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**Further Investigation into the June 8，1948 Bombing of Dokdo Island**

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Introduction

On the evening of Tuesday, June 8, 1948, three Korean fishermen were rescued from a damaged 15-ton wooden boat in the East Sea/Sea of Japan. The men told of a horrifying ordeal they had endured earlier that day. They claimed that aircraft had bombed and strafed them while they and others in up to 80 other boats were harvesting seaweed at the small island of Dokdo. Of all the fishermen present that day, the three badly shaken men were among the few survivors.1) In the weeks after the incident, the story became national news in Korea, eliciting indignant media responses in both the North and the South.2) U.S. military representatives in the region issued statements to the Korean press, providing their own version of the incident, while admitting that U.S. Air Force bombers had indeed used Dokdo as a practice bombing target that same day.3) Until now, the survivors’ testimonies, newspaper accounts and press releases issued by the U.S. military have provided the only explanations of how this bombing incident had taken place. The purpose of this paper is to provide a more detailed accounting of the June 8，1948 bombing incident, to provide explanations to previously unanswered questions, and to offer challenges to allegations in previous accounts.

I. Korean Accounts of the 1948 Bombing

Three men were known to have survived the bombing of Dokdo on Tuesday, June 8，1948: Gong Du-up, Jang Hak-sang, and Lee Sang-joo; all Korean nationals. Much of the previous research on the June 8，1948 bombing of Dokdo is based on the testimony of these survivors and on Korean newspaper articles that were

1) Hanguk Oedae [Korea Foreign Language University], Dokdo munjae yonguhoe jaryojip: Dokdo ui ojae wa onul [Dokdo issue research data-book: Dokdo’s past and present], (Seoul: Hanguk Oedae, 1995), pp. 16-18.

2) For both North and South Korean reactions to the bombing, see “Korean Press Reaction to Accidental Bombing 8 June, “ Estimate of the Situation, 6，27 June 1948-10 July 1948, Headquarters Fifth Air Force, Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

3) Joson Ilbo (Seoul), 16 June 1948, p. 2; 18 June 1948, p. 2.

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published in the days and weeks following the incident. The articles themselves were based on the survivor’s eyewitness accounts. Having been rescued, these three men were able to return from Dokdo to tell their story the day after the bombing on June 9. As the news of the bombing began to spread among the residents of Ullung Island, the local police were dispatched at 9:00pm on the ninth to look for other survivors and collect the dead.4) The next day, the police returned in the evening with the bodies of two of the dead, but with no other survivors. That same day, June 10, reporters from mainland Korea arrived at Ullung Island and the first sketchy reports of the bombing incident started to appear in the daily newspapers of the capital, Seoul, on June II.5) The Seoul daily, the Joson Ilbo, ran one of the first detailed accounts of the bombing incident based on survivor testimony in the newspaper’s June 12 edition. In this edition, the newspaper reported that on Tuesday, June 8, there were nine aircraft in the sky over Dokdo at around 11:00am when the bombing and shooting from these aircraft started, initially destroying over 20 boats. Soon after the bombing, three aircraft were sighted about 200 meters offshore to the east. Bombs that were dropped from these planes hit around 20 other boats in the area. The account stated that after the area had been bombed a total of four times, a single aircraft circled around the island once and then flew off in the direction of Gangwon Province.6) On June 15 and 16, the newspaper also reported that police from Ullung Island had seen the bomber formation that morning, and that at the time, the planes were flying low enough for the police to be able to see the star-insignia of the U.S. Air Force on the underside of the wings.

The news of the bombing incident elicited strong reactions in newspaper editorials in Seoul and from political representatives of the then provisional National Assembly, essentially holding U.S. authorities responsible. U.S. military intelligence noted that although early reportage on the incident mentioned that the aircraft involved were “unidentifled”, this “did little to temper the statements which appeared in all Seoul newspapers demanding that a thorough investigation, compensation, and punishment commensurate with the crime be effected immediately.” Syngman Rhee’s political party was quoted as saying that the bombing incident ‘‘might worsen relations between the U.S. and Korea,” while Kim Goo was reported to have said that the Korea-U.S. relationship would suffer “unless severe punishment is dealt those responsible for the misfortune. The Joson Democratic Party also issued a statement demanding that the “real facts” be reported, adding, “we cannot permit our good fishermen to be used as testing

4) Ibid., 12 June 1948, p. 2.

5) Hong, Sung-gun, “Dokdo p’okkyuk sagon ui jinsang kyumyong kwa juyo-jaengjom [Inquiry and main arguments of the Dokdo bombing incident],” p. 4.

6) Joson Ilbo, 2, 12 June 1948, p, 2.

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materials.”7) Despite the indignant reactions, within two months of the bombing, the incident was all but forgotten in the Korean press, and the bombing remained out of the Korean public consciousness for almost fifty years.

Forty-seven years later, in 1995, both Gong Du-up and Jang Hak-sang again went on record to tell what they remembered about the bombing incident. They told of the horrifying sight of fishermen futilely waving Korean flags at the planes, jumping into the sea and fleeing into caves to avoid the bombs. Mr. Jang stated in this interview that he heard the sound of airplanes coming from the direction of Ullung Island and had seen 12 bombers divided into two formations, flying at an altitude of about 600 meters. He claimed the planes bombed Dokdo from Suhdo (West islet) to Dongdo (East Islet) and that bombs and machine-gun fire from the planes destroyed nearly 80 boats of different sizes that were in the area. Mr. Gong concurred, adding that since five to eight people were required on some of these boats, it is more likely that 150 to 320 people were killed at Dokdo that day.8) Importantly, it is evident from Mr. Gong’s statements that, like himself and Mr. Jang, Korean authorities on Ullung Island were unaware that Dokdo had been a designated bombing range. Together, the survivors’ testimonies provide details that can be compared to U.S. Air Force documentation.

II. U.S. Air Force History

In addressing the circumstances of the June 8，1948 bombing of Dokdo Island, previous research has relied heavily upon the eyewitness accounts of bombing survivors Gong Du-up and Jang Hak-sang, and on Korean newspaper accounts and U.S. military press statements that were published in the days and weeks immediately after the bombing. Other, previously unexamined sources exist that provide substantive evidence that can help further explain how the incident took place. These sources, from official U.S. Air Force records, also corroborate much of the Korean eyewitness testimony.

The 93d Bombardment Group and its 1948 Deployment to Okinawa

The U.S. Air Force’s 93d Bombardment Group (93d BG), comprised of the 328th,,329th ,and 330th Bombardment Squadrons, flew B-29 Superfortress bombers in 1948. The 93d was the Bombardment Group of the 93d Bombardment Wing, Fifteenth Air Force, which was stationed at Castle Air Force Base near Merced,

7) Headquarters United States Army Forces in Korea, Intelligence Summary #144, 14, 18 June 1948，XXIV Corps, G-2,, Historical Section, Record Group 554, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

8) Dokdo munjae yonguhoe jaryojip: Dokdo-ui ojae wa onul [Dokdo issue research data-book: Dokdo’s past and present], pp. 16-18.

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California. In April 1948, the 93d BG was ordered to Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa, Japan, for a three-month temporary duty deployment.9) The specific mission of the 93d BG during this 90-day deployment, as outlined in SAC Field Order No. 16 of April 15，1948，was to “conduct a series of 21 scheduled bombing missions on targets in this area in order to demonstrate the overall preparedness of one Group of B-29 aircraft assigned to the Strategic Air Command.”1()) Being the highest Air Force command in the Far East, the Headquarters of the Far East Air Force (FEAF) designated the mission bombing targets in Field Orders issued to the 93d BG.11) It was for the third mission of the deployment that FEAF issued orders for the 93d BG to use Dokdo as a bombing target.

Mission Number 3

The unit history of the 93d BG for June 1948 reveals the sequence of events that took place on that day from the perspective of bomber group aircrews and unit historians. According to the report for its third mission, the 93d BG was ordered on June 7，1948 to fly a maximum effort mission, of which the first objective was to bomb Liancourt Rocks (Dokdo). Liancourt Rocks was ordered as the primary target, to be bombed with four 1,000-pound General Purpose bombs per aircraft, while non-bombing missions were scheduled over Ashiya and Kadena Air Force Bases in Japan and Okinawa- At the start of the mission, three aircraft were unable to participate due to mechanical failures, leaving the group with 20 bombers plus a weather aircraft that flew 30 minutes ahead of the group formation on their way to the East Sea/Sea of Japan. The bombing run began at Ullung Island, which was identified as the Initial Point (a well defined spot that fixes the position of a bomber formation before it begins its bomb run), with the formation having arrived over Ullung Island at 11:47 a.m. On their way to the target from Ullung Island, the compass heading for the formation, corrected for wind, was 30 degrees different than was forecasted for that day. Other than the wind discrepancy, the weather over Dokdo was reported as “CAVU” (Ceiling And Visibility Unlimited),

The 93d BG approached Dokdo in a staggered-altitude squadron trail formation, with the 330th Bombardment Squadron in the lead with seven aircraft, the 328th next at a lower altitude with six aircraft, and the 329th in last position and flying higher with six aircraft. The actual altitude at which the B-29s were flying is not mentioned in the mission report. Over the target, the aircraft released their

9) United States Air Force, 93d Bombardment Group History, 7 June 1948, Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

10) 93d Bombardment Group History, 9 May 1948.

11) United States Air Force, 328th Bombardment Squadron History, 8 June 1948，Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

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bombs on the command of their squadron leaders, with the three individual squadrons dropping their bombs approximately one minute apart at ll:581/2am, 12:00pm, and 12:01pm respectively. The mission report mentions that three of the B-29s did not drop their bombs with their squadrons. These planes flew over the target, then evidently broke formation, turned around and flew back to the target, relying on their own bomb sights to drop their bombs. One of the planes failed to drop on the first bombing run due to a bomb bay door malfunction, while the other two failed to drop their bombs for reasons not mentioned. A total of 76 bombs were dropped on the island, while the “results as reported at interrogation were superior,” with the bombs reportedly hitting within 300 feet of the aiming point. The report also states that “[t]en sightings were made of shipping of all types” during the entire mission.12)

In the weeks immediately after this bombing mission, the 93d BGTs higher command, the Far East Air Force, would provide an account that was somewhat different from the 93d BG’s own account of its bombing mission over Dokdo.

III. Analysis of the Evidence

Parallels in the Two Accounts of the Bombing

Previous research has offered up little evidence to substantiate the claims made by June 8 bombing survivors Gong Du-up and Jang Hak-sang in regards to the actual events that took place that day. However, many similarities exist between the events described in the survivors’ statements, and the events cited in the official account of the 93d Bombardment Group’s bombing exercise at Dokdo. To begin with, Mr. Jang stated that he had heard the sound of airplanes coming from Ullung Island, and that the bombs had dropped across the islets from Suhdo (the western islet) to Dongdo (the eastern islet).13) Similarly, the Air Force’s official record of the event, the 93d BG’s mission report, states that the Group started its bombing run from Ullung Island, flying in essentially the same direction cited by Mr. Jan g.14) Mr. Jang’s assertion that he had initially seen twelve aircraft divided into two formations does not exactly match with the number of aircraft mentioned in the mission report.15) However, since the squadrons were reported to have flown in staggered-altitude formations, as described in the mission report, it is possible that Mr. Jang had only seen the first two squadrons, seven B-29s in one formation and six in the other. Regardless of the exact number of aircraft that Mr. Jang sighted, the significance in the correlation between these two accounts is the fact that both

12) 93d Bombardment Group History, 14-16 June 1948.

13) Dokdo munjae yonguhoe jaryojip, pp. 16-18.

14) 93d Bombardment Group History, 14-15 June 1948,

15) Dokdo munjae yonguhoe jaryojip, p. 17.

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sources describe aircraft that were flying in squadron-size formations, and not single-aircraft bombing runs that would have been more common in practicing bombing accuracy. In another similarity, both the eyewitness accounts and the mission report describe planes bombing the island after the initial bombing run. According to a newspaper report based on survivor testimony, three aircraft appeared and dropped their bombs on the island soon after the initial bombing.16) The mission report describes a similar event. Having failed to drop their bombs on the initial run, three of the B-29s in the Group formation bombed the island using their own bombsights outside of their squadron formations.17)

Both accounts also seem to agree as to the number of bomb runs that took place. The survivors say they were bombed four times.18) The 93d BG’s mission report states that the three separate squadrons dropped their bombs one minute apart, and that three individual aircraft dropped theirs later.19) Thus, four individual bombings can be deduced from the mission report. The survivors also testified to horrific destruction and loss of life caused by the bombing. The mission report would seem to back up their claims, since it states that four 1,000-pound General Purpose bombs per B-29 was the mission bomb-load, with seventy-six bombs reported to have hit the target.20) This evidence stands in contrast with FEAFs June 17，1948 press release that “practice bombs” had been used during the mission.21) What FEAF meant by “practice bombs” was not explained From the Joson Ilbo article, it is not clear whether the Air Force meant that the standard M38A2 “blue-devil” bombs (one hundred-pound, blue-painted practice bombs with small explosive charges) were used, or whether 1,000-pound General Purpose bombs were used as “practice bombs”. The wording in the Joson Ilbo article would make it seem that FEAF was referring to the former type, while the mission report and survivor testimony attest to the latter type.

There are several similarities between the survivors’ testimonies and the account written in the 93d BG’s mission report This would suggest that many of the events described by Mr. Gong and Mr. Jang are relatively accurate and, in addition to the available documentary evidence, it also strongly suggests that the 93d BG was the US Air Force unit involved in the incident at Dokdo on June 8,1948. This is especially convincing considering the fact that the 93d BG was the only B-29 unit operating out of Okinawa from May to mid-August that year, and

16) Joson Ilbo, 12 June 1948, p. 2.

17) 93d Bombardment Group History, 15 June 1948.

18) Dokdo munjae yonguhoe jaryojip, pp. 16-18.

19) 93d Bombardment Group History，15 June 1948.

20) Ibid., 14-15 June 1948.

21) Joson Ilbo, 18 June 1948, p. 2.

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that other than the 19th Bombardment Wing stationed at Guam, the 93d BG was the only other tactical unit in the entire Far East that flew B-29 bombers in June 1948.22)

Dissimilarities in Accounts of the Bombing

Despite the similarities between Air Force records and survivor accounts, some aspects of the available evidence do not correlate. For example, the mission report states that the 93d BG was “ordered to fly a maximum effort mission on 7 June 1948,”23) while Korean sources and all other American sources cited in this research assert that the incident took place on June 8.24) While this discrepancy cannot be completely accounted for, it can be reasonably assumed that the 93d BG flew its mission over Dokdo on June 8 for two likely reasons. First, the unit monthly histories state that mission Field Orders for this deployment were received one day before a mission began, therefore it is likely that the person or persons responsible for writing the Group historical reports probably had recorded the date on which the Field Orders for the mission were received (June 7), and not the actual date of the mission (June 8).25) Second, information in the monthly history for August reveals that the 93d BG had flown its missions on Tuesdays and Fridays during its deployment.26) June 8，1948 was a Tuesday. The mission report and survivors’ testimonies also disagree as to the exact time when the bombing took place. Gong Du-up’s assertion that it happened at ten or eleven in the morning does not match the information in the mission report that places the bombing at around noon.27) While both accounts place the bombing at approximately the same time of the day, the one or two-hour difference between the survivors’ accounts and the account in the mission report cannot be explained with the evidence at hand

One particular item of conflicting evidence that received attention from the Korean press in June of 1948，and in recent research by Hong Sung-gun (2002) and Yoon Han-gong (2001)，is the altitude at which the aircraft flew during the

22) United States Air Force, “Strategic Air Command Rotation Program,” FEAF 1948 History, 70-71, History Office, Pacific Air Forces, Hickam AFB, Hawaii.

23) 93d Bombardment Group History, 14 June 1948.

24) United States Air Force, “Korean Press Reaction to Accidental Bombing 8 June,” Estimate of the Situation, 6-7, 27 June 1948-10 July 1948，Headquarters Fifth Air Force, Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

25) United States Air Force, 328th Bombardment Squadron History, 8 June 1948，Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

26) Henry F. Ellis, 93d BG Photo Officer to Commanding Officer, 93d BG, Kadena AFB, “Photographic Report, TDY Period,” 4, 17 August 1948，in 93d Bombardment Wing History, August 1948，Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

27) Dokdo munjae yonguhoe jaryojip, p. 17.

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bombing- The June 17 announcement from FEAF stated that the aircraft flew at an altitude of 23,000 feet (7,000 meters) or higher.28) However, survivor Jang Hak-sang stated in 1995 that he remembered that the planes had flown at around six hundred meters (2,000 feet).29) There is also the June 1948 Joson Ilbo report that police on Ullung Island were able to see U.S. Air Force insignia on the underside of the planes’ wings.30) As such, the two Korean accounts place the planes at a much lower altitude than claimed by FEAF. Yet, the possibility that the B-29s would have been damaged or destroyed by the detonation of their own bombs at such a low altitude is another issue to consider. The available evidence is not sufficient to substantiate either of these accounts, especially since the altitude of the planes cannot be verified from the 93d BG’s mission report.

Another unresolved issue is whether strafing took place at Dokdo that day. Korean newspaper accounts reported that the fishermen in their boats were both bombed and machine-gunned, while the June 16，1948 issue of the Joson Ilbo included a photo of a supposedly bullet-ridden storage trunk found at the bombing site.31) FEAF responded to the strafing allegation by simply stating that the aircraft had not fired their machine guns during the mission.32) In this case, one unit history does seem to back up FEAFs response to the allegation. Information in the 329th Bombardment Squadron history states that while the 329th dropped twenty-eight 1,000-pound bombs, the squadron did not expend any rounds of machine-gun ammunition during the entire month of June 1948.33) The other two squadrons did not record their expenditure of machine-gun ammunition for this month. This machine-gunning allegation is also related to the altitude question. The higher altitude described by FEAF would preclude effective or accurate machine-gun practice for the planes’ gunners, while the lower altitude described by the survivors would support their claim that they had been machine-gunned (the maximum effective range of .50 caliber machine guns, the type used on B-29s, is 2,000 meters).34) As with the altitude question, evidence is lacking to further support either claim.

28) Joson Ilbo, 18 June 1948，p. 2.

29) Dokdo munjae yonguhoe jaryojip, p. 17.

30) Joson Ilbo, 15 June 1948，p. 2.

31) Ibid., 12 June 1948, p. 2 16 June 1948，p. 2.

32) Ibid., 18 June 1948, p. 2.

33) 329th Bombardment Squadron History, 9 June 1948.

34) Federation of American Scientists, M2 .50 Caliber [12.7 mm] Machine Gun, 20 June 2002， <http://wwias.org/man/dcHi401/sys/land/m2-50cal.htm>.

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Fishing Boats in the Target Area

The 93d BG’s monthly history report for June 1948 makes no reference to boats being in the target area during its bombing run over Dokdo, only that “shipping” was sighted during the mission.35) Two events that were recorded when the monthly histories were written at the end of the month, however, could be of some interest to research on this aspect of the bombing incident, since they may have taken place as a result of what happened on June 8 over Dokdo. In one event described in the monthly history, it was deemed necessary for an officer to be appointed to work with the flight crews on ship and aircraft recognition. This officer was given ‘‘silhouettes and position views to aid the men in studying recognition of all nation’s surface vessels and airplanes.”36) Another incident recorded in a mission report mentions that the 93d BG encountered evidence of human habitation at the target area during its mission on June 23 at the island of Maug in the Philippines. Prior to the bombing run of this mission, the weather aircraft, “ [o]n passing over the target...noted two buildings so they dropped to 800’ to check for signs of habitation and at the same time taking pictures with a K-17 camera.”37) It would seem that the crew of the weather plane had made an extra effort to ensure that no people were in the area.

Even in light of what happened at Dokdo on June 8, it could be a coincidence that either or both of these precautionary measures were taken during the same month as the bombing incident. Nevertheless, it is curious that the precaution taken by the crew of the weather plane on the June 23 mission was also taken fifteen days earlier at Dokdo, where “signs of habitation” were also arguably present. According to information in the June 17 statement from FEAF, the weather aircraft that flew over Dokdo was 30 minutes ahead of the Group bomber formation, had circled the island six times, and had reported the area to be ready for the bombing exercise.38) Yet, it was never explained how the weather plane crew failed to see the Korean fishing boats during their inspection of the island prior to the bombing. One researcher of the bombing incident, Hong Sung-gun, questions the explanation given by the U.S. Air Force in its June 1948 press releases that the B-29 crews ‘confused the boats for rocks’ at the island.39) Hong argues that the bright colors of the Korean fishing boats were quite different from the color of any rocks at Dokdo, and unlike rocks, boats usually move about in the water.40) Therefore, some

35) 93d Bombardment Group History, 16 June 1948.

36) 329th Bombardment Squadron History, 2 June 1948.

37) 93d Bombardment Group History, 22 June 1948.

38) Joson Ilbo, 18 June 1948, p. 2.

39) Ibid.，16 June 1948，p. 2; 18 June 1948，p. 2.

40) Hong, Sung-gun, “Dokdo p’okkyuk sagon ui jinsang kyumyong kwa juyojaengjom [Inquiry and main arguments of the Dokdo bombing incident,” Online posting, 23 February 2002, Dokdo yoksa wa jiri [History and Geography of Dokdo], 20 May 2002, <http://mydokdo. com/technote/read.cgi ？board= i &y\_number=5>.

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uncertainty seems to remain as to why, according to FEAF, neither the weather plane crew nor the bomber crews were able to detect any boats at Dokdo during the mission.

Recollections of a Former 93d Bombardment Group Bombardier

The eyewitness testimony of two survivors of the June 8 bombing has provided much to our understanding of what happened at Dokdo on that day. However, previous research has not provided an account of the incident from any of the aircrew that took part in the mission. In researching the activities of the 93d BG during its time at Okinawa in 1948, it was deemed necessary to gain a better understanding of the situation by contacting former U.S. Air Force personnel who had been on the 93d BG’s deployment to FEAF that summer. With the help of Air Force records, a former officer of the 93d BG was contacted and interviewed. While not able to date or name the location of any particular mission on which he flew during the summer deployment to Okinawa, he was able to recall details of a mission that bore many similanties to the Dokdo bombing incident.

John Gibson, 83, retired from the U.S. Air Force as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1965. In 1948, Mr. Gibson was an Air Force Captain and Squadron Bombardier for the 329th Bombardment Squadron of the 93d BG and was with the unit when it was deployed to Okinawa in the summer of that year. In addition to being a member of a flight crew, Mr. Gibson was also a Squadron Bombardier with the 93d BG, and as such, he was in charge of keeping track of the bombing statistics, accuracies and training of the other bombardiers in his squadron. The former bombardier mentioned that during their deployment to the Far East that summer, the 93d BG was engaged in normal training exercises that involved navigation and bombing; both single-aircraft bombing and formation bombing. He could remember only one mission of the deployment that involved formation flying, one in which they bombed a “cove around an island, inside an island tip....”

When told that sources in Korea alleged that Korean fishing boats were present at an island that was used as a bombing target by the U.S. Air Force in June of that year, Mr. Gibson immediately recalled he had been involved in a mission in which there were ‘“boats in the cove” of an island that the 93d BG had bombed. He described the bombing as being slightly off-target. He stated: “We were bombing a spit of land off an island out there and, well, we just missed the target by about twenty feet and [the bombs] went over into the cove, and there were boats in the cove....”41) When asked if he had seen boats in the cove during [page 31] the mission, Mr. Gibson replied, “Yeah, I think I saw small boats, and I think somebody dispatched it off as saying [that] they were on drugs or something there...” He continued, saying, “that was daytime...I was told later on that there probably was boats, but they were dmg-running boats, and they used that [island] to hide away in the daytime...I saw them [but] I found out somebody’s opinion of what it was.”42> Mr. Gibson also insisted that live bombs had not been used during that particular mission, saying that he remembered that the bombs were “one hundred-pound bombs that were smoke bombs,” adding: “The only thing I dropped was those blue-devils...so I suppose we messed up somebody’s boats. I wouldn’t think they’d explode if one of those bombs hit a small boat, [but] it might knock a hole in it.” Regarding altitude, he only remembered that they had flown at 28,000 feet during their missions that summer. Mr. Gibson also replied that there had not been any missions over islands involving live gunnery practice.43)

If indeed describing the June 8 incident, Mr. Gibson’s memories would seem to both support and contradict elements of FEAF’s statements and the information in the 93d BG’s mission report. First, his recollection that the planes were flying in formation corresponds to information in the mission report. However, his statements would seem to contradict information regarding the use of 1,000-pound bombs, as written in the 93d BG’s mission report, while supporting FEAFs claim that practice bombs were used. Mr. Gibson’s recollections also back up FEAFs statements regarding both the altitude of the planes and the machine-gunning allegation. Most surprising, however, is his memory of seeing boats at the island during the mission. If actually describing the events of the June 8 incident, Mr. Gibson’s statements directly contradict FEAFs assertion in its June 17，1948 press release that stated that the B-29 crews had mistaken Korean fishing boats at Dokdo for rocks. This testimony again brings into question FEAFs statement that the weather plane crew, upon inspection of the island, reported that the island was ready for the bombing exercise. Considering that a bombardier could have seen boats at the island while presumably flying over the target area only once, it is puzzling why the weather plane crew failed to see the boats while flying multiple circuits over the same island only minutes before the bombing. Another question raised by this testimony is why the bomber crews would not have stopped the bombing exercise upon seeing boats in the target area, regardless of the type of bombs being used Although Mr. Gibson’s statements seem to provide surprising testimony to the research, it must be remembered that the former bombardier was not able to recall such important information as the place and date on which this

41) John R. Gibson, telephone conversation with author, 28 May 2002.

42) John R. Gibson, telephone conversation with author, 23 July 2002.

43) John R. Gibson, telephone conversation with author, 28 May 2002.

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mission occurred, only that it was during the three-month summer deployment of 1948; in fact, he claimed to have never heard of any island(s) named “Liancourt Rocks”, “Dokdo” or “Takeshima”,44) Therefore, it is possible that the mission Mr. Gibson recalled was one of the other twenty missions that the 93d BG had conducted during their deployment to the Far East that summer. However, his statements regarding formation flying, the sighting of boats at the target area and his description of the island make for an account that is eerily similar to the June 8 incident at Dokdo.

Conclusion

Based on the above evidence, some aspects of the June 8，1948 bombing incident at Dokdo can be explained with a fair amount of certainty. The record supports the idea that the bombing exercise conducted by the 93d Bombardment Group resulted in the June 8 tragedy. Additionally, certain allegations from the bombing survivors can be verified in parallels between their testimony and accounts in Air Force records, particularly in regard to the number of times the island was bombed and in the description of the planes’ flight patterns. The evidence also strongly suggests that the bombing exercise was conducted with live bombs, since, despite statements to the contrary, there is little reason to believe that the bomb load cited in the 93d BG’s monthly histories is incorrect. Again, it seems improbable that the use of practice bombs would have resulted in the deaths of at least thirty individuals and the sinking of numerous boats. Although less certain, information brought forth in this research also brings into question FEAFs statement that aircrews confused boats for rocks at Dokdo.

Other details concerning the bombing incident remain open for debate. How high were the planes flying during their bombing run? Did the B-29 gunners fire their machine guns during the exercise? More evidence is needed to answer these questions with a degree of certainty. They will invariably remain a part of any future discussion about the June 8, 1948 incident. It is hoped that this research will help to raise awareness of this incident and provide a basis for future investigation,

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*44) Ibid.* [page 33]

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