

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

S-2 NARRATIVE REPORT

MISSION DATE: November 18, 1944

MISSION NBR. 179

TARGET: Aviano, Italy - Airdrome

I. CHRONOLOGY

Forty B-24 type aircraft took off from base at 0700-0727 hours to bomb aircraft and installations at the Aviano Airdrome, Italy. There were no early returns. Forty aircraft dropped 78.15 tons of 100 G.P. bombs on the assigned target area at 1102 hours from an altitude of 21,500 - 23,000 feet. Number of bombs dropped on the target totalled 1563. Four aircraft jettisoned a total of 1.85 tons due to hung up bombs, rack malfunctions and in order to stay with the formation. 1.75 tons of the bombs jettisoned landed on the Adriatic and .1 ton dropped near the rally point after leaving the target. No bombs were returned to base. Forty aircraft returned safely to base at 1328 hours. None lost. None missing. None at friendly fields.

II. ROUTE AND ASSAULT

After taking off from base, the Group formed into three attack units, X, Y and Z; composed of two boxes each. As the Group had been assigned four aiming points, the four boxes in X and Y units were to attack the target as attack units. Z unit was to attack its two aiming points as a spread out attack unit. The briefing stated that a loose formation was to be flown to insure adequate coverage of the target area. After taking off from base, the route to the target was flown as briefed and from the I.P. at the mouth of the Tagliamento River, the attack was carried out on an axis of 320 degrees T. X and Y attack units were assigned aiming points along the middle line of buildings and hangars on the airdrome, and Y units aiming point was short of the line of three hangars to the SE of the main installations attacked by X and Y units. Target was successfully attacked and a rally made to the right as briefed. From this point the briefed route was not flown and three attack units did a wide 180 degree turn and come back to the vicinity of Lake Marano on the Adriatic. This deviation was made due to weather conditions existing to the east of the Udine area making it seem more advisable to take this course. From Lake Marano a reciprocal of course out was flown back to base. Enroute to the target the weather over the Adriatic was CAVU and in the northern area 1/10 to 3/10 strata-cumulus changed to only a few scattered clouds at 11,000 feet and visibility was unlimited. 50 P-51 type aircraft contacted the formation at 1050 hours at 22,000 feet and departed at 1115 hours at 22,000. 25 P-51 type aircraft were observed making sweep at 10,000 feet at 1050 hours in towards the target area and were last seen at the same location at 1115 hours at 16,000.

III RESULTS

(Reference of coordinates to TC No. 4-84-NA).

The two boxes in X Attack Unit dropped their bombs across the administration building and hangars H, I, J-22 and extended to the NW to the hangar lines. Direct hits were scored on the hangars and administration buildings.

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III RESULTS (continued)

The two boxes in Y Attack Unit had the same aiming point and dropped their bombs right of the aiming point and across the dispersal area to the E of the administration buildings. The pattern extended across two flak battery locations, one of which appears to be occupied.

The two boxes in Z Attack Unit hit the dispersal area S and SE of the hangar line at I-18, with pattern starting approximately 2500 feet S of the hangars and extending across them. Direct hits were scored on the S hangars. In the dispersal area at H, I-17 are located 6 and possibly 7 aircraft. One aircraft is located between the two hangars at I-19. The pattern of this attack unit covers the aircraft between the hangar and 3 of those in the dispersal area.

Bombardier's Combat Mission Report: Bombing was done by attack units with the exception of the third unit which bombed by individual boxes. Interference from another group at the I.P. caused the entire Group to change their axis of attack and one unit to change its aiming point.

The First Attack Unit was led by Captain Leavitt of the 721st Sqdn. Captain Leavitt encountered some difficulty in picking up the target because of a heavy haze in the target area. However he was able to find the target in plenty of time for a normal bomb run. Captain Leavitt states the pattern of his unit started short and covered the aiming point with some bombs carrying on a little over. Photos show an excellent concentration of bombs covering both the first and second attack units areas.

The Second Attack Unit was led by Lt. Hudson of the 722nd Sqdn. Lt. Hudson had a very short run due to his inability to find the target. This was caused mainly by the heavy haze in the target area. Lt. Hudson states his units pattern developed to the right of aiming point. Photos show bombs hit in dispersal area to right of aiming point.

The Third Attack Unit split into boxes and bombed as two units. The first unit was led by Lt. Miller of the 720th Sqdn. This box had difficulty on the run because of a collision course with another unit. However Lt. Miller got squared away in time to take a satisfactory run. Photos show an excellent concentration in the target area. The second unit was led by Lt. Gawne of the 720th Sqdn. Lt. Gawne had considerable difficulty because of a collision course with the box ahead. He also had trouble locating the target because of haze. He finally was able to take a satisfactory run. Photos show an excellent concentration of bombs around the aiming point and through the target area.

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VI. ENEMY RESISTANCE (continued)

A. Fighters: None

B. Flak: No flak was encountered at the target, but study of photographs indicates that at J-23, TC No. 4-84-NA, a flak battery is occupied.

Change of flight from briefed course resulted in flak from Montalcone: moderate, accurate, heavy; Campoformida: moderate, accurate, heavy; Grado: Slight, inaccurate, heavy. Flak was observed being fired at other units in the vicinity of Gorizia, Udine and Venice. Two aircraft were slightly holed at Campoformida.

V. OBSERVATIONS

At 1233 hours, on water, Air-Sea-Rescue boats heading towards what appeared to be 2 life rafts or an aircraft broken in two.

At 1155 hours, San Vito, large industrial building totalling approximately 12 to 18 in number. Cover area size of city block.

At 1027 hours, Pola, 6 medium sized ships headed toward Pola and about 8 miles off harbor. Circled when bombers appeared.

At 1120 hours, Trieste, looked like 8 medium sized vessels in harbor.

VI. CASUALTIES

Two aircraft slightly holed by flak.

VII. FLIGHT LEADERS:

<u>PILOT</u>	<u>BOMBARDIER</u>	<u>NAVIGATOR</u>	<u>PILOT</u>	<u>BOMBARDIER</u>	<u>NAVIGATOR</u>
Alexander	Leavitt	Suey	Hobert	Hudson	Reger
Rees	Miller	Kenna	Martus	Gawne	Rudman