



GERMANY

## Messerschmitt Me 262B-1a/U1

The fast declining ability of the German night-fighter force to halt RAF Bomber Command's offensive in the latter half of 1944 (when it was resumed after the Normandy invasion) prompted Oberst Hajo Herrmann, well known for his advocacy of drastic fighting tactics and commander of

Jagddivision 30, to suggest adaptation of the Messerschmitt Me 262 jet aircraft as a night-fighter; both he and Oberleutnant Behrens of the E-Stelle Rechlin tested an Me 262 experimentally fitted with Lichtenstein SN-2 radar and pronounced it a potentially excellent night-fighter. It was

therefore proposed to undertake conversion of Me 262B-1a two-seat trainers as night-fighters, installing a formidable collection of radar and radio equipment, including FuG 16ZY VHF radio, FuG 25a IFF, FuG 120a Bernardine visual read-out repeater, FuG 125, FuG 218 Neptun V search radar and FuG 350ZC Naxos radar homer; the use of an ungainly 'toasting fork' aerial array on the nose reduced the

Me 262's maximum speed from 873 km/h (542 mph) to 813 km/h (505 mph), but the ultimate production version, the Me 262B-2a, was intended

*All the Luftwaffe aircraft which went to the USA in 1945-6 were badly repainted with incorrect markings, the Hakenkreuz and in this case the Iron Cross being pre-1938 style, too early for this Me 262B-1a/U1.*



to incorporate a rear fuselage extended by 114 cm (45 in) to accommodate approximately 910 litres (200 Imp gal) of additional fuel. A pair of upward-firing 30-mm MK 108 cannon was mounted in a *schräge Musik* installation. Only one example of this version was flown before the end of the war, although a second aircraft which, equipped with centimetric AI radar in a blunt nose fairing and so dispensing with the ungainly external aerial array, was awaiting flight test when the war ended; it was expected to possess a top speed of 860 km/h (534 mph).

In terms of performance, if not equipment, these aircraft were far in advance of Allied night-fighters, and had they existed in service in significant numbers (and had Germany possessed the fuel to operate them) they must have inflicted prohibitive losses upon Bomber Command. As it was, one experimental unit, Kommando Stamp (under Major Gerhard Stamp, previously of I/JG 300, a *wilde Sau* unit) flew about 10 Me 262B-1a/U1 fighters, the unit later being redesignated Kommando Welter under Oberleutnant Kurt Welter and deployed for

the night defence of Berlin in March 1945; Welter himself is said to have shot down about 20 Allied aircraft at night in Me 262s in the last eight weeks of the war, and probably remains the world's most successful night-fighter jet pilot to this day.

### Specification Me 262B-1a/U1

Type: two-seat night-fighter  
Powerplant: two 900-kg (1,984-lb) thrust Junkers Jumo 109-004B-1 axial-flow turbojets  
Performance: maximum speed

813 km/h (505 mph) at 6000 m (19,685 ft); climb to 6000 m (19,685 ft) in 6 minutes 54 seconds; service ceiling 10850 m (35,600 ft); normal range 1050 km (652 miles)  
Weights: empty about 4585 kg (10,110 lb); maximum take-off about 6585 kg (14,515 lb)  
Dimensions: span 12.48 m (40 ft 11 Va in); length 11.53 (37 ft 10 in); height 3.84 m (12 ft 7 in); wing area 21.70 m<sup>2</sup> (233.6 sq ft)  
Armament: four forward-firing 30-mm MK 108 cannon in fuselage nose with a total of 360 rounds