

55BW Mission Summary No. 149, 25 Dec 44 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 25 December 1944, after the originally ordered mission had been cancelled due to unfavorable weather at bases precluded the participation by the 55th Bombardment Wing in the Strategic Air Force plan for the day, the M/Y at GRAZ, AUSTRIA was selected as the target for a mission to be executed at a later hour. Only one Bombardment Group, the 460th, had base weather conditions permitting a/c to be airborne. The 460th Bombardment Group executed the mission; of the 25 scheduled B-24 a/c taking off 24 dropped 43.75 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, fused .1N, .01 and .025T, from 21,600' at 1330A. The Narrative Mission Report follows:

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 25 December 1944, at 1044A, 25 scheduled a/c were dispatched to bomb the GRAZ M/Y in AUSTRIA.

There was one early return for the following reason: no power in #3 engine. This a/c turned back at 4125N-1626E and returned bomb load to base.

At 21,600', 24 a/c were over the primary target at 1330A. 22 a/c dropped 43.75 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, .1N, .01 - .025 T fusing. Due to engine trouble, 1 a/c jettisoned 8 bombs at 4657N-1545E and 1 other a/c, with 8 bombs hung up, jettisoned manually, one by one, above the bomb line. 1 a/c had 1 bomb hung up. This bomb was jettisoned in the ADRIATIC. The bombsight on the lead a/c froze, resulting in a course error to the left. A/c #0514 was shot out of the lead box during the bomb run and it peeled off through the formation disrupting the bomb run and causing a widely scattered bomb pattern. 3 bombs cut the RR to LIEBOCK and 5 hits were scored on the factory SW of the M/Y. No bombs fell in the M/Y. Due to malfunction of the auto pilot, the lead a/c used PDI on the bomb run and the other 3 box leaders used PDI because of the maneuvering required to miss the falling a/c.

The Group experienced MAH flak for 3 minutes over the target. Bursts were black in color with a few white. The fighter escort was not seen on the mission. The Group leader contacted the escort by radio but no visual contact was made.

6 e/a were observed on the mission: At 1346A at 4637N-1530E, 3 possible ME-109s were seen out of range. At 1405A at 4515N-1540E, 2 dark colored TEFs were seen flying parallel to the formation. At 1500A at 4630N-1500E, 1 black ME-410 was seen. This e/a stayed out of range at 9 o'clock 5000' above the formation, finally crossing over the formation and leaving.

The route was flown as briefed. Weather: On take off, 6-8/10 cumulus, bases 4000'. Clouds broke to 3 to 5/10 over central ADRIATIC and YUGOSLAV coast. 1-3/10 stratocumulus over mountains which became 6-8/10 in large patches South of ZAGREB. North of ZAGREB to target, generally clear with target clear. Similar conditions on return route

except 9-10/10 stratocumulus over Western ADRIATIC, bases approximately 1000' or less. SE of Spur, 4-6/10 stratocumulus, bases 3,500' becoming 6-8/10 over S ITALY and base. Visibility, generally 10-15 miles except 5-10 miles in haze in vicinity of Spur on return.

23 a/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1615A. On the bomb run, one a/c. was hit by flak, the #3 engine being shot away. A/c went into a steep dive and was seen to explode before reaching the ground. No chutes were seen.

10 a/c were damaged by flak. There were no casualties.

9 a/c attempted photos.

Due to the extremely short period of time between selection of the target and take off time, it was impossible to give the crews detailed briefing. At the time the notification of the selection of a new target was received, the crews were on the line. It was impossible then to return all crew members to the briefing room in the time available, so only pilots, bombardiers, and navigators were briefed.

Observations: At 4359N-1527E, a B-24 was seen on the ground, appeared to have crash-landed, 1450A.