

fell outside the target areas. A message of thanks from the Army was received, which said "Bombing quite remarkable and accuracy very impressive."

256. In addition to No. 205 Group's attack on the Santerno defences, the night intruders of Desert Air Force—Bostons, Baltimores and Mosquitoes—flew the record number of 169 sorties, attacking gun positions from Castel Bolognese to Massa Lombarda, watching for any movement on the roads in the Po Valley, or on the Po River itself, and bombing strong-points in the battle area.

*Day 10th April—Eighth Army Front.*

257. The following morning, again preceded by a heavy air assault by fighter-bombers, the infantry pushed forward to the line of the Lugo Canal, and by mid-day had reached it in strength. New Zealand troops attacked across the Lugo Canal soon after mid-day and by the evening had reached the Santerno River; at the same time Lugo town itself was captured. Further South the Polish Corps also reached the Lugo Canal.

258. In the afternoon the XVth Air Force made an even greater effort in support of the ground forces, despatching 1,261 bombers and fighters to continue the attack on the Santerno defences begun by No. 205 Group the previous night. The object was again to disorganise the enemy and attack troop concentrations, gun positions and defence installations in the area immediately ahead of the Eighth Army.

259. Desert Air Force flew 662 sorties during the day of which 608 were in close support of V Corps and Polcorps. Four squadrons of Marauders of the S.A.A.F. bombed gun areas at Menate, near the South shore of Lake Comacchio.

260. On the Polcorps sector, attacks were made at Solarolo, Gaiano, Bagnara and against gun areas on both sides of the Santerno. The Mordano bridge over the Santerno was bombed by Thunderbolts, scoring four direct hits on the bridge as well as others on the approaches.

*Night 10th-11th April—Eighth Army Front.*

261. Desert Air Force continued its watch over the battlefield during the night, but after attacks had been made on the primary targets such as headquarters buildings, gun areas, factories and dumps, the ensuing reconnaissance revealed very little movement, and what little there was appeared very scattered.

262. During the early hours of the morning an attack by the army was launched on the extreme right flank from the bridgehead across the Reno gained in the operations preliminary to the main assault and reached a point some five miles south-east of Argenta, to the north of Route 16. The enemy reacted very strongly as this was a dangerous threat to his key towns of Bastia, Argenta and Ferrara, guarding the Argenta gap, and the way to the Po Valley along Route 16.

*Day 11th April—8th Army Front.*

263. During the day and through the following night the Eighth Army fought for the Santerno crossings and by the morning of the 12th April had considerable forces across the river. During the day 824 sorties were flown by Desert Air Force. The majority of these were close support missions under "Rover"

control, against targets in the immediate battle area nominated by the Army. Spitfires and Mustangs were constantly strafing enemy positions. Search by tactical reconnaissance aircraft for enemy movement in and behind the battle area again revealed very little. In fact his powers of movement had been practically destroyed by our previous heavy air attacks in preparation for this battle. Artillery reconnaissance aircraft secured the engagement of hostile batteries throughout the day, and photo reconnaissance aircraft covered the battle area, Ferrara, Rovigo marshalling yards and any port activity in the North. The day's activity was typical of the work carried out by the Air Force during the offensive.

*Night 11th/12th April—8th Army Front.*

264. Further bombing was carried out by No. 205 Group when 225 tons of bombs were dropped on enemy concentrations, defences and dumps in the Bastia area, some two to three thousand yards in front of our own troops. The success of these attacks especially on the enemy's communications caused him to abandon Highway 16 where it crosses the Reno and divert his withdrawal to a point ten miles north-west of Bastia.

265. Desert Air Force night intruders continued their attacks in the battle area and communications behind it.

*Day 12th April—8th Army Front.*

266. During the day the bridgeheads already gained across the Santerno were consolidated into one, and a reserve division moved up through its northern part with the object of producing a local pincer movement against Bastia in conjunction with the force attacking north of Route 16.

267. Further south, Polish forces attacked up Route 9, capturing Castel Bolognese and in the late afternoon, Mordano on the west bank of the Santerno.

268. On this day the majority of the 729 sorties flown by D.A.F. helped the New Zealand and Polish Forces to consolidate and enlarge their bridgeheads across the Santerno River. One hundred and six sorties were directed against targets in the immediate battle area. The usual round of attacks on gun positions and on tanks took place with considerable success.

*Night 12th/13th April—8th Army Front.*

269. During the night No. 205 Group attacked the key communications centre of Argenta on Route 16, which was now being threatened by the Eighth Army's thrust north and south of the road. The destruction was very great; roads were cratered and blocked with rubble thus impeding the enemy's use of this line of communication.

270. Bostons, Baltimores and Mosquitoes continued their vigil throughout the night, patrolling the battle area, the Po River crossings and intruding further North.

*Day 13th April—8th Army Front.*

271. At dawn on the 13th April yet another amphibious assault was launched behind the enemy's left flank on the north-western shore of Lake Comacchio. To the south of Route 16 an attack was begun on Conselice, and further progress was made north and north-west of Massa Lombarda.