

W W II Activity with the Germans

Action taken against the Germans during W W II by Bert Stammerjohn who was stationed there with the 556th in 1941 thru 1943.

Subject: Action against German Aircraft, Iceland, 1941-1945.

Reed: Here is the best answer I could get to your question on kills and interceptions during the WWII period in Iceland. The facts come from the Unit Historical Reports of the 556th Sig AW Bn for the years 1941 to 1945. A caveat is that these reports were first required by USAAF orders early in 1943, but were to cover the time from declaration of war on. The battalion reports (my source) were issued for the four calendar years and surprisingly all of the events reported occurred during my duty in Iceland from Aug 1941 to Oct 1943. None later were reported up to the time the chain closed down in 1945 after VE Day.

1941 – Aug 17 – A visual contact of an intruder over Reyjavik airport was reported. A/C not reported. This was during the time of establishing camps after our arrival on Aug 8. No radars, British or American, in operation or fully installed or deployed.

1942 – Aug 14 -FW-200 was tracked by several radars S and W of Keflavik. It was shot down by fighters 5 mi off shore W of Reykjavik.

Oct 18 – A twin engine AC was seen and reported headed SW from Borgarnes. It was tracked by AA radar. Intercepted by fighters near Thingvellir. It was identified as a JU-88. One of the fighters, which was not damaged, crashed into the tail assembly of the JU-88 and it crashed into Mt Esja.

Oct 24 – A visual from Thingvellir was identified as a FW-200. Despite high winds, all radars were ordered back on the air and the AC was tracked SW of Reykjanes, then headed back in NE direction Thingvellir. The plane was intercepted by fighters and shot down near Akranes. Radar coverage was intermittent.

Also in 1942, there were several incidents of action air to ground and ground to air on the east coast near Budareyri.

Sep 6 – A FW-200 dropped 2 bombs on the Duchess of Bedford, which was carrying 556th troops to east coast stations. No damage or casualties.

Oct 2 – The AW platoon at Vattarnes fired on a FW-200 with unknown result.

Oct 5 – An FW-200 was fired on by ground troops as Vattarnes with both 50 and 30 caliber machine guns.

Oct 12 – An enemy AC was sighted over Raufarhofn at 1055 hrs. At 1303 hours, a FW-200 was sighted over Vattarnes and fired upon by US ground forces at 1220 yards. Results unknown.

Oct 15 – A FW-200 was fired on. Location not reported.

Oct 18 – A HE-111 was sighted and fired on by the AW platoon at Vattarnes.

My note: The German reconnaissance and weather flights navigated on the east coast of Iceland and are reported when captured to say that our radar had been a big help as a homing beacon! I cannot authenticate this.

1943 – Aug 5 – The radar station at Camp Ray, Siglunes, was notified by radio link that a FW-200 had been shot down north of Grimsey about 30 miles offshore from Iceland and 42 miles from Ray, and requested that someone be sent out to pick up prisoners, one of whom was thought to be badly injured. At that time the radar on the North Coast was set up for direct air-ground communication and I presume that the radar at Ray had been tracking the hostile. Permission was granted to take the station's MT boat to accomplish this. The party of 4 included the station CO, the Medical Officer, and three enlisted men. Despite rather threatening weather, the operation was successful and the circling fighter on station was able to visually direct them for the last portion of the trip to the life raft. All of the party were awarded the Soldiers Medal for this action. This action was written up in the British magazine Fly Past in Nov 1997 in a rather complete account of all participants, German and American except they attributed the capture/rescue to a naval PT boat. I wrote them about it and received space in the letters to the editor. Also in that issue there was an interesting (to me) picture spread on RAF Kaldadarnes circa 1942.

Jun 4 – This was one more air-ground exchange of fire at Vattarnes of more interest to the reporting unit since the hostile returned fire and put a few rounds of .303 caliber near and through the officers' hut.

There were no actions reported in 1944 or 1945. In fact, in 1943 they began to pull out all of the stations in the North and East; and upgrade the coverage around Reykjavik and Keflavik. When the 556th left Iceland they turned the SCR-271AE at Keflavik over to the air base for navigation and assistance in approach control.

Hope this helps! I will mail the copy of my history to you tomorrow.

Bert Stammerjohn