

MOROTAI AIRRAIDS

- Control Tower Operator - MOROTAI

- Sept. 27, 1944 Three enemy planes dropped bombs at 1900 hours near the beach. There was no damage. AA fire was moderate.
- Then at 2000 hours three more raiders came in; intense red tracer fire ignited the sky. The bombload fell at the uncompleted air strip.
- Sept. 28, 1944 At 0300 hours a lone Nip fighter strafed a nearby area, damaging a plane. It then dropped a good sized bomb. Many lights were on at the base because of the confusion whether an air raid alert was on. AA response was late and weak.
- Again at 0615 a lone regular zero fighter hovered in sight at 5000 feet over the base. Heavy fire from our AA batteries was directed at the aircraft. Our aim was bad. The plane did rock several times but this might have been evasive action.
- Sept. 30, 1944 At 1940 a lone enemy recon fighter flew fairly low over the base. AA bursts sent up a moderate barrage. Neither side suffered damage.
- Oct. 1, 1944 At 2100 a lone enemy fighter dropped a bomb harmlessly. We responded with light ack-ack fire as the enemy winged it homeward.
- Oct. 3, 1944 At 0610 an enemy recon 'Dinah' bomber dropped some bombs and made a quick getaway. For simple identification the U.S. gave Jap bombers girls names and the fighters boys names. Sporadic AA volleys did not disturb them.
- Oct. 7, 1944 An enemy night raider placed six bombs near the crash strip, then sped away. There was no AA fire. A P-61 night fighter took some futile machine gun bursts at the intruder. Time 0300. One U.S. soldier was killed and several injured.
- Oct. 8, 1944 At 0440 a Jap bomber cruised slowly and low. It released six bombs without effect. We had a night fighter airborne searching out the enemy. When the Jap returned over the target area, our spotlight caught the Nip briefly. Strong AA fire was hurled up. It is stated but not confirmed the aircraft was damaged.
- Oct. 9, 1944 At 0405 a lone Nip plane dropped four bombs. Then it evaded 90mm AA guns to escape.
- Oct. 11, 1944 At 0330 a Jap bomber released five bombs hitting the new fuel dump near the runway. Two separate revetments caught fire with large explosions resulting. One hundred barrels of fuel (5500 gallons) were destroyed. Emergency crews extinguished the conflagration but heavy smoke hovered over the spot.
- At 0420 another enemy raider dropped five bombs in same area with no damage.
- Oct. 23, 1944 At 2100 hours a Jap plane dropped a phosphorous bomb harmlessly in the peninsular area. There was no AA fire.

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- Oct. 24, 1944 At 2100 a lone Nip raider sneaked in dropping two heavy phosphorous bombs near the docks. Twenty of our men were injured, some seriously. Then, the aircraft strafed ineffectively. AA was very weak and late.
- Oct. 25, 1944 At 2145 an enemy intruder dropped several bombs north of the air strips near the artillery positions. We sent up moderate AA to no avail. No damage resulted for either side.
- Oct. 26, 1944 At 2315 a few bombs dropped harmlessly near our infantry position. Our heavy calibre AA shot at the lone Jap without success.
- Oct. 31, 1944 At 0530 it was still dark. The early morning shift members were returning from the mess hall. A red alert was on. Suddenly, machine gun sputterings were heard and strafing tracers observed. AA fire was moderate. The hostile craft retired safely. Considering the worst over, the a.m. shift left in a jeep for the air strip.

Without warning AA guns opened up fiercely. Jumping out of the vehicle 'Gus' and I hugged the sides of the road. Six Jap planes let loose with incendiary bombs which miraculously missed many parked B-24's. AA hit one Nip and sent him smoking into the sea. Then, came a marvelous sight..another Rising Sun plane was caught in a crossfire and disintegrated in mid-air. Another two planes were considered shot down. Jap strafing wounded one soldier. The planes could easily be seen in the dawn light. As a sidelight, one of our B-24 'Snoopers' returning from a night harassing attack was shot at in error. The airrome was partly covered with a pall of smoke. Damage was slight. It is felt that Jap 'Bamp'fighters and a 'Betty' bomber were in raid. The official communique claims four of the seven raiders were shot down.

- Nov. 5, 1944 At 0315 five Japanese aircraft attacked this base. Four phosphorous and other bombs fell near the air strip without effect. Enemy strafing failed also. Our AA was moderate
- Nov. 6, 1944 At 0130 hours four enemy aircraft raided Morotai dropping bombs at an unknown spot and releasing one harmlessly near the Pitoe runway. AA was heavy and drove the enemy away. Our night fighter shot down one and the enemy plane plummeted with a greenish flame into the sea. AA hit another plane and claimed it probably could not have returned to its base (probably Halmahera).

Another attack followed. One plane hovering high was caught in our searchlights. Our AA's attention was focused on this twin engine plane. As this aeroplane slipped away, another plane, flying treetop low, sneaked in and dropped two magnesium bombs blowing up two PB4Y's and damaging three others. Besides this, a heavy demolition bomb exploded harmlessly near the strip, being dropped by another raider. Not only that, but a fire flashed up at nearby Wama strip where one P-40 was destroyed and seven others damaged.

At 0400 our searchlights picked out another plane but it escaped. At the same time another sneak enemy intruder released more incendiaries on the strip without effect. At 0430, finally, the "all clear" was sounded. Eight enemy planes is a conservative estimate of enemy planes that came over this evening.

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- Nov.7,1944 At 0445 a Nip "Dinah" bomber swooped down on Pitoe strip and spread out 21 small bombs, 6 of them duds. Two bombs went thru the wings of a Navy PV-1 Ventura. One Navy man was injured in the head with shrapnel. The enemy also strafed without effect. The attack was such a surprise that AA did not respond.
- Nov.8,1944 The air raid 'alert' extended from 0330 to 0500. Four Jap planes, ignoring poor weather, attacked at 0415 dropping a phosphorous bomb near the infantry perimeter and 16 small bombs in the woods. Poor visibility made their aim bad. AA was weak.
- Nov.9,1944 At 0300 an enemy plane dropped a phosphorous bomb at the wood's edge near the strip. AA fire was light.
- At 0415 a 'Dinah' plane strafed and bombed Pitoe strip destroying two B-25's completely and damaging three others near the transient camp, which was also badly damaged. Our '50' calibre AA opened up and blasted the hostile craft sending it down in flames. The crew, who were hurled out, lay many yards from the wrecked plane. One of our squadron members was injured by shrapnel.
- Nov.10,1944 At 0330 two enemy planes hovered nearly five miles out at sea. One dropped a phosphorous bomb harmlessly into the ocean. Then we lost contact with them.
- Nov.11,1944 Between 0300 and 0500 Nip planes made three passes at U.S. positions. All attacks were ineffective. Our AA was moderate. The first pass- two phosphorous bombs fell, the second pass-ordinary bombs dropped,- the final thrust was a strafing attack without warning.

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- Nov.12,1944 - At 0330 hours, the usual striking time, the enemy made two futile passes. The initial approach resulted in one heavy bomb and a phosphorous one falling without effect. Sundry bombs were dropped on the second try. AA fire was intense.
- Nov.13,1944 - Pre-dawn, a lone enemy plane flew thru the fog over Morotai. After circling for some time, he jettisoned two phosphorous bombs at random. AA fire was sporadic.
- Nov.14,1944 - Three pre-dawn passes by the Japs failed. The first resulted in our negligible AA response. The second plane was caught in our searchlight. It must have been damaged somewhat. The last pass brought heavy AA fire into action. Bombs dropped south of Pitoe strip without effect.
- Nov.16,1944 - An enemy raider dropped a cluster of small bombs near Mama.
- Nov.22,1944 - At 2000 hours lights were on and movies showing. There was a common place 'yellow' alert on. Suddenly, an aircraft, with lights on, swept in and dropped bombs. Soldiers scrambled madly over each other and ran for shelter. Our AA opened up. Moments later our searchlights caught the low-flying Nip cruising low with its lights out. All calibres of AA let loose. The enemy plane caught fire and plunged into the sea nearby.

After that, more raiders came in individually. Although our planes in protected revetments received the greatest pounding, scattered camp areas were also hit. In all from 2000 to 2230 hours, when the all clear sounded, at least nine enemy planes had bombed this island base. Fires and explosions illuminated the airdrome like daytime. Sometimes our searchlights would pick out a Nip and the AA would belch out at the high targets. One other plane is listed as probably destroyed. It was last seen slowly sinking but not in flames. Including bombers, 12 enemy planes attacked us. Three of our men were killed outright and at least eight wounded. Our aircraft losses on the ground were staggering:

type	destroyed	damaged	location (air strip)
B-24	4	7	Pitoe
B-25	3 est	9 est	Pitoe
PV-1	1	1	Pitoe
A-20	7	6	Wama
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totals	15	23	

Some reports say damaged planes were more than listed above.

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- Nov. 24, 1944 - At 0930 about four enemy planes raided the airdromes and surrounding tent areas. Our searchlight spotted one Nip but it was too high for AA. Heavy damage was done to our parked aircraft. On Pitoe a PB4Y-1 was destroyed by direct hit. At Wama, two RAAF beaufighters were destroyed and five others damaged. Our personnel losses were 3 dead and 11 wounded. Bright fires glowed in the sky that night. There was smoldering fire visible most of the next day.
- Nov. 24, 1944 - From 2030 to 2200 the Japanese Air Force struck us. Nine planes bombed and strafed. On Pitoe, direct hits destroyed an OA-10 and a B-25. Other planes received insignificant bullet holes. A few daisy cutter bombs dropped on an abandoned area near the 79th tent area. The whirr of bombs falling was clearly audible in our trenches. AA was heavy. We had six nightfighters up. It is claimed that a hostile plane fell into the bay.
- Nov. 25, 1944 - Shortly after midnight, 0030, a lone Nip plane sneaked in strafing, then fled. A string of anti-personnel bombs dropped. A tire in the 79th motor pool had bullets in it.
- Nov. 25, 1944 - At 1915 hours an unidentified aircraft flew over. Light defensive AA was sent up. The plane was caught in our spotlight. Evidently, it was a high altitude reconnaissance mission. The plane made no hostile moves.

At 2045, however, another Jap plane swept in without warning. It strafed and dropped three bombs without effect. Our AA fire was belated.

- Nov. 26, 1944 - About three enemy planes struck at Pitoe with bombs and strafing. Bivouack areas were also targets. On the taxiways two P-7's were demolished. Other planes had scattered bullet holes. AA was meagre. Our night fighters were aloft.

Nov.27,1944 - At 0430 two Jap planes scattered a cluster of bombs at the airbase. One bomb fell 20 feet from the tar runway; other small bombs missed completely. AA was moderate. Night fighters were up.

Nov.29,1944 - At 0100 a lone enemy sortie came in behind a landing B-25 and dropped a cluster of small bombs without effect. AA was moderate. Constant 'red alerts' of other nearby Jap planes, prevented much restful sleep.

Nov.30,1944- Four Nip planes bombed the air base at 0310. A hazy sky protected the enemy. AA was moderate. On Wama strip two P-47's were destroyed, three damaged. On Pitoe, two PV-1 Venturas were demolished. One bomb landed in the coral runway making a hole that had to be filled in. Other bombs missed airbase facilities. In the 79th tent area, the water tank was slightly damaged; some tents had shrapnel holes. Our forces claim that one of our night fighters shot down a Nip plane.

Dec. 3,1944 - At 2300 our anti-aircraft units opened up lightly into the hazy sky. Evidently, an enemy reconnaissance aircraft was overhead. This was also the night that our intelligence sent out an 'invasion' alert. It is reported that the enemy plane was probably damaged.

Dec.6,1944 - An enemy aircraft jettisoned some small bombs mostly in the nearby sea, but one bomb landed harmlessly near Wama strip. Time was 0330. Our AA was heavy enough to keep the enemy high in the clouds.

Dec.7,1944 - At 0230 a Nip plane avoided our intense AA fire by remaining at high altitude. No bombs were dropped according to reports.

Dec.8,1944 - At 0345 about five Jap planes entered the bay area. Two of the planes were caught in our lights at very high altitude. Heavy AA guns sent up volleys without effect except to keep them away. It is believed that at least one plane dropped his bombs into the sea. Our night fighters also chased and fired at enemy planes.

Dec.9,1944 - At 0300 two hostile aircraft approached Morotai from the South. Our night fighters engaged them, and a 'Rufe' type float plane dropped seaward in flames about five miles off shore. The other plane evidently turned back. Our AA was inactive with our fighters up.

Dec.10,1944 - Between 0315 and 0415 Nipponese aircraft made three passes at this base. The first saw a high altitude craft heading north, drop bombs harmlessly near the air strip. On the second, they released three one hundred pounders in the 79th tent area. One landed 25 yards from the latrine, which was pierced with shrapnel..another dropped in adjacent brush..the third knocked sky high a tent in a nearby area with an AA position. This plane also fled northward with our spotlight on it. Heavy AA was hurled up. The third pass was a complete surprise as the enemy scattered small six pounders on Wama strip without effect.

Dec.15,1944 - At 0300 a drizzling rain was falling. The bad weather caused a lone enemy sortie to drop three bombs with effect beyond our infantry perimeter. Our AA response was weak.

Dec.17,1944 - At 0315 the weather cleared somewhat after the earlier heavy rains. Two Nip planes dropped two bombs each. The first plane came over high; the other dove from a high altitude to medium before releasing its load. The bombs landed at Wama with no damage. Only our big AA was used and moderately.

Dec.20,1944 - At 0430 a lone Jap plane haphazardly dropped several bombs harmlessly near the shoreline. The weather was only clear up high. We replied with moderate AA barrages.

Dec.20,1944 - At 1945 during a yellow alert, the usual illumination was visible at our base operations building under the control tower. I was working in the shack there. The records of the day were being reviewed. Suddenly, a twin engine plane swept in from the west, dropping a cluster of small bombs, then strafed. Damage was negligible except several small holes in the runway. Immediately, we smoothed them over. AA was light and very late.

Dec.23,1944 - At 0300 two enemy planes cruised over the base thru the hazy sky. Our AA was sporadic shooting up at the 5700 foot high target. A string of bombs dropped without effect near the small RAAF operations shack.

Dec.24,1944 - At 2200 hours, Christmas eve, three enemy bombers dropped about twelve medium bombs completely demolishing a B-24 and a P-47. Other parked planes received scratches. Two enemy craft were followed eastward high across the sky with our strong searchlights. AA was moderate.  
We lost a British Spitfire fighter which was sent down in flames in the bay. They have been used as nightfighters the past few nights. They are maneuverable and good for short distance interception.

Dec.25,1944 - At 2230, without warning, a surprise sortie released several bombs without damage west of the air strips. AA was meagre. The moon was so bright that the plane was visible when dropping his load. Several very small bombs dropped near a spare loose propellor on the ground without scratching it.

Dec.26,1944 - The movie show was running smoothly at the 2d Service outfit. Suddenly, at 2035 our 50 calibre AA was shooting up. An enemy twin-engine bomber streaked right over the trees above us and everyone scattered, flattening out. Some fellows were bruised in the confusion. It is not known whether the enemy dropped bombs.

Dec.27,1944 - At 0045 another Rising Sun plane arrived "unannounced." Our light AA opened up. Soldiers tumbled out of cots into foxholes quickly. Again it is not known whether bombs were dropped.

Dec.28,1944 - At 0400 an enemy plane dove from high altitude to a medium one, releasing small bombs. Our flak was heavy; aim was not good. Our searchlights were used sparingly. There was no damage either side.

Jan. 4,1945 - At 2345 hours, an enemy aircraft dumped five or more bombs into the ocean some distance from the air strips. The plane flew high above a top overcast sky. Our AA was only of harassing nature.

Jan. 6,1945 - Mid-afternoon (probably 1600) an enemy aircraft sped over Morotai on reconnaissance. It caused the base unaware. Above statement is 'unofficial.'

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Jan. 8, 1945 - At 0145 the red alert had scarcely sounded when two hostile planes appeared overhead. The first one dove, releasing four bombs..two of them killed eight men instantly. Two others died later. Total personnel casualties reached ten killed and thirty-One wounded. These soldiers were located at AA positions and in hospital areas near the beach. A few moments later another plane dove, dropping bombs to no effect. AA response was negligible., Evidently, the Nips objective was the large gas tank but they missed.

Jan. 9, 1945 - Around 0300 four Japanese planes attacked. Some bombs dropped in the bay; others landed harmlessly near the beach. One of our P-61 nightfighters rose to intercept and shot down a Jap 'Betty' bomber in flames. It made a bright light in the skies as it screamed seaward.

Jan. 11, 1945 - Shortly after 0300 a Jap dive bomber dove a considerable distance, then released three heavy bombs some space apart. A F-7 (photo B-24) was destroyed on the ground in flames. Six men of ours, caught on the ground nearby, received some shrapnel wounds. Our AA was meagre; our defense depended upon night fighters who failed to halt the assault.

NOTE- Observation- D-Day on Morotai was Sept. 15, 1944. From that date to Jan. 15, 1945 (when the 79th left) Morotai had 300 red alerts and 235 yellow alerts.\*

From Sept 15 to Sept 27 there were probably 6 enemy air raids

The 79th arrived Sept 27 and left Jan. 15

After Jan 15 there were only a couple airraids, the last being Mar. 22, 1945

The 79th probably were hit by 61 plus air raids. This leaves about 9

air raids to account for which were probably raids to other parts of Morotai area or planes over our airdrome area that I was not aware of during a red alert.

Data for air raids listed above and other occurrences was gleaned from official communique, fighter control, and most of it from personal observation from either my tent area, duty at airbase, and in a few instances while traveling by jeep to and from air strips. When in doubt, conservative figures were used. Number of attacking planes were probably understated. Sundry suspected hostile recon planes are not fully listed. I regret the report above lacks a personal touch because they were copied verbatim from a notebook written at the time (which I still have.) Many fascinating stories as to where I was during raids could fill a small booklet.

\* US Air Force Official records also lists 78 air raids.

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