

CER SENIN

Romanian Air Force Magazine

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#WEARENATO

PAGE 3-15



PAGE 8

**EUROPEAN
PARTNERSHIP
FLIGHT**

PAGE 9

**NEWS
FROM
ENJJPT**



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PAGE 12-13





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COVER I: **IAR-316B ALOUETTE AND SIKORSKY UH-60 BLACK HAWK AT BIAS 2022**
PHOTO: **ADRIAN SULTĂNOIU**
COVER III: **F-16 AND PILATUS PC-9 AT BIAS 2022**
PHOTO: **ADRIAN SULTĂNOIU**
COVER IV: **ITALIAN AIR FORCE WITH EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON AT BIAS 2022**
PHOTO: **ADRIAN SULTĂNOIU**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

#WEARENATO 3-15

NATO Chiefs of Defence discuss operationalisation of Madrid Summit decisions ____ 3

Defence minister's message marking 25 years since the signing of the Strategic Partnership between Romania and USA ____ 4

Canada mission-ready in Romania to secure NATO airspace in Black Sea region ____ 5

Joint Statement on the U.S.-Romanian Bilateral Defense Relationship ____ 5

10th AAMDC welcomes Brig. Gen. Maurice Barnett as the new Commanding General ____ 6

Visit at Capu Midia ____ 7

European Partnership Flight ____ 8

News from ENJJPT ____ 9

SELIS 22: CMSAF hosts largest international DAF engagement ____ 10

BIAS 2022 ____ 12-13

INTERNATIONAL CONTRIBUTORS ____ 16-25

RIAT 2022 ____ 26

NATO DAYS IN OSTRAVA ____ 26



PAGE 4



PAGE 8



PAGE 10



PAGE 16-25

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#WEARENATO

NATO Chiefs of Defence discussed operationalisation of Madrid Summit decisions



The Chief of Defence Staff, General Daniel Petrescu, participated in the NATO Military Chiefs of Defence Meeting. From 16 to 18 September 2022, the Allied Chiefs of Defence gathered for their annual conference, in Tallinn, Estonia. For the first time, Finland and Sweden attended the Military Committee Conference as NATO Invitees. The agenda reflected the changed security environment as well as the implementation of the decisions taken at the NATO Summit in Madrid, last June. The Chief of Defence Staff, General Daniel Petrescu, participated in the NATO Military Chiefs of Defence Meeting over 16-18 September, organized at Tallinn, Estonia.

The NATO Military Committee was welcomed to Tallinn during an official opening ceremony by the President of the Republic of Estonia, His Excellency Alar Karis. In his welcome address, the President highlighting the drastic change in the security environment since Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the invaluable reinforcement Allies has provided to NATO's Eastern flank. The Chair of the NATO Military Committee underscored the essential role played by Estonia, especially in the digital domain and when it comes to supporting NATO's digital transformation.

On the morning of the 17th of September, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Estonia Kaja Kallas set the scene for the day's meetings. She stressed the importance of broad international support for Ukraine. In his opening remarks, the Chair laid out the agenda and expectations for the conference: "Without a doubt: a new era for global security has begun. The entire international rules-based order is under attack. And it is up to the free, democratic nations of the world to protect it. Winter is coming, but our support for Ukraine shall remain unwavering".

The first session allowed the NATO Chiefs of Defence to discuss the implementation the far-reaching decisions on NATO's deterrence and defence posture taken, by the political leadership at NATO's Summit in Madrid as well as the operationalisation of NATO's deter and defend strategy. "This strategy makes sure that national plans are more closely interlinked with Alliance plans; military leaders have a common frame of reference for both Alliance wide threats and regional threats; and that we enhance the speed and effectiveness of our rapid deployable forces", underlined Admiral Bauer.

The next meeting was led by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Christopher Cavoli, who provided his strategic considerations on NATO's current and future posture on the Eastern flank and across the whole spectrum of the Alliance's 360-degree approach to security. In a session dedicated to the future of Armed Forces, the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, General Philippe Lavigne provided the Chiefs of Defence his insights in promoting cooperation across domains and service branches and enabling digital transformation.

In a session dedicated to promoting diversity in the Armed Forces, the Chiefs of Defence exchanged ideas on how to create a more diverse talent pool in their workforce. Admiral Bauer: "This is important in order to increase our effectiveness on the battlefield. And because creating a culture of inclusion is fundamental for the trust between men and women in uniform. Without trust, we cannot function", underscored the Admiral.

Admiral Bauer, Chair of the NATO Military Committee and Lieutenant General Martin Herem, Chief of the Estonian Defence Forces, concluded the conference by briefing the media on the outcomes of the meetings.

Story by nato.int



NATO SECRETARY GENERAL HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR MORE SUPPORT TO UKRAINE



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg participated in a meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, on Thursday (8 September 2022). The Secretary General underscored the need for more military aid to be sent to Ukraine to enable it to uphold its right to self-defence. He welcomed that NATO Allies continue to step up with more military, financial and humanitarian support for Ukraine.

The Secretary General met with the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Lloyd J. Austin III, and thanked him for hosting the meeting, and for the strong U.S. leadership and coordination. Mr. Stoltenberg also had discussions with German Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht and Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov.

While at Ramstein, the Secretary General was welcomed to the headquarters of Allied Air Command (AIRCOM) by its commander, General James B. Hecker. Mr. Stoltenberg thanked NATO personnel for their important work in keeping the Alliance's one billion people free and safe.

The Secretary General later participated in a secure video call hosted by U.S. President Joe Biden with participation from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi, Polish President Andrzej Duda, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, U.K. Prime Minister Liz Truss, and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. They were joined by representatives from France, the European Commission and European Council. The leaders discussed the results of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, focusing on the need to maintain support to Ukraine in the coming winter months.

Story by nato.int



DEFENCE MINISTER'S MESSAGE MARKING 25 YEARS SINCE THE SIGNING OF THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN ROMANIA AND USA

The signing of the Strategic Partnership between Romania and the United States of America at 11 July 1997, meant more than the enlargement of the cooperation framework between our country and the most important military power of the world. This partnership consecrated our country's final admission on the Euro-Atlantic integration path, a major strategic objective assumed with vision and wisdom by our people, who activated, from that moment on, all power and actional leverages of the Romanian state. It was a genial example that the Romanians know and can act cohesively, synchronized, by unifying all energies so that the country can be brought to table where important decisions are taken. The signing of the Strategic Partnership with the USA signaled the Romanian legitimate wish to join the community of the people who defend and promote the fundamental values of the individual freedom, democracy, peoples' rights and supremacy of laws.

In order to join NATO, the Romanian Armed Force assumed the role of a changing catalyzer by putting into practice a wide modernization and transformation program that can adapt to the new standards. The changes initiated by the military body were complex and sustainable. In parallel with the implementation of a comprehensive structural modernization and transformation program, the Romanian soldiers proved to be professionals able to act jointly with the allied structures in various multinational operations and exercises where they performed impeccably by proving they can act in accordance with the Alliance procedures and rules. Romania's invitation of joining NATO, made at the Prague

Summit, in November 2002, was an outstanding confirmation of these efforts. That moment found the Romanian soldiers with their weapons in their hands, in the hottest theaters of operations, together with the American soldiers and the rest of the allies engaged in the missions assigned, with whom they had already connected.

The reciprocal trust and respect between the soldiers of the Romanian and American armed forces were developed and consolidated over the last 20 years of joint actions performed in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Western Balkans and other areas of the world. I'm availing of this opportunity to thank the American and Romanian soldiers for their contribution to the security and defence of our nations, their professionalism and spirit of sacrifice they accomplished their missions.

In such times, it is advisable to pay homage to the people who lost their lives for our countries in the theaters of operations, thus, expressing our gratitude to these heroes' families, whom we ensure that the sacrifices of those who died in the line of duty will never be forgotten.

As the Homeland Defence National Strategy stipulates, our country's foreign and security policy will be substantiated on the next actional triade: increase of Romania's role and efforts within the European Union, consolidation of our strategic profile in NATO, as well as the strengthening and enlargement of the Strategic Partnership with the USA. Obviously, the Partnership exceeds the strict framework of collaboration in the field of security and defence, but the current security context shows that the options of engaging and developing an extended collaboration relation in the military field, since the first years the Strategic

Partnership was implemented, were essential. The US forces deployed to Romania, mainly to Mihail Kogălniceanu, Borcea and Campia Turzii Air Bases, and the troops from Deveselu which operate the Aegis Ashore Ballistic Missile Defence System, provide not only increased defence capabilities but they also represent a powerful and convincing concretization of the allied solidarity and the concreteness of our strategic Partnership. The United States of America have made a long-term commitment on ensuring and consolidating the security in the Black Sea area. The recent announcement made by President Biden, at Madrid, with regard to augmenting the US troops deployed to our country by deploying, on rotational basis, US brigade-level structures, is of utmost importance not just for us but for the entire consolidation effort of the allied defence and deterrence posture against any aggression emerging on the Eastern flank.

President Ronald Reagan used to say that freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. It is not ours by way of inheritance; it must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation was never guaranteed for anyone; any generation can lose it during their life.

At 25 years after the signing of the Strategic Partnership between Romania and the United States of America, we can say that freedom remains as precious as it is today both here, in Romania and all over the world. It is enough to think at the Ukrainian people's drama, with whom we are so sympathetic, in order to understand that each day lived peacefully, freely, as nations mastering their own destinies, is due to those who fell in the line of duty.

Vasile Dîncu, minister of National Defence



Royal Canadian Air Force CF-188 fighter jets have taken up their NATO Air Policing duties at Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base and will be securing the skies alongside the Romanian Air Force for the coming four months. Six Royal Canadian Air Force's CF-188 fighters and personnel from Canada's Armed Force Air Task Force-Romania (ATF-R) deployed to Romania in early August 2022. This is the seventh time that Canada has deployed an ATF to Romania on Operation Reassurance since 2014.

CANADA MISSION-READY IN ROMANIA TO SECURE NATO AIRSPACE IN BLACK SEA REGION

During an official ceremony on August 4, marking the beginning of the CF-18 mission, Lieutenant General Fernando de la Cruz, Commander of NATO's Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) Torrejón, Spain, presented the Mission Ready Certificate to is Lieutenant Colonel Stephan Latwaitis, ATF Detachment Commander, confirming Team Canada has been fully trained and qualified to accomplish the NATO mission.

This is a clear example of the spirit of cooperation and solidarity we share in the Alliance

General de la Cruz underscored the symbolic meaning of the enhanced Air Policing mission that displays Alliance cohesion and the transatlantic link binding Allies together. "Thank you to both nations, Canada and Romania, for enabling this activity that shows one more time that NATO is a strong Alliance where no member nation ever stands alone," said General de la Cruz. "The Canadian detachment from North America is ready to take responsibilities, together with the Romanian Air Force, for the Air Policing mission over this part of south eastern Europe," he added.

The Royal Canadian Air Force pilots from the 425th Squadron, will fly quick reaction alert and training missions alongside Romanian fighter pilots. All missions are fully integrated into the Romanian defence system and NATO's integrated air and missile defence system. Missions are controlled by the Control and Reporting Centre in Moara Vlăsiei, tactically commanded by the CAOC in Spain and overseen by NATO's Allied Air Command in Germany.

"This is a clear example of the spirit of cooperation and solidarity we share in the Alliance," said General de la Cruz. "Today we are facing a new

threat after Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. NATO reacted promptly, taking quick, decisive actions and providing a common voice to defend our nations; thereby, showing the unity of the Alliance. Since then, we have increased the level of Vigilance Activities over the NATO skies in this part of Europe," he concluded. "The Canadian Armed Forces are proud to participate in cooperative defence activities in support of NATO enhanced Air Policing in Romania," said Lieutenant Colonel Stephan Latwaitis, ATF Detachment Commander. "Canada is a strong supporter of NATO; by deploying an Air Task Force to Romania Canada is committed to doing its part to fulfill NATO Air Policing and to support NATO assurance and deterrence measures in Eastern and Central Europe with the aim of reassuring nations in the region of NATO's intent to support their stability and security," he added. One element of this response has been the Air Shielding missions Allied Air Command, both CAOCs and the Allies have conducted along the eastern flank. The Canadian fighter aircraft will be integrated in this effort flying together with aircraft from the Romanian fighter squadrons and the F-16s from the United States currently stationed at Fetesti Air Base here in Romania. In the country, the Air Shielding posture includes the French Surface-Based Air Defence System deployed, to contribute to the defence of Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base.

"Today my appreciation goes to the Romanian Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force including all of your personnel, for the high level of commitment that has allowed this enhanced Air Policing and the Air Shielding mission to happen this area," General de la Cruz said in conclusion.

Story by Allied Air Command Public Affairs Office

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE U.S.-ROMANIAN BILATERAL DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP

On September 24, 2022, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense Celeste Wallander and Romanian State Secretary Simona Cojocaru met in Romania to discuss a range of bilateral defense and regional security issues.

The two leaders recognized the 25th anniversary of the U.S.-Romania strategic partnership, shared views on Black Sea security, and lauded NATO's unified response against Russia's war of choice in Ukraine.

Both leaders noted Ukraine's recent battlefield successes in the Donbas region and condemned Russian President Vladimir Putin's



recent escalatory rhetoric. Assistant Secretary Wallander re-affirmed the United States' Article 5 commitment to the Eastern Flank and thanked Romania for hosting a significant number of U.S.

rotational forces. Both leaders also marked the historical significance of the NATO Summit in Madrid and stressed the need for Allies to continue investing in combat-credible forces to defend the

Alliance and deter Russian aggression. While aboard a Romanian naval vessel on the Danube River, Assistant Secretary Wallander and State Secretary Cojocaru joined a group of policy and military experts to discuss Black Sea security, and observed river barges and cargo ships ferrying vital Ukrainian grain exports to the global market.

The following day, both leaders visited Romania's 86th Air Base in Borcea, where they met with members of a Romanian F-16 squadron supporting NATO combat air patrols and Black Sea air policing operations.

Story by U.S. Department of Defense



10th AAMDC welcomes Brig. Gen. Maurice Barnett as the new Commanding General

SEMBACH, Germany— U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Maurice Barnett assumed command of the 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command from Maj. Gen. Greg Brady in a ceremony on July 12, 2022 at Sembach Kaserne, Germany.

Service members, family and friends took part in the ceremony to support the new commanding general and to honor the accomplishments of Brady. Presiding over the ceremony was U.S. Army Gen. Darryl A. Williams, commanding general of U.S. Army Europe and Africa. In Williams' speech, he highlights the accomplishments of 10th AAMDC under the command of Brady. Romanian Air Force was represented by Commander of 1st SAM Brigade, colonel Bogdan-Nicolae Istrate

The 10th AAMDC commanding general is required to perform in four critical roles: as the theater army air and missile defense coordinator, he manages a particularly constrained resource environment with an insatiable requirement for air defense capabilities. As the senior Army air defender in theater, he serves as the proponent for modernization of air and missile defense in support of U.S. Army future requirements. As the deputy area air defense commander, he advises a sister component commander on all matters in air defense operations, planning and coordination. As the commanding general, he leads and manages operations across four garrisons and 10 separate forward-deployed sites.

"In each of these demanding roles, Major General Brady has performed superbly, and the list is just a few of his exceptional achievements," said Gen. Williams.

Brady led the expansion of the 10 AAMDC headquarters from a colonel command to a general officer command and incorporated a 25 percent increase in staff. Brady also oversaw the activation of 5th Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment and deployed the Army's newest maneuver short range air defense capability, M-SHORAD, a striker-based platform. 10th not only fielded M-SHORAD, but showing off the advanced capability as part of the Army's modernization effort, drove the prototypes over 1000 miles of from Ansbach, Germany all the way to the northern edge of Estonia and conducted a mid-winter live fire and combined arms training exercise on the Gulf of Finland.

"Such a bittersweet honor to be here today,"

said Brady. "Bitter, because of how sad I am to leave this team I love so much. Sweet, because of how much this team has accomplished and General Williams just highlighted over the last three years and because of the exciting future I see for this command in the coming years."

Over the past three years, 10th AAMDC trained Ukrainian Soldiers on radars that they are now using to defend their skies. Last fall, Soldiers of 10 AAMDC supported the movement of 42,000 Afghans in their new journey to freedom and security. This year, both battalions rapidly deployed Patriot and short-range air defense batteries across 5 different NATO countries to assure Allies and deter any potential aggressor in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a flagrant violation of international law. "Throughout, the Soldiers, sergeants, officers and civilians of this command, displayed professionalism, expertise and commitment to our nation and its values," said Williams. "Their performance is a testament to the outstanding leadership of Major General Brady."

Over the past 3 years, readiness and relationships have been the focus for 10th AAMDC. Readiness can be encapsulated by current operation deployments across NATO's Eastern flank. There are soldiers deployed across six countries deterring aggression against NATO and assuring our Allies and partners of the United States, commitment to defend every inch of alliance territory including the skies.

During Brady's time in command, 10th AAMDC trained extensively with NATO Allies: a combined live fire in Greece with German air force partners, Sabre Guardian, a combined live



fire missile exercise with five air and missile defense platforms shooting over the Black Sea including U.S. Patriot, Romanian Hawk, U.S. Avengers, and Romanian SA-6 SAA just to name a few.

"I said our other focus was relationships. Not only do we maintain them, but we also improve them," said Brady. "We cherish these relationships, and a lot of our US joint partners are here today." He also states, "It's been fortunate to build these relationships with you and I know these relationships will stay strong for years to come."

The Brady family are ready to start their next chapter in Omaha, Nebraska, at the United States Strategic Command.

"We will continue to cherish our memories with all of you and sincerely hope our paths cross again," said Brady. Please continue to treat everyone with dignity and respect because you know what? When you put people first, winning happens. Shield of victory, stronger together, people first, winning matters."

The new Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Maurice Barnett is from Gary, Indiana and received his commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Air Defense Artillery Corps upon graduation from Indiana University in 1994. At his previous assignment he served a Deputy Commanding Officer for United States Army Cadet Command.

"I'm excited to join this great team, Team 10, and humbled by the leaders with whom I get to serve and ready to hit the ground running," said Barnett.

Text: pfc. Yesenia Cadavid

Photo: Ionuț Crivățu, Yesenia Cadavid



Visit at Capu Midia

The commander of the Allied Joint Force Command Naples, Admiral Stuart Munsch, and the deputy of the Southeast Multinational Corps Command, Major General Constantin Ciolponea, visited the complex firing range of the "Brigadier General Ion Bungescu" Air Defense Training School, where they had a meeting with the French soldiers of the MAMBA air defense detachment, stationed at Capu Midia.

Admiral Stuart Munsch participated, over 12-14 September, in a series of activities which operatively coordinate the JFCNP with the Allied structures deployed on our territory.

During the meeting, the two officials talked about the security situation from the Black Sea region and assessed the implementation status of the NATO measures taken to consolidate its defence and deterrence posture on the Eastern flank, especially in the Romanian area. Also, the meeting agenda included planning activities of the joint training sessions between the Romanian soldiers and the ones assigned to the Battle Group Forward Presence from our country.

On Monday, 12 September, the Chief of Defence Staff, General Daniel Petrescu, met with the Commander of the Allied Joint Force Command Naples (JFCNP), Admiral Stuart Munsch, at the 243rd Radar and Monitoring Brigade Callatis from Constanta.

General Daniel Petrescu appreciated the cooperation among the Defence Staff, JFCNP and the allied structures deployed on our national territory as well as the collaboration between JFCNP and Joint Forces Command from Romania. JFCNP support provided throughout the process of rendering operational the Headquarters Multinational Corps South East increased this allied structure's role in Romania with a view of achieving the C2 capacity of NATO's regional architecture. We are intensely planning the Allied forces' training process which must be thought within the context of the entire Allied Eastern Flank in order to increase interoperability and strengthen the deterrence and defence posture, the Chief of Defence Staff stated.

The visit agenda of the delegation headed by Admiral Stuart Munsch consists in working visits at 57th Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base from Constanta and the HQ Multinational Division South-East from Bucharest on 13 September, respectively at the Joint National Training Center from Cincu, Brasov and the HQ Multinational Corps South-East from Sibiu, on 14 September.

Photo and text: Anca Medrea



FETEȘTI AIR BASE, ROMANIA



FETEȘTI AIR BASE, Germany – 435th Contingency Response Support Squadron air advisors worked alongside the Romanian air force while leading training on the Barrier Arresting Kit 12 at Fetești Air Base, Romania, July 18-20, 2022.

The BAK-12 is an aircraft arresting system used by both the U.S. and Romania to decelerate landing fighter aircraft in emergencies.

The air advisors' training goal was to share best practices with Romanian personnel, better preparing them to conduct regular maintenance and care for the systems at Fetești. During the training, the air advisors encouraged Romanians to share any knowledge or information about their respective arresting systems. "It's equally important that we receive information from our Romanian partners," said Capt. Sylvan Lachance, 435th CRSS air advisor. "It's essential that we receive information about what they may need and any help or training they might benefit from." Both nations' service members valued the chance to share knowledge of hardware crucial to enabling Agile Combat Employment. The Romanian air force was eager to learn and share their knowledge as well.

"By completing this course we not only acquire new knowledge, skill, and abilities that allow us to perform operations and carry out necessary actions with varying degrees of complexity regarding the maintenance and repair of equipment, but we also accumulate specific knowledge and train the skills necessary for the use

and maintenance of technical means," said Romanian air force Warrant Officer 2nd Class Liviu Hapenciu, assigned to the 95th Air Force Base.

The 435th Air Ground Operations Wing executes a diverse mission set across the European theater, and the 435th CRSS's work with NATO partners is no exception.

The air advisors are a unique team of qualified multi-capable Airmen who support the United States in Europe with Security Force Assistance engagements.

"If you asked anyone in our unit what an advisor does, the answer would be different from each one because we all work in different lanes," said LaChance. "We all have the basic knowledge required to transfer capabilities to other nations."

Air advisors not only work with partner nations to develop their aviation enterprises but also to bolster partnerships with U.S. allies and partners. By leading and participating in multiple partnership events each year, the air advisors play a special role in enhancing relationships across the continent.

"Air advisors help strengthen the theater," said LaChance. "NATO's whole platform is that we are stronger together. Our job is to build interoperability with our partner nations."

To learn more about the 435th AGOW and its mission, visit ramstein.af.mil.

Story by Airman 1st Class Alexcia Givens, 86th Airlift Wing/Public Affairs





EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP FLIGHT

The F-16 EPF (European Partnership Flight) conference was held during 19-23 Sept in Bucharest, Romania and it was organized by USAFE in conjunction with the Romanian Air Force with attendance from other partner nations that flies the F-16 aircraft like Poland, Portugal, Belgium, Bulgaria.

The EPF event is designed to focus on F-16 maintenance and operations interoperability with an additional topic regarding the Agile Combat Employment Concept. The opening remarks of the event were made by col. Keith Derbenwich, air force attache at US Embassy in Romania, former F-16 pilot, that highlighted the importance of this platform in the various operation environment in which USAF and NATO partners were involved successfully. From the RoAF side, colonel Vasile Petrea



presented his remarks based on the importance of building shared training capabilities that will allow a better quality of the operational missions and col. Manoliu that stated about the team effort needed throughout maintenance and supply chain which are playing an important role in the F-16 program.

Sharing the experience gained by the air forces that have history in operating the F-16, especially nowadays geopolitical environment at the east of NATO border, having in mind the continuous upgrades and modernization of the platform, the F-16 aircraft is a combat proven asset that keeps an important role even in the today's warfares.

*Text: Radu Cătălin Mihalache
Photo: Adrian Sultănoiu*

B-52s BROUGHT UNDER NATO COMMAND FOR THE FIRST TIME DURING MISSION OVER ROMANIA

U.S. B-52s came under NATO command and control for the first time ever during a Bomber Task Force training mission over Romania working out offensive and defensive manoeuvres with Allied fighters.

The Allied aircraft from Canada, Romania and France practiced fighter-bomber escort procedures and bi-lateral communication on the long-range mission flying from the United Kingdom to Romania and the Black Sea Region. Then the aircraft conducted a range of simulated offensive strikes and defensive manoeuvres to support flying training objectives and interoperability between Allied aircraft and crews. The bomber aircraft came under command and control of NATO's Combined Operations Centres Torrejón and Uedem for the duration of the mission. Bringing U.S. bombers under the command and control of NATO entities creates the necessary opportunity to build our lines of trust and cohesion.

"Bringing U.S. bombers under the command and control of NATO entities creates the necessary opportunity to build our lines of trust



and cohesion," said General James B. Hecker, Commander of NATO's Allied Air Command and U.S. Air Forces in Europe - Air Forces Africa. "We're providing advanced capabilities and readiness enhancing activities across the Euro-Atlantic Area while creating flexible and agile options for bombers should they need to respond to any changes in the operational environment," he added. Bomber Task Force (BTF) missions

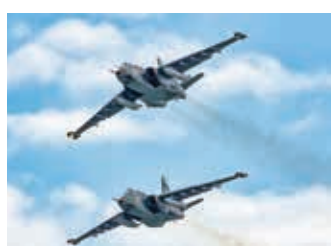
enhance the readiness and training necessary to respond to any potential crisis or challenge across the globe. BTF mission offer unique opportunities for Allies and Partners to strengthen collective deterrence and security throughout the region.

*Story by Allied Air Command
Public Affairs Office*

JOINT FLIGHT TRAINING THRACIAN VIPER 2022 STARTED

SOFIA, Bulgaria, on 8 August 2022, crews of the Bulgarian Air Force (BAF) started performing tasks in the joint flight training "Thracian Viper - 2022". Forces and assets from the Air Forces of Greece, Canada, Romania, and the United States in Europe will participate in the training.

Within two weeks, in the period 8 - 19 August, joint flights will be conducted in the Bulgarian airspace, and tasks specific to the sectors of aviation and air defence will be performed, the complexity of which will increase as the training progresses. Their main objective is related to the



preparation of forces for joint participation in coalition operations. On the Bulgarian side, servicemen from the Command, control, and surveillance base, crews of MiG-29 fighter jets from Graf Ignatievo Air Base, crews of Su-25 aircraft from Bezmer Air Base,



and crews of AS-532 Cougar helicopters from Krumovo Air Base participate in the training and have to fulfill tasks on aeromedical evacuation. Air defence formations from the Air Force and the Land Forces take part in the training as well.

Royal Canadian Air Force F-18s will operate from the territory of Romania, our northern neighbor. The Romanian and the Greek Air Forces with their F-16s will conduct flights taking off from and landing at their permanent bases. US Air Force personnel will provide for the aviation operations at Elena training area. The joint training "Thracian Viper" has been conducted annually since 2010 and provides opportunities for the Air Forces of the participating nations to generate rich experience in the conditions of real interaction in an international environment.

Story by shape.nato.int

ROMANIA Aids FRANCE battling wildfires with SAC TRANSPORT



Pápa, 12 August 2022 - Romania is using the Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC) to send firefighters and equipment to France, where wildfires near Bordeaux have already destroyed 7,400 hectares and forced 10,000 people to leave their homes.

"France requested the assistance of allies and partners through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, and Romania offered firefighting troops to assist.

The support that we provide to help French authorities to limit the effects of the wildfires is a proof of European solidarity. As we did in the past with other emergencies, we decided to use a fraction of the national share within Strategic Aircraft Capability and requested transport air support from Papa Airbase from Hungary. We chose this option because it was the fastest one available. C-17 Globemaster III is a proper capability that could fit the personnel and the firetrucks and accompanying equipment", said General Daniel Petrescu, Chief of Defense Staff of the Romanian Armed Forces.

The SAC aircraft are again proving to be an agile and capable asset for Member Nation Romania. Two SAC C-17s were on their way to Romania from Papa Air Base to pick up firefighters and equipment within seven hours of receiving a request to assist. This made it possible for Romanian firefighters to join French fire crews in directly combatting the wildfires within only 15 hours from the SAC receiving a request.

SAC multinational crews transported four firetrucks, a support vehicle and 25 firefighters yesterday and will transport more equipment and personnel today.

*Story by Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC)
Photos by Romanian Firefighter
Service - Alexandru Badea*



NEWS FROM ENJJPT

Class 22-06 graduated 21 combat aviators for the NATO alliance!

Our guest speaker was Colonel Cătălin Micloș from Romania, who spoke to a graduating class that included 13 Americans, 4 Germans, 2 Canadians, and 2 Romanians.

Two distinguished graduates were Aidan Bermingham (USAF) who will fly the F-35 at Luke AFB, and Jannis Ruester (German AF) who will fly the Eurofighter at Laage AB. Congratulations to all of our graduates!

The Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training Program, established in the spirit of NATO, is conducted by the 80th Flying Training Wing at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas. ENJJPT is the world's only multi-nationally manned and managed flying training program chartered to produce combat pilots for NATO. The 80th FTW is the official U.S. Air Force designation of this flying training organization, but it is better known as ENJJPT by its members.

A multi-national working group visited Sheppard AFB to survey the facilities and organization of the 80th FTW, which was

already conducting undergraduate pilot training for the German and Dutch air forces. In June 1980, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown announced the selection of Sheppard as the site for the proposed program, and the ENJJPT Program held its official opening ceremony Oct. 23, 1981. In 1987, the program was extended to 1989, and in 1989, the program was again extended to 2005. As of 2016, the program added Romania as its 14th partner and has been extended through 2026.

The benefits of the ENJJPT Program are many – lower cost, better training environment, enhanced standardization and interoperability, to name a few. Another important aspect of ENJJPT is the bond of friendship and respect developed among all participants in the 80th FTW. The student pilots and staff instructors of today will be the leaders of NATO's air forces of tomorrow. Having trained together, they will be much better prepared to fight and win together when the need ever arises.

Text & photos: Sheppard Air Force Base





SELIS 22: CMSAF Hosts Largest International DAF Engagement

Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass hosted the 2022 Senior Enlisted Leader International Summit Aug. 1-5, bringing together senior enlisted leaders from across the Department of Defense, NATO and 60 allied and partner nations. Romanian Air Force was represented by CSM Daniel Simpetru, Romanian Air Force Command Sergeant Major (CMSAF equivalent). The five-day summit focused on "Winning the High-End Fight," providing senior enlisted leaders an opportunity to build and maintain relationships, secure common interests, promote shared values, and deter current and potential threats by demonstrating the strength of global military partnerships.

"It's more than just an opportunity to meet, dialogue, and share perspectives with my enlisted partners from more than 60 nations," Bass said. "SELIS represents a promise to the future – a promise to work together, in the spirit of trust and solidarity to ensure the world our children, and their children, inherit will enjoy longstanding peace and stability."

During the event Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Kostiantyn Stanislavchuk briefed about ongoing military operations in Ukraine and how the Ukrainian NCO corps has strengthened with the help of U.S. and NATO allies since the 2014 invasion by Russia.

"Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has shown what happens when you don't trust and develop a strong NCO corps," Bass said. "While they have certainly moved fast, not having a strong NCO corps to interpret commanders' intent and ensure their military members are taken care of, have caused Russian forces to experience mistakes along the way."

Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall spoke to the senior enlisted leaders about the responsibility of the United States and its allies and

partners have in protecting and sustaining fundamental human rights.

"We need to defend fundamental rights and promote consent and democracy... Every human has the right to basic security and freedom from violence, the right to access truthful information from any source, and the right to hold their government accountable for its actions," Kendall said. "These aren't just American values; they are universal values."

He also touched on integrated deterrence and how it directly connects the U.S. and its allies and partners to effectively deter aggression across the globe. Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CQ Brown, Jr., touched on the importance of trust and relationship building during his comments to symposium attendees, stressing the importance of teamwork.

"I believe that success takes a team, but failure you can do alone," Brown said. "We're facing a very dynamic environment that affects us all, and if we want to gain a competitive advantage, we will need to collaborate with our allies and partners. In order to make this happen, we need to build Airmen and Guardians who are leaders that will get the job done in future crises, contingencies, and conflicts."

Story by USAF



The first day of JWLS on July 11th was a joint service day, offering a robust agenda including discussion forums, question and answer panels, practical workshops, and speaker spotlights for members of all services and DoD. The second day, July 12, featured service-specific sessions to promote discussion of topics such as leadership, mentorship, military policy and family wellness, and networking with leadership.

"JWLS 2022 offered a safe space for women in uniform to recognize each other's successes with laughter, celebration and joy. It was a space where we could ask for and offer each other help — focused on our professional development, our leadership aspirations, and our personal goals, to thrive while we serve," said SSLA President Capt. Emily Bassett. "Our 2022 SSLA JWLS theme, 'Stronger by Helping Each Other,' was personified by every single attendee and presenter: each one of us dedicated ourselves to deliberately reach out to one another, discuss the tough issues, and collaborate for solutions. We're grateful to our speakers, panelists, and every JWLS participant that made these authentic conversations happen—I think we all left inspired to serve."

JWLS 2022 featured a slate of well-known public figures from military and government, public speakers, authors, and influencers to drive discussions on issues of importance to military women, including Congresswoman Elaine Luria, Virginia Lieutenant Governor Winsome Earle-Sears, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro, Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. David Berger, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Joanne Bass, and many others.

Throughout the symposium, leaders emphasized that one of the key outcomes of JWLS was to be receptive and listen to attendees as they discussed issues that affect their professional development, retention and wellness.

"You didn't come here just to have coffee and meet new people and say 'hi' to friends you already had," said Gen. Berger during his remarks July 11. "You're going to solve the problems. My job is to listen."

Similarly, Secretary Del Toro noted in his keynote to Navy and Marine Corps

attendees July 12, "Let me be perfectly clear: I want to retain your service. I want you to thrive in service. And I want you to lead our services into the future."

JWLS also offered several opportunities to hear directly from leaders as they discussed their personal leadership challenges over the course of their career, offering guidance to attendees who represented a variety of ranks, from junior enlisted members to flag and general officers.

"I think you have to remind yourself that you may have a plan, but your plan may change," noted Maj. Gen. Jill Farris, Director of the National Guard Bureau's Office of the Joint Surgeon General, during a panel July 11. "I have a sign in my office that says there's a reason why there are 26 letters in the alphabet. If plan A fails, you have 25 more letters."

Along with the symposium, SSLA will also hosted a career and transitioning seminar aimed at service members preparing to retire and transition to a civilian career. The seminar featured insight from guest speakers about their own transitions as well as a panel of pro-military civilian employers. Attendees had the opportunity to participate in resume reviews, mock interviews, elevator pitch practice, the art of salary negotiation, mentoring and networking best practices.

Bassett emphasized that while JWLS was an event intended to empower, encourage and inspire, work still remains to ensure the impact of JWLS resonates across the services and DoD.

"We want each person who attended JWLS to think about their experience at JWLS – what they learned, the connections they made – and bring that back to their command," said Bassett. "Have these same authentic discussions with your leaders and your peers; leaders, have this authentic discussions with your people. We all believe in our mission to Mentor, Inspire, and Lead; use what you learned at JWLS to grow yourself and mentor inspire others as leaders. And additionally – we encourage you to continue these conversations with us at SSLA by becoming a member!"

*SSLA Press Release
Media Contact: Cdr. Laura K. Stegher*

101st Soldiers demonstrate CQB Readiness in Romania



U.S. Army Soldiers with Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), practice Battle Drill 6 on Mihail Kogalniceanu, Romania, July 11, 2022. 101st units are always prepared to deploy world-wide on short notice to conduct contingency operations in support of our national security objectives.

Since arriving in Romania Soldiers with Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), have improved their proficiency in close quarters battle with Battle Drill 6 on Mihail Kogalniceanu, Romania, July 11, 2022. Battle Drill 6 is a CQB drill that has Soldiers secure each room of a building so that additional forces can move into space to gain forward movement on the battlefield. The 101st enables NATO countries to support more exercises and participate in more training opportunities with ally and partner nations to deter aggression in the region.

"I think if we were able to incorporate our allies in future training with a joint operation we could refine standard operating procedures and bring the United States and international countries together," said 1st Lt. Ethan Lund, an infantry officer with A Co. 1-26th, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (ASLT). "That way if we paired in a future large scale combat operation then we would be able to go into a building, clear, and secure the building with foreign allies."

Fort Campbell units are always prepared to deploy world-wide on short notice to conduct contingency operations in support of our national security objectives.

"CQB training is very important in today's environment with what you're looking at in today's battlefields, you see a lot of urban environments," Lund said. "It seems that a lot of the warfare today is moving away from the rural environment and more into that urban building close quarters style fighting."

As they have for the last 80 years, the 101st Airborne Division stands ready to deploy anywhere to support and defend the Nation and our Allies.

*Text: By Pfc. Jayden Woods
Photo Credit: U.S. Army Pfc. Jayden Woods*

Joint Women's Leadership Symposium AND CAREER AND TRANSITIONING SEMINAR

Norfolk, Virginia (August 04, 2022)



The Sea Services Leadership Association (SSLA) brought together more than a thousand service women and men at the Norfolk Waterside Marriott in Norfolk, Va., July 10-13 during the 33rd annual Joint Women's Leadership Symposium and Career and Transitioning Seminar. Romanian Air Force was represented by captain Claudia Pop and captain Iuliana Ungureanu. SSLA JWLS is the largest gathering of women in uniform nationwide, and has been recognized as the premier professional and personal development conference for women in the military. Each year at JWLS, SSLA offers mentoring, professional development and leadership seminars for servicewomen and men from all military branches and the U.S. Coast Guard, NOAA, Department of Defense, and international representatives and civilians, directly addressing challenges and issues faced by those who serve.





The „BLUE SKY” exercise was held over the enchanting view of Romania, the green mountains, and open fields. For two weeks, the 131st („The Yellow Birds”) Squadron and the 103rd („Elephants”) Squadron moved their seats from Nevatim base to „Boboc” base in Romania, where they exercised flights in the unknown area of the Carpathian Mountains – this is how it looks from the inside

BEYOND BORDER: "BLUE SKY" EXERCISE IN ROMANIA

After eleven years that the IAF had not exercised in Romania, two squadrons that fly Heavy Transport Aircraft and the special forces unit YAHAK (Advance Landing Unit), took off from Nevatim base heading north-west. The aircraft landed in the country with which the IAF used to cooperate, the country that had the unforgettable blood-soaked accident 12 years ago. Now, the two squadrons reached the country to land on the foreign grass, navigate between mountains, fly high, and re-organize for different surroundings.

FLYING ABOVE THE ACCIDENT SITE

„First thing's first, the purpose of this exercise is to learn to fly in an unknown area, under the assumption that this is how it will be in wartime”, starts Capt. A, an aircrew of The 131st Squadron. „We practice here in mountainous regions, in a high topography with a heavy load. It is a complex operational challenge that we cannot practice every day. It is a flight close to the ground, in which the „ground” is high mountains’ surfaces. Therefore, the aircraft flies differently - the air is thinner, which stresses the engines. Combined with the heavy load we carry, it makes flying more difficult, and we need to adjust the way we fly”.

The current drill can't be separated from the accident, which occurred in Romania in 2010, in operation with the same name. During the drill, four „Yasur” (CH-53) helicopters took off in unstable weather and low visibility when one of them hit the Carpathian mountain ridge, and all of the seven aircrew members were killed. The emphasis on the flight during the changing weather can be felt throughout the entire duration of the deployment, and there's no doubt that despite the crew's not being used to these kinds of conditions, they certainly know how to handle them. „The Israeli Air Force takes care of continuity and doesn't forget the disaster that took place here”, clarifies Capt. A. „In preparations for the deployment, we talked a lot about the crash - we are studying what had happened and making sure it doesn't happen again, how we become better from the knowledge of what happened

in the past. To fly above the site of the accident with an Israeli flag is exciting”.

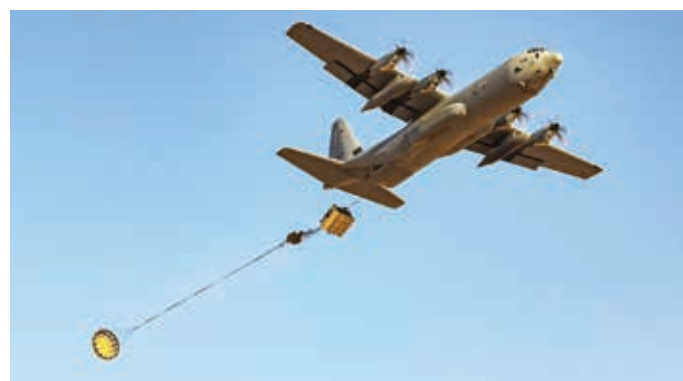
LANDING ANYWHERE

„The biggest challenge the technical department faces in this deployment is to build the foundation from zero”, shares Serg. Maj. Amos, Line Commander of the 131st Squadron. „We need to mobilize our entire workspace to a vacant parcel of land. Although we are not used to working in this new place, it is our job to maintain IAF standards. We work hard round the clock to ensure this”.

The transport aircraft did not land only on the sterile landing strips of the „Boboc” base. One of the capabilities they exercised was landing the aircraft in the wastelands, that is, areas they do not land on often. For that purpose, the ALU (Advance Landing Unit) joined the training - it is a unit whose sole purpose is to prepare a landing strip in wastelands successfully. „We reach an area that we tracked down in advance, either a place we already have located in the past or a place we identified in aerial photographs, and decide it's an appropriate area” explains Lt. D, the Team Commander in the unit. „The person who determines the exact location is „gravel tester”, says Sgt. A. „Afterwards, we scan the area and make sure it's clear from any potential obstacle that might risk the aircraft. Then, we start marking the area for the aircraft. An example of our training here is landing on grass - an important capability we rarely have the opportunity to exercise in Israel.”

„We prepared for this exercise throughout the past year, when in the last three months this was the main focus for the squadron”, summarizes Capt. A. „In the end, this exercise provided us a meaningful training, and we were able to acquire knowledge that will be useful in the next war. Apart from that, flying in an unfamiliar region is always exciting, especially in such a beautiful place”.

Author: Noa Shenbrun
Translation: Maya Ron, Mark Chuzhoy
Photography: Amit Agronov
www.iaf.org.il



German and Spanish Eurofighter detachments – shoulder to shoulder in NATO Air Policing

"We increased the detachment size by one third and almost doubled the mission output. For us it is a huge success – and it is a huge success for NATO as well"

A German A-400M conducts tactical air-to-air refuelling of a mixed Spanish-German twoship during a training mission.

Photo: Bundeswehr



Diamond formation of two German and two Spanish Eurofighters conducting a fly-by at Ämari Air Base in Estonia.

Photo: Michel Scheller / Bundeswehr

RAMSTEIN, Germany – For the first time, Germany and Spain have collectively executed NATO's enhanced Air Policing. A mixed German-Spanish flight of quick reaction alert interceptors flew sorties safeguarding the Baltic airspace.

Under the concept of „plug-and-fight”, a small detachment of approx. 60 Spanish Air Force personnel integrated with the 140-strong German main enhanced Air Policing detachment at Ämari Air Base in Estonia. Together both detachments operated a fleet of nine Eurofighter jets. When ordered to launch by NATO's northern Combined Air Operations Centre at Uedem in Germany, one Spanish and one German Eurofighters take off on a combined sortie e.g. to identify and escort non-NATO aircraft securing the NATO airspace above the Baltic nations.

„This combined deployment allowed for a significant reduction of our footprint in terms of personnel and materiel”, said Lieutenant Colonel Georg Hummel, German Detachment Commander. „Summing up the result of this interoperability endeavour we increased the detachment size by one third and almost doubled the mission output. For us it is a huge success – and it is a huge success for NATO as well”, he concluded. The cooperation among pilots was smooth, after all, they are flying the same basic aircraft type Pilot training has been standardised NATO-wide and several German pilots actually conducted some of their Eurofighter training in Spain.

„With these combined alert missions we have achieved great success as a result of teamwork and thanks to the interoperability of our advanced weapons system”, said Major Miguel Ángel López García, Spanish Detachment Commander. „Shared maintenance has reduced the logistics footprint, deploying fewer personnel and material by each country for this type of operation, and twice the joint operability of the Eurofighters has been generated than would have been obtained if both countries

had worked separately,” he added. For the first time in this cooperation among Eurofighter user nations, the German Air Force provided arms, guided missiles and ammunition for the on-board gun for the Spanish jets. They received fuel from German tank trucks and German tractors moved them on the apron. As and when required, the Germans made available smaller spare parts for the Spanish jets; for larger hydraulic and mechanic components a case-by-case review was conducted. Since both nations operate different versions of the Eurofighter, the replacement and exchange of electronic parts was not always possible. This meant that the Spanish detachment did bring their own spare parts kit which, however, was much less comprehensive than one required for an autonomous deployment.

German technicians executed most of the repair on the Spanish Eurofighters; a Spanish supervisor oversaw and certified their work; translators helped to overcome the language barrier and avoid any misapprehensions that might have sensitive repercussions. Each nation conducted final pre-flight checks because of major differences between German and Spanish procedures. Upon return-to-base, each nation's ground crews again received their jet for post-flight inspection. German technicians conducted smaller repair work to ensure jets were turned around for the next mission with minimum delay.

After almost three weeks of cooperation and two weeks of combined flying missions, both the technical and the flying teams have closely worked together. A combined squadron spirit has developed among the quick reaction alert interceptor detachment during mission and training flights enhancing interoperability among Eurofighter user nations.

Story by Allied Air Command Public Affairs Office based on information provided by the German Air Force detachment at Ämari



During the "Plug-and-fight" deployment, German tank trucks refuelled Spanish Eurofighters on the ground.

Photo by Michel Scheller/Bundeswehr



German and Spanish maintainers and technicians worked together to ensure jets were ready all the time.

Photo by Guagliano/Bundeswehr

THE LAST RIDE OF THE "BREWERY WAGON"

It was a war-winning mission, they said.

"...Without his gas and oil, Hitler's planes will not fly. His mechanized units will not roll. It would take three complete army corps many months to accomplish what less than 1800 of you men can do in one afternoon." – Major General Lewis H. Brereton, Commander, Ninth Air Force

Coming back was secondary.

"If nobody comes back, the results will be worth the cost." – Brigadier General Uzal G. Ent, Commander, IX Bomber Command and Tidal Wave mission commander



This picture is perhaps the most famous taken of Operation Tidal Wave, and was widely published in newspapers and magazines during the war. It shows the 98th Bombardment Group B-24D "The Sandman" of the group's fourth wave lifting its way above the smokestacks next to the McKee Distillation Plant at the Astra Romana refinery (Target White IV) on the south side of Ploiesti was taken by the B-24D "Chug-A-Lug." Each aircraft had a designated part of a refinery's infrastructure to bomb, attempting to strike the most vital elements. The Sandman hit a barrage balloon cable during the bomb run but the cable was cut by a propeller and the aircraft continued on making a successful attack on the refinery. Both aircraft were damaged but survived the mission, although the top turret gunner of "Chug-A-Lug" was killed.

Photo source: Official US Army Air Forces photo

By Terrence G. Popravak, Jr. Lieutenant Colonel, USAF (Retired)

Before the mission, many of the men probably had a difficulty to find Romania on the map. Afterwards, those who survived would never forget it. One hundred and seventy-eight American B-24D Liberator heavy bombers and their 178 crews, composed of over 1,700 airmen, took off from their air bases in Libya for a 2,400-mile round trip flight on Operation Tidal Wave, the epic low-level attack on nine key oil refineries around Ploiesti, which produced most of Romania's oil. A low-level attack promised better accuracy to accomplish the objective with the limited number of B-24 bombers available at the time. They hoped to deliver a knockout blow and shorten the war by six months. Romania's oil fields supplied the Axis with about 1/3 of its oil, including fuel for vehicles and industrial lubricants in a relatively concentrated area and was considered essential. They were such an important target that Allied leaders American President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, under pressure from Soviet leader Josef Stalin to open a second front against the Axis, personally ordered them to be destroyed to hamper the Axis war effort. Operation Tidal Wave was the second time American B-24 bombers attacked Ploiesti; the first time was in June, 1942 when a small raid of 12 planes, the first American heavy bomber raid against a target in Europe during World War II, accomplished little damage but underlined the importance of Ploiesti.

The Airmen who flew this mission came from five B-24 bomb groups, including two based in North Africa (98th and 376th) and three brought in from England (44th, 93rd and 389th) for this special mission on that Black Sunday, August 1, 1943. The crews were told they faced numerous fighters and ground-based anti-aircraft guns and barrage balloons, but the exact number was unknown and estimated. They were told that most were Romanian-manned and that their fighting spirit was not strong. These estimates were in error. Over 100 fighter planes and almost 400 antiaircraft guns defended Ploiesti and Romanian and German defenders both fought well.

One of the 178 crews, the Palm crew in the 376th Bomb Group, was unhappy when they learned of their assignment to fly a particular B-24 known as a lemon, a jinxed ship named "Brewery Wagon." Pilot John Palm was so disgusted that he threw a handful of sand and gravel at the aircraft as he and his crew approached it on the morning of August 1.

THE CREW

Pilot: First Lieutenant (1st Lt.) John Dudley Palm from El Paso, Texas was 27 years old. He was the commander of the crew and in the Army Air Forces tradition it was called the Palm crew. His crew came from all across the United States, from coast to coast. They were experienced, having completed somewhere between 18 and 20 combat missions by the time of Operation Tidal Wave. The rest of Palm's crew on this mission included:

Co-pilot: Second Lieutenant (2nd Lt.) William Franklin Love, Los Angeles, California, age 22. Bombardier: 2nd Lt. Robert W. Merrell was also from Los Angeles, age 25. For Operation Tidal Wave, Merrell replaced the Palm crew's regular bombardier, 2nd Lt. Lawrence R. Strickler - according to some sources this was Merrell's first combat mission.

Navigator: 2nd Lt. William Morris Wright, from Melrose, Massachusetts, 22 years old.

Flight Engineer / top turret gunner: Technical Sergeant (T/Sgt.) Alexander Philip Rockinson, from Canal Fulton, Ohio, 29 years old.

Radio Operator: T/Sgt. Harold Block, from Brooklyn, New York, age 30.

Gunner (either left or right waist, or tunnel) / assistant radio operator: Staff Sergeant (S/Sgt.) Austin Dean Chastain, from Siloam Springs, Arkansas. He was 31 years old, the oldest crewman. Gunner and Armorer: S/Sgt. Clay Eugene Snyder, from Paden City, West Virginia; he was 23.

Gunner / assistant flight engineer: S/Sgt. William Earl Thompson, St. Cloud, Florida, age 22.

Tail Gunner: S/Sgt. Dallis Richard Robertson, from Vincennes, Indiana, 29 years old.

THE AIRCRAFT

"Brewery Wagon" was one of 18,493 B-24 Liberator heavy bombers built during World War II – the B-24 was the most-produced heavy bomber and multi-engine aircraft in worldwide aviation history. She was completed as a B-24D-25-CO, US Army Air Forces serial number 41-24294 and handed over to the Army on December 9, 1942 from the Consolidated aircraft factory in California.

The Army paid \$289, 276 for the aircraft (about \$5.3 million, adjusted for inflation today).

Her first pilot assigned was probably 1st Lt. Robert H. Storz, the one who named her "Brewery Wagon." This name was in honor of the Storz Brewery of Omaha, Nebraska, run by his father, Adolph Storz. But Storz was not her only pilot, and the bomber's mission list suggests that although Storz named her and probably flew her from the US to North Africa, he and his crew didn't fly her in combat. Over the course of the weeks that accumulated into her 90-day life in the combat zone, she seemed to be a reluctant warrior, with mechanical problems frequently cropping up. Her ground crew did their best to keep her going, but she seemed a temperamental and somewhat unreliable ship.

By the time of the raid on Ploiesti, she had completed 11 combat missions with the 512 Bomb Squadron of the 376th Bomb Group, to Italy (including Rome) and Sicily, aborted and failed to complete five others, and lost one of her pilots killed in action on a mission to the railroad yard at Reggio, Italy, on June 21, 1943. The Tidal Wave mission to Romania concluded her luckless streak.



The ground crew of "Brewery Wagon" in the Libyan desert in the summer of 1943. A Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) was the Crew Chief, who provided supervision and coordinated the care of the aircraft, assisted by several other men. They worked on the flightline to service their aircraft day-to-day and conducted the pre-flight maintenance needed to make it mission ready as well as post-flight maintenance actions, battle damage repairs, etc. The men also diagnosed equipment malfunctions and replaced parts as necessary. They conducted thorough inspections of the aircraft, and kept records of the maintenance work they performed on it. The ground crew labored long and hard in primitive, harsh conditions and constantly battled the fine desert dust which got into everything, causing increased cylinder and piston and wear on the engines, cutting their service life in half.

Photo source: Courtesy Photo via USAF



B-24 aircrews of the 512th Bombardment Squadron, 376th Bombardment Group, arrive at their aircraft early in the morning of August 1, 1943, prior to the scheduled takeoff time of 7:30 a.m. Nearest at the left is the olive drab-painted No. 36, "Brewery Wagon," with the Palm crew huddled near the front of the plane. Next to the right is sand-painted No. 23, "Desert Lilly," one of the aircraft that aborted the mission over the Mediterranean Sea. And the next to the right is the sand-painted No. 28, "Wongo Wongo," which inexplicably crashed into the Mediterranean Sea on the way to Ploiesti.

Photo source: Official US Army Air Forces photo



The "Brewery Wagon" was a Consolidated B-24D-25-CO Liberator heavy bomber, construction number 1089, the 75th in her batch of 92 "Block-25" D-models produced. She was accepted for service in December, 1942, and by May 1, 1943 was assigned overseas in Ninth Air Force to the 376th Bomb Group, 512th Bomb Squadron. In the group she was given the number 36 on her nose and tail, and initially the radio identification letter (not painted on the aircraft) of B, later changed to V (36 V).

This is a still from a film clip of the aircraft in flight.
Photo source: via Mr. Charles R. Morgan



Above: in the Second World War nose art became a common feature on many American Army Air Force aircraft, especially on bombers and fighters. "Brewery Wagon" featured cartoonish characters hoisting mugs of beer, appropriate considering her first pilot was probably 1Lt. Robert H. Storz. He was the son of Adolph Storz, a brewer in Omaha, Nebraska, who took over the Storz Brewery founded by his father, Gottlieb Storz, in 1939. This nose art was featured on both sides of the nose of the aircraft. In addition, nicknames of the initial crewmembers were painted near their positions, such as "Siggy" (probably for bombardier 2Lt. William E. Siegfried) seen on the left side of the nose and some other words and smaller artwork were on other parts of the B-24. The six bomb symbols on the dark area beneath the canvas-covered cockpit represent six combat missions completed. "Brewery Wagon" completed 11 missions before her fateful flight in Operation Tidal Wave.

Photo source: American Air Museum in Britain

THE MISSION

The start of the mission went well until a 98th Bomb Group B-24 crashed after takeoff. Another Liberator, one of 28 in the 376th Bomb Group, crashed into the Mediterranean Sea after it suddenly lost control and flew wildly. John Palm was flying on the right wing of this ship, B-24 "Wongo Wongo" and had to maneuver "Brewery Wagon" out of the way to avoid a collision. The out-of-control bomber crashed into the sea - Palm's evasive maneuver spun him away and back around to the tail-end of the 376th Bomb Group formation, but he tagged along with his group and continued the mission.

So, two B-24 bombers were lost even before the force reached Romanian airspace. And 15 others left formation at various points, most with various mechanical problems, and returned to base before reaching Ploiesti (11 back to Libya and four to other bases).

A navigation error by the 376th Bomb Group commander in the lead position fractured the mission plan. As the navigators looked for three initial points (Pitesti, Targoviste, then Floresti) before making a turn directly for Ploiesti, he ordered a turn too soon, at the second point (Targoviste) and led his group and the 93rd Bomb Group immediately following on the wrong course, heading for Bucharest, not Ploiesti.

Although many navigators in the 376th Bomb Group recognized the error and several pilots broke radio silence to alert their commander, the group continued towards Bucharest. The radio set in the commander's aircraft was apparently turned off in accordance with the mission plan for radio silence prior to hitting the target. This silence on the approach was an attempt to achieve surprise, but in this case it became a problem when the flight plan wasn't followed.

At the left rear of the formation, Palm initially maintained course toward Floresti, the third and final Initial Point navigational checkpoint. But when his tail gunner told him over the intercom that the group had turned right, Palm brought his ship around to rejoin the formation.

As Palm turned, his navigator spoke over the intercom, "Doc, what are you turnin' here for?!" Palm replied "Beats the hell outta me Willie. Compton (the 376th commander) says turn!" Palm recalled that his navigator came back on the intercom, "Well, By God if this is the IP, I'm lost! This heading is all wrong."

Palm couldn't see any sign of his group's target, the Romana Americana refinery (code name White I) as the formation flew toward Bucharest. Navigator Wright said the target was off the left wing and Palm banked away from the group as "Brewery Wagon" began a solo low-level run toward Ploiesti, some 26 miles away. "No one followed us, so we made a run on Ploesti, ourselves," Palm remembered.

The Liberator flew into a rain shower and minimum visibility as the pilots strained their eyes to look out for obstructions in their flight path, trees, hills, power lines, and suddenly they emerged into the clear. And just then they crossed the outer ring of Ploiesti's anti-aircraft guns - the air-ground battle of Operation Tidal Wave began as aircraft and guns on the ground started firing at each other.

The guns started to hit as the big green bomber churned through some tree tops. The initial

damage wasn't serious and "Brewery Wagon" flew on. Given the alerted defenses, Palm chose to attack the nearest refinery. "By then, I didn't give a damn whose refinery it was! It was a refinery, and by God I was going to get it come hell or high water!" he said.

Now "Brewery Wagon" encountered the inner ring of defenses at Ploiesti. Palm lowered his aircraft even more, maybe 20 feet off the deck, only pulling up to avoid obstructions on the ground. With only one bomber to concentrate on, every gun in range opened fire on the lone bomber. Nearing a refinery, Palm pulled up to 100 feet on the bomb run; that's when his ship was hammered by the anti-aircraft guns. A stream of 20mm shells knocked out her left outboard engine. Other shells hit the nose and killed or badly wounded the bombardier and navigator. A 20mm shell exploded in the tail area, wounding the tail gunner in the scalp; he remained at his guns and continued to fire at the guns on the ground despite bleeding from his wounds.

As if the beating from the guns wasn't bad enough, various accounts state a German Me-109 fighter pilot, Hauptmann Wilhelm Steinmann, spotted "Brewery Wagon" low and trailing smoke. He overtook the B-24 from behind and fired his guns across the back and wings of the plane, inflicting fatal damage.

Although for many years it's been accepted that Steinmann delivered the coup de grâce to "Brewery Wagon," more recent scholarship on Tidal Wave suggests it was actually a different German pilot who engaged the bomber, Oberleutnant Hans-Wilhelm Schöpper. He claimed a victory over a B-24 at 1200 hours near Batesti. His description of the encounter with a B-24 is similar to Steinmann's.

But Romanian aviation historian Mr. Dan Melinte believes it was neither Steinmann nor Schöpper who shot down "Brewery Wagon," and thinks it more likely that it fell due to the accumulated damage from the guns on the ground. A post-battle Romanian military report assessed the wreck: "The plane from Ploesti-Triaj. Shows a few machine gun holes. The engines caught fire (but were extinguished on board) maybe it was hit by the A.A. below. I don't think he was knocked down by fighter planes."

Whether from AA guns or fighter, a shell also exploded in the cockpit and wounded both pilot and co-pilot. It hit near the pilot's right rudder pedal and shattered John Palm's right leg below the knee; some fragments apparently hit co-pilot Love. "Tramping the pedals was like fighting a bucking horse," recalled Palm, "I was not getting much pressure on the right pedal. I reached down. My right leg below the knee was hanging from a shred of flesh."

Palm let his copilot take over rudder pedal actions as he tried to think of the next thing to do. Before he could, more shells hit the bomber in the right wing and engines 3 and 4. "Now we had three engines shot out! Engines three and four were burning junk! I knew we were not going to make it. Our forward speed carried us over the refinery. (Probably Columbia Aquila, per Mr. Melinte) I pulled the emergency bomb release, I didn't want those thousand pounders nestled in the cockpit when we hit the ground."

Just then, south of Ploiesti near Tatarani, west of the Ploiesti-Bucharest rail line, an open space



Romanian AA gunners in Ploesti, 1943

From the memories of retired general Tedor Temelcu (2nd Lieutenant in 1943): "The first combat with American bombers took place on 1st August 1943, which was a Sunday. There was a sunny day, with no clouds. But for us, it was no day off. Battery was always prepared to open fire.

Germans, having radars in the Balkans, signalled a great aircraft formation crossing the Mediterranean and heading towards Europe. Nobody knew where is going to attack....However, from the moment when the heading was known, a lot of information started to flow to the Paulesti information centre.

Americans flew at low altitude. They descended immediately after crossing the Danube. Even if the radars couldn't track them, the observers from the Southern part of the country signalled that the aircrafts flew low. Knowing this, we adjusted the projectile fuses to explode 1000 m away from the cannons barrel, after firing. We had a surprise for the Americans. I don't think they knew that every 88 mm battery had also a 20 mm section, which was so effective.

We were not taken by surprise by this attack coming from the west to the east, but it was that special moment when you, as a gunner, firing at the aircraft, could see the airborne machine gunner fire back at you and all the bullets bouncing back from the cannon's armour. It was a real show...no more than 100 m from the barrel of the gun to the bomber, everything happening in split seconds.

Of course, the 88 mm cannons fight was complicated. We could only follow targets and fire manually, because of high angle speed. Every cannon would locate and fire at the plane directly. Even if I was assigned to the central fire distribution device, not been able to do my assigned tasks in this situation, I moved to cannon, to supervise the loader. Personally, I was interested in the loading as fast as possible, since planes kept coming and we needed to fire rounds as fast as possible. That was August 1st 1943...

Photo source: private collection of retired general Teodor Temelcu



Romanian military and perhaps civilian personnel take a moment pose for a picture during the salvage of the wreck of the B-24D "Brewery Wagon." One can get an idea of the size of the aircraft from its 110-foot wingspan. The men have erected a hoist near the flattened forward end of the bomber, with the only thing to stop the complete crushing being the aircraft's four engines. Note what appears to be a pair of jacks under the wing at the left, which are actually two rifle stacks of the soldiers working at the site. Some industrial facilities on the edge of Ploiesti are seen in the background. Most of the major components of the many downed B-24 bombers were scrapped, though some still-useable parts were repurposed for other things.

Photo source: personal collection of Mr. Gabriel Ivănescu



View of the right side of the wreck of B-24D "Brewery Wagon" during salvage of the wreck after the fierce Tidal Wave battle shows how crash-landed Liberator bombers often suffered extensive damage at the forward end, crushing or flattening the fuselage. Prominent is the hoist at the front end of the aircraft which appears to be used to raise the crushed nose section. The top turret abaft the grotesquely-elevated cockpit canopy frames appears to be removed. The V-shaped bit of wreckage down and left from the waist gun window could be bomb racks torn loose from the bomb bay areas crushed beneath the wings. Two rifle stacks for Romanian soldiers working at the site are seen on the ground with their "teepee" frame look, below the star on the fuselage.

Photo source: personal collection of Mr. Gabriel Ivănescu

appeared. "Just past the refinery, God was with us, I mean that, there was a big cornfield, like God put it there. We didn't have much choice. In getting over the refinery I had to put the ship into a sharp bank to avoid some smoke stacks. I barely had time to get the ship level again."

(Note, "Brewery Wagon" came down about 300 meters – three B-24 wingspans – from today's Pensiunea la Gina hotel, on Str. Intrarea Gaterului, nr. 1 on the Southwest side of Ploiesti.) The pilots bellied her in, props and plane cutting, crushing their way through the cornfield as the stricken B-24 came to a halt. In the nose, bombardier Merrell and navigator Wright, if they were still alive, may have been crushed when the nose section crumpled. Palm recalled "When we hit the ground with the two engines burning I thought, boy!, this thing is going to go up any second!! Bill (co-pilot) had pulled the fire extinguisher bottles and the ship never did burn up."

Palm quickly escaped the aircraft; he pulled at the twisted cockpit window and tore it out with one hand, "...something I couldn't do under normal circumstances with both hands in a week," he remembered.

"With the adrenaline flowing, I was able to pull the thing in. My leg was still attached by a small thread of flesh. I took the leg and layed it across my lap and dove out of the airplane. I think I was the first man out of the ship!!" He landed headfirst with a football-style shoulder roll.

Following Palm was co-pilot Love and radio operator "Rocky" Rockinson. They quickly grabbed Palm and pulled him away from the aircraft, which due to Love's quick thinking didn't catch fire and blow up with the remainder of the fuel aboard.

The first American aircrew shot down in Operation Tidal Wave was now on Romanian soil. Rockinson administered first aid to Palm, using his web belt as a tourniquet on Palm's leg to stop the bleeding.

"After I was lying there in a cornfield for what seemed a matter of a few minutes, here came a line of skirmishers. I whipped out my .45 and started to level it at them. Rocky said "Oh sir, don't do that!" It startled me so when he called me sir, cause it was not his custom. Right behind those Germans were some Romanian skirmishers. I told Rocky to go get one of them, since they were supposed to be friendly. He did and they came over and took a look at me. Some of them stayed with Rocky and me while the others left. Meantime the Germans had moved in and tried to take us away from the Romanians. The Romanians weren't having any part of it." After a German soldier cut off Palm's wristwatch, a Romanian soldier pointed his rifle at the Germans and motioned them to move away from the Americans.

The Romanians hauled me to a barrage balloon shack that was nearby. (near Bratulesti, per Dugan & Stewart, p. 228) As he lay in the shack, "he pantomimed to his captors how to construct a litter. They made one out of saplings and carried him on it to a truck." "From there they were able to get a truck in. They had a gunner from another airplane, Rocky and myself. It took about five hours from the crash until I was in a Romanian hospital." Given his condition, and despite delayed-fuze bombs still exploding, they transported Palm to a hospital in Bucharest.

THE AFTERMATH

They first took Palm to a gynecological hospital in Bucharest. From there Palm was transported by push-cart for a rough ride to Spital Shuler, a private first-class clinic.

Dr. Georg Petrescu at the clinic took care of Lt. Palm. "I could tell right away that Dr. Petrescu was a wheel and an Allied sympathizer," said Palm. Petrescu amputated Palm's right leg, sutured the stump and put him into a bed. The rest of Palm's crew were jailed in Bucharest.

That first night, Palm received a visitor. He was awakened by bodyguards in long leather overcoats toting machine guns. A fox-faced man spoke to him in English "So you are an American?" Palm indicated he was, after which the small man scowled and departed with his gunmen. Dr. Petrescu asked Palm, "Do you know who that was? General Antonescu." Back in Libya, the ground crew waited in vain for "Brewery Wagon" to return. The 376th Bomb Group was fortunate in suffering the fewest losses of the five groups in Tidal Wave, losing two aircraft, with another one other interned in Turkey.

Altogether, 34 B-24s were shot down over Romania, most from ground-based guns. Others were lost to Bulgarian and German fighters on the return, accidents (including a mid-air collision) and and seven more damaged ones were interned in Turkey, for a total loss of 54 aircraft. Twenty bombers landed at other Allied bases and 91 returned to Libya. Of those that returned to their homebases, 55 were seriously damaged, some so badly damaged that they never flew again. On August 2, Ninth Air Force could muster only 33 mission capable B-24 bombers.

The killed and missing were 308 men, with another 208 either Prisoner of War (POW) in Romania, Bulgaria or interned in Turkey. Seventy wounded survivors, now POW's, were in Romania. In addition, the aircraft that returned to Libya carried 54 wounded men aboard.

In Romania, 15 Romanian and German military personnel were killed and 48 wounded. Eighty Romanian civilians died, mostly in the inadvertent crash of a stricken B-24 into the women's prison in Ploiesti, and 170 wounded, including many at the prison. Losses of military equipment included six fighter planes, eight anti-aircraft guns and 12 barrage balloons.

The raiders inflicted significant damage on Romanian refinery infrastructure, though not as much as hoped. The 376th and 93rd failed to hit their target due to the navigational error. Some refineries were haphazardly attacked in the chaos of the battle. Three others were knocked out of the war when struck as planned. About 45% of refining capacity was lost for six months, but with excess capacity and repairs it resumed pre-attack levels. However, the quality of oil products decreased with less efficient, older refineries being pressed into service.

The next morning in Romania, Monday, August 2nd, John Palm received more visitors, this time friendly. "I am Helen and this is the king," said the Queen Mother as she introduced her teenage son King Michel. Palm responded, "It's sure nice to make your acquaintance."

Palm's recuperation in the hospital was pleasant, aside from losing his leg. Queen Helen asked Dr. Petrescu to move Palm to a private room, and she visited him sometimes He also received anonymous

First Lieutenant (1st Lt.) John Dudley Palm was born in Kansas on August 17, 1915 and later moved to Texas. He completed two years of college and worked as a salesman, likely in his father's shoe store, before he enlisted in the Army at Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas, on February 24, 1942. He received Army Service Number 18089362. He was single, without dependents when he joined up. After he completed pilot training, he was commissioned as an officer and received Army Service Number O-666805, and eventually assigned to the 376th Bomb Group in North Africa.

Photo source: American Air Museum in Britain



This view shows the crumpled nose section of "Brewery Wagon," the first American aircraft shot down in Romania during Operation Tidal Wave, after crash-landing just south of Ploiesti. The gaping space above the name and mission symbols is the pilot side of the cockpit from which her wounded pilot, 1st Lt. John Palm, dived out of after the aircraft halted. Due to its shoulder-mounted wings high on the fuselage, its deep fuselage below those wings, and the bomb bay with roller-type doors which provided little structural strength to the bottom of the aircraft, the forward sections of B-24s were notorious for often crumpling like this in crash-landings. The position of the top turret (at 10:00) and its two elevated .50-caliber machine guns shows that the gunner was alert and perhaps scanning for fighter aircraft just before the aircraft came down.

Photo source: via Mr. Charles R. Morgan



A Romanian sergeant major from the sanitary service. stands proudly near the right waist section of the crash-landed "Brewery Wagon." This picture reveals some of the terrible damage the aircraft suffered when it came to earth. Note the propeller blade sticking out below the crumpled fuselage, violently sheared off from one of the engines in the landing, which contributed to the aircraft's catastrophic damage. Some other wreckage is on the ground at the left, perhaps some of the bomb bay racks torn out of the belly of the B-24 as the weight of the wings crushed the forward part of the aircraft.

Of note is the artwork at the waist position, showing the arms of two men making a toast lifting their beer mugs with the word "GESUNDHEIT!" immediately below, and a crew nickname, "Speedy", in stylish writing below that.

On the top of the aircraft is the teardrop-shaped of the radio compass loop antenna housing, with a VHF radio blade antenna aft of that above the star. As a marking, the national insignia is a white star on a dark blue disc, with a yellow surround - the yellow was a theater recognition marking used by the US in North Africa. The summer of 1943 was a time of transition in USAAF national insignia markings on aircraft, and other styles can be seen in other pictures of Tidal Wave B-24 Liberators.

Photo source: personal collection of Mr. Gabriel Ivănescu

perfumed notes on crested writing papers. He was fitted with a wooden leg and apparently enjoyed a freedom in Bucharest not given to other prisoners. After a week or so, the wounded American POWs were taken from Bucharest to King's Hospital at Sinaia in the Transylvanian Alps above Ploiesti to continue their convalescence.

The other uninjured members of the "Brewery Wagon" crew were first held in Bucharest, and then moved to a permanent POW camp, Prisonaire de Lagurel No. 18, in Timisul de Jos. I would be remiss not to mention the critical role of Princess Catherine Caradja in the retention of the American POW's in Romania under Romanian control, and the humane treatment they received while in Romania. It is remembered and appreciated.

At least one of the Palm crew was taken out of Romania to Germany. One source indicates radio operator T/Sgt. Block was a POW at German Stalag 2a Neubrandenburg Mecklenberg. DI. Melinte mentioned that several American POWs were temporarily sent to Germany for questioning but were returned to Romania. It's unclear how long T/ Sgt. Block was in Stalag 2a, but as he was of the Jewish faith, it must have been a worrisome experience.

The wounded men recovered and eventually arrived at Timisul de Jos, but Palm was reportedly periodically summoned to Bucharest to meet with the Queen Mother. They talked about the current war situation and Palm brought news back to his fellow inmates.

"Brewery Wagon" survivors remained captive as POW's until Romania changed sides and joined the Allies in August, 1944. The eight men returned to American control in Operation Gunn. Palm reportedly prepared for evacuation by putting a pistol in his wooden leg. He said farewell to his many female friends and made his way to the airfield at Popestii.

FATE OF THE CREW AFTER THE WAR

The men of the Palm crew of the "Brewery Wagon" have all passed away now, but we remember their service and sacrifice during the Second World War. Pilot John D. Palm was medically discharged from the Army in 1946 at the rank of major. He returned to civilian life and worked in real estate and investments in El Paso. Palm continued to fly as a private pilot and flew his own aircraft on business trips. He had it fitted with special controls to compensate for his missing leg. John Palm passed away in 1985 at age 70.

Navigator William M. Wright died on August 1, 1943 and was initially buried in the Hero Section of the Civilian and Military Cemetery of Bolovan, Ploiesti. After the war his remains were returned to the US at the request of his family. He was buried in Peabody, Massachusetts.

Bombardier Robert W. Merrell was killed in action on August 1, 1943 and was also initially buried at Bolovan. His remains were returned to US military control. In accordance with family wishes he was buried overseas at the Ardennes American Cemetery and Memorial in Belgium.

Gunner Clay E. Snyder was the last surviving crewman and passed away in 2006 at age 85.

In the aftermath of the losses, somber activities took place at the home bases of the B-24s, as S/Sgt. John E. Blundell of the 98th Bomb Group recalled:

"Ploesti was one big battle won, but the hardest part of the Ploesti mission for those who were left behind still needed attention. Gathering the personal items and letters of the men who did not return, and sending them to their parents or wives, was a tough thing to do. To us the men who would not return were family too. It was difficult." Blundell continued: "Of those I handled, I think a twenty-two-year-old farm boy from Nebraska pretty well expressed the feelings of all of those who did not return. Ray left this note with me, along with his high school ring, a few pictures, a Boy Scout knife, his dog tags, and his flight jacket with instructions that if he did not return, I should send these to his folks. He wanted his little brother to have his jacket."

Saturday Night

July 31, 1943

North Africa

Dear Mom & Dad,

Here it is Sat. night and I'm pretty sure you are making plans to go to Church Sunday. Say a prayer for me, won't you.

We are making final plans for a very important mission in the morning. They say it is the most important one in our life. I want you to know that what I do, I do out of the love for my country. If you get this letter, you will know I didn't make it back. I hope you will understand, and please try to help Bud understand.

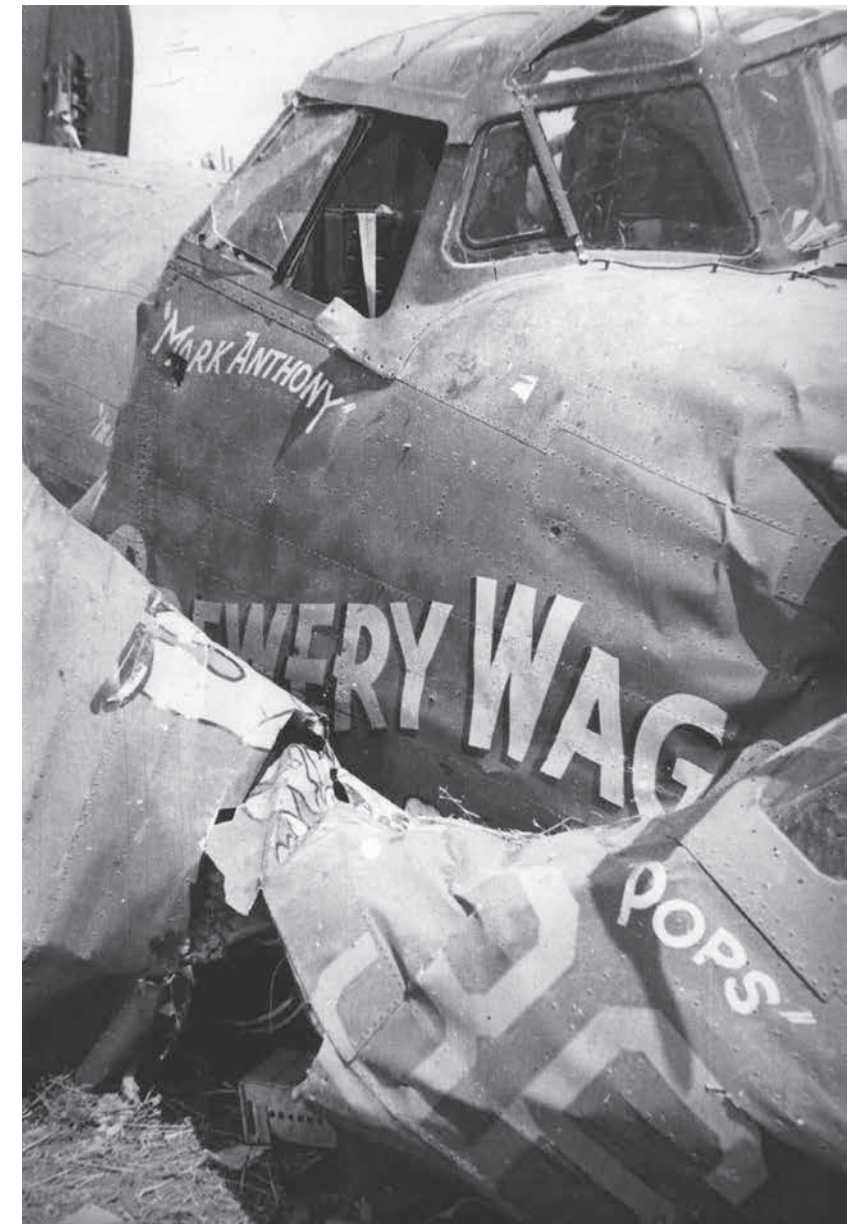
Know that I love you, and am grateful for all that you have done for me. Most of all, thank you for the gift of life itself which you gave to me.

Your loving son,

Ray

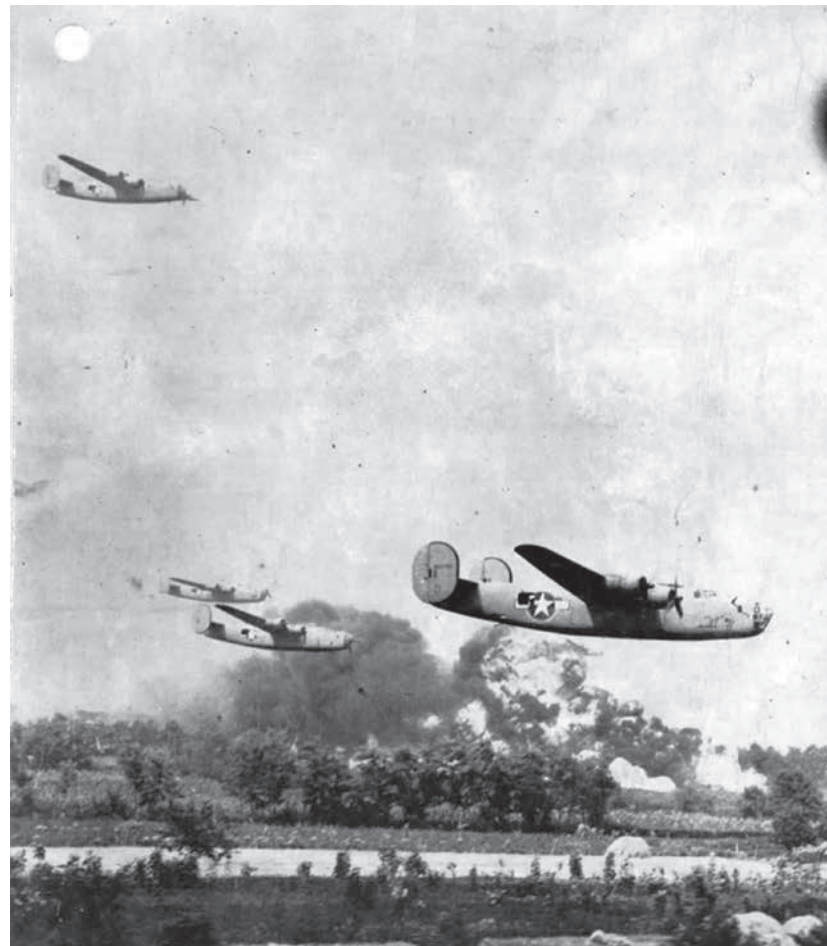
During the war, Tidal Wave was billed as a success. The image of the B-24 flying low over a Ploiesti refinery was dramatic and widely published in newspapers and magazines to inspire the American people who sent their sons to war. Five Medals of Honor, America's highest military honor, were awarded, the largest number for any aerial mission in history, which reflected the importance of the target and the sacrifices made to try and destroy it. The lessons learned from Tidal Wave were applied to subsequent American air raids on Ploiesti in 1944. Greater numbers of bombers were employed in high-altitude attacks, well-above the light-caliber flak that caused so many of the Tidal Wave losses. Fighter escort was provided to fend off Romanian and German fighter attacks. Even though these 1944 attacks achieved success over time, there were still many bomber losses and Ploiesti developed a reputation as "the toughest target." Postwar, Tidal Wave was studied by the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) team and reported on. In the years since, it's been the subject of numerous academic papers by military officers in professional military education studying air power at Air University. The mission remains controversial in terms of interpretation of the results and the impact on the war, with critics saying it was unsuccessful and others citing it as a qualified success. This debate will likely continue.

Regardless of the back-and-forth arguments on the success of the mission, other aspects remain consistent are the respect for the bravery of the aircrews and the audacity of the plan, which continue to inspire military personnel. For



View of the right side of the crumpled nose of "Brewery Wagon," looking aft. The aircraft number (36), name and beer-drinking nose art are caught in the distorted folds of the aircraft's skin. The name "Pops" was possibly the nickname for original Storz crew member navigator 2nd Lt. Thomas H. Shuler. Under the co-pilot's window "Mark Anthony" was probably the nickname for co-pilot 2Lt. Mark J. Mathers, Jr. On the tail section's left vertical stabilizer, battle damage appears present there on the inside side, evidence of the battering "Brewery Wagon" received in her low-level battle with the anti-aircraft guns surrounding Ploiesti. It was possibly this hit which showered the tail gunner with 20mm shell fragments and wounded him in the head.

Photo source: personal collection of Mr. Alexandru Arma



This picture captures some of the dramatic speed and violence of Operation Tidal Wave. Shown are B-24D Liberator bombers of the 98th Bombardment Group, the "Pyramidiers," just after their bomb run against the Astra Romana refinery (Target White IV). Taken from the B-24D "Li'l De-Icer," in the right wing position on the second wave over the target, it shows B-24D "Li'l Jughead," then "Daisy Mae" and probably "Black Magic." The flames on the ground below "Li'l Jughead" are believed to be from the fiery crash of "Tagalong" from the first wave of aircraft over the target. Another B-24, unidentified, can be discerned just beneath "Li'l Jughead" at the leading edge of the blossoming fireball from "Tagalong."

Photo Source: Official US Army Air Forces photo

example, in 2015 the operation name was used for a coalition air campaign to deny ISIS access to oil in Syria, in Operation Tidal Wave II. And since 2017, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency began a focused campaign called the "Ploesti Unknowns Project," with archival research and modern forensics (e.g. DNA analysis) to identify the skeletal remains of the unknown from Tidal Wave. Since that focused effort began, some 25 Tidal Wave men have finally been identified and accounted for, including posthumous Medal of Honor recipient Lt. Col. Addison E. Baker, Commander of the 93rd Bomb Group. The author was personally invited to participate in the August, 2021 funeral and memorial services for one of these men, T/Sgt Alfred F. Turgeon, radio operator aboard 98th Bomb Group B-24D "The Vulgar Virgin."

Nearly 80 years hence, Operation Tidal Wave continues to capture the attention and captivate the imagination of many. In 2019, the Romanian historical group AeRoHistoria conducted a Tidal Wave symposium in Ploesti which garnered public and media interest. A follow-up seminar with international participation was planned but cancelled due to COVID-19. In the United States interest also continues - on August 3, 2022 David Klaus gave a fascinating 90-minute presentation for the Commemorative Air Force channel on YouTube (CAF Warbird Tube) titled "The Ploesti Raid," in advance of his planned book and DVD documentary releases. It's likely this interest will continue in Romania and the United States, and this article is certainly not the last to tell the story of Operation Tidal Wave.

The Romanian people, civil and military, as well as the German soldiers, also got a good measure of American mission planning and bravery. The Romanians were impressed at the limited number of civilian casualties inflicted in the attack, and regarded the American Airmen as chivalrous, Cavalerie, they called them, to suffer such losses and avoid harming civilians.

Romanian women held wakes for the fallen, and placed special thin cakes on their caskets, each with a small American flag made of colored candies. When a German officer asked them why they did this, and why the women were crying for the Americans, one replied "We cry, because we know American mothers soon will be crying for their sons."

Those who fell in that battle received due respect from their adversaries - the German commander, General Gerstenberg ordered proper funerals with full military honors. Our honored dead, even those at the moment unidentifiable, were buried with honors in the Hero Section of the military and civilian cemetery at Bolovan in Ploesti.

Special thanks to the following persons who assisted in the preparation of this article: Capt. Sean M. Popravak, US Army, Mr. Gabriel Ivanescu and Mr. Dan Melinte, Mrs. Dalia M. Morariu, Mr. Charles R. Morgan, Mr. Flip Marchese, Mr. Alan Starcher and Mr. Chris Webb.

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The story of the B-24D "Brewery Wagon" was recently featured in a special exhibit at the National Museum of Romanian History (Muzeul National de Istorie a Romaniei) in Bucharest. Part of the Romania in the Second World War, 1941 - 1945 (Romania in Al Doilea Razboi Mondial Razboi Mondial) temporary exposition displayed between July, 2021 and May, 2022, it featured a nicely-made 1/48 scale model of "Brewery Wagon" along with several small pieces of the aircraft's wreckage recovered at the actual crash site by Mr. Dan Melinte. Photo source: personal collection of Mr. Gabriel Ivănescu





From July 15 to 17, 2022, the Royal International Air Tattoo returned after three years with its 2022 edition, which is already considered the most successful edition (in recent times) of the world's largest military airshow. The previous RIAT had been held in 2019, as the 2020 and 2021 editions were cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year the theme of the airshow was "Training the Next Generation Air Force", with also a focus on the 75th Anniversary of the United States Air Force. The Romanian Air Force participated with the AN-30 photo-grammetry aircraft.

The airshow welcomed 266 aircraft and 1,500 crew members from across the globe, including representatives from the Kingdom of Bahrain with a C-130J, their first ever appearance which makes them the 57th nation to participate in RIAT. Among the guests there was Top Gun Maverick's star Tom Cruise, who, as a long-time aviation enthusiast, visited the static displays and met the aircrews for a quick chat.

Text: Stefano D'Urso and David Cenciotti (the Aviationist)
Photo: Bogdan Pantilimon (RoAF)



NATO Days in Ostrava

welcomed 110 000 visitors

The second day of the largest security show in Europe took place in cold weather with occasional showers. Despite the expected heavy rain during whole day, for which the organisers were prepared, the weather situation was more favourable. That is why, to the great satisfaction of all participants, most of the planned dynamic demonstrations took place.

With the participation of 19 partner countries and under the partnership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the 22nd NATO Days in Ostrava and 13th Czech Air Force Days ended. After two years affected by the covid situation, the entry was again free and unrestricted for visitors. However, this year's edition was affected by another serious situation, namely the ongoing conflict on the territory of the sovereign state of Ukraine. A conflict that is taking place just a few hundred kilometres away from our country. That is why the visitors were often discussing this topic and showed satisfaction with the fact that the Czech Republic is part of a strong military

defence group. The so-called "Brotherhood in Arms" is visible at the event in the joint displays of the army, police, customs and rescue services. It is the personification of the real "Brothers in arms" that takes place during joint missions abroad or during the cross-border cooperation.

"We are very pleased that our event has maintained a high attendance of visitors who, despite the uncomfortable weather, leave the comfort of their homes and come to visit the Leoš Janáček Ostrava Airport. We thank them for that," said Zbyněk Pavlačík, deputy of the main organizer of the event, chairman of the JAGELLO 2000 association.

The NATO Days in Ostrava and Czech Air Force Days have earned a long-standing strong and prestigious position among the partner states in NATO, but not only there. Among its visitors and at the accompanying events that are part of the NATO Days, you can meet a wide range of high-tech experts and personalities from the command of individual NATO countries and some non-member countries.

As with any event, it happens that some countries cancel their equipment for various reasons, mostly operational workload, weather, etc. This was also the case in this year's event when 19 of the original 22 countries finally participated and some other countries reduced the number of their equipment. Even so, it is still an impressive list of equipment and displays prepared by the event partners and participating countries.

What the next editions of the event will bring cannot be determined exactly now, but the organizers are already working on them. As the world evolves, so does this event, and the aim is to provide the biggest and most complete picture of what allies are using in the field of defence. There is perhaps no better depiction of future developments than the recent dynamic display at NATO Days in Ostrava and Czech Air Force Days, a joint flypast of aircraft from several nations to symbolically welcome Finland and Sweden into the North Atlantic Alliance.

Story by natodays.cz



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