

15 February 1945

CONSOLIDATED REPORT

P-38 PROVISIONAL SQUADRON MISSION REPORT # 2-5
318TH FIGHTER GROUP MISSION REPORT # 2-22

1. A. Fifteen (15) P-38Ls. (Two did not reach the target)
B. Three (3) ZEKES
2. A. One (1) P-38L damaged while landing.
B. One (1) ZEKE damaged.
3. Escort B-24s and fighter sweep -- Iwo Jima.
4. Maj FOJTIK; Lts. GOFF, BOWEN, GEORGE (333d Sq) (Violet 31)
Maj WILLIAMS; Lts. MATHIS, GRAY, MARCINKO (19th Sq) (Violet 32)
Maj ROESER (Gp Hq); Lt GALT (73rd); Capt VOGT, Lt MORRIS (19th) (Violet 33)
Capt MULLIGAN; Lts. BESCHE, BARNHILL (73rd Sq) (Violet 34)

Takeoff: 0715 - Over Target: 1125-1215 - Land: 1540

Violet 32 and 34 rendezvoused with three navigating B-24s over Marpi Point at 1,500 feet. They proceeded to their IP (a point northeast of Iwo Jima). Capt. MULLIGAN turned back from about 225 miles out due to his right fuel boost pump going out. He pancaked at 0945. Lt. BARNHILL became lost from the formation as they passed through an overcast approximately 600 miles out. He returned to base, escorted by Buzzard 3, pancaking at 1415.

After reaching the IP, the remaining five P-38s left the two B-24s and headed for Iwo Jima on the deck. Arriving over the target at 1125, Major WILLIAMS observed two ZEKES at 14,000 feet over the west coast of the island and one ZEKE at 7,000 feet over the center of the island. While climbing to intercept the two ZEKES at their altitude, the ZEKES made an attack on Major WILLIAMS' flight. The Jap pilots were aggressive and experienced. Major WILLIAMS' flight went into mutual support, and as the flight leader got on the tail of one of the ZEKES, he observed a ZEKE on the tail of a P-38. He immediately broke contact and went to the aid of the other P-38 pilot. As Major WILLIAMS got within range, the Jap broke contact and headed for the protection of the island's gun defenses. Upon sighting automatic weapons fire from the island, Major WILLIAMS broke off his attack and searched for the other two ZEKES. Lt. BESCHE, being the only pilot left in his flight (Violet 34), had joined Major WILLIAMS' flight. He saw one of the ZEKES break away out to sea and gave chase. He got on the ZEKE's tail and started firing from maximum range, closing to approximately 250 feet. He observed his tracers hitting all over the ZEKE, but it did not smoke or burn. The ZEKE finally dove under Lt. BESCHE's wing and he lost him.

After the above action, Violet 32 and 34 orbited the target area

4. CONT'D

until the strike force of B-24s completed their bomb run. They then proceeded to the rendezvous point, Minami Rock.

Violet 31 and 33 rendezvoused with the strike force of B-24s over East Field and proceeded to their IP (Minami Rock) at 10,000 feet. Upon reaching the IP, they left the bombers and proceeded to the target, climbing to 21,000 feet. They orbited the target area and soon heard Major WILLIAMS call in three ZEKES. They searched the entire area, but evidently none of the ZEKES came up through the overcast (which was at about 10,000 feet), because the search was negative. Major ROESER and Lt. GALT, hearing someone call in a ZEKE circling one of the airfields, dropped down through the overcast to investigate. They circled the island twice at 500 feet but saw no planes or other enemy activity. There was no shipping in the vicinity of the island. Violet 31 picked up the strike force of B-24s 40 miles west of Iwo and escorted them on their bomb run. The bombers were at 18,000 feet and the fighters at 24,000 feet.

After the bomb run, all P-38s rendezvoused at Minami Rock. Three B-24s from the strike force provided the navigation escort on the trip back to base.

Heavy and medium A/A was meager to moderate, inaccurate, and continuously pointed.

5. A. Good enroute and return except for a front encountered approximately 60 miles north of Saipan. Clouds averaged .2 scattered cumulus, 2,000 to 8,000 feet. Over target: poor; solid overcast at 10,000 feet.
B. Loud and clear
6. None
7. Ammunition: 1,475 rounds cal. 50; 176 rounds 20 mm.
7,100 gallons gasoline
8. One twin-engine aircraft observed on Airfield No. 2. Several large fires and long columns of black smoke observed between Airfields No. 2 and 3, after the bomb run. Lt. BESCHE's hydraulic system went out over the target; when he pancaked, his landing gear collapsed and his plane veered to the left, off the runway, damaging a parked P-51. Damage to the P-38 extensive but reparable. Total estimated mileage: 1775 statute miles.

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

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8 PROVISIONAL SQUADRON MISSION REPORT # 2-5 -- CONTINUED

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