

55BW Mission Summary No. 138, 6 Dec 44 (Cont'd)

1. General Summary. On 6 December 1944, between 0709 - 0742A, 125 B-24 a/c of 129 a/c scheduled took off to bomb HEGYESHALOM M/Y, HUNGARY, and the Rangier M/Y at DEVINSKA NOVA, CZECHOSLOVAKIA. There were 6 early returns.

Due to an accident on the landing strip the take-off, assemblies and rendezvous of 464th and 465th Bombardment Groups, and the Wing rendezvous were delayed. The 460th and 485th Bombardment Groups took-off and assembled as scheduled. After making line rendezvous, these Groups took position in column as Wing rendezvous was effected en route.

Fighter escort was seen first at 1015A at 4555N - 1640E and departed formation at 1300A at 4250N - 1650E.

113 a/c were over targets, 80 a/c over HEGYESHALOM M/Y between 1107 - 1111A, and 53 a/c over BRATISLAVA at 1115A. The 464th Group, finding assigned primary and having observed assigned alternate targets overcast, elected to bomb DEVINSKA NOVA VES M/Y while the 465th Group dropped on its assigned primary through overcast. 75 a/c dropped 130 tons of 500 lb RDX and GP bombs fused .1N and non-delay T from 19,300 - 20,100' on HEGYESHALOM M/Y, 14 a/c dropped 34.25 tons on BRATISLAVA from 21,700', 26 a/c dropped 61 tons on DEVINSKA NOVA VES from 22,000', 12 a/c dropped 38 tons on targets of opportunity. A total of 253.5 tons was dropped on targets. 25 sortie a/c jettisoned 34.75 tons, 7 early returns jettisoned 15.5 tons, 2 sortie a/c returned 1.5 tons, and 2 early returns brought 4.5 tons of bombs back to bases.

Results: 460 Bomb Group photographs show direct hits on the HEGYESHALOM round house, numerous hits on goods wagons and tracks in the marshalling yard, and numerous strikes in the area of the South choke point. Photographs of the 485 Group show bombs, of the 460 Bomb Group to have cut all through tracks in the area of the South choke point. Several goods wagons, the roundhouse, and a large shed are still smoking. 485 Bomb Group strikes probably fell in the area of the yard. Probable strikes are visible through the smoke and others area visible short and over indicating the pattern fell in the yard. Two large explosions are apparent in the North one quarter of the yard. Reconnaissance photographs show all through lines probably blocked, 175 to 200 wagons damaged or destroyed and as many more immobilized. The roundhouse is 30% destroyed and numerous sheds in the yard and yard area are damaged or destroyed. Rolling stock is still smoking at 6 points and two were large craters indicate direct hits on ammunition trains. 464 Bomb Group photographs show approximately six strikes in the DEVINSKA NOVA VES M/Y. 465 Bomb Group photographs show the visible strikes hit in the Northern part of BRATISLAVA.

There was no flak at HEGYESHALOM. S-MIH was encountered at DEVINSKA NOVA, and S-MIH at GYOR on route.

16 - 25 e/a were seen by the 464th and 465th Bombardment Groups, and 15 - 25 were encountered. Claims were 11 - 4 - 1.

111 a/c were down at bases between 1415 - 1507A. 3 a/c were lost (1 on take-off, 2 to e/a), 2 crew missing, 1 landed at a friendly field.

Routes were flown generally east of briefed route to secure more favorable weather conditions.

Weather: 10/10 cirrostratus at take off base 20,000 feet. 2/10 stratocumulus at 4,000 feet. Over ADRIATIC 9/10 cirrostratus at 20,000 feet and 7/10 altostratus tops 11,500 feet. Over DINARICS continuing to LAKE BALATON 2/10 cirrostratus at 21,500 feet and 8/10 to 9/10 stratus clouds. Tops 12,000 feet. The latter deck broke at 4720N and continued patchy to the target. At the target 2/10 cirrus and patchy low stratus amounting to 3/10 to 4/10. Visibility 16 mi. On return cirrostratus and increased to 6/10 to 8/10 moving in from the west. Over ADRIATIC 6/10 cirrostratus base 18,000 feet and 6/10 multilayer middle clouds 10-13,000 feet. 3/10 stratocumulus, tops 5,000 feet. At base on return 7/10 altostratus and 1/10 stratocumulus with an unknown amount of cirrostratus above. Visibility for route 15-20 miles.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 6 December 1944, at 0715A, 30 a/c were dispatched to bomb the HEGYESHALOM M/Y in HUNGARY. 1 a/c crashed on take-off.

Group assembly and rendezvous with the 485th were accomplished without incident at 0815A. Wing rendezvous was accomplished on course at 4150-1614E at 0844A, the 460th flying in the #3 position. Fighter escort, P-38s, first sighted at 4555N-1640E at 1015A, furnished penetration, target and withdrawal cover. They left the formation at 4250-1650E at 1300A.

3 a/c returned early. 2 a/c jettisoned bombs in the ADRIATIC and 1 a/c, in order to maintain altitude, dropped bombs at 4442N-1620E in the mountains.

At 20,000', 26 a/c were over the primary target at 1107A. 22 a/c dropped 49.75 tons of 500-lb RDX-GP bombs, .1N-no delay T fusing. Due to malfunctions 12 a/c had 60 bombs hung up which were disposed of as follows: 12 bombs immediately before target, one bomb at 4709N-1702E, 10 bombs 15 miles south of target, 6 bombs at 4715N-1655E, 27 bombs in the ADRIATIC and 4 bombs returned to base.

No flak was experienced at the primary target but SIH flak was encountered for 1-1½ minutes NW of GYOR.

On penetration, the route was flown east of the briefed course in order to hold formation. Xxx xxxxx to target route was flown as briefed. The return route was flown to east of briefed route also, due to weather conditions.

25 a/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1415 hours. 1 a/c landed at xxxxx with the hydraulic systems shot out.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 6 December 1944, 31 of 32 scheduled B-24 a/c took-off starting at 0742A to bomb the primary target named in Operations Order No. 272. Take-off was delayed 23 minutes due to an accident by one a/c of the 465th Group at the end of the 464th Group runway.

Rendezvous was made approximately 6 minutes late, due to delay on take-off. Form up was made in the 465th Group area. The Group leader called all Gps. that wing rendezvous would be made at 0830A. This wing rendezvous was made and the Wing proceeded on course to the target.

2 a/c returned early; bombs were jettisoned.

Upon arriving at the Primary Target and finding it completely cloud covered, with both alternate targets also observed to be covered with a complete overcast on the route to the primary, it was decided to bomb the M/Y at DEVINSKA NOVA VES, 4813N-1658E, which was on course.

26 a/c were over the target at 1115A and 26 a/c dropped 61 tons of 500 lb GP bombs (.1 nose and non-delay tail fuse), from 22,000 feet.

3 a/c dropped 5 and three-quarters tons on targets of opportunity as follows:

A/C # 42-52070 dropped 2½ tons on RR and Factory at VAGSELLYE 4809N-1753E at 1133A.

A/C # 42-78613 dropped 2½ tons on MAGYAROVA 4753N - 1717E at 1133A hours because bomb bay doors froze over target. Crew claims hit in center of town.

A/C # 42-51903 dropped ¾ ton at FEZINOK 4815N-1715E at 1125 hours and claim hits on fuel storage. Heavy black smoke observed after bombs hit. 3 bombs did not release over target due to rack malfunction. 7 a/c jettisoned 10.75 tons.

Recapitulation of Bombs:

Dropped on Target	61 tons
Targets of Opportunity	5.75 tons
Jettisoned	10.75 tong
Total bombs dropped	77.5 tons

Both the Group Leader and the leader of the second attack unit used the C-1 automatic pilot on the bomb run.

Flak at the target was SIH, and was generally low and behind. The bursts were black, with a few white.

The formation was attacked by 15-20 ME-109 a/c at 1125A at 4818N-1700E. The attack was made while the formation was on a 90° heading after rally off the target while at 21,000 feet. The attack was pressed against Charlie and Dog boxes.

Fighters attacked in company front of 5/7 a/c from 6 o'clock high to level followed by a breakaway roll over to decoy position at 7/9 o'clock high with subsequent attacks being made by pairs from 6 o'clock high to level. No low attacks were reported.

Markings on e/a were camouflaged, with a greenish color on top of wings and fuselage with white underside. Some had square and others rounded wing tips.

Claims for this Group are 7 destroyed, 3 probably destroyed and 1 damaged.

1 jet-propelled a/c was observed just South of IAKE BALATON heading Northeast, travelling at high speed about 3 to 4 miles to the left of the formation.

Rendezvous was made with 20 P-38s at 1050A at 4201N-1636E and last escort was observed at 1220A at 4535N-1716E.

4 of our a/c failed to return.

A/C # 42-50962 was attacked by E/A at 4820N-1715E at 1130A. Our a/c was last seen with 1 engine on fire and losing altitude rapidly. 1 chute was seen to open.

A/C # 42-78682 was last seen at 1130A at 4818N-1706E when attacked by e/a. The a/c went into a dive with 2 engines on fire and a wing came off. 1 chute was seen to open.

A/C # 42-52504 last seen at 1130A at 4818N - 1706E when it was attacked by e/a. This a/c lost altitude rapidly and was seen to explode at approximately 16,000 feet. 8 chutes were seen to open before the explosion occurred.

A/C # 44-10556 was last seen at 1130A at 4820N - 1730E dropping behind formation with # 2 engine feathered. The a/c was apparently under control and no chutes were seen.

25 a/c landed at this base between 1449 and 1510A.

Route was flown as briefed to the target with minor deviations due to weather. The return route was flown approximately 20 miles to left of course for part of the route to the ADRIATIC.

4. 465th Bomb Group. 29 a/c of 32 scheduled took off at 0715A to attack the Rangier M/Y at BRATISLAVA, AUSTRIA. 1 a/c exploded while taking off.

The group assembled at 0800A at 7,500 feet, and Wing rendezvous was accomplished at 0831A at 7,500 feet. There was excellent communication between groups and assembly was all done. There was no continuous escort. A few P-38s were seen before and after the fighter attacks but there was no escort during the attack.

There were 2 early returns. 12 bombs were jettisoned. 8 bombs were returned to base.

While the formation was performing a 180 degree turn after rallying off the target, 20 to 25 ME-109s and FW-190s approached from the rear in 2 formations, a high box of 14 or more and a low box of 7 to 9 planes. The attack began northeast of BRATISLAVA at 1118A and continued until 1150A in the vicinity of GYOR. The planes were generally dark colored, gray or brown. Red spinners, orange tails, white rudders, black circles on rudders, 3 black diagonal marks across the fuselage were some of the identifying features noted on the attacking fighters. Attacks on this group were all from the rear and more generally unaggressive. 2 formations of enemy a/c attacked simultaneously. A 7 a/c formation attacked from 7 o'clock closing to about 400 yards before breaking to the right; a 4 a/c formation furnished a diversionary attack breaking off at 800 yards to 1,000 yards. There were several single attacks from 5 to 7 o'clock which broke off in a split "S" showing the belly of the enemy a/c to the formation at 800 to 1,000 yards. The 464th Bombardment Group was flying just to the left of our formation and the majority of attacks were against the last box in their formation which was scattered. Most of the single attacks against our formation resulted from enemy aircraft breaking away from their attacks on stragglers and scattered aircraft of the 464th Group which drew in towards "Dog" box of our formation for protection. There was one attack from low out of the undercast toward ball turret. 4 ME-109s are claimed as destroyed and 1 ME-109 is claimed as a probable. Attacks on the 464th were generally in the tail cone. 2, 3, and 4 a/c attacked in trail from 5 to 7 o'clock breaking off to the left and right in a split "S". 4 to 6 a/c attacked in trail from 6 o'clock high, the first breaking under the B-24 attacked, the second breaking over the B-24 attacked, and continued alternately breaking below and above the plane attacked. One straggler was attacked by 5 planes in line abreast from 6 o'clock high, the center planes executing pursuit curves and attacking at 4 and 8 o'clock with the center plane closing the attack to 200 yards and diving down and under. A straggler was shot down by coordinated attack with 1 ME-109 attaching from below in a steep climb toward the bell turret and 4 ME-109s coming over the plane high in trail from 6 o'clock and performing a split "S" into the B-24 firing as it came out of the dive of the "S" and heading out at 6 o'clock. 2 ME-109s were observed to have been shot down by B-24s shot down in the 464th Bombardment Group.

Flak at the target was moderate inaccurate heavy. No flak was encountered enroute.

The target was sighted visually and definitely identified. On the bomb run the target was obscured by clouds and it was necessary to bomb by off-set methods. C-1 automatic pilot was used. The second attack unit could not see the target and did not see the first attack unit drop and they did not drop their bombs on the primary target. 27 a/c were over the target at 1115 hours at 21,700' and 14 planes dropped 34.75 tons of 500 lb. GP bombs fused .1 nose and MD tail. 8 a/c dropped 19.5 tons of 500 lb. GP bombs at 1132A on a target of opportunity, MAGYARDIOSZEG, 4812N - 1738E as they were being attacked by fighters. 1 plane dropped 2.5 tons of bombs on a RR Highway bridge at 4810N - 1737E. 1 plane dropped 2 bombs in YUGOSLAVIA at 4521N - 1625E at 0952A because of a rack malfunction. 2 bombs were jettisoned in the ADRIATIC off the Spur because of a lack of power. 5 a/c jettisoned 10.5 tons of bombs in the ADRIATIC at 4250N - 1540E because of impending weather.

#### RECAPITULATION

Total tons in target area:	34.75
Total tons dropped on T/O :	22
Total tons jettisoned by sortie a/c:	11.75
Total tons jettisoned by E/R:	.5
Total tons returned by E/R:	<u>4.5</u>
	72.5 tons

27 a/c landed at 1507 hours.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 6 December 1944, 35 regularly scheduled B-24 type a/c took off at 0709 hours to bomb HEGYESHALOM M/Y, HUNGARY.

Assembly was as scheduled at 9,000' at 0817A and taking its position behind the 460th Group.

The 464th Group, scheduled to lead the Wing formation, called that the 464th and 465th Groups would be approximately 40 minutes late. At this time the 460th Group assumed the Wing lead and proceeded on course, leaving at 0825A, 9,000'.

Rendezvous was made with approximately 15-20 P-38 escort at 1100A, 4740N-1735E. They left the formation at approximately 1300A, 4320N-1600E.

There was 1 early return. Bombs were jettisoned.

No e/a were seen or encountered. No flak was encountered at the Primary Target. S-MIH flak was encountered enroute and on return at GYOR, 4741N-1738E, for approximately 3 minutes.

34 a/c were over the Primary Target at 1111A. 33 a/c dropped 60 tons of 500 lb GP bombs, .1 and non delay fusing; and 20.75 tons of

500 lb RDX bombs, .1 and non delay fusing from 19,300'; and total tonnage of 80.75 tons. Of these a/c bombing, 2 jettisoned a total of 5 bombs (1.75 tons) ½ mile beyond the target and 1 returned 2 bombs (.5 tons) to base because of a station release malfunction. 1 other a/c jettisoned 10 bombs (2.5 tons) at 4731N-1713E. The bomb run was on PDI as the C-1 in the lead ship, 1st wave, went out at the IP and the C-1 in the lead ship, 2nd wave was not used as the PDI was functioning perfectly. Bombing was visual.

Return to base was made without incident, mean landing time 1424 hours.

Route flown was East of course as briefed to avoid unfavorable weather.

The PFF equipment was used for navigational aids only. The lead Mickey Operator reports that the equipment performed perfectly and that he gave at least 40 fixes to the navigator enroute and on return.