

C O N F I D E N T I A L

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

- Group Headquarters -

Poretta Airfield, Corsica

July 1944

Fourth Week: 23 - 29

- 23 Major General Jones and his staff visited and inspected the group. The group has flown its 1,500th mission and its 14,000th sortie since 6 July 1943. The officers and enlisted men have been sending laundry out, and one of the natives returned this evening demanding anywhere from \$7 up for a barracks bag of laundry - for example, 6¢ for a handkerchief and 60¢ for coveralls. We paid her and also threw her out of our area.
- 24 Capt. Louis and Lt. Garber went to the 87th Wing. Took pictures of pilots in civilian clothes.
- 25 The enlisted men have set up an all-screened dining room - a considerable improvement on the old one. The group picked up 30 new pilots from the 19th Replacement. Capt. Gross, Group Special Service Officer, finished working on the group's citation and will deliver same to TAC.
- 26 Col. Kofahl and Lt. Col. Mullins addressed new pilots. Group Ordnance is having gun inspection.
- 27 The group is back in the saddle again; today we flew 6 missions and 71 sorties with our P-47's. Destroyed 3 Ju-52's, 3 W/V's, created road blocks, damaged RR bridges and buildings. One of the 526th Sq. pilots bailed out over the sea, was rescued by ASR and returned to outfit same day uninjured. He wants to resume flying tomorrow.
- 28 Lt. Col. Nevitt visited. Col. Bates flew with 526th as observer.
- 29 The 526th Sq. had another field day. They attacked an enemy airdrome in the Milan area, destroying 23 and damaging 10 enemy two-engine and single-engine aircraft. This is the type of missions that builds up the group morale. The pilots who participated in the mission were anxious to refuel their aircraft and go over the same target. Diana, the Red Cross girl, visited the line, passing out doughnuts and coffee.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

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

- Group Headquarters -

Porretta Airfield, Corsica

July 1944

Last two days of month, 30 - 31

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- 30 The group received a commendation from Col. Darcy on yesterday's missions.
A B-26 crashed on our field this afternoon. The aircraft is a total wreck, but the crew came out all safe. The resultant damage to the runway forced the group to call off its last two missions.
The group is stood down for several days while engineers lay matting on the field.
-
- 31 All who are able to take off during the group stand-down have been traveling through the towns of Corsica. The most scenic drive on the island is around Cape Corse and along the northwest coast. Some have taken the beautiful trans-island highway through the mountains to Ajaccio, the capital, for a look, among other things, at Napoleon's birthplace.
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HEADQUARTERS EIGHTY-SEVENTH FIGHTER WING
OFFICE OF THE WING COMMANDER
APO # 65C

17 JULY 1944

SUBJECT: COMMENDATIONS.

TO : C.O., 85TH FIGHTER GROUP.

1. IT IS WITH PLEASURE THAT I TRANSMIT TO ALL XII TAC UNITS BASED IN CORSICA, THE FOLLOWING MESSAGES TO WHICH THE COMMANDING GENERAL, XII TAC ADDS HIS "WELL DONE":--

A. FROM SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER, WESTERN EUROPE TO AIR C-IN-C MEDITERRANEAN:

"RECENT OPERATIONS OF YOURS HAVE BEEN OF INESTIMABLE VALUE TO US HERE PD MY CONGRATULATIONS AND GRATEFUL APPRECIATIONS TO YOU AND ALL SERVING UNDER YOU PD GOOD LUCK AND BEST WISHES"

B. FROM COMMANDING GENERAL, N.A.T.A.F., TO ALL UNITS:

"ON ONE TWO JULY YOU WERE ORDERED TO COMMENCE OPERATION MALLORY MAJOR PD IN JUST OVER SEVEN TWO HOURS YOUR WINGS HAVE DAMAGED OR DESTROYED NO LESS THAN TWENTY TWO BRIDGES OVER THE PO RIVER PD I REGARD THIS FEAT AS BEING OUTSTANDING IN THE HISTORY OF AIR WAR FARE PD WILL YOU KINDLY ACCEPT AND CONVEY TO YOUR STAFFS CMA AIR CREWS AND GROUND PERSONNEL MY SINCERE APPRECIATION AND ADMIRATION OF THEIR SKILL CMA EFFICIENCY AND ENTHUSIASM PD YOUR EFFORTS WILL HAVE FAR REACHING EFFECTS ON THE PROGRESS OF THIS CAMPAIGN IN THIS THEATER"

/S/ THOMAS C. DARCY,
THOMAS C. DARCY,
COLONEL, AIR CORPS,
COMMANDING.

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXTRACT FROM A COPY ISSUED BY AAF PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE

86th FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP FLIES 14,000 SORTIES

Fifteen hundred combat missions and 14,000 sorties in just over a year's time is the record of the 86th Fighter-Bomber Group of which Colonel Harold E. Acfahl, of Fellows, California, is commanding officer.

Now engaged in cutting rail lines, destroying bridges and generally disrupting the German supply and communications system, the group, working in close support of Allied ground forces in northern Italy, has established an enviable record.

Flying its first mission on 6 July 1943, out of Korba, Tunisia, they were the first to go into combat with A-36 Invaders and it was largely due to their early efforts that the full tactical use of the plane was realized. First used in the softening up of Sicily before the invasion, they later supported the Seventh Army during the Sicilian campaign. Six days after the Salerno landing, the group was operating from a beachhead airdrome under fire and closely followed the fall of Naples by establishing a base near there.

In the now famous "Operation Strangle" in Italy from 11 May to 7 June, the group flew from 50 to 90 sorties daily directed at rail and road communications, and were particularly successful operating against German troop and supply concentrations during the enemy withdrawal northward. Trucks, buses and other means of transport the Germans were using to evacuate, suffered greatly under the fire of the group as well as did large numbers of horses being used to draw artillery pieces.

When Rome fell, the group required only six days to move forward and begin operations from a new base. On another occasion since, the group flight echelon arrived at a new base in the morning and that afternoon the first mission had been completed from that base.

During its 1,500 missions, 5,000 tons of bombs have been dropped and 3,000,000 rounds of 50-caliber ammunition fired.

A total of 2,572 enemy vehicles was destroyed and an additional 2,405 damaged, 1,714 damaged and 46 locomotives were completely knocked out and 35 damaged.

Shipping was not neglected, as two transports, three freighters, two destroyers and one light cruiser were probably sunk and another ten craft of various types damaged.

Although primarily used as fighter-bombers, the group nevertheless, accounted for 23 enemy aircraft shot down and 23 damaged.

Lieutenant Colonel James K. Thomas, of 11 Morwood Road, Charleston, West Virginia, attorney general of the state, on leave from his duties for the duration, is executive officer for the group.

Major Nicholas J. Masun, Jr., of 5915 Field Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

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a squadron commander, with more than 80 missions, holds the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Croix de Guerre and the Air Medal with Clusters, as does Major Graham Weigle, of Kensington, Maryland, another squadron commander with more than 90 missions.

Major Robert J. Mirsch, 4 Elgas Street, Buffalo, New York, group operations officer, is the only original pilot still with the group.

Entertainment in ITALY, CONT'D.

The following is a sharp and piercing analysis by War Correspondent John Laner, written for the New York Herald-Tribune, on the entertainment of troops in the Italian Theater.

"Professional entertainers — good ones, too — have come to Italy, to perform for American troops at the front lines and bases here, but there are flaws in the talent supply system — almost certainly originating at home — which have led to various degrees of fiasco in the cases of George Raft, Kay Francis, Eddie Foy, Adolphe Menjou and several other performers, most of them highly competent under the proper conditions.

Mostly, entertainment difficulties here can be traced to miscasting at home — miscasting physically as well as in terms of material. Eddie Foy, for instance, one of the deans of American vaudeville, is violently allergic to airplane travel. It is nearly impossible to meet bookings in this area except by plane. Foy missed a number of shows. Troops misunderstood the situation, which was created in the first place by a misunderstanding of conditions by the talent exporters in America.

Kay Francis, most noted for stately drama against lavish Hollywood backdrops, was sent here as a comedian with a string of quick gags she had to memorize on the plane coming over. She did not exactly roll them in the aisles. Adolphe Menjou, one of the shrewdest and most resourceful of dramatic performers, was sent as a monologist. His act was poorly received by the troops and had to be saved by the overnight enlistment of Miss Tony Mason, a local Red Cross worker who can sing.

As against this, Bob Hope, one of the smoothest and most gifted solo performers in the world, was equipped with lavish props and auxiliaries, including Frances Langford and Jack Pepper, practically a show in themselves. Menjou could have used them. Hope did not need them.

George Raft played three of fifteen scheduled appearances because of a cold the Army ended up by cancelling his engagement and substituting Harry Barris, a pianist and singer who once was Bing Crosby's partner in the Rhythm Boys. About the work and willingness of Barris and of June Clyde and Louise Albritton, who were originally booked to appear with Raft and were told by Raft not to appear unless he did, the local Army people and soldiers are enthusiastic.

Col. Meyer who heads Special Service in Italy, says that steady, competent performers, especially vaudevillians, are more successful and cooperative generally than stars. "Things are tough here," says the colonel. "Under those ball-room dresses those girls wear long GI underwear. They have to. We need real troupers here, and when we get them the boys appreciate their stuff more than any other kind of entertainment."

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HEADQUARTERS
86TH SERVICE GROUP
APO 220

15 July 1944

MEMORANDUM)
NO. 45-1)

INTELLIGENCE AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Historical Program

1. In compliance with IBS Memo 125-2 and XI Bomber Command Memo 45-1, each squadron will appoint a Historical Officer, who will, in addition to his other duties, prepare and forward monthly, a historical report on the activities of his unit. The history will be forwarded to this Headquarters in triplicate not later than 1700 on the 2nd day of each month.
2. Among the subjects providing material for unit histories are changes in living conditions and morale, changes in key personnel, movement of a substantial part of the unit, actual functioning of the unit, its efficiency in accomplishment of its mission, problems faced and the methods used to solve them and individual exploit or achievement.
3. Statements in histories will be supported wherever possible by documentary exhibits such as orders, charts and photographs.
4. It is recommended that Historical Officers maintain a diary of events within their unit so as to facilitate the prompt preparation of a full report.
5. Reports will be concerned with fact rather than literary style. However they will be organized in such fashion as to render them readable and understandable. The following is quoted from XI Bomber Command Memo 45-1:
"Historics will be written in narrative style and will not consist of a mere checking of the sub-heading on some form. The recording of the activities of the units of this command will cover all noteworthy occurrences of historical interest and will constitute a properly substantial story of fact, quite apart from any outline of topical guide. However a high degree of organization is necessary to present the facts in a clear and unified manner. Common sense and the sense of what is historically important are the cardinal facts."
6. Reports will usually be classified SECRET, depending upon the nature of the material they contain. They will be forwarded with letter of Transmittal addressed to Commanding General, Army Air Forces, Washington, 25, D.C. (Through Channels).

By order of Lieutenant Colonel STORRY:

WILLIAM E. DOYLE, JR.,
Captain, Air Corps,
Adjutant.

OFFICIAL:

William E. Boyle Jr.
WILLIAM E. BOYLE, JR.,
Captain, Air Corps,
Adjutant.

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GP-86-H1
AUG 44

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Hq. 86th Fighter Group AAF
Outline History -Aug. 1944

HEADQUARTERS 86TH FIGHTER GROUP AAF
APO 650

G/PEV/jwg

AO 314.7

31 August 1944

SUBJECT: Historical Records.

TO : Commanding General, XII Tactical Air Command, APO 374.

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

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

b. Changes in organization;

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

None.

(2) Subordinate units; None.

(3) Changes of commanding officers; 2 August Col. Earl E. Bates, Jr., O-21625, assumed command of the 86th Fighter Group AAF, vice Col. Harold E. Kofahl, O-361694, relieved.

(4) Changes of staff officers; None.

(5) Changes in T/O; None.

c. Strength, commissioned and enlisted;

(1) Month of August 1944;

(a) At beginning; 25 officers, 2 warrant officers, 62 enlisted men, and 3 civilians assigned.

(b) Net increase; 1 officer, 1 enlisted man.

(c) Net decrease; None.

(d) At end; 26 officers, 2 warrant officers, 63 enlisted men, and 3 civilians assigned.

d. Stations;

(1) Poretta Airfield, Casamozza, Corsica.

(a) Date of arrival; 12 July 1944.

(b) Date of departure; Present station.

e. Movements; None.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

3537-1878

C O N F I D E N T I A L

f. Campaigns;

- (1) Name: Italy.
- (2) Duration; From 12 September 1943 (arrival of our advance echelon in Italy) - campaign still in progress.
- (3) Name; Southern France.
- (4) Duration; From 6 August to 28 August 1944 the Group ran missions over Southern France. These were our first targets in thirteen months of operations that were outside Italian territory (Sicily and Italy).

g. Operations;

- (1) Campaigns; Italy and Southern France.
- (2) Nature of operations; Main efforts were directed against enemy transportation and road and rail networks in Northern Italy and Southern France, with several escort missions into Southern France and bombing missions against coastal defenses in support of the Allied invasion.
- (3) Number of missions and sorties for period 1 August 1944 to 31 August 1944; 195 missions and 1,435 sorties for entire group.
- (4) Results of the most important missions; See squadron histories following.

h. Commanding officer in important missions; 9 missions flown by Commanding Officer during the month. On 28 August Col. Bates was flight leader on a 2-hour mission that put out two bridges on the Turin-Susa highway in spite of light and heavy flak near the target. On 24 August Col. Bates led our escort on a bomber mission that destroyed a vital bridge at Lunel, France.

i. Losses in action; None.

j. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves in action; None.

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

For the Commanding Officer;

Paul E. Versepnt
PAUL E. VERSEPNT,
Captain, Air Corps,
Group S-2.

Incl;

3 copies - War Diary

RESTRICTEDHEADQUARTERS TWELFTH AIR FORCE
A. P. O. 650

89

GENERAL ORDERS)

27 August 1944.

NUMBER 14)

CITATION OF UNIT

Under the provisions of Circular 333, War Department, 1943, and Circular 89, North African Theater of Operations, 10 July 1944, the 86th Fighter Group is cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy.

The 86th Fighter Group is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations on 25 May 1944. After the Allied armies had broken the enemy's seven-month stand before Cassino, Italy, and were threatening his flank from the Anzio Beachhead, powerful German forces attempted to reform on a line between Frascati and Tivoli, where they proposed to stop the Allied advance short of Rome. To disrupt this strategic maneuver, the 86th Fighter Group was ordered, on 25 May 1944, to maintain continuous armed reconnaissance of all roads leading from the front to the projected defense line. Although the majority of their fifty A-36's and P-40's had been flown over 400 combat hours on more than 200 combat missions and had been subjected, in almost a year's service, to the dust and heat of North Africa as well as to the terrific strain of vertical diving, the ground personnel, through indefatigable and resourceful effort, had every plane prepared for an all-out effort by daylight. Taking off at 0650 hours on 25 May, the first flight began a grueling battle with enemy transport, diving through intense accurate anti-aircraft fire to bomb traffic, effect road blocks and create confusion, repeatedly returning at minimum altitude to strafe the streams of enemy reconnaissance cars, personnel carriers, trucks, tanks, and horse-drawn artillery moving to the rear. When the final four-ship flight landed that night at 2020 hours, the Group had, in 12 missions and 86 sorties, destroyed 217 and damaged 245 enemy vehicles, inflicted an unknown number of casualties on hostile personnel, established many effective road blocks, silenced several gun positions, and interdicted the highways into the towns of Frosinone, Cori and Cascano. These crushing blows were not delivered without cost. Of the Group's fifty planes, hostile fire destroyed two and heavily damaged six others, one of which had to be salvaged. One pilot was reported missing in action. This dawn-to-dusk aerial hammering by the 86th Fighter Group, coordinated with the terrific assaults made upon adjoining areas by other units of the Mediterranean Tactical Air Force, so crippled the enemy's transport system and disorganized and decimated his ranks that he was forced to abandon his projected defense of Rome and hastily retreat northward to escape complete annihilation. In these operations, the pilots of the 86th Fighter Group, through their extraordinary heroism, determination and marked proficiency in combat have reflected highest credit upon their organization and upon the Military Service of the United States.

By command of Major General CANNON:

JOHN W. MCNAHAR,
Colonel, AC,
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

W. W. Dick
WILLIAM W. DICK,
Colonel, AGD,
Adjutant General.

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