

HEADQUARTERS 1ST FIGHTER GROUP
Office of the Intelligence Officer
APO 520

10 June 1944

Narrative Mission Report #1039

MISSION #1039 27th, 71st, 94th Squadrons ploesti, Rumania

1. MISSION AND TARGET: To provide support to 82nd Fighter group on dive bombing of oil refineries at Ploesti, Rumania.
2. AIRCRAFT AND CHRONOLOGY: 48 P-38's took off from Salsola A/D, Italy at 0517 hours. 9 returned early, (2 men, 4 escort, 3 cockpit trouble). 27 over the target or in immediate vicinity of target between 0840 and 0855 hours. 16 down at base at 1202 hours, 3 down at base at 1300 hours, after having refuelled at Vis Island; 5 down at base at 1414 hours, after having refuelled at Bari; 1 at friendly field (Bari); 2 lost, 12 missing.
3. ROUTE: Base to Vidin and thence to I.P. thence to target; returning via Craiova to base with the exception of 3 who returned via Vis Island.
4. RECONVOIUS, FORMATION AND ASSAULT: R/V was effected at 0535 hours at 1500' over Manfredonia as briefed and the entire formation proceeded, on the deck to the I.P. at which point the escort turned left but the 82nd Fighter group did not immediately turn making it necessary for the escort to turn right in order to remain with them. At this point the 82nd turned left and cut off blue flight of the 71st squadron from the rest of the escort formation. Blue squadron continued on to the target with the 82nd, 1/8th of that squadron and one other squadron being engaged with e/a, but one of these squadrons went on to the target upon finishing the combat with the e/a. All but 4 of the escort flew alightly to the S of the target at about 12,000' and covered the 82nd as they formed up after dropping their bombs; the other 4 circled the target area from 0830 / 0840 hours at 12,000' and then set course for base because of shortage of fuel. One squadron did not go into the target after its engagement with the e/a.
5. RESULTS OF BOMBING: An effective smoke screen obscured the target but black smoke from oil fires rose to 5,000'.
6. STRAFING: A L/O at Gacsti (44 43 N 25 19 E) was strafed and 4 JU-52's were left burning and 2 others were damaged; 1 MD-109 damaged. Hits were scored on an engine and 30 freight cars standing at Gacsti RR station. Several other trains in the vicinity of Cicoanesti (44 35 N 25 52 E), without observations of results, were strafed. On the S edge of Ploesti 2 gasoline storage tanks were strafed and destroyed. At an undetermined point in western Rumania 2 steam engines were strafed and destroyed 3 others were damaged and several strings of 8/10 tank cars in each string were destroyed; also in western Rumania an additional steam engine was destroyed and just after strafing the gasoline tanks at Ploesti a steam engine was attacked and destroyed; 3 of the steam engines were seen to blow up.

7. ENEMY AIR RESISTANCE AND ACTIVITY: Upon making the turn at the I.P. one squadron observed 6 DO-217's flying northerly on the deck; these were attacked and all destroyed. At this moment this squadron was attacked from above, behind and all sides by at least 20 yellow nose Fw-190's. The squadron broke left into them and a general dog fight ensued; the e/a attacked singly, in pairs, and in flights of 3 and 4 and in most instances directed themselves against the tail end charlies thence the number 3 man and on one occasion continued on against the number 2 man and then number 1 man. These e/a were aggressive and skillful. 5/10 miles SE of Bucharest one squadron encountered 4 DO-217's 1 Fw-190, 15/20 biplanes and 2/3 small monoplanes; these were flying on the deck and were in no particular formation and upon being attacked many crashed landed and the others scattered in various directions; the encounter lasting about 5 minutes. As the target was approached one squadron observed 1 JU-88, 1 ME-210 and 2 ME-110's flying at their level but no effort was made to attack the escort. The 2 ME-110's were destroyed by the 82nd fighter group. One ME-109 made a pass at the escort as they came off the target; the escort broke into this e/a and damaged it. Two other ME-109's approached the escort in this area but dove for the deck when they were broken into. The squadron which strafed at Gesti were attacked by 30/40 ME-109's from above and from all directions, pressing their attacks aggressively and succeeded in breaking up the P-38 formation. Several of the P-38's formed Luftbergys and after about 10 minutes scattered and headed for base; many of the e/a following and pressing their attacks. The P-38's quite easily cut ran the e/a. One CR-42 was encountered in the target area by a P-38 and destroyed. This e/a attacked from head-on.

8. FLAK: Intense, accurate, heavy, black, tracking and barrage type flak were encountered in the target area. Moderate, accurate, heavy, tracking type flak was encountered at Hoster and coast, accurate, light flak was directed at the formation from the edges of the G of Hoster on the Yugoslavian, Coast.

9. SIGNIFICANT OBSERVATIONS:

Enemy

- a) Naval and Shipping: 3 barges, 2 of which were camouflaged with brush and 1 loaded with RR ties were seen from 50' at 0700 hours along the bank of the Danube at 43 56 N 22 52 E.
- b) Enemy Ground Activity: A battery of anti-aircraft guns, forming a semi circle is located immediately west of the target along side of the RR which runs along the N side of the target, seen from 12,000' at 0845 hours.
- c) Flak: See 8 above.
- d) Other: None.
- e) Enemy A/D's and A/C on ground: At least 1 JU-87, 2 JU-88's and 4 T/E A/C were seen on Craiova A/D at 0945 hours from 100'. 1 JU-52 which was burning, 3 other JU-52's and 6 ME-109's were observed on an airfield located at 44 08 N 24 55 E, at 0915 hours from less than 100'.

10. WEATHER: Except for a few scattered clouds the target area was clear, visibility was good.

11. AIR-SEA RESCUE: None.

12. RADIO SECURITY: Generally satisfactory.

13. FRIENDLY A/C SEEN LOST OR IN DIFFICULTY; 1 P-38, believed to be from 82nd Fighter Group, was seen to crash at 0650 hours at 43 30 N 21 20 E; the pilot bailed out from 4,500' and his chute opened. 1 P-38 (Lt. Geyman) belly landed in a field 10/15 miles SE of Bucharest (44 17 N 26 15 E), at 0835 hours; the pilot was seen to climb out of his plane and wave to his wing man. 4 P-38's, 1 in flames, were seen to crash in the combat area at about 44 10 N 26 25 E; seen from less than 100' at about 0835/40 hours. 1 P-38 was seen to crash into the Romano Americano Refinery at 0845 hours; seen from 12,000'.

14. ENEMY A/C SEEN DESTROYED BY OTHER GROUPS; 2 ME-110's were destroyed by the 82nd Fighter Group as they approached the target area.

CONCLUSIONS:

15. VICTORIES AND LOSSES:

<u>Destroyed</u>	<u>Victories, Air</u>	<u>Prob. Dest.</u>	<u>Damaged:</u>
1 ME-109--Lt. Towres	1 ME-109--Lt. Bargoynne		1 ME-109--Maj. Pope
1 ME-109--Lt. Miller	1 ME-109--Lt. Haber		2 ME-109's--Lt. Miller
1 ME-109--Lt. Haber	1 YF-190--Lt. Hatch		1 YF-190--Lt. Shepard
5 YF-190--Lt. Hatch			1 YF-190--Lt. Hatch
1 YF-190--Lt. Hoenshell			
1 CR-42--Lt. Armstrong			
2 DO-217's--Lt. Shepard			
2 DO-217's--Lt. Hoenshell			
1 DO-217--Lt. Flakk			
1 DO-217--Lt. Hisey			
1 DO-217--Lt. Barlow			
1 DO-217--Lt. Grandall			
2 U/I Biplanes--Lt. Miller			
1 U/I Monoplane--Lt. Miller			
1 U/I Biplane--Lt. Allen			
1 U/I Biplane--Lt. Heien			
1 ME-109--Lt. Eldred			

TOTALS:

4 ME-109's	2 ME-109's	3 ME-109's
6 YF-190's	1 YF-190	2 YF-190's
8 DO-217's		
1 CR-42		
4 U/I Biplanes		
1 U/I Monoplane		

Ground:

1 JU-52--Lt. Miller	1 JU-52--Lt. Caughlin
1 JU-52--Lt. Towres	1 ME-109--Lt. Lawson
1 JU-52--Lt. Sprengel	
1 JU-52--Lt. Bargoynne	

TOTALS:

4 JU-52's	1 JU-52
	1 ME-109

Losses:

<u>Our Losses:</u>	<u>Flak:</u>	<u>Fighters</u>	<u>Other</u>
Lost	0	2	0
Missing	0	12	0
Damaged (repairable)	3	0	0
Damaged (non ")	0	0	0
Wounded	0	0	0

Lt. Jackson was seen to be shot down by an e/a and his A/C was seen to blow up at 43 30 N 22 10 E.

Capt. Bischoff crashed when wing struck locomotive while strafing at Gnesti. Identification of this A/C being Capt. Bischoff's is quite certain but not positive.

Lt. Geyman was seen to belly land in a field 10/15 miles SE of Bucharest at 44 17 N 26 15 E. He was seen to climb out of his A/C and wave to Lt. Crandall who circled over him.

Lt. Baker was last seen after the first break into the e/a. He was at 1,000' at 44 15 N 26 20 E.

Lt. Hisey was last seen on single engine at 44 15 N 26 20 E. He was heard to call on his radio that he was under attack and said, "This is it; I guess I've had it".

Lt. Hoenshell was last seen in combat in the vicinity of 43 30 N 22 10 E. He was being attacked by 6 ME-109's. He split eased into a cloud layer at 8,000' and was not seen again.

Lt. Smith was not seen after first part of combat which took place at approximately 43 30 N 22 10 E.

Lt. Janci was heard by Lt. Hatch to say that his trim tabs were destroyed and that he was on single engine and that he was unable to keep his e/s on level flight. This was in the vicinity of 44 05 N 26 20 E.

Lt. Plack was heard on the radio calling for help in the first break of combat.

Lt. Potter was flying Lt. Plack's wing. No information is available.

Lt. Johnson was flying Lt. Hisey's wing. No information is available.

Lt. McClellan was last seen in vicinity near Gnesti while strafing.

Lt. Moore was last seen in area SE of Gnesti.

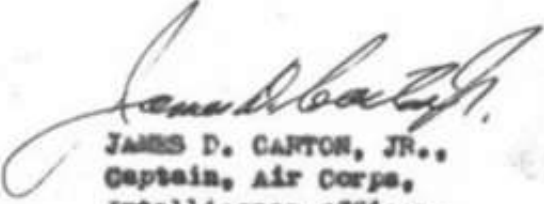
Lt. Joye was last seen in area SE of Gnesti.

16. SEPTIMS: 42. 3 are non-effective.

17. FORMATION LEADER AND FLIGHT LEADERS: Group leader and 27th Squadron leader, Lt. Miller; flight leaders, Lts., Bargoyns, Sprengel and Tovrea. 71st Squadron leader, Lt. Shepard; flight leaders, Lts., Ferguson, Hoenshell and Plack. 94th Squadron leader, Lt. Barlow; flight leaders, Lts., Geyman, Messeth and Allen.

18. COMMENTS: None.

19. CORRECTIONS ON TELEPHONE MISSION REPORTS: None.


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