

303rd BG(H) Combat Mission No. 1

17 November 1942

Target: U-Boat Submarine Pens, St. Nazaire, France

Crews Dispatched: 16

Length of Mission: 4 hours, 45 minutes

Bomb Load: 10 x 500 lbs General Purpose

Bombing Altitude: 20,000 ft

The 8th Air Force arrived in England on 12 May 1942, with **General Ira C. Eaker** commanding the Bomber Command. The first six months of the 8th Air Force were critical. Many delays had occurred in the preparation for the arrival of the U.S. Forces. There was considerable criticism from high levels, both British and American, against the build-up of the 8th Air Force and daylight bombing operation. This had put General **Eaker** in an untenable situation.



General Ira C. Eaker

But the War Order arrived at 1820 hours on Thursday, 16 November 1942. The 303rd had finally received its long-awaited instructions to participate in its first combat mission. This ended 288 days of organization and training, essential in preparing the Group for combat operations. Proud and eager crews were at the briefing room on 17 November. Ground crews made sure that the required number of B-17s were ready to fly the mission. Excited staff and support personnel pitched in to accomplish all of the mission essentials.

The briefing proceeded very smoothly in view of the fact that this was to be the first venture over enemy territory. The 303rd Bomb Group Commander, **Colonel James H. Wallace**, presided and commenced by announcing the names of the pilots, the ships they were to fly, and their positions. Photographs of the primary target, St. Nazaire, France, the secondary target, Keroman, and the last resort target, Brest, were shown to the crews with an explanation of each target. Lt. **Von Schmidt** gave a good prediction of the flak, in and around the target area. After the general briefing, the different crew members, navigators, bombardiers, gunners, and other groups were briefed separately. All of the crew members were allowed time to spend with their chaplains before they moved out to their respective aircraft.

Sixteen B-17s took off at 0923-0935, following the route as directed to the Redon checkpoint, then in various directions to the Dinan checkpoint, and on to the Dinard checkpoint. Weather appeared favorable with 25-mile visibility, and 5/10 cloud cover. 303rd BG(H) aircraft were part of the sixty-three 8th Air Force aircraft dispatched to bomb the U-Boat Pens. B-17s of the 91st, 301st and 303rd Bomb Groups, and B-24s of the 93rd Bomb Group had St. Nazaire as their target. The 305th, which like the 303rd, was on its first mission, flew a diversionary sortie to within 30 miles of Brest.

Four of the five previous missions flown by the seven Groups who had flown combat missions had been to the Bay of Biscay ports of Lorient, Brest and St. Nazaire. La Pallice, a fourth target, had yet to be attacked. The Germans by then realized that their U-Boat Pens were the 8th Air Force's number one target. By 17 November, flak batteries ringed St. Nazaire. This number gradually was increased to over one hundred. The bomber crews knew St. Nazaire as "Flak City."

On 9 November, four Bomb Groups had attacked St. Nazaire from 8,000-10,000 feet. This was a new tactical approach, since nothing positive had been accomplished on the previous raids (of 21 October and 7 November) to Lorient and Brest. The German .88 mm flak gunners were not fooled. Although every B-17 but one in the lead group (the 306th BG) were hit, all made it back to base. Eleven men were wounded.

However, the Group following the 306th BG was not so fortunate. Four of its Flying Fortresses went down--three over the target and one in a crash landing. One crewman was killed and thirty-two were MIA (Missing in Action). Subsequent U-Boat missions were flown from altitudes in excess of 20,000 feet. The truth of the motto, "The higher, the fewer," was established.

When the 303rd BG (H) crews proceeded to their target, they discovered solid cloud cover. The aircraft returned to Molesworth without dropping their bombs when the lead aircraft was unable to locate the target. Slight flak was encountered en route to and from the target. No enemy aircraft were sighted.



B-17F #41-24577 Hell's Angels 358th BS (VK-D)

*358th Bomb Squadron B-17F #41-24577 **Hell's Angels**, from which the 303rd Bomb Group later named itself, was one of the Group's Original B-17s. This mission was the first for both the 303rd Bomb Group "Hell's Angels" and B-17F "Hell's Angels." B-17F #41-24577 **Hell's Angels** completed her 25th combat mission on 13 May 1943, becoming the first 8th Air Force B-17 to do so.*

Aircraft Formation at Assembly Point

There is no official record of the aircraft formation at Assembly Point for this mission. An estimated pattern is shown.



Six (6) aircraft aborted this mission:

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Lt. Haas in 558 | Lt. Castle in 579 |
| Lt. Bales in 565 | Lt. Stockton in 610 |
| Lt. Sanderson in 603 | Lt. Robey in 966 |

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

CREW POSITIONS CMP - Command Pilot P - Pilot CP - Co-Pilot NAV - Navigator ANV - Ass't. Navigator MNV - Mickey Navigator ENG - Engineer BOM - Bombardier RO - Radio Operator	TOG - Toggler BT - Ball Turret Operator TT - Top Turret Operator TG - Tail Gunner NG - Nose Gunner RG - Radio Gunner WG - Waist Gunner LWG - Left Waist Gunner RWG - Right Waist Gunner GUN - Gunner	VI - Voice Interpreter OBS - Observer PAS - Passenger PHO - Photographer RESULTS OF MISSION KIA - Killed in action WIA - Wounded in action MIA - Missing in action POW - Prisoner of war	DOW - Died of wounds EVD - Evaded the enemy INT - Interned in neu cuntry REP - Repatriated RES - Rescued ESC - Escaped BO - Bailed out DCH - Ditched CR-L - Crashed on land CR-S - Crashed at sea
--	---	---	--

358th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17F #41-24606 *Werewolf*

P Oxrider, George J., 2Lt
CP Hurlburt, Donald W., 2Lt
NAV Grant, Donald L., 2Lt
BOM Thomas, Thomas R., 2Lt
ENG Ziemer, Frederick B., T/Sgt
TG Sadler, James K., Sgt
RO Dasher, Everett A., S/Sgt
RWG Maxwell, Samuel P., Sgt
BT Fincher, Clifton R., Sgt
LWG Hall, George F., Sgt

B-17F #41-24562 *Sky Wolf*

P Morales, Carl H., 2Lt
CP Swaffer, Calvin A., 2Lt
NAV Hunter, William C., 2Lt
BOM Zasadil, Frank E., 2Lt
ENG Hinds, Francis G., T/Sgt
BT Carroll, Albert V., Sgt
RO Powers, Joseph E., Sgt
RWG Hill, John E., Sgt
TG Blake, Robert C., Sgt
LWG Rukes, Merlyn D., Sgt

B-17F #41-24577 *Hell's Angels*

CMP Wurzbach, Clemens K., Maj
P Baldwin, Irl E., Capt
NAV Fulghum, Harold, Capt
BOM Bone, Donald R., 1Lt
ENG Rodriguez, James E., T/Sgt
RWG Meddaugh, Allerton F., Jr., Sgt
RO Warren, Russell M., Sgt
BT Brody, Harry J., Sgt
LWG Joy, Ripley W., 2Lt
TG Godwin, Harold E., Sgt

B-17F #41-24558 *Hunga Dunga*

P Haas, Joseph E., 1Lt
CP O'Connor, Robert S., 2Lt
NAV Anderson, William J., 2Lt
BOM Steele, Earl A., 2Lt
ENG Koenig, Bernard H., T/Sgt
BT Hall, Sidney V., Sgt
RO Gergash, Bernard A., Pvt
TG Batterson, Frank L., Sgt
RWG Kinney, Jesse R., Sgt
LWG Lucas, Jack, Sgt
(Abortive)

B-17F #41-24539 *Jersey Bounce*

P Nolan, Robert J., 1Lt
CP Kruse, Richard L., 2Lt
NAV McColl, Daniel A., 1Lt
BOM Hopper, Richard R., 2Lt
ENG Hively, Roy J., T/Sgt
BT Brunnet, Arthur, Sgt
RO Hamill, Milton, Sgt
RWG DeMuth, Edward L., Sgt
LWG Mullendore, Merle S., T/Sgt
TG Bitter, Emile V., Jr., Sgt

359th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17F #41-24581 *The '8' Ball*

CMP Robinson, George L., Maj
P Calhoun, William R., Capt
NAV Moore, Paul G., Capt
ANV Strickland, Joseph M., 2Lt
BOM Haas, Anton H., 2Lt
ENG Zaorski, Roman R., T/Sgt
LWG Fortunak, Richard C., S/Sgt
RO Terry, Charles R., T/Sgt
BT Mulgrew, William C., S/Sgt
TG Stephen, Willard W., S/Sgt
RWG Murphy, Murel A., Sgt

B-17F #41-24561 *The Duchess*

CMP Romig, Eugene A., Maj
P Stouse, Harold L., 1Lt
RWG O'Conner, Squire T., 2Lt
NAV Elliott, Jesse H., 2Lt
BOM Mathis, Jack, 2Lt
ENG Audiss, Eldon W., T/Sgt
RO Richardson, Donald R., T/Sgt
LWG Tupper, Theron S., S/Sgt
BT Garriott, John A., S/Sgt
TG Owen, Calvin H., S/Sgt

B-17F #41-24603 *Green Hornet*

P Sanderson, Ellis J., 1Lt
CP Bowman, Horace D., Jr. 2Lt
NAV Spence, John W., 2Lt
BOM Plummer, John W., 2Lt
ENG Devers, Sidney, T/Sgt
RO Jones, Miles B., T/Sgt
BT Greene, Frank W., S/Sgt
RWG Swanson, Harry F., S/Sgt
TG Markiewicz, Joseph L., S/Sgt
LWG Silva, Carlos J., Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)

B-17F #41-24565 *Idaho Potato Peeler*

P Bales, Ross C., 1Lt
CP McGough, Wilson N., 2Lt
NAV Browning, Richard C., 2Lt
BOM Thomas, Paul M., 2Lt
ENG Winter, Raymond K., Jr., Sgt
TT Perkins, Homer T., Sgt
BT Klee, John P., S/Sgt
RO Kilgore, Raymond H., T/Sgt
TG Snell, Jack D., S/Sgt
LWG Alcorn, Cecil E., Cpl
(Abortive Sortie)

360th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17F #41-24559 *Ooold Soljer*

CMP Marion, Charles E., Maj
P Lyle, Lewis E., Capt
NAV Embach, John H., 1Lt
BOM Libonati, Michael L., 1Lt
ENG Smith, Gene K., T/Sgt
LWG Hartung, Frederick A., T/Sgt
RO Balcombe, Clayton S., Sgt
BT Sangster, Robert H., Sgt
TG Durant, Edward W., S/Sgt
RWG Bradford, Edward A., Sgt
OBS Bartlett, Keith O., 1Lt

B-17F #41-24579 *Thumper*

P Castle, John A., 2Lt
CP Fitzsimmons, Kent M., 2Lt
NAV Anderson, Samuel H., 2Lt
BOM Sinopoli, Louis B., 2Lt
ENG Levin, Meyer, S/Sgt
LWG Heitman, Alfred V., Sgt
RO Yannie, Emilio J., Jr., S/Sgt
BT Craft, Cecil E., Sgt
TG Semonick, Martin A., S/Sgt
RWG Dobbins, Jerry W., Sgt
(Aborted)

B-17F #41-24602 *Yardbird*

P Farrar, John W., 1Lt
CP Witterstetter, Gene A., 2Lt
NAV Auman, Rictor H., 2Lt
BOM Stewart, Jack W., 2Lt
ENG Hassler, Kenneth C., S/Sgt
RWG Prescott, Paul H., S/Sgt
RO Lindewall, Erick K., T/Sgt
BT Dillard, George N., Sgt
TG Kurtenbach, Kenneth J., S/Sgt
LWG Union, Alfred M., S/Sgt

B-17F #41-24620 *Snap! Crackle! Pop!*

CMP Callaway, Richard D., Maj
P Fredericks, Jacob W., Capt
NAV Herrington, Glen M., Lt
BOM Fonorow, Milton S., Lt
ENG Hlastala, Michael S., T/Sgt
LWG Schneiderman, Henry G., Sgt
RO Smith, Richard J., S/Sgt
BT Nardine, Howard H., S/Sgt
TG Murray, Gilbert A., Jr. S/Sgt
WG Gordon, James I., S/Sgt

B-17F #42-2967 *Shak Hak*

P Breed, William H., 1Lt
CP Sample, Harry T., Jr., 2Lt
NAV Allen, Homer R., 2Lt
BOM Santerre, Homer N., 2Lt
ENG Putala, Stanley, T/Sgt
LWG Easter, Samuel D., S/Sgt
RO Herbert, Joseph M., T/Sgt
TG Lentz, James H., S/Sgt
RWG Roth, Charles L., S/Sgt
BT Magee, Alan E., S/Sgt

Some Gunner's positions in the 360th BS are uncertain.

427th Bombardment Squadron Crew Lists

B-17F #41-24610 Joe Btfspk

P Stockton, Donald E., 1Lt
CP Lipe, Fort W., 1Lt
NAV Grant, Lawrence H., 2Lt
BOM Shirley, Lloyd A., 2Lt
ENG Smith, Roy Q., S/Sgt
RO Amos, Lee H., S/Sgt
BT Packer, Dean M., Sgt
TG Callery, Phillip J., Sgt
RWG Hummel, Wilbur F., Sgt
LWG Jenkins, Robert R., Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)

B-17F #42-2966 (No Name)

P Robey, Harry A., Jr., 1Lt
CP Burma, Benjamin H., 2Lt
NAV Grice, Charles R., 2Lt
BOM Moser, Roy R., 2Lt
ENG Sulcofski, Francis, S/Sgt
RO Vogel, Sebastian L., S/Sgt
BT Levering, Edward T., Sgt
RWG Bradley, Merel D., Sgt
TG Rutt, Donald H., Sgt
LWG Gross, Luther N., Sgt
(Abortive Sortie)

Some Gunner's positions in the 427th BS
are uncertain