

CONFIDENTIAL

HEADQUARTERS

FFE/jmm

319.1

17 October 1944

SUBJECT: Narrative Mission Report

TO: Commanding General, 77th Bombardment Group (H)  
APO 520, Ft. Belvoir

1. On 17 October 1944, twenty eight (28) scheduled and three (3) spare B-24 type a/c took off to bomb the Vienna South Ordnance Depot, Vienna, Austria. The thirty one (31) a/c formed two attack units, the first unit leader being Colonel A. E. Bensinger, Group Commander, and second attack unit leader being 1st Lt Bedford D. May, Flight Leader, 77th Bombardment Squadron (H).

2. Group formation, altitude and direction were as prescribed.

3. Three (3) a/c returned as follows: A/C No 44-41084 returned from  $44^{\circ}37'N-16^{\circ}27'E$ , No 1 engine out and a/c lost formation in the clouds.

A/C No 44-50752 returned from  $45^{\circ}30'N-15^{\circ}45'E$  after losing formation in the clouds.

A/C No 44-78451 returned from  $45^{\circ}21'N-14^{\circ}52'E$  after losing formation in the clouds.

A/C No 44-51953 returned from  $46^{\circ}10'N-14^{\circ}55'E$  after losing formation in the clouds.

A/C No 44-52522 returned from  $44^{\circ}32'N-16^{\circ}20'E$ . After losing the formation in the clouds this a/c joined the 435th Bombardment Group (H) and proceeded with them until the box which it had joined turned back. A/C had a gas leak in No 3 tank and No 1 and 3 amplifiers were inoperative.

All a/c returning early returned their entire bomb load to the base.

4. Twenty three (23) a/c were over the target area and twenty two (22) a/c dropped 54.25 tons of 500 pound RDX bombs (.1 nose and .01 tail fusing) from 21,000 feet, on an axis of

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Ltr Marr mission rpt, contd

Attack of 180° (corrected axis of attack 79° and briefed altitude 23,000 feet). The Primary Target as designated by Operations Order No 217 was not attacked as cloud conditions in the target area prevented the formation from flying the course from IP to target exactly as briefed and when nearing the target area and finding visual bombing possible and the lead bombardier could see that last minute corrections to permit bombing of the briefed target were impossible. A secondary target was selected by the a/c at a 90° angle, the new MPI selected was the approximate center of the yard. After consulting the Wing Photo Interpreter it was established that this area is designated on M.G. 2, 15-11 as a freight yard. MPI release is indicated on attached photographs.

A/C No 42-50343 jettisoned 2.5 tons of bombs at 1151A hours just before reaching IP, after 10 minutes of inoperative. This action was necessary to lighten the a/c and keep up with the formation. A double track railroad was used as a target but results were unobserved. The a/c continued on course over the targetland without further action.

A/C No 42-50343 jettisoned 2.5 tons of bombs at 1300A hours. After release arm on B-10 shackle failed to function as A-2 release box was faulty and prevented release at target.

Bombing results were not observed visually sufficiently well to be accurately reported due to short period of opening in cloud coverage and poor visibility at target. Visibility was 8 to 10 miles in haze.

Three (3) a/c attacked targets of opportunity as follows: A/C No 44-10610 having lost the formation in the clouds at 1106A hours (46°03'N-17°03'E) joined the 460th Bombardment Group (H) and dropped 2.5 tons of bombs at 1205L hours, altitude 20,000 feet, axis of 80° by toggling on their drop. Target was not identified.

A/C No 42-52563 having lost the formation at (46°32'N-17°08'E) dropped 2.5 tons of bombs on Fernitz (46°58'N-15°30'E) at 1202A hours, altitude 22,400 feet, axis 360°. No specific target but believe strikes in the town.

A/C No 42-50736 which crashed near the base on return had reported to the tower that a R.R. bridge in Hungary had been attacked.

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Ltr Naxr Mission Rpt, contd

## Recapitulation of Bomb Tonnage

Dropped on target	54.25 tons
Dropped on targets of opportunity	7.50 tons
Jettisoned	3.25 tons
Returned to base	12.50 tons
Total	<u>77.50 tons</u>

Bomb strike photos show approximately thirty hits on the railroad yards which border the west bank of the Donau Canal in the northern part of Vienna. Additional hits were scored in the mixed industrial and residential section west of the yards. A smaller concentration of bombs was on the east bank of the canal, in a factory district situated off the northwest corner of the railway traffic center.

5. A-5 Automatic Pilot was used by the Group Leader, and the Group attacked as one attack unit, as the second attack unit leader had left the formation and there was insufficient a/c for more than one unit.

6. Flak at the target was reported as extremely intense, extremely accurate, heavy. Experienced crew members described the flak defenses as the heaviest and most accurate experienced by this Group. The formation was in flak for a period of approximately fifteen (15) minutes, starting at the IP. Large bursts reported indicate use of 105 mm, 128 mm and possible 150 mm guns.

Additional flak was reported as follows:

Graz (47°05'N-15°25'E)	MAH encountered
Sisak (45°29'N-16°22'E)	SIH encountered
Zombothley (47°14'N-16°37'E)	MIH observed
Sibenik (43°43'N-15°55'E)	S-MIH observed

7. No e/a were observed.

8. Fighter escort was reported as excellent. Cover was in the vicinity of the formation at all times despite the many changes in course necessary because of weather conditions encountered. Accurate reporting of numerical strength was extremely difficult due to cloud conditions, but the following estimates were made. 20 P-38 a/c first observed at 1032A hours (44°15'N-16°04'E) and last reported at 1430A hours (43°00'N-16°00'E). 15/20 P-51 a/c first observed at 1024A hours (43°53'N-15°36'E) and last reported at 1435A hours (42°50'N-16°00'E). Markings indicated the 1st, 52nd and 325th Fighter Groups.

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Ltr Narr mission rpt, contd

9. Weather en route was 6/10 to 8/10 cirrostratus, base 20,000 feet. Over Adriatic, continuation of cirrostratus increasing northward to 9/10 coverage. Below was 3/10 to 4/10 cumulus which increased north to Key Point to 8/10, tops 8,000 feet.

Over Dinaric Alps 10/10 at 20,000 feet and 7/10 cumulus with tops rising to east. Ship disappeared in cloud consisting of cumulus merging into thick altostratus about 50 miles inland and broke out in Lake Balaton Area at 20,000 feet.

Cloud cover from here to target consisted of 8/10 cirrostratus at 25,000 feet and 6/10 to 8/10 low cumulus, tops 8,000 feet. At target, 4/10 cumulus, tops 8,000 feet and 8/10 cirrostratus at 25,000 feet.

On return, cloud cover had diminished in amount. 6/10 to 7/10 cirrostratus at 25,000 feet entire route out, but nearly clear otherwise over Adriatic. 6/10 altostratus at 12,000 feet and 6/10 cirrostratus at 20,000 feet on return.

10. Our losses were as follows:

1. A/C No 42-51964, W/A, observed after target with fire in bomb bay but in controlled glide. Only eight (8) chutes observed but sufficient time elapsed before ship exploded and crashed for all crew members to abandon the a/c.
2. A/C No 44-41070, Y/J, reported to have received direct flak hit and blown up at 12104 hours over target. No chutes.
3. A/C No 41-29441, Y/E, hit by flak at target, last observed at 12114 hours going down under control. Two chutes observed.
4. A/C No 42-51663, B/Y, missing, dropped behind ten (10) minutes after rally, last observed at (48°20'N-17°00'E).
5. A/C No 42-50736, B/H, crashed while circling base on return. Had reported to tower that target of opportunity had been attacked and that hydraulic system was shot out. No survivors.
11. A/C No 42-95364 and a/c No 42-78472 landed at Gioia, Italy and a/c No 42-52537 landed at Bari, Italy because of flak damage and all three (3) a/c must undergo repairs before return to this base. A total of eleven (11) a/c were severely damaged, eight (8) of which will be inoperational for twenty four (24) hours or more.

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Ltr Bari Mission Rpt, contd

One (1) crew member was killed, two (2) seriously wounded and three slightly wounded by flak. Ten (10) crew members were killed in crash of a/c No. 12-10731.

## 12. Observations of importance:

Time	Place	Altitude	Observations
1137A	47°14'N-16°40'E	22,000	A/Ds, 20 a/c probably SEF. 25 revetments, two separate fields adjoining each other. Buildings on south end of field.
1137A	47°15'N-16°35'E	23,000	A/D, 6 SEF, no runway observed.
1213A	Target area	23,000	50 smoke generators, ineffective, appeared mobile, located on roads.
1213A	48°18'N-16°35'E	19,000	A/D, probably Vienna-Aspern 10 SEF and 4 TEF.
1221A	48°00'N-17°00'E	23,000	A/D, 25/30 TE a/c some may have been multi-engine.
1242A	47°20'N-17°20'E	22,000	A/D, 12/15 large a/c, 4/5 SEF.
1245A	47°23'N-17°03'E	17,000	Camouflaged A/D, 25/30 SEF silver and dark color, field painted green resembled woods.
1245A	47°20'N-17°32'E	16,000	A/D, one very low; runway
1250A	47°16'N-17°09'E	16,000	N/Y, 500 wagons, tracks leading out of town loaded.
1250A	47°15'N-16°55'E	17,000	N/Y, 500/750 wagons
1259A	Lake Balaton		12 barges
	45°10'N-15°40'E	14,500	Crashed B-24, no activity around it.
1451A	41°55'N-15°50'E	9,300	B-24 crash landed (reported as flash)

13. Eighteen a/c landed at this base between 1420A hours and 1559A hours. Three a/c landed and remain at friendly fields.

14. Extremely adverse weather conditions encountered after the turn point (42°00'N-16°20'E) rendered impossible any endeavor to adhere strictly to the briefed route. Frequent and sharp turns were executed to avoid weather and flak areas. Track chart of route as briefed and as flown attached.

15. One a/c attempted photographs and returned to base. Of six (6) camera ships, two (2) were lost, one (1) returned early, one (1) bombed a target of opportunity and did not attempt and one (1) landed at Bari Airport and although an effort was made to get the film developed at that point it was not successful. Selected strike photograph attached.

