

## In the night ...

**I**t is the night between 14 and 15 June 1944, and the Allies have landed in Normandy a week earlier. The German army tries by all means to slow down the Allies' progression in the air, on the ground and at sea. This night German bomber wing 100 (Kampfgeschwader [KG] 100) (insignia) has launched an assault against the enemy - three of KG 100's Dornier Do 217 aircraft, serial number ("s/n") 4555, 4748 and 4749, have taken off from Toulouse Franczal to drop their gliding bombs Henschel 293 and Fritz X on the Allied boats in front of Cherbourg. After several hours of flight the bombers begin to return to their base, but one aircraft, s/n 4748, is missing. It has been shot down by anti-aircraft fire or Allied fighters in the target area.



For a time, the other two aircraft, s/n's 4555 and 4748, have been lucky. They fly back without having encountered any opposition. We confirmed this when we found the rubber muzzle caps that protected the machine guns on these aircraft from rain and ice during flight (photo 2). The caps are automatically ejected when the guns are used. Their presence shows that the crew did not use their guns during the flight.

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## Suddenly, the accident

The two aircraft arrive above the Pyrenees mountains, in the west of Toulouse, when suddenly, a short time from landing, they crash at the same moment, a few kilometers one from each another.

The two aircraft explode and their crews, eight men in all, are instantly killed. The aircraft have crashed in a wooded area, they have dug a 100 meter long trench in the woods, and a fire has started.

The ammunition in the fire begins to explode, and the inhabitants of the next village will hear the noise of the detonations for the next 24 hours.

What happened?

Did they collide in flight? Did they descend looking for Toulouse airfield, thinking they were above the countryside, whereas they were above the mountains? This is the most likely explanation, but we probably will never know for certain.

The aircraft are torn in pieces, no number or code are legible on the wrecks. The day after, a young boy from the next village comes back from the crash site with pictures he has found on the ground (probably carried by one of the crews) and a machine gun he has found. Fearing retaliation by the German army if they find these items, his parents order him to burn the pictures, and bury the machine gun, which he does.





Later, the French resistance (« Maquis ») will recover the buried machine gun's ammunition, which fits the Mauser machine guns in their possession.

The remains of the crew of s/n 4555 are recovered by the German army a week after the crash. The German soldiers are very afraid of the resistance - they cautiously question the local inhabitants and take no chances. The remains s/n 4555's aircrew are evacuated. We found the grave of the pilot Kurt Faust in Berneuil cemetery (photo 3). However, we have no idea where the bodies of the three other crew members are laying. Thanks to the German Red Cross, we have found pictures of two of the crewmen, Erich Aldermann and Julius Schmidt (photos 4 & 5).

The bodies from s/n 4749 will remain at the crash site; the German army is retreating and has more important tasks than returning human remains from a very remote area. We have also found the picture of one of this aircraft's crew: Erwin Welte (photo 6).

The remains of s/n 4555 will be recovered immediately after the war by scrap dealers because metal has a strong value, whereas the remains of s/n 4749 will slowly disappear, victims of time and of the local people who will re-use parts and materials: for instance, a sheet of steel will be used to fix the roof of a barn that lost tiles (photos 7 & 8).



In 1983, three out of the four engines (each aircraft had two engines) are recovered by a helicopter. Now, they are shown in the air museum of Bagnères de Luchon (photo 9), together with other fragments.

Finally, and this is what triggered our quest, several parts of S/N 4749 are thrown after the war by local inhabitants into a cave. A simple way to clear the place and also erase the bad memories.

## Almost 70 years later

I know about two Do 217 that crashed in 1944 in the Pyrénées, but I have also heard about rumors of a cave in which aircraft parts were lying. This rumor makes me curious, so I try to learn more about it: I find a French Magazine printed in the 90's describing « aircraft parts in a cave », so I start to believe in the story. I also hear about a huge part stored in in the vicinity of Toulouse and after long searches, I find this beautiful vertical fin in the attic of a private person (photo 10).

My friend Gilles puts me in contact with one of his close friends, Fred, who is a specialist. Fred starts an investigation and a few weeks later, he reports to me: "I found it. I know where the entrance of the cave is. It is 90 meter deep. I went down, and yes, there are aircraft parts, look at these pictures." (photo 11). It is now clear that a full investigation and a retrieval operation are worth pursuing.







## A full retrieval operation is set up

The necessary authorizations are obtained from the French Archeology Directorate, and the mayor of the village provides her green light.

A sponsor helps us financially: « 328 » is a German aircraft service provider continuing the legacy of Dornier name. “328” is a British-owned company, with UK aviation interest as well. For instance, it helped in raising the Do 17 from the English Channel a few months ago.

The managing team for this retrieval operation is formed (photo 12): it is a remarkably complementarity mix of personnel that will definitely be the key to success.

## 14 September 2013

More than twenty cars are already parked (photo 13), tents are put up, and the specialist get ready. Our friend Hubert, a restaurant owner who is also an aircraft enthusiast (his grand uncle was a pilot in the famous fighter group « Normandie Niémen ») has taken care of the catering for the whole team, in a very professional manner: “cassoulet”, red wine, brownies. We have luck, the weather is perfect, and the team starts to get excited.

The specialists wear their dedicated suits (photo 14) and go down into the cave (photo 15). It is a 90 meters descent, before they reach the bottom (photo 16). Fred, who is in charge of the team, is very tense. His responsibility is huge, an incident may happen anytime, everybody must be very careful!



Photo © Langenfeld 2013



## Unique parts

Protected from the rain and the weather, an aileron portion has retained its original colors: dark green with white zebras (photo 20), here are three oxygen bottles (photo 21), a beautiful plate in German with fuel management instructions (photo 22) which confirms something very important to us: the Do 217 aircraft subtype is « K3 ». This proves we have found the remains of s/n 4749 (s/n 4555 was a Do 217 K2), a conclusion we had reached by deduction.

A plate appears on a piece of airframe: we have a cooling element there (photo 23).

Some equipment's components with markings or instructions (photo 24).

A huge fuselage portion comes up: almost three meters long, the structure is in very good shape (photo 25).



16 Photo © Langenfeld 2013



17 Photo © Langenfeld 2013



18 Photo © Langenfeld 2013



19 Photo © Langenfeld 2013



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The journalists came from the area around and in front of the cave entrance, waiting, while a cameraman is shooting the specialists going down.

Everybody is waiting, then the bags start to pop up from the cave (photo 17): here they are, the Do 217 parts see the light again (photo 18). They are inspected, admired, pictures are taken (photo 19). They start "talking" to us.





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24



23



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Many parts or skin portion are bent, thus showing the force of the impact (photo 26).

A plate reveals the presence of the FUG203 radio equipment (photo 27) (see the following link <http://www.cockpitinstrumente.de/Ausrustung/Teile/FuG203/FuG203.htm>).

This plate is very important because the FUG203 radio was exclusively used to guide the flying bombs and its presence proves that our Do 217 was actually carrying these bombs; it is very interesting to consider this plate in front of the "ULTRA" communication (a German message that was intercepted by the British) shown in

attachment 1, in which the German Headquarters were asking KG 100 about the impact of the Allied jamming on the control of the flying bombs. The electronic war had already started in 1944!

These Do 217 remains are precious because they are almost the only ones in the world. Although more than 1,700 Do 217 aircraft were built, not one single complete Do 217 still remains on earth, they have all been scrapped after the war.

For this reason, these parts will quite logically go to:

- The Berlin Technic Museum (SDTB – "Stiftung Deutsches Technikmuseum Berlin"),





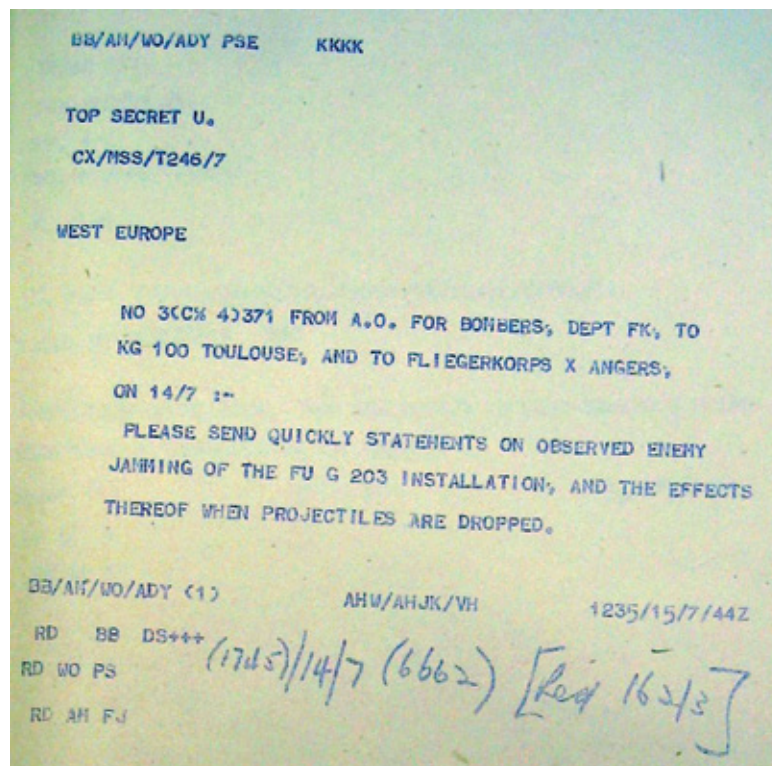
26



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Have more details on the research that lead us to clarify the identity of the aircraft (in French) go to: <http://www.petit-fichier.fr/2014/02/11/a-la-recherche-de-l-identite-du-dornier-oublie-11-2-2014/>

Read an analysis of the ammunitions found on spot (in French): <http://www.petit-fichier.fr/2014/01/12/ann-2-analyse-munitions/>



28. The ULTRA document.

- To the Dornier Foundation, near the Konstanz lake,
- In the new air museum in Toulouse « Aeroscopia » that will open in 2014 in front of the Airbus A380 assembly line,
- In the « musée de l'aéronautique » at Bagnères de Luchon, which already shows 3 BMW 801 engines coming from these Do 217.

This weekend has brought us a huge satisfaction: this operation and the analysis of the archives have allowed us to identify these machines and discover the fateful story of the two mysterious Dornier of the Pyrénées.

**Gilles Collaveri**

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THANKS: to the management team that made this operation possible, Gilles Sigro, Fred Maksud and Bruno Falconnet.

Thanks also to all the others that helped for the catering, the logistic etc. and, as usual, Steve for the perfect translation!

If you want to have to: see a description of the most significant parts found, have a look at: <http://www.petit-fichier.fr/2014/02/17/descriptif-des-pieces-gb/>

## Press references

### BBC :

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-24159975>

[http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio4/fooc/fooc\\_20130921-1204a.mp3](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio4/fooc/fooc_20130921-1204a.mp3)

### Le Fanatique de l'aviation :

<http://www.petit-fichier.fr/2014/01/12/fana-do-21711/>

### La Dépêche :

<http://www.ladepeche.fr/article/2013/09/29/1719458-bombardier-allemand-des-morceaux-retrouves-en-comminges-iront-a-berlin.html>

<http://www.ladepeche.fr/article/2013/09/16/1709934-au-fond-du-gouffre-du-sacon-un-bombardier.html>

<http://www.ladepeche.fr/article/2013/09/15/1709175-barousse-traces-epave-bombardier-allemand-disparu.html>

<http://www.ladepeche.fr/article/2013/09/14/1708974-chasseur-epaves-toulousain-va-exhumer-comminges-vestiges-rarissime-bombardier-allemand.html>

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N.V.M.

**AVION TONNÉ =**  
A =

**TYPE AVION**

**NUMERO DE SERIE ("Wat")**

**IMMATRICULATION**

Lfd. Nr.	Ort und Tag des Verlustes, Feindflug? (ja oder nein?)	Anzahl von...	Dienst und Dienststellung	Vermisst	Vollständiges Tagessatz Nr. der Erkennungsmarkte	Geburts-			Gr. (cm)	Verwundet? (Körperwunde und Wunde?)		Vermisst?	Todes- des Leibes
						Tag	Monat	Jahr		schwer	leicht		
1	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
2	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
3	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
4	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
5	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
6	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
7	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
8	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
9	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
10	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
11	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
12	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
13	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
14	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
15	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
16	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
17	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
18	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
19	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
20	Do 27.7.45	1	Offz. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

**CHERBOURG**

**FRONT S1**

**FRONT S2**

**list geboren 11.11.1874**

**CORPS RECUPERES - 10.18.7.**

The Luftwaffe document « NVM » listing the losses of that night.