

385th BG

General narrative

SUBJECT: Report of operations, 385th "A" squadron, mission of 24 December 1944.

TO: Commanding officer, 385th bombardment group (H), APO 559.

1. Squadron assembly: lead ship took off late due to a ship change and consequently formed late.
2. Group assembly: assembly with the other squadrons was late due to above mentioned difficulties.
3. Formation was good except the route out where the squadrons had several stragglers.
4. Division assembly: task force assembly was not as briefed due to the fact that we left our buncher late. However, the force was intercepted and the proper position flown. We were leading the 4 "D" group. The task force was intercepted between Cambridge and Bury.
5. Climb to bombing altitude was as briefed.
6. Route in was as briefed up to the leg where we turned to the I.P. at that time the 4 "F" group cut short the route, cutting off both myself and the 4 "E" group. Giving us considerable propwash and causing us to deviate from the briefed course. The 4 "F" group also cut off one squadron of the 4 "C" group which had split up for squadron bombing.
7. Target: we were the second group over our assigned target due to the fact that the 4 "F" group cut us out before the I.P. we were approximately two minutes behind the 4 "F" group.
8. Rally: of squadrons was effected but the high squadron was forced away from his position by another group and lost our group in the sun.
9. Descent was according plan.
10. Fighter support was excellent.
11. Remarks: group leaders should be briefed to hold their position in the column.

SUBJECT: Report of operations, 385th "B" squadron, mission of 24 December 1944.

TO: Commanding officer, 385th Bombardment squadron (H), APO 559.

1. Squadron assembly was fair. Not enough time was allotted for the assembly or lateness was due to ships not being able to locate the leader.
2. Group assembly was good and according to plan without difficulty.
3. The formation was good. It was very loose except when "bandits" were reported. Squadron formation was very good and that of the group fair.
4. The task force assembly was considered good. I was leading the high squadron of the 4D group. A few minutes after leaving the

buncher we cut points X and Y and assembled at Z

5. The climb to bombing altitude was good and effected according plan.

6. The briefed route in was followed, with times being approximately 17 minutes behind schedule. Visibility was good.

7. We were the first group overt the target. Lead-high-low was the order of squadrons over the target at an interval of 200 yards.

8. The rally after bombing was excellent; however, I was forced out by another group. The sun was very bright resulting in my losing sight of the lead squadron. Bandits were in the vicinity so I tacked on to the first group I saw.

9. The descent to minimum altitude was effected according to plan.

10. Fighter support was excellent and as briefed. They were met just prior to entering enemy coast.

11. The mission did not seem to be well planned. Not once was the sun in our favour. Groups should be briefed never to pass another group over enemy territory.

12. Aircraft 43-38233 flying #4 position in the low section of the 385th E squadron failed to return from this operation. Prior to reaching the target area, while over enemy territory, aircraft 43-38233 went out of control after apparently being hit by anti-aircraft fire. It left its proper position, zooming down and then up into the aircraft that was leading the section. The props of the lead aircraft struck 43-38233 and cut it in two at the waist section/ the ship then disintegrated with no chutes being observed leaving the wreckage. Nine crew members were aboard this aircraft.

	"A" Sq	"B" Sq	"C" Sq	"D" Sq	"E" Sq	Total
Aircraft scheduled to take off	12	13	13	10	9	57
Aircraft taking off	12	13	13	10	9	57
Aircraft attacking	12	13	13	10	8	56
Aircraft not attacking	0	0	0	0	1	1
Sorties credited	12	13	13	10	9	57

Reasons why aircraft did not attack

E Sqn - 43-38233 collided with another aircraft prior to reaching target area due to receiving damage by anti-aircraft fire. Aircraft disintegrated in air without dropping bombs. Sortie credited.

SUBJECT: Report of operations, 385th "C" Sqn, mission of 24 Dec. 1944.

TO: Commanding officer, 385th bombardment group (H), APO 559

1. The squadron and group assemblies were made as planned over buncher 13. No difficulties were encountered.

2. The squadron and group formations were both good.

3. The task force assembly was made as briefed. We were the fourth group in the task force. I led the low squadron of this group.

4. The climb to bombing altitude was made as briefed. There

were no deviations from prescribed course.

5. On the route in, the "F" group overran the D and E groups, and caused them to "S" around off course. The confusion took place right near our I.P., and made it extremely difficult to make our I.P. good.

6. The order of groups over our assigned target were as briefed. The interval between my squadron and the preceding one was about 45 sec.

7. The low squadron made the rally with the lead squadron at the rally point.

8. The descent was made according to plan.

9. The fighter support was good. It seemed very light in target area, but I believe they were drawn off by enemy action.

10. Channel "A" communications were very poor.

SUBJECT: Report of operations, 385th "D" squadron, mission of 24 December 1944.

TO: Commanding officer, 385th bombardment group (H), APO 559.

A. Squadron assembly was as briefed, as was group assembly.

B. The group was then joined on to the 4D group and we maintained our position behind 4D until after we reached the target.

C. The formation was not good. The 2nd flight lead section of the lead squadron was formed from a composite group and did not fly very close. Also the high squadron lagged somewhat.

D. The wing assembly route was not followed due to lead of 4D group being late on take-off thus late on departing the buncher. The wing assembly route was cut short and our two groups made the proper position in the wing column about half way along the wing assembly route.

E. The climb to altitude was very slow, both as to rate of climb and airspeed. However, the briefed route was followed closely.

F. The route to the target was followed as briefed. However, the 4F group caused us much trouble. They (4F) passed us enroute, then "S" ed across in front of our groups, then prior to the I.P. cut us out of the division column.

G. This group bombed ahead of 4C group. Otherwise our order of groups over the target was as briefed.

H. Our group was able to execute a very successful rally between the squadrons after the target. However, we were not able to catch the 4D group.

I. the descent and route out was as briefed.

J. fighter support was as briefed. However, there were a few enemy fighters able to get at us.

K. The problems encountered could be eliminated if every group leader maintained his correct position in the division.

SUBJECT: Report of operations, 385th "E" squadron, mission of 24 December 1944.

TO: commanding officer, 385th bombardment group (H), APO 559.

1. Squadron assembly was effected according to briefed plan.
2. Group assembly with lead squadron was made without any difficulties.
3. Formation: squadron formation was good with exception when encountering prop wash from other groups. Group formation dragged slightly in climb with high squadron to the rear.
4. Task force: I was leading the low squadron in the 4 "E" group. We left the buncher about two minutes late following 4"D". We intercepted the task force on time but 4F and 4G seemed to be too close behind 4C. This caused a bunching effect of the groups over the continent.
5. The climb to altitude was as briefed.
6. Route in: visibility was very good with slight haze toward the ground. Our course was slightly to the left of briefed course to avoid flak area. Here we encountered flak that was uncharted.
7. The order of groups on target was 4A, 4B, 4C, 4F, 4D and 4E, etc. As far as I know 4F out in front of 4D and 4E. We hot target according to briefed interval. We were in the 4"E" group.
8. Rally: a slight turn from target was effected with briefed descent to R.P. we picked up the lead squadron slightly beyond the R.P. as the high squadron was behind when turning on the I.P.
9. Descent was according to plan.
10. Fighter support: very good. The 4A group encountered bandits of which pulled some of the fighters from us, but we still had a sufficient amount.
11. Remarks: groups should retain their interval from the time they intercept the task force until turn off rally point at least. Cutting groups out on turns invokes a dangerous problem.