

# 398<sup>th</sup> BG

## General narrative

SUBJECT: Operations officer's report of mission on 24 December 1944

TO: Commanding General, first bombardment division, APO 557  
Commanding General, 1<sup>st</sup> combat bombardment wing, APO 557.

### 1. Summary of operations:

#### A. Data:

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| (1) Date of mission:     | 24 December 1944   |
| (2) Target assigned:     | Koblenz, Germany ("B" group)<br>Kirch Gons, Germany (Comp. Sqn)  |
| (3) Target attacked:     | Koblenz, Germany ("B" group)<br>Kirch Gons, Germany (Comp. Sqn)  |
| (4) Units participating: | 53 A/C of this group including<br>5 PFF A/C, formed the 1 <sup>st</sup> "B" CBG<br>and low Sqn. of comp. "C" Gp. |
| (5) Returned early:      | None   |
| (6) Failed to take-off:  | None   |
| (7) Lost:                | 42-97374, 42-102536 crashed on<br>take-off.  |

### 2. Narrative

#### Lead squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> "B" CBG

40 Aircraft scheduled from this field as 1<sup>st</sup> "B" group to hit airfield at Ettinghausen. Lead and deputy lead aircraft take-off was difficult due to ground fog. Remaining aircraft were held on ground due to third aircraft crashing on end of runway. Formation was finally assembled late and information was received from 1 CBW through VHF to use "B" plan attacking target at Koblenz.

Route to target was flown as briefed. 38 aircraft attacked primary visual target with results good, good and poor. No enemy fighters encountered

Fighter support was poor.

Flak was moderate but very accurate and was encountered from I.P. to target approximately 20 minutes.

Route home was flown as briefed. Formation was diverted to Rattlesden and Ridgewell and landing was without event.

One bombardier was killed and one crew member injured due to flak.

#### Low squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> "B" CBG

Take-off was made on instruments. Climb was made as briefed, and at the assembly buncher, information was given that the remainder of the formation would be slow taking off. Because of the delay in assembly, plan "B" was flown.

Plan "B" was flown as briefed. The low squadron took interval behind the lead squadron. The top turret gunner was instructed to flash an aldis lamp to the deputy at "Bombs away." At approximately two minutes before bombs away, the deputy leader mistook the sun reflecting on the aldis lamp for the signal. The deputy dropped his bomb short, and the remainder of the squadron, with the exception of the lead aircraft, dropped on the deputy. The lead aircraft dropped on the assigned target.

Moderate and accurate flak was encountered at frequent intervals from approximately 38 miles before the I.P. to past the target. No enemy aircraft were sighted.

Fighter support was fair.

Return was as briefed. The base was closed in upon return. Aircraft were diverted to Rattlesden and all landed safely. No aircraft in the low squadron was lost on the mission; one aircraft crashed on take-off.

#### High squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> "B" CBG

Take-off was made on instruments after slight delay. After lead aircraft took off, and a few wing aircraft, there was a delay of about an hour due to two aircraft cracking up on take-off. Assembly was satisfactory. The formation left the buncher with 12 aircraft. One aircraft caught the formation. The other had cracked upon take-off. He was low low element lead. The number 4 aircraft in the low element took over the low low lead. 13 aircraft hit the target.

After the lead aircraft took off, the mission was changed to plan "B". The mission was flown as briefed except that all control points were reached late.

Bombing was visual, but to right of MPI.

Scattered, accurate flak was encountered going into both I.P. and target.

No enemy aircraft were encountered.

No aircraft were lost due to enemy opposition.

Landing was made at Ridgewell due to adverse weather conditions at home base.

#### Composite low squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> "C" CBG

Take-off was made entirely on instruments but without incident to this squadron. Assembly was made at Bassingbourn and was fair.

Departed Bassingbourn on time and on course with seven aircraft.

Departed control point #1 4 minutes late but on course and with eight aircraft.

Route in was flown as briefed.

Bombing was visual with excellent results.

Route out was flown as briefed.

Landing was made at Ridgewell due to weather.

Five aircraft attacked with other squadron. No aircraft were lost.

Flak was meager and inaccurate.

No enemy aircraft were sighted.

Fighter support was excellent.

Weather was better than briefed.