

55BW Mission Summary No. 147, 19 Dec 44 (Cont'd).

1. On 19 December 1944, between 0725-0807A, 98 B-24 a/c of 100 a/c scheduled took off to bomb a target in GERMANY. Due to weather conditions the second Alternate Target, MARIBOR, YUGOSLAVIA, M/Y was attacked. There were 9 early returns.

Group assemblies were effected as ordered. The lead Bombardment Group, far ahead at line rendezvous point, was not seen and the Wing rendezvous was not effected until close to the key point.

Fighter escort was first seen at 0951A at (4317N-1622E), other fighters appeared at 1126A at (4845N-1730E). Escort remained with formation until 1415A at SPLIT.

88 a/c, after penetrating to IP, were over MARIBOR between 1314-1320A. 48 a/c dropped 94.25 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs fused .1N and .01, .025T on this target. One a/c bombed a target of opportunity. One Bombardment Group, due to mechanical malfunction, was unable to drop its bombs. 15 a/c of another Group were also unable to drop on target. 23 sortie a/c and 4 early returns jettisoned 54 tons of bombs. 20 sorties and 4 early returns brought 48 tons of bombs back to bases.

Results were unobserved, due to complete undercast.

Flak at target was SIH: no other flak was encountered.

8 e/a were seen, with no encounters resulting.

82 a/c were down at bases between 1520-1535A. 1 a/c was lost when it crash-landed on friendly territory, 2 a/c are missing, and 4 a/c landed at friendly fields.

Considerable deviation from the briefed route was required by weather conditions.

Weather: Base at take off - 5/10 stratocumulus at 4,000', breaking to the East. visibility 15 miles. Route out - Over South ADRIATIC 3/10 to 4/10 stratocumulus tops at 12,000', increasing over the North ADRIATIC to 8/10. From VIGOSLAVIAN coast to target and return 10/10 stratocumulus, tops to 14-15,000' with few cumulus seen building through. Peaks of AUSTRIAN ALPS visible, penetrating undercast to West. No high clouds encountered until the IP. Route back - From IP to target, formation flew through thin cirrostratus at 24,000', a/c on wing visible. Base of cirrostratus at 21,000', top unknown. Cirrostratus seemed to extend to North and East. On return, 10/10 stratocumulus, tops at 14,000 to 15,000' to North ADRIATIC; no high clouds over North ADRIATIC, 8/10 stratocumulus at 12,000' decreasing to 3/10 to 4/10 over South ADRIATIC. Low clouds broke along the ITALIAN coast, with only 4/10 to 5/10 from SPUR to Base, bases of clouds at 4,000'. Heavy cumulus visible over APPENIMES to West, some building to 18,000'. Target - 10/10 stratocumulus tops at 15,000'.

10/10 thin cirrostratus, base at 21,000' tops unknown. Base on return - 6/10 stratocumulus, bases at 4,000'. Heavy cumulus and stratocumulus over mountains to West. Visibility 15-20 miles. Metro data given on winds was off approximately 180 degrees, causing the Wing formation to be almost one hour late on its approach to the primary target area.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On, 19 Dec 44, at 0801A, 21 scheduled a/c were dispatched to bomb a target in GERMANY.

Group assembly was accomplished as scheduled. The 460th was over rendezvous point at 0851A, but the 485th was not in sight. The Group arrived at the key point 13 minutes late and the 485th was 10 miles behind at this time. Fighter escort, P-51s and P-38s, first sighted at 1129A at (4755N-1700E), furnished penetration and withdrawal cover. They were last seen at 1415A at SPLIT.

5 a/c returned early. 1 a/c bombed a target of opportunity, SOPRON, releasing 2 tons on the town.

The Group penetrated to LIPNIK, where bad weather forced its return. The leader elected to bomb MARIBOR M/Y. 16 a/c were over the 2nd alternate target at 1316A. From 23,500', 15 a/c dropped 29.25 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, .1N & .01 - .025T fusing. 1 a/c, unable to keep up with the formation, jettisoned bombs on a flak position at (4855N-1705E). 3 a/c had 3 bombs hung up which were disposed of as follows: 1 bomb in ADRIATIC and 2 bombs immediately after target. Bombing was by PFF. It was impossible to distinguish the M/Y in the scope, though the town of MARIBOR showed clearly enough to give the bombardier 70, 60 & 50 degree angle.

By offset an estimate was made on the location of the M/Y. Radar in the lead and deputy lead a/c worked well throughout. Radar in the lead a/c, 2nd attack unit, was inoperative for the entire mission and eventually this a/c lost an engine and returned to base alone. The bombardier of the a/c which assumed the lead dropped at a reasonable time interval after the first attack unit.

The Group experienced SIH flak for 1 minutes at MARIBOR.

The route was flown North of course to SPLIT and then as briefed to LIPNIK. From there, route was flown to JOKA and then direct to MARIBOR.

15 a/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1550A. 1 a/c landed at VIS because of fuel shortage.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 19 Dec 44, 25 of 27 scheduled B-24 a/c took off to bomb a target in GERMANY. Take off was at 0740A. Group form-up was as prescribed, as were two-group and Wing rendezvous, though executed at 1,000' additional altitude, due to cloud conditions. 1 a/c returned early. Bombs were jettisoned.

Route toward the IP was left of briefed course to avoid solid clouds. To get around these clouds, course directly North was held for about 15 minutes past the target area. Then the bombing approach was started, and as it began, the PFF equipment of the Group leader failed. The Group deputy leader was immediately advised to take over, but by the time his a/c had assumed the lead position, the primary target had been passed. Radio instructions were then received from the Wing leader to bomb the second alternate target on a reciprocal of the assigned heading. Course was then flown, with the First Deputy Leader in lead position, toward the second alternate target. 40 miles from the second alternate, the PFF equipment of the second deputy lead a/c failed. The PFF equipment of the second attack unit leader, though functioning effectively for navigational purposes, could not be utilized for bombing. Consequently, the second alternate target was not attacked with the second attack unit leader bringing his attack unit in front of the first attack unit, after the target had been passed. The return flight to base was made with the PFF equipment of the second attack unit leader being used for navigational purposes.

Difficulties reported with the PFF equipment were as follows:
Group Leader - Failure on approach to the Primary Target, when a fuse blew out, followed by complete failure on the return route, when the sweep would no longer rotate. Cause is believed to be a cracked Radome. First Deputy Leader - Failure 40 miles from the second alternate target when the fluxgate compass became inoperative believed due to freezing. Second Attack Unit Leader - Poor reception and lack of clarity on 20 mile range throughout flight.

16 a/c returned their full bomb loads, total of 32 tons, to base. 8 a/c jettisoned their bomb loads. The disposition of the bomb load of a/c #369, missing, is unknown. All a/c carried identical bomb loads -- 8 each of 500 lb RDX, fused .1N &.01 - .025T. Bombing recapitulation is as follows:

Returned to base	32 tons
Jettisoned	16 tons
Unknown (1 a/c missing)	<u>2 tons</u>
Total	50 tons

Flak was observed in the vicinity of the primary target at 1154A, Intense and Heavy. Near 4740"-1710E at 1255A, Scant Heavy flak was seen. At 1324A, in the MARIBOR area, Scant Heavy flak was observed. Due to 10/10 cloud undercasts enroute, it was found impossible to pin-point accurately the locations from which this fire came.

Rendezvous was first made with 50 to 60 P-38s at 0951A at 4317N-1622E. These a/c were identified as variously having the markings of the 14th Fighter Group. Rendezvous was then made with 30 to 40 F-51s at 1126A at 4845N-1734E. These a/c were identified as from the 332nd Fighter Group. Both types of a/c provided excellent cover to 1403A at 4415N-1541E.

A/c #369 is missing. This a/c was last observed at 4600N-1520E at 1345A, in formation and seemingly under full control. At 1405A, this a/c radioed the group lead a/c that it had 1 engine feathered, was low on gas, and requested a heading for VIS, which was supplied.

22 a/c landed from 1518A to 1546A. 1 a/c landed at a friendly field.

4. 465th Bomb Group. 26 of 26 scheduled took off at 0725A on 19 Dec to bomb a target in GERMANY. The group assembly is accomplished at 0833A at 9,500'. Wing assembly was completed at 0833½A at the same altitude. Line rendezvous was accomplished at 0839A at 9,500'. The formation was met by an escort of P-38s and P.51s at 1004A at 4558N-1636E and accompanied by them to the furthest point of penetration and back over the second alternate target, and remained with them until the ADRIATIC coast of YUGOSLAVIA was reached at 1412A. There was 1 early return, returned bombs.

No e/a were encountered and none were seen.

Flak encountered at the second alternate target (MARIBOR) was Scant and Inaccurate. Flak was observed at GYOR. Flak was also observed at DVENANY. Flak at MARIBOR was observed to increase in intensity after the formation had cleared the target area.

All 3 PFF operators reported having no difficulty navigating to the target area. Because of weather and on instructions from Wing Leader, the primary and the first alternate were not attacked and bombs were dropped by instruments on MARIBOR M/Y (second alternate). All 3 operators experienced difficulty in differentiating the South M/Y at MARIBOR from the city proper, but a synchronized run was made on the South section of the, city. After the target had been passed, all 3 operators report being able to pick up definite returns from the M/Y and that the formation had passed directly over it. The second attack unit dropped their bombs on the leader of the first attack unit, which made a coordinate-synchronized run, with 7 coordinating angles being called by the PFF operators. There was no confusion between Pilot, Bombardier, or PFF operator at any time during the bomb run or on the route up and back. It is believed that the target was hit, but confirmation was not possible because of complete undercast. PFF check points used at MARIBOR were the mountains and the valley.

24 a/c went over the target at 1320A at 22,500' and 24 a/c dropped 47 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs .1N & .01 - .025T fused. Bombs were dropped by PFF and C-1 auto pilot. 1 a/c, still missing, dropped 8 bombs at approximately 1258A, reasons unknown.

23 a/c landed at 1531A. 1 a/c landed at a friendly field. 1 a/c #106 was last observed between 1240 und 1300A heading in an Easterly direction.

The route was flown as briefed, except the formation was 45 minutes late at the point where they deviated from the briefed course. Swinging to the right until the formation was 50 miles East of course south of BLECHHAMMER. At this point the formation swung back to course, turned around and made due South until GYOR was reached. Course was then changed to bring the formation directly to MARIBOR. FEHRING was used as the IP for the bomb run on MARIBOR, with an axis of attack of 219 degrees. Rally was to the left on a heading of 180 degrees until the formation had passed clear of ZAGREB, course was then altered again to bring the formation across the YUGOSLAV coast at the Key Point and thence to the tip of the SPUR, from there to Base.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 19 Dec 44, at 0807A, 26 B-24 type a/c took off to bomb a target in GERMANY. The Group assembled over the base at 0835A at 8,000' and proceeded to line rendezvous point where the 460th Gp fell in behind. The 485th was over rendezvous point at 0850A and proceeded on course followed in order by the 460, 464, and 465 Gps.

Rendezvous with fighter escort consisting of 30 P-38s was effected at 1045A at 4620N-1640E. Several P-51s joined the formation near LIPNIK. Escort departed at 1300A at approximately 4700N-1630E.

There were, 2 early returns. 4 tons of bombs were brought back to base.

At 4930N-1645E adverse weather was encountered. The undercast and overcast converged in that vicinity resulting in conditions making it impossible to make a bomb run on the PFF. The leader decided to abandon the PT and return to one of the Alternate Targets. Again the formation became dispersed, and several of the a/c jettisoned bombs in that vicinity. The formation, however, continued to MARIBOR, the Second Alternate Target, and bombed that target by PFF and PDI.

The C-1 in each lead ship was inoperative. The bombs failed to release from the lead ship and several of the a/c of the 1st attack unit held their bombs. The 2nd attack unit was successful in getting its bombs away. 9 a/c dropped 18 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs from 23,000' at 1314A while on a heading of 205°. 11 a/c jettisoned 22 tons of bombs. 4 a/c returned 8 bombs to base.

Recapitulation of bombs	500 lb RDX bombs
2 Early Returns returned to base	16 bombs
9 Sortie a/c dropped on 2nd Alt Target	72 bombs
4 Sortie a/c returned to base	32 bombs
11 Sortie a/c jettisoned	88 bombs
26 a/c carried	208 bombs

No e/a were encountered. 6 unidentified SEF were observed flying to the North at 4510N-1525E. SIH flak was encountered over MARIBOR for approximately 2 minutes.

21 a/c landed without incident, 1st down at 1510A and last down at 1530A. 1 a/c, #504, landed at MADNA A/D and has not returned to base A/c #997, crashed in a valley on the Island of VIS. Details are lacking although it has been reported that 2 crew members were killed.

PFF report: 2 sets operative and 1 set not operative. An average of 25 fixes were given the navigators. The PT was not seen on the scopes, but the 2nd AT was picked up. 70, 65, 60, and 50 degree sighting angles were relayed to the bombardier. The drift was killed over the target; the last correction was 2 degrees. Bombs were believed to have hit in the SE corner of the city.

Route was flown as briefed except for deviations caused by weather.