

CHAPTER V OVERSEAS MOVEMENT, JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, 1944.

1. Mission of Organization.

The missions of the Group during the months of January and February were two in number:

- a. That of moving the personnel, equipment, and planes of the Group across the United States, the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea, Africa, and Italy to the Army Air Base at Torretta, Italy.
- b. That of establishing a camp at that Base in Italy.

(A) Movement of Ground Echelon

As was stated in the last paragraph of [Chapter IV, Page 53](#), the first train carrying organization equipment and the personnel of the 765th Squadron to the Port of Embarkation left Hammer Field on 31 December 1943 under the command of Lt. Colonel Edwin W. Grogan (Santa Ana, California). On the morning of 1 January 1944, the second train, under command of Major R. Foster Scott (Dale, Indiana), left for the Port of Embarkation. This train was made up of personnel of the Headquarters Detachment and the 764th Squadron. During the afternoon of the same day the third and last train left Hammer Field. This was commanded by Captain Morris J. Drobeck (Wheeling, W. Va.) and carried the personnel of Squadrons 766 and 767.⁽¹⁾

At 2100 o'clock on January 6th, the first train arrived at Camp Patrick Henry, Newport News, Virginia. Three hours later the second train arrived at the same destination. The third train arrived before daylight of the following morning. One officer, 2nd Lt. Allison L. Hornbaker, the Group Aerial Photo Officer, had been removed from his train because of an infected jaw while crossing the continent and so was lost to the Group.⁽²⁾

Camp Patrick Henry, which is located twelve miles from Hampton Roads, Virginia, the Port of Embarkation, is a staging area for overseas movements. During the five days the personnel of the Ground Echelon were at the Camp, they were issued clothing, equipment, and arms as provided in the directive for overseas movements. This issue made up the shortages with which the Echelon had left Hammer Field. In this staging or processing area all officers and men were also given final physical examinations. Only three men were lost to the Group at the staging area, two going AWOL and one failing to pass the physical examination.⁽³⁾

⁽¹⁾ See Appendage No. 1, Chapter V, Page 1.

⁽²⁾ No orders available.

⁽³⁾ See Appendage No. 2, Chapter V, Page 2.

On 12 January, the Echelon left Camp Patrick by train and proceeded to the Port of Embarkation at Hampton Roads. They went directly aboard ship from the train. The various units were assigned to "Liberty Ships" as follows:⁽⁴⁾

Headquarters Detachment and 764 th Squadron	S/S Archbishop Lamy
765 th Squadron	S/S George S. Hanly
766 th Squadron	S/S William Rawle
767 th Squadron	S/S John Jay

That same day some of the ships moved out into the harbor from their respective piers and dropped anchor to wait for other ships to load and move into position. This was accomplished before the end of the 13th of January. On 14 January 1944, the four ships, now part of a convoy of approximately one hundred ships, about twenty-five of which were escort ships, steamed out into the Atlantic Ocean. The long awaited and much discussed Port of Embarkation was now behind. New experiences lay ahead.

Personnel from Group Headquarters aboard the S/S Archbishop Lamy included, in addition to Lt. Colonel Grogan and Major Scott, the following individuals:

Captain Walter G. Mitten, Assistant Group S-4, (Ansonia, Connecticut).
CWO Fred C. Medau, Technical Inspector, (Livermore, California).
1st Lt. Raymond V. Gombossy, Assistant Navigator, (Youngstown, Ohio).
1st Lt. Joseph J. Monte, Special Services Officer, (Union Township, N.J.).
1st Lt. Louis C. Pfister, Assistant Adjutant, (Philadelphia, Pa.).
1st Lt. Paul G. Rasmussen, Chaplain, (Boston, Massachusetts).
2nd Lt. Charles S. Billhart, Asst Special Services Officer, (Glen Rock, N.J.).
2nd Lt. Stanhope E. Elmore, weather Officer, (Montgomery, Alabama).
2nd Lt. Edward F. Kiernan, Armament Officer, (New York City, N.Y.).
2nd Lt. George B. Maxson, Assistant Engineering Officer, (Rawlins, Wyoming).
M/Sgt. Hewitt Callendar, Tech Inspector Clerk, (Berkley, California).
Mr. Norman M. Boggs, ARC Field Representative, (Woodstock, New York).

On board ship calisthenics were conducted daily; certain classes in such subjects as care and cleaning of arms, intelligence, censorship, first-aid, sex hygiene, sanitation, and defense against air attack and chemical warfare were conducted; Special Services set up a diversified program of entertainment, instruction and recreation; and the Chaplain supervised the religious program.

Less than thirty-six hours after the convoy had lifted anchor a severe storm was experienced at sea. Among the many victims of seasickness was the Group Chaplain, 1st Lt. Paul G. Rasmussen. This was a severe blow to the pride of Chaplain Rasmussen, an officer of Danish descent with considerable seagoing experience, who was too ill to conduct religious services the first Sunday aboard ship. On three different occasions during the crossing of the Atlantic, depth charges were dropped but no enemy submarines or planes were actually seen by any member of this Group.

⁽⁴⁾ See Appendage No. 3, Chapter V, Page 3.

On the last day of January, after eighteen days at sea, the convoy passed through the Straits of Gibraltar and entered the Mediterranean Sea. The following day the air raid alert sounded. From high altitude twelve enemy bombers carried out a twelve-minute attack on the convoy. An unofficial report of this encounter listed one ship sunk, one damaged, and one bomber destroyed.

Upon the entrance of the convoy into the Mediterranean Sea, British escort ships replaced those provided by the United States for the Atlantic crossing. From Casablanca eastward, various ships of the convoy put in at the several harbors along the African Coast, while other ships from these harbors joined the convoy.

On February 4th, three of the four ships carrying personnel of the Group, together with some of the other ships of the convoy, dropped anchor in the harbor of Tunis. For six days the vessels lay off shore within sight of Tunis and Carthage, but no passengers were permitted to go ashore.

On February 10th, the ships again put out to sea and the officers and men were told their port of debarkation would be Naples, Italy. Two days later the vessels steamed past the Isle of Capri and entered the Harbor of Naples. That same day, after 31 days at sea, the officers and men went ashore and were moved to Bagnoli, which is seven miles from Naples.

At Bagnoli the officers and men were quartered in the Collegio Constanzio Ciano. There in mid-February, in buildings that had neither window panes nor artificial heat, they slept on marble floors with only two blankets. Such sleep as they were able to get was repeatedly broken by the roar of anti-aircraft guns defending the harbor of Naples against enemy aerial attacks. Lt. Colonel Grogan said the food was the poorest he had ever eaten in his twenty-one years of military service.

The personnel of the Group who were quartered at Bagnoli were glad to move. This they began to do when the first of three trains left Naples on February 16th on Vocal Orders of the Commanding General of the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations. The train, composed of "40 and 8" cars, arrived at Cerignola after thirty-six hours of travel. There the travelers boarded trucks for a two and a half hour ride to Venosa. The second train left Naples the 17th of February, followed by the last train on the 18th. The trip experienced by the personnel on the last two trains paralleled that provided on the first train. One of the highlights of all three trains was that of being stalled for an hour in a mile long tunnel in which over 500 persons were suffocated a few days afterward.

Colonel Glantzberg, who led the Air Echelon to Africa, Captain William Burke, Captain Francis Hoermann, and 1st Lt. William F. Foster were at Venosa to meet the Ground Echelon upon its arrival. Thinking the Air Base at Venosa was to be the station from which the Group was to operate, the Ground Echelon was prepared to set up their tents in the snow and mud, and begin to make ready for the arrival of the Air Echelon from Africa.

There were practically no buildings at Venosa. The field was not completed. When a plane of the 461st Group landed on the field, it bogged down in the mud on the landing strip. After looking over the field following this incident, the Commanding Officer of the 55th Wing, Colonel George Acheson, declared the field non-operational. The Group was then assigned to the Army Air Base at Torretta, which is eight miles south of Cerignola. So the Ground Echelon of the three squadrons (764th, 766th, and 767th) pulled their stakes out of the mud, boarded trucks, and returned through Cerignola on route to Torretta. The Air Echelons of Squadrons 767 and 766 arrived from Africa on February 22nd. The following day the Air Echelon of Squadrons 765 and 764 landed at the Base. The old Hammer Field crowd was gathering round.

The S/S George S. Hanly, carrying personnel of the 765th Squadron, did not put in at Tunis on February 4th but proceeded on to Augusta, Sicily. After nearly a week at that port, the Hanly moved on to Naples where it docked after dark the evening of February 15th. As had happened on the 12th of February to the Ground Echelon of the three other Squadrons, the personnel of the 765th were loaded on trucks and transported to Bagnoli, where they spent the remainder of the night with Squadrons 764, 766, and 767. The following day they boarded a train, but instead of going to Cerignola, they went all the way across Italy to Barletta. From there they were hauled back to Torretta by trucks, arriving at the Base two days after the arrival of the Air Echelon. And still the officers and men of the 461st were gathering round.

(B) Movement of Air Echelon

During the first half of the month of December plans had begun to take shape for the eventual overseas movement of the Air Echelon. It was known that the Group would have seventy complete combat crews but only sixty-two new B-24 airplanes. Knowing this, Colonel Glantzberg announced that as the new fly-away planes arrived they would be assigned to crews in the order in which each crew had completed the minimum training requirements for a heavy bombardment group. Eventually, therefore, the first sixty crews to meet the specified requirements received the planes assigned to the Group.^(a)

In December it had also been determined that, in addition to the ten crew members, each plane would transport four additional passengers to the Theatre of Operations. The 248 passengers designated as part of the Air Echelon followed closely the Air Echelon of a heavy bombardment group as defined by the Army Air Forces. The personnel so designated were officers and men selected from the various sections of the Group. Thus, a process of elimination assigned the either combat crews who did not receive a plane assigned to the Ground Echelon for the overseas movement. At the last movement, however, the Commanding Officer of the IVth Bomber Command, Brigadier General Samuel M. Connell, issued vocal orders by telephone that the eight pilots not receiving an airplane would replace eight individuals previously assigned to the Air Echelon.

Still another decision that had been made in December was that the squadron in which all the combat crews first completed the minimum training requirements and so

^(a) Cf. Chapter IV, Page 49, Par. 5.

was assigned its full complement of airplanes, would be the first to leave the Base for the processing field. Early in January it was announced that the 766th Squadron had won this distinction.

It had been expected the Air Echelon would leave Hammer Field for processing at Hamilton Field, California, at approximately the same time the Ground Echelon left for the Port of Embarkation. Such, however, did not prove to be the case. No part of the Air Echelon departed for processing until the afternoon of January 14th.

On 2 January, the Deputy Group Commander, Lt. Colonel Philip R. Hawes, assumed the former duties of the departed Executive Officer, Lt. Colonel Grogan and Statistical Officer, 1st Lt. Thomas M. Couch, became temporary adjutant in place of Major Scott. Various officers and men were detailed to turn in equipment and to police the buildings and areas vacated by the Ground Echelon. Arrangements were completed for the men of the Air Echelon to mess under the supervision of Base personnel. As the days passed, more airplanes continued to arrive, each of which was immediately turned over to a crew for acceptance, checking, calibration, and preparation for the long flight ahead; missions were flown; airplane recognition classes were conducted for Group and Squadron Staff Members; packing boxes cluttered up the areas between buildings on the line; but there was an apparent let down in the tempo of the training program.

The following day Colonel Glantzberg flew to Headquarters of the IVth Bomber Command and returned the next day with word that the movement from Hammer Field would be delayed several more days. That evening at their new home in Fresno, Colonel and Mrs. Glantzberg entertained the Senior Members of the Staff, the Squadron Commanders, Colonel and Mrs. Dougher, and the invited officers wives who were at Fresno.

While flying at high altitude on January 8th, three men on two different crews lost their lives due to oxygen failures. They were Sergeant Clement G. Amory, a tail gunner on Lt. Grimm's crew; and two men from Lt. Bush's crew, Sergeant Billy H. Novotny, a radio operator; and Staff Sergeant John F. Uts, a tail gunner. These losses led to an immediate investigation by the Group of the oxygen systems on all of the new planes; and, on 12 January, to a detailed investigation by two officers from Headquarters of the Flying Safety Section of the Army Air Forces: Major Randolph E. Churchill and Major J.J. Thompson. On the same flight with Lt. Bush on January 8th, Sergeant Herbert W. Bioling suffered a badly frozen hand and subsequently was lost to the Group.

The dwindling flying training program, which was further curtailed by bad weather on January 9th, came to a sudden halt on January 11th, when all planes were grounded for compliance with a Technical Order concerning a bolt in the landing gear of the nose wheel.

On 13 January, the Group issued verbal movement warning orders. The following day, January 14th, the official movement orders were received, and that afternoon the first two flights of planes from the 766th Squadron proceeded to Hamilton Field, California. Leading the first flight was Flight Leader, 1st Lt. Joseph W. Donovan (San Luis Potosi,

Mexico), who was flanked on his right wing by 2nd Lt. Robert Simon (Milwaukee, Wis.), and on the left wing by 2nd Lt. Richard S. Fawcett (Amherst, Mass.). One of the passengers on Lt. Simon's plane was Major Leigh M. Lott, the Group Combat Intelligence Officer (Bridgeton, New Jersey). The second flight, consisting of six planes, left Hammer Field an hour after the first flight had left. This flight, led by 1st Lt. Charles W. Bauman (Dallas, Texas), was made up of the crews of the following pilots:

2nd Lt. Robert S. Bigelow (Roswell, N.M.),
2nd Lt. Joseph B. Hesser (North Vernon, Indiana),
F/O Paul S. Mowery (Dillsburg, Pa.),
2nd Lt. Ralph T. Seeman (Kent, Washington), and
F/O Douglas L. Robertson (Long Beach, Cal.).

The Squadron Commander, Captain James C. Dooley (Dallas, Texas) was a passenger on F/O Mowery's plane; the Group Operations Officer, Captain William Burke (Orwigsburg, Pa.), rode with 2nd Lt. Bigelow.⁽⁵⁾

The following day, 15 January, the third and last flight of the 766th Squadron flew from Hammer Field to Hamilton Field. This flight was led by Flight Leader, 2nd Lt. Donald MacDougall (Cranston, R.I.). In this flight were –

2nd Lt. Theodore R. Ahlberg (Portland, Ore.),
2nd Lt. Robert F. Edwards (Arlington, Va.),
2nd Lt. Turner M. Holmes (Chicago, Ill.),
2nd Lt. Culos M. Settle (North Wilkesboro, N.C.), and
2nd Lt. Sidney S. Wilson (Buffalo, N.Y.).

The Group Commander, Colonel Frederic E. Glantzberg (Springfield, Mass. And Fresno, Cal.); Captain Hohn E. Wagener (Sparkill, N.Y.), Group Communications Officer; and 1st Lt. Sydney S. Spivack (New York, N.Y.), Assistant Group Combat Intelligence Officer, rode with Lt. Holmes. The Colonel had planned to take off with the first flight on the 14th, but Lt. Holmes' plane was un-airworthy. Captain Marion M Pruitt (Greenville, Texas), Group Navigator, flew with Lt. Wilson's crew, while 1st Lt. George V. Leffler, the Group Bombardier (Madison, Wis.), was a passenger on Lt. Edwards' plane. First pilots in this Squadron who did not receive a new plane, but who traveled with the Air Echelon were 2nd Lt. Edwin Bauman (Sonoma, Cal.) and 2nd Lt. Robert A. Wood (Cincinnati, Ohio).

The second Squadron to leave Hammer Field was the 767th. The date of departure was January 17th. The first pilots with planes in this Squadron were:

Flight Leader, 1st Lt. Harold B. Strong Jr. (Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.),
Flight Leader, 1st Lt. Robert W. Walters (Miami, Fla.),
Flight Leader, 2nd Lt. Floyd W. Woodard (Phoenix, Ariz.),
2nd Lt. Ausbon E. Aldredge (Alexandria, La.),
2nd Lt. Robert W. Alkire (Jamaica, N.Y.),

⁽⁵⁾ See Appendage No. 4, Chapter V, Page 4.

2nd Lt. Kelton G. Bush (Albany, N.Y.),
2nd Lt. James E. Harris (Red Cloud, Neb.),
2nd Lt. Robert L. Heald (Orange, N.J.),
F/O Harry G. Huggard (Dover-Foxcraft, Me.),
2nd Lt. Gerald J. Maroney (Jamaica, N.Y.),
2nd Lt. George Nelson (Chesterton, Ind.),
2nd Lt. Francis J. Riley (Twin Falls, Idaho),
2nd Lt. Aaron J. Trohman (Brooklyn, N.Y.),
2nd Lt. Calvin S. Warren (Jacksonville, Fla.), and
1st Lt. William H. Zumsteg (Chicago, Ill.).

First pilots without planes were: 1st Lt. Matias M. Torres Jr. (Albuquerque, N.M.) and 2nd Lt. Marwood E. Wright (Minneapolis, Minn.). The Squadron Commander, Major James B. Knapp (Blandinsville, Ill.) rode with Lt. Maroney.

On January 19th, Squadron Commander Captain Albert O. Witte (Muskegon, Mich.) took his Squadron, the 764th, to Hamilton Field. The Flight Leaders were 2nd Lt. James O. Bean (Elnora, Ind.), 2nd Lt. Harold C. Blanchard (Fresno, Cal.), 2nd Lt. Mac A. Kollenborn (Boise, Idaho), and 2nd Lt. Clyde A. Stevens (Kansas City, Mo.). First pilots with planes were:

2nd Lt. George A. Burton (Milwaukie, Ore.),
2nd Lt. Keith L. Fuller (Delpaso Heights, Cal.),
2nd Lt. Robert J. Hefling (Sheboygan Falls, Wis.),
2nd Lt. George N. Ryder (Decatur, Ga.),
2nd Lt. Robert N. Sayre (East Liverpool, Ohio),
2nd Lt. Kay B. Steele (Glendale, Cal.),
2nd Lt. Edgar M. Trenner (New York, N.Y.),
2nd Lt. Edward F. Weiluva (Sacramento, Cal.),
2nd Lt. William C. Wallace (Los Angeles, Cal.),
2nd Lt. Robert A. Weir (Billings, Mont.), and
2nd Lt. John F. Wilson (Double Springs, Ala.).

Captain Witte flew with Lt. Trenner. The Group Photo Interpretation Officer, 2nd Lt. James C. Clark, was a passenger on Lt. Stevens' plane. The first pilots in the Squadron without planes were 2nd Lt. James R. Johnson (Oklahoma City, Okla.) and 2nd Lt. Farrold F. Stephens (Las Vegas, N.M.).

The 765th Squadron was the last one to leave Hammer Field. The Squadron Commander, Major Robert E. Applegate (Cincinnati, Ohio) led the Squadron to Hamilton Field on January 20th. He flew with Lt. Kostka. The Flight Leaders of the Squadron were: 1st Lt. Marion C. Mixson (Charleston, N.C.), 2nd Lt. Forrest D. Nixon (Auburn, Ala.), and 2nd Lt. John K. Specht (Oxnard, Cal.). The first pilots with planes were:

2nd Lt. James T. Bennett (Jamesville, Cal.),
2nd Lt. Jackson F. Childrey (Richmond, Va.),
2nd Lt. Eugene P. Ford (New Derry, Pa.),

2nd Lt. Vernon W. Garrison (Eaton Rapids, Mich.),
2nd Lt. Walter J. Grimm (Newark, N.J.),
2nd Lt. Roy E. Huber (Plevna, Mont.),
2nd Lt. Charles F. Kostka (Cicero, Ill.),
2nd Lt. Thomas R. Moss (Baltimore, Md.),
2nd Lt. Samuel N. Norris (Owensboro, Ky.),
2nd Lt. Edward W. Peterson (Chicago, Ill.),
2nd Lt. Nobile A. Taylor (Corpus Christi, Texas),
2nd Lt. Joseph H. Sage (Spokane, Wash.), and
2nd Lt. William Z. Weems Jr. (Houston, Tex.).

First pilots without planes were Captain Francis J. Hoermann (Hartford, Conn.) and 2nd Lt. Glennial Fulks (Munfordville, Ky.). Several members of the Group Staff had waited at Hammer Field to take care of the last details of departure and to travel with the last squadron to leave. They were the Deputy Group Commander, Lt. Colonel Philip R. Hawes (Nanuet, N.Y.) and the Group Surgeon, Captain Charles J. Deishley (Columbus, Ohio) who rode with Lt. Childrey; Captain Henry M. Hudson (Waco, Texas), Group Engineering Officer, and 1st Lt. Thomas M. Couch (Dallas, Tex.), Group Statistical Officer, who rode with Lt. Norris; and Captain Harrison G. Word (Alice, Tex.), Assistant Group Operations Officer, who flew with Lt. Huber.

Four Sergeants, each one a Section Chief in Headquarters, were passengers as part of the Air Echelon. They were:

M/Sgt. Claude W. Hisey, S-1 Sergeant Major (Gary, Indiana),
M/Sgt. Charles H. Bredice, S-2 Section Chief (Ionia, Michigan),
M/Sgt. William A. Reiser, S-3 Section Chief (Klamath Falls, Oregon), and
M/Sgt. LeRoy W. Rioux, S-4 Section Chief (Worcester, Massachusetts).

The processing program at Hamilton Field was normally accomplished in a period of three days. The program fell into four distinct parts, as follows: (1) A physical examination for all personnel; (2) A final check and provision of all personal and professional equipment and clothing; (3) Briefing for a cross-country and an over water flight; (4) Inspection, testing, and final modification of each airplane. A total of four officers and eight enlisted men were dropped from the records at Hamilton Field.⁽⁶⁾

Whenever the processing of several planes and crews was completed, they left by flights for various stations along the prescribed route for their final destination. Colonel Glantzberg, who led the first flight from Hamilton Field to Africa, insisted that the planes should be moved in formation flights of convenient sizes and that every half hour the planes should interchange positions in the formations. This decision gave the pilots a great deal of practice in formation flying without causing over-fatigue. The first flight left Hamilton Field on 17 January. Table No 1 gives the dates at which the Squadron

⁽⁶⁾ See Appendage No. 2, Chapter V, Page 2.

Commander, with most of the planes in each respective Squadron, arrived at the various stations along the route.⁽⁷⁾⁽⁸⁾

Colonel Glantzberg arrived at Oudna the 3rd of February with the 766th Squadron. There he found Colonel Crowder with his Group, the 460th. A few days later the 460th moved to Italy, leaving space on the Base at Oudna for the expected arrival of all planes of the 461st. The next several days were spent in setting up a camp in the mud and rain of winter Africa. On February 5th, orders were received which directed the movement of the Group to Vanosa, Italy on the 12th. Later these orders were cancelled.

Table No. 1

<u>Station</u>	<u>766</u> <u>Squadron</u>	<u>767</u> <u>Squadron</u>	<u>764</u> <u>Squadron</u>	<u>765</u> <u>Squadron</u>
Hamilton Field, California	Jan. 14	Jan. 17	Jan. 19	Jan. 20
AAB, Palm Springs, Calif.	17	21		25
Sky Harbor Airport, Pheonix, Ariz.			21	
AAB, Midland, Texas	18	22	22	27
AAB, Memphis, Tenn.	20	23	23	28
Morrison Field, Trinidad, British, V.I.	25	27	27	Feb. 1
AAB, Belen, Brazil	26	28	28	2
AAB, Fortaleza, Brazil	27	29	29	3
AAB, Rufisque (Dakar), Fr. W. Africa	29	31	31	5
AAB, Marrakech, French Morrocco	30	Feb. 1	Feb.1	6
AAB, Telegma, Algiers	31			
AAB, Djeseida, Tunisia	Feb. 2	2	2	
AAB, Oudna, Tunisia	3	3	3	8
AAB, Torretta, Italy	22	22	23	23

Leaving the Air Echelon at Oudna under command of Major Knapp, Colonel Glantzberg took off in a B-24 for Headquarters of the 15th Air Force at Bari, Italy on 11 February. The officers traveling with the Colonel in this advance party were Captain Burke, Captain Pruitt, and Lt. Foster. Because of adverse weather conditions at Bari, the party landed at Manduria. The same afternoon the Colonel and Captain Burke went to San Pancrazio to look over the set-up of the 376th Group, one of the oldest U.S. heavy bombardment groups in Europe. They planned to fly a combat mission with the 376th Group on 13 February, but the mission was stood down because of bad weather. The

⁽⁷⁾ See Appendage No. 5, Chapter V, Page 5.

⁽⁸⁾ See Appendage No. 6, Chapter V, Page 6.

following day, flying in different planes, they took off for a combat mission. Colonel Glantzberg got through to the target at Verona, Italy, but Captain Burke was turned back by engine failure five miles south of the bomb line. Thus, on 14th February, Colonel Glantzberg, fittingly enough, became the first member of the 461st Group to fly a combat mission.

On February 15th, the Colonel and the three other officers in his party flew to Bari. That same day Captain Hoermann, commanding a small party of four officers and eight men, landed at Venosa to begin the setting up of a camp at that Base. On February 16th, Colonel Glantzberg and his party went to Venosa, traveling from Spinazzola to Venosa by Jeep. Captain Pruitt returned to Oudna on the plane that had transported Captain Hoermann and his party to Venosa, but Colonel Glantzberg and the two other officers in his party were still at Venosa on February 18th, when Lt. Colonel Grogan arrived with the first Squadron of the Ground Echelon. That same day Colonel Glantzberg was notified verbally by the Commanding Officer of the 55th Wing, Colonel George Acheson, that the Group was to be moved to the Base at Torretta, Italy.

On February 20th, Colonel Glantzberg, Captain Burke, and Lt. Foster drove to Torretta and selected headquarters and squadron areas. Captain Burke then returned by plane to Oudna to expedite the movement of the Air Echelon to Torretta. Colonel Glantzberg and Lt. Foster remained at Torretta to welcome the arriving Ground and Air Echelons a few days later as already described on pages 56 and 57.

By February 26th, a headquarters mess for officers had been set up on the first floor of the headquarters building. That day Colonel Acheson visited the Group. He made several constructive suggestions, but expressed satisfaction with the progress the Group had made in orienting itself at Torretta.

The following day Colonel Glantzberg flew Major Lott to San Pancrazio where he was to remain with the 376th Group until he had seen a mission planned, briefed, interrogated, and reported. While at San Pancrazio, the Colonel arranged for each of his squadron commanders to fly a combat mission with the 376th Group.

On the last day of February, the 29th, twelve planes, ten of which had been transferred to the 47th Wing, took off in a formation flight for San Pancrazio.⁽⁹⁾ The Flight Leader was Captain Albert O. Witte, the 764th Squadron Commander. Real tragedy marked this flight. The formation ran into bad weather and split up. Captain Witte was fatally injured when his plane crashed in the storm near Martina Branca. Other fatalities of the skeleton crew were the co-pilot, Flight Leader 2nd Lt. Harold C. Blanchard; the navigator, 2nd Lt. William Maxfield; and the engineer, S/Sgt. Frank N. Lamartina. The only survivor was the radio operator, Sgt. Ansel B. McNaight, who was critically injured.

In the death of Captain Albert O. Witte the Group lost the last of its four original squadron commanders. But the Group also lost far more than just that. It lost an

⁽⁹⁾ See Appendage No. 7, Chapter V, Page 7.

exceptionally capable young officer who had progressed rapidly on a most promising military career.

Born October 16, 1917, Witte was commissioned a Second Lieutenant at the United States Military Academy at West Point, 29 May 1942. He finished his cadet pilot training 13 December 1942. Between that date and the one on which he became a squadron commander of the 461st Group (11 August 1943), he attended a four engine training school, was promoted to First Lieutenant, and was an instructor four-engine pilot at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho. On September 17, 1943, he was promoted to the rank of Captain.

During the period he was a member of this Group, he displayed almost unlimited promise of potentially great military leadership. Tall, athletic, handsome, highly intelligent, understanding of human nature, capable of making decisions, conscientious, a cautious superior pilot, a devoted family man – he was truly a man's man.

His position as Squadron Commander will undoubtedly be well filled by his successor, but no one will ever replace "Al" Witte in the affections of the men and officers of the 461st Bombardment Group.

Between the time that Colonel Glantzberg left Hammer Field on the 14th of January and that of the arrival of the majority of the personnel of the Group at Torretta on 22 and 23 February, the only information he had concerning what was happening to considerably large blocks of the personnel of the Air Echelon was that provided by crew members who caught up to the Group at various stations along the route. In fact, several weeks elapsed after the official arrival of the Group at Torretta before he got the complete picture of what had happened to many of the Air Echelon members while on route.

Some planes had been detained longer than others at Hamilton Field for modification and final check-up for overseas movement. Colonel Hawes left the 765th Squadron there and flew with the 764th Squadron to Morrison Field. There he waited from 24 January until the 19th of February for straggling planes of the Group. Captain Word, who had been left behind with the stragglers at Hamilton Field, arrived at Morrison Field on February 16th. On February 19th, Colonel Hawes, flying with Lt. Wood of the 766th Squadron took off from Morrison Field. They arrived at Djeseida on March 2nd and at Torretta on March 4th.

The sixty two planes, transporting 620 officers and men, were flown from Hammer Field, California, to the Army Air Base at Torretta, Italy, without the loss of a single life and with the loss of only one plane. While the Air Echelon was stationed at Oudna, Flight Leader Kollenborn's co-pilot, 2nd Lt. Hayden "washed out" their plane. This happened in a taxi accident when Lt. Hayden pulled up the landing gear instead of the flaps. To compensate for Lt. Kollenborn's chagrin and disappointment, but fundamentally as a reward for outstanding achievement during the training program, Lt. Kollenborn was made Assistant Operations Officer of his Squadron, the 764th.

From Hamilton Field to Oudna, Tunisia, the Air Echelon had been under the complete command and administrative control of the Commanding General, Ferrying Division, Air Transport Command. At Morrison Field the ATC ruled that passengers would no longer be permitted to cross the Atlantic on heavy bombers. As a result, 248 officers and men were off loaded from the sixty-two planes of the 461st Group. In some Squadrons a gunner from each crew was off loaded and the crew chief was taken in his place. Captain Henry H. Hudson, the Group Engineering Officer, and 1st Lt. William F. Foster, 765th Squadron Combat Intelligence Office (Los Angeles, Cal.) were the only individuals not on flying status to cross the Atlantic with the Air Echelon.

Most of the off loaded members of the Air Echelon were at Morrison Field a minimum of two weeks. One hundred thirty of these individuals were eventually sent by rail and air to New York and from there by C-54 and C-47 to Oudna. The first detail of off-loaded personnel left Morrison Field in day coaches for 1 Park Avenue, New York City the evening of February 5th. This detail, under train commander Major Leigh M. Lott, consisted of fifty-two officers and men, three of whom were members of the 460th Group. They arrived in New York the evening of February 7th and were quartered at the Murray Hill Hotel.⁽¹⁰⁾

The evening of February 10th the first of these individuals left La Guardia Field by C-54 for overseas. On the plane leaving that evening were:

Major Leigh M. Lott,
Captain Alexander E. Sproul (Staunton, Va.), 766th Squadron Surgeon,
1st Lt. Rowland A. Boone (Hemat, Colo.), 766th Squadron Engineering Officer,
2nd Lt. Glenn H. Stemple (Oakland, Iowa), 766th Squadron Armament Officer,
2nd Lt. Ellis G. Stowe, 460th Group,
M/Sgt. Joseph W. Doody (Belaire, Ohio), 767th Squadron Flight Chief,
M/Sgt. Frank Martinus (Adrian, Mich.), 765th Squadron Flight Chief, and
T/Sgt. Harry E. Russo (Atlantic City, N.J.), 764th Squadron Armament Chief.

For the Atlantic crossing these individuals found themselves on a plane carrying Major General J.E. Hull and the senior members of his amphibious staff to England. The plane was unable to land at Stevensville, Labrador, so was compelled to turn back to Presque Isle, Maine. There M/Sgt. Martinus and T/Sgt. Russo were off loaded and additional gasoline was taken aboard. At 0600 the morning of February 11th, with the thermometer reading 20 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, the plane took off for Goose Bay, Labrador. It left there at 1100 o'clock the same day for Scotland. At 0215 Greenwich Central Time, February 12th, the plane landed at Proswich, Scotland. That evening at 0500 the plane and the passengers left for Casablanca. The above-mentioned four officers and one enlisted man were the only members of the 461st Group to travel to Italy by way of the British Isles. Mention is made here of this bit of detailed information because of the fact that on February 12, 1944, the 461st Group had personnel in six different countries of the world: United States, Brazil, Tunisia, Italy, Canada, and the British Isles.⁽¹¹⁾

⁽¹⁰⁾ See Appendage No. 8, Chapter V, Page 8.

⁽¹¹⁾ See Appendage No. 8, Chapter V, Page 8.

Eventually all of the 130 passengers were transported from West Palm Beach to New York, Stevensville, the Azores, Casablanca, El Alouina, and Oudna. All arrived at Oudna in time to rejoin the Air Echelon for movement to Torretta on 22nd and 23rd of February.

The remaining 118 members of the Air Echelon off loaded at Morrison Field – all enlisted men – left Morrison Field by train for Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia on February 13th.⁽¹²⁾ They left Hampton Roads the 7th of March on the fast unescorted troop ship, S/S General Mann, and arrived at Casablanca on the 16th of March. From there to Tunis they experienced a seven day train ride in the famous French “40 and 8’s”. After two weeks at Tunis they were sent back to Algiers (a three day trip in the “40 and 8’s”. By this time they had transferred from the Group to the 19th Replacement Battalion. Upon the insistence of the Group and the 49th Wing Commanding Officers, the Fifteenth Air Force finally located these 188 men. They were transported by heavy bombardment planes from Algiers to Torretta. The last of them arrived at the Base on the 30th of April. Thus, from 31 December 1943 to 30 April 1944, four month elapsed before all of the personnel of the Group, approximately 2000 officers and men, were moved from Hammer Field, Fresno, California, to the Army Air Base at Torretta, Italy.⁽¹³⁾

2. Promotions.

Promotions not previously recorded:

- a. 22 November 1943, 2nd Lt. Thomas M. Couch, Statistical Officer, to 1st Lieutenant.
- b. 30 December 1943, 2nd Lt. Louis C. Pfister, Assistant Adjutant and Assistant Statistical Officer to 1st Lieutenant.

3. Personnel.

Deputy Group Commander, Lt. Colonel Philip R. Hawes, ASN 0-21220.

Philip R. Hawes, the son of Mr. And Mrs. David R. Hawes, was born at Los Angeles, California, 24 August 1913. He was graduated from the Manuel Arts High School in Los Angeles in June 1931.

On 1 July 1933, he entered the United States Army in which he served as a private until 1 July 1934. Having been appointed to the United States Military Academy at West Point by competitive examination for Army enlisted men, he entered the Academy 2 July 1934. After distinguishing himself as an expert gymnast at the Academy, he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant, 14 June 1938.

In September 1938, he reported to Randolph Field, San Antonio, Texas, for primary and basic pilot training. Upon completion of this training in June 1939, he was sent to

⁽¹²⁾ No orders available.

⁽¹³⁾ See Appendage No. 9, Chapter V, Page 9.

Kelly Field, San Antonio, Texas, for advance training. He was graduated from Kelly Field, 25, August 1939.

Following his graduation from Kelly Field, he returned to Randolph Field as an Instructor and Assistant Flight Commander. He remained in those dual positions until his transfer to Goodfellow Field, San Angelo, Texas, in March of 1941. There he became Flight Commander and Assistant Stage Commander.

In October 1941, he was transferred to Parrin Field, Sherman, Texas, as a Squadron Commander. Eventually he became Assistant Director of Training and Base Operations Officer. In December 1942, he was made the Director of Training at the Army Air Base at Garden City, Kansas. He remained in that position until August 1943 when he went to the Army Air Base at Ft. Worth, Texas, to attend the B-24 transition school at that Base. After completing this training in mid-October of 1943, he was ordered to the Fifteenth Bombardment Operational Training Wing, Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho, for assignment to a heavy bombardment group destined for foreign service.

After having been at Gowen Field approximately one week, he was interviewed there by the 461st Bombardment Group Commanding Officer, Colonel Frederic E. Glantzberg, on 1 November 1943. On 3 November 1943, he reported to the 461st Bombardment Group at Fresno, California, and was immediately made Deputy Group Commander in place of Major Robert E. Smith.

Lt. Colonel Hawes plunged into the training program immediately upon his arrival at Hammer Field. He impressed all members of the Group by his soldierly bearing; his administrative abilities; his knowledge of training and flying techniques; his capacity for hard work; his loyalty; and when off duty, which was seldom, by his ability to be a good fellow and a good mixer.

Hawes was promoted to the Regular Army Permanent Rank of First Lieutenant, 14 June 1941. The dates of his other promotions are as follows: AC: First Lieutenant, 1 October 1940; Major, 3 April 1942; Lt. Colonel, 23 July 1942. AUS: Captain, 15 October 1941; Major, date unknown; Lt. Colonel, 9 September 1943.

On 18 June 1943, four days after his graduation from West Point, he married Miss Jane E. Hermes of Nanuet, New York. To them have been born two children: Philip R. Hawes Jr., 23 September 1940; and Ann Adele Hawes, 29 December 1942.