

1943

By early 1943, Kammhuber's *Dunkelnachtjagd* (*Himmelbett*) fighter control defences had been increased considerably in depth, and were now virtually completed. More than 120 *Himmelbett* GCI stations were in position and overlapping from München in the south to Southern Norway in the north, and from the Dutch coast in the west to Berlin in the east, thus covering virtually the whole of the areas of the Reich that were affected by RAF Bomber Command attacks. By that time, the *Nachtjagd* had expanded to five Geschwader -NJG1, 2, 3, 4 and 5- with a frontline strength of some 390 crews divided over 15 Gruppen. The majority of the *Nachtjäger* were now also equipped with the *Lichtenstein* AI radar. This formidable defensive night fighter belt was capable of exacting a maximum toll of 6% bomber casualties on any deep penetration raid into the Reich.

The completion of the Luftwaffe's radar close-controlled night fighter defences coincided with the start of Bomber Command's first Main Offensive, a concerted series of 31 Main Force raids directed at the Reich's industrial heartland in the Ruhr and another 20 major attacks on targets elsewhere in Germany and the Occupied Territories, which was to last from 5-6 March to 23-24 July 1943. As a result of the perfected *Nachtjagd* defences, Bomber Command losses during the Battle of the Ruhr rose to an alarming height. Operational statistics for the period of this Battle reveal that a staggering 1,000 Bomber Command aircraft were lost, or 4.3% from 23,401 sorties dispatched. This was the equivalent of Bomber Command's complete front-line strength at the beginning of the Battle, which stood at some 1,000 aircraft –the four-engined Stirling, Halifax, and Lancaster, and the twin-engined Wellington- in early March 1943. An estimated 686 Bomber Command aircraft fell foul of the *Lichtenstein*-equipped *Himmelbett* *Nachtjagd*.

To counter the mounting Bomber Command offensive even more effectively, during the second half of May 1943, some 30 selected experienced *Nachtjagd* crews from NJG2 (Hermann Sommer), NJG3 (Rudolf Frank, Walter Milius, Günther Radusch, Viktor Sorko, Paul Szameitat, and Paul Zorner), NJG4 (Hans Autenrieth, Helmut Bergmann, Heinz-Martin Hadeball, Wilhelm Herget, Kurt Holler, Hans-Karl Kamp, Kurt Karsten, Reinhard Kollak, Richard Launer, Ludwig Meister, Gerhard Raht, Heinz Wilberg and Heinrich Wohlers), and NJG5 (Rolf Bokemeyer, Ernst-Georg Drünkler, Werner Hoffmann, Werner Hopf, Herbert Hubatsch, Wilhelm Johnen, Wolfgang Knieling, Hans Leickhardt, Siegfried Wandam and Heinrich Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein) were temporarily attached to the hard-pressed Gruppen of NJG1 in the central battle areas of the Netherlands and Belgium. These guest *Spitzenbesatzungen* (aces crews) contributed heavily to the high scores of NJG1 during the height of the air battle, in June and July 1943.

It should be noted that -with only one or two exceptions- the guest crews' victories were officially added to the tally of their guest units instead of to their mother units, as has become crystal clear from studying the official OKL/RLM Confirmed *Abschussübersichte* of the *Nachtjagd* units involved in the Battle of the Ruhr. In the listings that follow, the mother unit to which the individual claimant belonged, and the unit to which they were seconded, are listed.

3-4 January 1943 ESSEN

Three Lancasters failed to return from a small force of 22 aircraft dispatched to attack Essen in a second experimental OBOE-marking raid between 19.45 and 19.49 hrs. All three of these losses occurred over the Netherlands, two due to night fighters operating in *Dunkelnachtjagd* fashion. Another estimated 10 GCI-controlled sorties failed to achieve *Feindberührung*. In turn, 6./NJG1 lost Oblt. Wolf and his *Funker* Fw. Kurz, who were killed in a crash in Bf110 F-4 G9+DP whilst coming in to land at St. Trond at 20.55 hrs.

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|-------------------------------|---------|-----------|--|-------|-------------------------|
| Uffz. Christian Költringer: 1 | 7./NJG1 | Lancaster | 1½ km. S.E. Velp: 5.600 m. (4 D) | 20.15 | 9 Sqn Lancaster W4840 |
| Oblt. Manfred Meurer: 9 | 3./NJG1 | Lancaster | twixt Baarlo and Kessel (5 C): 4.000 m | 20.23 | 207 Sqn Lancaster W4134 |

4-5 January 1943 ESSEN

A relatively small force of 33 bombers was sent to attack the city of Essen using OBOE again with the force bombing between 19.39 and 19.50 hrs. This time, some 10 GCI sorties were flown by I. and IV./NJG1 over the Netherlands, which destroyed two homeward-bound Lancasters. 'Friendly' Flak was responsible for the death of Oblt. Wolfrat Bauer, a six-victory ace and St.Kpt. of 7./NJG1, whose Bf110 F-4 G9+AR received a direct hit in its starboard engine and wing whilst chasing a bomber into a *Flaksperrgebiet* over Duisburg and went down to crash at Duisburg-Hamborn at 19.50 hrs.

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|---------------------------|----------|-----------|---|-------|-------------------------|
| Hptm. Reinhold Knacke: 41 | 1./NJG1 | Lancaster | Hatert, 5 km. S. Nijmegen (5 A): 5.200 m. | 20.19 | 460 Sqn Lancaster W4274 |
| Oblt. Rudolf Sigmund: 7 | 10./NJG1 | Halifax | sea 40 km. W. Leiden (Zander): 4.300 m. | 20.30 | 101 Sqn Lancaster W4796 |

8-9 January 1943 DUISBURG

Small forces of bombers were sent to attack Duisburg (41 aircraft bombing between 19.20 and 19.35 hrs, three Lancasters lost), and to lay mines in the German and Danish coastal shipping lanes (42 out of 71 aircraft dispatched sowing their mines between 19.15 and 22.37 hrs, three Lancasters lost). There was only slight *Nachtjagd* activity, approximately 13 *Dunkelnachtjagd* sorties were flown by crews of NJG1 and NJG3 over the Low Countries, NW Germany and Southern Denmark between 18.36 and 00.05 hrs, most of which were directed against the *Gardening* force. 10 of these were Bf110s of II./NJG3 that were scrambled from Schleswig-Land between 18.54 and 23.15 hrs. At least four attempts at interception were made, which resulted in one outward-bound Duisburg raider being shot down by Oblt. Becker and his regular BF Fw. Staub in box *Hering*, and two crews of NJG3 each destroying one *Gardener* in *Raum Robbe*, on Romo Island.

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|--------------------------|---------------|-----------|---|-------|------------------------|
| Oblt. Ludwig Becker: 41 | 12./NJG1 | Lancaster | Hackfort, SE Zutphen (Hering): 800-1.000 m. | 19.23 | 9 Sqn Lancaster W4159 |
| Maj. Günther Radusch: 15 | Stab II./NJG3 | Lancaster | sea W. Sylt (Robbe): 2.500 m. | 20.00 | 44 Sqn Lancaster W4176 |
| Fw. Ernst Baader: 2 | 4./NJG3 | Lancaster | (sea) 3 km. N. Aabenraa (Robbe): 2.700 m | 21.10 | 44 Sqn Lancaster W4277 |

9-10 January 1943 ESSEN/MINELAYING

Bomber Command mounted two operations. 52 aircraft bombed Essen between 19.20 and 19.36 hrs, for the loss of three of their number. On their way in over Holland, the force was opposed by a handful of GCI-controlled fighters of NJG1, two crews from the first Gruppe each claiming a Lancaster destroyed. Major Streib and his BF Uffz. Fischer flew Bf110 G9+BB on a patrol in *Raum 5 A* (to the west of their operational base of Venlo) between 18.40 and 20.14 hrs, bagging a 97 Squadron Lancaster *Abschuss*. In turn, at 21.00 hrs Lt. Bruno Heilig of E./NJG2 belly-landed his Ju88 C-2 R4+FU at Hulten, just outside Gilze-Rijen airfield, after suffering engine failure. The third bomber loss was due to Flak of the 4. Flak Division:

-103 Sqn Lancaster ED384: coned by 11./III./Flak Rgt. 611, 2.-4./Flakscheinw. Abt. 250 and 3./Flakscheinw. Abt. 648, hit by 4./schw. Flak Abt. 404, 2./Res. Flak Abt. 383 and 1. & 4./Res. Flak Abt. 541, 230/VI, crashed at Rheidt-Rommerskirchen,

A second force of 121 aircraft was sent on a large scale mine-laying operation off the Frisians, in the German Bight, and in the Kattegat. Four Halifaxes were lost, all being claimed shot down by crews of NJG1 and NJG3. (A 5th *Gardener*, 301 Squadron Wellington R1535 was severely shot up by two *Nachtjäger* at around 20.45 hrs and, flying home on one engine, crashed on its return to the UK with the loss of four of the Polish crew).

The IV./NJG3 Abschuss for 158 Squadron Halifax W7751 shot down near Esbjerg was contested by light Flak, and later officially credited to the Flak unit. The team of Maj. Lent/Fw. Kubisch, in Bf110 G-4 G9+AF, dispatched a *Gardening* Halifax during a patrol in box *Eisbär*, which they flew from Leeuwarden between 19.52 and 20.54 hrs.

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|---|---------------|-----------|---|-------|------------------------|
| Lt. Lothar Linke: 14 | Stab IV./NJG1 | Halifax | sea 8 km. W. Schiermonnikoog (<i>Tiger</i>): 1.100 m. | 18.22 | 10 Sqn Halifax BB252 |
| Lt. Günther Rogge | 12./NJG3 | Halifax | nr Tarp, 7 km. N. Esbjerg airfield | 18.26 | 158 Sqn Halifax W7751 |
| <i>Note: coned by searchlights and also claimed by 2./M. Flak Abt. 204 and 2./Iei. Flak Abt. 742 ('Halifax 7 km N. Esbjerg airfield 18.25 hrs'), claim Lt. Rogge not listed in OKL/RLM 12./NJG3 Confirmed Abschussübersicht, rejected and victory credited to Flak on 12.3.1943</i> | | | | | |
| Maj. Werner Streib: 39 | Stab I./NJG1 | Lancaster | 4 km N. Maasbree, W. Venlo (5 A): 6.500 m | 19.15 | 97 Sqn Lancaster R5738 |
| Lt. Erich Richter: 2 | 2./NJG1 | Lancaster | Haarzuilens, 12 km. NW Utrecht (<i>Gorilla</i>) | 20.02 | 57 Sqn Lancaster ED319 |
| Maj. Helmut Lent: 57 | Stab IV./NJG1 | Halifax | sea 10 km. W. Texel (<i>Eisbär</i>): 4.000 m | 20.24 | 51 Sqn Halifax DT483 |
| <i>Note: claim listed in OKL/RLM Confirmed Abschussübersicht Stab IV./NJG1 for 8.1.1943 20.24 hrs; clerical error</i> | | | | | |
| Oblt. Hans-Joachim Jabs: 17 | 11./NJG1 | Halifax | sea 20 km. W. Vlieland (<i>Tiger</i>): 2.400 m. | 22.15 | 419 Sqn Halifax W7857 |
| <i>Note: claim listed for 8.1.1943 22.15 hrs in OKL/RLM 11./NJG1 Confirmed Abschussübersicht; clerical error</i> | | | | | |

13-14 January 1943 ESSEN



106 Squadron Lancaster R5700 was badly damaged by 2 cm cannon fire from a *Nachtjäger* near Essen on 13-14 January 1943 and crash-landed at Hardwick. It was repaired, only to be shot down by a combination of Flak and a night fighter during the 22-23 September 1943 Hannover raid (Coll. Erich Brown).

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| Maj. Werner Streib: 40 | Stab I./NJG1 | Lancaster | Birten, SSE Xanten (5 A): 6.200 m. | 19.16 | prob. 106 Sqn Lancaster W4261 |
| Maj. Werner Streib: 41 | Stab I./NJG1 | Lancaster | twixt Assel and Hoogsoeren (5 A): 1.800 m. | 19.44 | 106 Sqn Lancaster R5680 |
| Oblt. Horst Pause: 1 | 1./NJG1 | Lancaster | sea W. Schouwen (<i>Hamster</i>): 200 m. | 20.56 | 9 Sqn Lancaster W4843 |

14-15 January 1943 MINELAYING

From a small-scale *Gardening* operation by seven aircraft to the Dutch Frisian Islands, one aircraft failed to return:

-466 Sqn Wellington HE152: hit by Flak of 6./M. Flak Abt. 246 battery Terschelling-Ost, and 2./Iei. Flak Abt. 845 crashed in flames in Waddensea W. of Ameland at 17.42 hrs.

17-18 January 1943 BERLIN

Berlin was the target for 187 four-engined heavy bombers (170 Lancasters and 17 Halifaxes), which bombed between 20.30 and 21.25 hrs. The raid encountered intense opposition from both Flak and fighters, mainly en route, and 22 'heavies' failed to return.

Night fighters of NJG1, 3 and 4 flew approximately 46 *Dunkelnachtjagd* sorties between 18.14 and 23.39 hrs, in clear moonlight above cloud, and were particularly active on the homeward routes. Returning bomber crews reported 33 interceptions by night fighters, which resulted in 19 bomber Abschüsse (18 of which were subsequently confirmed), five aircraft returning with fighter damage. Three aircraft were shot down by heavy Flak, which also inflicted damage to another 20 aircraft, one of the latter (460 Squadron Lancaster R4816) being written off on its return to the UK:

-12 Sqn Lancaster W4368: hit by 1./schw. Flak Abt. 216 and 1.-3./schw. Flak Abt. 232 and crashed near Damgarten-Ribnitz at 21.16 hrs.

-76 Sqn Halifax DT569: hit by 3./schw. Flak Abt. 225 (o) and 1., 2. & 4./schw. Flak Abt. 647 (o), impacted near Hamburg-Poppenbüttel at 21.53 hrs.

-61 Sqn Lancaster W4767: coned by two searchlights of M. Flak Abt. 241, hit by light Flak of Kriegsmarine vessel K 3, ice-breaker 'Eisvogel', and by 2., 3., 5. & 6./M. Flak Abt. 271, crashed nr. the Hohenzollernpark in Kiel at 22.08 hrs.



This page and overleaf: A series of three photos of 7./NJG4 Bf110 'B' being prepared for an operational sortie in the wet snow at Juvincourt in early 1943. (Coll. Heinz Borgmann via Dr. Rüdiger Karsten).



Becker with his BF Fw. Staub flew successive patrols in *Schlei*, Oblt. Maier successfully guiding these ace crews onto a Lancaster and two Stirlings, which were all shot down in the icy waters of the North Sea. Oblt. Becker destroyed two Stirlings, but it is unclear if his second kill was achieved under GCI control of Oblt. Maier; this victory is not listed in the KTB of the XII. Fliegerkorps as an *Abschussbeteiligung* of Maier.

NJG3, which employed an estimated 25 fighters, including 18 Bf110s and two Do217s of the II. Gruppe from Schleswig-Land during the course of the evening of the 17th January, was credited with 12 confirmed *Dunkelnachtjagd* Abschüsse over Denmark and Northern Germany. Oblt. Paul Szameitat and his BF Uffz. Kübler, flying Bf110 D5+HP of 6./NJG3 destroyed three Berlin raiders

In exchange, 101 Squadron Lancaster ED321 claimed a persistently attacking Bf110 shot down in the Kiel area at 21.35 hrs (the fighter's port wing being seen to break off before it went down in flames, the Lancaster returning with both gun turrets put out of action, the starboard outer engine in flames and a petrol tank holed), and the two gunners on board Lancaster W4365 of 207 Squadron claimed an attacking 'Bf109' shot down in flames 30 km. NW of Flensburg at 21.50 hrs. Neither of these claims can be positively matched to documented *Nachtjagd* losses. Two-victory veteran Lt. Richter and his *Funker* Ogefr. Pöttker of 2./NJG1 both died due to mountain sickness, after vacating their Bf110 F-4 G9+GK at great height near Utrecht at 18.45 hrs, and a Bf110 F-4 of 4./NJG1 bellied in at Leeuwarden with slight combat damage.

It has proved impossible to match many of the German *Nachtjagd* Abschüsse to the Bomber Command losses, as 12 of the victory claims were achieved over the North Sea. IV./NJG1 alone claimed five *Viermots* destroyed north of Vlieland, Terschelling, and Ameland, all of which were *anerkannt* on 24 September 1944. Three of these Abschüsse were achieved under control of Oblt. Maier, JLO of box *Schlei* at Schiermonnikoog, one of *Nachtjagd*'s most successful night fighter controllers, for his 49th – 51st *Abschussbeteiligungen*. During the course of the night, Fw. Vinke and his *Funker* Fw. Schödl, Oblt. Jabs and his *Bordfunker* Fw. Weissflog and Oblt.



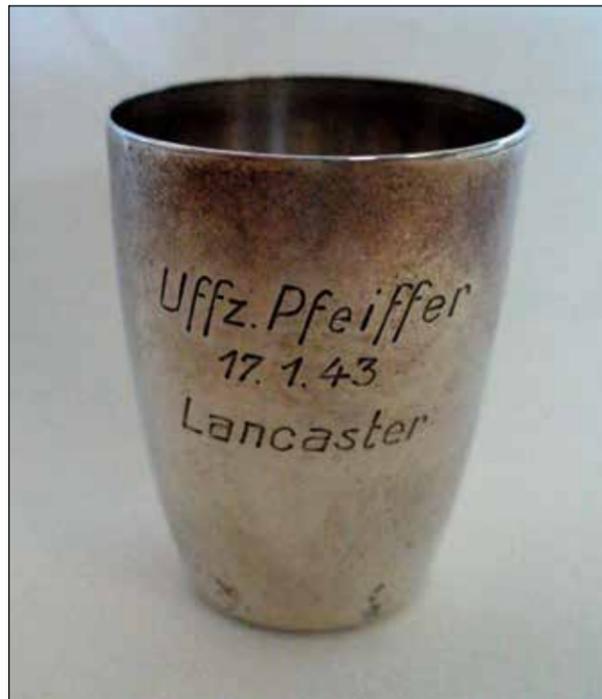
This page and overleaf: A series of three photos of 7./NJG4 Bf110 'B' being prepared for an operational sortie in the wet snow at Juvincourt in early 1943. (Coll. Heinz Borgmann via Dr. Rüdiger Karsten).

during two successive patrols in box *Kiebitz C* (between 19.06-20.15 and 21.33-22.30 hrs, for Szameitat's 17th and 18th *Feindflüge*). According to a I. Marine Flak Brigade report, the *Nachtjäger's* third victim for the night, a homeward-bound 49 Squadron Lancaster, was first picked up by the ground radars of *Raum Kiebitz C* when flying near Neumünster at 21.54 hrs, and attacked by Szameitat at a height of 5,000 metres near Schleswig at 22.04 hrs. The 'heavy' gradually lost height and finally crashed in flames at Bärenshöft 14 minutes later. Oblt. Martin Drewes of 9./NJG3 achieved his first nighttime victory, shooting down an 83 Squadron Lancaster near Linten/Heide in Schleswig Holstein, under control of box 2 A. (Incidentally, he mis-identified this *Abschuss* as a 'Stirling'). Drewes survived the war with 43 night- and five daylight *Abschüsse*. As a *Zerstörer* pilot, he had been credited with two victories, a Gladiator on 20 May 1941 at Al Aluja, Iraq, during a spell of operations in the *Sonderkommando Junck* in Iraq, and a Spitfire off Great Yarmouth on 29 August 1941 in 4./ZG76.

Another later ace who opened his score on 17-18 January was Oblt. Paul Zorner, St.Kpt. of 2./NJG3, who was destined to survive the war with 55 confirmed and three unconfirmed night *Abschüsse*. Under guidance of his regular *Bordfunker* Gefr. Wilke and Lt. Jansen, the very experienced JLO of box *Jaguar* with 34 *Abschussbeteiligungen* to his credit, Zorner shot down a Halifax (possibly of 76 Squadron) over the North Sea: "In early December 1942, I was posted to 2./NJG3, which was equipped with the Do217. I did not like this type of aircraft, so my Commanding Officer Hptm. Egmont Prinz zur Lippe Weissenfeld gave me a Bf110 on 6 January 1943. Until the 17th January, I did six take offs and landings to get used to this type of aircraft, and on the evening of the 17th, I flew my first operational mission in the Bf110.

On this night, the RAF flew in far to the north heading for Berlin. When I was scrambled from Wittmundhafen at 20.20 hrs, the attack was already over and I was disappointed because my comrades at Grove had successfully engaged the bombers and all I could do was wait. If I remember correctly, the night was clear and without moonlight. I orbited the radio beacon at Juist Island, out of reach of the RAF bombers flying home far to the north. But then, all of a sudden, at 21.45 hrs my Fighter Controller informed me that a single bomber flew far south of the main bomber stream, heading west, and perhaps it would come within range of our ground radar. Two minutes later, he told me he would try and guide me to the target, although it was still flying at a distance of some 50 kilometers from the radar station (the normal effective range of our ground radar was some 30 km, but the Fighter Controller at Juist was a very experienced man). He gave me instructions to head north-east but because of the great distance between us and the target,

This silver victory cup was awarded to Uffz. Pfeiffer of 10./NJG1 for his 2nd victory, an unidentified Berlin raider that he shot down on its return flight off Vlieland on 17-18 January 1943 (Coll. Anonymous).



he could not give me the altitude at which the aircraft was flying. A few minutes later, he told me to head north, that the target was flying at 3000 m. and that it was coming from the right. I lost altitude to 3000 m. and at once spotted a little black dot in front of me, flying just a little higher than me. It was 21.53 hrs, and from then on everything went very fast. Whilst climbing, I approached the target, and saw that it was a four-engined one, turned to the left and sat about 150 m. behind and below him, ready to go in for the kill. Within the next minute, I went in twice, firing a burst each time, but saw no results. And the bomber flew quietly onwards not even alerted by my fire; I think the crew was already relaxing, flying far out over the sea, and thinking they were out of the danger zone. Maybe they simply did not notice my first two attacks, and when they finally did they had no time to react – it all went very quickly. In the meantime, I had approached the aircraft to some 20 m, slightly below and behind him. I went in a third time, climbing fast whilst giving him a long burst of gunfire through its left wing. The wing burst into a sheet of flames immediately; the bomber spiralled down over to the left for about three seconds, then went down vertically, and crashed into the sea at 21.54. The whole action had lasted only three minutes, from the moment I first saw the target up to it crashing into the sea.

After this *Abschuss* I felt genuinely relieved, because this was already my 14th operational night fighting sortie, and, in early December 1942, I had become *Staffelkapitän* without having previously scored a victory. My superiors expected me to score a success at last. But, another matter was also important to me. I had a dislike of the Do217, and after endlessly pestering my *Kommandeur*, against every normal practice, I had become the only pilot in my *Staffel* to receive the Bf110. And now I had immediately scored a kill during my first sortie on the type, under adverse circumstances. This had proved two points in my favour: in the first place, I was not a failure as a night fighter, and, secondly, my aversion towards the Do217 had proven right!"



Oblt. Martin Drewes opened his nighttime score with an 83 Squadron Lancaster *Abschuss* during the 17-18 January 1943 Berlin raid (Coll. Martin Drewes, via Sergio Louis dos Santos).

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| Lt. Paul Szameitat: 7 | 6./NJG3 | Lancaster | Kleinkummerfeld (<i>Kiebitz C</i>): 1.500 m. | 19.33 | 9 Sqn Lancaster W4761 |
| Note: coned by searchlights of M. Flak Abt. 211, 221, 241 and 251 ('Stirling nr. Klein-Kummerfeld 19.33 hrs'), also claimed by Flak of 4./schw. Flak Abt 271 ('Lancaster Kl. Kummerfeld 19.33 hrs'), Flak claim confirmed on 15.9.1944, victory Lt. Szameitat confirmed on 24.9.1944 | | | | | |
| Ofw. Karl Haisch: 6 | 4./NJG3 | Lancaster | 30 km W. Blaavands Huk (<i>Büffel</i>): 1.800 m | 19.50 | poss. 12 Sqn Lancaster W4372 |
| Fw. Heinz Vinke: 9 | 11./NJG1 | Lancaster | 35 km. N. Terschelling (<i>Schlei</i>): 3.900 m. | 20.25 | Berlin raid, unidentified |
| Note: victory confirmed on 24.9.1944 | | | | | |
| Fw. Herbert Holz: 1 | 10./NJG3 | Halifax | Stenderup, 9 km. NE Kolding (<i>Faun</i>) | 21.34 | 35 Sqn Halifax W7886 |
| Note: also claimed by Flak of 1.-4./schw. Flak Abt. 306 (o) ('Halifax nr. Stenderup ESE Kolding 21.32 hrs'), Flak claim confirmed by OKL on 10.9.1944, no confirmation date of Fw. Holz's claim known | | | | | |
| Ofw. Karl Haisch: 7 | 4./NJG3 | Lancaster | 10 or 80 km W. Lemvig (<i>Büffel</i>): 3.900 m | 21.45 | Berlin raid, unidentified |
| Note: victory confirmed on 24.9.1944 | | | | | |
| Lt. Paul Szameitat: 8 | 6./NJG3 | Lancaster | 90 km NW Westerland (<i>Kiebitz C</i>): 1.600 m | 21.49 | Berlin raid, unidentified |
| Note: victory confirmed on 24.9.1944 | | | | | |
| Uffz. Hans Meissner: 1 | 6./NJG3 | Lancaster | Ellingstedt, 10 km SW Schleswig (<i>Kiebitz</i>) | 21.50 | 50 Sqn Lancaster ED471 |
| Note: coned by two searchlights of M. Flak Abt. 211 ('Halifax nr. Ellingstedt 21.50 hrs'), also claimed by Flak of 4./schw. Flak Abt. 267 and 1.-4./schw. Flak Abt. 613 ('Lancaster nr. Ellingstedt/Schleswig 21.49 hrs'), OKL record bearing hand-written note '3. Fl. Div. + N.J.'. Victory Uffz. Meissner confirmed on 24.9.1944 | | | | | |
| Oblt. Paul Zorner: 1 | 2./NJG3 | Halifax | sea 45 km. NW Juist (<i>Jaguar</i>): 3.200 m | 21.54 | poss. 76 Sqn Halifax DT647 |
| Lt. Gerhard Raht: 2 | 4./NJG3 | Lancaster | Hanerau-Hademarschen (<i>Hummer</i>): 3.000 m | 21.59 | Berlin raid, unidentified. |
| Note: victory confirmed on 24.9.1944 | | | | | |

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| Hptm. E. Prinz zur Lippe-Weissenfeld: 38 | Stab I./NJG3 | Halifax | Heisfelde, 5 km N. Leer (<i>Hummer</i>): 5.200 m | 22.13 | 1654 CU Lancaster R5843 |
| <i>Note: also claimed by Flak of 8. Flak Div. ('Halifax Heisfelde N. Leer 22.17 hrs'), victory Hptm. Weissenfeld confirmed on 24.9.1944</i> | | | | | |
| Maj. Günther Radusch: 16 | Stab II./NJG3 | Lancaster | sea 50 km. W. Esbjerg (<i>Robbe</i>): 5.500 m | 22.14 | poss. 12 Sqn Lancaster W4372 |
| Oblt. Hans-Joachim Jabs: 18 | 11./NJG1 | Stirling | sea 10 km. N. Ameland (<i>Schlei</i>): 3.200 m | 22.17 | poss. 97 Sqn Lancaster R5575 |
| Lt. Paul Szameitat: 9 | 6./NJG3 | Lancaster | Bärenshöft (<i>Kiebitz C</i>): 1.000 m | 22.18 | 49 Sqn Lancaster ED444 |
| <i>Note: also claimed by 1. & 2./schw. Flak Abt. 306 (o) ('Lancaster 2 km E. Sprakebüll 22.18 hrs'), victory Lt. Szameitat confirmed on 24.9.1944</i> | | | | | |
| Oblt. Hans-Dieter Frank | 2./NJG1 | Lancaster | sea 10 km. W. IJmuiden (<i>Eisbär</i>): 150 m | 22.24 | Berlin raid, unidentified |
| <i>Note: claim not listed in OKL/RLM 2./NJG1 Confirmed Abschussübersicht</i> | | | | | |
| Oblt. Martin Drewes: 3 | 9./NJG3 | Stirling | nr Linten, NE Heide (2 A): 5.600 m | 22.32 | 83 Sqn Lancaster R5630 |
| <i>Note: also claimed by Flak of 3. Flak Div. ('4-mot Linden NE Heide 22.33 hrs'), victory Oblt. Drewes confirmed on 24.9.1944</i> | | | | | |
| Fw. Ernst Baader: 3 | 4./NJG3 | Lancaster | sea W. Tønder (<i>Auster</i>): 4.300 m. | 22.43 | 12 Sqn Lancaster ED388 |
| <i>Note: in KTB XI. Luftgau noted as 'Lancaster in sea nr. Amrum 22.43, shot down by Nachtjagd', one of crew first buried at Amrum and one at Westerland. A/c also claimed shot down by radar-directed Flak of M. Flak Abt. 211, 221, 241, 261 and 271 ('Short-Stirling in mud flats off Sylt 22.43 hrs'). Flak claim rejected, victory Fw. Baader confirmed on 24.9.1944</i> | | | | | |
| Oblt. Ludwig Becker: 42 | 12./NJG1 | Stirling | sea 20 km. N. Ameland (<i>Schlei</i>): 3.800 m | 23.03 | poss. 97 Sqn Lancaster R5575 |
| Oblt. Ludwig Becker: 43 | 12./NJG1 | Stirling | 40 km. N Terschelling (<i>Schlei (?)</i>): 3.800 m | 23.28 | Berlin raid, unidentified |
| <i>Note: victory confirmed on 24.9.1944</i> | | | | | |
| Uffz. Karl-Georg Pfeiffer: 2 | 10./NJG1 | Lancaster | sea 10 km. W. Vlieland (<i>Tiger</i>): 3.600 m | 23.29 | Berlin raid, unidentified |
| <i>Note: victory confirmed on 24.9.1944</i> | | | | | |

18-19 January 1943 MINELAYING

22 Stirlings and 7 Wellingtons were dispatched to lay magnetic mines off the Frisian island chain between 18.41 and 19.07 hrs. The *Gardeners* reported one fighter attack over Juist at 19.26 hrs, but all aircraft returned safely and without battle damage. Approximately five sorties were made by *Dunkelnachtjäger* between 19.20 and 20.21 hrs in the target area, which resulted in one victory claim. During a patrol in *Raum Jaguar* (JLO Lt. Jansen), Ofw. Offner and his crew of Uffz. Zrenner and Ogefr. Schneider of 2./NJG3 achieved a Stirling Abschuss off Rottumeroog, which was later confirmed as a full victory.

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|---|---------|----------|--|-------|--------------|
| Ofw. Anton Offner: 1 | 2./NJG3 | Stirling | sea 15 km N. Rottumeroog (<i>Jaguar</i>): 50 m | 20.01 | Unidentified |
| <i>Note: victory confirmed on 24.9.1944</i> | | | | | |

21-22 January 1943 ESSEN

Between 19.37 and 20.03 hrs, 79 Lancasters and 3 Mosquitoes visited Essen. 70 further aircraft were dispatched on mine-laying operations off the Frisian island chain, where they sowed their magnetic mines between 18.10 and 19.43 hrs. Four Lancasters were lost from the Essen force, six aircraft failed to return from the *Gardening* effort.

Although there was a full moon, the heavy cloud conditions, rain and poor visibility were not favourable for the operation of *Dunkelnachtjagd* controlled fighters and only an estimated 10-15 sorties were made, both against the Essen raid and the mine-laying operation. *Nachtjagd* was credited with four confirmed victories; two from the Essen force, and two from the mine-laying force. Fw. Kleinhenz and his *Bordfunker* Uffz. Gampe of 8./NJG1, under control of the JLO Oblt. Reisch of *Raum Marder* at Ten Arlo, dispatched an outward-bound Lancaster of the Essen force that impacted in the city centre of Enschede. Incidentally, the crew mis-identified their quarry as a 'Stirling'; their Abschuss was officially *anerkannt* on 24 September 1944.

Uffz. Georg ('Schorsch') Kraft and his BF Gefr. Handke, a novice replacement crew in 12./NJG1, experienced their third *Nachtjagd Einsatz*, as Handke vividly recounts: "We were the second machine in the first wave, and the first machine had already taken off for box 'Tiger'. Schorsch then went off on his own to cockpit readiness, while I stayed sitting at the telephone. Then of course Hptm. Ruppel gave us the order to fly to the area of box 'Herring', and gave us an especially good runway. But then began a real drama – first the engines wouldn't start, then we ran both the battery wagon and the on-board batteries flat, until, finally, the number two engine caught. As a result, we were at least six minutes late. When we finally rolled out of the hangar, the order to take off had been withdrawn, but we didn't hear that. Normally the pilot had to contact the tower as soon as he started moving, in order to have the runway lighting switched on. However, as our on-board batteries were already flat, I had to wait until after take off, before the generators started delivering power.

So we were completely blacked out when we took off, on the wrong runway, six minutes late (at 18.53 hrs, author's note) and with no take off authorisation, without having contacted the tower! In addition, Schorsch's helmet leads had come apart again, so for the first three minutes we could not speak to each other, until I identified the fault and yelled it over to him. Only then could I open contact



Weapons mechanic at work on Oblt. Martin Drewes' Bf110 (Coll. Adriano S. Baumgartner).

with the tower, which was very surprised that we were in the air to begin with. One minute later Hptm. Ruppel decided after all that we could continue to fly to Salzhering. With a great deal of effort I was able to contact the box (on shortwave), when a contact did indeed cross into the box, heading home.

We were vectored onto it, but after only a short while we lost contact with the ground as Tommy was jamming the frequency. So our first interception went down the drain. In addition, I'd switched on the transformer in my Lichtenstein radar set straight away, without first warming up the tubes; only for a few seconds, but that was enough, it was useless for the remainder of the night. Later on I realised that the range display had been damaged by about 1km – instead of 4km it showed 3km. Fortunately, another aircraft came through



A weapons mechanic working on a Bf110 of NJG1 (Coll. Wim Govaerts).

our box and this time I was able, with great difficulty, to keep communications open, despite enemy jamming. It was a full moon and there was about 1.5km visibility, so the loss of our radar wasn't a complete tragedy. The GCI was also good. As the enemy machine was supposedly flying at 6,000 metres, we went to 5,800, at which point Kraft caught sight of it about 2 km in front of us, but about 200m lower, meaning the ground radar (a giant Würzburg) had been out by 400 metres, which hardly ever happened after that. In addition, the Tommy was weaving. Previously, we'd not have gotten close, even at full throttle, but now we could really push, and we caught up.

Gradually, we saw it was a four-engined aircraft. At first we were completely clueless, all the good advice was forgotten and we had no idea how we should approach the Tommy and so made all the mistakes it was possible to make. Instead of diagonally, or from the side, we came at him from directly behind. Normally, given the visibility, the rear gunner should have been able to see us, but he was probably already so shaken up through the constant weaving, that he was sick. In any case, we approached without being seen. I had also forgotten to switch the heating on and to prepare a course for our return before the attack. In addition, we now saw that it was a Lancaster – though we didn't think to make an exact identification at that moment, it was only later that we put it all together from memory.

When we were about 200 metres below, Schorsch climbed far too quickly, so we ended up dropping too far back, as we were already at full power and had nothing more to give. So in the end we fired from 300 metres and of course hardly hit anything, and we'd only fired the four machine guns, as my pilot had not pushed the cannon button hard enough. Now, naturally, the rear gunner woke up and opened fire, but he was too high, as the Lancaster had dived hard away at the same instant. Schorsch dived immediately and continued firing. This time he pushed harder on the cannon button, with the result that these now also fired. This exploded the starboard wing of the Lancaster, and a second later we found ourselves in the clouds, which in the meantime had come in from the west. We saw nothing more of the burning machine, not least because we had a great deal to do to look after ourselves.

Because of the steep dive, the artificial horizon had toppled, and so the most important blind-flying instrument had gone. As we'd also misjudged the dive into the clouds, we very rapidly lost 2,000 metres. Only when we were down to 3,400 metres did the machine right itself, still in the clouds. Then we flew for a couple of minutes zooming up 'in steps', before Schorsch finally had the machine under control, while I went through the mill in the back. That really had me scared – and that 40 km out to sea. I really knew what they meant by 'being in a funk' at that point. Schorsch was all in, too. Then we finally checked if the motors were OK, and thought about how we were going to inform the controller that we'd fired at an enemy machine without bringing it down, therefore only being able to claim a 'contact with the enemy without a clear victory'. With Hptm. Ruppel nothing was worse than to return with just a 'contact with the

enemy... 'In the end I told them: 'Pauke, Pauke, ended' ('attack ended'), and 'Courier in curtains' ('enemy machine in the clouds'). However, on the ground they believed I said 'Courier dealt with', as they told us later.

When we then flew back to base, we felt so bad that we hardly wanted to land (at 20.37 hrs, author's note). At dispersal, we just wanted to disappear, but then the bus was there and it picked us up! We thought: 'Goddamn, we're for it now,' but it turned out completely different. We'd hardly arrived back at Control when Maj. Lent and Hptm. Ruppel came and congratulated us on our first victory! We were simply speechless, until it was all explained. Maj. Lent had, 20 minutes before his 50th (night) victory, seen our Tommy come out of the clouds on fire and crash into the water. In addition, the victory was also observed by 'Herring'. So, of course we were relieved and overjoyed. Afterwards the Kommandeur awarded Schorsch and I the Iron Cross 2nd Class. Our ammunition use had been 80 cannon shells and 1,250 machine gun rounds!" The Abschuss of the Kraft/Handke team was officially *anerkannt* on 24 September 1944.

The six Gardening losses were all due to Flak and Nachtjäger. Marine Flak was responsible for the destruction of four minelayers, a fifth kill being shared with the Kommandeur of I./NJG3:

-466 Sqn Wellington HE410: hit by Flak of 5./M. Flak Abt. 246 battery Terschelling-West between 18.00 and 18.06 hrs, flew at low level into Friesland Province, hit again by 2./lei. Flak Abt. 845 at 18.20 hrs, crashing N. of Wirdum near Leeuwarden at 18.20 hrs. Note: victory confirmed by Admiral in den Niederlanden 18.2.1943

-429 Sqn Wellington BK432: hit by Flak of Stab M. Flak Abt. 246 Harlingen, crashed in flames into the Waddenzee off Roptazijl and exploded at 18.37 hrs.

-prob. 420 Sqn Wellington BJ966 or 427 Sqn Wellington X3873: coned by Scheinwerferstaffel of 3./988, hit by light Flak of 3./lei. Flak Abt. 988 and by 6./M. Flak Abt. 216, crashed into sea off Borkum at 18.58 hrs. Note: claimed as 'unidentified Viermot', victory confirmed by Kriegsmarine Stab Nord on 16.2.1943.

- 76 Sqn Halifax DT621 or 158 Sqn Halifax DT583, hit by 1./lei. Flak Abt. 988 (I., III. & III. Zug), crashed in sea off Wangerooge at 19.13 hrs. Note: victory confirmed by Kriegsmarine Stab Nord on 15.3.1943.

During a GCI patrol in box *Schlei*, Kommandeur of IV./NJG1 Major Lent and his regular *Funker* Fw. Kubisch, flying in Bf110 G-4 G9+AF, destroyed a Gardening Wellington to the north of Schiermonnikoog, which marked Lent's 50th nighttime victory.

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|--|---------------|------------|---|-------|--|
| Hptm. E. Prinz zur Lippe-Weissenfeld | Stab I./NJG3 | Halifax | sea off Borkum (<i>Jaguar</i>) | 18.46 | 76 Sqn Halifax DT621 or 158 Sqn Halifax DT583 |
| Note: coned by Scheinwerferstaffel of 3./lei. Flak Abt. 988, also claimed by light Flak of 3./lei. Flak Abt. 988 ('unidentified Viermot Borkum in sea 18.45 hrs'), Flak and Flak searchlight claims confirmed by Kriegsmarine Stab Nord on 12.2.1943. Claim Hptm. Prinz zur Lippe-Weissenfeld not listed in OKL/RLM Stab I./NJG3 Confirmed Abschussübersicht | | | | | |
| Fw. Theodor Kleinhenz: 1 | 8./NJG1 | Stirling | Enschede (<i>Marder</i>): 4.000 m | 19.45 | 103 Sqn Lancaster W4335 |
| Uffz. Georg Kraft: 1 | 12./NJG1 | Lancaster | sea 40 km. N. Den Helder (<i>Salzhering</i>): 5.600 m | 19.52 | 103 Sqn Lancaster W4340 |
| Maj. Helmut Lent: 58 | Stab IV./NJG1 | Wellington | sea 30 km. N. Schiermonnikoog (<i>Schlei</i>): 100 m | 20.11 | 420 Sqn Wellington BJ966 or 427 Sqn Wellington X3873 |

23-24 January 1943 DÜSSELDORF

Due to the prevailing adverse weather over the Low Countries (10/10th cloud with icing between 150 and 4,000 metres), the Nachtjagd reaction against a raid by 80 Lancasters and three Mosquitoes on Düsseldorf remained at a minimum. Just five or six sorties were flown in GCI boxes in the Netherlands by E./NJG2, I./NJG1 and IV./NJG1 between 17.30 hrs and 21.43 hrs. Despite reports of numerous bombers passing through the *Dunkelnachtjagd Räume* in Belgium, both on the outward and homeward-bound route of the bomber stream, II./NJG1 at St. Trond was grounded. Major Streib, Kommandeur of I./NJG1 and his *Bordfunker* Uffz. Fischer flew a sortie from Venlo in Bf110 G9+BB between 19.51 and 20.54 hrs, during which they had two undecided *Feindberührungen*. In his private diary, Lt. Siegfried Elsässer of E./NJG2 noted about the weather conditions on this night: "23.1.43, 17.30. 1st wave operation. 5th war flight. 1 vector, hostile too fast. Weather; thick clouds at 300 m, solid cover up to 5500 m. Cockpit windows iced up, making landing very difficult. The first time, went round again."

One of the two Lancasters that failed to return was shot down by Lt. Kuthe and his BF Uffz. Bonk of 11./NJG1 in the S.E. part of Friesland province, the Netherlands, during a patrol in box *Eisbär*.

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|-----------------------|----------|-----------|---|-------|-------------------------|
| Lt. Wolfgang Kuthe: 3 | 11./NJG1 | Lancaster | Warns, nr Stavoren (<i>Eisbär</i>): 2.000 m | 20.56 | 460 Sqn Lancaster W4308 |
|-----------------------|----------|-----------|---|-------|-------------------------|

26-27 January 1943 LORIENT

157 aircraft bombed Lorient between 19.50 and 21.00 hrs. The raid provoked no Nachtjagd reaction. Three 'heavies' failed to return, at least one of these being claimed destroyed by Flak in the target area:

-429 Sqn Wellington BK163 or 460 Sqn Lancaster W4837: hit by 2./schw. Flak Abt. 677, crashed in sea near Lorient at 20.09 hrs.

Two crews of IV./NJG1 each claimed one 'Wellington' destroyed in *Dunkelnachtjagd* fashion. The team of Lt. Kuthe and Uffz. Bonk, operating in *Raum Salzhering*, dispatched a 21 OTU Wellington which had inadvertently wandered into enemy territory during a navigation exercise over the North Sea. The *Wimpey* was first engaged by light Flak at 00.25 hrs, before being finished off by the Nachtjäger three minutes later. Uffz. Kraft and his *Funker* Gefr. Handke were scrambled from Leeuwarden at 02.03 hrs for their 4th *Einsatz*, a GCI patrol in box *Tiger*. Just over an hour later, they destroyed a 'Wellington' (which, in fact, was a Coastal Command Hudson, flown by a Dutch crew engaged in an anti-shipping sortie off the Dutch Frisian islands), before returning to their home base at 03.37 hrs. Both Nachtjagd claims were officially *anerkannt* by the OKL/RLM on 24 September 1944.

Lt. Wolfgang Kuthe: 4 11./NJG1 Wellington Wadden Sea 5 km. E. Den Helder (*Salzhering*): 700 m 00.28 21 OTU Wellington X9667

Note: also claimed by Flak of 7. & 9./lei. Flak Abt. 808 at 00.25 hrs

Uffz. Georg Kraft: 2 12./NJG1 Wellington sea 20 km. NW Terschelling (*Tiger*): 1.400 m. 03.03 320 Sqn Hudson EW919

27-28 January 1943 DÜSSELDORF/MINELAYING

From a force of 54 aircraft *Gardening* in the Frisian Islands chain and the Baltic between 18.42 and 21.55 hrs, one Stirling failed to return, a victim of Flak of the 15. Flak Brigade:

-218 Sqn Stirling N6077: hit by heavy Flak of 1., 3. & 6./Schw. Flak Abt. 801 (o), crashing near Dassel-Relliehausen at 22.05 hrs.

Düsseldorf was attacked by 162 aircraft between 19.59 and 20.18 hrs; three Lancasters and three Halifaxes failed to return. Flak of the 4. Flak Division was credited with one kill:

-102 Sqn Halifax W7918: coned over the target by 13. & 14./III./Flak Rgt. 26 and Flakscheinw. Abt. 250, hit by 1.-4./schw. Flak Abt. 401, 1. & 3./schw. Flak Abt. 447, 1., 2. & 4./schw. Flak Abt. 383, 1./schw. E. VI and 1. L.u.V. Battr. FA.S.V., later crashed in Wadden Sea E. of Den Helder at 00.30 hrs.

Approximately 14 sorties were made by GCI-controlled night fighters of NJG1 and NJG2 between 19.27 and 22.54 hrs. Two ace crews from I./NJG1 were each credited with the destruction of a 51 Squadron Halifax (one outward-bound and one on its return flight) over the S.E. part of the Netherlands. Their colleagues of II./NJG1 were less successful. Between 19.45 and 21.44 hrs, eight Bf110s of the St. Trond-based Gruppe patrolled in the GCI boxes over Belgium. Although 28 outward-bound and 18 homeward-bound 'heavies' passed through their *Räume*, no *Abschüsse* or *Feindberührungen* were achieved.

Hptm. Reinhold Knacke: 42 1./NJG1 Lancaster Mill, 12 km. SSW Nijmegen: (prob. 5A) 6.300 m. 20.10 51 Sqn Halifax DT705

Oblt. Manfred Meurer: 10 3./NJG1 Halifax 5 km. NE Gemert, N. Helmond (5 B): 5.300 m 20.53 51 Sqn Halifax DT721

29-30 January 1943 LORIENT

Lorient was the Main Force target for the night, 116 aircraft bombing between 20.32 and 21.05 hrs. Four aircraft plus a *Gardening* Wellington tasked to lay mines off Lorient were lost, at least two being shot down by Flak:

-unidentified aircraft: hit by 2. & 3./schw. Flak Abt. 677, crashed in sea off Lorient at 20.36 hrs.

-unidentified aircraft: hit by 2./schw. Flak Abt. 671, 2. & 3./schw. Flak Abt. 677 and one Kriegsmarine Flak battery, crashed at Lorient at 20.57 hrs.

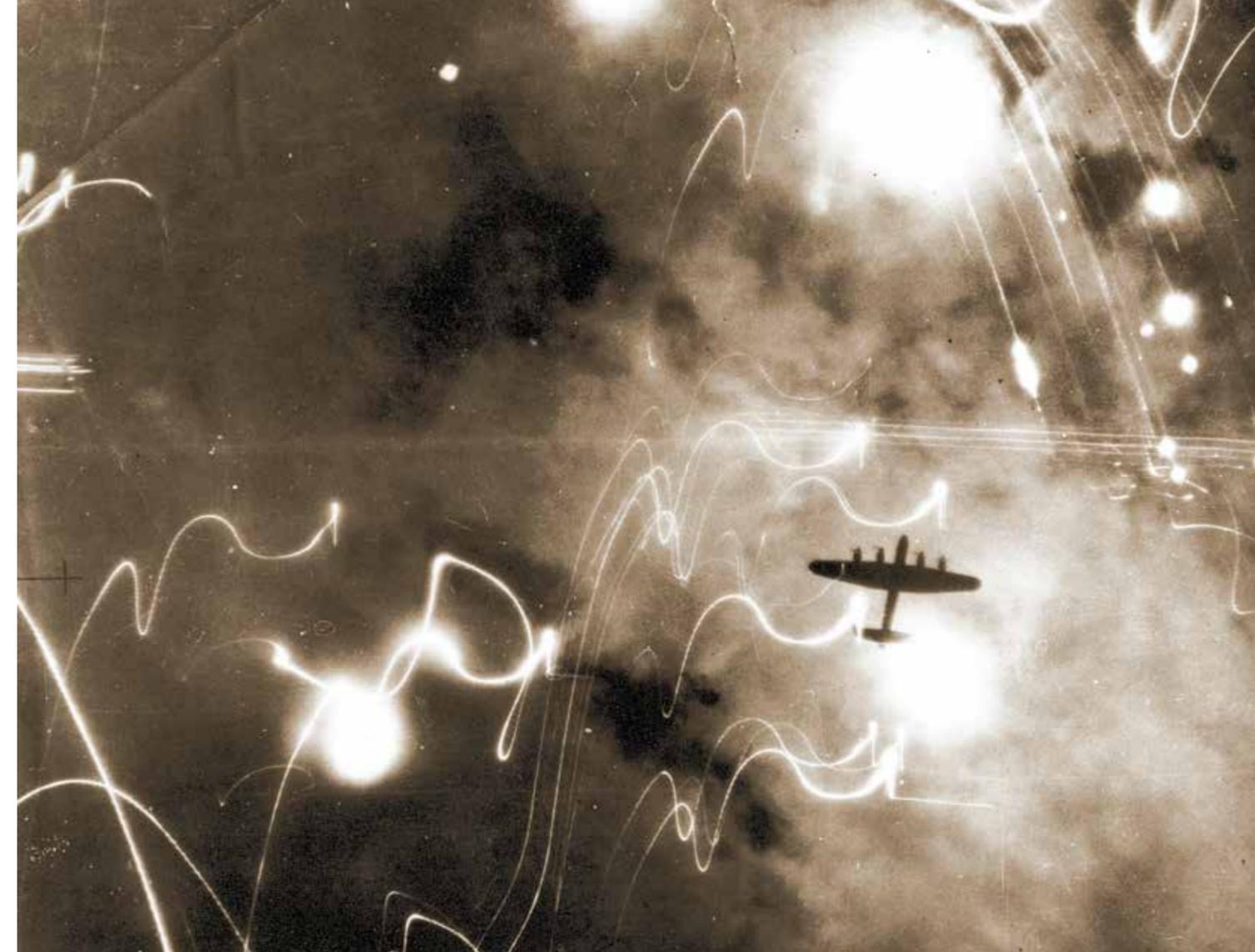
30 January 1943 VARIOUS

19 Wellingtons and 17 Bostons were sent out on cloud-cover operations to Germany and the Netherlands. In reaction, both *Tagjäger* and *Nachtjäger* were sent up to hunt for the intruders, the night fighters operating under GCI control. Uffz. Kraft and his BF Gefr. Handke of 12./NJG1, for example, flew a 35-minute sortie from Leeuwarden in box *Salzhering* between 12.11 and 12.46 hrs, without making *Feindberührung*. Between 11.56 and 12.03 hrs, six Bf110s of II./NJG3 were scrambled from Schleswig, and four more between 15.09 and 15.35 hrs, none of which reported enemy contact. Four Wellingtons were lost, one of which was shot down by Lt. Kuthe and his BF Uffz. Bonk under control of box *Tiger* into the icy waters to the north of Terschelling. Two *Tagjäger*, Hptm. Falkensamer of 3./JG1 and Uffz. Hähnel of 12./JG1, were also each credited with a Wellington victory.

Lt. Wolfgang Kuthe: 5 11./NJG1 Wellington sea 10 km. N. Terschelling (*Tiger*) 13.31 466 Sqn Wellington HE397

30-31 January 1943 HAMBURG

148 aircraft, including 135 Lancasters, were dispatched to bomb Hamburg. Five Lancasters failed to return. Whilst crossing the Dutch coast on its outward-bound flight, one 'heavy' was destroyed by Flak:



A Lancaster is silhouetted over the fires of Hamburg on 30 January 1943. (Coll. ww2images.com)

-101 Sqn Lancaster ED447: hit by 8./M. Flak Abt. 808 near IJmuiden at 02.09 hrs, shot down by II. Zug 2./Res. Flak Abt. 242 and 5./Res. Flak Abt. 242, crashed at Rijk in the Haarlemmermeerpolder, S. of Amsterdam at 02.17 hrs. Note: mis-identified by Res. Flak Abt. 242 as 'Wellington'.

The Hamburg-based Flak of the 3. Flak Division and the 8. Flak Division each filed one *Abschuss*, both of which were officially confirmed by the OKL on 10 September 1944, whilst Wilhelmshaven-based Marine Flak shared in the 8. Flak Division claim:

-57 Sqn Lancaster W4189: hit by 2./schw. Flak Abt. 602, impacted near Moorwärder/Spadenland at 03.15 hrs.

-106 Sqn Lancaster W4826: hit by Flak of M. Flak Abt. 222 (Flak Ugruko Süd), 1./schw. Flak Abt. 117 (o), 4./schw. Flak Abt. 531 (o), 2. & 3./schw. Flak Abt. 615 (v), 1./schw. Flak Abt. 231 (o) and 2./schw. Flak Abt. 223 (o), crashed in flames at the railway station of Imsum at 03.20 hrs.

Note: in the Marine Flak *Abschussmeldung*, the time of crash was noted as 02.58 hrs, and crash location as 'near Neuenwalde'.

Two Hamburg raiders were destroyed by GCI-controlled *Nachtjäger*. Oblt. Becker, flying a Bf110 F from Leeuwarden, achieved his 44th and final victory in WWII, a 97 Squadron Lancaster which he shot down under control of box *Salzhering*. His claim was posthumously *anerkannt* by the OKL/RLM on 24 September 1944. The second heavy bomber that fell foul of a *Nachtjäger*, 9 Squadron Lancaster ED477, which crashed at 03.24 hrs in the Ristedter swamp, 15 km. SSW of Bremen, was claimed both by Lt. Weiss of 1./NJG3 and by Bremen-based Flak of the 8. Flak Division. After official evaluation, the *Nachtjäger* was credited with the victory.

Oblt. Ludwig Becker: 44 12./NJG1 Lancaster sea 15 km. E. Texel (Pl.Q. 245, *Salzhering*): 500 m. 03.10 97 Sqn Lancaster W4835

Lt. Ernst Weiss: 1 1./NJG3 Lancaster Ristedter Moor, S. Bremen (Roland B): 5.000 m. 03.24 9 Sqn Lancaster ED477

Note: coned by 1. Flakscheinw. Abt. 498 (Werfer Hengsterholz) and also claimed by heavy Flak of 1., 2. & 4./schw. Flak Abt. 498, 2./schw. Flak Abt. 268, 4./schw. Flak Abt. 269 and 2./schw. Flak Abt. 138 ('Lancaster Risterdter Moor 03.24 hrs'), Flak claim officially rejected and victory credited to Lt. Weiss on 24.9.1944

2-3 February 1943 KÖLN

Five out of a force of 161 aircraft that raided Köln were lost. An estimated 50 outward-bound and 65 homeward-bound 'heavies' passed through six GCI boxes in Belgium, where eight Bf110s of II./NJG1 patrolled during the course of the evening. Just one crew achieved a *Feindberührung*: at 20.56 hrs, Oblt. von Bonin reported an undecided combat with an outward-bound Lancaster just west of the Köln Flak zone. Two I./NJG1 aces, Major Streib (flying in Bf110 G9+BB from Venlo between 20.58 and 22.17 hrs) and Oblt. Frank were responsible for the destruction of three Köln raiders. Streib shot down both his adversaries in *Raum 5 C* (Weert) under control of JLO Oblt. Knickmeier and with the aid of his experienced *Funker* Uffz. Fischer, for whom these were his 13th and 14th *Abschussbeteiligungen*. The victim of Oblt. Frank and his BF Fw. Gotter (who were patrolling in box *Gorilla*) has been identified as a 7 Squadron Stirling that came down to the SE of Rotterdam –from the wreckage of this aircraft, the Germans captured a virtually intact H2S set. In many post-war publications, this victory has been wrongly attributed to Oblt. Knacke, St.Kpt. of I./NJG1 (Knacke achieved no victories on 2-3 February; he died in action the very next night).

Two other aircraft of the Köln force (a 44 Squadron Lancaster and a 102 Squadron Halifax) collided to the SSW of Eindhoven, after both aircraft had taken Flak hits. The following Flak claim was submitted with the OKL: 'A) Lancaster B) Halifax Luiksgestel 20.50 hrs, 1. and 4./s. Abt. 665 and 1./s. Abt. 591'. After the collision, both bombers exploded with the loss of all 14 crew members, scattering debris at Luyksgestel and Hamont respectively, on the Dutch-Belgian border.

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|--|--------------|-----------|--|-------|------------------------|
| Maj. Werner Streib: 42 | Stab I./NJG1 | Lancaster | Kessel, 6 km. SW Venlo (6257, 5 C): 5.800 m | 21.12 | 49 Sqn Lancaster ED440 |
| Maj. Werner Streib: 43 | Stab I./NJG1 | Lancaster | 1 km NW Hamont, NE Diest (5281, 5 C): 5.000 m | 21.30 | 50 Sqn Lancaster ED488 |
| <i>Note: also claimed by Flak of 1./schw. Flak Abt. 665 and 1./schw. Flak Abt. 591 ('Lancaster 1 km. NW Hamont 4000 m. 21.29 hrs'), victory Maj. Streib confirmed on 29.9.1944</i> | | | | | |
| Oblt. Hans-Dieter Frank: 15 | 2./NJG1 | Stirling | 12 km. ESE Rotterdam (4225 I, <i>Gorilla</i>): 4.400 m. | 22.01 | 7 Sqn Stirling R9264 |

3-4 February 1943 HAMBURG

The first 200-plus raid in more than two weeks, 263 bombers headed for Hamburg, the force bombing between 20.55 and 21.25 hrs. In reaction, an estimated 65 GCI-controlled *Nachtjäger* of NJG1, 3 and 4 were employed, British listening stations overhearing the radio traffic of 25 attempted interceptions. 16 Main Force aircraft were lost, 12 of which were credited to crews of NJG1. Two 'heavies' escaped damaged from sharp encounters with *Nachtjäger* on the return flight, near Maffan at 22.08 hrs and off Vlieland at 22.31 hrs. Heavy Flak of the 3. and 8. Flak Divisions were credited with three kills, 17 bombers returning with Flak scars:

-106 Sqn Lancaster W4770: hit by 4./schw. Flak Abt. 262, 2./schw. Flak Abt. 611, 1., 2. & 4./schw. Flak Abt. 606 and 3./Res. Flak Abt. 222, impacted at Lichtenmoor nr. Heemsen, N. of Nienburg at 21.30 hrs.

-78 Sqn Halifax W7938: hit by 1. & 2./schw. Flak Abt. 531, 1. & 4./schw. Flak Abt. 163, 4./schw. Flak Abt. 223 and 4./schw. Flak Abt. 231, crashed near Stickgras, S. of Delmenhorst at 21.40 hrs.

-408 Sqn Halifax DT680: hit by 1.-4./schw. Flak Abt. 603 and crashed nr. Lüdershausen, S. of Artlenburg at 21.40 hrs.

Aided by his regular *Bordfunker* Uffz. Bundrock, Hptm. Reinhold Knacke, St.Kpt. of I./NJG1, achieved his 43rd and 44th confirmed *Abschüsse* over outward-bound bombers during a patrol in box *Gorilla* (based at Leerdam, south of Utrecht in central Holland). He was killed in his Bf110 F-4 G9+DK by return fire from his second *Viermot* *Abschuss* that night, a 'Halifax' that he engaged near Tiel. In fact, his final victory concerns the loss of 214 Squadron Stirling R9197, which impacted at Leusden following a night fighter attack at 20.04 hrs. Interestingly, Bf110 E-1 G9+GK of I./NJG1 in the hands of Uffz. Fritz Hahn also crashed in this immediate area, due to an unknown cause, Hahn and his *Funker* both perishing when their fighter impacted at Zoelen at 20.00 hrs, just five minutes before Knacke claimed his second *Abschuss* and in turn was shot down himself.

Immediately after his Messerschmitt had been set on fire, Uffz. Bundrock baled out and landed safely. His pilot probably tried to bale out only seconds before his aircraft crashed 3 km east of Achterveld near Ede at 20.05 hrs. After coming down on his parachute, Uffz. Bundrock was led to the crash site: "The night was unpleasantly cold – I shivered in the chill air. There were no thoughts in my head, except those that kept returning to Hptm. Knacke. Then we saw the glowing embers of the crash site and the wreckage of the Me110 where it lay, still smoking. Some sharp-edged pieces of debris- jutting at bizarre angles from the ground where they had impacted- stood out against the darker horizon in ghostly fashion. I noticed a German *Landser* with a rifle standing a short distance from the crash site. Suddenly we spotted a large expanse of whiteness on the ground and as we drew closer we recognised it as an opened parachute. The Dutch mayor was also standing there shining his torch at the form lying on the black earth. It was my *Hauptmann* Knacke. He lay there in his flying suit -his body slightly hunched and crumpled -his winter flying helmet on his head and his face turned into the earth. I stood motionless for a few seconds- unable to move- just staring. My eyes filled with tears as I contemplated the sight of the smashed body laying at my feet. Then I stooped down and reached out to turn the motionless form over, feeling the soft broken-boned mass under the flying suit. I was only able to identify him from his *Ritterkreuz*. It was with unspeakable sadness that I held it for a short moment in my hand. I couldn't recognise his face under the helmet. It looked like it had been a head shot but I couldn't be certain. We pulled the

parachute over him and stood there for a while at the spot where his life had been extinguished. It was with him that I had become an aviator - it was with him that I had lived my war-time experiences with all their highs and lows. Just a little over an hour ago he had been a fanatical hunter who threw himself tirelessly on his prey in order to kill, kill and kill again. This bloody war. Now he too had been killed..

It was later concluded -on the basis of the widely scattered debris- that our Bf110 must have exploded shortly prior to impacting the ground. Perhaps it was only at that point that Knacke had managed to struggle free, but by then it had been too late. On 5 February *Hauptmann* Reinhold Knacke received the posthumous award of the *Oakleaves* to his *Knights Cross of the Iron Cross* -as the 190th soldier of the German *Wehrmacht* to be so honoured by the *Führer*. On 6 February -coincidentally my 26th birthday- Hptm. Knacke was buried with full military honours at the *Heroes cemetery* at Deelen aerodrome near Arnhem in Holland. His last resting place was a plot at the end of the main avenue of the cemetery, under the colours for which he had fallen in action. All around were the graves of the many others with whom we had flown, lived and laughed. No doubt they too had hoped, prior to each sortie they flew, that it would not prove to be their last. As luck would have it the lifeless body of Oblt. Gildner was laid to rest alongside Knacke just a few weeks later. There weren't many plots left in the grave yard. I started to reflect on my own eventual fate -in which row and alongside whom would I too be buried?

It was pouring with rain as the coffin containing the body of my pilot was lowered into the open grave. It was a terribly sad funeral ceremony. I found the volley of gunfire -as the salutes rang out- somewhat upsetting- it seemed not at all appropriate to the mood".

Lt. Elsässer of E./NJG2 had an eventful sortie, as recorded in his diary: "3.2.43. *Oak Leaves* winner, Hptm. Knacke, killed. Call from Hptm. Wittgenstein. 18.00, stand-by wave. 6th war flight (operation), box 'Zander'. Machine completely knocked about! *Wireless operator* give incorrect patrolling area, so searchlights and shot at by Flak".

Four crews of III./NJG1, manning the GCI boxes 4 A (Lingen), 4 D (Doetinchem) and *Hase* (Harderwijk) in Eastern and central Holland, each scored one victory. The *Gruppenkommandeur* Hptm. Thimmig and his BF Ofw. Steckemetz flew a 1. *Welle* (wave) patrol in box 4 D between 19.18 and 20.37 hrs in a Bf110 F-4. Following one vector, they destroyed a 75 Squadron Stirling which impacted at Enter. The crew was relieved by Hptm. Dormann, St.Kpt. of 9./NJG1 and his *Funker* Ofw. Schmalscheidt for a 2. *Welle* patrol in 4 D, Dormann shooting down a 15 Squadron Stirling near Nijmegen after two vectors.

Lt. Linke of Stab IV./NJG1 reported two homeward-bound 'heavies' shot down off Vlieland during a patrol in box *Tiger*, both of which were *anerkannt* as confirmed victories on 29 September 1944. His second claim (for a 'Halifax') actually concerned an 83 Squadron Lancaster that escaped damaged from the encounter. In turn, two Bf110 F-4s of Linke's Gruppe were lost (at Zuidwolde/Linde and Meppeln), both being vacated by their crews after running out of fuel.

Right: Ofw. Kurt Bundrock, *Bordfunker* to Hptm. Knacke (37 *Abschussbeteiligungen*) and Major Streib (12 *Abschussbeteiligungen*) (Coll. Marcel Hogenhuis).

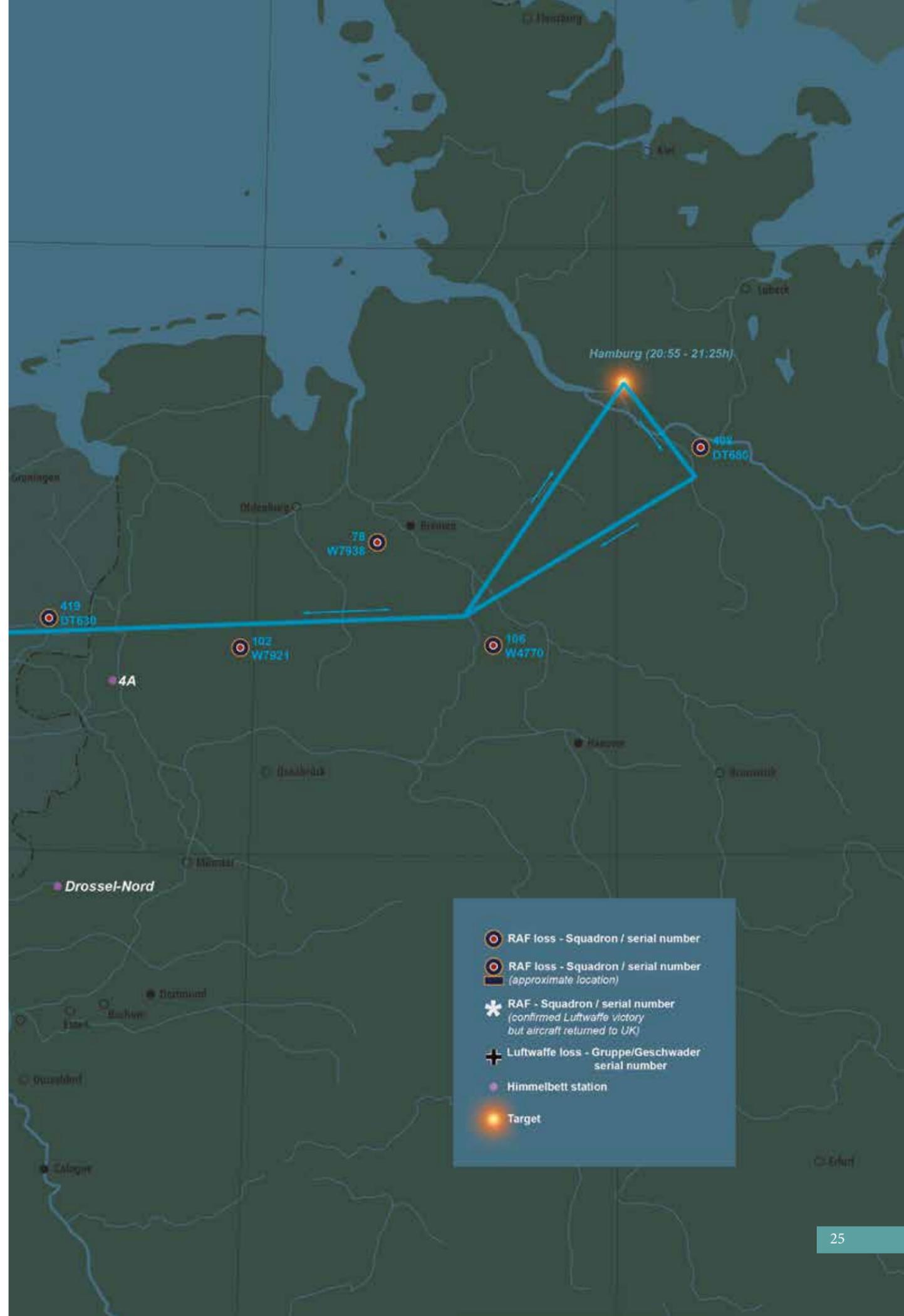
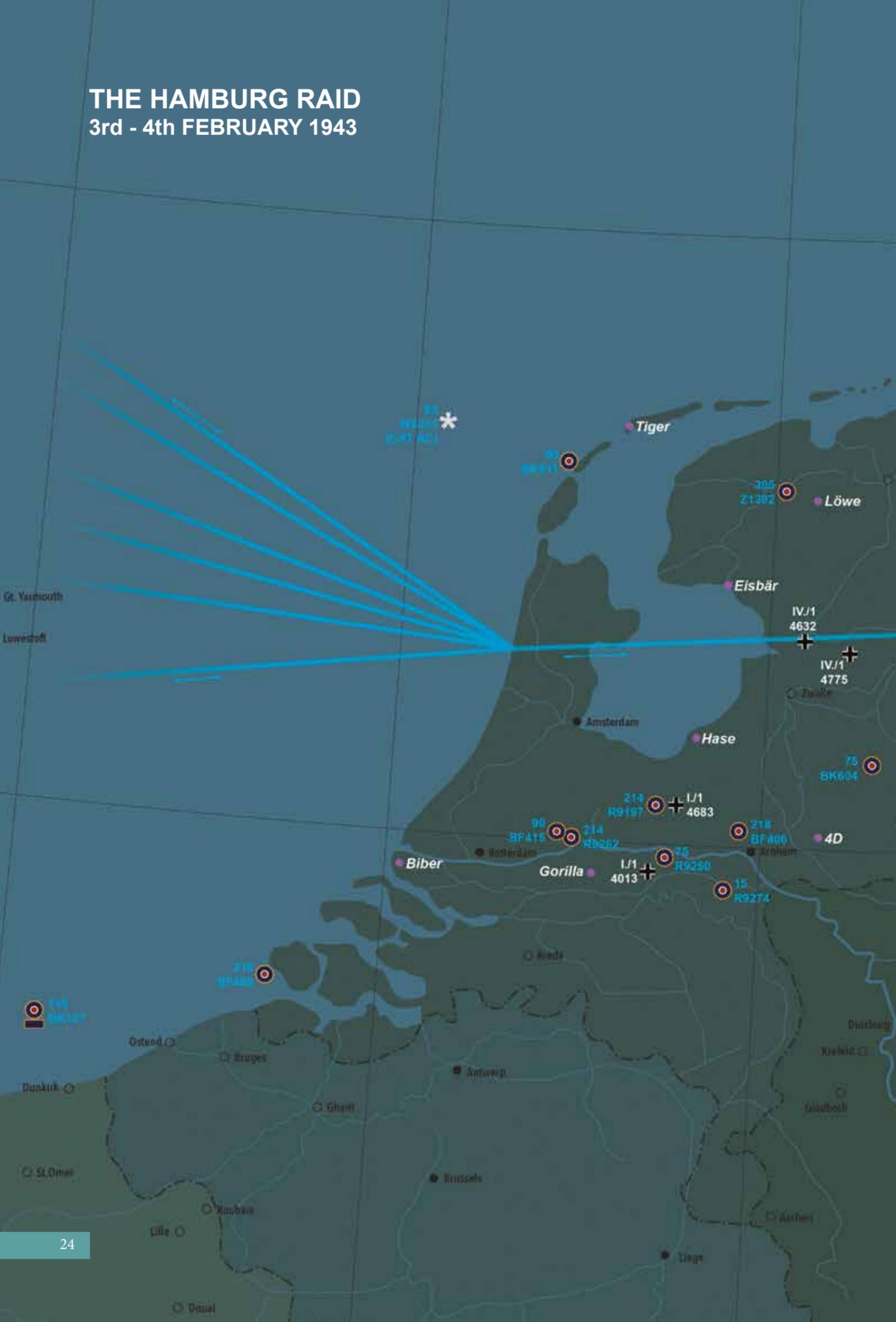


Above: Hptm. Reinhold Knacke, St.Kpt. of I./NJG1 was killed in action on 3-4 February 1943 (Coll. Wim Govaerts).



THE HAMBURG RAID

3rd - 4th FEBRUARY 1943



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|--|----------------|------------|---|-------|---|
| Hptm. Reinhold Knacke: 43 | 1./NJG1 | Stirling | Ingen, 5 km. S. Amerongen (5379, <i>Gorilla</i>): 3.500 m. | 19.46 | 75 Sqn Stirling R9250 |
| Hptm. Reinhold Knacke: 44 | 1./NJG1 | Halifax | NNW Tiel (5213, <i>Gorilla</i>): 3.300 m. | 20.05 | 214 Sqn Stirling R9197 |
| Hptm. Wolfgang Thimmig: 11 | Stab III./NJG1 | Stirling | nr. Enter, 2 km. E. Rijssen (6367 d 3, 4 D): 4.200 m. | 20.10 | 75 Sqn Stirling BK604 |
| Ofw. Karl-Heinz Scherfling: 6 | 10./NJG1 | Halifax | Schoonoord, 20 km. SE Assen (6325 h, <i>Eisbär</i>): 5.300 m | 20.30 | 419 Sqn Halifax DT630 |
| Oblt. Manfred Meurer: 11 | 3./NJG1 | Stirling | 5 km. N. Arnhem (5389, <i>Drossel-Nord</i>): 4.200 m. | 20.41 | 218 Sqn Stirling BF406 |
| Lt. Werner Rapp: 2 | 7./NJG1 | Halifax | Brokstreek, 5 km NW Quakenbrück (4 A): 5.000 m | 20.48 | 102 Sqn Halifax W7921 |
| <i>Note: also claimed by Flak of 2. & 4./schw. Flak Abt. 143 and Schw. Heimat Flakbatt. 201/VI and 202/VI ('Halifax nr. Essen NW Quakenbrück 20.47 hrs'), Flak claim officially rejected by OKL, victory Lt. Rapp confirmed on 29.9.1944</i> | | | | | |
| Hptm. Wilhelm Dormann: 3 | 9./NJG1 | Stirling | 6 km. NNW Nijmegen (4 D): 3.000 m. | 20.54 | 15 Sqn Stirling R9274 |
| Oblt. Horst Pause: 2 | 1./NJG1 | Stirling | sea off Zoutelande (3253, <i>Biber</i>): 5.000 m | 21.05 | 218 Sqn Stirling BF408 |
| Uffz. Alois Ott: 1 | 12./NJG1 | Wellington | Drogeham, E. Leeuwarden (6471 h 1, <i>Löwe</i>): 5.000 m. | 21.37 | 305 Sqn Wellington Z1392 |
| Lt. Lothar Linke: 15 | Stab IV./NJG1 | Wellington | sea 5 km. W. Vlieland (448312, <i>Tiger</i>): 4.400 m | 22.19 | 300 Sqn Wellington BK511 |
| <i>Note: also claimed by Flak of 1. & 3./schw. Flak Abt. 611, 1. & 3./schw. Flak Abt. 262, 2./Res. Flak Abt. 222 and 3./schw. Flak Abt. 606 ('Wellington nr. Vlieland in sea, Grid Square 4483, 22.19 hrs'), Flak claim officially rejected by OKL, victory Lt. Linke confirmed on 29.9.1944</i> | | | | | |
| Lt. Lothar Linke: 16 | Stab IV./NJG1 | Halifax | sea 30 km. NW Vlieland (4459 d 2, <i>Tiger</i>): 4.800 m | 22.34 | 83 Sqn Lancaster W4231 (Cat. AC damaged) |
| <i>Note: homeward-bound flying at 17,000 ft 40 km NW of Vlieland at 22.31 hrs attacked from close range by a night fighter, which raked the whole fuselage from nose to tail, set the starboard inner engine on fire and wounded the B/A in the foot, fire went out on feathering the engine. Claim Lt. Linke confirmed as full victory on 29.9.1944</i> | | | | | |
| Uffz. Johannes Vogel: 1 | 1./NJG1 | Stirling | Willeskop, 16 km. SW Utrecht (4389, <i>Gorilla</i>): 3.200 m | 23.00 | 90 Sqn Stirling BF415 |
| Uffz. Christian Költringer: 2 | 7./NJG1 | Stirling | Benschop, 12 km. SW Utrecht (4389 i 9, <i>Hase</i>): 3.600 m | 23.35 | 214 Sqn Stirling R9282 |

4 February 1943 USAAF BREMEN



While the *Himmelbett* Nachtjagd tried to ward off the mounting British strategic night bombing offensive, the Luftwaffe was confronted with a new threat on 27 January 1943, when B-17s and B-24s of the American 8th USAAF started bombing targets in Germany. Because of a shortage of day fighters, and because the Luftwaffe High Command believed that the heavily armed long-range twin-engined night fighters could be effectively employed in combating the American combat boxes, on 4 February, Nachtjäger were thrown into the daylight battle for the first time. With the aid of his BF Fw. Weissflog, Oblt. Hans-Joachim Jabs, St.Kpt. of 11./NJG1 and one of the highest scoring *Zerstörer* pilots during the Battle of Britain whilst serving with ZG76, led eight Bf110s from Leeuwarden against a force of B-17s returning from a raid on Bremen. Following take off shortly before noon, the Nachtjäger picked up the first of the returning bombers near Emden at 12.04 hrs, following them out to sea, where the night hunters and Fortresses clashed to the NW of the Ameland-Texel area. Three B-17s were downed in the ensuing combat, by Oblt. Jabs, Ofw. Grimm and Uffz. Naumann; all three Abschüsse were officially *anerkannt* by the OKL/RLM as confirmed victories on 29 September 1944. These were the first of approximately 141 Nachtjagd Abschüsse (106 Fortresses, 29 Liberators, five Lightnings and one Thunderbolt) that were claimed

On 4 February 1943, Ofw. Heinz Grimm of 12./NJG1 achieved his only *Abschuss* in daylight with a Fortress downed off Texel. He is seen here preparing for a sortie at Leeuwarden sometime in 1942 or early 1943 (Coll. Grimm family, via Dom Howard).

in daylight during 1943-44 against the USAAF. Incidentally, Grimm and Naumann received their instructions from the GCI boxes *Eisbär* and *Löwe*, respectively, whilst Jabs appears to have hunted without GCI control. Combats continued until 12.52 hrs when the last fighters returned to base. All eight participating Bf110s were badly shot up; two force-landed before they could regain their base in Northern Holland. As a result, IV./NJG1 was unable to participate in the air defence against RAF Bomber Command over the coming few nights.

Gefr. Handke, *Bordfunker* to Uffz. Kraft, recalls his 7th *Einsatz*: “On the bombers’ return flight, four of our pairs took off for a formation of 60 Boeing Fortress IIs. Uffz. Naumann (with Uffz. Bärwolf), scored his first daylight victory. In a pair with Lt. Völlkopf he attacked the formation head on and shot a Boeing out of formation. With one motor smoking and its undercarriage hanging down, it fell behind. Naumann immediately turned around and attacked again, from behind. The result was that both machines went down on fire, but Naumann was still able to make a belly landing on the water off the north beach of Ameland. Hptm. Jabs, who’d been awarded the Knight’s Cross for his 15 *Zerstörer* victories over England in 1940, also shot down a Boeing with his wingman. Uffz. Scherer attacked the formation completely alone. He transmitted: ‘I am in contact with 50 couriers and am attacking.’ Then he dived down into the thick of it. He certainly fired at one, but had to pull away because his face was full of splinters, his wireless operator Mehner even had the whole altimeter hanging off his face.

Then it was our pair’s turn, Ofw. Grimm and us. We were sent out from GCI box ‘Eisbär’ and were the last ones to reach the formation, at 7,000 meters altitude and 20km west of Texel. (In our usual *Nachtjagd* fashion, we had been sent in pairs to different GCI boxes, instead of trying to attack in one formation). Suddenly we saw the whole crowd of 60 Boeings in front of us! I must confess, that I had a brief shiver of fear, when I saw them. It was the same for my comrades. We seemed so small and puny compared to these ‘Flying Fortresses.’ We attacked from the side, the lead aircraft first. However he turned in too soon, so that we couldn’t even bring our guns to bear and flew right past the rear of the formation, at which point they all shot at us. We then took turns attacking the rear machine from above and behind, until we were both out of ammunition. With Grimm’s last attack a Boeing caught fire and later crashed. All of Grimm’s perspex was shot out, the Wireless Operator Uffz. Meissner was wounded, the port engine stopped. We also had to feather our port engine, as it was smoking. To port both tanks were shot through, to starboard the rear tank, the coolant and fuel pipes to the port engine and Schorsch’s armoured windscreen were all kaputt. So we both went back to the field with one engine stopped. Grimm’s other engine then also stopped, so he had to make a belly-landing, whereas ours kept going for the landing. We landed smoking next to Grimm (at Leeuwarden at 12.44 hrs, author’s note).”

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|-----------------------------|----------|------|--|-------|---|
| Uffz. Alfred Naumann: 1 | 11./NJG1 | B-17 | Waddensea twixt Terschelling-Ameland (5466 b, <i>Löwe</i>): 3.500 m. | 12.25 | B-17F 41-24589 ‘Texas Bronco’ 91BG/323 BS, or B-17F 41-24544 ‘Pennsylvania Polka’ 91BG/323 BS |
| Ofw. Heinz Grimm: 6 | 12./NJG1 | B-17 | sea 50 km. NW Texel (4452, <i>Eisbär</i>): 6.700 m. | 12.35 | B-17F 41-24544 ‘Pennsylvania Polka’ 91BG/323 BS or B-17F 42-5060 305 BG/422 BS |
| Oblt. Hans-Joachim Jabs: 19 | 11./NJG1 | B-17 | over Terschelling/sea 10 km. NW Harlingen (5455 b 7, prob. <i>Tiger</i>): 10.000 m. | 12.51 | B-17F 41-24569 ‘Memphis Tot’ 303 BG/427 BS |

The Bf110 of Uffz. Naumann (11./NJG1) burning out on the North Sea beach of Ameland, 4 February 1943. One of the two crew members is seen posing with the burning wreckage (Coll. Tresoar).

