

TUSKEGEE AIRMEN, INC.

HARRY A. SHEPPARD RESEARCH TEAM

"NEVER LOST A BOMBER" INVESTIGATION

For many years statements have been made "that the 332nd Fighter Group, known as the Red Tails, never lost a bomber to enemy aircraft" or other similar statements implying the same. At the Tuskegee Airmen Inc. (TAI) National Convention in 2004 the TAI National Historian, Dr. William F. Holton, released a document that asserted that this statement was not wholly accurate and cited five missions during which he believed bombers were lost to enemy aircraft as his proof.

The Harry A. Sheppard Research Team (HASRT) investigated the five missions in his report and with the use of other additional records to the debriefing reports of the 332nd Fighter Group used in Bill Holton's report, the debriefing report of the 49th Bomb Wing, records found in the 15th Air Force folder, and Missing Air Crew (MAC) Reports found that his paper was correct for the mission on 12 July 1944 to Nimes France, but in error for the other four missions. These findings were reported at the next convention in 2005 with the recommendation "That all Tuskegee Airmen stop using, accepting or acknowledging this statement and if asked that they do not know, as current data is incomplete and investigation is ongoing"

AT the 2006 convention it was reported by the HASRT, that on the 9 June 1944, the 332nd FG's first escort mission as a member of the 15th Air Force, escorted all

15 bomber groups of the 15th Air Force, over 500 bombers, on the first leg of the mission with just 34 P-47's, to Munich, Germany. In the first wave attack by German fighters research using all of the same records used in the previous investigation indicates that two (2) bombers were lost to enemy aircraft. At the 2008 convention it was reported that in addition to the 9 June and 12 July 1944 losses we have also found records that confirmed that 2 B-17's of the 463rd BG, 5thBW were lost to enemy aircraft on the 24 March 1945 mission to Berlin.

Another investigator, not a HASRT member has found that there were other losses to enemy aircraft while under the escort of the 332nd FG. His number of losses is 27 of which 7 are confirmed by the HASRT as stated above. By our count, we now believe that there were a total 322 escorted bombers lost to enemy aircraft between 1 June 1944 and the end of the war. That is an average loss of 46 bombers per fighter group, 7 fighter groups. Using these numbers it may be said the 332nd FG was well below the average using the highest figure.

Therefore, based on investigations conducted by Dr. William F. Holton, former National Historian of TAI; the Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell AFB, AL; and Harry A. Sheppard Research Team it is a fact that some bombers were lost to enemy aircraft while being escorted by the 332nd FG (Red Tails) while they were members of the 15th AF.

