



Formation flight of Lichtenstein-equipped Bf110 F-4s of I./NJG4, probably taken in mid 1943. 3C+KK is flying closest to the camera (Coll. Paul Gärtig).

bomber climbed away from us, but we regained contact. We then made a second attack, aiming between the fuselage and the starboard engines. After this attack, the bomber burned and went down.

We were the only crew which came back home from this operation successful, and with two victories, even though a number of Bf110s had been sent up into the night sky".

Three Halifax Abschüsse and a Lancaster kill were claimed by four crews of the newly founded I./NJG6 which was based at Schleissheim and Mainz-Finthen. At least 21 crews of this Gruppe were operating between 01.12 and 03.50 hrs without close ground control, using one frequency in the target area which was giving a running commentary on the raid. The fighters, however, could only get limited useful information from the *Laufende Reportage* control: there was difficulty over the height of the bombers at one point and both the

aircrews and ground stations reported interference of their radars. One of their number, Fw. Bahr of the 3. Staffel, flew his 25th Nachtjagd *Einsatz*, a sortie in Bf110 G-4 2Z+IL between 01.31 and 03.08 hrs, and noted in his *Flugbuch*: "Freelance sortie over Mannheim".

Flak was credited with at least one Abschuss, 11 Main Force aircraft returning with Flak damage:

-76 Sqn Halifax LK892: coned by 1., 3. & 4./Flakscheinw. Abt. 369 between 03.43-48 hrs, hit by 1. & 2./gem. Flak Abt. 501, crashed at Aubengue, Wimereux (Pas-de-Calais) at 03.48 hrs.

In return, the rear gunner of Halifax EB247 of 427 Squadron claimed an attacking Fw190 shot down in flames near Landau at 02.07 hrs (the bomber was badly shot up in the encounter and later abandoned over England), the two gunners of Lancaster DV178 of 49 Squadron a single-engined fighter destroyed NW of Kaiserslautern at 02.25 hrs, and, finally, the gunners on board Lancaster EE194 of 467 Squadron claimed an Me109 shot down in flames to the north of Saarbrücken at 02.28 hrs. Set against these claims, NJG4 reported two Bf110 losses due to air combat: a G-2 coded 3C+LJ in the hands of Hptm. Haesler of the 1. Staffel crashed at Morialmé and a G-4 flown by Oblt. Breimer of the 9. Staffel impacted at Brabant. Both pilots sustained injuries, their crews escaping unscathed.

Lt. Norbert Pietrek: 2	2./NJG4	Halifax	5 km. NW Hubert (7 B): 4.300 m.	00.43	405 Sqn Halifax HR872
Lt. Norbert Pietrek: 3	2./NJG4	Lancaster	nr Marbehan (7 B): 4.200 m.	01.31	61 Sqn Lancaster W4236
Lt. Johannes Engels	4./NJG6	Halifax	nr Vollmersbach	01.40	102 Sqn Halifax JD408.
<i>Note: claim not listed in OKL/RLM 4./NJG6 Confirmed Abschussübersicht, only listed in KTB Stab NJG6</i>					
Hptm. Heinrich Wohlers	Stab I./NJG6	Halifax	nr Spessbach, NW Landstuhl	02.30	102 Sqn Halifax JB782.
<i>Note: claim not listed in OKL/RLM Stab I./NJG6 Confirmed Abschussübersicht</i>					
Oblt. Hans-Georg Birkenstock	Stab I./NJG6	Lancaster	nr Erfenbach		49 Sqn Lancaster ED719.
<i>Note: Abschuss not officially submitted to OKL/RLM, only listed in KTB Stab NJG6</i>					
Ofw. Richard Launer	1./NJG6	Halifax	in Mannheim		419 Sqn Halifax JD257
<i>Note: Abschuss not officially submitted to OKL/RLM, only listed in KTB Stab NJG6</i>					

10-11 August 1943 NÜRNBERG

Bombing between 00.57 and 01.50 hrs, 653 heavy bombers caused widespread destruction in Nürnberg, for the loss of just 16 Halifaxes, Lancasters and Stirlings. 11 of these losses are attributed to Nachtjagd (five other bombers receiving fighter damage), and two to Flak. A large number of Nachtjäger were active, most of which operated in a freelance role. Returning bomber crews reported 68 fighter interceptions, 14 developing into attacks. The interceptions were fairly evenly divided between the outward and the homeward routes and 12 occurred over the target area.

During the bombers' outward-bound flight, around midnight, the five most senior crews of II./NJG1 were scrambled from St. Trond for a historic 'first' in the night airwar. The Nachtjäger got their instructions directly from *Teerose*, the 1st Jagddivision HQ near Arnhem and were led into the bomber stream by the Y-system, a type of ground-controlled navigation by means of VHF. During the freelance hunt, Oblt. Schnauffer destroyed a 97 Squadron Lancaster that came down twixt Langwaden and Hähnlein, thus achieving the first Y-controlled Abschuss in the Nachtjagd, for his 21st confirmed victory. Oblt. Heinz Freymann, who flew as Schnauffer's *Bordfunker* on this occasion, reported in his *Luftzeugenbericht* (air eye witness report): "On 10.8.43, shortly before midnight, I became airborne with Oblt. Schnauffer for a *Wilde Sau* sortie in the direction of Frankfurt am Main. At 00.29 hrs I saw a four-engined enemy aircraft, after Oblt. Schnauffer had drawn my attention to it. I was unable to establish the exact type. After the first attack, a small glow of a fire was visible in the left-hand wing, probably in one of the engines. The fire spread very rapidly and, soon after, the flaming aircraft plunged down vertically towards the earth. At 00.32 hrs, I saw the impact fire".

Whilst the Nürnberg force was penetrating into German airspace, some 20 Bf109s of Stab. I. and II./JG Herrmann were scrambled from Bonn-Hangelar. Some of these fighters were ordered to Frankfurt, which was a diversionary target for a few Mosquitoes. The other Wild Boars were directed to the Mannheim-Heidelberg area, where they claimed three Halifaxes shot down, including 158 Squadron Halifax JD249 which came down at Weschnitz, 15 km NE of Mannheim. Subsequently, they were ordered to head for Nürnberg, where two pilots of the I. Gruppe each claimed a *Viermot* destroyed. The latter two claims were probably later officially rejected, even though the loss of 106 Squadron Lancaster DV195 (which impacted at Erlenstegen on the NE outskirts of Nürnberg) can be tied to one of these claims. The second of these rejected *Wilde Sau* Abschüsse over Nürnberg probably concerns a combat involving Lancaster ED654 'Cutty Sark' of 9 Squadron, which fought a prolonged combat with a 'Ju88' during its bombing run with a full bomb load. The combat lasted 11 minutes, during which the mid-upper gunner was killed and the rear gunner badly wounded. In return, the gunners on board 106 Squadron Lancaster ED593 engaged an attacking Ju88 on the run in to Nürnberg at 01.06 hrs and claimed the aircraft shot down in flames.

Nürnberg-based heavy Flak destroyed two searchlight-coned bombers during the actual bombing attack, 34 Main Force aircraft returning with Flak scars:

-218 Sqn Stirling EE885: coned by 1.-4./Scheinw. Abt 633 and 8./Scheinw. Abt. 522, hit by z.b.v. Z/schw. Flak Abt. 522 and impacted south of Hersbruck at 01.25 hrs.

-619 Sqn Lancaster EE112: coned by 1.-4./Scheinw. Abt. 633 and 2. & 4./Scheinw. Abt. 634 between 01.30-38 hrs, hit by 1.-6./schw. Flak Abt. 522 and crashed 3 km SE of Moosbach at 01.38 hrs.

Operating with an estimated 10 aircraft under a running commentary control broadcasting from the Mannheim area, I./NJG6 returned with four Abschüsse. Hptm. Heinrich Wohlers, the *Gruppenkommandeur*, scored a triple Abschuss. Incidentally, he mis-identified his first two victims – his 'Stirling' claim near Schafhausen has been identified as 35 Squadron Halifax HR861, which caught fire, exploded and crashed at Framersheim, 5 km NE of Alzey. At least one crew of I./NJG6, Fw. Bahr and his *Funker* Uffz. Rehmer who belonged to the 3. Staffel, flew a double sortie. They were scrambled from Mainz-Finthen in Bf110 G-4 2Z+IL at 00.19 hrs for 'Freelance hunting in the Frankfurt-Mannheim area', as Bahr later noted in his *Flugbuch* and, 27 minutes after their return to Mainz at 01.23 hrs, they became airborne again, this time for a GCI patrol in box *Dachs*. At 03.31 hrs, they touched down at their home base from Bahr's 27th *Einsatz*; he made a brief note in his *Flugbuch* that they had enjoyed 'no vectors'.

Although around five Fw190s of 2./JG2 became active in the Rouen/Arras area against the returning bomber stream at 03.27 hrs, none of these subsequently reported *Feindberührung*. Elements of I./NJG4 were also active against the returning bombers, one crew of the 3. Staffel reporting a kill, but this came at a high price: a Bf110 of the Gruppe crashed at Bois d'Acren near Lessines after its crew had all baled out safely and Do217 N-1 3C+CL of the 3. Staffel impacted at Froidchapelle following air combat, the pilot Uffz. Schürer dying. Another aircraft, Bf110 G-0 3C+EJ in the hands of Ofw. Brandstätter of the 1. Staffel tried to land at Biblis with battle damage but crashed on finals, the *Funker* being killed.

11 crews of II./NJG1 flew *Himmelbett* patrols over Belgium, two crews each scoring a confirmed kill over homeward-bound bombers, in the *Räume Rochen* (JLO Ofw. Waack) and 7 C (JLO Ogefr. Meier) respectively. In the latter box, Lt. Hager of the *Gruppenstab* dispatched a 15 Squadron Stirling and subsequently wrote in his *Gefechtsbericht*: "Due to the strength of the jamming, a normal GCI sortie was not possible. By following the *Jägerleitoffizier's* general guidance, we came into contact with the enemy at



On 10-11 August 1943, Hptm. Alfred Haesler, St.Kpt. of I./NJG4 bailed out of his Bf110 G-2 after suffering an engine fire on take-off from Florennes airfield, striking the tailplane of his fighter which necessitated the amputation of one of his legs in hospital (Coll. Roland Charlier).

03.18 hrs. An enemy aircraft on an out-bound course cut across my course at an angle of 90 degrees. By turning in quickly I did not lose the target again. In a short time I was some 130 meters below the enemy aircraft, at 3,700 meters altitude, and I recognised it as a four-engined aircraft. I initiated a gentle climb and fired at the starboard inner engine, which immediately burst into bright flame. The aircraft went down in a glide, at about 1,500 meters some pieces fell off. At 03.25 hrs the enemy aircraft crashed 1 km SE of Doische, 5.5 km W of Givet, I saw bright flames at the point of impact".

Whilst the Nürnberg force was in its return flight over France, eight Me410s of V/KG2 were scrambled from Merville on *Fernnachtjagd* duties in Raum Cambridge. Two crews of the 16. Staffel each claimed a 'Stirling' destroyed (one of which, actually, was a 115 Squadron Lancaster that broke up in the air and crashed near Maidstone at 04.30 hrs), all other crews reporting successful bombing attacks on airfields.

Oblt. Fritz Söthe: 2	3./NJG4	Halifax	nr Wancennes: 5.200 m.	00.03	158 Sqn Halifax HR938
Oblt. Heinz-Wolfgang Schnauffer: 21	Stab II./NJG1	Lancaster	S. Hähnlein, 15 km SSW Darmstadt: 5.400 m.	00.32	97 Sqn Lancaster ED939
Uffz. Horst John	2./JG Herrmann	Halifax	Mannheim: 5.500 m.	00.36	158 Sqn Halifax JD249
Hptm. Heinrich Wohlers	Stab I./NJG6	Halifax	nr Bad Kreuznach	00.37	49 Sqn Lancaster ED625.
<i>Note: claim not listed in OKL/RLM Stab I./NJG6 Confirmed Abschussübersicht</i>					
Hptm. Friedrich Karl Müller: 2	1./JG Herrmann	Halifax	3-5 km. NNE Biblis airfield: 4.200 m.	00.44	Nürnberg raid, unidentified
Hptm. Friedrich Karl Müller: 3	1./JG Herrmann	Halifax	prob. N. Heidelberg: 4.200 m.	00.45	Nürnberg raid, unidentified
Uffz. Kustusch: 1	3./NJG4	Halifax	Boussu, 12 km. WSW Mons: 1.600 m.	02.17	77 Sqn Halifax JD167
Fw. Otto Fries: 1	5./NJG1	Lancaster	nr Hanzinelle, 18 km SE Charleroi (<i>Rocher</i>): 3.500 m.	02.56	97 Sqn Lancaster JA716
Lt. Johannes Hager: 7	Stab II./NJG1	Stirling	1 km SE Doische, 5 km. W. Givet (7 C): 3.700 m	03.25	15 Sqn Stirling BF460
Hptm. Heinrich Wohlers	Stab I./NJG6	Stirling	nr Schafhausen, 1 km. NE Alzey		35 Sqn Halifax HR861
<i>Note: Abschuss not officially submitted to OKL/RLM, only listed in KTB Stab NJG6</i>					
Oblt. Hans-Georg Birkenstock	Stab I./NJG6	Lancaster	nr Alsenborn		102 Sqn Halifax JD369.
<i>Note: Abschuss not officially submitted to OKL/RLM, only listed in KTB Stab NJG6</i>					
Hptm. Heinrich Wohlers	Stab I./NJG6	Halifax	in Asbach, N. Idar-Oberstein		51 Sqn Halifax HR838.
<i>Note: Abschuss not officially submitted to OKL/RLM, only listed in KTB Stab NJG6</i>					
Fw. Johann Trenke: 1	16./KG2	Stirling	nr. Chelmsford (0216): 2.800 m.	04.25	115 Sqn Lancaster DS665
Lt. Hermann Walther: 1	16./KG2	Stirling	sea SW Eastbourne (0134): 3.000 m	04.36	unidentified



The wreckage of 77 Sqn Halifax JD167 at Dour after being shot down on the night of 10-11 August 1943. (Coll. BAMA)



Pilots of 2./JG2 enjoying a smoke in the summer of 1943, from left: Oblt. Haberland, Uffz. Edelmann, Uffz. Petretti, Fw. Eiflein (hidden), Ofw. Bigge, Lt. Eichhoff. On 12-13 August 1943, Uffz. Petretti achieved the first nighttime victory of 2./JG2. Note the special flying goggles, which were used in training during daylight to enhance the pilots' night vision (Coll. Horst Jeckel).

12-13 August 1943 MILAN, TURIN

656 aircraft targeted Milan and Turin, respectively between 01.10-01.48 and 01.11-01.37 hrs, for the loss of five heavy bombers. Five Main Force aircraft of the Milan raid returned with Flak damage and one with scars sustained in a combat with a *Nachtjäger*, whereas another five Turin raiders returned with Flak damage and two Stirlings of the Turin force with fighter scars.

Nachtjäger accounted for four bomber losses over France. Although a considerable number of twin-engined fighters were airborne from airfields in the *Himmelbett* belt in NE France, the most effective resistance to the raids on Northern Italy came from freelancing single-engined fighters of 2./JG2, five of which were operating in the Évreux area between 22.52 and 00.41 hrs. Without vectoring from the ground, two Fw190 pilots claimed three Halifax kills, which were all confirmed on 20 January 1945. Lt. Grossfuss reported two Abschüsse; Lt. Petretti was responsible for bringing down a 138 Squadron (SOE) Halifax that crashed near Ecorcei. Ofw. Josef 'Jupp' Bigge, a veteran of the Battle of Britain, noted in his *Flugbuch* that he had enemy contact with two *Viermots* during a sortie that lasted 88 minutes, between 22.54 and 00.22. Incidentally, he took off from St. André for a second *Feindflug* at 03.11 hrs, but was forced to bale out of his Fw190 A-6. In return for the 2./JG2 Abschüsse, the rear gunner of a 90 Squadron Stirling claimed a Fw190 destroyed south of Bernay at 23.49 hrs.

Hptm. von Niebelschütz, St.Kpt. of 5./NJG4 and flying from Dijon-Longvic airfield, engaged a homeward-bound 214 Squadron Stirling of the Turin force which had previously been damaged by Flak, and shot it down at 02.42 hrs. Seven aircraft of 2./JG2 were airborne against the returning raiders, between 03.06 and 05.20 hrs, but none of these reported *Feindberührung*.

11 Me410s of V./KG2 were engaged in *Fernnachtjagd* duties over East Anglia, four of which attacked targets of opportunity, at Colchester, Ipswich and Felixtowe. On their return to Vendeville, one crew of the 14. Staffel crashed at Le Mans.

Uffz. Ernst Petretti: 2	2./JG2	Halifax	prob. Gacé/Évreux area: 3.000 m.	23.10	138 Sqn Halifax BB334
Lt. Detlef Grossfuss: 1	2./JG2	Halifax	nr Bernay: 3.000 m.	23.17	76 Sqn Halifax DK240
Lt. Detlef Grossfuss: 2	2./JG2	Halifax	1 km. NNW Verneuil-sur-Avre: 3.000 m.	23.27	77 Sqn Halifax JD125
Hptm. Hans-Wolfgang von Niebelschütz: 3	5./NJG4	Lancaster	nr La Buisnière sur Ouche: 3.500-3.000 m.	02.42	214 Sqn Stirling EF390

14-15 August 1943 MILAN

140 Lancasters raided Milan between 02.12 and 02.40 hrs (CET, which was one hour ahead of GMT between 15 August and 4 October 1943). There was only limited fighter and Flak opposition; just one aircraft was lost, which was shot down by the *Staffelkapitän* of 5./NJG4 near Chalon-sur-Saône in Eastern France on its outward-bound flight still carrying a full bomb load. One bomber returned with slight Flak damage.

Two fighters of 2./JG2 were airborne against the returning bombers between 02.52 and 04.28 hrs in the Évreux area, but failed to achieve *Feindberührung*. In return, the rear gunner on board 101 Squadron Lancaster ED327 claimed a Fw190 destroyed north of Bourges at 03.43 hrs.

Hptm. Hans-Wolfgang von Niebelschütz: 4	5./NJG4	Lancaster	nr Sassenay: 4.000 m.	23.53	7 Sqn Lancaster JA850
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15-16 August 1943 MILAN, MINELAYING



Uffz. Albert Kreuzer was one of the successful pilots of 2./JG2 on 15-16 August 1943 (Coll. Horst Jeckel).

199 Lancasters were dispatched for another raid on Milan, bombing between 00.55 and 01.34 hrs (CET). Five of their number returned with Flak damage and seven were lost to Fw190s of 2./JG2, which operated from St. André, Évreux and Beaumont le Roger airfields; all seven claims by 2./JG2 were officially *anerkannt* on 20 January 1945. The first of seven Focke Wulfs of this Staffel became airborne at 22.40 and sent to a patrol height of 4,500 metres. Four pilots each radioed a *Sieg Heil* over outward-bound ' heavies', before landing again between 23.35 and shortly after midnight. British losses included 467 Squadron ED998 flown by the CO W/Cdr. Gomm DSO DFC. This aircraft was attacked by Ofw. 'Jupp' Bigge in his Fw190 A-6 over Chuisnes, 7 km. west of Courville-sur-Eure, and blew up in mid-air with the loss of six of the crew. During the air battle in the Chartres area, two 'twin-engined fighters' were claimed shot down: the rear gunner of 49 Squadron Lancaster JA892 sent a fighter down in flames to crash some 40 km SW of Chartres at 22.20 hrs, the rear gunner on board 9 Squadron Lancaster ED499 destroying another Nachtjäger 12 minutes later.

Five Fw190 pilots were again scrambled against the Milan force on the return flight, from 03.22 hrs onwards, one aborting its sortie due to a faulty compass. This time, two pilots achieved three Abschüsse. At 03.14 hrs, a British listening station overheard Fw. Grossfuss, the pilot claiming a double victory, exclaiming: "Wait a minute – I have got another. *Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!*" and, three minutes later, reporting on R/T: "*Position of Sieg Heil NNE of Caen*". By 04.55 hrs, all Fw190s of 2./JG2 had returned to their bases safely.

I./NJG4 was employed for the first time in *Wilde Sau* fashion, as Uffz. Forke, *Funker* to Oblt. Meister of the 1st Staffel noted in his wartime diary: "15.8.1943. *We fly 'Wilde Sau' for the first time. No longer do we have to fly*

2./JG2, summer 1943, from right: Oblt. Karl Haberland (KIA 27 January 1944); Uffz. Albert Kreuzer (KIA 11 May 1944); Uffz. Werner Edelmann (KIA 4 January 1944); Uffz. Ernst Petretti (KIA 11 November 1943); Lt. Detlef Grossfuss (WIA 5 July 1944); Lt. Heinz Eichhoff (survived the war as Gruppenkommandeur of I./JG2); Ofw. Josef ('Jupp') Bigge (WIA 6 September 1943) (Coll. Horst Jeckel).



A local boy playing in the tail unit of 467 Squadron Lancaster ED998 at Chuisnes (Coll. Vincent Holyoak, via Horst Jeckel).

around in a confined area, now we can go straight to where the Tommies are expected. Today they're off to Italy. First we head south in the direction of Orléans and then towards Dijon. No Tommies in sight. We land in Tavaux (Dôle), after refuelling we want at least to catch them on their way home. Here again we're too late, and we land at Melun without achieving anything. A good meal, then a morning flight back to Florennes".

63 Bomber Command aircraft carried out mine-laying sorties. Three failed to return, including two Wellingtons which fell foul of Lt. Grimm of Stab IV./NJG1 in the target area. Interestingly, a note in the XII. Fliegerkorps Abschuss listings for August 1943 to Grimm's second victory states 'Wellington made ditching', which refers to the loss of a 300 Squadron Wellington that was ditched off the Frisian Islands chain following a night fighter attack. The two survivors of the *Wimpey* crew were adrift in their dinghy for eight days and nights before being rescued by a *Kriegsmarine* vessel. A third victory credited to IV./NJG1 concerns the loss of a 415 Squadron Coastal Command Hampden, which was shot down during an anti-shipping sortie off the Dutch coast by Hptm. Freiherr von Buchholz.

Fw. German Effein: 3	2./JG2	Lancaster	6 km. SE Chartres: 4.800-2.000 m.	23.20	61 Sqn Lancaster ED722 or 467 Sqn Lancaster JA675
Lt. Detlef Grossfuss: 3	2./JG2	Halifax	3 km. SSW Rugles: 4.000 m.	23.20	61 Sqn Lancaster W5002
Ofw. Josef Bigge: 6	2./JG2	Lancaster	Courville-sur-Eure, W. Chartres: 4.300 m.	23.23	467 Sqn Lancaster ED998
Uffz. Herbert Penz: 1	2./JG2	Lancaster	Grigny, S. Paris: 4.200-3.000 m.	23.26	61 Sqn Lancaster ED722 or 467 Sqn Lancaster JA675
Lt. Heinz Grimm: 18	Stab IV./NJG1	Wellington	sea 55 km N. Vlieland (BK 31): 700 m.	00.07	166 Sqn Wellington HF596
Lt. Heinz Grimm: 19	Stab IV./NJG1	Wellington	sea 60 km. NW Vlieland (BK 23): 80 m	00.36	300 Sqn Wellington HE768
Hptm. Fritz Freiherr von Buchholz: 1	11./NJG1	Hampden	sea 15 km. W. Castricum (FJ 66): 100 m	01.15	415 Sqn Hampden P1258
Uffz. Albert Kreuzer: 2	2./JG2	Halifax	Chéronvilliers/Eure: 5.200 m.	03.52	49 Sqn Lancaster LM337.
<i>Note: also claimed by light Flak of (L) 305/XII ('Halifax Cheronvilliers 03.52 hrs')</i>					
Lt. Detlef Grossfuss: 4	2./JG2	Lancaster	3 km. SE Orbec-en-Auge: 4.200 m.	04.03	61 Sqn Lancaster DV186
Lt. Detlef Grossfuss: 5	2./JG2	Lancaster	500 m. S. Houlgate: 3.000 m.	04.19	207 Sqn Lancaster ED498.
<i>Note: also claimed by light Flak of IV. 3./Iei. Flak Abt. 955, III. 3./Iei. Flak Abt. 957 and IV. 4./Iei. Flak Abt. 957 ('Lancaster 2 km SE Houlgate 100 m. 04.12 hrs')</i>					

16-17 August 1943 TURIN

Between 01.11 and 01.50 hrs (CET), 154 aircraft bombed Turin, for the loss of four aircraft. Five Main Force aircraft returned with (slight) Flak damage and three with fighter scars.

A total of an estimated seven Fw190s of 2./JG2 were active on the outward-bound route, between 23.03 and 00.55 hrs, and against the returning 'heavies', between 03.04 and 05.10 hrs. In a rudimentary form of *Laufende Reportage*, they were given frequent positions of the bomber stream by means of the day fighter grid system, most of them indicating an area to the west of Évreux and in the vicinity of Caen. A few twin-engined Nachtjäger of NJG4 were also active, in the freelance *Wilde Sau* role, and probably also in the traditional *Himmelbett* Nachtjagd.

The Nachtjagd effort resulted in two Abschüsse against the Turin force: a crew of 9./NJG4 dispatched an outward-bound 218 Squadron Stirling, whilst a Fw190 ace of 2./JG2 claimed a 405 Squadron Halifax on its return flight. In turn, Bf110 G-4 3C+CK of Stab I./NJG4 was shot down in flames by a 141 Squadron Beaufighter at Châtillon-le-Roi. Lt. Schneidewind, a pilot with two confirmed victories, was killed; his two crew members baled out wounded. Uffz. Forke, *Bordfunker* to Oblt. Meister of 1./NJG4, recorded in his diary: "16.8.43. Tonight same Wild Boar sortie (as on 15-16 August, author's note) but started somewhat earlier. An enemy night fighter shot down Leutnant Schneidewind. His Bordfunker and third man unharmed, Lt. Schneidewind was killed. After a snack in Melun we return to Florennes, again unsuccessful as Tommy returned home much further to the west and we were unable to obtain any usable radar acquisitions".

Oblt. Haberland's (St.Kpt. 2./JG2) claim for a Halifax shot down near Alençon (which was confirmed on 20 January 1945) remains a mystery. It is a remote possibility that this Abschuss concerns the loss of a 138 Squadron Halifax. Both the time of Haberland's claim and the actual time of the crash of this aircraft more or less match, but this SOE aircraft came down a few hundred kilometres more to the south, near Arx, than Haberland's claimed position.

Oblt. Karl Haberland: 5	2./JG2	Halifax	6 km. E. Alençon: 3.500 m.	23.28	poss. 138 Sqn Halifax JD312
Oblt. Hans Kulow: 1	9./NJG4	Stirling	nr Ambérieu, 15 km. NE Lyon: 3.400 m.	00.43	218 Sqn Stirling EH884
Lt. Dettlef Grossfuss: 6	2./JG2	4-mot	25 km. N. mouth River Orne: 3.400 m.	04.20	405 Sqn Halifax HR856

17 August 1943 SCHWEINFURT, REGENSBURG

In the months following the first clashes between Nachtjagd and the American combat boxes in February and March 1943, Nachtjagd crews were only occasionally thrown into the daylight battles, with small groups of Nachtjäger being sent up to pick off stragglers, which was considered a relatively low-risk task. The first large scale encounter between the twin-engined night fighters and the American combat boxes in daylight after early 1943 took place on 17 August. Shoulder-to-shoulder with elements of nine Tagjagd Geschwader, Gruppen of NJG1, 2, 4, 6, and NJG101 were deployed to combat two 8th USAAF missions targeting Schweinfurt and Regensburg. Opposition against the Regensburg raid amounted to an estimated 100 single-engined fighters and 14 twin-engined night fighters, whilst the Schweinfurt attack drew up an estimated 300 fighter sorties, some 60 of which were from Nachtjagd units.

The first night fighters to encounter the bombers on their outward flight were a handful of Bf110s from I./NJG1, which had been scrambled from Venlo airfield to hunt down stragglers. The Gruppe claimed two B-17 Abschüsse for no own losses. Lt. Rolf Bussmann, a seasoned 15-victory ace of 1./NJG1 claimed a Fortress destroyed to the SW of Genk at 11.30 hrs. His victim was probably a 91st BG/323rd BS B-17, the first of the Schweinfurt force to go down. Bussmann later lost this claim to Fw. Dörre of 9./JG26, who was credited with the full kill after official investigations. According to an entry in the OKL/RLM Confirmed *Abschussübersicht* for 1./NJG1, on 5 May 1944 Lt. Bussmann only received credit for an 'Endgültige Vernichtung'. Lt. Nabrich of the 3. Staffel claimed a B-17 shot down at 11.37 hrs; his Abschuss has not been identified and was probably subsequently not confirmed.

The next night fighters to be sent up were a flight of three experienced crews from St. Trond-based II./NJG1, who were ordered to hunt for crippled bombers returning early from the Regensburg raid. Hptm. von Bonin, Oblt. Barte and Lt. Witzke combined their 20mm cannon firepower to shoot down 100th BG B-17 42-30063 'Picklepuss' to the SW of Aachen. The Bf110s of von Bonin and Witzke, both attacking from below and behind in the usual night fighter fashion, were riddled by accurate defensive fire that was put up by the gunners of 'Picklepuss', and both Nachtjäger returned to St. Trond on one engine. Oblt. Barte, at that time an ace with 10 confirmed night Abschüsse, recalls: "Without any sort of briefing, we took off at around 10 o'clock. Once airborne, we received the necessary information and orders from our Gruppe Operations Room. Our Ops Room also guided us towards our assigned Grid Square. Over the German-Belgian border, we clashed with a formation of bombers, at a height of some 7.000 metres. We did not have any sort of special attacking tactics. During the engagement, one B-17 became separated from the formation and turned back in the direction of England. Von Bonin and Witzke both attacked the aircraft from below – both were shot down. I then engaged the bomber with a frontal attack and pulled up over the aircraft. I saw how one of the wings of my adversary broke off, which caused the B-17 to spin down. I witnessed four of the crew baling out, one of the 'chutes did not open, and saw the machine crashing into an open field". Perhaps remarkably, the kill of 'Picklepuss' was fully *anerkannt* to Lt. Witzke on 8 May 1944, instead of Barte. During a second sortie in the mid-afternoon, Hptm. von Bonin claimed another B-17 kill, 3 km. NE of Aarschot, but this also was subsequently unconfirmed. A total of 15 II./NJG1 Bf110s were scrambled from St. trond during the course of the day's battles, tasked to pick off stragglers from



Fw. Fries of 5./NJG1 scanning the sky at 13,000 ft during a daylight mission in 1943, as taken from his *Bordfunker's* position. Note the airspeed indicator almost at the 300 kph mark. Fw. Fries claimed one B-17 kill plus a B-17 HSS from the Regensburg force on 17 August 1943 (Coll. Otto H. Fries).

both Task Forces. One of the crews were Fw. Otto Fries and his *Bordfunker* Uffz. Alfred Staffa, who went after the Regensburg force. Around noon and over Mannheim, they first encountered B-17 42-30017 'All Shot to Hell' of the 390th BG/568th BS, piloted by 2nd Lt. Ashbrooke Tyson. Fw. Fries shot the *Viermot* down in flames at 12.13 hrs, and the aircraft exploded at Bingen, on the Western banks of the River Rhine. (His Abschuss went unconfirmed by the Luftwaffe higher authorities; the kill was probably credited to a pilot of JG1 or Jagd Gruppe Süd instead). At around 12.30, the Fw. Fries crew claimed a *Herausschuss* of another Fortress, Staffa setting one of its engines on fire with his hand-held rear-facing twin machine gun. This was a 100th BG kite (42-30080 'High Life' of the 351st BS) flown by 1st Lt. Donald Oakes, which later limped into Dübendorf airfield in Switzerland for a belly-landing. Lt. Hager of Stab II./NJG1 celebrated his 23rd birthday, one day previously, with a claim for a B-17 *Herausschuss* at Tauberbischofsheim, south of Wertheim, at 12.26 hrs. (This was another 100th BG Fort, 42-30070 'Tweedle-O'-Twill' of the 350th BS, in the hands of 1st Lt. Ronald Braley). In 1977, Hager recorded: "Because there were not enough day-fighters on the western front I had to fly twice during daylight with my clumsy Me110. On my first mission we had trouble with ground control. We did not find the Americans. A week later (17 August 1943, author's note) during our take off we saw the formations flying overhead our airfield of St. Trond, on a course of about 130°. Near the river Mosel I had reached an altitude of some 1000 meters above the American 'heavies'. Nearly 300 bombers flew ahead of me in boxes of 20 aircraft. They were staggered in altitude, width and depth to give mutual fire protection. I was able to shoot down one B-17, but my Me110 took 17 hits". Hptm. Hans-Werner Rupprecht, St.Kpt. of 5./NJG1, returned to St. Trond with a claim for a *Herausschuss* of a B-17, which he attacked four times between 13.30 and 13.50 hrs. He managed to shoot two engines on fire before breaking off the attack due to running low on fuel. His quarry was yet another 100th BG Fortress, 42-30042 'Oh Nausea' of the 349th BS, piloted by 1st Lt. Glenn van Noy. It was later observed to ditch in the Mediterranean Sea, to the north of Sicily. Finally, Oblt. Barte engaged a B-17 near Diest. Long after the war, he recalled: "During the afternoon, we flew a second sortie against the Schweinfurt force – with von Bonin, Witzke and Barte, just like earlier that day. We headed in the direction of Brussels and became locked in combat to the east of this city. I attacked a B-17 from directly behind, it exploded in mid-air after taking three bursts of gunfire. I saw three of the crew descending under their parachutes". In his *Gefechtsbericht*, Barte reported that the remains of the Fort rained down at Testelt, near Diest at 15.15 hrs. Surprisingly perhaps, Oblt. Barte never received official confirmation of this claim, which has been identified as a 91st BG Fortress of the Schweinfurt raid. 42-29559 'Stupntakit' of the 323rd BS did, in fact, go down after fighter attacks and crashed near Langdorp, to the west of Diest, a small village just four kilometres away from Testelt, but the shooting down of 'Stupntakit' was later credited to Ofw. Glunz, a *Ritterkreuzträger* in 4./JG26. Finally, Oblt. Kleinschmidt of the 6. Staffel engaged a Flak-damaged Fort of the 381BG/532 BS, sending the 'heavy' down to crash near Esch, and was later credited with an 'Endgültige Vernichtung'. It had been a frustrating day for II./NJG1: out of five B-17 Abschüsse, only one full victory plus an 'E.V.' were later officially credited by the RLM/OKL. The majority