

Hptm. Erhard Peters: 8	9./NJG3	Lancaster	-	19.33	7 Sqn Lancaster JB398.
<i>Note: XI. Luftgau crash report: 'Lancaster 19.30 Torfhaus Harz, 13 km SE Goslar, J(äger)' or 514 Sqn Lancaster LL679. Note: XI. Luftgau crash report: 'Short Stirling 19.30 Lauenberg 10 km S. Einbeck, J(äger)'</i>					
Lt. Peter Spoden: 5	5./NJG5	Lancaster	W. Braunschweig	19.35	207 Sqn Lancaster LM383
Hptm. Heinz-Martin Hadeball: 23	3./NJG6	Lancaster	Lamspringe, 28 km S. Hildesheim	19.35	207 Sqn Lancaster DV369
Lt. Otto Fries: 7	5./NJG1	Lancaster	Bakede, 5 km E. Bad Münder: 4.000 m.	19.35	207 Sqn Lancaster DV191
Uffz. Siegfried König: 4	9./NJG3	Lancaster	-	19.38	Braunschweig raid, unidentified.
<i>Note: victory confirmed on 21.7.1944</i>					
Lt. Wendelin Breukel: 12	4./NJG2	Lancaster	-	19.40	prob. 550 Sqn Lancaster DV306
Oblt. Albert Walter: 6	1./NJG6	Lancaster	3 km N. Hornburg	19.40	408 Sqn Lancaster DS767
Lt. Wendelin Breukel: 13	4./NJG2	Lancaster	-	19.45	prob. 166 Sqn Lancaster DV404 or 626 Sqn Lancaster ME576
Hptm. Leopold Fellerer: 19	Stab II./NJG5	Lancaster	-	19.45	prob. 166 Sqn Lancaster DV404 or 626 Sqn Lancaster ME576
Maj. Heinrich Prinz zu Sayn Wittgenstein: 73	Stab NJG2	Lancaster	-	20.00	prob. 576 Sqn Lancaster ME585
Oblt. Hermann Greiner: 12	10./NJG1	Lancaster	near St. Dizier	20.00	Braunschweig raid, unidentified.
<i>Note: victory confirmed on 19.8.1944</i>					
Oblt. Josef Kraft	4./NJG5	Lancaster	Berlin	20.20	Braunschweig raid, unidentified.
<i>Note: claim not listed in OKL/RLM 4./NJG5 Confirmed Abschussübersicht</i>					
Lt. Kurt Matzak: 2	12./NJG1	Lancaster	sea 60 km NW Terschelling (Tiger)	20.33	Braunschweig raid, unidentified.
<i>Note: victory confirmed on 18.8.1944</i>					
Ofw. Heinz Vinke: 35	11./NJG1	Lanc/Halif	Westerlag/Texel	20.33	97 Sqn Lancaster ND421
Oblt. Dietrich Schmidt: 10	8./NJG1	Lancaster	Kolhorn, near Schagen (Fox)	20.35	156 Sqn Lancaster ND357
Ofw. Wilhelm Schulte-Heinrich: 2	7./NJG2	Lancaster	-	-	Braunschweig raid, unidentified.
<i>Note: claim not listed in OKL/RLM listings or in OKL/RLM 7./NJG2 Confirmed Abschussübersicht, but confirmed victory according to 1. JD records</i>					

## 20-21 January 1944 BERLIN

769 bombers headed for Berlin for the heaviest raid on the Reich's capital city yet. Small Mosquito diversionary attacks against Kiel and Hannover, a long, indirect, northern approach route of the Main Force, and the 'ghost voices' of *Corona*, all failed to confuse the German defences. Stationed off the Dutch coast, the German Radar vessel 'Togo' correctly plotted the incoming bomber stream at 17.09 hrs when it was still 160 km out over the North Sea, to the west of Terschelling. The weather conditions, however, were so bad that only the most experienced night fighter crews of the I. Jagdkorps, 98 in all (less than half of the available twin-engined force of 228 fighters) were committed to action.

During the course of the night, running commentaries of the 1., 2., 3., and 7. JD were operating, the first of which (1. JD at Berlin) opened up at 17.35 hrs, sending aircraft of NJG5 to an unidentified beacon 20 minutes later. At the same time, this control announced, 'Spearhead of hostiles 60 (km) NNE Emden - 80 (km) NNW Wilhelmshaven at 9.500 metres'. At an unknown point in time, these NJG5 crews were directed into the outward-bound bomber stream by means of the Y-method.

Despite the fact that due to the atrocious weather only one aircraft from the zone of 2. JD was scrambled (Bf110 G-4 D5+FS, in the hands of Oblt. Zorner, St. Kpt. of 8./NJG3 and his crew of Fw. Wilke and Uffz. Kreimer, from Lüneburg at 18.29 hrs), it appears that the 2. JD controller at Stade guided NJG1 and NJG2 during this night's defensive operations. The first Ju88 crews of these Geschwader of 3. JD were airborne from bases in the Low Countries as early as 17.29 hrs, with orders to gather over *FF Ludwig* near Osnabrück. 2. JD's controller then ordered, at 18.13 hrs, the Ju88 crews of II. and III./NJG2 to fly to *FF Quelle* (near Stade). These Nachtjäger were told, at 18.36 hrs, 'All NJG2 aircraft everywhere to be ready to attack' and, 30 seconds later, 'All NJG2 aircraft must be close to hostiles. Hostiles are approaching to port', whereupon the Ju88s were guided into the stream over *Quelle* and over the mouth of the Elbe River. Uffz. Heinz Misch of 9./NJG2, who became airborne for his 8<sup>th</sup> *Feindflug* at 18.01 hrs, later commented in his *Leistungsbuch*: 'Led by Y-System into enemy bomber stream, but unable to make contact as own aircraft was caught in strong Flak fire'. At 18.23 hrs, the Bf110s of II., III. and IV./NJG1 (and possibly a few He219s of I./NJG1) assembled at *FF Marie*; 35 minutes later they were directed NNE on a course of 30 degrees and were led, somewhat belatedly, into the stream over Parchim. Finally, the II. Jagdkorps in France contributed 25 selected crews of I. and II./NJG4, at least two of which made contact with the stream on its outward-bound flight.

The first heavy bomber loss for the night was due to the 3. Flak Division, the Flak claim being *anerkannt* on 20 June 1944:

-419 Sqn Halifax HX162: hit by 2. & 4./schw. Flak Abt. 647 (o) (Grossbatterie Steilshoop), crashed at Horst (Klostermoor), 7 km N. Elmshorn at 18.45 hrs.

With a relatively large number of experienced crews of NJG1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 'swimming' in the bomber stream long before the 'heavies' reached their target, fed with continuous H2S plots on the whereabouts of the stream, the scene was set for an effective *Zahme Sau* operation. Ofw. Berschwinger of 4./NJG2 opened the Nachtjagd tally with two Halifax Abschüsse. His first victim was LV773 of 158 Squadron. According to a XI. *Luftgau Abschussmeldung* and a local 3. Flak Division *Abschussmeldung*, the bomber crashed at Wentorf near Bergedorf at 18.56 hrs. Berschwinger's second quarry has been identified as 429 Squadron LL197, which fell in woods near Zeetze at exactly 19.10 hrs. These were the first of some ten bombers that fell foul of Tame Boars before the bomber stream arrived over the target. The visibility at operational altitude en route however, was bad and many *Feindberührungen* were lost. The *Kommodore* of NJG2 Major Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein and his crew of Fw. Ostheimer (BF) and Gefr. Matzuleit (BS), in Ju88 R-2 R4+AA, claimed three *Viermots* shot down in flames, all of which were confirmed by the *Abschusskommission* on 6 July 1944. They had about six feet of one of the Junkers' wings cut off by one of the propellers of their third victim that plunged down very close to the Nachtjäger. This was probably 419 Squadron Halifax DT731, which went down after two attacks by a Ju88 near Dessau. Consequently, the *Experte* had to make a belly-landing at Erfurt.

The *Staffelkapitän* of I./NJG4 Oblt. Ludwig Meister, temporarily based at Werneuchen, bagged a double Abschuss in Bf110 G-4 3C+HL. His regular *Funker* Fw. Forke recorded in his wartime diary:

'20.1.44. A nighttime sortie crowned with success! Alert comes very early. Check weather situation, sit start-ready in cockpit and receive take-off order after half an hour. We proceed northwest, climb through several cloud layers and hunt the bomber incursion based on our radio traffic. First fly 270°, then 240° and wait until we have an acquisition on our Lichtenstein SN-2. I soon have the first one cruising from starboard to port. I direct my pilot, we sense the bomber's propellers churning up the air, then we have visual contact. We work our way underneath and give him company (for some of the time we are just 50 m immediately underneath), then we climb, our fire hits him between fuselage and wing and he keels over (426 Squadron Lancaster LL628, crashed 2 km south of Liebenwalde, author's note). We don't wait for the crash, we can leave that to Toni to watch. A new Radar acquisition, I have four or five targets all at once on the screen. We then sight three of them with the naked eye and are in the middle of the bunch. We select one, approach directly from astern and give him a full burst. He plunges down and a minute later the clouds below us light up. Crash! (102 Squadron Halifax LW227, hit the ground near Schönermark, author's note). Five minutes before that Toni confirms the demise of the first Tommy, it was a Lancaster. Intercept times 19:30 hrs and 19:35 hrs'.

The running commentaries of 1. and 2. JD mentioned Berlin as the probable target at 19.02 hrs, 'Many hostiles approaching Berlin course 90', 27 minutes before the planned start time of the attack. In the Berlin area, conditions were exceptionally favourable for the assembled Nachtjäger to engage the bomber stream in Wild Boar fashion. Even though there was no moon, the night was very clear with excellent visibility. A layer of cloud at about 4,000 metres was illuminated from below by 420 searchlights from 35 heavy Flak batteries between 19.21 and 20.05 hrs, forming a *Leichtentuch*, or background against which the bombers were clearly silhouetted.

Ofw. Heinz Vinke of 11./NJG1 scored Nachtjagd's final victory on 20-21 January 1944. He is seen here posing for the camera in an 'Abschuss pose' sometime in early October 1943, in front of Bf110 F-4 Wrk.Nr. 4874 G9+BY of 11./NJG1, his tail depicting 31 victory symbols. From left: Uffz. Rudi Walter (BS), Uffz. Rudi Dunger (BF), Fw. Heinz Vinke. (Coll. Rob de Visser)





Many bomber losses occurred as a result of these conditions, although the Berlin Flak defences somewhat hindered the Nachtjäger by firing up to a height of over 6,000 metres - even though the 1. Flak Division had a strict firing ceiling of 5,500 metres. It is estimated that some 100 twin-engined and single-engined fighters operated over Berlin. Although, reportedly, only small numbers of fighters actually pressed home their attacks some 21 heavy bombers were shot down in the Berlin area, including at least four *Viermots* that were claimed destroyed by single-engined Wild Boars. Only those single-engined Abschüsse that can be found in the RLM/OKL victory claims lists have been detailed below. JG300 filed a total of six Abschüsse. These included three *Viermot* claims on their run into and over the city by Lt. Otto Brüning flying a Bf109 of the 1. Staffel. Lt. Dieterle in a Bf109 G-6 of the 3. Staffel achieved two confirmed Abschüsse. He recorded in his *Flugbuch*: 'Lt. Dieterle, Bf109 SO+XT, Feindflug, Brandis 20.1. 18.55, Welzow 20.1. 20.48, 113 mins, 19<sup>th</sup> Frontflug, Berlin, 2 Abschüsse, Stirling - Halifax II'. JG301 achieved a Halifax and a Lancaster Abschuss and JG302 one Halifax claim. In turn, JG301 and JG302 suffered the loss of three aircraft and two pilots, at least two of which were shot down in air combat, near Jüterbog and Pretsch an der Elbe. The rear gunner of 102 Squadron Halifax HX153 claimed a single-engined fighter as probably destroyed over Berlin at 19.36 hrs; it was last seen diving below the Halifax in flames. Hptm. Autenrieth, St.Kpt. of 6./NJG4, shot down a Halifax and a Lancaster. During his second combat over Berlin, his Bf110 G-4 was hit by return fire, forcing the up-and-coming Nachtjagd ace and his crew to bale out at Spreenhagen near Berlin. Autenrieth broke one of his legs on hitting the tail unit, which kept him out of action for three months. Another ace, Hptm. Altendorf, Kommandeur of IV./NJG5, was shot down in air combat at 19.05 hrs. He managed to bale out with injuries, but both his crew members died in the crash of Bf110 G-4 G9+BW near Perleberg. It took Altendorf several months to recover from his wounds; in late August 1944 he scored three further confirmed victories. The Kommandeur of I./NJG5 Hptm. Werner Hoffmann and his crew of Ofw. Köhler (FB) and Uffz. Modl (BS), flying Bf110 G-4 C9+CB, baled out at 19.45 hrs after shooting down an 83 Squadron Lancaster at Dreetz. Against these three Bf110 losses, only one returning heavy bomber crew claimed a twin-engined fighter destroyed over Berlin, the mid-upper gunner of 7 Squadron Lancaster JA693 shooting down a Bf110 at 19.38 hrs.

One of the Nachtjäger to score a double confirmed Abschuss, his first *schräge Musik* victory, in the target area was the St.Kpt. of 8./NJG3 Oblt. Zorner. He later noted in his *Flugbuch*: '63<sup>rd</sup> op. sortie. 23<sup>rd</sup> Abschuss, Halifax NW Berlin (*schräge Musik*). 24<sup>th</sup> Abschuss, Lancaster NW Berlin'. More than 60 years later, he vividly recalled:

'On January 20, 1944, our W/T interception registered signs of preparations for an attack and bomber formations forming over south-east England, indicating likely incursions during the evening. Swarms of bombers poured over the North Sea and, once over the Schleswig-Holstein coast, changed course to south-east. This led us to suspect that Berlin was the target, which our training course participants (Oblt. Zorner attended a Gruppenkommandeur training course at Werneuchen airfield near Berlin between 11 and 25 January 1944, author's note) were now to defend. I took off at 18:29 hrs, was directed onto the bomber formation and climbed to 6000 m. Berlin was under almost total cloud cover with temperatures well below zero, so we at least had no risk of icing up. At first I could see nothing, although air traffic confirmed without any doubt that Berlin was indeed the target. I flew a zig-zag course to the north-west of the capital. At long last Wilke had a target on his SN2 and guided me onto a bomber flying southeast towards Berlin at 6800 m.

'Wilke, I have contact', I told him at 19:26 hrs, when I could see the bomber clearly. 'There's a break in the clouds in front of us. I'll keep to one side until we have the cloud break underneath us. Then I'll try to attack with *schräge Musik*.'

Two minutes later I slid underneath the bomber until it appeared like a giant about a hundred metres above me. I aimed just ahead of the starboard wing, pressed the firing button and simultaneously throttled back so that the Halifax would pass through the hail of bullets. The effect was spectacular. The wing was completely separated from the fuselage like a chain saw cutting through the branch of a tree. Had I not immediately swerved steeply to starboard our Me110 would have been hit by either the exploding wing or the nose-diving bomber. The remains of the Halifax hit the ground at 19:31 hrs with a violent explosion, probably caused by the bombs still on board. Berlin was spared that at least.

I could see Flak to the south-east and then a number of fires; not large ones but several small widely dispersed blazes. Some of them I watched through gaps in the clouds, others lit up the clouds from below. Wilke was trying to reload the *schräge Musik* for the next attack but was having problems with a cartridge which had jammed in the barrel of one of the twin 20 mm cannons. Ammunition was not belt fed but in drums of 30 rounds; once empty the drums had to be replaced by the Radar operator. But Wilke was unable to remove one of the drums because of the jammed cartridge.

While he was still struggling I noticed a few hundred metres lower down two bombers close together and lit up by searchlights playing on the thin cloud base. I throttled back, lowered the flaps and closed in on one from the rear. *Schräge Musik* would have been counter-productive, not only because only one of the guns was working but also because of the brightly lit cloud ceiling behind us. The only solution was an attack from the rear, although this time with no possibility of creeping up through a layer of haze. And so I immediately came under fire at around 300 m, without effect however, as the Lancaster pilot was swerving violently making it impossible for the tail gunner to aim properly. I couldn't get him in my sights. Four times I tried, the fourth attempt was successful. The 'heavy' burst into flames and disappeared into the clouds, where we could still detect him burning. He crashed at 19:45 hrs with multiple explosions. (57 Squadron Lancaster JB419, set on fire and crashed near Nienberg, north of Nauen ca. 19.45 hrs, author's note). Once more one that didn't make it to its target.

No point in looking for more enemies, slowly but surely the explosions and Flak died down. At 20:45 hrs I decided to return and touched down at Werneuchen at 21:05 hrs'.

24-year old Hptm. Leopold 'Poldi' Fellerer, Kommandeur of II./NJG5 in Bf110 G-4 C9+AC, was the top-scoring pilot of the night with five Halifax Abschüsse, all of which were officially *anerkannt* by the OKL/RLM on 17 June 1944. Probably with the use of *Schräge Musik*, Fellerer shot all five 'heavies' down in the target area and on the first part of the homeward leg. His first victim was 76 Squadron Halifax LK958, which fell at Lückstedt near Osterburg at 19.40 hrs still carrying a full bomb load. He mis-identified his fifth Abschuss, a 76 Squadron Halifax, as a 'Lancaster'. Fw. Hans Forke, *Bordfunker* to Oblt. Meister of I./NJG4, continues his story:

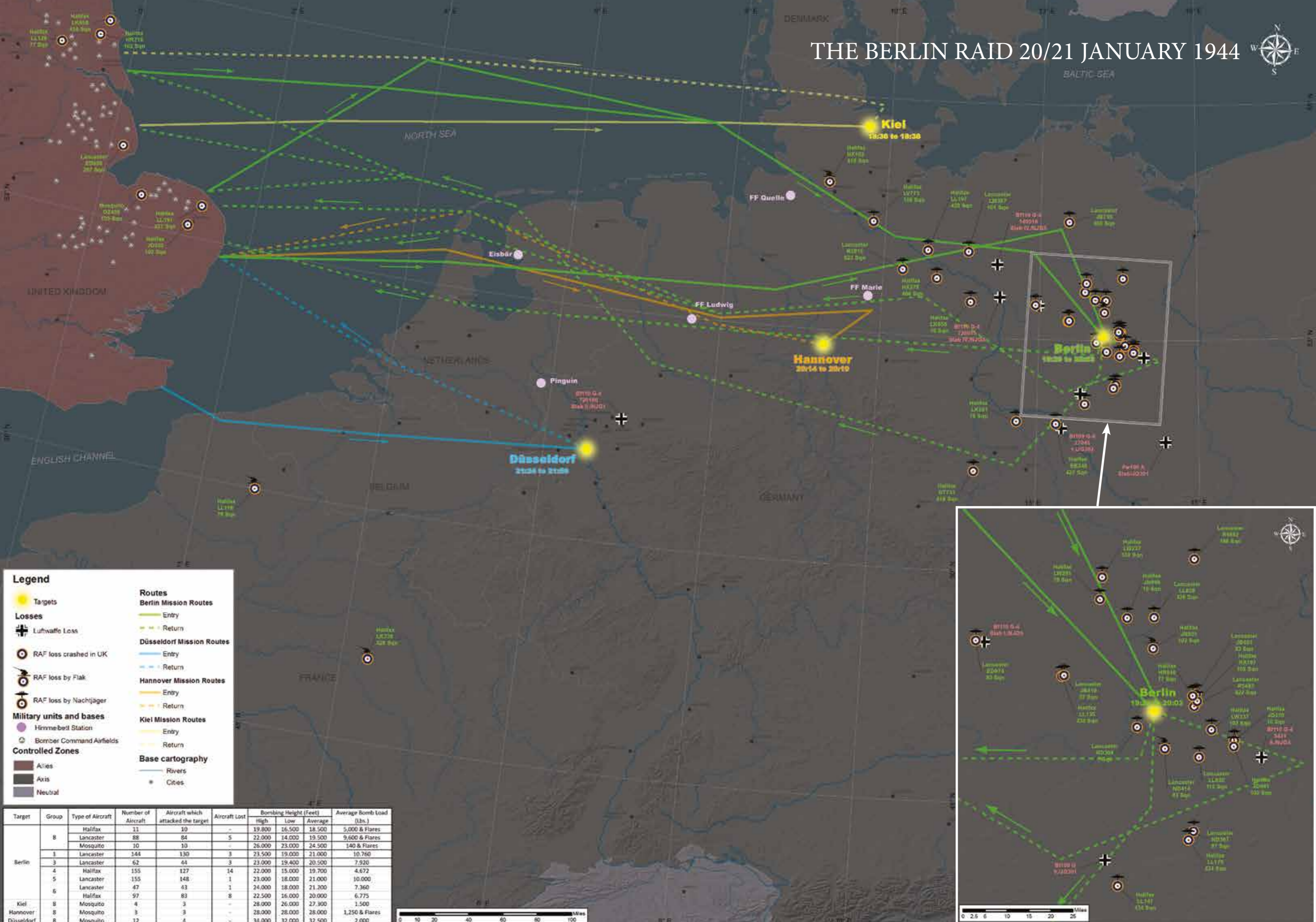


A series of photos taken by a German military squad on 21 January 1944 of the still smoking remains of 429 Squadron Halifax LL197, which crashed in woods called the Grünen Jäger, twixt Stapel and Jessenitz at 19.10 hrs on the evening of 20 January 1944. (Coll. Horst Jeckel)





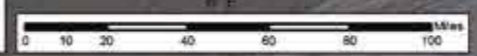
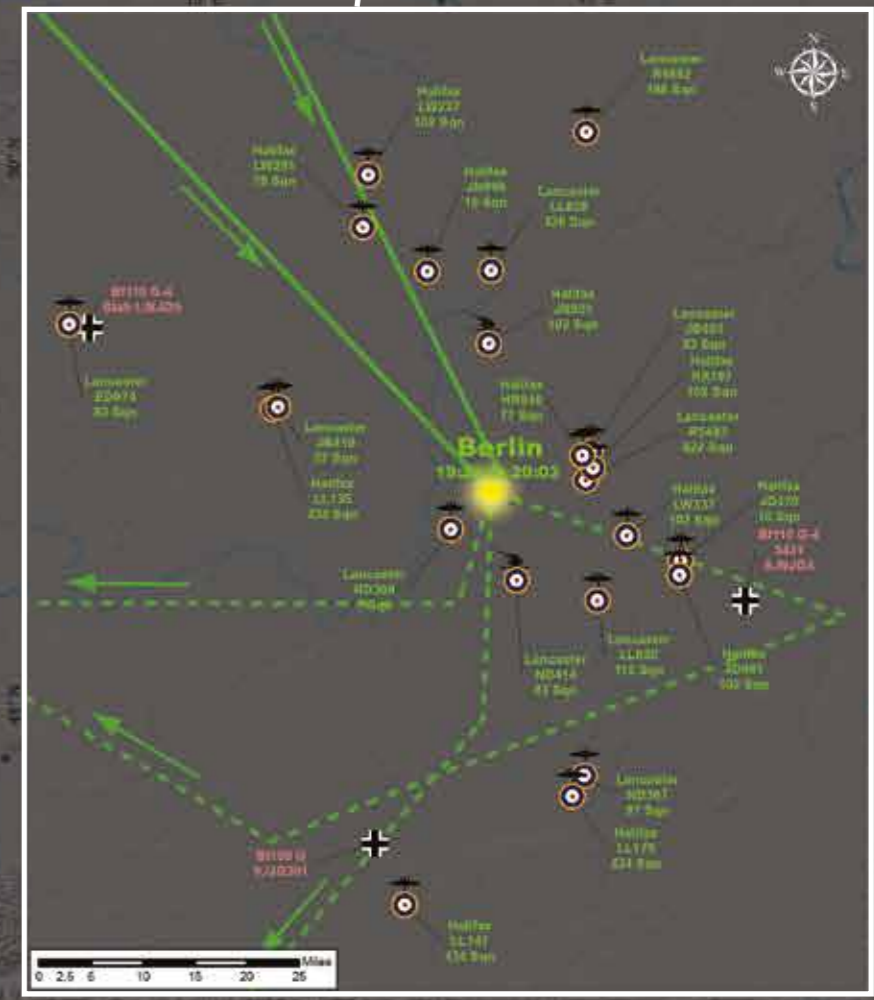
# THE BERLIN RAID 20/21 JANUARY 1944



**Legend**

- Targets**
  - Yellow circle with star: Targets
- Losses**
  - Black cross: Luftwaffe Loss
  - Black circle with cross: RAF loss crashed in UK
  - Black circle with cross and star: RAF loss by Flak
  - Black circle with cross and star: RAF loss by Nachtjäger
- Military units and bases**
  - Purple circle: Himmelfahrt Station
  - Black circle with star: Bomber Command Airfields
- Controlled Zones**
  - Light blue: Allies
  - Dark blue: Axis
  - Grey: Neutral
- Routes**
  - Berlin Mission Routes**
    - Green line: Entry
    - Green dashed line: Return
  - Düsseldorf Mission Routes**
    - Blue line: Entry
    - Blue dashed line: Return
  - Hannover Mission Routes**
    - Orange line: Entry
    - Orange dashed line: Return
  - Kiel Mission Routes**
    - Yellow line: Entry
    - Yellow dashed line: Return
- Base cartography**
  - Blue line: Rivers
  - Black dot: Cities

Target	Group	Type of Aircraft	Number of Aircraft	Aircraft which attacked the target	Aircraft Lost	Bombing Height (Feet)			Average Bomb Load (Lbs.)
						High	Low	Average	
Berlin	8	Halifax	11	10	-	19,800	16,500	18,500	5,000 & Flares
		Lancaster	88	84	5	22,000	14,000	19,500	9,600 & Flares
		Mosquito	10	10	-	26,000	23,000	24,500	140 & Flares
	1	Lancaster	144	130	3	23,500	19,000	21,000	10,760
	3	Lancaster	62	44	3	23,000	19,400	20,500	7,920
	4	Halifax	155	127	14	22,000	15,000	19,700	4,672
Kiel	8	Mosquito	4	3	-	28,000	26,000	27,300	1,500
	8	Mosquito	3	3	-	28,000	28,000	28,000	1,250 & Flares
Hannover	8	Mosquito	3	3	-	34,000	32,000	32,500	2,000







Hptm. Fellerer, Kommandeur of II./NJG5 and his regular crew of Fw. Hätscher (Bordfunke, on left, WIA on 24-25 March 1944) and Uffz. Schopf (Bordschütze, on right) posing with Bf110 G-4 Wrk.Nr. 740039 in mid January 1944. By that time, Fellerer's personal tally stood at 22 Abschüsse, 19 of which were officially confirmed. (Coll. Chris Ehrengardt)

'By now we have arrived over Berlin. We sight a bunch of Tommys, but they drop their bombs and then immediately disappear in the clouds. There's something wrong with our crate, clock and fuel pump are malfunctioning and we can no longer successfully intrude into the homebound bomber stream. We are close to Werneuchen airfield, lock onto the beacon and land in the rain. Hopefully our Abschüsse will be accepted'. (The Abschusskommission only confirmed the second claim of the Meister/Forke team, on 21 June 1944).

Over Berlin, Flak batteries of the 1. Flak Division tracked 23 bombers on Radar flying under the maximum Flak fire ceiling of 5,500 metres (18,000 ft). Engaging these with a barrage of 11,747 heavy and 2,338 light Flak shells, the Berlin Flak claimed six aircraft destroyed, three of which can be found in the OKL/RLM records:

-83 Sqn Lancaster ND414: hit by 2. & 6./schw. Flak Abt. 307 and 3./schw. Flak Abt. 418 (Eisb.), exploded and crashed at Berlin-Lichtenrade at 19.39 hrs.

-102 Sqn Halifax JN951: hit by 4./schw. Flak Abt. 416 (Eisb.) and crashed at Wensickendorfer Heide at 19.53 hrs.

-unidentified Lancaster: hit by 3./schw. Turmflak Abt. 123 (Humboldthain/Berlin Flak tower), crashed in Berlin-Mahlsdorf, time unknown.

By 19.50 hrs, the first wave of bombers was leaving Berlin and flying south towards Magdeburg and Halle. Nine minutes later, the 7. JD control reported 'shattering explosions' 50 km SW of Berlin, while the spearhead of the returning force was plotted by the same control SW of Leipzig at 20.04 hrs, and said to be flying away from Erfurt at 20.15 hrs. Five crews of I./NJG101 were hastily scrambled to take up *Himmelbett* patrols in the northern area of 7. JD, none of which subsequently made contact with the returning 'heavies'. A few twin-engined freelance fighters managed to continue with the bombers for some distance on the way home. With the assistance of small red fighter flares that were being dropped by five Ju88s of III./KG3, and which marked the bombers' progress as far as Magdeburg. Night fighters shot down four bombers on this part of the route. These included 434 Squadron Halifax LL179 (which crashed 1 1/2 km north of Mückendorf following a Nachtjäger attack), 434 Squadron Halifax LL141 (which came down in a field 1 km SW of Hohenahlsdorf, catching fire on impact), and 427 Squadron Halifax EB246 (which hit the ground at Trebitz). All three Halifaxes were victims of Hptm. Fellerer. In turn, Bf110 G-4 C9+BF of Stab IV./NJG5 was shot down in air combat and crashed at Werben at 20.15 hrs, the pilot Oblt. Klemenz being slightly injured. Starting at 20.05 hrs, the freelance Nachtjäger began receiving landing instructions.

Before they crossed the Dutch coast over the mouth of the Scheldt at 22.43 hrs, the final hurdle for the returning bombers was a handful of Nachtjäger of NJG1 and NJG3 manning the *Himmelbett* boxes over north-west Germany and the Netherlands. One of these, Hptm. Modrow and his BF Gefr. Schneider of 2./NJG1 (who had been scrambled from Venlo in He219 A-0 G9+AK at 20.16 hrs) had

three unsuccessful GCI Radar chases in *Raum Pinguin* before returning empty-handed to Venlo at 22.15 hrs. Another *Himmelbett*-operating crew, Oblt. Drewes and Uffz. Handke of 11./NJG1, were scrambled from Leeuwarden in a Bf110 G-4 at 19.45 hrs for a patrol in box *Eisbär*. Erich Handke noted in his diary:

'We were flying our new machine with SN2. We were once again in the middle of the enemy formation and I had made out numerous targets, getting within 500 metres of three of them. However, I could not see any of them as the visibility was so poor. The stars were very blurry and hard to make out. This drawback of the SN2 set, that one could only get in to 500 metres from the target, absolutely needed fixing.' No further bomber losses occurred at this stage. Instead, a Bf110 G-4 of Stab II./NJG1 in the hands of Lt. Höppner fell to 'friendly' fire of the 22. Flak Division, crashing in the Castroper Straße nr. 12 at Herne, north of Bochum at 22.06 hrs, killing the whole crew.

Total Bomber Command losses amounted to 35 Lancasters and Halifaxes, which exactly matches the number of Nachtjagd Abschüsse that were officially confirmed by the RLM/OKL. The I. Jagdkorps reported 38 *Feindberührungen* with 33 'certain' victories, at least 27 of which can be traced in the RLM/OKL listings. In addition, Ofw. Lüddecke of 3./NJG2 claimed two probable Halifax Abschüsse during a sortie from Deelen in Ju88 C-6 R4+EL between 17.35 and 21.40 hrs. Eight Main Force 'heavies' returned with damage sustained in fighter attacks and 47 with Flak scars.

Against these successes, the I. Jagdkorps lost seven aircraft and the II. Jagdkorps one, at least five being shot down in air combat, five of the crew members being killed and 11 injured.

Ofw. Hans Berschwinger: 7	4./NJG2	Halifax	-	18.56	158 Sqn Halifax LV773.
<i>Note: also claimed by Flak of 5. &amp; 6./schw. Flak Abt. 647 (Grossbatterie Farmsen), 1. &amp; 3./schw. Flak Abt. 162 (Grossbatterie Billstedt), 1. &amp; 8./schw. Flak Abt. 647 (Grossbatterie Havighorst), 7./schw. Flak Abt. 647 (RAD 4/70) and 3./schw. Flak Abt. 647 ('Halifax Wentorf nr. Hamburg 18.56 hrs, in co-operation with Nachtjagd'). Credited by OKL as shared victory: claim Ofw. Berschwinger confirmed on 26.4.1944, Flak claim confirmed on 20.6.1944</i>					
Ofw. Hans Berschwinger: 8	4./NJG2	Halifax	-	19.10	101 Sqn Lancaster LM387 or 429 Sqn Halifax LL197
Maj. Heinrich Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein: 74	Stab NJG2	Halifax	-	19.10	101 Sqn Lancaster LM387 or 429 Sqn Halifax LL197
Uffz. Franz Zawadka: 1	4./NJG5	Halifax	-	19.19	460 Sqn Lancaster JB739
Maj. Heinrich Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein: 75	Stab NJG2	Halifax	-	19.15-20	prob. 166 Sqn Lancaster R5862
Hptm. Werner Hoffmann: 20	Stab I./NJG5	Lancaster	near Dreetz, 20 km NNE Rathenow (EE 9): 6.400 m.	19.20	83 Sqn Lancaster ED974
Hptm. Heinrich Wurzer: 1	3./JG302	Halifax	W. Berlin	19.24	Berlin raid, unidentified.
<i>Note: victory confirmed on 5.9.1944</i>					
Obstlt. Günther Radosch: 45	Stab NJG5	Lancaster	-	19.30	7 Sqn Lancaster ND368
Hptm. Hans Autenrieth: 16	6./NJG4	Halifax	Weitsche, 8 km SE Dannenberg	19.30	466 Sqn Halifax HX278
Oblt. Ludwig Meister	1./NJG4	Lancaster	2 km SW Liebenwalde	19.30	426 Sqn Lancaster LL628.
<i>Note: also claimed by Flak of 3./schw. Flak Abt. 416 (Eisb.) ('Lancaster Liebenwalde 19.35 hrs'), claim Oblt. Meister not listed in OKL/RLM I./NJG4 Confirmed Abschussübersicht</i>					
Oblt. Paul Zorner: 21	8./NJG3	Halifax	NW target Berlin: 6.800 m.	19.31	434 Sqn Halifax LL135.
<i>Note: also claimed by Flak of 4./schw. Flak Abt. 525, 2., 3. &amp; 7./schw. Flak Abt. 437, 2./schw. Flak Abt. 211, 3. &amp; 4. s./schw. Flak Abt. 662 ('Halifax Kienberg 19.30 hrs'), victory Oblt. Zorner confirmed on 19.6.1944</i>					
Lt. Manfred Dieterle: 1	3./JG300	Stirling	30 km NW Berlin	19.32	78 Sqn Halifax LW291.
<i>Note: no Stirlings participating in Berlin raid, LW291 exploded nr. Grossmutz, 30 km NW Berlin ca. 19.30-35 hrs. Victory Lt. Dieterle confirmed on 2.8.1944</i>					
Maj. Heinrich Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein: 76	Stab NJG2	Halifax	near Berlin	19.25-35	prob. 419 Sqn Halifax DT731
Ofw. Hans Berschwinger: 9	4./NJG2	Lanc/Halif	-	19.36	622 Sqn Lancaster R5915.
<i>Note: also claimed by Flak of 3. &amp; 4./schw. Flak Abt. 601, 1., 3. &amp; 4./schw. Flak Abt. 602 and 4. &amp; 6./schw. Flak Abt. 607 ('Halifax Havekost 19.35 hrs'). Victory Ofw. Berschwinger confirmed on 26.4.1944, Flak claim confirmed on 20 June 1944</i>					
Oblt. Wilhelm Johnen: 7	5./NJG5	Lancaster	Oranienburg area, NNW Berlin	19.37	10 Sqn Halifax JN899
Oblt. Ludwig Meister: 22	1./NJG4	Halifax	near Schönmark, 25 km NE Neuruppin	19.37	102 Sqn Halifax LW227
Oblt. Manfred Tischtau: 5	8./NJG5	Lancaster	-	19.37	Berlin raid, unidentified.
<i>Note: victory confirmed on 17.6.1944</i>					
Obstlt. Günther Radosch: 46	Stab NJG5	Lancaster	-	19.39	97 Sqn Lancaster ND367
Hptm. Leopold Fellerer: 20	Stab II./NJG5	Halifax	-	19.40	76 Sqn Halifax LK958
Oblt. Paul Zorner: 22	8./NJG3	Lancaster	NW target Berlin: 5.800 m.	19.45	57 Sqn Lancaster JB419
Oblt. Josef Kraft: 8	4./NJG5	Lancaster	Berlin	19.45	prob. 115 Sqn Lancaster LL650



Hptm. Hans Autenrieth: 17	6./NJG4	Lancaster	7 km NE Berlin	19.45	83 Sqn Lancaster JB461
Uffz. Peter Ingwersen	5./NJG5	Lancaster	-	19.45	622 Sqn Lancaster R5483.
<i>Note: also claimed by Flak of 6./schw. Flak Abt. and 3./schw. Flak Abt. 418 (Eisb.) ('4-mot Berlin-Marzahn 19.45 hrs'). Claim Uffz. Ingwersen not listed in OKL/RLM 5./NJG5 Confirmed Abschussübersicht, victory prob. credited to 1. Flak Div.</i>					
Unknown crew	12./NJG5	-	-	19.45	102 Sqn Halifax HX187.
<i>Note: according to statements of surviving crew members, hit by Flak over Berlin at 19,500 ft followed by night fighter attack, crashed 1,5 km W. of Eiche at 19.45 hrs. Victory credited to 12./NJG5 on 17.6.1944</i>					
Oblt. Helmuth Schulte: 2	Stab II./NJG5	Halifax	Berlin-Falkenberg	19.47	77 Sqn Halifax HR946
Hptm. Helmut Suhr: 1	8./JG301	Lancaster	over Berlin	19.47	Berlin raid, unidentified.
<i>Note: victory confirmed on 9.9.1944</i>					
Lt. Manfred Dieterle: 2	3./JG300	Halifax	Berlin	19.48	102 Sqn Halifax LW337.
<i>Note: also claimed by Flak of 1.-3./schw. Flak Abt. 362 and 2./schw. Flak Abt. 418 (Eisb.) ('Halifax Hirschgarten 19.47 hrs'), victory credited to Lt. Dieterle on 2.8.1944</i>					
Hptm. Leopold Fellerer: 21	Stab II./NJG5	Halifax	-	19.50	434 Sqn Halifax LL141
Oblt. Bernard Jungmann: 1	Stab IV./NJG5	-	-	19.50	prob. 10 Sqn Halifax JD470 or 102 Sqn Halifax JD461
Hptm. Leopold Fellerer: 22	Stab II./NJG5	Halifax	-	19.58	434 Sqn Halifax LL179
Oblt. Gustav Tham: 7	11./NJG5	Halifax	Berlin	20.03	prob. 10 Sqn Halifax JD470 or 102 Sqn Halifax JD461
Oblt. Peter Ehrhardt: 7	8./NJG5	Lancaster	-	20.08	Berlin raid, unidentified.
<i>Note: victory confirmed on 17.6.1944</i>					
Hptm. Leopold Fellerer: 23	Stab II./NJG5	Halifax	-	20.05	427 Sqn Halifax EB246
Hptm. Leopold Fellerer: 24	Stab II./NJG5	Lancaster	-	20.11	76 Sqn Halifax LK921.
<i>Note: also claimed by Flak of 227/IV, 226/IV, 256/IV and 252/IV ('Halifax Pöplitz 20.11 hrs'), victory credited to Hptm. Fellerer on 17.6.1944</i>					
Ofw. Heinz Vinke: 36	11./NJG1	Lancaster	-	21.02	Berlin raid, unidentified.
<i>Note: victory confirmed on 12.7.1944</i>					

## 21-22 January 1944 MAGDEBURG

Magdeburg was the Main Force target for 648 aircraft, whilst a small number of 12 Mosquitoes and 22 Lancasters attacked Berlin as a diversionary raid. Despite the use of heavy bombers in the spoof attack, the German Tame Boar defences were not deceived. At 20.50 hrs, the main bomber stream coming from the Harwich area was reported to the I. Jagdkorps HQ at a point about 120 km west of Texel. The bomber stream made landfall near Cuxhaven and passed between Hamburg and Bremen heading for Berlin. At this point, the diversionary raiders left the Main Force and headed towards Berlin, some 95 km further east.

In response to the approaching bomber force, at around 21.00 hrs 3. JD sent up its Ju88 Gruppen of NJG2, followed a short while later by the Bf110 units of NJG1, with orders to gather at *FF Ludwig* (near Osnabrück). A few crews of NJG1 and NJG3 were employed in GCI patrols in the Frisian Islands chain, but most of the crews of the latter Geschwader became airborne on *Zahme Sau* duties between 20.50 and 21.35 hrs. They were ordered to collect around beacon *Quelle* (NW of Hamburg) at 21.09 hrs. Among them were a number of *Experten* crews: Fw. Frank and his regular crew of BF Uffz. Schierholz and BS Fw. Schneider of 6./NJG3, who left Schleswig at 21.05 hrs in Ju88 C-6 D5+IP; Oblt. Zorner, St.Kpt. of 8./NJG3 and his crew of Fw. Wilke (BF) and Uffz. Kreimer (BS), who became airborne from Werneuchen in Bf110 G-4 D5+FS at 21.25 hrs; and Major Lent and his *Funker* Ofw. Kubisch, who were scrambled from Stade in Bf110 G-4 D5+CA at 21.32 hrs.

At 21.24 hrs, the Gruppen of NJG1 and 2 were sent to *Funkfeuer Quelle* too. Finally, the 1. JD controller scrambled NJG5 and gathered his fighters over *FF Hahn*, east of Hamburg. 2. JD directed NJG3 into the stream between *FF Hahn* and *Quelle*, whilst 1. JD led NJG5 into the bomber stream between Heligoland and Hamburg, which was where the Division's controller of 3. JD fed his crews of NJG1 and 2 into the bomber stream. The process of feeding the fighters into the bomber stream was helped by the prevailing good visibility. In all, the I. Jagdkorps employed 169 twin-engined fighters, from the available force of 197 aircraft. 7. JD in Southern Germany contributed another 14 Bf110s of I./NJG6 and I./NJG101, three of which were employed in *Himmelbett* fashion and 11 on *Wilde Sau* duties. At 21.46 hrs, the freelance fighters of NJG1 and NJG6 were ordered to obey further instructions from 2. JD.

Aided by several *Laufende Reportages*, the first of which came on the air at 21.09 hrs, and by visual markers that were dropped by at least eight Ju88 A-4s of III./KG3 from 22.34 hrs onwards, the twin-engined fighters fought a running battle with the 'heavies', which arrived over the target at around 23.00 hrs. An estimated 12 bombers were shot down by Tame Boars between the German coast and Magdeburg, including a double Lancaster Abschuss by Maj. Lent and his *Bordfunker* Ofw. Kubisch. (The *Experten* crew returned to Stade at 00.01 hrs). One of the Nachtjäger victims on this stretch was 35 Squadron Halifax HX324, which exploded in mid-air at 22.30 hrs, flaming debris of the wreckage being scattered over an area of about 500 metres in diameter just to the west of Rehbeck. This aircraft was claimed by Hptm. Jakob, St.Kpt. of 3./NJG2 flying a Ju88 C-6, who was wounded in a crash on landing at Deelen.

The 31 year-old *Kommodore* of NJG1 Major Werner Streib claimed his final victim of the war, a Lancaster at 22.55 hrs, for his 64<sup>th</sup> confirmed victory (and 65<sup>th</sup> Abschuss). He was appointed Inspector of the Nachtjagd on 1 March, a function he held until the end of WWII.

By far the most successful Nachtjäger during the bombers' outward-bound journey was Major Heinrich Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, *Kommodore* of NJG2. He had scrambled from Deelen at around 21.30 hrs in Ju88 C-6 R4+XM, accompanied by his regular crew of Fw. Friedrich Ostheimer (BF) and Gefr. Kurt Matzuleit (BM). Wittgenstein flew in his reserve aircraft, which was not equipped with *Schräge Musik*, as his regular mount (Ju88 R-2 R4+AA) had been badly damaged in action during the previous night.

A brilliant pilot of aristocratic descent, Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein survived some 150 operational sorties as a bomber pilot in the early war years, before he transferred to Nachtjagd in the autumn of 1941. Appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 9./NJG2 in November 1941, he scored his first confirmed victory six months later on 6-7 May 1942, launching him into a meteoric night fighting career. During the following six months, he amassed 22 Abschüsse, receiving the *Ritterkreuz* in October of that year. Over the next twelve months, he added some 40 more victories to his tally, 23 of these having been achieved on the Eastern front whilst serving as *Kommandeur* of IV./NJG5 and I./NJG100. The award of the Oak Leaves for 54 Abschüsse was gazetted at the end of August 1943. On 15 August 1943 Prinz Wittgenstein took over II./NJG3 in Schleswig, and on 1 December he was appointed *Gruppenkommandeur* of II./NJG2 based at Deelen, Holland. His tally standing at 68 Abschüsse, 27-year-old Major Wittgenstein became *Kommodore* of NJG2 on 1 January 1944, adding another 15 confirmed victories during the first month of 1944.

After setting course from Deelen to the north east, Wittgenstein entered the Magdeburg-bound bomber stream in the Bremerhaven area just before 22.00 hrs, his *Funker* Fw. Ostheimer immediately picking up a 'heavy' on his SN-2 set. More than half a century later, Friedrich Ostheimer recalled:

*'At around 22:00 or 22:05 hrs we fired off a burst from below on the first Viermot and immediately set the wing on fire. Despite this, the bomber flew on for a short while then slowly lost height and finally went down out of control and crashed in a gigantic ball of fire.'* Wittgenstein's first victim, 431 Squadron Halifax LK680, fell at the railway station of Imsum at 22.05 hrs; its destruction was contested by Oblt. Tober, the St.Kpt. of 8./NJG2 and by *Marine* Flak. Tober noted in his *Leistungsbuch*: *'80<sup>th</sup> operational sortie. 21.08-01.47 hrs. Wilde Sau to Magdeburg. Abschuss of a 4-engined enemy aircraft at 22.09 hrs ca. 25 km WSW FF Quelle (near Imsum, N. Wesermünde). After two attacks (1<sup>st</sup> from below and 2<sup>nd</sup> from above) went down vertically through clouds, followed by impact fire shortly later. Witnesses Fw. Rösner (BF) and Uffz. Gernegross (BM).'* After official evaluation, the RLM rejected Oblt. Tober's claim and credited the victory to Wittgenstein on 19 August 1944. Only minutes after their first Abschuss, Fw. Ostheimer picked out one of six bombers that he had simultaneously on his Radar: *'A short burst on the second bomber resulted in him briefly catching fire and then keeling over to port. I could clearly see him crashing, followed by a series of violent explosions. This was at about 22:10 to 22:15 hrs.'* The bomber, 7 Squadron Lancaster JB408, crashed at Klein Wohnste, reportedly at 22.10 hrs. 'Swimming' with the bomber stream on an easterly heading, the Wittgenstein crew engaged their third victim towards 22.30 hrs, which was sent down in flames with, *'one long and powerful burst of gunfire'* as Ostheimer later recalled. This was 44 Squadron Lancaster DV263, which exploded with tremendous force over Waddekath. After a 15-minute Radar chase, at 22.45 hrs Major Wittgenstein dispatched his fourth victim of the night, 514 Squadron Lancaster LL672, with two quick bursts of gunfire, the 'heavy' crashing at Geestgottberg at 22.48 hrs. Fw. Ostheimer recalled: *'After our first attack I saw the bomber go down in flames and crashing at about 22:40 hrs'* and added: *'Now we have really set the cat among the pigeons.'*

Hptm. Erhard Peters, St.Kpt. of 9./NJG3 flying a Bf110 G-4, claimed two *Viermots*, both of which were confirmed by the *Abschusskommission* on 21 July 1944. Flying as third man/*Bordschütze* in Peters' crew was war reporter Fw. Jürgen Clausen, who wrote the following account for the German press:



A bombing photo taken on this night over Magdeburg showing a 'Cookie' going down over the city. (Coll. ww2images.com)