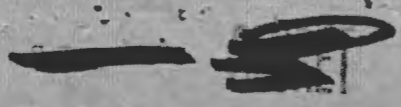


GP-358-H1
Feb. 45



AIR FORCE: FIRST TACTICAL AIR FORCE (PROVISIONAL)
 COMMAND: XII TACTICAL AIR COMMAND
 WING: 64TH FIGHTER WING
 GROUP: 358TH FIGHTER GROUP
 DATES INCLUDED: 1 February to 28 February 1945 incl.

GP 358-H1 (F1)
FEB. 1945

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 Bitchhoffen", 409th Infantry, 16 February
 1945.

P.R.C.



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Outline History, 358th Fighter Group, February, 1945.

- a. Present Designation: 358th Fighter Group, 64th Fighter Wing.
- b. Changes in Organization: None.
 - (1) Changes in designation: None.
 - (2) Subordinate units: None.
 - (3) Changes in command: None.
 - (4) Changes in staff officers: None.
 - (5) Changes in T/O: None.
- c. Strength: Officers: 31
Enlisted Men: 68
- d. Present Station: A-90, Croix-de-Boetz, Toul, France (since 11 November 1944).
- e. Movements: None.
- f. Campaigns: (see operations)
- g. Operations: The Group operated on 22 out of the 28 days during the month. A total of 164 missions totaling 1831 sorties were flown. About 75% of these missions were dive bombing and armed reconnaissance, the balance of them consisted of air cooperation and escort of medium bombers. A tabulation of claims for the month of February is given below:

	<u>Destroyed</u>	<u>Prob Des</u>	<u>Damaged</u>
E/A in Air	10	2	3
E/A on Ground	4	0	5
Military Transports	158		.163
Armored Vehicles and Tanks	10		.14
Locomotives	46		.140
Railroad Cars	558		1859
Bridges	9		.14
Gun Positions	20		.84
Dumps	5		.10
Factories, Bldgs & Hangers	305		.136
Vessels and Barges	0		.20
Horse Drawn Vehicles	31		.15

Road Cuts		17	
Railroad Cuts		221	
Marshalling Yards Attacked		39	

- h. - 1. See Squadron history reports.
- i. Awards:
Colonel James B. Tipton - . . . Bronze Star and 12th, 13th and 14th Oak Leaf Clusters.

Awards, cont'd.

Capt. Darwin A. Johnson . . . Bronze Star
T/Sgt. James L. Warren . . . Bronze Star
T/Sgt. Alfred S. Hovde . . . Bronze Star

WAR DIARY
358th Fighter Group
A-90, Croix-de-Metz, Toul, France
February 1945

1. One Squadron had just reached target area when recalled by bad weather at base. One Squadron was about 25 miles east of base, and the other was just setting course over field when recall was made. Had excellent lecture for all Pilots and Intelligence Officers by an officer from Military Intelligence Section on Prisoner of War Interrogation methods.
2. Excellent flying weather. Operated 11 missions for total of 121 sorties. The 367th Squadron knocked out an important RR bridge. Photo recon plane reported 2 of the 3 bridge spans were knocked out.
3. Each Squadron had one mission today.
4. Each Squadron had one mission today. General Barcus, CG, XII TAC, was at field today for purpose of decorating several of our Pilots.
5. No flying today.
6. Each Squadron had one mission today.
7. No flying today.
8. Each Squadron had 3 missions for a total of 107 sorties. The 366th Squadron destroyed 5 Me-109's.
9. Each Squadron had 3 missions for a total of 108 sorties.
10. One mission for each Squadron.
11. One mission for each Squadron.
12. Bad weather. No flying.
13. Had 8 missions for 103 sorties today. The 365th Squadron operated a very successful air cooperation mission against an enemy strong point, entrenched in an old paper mill just in front of our troops. A message from Army about this mission reads as follows: "Close support mission flown by your Group on target at Q-862658 at 1630 hours very successful. Ground unit reports target completely destroyed. Enemy casualties reported to be many". Colonel Jackson, CO of 64th Wing, went on this mission.
14. Very active day. 12 missions for a total of 136 sorties.
15. Excellent flying weather. Group broke its previous record on sorties by operating 13 missions for a total of 152 sorties. For the first time in several days enemy aircraft were encountered, resulting in 3 Me-109's and 4 He-111's destroyed, 1 Me-109 probably destroyed, and 6 Me-109's, 1 Ju-88 and 1 He-111 damaged. The circumstances surrounding these claims were

War Diary, cont'd.

quite unusual. The 367th Squadron engaged several Me-109's in aerial combat and chased them over an airdrome where there were several Me-109's on the field. The 365th Squadron, hearing the encounter over the R/T, rushed to the area and in trying to locate it came over another enemy airdrome, which they bombed and strafed, resulting in claims on He-111's and Ju-88 mentioned above.

16. Bad fog conditions prevailed until 1100 hours. 7 missions and 83 sorties today. For the first time for any Group in this Air Force, the planes carried 325# depth charge bombs. The target had been selected by Army -- the town of BITSCHHOFFEN -- and was under observation by many Army observers during the bombing attack, which was made by our 367th Squadron. Attached hereto is report by Army on the results of this mission (see Appendix I).
17. Heavy fog prevented any operations.
18. Bad weather in target area prohibited operations. Rain in our area in afternoon.
19. Bad weather in early forenoon. Had 5 missions for 71 sorties.
20. No operations today due to bad weather.
21. Good weather today. Had 10 missions for total of 134 sorties.
22. Excellent weather for operations. Had 10 missions totaling 146 sorties. For about the first time in a week enemy aircraft were encountered, resulting in 1 Me-109 destroyed and 2 Me-109's damaged. All afternoon missions were on a rail interdiction program in coordinated effort throughout the entire allied air force.

Two of our Squadrons were commended for their work on morning missions. The first was for the 365th Squadron. Below is quoted teletype of 25th February from Seventh Army Air Support Control:

"Ground report on Mission A.O. 27, 22 Feb, that bombed and strafed pill boxes at Q-408665 states that the excellent bombing and strafing was necessary due to the proximity of our troops. The Flight performed as required. Observers reported that all bombs were in the target. Approx 20 enemy killed in trenches and probably more in pillboxes".

The second report of the day was for the 366th Squadron on their bombing of LEBACH marshalling yard and is quoted below:

"Photos of good quality and complete cover show that a concentration of about 30 bombs landed in the center of the target area cutting all tracks and damaging at least 40 cars mostly empty Gondolas. String of 25 cars stalled near triangular junction at east end of M/Y. Two large warehouses alongside in the M/Y are 50 per--cent destroyed and several residences in the area are also seriously damaged or destroyed. Minor damage to the passenger platforms by near misses. Thru traffic impossible."

War diary, cont'd.

23. This was Group's second largest operational day -- 12 missions and 151 sorties. The 367th Squadron was commended on one Air Cooperation mission. The following message was received from 42nd Infantry Division:

"Wonderful show on Mouterhouse. Frontline troops stood up in foxholes and cheered. They want a flight every hour. 42nd Division sends their thanks to flight".

24. Bad weather until afternoon. Only 4 missions today.

25. Good weather, 10 missions for 130 sorties.

26. Bad weather part of the day, 5 missions for 60 sorties.

27. Poor flying weather, only two of our squadrons were operational for 1 mission each.

28. Had 6 missions for 75 sorties today. Photo interpretation report for 1 mission of 367th squadron reads as follows, "Small railroad bridge over road has one track destroyed and the other track severely damaged, through traffic impossible".

A teletype from 7th Army Air Support control concerning mission of 366th squadron operated today reads as follows:

"Bombing of troops and motor transport in St. Annual very effective is report of ground observers. Fires still burning at 1700 hours. 4 buildings at least destroyed. After bombing enemy observed running in target area. Division artillery effectively used on them. Reported by 70th Division".

APPENDIX I

HEADQUARTERS 409TH INFANTRY
Office of the Regimental Commander

16 February 1945

SUBJECT: Bombing of Bitchhoffen.

TO : Commanding General, 103d Infantry Division
(Att: Capt McClellan, Air Liason Officer)

1. The following description of the bombing of Bitchhoffen, 16 February 1945, is submitted as requested by the Air Liason Officer, 103d Infantry Division.

2. "Due to the fact that Bitchhoffen is on the reverse slope of a hill, observation of all the buildings and streets is impossible from any point in our regimental zone, but from the third battalion O. P. in Ringeldorf, the observer could see the tops of several buildings and the church steeple quite clearly. The good observation on the church steeple enabled the observer to estimate the impact area with a fair degree of accuracy. On the initial wave, one of the bombs fell to the east of the target area, but all the rest seemed to be well within the town. . . . With one possible exception all bombs detonated upon impact according to the consensus of opinion of a group of observers. Each explosion caused a brilliant flash of yellow flame followed by large clouds of smoke varying in color and density from a thin, red smoke to a heavy, black smoke. An observer with an artillery scope said that the explosions were very effective, and debris was thrown high into the air. It is believed that one fire was started in the location indicated on the sketch not attached .

For the Regimental Commander:

RICHARD A. EDWARDS,
1st Lt, Inf.,
Ass't S-3

THIS IS A TRUE EXTRACT COPY

/s/ Robert F. Weichsel,
/t/ ROBERT F. WEICHSEL,
Capt, Air Corps.

THIS IS A TRUE COPY

Joseph A. Lawton
JOSEPH A. LAWTON,
Major, Air Corps.

HEADQUARTERS 103D INFANTRY DIVISION
Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff G-3

20 February 1945

Subject: Bombing of BLITSCHHOFFEN (J912B).

To : G-3 Air, VI Corps, APO 46, US Army.

The following is an extract from the Division Interrogation Report
181800A to 191800A, February 1945:

* * * * *

<u>SN</u>	<u>UNIT</u>	<u>SECTOR & PLACE OF CAPTURE</u>
1	1 Co, 935 Inf Regt	409 Inf, vic (J919277)

Bombing of Blitschhoffen:
PW did not know extent of damage to the town, but on Feb 18 the
Germans were still digging bodies out of cellars.

* * * * *

SAMUEL D. McCLELLAND,
Capt, Air In O, 103d Inf Div

A TRUE COPY:

Joseph A. Lanton
JOSEPH A. LANTON,
Major, Air Corps.

The following is a comparison of the bombing of KINDWILLER (3-890293), 9 February 1945, and BITCHHOFFEN, (3-915290), 16 February 1945, both observed by L-4 pilots.

- (1) The bombing of BITSCHOFFEN seemed more accurate.
The bombs hit the heart of the town.
- (2) The effect of the bombs seemed to be roughly double that of the previous bombing.
- (3) Bricks and debris were seen blown 300 or more feet into the air. Buildings were devastated.

T. J. OXFORD, 1st Lt.
928 FA Bn

F. EDWARD SMITH, 1st Lt.
103d Div Arty

WILLIAM R. POWELL, 1st Lt.

THIS IS A TRUE EXTRACT COPY

/s/ Robert F. Weichsel,
/t/ ROBERT F. WEICHEL,
Capt, Air Corps.

A TRUE COPY:

Joseph A. Lawton
JOSEPH A. LAWTON,
Major, Air Corps.