

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

3 February 1945

CONSOLIDATED REPORT

P-38 PROVISIONAL SQUADRON MISSION REPORT # 2-1
318TH FIGHTER GROUP MISSION REPORT # 2-3

1. A. Twenty (20) P-38L's (Four were spares and did not proceed to the target)
B. Four single-engine aircraft.
2. A. One (1) P-38L (Operational)
B. None
3. Escort Five (5) F-5's on photo reconnaissance mission to Iwo Jima.
4. Capt. OTTENSTEIN, Lt. DUKET, Capt. WOLFE, Lt. BALKUM. (Violet 31) - (333d)
Lts. ERBELE, RIVAS, BOWEN, MONYELLE. (Violet 33) - (333d)
Lts. AMON, BESCHE, BABCOCK, HEAGNEY. (Violet 32) - (73rd)
Capt. MULLIGAN, Lt. BENNETT. (Spares) -- (Violet 35) - (73rd)
Capts. SLEPECKY, LEFFORGE, Lts. DUNN, BARRETT. (Violet 34) - (19th)
Lt. REDFIELD, F/O WALKER. (Spares) -- (Violet 36) - (73rd)

First Wave: -- Takeoff: 0850 - Over Target: 1230 - Landed: 1600

Second Wave:-- Takeoff: 0958 - Over Target: 1335 - Landed: 1624.

The first wave, composed of Violets 31, 32, 33, and 35, rendezvoused with four F-5's and three B-29's over East Field at 0900 and proceeded to the target at 10,000 feet. The two spares, Capt. MULLIGAN and Lt. BENNETT, turned around one hour out and pancaked at 1118. The remaining two flights continued to Iwo Jima with the F-5's and B-29's. They began dropping to the deck 200 miles from the target. When approximately 70 miles east of Minami Rock, Lt. DUKET called in, stating that he was in trouble. Immediately after, he dropped his second external tank, called "MAYDAY, MAYDAY", ditched, then the plane hit a wave and nosed over. One of the B-29's turned around and orbited the position where the pilot went in.

The rest of the formation continued to the target. The remaining two B-29's orbited Minami Rock while the P-38's escorted the F-5's on their photo runs. Lts. AMON and BESCHE escorted one F-5 on its photo run from southeast to northwest, just north of the south volcano. Lt. AMON observed one automatic weapons position and directed his strafing at it. Apparently, he was not successful in silencing it for his plane was hit on the right boom just in front of the rudder as he came off the target. The boom was almost completely severed. Lts. BABCOCK and HEAGNEY escorted one F-5 on its photo run from southeast to northwest across the area between Airfields No. 1 and No. 2. Both pilots strafed automatic weapons positions just east of the south part of the runway No. 2. The F-5 appeared to be hit by automatic weapons fire over the middle of the island. It burst into flames and crashed in the water 800 yards west of the shore opposite Airfield No. 1. Capt. OTTENSTEIN escorted the same F-5 that Lts. BABCOCK and HEAGNEY escorted, but made his strafing run

4. CONT'D

on the F-5's right. He strafed an automatic weapons position just southwest of the east Boat Basin. The pilot observed his tracers entering the position and believes that the installation was damaged. Capt. OTTENSTEIN also observed one ZEKE parked just north of Airfield No. 2. Capt. WOLFE and Lt. BALKUM escorted one F-5 on its photo run just north of airfield No. 2. Capt. WOLFE strafed the caves near the radio station northwest of Airfield No. 3. His fire entered the caves but he was over the vicinity before he could evaluate the damage. Lt. BALKUM strafed the radio station and observed his tracers hitting the installation. However, no fires were seen. When Capt. OTTENSTEIN, Capt. WOLFE and Lt. BALKUM completed their runs across the island, they orbited the position where the F-5 had crashed before proceeding to the rendezvous point. The pilots thought they observed an oil slick in the vicinity.

Lts. ERBELE, RIVAS, BOWEN and MONYELLE escorted one F-5 on its run across the east shore of the island, from northeast to southwest. They did not strafe. Continuously pointed medium antiaircraft from positions along the east coast from the boat basin to the south volcano, was moderate to intense and inaccurate. It was meager to moderate and accurate to inaccurate from positions east of the south tip of Airfield No. 2 and from positions north of the south volcano. Light A/A intense, accurate to inaccurate.

After the above action, the flights rejoined and rendezvoused with the B-29's at Minami Rock. They then proceeded on course for base.

The second wave, composed of Violets 34 and 36, rendezvoused with one F-5 and three B-29's over East Field at 1010. The entire formation climbed to 10,000 feet and proceeded on course 300 degrees. The spares, Lt. REDFIELD and F/O WALKER, returned to base one hour from Saipan, pancaking at 1207. The formation started to let down to the deck 150 miles from the initial point which was located 60 miles southwest of Iwo Jima on a vector of 240 degrees. At the initial point the flight changed course to 60 degrees and headed into the target. The B-29's left the formation and proceeded to the rendezvous point -- Minami Rock. As the formation approached Iwo Jima, one single-engine enemy aircraft (possible TOJO) was observed at 600 feet, flying due east over the island. At about the same time, one A/A gun fired a single burst over the center of the island. It is believed this method is employed to alert Iwo Jima.

The F-5 made its photo run along the west coast with the four P-38's echeloned to his left. While making the run, Capt. SLEPECKY observed three single-engine enemy aircraft at 8000 feet over the island. Due to the distance involved, identification was difficult. Two single-engine planes were observed on the ground, in the southwest parking area of Airfield No. 1. The flight encountered meager to moderate, continuously pointed, inaccurate, medium A/A. Fire was observed to emanate from positions at the base of the south volcano and along the coast west of Airfield No. 1. After completion of the photo run, the flight rendezvoused with the B-29's at Minami Rock and proceeded to Base.

5. A. First Wave: -- Good enroute, over target and return, except for a solid overcast 200 miles from the target. Clouds, .4 scattered cumulus, 2,000 to 10,000 feet.
Second Wave:-- Poor enroute; clouds .8 to .9 from 22 degrees North to Iwo Jima. Over target and return; clouds, .7, 4,000 to 8,500 feet.
- B. First Wave: -- Poor between P-38's and B-29's. Only one B-29 could be contacted. The other two could transmit but not receive.
Second Wave:-- Loud and clear.

6. Undetermined.

7. Ammunition: --- 333d: 42 rounds 20 mm. 1,280 rounds .50 cal.
73rd: 261 rounds 20 mm. 1,500 rounds .50 cal.
19th: None

Gasoline: ---- 24,100 gallons.

8. Captain LEFFORGE (Violet 34-2) received some damage to his tail assembly upon dropping the 300 gallon tank at the initial point.

Photo runs, with exception of lost F-5, completed as scheduled.

Three day Dumbo search for Lt DUKET proved unsuccessful.

SANDERS

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