

765TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)
461ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
Office of the Combat Intelligence Officer

WFF/jdk

APO 520, NY, NY
31 August 1944

SUMMARY OF THE SQUADRON HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST

In August, the 765th Bombardment Squadron participated in 20 combat missions, during which 120 squadron airplanes succeeded in reaching the targets to drop 260 tons of explosives on enemy installations. France, Hungary and Italy each were attacked four times; Rumania was the target for our bombs on three occasions; both Germany and Austria were visited twice; and one mission was flown to Yugoslavia. The outstanding aerial activity for the month was the softening up of the southern coast of France preparatory to the Allied invasion of that region and on "D" day giving tactical aid to the landing forces. Other noteworthy sorties were flown to Avignon, France, where devastating bombing accuracy destroyed a railroad bridge; to Vienna, Austria at which target direct hits on an underground oil storage depot were scored; and to Blechhammer, Germany to aid in the complete demolition of the synthetic oil refinery there. On August 17th, the Ploesti oil fields in Rumania were bombed, an attack which later proved to be that last one any group ever will have to make on that strategic and feared objective. On other days, formations attacked communications, supply, and transportation centers in Italy, Hungary and Yugoslavia. Five enemy aircraft were shot down by squadron gunners in August. On "stand down" days, training flights were scheduled with special emphasis placed on the newly-developed techniques of radar bombing.

One crew was MIA as a result of the month's operations. Lt. Schweisberger was forced to abort from the formation en route to Friedrichshafen, Germany on August 3rd and never has been seen or heard from since. Lt. Johnson's crew gave the squadron quite a scare when the explosion of an airplane in his flight severely damaged his ship, forcing him to leave the formation and land just south of the battle lines in Italy. It was two days later that word of his safe landing reached the squadron. During the interim everyone had given the men up for lost. The month was heralded out with great news, as on the evening of the last day a message stating he and his men to be safe in Bari. They were released from prison camp when the Hungarians surrendered.

Twelve new combat crews were added to our roster of flying personnel in August. One other pilot and two gunners also joined the squadron. A bombardier and one aircrew enlisted man were transferred to the 764th Bombardment Squadron and two gunners were permanently grounded as reclassified as armorers. Seven of the officers and eleven of the enlisted men on temporary duty to the United States were officially transferred to a replacement center there. Another twenty-two officers and thirty-one enlisted men departed for the United States on a permanent change of station.

Two airplanes were lost in action and two others classified as unserviceable during the month. Seven new airplanes flew their first mission in August.

The strength of the ground crew enlisted men showed a slight decrease for the month. Although eight men joined the organization, two others were transferred out of the squadron and eight men from the line were selected to return to the United States for B-29 Superfortress training. Lt. Norris, who was MIA over Yugoslavia and rescued by the partisans, returned to the squadron and was assigned duty as Assistant Intelligence Officer. Later in the month, Lt. Monio, another S-5 Officer, joined the organization.

The excellent combat records of Captain Murphy and Captain Dusenberry won recognition in August in the form of the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross. Lt. Johnson, Sgts. Daynovsky and Hager, and Cpls Priest and Tukey merited the Purple Heart. Most of the new crew members earned the Air Medal.

A good number of men received promotions during the month. Captain Hoermann is now Major Hoermann, Lts. Dusenberry and Arbuthnot made captain, thirteen 2nd Lts became entitled to wear silver bars, one flight officer was commissioned, nine S/Sgts sewed another stripe on their sleeves, fifteen Sgts added a "rocker", three Cpls stated receiving Sgt's pay, three PFCs became non-commissioned officers, and 3 Pvts were given \$4-a-month raises in base pay. On the other hand, ten men were "busted" to the grade of private for misconduct, but three of the decisions were rescinded at a later date.

A large number of men were able to rest war-torn nerves during August. Twenty-one officers and forty enlisted men relaxed for a week at Capri, San Spirito, de Villagio Mancuso. Thirteen other officers and thirty-eight other enlisted men spent three full days in historic Rome. F/Sgt Pagg lived for a week with the 5th Army on the front lines near Florence.

Three enlisted men "went over the hill" in August. All returned to face the consequences of their offenses. Three other men, involved in the theft of valuables and equipment from tents of MIA crews, departed for a four-month confinement in the 15th Air Force Stockade in Bari.

Eighteen men were hospital patients in August. Of this total, two were aircrew men wounded in action and three were malaria victims, the first in the squadron. Two cases of venereal disease were reported and both were successfully treated and cured.

The usual amount of entertainment and recreation existed for the men. Movies were shown every other night, projector permitting. The Enlisted Men's Club and "Club Amazon" functioned on other evenings. One night the Red Cross girls handed out coffee and doughnuts in the squadron area and chatted with the men. A squadron birthday party, commemorating its first year of existence, was held on August 11th; and, later in the month, an all-negro orchestra provided music for a celebration in the Officer's Club. A squadron baseball team was organized and during the month accumulated an enviable record of wins against neighboring organizations.

The first group war bond raffle was held on August 11th with thirty-nine bonds and one cash prize going to the lucky ticket holders. Only four of the forty winners were members of the 765th Bombardment Squadron.

The month of August marked the first anniversary of the activation of the 461st Bombardment Group. The squadron looked back on a year of assembling men and equipment, training both the air and ground echelons, molding the unit into a well-knit organization, preparing for overseas

movement, leaving the United States for foreign soil, arriving in Italy, and finally actual combat with the enemy. The men looked ahead to the squadron's second year of operation with the hope that its outstanding achievement would be the utter destruction of tyranny and aggression and the creation of a lasting peace. As the German resistance began to crumble, there seemed to be a good possibility that all would celebrate the second anniversary of the group at home with their families.

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EXTRACTS FROM THE SQUADRON HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST

August 1. No combat mission was flown today. Promotions for the enlisted men were posted.

August 2. Today's mission was to Avignon, France; the target – a railroad bridge; results – excellent. The formation was lead by 1st Lt. Taylor, six of our planes, each carrying nine 500 pound bombs, participated. The aircraft took off between 0845 and 0915. The flying time was approximately 8 hours. Crew 34 was forced to abort at I.P. when Lt. Landry, the navigator, crawled out to see why the bomb bay doors failed to open, and passed out from lack of oxygen. Three enlisted men, gunners, joined the Squadron today.

August 3. Captain Specht led the Group on an attack on the chemical works at Ober Hadorach, Germany. Seven of our planes took off; but aircraft number 63, piloted by 2nd Lt. Schweisberger, had to return because a supercharger was on fire, and was last seen just south of the Alps. A list of the crew is as follows: 2nd Lt's Schweisberger, Guy, Koester, Nolan. S/Sgt. Haag – Sgt's Durning, Frye, Tidd. Cpl's Furfare and Huhn.

August 4. No combat mission was flown today.

August 5. No combat mission was flown today. 1st Lt. Samuel Norris returned from the 26th General Hospital to his new duties as assistant Squadron Intelligence Officer. Four of the Red Cross girls were at the Squadron tonight to give the boys some coffee and doughnuts.

August 6. The planes took off at approximately 0745 for an attack on the marshalling yards at Miramas, France. Ships 39 and 32 aborted, one because of an engine malfunction and the other because of a faulty oxygen system. The remaining 5 ships did an excellent job, laying a concentrated bomb pattern that blanketed the objective.

August 7. The 77th mission for the Squadron was to the Synthetic Oil Refineries at Blechhammer, Germany. Take off time was approximately 0700, and our Squadron had six ships over the target. The flak was intense, and heavy, but was inaccurate. The bombing was done by PFF, and the results weren't recorded by camera; however, it is believed that the target was well blasted. Several columns of black smoke were seen. All of our ships returned safely at 1500. Seven of our officers and 20 enlisted men were able to go to Rome, Italy for a three day visit.

August 8. No combat mission was flown today. The 6 officers and 18 enlisted men who went to the States on DS, have been transferred AAF Redistribution Sta. #1, Atlantic City, N.J.

August 9. The Almasfuzito Oil Refinery in Hungary was the 78th mission for the Group. The flak for this area was light, inaccurate, and heavy, and no fighters were seen. The target was well

blasted, and the bomb pattern was very good. Black smoke was seen to 15000 feet and large fires and explosions were also reported. We had seven ships from the Squadron over the target and all returned safely by 1400. Lt. Novak, having finished 50 combat missions, left for Personnel Center #3 today.

August 10. Our ships took off for Ploesti, Rumania at approximately 0520, and nine of our aircraft had their bombs on the target. Bombing was done by PFF, due to the heavy smoke from previous bombings, and smoke screens. Of course the actual bomb hits weren't recorded, but from all reports they were headed in the right direction. One of the ships had to jettison their bombs because of a malfunction of the bomb bay doors. Ship 34 had its gas tanks shot up, and two of the men were injured. Cpl. C. S. Prient and S.M. Tukey were the men injured. Two ships were seen to go down over the target, but they weren't from the 461st Bomb Group. Lt. Kahn had his rudder controls, elevator control, and right aileron shot out by the flak, also there was a large hole in his main gas tank. T/Sgt. Harry Lightstone did a remarkable job of repairing the control cables. He was doing all this work at 20000 feet in the bomb bay without oxygen. The crew was about to bail out, but with the repaired cables and the C-1, Lt. Kahn was able to nurse the ship back to the base, and made a beautiful landing with the C-1, and shot up cables. 1st Lt. Curtis G. Green, Jr. was assigned to us from the 764th Bomb Squadron. Two S/Sgt's were promoted to T/Sgt.

August 11. No combat mission was flown today. Nine officers and x EM relieved from duty and transferred to Personnel Center #6. These men have completed "50" combat missions. The following 2nd Lt's were promoted to 1st: Abidi-Cessna-Grabenstein-Haggerty-Jenkins-Pasiuk-Schear-Green-Hasenkampf-Humburg. Today marked the first anniversary of the activation of the 765th Bombardment Squadron, and was celebrated by the officers and men with parties at their clubs.

August 12. Mission #80 was to Genoa, Italy, and the target was coastal installations of gun batteries. The flak for this area was very accurate, and one ship must have received a direct hit in the bomb bay because it blew up over the target. During the excitement, Lt. Johnson and crew just disappeared from the air, and we have no account as to their whereabouts. The results were not so good.

August 13. On this date, our aircraft bombed the gun emplacements at Genoa, Italy for the second consecutive day. Seven ships participated in the mission; and, although it is impossible to state for sure, it is believed that one of the flights succeeded in obtaining direct hits on the target. Flak was encountered over the target, both from land batteries and from ships in the harbor; however no one was hit.

August 14. Eight aircraft flew on mission #82, which was aimed at the destruction of gun emplacements at St. Raphael on the southern France "Invasion" coast. The 1230 take-off on this date was the latest yet for a combat mission, and our ships did not arrive back at the base until 1000. Slight opposition was not, and returning crews claimed that bombs hit the briefed objective. We received news today that Lt. Johnson and crew are all safe and sound and are on their way back to the Squadron. They landed behind the lines in Northern Italy. Lt. Johnson had a slight head wound.

August 15. Today we paved the way for the landing in southern France of our troops. The target was the beach between Toulon and Nice. Two ships had to bring their bombs back, because of a rack malfunction. But the rest of the aircraft had their bombs right on the money. No flak or enemy aircraft were encountered. Six S/Sgt's were promoted to the grade of T/Sgt.

August 16. No combat mission was flown today. M/Sgt. Pegg left for a visit to the front lines of the 5th Army.

August 17. Mission #84 was flown to an oil refinery at Ploesti, Rumania. Nine aircraft from the Squadron took off on schedule, but two of them were forced to abort from the formation. The rest of them went on to the target, where they succeeded in obtaining direct hits upon the objective. AA fire was both intense and accurate and several ships were moderately damaged. All personnel were unharmed. Five officers and two EM having completed their 50 missions, left for the States.

August 18. Mission #85 was flown today, and the seven aircraft that participated encountered no opposition, but our bombs really plastered the target, an airdrome situated at Alibunar, Yugoslavia. Three new aircrews joined our Squadron: Lt's Baker, Beatty and Chalmers are the First Pilots.

August 19. No combat mission was flown today.

August 20. Today's mission was flown to an enemy airdrome at Szolnok, Hungary. Seven of our ships participated in the raid, and all report that the target was well covered with bomb hits.

August 21. No combat mission was flown today.

August 22. Today's mission to an underground oil storage depot near Vienna was a rough one. Seven Squadron aircraft each dropped four 1000 pounders on the target with excellent results. We were lucky that all our men returned safely as enemy fighters took a large toll of B-24's.

August 23. Seven Squadron aircraft flew mission #88 to drop their frags on Markersdorf Airdrome in Austria. Lots of flak and fighters greeted them at the target, but we escaped without loss. Captains Ben S. Murphy, and Robert K. Dusenberry were awarded the D.F.C. A new combat crew was assigned to the Squadron; Lt. Gray is the First Pilot.

August 24. Today's mission was to Ferrara, Italy, and the target was a R/R bridge. There was a little flak, but no fighters were encountered. The bombs fell a little off, and only the approaches were hit. F/O Panagiotopoulos (Kelly) was commissioned a 2nd Lt.

August 25. No combat mission was flown today. 1st Lt's Arbuthnot and Dusenberry were promoted to Captains. 2nd Lt. Bloxom made 1st.

August 26. Seven Squadron aircraft went off on mission #90 to aid our day old allies, the Rumanians, by bombing a German airfield just outside of Bucharest. No opposition was encountered. Lt. Johnson, a bombardier, was transferred to the 764th Squadron.

August 27. Today's mission was a milk run to a railroad viaduct in northern Italy near the Yugoslavian border. Our boys really focused their sights on the target and the viaduct is a mass of wreckage. No opposition was met.

August 28. Mission #92 had for its target a vital enemy bridge at Szalnok, Hungary, and once again the fliers returned to tell of good results. Enemy resistance was negligible.

August 29. The target for today was a marshalling yard at Szeged, Hungary. Seven Squadron airplanes dropped 22,000 tons of explosives on the objective adding materially to the German's overwhelming supply and transportation problem. All the planes returned safely. Colonel Glantzberg presented purple hearts to Lt. Johnson and Sgt. Daynovsky at Group. Air Medal awards also were made. Lt. Kelleher's crew joined the Squadron.

August 30. No combat mission was flown today.

August 31. No combat mission was flown today. We were informed today that all the members of Lt. Weems crew are safe. And are here in Italy. They were released after the Russians and Rumanians decided to fight together instead of against each other.