

right direction. One crew from our squadron was missing. Time 7 hours, 50 minutes.

Mission 35

Blechhammer, Silesia. Ship # 60.
December 2, 1944

Target: Oil refineries. Bomb load 6 each 500 lb RDX explosive. We were escorted by 50 P-51s and 50 P-38s. The P-51s flew very good cover into the target, and the P-38s were supposed to fly cover on the withdrawal. We did not see them. There was no fighter opposition, although the flak was very intense. I flew #6 position. Podwolski was in position #3. Just as bombs were released a shell went through Podwolski's number 4 engine nacelle. He lost the engine and almost the wing. He flew it back to base OK. We missed the target. Time 8 hours, 15 minutes.

Author's Notes:

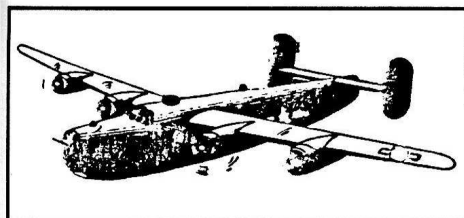
The following is a list of those crews that I recorded as going down and what happened to them. Some of those listed as unknown may have been captured. The information was probably known after I had returned stateside.

Original crews lost.

Fisher- -Captured
Kane- - Unknown
Boyer- -Captured
Swinehart- -Unknown

Replacement crews lost

Moore- -Captured
Rosencrans- -Captured
Ohlsson- -Captured
Newton- -Escaped twice
Krinkly- -Escaped from Yugoslavia
Krahn- -Ditched in the Adriatic Sea
Lange- -Unknown
Capalbo- -Blew up
Galvin- -Unknown
Hailey- - Unknown
George- -Unknown



HISTORY OF THE 15TH AIR FORCE IN WORLD WAR TWO

THE WORLD WAR II YEARS, 1943-1945 Origins of the Command

As a new command(1*) in the latter stages of World War II, Fifteenth Air Force was constituted on October 30, 1943, and activated on November 1 at Tunis, Tunisia. It undertook operations immediately and for the ensuing 18 months contributed heavily to the Allied air war effort against the Axis powers.

Fifteenth was not, however, merely created in a two-day span as either an afterthought or in response to a momentary crisis. Rather, its activation came about due to the unfolding of events and decisions associated with the overall war effort. On May 9, 1943, the North African campaign had been successfully concluded with an Allied victory over the Axis powers--the first one over Germany and Italy in the Mediterranean theater of operations.

The following August the Combined Chiefs of Staff worked on plans at the Quebec Conference for a cross-channel invasion from England to France to be launched in the spring of 1944. General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, chief of the Army Air Forces, questioned whether Eighth Air Force was able to conduct the required bomber offensive alone. British Air Chief Marshall Portal agreed with him and pointed out that operations from southern Italy would be nearer to the vital German fighter aircraft factories in the area around Vienna, Austria.

General Arnold reflected on the possibilities opened by this idea, and on October 9 submitted to the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff a plan for creating the Fifteenth as a stra-

tegic air force to participate in the Combined Bomber Offensive. After their approval, the Allied Combined Chiefs ratified the plan on October 22.

Major General James H Doolittle of the Tokyo Raid fame(*2) served as Fifteenth's initial commander. His first headquarters was a large, modern school building in Tunis, the Lycee Carnot.

The U.S. Strategic Air Forces in Europe (USSAF), stationed in England (and later France), eventually exercised some operational control over the new air force as well as continuing jurisdiction over the older Eighth Air Force. More directly, Fifteenth became a strategic component along with the British Royal Air Force's 205th Group in the reorganized Mediterranean Allied Air Force. This bombing force came into existence to take advantage of the strategic bombing possibilities offered by the "soft underbelly" of Europe, to use a Churchillian phrase.

Although Fifteenth was the newest numbered air force at the time, it was initially composed of veteran units such as the 97th and 301st Bomb Groups, both of which had initially been assigned to Eighth and later to General Doolittle's previous command, the Twelfth, during the North African campaign. Thus, Fifteenth started its existence with experienced heavy and medium bomber units of the 1942-1943 period, with both Twelfth and the Ninth contributing groups. It was assigned four B-17 (Flying Fortresses) groups and two B-24 (Liberator) groups. For a brief time at the beginning, it also had two B-25 (Mitchell) groups and three B-26 (Marauder) groups. To protect this armada, three escort fighter groups with P-38s (Lightning) and one P-47 (Thunderbolt) group were assigned. This was soon increased by three more units with P-47s which later converted to P-51s (Mustang). Eventually, a photo reconnaissance group with F-5s joined the command. Intermediate supervision between Fifteenth and its units was exercised by eight wings. From activation to June 1944 the command gained a number of units, eventually reaching a strength of 21 Bomb Groups (6 B-17 and 15 B-24) and 7 Fighter Groups (3 P-38, 3 P-51, 1 P-47). Fifteenth thus became second only in size to Eighth Air Force among overseas air commands.