

458th Bombardment Group Aircraft Losses

The official total of combat losses suffered by the 458th Bombardment Group during their 14 months on operations is 47 aircraft and crews. Each of these combat losses are documented in Missing Air Crew Reports (MACR), one of which was required to be filed after about a 24-hour period for each aircraft failing to return to base from a combat mission, or in the cases in which an aircraft *did* return to England, but aircrew were missing from that aircraft.

There were, however, a number of additional losses that are a bit more difficult to trace. For any loss of an aircraft not related to combat that occurred in England, the USAAF filed an Accident Report (AAF Form 14). The 458th has a total of 53 of these Form 14's, and while the majority of these accidents were relatively minor with little damage to aircraft and crew, 14 involved a total write off (Category E) of aircraft and resulted in 94 air crew killed.

Another category of loss, and one of the most difficult to trace, are those crews who crash landed in Allied controlled territory on the Continent after June 6, 1944. As the Allies moved across France, Belgium, and Germany, former Luftwaffe airfields were taken over and became a safe haven for battle damaged bombers that were not likely to make the trip across the Channel to their bases in England. Although these losses were directly attributable to combat, most times the crew was accounted for, so no MACR was issued. Likewise, no accident reports were created since the aircraft was lost due to combat. A vicious "Catch 22!" There were 4 such incidents in the 458th's history. The first such landing by a 458th crew which involved the total loss of the aircraft occurred on September 5, 1944, and the last was on January 28, 1945.

There are a few other combat losses that are not counted in the 458th's official total of aircraft and crews lost. Two of these occurred on April 22, 1944, when German intruders followed the 2nd Bombardment Division home under cover of darkness and shot down 17 Liberators over Norfolk. Two of these B-24s belonged to the 458th. Two separate instances of combat related crashes in England also befell the group, the first occurring on May 5, 1944, with the loss of aircraft and four air crew killed; and the second on January 14, 1945, with loss of aircraft and nine air crew killed. No report can be found on either of these losses. The final loss attributed directly to combat of which no report of loss can be located took place on January 16, 1945, in which one crew, due to battle damaged fuel cells, bailed out over Allied territory in France resulting in two crew members killed when their parachutes failed to open.

To sum it all up, the figure of 47 losses sustained by the 458th Bombardment Group during World War II is inaccurate. I hope to set the record straight here. While all details are not fully known, I believe the totals below, compiled from existing records on hand, are as accurate as possible. I welcome corrections or any additional information that anyone may have.

Combat losses (MACR):	47
Combat losses (No MACR):	10
Accidents (A/C Cat. E):	14
Total aircraft lost:	71*

*Total does not include two aircraft lost in training (10 air crew killed).