

Army Air Forces Letter of Information

November 30, 1944.

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Headquarters 11th Bombardment Group (H)

Office of the Commanding Officer

APO 246

30 November 1944

SUBJECT: Letter of Information.

TO: All Combat Crew Members.

1. A maximum number of bombs dropped where they will do the most damage to the Japs with a minimum loss of our aircraft and crews is the primary objective of this Group. It is the desire and intention of the Group Commander that every thing that is done in this Group will be planned and executed so as to achieve that goal. The reason for this is simple — to hasten the successful conclusion of this war in order that we can all return to our loved ones and enjoy the multitudinous rights, privileges, pleasures and luxuries that will be ours in the greatest nation of the world — our own UNITED STATES of AMERICA. Stop for just a minute and try to imagine how people will live in the conquered nations in comparison with how we will live after this war is over.

2. At present our two most important targets are shipping in the Bonin and Volcano Islands Area and airfield and airfield installations at IWO JIMA.

3. The Bonin and Volcano Islands form a part of the now depleted outer perimeter of the Japanese Empire defenses. Personnel, material and subsistence can only be supplied there in quantity by shipping. These islands not only constitute a part of Japan's outer defense but also provide a constant threat to our own bases here in the Marianas. Furthermore, future operations may possibly include our own assault and occupation of certain of these islands. Every Japanese ship that unloads in this area means that the war will last that much longer. Just think how seriously the operation of this Group would have been affected if one or both of the ships that brought our ground echelon from Kwajalein to Guam had been sunk.

4. It is realized that the B-24 was designed for medium and high level bombing and not for strafing and mast head attacks against shipping. However, it has been conclusively proven that low level strafing and bombing of shipping is feasible, and has been accomplished in B-24's against unprotected shipping, without too great risk. In view of the range of our aircraft considerable damage may be done to the enemy by using these tactics now and in the future.

5. The following is an analysis of the effect of direct bomb hits and near misses against shipping:

a. Warships — BBs, CVs, CVEs, CAs, CLs.

(1) Direct hits.

(a) AP bombs dropped from 15-20,000 feet will pierce all protective armor. BASIC: Ltr. Hq 11th Bomb Gp (H), Subj "Ltr of Information", dtd 30 Nov 44.

(b) SAP bombs will not penetrate armor decks and .01 fuse should be used for maximum fragmentation effect.

(c) GP bombs will not pierce deck or side armor or large warships. The bomb breaks up on impact so that in—stantaneous fusing is desired on GPs to gain frag—mentation effect. GP

fragmentation will damage super—structure, above—deck installations, and cause casual—ties to personnel.

(2) Near Misses.

(a) AP bombs give serious non-sinking damage at 10-16 feet.

(b) SAP bombs fused for host direct hit damage cause no damage in near misses.

(c) GP bomb explosions at water surface cause no damage. GP explosions under water within 10 feet of warships will cause warping and loosening of side plates.

b. Light Warships — CMs, DDs, SSs (surfaced), AOs , etc.

(1) Direct hits.

(a) AP bombs not advised and information not available.

(b) SAP bombs not advised and information not available.

(c) 500 lb. GP bomb preferred. This bomb will sink any of these lighter warcraft with direct hits.

(2) Near Misses.

(a) The 500 lb GP bomb will definitely cause damage to light warships on exploding underwater in the prox—imity of the target.

(b) Definite holing — 15 feet.

(c) Extensive damage — 21 feet.

(d) Slight damage — 28 feet.

c. Merchant shipping.

(1) Direct hits — Again 500 lb GP is preferred. Merchant shipping is the target built for this bomb, for it will penetrate any plate or bulkhead, and its fragmentation effect is exceedingly great. The probability of sinking merchant shipping up to 5,000 tons with 500 lb GPs is: with one hit, two hits, three hits, and four hits; 50%, 75%, 87.5%, and 93.75% respectively. Larger ships re—duce the probability but it is always possible to sink merchant ships with one 500 lb GP.

(2) Near misses.

(a) Surface bursts of 500 lb GPs from 20,000' will pen—etrate, upon fragmentation, each square foot of vessel surface presented within thirty feet of burst at least once. Hits nearer will cause increasingly more damage, but instantaneous fusings will probably not sink a vessel unless a direct hit is accomplished. By bombing along the ships length, a similar penetra—tion effect may be accomplished from a hit 50 feet from the target either to port or starboard.

— 2 — BASIC: Ltr, Hq 11th Bomb Gp (H), Subj "Ltr of Information,dtd 30 Nov 44.

1 Definite holing — 19 feet.

2 Extreme damage —25 feet.

3 Slight damage — 32 feet.

The 1,000 lb Gp bomb will increase these radii by five (5) feet.

6. Strafing of enemy ships has usually been classed as a defensive measure for heavy bombardment. However, recent results have proven this to be false. Strafing of vessels is highly recommended on all minimum altitude attacks made on shipping.

a. Heavy warships — Any discussion of strafing of heavy warships will be omitted for obvious reasons.

b. Light warships — On record are two destroyer sinkings by straf—ing alone. Strafing is highly recommended on attack against light warships. Sinkings will only occur if boilers or com—bustible supplies are hit, but the morale lowering effect, and superstructure damage are important as the reduction of enemy AA effectiveness. A .50 caliber bullet will pierce 1/4" of case—hardened armor plate or 1/2" mild steel plate from 600 feet.

c. Merchant shipping — Many instances of small merchantmen being sunk by strafing are on record. As in the case of destroyers however, a highly combustible area must be hit. Extensive dam—age can be effected usually however, and other factors are applicable as in light warships.

7. Since the Group has been based in the Marianas a few direct hits and many near misses have been obtained against shipping. But we can do better than that — SINK the yellow bastards.

8. IWO JIMA, of course, presents the real threat to our recently acquired bases here in the Marianas. In the last few days Japanese aircraft based there have destroyed four B—29s and damaged many others on the ground at Saipan. Out constant and accurate bombing of the airfields and airfield installations there will keep this offensive threat of the enemy reduced to a minimum and also weaken the opposition he may put up against landing forces should IWO JIMA ever be assaulted and occupied.

9. Considerable harassment and damage has already been done on our strike missions against this target for which all of you have participated therein should be complimented. Much more yet remains to be done.

10. As additional incentives to combat crews to drop a maximum number of bombs where they will do the most damage to our enemy the following policies are announced:

a. For excellent bombing a letter of commendation, with before, during, and after photographs, will be given to the pilot and bombardier. If the bombing is by a formation then the Pilot — Bombardier team of the lead airplane will be given letters of commendation with photographs and when conditions so warrant a letter of commendation will be given to the entire squadron.

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In radar bombing it is considered that credit for successful bombing should be given to the Pilot, Bombardier, Radar Operator, and Navigator.

b. For sinking of shipping, recommendations will be made for appropriate awards or medals. The importance of the enemy shipping sunk will determine the type of award recommended.

c. Since the directive from higher headquarters was received that automatic awards of the Air Medal and DFC are suspended no other information has been received. However, it is assumed that subject medals will be awarded for specific acts of meritorious achievement in flying and/or for a series of such deeds. It is the opinion of the Group commander that a series of good bombing missions would warrant the award of an appropriate medal.

d. Obviously, personnel who obtain good bombing results increase their opportunities for promotion.

e. Effective 1 Dec 44, each squadron will compete for ownership of "The Thunder Mug". This trophy will be awarded monthly to the squadron having the best bombing record for the past month. The decision as to which squadron will receive the award will be made personally by the Group Commander in each case based on the photographs and other information available. At the end of the present war "The Thunder Mug" will be awarded permanently to the squadron that had it in its possession the greatest number of months. It is contemplated that "The Thunder Mug" will be a silver plated bomb engraved with Group and Squadron Insignia, standing upright on its tail, supported by the fins, with handles on its sides to assist in the drinking of the delicious brew therein at periodic presentations, ceremonies, festivities, and anniversaries. There will also be engraved thereon the record of each squadron's ownership and its outstanding achievements.

HAPPY LANDINGS

R L Waldron

R. L. WALDRON

Colonel, Air Corps

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