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HEADQUARTERS
 464th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
 Office of the Intelligence Officer
 APO 520 U S Army

JFP/MCK/rcm

319.1

13 July 1944

SUBJECT: Narrative Mission Report

TO : Commanding Officer, 55th Bombardment Wing (H),
 APO 520, U S Army
 Attn: A-2

1. On 13 July 1944 at 0720B hours, 32 B-24 of 33 a/c scheduled took off to bomb MANTUA M/Y (Last Resort Target). 1 A/C failed to take off because 2 engines had excessive RPM's. The 32 a/c formed in 2 attack units; the first unit was led by Major Clarence G. Poff, Commanding Officer 778th Bombardment Squadron (H), and the second was led by Major Weldon K. Burton, 464th Group Operations Officer.

2. The take off and Group assembly was carried out S.O.P. The two Group line rendezvous between Andria and Canosa was S.O.P. On Wing rendezvous over Spinazzola, only one other group was sighted and we turned into right echelon with this group. On the flight up the Adriatic the 464th and 465th were in good formation, but it was difficult to keep up with the lead group because of the apparent excessive air speed, change of course, and interference of other groups. On arriving at the I.P. for the Primary Target it was found that clouds obscured the target area and the decision was made to bomb the Target of Last Resort. On arriving at this Target, it was found that the M/Y was covered by clouds on the east, reaching up to the western edge, and it was impossible to hit target on this approach, but it was evident it could be hit from a reciprocal heading. Since no opposition was encountered we made a 180° turn and came in and bombed the target.

3. 15 P-51 a/c were observed at 1005B hours at 44°30'N - 13°40'E and 12 P-38 a/c were observed at 1035B hours at 44°40'N - 13°30'E.

4. 1 A/C returned prior to bombing because of gas leak in #3 tank.

5. 6 ME-109 e/a were observed at 1042B hours at 45°05'N - 10°42'E; 4 DO-217 e/a were observed at 1100B hours at a point

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Ltr Narrative Mission Report contd

20 miles N of Mantua; 1 ME-110 e/c was observed at 1428 hours at Mantua; none of these e/c at ack formation.

6. 31 a/c were over target at 1059E hours, 74 a/c dropped 59 3/4 tons of 500 # G.P. bombs (.1 nose and .01 and .025 mixed tail fusing) at 21,000 feet. 1 a/c of the 24 a/c dropping on target jettisoned 1 bomb; 2 a/c jettisoned 20 bombs, one of which landed in water off target, the other a/c jettisoned its bombs at 45°08'N - 10°48'E; 5 a/c returned 50 bombs to base. The M/Y was observed to be fairly well-filled before bombs away. Six bombs hit in M/Y in front of the R.R. station. 10 hits in M/Y between R.R. station and Locomotive shed. Two hits at North Choke Point of M/Y, 3 or more direct hits and several near misses on the combined R.R. and highway bridge at the North end of the M/Y. Two hits on Flour mill adjacent to bridge. Twenty hits on several buildings 2,000 feet North-West of the bridge. Largest concentration of bomb hits were adjacent to the NW corner of the M/Y.

7. Weather - Generally clear over base at take off, cumulus over mountains, visibility 20 miles. No clouds over South Adriatic. Further North were 5/10 to 6/10 stratocumulus clouds, tops 12,000 feet. At target, 4/10 to 5/10 strato-cumulus clouds which obscured Primary Target. Visibility was 20 miles. The Secondary Target was clear on second bomb run. 5/10 cumulus necessitated a 180° turn and return over target.

8. Course was as briefed until reaching the I.P., at which time a left turn was made, turning right approximately three miles north of Chioggia. A course of 267 degrees was flown directly to Mantua, after which a thirty degree turn to the right was made in order to circle to the left, missing briefed flak areas, to make the second run on the target. The course back to the briefed route was the reciprocal of the one in from the coast. The rally and return was made without difficulty.

9. No flak was encountered on route to target nor on return.

10. Route as briefed and as flown, axis of attack plotted on chart attached.

11. 5 a/c attempted photographs. Selected prints attached.

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Ltr Narrative Mission Report contd
For the Commanding Officer

MAURICE C. KIPLING,
Capt. Air Corps,
Asst. S-2 Officer.

2 Incls -
Incl 1 - Track Chart
Incl 2 - Selected Strike Photos