

Ar-234 TRAINING UNITS

Prisoners Describe Curriculum and Research At GAF Bases and Experimental Stations

Two German pilots who deserted from their base at Alt Lönnewitz brought their Ju-88 down at St. Dizier early this month. They were subsequently brought to England and questioned by ADI(K), Air Ministry and US Air Interrogation Unit, and the present article is based on a report issued subsequently.

At the time of desertion, the pilots were in training with III/EKG 1, a unit which converts pilots to the Ar-234. Trainees are eventually assigned to KG 76, noted in SUMMARY No. 70 (page 11) as a Geschwader flying the Ar-234.

Besides giving details on the training unit to which they belonged, the pilots were able to inform their interrogators on the operational Gruppen of KG 76 and the Arado construction plant at Sagan, lately removed to Brandenburg/Briest.

III/EKG 1: One of the prisoners joined IV/KG 76 at Alt Lönnewitz in October, 1944. This Gruppe was renamed III/EKG 1 in January, 1945, and at that time consisted of four Staffeln numbered 9, 10, 11 and 12. This was to be the only operational training unit for the Ar-234 and the pool out of which pilots for KG 76 were drawn.

In October, 1944, the operational Gruppen of KG 76 were equipping with the Ar-234, and reinforcements of experienced pilots from other operational units, along with pilots from blind-flying schools, were sent to Alt Lönnewitz for training. Alt Lönnewitz was associated as far back as October, 1944, in SUMMARIES No. 48 (page 6) and No. 49 (page 4) with the Arado jet. The other prisoner under interrogation belonged to this latter group of trainees who composed IV/KG 76 (or III/EKG 1).

The training unit was subdivided into three instructional sections: one group began flying training, another awaited training, and the third was sent for a six-week technical course with the Sagos Company. This firm was engaged in constructing the Ar-234 at Sagan/Küpper Airfield.

Ground crews for IV/KG 76 were drawn from KG 76 and received training for servicing the Arado aircraft at Sagan.

By 1 April, 1945, II/EKG 1 had nearly completed training, with only final bombing instruction remaining. Staffel 12 had finished conversion to the Me-262 (the last stage before flying the Ar-234) and Staffel 9 was about to begin conversion to the Me-262. Staffel 10 was still receiving theory instruction. Because of the staggered stages of training, aircraft of III/EKG 1 were of various types. Most of the planes were He-111s and Ju-88s, with two each Me-110s,

and two-seater Me-262s. There were four FW-190s and only one Ar-234B. By 1 April, when the two pilots deserted, the original 40 trainees had been augmented by about 35 new men.

Other Gruppen of EKG 1: Early in April, I/EKG 1 was said by the prisoners to be at Gardelegen and was the only operational training unit for bomber units crew members that was still organized in the GAF.

II/EKG 1, formerly IV/KG 26, was at Kolberg until the end of January, when it moved to Hølev, an airfield on the island of Fünen, Denmark. This Gruppe had four Staffeln, was equipped with Ju-88s, He-111s and FW-190s, and was a training unit for torpedo bombing. About the middle of March, one of the prisoners had heard that the Gruppe had been dissolved; the pilots were thought sent to southern Germany for Me-262 training, while other personnel were sent to Flak, SS, and paratroop units.

KG 76: In October, 1944, I/KG 76 was at Burg/Magdeburg converting to the Ar-234. The prisoner had heard that the Gruppe was about to become operational by the end of March. When Gruppe II was ready to convert to the Ar-234 in October, 1944, there were no aircraft available, so the pilots were put to work at an Arado shop at Alt Lönnewitz. Later on, Ar-234 training did take place and by April II/KG 76 was at Burg/Magdeburg ready for action.

Activities of Gruppe III correspond with those of I/KG 76, and early in April this Gruppe was also operational, flying the Arado jet from Alt Lönnewitz.

Arado Research at Sagan: One of the prisoners had spent over a month at the Sagos plant with other pilots of III/EKG 1. He identified the firm as being the experimental construction center for the Arado, and said it had produced both prototypes and sub-types of the Ar-234.

In January, 1945, when the Russian advance forced evacuation of the Sagos company from Sagan, the firm, together with trainees from III/EKG 1 moved to Brandenburg/Briest, where the prisoner thought it was still located.

Work at Sagan was chiefly confined to experimental assembly and flying trials of Ar-234 prototypes. Trainees from III/EKG 1 received instruction in sub-types B and C. The prisoner learned that up to January, 1945, three sub-types, A, B, and C had been assembled by Sagos.

Ar-234A: This sub-type had the regular Ar-234 fuselage, but was equipped with a single skid under the

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destroyed. Fresh craters were seen among refueling points, in the aircraft shelter area, and on the northern perimeter track. About 50 craters were counted on the northeast end of the runway, with at least 20 others extending to the southwest. Craters were visible on the landing ground south of the runway, while another group extended into the southern portion of the hangar area.

Schafstadt : As a result of Eighth Air Force attack here on 9 April, the airfield including the runway was completely and effectively cratered. The western half of the runway was particularly heavily hit. Hangars and other facilities in the northwestern corner of the field were not affected nor was the fuel storage in the southeastern corner. Approximately 21 planes were visible, of which three were damaged.

INDUSTRIAL TARGETS

Düneberg : From photos taken on 9 April, two days after 168 Eighth Air Force B-24s hit the explosives factory, it was seen that heavy damage was inflicted. Two huge craters were observed, one situated in the explosive dump in the woods at the extreme northwest side of the target area, and the other southwest of the settling tanks. Blast from these explosions traveled in an easterly direction and left

havoc in its path. Many small buildings were utterly destroyed, and other severely damaged from blast effect. The railway switches southeast of the main boiler house were cut by at least five craters.

Kraiburg : Another explosives factory hit by Eighth Air Force was this one near Mühldorf, attacked on 11 April by 133 B-17s. As a result of the 381 tons of bombs dropped considerable damage was inflicted on storage areas in the northeastern part of the factory, and five large explosions resulted. Two stores buildings and a possible solvent recovery plant were still burning at time of reconnaissance. Hits were scored on some earth mound complexes engaged in nitroglycerine manufacture, but apparently without serious consequences. Some damage was seen in the storage and sidings in the central area.

Nuremberg : The marshalling yard, the Siemens electrical plant, the M.A.N. Works, and gas works were all targets for Eighth Air Force here on 5 April when 309 B-17s unloaded over 900 tons, and photos show most of the bombs to have fallen in the southern part of the town damaging all these establishments. The Siemens works suffered the most severe damage, with five large workshops and seven main shops in the electrical equipment plant, damaged severely.



Ar-234

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fuselage and a skid under each jet engine, instead of the normal undercarriage. The aircraft took off from a trolley which could be jettisoned suspended from a small parachute when the plane was in the air. Fuel for the Ar-234A was carried in two fuselage tanks with capacities of 462 and 490 gallons, respectively.

Ar-234B : The B series was completed at the end of February, and could carry either two 1,100-pound bombs under each jet unit, or one 2,200-pound bomb under the fuselage. The bombsight used was the Lotfe 7K, mentioned briefly in SUMMARY No. 74 (page 12). The aircraft carried no armament.

Ar-234C : The C series was powered by four BMW jet units placed close together in pairs, each pair housed in a common fairing. The fuselage, which resembled that of the B series, included a pressure cabin for one pilot. The underside of the central part of the fuselage was described as concave, so that when a 4,400-pound bomb was carried, only about half of it could be seen. Besides one large bomb, one 1,100-pound bomb could be carried under each pair of jet engines.

Two MK 108s firing forward, one on each side of the fuselage forward of the leading edges of the

wings, and two rearward-firing guns of the same type, one on each side of the lower part of the fuselage between the trailing edge of the wing and tail unit, comprised the armament of the Ar-234C.

At the time the prisoner left Alt Lönnewitz, the Ar-234C was being assembled on the airfield. The informant had been told by the construction foreman that the C was 112-124 m.p.h. faster than the B at cruising speeds. The pilots training at Sagan were told that this model had flown at speeds as high as 670 m.p.h. at altitudes up to 26,240 feet without bomb load or armament, and that this was not the best that it was capable of doing.

Ar-234 Conversion Course : The technical side of the course given in III/EKG 1 lasted six weeks at the Sagos development plant. Another six weeks of training at Alt Lönnewitz followed this. The pilots were given a theoretical course in navigation, ballistics, jet-propulsion theory, radio operation, radar, and, incidentally, one hour's daily instruction in National Socialist politics. This last course invariably ended with a "battle song" of the Nazi movement.

Originally, flying training began with "circuits and bumps," cross-country and high-altitude flights in the FW-190, followed by training under Egon control in the Me-110. Lack of fuel, however, forced this part of the training to be abandoned, in addition to which the accident rate with the Ar-234 was so high that an intermediate stage was introduced.

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