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action (KIAs) were irritating, because it was time to forget and get back to finishing the war. At unwanted times their dreams would be contaminated with flashbacks of those would be friends.

The effect of absorbing all of the excitement of a lifetime in one sudden rush changed plans for daring stunts after the war. A 75 MM cannon equipped B-25 Pilot swore that when the former field piece went off he could hear the rivets pop. Handling the controls tenderly afterwards, he did not know if he could bring the wounded mass of metal back to base. A quiet 9 to 5 office job seemed ideal at the time.

But they were not fatalists, they knew that power would soon pass into their own hands and they had to survive to keep traditional values safe. The people back home were depending on them. What depressed all airmen was the appearance of the Me-262 jet powered fighter. With determined vigor the jets were tearing huge holes in USAF bomber formations. Luckily the Luftwaffe squadrons were small and the losses could be tolerated. But! But! Why hadn't the guys back home come up with something better? The airmen were determined then and there to do something about this outrage if and when they returned home. Today's precision Airforce is proof of this. This retired generation of Pearl Harbor, its job now almost complete wants to sit back and write its memoirs. Can you readers help?

#### The 15th Air Force

Because the Association has received many inquiries about other 15th Airforce Groups, the main units are listed below. The United States Army Air Forces (USAF) classified its bomber aircraft as follows: 1) Medium Bombers: A-20s, B-25s & B-26s ,2) Heavy Bombers B-17s & B-24s, 3) Very Heavy Bombers B-29s.

#### 15th AF Bomb Groups

The various Organizations of the 15th AF are broken down by Wing, and Group. For squadrons assigned to the groups E-Mail me at [bud484bg@aol.com](mailto:bud484bg@aol.com). The 49th Wing was comprised of the (A) 451st BG at Castelluccia, (B) the 461st BG at Torretta, and (C) the 484th BG at Torretta. All three groups flew the B-24 Liberator Bomber and shared the same combat color, insignia red. The groups sometimes flew to the same target, and at other times separate targets.

All of the other heavy bomb groups of the 15th Air Force operated the B-24 Liberator. (A) 47th Combat Wing (CW): 98th BG, 376 BG, 449th BG, 450th BG. (B) 455th BW: 460th BG, 464th BG, 465th BG, 485th BG. (C) 304th BW: 454th BG, 455th BG, 456th BG, 459th BG. The exception was with the 5th Combat Wing which operated the B-17 airplane: 2nd BG, 97th BG, 99th BG, 301st BG, 463rd, and 483rd. The 15th Airforce's bombardment and fighter wings were based in southern Italy.

#### 15th AF Fighter Groups & Auxiliaries

Fighter Escort was flown by the 15th Airforce's 306th Fighter Wing. The Fighter Groups were: 1) 1st Fighter Group (FG) P-38s at Lesina. 2) 14th FG P-38s at Triolo, 3) 31st FG P-51s active from 4/44 at Mondolfo, 4) 52nd FG P-51s at Piagolino, active from 5/44, 5) 82nd FG P-38s at Vincenzo, 6) 325nd (FG) P-47s trans to P-51s at Mondolfo, 6) 332nd FG Tuskegee Airmen P-47s trans to P-51s at Ramitelli. The P-47s were replaced by

P-51s in May of 1944. Notes: On occasion groups were moved from one wing to another. Other Units: (A) 5th Photo Recon GP F-5s, (B) 68th Tactical Recon GP 1) B-17s, 2) B-24s, 3) 154th Weather Recon GP P-38s. You can reach the 15th Airforce Association (AF) at [cebn@aol.com](mailto:cebn@aol.com). Also try: <http://www.heavybombers.com/484thbg.html>

#### The 484th BG Is Born

The 484th Bomb Group was trained in Harvard, Nebraska in 1943 with B-24s and deployed to Italy in March 1944. The group arrived in Cerignola, Italy where the gently rolling mounds of the Foggia plain awaited them. In prewar days the Italian Airforce trained near Foggia too. The 484th BG took over farmland where wheat was once grown. Dual North and South runways were laid out and paved with crushed gravel, and later improved with pierced steel planking, a dubious improvement especially when it rained.

The group brought 60 new olive drab B-24s to the airfield at the Torretta crossroads about 12 K southeast of Cerignola, itself 35K south of Foggia. The group started out with about 3 trained crews of 10 men for every B-24. This would vary depending on losses and availability of replacements. In the one year of combat operations over 5000 soldiers and airmen passed through the group. Replacements were brought in to fill in the Table of Organization (TO) due to casualties, illness and to replace flight crews who had finished their combat tours. For a battle area that was expected to offer light resistance tours were set at 50 missions. However, resistance was stiff from both fighter aircraft and flak cannons. Credit was shortly reduced to 35 missions, and modified again by giving double credit to long and arduous missions. Flight crews were given leave to rest camps at the halfway point of 18 sorties. Ground echelon personnel were given leave also when conditions permitted it. One such camp was on the Isle of Capri.

#### The B-24 Liberator Bomber

The Consolidated B-24 Liberator was designed and built in such great haste such was the need for a heavy bomber in 1939, when Germany invaded Poland. By taking the long Davis Wing and empennage from a twin engined seaplane and installing them on an oval fuselage the B-24 was born. To improve ground handling visibility, the whole assembly was set on tricycle landing gear. The design was both good and bad. Good: The Davis Wing in combination with the supercharged Pratt & Whitney R-1830 engines and the Hamilton Standard hydromatic propellers worked well together. Bad: The nose wheel, built up of welded steel struts was too weak and failed when over stressed due to hard landings, strong cross winds, or rough runways. The fuel quantity indicators were of a simple boiler gauge style that required level flight for accurate reading, except that the aircraft actually flew slightly nose high to get additional lift from the fuselage. (The Lockheed Constellation was purposely designed to obtain fuselage lift). The fuel selector valves could be set for all engines to feed from the crossfeed manifold which held about 60 gallons. When this was used up all four engines would quit, not handy during the take off roll. The outboard auxiliary or Tokyo tanks of early model B-24s up to the "H" model did not have any fuel quantity gauges at all. When the fuel pressure dropped when feeding from these tanks it was time to transfer back to the mains before the engines quit.