

55BW Mission Summary No. 54, 2 July 1944 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 2 July 1944, 136 of 139 a/c scheduled took off between 0636-0658B to bomb BUDAPEST RAKOS M/Y. There were 12 early returns.

Group assembly and line rendezvous were effected as ordered. One group was late for Wing rendezvous, which was completed enroute. Fighter escort, excellent in quality, was reported seen between 0929-0940B, and remained with formation until 1130-1230B as variously reported.

124 a/c were over target between 1028-1030B. 124 a/c dropped 303.75 tons of 500 lb GP bombs (.1, .01 and non-delay fusing) from 22,400-23,700'. 6 early returning a/c jettisoned partial loads. 1 a/c brought back full bomb load, 1 sortie returned .25 tons.

Results were as follows:

460th Bomb Group. Heavy concentration of bombs in the northern end of the marshalling yard. Approximately ten hits on the north choke point. Several other strikes on tracks in north end of M/Y.

464th Bomb Group. Numerous strikes in the center of the marshalling yard scoring several direct hits on goods wagons and tracks. Some strikes covered the south choke point scoring hits on the important tracks in that area.

465th Bomb Group. Some strikes believed to be in smoke obscured areas south of center of the marshalling yard. Several strikes in north west area in the workshop or loading area. Three hits on the north choke point.

485th Bomb Group. The vast majority of the bombs fell in the smoke obscured area. Several strikes are seen on either side of the marshalling yard indicating that the main portion must have fallen across the marshalling yard but was obscured by smoke from previous bombing.

Reconnaissance photographs show all through lines to be cut and extensive damage to goods wagons, installations, and tracks. All through tracks cut at the south chock point. 60 to 70 goods wagons appear to be destroyed or severely damaged. Near misses have probably damaged a good many more. Extensive damage is visible to all through tracks in the north portion of the marshalling yard. There are several indications of probable explosions in several of the goods wagons hit. Possible damage to the remainder of the yard and installations is not visible due to clouds and limited coverage.

Flak at target ranged from MIH to IAH. 5-20 e/a were seen by individual groups, 0-6 were encountered. Claims: 4-0-0.

124 a/c were down between 1250-1330B, 0 lost, 0 missing, 0 at friendly fields.

Route was flown as briefed.

Weather: Enroute, 2/10 cumulus at 18,000' over ADRIATIC, increasing to 3/10, 14,000' over mountains in YUGOSLAVIA, visibility 18 miles through slight haze. Some altostratus. Target: 5/10 cirrostratus, 20,000', visibility 16 miles. Route back, 5/10 alto cumulus, 15,000'-10,000' over YUGOSLAVIA, 14,000' over ADRIATIC.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 2 July 1944, at 0640B, 28 scheduled a/c were dispatched to bomb the BUDAPEST RAKOS M/Y in HUNGARY.

The Group made correct rendezvous with the 485th. Over SPINAZZOLA, the Group was thirty seconds late and found that the Wing had departed. About fifteen miles over the ADRIATIC, it assumed its proper right echelon in the formation. Fighter escort, P-38's and P-51's, were first observed at 0940B just beyond the DANUBE River, furnished penetration, target and withdrawal cover. They left the formation at 1140B south of 4536N1840E.

One a/c returned early.

From 23,500', 27 a/c dropped 64.75 tons of 500 lb GP bombs, on the primary target at 1028B.

The Group experienced MIH flak over the target area. Other flak encountered as follows: MIH at MOSTAR, SIH at SARAJEVO, SIH at TUZLA, 4433N1341E.

Approximately 20 Me-109's and FW-190's defended the primary target. The fighter escort engaged the bulk of the e/a on the bomb run. There were six encounters with single engine fighters. Attacks were generally aggressive from 5 & 6 o'clock. Three e/a are claimed destroyed, two Me-109's and one FW-190.

Route was flown as briefed.

27 a/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1300B.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 2 July 1944, starting at 0630B, 39 B-24 a/c of 39 a/c scheduled took off to bomb the BUDAPEST RAKOS M/Y.

Group take off and assembly was accomplished according to plan. Line rendezvous with 465th Bombardment Group at ANDRIA was as prescribed. Rendezvous with the fighter escort which consisted of 20 P-38 a/c, 10 P-47 a/c and 40 P-51 a/c was effected commencing at 0929B at 4419N1820E. The bombers were given excellent penetration escort, target cover and withdrawal escort to the YUGOSLAVIAN coast, the

escort departing at 1205B. All of the crews at interrogation report the recognition of P-51 a/c with red noses. No yellow nosed P-51 a/c were observed, nor were the wing markings or recognition letters identified.

Five B-24 a/c returned early.

No flak or enemy planes were encountered or observed enroute to the target. At the target IAH flak was encountered. In the target area, at 1031B, 4 Me-109 a/c were observed, deployed for attack, one of which attacked from 12 o'clock high and pressed the attack to within 400 yards of a/c No. 42-52549 which was flying in Dog Box. Sgt. Walter H. Stutts, nose gunner of a/c 42-52549 opened fire on the Me-109 at about 600 yards. The e/a pulled up and over Dog Box, smoking badly, and was seen to crash. E/A observed in the target area consisted of six Me-109 a/c and four FW-190 a/c. These e/a appeared to be well engaged by our friendly escort with the exception of the encounter mentioned. On the return route, the formation flying west off of the briefed course was engaged by flak at SARAJEVO while flying at between 15,000 and 16,000'. Flak at SARAJEVO was MAH apparently consisting of about 12 heavy guns. SIH flak was encountered at TUZLA 4433N1845E.

Thirty-four B-24 a/c of this group were over the target at 1028B (assigned target time was 1014B). Thirty-four a/c dropped 842 tons of 500 lb GP bombs (.1 nose and mixed .01 and non-delay tail fuses) from 23,700'. Four early returns jettisoned ten tons of bombs. B-24 a/c No. 42-95228 jettisoned ½ ton of bombs west of the target when one bomb failed to release due to malfunction. B-24 a/c No. 42-76326 returned ¾ ton of bombs to base when, due to a rack malfunction, bombs could not be released or salvoed. One early return brought back 22 tons of bombs to the base.

Thirty-four landed at 1250B without incident:

To the target the route was flown as briefed, then to SZEKSZARD 4621N 1841E as briefed, then directly to SARAJEVO at which point a turn was made to the left to bring the formation back onto the briefed course.

4. 465th Bomb Group. On 2 July 1944, 33 a/c of 36 scheduled took off at 0639B to bomb the RAKOS M/Y at BUDAPEST, HUNGARY.

The Group assembled over ANDRIA at 0719B at 6,000' without incident.

The Wing rendezvous was accomplished at 0732B over SPINAZZOLA at 6,000'.

The fighter escort was met at 0930B at 4535N1845E (near the DANUBE) at 21,500' and escorted the bombers to the target, over the target, and escorted them back to the ADRIATIC Coast where they left at 1230B at 14,500'. The escort was reported to be excellent.

There were two early returns.

31 a/c went over the target at 1028B and 30 a/c dropped 75 tons of 500 lb GP bombs (.1 nose and .01 and non-delay tail fuses) from 22,900'.

One a/c lost 2 engines and made an individual run and joined the 464th after leaving the target.

2 to 3 Me-109's and 1 Me-210 and 1 Me-110 were seen in the target area at 1030B.

There were two encounters with enemy a/c over the target. The first was an attack by an Me-109 at 1030B at 20,000', The attack was made from 7 o'clock level with break away below. The a/c passed underneath and then climbed up on the side and made second pass at the tail from above. The second encounter was also made at 1030B by an Me-109. The attack was made from 9 o'clock the a/c making a large oval and closing to approximately 200 yards.

Radio security was again violated by an unidentified group using the code name "Wheeltrack". The violation occurred about one hour prior to target. One a/c in the group called the lead a/c and made the following transmission in the clear: "My navigator says we are heading straight for BROD, is that correct?".

31 a/c landed at home base at 1312B mean time.

Route was flown as briefed.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 2 July 1944, at 0658B, 36 B-24 a/c took off to bomb BUDAPEST RAKOS W/Y.

Assembly over ALTALURA at 8,000' was satisfactory.

Rendezvous with 460th Bomb Group between ALTAMURA and GRAVINA at 0732B at 8,000' on course over SPINAZZOLA.

Rendezvous with fighter escort, which consisted of 25 to 30 P-51 a/c was effected at 0935B at 4225N1917E. The escort left the formation on return route at 1130B at 4430N1840E.

Four a/c returned prior to bombing.

15 e/a, Me-109's and FW-190's, were seen between IP and target area but did not attack formation. MAH flak was encountered over the target for approximately 5 minutes. MAH flak was encountered at 4352N1825E.

32 a/c were over target at 1030B. 32 a/c dropped 79.5 tons of 500 lb

GP bombs (.1 nose and .01 non-delay tail fuses) at 22,400'. 1 a/c jettisoned two bombs which hung up, at 4730N1905E.

Return was made without incident. 32 a/c landed, mean landing time, 1330B.

Route was flown as briefed.

DISTRIBUTION:

- 1 cy ea CG, AC of S, A-3, Fifteenth AF.
- 2 cys AC of S, A-2, Fifteenth AF.
- 1 cy 28th SCU, Fifteenth AF.
- 1 cy PRO, Fifteenth AF.
- 1 cy ea CO, AC of S, A-2, 5th, 47th, 49th, 304th Bomb Wing.
- 1 cy CG, 306th Fighter Wing.
- 1 cy ca CO, AC of S, A-1, A-2, A-3, 55th Bomb Wing.
- 1 cy ea Bombdr 0, PI, PRO, Stat, 55th Bomb Wing.
- 1 cy ca cO, S-3, ea Gp, 55th Bomb Wing.
- 3 cys S-2, ea Gp, 55th Bomb Wing.
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