

Luftwaffe Symbols and Codes:

Introduction: This is a basic introduction to what is an intricate subject. As such, it is intended to complement the pages dealing with RAF and USAAF codes. For specific information on Luftwaffe markings I would recommend [Ruy Horta's Luftwaffe](#) Page for precise details. While the system at first sight seems over elaborate it did provide a means for extremely accurate identification.

As the system for marking Luftwaffe aircraft was unique, it is necessary to describe a generalised command hierarchy. There were, of course many exceptions to the general rule, particularly late in the war.

A **Geschwader** comprised 100-160 aircraft and was divided into 3-4 **Gruppen** each of approximately 30-40 aircraft. In turn each Gruppe was made up of 3 **Staffeln**, these having 12-16 aircraft. Gruppen and Staffeln were indicated by Roman and Arabic numerals respectively. Thus III./KG 26 indicates the third Gruppe of Kampfgeschwader 26, while 3./KG 26 denotes the third Staffel of the Geschwader.

All aircraft, with the exception of Jagdgeschwader, which will be dealt with separately, normally displayed a four digit code, two forward and two aft of the Balkenkreuz. **The first two digits** indicated the Geschwader. The third, usually colour coded, indicated the individual aircraft within the Staffel and the fourth denoted which Staffel and Gruppe within the Geschwader.

The colour codes used were as follows: For simplicity these are roughly matched to RAF units of equivalent status.

3rd Digit

Blue Geschwader Stab (Group HQ)

Green Gruppe Stab (Wing HQ)

White 1,4,7,10, 13 Staffeln (Sqn)

Red 2,5,8,11,14 Staffeln (Sqn)

Yellow 3,6,9,12,15 Staffeln (Sqn)

4th digit

Geschwader Stab	Gruppe Stab	Staffel	Staffel	Staffel
Geschwader	A			
Gruppe I	B	H (1)	K (2)	L (3)
Gruppe II	C	M (4)	N (5)	P (6)
Gruppe III	D	R (7)	S (8)	T (9)
Gruppe VI	E	U (10)	V (11)	W (12)
Gruppe V	F	X (13)	Y (14)	Z (15)

Thus **A1 KS** indicates aircraft "K" of 8 Staffel III./KG 53

Geschwader Codes (not Jagdgeschwader)

Kampfgeschwader (Bomber Units)		Kampfgruppen		Zerstörergeschwader (Heavy Fighter Units)	Nachtjagdgeschwader (Night Fighter Units)	
KG 1	V4	KGr zbV 1		1Z ZG1	2J NJG 1 (Transient)	G9 H1
II./KG 1	3X	KGr zbV 6		G6 ZG 1	6U NJG 2 partial	4R 6M
KG 2	U5	KGr zbV 9		9P ZG 2	2S NJG 2	R4 4E
KG 3	5K	KGr zbV 108		7Ü I./ZG 2	3MNJG 3	B4 5F
KG 4	5J	KGr zvV 126		1T I./ZG 26	U8 NJG 3	D5 P2
KG 6	3E	KGr zbV 172		N3 II./ZG 26	3U NJG 3	3J 4N
KG 27	1G	KGr zbV 172		L5 IV./ZG 26	4A NJG 4	3C 5D
KG 27	1H	KGr zbV 172		4V ZG 76	2N NJG 5	C9 V7
KG 30	4D	KGr zbV 700		7V I./ZG 52, II./ZG2	A2 NJG 6	2Z 8H
KG 51	9K	KGr zbV 800		8T ZStaffel 210	2H NJG 11	3WH8
KG 53	A1	KGr 100		6N Stukageschwader (Stuka Units)	NJG 100	W76K
KG 54	B3	KGr 606		7T I./St TrG 126	J9 NJG 101	9WC2
KG 54	2F			I./StG 1	A5 NJG 102	7J A6
KG 55	F8			StG 2	S1 NJG 200	8V C6
KG 60	P1	KFGr 106		M2 StG 3	S7 NJGr 10 and NJ Stfl Finland/ Norway	D9 7A
KG 66	Z6	I./KFGr 806, II./KflGr 806		M8 II./StG 51	6G NJStfl/KG 40 Kdo Kunkel	4C E6
KG 76	F1	KFGr 406		K6 III./StG 51	6G Nachtschlachtgruppe (Night Ground Attack)	T6
KG 77	3Z	KFGr 506		S4 StG 77, SG 77	S2 NSGr 1	V8 F6
KG 100	6N	KFGr 706		61 LG 1	L1 NSGr 4	1K 4U
KG 101	5T	KFGr 806		M7 LG 2	L2 Transportgeschwader Transport Units	G2
KG 200	A3	KFGr 906		8L	TG 1	1Z
SKG210	S9			LLG 1	H4 TG 2	8T 7R
Miscellaneous Units		Minesweeper Units			TG 4	4V D1
Wetterstaffel 5	1B	Minensuchgruppe der Luftwaffe		3K	TG 5	J4 6R
Stabsschwarm	K1				TG 8	C8 6W
Luftflotte 6						
		Non-operational		W1	TG 30	S3 X4
X Fliegerdivision	2P	Non-operational		W6	TG 290	J4 F7
Command						

X Fliegerkorps Command	P4 Non-operational	W8	TGr Herzog	6Z K7
	Non-operational	W9	TG zbV 600	6M
Sonderstaffel Tranzozean	P5 Bordfliegergruppe 196	T3	222	X4
	Bordfliegergruppe 196	6W	Lufttransportstaffel	
	Kommando der Erprobungsstell	E7		J2
Wekusta 1	D7 Erprobungsgruppe 210	S9		9V
Wekusta 26	5M Versuchsverband ObdL	T9		F2
				T5

Kurierstaffel Finland 1R

**Aufklärungsgruppen
(Reconnaissance
Units)**

Aufklärungsgruppe 10	H1
Aufklärungsgruppe 11	6M
Aufklärungsgruppe 13	4E
Aufklärungsgruppe 14	5F
Aufklärungsgruppe 21	P2
Aufklärungsgruppe 22	4N
Aufklärungsgruppe 31	5D
Aufklärungsgruppe 32	V7
Aufklärungsgruppe 33	8H
Aufklärungsgruppe 33	H8
Aufklärungsgruppe 41	6K
Aufklärungsgruppe 41	C2
Aufklärungsgruppe 120	A6
Aufklärungsgruppe 121	C6
3./Aufklärungsgruppe 121	7A
Aufklärungsgruppe 122	E6
Aufklärungsgruppe 122	T6
Aufklärungsgruppe 122	F6
Aufklärungsgruppe 123	4U
Aufklärungsgruppe 124	G2
Seeaufklärungsgruppen (Maritime Reconnaissance)	
Seeaufklärungsgruppe 125	7R
Seeaufklärungsgruppe 126	D1
Seeaufklärungsgruppe 127	6R
Seeaufklärungsgruppe 128	6W
Seeaufklärungsgruppe 129	X4
Seeaufklärungsgruppe 130	F7
NachtSeeaufklärungsgruppe ObdL	K7
Nahaufklärungsgruppe 8	6M
Nahaufklärungsgruppe 33	J2
Long-Range Reconnaissance Units	
Fernaufklärungsgruppe	J2
1./Fernaufklärungsgruppe 100	9V
Ergänzungs- Fernaufklärungsgruppe	F2
1&2/Aufklärungsgruppe ObdL	T5

In addition to this coding system there were "Honour Titles", or named Staffeln

Geschwader Honour Titles were insignia in the form of shields or emblems displayed below the cockpit or on the forward fuselage. Some examples are shown below.

Jagdgeschwader	Kampfgeschwader	Zerstörergeschwader
JG 1 Oesau	KG 1 Hindenberg	ZG 1 Wespen
JG 2 Richthofen	KG 2 Holzhammer	ZG 26 Horst Wesel
JG 3 Udet	KG 3 Blitz	Aufklärungsgruppe
JG 5 Eismeer	KG 4 General Wever	10 Tannenberg
JG 26 Schlageter	KG 26 Löwen	124 Richthofen
JG 27 Afrika	KG 27 Boelke	Stukageschwader
JG 51 Molders	KG 30 Adler	StG 2 Immelmann
JG 53 Pik As	KG 51 Edelweiss	Schnellkampfgeschwader
JG 54 Grünherz	KG 53 Legion Kondor	SKG 210 Wespen
JG 77 Herz As	KG 54 Totenkopf	
	KG 55 Griefen	

Jagdgeschwader:

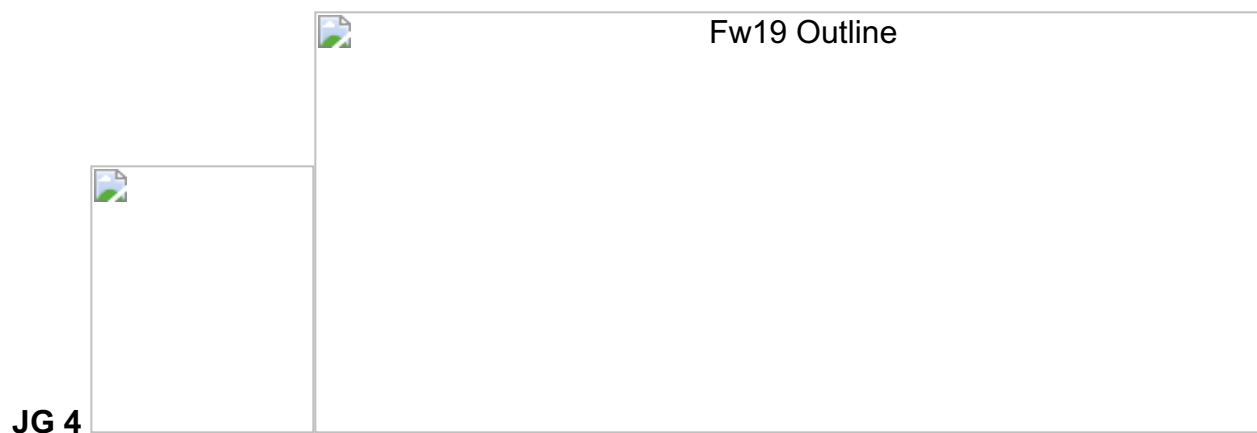
Rather than the two digit code the Geschwader was indicated by the **Geschwaderzeichen**, or unit emblem. (Note: a Geschwaderzeichen was not necessarily an "Honour Title". A number was then displayed forward of the Balkankreuz in the staffel colour, or in black and outlined in the staffel colour. The exception being aircraft of IV Gruppe with plain black numbers. Aft of the Balkankreuz the Gruppe was indicated by the symbols in the left column below.

Further symbols, as seen in the right column, indicated the rank or appointment of the pilot.

Gruppe _____ **Function**



The diagram below then gives a coding for a fictional Fw190 of Gruppen Kommandeur of II./JG 4., the aircraft being "No 8" assigned to the eighth Staffel. In reality, as both the Green 8 and the bar aft of the Balkankreuz indicate the Gruppe, the bar would likely not have been painted.



NB:

1. Not all Jabo Units displayed the bomb emblem.

2. Prior to October 1943 SchG 1 SchG 2 displayed a black triangle on one side or other of the Balkankreuz plus a letter in the Staffel colour. After 1943 this was changed to a coloured letter forward of the Balkankreuz with all other marks similar to the parent Jagdgeschwader.

Reichsverteidigungsbände:

From 20/2/45 coloured bands were applied to the aft fuselage to identify aircraft deployed for the defence of the Reich . I strongly suggest the link at the top of the page for full details on these and other more specific markings and insignia.

Note that in many cases the underside of the fuselage was painted varying shades to alert Ack-Ack gunners to friendly aircraft.