

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

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

HHS/FFE/jd

319.1

19 December 1944

SUBJECT: Narrative Mission Report

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

1. a. On 19 December 1944, twenty-five (25) of twenty seven (27) scheduled B-24 type a/c took off to bomb the primary target as specified in Operations Order No 294, 55th Bombardment Wing (H), 18 December 1944.
 - b. Take-Off began at 0740A hours.
 - c. A/Cs Nos 42-78488 and 44-39363 failed to take-off. Cause, in both cases, was booster pump failure.
2. a. Twenty five (25) a/c formed into two (2) attack units. The first attack unit was led by Lt. Col. Elvin E. Good-year, Group Operations Officer. The second attack unit was led by 1st Lt Harry F. Heineman, Flight Leader, 779th Bombardment Squadron (H).
 - b. Group form-up was as prescribed, as were two (2) group and Wing rendezvous, although executed at one thousand (1,000) feet additional altitude, due to cloud conditions.
3. One (1) a/c returned early at 0932A hours, due to losing oil pressure in No. 3 engine. This a/c turned back at 0902A hours at (41°30'N-16°40'E).
4. Route toward the IP was as shown on the inclosed track chart, swinging left to avoid solid clouds. To get around these clouds, course directly North was held for about fifteen (15) minutes past the target area. Then the bombing approach was started, and as it began, the PFF equipment of the Group leader failed. The Group Deputy Leader was immediately advised to take over, but by the time his a/c had assumed the lead position, the primary target had been passed. Radio instructions were then received.

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from the Wing Leader to bomb the second alternate target on a reciprocal of the assigned heading. Course was then flown, with the First Deputy Leader, Capt. Charles H. Foote Operations Officer, 779th Bombardment Squadron (H), in lead position, toward the second alternate target, as shown on the enclosed track chart. Forty (40) miles from the second alternate target, the PFF equipment of the second deputy lead a/c failed. The PFF equipment of the second attack unit leader, though functioning effectively for the navigational purposes, could not be utilized for bombing. Consequently, the second alternate target was not attacked, with the second attack unit leader bringing his attack unit in front of the first attack unit, after the target had been passed. The return flight to base was made with the PFF equipment of the second attack unit leader being used for navigational purposes.

5. Difficulties reported with the PFF equipment, were as follow:

a. Group leader- Failure on approach to the Primary Target, when a fuse blew out, followed by complete failure on the return route, when the sweep would not longer rotate. Cause is believed to be a cracked Radome.

b. First Deputy Leader- Failure forty (40) miles from the second alternate target when the flux-gate compass became inoperative believed due to freezing.

c. Second attack Unit Leader- Poor reception and lack of clarity on twenty (20) mile range throughout flight.

6. a. Sixteen (16) a/c returned their full bomb loads, total of thirty two (32) tons, to base.

b. Eight (8) a/c jettisoned their bomb loads as follow:

(1) A/C No 42-51689, early return, two (2) tons at (41°30'N-16°40'E) at 0902A hours.

(2) A/C No 44-41339, two (2) tons at 1424A hours at (43°18'N*16°00'E) in order to conserve fuel.

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(3) A/C No. 44-48767, two (2) tons at 1327A hours at (48°20'N-16°03'E), in order to conserve fuel.

(4) A/C No 44-41213, two (2) tons at 1500A hours at (42°10'N-16°20'E), as No 4 engine had been lost and it was necessary to lighten the a/c's load.

(5) A/C No 44-49394, two (2) tons at 1140A hours at (48°40'N-17°10'E), as No 1 engine had to be feathered and it was necessary to lighten the a/c's load.

(6) A/C No 42-51760, two (2) tons at 1425A hours at (43°07'N-15°53'E), in order to conserve fuel.

(7) A/C No 44-48880, two (2) tons at 1215A hours at (49°10'N-18°00'E), in order to conserve fuel.

(8) A/C No 42-78590, two (2) tons at 1345A hours at (47°00'N-17°00'E), in order to conserve fuel.

c. The disposition of the bomb load of a/c No. 44-49369, missing is unknown.

d. All a/c carried identical bomb loads -- eight (8) each of five hundred (500) pound RDX bombs, fused .1 nose and mixed .01 and .025 tail.

e. Bombing recapitulation is as follows:

Returned to base	32 tons
Jettisoned	16 "
Unknown (One a/c missing)	2 "
Total	<u>50 tons</u>

7. a. Flak was observed in the vicinity of the primary target at 1154A hours, intense and heavy. Near the coordinates of (47°40'N-17°10'E) at 1255A hours, scant heavy flak was seen. At 1324A hours, in the Maribor area, scant heavy flak was observed. Due to 10/10ths cloud undercasts enroute, it was found impossible to pin-point accurately the locations from which this anti-aircraft fire came.

b. One (1) a/c No 42-78590, which landed at Foggia airfield, is reported by its crew to have received three (3) flak holes enroute; one (1) under the right bomb bay gasoline tank, and one (1) through the drift meter, and



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one (1) in the lower portion of No. 3 engine. Though the crew of this a/c observed flak enroute, they have no exact knowledge of when or where the damage was received. It is believed, however, that the flak holes were probably made at some time just past the IP for the primary target, when flight was being made through clouds. This belief was stated despite neither sight, nor sound, of any close burst during this or any other portion of the flight. The a/c was temporarily left at the Foggia base where it landed.

8. Rendezvous was first made with fifty (50) to sixty (60) P-38 a/c at 0951A hours at (43°17'N-16°22'E). These a/c were identified as variously having the markings of the 14th Fighter Group. Rendezvous was then made with thirty (30) to forty (40) P-51 a/c at 1126A hours at (48°45'N-17°34'E). These a/c were identified as from the 332nd Fighter Group. Both types of a/c provided excellent cover to 1403A hours at (44°15'N-15°41'E).

9. The crew of a/c No 44-49032 reports that a P-51 airplane was seen in a slow glide, emitting white smoke at 1303A hours at (47°22'N-16°47'E).

10. A/C No 44-49369 is missing. This a/c was last observed at (46°00'N-15°20'E) at 1345A hours, in formation and seemingly under full control. At 1405A hours, this a/c radioed the group lead that it had one (1) engine feathered, and was low on gasoline, and requested a heading for Vis, which was supplied.

11. Weather conditions encountered enroute were as follows:

a. Base at takeoff- 5/10ths stratocumulus at 4,000 feet, breaking to the east. Visibility 15 miles.

b. Route out- Over south Adriatic 3/10ths to 4/10ths stratocumulus tops at 12,000 feet, increasing over the north Adriatic to 8/10ths. From Yugoslavian coast to target and return 10/10ths stratocumulus, tops at 14,000-15,000 feet with few cumulus seen building through. Peaks of Austrian Alps visible, penetrating undercast to west. No high clouds encountered until the IP.

c. Route back- From IP to target, formation flew through thin cirrostratus at 24,000 feet, a/c on wing visible. Base of cirrostratus at 21,000 feet, top unknown.

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Cirrostratus seemed to extend to north and east. On return, 10/10ths stratocumulus, tops at 14,000 to 15,000 feet to north Adriatic; no high clouds over north Adriatic 8/10ths stratocumulus at 12,000 feet decreasing to 3/10ths to 4/10ths over south Adriatic. Low clouds broke along the Italian coast, with only 4/10ths to 5/10ths from Spur to Base, bases of clouds at 4,000 feet. Heavy cumulus visible over Appenines to west, some building to 18,000 feet.

d. Target- 10/10ths stratocumulus tops at 15,000 feet. 10/10ths thin cirrostratus, base at 21,000 feet tops unknown.

e. Base on return- 6/10ths stratocumulus, bases at 4,000 feet. Heavy cumulus and stratocumulus over mountains to west. Visibility 15 to 20 miles.

f. Metro data given on winds was off approximately 180 degrees, causing the Wing formation to be almost one hour late on its approach to the primary target area.

12. Twenty two (22) a/c landed at this base from 1518A hours to 1546A hours.

a. One a/c landed at Foggia at 1535A hours.

13. Two (2) a/c attempted photographs enroute. In each case, the photographs show nothing but completely solid undercast, so were not printed.

For the Commanding Officer:

FRANCIS F. ELDER
Major, AC
Intelligence Officer

1 Inclosure
Incl 1 - Track Chart