



Junkers Ju 88 in French Service

By DR. RIVIERE

Introduction

After the German Wehrmacht retreated from France to the Rhine River and the Siegfried Line in 1944, a number of German garrisons (mainly Kriegsmarine units) were kept in strong positions along the French Channel and Atlantic Coasts. Such "pockets" hampered the supply of Allied forces and the revival of the French economy since most of the important harbor installations were still occupied or cut off from the sea. In the case of the main southwestern ports: Bordeaux was completely isolated from the sea by pockets (Royan and Pointe de Graves fortified systems) on both sides of the Gironde estuary, while the La Rochelle-La Pallice harbor complex was surrounded by a third pocket.

A land and naval blockade was organized against these pockets, but the French light land forces (mostly ex-guerilla units, FFI and FTP) were poorly equipped and armed. In fact, they were unable to seriously threaten the enemy infantry, which was protected by heavy concrete fortifications and important natural obstacles (rivers and floodable lands) as well as supported by powerful artillery forces (as the pockets comprised main "Atlantic Wall" bunkers and weapons). In this situation, air power would allow the French to counter the German superiority. It would also permit interdiction of enemy sea reinforcements or evacuation and would disturb communications between pockets.

However, frontline operations along the German border did not allow the French (or other Allied forces) to divert first-line squadrons to aid in the reduction of the coastal pockets, and the French Command organized, or authorized, new air units to be equipped with obsolescent or seized enemy aircraft. This was possible because the Luftwaffe maintained no flying forces near the pockets, and the French planes were threatened only by the extremely powerful flak batteries.

Enemy defensive power was progressively weakened, and a projected early 1945 French assault was postponed only because of the German Ardennes and Alsace counteroffensives. During April, the pockets at Royan and Pointe de Graves were destroyed and others surrendered. Advancing armor and infantry had received constant air support from the "Forces Aeriennes de l'Atlantique." Actually, large pillboxes had proven difficult to destroy, but most lighter structures, including ammunition dumps, observation posts, barbed wire entanglements and mine fields, had been destroyed or severely damaged. On several occasions there had been massive attacks by RAF Bomber Command, by the USAAF 8th Air Force and by French Air Force mediums, but constant harassing and "all day" intervention had been the work of the "local Air Force" up to the last day!

In previous articles on the French Martin 167s and Douglas Dauntlesses, these facts have been partially related with many details having come from Dr Riviere. Dr Riviere is really the specialist on the history of the French Atlantic Coast pockets. An no one before him has ever written the story of what is probably the lone Allied WW II unit specifically created to use enemy aircraft--the story of Groupe FFI Dor, later Groupe de Bombardement 1/31 "Aunis" and its Ju 88A's!

J. Cuny

After the hasty retreat of the 11th Panzer Division of Gen. Wiese towards the Rhone Valley, in August 1944, the Toulouse area was liberated by the FFI and FTP resistance groups, coming down from the surrounding hills, while the de Lattre army continued its drive northward. In Toulouse, aeronautical factories and facilities had been abandoned in poor shape, and the Liberation Committee immediately started an inventory of the existing goods, as well as making plans for their future use.

Intermingled in the wrecked equipment, eight Ju88A aircraft seemed to be within possible recovery, and an inventory of an important amount of material on other airfields was still to be made. On August 28th, Commandant Pellisier, the local Air Force Commanding Officer, ordered Commandant Dor to set up an FFI (Free French) Bomber unit, making use of the Ju 88s after painting French roundels over their summer camouflage.

On September 4th, this first bomber unit and an

FFI Fighter group were set up in the area. Reserve Captain Doret (a famous, pre-war aerobatic pilot and chief test pilot for Dewoitine) collected about 50 Dewoitine D.520 fighters in St Martin du Touch and Tarbes-Ossun and organized a fighter group of two squadrons. Finally, Fieseler Fi 156 Storch observation aircraft were grouped to set up an observation and reconnaissance unit. A small air force was thus organized locally with makeshift and "looted" equipment.

While, on September 20th and 30th, the first two Ju 88A's were flight-accepted by Commandant Dor, engineer E. Rapoport, member of the "Comite de Liberation" of the Toulouse SNCASE plant, presented a first statement showing the available material, including a total of 16 aircraft plus spares for five.

A group then traveled by automobile to visit airfields in Orange, Valence, Salon, Nimes and Montpellier. Once a list of equipment that could be "recovered" was set up, a single truck from the Toulouse industrial concern set out with a group of men. They spent 15 days away, sleeping in the open, gathering and bringing back necessary equipment. One problem still remained. Without trains aircraft engines could not reach Toulouse. Finally, another group brought back nine sabotaged engines from Bordeaux-Merignac which eventually provided seven serviceable engines. Thanks to secret records held by the underground, the sabotage performed on each

engine due for shipment to the Germans was known.

The first train to arrive from Orange brought badly needed propellers and the remaining powerplants. Yet another mission was sent out, to Paris, and various necessary parts were procured there. One problem was that all bridges over the Loire had been blown up. Trucks had to be commandeered to pick up the material collected in the Paris area, bring it to Orleans and across the Loire before loading it on rare freight cars.

Only the dedication, the emergency and the spirit of initiative enabled this group of people to solve a gigantic jigsaw puzzle and to perform the feat of establishing the material support for a fighting bomber group built up from wrecks and leftovers recovered from the whole territory of a country disorganized by liberation.

The lack of literature should also be mentioned. There was a single inspection record, incomplete lists and manuals--all in German. There was no information available on the electrical or hydraulic installation or on the adjustment of the propeller governors. So the personnel of the factories who had been assigned the repair of the aircraft had to rediscover how the airplane was built.

Equipment status, as reported by engineer Rapoport on October 6, 1944, was as follows:

Engines: Enough to equip 11 aircraft in Toulouse - 20 units missing (10 of which are needed as spares) recovered in Bordeaux, Orange and Valence. (Life of the 1200 hp Jumo 211B1 is 100 hours.)

Propellers: Enough to equip 5 aircraft - 22 plus 4 spares missing (available in Orange or assembled in Paris).

Fuselages: Nine aircraft available, one under repair by Breguet, 6 recovered wrecks.

Wings: Enough for 9 aircraft. Other 7 aircraft to be equipped with recovered wrecks.

Flaps: Supply in Toulouse for 10 aircraft, 11 sets missing of which 3 are found in Bordeaux and 8 manufactured.

Equipment: Available in Toulouse for 9 aircraft. Other 7 aircraft will only be equipped after investigations in Paris and in the Rhone Valley.

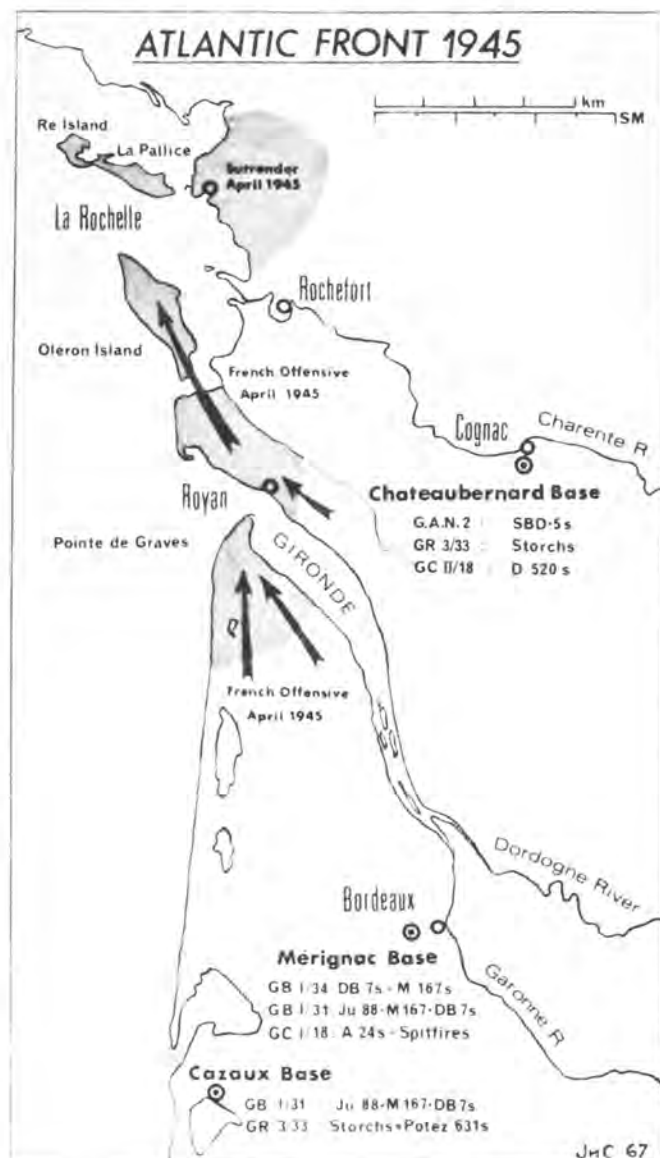
Operational equipment: Bombsights and radio - recovered wherever possible.

The usual bomb load was ten 50-kilo bombs in the bomb bay and two to four bombs under the wings, weighing 100 to 500 kilos each. Ordnance used were 1 kilo electron incendiaries, SC 250 explosives, SC 10 and SD 2 splitter and 90 SD 2 two-stage.

Starting with two deliveries on September 20th and 30th of 1944, a total of 16 aircraft were delivered to the unit by SNCASE at the approximate rate of two per month. In the spring of 1945, six aircraft produced by Ateliers Aeronautiques de Boulogne brought the total number of Ju 88s delivered to 22 aircraft. The Boulogne plant continued production of the Ju 88 after the end of the war to provide the Armee de l'Air with modern liaison and training aircraft.

Losses: Of the 22 aircraft delivered to the squadron, four were lost by accident, two due to engine failure, and two were hit by flak, one over La Rochelle and the other over Royan.

Paint and Markings: The aircraft delivered by SNCASE had the Luftwaffe "Summer 1943" camouflage--light grey paint with black dots, the upper surfaces becoming almost entirely black. Numbers were painted in black within white circles on the fins. The fuselage roundels were lined with cream instead of yellow, and no unit badge was carried. "Invasion Stripes" were not painted on the aircraft after February 1945. No 1 aircraft had on its fuselage a marking in black: "Prise de Guerre FFI." On the cockpit sides small white bombs showed the missions flown (No 2 had a maximum of 44 in groups of 5). The Ju 88s delivered by A.A.B. were olive green with serial numbers in white on the empennage and the A.A.B. trademark on the engine cowling sides.





Orly Airport, 1944. Pieces, such as Ju 88 tail, were collected to complete Toulouse aircraft. (Aéroport de Paris)



GB I 31 Junkers Ju 88A's on Cognac Air Base in spring of 1945. Machine in foreground is No 10, Werke Number 883 781.



First Ju 88A delivered to French Air Force was crashed at Toulouse in October 1944. It carried summer camouflage scheme.



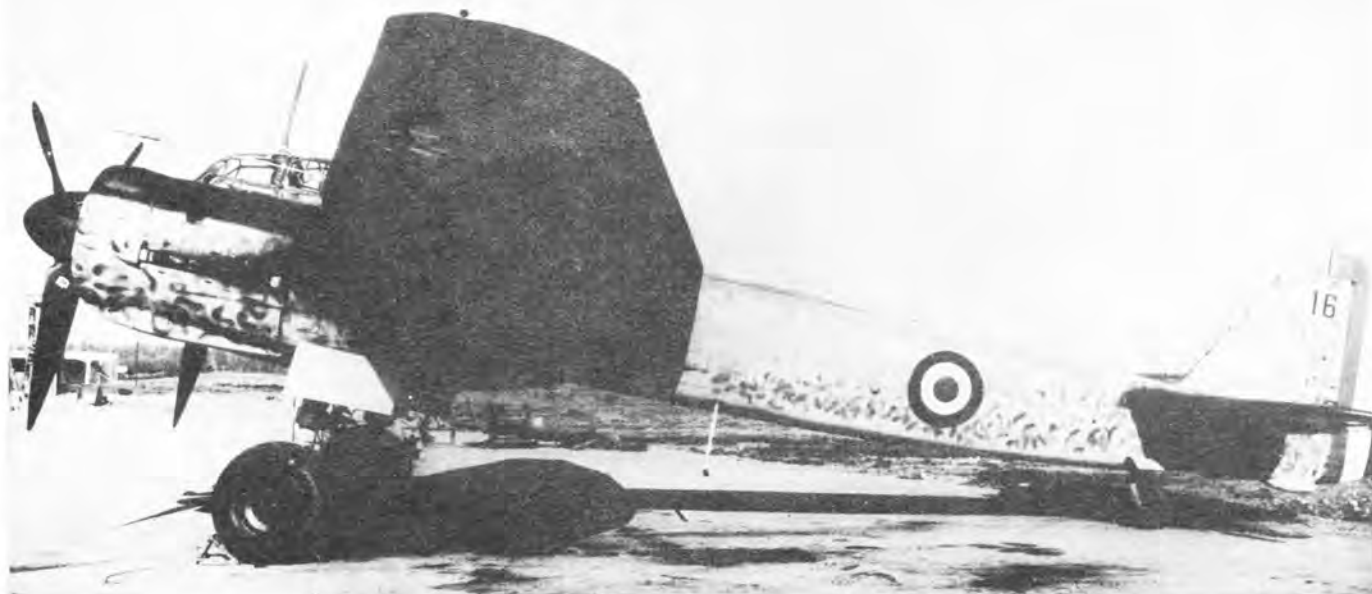
No 1 had inscription stencilled on right side of fuselage between roundel and stripes reading: "Prise de Guerre F.F.I."



This Ju 88A became a specialized meteorology or photo reconnaissance aircraft during the spring of 1945.



Ju 88A No 5 after replacement of damaged right engine cowl by spare of different color from A.A.B. production line.



Junkers Ju 88A No 16 featured a slightly different camouflage style which was more like that used on German sea reconnaissance aircraft. It was the last Ju 88 bomber completed by the Toulouse plant.

For liaison purposes, the Dor unit used a Heinkel He 111H recovered in Toulouse. It was previously the aircraft of the German General commanding southern France and was lavishly equipped with four leather chairs in the bomb bay. The plane had been repainted all cream with red spinners.

OPERATIONS

Less than a month after receiving its first aircraft the unit started operations against the enemy. The so-called German "pockets" were strongholds on either side of the Gironde estuary prohibiting the use of the harbor of Bordeaux and the fortified port of La Rochelle, which, together with the two islands of Re and Oleron, was a very important submarine base. These were encircled by recently-founded French units, without artillery, armor or the necessary training.

After the first bombing missions on October 16, 1944, the "Groupe FFI Dor" was integrated into the "Forces Francaises de l'Atlantique" as the Groupe de Bombardement 1/31 "Aunis." These forces consisted of:

Two Bomber Squadrons

- 1/31 "Aunis" with Ju 88A's
- 1/34 "Bearn" with Douglas DB 7s and Martin 167s (In March 1945 these were transferred to 1/31 and replaced by Martin B-26s)

Two Fighter Squadrons (after March 1945)

- 1/18 "Vendee" with Douglas A-24B's and Dewoitine D.520s
- 11/18 "Saintonge" with Dewoitine D.520s and Spitfire VB's

One Observation/Reconnaissance Squadron

- 111/33 Perigord with Fieseler Fi 156C's and Potez P-63s

A Unit of Douglas SBD-5 Dive Bombers of the French Navy

During the winter, combat sorties were carried out with increasing frequency and a growing number of aircraft as training continued at the base in Toulouse. On January 30, 1945, the group received aircraft from GB 1/34 "Bearn"--three Douglas DB 7s and four Glenn Martin 167s, coming from North Africa. Joint operations were easy due to the similar performance of the aircraft.

These new aircraft were based at Bordeaux-Merignac until the group gathered at Cazaux on March 15th. The

intensity of operations increased with up to 11 Ju 88s, together with four Douglas or Martin bombers, flying repeated missions, especially during the general offensive of April 1945.

Combat tactics were derived from the U. S. method: arriving over the target, all flight aircraft dropped their bombs on signal from the flight leader. The formation then broke up to avoid the heavy and accurate flak fire (Royan was protected by 25 heavy pieces plus 62 lighter pieces, and Pointe de Graves had 8 88-mm guns plus 51 lighter pieces). Rendezvous was easily accomplished over friendly territory due to the absence of the Luftwaffe. Bombing was synchronized with the attacks of the SBD-5 dive bombers and D.520 fighters to silence artillery fire.

As the end of the war came nearer, fighting around the pockets became fiercer. On April 14th, a general offensive was launched with the help of some 1,150 aircraft--8th Air Force B-17s and B-24s, 1st Tactical Air Force B-26s and the French 3rd Escadre de Chasseur Bombardiers (three P-47 squadrons). 1/31 participated



Highest number of operations flown by a Ju 88 of GB 1/31 was the 44 sorties accomplished by No 2. The aircraft is shown at the end of the war at the Cazaux base.



Aircrews of an "Aunis" escadrille in front of one of their aircraft. They wear a mixture of uniforms, U.S. and French types, which was common practice near the end of WW II.

fully in the fighting, providing up to 18 sorties a day until the end of April and the final collapse of the German strongholds.

After victoriously overflying the cities of the French southwest, and after the crews took some rest, the squadron took part in the parade of forces over Paris on June 18, 1945. This was marred by the loss of a crew due to a forced landing after engine failure. Soon after, the unit was disbanded and the Ju 88s were transferred to the navigation and gunnery training unit set up at Cazaux.

On May 10th, the "Croix de Guerre" was placed on the squadron's pennant, bearing the partridge of the province of Aunis. In the accompanying text mention was made of the 140 sorties (230 flight hours) within the week of April 13 to 20, of the total of 420 sorties flown in 850 operational flight hours and of the gallant behavior of the crews of which two were lost to enemy fire.

Ju 88s lost to enemy fire:

1 Feb 1945: Ju 88A No 3, hit by flak and crashed burning in area northwest of Charente, crew - Nimier, Dubois (wounded), Prunier, Severac (killed).

23 Feb 1945: Ju 88A No 7, hit by flak and lost in Royan harbor, crew - Rault, Suilichini, Espie, Cayius (missing).

Ju 88 losses by accident (fatal):

13 Nov 1944: Ju 88A No 5, crashed during takeoff at Toulouse, crew - Cdt Oberty, Galland, Nicol, Mazieres (killed).

7 Dec 1944: Ju 88A No 4, crashed during takeoff at Toulouse, crew - Coudoux, Reulet, Bonnafois, Lagrasselle (killed).

13 Apr 1945: Ju 88A No 17, crashed during landing at Cazaux, two crew safe but airmen Clerc and Gerbaud (killed).

18 Jun 1945: Ju 88A No 9, crashed near Paris after engine failure, crew - Taupiac, Leron, Savant, Rigaud (killed).

FRENCH DELIVERIES FOR OPERATIONAL USES 1944/45

French A/C No	German WkNr	1st Flight	Delivery	Notes
---------------	-------------	------------	----------	-------

SNCASE plant:

No 1	822 916	9- 9-44	20- 9-44	Crash 9-10-44
No 2	1 295	26- 9-44	30- 9-44	
No 3	1 259	5-10-44	12-10-44	Recce-photo
No 4	1 024	4-10-44	13-10-44	Crash 7-12-44
No 5	140 249	21-10-44	31-10-44	Crash 13-11-44
No 6	430 767	25-10-44	3-11-44	
No 7	822 614	8-11-44	24-11-44	Flak 23-2-45

No 8	822 632	27-11-44	7-12-44	
No 9	883 681	5-12-44	22-12-44	Crash 18-6-45
No 10	883 781	4-12-44	24- 2-45	Crash Jul 45
No 11	822 595	14-12-44	18- 1-45	Crash 3-5-45
No 12	822 612	Jan 45	9- 2-45	
No 13	430 688	Jan 45	16- 2-45	
No 14	301 530	Feb 45	14- 3-45	
No 15	833 932	Mar 45	7- 4-45	
No 16	6 642	Apr 45	8- 5-45	

A.A.B. plant:

No 17	AAB 2	25- 3-45	Crash 13-4-45
No 18	AAB 3	25- 3-45	
No 19	AAB 4	8- 4-45	Crash 23-6-45
No 20	AAB 5	17- 4-45	Crash landing 19-4-45
No 21	AAB 6	19- 4-45	
No 22	AAB 7	8- 5-45	

GB 1/31 "AUNIS" 1944-45 WAR MISSIONS

Date	Target	Aircraft
16 Oct 1944	Pointe de Graves	3 Ju 88
19 Oct 1944	Near Royan	2 Ju 88
21 Oct 1944	Vensac	1 Ju 88
22 Oct 1944	St-Vivien	1 Ju 88
24 Oct 1944	Grayan/St-Vivien	4 Ju 88
28 Oct 1944	Vallieres	2 Ju 88
3 Nov 1944	Vallieres	3 Ju 88
10 Nov 1944	Photo mission Royan	1 Ju 88
16 Nov 1944	Photo mission	1 Ju 88
15 Dec 1944	La Rochelle	1 Ju 88
23 Dec 1944	Medis	2 Ju 88
25 Dec 1944	Pointe de Vallieres	2 Ju 88
26 Dec 1944	Fort de Royan	2 Ju 88
1 Jan 1945	Fort de Royan	3 Ju 88
22 Jan 1945	Belmont	3 Ju 88
28 Jan 1945	Vallieres	2 Ju 88
16-31 Jan	Plus photo missions over La Rochelle	
2 Feb 1945	Objective invisible	4 Ju 88
3 Feb 1945	Medis	3 Ju 88
13 Feb 1945	Pointe de la Coubre	6 Ju 88
18 Feb 1945	Pointe de la Coubre	6 Ju 88
22 Feb 1945	Fort de Royan	6 Ju 88
23 Feb 1945	Pointe de la Coubre	6 Ju 88
2 Mar 1945	Fort de Royan	4 Ju 88 & 5 others*
3 Mar 1945	Photo region W Royan	1 Ju 88
4 Mar 1945	Belmont	6 Ju 88
8 Mar 1945	Medis	6 Ju 88 & 5 others
9 Mar 1945	Pointe de Suzac	3 Ju 88 & 5 others
10 Mar 1945	Puyraveau	4 Ju 88 & 4 others
12 Mar 1945	Pointe de Vallieres	5 Ju 88 & 4 others
13 Mar 1945	Jaffe	3 Ju 88
14 Mar 1945	La Palmyre	5 Ju 88 & 5 others
22 Mar 1945	?	5 Ju 88 & 4 others
1 Apr 1945	Sea surveillance	2 Ju 88
2 Apr 1945	St-Vivien de Medoc	5 Ju 88 & 5 others
5 Apr 1945	Talais	6 Ju 88 & 5 others
6 Apr 1945	Pointe de Vallieres	8 Ju 88 & 4 others
7 Apr 1945	Lede de Royan	5 Ju 88 & 2 others
8 Apr 1945	St-Vivien	8 Ju 88 & 4 others
10 Apr 1945	Montalivet	9 Ju 88 & 4 others
11 Apr 1945	Grayan	9 Ju 88 & 4 others
13 Apr 1945	Grayan	11 Ju 88 & 4 others
14 Apr 1945	Belmont	9 Ju 88 & 4 others
DO	Boube	8 Ju 88 & 4 others
DO	Photo mission	1 Ju 88
15 Apr 1945	Vallieres	10 Ju 88 & 5 others
16 Apr 1945	NW of Royan	10 Ju 88 & 2 others
DO	Pointe de Graves	10 Ju 88 & 2 others
17 Apr 1945	Pointe de Graves	10 Ju 88 & 2 others
18 Apr 1945	South of Soulac	10 Ju 88
DO	Port du Verdon	8 Ju 88
19 Apr 1945	SW of Oleron	10 Ju 88



Resting between operational sorties is the Ju 88A No 13 of Groupe de Bombardement I 31. Werke Number 430 688.



A.A.B.-built planes were easily distinguishable by their different camouflage scheme. This is No 18 with tail of No 15 to the right. In the background is the lone Bloch 174 photo aircraft used by "Forces Aeriennes de L'Atlantique". (E.C.A.)



Heinkel He 111H, VIP transport, after its capture, not in flying shape, at Toulouse and in original Luftwaffe camouflage.



The lone French He 111 in its very special finish for GB I/31 of cream overall, red spinners, large roundels, tricolor tail.



Postwar produced A.A.B. Ju 88 at Cazaux base for Armament Test.



Ju 88A used during early '50s by "Service Cinema des Armees".



Ju 88C used for armament test flights at Cazaux, late 1940s.



Aeronavale Ju 188E, 3rd from Sud-Est, in all green camouflage.



French completed Ju 188E-1 at Toulouse during 1946, all green.

25 Apr 1945	Oleron	10 Ju 88
28 Apr 1945	Oleron	11 Ju 88
30 Apr 1945	Oleron	10 Ju 88

*Number of other types of planes on mission.

FOOTNOTE: Colonel Dor is today an engineer at Sud-Aviation and works on the Concorde project. Captain Joussen was to become a French Air Force colonel and works today in private industry. Captain Sautier was to become a general in the French Air Force and works today at the Matra missiles factory. Captain Oberty was killed in a fatal crash during operations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: POCHES DE L'ATLANTIQUE by P. Mordal, 1964. ENTRE MARINS by Admiral Meyer, 1965. LIBERATION DU SUD OUEST by General Adeline, 1948. GUERRE ET OCCUPATION 40/45 EN CHARENTE MARITIME by Dr Riviere, 1960.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: The author wishes to thank all the people who have given him help by furnishing data, dates and facts. Among them are: MM. Dor, Tourne, Legros, Cuny, Mutin, Danel, French Military Photo Service (ECA) and the survivors of GB 1/31.

ADDENDA BY J. CUNY: When GB 1/31 was disbanded, its surviving machines were supplemented in French service by other Ju88s. There were A.A.B. produced Ju 88s and some others were seized in Germany. The total number was probably between 50 and 60 Ju 88A's and C's. The French Navy ordered 12 Sud-Est built Ju 188E's (with BMW 801 engines) and several, again, came from Germany.

Junkers bombers were still flying in France during the early 1950s, in spite of growing maintenance and spares problems. At least one Ju 88A could be seen on the Chateaudun base graveyard as late as 1956-57. The Ju 88s were used in many roles:

Navigation Trainers: It was intended to use Ju 88s as navigation and bombing trainers at Cazaux, but these planes appeared ill-suited for this duty and were quickly replaced by Wellingtons, as previously used by the Marrakech Navigation School.

Test and Evaluation Flights: After the war, French industry was resuming armament and instrument design and production. Ju 88s proved well suited for these tests as well as for missile and parachute trials. France's Flight Test Center (C.E.V.), and French Air Force and Navy special evaluation units, used Ju 88A's, Ju 88C's and Ju 188E's for these purposes.

French Air Force Squadrons: At least one unit used Ju 88s, the "Escadrille de Police et de Securite 1/81", based at Sidi-Ahmed, Tunisia, and had eight planes of this type from August 1945 to December 1946. (The unit later re-equipped with Avro Ansons.)

French Navy Squadrons: Several land-based general purpose units had Ju 88s or 188s among other miscellaneous types. Junkers bombers seem to have been used, mainly as fast liaison planes, by Flotilles 3S, 4S and 10S.

Ju 88A SIDE-VIEW DRAWINGS BY J. CUNY

No 10: A Toulouse-erected machine that was delivered just before the French stopped applying Invasion Stripes.

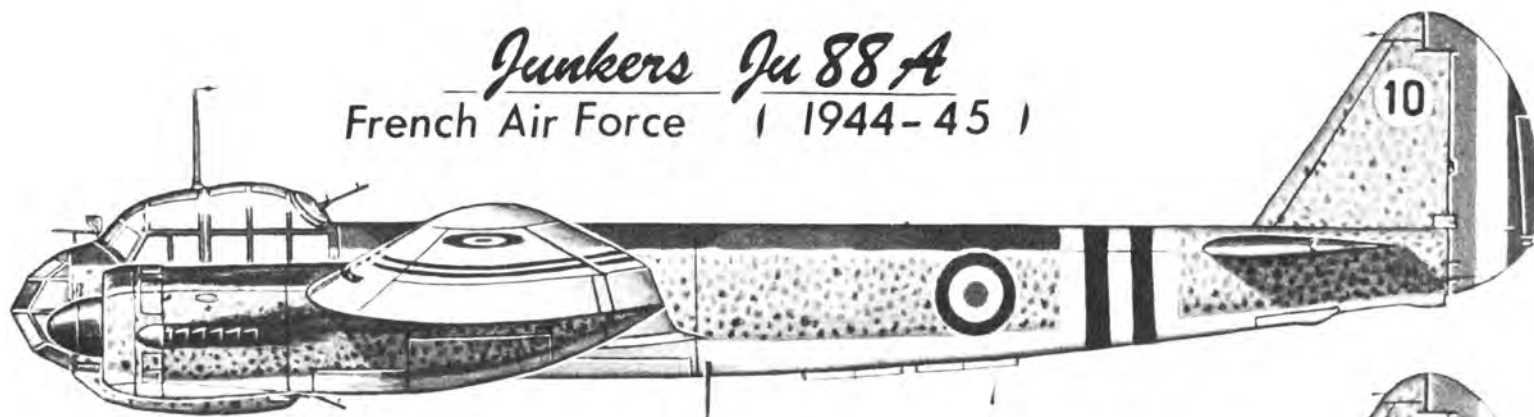
No 15: A Toulouse-erected machine which was completed just in time to take part in the intensive operations of April 1945. Camouflage style and size of fin number slightly different from No 10.

No 21: A Boulogne-built machine that had a very short operational life, being delivered to GB 1/31 on April 19th. Overall dark camouflage but light blue engine cowl undersurfaces, white stenciled production number on fin (Ju 88, AAB n°06), A.A.B. trademark (two wings) painted white on the side of the engine cowl.

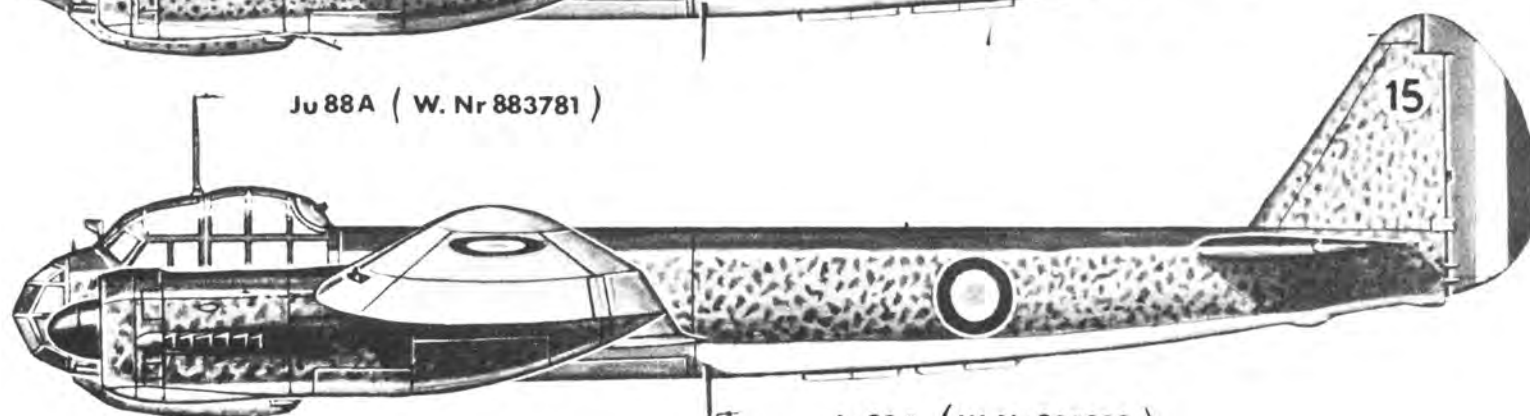
Unit Badge: Gold partridge on red shield--sometimes Naval anchor and wild boar supplement the province bird emblem.

Junkers Ju 88A

French Air Force (1944-45)



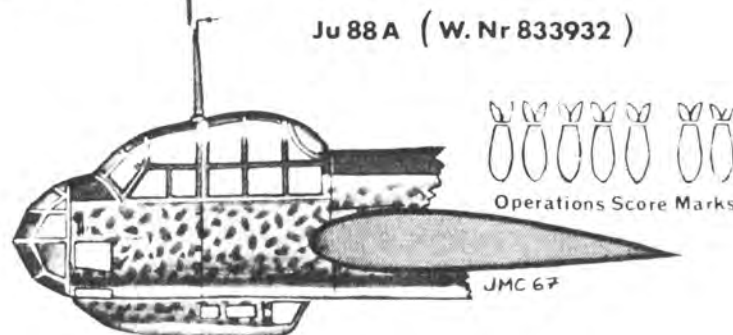
Ju 88A (W. Nr 883781)



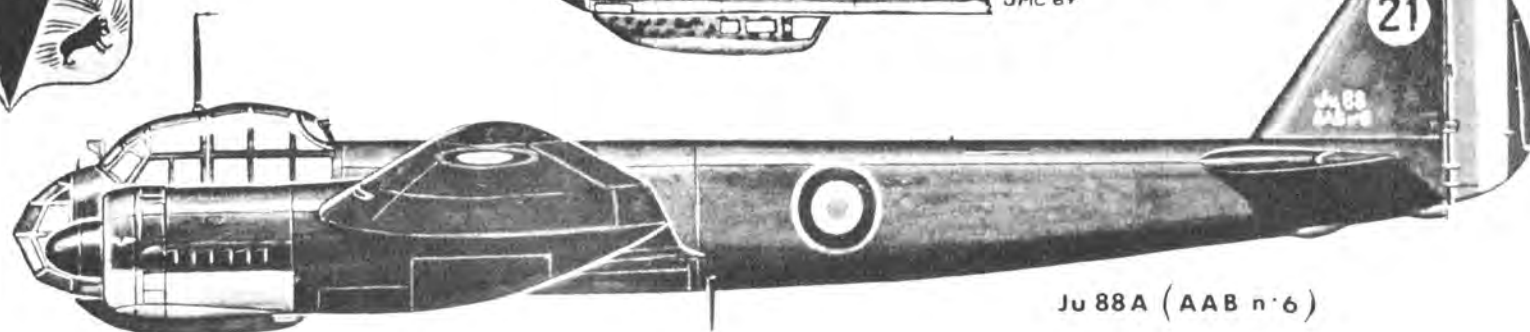
Ju 88A (W. Nr 833932)



GB I/31 Insignia
(On Unit Pennon)



Operations Score Marks



Ju 88A (AAB n°6)