

55BW Mission Summary No. 84, 18 Aug 44 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 18 August 1944, 114 B-24 a/c were scheduled, and 116 a/c (113 scheduled plus 3 spares) took off between 0625-0648B to bomb an oil target at PLOESTI (AERICANO ROMANO was bombed). There were 19 early returns.

Group assemblies, line rendezvous, and Wing rendezvous were effected as briefed. Fighter rendezvous was met at 0945B at 4416N2318E and remained with formation until 1245B at 4200N1912E.

97 a/c were over target at 1033-1038B. 83 a/c dropped 164.5 tons of 500 lb GP bombs fused .1N, .025T from 24,500-25,850'. 8 sorties and 9 early returns jettisoned 34 tons; 3 early returns jettisoned part loads. 2 sorties and 7 early returns brought 20 tons back to bases; 3 early returns brought back part loads.

Results:

460 Gp - Photos show the ROMANO AMERICANO Oil Refinery to have received numerous strikes in the target area. The strikes cover the finished product and crude oil storage areas with one direct hit probable on the boiler house.

464 Gp - Photos show the ROMANO AMERICANO Oil Refinery to have received numerous strikes in the Western portion of the plant with hits probable on the rail facilities serving the refinery and on the finished product storage area.

465 Gp - Photos show the ROMANO AMERICANO Oil Refinery to have received possible strikes in the target area with smoke preventing accurate assessment.

485 Gp - Photos show the ROMANO AMERICANO Oil Refinery to have received numerous strikes in the target area in the crude oil and finished product storage areas.

The main weight of the attack is believed to have fallen in the oil storage areas. Several fires are seen to have been started in the finished product and crude oil storage areas. The rail facilities of the refinery have probably suffered considerable damage. Reconnaissance photos are expected to reveal damage to several oil storage tanks but severe damage to any vital installation is not believed probable.

Flak at target was IAH. IAH was encountered at DZEPA; MAH was encountered at SURDLICA and at 4251N2209E.

3-6 e/a were seen; no e/a was encountered.

97 a/c were down at bases between 1350-1410B, none was lost nor missing; none landed at friendly fields.

Route was flown as briefed except as right echelon formation caused spread to right of briefed course.

Weather: Generally clear en route to target, with traces of cirrus and scattered cumulus over BULGARIA and RUMANIA. On return 1-2/10 cumulus over BULGARIA and YUGOSLAVIA and 2-3/10 cumulus over ITALY. Visibility over entire route: 15-20 miles.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 18 August 1944, at 0625B, 30 scheduled a/c were dispatched to bomb PLOESTI targets, dropping on the ROMANO AMERICANO O/R.

The Group formed its two attack units at 0710B. Rendezvous with the 485th was accomplished at 0718B and the Wing formed over SPINAZZOLA at 0729B with the 460th in the lead. Escort of P-51 a/c was contacted by radio at 1000B at 4508N-2500E and furnished penetration and target cover. They were last seen just past the target at 1043B.

3 a/c returned early.

At 1033B at 24500' 27 a/c were over AMERICANO ROMANO O/R. 21 e/c released 42 tons of 500 lb GP bombs. Due to mistaken target identification, the lead box of the second attack unit, composed of 5 a/c, held its bombs and dropped on warehouses on the DANUBE RIVER at LOM, BULGARIA, on the return. 10 tons of bombs were released on this target. Due to bomb rack malfunctions 1 a/c salvoed its bombs two miles short of the PT when it opened its bomb bay doors.

IAH flak was encountered over PLOESTI and scant flak was observed over BABICI, 4251N-2209E.

4 black ME-109s and 2 FW-190s were seen between the IP and the primary target at 1027B. These e/a did not attack.

The only deviation from the briefed route was between PLOESTI and SVODE, 4258N-2217E, where the formation was north of briefed route and passed over LOM.

27 e/c returned to base, mean landing time 1350B.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 18 August 44, 27 of 28 scheduled a/c and 3 spare a/c took off at 0635B to bomb PLOESTI targets. Target attacked was ROMANO AMERICANO O/R.

Group assembly, line rendezvous with the 465 Gp, and Wing rendezvous were made as planned.

9 a/c returned early.

21 a/c were over the target at 1036B. 16 a/c dropped 30½ tons of 500 GP bombs from 25850'.

2 a/c jettisoned 1½ tons of bombs. One a/c jettisoned ½ ton of bombs at IP due to inability to climb to altitude; the other jettisoned 1 ton at 4525N-2605E at 1027B.

5 other a/c of the 21 a/c over the target disposed of bombs as follows: 1 a/c returned 2 tons to base; 1 a/c accidentally released 2 tons 1 minute after IP. 1 a/c jettisoned 2 tons at 4452N-2630E due to reck malfunction; 1 a/c jettisoned 2 tons at 4440N-2550E because he was low on gas; 1 a/c jettisoned 1½ tons of bombs at 4502N-2603E because two turbos were inoperative and jettisoned ½ ton, the remainder of its load at 4340N-2315E because select lever and pilot emergency handle inoperative.

IAH flak encountered for a period of 3 to 4 minutes at the target. M-IAH flak encountered at SURDLICA 4242N-2211B. IAH flak was encountered at DZEPA 4246N-2205E.

3 ME-109s were observed at 4443N-2620E PITESTI. These e/a at an altitude of 25,000 came in from 9 o'clock, made a pass at the formation to within 700 yards, turned and went out same way as they came in. One unidentified e/a was observed in a dog fight with a fighter a/c at the IP.

Rendezvous with fighter escort made at 0940B at 4350N-2300E with 30-35 P-51s. 2 P-38s were observed at 1012B at 4435N-2550E.

21 a/c landed at base from 1345B to 1415B.

Route flown as briefed except 14 miles right of course 4235N-2154E between TP ULCINE and TP SVODE.

4. 465th Bomb Group. 28 of 28 a/c scheduled took off at 0625B to attack O/R in the PLOESTI area.

The Group assembled over ANDRIA at 0717B at 7000'. Escort of P-51s joined at 1003B in vicinity of DRAGASINA, escorting the Group over the target and leaving at the coast of YUGOSLAVIA at approximately 1247B.

There were 4 early returns.

Flak at the target was IAH.

24 a/c bombed the ROMANO AMERICANO O/R at 1038B at 25000'. 22 a/c dropped 44 tons of 500 lb GP bombs. Of the two a/c not dropping, one had a number one turbo out and dropped early; the other had rack malfunction and dropped just after leaving target area.

4 e/a were seen; none encountered.

24 a/c landed at 1410B.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 18 Lug 44, at 0648B, 28 a/c scheduled took off to bomb the ROMANO AMERICANO O/R.

Group assembly over ALTAMURA at 0720B was satisfactory.

Line rendezvous with the 460th between ALTAMURA and GRAVINA was satisfactory. Wing rendezvous over SPINAZZOLA at 0731B was two minutes late.

Fighter escort of P-51s joined formation at 4416N-2318E at 0945B. They departed at 4200N-1912E at 1245B.

3 a/c returned prior to bombing.

25 a/c were over the target at 1035B. 24 a/c dropped 48 tons of 500 lb GP bombs at 25000'. 1 a/c returned 8 bombs to base after failing to release because the bomb bay doors would not completely open.

3 ME-109s were seen near PLOESTI; none attacked. Flak at target was IAH, lasting for 4 minutes. Enroute, MAH flak was encountered at 4251N-2209E. Formation at 17000' was exposed to this fire for 3 minutes. It is believed that this flak came from RR guns from the RR east of SVODE.

Return made without incident. 25 e/c landed, mean landing time 1351B.