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USAF HISTORICAL STUDIES NOS. 158 - 160

THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE GERMAN LUFTWAFFE AGAINST
THE ALLIES IN THE WEST, 1943 - 1945

By

P.R.C.

JOSEF SCHMID
Generalleutnant, a.D.

PREPARED BY THE USAF HISTORICAL DIVISION
THROUGH THE COOPERATION OF THE HISTORICAL DIVISION, HEADQUARTERS USAFEUR

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

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STUDIES 158 - 160

THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE GERMAN LUFTWAFFE AGAINST
THE ALLIES IN THE WEST, 1943 - 1945

Volume II (with Annex Volume II)

THE STRUGGLE FOR AIR SUPREMACY
OVER THE REICH

1 January 1944 - 31 March 1944

Compiled from German Source Materials

By

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Commanding General, I Fighter Corps

Göggingen, near Augsburg
April 1954

FOREWORD

Studies 158 - 160 are divided into two major parts, "The Air War in the West" and "The Air Defense of the Reich", reflecting the command organization within the Luftwaffe during World War II.

The problems connected with the procurement of necessary source materials, as well as the scope of the latter, have precluded the chronological preparation of Studies 158 - 160. The author was forced to complete first those sections for which source material was already available. Thus the first portion completed was the description of air defense activity in the Reich during the period from 15 September 1943 to D-Day (6 June 1944). This portion has been further divided into three volumes (each accompanied by an annex volume), as follows:

Volume I - Day and Night Aerial Warfare over the Reich, 15 September 1943 - 31 December 1943.

Volume II - The Struggle for Air Supremacy over the Reich, 1 January 1944 - 31 March 1944.

Volume III - Aerial Warfare over the Reich in Defense of Vital Luftwaffe Installations and Supporting Services, 1 April 1944 - D-Day (6 June 1944).

A critical comparison of Allied and German source materials dealing with the events of the selected period is forthcoming.

The present text (Volume II of the above) deals with the events comprising German air defense activity (1 January 1944 - 31 March 1944), excluding the commitment of antiaircraft artillery. Volume II is based en-

tirely on German sources. The illustrations pertaining to Volume II are to be found in Annex Volume II.

Source Materials Used for Volume II

The chief contemporary source utilized in the description of events was the War Diary of the I Fighter Corps. This Diary is of documentary significance. In a few instances, supplementary information has been taken from material salvaged from the former Military Science Branch, German Luftwaffe. This information may be considered to be quasi-official.

The few explanatory remarks pertaining to the air attacks on Berlin are based on the private notes of one of the air defense officials stationed there.

The critical remarks included in the monthly surveys represent the views of the author, tempered by the opinions of the following:

Walter Grabmann, Generalmajor a.D., former Commanding Officer,
3d Fighter Division, and

Guenther Radusch, Colonel a.D., former Commanding Officer, 5th
Night Fighter Wing.

The following were not considered:

reports prepared from memory, and

information contained in lay literature published during the war and subsequent thereto.

Evaluation of Volume II, Studies 158 - 160

The description of the events covered in Volume II is based on source materials from the middle echelon of Luftwaffe command. Combat reports by operational units are not available, and in view of the conditions prevailing at the end of the war, there seems to be little likelihood of obtaining documentary material dealing with the course of individual air actions. This, of course, is a decided lack as far as the writing of history is concerned, especially since subjective reports, based on the memory of individuals, can be assigned only limited significance.

The material contained in Volume II may be assumed to come close to historical truth. Minor errors must be accepted as inevitable, considering the limitations of the sources available and taking into account the fallibility of human memory.

It should be kept in mind that all references to the employment of Allied air forces are based on the information available to German military authorities at the time of their commitment.

The figures given (not, however, the time indications) can be properly evaluated only in terms of their reciprocal relations. The author's thoughts regarding the limited significance of statistics as well as the characteristics and deficiencies of the reporting methods will be given expression elsewhere.

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The photographs have been taken from the War Diary of the I Fighter
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CHAPTER I

DAY ACTIONS DURING JANUARY 1944

I. SURVEY

a. American Offensive Activity

The Command Headquarters, I Fighter Corps, suspected that the American Air Forces in Great Britain had received reinforcements during January 1944, especially fighter aircraft units. On the whole, however, although the total number of aircraft employed during January was larger than before, there was no appreciable increase in the striking power of individual attacks, nor were the successes enjoyed by the American Air Force appreciably greater than before.

Seven large-scale attacks were directed against the Reich, one of which was called off before the aircraft had left the ground, presumably because of adverse weather conditions. Weather conditions were such that sight bombing was possible on only two occasions, and one of these attacks was only partially successful. Inasmuch as the American Air Force units had to resort to instrument bombing during all the other attacks, the damage suffered by vital targets within the Reich was relatively insignificant, with the exception of the destruction wrought on Kiel.

As was the case in December 1943, American air commanders in Great Britain demonstrated caution in their choice of days characterized by

favorable weather conditions for their large-scale attacks.

No definite pattern was discernible in the choice of attack targets.

The penetration of American bomber aircraft into Central Germany on 11 January, with favorable weather conditions for the defenders, resulted in serious losses for the attacking units. At the time of this attack, the American escort fighters were not yet able to function adequately as a protective screen for the bombers and to shield them effectively against German single and twin-engine fighter aircraft attacking from a distance, even though the latter were numerically inferior.

After mid-January, American fighter units began more and more to carry out independent penetration actions into Germany via Belgium and Holland. It was assumed that these were chiefly orientation flights for the benefit of newly arrived fighter units.

As German military leaders had anticipated, in January 1944 the American Air Forces in Great Britain began to follow the principle of selecting several targets in the Reich for the same attack day and of carrying out large-scale attacks on occupied airfields in order to paralyze German defensive activity. Even so, the American attack of 31 January, on German airfields in Holland, was without effect.

Apart from the large-scale attacks, American air activity during

January was conspicuously limited. On eight days during the month there were very few American aircraft, or none at all, observed over the Reich.

There was a slight increase in offensive air activity against German targets carried out by the American Air Forces stationed in Italy. This was limited to attacks on targets in the Vienna area or in the Alpine regions.

In view of the increase in numerical strength of American Air Forces in Great Britain, the commanders of the I Fighter Corps were forced to give serious consideration to the possibility of an appreciable increase in American offensive activity as soon as weather conditions became more favorable in the spring of 1944.

b. The Commitment of the I Fighter Corps

Despite their numerical inferiority, the German single and twin-engine fighter units demonstrated on 11 January that the employment tactics and striking power of the daytime fighter units assigned to air defense operations were capable of inflicting such high losses on the American enemy, under favorable weather conditions at any rate, that they would soon exceed the limit of expendable loss. If weather conditions were unfavorable, however, the technical deficiencies of German fighter aircraft and the low training standard of replacement fighter pilots precluded steadily successful and effective combat

against American superiority at high altitude. Thus, January 1944 was again characterized by the inability of German forces to provide an effective defense against American day attacks on the Reich, let alone to prevent them. Only the utmost caution in employing aircraft in bad weather--especially when take-off and landing conditions were uncertain--was able to keep German losses within reasonable limits. Even so, approximately one-third of German aircraft losses was due to commitment under unfavorable weather conditions.

In compliance with the suggestion made in December 1943 by the Headquarters, I Fighter Corps, the geographical concentration of daytime fighter units was carried out in northwestern Germany, eastern Holland, and in the area between Bremen and Hannover. Corresponding organizational changes were completed for almost all units at wing level.

The technique of combat by mixed units in close wing formation proved effective when weather conditions were favorable. The assembling of larger units in wing formation was rarely successful, however, under poor weather conditions. The technique of attack from the front, which has proved to be most generally successful, has not yet been mastered by all fighter units.

There has been no numerical reinforcement of the daytime fighter units assigned to Reichs air defense operations, although an increase was requested in December 1943 by the Headquarters, I Fighter Corps.

The use of daytime fighter aircraft by so-called piggy-back groups belonging to single-engine night fighter units, and the high losses of the latter during January 1944 had a derogatory effect on the employability of the daytime fighter forces.

The supplying of aircraft for the daytime fighter units was, on the whole, satisfactory.

The total striking power of the daytime fighter units assigned to the I Fighter Corps was greater during January 1944 than during the latter months of 1943. The success obtained on 11 January (under favorable weather conditions) did much to increase the confidence--in command elements and line units--in an ultimately effective defense against American day attacks, although the tactical and numerical superiority of the American fighter units had by no means been fully demonstrated.

c. Successes and Losses During January 1944

During January 1944, the average total number of daytime fighter aircraft available for employment by the I Fighter Corps was:

400 single-engine fighter aircraft,

80 twin-engine fighter aircraft, and

100 night fighter aircraft suitable for daytime employment.

The total number of daytime fighter aircraft committed by the I Fighter Corps during January 1944 was: 2,306 aircraft.

The total aircraft losses suffered by the I Fighter Corps during

January 1944 amounted to: 122 aircraft, or 5.3% of the total number of aircraft committed.

The total aircraft losses suffered by the enemy within the area covered by the I Fighter Corps during January 1944 amounted to: 179 aircraft (excluding those brought down by antiaircraft artillery), or 2.5% of the estimated total number of aircraft (7,158) employed by the American Air Forces against the Reich.

d. ~~Other Significant Events~~ Remarks

Conference at Command Headquarters, I Fighter Corps

On 19 January 1944, at the Headquarters of the I Fighter Corps in De Breul, Holland, a conference was held with Luftwaffe signal communications officers attached to the Luftwaffe High Command, the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, and the Headquarters, Air Fleet Reich. During the course of this conference, the Commanding Officer of the I Fighter Corps pointed out that the majority of day fighter crews were incapable of operating airborne radio equipment. He emphasized that the signal communications officers and not the technical officers attached to the fighter groups were responsible for guaranteeing the functional reliability of airborne radio instruments and for assuring that the flying personnel were trained to operate such equipment. The Commanding General then requested that the Chief Signal Officer, Luftwaffe High Command, take action to assign capable signal communications officers to the fighter aircraft groups.

Extract from the Minutes of a Conference Held on 25 January 1944, at
Headquarters, I Fighter Corps, at De Briel, Holland

The conference began at 1230; among those present were the commanding officers of the 1st, 2^d, and 3^d Fighter Divisions, and Generalmajor Galland, General of the Fighter Aircraft Forces.

During the course of the conference, Generalmajor Schmid, Commanding General, I Fighter Corps, brought out the following points:

"The numerical strength of the American Air Forces in Great Britain has increased. We must face the fact that American offensive activity against the Reich will probably become greater during the coming weeks and months and that the American fighter escorts will become much stronger than they are at present. The estimated flight-range (as far as Braunschweig) of the Thunderbolts used as escort fighters has not yet been confirmed. On the other hand, we know that the Lightning fighters, equipped with supplementary gas-tanks, are able to provide a protective screen for the bombers as far as central Germany. It is extremely important that our high-altitude fighter units provoke the Lightnings to join combat, so that they will be forced to dump their auxiliary tanks. If they can be forced to do so, they will have no alternative but to break off combat and return to their bases before they run out of fuel. It does not seem likely that American fighter aircraft will be able to penetrate as far as Berlin at present.

It is anticipated that, in future, the American bomber units will

select two or more targets for attack on the same day. Careful note should be made of the flights of American morning reconnaissance aircraft, since these are nearly always charged with the mission of reconnoitering weather conditions and targets preparatory to an attack. It has often been observed that the following bombers use the same flight course as the reconnaissance aircraft which preceded them.

As regards the commitment of our day fighter units, we must try to follow the technique of assembling light, heavy, and twin-engine fighters at combat altitude and of bringing them to bear against the invading bombers in closed combat formation. In this way we should be able to maintain numerical superiority at a given time in a given place.

The practice of moving fighter units early in the morning will be discontinued; experience has shown that these units have not regained the required state of operational readiness by the time the American aircraft begin to appear. If weather conditions or the military situation should render the transfer of fighter units necessary, they should be transferred on the evening before an attack is expected.

In order to assure the smooth transfer of fighter units in the air ^{divisional} from one/area of control to the other, all fighter divisions will announce their control frequencies every evening. Each divisional command will also inform its neighboring commands of the transfer of any of its units.

Before fighter units are ordered up a second time against the same group of bombers, they must be given all available information regarding

the position of the enemy aircraft, especially when the fighter units are not in their own divisional command area or have landed at fields other than those specifically assigned to fighter aircraft.

All fighter aircraft will be certain to tune in their identification equipment. This precaution is absolutely necessary in order to avoid their being fired upon by our own antiaircraft artillery.

The antiaircraft artillery officers assigned to the fighter divisions will be responsible for keeping the latter informed of the air situation and of the positions of our own fighter units in the air at all times. Artillery officers will direct their defensive fire in accordance with orders issued by the commanders of the fighter divisions."

II. DAY ACTIONS, 1 January through 16 January 1944 (excluding large-scale American attacks)

(see Figure 76, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

The period was characterized by surprisingly little activity on the part of the American Air Forces. During the reporting period, the following actions were noted:

Approximately 40 American fighter aircraft penetrated as far as the Dutch coast; 34 aircraft, flying singly, were observed in the vicinity of the Dutch coast; and 4 Mosquito reconnaissance aircraft were reported over the West Frisian Islands and the English Channel.

Reconnaissance activity was carried out over Jutland and the western portion of the Baltic Sea as far as the Haff of Stettin. It was impossible to determine the flight course of one of these reconnaissance aircraft, which had approached over southern Holland.

On 14 January, several enemy aircraft attacked a German ocean convoy off the western coast of Jutland.

b. Commitment of Aircraft By the I Fighter Corps

Several single-engine fighters, stationed at the airfield at Husum (in Schleswig), were sent into combat against the enemy aircraft attacking the convoy.

c. Allied Losses

2 aircraft certainly brought down

1 aircraft probably brought down

d. German Losses

None

III. DAY ACTIONS, 16 January through 1 February 1944 (excluding large-scale American attacks)

(see Figure 77, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

The following actions were carried out by the American Air Forces during the reporting period:

Orientation flights over Holland - approximately 300 fighter aircraft.

Single flights over the Dutch coast - approximately 40 aircraft.

Reconnaissance flights - 9 Mosquito aircraft.

Attacks on German-occupied airfields - approximately 150 aircraft.

The following areas were covered by American reconnaissance activity: Jutland, the area around Rheine, Münster, the Ruhr District, and the Tyrol around Innsbruck.

The orientation flights were assumed to be for the benefit of recently arrived fighter crews. Moreover, from 1327 to 1427 on 25 January, a group of approximately 50 Thunderbolts attacked the airfield at Gilze Rijen in Holland. Relatively little damage was caused.

On 27 January, from ~~1429 to 1607~~ 0849 to 0906, six singly-flying fighter bombers bombarded the benzole factory at IJmuiden, in Holland.

On 31 January, from 1429 to 1607, a group of approximately 150 American aircraft carried out attacks on German-occupied airfields in Holland. The damage suffered by airfield installations was relatively slight, (see Figure 78, Annex).

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

Although experience has shown that the prospects of success, in the commitment of fighter aircraft against American craft on close-range missions, are not great, approximately 30 single-engine fighters from the 3^d Fighter Division were sent up in scramble against the American attackers on 31 January.

c. Allied Losses

4^a Aircraft certainly brought down.

d. German Losses

None.

IV! THE AMERICAN ATTACK ON KIEL AND MÜNSTER, 4 January 1944

(see Figure 79, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

'Beginning at 0800, German radio reconnaissance reported the assembling of American attack units in Great Britain. The take-off of a small force with course to the east was reported first. By 0935 they had reached

the Dutch coast. Here the group, consisting of approximately 150 bombers with a large fighter escort, split into three waves, which proceeded as follows:

first wave - over the ^AIsland of Texel

second wave - over the Zuyder Zee

third wave - over Amsterdam.

Proceeding towards the east and southeast, all three waves continued into the Osnabrück, Münster, and Rheine area, where they bombarded Rheine and Münster and then headed back towards Great Britain. North of Dortmund they were picked up by additional fighter aircraft, which had flown in over the mouth of the Schelde at 0953.

The use of a small force initially, as described above, had prepared German fighter commanders for a larger-scale action later in the day. Thus it was no surprise when a larger force, consisting of approximately 400 bombers, 300 single-engine, and 30 twin-engine fighters, was reported over the North Sea. At 1012 their position was reported 90 kilometers northwest of the ^AIsland of Texel, with course towards the northeast. Divided into at least six smaller units, the Fortresses continued their flight north of the Frisian Islands towards the coast of Jutland, which they crossed at 1110, at a point between the ⁱIslands of Röm and Husum. From here they proceeded directly to the attack on the city of Kiel. Sight bombing over the target was possible during only a part of the attack. The American bombers flew back to Great Britain in broad front formation, passing over a point between Esbjerg and the ^vIsland of Texel, with course towards the west and northwest. The last returning bombers were observed over Emden at approximately 1330. A large group of American fighter aircraft came in over Emden and Wilhelmshaven at 1115 and proceeded as far inland as Neumünster, where they picked

up the returning bombers and escorted them home.

The American attack on Kiel caused a great deal of property damage, including several heavy industry plants. The damage inflicted on Münster and Rheine, however, was relatively slight.

In addition to the actions described above, the following operations were carried out by the American Air Forces on 4 January:

A group of approximately 50 single-engine fighter aircraft penetrated as far as the border of the Reich, flying over the mouth of the Schelde at ~~1015~~ 0909. Their return flight began at 1015, at an altitude of 3,500 meters.

Two aircraft flew over the islands located around the mouth of the Schelde during the time from 1336 to 1353.

A single aircraft flew over the ⁱIsland of Texel at 1406 on the way to Bergen. Its flight altitude was reported at 1,500 meters. At 1421 it crashed north of Bergen.

A single Mosquito reconnaissance airplane was observed 10 kilometers north of the ⁱIsland of Langeland at 1335. It flew on over Vordingborg as far as the ⁱIsland of Rügen and returned via Esbjerg. Its position at 1507 was reported 70 kilometers west of Esbjerg.

Between 1455 and 1548, approximately 30 Typhoon fighter aircraft flew in as far as as Gilze Rijen/Antwerp area, crossing the mouth of the Schelde. Their altitude was reported as 50 to 200 meters.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

Units from the 1st and 2^d Fighter Divisions were sent up against the attackers at Kiel, and from the 3^d Fighter Division against the attackers at Münster. The total commitment was 316 ~~XXXXXXXX~~ single and twin-engine fighter aircraft.

Because of snow flurries and rapidly moving clouds, it was impossible to assemble fighter units in close formation in the air and to guide them to the enemy above the cloud cover. Only a few of our aircraft managed to make contact with the enemy, and these few became involved in uneven combat because of the numerical superiority of the American forces.

c. Allied Losses

1 aircraft certainly brought down

13 aircraft probably brought down

1 aircraft crashed near Bergen

d. German Losses

12 aircraft

personnel: 7 dead

2 wounded

4 missing in action

e. Weather Conditions

Over Great Britain: 3 to 10/10 cover of cumulus and nimbus clouds between 500 to 700 and 3,000 to 4,000 meters.

Over northern Germany and Holland: violent snow flurries; clouds above 500 meters, flurrying snow between 300 and 500 meters; visibility less than one kilometer; cloud cover rated as varying from 5 to 10/10.

Over the target areas: rapidly moving clouds, accompanied by snow flurries.

V. THE AMERICAN ATTACK ON KIEL AND DÜSSELDORF, 5 January 1944

(see Figure 80, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

At 0930 the first American bombers were reported approaching in a broad front extending from a point 100 kilometers west of the ¹/₂ Island of Texel to a point 200 kilometers west of the ¹/₂ Island of Terschelling with

their course towards the northeast. Passing over the North Sea, they crossed the coast of Jutland between the ^NIsland of Fanö and the mouth of the Elbe River and flew on towards the southeast to Kiel. After bombarding Kiel, they flew back towards the west at 1140, crossing the coast at a point between the ^NIsland of Pellworm and the Bay of Jade. By 1240 the last returning formations were reported at a point approximately 150 kilometers north of the island of Schiermonnikoog. The bomber group, consisting of approximately 400 aircraft, was protected along its southern flank by an escort of approximately 200 American fighter aircraft on both its approach and return flights. From 0955 to 1010, fighter forces were reported arriving over the coast near Bergen, and beginning at 1052 several fighter aircraft flew over the island of Texel and on into the area north of Hamburg.

As a defensive precaution, the city of Kiel was enveloped in an artificial smoke screen during the attack. Despite this fact, the American attack succeeded in inflicting serious damage on public and private buildings.

A second attack wave of about 200 bomber aircraft reached the areas of Duisburg, Düsseldorf, Cologne, Koblenz, and Trier. Although conditions were favorable for sight bombing, the damage in Düsseldorf, Neuss, and Jülich was relatively insignificant. The first report of this second attack wave was received at 1035, and gave the position of the enemy aircraft at 70 kilometers west of the mouth of the Schelde. Moving in broad front formation, they passed between Roermund and Malmedy and flew on into the Rhine area. Reaching the border of the Reich at 1135, part of the bombers turned around and returned, while the majority continued on to take part in the attack. After unloading their bombs, they began their return flights at 1236, with course towards the west. An American fighter

group, approximately 80 strong, appeared over the mouth of the Schelde at 1149, flew on to pick up the returning bombers over Holland, and returned with the bombers, crossing the Channel coast at about 1330 at a point between the mouths of the Schelde and the Somme.

In addition to the attacks reported above, the American Air Forces carried out the following actions on 5 January:

A single Mosquito aircraft carried out a reconnaissance mission over the area north of Stettin. It was first observed at 1219, west of the island of Rügen. Flying back, it passed over the islands of Moën and Ringkøbing and was lost to sight at 1401.

In the time from 1322 to 1447, a second Mosquito reconnoitered the area of Koblenz, Trier, and Verdun, having approached from south of Aix la Chapelle.

From 1428 to 1517, a third Mosquito reconnaissance aircraft was observed over The Hague and the Emmerich area. It flew back by way of Ostende.

A fourth Mosquito reconnaissance airplane flew over the island of Goeree at 1439, flew on to Duisburg, and back towards the west over Woensdrecht at 1547.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

With the exception of the single-engine fighter group at Dortmund, all available single and twin-engine fighter forces were employed against the invaders as they passed over the North Sea coast. Despite stormy weather conditions, the majority of our fighters were able to attack the American units in the area between Helgoland and Kiel. The fighting was fast and violent, but the American fighter aircraft were able to keep our fighters so occupied that they had little opportunity to get at the bombers. After weather conditions had improved, the fighter

group at Dortmund was sent up against the southernmost group of bombers, and succeeded in bringing down six.

The total commitment by the I Fighter Corps was 269 aircraft (single and twin-engine fighters).

There is no mention in the War Diary of the I Fighter Corps of the employment of the units assigned to the 7th Fighter Division.

c. Allied Losses

16 bombers and 5 single-engine fighters certainly brought down

13 bombers and 5 single-engine fighters probably brought down

d. German Losses

11 aircraft

personnel: 1 dead

6 wounded

15 missing in action

e. Weather Conditions

Over the northern German coast and Holland: scattered cumulus and nimbus clouds beginning at 500 meters and extending to 4,000 meters, sporadic rain flurries.

Over the northern edge of the Mittelgebirge and the Ruhr District: closed cover of low-lying stratus clouds, occasional snowfall.

Over Kiel: sparsely scattered stratus clouds between 4,000 and 4,500 meters.

VI. THE AMERICAN ATTACK ON MANNHEIM-LUDWIGSHAFEN AND FRANKFURT/MAIN, 7 January 1944

(see Figure 81, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

During favorable take-off weather in the British Isles, an American force consisting of approximately 550 bombers, 250 single-engine, and

50 twin-engine fighters, took off for an attack on targets located near the confluence of the Rhine and Main Rivers. Although this area was covered by high-altitude clouds, the attack inflicted serious damage on industrial installations in Mannheim.

At 1005 the bombers, protected by a large fighter escort, passed over the mouth of the Schelde, moving on towards the east and southeast over Emmerich and Aix la Chapelle, and penetrating as far as Limburg/Lahn, Frankfurt/Main, Mannheim, Kaiserslautern, and Traben-Trarbach. After unloading their bombs on Mannheim-Ludwigshafen, the area south of Frankfurt, and Kaiserslautern, the American units began their return flight with course towards the northwest, passing over the area south of Brussels. The last American bombers crossed over the Channel coast between the mouth of the Schelde and Fécamp at 1410. Many of the escorting fighters had turned around and flown back immediately after reaching the border of the Reich or over the Ruhr District. A group of fighter aircraft was reported over the mouth of the Schelde at 1155, waiting to pick up the returning bombers and escort them home. They met the bombers over the Brussels area.

In addition to the attack reported above, the American Air Forces carried out the following actions on 7 January:

At 1121 a singly-flying airplane was reported over the island of Amrum. It proceeded over the northern tip of the island of Laaland and over the island of Falster, where it disappeared from sight at 1144.

During the time from 1253 to 1324, a single aircraft was reported over the islands of Röm and Laaland. It was observed as far as a point 20 kilometers east of the island of Falster, where it disappeared from sight.

From 1320 to 1328, a group of approximately 20 aircraft was observed

flying along the coast west of the island of Walcheren.

One airplane was reported along the coast near Esbjerg/Jutland from 1318 to 1331.

At 1520 one aircraft was observed flying back towards the west over the island of Fehmarn, north of Flensburg and Esbjerg. Its last position was given as 60 kilometers west of Westerland at 1608.

An air attack on Wiener-Neustadt was carried out by a force of approximately 100 bomber aircraft from bases in Italy.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps.

Several day fighter units were kept out of action by poor weather conditions.

c. Allied Losses

Allied losses could not be determined.

d. German Losses

None.

e. Weather Conditions

10/16 cover of multiple-strata^a clouds between 500 and 2,500 meters.

Over the Bay of Helgoland: cloud cover beginning at 150 meters, rain.

VII. THE AMERICAN ATTACK ON BRAUNSCHWEIG, OSCHERSLEBEN, AND OSNABRÜCK,
11 January 1944

(see Figure 82, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

Beginning at 0828, German radio reconnaissance detected the assembling of a force of approximately 500 American bombers in the area south of Ipswich. The first bombers, accompanied by a large fighter escort, were reported approaching at 1010; their ~~XXXXXX~~ position was given

as 150 kilometers west of the Dutch coast, with course towards the east. Reaching the coast at a point between Den Helder and The Hague, the American units moved forward in a widely-spread line, the northernmost end passing over Assen, Verden, and Gardelegen, and the southernmost units over Stadtlohn, Paderborn, and Nordhausen, as far as the Magdeburg, Merseburg, and Dessau areas. Although conditions were excellent for sight bombing, bombardment was sporadic, and the few hits scored on Bienrode (near Braunschweig), Braunschweig, and Oschersleben caused relatively little damage to industrial installations. At 1155 the bombers began their return flights, most of them with course towards the west, but a few flying towards the northwest. Flying in broad front formation, the bombers crossed the coast between the island of Borkum and the mouth of the Schelde. The majority of the escorting fighter units had turned back at 1120, when the bombers crossed the border of the Reich, leaving the latter to operate ~~with~~ without protection over the target areas.

At 1143, a group of approximately 100 Liberator bombers, reported 50 kilometers west of Bergen, followed in the wake of the main attacking force. Moving towards the east, they reached the area of Osnabrück, Bielefeld, and Münster, where they bombarded the cities of Osnabrück, Bielefeld, and Meppen, and headed for home at 1220. The returning Liberators were met by American fighter aircraft over Meppel and Appeldoorn, the fighters having flown over between Den Helder and The Hague shortly after 1200.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

1st Fighter Division: over Braunschweig

2^d Fighter Division: over Hannover and Paderborn

3^d Fighter Division: over Bremen and Bielefeld in their first

scramble; against the returning bombers over Münster in the second.

All three fighter divisions succeeded in assembling their units in close combat formation. Excellent high-altitude visibility enabled these to attack the American units (four-engine bombers) repeatedly and from the front. Our high-altitude fighters were able to keep the numerically inferior American escort fighters so occupied that our twin-engine fighters were free to attack the unprotected bomber aircraft. The aerial combat was carried out over the area bounded by Nienburg, Braunschweig, Oschersleben, Hannover, and Paderborn.

The defensive operations of the I Fighter Corps were crowned with success, ~~which~~ while our own losses remained within reasonable bounds. This success prevented the American Air Forces from carrying out their planned attack on industrial plants located in central Germany, and at least one-third of the total number of ^{bomber} aircraft employed by the enemy was destroyed.

A total of 239 single and twin-engine fighter aircraft was employed by the I Fighter Corps.

c. Allied Losses

113 aircraft certainly brought down, as follows:

by the 1st Fighter Division: 17 bombers and 3 fighters

by the 2^d Fighter Division: 54 bombers and 1 fighter

by the 3^d Fighter Division: 34 bombers and 4 fighters

33 aircraft probably brought down

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

d. German Losses

21 aircraft completely destroyed

19 aircraft more than 60% damaged

personnel: 6 dead

17 wounded

34 missing in action

e. Weather Conditions

Sparsely scattered stratus clouds between 1,200 and 1,500 meters.

Over the target area: predominantly clear with scattered clouds.

VIII. THE PENETRATION BY AMERICAN BOMBERS INTO THE DÜREN AREA, 24 January 1944

(see Figure 83, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

The situation picture, Headquarters, I Fighter Corps (based on information received from radio reconnaissance stations and on reports from radar stations):

Reports were received to the effect that a force consisting of approximately 700 bombers and 300 fighter aircraft was assembling for take-off at American bases in Great Britain. At 0957, large enemy formations were reported crossing the Channel coast between Osterschelde and Dunkirk with course towards eastsoutheast. At 1020, after receipt of a radio message "Operation called off" (intercepted by German radio reconnaissance), the majority of the American bombers, then over Belgium, turned around and started back to Great Britain. Some 150 of the original group continued as far as Aix la Chapelle and Düren, then turned around and headed back to their bases. Several smaller fighter units penetrated as far as the Koblenz and Frankfurt areas. Beginning at 1106, large numbers of fighter aircraft flew over the coast between the mouth of the Schelde and Cap Gris Nez, and continued on towards the southeast as far as the border of the Reich. The aircraft types identified were Thunderbolts, Spitfires, and Lightnings.

The situation picture, Headquarters, Air Fleet Reich (based on the reports of the eye-ear aircraft reporting stations assigned to the aircraft

observation stations, Luftwaffe administrative commands and headquarters, antiaircraft artillery divisions):

The American bombers penetrated as far as the areas of Koblenz, Frankfurt, and Mannheim. Here they separated into two groups, one to continue to Berlin, and the other to Nuremberg and Pilsen. On the basis of this information, airraid alarms were ordered in Berlin, Nuremberg, Regensburg, and Pilsen.

+++++

The aircraft observation commands probably received reports, based on the motor noise of German single and twin-engine fighter aircraft returning to their bases from Aix la Chapelle, Koblenz, and Frankfurt, and from these constructed American flight courses towards Berlin and Nuremberg.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

When the American force was reported crossing the coast, with course towards the southeast, the Headquarters, I Fighter Corps, assumed that an attack on targets in the Rhine and Main River areas was planned. Accordingly, the following forces were sent up at 1000:

1st and 2^d Fighter Divisions: over Koblenz

3^d Fighter Division: over Brüssels.

Only a few of our fighter aircraft achieved contact with the enemy over Düren and Koblenz. One twin-engine fighter formation became involved in combat with American fighters over Koblenz. As soon as it was realized that the American units had been called home, the fighter units of the I Fighter Corps were ordered to land.

On the basis of the situation picture available at the Headquarters, Air Fleet Reich, the Commander in Chief, Luftwaffe, assumed that a large-scale attack on Berlin was forthcoming and took a personal hand in operations. In order to assure adequate defense against the anticipated attack on Berlin and, later, Pilsen, he ordered the Headquarters, Air Fleet Reich,

to send up all available fighter aircraft, including day and night units, belonging to the fighter divisions and fighter pilot schools. The Headquarters, Third Air Fleet, in Paris also received orders to attack the American units when they flew back from Berlin.

The Headquarters, I Fighter Corps, however, was convinced that it was right in its assumption that the American units had turned around and headed for Great Britain as soon as they reached the Düren area, and therefore ordered its fighter units to land again at their take-off bases.

A total of 410 single and twin-engine fighter aircraft were employed by the I Fighter Corps.

Under the command of the Air Fleet Reich, 411 single and twin-engine fighters and night fighters were committed (aircraft belonging to the 7th Fighter Division, the Fighter Command Austria, and to several training units).

c. Allied Losses

1 bomber and 5 fighters certainly brought down by units from the I Fighter Corps

3 bombers and 1 fighter probably brought down by units from the I Fighter Corps

d. German Losses (I Fighter Corps)

6 aircraft

personnel: 4 dead

4 wounded

7 missing in action

e. Weather Conditions

3 to 10/10 cover of stratus clouds between 600 and 2,000 meters, some peaks rising as high as 4,000 meters. Orientation by reference to ground landmarks was possible as far as the Frankfurt area; further

east such orientation was precluded by the cloud cover.

f. Remarks

The lack of uniformity in the situation picture on 24 January 1944, and the resultant senseless mass commitment of aircraft and personnel of the day fighter units, gave rise to the following suggestion from the Headquarters, I Fighter Corps, addressed to the Luftwaffe High Command through the Air Fleet Reich:

"In order to assure successful air defense measures within the territory of the Reich, the following conditions must be met:

1. one central agency should be given the responsibility of preparing the situation picture
2. all the reporting agencies engaged in home air defense activity (radio reconnaissance, radar, and eye-ear reporting stations) should report to a single central agency and should be made subordinate to this agency
3. a central commanding unit should be set up to direct the commitment of day and night fighter units in home air defense activity."

This suggestion was, in effect, merely a repetition of a recommendation made by the Headquarters, I Fighter Corps, during the course of the map exercise on 11 December 1943. It was not carried out until 31 March 1944.

On 25 January 1944, the following telegram from the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe was received at the Headquarters, I Fighter Corps:

"To Generaloberst Stumpff,

Generalmajor Schmid, and Comrades.

Yesterday's little maneuver may be considered a success, except for the fact that April Fool's Day is still two months away. I should like to express my appreciation, both to myself and to all participating commanders, for our excellent work in warding off the attack on the fortress of Köpenik.

s/Göring

Reichsmarschall"

IX. THE AMERICAN ATTACK ON FRANKFURT/MAIN, 29 January 1944

(see Figure 84, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

Beginning at 0830, German radio reconnaissance reported the assembling of American air units in the Norwich and Colchester areas. The total strength of the enemy formations was estimated at 800 bombers and 700 fighter aircraft. At 0930 the first bombers appeared over the Channel coast near Vlissingen, Ostende and Dunkirk. A force of approximately 400 Fortresses and Liberators proceeded as far as Frankfurt/Main and Mannheim, its northern flank protected by a heavy screen of fighters. The American bombers unloaded their bombs over Frankfurt, causing serious damage in the central part of the city.

The bombardment was carried out by instrument. The bombers returned to their bases on a northwest course over Belgium, where they were met by several fighter aircraft formations which had flown in over the mouth of the Schelde, and escorted home.

In addition to the attack described above, the following activity was carried out by the American Air Forces on 29 January:

A single aircraft was observed over Emden and the island of Borkum during the time from 0739 and 0758.

Between 0757 and 0807, one airplane was reported 100 kilometers west

of Katwijk.

Two aircraft were reported over the island of Schouwen during the time from 1342 to 1343.

Between 0851 and 0855, a single aircraft was observed over the mouth of the Meuse River.

At 1338 a group of six aircraft flew over the island of Walcheren and proceeded on to the Gilze-Rijen area.

At 1523 several aircraft were observed above Hoek van Holland.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

A successful commitment of the single and twin-engine fighter groups was prevented by poor weather conditions. It was planned to assemble all the units of the 2^d Fighter Division over Osnabrück (where the fire from our antiaircraft artillery stations would have served as a navigational aid) and all those of the 3^d Fighter Division over München-Gladbach (also antiaircraft artillery fire), but this plan could not be carried out. The majority of our units was unable to penetrate the very dense cloud cover prevailing above 3,000 meters.

2^d Fighter Division: The II Group, 11th Single-Engine Fighter Wing, was able to penetrate as far as the Leeuwarden and Gronigen area, and the II Group, 26th Twin-Engine Fighter Wing, as far as a point west of Hannover - in both cases, by making a long detour towards the north. By this time, the American formations were already on their way back to Great Britain and, to prevent their running short of fuel, our units were ordered to land without having established contact with the enemy. The II Group, 26th Twin-Engine Fighter Wing, had to be directed to an airfield on the North Sea coast in order to assure its landing safely.

3^d Fighter Division: The I Group, 3^d Single-Engine Fighter Wing, and the 10th Squadron, 2^d Single-Engine Fighter Wing, took off from the airfield

at Rheine, and succeeded in penetrating through the cloud cover. Twenty-one aircraft from these two units were involved in combat with American fighters over Frankfurt/Main and Aix la Chapelle.

The total commitment of the I Fighter Corps was 224 single and twin-engine fighter aircraft.

c. Allied Losses

4 fighters certainly brought down

1 aircraft probably brought down

d. German Losses

None

e. Weather Conditions

Unbroken cloud cover over all German-occupied airfields.

Within the area assigned to the 1st Fighter Division: dense cloud cover between 100 and 3,500 to 4,000 meters.

Within the areas assigned to the 2^d and 3^d Fighter Divisions: cloud cover beginning at 250 to 500 meters, ~~xxxxxxx~~ varying according to time and place; visibility was so poor even below the cloud cover that instrument flying was necessary above 150 meters; the upper limit of the cloud cover was between 1,000 and 1,400 meters, above which visibility was good.

Over Frankfurt: at the time of the attack, Frankfurt was hidden by a 10/10 cover of stratus clouds between 500 and 1,200 meters.

X. THE AMERICAN ATTACK ON BRAUNSCHWEIG, 30 January 1944

(see Figure 85, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

At 1020, having assembled over the Norwich area, a force of approximately 400 bomber aircraft and a heavy fighter screen took off from the British Isles with course towards the east. Passing over the

coast between the island of Texel and The Hague, the American formations pushed on over northern Holland to Hannover, Braunschweig, and Magdeburg. Using instrument bombardment techniques, they dropped the majority of their bombs on Braunschweig, and a few on Hannover and Salzgitter, and at 1224 began their return flights towards the west and northwest. The formations flying farthest north crossed the coast at Den Helder, and those flying farthest south at Dunkirk. All formations had left the Continent by 1435. The total strength of the American fighter escort was approximately 300 aircraft. A part of these penetrated as far as Hannover and Braunschweig. At 1104 additional fighter aircraft were reported approaching between IJmuiden and the mouth of the Schelde. The fighters picked up the returning bombers over Minden and Rheine. The American attack caused medium-heavy damage to industrial plants and property in Braunschweig.

In addition to the attack on Braunschweig, the following actions were carried out by the American Air Forces:

During the time from 0841 to 0859, a group of fifteen Typhoon aircraft was reported approaching over the islands of Goeree and Schouwen.

Between 1426 and 1520 a force of approximately forty fighter aircraft advanced as far as Zwolle.

Between 1600 and 1605 twelve aircraft circled above the mouth of the Schelde.

Small bomber formations belonging to the American Air Forces based in Italy carried out attacks on Villach and Maribor.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

Commitment was carried out as follows:

units from the 1st Fighter Division: over Braunschweig

units from the 2^d Fighter Division: over Hannover and Minden

units from the 3rd Fighter Division: over Münster, and Diepholz.

The weather was so overcast that assembly in closed combat formations proved very difficult. Only 137 of our single and twin-engine fighters were able to contact the enemy, and most of these became involved in individual combat. This, together with adverse weather conditions, resulted in rather high German losses. On the whole, 30 January 1944 had to be chalked up as a failure for the day fighter units assigned to home air defense.

A total of 351 single and twin-engine fighter aircraft was committed by the I Fighter Corps.

c. Allied Losses

17 bombers and 6 fighters certainly brought down

9 bombers and 1 fighter probably brought down

d. German Losses

30 aircraft completely destroyed

21 aircraft more than 60% damaged

personnel: 9 dead

13 wounded

30 missing in action

e. Weather Conditions

10/10 cloud cover between 300 and 3,000 meters

f. Remarks

In the magazine "Aviation and Aeronautics" (published in Zürich) for June 1949, mention is made of an American attack on Klagenfurt, allegedly made on 31 January 1944 by units based in Italy.

There is no confirmation of this attack in the War Diary of the I Fighter Corps or in the material of the former Military Science Branch of the German Luftwaffe.

CHAPTER II

NIGHT ACTIONS DURING JANUARY 1944

I. SURVEY

a. British Offensive Activity

British air commanders had designated Germany's capital as the chief target for nocturnal bombardment during the month of January 1944. Nine major attacks were carried out, and six of these were directed against Berlin. The purpose behind this planning was presumably to demonstrate to the world a counterpart of the German air attacks on London during the fall of 1940 and to indicate the increase in the striking power of the RAF since that time. Although the total number of British aircraft employed against Germany during January was nearly double the number used during December 1943, there was no appreciable increase in their effectiveness. Bad weather on attack nights and what seemed to be a lack of effective organization of the attacks themselves had a detrimental influence on British operations. There was no indication of British and American coordination as regarded the selection of targets.

On eighteen evenings during the month of January, the Bomber Command carried out harrassing attacks on targets in the Ruhr District, utilizing Mosquito bomber aircraft for this purpose. Most of these attacks were directed against objectives in the industrial areas of Rhein-Westfalen. The fact that there were twelve nights during January in which no aircraft whatsoever were committed against Germany would seem to indicate that the RAF was following the policy of selecting nights with fair weather for its attacks.

On four nights mining activity by the RAF was reported.

b. British Offensive Tactics and Radio Interference

The Bomber Command attempted to offset the effectiveness of the

German night fighter defense by wide detours over the North Sea and Jutland, as well as by the employment of Mosquito raiders and mine-laying aircraft in diversionary attacks. These measures had only limited success in deceiving the commanders of the German night fighter defenses. Frequent attempts were made to conceal the intent to attack ~~by heavy bombers~~ with heavy bombers by employing Mosquito bombers at the same time in the general area of the intended target. The German identification stations, however, were able to identify the Mosquitos flying with the bomber streams because of their greater speed and could thus distinguish them from the four-engine bombers. British efforts to jam the German radar instruments and to interfere in German radio communication continued through January. Inasmuch as there were no innovations in the techniques heretofore applied, these measures had only limited success.

c. The Commitment of German Night Fighter Units

Adverse weather conditions during January 1944 precluded fully effective employment of night fighter aircraft. Nevertheless, on no occasion were the British able to attack without meeting some sort of defense. In every case, British assembly activity for night missions was recognized well in advance, and our radar stations, using their Rotterdam direction-finding equipment, were able to follow the flight course of the British bomber streams with almost perfect accuracy. Thus, all the conditions necessary for a systematic commitment of our night fighter units obtained. On the whole, however, such commitment was practicable only in the case of the units belonging to the 3^d Fighter Division, since these were the only aircraft equipped with airborne search instrument, SN-2. Because of extensive British radio interference activity, the Himmelbett technique gave promise of success only against mine-laying aircraft and against the bombers on their return flights.

Moreover, night fighter aircraft standing by in the Himmelbett areas of the 3^d Fighter Division (over Holland and Belgium) were frequently successful in controlled pursuit operations starting from these areas.

In order to meet the threat represented by the British Mosquito bombers, the Headquarters, I Fighter Corps, employed night fighter aircraft provisionally equipped for operations at high altitudes and at high speeds. The aircraft types He 219, Me 110, and Me 109 were utilized in these attempts, but did not prove very successful. Thus it may be said that the German night fighter forces had no effective means of meeting the British harrassing raids.

All the attempts on the part of the Headquarters, I Fighter Corps, to initiate action - in coordination with the High-Altitude Flight Station at Oranienburg and with various agencies of the German aircraft industry - to improve the performance of the night fighter aircraft to a degree which would render them an effective defense against the Mosquitos, met with so little support from higher headquarters that the results were negligible.

During January the night fighter crews made considerable progress in the techniques of controlled combat against specific objectives and in night pursuit operations during adverse weather. Both officers and enlisted men demonstrated laudable devotion to their duty, and although we were unable to effect complete neutralization of any one bomber stream, still it can be assumed that the losses suffered by the British bomber forces were painful ones. The striking power of the German night fighter forces had increased.

d. Successes and Losses During January 1944

During January 1944, the average total number of night fighter aircraft available for employment by the I Fighter Corps was 225 twin-

engine fighter aircraft.

The total number of night fighter aircraft committed by the I Fighter Corps during January 1944 was 1,436 twin-engine fighter aircraft.

The total aircraft losses suffered by the I Fighter Corps during January 1944 amounted to 59 twin-engine fighter aircraft, or 4.2% of the total number of aircraft committed.

The total losses suffered by the enemy within the area covered by the I Fighter Corps during January 1944 amounted to 268 aircraft (excluding those brought down by antiaircraft artillery), or 5.3% of the estimated total number of aircraft (5,036) employed by the RAF against the Reich.

e. ~~Other Significant Events~~ Remarks

At 1930 on the evening of 19 January, a conference of Luftwaffe signal communications officers from the Luftwaffe High Command, ~~the Chief Signal Officer~~ Office of the Chief Signal Officer, and from the Headquarters, Air Fleet Reich, was held at the Headquarters, I Fighter Corps, at De Breul. At this meeting the Commanding General, I Fighter Corps, requested that the following steps be taken:

that the network of Wismar stations be tightened, so that an increased number of flame position reports might be available to serve as confirmation of the flight course of the British bombers;

that the number of Gerhard position-finding stations be increased, for the same reason as indicated above;

that the delivery of the airborne search instruments (SN-2) be speeded up, so that all the night fighter aircraft belonging to the 2^d Night Fighter Wing might be supplied as soon as possible;

that all night fighter aircraft be equipped with search instruments of the Liechtenstein BC type;

that the panorama objective be removed from all night fighter aircraft;

that immediate action be taken to resolve the difficulties impeding the production of the LV-1 tubes for radar equipment;

that action be expedited on the installment of airborne search instruments of the Naxos and Rosendahl-Halbe types in a sampling of aircraft from the 1st Night Fighter Wing for purposes of testing; it was suggested that the operational testing be accomplished in line units rather than at the Experimental Station at Werneuchen, so that fighter crews might be trained immediately in the use of these instruments under battle conditions.

On 25 January 1944 there was another conference at corps headquarters at De Breul. This meeting was attended by the commanding officers of the fighter divisions, the commanding officer of the 30th Fighter Division (single-engine fighters), and Generalmajor Galland, General of the Fighter Aircraft Forces. The following is quoted from the talk given by the Commanding General, I Fighter Corps:

"The RAF is employing a new tactic, that of making wide detours out to sea. If our radar stations are to be able to follow their flight course, the "flame" and "Gerhard" position reports, as well as the reports based on the data of Rotterdam direction-finding equipment, must assume increasingly greater significance. The fighter divisions, as well as our reconnaissance aircraft, must be on the lookout for flare signals sent up by the aircraft reporting stations. The techniques heretofore in use in night pursuit operations have proved very satisfactory and will be continued. Whenever possible, night fighter aircraft already standing by in the "Himmelbett" areas on the outer border of the air defense zone should be utilized in pursuit operations. The use of the two airborne search instru-

ments, SN-2 and Liechtenstein BC, together gives promise of success. Every effort should be made to overcome difficulties impeding the installment of airborne radio equipment in night fighter aircraft. The powerful short-wave transmitter stations located within fighter division areas will be used as a last resort, in case enemy interference in our aircraft control frequencies should become too bad. The successful application of the "Himmelbett" technique requires constant practice on the part of our night fighter crews and the aircraft control officers in our radar stations.

Careful preparations on the part of the fighter divisions are a sine qua non for the effective employment of fighter aircraft in "Himmelbett" areas. It is imperative that the aircraft control officers manning the radar stations and the fighter commanders plan the coordination of their efforts well in advance of the date of employment, and that the flying crews be informed fully and in time."

II. THE BRITISH ATTACK ON BERLIN, 1/2 January 1944

(see Figure 86, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

During the time from 1830 to 2050, in the absence of any preliminary reports from German radio reconnaissance stations, a group of approximately 30 Mosquito aircraft carried out surprise harrassing raids on the Ruhr District. Approximately 25 Mosquitos had approached from the Zuyder Zee, while five of them had come in over the mouth of the Schelde. By 2132, all the aircraft had left the Continent via the mouth of the Schelde.

At 0110 the first bombers of the major British force (numbering approximately 400) were sighted at a point about 130 kilometers west of the Dutch coast, heading east. The bombers crossed the coast in four waves between the island of Texel and Rotterdam. Mosquito bombers, preceding

the main force, opened the attack on Berlin and then headed for home. Flying in tight formation, the heavy bombers passed over the Hannover area, where they fanned out and moved on towards the east and southeast, some of them to Berlin and others to Leipzig, Altenburg, Gera, and Weisenfels. No definite direction of attack was discernible, and in fact it seemed as if poor weather conditions were preventing the attack from being carried out according to plan. The bombardment of Berlin, between 0230 and 0355, was sporadic, and the damage caused to industrial installations and private property was slight and restricted to the southern part of the city. The bombers flew back over Erfurt and the Frankfurt area, passing over the Channel coast at 0628. Their flight altitude during the approach and return flights varied between 3,600 and 7,000 meters.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

On the whole, commitment was rendered difficult by poor weather.

The following forces were employed:

in "Himmelbett" areas against approaching bombers:

formations from the 1st and 3d Fighter Divisions

in "Himmelbett" areas against returning bombers:

formations from the 1st, 2d, and 3d Fighter Divisions

in night pursuit operations:

units from the 3d Fighter Division, which were directed into the enemy bomber stream over Holland

in controlled combat against specific objectives:

units from the 1st Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacons Berte and Pente

units from the 2d Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacons Quelle and Zebre

From their assembly points, the night fighter aircraft from both divisions were directed on to Berlin and Leipzig.

Reconnaissance aircraft stood by over Bremen, Hannover, and Berlin.

A total number of 167 twin-engine fighter aircraft was employed by the I Fighter Corps.

c. Allied Losses

18 bombers brought down

d. German Losses

15 aircraft, 11 of which were lost because of difficulties occasioned by poor weather conditions.

personnel: 18 dead

8 wounded

8 missing in action.

e. Weather Conditions

Over the Ruhr District: uninterrupted cloud cover up to 6,000 meters; danger of icing above 2,000 meters

On the enemy approach course to Berlin and return course over Frankfurt/Main: 10/10 cloud cover between 1,000 to 2,000 meters and 4,000 to 6,000 meters

Over Berlin: rain.

III. THE BRITISH ATTACK ON BERLIN, 2/ January 1944

(see Figure 87, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

During the evening, German radio reconnaissance reported a British attack in preparation for the second half of the night. At 0031, a stream of approximately 300 bombers was reported approaching about 120 kilometers west of the Dutch coast. Flying over the coast between the island of Texel and The Hague, the bombers headed towards the east and maintained

this course as far as Hannover. Here the attackers split into three ~~three~~ groups and continued as follows:

one group over Lüneburg, Stettin , and Eberswalde to Berlin,

one group direct east to Berlin,

and one group over Halberstadt and Bitterfeld to Berlin.

Their return flight, towards the west and southwest, began at 0250. They crossed the coast between the islands of Vlieland and Schouwen, the last aircraft reported departing the Continent at 0615.

Favored by a strong tail-wind on their approach flight, the bombers, flying through the clouds, attained a speed of 440 kilometers per hour. Their flight altitude varied between 3,000 and 7,000 meters. The bombardment of Berlin, between 0240 and 0310, was not concentrated, but managed to cause considerable property damage in the northeastern sectors of the city.

In addition to the attack described above, the RAF carried out the following actions:

Beginning at 1850, a force of fifteen Mosquitos carried out harrassing raids on Duisburg. They had penetrated to their target between 1821 and 1949, crossing the coast between Bergen and The Hague and proceeding to the Gronau, Duisburg area. They returned to their bases at 2105, flying back across the mouth of the Schelde.

At 2118 a single aircraft flew over the island of Rottumeroog and on to Groningen, Assen, and Meppel. It returned over Amsterdam at 2149.

Between 2337 and 2345, a single aircraft circled over the islands of Terschelling and Borkum.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

A cold front, moving east into the air defense zone, made effective commitment extremely difficult.

The following forces were employed in pursuit operations and in controlled combat against specific objectives:

units from the 1st Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacons Marie and 12

units from the 2d Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacons Quelle and Marie

units from the 3d Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacons Ludwig and Philipp.

Part of these fighter aircraft were directed into the enemy bomber stream by way of the Zuyder Zee, and part of them directly from their assembly beacons.

A total number of 128 twin-engine fighter aircraft was committed by the I Fighter Corps.

c. Allied Losses

20 bombers brought down

d. German Losses

9 aircraft

personnel: 6 dead

5 wounded

9 missing in action

e. Weather Conditions

10/10 cover of multiple-stratus^c clouds between 1,500 and 7,000 meters; danger of icing above 2,000 meters; ground squalls.

IV. BRITISH HARRASSING ATTACKS, 3/4 and 4/5 January 1944

(see Figure 88, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

3/4 January 1944: During the time between 1826 and 1859, a courier aircraft was observed flying over the Skagerrak on its way to Sweden.

At 0351 a singly flying aircraft passed over Ringkoebing as far as Husum. At 0437 it departed from Schleswig-Holstein, flying towards the west over Friedrichsstadt.

Beginning at 0502, a force of ten Mosquito bombers attacked Frankfurt/Main. At 0410 they had come in over Calais and Dunkirk, flying southeast as far as Frankfurt/Main and Giessen. By 0605 they had left the Continent, crossing the coast between The Hague and the mouth of the Schelde.

Two raiders appeared at 0508 over Essen. They had come in over Den Helder at 0430 and departed via Katwijk at 0525.

Between 0528 and 0606, a single aircraft was reported circling above the island of Texel, Harlingen, and Den Helder.

4/5 January 1944: Approaching at 1934 over the southern portion of the Zuyder Zee, a group of 15 Mosquitos flew over the Rhine industrial area and attacked the city of Krefeld. The return flight was carried out over the mouth of the Schelde, Brussels, and Blankenberghe, the last aircraft crossing the coast at 2052.

During the time from 1937 to 2018, one airplane was observed flying over the island of Texel, Assen, ~~EM~~ Lingen, and the Zuyder Zee.

Brandenburg on the Havel was the victim of a harrassing raid carried out by a force of ten Mosquito bombers. They had penetrated over southern Westerland beginning at 2221 and continued towards the southeast as far as Neurippen and Brandenburg. Their return flight was carried out in broad front formation towards the northwest. They crossed the coast between the island of Terschelling and Leyden, the last aircraft disappearing out to sea at 0035.

At approximately 0029, four Mosquitos flew over the coast between the islands of Texel and Vlieland, heading towards the southeast. Two of them turned around at Lingen, and the other two continued on over Rheine and

Hannover as far as the area northwest of Berlin, where they circled around for rather a long time. They were reported leaving the Continent between Den Helder and The Hague at 0314.

At 0307 two Mosquito bombers were reported approaching over Husum. After circling over Husum, they turned towards the southeast and flew as far as Hamburg. They departed at about 0407 over Wilhelmshaven and the island of Terschelling.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

3/4 January 1944: no commitment

4/5 January 1944: the following aircraft were employed:

during the harrassing raid on Essen:

1 Me-110 from the airfield at Twente

1 Me-109 from the airfield at Bonn-Hangelar

during the harrassing raid on Brandenburg:

1 Me-110 from the airfield at Stade

1 Me-110 from the airfield at Twente

c. Allied Losses

Could not be determined.

d. German Losses

None

e. Weather Conditions

3/4 January 1944: broad bad-weather zone extending from southeastern England over Belgium and Holland as far as central Germany; gradual dispersal of the cloud cover and a transition to post cold front conditions, beginning in the north and moving inland.

4/5 January 1944: 4/10 cover of cumulus clouds between 800 and 3,000 meters; occasional rainstorms until 2000; cloud cover dispersing rapidly after midnight.

V. THE BRITISH ATTACK ON STETTIN, 5/6 January 1944

(see Figure 89, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

At midnight, preparations for the take-off of a large bomber force were reported in the area of The Wash. At 0032 our long-range search instruments picked up the approach of a bomber stream located approximately 200 kilometers west of the island of Terschelling and heading towards the northeast. After crossing the North Sea, the bombers flew over the western coast of Jutland south of Lim Fjord, crossed northern Jutland, and flew east as far as Aarhus. Here they turned towards the southeast and continued over the islands of Laaland and Rügen to Stettin and Berlin. The bombers, approximately 400 strong, directed their attack at the city of Stettin. German reports on the flight course of the enemy bombers, especially those based on the data of the Rotterdam direction-finding equipment, made an attack on Berlin seem imminent. The observation station network of the I Fighter Corps was presumably too weak along the Baltic coast to pick up a clear report of the enemy's flight course over the western Baltic into Stettin. It is also possible that the British Bomber Command deliberately sent a few Mosquitos to Berlin in order to divert our attention from the main attack. The bombers left the attack area at 0347, flying west and northwest towards the Bay of Helgoland. The departing aircraft were last reported from the western coast of Jutland at 0656 and from the Dutch coast at 0535.

In addition to the attack described above, the RAF carried out the following actions during the night of 5/6 January 1944:

A force of fifteen Mosquitos flew in at 1835 between the mouth of the Schelde and Dunkirk, carried out harrassing raids over Bonn and Mayen, and returned towards the west.

At 1904 a group of ten Mosquitos raided the city of Essen. They had

flown in between Den Helder and IJmuiden at 1847, and returned between The Hague and ~~the~~ Westerschelde at 2030.

At 2100 the city of Krefeld was raided by a force of twenty Mosquitos, which had come in over Amsterdam and the southern Zuyder Zee at 2028. The bombers flew back over Rotterdam and the mouth of the Schelde at 2330.

From a base in Italy, a single aircraft penetrated as far as Frankfurt/Oder, where it dropped supplies or agents. Its flight course, picked up at 2137, took it over Glatz, Breslau and Glogau to Frankfurt. Its return course over Cottbus, Bautzen, Prague and Klagenfurt was lost at 0245.

At 0729 a single aircraft was reported over northern Jutland. It flew as far as Horsens Bay, then returned over the islands of Roem and Sylt and was lost to observers at 0801.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

The following forces were committed:

in night pursuit operations:

a few night fighter aircraft from the 2d Fighter Division over northern Jutland

in controlled combat against specific objectives:

units from the 1st Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacon 12 and guided on to radio beacon 13

units from the 2d Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacon Quelle and guided on to radio beacon 13

units from the 3d Fighter Division, assembling at radio Beacons Phlipp and Quelle and guided on to radio beacons Quelle and 13

Those fighter aircraft assembling at radio beacon 13 were directed on to Berlin to meet the expected attack and then rerouted to Stettin.

Some of the fighters recognized the fire over Stettin and headed for that city without waiting for directions. The majority, however, arrived

at Stettin too late for effective accomplishment of their mission.

from Himmelbett areas against the returning bombers:

smaller formations belonging to the 2d and 3d Fighter Divisions, over the Bay of Helgoland and in northern Holland.

Deceived by the British detour maneuver, the German night fighter commanders expected a large-scale attack on Berlin and were unprepared for the actual attack on Stettin.

A total number of 143 twin-engine fighter aircraft was employed by the I Fighter Corps.

c. Allied Losses

11 bombers brought down

reports were received that one British bomber was so badly damaged that it was forced to make an emergency landing in Sweden.

d. German Losses

3 aircraft

personnel: 3 dead

5 missing in action

e. Weather Conditions

In the area covered by the 2d and 3d Fighter Divisions: almost impenetrable cover of strato-cumulus clouds; cover as low as 300 to 500 meters over Jutland.

In the area covered by the 1st Fighter Division: rapidly dispersing cloud cover of 3/10 to 5/10, beginning at 2,500 to 3,000 meters.

VI. THE BRITISH HARRASSING ATTACK ON DORTMUND AND DUISBURG, 6/7 January 1944

(see Figure 90, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

Beginning at 1917, a force of fifteen to twenty British Mosquitos raided the cities of Dortmund and Duisburg. Their approach courses were

as follows:

approximately fifteen aircraft; between Bergen and the island of Texel from 1841 to 1915,

approximately five aircraft: over the mouth of the Schelde.

The last aircraft were reported departing from the Dutch coast at 2030, their course towards the west. The damage in Duisburg-Hamborn and Dortmund was slight.

Between 1844 and 2342, three courier aircraft were sighted over the Skagerrak, one on its way to Sweden and the other two returning to Great Britain.

At 0215 a single Mosquito crossed the Channel coast near Bruges and flew on over Charleroi and Luxemburg as far as the Karlsruhe area. It returned to Great Britain by way of Metz, Valenciennes, and Berk s.M., crossing the coast at 0401.

Fifteen mine-laying aircraft were reported north of the West Frisian Islands at 0546. At 0624 they reached their destination, mined the waters lying between Cuxhaven and Helgoland, and at 0650 returned to their bases.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

The following aircraft were employed:

during the harrassing raids:

two twin-engine fighter aircraft, guided by the Y-Method

against the mine-laying aircraft:

30 twin-engine fighter aircraft, from Himmelbett areas over the Bay of Helgoland. This mission was without success due to the fact that the mine-layers were flying at a very low altitude and were protected by heavy rain flurries.

A total number of 32 twin-engine fighter aircraft was employed by the I Fighter Corps.

c. Allied Losses

Could not be determined.

d. German Losses

1 Ju-88

personnel: 2 dead

e. Weather Conditions

10/10 cover of multiple-stratus clouds from 500 to 2,500 meters.

Over the Bay of Helgoland: cloud cover beginning at 150 meters; rain; scattered cloud fields at 5,000 meters.

VII. BRITISH HARRASSING ATTACKS ON THE RUHR DISTRICT, 7/8 and 8/9 January 1944

(see Figure 91, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

7/8 January 1944: Radar reports seemed to indicate a large-scale take-off from the area lying south of The Wash. The British formations penetrated as far as twenty kilometers west of the mouth of the Schelde and then turned towards the west.

A force of twenty aircraft attacked the city of Duisburg, coming from the southern tip of the Zuyder Zee in the time from 2038 to 2230. On their return flight, the last airplane was reported crossing the mouth of the Schelde at 2340.

Two Mosquito aircraft were observed over the Freiburg/Breisgau and Constance areas between 2144 and 0350. Both their approach and return flight courses took them over northern France and Lorraine.

Three courier aircraft were reported over the Skagerrak.

8/9 January 1944: Three groups of Mosquito bombers penetrated into the Ruhr District as follows:

The first group, consisting of twenty aircraft, crossed the coast between

between Ostende and Boulogne s.M. at 1812, and continued as far as St. Vith, Aix la Chapelle, Cologne, and Munchen-Gladbach. They returned at 1858 over the mouth of the Schelde.

The second group, consisting of ten aircraft, approached over Den Helder and Amsterdam at 1835 and penetrated as far as Rheine, Dortmund, and Düsseldorf.

The third group, consisting of fifteen aircraft, was reported approaching over the mouth of the Schelde at 1909. Five aircraft turned back after reaching Cologne, and the rest continued on over Giessen, Frankfurt/Main, Heilbronn, Mainz, and Koblenz. The last aircraft to leave the Continent were reported crossing the mouth of the Schelde at 2113.

Scattered bombs were dropped on Aix la Chapelle, Cologne, Dortmund, Düren, Elberfeld, the area north of Frankfurt/Main, and Offenbach.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

7/8 January 1944: 22 twin-engine fighter aircraft were ordered to stand by in their Himmelbett areas over Holland for possible commitment against the British attackers.

8/9 January 1944: one Me-109 (guided by the Y-Method) was employed during the harrassing raids.

c. Allied Losses

Could not be determined.

d. German Losses

None.

e. Weather Conditions

7/8 January 1944: 5/10 to 10/10 cover of strato-cumulus clouds between 500 and 4,000 meters.

8/9 January 1944: closed cover of strato-cumulus clouds between 300 and 4,000 meters; danger of icing above 1,500 meters.

VIII. BRITISH HARRASSING ATTACKS ON BERLIN AND SOLINGEN, 10/11 January 1944

(see Figure 92, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

There were two harrassing raids carried out by Mosquito bombers. The first of these was accomplished by a force of approximately fifteen Mosquito aircraft, whose approach was reported at 1810 over the mouth of the Schelde and northern France. After bombarding Solingen and dropping scattered bombs on München-Gladbach and the area lying north of Venlo, they departed over the mouth of the Schelde at 2030.

The second attack was on the city of Berlin, and was carried out by a group of ten aircraft. Approaching over Bremen and Stendal at 0257, three of them turned back over Holland and Oldenburg. After bombarding Berlin, the rest returned by way of Hannover and Münster, leaving the Continent at 0537 over the mouth of the Schelde.

In addition to the above, the following actions were noted:

During the time from 1950 to 2009, a single aircraft was reported circling over the coast in the vicinity of Vlieland, Leeuwarden, and the island of Terschelling. Its altitude varied from 200 to 1,500 meters.

One airplane was observed over the island of Walcheren and Gilze Rijen between 2330 and 0005.

Two aircraft were reported over the area of Katwijk and Utrecht from 0308 to 0410.

From 1807 to 0500, five aircraft were sighted over the Skagerrak, three of them flying from Sweden to Great Britain and the other two on their way to Sweden.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

Three twin-engine fighter aircraft were employed from Himmelbett areas over Holland.

c. Allied Losses

Could not be determined.

d. German Losses

None.

e. Weather Conditions

In the area covered by the 1st and 2d Fighter Divisions: 3/10 to 5/10 cover of strato-cumulus clouds between 800 and 2,000 meters.

In the area covered by the 3d Fighter Division: 8/10 to 10/10 cover of stratus clouds between 1,000 and 1,600 meters; scattered clouds between 5,000 and 6,000 meters.

IX. BRITISH HARRASSING ATTACKS ON ESSEN AND DUISBURG, 13/14 January 1944
(see Figure 93, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

During the second half of the night, the cities of Essen and Duisburg were the targets of British Mosquito raiders.

Beginning at 0325, two waves of Mosquitos were reported approaching, the first over the mouth of the Schelde and the second over the Zuyder Zee.

A force of ten aircraft circled above the following areas in Holland: Amsterdam, Zwolle, Hengelo, Twente, and Gilze Rijen.

The group bombarding the two industrial cities consisted of twenty-five aircraft, two of which penetrated as far as the Koblenz area.

After carrying out their bombardment mission, the Mosquitos left the Ruhr District with course towards the northwest, passing over the coast between Den Helder and the mouth of the Schelde. The last aircraft were reported leaving the Continent at 0610.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

one Me-110 from a Himmelbett area.

c. Allied Losses

1 Mosquito brought down.

d. German Losses

None.

e. Weather Conditions

In northern and central Germany: extensive ground and high-altitude fogs.

In western Germany and Holland: heavily overcast between 300 and 5,000 meters.

X. THE BRITISH ATTACK ON BRAUNSCHWEIG, 14/15 January 1944

(see Figure 94, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

At 1747 German radar stations picked up the first aircraft of a British bomber stream consisting of several hundred aircraft at a point some 120 kilometers west of the island of Texel and IJmuiden. Maintaining a direct course, the British bombers flew over the Zuyder Zee, Rheine, Osnabrück, and on to Braunschweig and Magdeburg. A force of Mosquitos, flying ahead of the main bomber stream, diverted attention from the actual target of the attack by continuing their flight towards Berlin, Fürstenwalde, Torgau, and Leipzig. At 1930 the bombers began their return flight towards the west, the last aircraft crossing the Dutch coast between the island of Terschelling and Westerschelde by 2145. No systematic plan was discernible behind the British attack; bombardment was widely scattered, with the area around Braunschweig apparently the focal point of the attack. Bombs were also dropped on Oschersleben, Brandenburg, and Leipzig.

In addition to the above, the following RAF actions were observed during the night of 14/15 January:

During the time from 1826 to 1854, a force of ten aircraft mined the waters immediately north of the islands of Terschelling and Langeoog. The flight altitude of the mining aircraft was reported as varying between 100 and 600 meters.

Between 1818 and 1929 five Mosquito aircraft crossed over the mouth of the Schelde, flew on over Emmerich, Wesel and Münster, and joined the main bomber stream.

Between 1714 and 2239, four courier aircraft crossed the Skagerrak on their way to or from Sweden, passing over the northern tip of Jutland.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

The following forces were employed in connection with the main enemy attack:

From Himmelbett areas during the approach and departure flights of the bombers: partial forces belonging to the 2d and 3d Fighter Divisions.

In night pursuit operations:

units from the 1st Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacon Zebra and directed into the bomber stream over Hannover;

units from the 2d Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacon Phillip and beginning pursuit operations in that same area; and

units from the 3d Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacon Ludwig and taking up pursuit action over Twente in Holland.

Some of these units continued their pursuit activity during the return flight of the enemy bombers.

It is the opinion of the Headquarters, I Fighter Corps, that the dissipation of the British attack force may be attributed to the rapid and effective action of our fighter aircraft against the bomber stream.

A total of 162 twin-engine fighter aircraft was committed by the I Fighter Corps.

c. Allied Losses

39 bombers certainly brought down

5 bombers probably brought down

d. German Losses

2 aircraft

personnel: 3 dead

3 missing in action

e. Weather Conditions

Over the area covered by the 1st and 2d Fighter Divisions: 5/10 to 10/10 cover of stratus clouds between 800 and 1,200 meters.

Over the area covered by the 3d Fighter Division: predominantly clear.

f. Remarks

During the night of 14/15 January, ^{Second} Lieutenant Breukel, of the 4th Squadron, 2d Night Fighter Wing, brought down a total of six enemy aircraft.

XI. THE BRITISH ATTACK ON BERLIN, 20/21 January 1944

(see Figure 95, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

During the early evening hours, several hundred British bombers crossed over the southern part of the North Sea, with course towards the east and northeast. At 1709 their position was reported as approximately 160 kilometers west of the island of Terschelling. Flying in a fairly broad stream, they appeared over the Bay of Helgoland between Westerland and Norden, passed over the Bay of Kiel and Hamburg and continued towards the southeast to Berlin and Frankfurt/Oder. They bombarded Berlin between 1910 and 2000, causing some property damage in the eastern sector of the

city. Bombs were also dropped over Neubrandenburg, Eberswalde, and the area lying south of Berlin.

At 1928 the bombers began their return flight, the return course bounded towards the north by the line formed by Wittenberge, Bremen, and Borkum, and towards the south by the line formed by Altenburg, Bebra, Wuppertal, and the mouth of the Schelde. The last aircraft was reported passing over the coast at 2243.

At 1807 approximately seven Mosquito aircraft crossed the Dutch coast between Bergen and Den Helder, flew directly on over Meppen, Braunschweig, and Berlin, and joined the main bomber force there. By diversionary maneuvering between Berlin and Dresden, they attempted to camouflage the actual target of the attack.

The following actions were carried out during the attack on Berlin, and were assumed to be attempts to divert our attention from the latter: a mining mission in the southern part of the North Sea, and a harrasing raid on the city of Stettin by a group of Mosquito aircraft.

In addition, Duisburg and Düsseldorf were attacked by a force of approximately ten Mosquitos. ~~They~~ They had penetrated the Continent between Ostende and Calais, beginning at 2025, and had flown over Malmedy and Aix la Chapelle into the Ruhr District.

Between 2238 and 2258 a single aircraft was reported circling over the islands lying at the mouth of the Schelde.

During the night of 17/18 January, between 1725 and 1759, one British courier aircraft crossed the Skagerrak.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

Weather conditions were so bad that only the most experienced night fighter crews were selected for employment, as follows:

In night pursuit activity during the approach flight of the bombers:

several night fighter aircraft from the 1st Fighter Division, which were directed into the bomber stream by means of the Y-Method;

units from the 3d Fighter Division; the Ju-88's assembling at radio beacon Ludwig and guided into the enemy stream over radio beacon Quelle and over the mouth of the Elbe; the Me-110's assembling at radio beacon Marie, and guided into the bomber stream over Parchim.

From Himmelbett areas during the return flight of the bombers:

small units from the 2d and 3d Fighter Divisions, over northwestern Germany and Holland.

In night pursuit activity during the return flight of the bombers:

a few night fighter aircraft from the 3d Fighter Division.

A total number of 98 twin-engine fighter aircraft was employed by the I Fighter Corps.

Despite their numerical inferiority, the defensive activity of our night fighter forces may be termed a noteworthy success. The majority of the British bombers brought down were hit during their return flight, by which time weather conditions had improved somewhat.

c. Allied Losses

33 bombers brought down

d. German Losses

7 aircraft, one of which was brought down by German antiaircraft artillery fire at 2208 over the freight station at Herne.

personnel: 5 dead

10 wounded

e. Weather Conditions

Over the area covered by the 2d Fighter Division: a bad-weather zone, some 200 kilometers in width, moving slowly towards the east; 10/10

cloud cover starting at 75 to 200 meters and extending as high as 5,000 to 7,000 meters.

Over the area covered by the 1st and 3d Fighter Divisions: 9/10 to 10/10 cover of stratus clouds, starting at 200 to 600 meters and extending as high as 1,000 meters; danger of icing above 2,000 meters.

f. Remarks

During the night of 20/21 January, Captain Fellerer, Commanding Officer of the II Group, 5th Night Fighter Wing, brought down five British bombers.

XII. THE BRITISH ATTACK ON MAGDEBURG, 21/22 January 1944

(see Figure 96, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

At 2050 a British bomber stream coming from the Harwich area was reported about 120 kilometers west of the island of Texel. The group, consisting of ~~some~~ several hundred four-engine aircraft, flew over the North Sea with course towards the northeast and moved on towards the mouth of the Elbe. South of Helgoland, a small group broke off from the main force and attacked Wilhelmshaven, evidently in an attempt to draw our attention away from the continuing flight of the main stream. Over Husum and Norden, the main force wheeled about towards the southeast and continued as far as Magdeburg and Dessau. At the same time, Mosquito bombers were harrassing Berlin, Leipzig, and Dresden - again in an attempt to camouflage the real targets of the attack, Magdeburg and Dessau. Dummy flares were dropped over Berlin, the area south of Magdeburg, and near Leipzig. The Mosquito aircraft participating in the diversionary actions had come in over the Zuyder Zee and continued on a direct course to Berlin, and could be clearly distinguished by our Rotterdam direction-finding equipment from the bombers

making up the main force. Thus, British diversionary actions did not succeed in confusing the situation picture available to the Headquarters, I Fighter Corps. At 2248 the British bombers began their return flight, most of them heading towards the west. They left the Reich in broad front formation, and crossed the coast between Wesermünde and Duhkirk, the last aircraft leaving the Continent at 0145. Approximately ten of the bombers left the Continent after the attack by way of the Bay of Kiel, flying out to sea over Ringkoebing. The attack on Magdeburg was fairly severe and caused considerable damage in the eastern part of the city.

In addition to the attack described above, the RAF carried out the following actions during the night on 21/22 January:

Between 1928 and 2012, three Mosquito aircraft, presumably long-range night fighters, crossed the mouth of the Schelde and flew as far as Rheine and Osnabrück.

During the time between 1935 and 2027, a single aircraft carried out an observation flight over Bergen and the Zuyder Zee area. The aircraft was identified as a long-range night fighter, and its crew was apparently reconnoitering the airfield at Leeuwarden.

A group of three Mosquito aircraft, approaching over Rheine at 2027, carried out a harrassing raid on the city of Haltern.

Cologne and Duisburg-Oberhausen were subjected to a harrassing raid by a force of some twenty Mosquito bombers. The bombers approached over the mouth of the Schelde at 2004 and began their return flight towards the southwest at 2100.

During the time from 2010 to 2028, one courier aircraft was observed over the Skagerrak on its way to Sweden.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

The following forces were employed:

In pursuit activity or in controlled combat against specified objectives during the approach of the British bombers:

units from the 1st Fighter Division: assembling at radio beacon Hahn and directed into the bomber stream between radio beacons Hahn and Quelle;

units from the 2d Fighter Division: assembling at radio beacons Hummer and Quelle and directed into the bomber stream between Helgoland and Hamburg;

units from the 3d Fighter Division: assembling at radio beacons Ludwig and Hummer and guided on to radio beacon Quelle, from which they were guided into the bomber stream between Helgoland and Hamburg.

From Himmelbett areas during the return flight of the bombers:

small formations from the 2d and 3d Fighter Divisions, employed over northwestern Germany and Holland.

In night pursuit activity during the return flight of the bombers:

several night fighter aircraft belonging to the 4th Fighter Division, and employed from the area assigned to the 3d Fighter Division.

A total number of 169 twin-engine fighter aircraft was employed by the I Fighter Corps.

c. Allied Losses

37 bombers certainly brought down

4 bombers probably brought down

d. German Losses

6 aircraft

personnel: 3 dead

7 missing in action

e. Weather Conditions

4/10 to 9/10 cloud cover between 300 to 800 meters and 2,000 meters;

Intermittently clear over the Dutch coast; light fogs at all altitudes.

f. Remarks

During the night of 21/22 January 1944, two officers were killed in action:

Major Prince of Sayn-Wittgenstein, Commanding Officer of the 2d Night Fighter Wing. This officer had brought down a total of eighty-two enemy aircraft in night combat, and had been awarded the Knights' Cross of the Iron Cross, with Oak Leaves and Swords. He began his career in the Luftwaffe as a bomber pilot, then became a fighter pilot, and ^{had} been assigned to the eastern front prior to his present mission. There he had brought down twenty-nine Soviet aircraft in night combat. During the night of 21/22 January he succeeded in shooting down five British bombers before his own airplane, a Ju-88, crashed in the vicinity of Magdeburg, the victim of a British long-range night fighter. His radio man and mechanic were able to parachute to safety, while the Prince himself, who always flew without a parachute, died a hero's death.

Captain Meurer, Commanding Officer of the I Group, 1st Night Fighter Wing, holder of the Knights' Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves, and Master Sergeant Scheibe, Captain Meurer's radio man, who had been awarded the ^AKnights' Cross of the Iron Cross. This night fighter crew had brought down a total of sixty-three enemy aircraft. Captain Meurer's airplane, an He-219, collided in mid air with a British bomber. Both aircraft crashed, the two wrecks coming to lie within 600 meters of each other.

67a

Major Prince of Sayn-Wittgenstein

Killed in Action During the Night of 21/22 January 1944

67b

Captain Meurer

Killed in Action During the Night of 21/22 January 1944

XIII. BRITISH HARRASSING ATTACKS ON DÜSSELDORF, 23/24 January 1944, AND
ON AIX LA CHAPELLE, 25/26 January 1944

(see Figure 97, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

23/24 January 1944: During the time from 1940 to 2330, a group of approximately forty Mosquitos carried out harrassing raids in Holland and the Rhine River area and bombarded the city of Düsseldorf. The action was accomplished in three waves, as follows:

an initial group of twenty aircraft, approaching between Dunkirk and Berck and flying towards the southeast as far as Koblenz, Bingen, and Trier,

a second group of fifteen aircraft, approaching over the mouth of the Schelde and flying on to bombard Düsseldorf, and

a third group of five aircraft, approaching between Haarlem and Leyden, and penetrating as far as Meppel and Deventer.

On their return flight, the aircraft maintained a westward course across Holland and Belgium.

At 0214 a single Mosquito passed over the island of Vlieland and flew on over Assen and Kloppenburg into the area lying twenty-five kilometers west of Hannover. Its return flight course led it over Bielefeld, Gummersbach, Liège, and Amiens, leaving the Continent at 0408.

Between 0141 and 0202, a courier aircraft was observed crossing the Skagerrak on its way to Sweden.

Several aircraft from the British base in Italy carried out a raid on the city of Maribor in Carinthia.

25/26 January 1944: At 1905 a single Mosquito crossed over Abbeville and penetrated as far as Liège. After circling over Liège until 2029, the aircraft returned home over the mouth of the Schelde.

A force of some fifteen Mosquito aircraft, approaching between Dun-

kirk and Calais, carried out a harrassing raid on the city of Aix la Chapelle, flying back across the mouth of the Schelde at 2245.

At 0300 a single Mosquito flew over the mouth of the Schelde and continued on over Antwerp to the Mainz area. Flying back, it passed over Metz, Reims, Beauvais, and Le Treport, leaving the Continent at 0507.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

23/24 January 1944: four twin-engine fighter aircraft (directed by the Y-Method) during the attack on Düsseldorf.

25/26 January 1944: one twin-engine fighter aircraft (directed by the Y-Method) during the raid on Aix la Chapelle.

Thus, a total number of five twin-engine fighter aircraft was employed by the I Fighter Corps on these two nights.

c. Allied Losses

Could not be determined.

d. German Losses

None.

e. Weather Conditions

23/24 January 1944: 2/10 to 6/10 cover of cumulus clouds from 500 meters to 1,000 meters; scattered rainstorms.

25/26 January 1944: 5/10 to 10/10 cloud cover between 300 to 600 meters and 3,000 meters; scattered rain flurries between 5,000 and 7,000 meters.

XIV. THE BRITISH ATTACK ON BERLIN, 27/28 January 1944

(see Figure 98, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

At approximately 1800 a bomber stream took off from the Norwich area in the British Isles and proceeded across the southern part of the North Sea into the Bay of Helgoland and towards the mouth of the Elbe.

At this point a group of Short-Stirling four-engine bombers, flying at a lower altitude than the rest, reversed their course and began dropping mines into the sea. Their maneuver was a success and they were able to divert attention from the main bomber stream, which flew on towards the southeast, over the islands of Terschelling and Borkum, over the Kassel and Hannover areas, and finally on to Berlin, which they attacked from the south and southwest. Some of the bombers made a detour over Cottbus and Frankfurt/Oder.

At the same time, several singly-flying Mosquitos approached over the Zuyder Zee and flew on, on a direct course, to Berlin, Frankfurt/Oder, and Leipzig in an attempt to confuse the German situation picture.

On their return flight, the bombers passed over the southern Ruhr District and Frankfurt/Main. According to statements made over the British radio, 1,500 tons of bombs were dropped on Berlin. The attack lasted from 2015 to 2050 and was directed chiefly at the eastern part of the city. Scattered bombs were also dropped over Leipzig.

In addition to the main attack described above, the RAF also carried out the following actions:

From 1920 to 2024, a single night fighter raided the areas of Ijmuiden, Arnheim, and Zwolle.

One airplane was observed circling above the island of Texel between 1929 and 2002.

Between 2030 and 2104 two aircraft penetrated as far as the areas of Katwijk and Apeldoorn.

At about 2035 a force of seven Mosquitos flew over Ijmuiden and Zwolle, presumably on their way to Berlin.

Between 2102 and 2114 two aircraft flew along the coast from Bergen to Alkmar.

A group of eight Mosquitos, having approached at 2135 between Dunkirk and Calais, raided the city of Aix la Chapelle and returned home together with the main bomber stream from Berlin.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

The following forces were committed:

In pursuit activity and in controlled combat against specific objectives during the approach flight of the bombers:

Units from the 1st Fighter Division (Northern Sector), assembling at radio beacon Hahn; as soon as the British mining maneuver in the Bay of Helgoland was recognized as a diversionary action, the aircraft were guided on to radio beacon Berta, and from there to combat over Berlin,

Units from the 1st Fighter Division (Southern Sector), assembling at radio beacon Fliege and directed into the bomber stream southwest of Berlin,

Units from the 2d Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacon Hammer; after the real purpose of the British mining action was recognized, the aircraft were directed towards the south and met the bomber stream in the vicinity of Braunschweig,

Several night fighter aircraft from the 3d Fighter Division (Northern Sector), directed by the Y-Method from their own airfields into the bomber stream,

Units from the 3d Fighter Division (Southern Sector), assembling at radio beacon Ludwig and moving on to radio beacon Quelle, from which they were directed towards the south into the Braunschweig area, and

Several night fighter aircraft belonging to the 7th Fighter Division, which were directed into the bomber stream from radio beacon 10.

From Himmelbett areas during the return flight of the bombers:

A small number of aircraft from the 2d and 3d Fighter Divisions, em-

ployed over Hannover, the Rhine area, southern Holland and Belgium.

A total number of 167 twin-engine fighter aircraft was employed by the I Fighter Corps.

Because of the successful British diversionary maneuver in the Bay of Helgoland and the detours made necessary by it, only twenty-four of our night fighter aircraft managed to contact the enemy.

c. Allied Losses

20 bombers certainly brought down.

d. German Losses

9 aircraft

personnel: 5 dead

9 wounded

1 missing in action.

e. Weather Conditions

5/10 to 10/10 cloud cover between 200 to 1,000 meters and 1,500 to 2,000 meters; visibility varying from five to fifteen kilometers.

Over Berlin: visibility from one to three kilometers; high-altitude winds at 5,000 meters from 290°, velocity 120 to 140 kilometers per hour.

f. Remarks

Several of our night fighter crews were taken in by false commands issued in German by British interference transmitters; two aircraft obeyed British orders to land.

One Ju-88, piloted by Master Sergeant Giesshaber, was shot down over Osendorf (seven kilometers ~~xxx~~ south-southeast of Halle) by our own anti-aircraft artillery.

One Ju-88, piloted by Captain Billich, was hit by antiaircraft fire while flying at 5,000 meters over Braunschweig. The fuselage of his air-

plane suffered a direct hit, and the fuel-line was damaged.

One Me-110, flown by 1st Lieutenant Baake, collided with a British aircraft over Bonn. Both aircraft crashed, but 1st Lieutenant Baake was able to parachute to safety.

For the first time it was reported that British aircraft were equipped with phosphorus sprays, which went off whenever German fighter aircraft approached the bombers. This defensive measure on the part of the British was without effect.

XV. THE BRITISH ATTACK ON BERLIN, 28/29 January 1944

(see Figure 99, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

First half of the night: Singly-flying Mosquitos bombarded the night fighter airfields at Leeuwarden, Deelen, Gilze Rijen, and Venlo. The bombs were dropped from a very high altitude.

During these attacks, a group of from fifty to sixty British aircraft was reported at about 1850 approaching from the Harwich area. The group flew over the southern part of the North Sea as far as the western corner of the Baltic Sea. It was not until they had crossed Schleswig-Holstein that their mission was recognized as a mine-laying one. The Headquarters, I Fighter Corps, had presumed that they were bombers. Mines were laid in the mouth of the Elbe and in the western waters of the Baltic Sea.

Between 1920 and 2000 a single aircraft penetrated over the island of Schouwen as far as Brussels.

During the time from 1950 to 2200 a group of ten Mosquitos penetrated into the Ruhr District. They approached over The Hague and departed via the mouth of the Schelde.

Approaching at 2045 over the island of Terschelling, Osnabrück, and Hannover, a force of five Mosquitos raided the Berlin area. They flew back

between Bielefeld and Paderborn over the mouth of the Schelde, leaving the Continent at 2317.

Between 2221 and 2250 five aircraft flew along the coast from Bergen as far as the island of Terschelling.

Last half of the night: About 0030 a force of approximately 500 aircraft took off from the Norwich area and proceeded towards the northeast, crossing the southern part of the North Sea, as far as Kiel. The main stream was preceded by single aircraft, flying very low, whose mission was presumably to mock a mine-laying action. After dropping flares over Kiel, the British bombers turned towards the southeast and headed directly for Berlin. A small number of the four-engine bombers flew on towards the east from Kiel, and reversed their course over the western corner of the Baltic Sea.

Leaving Berlin, the bombers passed over Bremen, Kiel, and Holstein and flew out over the North Sea. Despite a cloud cover of 10/10, the British attack, lasting from 0310 until 0340, had been accurate and devastating. Unter den Linden and the Zoological Gardens suffered particularly severe damage.

At approximately 2310, some twenty Mosquito aircraft which were assumed to be long-range night fighters, penetrated as far as Münster, Hannover, and Osnabrück. Three of the twenty continued on as far as Perleberg and Greifswald.

At 0020 two Mosquitos, coming from the Calais and Florennes area, passed over Koblenz and flew on to Frankfurt/Main, where they circled for some time. Returning, they flew over Trier, and Cambrai, and crossed the Channel coast at about 0250.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

First half of the night: The following forces were employed:

~~From Himmelfahrt~~

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From Himmelbett areas against the Mosquito invaders:

Several twin-engine fighter aircraft from the 3d Fighter Division.

From Himmelbett areas against the mine-laying aircraft:

Several aircraft from the 1st, 2d, and 3d Fighter Divisions, over the Bay of Helgoland and over the coastal areas of the western Baltic Sea and Holland.

In pursuit activity against the mine-laying aircraft:

A small force from the 1st Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacon 13.

As soon as it was realized that the enemy approach flight over the North Sea was merely a mine-laying mission, all aircraft were ordered to land.

Last half of the night: The following forces were employed:

From Himmelbett areas, during both the approach and departure of the bombers:

Several aircraft from the 3d Fighter Division, employed over the Dutch coast.

In pursuit activity and controlled combat against specific objectives:

Units from the 1st Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacons Hein and Eienhörnchen and directed on to controlled combat over Berlin,

Units from the 2d Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacon Quelle and directed into the bomber stream over Lübeck,

Units from the 2d Fighter Division (Northern Sector) were guided to the enemy bomber stream directly from their home airfields,

Units from the 3d Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacons Ludwig and Quelle; the aircraft at radio beacon Ludwig were directed on to radio beacon Quelle, and from there the entire group was guided to the bomber stream between Kiel and Lübeck, and

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A reinforcement force from the 7th Fighter Division, together with formations from the 3d Fighter Division which were unable to take off with the others, was assembled at radio beacon Gertrud and directed on to controlled combat over Berlin.

The total number of twin-engine aircraft employed during both halves of the night was 187.

c. Allied Losses

42 bombers brought down.

d. German Losses

2 aircraft

personnel: ~~3~~ 3 dead

e. Weather Conditions

First half of the night: The border between the operational areas of the 2d and 3d Fighter Divisions, as well as the adjacent coastal area along the Bay of Helgoland, were enveloped by a 10/10 cloud cover zone extending some 100 kilometers; the cloud cover hung as low as 100 to 400 meters and extended to 4,000 to 5,000 meters; visibility varied between one and three kilometers; ~~within~~ outside this zone, in the area covered by the 3d Fighter Division the cloud cover was 10/10, and in the areas covered by the 1st and 2d Fighter Divisions, between 5/10 and 10/10 from 500 to 1,000 meters; scattered clouds above 2,500 meters.

Last half of the night: In the western part of the operational area assigned to the 2d Fighter Division and in the coastal area lying towards the northwest, there was a bad-weather zone some 100 kilometers in width, moving slowly towards the east; within this zone the cloud cover was 10/10 between 100 to 400 meters and 4,000 to 5,000 meters; outside this zone, in the area covered by the 1st, 2d, and 3d Fighter Divisions, the cloud cover varied between 5/10 and 10/10, beginning at 500 to 1,000 meters and dispers-

ing at 1,200 to 1,500 meters; scattered clouds above 2,500 meters.

f. Remarks

The effectiveness of the British attacks on our airfields in Holland:

Deelen: six demolition bombs and eight type "33" aerial mines, several of them equipped with delayed-action fuzes; several runways and landing-strips were slightly damaged.

Venlo: twelve bombs, demolition and incendiary, some of them equipped with delayed-action fuzes; one Me-109 destroyed, and several runways seriously damaged.

Leeuwarden: twelve demolition bombs, some of them equipped with delayed-action fuzes; two runways damaged.

Gilze Rijen: several demolition bombs; two runways damaged.

The British attacks were instrumental in delaying the commitment of our night fighter aircraft during the night of 28/29 January (see b, above, regarding the late start of several formations belonging to the 3d Fighter Division).

XVI. THE BRITISH ATTACK ON BERLIN, 30/31 January 1944

(see Figure 100, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

During the night of 29/30 January: Several Mosquito aircraft appeared over the Ruhr District. One airplane was reported over the island of Goeree between 2344 and 0019. At 0304 a single Mosquito flew over the island of Texel and on to Meppen, Vechta, and Celle; it flew out to sea over Cuxhaven at 0413.

During the night of 30/31 January: At 1815 a force of several hundred British bombers took off from the Norwich area for Berlin. Their course led them over the southern part of the North Sea and Schleswig-

Holstein as far as the Bay of Kiel. Here they turned towards the south-east and headed directly towards Berlin. At the same time, a force of fast Mosquito bombers was reported having crossed the Zuyder Zee on its way to Berlin. The attack on the capital lasted from 2000 to 2100 and was unusually severe, causing not only serious damage to property and to industrial installations, but also setting fire to large sections of the city. The sectors most severely hit were the center, and the western and southern portions. Crossing northwestern Germany and Holland, the British bombers returned to their bases.

In addition to the attack described above, the RAF carried out the following actions during the night of 30/31 January 1944:

Several Mosquito aircraft carried out a harrassing raid on the city of Cologne. The aircraft had approached between Ostende and Calais at approximately 1830, and flew back over the mouth of the Schelde at 2040.

Between 1919 and 1927 a single aircraft was reported circling above the mouth of the Schelde and the adjoining coast.

From 1848 to 2328, Two aircraft were observed above the Skagerrak, one on its way back to Great Britain and the other on its way to Sweden.

b. Commitment of Aircraft By the I Fighter Corps

The following forces were employed:

From Himmelbett areas during both the approach and departure of the bombers:

Several aircraft from the 3d Fighter Division, employed over the northern coast of Holland.

In pursuit activity and controlled combat against specific objectives:

Units from the 1st Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacons Hahn and Wienbrunn, and directed into the bomber stream ~~xxxxx~~ east of Parchim,

Units from the 2d Fighter Division, the majority assembling at radio beacon Quelle and directed into the bomber stream north of Kiel, together with the forces from the 3d Fighter Division; those night fighters based at Grove and Westerland were guided to the bomber stream over Schleswig-Holstein, and

Units from the 3d Fighter Division, assembling at radio beacons Ludwig and Quelle.

Reinforcements from the 7th Fighter Division and several formations from the 3d Fighter Division were assembled at radio beacon Gertrud, transferred to radio beacon Berta, and sent on to controlled combat over Berlin.

The total number of twin-engine fighter aircraft employed by the I Fighter Corps was 146.

c. Allied Losses

43 bombers brought down.

d. German Losses

6 aircraft

personnel: 4 dead

3 missing in action.

e. Weather Conditions

29/30 January: 10/10 cover of high-altitude fogs between 200 to 400 meters and 900 to 1,200 meters; visibility three to six kilometers.

30/31 January: cloud cover varying between 6/10 and 10/10, beginning at 400 to 800 meters and extending as high as 1,000 meters; over the Bay of Helgoland and Berlin: cloud cover beginning at 75 to 300 meters and extending as high as 2,000 meters, or even 4,000 meters in some areas.

CHAPTER III

DAY ACTIONS DURING FEBRUARY 1944

I. SURVEY

a. American Offensive Activity

American offensive activity against the Reich increased appreciably during February 1944. Allied newspapers and radio releases announced the beginning of a large-scale air offensive against Germany, and this offensive materialized after 20 February, as soon as weather conditions improved. The American Air Force units stationed in Great Britain were obviously coordinating their daytime attacks with those Air Force units stationed in Italy, and their chief target was apparently the installations of the German aircraft industry. The effectiveness of their attacks was greater than heretofore, and they succeeded in disrupting the operations of German air armament plants to such an extent that the systematic supplying of the needs of the German air defense forces was impossible.

During the reporting period, the American Air Forces carried out a total of fifteen large-scale attacks on targets located within the Reich. Four of these attacks were carried out by units based in Italy. On three of the days selected for attack, weather conditions permitted unlimited sight bombing. On three other days instrument bombardment was necessary, and on five days, partially so. American aircraft losses during the large-scale attacks after 20 February were fairly great, with 234 aircraft in the area covered by the I Fighter Corps alone. If one gives due consideration to the number of attacks, the total number of aircraft employed, and the total number of aircraft destroyed, one realizes that the Americans paid dearly for the effectiveness of their attacks.

The American practice, in operations originating from Great Britain,

of flying several bomber missions on the same day, served to dissipate the German fighter defenses. Moreover, the coordination of the time of attack and the target to be attacked by the forces coming from Great Britain and from Italy served the triple purpose of reducing the effectiveness of German defenses, increasing the effectiveness of the American attack, and reducing the American losses. The increase in American fighter aircraft mentioned in connection with the events of January 1944 reached its full effectiveness during February. Large escorts of single and twin-engine fighters accompanied the bombers during their approach and return flights, and remained in most cases as a protective screen during the attacks themselves. Only in rare instances did the well-organized system of fighter escort relief fail in its purpose. There were very few successful attacks on German-occupied airfields. Even ~~except~~ apart from the days selected for large-scale attacks, American air activity was rather lively, most of it devoted to target reconnaissance and to observation flights to ascertain the effectiveness of previous attacks. The chief objectives for reconnaissance activity seemed to be the Ruhr District, Jutland, and the western coast of the Baltic Sea, although reconnaissance aircraft also evinced interest ⁱⁿ for the area north of Berlin, the Bay of Helgoland, the Hannover and Braunschweig area, and the Frankfurt area. Independent flights (i.e. not as fighter escorts) by fighter aircraft, as well as flights along the coast of the Bay of Helgoland and Holland, were extremely rare. On only four days during the reporting period were there no American aircraft at all observed within the area of operation of the I Fighter Corps.

b. The Commitment of the I Fighter Corps

The beginning of the American air offensive in February 1944 was no surprise to the Headquarters, I Fighter Corps. The order, issued by the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe, to concentrate on bringing down

as many enemy bombers as possible, was still binding for the forces engaged in defense against the American daytime attacks. There had been no increase in the number of units assigned to air defense activities. Thus, the enemy's numerical superiority continued to have a detrimental effect on the outcome of aerial combat actions. In addition, on six of the days selected for attack, poor weather conditions rendered effective commitment of the German fighter units extremely difficult or even impossible. Since the American Air Forces carried out attacks on targets scattered throughout the entire Reich, including several in southern Germany and in Austria, the decentralized command organization of the German defensive forces proved to be a decided disadvantage. The 7th Fighter Division, in southern Germany, and the forces assigned to the Fighter Commander (Ostmark), in Austria, operated quasi independently in their assigned areas, subject only to instructions issued by the Air Fleet Reich.

In general, the Commander in Chief, Luftwaffe, had assigned the following missions to the various air defense forces:

I Fighter Corps: the defense of the northern sector, particularly of the industrial districts in Rheinwestfalen and in central Germany, ~~and~~ of the coastal areas devoted to naval operations, and of the Berlin area.

7th Fighter Division: the defense of southern Germany, with special emphasis on the protection of the industrial areas around Frankfurt/Main, Mannheim, Stuttgart, Nuremberg, Munich, and Augsburg.

Fighter Commander (Ostmark): the defense of vital installations in Austria, particularly in Vienna, Wiener-Neustadt, Steyr, and Linz.

The day fighter forces placed at the disposal of these three commands were too few for effective accomplishment of the missions assigned. Coordinated action by all three groups was rarely attained, because the area to be protected (the Reich including Austria) was far too extensive in view

of the limited range of our fighter aircraft, and because each of the three commanders was naturally most concerned with fulfilling his defensive mission within the operational area assigned to him.

After the American air offensive had begun, the Headquarters, I Fighter Corps, put forth a plan for the geographical concentration of all the daytime fighter forces assigned to northwestern Germany and the Frankfurt area. The plan was motivated by the thought that a united, relatively strong German fighter defense might have a chance to meet the American attackers successfully, especially if the American fighter escort units were selected as the chief target. During a conference at Carin Hall on 22 February 1944, the Commanding General, I Fighter Corps, was given the opportunity to present his suggestion to the Commander in Chief, Luftwaffe. The conference, lasting from 1200 to 2130, had been called by Reichsmarschall Goering to discuss the havoc being wrought in the German air armament factories by ~~the~~ enemy bombardment. The occasion was hardly an auspicious one to present to the Reichsmarschall a plan calling for the concentration of all available daytime fighter units in a relatively ~~small~~ area and for a centralized command of all air defense operations within the Reich. Towards the end of the conference, the Commander in Chief, Luftwaffe, indicated that he was already aware of the successes ~~and losses~~ attained on that day by the units of the I Fighter Corps; they were as follows: 55 enemy bombers and 10 enemy fighters certainly brought down and 9 bombers probably brought down (translator's note: not quite accurate, see XII, c). The results of the conference on 22 February are indicated in I, d, below.

Despite the unfavorable conditions under which they were forced to operate, the daytime fighter units of the I Fighter Corps succeeded in inflicting heavy losses on the American Air Force units stationed in Great

Britain during the interval from 20 February, marking the beginning of the large-scale American air offensive, to 29 February. They were unable, however, to turn back a single one of the American attacks completely. Our own losses during this period, in terms of aircraft totally destroyed, did not exceed bearable limit, although the number of aircraft damaged was inordinately high.

By the end of February 1944, the evaluation of the air situation was as follows, as far as the German air defense forces were concerned:

"From two separate bases, Italy and Great Britain, the American Air Forces have launched concentrated and effective attacks on targets lying within the heart of the Reich. The German air armament industry was the first objective selected for intensive bombardment. We must assume that the Allied air commanders are prepared to continue their large-scale attacks, and, in fact, to broaden their target area to include vital war industries in all parts of the Reich. It is probable that American blind bombardment techniques (with the help of radar) will be perfected, increasing tremendously their chances of attaining direct hits even on days when weather conditions are too bad to permit sight bombing. The total effectiveness of the Allied air attacks will be augmented by the night attacks carried out by the RAF. This threat to Germany and to German-occupied territory has shaken badly Germany's position as an air power in Europe. The smooth functioning of Germany's war industries is the primary prerequisite for a successful conclusion of the war. The systematic destruction, by bombardment from the air, of German armament plants is bound to have a catastrophic influence on the outcome of the war, especially in view of an Allied invasion of Europe.

In number as well as in technical performance, the daytime fighter units assigned to German air defense activity are inferior to the American fighter aircraft forces. In spite of their demonstrated courage and their

willingness to make every sacrifice for their country, in the long run ~~they~~ ^{our forces} are fighting a hopeless battle. On the basis of the average number of aircraft committed each day, the numerical ratio during the month of February was as follows:

total American strength (bombers and fighters)	:	German strength in single and twin- engine fighters (I Fighter Corps)
3.6	:	1
American fighter strength	:	German strength in single and twin- engine fighters
1.6	:	1

The initiative in selecting days characterized by favorable weather conditions for large-scale undertakings lies with the American air commanders. The nature of the command organization within the German air defense forces precludes coordinated and economical commitment of the available forces. The tactics presently employed by the German fighter units, i.e. going after the enemy bombers, should be revised and modified, since they are leading to heavy losses. Knowing that they need not fear an attack by the German fighter aircraft, American fighters are able to move into range and attack the German fighters from above. Because of our heavy personnel losses and the lack of sufficiently well-trained replacements, our daytime fighter forces are unable to maintain any degree of effectiveness in a lengthy combat. If the German air defense forces continue to operate as they have in the past, there will be no chance of their minimizing the effectiveness of the American day attacks. Continuation of the present system is tantamount to the deliberate destruction of valuable personnel and materiel without hope of tangible results.

For this reason, in the interest of the over-all conduct of the war, the Luftwaffe must face the fact that its most important mission is the prevention of American daytime attacks on the Reich. The most vital pre-

requisite to the successful accomplishment of this mission is the regaining of air supremacy over the territory of the Reich.

It is doubtful that this goal can be attained with the fighter aircraft models presently available, especially in view of the fact that Germany is not in a position to rival the United States in the production of fighter aircraft.

On the other hand, the Luftwaffe does have the Me-262, a jet fighter which came through its first round of tests on 24 May 1943 with flying colors and which is technically far superior to any fighter aircraft which the Americans have been able to produce.

Thus, the conversion of our daytime fighter units from their present aircraft models to the Me-262 seems urgently indicated. The Me-262 represents our only chance to regain our lost air supremacy.

In preparation for such a conversion, the following steps must be taken:

Mass production on the Me-262 jet fighter must be speeded up in all available factories.

The air defense forces must be given top priority in the acquisition of personnel and materiel, while all other functions of the Luftwaffe must be relegated to the background.

Courses in navigation and instrument flight must be introduced immediately in all fighter pilot training schools.

The Me-262 must be equipped with the instruments necessary for blind flying and for bad-weather landings.

Without waiting for the conversion to Me-262's, the daytime fighter units assigned to air defense activities must make it their chief mission to win back Germany's position of air supremacy. The following steps are prerequisites to the accomplishment of this mission:

All available daytime fighter aircraft must be concentrated within the Reich, even if this means withdrawing them completely for a time from every other front.

All fighter aircraft must be welded into a single group under centralized command, for commitment in decision-seeking aerial combat with the enemy.

The chief objective to be considered in the commitment of this group must be the destruction of the American fighter forces. The problem of turning back the American bombers from the borders of the Reich can be dealt with later. Bad-weather periods, during which large-scale enemy attacks need not be anticipated, should be utilized to send fighter forces into Great Britain to harrass the flight maneuvers of the American attacking forces."

Unfortunately, the above evaluation of the air situation was given no consideration at the end of February 1944, nor were any of the suggested measures put into effect.

c. Successes and Losses During February 1944

During February 1944, the average total number of daytime fighter aircraft available for employment by the I Fighter Corps was:

350 single-engine fighter aircraft,

100 twin-engine fighter aircraft, and

50 night fighter aircraft suitable for daytime employment.

The total number of daytime fighter aircraft committed by the I Fighter Corps during February 1944 was: 2,861 aircraft.

The total aircraft losses suffered by the I Fighter Corps during February 1944 amounted to: 299 aircraft, or 10.3% of the total number of aircraft committed.

The total number of aircraft lost by the enemy within the area covered

by the I Fighter Corps during February 1944 amounted to: 310 aircraft (excluding those brought down by antiaircraft artillery), or 2.9% of the estimated total number of aircraft (10,452) employed by the American Air Forces against the Reich. This estimated figure does not take into account the aircraft committed from bases in Italy.

d. Remarks

From 9 through 12 February the Commanding General, I Fighter Corps, paid inspection visits to seven of the units under his command. The following is quoted from his inspection report to the Air Fleet Reich, as it appears in the War Diary of the I Fighter Corps:

"The morale and military attitude of the flying crews is excellent. In those units commanded by superior officers, it is better than excellent. Our daytime fighter crews are young and eager for action. The recent heavy losses, however, are ample indication of the fact that they are inexperienced in flight technique as well as in tactics. I should suggest that, even after they have been assigned to their units, their training be continued until they are actually needed for commitment. Intensive training with FW-190's, with the conditions of actual combat closely simulated, is urgently indicated from the point of view of personnel economy, and the extra time required would more than pay for itself in the form of more experienced crews with better developed tactical ability and of increasing effectiveness with fewer losses.

The squadron captains, as deputies of their respective commanding officers, should be given continuous training in the exercise of command authority, even to the extent of granting them greater initiative in the accomplishment of actual missions. Personnel officers must be extremely careful to select only the best-qualified men to fill these positions as they become vacant. Bureaucratic one-sidedness, which gives chief con-

sideration to length of service in awarding such appointments and ignores tactical ability and training, can lead only to a serious decrease in the effectiveness of our command organization.

The last-minute transfers from one airfield to another, which are often necessitated by tactical considerations or by weather conditions, are having a detrimental effect on the smooth functioning of the command organization. In future, every effort should be made to allow each unit to take off according to plan from its own airfield and then to assemble all the units at that airfield which is most favorably located for the purposes of the undertaking planned. In carrying through such assembly actions, care should be exercised to make sure that all squadrons belonging to one group be assembled at the same airfield. Provided the airfield in question is large enough, it is desirable to assemble two entire groups there at once.

The enemy fighter escorts are becoming larger and stronger. Some way must be found to meet these fighter aircraft effectively, otherwise our own fighters will be unable to get at the enemy bombers. A concentrated blow against the enemy fighter escort forces would represent a tactical and moral success."

On 23 February 1944, from 1230 until 1630, a conference was called at the Headquarters, 2d Fighter Division, at Stade. The conference was led by the Commanding General, I Fighter Corps, and was attended by the General of the Fighter Aircraft Forces, the commanding officers of the fighter divisions, and the commanders of the fighter wings assigned to the I Fighter Corps. The following quotation is taken from the minutes of the conference, as they appear in the War Diary of the I Fighter Corps:

"General Schmid: The enemy obviously plans to assure his own air supremacy as a prelude to a large-scale invasion. The air situation in

the Reich is tense and serious. The damage which the enemy has inflicted on our air armament industry is not inconsiderable. In order to meet the threat inherent in the enemy daytime attacks, all available units must be prepared for all-out commitment. We must find a way to turn back the enemy before he can enter the Reich; otherwise we may soon be faced also with British attacks during the day. The tactical mistakes made during the last few days are not the fault of the operational units, but of the fighter division headquarters. Chief among these was the failure to recognize in time American diversionary maneuvers for what they were. In compliance with the orders issued by the Reichsmarschall, the commitment of our daytime fighter units will be guided by the determination to provide adequate defense for the air armament industry throughout all of Germany at the same time.

Within the area assigned to the I Fighter Corps, the following distribution of forces will become effective immediately:

1st Fighter Division:

~~3d Fighter Wing~~

3d Single-Engine Fighter Wing, including I through IV Group

26th Twin-Engine Fighter Wing

3 groups of single-seater night fighters drawn from the 300th and 302d Single-Engine Fighter Wings

2d Fighter Division:

11th Single-Engine Fighter Wing, including I through III Group

III Group, 54th Single-Engine Fighter Wing

3d Fighter Division:

1st Single-Engine Fighter Wing, including I through III Group

I Group, 300th Single-Engine Fighter Wing, Bonn (single-seater night fighter aircraft).

The following operational areas are assigned:

1st Fighter Division: Hannover and Magdeburg

2d Fighter Division: Oldenburg, Bremen, and Rotenburg

3d Fighter Division: German-Dutch border.

At the suggestion of the General of the Fighter Aircraft Forces, the Reichsmarschall has agreed that one fighter group from each fighter division shall be designated for combat against the American fighter escort forces. The enemy fighters will be attacked ^{by} ~~in~~ small groups of two or three German aircraft, plunging down on them from above. The Me-109's employed for this purpose will be equipped with light armaments and with automatic ammunition loaders.

As many of our fighter aircraft as possible should be sent up against the bombers a second time when the latter are on their return flight. Heretofore, many of our fighters have landed at the wrong airfield after completing their first scramble and by the time they were located, it was too late to send them up a second time. From now on, specific airfields will be designated as fighter aircraft fields. These airfields will have supplies of ammunition, gasoline, oil, and oxygen, whereas all other airfields will be limited to gasoline supplies. Thus, if a fighter aircraft should land at a non-fighter airfield, he will refuel immediately and take off for the nearest fighter aircraft field, from which he will be recommitted."

II. DAY ACTIONS, 1 February through 12 February 1944 (excluding large-scale American attacks)

(see Figure 101, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

During the seven days on which there were no large-scale attacks, American air activity on the whole was very slight. Mosquito reconnaissance aircraft were almost the only enemy aircraft observed. A total of approx-

imately twenty-five Mosquito aircraft carried on reconnaissance activity over Stettin, Kiel, Hamburg, Hannover, and the Ruhr District. In addition, some twenty-four enemy aircraft were observed during the reporting period over the coastal area along the Bay of Helgoland and over the Dutch coast, and several low-flying aircraft were reported near the West Frisian Islands, where they presumably were laying mines.

b. Commitment of Aircraft By the I Fighter Corps

Eight single-engine fighter aircraft were employed on 9 February against Mosquito reconnaissance aircraft over the Ruhr District.

c. Allied Losses

Could not be determined.

d. German Losses

None.

III. DAY ACTIONS, 12 February through 19 February 1944 (excluding large-scale American attacks)

(See Figure 102, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

Approximately one hundred enemy fighter aircraft penetrated as far as the Dutch coastal area. Thirty of these attacked the airfield at Gilze Rijen on 14 February, but without causing much damage. A total of ten Mosquitos were observed to be engaged in reconnaissance activity, the chief objectives of which were Anklam, Rostock, Lübeck, Bremen, Rheine, and Brandenburg/Havel.

b. Commitment of Aircraft By the I Fighter Corps

Sixteen single-engine aircraft were employed against the enemy reconnaissance aircraft over the western coast of the Baltic Sea, and twenty during the attack on the Gilze Rijen Airfield. Thus, a total of thirty-six single-engine fighter aircraft were employed by the I Fighter

Corps during the reporting period.

c. Allied Losses

Could not be determined.

d. German Losses

None.

IV. DAY ACTIONS, 19 February through 1 March 1944 (excluding large-scale American attacks)

(see Figure 103, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

Despite the fact that six large-scale attacks also fell within this reporting period, other enemy air activity was continued as usual, and a total of thirty Mosquito reconnaissance aircraft and forty fighter aircraft were reported within the area covered by the I Fighter Corps. The chief reconnaissance targets seemed to be the following: the Oder and Warthe area between Landsberg/Warthe and Stettin, the western coast of the Baltic Sea, Jutland and the Great and Little Belts, the Ruhr District, Kassel, and Paderborn, and the Rhine and Main river areas, including Frankfurt/Main, Würzburg, Mannheim, and Karlsruhe.

The majority of the fighter aircraft were reported over the Dutch and Belgian coasts.

On 23 February a force of approximately 180 four-engine bombers, accompanied by an escort of some eighty Lightnings, bombarded armaments plants in Steyr, Austria. The attack was carried out from the American base in Italy, and was apparently a part of the over-all American offensive which began on 20 February.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

Since we ^{had} ~~have~~ no aircraft types really suited to the purpose, no attempt was made to interfere with the Mosquito reconnaissance aircraft.

There is nothing in the War Diary of the I Fighter Corps to indicate any commitment on the part of the 7th Fighter Division or the Air Commander (Ostmark) against the American attack on Steyr.

c. Allied Losses

Could not be determined.

d. German Losses

None.

V. THE AMERICAN ATTACK ON WILHELMSHAVEN, 3 February 1944

(see Figure 104, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

At 0955 the first aircraft of an American force consisting of approximately 350 bombers, 300 single-engine fighters, and 50 Lightnings were reported at a point about 150 kilometers west of Den Helder. Flying towards the east, they continued on between the island of Vlieland and Katwijk as far as the area north of Rheine and Groningen. Here the force split up into numerous smaller formations and moved on to attack Wilhelmshaven, the majority of them bombarding the city by instrument. Several aircraft had penetrated as far as Hannover and Neumünster. With their course towards the west and southwest, the American bombers departed from the Continent between the island of Wangeroog and Bergen, the last aircraft crossing the coast at 1225. In Wilhelmshaven the damage to private property as well as to industrial plants was considerable. The wharves were also badly hit. Extensive fires broke out in the southern part of the city. A few bombs also fell on Westerstedt, twenty-five kilometers northwest of Oldenburg, and on Farge, near Vegesack, approximately twenty kilometers northwest of Bremen. At Farge an antiaircraft artillery battery was hit.

During the morning, between 0848 and 0900, eleven fighter aircraft were observed circling above the mouth of the Schelde.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

The following forces were employed:

Units from the 1st Fighter Division, over the Bremen area,

Units from the 2d Fighter Division, over the Wilhelmshaven area and over Bremen, and

Units from the 3d Fighter Division, over the Oldenburg area.

Poor weather conditions made it very difficult for the units to assemble according to plan. Only fifty-two aircraft, flying singly, were able to penetrate the cloud cover, where they became involved in combat with American fighters over Bremen and Oldenburg. All in all, the day's operations had to be chalked up as a failure for the German air defense forces.

A total number of 225 single and twin-engine fighter aircraft was employed by the I Fighter Corps.

c. Allied Losses

2 Thunderbolts certainly brought down,

1 Thunderbolt probably brought down.

d. German Losses

6 aircraft totally destroyed,

5 aircraft more than 60% damaged;

personnel: 4 dead

2 wounded

6 missing in action.

e. Weather Conditions

Area covered by the 3d Fighter Division: 5/10 to 8/10 cover of scattered multiple-strata clouds between 500 and 1,800 meters;

Area covered by the 2d Fighter Division: fairly impenetrable cloud cover and cloud fields above 3,500 meters; over the Bay of Helgoland:

high-altitude fogs between 100 and 200 meters;

Area covered by the 1st Fighter Division: closed cloud cover beginning at 500 meters and extending as high as 2,500 meters; stratus clouds above 4,000 meters; south of the line Stettin-Bonn: closed cloud cover hanging as low as 200 meters in some localities; over the target: cloud cover with occasional gaps, beginning at 500 meters.

VI. THE AMERICAN ATTACK ON FRANKFURT/MAIN, 4 February 1944

(see Figure 105, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

At about 0900, German radio reconnaissance reported the assembly of a large American bomber force in Great Britain. At 1040 the first aircraft began appearing over the mouth of the Schelde, and soon the entire force, consisting of some 500 bombers with a strong fighter escort, was on its way towards the southeast. Flying above the clouds, the enemy force passed over Emmerich and Liège and continued on to the Giessen and Frankfurt/Main area. On their return flight, the bombers crossed the Channel coast between Bergen and Calais, the last aircraft flying out to sea at 1410. The total strength of the fighter escort was approximately 300 single and 50 twin-engine fighter aircraft, the majority of which had approached over the mouth of the Schelde between 1130 and 1230 to pick up the returning bombers. Some of the fighters had come only as far as the border of the Reich and had reversed their course over Arnheim.

The bombardment, by instrument, of Frankfurt/Main caused considerable property damage in the suburbs of the city. Bonn and Bad Godesberg had also been hit by scattered bombs.

In addition to the attack described above, the American Air Forces carried out the following actions:

At 1215 a single Mosquito flew over Esbjerg and on to reconnoiter

the islands of Fünen and Laaland and the Bay of Mecklenburg. At 1450 it returned home over the island of Roem.

Between 1404 and 1513, a group of five fighter aircraft flew at a very low altitude over The Hague and Rotterdam.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

A cloud cover several thousand meters in thickness prohibited the commitment of large aircraft formations. Only a few aircraft from the 3d Fighter Division succeeded in penetrating the cover above the Dutch coast, where they encountered an American bomber formation.

c. Allied Losses

1 aircraft brought down.

d. German Losses

None.

e. Weather Conditions

10/10 cloud cover between 400 to 600 meters and 6,500 meters.

f. Remarks

By rights the Frankfurt area did not belong in the air defense zone assigned to the I Fighter Corps. Since the preparation of the air situation picture as well as the measures taken by the air commanders in the Frankfurt area on 4 February had proved unsatisfactory, the Commanding General, I Fighter Corps, had been called to the Headquarters, Air Fleet Reich, in Berlin for a conference regarding the ways and means of remedying the situation. On this occasion the Commanding General, I Fighter Corps, suggested to the Commander in Chief, Air Fleet Reich, that the responsibility for the preparation of air situation pictures and for the commitment of the fighter aircraft forces engaged in air defense operations be placed in a single central command agency.

VII. THE AMERICAN ATTACK ON FRANKFURT/MAIN, 8 February 1944

(see Figure 106, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

Beginning at 0956, a force of approximately 300 bombers, accompanied by a like number of fighter aircraft, flew over the mouths of the Schelde and Somme rivers and moved on across Belgium and northern France towards the southeast and east as far as the Rhine and Main river area. Since about 1100, American fighter formations had been penetrating as far as Luxemburg and then reversing course, while at the same time other fighter groups were approaching from the Channel, crossing the coast between the mouth of the Schelde and Dieppe, and continuing on towards the southeast to pick up the returning bombers at the German border. After bombarding Frankfurt, the American bombers had begun their return flights towards the west and northwest at 1133. They crossed the Channel coast between the mouth of the Schelde and Dieppe in broad front formation, the last aircraft leaving the Continent at 1330. Even though sight bombardment was possible only during a portion of the attack, the city suffered serious property damage.

In addition to the attack described above, the American Air Forces carried out the following actions:

One Mosquito, apparently on a reconnaissance mission, flew over the area north of Hamburg. Its approach course was picked up north of Helgoland at 1112. Its return course led it along north of the Frisian Islands, and its last position reported, at 1219, was forty kilometers north of the island of Vlieland.

Between 1242 and 1255, eight enemy aircraft flew along the coast from Bergen as far as Den Helder.

Between 1304 and 1319, five aircraft circled over the mouth of the

Schelde.

A single aircraft, approaching at about 1300 over Tondern and Flensburg, reconitered the area north of Schwerin, and returned the same way at 1447.

At 1358 a single aircraft was observed circling over the island of Texel.

Between 1405 and 1415, two aircraft flew along the coast from IJmuiden as far as Alkmar.

Approaching at about 1432 over the island of Walcheren and Gilze Rijen, one Lightning penetrated as far as Duisburg, apparently for reconnaissance purposes. It departed via Gilze ~~Rijen~~ Rijen at 1443.

Between 1648 and 1651 a single aircraft was reported circling above Den Helder.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

The following forces were employed:

Units from the 2d Fighter Division, over Frankfurt/Main; because of difficulties encountered in assembling, these formations were unable to take part in combat.

Units from the 3d Fighter Division, over Koblenz and Wiesbaden; because of unfavorable weather conditions, only sixty aircraft managed to contact the enemy.

A total number of 137 single and twin-engine fighter aircraft was employed by the I Fighter Corps.

c. Allied Losses

3 bombers and 2 fighter aircraft certainly brought down,

1 aircraft probably brought down.

d. German Losses

8 aircraft

100

2 aircraft more than 60% damaged

personnel: 1 wounded

8 missing in action.

e. Weather Conditions

Area covered by the 1st, 2d, and 3d Fighter Divisions: rain and hail storms; visibility 200 meters in storm areas, otherwise varying from 500 to 1,000 meters; danger of icing above 1,000 meters.

Over the target: 8/10 cloud cover, with occasional gaps; cumulonimbus clouds with peaks as high as 5,000 meters; cloud cover beginning at 200 to 300 meters in rainy areas, otherwise at 500 to 800 meters; adjoining mountain area enveloped in clouds.

VIII. THE AMERICAN ATTACK ON BRAUNSCHWEIG, 10 February 1944

(see Figure 107, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

Beginning at 0830 the assembling of an American bomber force over the British Isles was reported. At 1010 the attackers took off--approximately 300 bombers, accompanied by an escort of 200 single and 50 twin-engine fighter aircraft. Crossing the coast between Den Helder and The Hague, the group moved on towards the east over Cloppenburg, Rheine, Soltau, and Minden into the Braunschweig area. The fighter escort split into two groups at the German border, one group reversing its course in two sections, one at 1104 and the other at 1140, and the other group remaining with the bombers as far as Hannover and Braunschweig. After dropping their bombs, with limited sight, on Braunschweig, at 1202 the bombers turned back towards the west. Over Rheine and München-Gladbach, they were picked up by several fighter formations which had come in over the mouth of the Schelde and Den Helder between 1220 and 1250. The last departing aircraft left the Continent between Haarlem and the mouth of the Schelde at 1340. The

damage inflicted on Braunschweig by the attack was relatively slight.

In addition to the attack described above, the American Air Forces carried out the following actions:

Between 1116 and 1216, several fighter aircraft penetrated as far as Münster, approaching by way of The Hague.

A single reconnaissance aircraft flew over Ringkoebing at 1329, on over the islands of Samsö and Seeland as far as Stralsund. It returned via the Bay of Kiel and the island of Amrum at 1509.

Between 1345 and 1413, a group of twenty-five single-engine aircraft penetrated into the area of The Hague and Haderwijk.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

The following forces were employed:

Units from the 1st Fighter Division, over Braunschweig,

Units from the 2d Fighter Division, over Soltau and Hannover, and

Units from the 3d Fighter Division, over Diepholz and Bremen.

Despite the stormy weather, all the fighter divisions were able to carry out their assemblies according to plan, and the close combat formations were able to stage repeated attacks on the American bomber formation. Aerial combat with American fighter aircraft over Bremen, Braunschweig, and Osnabrück was violent and resulted in heavy losses for our units. Due to poor bombing visibility and the successful attack by our fighter units on the bomber stream, the American attack on Braunschweig was robbed of full effectiveness.

A total number of 303 single and twin-engine fighter aircraft was employed by the I Fighter Corps.

c. Allied Losses

43 bombers and 28 fighter aircraft certainly brought down,

5 bombers and 6 fighter aircraft probably brought down.

102

d. German Losses (as of 2300, 10 February)

30 aircraft totally destroyed,
 16 aircraft more than 60% damaged,
 personnel: 3 wounded
 33 missing in action.

e. Weather Conditions

Area covered by the 2d and 3d Fighter Divisions: 5/10 to 10/10
 cover of nimbus clouds with scattered snow flurries; high-altitude visibility good.

Area covered by the 1st Fighter Division: 10/10 cloud cover and intermittent snowfall; cloud cover beginning at 100 to 300 meters and extending up to 5,000 meters;

Over the target: cloud cover varying between 7/10 and 10/10.

IX. THE AMERICAN ATTACK ON FRANKFURT/MAIN, 11 February 1944

(see Figure 108, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

Beginning at 0830 German radio reconnaissance reported the assembling of an American bomber force in the vicinity of Ipswich. At 1010 the 300 bombers and 270 fighter aircraft making up the group took off towards the southeast and flew over Belgium, the Eifel area, and Luxembourg into the Frankfurt/Main and Mannheim area. They crossed the coast between the mouth of the Schelde and Dunkirk. At Traben-Trarbach, part of the fighter escort reversed its course at about 1111. Beginning at 1145, the fighter formations assigned to pick up the returning bombers made their appearance between the mouth of the Schelde and Calais. A few formations flew on as far as St. Trond, and the rest into the Rhine river area. At 1229 the bombers, having bombarded Frankfurt, returned towards the west and northwest, flying over the coast between Dunkirk and Dieppe. The last

aircraft were reported leaving the Continent at 1400. Sight bombing was possible during most of the attack on Frankfurt, and the damage to both industrial plants and private property was very great.

In addition to the attack on Frankfurt/Main, the American Air Forces carried out the following actions:

Between 1407 and 1430 a single aircraft flew over the mouth of the Schelde and on as far as the Utrecht area.

From 1700 to 1710 four aircraft flew along the coast from Den Helder as far as the island of Texel.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

The following forces were employed:

Units from the 1st and 2d Fighter Divisions, over Frankfurt/Main, and Units from the 3d Fighter Division, over Bonn and Koblenz.

Weather conditions were so bad that our units encountered great difficulty in reaching their appointed place of commitment; several groups were forced to return to their bases. Only seventy aircraft were able to participate in combat over Koblenz and Frankfurt.

A total number of 187 single and twin-engine fighter aircraft ~~was~~^{was} committed by the I Fighter Corps.

c. Allied Losses

3 bombers and 10 fighter aircraft certainly brought down,

1 bomber and 12 fighter aircraft probably brought down.

d. German Losses (as of 0900, 12 February)

12 aircraft totally destroyed,

5 aircraft more than 60% damaged,

personnel: 2 dead

2 wounded

16 missing in action.

e. Weather Conditions

Loosely scattered nimbus clouds between 500 to 700 meters and 2,000 to 3,000 meters; cloud cover dammed up against the mountains.

Over the target: cloud cover varying between 4/10 and 9/10, with large gaps torn by strong south winds.

f. Remarks

On 12 February 1944, Major Beyer, Commanding Officer of the IV Group, 3d Single-Engine Fighter Wing, was killed in action. He had brought down a total of eighty-one enemy aircraft and had been awarded the Knights' Cross of the Iron Cross.

X. THE AMERICAN ATTACK ON BRAUNSCHWEIG, 20 February 1944

(see Figure 109, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

20 February marked the beginning of the Anglo-American large-scale air offensive against the Reich.

The first assemblies of American aircraft were reported in the Ipswich and Norwich areas. The American offensive operation on 20 February was carried out in the following phases:

At 0955 a group of some one hundred bombers (twin-engine) flew over the mouth of the Schelde at an altitude of 5,300 meters, and attacked targets on the island of Schouwen. At 1041 they flew back out to sea. As far as we could discern, this action had no particular purpose.

Another group, consisting of approximately 150 bombers, was also reported approaching at 0955, its position about 120 kilometers west of Den Helder and its course towards the northeast. This group crossed the southern part of the North Sea, reaching the coast of Jutland between the islands of Fanø and Sylt, and detouring over the islands of Fünen and Seeland to attack targets in the Greifswald and Stralsund areas. At 1315 the American

bomber force crossed the Bay of Kiel flying towards the northwest and left Jutland between Husum and Esbjerg at 1503.

The lead aircraft of the main American attacking force appeared at 1059 at a point approximately 200 kilometers west of Katwijk, their flight course towards the east. This force consisted of 450 bombers, accompanied by a fighter escort. After crossing the coast between Ijmuiden and Hoek van Holland, the bombers flew on to Braunschweig, Magdeburg, Dessau, and Halle, their northern flank moving over Cloppenburg and Nienburg, and the southern one over Münster, and Bielefeld. A part of the fighter escort, which consisted of 300 single and 100 twin-engine fighter aircraft, left the bombers at 1245 over the Rhine area. The first bomber formations to leave the target area departed at 1335, heading towards the west and southwest. The returning bombers were picked up by a fighter escort over Kassel and Frankfurt/Main, the escort having flown in beginning at 1309 between the mouth of the Schelde and Galais. Widely scattered on their return flight, the bomber formations flew over western Germany, Holland, and Belgium towards the Channel coast and crossed it between Den Helder and Etaples, the last aircraft leaving the Continent at 1548. The bombardment, directed chiefly at aircraft plants in the vicinity of Braunschweig, Bernburg, and Gotha, had not been particularly concentrated, although a great deal of property damage was caused.

At 1140 several aircraft, flying between 3,000 and 4,000 meters, crossed the coast between Hoek van Holland and the mouth of the Schelde, and penetrated as far as the Ruhr District before reversing their course and flying back over the mouth of the Schelde. A few of these aircraft flew on as far as the target area and joined the bombers; apparently their mission was to ascertain the effectiveness of the attack.

At 1714 approximately sixty American aircraft were reported thirty

kilometers north of the island of Terschelling, with course towards the east. They reversed their course over the Bay of Helgoland and returned towards the west, their last position reading (at 1807) being northwest of the island of Texel. Observers were unable to determine the purpose of this flight; it is assumed that the aircraft were engaged in a sea-rescue mission.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

The following forces were employed:

Against the enemy penetration flights in the north:

day fighter units and some night fighter aircraft from the 1st Fighter Division, over Greifswald and Stralsund,

a few night fighter aircraft from the 2d Fighter Division, over Schleswig-Holstein, against the returning bombers.

During the main American attack:

Units from the 2d Fighter Division, over Braunschweig and Harz,

Units from the 3d Fighter Division, over Münster.

Weather conditions precluded the assembling of our aircraft into large closed combat formations. Some of our smaller formations succeeded in contacting the enemy, and became involved in heavy combat with American fighter aircraft. The casualty rate was very high.

A total of 362 single and twin-engine fighters and night fighters were employed, only 155 of which managed to participate in combat.

c. Allied Losses

27 bombers and 8 fighter aircraft certainly brought down,

15 bombers and 6 fighter aircraft probably brought down.

d. German Losses (as of 1100, 21 February)

28 aircraft completely destroyed,

21 aircraft more than 60% damaged

107

personnel: 10 dead

19 wounded

34 missing in action.

e. Weather Conditions

South of the line: southern Zuyder Zee - Bremen - Neurippen, and north of the line: coast of the Bay of Helgoland - Neumünster - Greifswald, the cloud cover was 10/10, between 300 to 500 meters (as low as 150 meters in some areas) and 1,000 meters (as high as 1,500 to 1,800 meters along the mountain range); danger of icing in the clouds; in the mountains and foothills there were light snowfalls; in the area lying directly between the two lines indicated above, predominantly clear and ~~cloudless~~ cloudless.

Over Stralsund: 10/10 cloud cover between 500 meters and 1,000 meters.

Over Braunschweig and Dessau: cloud cover varying between 4/10 and 10/10 between 500 meters and 1,500 meters; high-altitude mists.

XI. THE AMERICAN ATTACK ON CENTRAL GERMANY, 21 February 1944

(see Figure 110, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

At 1222 several hundred American bombers, accompanied by a large fighter escort, flew over the Dutch coast between The Hague and Den Helder. They flew towards the east over the Zuyder Zee and Hannover as far as the areas of Braunschweig, Magdeburg, and Halberstadt. Here they circled, seeking an opportunity for sight bombing. Finding none, they discharged their bombs over a widely scattered area, and left the target zone at 1420. Over Osnabrück, at 1350, they turned and headed back to the British Isles. A fighter aircraft force, which had penetrated as far as Vechta and Osnabrück, crossing the coast between Den Helder and Katwijk between 1325 and 1400, picked up the returning bombers over Osnabrück and accompanied them back to their home bases. The last aircraft departed from the Continent

between Den Helder and the mouth of the Schelde at 1605.

In addition to the action described above, the American Air Forces carried out the following operations:

One Mosquito aircraft, apparently on a reconnaissance mission, penetrated as far as the Emden area. It appeared over Zandvoort at 1215, flew on over Zwolle, Assen, and Emden, and returned the way it had come at 1245.

Between 1445 and 1551 a group of approximately forty ~~Mosquito~~ fighter aircraft flew over the mouth of the Schelde and circled above Breda and Hertogenbosch.

One Mosquito aircraft was observed on a reconnaissance mission over southern Bavaria. It crossed the mouth of the Somme at 1210, and flew on over Metz and Ulm as far as Munich and the area immediately south of Munich. Its last reported position on the way home was over Altötting, at 1405.

At 1302 two Mosquito aircraft passed over Husum, Kiel, Rostock and Neubrandenburg, apparently also on a reconnaissance mission. It departed, leaving the Continent between Westerland and Esbjerg, at 1445.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

The following forces were employed:

Units from the 1st Fighter Division, over Braunschweig and Mag^{de}burg,

Units from the 2d Fighter Division, over Braunschweig and Hannover, and

Units from the 3d Fighter Division, over Osnabrück and Bremen.

Low-hanging clouds and poor visibility delayed the take-off of those units stationed in the southern sector of the areas assigned to the 2d and 1st Fighter Divisions, and as a result the 3d Single-~~Engine~~Engine Fighter Wing and the 26th Twin-Engine Fighter Wing arrived late at their appointed place of employment.

A total number of 282 single and twin-engine fighter aircraft was employed by the I Fighter Corps.

c. Allied Losses

20 bombers and 7 fighters certainly brought down

5 bombers and 2 fighters probably brought down.

d. German Losses

11 aircraft totally destroyed

14 aircraft more than 60% damaged

personnel: 6 dead

9 wounded

14 missing in action.

e. Weather Conditions

Clouds dispersing gradually in the face of winds moving from the north as far as a line from the mouth of the Weser via Hamburg to Stettin; light snowfall south of this line; cloud cover between 200 to 500 meters and 1,000 to 1,500 meters; visibility above the cloud cover, 50 to 100 kilometers; ground visibility three to ten kilometers; at the time of the attack, central Germany was covered by an impenetrable cloud layer, its peaks reaching as high as 1,500 meters.

XII. THE AMERICAN ATTACK ON OSCHERSLEBEN AND BERNBERG, 22 February 1944

(see Figure 111, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

Since 0815 German radio reconnaissance agencies had been reporting on the assembling of an American bomber force over Great Britain. Taking off at 1010, several smaller formations of Marauders (approximately 100 aircraft in all), accompanied by a fighter escort, flew over Rotterdam as far as the areas of Breda and Antwerp, where they bombarded the airfields at Gilze Rijen and Tilburg. On their return flight, the last bombers were reported over Antwerp at 1102.

The main force, totalling some 500 bombers and a great many fighter

aircraft, followed at 1118, crossing the coast between Katwijk and the mouth of the Schelde. Moving directly towards the east, the bombers flew on to Braunschweig, Magdeburg, Halle, and Oschersleben. They bombarded aircraft plants in Bernburg and Oschersleben, causing severe damage.

The bomber formations departed from the target area at 1430, headed towards the west, and, flying in loose formation, crossed the Channel coast between Bergen and Calais. The last aircraft left the Continent at 1630.

The fighter escort of approximately 400 aircraft remained with the bombers throughout their approach flight, some of the escort aircraft even following into the target area. The rest of them left the bombers at 1213 over southern Holland and headed for home. Beginning at 1250, several formations of Lightnings appeared to take up escort duty over the target area. At 1302 another wave of fighter aircraft appeared between IJmuiden and the mouth of the Schelde. This wave penetrated as far as the Münster area and there, at 1340, reversed their course. From 1354 on, additional fighter formations, coming in over the mouth of the Schelde and making a detour towards the south-east over Koblenz, flew on to Marburg to pick up the returning bombers for the flight home.

In addition to the activity noted above, the American Air Forces based in Italy carried out ~~xxxx~~ an attack on the air armament plant at Regensburg.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

The following forces were employed:

Units from the 1st Fighter Division, over Magdeburg,

Units from the 2d Fighter Division, over Harz and Kassel, and

Units from the 3d Fighter Division, over Bielefeld and Paderborn.

Since weather conditions were favorable and high-altitude visibility good, our assembly maneuvers were carried out smoothly and without interference from the enemy. Although, on the whole, the American fighter escort

was a strong one, during the time from 1350 * until 1415 the bomber formations were flying without escort. Thus our fighter aircraft, approaching from the north, were able to make repeated attacks on the bombers and succeeded in bringing down a goodly number, while keeping their own losses to a reasonable minimum. Despite this successful interval during the over-all action, the day fighter units of the I Fighter Corps were unable to prevent the American attack on central Germany.

A total number of 332 single and twin-engine fighter aircraft was employed by the I Fighter Corps.

There is no record available of any employment on the part of the 7th Fighter Division or the Air Commander (Ostmark) against the American attack on Regensburg.

c. Allied Losses

55 bombers and 10 fighters certainly brought down

6 bombers and 3 fighters probably brought down.

d. German Losses (as of 1200, 23 February)

11 aircraft totally destroyed

16 aircraft more than 60% damaged

personnel: 6 dead

5 wounded

17 missing in action.

e. Weather Conditions

North of the line: Cologne - Kassel - Braunschweig - Jüterbog:
predominantly clear, scattered clouds at 1,000 meters and at 4,000 meters.

South of the line indicated above: an almost impenetrable cover of stratus clouds, their peaks reaching as high as 1,500 and 2,000 meters; high-altitude visibility good; high-altitude winds from 60-70⁰, velocity 80 kilometers per hour.

Over the target area: scattered clouds.

f. Remarks

On 22 February 1944, Captain Tratt, Commanding Officer of the II Group, 26th Twin-Engine Fighter Wing, was killed in action. He had brought down a total of thirty-eight enemy aircraft, and had been awarded the Knights' Cross of the Iron Cross.

XIII. THE AMERICAN ATTACKS ON SCHWEINFURT, GOTHA, ROSTOCK, GNESEN, and STEYR,

24 February 1944

(see Figure 112, Annex)

The fourth day after the beginning of the Anglo-American air offensive marked its peak. According to German sources, the American Air Forces committed a total of 960 bombers and 680 fighter aircraft on that day (24 February).

1,360 of these aircraft appeared in the area covered by the I Fighter Corps, where they were met by a total of 336 German aircraft. The latter figure includes second sorties by both daytime and night fighter aircraft.

a. Enemy Activity

American air activity on 24 February was carried out in the following stages:

1. Attacks by ~~Marauder~~ Marauder bombers on German night fighter airfields in Holland:

The first attack was carried out by a force of approximately sixty aircraft on the airfield at Gilze Rijen between 0943 and 1056. The course of their approach and return flights led over the mouth of the Schelde.

The second attack, also by a force of about sixty aircraft, was directed against the airfield at Beelen and lasted from 0957 until 1055. The invaders approached their target from The Hague, and departed via Amsterdam.

The third attack, again by a group of some sixty aircraft, was on the

airfield at Leeuwarden. Approaching over Den Helder, the Marauders bombarded the airfield between 0957 and 1048, and returned to their home bases via the island of Vlieland.

In all three instances, the Marauders were protected by American fighter escorts. The invaders flew at an altitude of 3,500 to 3,600 meters.

2. Diversionary attack by about 200 bombers on air armament works at Rostock and Gnesen:

At 1016, the American bomber formations were reported some 120 kilometers west of the island of Texel, with course towards the northeast. Their continued flight across the southern part of the North Sea could also be followed by our radar equipment. After crossing the coast between Esbjerg and Husum, the bombers turned towards the southeast and divided into two groups. The first of these flew on over the Bay of Kiel into the Rostock and Stralsund area, and the second over the Haff of Stettin, Stargard, and Schneidemühl to Gnesen. The following targets were bombarded:

aircraft plants in Rostock-Marienehe (beginning at 1240), by a force of 120 bombers, and

the aircraft plant at Gnesen (beginning at 1404), by a force of approximately eighty bombers.

After discharging their bomb-loads, the American invaders started their return flight towards the northwest, crossing the western portion of the Baltic Sea, and the coast of Jutland between Esbjerg and the island of Sylt between 1441 and 1633.

The damage in Rostock and Gnesen was relatively slight.

3. The main attack, carried out by a force of 400 bombers (with a fighter escort of 600 aircraft) on industrial installations in Gotha and Schweinfurt:

At 1109 the main force took off from bases in Great Britain.

Crossing the coast between the island of Texel and The Hague, they pushed on towards the southeast and south over Münster and Rheine as far as Nordhausen, Erfurt, Schweinfurt, and Kassel. Since the weather was clear and high-altitude visibility excellent, the bombers were able to attack their ~~key~~ targets in Gotha and Schweinfurt with great precision, and caused a great deal of damage. The first aircraft departed from the target area at 1330, flying over Würzburg, Darmstadt, Cologne, and Giessen, and crossing the Channel coast between the mouth of the Schelde and Berck s.M. The last bombers left the coast behind them at 1530. The ~~first~~ ^{first} groups making up the fighter escort left the bombers as follows and returned home:

at 1216, northwest of Meppel,

at 1233, over Meppen, and Osnabrück, and

at 1250, south of Hannover.

Several fighter formations, which had flown in over the coast between the mouth of the Schelde and Dunkirk between 1316 and 1440, picked up the returning bombers over Mainz, Giessen, Cologne and Liège. In the target area itself, the bombers were protected by formations of Lightning aircraft.

4. Secondary attacks on air armaments works in Steyr and Linz from the American bases in Italy:

Secondary attacks were carried out by a total of 160 bombers and 80 Lightning fighters. At 1123 the invaders were reported over Split, headed towards the north. They flew on over Zara and into the Salzburg and Linz areas. Their return flight, following the same course as was used during the approach flight, began at 1325. The damage caused by the attacks was fairly serious.

5. In addition to the above, the following air actions were noted:

Between 0829 and 0832 a single aircraft was reported flying over the Katwijk area.

At 1052 a single Lightning flew over Bergen on its way via Zwolle and

Nordhorn to the Osnabrück area. The airplane, presumably on a weather reconnaissance mission, turned back towards the west at 1125.

Approaching at 1043 over Ostende, Brussels, and St. Vith, a single Mosquito reconnoitered the Mainz area and flew back towards the west. Its flight course was lost over Darmstadt at 1141.

At 1127 a single Lightning reconnaissance aircraft flew over the island of Texel on its way to the Oldenburg area. Departing at 1216, it returned over the island of Schiermonnikoog.

Between 1136 and 1318 a group of three fighter aircraft penetrated as far as the Duisburg and Düsseldorf area. Their approach course led over Westerschelde and Eindhoven, and their return course over Dunkirk.

Approaching from the island of Terschelling at 1145, a single aircraft pushed on to reconnoiter the Bremen area. It departed at 1217.

At 1540 a reconnaissance aircraft flew over the island of Goeree and on to Dordrecht, where it was lost to observers.

The Lake Constance area was reconnoitered by American aircraft which had flown in over Metz and Strassburg at about 1320. The aircraft departed via Ulm at 1427.

Between 1542 and 1654 a group of fifteen Thunderbolt fighter aircraft penetrated into the Eindhoven area. They had approached over the island of Walcheren, and returned over Apeldoorn and Hoek van Holland.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

The following forces were employed:

During the attack on Rostock and Gnesen:

Units from the 1st Fighter Division, over Rostock,

Several formations from the 2d Fighter Division, over the Bay of Lübeck, and

Night fighter formations from the 1st and 2d Fighter Divisions, over

Jutland, Greifswald, and Stettin.

During the main American attack:

26th Twin-Engine Fighter Wing from the 2d Fighter Division, over Halberstadt and Gotha, and

Units from the 3d Fighter Division, over Paderborn and Kassel.

All of our day fighter units were able to carry out their combat assembly maneuvers successfully. Some fighter formations succeeded in finding and attacking American bomber formations which were flying without fighter escort, over Holzminden and Göttingen. The majority of our single and twin-engine fighter aircraft experienced at least some combat with American fighter aircraft. It should be emphasized that all of our daytime fighter crews, despite the mental and physical strain caused by their almost steady commitment since the start of the American air offensive, fought stubbornly and courageously in the face of overwhelming American numerical superiority. Although their record of enemy aircraft destroyed ^{was} ~~is~~ worthy of admiration, they were unable to prevent the American attack from attaining its full effectiveness.

A total number of 336 single and twin-engine fighters and night fighter aircraft was committed by the I Fighter Corps.

There is no record in the War Diary, I Fighter Corps, of any commitment on the part of the 7th Fighter Division or the Air Commander (Ostmark) against the American attacks on Steyr and Linz.

c. Allied Losses

52 bombers and 7 fighters certainly brought down,

1 bomber and 1 fighter probably brought down.

d. German Losses

26 aircraft totally destroyed,

12 aircraft more than 60% damaged

117

personnel: 3 dead

9 wounded

27 missing in action.

e. Weather Conditions

Cloudless.

117A

Night Fighter Aircraft Attack in a Day Action over

Stettin,

24 February 1944

XIV. AMERICAN ATTACKS ON AUGSBURG, REGENSBURG, and FÜRTH, 25 February
1944

(see Figure 113, Annex)

A. Enemy Activity

Beginning at 0900, reports were received regarding the assembling of American formations over the British Isles. With all the participating formations apparently taking off at the same time, the attack force split into ^{two} ~~three~~ groups as follows:

At 1109 the first aircraft of a bomber force consisting of approximately 200 aircraft were reported some 100 kilometers northwest of the island of Vlieland, with course towards the northeast.

The second group, consisting of 500 bombers, appeared at 1110 over Dieppe and the mouth of the Somme, with course towards the east southeast.

At approximately the same time, at 1110, a group of 200 bombers, accompanied by 80 Lightning fighters, was reported over Klagenfurt, with course towards the north. This group came from the American base in Italy.

At 1220 it was realized that the group moving across the southern part of the North Sea was engaged in a diversionary maneuver. While still over water, approximately seventy kilometers west of the island of Sylt and Esbjerg, the American bombers reversed their course and headed back to Great Britain. Although it was first assumed that their mission was to mine the waters off the western coast of Jutland, this seems improbable. On their flight towards the west, the returning bombers were reported 100 kilometers north of the island of ~~Terschelling~~ Terschelling at 1346.

In the meantime the second group had crossed northern France and the Rhine River (between Mannheim and Karlsruhe) and had launched their attack on the aircraft factories in Augsburg, Regensburg, and Fürth. At

1350 the American bombers departed from southern Germany and headed for the coast, some of them via Darmstadt and Aix la Chapelle, and the rest via Karlsruhe, Saarbrücken, and Strassburg. They crossed the coast between the mouth of the Schelde and Dieppe. The bomber operation was supported by a force of some 500 fighter aircraft, as follows:

At 1215 several Lightning formations approached between the mouth of the Schelde and Bruges and flew on over Koblenz and Darmstadt to join the bombers over Mannheim and Ansbach.

At 1235 a single fighter formation flew over the mouth of the Schelde and continued towards the southeast as far as Bad Kreuznach. Here the aircraft reversed their course and returned, crossing the coast between Calais and the mouth of the Schelde. The bomber aircraft were picked up by an escort of approximately 100 fighters over Koblenz and Traben-Trarbach at 1445. These fighters had come in over the mouth of the Schelde and Brussels beginning at 1405.

The third of the groups mentioned above, the one from Italy, approached Germany over Linz, Austria, and attacked the Messerschmitt works at Regensburg at 1300.

All the aircraft factories attacked on 25 February suffered heavy damages.

In addition to the above, the American Air Forces carried out the following actions:

Between 0815 and 0824, two Spitfires were reported flying at about 2,600 meters above the island of Walcheren.

From 0846 to 0917, two aircraft were observed circling over the mouth of the Schelde.

At 0944 a single aircraft flew over the island of Goeree and on over Amsterdam and Utrecht as far as Arnheim. At 1039 it returned towards the

west over Katwijk.

Approaching at 0945 over Bruges and Antwerp, a single aircraft reconnoitered the Maastricht area, and flew back at 1012 over Brussels.

Between 1005 and 1038 several fighter aircraft, approaching from the mouth of the Schelde, penetrated as far as Venlo, Hamm, Aix la Chapelle, and Liège. They returned towards the west, passing between Rotterdam and Bruges, the last aircraft leaving the Continent at 1113.

The Münster and Paderborn areas were the object of a reconnaissance flight by a single Mosquito aircraft. It appeared at 1115 over Katwijk, and flew on over Arnheim; its return flight course was over Osnabrück, Zwolle, and the Zuyder Zee, at which point it left the Continent at 1223.

Approaching at 1113 over the mouth of the Schelde, a single Mosquito aircraft flew on over Volkel as far as Duisburg and Herne, apparently engaged on a reconnaissance mission. It returned to the west, flying over Brussels and Ghent at approximately 1217.

Between 1809 and 1812 a single aircraft was observed circling over Katwijk and Hoek van Holland.

During the time from 1510 to 1539, one Mosquito aircraft flew from Mühlhausen to Switzerland, crossing Friedrichshafen and St. Gallen.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

In expectation of a large-scale attack on targets in northern Germany, the day fighter units of the 1st and 2d Fighter Divisions were placed on alert status but not sent up. Thus the American diversionary maneuver over the North Sea may be reckoned a success.

The following units were employed during the attack on Augsburg:

Units from the 3d Fighter Division, over Mainz and Mannheim.

The fighters from the 3d Fighter Division were sent up just in time

to catch the last of the American bombers on their approach flight over the Karlsruhe area. Although the original plan called for a second sortie for these fighter aircraft as soon as they had refueled, this plan was not carried out.

All things considered, 25 February must be chalked up as a failure for the I Fighter Corps.

A total of 100 single-engine fighter aircraft were employed.

There is no record in the War Diary of the I Fighter Corps of any commitment on the part of the 7th ~~air~~ Fighter Division or of the Air Commander (Ostmark) in connection with the American attack on aircraft works located in southern Germany.

c. Allied Losses

6 bombers certainly brought down,

3 bombers probably brought down.

d. German Losses (as of 1200, 26 February 1944)

5 fighter aircraft totally destroyed,

1 fighter aircraft more than 60% damaged,

personnel: 2 wounded

5 missing in action.

e. Weather Conditions

Cloudless.

XV. THE AMERICAN ATTACK ON BRAUNSCHWEIG, 29 February 1944

(see Figure 114, Annex)

a. Enemy Activity

By 0800 German radio reconnaissance had picked up the assembling of an American attacking force over Great Britain. Beginning at 0940, the first bomber formations crossed the Dutch coast between Den Helder and the mouth of the Schelde. The bombers, accompanied by a

fighter escort, were headed towards the east. They flew on over Oldenburg, Verden, Hameln, and Münster to the Braunschweig area. Sight bombardment was impossible, and the attack, carried out by some 200 bombers, resulted in comparatively slight damage. At 1100 a part of the fighter escort had broken away from the bombers, over Osnabrück, and returned towards the west. The majority of the fighters remained with the bomber force as far as Celle and Lüneburg. At 1115 the first bombers began leaving the target area. Eye-and-ear observation stations reported that motor noise stopped at 1311 in the area between The Hague and the island of Terschelling. Between 1100 and 1205 fighter escorts had flown in over Den Helder and Katwijk, and picked up the returning bombers over the Minden area. The "Big Week" of the American offensive during February 1944 was concluded by a penetration flight by a group of some thirty fighter aircraft. Between 1229 and 1322, they appeared over the mouth of the Schelde, as usual, and flew on as far as the Gilze Rijen area.

b. Commitment of Aircraft by the I Fighter Corps

Due to an enveloping fog, which covered the entire area assigned to the I Fighter Corps, no aircraft were committed on 29 February.

c. Allied Losses

Could not be determined.

d. German Losses

None.