

COMBAT
AIRCRAFT

115 

Chris Goss

Fw 200 CONDOR UNITS OF WORLD WAR 2



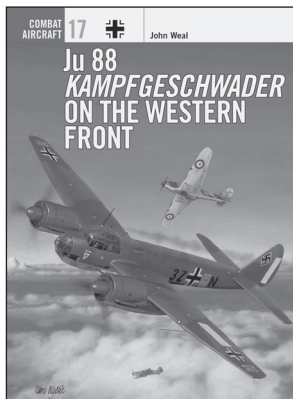
Author

Chris Goss is a recently retired senior Royal Air Force officer who has studied the 1939-45 air war over northwest Europe for many years, specialising in Luftwaffe air operations. He has amassed a substantial collection of original wartime material and photographs as a result of interviews and extensive correspondence with veterans and their families. Chris has written more than 14 books, such as *Bloody Biscay*, *Brothers in Arms* and *The Luftwaffe's Blitz*, that have been critically acclaimed for their research and have been published in Hungarian, Spanish and Czech, as well as in English. This is his first volume for Osprey.

Illustrator

Chris Davey has illustrated more than 30 titles for Osprey's Aircraft of the Aces, Combat Aircraft and Aviation Elite Units series since 1994. Based in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, he is the company's last traditional airbrush artist. As the profiles in this volume clearly show, he is the artist of choice for large aircraft subjects such as the Condor.

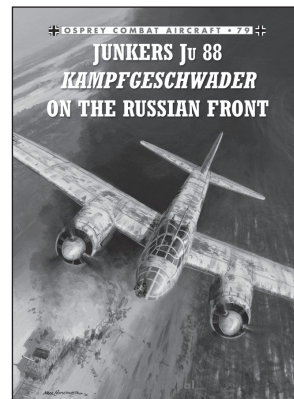
Other titles in the series



COM No: 17 • ISBN: 978 1 84176 020 9



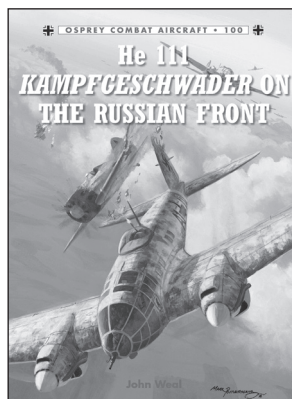
COM No: 75 • ISBN: 978 1 84603 318 6



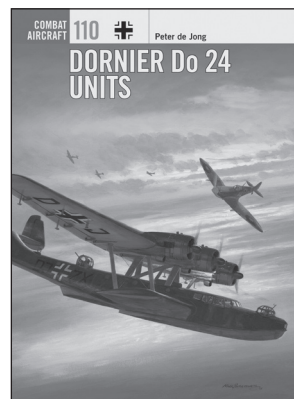
COM No: 79 • ISBN: 978 1 84603 419 0



COM No: 91 • ISBN: 978 1 84908 670 7



COM No: 100 • ISBN: 978 1 78096 307 5

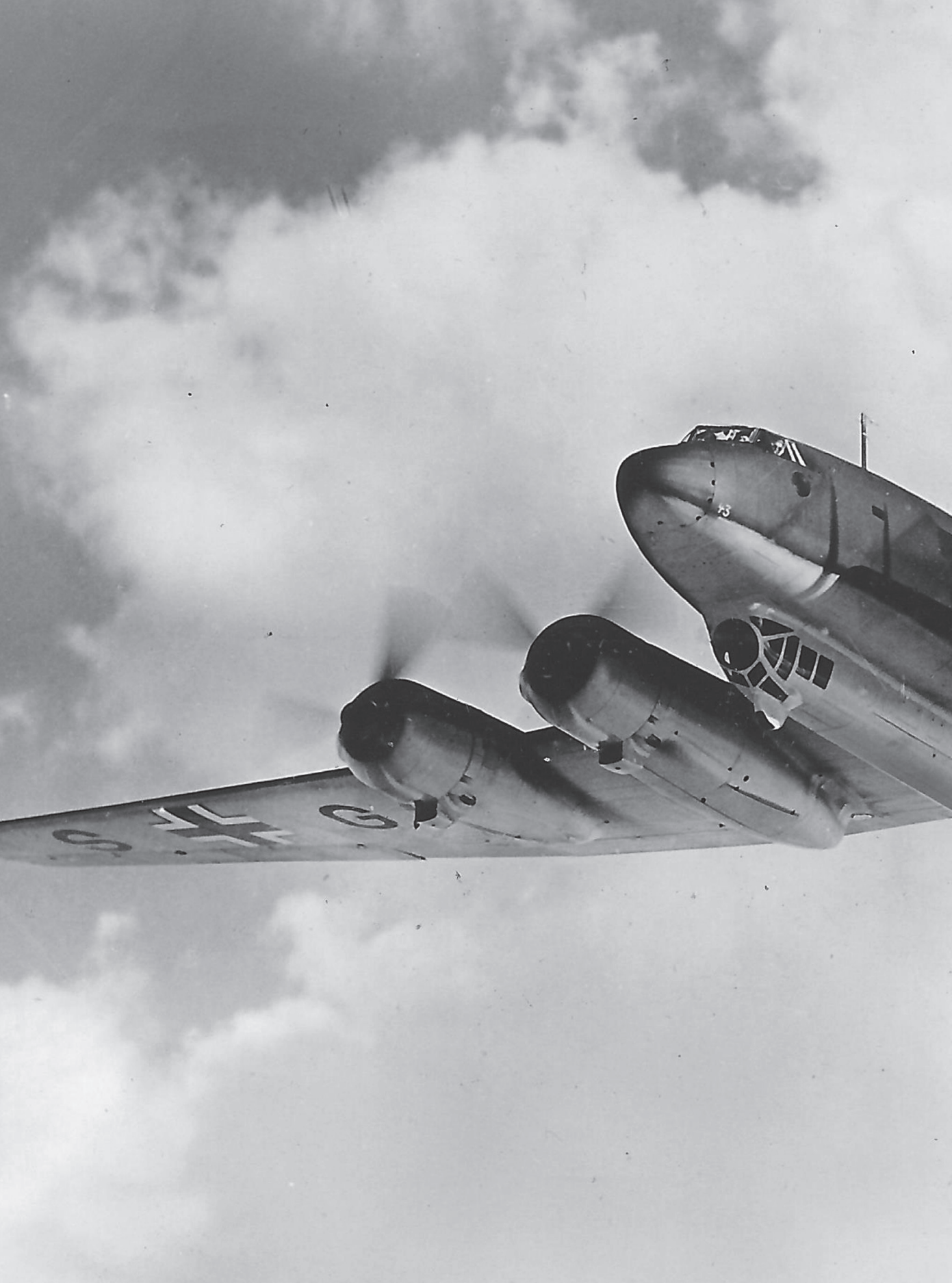


COM No: 110 • ISBN: 978 1 4728 0570 6

COMBAT AIRCRAFT

115

**Fw 200 CONDOR UNITS
OF WORLD WAR 2**



SERIES EDITOR TONY HOLMES

115

COMBAT
AIRCRAFT

Chris Goss

Fw 200 CONDOR UNITS OF WORLD WAR 2



OSPREY
PUBLISHING

This electronic edition published in 2016 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published in Great Britain in 2016 by Osprey Publishing
PO Box 883, Oxford, OX1 9PL, UK
1385 Broadway, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10018, USA

E-mail: info@ospreypublishing.com

Osprey Publishing, part of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
© 2016 Osprey Publishing Ltd.

All rights reserved

You may not copy, distribute, transmit, reproduce or otherwise make available this publication (or any part of it) in any form, or by any means (including without limitation electronic, digital, optical, mechanical, photocopying, printing, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the publisher. Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978 1 4728 1267 4
PDF e-book ISBN: 978 1 4728 1268 1
e-Pub ISBN: 978 1 4728 1269 8

To find out more about our authors and books visit www.ospreypublishing.com. Here you will find our full range of publications, as well as exclusive online content, details of forthcoming events and the option to sign up for our newsletters. You can also sign up for Osprey membership, which entitles you to a discount on purchases made through the Osprey site and access to our extensive online image archive.

Osprey Publishing supports the Woodland Trust, the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. Between 2014 and 2018 our donations will be spent on their Centenary Woods project in the UK.

www.ospreypublishing.com

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Andrew Bird, Justin Horgan, Tony Kearns, Ed North, Tim Oliver, Günther Ott and Bernd Rauchbach for their assistance with the compilation of this volume.

Front Cover

At 0205 hrs on 17 July 1941, Fw 200C-3 Wk-Nr 0063, coded F8+CL, of 3./KG 40 took off from Cognac, in France, on a combined weather and armed reconnaissance mission over the Atlantic. At the controls were Oberleutnant Rudolf Heindl, with second pilot Unteroffizier Edgar Siegmund sat alongside him. The rest of the crew consisted of Oberleutnant Hans Jordens (radio operator), Unteroffizier Carl Reichl (radio operator), Feldwebel Hans Singer (flight engineer), Feldwebel Walter Pflugbeil (observer) and meteorologist Regierungs-Rat von Hartel.

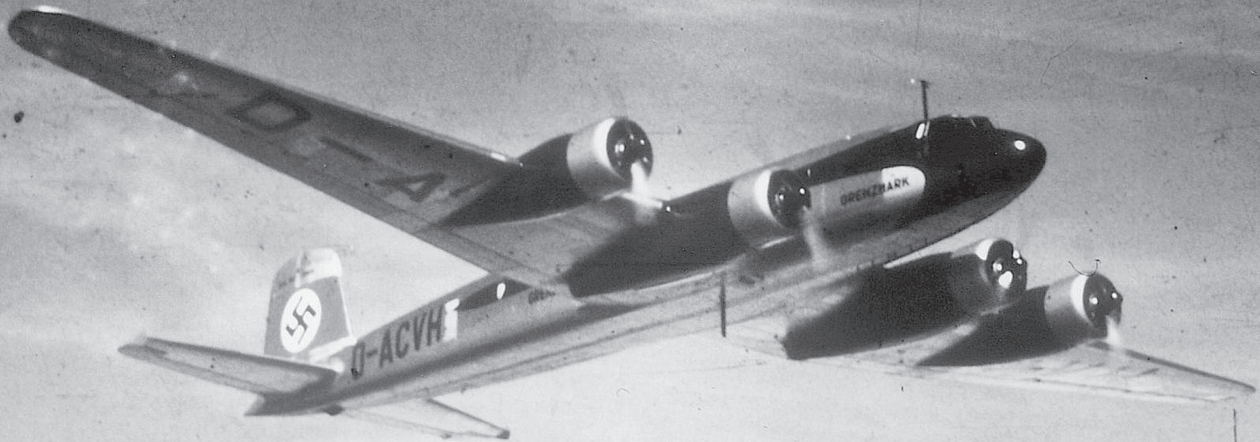
Shortly after 0800 hrs, whilst flying at just 50 ft above the sea, the Condor crew spotted Convoy OB 346 sailing northwards off the west coast of Ireland. They noted that there were 36 freighters up to 10,000 brt, four destroyers and five frigates, as well as a single Armstrong Whitworth Whitley patrolling overhead. The latter, Z6635/YG-Q of No 502 Sqn crewed by Wg Cdr Don Shore (Captain), Flg Off Arthur Brock, Plt Off John Macleod and Sgts S Larmour and Basil Henson, immediately turned towards the Condor in order to protect the convoy.

In a running battle that lasted six minutes, the Condor was hit in one of its inner engines and 27-year-old Hans Jordens was fatally wounded. However, the German gunners were more accurate than their RAF counterparts, hitting the Whitley's cockpit and wounding Wg Cdr Shore and two other crewmen. They also started a fire amongst the aircraft's 'pyrotechnics' and damaged the starboard engine. The Whitley turned away and the Condor climbed into cloud and headed for France. Four minutes later Z6635 began to lose power from its starboard engine, which then caught fire. Wg Cdr Shore made the decision to ditch, after which the crew quickly took to a dinghy that had been punctured by bullets in the combat. They were soon rescued by HMS *Westcott*, however.

Wk-Nr 0063 landed without incident at Brest at 1200 hrs. This aircraft was later assigned to 7./KG 40 and recoded F8+BR, only for it to suffer technical problems that resulted in it ditching at Storsdahlsfjord, off Norway, on 22 February 1942. The remains of the aeroplane were recovered in May 1999 and can now be seen under restoration at the *Deutsches Technikmuseum* in Berlin (Cover artwork by Mark Postlethwaite)

CONTENTS

Chapter One	
TO WAR	6
Chapter Two	
1941 – BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC BEGINS	19
Chapter Three	
1942 – CHANGES	40
Chapter Four	
1943 – BEGINNING OF THE END	45
Chapter Five	
1944 – NOWHERE TO HIDE	75
APPENDICES	86
Colour Plates Commentary	93
Index	96



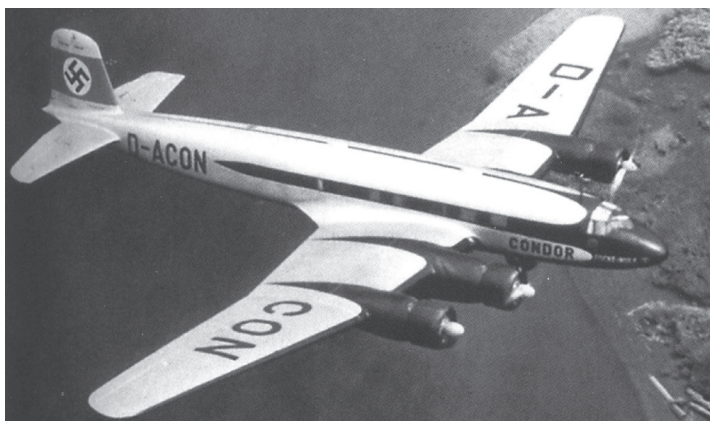
CHAPTER ONE

TO WAR

Designed by Kurt Tank, Technical Director of the Focke-Wulf Flugzeugbau, as a four-engined airliner, the Fw 200 first flew in July 1937 with Tank himself at the controls. Once in production, the airliner's ability to fly passengers over long distances was quickly proven, with flights to Cairo in July 1938, then to New York the following month and Tokyo in November of that same year (although the aircraft on this last flight was lost in an accident off Manila on the return trip when two engines failed as it was landing). Such flights impressed Finnish, Danish and Brazilian national airlines. Indeed, aside from its use by *Deutsche Luft Hansa (DLH)*, Danish airline *Det Danske Luftfartsselskab (DDL)* and the Brazilian *Syndicato Condor* also acquired a handful of Fw 200s. Finally, the Japanese ordered five civil versions and one for military use.

Early in 1939, prompted by the Japanese need for a military variant, Kurt Tank began modifying the Fw 200B to perform the maritime reconnaissance role. The result was

The Fw 200 V1 prototype approaches New York City on 11 August 1938, the aircraft having taken 24 hours and 36 minutes to fly the 6371 km from Berlin. This flight was a major propaganda coup for *DLH*, the Third Reich and Focke-Wulf Flugzeugbau



The classic lines of DLH Fw 200A-0 D-ACVH, christened *GRENZMARK*. This aircraft subsequently became NK+NM and was assigned to the FdF

the Fw 200C, which was essentially similar to the Fw 200B-2 but with a dorsal turret, two guns in a ventral gondola, increased fuel capacity and floor-mounted cameras. By now the Luftwaffe had noticed the Fw 200's potential as a long-range reconnaissance aircraft capable of operating far out to sea, and, following completion of the first prototype (Fw 200 V10 Wk-Nr 0001, named *Hessen*), it ordered ten Fw 200C-0s to be built.

TO WAR

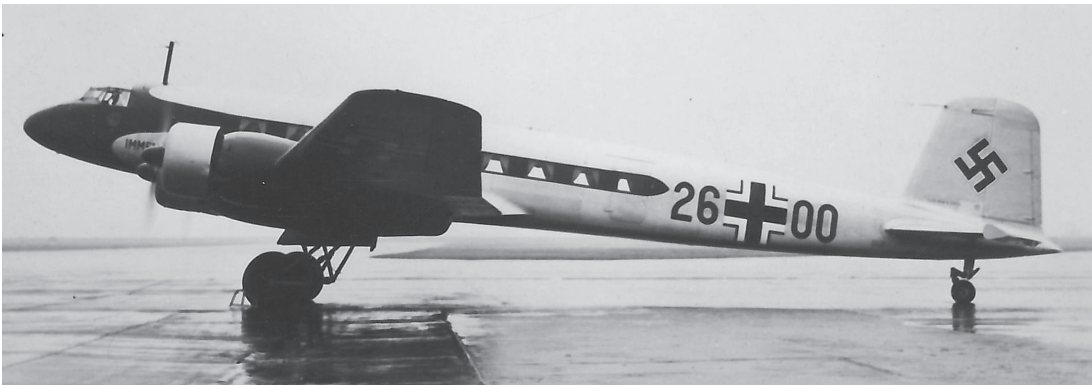
As a result of the power struggle between the Kriegsmarine and the Luftwaffe as to who would be in charge of maritime combat aircraft, in October 1939 *Reichsmarschall* Hermann Göring rejected the notion that aircraft assigned to the Kriegsmarine would be engaged in offensive missions. He stated that in future, reconnaissance of British coastal waters should be carried out by the Luftwaffe's X. *Fliegerkorps*, with all but six long-range-reconnaissance *Staffeln* and nine multipurpose mine *Staffeln* remaining with the Kriegsmarine for missions over the North Sea and its approaches. All other maritime units would transfer to X. *Fliegerkorps*. At about this time the Condor began to make an appearance in the frontline, and it would soon become synonymous with German maritime operations.

In September 1939 Hauptmann Edgar Petersen, formerly *Staffelkapitän* of 1. *Staffel* of *Kampfgeschwader* 51 (1./KG 51) and now serving with *General zur besonderen Verwendung der Luftflotte 2*, began championing the use of the Fw 200 for long-range maritime missions. As he stated after the war;

'I looked around for a suitable aeroplane in Germany. There was the [Junkers] Ju 90, but there were only two of these available and no production line had been set up. On the other hand, the Focke-Wulf company had four Fw 200s nearing completion, intended for delivery to Japan. I took these and a further six standard Fw 200 transports, and with these I set up my *Fernaufklärungsstaffel* at Bremen on 1 October 1939.'

In addition to the creation of Petersen's unit, another specialist formation, *Versuchsstelle für Höhenflug* (part of *Aufklärungsgruppe Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe*, abbreviated as *Aufkl OBdL*), had been established at Berlin-Werder, and it was this unit that suffered the first military Condor accident when, on 23 November 1939, Fw 200 V10 experienced engine failure at Jever, in northern Germany, resulting in 50 per cent damage.

Formerly D-ARHU of DLH, the Fw 200 V-3 was originally named *Ostmark*. However, when it became 26+00 the Condor was renamed *Immelmann II* and assigned to the FdF



Petersen now began selecting and training crews, and in April 1940 the *Fernaufklärungsstaffel* was redesignated I./KG 40, soon to be part of I./KG 40, and was in action over and around Norway from 10 April 1940 onwards. However, Condor numbers were still limited. For example, I./KG 40's strength on 10 May 1940 was just four aircraft, of which only two were serviceable.

The first Condor loss on an operational mission occurred during an evening reconnaissance of Narvik on 22 April 1940 when it is thought that Oberleutnant Karl-August Beckhaus and his crew were victims of weather or mechanical failure. On the same day a Condor being operated in the transport role by 4./Kampfgeschwader zur besonderen Verwendung 107 (4./KGzbV 107) crashed at Berlin-Staaken, killing Oberleutnant Alfred Henke and three crew. Just over a month later, on 25 May 1940, Oberleutnant Hellmuth Schöpke's crew became the first to be shot down by enemy aircraft when Flg Off Herman Grant-Ede of No 263 Sqn, flying a Gloster Gladiator, intercepted their Condor. It was forced to crash-land in the sea near Dyrøy Island, off the Norwegian coast, and Schöpke and one of his crew were captured. A third crewman was killed and two more evaded. Grant-Ede had never seen a Condor before, and he thought his victim was a Ju 90 transporter. He filed two combat reports on the 25th, the first stating:

'Red Section took off at 0905 for a defensive patrol of Harstad-Skaanland area. Anti-aircraft bursts showed position of enemy aircraft, which was pursued and jettisoned its bombs four miles southeast of Lemminvaer. Eight large bombs were observed to drop from outer engines. Speed 250 to 350 mph, attack No 1 used and at 1000 yards two short bursts fired, but no hits. Enemy aircraft using tracer from single gun on top rear turret. Enemy aircraft was low-wing four-engined monoplane with dirty green camouflage and single rudder. Enemy aircraft dived to sea level and escaped seawards due to superior speed.'

Even though Grant-Ede was credited with shooting this aircraft down, by his own admission he fired only twice, did not hit it and the 'four-engined monoplane' got away. The second combat some 50 minutes later was more conclusive;

'On return from previous combat, AA [anti-aircraft] fire observed over Harstad at about 1025 hrs. Enemy



The first military Condor to suffer an incident was Fw 200 V10 Wk-Nr 0001 BS+AF. Originally coded D-ASHH and named *Hessen*, it was assigned to Oberstleutnant Theodor Rowehl's *Versuchsstelle für Höhenflug*, part of *Aufklärungsgruppe Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe*. Converted to carry cameras, and with an increased fuel capacity, the aeroplane suffered engine failure on takeoff from Jever on 23 November 1939. It had been tasked with flying a reconnaissance mission to Iceland and the Faroe Islands. Flugkapitän Martin Königs and his crew were uninjured but the aircraft suffered 50 per cent damage



Veteran pilot Edgar Petersen was the first to champion the use of the Fw 200 for long-range maritime missions. He was duly given permission to set up a *Fernaufklärungsstaffel*, equipped with Fw 200s, at Bremen on 1 October 1939