

It was also agreed that as the air force would necessarily play the predominant role in trans-Adriatic operations, the co-ordinator should be the Air Force Commander.

64. In a directive dated 7th June 1944 from the Air Commander-in-Chief, M.A.A.F., a new composite group was formed known as Balkan Air Force. The operational units of Balkan Air Force consisted on an average of twenty-two squadrons excluding those employed on special supply operations. They operated fifteen types of aircraft, flown by air-crew of eight different nationalities (British, South African, Italian, Greek, Yugoslav, and for the supply dropping operations, American, Polish and Russian). It will be seen how "international" were the responsibilities of the A.O.C., B.A.F. as an Air Commander.

65. The responsibilities of A.O.C. B.A.F.* as co-ordinator of trans-Adriatic operations were contained in a directive from the Supreme Allied Commander which became effective on the 15th June 1944. In this directive it was laid down that, apart from the air units coming under his direct command, the A.O.C. B.A.F. was also responsible for co-ordinating the planning and execution of trans-Adriatic operations by all the three services. The land forces affected were known as Land Forces Adriatic (L.F.A.), while the naval forces concerned were those under the command of Flag Officer, Taranto and Liaison with the Italians (F.O.T.A.L.I.). Other formations whose activities the A.O.C. B.A.F. was required to co-ordinate were:—

(a) No. 37 Military Mission (known as the Maclean Mission) which was attached to the Headquarters of Marshal Tito in Yugoslavia.

(b) Force 399, which was responsible for Military Missions in Albania and Hungary and, in a liaison capacity, for missions and special operations in Greece.

(c) Headquarters Special Operations (Mediterranean)—abbreviated title S.O.(M).—which was responsible for the co-ordination and general supervision of special operations throughout the Mediterranean.

66. It was, however, implicit in the directive that while the Air Officer Commanding Balkan Air Force was responsible for the co-ordination of trans-Adriatic operations, the Naval and Army Commanders were ultimately responsible to their respective service Commanders-in-Chief for the day-to-day conduct of operations.

67. The Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, had always been of the opinion that it was unnecessary to associate the Flag Officer, Taranto and Liaison with the Italians (F.O.T.A.L.I.) so closely with the other two service commanders as to necessitate moving his Headquarters from Taranto to Bari. From the point of view of naval strategy, too, it was desirable that his Headquarters should remain at Taranto. He was accordingly represented at Balkan Air Force Headquarters by a Naval Liaison Officer who filled the position more of an additional Chief of Staff than an actual Liaison Officer.

68. Located in the same building at Bari was the Rear Headquarters of the Maclean Mission. Force 399 was located partly in the R.A.F. building and partly elsewhere in Bari.

69. There was therefore set up in one building in Bari what amounted to a miniature G.H.Q. Major issues of policy were discussed at periodic conferences between the three commanders at which their political advisers and representatives of 37 Military Mission and Force 399 were present as required. Day-to-day inter-service discussions also took place at a morning War Room Conference and subsequently between operations and intelligence officers of the three services at a conference presided over by the Senior Air Staff Officer, B.A.F.

70. In order to deal with the various political problems which are inevitably produced by war in the Balkans, representatives in Bari of the British Resident Minister, Central Mediterranean, and of the U.S. Political Adviser, A.F.H.Q., were made the Political Advisers of the A.O.C. Balkan Air Force, and he presided over a Policy Committee which, besides the other two service Commanders, included his Political Advisers and the representatives of the Maclean Mission, Force 399 and H.Q., S.O. (M).

71. As part of the machinery of inter-service co-ordination and to effect the necessary liaison between the three services, the offices of the political representatives and the various "special" forces, an Inter-Service Secretariat was added to the staff of A.O.C., B.A.F.

72. Joint Planning and Joint Intelligence Staffs were also set up and the Intelligence Staff was given the task of providing Balkan intelligence on a wide scale to meet not only the requirements of B.A.F. and L.F.A. but for Force 399 and S.O. (M). A small joint Public Relations Office was also set up.

73. There was a Combined Signals organisation and a Chief Signals Officer (Army) B.A.F. was appointed who was responsible to the Air Officer Commanding in his capacity as co-ordinator of Balkan operations. Necessarily he worked in the closest touch with the Chief Signals Officer (Air) who was responsible for B.A.F. Signals.

74. The joint organisation worked well. Inter-service contacts were maintained all day and every day and the close relations which were established with the political and special forces represented in Bari were of the utmost value in handling the various politico-military problems of the Balkan war. So close was this day-to-day contact that in fact it was found possible to discontinue the meetings of the Committee which had been set up to deal with Special Operations matters.

75. Another feature of the joint organisation was that a system of inter-service command responsible to B.A.F., F.O.T.A.L.I. and L.F.A. was established on the island of Vis and subsequently on the mainland at Zadar, which became known as C.O.Z.A. (Combined Operations Zadar).

76. It was made clear in the A.O.C.'s directive that the primary object of trans-Adriatic operations was "to contain and destroy as many enemy forces as possible in the Balkans." From the Allied resources at that time employed against the Germans it was not to be expected there would be much to spare for operations in the Balkans. Moreover, it was the policy of the U.S. Chiefs of Staff that U.S. forces, apart from some special service units, should not be employed in an operational role in the Balkans.

* A.V.M. Elliot was succeeded by A.V.M. Mills on 13th February, 1945.