

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

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

BVB/FFE/jmm

319.1

17 December 1944

SUBJECT: Narrative Mission Report

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

1. On 17 December 1944, thirty (30) of thirty one (31) scheduled B-24 a/c took off at 0815A hours (the last a/c was off at 0855A hours) to bomb Blechhammer South O/R. The a/c formed in two (2) attack units, the first of which was led by Lt Col Charles F. McKenna III, Deputy Group Commander of the 464th Bombardment Group (H), and the second, by Captain Walter F. Steves, Assistant Operations Officer of the 778th Bombardment Squadron (H).

2. B-24 a/c No 42-78618 failed to take off when in an attempt to pass behind another a/c taking off on the South runway, the taxi-strip gave way three (3) feet in from the shoulder, causing the a/c to bog down. This incident delayed the take-off of the last five (5) a/c.

3. The Group form-up was accomplished generally in the 460th Bombardment Group (H) area. Because of weather conditions, some difficulty in getting the Group together was experienced. Line and Wing rendezvous were executed as prescribed. B-24 a/c No 42-78671, one of the five (5) a/c taking off late, failed to make the Group form-up and is missing.

4. Three (3) a/c returned early for reasons given as follows:

B-24 a/c No 42-52526. Landing gear would not retract because the safety solenoid switch stuck. Neither the pilot nor the engineer knew that the solenoid could be flipped. A/C circled in the local area landing at 1003A hours.

B-24 a/c No 42-51644 had to feather No 2 engine due to the loss of oil. This a/c returned from 42°40'N-15°00'E at 0952A hours. Landing time 1025A hours.

B-24 a/c No 42-49146 after a late take-off at 0650A hours, which delay was caused by one (1) bomb jarring loose

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from one (1) shackle while taxiing, was unable to locate the formation although having climbed to above the overcast at 11,000 feet and having reached a point at 42°50'N-16°20'E. This a/c turned at 1010A hours and landed at 1115A hours.

The three (3) early returns brought back to this base six (6) tons of bombs.

5. Twenty five (25) a/c were over the target at 1231A hours and twenty five (25) a/c dropped forty nine and three quarters (49 3/4) tons of 500 lb GP bombs (.1 nose and mixed .01 and .025 tail fusing) from 22,350 feet.

B-24 a/c No 44-49415 had one (1) bomb hang up over the target which was later jettisoned at 50°05'N-18°30'E at 1245A hours.

B-24 a/c No 44-49073 left the formation at 1200A hours at 49°20'N-17°20'E and is missing. The disposition of the bomb load of this a/c is unknown.

B-24 a/c No 42-78671, mentioned in paragraph No 3 is missing and the disposition of the bomb load of this a/c is not known.

Recapitulation of Bomb Tonnage Disposition

25 a/c over target dropped	49.75 tons
1 a/c (of the a/c over target) jettisoned	.25 tons
2 a/c missing, carried	4.00 tons
3 a/c returning early brought back	<u>6.00 tons</u>
Total	60.00 tons

Bombing was by PFF. Both attack unit leaders used the C-1 Automatic Pilot. All PFF equipment worked satisfactorily.

Bombs away photos from each of the four (4) boxes of attacking a/c show a solid overcast at the time of bomb release. An additional camera in Dog Box showed a small amount of unidentifiable terrain visible at the time of bombs away. It is not possible to estimate the area where impacts occurred.

6. Flak at the target was reported as being M to ITH, with a majority of the crews reporting it to be intense. Crews expressed the belief that the chaff dispensing was effective in countering the accuracy of the flak despite the fact that the Group was first across the target.

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MIH flak was observed at Győr. Reports of flak at the following locations were given:

46°10'N-16°50'E	SIH
46°29'N-17°00'E	S/MIH
46°42'N-16°43'E	SIM (6 gun battery)
48°08'N-17°30'E	MIH
48°53'N-18°22'E	SIH
48°00'N-18°40'E	SIH

7. Escort of twenty five (25) to thirty (30) P-51s was observed at 1103A hours at 46°40'N-16°55'E, and provided penetration escort. Ten (10) P-38s made rendezvous at 1130A hours at 47°21'N-17°20'E and provided target cover and withdrawal. At 1300A hours at 49°05'N-18°35'E, four (4) P-51s were sighted and likewise furnished withdrawal escort. The escort was last reported at 43°51'N-16°25'E at 1500A hours.

8. Weather encountered was as follows:

Base - 10/10ths stratocumulus, base 6,500 feet, tops 8,000 feet. 6/10ths to 8/10ths cirrus at 25,000 feet.

On Return - Clouds had broken to 3/10ths to 4/10ths. Visibility was 15 miles.

Route - 8/10ths to 10/10ths stratocumulus entire route with large breaks in some areas - in Lake Balaton area and at the IP. Clear of low clouds to the east of course. Cirrus decreased to scattered to the north.

Target - 6/10ths to 8/10ths stratocumulus in area, tops 12,000 feet; clear to north and east. Visibility was 15 miles in haze.

On Return - Clouds were scattered to broken over the Adriatic. Visibility was 15-20 miles in haze enroute.

9. Two (2) a/c failed to return:

B-24 a/c No 44-49073 (R/X), Lt Col Charles F. McKenna, III, pilot, left the formation at 49°20'N-17°20'E with No 3 engine smoking badly. Lt Col McKenna advised the Deputy Group Leader that he could not successfully complete the mission and was leaving the formation. The a/c was under control when last observed.

B-24 a/c No 42-78671 (B/J), for reasons unknown did

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not to make the Group form-up. This a/c was last seen about ten (10) minutes after take-off in the area of 41°20'N-16°08'E (was not in trouble at this time), and was at 5,000 feet at approximately 0910A hours.

10. One (1) minor injury caused by frost bite was incurred.

11. Observations reported.

<u>Time</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Altitude</u>	<u>Observations</u>
1344A	47°15'N-17°09'E	15,500 ft	M/Y containing 500 units.
1345A	47°15'N-17°02'E	15,000 ft	L/G with fifteen (15) SEF dispersed about the landing strip.
1127A	47°25'N-17°30'E (Papa)	18,000 ft	A/D, twenty five (25) SEF on field.
1530A	42°20'N-15°40'E	4,500 ft	Markers in Adriatic and a boat heading toward the markers.

A B-24 a/c without tail markings joined the formation in the area of Lake Balaton and flew with the formation in various positions. This a/c dropped bombs with the formation from C-31 position, and returned with the formation as far as Split where a/c left the formation. The first three (3) numbers of the B-24 were identified as "419".

12. Twenty five (25) a/c landed at this base between 1610A hours and 1625A hours without incident.

13. The route was flown as briefed. Navigation was PFF and DR. From the IP to the target the lead PFF navigator gave six (6) sighting angles to the bombardier. Two (2) course corrections were made, the last one of 4 degrees left and onto a heading of 71 degrees to the target. The target itself was easily identified in the scope. Gleiwitz, Ratibor, and Moravská Ostrava were used as additional check points. Track Chart showing route flown is attached.

14. No flak damage was incurred by a/c of the 464th Bombardment Group (H).

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15. Six (6) a/c attempted photographs. Selected photograph attached.

For the Commanding Officer:

FRANCIS F. ELDER
Major, AC
Intelligence Officer

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