

NO 388 - EXCEPT OPERATION IRON BAR  
NOVEMBER 1957

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IRON BAR, Large Scale SAC Exercise

A warning order was received at this headquarters on the last day of the reported period on a SAC large scale exercise with a programmed date of 25 November 1957. This operation has been nicknamed IRON BAR. Headquarters, Eighth Air Force, which was given the responsibility of planning and coordinating the exercise, outlined the planning factors for the operation. The 321st Bomb Wing's participation in the exercise

24. Flying Schedule and Log, 321 BW, 28 Jul 1957, in files 321 BW Control Room.
25. Msg, Comdr 2 AF to Comdr 321 BW, DODC 11126, Subj: "Aircraft for Loading Training", 28 May 1957. Exhibit 26
26. Interview by (b)(6) Historian, with Capt (b)(6)  
(b)(6) 321 BW Spts & Anal Officer

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would be the deployment of 40 B-47 aircraft to the United Kingdom. Fifteen of the planes would refuel in the "Book Mark" area; 17 would go by way of the "Fighting Fox" refueling area and eight would take the "Ransom" refueling area route. Greenham Common Royal Air Force Station would be the site of all prestrike activities for the PCAFB wing. After departing Greenham Common, the programmed strike route for all the aircraft was 51/00N 10/00W to 57/30N 23/00W to 64/30N 14/30W to the Shetland Islands and from there to the target area on the coast of the Netherlands and Northwest Germany. The redeployment route would be through the "Harbor" and "Fighting Fox" refueling areas. <sup>27</sup> (S)

The total number of PCAFB personnel involved in the deployment exercise was listed as 586, of which 466 would be airlifted by aircraft of other units. A total of 93.7 tons of cargo would be airlifted in support of the operation and would include 18 built up J-47 jet aircraft engines and 1200 boxes of small arms ammunition. <sup>28</sup> (S)

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IRON BAR, Large Scale Training Exercise

The 321st Bomb Wing was scheduled to deploy 35, B-47 type aircraft to a forward overseas base on 25 November 1957 for participation in a large scale training exercise with other SAC units. The nickname of the operation was IRON BAR. All 321st Bomb Wing aircraft were to carry special weapons. ~~(S)~~

The exercise was to include the deployment of aircraft to Mildenhall,

18. Interview by (b)(6) Historian, with Capt. (b)(6)  
321 BW Staff ISO
19. Ibid
20. Ops Order 39-57, IRON BAR, 321 BW, 1 Nov 1957. Exhibit 10

NOTE: Photos of 321st BW Bomb Competition crews and trophies in Photo Section of this history

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19

England, which had been designated as the staging base for the 321st Bomb Wing. After reaching Mildenhall the wing was to fly a mission against a target area, which was a point of land on the north coast of Spain approximately nine nautical miles west of Santander. No strikes were to be made against the target area since the aircraft were carrying special weapons and only camera scores were scheduled for the purpose of tracking the aircraft positions. Also a maximum chaff dispense-out was to be performed on the strike phase. After completion of the strike mission the aircraft were to return to Mildenhall then begin redeployment to PCAFB on 30 November. Aerial refuelings were to be accomplished on deployment and redeployment. <sup>21</sup> ~~(S)~~

In the preparation phase, 39 aircraft were loaded with special weapons. Four were spares and the other 35 were scheduled for deployment. Emergency War Plan (EWP) loading time requirement was 25 hours and the estimated time for the IRON BAR exercise was 17 hours. However, the operation was achieved in eight hours. This was attributed to the preparation of the aircraft, the proficiency of the 39th Aviation Depot Squadron loading crew and A&E monitors, as well as effective supervision by all agencies concerned. Some difficulties were encountered, such as no lock lights on five aircraft and five hoist failures, plus two "J-Box" and two hoist delays. But even with these problems the mission was evaluated as superior, and aircrews demonstrated excellent weapons handling capability and weapons knowledge. <sup>22</sup> ~~(S)~~

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21. Ops Order 39-57, IRON BAR, 321 BW, 1 Nov 1957. Exhibit 10  
22. Special Weapons Critique for IRON BAR, in files 321 BW D/Ops

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The lead aircraft was scheduled to take-off at 1500 hours Eastern Standard Time on 25 November and the next five planes were to follow at one minute intervals. Thereafter, two planes would take-off one minute<sup>23</sup> apart each hour until all of the aircraft had been launched. The lead plane was delayed two minutes because of air traffic control and number 18 in the take-off order was 20 minutes late because one of the crew opened his chute by mistake and had to obtain another one. All other aircraft were airborne without difficulties.<sup>24</sup>

After departing PCAFB, the aircraft flew to their designated refueling areas with the first 15 and the last six planes using the Fighting Fox area and the remaining aircraft refueling in the Sundial Area.<sup>25</sup> (See Exhibit 10 for location of refueling areas). Considerable difficulty was experienced in the deployment refueling phase. Only five tankers met the first six B-47's and there was no tanker at the rendezvous point for the eighth plane. During the refueling operation of the fourteenth aircraft the windshield was damaged. It aborted the mission and returned to PCAFB. Number 15 had a tanker abort. The 18th aircraft received only 30,500 pounds of the required 50,000 pounds of fuel because of a tanker fuel leak and landed at Loring AFB, Maine. Tanker aborts or malfunctions made it necessary for aircraft in number 22, 24, 27 and 28 positions to land at Pease AFB, New Hampshire for refueling.<sup>26</sup> After completing refueling the aircraft proceeded by the designated route to Mildenhall, England. Only 34 planes arrived at the overseas station. The plane

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- 23. Crew and Aircraft Assignment Sheets for IRON BAR, Exhibit 11
  - 24. Deployment Summary for IRON BAR, in files 321 EW D/Ops
  - 25. Crew and Aircraft Assignment Sheets for IRON BAR, Exhibit 11
  - 26. Deployment Air Refueling Summary for IRON BAR, in files 321 EW D/Ops

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that was damaged did not complete the flight. <sup>27</sup> ~~(2)~~ (See Exhibit 10 for route to Mildenhall)

The strike mission was scheduled for 28 November with the first aircraft departing Mildenhall at 1400 hours Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). The first five sorties were scheduled to take-off at one minute intervals and the remaining aircraft were to depart at specified times with the last plane leaving at 1635 hours. <sup>28</sup> ~~(3)~~

Thirty-three aircraft were airborne on time. The plane in position 30 in the take-off order ground aborted due to radar trouble, but took-off later and flew the mission. After leaving Mildenhall, the planes proceeded to position 49-19N/18-50W where they turned south. Shortly after making this turn the crews performed a gunnery fire-out. The gunnery exercise was rated as only 79 per cent reliable. Seven malfunctions were reported and only 21,515 rounds of the 29,500 rounds, which had been loaded, were fired. At position 44-21N/19-15W the aircraft turned again and flew a direct course toward the target. At the maximum penetration line, 12 nautical miles from the target area, they executed a 20 degree turn north and proceeded back to the staging base. During the strike phase two aircraft experienced radar air aborts and 32 made effective scores for a percentage of 91.4. Only four of the camera scores were in excess of 500 feet. Ten were rated as perfect; five were within 100 feet; five were between 200 and 250 feet; four were between 300 and 375 feet, and four others

27. Deployment Summary for IRON BAR, in files 321 EW D/Ops

28. Crew and Aircraft Assignment Sheets for IRON BAR. Exhibit 11

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were from 400 to 500. Those over 500 feet were reported at 1400,  
1600, 2200 and 4200 feet. <sup>29</sup> (S) (See Exhibit 10 for strike route)

The 321st Bomb Wing was scheduled to redeploy in three waves, the first departing on 30 November and the second and third were to leave on 1 and 2 December 1957. On the return trip the wing was to provide chaff dispensing exercises against the Eastern Region Defense Force. <sup>30</sup>

Number two aircraft in cell three of the first wave had a defective windshield and was rescheduled for Wave III. On the second day of redeployment the third aircraft in the first cell had a bomb bay door malfunction and was also held over for the third wave. <sup>31</sup> Waves I and II returned by the alternate route due to weather and refueled in the Cotton Club and Whisk Eroom areas, and Wave III flew the primary return route, refueling in the Fighting Fox and Sundial areas. <sup>32</sup> In Wave I, the number three plane received only 35,000 pounds of fuel and in the second wave two B-47's landed at Goose Bay AFB, due to refueling difficulties. A tanker hydraulic leak in the last wave resulted in one plane on-loading only 29,000 pounds of fuel. <sup>33</sup>

Scores on the ECM exercise against the Eastern Region Defense Force had not been received from Second Air Force, however the effectiveness was questionable since a total of 16 malfunctions were reported.

29. Strike Phase Summary for IRON BAR, in files 321 BW D/Ops
30. Ops Order 39-57, IRON BAR, 321 BW, 1 Nov 1957. Exhibit 10
31. Redeployment Summary, IRON BAR, in files 321 BW D/Ops
32. Interview by (b)(6) Historian, with Maj (b)(6)  
Ops Staff Off
33. Redeployment Refueling Summary, IRON BAR, in files 321 BW D/Ops

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The deficiencies were traced to a variety of causes, such as blown fuses, tape and chute jams, low pressure, wrong counter settings, no wave guide adapter and no shorting bar. <sup>34</sup> ~~(S)~~

A summary of the problem areas revealed that: one aircraft did not use water-alcohol-injection on take off; training emphasis, better line markers, and line speed checks were required; and compressor stalls were a hazard in cold weather. In the air refueling phase, tanker support was poor. There was an excess of tanker aborts and malfunctions and rendezvous equipment was poor. Also the tankers did not fly at the scheduled speed. Receiver performance indicated that heavy-weight refueling training was needed by some crews as well as retraining in the tactical doctrine. Radio discipline was poor. Excessive chatter caused confusion, poor interphone technique was evident and channelization was not uniform. Cell leaders did not use prescribed procedures and radio calls and proper codes were not used in giving instructions for altitude and heading. Wing men did not fly adequate cell formation. A special emphasis was to be placed on tactical doctrine formation, heading codes and altitude codes. <sup>35</sup> ~~(S)~~

A pre-and-post strike staging team of approximately 404 personnel and 91 tons of cargo was deployed to the staging base to support the 321st Bomb Wing during the IRON BAR exercise. <sup>36</sup> ~~(S)~~ (See Annex D to Exhibit 10 for listing of personnel and equipment in staging team)

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- 34. ECM Summary, IRON BAR, in files 321 BW D/Ops
  - 35. Summary of Problem Areas, IRON BAR, in files 321 BW D/Ops
  - 36. Ops Order 39-57, IRON BAR, 321 BW, 1 Nov 1957, Exhibit 10

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ABSTRACT	THE 76 FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON (FIS), AIR DEFENSE COMMAND (ADC), TRANSFERRED FROM PRESQUE ISLE AIR FORCE BASE (AFB) ME TO PINECASTLE AFB FL. TWO CREWS FROM THE 321 BOMBARDMENT WING (BW) WON THE MCCOY AND FAIRCHILD TROPHIES DURING THE STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND (SAC) BOMBING AND NAVIGATION COMPETITION HELD AT PINECASTLE AFB 30 OCT THROUGH 5 NOV 57. THE MCCOY TROPHY WAS INITIATED BY 2 AIR FORCE AND APPROVED BY SAC IN HONOR OF COL MICHAEL N. W. MCCOY, COMMANDER OF 321 BW, KILLED IN A B-47 CRASH ON 9 OCT 57. THE 321 BW PARTICIPATED IN IRON BAR AND BLACK BART EXERCISES.				
DNOTES	CONTAINS SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS 1 THROUGH 23.				
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