

55BW Mission Summary No. 63, 15 July 44 (Cont'd).

1. General Summery. On 15 July 1944, 142 B-24 a/c of 146 scheduled took off between 0630-0650B to attack the Standard and the Uniera Speranze Oil Refineries at PLOESTI. There were 25 early returns.

Group assemblies, line rendezvous, and Wing rendezvous were effected as ordered. Rendezvous of fighter escort was variously noted by individual Groups between 0925 and 1025B; escort gave excellent cover at target, and is reported to have left formation between 1100-1145B.

117 a/c were over targets et 1056-1100B. 97 a/c dropped 236 tons of 1000 lb GP bombs (.1N,.01,.025T fusing) from 20000-24000'. Other a/c failed to drop because PFF equipment was inoperative. 6 early returns jettisoned full bomb load; 10 early returns and 15 sorties (plus 1 part load) returned bombs to bases.

Results were as follows: Bombs from all Groups are seen entering the smoke area which covers the target. Damage is believed to have been inflicted from the probable hits in the target area but assessment is not possible.

M-IAH flak was encountered at target. One Group encountered SIH at 4335N4230E.

2-30 e/a were seen, 2,6,21, and 20-25 were reported by individual Groups as attacking. Some attacks were aggressive. Claims are 2-3-1.

113 a/c landed between 1410-1436B. 1 a/c was lost, 2 are missing, and 1 landed at friendly field.

Route was flown as briefed.

Weather: 1/10 alto stratus at base, 4/10 over ITALY, clearing over ADRIATIC. Scattered cumulus over YUGOSLAVIA. At target 5-6/10 cumulus, tops 12000', visibility 15 miles. Return 5-8/10 cumulus, 15000', visibility 10 miles over YUGOSLAVIA, 5/10 alto cumulus over ADRIATIC, 2/10 cumulus at bases.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On: 15 July 1944, at 0650B, 39 scheduled a/c were dispatched to bomb the Standard Oil Refinery, PLOESTI.

The Group formed in 2 attack units at 0735B in the regular assembly area and rendezvous with the 485th was accomplished over ALTAMURA at 0739B without incident. The Wing formed over SPINAZZOLA at 0750B with the 460th leading the Wing. The fighter escort, P-38s and P-51s, contacted the formation et (4320N2125E) at 0925B: They

furnished penetration, target and withdrawal cover leaving the formation near NIS at 1145B.

6 a/c returned early.

From 24000', 33 a/c were over the target at 1056B. 31 a/c dropped 75.5 tons of 1000 lb GP bombs. Due to reck malfunction, 1 a/c returned 1 bomb to base and 3 a/c jettisoned 8 bombs in the fields West of PLOESTI. 1 a/c with the 2 end 3 superchargers out, jettisoned its bombs south of BUCHAREST in order to maintain formation.

M-IAH flak was encountered over the target. It was largely barrage type. This barrage of flak was observed a few minutes before the formation reached the target and continued until the formation was some distance out of range. Crews reported that 2 B-24's of another Group were shot down by flak at ZSJECA (4354N2215E).

On the route out, 2 ME-109 were seen 15 miles NE of NIS at 0930B. At 1020B, 2 ME-210 were seen at 4407N2100E. The above e/e did not attack. At 1130B 2 black FW-190 were encountered at 4218N1902E. The e/a came in level at 1 o'clock and closed to 700 and 900 yd breaking away low. No claims.

30 a/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1410B. 1 of our a/c covered a B-24 that had ditched 40 miles from BARI and returned to base after 5 of the ditched crew had been rescued by Catalina. 1 of our a/c landed at VIS. Another a/c, seriously damaged by flak over the target, was last seen near KRALJEVO 4345N 2042E at 1233B. This a/c is listed as missing.

The route was flown as briefed.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 15 July 1944, 38 B-24 a/c of 39 a/c scheduled, took off at 0630B to bomb the Unieraa Sperantze Oil Refinery.

Group from-up was accomplished without incident. Group rendezvous was made as briefed behind the 465th Group at 9000'. The Wing rendezvous was made as briefed.

Approximately 21 e/c were observed consisting of 8 ME-109 in the NIS area at 1215B, between 1050B and 1115B. 7 encounters took place, 5 in the target area, 1 at CRAIOVA and 1 in the NIS area. E/a in the target area attacked from 6 o'clock high and low and at 11 o'clock. In the NIS area, e/a appeared to have a rocket under each wing. Several e/a fired rockets, gunners stated they did not see any tracers fired by e/a. Combat Claims for this Group are 2 ME-109 probably destroyed.

Rendezvous with fighter escort at 1025B in the vicinity of ROSTORII de VEDE where 15/20 P-51 were observed. Cover continued until 1135B just past the target area. Consensus of opinion among returning

crew members was that excellent cover was given the Group and Wing formation.

Flak at the target was IAH with black and white bursts. The white bursts were mostly considerably higher than the formation. Numerous red and pink bursts were observed. SIH flak was observed at PITESTI and MAH observed at BUCHAREST.

31 a/c were over the target at 1059B (briefed 1045B) and dropped 74 tons of 1000 lb GP bombs (.1, .01, .025) from 20000 to 23000'. 5 a/c returning early returned 12½ tons to base and 2 jettisoned 5 tons. 5 bombs were jettisoned by 1 a/c 12 miles east of NOVI PAZAMAT 0950B and 1 a/c jettisoned 5 bombs at 1117B, 4357N2423E. 1 a/c jettisoned 2 bombs at 4415N2313E at 1145B, and 1 a/c jettisoned 5 bombs at 4408N2550E at 1030B.

1 a/c was lost; 1 is missing.

28 a/c returned to base between 1417B end 1440B. 1 a/c landed at 1625B having previously landed at BARI at 1420B.

Route was flown as briefed.

4. 465th Bomb Group. On 15 July 1944, 30 a/c were scheduled to take off at 0645B to bomb the Unieraa Sperantze Oil Refinery at PLOESTI. 28. a/c took off at 0646B in 2 attack units.

The group assembly was made at 0737B over ANDRIA at 8000'. Wing rendezvous was accomplished at 0753B over SPINAZZOLA at 8000'.

There were 7 early returns. Flek was IAH at the target. SIH flak was encountered at 4355N-2230E. 1 FW-190 was encountered at 1102 over the target at 23000 feet. The fighter came in from below at 0530 o'clock; no claim is made. 8 to 10 ME-109s were encountered at 1215 at 4402N-2240E at 16000 feet. 1 attack was pressed by 6 fighters in formation flying parallel to the bomber formation, turning into the formation from above at 0130 o'clock and attacking in trail. 4 fighters attacked from 0430 o'clock high in trail and went out at 8 o'clock and made a wide turn and attacked again at 7 o'clock. Other attacks were made aggressively from 3, 6 and 9 o'clock concentrating on the stragglers. Claims are 2 destroyed, 1 probable and 1 damaged. Some fighters were silver, others dark gray, and some with yellow spinners and yellow stripes on wing and tail.

21 a/c went over the target at 1100 at 23000 feet. 6 a/c of 1 box comprising the whole of the second attack unit dropped 15 tons of 1,000 pound GP bombs with .1 nose and mixed .01 and .025 tail fuses on their pathfinder a/c. Lead pathfinder of the first attack unit developed a malfunction at the Danube River enroute to the target; at this point Captain Roberts took over the lead of the formation and his pathfinder equipment developed a malfunction at the IP. For this reason the lead bombardier, not being able to sight visually, did not

drop his bombs; and consequently the rest of the first attack unit also failed to drop, 9 a/c returned their bombs to base. 6 a/c jettisoned their bombs.

21 a/c landed at their home base at 1436 hours. No a/c were lost or missing, and there were no casualties.

Route was flown as briefed. Escort of P-51s joined the formation at 1025 in the Bucharest area, provided cover over the target, and left the formation at 1100 hours just north of Ploesti.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 15 July 1944 at 0647 hours, 37 B-24 a/c of 38 a/c scheduled, took off to bomb the UNIREA SPERANTZA OIL REFINERY in PLOESTI, RUMANIA.

Assembly was over Altamura at 7,000 feet and was satisfactory. One a/c returned to base after losing a gas cap; after refueling, it was too late to take off again.

Rendezvous with the 460th Group was affected between Altamura and Gravina at 0739 hours. The 460th Group led the Wing rendezvous over Spinazzola at 0750 hours; the order of flight being 460th, 485th, 465th and 464th Groups.

Rendezvous with the fighter escort, which consisted of 40 P-51 a/c was made at 4350N-2426E at 1020 hours. 12 P-38 a/c were observed over the target, Fighter escort departed at 4500N-2500E at 1126 hours.

Five a/c returned prior to bombing.

Two e/a, unidentified single engine planes, were observed to have attacked the Group following the 485th.

Thirty-two a/c were over the target at 1058 hours (target time 1045 hours). Twenty-nine a/c dropped 71.5 tons of 1,000 lb GP bombs.

Four a/c returned 15 bombs to base.

No e/a were encountered. Flak was encountered at the target for 5 minutes and was IAH. Flak was not encountered at any other points enroute or on return.

Return was made without incident. 32 a/c landed, mean landing time 1434 hours. There were no stragglers or late arrivals.

One P-51 was seen to go down smoking over the target.