

INTELLIGENCE

HEADQUARTERS 306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
Office of the Intelligence Officer
United States Forces

24 May, 1944

SUBJECT: Intelligence Narrative,
Mission: BERLIN, 24 May, 1944.

TO : Commanding Officer, 306th Bomb Group (H), APO 557.

1. Narrative

The 306th Group took off at 0652 hours, flying 22 A/C plus 2 PFF as lead and part of high groups of 40th C.W. Route was substantially as briefed. C.W. Leader was forced south of route to avoid con-trails near Heligoland, was three miles south of course part of way in. To kill drift, lead navigator took an I.P. at 5240 x 1240, south of briefed I.P. approaching target on mag. heading of 109°. Route out was as briefed.

C.W. Leader felt altitude should have been higher on way in. Let down was as briefed after target, being at 21,000 feet at 1154, but at 1158 had to resume climb and regain altitude to get over front.

AFCE was only fair, the rudder showing a tendency to yaw.

The Group left the English Coast at 1146½ hours, one mile north of Cromer, crossed enemy coast at 1017½ hours, at 5408 x 2050, landed at base at 1524½ hours.

2. Fighter Opposition and Fighter Support

No attacks on 40th C.W. A Combat Wing in front was under heavy attack, just as it swung off the target and came out of the flak area, five or six B-17's being seen to be knocked down, two exploding. Fighter support was good, without gaps. P-51's picked up at 1017, continued to 1040, when more 51's escorted formation over target. First P-38's were seen just off the target, with more coming in at 1202. P-47's and P-51's were picked up en route out.

3. A.A. Gun Fire

Five to six groups of bursts of accurate, tracking fire was encountered when formation was forced south of course to stay out of con-trails and passed near Heligoland. Our A/C 397-0 was hit. Could not stay up, and eventually turned back inadvertently swinging over Hamburg and dropping bombs in middle of flak area there. At target crews agree that A.A. Fire though not slight, was much worse on other formations, and as a whole not nearly as intense as has been observed during previous missions. Our A/C 113-G was knocked down over target by direct hit. Out of remaining twenty 306 A/C, damage was 2 severe, 10 slight.

4. Bombing

Bombing was by PFF. Crews report bomb strikes in center of Berlin. Strike photos, largely cloud obscured, show no strikes, but show bombs away. 40th Combat Wing bombs were closer to the center of the city than some previous bombing, as lead bombardier reports seeing good concentration on ground to right, while he was still on bomb run.

5. Leaflets

A/C 737-U dropped 8 G-20's and A/C 055-H dropped 2 G-20's and 6 G-41's on the primary.

6. Weather

Ground haze delayed takeoff forty minutes. Visibility was bad on way in, formation flew for a long distance in very thick haze. Fairly dense and persistent contrails. 10/10ths. on way in, clearing to 7/10ths. in target area, 10/10ths. coming out.

7. A/C In Distress

Our A/C 113-G, pilot Ehrler, was hit by flak 30 seconds after bombs away. One chute. The following data was obtained from Ehrler's wing-men and the leader of the second element of his squadron:

Thirty seconds after bombs away, 1106, flak burst hit Ehrler's elevators, either knocking them off or tearing them to shreds. Ehrler's plane went up in a steep stall, and after "standing on its tail" for a moment, slid off to the left and turned on its back, regained flying attitude momentarily, then went almost straight down in a flat spin. No one could see it below an estimated 18,000 feet, at which time all engines were still running. No fire, explosion or smoke was seen. One chute is believed to have come from the plane.

B-17, 1109 hours, from formation ahead, exploded. No chutes seen.

B-17, 1109 hours, from formation ahead, nosed up and turned over, going down in a spin. 5 chutes.

2 B-17's, 1109 hours, from formation ahead on fire, down in spin through the clouds. No chutes seen.

8. A/C Returning Early

A/C #397-O, pilot Bennett, hit by flak near enemy coast at 1010 hours; feathered #3 engine, could not stay with Group or following Groups; dropped bombs at 1023 hours, on what was thought by DR fix to be Hamburg; landed at base at 1348 hours. No spares.

9. Phoned as Hot News

Dinghy reported seen at 5340 x 0350, at 1354 hours, by one crew member of our A/C 897-S, from a height of 3,000 feet. Our A/C 055-M, reported SOS call, presumably from dinghy, at 1423 hours.

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