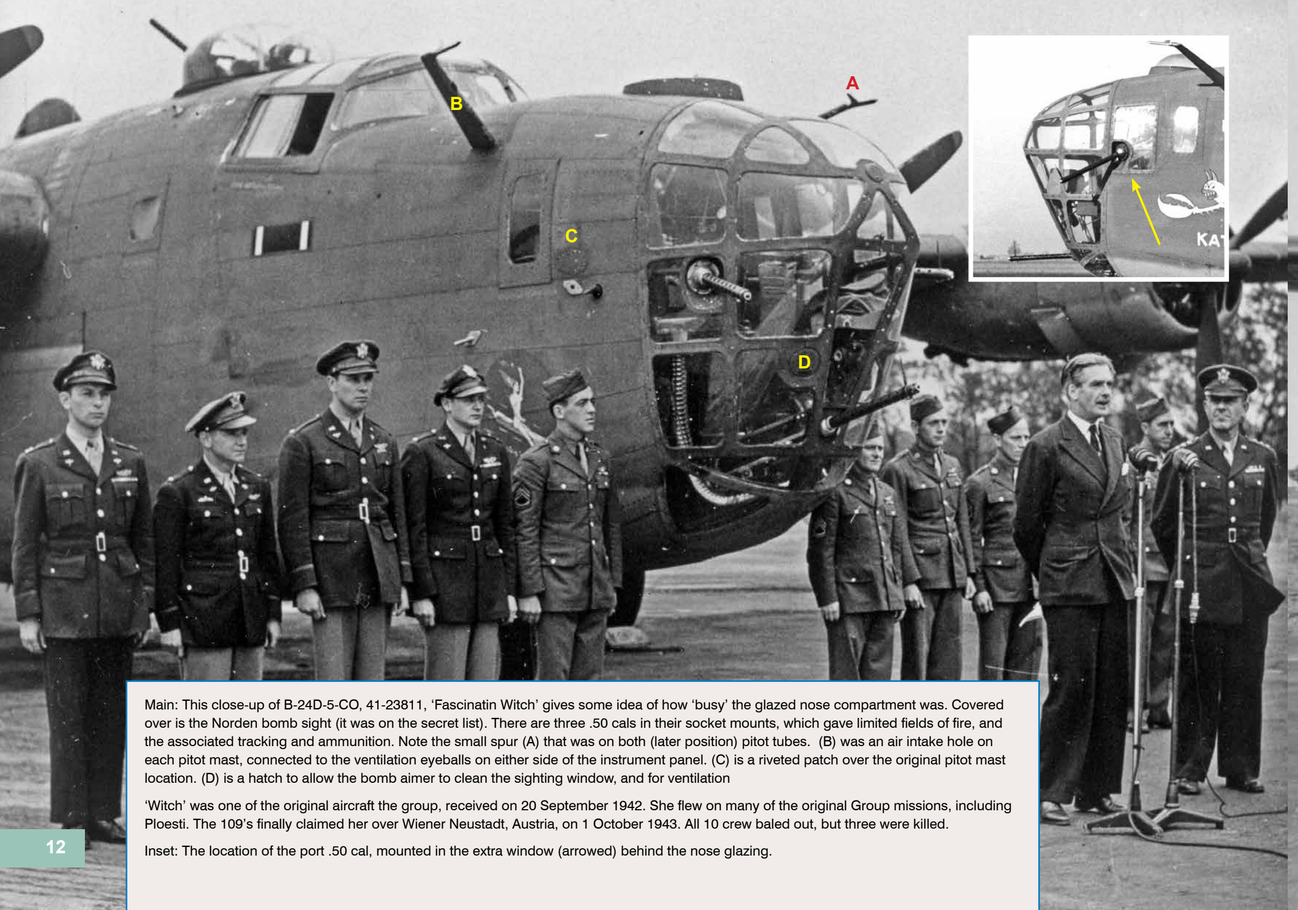
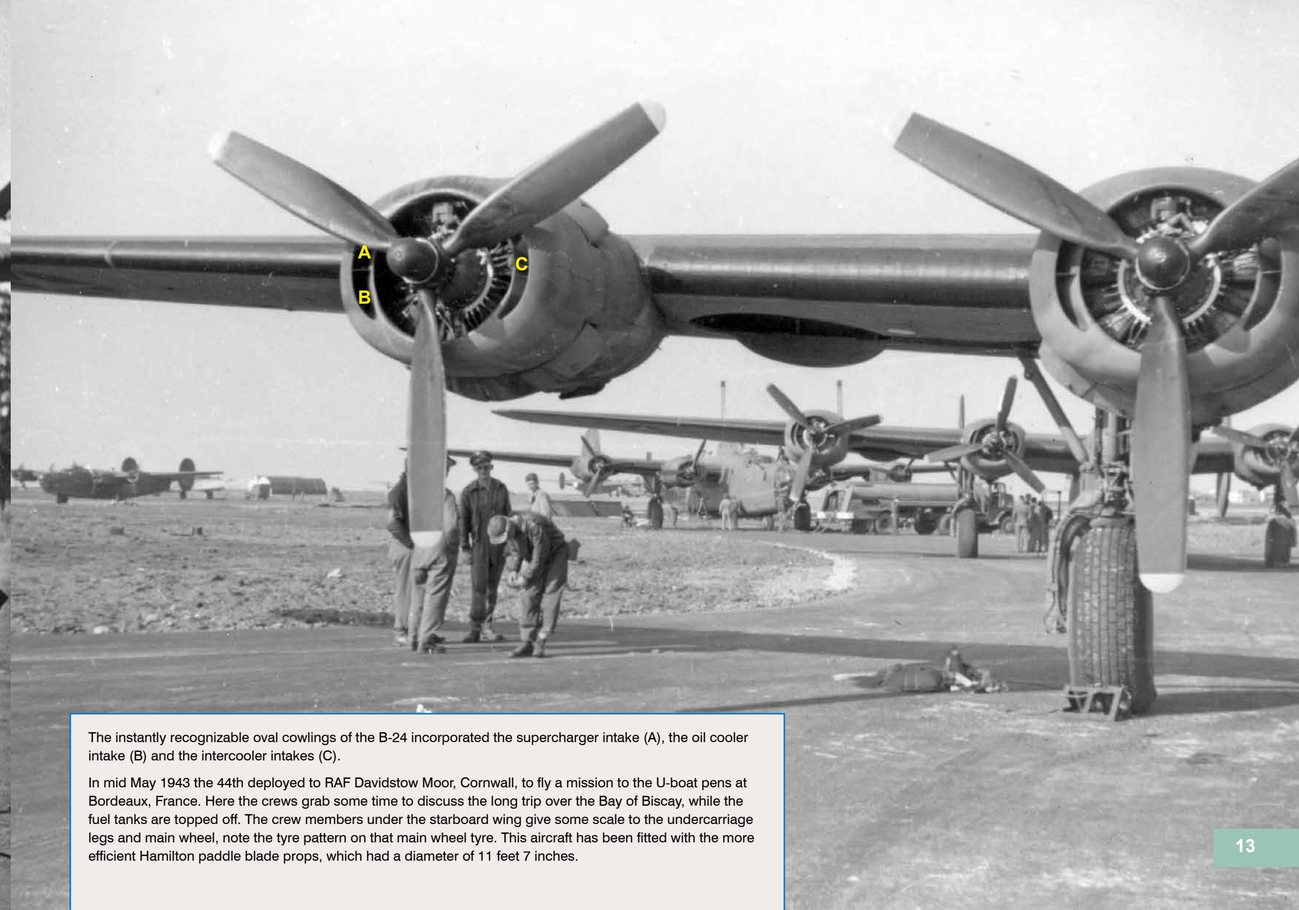


Main: This close-up of B-24D-5-CO, 41-23811, 'Fascinatin Witch' gives some idea of how 'busy' the glazed nose compartment was. Covered over is the Norden bomb sight (it was on the secret list). There are three .50 cals in their socket mounts, which gave limited fields of fire, and the associated tracking and ammunition. Note the small spur (A) that was on both (later position) pitot tubes. (B) was an air intake hole on each pitot mast, connected to the ventilation eyeballs on either side of the instrument panel. (C) is a riveted patch over the original pitot mast location. (D) is a hatch to allow the bomb aimer to clean the sighting window, and for ventilation

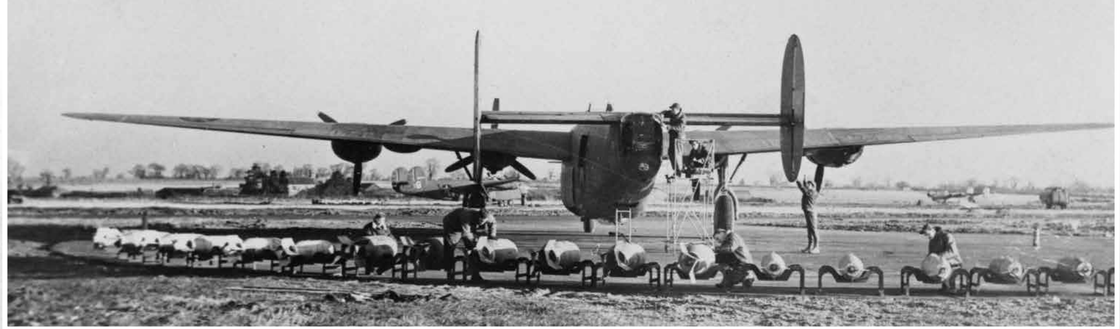
'Witch' was one of the original aircraft the group, received on 20 September 1942. She flew on many of the original Group missions, including Ploesti. The 109's finally claimed her over Wiener Neustadt, Austria, on 1 October 1943. All 10 crew baled out, but three were killed.

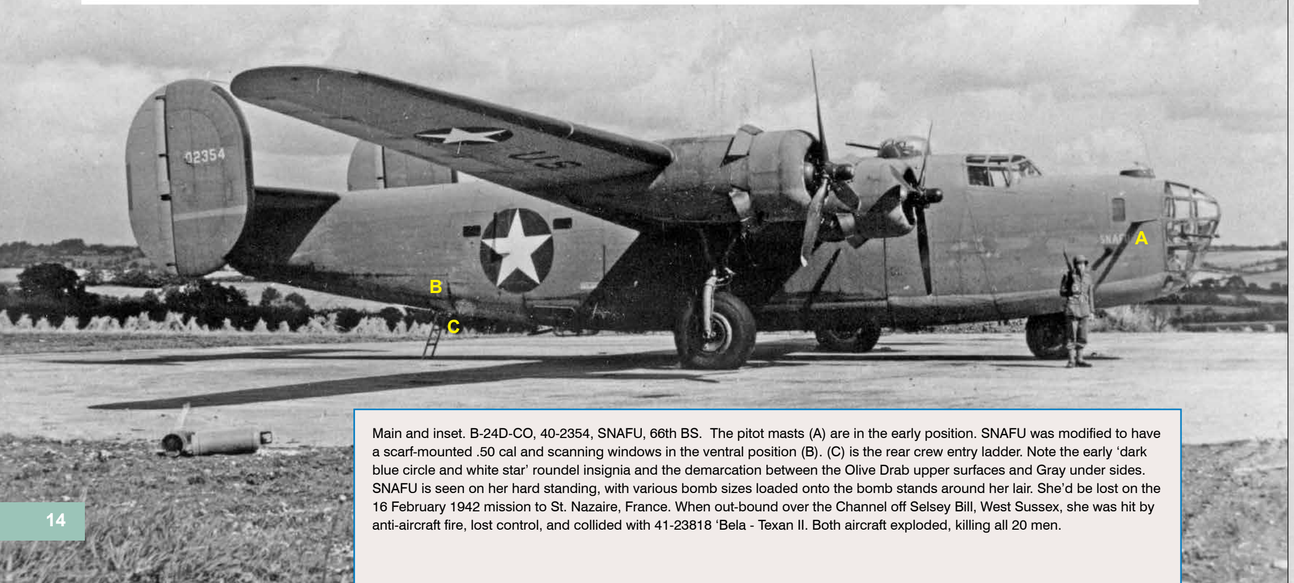
Inset: The location of the port .50 cal, mounted in the extra window (arrowed) behind the nose glazing.



The instantly recognizable oval cowlings of the B-24 incorporated the supercharger intake (A), the oil cooler intake (B) and the intercooler intakes (C).

In mid May 1943 the 44th deployed to RAF Davidstow Moor, Cornwall, to fly a mission to the U-boat pens at Bordeaux, France. Here the crews grab some time to discuss the long trip over the Bay of Biscay, while the fuel tanks are topped off. The crew members under the starboard wing give some scale to the undercarriage legs and main wheel, note the tyre pattern on that main wheel tyre. This aircraft has been fitted with the more efficient Hamilton paddle blade props, which had a diameter of 11 feet 7 inches.





Main and inset. B-24D-CO, 40-2354, SNAFU, 66th BS. The pitot masts (A) are in the early position. SNAFU was modified to have a scarf-mounted .50 cal and scanning windows in the ventral position (B). (C) is the rear crew entry ladder. Note the early 'dark blue circle and white star' roundel insignia and the demarcation between the Olive Drab upper surfaces and Gray under sides. SNAFU is seen on her hard standing, with various bomb sizes loaded onto the bomb stands around her lair. She'd be lost on the 16 February 1942 mission to St. Nazaire, France. When out-bound over the Channel off Selsey Bill, West Sussex, she was hit by anti-aircraft fire, lost control, and collided with 41-23818 'Bela - Texan II. Both aircraft exploded, killing all 20 men.





Left: A three-ship element in formation with; top to bottom 41-23811 K 'Fascinatin' Witch, 41-23788 H 'Avenger' and 41-23769 B 'Sure Shot' all from the 66th BS. All three were assigned to the 44th on 20 September 1942 and they each lasted into the autumn/winter of 1943. The Medium Green camouflage blotching applied to some of the early ships' upper surfaces and rudders is very clear on 'Sure Shot'. All three aircraft are adorned with the early national insignia on the fuselage and single squadron letter, that was worn on most aircraft in the group during the winter of 1942 into early spring 43, in yellow.

Above: B-24-D-5-CO, 41-23778, F 'Jenny' of the 66th BS brought Lt. James Kahl and his crew safely home from Wilhelmshaven on 27 January 1943; the Group's 14th mission. Note the early ball and socket nose mount for .50 Cal (A), and the later position pitot mast (B).The aircraft name was in yellow. Her captain, Lt Rocco Curelli renamed, her 'Lady Luck', after she brought him back safely from Ploesti. Their luck ran out on 16 October 1943 when they were shot down on a raid to Foggia, Italy. Curelli and all but one of his crew were killed.

Below: B-24D-5-CO, 41-23807, U 'Little Beaver' 67th BS. Lt Chester Phillips and his crew proudly stand in front of her on 22 March 1943, after returning from Berlin. The crew give scale to the 'Eightball' logo. The name and mission tally was in yellow. Note the red fire extinguisher panel (A) and that the censor has blocked out the nose glazing (B) to hide the Norden bomb sight. Lt Phillips took 'Little Beaver' to Kiel on 14 May 1943, where the 44th fought an intense aerial battle and were awarded their first Distinguished Unit Citation. Sadly 'Beaver' did not return to Shipdham that day. Phillips and six of his crew were killed, four were PoW.

Right: Gearing up. The gunners who flew in the rear of 'Little Beaver' are helped into their Shearling flying clothing and parachute harnesses. The individual aircraft code was in yellow on both the tail and fuselage, it's partially covered by the open bomb bay doors.

Inset: Little Beaver's nose art, a beaver throwing a bomb.





Formation practice meant safety; and the tighter the formation the more the squadrons were afforded protection. Photographed from a co-pilot's position near Attleborough, Norfolk, is B-24D-5-CO, 41-23774, S 'Hitler's Nightmare' 68th BS. Lead aircraft is 41-23816 X 'Black Jack' 68th BS and furthest away is 41-23817 S 'Suzy Q' of the 67th BS. 41-23774 was transferred to the 93rd BG on 18 March 1943. Note the Medium Green camouflage on the aircraft's flying surfaces.

Right: Close-up of B-24D-5-CO, 41-23816, X 'Black Jack' from the same set of photographs. Note the staining and paint wear on the wings. She was shot down by 109s on 1 October 1943 near Wiener Neustadt, Austria, taking five of her eleven crew to their deaths.

