The incendiary night attack of 10 March 1945 on Tokyo, the report
of which follows, ended a complete change of tactics for the XXI
Bomber Command.

Prior to this attack, all strikes had been planned at high-levels,
precision efforts. The desired results had not been obtained, however,
since in a great many instances adverse weather conditions had prevent-
ed visual bombing. A study of radically different tactics was made,
resulting in a plan for low-level, incendiary attacks. It was believed
that the following advantages would result:

1. Better Weather Conditions: At lower altitudes, winds of 20 to
35 knots, as compared with 100 to 130 knots at 25,000 to 30,000 feet,
would ordinarily be unnoticeable, thus making it unnecessary to counter-
act excessive drift by limiting bombing approaches to east-west runs.
Cloud conditions would also tend to be more favorable at lower altitudes.

2. Better Use of Target Disruptions: Scope definition would ordi-
narily be better at lower altitudes.

3. Greater Fuel Loads: Elimination of the climb to high levels
plus the fact that formation would not be flown at night would result
in decreased fuel consumption and therefore larger bomb loads. In
addition, it was believed that night bombing would permit dispensing
with all ammunition except that for the tail guns. The elimination
of this weight would also increase the potential bomb load.

4. Simpler and Improved Maintenance: Low-level flying was ex-
pected to put less strain on the engines and to facilitate the prob-
lem of maintenance.

5. Greater Bombing Accuracy: Errors in bombing were expected
to decrease as a result of the lowering of the bombing altitudes,
although low-altitude attacks would ordinarily increase the probabil-
ity of losses as a result of enemy action, the missions would be
planned to reach Japan at a time when its defenses were least effect-
ive. The fact that the enemy had not as yet developed an efficient
night fighter was an important consideration.

Although night bombing would be new for a great many B-29
crews, all crews had had experience in night navigation on previous
missions.

To take advantage of the surprise element in the planning, four
separate targets were selected for attacks every second night in or-
er to prevent, as far as possible, the enemy from setting up effective
low-level defenses. Targets selected were the urban areas of Tokyo,
Nagoya, Osaka and Kobe. Nagoya was later made the target for a sec-
ded attack, the fifth and last of this series.

The first mission against Tokyo was planned at an attack alti-
itude of 8000 to 10,000 feet so that maximum effect of enemy automatic
weapons and barrage balloons could be avoided. Flak belts, desig-
nated as pathfinder crews, were to mark the aiming point. Bombing
was to be by individual aircraft, with each plane using radar appro-
aches and making visual corrections, if possible.

It is noteworthy that the object of these attacks was not to
bomb indiscriminately civilian populations. The object was to de-
stroy the industrial and strategic targets concentrated in the urban
areas of these four major Japanese cities.
Defense Evidence Exhibit A cont.

General Curtis LeMay, Tactical Mission Report for Mission #40, March 10, 1945 (excerpt), p.2

National Archives and Records Administration (Record Group 18, Box 5446)

(3) Bombing Results and Damage Assessment: (See Annex D, Part III, for details.) Interpretation of photographs obtained on 11 March 1945 assessed visible damage at 440,145,000 square feet, or 15.8 square miles of city area destroyed. Eighteen per cent of the industrial and 63 per cent of the commercial districts were destroyed, along with the heart of the residential district. In Incendiary Zone No. 1 destruction totaled 82 per cent. Twenty-two industrial target numbers and many other unidentified industries were destroyed or damaged.

Curtis E. LeMay
Major General, U.S.A.
Commanding