

1780

HEADQUARTERS
~~SECRET~~

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES (PROV.)
APO 512

2 July, 1945

TO : Icardi, Aldo L.

SUBJECT: Recommendation for Award

TO : Commanding General, HQUA

1. Under the provisions of AR 600-45, dated 22 September, 1945, as amended, it is recommended that Aldo L. Icardi, OY21212, First Lieutenant, Coast Artillery Corps, Secret Intelligence Branch, Company B, 2077th Regiment, Office of Strategic Services (Provisional), be awarded the medal for the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services against an enemy of the United States.

2. First Lieutenant Aldo L. Icardi was parachuted into enemy territory in Northern Italy, on the night of 26 September, 1944, as a member of the Chrysler Mission, composed of Major William Holloman, Lieutenant Victor Gianino, Sergeant Arthur Ciavarella, Sergeant Carl LaBelle, and two civilian agents.

On the night of 6 December, 1944, the mission was attacked at its base, at Villa Castelluccio, on the shore of Lake Orta. As a result of the action, Major Holloman disappeared. Lieutenant Icardi became the leader of the mission and, in this capacity, directed the activities of the mission for five months.

The Chrysler Mission operated in the zone of Novara, Verona, Verona, Milano, Ravenna, Brescia, Verona, Mantova, Garda Valley, and the Alto Adige. Under the direction of Lieutenant Icardi, an intelligence network was organized to encompass the above areas. This network had sub-stations in the principal cities, towns, and villages, and the sub-stations employed many sub-agents. The sub-agents reported to the mission and they reported, all of whom were carefully controlled by Lieutenant Icardi. These individuals gathered military intelligence and intelligence information on troop dispositions and identification, routes, supply lines, bridge traffic, location of gas and fuel dumps, railway yards, and other military installations, including information on supply lines, and other intelligence, including economic intelligence, etc.

-2-

The military intelligence gathered by Lieutenant Icardi was broadcasted to the base Office of Strategic Services station, via four radios. These radios were called (1) Chrysler, (2) Diana, (3) Westwood, (4) Marianna. These radios transmitted 1582 messages, representing approximately 80,000 word groups.

After the attack of 6 December, 1944, the mission layed low for ten days, and operations were suspended. A field investigation of the attack, by Mr. Icardi, and an inspection of the grounds, gave no indication as to why the attack had been made.

About 15 December, 1944, contact was established with Colonel Della Torre, the newly appointed, unified commander of the Ossola formations. The bands under his command were the Second Garibaldi Division, the Valtoce Division, and the Boltrano Division, a total of two thousand men, fifteen hundred of whom had to be armed.

Plans were made to receive a daylight drop of twenty tons, at Quarna, for Comando Senna Ossola. The operation was layed on for the second week of January, 1945. At noon, on 18 January, 1945, the drop was received successfully, and ten Liberators flew over the zone for two hours. The enemy attempted to recover the drop, but lost thirty dead and fifty wounded, retreated, and did not try again. During this period, the radio had been moved to the pinpoint, and communications were carried on from there.

On the night of 16 January, 1945, while they were awaiting the drop, Mr. Luigi Vestri of Pineapple mission visited the mission, at Quarna. The Pineapple mission had had its radio damaged on its initial drop and had not been able to make contact with base since their arrival. A message requesting a radio drop with money and ciphers was sent for Pineapple.

Lieutenant Icardi visited Gloggio, the Pineapple headquarters, on 21 January, 1945. There, he met the entire organization and was satisfied that the net could work. It was agreed that the Pineapple intelligence would be sent to Chrysler, until their radio should arrive.

At this time, orders were received from base to concentrate on intelligence and to organize an extensive net all over Northern Italy. Plans were made then to set up cells, at Soriano, Novara, Milano; Brescia, and Verona. The immediate objectives were to report battle order, troop movements, supply lines, and military banking objectives. The long range objective was to control completely all traffic movement, twenty-four hours daily, on every passage over the Ticino river, the Adige river, and the Adige river. The complete control over the Ticino river was accomplished and functioned during the months of March and April, 1945. The Adige river was partly controlled, during the last days of April, 1945.

Upon return from Gloggio, Lieutenant Icardi went to Valdagno, where he conferred with Montalini, for supply drops to the twenty-five hundred Garibaldini

SECRET

-3-

of his formation. It was decided to supply them by night drops; five pinpoints were selected, and, during the next two months, twenty-two supply drops of weapons, ammunition, food, and clothing arrived, which served to arm completely and allowed an expansion of the Garibaldi formations, to three thousand men.

Returning from Valdaglia, to Aiso, Lieutenant Icardi learned that, on 28 January, 1945, the mission had been betrayed to the enemy, by way of an anonymous letter. This letter was intercepted and gave the mission time to evacuate its headquarters. The enemy made his attack but found no one at the old base.

During the night of 29 January, 1945, a supply drop arrived at Watermelon pinpoint for the mission. Lieutenant Icardi left Aiso, on 30 January, 1945, to recover the drop. That afternoon, the enemy attacked all over the area, in an extensive mop-up. This mop-up lasted fifteen days, and it resulted in the loss of the radio and the cipher books.

When the attack came, Sergeant LeBelle managed to hide the radio and cipher and, taking the plan and crystals with him, left for the woods, in a cave hideout which had already been prepared in this eventuality. During the period of two weeks, the sergeant was almost taken two times. Each time, the enemy came to within a very short distance from his hideout, with German police dogs. In these fifteen days, he and his companion had very little to eat; he was completely on his own, being out of contact with Lieutenant Icardi and the other people connected with the mission.

Lieutenant Icardi spent three days in a hole, at Quarna, while the enemy set up his base, in that time. After the third day, he managed to slip past the enemy patrols and go to Nonio, which was the only town in the whole zone that was not occupied by the Fascist forces.

During this period of mop-up, three supply drops were made, which the enemy recovered. This was purely a case of negligence on the part of the Air Corps that flew the missions, because the proper signal fires were not lit and the proper identification signals were not used. Patriot morale and the mission morale suffered considerably, especially because supplies were badly needed in that period.

On 10 February, 1945, the enemy came to Nonio, and Lieutenant Icardi barely had time to get into his hiding place. There, he remained for four days, with three other persons, in the attic, over a paint shed of a furniture factory. The Fascists had taken the German police dogs into the shed, but they could smell nothing because of the paint odor. Through the thin ceiling of the attic, they heard every move that the Fascists made. No one slept at night for fear that snoring would be heard by enemy patrols, that made their rounds about the shed, which was located ten yards from the house where two Fascist officers and three soldiers were living.

When the mop-up ended, the mission was in this situation; radio, cipher, and records had been captured. One supply drop to be recovered, but possibly lost.

Section 2 FDPS page 240

SECRET

as a result of enemy action. The mission had been out of contact with base, for sixteen days and probably would be out for considerably more.

Upon reconnaissance of the supply drop, of 29 January, 1945, the only equipment recovered was a radio which had dropped into a mountain stream and had remained there for two weeks, until they fished it out. The radio was not operative, and there was no signal plan, nor cipher pads.

Beginning 17 February, 1945, a series of night drops, for the Zona Osceola, began to arrive. In all, there arrived twelve drops, with arms, ammunition, food, and clothing, for supplying fifteen hundred partisans of that command. These arms were used in April, 1945, to save the power plants of the Osceola valley and the Sempione tunnel.

In the first drop, the mission received three thousand dollars. Although a radio was marked on the shipping ticket, no radio was found among the material of the drop. At this time, when communication with the base was impossible, news arrived that Vestri had received a radio but could not make contact with the base. This was probably because the base was not listening for him. It was decided, then, to go to Vestri with the Chrysler plan and to attempt to make contact, using our plan and his books. Lieutenant Icardi joined Vestri, at Grignasco, on 22 February, 1945, and contact was made that same day.

Chrysler intelligence had accumulated since the end of January, 1945, and the traffic, from the beginning of Diana radio, was heavy. But the expanded intelligence net covering Torino, Novara, Milano, Verona, and Brescia, brought in so much work that, in the first month of operation, Diana sent out four hundred and twenty-six messages, and, from 22 February, to 25 April, 1945, sent out over thirty-five thousand groups. The intelligence functions of Chrysler and Pineapple were then merged and the work divided. Vestri would handle the Vercelli and Novara provinces including the traffic control, over the Ticino river. This latter was to be twenty-four hours daily and covering every passage used by the enemy. Lieutenant Icardi would handle all the intelligence from the Ticino river east, Lombardy and Veneto. Vestri would handle the Moscatelli supply drops, Lieutenant Icardi the Zona Osceola and Dinio Raggruppamento supply drops.

To speed the arrival of intelligence from the Torino zone, it was decided to pass the Torino cells to Strawberry Mission, which was operating in the Val Pellice. To effect this, Vestri and Lieutenant Icardi left for Torino, on 24 February, 1945. Contact was made with Corporals Deili and Moia, on 27 February, 1945, at Torre Pellice. All arrangements were made for their taking over the Torino cells, and courier service from the cells, to the radio, was established.

During the months of March and April, 1945, over one hundred and twenty-five messages were sent to Strawberry, by the Torino cells.

-5-

The volume of traffic being handled by Diana became obviously dangerous, from a security point of view, and inefficient from a time point of view. As a consequence, it was decided to establish another radio base, in Lombardy. Busto Arsizio was the place at which the radio was to be set up.

In the first week of March, 1945, Lieutenant Icardi went to Busto Arsizio to set up the organization. Arrangements were made to house the radio and the operator, a message center was established in a seminary, and personnel was engaged to handle the ciphering. The office for editing the intelligence was established, and all cut-outs and necessary couriers were prepared for the initiation of new operations. During the second week, the dangerous and ticklish job of transferring radio and operator had to be done. This was particularly dangerous, because it was absolutely necessary to pass the Ticino river to get into Lombardy. German surveillance, at the Ticino, was the closest in all of northern Italy. The transfer was effected, under the protection of three agents of the Brigata Nera, who were brought to do the job. Immediately upon arrival at destination, the radio and operator were transferred a considerable distance on bicycles so that all danger of double-agent, by Fascists agents hired, would be eliminated. The entire operation was done by cut-outs, so that the risk was minimum.

The Westwood radio began operating on 16 March, 1945, and, in one month and a half, it sent out two hundred and eighty messages. This radio, like all of the others, had technical difficulties with the base. On two occasions, QRM's were not kept by the base, and weak reports of atmospheric interference prevented contacts and caused consequent backlogs in messages.

At the beginning of April, 1945, they discovered that the Busto radio was being DF'd and also disturbed by the enemy. One morning, the radio operator looked out of the window and saw eight Germans setting up the aerial of a DF set across the street from his radio, just five minutes before contact time. An automobile was obtained immediately, with a person who could protect them, and the radio and the operator were moved thirty kilometers from Busto, to Abbiate Grasso.

During the end of March, 1945, contact was made with the Swiss desk and Captain Badiano. A bi-weekly courier service was established, and this carried original documents, and economic and political reports that could not be sent by radio. A technical section was set up at Ronio, which drew target maps, copied topographical maps, and photostatic stolen designs. This material was prepared along with weekly resumes of intelligence, and sent into Lugano, by way of the Lake Maggiore route.

Instructions arrived from the base, for setting up intelligence nets, in the Veneto area. Contacts were immediately made with cells working in that area, and the base was informed that radios could be worked from Mantova and Verona. These radios never arrived, because of the limited number of circuits

Section 2 FDPS page 242

alotted to the Office of Strategic Services. Numerous missions of a political nature, sent by the British, arrived in our zone. This did not seem compatible with the explanation given for the lack of circuits for our military missions. This was especially difficult to explain to their collaborators who were risking their lives, too. In the Alto Milanese zone, at least four British political missions arrived in the months of March and April, 1945.

At the beginning of April, 1945, the base requested that Sergeant Ledolce be returned to his headquarters. A new operator to replace the sergeant was found working with the Diana mission. This fellow, named Carlo Fornara, was trained and put to work with the sergeant. About 18 April, 1945, Sergeant Ledolce was taken into Switzerland. He arrived safely. The new operator turned out to be satisfactory and displayed much courage, in spite of his youth. During the month of April, 1945, Lieutenant Icardi made three trips to Milano, where he consulted with CLNAI officials, concerning the coming insurrection. Contacts were made with German officers who were in the anti-Nazi movement. These officers were of Austrian origin and gave much useful information.

In the months of March and April, 1945, Lieutenant Icardi maintained personal liaison between the Diana and Westwood radios, and the intelligence base at Nonio. The trip between Busto Arsizio, Beca, and Nonio was made every other day. Travelling on bicycle past German and Fascist road blocks, crossing the Ticino and going into patriot territory past the enemy patrols. The trips to Nonio also made possible contact with Dolonel Della Torre's Zona Ossola; plans for the defense of the Ossola sixteen power plants and the Sempione tunnel were drawn up, and supply drops for feeding and providing ammunition for the patriots were laid on. Events developed in such a manner that the supply drops were not necessary, but the Sempione tunnel was de-seized by a platoon of patriots from the eighty-third Garibaldi Brigade of the Comande Ossola. The co-ordinated attack against the six hundred German pioneer troops in the valley forced them to retreat and abandon the power plants which they were supposed to blow up, and for which thirty-two carloads of explosives were waiting at Varsa.

At the same time, Lieutenant Icardi was making plans with the Raggruppamento A, Di Dio, at Busto Arsizio, for the insurrection. In fact, on 25 April, 1945, the plans were carried out in liberating Busto Arsizio, Legnano, Gallarate, and Varese. All of the major towns, in the Alto Milanese region, were liberated, by the night of 25 April, 1945, in this manner, and not one shot was fired by the allied troops, when they arrived in this zone.

On the night of 25 April, 1945, at 2100 hours, the commercial radio, at Busto Arsizio, under the command and control of Lieutenant Icardi, broadcast the news of the Italian insurrection, to the world. This was the first radio, in occupied Italy, to go on the air.

As a result of the military operations directed or collaborated in, by Chrysler Mission, over thirteen thousand enemy troops were captured, and the entire zone was entered by allied troops, without resistance or bloodshed. On

17863
17**SECRET**

27 April, 1945, Lieutenant Icardi joined Captain Badaric, in Milano, where they together handled the negotiation of the unconditional surrender of German troops, to the Fourth Corps. Marshal Graziani, who had been taken by Captain Badaric, at Camp, was presented to Colonel Fisk, of the Fourth Corps.

3. I certify that I have personal knowledge of the exceptionally meritorious service of First Lieutenant Aldo L. Icardi, in connection with military operations against an enemy of the United States, and the results thereof.

4. Status at time for which recommendation for award is submitted: Was First Lieutenant, Secret Intelligence Branch, Company D, 2677th Regiment, Office of Strategic Services (Provisional). At present, First Lieutenant, Secret Intelligence Branch, Headquarters, 2677th Regiment, Office of Strategic Services (Provisional).

5. All of the service of First Lieutenant Aldo L. Icardi, subsequent to that cited, has been honorable.

6. No previous awards have been issued.

7. Recommendation approved and transmitted for your consideration.

EDWARD J. F. GLAVIE,
Colonel, Infantry,
Commanding

PROPOSED CITATION FOR THE AWARD OF THE MEDAL FOR THE LEGION OF HONOR TO FIRST LIEUTENANT ALDO L. ICARDI

Aldo L. Icardi, O921212, First Lieutenant, Coast Artillery Corps, Secret Intelligence Branch, Company B, 2877th Regiment, Office of Strategic Services (Provisional), for exceptionally meritorious services against an enemy of the United States. Lieutenant Icardi parachuted into enemy territory in Northern Italy, on the night of 26 September, 1944, as part of the Chrysler Mission. On 6 December, 1944, upon the capture and disappearance of Major William Holman, Lieutenant Icardi became the leader of the mission, and, in this capacity, directed the activities of the mission for five months. The Chrysler Mission operated in the zone of Novara, Verino, Vercelli, Milano, Pavia, Brescia, Verona, Mantova, Oseola Valley, and the Alto Milanese. Under the direction of Lieutenant Icardi, an intelligence network was organized to encompass the above zones. This network had cutout agents in the principal cities, towns, and valleys, and cutout agent employed many sub-agents. This organization totalled some three hundred and fifty persons, all of whom were directly controlled by Lieutenant Icardi. These individuals gathered military intelligence and furnished information such as troop dispositions and identifications, railroad traffic, highway traffic, bridge traffic, location of ammo and gasoline dumps, military targets, counter-intelligence, political and economic intelligence. The military intelligence gathered by Lieutenant Icardi was broadcasted to the base Office of Strategic Services station, via four radios; these radios transmitted 1532 messages, representing approximately 80,000 word groups. In addition to the independent intelligence network established by Lieutenant Icardi, he kept close contact with many of the Partisan groups in Northern Italy. Through these contacts, Lieutenant Icardi was able to arrange supply drops to the Partisans, supplying them with approximately a hundred tons of material composed of food, clothing, arms, and ammunition. Entered military service from Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.

EDWARD J. F. GLAVIN,
Colonel, Infantry,
Commanding