

HOME

ASSOCIATION

GROUP HISTORY

MISSIONS

PERSONNEL

AIRCRAFT

ME

# MISSION NO. 73

Missions

**TARGET: CITY CENTER**

**BERLIN, GERMANY**

**21 JUNE, 1944**



The plans called for the greatest aerial assault in history. Although the effort was reduced by more than half before take off, the operation as carried out remained the largest to date. One thousand bombers from Italy were scheduled to fly north, while 900 RAF Lancaster bombers were to follow the Eighth Air Force to the center of Berlin for their first daylight raid into Germany. These two operations were scrubbed and only the Eighth attacked.

In the first deep penetration of Germany since D Day, the 457th dispatched 42 planes for the mission, composing the entire 94th B Combat Wing except for twelve craft in the high box. In addition one squadron was supplied for a composite box. Major Leroy Watson was Air Commander of the lead B box, with Captain Russell M. Selwyn as pilot. Capt. Richard E. Hoelzer was Commander of the low B box, with Lt. Vinton H. Mays as pilot. Major Fred A. Spencer was Commander of the high composite box, with Lt. Harry Stafford as pilot.

Three ships aborted from the lead box reducing its strength to fifteen craft. Bombing was by PFF and results were described as fair. At least six distinct bomb patterns were made over a very large area of Berlin.

The aircraft piloted by Lt. Robert M. Krumm, a veteran of twenty-nine missions, developed engine trouble en route to the target, began lagging behind the formation, jettisoned its bombs and landed in Sweden.

Upon leaving the target, the plane piloted by Lt. Hershel Wilson received a direct hit from flak, which knocked out one engine. It caught fire and the ship exploded. Only four of the crew survived.

The craft piloted by Lt. Edward J. Reppa, flying his last mission, was hit just after bombs away by flak, which knocked out engines Number 2 and 3. He left the formation and started back to England alone. Over the North Sea all expendable equipment was thrown out to lighten the weight. Flying barely fast enough to maintain flying speed, he was able to land the craft, using all the runway before coming to a coasting stop at the end of the runway.

Twenty-four of the returning planes sustained damage. For the day the Eighth Air Force dispatched 1177 aircraft to Berlin and the Berlin area. In addition, 163 B-17s were dispatched to the Ruhland synthetic oil refinery, southeast of Berlin, and then continued on to Russia.

The following crews were lost on this date:

Lt Hershel Wilson

Lt Robert M. Krumm

