

THE GERMAN JET-POWERED BOMBER **ONCE AGAIN TOO LITTLE TOO LATE FOR WW2**

THE ARADO AR-234 – THE FIRST OPERATIONAL JET-POWERED BOMBER OF WW2

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German AR-234 on German Air Field

ADDITIONAL INFO AT THE FOLLOWING VIDEO LINK (COPY AND PASTE INTO YOUR BROWSER)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6oxQYEckgQ>

The Arado Ar 234 was the world's first operational jet-powered bomber and reconnaissance aircraft built by the German Arado company in the closing stages of World War II. Produced in very limited numbers (210), it was used almost entirely in the reconnaissance role, but in its few uses as a bomber, it proved to be nearly impossible to intercept. It was the last Luftwaffe aircraft to fly over Britain during the war, in April 1945.

The first Ar 234 combat mission, a reconnaissance flight over the Allied beachhead in Normandy, took place on August 2, 1944. With a maximum speed of 735 kilometers (459 miles) per hour, the Blitz easily eluded Allied piston-engine fighters. While less famous than the Messerschmitt Me 262 jet fighters, the Ar 234s that reached Luftwaffe units provided excellent service, especially as reconnaissance aircraft.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

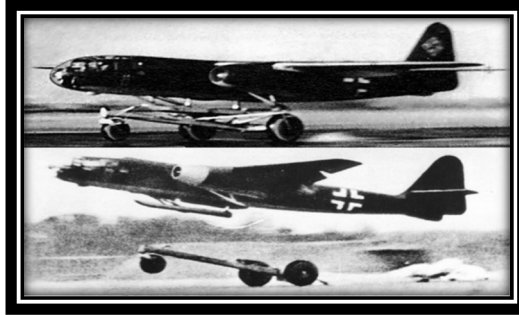
The project began in 1940 at the request of the Nazi Air Ministry RLM. They wanted a reconnaissance plane powered by the new turbo jets which were at the time in development at Junkers and BMW. The airplane was first dubbed the E.370, but it was later re-named the Ar 234.

The aircraft was designed with a narrow fuselage with the wings mounted on top of the fuselage. The jet engines were attached to the underside of the wings. Most of the aircraft was occupied with fuel tanks because RLM wanted a long-range aircraft (Ar 234 had a range of 1,243 miles/2,000 km).

With so much space allocated to the tanks, there was no room for a conventional undercarriage. Arado's solution was to use a detachable mounted trolley for takeoff and a central skid for landing. In later models, however, these were removed because the landing skid was considered too flawed and dangerous to continue using. Plus, once the aircraft had landed on the skid it couldn't move under its power, so it had to wait for a special truck to take it back to the main hangars. This made it a sitting duck, vulnerable to Allied strafing attacks. In later models, this problem was finally solved by moving the central fuel tank out of the way and raising the nose wheel behind the pilot ejector seat.

The V5 and V7 were the first two aircraft to see service in the war. They were sent to France in the immediate aftermath of the D-Day landings, although only one aircraft made it due to engine problems.

This was the first mission undertaken by the Ar 234; it came up against no opposition.



Taking off on skids before wheels were added

The Allies scored the first Ar 234 kill on 11th February 1945, when a Hawker Tempest shot down the Arado over Hull, United Kingdom.

The first bombing raid made by the Ar 234's happened on the 24th December 1944 when nine 234 bombers of 9th Staffel of Kampfgeschwader 76, led by Hauptmann Diether Lukesch and each carrying one 500kg bomb, attacked the railway yards at Leige: the raid was an outright success, with damage limited to a minor wing scrape suffered by one aircraft due to undercarriage failure. Then, one week later they attacked Allied airfields. During January 1945 they attacked Liege once more, as well as Bastogne, and Antwerp. In February more Ar 234s were converted to bombers, though by that time it was too late-- fuel shortages, a problem that had gradually choked the Luftwaffe throughout the war, essentially grounded the aircraft

The last operation of the 234s was to bomb the bridge at Remagen in an attempt to halt the advancing Americans. Five planes were lost in the process.

Over the next few weeks, more aircraft were converted to bombers, only to be handed over to the Allies without seeing any action.



The only surviving Arado 234 is at the Smithsonian Museum

This Ar 234 B-2 served with bomber unit KG 76 from December 1944 until May 1945, when British forces captured it in Norway. Turned over to the United States, it was brought to Wright Field, Ohio, in 1946 for flight testing. In 1949 it was transferred to the Smithsonian, which restored it in 1984-89. This Arado is the sole survivor of its type.



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