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HEADQUARTERS  
450TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) AAF  
APO-520 US ARMY

S-2 NARRATIVE REPORT

MISSION DATE: April 8, 1945

MISSION NBR. 257

TARGET: Vipiteno, Italy - Railroad Bridge

I. CHRONOLOGY

Thirty-two B-24 type aircraft took off at 0730-0750 to bomb the Vipiteno Railroad Bridge in Italy. One aircraft returned early due to engine failure. Twenty-one aircraft dropped 51.5 tons of 1000 lb RDX bombs on the primary target at 1133-1144 hours from 24,000 - 26,000 feet. Seven aircraft jettisoned 16.5 tons in the mountains at (46.42N-10.42E): this includes six aircraft from lead squadron and one other aircraft. This resulted when lead aircraft of 1st squadron sustained heavy flak damage plus a bombsight malfunction and was forced to jettison. One aircraft jettisoned 2.5 tons in the Adriatic in making an early return due to engine failure. 7.5 ton bomb disposition of three aircraft cannot be accounted for, at present: one aircraft lost, one aircraft missing; and one aircraft made an early return from near the initial point and landed at a friendly field. Twenty-six aircraft returned to base at 1518 hours. One lost. One missing. Three landed at friendly fields, and two have since returned.

II. ROUTE AND ASSAULT

Rendezvous and route were flown as briefed, except for the second squadron which made a 360 degree turn due to interference on bomb run. Bombing was by visual method. 20-30 P-51 aircraft made rendezvous as escort at 1145 hours, (46.40N-10.50E), at 25,000', and withdrew at 1210 hours, (44.30N-10.30E), at 20,000'. Target weather was CAVU. Enroute weather varied from .2 to .8 at 15,000' with visibility unrestricted.

III. RESULTS

Bomb strike photos show:

1st Sq: Due to heavy flak damage to lead ship this box was forced off the target and salvoed because of bombsight malfunction.

2nd Sq: Hit slight over and to west of target. Bombs hit across main highway and hit on highway bridge 1500' N of Vipiteno M/Y. The latter bridge was cut or seriously damaged.

3rd Sq: Hit short and slight west of the target.

4th Sq: Several direct hits on north approach to bridge and one possible direct hit on center of bridge.

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IV. ENEMY RESISTANCE

A. Fighters: None

B. Flak:

Flak at target was of tracking type and became more accurate just after bombs away. All flak was excellent for altitude.

<u>Sq.</u>	<u>Tgt. Time</u>	<u>Bomb Alt.</u>	<u>Axis</u>	<u>Flak Exp.</u>	<u>Lost</u>	<u>Sev. Dam</u>	<u>Slight Dam.</u>
1st	1135	24,000	210	M/I A H	1	0	4
2nd	1136	24,000	140	M A H	0	0	6
3rd	1138	25,500	202	M/I A H	0	0	7
4th	1146	25,000	190	M A H	0	0	7

4th Squadron made 360 degree turn between I.P. and target and encountered flak at Innsbruck upon turning into second run. The flak was M A H with some white bursts above the formation.

V. OBSERVATIONS

At 1423 hours at Lake Lesina (41.23N-15.21E) an aircraft resembling a B-17 was observed in the water.

At 1049 hours, Klagenfurt, from 23,000': North M/Y was filled to near capacity; south M/Y contained approximately 350 units.

At 1225 Hours, Parma, Italy, from 15,000': M/Y was approximately 3/4 full of rolling stock.

VI. CONCLUSION

A. Total Losses: One aircraft exploded, due to flak damage at target, after 6-8 chutes observed.

One aircraft is missing: At 1135 hours pilot called in clear and stated his intention was to head for Switzerland due to two engines being inoperative; presumable caused by flak damage at target.

B. Damage: 24 aircraft sustained minor damage due to flak fire at target.

C. Casualties: One EM sustained slight face wounds when flak shattered plexiglass on turret.

D. Victories: None