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Hq 86th Fighter Group AAF
Outline History - Nov 1944

HEADQUARTERS 86TH FIGHTER GROUP AAF
APO 650

AG 344.7

30 November 1944

SUBJECT: Historical Records.

TO : Commanding General, XXII Tactical Air Command, APO 650

1. Outline History of Headquarters 86th Fighter Group AAF for the period 1 November 1944 to 30 November 1944;

a. Present designation; Headquarters 86th Fighter Group, XXII Tactical Air Command.

b. Changes in organization;

(1) Changes in designation, assignment, or attachment;

(a) Changes in designation; None.

(b) Changes in assignment; None.

(c) Changes in attachment; None.

(2) Subordinates Units; None.

(3) Changes of Commanding Officers; None.

(4) Changes of Staff Officers; None.

(5) Changes in T/O; None.

c. Strength, commissioned and enlisted;

(1) Month of November 1944;

(a) At beginning; 25 officers, 1 warrant officer and 56 enlisted men assigned.

(b) Net Increase; 1 officer and 4 enlisted men assigned.

(c) Net Decrease; None.

(d) At end; 26 officers, 1 warrant officer and 60 enlisted men.

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d. Stations;

(1) Pisa Airfield, Italy.

(a) Date of arrival; 23 October 1944. (A) party

(b) Date of departure; Present station.

(c) Present Station; Pisa Air Base, Pisa, Italy.

e. Movements; None.

f. Campaigns;

(1) Name; Sicilian, Italian, Southern France.

(2) Duration; 18 August 1943 to date - campaign still in progress.

g. Operations;

(1) Campaign; Italy.

(2) Nature of operations; Armed reces, road blocks, rail cutting, enemy occupied buildings, supply lines, aircromes, communication lines, escort, and anti-flak diversion missions. These missions were chiefly executed in the Po Valley.

(3) Number of missions and sorties for period 1 November 1944 to 30 November 1944; 190 missions and 1158 Sorties for entire Group.

(4) Results for the most important missions; See squadron histories.

h. Commanding officer in important missions; Commanding officer flew five missions; none of the missions very spectacular.

i. Losses in action. None

j. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves in action: (1) 1st Lt. Finley C. Brinley - O-796074 DFC

2. Inclosed is War Diary, Headquarters 86th Fighter Group AAF, for the period 1 November 1944 to 30 November 1944.

For the Commanding Officer:

Incl;
2 copies - War Diary

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Paul E. Versepud
PAUL E. VERSEPUD,
Major, Air Corps,
Group S-2

PS/224

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WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER GROUP AAF

• Group Headquarters -

Pisa Airfield, Pisa Italy

November 1944

- 1 There were five missions flown today and both the A party at Pisa and B party at Grosseto operated from their respective bases. Our operations are connected by courier service between the two bases. Major Fauskin of S-1 section arrived today to setup operations. Major Versept flew to command, which is located at Florence.
- 2 Rain interrupted our operations for the day and a stand-down was called 10 o'clock. In the afternoon Col. Bates Group Commander, came down to the line and took charge of evacuating all operational aircraft to Tarquinia. Word was received that river Arno was overflowing its banks and that there would be possibilities of the field being flooded. The flooding of the Arno caused an added misery to the Italian town folk of Pisa. All transportation to and from Pisa was at a stand still. The high water mark in our bivouac area was six inches at the enlisted mens mess hall.
- 3 Today was another unoperational day, with the flood waters receding. The engineers blew up several levies in order to save the main bridge across the Arno river.
- 4 Another day of stand down. Our aircraft returned today from Tarquinia airfield. It was learned today that our B party at Grosseto was also in the flood. There, it seems that a dam broke above the city and caused the water to rise to fifteen feet in some spots. In the officers club the water rose to the second floor level.
- 5 This was the first good day of operations we have had since coming into this field. The group flew 73 sorties. The first movie shown tonight at our new theater was "Bill the Conquering Hero" this picture was enjoyed by all who attended.
- 6 Major operations today were on the Brenner Pass, which resulted with eleven missions and seventy-three sorties. In this locality our range can cover all of German held Italy.
- 7 All three squadrons are now operating from this base. The movie this evening was "Beautiful but Broken".
- 8 Stand-down for today, due to inclement weather.
- 9 Another day of no flying, still bad weather. "ella Logan" and her show were in Pisa, those that attended said that the show was pretty much the same as when first seen at Marigliano Italy.

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WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

Pisa Airfield, Pisa Italy

November 1944

- 10 The group had another good day flying eleven missions. It seems that winter is finally setting in as in the early mornings it gets quite cold. A thirty-five piece band was scheduled to play at our theater this evening but never showed up. Many of the group personnel drove to Leghorn to see the "Parretts of Wimpole Street".
- 11 This section resumed having days off again. With the cold weather setting in most everyone is running around trying to requisition, borrow, chisel or steal a stove and some pipe. Stove pipe this year seems to be a problem it seems that hospitals and living quarters have priority. Maybe the office personnel aren't suppose to get cold.
- 12 Group officers mess and the enlisted mens mess are now using chinaware to eat from. Although we still have to furnish our own utensils it still reminds one of the good low days back in the states.
- 13 Group Hq. enlistedmen have a barber and a tailor in their bivouac area. The barber is one of the best they have had while here in Italy, and the tailor formerly operated a large shop in the city of Pisa, when war came to this part of the country, he specialized in manufacturing of uniforms and garments for German officers.
- 14 Stand-down for the group. Col. Covington from XXII Tactical Air Command and Col. Kimmel of 62nd Fighter Wing, visited operations and spoke with Col. Bates.
- 15 Another stand-down for the group, due to high winds.
- 16 Administrative inspectors from XXII T.A.C. are here inspecting the group and are chiefly stressing safeguarding military information.
- 17 Seven men of Hq. were promoted today, this is the first promotion of anyone in headquarters since May 1944. Men promoted today staged a party this evening at the mess hall. The party got in such a swing that you would think that everyone got promoted.
- 18 PW-7 mobile training unit arrived on this base for training of pilots, engineering and mechanics.

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WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

Pisa Airfield, Pisa Italy

November 1944

- 19 Col. Bates Group Commander left this morning for rest camp at Capri.
- 20 General Darcy visited operations and intelligence.
Stand-down was declared at noon today for training and maintenance.
Major Versepout attended a lecture today on military censorship regulations at Leghorn.
Enlistedmen of Hq. had rifle inspection this evening, following the inspection a lecture on small arms was conducted by T/Sgt. De Cello of Gp. Ordnance.
- 21 News has arrived today that personnel of this group may be sent home on thirty day rotation plan. This has been the chief discussion throughout all the sections. As to who was going first, why he should go instead of the other fellow, who has had more service overseas and questions similar.
- 22 Tonight was opening night for the new enlistedmens Club. All who were present had a good time. A dance was held and music was furnished by our own group band.
- 23 Today the group celebrated its second Thanksgiving overseas. The first was at Pomigliano.
The group had a stand-down today due to abortive weather which in some respects turned out in our favor as both the officers and the enlistedmens mess halls put on a big dinner with plenty of turkey for all.
In the evening some of the men celebrated a little at both the clubs.
- 24 Continued rains made flying impossible today. Stand-down was called.
- 25 Another inoperational day. Some of us are sure catching up on our sack time. Major Versepout drove to Florence.
- 26 Lt. Gen. Mc Narney landed on this field today.
- 27 Col. Bates returned from Capri.
- 28 Today with good flying weather the group scored 93 sorties and 21 missions. Wide distribution of Airfield Defense Plan to all units on this field.
- 29 Personnel of Hq. were presented with orders authorizing them wearing group citation ribbon.
- 30 Effective today an order was issued at this Hq. forbidding admission of civilians to the group theater.
Italian soldiers which will be used as guards on this field, moved in today and are bivouaced on the opposite side of the field.

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HEADQUARTERS 86TH FIGHTER GROUP AAF
APO 650

AG 314.7

31 December 1944

SUBJECT: Historical Records.

TO : Commanding General, XXII Tactical Air Command, A.P.O. 650.

1. Outline History of Headquarters 86th Fighter Group AAF for the period 1 December 1944 to 31 December 1944:

a. Present designation: Headquarters 86th Fighter Group, XXII Tactical Air Command.

b. Changes in organization:

(1) Changes in designation, assignment, or attachment: None.

c. Strength, commissioned and enlisted:

(1) Month of December, 1944:

(a) At beginning: 26 officers, 1 warrant officer and 50 enlisted men assigned.

(b) Net increase: None.

(c) Net decrease: One officer.

(d) At end: 25 officers, 1 warrant officer, and 50 enlisted men assigned.

d. Stations:

(1) Pisa Airfield, Italy.

(a) Date of arrival: 23 October, 1944.

(b) Date of departure: Present station.

e. Movements: None.

f. Campaigns:

(1) Sicilian - 3 July 1943 to 12 August 1943.

(2) Southern France - 15 August 1944 to 26 August 1944.

(3) Italian

(a) Naples Voggia 4 October 1943 to 21 January 1944.

(b) Rome Arno 22 January 1944 - still in progress.

g. Operations:

(1) Campaign: Rome Arno.

(2) Nature of operations, Group flew 103 missions on Close Support targets, enemy strong points, occupied areas, troop concentrations. (Majority of Close Support missions directed by controller, "Rover Joe"). The balance of missions were on lines of communications, dumps, and opportunity targets, with the major effort on rail line interdiction. Total destruction for the month of December was impressive. (see monthly summary attached). Flew more missions and sorties than any previous month, exceeding even May 1944's "all out" effort.

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(3) Number of missions and sorties for period 1 December 1944 to 31 December 1944; 296 missions, and 1630 sorties for entire Group.
(4) Results of most important missions; see Sq. histories.

h. Commanding officers in important missions:

(1) Colonel Earl E. Bates commanding 86th Fighter Group, 1 Dec. 1944 to 31 Dec. 1944.

(2) Sq. leaders in important missions -- See Sq. histories.

i. Losses in action: None from Group Headquarters.

j. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves in action:

(1) Kirsch Robert J. O-790566, Major, Hq. 86th Fighter Group was awarded the DFC for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as pilot of a P-47 type aircraft. On 14 December 1944, Major Kirsch led a four plane flight of fighter-bombers in an attack upon enemy gun positions near Castel San Pietro, Italy. Displaying superior leadership and resourcefulness as he skillfully maneuvered through an almost solid overcast upon the approach to the target area, Major Kirsch's precision-directed run over the objective enabled his P-47's to register direct hits, causing a tremendous explosion and starting a number of fires. On more than eighty combat missions, his outstanding proficiency and steadfast devotion to duty have reflected great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States.

(2) Beltra Vincent F. O-429443, Capt., Hq. 86th Fighter Group was awarded the first Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal. Livergnano, Italy.

2. Inclosed is War Diary, Headquarters 86th Fighter Group AAF, for the period 1 December 1944 to 31 December 1944.

For the Commanding Officer:

Donald L. Whitney
DONALD L. WHITNEY,
Captain, Air Corps,
Group Historian

Incl:
2 copies - War Diary

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WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER GROUP AAF

- Group Headquarters -

Pisa Airfield, Italy

December

- 1 Flew 15 missions today, the majority in accordance with Operations Order #3, which assigns the 86th Group a specific area for interdiction of roads and railways. Accomplished twenty three railcuts and four road blocks, and destroyed a considerable amount of rolling stock. 1 JU 38 destroyed in air by 527th Squadron. 1635 Medium Maintenance unit moved on the Pisa Airbase today.
- 2 Again flew missions on Operation's Order #3, cutting rail lines, etc. Only one ship damaged by flak today against 7 damaged yesterday. An attractive sign erected at the entrance to the field, "Pisa Airfield, Base of the Invaders, Home of Rover Joe, The G's Friend." Many front line troops observing the striped tails on a P-47, remark "there's a Rover Joe plane." An article in a recent edition of Yank publicizes ground air support, and uses a striped tail P-47 in illustration of a Rover Joe Mission.
- 3 Standdown today due to inclement weather.
- 4 Group resumed flying close support (Rover Joe) missions today. Groups SO appointed Major Richard Taylor ass't group operation's officer; Major Percy C. Faulstin Group administrative inspector vice Lt. Col. Thomas; 1st Lt. W. Clifford Adler, 527th sq. appointed club officer for the officers club; 1st Lt. Gilbert C. Glmann, Ops Sq., appointed ass't club officer.
- 5 Weather forced standdown until noon. Flew two Rover Joe missions, and several rail cutting missions in the pm with no spectacular results. General Darcy, Deputy Commander XXII TAC, arrived at this base today and will stay overnight with the 86th Group. All officers and enlisted men attended an information and education series of films at the Group theatre-- Sex hygiene, orientation, and technical film on "Detonation" in aircraft.
- 6 Generals Baker, Cannon, Gridlaw, and Darcy visited the base today. Four successful missions this morning rec'd Po valley, but weather forced a standdown at noon. The Group completed 2500 missions today. Bulletin posted today stated that all personnel now having rooms in town will resume quarters at barracks, the high V.L. rate in the group precipitated the order.
- 7 Rain and low ceilings held operations to a minimum. A routine inspection was made today by Col. Bates of the enlisted men's quarters and APO. The Group theatre is showing "Dragon Seed" tonight.
- 8 Standdown all day today. The continued bad weather has allowed maintenance to get aircraft in good shape. Passes for civilian employees were distributed to various units on the field today by the base security officer.

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WAR DIARY OF THE 56th FIGHTER GROUP AAF

- Group Headquarters -

Pisa Airfield, Italy

December

- 9 Again bad weather curtailed operations--ten missions flown. 23:30 bed check now effective every night. "Panama Wattie", USC show playing at the Air Corps Theatre drawing large crowds.
- 10 15 missions today, the majority on close support targets with consistently good results. The 527th sq. destroyed a ME HQ in aerial combat today. General Arnold, Brigadier Generals Childlow and Percy and the Brazilian Air Minister visited the Pisa airbase today.
- 11 Only two missions today, due to weather. Col. Bates held a meeting of all pilots, and gave a lecture on "Operational procedure on the field".
- 12 Standdown due to bad weather.
- 13 The Group flew seventeen missions today on front line targets and enemy communications. There was a change in the Intelligence organization of the Group. Both Group ass't intelligence officers transferred-- Lt. Wolf to the 526th Sq., and Lt. Voller to the 527th Sq.. Lt Duncan, Group PRO given additional duty as ass't Intelligence officer, and Captain Whitney was transferred from 527th Sq to Group as ass't Intelligence Officer. The weekly dance was held at the Officers club tonight.
- 14 In spite of persistent overcast at 5/6000', several flights attacked the front line areas. Major Merson, led one, a particularly spectacular mission coming in under the overcast to a low-level bombing of a meselwefter position. Christmas packages are arriving by the sack full, a feeling of good will toward the mail clerks for a change.
- 15 The major part of the day's effort was against front line targets. Weather prevented the last three missions from reaching their primary targets, so they effectively attacked rail lines.
- 16 Weather again curtailed operations. Seven missions were flown, four of them on the town of Tossignano where an enemy counterattack had taken place. A message was received from ASC: "Ground reports on all missions Tossignano town -- All bombs target area, fires and excellent results." The Group flew it's 2,500th mission today. The enlisted personnel were issued a new type bed-roll today.
- 17 The customary overcast in Northern Italy once again curtailed today's schedule. Marshalling yards and rail lines were effectively attacked. The Congressional party circled the base in C-47's, then flew on to Florence.

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WAR DIARY OF THE 36TH FIGHTER GROUP AAF

- Group Headquarters -

Pisa Airfield, Italy

December

- 18 The Group flew seven missions this morning on rail lines, then the weather called a halt to the day's operations. Mrs. Clare Luce Booth, accompanied by General Darcy visited Pisa base and lunched with Col. Bates and the staff officers at the officer's mess.
- 19 A standdown was declared at 1100 hours due to weather. Four missions hit the much pounded gun positions at P. Bianca.
- 20 Four excellent reconnaissance missions this afternoon netted 12 locomotives and twenty motor transports destroyed. Group enlisted men went through gas chamber to check masks. PX rations issued today - no beer. 6
- 21 Heavy overcast covered battle area. Two successful recces destroyed 12 locomotives and damaged 1 locomotive. USO show tonight at Group theater. The theater, newly christened "The Thunderbolt Theater" is shared with the 350th Fighter Group. Show at Enlisted Men's Club by local talent. Dance at Officers Club. Good attendance at Officers Club with advent of 105th Station hospital in Pisa area.
- 22 A full days effort on front line targets. Group has resumed issuing passes, so a few will be able to spend Christmas on pass.
- 23 Armed reconnaissance missions effective with large amount of rolling stock destroyed or damaged. ASC received following message from First Guards, "Your courageous attacks observed with gratitude and admiration by all ranks. Best air support we have ever had. Please convey our appreciation to pilots and condolence for losses suffered. Many thanks".
- 24 Stand down due to weather. Two volunteer missions destroyed switch engine. Officers of group gave liquor rations for December to enlisted men. Liquor was available at enlisted men's bar between 1000 and 1700 today. Club closed tonight. Midnight mass (military) in Cathedral of Pisa tonight.
- 25 Christmas day - Business as usual 12 Armed reconnaissance missions. Last year we celebrated Christmas at Pomigliano, Italy. Then we were hoping to be celebrating Christmas at home this year, despite the Liri River stalemate. Morale is good considering the length of time overseas, and the natural desire to be at home over holidays. Excellent Christmas mail service and good rations has helped keep morale at high level. Dances at Enlisted Men's and Officers Club tonight.
- 26 Good operational day. News of Jerry break through in France sobering.

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