

Bill Varnedoe, 385th BG Historian Emeritus describes the 385th BG's involvement with Project Aphrodite, an attempt to use B-17 bombers as remotely controlled precision guided munitions against bunkers and other hardened/reinforced enemy facilities. The plan called for B-17 aircraft which had been taken out of operational service – various nicknames existed such as "robot", "baby", "drone" or "weary Willy" – to be loaded to capacity with explosives, and flown by radio control into bomb-resistant fortifications such as German U-Boat pens and V1/V2 sites.

*"One of our 385th pilots, Fain Poole, volunteered for a mission. He piloted the drone on takeoff and leveled it out until the mother ship took over control. Then he jumped out by parachute. This drone later refused to dive on the target (a V-2 launching site) on command of the mother ship and was lost. Fain sat at a reunion banquet table with me once and told me of this adventure!! He said they counted that mission as five missions on his tour. He also told me they didn't trust pilots to pull their ripcords and fitted them with a lanyard like paratroopers!! He said it was a disaster, as it just flung them back against the fuselage, often breaking bones! Those drones were too early with the technology of the day. One blew up over England on the control switchover, which also armed the fuse. It killed one of the Kennedys! There's a good book, Aphrodite, Desperate Mission by Jack Olsen. ibooks, 2004."*