

Two Fortresses Fly Historic Mission In 'Operation Reunion'

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(Stars and Stripes Staff Writer)

A 15TH AAF BASE IN ITALY, Sept. 3 — This is the story of how two 15th AAF Flying Fortresses flew to an airdrome near Bucharest, Rumania, last week in the first scheduled landing of heavy bombers in Rumanian territory.

Escorted by a formation of Mustang fighters, the bombers carried signal equipment, medical supplies and arranged final details of the evacuation of 1,000 combat crewmen in last week's daring "Operation Reunion" in which all the airmen were safely flown back to a 15th AAF base in southern Italy.

No personnel was removed on the first trip. The men were being held some distance from the field for safety's sake, and the Mustangs were able to cover the operation for only a limited time.

UNEVENTFUL TRIP

The trip to Bucharest was uneventful. The bombers flew across the Balkans at medium altitude, encountering neither flak nor fighter opposition. The first B-17 to land was piloted by Maj. Allen W. Schroeder, Aberdeen, N. D. Maj. Schroeder's ship was followed by one flown by Capt. E. C. Karnes, Los Angeles, Calif.

The Mustangs did not land. The bombers were on the ground only 20 minutes, and their motors were kept going all the time.

The planes were prepared for the first step in the "Operation Reunion" by removing the bomb sights and bomb shackles. All the guns were manned, and each B-17 carried a full combat crew. The

P-38 In Rumanian Rescue In August

A 15TH AAF BASE, ITALY, Sept. 3 — While the two 15th AAF Flying Fortresses which flew into Rumania early last week to arrange for the evacuation of some 1,000 Allied airmen held prisoners of war were the first heavy bombers to land on Rumanian soil in World War II, they were not the first Allied aircraft to do so.

In the course of an all-fighter shuttle to a Russian base early in August, F-O Richard Andrews, Portland, Ore., a pilot of a P-38, landed in a Rumanian plane to rescue a fellow flying pilot who had been forced to crash land. Both pilots then flew on to Russia in the cockpit of Andrews' plane.

ing for signs of trouble. There were no incidents.

On the ground, the liaison party was met by the Rumanian ace who a few days before had flown Lt. Col. James A. Gunn, III, to 15th AAF headquarters in Italy to arrange for the rescue. With the captain was Maj. William H. Yaeger, Hebbroville, Texas, only American in the welcoming committee that included Rumanian air force personnel and civilians.

When Col. Gunn took off for Italy, Maj. Yaeger had been left in charge of the evacuees, whose camp was some distance from the field. He stayed behind on Tuesday to help arrange the details for the operation rather than return to Italy with the two Fortresses.

CROWD ON HAND

"When we got there," said Capt. Karnes, "people were driving up from everywhere. They were driving trucks, American-made passenger cars and German jeeps. A lot of them were right on the field.

BACK FROM RUMANIA



DRESSED IN A VARIETY of nondescript uniforms, some of the 1,000 AAF combat crewmen evacuated last week from Rumanian prisoner of war camps by heavy bombers of the 15th AAF are pictured shortly after their arrival at an air base in southern Italy. Some of the airmen are wearing the German Iron Cross decoration and other Nazi medals which they purchased in Rumania for ten cents. (MAAF Photo)

Daring Rescue By Air Planned By Airmen Downed Over Ploesti