

55BW Mission Summary No. 154, 4 Jan 45 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 4 Jan 45, 56 scheduled a/c of 56 scheduled took off between 0829-0835A to bomb the BOLZANO, ITALY, M/Y. On this, the first combat mission of the 55th Bombardment Wing of the year 1945, two Bombardment Groups were stood down because of weather conditions at bases. There were 9 early returns (7 of these were weather returns) and 1 prior return.

Group assemblies were effected with great difficulty, due to weather one box being unable to locate its Group and its 7 a/c constitute weather returns. Rendezvous was successfully effected on route.

Fighter escort, consisting of 20-25 P-51 a/c joined formation at 1138A at SANSEGO, gave penetration, target, and withdrawal cover, departing formation at 1430A at SANSEGO,

46 a/c were over target between 1305-1306A. 45 a/c dropped 87 tons of 500 lb GP bombs, fused .1N, and .1 and .025T, from 23,500-25,000', Cne prior return dropped 2 tons on the SPITTAL, GERMANY, M/Y at 12220A from 21,600'. 5 sortie a/c jettisoned 5 tons, 2 early returns jettisoned 2 tons, 1 early return accidentally released .25 tons. The 7 weather returns brought 14 tons of bombs back to base.

Results: Photographs of 464th Group show strikes North and West of the M/Y. 465th Group photographs show approximately 20 strikes in the BOLZANO Main Yard and several in the locomotive depot. 2 direct hits are on the station, one direct hit and two near misses on the car shop, and direct hits or near misses on an estimated 20 to 30 units of rolling stock are evident. It is possible that all through tracks have been cut or temporarily blocked.

Flak at target was IAH.

1 e/a (jet propelled) was seen, no e/a was encountered.

45 a/c were down at bases between 1532-1610A. 1 a/c was lost to flak (crashlanding at a friendly field). 1 a/c landed safely at a friendly field.

Route was flown as briefed from SANSEGO.

Weather: 9/10 to 10/10 stratocumulus, base 5,000', tops 6,500' at takeoff which covered local area but cleared over Spur. Route out, 3/10 to 5/10 scattered, tops 7,000' over ADRIATIC with 8/10 to 10/10 coverage along Italian coast and 3/10 to 6/10 along Yugoslavian coast, 1/10 to 3/10 coverage in North ADRIATIC. Over ALPS, 4/10 to 7/10 cirrostratus, base 24,000' and clear below except for valley stratus. At target, 6/10 co 7/10 cirrostratus, base 25,000'. Visibility was 10 miles in haze. on return, cloud cover had decreased over ADRIATIC except for Spur and Gulf north of Spur where there was 8/10 to 10/10

stratocumulus, base 3,000', tops 7,000'. Generally clear to scattered South of SAN SEVERO and clear at base on return. Visibility was generally 12-20 miles in haze.

2. 464th Bomb Group. On 4 Jan 45, 28 scheduled B-24 a/c took off at 0829A to bomb the rolling stock in the BOLZANO M/Y.

8 a/c returned early, 1 a/c jettisoned and 7 returned bombs to base.

The Group form-up was not successfully executed due to weather conditions which made it necessary to change form-up plans. The Group Leader was informed by Wing to form up in area No. 4. Subsequently, the leader was told to form up in the normal area and above the overcast, and was later instructed to form in area No. 4 above the overcast. Form-up was accomplished South of the Spur as was rendezvous with the 465th Group, Charlie Box failed to locate the formation after forming up in area No. 4 according to radio instructions. This box left LAGOSTA at 1039A and contacted the Deputy Lead between LAGOSTA and SANSEGO at which time Charlie Box leader was informed that the formation would be 5 minutes late at SANSEGO. Charlie Box executed 2 360° turns at SANSEGO, and being unable to locate the main formation left the area on course at 1155A. Still unable to locate the formation, the Leader of Charlie Box made the decision to return to base at 1219A from 4530N 1425E.

20 a/c were over the target at 1305A and 18 a/c dropped 36 tons of 500 lb GP bombs (.1N and .01 & .025T) from 23,500'.

A/c #44-49363 jettisoned 2 tons of bombs at 1300A at 4640N-1115E because of inability to maintain formation position and altitude after loss of #2 engine.

A/c #42-51563 due to flak damage to the bomb racks was unable to release on the target and jettisoned 2 tons of bombs at 4625N-1240E.

Recapitulation of Bomb Tonnage Disposition:

18 a/c of 20 a/c over target dropped	36.00 tons
2 a/c over target jettisoned	4.00 tons
7 a/c (early returns) brought back	13.75 tons
1 a/c (of the 7 early returns) accidental release	.25 tons
1 a/c (early return) jettisoned	<u>2.00 tons</u>
Total	56.00 tons

Bombing was visual. The Group Leader used the C-1 Automatic Pilot on the bomb run.

Flak at the target of from three (3) to four (4) minutes duration was described as IAH. Crews report that the flak was very accurate, many of the a/c received flak damage.

Escort consisting of from 20 to 25 P-51 a/c made rendezvous with the formation at 1138A at SANSEGO and provided cover on penetration, at the target and on withdrawal to SANSEGO at 1430A.

Route flown was from base to 4200N - 1623E, then to SANSEGO and to the target as briefed. From the IP the briefed heading was taken up and flown until just short of the bomb release line where, because of undetermined reasons, the lead a/c went into a skidding left turn which required a sharp correction to the right and a consequent heading of 220 degrees for the axis of attack. The return was generally as briefed to the Spur at which point the Group Leader left the formation to proceed to BARI.

20 a/c landed at this base between 1532A and 1650A. The lead a/c landed at BARI at 1605A to permit removal of an injured crew member, and landed at this base at 1645A. The last a/c landing had difficulty in getting the landing gear down due to flak damage. This a/c circled the field until 1650A.

3. 465th Bomb Group. 28 a/c of 28 scheduled took off at 0835A in two attack units to attack the BOLZONO, ITALY Marshalling Yard.

The group assembled at 0945A at 20,000 feet in the ADRIATIC-CANOSA area. Wing rendezvous was accomplished off the tip of the spur at 1032A at 10,000 feet. An escort of P-51s joined the formation at 1203A at TRIESTI providing PTW escort and departing at 1418A opposite ANCONA.

There was 1 early return from the rendezvous area due to gasoline siphoning. Bombs were returned to Base. 1 prior return left the formation at DOGNA with a supercharger out and aa runaway propeller. This aircraft bombed a target of opportunity at SPITTAL, GERMANY.

1 crew reported seeing an unidentified jet-propelled aircraft 30 miles South of xxxxxxxx at 1245A and saw it attacked by 4 P-51s. No other enemy aircraft were reported. Flak at the target was Intense, Accurate, Heavy.

26 a/c were over the target at 1306A at 25,000 feet on an axis of attack of 375 degrees. 26 a/c dropped 51 tons of 500 RDX bombs fused .1 N and .01 and .025 xxxed tail. Both the first and second attack units bombed visually using automatic pilot. Heavy haze made identification of the target very difficult and the final bomb run was less than 30 seconds. 1 a/c jettisoned 1 bomb in the ALPS 5 minutes off target and 1 a/c jettisoned 2 bombs in the ALPS at 1320A. 1 a/c jettisoned 1 bomb in the ADRIATIC at 1306A. These 3 a/c jettisoned because of rack malfunctions. Baker Box Leader had a rack malfunction and dropped 5 seconds late. Disc speed on the bomb-sight of Baker "Two" was erratic causing Baker "Two" to drop on Baker "One", thus most of the bombs of Baker Box were over.

The prior return bombed the M/Y at SPITTAL, GERMANY at 1220A from 21,800 feet.

Recapitulation:

Tons dropped on target:	51
Tons dropped on T/O:	2
Tons jettisoned:	1
Total carried:	54 Tons.

25 aa/c landed at the Base at 1610A. 1 a/c, #44-49187, piloted by Lt. OBJARTEL crash-landed at BARI.

Route was flown as briefed.

4. 325th Fighter Group.

Mission and target: Provide close escort on PTW for B-24s of 55th Wing attacking Bolzano M/Y, Italy.

Aircraft and Chronology: 51 P-51s took off from base at 1020A. 10 P-51s returned early: 5 mechanical, 3 cockpit, and 2 that did not catch formation after taking off late. 40 P-51s down at base 1535 hours, 1 P-51 down at base 1630 hours after landing at Fano with mechanical difficulties.

Route: Base NNW to 4557N-1403E, then N to Brenner Pasa, then S to target, then E to 4620N-1330E, then SE to 4420N-1414E, then SW to base.

Rendezvous, altitude and formation: 41 P-51s R/V with B-24s at 4557N-1403E at 1200 hours, Fighters at 23,000', bombers at 22,000 feet. 41 P-51s escorted bombers over target from 1250 to 1315 hours. Fighters at 24/26,000 feet, bombers at 22/25,000 feet. P-51s gave withdrawal support to 4420N-1411E, leaving bombers at 1410 hours, with fighters at 22,000 feet, bombers at 21,000 feet. Bomber formation was good.

Enemy Aircraft and Resistance: None

Flak: SIH at Trieste, no damage. SIH at Monfalcone (4549N-1430E), no damage.

Weather: Base: 10/10 low cloud from 3000 feet to 5500 feet becoming 8/10 50 miles on course. Low cloud broke in North Adriatic and Udine area. Target: Clear of low cloud but hazy and 9/10 to 10/10 high cloud with base at 25,000 feet. Return: Same as out except only scattered low clouds at base.

Radio Security: Satisfactory.

Friendly Aircraft Lost or in Difficulty: None.

Enemy-Aircraft Soon Destroyed by Other Groups: None.

Victories and Losses: None.

Sorties: 41.

Comments: Bombers did not follow briefed course home from target.
Course they flew was believed better course, but this Group was not
informed of change in route plan,