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HEADQUARTERS
20th Fighter Group, Army Air Forces
AAF Station F-367 APO 637 U.S. Army

(B-4)

319.1

25 January 1944.

SUBJECT: Tactical Commander's Report, Field Order No. 222, Headquarters
VIII Fighter Command, dated 24 January 1944.

TO : Commanding General, VIII Fighter Command, APO 637, AAF Station
F-361. (thru channels)

In compliance with VIII Fighter Command Memo 55-3, Sec. V, par
12, dated 23 August 1943, the following Tactical report is submitted
covering the mission of 24 January 1944 as per Field Order No. 221.

1. Track Flown.

a. All squadrons started engines at 0913.

b. At 0921 the 77th Squadron led by Major Johnson took off
followed by the 79th and 55th. The 55th Squadron took off from AAF Station
without and rendezvoused with the rest of the Group in the air.

c. Set course at 0938.

d. Landfall over English Coast was made at 0958.

e. Landfall in enemy coast over Dunkirk was made at 1012. One
box and several stray bombers were seen returning as we were crossing the
channel. Fine Boy was called, and advised us that the bombers were on course
and to continue.

f. Continued on course and approximately ten minutes after making
enemy coast two other boxes were seen aborting. At approximately 1035
received message that bombers had been advised to abandon mission. At
this point I sighted one task force heading 1043. We changed course
here and rendezvoused with these bombers at 1043. At approximately the
southern part of the Ruhr valley there was a large break in the overcast,
and the bombers proceeded to bomb an industrial town which I took to be
Bonn. Apparently good bombing was achieved.

g. From Bonn a course of due west was flown to about Brussels
at which point the course altered slightly to the north with the bombers
breaking the enemy coast just south of Ostend at approximately 1155. The
Group made the English coast at 1207.

h. At 1315 all planes were down at home base or vicinity.

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2. Description of Rendezvous. The Group flew at approximately 25,000 feet with the 77th leading, the 79th on the port, and the 55th to the starboard side and somewhat behind. As the Group rendezvoused with the bombers the 79th was deployed as far as to weave over the lead box; the 77th weaved over and to the right of the right box furnishing close escort; and the 55th joined the left hand lower box. The right hand box of bombers seemed to be highest.

3a. Description of Strategy and Tactics Employed. High cover was furnished by F-47's and P-51's throughout the mission with excellent results, no enemy aircraft being allowed to approach through this cover. On route back we ran into a thin overcast which tapered up to about 20-23,000 feet. The two lower boxes flew through the overcast while the top box proceeded over it. The top box which was at approximately 25,000 feet left no contrails. The two lower boxes that were flying in the overcast were leaving contrails. The fact that the bombers were in the overcast made it difficult to support these lower boxes. It was at this time that several F-190's who apparently had been stalling in this overcast to the south made their attack. It is felt that if the two lower boxes had gone over the overcast better cover could have been furnished.

5. Formation Employed. In giving cover four ship flights were used, criss-crossing and doing a weaving cross to maintain speed. Independence of action between eight ship sections is emphasized. Mutual support between sections of a squadron is obtained by disposition of the squadrons in the group.

6. Analysis of Encounters with Enemy Aircraft. The F-190's in making their attack on the bombers drove in from below taking advantage of the B-17 contrail cover. Due to this advantage an immediate counter attack was not employed. However, when the attack was countered results were decisive, all the enemy aircraft diving for the deck and being completely dispersed. Our lightnings attacked from about the same level turning into the attack.

7. Tactics Employed Against Anti-aircraft Fire. Anti-aircraft fire was light. Our fighters broke away from the bombers in the anti-aircraft barrage area. Defensive measures used were weaving and losing and gaining altitude.

8. Communications. R/T reception was fair, but the air was cluttered with repetition of calls on the same bogies. No significant equipment failure was noted.

9. Effect of Material Failure Upon the Conduct of the Mission. Material failure had no significant upon the conduct of the mission. There were no abortives, but two of our aircraft were forced to go on single engine at time of rendezvous because of engine trouble.

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CCE NARA Date 9/28/10

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10. Weather. We passed through thin overcast at about 17,000 feet while crossing the channel. There was 10/10ths overcast at 12,000 over our route in with a large break over the target area. On the return route we ran into thin overcast up to about 23,000 feet. Over the channel on the way home there was a high thin overcast at 20-30,000 feet with lower broken cloud at approximately 10,000 feet.

11. Difficulties Encountered. The fact that two boxes of bombers flew into overcast made it difficult to furnish effective escort.

H. E. Johnson Jr.
H. E. Johnson Jr.,
Major, Air Corps,
Commanding Officer,
77th Fighter Squadron.

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NND 745005
Authority
By *CKC* NARA Date *9/28/10*

MISSION SUMMARY REPORT

24 JANUARY 1944

A. 20TH FIGHTER GROUP, MAJ. JOHNSON LEADING.

B. 57 P-38'S (16-55) (22-77) (19-79) UP 0921 DOWN 1245.

C. 1 (BELLY TANK TROUBLE)

D. F O 222 TARGET AND AREA SUPPORT.

E. THREE (3). 1 NYR; (1 HIT BY FLAK, BAILED OUT OVER A TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY
BELEIVED TO BE BONN OR COLOGNE; 1 DOWN CHANNEL.)

F. N I L.

G. LT. HART 77TH SQDN. (BAILED OUT OVER TARGET.), LT. FRAZIER 55TH SQDN.
(REASON UNKNOWN).

H. 2-2-1

1 F W 190 DESTROYED, CAPT M&C MAULEY, 55TH SQDN.

1 F W 190 DESTROYED, CAPT. MCLARY, 55TH SQDN.

1 F W 190 PROBABLY DESTROYED, CAPT. M&C MAULEY, 55TH SQDN.

1 F W 190 PROBABLY DESTROYED, CAPT. MCLARY, 55TH SQDN.

1 F W 190 DAMAGED, LT. BAKER, 55TH SQDN.

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MISSION SUMMARY REPORT (cont.) 24 JANUARY 1944

I. GROUP CROSSED IN NIEUPORT AT 1011, 24,000 FEET. MADE R/V WITH 3 BOXES OF BOMBERS NORTHWEST OF KOBLENZ AT 1050, 24,000 FEET. BOMBERS TURNED NORTH AND BOMBED TARGET BELIEVED TO BE EITHER BONN OR COLOGNE. ROCKETS AND HEAVY, ACCURATE FLAK OVER THE TARGET. FLAK HIT LT. HART'S RIGHT ENGINE WHICH CAUGHT FIRE. HE WAS SEEN TO BAIL OUT AND WAVE. HITS WERE OBSERVED ON A BRIDGE AND IN RAILWAY YARDS. EN ROUTE OUT BETWEEN GHENT AND LILLE AT 1140, 24,000 FEET, 6 TO 8 F W 190'S ATTACKED THE BOMBERS. 59TH SQDN. TURNED INTO THE ATTACK AND SCORED THE ABOVE CLAIMS. LT. FRAZIER LAST SEEN DIVING INTO THE CLOUDS AFTER A F W 190 HAD BEEN SHOT FROM HIS TAIL. P-51'S AND P-47'S PROVIDED TOP COVER FOR THIS ENCOUNTER. L/F OUT OSTEND, 20,000 FEET AT 1200.

WEATHER: 4/10 CLOUDS OVER CHANNEL, 2 TO 3/10 OVER TARGET AT 18,000 FEET. 6/10 ON RETURN OVER CONTINENT AND CHANNEL. PERSISTENT CONTRAILS OVER 20,000 FEET.

R/Z : GOOD.

MISSION SUMMARY REPORT

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24 JANUARY, 1944

FO #222

ESCORT FOR BOMBERS - TARGET COVER --FRANKFURT

2 BELLY TANKS

2 SORTIE CREDITS

- A. 55TH FIGHTER SQUADRON CAPTAIN MCAULEY LEADING
- B. 16 P-38'S UP WITTERING 0921 - 13 DOWN WITTERING 1226
 - 1 - DOWN CROYDON 1225
 - 1 - DOWN KNUTTISHALL 1229
- C. NIL
- D. BOMBER ESCORT - FIELD ORDER #222
- E. 1 - LT. FRAZIER - E/A
- F. NIL
- G. 1 - LT. FRAZIER MISSING
- H. 2 - 2 - 1
 - ONE (1) FW 190 DESTROYED - CAPT. MCAULEY
 - ONE (1) FW 190 DESTROYED - CAPT. MCLARY
 - ONE (1) FW 190 PROBABLY DESTROYED - CAPT. MCAULEY
 - ONE (1) FW 190 PROBABLY DESTROYED - CAPT. MCLARY
 - ONE (1) FW 190 DAMAGED - LT. BAKER
- I. SQUADRON TOOK OFF, MADE ALTITUDE AS BRIEFED. L/F IN 21,000 FEET AT 1012 NEAR OSTEND. R/V WITH BOMBERS AT 1046 NEAR TARGET. 3 BOXES OF BOMBERS WITH TRIANGLE INSIGNIA ESCORTED FROM TARGET AREA. GROUP RETURNED AND ESCORTED TWO MORE BOXES FROM TARGET. BETWEEN LILLE AND GHENT 6-8 FW 190'S BOUNCED THE SQUADRON. LT. FRAZIER SEEN TO GO DOWN IN THIS AREA. NO ONE SAW HIM HIT THE GROUND. L/F OUT MADE NORTH OF DUNKIRK AT 1150 AT 13,000 FEET. CONVOY SEEN GOING NORTH NEAR MOUTH OF THAMES. BOMBERS REPORTED OVER R/T THAT FIGHTER ESCORT WAS EXCELLENT AND THAT NO ONE WAS IN TROUBLE. ONE BOMBER SEEN TO GO DOWN NEAR BRUSSELS, NO CHUTES SEEN. P-51'S PROVIDED EXCELLENT TOP COVER. R/T GOOD/ WEATHER OVER CHANNEL 2-4/10THS. OVER CONTINENT, FROM

-2-

FO #222 (CONT.)

14 A.

1. 4-6/10 THS TO 10/10THS. TARGET AREA 7-8/10THS.

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MISSION SUMMARY REPORT

January 24, 1944

A. 77th Fighter Squadron, 20th Fighter Group, Major Johnson. leading.

B. ~~19~~ up at 0924. 18 down at 1245.

C. 1 down at 0940. Lt. Frakes ~~Belly tank~~ trouble.

D. Bomber escort and target support mission. Field Order No. 222.

E. 1-2nd Lt. J. C. Hart. A.A. fire.

F. Nil.

G. 1-2nd Lt. J. C. Hart - seen bailing out.

H. Nil.

I. Landfall over enemy coast at French-Belgian border at 1011 at 24,000 feet. R/v with bombers north of Koblenz at 23,000 feet at 1055. Flak over target area heavy and accurate. It was here that flak got 2nd Lt. Hart's right engine which he feathered and which later caught on fire. Hart seemed to bail out and wave. Bombing was inaccurate. Railroad hit hard and bridge also. Factory below not hit to any extent. Rockets seen in this area. Two rockets trailing brown smoke burst at fighter altitude in red burst and 4 balls of fire descending. Yellow flight on way out saw rocket burst over ~~Dieppe~~ ~~ls~~. Flak fired at this flight at regular intervals accurate to height. Red flight saw low box of bombers being attacked by approximately 8 F W-190's trailed by P-47's. 190s attacking in pairs and breaking off by diving into overcast. Red leader turned into these and fired 2 second burst at app. 300 yds to keep E/A away. They broke away in a dive. B-17 seen immediately go into a spin. Recovered several times and then 5 chutes seen to open and B-17 seen to hit ground. This was in vicinity of Swevezele. While climbing Red four called bogies and red leader pulled up in climbing turn. Right ~~above~~ saw 190 and Red leader racked in tight and dropped belly tank., but 190 dove away before he could fire.

Landfall out at Ostend at 20,000 at 1200. Flak over Bruges. P-47 seen orbiting over midchannel at 5200-0230. Only E/A seen ~~were~~ those near Belgian coast. Lt. Taylor heard over bomber intercomm that target of opportunity being attacked but could not tell what it was. It seemed to be factory and railroad and bridge over river. Suggestion made that ~~5~~5ls refrain from turning into P-38s as identification is too difficult. Strange P-38 seen ~~without~~ tail mark flying around bombers.

Weather: scattered 4/10 clouds over channel at 18,000. Area just before target completely overcast on way in, breaking up into 2/10 to 3/10 clouds over target at 18,000 feet. On return over continent 4/10 to 5/10 clouds at various levels.

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MISSION SUMMARY REPORT

24 January 1944.

A. 79th Fighter Squadron Maj. RL. Ott leading
 B. 22 P-38s Up: 0927; Down 1320. 1-Wittering; 2-Cosford; 1- ? RAF
 C. None
 D. Ramrod - bomber escort
 E. 1 P-38 NYR - Lt. Hartig - reason unknown
 F. None
 G. 1 NYR - Lt. Hartig
 H. 0-0-0
 I. Weather: 5 to 8/10 overcast over channel; clearer in the South over continent; over target that was bombed it was clear and visibility was unlimited; on return solid overcast was encountered with top about 14000 ft.

E/A: Only 7 Me 109s seen. These planes were about 7000 ft. below formation; one flight went down but E/A went down into overcast. Between Brussels and enemy coast approximately 3 U E/A bounced the bombers. One bomber flew level and then into a sharp dive. Four chutes were seen. Bomber crashed. P51s and P38s were above bombers at this time and some P38s followed E/A down. One bomber became a straggler and was escorted home. During this encounter Lt. Hartig (White 4) disappeared in overcast and bomber contrails at about 20,000 ft. and White Flight was unable to find him after the encounter.

A/A: Flak over bombed target was heavy but inaccurate. Five or six rocket flashes were seen. These burst about 25,000 ft. forming an umbrella of white streamers which burst into red balls at end. No hits observed.

Planes Lost: Lt. Hartig has not been reported and was last seen near French Coast at 20,000 ft. He was having difficulty with a prop and was following last box of bombers. Rest of White Flight was weaving over him until encounter described above. Over the Channel Capt. Graham and Yellow Flight observed a chute and circled for one hour until ASR picked up pilot. P47s were also circling and another flight of P38s were above.

Misc. Near Ostend many small boats were observed. (approx. 50). U E/A seen on A/D SW of Brussels and also on A/D S of Ostend.

Bombers were apparently recalled and R/V was made at 1048 bombers coming from NW. Place unknown. Bombers turned North and bombed a large town or city. Bombs were well concentrated. Bombers were B-17s in 3 boxes and were escorted home by P38s, P47s and P51s. No Enemy attacks except near Ghent - described above.

Friendly convoy off English coast fired at one of our planes returning on single engine.

EDWARD J. STEINER 1st Lt. A. C.
 S-2

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TELEPHONE FLASH REPORT

F.O. 222DATE 24 January 1944.

(Not to be teletyped)

(Not to be teletyped)

a. Designation of Unit	20TH FIGHTER GROUP.
b. Time of Landing	1245
c. Aircraft MYR (State if believed Lost)	1 bailed out about two minutes away from target of opportunity.
d. Estimated Claims	Destroyed 1 Probable 2 Damaged 2
e. Brief description of Mission	Landfall in at Nieuport 1011. at 24,000 feet. Rendezvoused 1050 at 21,000 feet. 3 boxes of bombers, bombed Aachen or Duren. Out Ostend 20,000 -13,000 feet. 6 to 8 E/A bounced group between Lille and Ghent 1140.
f. Weather - Battle damage	

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TELEPHONE FLASH REPORT

F.O. 222

DATE 24 January 1944.

(Not to be teletyped)

(Not to be teletyped)

a. Designation of Unit	55TH FIGHTER SQUADRON.
b. Time of Landing	1225
c. Aircraft NYR (State if believed Lost)	3. 1 Croyden - McCleary. 1 Unknown. 1 Knettishall - Yelton.
d. Estimated Claims	Destroyed 1 Probable 2 Damaged 2
e. Brief description of Mission	Landfall in as briefed 1011. 21,000 feet. R/V with bombers at 1046, 21,000 feet. Bombing concentrated. 6 to 8 FW 190's bounced group between Lille and Ghent; way out. Landfall out Dunkirque 1150, at 13,000.
f. Weather - Battle damage	2/10th's over channel. 10/10th's over target.

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TELEPHONE FLASH REPORT

F.O. 222DATE 24 January 1944.

(Not to be teletyped)	(Not to be teletyped)
a. Designation of Unit	<u>77th Fighter Squadron. Maj. Johnson.</u>
b. Time of Landing	<u>1245</u>
c. Aircraft NWR (State if believed Lost)	<u>1 N. R.Y. Lost Lt. Hart bailed out over target.</u>
d. Estimated Claims	<u>Destroyed 0 Probable 0 Damaged 0</u>
e. Brief description of Mission	<u>In at 1011 at 24,000 feet. R/V at 1055 with bombers SW of Frankfurt at 23,000 feet. 4 to 12 E/A/C on way out 20 miles East of Ostend Red Flight fired on them as they were attacking 2 B-17's. No claims. Out Ostend 1200 at 20,000 feet.</u>
f. Weather - Battle damage	<u>4 - 5/10's over channel at 18,000 feet. 2 to 3/10's over target at 18,000 feet.</u>

TELEPHONE FLASH REPORT

F.O. 222DATE 24 January 1944.

(Not to be teletyped)

(Not to be teletyped)

a. Designation of Unit	79th. Fighter Squadron.
b. Time of Landing	1225 - 1:15.
c. Aircraft NYR (State if believed Lost)	1 NYR'S.
d. Estimated Claims	Destroyed 0 Probable 0 Damaged 0
e. Brief description of Mission	Landfall out England Cleaton 9:57. Landfall in at Newport, France 1011. 1050 as we were just short of R/V. Heard bombers were recalled. Saw 3 boces of B17's coming from NW. Bombers turned North and bombed Aachen or Duren with great success. Rockets from ground over target. Heavy, but inaccurate flak at 23,000 feet. Out Ostend 1125, at 20,000 feet. At 1140 between Brussels and coast 3 unidentified E/A bounced bombers. One bomber shot down, no chutes seen to open. One straggler brought home by this squadron at 22,000 feet. B-17 tail gunner shot at Lt. Mednick from a distance of 500 or 600 yards.
f. Weather - Battle damage.	5/8 10th's over channel. Clear at altitude. Persistent contrails at 20,000 feet and up. Weather clear over target. Solid overcast on return up to 6,000 feet.