

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

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

COA, PFM, MOB

319.1

20 December 1944

SUBJECT: Narrative Mission Report

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

1. On 26 December 1944, twenty five (25) of twenty eight (28) B-24 a/c took off at 0800A hours to bomb Odertal Oil Refinery.

Three (3) a/c failed to take off:

- A/C No 42-78692 - due to failure of electrical system.
- A/C No 42-78433 - due to illness of pilot.
- A/C No 44-41339 - due to no. 2 engine cutting out on take off.

The twenty five (25) a/c formed into two (2) attack units, the first being led by Lt. Colonel James R. Gilson, Commanding Officer of the 778th Bombardment Squadron (H), and the second by 1st Lt. George Krynovich, Flight Leader of the 778th Bombardment Squadron (H).

2. Group form up and wing rendezvous was made as planned without incident, leaving Bari at 0904A hours. The 460th Group did not rendezvous but, caught up with the wing formation before arriving at Split.

3. Four (4) a/c returned early:

- (a) A/C No 42-50533 - turned back at 42°25'N-17°10'E at 0934A hours due to illness of the engineer. This a/c returned two (2) tons of bombs to base.
- (b) A/C No 44-10610 - turned back from assembly area due to loss of No. 3 engine. This a/c returned two (2) tons of bombs to base.
- (c) A/C No 42-51563 - this a/c turned back at Split at 1052A hours. Due to late take off this a/c could not overtake the formation. This a/c returned two (2) tons of bombs to base.

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(d) A/C No 41-29394 - this a/c turned back at 45°08'N-16°28'E due to late take off was unable to locate the formation. This a/c returned two (2) tons of bombs to base.

4. Due to late take off a/c No 42-95332 joined another group and dropped two (2) tons of bombs at 1115A hours from 23,500 feet on a heading of 220° at (46°16'N-11°38'E). The navigator approximated this position due to lack of sectional maps of this area. The town of Predazza (46°10'N-11°37'E) is in this area. Smoke was observed in the target area which was near a main highway and highway bridge near a river and town. The markings on the Group followed by our a/c was as follows: White triangle on upper vertical stabilizer with a small blue circle inside the triangle. MAB risk was encountered at the target.

5. Twenty (20) a/c were over the primary target at 1224A hours (briefed target time 1236A hours) and twenty (20) a/c dropped thirty eight and one half (38½) tons of 500 pound KDX bombs (.1 nose and .01 and .025 tail fuse) from 24,000 feet.

One (1) a/c which was over the target jettisoned one and one half (1½) tons at (47°08'N-17°10'E) at 1115A hours in an open field, due to accidental release when the Navigator accidentally hit the salvo handle when opening the bomb bay doors.

One (1) a/c dropped two (2) tons of bombs at 1115A hours at (46°16'N-11°38'E) (see paragraph No. 4).

Four (4) early returns brought back eight (8) tons of bombs to base (see paragraph No. 3 (a), (b), (c), (d)).

Recapitulation of Bombs

Dropped on target	38 ½ tons
Dropped at (46°16'N-11°38'E)	2 tons
Jettisoned	1 tons
Returned to base (early returns)	8 tons
Total	50 tons

Bombing was by PFF due to an effective smoke screen both at Blechhammer and Odertal, the ground wind blowing the smoke from

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Blechhammer in a northwesterly direction, plus smoke generators on the southeastern side of Odertal. Cooperation between the PFF operator and bombardier was excellent, with the PFF equipment working satisfactorily.

The lead PFF a/c identified the target area forty (40) miles away and the briefed target was identified on the scope during the bomb run. Course determination and range synchronization was made on the briefed target.

The last range correction was made eight (8) miles, and for course nine (9) miles from the target. Six (6) range readings were made. Three (3) course corrections were made, the last being two (2) degrees.

The bombardier made no visual corrections for course or precomputed rate on the bomb run. The bombardier used meteorological data to determine preset dropping angle and drift.

Bomb strike photos show approximately one hundred (100) hits in open country three and one half (3½) miles northwest of the Odertal refinery. These hits are between the Oder River and the double track railroad to Cogolin, and are immediately south of the town of Oberwitz. Additional hits on or near the target are probably intermingled with those of another wing which bombed the refinery immediately previous to the arrival of this group. It is not possible to determine what installations were hit in the refinery area, as no target detail is visible on these photos.

6. The Group Leader used C-1 automatic pilot. The second attack unit leader used P.D.I. due to the presence of a B-17 formation in the area making this method more practical due to the necessity of possible quick action.

7. Flak at the target was M to IIR, with both black and white bursts, most of which was to the right of the formation.

M to IAH flak was encountered at Nagykanizsa (46°27'N-16°59'E). This flak appeared to be coming from the M/Y which would indicate railway guns being used at this location.

SH flak was observed at (47°29'N-17°28'E), Sgt Aut.

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8. Rendezvous was first made with thirty (30) P-38 and twenty four (24) P-51 a/c at 1000A hours at (43°20'N-16°30'E). Escort was last observed at 1415A hours at (46°09'N-17°50'E). Escort was described as being good.

9. Weather at take off and from base to coast 3/10 to 4/10 stratocumulus, tops 6,000 feet and 6/10 altostratus, base 14,000 feet. Visibility was 15 miles.

Over Adriatic, 3/10 to 4/10 stratocumulus, tops 7,000 feet and 2/10 altostratus at 14,000 feet.

Clear on Dalmatian Coast and over Dinarics to northeast slopes where there was 10/10 stratocumulus, tops 6,000 feet extending for 40-50 miles to the northeast.

Over Hungarian Plains, clear except for a circular mass of stratus, diameter 50 miles centered at Ne'siedler Lake.

Clear to north of target with visibility lowering to 10 miles in haze.

At target, clear, visibility 5-10 miles in haze.

Similar conditions on return except Adriatic was clear.

6/10 cirrostratus at 20,000 feet and 5/10 stratocumulus at 7,000 feet on return. Visibility was 20 miles.

10. One (1) major and two (2) minor flek wounds were suffered by crew members.

Five (5) a/c were damaged, two (2) of which will be inoperative for more than twenty four (24) hours.

Two (2) of our a/c are missing:

A/C No 42-51953 - R/T: This a/c radioed at 1246A hours that only 450 gallons of gasoline were left, that No. 1 prop was running away and could not be feathered and that they were going to Russia on 85° heading. Last observed at (49°57'N-17°30'E).

A/C No 42-78618. - B/F: This a/c was last observed at (50°19'N-17°23'E) at 1237A hours. A/C was smoking from No. 3 engine which had been smoking going into, and over the target. A/C was under control when last observed dropping back from the formation.

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11. The following observations were reported:

<u>Time</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Altitude</u>	<u>Observation</u>
	(43°55'N-15°31'E)		Crashed B-24 a/c at north end of Vransko Lake. Yellow color with plain brown tail. B-17 a/c four (4) miles SSW of the B-24 with red rudder and yellow engine cowlings.
1122	Papa		M/Y - 500 plus wagons.
1335	Papa		A/D with 15 a/c. Mostly SEF with 2/3 TEAC.
1300	(49°20'N-17°35'E)	19,000	Very large number of what looked like oil storage tanks.
1330	(47°33'N-17°22'E)	18,000	A/D with three (3) silver a/c.
1340	(46°19'N-16°49'E)		M/Y filled with wagons also ten (10) locomotives in steam.
1300	(49°13'N-17°33'E)	19,000	Believed to be an ordnance depot.
1123	(47°16'N-17°09'E)	22,300	M/Y - five (5) of seven (7) tracks loaded.
1238	(50°16'N-17°24'E)		Twenty (20) barrage balloons at 1,000 feet.
1437	(44°28'N-16°30'E)	16,500	A/C burning
1310	(48°42'N-17°25'E)	19,000	B-24 burning

Considerable rail activity observed in area of (49°00'N-17°30'E). Twenty (20) trains were observed in this area.

12. Eighteen (18) a/c landed at this base between 1550 and 1610A hours.

13. Route was flown as briefed. Track chart showing route flown inclosed.

14. Four (4) a/c attempted photographs. Selected print inclosed.

For the Commanding Officer:

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

FRANCIS F. ELDER
Major, AC
Intelligence Officer