

The purpose of this letter is to keep the personnel of the Air Service, both in Washington and in the field, informed as to the activities of the Air Service in general, and for release to the public press.

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HOW IT FEELS TO PILOT A PLANE ON A NIGHT BOMBING MISSION

The following is an interesting account of the night bombing mission, experienced by First Lieutenant Robert S. Worthington, Air Service, Luke Field, T.H., during the recent Hawaiian Department maneuvers, in which the Air Service played a very important part.

The mission was a bombing raid laid over a designated course, protected by a series of Searchlight Batteries, and the third Air Service mission of the maneuvers which took from one hour to two hours and a half to complete. Only those who are familiar with the terrain and weather condition of the Islands can really appreciate Lieut. Worthington's predicament, which is herewith explained in detail:

"Before taking off at Kuhuku, Island of Oahu, two fires were lit near a stone wall, and one ahead on the sand dunes for use in case of forced landings, or failure of the searchlight.

"At the time of take-off it was raining, and clouds were gathering over the nearby mountains, giving a ceiling of 1000 feet. Lieutenant Jesse A. Madarasz took off first and circled clockwise over the land ahead, and then Lieutenant Landon C. Catlett, Jr., took off, circling counter clockwise over the sea. I took off and proceeded straight ahead, burning a Holt wing flare.

"The other planes immediately fell into a "V" formation, and proceeded out to sea. We attained 8000 feet altitude, and upon approaching Schofield Barracks we changed to bombing formation and made the required two trips over that Post. There was a light, low haze below us through which we could clearly see the Post, but the searchlights could not pick us up. Overhead and before us the stars were shining, though below over Kole Kole pass and the mountains the rain and clouds were thick.

"We were proceeding, still in bombing formation, out to sea, intending to return via Barber's Point, and I had just got a glimpse of Barber's Point light when we were enveloped in a thick cloud full of sleet and snow. This covered my goggles, which I had to remove, and used no more.

"Thinking of the two ships behind I immediately stuck the Martin's nose down, but Lieutenant Catlett, who did the same, passed over me hardly ten feet away. I then tried to hold some elevation, about 4500 feet, since that was about the level of the top of the mountain below.

"Flying about for some minutes I saw a dull radiant glow that I recognized as a searchlight beam, and, diving down, I came out of the clouds about 500 feet above the ground in a heavy rain.

"A great many searchlights were now turned on the ships, and only after firing several Very light signals were they taken off. Through the rain it was hard to see the few lights below after the searchlights were removed so I circled around the lights, trying to place myself. There was another small settlement with lights showing nearby, and when the rain decreased enough to let me see it I flew there and circled over them awhile, knowing there could be no mountains between. At times the rain and clouds made it all black, and I was intending to have the observer and radio men jump in their chutes. Finally I made out dimly two searchlights laid along the ground, head to head, and thought it might be Wheeler Field or Luke Field. As I looked I saw three parachutes come down, and thought those in one of the other ships had jumped. It turned out that these "chutes" were Very lights blown by the wind and dimmed by the rain and clouds.

"Seeing a clear moment we flew over and I said, 'Where are we?'

"As I couldn't do much looking, the observer said, 'It's water!' I glanced over and saw the ripples of the water in the searchlight beams. It really was a heavy wind blowing the wet grass. I then was all at sea, for the lights which had at first checked with Schofield now checked with no place I knew.

"After flying about for some time all the street lights below were turned on and immediately recognizing Schofield Barracks I proceeded on the mission, flying well out to sea, as had been previously arranged in case of the planes getting separated.

By the time I reached Fort Kamehameha I saw one of the two other ships coming back to the airdrome at Luke Field.