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HEADQUARTERS  
FOUR EIGHTY THIRD BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)  
APO 520Statement of Witness

On 18 July 1944 the 483rd Bombardment Group (H) went into the assigned target area without fighter escort or other group support. As the initial point was approached approximately seventy-five (75) enemy fighters swept by the group formation on the right making a wide turn at the rear in preparation for a tail attack.

When the 483rd Group executed the turn onto the bombing run the four boxes went into the box-in-trail formation. While the turn was being made, the aforementioned enemy fighters attacked, supported by an additional force of equal fighter strength. The estimated total enemy fighter strength was approximately 175-200 when the tail attack was made.

Seven airplanes of the 816th Bombardment Squadron made up the number four box, and the entire enemy fighter strength made a concentrated attack on these seven airplanes. Three B-17's were shot to pieces while in level flight and while maintaining their positions in formation. A fourth went down, apparently shot out of control, and broke apart as soon as the ship went into a spin. The three remaining airplanes of the 816th Squadron drifted out of formation and appeared to be out of control, two of which were beginning to burn. Several occasional parachutes were seen although a number of crew members were thrown from their ships and it is unknown whether their parachutes functioned.

A considerable number of enemy fighters were shot down by the gunners in these ships while the attack was being made, but the fighter fire power was overwhelming. The enemy attack was made in such a manner that very few guns of each airplane could bear on the fighters.

The fighter attack was executed in waves of 5 and 6 ships in close javelin formation closing directly and on a level with the tail of each B-17. The fighter waves concentrated on 2 or 3 ships on an attack, and fired only on the rearmost airplanes.

The fighters moved up to the number three box after destroying the airplanes of the 816th Squadron, and five ships of the 817th Squadron were destroyed in the same manner.

Twelve remaining airplanes of the 483rd Group reached the target and dropped their bombs.

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