

55BW Mission Summary No. 49, 23 June 44 (Cont'd)

1. General Summary. On 23 June 1944, 150 B-24 a/c of 153 a/c scheduled took off between 0550 - 0611B to attack oil storage facilities at GIURGIU, RUMANIA. There were 24 early returns, for the most part due to weather.

Group assemblies were without incident, and line and wing rendezvous were effected as ordered. Fighter escort was observed at varying times by the several Groups, some of which varied course to avoid cloud formations, but P-38 and P-51 a/c accompanied units of the Wing from 0812 until 1110B.

124 a/c were over the target between 0942 - 1002. 118 a/c dropped 124 tons of 1,000 lb GP bombs fused .1N .01 and .025 and 116 tons of 100 lb M-47 incendiaries from 20,000 - 22,800' with Fair to Excellent results. 9 a/c jettisoned, 8 (6 of them early returns) brought bombs back.

Flak at target was MAH; barge and railway flak was noted. MAH was encountered at SKOPLJE, SIH at NIS, and SIL at DURAZZO.

Up to 15 e/a were seen, 6 were encountered. 1 e/a is claimed probably destroyed.

124 a/c were down between 1301 - 1357. 1 a/c was lost, 1 is missing.

Course was flown as briefed except for variations necessitated by changes to avoid cloud. For weather, see individual Group Narratives.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 23 June 1944, 0610 hours, 39 scheduled a/c took off to bomb the Oil Installations at Giurgiu.

Wing rendezvous was accomplished on time without incident, the 460th leading the Wing. Fighter escort, P-38s, contacted the formation just prior to the IP at 0940 hours, furnished penetration, target and withdrawal cover. They left the formation at 0955 hours immediately after target.

Four a/c returned early. Two a/c returned bombs to base, two a/c jettisoned bombs in Adriatic.

From 22,000', 35 a/c were over the target at 0945 hours. 30 a/c dropped 60 tons of 1000 lb. GP bombs, .1N, .01 & .025T fuses, on the primary target. There was a good concentration of bursts in the center section of the target with hits on the Quay side in area of two warehouses. Hits were also scored on quayside NE of warehouses. Many bombs fell in the river where numerous barges were observed. Due to bad weather, five a/c lost the formation and joined the 464th Group.

They dropped 8 tons on that Group's primary target. One a/c jettisoned it's bombs.

The Group experienced MAH flak in the target area. Flak barges were observed in the river nearby.

Route was flown as briefed, with slight variations from key point to target

Weather: Over Adriatic, 4-6/10ths cumulus, tops 13000'; over Albanian Coast, 9-10/10ths alto-cumulus, tops 11-14000', 4-6/10ths cirrus decreasing to 2-3/10ths cumulus tops 11-13000' over target, viz. 15-20 miles. On return, 8-10/10ths cumulus over Albania and Yugoslavia, tops 14-15000', diminishing to 4-6/10ths over Adriatic.

35 a/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1315 hours.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 23 June 1944, beginning at 0550B hours, 37 a/c of 39 scheduled took off to bomb the Giurgiu Oil Installations and Storage.

Assembly was accomplished without incident. Rendezvous with the 465th Bombardment Group (H), end Wing rendezvous, were accomplished as prescribed.

Rendezvous with the fighter escort, consisting of ten P-38s and 8 P-51s, was effected at 0812B hours in the vicinity of Lolaj. Fighter escort was observed at intervals enroute to the target, over the target and on return to (42° 15' N - 18° 36' E) at 1110B hours.

7 e/a, consisting of 1 FW-190, 1 ME-109 and 5 unidentified a/c were observed. The FW-190 was observed at 0935B hours at the Initial Point; the unidentified a/c were observed at 0943B hours in the target area; the ME-109 was observed at 1120B hours at (42° 40' N - 20° 20' E). No encounters were experienced by this Group.

At the target, S to MIH flak was encountered. On the return route, IAL flak was reported at Visceka Exane (34° 09' N - 22° 49' E) by crew members of B-24 a/c No. 42-47248, an early return, then flying at 10,000 feet.

25 a/c were over the target at 0942B hours (target time was 0950B hours). 24 a/c dropped 49.15 tons of 16-clustered 100 lb incendiaries. B-24 a/c 42-52544 was over the target at 0942B hours but did not drop due to failure of electrical release and did not salvo for fear of dropping bombs in Rushuck, and returned with 2 tons of bombs.

Weather over the target was good, with 4/10 lower cumulus and visibility 20 miles. Enroute over the Adriatic, large patches of Alto Stratus were encountered at 10,000 to 11,000 feet which gradually

merged into an 8/10 Alto cumulus layer near the Yugoslavian coast with base at 10,000 and tops at 14,500 feet. Above this layer was an 8/10 Cirro Stratus Bank with base at 20,000 feet and tops unknown. This layer decreased to 4/10 coverage toward the east and thinned out. Both the route out and back was complicated by large Cumulus Banks built up to 18,000 feet. On return, the Adriatic was clear, and there was scattered Cumulus over Italy.

The route was flown as briefed to the target and back to Ferdinand. From Ferdinand to the Yugoslavian coast, the route flown was slightly north of the briefed course, thence to a point in the Adriatic at (40° 58' N - 18° 32' E), thence to base. The route as briefed.

6 a/c were forced to return to base from the Yugoslavian coast where they became lost from the formation in climbing through the overcast.

25 a/c landed beginning at 1311B hours, the last a/c landing at 1350 B hours.

Bombing results were generally good. The second attack unit was unable to locate the first attack unit after passing through the overcast over the Yugoslavian coast and as a consequence fell in behind the 485th Bombardment Group (H) and followed that Group into the target at Giurgiu dropping their bombs on the Old Oil Landing Quay. The first attack unit scored hits in the southwest section of the briefed target, and on the loading installations flying between the oil storage tanks and the Danube.

3 a/c received minor flak damage.

4. 465th Bomb Group. On 23 June 1944 at 0606B 36a/c scheduled took off to bomb the oil installation and storage at Giurgiu, Roumania.

The Group assembly was accomplished at ANDRIA at 7,000 ft. at 0718B. Wing assembly at SPINAZZOLA.

There were 4 early returns.

32 a/c went over the target and 31 a/c dropped 60 17/20 tons of 100 lb. M-47 incendiary bombs at 1002B hours from 20,000 ft. 2 a/c had rack malfunctions which resulted in 10 bombs failing to release in each a/c. 10 of these bombs were jettisoned in the Adriatic Sea.

Bomb strike photos show a good concentration of bombs in the target area including direct hits on oil pumping stations starting fires, and on warehouse and loading facilities in the M/Y area. 1 direct hit left an oil barge in flames. Hits were also observed in workshop area, 2,000 ft. NE of target area.

Flak at target was scant to moderate, accurate and heavy, On the return route flak was encountered at Skoplje, Yugoslavia, MAH at Nis, Yugoslavia, SIH flak was observed, and at Durazzo on the Yugoslav coast, SIL flak was encountered.

Weather enroute consisted of scattered to broken clouds with a solid undercast over Yugoslavian mountains and towering thunderheads. Over the target there was a 3 to 4/10ths cloud cover at 17,000 ft. Return route was same as route out.

32 a/c landed at 1357B.

14 a/c received slight flak damage and 1 a/c received Moderate damage consisting of hits in hydraulic system, ono inverter and #4 engine.

2nd Lt William LaFleur, bombardier in #3 ship in "C" box suffered a slight flesh wound in the thigh from flak.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 23 June 1944 et 0611B, 38 a/c took off to bomb GIURGIU Oil Installations and Storage (Primary target). There were 4 early returns.

Assembly over ALTAMURA at 5000' was satisfactory.

Rendezvous with 460th Group at 0702B at 6000' between ALTAMURA and GRAVINA; with 464th and 465th Groups at 0713B at 6000' on course over SPINAZZOLA.

Rendezvous with fighter escort, which consisted of 6 P-51s and 12 P-38s was effected, without incident at 4335N2448E at 0933B.

15 e/a, 8 ME-109s, 4 FW-190s, 3 believed to be Ju-87s as they had fixed landing gear, were seen between IP and target and 30 miles west of SOFIA on return. Moderate, accurate, heavy flak was encountered over target for approximately 3 minutes; some RR flak was observed south of target. 1 a/c was lost to flak over target area.

32 a/c were over target at 0945B (target time 0950B). 32 e/c dropped 64 tons of 1000 lb GP bombs (.1 nose and .01, .025 tail fusing) at 21800'. Bomb strikes were observed in target area; some dropped short and some were seen to go over the target. No heavy smoke was observed.

Patches of 4/10 to 7/10 alto cumulus tops at 10000' to YUGOSLAVIAN coast, becoming 9/10 to 10/10 alto and stratocumulus et 14000' at YUGOSLAVIAN coast with cumulus extending through this deck at 16000'. This deck broke at eastern foothills of YUGOSLAVIAN mountains to 3/10 to 4/10. North of SOFIA and east of VIS over mountains, the alto cumulus and cumulus increased to 8/10 with tops at

16000', breaking to scattered cumulus 75 mi. west of target. Target area 2/10 to 3/10 cumulus tops at 8000'. There was a line of cumulonimbus over TRANSYLVANIAN ALPS to north and over mountains to south. Route back same as out with cumulus building up to 18000' over all mountains, Over ADRIATIC, clear with 3-4/10 cumulus at 16000' over base.

About 15 e/a were seen between IP and target and 30 mi. west of SOFIA on return, of which 8 were ME-109s, 4 FW-190s, 3 believed to be Ju-87s, as they had fixed landing gear. At 1101B, 1 ME-109 made a pass at the second wave at 4258N2200E; the attack came in at 3 o'clock low and broke away at 8 o'clock, but was unaggressive. Gunners fired with no results. Colors noted on e/a: ME-109s - silver gray in color - some with yellow noses - one with red nose, black and white fuselage with white swastika.

Return was made without incident. 32 a/c landed mean landing time, 1311B. There were no stragglers, no late arrivals.

As stated in paragraph 6, 1 a/c, #495, was lost by direct flak hit; bomb bay was in flames and flames were also coming out of upper turret. A/c went into 45 deg dive out of formation, then pulled out and was last seen under control 8 men were seen to come out of plane, 6 chutes definitely opening. Red flare was fired by a/c on way down. A/c was at approximately 21800' when hit. 1 a/o is missing.

Route flown as briefed.