

55BW Mission Summary No. 108, 23 Sept 44 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 23 Sept 1944, 118 B-24 a/c were scheduled, and 125 a/c (118 scheduled plus 7 spares) took off between 0725-0749A to bomb bridge targets (see Results for identification) in Northern ITALY. One spare returned; there was 1 early return (123 sorties).

Group assemblies and line rendezvous were effected as ordered, with difficulty caused by unfavorable cloud condition. Except for change in order of flight caused by delay due to unavoidable cloud conditions, Wing rendezvous was effected as ordered. On this mission there was no fighter escort.

123 a/c over targets (Primary Targets 1107-1117A; Alternate Targets at 1133A and 11404A, and 120 a/c dropped 278.5 tons of bombs as follows: 126.5 tons on TAGLIAMENTA CASARSA RR Bridge; 79.5 tons on PONTE DI PIAVE; 37.5 tons on LATISANA RR Bridge; and 35 tons on PINZANO RR Bridge. Of total tonnage, 60 tons were 2,000 lb RDX, 24.5 tons were 1,000 lb RDX, and 193.5 tons were 1,000 lb GP bombs. Fusings were .1N and non-delay T. Bombing was from 13,500-14,600'. 1 sortie a/c jettisoned 1 ton. 4 sortie a/c returned 6.5 tons, and 1 early return brought back to base 2.5 tons of bombs.

Results: Clouds prevent assessment of results on the LATISANA, CASARSA and PINZANO rail bridges. The SAN DONA DI PIAVE was severely damaged. The PONTE DI PIAVE bridges received several direct hits and near misses.

There was no flak enroute or at targets. No e/a were seen or encountered.

123 a/c were down at bases between 1335-1401A, none lost, none missing, and none at friendly fields.

Route flown as briefed.

Weather: At bases, 2-5/10 stratocumulus, tops 4,000'. Enroute, 5-6/10 alto-stratus and 6-7/10 cirrus over ADRIATIC. At targets, 7-9/10 alto-cumulus. Return, reverse of route to target. Visibility 10-15 miles.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 23 Sept 44, at 0740A, 31 scheduled a/c were dispatched to bomb the TAGLIAMENTA/CASARSA RR Bridge, ITALY.

Group assembly in original area on time, and rendezvous with 485th also on time. In position, 460th followed lead group through an extra turn which brought both to Wing rendezvous slightly late.

31 a/c over target at 1113A. From 13,500', 25 a/c dropped 49 tons 2000 lb mixed RDX and GP bombs, and 5 a/c dropped 11 tons of 1000 lb GP bombs. Target cloud-obscured during last 35 seconds of bomb run. Bombs released on synchronization already set up. Auto pilot was used

by both units. Due to reck malfunctions, 1 a/c jettisoned 1 2000 lb bomb in a field 3 minutes before target, and 1 a/c returned 2 2000 lb bombs to base.

Route flown as briefed.

31 a/c returned to base, mean landing time 1345A.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 23 Sept 44 at 0725A, 28 scheduled a/c and 3 spares took off to bomb the PINZANO S RR Bridge, ITALY.

Group form-up accomplished in a highly satisfactory manner under adverse weather conditions, and Group and Wing rendezvous as ordered, with exception that this Group was on course 1 minute late. Wing formation described as loose but satisfactory, weather considered. 1 a/c returned early. All spare a/c completed mission.

30 a/c over target at 1117A. 14 a/c dropped total of 35 tons of bombs from 14,000'. Group Leader finding solid overcast completely obscuring PT, signaled indicating that First Alternate Target PIAVE/PONTE DI PIAVE RR Bridge, would be attacked, and formation set course for SACILE, IP for the alternate. 30 a/c over First Alternate at 1140/. and 15 e/c dropped 37 tons of bombs from 14,000'. Axis of attack 1920 (briefed axis 190°). All bombs were 1000 lb GP. A total of 5.5 tons returned to base.

Recapitulation:

Dropped on Primary	35.0 tons
Dropped on 1st Alternate	37.0 tons
Returned to base	<u>5.5 tons</u>
Total (31 a/c	77.5 tons

Bombing visual. Cloud coverage at IP was 7-8/10 and target obscured until formation reached ODERZO (4547N-1229E), at which time overcast broke up sufficiently to make target visibility good. Both attack unit leaders bombed First Alternate on Auto Pilot. First attack unit leader used C-1 and second attack unit leader used A-5.

Results: Several direct hits, and near misses were scored on the PONTE DI PIAVE rail and highway bridge.

No enemy opposition was encountered.

30 a/c returned to base between 1348-1414A.

Route flown as briefed.

4. 465th Bomb Group. On 23 Sept 1944 at 0738A, 31 scheduled a/c took off to bomb the TALIAMENTA/CASARSA By-pass RR Bridge.

Group assembled at 0837A at 10,000' and Wing rendezvous accomplished at 0852A at 10,000'. No escort scheduled. No early returns.

No flak encountered enroute or at target, and no enemy aircraft were seen.

31 a/c over target et 1112A at 14,600' and 31 a/c dropped 24.5 tons of 1000 lb RDX bombs and 42 tons of 2000 lb RDX bombs, a total of 66.5 tons on target. Bombing done visually with lead bombardier sighting through openings in clouds with target disappearing under clouds for the last 40 seconds of bomb run, so that bombs were dropped on previous synchronization. PDI used because of failure of A-5 on lead aircraft.

Recapitulation:

1000 lb RDX dropped	24.5 tons
2000 lb RDX dropped	<u>42.0 tons</u>
Total	66.5 tons

Results: Several direct hits visible on the CASARSA highway by-pass, but clouds prevent complete assessment.

31 s/c landed at 1346A, mean landing time.

Route flown as briefed except for deviations from briefed axis on bomb run made in attempt to locate target through clouds.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 23 Sept 44 at 0749A, 28 scheduled and 4 spare a/c took off to bomb the LATISANA RR Bridge in Northern ITALY.

Group assembled at 7,500' at 0840A. Wing rendezvous et 0853A at 7,500'. One spare a/c returned at 0845A; other 3 flew with second wave. There were no early returns.

31 a/c over target at 1107A; 13 a/c dropped 37.5 tons 1000 lb GP bombs from 14,000'. 1 a/c returned 5 bombs to base because bomber dier's error (failed to drop with formation). 17 a/c over 2nd Alternate at 1133A and dropped 42.5 tons 1000 lb GP bombs from 12,400'.

The formation located IP successfully but from that point on in to target the area was covered by 8-9/10 cumulus between 4,000' and 11,000'. The first wave bombed the PT and rallied left as briefed. Second wave obtained radio permission from Group leader to make a run on the 2nd Alternate, PIAVE/S DONA DI PIAVE RR Bridge. First wave flew to approximately 4530N-1250E and made two 360° turns while the second wave bombed. Formation made a PFF approach on PT, applying visual corrections and when the sight was set up, bombs were dropped when rate expired. Second wave bombed visually. Neither wave used auto pilots as they were inoperative.

Results: Two direct hits and several near misses severely damaged the eastern portion of the SAN DONA DI PIAVE rail bridge. Direct hits and near misses visible on the east approach.

No e/a were seen or encountered. 3 bursts of flak noted by a/c of first wave as they rallied from PT.

31 a/c landed at 1335A, mean landing time.

Route flown as briefed.