

55BW Mission Summary No. 50, 26 June 1944 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 25 June 1944, 149 B-24 a/c of 153 scheduled, took off between 0520 - 0545B to attack SETE and BALARUC oil facilities. Two attack units were formed, the 460th and 485th Bomb Groups attacking SETE, the 464th and 465th Bomb Groups attacking BALARUC. There were 9 early returns.

Group assemblies were made as ordered, but line and Wing rendezvous were complicated by the necessity of making rendezvous at altitudes different from those ordered because of adverse cloud conditions. The same cause resulted in attack units being late at targets.

Fighter escort was not seen by all Groups, because of delay of Wing rendezvous. Two Groups report escort joining formation at 0820 and 0850. The escort being present over target areas.

137 a/c were over targets at 1017, - 1032B. 136 a/c dropped 271 tons of 500 lb GP bombs (.1N, 75% .01 and 25% non-delay T fusing) from 16,800' - 19,000'. 2 a/c jettisoned; 5 a/c (early returns) brought bombs back.

Results were as follows:

460th Bomb Group - The target was partially obscured by Smoke at the time of attack. Several strikes are observed in the northern portion of the vulnerable area of the refinery and on the rail facilities adjacent to the refinery. Strikes extend into the residential areas beyond the refinery. The second were attacked a target of opportunity scoring several near misses on a Sulfuric acid and munitions plant.

464th Bomb Group - The bombs dropped in a close pattern approximately 1000' northeast of the lubricant refinery assigned as a target. Incidental damage was caused by several strikes on a rail line and an unidentified industrial installation.

465th Bomb Group - Damage in the target is centered in the southern portion of the refinery with several strikes in the storage tank area scoring several direct hits or near misses. A merchant vessel docked at the refinery was set on fire by one or two direct hits. The remainder of the bombs fell slightly to the left of the target area.

485th Bomb Group - The first wave attacked the target assigned scoring numerous strikes in the target. Three direct hits on probably intermediate product storage tanks started fires sending immense columns of smoke in the air. Several additional strikes were scored on the oil storage area and the rail facilities adjacent to the refinery. The second wave attacked a target of opportunity, a Lubricants refinery and storage plant at BALARUC. Approximately ten strikes were

scored in the northeast portion of the target with probable direct hits on five small buildings. The rail and docking facilities adjacent to the refinery received approximately seven hits.

Three Groups report SIH flak at targets; three Groups report SIH at AGDE, one Group reports SIH at BOUZIGUES.

134 a/c were down (3 landing late after stops at friendly fields) between 1407 - 1440B. 6 a/c were reported at friendly fields; none lost, none missing.

Weather: 8-9/10 cumulus over ITALY, scattered cumulus over sea to CORSICA, where it increased to broken cumulus; 10/10 cumulus at MARSEILLES, CAVU at target. On return same as route out except 8/10 cumulus over ITALY.

Route was as briefed except for deviations caused by adverse weather.

2. 460th Bomb Group, On 25 June 1944, at 0538 hours, 37 scheduled a/c took off to bomb the oil refinery at SETE, FRANCE.

The Group formed in two attack units in the regular assembly area, rendezvous with the 485th was accomplished over ALTAMURA at 0632 hours. The 485th and 460th were over SPINAZZOLA at 0642 hours but did not contact the other two groups of the Wing formation, who it is believed were late. Fighter escort, P-38s, first contacted the formation near TOULON at 0930 hours, furnished penetration, target and withdrawal cover. They were last seen in the vicinity of 4200N - 0630E at 1135 hours.

Three a/c returned early.

From 17,000' at 1026 hours, 18 a/c of the first attack unit dropped 36 tons of 500 lb GP bombs, on the primary target. The second attack unit was unable to get in proper position to attack the PT and made their bomb run on the BALARUC Munitions & Sulfuric Acid Plant. From 16,800' at 1027 hours, 14 a/c dropped 28 tons of the same type bombs at this target. One a/c failed to drop its bombs due to mechanical malfunction and jettisoned them in the sea south of FRANCE. Another a/c failed to join our formation and bombed with the 464th.

The Group experienced SIH flak over the primary target, the batteries being on the SW shore of LAKE THAU. On the rally, SIH flak was encountered at AGDE.

29 a/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1440 hours. Five a/c landed at friendly fields.

Route was flown as briefed to target. On the return journey the first leg was flown to the south tip of CORSICA, thence to base

with the formation dispersing over the Italian mainland due to weather.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 25 June 1944, beginning at 0520B hours, 39 B-24 a/c of 39 scheduled took off to bomb BALARUC OIL REFINERY, BALARUC, FRANCE. There were 5 early returns.

Assembly was effected with difficulty, due to cloud condition.

Over the west coast of ITALY, rendezvous with one attack unit of the 465th Group was accomplished, but full Wing rendezvous was not made, because of delay caused by cloud conditions at assembly.

From 30/40 P-38a/c providing fighter escort were seen along the route to the target, the first at 0802B hours at the Italian coast, continuing to the target area, where 18/25 P-38 a/c were observed. No escort was observed after leaving the target area.

Two e/a were observed at 4312N0438E, off the GULF OF BEAUDUC at 1010B hours, from 17500 ft. There were no encounters.

Flak encountered at the target area was SIH. SIH flak was observed at AGDE on the rally left. From 15/20 bursts were observed coming from BOUZIGUES.

34 a/c were over the target at 1032B hours, (target time 1010B hours). 34 a/c dropped 68 tons of 500 lb GP bombs.

34 a/c landed beginning at 1407B hours, the last a/c landing at 1440B hours.

Route was as briefed to the target with the exception of the form up and rendezvous.

4. 465th Bomb Group. On 25 June 1944, 38 a/c were scheduled to take off at 0525 hours to bomb the oil refinery at BALARUC. 38 a/c took off at 0521B hours. There was one early return.

Assembly and rendezvous were effected with difficulty due to adverse cloud conditions. Escort of P-38s and P-51s joined the formation over the French coast at TOULON at 1800 ft. and left at approximately 1030 in the target area.

4 e/c fighters were observed in the target area; there were no attacks. No flak was encountered over target; SIH flak was encountered at AGDE.

13 a/c of the first attack unit went over the target at 19000 ft. at 1017. 22 a/c of the second attack unit went over the target at 1030 at 19000 ft. 1 a/c went over the target assigned to the 449th

Group with them and over their alternate and jettisoned their bombs in the TYRRHENIAN SEA at 4235N0830E because the group failed to drop on target. 35 a/c dropped 69 3/4 tons of 500 lb GP bombs. 1 bomb was jettisoned in the TYRRHENIAN SEA because of bomb rack malfunction.

33 aircraft landed at 1420 hours mean landing time. 1 a/c landed at 1820; 2 a/c landed at 2000 hours.

1st attack unit flew route as briefed; second attack unit came back over ITALY to ADRIATIC into base to avoid weather.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 25 June 1944 at 0545 hours, 35 B-24s Rendezvous with fighter escort, which consisted of 25 P-38s was of 39 a/c scheduled took off to bomb SETE OIL REFINERY (PT). There were no early returns.

Assembly over ALTAMURA was satisfactory.

Rendezvous with the 460th Bombardment Gp. between ALTAMURA and GRAVINA at 0638 hours and wing rendezvous over SPINAZZOL. at 0645 hours.

Rendezvous with fighter escort, which consisted of 25 P-38s was effected without incident at 43 deg 00 min W - 06 deg 00 min E at 0950 hours.

Flak at target was SIH; some railway flak was observed. Formation was exposed to flak for approximately 2 minutes.

Eighteen a/c of the first wave were over the PT at 1024B hours (target time 1010B hours) Eighteen a/c dropped 36 tons of 500 lb GP bombs (.1 nose, 75% .025 tail, 25% non-delay) at 18,800 feet. Seventeen a/c of the second wave were over target (chemical works and oil storage at SETE, Southwest of PT) at 1025B hours. Second wave did not bomb PT because they identified it too late to do any satisfactory bombing; therefore, continued on course and bombed the chemical works and oil storage southwest of the PT. The 17 a/c dropped 34 tons of 500 lb GP bombs (.1 nose, 75% .025 tail, 25% non-delay).

There were no claims, losses, or casualties. There were no encounters with e/a.

Return was made without incident. Thirty-five a/c landed, mean landing time 1430 hours. There were no stragglers, no late arrivals.

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