

Downed American Flyers: Forgotten Casualties of Axis Atrocities in World War II

Kevin T Hall

Abstract: After World War II, Allied nations tried thousands of ‘lesser’ war criminals throughout Europe and the Pacific after the well-known trials of high-ranking officials in Nuremberg and Tokyo. The victims largely included civilians of occupied nations and POWs. However, with the conclusion of these trials in both Europe and the Pacific by 1949, the crimes committed, the perpetrators, and the victims withdrew from public discourse relatively quickly. Many unresolved questions remain surrounding the extent of Axis violence committed against Allied POWs, especially flyers. Despite significant studies focusing on the experiences of POWs during captivity, few have offered a comparison of the method of Axis mistreatment committed against airmen and the relationship between centralized authority and civilian action in both the European and Pacific theaters of war. By focusing on the largely overlooked phase between being shot down and being sent to a POW camp, this study seeks to comprehend not only what airmen experienced when they encountered Axis civilians and soldiers, but also the process and motivations of perpetrators’ actions. Further, comparing the postwar ‘flyer trials’ offers an opportunity to fill the gaps related to this topic due to the scarcity of remaining documents and has the potential to assist in answering unresolved questions regarding the circumstances surrounding the death of missing US servicemen.

Keywords: postwar crimes trials, POWs, World War II, downed airmen, flyer trials

For the perpetrators of this macabre and ghoulish blood orgy to escape proper and just punishment would shock people of good conscience and good will everywhere. [...] Stern justice must be meted out [...] for the terrible atrocity that occurred, but it will be the type of justice that is tempered with mercy and grounded in the interest of humanity and the common good.

– Lt Col Allan R. Browne, Army Judge Advocate

Throughout the four years after World War II, the Allied nations conducted postwar trials (e.g., at Nuremberg, Tokyo, Dachau, and Yokohama) that offered an opportunity, albeit brief, for the world to examine and comprehend the horrors and atrocities committed during the conflict. Especially for the countless families whose sons, brothers, and fathers were killed during the war or who were still listed as missing, the postwar trials afforded an attempt to begin to find closure. The unknown circumstances surrounding

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the certainly grueling final minutes of these young men's lives and the whereabouts of their remains caused the anguish of families to linger and had a lasting impact on generations thereafter. By the end of the war, approximately 79,000 US servicemen remained missing. Despite the determined effort of the US military and government to recover and identify missing servicemen, today over 72,000 Americans are still unaccounted for from World War II. A large share of these is considered unrecoverable due in part to their location, the uncertain circumstances surrounding death, or lack of essential evidence.¹

The crimes committed against Allied POWs relatively quickly withdrew from public discourse following the postwar crimes trials as the Cold War burgeoned, and attention shifted to the new international conflict on the Korean Peninsula. While scholars have investigated the Holocaust and atrocities of the Third Reich as a whole, there remain many unresolved questions surrounding the extent of Axis violence committed against POWs (particularly downed flyers) throughout both Europe and the Pacific. Further, the hearings of lower-level perpetrators and the crimes they committed continue to be overshadowed by the notorious Nuremberg and Tokyo trials, with the European proceedings generally dominating the discourse. Few studies have offered a comparison of the violence committed against downed airmen and the relationship between centralized authority and civilian action in both theaters of war. Most research concerning captured airmen focuses either on their experiences in POW camps (and occasionally their attempts to escape) or on the occurrences during their airborne missions. The transitional stage between being shot down and being confined in a POW camp, which could last years, months, or mere minutes – depending on whether the flyer was able to evade capture, received assistance from locals, as well as the conviction of the captors – remains relatively overlooked.² However, this phase is significant to understand the experiences of downed airmen, the threats they faced, and the overall relationship between the air war and Axis violence.³

1 'World War II Accounting', *Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency: Fulfilling Our Nation's Promise*, <<https://www.dpaa.mil/Our-Missing/World-War-II>> [accessed 15 December 2020].

2 The following are the only manuscripts dedicated specifically to analyzing the mistreatment committed against American flyers in World War II: Kevin T. Hall, *Terror Flyers: The Lynching of American Airmen in Nazi Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021); Georg Hoffmann, *Fliegerlynchjustiz: Gewalt gegen abgeschossene alliierte Flugzeugbesatzungen, 1943-45* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schönigh, 2015).

3 Examples include: Fiske Hanley II, *Accused War Criminal: An American Kempei Tai Survivor* (New York: Brown Books, 2020); Michel Paradis, *Last Mission to Tokyo: The Extraordinary Story of the*

Once captured, flyers' status often remained rather ambiguous, e.g., they could be detained as criminals, spies, saboteurs, or terrorists pending an investigation to determine whether they had participated in indiscriminate attacks against non-military targets, or until their captors determined what treatment they (often subjectively) deemed appropriate. Varying factors, such as an airman's race, religion, or simply his association with the Allied air corps, significantly influenced their (mis)treatment and could be reason enough for a perpetrator to result to violence. In addition to the various forms of pressure and orders by military and government authorities, the loss and destruction experienced during the war were further 'catalysts of radical stimulation,' as Nicholas Stargardt confirmed, that could result in violence and rage – even among 'ordinary' citizens.⁴

Despite the international legal attempts, e.g., the Hague and Geneva Conventions, to protect POWs prior to the war, Japan was not a signatory; nevertheless, the Japanese government assured the US Secretary of State Cordell Hull in January 1942 that 'Japan will apply *Mutatis mutandis* provisions of the [Geneva] convention to American prisoners of war in its power.'⁵ However, the first attack on the Japanese mainland on April 18,

Doolittle Raiders and Their Final Flight for Justice (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020); Sarah Kovner, *Prisoners of the Empire: Inside Japanese POW Camps* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020); Helen Fry, *M19: A History of the Secret Service for Escape and Evasion in World War Two* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020); Harold H. Brown and Marsha S. Bordner, *Keep Your Airspeed Up: The Story of a Tuskegee Airman* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 2017); Will Iredale, *The Kamikaze Hunters: Fighting for the Pacific, 1945* (London: Macmillan, 2015); Donald E. Casey, *To Fight for My Country, Sir: Memoirs of a 19-Year-Old B-17 Navigator Shot Down in Nazi Germany and Imprisoned in the WWII 'Great Escape' Prison Camp* (Chicago: Sterling Cooper, 2009); Herman Bodson, *Downed Allied Airmen and Evasion of Capture: The Role of Local Resistance Networks in World War II* (London: McFarland, 2005); James Bradley, *Flyboys: A True Story of Courage* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2004); Dawn Trimble Bunyak, *The Last Mission: A World War II Prisoner in Germany* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017); Stephan Ambrose, *The Wild Blue: The Men and Boys Who Flew the B-24s over Germany, 1944-45* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001); Philip D. Caine, *Aircraft Down: Evading Capture in WWII Europe* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1997); Philip Ardery, *Bomber Pilot: A Memoir of World War II* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996); Mitchell G. Bard, *Forgotten Victims: The Abandonment of Americans in Hitler's Camps* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994); Tom Bird, *American POWs in World War II: Forgotten Men Tell Their Stories* (Westport: Praeger, 1992); E. Bartlett Kerr, *Surrender and Survival: The Experience of American POWs in the Pacific, 1941-45* (New York: William Morrow, 1985); Philip R. Piccigallo, *The Japanese on Trial: Allied War Crimes Operations in the East, 1945-1951* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979); Levitt Clinton Beck, *Fighter Pilot* (Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing, 1946).

4 Nicholas Stargardt, *The German War: A Nation under Arms* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), p. 8.

5 Response from the Japanese Government to US Secretary Cordell Hull's request that the nation would apply the provisions of the Geneva Conventions, 30 January 1942. *The Army Medical Bulletin*, No.62: *The Geneva Red Cross Movement* (Carlisle Barracks, 1942), pp. 160-161; G. Bernard Noble and E.R. Perkins, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers 1942*, 6 vols (Washington, DC: US Government Printing office, 1960), I, 796.

1942 (commonly referred to as the Doolittle Raid), and the devastating aerial offensive against Japan that followed, drastically impacted the (mis) treatment of downed Allied airmen. As the war proceeded, so too did the radicalization of combat, as the border between legality and criminality often became obscured. Frequently located far behind enemy lines in the Axis home front or in occupied territories, captured flyers found themselves in direct contact with enraged citizens, who were often triggered by the death and destruction inflicted by the traumatic air war. These encounters represented a 'new 'front' in the heart of the Axis,' as Laura C. Counts demonstrated, and offered individuals an exceptional chance to confront the enemy firsthand and the potential to seek revenge for their losses.⁶

Using records from the US flyer trials, the following quantitative and qualitative analysis compares the extent of the violence committed against captured American airmen in Europe and Asia. It seeks to comprehend the process and rationalizations of perpetrators' actions as well as examine the 'ordinary' Germans and Japanese involved in the war crimes. While the trials analyzed in this study surely do not describe every instance relating to the mistreatment of downed airmen, they provide an opportunity to advance the relatively limited discourse on the mistreatment committed against downed airmen in World War II. Moreover, the comparison of the US flyer trials in Germany and Japan offers an opportunity to expand upon the limited historiography related to this subject and has the potential to assist in answering unresolved questions regarding the circumstances surrounding the death of missing US servicemen.

6 Major Laura C. Counts, 'Were They Prepared? Escape and Evasion in Western Europe, 1942-1944' (unpublished Thesis, Air Command and Staff College, 1986), p. 1. The analysis of the flyer trials in Germany is based on the research in Hall, *Terror Flyers*. The documents can be found at: Deputy Theater Judge Advocate's Office, War Crimes Branch, NARA, RG 153, Entry 143, Box 155-510. The documents used in the analysis of the trials held at Yokohama and throughout the Pacific (e.g., Guam, Singapore, Rangoon, Rabaul, Manila, Shanghai, Indonesia, and Marshall Islands) can be found at: Records of the Office of the Army Judge Advocate General (Army) RG 153, Entry 1021, NARA; 'Yokohama', *Philipps-Universität Marburg: ICWC*, <https://www.uni-marburg.de/icwc/forschung/2weltkrieg/yokohama?order=source&order_type=asc&offset=0&count=100&name=&id_trial> [accessed 5 November 2021]; *The International Military Tribunal for the Far East: Digital Collection*, <<https://imtf.law.virginia.edu>> [accessed 5 November 2021]; *International Criminal Court Database*, <<https://www.legal-tools.org>> [accessed 5 November 2021].

The Flyer Trials

Most of the US flyer trials in the Pacific were carried out in Yokohama, Japan, however, for logistical reasons, the US also held trials closer to the locations where crimes were committed, e.g., in Shanghai, Guam, Manila, Singapore, Rangoon, Rabaul, the Marshall Islands, and Morotai Island in Indonesia. These hearings focused primarily on war crimes (Class B) and crimes against humanity (Class C). Similarly, in Europe the US conducted trials at the former Dachau concentration camp (among other locations in the US-occupied zone) and focused mainly on crimes committed against American citizens and POWs. Most of these proceedings focused on the so-called *Lynchjustiz* (lynch justice) committed against hundreds of captured American airmen.⁷

The flyer trials in the Pacific and in Europe were quite elaborate. In the Pacific, the trials lasted on average just over one month; however, in Germany they averaged less than one week. While investigations in both theaters were plagued by the difficulty in apprehending accused perpetrators and collecting evidence (especially finding witnesses), the remoteness of crime scene locations that spanned much of the Pacific Theater often caused delays in proceedings. Nevertheless, the trials in the Pacific benefited from the precedents set at the Nuremberg and Dachau trials, which had the advantage of commencing investigations and hearings much sooner, as the war concluded more than three months earlier in Europe.

Hearings in both theaters similarly included extensive judicial sources, e.g., investigative files, transcripts of court proceedings, detailed depositions (and translations thereof), appeals for clemency, occasionally autopsy reports when the victims' bodies were recovered, and justifications for verdicts. However, following the trials, the inability to identify numerous flyers lingered due to either the lack of

7 Hall, *Terror Flyers*; Hoffmann; Richard Overy, *The Bombers and the Bomber: Allied Air War over Europe, 1940-1945* (New York: Viking, 2013); Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009); James J. Weingartner, 'Americans, Germans, and War Crimes: Converging Narratives from "The Good War"', *Journal of American History* 94.4 (2008), 1164-83; Barbara Grimm, 'Lynchmorde an alliierten Fliegern im Zweiten Weltkrieg,' in *Deutschland im Luftkrieg: Geschichte und Erinnerung*, ed. by Dietmar Süß (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2007), pp. 71-84; Klaus-Michael Mallmann, 'Volksjustiz gegen anglo-amerikanische Mörder: Die Massaker an westalliierten Fliegern und Fallschirmspringern 1944/45,' in *NS-Gewaltherrschaft: Beiträge zur historischen Forschung und juristischen Aufarbeitung*, ed. by Alfred Gottwaldt, Norbert Kampe, and Peter Klein (Berlin: Hentrich, 2005), pp. 211-213; Ralf Blank, 'Wartime Daily Life and the Air War on the Home Front,' in *Germany and the Second World War*, ed. by Jörg Echternkamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 371-478 (p. 466).

remains or the poor condition thereof. While this issue did occur in Europe, it was a particular problem in the Pacific, as Japanese officials often ordered the cremation of flyer's remains after their execution, many of which were then dispersed at sea, or officials ordered the disposal of the airmen's bodies in an attempt to conceal the crimes.⁸ As a result, the standard evidence for conviction at hearings in both Europe and the Pacific often relied, out of necessity, on witness testimonies, which largely included hearsay. Thus, the critical analysis of the trial documents is imperative to reliably determine how and why the violence committed against flyers unfolded.

An examination of 70 flyer trials held throughout the Pacific between 1945 and 1949 revealed that 394 perpetrators were charged with, for example, unlawful torture and execution of flyers, the desecration, mutilation, and dissection of their bodies, as well as prosecuting captured airmen under fraudulent charges – specifically indiscriminate bombing. The victims included over 400 American airmen, nearly all of whom were killed. This number is increased by several hundred when taking into consideration the flyers who survived their mistreatment. While numerous flyers remained unidentified by the end of the trials, most victims have since been identified. The extent to which perpetrators sought to conceal their actions significantly hindered the identification process and surely hindered uncovering additional cases. This was similar to the incidents that occurred in Nazi Germany as well. Compared to the analysis of 179 flyer trials held in Germany between 1945 and 1948, where 490 perpetrators were charged with committing assaults and killing downed American airmen, the victims included a comparable number of flyers with 310, over 70 percent of whom were killed.⁹

At the time of the trials in the Pacific, the average age of perpetrators was thirty-seven years old, with an age range between nineteen and sixty-five-years. They were far younger than the accused perpetrators in Germany, whose average age was forty-five years; though, the age range was comparable with nineteen to seventy-two years (figure 1).

8 See, e.g., US v. Otohiko Inoue et al., Yokohama, Japan, 13 January 1949; US v. Kajuro Aihara et al., Yokohama, Japan, 11 March 11–27 August 1948; US v. Jiro Hamamoto, Yokohama, Japan, 27 December 1948–3 January 1949; US v. Hiroshi Iwanami et al., JAG Case Files, Pacific-Army, November 1947; Sheldon H. Harris, 'Japanese Biomedical Experimentation During the World War II Era', in *Military Medical Ethics*, ed. by Dave E. Lounsbury (Falls Church: Office of The Surgeon General, 2003), II, 463–506 (pp. 489–499); Charles G. Roland, 'Human Vivisection: The Intoxication of Limitless Power in Wartime,' in *Prisoners of War and Their Captors in World War II*, ed. by Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich (Oxford: Berg, 1996), pp. 149–155.

9 Hall, *Terror Flyers*, pp. 134–139.

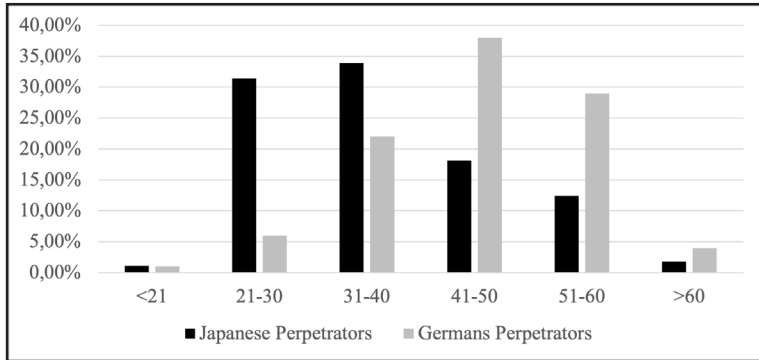


FIGURE 1. Comparison between Age of Perpetrators Tried in Japan and Nazi Germany

However, two gleaming differences between the perpetrators in the Pacific and in Europe are apparent. The first is the large representation of civilians implicated in Germany. While surely an underestimate of the actual number of civilians who took part in the mob violence, they represented 39 percent of all perpetrators tried and nearly 70 percent of offenders involved in committing assaults on flyers. In the Pacific, however, less than 8 percent of individuals prosecuted were civilians, nearly half of whom were medical personnel implicated in conducting medical experiments on airmen. The second noticeable difference is the influence of the Nazi Party and rhetoric. At least 50 percent of the perpetrators were known NSDAP members and roughly one third were considered *Alte Kämpfer* – members who joined the Nazi Party before 1933. This relatively high percentage indicates not only that the party members were influential in the violence, but also further confirms that the Allies largely pursued members of the Nazi party and illegal organizations (e.g., SA, SS, SD, Gestapo). With the burgeoning Cold War, this allowed investigators to punish individuals who violated laws of war, reeducate Germans about the Nazi atrocities, and ultimately support the denazification and democratization of Germany. Still, many perpetrators, especially civilians, went unpunished.¹⁰

10 Hall, *Terror Flyers*, p. 137. See also, *Junge Kämpfer, alte Opportunisten: Die Mitglieder der NSDAP 1919–1945*, ed. by Jürgen W. Falter (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus Verlag, 2016); Devin O. Pendas, 'Seeking Justice, Finding Law: Nazi Trials in Postwar Europe,' *The Journal of Modern History*, 81.2 (2009), 347–368; Rebecca Wittmann, 'Tainted Law: The West German Judiciary and the Prosecution of Nazi War Criminals,' in *Atrocities on Trial: Historical Perspectives on the Politics of Prosecuting War Crimes*, ed. by Patricia Heberer and Jürgen Matthäus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), pp. 211–30; Michael Salter, *Nazi War Crimes, US Intelligence and Selective Prosecution at Nuremberg:*

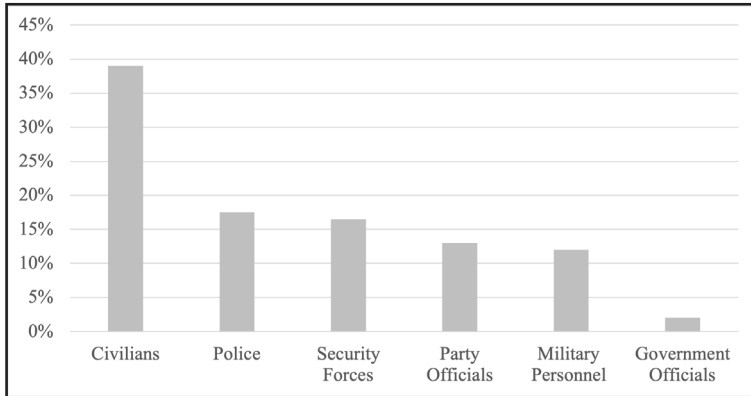


FIGURE 2. Percentage of German Perpetrators Tried for Mistreating Captured Airmen

Grouping the perpetrators of the German flyer trials into six main groups – civilians, police, security forces, party officials, military personnel, and government officials – best represented the broader German society (figure 2).¹¹ Based on the perpetrators' testimonies, each of these groups had distinct motives that influenced their actions. For example, civilians acted primarily out of rage and distress. Their actions were a direct response to their experiences with the aerial bombing raids and strafing attacks. Party officials used the tense emotional situation to further incite the broader public to not only seek revenge, but also the justice and appropriateness of committing *Lynchjustiz* (lynch justice) against captured enemy flyers. The second largest group tried was the German police, which included, for example, criminal police, order police, Gendarmerie, along with rural and auxiliary police forces. These individuals acted largely in adherence to orders from party officials and security force members. The latter group consisted of SS, SD, and Gestapo, and was the most likely to be involved in killing captured airmen. Party officials and security force members were prosecuted mainly for passing on orders to mistreat and kill captured flyers; however, their personal participation in violence was not uncommon. As for the military personnel and government

Controversies Regarding the Role of the Office of Strategic Services (New York: Routledge, 2007); Elisabeth M. Yavnai, 'Military Justice: The US Army War Crimes Trials in Germany, 1944-47' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London, 2007); Michael H. Kater, *The Nazi Party: A Social Profile of Members and Leaders, 1919-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

¹¹ Hall, *Terror Flyers*, p. 139.

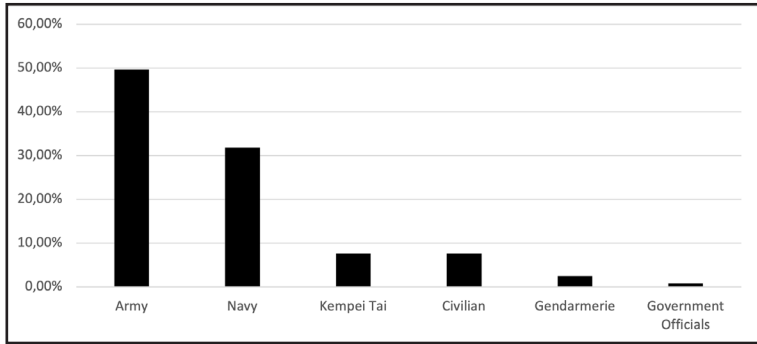


FIGURE 3. Percentage of Japanese Perpetrators Tried for Mistreating Captured Airmen

officials, they represented the groups least likely to mistreat airmen. Military personnel, especially members of the Luftwaffe, generally felt a sense of camaraderie with US airmen. When soldiers were involved in mistreating flyers, though, it was often out of revenge for lost family members or for fear of retaliation for disobeying orders. Government officials rarely had contact with enemy aviators.¹²

The overwhelming majority (roughly 89 percent) of perpetrators tried in the Pacific trials were either members of the Army, Navy, or Kempeitai (military police). The majority (70 percent) of these military personnel were officers, whose ranks ranged from Lieutenant to Vice Admiral (Figure 3). While the number of civilians tried for mistreating airmen is relatively minimal with less than 8 percent, of whom the majority were medical physicians working with the Japanese Army, there were far more civilians involved in mistreating downed airmen than indicated by the trials.

Numerous personal accounts of downed flyers who survived the war consistently reported that they experienced mistreatment at the hands of angry civilians once they landed.¹³ One such example involved

¹² Hall, *Terror Flyers*, p. 137-139.

¹³ See, e.g. Bruce H. Wolk, *Jewish Aviators in World War Two: Personal Narratives of American Men and Women* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2016); Ralph E. Sirianni and Patricia I. Brown, *POW #3959: Memoir of a World War II Airman Shot Down over Germany* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2006); John Paris, *Pappy's War: A B-17 Gunner's World War II Memoir* (Bennington: Merriam Press, 2005); Graham Pitchfork, *Shot Down and on the Run: The RCAF and Commonwealth Aircrews Who Got Home from Behind Enemy Lines, 1940-1945* (Toronto: The Dundurn Group, 2003); Sherri Greene Ottis, *Silent Heroes: Downed Airmen and the French Underground* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2001); Oscar G. Richard III, *Kriegie: An American POW in Germany* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); Stephan Tanner, *Refuge from the Reich: American Airmen and Switzerland during World War II* (New York: Sarpedon, 2000); Ronald Schaffer,

2nd Lt Fiske Hanley, who was shot down during a raid near the Shimomoseki Straits on March 27, 1945. In his memoirs, Hanley describes descending near the small village of Ueki, where a large crowd of forty to fifty angry and armed farmers immediately surrounded him after he landed in a rice paddy. As Hanley recalls,

One of the Japanese men, holding a bamboo spear, charged at me from my right front. His spear was leveled at my head. At his signal, the others joined in his charge. [...] I reached out and deflected his spear over my head. He lunged passed me! Then the excited horde was upon me. They were like a pack of crazed and starved animals after raw meat. They were so close that they couldn't use they larger weapons. They became a mass of jammed humanity as they milled around me. I was hit with fists and clubs. They hit me from every direction. Their main target seemed to be my head, and they didn't miss. My flak suit and survival gear gave me some protection and probably saved my vitals from severe wounds. Lack of a helmet made my head fair game. I tried to parry the vicious jabs at my eyes. Fortunately, no one had a knife. The women were especially vicious. [...]

There was no reprieve from the attack. I was being clubbed and beaten to death. These savages had no thought of allowing me to surrender. Capture was not in their minds. They were out to kill me! The mob was in a frenzy and out of control. No one seemed to be in charge. Their shouting increased in tempo as they – men, women, and children – fought to get in lethal blows. I used my bloody hands and arms to protect my head, which was already burned from my bailout from the flaming airplane. I was bleeding profusely, my shirt soaked with blood. My instinct to live was foremost in my mind, but I was losing that battle. [...]

A figure several rows back in the mob managed to severely poke my face on the right cheekbone with an implement shaft of some kind. An inch above and it would have put out an eye. [...] I was knocked down countless times and each time struggled to my feet. I never lost consciousness during the beating. [...] This was a horrible way to die! By now, I was believing I had made the wrong decision. I should have shot myself. I kept yelling 'I surrender!' and prayed [...].¹⁴

While Hanley managed to survive his run-in with an angry civilian mob, thanks to the efforts of a police officer, Kempeitai officials quickly took Hanley into custody and held him at their headquarters in Tokyo. While there, he, along with over 100 identified American flyers, were interrogated, severely tortured and mistreated. Roughly 25 percent

Wings of Judgement: American Bombing in World War II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Kenneth W. Simmons, *Kriegie* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1960).

¹⁴ Hanley II, pp. 112-122.

of the known airmen held there were killed or perished due to their injuries and lack proper food and medical treatment. Hanley reflected on his experiences after the war and recorded two thought-provoking questions in his memoirs: 'What would an American mob have done if a Japanese airman parachuted in their midst right after Pearl Harbor? What would I have done if people near and dear to me had been killed by the enemy?'¹⁵ No doubt, similar mobs of angry American citizens would have lashed out at an enemy that inflicted such disastrous destruction and loss of life on US soil. After all, in the history of the US, similar hostile mobs have needed much less cause or justification to commit vicious acts (e.g., lynchings) against their fellow citizens.

The similarly strict top-down hierarchy structure and pledge of utmost obedience to the symbolic figurehead in each nation, whether to the Japanese Emperor or the Nazi Führer, established an environment in which the minds of the larger populace could be molded to carry out the desires of the supreme leaders. While the varying cultural and traditional customs in Japan and Nazi Germany surely had some influence on the actions of the populace, the most impactful aspect in Germany was the government's public approval and promotion for civilians to commit mob justice against captured enemy airmen. Such sentiment likely existed among a significant portion of the population in Japan, however, the Japanese military and government generally kept strict control over civilians.

One such incident that portrays the participation of civilians under military guidance in Japan occurred on August 8, 1945 – two days after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima – and involved the last B-29 shot down during World War II. Nicknamed 'Thunderbird,' the crew crash landed near Tachikawa, located less than twenty-five miles west of Tokyo following a bombing mission against the Nakajima aircraft factory (figure 4).¹⁶ Two crewmen (M/Sgt Lester C. Morris and S/Sgt Serafino Morone) managed to bail out of the plummeting aircraft and parachute safely to the ground.¹⁷

Morris and Morone were taken to the Tachikawa Kempeitai headquarters. Upon their arrival, a large mob of civilians – reportedly number 400–500 people – confronted them. The mob was enraged and sought retribution for the devastation wreaked by the air raids.

¹⁵ Hanley II, p. 122.

¹⁶ 'SSGT Serafino Morone,' *Find a Grave*, <<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/116119571/serafino>> [accessed 20 February 2021].

¹⁷ *Ibid.*



FIGURE 4. Crew of the 'Thunderbird.' Front Row (left to right): M/Sgt Lester C. Morris, S/Sgt Serafino Morone, T/Sgwt Harold P. Brennan, S/Sgt James F. Payne, S/Sgt Mark E. Miller, Cpl Raymond G. Cagle. Back Row (left to right): Capt James L. Shumate, 1st Lt Thomas O. Marshall, 1st Lt Nicholas Poulos, 1st Lt Norman M. Jones, 1st Lt Henry Yassas.

Although guards exhibited Morris and Morone before the crowd for roughly half an hour, the flyers allegedly were not mistreated and were instead confined in a cell at the Kempeitai headquarters overnight. As Morris recounted after the war, the interrogations

were anything but gentle. Despite the fact that I was already in bad shape when captured, they beat me during questioning so much that I lost consciousness three times. Each time they brought me back to consciousness with buckets of cold water and continued the treatment. I believe they must have done worse to Morone because of the secret radio codes he may have possessed.

For nearly two days after his capture, Morris was not fully conscious due to a head injury; however, this possibly saved his life.¹⁸

The following day, Maj Shichisaburo Yajima decided it would be best to put a flyer (Morone) on display since a large number of people wanted to see a captured airman. Yajima further explained that this

¹⁸ Letter from Morris to General Leon W. Johnson, Personnel Service Division, 13 December 1945, MACR 14820, *National Archives Catalog*, <<https://catalog.archives.gov>> [accessed 6 March 2021].

would be a way to bolster the spirit among the populace to continue the war. Kempeitai officials arranged to use the grounds of a nearby school, as it provided more room to accommodate the large crowd. Fully aware that this incident would result in the death of Morone, officials then sought and received permission from the city council to dispose of his remains in the public burial grounds. Around 1:00PM that afternoon, three guards escorted Morone to the schoolyard, followed by a large crowd that had been notified in advance of the opportunity for revenge. Morone was reportedly only wearing pants, which were torn below the knees, and was blindfolded with his hands tied together.¹⁹

Once at the schoolyard, guards tied Morone to a post with his back toward the crowd. The guards displayed a sign that read: 'This flyer was one of the persons who bombed Tokyo, and because of the bombings, we have lost our loves ones, brothers and sisters, and you will wreak your revenge upon this person.' A guard, W/O Noboru Seki, then addressed the crowd, stating 'Ladies and gentlemen, you will now be permitted to beat this B-29 flyer. However, each one will only strike the prisoner one time.' Although several members of the crowd came prepared with large clubs, guards insisted they use a split bamboo stick, to prolong the torture and prevent immediate death.²⁰

As the beating began, the crowd had allegedly grown to well over 1,000 people, several hundred of whom (including women) lined up to beat Morone. The public display lasted nearly two hours and was only stopped due to an air raid alarm around 4:00PM. Clearly suffering in pain throughout the ordeal, witnesses reported that Morone was delirious and that guards gave him water now and then to revive him, only to continue the beating. As the crowd eventually dispersed, guards placed Morone on a stretcher, as he was far too weak to walk, and carried him to the cemetery, where his grave had already been dug. They placed Morone next to the grave and an officer approached, drew his sword, and decapitated him. Morone's body fell into the grave, which was quickly filled in.²¹

19 Review of the Staff Judge Advocate, 8 October 1948, US v. Noboru Seki, 18–22 August 1947 Case No. 217; US v. Shichisaburo Yajima, June 24, 1947, Records of the Office of the Army Judge Advocate General (Army) RG 153, Entry 1021, NARA; <<https://www.online.uni-marburg.de/icwc/yokohama/Yokohama%20No.%20T217.pdf>> [accessed 20 December 2020].

20 Ibid.

21 Review of US v. Noboru Seki, August 18–22, 1947; 'Accounts from End of WWII Reveal Divergent Fates of US B-29 Bomber Crews Crashing in Japan,' *The Mainichi*, <<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20200819/p2a/00m/0fe/019000c>> [accessed 6 March 2021].

Afterwards, Kempeitai officials requested that a doctor, Dr. Nakayama, fill out a death certificate for Morone in which it stated that he had died from injuries sustained in the crash of his B-29 and was completely burned. By the end of September, several weeks after the end of the war, Seki ordered soldiers to disinter Morone's body and cremate his remains to cover up his murder. Following this, Morone's remains were placed in a box and reinterred in the same grave.²²

Yajima was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment while Seki received 20 years confinement. As for Morris, Morone's crewmember, he was transferred (for unknown reasons) a short time after Morone's execution to the Kempeitai headquarters in Tokyo, where he experienced severe torture during interrogations, before he was sent to Omori POW camp. He did, however, manage to survive the war and returned to the US aboard the USS *Benevolence*.²³

Despite women's involvement in beating captured flyers, only one woman is known to have been tried for participating in the mistreatment of Allied airmen. As a member of the medical staff involved in the vivisection experiments on American airmen at Kyushu Medical University in May/June 1945, the nurse received five years imprisonment. In Germany, however, eight women were tried and sentenced for their roles in the mob violence, however, this is a serious underestimate as the number of undocumented women (and men) involved was undoubtedly higher. Most trials in Germany, and countless personal accounts from aviators, depicted the brutality suffered at the hands of large civilian mobs and suggest that the dark figure is certainly high. Witnesses reported that these crowds could reach several hundred participants, of which women represented a significant portion.

A similar incident occurred in Gross-Gerau, Germany on August 26, 1944. The crew of a B-17, nicknamed *Hard to Get*, was shot down by flak during a bombing mission over Gelsenkirchen. Five crewmembers (1st Lt Dean C. Allen, 2nd Lt Charles H. Evans Jr., S/Sgt James R. Carvey, S/Sgt Richard C. Huebotter, and T/Sgt Harvey J. Purkey) safely parachuted from their damaged aircraft and landed in the vicinity of Rheinberg – located roughly 15 miles north of Duisburg. The flyers were immediately taken into custody and transported to a nearby Luftwaffe

22 Review of US v. Noboru Seki, 18–22 August, 1947.

23 Review of the Staff Judge Advocate, 14 October 1948, US v. Toyokazu Hikita et al., 1–2 March 1948, Case No. 294; US v. Shichisaburo Yajima, 24 June 1947, Records of the Office of the Army Judge Advocate General (Army) RG 153, Entry 1021; NARA; <<https://www.online.uni-marburg.de/icwc/yokohama/Yokohama%20No.%20T217.pdf>> [accessed 20 December 2020].

airfield, where they were held in custody overnight. The following day, guards transported the airmen by train to Dulag Luft for interrogation. During their journey, both Evans and Purkey managed to escape from the train near the village of Trebur after the train had stopped at a small station and their guards were sleeping. They were, however, quickly apprehended and guards escorted them to the nearby town of Gross-Gerau. This town is located four miles east of Trebur and roughly eight miles south of Rüsselsheim – the location where the most infamous case of *Lynchjustiz* had occurred just three days prior.²⁴

Witnesses reported that locals were in a ‘state of great excitement,’ as they had experienced a heavy air raid a few days prior that killed 27 civilians – mostly women and children. Unfortunately for the flyers, the funeral for these individuals killed in the air raid was scheduled for this ill-fated day. The timing of the airmen’s presence with the funeral, in addition to the Nazi regime’s support and often promotion of German citizens to seek revenge, surely gave the flyers reason to worry for their safety.²⁵

The enraged mob of civilians quickly grew to several hundred people (including many women) who savagely beat the airmen unconscious. Members of the mob punched and kicked the flyers and used boards, metal pipes, bricks, and virtually anything at hand. One woman admittedly used her shoe to beat an airman, directing the blows at his eyes. The spontaneity and the ferocity of the violence was alarming. A short time later, two police officers and the *Kreisleiter* arrived after word spread quickly throughout the town of the mob violence. The officials quickly agreed that the flyers ‘should be given to the people.’ Once the police chief arrived at the scene, he exclaimed to his two subordinates: ‘Why haven’t they been beaten to death?!’ The police chief then ordered the flyers to be taken to the courtyard of the city hall. All the while, irate civilians continued to mercilessly beat the helpless airmen. Upon arriving at the city hall, the police chief barred the mob from entering and ordered all windows and doors facing the courtyard to be closed. Preventing any onlookers from seeing the imminent and violent end to Purkey and Evans, two men beat the flyers to death with iron bars. Their remains were then buried in the local cemetery.²⁶

24 Case No. 12-793, 12-793-1, 12-793-2, Record of U.S. Army Europe, War Crimes Case Files (Cases Tried), 3 August 1945, 15 August 1945, 28-29 July 1947, RG 549, Entry 290, Box 121, NARA. See also Hall, *Terror Flyers*, pp. 180-187.

25 Ibid.

26 Review and Recommendations for Case No. 12-793, 12-793-1, 12-793-2, Record of U.S. Army Europe, War Crimes Case Files (Cases Tried), 3 August 1945, 15 August 1945, 28-29 July 1947, RG 549, Entry 290, Box 121, NARA. See also, Hall, *Terror Flyers*, pp. 180-187.



FIGURE 5. Memorial Plaque for Harvey J. Purkey and Charles H. Evans Jr. in Gross-Gerau.

After the war, three separate trials convened and prosecuted seven Germans for their role in mistreating and executing Purkey and Evans (figure 5).²⁷ The police chief and one of the men who wielded the iron bars were sentenced to death and executed on April 1, 1946. Four civilians, including two women, were tried for their participation in the mob violence. Three, including the two women, were sentenced to less than two years imprisonment while the fourth individual received a fifteen-year sentence. However, the latter verdict was eventually reduced, and the man was released by December 1952 after repeated appeals for review and clemency.²⁸

While the mistreatment of downed airmen was most prevalent in the main territory of Japan and Nazi Germany, where the bombing raids were most prevalent, violence occurred wherever flyers were shot down and in nearly every country involved in the war (figures 6 and 7).²⁹ In particular, the vast geographic expanse of the Pacific Theater resulted in varying methods in which Japanese soldiers treated downed airmen. Generally, once Japanese forces captured a flyer, they reported the case to

27 The plaque, commissioned in August 2018, reads: 'We commemorate the American Air Force soldiers who died on August 29, 1944, here in the courtyard of the former town hall after an angry crowd had driven the US soldiers through the streets. We remember the occurrence with disgust. May the death of the American soldiers be a reminder for humanity, reconciliation, and peace.' Photo courtesy of Cornelia Benz, Presse- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, Kreisstadt Gross-Gerau.

28 Review and Recommendations for Case No. 12-793, 12-793-1, 12-793-2, Record of U.S. Army Europe, War Crimes Case Files (Cases Tried), 3 August 1945, 15 August 1945, 28-29 July 1947, RG 549, Entry 290, Box 121, NARA. See also, Hall, *Terror Flyers*, pp. 180-187.

29 Maps created by the author.

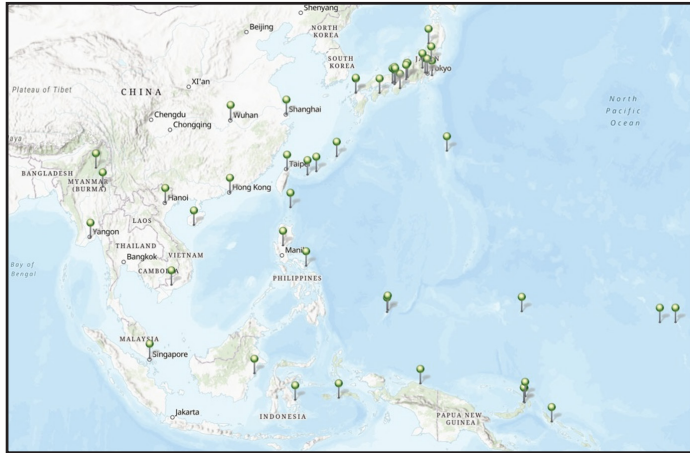


FIGURE 6. Locations Identified in the Postwar Trials where US Flyers Were Mistreated throughout the Pacific.

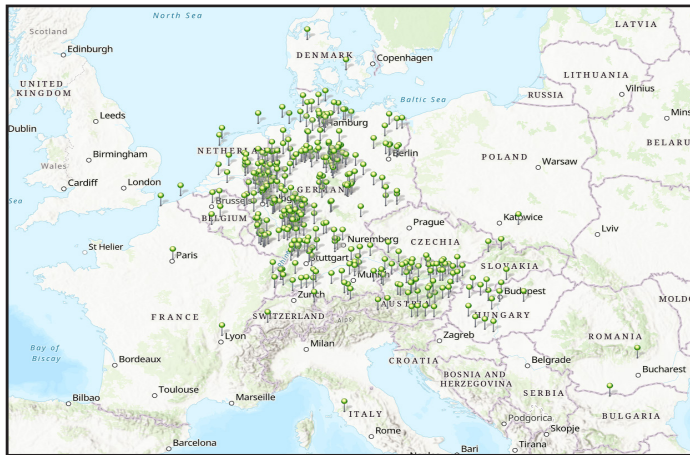


FIGURE 7. Locations Identified in the Postwar Trials where US Flyers Were Mistreated throughout Europe

military headquarters in Tokyo and waited for orders regarding further action. Numerous instances from the remote Pacific islands reveal, however, that local Japanese officers often dealt with the circumstances on their own due to the intense combat, desire for revenge, the lack of prompt communication with Tokyo officials, or simply because they did

not want to care for an enemy prisoner when it was difficult enough to provide food and water for their own soldiers. Numerous cases indicate that Japanese guards often executed flyers (in various brutal manners) when they thought an Allied attack was imminent. On more than one occasion, Japanese officers even permitted cannibalism among their soldiers as captured prisoners (including American flyers) and even their own dead comrades offered the only source of nourishment.³⁰

In the Pacific, the mistreatment of flyers began much sooner and lasted far longer (figure 8).³¹ This was due, in part, to the Doolittle Raid on April 18, 1942, as eight airmen – 1st Lt Dean E. Hallmark, 1st Lt Robert J. Meder, 1st Lt Chase Nielsen, 1st Lt William G. Farrow, 1st Lt Robert L. Hite, 2nd Lt George Barr, Cpl Harold A. Spatz, and Cpl Jacob DeShazer – were captured and detained as war criminals. As a result of the raid on Tokyo, the Japanese enacted the ‘Enemy Airmen’s Act’ (an *ex post facto* law) on August 13, 1942, which declared the death penalty for any Allied flyer who participated in indiscriminate bombing or targeted non-military targets. Two weeks later, on August 28, 1942, these eight airmen were tried and convicted for their roles in bombing civilian targets. Three of these men (Hallmark, Farrow, and Spatz) were later executed in October of that year. The remaining five flyers managed to endure over three years of torturous imprisonment and survived the war. The peak of violence committed against American airmen occurred in the final months of the war, especially after May 1945 as Japanese military and government officials ordered the disposal of enemy flyers who lacked any valuable intelligence information.³² The execution of the three Doolittle raiders was, and remains, the most well-known incident in the Pacific that involved reprisal killings of downed airmen.³³

The violence committed against airmen in Europe largely began at the end of 1943/beginning of 1944 and climaxed between July and August 1944 due not only the increase in Allied bombing raids, but also as a response to Nazi propaganda. As Gary Anderson revealed,

30 See, e.g., ‘Records of Proceedings,’ US v. Yoshio Tachibana et al., 15 August 1946, Marianas Islands, Guam, <<https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/cd1a09/pdf>> [accessed 19 January 2021]; James Bradley, ‘Jap Cannibals to be Hanged,’ *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 7 October 1946.

31 Data is based on my analysis of US postwar crimes trials held throughout the Pacific (Records of the Office of the Army Judge Advocate General, Army Pacific, RG 153, Entry 1021, NARA) and the analysis of the flyer trials held in Germany (largely at Dachau) found in Hall, *Terror Flyers*, p. 141.

32 ‘Review of the Staff Judge Advocate,’ 17 June 1949, US v. Kajuro Aihara and others, 11 October–29 Decemeber 1948, Yokohama, Japan, <<https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/475ba3/pdf>> [accessed 21 January 2021].

33 See, e.g., Paradis.

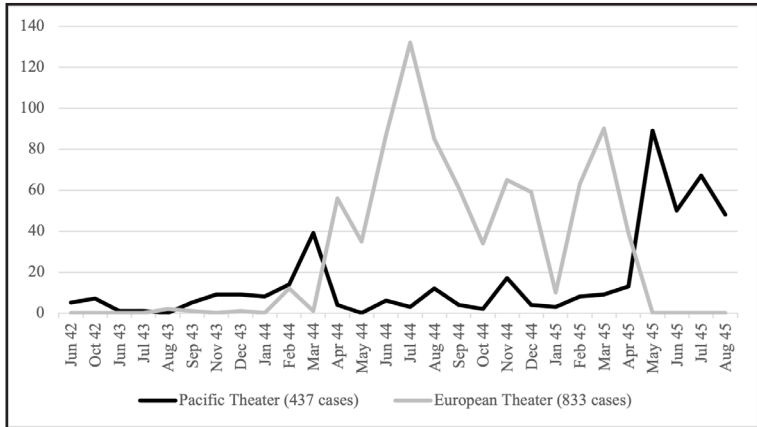


FIGURE 8. Timeline of American Airmen Mistreated by Theater of Operation

moreover, the killing of downed airmen in Japan was well-known [in Germany] and acted as an example to follow.³⁴ In May 1944, propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels published a newspaper article in which he publicly validated violence (*Lynchjustiz*) to be committed against captured airmen.³⁵ Throughout June 1944, the process of finalizing the classification of a ‘Terror Flyer’ (*Terrorflieger*) took place and the desired treatment of enemy flyers was determined. Clearly influenced by Japan’s ‘Enemy Airmen’s Act’ of 1942, Germany established four criteria that constituted acts of terror for which airmen could be executed. These included: 1) attacking civilians, 2) firing at German aircrews as they descended in their parachutes, 3) attacking passenger trains in public service, and 4) attacking military and civilian hospitals and hospital trains, which are clearly marked with the Red Cross. This information was distributed to the military and party leadership and was used to ‘justify the transfer of POW enemy airmen from the Oberursel flyer processing camp [Dulag Luft] to the SD for *Sonderbehandlung*.³⁶ While the Reich Foreign Ministry initially voiced concerns about imposing

34 Gary Anderson, ‘Lynchjustiz gegen alliierte Piloten: Drei Fälle aus dem Bodenseeraum 1944/45,’ in *Opfer des Unrechts: Stigmatisierung, Verfolgung und Vernichtung von Gegnern durch NS-Gewaltherrschaft an Fallbeispielen aus Oberschwaben*, ed. by Edwin Ernst Weber (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbeck, 2009), pp. 269–290 (p. 276).

35 Joseph Goebbels, ‘Ein Wort zum feindlichen Luftterror,’ *Völkischer Beobachter*, 28 May 1944.

36 ‘Behandlung der feindlichen Terrorflieger,’ Letter from OKW to Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe Concerning Treatment of Enemy Terror Flyers, 14 June 1944, Case 12-2000, Vol. 36: Treatment of Enemy Terror Flyers and Sabotage Troops, 8 August 1942–20 June 1944, Records of US Army,

'special treatment' (*Sonderbehandlung*) on Allied airmen, since Germany was a signatory of the Geneva Conventions, officials maintained that

an emergency solution would be to prevent suspected airmen from ever attaining a legal prisoner of war status; that is, that immediately upon seizure they be told that they are regarded not as prisoners of war, but as criminals, and that they will be delivered not to [...] a prisoner of war camp, but to the authorities [...] for the prosecution of criminal acts. If interrogations during those proceedings should reveal circumstances which show that *Sonderbehandlung* is not applicable to the particular case, then the airman concerned might [...] be subsequently transferred to the legal status of prisoners of war by being sent to the reception camp at Oberursel. Naturally even this expedient would not prevent Germany from being accused of violating existing treaties [...] but at least this [...] would make it possible to follow a clear line; thus, relieving us of the necessity of openly renouncing the present agreements, or, upon publication of each individual case, using excuses which no one will believe.³⁷

While no trials are known to have occurred in Germany as they did in Japan, the possibility was discussed among high-ranking Nazi officials.³⁸ Nevertheless, the regime permitted and encouraged civilians to vent their anger and frustration by seeking revenge against captured flyers, with violence surging in the final months of the war as civilians and security forces heeded the Nazi regime's call for a final stand to defend the Reich (figure 9).³⁹

The most widely known incident that involved reprisal killings of downed flyers during World War II was the Rüsselsheim massacre, which occurred on August 26, 1944.⁴⁰ Following the most devastating air raid on the city of Rüsselsheim, German soldiers marched eight

Europe, 1942–1991, War Crimes Trials Case Files, 1947–1958, RG 549, Entry A1 2238, Microfilm T1021, Reel 10, Frame No. 758, NARA, <<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/40957462>> [accessed 2 March 2021].

37 Ambassador Ritter, 'Draft of Letter from the Foreign Office to Chief OKW concerning Treatment of Enemy Terror Flyers,' Salzburg 20 June 1944, *Trials of War Criminals before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10* (Washington, DC.: United States Government Publishing Office, 1960), XI, 175–77. See also, Hall, *Terror Flyers*, pp. 4, 14, 40–47, 114–118, 151, 245.

38 'Jews Head List of U.S. Fliers Facing Nazi Trials,' *Jewish Criterion*, 7 January 1944.

39 Hall, *Terror Flyers*, pp. 113–119. The data for figure 9 is based on my analysis of US postwar crimes trials held at Yokohama (Records of the Office of the Army Judge Advocate General, Army Pacific, RG 153, Entry 1021, NARA) and in Germany (Hall, *Terror Flyers*, p. 141.)

40 Hall, *Terror Flyers*, pp. 3, 142, 186–187; Gregory A. Freeman, *The Last Mission of the Wham Bam Boys: Courage, Tragedy, and Justice in World War II* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Günter Neliba, *Lynchjustiz an amerikanischen Kriegsgefangenen in der Opelstadt Rüsselsheim (1944): Rekonstruktion einer der ersten Kriegsverbrecher-Prozesse in Deutschland nach Prozessakten (1945–1947)* (Frankfurt a.M.: Brandes und Apsel, 2000); Augusto Nigro, *Wolfsangel: A German City on Trial 1945–48* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2000).

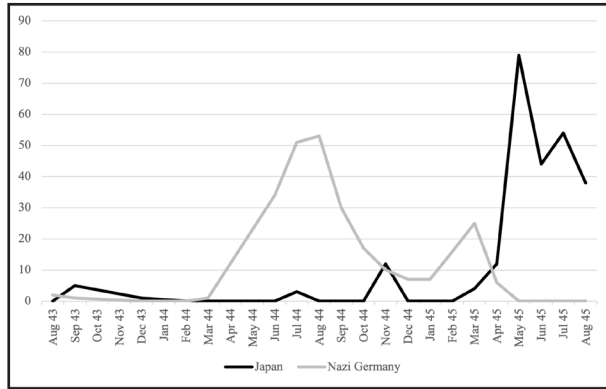


FIGURE 9. Number of Known US Flyers Mistreated in Japan and Nazi Germany (excluding occupied territories).

American airmen (Sgt Elmore L. Austin, Sgt William A. Dumont, 2nd Lt Norman J. Rogers, Jr., 2nd Lt John N. Sekul, F/O Haigus Tufenkjian, S/Sgt Thomas D. Williams, Jr., Sgt William A. Adams, Sgt Sidney E. Brown) through the town on their way to Dulag Luft for interrogation. With the citizens still in an excited condition following the destructive bombing raid, a crowd quickly gathered around the airmen. The mob viciously beat the airmen with fists and blunt objects. Six flyers died but two (Adams and Brown) managed to escape and survived the war.

Trial Sentencing

While in both Japan and Germany the largest percentage of sentences resulted in death, US military review boards reduced a significant number of sentences following appeals for clemency (figure 10 and 11). Some convictions were even overturned due to insufficient evidence. Once the Federal Republic of Germany was established in 1949, many more convicted perpetrators were pardoned or received additionally reduced sentences. By 1955, the West German government paroled most perpetrators in part due to various pressure groups through the US and Germany. Similarly, in 1958 the Japanese government released the remaining convicted war criminals.

Most perpetrators in the Pacific attempted to justify their actions by claiming that it was their duty to obey superior orders and, had they not followed such commands to execute captured flyers, that they

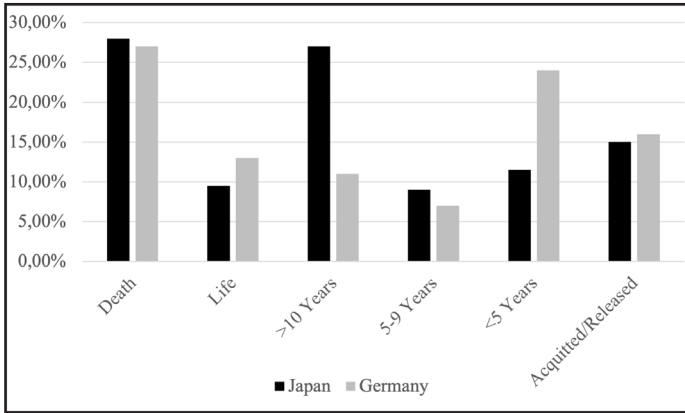


FIGURE 10. Distribution of Sentences (by percent).

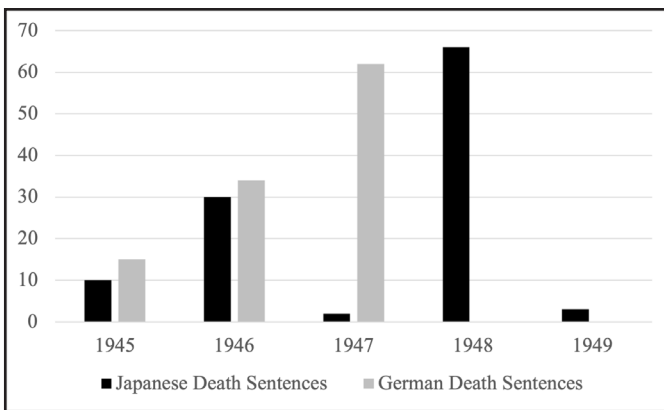


FIGURE 11. Death Sentences Administered Each Year.

themselves would have faced being imprisoned or even killed. Similar defenses were put forth by German soldiers, security forces, and Nazi officials. However, the judges refused to accept such arguments as most of these perpetrators were officers and as such knew – or at least should have known – the illegality of their actions. US prosecutors (at least in Germany) pointed out that even Goebbels acknowledged this in his May 1944 article, in which he condemned the Allied air raids and encouraged citizens to seek revenge against downed flyers. Ironically, he argued that

it is not provided in any military law that a soldier in the case of a despicable crime is exempt from punishment because he blames his superior, especially if the orders of the latter are in evident contradiction to all human morality and every international usage of warfare.⁴¹

As for the civilians who took part in the mob violence, they argued that the trauma inflicted by the war, especially the air raids, induced their vicious and cruel actions in hopes of seeking revenge for their losses. Particularly in Germany, the relentless Nazi propaganda and rhetoric was influential in agitating the already anxious populace.

Prosecutors and investigators repeatedly uncovered forged documents by Japanese and German perpetrators that attempted to cover up the circumstances surrounding flyers' deaths and the extent to which mistreatment occurred. During many of the flyer trials in Germany, perpetrators reported that airmen were 'shot while attempting to escape.'⁴² While countless downed airmen did indeed try to avoid capture, as was their duty, the overwhelming majority of these cases revealed that flyers were shot and killed after they had been captured and posed no threat to their captors. In the Pacific, military officials only attempted to cover up the murders of airmen in the final days of the war and during the immediate months thereafter. Often, false trial documents, such as witness statements, and even statements allegedly made by captured flyers, were created to appear to corroborate their participation in indiscriminate bombing and therefore justify the perpetrators' actions. In addition, perpetrators actively tried to cremate and dispose of airmen's remains to conceal their actions and prevent any future consequences from the Allied occupiers.⁴³

Conclusion

Combining the few studies that have dealt with the mistreatment committed against downed flyers in Europe reveals that over 1,000 identified American airmen were mistreated (including both deaths and assaults) in Nazi Germany (including Austria) after they were shot down. And yet, this does not take into consideration flyers from the remaining Allied nations as well as the broader geographic scope

⁴¹ Goebbels.

⁴² Review and Recommendations for Case No. 12-1812, Record of U.S. Army Europe, War Crimes Case Files (Cases Tried), 23 April 1947, RG 549, Entry 290, Box 187, NARA. Hall, *Terror Flyers*, pp. 165, 191.

⁴³ Hall, *Terror Flyers*, pp. 149-150, 166-167, 211-214.

of combat in Europe during World War II.⁴⁴ In the Pacific Theater, far less analysis has been conducted on the mistreatment of downed airmen prior to being sent to a POW camp. Studies have confirmed the reduced survival rates of POWs while in custody of Japanese forces compared to German troops and that the death rate of American POWs ranged from roughly one percent in Germany to over thirty percent in Japan.⁴⁵ Further, scholars have estimated as high as several hundred Allied airmen were executed after being shot down in the Pacific. A significant number of whom were allegedly killed after summary trials and court-martials.⁴⁶ As previously mentioned, however, the 70 US postwar crimes hearings analyzed in this study revealed that over 400 American airmen alone were executed throughout the Pacific Theater. In addition to this figure, the countless flyers whose remains were never recovered (and the circumstances surrounding their deaths never confirmed) need to be taken into consideration. The same goes for the mistreatment inflicted upon flyers of the other Allied nations. As with the cases in Europe, the dark figure is certainly high.

Analysis of the mistreated flyers in both theaters reveals that bomber crews were most likely to experience mistreatment. This is unsurprising given their increased numbers (compared to fighter pilots) and the targeted hatred of Axis civilians and soldiers toward bomber crews for their role in wreaking havoc and devastation upon the Axis home fronts (figure 12). Interestingly, according to the postwar trial statistics, while enlisted flyers were more likely to be mistreated than officers in the Pacific Theater, the opposite was confirmed in Europe (Figure 13).

This is supported by numerous statements and reports by Japanese perpetrators who ordered the transfer of flyers with useful intelligence information (most often officers) to Tokyo for additional (often severe)

44 Hall, *Terror Flyers*, p. 6; Hall, 'The Flyer Trials: Seeking Justice for Lynchjustiz Committed against American Airmen during World War II,' *War in History*, 27.3, 2020, 486-516; Hall, 'Luftgangster over Germany: The Lynching of American Airmen in the Shadow of the Air War,' *Journal Historische Sozialforschung/Historical Social Research*, 43.2, June 2018, 277-312; Hoffmann; Overy; Bas von Benda-Beckmann, *A German Catastrophe? German Historians and the Allied Bombings, 1945-2010* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010); Evans; Weingartner; Grimm; Blank.

45 Niall Ferguson, 'Prisoner Taking and Prisoner Killing in the Age of Total War: Towards a Political Economy of Military Defeat,' *War in History*, 11.2 (2004), 148-192; Keith Lowe, *Savage Continent: Europe in the Aftermath of World War II* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), p. 122.

46 Barrett Tillman, *Whirlwind: The Air War against Japan, 1942-1945* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010); Edward Frederick Langley Russell, *The Knights of Bushido: A History of Japanese War Crimes during World War II* (Skyhorse Publishing, 2008); Timothy Long Francis, "To Dispose of the Prisoners": The Japanese Executions of American Aircrew at Fukuoka, Japan during 1945,' *Pacific Historical Review*, 66.4 (1997), 469-501.

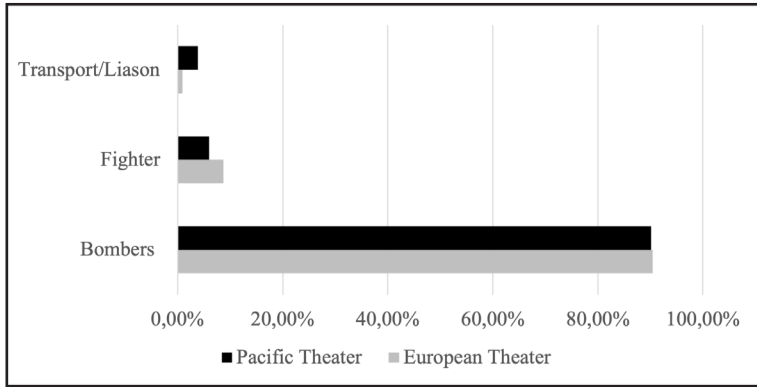


FIGURE 12. Mistreated Flyers by Known Crew Type in Each Theater

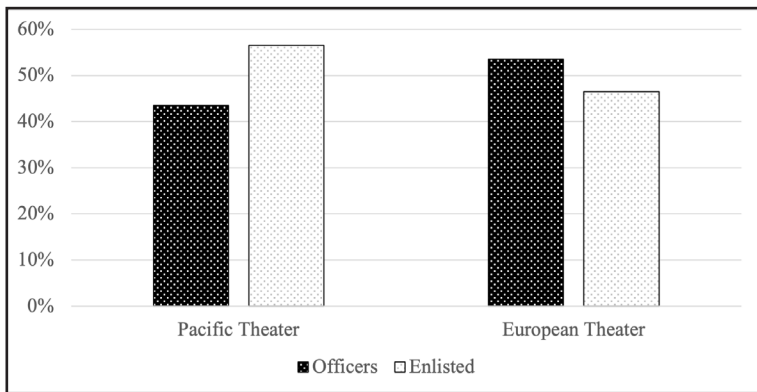


FIGURE 13. Type of Mistreated Flyers by Theater

interrogation. Flyers in Europe were similarly sent to an interrogation center (Dulag Luft) in Oberursel for interrogation. Meanwhile, the remaining enlisted crewmembers were frequently executed to reduce the burden of taking care of them. For the flyers fortunate to survive their initial capture, most were sent to POW camps throughout Japan, where they continued to struggle to survive. Guards frequently abused prisoners, food and medical treatment remained inadequate, and the backbreaking forced labor further exacerbated prisoners' physical and mental conditions. Regardless of where flyers went down, their first major hurdle was to stay alive long enough to make it to a POW camp.

While the instances of Axis violence committed against downed flyers during World War II each exhibited unique characteristics, they all similarly represented a common approach to combat enemy airmen. The violence was partly a tactic to intimidate flyers from bombing Axis territory, especially populated areas, as well as a means to rally citizens' support of the Axis regimes' fight for survival. Compelled by the radicalization of Axis atrocities, the air war pushed many individuals to their psychological limit, as the war erased most means of security. While individuals' (especially civilians) severe anguish and losses often elicited crazed attacks of revenge, the Axis regimes' increased support and endorsement of such vigilante justice significantly amplified the mistreatment committed against downed airmen.

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Kevin T Hall is a postdoctoral researcher at Ruhr-Universität-Bochum. He is the author of *Terror Flyers: The Lynching of American Airmen in Nazi Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021).