

*Excerpts from the Monthly Historical Report*  
760<sup>th</sup> Chemical Depot Company (Aviation)

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Transcribed by Fred Thomas, 1-November-2022

All reports were signed by Captain Edward Kenny (initially a 1<sup>st</sup> Lt.)

31 July – 31 December 1944

*[Preparing to move with its munitions from Charters Towers, Queensland to Oro Bay, New Guinea.]*

*p. 613*

September was an eventful month in that movement orders on Depot Stock were received, Incendiary Clusters were destroyed, shipments were made to the RAAF, and Lt Cook joined the Organization.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of September a Movement Order on the following Depot Stock was received from the Ord. Officer, Hq V ASAC:

22,205	ea.	Bomb, M47A2, H 100 lb.	[Mustard Agent]
683	ea.	Bomb, M47, H, 100 lb	[Mustard Agent]
23,095	ea.	Wire, Arming f/M47 Bombs	
15,023	ea.	Burster, M4	
104	ea.	Bomb. M44, L, 100 lb.	[Lewisite]
55	ea.	Bomb, T2, CG, 1000 lb	[Phosgene]
60	ea.	Bomb, T2, AC, 1000 lb	[Hydrogen Cyanide]

Upon receipt of the Movement Order work was immediately begun on the preparation of the bombs, bursters, and fuses for shipment. The preliminary work consisted of checking all bombs, stenciling boxes, and repairing boxes in poor condition.

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Before the bomb movement a shipment of fifty (50) M47A2 bombs were sent to the Australian Field Experimental Station at *[unreadable word]*, Queensland, and eight (80) M10 Spray Tanks to the RAAF Experiment Station at Laverton, Victoria.

*p. 615*

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of September another Movement Order was received from the *[unreadable word]* Supply Officer *[unreadable word]* directing the shipment of all bulk chemicals to the *[2 unreadable words]* Officer at Oro Bay.

*p. 616*

With the receipt of the above order all Depot Stocks on hand were now awaiting shipment. This meant the unit itself would move shortly afterwards. A directive to that effect, No. 119, Hq, AAF S*[unreadable letter]* PA dated 15 October 1944 was received later during the month directing the unit to proceed to Oro Bay when shipments were completed, and upon the orders from the RTC Officer at Townsville, the

Organizational Movement Order to be issued by Hq, Base Two SOS. The unit was to come under the direct control of [*unreadable letter*]ASC upon arrival at destination.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of October a call was received from Capt. Oliver, the RTC Officer at Townsville, and the first shipment was begun. Two forty (40) foot trailers were secured from the Depot Supply Officer at Depot Two and were immediately put to use. The work continued night and day for the 24<sup>th</sup> thru the 2[*unreadable number*]th before a halt in the shipment was called. During that period ten (10) tons of bulk chemicals and three thousand eight five (3085) bombs were shipped. Shipments were again resumed on the 30<sup>th</sup>, and although the loading and unloading details worked smoothly without a hitch, the Queensland Railroad had difficulty in supplying cars.

[*A table of munitions shipped follows, but is very difficult to read.*]

*p. 617*

When the Chemical Munitions arrived at Townsville the local wharfies became alarmed at handling such a cargo and went on strike. Lt. Cook and Capt. Oliver, after a conference with Australian Military authorities secured the service of the Australian Militia to continue the loading. The loading itself was slow due to higher priorities by other organizations, such as Depot Two, which meant the two ships loading Chemical Unitions had to pull out into the stream. Bombs of the same type from Kangaroo Ordnance Depot were also being loaded at the time. When stored in the hold of the vessel the bombs containing Mustard and Lewisite, built up a concentration of vapor, which though not lethal, was still dangerous, and instructions as to opening of hatches and the procedure to be followed in unloading were left with the Chief Mate by Lt. Kenny. When these two ships were fully loaded they contained the entire theatre stock level of one hundred (100) lb. chemical bombs.

*p 623*

The advance party under Captain Kenny arrived at Oro Bay on the 13<sup>th</sup> and were quartered at the 217<sup>th</sup> Chemical Composite Company. The next day they began reconnoitering the local countryside for a suitable camp site, and succeeded in locating an area on the Dobodura Road about nine (9) miles from Oro Bay and within a mile of Inbi Ordnance Dump, where the Chemical Munitions the Unit was to maintain were to be stored. Arrangements were made with the Base "B" Area Commander and the site was approved of.

The area was approximately four hundred (400) yds long and two hundred (200) yards wide. It had been occupied by the [*unreadable word*] Trucking Company and was built and filled in ground.

*p. 624*

The Liberty ship "Monroe" on which the bombs and bulk containers had been shipped from Brisbane and Townsville, was still in Oro Bay Harbor when the Company arrived. Since the bulk chemicals were the property of the Base "B" Chemical Officer, and the bombs the property of the Ordnance Department the 760<sup>th</sup> was not responsible for the unloading of the ship. The unloading began a week after the 760<sup>th</sup> arrived and the personnel unloading were members of the Port Battalion. During unloading proper precautions were not taken and many men received Mustard burns. The 760<sup>th</sup> was then called in to supervise the unloading and supplied a detail of twelve (12) men, four (4) on each eight (8) hour shift. These men worked in the holds of the vessel and enforced gas disciplines, as a result burns to personnel, which had called for the treatment of fifty (50) men previously, were cut to six (6) men burned for the duration of the work.

## January 1945

[*On station in New Guinea.*]

*p. 638*

January saw the organization rapidly adjusting itself to new surroundings. Floors for tents were finished in ten (10) days time, and tents were erected and occupied. Shower towers were built, electric wiring was installed throughout the area, plans for a Day Room were made, and a garden plot, comprising about one half acre was laid out.

The work program being carried out in the Company Area and Toxic Yard was handicapped by lack of transportation. The situation was somewhat relieved by the use of a semi-trailer obtained from the Base Motor Pool. The unit Supply experienced difficulty in securing Engineer and Ordinance supplies, but fortunately a good stock of small tools, nails, spare parts etc., had been obtained in Australia before leaving.

Lectures were held during the month on malaria control and prevention of scrub typhus. Other lectures were given on the care and use of impregnated clothing and first aid for gas casualties. Rifles were also collected and stored. The program in the Toxic Yard was an ambitious one requiring work on a larger scale than was ever thought of in Australia. The Mustard bombs were in poor shape and the reconditioning of some [*unreadable word*] two thousand five hundred (*[unreadable number]*2,500) was undertaken. This task called for a new SOP on the destruction of leaking bombs and the following was worked out:

The apparatus is carried on a barge, and consists of a steel table three (3) feet wide by five (5) feet long with a steel bar four (4) feet long by one (1) foot square running lengthwise along the ... [*Two lines unreadable*]

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admit the punch. A door is fitted to the rear end (end at which bomb enters) of the box. In order to prevent bomb from rolling under the punch, two (2) guides made of  $\frac{3}{4}$ " pipe are welded to the table, running through the box the entire length of the table, and extending one (1) foot out the end of the box. The table is slanted toward the front by making the front legs nineteen (19) inches long and the rear legs twenty four (24) inches long. The apparatus is made of steel throughout, and all points are welded.

The table is operated on the stern of the barge by a six (man detail, and the procedure is as follows: Two (2) men carry the bomb to the table and place it on the extension. The man carrying the tail pushes the bomb into the box and closes the steel door. The bomb is now in position under the punches, and puncturing is accomplished by striking the punches two or three times with a three pound hammer. The rear hole is always made first since there will be a void in the bomb due to the slant of the table. After the bomb is punctured the door is opened and the fifth man by use of an eight (8) foot pole pushed the bomb out of the front end of the box and off the table into the sea. The sixth man on the detail is charged with first-aid and decontamination duties.

The above operation is carried out aboard a steel barge with the table attached on the stern. During the bomb disposal the barge is towed into the wind thus removing any [*unreadable letter*] vapor which may emerge.

## May 1945

*p. 669*

Work on the one hundred lb M47A2 Mustard filled bombs consisted of checking twenty two thousand four hundred and two (22,402), removing 1656 leakers and destroying 203 at sea. This method of disposal at sea had been in effect for a period of six months. The SOP set up for this destruction called for traveling a distance of five miles out to sea before destroying and discharging bombs. Twelve hundred (1200) bombs had been so destroyed. During May two empty casings were swept on shore by the undertow, and were discovered on the beach in the WAC area. A rather excited MP called the 760<sup>th</sup> and the casings were picked up and buried, but not until the Colonel on the Base had been reassured that such an occurrence was a rarity. To prevent any reoccurrence the distance off shore to the disposal point was lengthened to ten miles. The M47A2 bombs were continually deteriorating and the fact that they were not suitable for shipment was made known to Ordnance.

Other miscellaneous work such as decontaminating large areas, transferring bulk mustard, removing truck loads of contaminated materials and inventorying all stock on hand was also carried out.

*p. 676*

The mustard bombs in the Toxic yard at Strip 12 were leaking more and more each day and a pungent, garlic like odor permeated the air for a mile in either direction. Working in this atmosphere, in impregnated clothing, on a hot day was far from pleasant. At Kabi the situation was even less attractive, since the defective 500 lb CK filled bombs were exploding without any apparent warning. Working in the vicinity of these bombs, and the defective bombs had to be cut out, was hazardous and unpleasant. These explosions, extremely violent in nature, sent up a cloud of white gas and the detonations alone were capable of flooring a man fifty (50) yards away.

In destroying these bombs, a Standard Operating Procedure had to be established which would enable personnel to destroy the bombs rapidly and safely. Static detonation was out since this entailed removing bombs which might explode any moment to detonation area three miles away. The remaining method was to destroy defective lots in the storage piles by marking the bombs and penetrating the casing with thirty (30) caliber armor piercing bullets.

## June 1945

*p. 678*

Despite only two (2) weeks of active work in the Toxic yard during the early part of June, a great deal of work was accomplished and was as follows:

### Miscellaneous Projects

300	CK M78 Bombs moved to a new location	CK = cyanogen chloride
147	ton containers, Mustard and Leursite, pressure tested	
200	CK M78 bombs destroyed	CK = cyanogen chloride
150	M47H2 bombs destroyed at sea	
229	M47H2 bombs leakers removed	
895	M47A2 bombs tested	

There was no activity of the FETC Project. FETC itself having been alerted for a forward movement

## July 1945

*[The Unit has departed from New Guinea.]*

*p. 679*

By July 1<sup>st</sup>, the 760<sup>th</sup> had been on the ocean for the third day. The “Anhui” an old ship, under the command of Capt. Miller, was in a convoy of five ships, two LSTs, a liberty, the “Anhui” and a Destroyer. Progress of the convoy was slow due to the LSTs, and this fact, though it seemed trivial at the time was to cost the personnel of the 760<sup>th</sup> five precious points and one battle star for the Luzon campaign, since the unit arrived in Manila Harbor three days after the campaign closed.

*Post-WWII information and photos about what appears to be the Toxic Yard at “Strip 12” is available at*

[Embi Airfield, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea \(PNG\) WWII \(pacificwrecks.com\)](http://pacificwrecks.com)