

55BW Mission Summary No. 104, 18 Sept 44 (Cont'd).

1. General Summary. On 18 Sept 44, 115 B-24 a/c were scheduled, and between 0615-0645A the 115 a/c scheduled plus 6 spare a/c took off to bomb the BUDAPEST North and South and the SZOB RR Bridges in HUNGARY. Three spares returned, and 4 scheduled a/c returned early.

Group assemblies and line rendezvous were effected with difficulty, due to cloud conditions, and not as ordered. Wing rendezvous was not possible, but was effected en route. Fighter escort of P-38 and P-51 a/c was first seen at 0834A at 4314N1610E, gave excellent penetration, target, and withdrawal cover, being last seen at 1300A at the YUGOSLAV coast.

114 a/c were over targets (SZOB at 1116-1117A, BUDAPEST at 1124-1127A) and 109 a/c dropped 235 tons (118 tons 1000 lb, 117 tons 2000 lb) of RDX bombs fused .1N, non-delay T. (53 a/c dropped 51 tons 1000 lb and 63 tons 2000 lb, total 104 tons, on BUDAPEST RR Bridges and 56 a/c dropped 67 tons 1000 lb and 56 tons 2000 lb; total 112 tons, on SZOB RR Bridge). Bombing altitude at SZOB was 18,000-19,000', at BUDAPEST was 22,000-23,100'. 4 sortie a/c jettisoned 6 tons, 2 early returns jettisoned 5 tons of bombs. 3 spares brought 7.5 tons back to base. 6 sortie a/c returned 9 tons, 2 early returns brought back 5 tons.

Results:

460 Gp - Main concentration of bombs fell short and West of the bridge. Strikes are visible hitting into unidentified industrial area, one direct hit on gasholder causes small explosion and fire.

464 Gp - Two possible direct hits on the bridge, one on East span and one on West span with several near misses on both sides. Two direct hits are seen on West approach railroad tracks and several noted on East approach.

465 Gp - Target is completely smoke obscured. Many bombs strike left of bridge with several bombs short indicating the possibility of some bombs in the smoke covered target area.

485 Gp - One direct hit and three near misses are seen on first span from the East abutment and one near miss on third pier from the East abutment. One direct hit on second span from the West abutment with at least one direct hit on West approach RR tracks. One direct hit on each of these clusters of barges in inlet on East side of River.

Flak at BUDAPEST was II/AH. There was no flak at SZOB. Three Groups saw no e/a; one Group saw 2-4 e/a. There were no encounters.

111 a/e were down at bases between 1415-1420A. No a/c were lost nor missing, 3 a/c landed at friendly fields.

Deviations from briefed route were unavoidable due to cloud conditions on route out. A further deviation was forced upon one Group on rally from target. On return route was flown as briefed.

Weather: At bases, 7-9/10 stratocumulus, tops 10-12000', breaking to 1-3/10 over YUGOSLAVIA and HUNGARY. At targets, 1-2/10 altocumulus, tops 16,000', visibility 18 miles. On return same in HUNGARY and YUGOSLAVIA, 6-8/10 cumulus over ITALY, bases 5-6,000', visibility 15-25 miles.

2. 460th Bomb Group. On 18 Sept 44, at 0621A, 31 scheduled a/c were dispatched to bomb the BUDAPEST South RR Bridge in HUNGARY. The Group assembled over the base at 0715A, assembly being accomplished at 12,000' to avoid cloud cover at the briefed altitude. Rendezvous with the 485th was accomplished at 0725A, 7 miles SSW of the base, the 485th flying over to our area to rendezvous was not accomplished as briefed but later formed at 4502N1704E at 0926A, Fighter escort, P-38s, first sighted at 4450N1640E at 0905A, furnished penetration, target and withdrawal cover. They left the formation at 4615N1750E at 1230A.

As the formation began the bomb run, the target was visible but shortly thereafter, it was obscured by stratocumulus clouds. It remained obscured until about 20 seconds before bombs away and so an extremely short actual bomb run resulted.

At 23,100', 31 a/c were over the PT at 1124A. 8 a/c dropped 19 tons of 1000 lb RDX bombs and 20 a/c dropped 39 tons of 2000 lb RDX bombs. 2 a/c jettisoned bombs (4X2000) in field near BUDAPEST and 1 a/c returned bombs (2X2000) to the base. 2 a/c failed to drop 3 bombs on the target. 1 bomb (1x2000) was jettisoned near the IP and the other 2 bombs (2X1000) were jettisoned in the ADRIATIC. Both attack units used auto pilot on bomb run.

The Group experienced IIH flak over the PT.

The route was flown as briefed.

29 a/c returned to base at 1420A. 2 a/c landed at VIS and have since returned.

3. 464th Bomb Group. On 18 Sept 44 at 0630A, 23 scheduled B-24 a/c and 3 spare a/c took off to bomb the SZOB RR Bridge in HUNGARY. The Group form up was hampered by low clouds in the form up area. The Wing rendezvous was not accomplished as prescribed; the 464th Gp assumed Wing lead at 4509N1701E.

31 a/c were over the target at 1116A (briefed 1055A) and 29 a/c dropped 63 tons of 1000 lb and 2000 lb RDX bombs from 18,000'. Of the 29 a/c dropping on the target, 16 a/c dropped 37 tons of 1000 lb bombs and 13 a/c dropped 26 tons of 2000 lb bombs. 3 of the a/c carrying 1000 lb bombs returned a part of their bomb load.

Recapitulation of Bomb Tonnage

1000 lb Dropped on target	37 tons
Returned to base	3
2000 lb Dropped on target	26
Returned to base	4
Total	<u>70 tons</u>

The C-1 automatic pilot was used by the first attack unit leader. The second attack unit leader used PDI as the turn control of the C-1 automatic pilot was erratic.

No flak encountered either at the target or enroute.

Fighter escort consisting of 50 P-38s and 20 P-51s first observed at 0834A at 4314N-1610E at which time the P-51s passed the formation. P-38s sighted at 0834A at 4324N-1619T. P-38 escort from 14th Fighter Group and P-51 escort from 325th Fighter Group. Escort last reported at 1157. at 46451-1855E.

31 a/c landed between 1404-1430A.

Route not flown as briefed because of weather in local area, as described in paragraph 2. From rendezvous to Island of Legosta, to Vis, to K.P., to 4355N-1625E, to 4448N-1656E, to 4519N-1706E, thence as briefed but generally about 3 miles to right of course.

4. 465th Bomb Group. On 16 Sept 44, at 0615A, 28 a/c scheduled took off to bomb the SZOB RR Bridge.

Group assembled along ADRIATIC coast just south of MANFERDONIA at 0705A at 10,000 feet. This assembly area was used because the usual area was cloud covered. No line rendezvous was made because our group could not locate the 464th. The Wing rendezvous was accomplished at 0734A (3 minutes late) in briefed area at 12,000'. The 465th led the Wing up to the LAKE BALATON area, where the 464th took over the lead. An escort of P-38s joined the bombers at 0916A at PRIDJEDOR and P-51s joined at 1029: in the LAKE BALATON area. Fighters provided escort to target and back to coast of YUGOSLAVIA, where they departed at 1300A.

1 a/c returned early.

No flak encountered enroute or at the target, and no e/a were seen.

27 a/c over target at 1117A at 19,000'. 15 a/c dropped 30 tons of 2,000 lb RDX bombs (.1N and non-delay tail fusing), and 12 a/c dropped 30 tons of 1,000 lb RDX bombs (.1N and non-delay tail fusing), for a total of 60½ tons of bombs. Bombing done visually using A-5 auto-pilot and bombs were dropped from 200' above briefed altitude to avoid prop wash from group ahead.

27 a/c landed at 1413A (mean landing time).

Route flown as briefed.

5. 485th Bomb Group. On 18 Sept 44, at 0645A, 28 a/c scheduled and 3 spare a/c took off to bomb the BUDAPEST North RR Bridge (PT). Of 28 a/c scheduled, 3 returned early to base, and all spares returned to base with bombs. 1 early return jettisoned bombs.

Over the assembly point, the Group made one circle on course at 5,000' (due to weather being 6/10, the maximum altitude reached was 5,000') and then flew south of line rendezvous point for 8 minutes and over Wing rendezvous point on time flying their own pattern, the boxes of the Group forming the Group formation on the way. The Group was at 8,000' when the 460th Group fell in behind at 0714A. The Wing leader called that the Wing would rendezvous at 0731A and the 485th upon arriving there found no other Groups visible. The Group and the 460th then set out on course at 0731A, on a heading of 0 degrees for the K.P. They flew until 0806A, not seeing any of the other Groups. At 0806A, a Group was seen approximately 20 miles off to the right of course. The 485th was 5 miles to the left of briefed course at this point and together with the 460th eased to the left and then to the right and fell in behind the 465th Group, 10 miles south of the Island of VIS, on course, at 0822A. The 464th Group had not been seen up to this time.

30-40 P-33s and P-51s joined the formation at 0905A at 4430N-1615E, furnishing cover to target, over target, and on withdrawal to approximately 4420N-1617, leaving the formation at 1245A.

25 a/c over target at 1127A (target time 1102A). 13 a/c dropped 32 tons of 1,000 lb RDX bombs (.1N and non-delay tail fusing) from 22,000'. 1 of these a/c carried 4 bombs instead of 5. 12 a/c dropped 24 tons of 2,000 lb RDX bombs (.1N and non-delay tail fusing) from 22,000'. Bombing accomplished with use of A-5 automatic pilot, and was visual.

On return, 2-4 ME-109s, green colored, were seen at the K.P. (GROHOTE) and were heading in the opposite direction (0 degrees), at 1300A. IAH flak was encountered from the IP to the target. No other flak encountered or observed.

24 a/c landed, all having returned without incident, at the mean landing time of 1415A. 1 a/c of formation landed at VIS, and returned to base at 1635A.

Route to target as briefed, and axis of attack over target was 125° TC. The Group could not rally to the left (90°) as briefed, due to another Group on their left, and closing in. Therefore, they flew out on rally for 3 minutes, then headed on a course of 160° to get on the return course. The return from this point was as briefed.