



# Red Christmas: The Tatsinskaya Airfield Raid 1942

*Robert Forczyk*

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By December 1942, the Soviets had surrounded the German 6th Army in Stalingrad, cutting off all lines of supply except through the air. Seeking to sever this last German lifeline, Soviet Command decided to launch a raid with the entire 24th Tank Corps to seize the airfield at Tatsinskaya, the primary operating base for the German airlift efforts. On 17 December, the 24th Tank Corps advanced toward Tatsinskaya, seizing the airfield on Christmas Eve. The Soviet tankers succeeded in destroying many Luftwaffe aircraft on the ground, but afterwards found themselves isolated and out of fuel behind the German lines.

Generalfeldmarschall Erich von Manstein rapidly organized a counterattack with elements of two panzer divisions, crushing most of the raiding force between 26 and 28 December. Just before the raiding force was annihilated, it received permission to abandon its heavy equipment and escape back to Soviet lines on foot. Thus, the raiders accomplished their mission of severely disrupting the airlift to Stalingrad, but at the cost of an entire tank corps.

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