

55BW Mission Summary No. 69, 25 July 1944 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 25 July 1944, 131 B-24 a/c, of 134 a/c scheduled, took off between 0640-0704B to bomb the HERMAN GOERING TANK WORKS at LINZ, GERMANY. There were 16 early returns.

Group assemblies, line rendezvous, and Wing rendezvous were effected as ordered.

Fighter escort contact was variously reported effected between 0930-1035B, and departure between 1212-1400B. Groups offering comment express highest appreciation of fighter cover, especially by P-51 a/c, whose pilots gave very close escort.

113 a/c were over target between 1127-1131B. 112 a/c dropped 270.5 tons of 1000 lb GP bombs (.1N, .025T fusing) from 23,000-24,000'. 1 a/c dropped 2.5 tons (same type and fusing) on a target of opportunity. 2 sorties jettisoned full load, 1 early return jettisoned part load. 1 sortie returned full load to base; 9 early returns brought back full loads, 1 early return brought back part load to base.

Results are as follows:

460th Bomb Group photographs show some bombs striking just short of the target and full development of the pattern probably scored hits in the target area.

464th Bomb Group photographs show numerous strikes in the storage of steel parts building area. several direct hits were observed on the main building and on the rail facilities in that area. Additional strikes are believed to be in the assembly shop area but cannot be seen due to smoke.

465th Bomb Group photographs show numerous strikes in the west assembly shop, several direct hits on the foundry and the east assembly shop. The area east of the assembly shops which contains an unidentified building and the ore thinning plant has received numerous strikes but smoke prevents accurate assessment. Additional strikes are believed to have fallen in the area of the rolling mill and the stamping and pressing shop but are not visible due to smoke.

485th Bomb Group photographs show strikes on both sides of the smoke, indicating the bombing pattern fell in the target area.

Reconnaissance photographs show the store building for steel parts with several direct hits. The transformer station suffered damage from several near misses. The west machine and assembly shop is seriously damaged and still burning furiously at the time of photographs. Only part of the rolling mill is visible but that portion has received at least one direct hit. The foundry has received



3. 464th Bomb Group. On 25 July 1944, 39 scheduled N-24 a/c of this Group took off at 0655B hours to bomb the Linz/Austria, Hermann Goering Tank Works.

Four a/c returned early.

Visibility of 3 to 5 miles due to haze, caused the box leaders to encounter difficulties in the Group form-up, which was effected 5 minutes late. Two Group assembly, however, was effected on time, and according to plan. Wing rendezvous was effected as prescribed.

Rendezvous with fighter escort was effected first at 0956B hours at 4500-1515. Twenty P-38 a/c and 30 P-51 a/c were seen at this time. Fighter escort continued to and over the target, observations enroute running from 10 to 60 P-51 a/c and from 2 to 30 P-38 a/c. Over the target, top cover a/c dropped chaff bombs. Upon withdrawal, both types of a/c were continuously seen, the last escort observations being up to 1245B hours and position of 4500-1510. All crews were uniformly warm in their praise of the escort and fighter protection provided.

Enemy a/c observer were one ME-109 at the target, fling in a direction opposite to that of the group, and ten SEF, otherwise unidentified, at Welk, Austria, 4814-1519. This Group had no encounters.

IIH flak was encountered at the target and during the rally from the target. Spot concentrations were observed off and on in the target area for about 6 minutes, leading several crews to report that the flak was of barrage type. Several crews reported seeing chaff bombs from friendly escort a/c exploding above them, and were of the opinion that this increased chaff materially aided to decrease the efficiency in aim of the AA below. Flak was observed at Zagreb, Moderate Heavy, and at Steyr, Intense Heavy. One of our a/c, an early return, encountered SAH flak at St. Janz (4630-1545).

Thirty-four a/c were over the target at 1128B hours (briefed target time 1120B hours). Eighty-two tons of 1,000 lb. GP bombs (.1 nose and .025 tail fusing) were dropped on the target from 23,000 ft. One a/c at 4805-1528 was forced to jettison one bomb (1/2 ton) to keep up with the Group. The remaining four bombs were released on the target. Due to rack and door malfunctions, another a/c, after successfully making its bomb run, was forced to return its 2 1/2 tons of bombs to Base. A third a/c, an early return, released their five bombs (2 1/2 tons) at 4630-1545, on a target of opportunity which they believed to be a flak installation, then firing at them on their return route. Three a/c, early returns, brought back their entire bomb loads to base, a total of 72 tons. One a/c, now missing, was known not to have flown over the target. The disposition of its bomb load (2 1/2 tons) is unknown. M-5 was used by both attack units.

Results of the bombing are considered excellent.

Thirty-three a/c landed at this base from 1352B hours to 1422B hours. One a/c landed at 1630B hours, due to first landing at Foggia No. 2 in order to replenish fuel. One a/c, B-24 No. 42-52484, is missing. This a/c was last observed at 1045B hours at 4638-1552. Its No. 2 engine had been smoking for a while, the pilot feathered it, peeled off and turned back, seemingly under control.

Route was flown as briefed except for evasive action on return route to avoid flak at Klagenfurt.

4. 465th Bomb Group, 28 a/c of 28 scheduled took off at 0640 hours on 25 July 1944 in two attack units to attack the Hermann Goering Steel Works at Linz/Austria.

The Group assembled over Andria at 0804 hours at 10000 ft. Wing assembly was accomplished over Spinazzola at 0819 hours at 10000 ft. It is reported that this rendezvous and the subsequent wing formation enroute to the target and return was one of the best ever flown.

An escort of P-51s joined the formation at 1015 hours near Zagreb at 21000 ft and gave cover from there to and over the target. P-38s gave withdrawal cover from the target to the coast of Italy, leaving the formation at approximately 1400 hours. Particular emphasis is given here to the escort provided today. The 51s met them at Zagreb and after slowly sliding in from the side gave ample time for recognition and thereafter weaved back and forth under and over the groups of the Wing. This close escort by P-51s in the last 2 days has been enthusiastically reported as "the best escort we've ever seen."

7 a/c returned early.

Flak at the target was Intense, accurate to inaccurate, heavy. No flak was encountered enroute. There were no encounters with enemy aircraft and 1 crew reports observing 15 unidentified a/c attacking a group far ahead at 1030 hours in the vicinity of Dukovic, Yugoslavia.

21 a/c went over the target at 1127 hours at 24000 ft. Bombing was done visually and lead a/c were flying on A-5 pilot. 49.5 tons of 1000 lb bombs .1 nose and .025 tail fused were dropped. 3 a/c jettisoned 1 bomb each in order to keep up with the formation. 1 was jettisoned near Silba Island at 0945 hours and another at approximately 4400-1440 at 0940 hours. Another was jettisoned at 4610-1555 at 1029 hours. 1 a/c jettisoned 2 bombs about 7 miles beyond the target because of a rack malfunction and the other bomb was jettisoned because of a rack malfunction at 1137 hours at about 4757-1412. The IP could not be located because of cloud cover and the formation turned on the briefed axis of attack in vicinity of IP after sighting the target area itself. Since it appeared from a distance that the target

might be cloud and smoke obscured the offset grid was used by the lead bombardier because the PFF equipment was functioning improperly. However at about one minute before the target there was a large enough opening in the smoke and clouds to reveal the pressing shop which permitted visual bombing. The lead bombardier changed the aiming point to sight on this building, the only in the assigned area which was not smoke covered from previous bombing.

The weather enroute was as follows.

20 a/c landed at 1425 hours at 1 a/c landed at 1604 hours after having made an emergency landing at Vis at 1314 hours because of insufficient fuel to reach the home base.

The route was flown as briefed.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 25 July 1944 at 0704 hours, 35 B-24 a/c of 36 a/c scheduled took off to bomb the Linz/Herman Goering Tank Works (PT).

Assembly was over Altamura at 0800 hours. The formation at assembly was satisfactory.

Rendezvous with the 460th Group over Altamura was effected at 0809 hours, with the 485th leading, and with the 464th and 465th Groups over Spinazzola at 0819 hours. Rendezvous were effected on scheduled times without difficulty.

Rendezvous with fighter escort was effected without difficulty, at 0930 hours at 4330-1515. Several P-38s covered the formation on penetration. At 1015 hours approximately 30 P-51s joined and furnished target and withdrawal cover. These a/c joined at 4640-1600 and remained with the formation until the coast of YUGOSLAVIA at approximately 4518-1435.

Three a/c returned prior to bombing.

Approximately 11 e/a were seen over the target. Seven of these were ME-109s and four were FW-190s; they did not approach the formation.

32 a/c were over the primary target at 1129 hours (target time 1120 hours). 32 a/c dropped 80 tons of 1,000 lb GP bombs (.1 nose and .025 tail fusing) at 24,000 feet. Being unable to locate the IP, the bomb run was begun on ETA. The target was well covered by smoke on the approach. This smoke was caused by bombing of other Groups and from smoke pots surrounding the target. It appeared that the smoke pots were started only a few minutes prior to the arrival of the formation, indicating that the enemy probably was surprised. The wind tended to blow the smoke away from the target. The lead bombardier, unable to see his aiming point, bombed by offset, locating a bridge to the North and a stream intersection to the Southeast. His bombs were observed to

have fallen into the smoke covered area believed to be the target. The smoke had somewhat dissipated when the second wave came over the target, leaving a portion of it in the clear.

No e/a were encountered. Flak at the target was IAH. To the left of the target area a barrage was thrown up. Bursts at the formation indicated that the enemy was tracking. In addition to the above, several large white bursts were observed about 1,000 ft over the formation. SIH flak was encountered at ZAGREB.

Return was made without incident, 31 a/c landed, mean landing time 1414 hours. One a/c landed at a friendly field.