Category " B ". Twelve airfields of the second list were attacked by the Eighth Air Force with very satisfactory results.

134. The following categories of airfield damage were used:—

Category " A "—major installations completely destroyed; no further attacks needed.

Category " B "—major installations severely damaged; further attacks warranted.

Category " C "—minor damage; further attacks required.

135. *Statistical Summary of Attacks on Airfields during the period* 11*th May to D-Day.*

Force	*Attacks*	*Sorties*	*Bombs*
A.E.A.F.			
Ninth Air Force	56	2,550	3,197 tons
Second T.A.F.	12	312	487 tons
R.A.F. Bomber Command	6	119	395 tons
U.S. Eighth Air Force	17	934	2,638 tons
	91	3,915	6,717 tons

136. These attacks on enemy airfields accomplished the desired object of placing the enemy under the same handicap as the Allied fighters by forcing them to operate from airfields a long way from the assault area. They were also largely responsible for the lack of enemy air interference with our landings and undoubtedly contributed much to the ineffectiveness of the German Air Force at the really critical times.

Photographic Reconnaissance.

137. The photographic reconnaissance units of the Allied air forces were the first to begin active and direct preparation for the invasion of Europe from the West. For more than a year, much vital information was accumulated which contributed very greatly to the ultimate success of the assault. The variety, complexity and moreover, the detailed accuracy of the information gathered and assiduously collated was of great importance in the preparatory phase of the operation.

138. Each particular service had its own requirements and individual problems which only photographic reconnaissance could hope to solve. Then again, within each service, specialised sections relied to a great extent for their information on these sources, e.g. as early as possible after each major bombing attack, damage assessment sorties were flown.

139. Photographic coverage of the entire coastline from Holland to the Spanish frontier was obtained to gather full details of the coastal defences. Verticals and obliques were taken of beach gradients, beach obstacles, coastal defences and batteries. Full photographic coverage from Granville to Flushing, both in obliques and verticals, was obtained. This very large coverage also served to hide our special interest in the selected assault beaches.

140. Obliques were taken at wave top height, three to four miles out from the coast, in order to provide the assault coxswains with a landing craft view of the particular area to be assaulted or likely to be their allotted landing spots. Then obliques were flown 1,500 yards from the coast at zero feet, to provide platoon assault commanders with recognition landing points. Further obliques were taken, again at 1,500 yards from the shore, but at 2,000 feet to provide, for those who were planning the infantry assault, views of the immediate hinterland.

141. Inland strips were photographed behind the assault areas, looking southwards, so that infantry commanders could pinpoint themselves after they had advanced. Again, it was necessary to photograph hidden land behind assault areas, so that the infantry commanders would know the type of terrain behind such obstructions as hills or woods.

142. Bridges over rivers were photographed and special attention was paid to the river banks to enable the engineers to plan the type of construction necessary to supply temporary bridges in the event of the enemy blowing up the regular bridges.

143. The prospective airfield sites were selected by the engineers after they had studied the vast quantity of reconnaissance photographs available. The success of the Airfield Construction Units, some details of which are given in Part IV of this Despatch, is testimony to the value of this reconnaissance.

144. It was also necessary to cover all the likely dropping areas for the use of the airborne divisions, and to pay special attention to each area for concealed traps such as spikes, etc. These traps were observed on photographs of many sites chosen and it was necessary to make other plans accordingly.

145. Flooding areas, too, throughout Holland, Belgium and France were all photographed at different periods, thus ensuring to the Army Commander full knowledge of these defences in planning the deployment of his forces. The extent to which army commanders depended upon photographic reconnaissance may be gauged by the volume of cover they received. In the two weeks prior to D-Day, one R.A.F. Mobile Field Photographic Section alone made for Army requirements more than 120,000 prints.

146. Continued photographic reconnaissance was also flown covering enemy communication centres, petrol, oil and lubricant dumps, headquarters, inland defences and military concentrations. These reconnaissances provided invaluable information as to the enemy order of battle and his capabilities.

147. Many small scale sorties were flown for Combined Operations, enabling them to make landings at selected spots, long before the real offensive was launched and to bring back vital information.

148. Another important task undertaken was the photographing of Allied landing craft, equipment and stores in the United Kingdom, to facilitate experiments with the type of camouflage most likely to be effective.