

THE UMPTEENTH FIGHTER SQUADRON - Part I

I. Introduction

The Umpteenth Fighter Squadron, X Fighter Group, was activated on June 15, 1942, at Blank Field, located in a rural district on the Eastern seaboard of the United States. It was the first unit to occupy the field, and it was designated as an operational training unit. Group HQ were at the same field, the other squadrons of the group being located at fields within 200 miles. The Group HQ personnel were attached to the Umpteenth Squadron for housing and rations.

The officers of the X Fighter Group had been drawn mostly from the Red Pursuit Squadron which had been divided in two on June 1, 1942. Captain Keats, C. O. of the Umpteenth Fighter Squadron had been Operations Officer of the Red Pursuit Squadron. The Umpteenth Fighter Squadron's Operation Officer, First Lieutenant Como, as well as all except four of the pilots, had also been members of the Red Pursuit Squadron, but the squadron had not had its full quota of airplanes so that most of the pilots who joined the Umpteenth Squadron had had only a few hours in the air over and above what they had completed before they left advanced flying school. First Lieutenant Metry and First Lieutenant Apply, Squadron Engineering Officer and Squadron Medical Officer respectively, had formerly been with the Blue Pursuit Squadron at a field in another part of the country. First Lieutenant Mason, Adjutant, and Second Lieutenants Dunn and Taft, Supply Officer and Armament Officer respectively, had each come from a different organization. During the first weeks of its existence the Umpteenth Fighter Squadron had no Communications or Transportation Officers. From time to time various pilots who were temporarily off flying duty for a few days were assigned to these positions.

Among the enlisted men, somewhat more than one third of the Umpteenth Fighter Squadron's personnel had been with the Red Pursuit Squadron, about the same number had been with the Blue, and most of the remainder had come from the HQ and HQ Squadron of the Y Pursuit Group of which the Red Fighter Squadron had been part.

During the first two weeks of the Umpteenth Fighter Squadron's existence, Captain Keats divided his time between his adjutant, his operations officer and pilots, and his superiors in Group HQ. At the beginning of the third week, that is, about July 6, Captain Keats became dissatisfied with the condition of affairs in Squadron HQ and he transferred First Sergeant Sayre to a detail at Group HQ and made Technical Sergeant Blaine Acting First Sergeant. At the end of the week he sent Lieutenant Como on leave and made Second Lieutenant Bartolo Operations Officer.