

Trails of Hope. The Odyssey of Freedom

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SEKONDI- TAKORADI

SEKONDI-TAKORADI IS IN GHANA, AND COMPRISES THE TWIN CITIES OF SEKONDI AND TAKORADI. DURING WORLD WAR II, THESE WERE TWO SEPARATE CITIES LOCATED ON THE GOLD COAST, WHICH WAS A BRITISH COLONY AT THAT TIME.

[Next](#)

[Back](#)

Places

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The history of Takoradi started with the Dutch Fort Witsen established in 1665. In 1928, Ghana's first seaport was built there, which stimulated the development of the city. During World War II, Takoradi became an important site for the supply of aircraft to Royal Air Force units. Planes were transported by ship to this city from factories, assembled there and then flown by the pilots to combat units.

On 14 September 1940, the British Air Ministry approached the General Inspectorate of the Polish Air Force with a proposal to establish a trans-African transport unit for transferring planes from Takoradi to Cairo. The command of the Polish Air Force approved this idea, and on 21 November 1940 the first group of 22 Polish airmen arrived in Takoradi where they formed the Polish Transport Group, subordinate to the 216th Transport Group in Egypt. The Poles were commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Mateusz Iżycki. The unit included pilots who were not qualified to fly in combat because of their advanced operational age or lack of proper combat training. As part of the air bridge, the Polish pilots flew combat, transport and training aircraft to deliver them to all corners of Africa, as well as the Middle East, and later to Italy and the Far East. In 1944, the tasks of the group were extended to include the transport of people, mail and goods in Africa and Italy.

The Poles flew on routes including Takoradi-India, Takoradi-Cairo, Takoradi-Freetown, Cairo-Burma, Cairo-Singapore, Cairo-Tehran, and Nairobi-Great Britain. By 1 May 1945, they had transported 3,602 planes on these routes. Regrettably, 19 Polish airmen were killed in the line of duty.

In the summer of 1941, some Polish pilots from the Polish Transport Group volunteered to take part in air battles over Africa. Twenty-two volunteers enlisted for operational service, and half of them were selected for operational training. The informal commander of the unit was Captain Feliks Gazda. After training at the 71st Operational Training Unit near Khartoum, the Poles entered combat in February 1942. Their national identity was emphasised by the establishment of a

separate flight in No. 112 Squadron of RAF. They ended their combat service in September after completing 140 combat flights.

Today, this constitutes a forgotten part of the history of the Polish military effort during World War II. While the Poles fighting as part of No. 112 Squadron are mentioned in the historiography of the Polish Air Force, the subject of the Polish Transport Group still awaits further study.

[More people](#)

[More places](#)

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)