

390th BG

General narrative

SUBJECT: Operations narrative of mission #229, 24 December 1944.

TO: Commanding officer, 390th bombardment group (H).

390 "A" squadron
command pilot - Lt Col. Jones.

1. General narrative: The 390 "A" squadron flew as lead squadron of the 13 "A" group, leading the 13th wing. Take-off and assembly were as briefed. Wing assembly was as briefed, but some difficulty was encountered with division assembly in that the last group of the 4th wing was late in assembling, and a parallel course was flown with this group most of the way in. approximately one (1) hour before target time, a flak burst punctured the Plexiglas nose. Malfunction of the bombsight was caused by the resulting air stream, and the rate end mechanism was found to be frozen on the bomb run. This resulted in a strike report of PA4. The withdrawal and return to bases was as briefed. The flak was moderate and accurate. There were no fighter attacks on this formation. Weather was as briefed except for ground haze, which was heavy.

2. Aircraft not attacking: twelve (12) A/C took off as scheduled, attacked, and are credited with sorties. Formation at assembly and over the target is shown in diagram "A"

3. Aircraft lost: none

390 "B" squadron
Command pilot - Maj. Brown

1. General narrative: the 390 "B" squadron flew as high squadron of the 13 "A" group. Take-off and assembly were as briefed. The balance of the mission was flown essentially as briefed with such exceptions as are shown above for 390 "A". Timings were late because of wind change. Bombardier had trouble on run because of looking into sun.

2. Aircraft not attacking: Eleven (11) A/C took off, attacked, and are credited with sorties, formation at assembly and over target is shown in diagram "B"

3. Aircraft lost: None

390 "C" squadron
Command pilot - Capt. Wilkinson.

1. General narrative: the 390 "C" squadron flew as low squadron of the 13 "A" group. Take-off and assembly were as briefed. Flak was encountered crossing the enemy lines at St. Vith and Malmedy, and damage sustained to number 2 and number 3 engines. Two (2) hours later, at 1402, number 3 prop ran away, and could not be feathered. It was impossible to maintain formation, so lead was turned over to deputy. The low squadron, under the deputy lead proceeded to the target and dropped on the lead squadron. The balance of the mission was flown as briefed with such exceptions as are noted for 390 "A"

2. Aircraft not attacking: twelve (12) A/C took off as scheduled. A/C 206 (Stene) hit by flak and aborted before bomb run; is credited with sortie. Thus eleven (11) A/C attacked and twelve (12) A/C credited with sorties. Formation at assembly is shown in diagram "C" and over the target in diagram "D"

3. Aircraft lost: none

390 "D" squadron
command pilot - Maj. Engelbrecht.

1. General narrative: the 390 "D" squadron flew as lead squadron of the 13 "B" group. Take-off and assembly were as briefed. Division formation and timings were generally good. However, the last few groups of the division lead wing and 13th wing bunched up considerably, causing a broadening of the division column, considerable "S" ing and little flexibility for manoeuvring. Fireball Charlie being too far forward and only slightly higher gave the "B" group an excessive amount of prop wash. The bunching up, coupled with quite a bit of uncharted flak, presented difficulties. As a result of these two factors and manoeuvring to avoid flak, two (2) groups of the 4th wing fell in between us and the 13 "A" group and caused us to fly a course slightly north of briefed course. However, our I.P. was made good and the bomb run was good. Bombardier changed I.P. to left when he noted right side of target was well hit. R.P. was made and group reassembled. 13 "B" fell into division column and return was as briefed.

2. Aircraft not attacking: Twelve (12) A/C took off as scheduled. A/C 984 (Drinkwater) aborted before reaching enemy territory and is not credited with a sortie. A/C 812 (Henry) aborted in enemy territory, did not attack, and is credited with a sortie. A/C 274 (Fackelman) and A/C 173 (Herring) were lost, to flak, before the target; are credited with sorties, but did not attack. Thus, eight (8) A/C attacked, and eleven (11) are credited with sorties. Formation at assembly is shown in diagram "E" and over the target in diagram "F"

3. Aircraft lost: A/C 274 (Fackelman) hit by flak at 5023N-0852E. Outer panel of wing knocked off; plane split - "S" ed out of formation, spun in, and exploded on the ground. No chutes were observed.

A/C 173 (Herring) hit by flak at 5023N-0852E. Plane exploded in mid-air. No chutes were reported seen.

390 "E" squadron
Command pilot - Capt. Perry.

1. General narrative: the 390 "E" squadron flew as high squadron of the 13 "B" group. Take-off and assembly were as briefed. On the bomb run, the Vickers unit of the top turret caught fire and caused the cockpit to fill with smoke. The pilot had the elevator turned off on the AFCE, because, it wasn't functioning well. When the cockpit became smoked up, he hit the wheel as he reached for the window, and caused the bomb sight gyro to topple. This caused an error in bomb release. The withdrawal was flown as briefed.

2. Aircraft not attacking: twelve (12) took off as scheduled. A/C 127 (Kenny) landed on continent after crossing target, and is credited with a sortie. Thus twelve (12) A/C attacked, and are credited with sorties. Formation at assembly and over the target is shown in diagram "G".

3. Aircraft lost: None.