

REPORT  
OF  
ATTACK ON JAPANESE CONVOY

BY  
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ATTACK ON JAPANESE CONVOY - 3RD. MARCH, 1943

Report Of Attack Carried Out By Boston Aircraft Of  
No. 22 Squadron - R.A.A.F.

1. ORDERS.

At 1300L on 3rd MARCH, 1943; the following verbal orders were received from the Controller, No. 9 O.G.: "All available Bostons to carry out co-ordinated attack on enemy convoy last reported position 0705 South, 148.30 East widely scattered at 1220/3 MARCH (.) Aircraft rendezvous at CAPE WARD HUNT at 4000 feet (.) Set course for rendezvous at 1400 hours L 3/ MARCH, remaining in visual contact during approach to target (.) Rally Point CAPE WARLA (.) Primary targets transports first alternative warships, accend alternative LAE aerodrome (.) Order of assembly and approach to target one squadron of Bl7's at 9000 feet, one squadron B25's 8000 feet, one squadron B25's 7000 feet, one squadron Beaufighters 6000 feet, one squadron B25's 5500 feet, one squadron B25-Cl's 5000 feet, one squadron A20's 4500 feet, one squadron of Bostons 4000 feet (.) Order of attack (.) First Beaufighters straffing, the B25's, then B25's-Cl, followed by A20's and Bostons all mast head - then Bl7's from 7000 feet to 10,000 feet, followed by one squadron B25's 3000 to 6000 feet (.) Bombs medium bombers 500 lb. demolition and instantaneous fuse, high bombers 1000 lb. demolition instantaneous fuse, mast head attack 500 and 250 lb. 5 second delay (.) Fighter cover will have sets on 4895 Kcs (-) Bomber Flight Leaders will identify and locate themselves relative to target when calling for Fighters in any emergency (-) Enemy convoy protected by fighters (-)

2. BOMB LOAD.

Each aircraft was bombed up with two 500 lb G.P. instantaneous fusing, and two 250 lb S.A.P. 1 second delay.

3. BASE TO RENDEZVOUS.

Five aircraft were available and were all airborne by 1330L, reaching the rendezvous at 1410L. The weather over the ranges was bad, and the squadron was fortunate in finding a break south of "the Gap", and got through at 14500 feet. One squadron of B 25's reached rendezvous at the same time as ourselves, also one or two B 17's; but by approximately 1500 L, all aircraft had assembled, and at 1505 L set course for convoy.

4. METHOD OF ATTACK.

(a) Order of approach.

As the Beaufighters and A20's had been unable to cross the ranges, the attack was led on to the target in the following order:- One sqddron of Bl7's, followed by three squadrons of B25's, one squadron of Bostons, one squadron of B25's, and one squadron of Bl7's. (This may be incorrect, but is the general impression of all Boston pilots).

(b) Constitution of Convoy.

The convoy was sighted from 4000 feet through light cloud, at 1530 L, in the approximate position of 07'10"S 147'40"E. It appeared to consist of three Destroyers and four Transports widely dispersed. All the transports were stationary and burning when sighted, and one Destroyer was stationary and low in the water, as if having been hit previously. One other Destroyer was in the vicinity of the transports, and the remaining one was steaming north, at approximately 20 knots.

(c) The Attack.

All aircraft in the formation carried out a low dive attack from 4000 to 1500 feet, and released their bombs in sticks of four. The target chosen was the stationary destroyer, which appeared on our left as we passed over the convoy. As the aircraft approached, they went into line astern, and formed a circle round the target. Thus all aircraft were in position to attack in quick succession, and the destroyers' fire power was further confused. For low dive attacks, this method is highly commended, and it proved very effective on this occasion. One aircraft had to make a second run owing to interference by enemy fighters. Each stick of bomb straddled the target, and two direct hits with 250 lb bombs, and approximately five near misses, were scored. The destroyer appeared to be of the HUBUKI class, and the attack on it lasted for three to four minutes. After the bombing, one aircraft proceeded to a burning transport, and strafed barges and troops in the water around it.

5. ENEMY OPPOSITION.

(a) Fighters.

Several aircraft were attacked by Zekes, before and during their bombing runs. These attacks were unsuccessful, partly due to the Bostons being strung out in line astern just prior to bombing, and they afforded each other a certain amount of protection.

(b) Anti-Aircraft.

The A/A opposition was light and ineffective, and did not worry any of the aircraft.

(c) General.

The nature of the combined attack appeared to confuse all the enemy defences, and effectively divided his fire power. The whole attack was carried out far more rapidly than was planned, and the enemy had to contend with all aircraft of all formations at the one time. The Bostons were almost bombing through straffing B25's, and the Bl7's were bombing from medium height through both.

Enemy fighters did not attack the Bostons in force, and single enemy aircraft did not press home their attacks with much tenacity.

No casualties to personnel, and no damage were sustained.

6. COMBINED EFFORT.

The destroyer in the vicinity of the transports was attacked by either Bl7's or B25's, and suffered direct hits with heavy bombs, and blew up almost instantaneously. All ships received a thorough straffing from the B25-Cl's, and the bombing from B25's and Bl7's, appeared very accurate. B25-Cl's strafed the decks of the destroyer we attacked, some 30 seconds before the leading aircraft made a run, and this must have helped a considerable amount in keeping the ships guns from firing, during our bombing.

The fact that the complete attack was effected almost simultaneously, is again stressed. All pilots were convinced of the great assistance this afforded in dividing the enemy's defences, and although it must have caused a certain amount of risk, no damage resulted.

7. GENERAL.

As the aircraft approached the convoy, seven to ten Zekes were seen apparently engaged in a sham fight, several miles to the west. These tactics achieved no object, and the Zekes quickly came over, and attacked the Bostons as previously stated.

On leaving the area, it was apparent to all personnel, that the convoy could not re-form to make any semblance of an effective force. All ships excepting the one destroyer proceeding north, were either sunk or sinking, and it is understood that this ship was sunk the following day.

Two days later - 5th MARCH - a formation of four Bostons made a search for life boats and barges off CAPE WARD HUNT. Several life-boats and rafts were located, but none contained live men, and no attacks were made.

s/ CHARLES C. LEARMOUTH  
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A D D E N D U M

REASON FOR ATTACK AND BOMB LOAD NOT BEING AS ORDERED

On the morning of 3rd. March all aircraft were placed on alert for possible attack against the Convoy. No instructions were given as to bomb load and aircraft were bombed up with 2 x 500 inst. G.P. and 2 x 250 S.A.P. I sec. delay. In view of the fact that orders were not received until 1300hours and all aircraft were due at the rendezvous at 1400 hours the bomb load could not be changed in the time available. Consequently the attack took the form it did instead of a mast-head attack as ordered.

ROUNDS FIRED AGAINST TARGET

300 x .5, 1490 x .303.

WEATHER

Low scattered cloud, base 2000 feet, visibility 15 miles.

GENERAL

While over the convoy several dog fights were observed between P 38's and Zeros in the course of which one Zero and one P 38 were seen falling away towards the water as though shot down.

APPENDIX A

