

AIR FORCE: FIRST TACTICAL AIR FORCE (PROVISIONAL)
 COMMAND: XII TACTICAL AIR COMMAND
 WING: 64TH FIGHTER WING
 GROUP: 368TH FIGHTER GROUP
 DATES INCLUDED: 1 March to 31 March inclusive

GP 358-HI(EI)
 MAR, 1945

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OUTLINE HISTORY, 358TH FIGHTER GROUP, MARCH 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: 33
- 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: Group operated on 27 of the 31 days during the month. A total of 291 missions for a total of 2804 sorties were operated; far exceeding previous month's performance. Bomb tonnage dropped was just short of 1385 tons. A much larger percentage of our missions for the month were of Air Cooperation type in support of ground forces. Continued to operate some bomber escort and armed reconnaissance type missions. (See attached sheet for tabulation of claims for the month).
- h. - 1. (See Squadron history reports).
- j. Promotions:
- 1st Lieut. to Captain
- 1st Lieut. Emanuel Haber
- k. Awards: None.

[REDACTED]

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

1. 6 missions for 70 sorties today. 2 missions were fighter sweeps, patrolling in Stuttgart area to watch enemy planes and prevent them from coming up to attack RAF bombers attacking Mannheim.
2. 9 missions, 119 sorties.
3. 7 missions, 90 sorties. Excerpt from Memorandum, G-3 Air Section, Headquarters Seventh Army, dtd 30 March: "2 PW's of group of 13 taken by the 63rd Division stated that after the effective bombing and strafing around HARTUNGSHOF by BOOKWORM at 1230A hours they surrendered when confronted by ground troops. PW states that bombing was devastating".
4. 3 missions, 36 sorties.
5. 3 missions, 36 sorties.
6. No flying today; bad weather.
7. No operations; bad weather.
8. No operations; bad weather.
9. 7 missions for 81 sorties. The 367th Squadron received commendation for one of their missions of air cooperation, and the 366th Squadron was likewise commended in same message, which reads as follows: "2030A - Air Missions today bombed and strafed troops and gun positions SCHORNECK (Q-4069) at 1130A and KRUCHATTA (Q-3970) at 1200A. Another mission bombed and strafed troops and gun positions at KRUCHATTA and along road northwest to KLARENTHAL at 1515A. Artillery and ground observers report all bombs target and fires still burning in all target areas at 1800A. Many buildings demolished in SCHORNECK. (70th Inf Div) 2030A - Reported all bombs target area on ammo dump Q-387725. All missions flown by 358th Group. (70th Inf Div)" (From Memorandum, G-3 Air Section, Headquarters Seventh Army, dtd 30 March).
10. 3 missions, 35 sorties. Weather very unfavorable for operations.
11. 4 missions, 43 sorties. Very bad weather in target area.
12. Only 1 mission, 12 sorties. Very bad flying weather.
13. Heavy fog prevented operations until around noon. Had 8 missions for 98 sorties. The 366th Squadron strafed Malsheim A/D. No planes seen on field.
14. 6 missions, 76 sorties. 367th Squadron attacked the important BAD MUNSTER RR bridge. Each plane carried two 1000# bombs. The bridge was damaged by this attack.

15. This was "D" day for jump-off of Seventh Army. Group far exceeded its previous record of sorties for a single day. Operated 24 missions for a total of 198 sorties. For the first time in several days a single Me-109 was encountered and damaged. Effectiveness of attacks of 366th and 367th Squadrons was verified in division reports relayed through G-3 (Air), Seventh Army, by teletype: "From G-3 Air 100th Div., 'Missions on Fort Otterbiel and vicinity Q-7851 yesterday by . . . 358 Group had excellent results. After air mission no fire received from fort and vicinity' . . . From G-3 Air, 45th Div., 'Exhaust Yellow bombed and strafed enemy troops Q-5960 at Q835A. C. O. of Regt. reports results excellent. Ground troops are very enthusiastic about results of 8 fighter bomber shows directed against town in our sector today. Ground observers who saw attacks of Exhaust Yellow on Reinheim, Gersheim and Herbitzheim; Bookworm on Walaheim and Wittersheim; . . . Exhaust White on Breitfurt; . . . say that the accuracy appeared excellent. Several of today's targets were less than a kilometer from our forward troops and needless to say thousands of faces were upturned and thousands of sighs of relief were heaved when the mission were accomplished without mishap! "
16. Group established another record today with 26 missions for 206 sorties. All of these missions were air cooperation and armed reces. Many of them were bombing towns in front of our ground forces. Memorandum, G-3 Air Section, Seventh Army, dtd 30 March, states: "2030A - Excellent Air support today. Two missions on Fort at Q-830505 by 358th Group most successful. After these missions infantry able to move forward and take objectives."
17. Poor weather somewhat restricted operations today. 10 missions, 80 sorties. 367th Squadron was commended in message from GLO, 100th Division, which reads as follows: "Mission on troop concentration and vehicles at THULLEN (Q-8660) very effective. Division Artillery sub planes report, prior to attack, beaucoup troops and vehicles in town. Attack caused fires and left town burning with all bombs target area. CG 100th Division Artillery very appreciative of swiftness of action on attacking the target, speed with which cooperation rendered and aid to assault troops of division. CG says, 'Many Thanks' ".
18. Major General Webster, Commanding General, First Tactical Air Force, visited our field today for the first time. He was accompanied by Brigadier General Barcus, Commanding General, XII Tactical Air Command. Group took advantage of excellent flying weather and operated 23 missions totaling 181 sorties. All missions were air cooperation. One pilot of the 367th Squadron, 1st Lt. Robert Ward, destroyed 5 tanks with 3 rockets.
19. Another record day of operations. 25 missions for 206 sorties. The enemy was moving out of the Sear valley east toward the Rhine. Our Group destroyed a total of 328 motor transports and damaged 150 more, as part of our claims for the day. Quoting again the Memorandum, Seventh Army, dtd 30 March, "The assistant Division Commander today was present at a forward CP when Gatepost White attacked NIEDER WURZBACK. He has high praise for the skill and accuracy with which the attack was executed".

- [REDACTED]
20. This was another banner day for the Group. Although only 15 missions for a total of 146 sorties were operated, the destruction on enemy equipment surpassed that of the previous day. Long columns of motor transports of the enemy were caught moving east between Frankenstein and Bad Durkheim and between Frankenstein and Neustadt on roads through the woods. It was the kind of situation that our pilots had been briefed on to expect for it was conclusive that the enemy would sooner or later try to evacuate the Saar pocket and endeavor to escape across the Rhine. Just to mention one item on the day's claims, the Group destroyed 457 motor transports and damaged and additional 453. All in all, on this date we delivered one of the most staggering punches to the enemy since the Group went into combat. A report was received from ALO, 3rd DIA, on bombing of Buchelberg by 367th Squadron, in letter dtd 30 March: "20 March, Exhaust Blue and Green bombed the southern edge of town (Buchelberg) and strafed trenches along the northern part of the clearing. They observed and strafed 4 gun positions (105mm). The southern part of the town is now non-existent. Fires were still burning 26 March. The gun positions were empty (guns evacuated after attack).
 21. Bad weather during forenoon prohibited operations. Had 7 missions for 63 sorties. The pocket west of the Rhine in which enemy motor transports, etc., could be safely attacked had shrunk to a very small area. Our ground forces were closing in rapidly from all sides on the enemy, creating a situation calling for the utmost accuracy of attack and positive identification in order to avoid casualties among our own troops. The great volume of enemy motor transport, etc., which was available for attack on the two previous days had all but disappeared. What had not been destroyed and damaged had presumably under cover of night and during the forenoon when our planes were grounded by bad weather, made good the opportunity to escape across the Rhine. To draw a comparison, our group destroyed today only 43 motor transports as compared with 457 on the previous day.
 22. 15 missions, 124 sorties. Very little rail or road activity on east side of Rhine where Group was operating. G-3 Air, 42nd Division, reported very successful attack by 367th Squadron on Dahn-Busenburger road. The message stated: "Air officer arrived Dahn-Busenburger road 30 minutes after bombing. Devastating. Krauts driven off road by air attack, surrendering by hundreds. Vehicles, dead horses and booty strewn along road unbelievable. Believe claims for M/T and HDV this area underestimated."
 23. First mission of day taking off at 0620 was fighter sweep and patrol over several enemy airdromes east of the Rhine river. Few scattered aircraft seen on some of fields, but no claims. Practically all other missions of the day were concentrated on knocking out two bridges, one at HEILBRONN and the other at BIETIGHEIM. Both bridges were claimed damaged. Only two of our squadrons were operating today. 9 missions for 122 sorties.
 24. 9 missions for 128 sorties. Only two squadrons operating today. Continued attacks on important bridge at BIETIGHEIM. Several direct hits scored, also many rail cuts on approaches. Bridges now believed to be definitely unserviceable. The 367th Squadron ran into 4 Me-109's about 1830 hours. The enemy
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

aircraft tried to lead our squadron over MALMSHEIM airdrome as as to be brought under flak attack. One Me-109 was attacked and seen to crash land on the airdrome.

25. 7 missions, 102 sorties. Over half the sorties flown were armed reconnaissance. Not much enemy equipment located but to mention two items. Group destroyed 56 motor transport damaging 29 additional, also destroyed 25 RR cars and damaged 68 others.
26. This was "D" day for 7th Army in their operation of crossing Rhine river. Our squadrons operated mostly as area patrol over the river to intercept any enemy aircraft coming up to attack our ground forces in their crossing. First squadron was airborne at 0513 hours and upon returning to base reported seeing large numbers of our barges and assault boats loaded with troops crossing the river. All existing records for sorties flown were broken. Group had 28 missions for a total of 242 sorties. As the day progressed, pilots brought back word that many pontoon bridges across the river had been completed, and many more in process of construction. They reported great numbers of our troops, tanks, motor transports etc, crossing, and evidently meeting with little or no resistance. Last plane landed far after dark at 2035 hour.
27. Bad weather seriously handicapped operations, only 8 missions for 56 sorties during the day.
28. Group again not very active due to adverse weather conditions, only two missions for 16 sorties during the day.
29. No operations today because of adverse weather. Colonel Jackson 64th Wing Commander visited group today and made presentation of awards to several pilots.
30. Bad weather continued but late in PM were able to put up 5 missions for 21 sorties.
31. The month of March was brought to a close with an outstanding day of operations. 28 missions were operated for a total of 225 sorties the second best day in Groups history. To mention a few items of claims for the day, we destroyed 56 buildings, 4 tanks, 25 RR cars, and 140 motor transports.

APPENDIX I



From left to right: Colonel Tipton, Group Commander; Major General Webster, Commanding General, First Tactical Air Force, (Prov); and Brigadier General Barcus, Commanding General, XII Tactical Air Command. Photo was taken in Briefing Tent at Station A-90.

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APPENDIX II
TRIBUTE FROM THE GROUND FORCES

Quoted below is a letter from the Air Officer of 42nd (Rainbow) Division which we consider fitting to be incorporated as part of our history record:

TO THE BOYS WHO FLY THE FIGHTER BOMBERS

Although during a heavy offensive operation you receive few reports from the ground forces as to the results of your magnificent work, it is deeply appreciated. The radio reports on what you do and see are eagerly studied for indications of what the enemy is up to. Every ground force soldier knows that when he sees you pass over that you are working for him! As one doughfoot stated: "There goes the power and the glory". Another said: "There goes our team's interference to take out the backfield".

The close support missions flown at the request of this division have all been 100% perfect. Never once have any of our troops been bombed or strafed although they have been very close to the target.

The results of your work on railroads and other communication zone targets in the areas we have passed through have convinced all "Doubting Thomases" of your efficiency.

Everytime you fly a mission for us we put artillery on every AA position in the area. Many times our forward observers have spotted other AA guns when they opened up and put fire on them before they could hurt you.

The Rainbow considers you a part of our team.

Major E. EVANS,
Air Officer,
42d Inf Div.

~~SECRET~~
APPENDIX III

GENERAL

During the month of January 1945, our Group was recommended for the Presidential Citation for extraordinary heroism in action against the enemy from 24 December 1944 to 2 January 1945.

The recommendation was approved by First Tactical Air Force (Provisional) by General Orders No. 22, dated 19 February 1945, copy of which is attached for recording in the Group History.



HEADQUARTERS
FIRST TACTICAL AIR FORCE (PROVISIONAL)
APO 374

GENERAL ORDERS)
NUMBER.....22)

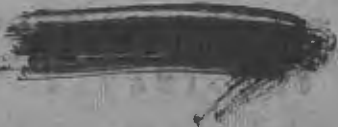
19 February 1945.

BATTLE HONORS.....I
AWARD OF THE SILVER STAR.....II
AWARDS OF THE BRONZE STAR AND DL.....III

I. BATTLE HONORS

1. By direction of the President, under the provisions of Circular Number 333, War Department, dated 22 December 1943, and in accordance with authority delegated by the War Department, the following-named organization is cited for gallantry and extraordinary heroism in armed conflict with the enemy while serving with the First Tactical Air Force (Provisional) in the European Theater of Operations. The citation reads as follows:

THE 358TH FIGHTER GROUP. For extraordinary heroism in action against the enemy from 24 December 1944 to 2 January 1945. The 358th Fighter Group distinguished itself as a unit by exceptional skill, bravery, and combat spirit in armed conflict with the enemy during the period when the Wehrmacht launched a powerful offensive against the United States Seventh Army in conjunction with the Ardennes breakthrough. Despite the hazardous conditions of low visibility and intense opposition from anti-aircraft fire under which a large number of the seventy-nine missions were flown during this period the personnel of the 358th Fighter Group demonstrated extreme courage, determination, and aerial skill, and were principally responsible for the maintenance of air superiority against a resurgent German Air Force. Through the systematic reduction of communication and supply lines, the immobilization and destruction of hostile artillery, and finally in the execution of closely coordinated air support of our ground troops, this organization contributed in vital measure to the support of the Seventh Army's long and tenuous front. The outstanding record of the 358th Fighter Group in aerial combat with the enemy reached its climax at the turn of the year when, during a major enemy assault in the Sauerbrunn area, twelve of the Group's P-47 type aircraft which were engaged in armed reconnaissance of marshalling yards near Houseldrohen, encountered a large force of Focke-Wulf and Messerschmitt aircraft. Although outnumbered almost three to one the P-47 pilots jettisoned their bombs and closed with the enemy. In a gallant display of fighting courage and aerial skill they destroyed fourteen of the enemy planes and damaged six without loss of their own aircraft. The gallantry and extraordinary heroism exhibited during this crucial period of operations against the enemy reflect great credit upon the personnel of the 358th Fighter Group, and exemplify the finest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States.



CO, 22, No. First Tactical Air Force, (Provisional), 19 Feb 48 (Cont'd)

II. AWARD OF THE SILVER STAR

1. By direction of the President, under the provisions of AR 600-45, as amended, and in accordance with authority delegated by the War Department, the following-named officer is awarded the SILVER STAR:

WALTER T. O'NEIL, O-521765, First Lieutenant, Air Corps, 367th Fighter Squadron, 358th Fighter Group. For gallantry in action while participating in aerial flight against the enemy in the European Theater of Operations. Lieutenant O'NEIL distinguished himself by conspicuous heroism and brilliant flying skill when, on an armed reconnaissance mission over Germany on 1 January 1945 the formation of twelve P-47 type aircraft in which he was flying encountered a force of thirty-five enemy fighters. With no thought of the odds against him, Lieutenant O'NEIL immediately closed with the enemy, and in a gallant display of fighting spirit and combat skill he destroyed three and damaged two of the hostile fighters. By his superb bravery and aerial skill as displayed on this occasion he merited the Silver Star its great distinction upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States. Entered military service from Mendocino, California.

III. AWARDS OF THE BRONZE STAR

1. By direction of the President, under the provisions of AR 600-45, as amended, and in accordance with authority delegated by the War Department, the following-named officers and enlisted personnel are awarded the BRONZE STAR:

TIMOTHY J. BOGGS, 155459, Colonel, Cavalry, Headquarters, First Tactical Air Force (Provisional). For meritorious service in connection with operations against the enemy from 2 November 1944 to 19 February 1945. Entered military service from Hollister, California.

GERALD S. COLBERT, 36255100, Master Sergeant, Coast Artillery Corps, 81st Anti-aircraft Artillery Group. For meritorious service in connection with military operations against the enemy from 1 April 1944 to 29 January 1945. Entered military service from Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

WILFRED L. HILLMAN, 6581168, Master Sergeant, Air Corps, 25th Bomb Squadron, 17th Bombardment Group (). For meritorious service in connection with military operations against the enemy from 28 December 1942 to 18 December 1944. Entered military service from Salt Lake City, Utah.

EMANUEL L. KLEIN, 6571876, Master Sergeant, Air Corps, 98th Bombardment Squadron, 17th Bombardment Group (). For meritorious service in connection with military operations against the enemy from 1 January 1943 to 6 November 1944. Entered military service from Jackson, Mississippi.

WALTER S. DAVISON, 11338437, First Sergeant, Air Corps, 44th Bombardment Squadron, 330th Bombardment Group (). For meritorious service in connection with operations against the enemy from July 1942 to January 1945. Entered military service from St. Johnsbury, Vermont.

GO, 22, HQ, First Tactical Air Force, (Provisional), 19 Feb 1945 (Cont'd)

ERYL T. ADAMS, 18000595, Technical Sergeant, Air Corps, 37th Bombardment Squadron, 17th Bombardment Group (H). For meritorious service in connection with military operations against the enemy from 25 December 1943 to 27 January 1945. Entered military service from Danville, Texas.

LELAND E. TOOLE, 3 083525, Technical Sergeant, Air Corps, Headquarters Squadron, 320th Bombardment Group (H). For meritorious service in connection with military operations against the enemy from December 1943 to January 1945. Entered military service from Weaverville, California.

NORRIS G. HILL, 20328533, Sergeant, Coast Artillery Corps, 213th Anti-aircraft Artillery Group. For meritorious service in connection with military operations against the enemy from 1 April 1944 to January 1945. Entered military service from Trichlers, Pennsylvania.

By command of Major General WEBSTER:

C. E. CHURCH
Colonel, Air Corps
Chief of Staff

OFFICIAL:

T. J. BROWN
T. J. BROWN
Colonel, AGC
Adjutant General

Distribution: "A"

APPENDIX IV

358TH FIGHTER GROUP HISTORY

Month of MARCH - 1945



CLAIMS

E/A
M/T
LOCOS
R.R. CARS
TANKS
GUNS
FACTORIES & BLDGS
ROADS CUT

	DESTROYED	DAMAGED	DESTROYED	DAMAGED
	1	3	106	
	1678	1113	132	101
	31	99		
	463	1125		45
	69	113	1	13
	38	187	8	72
	654	402		
	30		5	5

R.R. CUTS
H.B.V.S
A/F ATTACKED
M/Y ATTACKED
BRIDGES
BARGES
TROOP CONCENTRATIONS
AMMO & GAS DUMPS