

388th BG

General narrative

SUBJECT: Report of operations officer on mission of 24 December 1944.

TO: Commanding officer, 388th bombardment group (H), APO 559.

388th "A" squadron formation:

1. General narrative. The lead aircraft of the 388th "A", 388th "B", and 388th "C" took off 0840-0844 hours and assembled into group formation over buncher #10 at 10,000 feet using the instrument assembly procedure. The 388th "A" squadron took off 0913-0931 hours and assembled over buncher #10 at 10,000 feet using the instrument assembly procedure. The 45th "A" group departed buncher #10 on time and on course for Thetford. The wing and air division assembly was as briefed. The 45th "A" group started the climb to bombing altitude upon departing the English coast at Felixstowe. The route from the English coast to a point just over the battle line was flown as ordered, at which time moderate and very accurate flak was encountered between Frankfurt and Cologne. The leader of the 45th "A" group had to abort due to battle damage and the deputy leader took over and reformed the group about five miles north of course. The 45th "A" group continued on course to the right of the 13th wing which was about 15 miles north of course. At the Pre I.P. the 13th wing converged on course and it was necessary for the 45th "A" group to "S" left to get in proper division column. At the I.P. the 45th "A" group made a normal fan-out procedure and made a visual bomb run on the primary target, bombing by squadrons with fair results. The 388th "A" squadron turned to the R.P., lost 1,000 feet, and rally was effected as planned. Return route was flown as ordered. The 45th "A" group started the descent to minimum altitude over the battle line. At that time the wing was in loose column. Letdown was continued to control point #4 which was reached about 38 minutes late due to a wind shift. The 45th "A" group returned to home base and landed 1705-1729 hours without incident. Moderate and inaccurate flak was encountered up to the I.P.; however there was none on the bomb run. Flak was nil on the return route. Enemy fighters, jet-propelled and Me-109's, were observed but no attacks were registered against this group. VHF contact was excellent until after the target and the it was fair. Weather was as briefed and contact with the weather ship was excellent. Friendly fighter support was fair.

2. Aircraft not attacking. Eleven A/C, plus 2 PFF A/C, took off as scheduled. One A/C returned early, a mechanical failure. The remaining ten A/C, plus 2 PFF A/C, attacked and received sorties. Their positions in the formation at time of assembly and over target, are shown in the attached diagram.

3. Aircraft lost. None

388th "B" squadron formation:

1. General narrative. The 388th "B" squadron took off 0906-0923 and assembled over buncher #10 at 10,500 feet using the instrument assembly procedure. Reference is made to the above report of the 388th "A" squadron formation for a general narrative of the remainder of the mission which was flown, as high squadron in the 45th "A" group, in company of the 388th "A" squadron.

2. Aircraft not attacking. Eleven A/C plus 2 PFF A/C, took off as scheduled. One A/C was missing in action before the target, receiving a sortie. The remaining ten A/C, plus 2 PFF A/C, attacked and received sorties. Their positions in the formation, at time of assembly and over target, are shown in the attached diagram.

3. Aircraft lost. A/C 43-38424 left the formation after the target with #1 engine feathered. It is believed that this A/C landed in France.

A/C 44-8411 was hit by flak before the target and blew up. 6 chutes.

388th "C" squadron formation:

1. General narrative. The 388th "C" squadron took off 0924-1006 and assembled over buncher #10 at 9,500 feet using the instrument assembly procedure. Reference is made to the above report of the 388th "A" squadron formation for a general narrative of the remainder of the mission which was flown, as low squadron in the 45th "A" group, in company of the 388th "A" squadron.

2. Aircraft not attacking. Thirteen A/C, plus one 1 PFF A/C, took off as scheduled. One A/C returned early, a mechanical failure. The remaining twelve A/C, plus 1 PFF A/C, attacked and received sorties. Their positions in the formation, at time of assembly and over target, are shown in the attached diagram.

3. Aircraft lost. None.

388th "D" squadron formation:

1. General narrative. The lead aircraft of the 388th "D" and 388th "E" squadrons took off 0840 and assembled over buncher #10 at 13,000 feet. The 388th "D" squadron took off 0856-0905 hours and assembled over buncher #10 at 13,000 feet using the instrument assembly procedure. The 388th "E" squadron assembled into group formation, however the 96th "D" squadron did not make assembly with the 45th "B" group. The 45th "B" group was 3,000 feet higher than the 45th "A" group however no difficulty was experienced except that some "S" ing was necessary to maintain the proper interval behind the 45th "A" group. Approximately at Swaffam the 96th "D" squadron made formation with the 45th "B" group and division assembly was approximately as briefed. The 45th "B" group maintained their altitude and did not start their climb until the 45th "A" group had climb to the same altitude as the 45th "B" group. The 45th "B" group then started their climb to bombing altitude, reaching bombing altitude approximately at the briefed point. The interval of the 45th "B" group behind the 45th "A" was less than two minutes on the route in and proper interval of two minutes was obtained just prior to the I.P. The 45th "A" group had to "S" behind the combat wing ahead of the 45th, thereby causing the 45th "B" group to make a large "S" before turning on towards the I.P. The 45th group executed the fan-out procedure, peeled off by squadrons, making individual bomb runs on the primary target. Rally was effected as planned and the return route was uneventful with the descent to minimum altitude accomplished as briefed. The 388th "D" squadron arrived at home base and landed 1727-1753. Flak was nil except at the battle line on the route in which was moderate and accurate. Enemy fighters were in the area however no attacks were made on the 388th "D" squadron. Friendly fighter escort was very good. Weather was approximately as briefed for the entire route.

2. Aircraft not attacking. Eleven A/C, plus 2 PFF A/C, took off as scheduled, attacked, and received sorties. Their positions in the formation at time of assembly and over the target, are shown in the attached diagram.

3. Aircraft lost. None.

388th "E" squadron formation:

1. General narrative, the 388th "E" squadron took off 0854-0916

hours and assembled over buncher #10 at 13,500 feet using the instrument assembly procedure. Reference is made to the above report of the 388th "D" squadron for a general narrative of the remainder of the mission which was flown, as high squadron of the 45th "B" group, in company of 388th "D" squadron.

2. Aircraft not attacking. Eleven A/C, plus 1 PFF A/C, took off as scheduled, attacked, and received sorties. Their positions in the formation, at time of assembly and over target, are shown in the attached diagram.

3. Aircraft lost. None

388th "F" squadron formation:

1. General narrative. The 388th group put up six A/C to form the lead section of the 388th "F" squadron, and the 96th group furnished the low section. The lead A/C was of the 388th group and took off 0840 hours and assembled over buncher #9 at 15,000 feet. The other five A/C were 1st Division A/C and took off at 0850 hours and assembled over buncher #9 at 15,000 feet. The 388th "F" squadron formed the low squadron of the 45th "F" group. The 45th "F" group was in proper wing order on the wing assembly route and the 45th "F" group had some trouble due to the difference in altitude, however the leader considers the planning as excellent. The leader of the 45th "F" group started his climb to bombing altitude before the 45th "A" group reached the assembly altitude of the 45th "F" group. This caused the 45th "F" group to do considerable "S" ing. The 45th "F" group made a course of approximately 12 miles north of briefed course on the leg to the I.P. due to all other groups taking too much interval in the fan-out. The primary target was bombed visually. The 388th "F" squadron got back in group formation at the rally point and return route was approximately as briefed with the descent to minimum altitude started at the right point on the battle line. Over England three A/C broke formation and returned to their proper base and four A/C including the lead A/C landed at 1737-1740 hours this base. Flak was seen at the battle line on the route in, however no flak was experienced by the 388th "F" squadrons. Weather was as briefed. No enemy fighters were seen and friendly fighter escort was good. The 1st division crews did not fly good formation possible due to the fact the crews were from several bases in the 1st division. The 96th squadron leading the 45th "F" group had some spare A/C however they would not fill in the second flight of the second section of the low squadron. Only three A/C of the 1st Division scheduled to fly as the second section of the 388th "F" group formed or flew with the 388th "F" squadron. Only four A/C toggled on the lead A/C of the 388th "F" squadron, the rest toggling late and some toggled one to three minutes late.

2. Aircraft not attacking. One PFF A/C took off as scheduled, attacked, and received a sortie. Its position in the formation, at time of assembly and over the target, is shown in the attached diagram.

3. Aircraft lost. None.