

CONSOLIDATED MISSION REPORT

P-38 Provisional Squadron Mission # 12-1
 318th Group Mission # 12-10

8 December 1944.

- 731 FIGHTER SQUADRON MISSION # 12-1
1. A. Twenty-eight P-38L's.
 B. Five ZEKES.
 2. A. None.
 B. One ZEKE destroyed (confirmed) and one ZEKE damaged.
 3. Fighter Sweep on Iwo Jima, prior to strike by B-29's and B-24's.
 4. Capt. PARK; Lts. SULLIVAN, EUSTIS, DUKET. (Violet 1)
 Capt. OTTENSTEIN; Lts. MONYELLE, ERBELE, FOSTER. (Violet 2)
 Capt. TENNANT; Lts. SPAULDING, PETTY, GIBSON. (Violet 3)
 Maj. ROESER; Lts. HEAGNEY, BALKUM, DUERSCHMIDT. (Violet 4)
 Lts. RUFF, CARDEN, COX, RICKARD. (Violet 5)
 Lts. KANE, WALKER, HARBOUR, REDFIELD. (Violet 6)
 Capt. MC COWN, BENNETT (M), SPENCER, BESCHE. (Violet 7)

Takeoff: 0628. Time Over Target: 0945. Land: 1401.

The three escorting B-29's led all seven flights to within five miles of Iwo Jima. The original plan was for Violets 1, 2 and 3 to make a sweep around the west side of the island, and Violets 4, 5 and 6 to make a sweep around the east side of the island. These six flights were to clear the skies of enemy fighters before the arrival of the B-29's and B-24's. Violet 7 was to remain with the three escorting B-29's, five miles south of Iwo Jima. However, a solid overcast existed over the target and the pilots could not see any part of the island.

Violet 1 saw one ZEKE break through the overcast at 7,000 feet. As soon as the ZEKE spotted the P-38's, he immediately dived through the overcast.

Violet 2 saw three ZEKES at 20,000 feet at 9 o'clock, with four P-38's chasing them from out of range.

Violet 3 called in the above three ZEKES at 10 o'clock, high. The first ZEKE dived straight down and disappeared in the clouds. Violet 3-1 peeled off and attacked the second ZEKE, who headed for the overcast in a more gentle dive. Violet 3-1 made two passes at this ZEKE from maximum range and observed hits in the back of the cockpit. These hits were also observed by Violet 3-2. This ZEKE disappeared in the clouds, trailing smoke. Violet 3-1 and 3-2 then climbed back to 16,000 feet and saw Violet 3-3 and 3-4 attacking the third ZEKE. Violet 3-1 opened fire at maximum range. Neither Violet 3-1, 3-3 or 3-4 observed any hits on this ZEKE, who also disappeared in the overcast.

Soon after leaving the escort bombers, Violet 4-2 developed engine trouble. The entire flight returned to the three escorting B-29's where they left Violet 4-2. Shortly after this, Violet 4-1 observed a ZEKE break through the overcast in a climbing turn. Violet 4-1 immediately attacked, firing a short burst from

from dead astern. The ZEKE exploded and burned. This action was confirmed by Violets 4-3 and 4-4. The ZEKE was OD in color with the usual roundels on wings and fuselage. The ZEKE did not have any opportunity to take any evasive action.

Violet 5 stayed at 18,000 feet and after a complete search of the area let down to 12,000 feet. Only enemy aircraft observed was the one shot down by Major Roeser (Violet 4-1).

Violet 6 and Violet 7 remained with the escorting B-29's at 18,000 feet.

All flights made a thorough search for enemy fighters other than those reported above. They remained in the target area for approximately 20 minutes. Inasmuch as Minami Rock (the rendezvous point) was completely closed in by weather, they had great difficulty in reforming. Violet 5 went down through the overcast in an attempt to locate Minami Rock, and found themselves over the east coast of Iwo Jima, near the volcanic cone. They observed bombs bursting on the island and immediately withdrew.

The flights rejoined as best they could under the circumstances, with some of them catching the formation on the course home. They pancaked at 1401K, after being airborne for 7 hours and 33 minutes.

5. A. Excellent enroute and return; scattered clouds. Bad over target; solid overcast at 7,000 feet.
B. Loud and clear.
6. None.
7. 1,540 rounds .50 caliber. 385 rounds 20 MM. 20,860 gallons gas.
8. No A/A, shipping or other observations. The B-29 escort was highly satisfactory.

SANDERS

DISTRIBUTION:

- 3 Copies - Director of Intelligence, AAFPOA
- 3 Copies - CTG 93
- 3 Copies - Headquarters Seventh Air Force
- 3 Copies - Headquarters VII Fighter Command
- 3 Copies - Each Sqdn. Concerned.

8 December 1944.

INDIVIDUAL PILOT NARRATIVE REPORTS
(Group Mission # 12-10, 8 Dec. 1944)

MAJOR WARREN K. ROESER (Violet 4-1)

At approximately 0945K, 8 December 1944, I arrived at IP with my flight, and prepared to start a sweep around the east side of Iwo Jima at 16,000 feet. There was a solid overcast above the entire target area, with base at 1,000 feet and top at 7-8,000 feet. Neither Iwo Jima nor Minami Rock were visible to me at any time from the above overcast.

At approximately 0950K I heard three bogies called in at nine o'clock to the B-29 escort. Turning slightly to port, I saw two flights of P-38's chasing two Zekes into the overcast. I did not see the other two reappear after diving into the cloud layer.

At 1000K my wing man, Violet 4-2, called me and said he was having trouble with his port engine, so I turned to take him back to the escort B-29's, where he was to wait for me. Just as I turned, I saw a Zeke climbing rapidly just above the overcast at nine o'clock to me about one-half mile off. I immediately turned toward him, and he evidently did not have time to take any evasive action, for I was able to get dead astern of him and fire a two-second burst from a range of not more than 200 feet. Large pieces flew from his tail section and canopy, then he exploded and spun down to the top of the overcast, trailing flames and completely disintegrated.

No more enemy aircraft were seen by my flight, and at 1140K we rejoined the B-29 escort and headed for Saipan, where we landed at 1355K.

/s/ Warren K. Roeser
/t/ WARREN K. ROESER
Major, Air Corps

LT. EVERETT L. BALKUM (Violet 4-3)

I was flying Major Roeser's element. I observed a Zeke break through the overcast in a climbing turn to the left. Major Roeser immediately got on the Zeke's tail and closed to about 50 yards. Major Roeser opened fire and I saw the Zeke explode and burn. The Zeke was dark OD in color and had red roundels on the wings and fuselage. The Zeke took no evasive action.

/s/ Everett L. Balkum
/t/ EVERETT L. BALKUM
1st Lt., Air Corps.

A TRUE COPY:

C. L. Hoover
C. L. HOOVER,
Captain, Air Corps

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O'Hara, Hussey,

214

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(Group Mission # 42-20, 13 December 1944) Continued.

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HEADQUARTERS
318TH FIGHTER GROUP, AAF
A.P.O. # 244

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