

**BRITAIN 1939 – 1945:
THE ECONOMIC COST OF STRATEGIC
BOMBING**



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ABSTRACT

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The strategic air offensive against Germany during World War II formed a major part of Britain's wartime military effort and it has subsequently attracted the attention of historians. Despite the attention, historians have paid little attention to the impact of the strategic air offensive on Britain. This thesis attempts to redress this situation by providing an examination of the economic impact on Britain of the offensive. The work puts the economic cost of the offensive into its historical context by describing the strategic air offensive and its intellectual underpinnings. Following this preliminary step, the economic costs are described and quantified across a range of activities using accrual accounting methods. The areas of activity examined include the expansion of the aircraft industry, the cost of individual aircraft types, the cost of constructing airfields, the manufacture and delivery of armaments, petrol and oil, and the recruitment, training and maintenance of the necessary manpower. The findings are that the strategic air offensive cost Britain £2.78 billion, equating to an average cost of £2,911.00 for every operational sortie flown by Bomber Command or £5,914.00 for every Germany civilian killed by aerial bombing. The conclusion reached is the damage inflicted upon Germany by the strategic air offensive imposed a very heavy financial burden on Britain that she could not afford and this burden was a major contributor to Britain's post-war impoverishment.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAEE	Aeroplane and Armaments Experimental Establishment
AOC-in-C	Air Officer Commanding in Chief
AS	Anti-Submarine
BBSU	British Bombing Survey Unit
BCATP	British Commonwealth Air Training Plan
CAS	Chief of the Air Staff
CBRM	California Bearing Ratio Method
CFC	Central Flying Control
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
C-in-C	Commander in Chief
CNS	Chief of the Naval Staff
CRD	Civilian Repair Depots
EATS	Empire Air Training Scheme
FCO	Flying Control Organisation
FCS	Flying Control Staff
HC	High Capacity
HCU	Heavy Conversion Unit
HE	High Explosive
HMS	His Majesty's Ship
hp	Horse Power
ID	Identification
kW	Kilowatt
LMF	Lack of Moral Fibre
MAP	Ministry of Aircraft Production
MP	Member of Parliament
MPH	Miles Per Hour
NOCOP	No copies to be made
OTU	Operational Training Unit
POL	Petrol Oil and Lubricant
PRO	Public Record Office
RAE	Royal Aircraft Establishment
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
RN	Royal Navy
RNAS	Royal Naval Air Service
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
SAA	Small Arms Ammunition
SAE	Society of American Engineers
SAP	Semi-Armour Piercing
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force
SIGINT	Signals Intelligence

TI	Target Indicator
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USAAC	United States Army Air Corps
USAAF	United States Army Air Force
USAF	United States Air Force
USSBS	United States Strategic Bombing Survey
WAAF	Women's Auxiliary Air Force

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