

AIRPORT STRUCK FROM ALTITUDE OF 'ZERO PLUS'

Historic first blows of the AAF against the German Luftwaffe were struck on July 4, 1942, with minimum altitude bombings of four German airdromes in Holland. The assault was

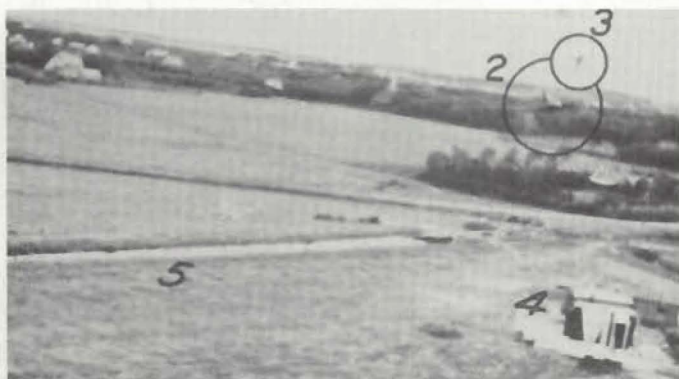
a combined RAF and AAF operation. Six RAF and six AAF crews participated using American-built Bostons (A-20s). Extensive damage was inflicted, especially to personnel, and one flight had the good fortune to surprise a German parade formation with a strafing attack from all machine guns. Of the twelve planes participating in the raids, three were lost, including two in the flight pictured here.

The three-plane flight attacking Bergen Alkmaar did not positively identify the target until antiaircraft gunners opened fire, as the airdrome was thoroughly camouflaged. Because of their position at the moment of identification,

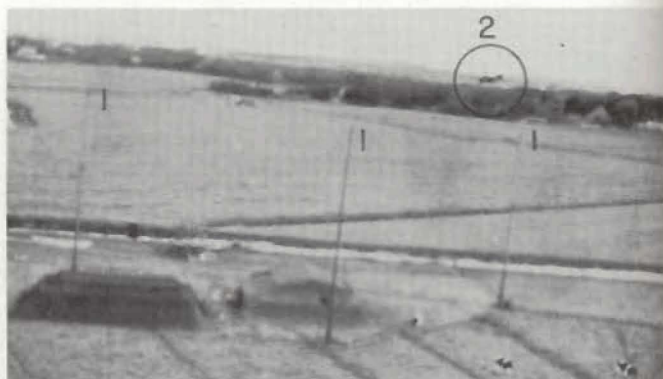
the pilots abandoned the previously planned line abreast formation and turned into the bombing run, line astern, at an altitude of 100 feet.

The lead plane dropped its bombs over the main hangar area, setting fires. The second ship followed the leader almost exactly and dropped HE and incendiary bombs on the target. This plane was crippled by AA fire and overtaken by a Messerschmitt, which shot it down over the sea. The third plane ran into intense AA fire on the last turn before the bombing run and crashed.

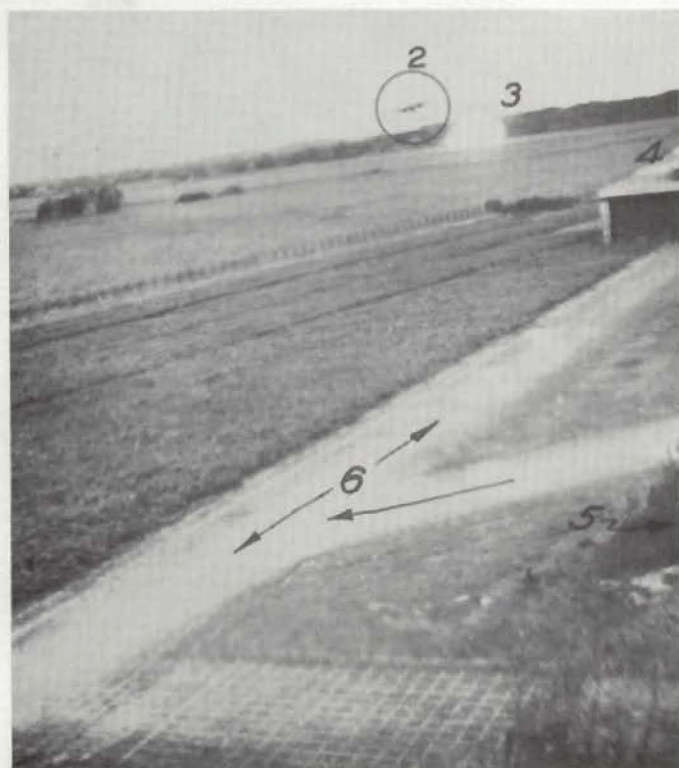
Photographs were taken from a fixed camera operated by remote control in the tail of the lead plane.



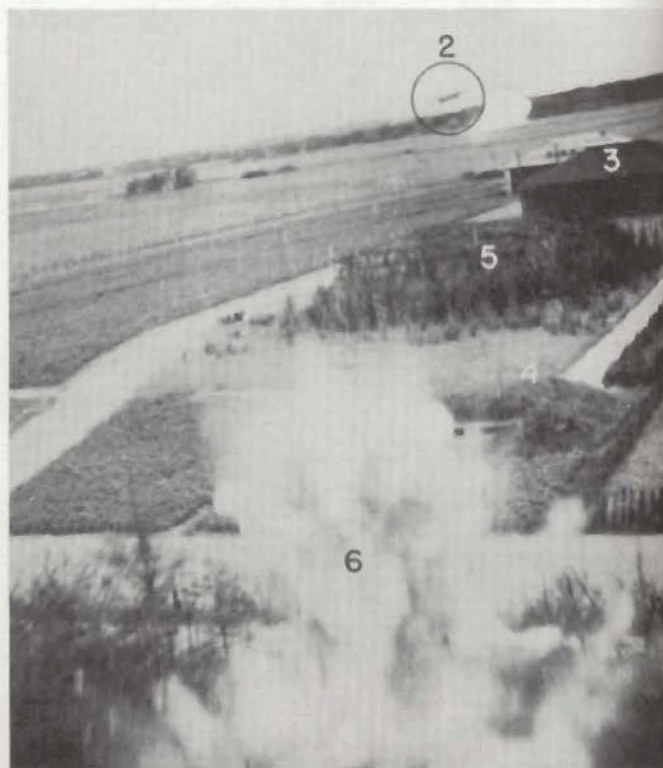
A. No. 2 plane (2) and No. 3 plane (3) approach the target at low altitude. Construction is at (4) and ditch (5).



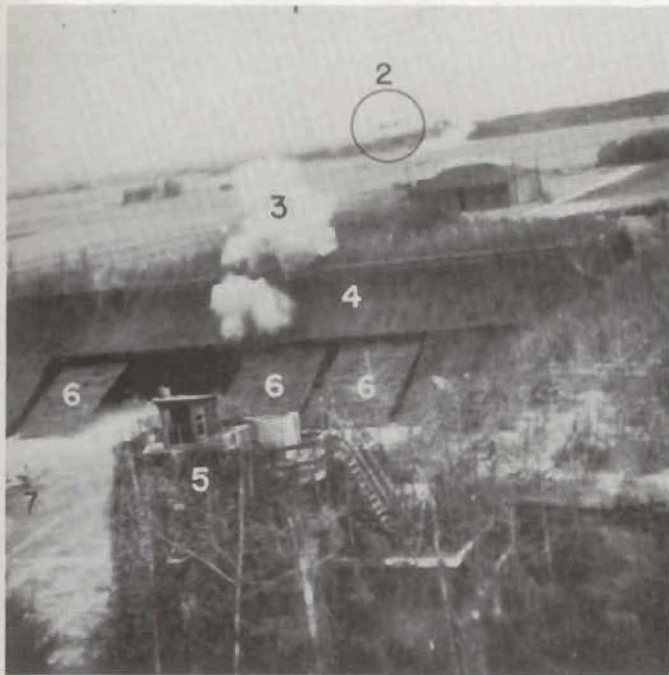
B. No. 2 plane is at edge of airdrome. No. 3 plane is off course and invisible. Towers (1) are probably for radio.



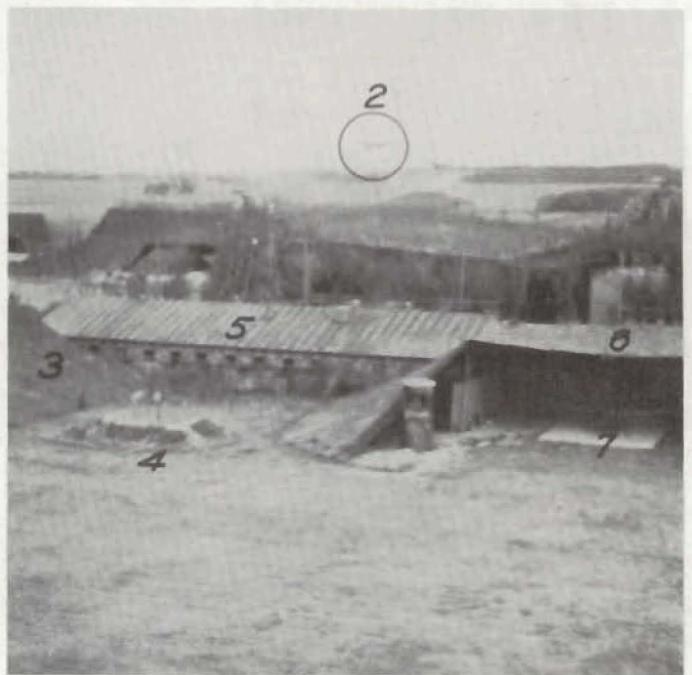
C. Surfaced runways (6), building (4) and camouflaged shelter (5) are in path of No. 2. No. 3 is crashing.



D. A bomb bursts (6) from lead plane. Area includes hangar (3), camouflaged hangar (5) and underground storage (4).



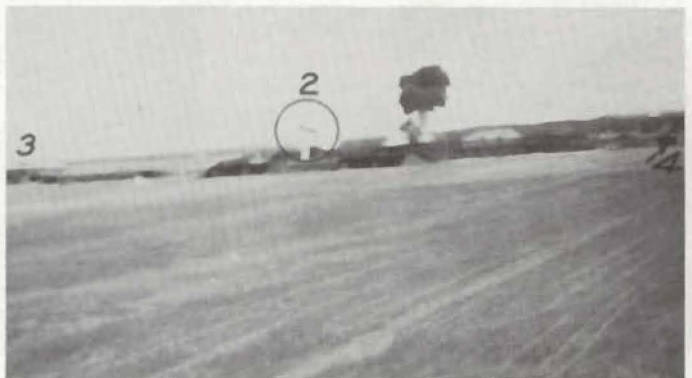
E. Camouflaged hangar (4) has inclined doors (6) with nets. Also seen are probable control tower (5) and FW-190 (7).



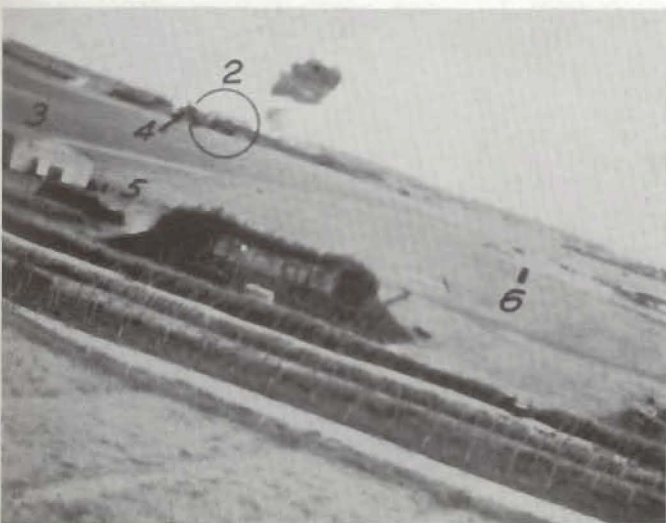
F. Dispersal area at edge of field has fighter plane (7) in bay (6), possible barracks (5), machine gun (4), hangar (3).



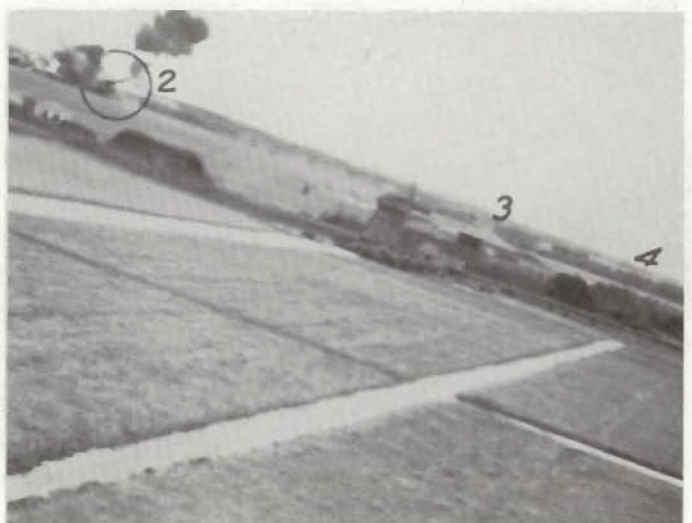
G. Lead plane is now leaving landing ground as No. 2 plane continues approach. Black smoke is from crashed No. 3.



H. Camouflaged dispersal bays (3) are at left and a camouflaged dispersal bay or hangar (4) at right. No. 2 is banking.



I. Explosion of bomb (4) from lead plane is visible near No. 2. Also seen are sheds (3) and (5) and runway (6).



J. No. 2 plane flies through blast of first plane's bomb as it starts to leave area. At right are hangar (3) and bays (4).