

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 11652, Sec. 3(E) and 5(D) or (E)
745-005
By 7 NARS, Date 10/31/77

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STATEMENT

Strafing of Esperstedt Airfield on February 9, 1945

Captain Lowell E. Einhaus O-767167

"When I strafed Esperstedt airfield on February 9, 1945 my first pass was from south to north and I strafed three FW 190s on the western side of the field. I observed strikes on all aircraft, two bursting into flames and one smoking. I chandelled up to the left after this and came back again from the same direction for a second pass. This time I fired at one FW 190 in a hangar in the dispersal area south of the field. The FW 190 burst into flames and the whole hangar was smoking as I passed over it. Later on after I had completed my pass I noticed that the hangar had caved in and both the aircraft and the hangar were burning violently. On this same pass as I came upon the airfield I finished off the plane that had been smoking as the result of my first pass. This aircraft blew up as I passed 50 feet above it, the explosion causing my plane into about a half snap roll. On my third pass I came in again from south to north and this time I fired at a FW 190 in the SW corner of the field which was parked near a hangar. This aircraft burst into flames as I passed over it and I also saw a few hits on the hangar which I claim as damaged. As I finished this pass I flew to the left and let go of a short burst in a barracks building on the northwest side of the field. I claim this as damaged. On my fourth pass I got another FW 190 right next to the previous one and it was burning as I passed over it.

I believe I made three more passes on the field but my guns were running out of ammo and were firing sporadically. I believe it was only my right wing guns that were firing at the end. I sprayed the general area noticing a few hits on various aircraft but am not claiming any of these. It was during these passes that I saw about eight Germans running toward the barracks area. These were hit by my fire and only two got away. All of my passes started from 1500 to 2000 feet. My angle of attack was approximately 30° to 35°. I came down to about 50 to 100 feet and my speed must have been between 300 to 375 mph. My bursts were many and short. I am sure that I destroyed these six planes. I am attaching statement from my wingman who witnessed most of my shooting. We were the last ones to leave the field and I counted 30 plus fires as I circled over the airfield before I left."

Lowell E. Einhaus

LOWELL E. EINHAUS,
Captain, Air Corps.

CONFIRMATION FOR CLAIM

"I was flying Captain Einhaus' wing on February 9, 1945 and was in trail to his left and west when he made his first two passes. I saw two planes go up in flame on his first pass. I also saw him set a revetment hangar (revetment covered with canvas) on fire with plane in it, both burning on his second pass. On his fourth pass I saw him set another one on fire. On other passes I was too far behind or strafing a different part of the field and therefore cannot confirm any of his other claims."

William C. Fay
WILLIAM C. FAY,
1st Lt., Air Corps.

Joseph R. Genest
JOSEPH R. GENEST,
1st Lt., Air Corps,
Intelligence Officer.

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H. Parlee

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CONSOLIDATED ENCOUNTER REPORT

MAJOR MERLE J. GILBERTSON 0-730451
CAPT. LOWELL E. EINHAUS 0-767167
CAPT. EDWIN C. JENNINGS 0-661215
CAPT. CHARLES H. COLE 0-725682
1ST LT. FREDERICK (NMI) LARSEN 0-470948
1ST LT. WILLIAM C. FAY 0-827185

1ST LT. REPS D. JONES 0-675708
1ST LT. PHILLIP L. SCHALLO 0-688850
1ST LT. GARTH L. REYNOLDS 0-692198
2ND LT. GLEN R. HALL 0-818375
2ND LT. EDWIN R. PITZ 0-827272
2ND LT. JOHN P. STARKE 0-820343

- a. Combat.
- b. 9 February 1945.
- c. 77th Ftr Sq, 20th Ftr Gp.
- d. 1315 to 1335.
- e. Esperstedt, airfield, Germany.
- f. Clear on deck, 5/10 cloud cover at 5000 feet.
- g. FW 190 - Me 109 - Me 410 - Me 110 - u/i s/e biplane.
- h. 3 FW 190s destroyed - Major Gilbertson
 - 1 Me 109 destroyed - Lt. Jones OK
 - 1 FW 190 destroyed - Lt. Starke OK
 - 1 FW 190 destroyed - Capt. Edwin C. Jennings ? POSSIBLY ONE DAM
 - 2 FW 190s destroyed - Lt. Schallo OK
 - 1 s/e biplane destroyed - Lt. Larsen ?
 - 2 FW 190s destroyed - Lt. Larsen OK
 - 6 FW 190s destroyed - Capt. Einhaus - ?
 - 6 FW 190s destroyed - Capt. Cole OK
 - 3 FW 190s destroyed - Lt. William C. Fay. ONE DEF. TWO ?
 - 3 FW 190s destroyed - Lt. Jones OK POSSIBLY MORE
 - 2 FW 190s destroyed - Lt. Reynolds OK
 - 2 FW 190s destroyed - Lt. Pitz OK
 - 1 FW 190 destroyed - Lt. Hall OK
 - 1 Me 410 destroyed - Lt. Schallo MANY HITS (OK ?)
 - 1 Me 410 destroyed - Lt. Starke MANY HITS (OAM)
 - 2 Me 110s destroyed - Lt. Reynolds OK
 - 1 FW 190 damaged - Capt. Cole OK
 - 1 FW 190 damaged - Lt. Hall OK
 - 1 Me 110 damaged - Maj. Gilbertson
 - 1 Me 110 damaged - Lt. Pitz OK
 - 1 Me 410 damaged - Lt. Hall OK

Other ground targets:

- 1 locomotive dest - Maj. Gilbertson OK
- 1 hangar destroyed - Capt. Einhaus - ?
- 1 hangar destroyed - Lt. Jones OK
- 2 hangars destroyed - Lt. Larsen
- 2 hangars damaged - Capt. Einhaus - ?
- 1 admin. bldg. damaged - Capt. Einhaus - ?
- 6 hums killed - Capt. Einhaus ?
- 20 freight cars damaged - 77th Squadron.
- 1 gun emplacement & personnel damaged - Capt. Jennings.

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1. After our squadron had escorted the bombers around their target at Lutzkendorf, we dropped down to strafe on a heading of 260°. Just east of Esperstedt airfield a long train was strafed by Major Gilbertson and his section. The engine was destroyed by Major Gilbertson but the freight cars would not burn and therefore are claimed as damaged only.

Right after this Lt. Larsen who was flying Yellow 4 was first to see about 80 plus e/a, 3/4 of which were s/e (mostly 190s) and the balance t/e aircraft. He made a pass on the field as he called the planes in to the squadron. The squadron then strafed the field for 20 minutes from 1315 to 1335 making one pass from east to west, 2 passes from north to south and as many as 5 passes were made by some pilots from south to north. The light flak was very intense but not accurate. 38 planes were destroyed on the ground and 5 damaged. 4 hangars, 1 large and 3 blister types, were destroyed and 2 were damaged. 1 gun emplacement and personnel were damaged, 1 administrative building was damaged and 6 of the Hums were killed.

(Over)

All the planes -- especially the FW 190s -- appeared to be brand new and burst into flame readily. Capt. Cole who was leading Red section took pictures of the field with his K-25 camera after his ammo had run out. We are enclosing these pictures which reveal many planes on fire even though the field was still under attack after the pictures were taken.

There were revetments to the south with roads from them leading to the field and dispersal areas. There were many light flak emplacements south of the field as well as on the eastern side and in the southwest and northwest corners.

j.	Ser No of A/C:	Markings of A/C:	Ammo expended:
Gilbertson	44-14822	LC-A	1600 rounds 50 cal.
Einhaus	44-13918	LC-V	1300 rounds 50 cal.
Jennings	44-13798	LC-W	1279 rounds 50 cal.
Cole	44-11324	LC-U	1800 rounds 50 cal.
Larsen	44-15605	LC-M	1480 rounds 50 cal.
Fay	44-11566	LC-Q	1800 rounds 50 cal.
Jones	44-14823	LC-F	1800 rounds 50 cal.
Schallo	44-14975	LC-K	1460 rounds 50 cal.
Reynolds	44-15321	LC-S	1500 rounds 50 cal.
Hall	44-14824	LC-P	750 rounds 50 cal.
Pitz	44-14598	LC-L	1670 rounds 50 cal.
Starke	44-13803	LC-P	1760 rounds 50 cal.

Merle J. Gilbertson
 MERLE J. GILBERTSON,
 Major, Air Corps,

Joseph R. Genest
 JOSEPH R. GENEST,
 1st Lieut., Air Corps,
 Intelligence Officer.

