

SATURDAY, 23 DECEMBER 1944

AMERICAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS

ALASKA (Eleventh Air Force): The weather mission finds squall conditions and is aborted.

CHINA-BURMA-INDIA THEATER

CHINA THEATER (Fourteenth Air Force): 8 B-25s pound points along the Burma Road. 13 B-25s hit town areas, trains, and other targets of opportunity at Vinh, French Indochina, from Dap Cau, French Indochina to Lungchow, China, and from Lang Son, French Indochina to Yungning, China. In China, 3 B-25s and 5 P-40s damage about 50 railroad cars in the area S of the Yellow River; 16 P-51s over Wuchang and Hankow damage 2 ferry ramps and blast 3 oil dumps. 12 P-51s and P-38s damage 2 hangars at Heho Airfield, Burma, and in China, 12 P-51s pound railroad shops at Chenghsien and bomb Houmachen with napalm.

INDIA-BURMA THEATER (Tenth Air Force): In Burma, 15 P-47s knock out and damage bridges at Mong Long, Pa-mao, and Man Pwe; 12 B-25s destroy bridges at Tonbo, Saye, Ketka, and Nampawng, and damage several others; 40+ fighter-bombers attack storage areas, bivouacs, and enemy-held points at Namhkam, Nyaunggyin, Hseing-hkai, Mongyin, and Kutkai. Transport sorties to forward bases and frontline areas total 353.

EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (ETO)

AIRBORNE OPERATIONS (IX Troop Carrier Command): 260 C-47s drop 334 tons of supplies in parapacks on several drop zones inside the besieged American positions at Bastogne, Belgium.

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Eighth Air Force): 2 missions are flown. Mission 757: 423 bombers and 636 fighters are dispatched to hit marshalling yards, communication centers and a rail junction in the rear of the battle area; 75-150 Luftwaffe aircraft are encountered and the AAF claims 75-5-23; 7 fighter are lost:

1. 148 of 153 B-17s hit the marshalling yard at Ehrang; 45 B-17s are damaged; 1 airman is KIA and 1 WIA. Escorting are 54 of 62 P-51s; they claim 20-0-3 aircraft without loss.
2. 113 B-24s are sent to bomb communication centers at Ahrweiler (48), Junkerath (31) and Dahlem (27); 74 B-24s are damaged; 3 airmen are WIA. Escort is provided by 243 of 254 P-51s; they claim 1-0-0 aircraft; 1 P-51 is lost (pilot MIA) and 1 damaged beyond repair.
3. 152 B-17s are dispatched to hit marshalling yards at Homburg (58) and Kaiserslautern (40) and the rail junction at Homburg; 6 others hit targets of opportunity; they claim 6-4-5 aircraft; 77 B-17s are damaged; 1 airman is

WIA and 7 MIA. Escorting are 112 of 117 P-51s; they claim 2-0-0 aircraft without loss.

4. 6 of 6 B-17s fly a screening mission.

5. 163 P-47s and P-51s fly a fighter sweep of the Bonn, Germany area; they claim 46-1-15 aircraft; 3 P-47s and 3 P-51s are lost (all pilots MIA).

6. 20 P-51s fly a scouting mission without loss.

Mission 758: 5 B-17s and 7 B-24s are dispatched to drop leaflets in France, the Netherlands and Germany during the night; only 10 aircraft drop leaflets. The 374th, 375th and 376th Fighter Squadrons, 361st Fighter Group, based at Little Walden, England with P-51s, begin operating from St Dizier, France; the 486th and 487th Fighter Squadrons, 352d Fighter Group, based at Bodney, England, begin operating from Asch, Belgium with P-51s.

TACTICAL OPERATIONS

First Tactical Air Force (Provisional): The 405th Fighter Squadron, 371st Fighter Group, ceases operating from Dijon, France with P-47s and returns to base at Tantonville.

Ninth Air Force: In Germany, around 500 B-26s and A-20s attack rail bridges, communications targets, villages, a rail junction and targets of opportunity losing 31 bombers; fighters fly bomber escort, armed reconnaissance, and patrols (claiming 100+ aircraft downed and 3 airfields bombed), and support ground forces between Werbomont, Belgium and Butgenbach, Germany along the N battleline of Bulge and the US III, VIII, and XII Corps forces along the S battleline of the Bulge. In Belgium, the L-5s of the 153d Liaison Squadron, IX Tactical Air Command (attached to Twelfth Army Group), cease operating from Liege and return to base at Tongres; the 161st Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 363d Tactical Reconnaissance Group, based at Le Culot begins operating from Conflans, France with F-6s and P-51s.

MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO)

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force): Bad weather again limits operations to reconnaissance, supply dropping, and escort missions over C and E Europe.

TACTICAL OPERATIONS (Twelfth Air Force): In Italy during the night of 22/23 Dec, A-20s on intruder patrols hit Po River crossings and targets of opportunity; bad weather during the day grounds the medium bombers; fighter-bombers operate in the W Po Valley, mainly against railway communications; an airfield near Milan is attacked, and several enemy airplanes destroyed.

PACIFIC OCEAN AREA (POA)

AAFPOA (Seventh Air Force): 12 B-24s from Saipan Island and 14 from Guam

Island hit Iwo Jima Island; 3 others from Guam Island, flying armed reconnaissance mission, bomb Woleai Atoll. During the night 2 B-24s from Guam and Saipan fly harassing strikes against Iwo Jima.

HQ AAF (Twentieth Air Force): HQ 313th Bombardment Wing (Very Heavy) and HQ 504th Bombardment Group (Very Heavy) and the 398th and 421st Bombardment Squadrons (Very Heavy) arrive at North Field, Tinian Island from the US with B-29s.

SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA [SWPA, Far East Air Force (FEAF)]: In the Philippine Islands, B-24s bomb Fabrica and Silay Airfields on Negros Island; P-38s and P-47s provide cover. B-24s bomb Grace Park Airfield in the suburbs of Manila; on Mindanao Island, B-25s pound San Roque Airfield and the Davao and Zamboanga areas. On Halmahera Island, B-25s and fighter-bombers blast Lolobata, Hate Tabako, and the Goeroea area. Again numerous FEAF aircraft fly various small strikes, armed reconnaissance, and sweeps over the Philippine Islands and the Netherland East Indies; fighter-bombers are especially active against targets in the C Philippine Islands and Halmahera Island. The air echelon of the 17th Reconnaissance Squadron (Bombardment), 71st Tactical Reconnaissance Group, moves from Biak Island to San Jose, Mindoro Island with B-25s (the squadron is based at Tacloban, Leyte Island).