
retracted, accelerated to 250 kmph (150 mph) for climb. We leveled off for cruise indicating around 380 kmph (230 mph). Because of our limited knowledge of the JU 88, we flew as conservatively as possible, with no experimentation, straight to Deversoir AB, circled the field calling for clearance to land, made a wide base and long final, coming over the runway at about 180 kmph (110 mph) and made a 3-point touchdown at about 155 kmph (90 mph). The flight was uneventful and we were impressed with the handling and performance of the JU at this point. The tower directed us to the hangar (only one on the base) where we parked and shut the bird down.

There was a crowd already assembling. The ground crew immediately towed the aircraft into the hangar and roped it off. We said hellos to our associates we had said good-by to only a few hours before. The depot had picked a good crew to work with us. The crew leader was Sgt. Robert V. Connor. (Sgt. Connor made the Air Force a career and retired at Edwards Air Force Base a few years ago and now lives in Salt Lake City, Utah).

PREPARING THE PLAN AND THE JU 88 FOR THE FERRY TO THE U.S.

We decided to pull samples of gasoline, engine oil, hydraulic fluid, and engine coolant. The German gasoline sample came from a small amount of residual fuel left in the bomb bay tanks as Lt. Cook had learned that only the wing tanks had been serviced by the RAF crew. These samples were taken to the lab to determine compatibility with US grade fluids and to check for contaminants. We requested earliest possible processing as the results could either make ferrying route support easy or a major problem. We did not plan any other work on the JU 88 until the next day, but planned to meet after dinner. Meanwhile, I met with Colonel Phillip Roll, the 26th commander, and brought him up to date on the project.

During the after dinner meeting, we agreed that I would take responsibility for the overall project as well as for flight planning, navigation, administrative matters, and communications. Lt. Cook would take prime responsibility for inspection, maintenance, modification, and service of the JU 88. He would work up the inspections, service, maintenance, and documentation program, and extract as much historical flight and maintenance data as possible in order to set up a standard USAAF Flight Maintenance Record file (Form 1). He would use 26th Air Depot forms to document, servicing, inspections, repairs, removals, reinstallations, openings, closures, and modifications, etc., using a double checkoff on all actions. Our personal stakes were high as most of the flight was over unforgiving territory. We both agreed we did not want to leave anything to chance or overlook any item that could compromise our success.

An additional requirement for Lt. Cook was to open covers and panels to expose all of the important systems, such as electrical, fuel, hydraulic, pneumatic, flight control, instruments, communications, etc., and diagram or describe them to the level needed to operate and maintain them on the flight (this was to fill in the void left by the lack of Ju 88D-I technical data and manuals).

By the next morning, I was to have available the preliminary flight route, our primary and alternate landing locations, and a list of our longest flight legs and the distances involved. We agreed my highest priority was to resolve question of range.

We split up and I went to base operations to review maps, airport data, navigational facilities, notams (Notice to Airmen file), i.e., airfield and route problem data) and to plot our route. I chose to take the same route back that I had flown in the B-25 with the 12th Bomb Group deployment back in July 1942. I had some familiarity with the bases and route, and all the planning documents indicated facility and navigational aids improvements all along the route since then. I switched to Georgetown, British Guiana, and dropped Trinidad as stopover base. All of our flight legs could be held under 1100 miles except the two Atlantic legs from Accra to Ascension Island and from there to Natal, Brazil. I made up a list of items I would need for a flight navigational kit and left it at operations.

It was now near midnight so I went to quarters, turned in, and reflected on the day's activity. That morning, I had actually been manifested to return to the US, and here at the end of the day I was back at Deversoir in the same quarters, faced with the biggest challenge of my life and one not free of risk.

I went to the hangar about 0700 the next morning and Lt. Cook and crew were already at work with engines uncowed and inspection covers and panels removed. He had made up a long list of items to be inspected and serviced, and a list of removals. Worksheets to log actions were in place and in use. Cook was an exceptional maintenance officer with unusual supervisory and communications skills. He was also very good at maintaining rapport with those under his supervision. I went to my old office to study the JU 88A-4 data we had picked up to see if I could develop reliable range data. All the charts were for bomber configurations and the best range figure was under 1200 miles, so the best possible estimate for our reconnaissance variant was 1300 miles. I called Col. Thompson at 9th AF and advised him that we were going to have to add fuel to make it across the Atlantic and that the JU 88 A-4 data included load configurations with 900 liter drop tanks installed. I asked him to check and see if he could locate any JU 88 external rack tanks and brought him up to date on our activities at Deversoir. He said that Maj. Nelson was on his way out to Deversoir and that the classified status had been dropped, but there was to be no publicity until the aircraft reached Wright Field.

I returned to the hangar, telling Cook we would have to add fuel and that the JU manuals showed drop tanks for the bomber version's external racks. We checked our JU and found that it had a bomb rack inboard of the engine on each side. The crew was well along in diagramming the fuel system. We expanded the effort to determine whether fuel lines extended to the bomb racks. We found two lines; one fed to the fuel manifold-valve system and the other appeared to connect to a pneumatic system. The fuel shop started a search to see if JU tanks may have been picked up on depot salvage recovery runs into the battlefield area while I went over the fuel system data with Cook. It was similar to the B-25 system with engines feeding from inboard and outboard wing and bomb bay tanks, and drop tanks apparently transferring to wing tanks. We would have to finalize the fuel system configuration after we resolved the drop tank installation issue.

The laboratory personnel arrived with a preliminary analysis of the fluids we had drawn the previous evening. There was no significant contamination. The engine coolant was essentially identical to our 50-50 glycol and water; the hydraulic fluid was similar to US fluid and compatible even at elevated temperatures; the engine oil was similar and considered compatible, but with slight degradation when mixed under elevated temperatures; fuel was com-