

0. SUPER MAN ATTACKS - FUNAFUTI and NAURU - Story Preface

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In this image we see the island of Nauru, under an American bombing attack, during 1943. Photo included in *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, [Chapter 9](#).

Zamperini and his crew mates were able to fly long - really long - missions. A loaded-with-bombs B-24 had a range of about 2,850 miles, which was helpful for many reasons - including the element of surprise. Zamp and his mates flew such a mission during April of 1943.

Super Man's flyers started the trip without their own plane. Stuck in the mud on take-off - from Hawaii's Kahuku Air Base - the plane was reunited with its normal crew at [Funafuti](#). That speck of land (then [part of the Ellice Islands](#), now part of Tuvalu) was the [gathering place](#) for twenty-six heavy bombers.

Their mission was to attack a phosphate-producing island, known as [Nauru](#), which provided Japan with raw materials for explosives and fertilizer. It was a [heavily defended place](#).

To keep the Japanese guessing where the Allied bombers were based, the B-24 crews would leave Funafuti, fly toward Guadalcanal, then make a turn and [head for Nauru](#). Led by *Super Man*, the planes would fly low (at 8,000 feet) and maintain radio silence.

The men did not understand why they were ordered to fly at the same altitude, thereby increasing exposure to anti-aircraft fire. Their job, however, was to carry out (not plan) the mission.

Even though [the noon attack](#) was a surprise, the Japanese at Nauru were quick to respond. As bombardier, Louie controlled the plane as he used his Norden bombsight to line-up targets. Then ... *Super Man* began to violently shake.

Flak, and other anti-aircraft fire, surrounded the [attacking B-24s](#) which were flying at the same level. Maintaining focus, Louie hit his targets. He even managed to blow-up the island's fuel supply.

Super Man - and its crew - took a major beating as the plane continued its attack. Louie narrowly missed a facial strike, from a whizzing cannon, but he was uninjured.

Able to help his crew mates, Zamp and the co-pilot saved three men from death that day. Their plane was less fortunate. [Riddled with holes](#), *Super Man* was damaged - likely beyond repair - with:

- 4 cannon holes;
- 2 heavy anti-aircraft hits;
- 500 shrapnel holes;
- 150 7.7-millimeter bullet holes; and
- A destroyed right tail.

All the attacking B-24s returned to Funafuti, but a shaken pilot made a grave mistake en route. Instead of maintaining radio silence, he called in a question: Should he return to Funafuti directly or via Guadalcanal?

Hearing the transmission, the Japanese learned where to send their retaliatory bombers. Later that night, while exhausted flyers slept and Marines based at Funafuti either missed (or misinterpreted) radar readings, Japanese bombers laid waste to the island. One of Zamp's crew members, injured during the bomb run, died before the attack.

Super Man's crew would never fly their plane again. Instead ... after returning to Hawaii for some rest ... their skipper volunteered to take his crew on a search-and-rescue mission. They ended up using a plane no one trusted.

It was called ... *Green Hornet*.

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/SUPER-MAN-ATTACKS-FUNAFUTI-and-NAURU-Unbroken-Louis-Zamperini-Story>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/SUPER-MAN-ATTACKS-FUNAFUTI-and-NAURU-Unbroken-Louis-Zamperini-Story>

Questions 2 Ponder

How Do We “Keep Our Cool” When Danger Strikes?

While under attack by enemy fire, airmen in a B-24 called “Super Man” keep their focus and carry-out their mission.

Their plane is heavily damaged with 4 cannon holes, 2 heavy anti-aircraft hits, 500 shrapnel holes, 150 7.7-millimeter bullet holes and a destroyed right tail.

Despite a near-facial injury, from a whizzing cannon, the bombardier - a man called Louis Zamperini - controls the plane and hits the mark.

After the bombing run is over, the crew must fly their utterly torn-up plane back to base (which is not located nearby).

How hard is it to “keep our cool” when danger strikes?

Do you think that Zamperini, and his crew mates, were able to maintain their focus because their very lives depended on their own actions? Explain your answer.

Put yourself in the shot-up plane and relate your plan to maintain your own sense of well-being as you do your best to do the job and return to base.

Do We Have to Carry-out a Bad Order If It Endangers Our Lives?

Sent to attack a Japanese-held island, a group of B-24s are ordered to fly at the same flight level en route to the target.

It is a dangerous order, as the crews well know, because enemy fire can destroy more planes if those planes are flying at the same, not staggered, altitudes.

However, a military order is an order which must be carried-out by the individuals to whom the order is given. That means these air crews are putting themselves at risk when they know a different plan would keep them safer.

When they are within range of anti-aircraft fire, the airmen's worst fears come true. Enemy ground fire is damaging many of the planes.

Did the air crews have a choice to obey or disobey the direct order to fly at the same altitude? Why, or why not?

Do we have to carry-out a bad order if it endangers our lives? Explain your answer.

Would your answer be different if the bad order was not a military-issued order? Why, or why not?

Is there ever a time when you could justify disobeying a bad order which endangers your life?



Funafuti - Location in the Ellice Islands

Image online, courtesy University of Washington.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Funafuti-Location-in-the-Ellice-Islands>



Funafuti - Approaching the Atoll

Image of Funafuti, online courtesy Tuvalu Islands.com.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Funafuti-Approaching-the-Atoll>



Funafuti - Gathering Place for B-24 Bombers En Route to Nauru

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Funafuti-Gathering-Place-for-B-24-Bombers-En-Route-to-Nauru>



Nauru - Phosphate-Producing Island

Image of Nauru, by air, online courtesy U.S. Department of Energy's Atmospheric Radiation Measurement Program.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Nauru-Phosphate-Producing-Island>



Nauru - Approach by Air

Image of Nauru, as approached by air, online courtesy U.S. Department of Energy's Atmospheric Radiation Measurement Program.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Nauru-Approach-by-Air>



Attack on Nauru by B-24s

Image online, courtesy U.S. Library of Congress.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Attack-on-Nauru-by-B-24s>



Louis Zamperini Examines Super Man

Image of Louis Zamperini, examining Super Man's damage, online courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Louis-Zamperini-Examines-Super-Man>



Super Man - Damaged During the Nauru Raid

Photo of CH Cupernell (likely) and the damaged B-24 called "Super Man." Photo online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Super-Man-Damaged-During-the-Nauru-Raid>



Funafuti after the Japanese Retaliatory Strike

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Funafuti-after-the-Japanese-Retaliatory-Strike>



Destroyed B-24s at Funafuti

Image online, U.S. National Archives.

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