

314. *Scale of Effort of A.E.A.F. Fighters and Fighter Bombers.*

	No. of operational aircraft available	No. of sorties flown	Average No. of sorties per available a/c per day
<i>2nd T.A.F. :—</i>			
D-Day... ..	883	1,266	1.43
D+1	843	2,467	2.93
June (average)	840	988	1.18
<i>Ninth A.F. :—</i>			
D-Day... ..	1,158	2,139	1.84
D+1	1,049	2,804	2.80
June (average)	1,005	1,022	1.02
<i>A.D.G.B. (including 85 Group) :—</i>			
D-Day... ..	885	811	0.92
D+1	852	984	1.15
June (average)	838	678	0.81
<i>Total :—</i>			
D-Day... ..	2,926	4,216	1.44
D+1	2,744	6,255	2.28
June (average)	2,683	2,688	1.00

315. Commencing at 0430 hours on D-Day and continued throughout the daylight hours during the assault period, a continuous fighter cover was maintained at nine squadrons strength over the whole assault area. Of this force of nine squadrons, six Spitfire squadrons provided low cover and three Thunderbolt squadrons, high cover. Of the six Spitfire squadrons, one squadron patrolled over each of the two American beaches with a third squadron on the western flank; two more covered the length of the three British beaches with one squadron on the eastern flank. Of the three Thunderbolt squadrons maintaining high cover, one was disposed centrally over the western area, a second over the eastern area, and the third was positioned between the two areas, but some eight to ten miles inland from the beach area itself. In this position it was readily available to reinforce any particular area or to engage enemy aircraft approaching the beach from the south, south-east or south-west.

316. The high and low cover fighters operating over the eastern area were under the control of F.D.T. 217; the fighters over the western area, under the control of F.D.T. 216. The "free" high flying Thunderbolt squadron operating inland, was also controlled by F.D.T. 217 (see para. 322).

317. The scale of the effort described above was maintained, whenever weather permitted, until 13th June, when the force involved was reduced to three low cover and two high cover squadrons. All these squadrons operated from England. In addition, a reserve of two squadrons from those by then operating on the Continent was maintained at readiness for extra low cover if required. This arrangement continued, again whenever weather permitted, until sufficient fighter squadrons had been moved to the Continent to take over the commitment (see para. 329).

318. Four squadrons of Lightnings (each of 16 aircraft strength) maintained throughout the daylight hours a continuous patrol over the assault forces and the shipping lanes leading to the beaches. They operated normally at between three thousand and five thousand feet or just below cloud base, in four distinct areas, and all were under the control of F.D.T. 13 (see para. 322). This cover was maintained for the first three days, but because of the

lack of enemy reaction it was then reduced to three squadrons, and finally to two squadrons on 11th June. Additionally, a reserve of not less than six squadrons was also available for reinforcement of any sector requiring it.

319. It was essential to provide adequate fighter cover over the beach-head and shipping lanes during the critical periods of first light and last light. To ensure that sufficient aircraft could be in the area at these times, twelve British and twelve American fighter squadrons were trained to take off and land in darkness. Thus, with the night fighter operations, fighter cover was maintained, whenever weather permitted, continuously throughout the twenty-four hours.

320. *Control of Fighter Forces.*—I have already dealt with the activities of fighter aircraft on offensive patrols and in direct support, and those of the strike force. The arrangement for meeting the calls for air support during the assault were as follows. A Headquarters ship accompanied each Naval Assault Force: this ship carried an Air Staff Officer who was the representative of the Commander, Advanced A.E.A.F. This officer kept the Commander, Advanced A.E.A.F., informed of the Military and Naval Commanders' intentions and requirements through naval channels to Portsmouth and thence to Uxbridge. These Headquarters ships were equipped for the control of direct support aircraft and also to act as stand-by to the Fighter Direction Tenders (referred to below) for the control of fighter cover forces. In neither case did the need for them to exercise direct control of fighters arise. In addition, each Headquarters ship received reports in the clear from reconnaissance aircraft and relayed this information on targets to Uxbridge. They also provided liaison when needed (and it was frequently needed) between the bombarding warships and their spotting aircraft (see paragraph 207).

321. As stated in paragraph 311, the central control of both the night and day fighter squadrons was exercised by the Combined Control Centre, Uxbridge, using the static organisation of A.D.G.B. Three Fighter Direction Tenders operated as forward controls. One of these Fighter Direction Tenders was placed in each of the United States and British sectors and one in the main shipping lane. This ship later