

14209

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classification ~~SECRET~~
to ~~RESTRICTED~~
by E. A. BRADENAS, Lt. Col., AC
by F. M. MURCH, Capt., AC
Date ~~2002-3-10-10~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

WAR DEPARTMENT
HEADQUARTERS ARMY AIR FORCES
WASHINGTON

51-50N
10-48E

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT

IMPORTANT: This report will be compiled in triplicate by each Army Air Forces organization within 48 hours of the time an airplane is officially reported missing.

- ORGANIZATION: Location Ober-Olm, Germany Command or Air Force XIX TAC
Group 354th Ftr Gp Squadron 355th Ftr Sq Detachment None
- SPECIFY: Point of departure Ober-Olm, Germany Course 270°
Intended Destination Wernigerode, Germany Type of Mission Armed Recon
- WEATHER CONDITIONS AND VISIBILITY AT TIME OF CRASH OR WHEN LAST REPORTED
Ceiling unlimited. Visibility 2 to 3 miles in haze to 7000 ft.
- GIVE: (a) Date 11 Apr 45 Time 1300 and Location Wernigerode, Germ
of last known whereabouts of missing airplane: 164 mi SW of Frankfurt
() Specify whether () Last sighted; () Last contacted by radio:
() Forced down; (X) Seen to crash; or () Information not available.
- AIRPLANE WAS LOST, OR IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN LOST, AS RESULT OF:
(Check only one) () Enemy airplane; () Enemy anti-aircraft; (X)
Other circumstances as follows: Crashed while making a strafing pass.
- AIRPLANE: Type, Model and Series P-51D-20 A.F. Serial No. 44-63695
- ENGINES: Type, Model and Series V-1650-7 A.F. Serial No. (a) V-328400
(b) _____ (c) _____ (d) _____
- INSTALLED WEAPONS (Furnish below Make, Type and Serial No)
(a) Browning Mach (b) Gun Cal. 50 (c) 1331486 (d) 1331040
(e) 1331306 (f) 1330917 (g) 1530618 (h) 1502579
- THE PERSONS LISTED BELOW WERE REPORTED AS: (a) Battle Casualty Yes
or (b) Non Battle Casualty No
- NUMBER OF PERSONS ABOARD AIRPLANE: Crew 1 Passengers 0 Total 1
(Starting with pilot, furnish the following particulars: If more than 10 persons were aboard airplane, list similar particulars on separate sheet and attach original to this form.)

	Crew Position	Name in Full (Last Name First)	Rank	Serial Number
1.	Pilot	<u>Harker, William F.</u>	<u>2d Lt</u>	<u>0-821204</u>
2.				
3.				

- IDENTIFY BELOW THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE LAST KNOWLEDGE OF AIRPLANE, AND CHECK APPROPRIATE COLUMN TO INDICATE BASIS FOR SAME:
- | Name in Full
(Last Name First) | Rank | Serial Number | by Radio | Last Sighted | Saw Crash | Forced Landing |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. <u>Gross, Clayton K.</u> | <u>Capt</u> | <u>0-683512</u> | | | <u>XXXXXX</u> | |
| 2. | | | | | | |
| 3. | | | | | | |

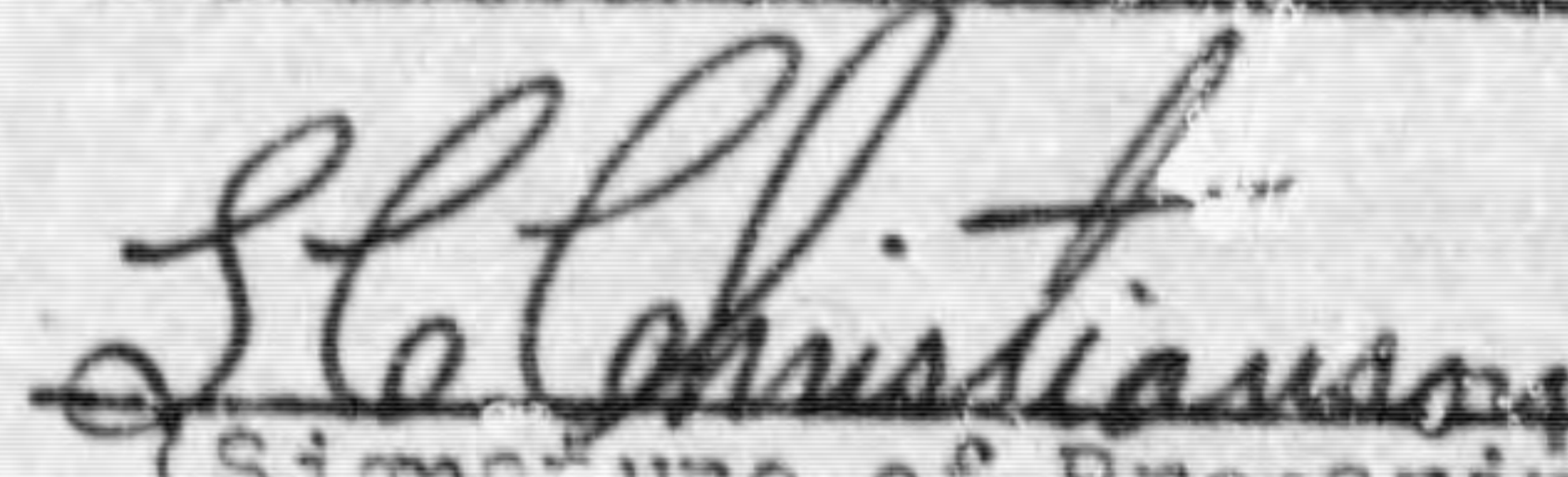
- IF PERSONNEL ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE SURVIVED, ANSWER YES TO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS: (a) Parachutes were used No; (b) Persons were seen walking away from scene of crash No
or (c) any other reason (Specify) None

Incl. 15
Incl. 1

13. ATTACH AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH, MAP, CHART, OR SKETCH, SHOWING APPROXIMATE LOCATION WHERE AIRPLANE WAS LAST SEEN. **See Incl (Overla.)**
14. ATTACH EYEWITNESS DESCRIPTION OF CRASH, FORCED LANDING, OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES PERTAINING TO MISSING AIRPLANE. **See Incl (Statement)**
15. ATTACH A DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTENT OF SEARCH, IF ANY, AND CITE NAME, RANK AND SERIAL NUMBER OF OFFICER IN CHARGE HERE **No search conducted.**

Date of Report 14 April 1945

FOR THE GROUP COMMANDER:


(Signature of Preparing Officer)
L. C. CHRISTIANSON,
2d Lt, AC,
Adjutant.



MAY 25 1945

C O N F I D E N T I A L

355th FIGHTER SQUADRON ARMY AIR FORCES
354th FIGHTER GROUP
APO 141

13 April 1945

S T A T E M E N T

I was leading Red Flight with Lt Harker on my wing the day he crashed in enemy territory.

We were strafing trucks from across an open field to a road paralleling a woods. I would estimate the height of the trees as approximately 30 feet. Several times I experienced difficulty in clearing them after a pass at the line of trucks.

Lt Harker was following in a string pattern about 500 yards behind me. There was no flak or anti aircraft fire of any sort.

After about 6 passes I pulled up and noticed a fire in the middle of the woods. Number #3 man called me and said Number # 2 man had failed to clear the tree tops and had crashed into the woods.

Clayton K Gross
CLAYTON K. GROSS,
Captain, Air Corps.

VZCZC

RR RUEHC RUEKJCS RHHMUNA RUEKJCS RUHPQA RUEKJCS
 RUSNMIU RUEAHOF RUHVAAA RHCPMXA RUCNFRG
 DE RUEHOL #0675/01 285 **
 ZNR UUUUU ZZH
 R 121122Z OCT 95
 FM AMEMBASSY BONN
 TO RUEHC / SECSTATE WASHDC 4352
 RUEKJCS / SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:ISA/DPMO//
 INFO RHHMUNA / USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//JDL//
 RUEKJCS / DIA WASHDC//CH-2/POW/COS//
 RUHPQA / CDR JTF-FA HONOLULU HI//
 RUEKJCS / JOINT STAFF WASHDC//OJCS-PW/MIA/JS//
 RUSNMIU / CDMT IES GARMISCH GE//ECMC-DOS-HHD//
 RUEAHOF / CDR PERSCOM ALEXANDRIA VA//DAPC-ZB-TFR-H//
 RUHVAAA / CDR USACILHI HICKAM AFB HI//TAPC-PEDR-H//
 RHCPMXA / CDRAFRA MAXWELL AFB AL//
 RUCNFRG / FRG COLLECTIVE
 BT
 UNCLAS BONN 20675

DEPT FOR EUR/AGS
 DEPT FOR DS/AVINCENT

E.O. 12356: N/A
 TAGS: KPOW, MOPS, PREL, PHUM, GM
 SUBJECT: CRASH SITE OF U.S. P-51D LOCATED IN EASTERN
 GERMANY; PILOT'S GRAVE BELIEVED NEARBY

1. SUMMARY: ON OCTOBER 9, WHILE ON PRIVATE TRAVEL IN THE GERMAN STATE OF SACHSEN-ANHALT, EMBOFF WAS SHOWN THE WWII CRASH SITE OF A U.S. P-51D MUSTANG AIRCRAFT. AIRCRAFT TYPE HAS BEEN CONFIRMED FROM PARTS FOUND AT THE SITE. ACCORDING TO LOCAL SOURCES, THE AIRCRAFT WAS STRAFING A TRUCK CONVOY JUST OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE OF TRAUTENSTEIN WHEN IT CRASHED ON APRIL 11, 1945, JUST WEEKS BEFORE THE END OF THE WAR. LOCAL INFORMATION AND EVIDENCE MATCHES THE CIRCUMSTANCES DESCRIBED IN OFFICIAL U.S. RECORDS CONCERNING THE LAST MISSION OF A 2ND LT. HARKER, WHO CRASHED HIS P-51D NUMBER 44-63695 IN THE VICINITY OF TRAUTENSTEIN ON THAT DATE. ALTHOUGH NO WITNESSES TO THE CRASH HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED BY THE EMBASSY, SEVERAL LOCAL SOURCES REPORTED THAT THE PILOT IS BURIED NEAR THE WRECKAGE. A SEARCH OF THE CRASH AREA REVEALED WHAT IS THOUGHT BE THE PILOT'S GRAVE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE EMBASSY FIRST LEARNED OF THE CRASHED AIRCRAFT WHEN THE RSO INTERVIEWED A WALK-IN GERMAN NATIONAL EARLIER THIS YEAR, WHO CLAIMED TO KNOW THE LOCATION OF A CRASHED U.S. MUSTANG FIGHTER SOMEWHERE IN THE VICINITY OF TRAUTENSTEIN, SACHSEN-ANHALT. HE TOLD THE RSO THAT HE HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE CITY MUSEUM OF WERNIGERODE, A CITY NORTH OF TRAUTENSTEIN. IN ANSWER TO A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE STATING THAT THE MUSEUM SOUGHT INFORMATION FROM ANYONE WHO KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT THE CRASH OF AN AMERICAN FIGHTER NEAR TRAUTENSTEIN ON APRIL 11, 1945, EMBASSY DAO USED INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE WALK-IN TO REQUEST RECORDS FROM USAF. AFRA/MAXWELL AFB AL SUPPLIED MILITARY AIRCRAFT CRASH REPORT NUMBER 14209, WHICH MATCHED THE DETAILS OF WALK-IN'S STORY. ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, 2ND LT. HARKER'S P-51D MUSTANG CRASHED AND BURNED DURING A STRAFING RUN ON APRIL 11, 1945. USING THE MISSION MAP SUPPLIED BY AFRA, IT WAS POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY TRAUTENSTEIN AS THE VILLAGE NEAREST THE CRASH SITE.

3. UPON TRANSFER FROM BONN, RSO TURNED THE CASE OVER TO

EMBOFF. BASED ON WALK-IN'S STATEMENT, EMBOFF LOCATED THE DIRECTOR OF THE CITY MUSEUM OF WERNIGERODE, DR. SCHEFFLER, WHO WAS VERY KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE INCIDENT AND AGREED TO SHOW EMBOFF THE SITE.

4. ON OCTOBER 9, EMBOFF MET SCHEFFLER IN WERNIGERODE. DURING THE DRIVE TO THE CRASH SITE, SCHEFFLER EXPLAINED THAT SEVERAL MONTHS EARLIER, HE HAD RECEIVED A LETTER, VIA THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, FROM AN OLD FRIEND OF LT. HARKER'S. THIS FRIEND ASKED IN HIS LETTER IF GERMAN AUTHORITIES COULD HELP HIM LOCATE HARKER'S CRASH SITE AND REMAINS. BASED UPON THAT LETTER, SCHEFFLER HAD PLACED A STORY IN THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER ASKING FOR INFORMATION FROM ANYONE WHO HAD ANY KNOWLEDGE OF THE EVENT. HE RECEIVED SEVERAL RESPONSES AS A RESULT. NOT KNOWING THAT THE U.S. EMBASSY WAS INVOLVED, SCHEFFLER BEGAN INTERVIEWING RESIDENTS OF TRAUTENSTEIN AND COLLECTING AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER TO PROVIDE A REPORT TO HARKER'S FRIEND. (NOTE: SCHEFFLER WILL PROVIDE EMBASSY

WITH A COPY OF THIS REPORT, WHICH EMBASSY WILL FORWARD TO WASHINGTON.)

5. SCHEFFLER TOOK EMBOFF TO A STATE FOREST LESS THAN ONE MILE FROM TRAUTENSTEIN. THE CRASH SITE IS IN A MATURE PINE WOODS, EASILY REACHED WITHIN A FEW MINUTES BY FOOT FROM A NEARBY LOGGING ROAD. WRECKAGE IS STREWN OVER THE FOREST FLOOR IN A ROUGHLY CIRCULAR AREA APPROXIMATELY FIFTY YARDS WIDE, ALTHOUGH FEW, IF ANY, LARGE PIECES REMAIN. A FIRE RESULTING FROM THE CRASH DESTROYED MANY TREES AT THE SITE AND MELTED ALUMINUM CAN BE FOUND AMONG THE DEBRIS. ACCORDING TO SCHEFFLER, THE MOTOR AND OTHER LARGE SECTIONS OF THE AIRCRAFT WERE REMOVED FOR SCRAP LONG AGO.

6. THE CRASH REPORT STATES THAT HARKER PROBABLY FAILED TO PULL CLEAR OF A WOODS AFTER COMPLETING THE SIXTH STRAFING RUN AGAINST THE CONVOY. THE AIRCRAFT'S ENTRY POINT THROUGH THE TREES IN THE FOREST CAN EASILY BE SEEN AND THE DIRECTION AND ORIENTATION RELATIVE TO THE ROAD UPON WHICH THE CONVOY WAS TRAVELING APPEARS TO MATCH THE REPORT. THE FLIGHT LEADER MENTIONS SEEING A FIRE WHERE HARKER CRASHED AND THIS MATCHES EVIDENCE OF FIRE AT THE TRAUTENSTEIN SITE.

7. SCHEFFLER SAID THAT TWO GERMAN SOLDIERS WERE KILLED DURING THE ATTACK ON THE CONVOY AND THAT THEY WERE BURIED IN TEMPORARY GRAVES IN THE TRAUTENSTEIN CHURCH YARD (ONE BODY HAS SINCE BEEN REMOVED). SECOND-HAND REPORTS FROM THOSE WHO WENT TO THE SCENE OF THE CRASH IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARD SEEM TO AGREE THAT HARKER DIED OF INJURIES SUSTAINED FROM THE CRASH AND WAS BURIED AT THE SITE, NOT IN THE CHURCH YARD WITH THE SOLDIERS. THAT HARKER'S BODY MAY HAVE SURVIVED THE FIRE SEEMS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE ABSENCE OF FIRE DAMAGE ON SEVERAL PIECES OF DEBRIS ORIGINATING FROM THE COCKPIT AREA. SCHEFFLER SAID THAT THE EXACT LOCATION OF HARKER'S GRAVE, ALTHOUGH IN THE GENERAL AREA OF THE WRECKAGE, WAS UNKNOWN.

8. AFTER SCHEFFLER'S DEPARTURE, EMBOFF AND FAMILY CONDUCTED A CAREFUL SEARCH OF THE CRASH AREA, LOOKING FOR ANYTHING UNUSUAL THAT MIGHT INDICATE A GRAVE. EMBOFF'S SPOUSE DISCOVERED A LARGE ROCK (THERE ARE NO OTHER ROCKS IN THE VICINITY) LOCATED PRECISELY BETWEEN TWO TREES AND JUST OUTSIDE THE FIFTY-YARD PERIMETER OF THE WRECKAGE-STREWN AREA. NO ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO DETERMINE IF THIS WAS, IN FACT, THE PILOT'S GRAVE. HOWEVER, IT APPEARED TO BE THE MOST LIKELY SPOT IN THE AREA.

9. A P-51 RESTORATION SPECIALIST HAS POSITIVELY IDENTIFIED A PIECE OF CRASH DEBRIS BEARING A PART NUMBER AS A LEFT-HAND RUDDER PEDAL BRAKE OPERATING LEVER ASSEMBLY FROM A P-51D AIRCRAFT.

PAGE 02 OF 02

BONN 020675/01

8BB107

285/1145Z

10. COMMENT: THE CRASH SITE LIES WITHIN THE FORMER DDR.
THIS IS WAS THE REASON WHY INFORMATION DID NOT REACH U.S.
OFFICIALS FOR FIFTY YEARS. END COMMENT.

11. AGENCIES WISHING MORE DETAILED INFORMATION REGARDING
THE P-51D CRASH SITE AND THE EXACT LOCATION OF THE
POSSIBLE GRAVE OF THE PILOT MAY CONTACT
EMBASSY BONN ON 011-49-228-339-2889.

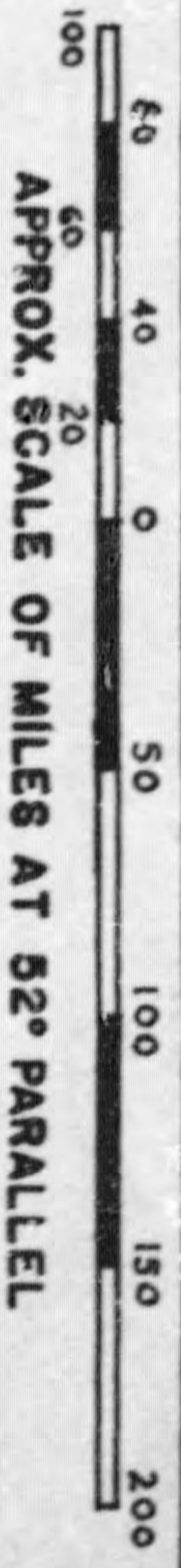
REDMAN

BT

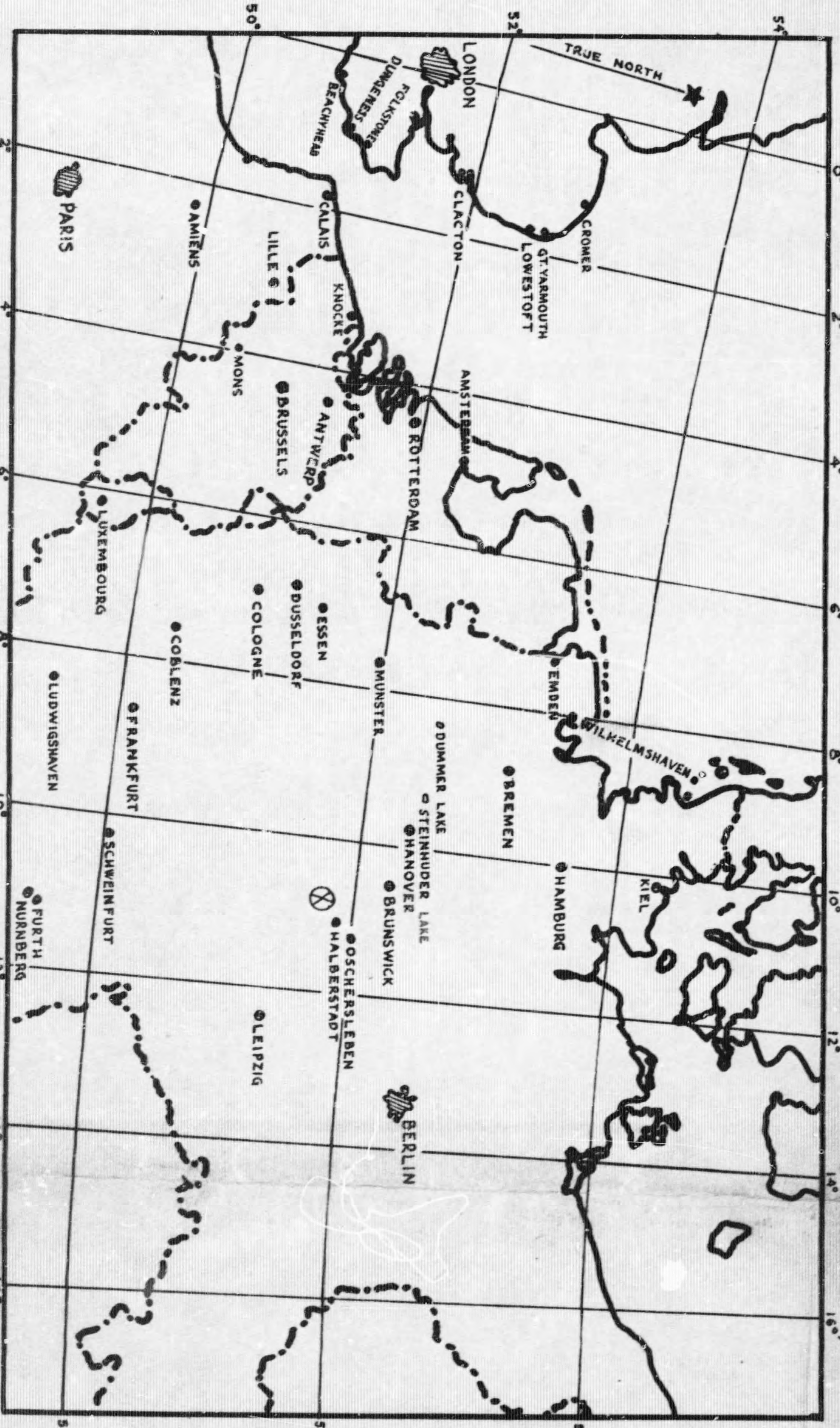
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NNNN

HEADQUARTERS, 354TH FIGHTER GROUP
MAP FOR MISSION NO: _____



FIELD ORDER NO: 257
DATE OF MISSION: 11 Apr 45



REPRODUCED FROM CODE "P", SHEET 19,
BY SGT. G. COCCINI, 12 MARCH, 1944
SCALE = 1:4,000,000

LEGEND ——— INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES
● CITIES

REPRODUCED BY 925 ENGR. AVN. REGT.



2Lt. William Harker