

55BW Mission Summary No. 144, 16 Dec 44 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 16 December 1944, 138 B-24 a/c (139 a/c scheduled) of the 55th Bombardment Wing took off from 0830-0843A to attack oil and industrial targets in CZECHOSLOVACIA. There were 15 early returns and 1 a/c returned prior to bombing, and attacked a target of opportunity.

There were no encounters with enemy aircraft. A total of 16 e/a was observed, most of which were in the target area. Although several e/a showed signs of attacking the bombers, the fighters broke away before reaching the proximity of the B-24s.

The flak at BRUX was IIH. MIH-IAH flak was encountered at PILSEN for approximately 4-5 minutes. MAH was encountered at GMUNDEN, a target of opportunity. SIH flak was encountered at IUSSIMO (4430N-1423E). Escort of P-38s and P-51s was reported as Excellent. Weather: 10/10 cirrus on take-off, which extended to VIS, breaking to 3-5/10 to the north. Total undercast of stratocumulus 10-20,000' over North YUGOSLAVIA to ALPS. Large breaks and clear areas over tops of ALPS to PT, where 8-10/10 cumulus and 3-5/10 cirrus was encountered. Weather was the same on return to PILSEN, 10/10 cumulus in ALPS breaking to 5-7/10 with 6-8/10 cirrus over ADMIATIC. 4-5/10 cumulus over ITALY. Visibility 10-15 miles.

27 B-24 a/c were over BRUX at 1253A, and from 21,500' dropped 54 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs (including 1/4 long delay fuses) and 5 leaflet bombs. 81 B-24 a/c from 22,800-24,500' at 1315-1317A dropped 160.25 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs (including 1/4 long delay fuses) and 13 leaflet bombs. 1 a/c of the 464th Bomb Group dropped 2 tons and a leaflet bomb on VILLACH M/Y at 1435A from 15,600'. 1 B-24, a prior return of the 485th Bomb Group, dropped 2 tons on GMUNDEN (4756N-1339E) at 1253A from 18,000'.

Results: Bomb strike photographs show strikes from the 460th Bomb Group to have fallen in the southeast part of PILSEN. Strikes are visible in the landing areas of the airdrome. Bombs away photographs indicate possible strikes in the Skode Works. Photographs of the 464th and 485th Bomb Groups give an indication of only a small part of the formation which dropped north of PILSEN. The 465th Bomb Group photographs show only total undercast with no indication of results of the bombing.

96 a/c landed at home bases between 1655-1716A. 19 a/c landed at friendly fields. 1 a/c ditched and 3 a/c crash-landed. 3 B-24s are missing.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 16 Dec 44, at 0835A, 38 a/c were dispatched to bomb a target in CZECHOSLOVAKIA. Five a/c returned early.

At 22,800', 33 a/c were over PILSEN at 1315A. 37 a/c dropped 53.25 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, .1N and .01 - .025T fusing (1/4 delay). Six leaflet bombs were released. One a/c had 3 bombs hung up which were jettisoned in the ADRIATIC. One a/c dropped 2 tons near the PT. Disposition of bomb loads on 5 a/c is not known.

20 a/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1700A. 12 a/c landed at friendly fields: 7 at PANTANELLA, 3 at VENOSA, 1 at FALCOMARA and 1 crash-landed at NUMANA. One a/c crashed near the Spur at 4144N-1540E at 1634A. Route was flown as briefed.

3. 464th Bomb Group. on 16 Dec 44, 33 B-24 a/c took off to bomb PILSEN, CZECHOSLOVANIA.

33 a/c were over the PILSEN Skode Works at 1317A at 24,500'. From an attack axis of 30°, 29 a/c dropped 14½ tons of 500 lb bombs, fused long delay, and 43½ tons of 500 lb bombs, fused .1N and mixed .01 and .025T. Of the above stated bombs, 3 tons of long delay fusing were RDX and 11½ tons GP. Of regular fused bombs, 9 tons were RDX and 34½ tons were GP. An additional 4 leaflet bombs were dropped.

1 a/c dropped 1/2 ton of 500 lb RDX bombs, fused long delay, 1½ tons RDX and 1 leaflet bomb on the M/Y of VILLACH, AUSTRIA. Release was made at 1435A from 15,600' on an attack axis of 168°. 3 a/c jettisoned 6 tons.

Route was flown as briefed.

27 a/c landed at base from 1650-1750A.

4. 465th Bomb Group. 34 a/c of 35 a/c scheduled took off at 0842A on 16 Dec 44 to bomb the oil Refinery at BRUX. There were 4 early returns.

No enemy a/c were seen nor encountered.

28 a/c went over the target at 1353A at 21,500' and 27 a/c dropped 42½ tons of 500 lb RDX and GP bombs (.1N and .01 and .025T using and 13½ tons of long delay bombs, 1-72 hours) and 5 leaflet bombs. Bombs were dropped by PFF using C-1 auto-pilot. 1 a/c, still missing, jettisoned 8 bombs at IP, reason unknown.

26 a/c landed at 1655A. 3 a/c did not return. 1 a/c landed at LUCERA.

Route was flown as briefed.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 16 Dec 44 at 0843A, 33 B-24 a/c took off to bomb PILSEN, CZECHOSLOVAKIA. 7 a/c returned prior to reaching the target. 1 a/c turned back at 4910N-1314E at 1225A. 8 bombs were dropped on GMUNDEN (4756N-1339E) at 1253A from 18,000'.

26 a/c were over PILSEN at 1315/ at 24,500'. 25 a/c dropped 36 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, fused .1N, .01 and .025T; 13 tons of 500 lb RDX long delayed bombs; and 3 leaflet bombs. 1 of these a/c jettisoned 2 long delay bombs at 4933N-1300E. 1 other a/c jettisoned 6 500 lb RDX bombs, regular fusing, and 2 500 lb RDX long delay bombs at 4030N-1337E at 1251A due to an accidental release.

Bombing was by PFF and C-1 on a heading of 55°.

No e/a were encountered.

23 a/e landed without incident, mean landing time 1716A. All landings were made after dark. 3 a/c landed at friendly fields, and have not returned to base.

Route was flown as briefed.