

55BW Mission Summary No. 64, 16 July 44 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 16 July 1944, 131 B-24 a/c of 136 a/c scheduled, between 0625-0640B took off to bomb the WIENER NEUDORF a/c engine factory. There were 20 early returns.

Group assemblies, line rendezvous, and Wing rendezvous were accomplished as ordered. Fighter escort joined the formation at 0935B near LAKE BALATON, furnished excellent cover, and remained with the formation until approximately 1200B.

10. a/c were over the target between 1030-1035B. 102 a/c dropped 108.5 tons 1000 GP bombs (.1N,.01,.025T fusing) and 116.6 tons of 100 lb clustered M-47 incendiary bombs with instantaneous fusing, from 22700-24000'. PFF was used. 4 early returns brought back full, and 8 sorties jettisoned part bomb load.

Flak was IAH at target. 25-150 e/a were seen and 2-30 e/a were encountered by individual Groups. Claims are 15-10-10.

100 a/c were down at bases between 1300-1351B. 5 a/c were lost, 3 a/c are missing, and 3 a/c landed at friendly fields.

Route was flown as briefed.

Weather: Clear at bases; enroute, 1/10 stratus over ADRIATIC, 4000', visibility: 15 miles, clear over DINARIC ALPS, 7/10 alto stratus developing to IP, 10000'. Target 8/10 alto cumulus 17000', 9-10/10 cumulus 18000'. ZAGREB to bases scattered cumulus becoming clear, visibility 15-20 miles.

Results were as follows:

460th Group - Slightly less than half of the bombs were photographed at time of bombs away. Photographs indicate bombs were released approximately 15000 to 20000' from the target.

464th Group - Only a few photographs of bombs away are available but they indicate that the bombs were not released closer than 15000' and were probably released approximately 25000' from the target. Some bombs are seen to strike the ground 15000' from the target.

465th Group - Bombs away photographs from one aircraft only. They indicate bomb release at approximately 10000' from the target, Some strikes are barely visible in the target and some just short of the target.

485th Group - Photographs indicate the bombs hit in open fields near SIEFENSHIRTEN.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 16 July 1944, at 0630B, 34 of 35 scheduled a/c took off to bomb the WIENER NEUDOPF A/C Engine Factory in AUSTRIA.

Th: Group formed its 2 attack units in the regular assembly arca at 0720B. At this time the 464th was flying through our assembly area. Rendezvous with the 485th was accomplished over ALTAMURA at 0732B. The Wing formed over SPINAZZOLA at 0743B with the 460th falling in behind the 464th. The fighter escort, P-38s, were first seen at 4600N1730E at 0935B and furnished excellent penetration, target end withdrawal cover. They left the formation at 1245B, 35 miles NE of BARLETTA.

4 a/c returned early.

On the route out, the Group observed approximately 150 e/a from 10 minutes before the IP to the target. The majority of the e/a were FW-190s and ME-109s. 10 to 20 TEF were also seen. There were 18 encounters with e/a. ME-109 attacked in echelon of 4. They came in from 9 o'clock low, closed to 300-400 yd and peeled off at 6 o'clock. An FW-190 came in from 9 o'clock level, closed to 75 yd and dove out at 6 o'clock. 9 other single attacks were made by ME-109s from 11 to 3 o'clock. These e/a attacked aggressively and closed to 300-400 yd. Our claims: 1 destroyed, 1 probable.

At 23800', 29 a/c were over the primary target at 1032B and dropped 57.2 tons of 100 lb M-47 clustered incendiaries with instantaneous fusing by PFF method, 1 a/c did not reach the target due to e/a. Due to malfunctions, 5 a/c had 16 bombs hung up. 4 of these a/c jettisoned 12 bombs in the ADRIATIC and 1 a/c jettisoned 4 bombs just after target time.

The Group encountered IAH box barrage type flak over the target. The Group was in the flak defenses for about 3 minutes. Smoke generators completely surrounded the target area and were from 100 to 125 yd apart. Apparently the generators were fired late and were not very effective.

20 a/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1315B. 2 a/c are listed as missing. 1 B-24 was attacked by 2 ME-109s at 1027B and was last seen going down through the clouds in the target area, apparently still under control. Another B-24, damaged probably by flak, was last observed at 4620N1630E with the #1 engine smoking. This a/c was under control and escorted by 4 P-38s.

The entire route was flown as briefed.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 16 July 1944 at 0625B, 30 B-24 of 32 a/c scheduled took off to bomb WIENER NEUDORF a/c engine factory.

The group assembly was executed according to plan. Line and Wing rendezvous was as prescribed.

Rendezvous of fighter escort which consisted of 35 to 50 P-38 a/c of 306th Fighter Wing was effected without incident in the vicinity of LAKE BALATON at 0955B.

6 a/c returned prior to bombing.

21 a/c were over target at 1030B (briefed 1021B) and dropped 52½ tons of 1000 lb GP at 23000'; 2 a/c jettisoned 10 bombs. 4 a/c returned 20 bombs to base; 72 tons of bombs went down in 3 ships, which were shot down between IP and target.

25-30 ME-109s and 3-7 FW-190's were observed between IP and target. Those e/a were very aggressive in their attacks on the formation. One series of attacks came from 6 o'clock, at 2000 yd the e/a about 30 in number were abreast as they approached the formation, the width of the attacking e/a narrowed similar to a funnel sliding from side to side, thus presenting a difficult target. The e/a pressed their attack to within 150' peeling off to right and loft. Another series of attacks were from 1030 o'clock high, pressed very close to the formation. Another series of attacks was from all clock positions. Our bomber crews claim: 9 ME-109s destroyed, and probably destroyed 6 ME-109s and 3 FW-190.

19.a/c landed at 1300B; 1 a/c landed at VIS; 1 a/c crash landed at FOGGIA and will be salvaged.

Smoke pots were observed along the North NW and West side of the target area. The pots were located approximately 2000' from the target along the road.

IIH to IAH flak was encountered between IP and target.

Route was flown as briefed.

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4. 465th Bomb Group. On 16 July 1944, 30 a/c of 31 scheduled took off at 0640B to bomb the WIENER NEUDORF a/c engine factory buildings.

The Group assembly was accomplished at 0730B over ANDRIA at 5000' and the Wing rendezvous was accomplished over SPINAZZOLA at 0740B at 5000'.

P-38 escort was met at LAKE BALATON at 0937B at 24000' and left at the coast of YUGOSLAVIA at 1205B at 15000'. The fighters escorted the bombers to the target, over the target and back to safe territory. The escort was described as very good.

There were x early returns; all due to mechanical defects and all a/c returned their bombs to base.

The flak at the target was IAH, inaccurate for altitude, accurate for deflection.

40-50 enemy e/c were seen. 40 e/a were encountered between 1012 and 1030B, between LAKE BALATON and the target, at 24000'. 25-30 ME-109s and 15-20 FW-190s. Attacks xxxx were made from 11 and 12 o'clock high down through the formation and out at 5 and 6 o'clock. Some leveled off and passed through the formation. Some of the ME-109s had silver fuselages and some were bluish gray. Some of the FW-190s were dark, white and yellow checkered tails with black spinners and a black band about 3 feet from the fuselage on the wings. Several old ME-109s had non-retractable tail wheels arc reported. Some had black swastikas with yellow borders.

Truuica 200 included attempts from small groups of e/a to decoy the Escort from the formation and when successful, additional fighters moved in and attack from the opposite direction. This tactic was successfully repeated several times and crewmen said that the enemy planes were very aggressive in their attacks on the escort. their extra fuel tanks when they attacked the bombers. The following claims are made: 2 ME-109s and 3 FW-190s destroyed, x ME-109s and 1 FW-190 probably destroyed, 3 ME-109s and 3 FW-190s damaged.

25 a/c went over the target at 1031B and 22 a/c dropped 56 tons of 1000 lb GP bombs from 24000'. Target was bombed visually. 1 a/c salvoed (bombs dropped armed but not aimed at any target) 5 bombs at 1025B at xxxxxx from 23000' xx use the a/c had lost a supercharger and was unable to stay with the formation. The a/e flew the bomb run with the formation even though it had dropped its bombs before the target, but was unable to keep up and fell back and returned later alone. 9 a/c jettisoned 1 bomb each because they were unable to keep up with the formation with a full bomb load. Xx xxxx xxxxx and the disposition of its bombs is not known although it is certain that this a/c did not go over the target.

23 a/c landed at 1351B. 1 a/c was lost to enemy fighters at 4710N1720E. Some crewmen report that 10 chutes were seen to come from his plane.

The mission was flow as briefed.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 16 July 1944, at 0635B, 37 B-24 a/c of 38 a/c scheduled, took off to bomb WEINER NEUDORF (Primary Target).

Assembly was over ALTAMURA at 8,000' and was satisfactory.

Rendezvous with the 460th Bomb Group was made at 0743B at 8,000' between ALTAMURA and GRAVINA, and with the 464th and 465th Bomb Groups over SPINAZZOLA at 0741B.

Rendezvous with the fighter escort, which consisted of P-38 and P-51 a/c was effected at 4550N1723E at 0938B. Fighters provided penetration cover, target cover and withdrawal cover. They left the formation at 4320N1650E at 1155B.

Six a/c returned prior to bombing.

Another a/c, #299, fell out of the formation at the IP because of three engines malfunctioning. Bombs were jettisoned at 1018B at 4750N1655E. As a/c left the formation, P-38s covered it until another group returning from the target was joined. This a/c returned to the base as the formation was landing. It is not considered as an early return.

A number of e/a, probably 25 to 50, apparently ME-109s, were seen at the IP and over the target area. Two ME-109s made unaggressive attacks on the low box of the second wave. Flak over the target was IAH.

30 a/c were over the target at 1035B (target time 1021B). 30 a/c dropped 59.4 tons of 40-M-47 clustered incendiaries from 22,750'. Of the 30 a/c dropping bombs to base and another returned 2 bombs to base after they had failed to release on the target.

Many dog fights between fighter cover and e/a over the target were reported by crew members. Several ME-109s were shot down by friendly fighters. One ME-109 being chased by a P-38 suddenly disintegrated at 1022B. One crew reported seeing 5 ME-109s shot down. Evidently, the sky was filled with fighter a/c both friendly and enemy. Crews were very enthusiastic in their praise of fighter cover. Some of the ME-109s seen were black with yellow markings, others were of a light blue color with red tails painted to resemble P-51s.

Only 2 ME-109s attacked the formation. As they dived on the low box of the first wave, S/Sgt George T. Coleman, left waist gunner of a/c #729, lead box, first wave, opened fire. at 800 yards. He claims to have damaged one e/a.

Return was made without incident. 30 a/c landed, mean landing time, 1326B. One a/e #132, landed at the FOGGIA main airfield with a wounded crew member. This a/c returned to base at 1525B.

There were no losses.

Route was flown as briefed.

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- 1 cy ea CG, AC of S, A-3, Fifteenth AF.
- 2 cys AC of S, A-2, Fifteenth AF.
- 1 cy 28th SCU, Fifteenth AF.
- 1 cy PRO, Fifteenth AF.
- 1 cy ea CO, AC of S, A-2, 5th, 47th, 49th, 304th bomb Wing.
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- 1 cy on CO, AC of S, A-1, A-2, A-3, 55th Bomb Wing.
- 1 cy ca Bombdr 0, PI, PRO, Stat, 55th Bomb Wing.
- 1 cy ca CO, S-3, ea Gp, 55th Bomb Wing.
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