

Australian fighter jet carries out first air strike inside Syria.




- ABC News

A decorated Australian World War II heavy bomber pilot has cleared his conscience 70 years after the war's end, by penning an apology to the German towns he bombed.

- ABC News



Leunig



My name is Lawrence Larmer. During World War 2 I served in the Royal Australian Air Force, for the last three months of the war I was with a British Squadron in Bomber Command.

I write to you today to tell you that on April 11th I was with a force that bombed your city. I cannot recall the military reason for the raid and I make no apologies for it. But I deeply and truly regret that we were responsible for the deaths and injuries of so many innocent civilians – men, women and children.

Unfortunately today's wars are not just between military personnel, good people on both sides suffer and die.

As I am now in my 92nd year and, as this is the 70th anniversary of the end of that dreadful event I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere sympathy to your people for what was really a side effect of what happened that day.

Once again, my deepest sympathy.

Yours sincerely

L. Larmer

Correspondence with the German Embassy

18 March, 2015

Dear Mrs. Larmer,


Thank you very much for your kind fathers letters, which were forwarded to me today through our Consular Office in Melbourne.

Please forgive my asking, but before we proceed any further I would require proof of authenticity of your father's history. The dates and cities all match up (although I think that your father means HAMBURG instead of HOMBURG), but we would really appreciate if you could send us a scanned copy of your father's service record.

Again, I hope you understand my request in light of many emails that we receive during these times.

With kind regards,

Carsten Knorr
OTL i.G. / LtCol (GS), German Air Force
Defence Attaché to Australia and New Zealand
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany
119 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600



19 March, 2015

Dear Carsten

Please find attached the relevant pages from my father's Flying Log Book and a page from *Snaith Days* a book written by Keith S Ford which details 51 squadron missions from 1942 - 45. I hope this information is what you need.

Thank you again for your assistance in what is an important matter for my father.

Regards

23 March, 2015

Dear Margaret,


Thank you very much for the electronic copies of the log book and the mission book. Talking to the German Ambassador Dr. Mueller, he is very much willing to forward your father's letters to the majors of the German cities including a short letter of himself. If you don't mind, we would at the same time inform the Australian Ambassador to Germany about these letters. In addition, we would like to bring these letter to the attention of Dr. Brendan Nelson, Director of the Australian War Memorial here in Canberra.

Please let us know if you and your father approve of the suggested ways forward.

Will you send us the letters again with a signature of your father?

Kind regards,

Carsten Knorr
OTL i.G. / LtCol (GS), German Air Force
Defence Attaché to Australia and New Zealand
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany
119 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600



24 March, 2015

Dear Carsten

Thank you for following up on this matter my father is very grateful. He approves of the suggested way forward and is willing for you to contact the people you have listed.

Please find attached the individual letters with my father's signature on each. I will be happy to assist in any way so please contact me if you require any further information.

Thank you once again


Kind regards

16 April, 2015
Dear Margaret,

Thank you very much for the individual letters, which we are currently processing as well as drafting the according letters to the majors of the respective German cities. We will keep you updated on the developments.

With kind regards,

Carsten Knorr
OTL i.G. / LtCol (GS), German Air Force
Defence Attaché to Australia and New Zealand
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany
119 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600



24 April, 2015
Dear Margaret,

It is my pleasure to inform you that today your father's letters together with the original draft have been sent via email to the Lord Mayors / the Mayors of the nine cities in Germany.


The emails were sent with a cover letter signed personally by German Ambassador Dr Christoph Mueller.

Warm regards,

Sabine

Sabine Stinn
PA to the Ambassador

German Embassy Canberra
119 Empire Circuit
Yarralumla ACT 2600



Gemeinde Nordseeheilbad Wangerooge – Postfach 16 20, 26480 Wangerooge



Ihre Nachricht vom

Ihr Zeichen

Ansprechpartner / Zeichen
Herr BGM Dirk Lindner
E-Mail
dirk.lindner@wangerooge.de

Tel.-Durchwahl / -FAX
+49 (0) 4469 99-110/ -115
Datum
27.04.2015

Dear Mr Larmer,

Thank you for your very personal words on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Wangerooge bombardment.

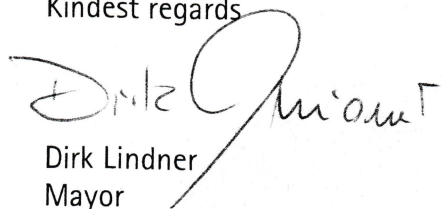
On April, 25th pupils of the 5th to the 10th form of our island school devoted themselves to the topic and also to their responsibility for keeping peace. At the hour of commemoration wartime witnesses reported on the dreadful 15 minutes they experienced on Wangerooge when they were young. These emotional narratives touched our pupils deeply.

On my behalf, I was glad to read your letter to our youngsters and to old members of the population who were contemporary witnesses. Your letter made us comprehend that you, a member of the RAF and a young man of only 22 years at the time of the bombing, has been affected by the circumstances even after all these years. You still think about the evil you and your comrades brought upon this island. This raises hope that war must not happen again at any time. Your letter became part of this hope in the minds of our young people.

I wish that you were successful in conveying your experiences and sentiments to youngsters in your environment, too. In this letter I include photoes taken at our school on commemoration day. You will also find a brochure enclosed showing you the beauty and uniqueness of Wangerooge island.

Wholeheartedly I wish you all the best!

Kindest regards


Dirk Lindner
Mayor



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E-mail gemeinde@wangerooge.de . Internet www.wangerooge.de

DER BÜRGERMEISTER

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Frau Borries

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038847 626-28

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E-Mail

marlis.borries@boizenburg.de

Gebäude, Zimmer

Rathaus, 4

Aktenzeichen

81

Datum

18.05.2015

Dear Mr. Larmer,

many thanks for your letter. As the mayor of Boizenburg I was very surprised to receive it.

Boizenburg and every German has to be happy, that the allied forces defeated Hitler-Germany and freed the world from the horrible dictator. This is the reason, that my country and even the Europeans live in peace for more than 70 years now. And peace is the reason for our prosperity. In the last 70 years our country grew to one of the most respected countries of the world, and my generation, I am 59 years old, is very proud to live in this country.

I for myself would not like to live in a world that is not free, in a world, where millions of people are pursued and killed because of their race, religion, color, political opinion or sexually preference. I and my generation are very glad that everybody nearly can do anything, except he hurts other people. This is only possible because you and people like you fought against the Nazis and won the war.

60 million people lost their lives because of the horrible ideology of some few persons that has been in responsibility for the cruel things that happen in the 30th and 40th of the last century. Figure what would have happened if the allied forces wouldn't have won the war. This would be a terrible world.

You did right in bombing the German cities, and it is not your guilt that civilians died during your attacks. The commanders of the German

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Sparkasse Mecklenburg-Schwerin

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IBAN: DE56 1405 2000 1650 000 002

Raiffeisenbank

BIC: GENODEF1RLB

IBAN: DE50 2306 3129 0000 6266 00

Deutsche Kreditbank AG

BIC: BYLADEM1001

IBAN: DE19 1203 0000 0000 2019 39

Sprechzeiten Verwaltung

Mo. - Fr. 09:00 - 12:00 Uhr

Di. 13:00 - 18:00 Uhr

Öffnungszeiten Bürgerbüro

Mo. - Fr. 08:00 - 12:00 Uhr

Mo. 13:00 - 16:00 Uhr

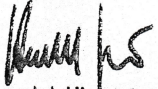
Di. + Do. 13:00 - 18:00 Uhr

forces recruited children at the end of the war to stop the allied advance, they send them into death, knowing, they didn't have any chance to win and survive. This is the big disgrace, and not your fight against dictatorship with the target to subdue Europe and the world.

I have to thank you for your fight, and I am very sad, that the world has not really learned from the cruel time of World War 2.

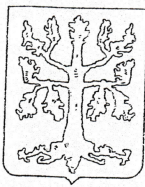
Hope to hear of you again,

Yours sincerely



Harald Jäschke

Mayor of the city of Boizenburg



Hagen, May 8, 2015

Dear Mr. Larmer,

on behalf of the citizens of our city Hagen I would like to thank you for your letter, which has been passed on to me by the German Embassy in Canberra. Your letter really has touched me deeply.

Most people living in Hagen have thankfully never experienced the horrors of war. Nonetheless are your words really touching. Especially the fact that you still think of the dreadful days way back in 1945. At that time you had to follow the orders of your commanders. No one in Hagen can or will ever blame you for the things you have done. War always means violence and harm – and very often the weak and innocent belong to the victims.

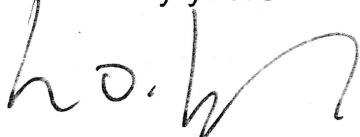
Unfortunately we have to notice that not everybody learned the lesson from the devastating World War 2 and from following wars in different parts of the world. Therefore I consider your letter as a reminder to us and future generations, to do whatever is possible in order to preserve peace.

As a signal of peace and reconciliation and as a signal against the horrors of dictatorship and war, I consider also the vibrant city partnerships that Hagen has made in the past 50 years, with cities in particular in Russia, Israel and France. Former enemies have become friends here.

Only yesterday we remembered the victims of the II. World War during our monthly meeting of the city council. I took the liberty to read out your letter in front of the politicians and citizens. This has been taken up by the council members and the citizens of our city with great gratitude and sympathy.

Personally and on behalf of the council and the administration of the City of Hagen I would like to wish all the best - especially, of course, health and inner satisfaction. You are a wonderful man!

Sincerely yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E.O. Schulz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Erik O. Schulz
Lord Mayor of Hagen



Dortmund, 11 June 2015

Dear Mr Larmer,

for your letter to the city of Dortmund, passed on to us through the German Ambassador to Australia, Dr. Müller, I wish to express my deepest respect and appreciation.

I find it very remarkable that you made the effort to express your regrets regarding casualties among civilians during the bombing of our city during WW II.

From today's perspective we celebrate the end of WW II seventy years ago as the liberation of Germany from the Nazi dictatorship. Therefore the bombing of our city during those last months and weeks of war was part of this liberation, even though it was undoubtedly associated with huge losses and sacrifices among the civilian population. In fact, by the end of the war 93% of the centre of Dortmund was destroyed.

After the war we were given the opportunity to rebuild our city within a free and democratic country, which could not have happened if the Allied Forces had not defeated us. So your mission with the Bomber Command of the RAF served a good purpose even though it was unfortunately connected to civilian casualties. That's the complexity of war that is hard to understand at times.


Today Dortmund is a thriving city with about 600,000 citizens and a very multicultural population. We had many memorial ceremonies across the city to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of WW II and to remember the huge losses on both sides of the war parties involved and of course among the persecuted victims of the Nazi regime.

So your letter arrived at a time very fitting for a deeper look back at the events of those times. We appreciate your expression of sympathy and thank you for sharing your feelings on those events so openly with us.

It takes a very special person to be so considerate and compassionate, so again, thank you very much indeed for your message..

On behalf of the people of Dortmund I send you warm greetings and best wishes from Germany.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ullrich Sierau". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Ullrich Sierau
Lord Mayor of Dortmund

DER OBERBÜRGERMEISTER

DER KREIS- UND UNIVERSITÄTSSTADT HOMBURG

.....



Homburg, 17.06.2015

Dear Mr.Larmer,

Thank you very much for your kind and very personal letter due to the 70th anniversary of the end of World War 2.

I definitely agree that war is always the worst and most expensive opportunity to solve problems and conflicts. Also, there is always the question about if it's an "equitable" or a criminal war. But always soldiers and innocent civilians in principle suffer from martial conflicts and die.

Thanks again for your condolences and your sympathy. Best wishes from Homburg - a city that after destruction has been built up again by its population and has become a booming community.

Yours sincerely



(Rüdiger Schneidewind)
Oberbürgermeister



15 August 2015

Your Excellency

Some months ago I wrote to the leaders of various cities and towns in Germany that I had bombed while I was in Bomber Command in the Second World War. You were kind enough to forward them with a covering letter from yourself.

I have received replies from five of those cities (I enclose copies for your records).

I was overwhelmed by the spirit of appreciation and understanding expressed in each. I was honoured by the compliments and humbled by the generosity of them.

It is so obvious from the responses from people across such a vast area, that is how you are again one of the great countries of the world.

My purpose in writing was to express my sorrow at what war had done. I am glad I did write those letters.

Thank you and your staff for your interest and help.

Yours sincerely

Lawrence Larmer