

T A C T I C A L S T U D Y O F A T T A C K

B Y

1st Lt

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TACTICAL STUDY OF ATTACK

Date: March 3, 1943. Time: 1515 to 1545 Place Bismark Sea.

On the day of the raid in question I was flying a B 25 C airplane. It was a two ship formation. We approached the target area from the southwest. The lead ship led us across various pieces of wreckage, burning ships and personnel in the water. At the east side of the target area we turned a few degrees to the left bearing down upon a Japanese light vessel which, upon closer observation, proved to be a destroyer. Its course was approximately 290 degrees, thus we approached the vessel broad side. Acting on orders to strike individually I maneuvered my airplane away from the leader and described a course that would make my attack from the stern. The estimated speed of the vessel before the attack was eight knots, however when our tactics became apparent to him I could see that he was increasing his speed by the churning of his wake.

Our speed during the attack was 220 miles per hour at mast height. His evasive action when struck by the leaders airplane was a 90 degree turn to the left, thus enabling my airplane to strike broad side. My approach was somewhat concealed by the smoke from his funnels. We encountered no resistance from the destroyer on the approach or withdrawal. I began strafing as soon as we were within range. Our bomb was dropped with skip bombing tactics after which we pulled over the mast and withdrew with a 90 degree turn to the left. The bomb hit amidship, causing an explosion of black smoke and flames to an approximate height of 300 feet. Considering this a sinking condition, I then proceeded to the center of the battle area to bring my forward machine guns to bear on personnel in the water. The effect of this strafing could not be accurately determined because of the confusion and debris in the water, but with the amount of enemy personnel and our abundance of fire power, casualties were inevitable. These runs began from about 200 feet and continued until water and debris, caused from the bullets hitting the target, made it necessary to pull up. Four of these runs were made before directing my attention to a cargo ship south of the area which was in a burning condition. This approach was also made mast height at a speed of approximately 220. Approaching broad side, we observed her to be about 5000 tons. Personnel were visible on the deck in spite of fire and possibility of explosion. The ships visible protection was a three to five inch gun mounted on the after deck pointing aft, with no attendance. I fired several bursts from the forward guns as we drew in range and a marked effect was noticed among the troops on deck. Two bombs were dropped. They fell long however and would be considered effective near misses. The remainder of the time over the target was taken up by strafing the remaining personnel in the sea.

At an order from the squadron commander, we executed a withdrawal joining in formation enroute.

The bomb load consisted of three 500 pound demolition with five second delay fuse, 2000 rounds of 50 calibre ammunition consisting of armour piercing, incendiary and tracers were expended.

On the first target, the destroyer, no personnel was visible. The only armament that could be recognized was light anti-aircraft. This fire-power was continuous very rapid but ineffective.

An observation of B17's and other B25's strafing barges and enemy personnel in the water but the results could not be ascertained.

On this attack there was no malfunctioning of armament, plane mechanism or instruments. In my opinion under these circumstances the principles of attack used were suitable and effective. A coordinated attack is necessary for the success of this type of mission.

/s/ 1st Lt J. B. Criswell -Pilot
/t/ 1st Lt. J. B. Criswell
/t/ 1st Lt W.G. Paine Co-Pilot
/t/ S/Sgt C.G. Thompson -Radio G.
/t/ S/Sgt C.H. Maupin -Gunner



Cruiser

Destroyer at time of bomb release had turned 90° left. Made broadside attack.

Strafing Runs

debris

Barges

withdrawal

Approach

Burning Cargo

Burning Warship

Burning Warship

Burning Transport

