

55BW Mission Summary No. 155, 8 Jan 45 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 8 Jan 1945, between 0809-0836, 81 B-24 a/c of 84 a/c scheduled (460th Bombardment Group stood down because its airfield was not operational) took off to bomb a target in AUSTRIA. There were 4 early returns.

Group assemblies and Wing rendezvous were formed as ordered. 1 a/c (485th Bombardment Group) crashed at assembly.

Fighter escort was seen at 1105, 1115, and at 1130A by the three bombardment groups. They were reported with groups until departure at 1225 and 1315A. For Fighter a/c see narrative appended.

One bombardment group turned back when weather was impenetrable.

51 a/c were over Alternate Targets (SALZBURG, KLAGENFURT, and VILLACH), and 29 a/c dropout 56.5 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, fused .1N, .01 and .025T from 25,500-26,000', as follows: 8 a/c dropped 16 tons on SALZBURG at 1219A, 7 a/c dropped 12.5 tons on VILLACH at 1245A, and 14 a/c dropped 28 tons on KLAGENFURT at 1158A. 7 sortie a/c jettisoned 10.25 tons, 1 early return jettisoned 2 tons of bombs. 43 sortie a/c returned 85.25 tons to bases and 3 early returns brought 6 tons of bombs back to bases.

Results could not be observed, since all bombing was through 10/10 undercast.

SAH flak was encountered at SALZBURG and VILLACH. No other flak was encountered.

No e/a were encountered nor seen.

75 a/c were down at bases between 1415-1525A. 1 a/c was lost (crashed at assembly). 1 a/c landed at friendly field.

There were extensive deviations from briefed route, necessitated by weather conditions and the decision to bomb alternate Targets.

Weather: 2/10 cumulus and stratocumulus at take-off and 3/10 cirrus above 2,000', visibility 20 miles. Generally clear to coast. Over South and Central ADRIATIC 8-10/10 cumulus in Eastern half and generally clear to scattered in Western half. Over South slopes of ALPS a 10/10 cumulus with tops to North to 15,000'. Over South slopes of ALPS a 10/10 cirrus layer was encountered, base 22,000', tops 25,000'. 10/10 cumulus layer was below, tops unknown. Persistent vapor trails were forming at 25,000'. At target 10/10 cirrus, tops 24,000',

visibility 20 miles. Little change on return, scattered cumulus at base on landing.

2. 464th Bomb Group. On 8 Jan 45, 28 scheduled B-24 a/c took off to bomb the Primary Target in AUSTRIA.

The Group form up, line rendezvous, and Wing rendezvous were executed as prescribed.

1 a/c returned early. Bombs were jettisoned.

27 a/c were over KLAGENFURT, a target of opportunity, at 2156A and 14 a/c dropped 28 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs (.1 nose and mixed .01 and .025 tail fusing) from 26,200'.

13 a/c of Charlie and Dog boxes returned 26 tons of bombs to base. These a/c did not release on target because the second attack unit leader did not release due to the fact that the target could not be identified in the scope, and thick vapor trails obscured the bomb release of the first attack unit.

Recapitulation of Bombs

14 o/c of 27 a/c over target dropped	28 tons
13 a/c over target returned to base	26 tons
1 a/c jettisoned	<u>2 tons</u>
	56 tons

Bombing was by PFF method. The leader of the first attack unit made the bomb run using the C-1 automatic pilot, while the second attack unit leader made the run manually.

No flak was encountered at the target or on the route.

40 to 50 P-38 a/c were reported observed at 1105A at (4440-1310). Though not designated as escort the P-38 a/c furnished escort on penetration to the target and withdrawal from the target being last observed at 12251 at (4516-1410).

26 a/c landed at this base between 1405 and 1430A without incident. 1 a/c is down at a friendly field.

The route up the ADRIATIC was flown left of the briefed course and West of POLA. At 1130A the Wing leader instructed the Group Leader to bomb VILLACH M/Y. The formation passed 7 miles West of UDIME, then to (4538-1320), there on a heading of 110° into the target. VILLICH could not be picked up in the scope of the lead a/c; so the run was continued on the same approximate heading. KLAGENFURT was identified in the score and the decision was made to bomb KLAGENFURT. On return the formation passed between TRIESTE and FIUME, thence straight to base.

The PFF set in the lead a/c worked satisfactorily, being used as an aid to navigation enroute and for the bomb run. VILLACH could not be identified in the scope, but KLAGENFURT was picked up and identified without difficulty by its shape and its position in the valley. The navigator gave 4 sighting angles to the bombardier and made 4 course corrections, the last one being a 2° right correction. The PFF set in the lead a/c of the second attack unit worked in a satisfactory manner for navigational purposes on route to target. In the target area, only weak returns appeared on the scope due to malfunction of the oscillator. With manual operation neither VILLACH or KLAGENFURT could be identified.

3. 465th Bomb Group. 28 a/c of 28 scheduled took off at 0836A on 8 Jan 45 to bomb a target in AUSTRIA.

Group and Wing rendezvous were accomplished as ordered, departing rendezvous point at 0944A at 7,000'. A number of P-38s and P-51s were sighted at 1130A at the head of the ADRIATIC. No other escort appeared but radio contact was maintained with them.

2 a/c returned early. 1 with a broken oil line and the other with an engine out. Both a/c returned bombs to base.

No flak or enemy a/c were encountered.

Turn back was made 18 miles North of UDINE at 1150A and all bombs were returned to base except 3 which were jettisoned in the North ADRIATIC.

While in normal climb to reach key point at briefed altitude, (18,000') the weather ship advised that there was cirrus at the key point up to 23,000', too thick to climb through. Weather ship later reported that there was solid cloud cover up to 25,000' in the next area North of the Key Point. Lt. Col. FOSTER, leading the Wing, directed the formation to attempt to get over the key point at 25,000' and arrived there at 24,000'. Clouds ahead made it impossible to reach the primary and the Wing was notified that an effort would be made to reach the second Alternate. 40 miles SW of the second Alternate the group leader saw he could not get on top and recalled the Wing, which is acknowledged by the 2nd group in the Wing formation. The group made a 180° turn at 25,000' and the lead box just penetrated the cirrus clouds in the turn. Cloud cover prevented bombing the third alternate or briefed target of opportunity visually.

Communications with the second group were good but not with the third. Communications between bombers and fighters were good.

26 a/c landed at 1415A. All a/c returned safely.

Route was flown as briefed except for deviations due to weather.

4. 485th Bomb Group. At 0809A on 8 Jan 45, 25 B-24 type a/c of 28 a/c scheduled took off to bomb a target in AUSTRIA.

The group assembled over the home base at 3,300' at 0823A. A/c #95460 crashed on the field during the assembly. 6 crew members parachuted safely; the remaining 4 crew members were killed in the crash.

The Wing rendezvous was effected as briefed with the 485th Group following the 464th Group on course at 0936A rt 9,000'.

50 P-38 type a/c joined the formation at 1115A at (4550-1300). These a/c were last seen at 1315A at (4600-1230). 2 P-51 type a/c were observed in the SALZBURG area.

There was 1 **early** return. Bombs were returned to base.

The formation departed on course from Wing rendezvous point and remained on course until reaching the ADRIATIC where a course to the left of the briefed course which was followed because of weather concentrated along the YUGOSLAVIAN Coast. Upon reaching the key point, the Wing formation veered to the right. The 485th Group followed the Wing leader until 1130A, when the Wing leader, turned to the right into a cloud layer, the 485th avoided the clouds by turning left. At 1155A the Wing leader advised all groups by radio to bomb the Air Force 43 target. A bomb run was made on a target which evidence indicates was located somewhere in in the SALZBURG arca. "A" and "B" boxes only dropped on this target. 8 a/c dropped a total of 16 tons, 500 lb RDX bombs fused .1 x .01 and .025 at 1219A from 25,500' on a heading of 332°. A/c #694 jettisoned 2 tons somewhere in AUSTRIA (no data), and a/c #517 jettisoned 2 tons at (4808-1242) at 1225A.

Charlie box became separated from the formation at CAORLE due to the existing cloud banks through which the formation was flying, After flying on a 360° heading Por several minutes the box deviated to the right and circled around BRUCK, continuing almost to SALZBURG. At approximately (4740-1310) a course was followed to VILLACH where the M/Y was bombed on PFF. 7 a/c dropped 12 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs fused .2 x .01 and .025 at 1245A from 25,700', heading 134°. Prom the 7 a/c 1½ tons were jettisoned after the target duo to rack malfunctions, 1 other a/c jettisoned 2 tons of bombs just South of VILLACH.

After leaving Charlie, Dog Box lost the formation. There being no PFF equipment in this box and due to a complete undercast existing in the area the box leader decided to return to base. The box turned back at SPITTAL. 4 a/c returned 8 bombs each, 8 tons to base. 1 a/c jettisoned 2 tons of bombs 15 miles South of VIS, at 1412A from 4,000' due to a shortage of gas.

Recapitulation of Bombs

1 a/c (early return) returned to base 2 tons

1 a/c crashed .t cos.51y	2 tons
8 a/c dropped on SALZBURG area	16 tons
7 a/c dropped on VILL .CH	12½ tons
2 of the above a/e jettisoned	1½ tons
4 a/c jettisoned	8 tons
4 a/c returned to base	<u>8 tons</u>
25 a/c	50 tons

No e/a were observed or encountered. SAH flak was encountered in the SALZBURG area for approximately 1 minute. SAH flak was encountered at VALLACH for approximately 2 minutes,

23 a/c landed without incident, mean landing time 1525A.

The PFF operators report as follows: Lead ship Able Box - Found it impossible to make any positive identification while passing over ALPS. Definitely identified UDINE and LINZ on the scope. Approximately 20 fixes were given to the navigator, all South of UDINE. 7 sighting angles were given to the bombardier.

Lead ship Charlie Box - No difficulty was experienced in the use of the equipment or in navigating to the target. KLAGENFURT was used as a check point and VILLACH was identified on the scope. 3 sighting angles were Given to the bombardier.

Lead ship Charlie Box - No difficulty was experienced in the use of the equipment or in navigating to the target. KLAGENFURT was used as a check point and VILLACH was identified on the scope. 3 sighting angles were given to the bombardier.

5. 31st Fighter Group.

Mission and Target: PTW for 4 groups of B-24s of the 55th Wing attacking targets in AUSTRIA.

Aircraft and Chronology: 41 P-51s took off from base at 1019A. 6 returned early (3 mechanical, 2 spares, and 1 escort). 35 made r/v by sqdns. at 1050, 1115, and 1150A. (see par. 4); 35 over target (s) at 1050-1120 and 1245-1310A; 35 down at base at 1522A.

Route: Base, CAORLE, AVIANO, ZELL, IP Base. (307th Sqdn. turned off with one group of bombers to KLAGENFURT).

Rendezvous, formation, and assault: When at POLA, 1055A, 309th Squadron leading, identified the 304th Wing. At 1100, one group of the 55th Wing was seen. In making a 270° turn to identify the bombers, 309th Squadron became separated from the other 2 squadrons and proceeded on course, as the 55th Wing eventually was not identified. At 1130A, the 55th Wing called on the R/T, saying that they were hitting the second Alternate Target (KLAGENFURT). 12 P-51s then made r/v at 1150A at 19,000' at 4539N-1320E. 307th Sq, after passing the 47th Wing near UDINE at 1050A, and the 49th Wing later, made r/v with

one group of the 55th Wing at KLAGENFURT, staying there from 1050-1120A at 25/26,000' and left the bomber on return at 1235A, 26,000' at 4605N-1250E (7 P-51s) (One flight of 4 P-51s went 60 miles North of KLAGINFURT with another wing, and returned from there at 1230A to base). The 309 Sq covered 3 Groups of the 55th Wing at LINZ at 1307A at 27,500' to cover other scattered B-17s and B-24s, as the 52nd Fighter Group was also escorting. (one flight of 4 P-51s gave escort to stragglers returning short of the target). 308 Sq rendezvoused with B-24s at ANCONA, 1115A, 16,000' identified as the 47th Wing and 304th Wing, and escorted then to LINZ, staying there from 1245A to 1310A, 26,0001, 12 P-51's leaving them on return at 1400A, 16,000' at 4530N-1520E. This squadron did not identify the B-24s of the 55th Wing. The entire process of rendezvous and escort was greatly hampered by extremely bad weather (See par 10). No bombs were seen to be dropped at either PT or KLAGENFURT. At the former target, the bombers of the 55th Wing (3 groups) made a run, on a 120° axis, at 1305A 27,500', and then rallied right. The bomb groups became widely scattered during their climb enroute, and over the target and coming off, were broken down to boxes of 6 to 8, with many stragglers.

Flak: None to fighters.

Weather: For 100 miles out on course, 10/10 cloud with tops at 10,000'. Over ALPS and target, 7/10 stratus with tops at 15,000' also 7/10 10/10 cirrus, from 25,000' to 28,000'.

Radio Security: Satisfactory.

Friendly Aircraft Lost or in Difficulty: None