

R.A.F. HITS AIRFIELD AND ESCORTS AMERICANS

R.A.F. Mitchell medium bombers and Typhoon fighter-bombers of Fighter Command struck at two airfields in the St. Pol area of France this morning as U.S.A.A.F. Marauders, escorted by Spitfires, raided two other targets nearby.

Pilots of the Mysore Spitfire Squadron, escorting the Marauders, shot down three F.W. 190s and damaged others.

Spitfires also escorted the formation of Mitchells, and Typhoon fighters accompanied the Typhoon bombers, but no enemy aircraft were seen on these two operations, and all our bombers returned safely.

Despite fairly heavy flak, the Mitchell crews saw bomb bursts on their target, Monchy Breton airfield, and among the dispersals.

A Flight-Sergeant pilot reported afterwards that his Mitchell was blown out of the formation by the blast from an anti-aircraft shell, but he was soon back in his place again. Photographs taken during the raid show about 40 bomb bursts on the airfield.

The Typhoon pilots reported seeing hits on dispersal huts at their target, Bryas Sud airfield.

The Spitfires escorting the Marauders also saw accurate bombing and encountered fighter opposition. The first U.S. attack was on Vendeville airfield, at Lille, and the Mysore and Natal Spitfire Squadrons, which were part of the escort, dived on a formation of a dozen F.W. 190s near the target. A Flight-Lieutenant of the Mysore Squadron who was recently awarded the American Air Medal for his work in escorting Fortresses, and two other pilots of the squadron each shot down one. Together, the two squadrons severely damaged some others leaving less than half the F.Ws intact out of the original formation.

"There was a general melee when we went down and we couldn't see what happened to all our victims", said one of the Mysore pilots. "The Hun was more in evidence than usual and the fighter wing above us had a scrap."

The pilots reported that the bombing at Lille was excellent, with a terrific explosion from an ammunition dump a quarter of a mile outside the airfield. This sent up red smoke which rose over 5000 feet and was still visible when they were 16 miles away.

At Mazingarbe, the industrial target of the second force of Marauders, some thirty enemy aircraft were seen but did not intervene.

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