

DECEMBER, 1944

Serial Number (June)	Mission Number (Current)	Date	Target	Groups Participation			
1.	136	2 Dec 44	BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY, S O/R	460	464	465	
2.	137	3 Dec 44	FELDKIRCHEN, AUSTRIA, M/Y*## VILLACH, AUSTRIA, M/Y*# KLAGENFURT, AUSTRIA, M/Y*#	460	464	465	485
3.	138	6 Dec 44	HEGYESHALOM, HUNGARY, M/Y DEVINSKA NOVI VES, CZECHOSLOVAKIA ## BRATISLAVA, CZZCHOSLOVAKIA	460	464	465	485
4.	139	7 Dec 44	SALZBURG, AUSTRIA, M/Y ** VILLACH, AUSTRIA, M/Y ** TRIESTE, ITALY, Harbor*##	460 460	464 464	465	
5.	140	8 Dec 44	VILLACH, AUSTRIA, M/Y ** # GRAZ, AUSTRIA, M/Y* GLEISDORF, AUSTRIA, M/Y ** ##	460	464	465 465	485
6.	141	11 Dec 44	VIENNA, AUSTRIA, S O/D	460	464	465	
7.	142	12 Dec 44	BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY, S O/R* MORAVSKA/OSTRAVA, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, M/Y* TROPPAU, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, M/Y* GRAZ, AUSTRIA, M/Y*	460 460	464	465 465 465	485
8.	143	15 Dec 44	SALZBURG, AUSTRIA, M/Y AMSTETTAN, AUSTRIA, M/Y		464	465	485
9.	144	16 Dec 44	BRUX, CZECHOSIOVAKIA, O/R PILSEN, CZECHOSLOVANIA, Skoda#	460	464	465	485
10	145	17 Dec 44	BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY, S O/R	460	464	465	485

11.	146	18 Dec 44	BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY, North & South O/Rs	460	464	465	485
12.	147	19 Dec 44	MARIBOR, YUGOSLAVIA, M/Y#	460	464	465	485
13.	148	20 Dec 44	BRUX, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, O/R VILLACH, AUSTRIA, M/Y#	460	464	465	485
14.	149	25 Dec 44	GRAZ, AUSTRIA, M/Y	460			
15.	150	26 Dec 44	BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY, S O/R ODERTAL, GERMANY, O/R	460	464	465	485
16.	151	27 Dec 44	MARIBOR, YUGOSLAVIA, Main M/Y KLAGENFURT, AUSTRIA, M/Y# VILLACH, AUSTRIA, M/Y	460	464	465	485
17.	152	28 Dec 44	ROUDNICE, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, Oil Transport Facilities KRALUPY, CZECHOSLOVANIA, O/R NUMBURK, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, RR Bridge## AMSTETTEN, AUSTRIA, M/Y#	460	464	465	485
18.	153	29 Dec 44	VERONA, ITALY, Porto Vescova M/Y VERONA, ITALY, Porto Nuovo M/Y	460	464	465	485

* Daylight mission, individual aircraft, using Pathfinder.

** Night mission, individual aircraft, using Pathfinder.

Alternate Target.

Target of Opportunity.

The 55th Bombardment Wing executed 18 missions in December, 1944. This compares with 16 flown in November, 10 in October, 15 in September and - the largest number flown in a single month -- 22 in August. Despite the increase in the number of missions, the total tonnage of bombs dropped marks a further decline in the total tonnage by months, a decline which has been constant since the peak was reached in August. In December, 2,445 tons were dropped; 2,561 were dropped in November, 3,578 in October, and 5,135 in August. In December, 1,633 aircraft were dispatched, of which 1,284 made sorties over enemy territory. Of the aircraft dispatched, 71% accomplished effective sorties.

The paradox of an increase in missions and in the number of aircraft dropping bombs while the tonnage dropped was less than the

preceding month is to be explained by the increased employment of Pathfinder missions in which a small number of aircraft was dispatched to fly and to bomb individually. Missions of this type were first flown in November and were continued in December; 4 were executed in this month, two by day and two by night. Obviously if weather conditions had permitted full scale missions rather than these in very limited strength, the number of aircraft dispatched and the tonnage dropped would have been commensurate with the increased number of missions flown.

Weather was the major factor in almost all of the December missions. There were few occasions where targets were fully visible, and on still other occasions aircraft and crews had to be stood down because base conditions precluded flying on days when targets would have been clear. The increased use of Pathfinder equipment, plus the higher effectiveness of the use of this equipment due to assiduous training and consequent increased efficiency of Pathfinder operators made it possible to secure results in bombing which reflected a creditable destruction of targets. Unfortunately, it was impossible to assign credit to the several Wings or Groups attacking targets, because photographs of bombs away almost uniformly showed only cloud. Reconnaissance photographs showed good results of bombing, but it was impossible to determine which units secured these results. Such was the case in the attacks on the VIENNA South Ordnance Depot on 11 December BLECHHAMMER South Oil Refinery on 17 December, and BLECHHAMMER North and South Oil Refineries on 18 December. On two occasions when visibility permitted visual bombing, the HEGYESHALON, HUNGARY, M/Y and the Porto Vescova and Porto Nuovo M/Ys at VERONA, ITALY, were well hit; results at HEGYESHALON were excellent.

It is noteworthy, also, that very deep penetrations into enemy and enemy occupied territory were made during the month of December. These were required in the six missions against BLECHHAMMER and the one against ODERTAL in Upper Silesia, the two missions against the BRUX, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, Oil Refinery, and the mission against oil targets at ROUDNICE and KRALUPY, CZCHOSLOVAKIA.

The same factor is to be noted in the analysis of location of targets bombed during the month. Three targets were bombed in ITALY, two in YUGOSLAVIA, one in HUNGARY, seventeen in AUSTRIA, six in GERMANY (all of these in UPPER SILESIA), and ten in CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

As to types of targets. attacked, one each of Harbor, Ordnance Depot, Ammunition Factory (Skoda), and Railroad Bridge were bombed, 10 Oil Targets were bombed, and 25 Marshalling Yards were bombed.

The effect of weather is to be seen in the large number of occasions when Alternate Targets or Targets of Opportunity were attacked. On three missions (3, 8 and 19 December) the assigned Primary Target was not reached by any aircraft. Indeed, there were only 8 missions on which only the assigned Primary Targets were attacked with no aircraft failing to reach the Primary and attacking

Alternates or Targets of Opportunity instead. The total of 19 Alternate or Targets of Opportunity attacked is the highest in the aggregate and by far the highest. in proportion obtaining in any one month of the Wing's operations.

On the mission of 6 December the long period during which opposition by - enemy aircraft was negligible and in which there were neither losses nor claims of enemy aircraft destroyed came to an end. Assigned with the 465th Bombardment Group to attack the Rangier M/Y at BRISLAVA, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, the 464th Bombardment Group elected to attack the M/Y at DEVINSKA NOVI VES, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, because the Rangier M/Y was cloud obscured and gave no return on the Pathfinder scope while DEVINSKA NOVI VES, only a few miles away, was clear and offered perfect conditions for visual bombing. As the Group was rallying off the target, as many as 40 e/a were encountered and a running fight ensued. The Group lost 3 bombers while accounting for 7 enemy fighters destroyed, 3 probably destroyed, and 1 damaged. The 465th Bombardment Group, close to the 464th in line of flight, also experienced encounters in the same action, and with no losses claimed 2 of the enemy fighters destroyed and 1 damaged.

On Christmas Eve a midnight mass was celebrated in the church of San Sebastian by the Wing Chaplain, Major Maurice G. Flaherty. Protestant Christmas services were held in the theater by Captain Miller, Chaplain of the 323rd Service Group. Excellent Christmas dinners were served at the Enlisted Men's mess at noon and at the Officers' Club in the evening. General Acheson and his Staff were guests at the Enlisted Men's dinner. An evening of jollification, at which suitable gifts were presented, was enjoyed at the Officers' Club; the Men's Chorus sang carols on this occasion. The 55th Bombardment Wing "Scrapbook" was presented by Captain Earle L. Osborne, Commanding Officer of the Hindquarters Squadron, to the Enlisted Men as his Christmas greeting to them.