

# Interesting Facts about World War Two



1.

The first American serviceman killed in the war was Captain Robert M. Losey. He was serving as a military attaché and was killed in Norway on April 21, 1940 when German aircraft bombed the Dombås railway station where he and others were awaiting transport.



2.

The first German soldier killed in World War II was Lieutenant von Schmeling, who was a military advisor to the Nationalist Chinese (China had been at war with Japan since 1931). He was killed while leading a Chinese Infantry Battalion of the 88th Division of Shanghai in 1937.



3.

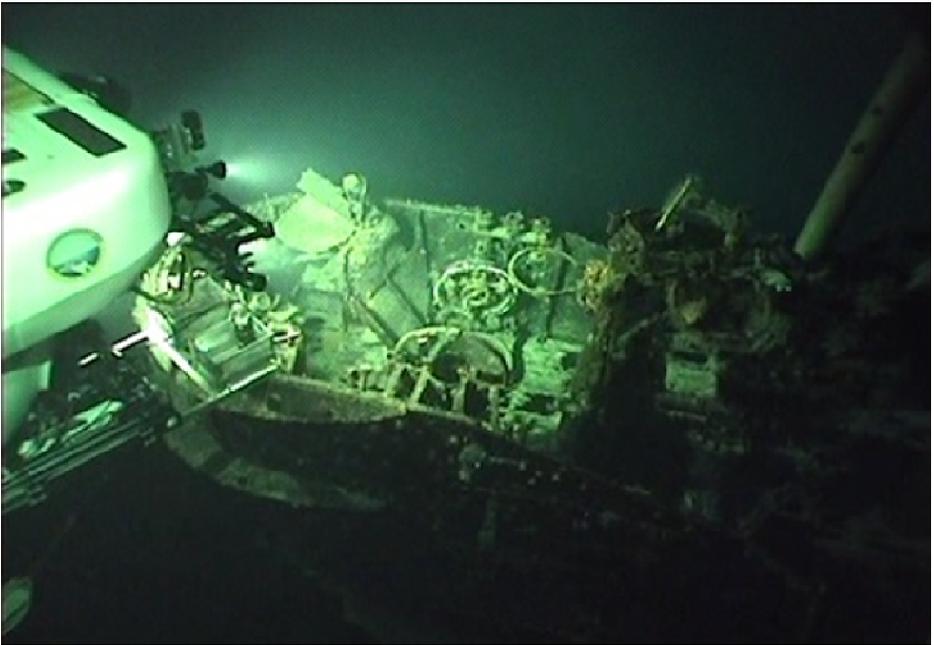
Japan employed multiple types of suicide attacks during the war, including suicide submarines called Kaiten ("the turn toward heaven"). Approximately 100 of these were used, the most famous of which was used in the sinking of the USS Underhill.

[The submarine is the small tube going down the tracks. It held one or two men only and was basically a "manually-controlled torpedo"]



4.

Finnish snipers were some of the deadliest in the world. During the Winter War (November 1939 - March 1940), the Soviet Union invaded Finland hoping to gain Finnish territory and create a buffer zone for Leningrad. Because of the inexperience of Soviet troops and the incredible effectiveness of Finnish snipers, the USSR lost 40 men to every Finn that was killed.



5.

In 2005, dive researchers from the University of Hawaii discovered the remains of a massive Japanese submarine, I-401. This behemoth was basically an underwater aircraft carrier and was built to bomb the Panama Canal-it carried three folded up bombers inside its watertight hangar. The huge submarine could sail 37,000 miles, or one and a half times around the world. Three of these subs were captured at the end of the war. They measured 400 feet long and 39 feet high, and could carry a crew of 144 men.



6.

According to the AAF Statistical Digest, the U.S. Army Air Forces lost 14,903 pilots and crew in the United States. These men died as a result of more than 50,000 accidents during the course of the war. Another 1,000 planes disappeared en route from the U.S. to foreign countries.



7.

Air losses were so staggering during 1942-43 that it was statistically impossible for bomber crews to complete a 25-mission tour in Europe.



8.

More than 41,000 American servicemen were captured during the war. Of the 5,400 captured by the Japanese, half died. About 10% of those captured by Germans died.



9.

The youngest U.S. serviceman was just 12 years old. Calvin Graham lied about his age to get into the service and was later wounded at the Battle of Guadalcanal. He was given a Dishonorable Discharge for lying about his age, though his benefits were later restored by act of Congress.



10.

Some baffling bits of irony:

1. The insignia of the U.S. Army's 45th Infantry division was the swastika (the 45th was part of the Oklahoma Army National Guard and the swastika was a tribute to the large Native American population in the southwest).
2. Hitler's private train at the start of the war was named "Amerika."
3. At the time Pearl Harbor was attacked, the top U.S. Navy command was called CINCUS (pronounced "sink us").



11.

793 German U-boats were lost in World War II. Of the nearly 40,000 men onboard those subs, 75% died at sea.



12.

More men died in the U.S. Air Corps than the U.S. Marine Corps. It is estimated that while completing your required 30 air missions, your odds of being killed were 71%. And fact #30 about U.S. troops is even more sobering.



13.

The power grid in Germany was more vulnerable than the Allies realized during the war. Some experts speculate that if Allied bombers had dropped just 1% of their bombs on power plants instead of industrial factories and targets, the whole of Germany's infrastructure likely would have collapsed.



14.

There was really no such thing as an average fighter pilot--you were--either an ace or machine gun fodder. One of Japan's top fighter pilots, Hiroyoshi Nishizawa, shot down over 80 planes during the war but died while a passenger on a cargo plane. One of Germany's top aces, Oberst Werner Molders, died as a passenger on a plane that crashed.



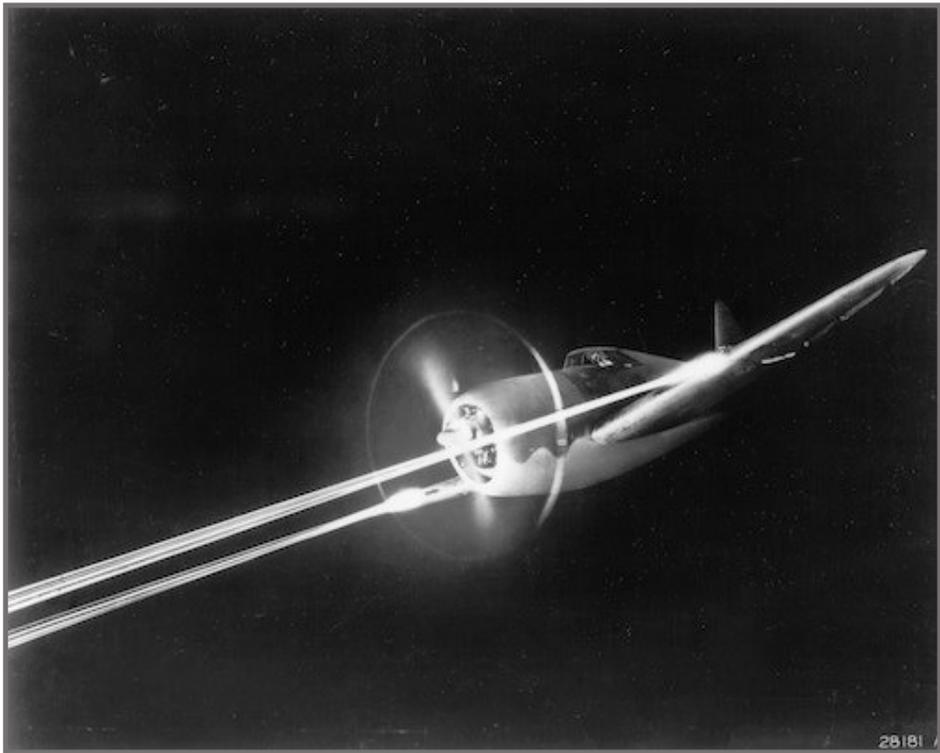
15.

In their guns, fighter planes loaded every fifth round with a glowing tracer to help them aim correctly. This turned out to be a big mistake, since tracers took a different flight path than regular bullets—if your tracers were hitting their target, odds are 80% of your regular rounds were missing.



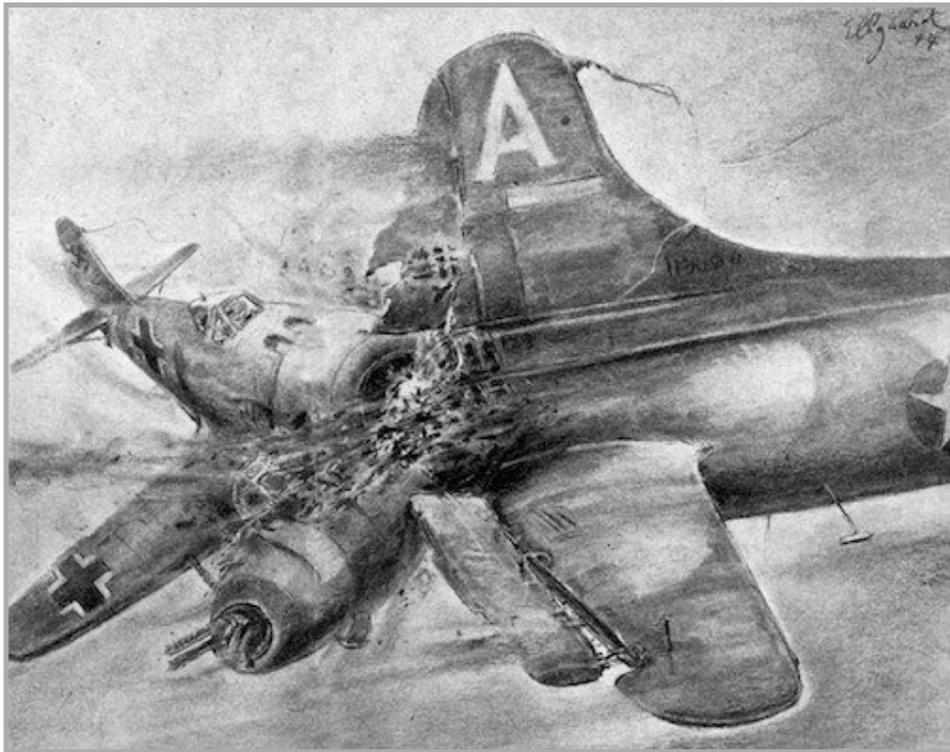
16.

To make things worse, including tracer rounds immediately told your enemy he was under attack, and it let him know which direction you were coming from.



17.

Perhaps worst of all, pilots would load a string of tracer rounds at the end of ammunition belt to let them know when they'd run out of ammo. Unfortunately, this also let the enemy know they were out of ammunition. It is said that pilots who stopped using tracers saw their hit rates nearly double and suffered less casualties.



18.

Russian pilots destroyed hundreds of German aircraft by ramming them in midair. A few famous Russian pilots were able to eject after ramming enemy planes and survived to fight in future battles. Germany also began using aerial ramming near the end of the war.



19.

Because of its massive number of troop transports, the U.S. Army actually had more ships than the U.S. Navy.



20.

When the U.S. Army landed in North Africa, they brought along more than troops and equipment: they also set up three complete Coca-Cola bottling plants to keep troops well supplied.



21.

The Koreans: Some of the first Germans captured during the invasion of Normandy weren't German at all, they were Korean. These soldiers had been forced to fight for the Japanese army until they were captured by the Russians, who forced them to fight for the Russian army. They were later captured by the Germans and forced to fight as German troops.



22.

Germany officially declared war on just one nation in World War II: The United States of America.



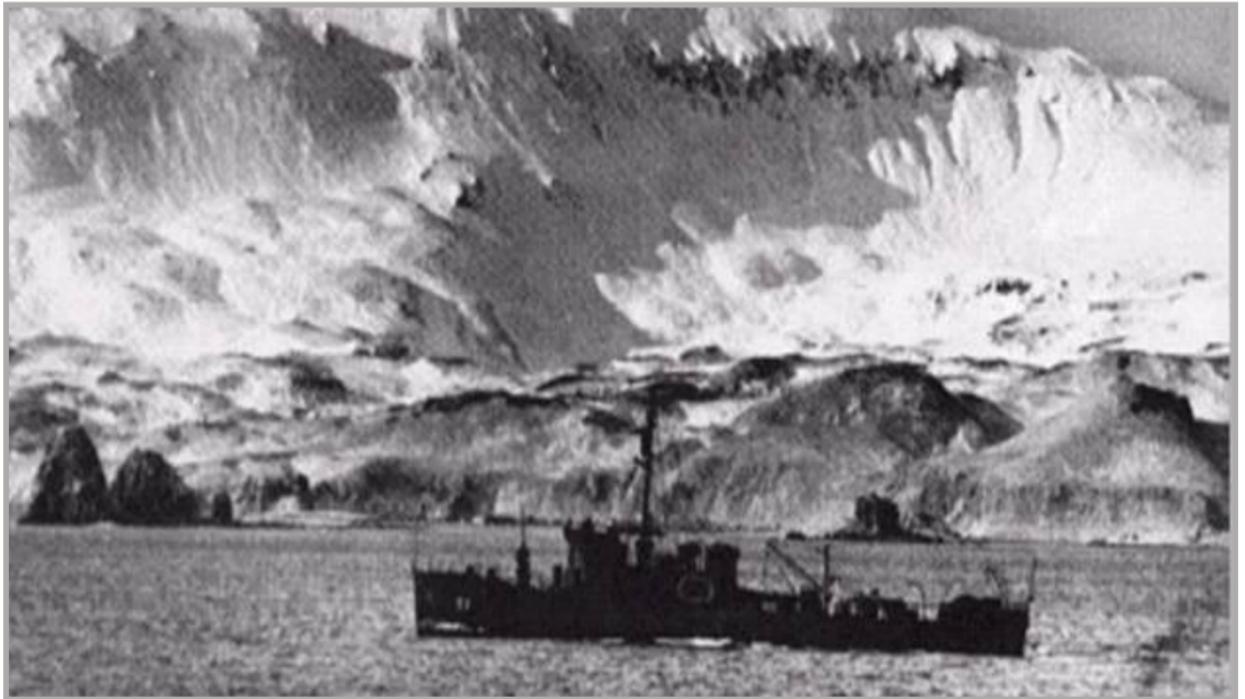
23.

The Dachau concentration camp first opened in 1933, six years before the start of World War II. The Dachau camp system grew to include nearly 100 sub-camps.



24.

20% of Poland's population died during World War II, the highest percentage of any nation.



25.

Japan occupied U.S. territory for more than a year, invading and holding two islands in the Aleutian Island chain, which is part of Alaska. Nearly 1,500 American troops were killed in 13 months of fighting to retake the islands.



26.

Polish Catholic midwife Stanisława Leszczyńska delivered 3,000 babies at the Auschwitz concentration camp during the Holocaust in occupied Poland.



27.

Only 20% of the males born in the Soviet Union in 1923 survived the war.



28.

Adolf Hitler's nephew, William Hitler, served in the U.S. Navy during World War II



29.

Hiroo Onoda, an Imperial Japanese Army intelligence officer who fought in World War II, held his position in the Philippines and refused to surrender until 1974. His former commander travelled from Japan to personally issue orders relieving him from duty.



30.

More than 16,000,000 American troops served in World War II. Of these, 405,000 were killed during the war.



31.

Ladies of the Hitler Women: One shudders to think what happened to them in 1945.



32.

Total casualties for World War II are estimated between 50 and 70 million people. 80% of those came from just four countries: Russia, China, Germany, and Poland.