

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

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

HHS/FFE/jmm

319.1

12 March 1945

SUBJECT: Narrative Mission Report

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

1. On 12 March 1945, forty two (42) B-24 type a/c took off to bomb the Florisdorf O/R, Vienna, Austria.

a. Eighteen (18) a/c plus three spare a/c scheduled for RED FORCE, took off beginning at 0932A hours.

b. Eighteen (18) plus three (3) spare a/c scheduled for BLUE FORCE, took off beginning at 0942A hours.

c. Two (2) a/c were late take-offs.

(1) A/C No 42-78692, of BLUE FORCE, took off at 0957A hours.

(2) A/C No 44-41337, of RED FORCE, took off at 1025A hours.

2. The form-up for RED FORCE, under the leadership of Colonel A J BIRD, Jr, Commanding Officer, was excellent. Difficulty was encountered at wing line rendezvous, due to both forces of the 460th Bombardment Group (H), being late. This necessitated 464th Group Leader making two (2) dog legs to the right, to allow the late Group to come up and enter into proper position. By the time the Yugoslavian Coast had been reached, an excellent Wing formation had been achieved, which was then retained throughout the flight.

3. An excellent form-up was accomplished by BLUE FORCE, under the leadership of Lt Col JAMES H GILSON, Commanding Officer of the 779th Bombardment Squadron (H).

4. A total of four (4) a/c were early returns.

a. A/C No 44-50471, of BLUE FORCE, turned back at 4206N - 1620E, due to a gasoline leak in the bomb bay and its

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fuel transfer system being inoperative, landing at 1115A hours. This a/c returned its entire bomb load of two (2) tons to base.

b. A/C No 44-49394, of RED FORCE, turned back at (4511N - 1530E) due to its fuel transfer pumps not operating, landing at 1331A hours.

c. A/C No 42-78492, of BLUE FORCE, turned back at 4620N - 1447E) due to drop of manifold pressure on No 1 engine to twenty (20) inches, followed by serious vibration and loss of altitude when its propeller ran away, following an attempt to feather, landing at 1435A hours. This a/c jettisoned its entire bomb load of two (2) tons at (4500N - 1555E) at 1255A hours. This action, plus jettisoning of all ammunition, was necessitated by the extremely rapid loss of altitude suffered when engine trouble was encountered.

d. A/C No 44-49415, of RED FORCE, turned back at (4745N - 1435E); due to two (2) turbo superchargers oscillating, making it impossible to keep up with the formation. This a/c landed at 1520A hours. To lighten its load, all bombs, comprising two (2) tons, were jettisoned at (4745N - 1435E) at 1307A hours.

5. Two (2) a/c were prior returns.

a. A/C No 44-41337, a late take-off, attempted to catch the formation by all possible means. At the key point (4407N - 1515E), a Group was seen ahead, climbing, at an estimated distance of fifty (50) miles. Realizing that it was impossible to catch up, decision was made to bomb Celje. Upon this target, from 20,000 feet, from an attack axis of 160° T, at 1308A hours. This a/c released two (2) tons of bombs, returning to base at 1510A hours.

b. A/C No 44-48880, following engine trouble necessitating feathering No 2 propeller, turned back at 1311A hours at (4836N - 1510E). Enroute, a bridge target of opportunity was bombed at (4709N - 1426E) at 1328A hours from 19,000 feet, upon an attack axis of 180° T. Two (2) tons of bombs were released, and return to base made at 1545A hours.

6. The route was flown as briefed, with but minor variations. BLUE FORCE followed RED FORCE's lead enroute. A graphic track chart, annotated with geographical coordinates and times of deviations, is inclosed.

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7. Both Forces bombed the designated primary target.

a. Eighteen (18) a/c of RED FORCE released thirty six (36) tons of 500 pound RDX bombs, fused .1 nose and mixed .01 and .025 tail, at 1348A hours, from 23,500 feet, on an attack axis of 202° T.

b. Eighteen (18) a/c of BLUE FORCE released thirty six (36) tons of 500 pound RDX bombs at 1350A hours, from 23,200 feet, on an attack axis of 212° T.

c. Bombing recapitulation is:

EARLY RETURN A/C		
2 returned to base		4 tons
2 jettisoned		4 "
PRIOR RETURN A/C		
1 released at (4407N - 1515E)		2 "
1 " " (4836N - 1510E)		2 "
RED FORCE A/C		
18 released on primary		36 "
BLUE FORCE A/C		
18 released on primary		<u>36</u> "
Total		84 tons

8. Bombing by both forces was accomplished by PFF.

a. The lead a/c of RED FORCE reports that PFF set operation was satisfactory, though a bad inverter caused somewhat weak reception. Target pick-up was achieved forty (40) miles away. Though dim, the MPI was clearly distinguished at the IP. Three (3) course corrections were given, the last of 2° L. Seven (7) sighting angles were supplied, from 70° through 60°. In the opinion of the lead PFF navigator, an excellent bombing run and release were secured.

b. The lead a/c of BLUE FORCE reports excellent operation of PFF equipment enroute. The target was picked up, fifty miles away, and a clear scope image retained to bombs away. Three (3) sighting angles, from 70° through 60°, and one (1) course correction of 4° left, were given.

9. C-1 automatic pilot equipment was used by RED FORCE leader, while due to erratic operation, the bombing run was flown manually by BLUE FORCE leader.

10. Bombing results are:

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a. Mission photographs show a solid cover at Vienna. Bombs away photos only were obtained at the Primary Target.

b. One a/c bombed Celje M/Y but had no camera to record results. Another a/c bombed a bridge near St Lorenzen, Austria. Photos show several hits in the river approximately 3,000 feet from the bridge and a possible hit in the railroad track one mile from the town.

11. M/IIH flak was reported by both forces at Vienna, Austria. The concentrations, described as barrage type, were mainly in the clear space between the two (2) forces. Other, smaller concentrations were observed to the right and to the left of course, generally at altitude. Time in range is reported as from four (4) to five (5) minutes.

12. One (1) unidentified a/c was observed at (4700N - 1640E) at 1240A hours at 5,000 feet. This a/c was proceeding in the opposite direction from the formation, which was then at 23,000 feet. It was described as a single engine airplane, of brown color.

13. Fifteen (15) to twenty (20) P-51 escort fighters were first observed at 1229A hours at (4550N - 1500E), by both forces. These a/c were identified as of the 325th Fighter Group, and were last seen at 1516A hours at (4330N - 1603E).

14. Weather was reported as follows:

At the base on take-off there was few stratocumulus and cumulus at 4,000 feet with tops to 6,500 feet. There were no high or middle clouds. Visibility was 15 miles at take-off. Surface wind was west 6 mph.

Base on return there was 1/10 cumulus with bases at 4,000 and tops at 5,500. There was 2/10 cirrus at 26,000. Visibility was 20 miles. Surface wind was northeast 4 mph.

Route out at the spur, there was a rapid increase of cloudiness. North of the spur there was 6/10 stratocumulus with bases at 4,000 and tops to 8,000. This layer continued northward to a point near Fiume where it broke sharply to 2/10 and then to clear. It was clear over the mountains. Visibility was greater than 20 miles. At a point 100 miles southwest of the target area, there was a line of clouds under the flight level that lay along a north west-south west line. This was 10/10 stratocumulus with tops to 15,000 feet. There was 2/10 cirrus at 26,000 feet. Visibility was 20 miles. Snow cover north of the mountains.

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At the target there was 10/10 stratocumulus with tops to 15,000 feet. Visibility air to air was 20 miles.. There was 2/10 cirrus at 26,000 feet.

Route back, there was 10/10 stratocumulus with tops to 15,000 feet. This undercast started to break up about 100 miles south of the target, and gradually became clear over the Yugoslav mountains. Over the Adriatic there was 1-3/10 small cumulus with bases at 4,000 feet and tops to 5,500 feet. Visibility was 20 miles. 3

15. Observations were reported as follows:

a. Varazzin M/Y, (4619N - 1621E) - 500 units - 1428A hours from 21,000 feet.

b. M/Y, (4736N - 1430E) - 200 to 300 units - 1332A hours from 19,000 feet.

16. Thirty six (36) a/c of RED and BLUE FORCES returning from the primary target, landed at this base from 1559A to 1630A hours.

17. A total of nine (9) a/c attempted bomb strike photographs. A selected print, each from RED FORCE, BLUE FORCE, and the a/c attacking a target of opportunity at St Lorenzen, are inclosed.

For the Commanding Officer:

FRANCIS F. ELDER
Major, AC
Intelligence Officer

4 Incls
Incl 1 - Track chart
Incl 2 - Selected print (RED FORCE)
Incl 3 - Selected print (BLUE FORCE)
Incl 4 - Selected print T/O