

# Mission 132 17 December 1944

## Odertal Oil Refinery

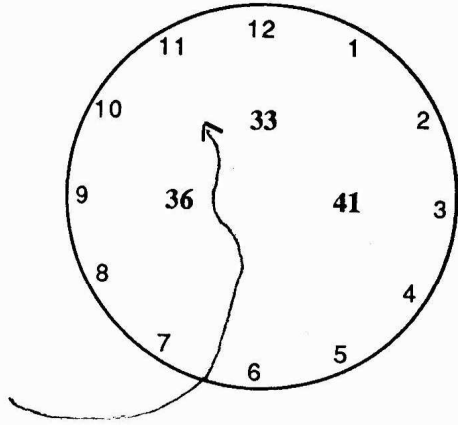


Diagram of attacking Me 109 that was shot down

The 15th Air Force's attack on the German Petroleum industry is well known by veterans of the 484th Bomb Group. When the Operations Order came down from Wing HQ on the evening of 16 December 1944 the intelligence personnel at group immediately began to decode the order. It called for a maximum effort by the 49th Wings four bomb groups namely the 484th BG (Bow tie), 451st BG (red Ball) and the 461st (Red Dash). Two groups from the 47th Wing and four groups from 304th wing were also ordered to bomb Odertal also, approaching the target from different directions. (See attack Map)

Other groups of the 15th AF and the 8th AF were also ordered into battle in a coordinated effort to cut German aviation fuel production by 80%. This would be a tall order even in ideal weather conditions

At the early morning crew briefing the target selected for the 49th Bomb Wing was the refinery at Odertal, Austria. This synthetic refinery employing coke ovens produced 4000 tons of avgas (aviation fuel) per month. A photo recon of 2 December revealed damage to the cracking plant but no new damage to the synthetic installations.

The target lay due east of the town of Odertal on the east side of the main railway line to Berlin. The Oder River lies 1 1/2 miles at the nearest point. The refinery works are surrounded by open country, Blechhammer North and South lie approximately 8 miles SE of Target. Alternate targets were given also. (1) See notes at the end of the report.

The German fighter defenses were awesome in spite of the reduced efficiency of Luftwaffe Units, up to 50 single engine fighters in the Vienna. There is the possibility that 25 to 30 single engine fighters are in the target area and believed to be drawn from training units and may not be first line opposition as likely to be encountered in central Germany and not the same fighting capacity as units which opposed our formations during this past summer.

In addition to the bombing efforts the 15th Fighter Group was ordered to strafe railway traffic and installation from Roseheim to

Wells, Austria.

Flak defenses were always considered serious business. 139 guns were expected to be at target area, 151 guns at Gleiwitz to the South-East. therefore the Rally was ordered sharp left off of target. On briefed route North of turning point 2 reported intense flak installations East of Bratislava area. 54 guns in range, 44 radar directed, and smoke screens. The groans would swell up in the briefing shacks when the enemy's defenses were announced. Veteran crews knew better, railroad flak was always a menace even on so called "Milk Runs" The stuff could be anywhere, and usually was. Flak was expected also at Letenye, Gyor, Bratislava, Blechhammer, Gleiwitz, Mor Ostrava, and Oswiecim.

As a way of throwing the crews a bone, to escape capture if shot down they were told that there was partisan activity in central Slovakia near the same hill area previously mentioned. The Romanian Air Staff advised Romanian army command on the Hungarian front who organized a system for picking up allied airman. They were warned of two POW camps to avoid, 1) West section of Kosel 2) City of Blechhammer. They were ordered not to bomb unassigned targets in Yugoslavia and Hungary. Assigned KP time must be maintained to keep proper spacing of formation in the target area, planned timing and rallies designed to split enemy flak defenses.

Signals to the Russians were given as: 1) Dip left wing two or three times, 2) Rock wing 3 to five time and fire a green flare.

### The Actual Attack

The cruising formation of the 484th BG combat boxes is shown below. They correspond with the information shown on the top of the pilot's flimsey shown elsewhere in this report

