

HEADQUARTERS EIGHTH AIR FORCE

Office of the Commanding General

APO 634



10 January 1945

To Every Member of the Eighth Air Force :

The year 1944 was a significant one for those who have devoted themselves to the cause of freedom and justice throughout the world. In both hemispheres, the forces of tyranny were rolled back and steadily compressed into surrounded bastions from which there can be no escape. Here in the European Theater, the Eighth Air Force fought with distinction. It contributed importantly to the Allied war effort and earned a place in history which time will not erase. As the Commander of that Force, I am responsible not only to my military superiors, but to those who have made the year so memorable—the men and women of the Eighth.

I want you to share with me the broader view of the picture—a picture of our major tasks in 1944 and how we accomplished them. You deserve to share that view by virtue of the fact that you dedicated 1944 to your work, to your country, and to the cause of freedom. In spite of physical discomforts caused by mud, and rain, and cold, in spite of losses in battle, in spite of handicaps which seemed insuperable at times, you persevered and succeeded.

The brief outline which follows will fill you with pride and with the realization that each of you contributed to the job some element which was indispensable. I believe it will add to your determination to carry on unstintingly until our goal becomes a reality.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. H. Doolittle', written in a cursive style.

J. H. DOOLITTLE

Lieut. General USA

Commanding

THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE—1944

ON DECEMBER 24, 1944, the Eighth Air Force sent over Germany 2,034 heavy bombers and 936 fighters, the greatest single force of airplanes ever dispatched in history. Well over 21,000 Americans flew in that armada over marshalling yards, vital communications centers and airfields behind the enemy lines. Many times that number worked on the ground to launch those planes, and many more again performed the great varieties of services which have built the Eighth into the deadly weapon it was intended to be.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

The past year has seen the Eighth Air Force in full stride. We have hit the enemy with more than 430,000 tons of bombs. During the year, our fliers flew 1,700,000 operational hours, and our planes consumed 522,000,000 gallons of gasoline to release those tons of destruction. Blows were directed in turn at the types of targets which were most vital to the Nazi war effort and which could only be destroyed by precision bombing—the job of the Eighth.

Our first task was to make sure that when the combined Allied ground forces invaded "Fortress Europe", we would have superiority in the air. Our bombers and fighters, hand in hand with those of the RAF, and the Ninth, Twelfth and Fifteenth American Air Forces, pounded German air power in the early months of the year, and the Luftwaffe was virtually helpless during the initial phases of the invasion. Aircraft factories, oil plants and supplies, and transportation facilities—these targets showed the effects of our pre-invasion hammering when D-Day came.

Our second great mission was performed during the invasion phase. Although designed for strategic bombing, the Eighth carried through every task of tactical support of the ground forces called for by the Supreme Commander. We helped to cover the Normandy beaches, and later the Dutch airborne landings, with protective air umbrellas. On June 6th, we flew a record-breaking 4,700 sorties. We sealed off the bridgeheads from enemy reserves by cutting the Seine and Loire bridges, and by hammering Nazi communications. Precision bombing blazed the way for the ground forces through enemy strong points. Before D-Day we flew thousands of tons of munitions and equipment to resistance movements on the continent; rushed emergency shipments of food, medical and other vital supplies to ground forces during the crucial month of August; and cooperated in the development of psychological warfare by dropping almost 900,000,000 leaflets in enemy-controlled territory by night, and additional millions during daylight missions.

In air battles during 1944, fighter pilots and bomber crews destroyed over 6,000 enemy aircraft. Strafing attacks by our fighters accounted for 1,950 more. In precision attacks on enemy airfields and factories, our heavies not only blasted production facilities, but damaged or destroyed an additional 2,630 Nazi aircraft. Fighters also knocked out 3,652 locomotives, 5,702 freight cars, 3,436 trucks, and significant numbers of tank cars, ammunition dumps and similar ground targets.

Ground crews equalled the fliers in their devotion to duty. Men have frequently worked for 72 hours without rest to put their ships back in the air. There was a steady rise in percentages of aircraft in commission—in spite of growing numbers of sorties monthly and increased battle damage. Just before D-Day, the number of planes to be serviced rose sharply; the job was done with no increase in numbers of ground crews.

Recognition for achievements both in the air and on the ground came to many of you in 1944, in the form of decorations from our Government. Of the five highest and most cherished awards that our country can bestow for valorous conduct, 594 were won by members of the Eighth. Seven of these were Congressional Medals of Honor.

. . . . AS ONE

The story of the Eighth is the story of *all* of you. It belongs neither to any individual nor to any part of us less than the whole. Every member of this Command has contributed some element to it; without all of these contributions, the story would not have been. Ordnance and Chemical workers, for example, during 1944 loaded more than 3,000,000 bombs and incendiaries—most of them during the long hours of the night—and hand-linked, repositioned and loaded 53,000,000 rounds of 50 calibre ammunition in the course of their duties. The sweat of thousands went into the driving, servicing, and repair of the Eighth's 25,000 motor vehicles. At one Headquarters alone, the telephone operators handled 14,000 calls each day. If you are one of these, or if you are one of those who kept us, by all standards, in good health—who in 1944 brought about important reductions in non-effective rates; if you are one of those who built and maintained our air strips and station facilities, or one of those who can proudly say that over 1,000 road convoys were escorted during 1944 without an accident; if you are one of those who performed the unheroic but indispensable functions of guaranteeing our supplies of food, adequate clothing and organizational equipment, or one of those whose attention to administrative assignments contributed so substantially to effectiveness—then you are part of the team.

The past year has seen outstanding technical advances. One of the most important was the development of instruments for bombing through overcast which steadily increased the number of missions flown per month in weather previously prohibitive to operations. Weather and photo-reconnaissance units pioneered many new techniques and rendered remarkable services, not only to the Eighth, but to other air and ground forces.

Other significant developments vital to our growth and success took place in 1944. Payroll and allotment problems were resolved, and personnel showed growing interest in savings by sending home well over \$170,000,000. Each month recorded marked increases in the diversity and quality of opportunities for recreation and leisure-time education. Significant emphasis was placed upon activities which are giving us further understanding of the peoples and problems involved in global war. Each Chaplain conducted an average of 38 services every month; they proved themselves invaluable sources of advice, friendship and spiritual strength. The already firm bonds of kinship and understanding which exist between our British Allies and ourselves were made even stronger. In such ways did 1944 do much to prepare us, both mentally and physically, to face our problems and the task that lies ahead.

. . . . TO WIN

Our story has not yet ended. Together we have become one of the mightiest striking forces of all time. As pioneers of the daylight precision assault, we will continue that assault until final victory is won.

This is your report—written by your deeds, sealed by your devotion. Let us give thanks for what has been accomplished. Let us remember those who have given themselves in the battle. As the New Year dawns, let us resolve to press the attack, and go forward “as one—to win”.



 **AS ONE-TO WIN**