

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

WFF/jdk

APO 520, NY, NY
30 September 1944

SUMMARY OF THE SQUADRON HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER

During the month of September, the 765th Bombardment Squadron flew on seven bombing missions, during which forty squadron airplanes dropped a total of ninety-five tons of explosives on enemy installations. On one of the sorties, the target area was covered by such a complete overcast that the bombs were brought back to the base. Four of the objectives were situated in Yugoslavia; two were in the Athens, Greece vicinity; and the other was located in northern Italy. The flights to the Balkans were aimed to block the escape of the German armies beleaguered there. The outstanding function of the organization for the month was the delivery of gasoline and bombs to American troops fighting in France. Seven of these transport missions were flown to Lyons. On numerous occasions, several of the aircraft were forced to remain in France overnight. September marked the one hundredth combat flight of the squadron. Counting the supply sorties, the total number of missions reached the one hundred and seven mark. Adverse weather was primarily responsible for the fifteen stand-downs that occurred during the month. Training flight and practice missions were scheduled on those days.

No men are missing in action as a result of the month's aerial activities. Not a serious injury was suffered, although several gunners were slightly but painfully wounded by anti-aircraft fire.

Two new combat crews augmented the roster of flying personnel in September. Fifteen flying officers and thirty aerial gunners, having completed their tour of duty in this theater, departed for the United States on a permanent change of station.

Three new Liberators were assigned to the squadron during the month. The fourth airplane numbered "22" was lost when it caught fire at Lyons, France. The more superstitious members of the organization do not advocate giving this "jinxed" number to any more ships. Old "Invistus", one of the original combat airplanes of the squadron, was returned from the sub-depot and declared in commission for non-combat flights only.

A great many changes occurred in the air echelon personnel of the squadron. Heading the list was the transfer of Squadron Commander, Lt. Col. Robert E. Applegate, to the 451st Bomb Group. Major Francis J. Hoermann assumed the duties of commanding officer. Captain Arbuthnot stepped up into the position of Squadron Operations Officer, and Lt. Gray, one of the newer pilots, was selected as his assistant. Captain Murphy was transferred to Group Headquarters to fill the vacancy left by the return of group bombardier, Major Leffler, to the United States. Lt. Malita became squadron bombardier. Lt. Prien, now a Captain, took over the responsibilities of squadron navigator when Captain Dusenberry departed on a permanent change of station, but shortly thereafter he was placed on DS at Group Headquarters and Lt. Toth was chosen to pinch-hit for him.

Similarly, the gains and losses of ground echelon men were above average for the thirty-day period. Lt. Hume, cryptographic officer on DS to group ever since the arrival of the squadron in Italy in February, officially was transferred there. One instrument mechanic, three armorers, one electrician, one technical inspector, two cooks, and seven general duty soldiers joined the organization. On the other side of the ledger, three men were lost to the detachment of patients; two on DS to Group Headquarters were transferred there; one man was sent to Wing; and four others reassigned to different organizations within the group.

For extraordinary achievement in aerial flight, Major Hoermann, Captain Arbuthnot, Captain Prien, Lt. Kahn, and T/Sgt. Gore were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Lt's Childrey, Calavito, Gourtz, and Moss, T/Sgts Hetzel and Mayfield, and S/Sgt. Martin, all of whom had returned to the United States, also came out with orders for this coveted medal. Captain Specht became the first member of the squadron to be awarded the First Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross. Captain Baker and Sgt. Liebhart received the Purple Heart for injuries sustained while on flight against the enemy. Numerous Air Medals and Oak Leaf Clusters were earned. Twenty-one ground echelon enlisted men were recommended for the Bronze Star.

Many new bars and stripes made their appearance during the month. Lts Johnson, Phillips, Baker, Sinai, and Prien became wearers of "railroad tracks"; eighteen 2nd Lts changed the color of their collar insignia from gold to silver; F/O Barnes was commissioned, two S/Sgts made "tech"; six buck Sgts became first three graders; twenty-four Cpls. Added another stripe; six Pfcs. Became "non-coms"; and five Pvts. Were given their first chevron. Six men lost their ratings during September, three for taking an ambulance on a pleasure jaunt, one for being caught "off-limits", another for inattentiveness while on guard at the main gate, and one air crew man was "busted" when he requested and was given ground duty.

The rest camp quota for the squadron continued throughout the month. Twelve officers and eighteen aerial gunners received the opportunity to spend a week on the Isle of Capri. Thirteen ground echelon enlisted men, most of whom worked on the line, were given a seven day change of scenery at San Spirito. Twelve officers and forty-three enlisted men flew to Rome to spend three days in the Italian capital.

There was only one case of AWOL during the month. The guilty soldier was court martialed and sentenced to four months of hard labor; but, when the time came for him to depart for the 15th Air Force stockade, he was nowhere to be found. All MP stations have been given his description and informed to arrest him on sight.

Sixteen enlisted men and four officers were hospitalized for various maladies during September. No new cases of malaria broke out in the squadron, but there were four new venereal disease patients and two men became ill with yellow jaundice.

On the 4th of September a practice air raid, gas alert and ground attack took place at 2100. The men had been organized into groups in advance and everyone knew precisely what he was suppose to do upon the sounding of the alarm. At 2200, the all-clear was sounded, and the practice maneuver was declared by the umpires to have been well carried out. On September 18th, the men were filed through the gas tent in order to test their gas masks. Defective chemical warfare equipment was repaired or replaced.

During the month, the tents both in the ground echelon and the aircrew areas were lined up into company streets. Almost immediately, a winterization program was commenced just in time, as the last few days of the month were stormy ones. Drainage trenches were dug in back of the row of tents.

There were other improvements made in the squadron area. A black and white striped gate was built across the entrance to the squadron and all unidentified vehicles are required to come to a stop before being permitted to pass through. A roof was made for the shower, which will permit its use through the winter. Plates were purchased from the squadron fund and are to be used in the enlisted men's mess hall as soon as a shed for washing them can be constructed.

Information concerning the Army Air Force Aid Society was posted on the bulletin board. Each enlisted man was expected to become a member for one year at a cost of one dollar, and every officer was expected to purchase a benefactor membership for five dollars.

Captain Arbuthnot, whose crew shot down fourteen enemy fighters during the Linz attack on July 26th, and M/Sgt. Genuardi, crew chief of "All American", the Liberator they were flying, were sent to Rome to make a radio transcription of a script concerning the remarkable achievement.

The entertainment for the men again consisted of movies. Several USO shows were presented on the stage of the group theater. Six motion pictures were shown in the squadron area, of which four were repeats. On five other evenings, scheduled pictures were cancelled because the projector had broken down.

The atmosphere of the squadron was unusual as the month neared its end. Everyone had on his mind a series of questions, the answers to which were all-important to the future welfare of the men of the organization. Would the organization be able to continue combat operations throughout the winter? Would the war with Germany end in 1944? The articles in the Stars and Stripes concerning the transfer of air power to the Pacific subsequent to the surrender of the Nazis had caused much talk and comment. Was this to be the fate of the squadron? Were plans being formulated to transform the group into a B-29 outfit? In other words, there was more than the usual concern about the future of the squadron. October might well contain many of the answers.

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EXTRACTS FROM THE SQUADRON HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER

September 1. Seven squadron bombers returned for another try at the Ferrara railroad bridge in northern Italy. However, a severe overcast was encountered at the objective and only a few stray bombs hit the target. Payment of August wages was made to both officers and enlisted men. A meeting of the ground echelon was held at 1900, during which Major Rainen told the men the details of the furthering practice of air raids, gas alert, and ground defense. Later in the evening, the officers of Lt. Weems crew related their experience as prisoners of war in Rumania. A gate was constructed at the entrance to the squadron area.

September 2. In an effort to trap German divisions in the Balkans, squadron fliers bombed a railroad bridge in southeast Yugoslavia with excellent results. No enemy opposition was encountered. A 15th Air Force special order was received awarding the Distinguished Flying Cross to Major Hoermann, Lt. Prien, T/Sgt. Gore. Lts Childrey Colavito, Gourtz, and Moss; T/Sgts Hetzel and Mayfield; and S/Sgt. Martin, all of whom have returned to the United States on a permanent change of station, also were awarded this medal.

September 3. On this date, mission #96 was flown, again with the main purpose of trapping the Nazis in the Balkans. The target was ferryboat slips in Yugoslavia and aerial photographs showed that the airmen of the squadron did a great job of pin-point bombing. The promotion list was posted on the bulletin board announcing that there were x new S/Sgts, 24 new Sgts, 8 new Cpls, and 3 new Pfc's in the squadron. Lt. Monis was assigned to the organization as assistant intelligence officer. Lt. Hume, cryptographic officer on DS to group since the arrival since the arrival of the squadron in Italy, was transferred to that headquarters. Two enlisted men were transferred from the squadron, one to Group Headquarters and the other to the 49th Bomb Wing. Five ground echelon enlisted men were assigned to the unit.

September 4. No combat mission was flown on this date. Lt. Johnson's crew departed Capri and their ground echelon enlisted men were sent to San Spirito for a week. At 2100, a practice air raid, gas alert, and ground defense against paratroopers was staged. The maneuver was declared to be a success by the umpires. Four of the enlisted men of Lt. Weems' crew returned to the squadron from prison camp in Rumania. Pvt Nevil was listed on the morning report as AWOL.

September 5. Mission #98 was flown to the Sava East Railroad Bridge in Yugoslavia, but the extreme overcast at the target made accurate bombing an impossibility so the explosives were brought back to the base. Lt. Kahn received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his splendid job of bringing back safely a severely crippled ship on the last Ploesti attack. Six general duty soldiers were assigned to the squadron. Major Rainen was sent to the hospital with yellow jaundice. An enlisted man was reduced to the grade of private for inattentiveness while on guard.

September 6. A recent mission was flown to yesterday's target and this time the objective was unobscured enabling the fliers of the squadron to cover it with a good pattern of bomb hits. Lt. Liebhart was wounded in the leg by anti-aircraft fire. Six officers and eighteen enlisted men, having completed fifty missions in the European theater, were sent back to the United States on a permanent change of station. Six officers and twenty-one enlisted men departed for a three-day vacation in Rome. Radio operator Mahuta returned from prison camp in Rumania to find he had been promoted to T/Sgt.

September 7. No combat mission was flown on this date. Orders were received to equip all airplanes with luggage racks. Capt. John N. Specht became the first member of the organization to be awarded the First Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross. Capt. Arbuthnot was awarded the D.F.C. for the exceptional flying ability he evidenced on the Linz attack on July 25th. Sgt Linzy Davis, hospitalized for over a month with serious flak wounds, returned to the squadron.

September 8. No combat mission was flown on this date. Col. Glantzberg decorated Capt. Murphy with the D.F.C. and 33 other members of the air echelon with the Air Medal. Capt. Murphy was transferred to Group Headquarters to fill the vacancy left by the return to the United States of group bombardier, Major Leffler. Lt. Malita took over the duties of squadron bombardier. Two officers and five aerial gunners departed for the United States on a permanent change of station. Pvt Nevil returned to duty after being AWOL since the 4th of the month.

September 9. For the third consecutive day no combat mission was scheduled. Preparations were made to begin flying transport missions to France. S/Sgts Samuels and Ryan, the two remaining members of the Lt. Weems' crew, returned from Rumania.

September 10. The squadron carried out its first mission as transport planes. Quantities of fuel and bombs were landed in Lyons, France. The operation was not a complete success, as airplane #22 caught on fire at Lyons just before take-off for the return trip. Several men were singed but fortunately no one was seriously injured. Two of the airplanes of the squadron remained in France overnight. For the first time in combat ground crew personnel went along on the mission. There was one armorer on each airplane to help tend the 300-pound bombs. One enlisted man was transferred to the 451st Bomb Group and another to the Detachment of Patients. One EM was reduced to the grade of private for being caught "off-limits" in town. Four officers and a like number of enlisted men left for the United States, having flown 50 missions in this theater.

September 11. No combat mission was flown on this date. Lt. Cooper's crew left the squadron Capri-bound. Three ground echelon enlisted men departed for San Spirito rest camp. Shining new silver bars made their appearance on the collars of Lts Beatty, Birrell, Cooper, Moudy, and Toth.

September 12. The second shipment of gasoline was flown to Lyons, France. Ten ground crew chiefs were scheduled to spend ten days in Marseilles, France to maintain our airplanes that would land there to reload rather than all the way to Italy. However, this plan was cancelled at the last minute.

September 13. Another transport mission was flown to Lyons. Lt. Green was forced to land en route near Toulon because of adverse weather. On the return trip one airplane spent the night at

Rome and one stayed over at Foggia. All the tents were moved net up along company streets. Capt. Arbuthnot and M/Sgt. Gouardi flew to Rome to make a radio transcription of a script written about the 14 German fighters shot down by Capt. Arbuthnot's crew flying Gouardi's "All American" during the Linz attack on July 25th. First Pilot Johnson received a promotion to the rank of Captain.

September 14. Another cargo flight was scheduled for this date, but it was called off during the night. Lt. Richman and Sgt. Gore left the squadron to return to the States, having flown their "50" against the enemy. Capt. Nathan, squadron surgeon, departed on DS to the 51st station hospital in Foggia to undertake a practical training course.

September 15. Five squadron airplanes delivered gasoline to American troops fighting in France. While taking off after his forced landing near Toulon, Lt. Green damaged the wing tips of his airplane. A ship was dispatched there to bring his plane a new part. Information as to the workings of the Army Air Force Aid Society was posted on the bulletin board. Colonel Applegate requested each enlisted man to become a member for one year at a cost of one dollar and stated his wish that every officer purchase a benefactor membership for five dollars. F/O Barnes' crew arrived to augment the roster of flying personnel.

September 16. Another transport mission was flown to Lyons. Nothing extraordinary happened and all those airplanes made it back.

September 17. More gasoline was delivered to France. This time three airplanes were forced to remain in Lyons overnight. One enlisted man was transferred to Group Headquarters.

September 18. No combat mission was flown on this date. Major Hoermann assumed the duties of Squadron Commander preparatory to the departure of Colonel Applegate. Captain Arbuthnot became Operations Officer, and Lt. Gray was selected to be his assistant. Members of the ground echelon marched through the gas chamber to test the functionality of their gas masks. Faulty equipment was repaired or salvaged at once. Two M/Sgts, having appeared before the board, received promotion to T/Sgt. Four enlisted men were sent to San Spirito for a week of rest. No allotment to Capri was received this week.

September 19. For the second day in a row there was a stand-down. Lt. Colonel Applegate left the squadron to assume new duties with the 451st Bomb Group. Lt. Prien was placed on DS with Group Headquarters.

September 20. Only training flights were flown on this date. The armorers spent a busy day replacing the ball turrets on most of the airplanes. Major Jena came down from the 49th Bomb Wing to take over the medical duties of the squadron in the absence of Captain Nathan. Lts Prien and Phillips accepted congratulations on their promotions to the rank of captain. Lts Waggoner, Berg, Blake, Devlin, Dick, King, Lace, Marshall, Moore, Netzer, Presho, Soch, and Summers changed their collar insignia from a gold bar to a silver one.

September 21. Again only training flights were scheduled. Six officers and twenty-one enlisted men were sent to rest camp at Rome for three days. Sgt. Padgett of the communications department was placed on DS with the 6660th Signal School Co.

September 22. Four squadron airplanes delivered more gasoline to France. All the ships returned to the base before dark. Two officers departed on a permanent change of station to the United States. A bombardier, a technical inspector, a cook and a basic were assigned to the organization. On the other hand, one bombardier was transferred to another squadron and an enlisted man was transferred to the Detachment of Patients.

September 23. No combat mission was flown; only training flights were scheduled. O.D. sizes were turned in to the supply room. Italian workmen began digging drainage trenches between the rows of tents in preparation for the forthcoming rainy season. Squadron Adjutant, Samuel B. Sinai, was promoted to the rank of captain.

September 24. The squadron flew its first bombing mission since September 6th. The target was an enemy airdrome near Athens, Greece. An excellent pattern of hits was scored on the objective. The appearance of the squadron area was greatly improved by the removal of the embankment between the enlisted men's tent area and the headquarters buildings. A leveler was run over the ground until all lumps of dirt had been evened down.

September 25. A bombing mission was flown to the Athens area for the second consecutive day. This time the primary target was submarines in one of the four harbors. F-22's preceded the group as reconnaissance to spot the subs and direct the Liberators to their location. However no "pig boats" could be observed and the harbor facilities were attacked as an alternate. The results of the bombing were very poor. Lt. Presho's crew was scheduled to fly to Naples on route to Capri but bad weather forced them to postpone their departure until the following day. Three ground echelon enlisted men departed for a week of relaxation at San Spirito. Three medics were reduced to the grade of private for commandeering an ambulance for private use. Lt. Campo departed on DS to Bari to attend 15th AF Personal Equipment School. The winterizing of tents continued with many individuals building walls of tufa block to keep out the rain and wind. Another blanket was issued to each man. Pvt. Nevil, on orders to be taken to the stockade in Bari for four months of hard labor, was nowhere to be found.

September 26. No combat mission was flown on this date. 1st Lt. Green was placed on DS with the 865th Bomb Group. Cpl. Mullahey, teletype operator on DS to group, was transferred there.

September 27. No combat mission was flown on this date. Cpl. Arsi was sent to Cooks' and Bakers' School.

September 28. A double-header mission was originally scheduled for this date, but a stand-down was called at the last minute. The squadron aircraft had been divided into two attacking forces, each briefed to participate in the demolition of different targets. Captain Nathan returned from his course of study at the 61st Station Hospital. Lt. Baker received a promotion to the rank of captain. Pvt Nevil still had not been located and was carried on the morning report as AWOL.

September 29. The same double mission as was planned for the previous day was again scheduled and again called off at the last minute. Several truck loads of lumber were made available to the men for winterization purposes and a mad scramble to get the most and best boards resulted. Final touches were put on the roofing of the squadron shower. F/O Barnes, first pilot of an air crew, was commissioned to 2nd Lt. S/Sgts Ryan and Samuels were ordered to

report to Replacement Depot 7 for shipment back to the United States. One enlisted man was transferred to the 764th.

September 30. For the third consecutive day, the double mission had to be cancelled because of the unflyable weather prevailing. Captain Phillips departed for a permanent change of station in the United States. Lt. Gray accidentally shot himself in the leg while riding his motorcycle and was taken to the hospital. Salaries for the month of September were paid. All enlisted men and officers who had not as yet joined the Army Air Force Aid Society passed directly from the payline to a desk where their membership was accepted. Two enlisted men turned over in a weapons carrier on the road to group but fortunately no one was seriously injured. Lts Rothberg and Waggoner held a house warming in their new tufa block house. They seem to have started an epidemic as at least seven others are now under construction.