

This is a collection of entries from the official war diary of the

525TH Fighter Squadron

1 July 1943 – 26 November 1945

These images were scanned from microfilm rolls obtained from the Air Force Historical Research Agency.

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The 525, 526 and 527 history files are on rolls A0822 and A0823.
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THE HISTORY OF THE 525th FIGHTER SQUADRON

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The story of the 525th Fighter Squadron begins at Key Field, Meridian, Mississippi, when on 8 August 1942, the personnel of the 389th Bombardment Squadron, 86th Bombardment Group (L), began operating as the 525th Fighter Bomber Squadron, 86th Fighter Bomber Group.

After flying a succession of planes which included A-20's, A-31's and A-24's, they received the then new A-36's in which they came overseas. Axis rail and motor columns were soon to discover what a deadly team the plane and the pilots would make.

The first bit of foreign soil which could be called home was La Senia Airrome, Algeria occupied in the latter part of May, 1943. Although no missions were flown from here it was long remembered for its uniformly poor living conditions, wind, dust, poor food and scarcity of water.

Marnia, French Morocco, Medouina, French Morocco, Tafaraoui Airrome, Algeria, Tunis, and Comiso all came into the picture for a short while, but it was not until reaching Korba, Tunisia that the first all-squadron mission was flown, on the 6th of July, 1943. Here also the first combat loss was sustained.

While based on Gela Airfield, Sicily the squadron came into its own, doing wonderful work in support of the 7th Army's drive through Sicily. Flying from daylight to dusk they blasted enemy convoys, gun positions, troop concentrations, strongpoints and road bridges. From Barcellona Airfield, Sicily the first attacks were made on the Italian boot. While stationed there the outfit received news of the Italian surrender soon to be dampened by the bloody battles of Salerno and vicinity in which they took an important part.

The fight up the Italian Peninsula is well known and was supported heroically by the boys of the squadron. Flying from Sele Airfield, Serretelle I/G, Pomigliano Airrome, Marcianise Airfield, Ciampino, Orbetello, Poretta Airfield, Corsica, Grosseto Airfield back in Italy, and Pisa Airrome, the outfit, which had since changed from A-36's to A-47's, soon appreciated for their ability to take it and come home, won the regard of their buddies on the ground for the wonderful support they gave with utter disregard for enemy resistance. By the time Pisa was reached all knew that the "forgotten front" no longer held anything but flak, so it was with little surprise but great anticipation that they received the news of a jump to France.

On 23 February 1945 the planes flew from Pisa to Tantonville Airfield, France and two days later the first combat mission was flown. It was while at this base that the last push, which terminated 7 May 1945, was begun on 15 March 1945. With front lines moving so rapidly they were soon out of range of the small fuel capacity of the fighter, so the last war-time move came, this time to Braunschardt Airfield, Germany on 13 April. By this time the end of the war was plainly in sight and after about two weeks of full scale and unusually fruitful operation the missions became nothing more than routine patrols.

Thus on 7 May 1945 was completed the combat history of the 525th Fighter Squadron covering almost two years. In that time more than 9070 sorties were flown against all sorts of targets. Such a record cannot be made without heartbreaking losses, but with all due consideration to American personnel and materiel versus enemy firepower these losses were as small as work and training would make them.

With the end of the war in Europe came the war of unrest, partially mitigated by redeployment of those men eligible for discharge. An elaborate sports program, social life --- to whatever degree permissible --- and extra curricular activities, serve to keep squadron personnel occupied if not actually satisfied.

With redeployment has come the inevitable shortage of man power finally necessitating, on 1 December 1945, the consolidation of all three squadrons of the group into one Group Headquarters to function by the pooling of resources until sufficient replacements make it possible to operate individually again.

Despite severe shortages the outfit still carries on a very complete flying program from Schweinfurt Air Base. This, of course, has been done with comparatively few of the great number of planes available in combat.

Thus through the continual and unflinching cooperation of all its members: the flying personnel for whom the group has its very existence, ground officers who give so unstintingly of their time and abilities, and enlisted men whose job it is to keep them in the air, on the records and in the mess, the 525th Fighter Squadron in over 2 years of operation has amassed a record second to no outfit of its like in the theater.

Sheet No. 1 Primary, 549th AAF, 1st AF, 1st AF, 1st AF. Tunis (Ground echelon)
Korba, Tunisia (Air echelon)
(Station)

Month of July, 1943. Prepared by WILLIAM H. BLACK ELL,
1st Lt., AC, Ass't. S-2.

DAY EVENTS

1 Our ground echelon is bivouaced in an olive grove SE of Tunis, while the air echelon is at Korba. The 27th Group is also at Korba, and our pilots are getting ready for combat, and will fly their first missions with the 27th pilots. Part of the ground echelon at Tunis is busily engaged in preparing the vehicles for shore landing at some as yet unannounced point.

2 Some of the officers and enlisted men went swimming at a beautiful beach SW of Tunis. We are bivouaced next to the 34th Division, or rather, Co. "I" of the 133rd Inf. Many of these men relate interesting stories of their experiences in the Tunisian Campaign.

3 Seven of our pilots, Capts. Striegel and Gunnison, Lts. Burchett, McCord, Rutherford, Sorensen and Vitopil, flew their first combat mission this date, with 27th Group pilots. The mission was over Sicily, and lasted 1:30. Lts. Watts, DuVall, Jackson, Stylys and Griswold left the bivouac area near Tunis for Korba to begin combat flying.

4 Lt. Hatten flew his first combat mission today, with the 27th Group. Lt. DuVall got 2:00 combat time, but did not get a sortie. The officers and men of the ground echelon are eating with Co. "I", 133rd Inf.; the food is very good.

5 Everyone is speculating as to the Allies' next move. Most suspect it to be an invasion of Sicily. Large flights of heavy and medium bombers are seen flying in that direction every day.

6 First squadron mission was flown from Korba today, target being anything of opportunity on roads and railroads in area of Sciacca, Sicily. There were 12 aircraft. Mission was led by Capt. Striegel. Some strafing of military objectives was reported.

7 No missions were flown today. Nothing eventful.

8 Two missions were flown today from Korba. First was led by Capt. Striegel and included Capt. Gunnison and Lt. Rutherford, remainder being pilots of other squadrons. First mission was reconnaissance over central Sicily; uneventful. Second bombed and strafed bivouac area, store tents and ammunition dumps at Agrigento with excellent results. Pilots encountered first flak.

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Comiso A/D, Sicily
Tunis
Korba, Tunisia
(Station)

Sheet No. 3 War Diary, 525th Bombardment Group, B-24

Month of July, 1943. Prepared by WILLIAM H. BLACKWELL
1st Lt., AG, Ass't S-2

DAY

EVENTS

15 (Cont'd) anti-aircraft units on the field. A couple of Spit squadrons are on the field. One mission was flown today, bombing and strafing a supply dump at Corleano, Sicily.

16 Squadron is still split up, with the "advance" party, as far as we know, still at Tunis. Today, we, here at Comiso, borrowed some K-rations from the AA units. Water is a problem. There are several wells around, but no assurance that the water is fit for drinking, and we have no Halazone tablets. Three missions were flown, two strafing and one escort.

17 We are wondering when the remainder of the squadron will get over. Sgt. Hill, mess sgt., policed up a German water trailer today, and we need one. Several of the men have located a German bivouac area nearby, and have taken over a large trailer and a couple of trucks for our mess. Three missions were flown today with good results, several locomotives and trains being destroyed.

18 The Comiso A/D was surely wrecked by our bombing and shelling. Not a single building remains untouched, and some are a shambles. Many rifles and grenades are scattered about. Today we left by rail for Gela, having received orders to proceed there. Three missions were flown today.

19 Around midnight last night we arrived at our new field, a new landing strip laid in a wheat field and called Gela West. The remainder of the ground echelon arrived last night. Pilots are due in a day or so. Three reconnaissance and strafing missions were flown. While strafing a locomotive that exploded, Lt. Fernandez' plane was damaged and he bailed out 20 mi. NW of Pantelleria and was picked up by rescue launch.

20 Busy setting up for operations. Pilots came in today, part flying their own planes, remainder by C-47's. We are now bivouaced in olive grove on hill near western edge of Gela.



Sheet No. 1 War Diary, 525th Medium Bomber Squadron, Gela, Sicily
(Station)

Month of July, 1943. Prepared by WILLIAM H. BLACKWELL
1st Lt., AC, Ass't. S-2

DAY EVENTS

21 First mission from Gela West flown today by Capt. Gunnison and Lt. Vitopil, reconnaissance over roads in Western Sicily.

22 Two missions were flown today, both bombing and strafing. First covered roads N and NE of Nicosia, bombing motor truck convoy. Second mission bombed enemy strongpoint SE of Petralia.

23 Two missions were flown today. The first sought targets of opportunity on roads from Termini to C. Orlando. Second bombed landing barges East of S. Stefano.

24 First mission today bombed a supply dump near C. Orlando. Second bombed and strafed ships in Milazzo Harbor. Hits were scored on a ship and 2 seaplanes in the harbor. Cover observed 4 s/e a/c bearing yellow wings and black crosses. When cover turned into them they broke and fled.

25 Two missions today. One mission bombed 400' ship in Milazzo. Other sought an enemy armored column.

26 Milazzo harbor bombed by only mission flown by squadron today.

27 Bombing mission was flown today, target, enemy vehicles in by NE of Mt. Etna.

28 Stand down today. No missions flown. Everybody taking advantage of day off to visit nearby towns.

29 Three reconnaissance and strafing missions were flown today. A number of enemy motor vehicles were destroyed.



Sheet No. 5 War Diary, 525th FIGHTER BOMBARDMENT SQDN. Gela West, Sicily
(Station)

Month of July, 1943. Prepared by WILLIAM H. BLACKWELL
1st Lt., AC, Ass't S-2

DAY

EVENTS

30 No missions were flown today. This is surely a dusty spot, especially when there is a strong wind blowing. Many wonder when it rains here, if ever!

31 A joint mission with the other two squadrons was flown today, with the target being a bivouac area. Mission was considered successful. Today marks the end of our first month in combat. During this month, our pilots flew 374 sorties, and ran up 632:55 hours combat time.



Sheet No. 6 War Diary, 525th Bombardment Group S.M. Gela West, Sicily
(Station)

Month of August, 1943. Prepared by WILLIAM H. BLACKWELL
1st Lt., AC, Ass't S-2

DAY EVENTS

1 Beginning a new month today. On strafing mission in Randazzo area was flown today. Lt. Col. Stephen B. Mack, wing A-3 is attached to our squadron for flying and got his first sortie with us today. Lt. Fischer was hit by flak during this mission, apparently a 20 mm shell exploding on the right hand side of the cockpit. Although severely injured, he managed to fly his plane back and land it at Agrigento. Lt. Burchett drove over and flew the ship back.

2 One bombing mission today, with road junction at Cesaro the target.

3 A fighter sweep and one bombing mission flown today. Sweep was uneventful; bombing mission successfully attacked 3 ships off coast at S. Ferdinando.

4 First mission over Italy was flown today, led by Capt. Gunnison and consisting of 12 a/c, and bombed marshalling yards at Gioia Tauro. On a second mission, with objective to demolish the town of Troina, a German stronghold, due to haze, Regalbuto was bombed instead of Troina. Capt. Striegel, leading the flight, realized the mistake upon entering his dive, and attempted to tell others not to bomb, but message was not heard.

5 One mission, strafing, was flown today. Some trucks were destroyed.

6 Three missions were flown today. First bombed roads at Eastern end of Troina; second bombed road junction at Cesaro; and third put in a road block in Randazzo area. The area around Randazzo is called "Flak Alley" by the pilots, because of the accuracy and intensity of the flak encountered in that area.

7 Two bombing missions and one 4 ship reconnaissance mission were flown today. Red flak was observed for first time by pilots, and this is supposed to indicate that enemy fighters are coming in.

Sheet No. 7 War Diary, 525th FIGHTER BOMBING SQDN. Gela West, Sicily
(Station)

Month of August, 1943. Prepared by WILLIAM E. BLANCHETT
1st Lt., AC Ass't. S-2

DAY EVENTS

8 First mission today was one of 12 a/c to create road block near G. Orlando. Second mission bombed artillery positions SE of Maso. 1st Lt. Graham weible joined the squadron today.

9 A busy day with four missions. First and second bombed road intersection at Patti. On second mission, Capt. Striegel and others spotted a battery of AA guns in an orchard near Patti, and upon his request, a mission of 4 ships, which he led, returned and knocked out the battery. The last mission bombed a highway junction near G. Orlando.

10 Four missions today. First, a fighter bomber sweep, bombed bridge and road near Patti. Second bombed roads at Barcellona. Third bombed and strafed artillery positions, where large explosions were seen after the bombing. Fourth mission bombed olive groves where enemy vehicles and infantry were reported.

11 First mission bombed gun positions on Mandazzo-G. Orlando highway. Second attacked similar target on tip of G. Orlando. Third was an 8 ship reconnaissance mission. Fourth bombed town of Gioiosa Mare.

12 Two missions today. First dive bombed Patti. Second bombed and strafed enemy artillery positions near Adrano.

13 First mission today was a reconnaissance mission over Northern Sicily and the toe of Italy, and was uneventful. Second was to bomb 20 to 30 landing barges reported at G. Lindari; barges were not seen and bombs were returned to base.

14 Maj. Tarrant led the first mission which bombed a supply dump North of Gioia Tauro, Italy. Lt. Burchett led the 4 ship cover. Second mission bombed a road intersection at Spadaflora. Third bombed and strafed supplies on the beach at Spadaflora.



