

## WOLEAI, CAROLINE ISLANDS GROUP

As more northerly air bases were seized B-24 bombers raided other heavily defended Japanese positions. The primary target for the 5<sup>th</sup> Group in April, 1944, was the **Woleai** Atoll, particularly **Woleai** Island itself. This target was an important Japanese search plane and naval base, and also a stepping stone for aircraft and supplies from Pa!au Islands to Truk, Saipan and Yap Islands. The destruction of the defenses and installation on **Woleai** would give the Japanese a definite jolt. The bombing strikes on this target, at that time, would materially aid our future invasion plans on Western New Guinea and Saipan. The "eyes" of **Woleai** had to be blacked out and their Naval Forces had to be put on the defensive. This was the mission of the 5th Bomb Group.

In a series of 13 strikes, nine of which were on **Woleai** itself, Liberators of the 5th Bomb Group pounded this target into a mass of smoke, fires and bomb craters. The actions of the Allied Air Forces were relentless as reported by Japanese observers and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. **Anthony J. Goode** probably served on a number of these missions.

### April 18, 1944

(13th AF) B-24s bomb **Woleai** Atoll.  
(Japanese) Anti-Aircraft units noted 24 aircraft over the island.

### April 19, 1944

(13th AF) B-24s bomb **Woleai** Atoll  
(Japanese) Anti-Aircraft units noted 23 aircraft over the island.

### April 20, 1944

(13th AF) B-24s bomb **Woleai** Atoll  
(Japanese) Anti-Aircraft units noted 13 aircraft over the island.

### April 21, 1944

(Japanese) Anti-Aircraft units noted 22 aircraft over the island.

### April 22, 1944

(Japanese) 3 / 52 Field Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion on **Woleai** noted 19 aircraft attacking. Three were claimed shot down and two were damaged.

### April 23, 1944

(13th AF) 20+ B-24s bomb airfield and supply areas on **Woleai** Atoll  
(Japanese) Anti-Aircraft units noted 27 aircraft over the island.

### April 24, 1944

(Japanese) Anti-Aircraft units noted 15 aircraft over the island.

### April 25, 1944

(Japanese) Anti-Aircraft units noted 22 aircraft over the island.

### April 26, 1944

(Japanese) Anti-Aircraft units noted 19 aircraft over the island.

### April 27, 1944

(Japanese) Anti-Aircraft units noted 1 B-aircraft over the island.

### April 28, 1944

(13th AF) 21 B-24s bomb the airfield on **Woleai** Atoll  
(Japanese) Anti-Aircraft units noted 2 and 22 aircraft over the island.

### April 29, 1944

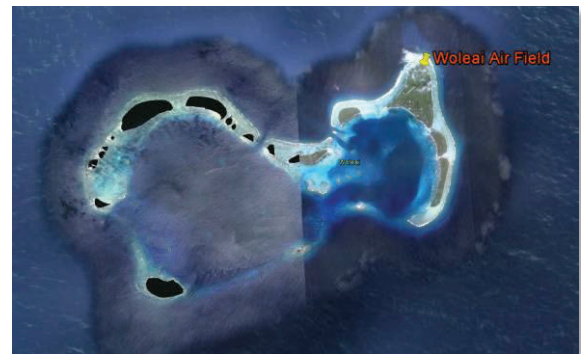
(Japanese) Anti-Aircraft units noted 12 aircraft over the island.

### April 30, 1944

(13th AF) 23 B-24s bomb the airfield on **Woleai** Atoll  
(Japanese) Anti-Aircraft units noted 23 aircraft over the island.

### May 1, 1944

(13th AF) B-24s of the Thirteenth Air Task Force hit **Woleai**



Antiaircraft gun positions (Ack-ack), supplies, personnel and the runway felt the attack. Combat crews flew these strikes without fighter cover. Ack-ack over this target was accurate and interception consisted of 10 to 12 enemy fighters on each mission. A goodly number of these Japanese fighters were shot down so that by the end of the period there was very little opposition except from ground defenses. The mission to **Woleai** and return was approximately 10 hours long, and entirely over water. There wasn't a dot of land anywhere between the target and Momote Strip. It was indeed a long, dreary mission, but it was also the forerunner of longer history-making missions.

These strikes were so effective in knocking out and neutralizing this target that the group received a Distinguished Unit Citation<sup>2</sup> which reads as follows:



**BY DIRECTION OF THE PRESIDENT, UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 9396 (9075), THE FOLLOWING UNIT IS CITED BY THE COMMANDING GENERAL, FAR EAST AIR FORCES:**

**5TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)**

***For outstanding performance of duty in action during the period 1 April to 15 May 1944, almost immediately after arriving at Los Negros, Admiralty Islands, the 5th Bombardment Group (H) was assigned the task of neutralizing the Woleai Island group, a key base in the Japanese inner defense circle. Located there were an airfield, bivouac areas, supply and storage depots, a radio direction finder station, and a number of anti-aircraft positions. The airfield was an important base for the staging of enemy tactical aircraft between Japan and the vital naval base at Truk. Combat crewmen of this group, making flights of approximately 1400 nautical miles entirely over water without fighter support, through severe tropical weather fronts, struck devastating blows at this enemy stronghold. From 18 April through 26 April, B-24 aircraft of the 5th Bombardment Group (H) caused widespread destruction. Shortly afterward, they were joined by another bombardment group, and operations continued through the middle of May. Ammunition, fuel and supply dumps at Woleai were destroyed or severely damaged; anti-aircraft positions were knocked out; runways were smashed, and 280 feet of a causeway was badly damaged. The gunners in this group shot down at least 20 enemy aircraft and probably 5 others, and destroyed 8 and probably destroyed 9 airplanes on the ground. Four of the Liberators were lost. Often braving intense anti-aircraft fire, navigating and bombing with superior accuracy, the 5th Bombardment Group (H) in less than a month, was largely responsible for reducing to a shambles a base upon which the Japanese had depended for an uninterrupted flow of supplies and aircraft for the strategic defense of Truk, Palau, and the western Caroline and Marianas Islands. All during this period the ground echelon worked steadily and efficiently to keep the aircraft in peak operational condition. The exemplary courage and devotion to duty displayed by the personnel of the 5th Bombardment Group (H) reflect great honor upon the Armed Forces and the United States.***

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<sup>2</sup> The Distinguished Unit Citation was established by Executive Order No. 9075, on 26 February 26th 1942. This order made it possible for the Secretary of War to issue citations in the name of the President of the United States to units of US Armed Forces and their Allies for heroism in action against an armed enemy from December 7th 1941 onwards. The unit must display such gallantry, determination, and esprit de corps in accomplishing its mission under extremely difficult and hazardous conditions as to set it apart and above other units participating in the same campaign. This act should be equal to that of an individual who could obtain the Distinguished Service Cross for it. -The design was approved on May 30th 1942. The ribbon was to be worn by all members of the cited unit and may be considered an individual decoration, only for those members who took part in the cited action. Others may only wear the decoration when serving in the cited unit. The ribbon is an ultramarine blue ribbon in a golden frame of laurel leaves. The unit flag receives a streamer in the colors of the decoration.

As the top of a seamount there is not much landmass but the strategic location of **Woleai** and the use of the air base as a Japanese staging point were significant. There was little there other than the air base when the raids began and there was nothing there when they were finished.

