

## Mission Narratives

The following four "Mission Narratives" were transcribed from microfilm and hard copies of original documents held by AFHRA (Air Force Historical Research Agency) from 1945 as part of the 15<sup>th</sup> Army Air Force records. Four Bomb Groups were involved with the March 4, 1945 bombing of Szombathely, and the following documents are the official records of each bomb group as they flew to Szombathely, and their return to base in Italy that afternoon.

In the order of their arrival over the city, the following Bomb Groups are noted for your information as follows:

485<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group - arrival: 12:42  
465<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group - arrival: 13:06  
460<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group - arrival: 13:24  
464<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group - arrival: 13:29

HEADQUARTERS  
485<sup>TH</sup> BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)  
APO 520 US ARMY

WAL/wfw

5 March 1945

SUBJECT: Narrative Mission Report

TO: Commanding General, 55<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Wing (H), APO 520  
US Army

1. On 4 March 1945 at 0739 hours, 28 B-24 type A/C took off to bomb the SZOMBATHELY SOUTH M/Y in Hungary. The 28 A/C formed in two attack units of two boxes each. Lt. Col Douglas M. Cairns, Group Operations Officer, led the formation.

2. Due to the weather conditions over the base, the Group assembled 30 miles west of the field at 0740 hours at 11,000'.

3. Uphill was contacted for weather conditions in the rendezvous area. The formation was advised to climb to 14,000' in order to get around the weather on the west side of the Spur. This was done with the Group being 10 minutes late for rendezvous. The 460<sup>th</sup> Group, scheduled to lead, was contacted for its position, which was given as fifteen minutes behind and at 16,000'. The formation was advised to continue on course and to climb to 16,000' and that the 460<sup>th</sup> Group would attempt to overtake it. Arriving at the Key Point 10 minutes behind schedule the leader again contacted the 460<sup>th</sup> Group which suggested that 485<sup>th</sup> continue on course and lead over the target.

4. There was no actual rendezvous with the fighter escort. The fighters called, asking for the target time and evidently flew directly to the target, where they were first observed in any number. A few P-38's and P-51's were observed enroute at 45° 00' N. - 15° 54' E. at 1045 hours. Fighters were last observed 1322 hours at 44° 15' N. - 16° 10' E.

5. One A/C returned prior to reaching the primary target. A/C #801 turned back at 46° 52' N - 14° 29' E at 1130 hours with a blown piston in #2 engine. 2 tons of bombs were jettisoned at the point of turn back, and although no planned bomb run was made, some hits were observed on a rail line. A/C landed at base at 1410 hours.

Narrative Mission Report, Cont'd

6. The formation missed the IP because of clouds and extremely hazy conditions in the area. The Mickey Operator turned the formation on the bomb run but was unable to keep the target on his scope. When almost abreast (sic) of the city the bombardier identified the target and made the necessary corrections. The bomb run was actually of only 45 seconds duration.

27 A/C were over (sic) the PT (Primary Target) at 1242 hours. 26 A/C dropped 52 tons of 500 lb RDX bombs, fused .1 x .01, from 23,500' and on a heading of 150°. One A/C, #3438, returned 2 tons of bombs to base because of rack malfunctions. Bombing was visual and by boxes with the lead ship in Able and Charlie boxes using the C-1 auto pilots.

Photographs reveal: ABLE BOX: A good concentration of bombs on the southern section of the target, covering both briefed MPI's. BAKER BOX: Pattern approximately 1500' west of the M/Y. CHARLIE AND DOG BOXES: A heavy concentration of bombs 2,500' to 3,000' west of the M/Y. Approximately in the center of the town.

7. Weather: Base on Take-Off: 9/10 cumulus and strato-cumulus bases 4,000' and tops 11,000'. Visibility unrestricted. Route Out: Base conditions to Adriatic. Over water 7/10 to 9/10 towering cumulus with tops 15,000', decreasing to clear along Yugoslavian coast, with 9/10 towering cumulus to 15,000' over mountains, then clear to Ljubljana. From here to IP 10/10 alto-cumulus tops estimated from 15,000' to 18,000' with few breaks through which one pilot observed lower clouds, breaking to 3/10 in target area, where no other clouds were observed. Patches of cirrus at 25,000' to 26,000' in Klagenfurt, Linz areas. Heavy persistent vapor trails from 18,000' to 23,000' reported from Ljubljana to IP. Visibility unrestricted. Route Back: South of Lake Balaton 6/10 to 8/10 heavy cumulus becoming overcast over Yugo mountains with tops to 15,000'. Adriatic as route out, with tops to 12,000' to 14,000'. Base on return: Same as take-off.

8. No e/a were encountered or observed. SAH flak was encountered for approximately two minutes over the target. Some of this flak came from RR guns: crew members reported seeing flashed (sic) from along the tracks. 3 A/C received minor flak damage. There were no casualties.

Narrative Mission Report, Cont'd

9. Observations:

- (1) M/Y at Ljubljana, 500 cars (Yugoslavia)
- (2) M/Y at Klagenfurt, 100 cars (Austria)
- (3) M/Y at St Vert, (sic) approximately 400 cars and three engines under steam. (St. Veit, Austria)

A B-24 from the 460<sup>th</sup> Group joined the formation at 1130 hours, filling in the position occupied by A/C #801, which turned back at that time, as indicated in Par. #5. This A/C bombed with the 485<sup>th</sup> Group.

10. 26 A/C returned to base, 25 A/C landing without incident at 1443 hours, mean landing time. A/C #51931 landed at Zara (Yugoslavia) for gasoline and returned to base at 1559 hours. A/C #49393 was observed to lose altitude over the target and take a heading to the east escorted by several P-38's. This A/C later reported by radio that it had landed behind the Russian lines at Szedebed (sic) (poss. Szeged, Hu.).

11. 7 out of 8 cameras attempting photographs were successful.
12. Route as briefed and as flown is plotted on the attached.
13. PFF was used only as navigational aids.

For the Commanding Officer:

s/Walter A. Ladner  
t/WALTER A. LADNER  
Major, Air Corps  
Group S-2 Officer

WALTER A. LADNER  
Major, Air Corps

\*My Notes:

- 45° 00' N. - 15° 54' E. (Trzac, Yugoslavia)  
44° 15' N. - 16° 10' E. (Knin, Yugoslavia)  
46° 52' N. - 14° 29' E. (St. Veit, Austria)

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Army Air Force Documents 1945, AFHRA, Maxwell AFB

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

HEADQUARTERS 465th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (HV)  
APO 520 U.S. ARMY

4 MARCH 1945.

SUBJECT: Narrative Mission Report.

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

SECTION I (Narrative)

1. 29 a/c of 30 scheduled took off at 0740 hours on 4 March 1945 to attack the M/Y at Szombathely, Hungary. The group formed into attack units with Lt. JOHN W. DUNBAR and Capt. JACK KNOWLES leading the first attack unit and Lt. R.O. DOSS leading the second attack unit. The third attack unit originally scheduled broke up at assembly and individual planes formed within the first two attack units.

2. Group assembly was not made until 0918 hours at 16,000 ft. between Andria(sic.) and Canosa. Weather prevented scheduled assembly. This group fell behind the 485th. which was behind the 460th. between Andria(sic.) and the Spur at 0920 hours at 20,000 feet.

3. An escort of P-51's joined at 1135 hours at Ljubljana and furnished target cover and withdrawal support, leaving at the Yugoslavian - Hungarian boarder.

4. The bomb run was made on the primary target in attack units. Boxes could not get into trail because of the close interval between attack units. Bombing was visual, the first attack unit using C-1 automatic pilot, the second attack unit using PDI\*. One a/c jettisoned its bombs at the IP because of engine trouble; this plane is missing. There were 25 effective sorties and 4 non-effective.

5. Bomb concentration was short with some hits in the south choke point (conversion of rail track\*) and a few hits in the marshalling yards.

6. Flack at Szombathely was Scant to Moderate, accurate and heavy. Five a/c received slight damage and one a/c received major damage.

7. No enemy a/c were seen or encountered.

8. Weather: At take-off there was 6/10 to 8/10 cumulus, bases at 4,000 feet tops at 12,000 ft. Base condition continued to Vis where clouds decreased to 4/10 cumulus with 3/10 altostratus with tops at 13,500 ft. were above the cumulus. North of Klagenfurt, 9/10 to 10/10 cumulus was encountered over the Alps, tops 14,000 ft. In the target area, there was

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Narrative Mission Report, dd 4 March 1945, cont'd

10/10 cloud cover to the south, but to the north there was less than 5/10 coverage. A large break over the target made the target plainly visible. Weather on return was similar to route out with heavy clouds over Northern Yugo breaking to 4/10 cumulus over the Adriatic.

9. The following observations were noted:
- a. 1,000 to 1,200 cars noted in the 3 M/Y's at Lubljana.
  - b. 500 cars in M/Y at Zalos.
  - c. 19 a/c on Klagenfurt A/D.
  - d. 19 small circular positions connected by roads formed a complete circle around the city of Ljubljana well outside of the city.

10. 25 a/c landed at 1515 hours mean landing time. A/C #906, marked R-Q piloted by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. CURTIS L. EATMAN was last seen at the IP and is thought to have headed south. He is thought to have headed for Russia and an un-identified B-24 with red cowling was observed to be heading for Russia south of Lake Balaton.

11. Route was flown as briefed.

SECTION II (Statistics).

29 a/c off at 0740 hours. Group assembly at Andria(sic.) at 0918 hours.  
Wing assembly between Andria(sic) and Spur  
at 920 hours.

25 a/c effective sorties, 4 non-effective, 1 missing.

25 a/c dropped 50 tons on Szombathely at 1306 hours at 22,100 feet.

Bombs: 500# RDX, fused .1 N\* - .01 T\*\*

4 tons jettisoned  
4 tons brought back  
58 tons total.

VICTORIES:

0 Destroyed            0 Probable            0 Damaged (German Aircraft)

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MALFUNCTIONS, NON-EFFECTIVE, etc.

STATUS	TURN BACK (Point)	DISPOSITION OF BOMBS	REASON
1 non-effective	4520N-1450E	Jettisoned 4303N-1530E.	Feathered Engine.
2 non-effective	Base Area	Brought Back	Oil leak. Prop Governor Failure.
1 non-effective	Target Area	Jettisoned 4733N-1606E.	Feathered Engine (Missing)

DATE: 4 March 1945. MISSION NUMBER: 154.

R. C. PEASE,  
Major, Air Corps,  
S-2.

Translators Notes for Clarification:  
(Added Notations)

N\* Nose

T\*\* Tail

PDI- Pilot Direction Indicator

Turn Back Points in Lat./Longitudes

Szombathely: 47°17'N - 16°38'E

Transcribed from microfilm for readability.  
Army Air Force Documents 1945, AFHRA, Maxwell AFB  
Font Style: American Typewriter

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

HEADQUARTERS 460<sup>TH</sup> BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)  
APO 520

US ARMY

D/RW/1

5 March 1945

SUBJECT: Narrative Report, Mission #22, Operations #109.

TO: Commanding General, 55<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Wing (H),  
APO 520, US Army.

1. At 0735 hours on 4 March 1945, 28 scheduled a/c were dispatched to bomb the Szombathely M/Y in Hungary. The Group was led by Colonel J. M. Price, Group Commander, and the second attack unit by Captain Warling W. Wilson, 763 Bomb Sqdn (H).

2. Due to adverse weather over the base, the Group was forced to assemble by boxes to the west of the field at 0917 hours, at 15000'. For this reason, also, the 460th was thirty minutes late for the briefed rendezvous over Andria, and made no rendezvous with the Wing. Radio communications between the Groups of the Wing were satisfactory, although Channel "A" was at times overloaded. Target weather was received from the 485th and relayed to the other Groups. Fighter escort, eight P-51's, first sighted at 1200 hours at (4650 N - 1420 E), furnished penetration, and target cover. They left the formation at 1324 hours in the target area.

3. 28 a/c penetrated to the primary target. Other Groups of the wing arrived over the IP at the same time as the 460<sup>th</sup>. To avoid a collision course, the Group made a 360 degree turn before initiating a bomb run. The target was obscured by cloud. Smoke, blown across it from previous bomb bursts to the north, further hid the briefed MPI's from view. In order to have a chance for successful bombing, a 360 degree turn was made to the left and into the wind, which was blowing at 80 knots. A second bomb run, made on an axis of 181 degrees, found the M/Y visible. On this axis, it was impractical for the boxes to hit the three separate briefed aiming points without crossing under each other. Therefore the Group Commander ordered each box to aim for the center of the M/Y. This order was acknowledge and carried out, the large white warehouses being taken as an MPI. At 22,000', 28 A/C were over the target at 1324 hours. 27 a/c dropped 53 tons of 500-lb RDX bombs, .1 Nose and .01 Tail fusing, on the target, one of the above a/c bombing with the 485<sup>th</sup>. Two a/c had four bombs hung up which were jettisoned immediately after target.

First bombs of first attack unit hit in M/Y just north of over pass with a direct hit on locomotive shed, and ten to fifteen hits in area of M/Y causing damage to trackage, rolling stock and overpass. Main concentration of 2<sup>nd</sup> attack unit in M/Y south of overpass in area of large trans-shipment shed. Damage to rolling stock and trackage. Fires resulted from oil cars hit. Definite number cannot be assessed due to smoke from 1<sup>st</sup>. attack unit. Auto pilot was used on the bomb run by the Group leader. The 2<sup>nd</sup>. Attack lead did not use auto pilot because of weak gyro. One a/c. separated from the Group, dropped two tons of bombs on Ljubljana M/Y at 1325 hours from 22,000'.

-1-

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(M22 :460 con't)

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

4. SAH flak was encountered over the target for two to three minutes. Black and white bursts were observed. MAH flak was encountered over Ljubljana by the single sortie.

5. Four U/I SEF's were seen in the target area at 1310 hours. These a/c were not recognized as standard German or American fighters. A/C came in on a pursuit curve from seven o'clock level, closing to 300-400 yards before breaking away when gunners fired. A/C were dark colored with lighter band around the fuselage behind the canopy – no return fire was received from these a/c.

6. Route was flown as briefed with exceptions noted in the target area. Route weather forced deviations from briefed route over the Adriatic. Weather at take off, 9-10ths cumulus and stratocum, bases variable 1500 to 3000' with snow flurries lowering ceiling to 500', tops to 12000'. 6/10ths to 8/10ths over Adriatic, tops 8-10000' becoming 3/10ths over Yugo coast continuing inland with many breaks. No Yugo, generally clear becoming 3-5/10ths and increasing to 6-9/10ths over central Austria, tops building to 16-18000. Target itself clear with surrounding area overcast, tops 12-14000'. Similar weather on return, snow flurries over base reducing visibility to 0-5 mi.

7. 19 a/c returned to base with a mean landing time of 1535 hours. Nine a/c landed at friendly fields: 7 at Pentanella, 1 at Torette and one a/c, #8769, crash-landed at Amendola. Crew members are safe. A/C can be repaired.

8. Three a/c received minor flak damage.

9. Nine a/c attempted photos. A significant print is attached.

For the Commanding Officer:

2 Incls.  
Incl 1 - TC  
Incl 2 - Photos

Roger Warner  
Major, AC.  
S-2 Officer

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Army Air Force Documents 1945, AFHRA, Maxwell AFB

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

HEADQUARTERS

BVB/FFE/hob

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

319.1

4 March 1944 (sic)

SUBJECT: Narrative Mission Report

TO: Commanding General, 55th. Bombardment Wing (H)  
APO 520, US Army

1. On 4 March 1945, thirty six (36) scheduled B-24 a/c, plus six (6) designated spare a/c took off at 0810A hours to bomb the Szombathely South M/Y. The a/c formed three (3) attack units. The first attack unit was led by Major Harry S. Wilson, Assistant Group Operations Officer of the 464th. Bombardment Group (H). The second, by 1st. Lieutenant George S. Quay II, Box Leader of the 777th. Bombardment Squadron (H). The third, by Captain Kenneth (NMI) Machado, Flight Leader of the 777th. Bombardment Squadron (H).

2. B-24 a/c No. 44-49415 returned early from the local area due to the loss of No. 2 engine which was feathered when the RPM and oil pressure dropped.

3. The Group form-up was accomplished southeast of Spinazzola, Italy and above the clouds at 14,000 feet. Due to the fact that the Departure time was delayed because of the weather encountered on form-up, this Group flew directly over Spinazzola and on to Lake Lesina leaving the latter point at 1000A hours.

4. Thirty nine (39) a/c were over the target and dropped seventy four and three quarter (74 3/4) tons of RDX bombs (.1 nose and .01 tail fusing) from 23,500 feet.

Three (3) of the a/c over the target, due to the following reasons were unable to release entire bomb load with the formation:

B - 24 a/c No. 44-49194: Slight creep in left bomb bay door prevented the release of four (4) bombs from the left racks. This

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Ltr. Narr. Miss. Rpt, cont'd

a/c jettisoned one (1) ton of bombs, one and one half (1 ½) minutes after bombs-away time.

B-24 a/c No 44-42401: An undetermined malfunction. Seven (7) bombs hung up and this a/c jettisoned one and three quarter (1 ¾) tons at 1435A hours at (4300' N - 1511' E). (Into the Adriatic Sea)\*

B-24 a/c No 44-48880: Racks freeze up. This a/c jettisoned two (2) bombs that hung up immediately after bombs away.

B-24 a/c No 44-49146: After a late take-off was unable to locate the formation and bombed the Graz East M/Y (Austria) at 1259A hours from 22,000 feet with a/c of the 40th. Wing.

B-24 a/c No 44-49415: the Early return, brought back to base two (2) tons of bombs.

B-24 a/c No 44-49363: failed to make the Group form-up and crashed in the area of Spinazzola. The disposition of the bomb load of this a/c is not known.

Recapitulation of Bomb Tonnage

Thirty nine (39) effective sorties dropped on Target	74.75 tons
One (1) effective sortie dropped on Graz East M/Y	2.00 "
Three (3) a/c (of those over the Primary Target) jettisoned	3.25 "
One (1) Early Return brought back to base	2.00 "
One (1) a/c crashed	<u>2.00 "</u>
Total	84.00 "

Bomb strike photos show very numerous hits in the city of Szombathely west of the marshaling yard. One bomb fell in the center of the South M/Y, with damage to two (2) columns of freight cars. The bomb pattern started approximately 3,000 feet west of the yard and continued southeast to the railroad junction. Other scattered hits fell in the fields east and south of the yard.

5. The first Attack Unit Leader use the C-1 Automatic Pilot on the bomb run, as did the leader of the Third Attack Unit. The second Attack Unit Leader made the run manually as to many corrections were necessary and the pilot did not have the opportunity to set up the C-1 automatic pilot.

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Ltr. Narr. Miss. Rpt, cont'd

6. Flack at the target of two (2) minutes duration was escribed as S - IH with the exception of crews of Able and Baker Boxes have the report S - AV.

7. Escort of thirty (30) to forty (40) P-54 a/c were first observed at 1000A hours at (41°53' N - 1520' E). Fifteen (15) to twenty (20) P-38 a/c were observed in the target area. The escort was last sighted at 1430A Hours at (4400' N - 1530' E).

8. Weather at take off was 8/10 stratocumulus and cumulus with tops up to 12,000 feet. Scattered snow showers in the area. 8/10 to 10/10 cumulus over Adriatic to 14,800 feet breaking along Dalmatian Coast to 3/10 to 4/10. 8/1 to 10/10 cumulus over Niaric Alps and in Drava River area to 10/10 altocumulus, top 12,000 feet. Both layers broke in vicinity of the IP to scattered. At target, 3/10 altocumulus tops 12,000 feet, visibility unlimited.

On return, low cover averaging 8/10, tops 12 - 14,000 feet. 8/10 strataocumulus and cumulus at base on return, a 3,000 feet. Visibility 20 miles.

9. Forty (40) a/c landed at this base between 1450A hours and 1600A hours.

10. Due to the fact that the form-up was late, the route flown was from Spinazzola to Lake Lesins, to (4313'N - 1450'W), to (4403N - 1570'E) and then as briefed. Track chart and route as flown attached.

11. Observations:

<u>Time</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Altitude</u>	<u>Observations</u>
11:35A	(4603'N - 1432'E) (Ljubljana, Yugoslavia)*	18,000	Two (2) M/Y's - each containing at least 200 units.
13:29A	(4717'N - 1638'E) (Szombathely, Hungary)*	21,000	M/Y with 20-30 S___

C O N F I D E N T A L

Ltr. Narr. Miss. Rpt, cont'd

12. Four (4) a/c received flak damage. Three (3) a/c received minor flak damage, and one (1) a/c received major damage and this a/c will be in-operational for a period of one hundred (100) man hours.

13. Twelve (12) a/c attempted photographs. Selected print attached.

For the Commanding Officer:

FRANCIS F. KELLER  
Major, Air Corps  
Intelligence Officer

2 Incls:

Incl 1 - Track Chart

Incl 2 - Selected Print

\*Translators Notes: (47 17'N - 10 38'E) Szombathely, Hungary  
(41 06'N - 16 58'E) Spinazzola, Italy  
(46 03'N - 14 32'E) Ljubjana, Yugoslavia

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