

200th Mission of the 98th

El Alamein to Allemagne History of the 98th Bomb Group

Activated on February 3, 1942, at Mac Dill Field, the 98th Bomb Group has operated in the Mediterranean Theatre since July 25, 1942, when the first of the air echelon arrived at Ramat David, Palestine. On August 1, 1942, the group carried out its first mission over Mersa Matruh.

Since that first epochal mission, the 98th Bomb Group has traveled a long way. Joined by its ground echelon on August 20, 1942, it operated from bases in Palestine until November 11, 1942, when it began a long series of forward movements in the wake of the victorious Eighth Army.

The monotony of routine attacks on Tobruck and Benghazi harbors, broken by occasional shipping strikes or attacks over Crete and Greece, was relieved by the group's first "head-lined" success over Navarino Bay on October 4, 1942. Soon the bombers were going deep into Axis territory. By the middle of November 1942, the group began attacking Tripoli as well as Benghazi, Tobruck having been dropped from the "milk run".

On December 4, 1942, the group took part in the first American heavy bomber attack on Italy, the harbor at Naples being the target. After the successful landings in North Africa, the group also operated over Tunisia, striking Sousse and Tunis.

The next phrase in group activity emphasized Naples and such targets in Sicily as Palermo and Messina. Commencing in May 1943, a series of counter air force operations was directed against airdromes over Rome, Italy, with the Littorio Railroad Junction as target. This was the first bomber attack on that historic city.

A climax to the summer's operations came on August 1, 1943, when the group took a leading part in the devastating attack on the oil refineries at Ploesti.

Missions followed missions. Soon the 98th Bomb Group began to look north of the Alps. Wiener Neustadt, Austria was attacked.

In November 1943 the group began operations from an Italian base. New strategic targets could now be allocated. Klagenfurt, Austria and Augsburg, Germany were

attacked in quick succession. But the first real test did not come until February 22, 1944, when the group penetrated deeper into Germany than ever before.

Target for the day was Regensburg. This was followed by an attack on Steyr, Austria and then a devastating second mission over Regensburg.

Missions were now coming thick and fast. On March 28, 1944, a climax was reached with the group accomplishing its 200th mission. More missions will follow but with the "Force for Freedom", striking from Mersa Matruh to Regensburg, the story of the 98th Bomb Group can be told in the words "El Alemain to Allemagne."

The Two Hundredth Mission

The 98th Bomb Group's two hundredth mission was to the Mestre Railway Junction, Italy. Led by Lt. Col. Marshall R. Gray, this mission will stand out as one of the most successful attacks in the history of the group with the record number of 41 effective sorties placing 118 tons of bombs on the target.

Battle Honors

As public evidence of deserved honor and distinction, the 98th Bomb Group has been awarded a citation in the name of the President of the United States for its participation in the attack on the Roumanian Oil Refineries at Ploesti on August 1, 1943. This award carried with it authorization for members of the group to wear the Distinguished Merit Badge.

The Record

In two hundred missions the 98th Bomb Group dropped more than 14,452,000 pounds of bombs on Axis targets, initiating 3,865 sorties and accounting for 271 enemy aircraft shot down from the skies with an added 71 planes probably destroyed.