

they hit the airdrome and other installations at this important base which also served as a link in the chain of communications between the Philippines, Palau, Truk and the Marianas. The heavies flew more than 1,000 statute miles from their base in the Admiralties, farther than they had ever travelled before, to hit Yap. They continued to pound Yap until the end of the month when they turned their attention to Noenfoor hitting it for two days, together with the Fifth Air Force, prior to invasion by American forces on 2 July.

Meanwhile, effective 15 June, the Thirteenth became a part of the newly created Far East Air Forces and the Thirteenth Air Task Force was dissolved. At the same time Major General St. Clair Street became commander of the Air Force.

Yap and other targets in the Carolines were hit by the heavies throughout July and into August, this time lending support to the invasion of Guam and Tinian in the latter part of July.

Since the first of the year the medium bombers and fighters, after the need for fighter escorts on Rabaul missions had ended, had been concentrating on bombing targets in the Rabaul area and the Northern Solomons, keeping these areas neutralized and starving out and destroying the Japanese forces isolated there. By August, these targets were nearly exhausted and the mediums and fighters became a part of the XIII Air Task Force under Brigadier General Earl W. Barnes, and moved into Western New Guinea, at what was then the furthest advanced Allied air base in the Southwest Pacific Area, there to commence operations against targets in Western New Guinea and portions of the Netherlands East Indies guarding the southern flank of the Philippines.

Late in August the heavies, operating from a new base off New Guinea, began an intensive bombardment of Palau, key point in the outer defenses of the Philippines, preparatory to invasion by Allied forces on 15 September. The latter also marked D-Day for Morotai. The invasion of Morotai was preceded by strikes by all forces, heavies, mediums and fighters, against enemy airfields and installations in Halmahera and neighboring islands.

Headquarters followed the advance of the heavies and on 13 September 1944, was officially closed in the Admiralties and opened in New Guinea; where it remained until 23 September 1944, when it was opened on one of the islands of the Netherlands East Indies.

Late in September the heavies moved to a new base in the Netherlands East Indies where they could come to closer grips with the enemy. On the 30th of September, they flew the first of a number of missions against the oil refineries at Balikpapan on the East coast of Borneo. This was the longest mission ever flown by Thirteenth Air Force Liberators, and certainly one of the longest missions ever flown by Liberators in any part of the world. Balikpapan was well defended by anti-aircraft and fighter planes. On later missions against Balikpapan a fighter escort made the long haul with the bombers.

With the invasion of Leyte on 20 October a new phase of operations began for the heavies which made their first incursion into the Philippines on 22 October, thus lending support to the Leyte operation.

On 29 October, Headquarters moved to the Molucca Islands where it would be in a better position to direct the assault on the Philippines.