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GERMAN AIR OPERATIONS
AGAINST BRITAIN
FROM JANUARY TO MARCH 1944

Report by the German Air Historical Branch
(8th Abteilung), dated 16.6.1944.

TRANSLATED BY:

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January 1944

January 1944 saw the renewal, after a lengthy interval, of large scale German air attacks on London.

The first operation took place in two waves on the night of 21st/22nd January by a total of 447 aircraft, of which 227 in the first wave and 220 in the second. The units taking part were K.G. 2., K.G. 6., S.K.G. 10., K.G. 30., K.G. 54., K.G. 66., K.G. 76., and K.G. 100. equipped mainly with Ju. 88 aircraft. A number of Ju. 188, Do. 217, Me. 410, Fw. 190 and He. 177 aircraft were also employed.

German Pathfinder aircraft operated successfully for the first time during this attack. Their value was however lessened by the small number of aircraft employed. In all subsequent raids, larger Pathfinder formations were in operation.

The favourable weather conditions prevailing during the attack by the first wave, together with successful target marking and flare illumination, enabled our aircraft to drop the majority of their bombs in the target area within the limited time allowed for the attack. During operations by the second wave however, 10/10 cloud conditions were encountered, so that concentration of effect was not possible. In view of the size of the target it can nevertheless be assumed that most of our bombs fell in the London area.

The second attack was carried out in the night of 29th/30th January by 285 aircraft of K.G. 2., K.G. 6., K.G. 54., K.G. 66., K.G. 76 and K.G. 100.

Despite unfavourable weather conditions, the use of 'Y' and 'Egon' equipment enabled our aircraft to carry out a powerful attack. Due to ground organisational difficulties, however, caused by the long absence of our bombers from large scale operations and consequent servicing deficiencies, a number of the aircraft intended for this attack failed to take off.

During these two large-scale attacks, a total of 581 aircraft were over the target. Losses in the two attacks totaled 57 aircraft, or 7.5%. The following bomb tonnages were dropped: H.E.: 310.65 tons; incendiaries: 508 AB 1000, 273 AB 500, 251 SBC 50 and 1327 BC 50.

In addition to these large-scale attacks, 121 aircraft carried out nuisance raids over London on six nights.

February 1944

Operations against London continued on an increased scale during February. In seven night attacks, - on the 3rd/4th, 13th/14th, 18th/19th, 20th/21st, 22nd/23rd, 23rd/24th and 24th/25th, a total of 1387 aircraft took part. Of these 1200 aircraft succeeded in reaching the target. Losses totalled approximately 5.2%. Losses were most severe to Ju. 88's, lowest to Fw. 190's and Me. 410's.

Units participating in the attacks were K.G. 2, K.G. 6., K.G. 51, K.G. 54, K.G. 66, K.G. 100, K.G. 101, and S.K.G. 10. 837.91 tons of H.E. were dropped, together with (incendiaries) 1235 AB 1000, 430 AB 500, 2646 BC 50 and 14 SBC 50.

In addition to these concentrated attacks, 135 aircraft were engaged on nuisance raids against London on six nights.

The attack carried out on 3rd/4th February (by 240 aircraft) was preceded by a nuisance raid. Inaccurate target marking resulted in a loss of concentration and numerous bombs falling outside the target area. Enemy night fighter defences were particularly strong during this operation.

Favourable weather conditions accompanied the next attack on 13th/14th February by 230 aircraft. Effective target marking with the aid of 'Y' and 'Truhe' procedure enabled the bulk of our bombs to fall

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within the target area, and good results can be expected in Central London.

The attack on the night of 18th/19th February by 200 aircraft was carried out in 10/10 cloud cover. Timing over the target was particularly good. Similar conditions prevailed during the attack on 20th/21st February (200 aircraft).

A further attack by 185 aircraft took place during the night of 22nd/23rd February to exploit the favourable weather conditions. British night fighter activity was intensified by the use of single-engined fighters.

Finally, 161 bombers flew against London on the night of 23rd/24th February and 170 on the 24/25th. During this latter attack, a number of bombs fell outside the target area.

To sum up: by exploiting previously gained experience, the Luftwaffe was during February able to achieve results very satisfactory in proportion to our strength of effort.

March 1944

Concentrated attacks were directed against the British Isles on the following nights: on 1st/2nd, 14th/15th, 21st/22nd and 24th/25th against London; on 19th/20th against Hull, and on 27th/28th against Bristol.

A total of 908 aircraft were engaged in the attacks, drawn from the following units: K.G. 2., K.G. 6., K.G. 30., K.G. 51., K.G. 66., K.G. 100., K.G. 101 and S.K.G. 10. Of these forces, 776 aircraft were over the target. Losses amounted to 8.3%. Bombs dropped totalled 391.40 tons of H.E. and as incendiaries, 912 AB1000, 249 AB 500, 4 AB 36 and 1903 BC 50.

During the attack on London on the 14th/15th March, carried out by 187 aircraft, weather conditions necessitated a last minute postponement by one hour of the time of attack and the absence from the operation of I/K.G. 100, I/S.K.G. 10 and about half the aircraft of I/K.G. 51. Target marking was carried out 5 minutes after H-hour and was not subsequently renewed, so that it quickly disappeared in the clouds. We did not succeed in concentrating our attack in the target area.

Similar difficulties were experienced during the attack by 131 aircraft on 19th/20th March on Hull, when the loss of the first Pathfinder aircraft led to target marking being 5 minutes late. Further Navigational troubles resulted in a wide dispersal of attack. The most optimistic estimate would be that half the bombs fell in the target area.

144 aircraft took part in the attack on London during the night of 21st/22nd March. Westminster Abbey was the main target. Target markings could be clearly recognised, and the raid is thought to have had considerable effect in Central London.

The last attack on London, carried out on the 24th/25th March by 143 aircraft was successful, but heavy losses were sustained.

Bristol was attacked by 139 aircraft on the night of 27th/28th March. This was the last concentrated attack during the first quarter of 1944. The operation was successful, despite heavy enemy defences, including single-engined fighters and rocket A.A. fire.

In addition to the above mentioned large-scale operations, nuisance raids over London were carried out on seven nights by a total of 116 aircraft.

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Thus, the policy of employing the Luftwaffe on strategic missions once more found expression, both in the attacks on Britain and in concentrated bombing operations against the rear of the Russian Armies, which were also being renewed at this time after a long period in abeyance.

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