

## The JG 300s, Converted Night-fighter Units

INFORMATION on the comparatively recently converted Nachtjagdgeschwader with numerical designations in the 300s has been obtained through the questioning of three Luftwaffe prisoners by ADI(K). They were GAF ground personnel assigned to units of these Geschwader at different bases during various periods from July, 1943, to December, 1944.

The development of these Geschwader into day fighter units makes a curiously complicated history, involving the disappearance at times of whole Gruppen, and their subsequent reappearance under new titles in new locations with new duties. The Gruppe designations have sometimes been used for units re-formed of personnel and equipment from deactivated units that had already been parts of the JG 300 series.

Biggest shuffle of these Geschwader took place in May, 1944, when, according to one of the prisoners who had been a headquarters clerk in III/JG 301, Göring issued an order that the *Wilde Sau* ("free lance") night-fighter tactics of the Geschwader were to decrease, and day-fighter operations to have first priority. *Wilde Sau* Gruppen were thus to be incorporated in one Geschwader, formed of one Gruppe from each of the Geschwader in the "300" classification. The other two groups of each fighter wing were then to be retrained as day fighters.

**JG 300 :** Of the units in this Geschwader, Gruppe I is thought to have been based at Bonn/Hangelar in July, 1943, flying both Me-109s and FW-190s. No information was forthcoming from these prisoners as to the activities or movements of this group after that date.

At the same time, II/JG 300 was based at Rheine. Equipped with 19 FW-190s and with about 35 pilots, Gruppe II was engaged in *Wilde Sau* operations during July. Within four months, in 1943, one informant believed, more than half the pilots of the unit had been shot down, some by their own flak. During the day, aircraft belonging to the group was occasionally flown against American bomber formations by pilots of II or III/JG 11, who were also based at Rheine at the time.

This prisoner went on to say that in October, 1943, half of II/JG 300 was sent to Altenburg, where one of the earliest shuffles was made. II/JG 300 dropped its designation and this half became the cadre for a new unit, II/JG 301. The informant said he did not know what became of the half of the Gruppe which remained at Rheine.

Considering the small amount of personnel and aircraft comprising III/JG 300, and its low scale of effectiveness in operations undertaken, its history is extremely involved. One prisoner first knew of III/JG 300 as an Me-109 unit based at Oldenburg in July, 1943. No information was available about the

group during a 10-month period until May, 1944, when the remaining pilots and aircraft of the deactivated II/JG 302 (a night- and day-fighter group) were sent to Wiesbaden, where the 7th and 8th Staffel were also based.

About June, 1944, a 10th Staffel was added (composed of pilots from JG 53), and the entire Gruppe III moved from Wiesbaden to Jüterbog.

It was reported that III/JG 300 had a total of 45 planes employed in both day- and night-fighter interceptions. The scale of effort was generally small, with 12 planes airborne for maximum night-time operations, and nine for daylight operations. Sometimes, however, double sorties were flown by four aircraft.

Part of the daytime duties of III/JG 300 was to escort Me-410s of I/ZG 26 based at Königsberg/Neumark, for which purpose the Me-109s were fitted with drop tanks. The informant believed that as many as 25 of these missions were flown between June and August, 1944, with the whole Gruppe participating. Losses on these flights were heavy (SUMMARY No. 66, page 7). Knowledge of III/JG 300 ends in August, 1944, when only eight of the original 45 aircraft were left.

**JG 301 :** More definite information was elicited on this Geschwader. Gruppe I, flying Me-109s, was reported as being stationed at Jüterbog in November, 1943. The group had moved to Neubiberg by January, 1944, and remained there until shortly after the Normandy landings, when it was sent to Cambrai. From this base, the aircraft of I/JG 301 were used to protect flying-bomb launching sites in the Pas de Calais, at the time an important series of missions.

Along with everything else the GAF had in France and Belgium that could fly, roll, or run, I/JG 301 moved again in August, this time to Salzwedel. There it was converted to an FW-190 Gruppe, and the prisoner estimated that nearly 100 new planes of this type were assigned to the four Staffel. Other than a contemplated move to Paderborn in October, 1944, which never materialized, I/JG 301 is still at Salzwedel, to the best of the informant's knowledge.

Information on Gruppe II of JG 301 begins in October, 1943, at Altenburg, where personnel of the defunct II/JG 300 provided the nucleus for the new group.

At the beginning of November, 1943, the group moved to Husum where it became an FW-190 unit, with a total strength of four aircraft, but more were borrowed from I/JG 11, stationed on the same field, to make up the deficiency. *Wilde Sau* operations were undertaken, and during the month spent at Husum about 10 pilots were lost out of the original 25 or 30.

The chronicle of II/JG 301 becomes involved in



December, 1943, when the Gruppe moved to Salzwedel. The 5th Staffel, minus its aircraft, returned to Husum after one week, but the 4th and 6th Staffeln remained at the new base flying Wilde Sau with only two or three losses in a month, the informant believed. About the middle of January, 1944, these two Staffeln moved to Ludwigslust, where they reunited with the 5th, and were joined by a Gruppe of JG 54 flying Me-109s. Here, II/JG 301 dropped its original designation and changed to "II/JG 302."

Gruppe III of this Geschwader is, like Gruppe II, first heard of in November, 1943. Equipped with about 25 serviceable Me-109s, it was stationed at Wiesbaden and had between 40 and 50 pilots.

In December, 1943, III/JG 301 moved to Frankfurt/Rhein-Main, where it remained until the end of January, 1944, flying Wilde Sau operations. Losses were not excessive, the prisoner believed. Such as occurred were made up by immediate replacements, and most of the pilots were saved.

Gruppe III moved to Zerbst in February, 1944, and began to fly day as well as night operations. Losses were still not heavy, but out of a total of 45 aircraft, there were seldom more than 16 or 17 in flying condition at one time.

In April or May, 1944, III/JG 301 moved to Gross Sachsenheim, near Stuttgart, where it became a night-fighter unit again. It was at this time that Göring issued the order to cut down on Wilde Sau operations and Gruppe III was disbanded. The numerical designation appeared again, however, in the middle of September, 1944, at Alperstedt, as that of an FW-190 unit. Its nucleus consisted of the remains of I/JG 302, which had been stationed near Vienna and had recently been deactivated.

In October, 1944, the new III/JG 301, now brought up to strength with 62 pilots and 60 aircraft, the informant believed, moved to Stendal, and continued to train as the "Bad Weather Day-Fighter Gruppe." It was still at Stendal in November, 1944, when

the prisoner's acquaintance with the unit ceased.

**JG 302:** Information on Gruppe I of Jagdgeschwader 302 begins in January, 1944, when it was thought to be stationed at Jüterbog. In May, it was almost certainly at Vienna/Seyring as an Me-109 unit. Flying day operations only, it generally acted as fighter escort for Me-410s of ZG 26.

Shortly afterwards, the group moved to Vienna/Götzendorf, where it was joined by a new 4th Staffel, bringing the strength up to about 55 pilots and between 55 and 60 aircraft. Of these, 45 were usually in serviceable condition.

Operations by I/JG 302 were flown almost daily, and heavy losses were sustained. On one day alone, the prisoner mentioned, 15 or 16 aircraft and eight pilots were lost. Since by then there were no replacements available, the scale of effort dropped from 45 to 15, although it was temporarily boosted by the help of a Sturmgruppe (IV/JG 3) for a few days. About the middle of September, 1944, what was left of I/JG 302 moved and became the basis for the formation of the new III/JG 301 at Alperstedt.

History of II/JG 302 is unknown until January, 1944, when, at Ludwigslust, the designation was applied to the Gruppe formerly known as II/JG 301. There it converted to an Me-109 unit with a serviceable strength of around 15 aircraft.

In March, it was ordered that both day and night sorties would be flown, and heavy losses soon made themselves felt. At one time, the prisoner said, the Gruppe was reduced to a strength of about four pilots and three aircraft.

II/JG 302 was deactivated in May, 1944. The aircraft that remained were sent to Bonn and München-Gladbach, while personnel were transferred to III/JG 300 at Wiesbaden.

Supposedly a III/JG 302 exists (or existed), but the prisoner could not contribute any information other than its probable presence at Jüterbog in January, 1944.



## Home Sweet Home—or Out of the Frying Pan

IT'S ALL relative, and if some of the former supermen of the "Tomorrow the World" school aren't too keen to return to the Fatherland, maybe the cigarette situation is one reason.

During a recent transfer of German prisoners who were being repatriated via Switzerland from Southern France, several of them kept complaining about the smallness of the cigarette ration they were issued en route, and tried by every means they could to get more. Four of them even tried to jump off the train before it left French soil, to avoid being returned to the Reich, or possibly to attempt last-minute purchases.

The payoff came when the troops were finally greeted at the Swiss-German border. Their homecoming gift consisted of an official issue of two (2) *Ersatz* cigarettes, and one (1) each picture of Hitler.



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