

**Combat Report – Night 14.6.44/Morning 15.6.44**

Aircraft: Mitchell Mk II "P" – FR176

Squadron: 320

Target: Condé-sur-Vire

Crew:	Pilot	- S/Lt. A. Manschot
	Nav. B	- S/Lt. T.M. Emous
	W/Op-A/G	- Sgt. A. Diets (Dutch Gunnery Course, Panama City, Florida with the USAAF)
	A/G	- S/Lt. A.K. Knapp (C.G.S. No. 64 Course)
Height:	6000 feet	<u>Time</u> ; 01.42/04.52 Hrs

A number of Mitchell aircraft were attacking an ammunition dump at Condé-Sur-Vire, each aircraft attacking individually with an interval of approximately two minutes. Conditions: No moon, starlit night, ground haze, no clouds, no enemy activity from the ground in the target area. The enemy aircraft were not using lights and were single and a twin-engined aircraft respectively, identified as a Me-109 and a Me-210, and no markings or armament were identifiable. At 03.06 Hrs, the Mitchell arrived near the target, which had been lit up by many flares.

Flares should have been dropped at 3,000 feet but were actually dropped at 5,000 feet. Then they started flying at 6,000 feet, above the flares, looking for the target.

At 03.08 Hrs, S/Lt Knapp saw another Mitchell being pursued by a Me-210 at 11 o'clock, 200 feet down, distance 500 yards. These two aircraft were silhouetted against the lit-up sky and crossing their course ahead; the two aircraft quickly disappeared into the dark, so that the taking of any action as throwing their aircraft on one side and fire was impossible, and were not seen again.

Distance between the above-mentioned aircraft was approximately 150 yards. S/Lt Knapp immediately asked the pilot to warn the other Mitchell that there was an enemy aircraft on his tail. The pilot carried this out.

Mitchell "P" then changed course again still searching for the target, which they could not identify. Again they flew over the lit-up area and then at 03.09 Hrs flying away from the flares they had just agreed on making a third run across the target area when Sgt. Diets, who was lying in the tail ordered "Corkscrew" when he saw an enemy aircraft climbing under their tail, at 6 o'clock, 100 feet down, at 150 yards distance. S/Lt Manschot started a violent corkscrew to port, but just before that moment, S/Lt Knapp saw a Me-109 emerging from under the tail and clearly silhouetted against the lit sky, at 5 o'clock, 100 feet down at 250 yards, and he fired a one-second burst over the enemy aircraft with his guns in the most depressed position to scare him off.

During this one-second burst, S/Lt Manschot started his corkscrew to port so that S/Lt Knapp's tracer went high above the enemy aircraft, and as the tail went high up at the same time, the enemy aircraft was then hidden behind the tailplane. Then S/Lt Knapp gave all possible guidance to his pilot during the corkscrew. When S/Lt Manschot pulled his aircraft out of the initial dive into a climb, S/Lt Knapp could not see any enemy aircraft.

Sgt. Diets saw the enemy aircraft, which he identified as a Me-210, firing at them with tracer, when they already had started a violent corkscrew to port with bombs under and while they were diving steeply to port, the enemy broke away to 4 o'clock up, still firing. They continued corkscrewing for a while and then S/Lt Knapp ordered to change the evasive action into violent weaving losing and gaining height and always keeping a certain course. When two minutes had passed after the afore-mentioned break-away, Sgt Diets saw the same Me-210 at 6 o'clock, 50 to 60 feet down, at 200 yards and he immediately ordered a violent corkscrew to port. S/Lt Manschot put his aircraft in a very steep dive to port and then S/Lt Knapp warned his pilot not to go too far down and immediately after the warning, when S/Lt Manschot pulled his aircraft out of the dive into a climb (being part of the corkscrew ordered), the aircraft started shivering severely so that S/Lt Knapp ordered to jettison the bombs, which S/Lt Manschot carried out immediately but as the aircraft was lying on its starboard side, the starboard bombdoor was severely damaged. As a result of the violent evasive action, Sgt. Diets was pushed against the tail perspex, and thus could not see the aircraft breaking away or disappearing. After two complete corkscrews, S/Lt Knapp ordered to resume

weaving as done before, as he could not see the enemy aircraft anywhere. Then flying away from the lit-up target area on course 290° after a lapse of half a minute, S/Lt Manschot reported a head-on attack by a single-engine fighter. He put the aircraft in a very steep dive to port just evading the attacker who broke away above end then resumed violent weaving on course 290°. After 2 minutes, when Sgt Diets reported that he was not quite sure that there was a fighter behind them, S/Lt Knapp ordered an orbit to starboard while rapidly losing height. Again on course they started weaving another time which continued until the aircraft was well above the open sea.

Only 25 rounds were fired from the top turret. Mitchell "P" was not damaged by any bullets but by violent evasive action, the port headlamp had been broken. The jettisoning of the bombs damaged the bombdoors and put the hydraulic system out of action. One bomb hung-up as one shackle had become loose so that bomb hung with tail down. Using the emergency system for undercarriage and flaps, a succesful landing was made at base at 04.052 Hrs.

For Gunnery Officer,  
No. 320 (Dutch) Squadron  
(H.J.A. van Lingen)



## Appendix

- 1) FR176 serial no. 42-64786, was shot down 24-10-1944 near Hedel.