

SECRET

HEADQUARTERS 454th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)

APO 520

U. S. ARMY

16 APRIL 1944

SUBJECT: HISTORICAL RECORDS

TO : Commanding General, Fifteenth Air Force, Attention: Historian
(through channels)

1. Unit history of the 454th Bombardment Group (H) for the period
1 March 1944 to 31 March 1944.

a. Facts relating to the origin of the unit:

(1) The present designation of the unit is 454th Bombardment Group (H), assigned to the 304th Bombardment Wing (H)

b. Changes in organization:

(2) There have been no changes in the designation of this unit.

c. Strength, commissioned and enlisted:

(1) Month of March 1944.

(a) At the beginning 27 Officers, 54 Enlisted Men.

(b) Increase of 2 Officers.

(c) No decrease.

(d) At the end 29 Officers, 54 Enlisted Men.

d. Stations:

(1) We are still stationed at San Giovanni Field, Italy.

e. Movements:

(1) There have been no movements of this Group since our arrival at this base.

f. Campaigns:

(1) Italian

(2) This campaign is still in progress.

g. Operations:

(1) The following are the bombing totals for the month of

March:

Sorties.....	321
Missions.....	13
Early returns.....	53
A/C Bombing.....	273
Tonnage Dropped.....	572.54
Losses.....	10

(2) The following E/A were destroyed, probable, damaged.

Destroyed..... 29

Probable..... 7

Damaged..... 4

(3) See attached Operational Mission Summaries for individual Missions.

h. Commanding Officers in important operations.

(1) Lt. Col. Aynesworth took part in Missions #6, 9, 10, 16, and 20.

(2) Lt. Gunn took part in Missions #11 and 19.

SECRET

(Historical Records continued)

i. Losses in Action:

(1) There have been no losses in Group Headquarters Squadron for the month of March.

j. Members who have distinguished themselves:

(1) No awards were made for the month of March.

2. Enclosed is the war diary of this unit for the period of 1 March 1944 to 31 March 1944, and

3 sets of photographs of A/C 459, 738th Squadron. This ship crash landed at San Severo Field, Italy, after completing Mission #12, 19 March 1944, and Operational Mission Summaries for March.

For the Commanding Officer:

**Charles E. Cox III
Major, Air Corps
Group Adjutant**

7 Incls.

Incl 1 – Pilot's (3 sets)

Incl 2 – Mission (trip)

Incl 3 – War Diary (trip)

Incl 4 – 736th Sqdn Hist.

Incl 5 – 737th Sqdn Hist.

Incl 6 – 738th Sqdn Hist.

Incl 7 – 739th Sqdn Hist.

SECRET

MISSION SUMMARIES

- March 2, 1944: Mission #6.** Our beachhead is being heavily attacked by the and the situation is critical.
- At 0829 hours, 35 A/C took off to bomb enemy concentrations along Rome-Cisterna road, immediately N.W. of Cisterna 4 A/C returned early because of engine malfunctions. 31 A/C dropped 33.06 tons of bombs. Many hits on both sides of road, but majority on the left side in the area in which regularly spaced objects (tents and equipment) were observed. Slight to moderate, inaccurate, heavy flak encountered through target.
- March 3, 1944: Mission #7.** At 0845 hours, 28 A/C of this Group took off to bomb Canino L/G, Italy. 3 A/C returned early due to malfunctions. 25 A/C dropped 20.82 tons of bombs. Bombs fell North and East of target. Flak was moderate, inaccurate, heavy at Civitavecchie, Tarquinis, Mentalto di Castro. 8-12 Fw 190's at 19,000 ft., from Tarquinis to Canino L/G and after rally left to coast, from 1150 to 1205 hours, made aggressive attacks on second element of lead Squadron and high right Squadron, coming in from 1 to 7 o'clock level and high, singly and in pairs. There was some painted silver, with black spinners; some had yellow tails. During the same period, 4 FW 190's and 1 ME 109 were destroyed, and 1 FW 190 probably destroyed.
- March 7, 1944: Mission #8.** At 0840 hours, 32 A/C took off to bomb secondary target - Orvieto A/D. 4 A/C returned early because of various malfunctions. 28 A/C dropped 70 tons of bombs. Bombs fell across field, particularly along the East side. Hits on buildings on the Southwest side of field observed. Flak was slight, inaccurate, heavy - white burst reported by second wave. Falk was observed being directed against other Groups at Viterbo, Tuscania, Montaldo di Castro. and East, South, and West of Lake Bracciano. In the Orvieto area, when the formation was at 19,000 ft. 10-12 ME 109's and FW 190's, made attacks from 1158-1210 hours. Attacks on the first wave were not organized on the first wave were not organized because of difficulty in forming after coming through overcast. Attacks on the second wave were apparently aggressive. E/A came in singly and in pairs at 3, 9, 11 and 12 o'clock high, low and level. 20mm cannon shells from FW 190's was believed fused for 300 yards. 1 FW 190 was probably destroyed, and ME 109 was damaged.
- March 15, 1944: Mission #9.** Enemy ground forces have cause a stalemate in ground operations in Cassino and Beachhead areas. Our Ground forc At 0744 hours, 31 A/C took off to bomb "B" area of Cassino Town. No A/C es will make a full tactical effort against the enemy immediately after our bombing efforts.
- At 0744 hours, 31 A/C took off to bomb "B" area of Cassino Town. No A/C returned early. 24 A/C dropped 72 tons of bombs on the target. 7 A/C returned bombs to base due to rack malfunctions. S.W. portion of Cassino Town well covered. Flak was moderate, inaccurate, heavy at target. The mission scheduled for the afternoon had to be recalled due to weather.
- March 17, 1944: Mission #10.** At 024 hours, 32 A/C took off to bomb PT Bad Voslau A/D, but due to bad weather, the secondary target at the industrial section of Vienna, Austria was bombed on ETA. 2 A/C returned early dur to engine trouble. 28 A/C dropped 51.15 tons of bombs on target. Vienna was completely overcast, But on the basis of course, ETA, and the flak encountered, Red Wing leaded, Lt. Col. Aynesworthy, is of the opinion that this Group scored heavily in Vienna area. Flak was moderate to intense, accurate, heavy in Vienna area from 1301 to 1308 hours. Black burst 20,500 ft. to 25,000 feet. Believed radar controlled, following formation over and off target.

SECRET

(Mission Summaries continued)

March 18, 1944: Mission #11. At 0750 hours, 32 A/C took off to attack and destroy Maniago L/G.

6 A/C returned early because of armament and engine malfunctions. 25 A/C dropped 28.26 tons of bombs. 1 A/C returned bombs to base due to bomb bay doors malfunctioning. Maniago L/G believed well covered. Some bombs fell short and beyond briefed target area. dark area on S.W. side of the L/G smoking. Several bursts of flak low and to the left after turn from target.

March 19, 1944: Mission #12. At 0955 hours, 30 A/C of this Group, took off to bomb Steyr-Daimler Pach

A/C Factory, but due to bad weather, target was abandoned, and Graz A/D and Klagenfurt A/D were hit. 11 A/C returned to base early for various malfunctions. 15 A/C dropped 28.3 tons of bombs on Graz, Austria. 2 A/C dropped 3.7 tons of bombs on Klagenfurt A/D and jettisoned 6 bombs into the Adriatic. 1 A/C dropped 2 tons of bombs on Kericbeg Harbor. 1 A/C jettisoned 2 tons of bombs in the Adriatic Sea. 1 A/C landed at a friendly field. 3 A/C were lost at the triangle of Graz-Klagenfurt - Maribor. 1 A/C missing and last seen at 4410N/1458E and 1 A/C ditched at 1505 hours at 4230N/1535E and crew of 10 men reported rescued by an English ship at 1635 hours. The 2 A/C that dropped bombs on Klagenfurt A/D at 1336 hours from 22,000 feet after joining another Group; observed burst over entire field, hangers, barracks, and adjacent buildings. 1 A/C dropped bombs in Kericbeg Harbor installations, results observed. 6 A/C are known to have dropped bombs South of Graz. 9 A/C (of these, 3 lost, 3 missing, 2 A/C ditched, and 1 A/C is at a friendly field) are assumed to have dropped bombs south of Graz. Flak was moderate to intense, accurate, heavy along the whole route. 4-6 FW 190's, at Celje, at 1308 came in from 7 o'clock level, made one pass, not aggressive. At 1335 hours West of Graz, formation was attacked by 40-50 ME 109's and FW 190's. These made aggressive attacks, mostly from 5-7 o'clock, but also from 3-8 o'clock, low, level, and high, singly and then in groups of 5-6. After attacking, they peeled under the formation, reformed and attacked again. One attack was made straight and level from 12 o'clock. Attacks lasted for 30 minutes. All planes had yellow spinners and most had belly tanks. ME 109's painted gray and FW 190's black. 5 crews of 10 men and 3 crews of 11 men were lost; 3 men (bombardier, navigator, nose turret gunner) missing over Graz-Klagenfurt area. Photographs are enclosed of the A/C landed at the friendly field showing the extent of its damage.

March 22, 1944: Mission #13. At 1120 hours, 22 A/C took off to bomb Verona East M/Y, but bombed alternative Target - Bologna M/Y due to weather. 9 A/C returned early because of engine, armament malfunctions. 1 A/C returned prior to bombing because BTG's oxygen was out. 11 A/C dropped 26.25 tons of bombs on target. 1 A/C dropped 2.5 tons on harbor installations of Pesaro, Italy. Bologna M/Y was well covered with majority of hits at both ends of M/Y. At Pesaro, results unobserved. No Flak, no fighters.

March 24, 1944: Mission #14. At 0800 hours, 21 A/c took off to bomb Steyr, but due to weather conditions, they bombed targets of opportunity. 2 A/C returned early with engine malfunctions. 11 A/C dropped 27.50 tons of bombs on Ancona M/Y. 2 A/C dropped 5 tons of bombs on Tana and 4 A/C dropped 8.25 tons on Senegallie, 1 A/C returned 1.25 tons of bombs to base because bombardier didn't think the target was worth more. Flak was slight, inaccurate, heavy at Ancona. Hits on center of Ancona Town, warehouses and choke point, and railroad bridge North of town. Tana - hits on RR and highway in center and Northwest part of town. Senegallie - hits on RR tracks.

THIS PAGE IS CLASSIFIED

MARCH 1944 WAR DIARY

(Mission Summaries Continued)

- March 26, 1944: Mission #15. At 0820 hours, 26 A/C took off to bomb and destroy Steyr – Daimler Puch A/C Factory. All planes returned bombs to base because target was abandoned due to adverse weather.**
- March 28, 1944: Mission #16. At 0850 hours, 28 A/C took off to bomb Verona East M/Y, Italy. 6 A/C returned early because of malfunctions. 3 A/C returned prior to bombing because of engine trouble. 18 A/C dropped 44.75 tons of bombs on Verona East M/Y. 1 A/C returned to base because bomb racks froze. Believed 50% of bombs hit in target area, remainder of bombs fell South of target and some hits observed on buildings North of railroad tracks. Believed some hits on choke point. Several fires observed. Flak was intense, accurate, heavy, beginning 40 seconds before bomb release line and continuing for 2 ½ - 3 minutes. Also, intense, accurate, heavy flak at Ferrara. 1 FW 190 came in at 1200 yards straight level 12 o'clock with silver wings, red nose. Fired seven to eight bursts of 20mm cannon fire and pulled off to 3 o'clock at 1220 hours, 21,600 feet. 30 ME 109's and FW 190's was engaged by P-38's at 4512N/1125E at 1205 hours.**
- March 29, 1944: Mission #17. At 0825 hours, 28 A/C took off from this Group. 2 A/C returned early, 1 with a navigator sick and the other with its nose turret inoperative. 26 A/C dropped 64.75 tons of bombs on the target. Eastern end of M/Y observed to be well covered. Hits on RR tracks, 2 miles East of M/Y observed. Slight, inaccurate, heavy flak observed in vicinity of Ancona. No flak observed at target area.**
- March 30, 1944: Mission #18. At 0722 hours, 29 B-24's took off to bomb the industrial center of Sofia. No A/C returned early and 72.5 tons of bombs were dropped. Bombs fell short and through the target area. Believed well covered. Heavy smoke and numerous fires observed. No fighters were encountered. Flak was moderate, inaccurate, heavy at Sofia, Skoplje, Nis, Perie, Zenens, along railroad North of Vranje. At Sofia, a large mirror-like reflection on the ground was observed for 5 minutes during which time the flak lessened in intensity.**

THIS PAGE IS CLASSIFIED

MARCH 1944 WAR DIARY

- March 2, 1944: Mission #6. Target Rose-Cisterna Road. Many hits on both sides of road, but majority on the left side in area in which regularly spaced objects (tents or equipment) were observed.**
- March 3, 1944: Mission #7. Target Canino L/G, Italy. Bombs fell North and East of target.**
- March 7, 1944: Mission #8. Target Orvieto A/D. Bombs fell across field, particularly along East side. Hits on buildings on the South-West side of field.**
- March 15, 1944: Mission #9. Target "B" area of Cassino. S.W. portion of Cassino Town well covered.**
- March 17, 1944: Mission #10. Target Vienna, Austria. Complete overcast, but believed well hit.**
- March 18, 1944: Mission #11. Target Maniaga L/G. Believed well covered. Some bombs fell short and beyond briefed target area. Dark Area on S.W. side of L/G smoking.**
- March 19, 1944: Mission #12. Targets Graz A/D and Klagenfurt A/D. No Observations for Graz. Klagenfurt A/D well covered.**
- March 22, 1944: Mission #13. Target Bologna M/Y. Yards were well covered with majority of hits at both ends of M/Y.**
- March 24, 1944: Mission #14. Targets Bombed were Ancona Town, warehouses, choke point and railroad bridge North of town. Senegallie – hits on RR tracks.**
- March 26, 1944: Mission #15. All targets abandoned due to adverse weather.**

THIS PAGE IS CLASSIFIED

MARCH 1944 WAR DIARY

March 28, 1944: Mission #16. Target Verona East M/Y. Believed 50% of bombs hit in target area, remainder of bombs fell South of target and some hits on choke point.

March 29, 1944: Mission #17. Target Milan? Lambrate Serriate M/Y. Eastern end of M/Y observed to be well covered. Hits on RR tracks 2 miles East of M/Y observed.

March 30, 1944: Mission #18. Target industrial center of Sofia. Bombs fell short and through area. Believed well covered.