

AWM 52 PH 5/27/19

TO : O.C.,
Srd., AUSTRALIAN BOMB DISPOSAL CO.,

REPORT ON
BOMBING RAID - FORT HEDLAND AIRDROME

0720 Hrs. 29 Jul 42

REF. MAP Not available
LOCATION 6 1/2 Miles South FORT HEDLAND Township.
REPORT BY Lieut, HOLBROOK J.S.
DATE 1800 Hrs. 23 Aug. 42.

SUMMARY

At 0830 Hrs. 1 Aug 42 I received order to proceed to Fort Hedland by road.
Moved out at 1040 Hrs. 1 Aug. 42. Arrived Fort Hedland 1500 Hrs. 7 Aug. 42.
Party consisted of Self, Sergeant and 3 O/R's.
Airdrome was raided 30 Jul. 42. at 0720 Hrs. by 3 Enemy Planes presumably Japanese.
Approximately 50 Bombs were dropped on and in the vicinity of drome, 3 U.K.B's were located and disposed of.
Return by road commenced 14 Aug. 42., arrived H.Q., Srd., Aust Bomb Disposal Co., 19 Aug. 42.

APPENDICES

- (A) SKETCH PLAN LOCATION OF BOMBS ON 'DROME.
- (B) SKETCH PLAN OF ROUTE TAKEN AND MILEAGE CHART

SIGNED John S. Holbrook Lieut.
O.C., No.1 Section,
3 Aust Bomb Disposal Co.,
23 Aug. 42.

SECRETREPORT ON BOMBING RAID PORT HEDLAND AERODROMENARRATIVE :- (Local information)

On the morning of 30 Jul, 48 nine enemy aircraft (presumably Japanese) approached the 'drome from a N.E. direction, flying at about 1500ft. in arrowhead formation.

On widening out, but not breaking their formation, they released their bombs across the 'drome and swinging eastward, disappeared in the direction from whence they came.

LAYOUT :-

The 'drome consists of three 1200ft. runways with re-fuelling facilities and five small buildings.

1. Mess - Sleeping hut
2. Transmitting and receiving room.
3. Magazine
4. Transmitting station.
5. Store

PROTECTION

The 'drome has a staff of nine whose duties appeared to consist of Administration, Wireless Operating, Weather Reporting and Computing, routine duties and fatigue, a few revolvers for protection.

A Company of the 25th. Garrison stationed at Port Hedland township is supplying a squad of approximately twelve men changeable each week, for guard duty. They are armed with rifles, Lewis (old pattern) and two converted Aircraft Browning guns, salvaged from wrecked 'planes at Broome. The guns are mounted in sandbag revetted pits and sited to protect the 'drome buildings. A spotter is on duty continuously.

REASONS FOR RAID

The general impression was that the raiders were after shipping. My own opinion formed by the fact that the bombs were of a general utility nature, and that, notwithstanding no opposition, very little use was made of them, I think it was just a practice operational flight.

TYPES OF BOMBS :-

The type of bombs used (based on the finding of the U.X.B.'s, partly burnt out incendiaries and bomb pieces) indicated :-

60 K.G. High explosive

60 K.G. Paraffin Wax incendiaries.

50 K.G. Thermite incendiaries.

The difference in craters formed by the H.E. was brought about by instant, or slight delay fusing. The 60 K.G. instant fuse bombs would have been an ideal destroying agent for grounded aircraft.

DAMAGE :-

Material damage consisted of a few small splinters holes through buildings and guard tents, damaged forty, five gallon drums of petrol and ten varying sized craters on the runways which were repaired and rolled ready for use by 1500 Hrs. the same day.

ACTION


On making a brief appreciation of the situation in conjunction with the Air Force squad we went to work on four supposed U. X. B.'s on the E.W. runway, and proved to be a 60 K.G. H.E. U. X. B., another a partly exploded broken up H.E. of the same type and the other two burnt out incendiaries. On further reconnaissance we found many indications of U.X.B. (a or canou-flets, all but one being burnt out incendiaries.

REMARKS

- (1) A peculiar feature of the raid was that an American Catalina Amphibian plane was standing near a refuelling point at the E. end of the E.W. runway and yet no special effort was made to destroy it.
- (2) Out of fifty bombs dropped, only three failed to explode, one of those the fuse had functioned but the booster failed to detonate the main filling.
- (3) The sandy top soil had defeated the operation of the incendiaries, so for the most part they had burnt out below surface.
- (4) The route taken is what is referred to as the coast road. We

experienced no undue difficulty in getting through, although the passing of dry river and creek beds which are in abundance in the latter 500 miles makes travel very rough and slow. A record wet season has been experienced throughout the North resulting in many rivers overflowing and inundating miles of low surrounding country. Fortunately most of the water had subsided and the tracks were fairly firm at the time we went through and returned.

- (5) Although acting as an independent Unit, we accompanied the Air Force B.D. Squad on this operation. The raid being wholly on Air Force property it became their responsibility, and under the present circumstance a privilege on their part to allow us to participate. Throughout the whole operation a desire for co-operation without sign of domination on their part was our fortunate experience.
- (6) Plan of drome and bomb craters was made by compass survey with pacing measurements. Craters checked and counter checked in relation to runways to ensure accuracy.

No.	Kind.	Depth of Penetration	Width of Crater.	Remarks
1	S.D.H.E.	5 Ft.	20 Ft.	Loamy Sand
2.	S.D.H.E.	5 Ft.	12 Ft.	Hard Packed Sand
3.	I.H.E.	4 Ft.	9 Ft.	" " "
4.	I.H.E.	2 Ft.	6 Ft.	Sand.
5	I.H.E.	1 Ft.	5 Ft.	"
6.	I.H.E.	4 Ft.	6 Ft.	Runway
7.	I.H.E.	4 Ft.	8 Ft.	Sand
8.	I.H.E.	2 Ft.	4 Ft.	"
9.	I.H.E.	4 Ft.	10 Ft.	"
10.	Thermite I.H.E.	4 Ft.	-	Thermite burnt out casing Runway not affected.
11.	I.H.E.	3 Ft.	9 Ft.	Sand
12.	I.H.E.	3 Ft.	10 Ft.	"
13.	D.H.E.	-	18 Ft.	Possible canouflet. Crater.
14.	P.WAX Incendiary.	4'6"	-	Rope burst. Wax not ignited
15.	"	5 Ft.	-	Burnt Out.
16.	D.H.E.	6 Ft.	20 Ft.	Sand.
17.	D.H.E.	-	22 Ft.	Most probable canouflet Crater: 
18	I.H.E.	1 Ft.	2'6"	SAND
19	I.H.E.	2 Ft.	3'6"	"
20	H.E. U.X.E.	4'6"	-	Angle true. Runway broken up.
21	I.H.E.	2 Ft.	8 Ft.	Sand and clay sub soil. Crater
22.	D.H.E.	3 Ft.	21 Ft.	5 Ft. Sand 3 Ft. Clay Dry.
23	I.H.E.	4'6"	8 Ft.	Sand
24.	I.H.E.	4'6"	9 Ft.	"
25.	I.H.E.	1 Ft.	2 Ft.	"
26.	I.H.E.	3 Ft.	10 Ft.	"
27.	P.WAX Incendiary.	5'6"	-	Sand vertical.
28.	D.H.E.	3 Ft.	20 Ft.	Sandy Loam.

No.	Kind	Depth of Penetration	Width of Crater.	Remarks.
29	Thermite Incendiary	10 Ft.	-	Cameoflet abandoned 10 Ft.
30	H.H. U.X.B.	5 Ft.	-	Runway
31	I.H.E.	4 Ft.	10 Ft.	Sand
32	I.H.E.	4 Ft.	10 Ft.	"
33	I.H.E.	4 Ft.	9 Ft.	"
34	I.H.E.	6 Ft.	24 Ft.	Hard Dry Clay.
35.	P.Wax Incendi.	9 Ft.	-	3 Ft. sand. 6 Ft. Clay Vertical.
36.	I.H.E.	18 ins.	4'6"	Sand
37.	I.H.E.	2 Ft.	4'6"	"
38.	H.H. U.X.B.	10 Ft.	-	3 Ft. sand 7 Ft. clay. True penetration.
39.	I.H.E.	3 Ft.	8 Ft.	Sand.
40.	I.H.E.	3 Ft.	8 Ft.	"
41.	D.H.E.	9 Ft.	24 Ft.	Sand 4 Ft. Clay 5 Ft. Wet.
42.	I.H.E.	6 ins.	2 Ft.	Sand.
43.	D.H.E.	7 Ft.	22 Ft.	Sand 3 Ft. Clay 4 Ft. Dry.
44.	I.H.E.	2 Ft.	5 Ft.	Sand
45.	Thermite Incendiary	5 Ft.	-	Runway.
46.	P.Wax Incendiary	5 Ft.	-	"
47.	D.H.E.	-	-	" repaired
48	D.H.E.	-	-	" "
49.	P.Wax Incendiary	3 Ft.	-	Dug out while burning.
50.	I.H.E.	4 Ft.	7 Ft.	Runway.