

HEADQUARTERS 397TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (M)
Office of the Group S-2

ADD: SAC,
2 January 1945.

SUBJECT: Air Battle Narrative (Day).

TO: Commanding General, 9th Bombardment Division (M), APO SAC,
Attention: S-2, Captain Lewke.

1. The mission of the 397th Bombardment Group (M), for 23 December 1944, was the Miller RR Bridge, Germany (SI-572671). The formation was composed of two boxes of three flights of six each, plus three window and 1 HFF A/C.

2. On mission of this group for 23 December 1944, the following information of combat encounters is submitted:

AIR BATTLE NARRATIVE (DAY)

9th B.O. S-2 Report 108a

- (1) Six F6-190's destroyed.
One B6-109 destroyed.

Four F6-190's probably destroyed.

Six F6-190's damaged.

- (2) Ten A/C missing.
3 A/C by e/a.
1 A/C by HFF.
6 A/C unknown, believed by e/a.

2 damaged out "M". 1 A/C sustained both HFF and e/a MG fire. The other A/C had damage from e/a fire, both 20mm and MG fire.

1 damaged out "M". HFF and e/a fire.

14 damaged out "A". 13 by HFF and 1 by e/a fire.

(3) From approximately 1040 to 1050, following turn off from target, first attacks by e/a on the bomber formation were directed at the three window A/C (1039 to 1040). Following this attack, the lead A/C of the window formation was observed smoking and going down with two e/a trailing. No. 2 A/C of the window formation was also hit, but further observations limited. This A/C believed to have been destroyed by e/a. No. 3 A/C of this same formation, returned to home base and crash landed due to damage inflicted by e/a. Following e/a attacks on window formation the efforts were directed against the 2nd box, flying 1000 ft below and

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Approximately 400 yards behind to the right. All flights were compact in formation except "B" flight, Box I, which was a little behind and below, following turn off from target. "C" flight, Box II, was flying high on "A" flight at the time of attack. First and second boxes were flying a tight formation as both boxes bombed on single PFF a/c. All e/a encounters were experienced in the vicinity of Lefkeld (L-375668) to Weisburg (L-252782) to Gaffern (L-132630).

(4). Total of 31 gunners reported firing on 15 to 25 e/a. 20 a/c of the bomber formation were involved by attacks of 3 B-109's and 15 to 22 P-190's.

(5). Bomber formation attacked by 3 B-109's used as decoys to attract gunners attention, while P-190's were predominant in strength of attack. The e/a attacked singly and in rapid succession usually level or slightly above from 6-7 o'clock, pressing home the attack very aggressively. Formation front of 8 to 10 e/a from 1000 yards, breaking into pairs at 500 yards was another method of attack. Crew members reported that e/a pilots were not experienced in actual fighter combat as total formation of 20 to 25 e/a did not take advantage of sun or clouds and methods of attack were hesitating and sometimes e/a pilots flew their a/c into direct vertical stalls. 1 a/c of the e/a formation, appeared to have fighter experience as he knew proper evasive turns from our gunners' fire and he pressed his attack from 50 to 25 yards. It is believed this pilot was the commander of the e/a formation. No attacks were experienced by the bomber formation from head-on position. Majority of attacks were made singly from 6-7 o'clock.

(6). No prescribed defensive tactics were employed by the bomber formation except to keep a tight formation with numerous evasive turns. 1 a/c in window element, No. 3, with top turret malfunction, maneuvered his a/c in such a position to enable his tail and waist gunner to have a larger radius of fire. These maneuvers were accomplished on solo return after other 2 a/c in this window element were destroyed by attacking e/a.

(7). The mission was on PFF, with 7/10 to 8/10 scattered cumulus over target and vicinity. Cloud formations at 2000 and 10000 ft. There was a decided haze, and sun and cloud protection for e/a was seriously limited. Weather did not hinder numerous attacks by the e/a.

(8). Crews stated that 6 to 12 e/a would pick out one distinct flight, either "B" or "C" flight of each box, and continue their attacks until bombers in each flight were destroyed or seriously damaged. Outstanding observation is the fact that e/a pounced on trailing flights and stragglers, and continued fire on stragglers until they disintegrated or were seen to crash on land. 1 to 2 e/a would follow each straggler with continued fire, and in return it is reported that missing a/c accounted for at least 2 to 3 e/a before their destruction. Crew members stated they did not see friendly escort fighters in the vicinity and further observations showed that strafing on the ground was being conducted by our escort a/c at the time of e/a attack.

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(9). From reports, only this formation was in the vicinity of the a/c attack.

(10). Included in consolidated of a/c attacks with disposition of missing a/c. Ref A/c for the formation shown as missing.

Ref Summary - 357th ABW
1st Lt. [Name],
1st Lt., [Name],
Capt. [Name]

1 encl:
consolidated combat plot (report 100%, 3 days).

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