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Skunk Works Mailing List

RE: History Channel

From: gregweigold@pmsc.com
Date: Fri, 03 Sep 99 09:10:00 -0500
Subject: RE: History Channel

Thanks Andreas! I should have known you'd have the skinny on this.

Greg W.

-----Original Message-----

From: <skunk-works@netwrx1.com> at INTERNET
Sent: September 03, 1999 8:23 AM
To: Skunk Works List <skunk-works@netwrx1.com> at INTERNET
Subject: RE: History Channel

Greg W. asked:

>What's this Horton 18 they're talking about on the History Channel...
>some Nazi bomber that could have gotten across the Atlantic and dropped a
>nuclear weapon on the US? Anybody?

>Don't know if this has anything to do with the Horton flying wing designs
>of the 1950's...

and Tom G. responded:

>The Horton brothers did most of their work on flying wings in the 1940's -
>getting as far as building a prototype. It is generally written up has
>having never flown, but I wonder. A lot of engineering records were
>destroyed, along with prototypes, and one, has to assume, flying examples.
>I don't have my reference library right to hand, but I'll look it up when I
>get home this evening.

First, the name is Horten, not Horton!

Incidentally, there was a single modified Cessna UC-78, registered "N39C", and named "Horton Wingless", (Model "HW-X-26-52") c/n "HW-X26-52", by its designer William E. Horton of Santa Ana, California (or Henderson, Nevada ?) The aircraft was equipped with a strange blended-wing fuselage with large wing fences, and was powered by two 225 hp Jacobs (or Wright R-985 ?) piston engines. It flew for the first time in 1951/52, but was destroyed (burned) after no financial backers for its series production could be found, even

though it is still registered in the FAA database (FAA type is 056-01-NU).

The Horten brothers, Walter and Reimar, established the Horten Flugzeugbau GmbH, in Bonn, in 1943, but had designed and built many powered and unpowered (glider) aircraft since 1933, most of which were flying wing designs, including 2 prototypes of the H IX (8-229) twin-engine jet fighter.

The first (H IX V-1) was an unpowered glider, and was found (disassembled) by advancing US troops in Brandis at the end of the war. It was apparently destroyed there, rather than shipped to the US. The second prototype (the H IX V-2), made its first jet-powered flight on 02/02/1945 at Oranienburg, with Leutnant Erwin Ziller on the controls. The aircraft was completely destroyed when it crashed on its third test flight there on 02/18/1945, killing the pilot Erwin Ziller, who had also made the second flight on 02/03/1945. Loss of power in the starboard engine (and subsequent loss of hydraulic pressure) seemed to have been the main reason for the crash, even though it was never established why Ziller neither used his radio nor his ejection seat and parachute during the emergency, and loss of consciousness, maybe due to fumes in the cockpit, was suspected as a contributing cause.

The third prototype (the H IX V-3) was nearly completed at the end of the war, and was built (in modified form) by the Gothaer Waggonfabrik as the Gotha Go 229 (sometimes also known as Horten Ho 229). It was captured by US forces on 04/15/1945 at Friedrichsrode, together with parts of other aircraft (including the incomplete V-4, V-5 and V-6, the last one being the armed production-representative night-fighter model), and was assigned the foreign equipment number "FE-490", later changed to "T2-490". It is now stored at the Paul E. Garber facility of the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum (NASM), at Silver Hill, Maryland, awaiting urgently needed restoration.

The Horten Ho XVIII was a planned intercontinental flying wing jet bomber, not unlike the Northrop YB-49/YRB-49A and B-2A Spirit "family" of bombers, but with large fairings for the landing gears, which doubled as stabilizing fins. The first prototype was only half completed, when it was captured by US troops in April 1945, and was subsequently scrapped. Its intended weapons load, a nuclear bomb to destroy New York or Washington, was (thankfully) just a pipe dream. Some technical data for the Horten H XVIII prototype:

Wingspan: 42 m / 138 ft 9.5 in. (appr.)
 Length: 19 m / 62 ft 4 in. (appr.)
 Height: 5.8 m / 19 ft 1 in. (appr.)
 Engines: 6 Junkers Jumo 109-004B-2 with 900 kp / 1,984 lb thrust each
 Max Speed: 820 km/h / 510 mph / 443 kt (estimated)
 Cruise Speed: 750 km/h / 466 mph / 405 kt (estimated)

The Horten H VIII, c/n 41, a transport aircraft of similar size, was even originally planned to be completed after its capture by British forces, but this plan was never followed through with, and the aircraft was also scrapped shortly afterwards.

Various other Horten flying wing designs, mostly gliders, were captured and brought to the UK and USA, several of which were given to Northrop (the obvious choice) for study. They included the following, as far as I know:

- * Horten H II, Werknummer (c/n) 6, (possibly ex "D-10-125"), used for Go 229 V-5 and V-6 aerodynamic testing, now also stored at Silver Hill;
- * Horten H IIIh, c/n ?, (maybe assigned "FE-7" and "T2-7"), now also stored at Silver Hill;
- * Horten H IIIh, c/n 31, coded "LA-AI", became "FE-5041" and "T2-5041", tandem two-seater, studied by Northrop, now also stored at Silver Hill;
- * Horten H IIIf, c/n 32, became "FE-5039" and "T2-5039", single seater, studied by Northrop, now also stored at Silver Hill;
- * Horten H IV, Ho 251, Horten 8-251, c/n 25, registered "D-10-1451", later coded "LA-AC", originally tested by the RAE (Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough) in the UK with Royal Air Force serial "VP543", and after many other civil owners in the USA (still registered "N79289"), and tests at the Mississippi State University, was last reported at the Planes of Fame museum, Chino, California. Incidentally, it is listed incorrectly in the FAA database as HORTON IV, with c/n "HAC289", (FAA type is 056-03-QP), and is also marked as "Sale Reported". The new c/n comes from the Hawkrider Glider Company at Denham, UK, who refurbished the aircraft in 1950, before it found its way to the USA;
- * Horten H VI V-2, c/n 34, became "FE-5040" and "T2-5040", single seater, studied by Northrop, now also stored at Silver Hill;

Another Horten H IV, Ho 251, Horten 8-251, c/n 26, registered "D-10-1452", later coded "LA-AD", was used by the BAFO (British Air Forces of Occupation) Gliding Club at Scharfoldendorf, where it was seriously damaged in a crash in about 1950. The aircraft is now in the collection of the Deutsches Museum, in Munich, Germany.

Other never flown projects included a supersonic swept wing (near delta) jet fighter, the Horten H X (or H XIIIb), which looked a lot like the Lippisch DM-1 (Darmstadt-Muenchen 1). The nearly completed full-scale mockup was destroyed to prevent its capture before US troops arrived, but the DM-1 was brought to the USA, and evolved into the Convair XP-92 / XF-92A, YF-102 / F-102A Delta Dagger, F-102B / F-106A Delta Dart, and culminated in the B-58A Hustler (I know, I'm stretching it here a bit.) ;)

Sometime soon I will have to visit Chino, to see and compare the Northrop N-9MB -- c/n 04, registered "N9MB", the last of Jack Northrop's flying wings that is (still/again) flying -- and the Horten H IV glider, two very pretty aircraft from 1942/43, which are still looking elegant and quite futuristic, even though the H IX V-1 was in my opinion the best looking one of them all.

-- Andreas

Andreas & Kathryn Gehrs-Pahl E-Mail: schnars@ais.org
313 West Court St. #305 or: gpahl@acm.flint.umich.edu
Flint, MI 48502-1239
Tel: (810) 238-8469 WWW URL: <http://www.ais.org/~schnars/>

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