JANUARY, 1945

The brief list of January 1945 missions is as follows:

Serial Number (June)	Mission Number (Current)	Date	Target	Groups Participation			
1.	154	4 Jan 45	BOLZANO, ITALY, M/Y	460	464	465	485
2.	155	8 Jan 45	KLAGENFURT, AUSTRIA, M/Y(AT) SALZBURG, AUSTRIA, M/Y (AT) VILLACH, AUSTRIA, M/Y (AT)	460	464	465	485
3.	156	19 Jan 45	Ineffective Mission (Weather)	460	464	465	485
4.	157	20 Jan 45	LINZ, AUSTRIA, M/Y ROSENHEIM, GERMANY, M/Y (AT) BRUNAU, AUSTRIA, M/Y (TO) RIED, AUSTRIA, M/Y (TO)	460	464	465	485
5.	158	31 Jan 45	MOOSBIERBAUM, AUSTRIA, O/R	460	464	465	485

The month of January, 1945, was unquestionably the low point of operational combat activity in the history of the Wing since the organization became fully operational. Only four effective missions were flown during the month; one additional mission was flown with aircraft reaching the target but unable to bomb, with the exception of one aircraft. At no time subsequent to March, 1944, (the beginning of operations with one Bombardment Group) was the Wing less active in combat. Indeed, much more was accomplished in offensive operations in April, 1944, when only one Bombardment Group (the 460th) was operational, than in January, 1945.

The reason for this inactivity was weather. While 41 operations orders were written in planning missions during the month under review, either base, route, or target weather, or a combination of two or all three of these factors made it impossible to execute the plans. This condition was general throughout the Fifteenth Air Force, but especially severe in the area of the 55th Bombardment Wing. It was evident that the location of the Bombardment Groups assigned to the Wing is disadvantageous for operations in winter weather; airfields are situated in valleys of a generally mountainous region and are by that reason subject to unfavorable conditions of snow. This was strikingly demonstrated in January, when there was nearly 20 inches of snow in the general region, while airfields of the 5th, 47th, 49th and 304th Bombardment Wing units were clear of snow (it is all the more remarkable that the airfields of the 304th and 49th Bombardment Wing units are not far distant from Pantanella Field, yet while, the last named was not operational by reason of snow the former were clear).

This inactivity inevitably had a deleterious effect upon morale throughout the Wing. Crews assembled for briefing, day after day, only to have the proposed operation canceled; often in the hope of executing the mission and thus accomplishing the purpose for which organizations and personnel are here crews were ordered to stand by in aircraft on taxi strips poised for takeoff and there waited until the last minute - only to be stood down again. Insofar as possible advantage was taken of combat inactivity for further and more intense training, both on the ground and flying. However, this could not meet the condition -- everyone was too acutely conscious of the events going on to accept willingly such prolonged quiescence. Rundstedt's offensive in the West was being thrown back, and the Russians were sweeping Westward. To be sure, there was great satisfaction when it was possible to announce that the Russian offensive, reaching Silesia, had resulted in the removal from the target list of OSVIECIM, KATOWICE, BLECHHAMMER, and ODERTAL, not to mention BOHUMIN and MORAVSKA/OSTRAVA. However, there was no satisfaction to be taken for the inability to cooperate with these offensive operations. It became a matter of enduring a situation with the only consoling thought that it was shared throughout the Strategic Air Force area -- and impatiently waiting until combat operations could be resumed.

It will be observed that in only two of these missions was the normal force of all four Bombardment Groups brought to bear, and that in only one mission were all four Bombardment Groups able to proceed together to the assigned Primary Target.

Inevitably most of these few missions were executed in such weather as made observation of results impossible. Yet fair to good results were secured in the first January mission (No. 154) against the BOLZANO, ITALY, M/Y (in ITALY, as in YUGOSLAVIA, targets can be bombed only under conditions of certain target identification and conditions of visibility), and the results of the LINZ mission were fair to good. The most successful mission flown during January was the last, Mission No. 158, against the MOOSBIERBAUM, AUSTRIA, Oil Refinery. This was a planned Pathfinder mission in which all units of the Fifteenth Air Force participated. It required post-attack reconnaissance to assess the damage inflicted; this proved to be devastating.

The New Year was appropriately observed by excellent dinners at messes of Enlisted Men and Officers. U.S.O. shows, movies and dances assisted in alleviating the sense of frustration and boredom which prevailed throughout the month.