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# The Round Tablette

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## Welcome to the May session of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table.

Tonight's speaker is Jay Stout, author of *The Men Who Killed the Luftwaffe*, will show how the introduction of Air Power into the European Theater of Operations by the Army Air Corps and Eighth Air Force led to victory in WWII.

One of the many technological innovations first employed during World War I, the airplane, complicated military planning throughout the inter-war years. Military aviation issues ran the spectrum from tactical support to strategic bombing — some thought (hoped) airplanes would make land armies and surface fleet navies obsolete. Airpower theorists believed that military aviation would dramatically change warfare.

US air power prophets of the 1920s, influenced by an Italian officer, Giulio Douhet, who argued that air power would prevent the butchery of the Great War's Western Front, proclaimed that the airplane would decide future conflicts. The Army and Navy each had their own advocates, most notably Brigadier General William "Billy" Mitchell, and Admirals William Fullam, Bradley Fiske, and William Sims. Each service had a dedicated force of flying officers who believed in the need to develop air power for the nation's defense even to the exclusion of other weapon systems.

Recognizing the need for military aviation, the Army and Navy Joint Board of Aeronautics stressed the tactical importance of air support for land and sea operations but did not champion the notion that air power might win wars.

Air advocates scored some successes, though not an independent air force or the unification of all military aviation. The Army upgraded its 'Air Service' to an 'Air Corps' and added an Assistant Secretary of War (Air). The Navy did likewise and ordered that only naval aviators could command carriers, and other aviation-oriented posts.

When the Second World War in Europe began the Allied air power advocates believed it was the time to prove the superiority of air

power — that it alone would win the war. Great Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF) and the US Army Air Forces (USAAF) had developed air doctrines on how to conduct strategic bombing which had much in common. Each believed that airplanes were the decisive weapons and strategic bombers attacking population centers and industrial targets would lead to a quick victory and avoid the attrition of trench warfare. In addition, smaller enemy fighter aircraft could not interfere with a bomber offensive and any diversion of resources to other services would seriously impair the bombers effectiveness. As bombing operations progressed, differences in practice separated the two allies. The British soon realized that German fighters put up a far stronger defense in daytime than expected. Furthermore, bombing accuracy proved pathetically poor. The RAF came to believe that "area bombing" of population centers demoralized the German civilians and inspired internal dissent. The USAAF maintained its position of daylight precision bombing (due to the Norden bombsight) and its strategic focus on Germany's industrial capacities, such as ball-bearing factories. American air commanders believed they could destroy Germany's ability to wage war.

In January 1942, Brig. Gen. Ira C. Eaker stood up VIII Bomber Command (In Dec. 42, 8<sup>th</sup> AF). He was expected to prove the theory and effectiveness of a daylight precision bombing campaign using the Norden bomb sight despite the experiences of the Royal Air Force.

The belief that strategic bombing could destroy Germany's ability to wage war turned out to be a chimera. The German government developed their air defense systems with fighters, radar systems, and anti-aircraft guns which demonstrated both the German government's ability to protect its population, and that bomber formations *were* terribly vulnerable to fighter attack. Moreover, bombing of craft-oriented (hand-made) German factories forced the dispersal of plants, often underground, and the shift to more mass production, though German airmen, sailors, and tankers complained of the poorer finish and quality. As the Allies destroyed Germany's industry, war production increased.

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If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns — contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)

At the Casablanca conference in January 1943, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and the Combined Chiefs of Staff included strategic bombing as part of their overall plan for Germany's defeat. While skeptical of the bombing results up to that point, the Allies presented it as a "second front in the air" to a grumbling Josef Stalin. The Western Allies proposed a Combined Bomber Offensive (CBO) hoping to destroy and dislocate Germany's industrial and economic system and demoralize the population, this would make it easier on invasion forces and eventual ground operations.

Despite Eaker's replacement in December 1943 by Lt. Gen. Jimmy Doolittle, bomber and aircrew losses remained horribly high until long-range fighters, like the P-51, became available and gave valuable protection for the bomber fleets, producing far more accurate strikes that destroyed German resources, especially oil, and transport nets, notably railroads. Albert Speer, German armaments minister, considered the degradation of the German oil industry by bombing the greatest threat to the Reich's economic war fighting capacity.

The Nazi Blitz failed to force Britain's surrender in 1940 and similarly, the German civilian morale remained unbroken by the bombing. Even so, Goebbels continued to be very sensitive to civilian reactions to the increasingly intense air strikes on German cities, especially amongst Berliners. Clearly, air power advocates overstated the importance of strategic bombing.

#### Further Readings:

Jay Stout, *The Men Who Killed the Luftwaffe: The US Army Air Forces against Germany in World War II* (Guilford, CT: Stackpole Books, 2010).

Roger Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: A History of the U.S. 8<sup>th</sup> Army Air Force* (NY: Doubleday, 1970).

Conrad C. Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in World War II: Bombs, Cities, Civilians, and Oil* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2016).

Williamson Murray, *Strategy for Defeat: The Luftwaffe 1939-1945* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1983).

John McManus, *Deadly Sky: The American Combat Airmen in World War II* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 2000).

Donald Miller, *Masters of the Sky: America's Bomber Boys Who Fought the Air War Against Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas about Strategic Bombing, 1914-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

#### Announcements:

Vietnam War Roundtable – September 2021 –

World War I Roundtable (zoom) – 14 Apr. 2021 –

Post-9/11 Roundtable (zoom) – 26 Apr. 2021 –

All: – [rdietrich@mnmilitarymuseum.org](mailto:rdietrich@mnmilitarymuseum.org)

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table – 18 May 2021 –

*The Infamous Dakota War Trials of 1862* –

[www.tccwrt.com](http://www.tccwrt.com) - [info@tccwrt.com](mailto:info@tccwrt.com)

St. Croix Valley Civil War Round Table – 30 Aug.

2021 – *Fort Fisher* - 715-386-1268 -

[rossandhaines@comcast.net](mailto:rossandhaines@comcast.net)

Military History Book Club, Har Mar Barnes & Noble

- TBD - [sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com](mailto:sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com)

Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000

Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345 - 320-616-6050 -

<http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>

Minnesota Air Guard Museum - 612-713-2523 -

[www.mnangmuseum.org](http://www.mnangmuseum.org)

8th AF Historical Society of MN, KC Hall

Bloomington, Wednesdays at 1130 -

<https://www.8thmn.org>.

Friends of Ft. Snelling - [www.fortsnelling.org](http://www.fortsnelling.org)

World Without Genocide - 651-695-7621 -

<http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/>

Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, Granite Falls, MN -

Air show - 2022 - 320-564-6644 -

<http://www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org>.

Wings of the North Airshow - Eden Prairie – 24-25

July 2021 - 952-746-6100 - [www.wotn.org](http://www.wotn.org)

Winston Churchill Book Club -

[lin.hopkins@hotmail.com](mailto:lin.hopkins@hotmail.com)

Alliance Francaise 612-332-0436 - [www.afmns.org](http://www.afmns.org)

Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - 651-338-2717 -

[crazyjerry45@hotmail.com](mailto:crazyjerry45@hotmail.com)

CAF - Commemorative Air Force - 651-455-6942 -

[www.cafmn.org](http://www.cafmn.org)

Selim Center for Life Long Learning, UST,

<https://www.stthomas.edu/selimcenter/>

Western Naval Historical Association

[info@wnha.net](mailto:info@wnha.net)

MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk VA,

<http://www.macarthurmemorial.gov>

National World War II Memorial, Washington DC,

<http://www.wwiimemorialfriends.org>

Ft. Snelling Language School program on TPT ch. 2

Monday 17 May 17, 8 p.m. and TPT LIFE channel

Thursday 20 May, 9 PM

**We need volunteers to drive our veterans to and from meetings. Please contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)**

#### Round Table Schedule 2021-2022

11 May The "Mighty Eighth" and Victory in Europe

14 Sept. Genesis of the Pacific War

12 Oct. Pacific Naval War

26 Oct. Reinforcing the Philippines

9 Nov. Deutsch Lecture – Arcadia Conference

14 Dec. Pearl Harbor attack

#### 2022

11 Jan. Patton: the Enigma

8 Feb. Wake Island

8 Mar. Nuremberg Trials – Goering

22 Mar. Florence Finch - Filipino Heroine

12 Apr. Doolittle Raid

10 May Last Battle: in the Alps

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**We would greatly appreciate your supporting the HCDWW2RT.**

