

SIXTH ARMY GROUP COMMANDER
COMMENDS FIRST TACAF, UNITS

The following communication, addressed to the Commanding General of the First Tactical Air Force, by Lieut. Gen. Jacob L. Devers, commanding the Sixth Army Group, has been released for publication. During the period 15 March to 25 March, inclusive, Marauders of this Wing flew 1,743 sorties on 89 missions against objectives in the western Germany territory east and west of the Rhine.

Commanding General, First Tactical Air Force (Provisional).

After a long period during which the Armies under my command were required to remain on the defensive, we passed to the offensive on 15 March 1945. Confronting us were powerful Siegfried Line emplacements, manned by hardened German troops. Our mission was to destroy the enemy and close to the Rhine as rapidly as possible.

To overcome the strong enemy defences, it was necessary for me to call on you for increased and intensive air cooperation, in excess of that which your forces had so gallantly and ably furnished in the past. Nevertheless, your pilots responded with characteristic enthusiasm and vigorous action, contributing in great measure to the successful completion of the operation ten days later on 25 March, at which time we had reached the Rhine on our entire front.

During this brief period, your officers and men flew on 13,281 sorties, and averaged more than 175 missions a day. Over 7,000 tons of bombs and 1,000 rockets were launched against all types of targets. In cooperation with the main effort of XV Corps your medium bombers and fighter-bombers attacked Siegfried Line positions with 875 tons of bombs on D-day and D-plus-one alone. The target area was reported to have been extremely well covered, and enemy defences were softened to such an extent that our troops found their task considerably less difficult.

In the course of your attacks against the enemy's lines of communication, your planes destroyed 198 locomotives, 2,907 railway cars, over 3,000 vehicles and 9 rail bridges, and cut rail lines in 562 places. In addition, 255 locomotives, 2,866 railway cars, 2,500 vehicles and 16 railroad bridges were damaged. In the face of such an overwhelming onslaught, the enemy was almost helpless, and our troops were able to collect thousands of prisoners.

I can only express in small part the gratitude which the American foot-soldier holds for his comrades in the air, who have in these recent operations once again demonstrated their outstanding courage and ability. It is therefore with a deep sense of gratefulness that I heartily commend you, your officers and your men on your outstanding achievements from 15 March to 25 March 1945.

JACOB L. DEVERS,
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army,
Commanding.

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MOVIES: "Rainbow Island" with Dorothy Lamour, Eddie Bracken,