

C O N F I D E N T I A L

HEADQUARTERS
464TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
APO 520 U. S. Army

MHS/FFE/hob

319.1

16 December 1944

SUBJECT: Narrative Mission Report

TO : Commanding General, 55th Bombardment Wing (H),
APO 520, U S Army

1. On 16 December 1944, thirty three (33) B-24 type a/c took off to bomb the primary target as specified in Operations Order No 290, 55th Bombardment Wing (H), 15 December 1944.

2. The thirty three (33) a/c formed into two (2) attack units. The first attack unit was led by Capt Joseph A. Shymanski, Flight Leader of the 779th Bombardment Squadron (H), assisted because of his first Group lead, by Lt Col Elvin E. Goodyear, Group Operations Officer. The second attack unit was led by 1st Lt Kenneth Machado, Flight Leader of the 777th Bombardment Squadron (H).

Group form-up and bomber rendezvous were executed as prescribed.

3. Following the route as flown by the Wing Leader, the primary target was not attacked. It is reported that the Wing Leader was heard to have stated that his PFF equipment was inoperative and he was heading for the first alternate target.

4. a. Thirty three (33) a/c were over the first alternate target, the Pilsen Skoda Works, Czechoslovakia, at 1317A hours at an altitude of 24,500 feet. From an attack axis of 30 degrees, twenty nine (29) a/c dropped fourteen and one half (14½) tons of 500 lb bombs, fused long delay, and forty three and one half (43½) tons of 500lb bombs, fused .1 nose and mixed .1 and .025 tail. Of the above stated bombs, three (3) tons of long delay fusing were RDX and eleven and one half (11½) tons GP. Of regular fused bombs, nine (9) tons were RDX and thirty four and one half (34½) tons were GP. An additional four (4) leaflet bombs were dropped on the first alternate target at the same time.

b. A/C No 44-49048 dropped one half (½) tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, fused long delay, one and one half (1½) of RDX bombs,

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Ltr Narr Miss Rpt, contd.

fused .1 nose and mixed .1 and .025 tail, and one (1) leaflet bomb on a target of opportunity, the M/Y of Villach, Austria. Release was made at 1435A hours from 15,600 feet on an attack axis of 168 degrees.

c. A/C No 42-78433, due to the leader of his box, the first in the second attack unit, not dropping, did not release over the first alternate target. Attempting to pick a target of opportunity, bombs were released at 1340A hours from 23,500 feet, on a heading of 180 degrees. Attempt was made to drop on a town at (49°40'N-13°05'E), but because there was no bombsight in the a/c, the town was missed and the bombs were observed to hit in a field. One and one half (1½) tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, fused .1 nose and mixed .1 and .025 tail, and one half (½) ton of 500 lb RDX bombs, fused long delay, were dropped.

d. A/C No 42-51903 at 1332A hours, accidentally released one and one half (1½) tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, fused .1 nose and mixed .1 and .025 tail, and one half (½) ton of 500 lb RDX bombs, fused long delay. Release was made from 23,000 feet upon accidentally hitting the toggle switch, while searching for a target of opportunity. Exact location of bomb strikes is unknown, but is believed to be approximately (50°15'N-12°51'E).

e. A/C No 44-49363 jettisoned one and one half (1½) tons of 500 lb RDX bombs fused .1 nose and mixed .1 and .025 tail, and one half (½) ton of 500 lb RDX bombs, fused long delay. Due to a rack malfunction, bombs could not be released at the first alternate target, and because of the necessity of lightening the load for fuel conservation, were jettisoned by hand at Fianona (45°08'N-14°11'E), at 1445A hours from 18,000 feet.

f. Bombing Recapitulation:

First Alternate Target

3 tons RDX, long delay
9 tons RDX, regular fusing
11½ tons GP, long delay
34½ tons GP, regular fusing
(4 leaflet bombs)

Villach M/Y

½ ton RDX, long delay
1½ ton RDX, regular fusing
(1 leaflet bomb)

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Ltr Narr Miss Rpt, contd

(49°40'N-13°05'E)

(50°15'N-12°51'E)

(45°08'N-14°01'E)

1 ton RDX, long delay
 1 1/2 ton RDX, regular fusing
 1 1/2 ton RDX, long delay
 1 1/2 ton RDX, regular fusing
 1 1/2 ton RDX, long delay
 1 1/2 ton RDX, regular fusing

Total

66 tons

5. Bomb strike photos show numerous hits in open country approximately two miles north of Pilsen Skoda Works. These hits are one mile north of the Mies River and one half mile west of a small town. Clouds obscured nearly eighty per cent of the terrain in the vicinity where impacts occurred, thus concealing many of the bomb strikes. One a/c bombed a target of opportunity - the south M/Y at the southwest edge of Villach, Austria. Photos show four hits on the freight sidings north of the locomotive depot and two hits on the freight yard south of the station.

6. The bombing run was flown by the group leader by PFF, with the C-1 Automatic Pilot equipment being used. Functioning of the PFF equipment is described as satisfactory, with excellent air crew coordination. Due to erratic functioning of the C-1 Automatic Pilot, the leader of the second attack unit was forced to employ PDI, both on the bombing run to the first alternate target, and during his lead of the attack upon a target of opportunity.

7. Flak at the alternate target was variously described as from M to IAH, with time in range from three (3) to five (5) minutes. Bursts were black, gray, with some white, high. Type of fire was described as predicted concentration, with altitude good but many bursts off to each side and ahead of the formation.

8. a. A total of what is believed nine (9) e/a were observed enroute. In the 1st alternate target area, eight (8) ME 109s were seen at 1317A hours. Approaching from six o'clock level, they turned off to three o'clock and made further approach to within about 1,000 yards. They did not attack, and turned away from the formation. E/A colors were dark, with indistinguishable markings between rudders and wings.

b. At 1216A hours, one (1) unidentified SEF was seen at (49°08'N-13°10'E). This a/c was going in the opposite direction to the bomber's line of flight, at the same altitude.

9. Rendezvous was made with twenty (20) P-38s at 1217A

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Ltr Narr Miss Rpt, contd

hours at (49°15'N-12°55'E). Contact with these fighters was intermittent, and at no time was approach close enough that markings could be distinguished. Twenty (20) to twenty five (25) P-51s were sighted at 1045A hours at (44°30'N-14°10'E). Some of these fighters were identified as of the 325th Fighter Group. Both P-38s and P-51s were last sighted at 1340A hours at (48°30'N-13°30'E).

10. Observations reported by crew members are as follow:

a. Several crews state that at 1438A hours, from an altitude of 15,000 feet, smoke and fires to 8,000 feet could be seen coming from the M/Y at Villach, Austria.

b. At 1349A hours, from 23,000 feet, a column of smoke was seen rising through a cloud undercast. The smoke column appeared to be similar to that which would be caused by a crashed and burning airplane. The location was (48°35'N-13°59'E), in the midst of mountainous terrain.

11. a. A/C No 42-78514 is missing. This a/c was last noted by the crew of the lead a/c of its box when it left the formation at the Italian coast on the return route, at the western edge of Lake Lesina. It is believed that this a/c was running low on gasoline.

b. A/C No 44-49334 ditched in the Adriatic Sea at 1605A hours at (42°48'N-15°05'E). It is reported that Air-Sea Rescue was immediately notified. Lack of fuel is believed to have been the cause of this ditching.

c. Four (4) a/c landed at the friendly Falconaro, Italy airfield. The numbers of these a/c are: 42-51856, 42-51178, 44-49369, 42-78692.

12. Weather at take-off at Base was 9/10ths thin cirrostratus above 20,000 feet. On return, 8/10-9/10 altocumulus, base at 12,000 feet.

Route, clear just north of spur becoming 6/10ths to 10/10ths stratocumulus and swelling cumulus, tops to 13,000 feet. 8/10ths stratocumulus, tops 8,000 feet, on Dalmatian Coast. Alps clear except for thick stratus in valleys, North of Alps, strato-cumulus varied from 5/10ths to 10/10ths, tops 10-12,000 feet.

Similar conditions on return with increase of clouds in southern Italy. 6/10ths stratocumulus over Spur, base 6,000, tops

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Ltr Narr Miss Rpt, contd.

7,000 feet. Visibility 15-20 miles for the route. Vapor trails encountered over Alps at 18-23,000 feet.

Primary target: 10/10ths stratocumulus. Tops 8-10,000 feet. Visibility 18 miles.

Pilsen: 8/10ths stratocumulus, tops 11,000 feet. Visibility 15 miles.

13. Route was flown as briefed, except for deviations as shown on the inclosed track chart, in order to bomb the first alternate target. Also shown is the route followed by "Charley" Box, as its leader attempted to bomb the target of opportunity of the M/Y at Villach, Austria.

14. Twenty seven (27) a/c landed at this base from 1650A hours to 1750A hours.

15. Two (2) a/c were damaged by flak, but will not be in-operational for more than twenty four (24) hours. One crew member injured by flak.

16. Three (3) a/c attempted photographs. A selected print is inclosed.

For the Commanding Officer:

FRANCIS F. ELDER
Major, AC
Intelligence Officer

2 Inclosures
Incl 1 - Track Chart
Incl 2 - Selected Print