107 FIGHTER SQUADRON

MISSION

Flying the A-10 Thunderbolt II, the 107 Fighter Squadron is one of the oldest flying units in the U.S. Air Force. Known as "The Red Devils," the squadron has served on multiple deployments in recent years, including launching aircraft to defend sovereign U.S. airspace on Sept. 11, 2001. The 107 Fighter Squadron is a component of the 127th Operations Group of the 127th Wing and is a part of the Michigan Air National Guard. The unit is based at Selfridge Air National Guard Base and is comprised of approximately 28 pilots and 45 support personnel. The 107 FS is closely supported by the 127th Maintenance Group which maintains the A-10 aircraft assigned to Selfridge.

LINEAGE

Organized as 107 Aero Squadron, 27 Aug 1917
Redesignated 801 Aero Squadron, 1 Feb 1918
Demobilized, 18 Mar 1919

107 Observation Squadron activated and allotted to NG, 7 May 1926

801 Aero Squadron reconstituted and consolidated with 107 Observation Squadron, 1936
Ordered to active service, 15 Oct 1940
Redesignated 107 Observation Squadron (Light), 13 Jan 1942
Redesignated 107 Observation Squadron, 4 Jul 1942
Redesignated 107 Reconnaissance Squadron (Fighter), 31 May 1943
Redesignated 107 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 13 Nov 1943
Inactivated, 9 Nov 1945
Redesignated 107 Bombardment Squadron (Light), and allotted to ANG, 24 May 1946

Redesignated 107 Fighter Squadron (Jet), 1 Jul 1950
107 Fighter Bomber Squadron
Redesignated 107 Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 1 Jul 1955
Redesignated 107 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 12 Apr 1958
Redesignated 107 Tactical Fighter Squadron, 1 Jul 1972
Redesignated 107 Fighter Squadron, 15 Mar 1992

STATIONS
Kelly Field, TX, 27 Aug 1917
Garden City, NY, 31 Oct-7 Dec 1917
St Maixent, France, 2 Jan 1918
Issoudun, France, 21 Feb 1918
St. Nazaire, France, 4 Jan 1919-unkn
Garden City, NY, 8-18 Mar 1919
Detroit, MI, 7 May 1926
Romulus, MI, 1929
Camp Beauregard, LA, 28 Oct 1940
Charleston, SC, 14 Dec 1941
Esler Field, La, 30 Jan-12 Aug 1942
Membury, England, 7 Sep 1942
Aldermaston, England, 25 Nov 1942
Membury, England, 8 Jan 1943
Middle Wallop, England, 11 Dec 1943
Deux Jumeaux, France, 28 Jun 1944
Le Molay, France, 5 Jul 1944
Toussus le Noble, France, 29 Aug 1944
Gosselies, Belgium, 16 Sep 1944 (operated from Chievres, Belgium, 7-18 Dec 1944)
Vogelsang, Germany, 23 Mar 1945
Limburg, Germany, 4 Apr 1945
Eschwege, Germany, 9 Apr-5 Ju1 1945
Drew Field, FL, 16 Sep-9 Nov 1945
Selfridge ANGB, Mt Clemens, MI

ASSIGNMENTS
Unkn, 27 Aug 1917-Feb 1918
Third Aviation Instruction Center, Feb 1918-Jan 1919
Unkn, Jan-18 Mar 1919
Michigan NG (divisional aviation, 32nd Division), 7 May 1926
Fourth Corps Area 15 Oct 1940
V Army Corps, Dec 1940
67th Observation (later Reconnaissance; Tactical Reconnaissance) Group 1 Sep 1941-9 Nov 1945
127th Operations Group

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft
PT-1,
BT-1,
O-2, 1927
O-38, 1931
O-47, 1938
O-47A
O-47B
O-49, 1941
O-52,
A-20,
P-51
Spitfire,
L-4,
A-20
DB-7
P-51
F-6
F-51
F-51D
B-26B
B-26C
F-84B, 1950
F-84C
F-84E
F-84G
F-51H
F-86E, 1953
F-89C, 1955
RF-84F, 1958
RF-101A, 1971
RF-101C
F-100D, 1972
F-100F
A-7D, 1978
F-16A, 1990
F-16B
F-16C
F-16D
A-10
B-26C
A-26B
B-26B
F-84C

L-4B
O-38E
O-38B

Support Aircraft
B-26

COMMANDERS
Maj Frederick R. Anderson, 7 May 1926-Nov 1939
Unknown, Nov 1939-7 Dec 1941
Cpt William G. Booth, 3 Jan 1942
Lt George W. Peck, 7 Jul 1942
Cpt John N. Atkins, 7 Dec 43
Maj Karl E. Kraft. Nov 1944
Cpt Robert E. Thomas, 6 Apr 1945
Maj Floyd E. Evans
Maj Frederick R. Anderson
Maj Richard Perry,
LTC Col. Donald W. Armstrong
LTC Arthur P Tesner, #1976
LTC Walter T. Wick, #1986
LTC Douglas S. Champagne 2007

HONORS
Service Streamers
Theater of Operations

Campaign Streamers
Antisubmarine, American Theater
Air Offensive, Europe
Normandy
Northern France
Rhineland
Ardennes-Alsace
Central Europe
Air Combat, EAME Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations
Distinguished Unit Citation
LeHavre and Straits of Dover, [23] Feb-20 Mar 1944

Cited in the Order of the Day, Belgian Army

6 Jun-[29] Sep 1944
[17] Dec 1944-25 Jan 1945

Belgian Fourragere

EMBLEM


107 Observation Squadron emblem

On and over a yellow disc, a representation of a flying red devil with black and white bat wings, holding in his left hand a red trident and with his right arm extended forward. All outlined in black. (Approved, 16 Sep 1954)

MOTTO
VIDERE EST SCIRE--To See is to Know
MORS HOSTIBUS--Death to our enemies

NICKNAME
RED DEVILS

OPERATIONS

On the 26th day of August, 1917, forty volunteer recruits arrived at Camp Kelly, San Antonio, Texas, coming from Vancouver Barracks, WA. Early the following morning, Aug. 27th, three hundred and forty-one other recruits arrived from Fort Thomas, KY. One hundred and ten men were taken from the latter contingent and placed with the men from the western coast to form the Squadron, now known as the 801st Aero squadron, formerly the 107 Aero Sqn.

To train these Men for overseas duties was not an easy task, but the untiring efforts of sgt. McMahan, Cpl. Clark, and Private Cowall soon changed this unit from a bunch of recruits to a well drilled and well-disciplined organization.

Sgt. Zuberbie who was placed in charge of the squadron by the commanding officer of the field, picked such capable men as Harvey C. Collender, for 1st Sgt Leslie C. Hubble for Sgt. Major, Burton Sateretrom for supply sgt., Fred R. Cyrus for mess sgt., and Charles L. McMahan, Urban V. Coke, Charles Holroyd, and Vonnie for drill sergeants.

The entire life was now very different to that which the men lived as civilians: the food, the quarters, and work, but everyone went at their new task with a light heart and willing hard, knowing they had enlisted for a good cause; namely, TO DOWN The hun.

On Sept. 22nd 1st Lieut. John A, Larkin was assigned as squadron commander, and his leadership was plainly visible, altho he only remained on this duty until Oct. 13th, 1917, when he was relieved by Capt. G. H. Taylor. Being an officer of wide experience, the Squadron progressed rapidly under his command, a more important duty was found for him and on Oct. 16th the Captain was relieved and Lieut. Gordon B. Keller was assigned as the new squadron commander.

After a long wait, orders came for the squadron to proceed to Garden City, NY and on Oct 26th we left Camp Kelly for our new camp on the East Coast. The change in climate was very noticeable, but the barracks were and comfortable. It was here that the final arrangements were made for the trip overseas, complete equipment drawn, a few transfers and the following officers were assigned to the squadrons: 1Lt Clark S. Long, 1LT Thomas; Carrol, 1Lt Ralph D. Looney, 1Lt Hugh Hartshorne, Jr., 1Lt Jaques M. Swab, 2Lt Charles F. Turner, The six weeks drilling at this post, under the leadership of Lieut. Keller, and Sgt. McMahan, put the Squadron in good physical condition, and when the long looked for orders came for overseas duty, all was ready.

On the 7th day of December, the squadron was ordered to St Johns, Canada. We travelled by rail to St. Johns and there boarded the English S.S. Tunisian; leaving Dec. 10th, arriving at Halifax, N. S., where she anchored until Dec. 15th, when the squadron was again on their voyage arriving at Liverpool on Christmas morning, Dec. 25, 1917. No submarine trouble was experienced during the voyage, and the weather conditions were very favorable for a pleasant trip; with clear days, moonlight nights, and a calm sea. The usual sea sickness that is experienced on all overseas trips was not missing on this trip, but it was one of the smoothest trips the old Tunisian had had seen in many months.

On the morning of Dec 26th the squadron unloaded the squadron baggage, and by 2:00 pm had entrained, headed for Southampton, England, arriving there early on the morning of Dec 27th, unloaded and marched out to the rest camp, and quartered there until Dec 29th. Leaving Southampton on board a side-wheeler, the English Channel was crossed to La Havre, France.

This trip across the Channel required only five or six hours, and at daylight Dec 30th, the Squadron was once more on the March to an English Rest Camp.

In this camp the weather us very cold, and to the men it was a little trying, so when on the morning of 1 Jan 1918 we were ordered to St Maixant, France there was no regret, until the means of transportation was seen to be boxcars.

At St Maixant the squadron was quartered in old French Barracks and most of the time here was spent in drilling, until orders came for us to proceed to the 3rd Aviation Instruction Center, 1Lt Gordon E. Keller was relieved from duties as Squadron Commander, and 1st Lieut. Ralph D. Looney was placed in command. On the 11th day of February, 1916, Lieut. Looney was relieved as commanding Officer and Lieut. Edward Kenney was assigned to these duties on Feb. 19th, 1918 and has continued in command to the present date.

On Feb. 20th, 1918, the squadron left St. Maixant arrived at the 3rd AIC Feb. 21st, 1918. It was at this post that the 801st Aero Squadron made their remarkable record. The first three months here the men worked in the Assembly and Test Department, where they made such a fine record, that on June 7th, 1918, when skilled help was needed at Field #2, this Squadron was asked to furnish 100 men to go to that field and help put the field in better shape, it was quite a blow to some of the men to leave a department which they had so diligently worked to place on an efficient basis.

Fifty men of the Squadron remained at their original work and the other hundred went to Field #2 with a determination to help place that field in as good condition as the department they had left. Every one use up early and worked late, doing all in their power to keep the Aeroplanes in flying condition, and this they did. Co-operating with another Squadron, Field #2 was placed on as efficient basis as any flying field in the A. E.F.

Fifty members of the Squadron still had charge of the Assembly and Test Departments and with the assistance of a company of Motor Mechanics, kept up the past good record.

The Michigan Air National Guard began in 1925 as a group of 58 aircraft buffs who met for weekly drills in a Detroit municipal garage learning about weapons and studying airplanes from textbooks.

The Detroit Police Department garage where the unit met, at Chene and Jefferson in downtown Detroit, was too small for any large equipment. The 107 Observation Squadron, even without any

aircraft, was granted Federal Recognition as part of the Michigan National Guard's 32nd Division on 7 May 1926. Michigan became the fifth state in the Union to have a Federally recognized air unit in the National Guard. The 107 Photo Section and the 107 Medical Section also received Federal recognition.

On 8 May 1927, one year and one day after Federal Recognition, the unit, largely through the cooperation of Detroit city officials, moved to a temporary flying field at Rouge Park. It was also on that day the pilots of the 107 picked up four new JN-4 at Kelly Field, Texas, and flew them back to Rouge Park.

The planes, widely known as "Jennies," were piloted from the vicinity of Burt and Plymouth roads on the far west side of Detroit. The Michigan Guard had its wings and continued to operate from Detroit City Airport in 1928 and 1929.

A continuing program for more and better facilities enabled the units to procure and move into the military hangar at Wayne County Airport on 4 Oct 1930. The hangar, specifically designed for the 107, was rated as the finest Guard squadron facility in the country and was furnished through fund raising efforts of the unit and interested community organizations at an open house and air show.

Active Duty Begins: The 107 Observation Squadron of the Michigan National Guard was activated for Federal service effective October 15, 1940. At that time the squadron was based at Wayne County Airport, Inkster, Michigan. Although the unit was flying several different types of aircraft, the primary type was the 0-47A and B. Major Frederick R. Anderson was commander. After activation at Inkster the squadron moved to Camp Beauregard, Louisiana, during the week of October 2128, 1940. The unit used rail transportation for its ground equipment, while most of the men drove their own cars. Once in place at Camp Beauregard the squadron became part of V Corps, US Army, and began intensive training.

Upon arrival at Alexandria, Louisiana, the nearly 200 members found that Camp Beaurgard, which was located just north of the city, was not a military base by today's standards. The Civilian Conservation Corps had established the camp in the 1930's and had used it as a base for lumber cutting. Since the buildings had been unused for some time they were in bad state of repair. Further, not enough wooden structures existed to house everyone so the enlisted men spent the winter in tents. These had wooden floors and only wood-burning stoves for heat. The field lacked a long enough hard-surface runway for the aircraft, and all taxiways were sod, which turned to mud with the increased use. Thirty-seven years after experiencing this episode in outdoor living, Colonel Robert A. Stone vividly remembers the cold and mud of winter. Conditions were harsh as the 107 opened this field and: When the 107 arrived from their home station, Wayne County Airport, Michigan, they were greeted by a very discouraging sight There was a small clearing in the woods that ran into the hills at the north end of the field and served as the runway. At the southern end of this clearing were a few old deserted Civilian Conservation Corps building in shambles and lice infested. The stories of wild pigs, snakes and vermin were not unfounded. No heating facilities were to be had. A veritable mud-hole was Esler Field, at the time, as no drainage

system had as yet been constructed. Desolation reigned supreme.

After arrival at Camp Beauregard the 107 began training and flew photographic missions in support of V Corps of the Army.

During that training, in the spring of 1941, one unfortunate incident stands out in the unit's history. On April 9, 1941, Lieutenant William Esler, Lieutenant Paul Smith and Private Charles Yesalones took off in an 0-47. Shortly after becoming airborne the aircraft lost altitude and crashed in the woods off the end of the runway. Lieutenant Esler, the pilot, was killed while Smith and Yesalones survived with numerous injuries. As a result, the War Department officially designated the airfield at Camp Beauregard as Esler Field. This field, still in use, is the principal airport for Alexandria, Louisiana.

The first deployment occurred in May of 1941. The unit was sent to Biloxi, Mississippi, to practice gunnery. The 0-47 were not well armed, even by 1940 standards, containing only one fixed thirty caliber machine gun in the wing and one flexible thirty caliber mounted aft of the observer's position at the rear end of the cockpit. The Biloxi deployment did allow target practice with towed as well as stationary targets. While flying out of Biloxi Airport the unit lived in tents pitched on a baseball diamond next to the sod airport. The only permanent structure at the airport was one wooden hangar that could accommodate several 0-47 for maintenance. The unit stayed at Biloxi for about three weeks and then returned to Esler Field.

The 107, following its return, continued to train and fly in support of Army photographic needs. On August 8, 1941, the unit again deployed; this time to Beaumont, Texas, to support V Corps war games. This deployment lasted until September 5 and in retrospect was remembered by those involved because a storm destroyed the tent encampment at the Municipal Airport and the troops had to move into the fairgrounds for temporary shelter. That shelter consisted of stalls in the cow barns, one for each individual, with outside showers set up in full view of a passing highway. After returning to Esler Field on September 5, 1941, some improvements in accommodations were in order; the unit still was not in first class quarters. The tents with floors and wood stoves of the previous winter now had been upgraded to tents with wooden floors and screen walls plus the wood stoves. These tents were, , an improvement over stalls in cow barns.

These problems aside, the unit increased its combat capabilities as the nation continued to arm and train for what was beginning to look, throughout 1941, more and more like active involvement in the war in Europe. This continued buildup directly affected the 107 when, on September 5, the squadron was attached to the newly activated 67th Observation Group. This group comprised the 107 and the other National Guard flying units at Esler, the 109th Observation Squadron from Minneapolis and the 153rd Observation Squadron from Meridian, Mississippi. Also, the Group included the 12th Observation Squadron, a regular Army Air Force unit serving with the three national guard units at Esler Field. On December 7, the attack on Pearl Harbor answered the question of whether or not the activation and preparation of these units was necessary. The men of the 107 and its newly formed group quickly found themselves affected by the outbreak of hostilities.

On December 12, 1941, the group received orders to deploy. This was not a training mission, and as a result the squadron would soon earn battle credit for participation in the Antisubmarine Campaign. The deployment created some hardships. The group left Esler Field in convoy, which was initially about seven miles long, and began movement towards the east coast. The squadrons took up positions at Savannah, Georgia, Charleston, South Carolina, and Wilmington, Delaware. The 107 and group headquarters were located at Charleston. The mission of the group was antisubmarine patrol and ship tracking and identification along the east coast in these first days of the war.

Again, the unit found itself deployed in the winter to a new base with minimal facilities. After arrival at Charleston, a bad situation was made worse by a poor choice of sites for the tents. A combination of winter rains, tents in a low area and no hard surface facilities soon had everyone living in quagmire. The men soon let their general feeling for their campsite and tent living conditions be known and demonstrated. While in this campsite the commander's tent caught fire. While this occurred a number of men were standing in a chow line nearby. According to Colonel Stone, an eyewitness, rather than join in the attempt to save the tent the men stayed in line and viewed the spectacle. One i5 driven to conjecture here--was it the dislike of tent living or fear of losing one's place in line that kept the men from assisting? Another witness, Colonel Henry E. Eckhart recalls that only a stove, some golf clubs and the metal portions of a footlocker remained. Colonel Eckhart also noted that the men in the chow line were cheering.

The 107 was not long involved in the Antisubmarine Campaign. On January 30, 1942, the unit returned to Esler Field along with the rest of the 67th Group to continue training for combat. Upon return to Louisiana the squadron found itself involved in the development of new procedures to adapt aerial reconnaissance to the Blitz-type warfare on the ground and high performance, fast fighter aircraft now in the sky. The old, lightly armed and slow multi-seat observation aircraft needed to be replaced with more modern aircraft. During the period from February 1942 until August of that year the 107 found itself on the forefront of developing the new doctrine and tactics that it, and others, would soon be employing in Europe. New aircraft began to appear on the flight line at Esler Field, several of the more important aircraft experimented with during this period were the A-20, and the single engine 0-43 along with the P-51. For the 107 the most important of these was to be the Mustang which it eventually would fly in combat as the F-6 reconnaissance version.

Pilots during this period developed procedures that allowed one person to accomplish what three had been doing in the much slower observation aircraft. The pilot had to become a navigator, gunner, radioman, cameraman and accurate observer all at once. Along with developing the new procedures with the high performance aircraft, the unit accomplished air mapping mission to assist the planning involved in laying out the new and greatly expanded Army bases. Their photographic efforts assisted in development of Fort Polk, Camp Clayborne and Lake Charles Air Force Base. Finally, in the summer of 1942 the Group began preparing for movement to Europe. After 22 months of service, the 107 split into two contingents and began moving toward the east coast for shipment to England.

The ground support echelon boarded a train on August 18, 1942, and moved to Fort Dix, New Jersey. On August 31 the men traveled to New York Harbor and the dock of the Queen Elizabeth. The men boarded the ship under cover of darkness, and departed for what was to be a 5-day race across the North Atlantic. Fortunately, on this trip she encountered no problems and docked in Scotland on September 6, 1942. Disembarking, the men boarded a train for Southern England. The trip south was made under blackout conditions at night and the train stopped several times. Each stop was made out in the country and the men received their first orientation to the European Theater of Operations as searchlights and anti-aircraft fire repelled German bombers over the nearby British cities. The next day the squadron's ground echelon arrived at its new base, Membury, Berkshire. This was an old Royal Air Force Base, taken over by the USAAF, and was located about 60 miles west of London.

The air echelon, composed of the pilots and crew chiefs, also deployed. Unfortunately, their trip to the European Theater was not as smooth or accident free as that of the Sound echelon.

When the unit split into two groups in August the intent had been to have the pilots fly over to England in new aircraft that they would pick up while moving to the east coast. Plans changed as the men were told that at least some of the aircraft they were to be assigned had been given to the Russians. Soon after the ground echelon moved to Fort Dix the pilots and crew chiefs made the same trip. From Fort Dix the men boarded a Dutch transport that moved north in convoy to Nova Scotia. At Nova Scotia more ships joined the convoy and the larger convoy and its protective warships began moving across the North Atlantic. During the crossing U-boats attacked the convoy twice and destroyed several ships. The Dutch transport, carrying the men of the 107, made the passage without being attacked directly. On September 22, 1942, 14 days after departure, the men disembarked at Glasgow, Scotland. After a quick train trip south they rejoined the unit again at Membury.

For several reasons the next year and three months-- September 1942 to December 1943-Lwas exasperating for the men. Initially, the squadron lacked any aircraft. Therefore, Eighth Air Force assigned it to VIII Air Force Service Command as a support organization for other groups, giving it no operational mission as a unit. Then, as aircraft began to become available, a whole series of different types, many of which were neither in the best of shape nor modern, were cycled through the unit. Also morale suffered due to a lack of American rations for the first year and a diet consisting of mutton, brussel sprouts and fried bread.

During this time the 107 served at several bases. From September 6, 1942, to November 25, 1942, the unit stayed at USAAF Membury. The squadron then transferred to USAAF station Aldermaston, Berkshire, and stayed at that location until January 8, 1943. On January 8, the unit moved back to Membury where it stayed until December 11, 1943. The squadron then transferred to USAAF Station Middle Wallop (nicknamed "Center Punch" by the 107 members) near Salisbury, England, and remained there until it went to France shortly after D-Day.

As already indicated, the Squadron was slow to begin flying activity because of the lack of aircraft.

The L-5 was the first plane assigned to the 107 in England.

These canvas covered, small single engine planes arrived in crates and the ground crews assembled them. Another aircraft type allocated to the unit shortly after arrival was the DB-7. This was the French version of the A-20 which the men had used back at Esler Field. These aircraft were in poor condition and the French language inscriptions throughout the aircraft did not make flying them any safer. The unit also flew British Tiger Moth trainers and American L-4 Piper Cub liaison planes during this period. Finally, after some time in England, and use of the above mixture of aircraft, the squadron received 21 Spitfires. Even this aircraft proved less than satisfactory. For example, pilots wrecked 19 of these planes. The most common problem leading to these accidents was the great ease with which the Spitfire could be ground looped and turned on its nose while taking off or landing.

Finally, the unit, reassigned to the Ninth Air Force on November 13, 1943, received the first F-6A to arrive in the British Isles.

As indicated earlier, not only the lack of aircraft and mission bothered the men during this period; the lack of American rations did not help either. Due to the resourcefulness of the men a small part of this situation was overcome when unit pilots took batches of ice cream mix on training missions over England to freeze it. This overcame the problem of no available freezer space on the ground and added another attraction to the menu. An episode with a Tiger Moth, lost over its own airfield, provided another interesting sidelight during this period. The runway at Membury had been camouflage painted to resemble the surrounding farm fields. Upon returning from a morning shuttle flight to a nearby base to get the daily weather information Sergeant Tony Salinger, piloting a Tiger Moth, found that he could not immediately locate the runway even though he was over the airfield.

While many aspects of the initial service of the unit in England seemed to distract from morale building, not all did. The brief service at USAAF Aldermaston provided one notable aspect on the positive side. In close proximity was a factory employing about 3,000 Irish women in the production effort. Needless to say, there was considerable partying. This occurrence, the general compatibility between the local people and the men of the 107, led to a number of men marrying while stationed in England. By the end of the unit's tour, ten enlisted men and one officer had married English girls.

Another interesting sidelight occurred while the unit was flying from Aldermaston. The British had several squadrons of Polish pilots that had escaped Poland as it fell to Germany flying within the RAF. Perhaps as a result of the way Poland was overrun by Germany in 1939, these pilots could be excused for a rather bitter desire to carry the war back to the Germans as quickly as possible. In any case, these flyers would take off on an assigned mission from their home base, fly the mission and return to Aldermaston and the 107's flight line. Once there, the ground crews of the 107 treated the Polish flyers as any transient flyers. The aircraft were refueled and serviced, including more ammunition. Then, the Polish pilots departed and flew another mission. Meanwhile, the RAF did not understand how the Polish flyers could fly missions that sometimes

lasted twice as long as the unrefueled duration of the aircraft.

During this period personnel of the 107 continued to train. The pilots flew some missions with their Spitfires over England in an air defense role although not as squadron operations. They used DB-7 or A-20 for target towing in support of other Eighth Air Force units' training. Some 67th Group aircrews operated on cross-channel sweeps from a number of Southern England bases. they never flew in group or squadron strength or operations. From July 1943 to October 1943, although no 67th Group operations occurred, an A-20 crew and two Spitfire pilots were missing in action. The group conducted important training during this period in ground artillery fire adjustment and observation and reporting of ground unit movements. The unit did not get back into the photography business until the fall of 1943. On November 13, 1943, as noted earlier, the 67th Group and its squadrons were reassigned to the Ninth Air Force and began receiving the F-6A. Concurrent with this the 107 changed bases again, this time to Middle Wallop where the unit soon became operational. The Squadron had finished its service with the Eighth Air Force and operational missions soon were to begin.

Perhaps the most action packed and impressive, the next period comprised the unit's combat activities. it is important to understand that the squadron flew so many missions and was involved in so much combat activity that one is forced to choose from literally hundreds of pages of interesting source material; only a small portion of the exploits of the 107 are outlined here. The more serious reader should consult the monthly histories produced by the squadron and forwarded to the 67th Group, or the Daily Summary of Activity kept within the squadron.

The assignment of these aircraft to the 107 and the reassignment of the squadron to the Ninth Air Force occurred as part of the preparation for invasion of the Continent. The Ninth Air Force had moved to England from North Africa in October of 1943 and quickly grew to a total of 290 units. It was six times the size it had been before, and it comprised the largest tactical air force of all time. Concurrent with this buildup, and the assignment of new aircraft, the squadron and its parent group made its last change of station within England. As noted earlier, this was to USAAF Station Middle Wallop, Hampshire, located near Salisbury. After arrival at this base on December 11, 1943, the 107 continued intensive training in aerial photography, visual reconnaissance and maneuvers with Army ground units in England.

At 1120 local time on the morning of December 20, 1943, a flight of two F6A departed Middle Wallop on the 107's first operational combat mission. The mission was a visual and photo reconnaissance over France, but no pictures were taken due to cloud cover. The significance of the mission, and two more flown later that day, was that the 107 became the first American tactical reconnaissance squadron to begin operations in Northern Europe. By the end of December the unit had flown 23 operational missions over enemy-occupied territory in France.

Throughout this early period of the squadron's combat activity, the English winter weather created as many hardships as the German flak. As an example, January 1944 weather only allowed nine operational days, during which the unit launched 33 missions against the V-1 Rocket installations in the Pas De Calais area of Northern France. Even on these operational days the

weather was not always cooperative. Seventeen were aborted after takeoff due to the weather while 16 brought back excellent photos of the objectives. In addition, two weather missions were flown during the month and all missions were relatively free of flak. The poor weather also created special problems for the maintenance of the aircraft as noted in February 1944: Too much credit cannot be given to the engineering section of this Squadron for their work in keeping the aircraft flying. This work involved long hours with a minimum of men and has always been finished in time for the day's operations. They are in no small way responsible for the record that this squadron has been able to maintain the past two and a half months of operational flying. This section is headed by Captain Gordon R. Flyglare of Minneapolis . . . Captain Flyglare was a former Master Sergeant in the 109th Observation Squadron and was commissioned as a First Lieutenant in this squadron in the summer of 1942. His able assistants as line chiefs are Master Sergeant Henry E. Eckhart and Master Sergeant Maxwell P. Allen along with Tech. Sergeant Lawrence T. Bedo all of Detroit, Michigan.

During these early months of combat activity the unit continued to be involved in training activities with the ground armies massing in England for the impending invasion of the Continent. It conducted artillery fire adjustment and visual as well as photographic intelligence collection missions. Also, as a result of increased recognition of the value of the tactical reconnaissance and the lack of pilots trained in this specialty, pilots from other organizations began to visit the squadron for training. As an example, in February two P-47 pilots were attached for this training. This policy continued throughout much of the remainder of the war.

On February 15 the unit was alerted for a special photo mission of the coast of France. The aircraft were to fly at 3,000 feet and in some more hazardous areas at 6,000 feet. The specific nature and reason for the mission was, at the time, a very closely guarded secret. The weather was not immediately cooperative, and the unit had to wait eight days before it could begin this newly assigned task. During this time, the pilots practiced by taking similar photography of the English coast. On the 23rd the weather broke and the project began. This mission assured the 107 and the 67th Group of more than just a footnote in the history of the war in Europe: Throughout early 1944 the 67th Tac Recon Group with its four Tac Recon squadrons carried the major burden as the eyes for the entire 9th Air Force . . . . Between 23 February and 20 March it carried out what was to be one of its greatest achievements. This was the most secret and important photo mission of the war, the making of Merton Oblique photos of 160 miles of French coastline and two inshore strips, 120 miles long each, covering all possible invasion areas. The coastline strip was taken 2,000 yards offshore, and the inshore strips were taken at 7,000 and 14,000 yards inland. . . . Over 27 days the missions were flown, 83 missions were accomplished without the loss of a single plane. A final total of 9,500 prints were produced, and the 67th Tac Recon Group was awarded a Distinguished Unit Citation for its accomplishments. It became the recipient of the earliest award of this coveted citation in the new 9th.

By the end of February the 107 had flown 29 missions of the French coast. While many of these were unsuccessful due to low clouds and haze, each day found the pilots ready for another attempt. The photos called for were Merton Gridded Obliques that would be used in preparation for the invasion. This mission was completed by March 20, and the 107 flew 67 of the 83 group

missions flown to accomplish the mission.

Squadron pilots also flew 18 successful weather mission over enemy-occupied territory during February, and they received a commendation from their former commander, Lieutenant Colonel George W. Peck, who was now serving as 67th Group Commander.

The weather information brought back from these flight proved invaluable to IX Bomber Command and IX Air Support Command.

During March 1944 the 107 continued weather, as well as photo, reconnaissance over northern and coastal France. Photo missions included bomb damage assessment on the V-1 rocket sites along with the coastal oblique work noted above. Evidence that the pace of the war was increasing was indicated in the unit's March monthly statistics. During this month the squadron flew 281 hours of combat; this included 88 two-ship missions. It flew numerous other practice missions for the ground forces training in England. These missions served the dual purpose of providing training for the Army and checking out new pilots assigned to the squadron.

That the war was becoming more intensive for the squadron was highlighted by two events during March. First, on the 8th of the month Lieutenant Jack K. Turner flew a low-level photo mission over France. A 1500-foot ceiling over the target area required him to fly very close to the ground. Although his aircraft drew some flak it suffered no hits. Over the Lisieux Airdrome Lieutenant Turner took advantage of his low altitude to shoot up a truck and the control tower at the field. This is the first documented indication that squadron pilot fired at any ground targets. Later in the month the unit suffered its first battle damage when a ship returned home with a single bullet hole in it.

More intensive training began in April 1944 with the ground forces awaiting the invasion; it stressed proficiency in artillery adjustment. The squadron participated in several exercises and produced photography in support of the maneuvers. Two other events during the month pointed to the impending invasion. First, the Army attached a liaison officer who was to assist in the briefing and post-mission interrogation of the pilots. Second, in preparation for a short sea voyage the squadron was expecting to take, the unit formulated practice moves and on the 15th of April the advanced echelon received its first alert for overseas movement.

On the operational side, the unit continued flying over France, accomplishing 41 missions. These were primarily pre- and post-strike photographic missions to document what the bombers had accomplished. Events on two missions during April emphasized the danger the pilots faced. On April 6 Lieutenant James R. Brier departed England on a two-aircraft mission over France. Extremely poor weather existed in the Channel area and his aircraft entered a fog bank, crashed into the coast and he was killed.

Since the middle of April the men had been limited to 24-hour passes and travel restrictions of no more than 20 miles from Middle Wallop. As May began the invasion began to seem even more imminent. Another indicator suggesting this occurred in the middle of the month when Major

John N. Atkins, the Squadron Commander, was grounded because he had too much knowledge of invasion plans. Further, the order to begin training to waterproof all 56 vehicles assigned to the Squadron suggested the invasion could occur at any time.

The men packed and shipped home all the extra equipment they had collected during the 19 months in England. On May 1, strip down inspections began to assure that both men and equipment were ready for movement to France. Finally, actual practice movements were conducted. The movements simulated the actual deployment by having the forward and rear echelons mobilize and move to another area and set up and camouflage their encampment. These practice deployments lasted 24 hours and began on May 16. They proved to be successful and a welcomed change of pace for the men: It was almost a Boy Scout trip. By ten o'clock the forward echelon was comfortably encamped in a beech and elm grove on Pitts Down fifteen miles from the field, with 33 vehicles and 8 trailers of the convoy so well camouflaged that Lt. Cook, flying at 200 feet, searched the area for half an hour and was not able to spot them. After a K-ration dinner almost everyone crawled into his tent to catch up on that sleep he had been missing the past few weeks. About six o'clock a party was sent scouting for beer, an item definitely in short supply around this troop-trampled bit of England. By telling the pub keeper they were buying for Americans who had been on maneuvers for weeks and weeks the party returned with enough Mild and Bitter to make everyone gleefully comfortable. In the middle of the beer party Major Moss and Nancy, the Red Cross girl from the field, drove up with coffee and sandwiches. They had expected to find us in foxholes Nancy was so angry she almost refused to have a drink. Not to be outdone by the forward echelon the rest of the outfit, making up the rear echelon, of 151 men and 4 officers, undertook the same training four days later. Beer Scouts were unsuccessful this time and the Red Cross decided we could make our own coffee, but we managed to survive. Except for a gas alert and a one hour hike the men had the day free. Most spent it sleeping or hunting for rabbits and pheasants in the surrounding woods. Both game and ammunition were plentiful. The results were, frankly, a shame and disgrace to the outfit--a very generous estimate being one kill per 100 rounds.

This practice for the invasion did not lessen the flying; in fact just the opposite occurred. May was by far the most active operational flying month yet for the Squadron. The unit compiled 477 hours of combat flying, conducting 125 operational missions. The new types of targets assigned and procedures utilized in these missions further alerted personnel to the possibility of invasion. Also, the pilots flew route recce missions reporting via radio or in debrief after the mission. This allowed information to become available several hours sooner than it had been when the photography had been the primary source of intelligence.

The pilots encountered more flak than ever before. On 101 of the first 125 missions flown during May, the pilots reported coming under fire. The accuracy of the fire also improved. On May 3, while Lieutenant Jack F. Hickman was flying one of the visual route recce missions his aircraft was hit by flak in the area between Heasoin and St. Pol. The pilot flying number two position noted black smoke coming from Lieutenant Hickman's engine. Hickman radioed that he was unhurt but the ship was out of control and he was bailing out. After he parachuted he landed and signaled that he was okay before disappearing into a woods. This was the Unit's first loss from direct

enemy action. Lieutenant Hickman was listed as missing in action until July 27, 1944, when the squadron received new that he had made his way to Switzerland and was interned.

Six days later the next episode with German flak proved deadly. Another two-ship mission was conducting a visual recce in the vicinity of Bernay St. Martin Airdrome when the flight lead, Lieutenant Donald E. Colton, went down to low altitude to make some observations. After returning to higher altitude Lieutenant Colton told his number two man he was all right. Shortly thereafter his aircraft entered a dive from 6,000 feet and number two, not knowing what was occurring, followed. At 4,000 feet the right wing of the aircraft fell off, the plane entered a spin and crashed on the edge of the German runway at Bernay St. Martin.

The aircraft exploded on impact and number two aircraft saw no canopy jettison or chute. , Lieutenant Colton became the first squadron pilot killed in action over-occupied France.

As final preparations for the invasion, the pilots trained more intensively in adjusting artillery fire from the air. The addition of more Army liaison officers to the squadron molded closer cooperation between the Army and the pilots. These debriefing officers helped assure that the information learned through visual reconnaissance would be forwarded to the proper individuals in the US First Army. This relationship actually became so successful that after the invasion the 107 was referred to as the "eyes of the First Army," since it was the only tactical recon squadron working directly for the First. Flying continued at a high level throughout the month. To handle the volume in any squadron work centers had to go on 24-hour work schedules with 16 to 18-hour work days for individuals. This was especially true in the maintenance, radio and photo processing areas. It was not an uncommon to have the film from a day's first mission arriving as the last prints from the previous day were being dried and dispatched via the squadron's L-5 liaison aircraft.

The squadron had now completed five months of combat and their new aircraft were already being replaced. New F6C Mustangs were augmenting the F6A's. As May came to a close, the nature of targets had become even more tactical. New targets added consisted of coastal guns, visual reconnaissance of troop and supply movements along lines of communication and continued bomb damage assessment of work done by IX Bomber Command. These bombers had now switched from concentration on attacking rocket facilities to interdicting supply movements by bombing bridges over the Seine River. While May had been the busiest month yet for the 107, June was to bring even higher levels of activity.

June 1944 was the most active month in the entire war for the 107. The Normandy invasion of June 6 and the direct support of the American First Army thereafter had a great deal to do with this. By the end of June the unit had flown 288 combat missions, as compared to the May monthly total of 125. The squadron accomplished this without any pilots being killed in action even though it lost several aircraft in incidents that will be described later. The unit began its move to France, with the forward echelon moving out on June 16, ten days after the invasion began.

The first direct suggestion to the pilots that the invasion would occur soon came on June 3 when

the squadron commander asked the pilots to give up their days off and cancelled all nonoperational flight to get the planes in shape. The painting of the invasion stripes that would help identify Allied aircraft from German also suggested that the invasion was soon to occur. By June 4 only two squadron F6 aircraft had not been painted with the identification stripes. Then, on the morning of June 5, the squadron launched a mission to check the status of the bridges over the Seine that IX Bomber Command had been attacking. This mission was the first flown by aircraft painted with the special invasion markings and the men thought the invasion was on or someone had made a mistake. Finally, at 1700 hours a mission returned from the Cherbourg Peninsula and reported: "Weather 10/10, cloud base 2,000 and lowering.' This prompted a number of pilots to catch the liberty run to Salisbury and two even left for London. Soon the big parade of transports and bombers moving overhead signaled the invasion. Three more surprise recce missions were laid on the squadron. Upon reaching the Cherbourg area the pilots found 2,000-foot ceiling and two mile visibility and turned back. That was when they first saw the invasion fleet. "I never saw so many frigging boats in my life," reported Lieutenant Jack K. Turner, and, "I wouldn't have missed that sight for a million dollars."

During the next three days the weather remained marginal and finally closed in totally on June 9. The unit still flew a total of 69 two-plane missions. During this time the 107 was the only tactical reconnaissance squadron flying over the Cherbourg Peninsula and vicinity and was the First Army's sole source of aerial observation from D-Day until the fall of Cherbourg. It's primary emphasis was to report tactical intelligence gained from visual observation. Transmissions from squadron pilots provided valuable intelligence to the ground army and tactical units: 15-20 medium tanks outside St. Saveur at intersection moving East . . . Troops moving towards Valognes on both sides of road, long column East. 40 armored cars, also motorcycles, on road Montebourg - St Mere Eglise, coordinated T-3597 . . Just out of Carental train approximately 20 cars moving East . . . 30 personnel trucks with trailers, head of column coordinate WT 6969, moving North-East at 10 mph. Vertical photos taken; Gimlet notified.

These kind of detailed reports came in every 20 minutes or so all day. By the end of June 6 the unit had flown 19 two-ship combat missions, the last of which landed at 2332 local time. The Squadron did its flying in poor weather under a 1500- to 3000-foot overcast. Although this gave flak gunners good range determination the unit's luck held and not one plane received battle damage.

The squadron spent the night of June 6 preparing for the first light missions of the next day. Pilots that had returned from late missions slept on the ready-room floor and mechanics caught a few moments sleep beside their aircraft or drank coffee as they worked. The first mission on June 7 was airborne at 0444. This day was also notable for its poor flying weather.

By the end of the day 26 more missions had been flown. Visual reports similar to those noted earlier were returned and unofficially-since reconnaissance pilots are not supposed to use guns except in extreme emergency--unit pilots got into the business of two-ship strafing jobs. This led to more squadron ammunition being expended in the first three days of the invasion than the entire month of May. All of this increased activity had its effect: Hard as they were going, no one

in the outfit seemed to think he was doing any more than his share of the job. Morale was up 100 percent. As those few who managed somehow to find a few minutes for letter writing explained: New it seems like we're doing something that will get us home.

The unit's good luck in escaping flak came to an end in the afternoon of June 7. Lieutenant Troy L. Ray was flying at 500 feet under a 10/10 overcast when his aircraft received a direct hit that badly damaged the aircraft and almost severed the elevator cable. He managed to nurse the ship home but did not have enough control to successfully land. His landing gear hit a barn 200 feet off the end of the runway. Upon contacting the runway the damaged landing gear separated from the aircraft, the propeller was torn off and the right wing and fuselage was badly damaged. Lieutenant Ray walked away from the totally destroyed aircraft. He told the flight surgeon, "Quit man, leave me be. All I need is a chew of tobacco." Ninety minutes later he was flying another F6 over Cherbourg.

On D-Day plus three the squadron was involved in the same activities. Through visual recce missions the unit pilots kept track of what the Germans were doing in attempting to counter the invasion. Squadron pilots radioed sightings to Gimlet, the control aircraft, that often dispatched fighter bombers immediately to attack the fleeting targets. This was an unfortunate day for two other squadron aircraft although, as with Lieutenant Ray, the pilots escaped unhurt. Lieutenant David R. Stopher was flying fighter cover for another squadron aircraft over Cherbourg when his engine cut out, possibly as a result of flak. He was just able to make it over the Channel before bailing out. Two minutes after hitting the water a British sailor was pulling him out of the water yelling, "Good show old chap, good show. . ." Three shots of Scotch later, and after transfer to several other ships, he was back in England. Lieutenant Stopher made it back to the squadron just past midnight and was flying missions the next day.

The unit suffered another aircraft out of commission that same afternoon; this time the pilot suffered only a bloody nose. A flak shell burst behind the seat of a F6 blowing the canopy apart and leaving 50 shell fragments to be pulled out of the cockpit area later by maintenance. Fortunately, the shell, which left large holes in both sides of the aircraft, burst directly behind the seat and the pilot was protected by the armor plate of the seat.

June 9 began as a day of rest since the weather was too poor to fly. the weather improved enough after supper to allow the unit to launch three missions to look at the invasion area and those bridges over the Seine that the bombers had been hitting. Two missions returned in an uneventful manner, but the third did not. It became one of the most incredible, and lucky, as well as unfortunate missions flown by the 107 in the entire war. The pilots involved were Lieutenant Troy L. Ray, who had walked away from one crash three days earlier, and Lieutenant Roswell E. Currie. This misadventure began when both aircraft failed to return from their mission and were reported as missing in action over Cherbourg. The next morning the squadron received new that Lieutenant Ray was on his way back to England via the US Navy. Upon returning Ray reported in with a wrenched leg and a flesh wound on his wrist caused by small arms fire. Lieutenant Ray shed no light on what happened to his wingman, but related a "decidedly unpleasant story:" . . . while returning from their assigned reconnaissance mission, on courses over the American

beachhead, tipping their wings in recognition for all they were worth, gunners on our own ships opened fire. It seemed like every son-of-a-bitch on a gun was trying to get in a shot." said Ray. His plane received several direct hits and, flying at less than 1,000 feet, as he was forced to by the low ceiling, he did not have time to bail out. "So I crash landed on what I thought was friendly territory. But as soon as I crawled out of my ship our own riflemen started pumping away at me. I was going to stand up and yell: "Don't shoot, I'm from Texas!' But there might have been some damn Yankees in the bunch so I laid still until they came and got me." After that people started being nice to him, once on a ship an admiral or someone high up in command came over to personally beg his pardon. They gave him a private stateroom on a warship and he came back to England in style.

Lieutenant Currie told an even sadder story upon his return, and it was four days before the unit had any knowledge of his status. He had been hit by American Navy anti-aircraft fire about the same time as Lieutenant Ray. He bailed out at 700 feet and hit the water before he could free himself from his chute. After some trouble with his Mae West life raft two Navy boats came alongside to pull him out. The rough water caused a collision catching his leg between the boats. Once in the boats they took him to the Destroyer USS Shubrick where he could not be moved due to his legs. Lieutenant Currie then spent the next two days aboard the destroyer and was forced to ride it through two engagements. The ship then docked at Southampton for ammunition and he was forced to suffer through a number of procedural problems and red tape which finally resulted in him bumming enough money from a stranger to get himself back to Middle Wallop by bus. The Squadron first received word of Lieutenant Currie's status when he walked through the door on the evening of June 13.

The pace of flying continued at high levels and the weather remained marginal. The next big event for the 107 indicated the success of the invasion and began on June 16 when the advanced echelon of the Squadron left Middle Wallop for France. This movement included 82 men and began in the morning. The first day and all the next was spent getting briefings and waiting in a giant military traffic jam in Southampton for the Military Police to lead them to their boat. Finally, on the afternoon of Sunday, June 18, they reached the LST and began loading. While loading, another LST docked next to them and put 600 German prisoners ashore. This was an impressive sight as many of the prisoners were very young, and the men felt little compassion. The scene also made them hope they would not become a prisoner of war in German hands.

By the time they loaded the ship the tide had receded and the ship was aground. Actually the ship's pilot was as much to blame as the receding tide since he had neglected to back it into deeper water as it became more heavily loaded. The ship finally got underway just before midnight and met its convoy near the Isle of Wright. As the convoy approached the beachhead, a storm began. When the ships entered the crowded, makeshift invasion port the LST experienced some trouble docking. After two try a collision occurred with a Liberty Ship's anchor chain that put a hole in the LST below the waterline. When berth was finally made, near the shoreline, two anchors were placed out, but the rear anchor broke and the ship was at the mercy of the storm. This predicament did not improve when the LST became partly grounded, broadside to the storm waves.

Two tugs attempted to free the ship but were unsuccessful. Next, an attempt to unload the vessel failed when the forward doors were opened and the first truck and trailer, which happened to be a 107 vehicle, drove off the ramp and disappeared. All of this might have been humorous had it not been for the storm and the fact that the trailer was carrying the pilots' duffel bags and the last time many of them were seen thew were floating away. Further complicating the matter, an attempt to close the LST doors failed as the cable that shut them broke.

The men and equipment spent the next four hours being sprayed by the sea as it crashed broadside into the stranded vessel. It became necessary for each individual to tie himself down or risk being washed overboard; at one point the captain told everyone to put life vests on and many men thought they would have to abandon ship. About the only good news throughout this activity centered on the fact that none of the vehicles broke loose on deck and all cargo held securely. All the men, soaked to the skin, were greatly relieved when the tide began to recede about midnight and the ship was finally left high and dry. The next morning the vehicles drove off onto Utah Beach, not even getting their wheel hubs wet. After proceeding only a short distance they had to stop and remove all the waterproofing materials put around each engine because it caused overheating.

The men then proceeded through some badly battered countryside, moving about six miles inland to their new location. Landing Strip A4, located near La Cambe, now became the new home of the 107. Upon arriving, the advanced echelon found that the strip was not yet complete, and the Army combat engineers were still grading and laying the wire mesh and pierced steel planking that would make up the taxiways and mile long runway.

The party quickly set up tents in an apple orchard, dug foxholes and camouflaged the area. At this point the men had not had much sleep in four nights. Guards were posted and the rest tried to get some sleep, but everyone had the jitters and most spent their first night in France running from tent to foxhole and back. Their feeling was not improved any by German bombers that attacked the field the first night drawing intense anti-aircraft fire. Since little squadron activity could be conducted the next few days the men "spend the time making themselves comfortable, adding guest rooms and billiard parlors on their foxholes and visiting the surrounding territory to try their French on the farmers." The portion of the unit in France spent the next seven days waiting for completion of the strip and cooperation from the weather so the aircraft, pilots and remaining ground support personnel could join them.

Colonel George Peck, Group Commander, landed about noon on June 27 and Major Atkins, 107 Squadron Commander, and 22 other F6 aircraft landed later in the afternoon. The squadron became the first American tactical reconnaissance outfit to operate from liberated France. This was cause for celebration during which "the bearded seven day veterans of the beachhead---the forward echelon--explained the finer points of foxhole digging and explained in detail the terrors of nightly visits by the Germans." In cooperation, the Germans did conduct a raid of the field that night. Missions, meanwhile, had continued from Middle Wallop, during the time the units advanced echelon had been in France. The missions remained the same and activity continued

at a high pace. Flak damaged several more aircraft and one pilot was forced to bail out over England when his engine failed. No pilot losses occurred that entire month. The unit conducted the movement of the aircraft to France in such a manner that it was flying combat missions again by noon the next day. The primary difference now was that they were three minutes from the front line instead of 30 as they had been when flying from England.

On the evening of June 28, Captain Roderick R. Patton, Squadron Operations Officer, and Captain Ford. and Army liaison officer serving with the squadron, went to First Army Headquarters to clear up a few matters. Colonel Blanchard, First Army G-2 for Air, noted some requests had come in from ground units to have the 107 pilots adjust artillery fire on the targets they were locating on their missions. Although the Army assumed this to be an impossibility, Captain Patton thought it was an excellent idea, and the next day proved it by personally flying several successful missions. Two days later, IX Air Forces' fighter command set aside two radio frequencies for this type of mission and the 107 added this additional category to its activities.

Throughout this period the morale remained high: Despite the comparatively rough life and the long hours and the C and K rations our cooks dispensed morning noon and night. . . . everyone felt good - damn good. It rained and we cursed, and the sun would come out - really hot sun - and we'd get dry just in time for the next shower.

We had known much harder life on many a maneuver than we had in our bivouac area in a apple orchard beyond the strip. We were in a new country doing a big job, and the Yanks were moving forward on every front.

The barter economy that quickly sprung up with the local French populace provided an interesting sidelight to the squadron combat activities during this period. Before being forced out the Germans had drained all the hydraulic fluid out the French vehicles, and this item was in very short supply. Since the unit had hydraulic fluid and the French had items then men wanted such as eggs, wine and services--like getting laundry done--a lively trade soon sprang up. One fine example of the value of this fluid was indicated by the trade of several cans of it by a certain squadron line chief (later a colonel in the Michigan Air National Guard) for a German motorcycle, no doubt recently acquired and of little value to the Frenchman who "owned" it.

As June 1944 came to a close, the 107 looked back on a month of outstanding accomplishments. the unit could point with pride to the 288 combat missions it had flown during the month. An important part of this record was the fact that the squadron had done this without the loss of any pilots even though it had suffered five aircraft destroyed and others damaged. The early arrival of the unit in France after the invasion added an important accomplishment to the expanding list of 107 credits. Also, the units service and "the eyes of the First Army" had begun. This combination would last for the rest of the war. Finally, while June was the busiest month of the war for the 107, much remained to be accomplished. the push that would take the American forces to their eventual linkup with the Russian Armies in Central Germany had just begun. Throughout the next ten and a half months of this advance, the 107 was to be directly involved in every campaign.

More squadron ground support elements arrived in France just before the end of June, three days after the pilots and squadron aircraft. Needless to say, when their C-47 touched down the men of the forward echelon were happy to see them since they had been accomplishing all the work needed to keep the Mustangs flying with only 67 enlisted man available of the usual strength of about 200 men. This left only the rear echelon in England awaiting ship transport to France. Though the next few days were very wet, flying continued. Flak badly damaged several aircraft; one made it back to A-4 and made a dead stick landing with its engine shot out. The landing became more eventful when the aircraft's machine guns activated during the landing; fortunately no one was hurt in the incident.

After flying from Landing Strip A-4 for only seven days, the squadron moved to Landing Strip A-9 located near Le Molay. The men approved of this move because it resulted in their beds being moved above ground for the first time since arriving in France. Another improvement also occurred shortly after the move when the mess facility began to supplement the ”K" and "C" Rations with more varied food.

The rear echelon finally caught up with the unit on Monday, July 10. The equipment was in good shape, but the men were not-- they had been sitting in marshalling area in England awaiting sea transportation to France for a long period of time. The added manpower and support equipment was appreciated as they had been missed. The men pitched their pup tents and retired early, happy that the long wait and move was behind them.

The unit suffered its first mishap soon after the move to A-9. Captain Roderick R. Patton failed to return from a mission. His wingman returned telling of heavy flak in the target area, and he had no knowledge of exactly what happened to his flight lead. The squadron learned nothing else immediately about Captain Patton; the only hint came from a fighter bomber pilot who had reported seeing a parachute in the St. Lo area near where Patton had been flying. The squadron heard nothing else about Patton until October 20, 1944, when it finally received word that he was a prisoner of war.

The 107 continued to fly a heavy schedule of combat missions: 14 more the day after Captain Patton failed to return and seven the day after that. Then on Friday, the 14th, two more aircraft went down. American anti-aircraft fire gunned down both. The ill-fated mission was a visual recce flown by Captain Robert E. Phillips and Lieutenant Troy L. Ray, (The same Lieutenant Ray who had been shot down over the beachhead earlier by American gunners and, before that, had crashed on landing due to German flak damage to his aircraft.). Lt Ray's aircraft was shot down around the Catz area at approx. 2115 hrs., Lt Ray parachuted to safety though, and Capt Phillips kept on coming home through heavy, accurate AA fire. He tried to land at strip A-4 but the gunners would not let him come in to land. At this strip he got his tail shot up. On his way to his home base, when still about two miles away, flying below the clouds, the AA fire was picked up by our own base gunners, who scored many direct hits that started the ship on fire. Capt Phillips had to make a crash landing, doing a swell job of bringing the ship in. All the time coming 'n the guns were firing directly at him. He got out of the ship while it was still rolling, but not without

getting second degree burns around his eyes, also on his legs. He was taken to the hospital. The following morning Lt Ray was picked up and brought home. He also had slight injuries, sustained while bailing out. He hit the tail section with his legs and hurt them quite a bit, This was the third time for Lt Ray. The pilots were lucky and, although injured, they returned to flight status. Two other squadron pilots, flying a visual recce around Avaranches on July 18, were attacked by 20 German aircraft. Lieutenant Raymond J. Doyle and Lieutenant Charles B. Easly recognized the danger and turned into the attacking aircraft, dove for the ground and started home. Lieutenant Doyle turned around and noticed a cloud of dust but could not identify what it was. Since Lieutenant Easly did not return it was assumed he had crashed. He was listed as missing in action, and later this was changed to killed in action. This is the first account of squadron pilots coming in contact with German Air Force aircraft—it was not to be the last.

If bad luck ran in streaks, this period of operations would rate as the worst in the 107's history. Six days after Lieutenant Easly crashed, Lieutenant Doyle was flying another mission, this time with Lieutenant Robert S. Olson as his wingman. The flight was bounced by 12 American P-47's. Lieutenant Doyle called a break to Lieutenant Olson but did not see him break. Doyle saw no shots fired but could not find his wingman after the encounter. He then returned to base and Lieutenant Olson became the third squadron pilot to be listed as missing in action in 14 days. It was later confirmed that Lieutenant Olson had been killed in action.

Demonstrations of the dangers of combat flying continued the next day when another P-47 opened fire on a squadron F-6 from a range of only 200 yards. Fortunately, no hits occurred and the aircraft returned safely. Then, on the 26th of July, Lieutenant Raymond J. Doyle, who had lost two wingmen earlier in the month, was flying a visual recce when he went down to a lower elevation to observe more closely. As he began to return to a higher elevation, his aircraft encountered light flak, entered a spin and his wingman saw it crash in flames.

There was no chute and Lieutenant Doyle became the third fatality suffered by the unit in July. P-47's again attacked and fired on squadron aircraft the last day of the month. An excerpt from the monthly report forwarded to the 67th Group noted the sentiments of squadron members: "The P-47's were at it again today, bouncing one of our sections. The consensus of opinions are that there are a lot of 'candidates for the Herman Goering Medal' flying P-47's."

The squadron ended the month with an assigned strength of 45 officers and 205 enlisted men.

Statistically the unit had lost three pilots who were killed in action, and one more who became a prisoner of war. Added to this, friendly ground fire had shot down two other aircraft. the unit lost a total of six aircraft during July. This was to be the worst monthly loss suffered by the 107 in the entire war. While experiencing these losses the squadron had flown 208 operational missions, composed of 416 sorties.

August 1944 was another busy month for the squadron. By the end of the month the 107 had flown 284 more missions and had lost more aircraft and another pilot, listed as missing in action.

On August 6 the squadron provided four aircraft for fighter cover for a P-38 which was flown by the 30th Reconnaissance Squadron, also assigned to the 67th group. (16:4) The P-38, reconfigured and called the F-5, was used for high altitude reconnaissance and had oblique and vertical cameras placed on its nose. Since all the aircraft's armament had been located there, the modifications needed to install the cameras forced removal of the guns. the F-5 was unarmed and needed fighter cover on its missions. The mission was uneventful; it did add this new category of activity to the type of combat flying in which squadron pilots were involved.

The first mishap to occur in August took place on the eighth of the month. This was a very busy flying day with a total of 46 sorties flown, but only 45 aircraft returned. The other received a flak hit in the engine. The plane was performing visual recce at 4000 feet, and while flying just Dyer the German side of the front lines a flak burst hit it and the engine stopped. Lieutenant Robert F. Thomas, the pilot, quickly discovered: to his amazement that without power, a Mustang doesn't glide very far. By stretching his glide as long as he dared, he bailed out just across our lines and had considerable difficulty in finding his rip-cord. The only thing that shook Nothing but the loss of face and a total wash out of the A/C was suffered in the accident.

A number of important visitors passed through A-9 during this period of time. Some of these were General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Winston Churchill and General Bernard Montgomery. The men's feelings about their leader is well demonstrated in the following passage Yesterday, Churchill again visited French soil, landing here at strip #9. Our commander in chief was also here again. His face has shown up quite a bit lately, but it seems no matter how many times he comes and goes, his popularity will never be lost or a thing of the past. All the G.I. population on the field always have a pushing good time, always trying to get a better look at their Gen. Ike. An on-looker can well understand how Gen. Ike earned his name among all soldiers as "their G.I. General."

Intensive activity filled the following days for the squadron. This was understandable, considered in the larger context of the war in Europe in late summer 1944. As indicated earlier, it is impossible to cover all the activities in the squadron during these months of combat. the following series of quotes indicates two days activities during August and notes some of the news the men were hearing about the war of which they were a small part.

Sunday, 6 August 1944, there were thirteen missions in all for the day. First mission was flown by Lt. Rice and Lt. Okrezesik. Take-off time, 1353, landed at 1503 hrs. Last mission flown for the day was flown by Capt. McAllister and Lt. Spicer. Take-off time 1715, landed at 1804 hrs. 'The missions consisted of six visual, four arty/R, one photo and one escort mission. All fronts are still looking good and last good bit of news received from Normandy Fronts was that Patton's army reached Laval. The Brest Penn. has been cut off and small bands of the enemy are still fighting in scattered areas along the coast. Nothing new was heard from the Red Army, yesterday but up to now the enemy haven't been able to stop them. There is fighting going on in Prussia.

On Tuesday, August 8: Over 600 American heavies (8-17 Bombers) gave support in the Caen sector to British and Canadian troops. Russians are reported to have driven a wedge into the

German defense covering East Prussia. To date we have destroyed 400 enemy tanks and caused 160,000 casualties. First mission flown for the day . . . take off time 0915 landed at 1016. Last mission for the day. . .take-off time 2015 landed 2050 hrs. The whole days missions consisted of eight visuals, four Arty/Adjustment and eleven photo missions

Bad news was in store for the squadron again on August 10, First, P-47's attacked a flight resulting in the loss of one air- craft with its pilot, Lieutenant Major M. Hillard, listed as missing in action. Lieutenant Hillard's status changed later in the month when he was reported safe. The same day, a flight of British Spitfires attacked two other unit aircraft and Lieutenant Edward A. Stearns was shot down. Three days later the unit learned he had bailed out and was recovering from shock and superficial burns in a hospital. Lieutenant Stearns returned to duty with the squadron on November 4, 1944. The squadron lost another aircraft seven days later when it developed engine trouble just after takeoff while flying at only 200 feet. Too low to bail out, the pilot flew the plane into the ground and walked away from a totally "washed out aircraft" with only minor cuts on his face and head.

The most exciting story of the month occurred the next day. Lieutenant William E. Lareau and Lieutenant Gueldner were flying a mission near Paris when eight FW-190's attacked. Lareau and Gueldner were forced to fight it out, though outnumbered four to one: First they were attacked by a flight of four, and broke. Lt. Lareau breaking to the right and Lt. Gueldner breaking to the left. Their trusty Mustangs outturned the FW's, so instead of being attacked, they were the attackers, right on the tail of the FW's. Both boys got in some good shots, with Lt. Lareau being the lucky one, scoring many direct hits, and seeing the plane start to smoke on the downward plunge. Lt. Gueldner had a story to tell also, putting it this way, "I had one all lined up and just going to pass the Jerrie one of my gold rimmed T. S. tickets when my pal (Werry Willie), Lt. Lareau, spoiled the whole thing by calling out let's go home," . . . Lt. Gueldner came back with a hole in one of his trim tabs.

This was the second encounter of unit pilots with large forces of enemy aircraft and the first that resulted in a squadron pilot claiming a probable victory.

Another squadron mission flying in the same area at the same time, returned minus one aircraft considerably dampening the good news brought in by Lareau and Gueldner. Lieutenant Jack K. Turner was missing in action and his wingman could shed no light on what had occurred. Some members of the squadron were of the opinion that he may have run into the same enemy aircraft engaged by Lieutenant Lareau and Lieutenant Gueldner. Later, Turner was reported as a prisoner of war. This made a total of five more squadron aircraft lost since the beginning of August. During the remainder of the month, the unit flew 65 more two-ship missions. Fortunately, no more pilots or aircraft were lost.

The 107 flew its 1000th combat mission during August, Since being federalized almost four years earlier, the squadron had changed considerable: When the squadron was called for federal ser- vice on October 15, 1940, it was composed entirely of native and adopted Michigan sons. in order that their previous training In the National Guard might best be utilized, many of these

men were transferred to new air corps units. Others returned to civilian life under the army's policy of honorably discharging men over 38 who wished to be relieved from active duty, and later when the squadron was assigned to the group with which it now operates, its ranks were further depleted of experienced officers and men who were transferred to group headquarters.

By August 1944 only 29 of the 251 men assigned to the squadron were national guardsmen who had been activated from Michigan with the unit. These men were generally the higher grade NCO's, having served longer and having more experience than the replacements that had arrived later. Also, as indicated, other original 107 officers and airmen had moved to the 67th group when it activated at Esler Field in September of 1941. This was true of the first two group commanders. Both Colonel Frederick R. Anderson and Colonel George W. Peck had served with the 107 before being federalized. Both also had been 107 squadron commanders before moving up to the group commander position. Colonel Anderson was 107 commander for over ten years, serving in that capacity from 17 June 1931, until 2 January 1942. Colonel Peck was squadron commander from 7 July 1942, until 6 December 1943. Men from the Michigan National Guard also filled five other key group positions in August 1944. These were Colonel Peter J. Markham, group operations officer; Major Robert L. Lander, group intelligence officer; Captain Arne H. Masters, group engineering officer; and two key NCO's working in his area, Master Sergeants Robert A. Stone and Anthony G. Salinger.

As August drew to a close, Allied armies were pushing the Germans back toward Germany very rapidly. Therefore the pilots were flying longer distances to get to the target areas, quite a change from the three minutes it had taken them when they first had deployed to France. As a result, the squadron received word it was moving forward to a field about 50 miles from Paris, Dreaux Airfield. An advanced party left A-9 on August 27 to set up and make ready for the aircraft.

The convoy made excellent speed despite the stretches of fog. Soon dawn came, and with it, increased speed for the file of vehicles--and with it a vision of destroyed trucks, tanks and other armored vehicles in which the Germans made their hasty retreat. For mile upon mile the roadside was littered with burned out vehicles, and the adjacent fields bore mute evidence of the toll the Germans paid in attempting to stay the American advance. Small mounds of earth with crude crosses marked the last resting place of many of the Wermacht.

Each of the 36 enlisted men and one officer--Capt. Schulherr--was astonished at the enthusiastic reception the French people gave them as they passed through the cities and villages enroute. Tomatoes and apples were freely given the troops, of course with the hope that the generous Americans would give them candy and cigarettes in exchange. They did.

Dreaux proved to be a former German airdrome, and a badly battered one at that, Not a hangar or building was left standing by the "softening" up attacks of the Allies. Engineers were at work filling the pock-marked runway. Demolition squads were detonating mines and unexploded bombs that littered the field.

After only two days of preparation, orders arrived moving the squadron to another location. The

advanced echelon began to repack and made ready to move to another just-captured airfield, Toussul Le Noble, located 15 miles southwest of Paris near Versailles. By the time the advanced echelon arrived at this field, designated A-46 by the Americans, the rest of the squadron had already arrived, coming directly from A-9, The Germans had used Toussul Le Noble as a site where they pieced together parts of American aircraft and it had been reported that aircraft such as B-17's had flown from that field. These planes would attempt to join up with Allied bomber formations and then begin shooting at the aircraft. Allied aircraft had bombed this field heavily about two weeks earlier and no clean-up had begun before the squadron arrived. The men had to clear away the damaged aircraft the Germans had collected as well as those destroyed by American bombing, They cleared and repaired runways and tore down or repaired damaged buildings. This aside, the worse task that fell to the men was burying the German airmen who had died in the bombings. (36) Some of the activities that occurred included the carpenter repaired holes in the roof and ceiling of the building used as officer's quarters and squadron mess. One particularly large hole was caused by a 500-pounder which failed to explode. The bomb remained in the basement until the bomb disposal squad removed it.

The (German) quarter master depot proved to be a treasure house for souvenir hunters and for obtaining useful items. 1st Sgt. Gerace and S/Sgt Satre, of communications section brought back a German "doddle buq"-- the remotely controlled miniature tank. The pair SOW' had it operating and went joy riding around the bivouac area. There was hardly a man in the squadron that did not get a Jerry or French bayonet, gun, pistol or knife of some kind.

German forces evacuated Paris and retreated quickly toward the West Wall* and Belgium. This meant the squadron pilots again were flying as much as 45 minutes just to reach the target areas. The German retreat was so rapid that the advancing American First Army was in Belgium by September 3. Squadron missions now lasted from two and a half to three hours and on September 9 the first 107 aircraft flew over Germany proper. Lieutenant Raymond Simmonds and Lieutenant Robert L. Spicer flew this first mission over the enemy homeland. they flew a visual recce of the Antwerokoln area bringing back reports of tremendous acjvi4 in marshalling yards, airdromes and factories in the heart of the Ruhr Valley. 200 German MET (vehicles) including enemy foot soldiers were observed moving East between Liege and Aachen. Sweepstakes (a radio link for dispatching fighter bombers) was notified. . . . Factories were all operating full blast over Cologne and marshalling yards in the vicinity of the city were fully covered by Lt. Simmonds on photos of good scale and good quality. An airdrome on the Eastern outskirts of Cologne was also photographed. A very successful mission and a credit to the two pilots who handled it.

Lieutenant Spicer, the next day, returned to the Cologne area and observed enemy aircraft on the ground at the airdrome he had located the day before. He told his escort to remain above a 3800-foot overcast and went below to have a look. Nothing more was heard from him; the unit assumed that he was shot down and listed him as missing in action. A month later the unit learned that flak had wounded him and badly damaged his aircraft while he was strafing the airfield and destroying two HE-111's and damaging another. After being wounded he had managed to nurse his damaged Mustang back over friendly lines and bail out. The squadron heard no more of

Lieutenant Spicer until learning in November that he had lost an eye in the action.

After the squadron had flown less than two weeks from A-46, the front had moved so far towards Germany that the 107 pilots had to fly over 225 miles to reach their target areas. On September 11, 1944, the unit received word that it would move forward again, this time to Belgium.

After serving three months, almost to the day, on French soil the squadron departed for Belgium on September 18, 1944. The new base was located near Charleroi and Gosselies, south of Brussels. The unit moved to Belgium by splitting the men, as before, into two echelons and moving via convoy. Except that it took them hours to cover the approximately 200 miles to the new base, the move was uneventful and everything went according to plan.

Rain clouds brought low ceilings and kept all aircraft on the ground the first two days in Belgium. This gave the men time to better organize their living areas, The damp, cooler mornings reminded everyone that summer was passing and the job of scavenging for stoves began. Many of the tents soon had stoves, which burned coal that could be mined in the local area. With the cold weather coming the squadron began negotiations to obtain billets in a hotel located in Gosselies. The hotel was about two miles from the field and all but 60 squadron members eventually moved here. The men did not move to the hotel until October 5 due to repairs that had to be accomplished.

Lieutenant Duncan B. McKee and his wingman were flying an operational artillery adjustment mission on September 26 when they were attacked by P-47's. Fortunately, no one was hurt, but his aircraft was badly damaged and he returned to base with his wing nearly shot off Upon returning Lieutenant McKee told the squadron intelligence officer during debrief Just as I pressed the mike button to call Lt. Denman a burst of tracer bullets passed over and through my left wing. Calling a break I broke sharply to the right and ended up in a steep spiral making a 360 degree turn before recovering. Not being able to find Lt. Denman, who was not fired upon, I turned West, punched throttle and prop pitch to the stop, and dove to gain speed. Four of the P-47's followed me in string about 2,000 yards behind and 500 yards to my left. Using war emergency I pulled away from them rapidly.

Upon returning to base analysis of the plane showed six holes in the left wing, two in the right wing, one in the propeller and one in the left elevator. The flaps and rudder trim were inoperative and the left hand brake line was severed, As September 1944 drew to a close, the squadron statistics noted 181 more operational missions had been added to the tally. October added another 147 missions to this list. The decreasing monthly totals were due, in large part, to the poorer flying conditions brought on by the fall weather.

Weather again was the main detriment against the successful completion of missions flown during the month. For 16 days in October, not an aircraft got off the ground. Many times on days when missions were flown, our pilots were forced to complete their recce in the face of not what you could term good operational flying weather.

While overall mission numbers declined, one type of mission artillery adjustment, increased. During October, unit pilots flew 34 adjustment missions, more than in any previous month. These missions all were in support of the US Army and this month most were in the vicinity of Aachen. Squadron members made weekly visits to XIX Corps Headquarters to iron out problems. The Army liaison officers assigned to the squadron and unit pilots made trips to the artillery fire control centers to talk to the people who were actually doing the shooting. This coordination resulted in more successful missions, An excellent example of a well-planned and executed artillery search and adjustment mission occurred when Lieutenant Francis J. Dillon and Lieutenant Luther B. Smith conducted one on October 15. After adjusting fire on targets which they located, the pilots radioed a flash report of the results of each target fired at, The following are extracts from this mission's radio reports: . . K-942479 - 4 gun btry - effect - target neutralized. K-935484 - Heavy flak battery effect - target neutralized. K-985505 - Four gun battery - effect - target neutralized. five sensings* - fire for . - 4 sensings fire for 4 sensings - fire for October proved to be a good month for the squadron in that no pilots or aircraft were lost. , flak continued to extract its toll in damaged aircraft. During the month the squadron operated in some of the most heavily concentrated flak environments in the world at altitudes generally below 6000 feet. One aircraft returned from a mission over Duren with 35 holes in it, inflicted while it was flying at 400 MPH.

The first enemy aircraft claimed as destroyed by a squadron pilot and sent forward was downed by Lieutenant Charles J. Smith on October 29

Lieutenant Smith also claimed he probably downed another enemy aircraft on the same mission. (5:63) Lieutenant Smith told the squadron debriefer: While flying a F-6c on a visual reconnaissance mission in the vicinity of Koblenz I saw a FW-190 at one o'clock low, flying South-Southeast over the treetops at G-0423. I radioed my wingman to keep track of me while I made my pass.

I had been flying a Northerly course when I saw the bandit, so T had to make a 180 degree pass from 4000 feet in a diving turn to the right. I closed dead astern and fired a long burst at approximately 200 yards range. His fuselage burst into flames and he used mild evasive action turning from left to right and then pulled up sharply to the left. I fired another burst from about 20 degrees and observed more hits in the cockpit, He then rolled over to the right on his back and crashed in flames on a road.

As I turned for home, near M-0969, I saw another FW-190 and two Me-109's at eight o'clock level turning gently toward me from the Southeast in a very scattered formation at about 500 feet. I immediately broke left into the nearest Me-109 and had no trouble getting on his tail, as he did not press his attack aggressively (sic) he pulled up sharply to the left, and I fired a burst from about 30 degrees in a steep climb. I observed hits in the engine and cockpit and light smoke trails, and broke off the attack as the other two bandits were turning toward my tail. One of them fired from about 40 degrees and 500 yards. I used violent evasive action and easily pulled away toward the West on the deck with everything forward. He shot no tracer, and later examination of my aircraft revealed no damage. I last observed the two remaining bandits climbing line astern

toward the Northwest. Claim; one enemy aircraft destroyed, one enemy aircraft probably destroyed.

Prospects for getting home before the war's end brightened for the squadron, and more particularly for those who had come to England back in September of 1942 from Ester Field. During October the Army initiated a point system to determine who was to go first. One point was given for each month overseas and more were added for age, marriage and children. A list had been made up back in August of all squadron non-flying members and submitted to command, but nothing had been heard since then. Then the squadron received orders during October for Master Sergeants Fulkerson and Shilling, Technical Sergeants Sweatt and Juntunen and Sergeant Devault. The men were delighted with their good luck, so it came as rather much of a shock when Fulkerson and Shilling declined to go. Some wag suggested they be given a sanity hearing. On the 11th of the month the other three said goodbye and took off in a C-47 for the promised land. The refusal of both Fulkerson and Shilling to leave the unit before the end of the war is more understandable when considered in light of the fact that both were original members of the squadron, activated with the unit from Detroit back in 1940, Further, Clarence L. Fulkerson had served in the squadron since its Federal Recognition in 1926 and was at that time the only "charter member" of the 107 still serving with the squadron.

Total monthly missions flown declined again in November, a further indication of deteriorating weather conditions. Only four days during the month were clear enough to allow a full day of missions. This fact aside, 103 more missions were accomplished. Of these, 74 were tactical recce missions and 29 were artillery adjustment. Colonel Blanchard, First Army G-2 for Air, aptly described operations during this month: "Weather conditions throughout the month were generally unfavorable for tactical and photographic reconnaissance."

The squadron lost another aircraft on November 5. Lieutenant Jack T. Greene was conducting a visual recce with his wingman near the front lines when he noticed that he had no oil pressure. Lieutenant Greene indicated this to his wingman over the radio and began a slow descent towards the American lines. He was last seen by his wingman flying at 1000 feet and heading west still about five miles from the American positions. Lieutenant Greene did not make it to the American lines and at the end of the month was listed as missing in action. Later, it was confirmed that he was a prisoner of war.

November 19th was our biggest day so far as photo reconnaissance was concerned. Eleven of the twelve missions flown that day brought back pictures; a total of 16 separate rolls. Four of these were Merton Oblique strips taken just inside of the front line at the request of First Army Artillery. Lt. Duncan B. McKee . . (on one of these missions) photographed some 20 miles

The photo lab sweated it out until 3:30 AM the following morning developing, printing and gridding a total of 1,500 prints, an amazing total considering the facilities available to the squadron. Major Cavlocoses of First Army's photographic detachment stated that during the past six weeks of bad weather more useful intelligence had been gleaned from photos taken by the 107 than from sorties flown by the other squadrons of the group combined.

Lieutenant Edward A, Stearns, who had been shot down on August 10, returned to the unit from the English hospital to which he had been sent for treatment of the burns he had received. His first operational flight was November 19. Bad luck continued to follow him though and he was shot down by German flak. Fortunately, only the aircraft was destroyed and Lieutenant Sterns returned the next day unscratched.

The men had some breaks in the fighting during this month: The 107 had its social life too, during the month. For tripping the light fantastic over a waxed marble floor at the Hotel Du Midi Ballroom, at Gosselies, the squadron held its first dance on the European continent on the night of November 12th, "Tripping" is used in its literal sense, as the substitute Belgian band left much to be desired in the way of rhythm. The much heralded event hit only snag--when the First Army band cancelled its engagement. We were forced to hire the only band that was available. It was a last minute choice, and by alternating with phonograph recording, the dancing was uninterrupted. Beer was free, having been purchased out of the dance fund to which each officer contributed 100 franks and each enlisted man 50. Cognac, wine and other potent mixtures were available at the bar and a good portion of the men brought along their own private stock. Women were plentiful, but so were their "mamas,' who insisted upon accompanying them even though the dance invitation clearly stated it was unnecessary and the chaperones were listed by name and chosen from a select list provided by the US Civil Affairs Detachment

The fall and winter weather and deteriorating conditions on the landing field finally caused a temporary move to another field.

After weeks of almost constant rain, the landing strip and dispersal areas became a quagmire--a mudhole of ruts and bogs making flying an impossibility. Operations had reached the point where each plane had to be thoroughly washed with the decontamination truck after every mission, Ships were mud from landing gear to cockpit. Missions were aborted and planes were wrecked because of the mud, it got on the camera lens, in the radiator and in the wheel bearings. Mechanics lived a nightmare of sloppy goo, but due to Engineering Officer Captain Flygare's zeal and the hard work of the men the planes were always ready.

This was to be a temporary move to allow runway repairs. The runway at Gosselies was made of wire mesh--not pierced steel planking --over sod and as this turned to mud it would splatter the underside of the aircraft. This created special problems for the F-6 aircraft because the mud covered the vertical camera lens and even the best flown missions brought no pictures home. To combat this problem unit personnel brought rubble, from nearby towns that had been destroyed, to the strip and spread it on the runway. Next, they placed a layer of straw over the crushed stone, then tarpaper over the straw and finally laid more wire mesh or pierced steel planking on top to complete a new runway. This process helped eliminate the mud problem but resulted in a runway that was sometimes over a foot higher than the ground on either side of it. A number of serious accidents resulted when aircraft wheels dropped off the side of the built-up area.

December 7 ground crews went to strip A-84, Chievres Airdrome, located near Mons, Belgium,

to prepare for the aircraft. The planes arrived the next day.

To the pilots it was quite a treat operating from the first concrete runway they had flown from since coming to the Continent. And with the two fighter bomber groups already on the field, Chievers became quite a busy airdrome, and during the first week Thunderbolts and Mustangs competed with each other to see which could pull the best "buzz" job. One Mustang outdid itself (in the presence of the station commander). Afterwards "buzzing the field was done at the rather healthy altitude of 500 feet and then only in good weather.

The repairs at Gosselies were almost complete and the aircraft returned on December 19. Perhaps no one appreciated the improved field more than the engineering department since they no longer had to wash off the aircraft after each taxing. Actually the aircraft would have stayed at A-84 a bit longer but the German Army began a counter-offensive on December 17 and it was thought that A-84 was too crowded with aircraft, offering a choice target for enemy attack. This battle, which became known as the Battle of the Bulge, effected the unit greatly.

The next few days were tense for the men. First, the Army instituted censorship of all news pertaining to the major German breakthrough. Second, the squadron's normal method of keeping track of the situation at the nearby front, their own pilots' reports, was halted because bad weather kept the aircraft on the ground from December 19 to the 23. News received on December 19 that the Germans continued to advance in their breakthrough in the First Army area generated further concern. The squadron posted double guards and for the first time since Normandy the men carried their weapons. All passes were cancelled and the men were warned to be on the lookout for enemy agents dressed in GI uniforms. German paratrooper scares and renewed nightly raids by the Luftwaffe made matters worse.

Throughout the first four days of the German advance the weather remained so bad it stopped all flying. The combination of the advance and bad weather created a situation so serious that the squadron engineering officer gave order to load trucks and be ready to burn all the aircraft if evacuation became necessary. Fortunately these precautions proved unnecessary as ground forces stopped the enemy about 20 miles from the squadron's location. Germans continued to bomb the field nightly. On December 26 the enemy bombed and buzzed the field. Anti-aircraft fire claimed one probable JU-88 downed. Master Sergeant Robert A. Stone was in a building near the runway and recalls looking up at exactly the right moment to find himself staring at a Me-109 pilot making a low pass and looking at him; the aircraft was about 100 feet from Stone's position, and barely missed the roof of a nearby building as it flew by.

Weather conditions improved on December 23 and the squadron quickly began operations. The 67th Group was of great assistance in providing intelligence and photography that led to stooping the German advance and the eventual counter attack that ended Field Marshal Von Rundestedt's Ardennes breakthrough. This effort was not accomplished without losses. On the first day of good weather, Lieutenant Charles J. Smith encountered a FW-190 near Aachen. Smith, in his last transmission to his wingman, reported that he was closing in on the enemy aircraft. He failed to return to base and was listed as missing in action; later this was changed to killed in action.

On the other side of the ledger, the first confirmed kill of an enemy aircraft occurred in December, On the 17th, Lieutenant Lewis P. Johnson and Lieutenant John F. Houlahan spotted a FW-190 and managed to stay together, both firing at and hitting the enemy aircraft. The successful engagement ended when, the pilot of the enemy aircraft bailed out. His chute opened at about 800 feet and the plane went straight in and exploded."

As December came to a close, the Allies were reconsolidating their line and the squadron again was in no immediate danger of ground attack. nightly bombing attacks continued to be a common occurrence. On December 31 anti-aircraft gunners downed a German bomber close to the field. Due to the German offensive, the 107 flew more missions in December than the previous month. They did this even though the weather was worse and the unit had to vacate the field due to its poor condition, as indicated earlier. The statistical summary for the month noted 108 two-plane missions flown and one pilot missing in action.

Winter weather, including near zero temperatures and snow, shut down flying operations from the 7th to the 12th of January. While this allowed a break in the flying routine, it created more work in another very time consuming way. About one- fourth of the squadron was on detail each morning for about three hours to help shovel the snow off the runway and taxi areas. During this lull in flying, news from the front continued to improve: The war is getting better, and it seems as though the Germans have made their stand, and are now moving back when the Americans and British started using pressure on the flanks. Heavy bombers were heard overhead almost every day but Tac/R stayed on the ground.

Flying activity that began after January 12 concentrated on finding the German supply routes that were servicing Von Runstedt's German Army. The increased German Air Force activity that accompanied the now unsuccessful counter-offensive added air defense to the squadron's mission. Though the squadron ''scrambled'' twice its pilots intercepted no targets and the German offensive flying activity remained a nightly affair. While the air defense flying did not prove to be exciting flying over German-held terrain continued to result in damage to aircraft. Lieutenant Floyd T. Dunmire's "enthusiasm" for artillery adjustment was probably somewhat dampened by a mission from which he returned with sixty holes in his aircraft. The plane had received a direct hit from German Boefoers anti-aircraft guns causing him to completely lose control. At 1500 feet he regained control of the aircraft, limped home with little or no rudder control and executed a safe landing. Captain Flygare, the unit engineering officer, stated: "I don't see how he made it back."

This proved to the only aircraft that received battle damage during January. On reconnaissance missions flown during January pilots reported that the Germans were pressing increasing numbers of horse-drawn vehicles into service. Squadron members considered this to be in large part due to Allied bombers taking their toll of German refineries. During January the grounded pilots of the 107 also experienced "gas" problems: The grounded pilots, weather bound by snow and low ceiling, kept up health and spirits by staging snow battles with members of the 109th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron. The chief strong points, bitterly defended, were the tower of

this squadron's chateau and the roof of the 107's intelligence building. The additional value of tactical reconnaissance, when combined with strike aircraft, again was demonstrated on January 23. Lieutenant John F. Houlahan located a convoy of more than 50 German trucks and armored vehicles and contacted three flights of P-47's, directing them to the target. He then led these aircraft on two strafing sweeps over the target. While returning home Lieutenant Houlahan heard the fighter bombers call First Army radio and report that they had "neutralized" the target. The same day, Lieutenant Roswell E. Currie located another even larger target, consisting of 200 vehicles, special purpose guns, and tanks. His message brought other P-47's to this target; on another 107 mission, flown later in the day, the pilot reported that the enemy convoy was still under attack by fighter bombers.

Only 85 missions were flown in January. This was the lowest monthly total since the previous February and was directly attributable to the poor weather. February 1945 brought better flying conditions and a considerable increase in flying activity with 139 is missions flown. These missions were in the Dusseldorf, Koblenz and

Duren areas of Germany. Individual pilots began to accumulate large numbers of missions flown and because eligible for rotation home. Captain Robert W. Denman rotated in February, having completed 91 missions; this was more than any other squadron pilot had ever flown.

The rotation of the older pilots coincided with new flyers reporting in from the states. These pilots quickly went to work flying combat missions. A specialty of the squadron during February was railroad route recce and marshalling yard photography. The Euskirchen Rail Yards were covered almost daily. The Germans fought back as best they could with flak. One semi successful attempt to lure aircraft to a lower elevation occurred when they placed five vehicles on a road in full view. The Germans then manned the trucks and surrounding woods with light flak and waited. When a 107 aircraft investigated the likely target the "vehicles and entire road" seemed to light up. Lieutenant James C. Keating came home with holes in his wings and fuselage but landed safely. His wing- man, Lieutenant Chalmer E. Hunter was hit with a 40MM in the wing but also returned safely.

February brought further reductions in German Air Force activity with few enemy aircraft sighted. Squadron pilots saw several new Me-262's, the first jet aircraft, but they had no chance for combat. Missions flown noted a re-emphasis on photography The squadron photo lab developed 6,751 negatives and printed 11,228 photographs during the month and pictures were taken on 118 of the 139 missions flown. This increase in unit photo work led to a change in the authorized strength within the photo section from 14 men to 37 men.

In the line of flying activity, Lieutenant Charles W. Staats came very close to achieving a record which would have provided him with considerable notoriety, This occurred when he observed a V-2 Rocket lifting off the ground. Unfortunately, the rocket was ahead of him, directly in his flight path. The V-2 left a stream of fire and sparks in its wake and, It looked like a boat coming up at me, I had to ,fink violently to avoid it and it came so close I could feel the heat." The near miss was substantiated by Lieutenant Staats' wingman.

Information obtained from squadron photographs indicated that the Germans were preparing to retreat further. This intelligence was gained in the middle of February when Lieutenant Stanley Snitzer brought back valuable pictures: Lt. Snitzer's photographs gave us the first evidence we had of the preparations of the road and rail bridges across the Roer River for destruction by demolition showing that the Germans were expecting a large scale attack in this sector and that they were planning to make a final defense stand on the East banks of the Roer River. Both Hunter and Colbert on two different missions in the afternoon observed the enemy's destruction of the sluiceways before these Roer River flood controls were taken by American ground forces. The photos taken on these sorties showed that the sluiceways on the largest had been blown allowing a huge volume of water to pass from the lake and turn the normally creek size stream running across the Cologne Plain into a formidable barrier, This flooded Roer River held up our ground force for at least two weeks.

A report from an artillery adjustment mission flown by the squadron In February revealed the scale of the American ground offensive that drove the Germans back into their own country. During this mission Lieutenant Arnott F. Tait and Lieutenant Chalmer E, Hunter adjusted fire for 240MM howitzers.

The period from the 21st to the end of the month proved to most of us to be the most profitable from a tactical reconnaissance standpoint, this clear weather gave aircraft of Tactical Air Command an opportunity to prepare ground ahead of the advancing ground troops who were surging across the Roer and later across the Erft Canal east in their drive to the Rhine. Lt, McKee's recce on the 22nd of the rail system West of the Rhine in 'Cu area showed that the green system had been knocked out. Lt. Houlahan's photo run over the marshalling yards at Euskirchen, Liblar, and Vettweiss showed that these important rail centers were unserviceable. Lt. Hugh's Merton run on this date was in the hands of the ground forces when they reached the Erft River.

March 1945 brought another increase in flying activity with a total of 163 missions flown. The squadron was grounded for nine days during the month and flew more than ten missions on eight days. Before the end of the month, the 107 began another move, this time to an air force base within Germany. This was not before the unit lost another pilot and several aircraft to enemy gunners.

At 1015 hours Lt. Dunmire observed an Me-262 with grayish green brown camouflage at 7500 feet in front of him and crossing at an angle of approximately thirty degrees. The enemy aircraft fired as it approached, passed in front of Dunmire and made a climbing turn to the right. Dunmire turned and maneuvered into firing Position, definitely identified the aircraft as an Me-262 and started firing from approximately 3000 yards with a 30 degree deflection. Dunmire's first bursts were low with too much lead, so he pulled the nose of his aircraft higher and observed strikes on the fuselage, left wing and at the wing roots. As Dunmire continued firing he saw a large flash of flame on the left wing about two or three feet from the root. The enemy aircraft began to turn when Dunmire commenced firing. The aircraft gradually completed a 180 degree turn and headed back towards Cologne losing altitude. Dunmire still followed the enemy aircraft, but was

unable to close so he began shooting again at long range, estimated 2000 yards, and observed tracers ricocheting off the enemy. Dunmire last saw the enemy aircraft at 4000 feet disappearing into a thick haze, still losing altitude in a steep dive to the right, still on fire. Dunmire was having trouble with his engine so gave up the chase and returned to base with a probable destroyed enemy aircraft to his credit.

Another dogfight between 107 aircraft and the German Air Force took place on March 15. This action resulted in another German aircraft downed, Unfortunately, while this was taking place, another squadron pilot and his aircraft were lost. Lieutenant Harry J. Huff later told what happened: Lieutenant Warren G, Moxley and myself were on an artillery shoot at pin point F-774244. Lt. Moxley was the number one man and he adjusted on the target, gun positions, twice for effect. I was at 800 feet and Lt. Moxley was at 6000 feet when he sighted and called out, "bogey on the deck along autobahn." At this moment I dove down and called Moxley to cover my tail as I was in better position to get on him than he was, As I closed, Moxley said, "it's a bandit," and started jockeying for position. As I closed I saw that the Jerry was a FW-190 and fired a short burst and observed hits and pieces flying off the bottom of the fuselage. I overshot and made a sharp turn to the left, Moxley then came in and made his pass from line of stern. When Lt. Moxley made his pass, he broke off to the right and I made a high 45 degree head on shot. The FW-190 flew right through my field of fire and I continued my dive and went between him and Lt. Moxley as he was lining up for another pass. By the time I got turned around to the right the FW-190 was heading East at 2000 feet pouring smoke from the rear end of his plane. The Jerry Pilot bailed out. My claim, one FW-190 destroyed. After my first pass we were getting intense small arms and light AA fire. When the parachute opened Lt. Moxley called me and said, "Get a picture if you can," I was heading South along the Autobahn when I noticed Lt. Moxley flying parallel with me at about 1000 feet below with fire streaming off his left wing and scoop. I hollered, you're on fire bail out, he flew about 500 yards further, turned sharply to the left and dove straight into the ground, blowing up. Lieutenant Moxley was leader of "C" Flight and had more than 66 missions to his credit at the time of his death.

After almost six months in Belgium the squadron began to move forward again on March 20. The advanced echelon left for Vogelsang, Germany, on that date. Eighteen crew chiefs moved forward on March 22 in a C-47, The aircraft changed bases on the 24th and the majority of the squadron's ground support personnel moved to Germany via convoy shortly thereafter. Finally, the rear echelon left Belgium on March 25.

The 107 began its move to Vogelsang, Germany on March 20, 1945.

An advanced echelon under the command of First Lieutenant William J. Zeff left Gosselies, Belgium via truck for our new airdrome at Vogelsang, Germany to set up camp and make arrangements for the arrival of the flight echelon as well as the rest of the squadron, Three days later the squadron in two serials departed with Captain John A. Elmstedt as convoy commander, and First Lieutenant John W. Cullian leading the second serial. Captain Gordon R. Flygare, squadron engineering officer, sent eighteen crew chiefs ahead via C-47 on 22 March. When the aircraft landed on the 24th the crew chief were on hand to take care of the aircraft.

The aircraft left the old base in Belgium and, flying normal combat missions, recovered at Vogelsang for debriefing.

The Airdrome at Vogelsang was a grass strip which the Germans constructed but had used very little. The field lay about a mile from the junction of the Erft and Roer rivers near the large dams that the Germans had destroyed in their unsuccessful attempt to hold up the American advance. The men found that a once important Hitler Youth Camp was located nearby. A great deal of furniture was taken from the now deserted camp to help furnish the squadron tents and buildings, Large quantities of hand grenades, rifle and machine gun ammunition were located at the camp. This led to considerable "practice" until the squadron commander directed that personnel no longer would engage in rifle practice and grenade throwing except under the direction of the armament officer.

The men felt the nearness of the ground war as their new status in the enemy's homeland limited their mobility. Few attempted to venture away from the base at night and the guards challenged those that did. Other aspects of the new field left much to be desired. The single sod runway consistently seemed to experience a strong crosswind. Further, this wind, which sometimes achieved velocities of 60 miles per hour, created havoc in the cantonment located at the top of a nearby hill. The tents also suffered from these windy conditions.

Flying activity from Vogelsang was very similar to that accomplished from Belgium. The dangers remained the same, as the experience of Lieutenant Duncan B. McKee bore out. On March 27 his aircraft received a direct hit from a light caliber flak weapon while conducting a visual recce mission. The explosion blew off four feet of the aircraft's left wing. Fortunately, Lieutenant McKee managed to fly the aircraft back to within sight of the base, He then bailed out and returned, little the worse for his experience.

Volgelsang proved to be a temporary station, After only 11 days another move began. On April 4 the squadron crossed the Rhine River on a pontoon bridge at Remegen, the site of the big Allied bridgehead and breakthrough that had taken place on March 9, 1945, The unit now was based at Limburg, Germany, at an airfield designated Y-83. Arrival at the new field brought with it the need for a great deal of repair work to put the facilities back in operation, The Germans had dug a checkerboard pattern of holes throughout the base and placed bombs in each hole. , before they could complete the work the swift American advance foiled their plans. , the American troops then had to defuze the bombs and haul them away, fill the holes in and repair the runway.

Once repairs were complete the squadron began flying missions almost immediately. , on April 7 the men learned that they were to move again. Eschwege, located 26 miles southeast of Kassel, Germany, became their new base, By the afternoon of April 10 the squadron aircraft had departed for Eschwege. Any reservations the men might have had about making this third move in less than a month were dispelled quickly: Our new location at Eschwege proved to be a veritable paradise after living in tents for so long a time. The station had been a large German air depot and the installations included modern barracks. Although some of the buildings had been

damaged by shell fire and demolition charges, billets were soon made habitable. The enlisted mens' barracks consisted of one large building with rooms of varying sizes, quartering from one to eight men. Stoves were already set up in the buildings and modern plumbing had been installed.

The entire vicinity proved to be a souvenir hunters paradise. Cellars of buildings contained hundreds of complete Jerry uniforms, guns, swastikas, and Nazi flags.

For over a week Major Thomas (the squadron commander) censored about 20 packages daily, containing items of captured equipment ranging from Luftwaffe boots to lace handkerchiefs.

All departmental sections were set up in buildings, although to accomplish this it was necessary to haul away tons of debris and smashed equipment and repair hundreds of broken windows.

German resistance in the Ruhr area was ending by April 15. On that date, a statement in the squadron daily summary of activity noted: "The Ruhr is completely cleaned up as far as tactical reconnaissance is concerned; no other areas assigned in this sector," Other missions brought back more news indicating that the Germans were still retreating, The same day, Lieutenant James C, Keating conducted a visual and photographic mission and located a large movement of men with white flags spaced throughout the column, The pictures that Keating took, today, just back with a first phase report substantiating his verbal statements that quite a number , . . (some one thousand plus) of Allied PW's were all marching in a column of orderly fashion up the road. All going North in the vicinity of about twenty miles due East of Leipzig. He made passes on the column and he withheld his fire, he observed that they did not disperse and that there was no enemy fire returning his passes.

The German Air Force continued to attempt to combat American aircraft in the air. The period of April 13 to the 16 was the most successful of the war for the 107 pilots In air-to-air combat operations. The first encounter occurred when Lieutenant Ernest C. Holland, Jr. engaged a FW-190. The dog fight ended with the German pilot bailing out of his damaged aircraft and the plane crashing in flames. Next, on April 15, Lieutenant James C. Keating and Flight Officer Berge Thomasian were conducting an area reconnaissance of the Dresden-Wittenberg area. While flying this mission Lieutenant Keating noted a FW-190 on the deck flying down the Autobahn. Both pilots attacked and hit the aircraft on two passes each. The encounter ended with the German pilot belly landing the aircraft in an open field. The two 107 pilots each received a share of the victory credit. (24:10) Three days later Lieutenant Ernest C. Holland, Jr. was flying another mission, this time with Lieutenant Roy Q. Killian as his wingman.

This mission became the most successful air-to-air engagement in which the 107 pilots were ever involved. After eluding 12 enemy aircraft the pilots got into the traffic pattern at Juterbog Airdrome, a large German field. During debrief Lieutenant Holland stated: about 0830 hours I observed a FW-190 and a Me-109 flying at 900 feet to the West of Juterbog Airdrome. I called Lt. Killian and told him to take the Me-109, I dived down from 5000 feet and attacked the FW-190 as it was on its landing approach East to West with wheels down. I opened fire at 300 yards with

70 degree deflection closing to 100, I observed strikes on the fuselage of the enemy aircraft. The FW-190 did a steep turn to the left and lost control and crashed. After completing a 180 degree turn I observed a FW-190 at about 50 feet preparatory to making a landing. As the aircraft was touching down I opened fire from 250 yards dead astern and closed to 50 yards, I observed strikes on the right wing and thts wing fell off the FW-190. . , catapulting the aircraft over on its back, While this was taking place Lieutenant Killian was also busy: . As I saw Holland destroy his objective I started making my pass at the Me-109 who was off to my left. I was about 1000 yards above and behind him when I started down. I closed to within 500 yards and started firing. I kept expending my ammunition to within 200 yards of him, or less, obserVing strikes going into the middle of the plane. As I pulled up over and to the left of the Me-109 I saw another Me-109 heading down and away from me. I squeezed off a short burst and kept on climbing. My original target was then heading East and making a steep banking diving turn to the left. He completed a 270 degree turn, hitting the ground with wheels up and crashed into woods, Destruction of three enemy aircraft in the air, plus one on the ground, over the 6-day period without the loss of any squadron aircraft in these engagements was a squadron record. , the Germans also were attacking aggressively when they had an opportunity. Such an occurrence took place on April 15 when Captain Roswell E. Currie failed to return from a mission he was conducting. Captain Currie was serving as radio relay for missions that were ranging out so far the ground controllers could not keep in direct contact with them. While he was airborne a controller had notified the squadron that enemy aircraft were in his area. Toward the end of the mission, Currie called control asking for a radio homing to base; nothing more was heard. Then, much like the earlier incident over the beachhead at Normandy, Captain Currie got home several days later with a story to tell . he was jumped by a couple of boys that had the proverbial black crosses on their planes. So, in order to elude them he pulled the of trick of darting into the clouds and out guess them. The sad part of it is , . . they out guessed him this time and were sitting right there waiting for him when he came up again.

in the clouds again and flew south, so far south that he flew off his Map, got lost and eventually (as all planes will from time to time) ran out of gas. He tells us that he debated on bailing out but decided against it and bellied it in instead. He was choosie too about where he set it down right beside a field hospital.

From the looks of him, it is obvious that he didn't use his sutton harness, a nice gash on the forehead put him in the hospital for a couple of days. The ordinary man wouldn't be out of there yet, but not Doc. He was out of there in a couple of days, talked them into giving him a command car, went to his plane, took the camera and guns out, put them in the car and came home. What a man.

Lieutenant Colonel Kraft, now serving as executive officer of the 67th Group after being promoted from command of the 107, on April 24 flew over Berlin with Lowell Thomas, the noted correspondent, riding "piggy back" in a two seat P-51. "Lowell's opening words were 'Hello everyone, this is Lowell Thomas speaking to you from a P-51 Mustang of the 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Group.' His talk was recorded and will be broadcast to the world when-release is granted . . . Berlin was a raging inferno."

Ground targets were numerous during April as the Germans became confined in the shrinking area between the Russians moving West and the Americans moving East. On April 20: After two days of bad weather, Lieutenants Keating and Woods took off on a visual recce and brought back reports of a concentration of 500 horse drawn vehicles and 2,000 troops moving South and Southwest and in general throughout the whole area, very confused civilian movements. Photographic interpretation showed this movement to the South and Southwest to be Russian.

The Russian's movement into close proximity also brought their aircraft into contact with the 107 missions.

Lt Merritt was doing number one work yesterday with Houlahan as the second plane, It is only too obvious that the lad wanted to do a good job, for he sighted nine unidentified aircraft off to his right and went barreling in after them. Houlahan started to scream at him to come back up, but to no avail. Merrit streaked through the formation and saw for the first time the big red star on their tails. Feeling like a penny waiting for change, he climbed back up and went on about his business.

War in Europe was approaching its bitter end and already the men and their commanders were planning what was to follow. Toward the end of April, Captain Robert E, Thomas, 107 Squadron Commander, gathered the men together: The meeting started off with a bang with Captain Thomas' announcement that with cessation of hostilities the Esewege Army Air Base deep inside Germany . will probably turn into another Maxwell Field Training Center, namely that of having to participate in regular daily periods of physical training and many other nuisance classes. We would immediately, if not sooner, start taking a little more care of our personal appearance. Oh's and groans filled the air, which of course was to be expected.

The first of May brought a slow-down in flying with limited operations and the 107 flying only about a half-day's operations every two days. Those operational missions that the unit now flew were shared on an alternating basis with the 109th squadron. The extra time on the men's hands began to result in construction projects in the work areas. Members of both the 109th and 107 squadrons began to refurbish German gliders that they had found on the field.

While we were all sweating them out (missions being flown) here at operations, we saw that the 109th hauled out their Jerry Glider and put in a little flying time on it while the field was clear. They towed it up about 700 feet with one of the L-4's and cut loose. Whoever was doing the flying in the glider did a swell job of sailing around the field, He was up about fifteen to twenty minutes in all setting it down right in front of their hangar, The glider flying soon met with some difficulty when, on May 4, radar picked up the activity and lead to this type of flying being placed on the "kaput' list. The 107 also reconstructed a German bi-plane, putting it back in flying condition. These types of nonoperational activity were in progress on May 2nd when: about 1900 hours all of a sudden we were bombarded with a bushel full of good news. The radio came out with the fact that the Italian Theater had surrendered completely and unconditionally, that Berlin had fallen and that, along with Hitler, Himmler, Goering and Goebbels had committed suicide. If

all of this is really true, it certainly will be only a matter of a few days before the whole show is over.

May 4 brought more news indicating that the war was ending, Although there is really nothing any of great importance going on in this immediate vicinity, the was is apparently growing to a close. The German Armies in the North are surrendering at the rate of entire divisions and armies at a time, Now that the Italian Theater was finished off a couple of days ago this leaves only a Southeastern pocket to clean up. Reports are coming in that there is no further opposition at this point either. If this is true, then it should be only a matter of hours before this squadron is off ops and thinking of other things to come.

On May 7 radio announcements prematurely stated that the war in Europe was over. As the day came to an end and night engulfed the field, Bowen as OD was about driven crazy by trying to obey the orders of the group C.O. Colonel Leghorn wanted everybody who was firing their guns or flares to be put in the jug. By the time the guards were called out along with the MP's the pyrotechnic display was in full swing. It took about two hours to get things quieted down. The results were several Majors and Captains along with Sergeants and Privates occupying a few seats with Military Police.

The squadron launched several missions the next day; the pilots brought back word that there were plenty of Russian aircraft flying and a few of them were still mixing it up with the Germans. Lieutenant Joseph R. Gill and Lieutenant John Goetzee, while returning from one of these missions, spotted an airborne German Starch liaison plane, Not sure what to do they called for instructions and were told to force it down. The two German pilots, wearing civilian clothes and waving white flags, landed involuntarily, at the nearest Allied airfield. More German aircraft flew into the 107's airfield to surrender later in the day: about two-thirty this afternoon we were all gaping at this German Ju-88 that came stooging in over the field at about 200 feet and doing about 150. At first it was kinda' hard to believe, but sure enough there she was, no mistaking about it. It also seemed that our own Cessna was flubbing around in the area and doing its best to get in the way. Then out of the clear blue sky there was a...BRA-a-a-a..Wham, Wham, Wham! Not only did the Ack-Ack open up on Jerry but they also pumped a few rounds at our own engine boys. The Cessna, just coming back from a cross country started jinking like mad, while Jerry pulled the smartest trick in the book. He fell off on his left wing as we observed strikes going into him. He continued this dive until we all thought he was going in. But not this boy, he pulled her out right on the deck, skimmed over the tree tops and small hill to get out of the line of fire. We sent out the "L" plane right away and he reported over the radio that the plane had bellied into a small clearing with all those on board out waving the white flag. Ambulance and jeeps were dispatched to the scene and hauled em' all in. Thirteen of them to be exact. At the interrogation, the fellows said that they flew down from a small island off the Southern coast of Norway to get away from the Russians who were taking the place over. They also said that there were more on the way and would appreciate it if they weren't given quite as warm a reception. The Cessna finally landed. . . We saw Fisher, the tech. rep.* from North American, crawl out and kiss the ground, Somebody yelled out, "Hey Fisher, how does it feel to be in combat?" He and his two pilots didn't think the situation was very funny . . . but the rest of us about split our sides laughing

at this remark, Winston Churchill came on the air just after the landing of the Ju-88 and gave the official word that the war was over. Shortly after the broadcast two more German aircraft, armed Stuka dive bombers, came in and landed--this time without flak.

It is now eight P.M. in the evening and just as the Jerries predicted, two Ju-87's circled the field and landed The Jerries hadn't landed yet when all the men transported themselves by any means available out onto the field, We all swarmed around them trying to get just one little look, just to see what these 'Supermen of the air" looked like. A rather motley crew they were, ill kept, dirty and unshaven. They too flew down from the South Coast of Norway, and demanded that they were not prisoners of war, that we couldn't hold them since the war was over, Somehow we couldn't quite see it that way, and the MP's took them in hand and carted them off in a hurry.

The 107's last operational missions were flown on May 10, 1945, two days after the German surrender, The missions were specifically assigned to overfly the prisoner-of-war camps to see what was occurring. The post mission reports in general were: "no movement seen, no panels and no pw signs," The war was over.

The war in Europe ended and the 107's mission quickly changed from operational to training. Practice flights included navigation, area reconnaissance and photo runs. Officers and enlisted men practiced close order drill, Initially, orders confined the men to the field and the major form of recreation was old movies that everyone had seen. This did not help morale to provide more recreation the unit obtained a B-17 which flew the men of the group to vacation spots in Europe.

The training at Eschwege continued, and new procedures dictated a more military appearance: the policy of this theater of operations was to conduct the army on a peace time basis, in other words, it is to be class A's from now on in the mess hall and after duty hours. Why we should dress up when there is no place to go and nobody around to impress we don't know. But you know the army, "ours is not to reason why."

On June 28, 1945 the squadron received its first notice of shipment back to the United States. The unit's service in Germany, with its confinement to base most of the time was coming to an end, One of the last daily summaries of activity entered in the squadron's diary described the continuing limitations on the men's activities.

We attend the usual prescribed classes and partake in a little extracurricular activities of our own. Namely that of "sniping beaver." Now to be an expert "beaver sniper" one must have the utmost patience, Perhaps before we delve into the subject any farther we had better define said subject.

By sniping or shooting beaver we mean that we partake in the fowl underhanded sport of watching lovers make with the big love through field glasses upon yon hillside. This new and unusual class is held between the hours of twelve noon and the hour of darkness every day. Some days the hunting isn't so good, while at other times we manage to bring to our eyes more than the allotted amount. The afternoon was spent in flushing several prospects, but for some unknown reason someone’s gun always jammed and no bacon was brought home until about

2000 hours tonight. A battery of twenty pairs of eyes were scanning the hillside when the star players went into action. Untold patience was the reward and the show would have made front billing in all the countries throughout the world. There is nothing unusual about the plot of this play, matter of fact it was the same old theme, boy 'meats" girl. The acting was terrific and the play reached a climax that stirred the very depths of our souls. With this vivid impression in our minds, we were forced, for lack of something better to do, to hit the sack and try as we might, to put in a good night's sleep. Fighting had ceased in Europe but the war continued in the Far East. The Japanese were retreating but the Allies had not yet invaded the home islands of Japan and in early summer 1945 it appeared a long period of combat remained in the Pacific area. This affected the 107 dramatically in early July. The men learned at a squadron meeting that the unit was slated for transfer to the Pacific rather than rotation back to the states as they had been told several days earlier. The next few days saw a great deal of change as men with longer duty overseas transferred out and new personnel were assigned to take their place. On July 5 the unit, composed of 30 officers and 170 enlisted men, left Eschwege for a staging area called Camp Detroit.

The unit arrived at Camp Detroit on July 9. The men spend the next month, somewhat bored, debating whether they would go to the Pacific through the Suez or Panama Canal. Duty consisted of details the unit members considered undesirable since the Army had billed the camp as a "haven of rest' suggesting that details were accomplished by prisoners of war and personnel assigned to the station. Needless to say this led to considerable ''bitching."

More men with longer service overseas transferred out during this period. These individuals separated from the unit and returned to the United States in small groups during this period. Many of the unit's members left Germany in July and were processed for several weeks at a depot near Paris. From there they moved to Camp Lucky Strike, a tent city located near Le Havre where they waited several more weeks. Little was available to keep the men busy during this period. Many of the men engaged in one thought-provoking process, trying to outsmart the system and smuggle home war souvenirs that they had collected; needless to say, many were successful.

The processing out of many senior members left in the unit only a few older volunteers and the more recently arrived men. Throughout July the men closely followed all news from the Pacific. Unit members greeted the news of the use of the Atomic Bomb and Russian entry into the war with great enthusiasm. Finally, Japan surrendered while the squadron was awaiting transportation to the Pacific. Next, the men learned that they would stay on the same schedule for transportation, but their ship would move them directly to the United States rather than the Pacific, The much awaited day arrived on August 25 when the unit moved to Camp Callais staging area; they arrived on August 27.

The unit's colors left France in early September: The great day came on September 4 when the entire squadron of 34 officers and 198 enlisted men rode to the port in trucks to board ship. It was a long wait on the quay there, but well worth it, and the struggle up the gangplank came easier with every step. Not a man in the squadron faltered or failed to make the climb.

The 107 embarked on the USAT General MacAndrew and the voyage home took about two weeks. The ship passed Gibralter on September 6 and the men sighted the Virginia coast on the morning of September 14, 1945. The ship docked at Newport News, Virginia the same day and the squadron members moved by train to Camp Patrick Henry. Personnel quickly processed for a 30-day leave; by 2300 hours on September 15 all but three of the unit's members had left on leave status.

The only men not going on leave were Lieutenant Katz, Staff Sergeant Rookard and Sergeant Segars. These men left Virginia as the advanced party for the unit to arrange for reassembly of the men after receiving leave at Drew Field, Florida. This reassembly never occurred: Upon reassembly day not a soldier showed up--all had been reassigned, transferred or discharged at various reception stations throughout the land." The 107 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron deactivated at Drew Field on November 9, 1945. On that day the unit ceased to exist as an active unit in the United States Army Air Force.

The squadron immediately reverted to an inactive status and the Army then assigned it back to the Michigan National Guard, which was already laying plans to reactivate the unit. Upon return to Detroit many of the pre-war members of the squadron began to meet weekly at Dr, Joseph A. Nowicki's office in downtown Detroit. (Dr. Nowicki had been the flight surgeon in the 107 before the war.)

During these meetings the men planned and conducted recruiting drives to gain enough volunteers to accomplish the prerequisites needed to pass the required federal recognition inspection needed before a national guard unit could gain the necessary federal support. This process of recruiting and training brought a squadron together that was composed of about two-thirds pre-war unit members. Many of the initial postwar unit members had served with the squadron before and during the war. One of the primary organizers of the new 107 was Major Frederick R. Anderson. Major Anderson had served as commander of the unit both before and after the squadron was federalized and was then assigned to Michigan National Guard Headquarters.

Since becoming operational on the 20th of December 1943, pilots amassed a total of 7,665 hours and 20 minutes combat hours in flying 4,218 sorties. This amazing contribution to the Allied victory began with flying photographic coverage of the rocket installation targets in Northern France. It was followed by the Merton oblique coverage of the continental coastline from Ostende, Belgium, to Cherbourg, France. These missions were flown at 4,000 feet over heavily defended flak positions and its importance was recognized with the award of the Distinguished Unit Citation for its completion. Pilots covered airdromes, coastal defenses and bridges just prior to the invasion. After D Day we became the eyes of the first Army and followed it all the way from Cherbourg to the Elbe River, an odyssey that included such bloodstained names as St. Lo, Vire, Falaise-Argentan Gap, the Seine, through northern France and Belgium, the Siefried line, the Ruhr and Rhine rivers and finally the linkup with the Russians at Torgau on the Elbe River.

107 PILOTS KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY 1940 — 1945

Lt William Esler: Killed as a result of a crash occurring Camp Beauregard flying field was renamed in, his honor. Today Esler Airfield is the principal airport for Alexandria, LA.

Captain Varner H. Matthews: Killed in a midair collision with Lt Charles F. Stone while on a training flight. The accident occurred while the unit was flying from England in the spring of 1943.

Lt Charles F. Stone: Killed in a midair collision with Capt Varner H. Matthews while on a training flight. The accident occurred while the unit was flying from England in the spring of 1943.

Lt Burton J. Duntley: Killed on a training flight near Lambourn Berks England while flying a P51A aircraft.

Lt James R. Brier: Killed at Dungeness, England while departing England for a combat mission over German occupied France on April 6, 1942. The aircraft crashed after entering a fog bank near the English coast.

Lt Donald E. Colton: Killed in action in the vicinity of Roven, Franch on May 9, 1944. Lt Coltons aircraft was shot down by flak.

Lt Robert S. Olsen: Killed in action over enemy territory, 1944.

Lt Charles B. Easley: Killed in action over enemy territory 1944. Lt Easley crashed while trying to evade 20 German that were pursuing him.

Lt Raymond J. Doyle: Killed in action over enemy territory after encountering flak on July 26, 1944.

Lt Charles J. Smith: Killed in action over enemy territory after encountering a FW-190 on December 23, 1944.

Lt Warren G. Moxley: Killed in action by enemy flak on March 15, 1945 after taking part in a successful dogfight with a German FW-190.

Lt Omar F. Harlan: Killed in England in a training flight accident.

Lt Harlan collided with a building while flying at low level.

The Prisoners:
Captain Roderick R. Patton
Lieutenant Jack L. Greene
Lieutenant Jack K. Turner

CONFIRMED ENEMY AIRCRAFT DESTROYED BY 107TR PILOTS

Date	Credit	Name	Rank

17	12	44	0.50	Houlahan, John F.	2Lt
17	12	44	0.50	Johnson, Lewis P.	2Lt
15	04	45	0.50	Keating, James C.	1Lt
15	04	45	0.50	Thomasian, Berge	FO
18	04	45	1.00	Holland, Ernest C., Jr.	1Lt
18	04	45	1.00	Killian, Roy O.	2Lt

On September 29, 1946, the unit passed a federal recognition inspection in the hangars and buildings at Wayne Airport that the 107 had left over six years earlier, The squadron then returned to service as a reserve unit stationed in the same facilities it had left on October 20, 1940.

On inactive status, the 107 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron was redesignated the 107 Light Bombardment Squadron on May 24, 1946. It was allotted to the State of Michigan on July 9th as part of the revamped Michigan Army National Guard Program.

The squadron, consisting of 16 officers and 150 airmen, along with four other units which had been meeting weekly as a Michigan Headquarters "holding detachment" in a flight surgeon's office, was granted federal recognition as an air unit of the Michigan ANG on September 29, 1946.

Located again in their original hangar at Wayne County Airport, the units were organized under Major Richard Perry, Commander. Later in 1946, Lt. Col. Donald W. Armstrong assumed command. The 107 Light Bombardment Squadron which received Federal and the 172nd Fighter Squadron which received Federal Recognition at Battle Creek's Kellogg Airport on December 21 1946, were joined by the 171st Fighter Squadron which received Federal Recognition on April 25th 1948

The guard's first post-war disaster claimed the lives of Capt. Charles J. Parham III and Lt. David Streeter when their B-26 crashed one mile from Willow Run Airport on December 27, 1948.

Shortly after the "police action" broke out in Korea in 1950, the 107 and Fist The wing was alerted for recall to Federal service on December 22, 1950 and nearly 400 personnel were readied during 16 drills in January 1951. The recall came on February 1, 1951 and all units were assigned to CONAC, 10th Air Force.

107 FBS and the 171st FIS only had one F-51H assigned. 44-64368 served the 107 as a maintenance trainer between December 1952 and June 1953. 44-64356 was utilized for only a month by the 171st FIS. It too was used as a maintenance trainer.

Pilots of the 107 and 171st Fighter Squadrons began serving daily alert duty during daylight hours in 1954. A skeleton jet fighter detachment was on duty at the Metropolitan Airport Base to supplement regular Air Force Air Defense units on a 14-hour-a-day basis.

With Col. Magnus Marks as the Wing Commander, the first summer camp following the Korean Conflict was held at Grayling in August 1953 with F-51 and B-26 aloft. The following year, August 19 to September 3, 1954, the first summer camp at the newly opened permanent training site at Alpena was held with all three Michigan Air Guard squadrons participating.

Pilots of the 107 Fighter Squadrons began serving daily alert duty during daylight hours in 1954. A skeleton jet fighter detachment was on duty at the Metropolitan Airport Base to supplement regular Air Force Air Defense units on a 14-hour-a-day basis.

On June 20, 1974, the 127th Wing deployed over 100 personnel to Nellis AFB, Nevada for four days. Twelve of the 107 Tactical Fighter Squadron's F-100 engaged in a heavyweight weapons training mission on the Nellis range, dropping 750 pound training bombs.

During annual field training at Alpena on August 1-15, 1974, the Wing participated in Sentry Guardstrike VI. This exercise, a combined service all-Reserve Forces "war game" under the total command of Col. Rann successfully tested the ability of both Air and Army Guard units in responding to realistic battle conditions.

May 1996—F-16s of the 107 FS deployed to Singapore for training exercises with the Singapore Air Force. From there they deployed to Hawaii to participate in RIMPAC '96. This was a multi-service, multi-national maritime exercise, intended to improve interoperability and coordination between joint forces.

August 1997—Six F-16s and 92 personnel of the 107 Fighter Squadron (FS) deployed to Al Jaber AB, Kuwait for a 30-day mission in support of Operation Southern Watch. 107 pilots were attached to the 4406th Operations Group (Provisional) and were charged with enforcing the no-fly zone over southern Iraq, which was issued by the U.N. Security Council following the 1991 Persian Gulf War. 107 pilots flew 214 sorties over the region, 107 pilots based at the Jab' lived in trailers, which were accommodated with air conditioners, cable TV and refrigerators. Such luxuries helped them cope in an environment where temperatures reached 145-degrees on the Al Jaber ramp.

The 107 Fighter Squadron's primary mission was to slow down any advance made by Iraq's Republican Guard armored units, if they decided to head south towards Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. As it turned out, the Iraqis kept their vehicles in garrison most of the time. Sorties were flown day and night. Although 107 pilots were not equipped with Night Vision Goggles (NVG) at the time, they improvised by utilizing the infrared seekers on their Maverick missiles to spot vehicle movement. During such operations, 107 pilots used the controlled fires emanating from oil fields as a visual reference point for navigation.

"We typically flew 2 or 4-ship missions and sometimes we flew 'coordinated twos' with the A-10s[from the 355th Fighter Wing]" said Maj. Mike "Tiger" Geiger, a 107 FS pilot.

During the coordinated sorties, 107 pilots would work with A-10s patrolling a "kill box."7 A "kill box" is a three-dimensional Fire Support Control Measure (FSCM) that allows for expeditious air-to-surface attack, which can be coordinated with surface-to-surface fire. Engagement authority is automatically granted, although aircrews must still take measures to positively ID the target and adhere to the rules of engagement.

The F-16s typically flew deeper into Iraq than the A-10s, primarily due to their superior speed and quicker response time, which proved to be an asset in the intercept mission. 107 pilots faced threats from Iraqi MiG fighters, particularly the Mach 2.8-capable MiG-25 interceptor.

"The MiGs would fly a 'High Fast Flyer' profile where the pilot would get above 50,000 feet, stoke the afterburner and really get fast and head south," said Maj. Geiger. "If he penetrated the 32nd parallel, we would seek approval to shoot."

November 1997—Despite looming possibility of cutbacks and base closure, the Selfridge Vision 2000 base renovation plan was announced. Under this plan, $130 million would be spent over ten years to improve infrastructure and facilities at Selfridge. Older buildings that were no longer efficient were either demolished or upgraded to modern standards.

February 1998—Ten F-16s and 177 personnel from the 107 FS deployed to Incirlik AB, Turkey in support of Operation Northern Watch. During the 30-day deployment, 107 FS pilots flew 149 sorties over northern Iraq to enforce the U.N. sanctioned no-fly zone. 127th members established a Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) training profile and helped improve the theater rules of engagement during the deployment.

August 1998—The 107 FS, 127th WG deployed six F-16s and 76 support personnel to Nellis AFB, NV to participate in the Red Flag exercise. This was the first time since 1980 the wing had participated in the massive air combat exercise. 107 FS pilots destroyed 90 percent of their targets in the 91 sorties flown by the squadron, earning them the top score among Air Combat Command fighter units. The next highest scoring unit only destroyed 78 percent of its targets.21 "Our unit was the best by at Red Flag by far," said Col. Richard Kowalski, 127th Operations Group commander. "We were head and shoulders above every other fighter unit there in every aspect of the exercise."

The 107 FS flew 98.5 percent of its assigned sorties, losing only one aircraft to a fuel leak before take-off. The unit shot down seven "enemy" aircraft and suffered no losses to surface to air threats.

January 1999—107 FS F-16 pilots deployed to Tyndall AFB, FL to participate in the Combat Archer exercise. This is an air combat exercise where pilots get the opportunity to fire live missiles at targets—something that they would otherwise not be able to do at their home bases. Such live-fire training allows pilots to accurately evaluate the capabilities of their air-to-air weapons systems.

January 2000—The 107 Fighter Squadron deployed to MacDill AFB, FL for their annual winter training. This was the unit's first deployment with the Theater Airborne Reconnaissance System (TARS). TARS is an advanced camera pod carried under the belly of an F-16.

Another 107 FS pilot was in the air during the attacks, but this time it was while he was working his civilian job as a pilot for United Airlines. Lt. Col. Rolf Mamman, flying a Boeing 767 from London to JFK International Airport, received a data link message notifying him that two passenger jets crashed into the World Trade Center. As the messages poured in, the gravity of the situation soon became apparent. "These are two separate crashes, this is hi-jacking...secure your cockpit."

F-16C Fighting Falcon (s/n 86-0233) of the 107 Fighter Squadron on the Selfridge flight line.

A 107 FS F-16C (86-0208) photographed just prior to in-flight refueling over Michigan. The Sidewinder missiles on the wingtips have blue stripes, indicating that these have inert warheads used for training purposes.

September 2001—The 107 Fighter Squadron took up an air defense alert mission under the name Operation Noble Eagle. The alert barns at Selfridge, vacant since the 171st Fighter Interceptor Squadron converted to C-130s in 1994, were slated to be demolished prior to the September llth attacks. , the new air defense mission brought the alert facility back into full use. F-16s stood alert 24/7, primed and ready to scramble at a moment’s notice to intercept unresponsive or threatening aircraft. C-130s of the 171st AS also maintained an on-demand Bravo Alert during Noble Eagle. The mission would last seven years until the arrival of the A-10sin 2009.

June 2003—107 FS F-16s received laser guided bomb mission marking on their aircraft. This was the first time such markings were authorized for use on squadron aircraft since 1945 in the European Theater of Operations during World War II.

January 2004—The 107 FS received the ANLQ-188 pod, which is an electronic threat simulator for use on the squadron's F-16s. The ANLQ-188 can be updated with simulations of the latest threats to allow for more realistic training for pilots, so they can better defend themselves.

May 2004—An F-16 from the 107 FS assisted a pilot of a light commercial plane to a safe landing after he had lost instruments and radio in his aircraft. Two F-16s were on a training mission at the time when air traffic controllers notified them of the situation. One diverted and escorted the private plane to Bishop Airport.

July 2004—members of the 107 FS returned home from combat deployment to Kirkuk Iraq.
August 2004—127th Wing conducted an Operational Readiness Exercise (ORE) at the Combat Readiness Training Center (CRTC) in Alpena. 527 member of the wing participated in the exercise

to measure the wing's combat readiness. Exercise included simulations of terrorist attacks, bombardment, chemical and biological warfare and conventional assaults.

January 2005—107 FS F-16s and personnel deployed to the Snowbird facilities at Davis-Monthan AFB in Tucson, AZ. to conduct their winter training.

March 2005—127th WG commenced the training of other air guard wings in the maintenance of the Theater Airborne Reconnaissance System (TARS). At the time, the 127th WG was the only ANG unit to have full capability with the system, which it employs on its F-16s.98 The TARS pod, is essentially a camera system slung under the belly of an F-16. As employed on 107 FS F-16s in combat operations in Iraq, the TARS pod would take before and after photos of targets to assess bomb damage. Thus, TARS-equipped F-16s could provide close air support for ground troops and conduct reconnaissance almost simultaneously.

August 2006— Two F-16s of the 107 FS made emergency landings after one of the jets sustained a bird strike while on a training flight. Both aircraft landed safely and no injuries were reported.

October 2006—107 FS F-16s scrambled after a light plane crashed into a New York City high rise. Two people were killed, including New York Yankees pitcher Cory Lidle and his flight instructor. F-16s scrambled just after 3pm on 11 October after assistance was request by the Northeast Air Defense Sector.

November 2006—The 107 FS participated in the Joint Special Operations Command's (JSOC) Jaded Thunder exercise at Avon Park Air Force Range in Florida. During the exercise, F-16s of the 107 provided fire support for Joint Terminal Attack Controllers on the ground.

A typical sortie by 107 EFS pilots started with waking up around 0030 hours. Pilots at Balad, AB, Iraq were assigned a room in a 10x10 trailer, with three rooms per trailer. 12 trailers made up a pod, which was surrounded by a 12 inch-thick concrete blast wall to protect them from rocket and mortar attacks. Body armor was a must, when walking through the compound. After a trip to the "Cadillac" trailer, which was equipped with running water and hot showers, the pilots would attend intelligence and Army ground liaison briefings. Following that, the pilots would sign for a blood chit, which was a document that requests help and promises reward to those who help a downed pilot return to friendly territory. The pilots would also review their escape and evasion plan, which they would use in the event they were shot down. After the formal briefings, the pilots assigned to the sortie (usually two of them) would go over the details of the fight with each other, discussing tactics and "what if" scenarios. "It's good to fly with the same squadron mate because you learn each others' habits and can anticipate each others' actions when you only have fractions of seconds to make decisions," said Lt. Col. Mike "Tiger" Gieger, a pilot from the 107 EFS. Following the briefings, the pilots would don their G-suits, survival vests, parachute harnesses and collect their helmets, night vision goggles (on night sorties) and side arms. The pilots, who were now 35 pounds heavier, would then get a ride on the expediter van out to the Hardened Aircraft Shelters where they would perform a thorough preflight check of their aircraft. After startup, the pilots would perform systems checks and load mission data into the aircraft's

avionics. Following this, the pilots would taxi their F-16s to the last chance checkpoint at the end of the runway, where crew chiefs would perform a final preflight check of the aircraft and pull the safety pins out of the bombs, thus arming them. When all was complete, the pilots would kick-in the afterburners and rocket down the runway. Once they were past the airfield, the pilots would turn off their aircraft lights and take their aircraft out of afterburner, so as to make them less visible to the enemy on the ground. Sorties could last well over 4 hours.

March 2007—250 members of the 107 Fighter Squadron and 127th Maintenance Group returned from their 45 day Aerospace Expeditionary Force 5/6 deployment to Iraq. During that time, the 107 FS, a component squadron of the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, flew close air support missions for ground forces during the Battle of An Najaf on 28 January.

February 2008—127th Wing F-16s were displayed at an air show in the Dominican Republic, commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Dominican Air Force. These were the first ANG F-16s to land on Dominican soil.

April 2008—the first F-16C (serial number 86-0234) left the 107 FS in April as a part of the squadron's conversion from the Fighting Falcon to the A-10s based at Battle Creek. It departed Selfridge for the maintenance depot at Hill AFB, Utah, after which time it was transferred to the ANG unit at Fort Wayne, Indiana. The transfer of F-16s out of Selfridge was completed by October of 2008 and the A-10s at Battle Creek began to transfer to Selfridge in December.

October 2008—A farewell ceremony commemorating the end of the 127th Wing's contribution to the NORAD/ 1st Air Force Air Sovereignty alert mission (aka Operation Noble Eagle) was held at the "alert barns" on the northwest side of the base on Oct 2. Two F-16s, call signs Chevy 21 and 22, were supposed to perform their last ever alert scramble for the crowd of airmen and families, but foul weather scrubbed the launch. This marked the official handover of the air defense mission to the F-16s of the 180th FW in Toledo, Ohio.

December 2008—The first six of an eventual compliment of 24 A-10s arrived at Selfridge. With the arrival of the A-10s came a change in missions. The 24 A-10s replaced 15 F-16s in the 107 FS. Some 110th FS pilots transferred over to the 127th during the conversion and served as instructor pilots to train ex-F-16 drivers on the 'Warthog.'

A-10C Thunderbolt II, s/n 81-0975, was the first jet to adorn the 'MI' tail code and the 'Red Devils' pitch fork motif of the 107 Fighter Squadron on the engine nacelle. (U5AF photo by Jeremy L Brownfield)

December 2008—The Last F-16 sortie by the 107 FS was flown on 17 December, marking the end of almost 20 years of Fighting Falcon operations at Selfridge.

May 2009—The A-10-equipped 107 FS officially stood up on 2 May.176

January 2010—The first deployment of 107 FS A-10s was to Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ. for winter training. The 107 sent ten Thunderbolt II aircraft and 100 support personnel on a four week deployment christened "Operation Demons to DM," Among the training the squadron performed included hundreds of live ordnance drops, maintenance qualification training and flight lead upgrades. In addition to the optimum flying conditions, the Arizona desert effectively simulates the desert environment A-10 pilots are currently facing in combat operations in Southwest Asia. All goals were met during the deployment certifying the 107 as a combat-ready squadron.

August 2010—Members of the 107 FS participated in water survival refresher training at Red Oaks Water Park in Madison Heights. This entailed pilots being pulled by a harness into the pool (to simulate the pull of a parachute in a wind), whereby they had to extricate themselves from their parachute harnesses.

October 2010—107 FS A-10s deployed to Barksdale AFB, LA to participate in Green Flag exercise.

October 2010—A-10s of the 107 FS participated in the unit's first ever "Hawgsmoke" competition, which was hosted this year by the 190th FW, Idaho ANG. The 107 deployed A-10sand ground crews to Boise, ID. to participate in the three-day event, where they competed against other air guard, reserve and active duty Thunderbolt II units. 17 teams, which included 40 aircraft and approximately 150 airmen, took part in the competition. 'Hawgdrivers' were judged on a number of criteria, including target acquisition and weapons delivery. Aircraft maintenance personnel also competed in the ev

Six months after officially earning a new A-10 mission, airmen of the Michigan Air National Guard's 127th Wing at Selfridge ANGB successfully completed their first deployment, traveling to Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., for a four-week exercise. "This deployment sets us up for taking the organization to the next level in preparation for the [air expeditionary force]" deployment next year, said Lt. Col. Doug Champagne, 107 Fighter Squadron commander. The unit converted from F-16s to A-10s per BRAC 2005. Selfridge maintainers deployed to Arizona kept the aircraft turning for 16 flights per day, thanks, said Maj. Kurt Ring, with the 127th Maintenance Group, to "a dedicated work force, working long hours, and we didn't have many hard breaks." Col. David Augustine, 127th Wing vice commander, credited maintenance and ops for doing an "amazing job in transferring a renowned F-16 unit into a top notch A-10 unit."

When the 107 Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, deployed to Kirkuk airbase, they became the first F-16 unit active or reserve to be based inside Iraq. During the 90 day deployment, they provided combat airpower for the Coalition Air Operations Center at Al Udeid Airbase, Qatar, and flew several hundred combat sorties. They proved close air support to the Army and Marines, and delivered airborne reconnaissance information to theater commanders. , when the 107 first arrived at Kirkuk, they found that while some improvements had been made, much work remained to provide proper force protection. “Some bunkers had been started but not completed,” said Lt. Col. Glenn Schmidt, 107 commander. “Additional bunkers and taxiway improvements were also needed to protect our people and aircraft in case of an attack.” The 107 worked with the base civil engineering squadron to improve force

protection, but other force protection priorities made the work slow. That's when the Michigan Army National Guard stepped up to the plate. The 1438th Engineer Detachment from Grayling, Mich., was in the area and happy to team up with fellow Michiganders. The 1438th provided much needed engineering and utilities support, such as vertical and horizontal construction, carpentry, plumbing, and electrical work. Before arriving in Kirkuk, the 1438th completed more than 600 combat service support missions while attached to the 101st Airborne Division in Mosul, Iraq. At Kirkuk, the 1438th repaired and constructed force protection measures at Iraqi police stations and checkpoints, repaired enemy prisoner of war facilities, and trained Iraqi Civil Defense Corps soldiers on heavy equipment operation. "They are truly a remarkable bunch of soldiers and they never cease to amaze me with their professionalism and tenacity," said Capt. Jim Flowers, commander of the 1438th. "We consider ourselves lucky to have the 107 here with us, especially when their F-16's hit full afterburner directly over our area of operations at 0400 hours." The 107 and 1438th worked together to construct bunkers, fill and move sandbags, and improve roadways in the F-16 complex. They built five new bunkers, finished three others, and completed a 300- yard extension to a gravel roadway. The roadway extension was critical because it allowed the 107 to move equipment to the primary maintenance hangar without driving over and possibly leaving debris on the flight line, a serious concern for F-16 jet engines. The work was difficult, but the defensive posture of the 107 quickly improved. "We needed heavy equipment and the 1438th came through for us," said Schmidt. "Their help was invaluable." In today's military, the term "joint" describes integration of all branches of service into a cohesive team utilizing active, guard and reserve personnel. The 107 and the 1438th came together and provided a war-fighting capability to the nation. Together, they truly became "brothers and sisters in arms." 2004

Some 200 airmen and 10 A-10s from the Michigan Air National Guard's 127th Wing left Selfridge ANG Base northeast of Detroit to train at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., according to a unit release. This two-week deployment is part of Operation Snowbird, under which northern-tier Air Guard units have the opportunity to drill in warm-weather conditions in southern Arizona during the winter months. "Training at Davis-Monthan in Snowbird is like a scrimmage before playing in the big game," said Lt. Col. Shawn Holtz, commander of the wing's 107 Fighter Squadron. "Everybody gets a chance to sharpen their skills and build up the team," he said. The Selfridge airmen departed for Arizona on Jan. 23; they will focus on search-and-recovery training during their stint at Davis-Monthan, states the release. While there, they will be able to nearly double their normal daily sortie rate. 2015

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