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DOD DIR 5200.9

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395TH FIGHTER SQUADRON  
OCT 1944

395TH FIGHTER SQUADRON  
368TH FIGHTER GROUP  
APO 595  
STRIP A-84  
CHEVRES, BELGIUM

Historical Clerk:

Cpl Dux H Schneider

Squadron Historian:

THEODORE F SKALKO  
1st Lt., Air Corps

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SQUADRON HISTORY  
October 1944

## I. Negative

## II. STRENGTH

COMMISSIONED AND ENLISTED

1. At beginning of Period:		
	OFFICERS - - - - -	56
	ENLISTED MEN - - - - -	-256
2. Net increase:		
	OFFICERS - - - - -	8
	ENLISTED MEN - - - - -	4
3. Net decrease:		
	OFFICERS - - - - -	8
	ENLISTED MEN - - - - -	1
4. At end of Period:		
	OFFICERS - - - - -	56
	ENLISTED MEN - - - - -	-253

III. On 1 October 1944 the second part of A Eschelon departed Strip A 69 for Strip A 84 at Chevres. This move was made with the Squadron transportation facilities and is a permanent change of Station.

On October 2 B Eschelon departed Strip A 69 to complete the organizational move to Strip A 84 at Chevres. A small detail of two officers and several enlisted men remained behind to supervise the cleaning detail.

IV. On 12 October 1944, 2nd Lt Clarence E Allen was leading an element in Green Flight on an Armored Reconnaissance mission for the 7th Corp Armored Column in the vicinity of Aachen. At about 1500 hours at about an altitude of 10,000 feet 20 ME 109's and FW 190's were encountered. In the general melee which ensued, none noticed any unusual occurrence to a member of our Squadron. The Squadron returned to the Strip not noting anyone's absence. A checkup revealed Lt Allen's absence and none could account for him or had witnessed anything concerning him. As he did not return, the following day, he is being carried M.I.A.

On 13 October 1944 a nine airplane flight took off at 1354 hours on a scramble mission. Their mission was to divebomb and strafe targets assigned by Marmite the Ground Forces Controller. In the vicinity of Aachen, at about 1500 hours and while flying at an altitude of about 10,000 feet the entire Squadron was bounced from above by at least 10 FW 190's. The enemy aircraft had an advantage of about 9000 feet and in addition our Squadron was handicapped in that their airplanes were all carrying two 500 lb G.P. bombs. On the initial pass by the E/A, Captain Norman E Schulte was heard to say he had been hit by enemy gunfire. He was seen to bail out of his airplane in the vicinity of Geilenkirschen at about 1510. Inasmuch as he has not returned to this Strip he has been carried as MIA since that time. No further word has reached us as to his whereabouts.

In the same dogfight, 2nd Lt Joseph F McMillan was last seen in shallow turns being pursued by a FW 190. As all this action was split second, none saw the conclusion of this combat but we have been going under the assumption that he has been shot down. Since he failed to return to this Strip, he has been carried as MIA.

At the same time, 1st Lt Marion W L Elliott was heard to call in over the R/T and all assumed that he had come through the dogfight unscathed. Yet he did not return to this strip with his Squadron and no further word has been received concerning him since that time. Lt Foltz, his wingman, lost Lt Elliott in the dogfight and could not give any information of his whereabouts. As a result he is being carried as MIA.

V. The following awards have been awarded to personnel of this organization during the month of October 1944.

In a public ceremony on 23 October 1944, the Distinguished Flying Cross was presented by General Vandenberg to the following Officers:

Major Harold P Sparks  
 Captain Marshall E Mumaw  
 Captain Roy L Bowlin  
 Captain Norman E Schulte  
 1st Lt Robert Caldwell  
 Captain Clifford L Gamble  
 Captain Lee R Standifer Jr  
 1st Lt Richard Kik Jr

The following Officers were awarded the Air Medal during this month:

1st Lt Marion W L Elliott	2nd Lt Walter R Johnson
1st Lt James M Ivey	2nd Lt Nealy C Riemann
2nd Lt Charles R Earls	2nd Lt Eugene Smith
2nd Lt Charles R Foltz	2nd Lt Louis Vieck
2nd Lt Joseph D Gianetti	2nd Lt William Wayland
2nd Lt Dale L Jewkes	

Bronze Star Medals were awarded to the following named personnel of this Squadron:

	1st Lt Joseph L Nolan
S/Sgt Herman Birk	S/Sgt William Demchuk
S/Sgt Alfred J Haimbach	S/Sgt Harry L Marshall

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CURRENT

EVENTS

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SQUADRON HISTORY

OCTOBER 1944

## Current events

1. At 0600 another part of A Eschelon pulled out for Strip A-84. It seems that every time our Group moves or contemplates a move it is Sunday and it is pouring rain. These two factors are ever present or so it seems. The ride by truck is a normal four to five hour drive but circumstances tend to make it a much longer ride. Back at A-69, B Eschelon was preparing to move the rest of the equipment and personnel to A-84. At the same time operational missions were going on. At the same time operational missions were going on. At the same time trucks were shuttling back and forth from Le Coulet to Cheveres to Laon and back again. Very, very confusing. Two EM drivers in our Squadron have really done themselves proud on our various moves. Pvt Race and Pfc Stubinger have done a grand job driving many miles for long hours without accidents or serious breakdowns. Good work men.
2. On Strip A-84 it was up at 0630 with a roll call formation at 0730. There's a lot of work to be done what with enemy bombs to remove, tents to be set up for living quarters as well as for operational functions. Then too word arrived that the airplanes which weren't expected until tomorrow would arrive today. A number of pilots who were not assigned to fly a rail-cutting mission or to ferry extra planes arrived by C-47's. Shortly thereafter the 12 pilots on a rail cutting mission led by Major Sarks landed here at A-84. The Squadron flew two rail-cutting missions this day despite the handicap of moving quarters, equipment and personnel without any interruption. All the flying officers arrived with the exception of Lt's Kik, Kesting and Le Loup. Reports have it that the three Officers were lost enroute and were forced to land at a British Strip. Cheerio lads! There's still a great deal to be done but it shall be all in good order. Boy, I mean this moving business entails a lot of complications. So far this Squadron has moved twice in England and four times in France. Now I'll wager our next move is to German territory where I should be fat for a change for this is one tongue I can understand. French is a little too hard to start learning at this late stage in the game. Viva La France! How's it going Belge?
3. The morning began with a hurried last minute briefing. It seems that we had no telephone communications with Wing but they dispatched a courier via truck. In order to conform with the Field Order, Group had to hustle. The mission was airborne and at the same time the weather socked in. Rain, low ceiling and an overcast were three factors too many to overcome to carry out the mission. Our pilots returned to land with their bombs and found it no easy task to do so. The remainder it really rained so all flying activity was

CURRENT EVENTS  
continued

brought to a halt. From there-on-in, however, a great deal of work was done. All personnel have to work on their living quarters, un pack and get set-up to stay if only for a time. A good question is, "How long do we stay here?"

All but a very few of our personell and equipment are here and in a day or so all will be present and accounted for. These days are sure flying by before too long the year 1944 will be but a memory.

4. This morning brought an O545 briefing for a rail-cutting mission. Captain Mamaw led the morning mission through and with an overcast. At the target area an overcast prevented locating one of the three assigned targets. However, the two which were located were well plastered. Lt Diman ran into a little hard luck when he spun out of the overcast, however, he regained control of his plane and returned to the base. He's a lucky boy, for back at Chilbolten we lost Captain Mac Smith in the same manner. It's hard enough to lose boys in direct combat with the enemy but to lose them because of weather is heartbreaking.

The afternoon brought a repeat on the same type of mission into the Aachen area with darn good results. Our pilots like the idea of plastering enemy territory for there is no longer the dread of injuring innocent civilians.

This weather is very peculiar. The nights are as clear as a bell and just at takeoff time ground fogs, overcasts and rains come in. There's not too much more flying time left so let us hope we can make the most of it.

The Squadron is set-up now as well as it has ever been. Living quarters, eating facilities and all departments are functioning at full strength and capabilities. It doesn't take us very long to make a home out of shambles.

5. Again an O545 briefing for a Armed Reccy this morning. As per usual ground fog and overcast socked in preventing takeoff. The weather didn't let up all day so there wasn't any operational flying.

Captain Stud Staton is again proving his ingenuity along with kibitzing from Lt Early. At Strip 3 on the Beach, he built a washing machine which would have aroused claims of unfair competition from every washing machine company. At various times, he has come through with diverse mechanical contrivances causing wonder to all who see them. Here at Chevres, he constructed a stove from an old drum which throws so much heat that the occupants of his room are practically driven out into the cold for relief. All this in addition to his flying.

This is getting to be a doggy Squadron. Everytime one turns about someone else has acquired a puppy. The latest addition is a dog acquired by Sgt Schambers of the mess hall.

Someday after the war Lts Buchman, Hill and Skalko could be asked about one interesting experience. Right now it's a very touchy subject.

CURRENT EVENTS  
continued

6. The two mission per day schedule still prevails. Captain Standifer led our Squadron on the first mission of the day which was a fighter sweep. It was a fairly uneventful mission with weather the greatest potential danger. Lt Le Loup was taken ill and was forced to abort after being airborne. Orders came through today sending Captain Standifer, Captain Gamble, and Lt Kik home. This Squadron is slowly becoming a new one to we old timers. Seven new pilots in the persons of Lt's Bergman, Dicks, Hays, Fortney, Grosjean, Palston and Swink. A short time ago, we added Lt's Monger and Palston so all in all the changes can really be appreciated when one looks about. These changes mean new flight leaders and new elements leaders making promotions possible for the pilots who merit them. Not so long ago Lt's Ivey, Elliott, Hays and Allen were new pilots now they are the backbone of the Squadron. Such is war, much as we hate to see the "Varsity" leave us they deserve a rest.
- The second mission of the day was led by Captain Schulte. "Norm" is a real old timer who has piled up many combat hours and I shouldn't be surprised to see him going home too before too long. This mission produced fireworks for the other two squadrons but ours did not get into the show at all. Between the 396th and the 397th 27 E/A were destroyed - 2 in the air and 25 on the ground. As a result, it was a thoroughly disgusted bunch of pilots which landed after this mission. There will come a time yet.
- Reports have it that Captain Clarence Staton will go in place of Captain Gamble who is going home. Looks very much as if Stud is slated to go home too.
7. The first mission of the day led by Major Sparks was a dive-bombing one on enemy defensive positions. Reports upon return were that bomb dispersion was good although results were NRO. Our boys could not see their targets and worked by pinpoint coordinates.
- Yellow flight returned from their five day leave in London, Captain Bowlin, Lt's Ivey, Smith, Huff and Hughes. Lt's Kleinklaus and McCrone returned from their seven day stay at a rest home in England.
- The second mission of the day was another armed recce with the controller assigning targets. NRO are the reports our pilots bring back for they cannot identify their targets. However reports from the ALO have it that the Ground Forces are very well pleased with the results and are asking their Headquarters to put commendations on record. So ends another day.
8. Lt Schofield is in the Hospital trying to recover from a cold complicated by asthma. Sam is a hard worker and his efforts are noticeably absent.
- Captain R. Clark has a case of bronchitis as a result of a severe cold. Evidently this field life is sapping the strength of our ground personnel as combat is doing to our flying personnel after so much of it. As a matter of fact,

CURRENT EVENTS  
continued

a little bit of it can be too much at times. General Sherman was right about war.

Briefing at 0545 this A.M. These milkman hours are rough for its cold in the morning, very much so. Bad weather prevented a takeoff on this mission. Another briefing for a mission at 1100 which was airborne at 1300. This was quite a mission for Lt Caldwell tangled with two E/A, one a FW 190 and the other a ME 109. Bob was handicapped by having his gunsight out but he came back with a claim for a probably destroyed ME 109. His flight was acting as top cover while the other two flights were bombing German towns. Lt Ivey's flight dropped its bombs into the intersection of Inden and according to reports did a bang-up job on it. It would be interesting to read Hitler's report on this one. It would probably read something like this. The weak Americans bombed our helpless towns again today --- no damage suffered. One of our towns is missing. All this on the Sabbath which according to the Good Book is not a working day.

9. This morning three old pilots, old in the sense of combat time, left for England enroute home. Captain Gamble, Captain Standifer and Lt Kik were the lucky ones. Good luck men, let us hear from you once in a while.

The briefing scheduled for 0800 was called off and we were released until noon. At noon we drew a release until day-break the next day. The weather is such that flying is impossible.

Major Warren of the 9th TAC has joined our Squadron to fly a few combat missions during his stay with us.

Our chances of wintering in this theater looks better every day now. This day the enlisted men drew winter overcoats and those of the officers who shipped their winter clothing home wished they hadn't. Such is life!

10. It has been raining for some three days now with no let up in the weather. This morning a briefing was held but the weather did not permit the mission to be airborne. It rained and rained and rained some more.

A pass system has been inaugurated for EM and Officers into Bruxelles thereby giving everyone an opportunity to see another larger European city. This is certainly a morale builder but the cessation of hostilities would really do the trick.

11. Briefing at 0830 for a dive-bombing mission on German A/D's. In the middle of briefing Lt "Stormy" Steers stated the mission couldn't take off. He was right.

After briefing most of our pilots were subjected to an E & E lecture for about half an hour then they returned to their volley ball game on the hanger floor.

S/Sgt Dennis and Sgt Neuber didn't make the truck coming back from Bruxelles last night which makes for a awkward situation. Captain Pendleton our Executive Officer has been working his head off getting priviledges for EM's but this sort of thing doesn't help their case at all.

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CURRENT EVENTS  
continued

At 1000 the first mission was scrubbed and a second one was called. This sort of thing is not infrequent. Anything is alright so long as a mission is flown. This mission called for dive-bombing pin-point targets in the city of Aachen. From all reports an intersection and several buildings have been removed from the scene. After this flight landed, we drew a release from "Ops" until daybreak.

We had heard that Lt. Curt Doescher our first MIA pilot is a POW.

12.

At the beginning of the day there weren't any evidences that it was going to be anything but a routine flying day. The schedule called for our Squadron to fly two missions in support of Booty, Seventh Corp Armored Column.

Briefing at 0830 for the first mission and it turned out to be a routine proposition of dropping bombs on a assigned target. No flak, no excitement, no nothing.

The second mission was out and returning home when we began to get news of big doings. The training flights came in and said there was a lot of chatter over the R/T of our Squadron in a terrific dogfight. Then the boys started to come in with their claims. Lt Wayland destroyed a ME 109 and damaged another. All this with a prop out and a hung-up bomb. Here's a pilot who will go places. Captain Mazur came in with a claim for one destroyed ME 109 and two damaged ME 109's. He really didn't know what he did do but his wingman, Lt Giannetti was there to testify to Hank's accuracy. Henry came in to interrogation smoking a cigar and waited for someone to tell him what he had done. He had been too busy dogfighting to count noses.

Lt Garry (wildman) came in with a claim of a destroyed ME 109. The pilot of the E/A bailed out making this a sure kill. Bill has chased E/A all over Germany so we are all glad he got one before he decided to go into Poland after one. In his eagerness he sometimes forgets that it takes gasoline to bring a plane home.

Lt Jewkes was in there shooting too for he has a probably destroyed JU 87 of all things and a claim for a damaged ME 109.

Lt Jeep Allen didn't come back. This means a lot to us for Jeep came to us way back when we were all together and had no losses to think about. Big, slow afoot, friendly as a pup, Jeep has a habit of wandering about with a playful grin on his face. Life has been good to this boy and he's been good to life. We are all hoping that he sat down at another field and that tomorrow will bring us good news of him. Every silver cloud has its dark lining too and his not coming back sort of took the edge of most of our appetites at the supper table. Jeep was a roommate of mine for months and in that time I grew to know him fairly well. Come on home Jeep, this MIA business is rough on raw nerves.

I'm beginning to find out that the psychologist who said that sleep is just a habit and not really necessary knew somewhat of what he was speaking about. Last night I was duty I.O. which meant I didn't get my sleep all night. This morning I

CURRENT EVENTS  
continued

had to get my Squadron ready for the mission. I tried to get some sleep but it was no show for I wanted to be there to make certain no unnecessary hitches. All day came the ordinary work to be done. Then came the big mission with all the combat reports to make up. At four o'clock a group Poop called me to relate that by eight o'clock tomorrow two recommendations for and extremely high award for two personnel had to be completed. I accepted this assignment in my usual quiet way which was practically blowing my top. So to make sure no one else in the department would get any sleep I got them all down here working with me. Great day!

13.

Ever so often a day comes along the memory of which becomes a bitter one. Yet when the day begins, there is nothing to indicate that it will be any more than a routine day. Today was such a day. This morning began with an early morning briefing for which has been for us a routine mission. The results of this mission were not so good for the target was covered by an overcast so they had to go to another area to get rid of their bombs. Col. Meyers led this mission and he picked a dandy. At any rate when it was all over no one was just certain where anyone had been but all returned safely which made the mission a successful one. Lt Marcus (Henry) Aldridge did not return with the Squadron from this mission but tagged onto another flight so all was well. Our boy "Henry" is quite a boy with a very contagious sense of humor.

As yet no word from Lt Jeep Allen so we don't know what to think. This is pretty much of a rough deal -- too much so.

The afternoon really was too much. We were on a 60 minute alert so when we were alerted the pilots scrambled. I've always hated this sort of mission for our Squadron but "c'est la guerre." After much hurrying nine out of twelve planes scheduled to go got off the ground. In the Aachen area our boys got bounced and thereby hangs a sad tale. Captain Schulte was shot down but reports indicate he bailed out. Lt's Elliott and McMillon also did not return and no one seems to be able to explain what became of them. We sweated and sweated them out to no avail. There isn't any adequate expression to cover this sort of situation. Three finer boys never climbed into a cockpit of any plane. Captain Schulte was one of the original cadre which formed the squadron. Capable, steady and a great leader; he has many combat hours over here. He was getting ready to go home. Lt Elliott a former instructor and a wonderful pilot was a welcome addition to the Squadron when he joined us. He's married and the proud Daddy of one of the baby boys in the Squadron. We called him "Min" or "Okie" for he's a native of Oklahoma which fact he was apt frequently to proclaim. Lt McMillon, an extremely quiet but capable chap fooled many people by his submissiveness. He was an avid reader and a deep thinker and a very well informed on many subjects. I had many a conversation with "Mac" none of which I felt left any educational imprint on him. It was a dark night to begin with but these events make it so much darker. It's quite a price to pay but there again some men must die so that others may live. Why can-

CURRENT EVENTS  
continued

not it only be that the Germans die so that the rest of us must live. Makes an excellent question.

It was Friday the 13th.

14. No news is good news but so far we've not had any news from our boys. We all hope no news is good news. We were on an alert basis all day but the weather was such that flying was verboten.  
Major Warren from 9th TAC who has been with us for the past week has been squeezing in some combat time. He has flown many a plane but has had very little time in the P-47 which gives a pretty good indication of the type of fellow he is. It takes plenty of guts to fly a strange plane in the big league combat theatre.  
Rumor hath it that we will move again to Le Culot. They say it's rough there and I'm willing to take anybody's word for it -- I don't have to see it to believe it. However, comes the word we move and like it or lump it. So we lump it.
15. The Sabbath is upon us again but that factor in itself has no effect on the waging of the war. The weather has not been particularly auspicious but our Group tries to overcome this handicapp. The first mission of the day was led by Captain Mumaw with an objective of bombing an enemy C.P., and troop concentrations. With the weather 10/10 finding the target was an impossibility. These days bombs are no longer brought back or jettisoned in the Channel for anything beyond the bomb-line is fair game.  
The afternoon found us on a 60 minute alert but a down-pour of rain put an end to this. So the P.M. was spent marking time waiting for something to happen until the release from "Ops" came at 1630.
16. The weather hasn't shown any tendency to improve as a result briefings have had to be held at a later hour. This morning's session took place at 1000 hours with Major Sparks scheduled to lead the Group. Targets selected for dive-bombing were the A/D at Bonn and Breitscheid. The Group never did get to take off for the weather turned for the worse prohibiting any and all flying for the day. In the late afternoon a release from "Ops" came through putting to an end all waiting.  
Bruxelles has been placed "Off Limits" to American troops putting to an end all passes to that city. Allies????  
New Flight leaders in our Squadron are Lt's Nolan, Jensen, and Early. Good old boys.
17. This morning started with a rebriefing of the mission scheduled for yesterday. The briefing took place with the anticipation that the mission would be airborne. Takeoff time was not set-up but was waiting on the weather. The weather did not permit a morning takeoff and the afternoon brought rain forestalling a mission for certain. We haven't contributed much to the war effort of late.

CURRENT EVENTS  
continued

The English are still repairing our hanger while all rumors of moving have ceased entirely. Why then do the British soldiers continue working on our hanger?

Cpl Farr and his slovenly habits in the Snack-Bar ran into a little difficulty. Cpl Farr now does not preside over the snack-bar anymore. Some men make it so hard for themselves no matter how pleasant the working conditions.

18. Our Squadron has been briefed five times without once being airborne. Four briefings have been on the same target. Our Major has been scheduled to lead the Group on these missions and as a result he's been forced to sit around the pilots room on the alert. The fronts which were supposed to pass by have not been too cooperative and as a result the weather has been such as to prohibit operational flying. The rains have come every day to further prevent flying.

Bruxelles was placed "Off Limits" to American troops and as a result the passes have been issued to Mons. Then today again 12 hour passes to Bruxelles have been put into effect.

Sgt David Scheinbart has been put in charge of the Snack Bar and he's a good man for it.

The days are pretty long, the nights longer but then it could always be worse. For example, there is always the C.B.I. Horrible thought. It's a rough war anyway one looks at it, but it's no picnic for the infantry who really know what war means.

The boys who like to tip a few over in our Group have had some interesting experiences. In England, it was mild and biters and black market stuff. France had ample cider, cognac, wines of all kinds and champagne. Belgium specializes in beer and champagne which was 50 francs per bottle in France while here the same bottle costs a thousand francs here. What I wouldn't give for a case of coca cola or pepsi-cola!

19. After a succession of briefings the Group managed to get airborne this morning led by Major Sparks. It turned out to be more of a class in instrument flying. The Group got as far as Aachen when they were forced to turn back for the poorest of poor weather. From all reports it was a rough trip but fortunately all made out well. These missions are equally dangerous as flying into flak ridden territory for weather too can be a formidable opponent.

The afternoon brought rain and lots of it forestalling further flying. A release at 1500 hours put an end to operational flying.

The rumor factory has been going full strength again and this time has come forth with a couple of dandies. The best one has us losing our planes by November 25 and arriving in the states by December 23. This is the type of rumor I like to hear fantastic as it may sound.

Lt George Hughes is on his way home according to all reports. A cold developed into pneumonia and his combat flying days are over in this theatre. George did not seem up to par for some time so we are glad to hear that his illness was caught at a stage where it could be brought under control.

CURRENT EVENTS  
continued

20. The weather held off long enough today to let our Squadron fly two missions before it set in again. Major Sparks took one mission off while Captain Mumaw led the Squadron on the other one. Of late it seems that when our Major is scheduled to lead the Squadron the takeoff is delayed and he finds himself on a standby. Sure is a rough war.

The last few weeks have been uneventful for us as regards to heavy damage to enemy facilities or equipment. For a time, at least the days of clobbering large enemy convoys has ceased to be daily occurrence as it once was. Those weeks would be more pleasant to look back on were it not for the loss of some of our boys. The missions are in strange contrast. On the days when our pilots have gone into flak-ridden territory and we expect casualties -- nothing happens. The casualties always seem to come on missions which are not of a significant nature. Such is war.

Y-Bar, not an operational plane, has come in for a considerable bit of flying since it has been converted to a piggy-back plane because the flying personnel have had an opportunity to take many of the ground personnel for rides. Lt Luker found his experience what could easily be called uplifting.

The afternoon found the weather closing-in ending all flying for the day. Our boys fly in weather when birds walk for too much is enough.

21. Lt Crego from the material Division has been attached to our Group to observe the developments of the rocket attachments. He has tried to give our pilots the benefit of his experiences but his advise will be more welcome after the rockets have been used by our pilots. From all indications, this practice is to come in the near future.

Today we were back on Armed Reccy working with the 7th Armored Division. Our takeoffs have been alternating at one and a half hour intervals with the other two Squadrons of the Group.

Major Sparks led the first mission and came back racking up several damaged locomotives and many goods-wagons.

Captain Mumaw took up the second mission of the day. Our "Ops" Officer and our C.O. have not been sparing themselves during the entire campaign from the time this Group first became operational in combat. A few words should be written about Captain Mumaw for he has consistently done his duty and more day after day. A hard worker on the ground, a grand leader in the air, he is the personification of American youth which has set such a high standard for airmen or groundmen of the world. Marshall has not the flair for the spectacular so characteristic of some men but his deeds find appreciation among those he serves with. In Lt Robert Miller he finds a counterpart and between these two the operations section of this Squadron is run as it should be.

The second mission was of an extremely routine nature without any spectacular incidents. Thusly concluded another day for the "Panzer-Dusters."

CURRENT EVENTS  
continued

22. Last night Lt Col Quimby, our former C.O. was at the Officer's Club and the Officers of this Squadron turned out to visit with him once more. His injuries with the exception of one broken arm have come along in good shape but it will be some time before he flies again. Life moves on.
- Today was one of those days when a great deal of effort was expended for naught. Briefings were held, targets were changed but the weather remained consistent -- too poor for flying.
- Apparently this Group is going to winter at this strip for moves are being made to winterize all equipment and the personnel are winterizing their living quarters. The pilots are moving into other quarters which are further removed from the line making for further adjustments. Life moves on.
23. These non-flying days are beginning to pile up. Briefings are held with tentative takeoff times set which have never come to pass. This same mission has been briefed several times already.
- We are pretty well set to winter at this strip but from all appearances there won't be much flying done.
- Major Sparks is in Paris these days. It's been a long time since he's taken a rest of any kind and it's been a hard drive. All in all it was a pretty dull day from beginning to end.
24. Briefing was held again for this morning for the same mission scheduled for yesterday morning. Major Hendricks of the 397th is going through the same standby stage that our own Major went through for a number of days. Takeoff was delayed pending a break in weather which never came.
- The afternoon brought a lecture by Captain from 9th Air Force on the conduct of American soldiers in occupied German territory. The policy of non-fraternization is going to be strictly adhered to of necessity which means that our customary attitude towards civilians is going to undergo a revision. Such is war.
- The overcast did not lift and a release at 1600 hours ended all further speculation as to flying.
25. The weather has been identical for four straight days -- consistently poor. The routine has not varied for the same period -- briefing -- then standby for the rest of the day waiting on the weather. The same pilots have been briefed for the same targets to fly identical courses with one varied from day to day and that is compass course out and back which varies several degrees. We aren't doing the war effort any good these days.
- 1st Lt Hugh P. Mathewes has joined our Squadron as a replacement pilot but in reality he is an old boy. In the states while this Group was going through O.T.U. he was a member of the 396th. The "Old Boys" are glad to have him with us for in the states he was a "hot pilot." Come in boy, come in.

CURRENT EVENTS  
continued

1st Lt Wallace Hill received word that on September 4, 1944 Alabama was graced with the advent of another male Hill. This is unusual in itself for the Daddies of this Squadron have produced a surplus of females. The cigars Lt Hill has been passing out aren't half bad. I'm for more babies and more cigars.

26. Too many days are too much alike this week. Briefing -- standby -- release. This has gone on for five days now. Wars cannot be won in this manner still men cannot combat nature and it's elements successfully. Rough war!

Col Neumen from 70th Fighter Wing held a meeting on awards and decorations. His discussion was valuable in that it cleared up many misunderstandings and ambiguities which have been prevalent to date. It appears that there is a difficult line of demarcation between heroism and duty and many interpretations result thereof. All's well which ends well.

Lt George A. Hughes one of the old boys hospitalized for a cold took a turn for the worse when pneumonia set in. His combat flying days are over. He is presumed to be on his way home and let us hope that he gets to see "Patty" for that has been his all consuming desire. "No greater love hath any man for his spouse."

27. It's hard to believe that almost a full week has gone by without any combat flying. Today the disgust was so general that even briefing was not held. At noon a release from "Ops" until daybreak came through.

The same cloud base and haze continued to hang over the field. Events of interest are but few. Lt's Le Loup, Bergman, Stover, Kesting and Rife are off for an operational leave into Paris. Lt Hill, our capable supply and transportation Officer is hospitalized with bad tonsils. He's a cheerful southern boy and his absence is easily observed. Major Sparks returned from Paris ready to go back to work again. All that is necessary now is a break in weather and off we go -- we hope.

Lt Earls who was on DS to the 1st Armored Division returned home the worse for his experience. He sported a P-38 pistol, a gift from a Infantry Officer. These DS's are risky assignments as can well be testified to by Lt (tough blonde) Joe Nolan who received a Bronze Star for his little tour. Joe was in the middle of a big push when he was on DS and he looked it when he returned. Such is war.

28. Today the Group went to work with a bang. The weather broke for the first time in a week and full advantage of this factor was taken. The first mission of the day was led by Captain Mazur. It was a bridge-busting and rail-cutting assignment. An unexpected surface wind raised heck with the bombs and our boys reported poor results. This was one of the first times our pilots carried 3 x 500 lb G.P.'s and we hoped for better results. For the efficiency of the old boys who are

CURRENT EVENTS  
continued

now gone makes a difference in the success of these missions for it's going to take a little time for the new boys to hit their stride.

The second mission was led by Captain Mumaw. It's purpose was to destroy radar installations and a four ship flight took this assignment.

The third mission of the day was led by Major Sparks and this time our Squadron acted as top-cover for the other two Squadrons which were carrying bombs. This was more or less a ride for our boys who stayed high above and did not have to go down to face the flak.

Total capitulation of the day's effort was fair but more is to come. Lt Wayland picked up some flak damage, Captain Mazur brought back some souvenirs testifying to Jerry's accuracy. Lt Al Kleinklaus went out and came back without incident only to clip a truck on the taxi strip with a wing necessitating a wing-tip change. A good question is who ran in to whom?

29. The Group continued to wage war upon the enemy today with the weather still favorable for flying.

The first mission was led by Captain Mazur, our All American boy. The purpose again was to destroy a bridge and cut rail-lines. Reports indicate that the bridge was not destroyed so the afternoon brought in a mission to go after the same bridge. Major Sparks took this assignment to lead his Squadron into battle again. Our Major is one of the top men when it comes to combat hours in this Group but he continually keeps on piling up more time. The last mission of the day provided no unusual excitement. It's good to get back to work -- one can get so tired of non-flying days.

30. The Sabbath came upon us with an early briefing but no mission materialized. The weather socked-in again and it is too potent a factor to overcome. In the past, Sundays seemed to be the days of most excitement and from the toll our pilots reaped of the enemy one forgot that it was presumed to be a day of rest and prayer.

The Squadron is undergoing personnel changes again. Captain John R. Elliott, better known to all as "Honest John" is leaving to join another Group. This move means a boost in grade eventually so more power to him. Slowly but surely fewer and fewer old faces are to be seen about. The French would say "C'est la guerre" while the Germans would say, "So ist das Leben" while "Honest John" would say "Tough!"

Lt Samuel R Schofield also known as "Two in One" Schofield is the new adjutant and a better choice could not have been made. Sam will do his usual bang-up job.

Cpl Steward Farr, the temperamental cook, has been transferred to a Signal Corp outfit. He really made it hard for himself but he was a good cook. So ended the Sabbath.

CURRENT EVENTS  
continued

31. Today brings the end of another month in the E.T.O. This makes ten months this outfit has seen come to end here. The morning was devoid of combat activity of any kind. Even the usual briefing did not take place making for a good deal of unnecessary agitation.
- The most auspicious event of the day was getting paid which is always a pleasant event. It makes for a pleasant sensation to have money in one's pocket even if only for a short time. Money isn't everything but most of us would hate to do without the things money can buy.
- The various departments have undergone a shifting about so that all can be undercover. S-2, S-3, and Personnel equipment have moved into what was the old pilots house and what was supposed to be the new mess hall. Engineering and Ordnance have moved into the hanger eliminating the use of tents. Winter is drawing high.
- In the states tonight the youngsters were ringing doorbells. We are somewhat handicapped for tents do not have doorbells. So what is Halloween in America is just another Tuesday over here.

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OF INTEREST

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HEADQUARTERS NINTH INFANTRY DIVISION ARTILLERY  
APO #9, US ARMY.

11 October 1944

SUBJECT: Performance of 368th Group.

TO : Air Support Officer, 9th Infantry Division, APO #9.

It is my desire to call to your attention the splendid cooperation on the part of those pilots who participated in the dive-bombing of targets for the 9th Division on October 7, 1944.

In spite of difficult flying conditions, the 368th Group arrived on schedule, identified the artillery red smoke placed on the targets after the first rounds, and dropped their bombs squarely on the smoke markings.

Our "cut" observer reports that all seven of the targets were precisely hit and the effect was excellent on each.

It is believed that the exceptional success of this operation could only be the result of a most thorough briefing and careful planning on the part of the entire organization. That this enabled us to conserve precious artillery marking ammunition, of which there is an extreme scarcity at this time, is only one of the benefits derived from the efficiency exhibited by the 368th Group.

It is suggested that the contents of this letter be brought to the attention of the commanding officer of the 368th Group.

/s/ R. V. Howell  
R. V. Howell,  
Brigadier General, U.S. Army,  
Commanding.

1st Ind.

AIR SUPPORT OFFICER, 9TH INF DIV APO #9, US ARMY, 11 October 1944

TO: Commanding Officer, 368th Fighter Bomber Group, APO # 595, US Army

THRU: Commanding General, 9th Infantry Division

Forwarded.

/s/ John W. Watson  
JOHN W. WATSON,  
Capt., Air Corps,  
A.S.P.O., 9th Inf Div

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2nd Ind.  
HQS 9TH INF DIV APO #9 US Army, 11 October 1944

TO: Commanding Officer, 368th Fighter Bomber Group, APO #595, US Army

THRU: Commanding General, VII Corps, APO # 307

It is with pleasure that I indorse this commendation for the pilots and others of the 368th Fighter Bomber Group who participated on the dive-bombing of targets for this division on 7 October 1944. Such fine cooperation and splendid performance are worthy of the highest praise and are a great contribution to successful ground operations.

/s/ Louis A. Craig  
LOUIS A. CRAIG,

Major General, U.S.A.  
Commanding.

201.22 3rd Ind. A:

HEADQUARTERS VII CORPS, APO 307, U. S. Army, 20 Oct 1944

TO: Commanding Officer, 368th Fighter Bomber Group, APO 595, U. S. Army.

THRU: Commanding General, IX Air Tactical Command, APO 595, U. S. Army.

I take pleasure in transmitting this tribute to the fine performance of duty by members of the 368th Fighter Bomber Group. Such splendid cooperation adds materially to successful air-ground activities.

/s/ J. Lawton Collins  
J. LAWTON COLLINS  
Major General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.

201.22 4th Ind. C-K-2

HEADQUARTERS, IX TACTICAL AIR COMMAND, APO 595, U. S. Army, 23 October 1944.

TO: Commanding Officer, 368th Fighter Group, APO 595, U. S. Army.

The commanding General notes with pride the splendid tribute paid to you and your Group. It is very gratifying to him to learn that the Commanding Generals of the Ground Forces are so appreciative of the fine results you are obtaining, and it is indeed a pleasure to pass on to you this well deserved commendation.

By command of Major General QUESADA:

/s/ A. C. Kincaid  
A. C. KINCAID  
Brig Gen, USA,  
Chief of Staff.

A TRUE COPY:

THEODORE F. SKAIKO  
1st Lt, Air Corps.

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DECORATIONS AWARDED TO MEMBERS OF THIS SQUADRONDistinguished Flying Cross

Lt Col Henry R Quimby  
 Major Harold P Sparks  
 Captain Thomas N Montag  
 Captain Roy L Bowlin Jr  
 Captain Clarence Staton  
 Captain Norman E Schulte  
 Captain Lee Roy Standifer  
 Captain Clifford L Gamble  
 Captain Marshall E Mumaw  
 Lt Richard Kik  
 Lt Robert E Caldwell

AIR MEDAL

Lt Col Henry R Quimby (RZI)	1st Lt Irwin M Pascal (MIA)
Major Harold P Sparks	1st Lt Forest D Midlam
Captain Thomas N Montag (KIA)	1st Lt William J Garry
Captain Marshall E Mumaw	1st Lt James W Early
Captain Henry J Mazur	1st Lt Robert C Fay (MIA)
Captain Roy L Bowlin Jr	2nd Lt Clarence E Allen (MIA)
Captain Norman E Schulte (MIA)	2nd Lt Homer E Hayes
Captain Lee R Standifer (RZI)	2nd Lt Joseph D McMillan (MIA)
Captain Clifford L Gamble (RZI)	2nd Lt Dale E Jewkes
1st Lt Richard Kik (RZI)	2nd Lt Edgar M McCrone
1st Lt Robert E Caldwell	2nd Lt Eugene R Smith
1st Lt Howard W Jensen	2nd Lt William J Wayland
1st Lt Joseph L Nolan	2nd Lt Joseph E Gianetti
1st Lt James E Ivey	2nd Lt Charles R Foltz
1st Lt Marion W Elliott (MIA)	2nd Lt Walter R Johnson
1st Lt Albert L Kleinklaus	2nd Lt Louis L Vieck
1st Lt Donald H Huff	2nd Lt William C Diman
1st Lt George A Hughes (RZI)	2nd Lt Charles R Earls
1st Lt Alexander E Le Loup	2nd Lt Charles R Rife
1st Lt Robert Miller	2nd Lt Nealy C Riemann
1st Lt Pike B Martin (KIA)	
1st Lt Eugene L Kesting	
1st Lt Joseph L Williams	

BRONZE STAR MEDAL

1st Lt Joseph L Nolan	S/Sgt Alfred J Haimbach
S/Sgt Herman Birk	S/Sgt Harry L Marshall
S/Sgt William Demchuk	

PURPLE HEART

Lt Col Henry R Quimby	2nd Lt Charles R Rife
Pvt William E Newton	

NE'ER WILL THEY BE FORGOTTEN

M. I. A.

Captain James W Goodwin	1	Not determined
Captain Malcolm A Smith	2	Not determined
Lt Kurt C Doescher	3	Bailed out
Lt Robert C Fay	4	Not determined
Lt Irwin M Pascal	5	Bailed out
Captain Thomas N Montag	6	KIA
Lt Pike B Martin	7	KIA
Lt Clarence E Allen	8	Not determined
Lt Marion W.L. Elliott	9	Not determined
Lt Joseph D. McMillan	9	Not determined
Captain Norman E Schulte	9	Not determined

COMPLETED OPERATIONAL TOUR

Captain Lee R. Standifer  
Captain Clifford L Gamble  
1st Lt Richard Kik Jr.

RETURNED TO ZONE OF INTERIOR

Lt Col Henry R Quimby

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## PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE

October 27th.

Report of Activities at SWAEF Press Headquarters, Paris, 24, 25 Oct

1. SWAEF Press Conference: Lt. Col. Douglas and Major Sparks spoke at 10:30 p.m. Tuesday and 3:30 p.m. briefings, respectively. Col. Douglas discussed recent activities of the CAF. Major Sparks discussed tactical activity on First Army Front, with particular attention to rail cutting.
2. Blue Network broadcasts: Col Douglas and Lt Olson made individual transmissions to Radio City New York for transcription to be used on Coca Cola "Spotlight Bands" broadcasts Oct 28 & 29th.
3. Transcriptions for "Home" radio stations: Col Douglas, Major Sparks and Lt. Olson made transcriptions which will be made into individual records and forwarded to radio stations in their respective home communities for broadcast about three weeks hence.
4. Conferences with correspondents: Col Douglas, Major Sparks and Lt. Olson conferred with Stars and Stripes correspondent and met with several other correspondents at SWAEF press headquarters.
5. Photographs and News Releases: Photographs of Col Douglas, Lt Olson and Major Sparks were delivered to photo section for general release. A total of 112 home town photos were also taken along and turned over to the news section for forwarding to PR sections at Ninth Air Force (Main). Discussed requests with feature section, photographic section.
6. October 4th issue of "Air News" (USA) devoted to Ninth Air Force, including photos of eight pilots of the 38th Group.
7. Discussions with radio section resulted in tentative arrangement for pilots on operational leave in Paris to make transcriptions for home radio stations. Scripts are to be prepared and forwarded with pilots who are to report to radio section. They will have scripts censored and make appointments with pilots at transcription studio at a convenient time during the leave period. Five or six pilots at a time can be accommodated. Plans for making preparations in advance of pilots leave are now being made.
8. Discussion of combat photography with combat cameramen from Fourth Combat Camera Unit resulted in possibility of taking 35mm movies and still photographs from B-29 plane P-47 accompanying tactical mission. He expressed confidence that he could be sent to Group DS for a period of time, if project meets with approval and request is sent to his unit commander.

DON A. PACKA  
 T/Sgt., Air Corps,  
 Public Relations Section

Supreme Headquarters  
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE  
Public Relations Division

24 October 1944

MAJOR SPARKS:

I should like to go back just a little bit and tell you about all the Thunderbolt Groups that came over from the States, primarily trained for high level escort fighting; however, upon arrival here, or rather in England, we were told that we were not in the 8th Air Force, but in the 9th, and in for something bigger, possibly even the long-awaited invasion.

Along about March we became operational, made a couple of fighter sweeps, escorted some B-17's and B-24's, and after a couple of weeks of that type of work, they came in one day with two 250 pound bombs for each plane. We had never heard of carrying them before, but we took off, one 250 pound bomb under each wing, and one belly tank with 108 gallons, to find a target assigned to us, a target we now know to have been in that "Crossbow" area for the robot sites. Never having done that kind of work before, you can imagine the inaccuracy of the results. We went through considerable amount of training with practice bombs back in England and thought that a 250 pound bomb was pretty heavy as the airplane is a little different in handling; then, however, we tried a 500 pounder under each wing, and a couple of weeks later we had two 1000 pound bombs beneath the wings, and no one thought that it would be successful. The sweating of the whole mission was during take-off. We went after targets at Namur, Liege, Basslet; and thus our first experience with carrying bombs and divebombing was in Belgium. During this time, approximately three months, we never ran into enemy fighters, and whenever we saw some little round

noses coming towards us they would turn out to be Spitfires, though we had been absolutely positive that they were Me 109's.

During these runs, many of which were on railroad marshalling yards, we used to dive with speeds well up to 400 mph from 10,000 feet pull out very sharply at about 3000 feet to regain our altitude. We found there would be a few little bursts of flak, but that was nothing compared to the anti-aircraft fire we ran into later on. We would find many trains in these yards, and on the way out we usually hit the deck here and there; there was practically no flak and we would run a gunnery pattern, and get set up in a kind of line, one plane behind the other, and strafe the trains. The first things we went after were the locomotives, but often the box cars on freight trains would blaze after we had made a pass. Just before D-day we were hitting some marshalling yards, but Jerry was beginning to get a bit worried: we found, in a few instances, a single pilot would make a strafing pass on an engine with only 5 rounds of API, upon which the whole engine just let go with steam, and for the first time we found that they were trying to make us think that we had blown up their engines whether they had been damaged or not.

Then came D-day, and we started working in very close support with our Ground Forces. We supported an army along through the battle of Cherbourg, St. Lo, by Domfront and passed Mons, and then up to where we are at present. Now that the line has become fairly static, and because we knocked out so many vehicles and trains prior to D-day, you can't go down and play as a cat would with a bird; for, if you do, you will not be coming back from that area west of the Rhine where engines and box cars are vital targets; they are protecting these with plenty of flak. Now that we are stationed just west of Brussels we are running a number of missions purely

to disable rail lines. Most of these railroads are on the west side of the Rhine and I am very familiar with them because I have led the Squadron about 5 times on two particular railroad tracks just north-east of Duren.

We cannot now attack the way we used to; previously, if we made an unsuccessful pass, we went down again, set up a little gunnery pattern and knocked out box cars and engines. Now we employ an entirely different set of tactics on account of the amount of stuff in the areas in which we work. The enemy thinks that we are going after other targets there, such as gun emplacements or those millions of little factories they have in that region. We turn about in such a manner that right down to the split second before we go down they are not absolutely positive that we are going after that rail line. We now usually use delayed action fuses, which allow us to get extremely low before releasing our bombs and get away before the bottom of the ship is knocked out.

You understand that for accuracy we have to be parallel with the lines, so Jerry has set up flak on both sides of the tracks and, as I said, we make a tremendous number of feints in the e, because if we go in across at say 5000 feet we have already "Red It" from the heavy and light flak.

Four or five days ago I believe it is, we were just on reconnaissance over the Duren area when we were asked to knock off a train. With a cloud ceiling of 5000 feet and about 8/10ths cover we started working close to the town where, day in and day out, the have trains running. As we started our dive on this moving train the locomotive detached itself from the box cars; we decided to keep on our dive and bomb the box cars, though we

might have pulled up and gone after the engine. Such tactics are probably aimed at diverting our attention from the target and by so doing they hope to prevent us from hitting either the cars or locomotive. Another ruse of the Jerries is to camouflage the engine as the first car and attach a dummy locomotive in front of the actual one. So, if you go down to strafe you have taken a crack at an "engine" which is, in fact, not one at all. If you do not spot this sort of thing, you have done no good at all.

We have quite some variety of targets in our Group - we may go for railroads one day and for strong points the next day, and then we also work in very close support to the ground forces, bombing gun emplacements and other strong points. Of particular importance appear to be the rail cutting missions. I would estimate that about every 6th day our group goes on such a mission; the tactics we have had to develop are pretty difficult, but the results are good and I don't think the Jerries could get anything worse unless they got one of their own V 3's or something.

We normally carry two 500 pound bombs with delayed action fuses on each ship and our idea is not to hit on only one place as we go down on the target. We try to attack the whole length of the track - someone hits here, another further on,

QUESTION: Do you ever see gangs of men repairing the track what you go over?

ANSWER: No, I haven't actually seen them doing it, although along this line we find there is personnel that we can strafe at times.

QUESTION: They probably do a good deal of repair work at night.

ANSWER: I am quite sure that would be the wisest time.

QUESTION: Do you ever see any buzz bombs up there?

ANSWER: No I haven't. I have heard them all the way back to the home base. In fact, one of the windows was completely shattered once, it really rocked the buildings. Evidently it was one of those tremendous things that they are now using.

QUESTION: Did you see much traffic on the river?

ANSWER: There are a number of barges. It is a very difficult to try and dive bomb them from an altitude, but there is traffic up and down there all the time.

QUESTION: Do those factories get attacked pretty often?

ANSWER: Now we are allowed to take a crack at them. It wasn't a primary target for a while, but now I believe the line has become quite static and possibly they figure that the person away from the cities doesn't know enough about what is going on, and they are going to allow us to take a crack at them now. We are going to hit everything that even looks like life.

QUESTION: Do you get much fighter opposition.

ANSWER: The times when we were over the beachhead, some of our boys ran into fighters. Incidentally, as Colonel Douglas mentioned, there is a terrific difference between the ability of the pilots in Normandy as compared with those babies we are meeting now over here. I am really convinced that they really had their green stock over there.

QUESTION: The colonel said last night I believe, that they were very quick to bail out when one of our boys got on their tails.

ANSWER: The same thing took place in Normandy. Actually with 109's and 47's, once one gets behind the other you

are a very good man if you can get out. The comparison between the two is very good as far as fighting is concerned.

QUESTION: You say you don't get bridges any more.

ANSWER: We would if we could, but they say "Get a rail line between Duren and Cologne." The work that you could do right there on a bridge would probably cost you 4 or 5 airplanes which represents a terrific lot of money, and a lot of trained pilots so here we go after rail lines instead.

QUESTION: You mean that the bridges are so heavily defended that it is too costly.

ANSWER: Oh Yes, and if you want to see some flak you just get into a fight with Jerry and he will lead you to these cities. Everyone that gets in a fight with Jerry here knows that everytime he will try to get you across one of those cities.

## THE GERMAN'S GREATEST DREAM: JACO

On July 31, 1944, Field Marshal von Kluge, German commander-in-chief in the West, telephoned three of the most powerful Wehrmacht generals on the invasion front.

He told them why the jig was up for the German Seventh Army.

To the chief of staff of one army group, von Kluge said: "The enemy has reached Avranches. Our 957th Infantry Regiment of the 363rd Infantry Division has apparently not moved owing to hitherto unprecedented enemy fighter-bomber activity. Enemy tank advances on Granville and Avranches were preceded by an umbrella of enemy fighter-bombers. This made movement almost impossible. The troops have suffered high losses in men and equipment by strong air activity, and morale has greatly suffered."

To the chief of staff of the German Seventh Army: "Yesterday's heavy fighting was successful for the enemy only because he paralyzed all our movements by employing fighter-bombers on an unprecedented scale."

To General Harlinson, Hitler's personal representative in the West, von Kluge said: "The enemy air superiority is terrific and smashes almost every one of our movements. Every movement of the enemy, however, is prepared and protected by its air forces. Losses in men and equipment are extraordinary."

These conversations are painstakingly and exactly recorded in a top secret enemy telephone journal, which was captured on the Western front. Certain phrases, repeated three or four times, show why the German High Command became desperate even before the start of the Great First and Third Army offensives in August -- "movement almost impossible," "paralyzed our movements," "smashes almost everyone of our movements," "extraordinary losses in men and equipment."

tions to solitary dispatch riders and individual infantrymen in footlock.

These operations, carried out in August by thousands of fighter-bomber formations, immobilized the German armies in France, forced troops to hide in thickets and stream bottoms, made communication between division and corps and army capricious and sometimes impossible.

Once a modern army has lost the ability to move -- once its chain of command is scrambled -- it is lost.

For Germans in the field, from privates to generals, the fear of the fighter-bombers is personal, enormous. One valuable prisoner said:

"The Japs come so suddenly we don't know they are there. When we moved in the daytime, we were on constant air alert. Our vehicles carried an observer on each running board and one in the back. When the Japs left, after an attack, we would crawl out of the ditches and put out the fires. But we were not ready to move for three days."

The enemy has been trying all kinds of stratagems to defeat Thunderbolts, Lightnings, and Mustangs -- some of them as clumsy as spies with false beards, others with a kind of super secret agent precision and cunning.

One of the first tricks was for an English-speaking German to broadcast on an American ground control frequency, use the stations call signs and try to steer the fighter-bombers on wildgoose chases or into traps. Generally the pilots could detect a whisp of an accent or a trace of swissness with American terms. They would challenge the enemy, who might be calling himself "Hotfoot" to represent the X Armored Division, to authenticate -- and the German would not be able to do it. One suspicious Thunderbolt pilot asked the ground-control voice to sing Mairzy Doots. The Jerry had never heard of the song, and the flight ignored his instructions and went on to hit their scheduled target.

At the sight of fighter-bombers, German convoys pulling out of France

And, then the reason for the immobility, the fantastic losses, the sagging morale of the Seventh Army: "Fighter-bombers on an unprecedented scale."

To the Germans in the ranks, as well as on the highest level of command, fighter-bombers are the most terrifying Allied weapon on the western front. When they are asked what weapon they fear most, German captives in the prison cages invariably answer "Jagdbomber" or "Jabo", the long and short of it for fighter-bomber.

American and British pilots flew fighter-bombers before the invasion of Germany, but never before were they thrown against the enemy with such damaging regularity, in such huge numbers, in so many different formations. The two tactical air forces on the continent, the U.S. Ninth Air Force and the British Second Tactical Air Force, have put as many as 2,000 fighter-bombers in the air at the same time. On good flying days, each of these aircraft can carry out three, four, or five separate missions between daybreak and dusk.

All the fighter-bombers operate intimately with front-line infantry and armor. The U.S. First and Third Armies are supported by Ninth Air Force Thunderbolts, Lightnings, and Mustangs, the British Second Army by Typhoons, Mustangs, and Spitfires. All these fast, light planes fight with bombs and bullets. Some are armed with armor-piercing incendiary bullets, five-inch rockets, special bombs -- projectiles that no steel plating can stop.

It is no wonder that the enemy is afraid of fighter-bombers. The statistical statement of their results is staggering. In August alone, the Ninth Air Force dispatched more than 23,000 fighter-bombers. They destroyed or damaged more than 450 German aircraft, 10,000 motor vehicles, 2,000 railway cars, 500 tanks, and 400 field guns.

Fighter-bombers fly in small formations all over the battle-front and miles behind it. They attack everything from huge German troop and truck concentra-

often left the roads and hid in thickets or ditches. One convoy looked for safety in a clump of trees and sent a suicide car down the road to draw fire. A car travelling 60 miles an hour had no chance of outdistancing Thunderbolts -- so first the pilots eliminated the hidden convoy, then picked off the car.

When the Germans run-out began in mid-August, many enemy units were so terrified at the approach of fighter-bombers that they hoisted the white flag at once and surrendered to air without a gun fired or a bomb dropped.

A Thunderbolt Squadron one day wheeled around for a closer look when the pilots saw some Germans waving the flag of surrender. They watched hundreds of soldiers run to join the officer under the flag. Finally, when the crowd of would-be prisoners had finished gathering, the Thunderbolts headed toward the American lines and waggled their wings as a signal for the Jerries to follow. Officers formed the troops in columns of four and marched them properly toward the prison enclosures. The Thunderbolts used their weapons and bombs elsewhere.

The most startling surrender took place on September 16, when 20,000 enemy soldiers gave up the fight in a strange ceremony near Orleans.

Brigadier General C.P. Weyland, commander of the Nineteenth Tactical Air Command, which had located this lost army, destroyed its cars and trucks and finally battered the trapped troops, took part in the surrender ceremony. Afterwards, he said:

"This air action was unquestionably the greatest single factor forcing the final capitulation. When requesting a conference with U.S. ground forces, the German commander indicated his willingness to surrender -- provided we stopped our air attack on his troops. We suspended our offensive operations south of the Loire during these negotiations, maintaining only surveillance. He was threatened with all our fighter-bomber action if he did not surrender.

"I heard and saw his final decision yesterday."

The German commander was Major General Erich Elster and with him, into the American prison cages, went his staff and all soldiers under his command.

That was just one of the indignities that German general officers have suffered at the hands of Ninth Air Force fighter-bombers. The aide to another general, captured immediately after a Thunderbolt strafing sweep said he last saw his corps commander crawling through bushes.

Over an officers' mess tent -- at a Thunderbolt base close to the front in France -- hangs a sign which says: "Through these portals pass the best damn strafers who ever made a krut general crawl through hedges."

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FIGHTER-BOMBERS TAKE ON  
HEAVY WEIGHT ROLE AT BREST

How tactical air power was used to help crack the bastion of Brest, the strongest fortified German position encountered in France, was revealed today by the War Department after a survey which showed remarkable effectiveness of air-ground coordination.

Investigation of results of nearly four weeks of bitter fighting around the important port which was surrendered September 19 disclosed, the War Department said, an additional use of fighter-bombers in knocking out seemingly impregnable strongholds.

Previously Thunderbolts, Lightnings and Mustangs of the Ninth Air Force had given close direct support to ground troops in their march through Normandy by clinching with enemy tanks and blasting them at tree-top level while keeping in radio contact with the advancing ground elements. This time the light fighter-bombers added extra claim to their name of "Infantry's air force" by helping to root out German from beneath thick concrete and steel just ahead of the Infantry.

The newly found air strength was used as an additional knockout punch to that of naval shelling, heavy bombers and heavy ground artillery. More than 3000 sorties were flown over the beleaguered area in the 25 days of the hard fought campaign. More than 1000 tons of bombs and hundreds of rocket charges were dropped. It brought highly complimentary messages from ground leaders.

The defense of Brest was the best the German mind could conceive. It has been built over centuries and greatly developed by the Germans in the last few years. It consisted, not of one, but four rings of forts and firepower, all manned by 50,000 first

class troops who lived in deep underground emplacements. On the outer perimeter was a series of 10 or more ancient Greek bastions, at prominent points and recently heavily reinforced by the Germans. These were further strengthened by temporary fortifications of earth and logs outside the permanent structures. Each fort had at least five 105 millimeter field guns under eight feet of reinforced concrete, firing through slots with three-inch steel protecting plates.

The positions could not be flanked because the guns were set for a 360-degree traverse against attack from land as well as from sea. The crews lived in dugouts of reinforced concrete which were impervious to bombing.

In addition, the Germans set up a number of anti-tank guns, mounted in battleship type turrets of five-inch steel, flush with the terrain, also covering all directions. These provided space for ammunition and two operators beneath six feet of reinforced concrete with small openings to slit trenches that led to living quarters under 10 feet of concrete.

The third defense was the ancient city wall, 50 feet thick at the base and tapering 15 feet at the top. Around the outside of the wall the Germans dug an anti-tank ditch, and added 88 and 75 millimeter field guns under the same thick concrete as at the forts. They also placed 40 millimeter anti-aircraft guns around the walls in open positions, protected by walls of concrete five feet thick and six feet high.

Inside the city itself on granite hills were anti-aircraft guns and the opening of tunnels that led to the outer rim of forts. In the fourth line of defense were field guns in enclosed positions

along a cliff overlooking the second largest part of France.

The waterfront was lined with reinforced concrete barracks at the base of the cliff where tunnels of concrete, 12 feet thick or more, enclosed submarine pens.

For good measure on top of all this, the Germans had artillery positions on two peninsulas facing the harbor and the city.

It seemed incredible that such fortifications could be taken at all, but the task was assigned to three hardened American Divisions, the Second, Eighth and Twenty-Ninth Infantries, along with a Task Force which first cleaned up on the peninsulas for the invaders' heavy artillery. The other peninsula -- Crozon -- partly circling the bay, was the last stand of the Germans who had been driven across the bay from the mainland by the systematic use of air-ground power.

At the start of the assault the Eight Division came from the North, the Second from the East and the Twenty-Ninth from the West, through Recouvrance. They first attacked the outer fortification and called in tactical air power for assistance.

The problem was immediate being cover for the infantry which troops could follow quickly into disabled defenses. It was solved by the use of heavy ground artillery from one of the peninsulas to fracture the thick concrete and steel, then almost simultaneous attacks by fighter bombers to speed the ground occupation.

Fighter bombers had been used several times before to blast a path for ground troops, but this was the first time it was called upon against heavy fortifications.

The bombers were put into the air on alert and were able to

strike their targets, the modernized ancient forts, momentarily, after artillery shelling. How well they succeeded is best told by members of the ground forces themselves. A report from the Twenty-ninth Division said:

"Close air support has greatly assisted the advance of units in the division in the assault of Fortress Brest. Hill 69 was a heavily defended area that resisted the advance of Infantry. This was one of several strongly held positions along the first line and was taken by one battalion, assisted by an air strike. Although only one of the bombs hit the target, the remainder being near misses, the enemy was kept under cover, which permitted the Infantry to advance and seize the position.

"Another strong point was Keronant. On September 4, one battalion, attacked to capture this strongly defended location and was assisted by two missions of four P-51's which bombed and strafed the strong point. The damage inflicted on enemy material and personnel, and the effect the air strike had in keeping the Germans under cover enabled a strong patrol to capture Bouzic in the east of Keronant. The strong point of Keronant was taken by the battalion, through the softening and destruction afforded by air support of five days duration.

"The Kerguilla strong point was practically destroyed and was made untenable by the bombing and flames, coordinated with artillery fire. This permitted the capture of Penfield, 600 yards to the south.

"The Infantry break-through near Illic on the evening of September 11th which began the final advance in Recouvrance came immediately after bombs had been dropped by fighter bombers near the enemy's center of resistance."

The capture of the modernized fortification brought this comment from a company commander in the Twenty-Ninth Division.

"Air Support has been a critical factor in the progress of the attack at Brest. Air has been able to effectively attack targets beyond the range of observation and has been particularly valuable in silencing enemy artillery. The plan of keeping planes on air alert was exceedingly effective and resulted in exceptionally swift and effective air support.

"It was possible to utilize close support in the same manner that we use direct support artillery. The Infantry soldier could take cover very close to the target during bombardment and advance on the target immediately after bombardment. An instance of this was the attack of a Ranger Battalion on Fort Gaultbrock on September 3. In this action the battalion commander requested aerial bombardment to precede the attack. The planes were in the air at the time and were ordered to attack the fort immediately. As the last bomb struck, the leading elements of the Ranger Battalion closed in and captured the fort before the defenders had an opportunity to organize for further resistance. It was reported that the leading elements of the battalion reached the fort six minutes after the last bomb was dropped.

Time after time during assault on Brest Ninth Air Force fighter bombers attacked particular targets as called for by the ground forces, specifically:

On August 27th, for nearly an hour, from 2:15 to 3:05 P.M. 12 Thunderbolts strafed one of the strong points of reinforced concrete bunkers and 105 millimeter gun emplacements. The bombing had a marked effect in destroying the installation along with heavy

artillery fire. Direct hits from the air were observed by ground troops only 200 yards away.

On September 3rd, from 5:30 to 5:38 in the afternoon, eight Thunderbolts strafed an enemy position from 150 to 200 yards in front of two companies of Infantry. The position was taken.

On September 4th the pin-pointed targets on "Hill 62" were pounded by heavy artillery, bombed and strafed almost constantly during the afternoon. Previous heavy opposition from fortified installations had been holding up all efforts to take the hill. That night patrols reported that the remnants of the enemy who had not been destroyed during the day had withdrawn. At 6:30 o'clock the next morning American troops occupied the hill without resistance.

Thus, the fighter bombers which had sparred with tanks and ground columns, flexed its muscles, and took on successfully a heavyweight assignment in a preliminary to the Siegfried Line.

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