

55BW Mission Summary No. 40, 6 Jun 44

1. General Summery. 01 6 June 1944, between 0500-0525B, 143 B-24 a/c of 146 scheduled took off to bomb the Ducia Romeno Oil Refinery et PLOESTI, RUMANIA. There were 16 early returns.

Group assemblies were made without incident, and Wing Rendezvous was effected as scheduled at 0617-0619B. Fighter escort was sighted at 0739B and rendezvous was made at 0750B. P-38s, P-47s and P-51s furnished penetration, target and withdrawal cover from (43 deg 49 min N - 19 deg 45 min E) to YUGOSLAV coast.

Of 116 a/c over target between 0913-1938B, 115 dropped 219 tons of 500 lb. GP bombs, fused .1, .01, .025, from 21,300'- 25,000'. 6 a/c jettisoned, 4 a/c returned bombs to base.

Results could not be determined, due to effective smoke screen, and are not believed to be good.

Flek at target varied from M to I and from Inaccurate to AH.

Up to 50 e/a were seen; 27-38 were encountered. Claims: 15-5-10.

11 a/c of the Wing were lost; 0 missing, 0 at friendly fields.

116 a/c landed between 1300-1332B.

Route was flown as briefed, with variations from IP to T by the 464th Bomb Group, and from T too AT by one 465th Bomb Group.

Weather: En route: Haze, scattered high clouds, 3/10 cumulus; base, 3,000'; visibility 15-20 miles. At target: 1/10 cumulus, base 4,000'; visibility, 15 miles. return: Haze and broken clouds, 2/10 cumulus.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 6 June 1944, at 0525 hours, 38 scheduled a/c took off to bomb the Dacia Romano Refinery at Ploesti.

The Group assembled over Ruva D. Puglia at 0600 hours. Line rendezvous with the 485th between Altamura end Gravina at 0608 hrs was without incident. Wing rendezvous was accomplished et 0617 hrs, the 460th leading the Wing. Fighter escort, P-38s and P-51s, contacted the Group at 0739 hours at (4349-1945), furnished penetration, target, and withdrawal cover. They loft the formation at 1253 hours at (4228-1826).

Four a/c returned early.

Two a/c returned bombs to base, two jettisoned in Adriatic.

From 24-25,000', 34 a/c dropped 65 tons of 500 lb GP bombs, .1N, & .01 & .025T fuses, on the primary target at 0917½ hours. One a/c

dropped 4 bombs at (4508-2434) due to rack malfunction, one a/c dropped 2 bombs in Adriatic because fuses fell out, one a/c returned 3 bombs due to rack malfunction and one a/c jettisoned 3 bombs in Adriatic due to release malfunction. Results: Upon reaching the target, the Group found an effective smoke screen totally obscuring the target. Bombs were dropped by the Pathfinder method. Although this equipment was not functioning properly, showing only a vague outline of the city and the oil refinery east of the briefed target, an estimated target position was bombed. A black smoke column rose through the smoke screen to the height of 15,000 feet.

IIH barrage type flak was experienced from the IP to the target area, the concentration of bursts being below the formation. Flak was also encountered at Leke Snagov.

Route was flown as briefed, Weather: enroute haze, scattered high clouds, 3/10 cumulus, base 3000', visibility 15-20 miles, Over target 1/10 cumulus, base 4000', visibility 15 miles, route back, haze and broken clouds, 2/10 cumulus.

No e/a were encountered although eight e/c were seen: 6 ME-109s north of Bucharest at 0930 hours, one FW-190 at 0923 hours in the same vicinity, one Ju-88 fifty miles west of Turnul Severin at 1015 hours. ME-109s were observed with the following markings: black fuselages, yellow noses and horizontal stabilizers.

34 a/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1315 hrs.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 6 June 1944 at 0515B hours, 35 B-24 a/c of 36 scheduled took off to bomb Dacia Romano Oil Refinery in PLOESTI, RUMANIA (PT).

Group assembly was accomplished in the area assigned, and was completed by 0556B hours. The two-group rendezvous was accomplished over ANDRIA at 0607B hours.

At Wing rendezvous this group was on course over Spinazzola at 0817B hours with the 465th Bomb Group.

Rendezvous with fighters was made at 0750B hours at 43 deg 43 min N 20 deg 30 min E for penetration, and withdrawal to the coast of YUGOSLAVIA. The fighters left the group 15 minutes before the IP and picked the group up again approximately 35 minutes off the target. During their absence the e/a attacked.

5 a/c returned early.

About 50 ee/a were seen between the hours of 0929 end 0952B hours at 45 deg 20 min N - 25 deg 50 min E, and 44 deg 45 min N - 25 deg 05 min E. The e/a were made up of 40 ME-109s and 8-10 FW-190s. Approximately 15-20 of these attacked bomber formation with others being engaged by fighter escort. The first attack came from out of the

sun at 12 o'clock and one o'clock line abreast, starting firing from 750 yards, pressing to within 75 yards of formation, diving under first attack unit, then breaking away to right and left, coming up through Easy and Fox boxes, then turning, made level attacks line astern at all boxes. They were very aggressive and acted like a suicide unit. Bombers claim 12 e/a destroyed, 3 probables and 2 damaged. Proper evaluation of these claims will be submitted later. Markings: ME-109s had yellow nose with silver fuselages. One was solid gray. 12 a/c were either holed by flak or enemy shell fire, 4 of these being disabled for over 24 hours.

Seven a/c failed to return.

Flak encountered was M to IAH from SIMINAI will clear of target area (44 deg 51 min - 23 deg 18 min E).

26 a/c were over target at 0938B hours. Four e/c being destroyed before reaching target. 52 tons of 500 GP (.1 and .025 fusing) were dropped from 24,500 feet. Target was well covered by smoke obstructing view of same. A few bombs hit a small town probably MIZIC. Other bombs hit in smoke-covered area near target while others dropping on the box leaders fell short. Observations are impossible due to smoke.

Route as briefed except from IP to target.

There was 1/10 cumulus, 15 miles visibility over target. Hazy scattered alto stratus and alto cirrus en route.

Return was without incident. 23 a/c landed at 1300B hours.

4. 465th Bomb Group. On 6 June 1944 at 0500 hours, 35 B-24s of 36 scheduled took off to bomb the Dacia Romano Oil Refinery at PLOESTI.

The Group assembly was at CANOSA at 0555 hours at 5,000 feet.

The Wing rendezvous was accomplished at 0619 at SPINAZZOLA at 8,000 feet.

Five a/c returned early.

Thirty e/c were over the target in two attack units, the first at 0914B at 23,500 feet and the second attack unit at 0926B hours at 21,300 feet. 29 a/c dropped 58 tons of 500 lb. GP bombs (.1 nose end mixed .01 end, .025 tail fusing). One a/c jettisoned its bombs after being hit with flak about three miles south of the target while in a spin and just before crashing.

26 a/c landed at 1332B hours (mean time). One a/c left the formation to circle a ditched a/c in the ADRIATIC and did not land until 1425B hours,

P-38 and P-51 escort was met at KRAGUJEVAC (44 deg 14 min N - 21 deg 12 min E) at 0750 and left at (43 deg 37 min N - 20 deg 00 min E) at 1104B hours. Escort, penetration, target cover and withdrawal cover was provided.

Encounters:

a. 12 to 18 ME-109s attacked from 6, 7 and 8 o'clock from oth high and low, singly, in pairs and in groups of four. Several of these planes passed under the formation and cut back again from 2 and 3 o'clock high.

b. 3 FW-190s attacked from 7 o'clock low, passing under the formation and cutting back in again from 3 o'clock much the same as the ME-109s.

c. 3 ME-110s attacked singly from 6 and 7 o'clock low.

The above attacks were all made at 20,000 to 22,000' and were all made in the target area.

The following claims are made: 5-4-5.

Flak was described as I/H from the CAMPINA PLOESTI road and over the city proper. The flak battery which was to be bombed by one ship from our group was active and firing from the left side of our formation. Flak was also encountered in the area of LUNGULERUL (44 deg 36 min N - 25 deg 40 min E). This was described as IAH.

Weather enroute was scattered to broken patches of alto stratus at 13,000 to 14,000 feet. Clear over target but heavy smoke screen covered entire target area.

Losses: One B-24, this Group, crashed and burned at 0920 just south of PLOESTI at 44 deg 43 min N - 25 deg 55 min E.

One B-24, this Group, was seen to have two engines feathered shortly after leaving the target area. Seven chutes were seen to leave the plane. This plane then began to fall behind the formation, but radio contact was maintained by the pilot with the lead ship until he informed the attack unit leader that he and the three remaining members of his crew were bailing out.

One B-24, this Group, was attacked by enemy fighters at 0942B hours and shot down in flames.

One B-24, this Group, (reason unknown) was ditched in the ADRIATIC at 1210B hours.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 6 June 1944, 35 B-24s of 36 scheduled took off to bomb Decia Romeno Oil Refinery, PLOESTI (PT).

Assembly was over ALTAMURA as scheduled at 6,000' at 0600 hours.

Rendezvous with the other Groups of the Wing was effected at 0608 - 0617 hours from ALTAMURA to GRAVINA to SPINAZZOLA at 6,000-8,000 feet.

Rendezvous with the fighter escort, which consisted of P-38s, P-47s and P-51s of the 306th Fighter Wing was effected at 0750 hours at approximately 43 deg 30 min N - 20 deg 20 min E. Escort provided target, penetration and withdrawal cover back to the YUGOSLAVIAN coast.

2 a/c returned early.

No e/a were seen on route to the target. Flek was first encountered past the IP and continued to build up from moderate to intense, mostly inaccurate, over the target.

Due to malfunction of bomb release mechanism in the lead a/c, bombs of this a/c were salvoed past the IP. Lead Ship maintained course from IP after malfunction of bomb release over the PT in order that other ships could bomb on target. Due to a very effective smoke screen, making identification of the target extremely difficult, most of the a/c of the first wave, and some of the second wave dropped bombs on a line from the IP to the target, some of the last bombs dropped being in the target area. In all, 26 a/c dropped 52 tons of 500 lb GP bombs, fused .1 nose and mixed .01 and .025 tail, in the area from the IP to the target, between 0913 and 0920 hours. Three a/c of the second wave succeeded in identifying PITESTI and dropped six tons of bombs on this target at 0938 hours, observing hits in the town. Two other a/c jettisoned bombs, one at 0927 hours at approximately 44 deg 36 min N - 25 deg 40 min E, near LINGULETUL, and the other at 1036 hours at approximately 44 deg 45 min N - 22 deg 05 min E. Result of bombing of PT was not observed, due to almost complete smoke screening of target area.

Weather on route and over target and return was slightly hazy, 3/10 overcast and 5/10 undercast.

About 15 e/a were seen in the target area and immediately beyond the target. These were 8 ME-109s, 6 FW-190s, and a twin-engined single tail fighter, probably a ME-210/410. None of these e/c attacked our formation, but several SEF were soon to attack another formation with unobserved results. The flak just before the target and over the target was moderate to intense, mostly inaccurate, heavy. Several very minor incidents of flak damage were sustained by the Group and one minor casualty, a slight wound of the mouth, was incurred by flak.

Return was made without incident by 31 s/c, mean landing time, 1300 hours. 1 a/c landed in BARI. No a/c were lost, and none are missing.

Route to the target was as briefed. After leaving the PT, part of the second wave proceeded to PITESTI and then returned as briefed.

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