

401st BG

General narrative

Mission 183 (Part I - 94th "B" formation)

Date 24 December 1944

Assignment

1. Assigned target: Koblenz, Germany (Plan "B")
2. Commitments: The 401st group was to furnish a complete 36 A/C group for the 94th "B" group formation. A PFF A/C was to be included in each squadron and as many spares as available.

Execution

1. Target bombed: Koblenz, M/Y Germany (vis)
2. a Group leader: 1st Lt. M.J. Christensen (Major Chapman aborted)
Lead navigator: 1st Lt. P.J. King (Howard "Mickey")
Lead bombardier: 1st Lt. M.E. McClendon
- b Low Sqdn leader: 1st Lt R.M. Fowler (Keeling)
Lead navigator: 1st Lt. J.M. Rush (Peterson "Mickey")
Lead bombardier: 1st Lt. M.M. Scanlon
- c High Sqdn leader: 1st Lt. C.W. Utter
Lead navigator: 1st Lt. R. Damp
Lead bombardier: 1st Lt. J.F. Hope

3. Flight over England:

a. Take-off:

about
incl. Take-off was delayed 10 minutes because of dense fog; opened to 1 mile and take-off proceeded normally. Thirty two aircraft took off (a borrowed A/C from 384th group) from home base and five A/C from other fields were to join the formation on route.

b. Squadron and group assemblies:

time Squadron and group assemblies were effected very rapidly but by to depart "Y" the group had 36 A/C. At this time "Newflick 3" called and said to delay 45 minutes and proceed on plan "B". after delaying 45 min. group departed with 39 A/C on plan "B", including six A/C from other groups.

3. c. Route over England:

After departing buncher the 94th "B" group was joined by 8 A/C of 94th "A". At CP #1 the 94th "B" and "A" were joined by 1st B group which decided to follow 94th "B" into the alternate target. The three groups 94th "B", 94th "A", 1st B were in compact column at departure of CP #1, 45 minutes late as briefed.

4. Attack:

a. flight to target:

94. "B" was leading the column proceeding to the alternate target (Koblenz) and a very good formation was maintained and the briefed course flown until the lead A/C aborted 150 miles from target, altitude 21,000' (4,000' below bombing altitude). When lead aborted, high sqdn leader was called to take over lead of group. High squadron leader dropped his wheels and started down only to find entire squadron following him. VHF contact couldn't be made with deputy. High squadron lead took over lead of the resulting 2 squadron combination. Lead and high squadron formation to the target was very poor. Due to mechanical difficulties and flak evasion, course was not as briefed from I.P. to target.

b. bombing run:

Lead & high squadron:

After the group lead had changed hands, the high squadron leader took over a little while before the I.P. Arrived about 3 miles north of assigned I.P. and soon thereafter encountered intense accurate flak. Evasive action was used to the left and the group started on a visual bomb run 35° off briefed Mag. heading. The bombardier synchronized on the M.P.I. and then employed evasive action. When he placed sight on back of target to refine corrections he found sight had become disengaged from the stabilizer. Since there was no time to replace the pin he held the sight on target with his right hand and made small corrections through C-1 with his left. When the indices crossed he salvoed. All other A/C used a 75' inter setting. The high squadron bombed on the group leader. Strikes were seen in the target area.

Low squadron:

Before I.P. was reached were north of course but turning just prior to the I.P., the I.P. was made good - almost. During the run this box had to "S" so as to get behind the lead - after zigzagging down the run, the target was sighted - the river being the identifying check point. Before the actual bomb run started the nose was hot by flak and seemed to affect the operation of the C-1, so it was turned off and a P.D.I. run was made. At bombs away only the smoke marker and 1 bomb went out, however, it is thought that most of the ships dropped on the smoke bomb. Repeated attempts to salvo had no effect, finally the pilot's salvo switch worked, approximately a minute after bombs away. Synchronization appeared good. unable to explain why bombs wouldn't go.

4. c. Flight from target:

South of course after leaving target. Returned to course and returned as briefed. Received diversion message over channel to land at Lavenham.

d. Return to base:

All ships landed at Lavenham safely - no ships of this formation landed at home base.

e. Weather:

CAVU over target with Cirrus above 27,000'. Ground haze was prevalent.

Visibility on take-off practically nil.

f. Fighter support:

Two flights of P-51's met the formation about 75 miles from I.P. and left immediately. No further support.

g. Comments on formation:

Very poor after lead aborted. Lead squadron scattered and high followed leader down when lead was changed. Low squadron good throughout.

During assembly and until lead aborted formation was very good.

h. Conclusions and recommendations:

Fly deputy PFF in #2 position, lead squadron.

i. Other A/C taking off for mission:

The following A/C were scheduled for the high squadron but due to the fact that all but one took off from other bases they were not able to reach 94th "B" formation.

A/C 44-6132: Took off from RAF field Gaydon, but due to fact that nothing other than practise bombs could be loaded, returned early to base.

A/C 42-97395: Took off with 401st BG but failed to find formation. It tacked onto 401st BG A/C flying with 452nd BG in 3rd DIV. It bombed Darmstadt A/D dropping 12 x 500# M17 IB.

A/C 43-38738: Took off from Harrington to join 401st BG but failed to reach 94th "B" formation. It bombed Giessen A/D with 34 x 100# GP's.

A/C 42-97322: Took off from Harrington to join 401st BG but failed to reach 94th "B" formation and tacked onto 303rd group formation. It bombed Darmstadt A/D with 34 x 100# GP's.

A/C 44-6313: Was scheduled to take-off from Polebrook but was unable to do so because field was closed. It joined the 351st group on the afternoon mission and was recalled with the formation.

A/C 43-38656: Took off from Wendling to join 401st but failed to reach formation. It flew and bombed with 379th group, dropping 8 x 500# GP bombs on Freiburg

5. Aircraft not attacking:

Lead squadron: PFF A/C 44-8033 Not sortie. Returned after reaching continent because of internal failure of #2 engine.

A/C T/O from other fields:

A/C 44-6132: Not sortie. Took off from RAF field Gaydon, but due to the fact that nothing but practise bombs could be loaded, it returned early to base.

was A/C 44-6313: Not sortie. Was scheduled to take-off from Polebrook but unable to do so because field was closed. It joined the 351st group on the afternoon mission and was recalled with that formation.

6. Enemy opposition:

No air opposition seen or encountered. (see flak report for flak)

7. Battle damage:

Major	Minor	To flak
1	21	22

8. Casualties:

1 - DOA

9. Statistical summary of operations (see attached form)

10. Bombing date:

a. observatio:

Bombs were seen to strike in the target areag.

b. Disposition of bombs:

Lead squadron: 11 A/C of the original lead squadron EET and bombed Koblenz, dropping 132 x 500# M-12 GP bombs. The aborting A/C 033 returned 11 bombs to base.

low squadron: 12 A/C of the low squadron EET and bombed Koblenz, dropping 143 500# M-12 GP bombs.

High squadron: 8 A/C of the original high squadron EET and bombed Koblenz, dropping 67 x 500# IB's - 8 x 500# M-12 (in GH A/C) - 10 x 500# GP (loaded in A/C 125 at Shipdam)

Other A/C: See paragraph 4 (i).

e. Tabular summary of disposition of bombs:

	Aircraft Over target	Bomb- ing	Num ber	Bombs size	type	Fusing nose	tail
Main Bombfall	31	31	(281 (79	500# 500#	M-12 M-17IB	1/100 33 sec.	1/100
Other attacks	4	4		see paragraph 4i)			
Total bombs on target			(281 (79	500# 500#	M-12 M-17IB	1/100 33 sec.	1/100
Other expenditures			-	-	-	-	-
Bombs returned			11	500#	M-12	1/100	1/100

Total (loaded on A/C taking off)	292	500#	M-12	1/100	1/100
	79	500#	M-17IB	33 sec.	

11. Lost aircraft: None.

MISSION #183 (Part II - squadron mission with 3rd division)

Assignment

1. Assigned target: Darmstadt A/G (Pri) or M/Y (sec)
2. Commitments: The 401st group was to furnish all available A/C at Deopham Green to participate in the mission with the 452nd group of the 3rd division. 15 A/C were available and flew the high squadron of the 452nd group formation.

Execution

1. Target bombed: Darmstadt (M/Y - Vis)
2. Squadron leader: Capt. D.A. Currie
 Lead navigator: Capt. W.B. Raberer
 Mickey operator: 1st Lt. F.P. Fraoili
 Lead bombardier: Capt. W.T. Hutsch

3. Flight over England:

a. Take-off:

Take-off was made at 0840. 15 A/C taking off normally and satisfactorily.

b. Squadron and group assemblies:

The squadron leader assembled the squadron over the buncher at Deopham Green at 17,000'. After making four 360° turns the squadron was assembled and it joined the group formation.

d. Route over England:

Route over England was as briefed as far as is known. The group and wing falling into good division column.

4. Attack:

a. Flight to target:

Flight to target was as briefed except the group lead ship was off course to the left part of the time. The group leader instructed 2 of the high squadron A/C to come into the lead squadron's formation. This left

13 401st A/C in the high squadron for the balance of the flight. The lead and low squadrons bombed the primary whereas the high bombed the secondary target.

b. Bombing run:

The squadron turned on I.P. as briefed and started bomb run without interference. There being such a ground fog and the run being into the sun the run started on Mickey. Not being able to see the primary target due to ground fog a run was made on secondary target. About thirty seconds before bombs away the bombardier was able to make a few minor

corrections. Bombs were dropped on the secondary target PFF with visual assist, squadron leader salvoed, all others used min. intervalometer setting.

4. Flight from target:

The rally was made very quickly and once in group formation the high squadron stayed there till it was over the channel.

d. Return to base:

Return was uneventful. The high squadron leader broke off from the group and returned to Deopham Green. The rest of the high squadron was supposed to return to base but were unable to do so and landed at other bases - safely.

e. Weather:

Weather was as briefed. Clear over the continent with haze over the target.

f. Fighter support:

Good.

g. Comments on formation:

Formation was best in a long time. Very good.

5. Aircraft not attacking:

None - all attacked.

6. Enemy opposition:

No air opposition was seen or encountered. Some meager but exceedingly accurate flak was encountered over battle line - not at target.

7. Battle damage:

(Included in Part I of mission summary)

8. Casualties:

None.

9. Statistical summary of operations: (see attached form)

10. Bombing data:

a. Observations:

Bombing was mostly unobserved.

b. Disposition of bombs:

15 A/C EET and bombed Darmstadt (2 on the A/C, 13 on the M/Y) and dropped 180 x 500# M-17 IB thereupon.

c. Tabular summary of disposition of bombs:

	Aircraft Over target	Bomb- ing	Num ber	Bombs size	type	Fusing nose	tail
Main Bombfall (sec. M/Y)	13	13	156	500#	M-17IB		
Other attacks (Pri. A/D)	2	2	24	500#	M-17IB		
Total bombs on target			180	500#	M-17IB		
Other expenditures			-	-	-	-	-
Bombs returned			-	-	-	-	-
Total (loaded on A/C taking off)			180	500#	M-17IB		

11. Lost aircraft: None.