

NOT FOR PUBLICATION, BROADCAST, OR USE ON CLUB TAPES
BEFORE 0830 D.B.S.T. (i.e. FOR EVENING PAPERS) ON
THURSDAY, 20th APRIL, 1944
THIS EMBARGO SHOULD BE RESPECTED OVERSEAS BY PREFACING
ANY MESSAGES FIELD WITH THE EMBARGO

Air Ministry News Service

Air Ministry Bulletin No.13615

MORE BOMBERS IN LESS TIME

Bomber Command's growth has been steady and scientifically planned. Because of this, it is easy to forget the precision with which a large scale attack is planned, and great numbers of aircraft, often a thousand at a time, handled.

One Lancaster bomber group, which twelve months ago had only a few heavy bomber squadrons and some Wellingtons, is a good example of this rapid growth. Not only has the change from two to four engined aircraft been made, but many new squadrons have also been formed. Last month the group set up a new record. Nearly 6,000 tons of explosives were dropped on enemy targets, and twice the group carried a load of over 1,000 tons in a single operation.

The armament and engineering staffs have a tremendous task to get the Lancasters ready for these big attacks, and they deserve much of the credit for them. They have always achieved what was asked of them, even when there were difficulties at the last minute.

One day, because of a sudden change of bomb load, the armament workers on the stations handled just under 4,000 tons of bombs in less than eight hours. On another occasion, when the group was ordered to send out nearly 200 bombers, the maintenance work of the engineers was so efficient that only one aircraft had to be withdrawn before the take off.

Much responsibility lies on the shoulders of the officers whose duty it is to control the take off and the landing of the Lancasters. The organisation is complex, but it works smoothly. Departures and arrivals are managed as though this were a railway system in peace time, rather than a great war machine which the enemy is continually trying to destroy.

Although more and more aircraft are sent out, the time-table is constantly being speeded up. Timing of the take-off is worked out to the second, and after a flight lasting six or seven hours, the first of the returning bombers can be heard approaching at the prearranged minute, though the aircraft will all have met fierce opposition from the enemy's air and ground defences.

Last month the group had 75 combats with enemy fighters, but the time-table was as exact as ever. In March the average time taken to land an aircraft, including in the average those which were badly shot up or had to make belly-landings, was 58 seconds less than in December of 1943.
