

55BW Mission Summary No. 133, 20 Nov 44 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 20 November 1944, 103 B-24 a/c of 109 a/c scheduled took off between 0730-0745A to bomb the BLECHHAMMER South Synthetic Oil Refinery (GERMANY). There were 7 early returns.

Group assemblies were effected without incident and on time but two groups effected line rendezvous late. Two groups were over Wing rendezvous point on time, with the second combat unit 12 miles distant. Wing rendezvous was completed at the first turning point.

Fighter escort, consisting of P-38 a/c, was first seen at 0953A at 4347N-1631E. P-51 a/c appeared at IP and furnished additional target cover. Fighters departed formation at 1500A at 4357N -1626E. Escort gave excellent cover.

96 a/c were over Primary Target between 1227-1228½A, and 89 a/c dropped 176.25 tons of 500 lb RDK bombs, fused 75% .1N and .01, .025T; 25% long delay, from 22,000-24,500'. 2 a/c dropped 4 tons on targets of opportunity. 9 sortie a/c jettisoned 12.25 tons, 4 early returns jettisoned 4.5 tons. 1 sortie returned .5 tons, and 1 early return brought back 1.5 tons of bombs to base.

Flak at target was IAH. MAH was encountered at GYOR.

4-6 e/a were seen; 3 e/a were encountered by one group. No claims were made.

80 a/c were down at bases between 1612-1659A. 3 a/c were lost to flak, 4 a/c are missing, 9 a/c landed at friendly fields.

Deviations from briefed route are cited in group reports.

Weather: At take-off, 3/10 morning alto-stratus at 11,000'. Over ADRIATIC, 1/10 stratocumulus, tops 6,000' and 3-4/10 alto-stratus at 10,000'. From VIS to 4500N-1600E, 9/10 stratocumulus, tops 10,000'. 6-8/10 thin cirrus at 22,000'. From Lake BALATON north, 2-3/10 stratocumulus and 2-3/10 cirrus at 22,000'. At target, patchy alto-stratus and 7/10 cirrus at 21,000'; visibility 20 miles. Similar conditions on return; 5/10 cirrus at base on landing. Visibility for the route was variable, 15-30 milos.

Results: The plant was heavily damaged. Hits were scored on both injector houses, both compressor houses, and hits or near misses on two of the hydrogenation stalls. The boiler house received one near miss. It is probable that the plant will be temporarily out of action. Enough direct hits are visible on one of the compressor houses to cause a great deal of internal damage. The other was hit twice and under normal conditions can be expected to be out of action. The injector houses sustained fewer hits and one of them may be in usable condition. Damage to the hydrogenation stalls and boiler house is not extensive but may be enough to halt production. The damage to the

vital installations as a whole is believed to be enough to put the plant out of action until repairs to the vital installations are completed.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 20 Nov 44 at 0745A, 24 of 25 scheduled a/c were dispatched to bomb the BLECHHAMMER South O/R.

Group assembly accomplished without incident at 0823A. Both the 460th and 485th were late for rendezvous, the 460th being 5 minutes late arrived over line rendezvous point at 0836A. At this time the 485th was seen 10 miles south of line rendezvous point. The 460th paralleled the course of the 485th and rendezvous was accomplished a few minutes later. The two groups proceeded directly to Wing rendezvous at 0855A. Fighter escort, P-38s and P-51s, first seen at 0953A at 4347N-1631E, furnished penetration, target and withdrawal cover. They were last seen at 4657N-1702E at 1350A.

5 a/c returned early; 4 jettisoned 4.5 tons, 1 returned 1.5 tons of bombs to base. 1 a/c, thinking it was above bombline, made a bomb run on the M/Y of a city which later proved to be ZAGREB, YUGOSLAVIA.

As formation approached IP, the lead group called that they were going to make a 360° turn to gain altitude. Turn was made and formation came back over IP for a visual bomb run at 24,500'. 19 a/c were over target at 1228½A and 15 a/c dropped 29.25 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, .1N, .01 & .025T fusing (½ delay). As a result of the turn, the formation was somewhat spread out at bombs away, resulting in a scattered bomb pattern. Target largely smoke-obscured by both previous bombing and a smoke screen. Lead a/c of first attack unit did not use auto pilot due to malfunction, but leader of second attack unit did use auto pilot. Due to rack malfunction, 1 a/c had 3 bombs hung up and jettisoned 10 miles south of target. 2 a/c did not drop on target due to rack malfunctions and jettisoned 5 miles past target. 2 other a/c had engine trouble enroute to target and jettisoned at 4957N-1755E and 4812N-1732E, respectively.

IAH flak experienced over and past target for 4½ minutes.

Route was flown as briefed except for minor deviations to 1 mile south of IP where a 360° turn was made to gain 2,000' altitude.

PFF equipment worked satisfactorily and was used as a navigational aid.

17 a/c returned to base with mean landing time of 1612A. 1 a/c which landed at friendly field with 3 wounded crew members has since returned. 1 a/c is missing.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 20 Nov 44, beginning at 0730A, 28 a/c scheduled and 1 spare took off to bomb BLECHHAMMER South O/R.

Group assembly and rendezvous with 465th as prescribed and the two groups arrived over rendezvous point 1 minute early. The 485th and 460th Groups were approximately 12 miles to rear as Wing formation proceeded on course, and pulled up into proper position at first TP (4200N-1620E).

28 a/c over target at 1228A (briefed target time 1215A), and 26 a/c dropped 51.5 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, fused .1N, .01 & .025T, and 25 6-72 hr long delay, from 22,000'. 1 a/c returned early, leaving formation at 1129A (4814N-1731E) when #2 engine had to be feathered, and bombed flak installations on west side of GYOR, AUSTRIA, at 1139A, altitude 17,000', heading 195°, two tons dropped. 1 a/c jettisoned .5 ton between IP and target when navigator accidentally hit salvo lever. Balance of bomb load of this a/c was released on target. 1 a/c jettisoned 2 tons at 1243A (5000N-1835E), because the select switch would not function over target and a/c was low on gas. 1 a/c jettisoned .2 ton at IP when select lever was pushed beyond select position due to a jolt caused by prop wash.

Bombing was visual and observation of target was only slightly restricted due to smoke screen which was ineffective. Wing leader upon reaching PFF IP (ZUCKMAWTEL) executed a 360° left turn and took up bomb run from the visual IP (OBER GLOGAU). Axis of attack was 72° (briefed axis 102°). Leader of first attack unit bombed on PDI as C-1 auto pilot was inoperative, and second attack unit leader also bombed on PDI.

Flak at target was IAH and of 5 minutes duration. A/c attacking GYOR encountered MAH for 2 minutes. 4 ME-109s. were observed at 1243A st 4942N-1844E at 16,000' directly under formation and on an opposite heading.

45 P-38s of the 1st Fighter Group first observed st 1055A at 4643N-1648E escorted formation to target. 30 P-51s were in target area and both types of escort were with formation on withdrawal until 1500A at 4357N-1626E. Escort was excellent.

25 a/c landed at base between 1600-1630A. 1 a/c is missing. The pilot called group leader and advised that 2 engines were inoperative and that a third was erratic. Position of a/c given at 4330N-1630E at 1518A. A heading for VIS was requested and given. 2 a/c landed at friendly field.

Route flown as briefed except that from VIS to HUNGARIAN border formation was 25 miles to left of course and at PFF IP a 360° turn to the left ending at the visual IP was made.

4. 465th Bomb Group. On 20 Nov 44 at 0742A, 23 a/c of 27 scheduled took off to bomb the BLECHHAMMER South O/R.

Group assembly accomplished at 0825A at 5,000'. Wing assembly accomplished at 0841A at 5,000'. Escort of P-38s intercepted formation

st 1100A in Lake BALATON area and a second escort called formation at 1200A near target area, reporting they were 10 minutes late but would make contact as soon as possible. Second escort joined near IP. Escort departed at 1500A near YUGO coast.

1 a/c returned early; the 2 delayed-action bombs jettisoned in ADRIATIC at 4230N-1630E and remaining 6 returned to base.

3 SEF with fixed landing gear encountered by a lone a/c in target area at 1230A at 23,000'. These e/a made an aggressive pass from high at 6 o'clock in line astern and the gunners began to fire at them. P-51s came in at once and drove the attacking a/c away.

No markings were visible and no claims were made. 2 or 3 a/c believed to be jet-propelled were seen at 1440A at 16,700' at 4440N-1626E. 2 parallel, intermittent vapor trails were seen coming from each a/c. Vapor trails seemed to come out in short bursts or puffs. A/c were moving back and forth in a patrol-like fashion, at a distance, and made no attempt to attack. No markings were visible.

Flak at target was IAH. Bombers did not rally as briefed due to fact that lead a/c was shot down, and as a result Able box was disorganized after bombs away. Lead a/c of Beker box had its rudder cable destroyed by flak and was unable to make turn off the target, so entire box flew through the main concentration of flak. This probably accounts for report that flak was more intense and accurate than ever encountered before at this target. Second attack unit rallied as briefed and did not encounter as much flak as the first attack unit. Crews reported several barrages of rapid-fire flak which was described as a series of about 14-16 almost simultaneous bursts at the rate of 2 bursts a second, which suggests the possibility of multi-gun batteries.

22 a/c over target at 1227A at 23,000' and dropped 44 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, .1N, .01T fusing. As formation approached the target, they cut short of the IP at 22,200' and made a 360° turn and continued to climb to 23,000', the briefed altitude for the attack. Formation leader called 464th leader and told him of his plan to make a 360° turn, but did not give reason for making it. As formation started on bomb run, leader of Able box was hit by flak and peeled out of formation seconds before bombs away. Deputy lead a/c took group over target. Smoke screen obscured target until the last 40-50 seconds. It is believed that a PFF run was started by lead a/c, but deputy bombardier who took over in the last few seconds sighted the refinery through the smoke and was able to make a visual run, although the briefed aiming point was not sighted. Second attack unit leader also bombed visually using A-5 pilot. Formation was only partially broken up despite 2 a/c ablaze and falling apart and another badly damaged and falling out of formation.

18 a/c landed at base at 1630A. 3 a/c did not return, while the crew of a fourth bailed out over or near the Spur. A/c piloted by group leader destroyed by flak at target when it burst into flame and left wing came off. 1 chute was seen. 1 other a/c destroyed by flak at target, having blown up in air. No chutes were seen. Third a/c hit by flak had 2 engines smoking but maintained altitude and radioed heading for nearest safe area. It was last seen losing altitude rapidly but apparently under control. Of the crew which bailed at the Spur, 8 members were reported safe at time of this report.

Route was flown generally north of briefed route, but was south of IP when a 360° turn was made to north before bombing. The scheduled route back to base was flown.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 20 Nov 44 at 0740A, 27 of 28 a/c scheduled took off to bomb the BLECHHAMMER South Oil Refinery.

Group assembled at 0820A. and led 460th, over line rendezvous point at 0831A at 7,000'.

Enroute to scheduled Wing rendezvous the Group Leader heard the 464th and 465th Groups calling that they would be 3 minutes early at rendezvous point. Formation turned to right, keeping the other groups in sight, and joined them approximately halfway between rendezvous point and the Spur at 0841A. Wing order of flight was 465th, 464th, 485th and 460th Groups.

At 1000A, approximately 40 P-38s joined formation at 4412N-1625E. They departed at 1420A at 4530N-1635E. Several P-51s were seen over target area.

There were no early or prior returns.

From TRNAVA the formation deviated to right from briefed course, missing MARH SCHOLBERG and IP. A 360° turn to left was made at 5026N-1728E and bomb run begun on PFF. PFF equipment worked in excellent manner and picked up target without difficulty. Shortly after the 60° sighting angle had been given the bombardier the formation broke into the open and target was identified. Bombing was completed by visual means using the C-1.

27 a/c over target at 1237A (target time 1215A). 26 a/c dropped 38.5 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, long-delay fuses. 1 of the 26 a/c returned 2 regular fused bombs to base. 1 other a/c jettisoned 8 bombs at 1228A at 5030N-1730E after 2 turbos had malfunctioned.

No e/a were seen or encountered. IAH flak encountered over target for 6 minutes.

The first a/c to land at 1600A had a flat tire and blocked the runway for several minutes. At 1621A landing was resumed. 20 a/c were down at 1659A. Last a/c made an excellent landing with a flat nose

wheel. In addition to the 20 a/c mentioned above, 8 a/c landed at friendly fields:

A/c #932 landed et PANTANELLA at 1605A; returning to base at 1730A.

A/c #277 landed at VIS at 1610A; returning to base at 1830A.

A/c #829 landed at BIFARNO et 1600A; returning to base at 1850A.

A/c #779 landed at TORRETTO at 1622A; returning to base at 1850A.

A/c #446 landed at FALCONARA and will remain there for repairs.

A/c #997 landed at AMENDALA and has not returned to base. 1 a/c is missing. It was last seen as formation rallied from the target, at which time it was lagging.

Route flown deviated from route briefed. Axis of attack was 65°.

Group leader reported an excellent Wing formation.