

No. 316 Squadron and the Flying Bombs:

Between June 13th 1944 - March 29th 1945 a total of 9,251 V1 flying bombs (known as Doodlebugs / Divers) were plotted by the Royal Observer Corps (ROC) from the 1,500 Observer Posts. Of these pilotless monoplanes 2,419 reached London. The total number destroyed was 4,261 - 1,971 by anti-aircraft fire, 1,979 by the skilled flying of the pilots of the allies, 278 by balloons and 33 by the Royal Navy.

A total of 412 came down in the county of Essex. Sgt. Aleksander Pietrzak of 316 Squadron was personally responsible for destroying 6 divers!

Alexander Pietrzak V1 Flying Bomb (Diver) kill history (listed as a V1 Ace - 5+kills).

Date: 04th July 1944 (Tuesday) Squadron: 316 (Polish)
Base: RAF West Malling
Aircraft: Mustang III FB161/SZ-1
Time: 11.45 Hrs (Time up: 1045 hrs - Time down: 12.20 hrs)
Area: 3 miles N.N.W. Boulogne

Description of this day's events:

1 X V1 Destroyed by Fl./Sgt. Alex Pietrzak. A very busy day against the V1 flying bomb. With 53 V1's destroyed by fighters during the day and a further 8 destroyed and 1 probable during the night. (3 by 316 Squadron) The Poles of 316 Squadron were soon learning the art of tackling the flying bombs and also what to avoid, as Sqn. Ldr. Arct. explained: "In theory, the engaging of flying bombs by fighter aircraft was a simple matter. In practice it was much more complicated. As a rule, one attacked the missile the same way as a normal aircraft from behind, with a small deflection. Firing straight from the rear was not effective as bullets might slide along the flexible sheet metal of the projectile's fuselage. One had to aim at the framework to hit either of the gyroscopes, or the engine and fuel tanks. Owing to the great speed of the missiles, attacks had to be made with a height advantage to increase one's speed in diving. Firing from the right distance was of paramount importance. This rule, instructing to open fire at a minimum distance, could in no circumstances be applied against the mischievous "Witches". When the pursuing fighter carelessly closed in and pressed the trigger at say, 100 yards and if he accidentally hit the fuses or the front of the fuselage where the high explosives were loaded, the bomb exploded in the air and its splinters and other bits flew towards the pursuer, often causing serious damage".

Date: 07th July 1944 (Friday)
Squadron: 316 (Polish)
Base: RAF West Malling

Aircraft: Mustang III FB161/SZ-1
Time: 19.58 Hrs
Area: Off Bexhill

Description of this day's events:

1 X V1 Destroyed by Fl./Sgt. Alex Pietrzak. 48 V1's destroyed by fighters during the day and a further 13 destroyed at night. (7 by 316 Squadron). This successful day for the Poles came to a close at 19.58 hrs with the shooting down of another Diver by Alex.

"Intercepted 10 miles off the French coast. Attacked from starboard rear from 250 yards. Strikes all over and it exploded in the sea 10 miles south-south east of Bexhill".

Date: 12th July 1944 (Friday)
Squadron: 316 (Polish)
Base: RAF Friston
Aircraft: Mustang III FB378/SZ-X
Time: 07.05 Hrs / 07.42 Hrs
Area: 2 miles N.W. Appledore (Kent), height - 2500 mtrs. - N Lympe height - 1100 mtrs.

Description of this day's events:

2 X V1 Destroyed by Fl./Sgt. Alex Pietrzak. 62 V1's destroyed by fighters during the day. (7 by 316 Squadron). Fl./Sgt. Alex Pietrzak sighted the first diver crossing the coast at Dungeness: "Attacked from around 200 yards dead astern, closing to 100 yards. Strikes all over and Diver exploded on the ground 2 miles north west of Appledore". The second Diver exploded mid-air after accurate fire from his Mustang and caused severe damage. He reported: "The first burst of fire slowed it down and after letting off a second burst it exploded in the air and the blast damaged the propeller and the left side of my aircraft and I was obliged to bail out".

Sqn/Ldr. Arct went into greater detail: "Fl./Sgt. Pietrzak in the heat of the fighting, closed in to 100 yards and opened accurate fire. He must have hit the fuses as the main bomb exploded in the air. The blast was so powerful that the Mustang lost its propeller and the wings bent to a most peculiar shape. The aircraft went out of control, fortunately, Pietrzak, a stocky, well-built fellow possessed very quick reflexes. His misfortune happened at 800 yards, he had lost quite a lot of precious height and at the last moment got out to save his life. Conclusions were drawn and we introduced the rule forbidding opening fire from less than 200 yards. This distance could easily be judged both in the daytime and at night. When a fighter approached a diver from behind, which was the normal way of attacking and when he could see the red hot ring of the jet engine's nozzle, it meant the distance was right to open fire. On the other hand, firing from more than 300 yards was rather useless

as the V-1 was much smaller than a normal fighter plane and it was easy to miss it from a big difference.

Date: 05th August 1944 (Saturday)
Squadron: 316 (Polish)
Base: RAF Friston
Aircraft: Mustang III FB383/SZ-J
Time: 05.15 Hrs / 0700 Hrs
Area: ? (Kent)

Description of this day's events:

2 X V1 Destroyed by Fl./Sgt. Alex Pietrzak. 32 V1's destroyed by fighters during the day and a further 10 destroyed at night. (6 by 316 Squadron).

The movement card (A.M. Form 78) for Mustang FB 378 - the aircraft that Alex bailed out from in the early morning of Friday 12th July 1944. No loss card can be found from RAF records. ¹¹⁷Unless of course you know different?