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Three Documents issued by the Supreme Command of the German Air Force Operations Staff (Intelligence - Foreign Air Forces West) concerning the G.A.F. raid on Allied Airfields in Belgium and Holland on 1 January 1945.

- (1) Express Pictorial Report by Intelligence Service West - dated 27.1.45.
- (2) Memorandum on Attacks on British and American airfields - dated 25.2.45.
- (3) Foreign Comments on Air Warfare, No. 2 - The German Air Attack on Allied Airfields in the West on 1 January 1945 - dated 4.3.45.

Translated by A.H.B.6.
May 1960

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Supreme Command of the G.A.F.
Operations Staff Ic Fremde Luftwaffe West * (1)

Express Pictorial Report by Intelligence Service West * (2)

No. 26/45 of 27 January 1945 - for Official Use only.

The Attack on Allied Airfields on 1 January 1945

Strong German air forces attacked Allied airfields in southern Holland and northern Belgium on 1 January 1945.

The enemy press and radio classified this unexpected attack as a further sign of the GAF's revival, but in other respects remained completely silent about losses.

(1) Results

German aerial photographs give proof of the success achieved.

In all, 402 aircraft were destroyed, these being:

- according to aerial photographs at 8 airfields -
279 aircraft (239 single-, 21 twin and 19 four-engined)
- according to visual reports at a further 7 airfields -
123 aircraft (113 single-, 7 twin- and 3 four engined).

The following were damaged:

- according to visual reports at 15 airfields -
114 aircraft (106 single-, 6 twin- and 2 four engined).

77 aircraft were shot down in air battles:

55 proven claims
12 probables

Accordingly, total losses amount to: 479 aircraft destroyed
114 aircraft damaged.

It may definitely be assumed that further unobserved losses occurred.

(2) Direct Effects

The British close-support effort was set back for a limited period. Considerable fighter forces were tied down for the purpose of driving off similar German attacks. Flying was impeded during the first days of January as a result of oil storage depots being burnt out, restricted landing at airfields, re-routing of aircraft, and the re-call of air transports.

Certified True Copy

? (signature illegible)

Major i.G. * (3)

By order

Wodarg

Oberst i.G. * (3)

* (1) See note on p.1 of Foreign Comments on Air Warfare.

* (2) Aerial photographs of Eindhoven and Ghent - St Denis A/F's only after the operation are attached to the German text and may be examined if required.

* (3) General Staff Officer.

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GAF Operations Staff Io.*
 Fremde Luftwaffen West*
 No. 1160/45 Top Secret.

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HQ, 25 February 1945.

Memorandum

Subject: Attacks on British and American Airfields

A The Attack on Allied Airfields in Southern Holland and Northern Belgium on 1 January 1945

I Enemy Losses according to German Reports

(1) Enemy Losses at Airfields:

According to final German findings, results of the operation on 1 January 1945 were as follows:

destroyed on the ground: 402 aircraft, these being:

according to photographic reconnaissance at 8 airfields:

279 aircraft (239 single-engined, 21 twin-engined and 19 four-engined)

According to visual reports at another 7 airfields:

123 aircraft (113 single-engined, 7 twin-engined and 3 four engined).

Damaged:

according to visual reports at 15 airfields:

114 aircraft (106 single-engined, 6 twin-engined and 2 four-engined).

(2) Enemy Losses in Air Battles:

According to unit reports: 65 "certain claims"
 12 "probables"

On this basis, total losses amount to: 479 aircraft destroyed
 114 " damaged.

II Enemy Losses according to Enemy Sources

(1) Losses on the Ground:

Ground losses were immediately made the subject of a strict news blackout and orders were also issued for complete silence to be maintained at the airfields which had been attacked.

Nevertheless, it was evident from press reports that the losses had not been insignificant. A few POW's who had been stationed at airfields which had been attacked who had fallen into our hands in the meantime and who were to a partial extent, willing to talk, had only heard rumours about total Allied losses. These rumours approximately confirm German reports on results.

N.B. See notes on p.1 of 'Foreign Comments on Air Warfare'

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Interrogation Centre West reports on attacks on individual airfields are gathered together in the Appendix. Generally speaking, statements made roughly confirm German unit reports, with the exception of the attack on Volkel airfield. In this case account must be taken of the possibility that the attack was, in fact, made on another airfield.

(2) Losses in Air Combat

Daventry announced that enemy losses in air combat were 25 aircraft, and that 20 of the pilots are safe. Although there is a possibility that not all of the aircraft which we shot down in the air are included in this figure, there still remains a considerable discrepancy between this and the 65 "certain claims" made by the Germans. It should be pointed out, however, that in all air battles involving heavy losses on both sides the enemy's losses are generally overrated to an appreciable extent in both German and Anglo-American unit reports.

III German Losses - (Details not stated).*

IV Assessment of the Attack on 1 January 1945

(1) Employment of the GAF

Secrecy: The element of surprise was fully maintained, although the enemy had been anticipating an attack on his overcrowded airfields for a considerable time.

Time of the Operation: At the time of the German incursion a large number of Allied fighter and fighter-bomber formations were already in the air and it was therefore no longer possible to attack them at their airfields.

Flight-Route Planning: A large number of fighter formations flew along main supply routes and over the cities of Liege, Brussels and Antwerp with their V1 defence zones, that is to say over prominent AA artillery concentrations. These formations had therefore already been effectively engaged by AA artillery during the approach. They

N.B.* In the German text provision is made for figures of personnel dead or missing. Total aircraft losses (missing or more than 60% damaged) and German aircraft engaged in the operation. Spaces are left blank for the figures themselves, which in the A.H.B. Copy of the text have not been filled in.

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suffered countless losses and were broken up, the result being that the operational objectives were reached either not at all or only by small elements.

Target-location: A number of specified objectives were not attacked. Many forced landings were made during the formations' return to base.

2) The Enemy's Reaction

a) The Allied Aircraft Reporting Service

The Allied Aircraft Reporting Service was late in identifying the German formations during their approach.

Information was first obtained from unit aircraft reporting services (visual/aural) and from visual reports by enemy formations already in the air. The radar organisation did not locate the formation until they were over Belgian and Dutch territory.

Considerable confusion arose in the identification of friend and foe and impeded the employment of enemy fighter formations.

b) Employment of Allied Air Defence Forces

Fighter Defence: There were already 12 RAF fighter squadrons in the air when the German incursion started and violent encounters developed even while the German formations were making their approach.

The absence or lateness of preliminary warning caused delay in sending fighters still on the ground into action. However, as the airfields were frozen solid, the aircraft were able to take off from their dispersal points and did not need to be brought up to the taxiing area first of all. For the most part, the German aircraft were not engaged until they were returning to base, when the enemy attempted first and foremost to cut the formations off or attack them while landing.

AA Artillery: Despite the absence of any early warning, AA defence was very strong along the approach routes and also went into action at airfields after a brief period. According to enemy reports, two-thirds of all enemy aircraft destroyed were brought down by AA. artillery.

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(3) Losses

With all available information taken into consideration, the enemy's losses can be assumed to have been some 500 aircraft destroyed.

(a) Losses in Material

As German losses amounted to 270 aircraft, the ratio between German and enemy aircraft losses is more favourable than in operations against enemy fighter-bombers and low-flying aircraft in the air and appreciably more favourable than in operations against enemy large-scale attacks.

Worthy of notice, however, is the unfavourable ratio of losses in the air battles which took place while our formations were returning to base.

(b) Casualties

The ratio of German to enemy pilots lost in the attacks must be regarded as exceptionally unfavourable. Although the enemy has large aircrew reserves at his disposal, the question of casualties is the most serious factor in the enemy's policy of air warfare.

(4) Results

- (a) The employment of fighters on defensive patrols over a number of airfields was observed as from 1 January 1945.
- (b) According to prisoners' statements, AA defences at airfields were reinforced.
- (c) A long-lasting weakening of the striking power of enemy fighter and fighter-bomber formations was not achieved.
- (d) The opinion of the British technical journal "Aeroplane" is typical of the British assessment of the attack:

"The attack was planned better than it was executed."

B Planning of Further Attacks on Airfields in the West

According to prisoners' statements, parking of aircraft at enemy airfields continues to be careless.

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In view of the facts that AA defences at airfields have been reinforced, that a higher degree of readiness for action on the part of fighters must be expected, and that the Aircraft Reporting Service has presumably been re-organised as a result of its failure on 1 January 1945, an increased state of defensive preparedness must be anticipated.

After account is taken of:

- (a) the Allies' large reserves of aircraft,
- (b) their innumerable airfields, and,
- (c) the German forces available,

further attacks cannot be expected to bring about a long-lasting weakening of the enemy's close-support formations.

On the other hand, an attack by strong forces in conjunction with German or enemy ground operations might bring about a short-term disruption of enemy planning and thus result in valuable time being gained. However, in order to avoid appreciable losses it is essential that the operational lessons of 1 January 1945 should be given careful consideration.

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APPENDIX to Ic/No. 145/45 - Top Secret

Ic/Fremde Luftwaffen West B 1*

Evaluation of Attacks on Enemy Ground Organisation on 1 January 1945

		<u>Number of A/c on Airfields</u>	<u>Damage</u>		
		<u>According to* Fr.Lw.West A3</u>	<u>According to Photo- graphic Reconnaissance</u>	<u>According to Visual Observation</u>	<u>According to Photo- graphic Reconnaissance</u>
				<u>Destroyed</u>	<u>Damaged</u>
<u>RAF 1st Tactical Air Force*</u>					
Eindhoven	123, 124 & 143 Fighter Wings & 39 Close-Recon.Wing com- prising 240 Typhoons, 40 Mustangs & 20 Spitfires.	1 Jan - 166 + 2 + 2	53 + 11 + 0	5 + 0 + 1	90 + 0 + 0
Volkel	121, 122, 126 Fighter Wings comprising 80 Typhoons, 100 Tempests & 80 Spitfires.	24 Dec - 88 + 0 + 2	33 + 6 + 0	10 + 0 + 0	
<u>RAF 2nd Tactical Air Force</u>					
Gilze-Rijen		1 Jan - 69 + 1 + 0			25 + 1 + 0
Maldeghem	135 Fighter Wing comprising 80 Spitfires.	1 Jan - 42 + 2 + 0	58 + 3 + 7	29 + 0 + 0	16 + 2 + 0
Ursel		1 Jan - 12 + 1 + 0			6 + 1 + 0
Ghent - St. Denis		1 Jan - 83 + 0 + 4			28 + 0 + 4

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2. - Appendix contd.

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	<u>Number of A/c on Airfields</u>	<u>According to*</u> <u>Fr. Lw. West A3</u>	<u>According to Photo-</u> <u>graphic Reconnaissance</u>	<u>Destroyed</u>	<u>According to</u> <u>Visual Observation</u>	<u>Damaged</u>	<u>According to Photo-</u> <u>graphic Reconnaissance</u>
<u>RAF 2nd Tactical</u> <u>Air Force (with</u> <u>light & medium</u> <u>bombers).</u>							
Grimberghen	132 Fighter Wing comprising 80 Spitfires.	1 Jan - 22 + 0 + 2	}	32 + 22 + 13	}	9 + 6 + 1	6 + 0 + 2
Brussels-Evere		6 Nov. - 64 + 16 + 0					
Melsbroeck	139 Heavy Close-Support Wing comprising 60 Mitchells	1 Jan - 67 + 72 + 38		85 aircraft		40 aircraft	29 + 17 + 13
<u>XXIX US Tactical</u> <u>Air Command</u>							
Le Culot		31 Dec - 64 + 4 + 10		0 + 0 + 3			
Glabbeek		1 Jan - 54 + 0 + 0		13 + 1 + 1		5 + 0 + 0	39 + 0 + 0
St. Trond-South	48, 366, 404 US Fighter & 363 Close-Recon. Groups com- prising 270 Thunderbolts, 60 Mustangs & 30 Lightnings.	25 Dec - 125 + 1 + 8		10 + 0 + 0			
<u>XIX US Tactical</u> <u>Air Command</u>							
Metz		26 Nov - 7 + 2 + 0		26 + 1 + 0		8 + 0 + 0	
Notes:*	Ic/Fremde Luftwaffen West B 1 -) Fremde Luftwaffen West A3 -)	Both B1 and A3 were sub-sections of the G.A.F. Operations Staff (Intelligence-Foreign Air Forces West), but it is not possible to trace from A.H.B.6 records the dates when each carried out.					
	RAF 1st Tactical Air Force -	The formation described as RAF 1st TAF is in fact No. 83 Group of 2nd TAF, which also comprised No. 84 Group (Spitfires) and No. 2 Group (Mitchells).					

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Supreme Command of the GAF
 Operations Staff Ic * (1)
 Fremde Luftwaffen West * (2)
 No. 4479/45 (Secret)

Headquarters, 4 March 1945

Foreign Comments on Air Warfare

No. 2

The German Air Attack on Allied Airfields
 in the West on 1 January 1945

In the present report all information on Operation "Bodenplatte" ^{*(3)} obtained from German and enemy sources has been compiled in finalised form.

I Successes and Losses

- (1) Successes: 479 aircraft destroyed (of which 77 were claimed as shot down in air combat),

114 aircraft damaged.

As most of the losses resulted from destruction on the ground, the enemy's casualties may be estimated as comparatively slight.

- (2) Losses: (the German effort being made by 990 aircraft)

260 killed or missing
 270 aircraft destroyed
 40 aircraft damaged.

- (3) The ratio of German and enemy aircraft losses in Operation "Bodenplatte" is more favourable than in operations against enemy fighter-bombers and low-flying aircraft in the West or in efforts against enemy large-scale attacks in the defence of the Reich.

The loss ratios (proportion of German to enemy losses) in day fighter operations are as follows:

	<u>German Losses</u>		<u>Enemy Losses</u>
(a) Operation "Bodenplatte"	1	:	1.7
(b) Operations against fighter-bombers and low-flying aircraft in the West	3.5	:	1
(c) Operations against large-scale incursions (Air defence of the Reich)	1.9	:	1

(Figures for January 1945)

N.B. * (1) Ic = Intelligence
 * (2) = Foreign Air Forces - West
 * (3) = "Ground level"

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II Direct Results of the German Operation according to Wireless Intercept Information and Prisoners' Statements.

- (1) The British close-support effort was set back for a limited period.
- (2) British and U.S. fighter forces were tied down to constant defence over airfields (aircraft or flights detailed to stand by).
- (3) Aircraft were re-routed, landing was restricted, and R.A.F. transport formations were recalled as a result of airfields being reported unfit.
- (4) Flying was impeded during the first days of January as a result of oil storage depots being burnt out and other damage.
- (5) AA defences and Aircraft Reporting Services were reinforced at airfields.

III Assessment of the German Attack by the Enemy Press and Radio

The enemy press and radio state unanimously that:

- (a) the German air attack on Anglo-American airfields in the Belgium - Holland area was the most concentrated attack by the German Air Force since the commencement of the invasion,
- (b) tribute must be paid to the German pilots' fighting spirit and their courageous readiness to embark on the operation,
- (c) the German operation did not effect Allied air activity either on the day of the attack or on subsequent days.

Assessments of German strategic aims, the way in which the Germans carried out the attack and Allied defence are extremely contradictory and in some cases, strongly influenced by propaganda, the object apparently being to soften down criticism of the Allied Command.

(1) Intentions

Daventry transmitting station described the objective of the German attack as the breaking of Allied air superiority on the Western Front. It might be assumed that the German intention was to relieve the pressure of enemy attacks on their ground forces from the air and give the German Command the opportunity of simultaneously making an attack on a specific sector of the front. However, there had been no trace of co-operation between the Army and Air Force anywhere. The entire affair had proved to be an Air Force matter exclusively. It had been a badly prepared operation. On the other hand, the "Daily Mail" was of the opinion (2 January 1945) that even if there had as yet been no indication of any synchronisation between the GAF attacks and

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intensified operations by the German Army, they might possibly be the prelude to a major effort on the part of the German Army. In any event the German attack on Allied ground organisation was not without significance with regard to the further development of the German winter offensive.

The radio commentator Frank Gillard believes that it is nevertheless also conceivable that Allied air attacks over the battle zone and on the German rail and road transport system had created such a critical situation for the Germans that they had been obliged to take drastic measures to neutralise such attacks. This well-known BBC air correspondent, who maintains that all but one of the attacks were made on British bases, believes that it may be concluded from this that the Germans are particularly afraid of the RAF fighters and their daylight attacks on German transport objectives, and intended to bring about a lull for at least one or two days in this way.

(2) Execution

In the opinion of the above-mentioned radio commentator Frank Gillard, the manner in which the German attack was conducted was carefully prepared from a tactical standpoint. The German aircraft approached in large groups, but soon split up to attack the objectives stated. Attacks were made on Allied airfields in both Belgium and Holland. Brussels, Antwerp and the Scheldt estuary were merely shot up.

The attack came as a complete surprise. Reuter reported that over Brussels the GAF circled unmolested above rooftops, streets and airfields for 45 minutes and carried out one of the most daring daylight attacks of the war by German fighter pilots. The alert was not given until 15 minutes had gone by. Thousands of agitated Belgians gathered at street corners and asked every passing British serviceman "Where is the RAF?". The latter did not put in an appearance until after the German aircraft had made off. The sudden German attack also caused confusion at Allied airfields and assisted the Germans in their operation. Contrary to regulations, Allied aircraft had been parked carelessly, and were wingtip to wingtip in some cases. At one airfield the Germans found a number of British aircraft on the ground just preparing to take off on operations. The FW 190's

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and Me 109's came down out of the sun, flew across the taxiing areas at very low level, and made the fullest possible use of their cannon and machine-guns. In Reuter's opinion the conclusion must be reached that, in general, the Germans' flying ability was very low as a number of German aircraft lay shattered on the ground. Moreover, firing by German aircraft was often very inaccurate, even though some damage was caused among the large number of parked Allied aircraft.

The tactical error made by the Germans, which turned the entire operation into a failure, was that they did not return to base immediately after the attack had been made but, with a feeling of satisfaction at what they had achieved, stayed too long over enemy territory. In this way maximum losses were inflicted on the Germans.

(3) Allied Defence

In addition to the element of surprise, which was only too natural in view of the absolute confidence placed in Allied air superiority, the main reasons given for the Allies' inadequate fighter defence in the case of attacks made directly on ground organisation are as follows:

- (1) the widespread nature of the German attacks,
- (2) the presence of ice on a large number of runways in the British forward area.

Hundreds of Typhoons, Tempests, Thunderbolts and Lightnings were employed in the subsequent air battle. This was the Allied pilots' first opportunity of engaging in an air battle over friendly territory for many months. Allied AA defence was good and "took a heavy toll of the Germans". Nevertheless, it proved to be inadequate.

(4) Results

From enemy reports it is established that the GAF is in a position to replace the aircraft losses arising from the attack on Allied ground organisation within a certain period. Much more serious, however, is the loss of trained fighter pilots. The efficiency of the German fighter arm would undergo a further decline as a result of the heavy losses in personnel, and it would be a considerable time before its fighting strength of 1 January 1945 was reached again. There was little expectation that a German attack on Allied ground organisation would be repeated in the foreseeable future.

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As far as Allied aircraft losses were concerned, their inexhaustible reserves made it possible for the breach which the attack had opened in formations in the forward area to be filled again in the shortest possible time. Although they succeeded in pinning down a number of aircraft on the ground, the Germans failed to hold up Allied tactical air attacks even for a single day. The Allied Tactical Air Forces flew hundreds of sorties and attacked enemy transport and communications on the afternoon of the day when the attack was made and on the days that followed also.

IV Prisoners' Statements on the Execution of the German Attacks

Le Culot Airfield

"On the morning of 1 January 1945 German fighters made a surprise attack on Le Culot airfield. The attack took the defences completely unawares. When the aircraft opened fire the P.O.W. hurried from his quarters and witnessed part of the attack, in the course of which he counted some 16 - 20 German aircraft.

A Thunderbolt of 23 Squadron (U.S.) which was in the act of taking off was shot down just before becoming airborne and the pilot was killed. Of 23 Squadron's other aircraft, three were heavily damaged and two more were slightly damaged. No other aircraft in the Squadron was actually burnt out. Some of the aircraft of 22 Squadron (U.S.) were engaged on operations. 53 Squadron (U.S.) reported only one aircraft slightly damaged. Particularly heavy losses arose among the Fortresses and Mustangs of various Squadrons which had made emergency landings on the airfield. At least 5 Fortresses and 2 Mustangs were completely destroyed by fire and damage was done to a number of other aircraft, especially Mustangs. The P.O.W. was unable to state to which unit the aircraft belonged. The Mustangs were believed to be 8th Air Force aircraft.

There were no casualties among aircrew.

It became common knowledge later that the Station Commander was taken to task by the Officer Commanding IX Tactical Air Command on account of the failure of the defences.

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As an immediate measure the Station Commander gave orders for two flights - one of 36 Group (U.S.) and one of 373 Group (U.S.) to remain in the air at all times whenever weather was fit for flying at a radius of 5 - 10 miles from the airfield. Operations Officers of the various Squadrons were given the task of holding a flight in readiness at all times, even when the remaining formations were operational. The emergency duty flights usually carry out airfield defence for 2 - 3 hours and are relieved in the air. These operations are maintained from dawn till dusk and, in most cases, the present rosters have already been drawn up for two weeks in advance.

In addition, AA defences at the airfield and the Aircraft Reporting Service have been reinforced to afford better protection should there be a repetition of the attack."

Volkel Airfield:

A Pilot Officer who was willing to talk and who was shot down on the afternoon of 1 January 1945 reported on the attack as follows:

"I was alerted by distant aircraft armament fire at about 0830 hours. A FW 190 fired a few short bursts. Half an hour later the same sound was heard again. Another low-flying FW 190, had fired a few short burst at random. Afterwards, the P.O.W. heard in the course of conversation that 3 FW 190's had attacked the airfield and shot it up at random between 0830 and 0915 hours. No casualties or aircraft losses resulted, and no damage worth mentioning was done to vehicles or quarters. One of the attacking aircraft was shot down. What happened at Eindhoven, however, was a different story."

Eindhoven Airfield:

A P.O.W. made the following statement:

At about 0830 hours I heard violent firing by aircraft armament and hurried onto the airfield. Immediately afterwards a number of FW 190's flying at very low level shot up the airfield. Still more German aircraft appeared and first of all shot up the duty section, which was put out of action at once. Some time passed before the AA went into action. Meanwhile, large fires had become visible in the direction of 39 Reconnaissance Wing's dispersal points, and considerable losses were caused there. Later on, the officer commanding

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this Reconnaissance Wing was called to account. Aircrew and, in particular, ground staff suffered heavy casualties. The parked twin-engined and four-engined machines were aircraft which had made intermediate landings, and to some extent these suffered severe losses. An appreciable number of billets and a repair workshop were destroyed by fire. After the attack all personnel at the base were given strict orders to keep silent. The P.O.W. described this attack as a "real good show".

Two other P.O.W.'s also mentioned heavy damage at Eindhoven.

Melsbroeck Airfield:

A P.O.W. made the following statement:

"A fairly large number of aircraft were destroyed in this attack, including 6 machines in his own Squadron. However, the damage done was not excessive, as most of the aircraft were on operations at the time.

The P.O.W. was given a photograph of results showing part of the airfield burning fiercely. The P.O.W. believes that these were mainly burning huts and, in certain cases, such twin-engined aircraft as were parked in the area. He was unable to state the number of twin-engined aircraft destroyed, and believes that they were Wellingtons of 69 Squadron." Reference was also made to considerable damage at Melsbroeck in another P.O.W.'s statement.

St. Trond Airfield:

A P.O.W. made the following statement:

"Shortly before our setting out on fighter-bomber operations 7 Me 109's flying at about 60 feet made a sudden appearance over the airfield in the early morning and shot up the aircraft cleared for take-off. Six Me 109's are said to have been shot down by airfield AA in this surprise raid. There were no casualties at the P.O.W. airfield and the number of aircraft completely destroyed was very slight. It was possible to carry out all necessary repairs within two days."

(The P.O.W. is inclined to class the entire German attack as a failure as put out in enemy propaganda and for this reason his statements cannot be regarded as absolutely reliable.)

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V. Summing-Up

The objective of the attack was to weaken the enemy's close-support formation in order to make a direct contribution toward the relieving of pressure on German Ground forces.

This objective was to be achieved by employing German fighter formations in strength in a surprise operation against airfields serving enemy close-support units, whose aircraft had until this time been densely parked without any precautionary measure whatsoever.

The German operation was carried out under particularly favourable conditions as it took the enemy completely by surprise. The enemy was no longer expecting such a strong German air effort. Admittedly, there were a few emergency duty sections on the airfields, but these failed to take-off in time owing to the Aircraft Reporting Service being badly out of practice and were surprised on the ground. Moreover, the airfields were inadequately defended with light AA.

According to the enemy, the heavy German losses occurred for the following reasons:

- (a) the attacking German formations remained over the targets for too long and enemy fighter formations were able to bring them to battle during the return to base,
- (b) to some extent the target approach and return to base were made along the enemy's main supply routes, which are known to be heavily defended by AA,
- (c) In some cases areas known to be covered by AA and balloons for operations against V1's were crossed, which resulted in additional heavy losses.

If the attack had been carried out in a more skilful manner the comparatively heavy German losses could have been avoided. It must be stressed that the ratio of German and enemy aircraft losses was nevertheless more favourable than in air operations against enemy fighter-bombers and low-flying aircraft and appreciably more favourable than in operations against enemy large-scale attacks in the defence of the Reich. It was not possible to bring about

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a long-lasting weakening of enemy close-support formations as the enemy has large numbers of reserve aircraft at his disposal and was able to replace losses immediately. The only result was that the British close-support effort was set back for a limited period. To the present day, however, up to two flights of every Wing are pinned down to carrying out airfield defence from early morning until dusk as a result of the attack on 1 January 1945. A long-lasting weakening of the enemy's close support effort cannot be expected unless German attacks on enemy ground organisation are repeated at irregular intervals.

Favourable conditions for carrying out attacks still exist in that the enemy continues to park his aircraft in close order on airfields, as innumerable aerial photographs have confirmed.

Nevertheless, the German attack of 1 January 1945 has produced the following results:

- (a) 2 - 4 sections carry out airfield defence over bases at all times,
- (b) airfield ground defences have been reinforced by light AA,
- (c) the enemy Aircraft Reporting Service has been re-organised on an intensified scale.

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