B-24s IN COMBAT



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The National Museum of the Air Force maintains this combat photo of B-24s in action over Europe: "Through flak and over the destruction created by preceding waves of bombers, these 15th Air Force B-24s leave Ploesti, Rumania, after one of the long series of attacks against the No. 1 oil target in Europe."

B-24s, like other WWII planes, took the fight to the skies in both the Pacific and European theaters. Photographs, from the U.S. National Archives, give us a glimpse at some of the aerial battle scenes.

- Inside the cockpit of a B-24J;
- <u>Loading bombs</u> for the next mission;
- Crashing, on take-off, was not uncommon for B-24s;
- Close-formation flying sometimes causes casualties;
- Nearing their target, the crew opens the bomb bay;
- Dropping bombs, from a higher altitude, creates a "close call" for planes below;
- With her rear fuselage blown off, "Red Bow" makes a fatal descent;
- <u>Losing their way</u>, crew members trying to find <u>Benghazi</u> a coastal town in Libya crash and are never seen again;
- Waist gunners, at their post, give (and receive) fire power;
- <u>Tanks explode</u>, on "Little Warrior," as a nearby waist gunner photographs his friends;
- Surviving "flak alley" once, a B-24 crew will soon be back in the same predicament;
- Surviving a mid-air collision could lead to a different result on the ground;

- Taking a direct flak hit, although it does not appear serious, leads to a <u>non-survivable event</u> for this B-24;
- Death by strafing occurs minutes after this B-24's number-one engine is on fire;
- Waiting for a late-arriving bomber, finally in sight of base;
- Sometimes returning planes are late because of engine failure(s);
- B-24 crews do their best to repair their crippled bombers;
- Landings did not always happen on smooth surfaces;
- Crash landings didn't always seal their fate, but this <u>flak-damaged B-24</u> never flew again;
- <u>Bursting apart</u>, in flames, this B-24 was lost one month before Hitler took his life (thereby ending the war in Europe).

Louie and his crew mates lost good friends as they - and their B-24s - tried to take back Japanese-held islands in the Pacific. "Super Man," and its crew, faced their own potential disaster on the day the men flew their Liberator to Nauru Island.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/B-24s-IN-COMBAT-Unbroken-Louis-Zamperini-Story

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/B-24s-IN-COMBAT-Unbroken-Louis-Zamperini-Story

Questions 2 Ponder

What Is It Like to Engage in Aerial Battle?

Flying planes with bad reputations, during very long missions, WWII airmen also had to battle enemy aircraft. Flak hits were just a few of the obstacles they endured.

In the days before jet engines propelled an air crew's ability to "escape" from danger, pilots had to keep their planes straight and level while chaos-in-the-air surrounded them.

National-Archive photos depict countless scenes of danger which airmen were sometimes able to survive, and sometimes not.

What do you think may have been the most-dangerous aspect of engaging in aerial battles during WWII?

Select a picture, from Chapter 4 - "B-24s in Combat" - and describe what the crew must have been going through at the moment the picture was taken.

What does your selected picture mean to you, in terms of how you would have reacted if it had been you, and not someone else, in the plane?

What if some of the airmen had a fear of flying but were assigned to serve on a bomber anyway? How would they manage their fears?

Media Stream





Inside the Cockpit of a B-24

Consolidated B-24J-10-FO (S/N 42-51660) cockpit. U.S. Air Force photo. Image online, courtesy U.S. Air Force and the U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Inside-the-Cockpit-of-a-B-24



Loading Bombs on a B-24

Photo of bomb-loading, on a B-24, online courtesy U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Loading-Bombs-on-a-B-24



Crashing on Take-off - B-24

Photo of B-24M-5-FO Liberator - s/n 44-50468 - online, courtesy U.S. National Archives. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Crashing-on-Take-off-B-24

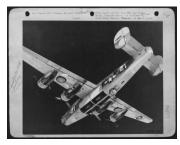


Close-Formation Flying - A B-24 Casualty

Photo online, courtesy U.S. Air Force and U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Close-Formation-Flying-A-B-24-Casualty



Open Bomb Bay on a B-24

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Open-Bomb-Bay-on-a-B-24



Close Call from a Dropping Bomb - B-24 at Truk Lagoon

Image online, courtesy NARA (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration). View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Close-Call-from-a-Dropping-Bomb-B-24-at-Truk-Lagoon



Final Descent - B-24 "Red Bow" in Crash Mode

Image online, courtesy NARA (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration). View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Final-Descent-B-24-Red-Bow-in-Crash-Mode



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Crash of a Lost B-24 - Unable to Find Benghazi

Image online, courtesy NARA (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration). View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Crash-of-a-Lost-B-24-Unable-to-Find-Benghazi

Waist Gunners Lost - B-24 Flak Burst

Image online, courtesy NARA (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration).

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Waist-Gunners-Lost-B-24-Flak-Burst

Exploding Tanks on a B-24 - Lost in Action

Image online, courtesy NARA (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration). View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Exploding-Tanks-on-a-B-24-Lost-in-Action

Flak Alley and a B-24

Image online, courtesy NARA (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration). View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Flak-Alley-and-a-B-24

Midair Explosion - B-24

Image online, courtesy NARA (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration). View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Midair-Explosion-B-24

#1 Engine Fire - B-24 Just Before Fatal Explosion

Image online, courtesy NARA (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration). View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/-1-Engine-Fire-B-24-Just-Before-Fatal-Explosion

Death by Strafing - B-24 Explosion

 $Image\ online,\ courtesy\ NARA\ (U.S.\ National\ Archives\ and\ Records\ Administration).$

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Death-by-Strafing-B-24-Explosion



Late Arrival - B-24 Returns to Base

Image online, courtesy NARA (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration).

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Late-Arrival-B-24-Returns-to-Base



<u>Limping Home - B-24 with Feathered/Smoking Engines</u>

Image online, courtesy NARA (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration).

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Limping-Home-B-24-with-Feathered-Smoking-Engines



Damage to a B-24 - Crew Repairs Sky Scow

Image online, courtesy NARA (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration).

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Damage-to-a-B-24-Crew-Repairs-Sky-Scow



Landing on Difficult Terrain - B-24

Image online, courtesy NARA (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration).

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Landing-on-Difficult-Terrain-B-24



Crash Landing Dooms a Flak-Damaged B-24

Image online, courtesy NARA (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration).

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Crash-Landing-Dooms-a-Flak-Damaged-B-24



Catastrophe for a B-24 - In Flames, March of 1945

Image online, courtesy NARA (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration).

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Catastrophe-for-a-B-24-In-Flames-March-of-1945



B-24s IN COMBAT

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