May 1944

Campaigns. This unit has become operational and is operating in the ITALIAN campaign.

Operations. Operations of the Groups within this Wing have been as follows for the month of May 1944.

TARGET	UNITS				DATE
(1) PARMA M/Y (La Spezia)	460	464			2 May 1944
(2) PLOESTI M/Y PODGORICA Troop Concentration	460	464	465		5 May 1944
(3) CRAIOVA M/Y	460	464	465	485	6 May 1944
(4) WIENER NEUSTADT A/C Factory KNIN M/Y	460	464	465	485	10 May 1944
(5) FERRARA M/Y ORBETELLO M/Y (AT) PARNA M/Y VIAREGGIA (AT)	460	464	465	485	12 May 1944
(6) MODENA M/Y PARMA	460	464	465	485	13 May 1944
(7) TREVISO M/Y MESTRE M/Y	460	464	465	485	14 May 1944
(8) PIOMBINO	460	464	465	485	17 May 1944
(9) PLOESTI NIS M/Y (AT)	460	464	465	485	18 May 1944
(10) BOLOGNA M/Y FAENZA M/Y FORLI M/Y	460	464	465	485	19 May 1944
(11) VALMONTONE	460	464	465	485	22 May 1944
(12) VALMONTONE	460	464	465	485	23 May 1944
(12) WIENER NEUSTADT WOLLERSDORF	460	464	465	485	24 May 1944
(13) AMBERIEU M/Y GIVORS M/Y	460	464	465	485	25 May 1944
(14) LYON M/Y	460	464	465	485	26 May 1944
(15) NIMES M/Y	460	464	465	485	27 May 1944
(16) WIENER NEUSTADT ATZGERSDORF	460	464	465	485	29 May 1944
(17) NEUDORFL NEUNKIRCHEN	460	464	465	485	30 May 1944
(18) PLOESTI	460		465	485	31 May 1944

It was great satisfaction to the Wing that from 2 May 1944, others of the four Groups became operational and engaged in combat. Successively the 464th, 465th, and 485th Bombardment Groups took their places with the more experienced 460th, and in the minimum time learned their lessons of flying combat formations, maintenance under combat conditions, and all those numerous skills of preparation and of execution of missions necessary to meet the exacting standards of the Air Force in which they are assigned and the no less exacting standards of the Wing Commander. These Groups had less opportunity for "Freshman" missions; after one of these flown against troop concentrations at PODGORICA, YUGOSLAVIA, the 464th and 465th

Bombardment Groups flew missions against the same target assigned to the 460th; after one mission to KNIN (YUGOSLAVIA) M/Y the 485th likewise undertook targets with the other groups. In the period from 2 to 22 May the administrative problems of the Wing in connection with missions were of considerable difficulty because during this period the Air Force ordered our Groups to attack separate targets on the same day. This entailed a great volume of labor in mission planning and in writing the operations orders and intelligence annexes.

It may be said that the Groups of the Wing, and therefore the Wing itself, fell into stride from 22 May 1944, for on and from this date it was the rule for all Groups of the Wing to attack the same major objective. This general procedure was modified in certain instances, but it was the usual procedure.

The Wing was glad to assume its share of the special objectives attacked on and immediately after 12 May 1944, when the Strategic Air Force en gaged in operations in support of the Ground Troops in the general offensive which opened on that date and has continued with unabated success. It is a matter of satisfaction that the Groups of this Wing, insofar as their periods of combat operations permitted, assumed a creditable share and attained worthy result in attacks upon enemy communications in Central and Northern ITALY which rendered the enemy's supply situation critical and resulted in his position on the long established line untenable. Captain De Witt C. Jones, Assistant A-3, then with the 460th Bombardment Group but before and immediately after assigned to the Wing, was a liaison officer in the memorable period when bombers of the Strategic Air Force flew their routes in sight of the ground troops.

Since the history of this unit is necessarily limited to its own personal in the matter of combat and incidents thereto, it is the happy fact that the Wing has suffered no personnel losses in combat, although several of its Officers have flown combat missions with the several Groups. Colonel George R. Acheson flew the first mission - indeed, he had flown several missions shortly after the time of his arrival in the theater and before the Wing had even a single Group in combat - and has flown` several thereafter. Colonel Arnold Schroeder, Lt. Col. J. P. Tomhave, Major Henry P. Dolim, Capt. Olen C. Pryant, Capt. Robert L. Linsley, Copt. De Witt C. Jones, Lt. Earle L. Osborne, Lt. Norman F. Conway, and It. Alexander Duarte, of combat crew status have flow missions, some of them having been awarded the Air Medal. Personnel who are on flying status, but who are not combat crew members, have flown missions as follows: Lt. Col. Ralph F. Reiner, Maj. Clarence Router and Capt. William G. Bradley (these three are Officers of the Medical Section). Of the ground echelon Maj. Louis B. Whitfield and Lt. Joseph W. Lynch have flow missions.

What has the 55th Bombardment Wing (Hv) contributed to the war effort? Two aspects in particular can be cited with assurance.

In the leadership of Colonel George R. Acheson this Unit was brought to complete organization and its training for combat brought to a high point of effectiveness. In advance of the remaining portion of the Wing personnel Colonel Acheson at the present station of the Wing welcomed the Groups assigned to it and almost single-handed supervised and assisted the Commending Officers of these Groups in the difficult problems of setting up and the still more difficult problems of transition from training to combat. Anyone on the scene can certify that in the amazing brief time - the time factor being further complicated by extremely unfavorable weather conditions - during which these Groups successively attained operational status and began to fly successful combat missions the successful transition from training to combat owes much to the untiring energy, the unerring knowledge, the complete command of the minutest detail of the operational condition of Sections and sub-sections within the Groups, and the wholly effective leadership of Colonel Acheson. It would have been a highly creditable achievement had the Wing Commander had the assistance of his Staff Sections, but the late arrival of the remainder of the Wing personnel left the Wing Commander with the assistance of only his A-3 and A-2 Section heads, plus some assistance of personnel assigned to the 305th Bombardment Wing and placed on detached service with this organization meant that not until April 6 was this assistance available. As one who was on the scene from the beginning the writer of this history is glad to state that the leadership of Colonel Acheson was inspiring, and unhesitatingly affirms that his leadership is the prime factor in the success of this Wing and in its contribution to winning the war.

A second and all but unique feature is the fact that this Wing was one of two Heavy Bombardment Wings which came to this Combat Theater and assigned to the Fifteenth Air Force with full Table of Organization strength. This marks a radical difference from the usual procedure of forming Wings from cadres. The result already attained by this Wing in operations indicates the value of the procedure which it exemplifies: the activation, the bringing to full strength in officers and Enlisted Men the training of its personnel, and the experience of personnel in working together, so that in the minimum time upon arrival in the combat theater the organization could function smoothly. It required but a few days for the necessary habituation to the new situation to supersede the established routines of training. From that time the Wing as a unit has functioned smoothly.

As detail of this second aspect, experience has established the necessity for the closest relation between the Wing and its Groups. This has been fully developed. Staff Section inspections are made monthly according to schedule. As occasions have shown it necessary, directives to correlate and to ensure compliance with Air Force procedures have been issued, and followed through in inspections. In addition to inspections, frequent informal visits are made to the various Sections, for cooperation and assistance.

Those are the factors which can be stated. For the ultimate test - success in combat - the event can be expected with full confidence in the leadership and the training which this organization has had and will maintain.