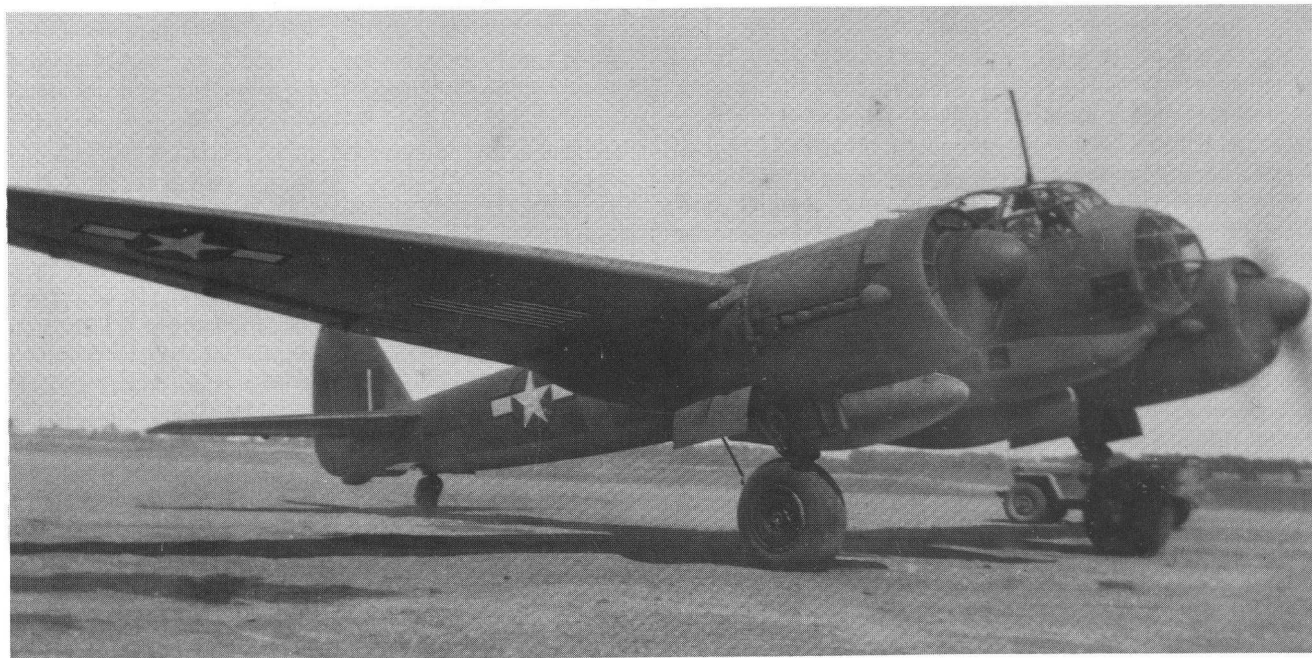

The First German Junkers JU-88 Flight Across the Atlantic

by
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This photo shows the actual markings that were applied to the JU-99 before the Atlantic Flight (26-1)

The first JU-88 flight across the Atlantic Ocean was made in October 1943 by two US Army Air Forces officers. Lt. George W. Cook and I planned the flight, prepared the aircraft, and flew the JU 88 from Cairo Egypt to Wright Field at Dayton Ohio for technical evaluation. This article details how we acquired the aircraft selection of the crew for the mission planning and preparing the aircraft and support for the flight, the flight itself, and evaluation comments about the JU 88 as well as the German JU 88 program. The aircraft survived several disposition campaigns after WWII and eventually was transferred to the Air Force Museum at Dayton, Ohio. The aircraft has been refurbished and is on display in the WW II Rumanian Air Force color marking scheme.

THE GIFT OF A NEW JU 88

By July, 1943, Theodore Nikolai had become increasingly disenchanted with the Nazi cause, the control of his squadron by German officers, and the high risk missions being assigned to the Rumanian pilots and had developed a personal dislike for a certain superior officer. He apparently was well aware that the Allied Forces were gaining the initiative and the Nazis were increasingly being forced on the defensive particularly in the air war. He decided to defect. He planned to pick out the best JU 88 in the squadron and fly across the Black Sea and Turkey to Beirut.

On 22 July 1943 at 1500 hours, he made his move. Informing the guard he was going to test fly JU 88 #430650, he took no maps or personal items to reduce the risk of detection. After takeoff he

headed out over the Black Sea toward Turkey, flying low over the water. Over Turkey, he climbed to over 10,000 feet, entered dense cloud cover, and encountered an easterly cross wind which went undetected. Approaching his ETA, he dropped down to lower altitude and broke out of the clouds, finding that he was over water, lost, and running low on fuel. Spotting a land mass and airfield, he extended the landing gear and flaps as he headed in for a landing. About this time, British Hurricanes spotted him and closed in, but held fire because he was not flying in a threatening manner and the aircraft had Rumanian Air Force markings. The Hurricanes escorted him in for a landing at 1915 on the British airfield at Limassol, Cyprus. Theodore Nikolai shut off the engines and surrendered.

With this action he presented the British RAF with the gift of a fully operational late model JU-88D-1-Trop reconnaissance airplane, barely one month old and with under 50 total hours flight time. The British immediately started their evaluation of the aircraft. Nikolai was very cooperative in the effort and readily assisted the British pilots' preparations to fly the JU 88. The best information available indicates the JU 88 was flown from Cyprus to Heliopolis Airport, Cairo, Egypt, on 27 July 1943 by an RAF test pilot assigned to No 1 British Airways Repair Unit (No 1 BARU) located at Heliopolis, essentially removing any practical possibility of the Nazis attacking and destroying the aircraft. The JU 88 remained with this unit until 1 Oct. 1943, underwent technical evaluation, and was painted in the RAF desert camouflage scheme. Before the aircraft left Cyprus, British RAF markings had been applied.