

Flying Tigers and the Hump



Flying Tigers Insignia

The United States was providing supplies and helping China defend themselves against Japan since early 1941. Aerial protection began with the American Volunteer Group (AVG) pilot crew that became known as the Flying Tigers. These fighter planes protected Chinese airspace. After the U.S. entered World War II, the volunteer Flying Tigers fell under command of the Army Air Force.

After several important supply routes, such as the Burma Road, were taken by the Japanese, U.S. cargo planes flew huge quantities of supplies from India over the Himalayan Mountains to areas needing supplies in China. These transportation runs became known as “Flying the Hump.” The high mountains and unpredictable weather conditions made the cargo runs very dangerous. Transporting supplies was crucial in winning the war against Japan.

Several Douglas cadets participated in this China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater as fighter and cargo pilots. Learn about two of these pilots and fill in the blanks below using the word bank.



C-46 cargo plane



Lt. Band in front of P-40 fighter plane.

Lt. William F.X. “Bill” Band

Lt. Band trained in the Douglas Class of 1943-D. He became a fighter pilot with the _____ and flew 102 _____. He flew many planes including the P-40 and P-51. He was decorated with many awards including the Silver Star, which he earned when he made a surprise attack on 4,000 _____ soldiers. After the attack, his plane was so badly damaged he barely was able to land on the _____.

Capt. Bliss Thorne

Capt. Thorne trained in the Douglas Class of 1943-C. He became a _____ pilot and “flew the hump” over the _____. He mainly flew the C-46 plane. He wrote a book about his experiences and later went on to serve in the Air Force Reserves.



Capt. Thorne cadet class photograph.

Word Bank

Cargo
Japanese
Flying Tigers
Himalayan Mountains
Airfield
Missions