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HEADQUARTERS 2D COMBAT BOMB WING (H)
AAF 114 APO 558

BLACK CENSORED MARK

29 September 1944.

TO: Commanding General, Mq 2d Bombardment Division, AAF 147, APO 558.
Commanding Officer, 389th Bombardment Group, AAF 114, APO 558.
Commanding Officer, 445th Bombardment Group, AAF 124, APO 558.
Commanding Officer, 453rd Bombardment Group, AAF 144, APO 558.

1. A critique was held in the main briefing room of the 389th Bomb Group at 1845 hours 27 September 1944. The critique was attended by major General Kepner, Brig. General Johnson, Brig. General Griswald, Col. Arnold, Col. Potts, Col. Jones, Col. Thomas and other representatives from the three Groups. Also attending were the lead and deputy lead crews of the 389th and 453rd and the deputy lead crew of the 445th, and fighter pilots who participated in the day's mission.

2. Col. Arnold was presiding and opened the critique by stating that its purpose was to find the truth about what happened on the day's mission by open discussion, and to learn lessons from the facts brought out in the discussion. He also stated that it was not the urpose of the critique to place blame or single out any one man or organization. A discussion of the mission was then started.

Assembly

It was brought out by all command pilots that the group, wing, and Division assembly was normal and accomplished as briefed. The Division started out on course in good shape.

Route in to the I.P.

Capt. Mauck of the 389th stated that after landfall he felt that his group was too close to Amsterdam so he flew south of the course to avoid flak, thus leaving the bomber stream for a time 0 the 453rd followed the 389th procedure. Good fighter support picked up the formation at landfall.

I. P. to Target

Maj. Graham (445th Deputy Lead): At the I.P. Maj. McCoy (445th Lead) called and said a PFF run would be made, giving the code word. He did not have flares, so I fired them. We turned our Mickey set off so that we would not possibly jam the lead Mickey set. According to the run of the Wing ahead of us, we were slightly to the left of course, and, from their smoke markers we bombed quite a bit farther west of them.

Col. Arnold: What was your heading? You were briefed 90 - 92° From all reports you turned off about 2/3rds of the way down the run to almost 63°.

Maj. Graham: We made a correction to the left but I didn't think it was that great.

Col. Arnold: Is your DR Navigator here?

DR Navigator: Yes sir. The lead ship made that correction to the left and we went in at 67°.

Col. Arnold: From your DR calculations where do you estimate you bombed?

DR Navigator: We overshot the target and I would say we vbombed about 5 miles east of the target. Bombs were away at 0941.

Col. Arnold: Graham, what was your procedure after bombs away?
CENSORED black mark

Maj. Heaton of the 453rd and CENSORED gave their stories of their procedure from the I.P. through the rally. It was brought out that they bombed Kassel and after the target the 389th lost sight of the 445th and came out first. It was also brought out that as they (289th, 453rd) came out after the rally on a southwest heading, some of the tail gunners reported aircraft falling in flames but these aircraft were so far to the east that it was impossible to identify them. Col. Jones stated that the attack came at 1003 and lasted until 1009. The tail gunner of the deputy lead ship, (Maj. Graham) stated that the enemy fighters came in from 5 to 7 o'clock level to slightly low. They attacked in waves of 15 to 30 planes each. He thought there were 3 waves. The waves moved through the entire formation firing as they went. It was 20 mm cannon fire.

Col Arnold then called on the representatives of the Fighter groups: Major Lund called on Maj. Brown (4th Fighter Group):

Major Brown (4th): Right from the rendezvous I had two squadrons with me and one squadron staying with our Big Friends all the time. We made the turn to the left at the IP and then swept over them. It was then that Colgate reported bandits to the NE so I took two squadrons with me, leaving one squadron with our Big Friends, and swept up to the northeast but could not see anything. While on this sweep our one squadron reported Big Friends being attacked so we dropped our belly tanks and went for our Big Friends. It took us about 2 ½ minutes to get there and one of the squadrons with me went in and mixed it up with the bandits. The 479th came in from one direction and the 361st came in from another.

Maj. Gen. Kepner: What sort of formation did the enemy use?

Major Brown: They just sort of swamped them, just about everything at once.

Maj. Gen. Kepner: Were they firing 20 mm or 50 cal.?

Major Brown: It was 20 mms.

Colonel Arnold: Did anyone see any bombers going down on the SW leg?

Bombardier on HR of 453rd: Our tail gunner reported several ships going down in flames. I stuck my head out through the blister and I saw 2 myself. He then reported one more directly behind but it was too far back to identify it.

Major Lund: Col Stewart, can we have your story?

Lt. Col Stewart (355th Fighter): We had a regular plan – had one squadron stay all around the rear of the 14th, another to the top and another broken up on both sides. All went very well. We went right on thru with the 14th. After bombs away we heard there was a fight going on under the clouds and went down to investigate, keeping two squadrons with our Big Friends at all times. It seems that I saw three columns of B-24s going down. The bombers were flying on the south course when they got in trouble.

Major Lund: Major Friedman, how about you [sic] story?

Major Friedman (361st): Everything went along fine until after bombs away. I then noticed enemy fighters going thru a box. One of my squadrons saw 10 pass thru the box and go down thru the clouds. They followed and found about 40 enemy fighters down there and mixed it up.

Major Lund: Major Brown, at what angle did you come in?

Major Brown: At about 350° and I had two squadrons with me and one was already in the fight. The 361st was already in the fight, too.

Lt. Col Stewart: We came on thru the target with 11 and all the way down. When I heard about the attack I started back with 5 ships and left 21/2 minus one flight which came back. We got in in time to get 3 190's. [sic]

CENSORED^{Dr}: Do you think any of the bombers could have gotten back into CENSORED^{Dory}?

Lt. Col. Stewart: Yes Sir, very likely they could.

Major Lund: Major Olds, will you go thru with your story?

Major Olds(479): Our group was on a fighter sweep. When I heard of our Big Friends being attacked I dropped my belly tanks, did a 180 and started back. I had 20 P-51s with me and there were some P-38s behind me. All the attacks of the enemy seemed to be from 6 o'clock. When I followed some to the deck I could see five fires already on

the ground with parachutes all over the area. When the fight was over, we helped about 12 stragglers back over friendly territory.

Col. Arnold then turned the meeting over to Maj. General Kepner who reviewed the discussion that had just taken place and commended [sic] on it. He brought out three very important points:

- (1) The part of the mission from the I.P. to the target is the most vital important, [sic] and difficult phase of a mission. In this case, a mistake was made by the lead crew resulting in their overshooting the target by about 20 miles and getting out of the bomber stream.
- (2) A mistake was made by the fighter support in not covering this group very closely while it was out of the bomber stream.
- (3) A mistake was made by the crews of the 445th Group in not identifying the fighters soon enough and not bringing to bear a concentrated barrage on the enemy as they swept through the formation. He felt that this mistake was made because the enemy employed tactics which, for a short time confused out [sic] gunners into thinking that they were out [sic] righter boys giving cover.

Conclusion: It is felt that the terrible intensity of this attack by the enemy was caused by:

- (1) A single group being off briefed course, out of the fighter stream and without adequate friendly fighter cover.
- (2) Crews failing to identify the enemy and their being late in opening fire.

A strike photo has given conclusion [sic] proof that the 445th's bombs were dropped at a spot 4 miles west of Gottingen which is about 30 miles northwest of Kassel. Having dropped at this point, the group made the briefed rally procedure which put them even farther east and out of the bomber stream. Meantime the 389th and 453rd and the 14th Wing bombed Kassel and turned south after rally as briefed. This left the 445th in trail of the entire Division, and they were jumped 5 miles west of briefed course at 10:03. A good suggestion was offered by Col Jones: The command pilot of the lead ship of the lead group in the Division or Wing should keep a very close check on the DR from the I.P. to the target when H2X is used. He should keep a clean check on the position of other units after bombs away.

For the Commanding Officer:

JAMES M. STEWART,
Lt. Col., AC,
Chief of Staff.