



Striving for Accuracy

The RAF and post-war bombing technology

PART ONE : DUMB BOMBS & PATHFINDERS

In the first half of a new two-part series on the RAF's post-Second World War search for more efficient bombing techniques and equipment for its drastically reduced but far more technologically advanced asset force, **JAMES JACKSON** explores the efforts put into the development of new automated systems designed to hone and improve the Service's conventional bombing capability

DURING THE SECOND World War Britain created a powerful strategic bombing capability, the effectiveness of which, in strategic, economic and even moral terms, has been debated ever since. During the late 1940s the RAF planned a new jet-powered medium-bomber force armed with nuclear bombs — an expensive project for a nation whose fiscal resources had been drained by six years of war. Britain could not afford a large force of bombers and stockpile of nuclear weapons; therefore the RAF had to achieve maximum efficiency from a relatively small force.

The measure of any bombing force's effectiveness is its accuracy of weapons delivery. Despite their destructive capability, nuclear bombs still needed to be accurately targeted to destroy large dispersed sites such as airfields and pinpoint targets such as reinforced bunkers. Accuracy avoided wasted effort and repeated sorties, which only increased the chances of losses —



In 1950 the RAF received its first batch of Boeing B-29s, given the name Washington in British service, provided as part of the USA's Mutual Defense Assistance Program in order to maintain the striking force of the RAF, which had seen a massive reduction in strength since the end of the war. Before the arrival of the Washingtons, RAF Bomber Command's long-range striking force was limited to a few squadrons of obsolete Avro Lincolns, and the prospective V-Force of new jet bombers with modern bombing aids was still some way off.

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