

MEMORANDUM:

30 July 1945

1. Following is submitted an account of the events leading up to an actual bailout of Capt. R. P. Fortune and crew on 23 July 1945.

a. My crew was briefed to stage through Iwo for refueling enroute to Rashin, Korea, where mines were to be laid. I took off from Base 1225K landing at Iwo 1545K. The flight crew did its own refueling, and it was found that because of the necessity of messing the flight crew, the one hour and forty-five minutes that elapsed between landing and "stations time" was sufficient only to fill the tanks, but not to top them off. It was brought to my attention through chance remark of Maj. Wagner's, that gasoline required transfer once a day from one underground reservoir to the other in an attempt to keep the gasoline cool. The tail gunner who helped fuel the airplane reported later that he noted the gasoline was unusually hot to the touch. All wing and bomb bay tanks were filled to the top and checked. The tanks were not topped before take-off as previously explained.

b. The normal take-off was affected at 1800K, and the mission was flown as briefed with the exception of a forty minute delay in arrival at the target due to adverse winds encountered over the Sea of Japan. Mines were laid as briefed and the return to Iwo was made at 17,000 ft. Nothing unusual occurred up to this point.

c. Upon arrival over Iwo at 0636K a thorough fuel check was made. Cruise control liquidometers, and "How Goes It" were in close agreement, and indicated that approximately 1442 gallons of fuel remained at that time. Briefed landing time at Base was 1922K. Out ETA at base was 1945K indicating a reserve flying time of one hour and twenty-one minutes. This was calculated against a "run out of gas time" of 1106K on the "How Goes It". With this information the decision was made to proceed to base.

Another routine check of fuel remaining was made at approximately 20-30N. Calculations indicated an estimated 1100 gallons of fuel remaining.

At 18-00N it was brought to my attention that the liquidometers were falling off rapidly. At this point a recalculation of fuel was made, and it was estimated that we had 380 gallons of usable fuel, with a total of 490 gallons remaining. It was my opinion that the liquidometers were not correct in light of our previous calculations, and that, although it would be close according to the liquidometers, we would make base, which was approximately one hour and fifteen minutes away. The power setting was reduced from 1800 to 1600 r. p. m., and we began a gradual descent from 15,000 ft.

As we proceeded south, the liquidometers continued to fall rapidly, and I then alerted the crew for a possible ditching or bailout. As the liquidometer on # one showed empty, the engine sputtered from lack of fuel. At this time the radio operator sent an emergency message to Wing radio station. The message was receipted for.

Fuel was transferred from the inboard engines to the outboard engines until fuel was exhausted in the inboard tanks, and number 2 and 3 engines were feathered. In view of an altitude of 11,000 ft., the power setting was reduced to 1400 r. p. m. on the remaining (outboard) engines. Liquidometers indicated 25 gallons remaining in each outboard engine. The crew had already checked all equipment and were aware of the situation. I instructed them to bail out of the forward and aft bomb bays at the second signal alarm bell. The radar operator was to stand by on interphone to report to me when the last man was out of the rear.

Just north of Anatahan the pilot was in contact with "Room Service", and I informed "Condor Mother" of the impending bailout. Ditching was out of the question because of probably insufficient control of the aircraft. Emergency I. F. F. was on and Condor Mother told me they had us "in sight". The radio operator sent the bailout message and screwed down the key at 1938K. Bomb bay doors were opened while at 7,000 ft.

d. The crew bailed out in quick succession. The radar operator informed me that all men had successfully bailed out of the rear and that he was then leaving. The radio operator, navigator, bombardier, engineer and pilot bailed out of the front bomb bay, headfirst, in the order named. The pilot had lowered the nose gear and raised the hatch as he passed to the rear. I had decided to use this exit to avoid being trapped after having my seat in the event of a sudden loss of power and resulting unstable flight of the aircraft. Although I didn't hear it, the pilot had reported all men out of the front immediately before leaving the plane. The autopilot had been set up with the elevator off.

I called Condor Mother and reported all men were out, and that I was leaving at 1940K at 6,000 ft. Condor Mother receipted and informed me that Help was already enroute to our position. I turned the plane 20 degrees right of Saipan, and checked the instruments noting that # one was cutting out.

I braced myself, head first face forward, down the nose wheel well and pulled myself out. Before pulling the ripcord, I rechecked my parachute straps. After falling an estimated 1,000 ft. to 1,500 ft. I pulled the ripcord, and the chute opened with a light jerk. As I descended, I counted ten parachutes to the North.

I attempted to unbuckle my chute, but was unable to do so before hitting the water. I went about eight feet under the surface, but felt no hard jar as I entered the water. I struggled to free myself of my chute, and in doing so became even more entangled in the shroud lines. At this point I relaxed, pulled the Mae West cords, and only the left side inflated although I had previously checked both CO2 cylinders. I then submerged and carefully disintegrated myself from the shroud lines. I opened and inflated the raft without difficulty, however I was too exhausted to climb aboard. I lay in the water with only my feet in the dingy. After several minutes, my strength returned sufficiently to allow me to climb into the dinghy. After another short rest I located

and stowed all emergency equipment. I put out the dye marker and used the signal mirror to attract the attention of numerous aircraft in the area. I was then located and circled by several airplanes. About an hour and twenty minutes after bailout I was taken aboard a navy crash boat where I received superb attention. The remainder of my crew were brought aboard the same craft within forty minutes.

Other crew members experienced no particular difficulties with the exception of the engineer who had injured his back probably at the time his chute opened. He was picked up, unconscious, supported only by his Mae West. His uninflated dinghy was found floating nearby. This man is an excitable type of person and it is my belief that he became completely exhausted while frantically struggling with his parachute shroud lines.

2. The following comments and recommendations are submitted as a result of this experience.

a. Suggest that when staging A/C through Iwo, consideration be given to the excessive gasoline temperatures and more time given in which to properly top off fuel tanks.

b. Suggest that whenever possible, and especially on long flights, crew be allowed to fly their own aircraft be it Renton or Wichita.

c. Suggest that C-1 vest be so modified as to preclude the wearing of a back type chute on top of cumbersome articles of equipment as was the case with the only member of the crew who was injured.

d. Although previous wet dinghy drill was excellent and proved valuable to the crew, I suggest that more emphasis be put on how to extricate oneself from a parachute harness.

e. Suggest that all crew members be taught how to swim before being allowed to fly combat missions.

f. In my opinion, the nose wheel well is ^{an} excellent escape exit for the Airplane Commander. I believe that I easily cleared all projecting parts of the plane.

g. Suggest that all crew be briefed on the use of Condor Mother and Condor Base in an urgent situation close to base. Their radar and radio facilities make them the most reliable contact to establish.

h. The Air Sea Rescue program, both indoctrination and operation, is excellent and the results it has achieved make for greater confidence in case of an emergency, thus allowing air crew members to think more clearly of the immediate problems. I feel that at least once a month, crews should be given a short refresher lecture on A. S. R. facilities and procedures.

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Airplane Commander