

SECRET

AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

TRANSLATION NO. VII/39

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

DIRECTIVES

BY

GOERING

Translated by:

A.H.B. 6., AIR MINISTRY.

20.8.1947.

G.168216

EDITOR'S NOTE

This translation contains copies of three directives issued by Goering during August 1940. In view of the ambitious nature of the planning which they disclose, particularly as regards the employment of single-engined fighters, it has been considered of possible interest to give the strength of the German Air Forces taking part in the Battle of Britain. These figures have been extracted from German Quarter-Master General documents held by this section, and are included as Appendix A.

A.H.B. 6.  
15.8.1947.

CONFERENCE HELD AT KARINHALL ON 15.8.1944.

Directives by Reichsmarschall Goering

- 1) The fighter escort defences of our Stuka formations must be re-adjusted, as the enemy is concentrating his fighters against our Stuka operations. It appears necessary to allocate 3 fighter Gruppen to each Stuka Gruppe, one of these fighter Gruppen remains with the Stukas, and dives with them to the attack; the second flies ahead over the target at medium altitude and engages the fighter defences; the third protects the whole attack from above. It will also be necessary to escort Stukas returning from the attack over the Channel.
- 2) Night attacks on shipping targets are only fruitful when the night is so clear that careful aim can be taken.
- 3) More importance must be attached to co-operation between members of individual aircrews. Seasoned crews are not to be broken up except in cases of the utmost urgency.
- 4) The incident of V/LG.1 on August 13th shows that certain unit commanders have not yet learnt the importance of clear orders.\*
- 5) I have repeatedly given orders that twin-engined fighters are only to be employed where the range of other fighters is inadequate, or where it is for the purpose of assisting our single-engined aircraft to break off combat. Our stocks of twin engined fighters are not great, and we must use them as economically as possible.
- 6) Until further orders, operations are to be directed exclusively against the enemy Air Force, including the targets of the enemy aircraft industry allocated to the different Luftflotten. Shipping targets, and particularly large naval vessels, are only to be attacked where circumstances are especially propitious. For the moment, other targets should be ignored. We must concentrate our efforts on the destruction of the enemy Air Forces. Our night attacks are essentially dislocation raids, made so that the enemy defences and population shall be allowed no respite. Even these however, should where possible be directed against Air Force targets.
- 7) My orders regarding the carrying out of attacks by single aircraft under cover of cloud conditions have apparently not been correctly understood. Where on one afternoon 50 aircraft are dispatched without adequate preparation on individual missions, it is probable that the operation will be unsuccessful and very costly. I therefore repeat that such sorties are to be undertaken only by specially selected volunteer crews, who have made a prolonged and intensive study of the target, the most suitable method of attack, and the particular navigational problems involved. By no means all our crews are qualified to undertake such tasks.
- 8) K.G. 100 (bombers) is also in future to operate against the enemy Air Force and aircraft industry.
- 9) It is doubtful whether there is any point in continuing the attacks on radar sites, in view of the fact that not one of those attacked has so far been put out of operation.
- 10) The systematic designation of alternative targets would appear frequently to lead to certain targets being attacked which have absolutely no connection with our strategic aims. It must therefore be achieved that even alternative targets are of importance in the battle against the enemy Air Force.

\* Editor's Note: This refers to the premature take-off of the unit on August 13th: See A.H.B.6. Translation No.VII/26)

11) The Commanders-in-Chief of the Luftflotten are to report to me on the question of the warnings to be given during enemy air penetrations over the Reich. At present, the warnings are causing a loss of output whose consequences are far graver than those caused by the actual bomb damage. In addition, the frequent air raid warnings are leading to nervousness and strain among the population of Western Germany. On the other hand, we must take in account the risk of heavy loss of life should an attack be launched before a warning has been given.

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II. Conference held at Karinhall on 19.8.1940.Directives by Reichsmarshall Goering.

"Regarding the continuation of the attacks on the enemy Air Force and aircraft industry, the following points will require more attention than hitherto, if our losses are to be kept down to the minimum, and the enemy Air Force swiftly and irrevocably destroyed".

"Until further notice, the main task of Luftflotten 2 and 3 will be to inflict the utmost damage possible on the enemy fighter forces. With this are to be combined attacks on the ground organisation of the enemy bombers, conducted however in such a manner as to avoid all unnecessary losses. I will return later to the question of operations against the enemy aircraft industry".

"The difficulties inherent in such a great task make it essential that while avoiding any rigid plan, the whole operation must be planned and carried through with the utmost care. This can only be possible if unit commanders at all levels are of the best type. I have therefore ordered that in future, unit commanders are to be appointed regardless of rank and exclusively from among the most suitable and capable officers. Where possible such officers should be appointed from their own unit".

"Immediate steps are to be taken by Luftflotten, Korps and Gruppen to test the suitability of all subordinate unit commanders, with a view to effecting exchanges and removals where necessary. Not only unsuitable, but also inexperienced officers whose lack of experience may lead to unnecessary losses, must be replaced. Otherwise suitable but inexperienced officers must serve under a really seasoned commander until such time as the latter is prepared to recommend their promotion".

"We must as far as possible avoid a state of affairs in which our aircrews are kept in constant readiness for operations, as this must inevitably fatigue our units. In the actual conduct of operations, commanders of fighter units must be given as free a hand as possible. Only part of the fighters are to be employed as direct escorts to our bombers. The aim must be to employ the strongest possible fighter forces on free-lance operations, in which they can indirectly protect the bombers, and at the same time come to grips under favourable conditions with the enemy fighters. No rigid plan can be laid down for such operations, as their conduct must depend on the changing nature of enemy tactics, and on weather conditions".

"Wherever feasible, fighters are also to attack the enemy on the ground. They must however be protected on such missions by succeeding waves of other fighters. Twin-engined fighters are to be employed where the range of single-engined aircraft is insufficient, or where they can facilitate the breaking off from combat of single-engined formations."

"The protection of returning bombers and fighters over the channel must be assured by specially designated fighter formations. The same applies to the defence of our own ground organisation. Young pilots not considered sufficiently experienced to fly over England could usefully carry out this latter task under the leadership of veteran pilots. The training of these young pilots and the importance of adequate supervision during their first operations are matters which cannot be too strongly emphasized".

"As long as the enemy fighter defences retain their present strength, attacks on aircraft factories must be carried out under cover of weather conditions permitting surprise raids by solitary aircraft. Such

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operations demand the most meticulous preparation, but can achieve very satisfactory results. The cloudy conditions likely to prevail over England in the next few days must be exploited for such attacks. We must succeed in seriously disrupting the material supplies of the enemy Air Force, by the destruction of the relatively small number of aircraft engine and aluminium plants".

"These attacks on the enemy aircraft industry are of particular importance, and should also be carried out by night. Should it however not be possible to locate an industrial target because of poor visibility or bad weather conditions, some other worth while target must be attacked. It would appear desirable for the purpose of night operations to allocate to units particular areas which they will come to know better during each successive raid. Within this area a list of target priorities should be drawn up, so that each sortie will produce some valuable result and flights will not be wasted due to the failure of the aircraft to find one particular target. There can no longer be any restriction on the choice of targets. To myself I reserve only the right to order attacks on London and Liverpool".

"Experience has shown the efficacy of light anti-aircraft defences on enemy naval vessels. Crews must therefore take care not to fly over them unless they are actually to be attacked".

"My remarks concerning the allocation to units of certain areas for night raids apply also to daylight operations. The more thoroughly the units know their operational areas, the greater will be their success. This is of special importance for fighter units".

"Many barrage balloons have been shot down recently. Units should be advised not to attack such targets unless it is absolutely necessary for the conduct of the operation, or unless the attacking aircraft can do so in perfect safety".

"Effective co-operation between bombers and fighters by means of conferences between unit commanders is essential for the success of combined operations and time must be allowed for this before an attack. Hurried orders and precipitate missions are impossible in the war against England; they can only lead to severe losses and setbacks".

"To sum up: we have reached the decisive period of the air war against England. The vital task is to turn all means at our disposal to the defeat of the enemy Air Force. Our first aim is the destruction of the enemy's fighters. If they no longer take the air, we shall attack them on the ground, or force them into battle by directing bomber attacks against targets within the range of our fighters. At the same time, and on a growing scale, we must continue our activities against the ground organisation of the enemy bomber units. Surprise attacks on the enemy aircraft industry must be made by day and by night. Once the enemy Air Force has been annihilated, our attacks will be directed as ordered against other vital targets".

The C-in-C of the LuftwaffeOperations Staff Ia.22.8.1940

III

Copy of Signal

In an order given on 15th August, 1940. The Reichsmarshall prohibited the presence of more than 1 Officer in any single aircrew. This order is to be sensibly observed. Although there is no intention of breaking up experienced crews, not more than one officer in a crew must take part in probationary flights against the enemy. We must at all costs prevent the reoccurrence of the unnecessary losses among officer personnel which have recently taken place.

Distribution

Luftflotte	1
"	2
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Air Force Liaison Officer at Army Supreme Command
" " " " " Navy " "





APPENDIX AStrength of Forces used in the Battle  
of Britain as at 10th August, 1940

	<u>Establishment</u>	<u>Strength</u>	<u>Serviceability</u>
Close Recce.	120	95	80
Long Range Recce.	126	100	71
S.E. Fighters	1011	934	805
T.E. Fighters	301	289	224
Bombers	1569	1481	998
Dive Bombers	348	327	261
Ground Attack	40	39	31
Coastal	94	93	80
	<u>3609</u>	<u>3358</u>	<u>2550</u>

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