

# GERMAN FLAK REPORTS

## Captured Documents Describe Batteries' Action During Eighth Air Force Attacks on Merseburg

**I**NVESTIGATION of the Flak defenses in the Merseburg area has produced a number of German battle action reports. These documents are of considerable interest, inasmuch as they consist of detailed accounts of specific engagements by the ground defenses. In some cases they provide interesting evidence of the success of our anti-flak countermeasures, as well as other difficulties encountered by the enemy in attempting to defend the Leuna oil plant against daylight heavy bomber attack.

The drawing on next page, reproduced from the original German map overlay, shows the disposition of heavy flak batteries in the Merseburg-Halle area. This evidence has been found to indicate that Flak Intelligence estimates of these dispositions prior to occupation was about 90 percent accurate.

Remainder of this article comprises translations of three separate action reports dealing with phases of the same operation—that of 25 November, 1944, when 695 Eighth Air Force heavies attacked Merseburg/Leuna between 1147 and 1216 hours. The heading was approximately 100°, bombing altitude 15,000-28,000 feet. Four B-17s were lost to flak on this occasion, 57 sustained major battle damage, and 163 minor damage.

The first German report is that of a Flak Abteilung stationed in the immediate Leuna plant area. The second is from an Abteilung in the Southwest Sector (*see map*), the third from gun Position 155. In most cases, the German terminology and references are self-explanatory. Simple numerals are used for the "clock positions" indicating direction; code-names in quotation marks are those of control stations and reporting stations; other code-names are those of anti-jamming devices (*see SUMMARY No. 68, page 5*).

*Flak Group Merseburg                      Battle HQ, 25.11.44*  
*Untergruppe Leuna-Mitte.*  
*Heavy Flak Abteilung 406 (o).*

Battle Report No. 33/34 25.11.44, 1145-1312 hours.

**Weather :** 9/10 cloud, clear, strong groundwind. In the beginning of the engagement, slight difficulty with artificial smoke in direction 10-3, which increased during the engagement; at the end, much additional smoke in direction 12-4. At the end of the engagement, 10/10 cloud obscured, light rain showers.

### Enemy :

**Number of Aircraft Observed :** At the beginning of the engagement, six groups of about 200 machines were optically tracked; later eight groups with an estimated 300 aircraft were followed acoustically.

North of the Untergruppe district, still more groups with about 200 machines were picked up acoustically. The machines flying through the effective range of the Untergruppe were engaged (about 500 a/c).

**Recognized Types :** Fortress II and Mustang.

**Action :** Before the bomb groups reached the target area, fighter squadrons flew over Querfurt and Eisleben to the target and disappeared over Halle to the east. The bomb groups followed after about 12-15 minutes.

A strong fighter escort preceded the bomb groups into the flak zone by about eight minutes. The enemy fighters crossed over the same district. About 1145 hours, the first bomb group reached the zone of the Untergruppe. The main approach direction of the bombers was from 11 to 2 and from 11 to 3. The departure was in direction 6 to 8. Flying formation was the usual flat wedge shape. Strength of the groups seen was 32 to 38 aircraft.

**Results of the Engagement :** Observation of the engagement was not possible because of thick cloud cover. The following planes were observed to be shot down :

- (1) From Position 114, 1148 hours in direction 12
- (2) From Position 113, 1154 hours, Merseburg  
From Position 114 burning, falling vertically  
From Position 133, burning, falling vertically  
From Position 142
- (3-4) From Position 114, 1157; 2 a/c in direction 4-5  
From Position 133, burning, falling vertically

### Judgment :

**Air Situation Reporting :** The reception from "Möve" and "Habicht" was good at the beginning of the engagement. After 1145, no more reception was possible from "Möve." The "Fluko" reports gave no clear idea of the air situation because of deceptive maneuvers of the enemy bombers before reaching the district. Because of the successful bombfalls on Bonn, Düsseldorf, and Eisenach, it was supposed that no bombing attack on our area would be made. The foregoing attacks could be recognized, however, from the later following reports. The fighter groups and bomb groups were well concentrated. Four or five attack waves were noted. As compensation for the failing "Fluko" and Freya reports, "Horizont" was intercepted. Also the air situation survey of the Flak Group gave a clear picture of the progress of the attack.

**Communications :** At 1145 hours, "Möve" went out; at 1200 the command post "Klibu" went out, and 1212 hours, all the lines to the Flak Group were out. Immediately, radio communication



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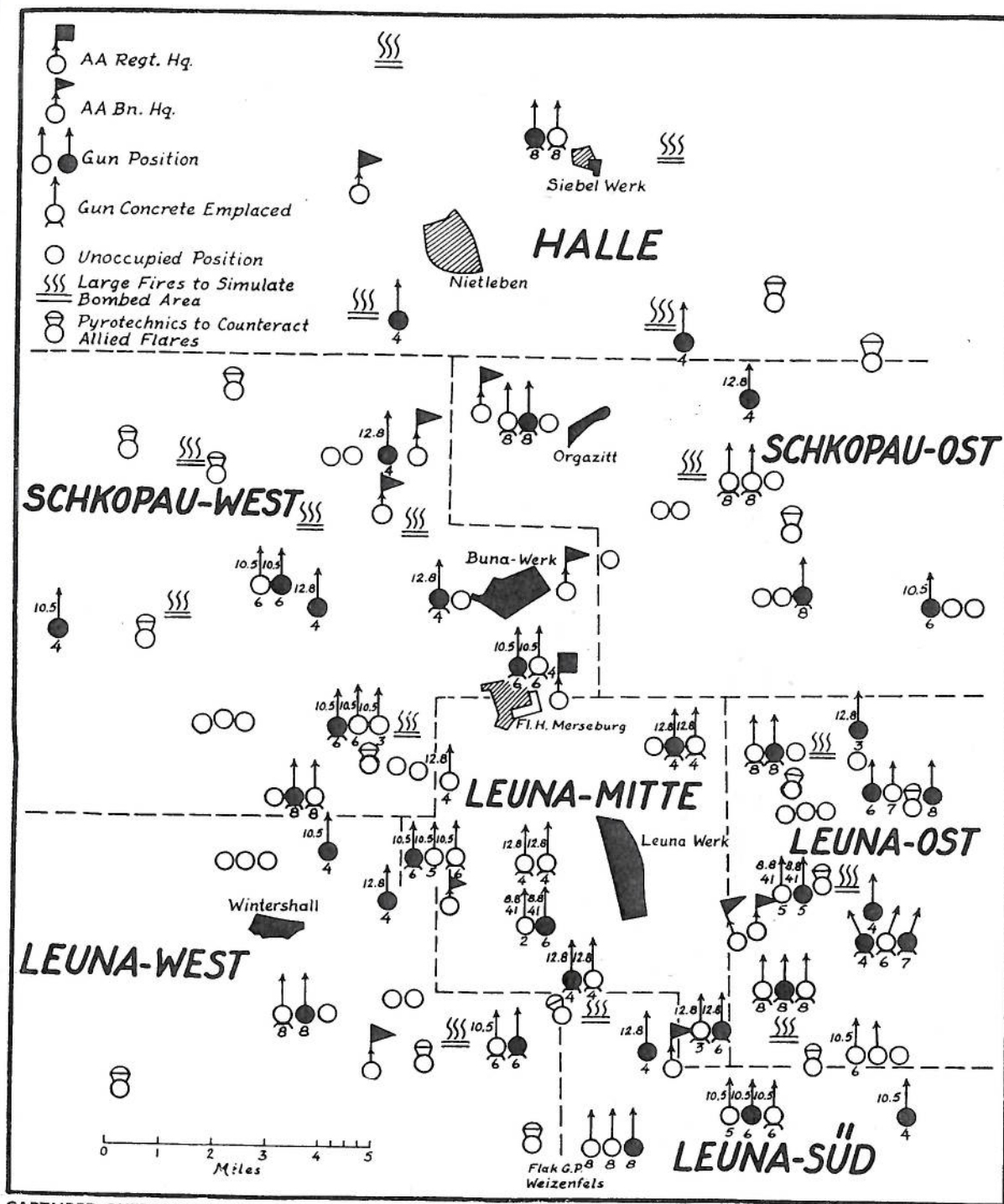
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CAPTURED OVERLAY SHOWING HEAVY FLAK DISPOSITIONS IN MERSEBURG-HALLE AREA; LEGEND AT UPPER LEFT

to the Group was established. Good reception. At 1215 one line to the Flak Group was again in operation. At 1150, "Fluko" Halle went out. At 1230, all lines to Position 123 went out; 1150 to 1235 the trapeze network to Positions 113 and 142 were out.

Progress of the Attack: Many enemy fighter squadrons (three to four aircraft each) flew about eight minutes ahead of the bombers into the target area. The attack waves chose case "C" for the approach. At 1145 the first wave of bombers came



into the flak zone. The second wave followed about four to five minutes after the first. The separation of the individual groups in the first wave was one to two minutes, and two to three minutes in the second wave. Later waves could only be observed acoustically and by vapor trails seen in a northerly direction.

Enemy fighters were noticed through holes in the clouds during the whole engagement over the target area. The fighters flew at a height of about 12,000 meters; the height of the bombers was 6,400 to 8,300 meters. Speed of the fighter groups was between 130 and 150 m/sec. The first bomb groups could drop their bombs visually. In the working range of the Untergruppe, about 500 aircraft were identified optically and acoustically.

#### **Assessment of the Flak Defense :**

**Firing Procedure :** Because of the weather situation, an optical engagement of the targets was possible only at the beginning. The greatest part of the groups were engaged electrically and with barrage.

**Radar Jamming :** About 10 minutes before the beginning of the attack, strong active jamming in the form of noise at a distance of about 50 km. was experienced. This could not be eliminated by changing frequency. It appeared to be a new kind of unsynchronized impulse-keyed transmitter, which forced the range circle toward the center, and placed the zero mark on the other side of the base line (?) The base line of the fine-range scope was strikingly drawn toward the top and bottom of the scope. Operation on B-band was without success. Passive jamming was medium to strong. Five radars were completely jammed, and three temporarily jammed; Nürnberg effected no success as an anti-jamming device. Through the very strong active jamming, Tastlaus with Taunus presentation was useless until a weakening of the jamming, when a few radars could again operate.

**Special Observations :** The results with the anti-jamming devices for the radar show that the efficiency with B-band, Tastlaus, and broad band dipole and the connected sensitivity adjustments has become entirely too inadequate. After this experience, much better results can be expected against active jamming with C-band and Würzlaus.

*Flak Untergruppe South West Battle HQ, 25.11.44  
Heavy Flak Abteilung 185 (o)*

*Battle Report No. 11/14, 25.11.44, 1143-1313 hours.*

**Weather :** At the beginning of the engagement, 9/10 cloud at the end, 10/10. Ground visibility good 20 km. Rain at times. Cloud height 500-1000m. Difficulties from artificial smoke were experienced at Position 129 over a small sector.

**Enemy :** The number of a/c could not be definitely established because of poor visibility—estimated at about 1,000 machines. On departure, about 500 aircraft were counted in close sequence. These

formations of about 20 a/c each flew very close together.

The groups flew in directly from the west and turned shortly before the target area toward the northeast, attacking the target from direction 10 and 11. They departed in direction 7, in order to leave the Untergruppe district in a westerly direction.

**Success of the Defense :** Because of the almost complete cloud over, the results of the flak fire could not be easily seen. From a few batteries it was reported, however, that the location of bursts was very good, as seen through holes in the clouds.

As far as could be observed, the groups attempted side-wise evasive action to get out of the flak. Three planes were observed to be shot down in direction 1 at 1153 hours, direction 2-3 at 1155, and direction 2 at 1200 hours.

#### **Judgment :**

**Air Situation :** The warning and air situation reporting from Fluko Halle "Horizont" was good from the beginning of the engagement, and allowed proper and timely engagement by the batteries. The Commander-command post communication went out for a few minutes at the beginning of preparations to fire, but was in good order until 1158 hours. At this time, communication was interrupted by broken telephone wires. Fluko Halle also went out at the same time after the beginning of the engagement. The reception of "Habicht" transmitter was very good, and represented the only communication with "Horizont" available for trouble-free reporting of the air situation. Through "Habicht" reporting, it was at least possible for the batteries to participate in engaging the groups with barrage fire.

**Progress of the Attack :** As far as optical observation allowed, it can be established that the group formations flew in flat wedge shapes. The groups had very short time separation, which had not heretofore been noticed. Our own fighters were not observed during the entire engagement.

Enemy fighters were evident in great numbers and hovered about all sides of the bomber stream. The enemy fighters reached our district a short time before the bomber formations reached the zone, but turned toward the south before reaching the bomb release line. The target altitude was measured between 4,700 and 9,000 meters and speed between 100 and 120 m/sec.

**Assessment of the Flak Defense :** The north battery of Untergruppe Southwest used electrical tracking throughout. The active and passive jamming was fairly light. Wismar equipment was used with success against active jamming. Passive jamming permitted operation in the normal manner (at Position 16). Radar at Position 129 was so actively jammed that working even with the built-in anti-jamming devices was impossible, and the engagement of the enemy had to be carried out with Malsi-barrage

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fire. The map coordinates for the Malsi barrage fire were taken from "Habicht" reporting center.

Active jamming of the affected radar was of hitherto unknown strength so that in the neighborhood of the target there was a whole large region of jamming. It appeared as though this jamming was carried out by extra jamming aircraft which hovered over the target area during the entire attack.

[An ammunition report was included here in the Battalion Report, indicating that the two gun positions involved used a total of 542 rounds electrically laid, and no less than 3,028 rounds fired in barrage, at a total of 14 targets.]

Position 155

25.11.44

Battle Report No. 4 25.11.44, 1142-1312 hours.

**Weather :** At the beginning of the attack, 9/10 cloud. Clear visibility, changing during the attack to 10/10 cloud. Sight difficulty because of haze, artificial fog, and smoke clouds.

**Enemy :** About 80 aircraft observed.

**Tactics :** Flew in from west and northwest, taking advantage of cloud cover and strong radar jamming. As far as could be observed, the distance between groups was small. Turned away immediately after bomb release.

**Judgment :** The air situation reporting was very spotty. The battery first became aware of an unmistakable attack by four-engine bombers when the groups were visible through a hole in the clouds. Meanwhile, reports such as "lead group near Fulda going east" and later, "single target in direction 9" were coming in. Shortly before the beginning of the engagement, one radio circuit for the flak communication went out. Thereafter, reception of the Flak transmitter was interrupted until a new equipment could be brought up. We succeeded in getting a report of the air situation only from "Primadonna" because all communications to Untergruppe failed.



## Hitler and the Weatherman

**M**ETEOROLOGISTS in the Reich, according to a captured one-time chief of the German Weather Service, often had troubles with the High Command. These usually sprang from the fact that the generals had a distorted idea of forecasting accuracy, and were filled with high indignation (or worse) when reasonable predictions were not precisely borne out. An instance was cited in which Hitler himself took a hand.

The occasion was a big parade in Munich which the Führer was to attend with the usual pomp and circumstance, and he wanted the best weather. The forecaster in the Munich area at the time, an expert with special knowledge of weather conditions in Bavaria, predicted that a thunderstorm would pass over the city between 1630 and 1700 hours on the day in question. The storm came all right, but it broke about 45 minutes earlier than expected, and presumably had some effect on the success of the ceremonies.

Hitler was heard to make some scathing remarks to his retinue, and the weather chief was instructed to remove the "offending" forecaster in the interest of greater efficiency. The chief stated that he refused to fire his Bavarian expert, and that nothing happened—except that he himself was replaced a few months later.

Strength, type, and formation could not be determined because of very poor visibility. Before each bomb release one, and sometimes two, smoke markers were observed.

Shortly before the beginning of the attack, very strong "beating" active jamming began on the radar. Measurement was not possible during this time. Therefore for a few minutes barrage fire was employed. Before and during the height of the main attack, the measuring capabilities of the radar were relatively good, however. Increasing window jamming could be overcome.

### Equipment Failures:

**A Battery :** Three guns out (temporarily). One gun breech-locking mechanism broken. One gun-locking bolt broken; one gun, bad cartridge jamming. One gun became ready again during the engagement. KG 40 (*Kommando Gerät*) was out temporarily because of failure of tracking mechanism.

**B Battery :** Temporary failure of the guns because of failure of breech mechanism; bad cartridge jamming, and defects in fuse setting machine.

**C Battery :** One gun out, bad cartridge jamming. One gun temporarily out because of failure of tracking mechanism.

Two bomb patterns about 300 meters north of the Position. No damage sustained. Telephone communication of the battery interrupted by other bomb falls.

### Radar Jamming Report :

**Active Jamming :** 1145 to 1155, Direction 9, noise jamming strong. Evasion by changing frequency. 1114 to 1220, Direction 7, noise jamming strong. Some measurement nevertheless possible. 1226 to 1230, Direction 9, noise jamming strong.

**Passive Jamming :** 1220, 15-20 km., direction 9, strong; evasion by Tastlaus good. 1225, 10-30 km., direction 10. Normal Taunus good; measurement was possible.



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