

Summary

March of 1945 saw the aerial bombardment of Hitler-held Europe reach new levels of sustained intensity, an intensity have caused the last of the Caesars to reflect upon Brutus' historic warning, to an earlier one. The combined USAAF - RAF bomb load for the month was the greatest ever, and under the unprecedented impact of over 60,000 tons, the continent trembled from the Vos de Rhodan to Berlin.

Operationally, the 92nd Bombardment Group had its biggest month -- 10 missions flown, 390 aircraft dispatched, 328 planes over targets. Abortions totaled 18, or approximately 4 1/2 % of aircraft dispatched. 18 aircraft were lost, about 4 1/2 % of the number dispatched. All operational statistics were substantially better than for February, hitherto the best month. The Group was alerted 22 times, briefed 23.

The month was especially notable for the series of large scale day-light assaults on Berlin, already badly battered by the RAF. The 92nd flew in five of the Berlin raids, but cloud conditions forced a turn back from the first one, March 3. In the other attacks on the enemy capital, March 6, 8, 9 and 22, the Group dispatched 29, 21, 21 and 32 aircraft respectively -- the last being the 92nd's largest mission of the month.

The March 6 raid marked the first use by the Group of the new M-17 incendiary - a 500 lb. airable cluster with 110 1/2 lb. magnesium and high explosive bombs within the cluster. Because of cloud conditions, results of the use of the new weapon were not observed.

7 aircraft were lost in the combined assaults on Berlin; 3 from the 92nd Squadron, piloted by 1st Lt. Walter C. Lunsford, 2nd Lt. William L. Webb and 2nd Lt. Frank Arison; 4 from the 48th Squadron, piloted by

1st Lt. Raymond R. Cooper and 2nd Lt. Walter E. Ryne; 1 from the 326th Squadron, piloted by 1st Lt. Wallace C. Tison, and 1 from the 327th Squadron, piloted by 2nd Lt. Rex A. Townsend.

The largest loss of aircraft was sustained in the Herborn (Harr.) mission of March 23, when 5 planes succumbed to severe enemy fighter action and 1144 over the target. 4 of these aircraft were from the 326th Bombardment Squadron. Particularly vicious fighter attacks were encountered by practically every plane, climaxed by the experience of 1st Lt. William H. Patrick, Jr. of the 407th Squadron, whose ship was almost rammed by a suicidally-inclined Nazi pilot. The Focke-Wulf 190 came in from dead astern, and instead of the usual procedure of flipping over and diving away at 100 yards, deliberately kept on coming in the face of heavy fire. It split second before the fighter would have rammed, its right wing went up, clearing the Fortress' vertical fin by inches. Its left wing, going down, clipped the left elevator of Lt. Patrick's ship. The F-W, minus a substantial portion of its left wing tip, headed straight down in an uncontrollable spin. Lt. Patrick's aircraft, minus 3 square feet of the left elevator, made the return trip safely, even though he was unable to keep in formation.

Of the 15 aircraft lost during the month, the 326 suffered most severely with 6, the 327th losing 5, and the 407th and 327th, 3 and 2. (See Appendix A.)

Awards for March were 4 DFCs, of which 7 were for completion of missions, 4 Purple Hearts, 14 Air Medals, and 1 Legion of Merit. Oak Leaf Clusters were awarded to 2 holders of DFCs, 21 holders of Air Medals. (See Appendix B.)

The award of the Legion of Merit, second one in the history of the group, was made to 1st Sgt Joseph H. By of the 326th Squadron, for

"exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services as crew chief of a ground crew responsible for the maintenance of bomber aircraft, from 1 Sept 1942 to 22 Dec 1943." 1st Lt Lye's ground crew, sometimes in skeleton form, established a mark of 20 consecutive missions without a mechanical failure. 1st Lt Lye is 24 and his home is in Ouessant, Texas. He has been with the Group since its activation in 1942.

1st Lt. Bernard A. Lakowski of the 326th Squadron was awarded an Oak Leaf Cluster to the DFC previously awarded in February, 1944. Each award was a tribute to his flying skill. Returning from an especially severe aerial battle over Schweinfurt, Aug. 17, 1943, 3 engines of Lt. Lakowski's ship failed for lack of fuel. Sighting a landing strip just inside the English coastline, he approached preparatory to landing, only to observe at the last moment an automobile parked on the runway. Displaying courage and exceptional flying skill, he actually vounded his heavy bomber over the automobile and made a safe landing without damage to plane or crew.

DFCs were awarded to Captain Frederick T. Frasse of the 325th Squadron, and to 1st Lt Edward T. O'Grady, also of the 325th, each for extraordinary achievement on the early Schweinfurt raids; the first on August 17, 1943 and the second on October 14, 1943.

Successful escapes from enemy-held territory were made in March by 15 airmen of the 92nd Group, shot down on missions as far back as September, 1943, and as recently as February. (See Appendix E.)

Typical was the experience of Sgt. Chas. A. Crutchfield of the 327th Squadron, who was shot down on his 12th mission, the Stuttgart raid of Sept. 8, 1943. On the return over France, the B-17, piloted by 1st Lt.

Wayne C. Bogard, was attacked by an enemy fighter, and the rudder controls shot out. The aircraft stayed level but lost speed, and the men bailed out at about 15,000 feet. Sgt. Crutchfield made his jump about noon - and recalls it as a 10,000 foot free fall.

He landed safely in a field, hid his chute and destroyed some identifying papers. Within the hour, he was picked up by a French peasant. That afternoon and evening he stayed hidden in the peasant's home, and at night, 1/Sgt. Rex Gibbs, radio operator of the ship, was brought in. In the morning, dressed in workmen's clothes, Crutchfield and Gibbs began the long, arduous journey which brought them to Spain on Jan. 20th and to England on March 3. One rather dangerous episode marking the journey was a six hour train ride in the same railway compartment with two German Officers. Sgt/ Crutchfield, whose home is in Fresno, California, and 1/Sgt. Gibbs, who came from Sault, Michigan, joined the group at Alconbury in June of 1943.

Officer promotions during the month were: 1 to Major, 3 to Captain, 43 to 1st Lt; 1 to 2nd Lt. (See Appendix C). The latter, the commissioning of 1/Sgt. Lyle G. Sage of the 327th Squadron, was the fifth such promotion since the arrival of the group in the ETO. 1/Sgt. Sage, an aerial engineer and top turret gunner, had previously finished his tour of duty. He is the holder of the Silver Star, awarded for heroic action on the field mission of July 24, 1943.

An officer, and 1st Lt. completed tour of duty and were promoted to Major and 1st Lt. respectively.

On March 17, 1944, a group of 1st Lt. and 2nd Lt. were promoted to 1st Lt. and 2nd Lt. respectively. The group was then sent to the 1st Lt. and 2nd Lt. respectively.

fighters had been subduing the fire for about an hour, when suddenly one went out of control and power-drove to the ground, digging a hole of eight to ten feet. The plane, piloted by Lt. Roy L. Wendell of the 71st Lighter Group, was completely blown to bits, broke a water main and set fire to two haystacks about 50 feet distant. All available men of the 104th A.C. Avn. fire fighting platoon responded, and after extinguishing the burning wreckage and ignited gasoline, turned their efforts toward subduing two stubborn haystack fires.

Training hours for combat crews held up very well in comparison to previous months, considering the fact that operational flying reached a new high, and that there were only 9 days of the month that the group was not alerted. It has also been suggested and trained.

and the β parameter is the inverse of the variance of the error term. The β parameter is estimated by the following equation:

a superimposed series of circles which simulate the various areas of attack into which all gunnery positions are divided. Currently, there are two upper turrets; a "Ball" suspended from the ceiling, and a "Chin" turret. The device has been found of great value in checking out new gunners, and in giving daily refresher courses to older turret operators. A sighting platform is under consideration for the flexible gunners, so that a greater number of men may utilize the trainer at the same time.

On March 23, the Medical Department completed the series of tetanus, typhus and typhoid immunizations and smallpox revaccinations, begun in February.

Personnel of the GWS were also busy during March, when all of the old type gas masks were picked up, disinfected, crated and dispatched to a general depot for shipment to the USA. Replacing the old mask is the new lightweight Service mask, more convenient to carry and to wear. All personnel issued the new masks tested them in the gas chamber, and a minuscule percentage (less than 2 of 13) were found defective. These apparently had become unserviceable through rough handling in shipment.

Many of the GWS displays and detector signs throughout the base were repaired and repaired. New displays were made showing the 3 carrying positions of the new mask, the arrangement of articles contained within the mask, and the proper way of replacing the mask in the carrier.

First shipments of the new 1.76 incendiary bomb - the "block burner" or super fire bomb - was received by GWS on March 1, although they were not loaded during the month.

On March 11, Detachment "A" 1142nd Military Police Co. (A.M.), was transferred out, and 20 men were added to Detachment "A" 1142nd Military Police Co. (A.M.), bringing its operator strength to 1 officer and 39 men.

1st Lt. Edward F. Munson succeeded 1st Lt. Frank S. Guiner as Provost Marshall on March 9. Lt. Guiner was transferred on March 14. As a part of a general tightening of security regulations, the M.D.'s instituted a more rigorous inspection of credentials of personnel entering the station.

Social activities included a St. Patrick's Day dance at the Officers' Club, with an estimated 500 in attendance, and two W.I. dances at the Red Cross Aeroclub, on March 7 and March 26. The latter, the "Cabaret Dance", was the most successful in the ten weeks of the Aero Club's operation. Light globes were painted blue to simulate a "night club" atmosphere, and candle-lit tables lined the walls. About 600 attended.

The Station's quiz Team continued its unbroken string of successes on March 23, by knowing twice as many answers as did a team representing Division Headquarters.

The enlisted men's bar, long an anticipatory dream of the thirsty, became reality on March 14, with Movie Star James Cagney in the role of Boniface. Cagney, making a characteristically whirlwind tour of the LTC, stopped off long enough to open the bar, buy drinks for everyone within range and depart, leaving a highly favorable impression.

The bulk of the credit for the bar goes to Spl. B. L. Latham, attached to the 44th Sub Depot. Spl. Latham, a carpenter in civilian life, expended a great deal of time and effort to the actual construction of the bar. The bar, open six nights a week, retails an average of 5 barrels of beer nightly.

March 19 was also an interesting day at the P.M., when the "Christmas" consignment of Whitcomb and Gilbert's enclosures was placed

on sale. The total sales for the month were 2,022 pounds, representing a decline from the previous month, but one largely explained by 754 pounds worth of Mother's Day flowers ordered. This latter figure indicates that 50% of the personnel participated -- a much better percentage than the same holiday the year before. On March 28, the LX received its first copies of the overseas edition of the New York Times.

March's end marked the second full year of the group since its activation April 1, 1942. Coincidental with this occasion was a teletype of commendation from Lieut. General James H. Doolittle, addressed to all members of the 1st Bombardment Division in connection with the safe return in extremely bad weather from the March 29th mission to Brunswick. Record of the 2nd group in the Brunswick raid: 18 aircraft dispatched, 18 aircraft attacking, 18 aircraft returned.