

TACTICAL STUDY

OF

ATTACK ON CONVOY NEAR LAE.

BY

CAPTAIN

R. D. CHATT.

NINETHIETH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (D)
THIRD BOMBARDMENT GROUP (D)

Tactical Study of Attack on convoy near Lae

By Captain R. D. Chatt.

Pilot - Captain R. D. Chatt
Co-Pilot - F/O. M. J. Carse
Gunner - S/Sgt A. J. Swain
Radio Gunner - Pfc W. W. Butler.

Time of attack - March 3, 1943: 1000 L; East and a little south of Salamaua.

Target: Destroyer, Blue gray, 1500 tons, on east end of line of warships that pullet out to meet us. Speed 35 K. at approximately 160 degree heading. Evasive action was that he turned his bow towards me.

Method of attack: I peeled off about 8 miles from the convoy and started diving changing our heading at least every 5 seconds. I reached water level about 3 miles from the destroyer. I continued to weave and went on in on the ship at 250-300 mph., making a bow to stern attack. I stayed at minimum altitude (10ft) and opened fired at about 800 yards when we straightened out on our run. I came in low enough so that he could not depress his heavy guns down to me. I believe that my guns made a big difference, because they were pouring into the superstructure, bridge, and along the deck. Explosive shells were hitting all over the front of the ship. I dropped two of my bombs early and from this altitude they skipped once and went into the bow of the boat below the water line and exploded. The other two landed on the deck and leveled everything right down to the deck. The destroyer turned at a 90 degree angle to its original course and came to a dead stop. The bow was down to water level. Smoke was coming out to an estimated altitude of 1500 feet and was visible for 60 miles.

After the bombs were gone I raised up over the masts and went right back down to zero altitude. By then I was in the center of the convoy so I stayed low and went west between two rows of ships hoping that they wouldn't fire for fear of hitting their own ships. They did keep firing but I believe their fire was lightened by my being between them. I held no constant heading until I was out of range; also it was necessary to dodge other aircraft, after I had made my run. I had dropped 4 x 500 pound, 5 second delay demolition bombs and had fired 1600 rounds from my nose guns and 100 rounds from the turret of 50 cal. ammunition.

Observation: I saw very little else around the convoy, because the ships I was passing had not been bombed yet, although the Beaufighters were doing a good job strafing. All of the enemy air activity that I saw was some dog fights high above the convoy, as I first approached it.

Conclusion: The coordinated attack with plenty of pursuit cover is the only way that this type of bombing would be successful. It is necessary to have the high level and medium bombers operating in order to spread the enemy fire. Also I believe it necessary to have enough planes down at mast height either strafing, skip bombing or with torpedoes so that there are planes attacking from more than one direction at once, keeping the fire from being concentrated on one plane long enough to determine with any accuracy their range etc. I believe that such a coordinated attack would continue to be successful. No one squadron should be sent in individually. Every part depends on every other part. Also I believe that one reason the attack went off so well was that all the planes met at a designated point and then went to the target together so that the timing was perfect.

I believe that the bow to stern is a good method of attack, because there are not as many guns that he can train on you as on a broadside attack; also the plane is exposed to fire for a shorter length of time. Probably in my particular attack the ship thought that I was carrying torpedoes and therefore wanted his bow toward me.

/s/ ROBERT D. CHATT,
/t/ ROBERT D. CHATT,
Captain, Air Corps.

GENERAL POSITION OF AP'S

