

Final Report - 10 Group Circus 16 of 26th February 1943,
 Diversion to 10 Group Ramrod 54 of 27th February and
 10 Group Circus 17 (two bombing waves) of 28th February.
 263 Squadron Whirlibombers.

A 26th, 27th, 28th February 1943

B 263 Squadron

C Whirlibombers (2 x 250 lb G.P. port 3 seconds, starboard instantaneous)

D 1635: 1400: 1505 and 1525 hours.

E Maupertus Aerodrome

F 5/10 cloud at 5000 feet thick haze; 3/10 cloud at 5000 thick haze;
 3/10 cloud at 3000 hazy

G Nil for 263 Squadron (1 Spitfire of 504 Squadron slightly damaged by flak on February 26th)

H Nil all squadrons

J (1 F.W.190 destroyed by F/O Andrieux F.X. of 130 Squadron on February 26th)

K Ten bursts or craters were actually seen on the airfield or in the dispersal areas. Further results not known.

During the afternoons of February 26th, 27th, 28th 1943, "A" Flight of 263 Squadron which was based at Harrowbeer carried out dive-bombing attacks on Maupertus Aerodrome, taking off and landing at Ibsley. On the 28th "B" Flight, based at Fairwood Common, also attacked Maupertus from Warmwell.

These operations were fully escorted and covered by close escort, escort cover and bouncing squadrons Ibsley, Portreath and Exeter Wings.

The following report covers the tactical aspect of what might be termed medium-high level dive-bombing as used for the first time in these attacks by Whirlibombers of 263 Squadron.

<u>Operation</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Times Up</u>	<u>Times Down</u>	<u>Times over Target</u>
10 Group Circus 16	26 Feb.	Ibsley	1555	1655	1635
Diversion to 10 Group Ramrod 54	27 Feb.	Ibsley	1320	1420	1400
10 Group Circus 17	28 Feb.	(Warmwell 1450 (Ibsley 1555	1555 1655	1525 1 st Wave 1635 2 nd Wave	

10 Group Circus 16

On February 26th 6 Whirlibombers of A Flight 263 Squadron led by S/Ldr Warnes, D.F.C., left Ibsley at 1555, and set course from the Needles climbing to 15000 feet. Owing to a false wind forecast landfall was made in the Western area of Cherbourg Harbour. Heavy flak here was intense and accurate for height and accurate enough for position to damage one Spitfire of 504 Squadron. S/Ldr Warnes dived to 11000 feet, to evade the flak and turned left to attack Maupertus, putting his flight into echelon starboard. They dived at 45 degrees to 5000 feet, releasing bombs during the dive which was continued to sea-level, at which height they returned to base. Bomb bursts were seen N.E. and S.W. inside the aerodrome area, also one mile to the south of the aerodrome.

Diversion to 10 Group Ramrod 54

The attack on Saturday February 27th by 5 a/c of A Flight was carried out exactly as planned. Landfall was made 3 miles S of Cap Barfleur at 15000 feet.

S/Ldr. Warnes led in a gradual right turn to the target and the Flight in echelon port peeled off vertically at two second intervals.

They dive-bombed at 430 A.S.I. with engines throttled right back in coarse pitch, pulling out at 5000 feet. It is stressed that the dives were between 80 and 90 degrees and that a good degree of accuracy in bomb-aiming appears possible this form of attack. Pilots selected buildings in the Eastern and Western dispersal areas and bomb bursts were observed among them.

10 Group Circus 17

the two attacks on Sunday February 28th by 6 a/c of B Flight from Warmwell led by S/Ldr. Warnes and 6 a/c of A Flight from Ibsley led by F/Lt. Blackshaw, D.F.C., only differed from the attack of the previous day in that in obedience to the order of A.O.C. 10 Group the dives were not continued below 7000 feet.

Flak

Flak in these last three attacks were:-

Heavy, slight fairly accurate for height but behind;

Light, moderate, inaccurate

Weather

Weather on all three days was hazy, with fair visibility out of sun.

Results

Information about bomb-bursts could only be collected from the "snap views" of escorting pilots. Three or four craters were seen on the airfield and several bursts among buildings in the dispersal areas. Any further information about bomb damage would be greatly appreciated by this Squadron.

CCG

Ten burst of CCG film were made by pilots during dives (references 263/13 - 20; two were on same reels). No cannon were fired.

Enemy Reactions

No e/a were seen by this Squadron. However operations reported enemy reactions of 8+ on February 26th; 12+ on February 27th; and 17+ (3+, 2+, 6+, 6+) on February 28th of which about 12 FW 190s were seen by the escort.

Escort

Despite the fact that the Whirlwind's diving speed makes it difficult for Escort to maintain contact the Close Escort Squadrons on all four attack skilfully kept with the Whirlwinds during the dive and were able to reform a defensive formation around the Whirlwinds as soon as they had levelled out. Proof of the excellence of the Escort is in the fact that a section of e/a which tried to jump the Whirlwinds in their dive was engaged and one of them destroyed by F/O Andrieux of 130 Close Escort Squadron on February 26th.

The Dive

These dives are made by trimming the a/c very nose-heavy. It is then possible to secure a vertical dive, with normal flying characteristics. Aileron flutter was not noticed, or any untoward characteristic. Pulling out was not difficult.

Bomb-aiming

A sight is first taken through the gun-sight on the point to be bombed. The nose of the a/c is then brought up slightly and the bomb released. This allows for bomb trail, supposing that when sighting the a/c was not diving absolutely vertical but at an angle of 80-85 degrees.

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