
Part 5 Awarding of the 1st Presidential Unit Citation

Headquarters 49th Bombardment Wing (H)
A.P.O. 520 U.S. Army

1 December 1944

Subject: Proposed Second Citation of the 484th Bombardment Group (Pathfinder) Army Air Forces.

To: Commanding General 15th Air Force

1. In accordance with the provisions of circular No 333 Department, 1943, and Circular No. 89, Headquarters NATOUSA, 10 July 1944, request a second citation for the 484th Bombardment Group for outstanding performance of duty and for extraordinary heroism on 1 July 1944, during an extremely hazardous bombing mission against vital enemy installations at Innsbruck, Austria.

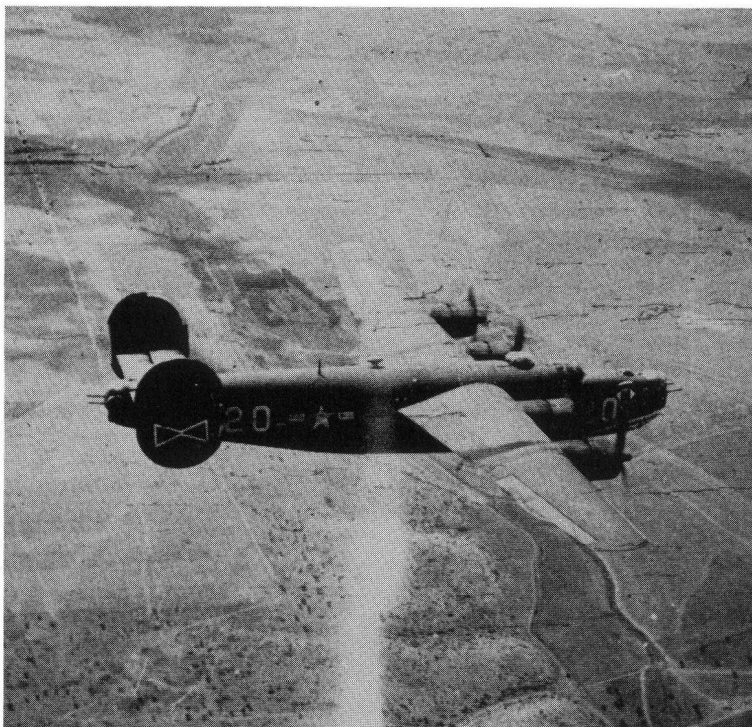
2. On 6 June 1944, Allied armies invaded Northern France. In a Special Intelligence Annex, higher headquarters advised that our primary objective was to render all possible direct and immediate aid to our invading forces. This annex further stressed that two objectives were well into destructive reach of our bombers: German Air Force production and maintenance complex and the enemy's communication system.

3. This bombing mission was part of the larger plan of the Air Force which contemplated the saturation of the enemies aircraft production and maintenance facilities in the greater Munich area, and a definite dislocation of Southern German transportation at the vital nerve center of that system at Innsbruck.

4. Most important plants for the manufacture of single and twin engine fighters were in the Munich area. At Innsbruck, were huge marshaling yards continually handling aircraft parts destined for assembly points North, South, and West, provided highly important communications arteries in the distribution of troops and supplies. Thus the successful accomplishment of this mission could render immediate aid to our invasion by delivering a possible knockout blow at the GAF and by preventing a serious harassment of our troops desperately struggling to gain a foothold on the continent.

5. First fighter interception against this mission was expected to

be encountered in the North Adriatic area. Second interception was anticipated from Salzburg through the target area. Since no diversionary effort was planned and the entire Air Force was routed almost directly to the primary target it would be possible for the enemy to commit all fighters from both Munich and Vienna controls, in a coordinated effort to nullify or prevent the successful completion of the mission. Fighter escort for penetration and withdrawal was divided among five wings. To augment possible weakness inherent in this dispersion of escort strength, crews were carefully briefed on all known enemy air tactics.



Ship 20 was flown by Harold L Chern on June 13, 1944, actual date of photo is not determined.

6. This mission climaxed a period of intense activity for this group. Since the latter part of May it had flown almost daily missions deep into enemy territory. This is the organization commended by Air Force for its complete destruction of the enemy aircraft factory at Wels, Austria on 30 May, 1944. This group had been cited by Air Force for an extremely damaging blow to the enemy oil supplies in two successive days against refineries at Ploesti and Guigu. The latter raid accomplished against terrific odds only the day before this order was received, has resulted in the loss of four of this group's bombers and seriously damaged twenty five other aircraft. It was therefore necessary that all available ground personnel worked feverishly for an uninterrupted period of forty hours to ready planes for this maximum effort. In this time an amazing record was made by engineering, ar-

ment, and ordnance personnel. Five complete engine changes were completed, cannon and shell holes patched and damaged ships repaired. The extent of repairs accomplished in this comparatively short period is a shining tribute to the esprit pervading the entire group.

7. As a direct result of the outstanding performance of ground and air personnel thirty-seven (37) B-24's took off at 0555 hours for the primary objective. So severe were weather conditions attending the rendezvous that the wing lead failed to make this rendezvous and the 484th immediately assumed command of the wing formation and continued through low haze over the Adriatic. Climbing steadily on course, several layers of clouds hampered the passage over the Alps, and the group following the 484th became separated from the formation in the quickly gathering overcast.

8. In the first hours after takeoff three aircraft lost engines and were unable to maintain altitude or the pace of the formation. The