

out by formations of fighter bombers which included Thunderbolts, Typhoons and Spitfires and by the medium bombers of the United States Ninth Air Force. The early operations were of an experimental nature, the intention being to explore the possibilities of attacks by fighter bombers and medium bombers against this type of target. The success of the early operations by fighter bombers surpassed expectations. It is probable that in one or two early attacks, a lucky hit exploded the demolition charges that had been set in place by the Germans and in such cases, the destruction caused was out of all proportion to the effort expended. Nevertheless, proof was speedily available that fighter bombers could carry out the task of destroying bridges effectively and relatively cheaply.

87. As D-Day approached, so the intensity of the attacks increased, until a crescendo of effort was achieved over a period of about 10 days prior to D-Day. These attacks were carried out, in the main, by fighter bombers and medium bombers of the United States Ninth Air Force, although Royal Air Force Second Tactical Air Force and the heavy bombers and fighter bombers of the United States Eighth Air Force also provided a contribution to the success of the plan. The marked success of the low level fighter bomber attacks of the Ninth Air Force, as well as the results obtained by the medium bombers is a tribute to the high standard of bombing accuracy developed by

this force during the preparatory period. These attacks were often met by heavy anti-aircraft fire, and the resultant losses were not light.

88. The outcome of these attacks was that, on D-Day, twelve railway bridges and the same number of road bridges over the River Seine were rendered impassable. In addition, three railway bridges at Liege and others at Hasselt, Herenthals, Namur, Conflans (Pointe Eifel), Valenciennes, Hirson, Konz-Karthaus and Tours, as well as the important highway bridge at Saumur, were also unserviceable.

89. After D-Day, the assault on bridges of tactical and strategical importance to the enemy was maintained and the results are confirmed in prisoner of war reports of the disruption and delay in the movement of troops and equipment which the enemy experienced. Details of these attacks are given in Part III (d) of this Despatch.

90. The statistical summary below is necessarily incomplete as, in many cases, road and rail bridges were attacked as targets of opportunity by fighter bombers of A.E.A.F. and the Eighth Air Force while engaged on offensive patrols against miscellaneous targets. In these instances, therefore, no separate appreciation of attacks on bridges, is possible.

91. *Attacks on Road and Rail Bridges for period 21st April-6th June.*

Force				Attacks	Sorties	Bombs
				(a) Rail		
A.E.A.F.	...	...	...	78	3,897	2,784 tons. 904 × 60-lb. R.Ps.*
U.S. Eighth Air Force	...	...	...	11	201	227.5 tons
				(b) Road		
A.E.A.F.	...	...	...	28	987	1,210 tons 495 × 60-lb. R.Ps.*
U.S. Eighth Air Force	...	...	...	1	24	24 tons

92. There can be no doubt that the enemy's transport difficulties after D-Day were the result of the cumulative and combined effects of all the attacks levelled against his communications system. The attacks on nodal points in the railway system, the complementary attacks on bridges and the line-cutting by fighter bombers, all contributed to the restriction placed upon enemy movements.

Neutralisation of Coastal Defences

93. I now come to air operations directed to the support of the landing (see paragraph 25). These operations had to be begun well in advance of D-Day. It was essential, as far as possible, to destroy the enemy's capacity to prevent Allied shipping from approaching the assault area and to blind him to that approach. I deal below, therefore, with air operations during this preparatory period directed to the neutralisation of the enemy's coastal defences and the disruption of his Radar cover.

94. There were forty-nine known coastal batteries capable of firing on shipping approaching the assault area. Included in this

number were some batteries still under construction. In the conditions that would obtain at the time of the assault, it would clearly be impossible for the naval forces successfully to engage all the coastal batteries. They, therefore, had to be dealt with before the landing and the air forces undertook this task at the request of the Naval and Army Commanders. I did not consider that aerial attacks against batteries whose casemates were completed were likely to be very effective. Fortunately those batteries in the Cherbourg area were the last to be casemated, and it was possible therefore, to attack many of them while they were still incomplete.

95. To avoid showing particular interest in the assault area, it was planned to attack batteries outside the assault area ranging as far north as Ostend, in the proportion of two outside to one within the area.

96. Interpretation reports revealed that, in a great many instances, the bombing was more successful than I at first expected; by D-Day, the majority of the coastal batteries within the area had been subjected to damaging attack.

* R.P.=rocket projectile.