

55BW Mission Summary No. 89, 24 Aug 44 (Cont'd).

Fighters last observed at 1400B at YUGOSLAV coast.

1. On 24 Aug 44, 117 B-24 a/c of 117 a/c scheduled took off from 0717-0751B to attack the FANTO O/R at PARDUBICE, CZECHOSLOVAKIA. There were 5 early returns.

Group assemblies were made in briefed area with Wing rendezvous at 0833-0837B. P-38 escort met at 1020B at 4500N-1500E; provided penetration escort, departing at target. 35 P-51s joined at 1100B at 4623N-1453E. Additional P-51s were observed after target time. Fighters last observed at 1400B at YUGOSLAV coast.

No heavy flak was encountered at target. Flak observed or encountered at:

ZELTWEG	SAH
STEYR	M-IAH
ST. VALENTIN	IIH
4910N-1500E	MAH

One a/c lost to flak over STEYR.

70-80 e/a, composed mostly of ME-109s and FW-190s, were observed, with 35-50 encounters. The encounters took place between rally point and LINZ-STEYR area. Attacks were very aggressive. E/a in initial attack fired rockets. Attacks were of 40 minutes duration. Enemy a/c were mostly battleship grey or dirty white. A few FW-190s with inline engines were observed.

4 a/c are known to be lost to e/a, with 2 a/c missing, 1 B-24 ditched off PIANOSA ISLAND, and 1 a/c abandoned after take off due to fire; crew safe.

From 1218-1221B at 20,000-23,000', 110 a/c dropped 274.25 tons 500 lb RDX bombs, .1 and .025 fusing. 2½ tons returned to base.

Results:

460 Gp - Photos show FANTO O/R, PARDUBICE, to have received numerous strikes in the target. Direct hits were scored on the distillation buildings, oil filtration and wax separation buildings, boiler house, oil treatment plant, and numerous oil storage tanks for intermediate and finished products. Eighteen separate explosions resulting in huge fires were definitely seen and several others indicated. The vast majority of bombs fell directly on the target.

464 Gp - Photos show FANTO O/R to have received several strikes, but smoke obscures their exact location. Incidental damage was caused to rail facilities in the area of the target.

465 Gp - Photos show FANTO O/R to have received several strikes, but smoke obscures exact location. One definite explosion resulting in an oil fire noted in vicinity of the distillation unit for lubricating oil, but previous fires prevent definite location. Incidental damage caused to rail facilities in target area.

485 Gp - Photos show FANTO O/R to have received several strikes, but smoke obscures exact location. One oil fire, probably from a tank car, was seen, and rail facilities of plant were damaged.

The primary objective of the attack was the destruction of the distillation units. Of the three present two were definitely hit and hits are probable on the third. The secondary objectives, the boiler houses, were both probably hit. Four direct hits are evident on one of them and hits are indicated on the other. Numerous oil stores were consumed by flame. Numerous hits were scored on other vital installations of the refinery.

Reconnaissance photographs show a distillation building, the lubricating oil filtration and wax separation plant, several oil storage tanks, and other buildings on the eastern side of the refinery to be in flames. Smoke from these fires prevents observation of the remainder of the refinery.

Weather: Clear over ADRIATIC; visibility 15 miles. Overcast over DINARIC ALPS at 9,000'. From ALPS to target 1-3/10 cirrus. Visibility throughout 15-20 miles. On return weather the same with 1-2/10 cumulus at base.

102 a/c landed from 1530-1600B. 1 a/c landed at a friendly field.

Route flown approximately as briefed.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 24 Aug 44, at 0725B 31 scheduled a/c dispatched to bomb FANTO O/R at PARDUBICE, CZECHOSLAVIA.

1 a/c returned early; 1 a/c lost due to engine fire after take-off, crew safe. 29 a/c dropped 72 tons of bombs at 20,000'. Due to compact formation, the gunners of this group were able to shoot at a/c attacking another unit. Claims: 3-1-1.

Route was flown as briefed.

29 a/c returned to base, mean landing time 1540B.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 24 Aug 44, 28 a/c took off at 0732B to bomb PARDUBICE O/R, CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

There were 3 early returns.

25 a/c were over the target at 1218B, and dropped 62½ tons of bombs from 21,800'.

2 or 3 e/a were observed in target area, being ME-109s. 30-40 e/a, predominantly ME-109s with a few FW-190s, attacked at 1235B, in vicinity of 4915N-1510E, at 18,000'. Attacks were made in waves of 2 to 5 a/c from 6 o'clock level, going through entire formation and breaking off to both right and left. The e/a made only one attack.

Claims: 16-7-5.

4 a/c failed to return, 3 being lost to e/a, and 1 missing.

20 a/c landed at base between 15203 and 1555B.

4. 465th Bomb Group. On 24 Aug 44, 30 scheduled a/c took off at 0717B to attack the FANTO O/R at PARDUBICE, CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

There were no early returns.

29 a/c over the target at 1221B at 23,000', dropping 72.25 tons of bombs.

25 a/c landed at base at 1600B and 1 a/c landed at base at 1725B after stopping for refueling at the Island of VIS. 3 a/c were lost under following conditions: a/c #29424 piloted by Captain CLARK reported by 464th Gp to have been shot down by e/a at 4910N-1510E at 1240B, and 5 chutes seen after the attack. A/C had lost an engine at IP and joined 464th Gp shortly before that group was attacked by e/a. A/C #78358 piloted 1st Lt. LENGVENIS was hit by flak at 1250B in the vicinity of ST. VALENTIN and although 1 crew reports seeing 3 chutes from this a/c, a majority of the crews report they do not believe anyone got out. A/C #51020 was ditched in the ADRIATIC at 1400B off PIANOSA ISLAND. Another a/c from our formation circled the ditched a/c for one hour and observed 2 men in the water with mae wests. Several rafts were adrift but no crew members were seen, although the circling crew reports that there may have been more in the water. The ditched a/c did not call the group leader and complain of any trouble until he stated that he was ditching. He was instructed by the leader to call Big Fence and give the approximate location. 4 a/c received slight flak damage.

10 a/c attempted photographs.

Route was flown as briefed to the target and on the rally, but the lead group rallied too sharp and too fast, thereby throwing the 464th and 465th slightly behind. After the fighter attack south of the target, the lead group took up a course 8 miles West of the briefed course to bring the formation in the range of the flak in the STEYR area.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 24 Aug 44, at 0751B, 28 a/c scheduled took off to bomb PARDUBICE O/R.

1 a/c returned prior to bombing.

27 a/c were over the target et 1219B. 27 a/c dropped 67.5 tons of bombs at 21,000'.

About 30-40 e/a were seen between rally point and LINZ, AUSTRIA, all of which were ME-109s and FW-190s. 30 of these attacked and the remainder were engaged by the fighter escort. The first attack was in mass formation, on the entire Wing formation, from 4 to 6 o'clock, some level and some high. The fighters then broke up and attacked singly and in pairs. Attack lasted from 1221B to approximately 1300B; all attacks were aggressive. Escort joined formation before target and came within 1,000', at which time they were fired upon by Nature Group, which caused them to scatter and climb to higher altitude. Just before the mass attack of e/a came on our formation, the P-38s and P-51s were engaged by a number of e/a at approximately 25,000'. Our formation claims 5 FW-190s and 4 ME-109s destroyed; 1 FW-190 and 3 ME-109s probables; 1 FW-190 and 2 ME-109s damaged.

1 bomber is missing after being damaged by e/a. E/A fired rockets into formation in mass attack, then used 20 mm on other attacks.

Return made without incident. 26 a/c landed, mean landing time 1530B.

Route flown as briefed.