

55BW Mission Summary No, 150, 26 Dec 44 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 26 December 1944, 98 B-24 a/c of 108 a/c scheduled took off to bomb BLECHHAMMER South and ODERTAL Oil Refineries in GERMANY. There were 9 early returns. Time of take off was between 0751-0820A.

Group assemblies were effected as ordered, but Wing rendezvous was effected enroute, because the lead Bombardment Group was early at rendezvous and following Groups were forced to catch up, which was accomplished when the column of Groups reached SPLIT.

Fighter escort, of excellent quality, was first seen at 1000A at (4320-1630). Target cover escort joined formation before IP was reached. Escort departed formation at 1430A near LAKE BALATON.

87 a/c were over Primary Targets (45 a/c over BLECHHAMMER South, 42 a/c over ODERTAL) between 1224-1230A (1226-1230A BLECHHAMMER, 1224-1228A ODERTAL). 85 a/c dropped 166 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs fused .1N, .01 and .025T on Primary Targets (84 tons on BLECHHAMMER, 82 tons on ODERTAL), 1 a/c dropped 2 tons on a target of opportunity. Altitudes were 24,000' to 25,300' over BLECHHAMMER, 24,000' to 25,000' over ODERTAL. 11 sortie a/c (including 1 prior return) jettisoned 13.75 tons, 2 early returns jettisoned 2.5 tons. 8 early returns brought 15.5 tons of bombs back to bases.

Results: Photo coverage is of poor quality due to effective smoke screen. The 464th Bomb Group photos indicate some strikes in the target area but smoke from previous bombing and smoke screen prevent any assessment. Additional strikes are visible to two miles West of the refinery. The 465th Bomb Group photos are 9/10ths smoke obscured however at least a dozen strikes are seen in the vital area of the refinery. Pattern indicates additional bombs in the refinery developed South-Southwest and South of the refinery with no military damage visible. Bombing by PFF, since the target was smoke obscured, the 485th Bomb Group photos show a small number of bombs in the area of the distillation unit and hydrogenation stalls. Further assessment is impossible due to smoke cover. All bombs that can be seen are within the target area.

Flak at BLECHHAMMER was IAH, and was M-IAH at ODERTAL. M-IIH was encountered at NAGYKAHIZSA.

No e/a were seen, none encountered.

77 a/c were down at bases between 1553-1630A. 2 a/c were lost (1 to flak at BLECHHAMMER, 1 ditched), 3 a/c are missing, 6 a/c landed at friendly fields.

Route was flown as briefed.

Weather: Weather at take off and from base to coast 3-4/10 stratocumulus, tops 6,000' and 6/10 altostratus, base 14,000'. Visibility was 15 miles.

Over ADRIATIC, 3-4/10 stratocumulus, tops 7,000' and 2/10 altostratus at 14,000'.

Clear on DALMATIAN Coast and over DINARICS to Northeast slopes where there was 10/10 stratocumulus, tops 6,000' extending for 40-50 miles to the Northeast.

Over HUNGARIAN Plains, clear except for a circular mass of stratus, diameter 50 miles centered at MEWSIEDIER LAKE.

Clear to North of Target with visibility lowering to 10 miles in haze.

At target, clear, visibility 5-10 miles in haze.

Similar conditions on return except ADRIATIC was clear.

6/10 cirrostratus at 20,000' and 5/10 stratocumulus at 7,000' on return. Visibility was 20 miles.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 26 Dec 44, at 0820A, 25 of 26 scheduled a/c were dispatched to bomb the BLECHHAMMER South O/R in GERMANY.

The Group assembled at 0847A and rendezvous with the Wing was accomplished at 0905A. The 464th, in the lead position, was 20 miles ahead of the formation and remained so on the mission. Fighter escort, first sighted at SPLIT at 1000A, furnished penetration, target, and withdrawal cover. They left the formation at 1350A at (4600-1630). 12 P-38s and 10 P-51s were seen in all.

2 a/c returned early. 1 a/c jettisoned 2 bombs in the ADRIATIC and returned 6 bombs to base. 1 a/c jettisoned bombs in a field near LIPNIK.

At 24,500', 22 a/c were over the Primary Target at 1226A. 20 a/c dropped 38.75 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, .1N and .01 - .025T fusing on the target. 3 a/c had 5 bombs hung up which were jettisoned in the ADRIATIC. 2 a/c failed to bomb the target because of rack malfunction and bomb-bay doors frozen. These a/c jettisoned 8 bombs each at (4800-1720) and (4950-1830). Although the IP was visible, bomb run was made by PFF because smoke and haze obscured the target. PFF was not operating well. It worked satisfactorily on only 1/2 the bomb run. 4 sighting angles were given and although there was considerable drift, it was believed that it was killed. Group leader used auto pilot on the bomb run but the 2nd attack leader used PDI due to C-1 malfunction.

The Group experienced IAH flak over the Primary Target for 5 minutes. Bursts were black with a few large red bursts. Smoke pots were in operation North and South of the target area and effectively concealed the target.

The route was flown as briefed.

19 a/c returned to this base with a mean landing time of 1615A. 2 a/c landed at friendly fields. 1 a/c is missing: A/c 1602 radioed that crew was bailing out and gave its position as (4330-1732) at 1446A. A/c had previously radioed at 1415A that #1 and #4 engines were out.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 26 Dec 44, 25 of 28 B-24 a/c took off at 0800A to bomb ODERTAL O/R.

Group form up and Wing rendezvous was made as planned without incident at 0904A. The 460th Group did not rendezvous but caught up with the Wing formation before arriving at SPLIT.

4 a/c returned early. Bombs were returned to base.

Due to late take off a/c No. 42-95332 joined another Group and dropped 2.0 tons of bombs at 1115A from 23,500' on a heading of 220° at (4616-1138).

20 a/c were over the Primary Target at 1224½A (briefed target time 1236A) and 20 a/c dropped 38.5 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs (.1 nose and .01 and .025 tail fuse) from 24,000'.

1 a/c which was over the target jettisoned 1.5 tons at (4708-1710) at 1115A in an open field, due to accidental release when the navigator accidentally hit the salvo handle when opening the bomb bay doors.

1 a/c dropped 2 tons of bombs at 1115A at (4616-1138).

Recapitulation of Bombs

Dropped on target	38.5 tons
Dropped at (4616-1138)	2.0 tons
Jettisoned	1.5 tons
Returned to base (early returns)	<u>8.0 tons</u>
Total	50.0 tons

Bombing was by PFF due to an effective smoke screen both at BLECHHAMMER and ODERTAL, the ground wind blowing the smoke from BLECHHAMMER in a Northeasterly direction, plus smoke generators on the Southeastern side of ODERTAL. Cooperation between the PFF operator and bombardier was excellent, with the PFF equipment working satisfactorily.

The lead PFF a/c identified the target area 40 miles away and the briefed target was identified on the scope during the bomb run. Course determination and range synchronization was made on the briefed target.

The last range correction was made 8 miles, and for course 9 miles from the target. 6 range readings were made. 3 course corrections were made, the last being 2°.

The bombardier made no visual corrections for course or precomputed rate on the bomb run. The bombardier used meteorological data to determine preset dropping angle and drift.

The Group leader used C-1 automatic pilot. The 2nd attack unit leader used PDI due to the presence of a B-17 formation in the area making this method more practical.

Flak at the target was M to ITH, with both black and white bursts, most of which was to the right of the formation.

M to IAH flak was encountered at NAGYKANIZSA (4627-1659). This flak appeared to be coming from the M/Y which would indicate railway guns being used at this location. Rendezvous was first made with 30 P-38 and 24 P-51 a/c at 1000A at (4320-1630). Escort was last observed at 1415A at (4609-1750). Escort was described as being good.

2 of our ac are missing: 1 a/c radioed at 1246: that only 450 gallons of gas were left, that No. 1 prop was running away and could not be feathered and that they were going to RUSSIA on 85° heading. Last observed at (4957-1730). The second missing a/c was last observed at (5019-1723) at 1237A. A/c was smoking from No. 3 engine which had been smoking going into, and over the target. A/c was under control when last observed dropping back from the formation.

18 a/c landed at this base between 1550 and 1610A.

Route was flown as briefed.

4. 465th Bomb Group. 23 a/c of 27 a/c scheduled took off at 0751A on 26 Dec 44 in two attack units to bomb the ODERTAL O/R.

The Group assembled in area #2 at 9,500' at 0830A and was at the Wing rendezvous assembly point at 0904A, but the 464th had departed ahead of schedule. Every effort was made to catch up, but, although the 464th was sighted at LAKE BALATON, it soon pulled away from the Group. An escort of P-38s joined South of Gyor at 1130A. P-51s joined in the target area and left at 1430A near LAKE BALATON.

1 a/e returned early after take off because one engine was on fire and returned bombs to base.

No e/a were seen or encountered.

Flak at the target was moderate, accurate, heavy. The crews reported the flak tracked them on the rally and was extremely accurate.

The target was partially obscured by a smoke screen and was covered by smoke from a previous bombing, but a visual run was made upon the target. The lead a/c is at VIS, and there are no details as to the method of sighting. 22 a/c went over the target at 1228A at 25,000' and dropped 43.5 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs with .1 nose and mixed .01 and .025 tail fuses. 1 a/c jettisoned 2 bombs at LIPNIK (4910-1750), in order to keep up.

20 a/c landed at 1630A. 2 a/c landed at VIS.

The route was flown as briefed.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 26 Dec 44 st 0815A, 25 of 27 B-24 type a/c scheduled took off to bomb the BLECHHAMMER South O/R in GERMANY, Primary Target.

The 25 a/c assembled over the base at 0830A and proceeded to area #2 where they fell in behind the 460th Group at 9,500' at 0904A.

The 460th and 485th were behind the other two Groups of the Wing at the scheduled rendezvous time; however, they caught up and were in good formation after two hours on course.

30 to 50 P-38 a/c joined the formation at 1006A, at (4335-1629). They departed at (5005-1741) at 1214A. Several P-51s joined at 1300A at (4930-1800) and remained with the formation until the coast of YUGOSLOVIA was reached.

There were 2 early returns. Bombs were returned to base.

23 a/c went over the target at 1230A. 23 a/c dropped 45.25 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, fused .1 x .01 and .025 from 25,300'. The axis of attack was 53°. 2 of these a/c jettisoned 3/4 tons of bombs.

The first unit did not use the C-1 because it was not operating satisfactorily. The second unit used the C-1 on the bomb run.

The bomb run was started on PFF; however, when about 6 miles from the bomb release line, the target is picked up and the last 20 seconds of the bomb run was made by visual means. The SE half of the target was almost totally covered by a smoke screen and the NW half was covered to the extent of being hazy. The bombardier was able to identify the briefed aiming point and to synchronize on it.

No e/a were observed or encountered. IAH flak was encountered, over the Primary Target for approximately 4 minutes. A/c #50486 received a direct hit over the target which completely severed the

tail assembly. A/c went into a dive and continued in a dive until out of sight. One chute was reported as opening.

A/c #29494 crashed at (4426-1630) ant 1427A. Pilot called on radio and said that crew was going to bail out as a/c was short of gas. Nine chutes were seen to open.

2 a/c, #28834 and #51335 landed at VIS for gas and have not returned to base at the time of this report.

19 a/c landed at base without incident, mean landing time 1553A.

Mickey operators reported that their sets worked perfectly.

A/c #410, target identified. On bomb run picture blacked out when the tango unit was turned on - BLECHHAMMER showed up because of its brightness. Last drift killed when the target became visual by a correction of 10° left. 70-68-65-62-58 and 53 sighting angles were relayed to the bombardier. 60-70 fixes were given to the navigator.

A/c #758, target identified. Drift was killed, six sighting angles were given to the bombardier and 50 fixes to the navigator.

A/c #029, target identified. The drift was killed, five sighting angles furnished the bombardier and 19 fixes were given to the navigator.

A/c #064, target identified. The drift was not killed (in ship). Five sighting angles were relayed to the bombardier and 31 fixes were furnished the navigator.

Route was flown as briefed.