



The Battle of Britain, 1940–1941

- Allied nations
- Axis and Axis controlled nations
- Cities with 1–5 major raids
- Cities with 6–10 major raids
- Cities with more than 10 major raids
- ✚ British night-fighter base
- ✚ German bomber base



GT32 The Battle of Britain, 1940–1941

Use this transparency to discuss the Battle of Britain.

BACKGROUND

After the defeat of France in World War II, Hitler turned his attention to England. In June of 1940, he began a massive air assault on that island nation.

The British defended their country with 2,900 planes, while the German air force, called the Luftwaffe, attacked with around 4,500 planes. However, that was the only advantage the Germans had in this conflict. During the campaign, they were plagued with an inconsistent battle plan. On some missions, they destroyed British ports and disrupted shipping lanes, while on others they bombed airfields and combat installations. They also tried bombing population centers. In addition, German bombers could not carry the payload necessary to deliver a permanently devastating blow. Also, these planes were vulnerable to British attacks because German fighters could not escort the bombers all the way to England. On the other hand, the British benefited from having a single goal as well as the best technology and fighters available. Newly developed radar alerted them to the German raids, and the British Spitfire was the most advanced fighter plane in the world.

Still, Germany came close to defeating the British. In September, however, the course of the battle changed when the Luftwaffe targeted cities exclusively. With the British airfields free from German attacks, the Royal Air Force thwarted the German attempt to win air superiority. Faced with British resolve, Hitler called off the attacks in May 1941.