

BOMBER CREWS RESCUED IN DESERT

On March 21, Boston bombers of the South African Air Force after attacking the enemy aerodrome at Martuba were intercepted by Messerschmitt 109s and two of the Bostons were shot down.

Everyone of the two crews, with the exception of an air gunner who was killed, has now returned safely to base.

The crew of one Boston owe their lives to their observer, a young pilot officer from Sydney, Australia.

After the attack by enemy fighters the aircraft was forced down in the desert some sixty miles off Gazala.

The pilot, a lieutenant colonel of the South African Air Force whose home is at Capetown was wounded by cannon fire and his two gunners, a flight sergeant from Johannesburg and a sergeant from Durban were also hit.

The pilot put his aircraft down in a "wheels-up" landing but before the bomber came to rest it burst into flames.

The observer helped his wounded companions out of the burning aircraft, made them as comfortable as possible on the sand although suffering from burns to his face and hands, started to walk eastwards for assistance.

He had walked for the best part of thirty hours and had covered over 22 miles of the rough going when, on the following afternoon, he reached the British lines and reported the position of his companions.

A reconnaissance aircraft and an army scouting party had already made an unsuccessful search for the Boston.

Early on Monday a Lysander "spotter" aircraft, with fighter escort, took a doctor out to the wounded men.

The doctor remained with the pilot and one of the gunners, the other gunner, with a bullet in his knee, was brought back.

An ambulance plane took off later but was unable to find the party, Subsequently the Lysander again set off leading the ambulance and safely located the doctor and the wounded men.

All four of the Boston's crew are now recovering from their injuries in a desert hospital.

The other Boston also forced landed and caught fire. Save for the gunner who had been killed the crew jumped to safety and walked back until they were picked up by a Free French patrol.

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