

The Aftermath

Göring held a meeting on 16th September to analyse the situation. The accounts of this meeting are contradictory. Göring was reportedly enraged and suggested that the fighter pilots were at fault for not gaining control of the air over the Channel and England. Generalmajor Theo Osterkamp 'Jagdfiegerführer 2' in charge of the fighter pilots and aircraft in Luftflotte 2, sprang to the defence of his pilots, blaming Göring's instruction that many of his pilots had to fly close escort to the bombers. He argued that had his pilots been allowed greater freedom they would have shot down more enemy aircraft and suffered fewer losses themselves. Many of his units were now operating at less than half strength, he said. Osterkamp continued, the RAF were now using new tactics, attacking in even greater number, concentrating on the bombers and refusing to be drawn into combat with his own fighter pilots.

Göring replied that this was a good thing. If the RAF appeared in greater numbers, then more can be shot down!

To the operational commanders present it seemed that Göring had lost touch with the reality of a dire situation.

Not all present thought the situation as bleak, however. Chief of Staff, Gen.Lt. Hans Speidel summarized this meeting and wrote a review of the Luftwaffe's campaign against Britain, dated 20th September:

“ *During the first phase of the campaign we were successful in defeating the enemy fighter force, which has gradually been reduced in number and efficiency. When the Luftflotten wanted permission to launch a major attack on London, it was initially refused and was only permitted after repeated requests. But by then there were only a few days of good weather left, so the attack could not be carried out as planned. This 'breathing space' has enabled the English to bring in pilots and equipment from training units and fighter planes, that have not yet been painted, from the factories into the frontline. As a result, the enemy's fighter defences have gradually strengthened again recently. Now, the English are sending poorly trained fighter squadrons to ruthlessly attack our aircraft and, as a last resort, ram our bombers, which has been seen several times. The German fighter aircraft, on the other hand, are usually only attacked by the more experienced English pilots.*

These developments have meant that, for the past few days, the fight against the enemy fighters has had to be resumed.

Now in the 3rd phase of the air war large bomber attacks are taking place, albeit mainly at night, and strong fighter formations are being deployed. Our own forces are much superior to the enemy's, and there is great confidence that the air war will continue successfully.

The number of enemy fighter planes is estimated at about 300, to which about 250 new English made aircraft are added every month. Opinions differ greatly about the total number of British warplanes; they are estimated at about 800 by the former Air Attaché in London, General Wenninger. It is believed that the English are holding back their forces for the expected climax of the air war, when the German invasion occurs.

Far from admitting defeat, Göring was encouraged. There was evidence that Fighter Command was near its end; inexperienced pilots, unfinished aircraft* and desperate tactics, a conclusion drawn from the three spectacular Hurricane / Dornier collisions witnessed by many of the bomber crews. Further, the attacks made on Portland and Southampton later in the day had gone almost unopposed, leading him to conclude that almost all the RAF fighters had been moved to protect London. Göring is believed to have said of 15th September, 'We need only four or five such days, and that will be the end of Fighter Command!'

*Also reported by some RAF pilots, 'silver' aircraft were simply an illusion created by the sun glinting off them at some angles. The Luftwaffe interpreted this as a sign that newly produced aircraft were being rushed to the front without time to camouflage them.

For the Luftwaffe the aim of the 15th September raids was to bring Fighter Command into battle with the intention of shooting down as many Spitfires and Hurricanes as they could, not to carry out a full-scale attack on London. Thus only 25 Dorniers flew over England on the first raid and 114 in the second. Whilst nearly all available Spitfire and Hurricane squadrons available to 11 Group flew twice and almost at full strength (12 aircraft) the Luftwaffe cannot be said to have operated at anything approaching a 'maximum effort' as has often been implied.



Available Luftwaffe Bomber Units 15 September

Those known to have operated in red.



Luftflotte 2

KG 1					
Stab	He111	Rosieres-en-Santerre	KG 30	Ju88	Brussels
I Gruppe	He111	Montdidier-Clairmoug	I Gruppe	Ju88	Brussels
II Gruppe	He111	Montdidier-Nijmegen	II Gruppe	Ju88	Gilze-Rijen
III Gruppe	Ju88	Rosieres-en-Santerre			
KG 2			KG 40		
Stab	Do17	Saint-Leger	Stab	Fw 200	Bordeaux
I Gruppe	Do17	Cambrai	KG 53		
II Gruppe	Do17	Saint-Leger	Stab	He111	Lille
III Gruppe	Do17	Cambrai	I Gruppe	He111	Lille
			II Gruppe	He111	Lille
			III Gruppe	He111	Lille
KG 3			KG 76		
Stab	Do17	Le Culot	Stab	Do17	Cormeilles-en-Vexin
I Gruppe	Do17	Le Culot	I Gruppe	Do17	Beauvais/Tille
II Gruppe	Do17	Antwerp/Deurne	II Gruppe	Ju88	Creil
III Gruppe	Do17	Saint-Trond	III Gruppe	Do17	Cormeilles-en-Vexin
KG 4			KG 77		
Stab	He111	Soesterberg	Stab	Ju88	Laon
I Gruppe	He111	Soesterberg	I Gruppe	Ju88	Laon
II Gruppe	He111	Eindhoven	II Gruppe	Ju88	Asch
III Gruppe	Ju88	Amsterdam/Schiphol	III Gruppe	Ju88	Laon
KG 26			KGr 126	He111	Marx
Stab	He111	Gilze-Rijen	StG 1		
I Gruppe	He111	Moerbeke, Coutrain	Stab	Ju87	Saint-Pol
(Wevelghem on 15/9/40)			II Gruppe	Ju87	Pas-de-Calais
II Gruppe	He111	Gilze-Rijen			

Available Luftwaffe Bomber Units 15 September



Those known to have operated in **red**.

StG 2		
Stab	Ju87	Tramecourt
II Gruppe	Ju87	Saint-Omer, Saint-Trond

LG 1		
IV Gruppe	Ju87	Tramecourt

Aufklärungsgruppe 22		
1 Staffel	Do17, Bf 110	Lille

Aufklärungsgruppe 122		
1 Staffel	Ju88	Vendeville
2 Staffel	Ju88, He111	Brussels/Melsbroek
3 Staffel	Ju88, He111	Eindhoven
4 Staffel	Ju88, He111, Bf 110	Brussels/Melsbroek
5 Staffel J	Ju88, He111	Haute-Fontaine

Küstenfliegergruppe 106		
1 Staffel	He115	Norderney
2 Staffel	Do18	Cherbourg
3 Staffel	He115	Borkum

Below: A Heinkel 111 of KG55 being refuelled during the Battle of Britain.



Luftflotte 3		
LG 1		
Stab	Ju88	Orléans/Bricy
I Gruppe	Ju88	Orléans/Bricy
II Gruppe	Ju88	Orléans/Bricy
III Gruppe	Ju88	Chateaudun

KG 27		
Stab	He111	Tours
I Gruppe	He111	Tours
II Gruppe	He111	Dinard, Bourges
III Gruppe	He111	Rennes

KG 40		
I Gruppe	Fw 200	Bordeaux

KG 51		
Stab	Ju88	Orly
I Gruppe	Ju88	Melun
II Gruppe	Ju88	Orly
III Gruppe	Ju88	Etampes

KG 54		
Stab	Ju88	Evreux
I Gruppe	Ju88	Evreux
II Gruppe	Ju88	St André

KG 55		
Stab	He111	Villacoublay
I Gruppe	He111	Dreux
<i>(evening attack on Portland)</i>		
II Gruppe	He111	Chartres
III Gruppe	He111	Villacoublay, Dreux
<i>(evening attack on Portland)</i>		

Kampfgruppe 100		
	He111	Vannes

Kampfgruppe 606		
	Do17	Brest, Cherbourg

Kampfgruppe 806		
	Ju88	Nantes, Caen

StG 3		
Stab	Ju87	Dinard
I Gruppe	Ju87	Barly

Aufklärungsgruppe 14		
4 Staffel	Bf 110, Do17	Cherbourg

Aufklärungsgruppe 31		
3 Staffel	Bf 110, Do17	St Briec

Aufklärungsgruppe 121		
3 Staffel	Ju88, He111	Chateaudun
4 Staffel	Ju88, Do17	Caen-Carpiquet

Aufklärungsgruppe 123		
1 Staffel	Ju88, Do17	Toussus-le-Buc
2 Staffel	Ju88, Do17	Cherbourg-West
3 Staffel	Ju88, Do17	Brest-Süd

Fighter Command's Effort



For Fighter Command, 15th September was not the greatest day of the Battle; 705 sorties had been flown in 115 patrols, yet those numbers had been exceeded many times.

Source *Air Ministry War Room Daily Summary (AIR22/11 to 13)*

July

10th	641 sorties / 200 patrols
11th	447 sorties / 119 patrols
12th	700 sorties / 207 patrols
13th	473 sorties / 143 patrols
14th	612 sorties / 163 patrols
15th	470 sorties / 154 patrols
16th	320 sorties / 128 patrols
17th	266 sorties / 70 patrols
18th	583 sorties / 166 patrols
19th	735 sorties / 175 patrols
20th	655 sorties / 191 patrols
21st	596 sorties / 190 patrols
22nd	637 sorties / 208 patrols
23rd	495 sorties / 182 patrols
24th	591 sorties / 191 patrols
25th	684 sorties / 191 patrols
26th	612 sorties / 144 patrols
27th	522 sorties / 141 patrols
28th	840 sorties / 220 patrols
29th	798 sorties / 205 patrols
30th	724 sorties / 185 patrols

August

1st	694 sorties / 207 patrols
2nd	492 sorties / 147 patrols
3rd	437 sorties / 144 patrols
4th	275 sorties / 90 patrols
5th	423 sorties / 99 patrols
6th	438 sorties / 134 patrols
7th	142 sorties / 38 patrols
8th	689 sorties / 152 patrols
9th	431 sorties / 142 patrols
10th	354 sorties / 116 patrols
11th	767 sorties / 165 patrols
12th	798 sorties / 196 patrols
13th	916 sorties / 192 patrols
14th	520 sorties / 132 patrols
15th	1320 sorties / 227 patrols
16th	895 sorties / 163 patrols
17th	303 sorties / 100 patrols
18th	914 sorties / 155 patrols
19th	403 sorties / 130 patrols
20th	477 sorties / 166 patrols
21st	620 sorties / 181 patrols
22nd	536 sorties / 141 patrols
23rd	507 sorties / 200 patrols

24th	985 sorties / 187 patrols
25th	506 sorties / 150 patrols
26th	828 sorties / 197 patrols
27th	303 sorties / 134 patrols
28th	778 sorties / 187 patrols
29th	524 sorties / 125 patrols
30th	1054 sorties / 208 patrols
31st	1016 sorties / 192 patrols

September

1st	661 sorties / 118 patrols
2nd	741 sorties / 100 patrols
3rd	729 sorties / 123 patrols
4th	677 sorties / 123 patrols
5th	672 sorties / 121 patrols
6th	987 sorties / 144 patrols
7th	871 sorties / 143 patrols
8th	215 sorties / 65 patrols
9th	466 sorties / 68 patrols
10th	224 sorties / 73 patrols
11th	678 sorties / 114 patrols
14th	860 sorties / 172 patrols
15th	705 sorties / 115 patrols

What did happen on 15th September was that a higher percentage of pilots located and engaged the enemy than ever before; 550 'contacts' were recorded (78% of the sorties) compared with 396 on 15th August (38%), 333 on 18th August (36%) and 390 on 31st August (37%).

The number of aircraft lost by the Luftwaffe, around 57, represented roughly 11% of the total number of sorties flown. These were not the highest Luftwaffe losses; 77 aircraft were lost on 15th August and 71 on 18th August. Although serious, it was not the knock-out blow as inferred in British reports. The Luftwaffe did not return in force because the weather, and particularly cloud, once more prevented large-scale operations.

Although considerable damage was caused by the bombing, only one third the weight of bombs fell compared to the September 7th raids. The RAF's official history of the Battle notes, '... if the weight of bombs dropped is to be reckoned an index of the German offensive, it is wrong to speak of this day either as the culmination of the attacks on London or as the crisis in the battle as a whole'.

The Weather



Fundamental throughout the course of the Battle was the weather, yet its impact is rarely mentioned. Although bombers were equipped for instrument flying, if a formation were to fly straight into cloud, then it would be scattered and, when the aircraft emerged, much valuable time would be taken trying to bring them together again. This applied over France during the assembly phase and also to the crossing of the Channel, so a relatively clear route was needed all the way from the airfields to the target. The alternative was to fly around cloud, but this increased the flight time and meant that the fighter escort was forced to turn back before a distant target such as London was reached. Even if the bombers did reach their target, a blanket of cloud prevented accurate bombing.

September weather over the Channel and south east England

7	A fine day, but some cloud over the Channel.
8	Heavy cloud and rain. Low cloud over the Channel all day.
9	Early cloud, clearing during the day to give sunny spells.
10	Low cloud and heavy rain.
11	A generally fine day, but some cloud persisting over the Channel.
12	Low cloud and rain.
13	Low cloud and rain, but clearing.
14	Rain and thunderstorms, clearing later in the day.
15	Fine with patchy cloud later. No rain.
16	Heavy cloud and rain.
17	Low cloud and showers.
18	Bright with strong winds.
19	Heavy rain with low cloud, fog and mist.
20	Clearing during the day to give clear skies in the afternoon.
21	Fine, but cloud building during the afternoon.
22	Fog and mist in the morning, clearing for a short time before heavy cloud formed.
23	A fine day with some patches of cloud.
24	Mist, fog and high cloud.
25	Rain and showers.
26	A fine clear day, clouding over later.
27	Cloudy with light rain.
28	Cloudy.
29	Light cloud.
30	Light cloud.



Fighter Command Squadrons, pilots and aircraft involved on 15 September 1940



1 (RCAF) Squadron

1 (RCAF) Squadron

MORNING RAID

Pilot	Serial	Code	11.40	11.45	11.50	11.55	12.00	12.05	12.10	12.15	12.20	12.25	12.30	12.35	12.40	12.45	12.50
F/Lt McGregor	P3859	YO-B															
F/O Molson	L1973	YO-G															
F/O Nesbitt	P3080	YO-C					V				Shot Down and injured						
F/O Briese	323*	YO-D															
F/O Norris	V6669	YO-J															
F/O Sprenger	P3672	YO-F															
S/Ldr McNab	V7288	YO-W															
F/O Travena	P3647	YO-U															
F/O Christmas	V6609	YO-X															
F/O Smither	P3876																
F/O Beardmore	V6603	YO-V															
F/O Brown	V6605	YO-N															
	* Canadian serial																

Below: Pilots of 1(RCAF) Squadron lined up with Hurricane V6603 YO-V which was flown by F/O Beardmore against the morning raid.



The four pilots on the right of the photo all saw action on 15 September; Pitcher, Yuile, Sprenger, Nesbitt. The C/O McNab is in the centre of the photo.

AFTERNOON RAID

Pilot	Serial	Code	14.10	14.15	14.20	14.25	14.30	14.35	14.40	14.45	14.50	14.55	15.00	15.05	15.10	15.15	15.20	15.25	15.30	15.35	15.40	
F/Lt McGregor	P3859	YO-B						V														
F/O Briese	V6605	YO-N																				
F/O Norris	V6669	YO-J						V														Landed at Biggin Hill to get bearings
S/Ldr McNab	V7288	YO-W						V														Landed at North Weald
F/O Christmas	V6609	YO-X																				
F/O Russel	V6603	YO-V						V														
F/O Lochnan	P3647	YO-U						V														Landed at West Malling
F/O Pattison	V6671	YO-K																				
F/O Yuile	L1973	YO-G																				Returned injured
F/O Pitcher	P3672	YO-F						V														

F/O Norris flew in V6669 1520 -1555hrs Biggin Hill to Northolt

Author's note: The ranks in this section are based upon the official ranks of the pilots of the time and don't include 'acting' ranks which were common amongst some squadrons. The aircraft serial numbers are taken from the ORBs and are cross-checked where possible. The aircraft codes come from a variety of sources and should be accurate although do bear in mind that some aircraft's individual code letters were changed during the Battle.

V = Victory Claim



Background photo: Hurricane V6609 YO-X which was flown in both engagements by F/O Christmas.

MORNING RAID

Pilot	Serial	Code	11.15	11.20	11.25	11.30	11.35	11.40	11.45	11.50	11.55	12.00	12.05	12.10	12.15	12.20	12.25	12.30	12.35	12.40	12.45	
S/Ldr Miller	V7408	YB-F																				
Sgt Griffiths	P2972	YB-H																				
Sgt Hogg	V6553	YB-J																				
F/O Pittman	V7416	YB-D																				
Sgt Bartlett	P2794	YB-E																				
P/O Bennette	P3033	YB-A																				
F/Lt Bayne	P3027	YB-N																				
P/O Wissler	P3168	YB-U																				
P/O Niemiec	P3788	YB-X																				
F/O Bird-Wilson	P3878	YB-W																				
P/O Ross	P3536																					
Sgt Sewell	V7241	YB-S																				
other flying, F/O Czernin N2674, P/O Bennette P3207																						

AFTERNOON RAID

			14.00	14.05	14.10	14.15	14.20	14.25	14.30	14.35	14.40	14.45	14.50	14.55	15.00	15.05	15.10	15.15	15.20	15.25	15.30	15.35	15.40	
S/Ldr Miller	P2794	YB-E																						
Sgt Griffiths	P2972	YB-H																						
Sgt Hogg	V7416	YB-D																						
F/Lt Bayne	P3027	YB-N																						
P/O Niemiec	P3788	YB-X																						
F/O Bird-Wilson	P3878	YB-W																						
P/O Ross	P3536																							
Sgt Sewell	P3894	YB-V																						
P/O Stevens	V6553	YB-J																						
F/O Czernin	V7408	YB-F																						
Sgt Chew	P3033	YB-A																						

Below: Pilots of 17 Squadron with P3878 YB-W flown by F/O Bird-Wilson against both raids, Bird-Wilson is sitting on the tailplane.



COMBAT REPORT:

F/O H A C Bird-Wilson - Green 1, B Flight, 17 Squadron

I was Green 1 when the squadron attacked a large formation of bombers (Do215 - 17 and He111) with escort fighters (Me110 - 109) at 20,000 feet. I led my section in to the bombers and did a climbing frontal beam attack on a Do. I did not notice the effects of my attack as Me110s came down on us. I climbed up to make another attack on some Me110s but my oxygen had given out and I was feeling the effects and very drowsy. Green 2 and myself chased the e/a south east but Green 2 had to break away as some more Me110s came onto his tail. I dived down through the clouds and came out about 15 miles south of Manston aerodrome. I suddenly spotted a Do215 flying at 3,000 feet towards France. I carried out two head-on beam attacks and the e/a's starboard engine went up in smoke and it dove down towards the sea, where upon I lost sight of it owing to haze. On my engagement with the bombers I noticed some Me109s which were painted bright orange all over.

COMBAT REPORT:

P/O P Niemiec - Blue 3, B Flight, 17 Squadron

I was No.3 in Blue Section when we attacked a formation of 50 or more Dorniers with Me110s behind and Me109s above them. There were only two in my section as No.2 did not take off. I made a beam attack on a Do17 and opened fire at 300 yards closing to 100 yards giving him a four second burst. Black smoke started to come from his starboard engine. I broke away under him, and saw another and bigger cloud of black smoke come from the engine, which I thought was beginning to catch fire. I then joined up with two of our Hurricanes and coming down through cloud saw another Do17. I broke away from the Hurricanes and after flying alongside the Dornier I turned into him in a break in the cloud and gave him a short burst at 100 yards, but observed no result. The Dornier returned cannon fire, but my aircraft was not hit.

COMBAT REPORT:

P/O L W Stevens - Red 2, A Flight, 17 Squadron

I was No.2 in Red Section when we sighted a formation of e/a consisting of about 50 bombers with a fighter escort of about 150 aircraft. Red Leader manoeuvred into position for an attack on the bombers. We climbed to about 15,000 feet and delivered a full beam attack. I picked a Do17 and gave a full deflection burst of about 3 seconds. When I broke away the Dornier was rolling onto its back. The last glimpse I had of it, it was assuming an inverted position. I was unable to look any longer as I was attacked by 5 He113s. I opened fire at approximately 300 yards and held my fire to about 75 yards. I saw the enemy aircraft run through my fire which entered the e/a from the nose to halfway down the fuselage and I think that it was destroyed.