

S E C R E T

g. Operations:

(1) Campaign: Italian.

(2) Nature of operations: Combat missions by flights of P-47 aircraft, on dive bombing, strafing and escort, particularly in attacking enemy communications, and principally of dive bombing and strafing type.

(3) Number of missions and sorties for period:

- (a) Missions: 98.
- (b) Sorties : 551.

(4) Results of important missions:

(a) Mission: 14 December 1944. Four aircraft, P-47 type, were ordered to attack 10 "Nebels" which had been causing the Fifth Army a good deal of trouble and which our own artillery couldn't seem to hit. All bombs were dropped on target and interrogation indicated that all mortar positions were knocked out.

(b) Mission: 16 December 1944. Four pilots flying P-47 type aircraft, were ordered to bomb the town of Tossignano as elements of the Sixth British Armored were cut off there. All bombs were on the target demolishing buildings and starting fires. Word was recieved from Army that it was a good show and also a commendation for the good work done.

(c) Mission: 31 December 1944. Eight aircraft were ordered to attack Calcenato railroad bridge and crane which was being used to carry supplies to front line troops and to carry supplies out of Italy. The crane was used to swing a part of the bridge out during the day and then to replace the span during the night making it appear from a daylight view that it was unserviceable. Interrogation disclosed that the crane was destroyed and bombing also accounted for one locomotive and three cars. One other set of bombs hit the east approach to the bridge, cutting the tracks and damaging the bridge. As a result of this mission, the flow of vital supplies and equipment was slowed down depriving the German frontline soldier these much needed supplies.

h. Commanding Officer's important missions: None to report.

i. Losses in action:

(1) CHARLES E. WILLIAMS, 0759143, 1st Lt., failed to return from mission, 10 December 1944. Two eyewitnesses are of the opinion that he went in with his plane at G-1428, Italy.

(2) ARTHUR E. JAMES, 0722096, 2nd Lt., failed to return from mission, 17 December 1944. He was seen to bail out of his plane and land safely in enemy territory at P-5550.

j. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves:

- (1) RAYMOND J. HUFF, 1st Lt. Silver Star
- (2) DONALD J. KLIMENT, 1st Lt. 1st OLC to DFC
- (3) WILLIAM P. BENEDICT, Maj. 2nd OLC to DFC

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- (4) SANBORN B. HUTCHINS, 1st Lt. DFC
- (5) RICHARD D. LAWRENCE, 1st Lt. DFC
- (6) HARRY A. MASTER, 2nd Lt. DFC
- (7) THOMAS G. ARCHIBALD, Capt. DFC
- (8) WALTER C. TAYLOR, JR., 1st Lt. DFC
- (9) ROBERT J. TAFT, Capt. DFC
- (10) JOHN M. LEPHY, 1st Lt. Soldier's Medal
- (11) CLAYSON S. GARBER, 1st Lt. Soldier's Medal
- (12) WILLIAM LIND, Sgt. Bronze Star

2. Inclosed is War Diary, 526th Fighter Squadron, 86th Fighter Group, for the period 1 December 1944 to 1 January 1945.

For the Commanding Officer:

*Howard C Wolf*  
 HOWARD C. WOLF,  
 1st Lt., Air Corps,  
 Unit Historian.

1 Incl: War Diary.

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Sheet No. 115. War Diary. 526th Fighter Sq., 86th Fighter Gp., APO 650, N.Y., N.Y.

Month of December 1944. Prepared by Howard C. Wolf, 1st Lt., above named Sq.

WAR DIARY

- 1 The Group officers held a dance and the dearth of women is comical. One put in an appearance. The Group theater ran a Benny Goodman film much to everyone's satisfaction. Three projectors were used before the picture was finished. The Squadron ran six missions. The 527th Squadron caught a JU-88, the first seen in some time. Armament and Ordnance sections bought a 200 pound hog for \$171.05 and had a barbecue for themselves in the evening.
- 2 Flew seven missions totaling 32 sorties, one in the area of Brenner Pass. PX rations, sans beer, were drawn. We got 15 packages of cigarettes for 15 days and rumor has it that the present quota may be reduced. Maybe the Senatorial Inquiry in the States will ease the smoking situation. As it is the non-smokers are taking care of those addicted.
- 3 Stood down due to bad weather. All three poker tables and the dice table in the enlisted men's day room were crowded with plenty of "sweaters" waiting to take the place of the unfortunates who went broke.
- 4 Flew three missions today. Lt. Leader was shot up on a close support show and bailed out safely in friendly territory. A signal reads that he was given first aid for an injury to his leg but nothing serious.
- 5 Stand down until afternoon because of weather. Got one mission off. We hear we are getting more replacements, the second batch within a month. Major Benedict is going home for 30 days after four or more years overseas. Group theater crowded to capacity as all the personnel of the Group were compelled to attend the showing of some training films.
- 6 Flew one mission before being stood down for the day. A good many of the enlisted men made their initial appearance at the local Red Cross Club, recently established in Piss, and reports are that the coffee and cakes are well worth going after. The enlisted men's club continues to have dances four times a week, well attended by local signorinas and GI's.
- 7 Flew two missions, one a special by Colonel Bates, after being stood down in the morning. Captain Kuhl and Lt. Lepry departed today for the Capri Rest Camp expecting to be gone seven days.
- 8 Meeting of the enlisted men. Major Benedict imposed bed-check in an effort to bring the VD rate down in the Squadron. Stood down all day due to weather.
- 9 Five new pilots assigned to the Squadron. Dance at the Officer's Quarters, no women as usual. Flew three missions in dubious weather. The Squadron Basket Ball team won the championship of the XII AAF Command in one of the tightest games of the tournament. Brigadier General Chidlaw, XXII TAC Commander, presented the team, McGoldrick, Bennet, Hetrick, Pucket, Miller, and Ripkin, and runner-ups with team trophies and medals.
- 10 Flew five missions today and lost two pilots. Lt. Williams was seen to go in with his plane south of Padua and Lt. Lawrence said he was bailing out near the front lines. There is much hope that Lt. Lawrence will be back

*Eff. 12/3/44  
G.W. Kuhl promoted from  
1st. Sgt. to 1st. Lt.  
Promoted to 1st.  
Sgt. 9/1/45*

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Month of December 1944. Prepared by Howard C. Wolf, 1st Lt., above named Sq.

WAR DIARY

with us. Lt. Williams will be sorely missed. S/Sgt. Joseph Brennan was reduced to the rank of Sergeant.

11 Stood down due to weather. Some of the enlisted men of the Squadron have taken in every performance of "Panama Hettie" playing for the last time tonight at the Air Corps theater. The ingenuity of the GI has again contributed to the comfort of the enlisted men of the Squadron. An improvised plumbing system has been installed in the latrines of the building. The hot water heating system, so far, has been a total flop due to lack of sufficient power to operate the pumps. The home-made oil drum stoves are still the standby of the GI. Morale, which has not been as it should be for some time, dropped to a new low today when it was found that new replacements in the Squadron with as low as six months overseas time were going home on furlough. An orientation meeting at the mess hall was well commented on and cleared up a number of points about the Italian Front about which the men were either doubtful or had no knowledge of whatsoever.

12 Stood down in the morning for repairs on the field. The field was opened again at noon but no missions were flown due to weather. Lts. Garber and Lepry were awarded the Soldier's Medal for participating in the rescue of several old and feeble people trapped in a home in Grosseto during the flood.

13 Word was received that Lt. Anderson, a pilot who went down on his initial flight, was in Florence. Seven missions flown today.

14 Five missions today. Returning from one of the missions after having his plane hit by flak, Lt. Sewell was unable to lower his left landing gear or raise the right one and chose to bail out in the sea at Marina di Pisa. He was picked up immediately by a boat and in a short while was back in the area suffering no ill effects. Lt. Clayson S. Garber was transferred to the 527th Squadron S-2 per S.O. 220, par. 1, Hq. 86th Fighter Group and Lt. Howard C. Wolf was transferred to this organization on the same order.

15 Major Benedict and Captain Setencich left for the States on a thirty-day furlough. Major Benedict was transferred to Hq. 86th Fighter Group. Major Taylor joined this organization and assumed the duties of C.O.

16 Weather curtailed the activities of the Squadron for the day. However three missions were flown before weather closed in and forced a stand down. Reports from Command indicated that elements of the Sixth British Armored were cut off at Tossignano. A special BSL was given the Group and our Squadron managed to get one mission in, in spite of weather. Word was received from the Fifth Army that target was well hit.

17 Once again, weather stepped in and the Squadron was stood down after two missions were flown. Lt. James was forced to bail out over enemy territory and was observed to land safely. Word was received from Command that Lt. Lawrence, who was lost on a mission a short time ago, is safe and in Partisan hands. It is said that he will be returned in three days.

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WAR DIARY

18 Only two missions were flown today as the weather closed in here at this field and the Squadron was stood down for the afternoon. The ping-pong table which was recently installed in the Intelligence room seems to grow in popularity and the new C.O., Major Taylor, turned out to be an experienced player. The Stars and Stripes, our reliable (?) newspaper, announced the complete capture of Faenza but a message received from the Fifth Army by our good friend Captain Keatch tells us that the northern end of the town is far from clear. The Germans are determined to hold on as long as possible as the loss of this town is a serious blow to their defense of the Po Valley. Clare Luce, who is seeing Italy, ate dinner at the Officer's Mess and was accompanied by General Darcy.

19 Weather continued bad again today and although two missions managed to get off, the Group was stood down for the rest of the day. PX supplies were issued today and once again "no beer". Enlisted men are sure they have been sold short and that now that election is over, there will be no more beer. However, reports indicate that there is plenty of beer to be had but shipping space at present is overcrowded. The Thunderbolt theater presents a USO show tomorrow and from all accounts, should be good. Late run of pictures at our show seem to be better but there is still lots of room for improvement. Oh well, as we say in French "C'est la guerre".

20 Weather looked operational today but only one armed reconnaissance was flown. The USO show at our theater was very good and the officers and men both seem much more beautiful than the women over here. The situation in Belgium continues severe as determined Germans press home their late but effective counter-offensive. News is at a minimum but late news flashes say that the Yanks have somewhat stemmed the rolling tide. One hundred and fifty Yanks were slaughtered by the Huns and news flashes say that the Yanks are the maddest they have been so far in the war and woe to the Germans that fall into their hands. He will get his opportunity to die for the "Fatherland". Five enlisted men and one officer departed for the 7th Replacement Depot on the first leg of their journey to the States. One enlisted man is on permanent rotation while the others will return after a thirty day furlough in the States.

21 Weather once again prevented the Squadron from completing a full day of scheduled missions. Pilots are bitching that at the rate they are getting sorties these days, it will be late next summer before they get home. The field was closed at noon to all planes as the Engineers were working on the runway. Word was received that Lt. Klamme, who bailed out some time ago, was safe and in Partisan hands. News like this seems to have a good effect on the morale of the pilots and enlisted men. Lets hope that we have lots more of that kind of news. Just for the record, today was supposed to be the shortest day of the year but it didn't seem any shorter or any longer than another day. One day is just like another over here in good (?) old Italy.

22 Today was the busiest day this Squadron has seen in quite some time. The

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Month of December 1944. Prepared by Howard C. Wolf, 1st Lt., above named Sq.

WAR DIARY

planes were off with the first light of day and down with the last rays of the sun. For some reason we had the first and last mission of the day. There were no extraordinary missions during the day and most of the close support jobs were bad due to inclement weather. Only three days until Christmas now but at the present time this country doesn't seem to even know it's coming. There isn't any of the gay holiday spirit such as you see back home. But then the people over here have nothing and they are lucky if they get enough to eat from day to day. Our theater has been collecting money for the children of Pisa and that, combined with the money collected by the Air Corps theater, should make some children a little warmer on Christmas day. The situation in Belgium is still very serious and Stimson said, "This is an all out effort by the Germans to give the German people a victory and thus boost their morale". Lt. General Bradley commented that the counter-offensive could lengthen or shorten the war by as much as 90 days. Arrival of numerous packages from the States has tended to inject the Christmas spirit in the enlisted men of the Squadron and they have taken it upon themselves to decorate their rooms and plan for Christmas Eve parties. Some fellows have even managed to get a Christmas tree.

23 An order was published by the Twelfth Air Force confirming the General Court Martial sentence requiring Major Benedict, our former Squadron Commander, to pay a fine of \$150.00 per month for ten months on charges of stealing an easy chair and two matching stools from a native Italian. Major Benedict was court martialed on the 11th of November 1944. Another day of good weather and the Squadron flew until the last light. Intelligence reported a concentration of 1,000 railroad cars on the line between Milano and Brescia. Two armed reconnaissance missions were flown and weather over the target prevented the flight from getting there. However they found some activity on the way to the target and succeeded in destroying and damaging some locomotives and cars. News broadcasts late tonight stated that the German counter-offensive is starting to slow down. The situation is still serious but as one British Commentator put it, "The Yanks have regained their confidence and are sure that there can only be one outcome to the battle and that is victory for the Allies."

24 Stand down for the day. Overcast skies kept the entire Group on the ground. The day before Christmas and everyone seems to be either going to church or getting ready for a big night. There is to be a dance at the Officer's Club and also at the enlisted men's club. Some of the officers have gotten an early start and have started to "spin in" already. All indications point to a big night and if there is any flying on Christmas day some of the pilots will need a lot of urging to get out of bed. Church Services will be held tonight at seven o'clock in the enlisted men's mess hall. After that there is a fellowship hour at the AFGD # 6 building.

25 CHRISTMAS DAY: Good weather today and the Squadron taking advantage of it, flew four missions. This is the second Christmas day overseas for the Group.

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Sheet No. 119. War Diary. 526th Fighter Sq., 86th Fighter Gp., APO 650, N.Y., N.Y.

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Everyone hopes that this will be the last one overseas and next year at this time we'll all be home. However as for food, there were no complaints. Turkey with all the trimmings, as much as you wanted, in both the officers' and enlisted men's mess. Some of the men gave out candy and food that they had received from home to the children of Pisa and their cries of "grazia" could be heard all over town. On the Fifth Army front there was plenty of snow and the fellows up there had a "White Christmas", also a cold one. At the Officer's Club Tom and Jerries were served "on the house", bringing back memories of the good old Day. Word was received that Lt. Lawrence was safe in Florence, having returned from enemy territory. Lt. Wolf was promoted to 1st Lt.

26 Good flying weather again today enabled the Squadron to get in five missions. Group Intelligence reported a large cruiser in La Spezia harbor so a special mission was flown to try and get it. However it turned out to be a false alarm so the pilots bombed the harbor and came home. The German counter-offensive in Belgium, although it looks better, is still serious. Good weather allowed the Air Force to get in some telling blows. However the decisive battle is still to be fought and the results may have a great effect on the length of time before this war ends.

27 Good weather today and the Squadron had a busy day. Lt. Lawrence who was lost on a previous mission was back with the Squadron today. He has his orders to go home and he really has an interesting tale to tell. The USO show which was supposed to show was cancelled as the Master of Ceremonies was sick.

28 The Squadron had one of its biggest days in a long time. Six missions, totaling 35 sorties, were flown and most of them were against occupied houses in the Castel Nuovo area. Intelligence has received a report that the German counter-offensive on the Fifth Army front might possibly break through and attempt to capture Leghorn and thus deprive us of a base of supply. In the event of a breakthrough this Group will fight a holding action until all military equipment is evacuated. Word was received from XXII TAC that due to the present tactical situation, all personnel will carry arms. There is nothing to unduly alarm anyone at the present time but it is better to be prepared in case something should happen. On the first mission this morning Lt. Wagler had quite an experience. The good Lt. went into his dive on his bomb run and on the way down he was slipping from side to side and kicking his rudder attempting to evade flak. However the "bubble" jobs have an undesired characteristic that is termed "rudder lock" and that is what Lt. Wagler got. With the rudder locked the plane went into a spin after first flopping over on its back. Lt. Wagler thought his time had come but luckily he managed to right the plane at about three hundred feet altitude, drop his incendiary bombs, and proceed on with the rest of the flight. All Lt. Wagler had to say was "After getting out of that spin I was so relieved that I was almost happy to see flak". Quite

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Sheet No. 120. War Diary. 526th Fighter Sq., 86th Fighter Gp., APO 650, N.Y., N.Y.

Month of December 1944. Prepared by Howard C. Wolf, 1st Lt., above named Sq.

WAR DIARY

an experience and one that should prove of value to pilots on future missions. On thumbing through the November issue of the Overseas Edition of the Saturday Evening Post, much to my surprise, I found a picture of our former C.O., Major Benedict, staring me in the face. There was quite an article on the Major and it appears that what he didn't know about "midnight requisitions" and "scrounging" just wasn't to be known. The article, entitled WHERE'S THAT BOMBER? IT WAS HERE JUST A MINUTE AGO, was taken from "Mediterranean Sweep", a book published by Duell, Sloan and Pearce, of New York, and written by Major Richard Thruelsen and Lt. Elliot Arnold. However, from good sources it is understood that as crime, "scrounging" does not pay. Word was received today that Lt. Arthur E. James, who was lost on a previous mission, is alive and safe in enemy territory. The pilots had a meeting last night and Lt. Lawrence told the complete story of his bail-out and escape through enemy lines to Allied territory. He had quite an experience and he says that a few cigarettes and some razor blades go a long way in making good contacts. He gave the pilots some good advice on what to carry with them on missions and in the future any pilot who shows up for a mission improperly dressed will be sent back to the barracks and a replacement sent in his place.

- 29 Another good day for the Squadron. Targets were once again highway bridges and railway lines. The Fifth Army front is still quiet and the 92nd Division reported only patrol activity. Captain Keach reports all quiet but whether that is a good sign or a bad sign is not known. Whether Jerry is wise to the fact that we are laying for him where he intends to attack and has decided to attack somewhere else or whether he is just waiting for a more favorable opportunity is something we don't know. The situation on the Western Front sounds better this morning and the counter-offensive of the Germans might turn into a victory for the Allies. However it is still serious and anything can happen.
- 30 A flight led by Lt. Taylor, 13 December, against Sebbioni (M-069262) was highly successful. A PW report from Thirteenth Corps reported four Krauts killed and target well hit. Another good day of flying weather and the Squadron, taking advantage of it, had a busy day. Lt. Welch, returning early from a flight due to the fact that his plane had a runaway prop, staged a one man show. He attacked an ammunition dump. His bombs fell short but he strafed and was rewarded with two large explosions from the dump. The dump had been attacked the day before and missed and Jerry might have had time to remove some of the ammunition before Lt. Welch pulled his solo act. Lt. Leader who bailed out in friendly territory some time ago and then who came down with scarlet fever a little while after, has now returned to the Squadron. He has had quite a few amazing experiences. He was wounded once by a 50 caliber bullet which just grazed his neck then he made a couple of emergency landings and last but not least he bailed out, injuring himself on landing. However he's back for more which just goes to show you, you can't keep a good man down. The German counter-offensive which started in the Castel Nuovo area, has been stopped and the enemy admitted there were just local gains. Whether he will attempt another one a little later remains

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Sheet No. 121. War Diary. 526th Fighter Sq., 86th Fighter Gp., APO 650, N.Y., N.Y.

Month of December 1944. Prepared by Howard C. Wolf, 1st Lt., Above named Sq.

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to be seen but from all reports the Allies are ready. The situation on the Western Front has improved considerably and Lt. General Patton's 3rd Army is doing a great job. A great many Germans have been cut off and the situation is viewed much more favorably.

31 The last day of the Old Year and all hopes now turn toward the New Year and the possible ending of the war. One year ago today the Squadron was wondering where they would be in December 1944 and now they are wondering what December 1945 will bring. Good flying weather again today and five missions totaling 28 sorties were flown. A gay time was had in the Officer's Club last night and Colonel Bates presented several awards to the pilots. Lt. Lawrence received a Purple Heart and some of the pilots received clusters to their Air Medals. The town of Barga has been reoccupied by the Allies and some of the ground which was lost to the Germans in their counter-offensive down the Castel Nuovo Valley has been regained. The situation in Belgium also looks much better and high ranking officials say the decisive battle is yet to be fought. Tomorrow is the big football game at Florence between the Twelfth Air Force and the Fifth Army and rumor has it that there will be more fights among the spectators than on the field. Spitfires will fly protective cover for the huge crowds which will gather there, in case some Jerry gets a "bright idea". Both teams have All American players and the starting lineup contains some people who would bring joy to the heart of some college coach. All in all it promises to be an exciting contest and a good many men will get a chance to see it as the Transportation Officer notifies us that there will be transportation available to and from the game.

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R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS TWELFTH AIR FORCE  
AFC 650

GENERAL ORDER)  
NUMBER 271 )

17 December 1944

E X T R A C T

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SECTION III - AWARDS OF DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS ( MISSING IN ACTION)

Under the provisions of AR 600-45, as amended, and pursuant to authority contained in Circular 89, Hq. MATCUSA, 10 July 1944, the Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded to the following named personnel, Air Corps, United States Army, who are missing in action, citation and next of kin as indicated.

SAMBORN B. HUTCHINS, 0822329, 1st Lt., 526th Fighter Sq., 86th Fighter Gp. For extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as pilot of a P-47 type aircraft. On 14 December 1944, when extremely adverse weather forced the cancellation of all tactical missions, Lt. Hutchins volunteered to fly in a four plane flight on an armed reconnaissance mission over enemy communication lines in Northern Italy. Skillfully maneuvering through heavy cloud formations upon the approach to the target area, Lt. Hutchins sighted a large train at Albenga. Immediately diving in attack in the face of intense anti-aircraft fire, Lt. Hutchins and his comrades repeatedly strafed the train, destroying the locomotive and damaging twenty railroad cars. Continuing in search of further enemy targets, Lt. Hutchins and his comrades strafed several other trains and a motor convoy in the area, destroying six locomotives, four gasoline trucks, and five motor vehicles, and damaging more than twenty railway cars before returning safely to base. On more than fifty combat missions, his outstanding proficiency and steadfast devotion to duty have reflected great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States. Mr. Allan S. Hutchins, (Father), 45 Richards Avenue, Paxton, Mass.

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SECTION V - AWARDS OF DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

Under the provisions of AR 600-45, as amended, and pursuant to authority contained in Circular 89, Hq. MATCUSA, 10 July 1944, the Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded to the following named personnel, Air Corps, United States Army, citation and residence as indicated.

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RICHARD D. LAWRENCE, 0824514, 1st Lt., 526th Fighter Squadron, 86th Fighter Group. For extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as pilot of a P-47 type aircraft. On 13 October 1944, Lt. Lawrence flew in a seven plane formation of fighter-bombers carrying gasoline incendiary bombs attacking enemy defense positions near Bologna, Italy. Courageously diving to minimum altitude in the face of intense enemy ground fire, Lt. Lawrence released his bombs with devastating effect upon this vital objective. Drawing away from the target a direct hit from enemy fire pierced

