

GAF FIGHTER OPERATIONS

Additional Reports by Pilot Prisoners On Various Tactics and Control Systems

INFORMATION on Luftwaffe fighter tactics against Allied fighter-bombers and other aircraft, as well as a description of ground control systems in relation to several types of operations, have been provided by interrogation. The informants are German fighter pilots captured during the winter and questioned by USAAF interrogators and officers of ADI(K), and the present article is based on further portions of the same report which formed the basis for the articles in SUMMARY No. 71 (pages 5-11 and page 15).

First part of the present report will deal with operations against fighter-bombers on the Western Front, and against ground targets. It should be borne in mind that several units were represented by the pilots questioned, and that their procedures often differed, but in general the viewpoints and experiences of these enemy flyers have much in common, and their observations are believed to give a good cross-section picture of operations as they knew them toward the end of 1944.

During the latter part of 1944, GAF fighter units based on the Western Front were frequently employed on missions against Allied fighter-bombers operating in daylight over Germany. The employment of Allied fighter-bombers against transport targets and other objectives well behind the German lines led to an attempt at interception whenever weather conditions permitted.

The fighter Gruppen were given orders to fly patrols of specified duration over areas defined by geographical features such as two or three towns and these missions were frequently carried out over the Ruhr and in the Rheine area.

As no large-scale encounters with Allied fighters were expected, it was not considered necessary for German fighters to fly in large formations and normally each patrol was carried out by a Staffel of 8-12 aircraft. Several Staffeln of the same Gruppe were often assigned to patrol adjoining areas simultaneously, but all four Staffeln of a Gruppe were seldom airborne at the same time.

Formation Flown: The Staffel flies in a loose "Vic" made up of elements of four aircraft (Schwärme) with the lead Schwärm slightly below the remainder.

Tactics: Ceiling permitting, the German aircraft patrol at about 10,000 feet, on the assumption that Allied fighter-bombers will penetrate at an altitude of between 6,000 and 10,000 feet. If cloud base is as low as 10,000 feet the German fighters may patrol at tree-top level in the hope that they

will be hard to see, while the fighter-bombers will be silhouetted against the clouds.

Having sighted Allied aircraft, the German fighters endeavor to gain position above and to the rear with a view to pressing home attacks on very much the same lines as described above in the case of fighter sweep operations. Their primary object is to force the fighter-bombers to jettison their bombs.

P-47s which have got rid of their bomb load are regarded as still relatively slow and unmaneuverable, and the view prevails among FW-190 and Me-109 pilots that they can out-turn and out-climb them at heights below 5,000 feet.

On the other hand, they admit that the P-47 is faster in a power drive, but if the scene of action is behind the lines over German territory the German pilots will sometimes dive after the P-47s in an effort to keep them in sight and eventually overhaul them in level flight. This dive pursuit is not practiced over the front-line zone because of AA and fear of encountering Allied fighters.

Observations on Allied Tactics: One prisoner who had himself flown as a fighter-bomber pilot on German operations over France, and had later taken part in several operations over Western Germany against Allied fighter-bombers, commented that Allied pilots appear to be somewhat lax and unobservant, and claimed that even when two Allied fighter-bomber formations were flying in close proximity for the purpose of mutual support and better defensive observation, it was still possible to surprise them with comparative ease.

This prisoner thought that the best defensive tactics would be to sight the German formation as early as possible, dive away, and take evasive action at tree-top level. This, he maintained, would give the aircraft a good chance of fulfilling their mission and returning safely to base. He added that if safety were the consideration, it would be better for the Allied fighter-bombers to jettison their bombs before diving away.

This pilot claimed to have seen instances when a few P-47 pilots, having been surprised from the rear, endeavored to turn away without jettisoning their bombs, thus furnishing a slow-flying target.

Attacks on Ground Targets: With the notable exception of the large-scale GAF fighter attack on Allied tactical airfields in Belgium and Holland on 1 January, 1945, a detailed account of which appeared in SUMMARY No. 67 (page 8), instances of organized

German
few.

On th
forces ir
some of t
fly top co

III/JG
FW-190s
jectiles a
these op
area, escc
by II/JG
FW-190s
cover, "1,
1,000 fee
Me-109s
sweep.

During
for Germ
fly at low
tunity su

INTERRO-
summary
in the fo
different
reports o
lished in

Fighter
time, typ
altitude a
and this i
fighter sw
of jammi
(fighter c

At the
fighter un
listen in t
Control
line, one
tactical ac
ments of
authority
which wa
by the I
prerogativ
on the sj
Allied air

This fr
abolished
shot down
had form
had rever
Mittelrhe

S

German fighter attacks on ground targets have been few.

On the occasion of an attack on Allied ground forces in the Aachen area on 3 December, 1944, some of the German fighter Gruppen were detailed to fly top cover for others which attacked ground targets,

III/JG 2, based at Ettingshausen and equipped with FW-190s, frequently flew with 21-cm. rocket projectiles against Allied ground positions. On one of these operations, on 17 December in the Monschau area, escort cover as far as the front line was provided by II/JG 2 flying Me-109s, and in this instance the FW-190s flew in line abreast and the Me-109 escort cover, "essing" constantly, flew behind and about 1,000 feet above them. On reaching the front line the Me-109s broke off and carried out a normal fighter sweep.

During the Rundstedt offensive it was not unusual for German fighter units sent up on fighter sweeps to fly at low level and shoot up Allied targets of opportunity such as motor transportation, troop concen-

trations and supplies. Such ground strafing attacks usually resulted from failure to find Allied fighter-bombers, and were not specifically ordered at briefing.

Attacks on US Twin-Engine Bombers: In attacks on twin-engine bombers, interception is effected in the same manner as laid down in the case of four-engine bombers, but the greater speed of the mediums and their ability to take violent evasive action reduces the effectiveness of the attacks.

Attacks on RAF Day Bomber Formations: Interrogation of one prisoner established beyond doubt that up to 1 January, German day-fighter pilots in the West—even up to the level of Gruppe CO—had little or no information on tactics and formations flown by RAF Bomber Command on daylight raids, nor was their intelligence dissemination such as to provide details of the armament of the aircraft in question. There was no clearly defined or accepted doctrine as to the best methods of attack.



Ground Control Procedure and Organization

INTERROGATION brought out the following brief summary of the ground control facilities available in the form of running radio commentaries for the different types of operation in question. Previous reports on GAF fighter control procedure were published in SUMMARY NO. 37 (page 13).

Fighter Sweeps: A brief commentary giving the time, type and number of Allied aircraft and their altitude and course is broadcast by Jafü Mittelrhein, and this is normally used by formations operating on fighter sweeps. As an alternative for use in the event of jamming, pilots listen in to the *Reichsjägerwelle* (fighter channel).

At the time of the December offensive, many fighter units put up on fighter sweeps were required to listen in to a special commentary put out by a Fighter Control Officer located somewhere near the front line, one of whose main functions was to coordinate tactical activities of fighters in the air with the requirements of ground forces. This Control Officer had authority to order airborne fighters to any point which was under Allied air attack in the area covered by the Rundstedt advance, but it remained the prerogative of the formation leader to decide, when on the spot, whether or not he could engage the Allied aircraft.

This front-line commentary appears to have been abolished in a few weeks' time as a pilot of 3/JG 27 shot down on 1 March stated that his Gruppe, which had formerly listened in to this special commentary, had reverted by February to the use of the Jafü Mittelrhein broadcast.

Against Allied Fighter-Bombers: On this type of operation commentaries are put out by the Jagddivision, by some of the Geschwader, and in some instances, as for example in the case of IV/JG 27, the Gruppe can put out a commentary if the Division or Geschwader broadcast cannot be heard. The formation leader and his pilots use whichever of these is assigned for the day, with a preference for a commentary broadcast by their own unit. Not all Geschwader were equipped to put out a commentary, it was stated.

"Y" procedure was employed to vector the German fighter formations to the Allied fighter-bombers, but early this year a change was made to Egon procedure, which then superseded "Y" control.

When not being vectored by "Y" or Egon control, all pilots of the German formation observed strict radio silence up to the time of combat.

Against US Heavy Bombers: On operations of this type "Y" or Egon procedure is used to vector the German aircraft to the bombers, or alternatively the pilots listen in to the Jafü Mittelrhein or Reichsjägerwelle commentaries and vector themselves. The special front-line commentary broadcast during the Rundstedt offensive also included reference to heavy bomber attacks over the tactical front, and was used as an aid to interception.

Against Ground Targets: The same three alternative commentaries as are employed in the case of fighter sweeps are variously used on ground attack missions.

Some Typical Operational Control Stations

EXAMPLES of the sources of information on Allied air activity available and the type of set-up used, are embodied in the following descriptions of the signal organization at headquarters of several different Geschwader.

JG 2 Geschwader HQ: A ground code operator prisoner who from mid-September, 1944, to January, 1945, was stationed at the HQ of JG 2 near Borsdorf, close to Nidda Airfield, gave a description of its operation. This was confirmed in essentials by the Kommandeur of II/JG 2, who was based at Nidda up to the time of his last flight on 1 January.

Signal section of the HQ was located in Borsdorf until early December when it moved to the Geschwader HQ, housed in a one-story wooden building west of the town.

The radio room was equipped with four transmitter-receivers operating 24 hours a day and having four functions.

(1) A "Geschwader Stern" (network) set operating on the Jafü Mittelrhein frequency on which operational orders were received in Morse in a five-letter code. Such orders usually took the form of instructions to put up a given number of aircraft at a stated time to patrol, or to attack ground targets, over designated areas described both geographically and in terms of fighter grid coordinates.

(2) A set receiving a Morse commentary put out in the clear by Jafü Mittelrhein, dealing with Allied air activity over Western and Southern Germany and Austria. This commentary was taken down in full and recorded in a book, and excerpts from its dealing specifically with the activity over the operational area of JG 2 were passed to the plotting room for marking on the operational maps and on the glass plotting screen.

(3) A set tuned to the frequency used jointly by Jagddivision 5 and Jagdkorps II, which put out a radio commentary in the clear of roughly the same type as Jafü Mittelrhein. These two commentaries, which were identified by the use of call signs, were recorded in full and the relevant sections of the text were passed to the plotting room.

(4) A set tuned to the frequency on which a radio commentary was put out in the clear by a transmitting station known to the prisoner only as "Flaksender" or "Welle 313," which dealt with Allied air activity along a section of the Western Front extending roughly from Cologne to the North Sea. This commentary was likewise recorded in a book and applicable extracts were passed to the plotting room.

Although information from these four sources contained much duplication all were nevertheless listened to uninterruptedly.

According to the radio operator prisoner the commentaries put out by Jafü Mittelrhein, JD 5 and Jagd Korps II were all given in the following standard manner and sequence:

- (a) Call sign of the transmitting agency.
- (b) Position of Allied aircraft in terms of the fighter grid.
- (c) Time.
- (d) Number and type of Allied aircraft, the type being indicated sometimes merely as "fighter-bombers," "four-engine aircraft," etc., and sometimes more exactly as "Thunderbolts," "Boeings," etc.
- (e) Altitude of Allied aircraft given either in meters or by the use of the usual adjectival definitions (very low, low, high, very high, etc.).
- (f) Course of Allied aircraft given either by use of the compass points (NE, SW, etc.) or by indicating a position on the fighter grid toward which the Allied aircraft were flying.

In the operations room there was an officer with a transmitter-receiver tuned to the frequency used by Jafü Mittelrhein, whose duty it was to interpose on this wavelength, for use by airborne formations of JG 2, information on Allied air activity within a radius of about 50 km. (30 miles) of the three airfields at Merzhausen, Nidda and Ettingshausen, used respectively by I, II and III/JG 2.

Once airborne, each Gruppe would be asked to confirm that radio reception was satisfactory by replying "Viktor." When Gruppen of JG 2 were about 30 miles from base on the return flight, each Gruppe would be informed by Geschwader of any Allied aircraft near the base airfields.

JG 6 and JG 27 Geschwader HQ: In the case of the Geschwader HQ of JG 6, no such elaborate set-up existed for the collation of information on Allied air activity, and the Geschwader relied solely on a running commentary put out by JD 3 on Allied aircraft operating over Western Germany.

On the other hand, JG 27 headquarters had direct communication with "Y," radar, and later with Egon stations, and broadcast its own Geschwader commentary to its Gruppen patrolling over Germany.

The Kommodore of JG 6 who was shot down on 1 January stated that it was planned to introduce at his headquarters similar facilities, including connections with "Y" and Egon stations, so as to enable the Geschwader to put out its own commentary, and he was under the impression that this type of control system was to be set up by all fighter Geschwader operating on the Western Front.



KNOWLI
German
generally
the inter
consider:
report h
ADI(K),
accompli
The latt
which fe
Jagdschl

Develop
both of
tenance
PPI gro
the forer
firms, e
The spe
called "
"Jagdh
the nam

An e
Jagdhau
was desc
140 feet
horizont
outline.
The Jag
supersed
was sho
previous

The J
array me
concrete
the follo
ment of
Freya c
parts cor
presentat
Berlin T

Aerial
on a fran
two rows
of eight
centimet
The dipc
at interv
reflector

The ar
per minu
standard

IRIS Public Record

Key Information

Main: UNITED STATES STRATEGIC AIR FORCES IN EUROPE

Document Type:

Call Number: 519.607A-72

IRIS Number: 00217337

Accessions Notes:

Old Accession Nbr: 4555-45

Title:

Beginning Date:

End Date:

Publication Date: 1945/03/25

Classification UNCLAS

Media Roll #: 6752 First Frame: 620 Last Frame: 652 Linear Feet: 0
Old MFlm Roll # A5724 Audio Rec:

NUMPAGE 0

Title Extensions:

Abstract

Descriptive
Notes:

Title AIR INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY NO. 72

Added

Entries

Author:

Subject: |

Major Command:

Doc Link:

Rcvd:	Rel	1987/08/11
Indexer ID: 35	Entered Date:	
QC ID:	QC'd Date::	
Scanner ID:	Scanned Date:	
Acc ID	Acc Date:	

Administrative Markings

No Administrative Markings Listed

Security Review Information:

Cond & Len Staff ~~SECRET~~

R 6695 K 1153

TO BE RETURNED TO
HISTORICAL DIVISION
A. O. L. R.

UNITED STATES
STRATEGIC AIR FORCES
IN EUROPE

DECLASSIFIED
EO 11652

SMC

Instru _____
Sign _____ (File No. _____)

Name _____ Date _____

Classification changed to
~~RESTRICTED~~
by authority of AC of S, G-2, WDGS
by *Ray M. Stroupe*
RAY M. STROUPE
1st Lt Inf
Ass't Custodian

JUN 22 1945

00217337

AIR INTELLIGENCE
SUMMARY No. 72

For Week Ending 25 March, 1945

COPY NO. 1269

SCANNED BY ACD
2009

16 APR 1945

~~SECRET~~

0004#1631097

517 607A-12

4555-45