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RESTRICTED

SG-FI-158-57
MAY 1945

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H I S T O R Y

458TH FIGHTER SQUADRON (SE)

506th Fighter Group (SE)

1 MAY 1945 - 31 MAY 1945

P.R.C.

RESTRICTED

RSI Cond No
C00227

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H I S T O R Y

The events of major importance during the month of May was the beginning of actual combat operations. The 458th Fighter Squadron's P-51Ds were assigned to Combat Air Patrol off the island of Iwo Jima for the first time on 18 May and twenty eight sorties were airborne with total time in the air of fifty hours. On this first day of actual duty the Squadron had it's first and only casualty of the month when Flight Officer John J. Cream was killed in a crash at the east end of North Field. Shortly after takeoff Flight Officer Cream's engine started to cut out. He brought the plane around and attempted to land but crashed alongside of the strip.

The first actual combat mission was scheduled to bomb and strafe Susaki Airfield on Chichi Jima on the 22 May. Fourteen aircraft took off, including one for Air Sea Rescue and one for it's escort. One plane later aborted due to mechanical difficulties but eleven planes carrying 1000 pounds of bombs each arrived over the target only to find it weathered in from 200 feet on up. The secondary target was also closed in so the planes started back to base, jettisoning their bombs in the vicinity of Kita Jima, /1.

On the 25th the Squadron again had Chichi Jima as their target again with Susaki Airfield, if operational, as the target of major importance. Fourteen planes again took off and arrived in the vicinity of the island only to find

/1. Final Mission Report, Mission #05-01, dated 22 May 1945.

it again totally closed in by weather. This time, however, some portions of Haha Jima were found visible and the twelve aircraft with bombs dropped them on a Radio or Radar Station, a gun position and military buildings and these installations were heavily strafed during the dive bombing run,^{/2}.

The first of the Very Long Range missions to the Japanese home islands came on the 28th after two postponements due to weather, when the 458th along with the other Squadrons of the 506th Group was scheduled to strafe Kasumigaura Airfield. This Field is located northeast of the city of Tokyo and was the deepest penetration north ever made by fighter aircraft. Twenty planes took off by 0957, rendezvousing with navigator B-29s over Kita Jima at 1018 and then heading north for the Japanese Empire. Three hours and forty minutes later pilots of the 458th saw the Empire for the first time and flew straight for their target. Led by Major Shipman, the Commanding Officer, the 458th followed the 457th and 462nd Fighter Squadrons on the strafing run in a rough line abreast formation. Many planes were seen scattered over the parking areas and pilots picked individual targets for their firing run, encountering light to moderate, but inaccurate for the most part, machine gun and automatic weapons fire from at least two sections of the Field. Lieutenant Connor suffered two hits in the left wing of his aircraft. The Squadron then continued on the deck on to the rally point, with several flights strafing auxiliary airdromes that happened to be on their course. The only enemy resistance encountered was by a radial engined fighter that made a pass at number Three

^{/2}. Final Mission Report, Mission #05-02, dated 25 May 1945.

man in Yellow Flight and who was shot down by the leader of Blue Flight, Captain Francis Carmody. This victory was a Squadron and Group first and was confirmed by Major Shipman who saw it hit the ground and blow up. All planes returned safely to Base by 1725 and after the score was totalled it was found that two enemy planes had been destroyed on the ground, one probably destroyed and sixteen damaged, /3.

Two other missions were scheduled during May but both of them were later cancelled due to weather conditions existing between here and the Japanese Empire. The first was on the 30th and it was another strafing mission, this time to Atsugi Airfield. The other was an escort of B-29s to Osaka, Japan.

The 458th also flew Combat Air Patrol on the 23rd and 29th, flying 75 sorties for a total of 131 hours on these days. Most of this flying was uneventful but four planes were vectored out by the Controller on the 23rd to a point about a mile off the shore of Iwo Jima where they sighted a life raft that was occupied by four or five survivors, /4.

The early part of the month of May was spent almost exclusively in erecting living quarters, building a temporary kitchen and washing, bathing and sanitary facilities. The men of the Squadron were assigned to these details so that they could all be cleaned up and ready for flying operations just as soon as the Air Detachment and the unit's planes were flown in from Tinian. That occurred on the 11th and twenty

/3. Mission Dispatch and Final Mission Report, Mission #05-03, dated 28 May 1945.

/4. Flash Report, Combat Air Patrol, dated 23 May 1945.

two planes and pilots flew into North Field. A temporary line area was set up so that flying operations could begin as soon as possible and this area was only to be used until a permanent area has been assigned, graded and made ready for occupancy. Six planes and six of the pilots from "A" Flight were still detached from the Squadron while flying Combat Air Patrol on Ulithi and these did not arrive until the 25th. Due to the fact that the Officers and men in the Air Detachment had been away from the Ground Detachment for almost three months, it was decided that some sort of a celebration should be held when the whole Squadron once again was all present. For several weeks before the 11th, one third of the beer ration had been put aside and on the 12th of May a beer party was held so that everyone could again become acquainted and swap experiences.

On 21 May the first air raid was experienced, when at 2220 hours an Air Alert was sounded and Officers and men of the Organization told to take to their foxholes for an air raid was imminent. Immediately afterwards the anti-aircraft guns started firing to the northwest of the Squadron living area and quite a few of the unit saw an unidentified enemy aircraft shot down and crash into the sea in flames. All clear was sounded at 2327 hours and no casualties were suffered nor was there any damage done to the unit's equipment or installations.

As of the first day of the month the strength of the 458th was sixty ^{four} ~~sixty~~ Officers and two hundred fifty four Enlisted Men and five new pilots were assigned during the month so that the ~~final~~ strength as of the 31st was sixty eight Officers and two hundred fifty four Enlisted Men.

458TH FIGHTER SQUADRON
A.P.O. # 86

SHORT RANGE MISSION
FINAL MISSION REPORT

Mission #05-01

22 May 1945.

1. a. Our forces: 11 P-51Ds.
b. Enemy forces: None.
2. a. Our losses: None.
b. Enemy losses: None.
3. Type of mission and target: Bomb and strafe Chichi Jima.

4. Pilots by flights:

A	B	C
Shipman, H.	Carmody, F.	Marcott, G.
Tatro, R.	Allen, R.	Kuhn, F.
Connors, T.	McCabe, L.	Richmond, R.
Bilous, H.		Lockney, W.

Takeoff time 0711 Target time 0830 Landing time 1030

Narrative account: No bombs dropped on a target due to weather. Bombs jettisoned over Kita. All targets between Chichi Jima and Base checked and found weathered in.

5. Weather: Solid overcast over target and alternates, bottom at 200 feet and tops between 4000 and 5000 feet.

Communications: Good with JOSEPHINE AND DUMBO. Interplane poor.

6. Ground damage evaluation: None - bombs jettisoned over Kita.

7. a. Ammunition expended:

- (1) .50 caliber: None
- (2) Bombs with fuzing: 22 X 500, inst. nose and tail.
- (3) Rockets: None

b. Gas expended: 1804 gallons.

8. Remarks and observations: Solid overcast from 10 miles north of base to Chichi Jima and covering all alternate targets between prevented dropping of bombs on specific targets.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

458TH FIGHTER SQUADRON

A P O #86

Short Range Mission

FINAL MISSION REPORT

Mission #05-02

Date 25 May 1945.

1. a. Our forces: 14 P-51s.
b. Enemy forces: None.
2. a. Our losses: None.
b. Enemy losses: None.
3. Type of mission and target: Bomb and strafe Susaki Airfield on Chichi Jima. Field and entire area closed by weather. Secondary target - targets of opportunity on Haha Jima.

4. Pilots by flights:

RED	YELLOW	BLUE	GREEN
Feld, R.	Barnes, R.	Nowick, P.	Lee, Q.
Ruble, M.	Davis, B.	Harris, P.	Lambert, R.
	Davidson, H.	Anderstrom, R.	Smith, N.
	Jones, M.	Wheeler, R.	Harvey, L.

Takeoff time 1504 Target time 1550 Landing time 1650

Narrative account: Fourteen a/c, including two Josephines, ordered to bomb and strafe Susaki AF. Target covered by weather and Squadron returned to Haha Jima where one flight dropped bombs in 351M and N and strafed two boats, one a Sugar Dog in 351N. No fires observed. Two flights attacked installations in 330 and 331 where bombs were observed to strike in 330N, 330R, 330J, 330S and 330I, as well as 331L. No anti-aircraft was encountered.

5. a. Weather: Chichi Jima closed in, 10/10 cover. Base 200 feet. East half of Haha Jima 10/10 cover based at 2000, west half 8/10, based at 200 and tops at 2000. Cold front five miles North of target and moving southwest.
b. Communications: Good.
6. Ground damage evaluation: Two bomb bursts were observed in area 330J, area surrounded by four radio towers. Buildings in center of this area strafed. Small Sugar Dog in 351N strafed by one aircraft. Two bomb hits observed in 330R, position of coastal defense guns and searchlight battery. Two bombs in building area 331L. Other hits not observed.
7. a. Ammunition expended:
 - (1) .50 cal - 2928 rounds.
 - (2) Bombs with fusing - Per Field Order.
 - (3) Rockets - None.
- b. Gas consumed: 1568 gallons.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Final Mission Report on Mission #05-02, dated 25 May 1945, cont'd.

8. Remarks and observations: One medium sized tanker sighter thru broken cover at anchor in 402J. One Sugar Dog, heading 20 degrees in 319J. One to three Sugar Dogs in 331B.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Mission Dispatch, Mission #05-03, dated 28 May 1945, cont'd.

27. Navigation and rendezvous problems: No difficulties encountered. All Dumbos and Super Dumbos located in positions as briefed.
28. Communications problems: See supplement.
29. Fatigue problems: None.
30. a. Total number of fighter to fighter encounters: One.
- b. General description and pattern followed: Pilot approached enemy a/c from rear, had difficulty in identification until enemy a/c attempted to pull up and away. A follow thru made positive identification possible by wing markings, and a short burst at close range into enemy's center section and fuselage caused a/c to fall off and spin in, exploding upon impact. A/c was smoking on descent.
- c. Altitude and location with respect to target: Attack commenced at altitude of 200 feet, enemy a/c falling in flames at point $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles of primary target.
- d. Did enemy fighters attempt to avoid escort and attack bombers: Nil.
31. Aggressiveness of Jap pilots: See 30.
32. Observations and unusual enemy tactics: No unusual enemy tactics were observed though several planes were observed in area of target and DP, flying at altitudes above our attacking forces, but no attempt was made relative to engagement.
33. Remarks and sightings: Upon approach to target from IP₁ which was made on heading of approximately 150 degrees, AW and MG fire was encountered in area of Kasumigaura A/C Plant, target P456. AW and MG fire from area at southwest corner of field. TE and SE a/c, TE predominating, observed parked in area in vicinity of Zeppelin Hangar. SE a/c parked southeast of the above area along southwest edge of Field. Planes totalled approximately 50 in number. Approximately 50 training type a/c observed in east corner of field near Trade School area. Several training type a/c observed around hangar in center of airfield. Approximately 10 SE and 20 TE test type transports parked near revetted area immediately south of "probable hospital". Smokestacks in tower area, north of "probable oil storage on northwest end of Field are approximately 100 feet in height. Two planes observed burning north side of field area, large fire in vicinity of powerhouse southwest of barracks, three large columns of smoke seen rising to altitude of 1000 feet observed after leaving PT. One fire observed in hangar and operations area in center of field. Two planes strafed in dispersal area at East end of field, spraying hangars and shops. Some a/c on North side of field gave appearance of dummy installations or camouflage. Upon leaving target, four planes strafed field at Togane or field north of Naruto. Approximately 50 to 60 a/c observed on the Field.

Mission Dispatch, Mission #05-03, dated 28 May 1945, cont'd.

Two SE and one TE Tess were hit and damaged in the Togune area, by Lt T. Connor. One SE destroyed on the ground, one damaged on the ground at the PT by Capt N. Johnson, three damaged by Capt N. Johnson at Imba Airfield. Two SE damaged on the ground, one TE probable on the ground at PT by Lt N. Smith. One SE fighter or trainer destroyed on the ground at PT by Lt Lee. Both Lt Lee's and Lt Johnson's claimed aircraft were observed to burst into flame. Three SE damaged on the ground by Lt Klump on airfield 10 miles to southwest of PT. Three SE damaged on the ground by Lt J. Kelsey at PT. One TE Tess damaged on the ground by Lt V. Middaugh and one TE Tess damaged on the ground by Lt R. Barnes. One shot down in flames south of the target area by Capt F. Carmody. Plane appeared to be large radial engined fighter. Radar Station strafed three miles south of PT. AA fire from south side of IMba Airfield, MG fire from hangars, no estimate of planes on field.

Communications poor on Mike channel, loud screaming noise from DP to target. Particles observed falling in air on approach from IP. Particles believed to be paper. No interference from target to Base.

458TH FIGHTER SQUADRON
A P O # 86

LONG RANGE MISSIONS
FINAL MISSION REPORT

Mission # 05-03

28 May 1945.

1. a. Our forces: 20 P-51Ds, 1 aborted.
- b. Enemy forces: None. 1 fighter intercept attempted. Enemy a/c shot down.
2. a. Our losses: (1) Personnel: None.
(2) Aircraft: None.
- b. Enemy losses: (Air) 1 S/E large fighter destroyed.
- c. Claims: One destroyed (air), two destroyed (ground), one probable (ground), 28 damaged (ground).
3. Type of mission and target: Strafe Kasumigaura Airfield; Long Range Fighter Empire Strike.
4. Times:

a. Takeoff	0957	b. Rend w/nav	1018	c. Departure pt	1340
d. Target	1355	e. Rally	1448	f. Landed	1725

Narrative: Takeoff and time over target as briefed as per Field Order. All planes made low level strafing run over entire target, strafing both areas on north and south side of field, as well as sub-assembly buildings and power plant at west end of field and dispersal area at East end of field. Damage observed to local installations as well as to parked a/c. Radio or Radar installation southeast of field strafed by 4 a/c as well as Imba Airfield and Togane or Nurato Airfields. Flak was light to moderate and inaccurate except at DP where it was moderate to heavy and inaccurate. One plane damaged by flak, MG fire. Three large columns of smoke observed rising from P/T to altitude of 1000 feet after strafing run.

5. a. Weather (1) Enroute: Per 7FC forecast.
(2) Target: 1/10 cover, high scattered clouds, visibility 6 to 8 miles, slight haze but target plainly visible from 10,000 feet.
- b. Communications: Good on all channels except MIKE at DP to and including over target. Loud screaming oscillation on MIKE channel prohibited communication from DP and over target. No interference target to home base.
6. Damage to enemy -- ground and sea: No sea damage. 31 a/c destroyed and damaged, 1 probable, three large fires started in target area. One fire presumably gas or oil storage, power plant area north-west of field.

458th Fighter Sqdn, Long Range Missions, Final Mission Report; Mission #05-03, 28 May 1945. (cont'd.)

7. a. Ammunition expended.
 - (1) .50 caliber: 12,151 rds.
 - (2) Bombs with fuzing: None
 - (3) Rockets: None.
 - b. Gas used: 7,896 gallons.
8. Remarks and observations: An obvious attempt was made by the enemy to jam communications on MIKE channel. Particles, size unknown, which appeared to be paper, were observed falling from high altitude in area between DP and target. This was the only area in which communications interference was encountered. Participants on raid feel that speed over target was excessive under existing flak conditions. More satisfactory results could have been obtained and more damage done had speed been reduced. No enemy opposition of consequence, though one single fighter was aggressive. Ground fire over target, AW and MG, was light to moderate and inaccurate; AA over DP and north coastal area was moderate to heavy and inaccurate.

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458TH FIGHTER SQUADRON
SHORT RANGE MISSION
FLASH REPORT

Mission C A P

Date 23 May 1945.

1. Times
 - a. Takeoff 0600
 - b. Target C A P
 - c. Landing 0730
2. Number of planes airborne: Four P-51Ds.
Number of planes abortive: None.
3. Description of target: C A P - Patrol from Point Nan to William to Easy.
4. Result of strike:
5. Unusual observations: Vectored to a point one mile on 85 degrees on IWO ASR Chart. Sighted one life raft occupied by at least 4 to 5 occupants who had lighted two smoke pots. Circled for five minutes over raft until relieved by Controller.
6. Weather: C A V U.
7. Comments: Smoke pots are excellent markers. Smoke visible for at least 10 miles. Smoke white.

Pilots on mission: Lt Smith, N.
Lt Harvey, R.
Lt Bodfish, R.
Lt Johnson, R. G.

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