

10 February 1945

SECRET

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

STATION COMMANDER

MONTH OF JANUARY 1945

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STATION COMMANDER
SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES MONTH OF JANUARY

PART I
PART II

PART I

On this Tactical Fighter Station as is the SOP within this Wing, the Commanding Officer of the Fighter Group assumes command of the Station and thus performs a dual yet concurrent function. The primary duty of this Fighter Station is to destroy the enemy in the air or on the ground, wherever he may be found, and at all cost and to protect the bombers we are assigned to escort.

The Commanding Officer has two primary objectives. First, the tactical leadership and supervision of the combat missions and tactics to be used and developed in the safeguarding of the bombers and the destruction of the enemy. Secondly and a matter which indirectly reflects itself to a great extent in the results gained in the air is the function of the ground staff in the operation of the Station. Responsibilities of the Station Commander include the morale of his troops, the administration and disciplinary problems of the officers and enlisted men, and in this theatre the execution of policies to maintain and further Anglo-American relationship.

While the ultimate responsibility for his command rests with the Commanding Officer, the execution of the numerous and complex functions are delegated to his Staff and their sub-staffs. My policies are given to my Staff and Commanding Officers at weekly or more frequent meetings, and these operational and administrative policies are placed in operation by them. A Commanding Officer must know his command, problems of his station and the corrective measures being taken. He must know his officers, their abilities and shortcomings so that the former can be developed and the latter corrected. He must at all time be certain that the enlisted men are given proper supervision, training and administration.

PART II

Tactical operations during the month of January were somewhat curtailed due to poor weather both locally and on the continent, with the Group flying only fourteen missions of which all were heavy bomber escort and area patrol.

There was one outstanding mission on 14 January 1945, however. The Group was assigned to escort B-17 bombers of the 3d Air Division on a deep penetration mission to targets in the vicinity of Derben, Germany. The Group covered the lead three boxes of the bomber force, with the 364th Fighter Squadron out front, the 362nd Fighter Squadron in the center and above and the 363rd Fighter Squadron at the rear.

SECRET

Summary of Activities Station Commander -
month of January - Part II cont'd.

SECRET

North and west of Brandenburg, a very large force of enemy single engine fighters were seen to be approaching one o'clock to the bomber stream. As the enemy neared, his force was seen to be composed of 70 FW-190's with a top cover of 100 ME-109's. The Group was alerted and took positions in accordance with the briefed plan. The FW-190's attacked immediately, shifting into a company front formation, with each wave of eight planes attacking in quick succession.

As the enemy attack was launched, the 364th Fighter Squadron being closest and initially the only squadron between the Hun and the bombers, dropped their auxiliary fuel tanks and turned head-on, by flights, into the on-coming enemy swarm. The enemy attack was shattered and passed down under the bomber boxes, being heavily attacked as they did so by the 362nd Fighter Squadron which had come down into the fight simultaneous with the 364th Fighter Squadron breaking into the FW-190's. A great melee of fighting planes ensued. The enemy was very determined and extremely aggressive and attempted to reform in waves for another onslaught on the bombers. On this they were successfully thwarted.

In a few moments, the entire top cover of ME-109's dove down to attack in an attempt to retrieve the situation and by their weight of numbers break through to the bomber boxes. But, the 363rd Fighter Squadron, which had been held in reserve for just such a contingency, was quickly moved forward by its commander and in a well-timed attack drove down into the big battle. But, even with that squadron's aid, the odds remained 3 and 4 to 1.

However, in thirty minutes of determined and skillful fighting by the escorting pilots, the Hun was driven off, disorganized and beaten. The Group destroyed almost a third of the attacking enemy planes, accounting for 56 1/2 destroyed by the end of the engagement. Even though the Hun was on this occasion unusually aggressive and experienced and in extremely large numbers, he was prevented from interfering with the bombers' reaching the target and bombing with good results.

The number of enemy aircraft destroyed on this mission established a new record for the number of aircraft destroyed in the air in one day by any single Fighter Group in the Eighth Air Force. We as a Group take great pride in a job "Well Done" and having carved the name of the 357th in the annals of the history of the Army Air Forces.

The new enemy threat in the air, jet-propulsion fighters, was encountered on several occasions during the month with fairly good results. Three twin-jet planes, ME-262's, were destroyed by pilots of the Group. On two of these occasions, it was found that a flight of four P-51's could box in an ME-262 and prevent it from evading. This tactic is being developed by the Group and will be used when possible in all future encounters with jet-propulsion aircraft. It is considered that if P-51's have the initial advantage of altitude and position and a numerical superiority of 4 to 1, jet-propelled planes can be destroyed on every encounter.

Irwin H. Dregne
IRWIN H. DREGNE,
Lt Colonel, Air Corps,
Commanding.