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Could the Allies Have Bombed Auschwitz-Birkenau?

[Stuart G. Erdheim](#)

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Abstract

Some recent articles have made a case that bombing Auschwitz-Birkenau to disrupt the killing operations was infeasible in 1944. In response to the work of James H. Kitchens III and Richard H. Levy, Stuart Erdheim argues that if the Allies had seriously considered that death camp as a potential target, they would have found that bombing it was no more complicated from an operational standpoint than was bombing any of numerous other targets during the war. What ultimately determined their decision against bombing was not any military assessment of whether the gas chambers *could have* been successfully destroyed with minimal collateral damage, but rather a predetermined mindset as to whether those facilities *should have* been treated as a valid target. By focusing on the operational question of bombing Auschwitz-Birkenau, the author concludes, as David Wyman did nearly twenty years ago, that the only responsible way to interpret the Allied inaction is by going back to the motives of those involved in the decision-making process.

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