



15th AF P-51 fighter

15th Air Force fighter operations on 17 Dec., 1944

All fighter jocks reported the enemy A/C as aggressive and skillful. Fighter pilots also reported back that ME-109s were black, most FW-190s light blue, a few were black. ME-109s had black and white crosses on spinners?. One ME-109 had red band around fuselage forward of tail. One FW-190 had white spinner, black crosses with a red center and a white border around a red band. The center aircraft carried a belly tank under right wing.

The 2nd Fighter Group, 2nd, 4th, and 5th Squadrons, Mission And Targets

To provide area cover over the Blechhammer, Germany area beginning at 1215A hours for the bomber force consisting of air groups of B-17s of the 5th Wing attacking Blechhammer North Oil Refinery at 1200 hours. Three groups of B-24s of the 49th Wing attacking Odertal Oil Refinery at 1219A hours, four groups of B-24s of the 55th Wing attacking Blechhammer South Oil Refinery at 1221 hours, and four groups of B-24s of the 304th Wing attacking Odertal Oil Refinery at 1234A hours.

Forty-seven P-51s took off Madna at 0950A hours. Three airplanes returned early. Thirty-three aircraft were over target at 22/26,000 feet at 1215/1250 hours. 11 aircraft penetrated to 4950N 1815E at 1205/1215 hours at 27,000 feet, numerous enemy planes were encountered at this point. 43 aircraft returned to Madna at 1510.

52nd Fighter Group assembled over base at 5,000 and set course at 1002A. Base to Zirje Island, west edge Lake Balaton to target. At 4950N 1815E, 15 P-51s encountered enemy planes. 10 P-51s engaged. 4 P-51s went onto target area. One-P-51 MIA. Return course reciprocal of outward.

16 P-51s picked up B-24s at 1200A at 24,000 at 4940N 1800E and stayed with these bombers to target. 33 P-51s were over target area from 1215A-1250 at 22/26,000. 11 fighters were diverted from their briefed mission by encounters with enemy aircraft immediately north of target.

2nd Fighter Squadron led Group, 5th Fighter Squadron went high, 4th Fighter Squadron went low. Formation to target in trail. Over target P51s split up. B-24s at 23/25000, P-51s at 22/26,000. B-24s reported enemy aircraft taking off from bases in target area. Some P-51s went to 28,000 west of target area to give better cover.

Enemy Aircraft: 45 ME-109s, 30 FW-190s spotted 15 P-51s of 5th Fighter Squadron headed north and slightly east of course

at 27,000 spotted 75 enemy planes at two o'clock at 30,000 feet heading south at 1205 hours (4950N 1850E). German planes were in irregular formation. Enemy aircraft turned 180 and attacked P-51s from six o'clock. P-51s broke into-enemy A/C. Some enemy a/c dived down to just above cloud deck at 9,000, others remained at 30,000. Some of the P-51s engaged at 9,000, the rest of the outnumbered P-51s continued to "break" repeatedly. 4 ME-109s, and 2 FW-190s were knocked down.

Weather:

Adriatic overcast at 12,000. Landfall to Lake Balaton overcast at 10,000. Lake Balaton to Danube scattered clouds at 23,000, to target undercast 9000/12,000 feet.

Air Sea Rescue:

Hi-Field acknowledged "Mayday W on D channel 1430/1435 hours. 2 dinghies in water, one with a number of men aboard, the other only one man. Lt. Stinchcombe circled (4335N 1540E) until a small yacht with about 200 men in khaki on board picked up the men in the dinghy.

14th Fighter Group:

48th Fighter Squadron (P-38) Wurbenthal, Germany, 1150AM Large number of enemy planes attacked formation. 2nd Lt David R. Miles (P-38J-10-LO "Coon Dog III" last seen with 4 FW-190s on his tail, P-38's right engine on fire.

37th Fighter Squadron "P-38L Melancholy Babe" 2/Lt Ernest V Roundtree at 4900N-1730E at 1215 was 29,000 and dived to attack enemy aircraft. Roundtree's P-38 skidded out of formation into path of P-51s. Not seen again.

49th Fighter Squadron Cap George T. Johnson. P-38L escorting B-24s at 1305 at 23,000 over Gyor, Hungary. Flak hit Johnson's right engine. P-38 rolled over and entered dive, wing came off—no parachute.

52 Fighter Group

5th Fighter Squadron 2/Lt Salvatore Giordino, P-51C, VF-P last seen at 32,000 at 1225 circling in target area. Last heard from at 1415 at 15,000, approximately 4350N 1550E. He asked Treadcar for a homer several times. Wingmates reported they heard homer clearly. Lt Giordino may have been on emergency course and nearer 4600N-1700E.

325th Fighter Group

318th Fighter Squadron 1/Lt Lawrence I. Schachner. P-51C "Little Bastard". At 1330 five miles west of Lake Balaton at 7,000 hit by flak. Last seen trailing smoke, 3 other P-51s in his flight turned back, but could not find him.

31st Fighter Group

308 Fighter Squadron 2/Lt George F Wilson Jr. P-51B "Mildred" shot down 1215 NW of Puerstein. KIA In Yellow flight, 5 miles SW of Komotau? at 25,000. Made right turn and overshot lead and veered off to right. Trying to get rid of drop tanks, one stayed on. Johnson pulled up and P-51 went out of control. Aircraft spun down to 10,000 then seemed to recover, disappeared into the overcast.