

# **Fortresses Smash Docks of Naples In Surprise Raid**

## **Battleship Hit**

Americans, in First Blow at Italy, cause Great Damage

Defenses Surprised when Raiders Arrive

Reinforcements Reach Army Preparing Attack on Tunis, Bizerte

By Leon Kay

Cairo, Dec. 5 (UP)---American flying fortresses in their first attack of the war on Italy were revealed today as to have struck a heavy blow at Italy's great southern port of Naples, scoring hits on an Italian battleship and two cruisers.

The big American bombing planes, making a flight of several hundred miles across the Mediterranean, struck Naples at dusk yesterday and caught Italians by surprise.

The American planes had trailed Italian aircraft across the Mediterranean and the Italians apparently were not aware of the approach of the U.S. raiders until the attack was launched.

The Americans centered their attack on the Porta Dimassa Quay, a communicate revealed, and upon ships moored alongside.

"Numerous hits were scored among the ships," the communicate said, "resulting in explosions and huge fires.

"Other hits were made on the Angione mole, starting fires and sending up great clouds of gray and black smoke."

Direct hits were scored on a battleship in the harbor, then communicate said, as well as on docks and railroad facilities.

The American planes encountered no Italian fighters due to the surprise of the attack but said they met “Considerable inaccurate anti-aircraft fire.” All of the bombers returned safely.

The Middle Eastern Command called the raid a success and the Italian High Command admitted it caused heavy damage, 159 deaths and 358 casualties in wounded.

It was the first American attack on the Italian mainland. And it was indicated that their bombs were shattering dock and other targets before the Italian defense had the slightest intimation of warning.

The Italians described the attack as “short and violent” and asserted that one of the raiding planes was shot down.

Naples is Italy’s largest southern port and a center for shipment of supplies and reinforcements to the Axis forces in Africa. With Genoa regarded as largely out of commission due to heavy Royal Air Force attacks, the knockout of Naples would severely handicap efforts to send more Italian and German troops to Africa.

Naples has been out of range of Britain’s long range bombers for the most part except for flights in which the bomb capacity of planes was reduced severely that sufficient gasoline for the round-trip flight can be carried.

The flight from Benghazi, most forward base which the fortresses would be likely to employ, to Naples is 700 airline miles---about the same as the bombing route from London to Berlin.

However, it would be possible for the big planes to utilize Malta as a stopping-off point if necessary.

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### **The First Naples Raid – “The True Picture”**

History was made on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1942, when the first raid on Italy was carried out with Naples the selected target.

The previous article headlined “Fortresses Smash Naples” was not a typographical error by one of the large New York dailies giving that “other” plane credit for the raid. This was strictly the doings of the Liberators, our B-24s. Each plane carried

three 2,000 pounders and the mission was so successful, due to its complete surprise, that over 90% of the bombs hit military targets. Ships, warehouses, and harbor facilities were really plastered as the Italian ships were docked “wall to wall.”

Lt. Cain was credited with hitting a battleship. Col. Kane went as co-pilot on the “Alice, the Goon” with Lt. Gore Huggins as pilot.

When the bomb bay doors wouldn’t open, “Killer” yelled over the interphone, “Drop the bombs anyway” with the result six direct hits (three bomb bay doors, one battleship and two tankers.)

After the “bombs away” call, “Killer” yelled to Jimmy Shoup “Now you can close the bomb bay doors.” “Haw! Haw! Haw!”. The Italians admitted the raid was short and violent.

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## **U.S. Bombers Raid Naples**

### **Three Warships Crippled**

The first American attack on Italy was carried out on Friday at dusk, when giant four-motored B-24s (Liberators) based in the Middle East, gave the port of Naples a terrific hammering.

Besides causing numerous fires and explosions, a reconnaissance over the city yesterday showed that one cruiser had definitely been badly crippled by direct hits.

The harbor and railway installations were battered out of all recognition and a great dislocation of traffic was caused by a direct hit on a large rail junction serving the dock area.

The battleship which was crippled was moored on the Angiono Mole.

### **U.S. Communique**

The following communique on the raid was issued yesterday by U.S. Army Headquarters, Middle East:

”Heavy B-24 bombers of the 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Air Force made the first attack in history by Americans on Italy proper yesterday when they struck at shipping. Italian fleet

units and harbor and rails installations at Naples. Excellent results were accomplished with direct hits by heavy caliber bombs on all objectives.

“Numerous hits were observed among ships moored at Porta Dimassa and on the quay itself, resulting in explosions and huge fires. Other hits on the Angiono Mole caused fires and great clouds of gray and black smoke. A large ship moored at the northeast of the mole received a direct hit. Two cruisers were seen to be hit directly, with very near misses on two other vessels. One heavy caliber bomb was seen to burst in the center of a large rail junction serving the dock area.

Anti-aircraft fire was heavy but inaccurate. There was no enemy air opposition. All of our aircraft returned safely.”