

HEADQUARTERS
451ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
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15th AAF in Italy - The allied invasion fleet was posed in blue waters 15,000 feet below as our B-24 Liberators came over. The invasion coast of Southern France, and specifically next to San Rafael, presented a panorama of ships, parachutes and land convoys.

Landings were under way to the left and right. Several waves were ashore. Our target was the road to Frejus, a supply line, a road possibly lined with ammunition stores. The ships off shore here were waiting.

Two long rows of large boats, evenly spaced, formed a bowling alley in the sea. Smaller landing barges darted in and out. Almost invisible, PT boats left a zig-zag wake as they headed on their various missions.

A pair of German fighters started to fly over, far below our liberator formation. All hell broke loose. That was the last we saw of the fighters.

We passed the convoy fast, then the shore, and then bombs dropped. They started hitting on the road's terminus, almost on the beach; they walked like a hitchhiker straight toward Frejus.

The waiting landing craft and barges broke their quiet waiting formation as we headed inland. Looking back, we could see the white churn of landing barges moving shoreward.

Ten miles inland, beyond Frejus, beyond the Liberator target, hundreds of parachutes rested on what had been quiet French farmland the morning before. They didn't move, because the men who had brought them there had long since left for more specific duty - though we could not see them. Four of these polkadot parachute clusters dotted the hillsides.

In the distance, a German tank and truck convoy wound through mountains and toward the beach. Our bombs were gone, and we were getting the hell out. Back over the sea, more bombers passed us, but going toward the beach we had just left.

That was the invasion as seen from an open camera hatch at 15,000 feet.

We listened to invasion news most of the way back to the home base. The liberators were serviced and now they're ready for another trip tomorrow.

/s/ ROBERT B. N. PECK,
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