

55BW Mission Summary No. 145, 17 Dec 44 (Cont'dl.

1. General Summary. On 17 December 1944, 105 B-24 a/c of the 55th Bombardment Wing took off from 0809-0834A to attack BLECHHAMMER South Synthetic Oil Refinery, There were 9 early returns.

There were no encounters with enemy aircraft. A total of seven enemy aircraft composed of one Jet propelled aircraft, one FW-190, one ME-210, and 4 SEF aircraft were observed between Lake BALATON and the initial point of the target.

Escort consisting of 25-30 P-51s were first observed at 1103A at 4640N-1655E and departed at 1500A at 4350N-1625E. Three Groups report P-38 escort at 1130A at 4721N-1720E which departed at 1517A at 4330N-1630E. Bomber crews report good escort was provided,

Flak encountered at BLECHHAMMER ranged from MIH to IIH for a period of 3 to 4 minutes. Other flak observed or encountered as follows:

MIH - GYO	MIH- 4808-1730
SAH - NAGYHANIZA	SIH - 4853-1822
SIH - 4610-1650	SIH - 4900-1640
S/MIH - 4629-1700	
SIM - 4642-1643 (6 gun battery)	

94 B-24s were over BLECHHAMMER S O/R from 1231-1234A. 86 a/c from 22,000-24,500' dropped 171.25 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs; also 1 propaganda bomb was dropped over the target. Bombing was accomplished by PFF means.

Weather: Base - 10/10 stratocumulus, base 6,500', tops 8,000'. 6/10 to 8/10 cirrus at 25,000'. On return - Clouds had broken to 3/10 to 4/10. Visibility was 15 miles, Route - 8/10 to 10/10 stratocumulus entire route with large breaks in some areas in Lake BALATON area and at the IP. Clear of low clouds to the East of course. Cirrus decreased to scattered to the North. Target - 6/10 to 8/10 stratocumulus in area, tops,12,000'; clear to North and East, Visibility was 15 miles in haze. On return - clouds were scattered to broken over the ADRIATIC. Visibility was 15-20 miles in haze enroute.

92 B-24 a/c landed at home bases from 1610-1625A. One B-24 landed at a friendly field. Three a/c are listed as missing.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 17 Dec 44, at 0834A, 23 scheduled a/c were dispatched to bomb the BLECHHAMMER South O/R in GERMANY. 2 a/c returned early.

At 22,000', 21 a/c were over the primary target at 1233A. 15 a/c dropped 30 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, .1N and .01 - .025T fusing. 5 a/c did not see the lead a/c release bombs and failed to drop. These

a/c jettisoned 10 tons at 4940N-1820E. One a/c had bombs hung up and jettisoned 2 tons at 5010N-1625E.

The Group experienced IIH flak over the target for 4 minutes. Black, white and eight red bursts were observed.

20 a/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1620A. 1 a/c, the lead a/c, landed at a friendly field, AMENDOLA. The route was flown as briefed.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 17 Dec 44, 30 of 31 scheduled B-24 a/c took off at 0815A to bomb BLECHHAMMER South O/R. 3 a/c returned early.

25 a/c were over the target at 1231A and 25 a/c dropped 49 3/4 tons of 500 lb GP bombs .1, .01, .025 fusing from 22,350'. Bombing was by PFF. Both attack unit leaders used the C-1 Auto pilot. All PFF equipment worked satisfactorily.

Flak at the target was reported as being M to IIH, with a majority of the crews reporting it to be intense. Crews expressed the belief that the chaff dispensing was effective in countering the accuracy of the flak despite the fact that the Group was first across the target.

2 a/c failed to return.

25 a/c landed at this base between 1610A and 1625A without incident. The route was flown as briefed.

4. 465th Bomb Group. 26 a/c of 28 scheduled took off in 2 attack units at 0810A on 17 Dec 44 to attack the BLECHHAMMER South O/R in GERMANY. 4 a/c returned early.

No e/a were seen or encountered during the mission. Flak at the target was M-IIH. A heavy concentration was seen over the target about 4 minutes before bombs away. Then there was a lull which lasted until the formation was clear of the target after which it again came up in a great concentration. While over the target the flak was off in both range and altitude as well as below usual intensity.

22 a/c went over the target at 1231A at 24,000' on a heading of 60 degrees. 22 a/c dropped 43.5 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, fused .1N and .01, .025T. 1 a/c returned .5 tons of bombs to base when 2 bombs hung up over the target and could not be jettisoned because of a malfunction of the release mechanism.

21 a/c landed at base at 1625A. No a/c are lost but 1 a/c is missing.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 17 Dec 44, 26 of 29 scheduled B-24 a/c took off to bomb the South BLECHHAMMER Synthetic O/R at 0809A. There were no early returns.

No e/a were seen. MIH flak was encountered in the target area for approximately 3 minutes.

26 a/c were over the PT at 1234A. 24 a/c dropped 47 tons of 500 lb RDX fused .1, .01, .025 mixed, one ton of 500 lb RDX delayed fusing and one propaganda bomb from 24,500'. The bomb run was made with PFF and the C-1.

26 a/c landed at base, mean landing time 1622A. Route was flown as briefed.