



# Wings of Madness

## Operation TIDAL WAVE

**The Bloodiest Battle in the History of American Aerial Combat**

*A Documentary Film Proposal*

By

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**The Ground-Level Air Raid on the  
Ploesti, Romania, Oil Refineries,  
1 August 1943**

**What Went Wrong?**



*“Today I felt pass over me a breath of wind  
from the wings of madness.”*

– Charles Baudelaire  
French poet



*The Sandman, piloted by Lt. Sternfels, moments after releasing its bomb load. This is the iconic image of the Ploesti, raid.*

## Overview

Our proposal is for a documentary film about operation TIDAL WAVE, the historic bombing mission of the Ploesti, Romania, oil refineries that occurred on 1 August 1943. The mission initially involved 178 United States Army Air Corps B-24 bombers and over 1,700 airmen. The 2,700-mile, 13-hour round-trip mission was flown from several airfields around Benghazi, Libya, to five targeted refineries in Ploesti, a city situated 65 miles northeast of Bucharest, Romania. The price for the mission was exceedingly high, the results controversial. Of those aircraft that took off from Benghazi, 54 never returned. Over 40 aircraft were lost to unexpectedly plentiful Luftwaffe defenses, both antiaircraft fire and fighters. Seven B-24s were