

Escape Statements

13 February, 1945

ESCAPE STATEMENT

On 15 January 1945 Sources: **Cpl. Noon**, ball gunner; and **Cpl. Farris** nose gunner, were on a mission to bomb the south M/Y at Vienna. Sources' aircraft, a B-24, was flying in last position of last box. It was hit, probably by flak, halfway between the IP and the target. Sources do not know extent of damage but say that No. 3 engine and then No. 2 engine cut out, the aircraft began to lose altitude. The bombardier salvaged his bombs and the pilot headed for Vis. Over Lake Balaton, more flak was encountered and another engine cut out. at 1415 hours, at 15,000 feet, in the vicinity of Brod, the pilot, **Lt. Bolmgren**, gave the order to bail out. The whole crew left the aircraft which Sources heard crash and explode below them. They were never in the hands of the enemy.

Sources, **Monjian**, radio operator **Pursell**, tail gunner, landed on southern bank of the river Sara about 20 miles SW of Brod. Within 20 minutes all four were gathered in a Chetnik house and were just getting some food when there was some shooting and a Partisan patrol arrived and hurried them away. They plodded through deep snow and that night reached a Partisan house whose owner drove them in a sleigh. The next day, 16 Jan., at Projavor where they met three of their officers, Lts. A.W. Boyle, D.A. Hill and H. Bell, who told them that the pilot, Lt. Bolmgren, had been killed. Parachute did not open. On the 18th all 7, with a few Partisans guides, traveled first by sleigh, then by train to Teslic where on the 19th, there was a clash between Partisans and Chetniks. Six Partisans were wounded and 22 Chetniks killed. Sources merely heard shooting. On the 20th all started for Jacjace by sled and reached Jajace on foot, after some difficult

mountaineering in deep snow, on 24 January. Meanwhile they had picked up four members of another crew. They stayed in Jajace at a Partisan transit mess till 4 February when they went by train to the village of Minestra, and walked 6 miles further to a house where they spent the night. In the morning they returned to Minestra, spent the day there and on the 6th plodded through a blizzard to Glamdc. On the 7th they reached Livno and on the 8th were brought by Partisan motor/transport to Sinj. There they were quartered in different houses with the result that Lt. Hill, Lt. Bell and Cpl. Pursell were left behind when they caught a train to Split on the 10th. Sources, Monjian, Lt. Boyle and 16 others, were at Split, left the harbor on an LC 1 on the 11th reaching Bari at 0900 on 12 February 1945.

DOUGLAS L. FOX, 2nd Lt. Air Corps.
Interrogator

ESCAPE STATEMENT

The following document is reproduced from a micro film supplied by Maxwell Airfield Archives.

29 March 1945

PILOT - HOWELL, JOHN S. 1st. Lt. 824th B.S.

MIA - 1 Feb 45 - 20 March 1945 Missions-20

CO-PILOT - TULLEY, EDGAR J. 1st. Lt. 824th B.S.

MIA - 1 Feb 45 - RTD 20 March 1945 Missions-19

NAVIGATOR - O'SULLIVAN, THOMAS 1st Lt. 824th B.S.

MIA - 1 Feb 45 RTD 24 March 1945 Missions-20

RADAR NAVIGATOR - FERRIS, JOHN O. JR. 1st Lt. 824th B.S.

MIA - 1 Feb 45 RTD - 20 March 1945 Missions-14

BOMBARDIER - DOWNS, THOMAS A. 1st Lt. 824th B.S.

MIA - 1 Feb 45 RTD 20 March 1945 Missions-19

ENGINEER - METZLER, RHIO T/Sgt. 824th B.S.

MIA - 1 Feb 45 RTD - 20 March 1945 Missions-16

RADIO OPERATOR - EASH, ERNEST E. T/Sgt. 824th B.S.

MIA - 1 Feb 45 RTD - 20 March 1945 Missions-20

NOSE GUNNER - PELL, JOHNNY L. S/Sgt. 824th B.A.

MIA - 1 Feb 45 RTD 20 March 1945 Missions-19

TAIL TURRET - BROCK, PHILLIP J. S/Sgt. 824th B.S.

MIA - 1 Feb 45 RTD - 20 March 1945 Missions-19

ESCAPE STATEMENT OF CREW

Mission was to MOOSBIERBAUM, 1st February 1945. On the bomb run, just before bombs away, and in the rally, the aircraft was hit by flak and very heavily damaged. Number 2 engine was knocked out and a piece of flak jammed the controls. The cross feed was cut and gas was leaking into the bomb bays, but Lt. Howell managed to stay with the formation, losing altitude fairly slowly, for about five minutes, and finally with number 2 and 3 both feathered and his instruments out he went into a dive in the clouds and pulled out, taking up a heading for Lake Balaton. The Lake was crossed at 12000 feet and when the aircraft reached PECS at 9000 the crew bailed out South of the town, then the pilot made a 180° turn and he and the co-pilot bailed out in the same area. All landed safely, although the upper turret gunner broke his leg on landing and is in a Russian hospital. The aircraft went down in a series of gentle turns, then hit in open country and blew up. Although two single shots with a submachine gun were fired at the pilot by Russian guards, no difficulty was experienced in identifying themselves as Americans by the crew members. No bad treatment was received by any of them, and they were all brought together promptly at a hotel in PECS, where they stayed for sixteen days, when they were taken to CSAVOLY. On the 23rd they were taken to BAJA, where they took a train for BUCHAREST and reported to the American Mission. They left there on the 19 March 1945 by R.A.F. C-47 for BARI.

SUGGESTIONS

1. If possible, crew members should avoid bailing out close to the battle line, since forward patrols are "trigger happy". It is best to go as deep into Hungary or Northeastern Yugoslavia as the conditions of the aircraft permits.
2. Keep your parachute if you bail out behind the Russian lines. It will prove useful to you in many ways.
3. A little basic knowledge of German and French will be very helpful. Some time spent studying phrase books in these languages would amply repay the time spent.
4. If you carry a lighter, be sure to carry extra flints, since matches are almost unobtainable.
5. More instruction should be given to crew members in correct jumping procedure. These crew members had been lectured by an ex-paratrooper, and found the information derived from the lecture invaluable.

JOHN F. HOLSTIUS
Captain, A.C.
Escape Officer

