

28 Feb 45

SUBJECT: Abortion of A/O 305 N

TO : Group Operations.

We had a gas leak to develop soon after we began to transfer fuel to #3 tank. We immediately changed to #4 tank, but the gas leak continued. We quit transferring fuel thinking the tanks were too full, and that the leak would stop after using some of the fuel. The Waist Gunner and Tail Gunner complained about gas fumes and after awhile reported they were getting worse. We had started climbing by this time, so I thought that maybe this too would keep the gas leaking if the tanks were too full. The gas leak continued throughout the climb. I had had the crew chief crack the bomb bay doors about 6 or 8 inches when the gunners reported the fumes. I called the Lincoln Red Leader and reported the trouble. He called back and said act at my own discretion. I called him back and said I would stay with the formation until we leveled off and see if it would stop.

When we leveled off we were almost in enemy territory. I called my Waist Gunners and asked about the leak to see if it had stopped and he reported it wasn't doing any better. About ten minutes later I asked him again and he said the gas was still coming out and the ship still had fumes in the Waist Section. I called the Lincoln Red Leader and reported this, and asked permission to leave the formation, drop my bombs and return to base. He called back and said to fly the same heading as the formation and out to the side, drop my bombs and return to base. We pulled out of formation, to the right side and flew straight ahead for about three minutes. We saw a town through a hole in the clouds which my Navigator identified as St. Goar. We tried to drop our bombs on this town. The left bomb bay doors would not open and while trying to open them we lost a minute or so but they wouldn't open so we dropped them thru the doors. We didn't see the bomb bursts because of the cloud coverage. I don't know whether we hit the town or not. We had no bombsight installed. According to the Navigator we were approximately 15 miles southeast of Coblenz, flying a heading of about 110° when we dropped our bombs. After we dropped our bombs we turned to a heading of 270° until we got back across the lines, and then we headed home. The gas leak continued until we reduced our power settings to start our let down.

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