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Gerhard "Gerd" Friedrich (16 September 1917 – 16 March 1945) was a Luftwaffe fighter ace of World War II. He was a night fighter ace who scored 30 victories, all recorded at night.

Gerhard Friedrich	
Nickname(s)	*Gerd*
Born	16 September 1917 Johannisthal, Kingdom of Prussia
Died	16 March 1945 (aged 27) Stuttgart
Cause of death	Killed in action
Allegiance	Nazi Germany
Branch	Luftwaffe
Years of service	1939–1945
Rank	*Major* (major)
Unit	NJG 1, NJG 4, NJG 6
Commands	I./NJG 6
Battles / wars	World War II • Eastern Front • North African Campaign
Awards	Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross

World War II [edit]

World War II in Europe began on Friday 1 September 1939 when German forces invaded Poland. Friedrich started his Luftwaffe career as a pursuit pilot with *Kampfgruppe zur besonderen Verwendung* 104 (KGr.z.b.v. 104—Fighting Group for Special Use) in preparation for the invasion of Crete.[1][2][Note 1]

Night fighter operations [edit]

Following the 1939 aerial Battle of the Heligoland Bight, bombing missions by the Royal Air Force (RAF) shifted to the cover of darkness, initiating the Defence of the Reich campaign.[3] By mid-1940, *Generalmajor* (Brigadier General) Josef Kammhuber had established a night air defense system dubbed the Kammhuber Line. It consisted of a series of control sectors equipped with radars and searchlights and associated night fighter. Each sector, named a *Himmelbett* (canopy bed), would direct the night fighter into visual range with radar beacons. In 1941, the Luftwaffe started equipping night fighters with airborne radar such as the *Lichtenstein* radar. This airborne radar did not come into general use until early 1942.[5]

A map of part of the Kammhuber Line. The 'kett' and night fighter 'boxes' are shown.

Friedrich received training as a night fighter pilot and began his night-fighting era when he was posted to III. Gruppe (3rd group) of *Nachtjagdgeschwader* 1 (NJG 1—1st Night Fighter Wing) at the beginning of 1942.[2] Friedrich claimed his first victory on the night of 16/17 June when he shot down a RAF Vickers Wellington at 03:08 5 kilometres (3.1 miles) west of Ijmuiden.[6] Serving with II. *Gruppe* (2nd group) of *Nachtjagdgeschwader 6* (NJG 6—4th Night Fighter Wing), he claimed his fourth victory on 24 October when he shot down the Handley Page Halifax bomber *W1188* from No. 103 Squadron near Bar-le-Duc.[1]

He was appointed *Staffelkapitän* (squadron leader) of 10. Staffel (10th squadron) of NJG 4 on 1 January 1943.[7] On 10/11 April, 502 RAF bombers attacked Frankfurt. In total, the RAF lost 22 aircraft, ten of which shot down by NJG 4, including a Wellington bomber claimed by Friedrich at 03:23. [8][9] On 16/17 April, during an attack of 327 bombers on Pilzen, Friedrich was shot down and wounded. He bailed out from his Messerschmitt Bf 110 and landed near Hochepeyer.[2][10]

On 1 August 1943, IV. *Gruppe* of NJG 4 became the I. *Gruppe* of *Nachtjagdgeschwader 6* (NJG 6—6th Night Fighter Wing) and was based at Mainz-Finthen Airport.[11] On 12 July 1944, he was appointed *Gruppenkommandeur* (group commander) of I. *Gruppe* of NJG 6.[1][2] Friedrich was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross (*Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes*) on 15 March 1945.[2]

The RAF targeted the Wintershall oil refineries at Lützkendorf, which lies east of Muchelin, with 244 Lancaster bombers and eleven de Havilland Mosquito fast bombers on the night of 14/15 March 1945.[13] In defense of this attack, Friedrich claimed three Lancasters shot down in timeframe 23:15 and 23:24.[14]

On the night of 16/17 March 1945, Friedrich collided with the Lancaster *PB785* from No. 576 Squadron RAF, piloted by Flight Lieutenant Frank Edmund Dotten, near Stuttgart. Friedrich and his crew, Leutnant Lewerenz, *Oberfeldwebel* Giesen and *Unteroffizier* Meyer, were killed in their Junkers Ju 88 G-6 (*Werknummer* 621801—factory number) along with the seven crew members of the British bomber.[2][15]

Summary of career [edit]

Aerial victory claims [edit]

According to Obermaier and Spick, Friedrich was credited with 30 nighttime—aerial victories, claimed in an unknown number of combat missions.[16][17] Foreman, Parry and Mathews, authors of *Luftwaffe Night Fighter Claims 1939 – 1945*, researched the German Federal Archives and found records for 33 nocturnal victory claims.[11] Mathews and Foreman also published *Luftwaffe Aces – Biographies and Victory Claims*, listing Friedrich with 32 claims, all of which in the Western Front.[2]

Chronicle of aerial victories[2] [hide]

This and the ? (question mark) indicates information discrepancies listed in *Luftwaffe Night Fighter Claims 1939 – 1945* but not in *Luftwaffe Aces — Biographies and Victory Claims*.

Claim	Date	Time	Type	Location	Serial No./Squadron No.
			– Stab III. *Gruppe* of *Nachtjagdgeschwader* 1 –		
1	17 June 1942	03:08	Wellington	5 km (3.1 mi) west of Ijmuiden[6]	
2	20 June 1942	03:13	Wellington	10 km (6.2 mi) north of Zandvoort[6]	
3	26 July 1942	02:12	Wellington	6 km (3.7 mi) west of Zwaanet[16]	
			– Stab II. *Gruppe* of *Nachtjagdgeschwader* 4 –		
4	24 October 1942	21:50	Halifax	Bar-le-Duc[19]	Halifax *W1188*/No. 103 Squadron RAF[11]
			– 8. *Staffel* of *Nachtjagdgeschwader* 4 –		
5	6 December 1942	19:29	Halifax	Courouvre[19]	
			– 10. *Staffel* of *Nachtjagdgeschwader* 4 –		
6	9 March 1943	23:35	Lancaster	northwest of Rouen[21]	
7	17 March 1943	00:16	Halifax	Blombos[21]	
8	11 April 1943	03:23	Wellington	Lünebach-Weuir[9]	
			– 2. *Staffel* of *Nachtjagdgeschwader* 6 –		
9?[Note 2]	6 September 1943	00:57	Halifax	vicinity of Mannheim-Sandhofen[22]	
			– 1. *Staffel* of *Nachtjagdgeschwader* 6 –		
10	26 February 1944	01:33	Lancaster	Seeburg[23]	Lancaster *LM158*/No. 90 Squadron RAF[12]
11	2 March 1944	04:04	Halifax	60 km (37 mi) southwest of Strasbourg[24]	
12	18 March 1944	22:32	Halifax	Preist[25]	
13	31 March 1944	00:57	Halifax	northwest of Nürnberg[26]	
14	11 April 1944	00:03	Lancaster	Montdidier[27]	
15	11 April 1944	00:13	Halifax	vicinity of Montdidier[27]	Halifax *LV880*/No. 51 Squadron RAF[27]
16	28 April 1944	02:09	Halifax	Switzerland, west of Friedrichshafen[28]	
17	28 April 1944	02:34	Halifax	Schaffhausen[28]	
18	13 June 1944	01:25	Lancaster	vicinity of Deelen[29]	
			– Stab I. *Gruppe* of *Nachtjagdgeschwader* 6 –		
19	12 September 1944	00:15	Lancaster	south of Darmstadt[30]	
20	12 September 1944	22:46	Wellington	northwest of beacon "Christa"[31][Note 3]	
21	28 January 1945	23:53	Lancaster	south of Wildbad[32]	
22	1 February 1945	19:20	Lancaster	Ludwigshafen[33]	
23	2 February 1945	23:20	Lancaster	Karlsruhe[34]	
24	2 February 1945	23:25	Lancaster	Karlsruhe[34]	
25	21 February 1945	20:45	Halifax	10 km (6.2 mi) southwest of Worms[35]	
26	23 February 1945	20:00	Lancaster	east of Pforzheim[36]	
27	23 February 1945	20:08	Lancaster	east of Pforzheim[36]	
28	23 February 1945	20:12	Lancaster	southeast of Pforzheim[37]	
29	23 February 1945	20:15	Lancaster	south of Pforzheim[37]	
30	14 March 1945	23:15	Lancaster[14]		
31	14 March 1945	23:18	Lancaster[14]		
32	14 March 1945	23:24	Lancaster[14]		
33	16 March 1945	21:03	Lancaster	7 km (4.3 mi) south of Echterdingen[74]	Lancaster *PB785*/No. 576 Squadron RAF[38]

Awards [edit]

- German Cross in Gold on 1 October 1944 as *Hauptmann* in the 1./*Nachtjagdgeschwader 6*[39]
- Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross on 15 March 1945 as *Major* and *Gruppenkommandeur* of the I./*Nachtjagdgeschwader 6*[40][41]

Notes [edit]

1. ^ According to Obermaier, Friedrich served in *Kampfgruppe zur besonderen Verwendung* 106 (KGr.z.b.v. 106—Fighting Group for Special Use).[2]
2. ^ This claim is listed in *Luftwaffe Night Fighter Claims 1939 – 1945* but not in *Luftwaffe Aces — Biographies and Victory Claims*.[2]
3. ^ Beacon "Christa"—Near Hagueneau in approximately 48°47'N 7°47'E

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1. ^ a b Bowman 2016a, p. 96.
2. ^ a b c d e f g Mathews & Foreman 2014, p. 344.
3. ^ a b Obermaier 1989, p. 114.
4. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 9.
5. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 27.
6. ^ a b c Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 46.
7. ^ a b Bowman 2016b, p. 44.
8. ^ a b Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 74.
9. ^ Bowman 2016b, p. 141.
10. ^ Bowman 2016b, p. 142.
11. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 96.
12. ^ a b Bowman 2016b, p. 96.
13. ^ Bowman 2016b, p. 219.
14. ^ a b c d e f Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 242.
15. ^ Bowman 2016b, pp. 221–222.
16. ^ Spick 1996, p. 245.
17. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, pp. 46–242.
18. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 50.
19. ^ a b Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 61.
20. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 70.
21. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 72.
22. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 112.
23. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 152.
24. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 153.
25. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 156.
26. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 161.
27. ^ a b Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 166.
28. ^ a b Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 172.
29. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 187.
30. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 215.
31. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 216.
32. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 232.
33. ^ a b Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 233.
34. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 234.
35. ^ Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 236.
36. ^ a b Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 237.
37. ^ a b Foreman, Mathews & Parry 2004, p. 238.
38. ^ Bowman 2016b, p. 221.
39. ^ Patzwall & Scherzer 2001, p. 123.
40. ^ Fellgiebel 2000, p. 187.
41. ^ Scherzer 2007, p. 320.

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