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Liaison Pilot with the 106th Infantry Division

I have read many articles about units that were active in the Battle of the Bulge, but not many about the division that bore the brunt of the German attack, the 106th Infantry Division.

We were, as Drew Pearson wrote, a very green unit that left the States in November of 1944 and moved into the front lines on December 10th around St Vith, Belgium. This unit replaced the 2nd Infantry Division, in some instances by signing over gun emplacement rather than pull them out.

The division was overrun by the German offensive December 16th through 19th. Two regiments, the 422nd Infantry and the 423rd Infantry were surrounded and captured, only after they used all available ammunition. Approximately 8,500 men were killed, wounded or captured.

On December 15, 1944, the division pilots flew into St Vith, only to leave on the 17th because of the German offensive. As we all know, the weather was terrible, with only a 500-600 foot ceiling.

The 592nd Field Artillery Battalion, a 155 mm unit was in division support and lost only one gun when a German 88 mm landed in one gun section on the 16th, killing the officer and entire gun crew. Their liaison pilots, along with the other assigned pilots, flew over 45 missions along the front lines. When the German offensive was halted, an air section consisting of 10 planes and pilots, operated as a unit with scheduled flights of two hours along the front lines every day from sunrise to sunset.

Very little is mentioned about liaison pilots and sections because we very seldom came into contact with the enemy. However, we were available to adjust fire on the enemy when called upon to do so. We didn't see the enemy personally but were sitting ducks with no ditch, no hill, no tree or building to hide behind. We were all shot at and luckily not in a vulnerable spot. However, not all made it.

The 106th Division did lose four or five planes, but no pilots, because of the weather between the 15th and 19th of December, 1944. I am sure that every liaison pilot was proud of the job they were assigned to do.



Picture of the 106th Division Pilots and observers, taken at Namur, Belgium, around December 20, 1944. Pictured are: Front rows--Lts Gray (P), McKensie (P), and Scott (P). Middle Row--Lts Neese (O), Stafford (P), Lang (P), Crawford (O), Elliott (P). Back Row--Maj (unidentified) (P), Lts McClure (P), Lauman (P), Cefaretti (P), and Cassibry (O).

Source: Bulge Bugle, February 1994

<http://www.battleofthebulgememories.be/stories26/us-army25/629-liaison-pilot-with-the-106th-infantry-division.html>
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