

55BW Mission Summary No 57, 7 July 1944 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 6 July 1944, 128 B-24 a/c of 133 scheduled took off between 0650-0715B to bomb PORTO MARGHERA Oil Storage facilities. There were 2 early returns.

Group assemblies and line and Wing rendezvous were effected as ordered. Fighter escort of the 306th Fighter Wing made rendezvous at 4305N1520E (approx.) and was identified by Bomb Groups between 0920-0933B. Fighters were reported with formation until after target area was passed at 1200B.

126 a/c were over target at 1037-1047B. 125 a/c dropped 312.25 tons of 500 lb GP bombs (.1N, .01 and .025T fusing) from 19,600-20,800'. 1 early return jettisoned: load; 1 Irsortio jettisoned: 1; 1 early return & one sortie returned full bomb load to bases. Results are as follows:

460th Bomb Group. 40-50 strikes north and south of canal thru the DAMIANI light oil plant resulting in explosions and fires. Many other hits in white oil storage tank area causing more explosions and fires.

464 Bomb Group. 16-18 hits on rain buildings of the Vetro-coke, Ammonia, Nitric Acid, and Fertilizer Plant causing severe damage. Numerous hits on building of the Aluminum Plant opposite the oil storage area. 10 direct hits on the Calcium Carbide Plant and other hits on the Power Station.

465th Bomb Group. Several strikes on the main workshop of the Vetro-coke Glass works. Several hits in the Coal By-products Plant resulting in fires.

485th Bomb Group. Hits scored in Coke Products Plant. Several small buildings were demolished. 8-12 strikes on the RR tracks and the highway north of target, possibly cutting all tracks. The Montecatini Sulfuric Acid and Fertilizer Plant has been badly damaged by direct hits.

MAH flak at target was the only flak encountered. 3 e/a were seen. There were no encounters.

123 a/c were down between 1245-1304B. None was lost, none were missing. 3 a/c landed at friendly fields, later returning to bases.

Route was flown as briefed by 2 Groups; 2 Groups varied from briefed course.

Weather: At base and over ITALY scattered middle cloud, over ADRIATIC 2/10 stratocumulus (base 7,000', tops 10,000'), visibility 20 miles. At target, 1/10 cumulus, visibility 20 miles. Return: Cloud

built up to 3-4/10 over spur of ITALY and to 6-7/10 over land to bases.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 6 July 1944, at 0715B, 31 scheduled a/c were dispatched to bomb the oil stores at PORTO MARGHERA.

The Group formed its two attacks units at 0808B, and rendezvous with the 485th was accomplished over GRAVINA at 0812B. The Wing formed over SPINAZZOLA at 0822B as planned, the 460th flying the #2 position. Fighter escort, P-38's contacted the formation at 0920B at 4310N1525E, furnished penetration, target and withdrawal cover. They left the formation at 1043B in the target area.

One a/c returned early.

At 19,600', 30 a/c were over the primary target at 1042½B. 29 a/c dropped 72.5 tons of 500 lb GP bombs.

The Group experienced MAH flak over the target area.

Route: The Wing departed SPINAZZOLA on a heading NW of the briefed course, following the briefed route up the ADRIATIC. The formation turned west, SE of the IP but crossed the IP on the correct axis of attack. The return route was flown as briefed.

30 a/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1245B.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 6 July 1944 starting at 0650B, 33 B-24 a/c of 38 a/c scheduled, took off and bombed the PORTO MARGHERA oil storage facilities dropping 82 1/4 tons of 500 lb GP bombs (.1N and mixed .01 and .025T fuses) at 1047B (assigned target time was 1034B) from 19,800'.

The Group form-up was executed according to plan. Line rendezvous with the 465th Bomb Group was as prescribed, as was the Wing rendezvous.

Rendezvous with the fighter escort which consisted of 30-35 P-38 a/c was effected at 0933B at 4327N1510E. The fighters escorted the bombers to the target and on withdrawal to 4155N1520E departing at 1208B.

There were no early returns and all a/c dropped all bombs on the target with the exception of a/c 42-78374 which had a rack malfunction and was able to drop only nine of the ten bombs on the target. This a/c jettisoned 1/4 ton of bombe in the ADRIATIC at 1134B.

No flak or enemy fighters were observed or encountered enroute to or on return from the target. At the target, MAH flak was encountered and crews report pinpoint positions of batteries as briefed. Five FW-190s were observed at the target flying about 5000

below and away from the bomber formation. There is no confirmation of this information.

Thirty two a/c landed at 1245B without incident. B-24 a/c #42-78374 received a flak hit before bombs away and landed at FOGGIA MAIN at 1225B.

The route was flown as briefed.

4. 465th Bomb Group. On 6 July 1944 at 0705B, 32a/c were scheduled and took off to bomb the oil storage plant at PORTO MARGHERA, ITALY.

The Group assembled over CANOSA at 0741B at 9,500' and made rendezvous with the 464th Bomb Group over ANDRIA at 0806B at 9,500'. Wing rendezvous was accomplished over SPINAZZOLA at 0823B at 9,500'. The formation was joined by an escort of P-38's at 4305N1528E at 13,000'. The escort left the formation at 1133B at 4332N1420E at 10,000'.

There was one early return due to failure of the #3 engine just after take-off. This a/c returned its bombs to base and landed at 0745B.

No e/a were seen and there were no encounters. Flak at the target was MAH. Several a/c believed that they could see a few bursts coming from a boat at the mouth of the PIAVE river or at end of VENICE harbor as the formation rallied away from the target.

31 a/c went over the target at 1045B at 20,800'. 77½ tons of 500 lb GP bombs.

29 a/c landed between 1240B and 1310B. 2 a/c left the formation enroute home and landed at FOGGIA because of casualties. They then took off for base and arrived at 1330B.

Our formation followed the lead groups and the route was not flown as briefed. At the first turn point the formation was 30 miles off course and it turned into the IP somewhat south of the briefed coordinates. Rally off the target was sharper than briefed and the formation was west of course during most of the return route to base.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 6 July 1944 at 0712B, 32 a/c took off to bomb PORTO MARGHERA oil storage. There were no early returns.

Assembly over ALTALURA at 0810B at 7,000' was satisfactory.

Rendezvous with 460th Bomb Group was made over SPINAZZOLA at 0822B at 7,000'.

Rendezvous with fighter escort, which consisted of 19 P-38 a/c was effected without incident at 0929B at 4305N1305E. Escort left formation at the target.

Three e/a, Me-109s, were seen in target area but did not approach the formation.

Thirty two a/c were over target at 1037B. Thirty two a/c dropped 80 tons of 500 lb GP bombs, at 20,600'.

Three e/a, ME-109s, were seen in the target area; there were no encounters. Twenty two a/c of formation were holed by flak; damage was slight.

Return was made without incident. Thirty two a/c landed, mean landing time, 1304B. There were no stragglers, no late arrivals.

Route was flown as briefed.

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- 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 ea CO, AC of S, A-1, A-2, A-3, 55th Bomb Wing.
- 1 cy ca Bombdr 0, PI, PRO, Stat, 55th Bomb Wing.
- 1 cy ea CO, S-3, ea Gp, 55th Bomb Wing.
- 3 cys S-2, ea Gp, 55th Bomb Wing.
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