

55BW Mission Summary No. 148, 20 Dec 44 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 20 Dec 44, 92 B-24 a/c, of 102 a/c scheduled, took off between 0810-0830A to bomb the Oil Refinery at BRUX, CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

There were 16 early return and 2 weather returns.

Group assemblies were effected with considerable difficulty, due to base weather conditions. Likewise line rendezvous could not be accomplished as prescribed, and Wing rendezvous of three Bombardment Groups was effected enroute. One Group, mistaking a formation for its own Wing, attached itself to the 47th Bombardment Wing and dropped its bombs on the VILLACH, AUSTRIA, M/Y (4th alternate target of this Wing).

Fighter escort, consisting of P-38 and P-51 a/c, was first seen at 1035A at (4400-1520), a second element appeared at 1041A at (4538 1418), and remained with formation until 1420A at (4636-1403).

74 a/c were over targets (27 over VILLACH at 1212A at 23,500'; 55 over BRUX at 1245-1249A at 24,100-25,000'), and 72 a/c dropped 343.5 tons (17 a/c, 33.75 tons on VILLACH, 55 a/c, 109.75 tons on BRUX) of 500 lb RDX bombs fused .1N, .01 and .025T. 1 sortie a/c jettisoned .25 ton; 10 early returns jettisoned 20 tons. 8 early returns brought 16 tons of bombs back to bases.

There was no flak at VILLACH. Flak was Moderate to Intense, Inaccurate to Accurate Heavy at BRUX. No other flak was encountered.

6 e/a were seen. There were no encounters.

51 a/c were down at bases between 1445-1700A. 2 a/c are missing. Due to weather closing bases 21 a/c landed at friendly fields.

Route to BRUX was flown as briefed.

Weather: VILLACH; Base at take off, 3-4/10 stratus and stratocumulus, base 1,500', tops 5-6,000' with ground fog moving in from West. Route, 9-10/10 stratus over ADRIATIC, tops 12-14,000'. 9/10 stratus, tops 12,000' over Dinarics and ALPS. On return, 7-8/10 stratus, tops 10,000' over YUGOSLAVIA. Over ADRIATIC 6/10 thin altostratus, base 13,000' and 7/10 stratus, tops 6,000'. At (4308-1520) ship ran into overcast cumulus and cumulonimbus, base 3,000' and tops 20-25,000' with many thunderheads over Spur. Visibility 3-6 miles in heavy haze beneath clouds. Target (VILLACH) 10/10 altostratus, tops 13,000'. Visibility air to air 20 miles. Base on return, 4/10 cumulus, base 3,000', tops 8,000', visibility 3-5 miles in heavy haze.

Weather: BRUX; Base at take off, 2/10 to 4/10 high clouds at 20,000'. 2-4/10 low stratocumulus, bases 2,500' and tops at 8,000',

visibility over 10 miles Surface wind Southwest 5 to 10 MPH. Route out, undercast from Spur across the ADRIATIC with tops at 12,000'. Few breaks over the Sea. Tops of the higher mountains in YUCOSLAVIA visible. Large breaks along the YUGOSLAVLIAN Coast but solid again in North YUGO. Tops of the ALPS visible with all valleys filled and tops at 12,000'. From the mountains into the target 8-10/10 undercast with tops at 12,000' 2-4/10 high clouds at 23,000'. High clouds thicker to the West. Route back the same with breaks over valleys, over TRIESTE and over the ADRIATIC. Buildup in cumulus over the Spur and inland to 12,200 feet. Return, same as route up. Line of build up cumulus to the North and West and stratus from the bases of these moved in over the field at landing time. Bases at 500' and visibility lowered from 8 miles to 2 miles. Target: 9/10 undercast with tops at 12,000'. Breaks in the target area.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 20 Dec 44, at 0830A, 25 scheduled a/c were dispatched to bomb the BRUX O/R in CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

Change in altitude did not allow time for complete Group assembly, though all boxes were formed at 0900A. The 460th was over line rendezvous point at 0903A, and over Wing rendezvous point on time, but the other Groups were not seen. Rendezvous with the 485th was accomplished at 0950A over the ADRIATIC. Tho Wing was not formed until the key point was reached at 1022A. Fighter escort, 30 P-38s and 40 P-51s, furnished excellent penetration, target and withdrawal cover. They were first seen at 1108 at (4559-1420) and they left the formation at 1420A at (4636-1403).

5 a/c returned early. 3 a/c jettisoned bomb loads in the ADAIATIC, 1 a/c jettisoned bombs at (4732-1405) and 1 a/c jettisoned 4 bombs at (4845-1355) and dropped 4 bombs on targets of opportunity. 3 bombs were dropped on a small town at (4739-1355) and 1 bomb was dropped on the RR tracks at (4725-1355).

20 a/c were over the primary target at 1245A at 24,100', 18 a/c released 35.75 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, .1N, .01 and .025T fusing. On the bomb run, the PFF operator in the lead a/c gave the 70 65 60 angles. At this point, the target faded from the scope and reappeared again after the 55° angle was given. The bombardier, able to see that the dropping angle was much closer than indicated by the PFF operator and because of the POW camps in the area, did not release bombs until well past the target. But the deputy lead was synchronized did release on the target and the first attack unit dropped on him. The 2nd attack unit, their PFF a/c on early return, dropped on the lead attack unit after a brief interval. Auto pilot was used on the bomb run by the lead a/c. Disposition of bomb load in 1 a/c is unknown.

Tho Group experienced IAH flak for 4 minutes over the target.

13 a/c returned to base with a mean landing sum of 1508A. 5 a/c landed at friendly fields. 1 a/c is missing: This a/c contacted

the leader 10 minutes after target time and reported that controls were shot away and that he would head for RUSSIA.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 20 Dec 1944, commencing at 0805A, 22 B-24 type a/c (including 3 spares) of 27 scheduled, took off to bomb a target in CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

Form up and assembly was accomplished as prescribed without incident.

Bomber rendezvous was not made as ordered. Unable to locate the 464th Bomb Group, the 464th formation fell in behind the 47th Wing.

Adverse weather preventing rendezvous with the 55th Wing, the 464th Group, following the 47th Wing, proceeded to the IP for the 4th alternate targets, VILLACH M/Y, which was attacked by PFF. 17 a/c were over the target at 1212A and dropped 33.75 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs (.1 x .01 and .025) from 24,000/23.000', on an axis of 312°.

A/c #488 jettisoned .25 tons of bombs in the ADRIATIC at 1310A at (4833-1515) because of rack malfunction at target.

A/c #453, 1 of the early returns, jettisoned 2 tons of bombs at 1010A at (4135-1610) after losing #3 engine.

The remaining 4 early returns brought back 8 tons of bombs.

Recapitulation of Bombs

17 a/c dropped on 4th A/T	33.75 tons
2 a/c jettisoned	2.25 tons
4 a/c returned	<u>8.00 tons</u>
Total	44.00 tons

1 crew reported observation of 2 ME-110s in VILLACH area at 1214A, which disappeared into clouds at 15,000' without making any passes.

Rendezvous was made at 1038A with 15-20 P-38s at (4400-1520), which remained in sight for only a few minutes; and at 1041A with 10-15 P-51s at (4558-1418), which departed at 1420A.

14 a/c landed at this field between 1420-1510A. Remaining 3 a/c landed at the field of the 459th Group because of closing in weather at home base.

4. 465th Bomb Group. 20 a/c of 23 a/c scheduled took off at 0814A on 20 Dec 44 to bomb the Oil Refinery at BRUX.

The Group assembly was accomplished at 0906A at 8,000' and the Wing rendezvous was accomplished at 0914A at 8,000'. An escort of P-38s and P-51s joined at 1055A and 1145A at SENJ end KLAUS respectively

and provided cover over the target and withdrew at 1415A at Southern edge of ALPS.

There were 3 early returns. 1 a/c left the formation in the rendezvous area due to mechanical difficulty, jettisoned its bombs in the ADRIATIC just off the SPUR and landed at a friendly field at 1050A. 1 a/c left the formation in the assembly area due to engine trouble and returned its bombs to the base at 0945A. 1 a/c left the formation West of LINZ due to engine trouble, dropped its bombs at (4758-1400), results unobserved, and landed at the home base at 1458A.

No e/a were seen or encountered.

Flak at the target was Moderate to Intense, Inaccurate, Heavy. The crews stated that the flak was accurate as to altitude and course but was bursting ahead and behind the formation.

All three PFF navigators experienced no difficulty in navigating to the target. The lead PFF in both attack units identified the target using PRAGUE, KIADMO, SIANY, KOMOTAU and BRUX as check points. The deputy lead PFF operator's 20 mile range was inoperative so that he was able to use PFF for navigation only. The other two PFF operators both stated that the city of BRUX showed up on the scope before the actual target did and in one instance the operator said 3 or 4 blips appeared on the scope and he picked the brightest and Northern most blip as the target. The other PFF operator had the same experience and he said he had no difficulty in identifying the target and he had located the target well in advance of the time when he would have to give angles. The lead operator's range unit was out of order when he turned it on at the IP to begin the bomb run. When he turned the range unit on it blacked out the scope so that the target couldn't be seen. He tried to locate the trouble but found that he wouldn't be able to correct it before reaching the target so he notified the bombardier that he would use the PFF for course only and that they would have to estimate the range. This was done using the 485th Group which was ahead of them to estimate the time for bombs away. The PFF operator said that he actually only had a ten mile bomb run due to the fact he was trying to adjust his range unit during the first part of the bomb run and therefore was not able to kill course sufficiently. He thought that they went to the right of the target and if he had time he would have corrected to the left. The operator reported that he had trusted his range unit several times enroute to the target and once just before reaching the IP and that it was working smoothly until he turned it on during the bomb run. He gave no dropping angles to the bombardier but could have done so if the range unit was functioning properly. This operator said that the target return on the scope slightly favored the left side of the center of the scope before disappearing in the ground return and on this basis he estimated that the formation passed over the right corner of the target. He could make no estimate as to the range. This crew bombed by PFF using C-1 auto-pilot and estimated range by using the group ahead of them for a guide. The PFF operator in the second attack unit said

that the drift was killed on the bomb run and that his last correction was 4° to the left. He gave six sighting angles to the bombardier as follows: 70-68-65-58-52-46°. This operator said that he thought his bombs fell in the center of the target and that he would not have made any other corrections to bring his bombs closer to the target. This crew made a manual run using PFF because the auto pilot was defective. Several tail gunners reported heavy black smoke coming from the target area after the formation passed over the target.

17 a/c went over the target at 1249A at 24,500' and 17 a/c dropped 34 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs (.1 nose and .01 and .025 mixed tail fusing).

16 a/c landed at the home base at 1655A. 2 a/c landed at a friendly field, one of which was an early return.

The route was flown as briefed.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 20 Dec 44, 25 of 27 scheduled B-24 type a/c took off to bomb the BRUX Synthetic Oil Refinery in CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

Group assembly was accomplished at 0826A at 8,000' over the home field. Rendezvous with the 460th Group was 3 minutes early.

Wing rendezvous was completed at 0925A at 8,000'. The order of flight was the 460th, 485th, 465th, and 464th Groups.

25 P-38 escort joined at 1115A at (4620-1318) and departed at 1420A at (4540-1430).

There were 5 a/c which returned prior to bombing.

20 a/c were over the target at 1248½A. 20 a/c dropped 40 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs fused .1 x .01 and .025, from 25,000'. Bombing was by PFF and PDI. C-1 was not operating satisfactorily. The axis of attack was 318°.

#### Recapitulation of Bombs

2 a/c (early returns) jettisoned	16 bombs
3 a/c (early returns) returned	24 bombs
20 a/c (sortie) dropped on PT	<u>160 bombs</u>
25 a/c carried	200 bombs

The mickey operator of the lead a/c, #234 reported that the PFF equipment functioned satisfactorily. There was quite a bit of scope interference enroute over the ALPS and also on the bomb run, The target, however, was identified and synchronization was on the center of the target. Three sighting angles were furnished the bombardier: 70 65 60° angles. The drift was killed over the target with the magnitude of the last correction being 3°. Approximately 50 fixes were furnished the navigator. One photo camera was installed, however, due to a malfunction only 5 photographs were obtained. The mickey operator

believed that the bombs fell in the target area. Photos show bombs away in the vicinity of KOPITZ. Target cloud covered with only a few breaks. After a thorough study of the photographs, the Wing Photo Interpretation Officer estimates that the formation passed directly over the refinery.

There were no encounters with e/a. 1 ME-109 was seen at (5015-1405). 3 unidentified e/a were observed in the target area, coordinates unrecorded. Flak at the target was IAH for approximately 5 minutes.

18 a/c were over the field at 1609A. A/c #474, landed at 1615A with a flat nose wheel and blocked the runway for several minutes. A total of 8 a/c landed, mean landing time 1627A. Clouds moved in suddenly over the field causing it to be closed for further landing. The remaining a/c were instructed to go to friendly fields. 11 a/c landed at friendly fields.

1 a/c is missing. This a/c #51277 is reported to have crashed over the Spur of ITALY on return. Crew reported to have bailed out. Details of the crash are not available.

Route was flown as briefed.