

# LA VITA AI TEMPI DELLE BATTERIE

international meeting, open court of primary school – Lakki, Leros 14th sept 2015

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### Air Attacks against Leros

German bomber missions on the Mediterranean Theater of Operations 1943

During the battle of the Aegean Sea, German bomber and dive bomber forces represented a major threat for British Forces. Lt Cdr Ramseyer R.N.V.R. mentioned in his report of 15th November 1943: *“Naturally from shortly after daybreak the island [Leros] was heavily bombarded by stukas and Ju 88s. During daylight hours I think it is true to say that at no time has the sky been clear of enemy activity.”* In fact, for securing the south-eastern flank and for the battle for Leros the German Air Force “Luftwaffe” deployed 5 groups of bomber and dive bomber to Greece. A total of 78 Junkers Ju 88 bomber and 67 Junkers Ju 87 dive bomber were available for the battle for Leros in November 1943.

Among the most important air units were:

- I./Lehrgeschwader 1 (25 Ju 88, Eleusis, 10.11.1943-23.01.1944)
- III./Lehrgeschwader 1 (32 Ju 88, Kastelli/Crete, 30.10.1943-22.01.1944)
- II./Kampfgeschwader 51 (21 Ju 88, Saloniki, 18.09.1943 -28.11.1943)
- 5. SQN Kampfgeschwader 100 (Dornier Do 217E, Athen Kalamaki, 24.10.1943 - 10.12.1943)
- I./Stukageschwader 3 in MEGARA (30 Junkers Ju 87D, 6.43-11.43)
- II./Stukageschwader 3, ARGOS, (27 Junkers Ju 87, operating from Rhodes from mid-October on)
- 13. Squadron Stukageschwader 151 (10 Junkers Ju 87D)

After the Italian exit of the German-Italian alliance and the promptly German reaction the 60 “Stukas” of I. and II /StG 3 were involved in air attacks against Italian troops on Cephalonia and Corfu, flying missions out of the Forward Operating Base of Araxos between 15th and 24th September 1943. From September 26th on, the German bomber fleet of X. Fliegerkorps (Athens) concentrated on bombing targets on Leros and air attacks against the British Royal Navy. In September 1943 nine air raids with a total of 175 aircraft were flown against the island. The heavy Italian batteries on Leros were amongst the key targets. In October Leros suffered under 121 air raids. Nearly every day the Luftwaffe bombed the island. 1024 aircraft attacked the gun positions and troop concentrations on Leros. On October 3rd and 4th the “Stukas” flew some missions out of the Forward Operating Base Kastelli /Crete in support of German ground forces on Kos. In October the “Stukas” flew missions against the British Royal Navy near Rhodes. On October 7th, HMS Penelope was attacked at 12.12 hrs C-time and on October 9th, HMS Carlisle was damaged at 12.00 hrs C-time and HMS Panther was sunk at 12.03 hrs C-time by I./StG 3. II./StG 3 planned to attack the warships at 12.15 hrs, but was intercepted by US Long-Range Fighter Aircraft P-38 “Lightning”. From October 10th on the “Stukas” started to bomb artillery positions on Leros. Then between November 12th and 16th the Stukas of I./Stukageschwader 3 flew daily two attacks against Leros. By mid-October II./Stukageschwader 3 deployed to Rhodes island, flying up to four

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missions per day during the battle for Leros. On November 17th the last combat flights in Greece were executed against British troops on Samos. Thereafter the "Stukas" deployed to the Eastern Front.

Air Attacks on Leros between September 26th and October 31st by German bomber and dive bomber :

September 26	2	25	October 9	6	39	October 20	2	28
September 27	1	30	October 10	3	68*	October 22	11	44
September 29	3	60	October 11	3	24*	October 23	5	47
September 30	3	60	October 12	8	62	October 24	4	15
October 1	6	46	October 14	3	65*	October 25	4	16
October 4	4	50	October 15	10	34	October 26	11	68*
October 5	5	79	October 16	11	76*	October 27	4	16
October 6	5	78	October 17	7	28	October 30	1	5
October 7	5	80	October 18	2	28	October 31	1	6
October 8	4	18	October 19	6	24			

German Aircraft sorties in support of battle for Leros between 12. and 16. November 1943

- Day 1: 122 Bomber, 48 Dive Bomber, 18 Destroyer, 34 Fighter, 30 Reconnaissance aircraft, 60 Transport aircraft
- Day 2: 68 Bomber, 62 Dive Bomber, 24 Fighter Bomber, 12 Reconnaissance aircraft, 20 Transport aircraft
- Day 3 :80 Bomber, 96 Dive Bomber, 24 Fighter Bomber, 34 Fighter, 22 Reconnaissance aircraft, 23 Transport aircraft
- Day 4 : 102 Bomber, 86 Dive Bomber, 49 Fighter, 24 Reconnaissance aircraft, 22 Transport aircraft Day 5 :89 Bomber, 81 Dive Bomber, 30 Fighter, 16 Reconnaissance aircraft, 20 Transport aircraft.

[Source: German Naval Staff war diary = KTB SKL]

Dive Bomber missions of I. / Stukageschwader 3 between October 4th and November 17th 1943.

All times are German A-time, whereas the British reports are mostly in C-time = A+2 hours.

1.	04.10.1943	1320-1420	60 min	Sea Air rescue mission from Crete
2.	05.10.1943	0545-0850	185	From Crete to Megara attack on Leros, Portolago
3.	06.10.1943	1020-1345	205	25 Ju 87 against Leros; Search and Destroy against RN
4.	07.10.1943	0810-1245	245	Attack on British „Nostril Force“, HMS Penelope
5.	09.10.1943	0800-1150	230	Attack on British "Credential Force", Carlisle and Panther
6.	10.10.1943	1330-1635	185	35 Ju 87 against LEROS, KTB SKL [page 112]
7.	11.10.1943	1105-1400	175	42 Ju 87; against RN Levita and Leros; SKL [page 120]
8.	14.10.1943	1030-1315	165	assumed target LEROS
9.	16.10.1943	1315-1615	180	assumed target LEROS

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10.	22.10.1943	0520-0810	170	STAMPALIA, Wireless Station at 7.00 destroyed, SKL [p.454]
11.	26.10.1943	1040-1335	175	SAMOS & LEROS. 17 Ju 87 against Leros harbor
12.	10.11.1943	1040-1345	185	21 Ju 87; assumed target LEROS
13.	12.11.1943	0730-1100	210	24 Ju 87, Battle for LEROS
14.	12.11.1943	1300-1600	180	24 Ju 87 Battle for LEROS
15.	13.11.1943	0630-1035	245	Battle for LEROS, unclear mission, long flight time
16.	13.11.1943	1215-1510	175	Battle for LEROS
17.	14.11.1943	0705-1005	180	Battle for LEROS
18.	14.11.1943	1205-1455	170	Battle for LEROS
19.	15.11.1943	0700-1030	210	Battle for LEROS
20.	15.11.1943	1220-1540	200	Battle for LEROS
21.	16.11.1943	0540-0850	190	LEROS, final act against Brit. HQ on Mt. Meraviglia
22.	17.11.1943	1050-1345	175	Air attack against Brit. troops in VATHY / Samos

British Losses September 26 to November 13 by German bomber, dive bomber and cruise missiles:

- September 26th Destroyer RHN Queen Olga, sunken by air attack.
- September 26th Destroyer HMS Intrepid, sunken by air attack.
- October 7th Cruiser HMS Penelope, damaged by air attack of I./StG 3 in Karpathos Strait
- October 9th Cruiser HMS Carlisle, damaged by air attack of I./Stukageschwader 3 in Karpathos Strait
- October 9th Destroyer HMS Panther, sunken by air attack of I./StukaG 3 in Karpathos Strait
- October 17th Cruiser HMS Sirius, damaged by air attack.
- October 30th Cruiser HMS Aurora, damaged by air attack.
- November 11st Destroyer HMS Rockwood damaged by cruise missile „Gleitbombe Hs 293“
- November 13th Destroyer HMS Dulverton sunken by cruise missile „Gleitbombe Hs 293“

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Publications of Hans Peter Eisenbach concerning the Battle of the Aegean Sea:

“Fronteinsatz eines Stuka-Fliegers” by HELIOS-Verlag Germany ISBN 978-3-938208-96-0. In this book you will find scans of all the pages of the “Flugbuch” with combat missions and numerous aerial photos of the air attacks against Leros.

Other Links:

<http://www.naval-history.net/xGM-Chrono-06CL-Carlisle-Eisenbach%20%20Attack%201943.pdf>

<http://www.naval-history.net/xGM-Chrono-06CL-Carlisle-Eisenbach-USCAP.pdf>