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Veterans Day 2012 USA Air Force Fact Sheet: 509th Composite Group

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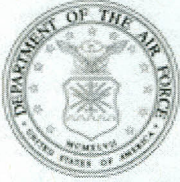


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FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet 509TH COMPOSITE GROUP

On December 17, 1944 the Army Air Forces established the 509th Composite Group at Wendover Field, Utah, and it immediately began training in fifteen specially-modified Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers for "special weapons" delivery. This was the first USAAF bombardment group to be organized, equipped, and trained for atomic warfare.

The 509th's training was to be completely shrouded in the deepest secrecy, therefore the desert isolation of Wendover Field was ideal. The Commander of the Group was then-Colonel Paul W. Tibbets, Jr., and it was to operate only one squadron, the 393rd Bombardment Squadron (Very Heavy), commanded by Major Charles W. Sweeney.

The group completed training and departed Wendover on April 26, 1945. (Not until well after the war did the United States Air Force officially admit that the 509th had trained at Wendover Field.) It arrived in June at its forward base on Tinian Island in the Pacific, only 1,450 miles from Tokyo.

More training and practice flights were flown from the island over the next few months, then on August 6, 1945 a B-29 Superfortress from the 509th Composite Group, the "Enola Gay," piloted by Group Commander Tibbets, dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.

Three days later another B-29, "Bock's Car," piloted by 393rd Squadron Commander Major Sweeney, dropped a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, Japan. Both cities were completely devastated by the blasts, and Japan announced its unconditional surrender the following day.

President Truman announced the unconditional surrender of the Japanese on August 14, 1945, and Allied occupation troops began to arrive in Japan two weeks later. Representatives from Japan signed the articles of surrender on the deck of the American battleship USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945. The bloodshed of World War II was finally over.



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