

55BW Mission Summary No. 117, 17 Oct 44 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 17 October 1944, 118 B-24 a/c were scheduled and 121 a/c took off between 0800-0837A to bomb a target in AUSTRIA. There were 18 early returns, 5 weather returns, and 9 prior returns, with 103 sorties credited.

Group assemblies, line rendezvous and Wing rendezvous were effected as ordered. Excellent fighter cover was furnished by escort which Joined formation at 1032A at 4415N-1604E and remained with formation until 1435A at 4250N-1600E.

Due to unusually unfavorable weather conditions, only two groups reached the area of the assigned Primary Target, and these were forced by cloud cover to bomb the First Alternate, the VIENNA Industrial Area, by non-visual method. One group bombed the 3rd Alternate Target (MARIBOR, YUGOSLAVIA, M/Y) and one group bombed a Target of Opportunity, NACYKANIZSA, HUNGARY, M/Y.

81 a/c were over targets between 1148-1219A (40 a/c over VIENNA between 1209-1212A, 28 over MARIBOR at 1219A, 13 over NACYKANIZSA at 1148A). 68 a/c dropped 168.75 tons on assigned targets (38 dropped 68 tons on VIENNA, 17 dropped 42 tons on MARIBOR, 13 dropped 32.5 tons on NACYKANIZSA), and 7 a/c dropped 17.5 tons on targets of opportunity (grand total, 186.25 tons). Bombs were 500 lb RDX, fused .1N, .01T. Altitudes were 21,000-23,000'. 6 sortie a/c jettisoned 11.25 tons, 4 early returns jettisoned 10 tons, 40 sortie a/c returned 40 tons, 13 early returns brought back 31.5 tons of bombs.

Results: VIENNA Bomb strike photos show numerous hits on the SE choke point of the NW Marshalling Yard. Additional strikes are visible on unidentified industrial and residential areas. All through tracks were probably cut at the choke point.

MARIBOR M/Y: Clouds prevent assessment.

NACYKANIZSA M/Y: Several hits were obtained on tracks et the North choke point. Complete assessment is prevented by clouds.

Flak at VIENNA was IAH. S-MAH was encountered at MARIBOR, MAH at GRAZ and MAH at SISAK.

No e/a were seen; there were no encounters.

104 a/c (including 9 prior returns) were down at bases between 1415-1545A. 3 a/c were lost, 4 a/c are missing, 4 a/c landed at friendly fields.

Unfavorable weather caused deviation of routes flown from route briefed.

Weather: At take-off, 6-8/10 cirrostratus, base 20,000'. Over ADRIATIC, cirrostratus increased to 9/10 coverage. Below was 3-4/10 cumulus, increasing to Key Point to 8/10, tops 8,000'. Over DINARICS, 10/10 at 20,000' and 7/10 cumulus with tops rising to east. Ship disappeared in cloud consisting of cumulus merging into thick altostratus deck 50 miles inland and broke out in Lake BALATON area at 20,000'. Here to target, 8/10 cirrostratus at 25,000' and 6-8/10 low cumulus, tops 8,000'. At target, 4/10 cumulus, tops 8,000' and 8/10 cirrostratus at 25,000'. On return, 6-7/10 cirrostratus at 25,000' entire route, nearly clear otherwise over ADRIATIC. 6/10 altostratus at 12,000' and 6/10 cirrostratus at 20,000'.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 17 October 1944 at 0805A, 31 scheduled a/c dispatched to bomb a target in AUSTRIA.

Group assembly without incident, rendezvous with 485th at 0909A. At this time, one box of the 485th was out of position behind this group, and the 485th was echeloned to right instead of to left. Wing formed at 0917A, 460th flying #4 position. Fighter escort, 50 P-38s, first sighted at 1210A at 4645N-1610E, furnished penetration and target cover, departing at 1225A at 4620N-1530E.

3 a/c returned early. 2 a/c returned bombs to base and 1 a/c jettisoned bombs in ADRIATIC.

Due to poor weather conditions, formation elected to bomb 3rd Alternate, South M/Y in MARIBOR. When decision was made, formation was about 12 miles SW of city. Due to heavy weather, formation passed near SE edge of MARIBOR before reaching IP, 4643N-1612E. 28 a/c over target at 1219A at 23,000', on heading of 225°. 17 a/c dropped 42 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs. Target completely cloud obscured and bombing was accomplished by PFF. 2 bombs of one a/c failed to release and were jettisoned immediately after target. 9 a/c returned bombs to base. 2 a/c jettisoned bombs, one at 4630N-1520E, the other at 4535N-1505E. 1st attack unit used auto pilot on bomb run. Lead a/c of 2nd attack unit did not bomb.

Results: Clouds prevent assessment.

Before IP, formation encountered SAH flak on SE of MARIBOR. On bomb run, MAH flak experienced for about 3 minutes.

Route flown as briefed to KP, then weather forced group to fly west of course to MARIBOR. Return from target to BOSAN PETROVAC and then as briefed to base.

27 a/c returned to base, mean landing time 1500A. 1 a/c is missing.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 17 Oct 44, beginning at 0815A, 28 scheduled a/c and 3 spares took off to bomb a target in AUSTRIA.

Group form-up, bomber and Wing rendezvous were as proscribed. 5 a/c returned early, bringing back entire bomb loads.

23 a/c over target and 22 a/c dropped 54.25 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs from 21,000', at 1209A. Primary Target not attacked as cloud conditions prevented flying course from IP to target as briefed and when formation neared target and found visual bombing possible, last minute corrections to permit bombing of briefed target were impossible. Decision reached on short notice to bomb M/Y crossing line of flight at a 90° angle. 3 a/c attacked targets of opportunity dropping 7.5 tons. 3 a/c jettisoned 7.5 tons.

Recapitulation:

Dropped on target	54.25 tons
Dropped on targets of opportunity	7.50 tons
Jettisoned	3.25 tons
Returned to base	<u>12.50 tons</u>
Total	77.50 tons

A-5 auto pilot used by group leader, and group attacked as one unit, since 2nd attack unit leader had left formation and there was insufficient a/c for more than one unit.

Results: Bomb strike photos show numerous hits on the SE choke point of the NW Marshalling Yard. Additional strikes are visible on unidentified industrial and residential areas. All through tracks were probably cut at choke point.

Flak at target extremely intense, extremely accurate, heavy. Crew members described flak as heaviest and most accurate experienced by this group. Formation in flak for approximately 15 minutes, starting at IP. Large bursts indicate use of 105 mm, 128 mm and possibly 150 mm guns. Additional flak encountered at GRAZ (MAH) and SISAK (SIH). No e/a were observed.

Fighter escort reported as excellent, remaining in vicinity of formation at all times despite many changes in course. Estimated 20 P-38s first observed at 1032A at 4415N-1604E and last reported at 1430A at 4300N-1600E. 15-20 P-51s first observed at 1024A at 4353N-1536E and last reported at 1435A at 4250N-1600E.

18 a/c landed at base between 1420-1559A. 3 a/c landed at friendly fields. 3 a/c were lost, 2 a/c are missing.

Extremely adverse weather conditions encountered after the turn point (4200N-1620E) rendered impossible any endeavor to adhere strictly to the briefed route. Frequent and sharp turns were executed to avoid weather and flak areas.

4. 465th Bomb Group. On 17 Oct 44, 31 scheduled a/c took off at 0800A to attack an industrial target in AUSTRIA.

Group assembled at 0901A, making line rendezvous with 464th and Wing rendezvous at 0917A at 6,000'. Escort of P-51s joined at 1130A, near WEIZ. P-38s and P-51s provided target cover, leaving at 1416A at the YUGOSLAVIAN coast.

14 a/c returned early.

17 a/c over target at 1212A at 22,500'. 16 a/c dropped 40 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs. 4 a/c dropped 2.5 tons each on targets of opportunity.

Recapitulation:

Dropped on VIENNA	40.0 tons
Dropped on targets of opportunity	10.0 tons
Returned to base	20.0 tons
Jettisoned by early returns	5.0 tons
Jettisoned by sortie a/c	<u>2.5 tons</u>
Total	<u>77.5 tons</u>

Results: Bomb strike photos show bombs to have hit the residential and industrial areas of VIENNA.

No e/a were encountered. Flak at target was IAH. No flak encountered enroute. Flak encountered in rallying NE of VIENNA was of less intensity and of shorter duration than that on any previous rally off targets in VIENNA proper.

15 a/c landed at base at 1545A. 2 a/e landed at friendly fields. 1 a/c is missing.

Briefed route was varied when formation flew north from GOLOMBOK to WEIZ to avoid weather. Numerous other slight variations made because of severe cloud conditions.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 17 Oct 44, 28 scheduled a/c took off to bomb PT in AUSTRIA. Weather prevented formation from reaching PT and a target of opportunity, NACYSKANIZSA M/Y, was bombed instead. Mean take-off time 0837A.

Assembly at 0907A at 7,000', with 485th leading 460th Group. Wing rendezvous at 0917A. at 7,000' with following order of flight: 464th, 465th, 485th and 460th Groups.

18 P-51s joined formation at 1027A, and last observed at 1248A. at 4410N-1540E.

There were 4 early returns. 1 a/c jettisoned, 3 a/c returned bombs to base.

Enroute, high clouds encountered at coast of YUGOSLVIA at 19,000', so dense that lead group could be seen only at infrequent intervals. Conditions continued until approximately 4500N-1620E, where break occurred. At this point, 11 a/c had lost formation. Leader continued toward PT to approximately 4700N-1700E, where solid undercast was encountered. Being without PFF ship, formation of 13 a/c turned back due south to M/Y at NACYSKANIZSA, where break in clouds occurred. Bomb run was begun on the M/Y using PDI and visual sighting. C-1 auto pilot was inoperative.

13 a/c over NACYSKANIZSA at 1148A. dropped 32.5 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs from 22,000'. 11 a/c which lost formation returned all bombs to base after failing to find suitable target of opportunity.

Results: Several hits were obtained on tracks at the north choke point. Complete assessment is prevented by clouds.

No e/a were encountered or seen. No flak was encountered.

11 a/c returned and 5 landed prior to formation of 13 a/c, which landed at 1415A.

Route deviated from route as briefed due to weather.