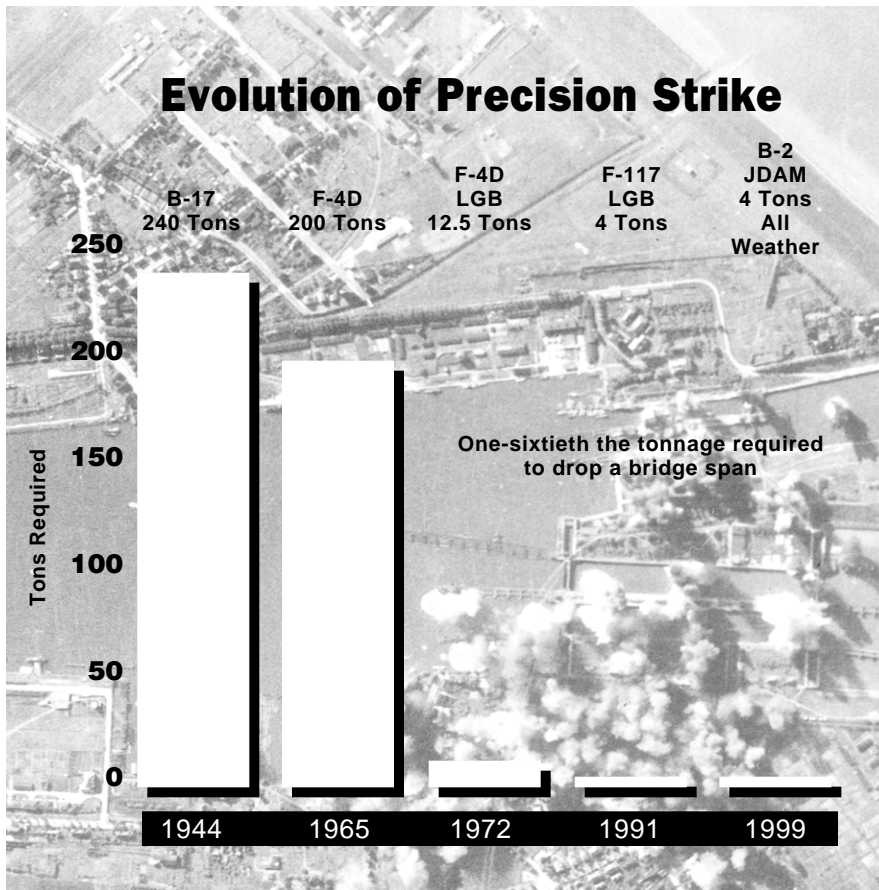


The Chart Page

By Tamar A. Mehuron, Associate Editor

To Bomb a Bridge



In 1944, attacking B-17s had to drop roughly 240 tons of bombs, on average, to be sure of destroying one German bridge. Even then, mission success required daylight and fair skies. By 1965, F-4D fighters could destroy a North Vietnamese bridge by dropping 200 tons of unguided bombs. Again, daylight and clear skies were required.

By 1972, however, new Laser-Guided Bombs made possible attacks of previously unthinkable accuracy. The same F-4Ds were suddenly able to drop a span with just 12.5 tons of bombs. This marked a stunning decrease of 95 percent from the World War II standard. Even so, bad weather could still thwart success.

The Persian Gulf War of 1991 marked another advance. Stealthy F-117s, operating at night, required just four tons—that is, four 2,000-pound LGBs—to take out an Iraqi bridge.

Eight years later, during Operation Allied Force, B-2 bombers over Serbia could destroy a bridge with four tons of GPS-guided Joint Direct Attack Munitions, in all kinds of weather.

Today, Air Force planners are working on a small diameter bomb weighing a mere 250 pounds. It will carry the explosive power of today's 2,000-pounders.

Source: USAF

Then and now. The photo above shows a concentration of bombs laid over Brunsbüttel Locks in Germany in World War II. At right is a poststrike photo of a bridge bombed in Serbia during Allied Force.

