AUGUST, 1944

A tabular view of the Wing's missions in August is as follows:

Serial Number (June)	Mission Number (Current)	Date	Target	Groups Participation			
1.	73	2 Aug 44	GENOA, ITALY	460	464	465	485
2.	74	3 Aug 44	FRIEDRICHSHAFEN, GERMANY	460	464	465	485
3.	75	6 Aug 44	MIRAMAS, France	460			
			LE PONTET, FRANCE		464		
			AVIGNON, FRANCE			465	
			TARASCON, FRANCE				485
4.	76	7 Aug 44	BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY	460	464	465	485
5.	77	9 Aug 44	BUDAPEST, HUNGARY		464	465	485
6.	78	10 Aug 44	PLOESTI, RUMANIA	460	464		485
7.	79	12 Aug 44	SETE, FRANCE, Area	460	464	465	485
8.	80	13 Aug 44	SETE, FRANCE, Arca	460	464	465	485
9.	81	14 Aug 44	ST. TROPEZ, FRANCE	460	464	465	485
10	82	15 Aug 44	BOURG ST. ANDEOL, FRANCE	460			
			DONZERE, FRANCE		464		
			LE TEIL, FRANCE			465	
			PONT ST. ESPRIT, FRANCE				485
11.	83	16 Aug 44	FRIEDRICHSHAFEN, GERMANY	460	464	465	485
12.	84	18 Aug 44	PLOESTI, RUMANIA	460	464	465	485
13.	85	20 Aug 44	CZECHOWICZ, POLAND	460	464	465	
14.	86	21 Aug 44	NIS, YUGOSLAVIA	460	464	465	485
15.	87	22 Aug 44	KORNEUBURG, AUSTRIA	460	464	465	485
16.	88	23 Aug 44	MARKERSDORF, AUSTRIA	460	464	465	485
17.	89	24 Aug 44	PARDUBICE, CZECH.	460	464	465	485
18.	90	25 Aug 44	PROSTEJOV, CZECH.		464	465	485
19.	91	26 Aug 44	FERRARA, ITALY	460		465	
20.	92	27 Aug 44	BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY	460	464	465	485
21.	93	28 Aug 44	SZONY, HUNGARY	460	464	465	485
22.	94	29 Aug 44	MORAVSKA OSTRAVA, CZECH.	460	464	465	485

During the month of August the Wing flew 22 missions against targets in GERMANY (6), FRANCE (5), CZECHOSLOVAKIA (3), ITALY (2), RUMANIA (2), HUNGARY (2), YUGOSLAVIA (1), and POLAND (1).

These missions were against the following types of targets: (1) Oil, 9 missions; (2) Industry, 2 missions; (3) Counter Air, 4 missions; (5) Communications, 5 missions; 10 targets; (6) Missions in participation in the invasion of Southern FRANCE, 4 missions; 20 targets.

A total of 2,435 B-24 a/c were dispatched during the month, of which 2,109 bombed the assigned target or target of opportunity. This established a percentage of effective sorties of 86.6, the highest rate of effectiveness to date. 5,135 tons of bombs were dropped, 85% of this tonnage on assigned target or target of opportunity, both these figures being the highest to date.

Of the 2,435 a/c dispatched only 145 returned early, an average of 6%, as against 9.6% in July, thus reflecting a marked improvement in maintenance.

While the 55th Bombardment Wing, which had reached the first place in the Fifteenth Air Force in bombing accuracy in July, yielded first place and dropped to second place at the end of the month of August, it held the lead for the period between 13 July through 26 August. Indeed, in percentage of bombs dropped within 600 feet of briefed aiming point, the Wing held first place throughout the month of August, with a percentage of 30.9, the 47th Wing being second with 26%. The 55th Bombardment Wing's average for bombs dropped within 1,000 feet of the briefed aiming point was 48.4%, itself a higher percentage than that achieved in July (36%). A gratifying factor in the high standard of bombing accuracy is the improvement of two of the Bombardment Groups of the Wing, whose averages increased from 28.4% to 39.9%, and from 18.4% to 46.1%, respectively.

A detail of interest in the months operations is that between 20 and 29 August the Wing flew missions on consecutive days, totaling 10. This is more than merely a point of interest: it is indicative of the high standard of maintenance.

Without question the major strategic effort during the month of August was directed against oil targets. In these the 55th Bombardment Wing achieved notable success. Its part in the concerted attack, carried out over a period of several days, against the refineries at PLOESTI was a small one, only two of its missions being against the Astro Romano plant on 10 August and the Romano Americano plant on 18 August. In the former attack the anticipated smoke screen was effective, requiring the use of Pathfinder and Offset bombing methods. The attack was successful. The smoke screen on 18 August was less effective, and the 55th Bombardment Wing on this occasion shared with other Wings of the Air Force the distinction of effecting the final destruction of this important objective, meriting a commendation by the Commanding General.

The attacks on both North (7 August) and South (27 August) synthetic oil refineries at BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY, were conspicuously successful. At BLECHHAMMER North the effective smoke screen again necessitated the use of Pathfinder equipment and Offset method, Post attack reconnaissance demonstrated the effectiveness of the Wing's bombing. At BLECHHAMMER South the smoke screen was less troublesome and bombing was visual, checked with Offset method – post attack reconnaissance showed a scene of devastation.

The attacks of PLOESTI and BLECHHAMMER completed the taking out of the Axis oil plants of major size and importance. The strategic plan thereupon passed to smaller targets, the objective being utterly to deprive the enemy of his oil resources. These targets included both refineries and storage tanks. Against these smaller targets, the harder to hit, the Wing's standard of bombing accuracy was of the highest practical utility. The attacks on PARDUBICE and SZONY were examples of the most effective precision bombing, the excellence of which is the only factor which relegates the results attained against CZECHOWICE and KORNEUBURG to a less distinguished degree of exemplary bombing, for the only difference in those examples is that one or two Bombardment Groups accomplished an equal degree of destruction while others secured less compact patterns.

Against the two targets at FRIEDRICHSHAFEN, GERMANY, which were attacked in August (the Manzell aircraft components factory and the Ober Raderach chemical works), the Wing completed the round of three targets in that city which were attacked with total destruction. When, on 3 and 16 August, Manzell and Ober Raderach were attacked with equal success, the 55th Bombardment Wing achieved a distinction held by no other bombardment wing in the USSAAF in Europe. The point of distinction is that targets in FRIEDRICHSHAFEN had been attacked by units of the Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces, with varying degrees of damage secured, but only the 55th Bombardment Wing on three successive missions to these targets (one with only 3 of the 4 Bombardment Groups participating) effectually took out its targets, with 75%-95% total destruction. In these missions it appears to be the inescapable conclusion that the tactical policies and the personal leadership of Colonel George R. Acheson had their effectiveness demonstrated in that ultimate test: victory in combat.

In the missions in which counter-air objectives were targets a high degree of success was secured, with the more conspicuous result being attained at BUDAPEST Tokol and PROSTEJOV A/Ds; results at NIS and MARKERSDORF would be regarded as good and are of less note only because of the excellence of the results in the overall operations of the month.

In the attacks of communications and shipping the result at one target, the GENOA Harbor Installations (Mission No. 73, 2 August) was so remarkable as to overshadow the generally excellent results gained against other targets of the same category. The score of bombing accuracy on this mission was 65.3% of bombs falling within 1,000 feet of briefed aiming point. The 465th Bombardment Group scored 84.5%. The 460th Bombardment Group's aggregate score was 84.4%, but when this figure is broken down it is seen that the second attack unit, while dropping 95.8% of its bombs within 2,000 feet, secured 68.8% within 1,000 feet, which -- itself a gratifying average -- brought the Group's average to the figure of 84.4, for the first attack unit achieved the unsurpassable record of 100% of its bombs falling within 1,000 feet.

Equally successful and possibly more interesting were missions in support of the invasion of Southern FRANCE. On 12 August 1944 Colonel Acheson, Wing Commander, Lt. Col. Melcher, A-3, and Major Riddle, A-2, attended a special briefing on these operations. It then appeared that Mission No. 75, 6 August, was related to this operation. At this time, exercising admirable judgment and initiative, Lt. Col. J. P. Tomhave, Wing Executive, who was pilot of the lead aircraft of the 460th Bombardment Group, saw that the bridge assigned as primary target had been destroyed (it was later learned that it had been destroyed a few hours previously by the Tactical Air Force); he therefore led his Group to an alternate target, the MIRAMAS Marshalling Yard and attacked it successfully. On this mission bridges at AVIGNON and TARASCON were successfully attacked – the value of this appearing later when the defeated German forces were blocked at these points in their retreat.

For, three days, 12-14 August inclusive, targets were gun positions in the SETE and ST. TROPEZ areas (the latter one of the bridgehead positions where ground troops were landed on 15 August). These operations had many factors of interest, justifying analysis and discussion. In each of the two areas there were eight coastal gun positions to be attacked. The tactical plan adopted was to have each set of four successively bombed by two Bombardment Groups, with each of the two attack units of the two Groups attacking its own individual target. The Bombardment Groups in line of flight were brought to the same Initial Point (a coordinate at sea) where, successively, the attack units of the two Groups bombing each set of four gun positions separated, each on its own prescribed axis. Conversely the prescribed rallies brought each unit back to its IP where the Wing again took its tactical formation. The success of the plan was gratifying; timing was as ordered, and the bombing by attack units was accurate. On 12 August, at the 4 SETE gun positions, Group scores were respectively 74.6%, 54.3%, 86.9% and 74.2% for a Wing average of 72.5%, the highest in the Air Force. On 13 August, against targets also at SETE, the figures were 93%, 74.2%, 90.3% and 60.2%; aggregate total for the Wing, 79.4%, far above that of the Air Force average or the score of the next Wing. The record on 14 August, against the ST. TROPEZ guns, was less impressive, one Bombardment Group scoring 81.6% to bring the Wing average to 45.6%.

On 15 August, D-Day for the invasion, each Bombardment Group of the Wing was assigned a highway bridge over the RHONE River, and each was successfully attacked The 460th Group scored 55.5%; the 464th, 52.7%; the 465th, 69.9%; and the 485th, 75.4%. The objective of the attack, to deny the use of these bridges to the enemy for transferring troops West to reinforce his troops on the beachheads, was fully achieved. Further, the destruction of these bridges was a serious hindrance to the enemy in his subsequent retreat.

Figures already cited in discussion of operations indicate the standard of bombing accuracy during the period covered by this Installment. Other high scores were achieved. For example, at

CZECHOWICE the 460th Bombardment Group scored 79.2%, and at PARDUBICE the same Group scored 81%. The 464th Bombardment Group scored 57.4% at PROSTEJOV, 50% at KORNEUBURG, 52.7% at DONZERE, and 46.7% at FRIEDRICHSHAFEN Manzell. Scores of the 465th Group not cited above include 72.7% at BUDAPEST Tokol on 9 August, 69.9% at LE TEIL bridge, and 56.1% at SZONY.

The 485th Bombardment Group secured its best scores, besides those already cited, at TARASCON bridge (48.7%).

An obvious trend is perceptible in the analysis of our missions with reference to encounters with enemy aircraft. The peak of the number of encounters with enemy aircraft was reached in June, when there were 481. There was a slight decline in July, when 468 enemy aircraft were encountered (13 less than in June). The decline in August was pronounced: only 149 enemy aircraft were encountered, a decrease of 319. These figures fit perfectly into the generalization already tentatively held: that the enemy at first gradually and then rapidly declined in his capability to oppose bomber formations with fighter aircraft, and bear out the fact already known, that the enemy has lost his maximum strength in fighter aircraft since May 1944.