

55BW Mission Summary No. 61, 13 July 44 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 13 July 1944, 115 B-24 a/c of 123 a/c scheduled took off between 0715-0720B to bomb PORTO MARGHERA Oil Storare, One Group indicating on its bombing run that PT and AT were completely cloud obscured, bombed MANTUA M/Y as a last resort target. There were 4 early returns.

Group assemblies and line and Wing rendezvous were effected as ordered with some difficulty on Wing rendezvous. Fighter escort, consisting of P-38 and P-51 a/c, was observed between 0957-1015B and remained with formation until 1137B.

111 a/c were over targets at 1031-1041B PT, 1059B LRT, and 99 a/c dropped 249 tons (186.25 on PT, 59.75 on LRT) of 500 lb GP bombs fused .1N, .01 and .025T from 20000-21500' on PT and 21000' on LRT. 7 sorties jettisoned full load, 1 sortie jettisoned part load. 1 early return jettisoned full load. 5 sorties brought full load back (from LRT).

Results were as follows:

460th Group - 40 to 50 strikes in the MONTECATINI Zinc Refinery area and SAVA ALUNINUM Plant. Several hits on building installations in the SAVA ALUMINUM Plant.

464th Group - 6 hits in the M/Y in front of the rr station. 2 hits at the north choke point of the M/Y. At least 3 direct hits and several near misses on the combined rr and highway bridge at the north end of the M/Y. 2 hits on the flour mill adjacent to the bridge. 20 hits on several buildings 2000' northwest of the bridge.

465th Group - 5 hits in the AGIP oil storage depot area with 1 possible direct hit on a storage tank. 6 to 8 hits in the light oil storage tank area with one possible direct hit. 10 to 15 hits and near misses on dock area.

485th Group - 20 strikes in the oil depot of the AGIP storage. 3 strikes on the SA Vetrake Coke and Coke by Product Plant. 3 fires were observed to be well under way. 12 strikes in the Glass works plant. One large building received 3 direct hits.

Flak at PT was reported from SIH to MAH; there was no flak at LRT nor en route. 5 e/a were seen in arca of PT, 11 were seen in area of LRT. There were no encounters.

110 a/c were down at bases between 1243-1250B from PT, at 1330B from LRT. No a/c was lost or missing; 1 a/c landed at a friendly field.

Route was flown as briefed except for necessary deviations between IP and PT, and as necessary for Group proceeding from PT to LRT.

Weather: clear at base, cumulus over mountains in ITALY, visibility 20 miles; clear over ADRIATIC. At PT, 5-9/10 stratocumulus, 12000' tops, visibility 15-20 miles. At LRT 5/10 cumulus, clear on bombing run.

in- reasons:

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 13 July 1944, at 0715B, 29 of 31 scheduled a/c took off to bomb the oil installations at PORTO MARGHERA.

The Group formed without incident in the regular assembly area and rendezvous with the 485th was accomplished at 0807B as briefed. The Wing formed at 0810B over SPINAZZOLA with the 460th leading the Wing. Fighter escort, P-38s contacted the formation over the KP at 0957B, furnished penetration, target and withdrawal cover. They left the formation at 1137B, 40 miles south of ANCONA.

There was one early return.

At 21500', 28 a/c were over the target at 1031½B. 24 a/c dropped 60 tons of 500 lb GP bombs on PORTO MARGHERA. 9/10 undercast made concentration on the primary target impossible. Revealed for a moment, it would be shut away again. Individual boxes, therefore, as they were able, bombed targets of opportunity at PORTO MARGHERA. 4 a/c were unable to bomb the target for the following reasons: (1) Bombay doors inoperative, (2) a/c flying beneath the formation, (3) rack malfunction, (4) release malfunction. All bombs were jettisoned in the ADIATIC.

The route was flown as briefed.

The Group experienced SIH flak in the target area, most of the bursts trailing the formation.

28 a/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1245B.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 13 July 1944 at 0720B, 32 B-24 of 33 a/c scheduled took off to bomb MANTUA M/Y (Last Resort Target).

The takeoff and Group assembly was carried out SOP. The 3 Group line rendezvous between ANDRIA and CANOSA was SOP. On Wing rendezvous over SPINAZZOLA, only 1 other group was sighted and we turned into right echelon with this group. On arriving at the IP for the Primary Target, it was found that clouds obscured the target area and the decision was made to bomb the Target of Last Resort.

On arriving at this target, it was found that the M/Y was covered by clouds on the east, reaching up to the western edge, and it was impossible to hit target on this approach, but it was evident it could be hit from a reciprocal heading. Since no opposition was encountered we made a 180 deg turn and came in and bombed the target.

15 P-51 a/c were observed at 1005B at 4430N1340E and 12 P-38 a/c were observed at 10359 at 4440N1330E.

1 a/c returned prior to bombing.

6 ME-109 e/a were observed at 1042B at 4505N1042E; 4 DO-217 e/a were observed at 1100B at a point 20 miles NW of MANTUA; 1 ME-110 e/a was observed at 1109B at MANTUA; none of these e/a attacked formation.

31 a/c were over target at 1059B, 24 a/c dropped 59 3/4 tons of 500 lb GP bombs at 21000'. 1 a/c of the 24 dropping on target jettisoned 1 bomb; 2 a/c jettisoned 20 bombs, one of which landed in water off target, the other a/c jettisoned its bombs at 4503N1043E; 5 a/c returned 50 bombs to base.

Course was as briefed until reaching the IP, at which time a left turn was made, turning right approximately 3 miles North of CHICAGGIA. A course of 267 deg was flown directly to MANTUA, after which a 30 deg turn to the right was made in order to circle to the left, missing briefed flak areas, to make the second run on the target. The course back to the briefed route was the reciprocal of the one in from the coast. The rally and return was made without incident.

No flak was encountered on route to target nor on return.

Weather - Generally clear over base at take off, cumulus over mountains visibility 20 miles. No clouds over South ADRIATIC. Further north were 5-6/10 stratocumulus clouds, tops 12000'. At target, 4/10 to 5/10 stratocumulus clouds which obscured Primary Target. Visibility was 20 miles. The Secondary Target was clear on second bomb run. 5/10 cumulus necessitated a 180 deg turn and return over target.

4. 465th Bomb Group. On 13 July 22 a/c of 26 scheduled took off to bomb oil storage installations at PORTO MARGHERA, ITALY.

The group assembled in the assigned area at 0800B at 8000' and the wing rendezvous was accomplished without incident at SPINAZZOLA at 0820B at 8000'.

1 a/c returned early due to 2 engines running rough with 2 magnetos out and returned its bombs to the base at 0810B.

About 12 P-38s met the bomber formation at 1005B at 4410N1250E at 14000' and provided escort to the target and back to 4400N1330E where they left the bombers at 1150B at 8000'.

21 a/c went over the target at 1041B and 20 a/c dropped 50 tons of 500 lb GP bombs from 20000'.

Flak at the target was said to be MAH.

2 unidentified planes, believed to be enemy fighters, were seen in the target area at 1040B at 20000'. There were no encounters.

20 a/c landed at home base at 1050B. 1 a/c landed at FOGGIA due to 2 crew members sustaining injuries, and crew was returned to base by truck.

Route was flown as briefed with the exception of a deviation made at the IP due to weather.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 13 July 1944 at 0717B, 32 B-24 a/c of 33 a/c scheduled took off to bomb PORTO MARGUERA (Primary Target). There was one early return.

Assembly over ALTAMURA at 0755B at 6,000' was satisfactory.

Rendezvous with 460th Bombardment Group between ALTAMURA and GRAVINA was effected at 0804B at 6,000'. Rendezvous with 464th and 465th Groups was effected at 0815B at 6,000' on course over SPINAZZOLA.

Rendezvous with fighter escort, which consisted of 12 P-38 a/c, was effected without incident at 4505N1300E at 1015B. Escort left formation at 4420N1340E at 1057B.

Three e/a, ME-109s were seen in the target area, but did not approach the formation.

31 a/c were over the target at 1032B (target time, 1035B). 31 a/c dropped 76.25 tons of 500 lb GP bombs at 20,200'. One a/c left one bomb on parking apron because of bomb rack malfunction. One a/c jettisoned two of its bombs over the ADRIATIC at 1120B due to bomb rack malfunction.

SAH flak was encountered over target area; the formation was exposed to flak for approximately 4 minutes.

Return was made without incident. 31 a/c landed, mean landing time 1243B There were no stragglers, no late arrivals.

Route was flown as briefed.