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FOURTY FOURTH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON
Office of the Historical Officer
AFO 631

23 October 1944

SQUADRON HISTORY
1 August 1944 to 31 August 1944

The month of August in retrospect was simply a continuation of what had begun in June with the bombing of Japan and what would continue to happen thenceforth.

All efforts of the squadron were undauntlessly directed toward one goal - - the complete annihilation of Japanese industrial targets, essentially steel installations. The squadron's contribution toward the final goal were many and the hope of all as indicated by the sweat dropped on the line was that we should contribute more and more.

The first few days of August is noted on the morning reports as having the personnel of the squadron engaged in routine duties. Routine they were - - true - - but only to these men to whom "routine" had come to mean hard work.

The maintenance crews nursed the engines on the VLR's like babies. The strenuous trips the previous months necessitated many engine changes and in accordance with a directive from higher headquarters both the combat crews and maintenance crews pitched in - - from airplane commander to tail gunner and from crew chief to grease monkey. Colonel Cornett put on his flying suit - - not to fly but to work on the plane. Rumor had it that the Adjutant and the Intelligence Officer also helped out - - that was mere rumor.

About the 5th of August word was given to people concerned that the planes had to be ready. Two missions were to be flown, one to Palembang, Sumatra to smash the Pladjoe Oil Refinery, and the other a return trip to Japan for a blow at Nagasaki.

On 7 August 1944 at 0012z the first of the squadrons planes was airborne when ship #503, piloted by Captain W. Hunter took off for the advanced base at Hsingching. On

SECRET

S E C R E T

8 August, #290 and #348 piloted by Major N. Wemple and Lt. Col. J. Cornett took off for the forward area. On 9 August Major McWilliams took off in #319. These planes were to go on the mission to Nagasaki.

Briefing was held on the morning of the 10th and the disclosure of the target was taken with an air of calmness which to an outsider may have indicated disinterestedness but to those in the know actually was a show of confidence in the crew and in the airplane they were to fly.

The maintenance crew assigned to #319 did an outstanding job in getting the aircraft ready for combat. The day it was scheduled for take off it was discovered that an engine change would be necessary before it could participate in the mission. The crew chief M/Sgt Dobrowolski and crew; S/Sgt Bergin, S/Sgt Alford, Sgt Potter, Sgt Arlet, Sgt Huber, Pfc Crivelli and Pvt Smith, performed a near miracle in accomplishing an engine change in 24 hours. #319 took its place majestically with the other superforts.

The mission was to be a night strike at Nagasaki proper. The planes were to carry 13 M-18 incendiaries and 3 M-26 Fragmentation bombs. The 44th Squadron led the take offs when #503 was airborne at 0903 on 10 August and turned its nose toward the Island of Japan. A short time after take off, however, #503 developed engine trouble (high fuel pressure on #2 engine) and retruned to the field at 1008Z. The trouble was remedied at once and the plane took off again at 1047Z.

Aircraft 319 was forced to jettison its bombs between Sashui Island and Korea due to the fact that radar went out on the plane and instrument weather prevented the Navigator from determining his exact position. The crew returned to Hsingehing disappointed but determined to make the next one.

All of the 44th planes with the exception of #290 dropped its bombs by radar because a large cloud obscured the target at the bomb release line. Aircraft 290 made its run on the target from a heading other than prescribed and was able to bomb visually. After dropping its bombs #290 made a second run over the target to drop photo flash bombs and take pictures.

Over the target A/A was meager with bursts falling behind the planes and low. However, a new type of projectile was used by the Japs, possibly a rocket projectile fired from a plane.

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

Aircraft #348 reported one amber-orange projectile flash across its nose starting from above and descending down at a shallow angle. #290 observed a green projectile followed by a long orange tail flash horizontally across the nose at 16,500 feet in the target area.

All aircraft took evasive action directly after bombs away, making diving turns of about 180° with loss of altitude of 1,000 to 2,000 feet to throw off A/A predictions.

Airplane 503 went over the target 45 minutes after the other planes and the crew reported that after releasing their bombs they passed through the cloud that obscured the target and were able to see huge fires around the entire perimeter of the target as well as large fires spotted throughout the area. They aptly described the picture as looking like a "raging forest fire".

In contrast to prior raids on Japan there were no searchlights nor fighter opposition in the area and no barrage balloons or smoke screen. On the return trip #290 and #348 were forced to land at A-7 as A-1 was closed in. Crews participating in this mission were as follows:

#503 (Combat)

Captain Hunter
Lt. Brown
Lt. Jellis
Lt. McKinsey
P/O Arrington
Lt. Albers
T/Sgt Brooks
Sgt Ball
S/Sgt Denney
Sgt Tepper
T/Sgt Moore
M/Sgt Belknap

#290 (Combat)

Major Wemple
Lt. Covey
Capt. Swanson
Lt. McIntyre
P/O Landau
Lt. Greenberg
T/Sgt Price
S/Sgt Wagner
T/Sgt Westberg
T/Sgt Pawlak
T/Sgt Houghton
M/Sgt Coggins

#250 (Transport)

Major Roberts
Lt. Harvell
Lt. Dickerson
P/O Gray
Sgt Anderson
Sgt Geisler
T/Sgt Van Ormer
Sgt Smith
S/Sgt Mueller
Sgt Sullivan
Lt. Gottlieb (X)

#348 (Combat)

Lt. Col. Cornett
Lt. Gaston
Capt. Starkey
Capt. McGutcheon
Lt. Noble
Capt. Stumpff
T/Sgt Cox
S/Sgt Curtiss
T/Sgt McConnell
T/Sgt McMahon
T/Sgt Doran
M/Sgt Ruskowski

#319 (Combat)

Major McWilliams
Lt. Farrell
Lt. Stearns
Lt. Kintis
P/O Cox
Sgt Underhill
Sgt Moncrief
Sgt Slapak
T/Sgt Hunt
S/Sgt Lamb
T/Sgt McCann
M/Sgt Dobrowolski

S E C R E T

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To the disappointment of the squadron no 44th planes participated in the mission to Palembang. This was due to a last minute change as to the number of planes the squadron would furnish on the two missions.

Planes returned to the rear area on the 12th and 13th of August.

Squadron personnel started to relax but not for long, for on the 14th word was passed around that another mission was in the making and the planes had to be ready.

On 18 August after diligent work by maintenance crews the planes took off. Out of 26 planes airborne for the group, 7 were from the 44th squadron. These were #503, piloted by Lt. Col. Cornett; #541, piloted by Major White; #268, piloted by Major Roberts; #290, piloted by Captain Harte; #322, piloted by Captain Mueller; #348, piloted by Captain Tisserat and #319 piloted by Captain Gray. All planes from the squadron arrived at the forward area without incident.

At briefing for the mission crews were informed the target was the Imperial Iron and Steel works at Yawata. This was an old story, for some of the 44th crews on this party had participated in a previous mission to Tojo-land and to the same target.

Starting at 0144Z, 20 August, 22 aircraft were airborne for the strike. Of these, 2 of the squadrons ships did not reach the primary target. Aircraft 268 developed an oil leak in #2 engine enroute to the primary target so he proceeded to the secondary target. Ten (10) miles from the secondary, the radar scope became inoperative and remained so until 10 miles past the target area. The pilot, Major Roberts, was determined to bomb something, so he proceeded to Kaifeng, China, designated as the target of last resort and bombed by radar at 23,000 feet. Due to a solid undercast bombing results were unobserved. No A/A or E/A was encountered. Aircraft 348 was forced to jettison its bombs when #4 engine cut out and the plane would not hold altitude.

Six (6) 44th planes proceeded to the primary target. 4 planes dropped 6 X 500 lb. bombs on the primary and 2 planes dropped 8 X 500 pounders on the primary.

Enemy A/A over the target ranged from moderate and inaccurate for the first planes over the target to intense and accurate for later aircraft. This brief statement doesn't begin

SECRET

S E C R E T

to tell the story. Lt. George Gaston, Co-pilot on #503, took pictures of the flak and stated that German flak had nothing on this stuff. "You could walk on it" was the comment.

Enemy fighter opposition was moderate to strong with numerous twin engine fighters encountered. At 0830Z airplane #503 encountered a Tony 10 miles Southwest of Yawata flying at 25,000 feet true altitude. Tony came in from 11 o'clock high; Captain Glenn McCutcheon, Bombardier, got him in his sight and started firing at 400 yards. At 300 yards sheets of flame came from the left side of the engine cowling and covered the cockpit. Dense white and black smoke poured from it till it hit the ground. Captain McCutcheon was officially credited with destroying one enemy aircraft.

At 0835Z a Tojo made a mistake and attacked #503 twenty miles WSW of the target at 25,000 feet. Tojo came in from 9 o'clock low and was first hit by T/Sgt R.E. McMahon, left gunner. E/A started to smoke after the left gunner hit him. Then Tojo slid around the tail where T/Sgt Andy "Regular Army" Doran hit him in the engine and cockpit. Flames poured back from the engine into the cockpit and Tojo's days of living came to an end; it hit the sea. Joint credit for one enemy aircraft destroyed officially confirmed was given to Sgt Doran and Sgt McMahon.

Weather at the target was CAVU with a slight ground haze. Bombing in general was good as confirmed by photos.

44th planes did not come through the mission unscathed but luckily damage was of a minor nature. Aircraft #322 sustained small flak holes as a result of A/A over the primary target. It was further damaged by an enemy fighter, which attacked at 23,000 feet, receiving 3 bullet holes in the lower aft turret, 6 bullet holes in the tail skid and 1 hole in the fuselage opposite the put-put. Aircraft 503 suffered a bullet tear in the right wing tip and a small hole in the radar dome as a result of a fighter attack at 22,000 feet.

For the mission, the U.S. Navy furnished 2 submarines to assist in Air-Sea rescue operations and to take advantage of any enemy shipping that would be forced out of port as a result of the raid. The hunting was good for after the raid the Navy sent a radiogram of thanks to the command saying the subs had a busy day. This was the first obvious hint that the super-forts were fitting into a grand strategic pattern. The crews were gratified to know that they were a part.

S E C R E T

By the 22nd all planes had returned to the rear area and those that had been damaged were repaired and in a few days were ready to go again.

During the month the number of cargo trips made by the squadron decreased from the previous month 7 "Hump" trips were made by tankers and 1 trip by a Combat plane carrying wet and dry cargo. In these 8 trips the squadron hauled the following:

17,420 gallons of 100 octane gas.
15,357 pounds of dry cargo.
6 passengers.

Morale in the squadron was at a high peak during the month. This can be attributed to "keeping busy", much improved PX, and more and better relaxation facilities provided by the squadron in the form of Volley Ball and Tennis Courts and by the base in the form of enlisted man's service club, the red cross, officers club, and the movies.

SQUADRON STRENGTH

<u>DATE</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>ENLISTED MEN</u>
1 August	84	96
31 August	84	96

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