THOR Website Quick Start Guide

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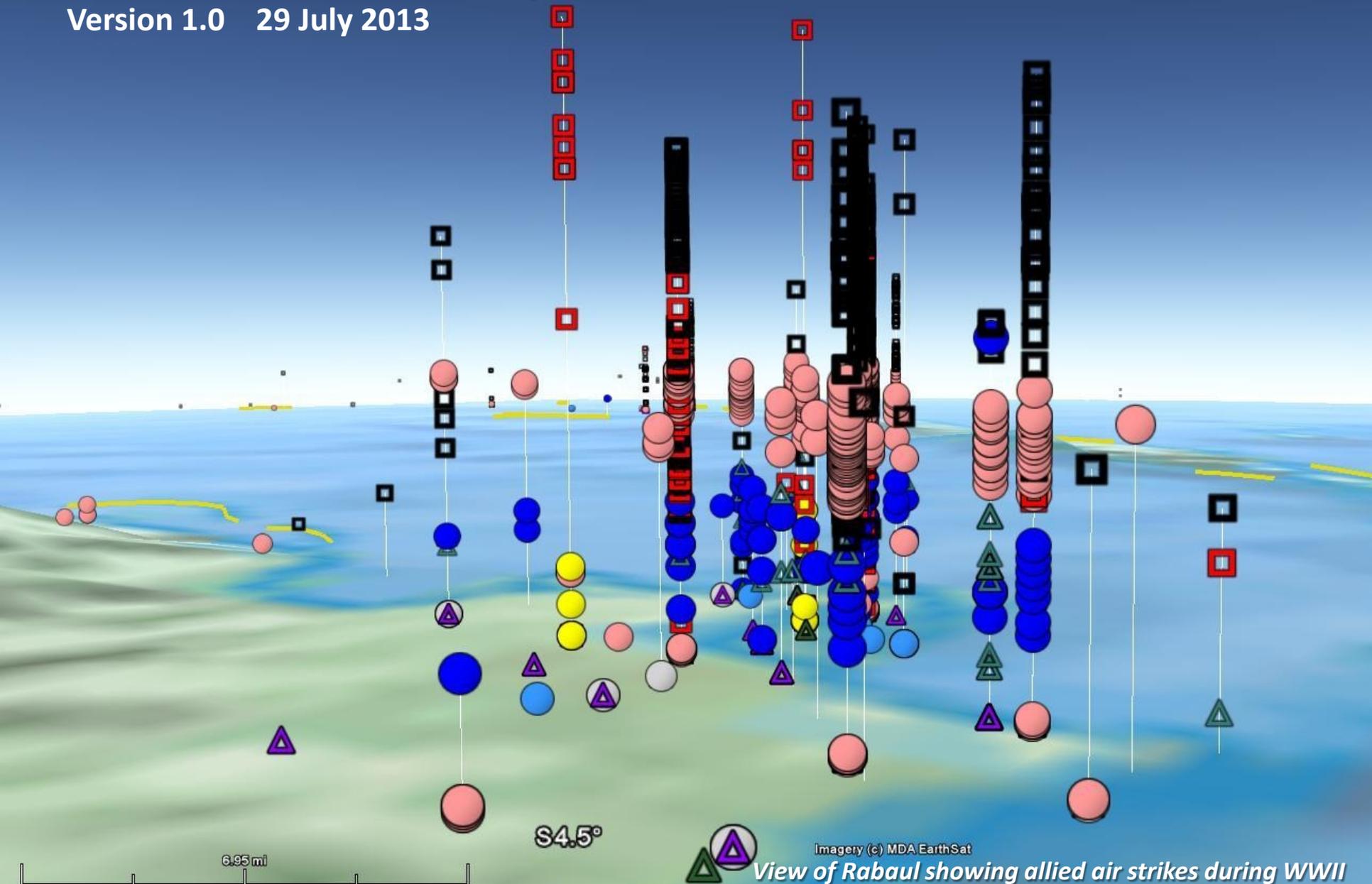
View of Rabaul showing allied air strikes during WWII

Welcome to the *Theater History of Operations Reports* (THOR) Website

You might be asking yourself, so how does this work? This is a quick start guide to walk you through the basics of using the site.

On the opening screen, you are presented with four choices. "Download User Manual" is the button to download this document. If you're not sure what you want to do or you have questions, we have a button for that as well. Let's choose "THOR FAQ's"
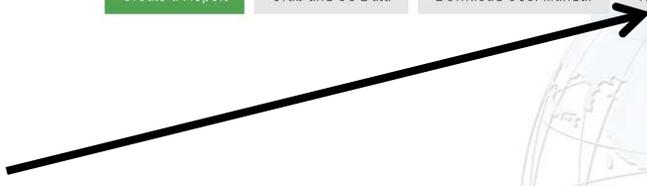

Click here

Asking a Question

We've put together a list of Frequently Asked Questions to handle the most common requests we get from users. We will update the list periodically, as we get feedback, so you might want to check back from time to time. What if your question isn't answered here? Click on the "Contact" button to write us a short note. Please provide a name and email address so we can respond to your request

Click here

THOR
THEATER HISTORY OF OPERATIONS REPORTS

Theater History of Operations Reports   Database   FAQ   Downloads   Contact   Links

FAQ's

Why should I use THOR? What does it provide?

Never before has there been a means of swiftly referencing where and when air strikes have been conducted across the globe. Vague mentions of strategic bombing such as "in Germany" have never allowed a detailed examination of effects generated or joint fires created when combined with land and sea forces. Conversely, anecdotal stories "from the cockpit" usually fail to tell the larger operational or strategic story of how that one plane or one squadron fit into the larger campaign narrative. For the first time, THOR provides a quick and reliable way to view air strike activity from 1915 to 1975, and provides the capability to generate historical summaries based on user-selected criteria to answer basic questions of who (callsign, service, country) how many (strikes, weapons, etc) what kind (aircraft, weapons, etc), when, and where. Additionally, by using Google Earth, this information can be presented geographically, and it allows for time series presentations (movies), as well as strike density and weapon intensity comparisons, to be made. Other sources of information, such as population density, etc, can be graphed on Google Earth to compare with air strike information.

Doesn't this capability already exist? Why did you reinvent the wheel?

If it exists, we haven't found it. We didn't invent THOR because we thought it would be neat, we built it to answer recurring questions about how airpower has been used in war. If you know of a similar or better capability, please contact us at thor@us.af.mil so we can compare ideas.

What does your database currently contain? How current is it?

THOR contains data from 1915 to 1975, covering World Wars I and II and the Vietnam War. It is as complete as we've been able to make it. We suspect there are some gaps in WWI – particularly in the Italian records, and are compiling the French bombing record in WW1. Vietnam is missing data prior to September 1965, and also the month of November 1967 is missing (due to water damage to its magnetic tape archive). To the best of our ability, the rest of the information is as complete as records document. The Korean war records are being hand transcribed from paper mission reports, and will be posted as soon as that action is complete.

Why bother including past wars in THOR? The current war is completely different than ones we've fought before.

Postwar assessments do not necessarily contribute to the current war but may still prove important to employing effects-based operations (EBO) and predictive battlespace awareness (PBA) in future wars. Correctly anticipating enemy responses and the ways airpower can best be used to exploit them might be based on modeling. One way to calibrate predictive models would be to understand how adversaries responded to previous airpower applications. (See "Slow Airpower Assessment: A Cause for Concern?" Lt Col Paul D. Berg, USAF. Air and Space Power Journal, Fall 2004, pp. 75-83) Additionally, some doctrine and strategies may be timeless. By providing the data, this idea can be more fully explored.

Why don't you include Weapon System Video(WSV) or post strike(BDA) imagery?

We look to add new features as our capability grows. We are excited about WSV and BDA imagery, but we would ask for help to host that information in a way we can reliably link to it--including it inside the THOR database would seriously bog down performance, as we are currently sorting through 4 million+ records to process a query.

Why do you report weapons dropped by weight? is that really the best metric?
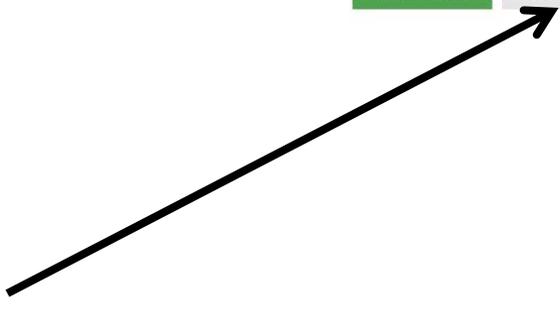
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To make your life easier, we've posted the results from some of the more popular searches and made them available for immediate download. It may save you from having to do multiple or complex queries. Let's choose "Grab and Go Data" from the Welcome screen (or click "Downloads" from the menu bar.)

Click here

"Grab and Go" Data

Sometimes you just want to look at the big picture, or don't have time to do multiple queries. Take a look at the data ready to download in the "Grab and Go" section. If you see what you want, click on it and the data will begin downloading to your computer. Need the entire THOR dataset (WWI, WWII, and Vietnam)? Click on the Full Database Download link. It will send you to a contact form where we request your email address so we can alert you to future data updates and fixes, and then your download will begin

Click here for full database download

Select "Grab and Go" Data

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If the prebuilt solutions in "Grab and Go Data" don't meet your need, then you can create your own custom report in just a few simple steps. On the opening screen, you are presented with three choices. Let's choose "Create a Report"

Click here ⟶
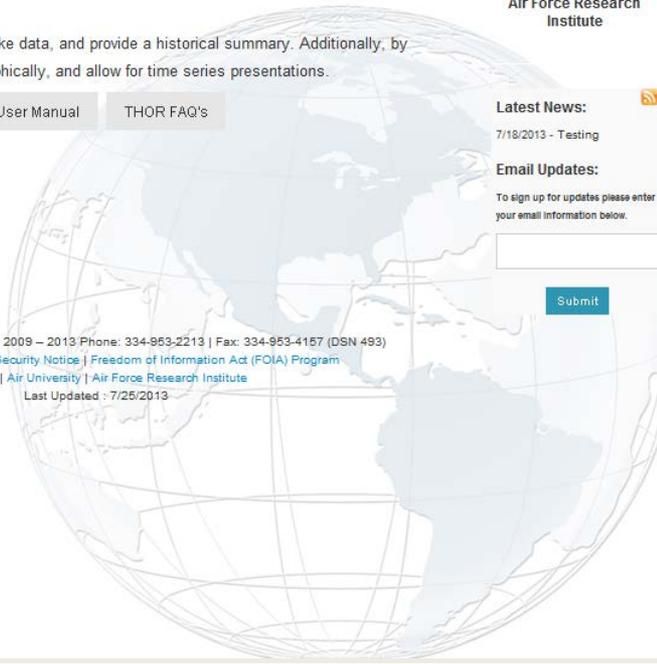
Choosing a Data Set

After selecting "Create a Report" you are given the option of choosing which war's data you wish to query. Each war's data is organized slightly differently, so each data set is tuned to that conflict's information structure.

Let's choose World War 2 by clicking on the campaign ribbon for that war

Click here ➙

Filtering the Data

Here's where you get to interact with the data. For performance reasons, output is limited to 20,000 records per query. One query will currently encompass all of WWI, Nine queries would encompass all of WW2, and 225 queries would be needed to cover all of the Vietnam war records – so filtering can play a vital role in narrowing your search

The most important search criteria is setting the Date Range

Set Start and
Stop Dates here

Filtering the Data 2

Next, choose whatever other criteria you wish to use to narrow your data search. Leaving an option field blank means that the database will return all options for that field that it finds in the first 20,000 records

You can narrow your search by:
1. The Country flying the mission
2. The Service flying the mission
3. The specific munition type
4. The aircraft type
5. The target country

Or combinations of criteria

Data Output

Once you've chosen your criteria, the next step is to choose what you want the output to look like. You can choose between a table of the data viewable on-screen, a downloadable Microsoft Excel table of the data, or a downloadable Google Earth-compatible file

Once you've made your choice, Select "Get Data" and the database will process your query

Google Earth screenshot of THOR data for the WWII European and Mediterranean Theaters of Operations by USAAF and RAF aircraft