

55BW Mission Summary No. 75, 6 Aug 44 (Cont'd).

1. General Summery. On 6 August 1944, between 0655-0719B, 145 of 147 B-24 a/c scheduled took off to bomb oil and communications targets in Southern FRANCE, each Group being assigned separate targets.

There were 5 early returns.

Group assemblies and line rendezvous were made without incident. Two Groups being 2 minutes late. Wing rendezvous was effected at the ITALIAN coast.

Two Groups report sighting escort. One Group reports sighting escort momentarily at ARLES, FRANCE, at 1134B; the other at 4320N0642E at 1117B and leaving on return at 1215B on course.

138 a/c were over assigned targets between 1151-1157B. 135 a/c dropped 230.5 tons of 500 lb RDX (.1N and non-delay T fusing) and 105 tons of 500 lb GP (.1N and .01T fusing) bombs from 20,000-22,000'.

4 a/c jettisoned 8 tons of bombs, and 8 a/c returned 18.5 tons of bombs.

Results are as follows:

460 Gp - Photographs show: MIRAMAS M/Y. Numerous direct hits on the choke point South of the locomotive repair area. Numerous small explosions and some large fires were observed in the marshalling yard. Reconnaissance photographs show considerable damage to trackage.

464 Gp - Photographs show: LE PONTET O/S. Entire oil storage area covered with very heavy concentration of strikes. Reconnaissance photographs show the processing unit heavily damaged, the main workshops seriously damaged and the large tanks damaged.

465 Gp - Photographs show: AVIGNON R/R Bridge. Several hits on each approach and 5 or 6 direct hits on the bridge proper in the center and south end. Reconnaissance photographs show the bridge to be intact.

485 Gp - Photographs show: TARASCON R/R Bridge. Two or three direct hits on the west end of the bridge and several hits on the west approach. Reconnaissance photographs show two points of appreciable damage to the bridge and minor damage at the third. Tracks were cut and West approach is probably unserviceable.

No flak was reported enroute and none was reported at TARASCON/RHONE R/R Bridge. Flak at other targets was reported to be MI-MAH.

18 e/a were seen but none encountered.

120 a/c were down at bases between 1502-1530B. 1 a/c was lost, 1 is missing, and 24 a/c landed at friendly fields.

Route was flown as briefed except for minor variation due to weather not affecting mission.

Weather: A few scattered cumulus and patches of cirrostratus were visible over the bases in the morning with 2-4/10 altocumulus enroute out over mountains, tops 13-15,000'. Over APPENINES on return, solid cumulus to 19-20,000' with some tops of 30,000'. Weather at targets clear with visibility of 20-40 miles.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 6 Aug 44, at 0700B, 28 scheduled a/c were dispatched to bomb the ARLES/RHONE RR Bridge in FRANCE.

Group assembly and rendezvous with the 485th at 0808B were without incident. The Wing formed over SPINAZZOLA at 0819B, as scheduled with the 460th in the lead position. Fighter escort, P-51s and P-38s, were observed for a few minutes over ARLES at 1154B.

Near ROME, one of our a/c was lost to a hit from a preceeding a/c test firing its guns.

As the Group approached the primary target, the ARLES RHONE RR Bridge, the lead bombardier, could see that the bridge was already out. The Group proceeded to the alternate target, the MIRAMAS M/Y. From 20,000', 27 a/c were over the alternate target at 1157B. 26 a/c dropped 65 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs. One a/c jettisoned.

The Group observed three e/a.

The Group met MAH flak over this alternate target. The flak defenses were reported on the right of the Group's course from the IP to the target, the heavier concentration coming from West of the target.

1 a/c was shot down by flak over MARAMAS.

21 e/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1530B. 1 a/c, unable to lower its nose wheel made a successful tail-down landing. 5 a/c landed at friendly fields.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 6 Aug 44, 44 B-24 a/c of 45 a/c scheduled took off at 0655B to bomb LE PONTET Oil Storage, FRANCE.

Group and bomber rendezvous was made without incident and as briefed. Wing rendezvous was made by the 465th and 464th Groups approximately 2 minutes late and pulled up to the Wing formation at the ITALIAN coast.

1 a/c returned early.

43 a/c were over the target 1151B (briefed 1200B). 42 a/c dropped 105 tons of 500 lb GP bombs.

2 a/c returned 5 tons to base, and 2 returned 2½ tons each.

Automatic pilot was used by both the first and second attack unit leaders.

Flak at target was MIH.

7 ME-109s were observed. There were no encounters.

Rendezvous with fighter escort was made at 1117B with 12 P-51s at 4320N0642E.

6 e/c landed at friendly fields.

35 landed at base at 1530B.

4. 465th Bomb Group. 34 a/c were scheduled and took off at 0640B on 6 Aug 44, in two attack units to attack the RHONE RR Bridge at AVIGNON, FRANCE.

The Group assembled over ANDRIA at 0800B at 11,000'. Wing rendezvous was accomplished at 11,000' at 0821B. No contact was made with escort.

There were 3 early returns.

Flak at target was MAH.

30 a/c went over the target at 1152B at 21,200'. 30 a/c dropped 75 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs.

20 a/c landed at 1520B. 10 planes landed at friendly fields

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 6 Aug 44, at 0719B, 39 B-24 a/c of 40 a/c scheduled took off to bomb TARASCON/RHONE RR Bridge.

Group assembly and Wing rendezvous were satisfactory.

38 a/c were over target at 11533 (briefed 1200B). 37 a/c dropped 90½ tons of 500 lb RDX bombs at 20,800'. First wave bombed on A-5; 2nd wave used manual control due to malfunction of A-5. 1 a/c returned 5 bombs to base; 1 returned 10 bombs to friendly field. About 8 e/a were seen at landfall east of TOULON. There were no encounters. No flak was encountered.

35 a/c landed, mean landing time 1502B.