

457th Bomb Group History
April 1944

DECLASSIFIED
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EIGHTH AIR FORCE

FIRST BOMBARDMENT DIVISION

457TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP



PERIOD COVERED FROM

1 APRIL 1944 to 30 APRIL 1944

April 23-24-27



Start on page 3 with 10 day rest

The month of April made its first impression on us here in England by giving us a change of time. Daylight Saving Time (double summer time) went into effect for all personnel of this station at 0200 hours the morning of 2 April 1944.

Also with the first of the month came promotions to some 215 Enlisted Men of all ranks or grades. The copy of Special Orders No. 55 which indicates these promotions is being attached to the original copy of the Group History.

On 3 April the entire personnel (Enlisted) of the S-2 Section of this Group received re-classification or change in MOS number. This is simply a paper matter for record, changing the MOS number 631 to 405 and 502.

There has been a new daily bus schedule into Peterborough instigated for the benefit of all personnel. The Bus will leave the station headquarters at 0800, 1000, 1200, 1400, 1600, 1800, 2200, and 2400 hours. Passenger stops will be made at Consolidated Mess and the Main Gate, 5 minutes after the even hours. The bus will leave the INER railway station in Peterborough at 0900, 1100, 1300, 1500, 1700, 1900, 21,00, 2300, and 0100 hours for the Base, however after 1900 hours only personnel returning from leaves, furloughs and passes will be permitted to ride.

The drive on salvage is gaining tempo with stress being placed upon material of all types regardless of little value the thing itself may seem to possess.

All Officers attached to Group Headquarters will be billeted in WAAF Site No. 1 in the future. Arrangements will be made by contacting the Ground Executive, Major Counselman.

Headquarters ETOUSA published circular No. 32 dated 20 March 1944 for information and guidance of all personnel in which the following is extracted: "IV. Service Ribbons. II. The European-African-Middle Eastern Service Ribbon will be worn so that the colors blue, white, and red in the center of the ribbon appear in the order named from right to left of wearer. By Command of GEN. EISENHOWER."

Starting with 9 April our Post Exchange will be open Sundays from 1100 to 1400 hours. Capt. Horner, the Post Exchange Officer announces that there is an opportunity for some enlisted men to make extra money during off-duty hours daily from 1730 to 2230, Monday thru Saturday.

There was re-classification of some 39 Enlisted Men in various clerical positions in Squadron and Group; this was another paper transfer of MOS numbers having no significance on the jobs themselves. Also as of 7 April Major Arnold E. Walters is appointed Station Air Inspector in addition to his other duties, thus relieving Lt. Col. Wilson of that job.

[REDACTED]

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The weather for the first week of April and last day or two of March made operational flying impractical, so the combat crews more or less enjoyed a rest of 10 days duration. However, on 9 April our Group flew one of the longest missions yet attempted by the 8th Air Force and we are pleased to be able to report that it was quite successful. In this effort our Group contributed one entire box for the Lead and the Lead and Low Squadrons of a composite box. The Lead Aircraft of the Lead Box was piloted by Lt. Jesse L. Smith, with Lt. Col. Henry B. Wilson in the co-pilot seat acting as Commander of the Group. Major Hozier flying co-pilot with Lt. Soenke was Deputy Lead.

The High Composite Box was led by Major Spencer flying as co-pilot with Lt. Godfrey, the pilot. Capt. Syptak and Lt. Gibbons were co-pilot and pilot respectively of Deputy Lead.

The target for this mission was a group of factories producing aircraft and air armament, primarily fighter aircraft and repairs for PW 190, located in the small town of Rahmel near Gdynia, Poland. In addition to bombing the target, the Group dropped 50 parcels of leaflets in the vicinity of Danzig from an altitude of 15,000 feet. The bombs of all aircraft of the Lead Group landed in the target area at the briefed MPI. The bombs of the aircraft of the High Box were also very close to the MPI. Since CAVU conditions were prevalent, the bombing results were observed to be very satisfactory and the entire target area was aflame by the time the last ships passed beyond view. For this splendid action, members of the lead crew received a special citation.

During the flight around the target area, many enemy aircraft mostly PW 190's and ME 109's attacked our formation, with very little success and our gunners certainly feel that they scored a decisive victory, claiming to have destroyed 12 enemy aircraft and damaging 6. Of course this is way beyond the actual number allowed. During this mission we lost two aircraft to enemy fighters and one for reasons unknown. T/Sgt. O. W. Murch, Top Turret Gunner, A/C No. 131 of the 751st Squadron was killed in action by fire from enemy aircraft. Lt. Bernard B. Weinberg, Navigator of A/C No. 551 of the 750th Squadron received a flak wound in his leg. Lt. John E. Haight, A/C No. 164 of the 749th Squadron, co-pilot suffered a shattered right leg and shell fragments in his right eye. Sgt. Morris J. Woodall, RO suffered injury to his hands due to shell fragments. Sgt. Graham, BT Gunner suffered a cut on the forehead from flak. Lt. Sheppard's A/C No. 537 was hit by flak and fighters at 1320 hours in the target area, while the ship apparently was still under control 5 chutes were seen to open. Lt. Walker's ship No. 456 was seen to go down over the target area and only 2 chutes positively seen to open, so all in all we did pay a price for a successful mission.

[REDACTED]

10 April 1944

Our Group attacked a target in Brussels. Our bombing was quite exact - the actual MPI being between 200 and 300 feet from the briefed MPI which was a large hanger on the airfield.

The Group was led by Major Watson flying as co-pilot with Lt. Belcher of the 748th Squadron in A/C No. 062.

On 11 April Capt. William H. Simpson was appointed station special Service Officer as primary duty to relieve Lt. Carl E. Walker.

On 11 April our mission took us to Sorau, Germany. The target was one of the most important assembly plants for FW 190's, located at an airdrome near the town of Sorau. The secondary target was a large synthetic oil plant at Politz near the town of Stettin, where large quantities of aviation gas are produced.

The weather being 8/10 to 10/10 overcast in the area of the Primary target made it impossible to make a successful bombing of this target, so the aircraft of this Group bombed secondary and targets of opportunity. Bombing results were unobserved generally, and the fact that the bombs were I.B.'s prevented any positive observations. From 75 to 100 enemy aircraft, consisting of ME 109's, FW 190's, many attacks were made on our nose from 10 to 2 o'clock, however most of the enemy aircraft fire was inaccurate. The 94th A Combat Wing was led slightly off course and directly over very dense AA concentration near Hannover at a very low altitude (16,000 feet) with the obvious result of the wing suffering greatly from ack-ack. Practically all damage to aircraft to this Group was sustained at this point.

This mission was led by Major Francis, with Capt. Bender as pilot of the Lead ship.

On 13 April we received information to all concerned, that "discontinue acceptance of OSS applications for GWS and SMP OCS. No additional candidates will be enrolled. Schools will be closed upon completion of presently enrolled classes. This was effective as of 11 April." Due to traffic on the streets of the station notice was published that all personnel riding bicycles would do so only in single file and with traffic. Along this same line all personnel were cautioned that no more than 5 persons may ride in a jeep at any time. Responsibility for compliance with this rests with the ranking officer or NCO and operator of the vehicle.

Our target for 13 April 1944 was the now famous ball-bearing works at Schweinfurt, Germany, which is the most important producer of this comodoty in Germany. As a secondary target we had the marshalling yards in the city of Koblenz. Major Watson was Commander of the Group in this flight with Lt. Belcher as pilot. Capt. Bender and Major Nozier were pilot and co-pilot respectively of the Deputy Lead.

The actual results of the bombing were unobserved, as the target and MPI were covered with smoke and explosions from G.P. bombs dropped by preceding units. However the target area was clearly visible through a 2/10 cloud coverage, so it is believed the results very good as the bombs were seen to go into smoke at the exact location of the MPI. In addition to bombs, our Group carried 52 parcels of leaflets which were dropped over the city of Schweinfurt. Estimates of the number of enemy aircraft encountered during this mission varied from 1 to 200 with the preponderance being toward the larger number. Most of the enemy aircraft were ME 109's, FW 190's and a few ME 110's. The enemy aircraft made their attacks at our nose and tail, from 10 to 2 o'clock and from 4 to 8 o'clock.

Considerable flak was encountered throughout the route, being intense but inaccurate at the target area. As usual our fighter support was very good and effective.

On 15 April we received the following information from the Finance Officer which is of primary interest to all officers of this command and requires very little repetition to get 100% compliance. "Pay vouchers for all ground officers must be in the hands of the Finance Office by the 15th of each month. Pay vouchers for flying officers must be in the Finance Office by the 20th. Prior to the 25th of each month individual pay vouchers for officers and enlisted men will be turned in to the Finance Office 24 hours before payment. On or after the 25th of each month, individual pay vouchers will be turned in 48 hours before payment." The Special Service Office is now located in the WAAF Site, adjacent to the WAAF Site Mess.

Eligible voters in the States of Alabama, California, Florida, New Jersey and North Carolina who apply immediately to the Secretary of their state for ballots, may be able to vote in their state primaries. The legal office of this Station is ready and willing to assist any who are interested.

Letter, Supreme Hqs, Allied Expeditionary Force, File 311.5, dated 25 Mar 1944, is quoted for the information and compliance of all personnel this command: "The enemy knows that preparations are being made for the invasion of the Continent. He is straining every nerve and concentrating all his resources to obtain accurate information upon which to base his defensive strategy. Our success in this vital operation depends upon denying him this information.

Each individual taking part in the preparations for this operation bears a heavy responsibility. The rules of security are known to us all - a guarded tongue and safe-guarded documents. It rests with each one of us to ensure that there is no relaxation of these rules until success is achieved.

All Commanders will ensure that the highest standard of individual security discipline and instruction is maintained throughout their commands, and that most stringent disciplinary action is taken in all

cases of the violation of security.

(S) [REDACTED] "D. WIGHTON, EISENHOWER"

All co-pilots, pilots, navigators and bombardiers who have not yet had their portraits taken in class A uniforms, are reminded they should do so Sunday 16 April, Monday 17 April or Tuesday 18 April.

Personnel of this Group are reminded that they are not to be without neckties while in a class A uniform.

The Commanding Officer again expressed his policy of "open door", seriously expressing the invitation for any member of the station to feel free to come to him or any member of his staff at any time to discuss any matter whatsoever.

On 18 April our Group attacked aircraft components factory of the Heinkel concern at Granienburg, Germany. This factory is located just 17 miles north-northeast of the center of Berlin. The main completed product of this factory is HE 177's. Major Spencer was in command and led the Group with Lt. Godfrey acting as his pilot. Lt. Shuchman and Capt. Smith were pilot and co-pilot respectively of the Deputy Lead aircraft.

Bombing results were reported from fair to good, the target area was partially obscured by smoke from previous bombs, causing the lead bombardier to bomb on a road and railroad intersection near the factory buildings east of the assigned MPI, as the briefed MPI was completely covered by smoke. In addition to the bombs, our Group carried 45 parcels of leaflets that were dropped over the target area. Only 5 enemy aircraft were seen, these having a healthy respect for our ability stayed at a distance and made no attacks. Flak at the target area was meagre to moderate and only fairly accurate.

On the 19 April we received a letter from Hq. 1st Bomb Division, dated 15 April, subject hunting violation for information and strict compliance by all concerned.

1. Higher Hq. has received numerous complaints that officers and enlisted personnel of this command have been hunting on private property and in addition, killing game out of season.
2. It is desired that this situation be investigated and necessary action instituted to correct this condition which tends to affect British-American relations if allowed to continue.

By command of Brig. Gen. WILLIAMS."

On 19 April we attacked GAF Station Air Park and Airdrome 1 1/2 miles northwest of Eschwege, 26 miles east-southeast of Kassel. This is an important center for equipping field work shop units which go into action on the fronts. The Group was led by Major Francis with Capt. Bender, his pilot. Lt. Lady and Capt. Syptak are pilot and co-pilot of the Deputy Lead.

For some reason unexplained and unknown, this mission failed to attack the Primary Target. The Wing was led around in a very indefinite manner, finally bombing Secondary and Tertiary Targets of Last Resort. Reports

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of the bombing results varied from excellent to poor, and are so contradictory and confusing that it is impossible to make a definite statement in this regard. This confusion over the bombing is apparently due to the crews not knowing where they were and not knowing what targets was going to come under attack. We furnished 4 aircraft for Air-Sea Rescue duty and this job was completed without incident.

On 20 April our Group received notice that the cable address for all organizations of this Station having an APO number 557 has been changed to AMORBL.

The target for 20 April was a No-ball situated south of the village of Grenflos and approximately 13 miles WSW of Paullens, and extends over an approximately 700 yards area. This is a ski-site and pictures taken on 20 November 1943 show that 2 possible glis are under construction.

Bombing results of the Group were excellent, with a strike photograph showing a good bomb pattern centering within 200 feet of the assigned MPI. The flak encountered on this trip was considered to be moderate and accurate, and located at several different points on the route. Our fighter support as usual was very good.

Capt. Smith was the Group C.O. and Major Hoffman was the Deputy of the "A" Group. Major Hozier and Capt Bussinger were C.O. and Deputy Group Commander of Group "B". On this mission we lost an A/C and one of the finest crews ever to fly. The ship was seen to explode in mid-air and no hope is held for any members of the crew. The crew was:

P Milne, Lt.	RO Johnson, Sgt.
GP Bussinger, Capt.	LW Schaffer, Sgt.
H English, Lt.	RW Holviman, Sgt.
B Cannon, Lt.	ET Beck, Sgt.
E Polegman, Sgt.	TC Gamblin, Lt.

On 21 April we made a very detail plan for a raid on Herseberg, Germany, however this mission was scrubbed and work completed was of no more value than just practice.

Our Group Commander, Lt. Col. Luper led the mission today to Hamm, Germany with Lt. Jesse Smith acting as his pilot. Major Hoffman was the Deputy Commander with Lt. May piloting his ship.

The target was the marshalling yard which has a capacity of 10,000 freight cars per day, is the largest transportation center in Germany, dealing with general traffic, it is called the "nerve center" of German rail traffic handling everything between the Ruhr in the North and Central Germany.

By the time our Group reached the assigned Primary Target, it was so blasted and smokecovered by the excellent bombing of 5 preceding units that our Group went on and dropped their bombs on the City of Hamm itself and results of this were proven to be very satisfactory.

[REDACTED]

There has been slight modification for Liberty Runs for Enlisted personnel of this Station in order to achieve smoother operation, and correct some of the faults that have been apparent up to this time. Our Group was fortunate enough to have Lt. Commander Campbell, the English Royal Navy give a couple of lectures on security.

The target for 24 April was the airfield and air depot situated 2 miles northeast of Erding, Germany. It is of considerable importance due to the fact that it holds large stocks of aircraft parts and equipment which are used as a reserve by the German Air Force in the Mediterranean.

Major Spencer was the Group C.O. of the flight with Lt. Godfrey acting as his pilot. Capt. Dickinson was the Deputy C.O. and Lt. Schuchmann acting as his pilot. Sorry to have to record that the bombing results of this mission were not good. The pattern was reported to be about 700 feet short of the MPI.

Enemy A/C mostly ME 109's and FW 190's attacked our formation from the IP until approximately 10 minutes after Bombs Away. And altho our fighter escort was generally good for the mission, it did not seem to be present from the IP to the target area. The flak at certain points of the route was moderate and accurate.

The target for 25 April was the Nancy/Essey Airfield, and the built-up area around it situated 2 miles East of Nancy. The airdrome has been used by military transport flying between France and Germany. More recently it has been used as a flying training school for glider and fighter pilots.

Major Francis, the Commanding Officer of the 750th Bomb Squadron was commanding the flight, with Capt. Bender acting as his co-pilot. As far as our Group is concerned we might say the mission was a complete failure, since no bombs were dropped due to the fact that the target areas were 9/10 to 10/10 overcast. The fighter escort was as usual very good.

On the return journey, the A/C of the Lead Pilot was seen to break into fire and smoke just before reaching the English Channel. Major Francis salvoed the bombs, made a 180 degree turn back into the continent and all members of the crew were seen to bail out (11 chutes seen to open) approximately 20 to 25 miles inside the coast of France. The crew consisted of:

Pilot	Bender, Edward M. Capt.	RO Mahan, Lyman M. Sgt.
CP	Francis, Roderick L. Major	LW Sarico, John P. "
N	Woodward, Earl E. Lt.	HW Hotaling, Lt.
H	Cavanaugh, Arthur T. Capt.	BT Woyurka, Michael "
B	Fuller, Edwin K. Lt.	TG Soules, "
E	Free, James L. T/Sgt	

On special Order No. 77 of 25 April, Capt. William [redacted], Jr. O-24859 was assigned to the 750th Bomb Squadron as the Squadron C.O. to replace Major Francis, and Capt. Wilbur D. Snow, O-24737 was assigned to be Assistant Group Operations Officer. 1st Lt. Jesse L. Smith was assigned to the 748th Bomb Squadron as Operations Officer. 1st Lt. Richard L. Hoelzer was assigned to the 751st Bomb Squadron as Operations Officer.

The Target for 26 April was the large factory located 4 miles north of the City of Brunswick, with center of the City of Brunswick assigned as the Secondary Target. Col. Luper was Commanding the flight with Lt. Selwyn as his pilot; Capt. Smith was Deputy Lead with Lt. Lady as pilot.

Due to 10/10 overcast at Primary Target, all ships dropped on the Secondary using PFF method with unobserved results. No enemy aircraft was encountered, however the flak was moderate over the target area and inaccurate as far as our formation was concerned.

Attention might be called at this time to the fact that the Officers will suffer a Stag Party at the Officers Club on Saturday 29 April.

On 27 April we attacked a No-ball target located at Zudausques, which is a ski-site and has been attacked before, but previous efforts have not inflicted sufficient damage to put the installation out of operation. Major Watson with Lt. Belcher as pilot was leader of the Group; Capt. Dickinson and Lt. Sheppard flying Deputy Lead. We again regret to have to report bomb results were poor. While no enemy aircraft were encountered, flak in the target area was meagre and fairly inaccurate.

April 27 was a very outstanding day in our operational life, in that we flew two missions, the target for the second being the Nancy/Essey Airfield, which we attempted to attack on the 25th but failed due to 10/10 cloud cover. This time Major Spencer was Commanding the Group with Capt. Mays being his pilot. Capt. Syptak was Deputy Leader with Lt. Lady as pilot.

While the actual MPI of our bombs appeared to be just short of the briefed MPI, the results can be reported to be very good as a 360 degree turn was made over the target at 19,000 feet under CAVU weather conditions and the entire airfield seemed to be covered by fire and smoke. Our Group encountered no enemy aircraft and the flak was so meager it hardly bears mention. This rounded out a full day and we feel that we added something to the war effort.

On 29 April, our mission took us to the business district of the City of Berlin. We have attacked this target several times before and hope to add to the destruction already meted out to this famous city. Major Hoelzer was in command with Lt. Belcher flying as his pilot, Major Hoffman was Deputy Lead and Lt. Godfrey was his pilot for this effort.

Due to the fact that the weather was 8/10 to 10/10 overcast at the target area, results of the bombing were unobserved, however as the Group left the target great columns of smoke were seen to rise through holes in the clouds, and all crews were satisfied that they had struck a vital [redacted] enemy aircraft were seen during

the entire flight and flak was encountered only over Berlin. This ranged from moderate to intense and was of the simple type, and as usual our fighter support was of the very best.

Today our Group was blessed with a new Chaplain, Capt. Halboth has come in to relieve Lt. Rogers, and we might say just in time as the Officers had a stag party tonight. What a party - it started in the evening at 2000 hours. The anti-climax occurred in the form of dancers imported for entertainment of the Officers, however this was surpassed by some of the performances given by the Officers themselves.

There has been a new list published of personnel authorized on the airdrome in case of aircraft accidents. This is due to the fact of considerable congestion in recent crash landings. The Powers that be are instituting a campaign against careless driving with the thought in mind to increase the safety of personnel on the Base, and ask the cooperation of everyone concerned.

The last day of the month of April finds our combat personnel winging their way to Lyon, France. The target being the airdrome located there. At the present a German fighter group is based there and this is a continuation of the drive by the 8th Air Force to destroy the Luftaffe and their nests. Col. Cobb was Leader with Lt. Jesse Smith flying as pilot; Capt. William Smith was Deputy Lead with Lt. Schuchmann as the pilot.

All the bombs were dropped on the Primary Target and the crews report excellent results. The pattern covered the briefed MPI with the actual MPI being approximately 300 feet short or to the Southwest. There was no enemy aircraft opposition and the flak was very meager apparently fairly accurate but aimed at formations other than ours. Our fighter escort was complete and excellent.

The Red Cross efforts this month were somewhat greater as far as case work was concerned. The Red Cross made 11 additional loans this month totaling 75 lbs and the total outstanding loans has been reduced to 5,000 lbs. Of course during the month the Aero Club carried on a program for the men which included 24 various types of entertainments and programs. In conjunction with Special Services they had one U.S.O. show and one lecture on the South Pacific War. The Aero Club served 109,102 snacks over the snack bar and an additional 8,800 snacks to members of crews returning from missions. All in all doing a very commendable service for the men.