



The scattered wreckage of 61 Squadron Lancaster DV401, which exploded near Bakhuizen on 2-3 January 1944. (Coll. Verzetsmuseum Leeuwarden)

2-3 January 1944 BERLIN

During the evening, German radio reconnaissance reported a major British attack in preparation for the second half of the night. At 00.31 hrs, a bomber stream (estimated at 'approximately 300 aircraft') was reported approaching about 120 km west of the Dutch coast. This was a force of 383 bombers that once more headed for Berlin. The first running commentary control started broadcasting plots on the bomber stream at 01.28-35 hrs, 'Enemy aircraft spearhead between Leeuwarden and Zwolle, 6.500-7.000 metres'. At the same time some of 128 twin-engined fighters that the I. Jagdkorps committed to action were ordered to assemble at beacons over Central Holland. From 01.36 hrs onwards, these *Zahme Säue* of NJG1 and 2 were directed into the bomber stream over the IJsselmeer, whilst being fed with accurate plots on the progress of the stream, which continued until the bombers arrived over Berlin. Surprisingly, however, hardly any Tame Boar fighter action developed. Throughout the night, *Himmelbett*-operating night fighters, mainly in the Netherlands, were also employed against the bomber force. Between 18.26 and 05.08 hrs, the listening stations in England heard 33 GCI sorties, ten of which were active against bomber aircraft.

Simultaneously, a force of twin-engined Wild Boars of the I. Jagdkorps was being assembled over various radio beacons. Those of NJG1 and 2 (3. JD) were gathered over *FFs Ludwig and Philipp*, of NJG3 (2. JD) over *FF Quelle* and, finally, of NJG5 (1. JD) over *Marie* and *FF 12*. The Wild Boar force also included an estimated 53 fighters of NJG4 (under 4. JD control) and 11 Bf110s of I./NJG6 (7. JD), the latter having become airborne from Mainz-Finthen at 01.05-10 hrs. At around 01.40 hrs, all these *Wilde Säue* were told to proceed to *FF Marie*, NE of Hannover. Although 'many bombers' were being reported between Bremen and Hannover at 01.49, 01.56, 02.06, and again at 02.14 hrs in the *Reichsjägerwelle* running commentary, no major combat developed in this area between the waiting Wild Boar force and the mass of bombers.

Finally, JG300 was scrambled from Bonn, Rheine and Wiesbaden at around 02.20 hrs and JG302 became airborne at around the same time. Lt. Sachs of 3./JG300 noted in his *Flugbuch*: '9th ops sortie, Bf109 White 8, t/o Wiesb.-Erbenheim 02.25, landing Brandis 04.15 hrs, flight duration 1 hr 50 mins, attack on Berlin, somersaulted during take-off for return flight on 4.1.44'.

The fighter controllers identified Berlin as the main objective at an early stage, reporting at 02.08 hrs 'Enemy aircraft proceeding to Berlin', half an hour before the attack was due to begin, but even this announcement did not stir things up. There were no diversionary raids which might have distracted the night fighter force. The lack of a true fighter opposition en-route can be explained by three factors. First, favoured by a strong tail-wind on their approach, the bombers attained a speed which the I. Jagdkorps war diarist noted as 440 km per hour. Secondly, the dozens of fighters of 1., 2., 3. and 7. JD that had assembled at radio beacon *Marie* were not released in time by their controllers, the bomber stream flying past at high speed virtually unopposed. Finally, a cold front, moving east into the German air defence zone, made effective commitment of the I. Jagdkorps aircraft extremely difficult. The Tame Boar force was severely handicapped by the strong winds, snow, rain, and solid cloud containing icing, and static electricity reaching up to 8,500 metres.

The first bomber to be lost on the outward route went down through Flak:

-463 Sqn Lancaster JA902: believed hit by Flak causing bomb load to explode, crashed on low-lying piece of land in the Noordoostpolder, ca. 20 km NW of Zwolle at 01.00-30 hrs.

Twin-engined fighters destroyed five Lancasters. The first of these was 61 Squadron DV401: hit by Ofw. Vinke of 11./NJG1, it went down to crash and explode near Bakhuizen at 01.27 hrs. Another Nachtjagd claimant was Lt. Matzak of 12./NJG1, who flew a *Zahme Sau* sortie in Bf110 G-4 G9+IZ from Leeuwarden. His quarry, LM423 of 619 Squadron, crashed at Ankum near Bersenbrück at 02.00 hrs. Lt. Oloff and his regular *Funker* Uffz. Schaffer in Bf110 G-4 G9+EK of 2./NJG1 dispatched a 156 Squadron Lancaster (which the crew mis-identified as a 'Halifax'), their victim going down to crash between Holtrup and Schweringen at 02.25 hrs. Over Lake Müritz, which was the last turning point before the bomber stream began its final leg into the target, Oblt. Leickhardt of 2./NJG5 attacked 49 Squadron Lancaster JB727, which turned onto a reciprocal course and then tragically collided with another 49 Squadron aircraft, JB231. The cockpit of JB727 struck the starboard wing of JB231 between both engines and immediately plunged down to crash at Leussow, 5 km NE of Mirow; the aircraft and crew were posted as 'lost without a trace'. JB231 struggled on for another 20 kms with one engine and a large part of its starboard wing missing, the whole crew parachuting to safety near Steinförde, 5 km west of Fürstenwalde. Incidentally, this was close to where Uffz. Rohlfling in a Bf110 G-4 of 9./NJG3 destroyed a 57 Squadron Lancaster just two minutes earlier.

Flak reported two further Lancaster Abschüsse, the second claim being officially confirmed by the OKL on 8 July 1944:

-83 Sqn Lancaster ND330: hit by Flak and crashed at Weissenberge nr. Wahrenholz at 02.15 hrs.

-619 Sqn Lancaster JB123: hit by 1.-3., 5. & 6./schw. Flak Abt. 606 and 1./schw. Flak Abt. 542 (o), crashed at Wense, 10 km NE of Fallingb. ca. 02.30 hrs.

Apart from a few more sightings of night fighters, no further interceptions or combats were experienced by the Main Force until the target area was reached at 02.48 hrs.

It was a completely different story over Berlin. An early arrival fell foul of the Berlin Flak defences:

-156 Sqn Lancaster JB553: hit by Flak of 1. Flak Div. and crashed into the Reinickendorfer Straße, Berlin-Wedding at 02.20 hrs.

One minute after JB553 went down over Berlin, all fighters were ordered to fly to Berlin and many of them had arrived there by the time the raid opened. For the next hour, above the city and for about 50 km after leaving the target, around 100 Nachtjäger were active in the *Kampfraum* Berlin and there was a string of combats. The Flak defences of Berlin ignored the restriction to fire up to 5,500 metres and, instead, fired a total of 13,369 heavy and 5,763 light Flak shells up to a height of 6,500 metres, claiming six heavy bombers shot down. Regrettably, no individual 1. Flak Division claims have been traced in modern research. Returning bomber crews reported identifying about 20 Ju88s, a few Bf110s and about a dozen single-engined fighters in the Berlin area. 24 Ju88 A-4s of III./KG3 each

Three *Lichtenstein* BC equipped Bf110 F-4s of III./NJG5 flying in formation in October 1943. During the 2-3 January 1944 Berlin raid, the Gruppe suffered the loss of five out of 15 aircraft employed. (Coll. NeunundzwanzigSechs Verlag)





32-year old Hptm. Friedrich Maier of 7./NJG5 was one of the casualties of III./NJG5 on 2-3 January 1944, his Bf110 G-4 C9+CS crashing at Berlin-Grünau with the loss of all on board. (Coll. NeunundzwanzigSechs Verlag)

dropped 18 fighter flares, and searchlights lit up the solid smooth layer of thin cloud that was prevailing over Berlin, just as on the previous night. This clearly silhouetted the bombers, which made the night fighter interceptions easier. It is estimated that seven heavy bombers fell to Nachtjäger in the target area. One of the bomber victims was 408 Squadron Lancaster LL631, which was attacked three times by 'Me210s' at approximately 02.52 hrs, a few minutes after bombing. It exploded in the Beelitz area, some 25 km south of Berlin. Actually, three individual Nachtjagd claims can be tied to the loss of LL631. 426 Squadron Lancaster DS760 was hit twice by a Ju88 (probably a Ju88 C-6 of 4./NJG3 in the hands of Uffz. Gerstmayr) just after finishing its bombing run and exploded.

Among a relatively small number of single-engined Wild Boars that became locked in battle over Berlin was Oberst Hajo Herrmann, Kommandeur of the 30. (Wild Boar) Fighter Division. He claimed having a Lancaster under 'w.B.' (*Wirksamer Beschuss*, or 'effective fire') at 02.57 hrs, and a second Lancaster shot down in flames on the approaches to Berlin (probably 7 Squadron JB677 which came down near Köpenick) eight minutes later. Only moments after his Abschuss, he was injured in his right leg by gunfire and had to bale out of his Fw190 A-6, landing near a lake, probably the Grosser Müggelsee. Although Herrmann later reported that he

had been shot down by an RAF intruder, no intruder claims were made on this night. A few days later, Oberst Herrmann was grounded on strict orders from Reichsmarschall Göring. Hajo Herrmann reputedly achieved nine Wild Boar Abschüsse, but only four of his victory claims can be traced in the official OKL/RLM records, his final Abschuss on 2-3 January 1944 being the only one that was officially *anerkannt* on 11 September 1944. Ofw. Emler of 1./JG302, another *Wilde Sau* veteran with seven unconfirmed and one rejected *Viermot* Abschüsse to his credit, was shot down and killed by the rear gunner of 97 Squadron Lancaster ND359, who claimed a 'Fw190' destroyed to the north of Dessau at 02.55 hrs. Kurt Emler's Bf109 G-6 fell at Maltershausen, west of Jüterbog.

Air gunners on board the following Main Force Lancasters logged three further night fighters (all identified as Me110s) as destroyed in the greater target area: 49 Squadron JB399 near Luckenwalde at 02.57 hrs (the 'heavy' returning to the UK damaged), 432 Squadron DS792 over Berlin at 03.00 hrs (the bomber managed to limp back home with very severe battle damage sustained in the encounter), and 83 Squadron JB488 over Berlin at 03.02 hrs. One of the latter two claims probably concerns the loss of three-victory veteran Fw. Sallmutter and his crew of 11./NJG5, who were all killed in a crash near Berlin-Schönefeld following air combat. Finally, at 03.02 hrs and over Potsdam, the F/Eng. manning the frontal gun turret of 12 Squadron Lancaster JB359 fired two long bursts of machine gun fire into the fuselage and starboard engine of another Me110, which was seen to break away in a steep dive and claimed as probably destroyed. This, in all probability, was Bf110 G-4 DQ+ST of 1./NJG5 in the hands of Lt. Scholz, which fell 6 km west of Brandenburg-Briest airfield with the loss of the pilot and his *Bordschütze*. Johannes Scholz had a tally of three unconfirmed Abschüsse by the time of his death.

At 03.17 hrs, one controller announced over the Reich fighter R/T frequency, 'Main mass of enemy aircraft now returning from Berlin' and began passing H2S plots on the returning bombers. The Nachtjäger were only able to follow the returning bombers for a short distance, as the I. Jagdkorps war diarist explained: 'Sorties against return flights only in the area of the I. Jagddivision with 'Tame Boars' and 'Wild Boars' flying with the bomber stream, as aircraft were forced to land in the I. Jagddivision's area due to weather, and sorties seemed unlikely to be successful in the areas of the other Divisions'. Five crews of NJG2, 3 and 5 scored six further victories over homeward-bound ' heavies'. Fw. Hubatsch of 5./NJG5, who was scrambled from Parchim in Bf110 G-4 C9+EN at 01.23 hrs for his 48th *Nachteinsatz*, dispatched an 83 or 103 Squadron Lancaster in the Zossen area before touching down at Werneuchen at 04.09 hrs. Incidentally, he later noted in his *Flugbuch*: 'Berlin, Abschuss 'Halifax', but his quarry was officially listed by the OKL as a

Lancaster. Another of the Nachtjagd claimants against the bomber force leaving the target area was Oblt. Paul Zorner, St.Kpt. of 8./NJG3. Engaged in his 60th *Feindflug*, in Bf110 G-4 D5+FS, he destroyed a Lancaster of 83 or 103 Squadron to the SSW of Berlin for his 20th Abschuss and 18th confirmed victory. The last Lancasters to go down were 432 Squadron DS739 and 115 Squadron DS667, both of which fell to Lt. Breukel in a Ju88 C-6 of 5./NJG2. DS739 crashed on the southern edge of Gross Rosenburg near Calbe (Saale) at 03.18 hrs, DS667 hitting the ground near Ackendorf; both victories were confirmed on 7 October 1944. (A third, probable, *Viermot* Abschuss by Lt. Breukel was turned down).

Finally, the 8. Flak Brigade destroyed a Mosquito that was engaged in an intruder sortie to Diepholz/Vechta airfield:

-418 Sqn Mosquito LR268: hit by 7./schw. Flak Abt. 401 (RAD 10/214), crashed at Cappeln nr. Cloppenburg at 04.30 hrs.

The Mosquito Flak Abschuss brought the total of claims submitted by the German defences to 27 Abschüsse, 22 by the Nachtjagd and five by the Flak arm. This almost matches the number of aircraft lost, which amounted to 27 Lancasters of the Berlin force and one Mosquito intruder. 12 Main Force bombers returned with Flak damage and nine with fighter scars. On 3 January 1944, the I. Jagdkorps War Diaries recorded a total of 23 *Feindberührungen*, which resulted in 18 'certain' victories and two 'probables'. One of the latter concerns a claim by Fw. Doh at 02.58 hrs, which was rejected by the OKL on 19 August 1944. 20 victories were later *anerkannt* to the individual German Nachtjagd claimants.

The Nachtjagd lost 16 twin-engined fighters, including nine of the I. Jagdkorps. 15 Bf110 crews of III./NJG5, for example, were scrambled from Königsberg, five of which were lost. Two of the Gruppe's losses were due to 'friendly' Flak fire and three to engine or instrument failure. Set against these heavy losses, according to the III./NJG5 KTB only the *Gruppenkommandeur* Hptm. Borchers managed to achieve a 'certain' *Viermot* victory, but even this Abschuss was later rejected by the *Abschuss Kommission*. 'Friendly' Flak also took the life of the nine-Abschüsse veteran and 29-year old *Kommandeur* of IV./NJG5 Hptm. Hans-Wolfgang von Niebelschütz, who was killed in a crash at Engelsdorf near Leipzig. Another 'friendly' Flak victim, Ju88 C-6 R4+DL of 3./NJG2 went down at Hannover-Vahrenwald, the wounded pilot Lt. Ewald Wüstenfeld later recording in his *Flugbuch*: 'Take off 01.21 hrs Kassel-Rothwesten for Nachtjagd 'Wilde Sau' to Berlin. Attacked and hit a Halifax. Uffz. Schmidt (BF, author's note) killed upon being hit by Flak, baled out by parachute 05.30 hrs at Gut-Heissum near Galer'. Finally, Flak claimed the life of bomber veteran and *Ritterkreuzträger* Ofw. Karl Haupt, who flew a *Beleuchter* sortie in Ju88 A-4 5K+FR of 7./KG3. The Junkers crashed near Grossburgwedel, NE of Hannover.

The St.Kpt. of 1./NJG4 Oblt. Meister and his crew experienced a frustrating night, as his *Funker* Fw. Forke noted in his diary: '3.1.44. Once again a late night take-off (in Bf110 G-4 3C+SJ, author's note) to intercept Tommys. But we're too late, as we learn from the situation report. We land in Venlo to await the homebound flights. But the weather deteriorates and the Tommys are returning much further north, where the cloud layer is up to 8000 m. And so we return to base at half-past-five. Later, we get some bad news. Our brand-new SN-2 Radar-equipped fighter has been damaged by a another night fighter that was landing and tore off a wing. A new wing is needed. It's pathetic'.

Although 3C+SJ was repaired at Venlo and returned to 1./NJG4 on 26 January 1944, Oblt. Meister considered it a lame duck and never flew the aircraft again. Instead, he had another SN-2 equipped Bf110 G-4, coded 3C+HL, repainted as his crew's new SJ.

The newly appointed *Kommandeur* of III./NJG2 Hptm. Ney achieved a Lancaster Abschuss, for his first confirmed victory, at 03.10 hrs. His victim was possibly an 83 Squadron aircraft that went down at Blankenburg (Harz), but Ney ran out of fuel trying to find an airfield to land. He and his crew baled out safely from their Ju88 C-6 at a height of 300 metres; their victory was *anerkannt* on 19 August 1944. Another *Experte* was less fortunate. Towards 02.00 hrs, Hptm. Siegfried Hahn, a ten-victory veteran and *Kapitän* of 9./NJG3 in Bf110 G-4 D5+BT, was on his landing approach to Stade with a failing engine, which caused his Messerschmitt to crash into buildings at Bachenbrook and disintegrate with the loss of the whole crew.

Ofw. Heinz Vinke: 34	11./NJG1	Lancaster	Bakhuizenkoog (<i>Eisbär</i>)	01.27	61 Sqn Lancaster DV401
Lt. Kurt Matzak: 1	12./NJG1	Lancaster	near Quakenbrück	02.00	619 Sqn Lancaster LM423
Lt. Heinz Oloff: 7	2./NJG1	Halifax	-	02.25	156 Sqn Lancaster JB317
Uffz. Walter Rohlfing: 5	9./NJG3	Lancaster	Luhme, 10 km NNE Rheinsberg	02.38	57 Sqn Lancaster JB681
Oblt. Hans Leickhardt: 6	2./NJG5	Lancaster	-	02.40	49 Sqn Lancaster JB727
Ofw. Kurt Welter: 4	5./JG302	4-mot	Berlin	02.55	156 Sqn Lancaster ND380 or JB640
Lt. Robert Wolf: 2	3./NJG5	Lancaster	-	02.55	408 Sqn Lancaster LL631
<i>Note: same claim as Oblt. Johnen and Fw. Doh (both 02.56 hrs), victories Lt. Wolf and Oblt. Johnen both confirmed as full victories by OKL on 19.8.1944</i>					
Oblt. Wilhelm Johnen: 5	Stab II./NJG5	Lancaster	near Beelitz, 20 km SW Berlin	02.56	408 Sqn Lancaster LL631
Fw. Gerhard Doh	6./NJG2	Lancaster	-	02.58	ASM, prob. 408 Sqn Lancaster LL631
<i>Note: filed as 'probable'; officially rejected and deleted by OKL from 6./NJG2 confirmed Abschussübersicht on 19.8.1944</i>					
Oblt. Albert Walter: 5	1./NJG6	Lancaster	near Michendorf, 10 km S. Potsdam	02.58	101 Sqn Lancaster DV269
Lt. Wilhelm Seuss: 1	10./NJG5	Lancaster	Berlin area	03.03	prob. 57 Sqn Lancaster JB364 or 83 Sqn Lancaster JB355
Uffz. Lorenz Gerstmayr: 3	4./NJG3	Lancaster	-	03.04	prob. 426 Sqn Lancaster DS760
Obst. Hajo Herrmann: 3	Stab 30. JD	Lancaster	Berlin	03.05	prob. 7 Sqn Lancaster JB677

Oblt. Manfred Tischtau: 4	Stab III./NJG5	Lancaster	-	03.06	Berlin raid, unidentified.
<i>Note: victory confirmed by OKL (as 2nd confirmed victory of Stab III./NJG5), confirmation date unreadable on microfilm</i>					
Hptm. Leopold Fellerer: 16	5./NJG5	Lancaster	-	03.08	prob. 83 Sqn Lancaster JB114 or 103 Sqn Lancaster JB747
Hptm. Berthold Ney: 1	Stab III./NJG2	Lancaster	-	03.10	poss. 83 Sqn Lancaster JB453.
<i>Note: claim filed under Ney's previous unit 6./NJG2, confirmed by OKL on 19.8.1944</i>					
Oblt. Paul Zorner: 18	8./NJG3	Lancaster	Luckenwalde area: 5.800 m.	03.10	83 Sqn Lancaster JB114 or 103 Sqn Lancaster JB747.
<i>Note: the International Red Cross Committee stated after the war that these two Lancasters collided, killing all 14 crew members, who were buried in Zehrendorf</i>					
Fw. Herbert Hubatsch: 5	5./NJG5	Lancaster	Berlin	03.12	prob. 83 Sqn Lancaster JB114 or 103 Sqn Lancaster JB747
Oblt. Wilhelm Johnen: 6	Stab II./NJG5	Lancaster	70 km SW Berlin	03.12	156 Sqn Lancaster JB310
Lt. Wendelin Breukel: 5	5./NJG2	Lancaster	-	03.18	432 Sqn Lancaster DS739
Lt. Wendelin Breukel: 6	5./NJG2	Lancaster	-	03.20	115 Sqn Lancaster DS667

4 January 1944 USAAF KIEL

In early 1944, the tempo of daylight missions for the Nachtjagd crews was stepped up dramatically, despite the continuing heavy loss of skilled crew members, specialised aircraft, and precious Radar and radio equipment. Throughout January 1944, the I. Jagdkorps had, on average, 100 twin-engined Nachtjäger available for action in daylight.

On the 4th January, 316 single - and twin-engined fighters of 1., 2. and 3. JD (including some 60-70 Nachtjäger) were employed against a raid on Kiel by 371 Fortresses of the 1st and 3rd Bomb Divisions. 115 Liberators of the 2nd BD attacked targets of opportunity, 11 B-17s and six B-24s failed to return. Because of snow flurries and rapidly moving cloud, it proved impossible to assemble the single-

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engined Tagjagd fighter Gruppen in close formations and to guide them to the combat boxes above the cloud. Just one Abschuss was achieved by a single-engined fighter, Fw. Heinz Fuchs of 6./JG1 claiming a B-17 of the 92 BG/326 BS destroyed in Grid Square FN 5, or near De Wijk, at 12.00 hrs.

The twin-engined Nachtjäger were less hampered by the weather than their single-engined brothers in arms, and flew a relatively successful mission against the Kiel raid, mainly on its return route. Among the airborne night fighters were elements of NJG3 and NJG5, 15 crews of NJG3 being ordered to rendezvous in the Neumünster area (south of Kiel) at a height of 7.000 metres at 11.06 hrs. More than half an hour later, only nine aircraft had gathered and the formation was held back until 11.50 hrs. At that point, the JLO told the leading Nachtjagd crew that, 'if the bombers are unescorted, you might attack'.

Two twin-engined *Führungshalter* ('contact keeper') aircraft controlled by the 2. JD running commentary controller

One Nachtjagd Gruppe that scored regularly against the 8th USAAF during late 1943 and early 1944 was IV./NJG3. Here depicted are IV./NJG3 aircrew posing in full flying gear at Westerland airfield in January 1944. Front row, l-r: Ofw. Rudolf Mangelsdorf (survived the war with seven nighttime and one daylight Abschüsse, plus a 'probable' in daylight, in IV./NJG3 and III./NJG2 to his credit); u/k; Lt. Hermann Stock (survived the war as Oblt. and St.Kpt. of 9./NJG2, with four nighttime Abschüsse and three daylight victories); Oblt. Hans-Hermann Müller (survived the war in the rank of Hptm. with 11 night- and five daylight Abschüsse in NJG2 and NJG3 to his credit, 14 of which were officially confirmed. Müller flew a total of 241 *Feindflüge* in Nachtjagd between 16 December 1941 and 30 April 1945); Uffz. Phillips. Back row, l-r: Uffz. Otto Platz (wearing glasses, he flew operationally as *Bordschütze* in the crew of Ofw. Mangelsdorf, achieved a Mosquito Abschuss on 16-17 January 1945); u/k; Uffz. Wiese; Uffz. Laub; u/k. (Coll. Theo Boiten, via Eric-Jan Bakker).



The St.Kpt. of 9./NJG5 Oblt. Fritz Carstens claimed a B-24 as probably destroyed off Kiel on 4 January 1944. (Coll. Dr. Dieter Schmidt-Barbo).





Lt. Hermann Stock flying Ju88 G-1 D5+BX of 11./NJG3 in July 1944. Between October 1943 and January 1944 and whilst serving with 12./NJG3, Lt. Stock was credited with the destruction of three B-17s during the daylight battles with the 8th USAAF; a 4th Fortress Abschuss (on 9 October 1943) was officially denied to the claimant. (Coll. Walter Briegleb)

at Stade first made contact with the outward-bound Kiel raiders to the west of Hamburg at 11.33 hrs. During the next one-and-a-half hours, these passed intermittent sightings of the American aircraft, and one of the *Fühlungshalter* crews reported at 12.52 hrs that 'an air battle is in progress between German and Allied aircraft'. Indeed, the *Nachtjäger* clashed with the returning *Amis* in force over Denmark and the German Bight, five victories being subsequently *anerkannt* to five different *Nachtjäger*. Lt. Stock of 12./NJG3 shot down a B-17 at 12.32 hrs. He had been scrambled from Grove in Ju88 C-6 D5+FX at 10.47 hrs for his 38th *Feindflug* and his *Abschuss* was confirmed by the RLM/OKL on 1 July 1944, as was a claim for a B-24 destroyed by Oblt. Leickhardt and his regular *Funker* Fw. Grosse at 12.50 hrs. Ofw. Altner of 8./NJG5, flying a sortie from Königsberg in Bf110 G-4 C9+ES, bagged an '*Abschuss einer Liberator*', as he noted in his *Flugbuch*; his claim was officially *anerkannt* on 19 June 1944. One of his *Staffel* comrades, Lt. Wagner, reported a probable victory over a B-24 over the German Bight, but his claim was later turned down.

Nachtjäger of NJG3 and NJG5 claimed another seven Fortresses and Liberators as probably destroyed. Fw. Mangelsdorf of 12./NJG3, for example, reported *Feindberührung* with three B-17s, during which he claimed a Fortress probably shot down. His claim is not listed in his *Staffel*'s OKL/RLM confirmed *Abschussübersicht* and was probably rejected. The same applies to a claim for a Liberator probably shot down over the North Sea off Kiel at around 11.45 hrs that was submitted by the *Staffelkapitän* of 9./NJG5 Oblt. Carstens. Oblt. Müller, the St.Kpt. of 10./NJG3, flew his 194th operational



Ju88 C-6 R4+GK of 2./NJG2 on its nose, winter 1943-44. The aircraft has been fitted with rocket launchers (or 'Dödel' in Luftwaffe slang) for daylight missions against the 8th USAAF. A veteran of 6./NJG2 recalls: 'In Deelen we received R-2 machines and day fighter operations were flown with Dödel, a type of mission absolutely unsuited to our line of work'. (Coll. Erich Brown)

sortie, from Aalborg-West in Ju88 C-6 D5+AV, and later noted in his *Flugbuch*: '*dogfight with 20 Lightnings*'. Undoubtedly shaken, but unscathed, he landed at Stade at 12.19 hrs.

During the course of the day's fighting, the I. Jagdkorps lost 12 fighter aircraft. Losses included three Bf110 G-4s of 7./NJG3, 5./NJG5 and 9./NJG5, all the crew members being killed or injured. Both fighters of NJG5 (coded C9+FN and C9+FT) were shot down into the sea near Husum, whereas the Bf110 of 7./NJG3, D5+JR in the hands of the *Staffelkapitän* Oblt. Günther Stege, was downed by long-range escort P-51s of the 55th FG to the west of Kiel at 12.35 hrs. Four-*Abschüsse* veteran Stege baled out severely injured.

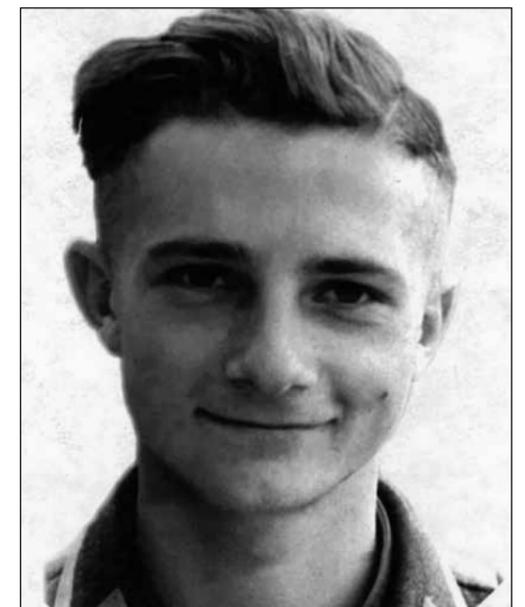
Lt. Paul Fehre	4./NJG3	B-17	Wangerooe	11.15		<i>prob. victory.</i>
<i>Note: claim not listed in OKL/RLM 4./NJG3 Confirmed Abschussübersicht</i>						
Uffz. Otto Kutzner	5./NJG3	B-17	-	12.28		VNE: ASM, <i>prob. victory.</i>
<i>Note: claim not listed in OKL/RLM 5./NJG3 Confirmed Abschussübersicht</i>						
Lt. Herbert Koch	11./NJG3	B-17	-	+/- 11.30		
<i>Note: submitted as probable victory, claim not listed in OKL/RLM 11./NJG3 Confirmed Abschussübersicht. Entry in Lt. Koch's Flugbuch: 'accompanied by Gärtner, Ju88 D5+LW, t/o Grove 10.40, landing Westerland 12.31, 49th operational flight, daylight sortie Neumünster, set two Boeing Fortresses on fire'</i>						
Lt. Hermann Stock: 3	12./NJG3	B-17	Asnaes (OB 6): 7.500-3.000 m.	12.32	B-17F 42-5838 'Mad Monkey II' 384 BG/547 BS	
Hptm. Walter Borchers: 18	Stab III./NJG5	B-24	-	12.45		
<i>Note: claimed as probable victory, confirmed as full victory on 19.8.1944</i>						
Fw. Krauter: 2	5./NJG3	B-17	-	12.50		VNE: ASM, <i>probable victory</i>
Oblt. Hans Leickhardt: 7	2./NJG5	B-24	-	12.50		
<i>Note: Abschuss confirmed as full victory on 19.8.1944</i>						
Uffz. Otto Kutzner	5./NJG3	B-17	-	12.55		VNE: ASM, <i>prob. victory.</i>
<i>Note: claim not listed in OKL/RLM 5./NJG3 Confirmed Abschussübersicht</i>						
Lt. Friedhelm Wüstenhagen: 1	1./NJG5	B-24	-	12.55		
<i>Note: claimed as probable victory, credited as full victory on 10.8.1944</i>						
Ofw. Herbert Altner: 4	8./NJG5	B-24	-	12.55		
<i>Note: claim confirmed as full victory on 19.6.1944</i>						
Oblt. Helmut Jankowski	Stab I./NJG5	B-24	-	13.00		<i>prob. victory.</i>
<i>Note: claim not listed in OKL/RLM Stab I./NJG5 Confirmed Abschussübersicht</i>						

5 January 1944 USAAF KIEL

Kiel was targeted again by the 8th USAAF, this time by 131 B-17s and 114 B-24s. Despite stormy weather conditions, the I. Jagdkorps sent up 269 fighters, the majority of which were able to attack the *Amis* on their return flight in the area between Kiel and Heligoland. In a short but fierce air battle, the Korps claimed 16 'heavies' and five escort fighters shot down, plus 13 B-17s and B-24s, and five fighters as probably destroyed. In fact, the Kiel raid suffered the loss of five B-17s, five B-24s, and seven P-38s of the long-range fighter escort.

The German fighter reaction included an estimated 60-80 *Nachtjäger* of NJG1, 3 and 5, which were sent up with orders to attack homeward-bound stragglers. These scored two B-24 and one B-17 *Abschüsse* in the Kiel-Tönning area, plus a P-38 Lightning downed in a dog fight by Oblt. Szardenings, who flew Ju88 C-6 D5+CN from Grove. Oblt. Drewes, the St.Kpt. of 11./NJG1, who was scrambled in a Bf110 G-4 from Leeuwarden at 11.33 hrs in the company of three other *Nachtjäger*, was also successful. His *Funker*, Uffz. Handke, subsequently noted in his *Flugbuch*: '*Liberator shot down with our group of four, altitude 3200 m. Awarded to us (on 29 August 1944, author's note)*'. The Drewes/Handke team touched down at Wittmundhafen at 12.51 hrs.

11 fighters of the I. Jagdkorps were lost in the air battle, including ten Bf110 *Nachtjäger*. III./NJG5, flying from Königsberg airfield, claimed three American bomber kills, one of which (by Fw. Brendel of the 9. *Staffel*) was later turned down by the RLM. In turn, the Gruppe lost five Bf110 F-4s and G-4s to the American fighter escort: C9+BS at Nortorf, C9+IT near



24-year old Fw. Herbert Hubatsch of 5./NJG5 was wounded in combat with an American escort fighter during a daylight sortie on 5 January 1944. (Coll. Marcel Hogenhuis)