55BW Mission Summary No, 159, 1 Fob 45 (Cont'd).

1. General Summery. On 1 Feb 1945, 134 B-24 a/c (138 a/c scheduled) of the 55th Bombardment Wing took off at 0805-0832A to attack a primary target in AUSTRIA. There were 21 effective sorties and 113 ineffective sorties (including 13 early returns) due to weather and mechanical difficulties encountered enroute over AUSTRIA. Fighter escort consisting of 30 P-51s were first sighted at 1145A at (4610-1615). Escort furnished penetration support and departed at 1230A at (4650-1525).

A total of 42 tons of 500 lb GP (.1, .01, .025) bombs was dropped on alternate targets and targets of opportunity. 1 B-24 a/c of the 460th Bombardment Group dropped 2 tons on POLA from 19,500' at 1206A; another a/c of this same group dropped 2 tons on a small town located at (4642-1603). 19 2-24 aa/c of the 465th Bombardment Group dropped 38 tons at 1130A from 23,000' between GRAZ and MARIBOR. 33 a/c jettisoned bomb loads and 80 a/c returned bombs to base.

No flak was encountered by the formation although SIH-MAH was observed in the GRAZ area. Near the primary target one a/c encountered MAH flak. SIH flak was observed at POLA.

No enemy a/c were soon or encountered.

Weather: Near the ADRIATIC 3/10 cirrus at 18,000', 10/10 stratocumulus at 16,000' over the DINARIC Alps continuing to the GRAZ-MARIBOR area. At (4600-1700) to the right and ahead solid banks of clouds, bases 18,000' to unknown tops but believed to be near 30,000'. Return route was similar.

121 B-24 a/c returned to bases and landed from 1445-1527A. No a/c were lost to enemy action or for other reasons and no a/c are listed as missing.

2. 460th Bombardment Group. On 1 Feb. 45, at 0831A, 35 scheduled a/c were dispatched to bomb a target in AUSTRIA.

Group assembly and rendezvous with the 485th were as scheduled. Rendezvous with the Wing was accomplished at 0928A.

4 a/c returned early. 1 a/c, unable to keep up with the formation due to supercharger failure, left the formation North of SPLIT and made a visual bomb run on POLA. From 19,500', 2 tons of 500 lb GP bombs, .1N & .01 and .025T fusing, were released on the target at 1206A on a heading of 185°.

1 a/c returned early due to a gas leak, took off again but was unable to catch the formation. This a/c followed another group over the IP towards the primary target. A/c was hit by flak and oxygen lines cut. This a/c turned back, bombing a target of opportunity, a town at (4642-1603). Results were believed negative.

31 a/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1445A.

3. 464th Bombardment Group. On 1 Fob 45, 41 of 42 scheduled B-24 a/c, took off to bomb the primary target in AUSTRIA. A/c took off from 0805 to 0826A, 3 of these a/c taking off late.

Group form-up and assembly were accomplished as prescribed.

Rendezvous with the 465th Bombardment Group was at proper time and altitude, with the formation of groups reported by the lead a/c as being loose. The Wing rendezvous was accomplished correctly, with all formations being somewhat extended.

1 a/c returned early.

9 a/c jettisoned bombs.

Due to the Wing formation not approaching any designated 15th Air Force PFF target, and prescribed visual alternates being 10/10ths overcast, no bombs were dropped on targets. 31 a/c returned their full bomb loads of 52 tons of 500 lb mixed GP and RDX bombs, fused .1 nose and mixed .01 and .025 tail to base. Bombing recapitulation is as follows:

9 a/c jettisoned	18 tons
1 early return returned	2
31 a/c brought back	62
	82 tons

31 a/c landed at this base from 1437A to 1501A.

4. 465th Bombardment Group. 33 of 35 scheduled a/c took off at 0829A in three attack units. The primary, an oil target, was not attacked.

Assembly and Wing rendezvous were as ordered.

There were 7 early returns.

No e/a were seen nor encountered.

19 a/c dropped 38 tons of 500 lb GP bombs fused .1 N, .01 and .025T, at 1130A from 23,000’ in the GRAZ-MARIBOR area. Of the 26 a/c in the formation at the time of bombs away, 19 dropped, 6 returned bombs to base either because they had not seen the leaders drop or had not identified the target while 1 a/c had jettisoned to keep up with the formation.

tons dropped on target	38
tons jettisoned	2
tons returned to base	12
tons jettisoned by E/R	4

tons returned to base by E/R	10
	66

26 a/c landed at 1445A. All a/c returned safely.

5. 485th Bombardment Group. On 1 Feb 45 at 0832A, 25 B-24 a/c of 25 a/c scheduled tool off to bomb the primary target.

The group assembled over the home base. Rendezvous with the 460th Group was effected as briefed.

The Wing rendezvous was on schedule at 0930A. The order of flight was 465th, 464th, 485th, and 460th Groups.

1 a/c turned back at (4115-1630) because of mechanical difficulties.

The formation flew on the briefed course reaching KUTINA at 1125A where instructions were received by the group leader from the Wing leader to bomb the second alternate, AF target #2. A run was started on PFF but on the bomb run, another group suddenly changed their course which placed the 485th in prop wash. A 360 turn was made and a second run started but on this run the target could not be found in the PFF scope. The Group leader then decided to bomb the first alternate, AF target #1. After reaching a point approximately 40 miles East of this target, it was determined that a visual run could not be made. The formation returned to base.

In the GRAZ area, the leader of Dog box saw chaff being dispensed and immediately called to find out if the formation was on the bomb run. The reply was misunderstood by the bombardier who released his bombs followed by the remaining six ships in the box. Interrogation failed to disclose the exact area. Photos show a bomb pattern in a flat open country with scattered trees. No property damage is in evidence. Bombs were dropped at 1221A at 23,500’ on a heading of 174°.

RECAPITULATION OF BOMBS

7 a/c dropped on GRAZ area	13.75 tons
1 of these jettisoned in ADRIATIC	.25 tons
1 a/c jettisoned in Southern AUSTRIA	2.00 tons
1 a/c jettisoned at (4400-1330)	1.50 tons
returned to base	.50 tons
16 a/c returned to base	32.00 tons
25 a/c carried	50.00 tons

26 a/c landed without incident, mean landing time at 1527A.

6. Bombing Analysis. Maxinun effort of the 460th, 464th, 465th and 485th Bomb Groups of the 55th Bomb Wing was dispatched against a target in AUSTRIA on 1 Feb 45.

465th Bomb Group: This Group led the Wing formation on the attack. The H2X equipment of the lead and deputy lead aircraft was not operating. The second attack leader reported poor reception on his H2X so the deputy leader of the second attack unit took over the lead of the Wing. This a/c later developed supercharger trouble end was forced to give up the lead to the leader of the third attack unit. The weather ship reported impossible flying conditions over the primary target and since the first alternate was a visual target only and had boon observed to be cloud covered enroute, a decision was made to attack the second alternate. A run was started on this target but, when the H2X operator was informed he had the wrong target on his scope the run was broken off. A second run was started on a heading of 115° and 19 a/c dropped their bombs at this time. There were four sighting angles given to the lead bombardier by the H2X operator. No results were observed but hits are believed in the MARIBOR area.

464th Bomb Group: This group flying second did not drop any bombs. Numerous turns were made in the area of the second alternate target but the H2X operators all reported they were not near the target. There were no malfunctions in any of the H2X or bombing equipment of this group.

485th Bomb Group: This group was flying third in Wing formation. Due to a misunderstanding in the lead ship of one box the bombs were dropped in the GRAZ area. The other members of this box also dropped their bombs. No hits were observed and no malfunctions were reported.

460th Bomb Group: This group was unable to bomb any target due to weather and the bombs were returned to base. Two ships, one an early return and one flying with another group dropped their bombs as follows: the early return was forced out of the formation by mechanical troubles and made a run on the first alternate (POLA). The weather was patchy so a heading was taken up as briefed. The bombardier was able to see the target long enough to synchronize on the aiming point. Directly after bombs away the pilot turned off in violent evasive action and the impacts were not seen. The other aircraft took off with the group but was forced back shortly after. Repairs were made and the ship again took off. They were unable to contact their own group so tacked on to a 49th Wing formation. However they were again forced to turn back and they headed for the second alternate target of GRAZ. As they were unable to maintain altitude the bombs were dropped on the town of CANKOVA (4648-1603). As there was no bombardier in the aircraft the bombs were salvoed. The impacts were soon in the Southwest section of the town and may have done some damage to a highway. The bombing was done on a heading of 268° from 18,000’.

7. Navigation Analysis: Rendezvous was as briefed. The 465th Group led the 464th, 485th and 460th Groups on course at 0928A at an altitude of 9,000'.

The climb to bombing altitude was started immediately after rendezvous. SPLIT, the keypoint, was reached at 1036A, one minute late, and at an altitude of 19,000', which was 4,000' over the briefed altitude. This deviation was made because of adverse weather conditions. The route was flown as briefed to the next turn point, EUTINA, where the course as altered to the IP of the second alternate target of GRAZ, after the weather a/c had advised the Wing leader that the weather at the primary target was solid from 18,000 to 28,000'. The third attack unit leader had to take over the lead of the Wing shortly after KUTINA was passed because of operational difficulties in the PFF equipment of the lead, deputy lead and second attack leader. The 465th Group started a run on MARIBOR, thinking it was GRAZ, thon did a 360° turn to come in on a bomb run on GRAZ. The group dropped bombs on this run, but after bombs were away it was discovered through a break in the clouds that MARIBOR had been bombed instead. Tho 460th Group stayed in Wing formation, but returned with its bombs. The 485th Group started a bomb run on GRAZ, but had to turn off the run when the 464th crossed over in front of them. A 360° circle was completed and a new run started, but the lead PFF operator was unable to pick up the target. A turn was made for the first alternate, but when it became evident that the run was not going to be visual, a turn was made cut to sea. The group returned home with the bombs. The 460th Group, the last group in Wing formation, made an attempt to bomb the first alternate target (POLA), but after the run had been started it was necessary to turn off because the target was completely covered by clouds. No route difficulties were caused by flak. Dead reckoning, Gee and PFF navigation were used from the turn point KUTINA. (4529-1647).

Bomb run data:

Group	Axis	Tgt time	Bmbg Alt
465th	135°	1237A	23,000'

MARIBOR was bombed by one group, the 465th, by FFF.

32 P-51s rendezvoused with the Wing at (4606-1618).

Adverse weather conditions was the main cause of the failure of this mission.

8. Pathfinder Navigation Analysis:

465th Group. Pathfinder equipment in the lead a/c was inoperative due to a bad range unit. The deputy leader was called to take over the lead position but PFF equipment in this a/c was inoperative due to a bad IF cable. The second attack leader was then

called but the mickey operator reported his equipment so weak that he was unable to bomb. Deputy leader of second attack unit came up to lead but lost an engine and was forced to leave the formation. The third attack unit leader then took over the lead. The mickey operator started a run on MARIBOR believing it to be GRAZ but bombs were not dropped as deputy leader informed lead a/c of their position. Second run was made and mickey operator gave four sighting angles to the bombardier. Some a/c in the formation dropped visually on targets of opportunity. Results are unknown.

464th Group. 10/10 undercast encountered at the YUGOSLAVIAN coast necessitated the use of Pathfinder as a navigational aid. Route was flow as briefed until Wing leader elected to bomb first alternate. Lead group turned short of the target and PFF operator reported no target indication at the point where lead group was making run. Severa1 180° turns were made then the formation returned to base following the lead group. A1l H2X equipment was reported in good working condition.

485th Group. Pathfinder was used as an aid to navigation. Fixes were given to the navigators about every 15 minutes. PFF was used to avoid known flak area. All operators report excessive amount of interference in their equipment. Bomb run on GRAZ was started on PFF but group was forced to turn off the bomb run and the lead operator was unable to identify the target again. The group stayed in the Wing formation and dropped no bombs.

460th Group. Pathfinder equipment in lead a/c was inoperative during the entire mission. Lead was taken over by the leader of the second attack unit since deputy leader had mechanical difficulties. Navigation was almost entirely by pathfinder methods as undercast prevented visual navigation. Navigators were informed of their position at frequent intervals. Deputy leader of second attack unit was unable to keep up with the formation so went to POLA and into a visual run on the Navy Yard. The Wing leader was followed and no bombs dropped.