

A CHALLENGE - ACCEPTED

by

Gregory C. Kohn

As part of William T. Larkins article "Notes On Aircraft Camouflage and Markings 1907-1954", which appeared on pages 43 thru 50 of the January-March 1957 Journal, a challenge to "Show Proof" was issued on page 48 under item #16. The basis upon which the challenge was made was a previously unpublished photograph of a B-24J, credited to Peter M. Bowers, which in the estimation of the author carries the most fantastic markings on a military airplane in the history of the world. These markings consist of a "personal insignia" (a Dragon and a nude), a name, and also carries squadron markings on the fin and rudder. Mr. Larkins says as follows: If any of you can top this let's see your proof!

The use of the term "Fantastic" to describe the markings on this specific B-24J is pretty hard to beat, but, inasmuch as overall markings are mentioned in the challenge, I submit the following story and photographs as an answer to this challenge.

The accompanying exclusive, also unpublished, photographs show a Boeing B-29 "Superfortress", s/n 42-24874, assigned to the 24th Squadron, 6th Bomb Group, 313th Wing, of the 21st Bomber Command of the 20th Air Force. This aircraft was based on North Field, Tinian Island, one of the Mariannas Islands in the South West Pacific Ocean. Tinian is located 4 miles from Saipan.

Although the markings on this plane can hardly be termed "fantastic", it does have the most complete and distinctive set of markings of any or all of the aircraft operating in the Pacific Theater of World War II. These markings consist of the following:

1. The B-29 type of aircraft operated only under the command of the 20th Air Force and therefore it is distinctive in itself as representing the 20th Air Force.
2. The B-29 operated only as a part of the 21st Bomber Command, and therefore is again distinctive in representing this particular Command.
3. The large black circle with a letter enclosed painted on the fin and rudder of the plane represents the 313th Bombing Wing.
4. The letter "R" also in black painted within the circle on the fin and rudder indicates that the plane is part of the 6th Bomb Group (Very Heavy).
5. The "Pirates Crest and flaming ball" insignia represents the "Coat of Arms" of the 6th Bomb Group. (see following note)
6. The red tip of the rudder fin, and the red removable sections of the engine cowlings indicate that the plane belongs to the 24th Squadron.

7. The number "4" in black appearing next to the rear fuselage door represents the last number of the aircraft serial number, identifying it as such according to squadron procedure, and at the same time designating it as the #4 plane of the squadron.
8. The black panel on the dorsal fin indicates that this airplane is a lead aircraft for formation flying and for mass bombing missions.
9. The "Colored Smoke" ejection tube, protruding from the camera hatch doors just aft of the rear fuselage entrance door also indicates this plane as a Squadron Lead plane. The lead plane would eject the colored smoke at a predetermined time at a rendezvous point so that the various planes of a squadron would pull out of the mass of circling aircraft and follow the lead plane to the target.
10. The personal "APPLE A DAY" insignia of the crew, painted on the front bomb bay doors indicate a departure from the orders of General H. Arnold that all personal insignia (pretty girls in the flesh, etc.) be removed from the nose of each aircraft in the 6th Bomb Group and be replaced with the "Pirates Head Crest" "Coat of Arms". The "Apple A Day" insignia was originally painted on the bomb bay doors, and no personal insignia ever appeared on the nose of the plane. We just left it on the bomb bay doors and took our chances, but there was no objection and as a result this airplane was the only B-29 in the entire 6th Group to have a personal insignia. (see following notes)
11. It was an accepted rule that each bombing mission be represented by a small bomb painted on the side of the fuselage of the airplane. This airplane again was an exception to the rule in that each mission, regardless of the type, was represented by an individual hand painted replica of the APPLE A DAY insignia, (note photo of nose)
12. The name of this airplane "EL PAJARO DE LA GUERRA" was painted in red letters, as were the names of all of the 6th Bomb Group planes, in the white area of the "Coat Of Arms". This name of course stuck out like a sore thumb among such gems as "White Mistress", "Lady's Delight", "Dirty Girty" etc.

It is interesting to note that the 6th Bomb Group was the only combat group operating in the entire 21st Bomber Command with every aircraft bearing the same insignia. This was a specific order from General Arnold, Commanding General of the U. S. Army Air Forces during the war.

6th BOMB GROUP COAT OF ARMS INSIGNIA

A coat of arms was first designed and approved for the Sixth in 1924. The insignia of the pirates head crest, and a shield of a schooner and an observation plane, and the motto, "Parati Defendere", (Always Ready To Defend), was used by the 6th Composite Group (The Panama Group), and was reassigned to the Sixth Bombardment Group on 4 February 1943 at APO 825, c/o Postmaster, New Orleans, La. On 1 November 1944 the coat of arms was refixed for the Sixth Bombardment Group (Very Heavy), at Grand Island Army Air Field in Nebraska. The pirates head is set against a dark blue triangle superimposed on a white circle. The Jacket and bandana of the pirate is yellow. Hair, moustach, eye-patch, scar, tattooing and shadows are black. The Ear rings are silver. All appropriate areas are flesh colored. The twisted base under

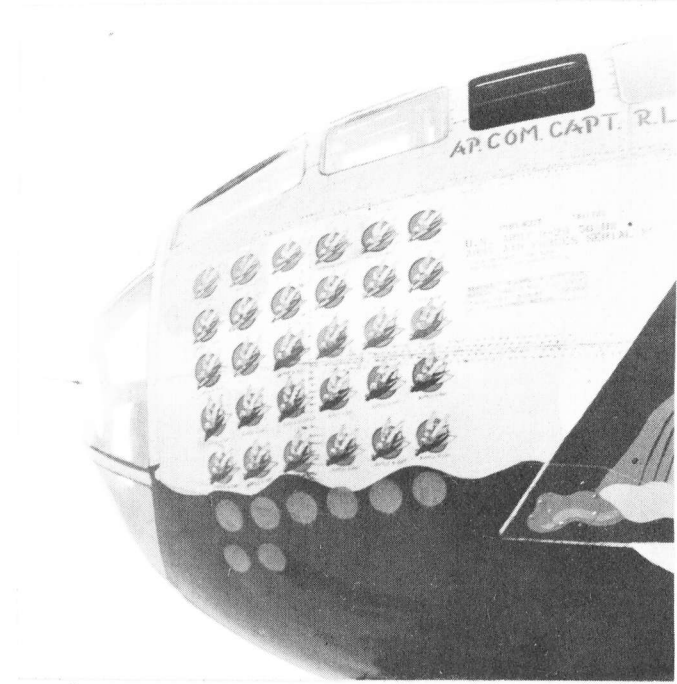


Boeing B-29-56-EW (42-24874) "EL PAJARO DE LA GUERRA"

All Photos by Gregory C. Kohn



Note Personal Insignia and Name of Aircraft



38 Missions Accomplished

the pirate is colored yellow and white starting from the left. Simulated red flames streak backward from the white circle on a white background, the edges of which are also streaked in red. The name of the plane is in red on the white background.

"APPLE A DAY" PERSONAL INSIGNIA

The "Apple A Day" insignia consisted of a brown and white eagle perched astride a black bomb. The fuse of the bomb consisted of a red apple with a green leaf attached to the stem of the apple. The tail fins of the bomb were light blue, and the eagle and bomb were set against a yellow circle bordered in red. The legend or motto "APPLE A DAY" was printed below the circle in medium blue. This insignia was painted near the leading edge of each front bomb bay door, and was painted on the left side of the nose to represent individual missions.

NAME OF THE PLANE "EL PAJARO DE LA GUERRA"

The name of this airplane "El Pajaro De La Guerra", Spanish for "The Bird Of The War" was painted on both sides of the nose. (The accompanying photos were taken just prior to the painting of the name on the right side of the fuselage.) The name itself is quite different from the usual names found on combat aircraft, and was arrived at in an unusual manner.

The Airplane Commander, Capt. Robert L. Litchfield, of Los Angeles, was determined that the airplane that he flew would have a meaningful and at the same time attractive personal insignia and name. To accomplish this end he ran a contest to produce this combination. Although the details of the contest are unknown the winning name and insignia were eventually fixed to Capt. Litchfield's aircraft.

In addition to the markings described, this particular B-29 was the second B-29 used in the war against Japan to appear in a "Black Bottom". This was applied by paint brush in the hands of the ground crew (Note the definition on the nose view of the left side). to a great portion of the airplane until a paint spray unit was obtained and the remainder finished by the spray method. The "Black Bottom", actually black dope which dried to a glossy finish, was applied to several B-29's in the 6th Group as an experiment to prevent their standing out in the enemy searchlights. This was the ground work for the later dull finish black bottomed B-29's that were produced and painted at the factory.

NOTE:

Detailed three view drawings and color schemes, names of crew members etc., of this aircraft are available from AIR BRITAIN, Drawing No. AW.71.

All of the above listed details were taken from a detailed Log Book which I kept during World War II. I was assigned as an Electrical Specialist on this aircraft.

If anyone can do better, then let's see your proof!
