

TACTICAL STUDY
OF
ATTACK ON ENEMY SHIPPING
IN THE BISMARCK SEA

SUBMITTED BY
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Tactical Study of attack on Enemy Shipping in the Bismark Sea
Submitted by First Lieutenant
Roy J. Moore

Members of the Crew: Pilot - First Lieutenant Roy J. Moore
Co-Pilot - Flight Sgt J. S. Stephens, RAAF
Upper Gunner - S/Sgt Charles H. Maupin
Radio Gunner, S/Sgt. Charles C. Thompson

Attached is a sketch of enemy shipping and their disposition on the morning of 3 March 1943, about sixty miles east of Salamaua, New Guinea in the Bismark Sea. This sketch only portrays the upper most fringe of the convoy as this was the Sector I attacked. The course of the airplane is shown in a solid line with various changes in altitude noted. The dotted line shows the course of the airplane after the bombing run had been made. In selecting the target I attempted to 1) pick a previously unattacked ship; 2) note the disposition of protecting warships and their proximity to the target; 3) plan the run in a manner calculated to avoid anti-aircraft fire from the protecting warship, with a view to compromise the situation in such a manner as to make the most effective run on the target without encountering a maximum of risk from fire from the adjacent warship.

The vessel attacked was a five thousand ton transport proceeding due west at a slow rate of speed. This vessel was screened by a light cruiser about one mile south east, and two destroyers north west and north by north west respectively. The destroyers were about two miles away, thus rendering them ineffective as protectors of the target.

As in noted on the sketch the course of my aircraft was about due north at four thousand feet when the convoy was sighted. At this time I was about one mile east of the above mentioned cruiser. I made a gentle turn away from the cruiser to avoid anti-aircraft fire, then started a power glide to increase speed and thus increase deflection from enemy fire. At about one thousand feet I turned parallel to the target and flew this course, still descending, until I was a right angles to the target. Here I turned sharply to the left and made a direct run on the ship. Maximum throttle settings were then made to attain the greatest possible speed. During this run I "cork screwed" the airplane by making undulating changes in altitude not varying from fifty to one hundred feet, and at the same time skidded the airplane from one side to the other. These evasive tactics were made to avoid any possible gun fire from the target.

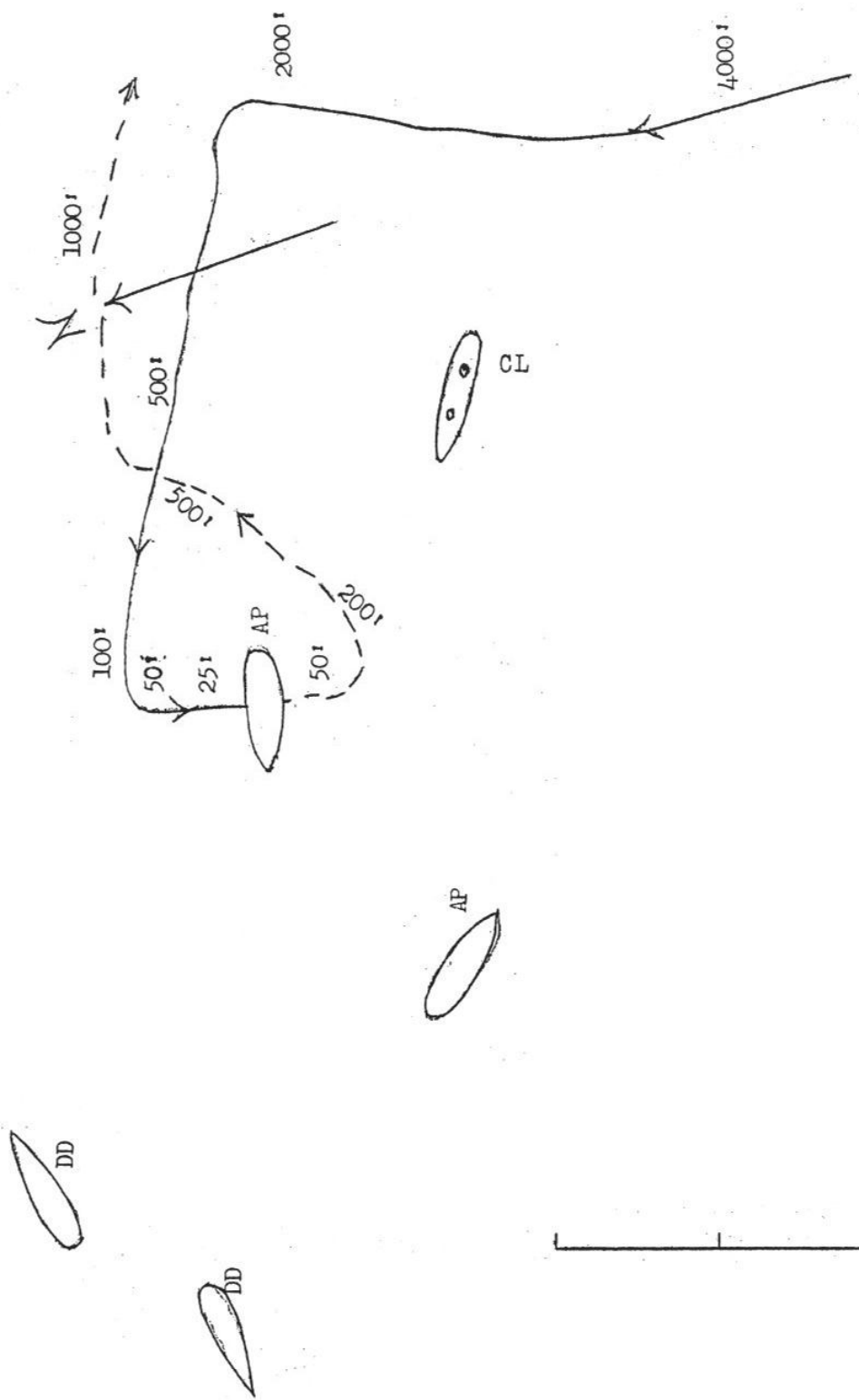
When within strafing range, I opened fire with my forward guns. The decks were covered with enemy troops. It is interesting to note that the troops were lined up facing the attacking plane with rifles in hand. However, the forward guns of the airplane out ranged their small arms, as I saw hundred of the troops fall and others go over the side before they could bring their guns to bear. My main purpose in strafing before the bombing run, in addition to killing enemy troops, was to damage any anti-aircraft gun emplacements, and demoralize gun crews. I then ceased fire as I came within very close range of the target as it was no longer possible to hold the aircraft in a firing position and make an effective bombing run. My co-pilot opened the bomb bays and I made a gradual pull up to clear the masts of the ship. I released my bombs and they fell into the water and skipped into the side of the ship. They exploded rocking the ship violently, heaving a huge hole at the water line. I then made a steep climbing turn to the left to avoid the adjacent cruiser, and at the same time veered away from the target to avoid any possible fire. My crew observed the ship to be sinking as we pulled away.

On this mission I carried three bombs, each weighing five hundred pounds. These bombs had a tail fuze with a four to five seconds delay between the fuzeing and explosion. These bombs fuze the moment they strike the water, thus furnishing a proper interval before striking the

side of the vessel, which allows you to be over your target when the explosion happens. During my strafing run I expended one thousand rounds of fifty calibre ammunition from eight fixed forward guns. All necessary controls are in the hands of the pilot. A firing button is on the aileron control wheel, and a bomb release switch is located on the pedestal between the pilot and co-pilot. The co-pilot opens the bomb bay doors from his side, and I usually release my own bombs, although some pilots assign this duty to the co-pilot.

It is my opinion that no fixed principles can be evolved in this type of attack. Only general rules can be followed, with variations made in them according to the situation at hand. This type of attack is purely extemporaneous. However, here are a few suggestions I believe worthwhile. When making a low level attack over water, watch out for water spouts thrown up by heavy guns from the enemy. Never open your bomb bay doors until nearly on your objective, as an open bomb bay increases drag, and decreases maneuverability. Finally, size up the situation as quickly as possible, begin your approach and let nothing deter you once a decision is made. Any unanticipated risks that occur during this phase should be ignored as these are conditions under which one must expect to work when facing the enemy.

/s/ ROY J. MOORE;
/t/ ROY J. MOORE,
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SCALE

2" = 1 mile