

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

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

RRB/jmm

319.1

20 February 1945

SUBJECT: Narrative Mission Report

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

1. On 20 February 1945, twenty eight (28) B-24 a/c took off beginning at 0840A hours to bomb the Primary Target specified in Operations Order No 85, 19 February 1945. The twenty eight (28) a/c formed two (2) attack units. The first unit leader was Lt Col James H. Gilson, Commanding Officer, 779th Bombardment Squadron (H) and the second attack unit leader was Captain William J. Saunders, Flight Leader, 779th Bombardment Squadron (H).

2. The group form-up was seriously hampered by weather conditions in the form-up area and after partially completing the form-up was necessary to break up and reform above the overcast at 11,000 feet. The 464th was on course over Andria at 0943A hours, one minute late but bomber rendezvous was completed without further incident, as prescribed.

3. Weather prevented the formation reaching the Primary Target and the first Alternate Target, Trieste S/Y was attacked. The formation leader was advised by the weather a/c that 10/10 overcast conditions existed at the Primary Target and that the target attacked was the only target open for visual bombing.

4. Twenty eight (28) a/c were over the target at 1201A hours and dropped fifty six (56) tons of 500 pound RDX bombs (.1 nose and .01 tail fusing) from 23,300 feet. Bomb strike photos show a heavy concentration of hits fall on the eastern two thirds of the shipyard, with direct hits on the three ships (probably merchant type, or naval auxiliary) measuring approximately 230 feet, 260 feet, and 375 feet. The fitting out pier and quay and the drydock all received direct hits. About forty hits fell short of the shipyard, in Muggia Bay. The bomb pattern did not reach to the slips in the extreme west end of the shipyard.

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5. No flak was encountered by this group at the target but S to MIH was observed at the target behind the formation and apparently directed at the following group.

6. Escort of 15/20 P-51 a/c rendezvoused with the formation at 1210A hours at (4440N-1330E) and remained in the vicinity of the formation until 1240A hours at (4328N-1357E).

7. Twenty eight (28) a/c returned to base between 1350A hours and 1435A hours.

8. Weather was as follows:

9/10 to 10/10 stratocumulus at take-off, base 3,000 feet, tops 10,000 feet, visibility 20 miles. Base conditions continued to coast.

Over Adriatic, scattered cumulus, 3/10 to 4/10 until the 43rd parallel was reached. Here the formation encountered 8/10 altocumulus and cirrus, base 18,500 feet, top 23,000 feet and was forced to circumvent clouds to the right over Yugo Coast.

Only scattered, 2/10 to 3/10 stratocumulus, top 10,000 feet along Yugo Coast.

At target, clear with unrestricted visibility.

Similar conditions on return with cloudiness at base broken up to 6/10 to 7/10 cumulus, top 10,000 feet. Visibility was generally 20 miles entire route.

9. Observations:

A report of splashes in water resembling a ditching at 1233A hours (4438N-1357E) SW of Pola from 17,000 feet was flashed to Wing A-2 at 1519A hours and further report of an intercepted radio message reporting an a/c low and preparing to ditch 1220A hours (4445N-1340E) was flashed to Wing A-2 at 1522A hours.

Time	Place	Altitude	Observation
1203	4544-1253	23,600	Small M/Y - full
1204	Trieste	23,500	Six (6) transport vessels, in harbor.
1210	4508-1359	22,600	Net stretched across large inlet.

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Ltr Narr Miss Rpt, 464th Bomb Gp (H), 20 Feb 45, contd

10. Route was not flown as briefed due to cloud conditions encountered enroute. Track chart showing briefed and flown route enclosed.

11. Nine (9) a/c attempted photographs. Selected strike photograph inclosed.

For the Commanding Officer:

FRANCIS F. ELDER
Major, AC
Intelligence Officer

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

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