

55BW Mission Summary No. 53, 30 June 1944 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 30 June 1944, 145 B-24 a/c of 150 scheduled took off between 0605-0625B to bomb an oil refinery in eastern GERMANY. There were 14 early returns.

Group assemblies, line rendezvous, and Wing rendezvous were satisfactory. Fighter escort was variously seen by individual Groups. The failure to see escort at all times being due to extremely adverse weather.

Because of impossible weather conditions, individual Groups turned back, none reaching target. 33 a/c dropped on various targets of opportunity. The only concentrated bombing being on harbor installations at SPLIT. The 33 a/c dropped 78.25 tons of 500 1b GP bombs (.1N .01 .025T fusing) 38 a/c (including 1 early return) jettisoned full bomb loads. 55 a/c returned bombs to base.

Results were as follows:

460th Bomb Group. Two to three direct hits were scored on a single line RR.

485th Bomb Group. The harbor installations at SPLIT suffered minor damage. One direct hit was scored on the LUKOBRAK mole proper and two or three on the quayside. Possibly one direct hit was scored on a Merchant Vessel and one or two strikes on the rail line leading to the mole.

Flak was encountered as follows: MAH at 4706-1755, MAH at BROW, MAH at PECS, MAH at IMOTSKI, MAH at West end of LAKE BALATON, IAH 10 miles North of METKOVIC, SIH at GYOR, and MIH at 4342N 1711E.

E/A seen by individual Groups numbered 0 - 4 - 34; and 45-50. E/A encountered numbered 0-1-22-25, and 35-40, some attacks being very aggressive. Claims total 8-1-3. 2 a/c are lost, 4 are missing, 1 landed at a friendly field.

124 a/c landed between 1215-1240B.

Routes were flown as briefed until Groups turned back, from which point Groups followed individual courses, determined by cloud conditions, to bases.

Weather: Clear to 60 miles SSE of ZAGREB, where alto-stratus and alto-cirrus began to form, bases 13,000', tops 15,000', rapidly becoming 10/10 in vicinity of LAKE BALATON, tops 15,000'-20,000', with visibility zero.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 30 June 1944 at 0625B, 35 a/c of 36 scheduled were dispatched to bomb an oil refinery in GERMANY.

Group assembly and rendezvous with the 485th between ALTAMURA and GRAVINA were accomplished on time, as was Wing rendezvous over SPINAZZOLA at 0723B. Fighter escort of P-38s was observed by some crews at LAKE BALATON.

There were four early returns.

North of LAKE BALATON, 4714N1803E, at 0945B, the Group encountered weather conditions which cut visibility to zero, which necessitated turning back and which caused a dispersal of the Group by boxes. To this point the route had been flown as briefed. Returning to the base, however, various boxes and a/c flew different routes. A few a/c attacked targets of opportunity in HUNGARY and YUGOSLAVIA. Twelve a/c dropped 500 1b GP bombs, .IN.01 & .025T fuses, at the following places in the quantities indicated:

2 a/c dropped 5 tons - - - RR(4627N1710E)
2 a/c dropped 5 tons - - - RR(4515N1715E)
1 a/c dropped 2.5 tons - - - Docks at Split
1 a/c dropped 2.5 tons - - - Factory, Pecs
* 1 a/c dropped 2.5 tons - - M/Y Kaposvar

At 1045B, 45-50 ME-210s were observed in the LAKE BALATON area. 35-40 e/a attacked, concentrating their fire on the high box of the 1st attack unit. They came in from 7 o'clock high in eight waves of four abreast and closed most aggressively to within 50 yards. Seven other ME-210s attacked singularly from 6 o'clock and 11 o'clock level. There were encounters with ME-109s. In one case a pilot emerging from a cloud, found an ME-110 attacking a B-24 which had one gun operative, altered his course, intercepted the fighter and shot him down. Three e/a destroyed are claimed.

* 1 a/c dropped 2.5 tons - - - Baldfoldvar, Town.

From the high box of the 11st attack unit, 4 a/c are missing, though only one was observed to go down, twenty miles North of LAKE BALATON, with the #3 engine and bomb-bay in flames. No chutes seen (EEA Reports filed). The surviving a/c of this box evaded e/a by seeking cloud cover and, although considerably damaged by e/a fire, returned to base where a crash landing was successful. One man sustained a slight scalp wound.

Flek was encountered in the following locations: MAH at 4706N1755E, MAH at BROD, MAH at PECS, MAH at IMOTSKI, MAH at West end of LAKE BALATON, IAH 16 miles North of METKOVIC, SIAH at GYOR and MIH at 4342N1711E.

Weather: Clear to 60 miles SSE of ZAGREB. Alto-stratus and alto-cumulus started to form, bases 13,000', tops 15,000' and rapidly became 10/10ths in vicinity of LAKE BALATON, tops 15-16000' with some tops at 20,000'. Visibility was zero when the Group turned back.

With a mean landing time of 1240B, 27 a/c returned to the base.

3. 464th Bomb Group, On 30 June 1944 at 0605B hours, 38 B-24 of 39 a/c scheduled took off to bomb an oil refinery in GERMANY.

Take off and assembly of the 464th was as scheduled and completed on time in the group assembly area.

The two group assembly was performed satisfactorily over Andria with the 464 on course at 0708B hours. Wing assembly was over Spinazzola at 0725B hours.

Rendezvous with fighter escort, which consisted of 8 P-38 a/c 306 Fighter Wing was effected without incident at about 1000B hours at 4710N - 1745E.

The formation turned at 4710N - 1740 E and proceeded back to base because of weather encountered. 1 a/c dropped 2½ tons of 500 lb GP bombs (.1 nose end mixed .01 end .025 tail) on target of opportunity PAUSPORNADASO 4613N - 1828E from 11,000' at 1018B hour

The weather was clear over the Adriatic, towering cumulus to Lake Balaton area where solid overcast was encountered. Base at 13,000 to 14,000 feet, tops 18,000 to 20,000.

5 a/c jettisoned 50-500 1b GP bombs; 1 a/c jettisoned 10 bombs at a point 10 miles SW of Györ, 1 a/c jettisoned 10 bombs at 4725N - 1805E, 1 a/c jettisoned 10 bombs 4705N - 1755E, 1 a/c jettisoned 10 bombs 4240N - 1610 E, 1 a/c jettisoned 10 bombs at 4128N - 1642 E).

1 a/c observed 4 ME-109s at about 1000B hours at 4750N - 1755E. 1 e/a (ME-109) attacked this ship resulting in injuries to 4 members of the crew. The attack was from 7 o'clock low out of a cloud bank, the e/a closing to within 75 yards. Tail turret gunner ball and top turret gunner and left waist gunner fired about 500 rounds. ME-109 was last seen falling in a steep spiral and slow spin, smoking all the time. Our a/c landed at 1217B hours at Foggia and hospitalized 4 men and returned to base.

4. 465th Bomb Group. Thirty six aircraft of 39 scheduled took off at 0620 hours on 30 June 1944 in two attack units.

Group assembly took place as scheduled at 0708 hours et 7,000 feet over Canosa and rendezvous with the 464th took place at the same time over Andria but the 464th was one end one half minutes early and our group one half minute late in arriving there. Wing rendezvous was as briefed at 7,000 feet et 0725 hours on course over Spinazzola.

Two aircraft returned early.

Thirty-four aircraft proceeded to the northern edge of Lake Balaton at which place they ran into 8/10ths Cirrus clouds at 22,000 feet and 10/10ths cumulus at 16,000 feet and they were forced to turn back and return to base. Eighty-five tons of 500-1 GP bombs, fused .1 nose and mixed .01 and .025 tail, were carried. Thirteen aircraft brought thirty-two and one half tons of bombs back to base. Fifteen a/c jettisoned 37 tons of bombs. Five a/c jettisoned 10 bombs each when attacked by enemy fighters, two of these dropped their bombs in Lake Balaton at 1000 hours and the other three also dropped at 1000 hours. Four more aircraft jettisoned 10 bombs each in order to keep up with their formation. One a/c lost an engine and jettisoned its 10 bombs. The remaining five a/c jettisoned 10 bombs each in the Adriatic Sea to avoid landing with the heavy load. Four a/c dropped 10 bombs each on targets of opportunity at the following coordinates: 4602N - 1747E, a cross road west of Szigetver at 1008 hours from 10,500 feet; 4620N - 1700E, a road junction at 1010 from 10,000 feet; 4621N - 1810E, a marshaling yard at 1038 hours from 10,500 feet; 4625N - 1727E, a highway at 1010 hours from 10,000 feet. Two a/c are missing and the disposition of their bombs is unknown.

No flak was encountered enroute. Eight to ten FW-190s, 20 ME-109s, four JU-88s, one ME-110 and one ME-210 were observed in the vicinity of Lake Balaton. There were from 22 to 25 encounters with ME-109s and FW-190s. The following tactics and markings are reported:

a. Six FW-190s attack from 5 to 6 o'clock, level and singly. Several passed through the formation and then dived down: One FW-190 came in high from 2 o'clock to within 400 yards and went into a steep dive after being hit. Some of the FW-190s had yellow markings under their wings, some had red noses, gray bellies and black backs. Some were all black.

b. Two ME-109s attacked at 5 o'clock, closing to 50 yards. One broke above and one below. Two ME-109s attacked at 5 o'clock level line astern closed to 200 yards past the waist and peeled right at 2 o'clock. Four ME-109s attacked at 6 o'clock, level (separate attacks) closing to 200 to 300 yards and diving down under the formation. One ME-109 at 3 o'clock, level, closing to 500 yards and breaking away at 2 o'clock. Six ME-109s in pairs, low, at 7 o'clock, closing to 300 yards and breaking under and down. These planes were either OD or dirty gray in color, with white crosses and some had black and white checks on their tails. The following claims are made: destroyed - 3 FW-190s and 2 ME-109s; damaged - 1 FW-190 and 2 ME-109s.

Weather enroute was as follows: clear but very hazy to Prijedor, then 2/10ths to 3/10ths stratocumulus clouds to 16,000 feet and increasing to 8/10ths cirrus clouds at 22,000 feet, then north of Lake Balaton, 10/10ths stratocumulus and cumulus at 16,000 feet. Similar weather was encountered from Lake Balaton on reciprocal route to base.

Thirty-two a/c landed between 1215 and 1245 hours.

The route of the mission was flown as briefed as far as Lake Balaton at which point weather prevented them from continuing on course. The northern edge of the lake was circled and a reciprocal route flown to base.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 30 June 1944, 36 B-24 a/c scheduled took off to bomb an oil refinery in GERMANY.

Assembly over ALTAMURA at 0700 hours at 5,000' was satisfactory.

Rendezvous with 460th Bomb Gp between Altamura and Gravina at 0711 hours and with the 464th and 465th Groups at 0723 hours on course over Spinazzola at 5,000'.

No rendezvous with fighter escort.

Three aircraft returned early.

No e/a were seen. SIH flak was encountered at BROD, Yugoslavia.

Sixteen a/c of the first wave were over target of opportunity at 1120 hours. Sixteen a/c dropped 39.75 tons of 500 1b GP bombs (.1 nose and .01, .025 tail fuses) at 20,000 feet.

Weather clear along entire route north as far as Lake Balaton where a deck of alto stratus at 11,000 feet was encountered. Deck appeared to be about 3 to 4,000' thick and near overcast. Visibility unlimited to Lake Balaton. Return: Change in weather; stratocumulus forming over Dinaric Alps to 19,000 feet. Visibility 5 to 10 miles.

No e/a were seen or encountered.

Return was made without incident. 33 a/c landed, mean landing time 1230 hours. There were no stragglers or late arrivals.

Route was flown 10 miles to left of course due to position of wing formation. Formation turned back over Lake Balaton, 4710N - 1820E. First wave returned by way of Split; second wave flew to right of Split.

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