

GP-358-A.1
4 JAN 45

GP-358-A.1 (F1)
JAN, 1945

AIR FORCE:	FIRST TACTICAL AIR FORCE (PROVISIONAL)
COMMAND:	XII TACTICAL AIR COMMAND
WING:	64TH FIGHTER WING
GROUP:	358TH FIGHTER GROUP
DATES INCLUDED:	1 January 1945 to 31 January 1945 incl.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Outline History Page 1

War Diary Pages 2 - 3

Letter, General Devers, Subject, "Commendation" . . Appendix I

Letter, Major Baker, Subject, "Close Air Support,
106 Cav Gp (Mecz), 2 January 1945" Appendix II

P.R.C.

6214-2
06085003

18

OUTLINE HISTORY, 358TH FIGHTER GROUP, JANUARY 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: 30.
 - Enlisted Men: 71.
- d. Present Station: A-90, Croix de Metz, Toul, France (since 11 November 1944).
- e. Movements: None.
- f. Campaigns: (See operations).
- g. Operations:
- Approximately 75% of missions flown during the month were Dive Bombing and Armed Reconnaissance in character. Most of the balance were Close Cooperation and Armed Reconnaissance type. A few straight fighter sweeps comprised the balance. Several tunnel sealing missions were laid on, and a rail interdiction program, along with rail cuts and attacking railroad bridges on the rail line running from Kaiserslautern to Neustadt.
- h. - 1. (See Squadron History Reports attached).
- j. Awards: None.

WAR DIARY, 358TH FIGHTER GROUP
A-90, Croix de Metz, Toul, France
January, 1945

1. On this day, the 358th Fighter Group made by far its greatest contribution to the war effort since it went into combat. The Luftwaffe had been put up in great strength that morning along practically the entire western front for the purpose of pulling a surprise attack on our airfields. The 367th Fighter Squadron on its first morning mission, flying 12 planes, met and engaged 30 plus enemy fighters, including Me-109's, FW-190's and a few Me-110's. There is no question but that this flight of enemy aircraft was headed for one of the airfields of this command. In the engagement, 14 enemy planes were destroyed and 6 more damaged without the loss of a single one of our pilots or planes. It is needless to add that the enemy was completely dispersed and none of them ever reached any of the airfields of the command. Our other two squadrons accounted for additional enemy aircraft that day. A record of 149 sorties were flown that day. This is the second anniversary of the Group's activation.
2. An excellent example of a Close Cooperation type mission was performed today by the 366th Fighter Squadron. 10 planes participated, each carrying 2 x 500# GP bombs and 1 x 250# frag bomb. 29 out of the 30 bombs were reported by forward controller as being dropped in the target area. (See attached copy of letter from ALO officer of ground unit for whom the close cooperation was furnished).
- 3 - 4. Nothing of special interest on these dates.
5. Planes returned from afternoon mission today in extremely bad weather. Landings were made at three adjacent fields. Part of these planes returned to home base before dark, but 22 were weathered in at one field until the 9th.
- 6 - 8. No flying on these dates due to adverse weather.
9. Planes finally returned from other base today. The 366th Fighter Squadron destroyed 5 Me-109's on this date.
10. Nothing of special interest on this date.
- 11 - 12. Bad fog prohibited flying on these dates.
13. Nothing of special interest.
14. Group flew a total of 123 sorties this date. One of our best days. In addition to a big score of ground targets, also destroyed in the air 8 Me-109's and damaged 3 more.
15. Nothing of special interest today.

16. This was second best day in history of the Group so far as number of sorties is concerned. Had a total of 13 missions, consisting of 145 sorties. Had two splendid examples this date of Close Cooperation type missions. On one of these missions, we were requested to knock out 6 Nebelwerfer guns which were harassing our ground troops. The 365th Squadron attacked the guns in the morning, killing several of the personnel, and the 367th attacked in the afternoon, scoring direct bomb hits. A week later, received information thru 64th Fighter Wing that the guns had never fired a shot up to that time since the attack. The second Close Cooperation mission on this date was performed by the 366th Squadron. They were requested to bomb the town of OFFENDORF. 12 planes took part in the mission, each carrying 2 x 500# GP bombs and 1 x 260# frag. Quoted letter is extract from Interrogation Report #727. (G-2 Section, IPW), Seventh Army: "On 16 January our fighters attacked OFFENDORF and scored a direct hit on house in which two platoons of the 2nd Co. and an AA Battery were stationed. 80% of the men in the house were killed".
- 17 - 19. No operations due to adverse weather. Nothing of interest on these dates.
20. Each Squadron flew one mission today, after which snow started falling and continued until night.
21. Snow fell again today, prohibiting flying. Snow removal detail started before daylight working on runway and continued all day.
22. Flew a total of 102 sorties today.
- 23.- 24. Nothing of special interest these dates.
25. No flying today.
26. Heavy snow storm during night; made it impossible to get snow off runway until noon. The 367th performed an excellent cooperation mission in the afternoon. At request of ground forces, Squadron bombed town of UHRWEILER. A short time later when our troops entered the town, they found that bombing had resulted in killing 100 enemy troops.
- 27 - 28. No flying. Nothing of special interest to record.
29. Group flew 10 missions for a total of 112 sorties today.
- 30 - 31. Nothing of interest to report on these dates.

SECRET
- 3 -

APPENDIX II

Hq 106 Cav Gp (Mecz)
APO 308, US Army

IMB:wd
18 January 1945

SUBJECT: Close Air Support, 106 Cav Gp (Mecz), 2 January 1945.

TO : Commanding General, XII TAC, LUNEVILLE, France.

1. The following are events in connection with the mission flown in close support of the 106 Cav Gp (Mecz), 2 January 1945, 1530 to 1550 hours, T.O.T. by the 366th F/B Sqn, 358th F/B Gp. Target, a fortified hill posn located at Q333718, France, 1:50,000, Sheet XXXV-12.

2. This target area, in the sector of the 106th Cav Gp (Mecz), had been retaken by the Germans during an attack launched by them on the night of 31 December 1944. Preparations were being made by the 106th Cav Gp (Mecz) to retake the ground lost. Air attack on the target was requested, but was not available at the time. The attack was launched, preceded by an arty preparation, and elements reached and took defenses on the SW crest of the hill. German arty fires on that part of the posn taken as well as heavy small arms fire from posns on the E crest of the hill and woods to the S and E forced a withdrawal. The Troop withdrew through the woods vic Q328713, from which point it had launched its attack, and continued to posns vic Q326708. After the withdrawal, heavy German arty fires were placed on the woods vic Q328713.

3. At this time a Flight of 10 F/Bs was made available to the 106th Cav Gp (Mecz) for air briefing. Since the number of Germans holding the posn area was much greater than anticipated, it was decided to use the Air Support to prepare for a second attempt to take the hill and to break up a probable German counterattack.

4. The Flight was air briefed and the target area marked with smoke. Photos of Sortie US34/3183, Print 4114, 24 December 1944 and Sortie US34/3283, Print 3050, 5 January 1945, contain comparative coverage of the target. The center of the excellent bomb pattern was on the S slope of the hill, but in the area from which a volume of small arms fire was received. There were also several hits on the E crest of the hill.

5. Due to the fact that the Troop received thirty-seven percent casualties during the attack, a second attempt could not follow the bombing.

6. A combination of time and circumstances caused much of the inherent value of the air support to be lost, however it is felt that it very definitely discouraged a German counterattack at a critical moment and did much towards raising the morale of our troops.

A TRUE COPY

Joseph A. Lanton
JOSEPH A. LANTON,
Major, Air Corps, Hq 358 F Gp.

/s/ Isaac M. Baker, Jr.
/t/ ISAAC M. BAKER, JR.,
Major, Infantry,
ALO, 106th Cav Gp (Mecz)

1st Ind.

HQ, FIRST TACTICAL AIR FORCE (PROV), APO 374, U. S. Army, 23 Jan 45.

TO: Commanding Officer, 358th Fighter Group, APO 374, U. S. Army.

1. It is indeed with pleasure that I forward this splendid commendation from the Commanding General, Sixth Army Group. The First Tactical Air Force (Prov) which furnishes the air effort for the Sixth Army Group keeps a close watch on the efforts and results of all its subordinate units. The outstanding achievements of the 358th Fighter Group has been exceptionally gratifying to me and an example for all organizations to strive to emulate.

/s/ Ralph Royce
/t/ RALPH ROYCE
Major General, USA
Commanding.

2nd Ind.

HEADQUARTERS, 358TH FIGHTER GROUP, APO 374, U. S. ARMY, 25 January 1945.

TO:

1. To reiterate, each officer and enlisted man of this organization and ancillary units should feel that the contents of the basic communication and indorsement are directed to his individual attention.

2. That we were commended by the army group with which our attacks against the enemy are coordinated, is a tribute to your personal efforts which have created an efficient tactical organization.

3. Such a commendation represents not only past performance with a high degree of tactical and technical skill, but also the kind of efficiency which is a prerequisite for achieving even greater successes.

James B. Tipton

JAMES B. TIPTON,
Colonel, Air Corps,
Commanding.

HEADQUARTERS
SIXTH ARMY GROUP
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL
APO 23

21 January 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO : Commanding Officer, 358th Fighter Group, APO 896 (374)

THRU : Commanding General, First Tactical Air Force (Prov.), APO 374.

The remarkable record achieved by the 358th Fighter Group during the month of December 1944 is a tribute to the leadership of the Commander and the aggressive determination of each member of the Command.

The records show that this unit, operating on 146 missions with 1710 sorties during weather seldom favorable, wrought upon the enemy the destruction of 1010 railroad cars, 75 locomotives, 109 motor vehicles, 301 buildings and damaged seriously almost double these numbers. In addition, this unit effected 48 railroad cuts and destroyed or damaged numerous marshalling yards, bridges, supply dumps and other important objectives. In air combat, at least 25 enemy aircraft were shot from the skies, and others were rendered useless on the ground.

The accomplishments and example of this unit have been the subject of much favorable comment, and I am pleased to pass to you and to each individual of the 358th Fighter Group, my congratulations, and the gratitude of the ground forces which your efforts have so materially aided.

/s/ Jacob L. Devers
/t/ JACOB L. DEVERS,
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army,
Commanding.