

USAAF HEAVY BOMB GROUP
MARKINGS & CAMOUFLAGE 1941-1945
BOEING B-17 FLYING FORTRESS





B-17F of the 91st BG, 323rd BS in the markings prior to the addition of the Group triangle A code in June 1943. (USAF)



Upper surface view of the aircraft illustrated above showing position and size of National Insignia on wing. Code in white, serial in yellow. (USAF)



LL+E of the 401st BS, 91st BG in the markings of September 1943. White triangle, black A. Yellow serial, code, and surround to the National Insignia. (USAF)



Left: LL+C of the same squadron as above illustrating the medium green splotching on upper surfaces in limited use during the summer of 1943. (USAF)

Below: B-17G, LL+G of the 401st BS, warming up prior to take-off on the taxi strip at Bassingbourn, home base of the Group from Oct. 1942 to June 1945.

(USAF via R. J. Francillon)



B-17G, 388th Bomb Group in early natural metal finish before full colour markings came into use. Early summer 1944.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This, the second volume covering USAAF Heavy Bomb Group markings completes the pictorial presentation of the 8th, 12th and 15th Air Forces so far as the B-17 and B-24 were concerned. It would seem to be necessary after reading certain reviews of S.13 Vol. 1, to explain for the benefit of readers and reviewers that neither S.13 Vol. 1 covering the B-24 markings nor this volume, S.14 Vol. 2, covering the markings of the B-17 are second volumes of AIRCAM Nos. 11 and 13 which illustrate the B-17 and B-24 in general. The reason for duplication of some illustrations in S.13 and S.14 from the two preceding books is due to the fact that the illustrations duplicated are the best or the only ones available to illustrate a specific point. Thanks are due to all those who assisted with photographs and information whose names are listed below in alphabetical order:

Rene J. Francillon, E. R. McDowell, E. A. Munday, USAF.

B-17G, 398th Bomb Group, 603rd Bomb Squadron, late 1944 early 1945 scheme.



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Above: B-17G of the 324th BS, 91st BG in the markings of March 1944. The 1 presumably shows the second A of the 324th. (USAF via R. J. Francillon)



Left: DF+F in the markings of the same period as shown above. (USAF)

Below: Late war markings of the 91st BG, red wing tips, fin and tailplanes. (USAF via R. J. Francillon)





B-17G, probably of the 355th BG on its bomb-run, OD and grey scheme, black de-icer boots. Note open bomb-bay, with bombs inside. (USAF via R. J. Francillon)

USAAF HEAVY BOMB GROUP Markings & Camouflage 1941-1945 Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress

THE PACIFIC AREA, 1941-1943

At the time of the entry of the United States into the war in December 1941, the only B-17s actually in deployment were the B-17Ds of the 19th Bomb Group, stationed at various airfields in the Philippine Islands. These numbered 35 and were in the process of being camouflaged when the first Japanese attacks destroyed a number on the ground.

The USAAF specified that combat aircraft should be olive drab on upper and side surfaces, with patches of medium green blotching applied in irregular patches to break up the outline of the aircraft. The under surfaces were to be neutral grey. These paint schemes were applied to aircraft built after early 1941, but existing aircraft—especially the larger types such as B-17s continued in their peace time natural metal finish, until they could be taken into unit paint shops and camouflaged.

This was the position at Clark and Del Monte Fields in the Philippines, when the first Japanese aircraft made bombing and strafing attacks on the parked aircraft.

Those aircraft of the 19th Bomb Group which survived the first assaults were hurriedly camouflaged with whatever paint was to hand, as a matter of extreme urgency. It is likely that a shadow shading pattern, similar to that used by the Royal Air Force in various shades of green and brown, was used.

Gradually the few surviving B-17Ds of the 19th were expended until only one was left. This was the venerable No. 40-3097 "Alexander the Swoose". As the other B-17Ds were damaged and written off, so parts were removed from them and built into 097. Eventually, while operating from Java it was named "The Swoose"—i.e., half swan, half goose. The aircraft was then taken off combat status and used by General Brett, USAAF commander as a personal aircraft.

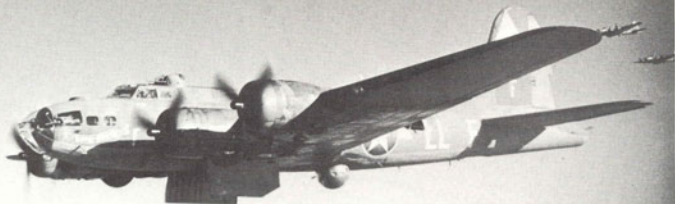
"The Swoose" survives today, in the Smithsonian Institute store for eventual public display.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour, the 7th Bomb Group were in transit to the Philippines and 12 of their aircraft actually arrived during the attack. The 7th was using both B-17Ds and B-17Es and at least one "D" was written off by strafing after it landed at the height of the attack. These aircraft were camouflaged olive drab (OD) above and grey below, and as far as can be seen from the available photos, did not have the medium green blotching.

The 7th Group eventually arrived in Java in February 1942 and, with the 19th Group, was engaged in operations against the onrushing Japanese forces. The B-17Es brought by the 7th to the Far East were far superior in defensive firepower to the older Ds and incorporated a tail gun position, which was lacking in all the B-17 models up to and including the B-17D. Later on the 19th was reinforced by the addition of some B-17Es, 512 of which were built by Boeing.

Other Bomb Groups, the 5th, 11th and 43rd were all equipped with B-17s during their early combat days, either B-17Es or early B-17Fs. Externally the B-17F only differed from the B-17E in having a clear perspex nose cap for the bombardiers station in place of the metal framed version used on the B-17E, and also wider blade propellers. Internally the B-17F series had many small improvements dictated by combat use.

A photo in existence of the early 1942 period shows three B-17s—one B-17D and two B-17Es. All have the early National Insignia with red centre in four positions, with red and white rudder stripes. One B-17E has the specified olive drab and grey camouflage and the other B-17E and the B-17D have a form of shadow shading. These aircraft are probably



"Bomb Boogie" of the 401st BS, 91st BG in late 1943 markings. (USAF)

from the 5th Bomb Group, stationed at Hawaii in early 1942.

All B-17 Bomb Groups in the Pacific engaged in battle against the Japanese were dispersed on the widest fronts and the numbers involved in any one area were quite small. The development of combat markings was not therefore of great importance, and few markings apart from national markings and serial numbers came into use.

In 1943 however, one Group in the New Guinea area, probably the 43rd, was painting large two digit numbers on the fin, below the serial number. These aircraft numbers bore no relationship to the serial, and were probably plane-in-group numbers.

As a result of decisions taken in 1943, it was decided that the B-17 was to be gradually withdrawn from Groups in the Pacific, and its place taken by the B-24 Liberator. Apart from special aircraft such as General MacArthur's personal aircraft "Bataan", and aircraft used in the Air Sea Rescue role, the B-17 all but disappeared from the Pacific area after 1943.

THE INDIA-BURMA FRONT

The 7th Bombardment Group was moved to this theatre of operations from Java in March 1942, and at first was equipped with B-17s, with a few early B-24 Liberators. These aircraft all were painted in olive drab and grey camouflage. The Group was completely re-equipped with B-24s by late 1942.

THE AIR WAR AGAINST GERMANY, 1942-1945

After the entry of the United States into the war, it was the intention of the USAAF to build up their air strength in

England, and carry the war to Nazi Germany alongside the Royal Air Force.

For several reasons, the build-up was not as rapid as had been hoped.

The first two Bomber Groups to arrive in the theatre, the 97th and 301st became operational on 17 August and 5 September 1942 respectively.

The 97th, which carried out the Eighth's first mission, was equipped with B-17Es, most of which were finished in the brown and medium green scheme for upper surfaces, with blue-grey under surfaces. Most of these B-17Es had "US ARMY" on the undersides of the wings.

The 301st had early B-17Fs with olive drab upper surfaces and neutral grey lower surfaces.

However, these two Groups were transferred to the 12th Air Force for operations in North Africa, in November 1942. Before the 97th left for Africa it exchanged its B-17Es for the B-17Fs of a newly-arrived Group, the 92nd. This unit carried out a few raids in September and October 1942, and was then taken off combat status to carry out the duties of a training unit for crews of Groups arriving later. By the end of 1942 there had arrived and were operational, the 306th, 303rd, 305th and 91st Bomb Groups, in that order. However, with the loss of the 97th and 301st to the Mediterranean, and the 92nd currently acting as a training unit, the build-up was slower than had been hoped. This situation was made worse by the needs of the Pacific theatre, as replacement aircraft and crews were diverted from the Eighth.

The B-17Fs arriving with the 306th, 303rd, 305th and 91st

"Blood'n Guts", a B-17G of the 401st BS in late 1944 markings, note new metal sheeting round the recently added Cheyenne turret. (USAF via R. J. Francillon)



the medium green blotching applied in a manner which it was hoped would break up the outline of the aircraft when viewed from above.

The National Insignia used at this time was the blue disc with white star, with yellow surrounds on some aircraft.

SQUADRON CODES

The Groups which remained with the 8th Air Force had squadron codes allocated, and these began to be carried from about January 1943. Each squadron (four per Bomb Group), had two letters allocated as its code. These codes were painted on the fuselage adjacent to the National Insignia, and a n individual aircraft letter painted on the other side of the National Insignia. Later—about March 1943—the individual letter was repeated on the fin below the serial number. Normally the colour used for these letters was grey, but the 91st always used yellow on its camouflaged aircraft.

As natural metal aircraft became available in the spring of 1944, the codes were painted in black, and as B-17Gs with staggered waist gun positions arrived, the squadron and aircraft codes began to appear adjacent to each other instead of being separated by the National Insignia.

Also Bomb Groups which arrived after the early part of 1944, eg. 398th BG, were allocated letter/number codes for each squadron, as the increasing number of units arriving in the United Kingdom in preparation for D-Day had used up the available all-letter combinations.

The British Air Ministry issued these codes to newly-formed RAF units, plus those of the US 9th Air Force as well as the 8th Air Force.

For some reason, the 447th, 388th, 452nd and 457th Groups, all B-17 units, never used these codes and found other means of identifying their squadrons. Similarly, some units, such as the 303rd and 379th Groups discontinued the use of their codes from about early 1945.

GROUP CODES

In May 1943, the first Groups of the 4th Bomb Wing became operational, the original four (306th, 303rd, 305th, 91st.) plus the 92nd, now back on combat status, forming the 1st Bomb Wing. The newcomers which formed the 4th Wing were the 94th, 95th, 96th, all operational in May, the 100th operational in June, the 385th, and 388th operational in July, and the 390th operational in August. During this period, the 1st Wing was strengthened by the addition of the 351st, 379th, 381st Groups. This expansion tripled the strength of the Eighth in four months, which meant, among other things, larger and more complex formations, making necessary some means of identifying one Bomb Group from another.

For this reason, from about June 1943, each Wing had a geometric symbol painted on the rudder, and repeated above the starboard wing tip.

The 1st Wing used a triangle, the 4th Wing a square, painted in white on the olive drab fin above the serial number. (The 2nd Wing, equipped with B-24 Liberators, used a circle. The 3rd Wing, equipped with B-26 Marauder medium bombers had a different marking system, and this unit eventually became part of the 9th Air Force.)

Upon these triangles and squares was painted a letter, a different one for each Bomb Group. For example, triangle A indicated the 91st Bomb Group, square A the 94th Bomb Group.

After some early short-lived experiments with yellow letters on white symbols, insignia blue (a very dark blue), or black, was used for the letters. Some units at first dulled the squares by using light grey for the symbols.

As new units joined the 8th Air Force, they too were allocated code letters, and in most cases, though not always, these were applied before the Groups entered combat.

In June 1943, there came a change in National Insignia, with the addition of two rectangles to the side of the encircled star, the whole device being outlined with a thin red border. These rectangles were often painted over part of the squadron codes.

Hardly was this change made when yet another change was ordered—the red border was changed to blue. However, the red border was still evident in early 1944, whereas the change should have been made during the previous August.

In September 1943, there came a change in command

structure of the Eighth. For some time the 1st, 2nd and 4th Wings had been unofficially referred to as "Air Divisions", and in this month their status was made official. The 1st Wing became the 1st Air Division, the 2nd Wing the 2nd Air Division, the 4th Wing became the 3rd Air Division. The 1st and 3rd Air Divisions had B-17 Flying Fortresses, the 2nd was equipped with Liberators. Each Air Division had eventually four Combat Bombardment Wings, each with three or four Groups assigned.

Although these changes were made to help the administration and operational functioning of the Eighth, they did not lead to immediate changes in colours and markings. For about a year (June 1943 to June 1944) the markings of the B-17s of the Eighth were stabilised—the Group letter in the square or triangle, the squadron code letter combination, and the individual letters.

Natural Metal Finish

In December 1943 the USAAF issued an instruction that camouflage paint would no longer be applied to operational aircraft, except for certain special roles, such as night fighters. Stocks of paint were to be used up first however. An area immediately in front of the pilot's cockpit was to be painted olive drab, to reduce sun glare, and on some types, including B-17s, the inboard upper part of the engine cowling was painted olive drab for the same reason.

The first natural metal aircraft began to arrive in the UK during February 1944.

They were at first regarded by the flight crews with misgivings, as many airmen felt that German aircraft would single out the more conspicuous natural metal finish aircraft. For this reason many Bomb Groups waited until enough natural metal aircraft were on hand to make up a formation before committing these aircraft to battle. In the 8th Air Force, the 457th Bomb Group was the first to put up an "all silver" formation. This was on 13 March 1944. However, it is likely that a few Groups committed individual examples of natural metal finish B-17s to action in the few weeks before this date.

Gradually the numbers of natural metal aircraft increased, until by mid-1944 the olive drab finish planes were in the minority. By now crews were showing a preference for the natural metal finish planes, and new crews found themselves flying the "older" olive drab aircraft.

During the early summer of 1944, a few Groups became operational which were equipped with a majority of natural metal finish planes. Also the 3rd Air Division had five Groups all operational with B-24 Liberators. As the flow of B-17s improved, these five Groups were re-equipped with B-17s, all of which were natural metal finish.

This rejection of camouflage was a complete reversal of previous policies, and was contrary to the practices of every other belligerent Air Force. To eyes long accustomed to the sombre paintwork of the RAF and Luftwaffe, the first appearance in any numbers of natural metal USAAF bombers was a startling sight.

A few olive drab aircraft did survive until the end of the war, and under the watchful eye of their ground crews ran up considerable tallies of operations. One olive drab aircraft, "Nine-O-Nine," of the 91st Bomb Group ran up 140 missions without an abort (early return due to a mechanical defect.) Several others reached over one hundred operational sorties. With the advent of natural metal finish, squadron code letters became black instead of grey or yellow, and the Group symbols became white letters on black triangles and squares.

Colour markings in the 8th Air Force, 1944-1945

With the introduction of natural metal aircraft into combat units, and the apparent rejection of all the principles of camouflage, the way was now clear for the use of colour as a means of unit identification. This was a much more typically American method than the RAF inspired code letters.

Coloured fuselage bands, cowlings, fins and rudders were all used in the pre-war US Army Air Corps.

In addition the Eighth had been bedevilled with formation join-up problems ever since it had come to Great Britain, where the weather conditions and visibility were much less suitable than had been foreseen.

The first organisation in the Eighth to use a comprehensive colour scheme was the 2nd Air Division. From April and May

1944, its B-24 Liberator Groups had worn coloured tails to identify the individual Bomb Groups (See Aircom Special S13, volume 1.)

This must have proved successful, as by July 1944, one combat Wing of the 1st Air Division had followed the example of the B-24s, and was shortly thereafter followed by the rest of the B-17 Groups in the 1st Air Division. The 3rd Air Division did not generally use coloured tail markings until early 1945. When they did take up this means of identification, however, quite large areas of the tail, also wings, were painted in colour.

THE 1st AIR DIVISION

In July 1944, the 1st Combat Wing began to paint the tail planes, wing tips, and part of the rudders bright red. This was in addition to the Group and squadron code letters already mentioned. By the end of August, each of the other three Combat Wings (itself each of three Bomb Groups) had a colour scheme for itself. The 41st Wing surrounded its triangle code with a coloured border, the 40th Wing had a coloured horizontal band, while the 94th Wing had a diagonal coloured band. In all three of these Wings, the colour varied with each Group. Some Groups discontinued the use of squadron code letters, or augmented them with coloured areas by VE day.

There follows a detailed description of codes and colours for each of the twelve Bomb Groups in the 1st Air Division. There were four Bomb Squadrons in each Bomb Group. All Group codes remained painted in a triangle.

1st Combat Wing

Colour, common to all three Groups in the Wing was a bright red vertical tail area, wing tips and tail plane.

91st Group. Group Code A Squadron Codes LG, OR, DF, LL, representing 322, 323, 324, 401 BS respectively. Squadron codes yellow on olive drab aircraft. Base, Bassingbourne.

381st Group. Group Code L. This was painted in a curiously off-balance fashion on many 381 aircraft. Squadron codes were VE, VP, GD, MS, representing 532, 533, 534 and 535 BS respectively. The codes were usually in a large bold style. Base, Ridgewell.

398th Group. Group Code W. Squadron Codes were N8, 30, K8, and N7 representing 600, 601, 602 and 603 BS. Many aircraft in 601 BS had the "O" in 30 code in enlarged style, thus 30M, M being the individual aircraft code. Base, Nut-hampstead.

41st Combat Wing

This wing used a coloured surround to its 1st Air Division triangle as a colour code. This surround was a different colour for each of the three Groups.

303rd Group. Group Code letter C. Colour code—Natural metal (or white on olive drab aircraft) with red surround. Letter C in centre. Entire device was some twelve feet on each side, common to other two Groups in wing. Squadron codes were VK, BN, PU, GN representing 358, 359, 360 and 427 BS respectively. The aircraft serial number was painted in yellow on the base of the red triangle.

From late 1944 a figure 1, 2, 3, or 4 was painted on the apex of the triangle, so representing each squadron in the Group. After this addition, squadron codes were not painted on new aircraft, although existing 303rd B-17s kept their codes. Base, Molesworth.

379th Group. Group Code letter K. Colour code—Black triangle with yellow surround. K in centre of black triangle. Squadron codes WA, FR, LF, FO, denoting 524, 525, 526, 527 BS respectively. Serial number in black on base line of yellow surround. Figures 1, 2, 3, 4 painted in apex of triangle as squadron codes from late 1944, and use of squadron code letters discontinued. Base, Kimbolton.

384th Group. Group Code P. Colour marking, white or natural metal triangle, black edge, with P in centre of white triangle. Squadron codes SU, JD, BK, SO, denoting 544, 545, 546, 547 BS respectively. Aircraft serial number on black lower edge of triangle in yellow, figures 1, 2, 3, 4, in apex of triangle as other two Groups in 41st Wing, but squadron codes retained. Coloured engine cowlings added from March 1945. Colours blue, yellow, red, white denoting 544, 545, 546, 547 BS in order. Base, Grafton Underwood.



Nose detail of "Nine O Nine", a B-17G of the 91st BG, 323rd BS. This aircraft made 140 trips without an abort. an 8th Air Force record. See colour side-view A1. (USAF)

40th Combat Wing

Colour code used was a horizontal band across the upper part of fin and rudder.

92nd Group. Group code B. Colour marking—red horizontal band across the fin and rudder, upon which was superimposed the triangle B code.

Squadron codes were NV, JW, UX, PY denoting 325, 326, 327, 407 BS respectively. Coinciding with the introduction of natural metal B-17s in early 1944, the triangle B was commonly repeated under the port wing. Base used during most of the 92nd Group's operational service was Podington.

305th Group. Group code G. Colour marking—bright green horizontal band on fin and rudder. Squadron codes were WF, XK, KY, JJ denoting 364, 365, 366, 422 BS respectively.

The 422 Bomb Squadron was regularly engaged in night sorties over Europe in a leaflet dropping role, from about August 1943 to June 1944. For this role many of its aircraft were painted with black under surfaces and had normal olive drab upper surface finish. This Group also painted its triangle G code below the port wing of its aircraft. Base, Chelveston.

306th Group. Group Code H. Colour marking—yellow band on fin and rudder. On natural metal finish aircraft this was normally edged in black. Squadron codes GY, BO, WW, and RD, denoting 367, 368, 369, 423 BS respectively.

From about late March 1944, squadron codes were not marked on new aircraft, and often deleted from existing equipment. From late August 1944 all aircraft used a coloured fin tip (i.e. the area above the yellow band) to denote the squadron. These were, in order of squadrons, red, white, bright green, and blue. Code also carried below port wing, as 92nd, 305 Group. Base, Thurleigh.

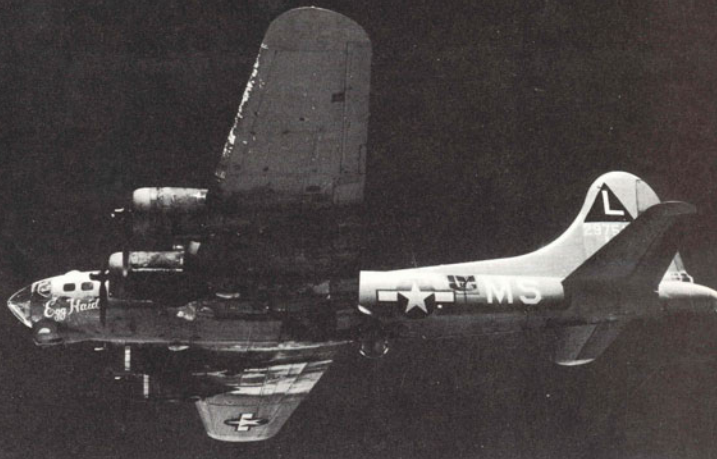
94th Combat Wing

351st Group. Group code J. Colour marking was a diagonal red band from the top of the rudder to the base of the fin. Squadron codes were YB, RQ, TU, and DS, denoting the 508, 509, 510, 511 BS. After the addition of the broad red band in August 1944, the codes remained unchanged. Base, Polebrook.

401st Group. Group code S. Colour marking—diagonal yellow band, similarly placed as red band of 351st. Squadron codes SC, IN, IW, IY, denoting 612, 613, 614, 615 BS respectively. Yellow band usually outlined in black on natural metal aircraft. Group was well known as first to arrive in UK with practically all its B-17s from the new B-17G Series. Letter I used was of distinct style, i.e. I, with "head and tail." Base, Deenethorpe.

457th Group. Group code U. Colour marking—diagonal blue band on fin and rudder. Squadron letter codes not used, instead propeller spinners were coloured red, blue, white, yellow to denote, in order, 748, 749, 750, 751 BS. Base, Glatton.

It can be seen that the colour schemes listed above were quite comprehensive. All Groups used their triangle codes as



"Egg Haid", a rather weather-beaten B-17G of the 381st BG, 535th BS heading for Germany. Late 1943 markings. (USAF)

noted, and in all cases the aircraft individual letter was painted in the lower part of the fin below the serial.

This individual aircraft letter was always carried although the squadron codes may have been deleted from the fuselage or not allocated, as in the case of the 457th BG.

The three Groups of the 40th Wing which regularly painted their Group Codes under the port wings were the only ones in the Eighth to follow this practice.

THE THIRD AIR DIVISION

At VE-Day, this organisation was composed of 14 Bomb Groups, all equipped with B-17s.

They were divided into four Combat Wings of either four or three Groups each. Between April and September of 1944, however, five Groups had had B-24s. At this time there were three Wings each of three B-17 Groups, and two Wings of B-24s one having three Groups and one having two B-24s Groups.

The operation of two bomber types within the same Air Division posed difficulties, both from the maintenance and supply angle, and the operational aspect. The B-17 and B-24 could not easily fit into the same bomber stream.

For this reason, as soon as enough B-17s were on hand, these five Groups were re-equipped with B-17s.

Three of these Groups, forming the 93rd Wing, already used red on their B-24 tails as a unit marking, and they continued this practice. By September 1944, these three Groups were fully equipped with B-17s, with only a minimal interruption in the tempo of operations.

The remainder of the 3rd Air Division did not use coloured tail markings until early 1945, although the 4th Combat Wing had started to paint a coloured chevron above the starboard wing, and below the port wing of its aircraft.

4th Combat Wing

This Wing originally consisted of the 94th, 385th, and 447th Bomb Groups. In late 1944, after the 486th and 487th Bomb Groups had re-equipped from B-24 Liberators, these two Bomb Groups were re-assigned to the 4th Wing. (While the

486th and 487th used B-24s they had formed the combat elements of the 92nd Wing.)

This then gave the 4th Wing five Bomb Groups, namely 94th, 385th, 447th, 486th, and 487th. In early 1945 the 385th was re-assigned to the 93rd Wing, and thereupon took up the markings appropriate to that Wing.

The 4th Wing markings were characterized by the liberal use of yellow paint on tail areas and wing tips from about January 1945. The coloured chevrons were not deleted from existing aircraft, but not always applied to new aircraft after January 1945.

94th Group. Group code A (in square, as all 3rd Air Division Group Codes.) Squadron codes were QE, XM, TS and GL denoting 331, 332, 333 and 410 BS respectively. From about October or November 1944 a red chevron carried above starboard wing and below port wing, in addition to the square A above the starboard wing, from about November 1944 the use of squadron codes was discontinued, although the individual letter remained on the rear fuselage and was repeated on the fin. Tail colours—bright yellow fin, rudder, spine and tail plane, also yellow wing tips. Single red band round rear fuselage. Square A remained on tail.

When squadron codes were discontinued, the engine cowlings were painted to denote each squadron. Colours used were blue, red, green, yellow, indicating 331, 332, 333 and 410 BS respectively. Base. Bury St. Edmunds.

447th Group. Group code K. Squadron codes not used during hostilities, only after VE-Day, when they were painted under the wing to discourage low flying.

From January 1945, all yellow fin, rudder, spine, tail plane and wing tips, with two bright green bands round rear fuselage.

Between September 1944 and January 1945 the Groups used the familiar 4th Wing Chevron, blue in colour. When the yellow tail paint came into use, existing Group aircraft kept their chevrons, but new aircraft had only the new yellow markings applied.

From September 1944 coloured engine cowlings were used to denote squadrons. Colours were yellow, white, red, green, indicating 708, 709, 710, 711 BS respectively. Base. Rattlesden.

381st Bomb Group formation heading out for Germany over a solid white sea of cloud. (USAF via R. J. Francillon)





B-17F of the 381st BG, 534th BS in standard OD and grey scheme with white Group triangle and black L, positioned off-centre on the fin. Red surround to the National Insignia. (USAF)

385th Group. Group code G. Squadron codes were issued but not used until after VE-Day. Coloured propeller spinners used to denote squadrons were blue, yellow, red and green denoting, in order, 548, 549, 550, 551 BS. Yellow chevron above starboard wing, and below port wing, from about September 1944.

This Group was assigned to the 93rd Wing before the 4th Wing started the use of all yellow tails. The command change did not require a change of base, which was Great Ashfield. For details of markings used after re-assignment, see under 93rd Wing.

486th Group. Group code W (changed from O used on Liberators until August 1944. The O could have been confused with D of the 100th Bomb Group.) Squadron codes were 3R, 2N, 2S, H8 denoting 832, 833, 834, 835 BS respectively. Chevron carried on wing from September 1944 was red and blue, with red bar outboard.

This was carried above starboard wing and below the port wing. Coloured tail markings, from January 1945 were all yellow fin, rudder and spine, tail plane and also wing tips. Three yellow bands around rear fuselage, which led to the deletion of squadron codes. Squadrons then denoted by the use of coloured nose bands, and the painting in squadron colour of the aircraft letter forward of the National Insignia. Colours used were, in order, yellow, blue, red, green, for the 832, 833, 834, and 835 BS respectively. Base, Sudbury.

487th Group. Group code P. Squadron codes were 2G, 4F, 2C, R5 denoting 836, 837, 838, 839 BS respectively. Used B-17s from August 1944 in place of B-24s. Red and yellow chevron on wings from September 1944, red bar outboard. Yellow tail areas and wing-tips added as other 4th Wing Groups in January 1945.

The individual aircraft letter on the fin below the serial number was over-painted with yellow and not carried thereafter. Fuselage code letters and individual letters remained however. Base, Lavenham.

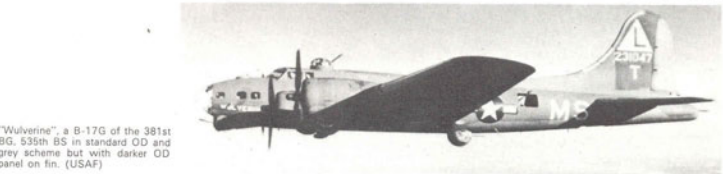
93rd Wing

The original three Bomb Groups in this organization were the 34th, 490th, 493rd. All three re-equipped from B-24 to B-17s by September 1944. These three Groups had all used red painted areas on the tails of their B-24 Liberators, and this theme was continued as soon as they re-equipped with B-17s. In this way, the 93rd Wing was the first to use coloured tail markings in the 3rd Air Division.

No Group codes were used while these Groups used B-17 Flying Fortresses.

34th Group. No Group or Squadron codes used during hostilities. The latter only appeared after VE-Day, when they were painted on under wing surfaces to discourage low flying.

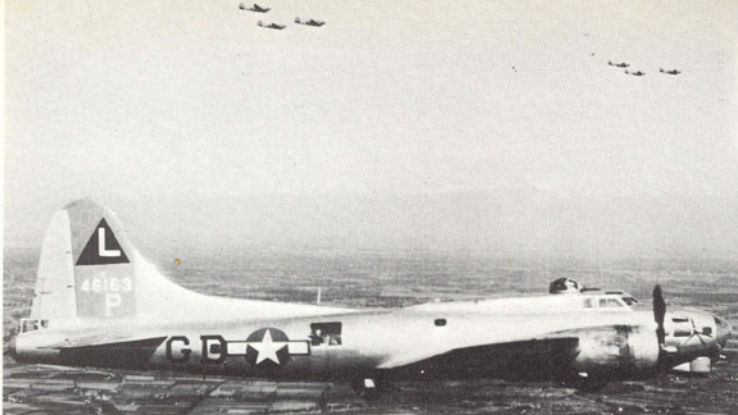
Colour markings—tail fin and spine painted bright red, from a vertical line just in front of the rudder hinge-post



"Wolverine", a B-17G of the 381st BG, 535th BS in standard OD and grey scheme but with darker OD panel on fin. (USAF)



Natural metal B-17Gs of the 381st BG, 534th and 532nd BS heading for a target in Germany. (USAF via R. J. Francillon)



B-17G in full 381st BG markings in September 1944. C-47's in background are part of the Arnhem force. (USAF)

forward up the fin to a point above the waist gun position. Chordwise red bands on both wings, above and below, and chordwise red bands on tail plane and elevators.

Aircraft used were solely natural metal finish, so far as is known, no olive drab B-17s flew with the 34th Group.

An individual aircraft letter was painted on the rudder, just above the trim tab. A coloured band around the nose indicated the squadron. These were white, yellow, red and green denoting 4th, 7th, 18th and 391st BS respectively. Base, Mendlesham.

490th Group. No Group or Squadron codes used during hostilities. Squadron codes used after VE-Day as 34th Group. Colour markings—fin and rudder upper third, (i.e. fin-tips) painted red, with wing and tail plane red stripes as 34th Group. Individual aircraft letters on lower part of fin, with a system of bars and crosses to indicate squadrons. These were for example, -A, A, +A, A-. These denoted, in order, 848, 849, 851, 850 BS. Base, Eye.

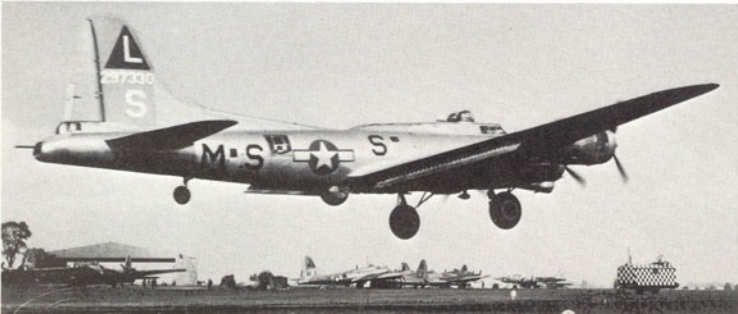
493rd Group. No Group or Squadron codes used during hostilities. Squadron codes under wing post—VE-Day, as 34th Group. Coloured markings were a broad red horizontal band along the base of the spine, fin and rudder. The aircraft

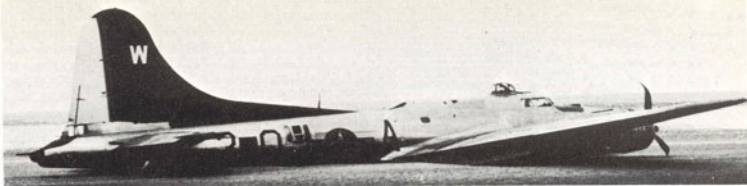
letter was painted on the fin above the serial number. Red bands on wings and tail planes as 34th Group. A single letter was painted on the fuselage to indicate the squadron and these were actually the first letter of the squadron radio call signs. These were S, B, C, P and these denoted 860, 861, 862, 863 BS respectively. Base, Debach.

385th Group. This Group was re-assigned to the 93rd Wing in early 1945, without changing its base. At first, before the B-17s could be repainted, they continued to use the Group code G in square. As soon as the work could be done, this Group code was erased and a red checkered design was applied to the fin and rudder. This was applied directly onto the natural metal finish or in a few cases olive drab finish. Red chordwise bands applied to wings and tail planes as with the other 93rd Bomb Wing units.

This work took some time, and some aircraft had square G and chevrons as late as March 1945. Squadrons continued to be shown by coloured prop spinners, blue, yellow, red, green for the 548, 549, 550, 551 BS respectively. Individual aircraft letters were painted high up on the fins, occupying one of the squares of the checkered tail. This bright red checkered design, when applied to natural metal finish aircraft, was

MS+S coming in to land at Ridgewell, home base of the 381st Bomb Group. Note position of the code letters. 535th BS. (USAF)





B-17G of the 398th BG, 601st BS down on the beach at Sandwich Bay just a few miles short of the emergency airfield at Manston. The all red fin and fillet was a variation of the standard Group markings. (Ray E. Bowers)

probably the most distinct and flamboyant marking applied to operational bombers in World War II, if the lead ships of the 2nd Air Division were discounted. Base, Great Ashfield.

13th Combat Wing

From January 1945, the three Groups in the wing used a coloured rudder as a coloured tail marking. A diagonal band of the same colour was also painted above the starboard wing, and often below the port. This was in addition to the existing Group and Squadron codes.

95th Group. Group code B. Coloured rudder and diagonal bands were red. On some aircraft part of the fin was included in the red area, as the red was taken up to a line parallel to the rudder trailing edge.

Squadron codes were BG, OE, ET, QW denoting 334, 335, 336, 412 BS respectively. After the coloured rudder came into use, these codes were no longer applied, although many existing B-17s kept them. Their place had been taken by coloured nose bands, in order, yellow, blue, green, red, for the 334, 335, 336, 412 BS, applied from mid-1944. Base, Horham.

100th Group. Group code D. Squadron codes were XR, LN, EP, LD denoting 349, 350, 351, 418 BS. From mid-1944, coloured nose bands were used, in order, blue, yellow, green, red. Squadron codes were continued however, until the war ended. Tail colour markings were a black painted rudder, as was the diagonal wing band on these aircraft. Base, Thorpe Abbotts.

390th Group. Group code J. Squadron codes were BI, CC, DI, FC denoting 568, 569, 570, 571 BS respectively. From mid-1944, the squadrons were denoted by coloured nose bands, in order, red, blue, yellow, green. The use of squadron codes was maintained however. Tail colours were a yellow rudder, as were the diagonal wing bands. Base, Framlingham.

45th Combat Wing

From about January 1945, the three Bomb Groups in this wing used two parallel coloured bands on the spine and rudder of their aircraft, and repeated them on the upper starboard wing, chordwise across the outer wing panels.

On some aircraft this was repeated on the lower port wing, but this practice does not appear to have been consistent.

96th Group. Group code C. Squadron codes were QJ, BX, AW, MZ denoting 337, 338, 339, 413 BS respectively. From January 1945, the tail vertical surfaces had two horizontal red parallel bands, repeated on the starboard wing upper surface. This was in addition to the "square C" Group code. Base, Snetterton Heath.

388th Group. Group code H. No squadron codes issued or used during hostilities, in fact the Group did not differentiate between its assigned squadrons, which were 560, 561, 562, 563 BS. Colour tail markings were two black parallel bands, carried as 96th Bomb Group.

The individual aircraft letter on the lower part of the fin below the serial number, and when the black bands were applied, this letter was located on the lower of the two bands. The letter "H" used by the 388th had a curiously high crossbar, and from a distance looked very much like an "M". This is probably the reason why "M" was never allocated as a Group code. Base, Knettishall.

452nd Group. Group code L. No squadron codes used during hostilities, but used below the wings post VE-Day as a deterrent to low flying. Squadrons were denoted by symbols before the aircraft letter in this way, A, -A, A+,

A-, These denoted in order, 728, 729, 730, 731 BS. Colour tail markings were two parallel yellow bands across the vertical tail surfaces, repeated on the starboard wing. The individual letter, and squadron indicators were located on the lower of the two yellow bands. Base, Deopham Green.

This, then, was the warpaint of the 8th Air Force. Between late January 1945 and VE-Day, the B-17s of the Eighth were an awesome sight, to friend and foe alike. There were many small anomalies within the system, and most Groups had some small idiosyncrasy or trademark. The 398th for example often had its "O" in the thirty code of the 601 BS enlarged. The squadron codes of the 96th Bomb Group were often painted out of line, so that the bar of the National Insignia should not be obscured. The 384th regularly split its code letters each side of the National Insignia. At least one 95th BG aircraft had the square "B" code turned through 90°. (See drawing.)

In addition the B-17s changed a little in outline. (Few B-17Fs if any, survived in the Eighth to wear the full colour schemes.) In mid-1944 new aircraft arrived with an improved tail gunner's compartment. This was known colloquially as the "Cheyenne turret", after the United Air Lines operated modification centre at Cheyenne which developed the turret. Apart from new aircraft which arrived in England with the new tail position, enough kits were supplied to modify all the Eighth's operational B-17s by early 1945. This modification required a small amount of sheet metal work in the extreme tail. On camouflaged B-17s this new metal was rarely painted, and most elderly camouflaged B-17s of the Eighth sported a small natural metal area in the tail. Many of these conversion kits were also supplied to the 15th Air Force as well.

The dorsal flexible gun in the radio compartment was also deleted from about mid-1944.

In the last few weeks before VE-Day, some Groups began to remove the chin and/or ball turrets from their B-17s. Both the 94th and 95th Bomb Groups had a few planes so modified. These looked almost like natural metal B-17Fs with their cleaned up noses. Also by VE-Day most Groups were painting the last three or four digits of the aircraft serial number on the noses of their aircraft. This was immediately below the three windows in the nose, and was sometimes accompanied by the aircraft individual letter. This area of the aircraft was often the place chosen for an aircraft name and/or painting. Depending on the whim of the crew, these were of varied character, ranging from patriotic, through humourous, to downright salacious. Many curvaceous females rode on the nose of B-17s over Europe, often in the altogether. Occasionally, after cover-ups were ordered the briefest of swim-suits were added.

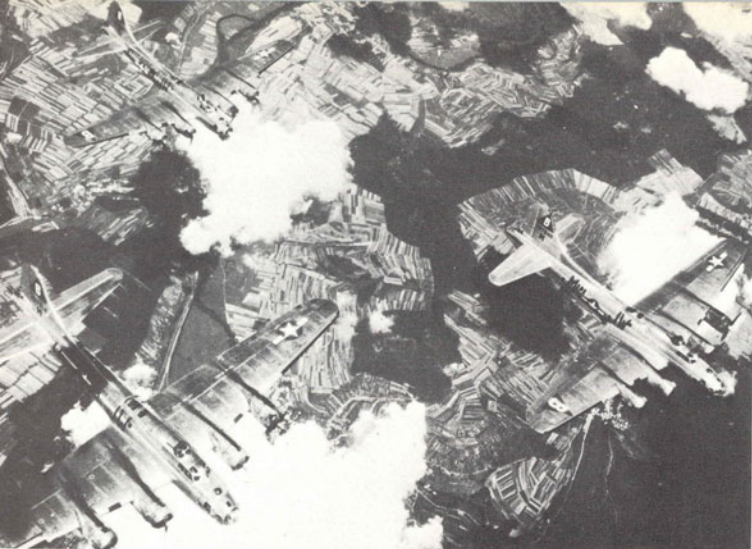
Most B-17 Groups occupied one particular base during their career with the 8th Air Force.

A few, especially in the early days of the 8th Air Force, moved from one base to another, but the bases mentioned are those at which the Groups spent most of their operational time.

THE MEDITERRANEAN THEATRE OF OPERATIONS

The 12th AIR FORCE

From November 1942 until November 1943, the four B-17 Groups in this theatre were commanded by the 12th Air Force. Two Groups, the 97th and 301st, had come to North Africa from the 8th Air Force, while two more, the 2nd



A formation of B-17Gs of the 92nd BG on their way to attack an oil refinery in France. The Forts are in the markings typical of those in use shortly before the application of the full colour markings of the 1st Air Division. (James C. Field)

and 99th, were added in the spring of 1943.

At first, the 97th and 301st used no Group markings, and their aircraft used only the olive drab/grey camouflage scheme, with medium green blotching on some aircraft. The olive drab paint became weathered and faded somewhat in the desert conditions.

When the 2nd and 99th Groups were added in the spring of 1943, the 5th Bombardment Wing was assigned as controlling organisation of 12th Air Force bombing operations. The four Bomb Groups, the 2nd, 97th, 99th and 301st then painted a small hollow geometric symbol on the fin above the serial number. This was in yellow paint. These symbols were, 2nd Group a circle; 97th Group a triangle; 99th Group a diamond; and 301st Group a square.

A method was found to indicate the squadron within each Group and was carried on in later service with the 15th Air Force, and will be mentioned in that section.

While serving with the 12th Air Force, the four B-17 Groups attacked targets all over the western Mediterranean.

These were often tactical in nature, and included railyards, harbours, airfields and similar installations. Among these were the attacks on the Rome railyards on 24 July 1943.

On 1 November 1943, the 5th Wing, with its four B-17 Groups came under the command of the 15th Air Force, and the 12th Air Force remained as purely a tactical force in support of the ground forces in Italy.

THE 15th AIR FORCE

The 15th Air Force was formed on 1 November 1943 to control all heavy bomber operations, and to act as a Strategic Air Force to attack Germany and German controlled territory from the south. On its formation, the Fifteenth had four B-17 Groups, and two B-24 Groups. By the spring of 1944 it had moved its units to bases in Southern Italy, and it had grown to 21 Bomber Groups, six of which were B-17 Flying Fortresses.

At first, the B-17s continued with the markings they had used in the 12th Air Force. During the spring of 1944, two more Groups were added from the USA, the 463rd and 483rd. These two Groups each had a number of natural metal finish aircraft, which were the first seen in large numbers in the theatre.

Previous natural metal aircraft had been in small numbers, arriving as replacements to the other four B-17 Groups.

With the arrival of these two Groups, the marking system was revised. All six B-17 Groups used the letter "Y" as a marking. (Y was not used by any of the Eighth's Bomb Groups.) The background upon which the "Y" was painted identified the Group.

The four original Groups used their existing symbols, enlarged so that the "Y" could be painted on it. The 463rd used a 60° segment of a circle, while the 483rd used the "Y" with a star below the lower arm of the "Y". On olive drab aircraft the background to the "Y" was white, and the "Y" itself was black or insignia blue. On natural metal finish aircraft the background was black and the "Y" white, or left natural metal. The "Y" and star of the 483rd Group was black or white, depending on whether the aircraft was natural metal or olive drab finish.

During the summer of 1944, three groups, the 97th, 99th and 483rd began to paint the "Y" in the appropriate Group background upon the upper surface of the tail plane. At about this time the 2nd Group began to use an outline circle with its "Y", and the whole device was in one colour, black on natural metal and white on olive drab finish aircraft. The next change was in the 301st Group, which discontinued the use of the square background. The "Y" was now painted directly on to the fin, and a large figure four was painted below the serial number. This presumably indicated that the 301st Group was the fourth Group to be added to the 5th Bomb Wing.

Still later, in the few weeks immediately before the cessation

Interesting shot of a B-40, the escort fighter version of the B-17, this particular B-17 was operated by the 327th BS of the 92nd BG.
(USAF via R. J. Francillon)



of hostilities, the six B-17 Groups had begun to use coloured tail surfaces to augment the code letters on the fin. There follows a summary of each Group's markings at VE-Day.

5th Bomb Wing, 15th Air Force

2nd Group. Code "Y" in an outlined circle. Squadrons denoted in a varied fashion as follows:

- 20 BS, at first no markings, later a yellow fin tip.
- 49 BS, a device similar to a capital "T".
- 96 BS, a letter "v", with a wide angle between the bars of the "v".
- 429 BS, a key shaped bar, with three angled limbs.

Later colour markings were added—these were a blue chordwise band outboard of the engines, thinly outlined in white on olive drab aircraft. Insignia blue rudders and elevators as well. In addition the 429th BS had a white band on its rudders as well, and reversed the colours on olive drab aircraft, i.e. white rudder, blue band. The 2nd was based at Amendola.

97th Group. "Y" in a triangle. Squadrons represented by the last digit of their number, which was painted in black on a white circle on olive drab finish aircraft, below the serial number. In the earliest days this single digit was painted directly on to the olive drab paint of the fin. When natural metal finish aircraft arrived the triangles remained white and the "Y" black. In the summer of 1944 the triangle "Y" marking was repeated on the tail plane upper surfaces, with the point of the triangle forward.

In the last few weeks of the war, some B-17s of this Group began to wear red rudder markings.

These were painted on to the silver rudder fabric and included diagonal red bars on several 414 BS aircraft, and red/silver check rudders on several 341 BS aircraft.

97th Group codes were 0=340 BS, 1=341 BS, 2=342 BS, 4=414 BS. Base Amendola.

99th Group. "Y" in a diamond. White diamond, black "Y" on olive drab aircraft, black diamond and white or natural metal "Y" on natural metal finish aircraft. Squadrons in the 99th Group distinguished by use of Roman numerals I, II, III, IV, denoting 346, 347, 348, 416 BS respectively. From mid-1944, the diamond "Y" was repeated on the upper surface of the tail plane. From early 1945, two wide black bands added to the rudders, fuselage, and elevators. Base, Tortorella.

301st Group. "Y" in a square at first, when natural metal finish aircraft became predominant the square background was dispensed with, and the "Y" painted in black straight on to the natural metal fin, directly above the serial number. When this plain "Y" appeared, the number four, directly below the serial number also identified 301st Bomb Group within the 5th Wing.

The squadrons were identified with two distinct systems. When the "Y" with a square background was used, a number 1, 2, 3, or 4 appeared below the serial.

These represented the 32, 352, 353, 419 BS respectively.

When the plain "Y" and numeral four were used to identify 301 Bomb Group, the squadrons were identified by the plain letter A, B, C, or D on the spine of the aircraft, thus identifying the 32, 352, 353, or 419 BS respectively.

From early 1945 the rudders and elevators were painted bright green as a tail colour marking. Base, Lucera.

All the four Bomb Groups so far mentioned in the 5th Wing had continued to use their 12th Air Force symbols for a while on joining the 15th Air Force. These symbols were later adapted, as shown, to take the "Y" marking. In the case of the 301st Group, the symbol was dropped, and replaced by a number four. The two following Groups, the 463rd and 483rd, had no ties with the 12th Air Force, and used the letter "Y" as soon as they became operational.

463rd Group. This Group used the letter "Y" on a 60° segment of a circle as a Group identification. This was commonly known as a "pie slice" from its shape. This marking was white with a black "Y" on olive drab aircraft, and black with a white "Y" on natural metal finish. No method of squadron marking is known for this Group. The squadrons were 772, 773, 774 and 775 BS. A curiosity of the 463rd Bomb Group is that many aircraft had their names or humorous drawings, not on the nose as normally, but on the dorsal spine. This feature, in itself, was rare enough to act as a Group identification. From early 1945, the rudders and elevators were painted yellow. Base, Celone.

483rd Group. Group symbol was a "Y" without a background. Instead, a small star was added below the "Y". As most of the B-17s were natural metal finish, the "Y" and star were normally black. No identification was used to identify squadrons which were 815, 816, 817, and 840 BS. (840 BS earlier numbered 818.) By early 1945 the rudder and elevator were being painted bright red. Base, Sterparone.

These six Bomb Groups made up the B-17 element of the 15th Air Force. Although small in number compared to that organization's Liberator complement, the B-17s of the Fifteenth carried out many hazardous operations, which included the first shuttle raid to Russia, the raid on Berlin on 24 March 1945, and the rescue of the allied prisoners of war from Rumania.

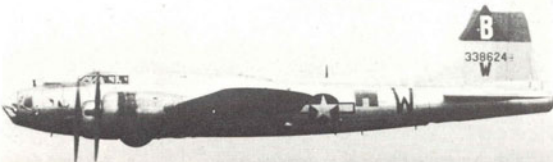
As can be seen, the B-17s biggest part was played in the rugged war in Europe, against the Luftwaffe.

The tough and rugged airframe of the B-17 Flying Fortress was at its best when pitted against the equally tough and rugged Festung Europa, and the decision to virtually withdraw the B-17 from the Pacific Combat operations was probably correct. After 1943 the B-17 had only a small specialized part in the Pacific, mainly on air-sea rescue and transport duties. In Europe however, bombing operations continued almost daily, stopped only by the weather.

Of the 12,731 B-17s built, by far the greatest number were used against Nazi Germany in one or other of the Groups, whose colour schemes have been detailed above. The B-17 was, indeed, a "Flying Fortress".

For several years after the war, the aircraft of these Groups stood in long rows in airfields designated as storage areas until they could be scrapped. The coloured tail markings stood out vividly against the background of natural metal. Curiously, the red markings of the 93rd Wing weathered least well, and were often scoured away by the wind and rain. Other paints, such as yellow with a high varnish content, wore better and lasted until the planes were scrapped in the early 1950s.

A B-17G of the 92nd BG in late war markings, the absence of turrets probably indicates this aircraft was used in the transport role shortly after VE-Day.
(R. J. Francillon)

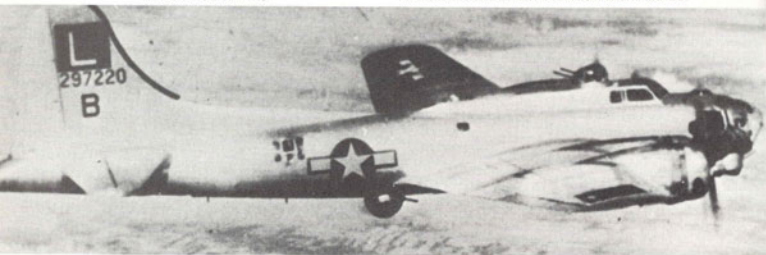




Note the position of the code, QJ, on this B-17G of the 96th BG, 337th B.S.



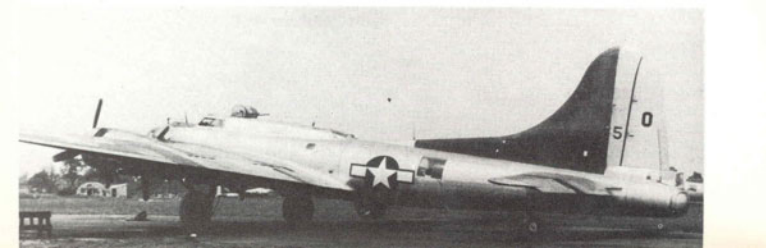
In the complete red markings of 1945, a B-17G of the 339th BS. Note this aircraft also carries a red nose band, unusual in 96th BG.



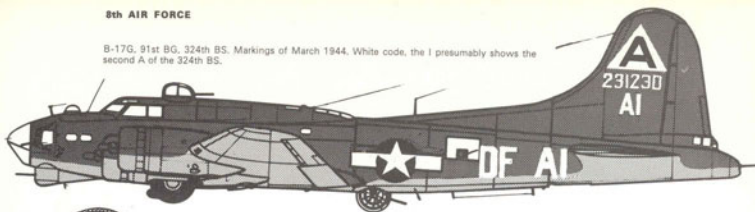
Above: A B-17G of the 452nd BG on the shuttle raid to Russia, Operation "Francis", 21 June 1944. Typical of the markings of the 3rd Air Division in the early summer of 1944. (USAF)

Left: "Mon Petit Rouge II" of the 452nd BG in markings of March 1944 before the application of full tail colour markings. Photo taken on 28 March 1944 on the way to attack German targets at Chateaudun France. (USAF via R. J. Francillon)

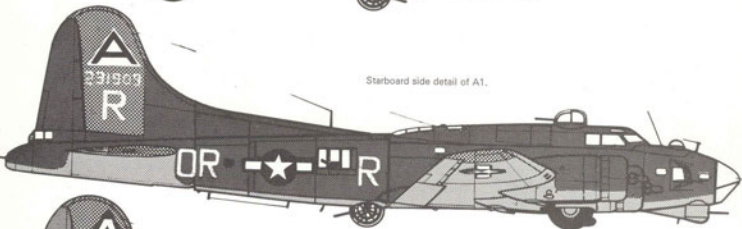
Below: B-17G of the 34th BG showing the red tail and wing markings of this group in September 1944. The serial has been overpainted. (via E. A. Munday)



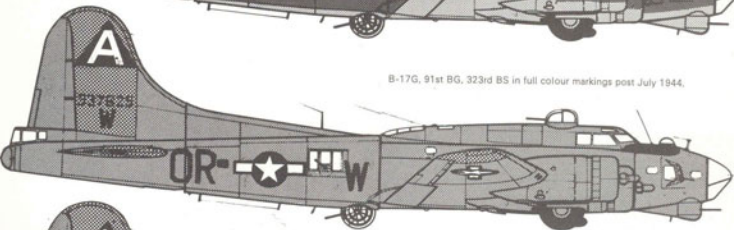
B-17G, 91st BG, 324th BS. Markings of March 1944. White code, the I presumably shows the second A of the 324th BS.



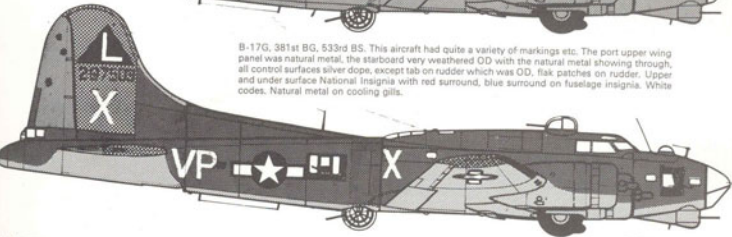
Starboard side detail of AI.



B-17G, 91st BG, 323rd BS in full colour markings post July 1944.

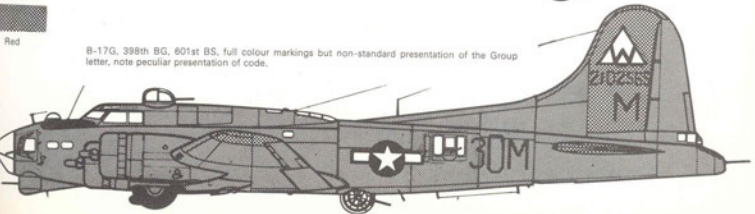


B-17G, 381st BG, 533rd BS. This aircraft had quite a variety of markings etc. The port upper wing panel was natural metal, the starboard very weathered OD with the natural metal showing through, all control surfaces silver dope, except tab on rudder which was OD, flak patches on rudder. Upper and under surface National insignia with red surround, blue surround on fuselage insignia. White codes. Natural metal on cooling gills.



Red

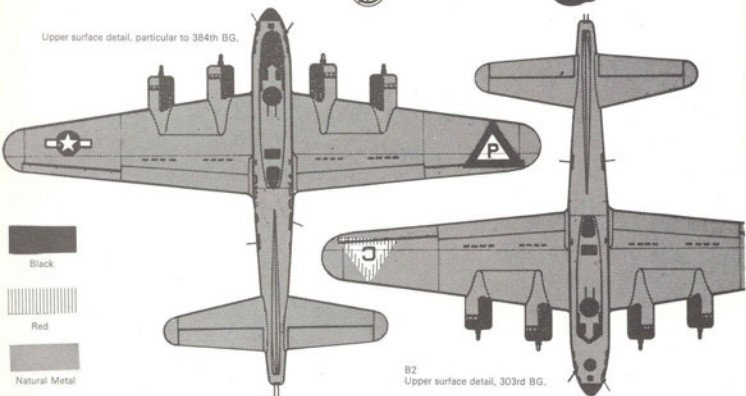
B-17G, 398th BG, 601st BS, full colour markings but non-standard presentation of the Group letter, note peculiar presentation of code.



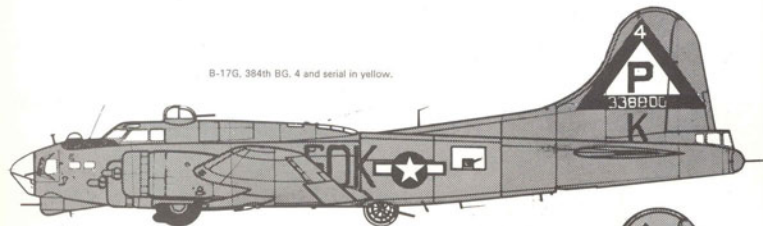
B-17G, 384th BG, 547th BS, black triangle with white centre. Early 1945.



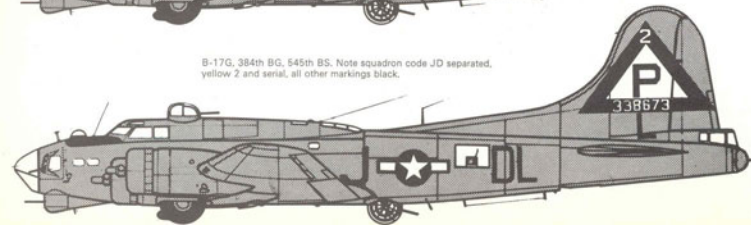
Upper surface detail, particular to 384th BG.

B2
Upper surface detail, 303rd BG.

B-17G, 384th BG, 4 and serial in yellow.



B-17G, 384th BG, 545th BS. Note squadron code JD separated, yellow 2 and serial, all other markings black.



C3 Upper surface detail, 447th BG.

C1 Upper surface detail, 447th BG.

Olive Drab

Yellow

Natural Metal

C5 Under surface detail, 487th BG.

Under surface detail, 447th BG.

C4 Under surface detail, 486th BG.



Green

C4 Upper surface detail, 486th BG.

D1 Upper surface detail, note non-standard presentation of B, 95th BG.

C5 Upper surface detail, 487th BG.

Red

Black

Dark Blue

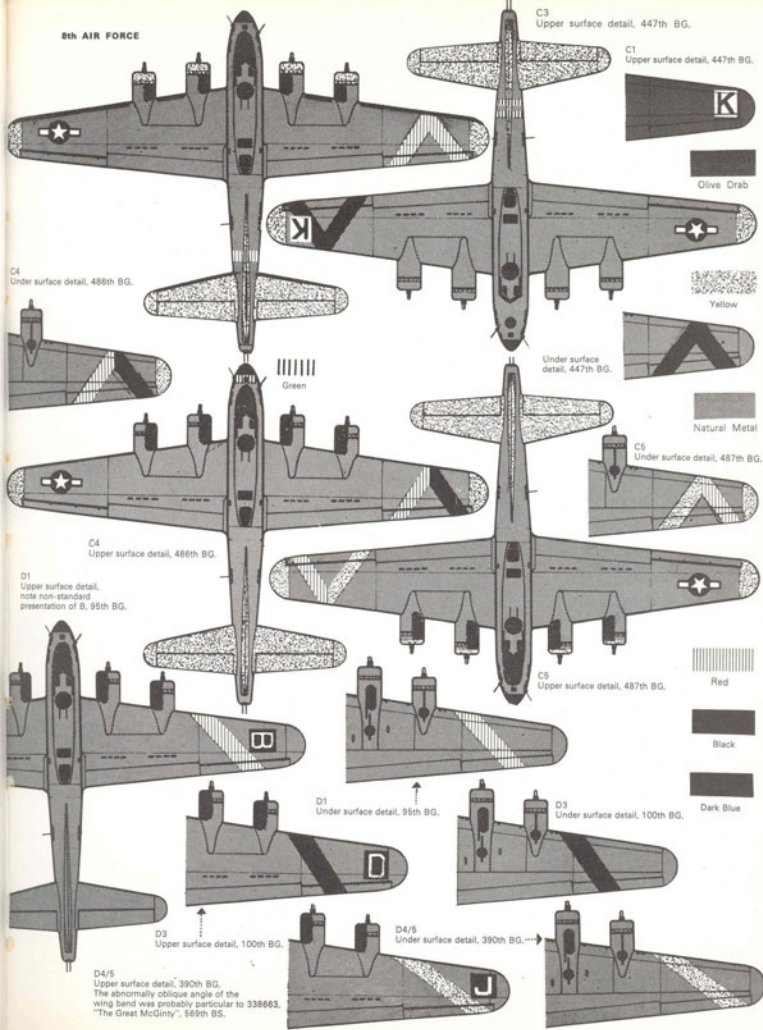
D1 Under surface detail, 95th BG.

D3 Under surface detail, 100th BG.

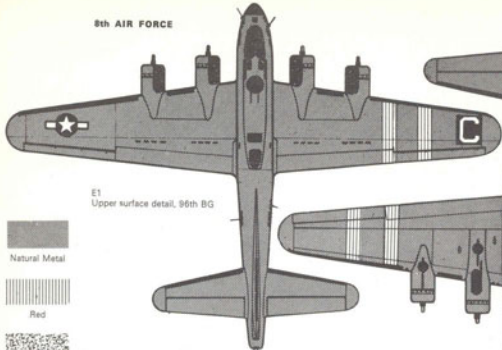
D3 Upper surface detail, 100th BG.

D4/5 Under surface detail, 390th BG.

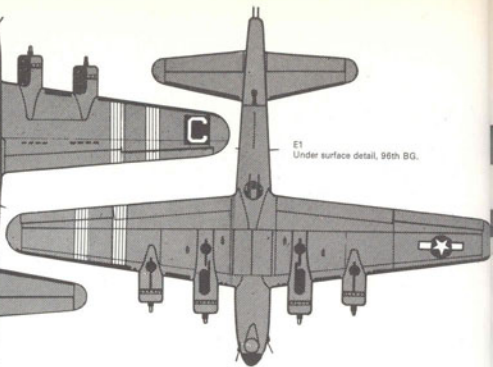
D4/5 Upper surface detail, 390th BG. The abnormally oblique angle of the wing band was probably particular to 338663, "The Great McGinty", 569th BS.



8th AIR FORCE



E1
Upper surface detail, 96th BG.



E1
Under surface detail, 96th BG.



Natural Metal



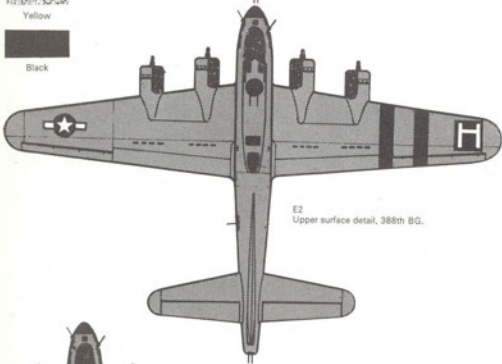
Red



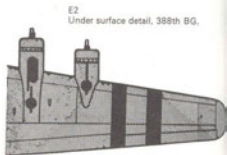
Yellow



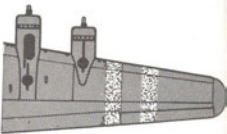
Black



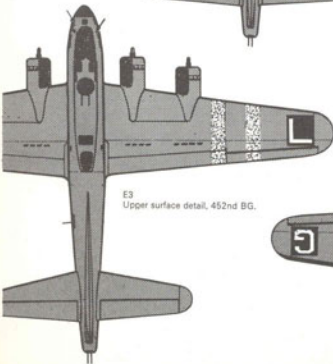
E2
Upper surface detail, 388th BG.



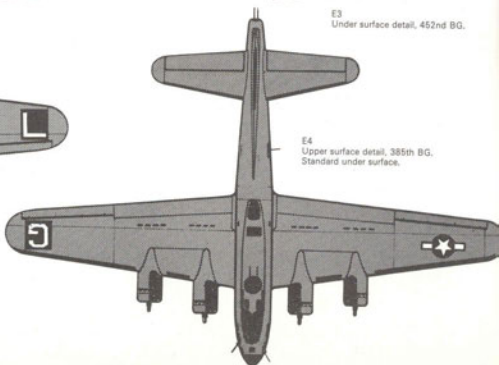
E2
Under surface detail, 388th BG.



E3
Under surface detail, 452nd BG.



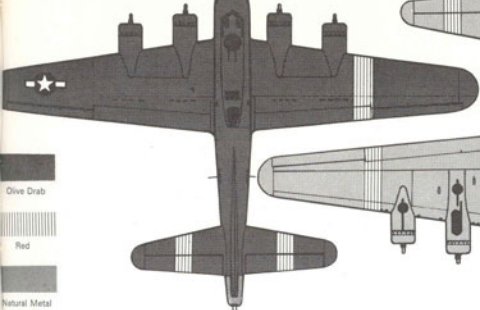
E3
Upper surface detail, 452nd BG.



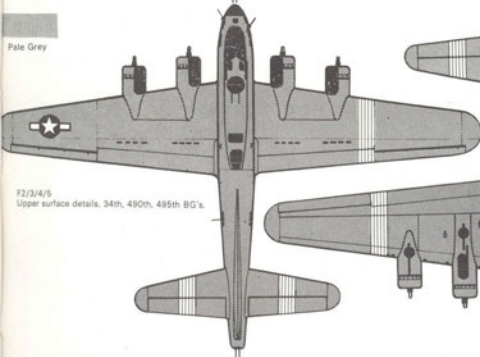
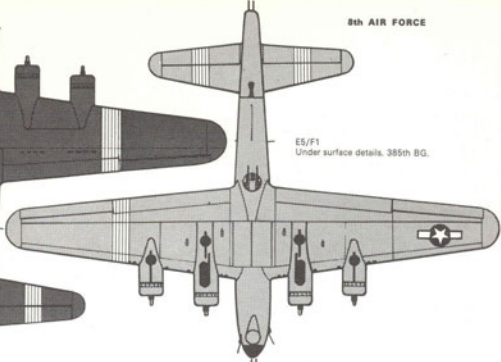
E4
Upper surface detail, 385th BG.
Standard under surface.

E5/F1
Upper surface details identical except
for OD and NM colour schemes. 385th BG.

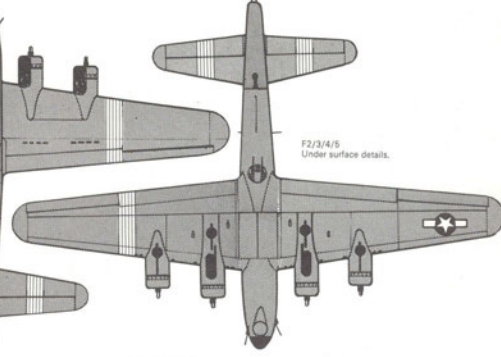
8th AIR FORCE



E5/F1
Under surface details. 385th BG.



F2/3/4/5
Upper surface details. 34th, 490th, 495th BG's.



F2/3/4/5
Under surface details.

B-17 BOMB GROUPS

8th AIR FORCE

1st Air Division

		Squadrons			
1st Bomb Wing					
81st Bomb Group	A	322-LG; 323-OR; 324-DF; 401-LL.			
381st Bomb Group	L	532-VE; 533-VP; 534-GD; 535-MS.			
398th Bomb Group	W	600-NB; 601-JO; 602-KB; 603-N7.			
40th Bomb Wing					
52nd Bomb Group	B	325-NV; 326-JV; 327-LX; 407-PY.			
305th Bomb Group	G	364-WF; 365-XX; 366-KY; 422-JJ.			
308th Bomb Group	H	367-GY; 368-BO; 369-WW; 423-RD.			
41st Bomb Wing					
303rd Bomb Group	C	358-VK; 359-BN; 360-PU; 427-GN.			
379th Bomb Group	K	524-WA; 525-FR; 526-LF; 527-FO.			
394th Bomb Group	P	544-SU; 545-JD; 546-BK; 547-SO.			
94th Bomb Wing					
351st Bomb Group	J	508-YB; 509-RQ; 510-TU; 511-DS.			
401st Bomb Group	S	612-SC; 613-IN; 614-IW; 615-IY.			
457th Bomb Group	U	748-**; 749-**; 750-**; 751-**.			

* No Codes used.

† 486 and 487 Bomb Groups re-equipped with B-17 summer 1944.

‡ 34; 490 and 493 Bomb Groups re-equipped with B-17 summer 1944.

No Codes used by 15th Air Force.

3rd Air Division

4th Bomb Wing

94th Bomb Group	A	331-DE; 332-XM; 333-TS; 410-GL.
447th Bomb Group	K	708-**; 709-**; 710-**; 711-**.
1486th Bomb Group	W	832-3R; 833-4N; 834-2S; 835-HB.
1487th Bomb Group	P	836-2G; 837-4F; 838-2C; 839-RS.

13th Bomb Wing

95th Bomb Group	B	334-BG; 335-DE; 336-ET; 412-OW.
100th Bomb Group	D	349-XR; 350-LN; 351-EP; 418-LD.
390th Bomb Group	J	568-BI; 569-CC; 570-DI; 571-FC.

46th Bomb Wing

96th Bomb Group	C	337-GJ; 338-BX; 339-AW; 413-MZ.
388th Bomb Group	H	560-**; 561-**; 562-**; 563-**.
452nd Bomb Group	L	728-**; 729-**; 730-**; 731-**.

93rd Bomb Wing

134th Bomb Group	*	7-**; 8-**; 18-**; 391-**.
385th Bomb Group	*	548-**; 549-**; 550-**; 551-**.
1450th Bomb Group	*	848-**; 849-**; 850-**; 851-**.
1493rd Bomb Group	*	860-**; 861-**; 862-**; 863-**.

15th AIR FORCE

5th Bomb Wing

2nd Bomb Group	20; 49; 96; 429.
97th Bomb Group	340; 341; 342; 414.
89th Bomb Group	346; 347; 348; 416.
301st Bomb Group	32; 352; 353; 419.
463rd Bomb Group	772; 773; 774; 775.
483rd Bomb Group	815; 816; 817; 840.

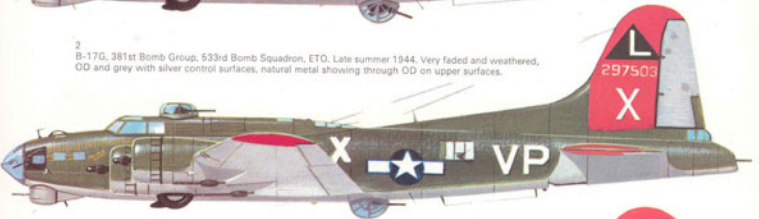


40 Olive drab B-17s bombing the airfield at Amiens-Clissy, France on 31 August 1943. (USAF)

1
Boeing B-17G Flying Fortress, 81st Bomb Group, 323rd Bomb Squadron, ETO. Late summer of 1944, this aircraft flew at least 125 missions without abort. Cheyenne turret fitted early 1945.



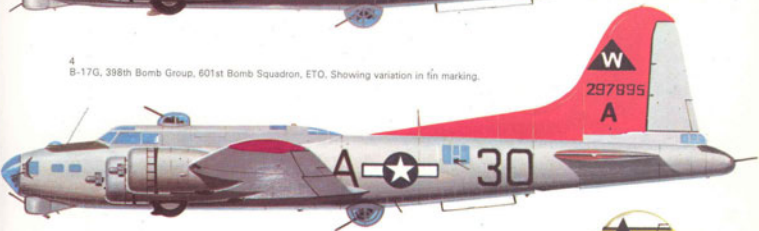
2
B-17G, 381st Bomb Group, 533rd Bomb Squadron, ETO. Late summer 1944. Very faded and weathered, OD and grey with silver control surfaces, natural metal showing through OD on upper surfaces.



3
B-17G, 398th Bomb Group, 602nd Bomb Squadron, ETO. Early 1945.



4
B-17G, 398th Bomb Group, 601st Bomb Squadron, ETO. Showing variation in fin marking.



5
B-17G, 306th Bomb Group, ETO. Spring 1945.



1
B-17G, 378th Bomb Group, ETO, Early 1945.



2
B-17G, 303rd Bomb Group, 358th Bomb Squadron, ETO, Early 1945.



3
B-17G, 351st Bomb Group, 509th Bomb Squadron, ETO, Early summer 1944. Typical of B-17s in use early summer of 1944, just prior to the full colour markings coming into use.



4
B-17G, 401st Bomb Group, 615th Bomb Squadron, ETO, February 1944.



5
B-17G, 457th Bomb Group, ETO, Spring 1945.



8th AIR FORCE

1
B-17G, 447th Bomb Group, ETO, Early 1944.



2
B-17G, 94th Bomb Group, ETO, Spring 1945.



3
B-17G, 447th Bomb Group, ETO, Spring 1945.



4
B-17G, 486th Bomb Group, 835th Bomb Squadron, ETO. Green was the squadron colour. Spring 1945.



5
B-17G, 487th Bomb Group, 837th Bomb Squadron, ETO. Yellow half cowis not standard on all aircraft.



8th AIR FORCE

1
B-17G, 95th Bomb Group, 336th Bomb Squadron, ETO, Spring 1945.



2
B-17F, 100th Bomb Group, 418th Bomb Squadron, ETO, September 1943. All white areas have been dulled to pale grey.



3
B-17G, 100th Bomb Group, 351st Bomb Squadron, ETO, Early 1945.



4
B-17G, 390th Bomb Group, 569th Bomb Squadron, ETO, Spring 1945.



5
B-17G, 390th Bomb Group, 571st Bomb Squadron, ETO. Non-standard application of marking on fin and rudder. Spring 1945.



8th AIR FORCE

1

B-17G, 96th Bomb Group, 413th Bomb Squadron, ETO, Spring 1945.



2

B-17G, 388th Bomb Group, ETO. Note high cross-bar to H, a 388th trademark. This aircraft was used to evacuate POW's after VE-Day, Spring 1945.



3

B-17G, 452nd Bomb Group, ETO, Spring 1945.



4

B-17G, 385th Bomb Group, ETO. Early summer 1944. Before 385th went from 4th Wing to 93rd Wing.



5

B-17G, 385th Bomb Group, ETO, Spring 1945. After transfer to 93rd Wing.



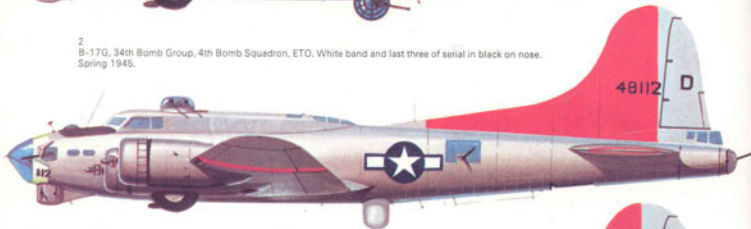
8th AIR FORCE

F

1
B-17G, 385th Bomb Group, ETO, Early (after February) 1945.



2
B-17G, 34th Bomb Group, 4th Bomb Squadron, ETO. White band and last three of serial in black on nose. Spring 1945.



3
B-17G, 34th Bomb Group, 4th Bomb Squadron, ETO. Variation in colour marking. Spring 1945.



4
B-17G, 490th Bomb Group, ETO. Spring 1945. Survived war, scrapped in USA.



5
B-17G, 493rd Bomb Group, 860th Bomb Squadron, ETO. Spring 1945.



15th AIR FORCE

1
B-17G, 2nd Bomb Group, 429th Bomb Squadron, Italy, Early 1945.



2
B-17F, 97th Bomb Group, 340th Bomb Squadron, Italy, 97th markings superimposed over older 2nd BG markings. Typical of B-17s in late 12th and early 15th Air Force days.



3
B-17G, 97th Bomb Group, 414th Bomb Squadron, Italy, Late 1944-1945.



4
B-17G, 97th Bomb Group, 340th Bomb Squadron, Italy, Late 1944-1945.

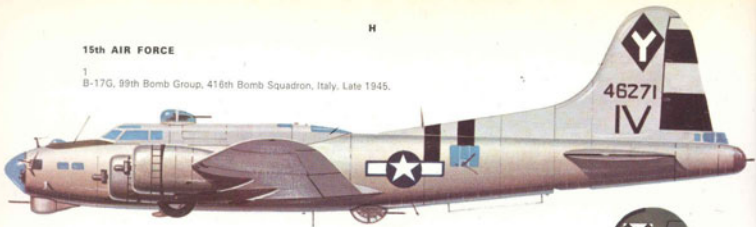


5
B-17G, 99th Bomb Group, 348th Bomb Squadron, Italy.



15th AIR FORCE

1
B-17G, 99th Bomb Group, 416th Bomb Squadron, Italy, Late 1945.



2
B-17F, 301st Bomb Group, 353rd Bomb Squadron, Italy, 301st markings superimposed over earlier 99th BG markings. 3=3rd squadron.



3
B-17G, 301st Bomb Group, 353rd Bomb Squadron, Italy, C=3rd squadron.



4
B-17G, 463rd Bomb Group, Italy, Early 1945. Fin illustrations peculiar to the 463rd BG.

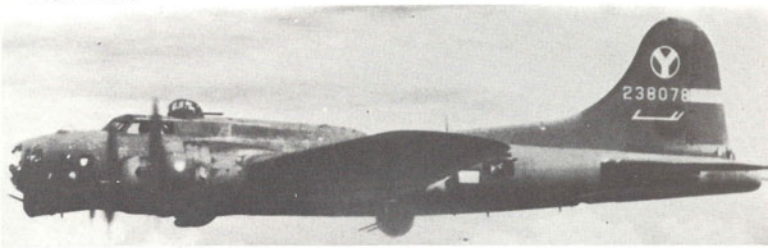


5
B-17G, 483rd Bomb Group, Italy, Early 1945.





Above: B17Gs of the 2nd BG, 49th BS, 15th AF over Bleckhammer, Germany, 7 July 1944, Standard OD and grey scheme with white Group markings on fin. (USAF)

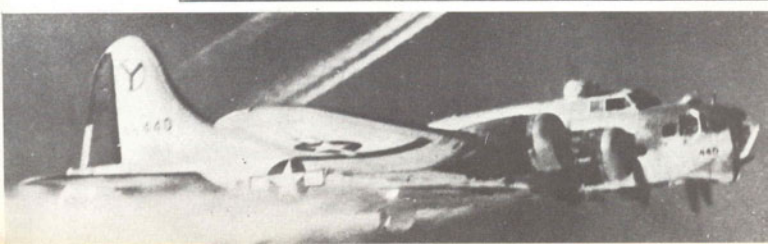
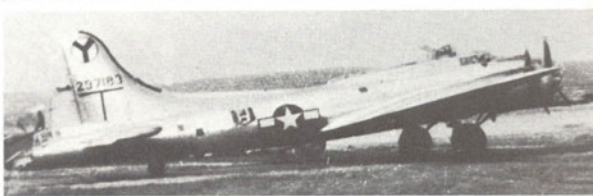


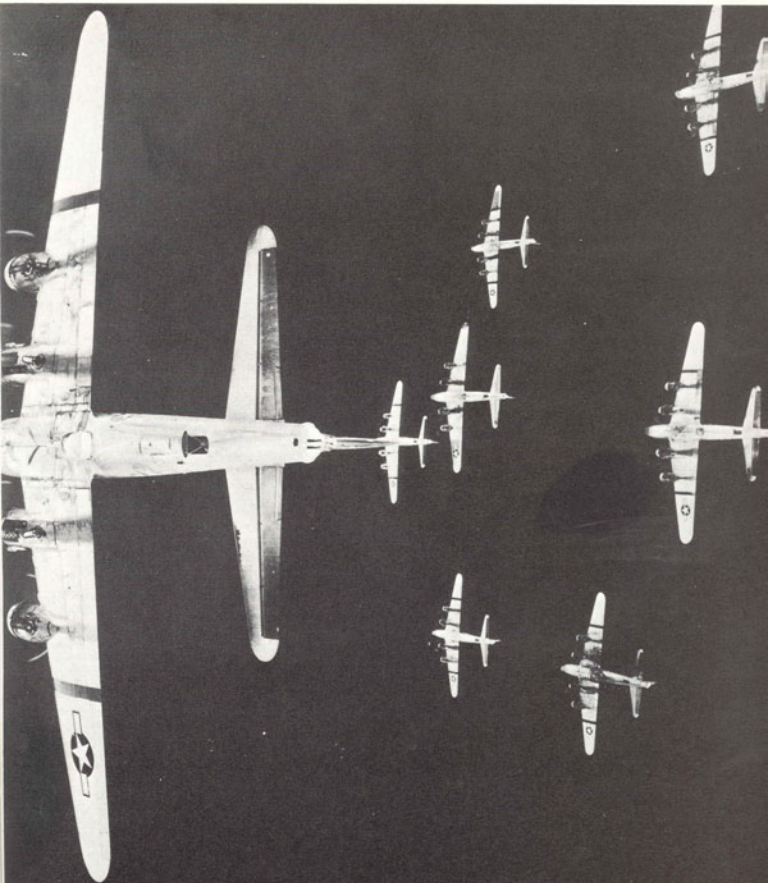
Above: B-17G of the 2nd BG, 429th BS photographed on shuttle mission to Russia. This aircraft previously flew with the 301st BG whose markings have been painted out on the fin. (USAF)

A NM B-17G of the 2nd BG, 49th BS in the markings of the late summer of 1944.

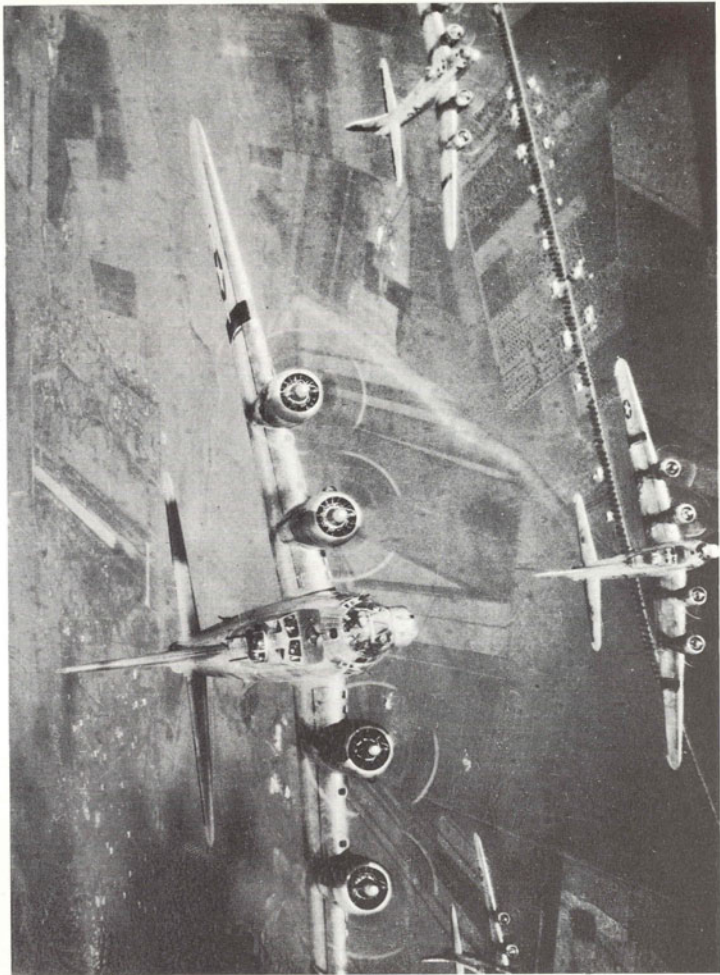
(via E. R. McDowell)

Below: B-17G of the 2nd BG illustrating the blue rudder and wing bands.





Late war photographs of the 2nd BIG showing the dark blue wing bands and elevators, lowest aircraft below has the Group symbol on port and starboard tailplanes. (USAF via R. J. Francillon)

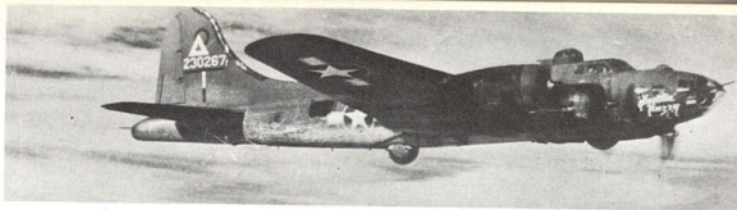




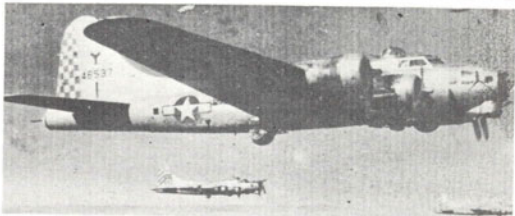
Above: "Kwiturbitchin" of the 97th BG, 414th BS returning home from an attack on German installations in Northern Italy. (USAF)

Below: Fortresses of the 97th BG, 340th BS heading for the rail marshalling yards at Linz, Austria. (USAF)



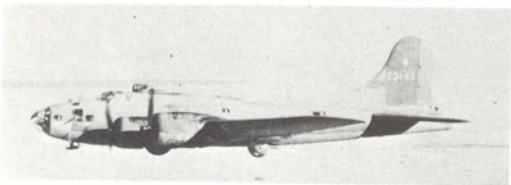


Above: B-17F showing early 97th BG, 340th BS markings over older 2nd BG markings. (USAF)

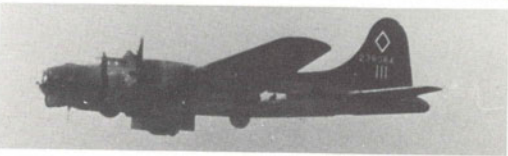


Right: B-17Gs of the 97th BG, 341st BS with red checks, 414th BS with red diagonal stripes. (via E. A. Munday)

Right: B-17F showing a very early presentation of the 99th BG diamond. The 99th operated with the 12th Air Force from March to November 1943. (via E. A. Munday)

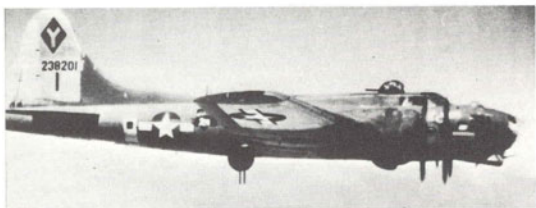


Right: OD and grey B-17G of the 99th BG, 348th BS.

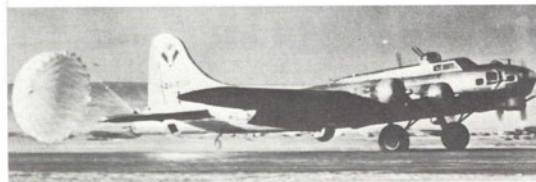


Below: "Yankee Doodle" of the 99th BG, 347th BS. Note the bars and surround have only recently been applied to the National Insignia. (USAF)





Above and two pictures left: "2nd Patches", a B-17G of the 99th BG, 346th BS, an OD aircraft with a large number of NM areas, hence the name, lower photograph illustrates the completed "sharkmouth" on the chin turret. (USAF)



Left: With brakes, electrical system and instrument panel damaged by flak this B-17G of the 99th BG, 346th BS lands safely at its home base in Italy with the tail gunners chute acting as a brake, note the tail gunners door has been jettisoned. Serial 46408.

(USAF via R. J. Francillon)

Below: Faintly visible on the tailplanes of the nearest B-17G are the symbols of the 99th BG. Both Forts are from the 416th BS. (USAF)



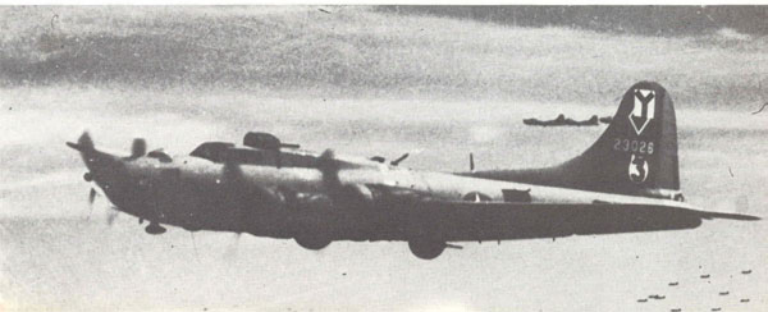


Above: A B-17F of the 301st BG in the markings used prior to March 1944. (USAF via R. J. Francillon)



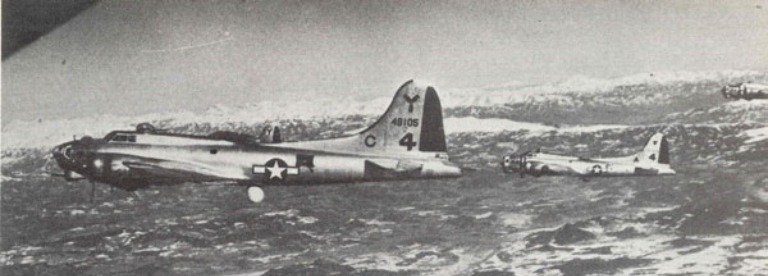
Right: Flak damaged B-17 of either the 352nd BS, 301st BG or 342nd BS 97th BG. (via E. A. Munday)

Below: B-17F of the 301st BG, 353rd BS with earlier 99th BG markings clearly visible. (USAF)





An OD and grey B-17G of the 301st BG, 353rd BS over the Alps. (USAF via R. J. Francillon)



Above: A radar equipped B-17G of the 301st BG, 353rd BS in the markings used during the closing weeks of the war. (USAF)

Below: Hit by flak after completing its bomb run over the Budapest Farenvaros railyards on 14 July 1944. Five crew members baled out but the Fort, believed to be from the 483rd BG went down, crashing on the outskirts of Budapest. (USAF)

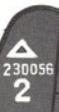


12th AIR FORCE

2nd Bomb Group.



97th Bomb Group.



99th Bomb Group.



99th Bomb Group.



301st Bomb Group.



Dark Olive Drab

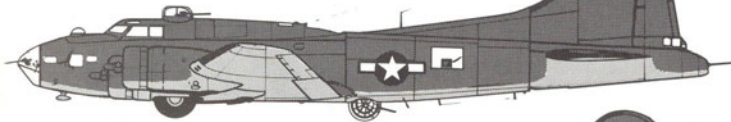


Olive Drab

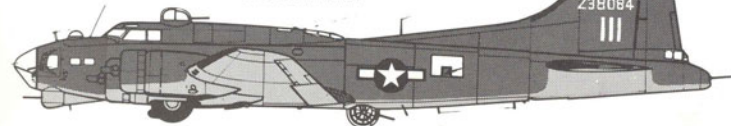


Pale Grey

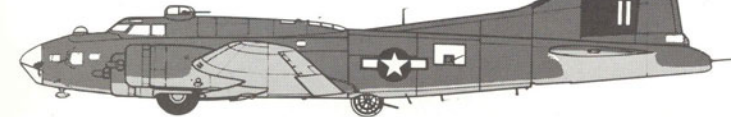
B-17F, 301st BG in markings used prior to March 1944.

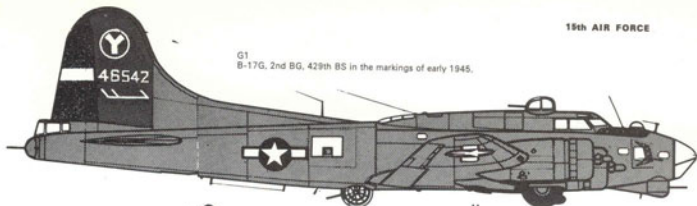


B-17G, 99th BG, 349th BS.

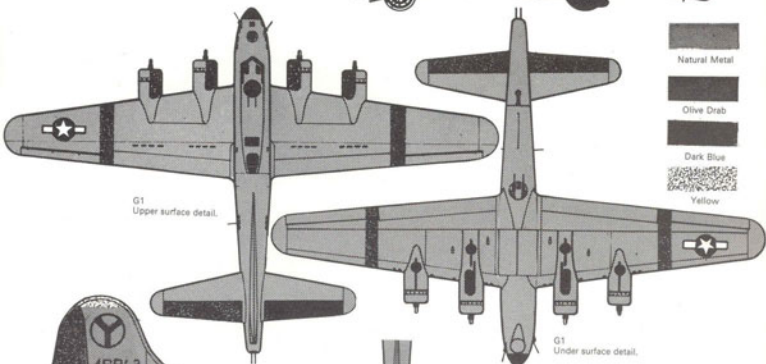


B-17F, 99th BG, 347th BS.



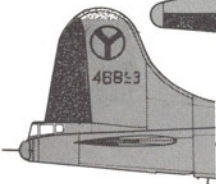


G1
B-17G, 2nd BG, 429th BS in the markings of early 1945.

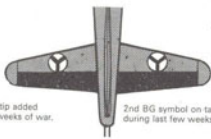


G1
Upper surface detail.

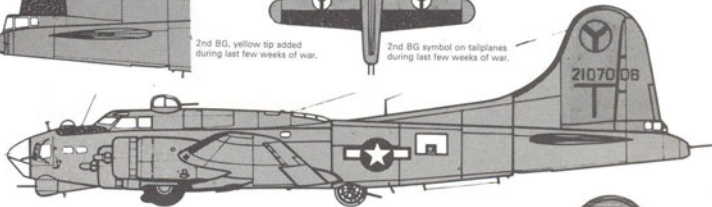
G1
Under surface detail.



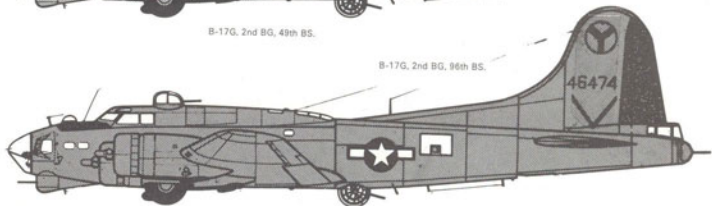
2nd BG, yellow tip added during last few weeks of war.



2nd BG symbol on tailplanes during last few weeks of war.

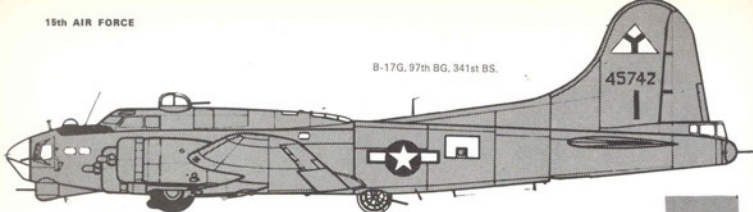


B-17G, 2nd BG, 49th BS.

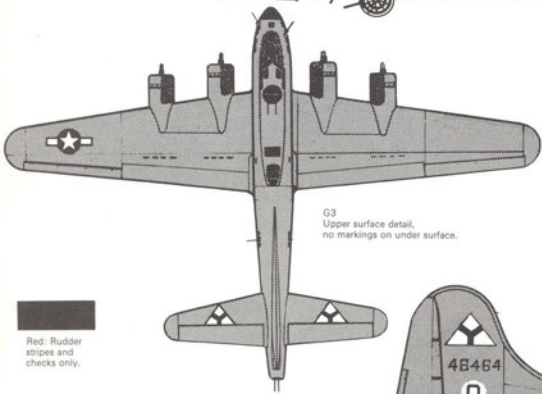
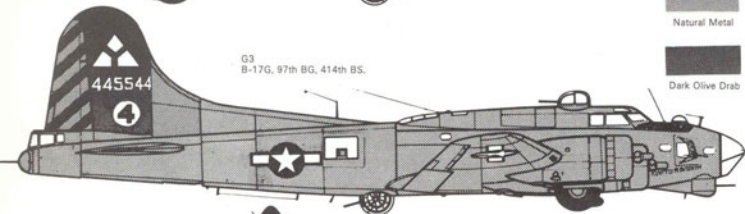


B-17G, 2nd BG, 96th BS.

B-17G, 97th BG, 341st BS.



G3
B-17G, 97th BG, 414th BS.



G3
Upper surface detail,
no markings on under surface.

Red: Rudder
stripes and
checks only.

2nd Bomb Group.



97th Bomb Group.



99th Bomb Group.



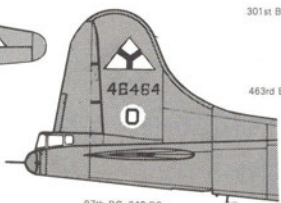
301st Bomb Group.



463rd Bomb Group.



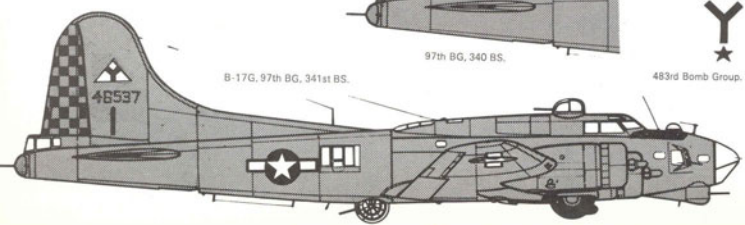
97th BG, 340 BS.



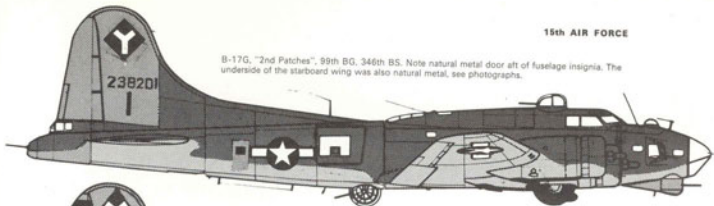
483rd Bomb Group.



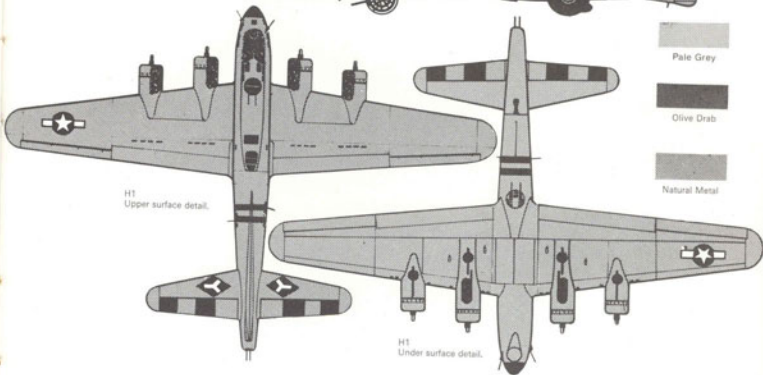
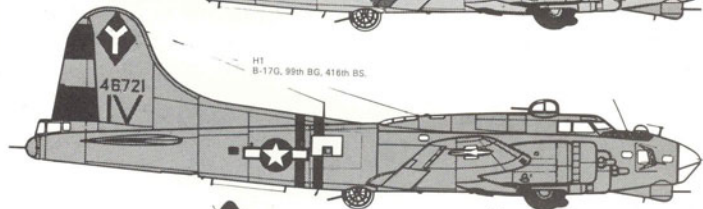
B-17G, 97th BG, 341st BS.



B-17G, "2nd Patches", 99th BG, 346th BS. Note natural metal door aft of fuselage insignia. The underside of the starboard wing was also natural metal, see photographs.

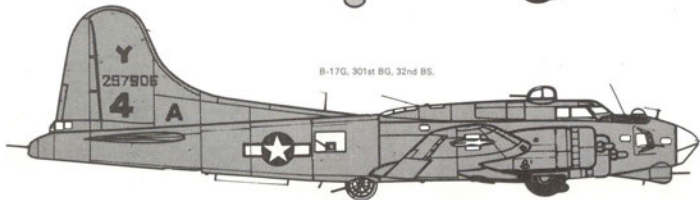
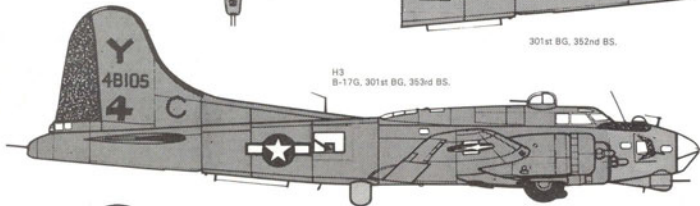
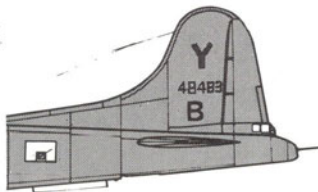
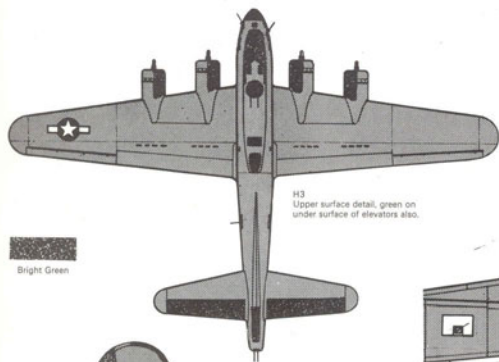
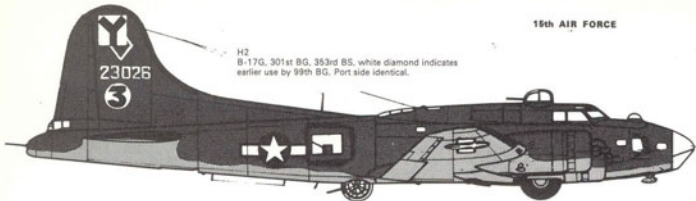


H1
B-17G, 99th BG, 416th BS.

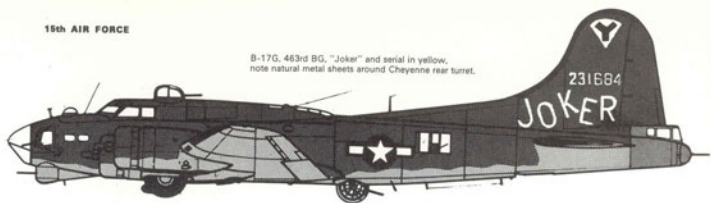


B-17G, 99th BG, 348th BS, markings shown as used after April 1944 until rudder markings appeared.

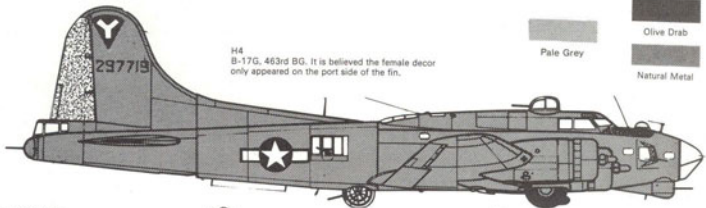
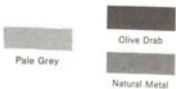




B-17G, 463rd BG, "Joker" and serial in yellow, note natural metal sheets around Cheyenne rear turret.

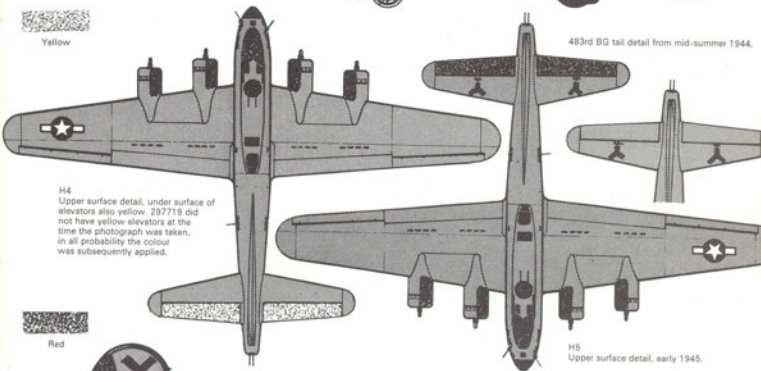


H4
B-17G, 463rd BG. It is believed the female decor only appeared on the port side of the fin.



Yellow

463rd BG tail detail from mid-summer 1944.



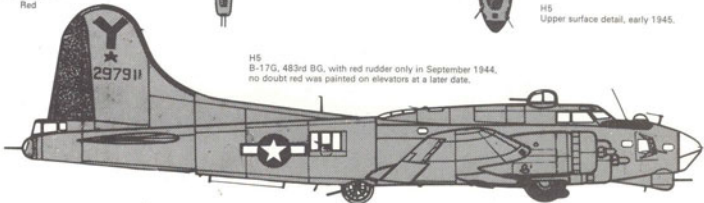
H4
Upper surface detail, under surface of elevators also yellow. 297719 did not have yellow elevators at the time the photograph was taken, in all probability the colour was subsequently applied.

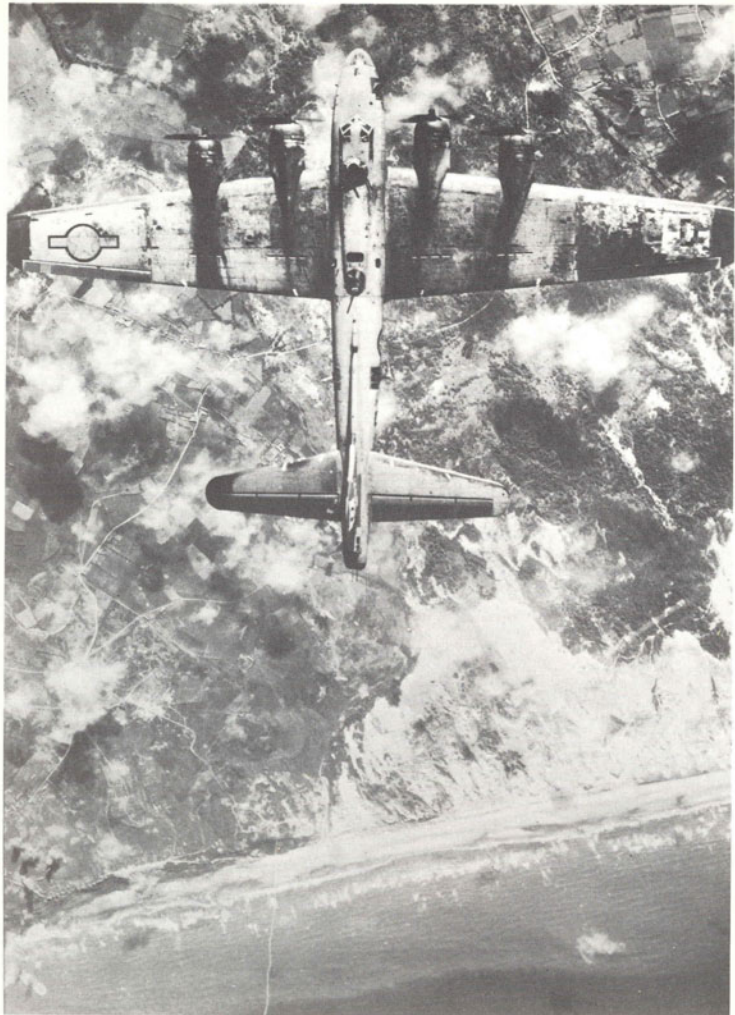
H5
Upper surface detail, early 1945.



Red

H5
B-17G, 483rd BG, with red rudder only in September 1944, no doubt red was painted on elevators at a later date.





A Fortress of the 100th Bomb Group attacking German coastal fortifications on the outskirts of Boulogne on D-Day minus one. Note the very weathered appearance of this B-17G. (USAF)



Above: "Yankee Doodle", a B-17E of the 97th Bomb Group in two tone green camouflage on the upper surfaces, early national insignia and US ARMY in black on wing under surfaces.

Right: Many of the early B-17E's and F's were camouflaged in Medium Green and Olive Drab to a pattern closely following that used by the RAF.

Below: Close-up nose detail of "Yankee Doodle". (Photos USAF)



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- 4 Supermarine Spitfire Mk. I/XVI, Merlin Engine
- 5 North American P-51B/C Mustang
- 6 Curtiss (P-40) Kittyhawk Mk. I/IV
- 7 Curtiss P-40 Warhawk
- 8 Supermarine Spitfire—Griffon Engine
- 9 Spad Scouts
- 10 Lockheed P-38 Lightning
- 11 Consolidated B-24 Liberator
- 12 Avro Lancaster
- 13 Nakajima Ki.43
- 14 Republic F/RF-84F
Thunderstreak/Thunderflash
- 15 Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress
- 16 Mitsubishi A6M-Zero-Sen
- 17 North American F-86A/H Sabre Vol. 1
- 18 Nakajima Ki.27/Manshu Ki.79
- 19 Grumman F6F3/5 Hellcat
- 20 Canadair Sabre Mk. I/VI:
Commonwealth Sabre Mk. 30/32 Vol. 2
- 21 Kawasaki Ki.61-I/III Hien/Ki.100
- 22 North American B-25C/H. Mitchell
- 23 Vought F4U-1/7 Corsair
- 24 Hawker Hurricane Mk. I/IV
- 25 Nakajima Ki.44-Ia/Ilb Shoki
- 26 Hawker Hunter
- 27 Douglas A-4 Skyhawk
- 28 De Havilland Mosquito
- 29 Nakajima Ki.84 Hayate

- 30 McDonnell F-4 Phantom
- 31 Vought F-8 Crusader
- 32 Kawasaki Ki.48
- 33 De Havilland Vampire
- 34 North American F-100 Super Sabre
- 35 Mitsubishi G3M-1/2/3
- 36 Douglas A-20 Havoc/Boston
- 37 English Electric Lightning
- 38 Curtiss P-36/Hawk 75/P-40A, B, C.

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Netherlands East Indies Air Force
West German Luftwaffe

Front cover top to bottom, and left to right along bottom:

B-17E, "Yankee Doodle", 97th Bomb Group. Typical shadow shading effect of 1942 vintage. Aircraft used on the Rouen raid on 17 August 1942 the first mission of the 8th Air Force.

Typical B-17F of early 1943, showing squadron codes only, prior to the introduction of Bomb Group codes and symbols on the fin. B-17F, 305th Bomb Group, 422nd Bomb Squadron, 8th Air Force.

B-17F of late 1943. Note addition of Bomb Group code and symbol on fin repeated above starboard wing. Note how the addition of the two white rectangles to the national insignia has encroached on to the squadron code and aircraft letter. B-17F, 384th Bomb Group, 546th Bomb Squadron, 8th Air Force.

Bomb Group tail markings, left to right: 385th Bomb Group, 305th Bomb Group, 447th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force, 463rd Bomb Group, 15th Air Force.