

junctions covering 1 Division's beaches. On the left of the Army front 3 Infantry Division, with a Combat Command of 2 Armoured Division, was to land in the area of Licata and capture the port and airfield. To support either of these assaulting forces a floating reserve sailed with the Army, consisting of the remainder of 2 Armoured Division and one Regimental Combat Team of 1 Infantry Division. In reserve in North Africa was the remainder of 82 Airborne Division, less those elements which had already been dropped before the landings, and 9 Infantry Division. The frontage of attack of the two Armies covered about a hundred miles, from Cape Murro di Porco to Licata.

The problem of assembling these forces for a simultaneous assault was perhaps the most complicated that ever faced a planning staff, for they were mounted from all over the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean and in part from the United Kingdom and United States. Of the British forces 5 and 50 Divisions and 231 Infantry Brigade came from Suez in ships; 51 Division came from Tunisia in craft and part of it staged at Malta *en route*; 1 Canadian Division sailed from the United Kingdom in two ship convoys. 78 Division, earmarked for reserve, was waiting in the Sousse—Sfax area to be ferried across in craft. Seventh Army used the ports west of Tunis. 1 Division came from the Algiers area, partly in ships and partly in craft; 3 Division from Bizerta and 2 Armoured and 9 Divisions from Oran, again partly in ships and partly in craft; 45 Division came from the United States, staging in the Oran area. Both the airborne divisions, 1 British and 82 United States, were based on Kairouan in Tunisia. From the command point of view also there was extreme dispersion. My Headquarters was originally near Algiers and later at La Marsa, near Carthage, with a small Tactical Headquarters on Malta. Seventh Army Headquarters was near Oran for the planning stage, subsequently moving to Bizerta, Eighth Army Headquarters was originally in Cairo and moved to Malta for the assault; Admiral Cunningham established his Headquarters also in Malta, and Mediterranean Air Command Headquarters and the Headquarters of the Tactical and Strategic Air Forces were all grouped around Carthage, adjacent to my main Headquarters.

Training was carried out at a number of different stations; it was not as thorough as I should have liked, but the pressing considerations of time and shortage of craft imposed serious limitations. The British forces mounted from Middle East carried out "dryshod"* training in the desert and had some very incomplete landing rehearsals in the Gulf of Aqaba. The Canadian Division had been well trained in the United Kingdom but its attempted exercise on the Ayrshire coast had to be cancelled as soon as it had begun owing to bad weather. 51 Division, which had no previous training or experience in combined operations, was put through a short course at Djidjelli, much hampered by shortage of craft.

* "Dryshod" was a technical term meaning exercises carried out on land simulating landings from craft.

The American 3 Division trained at Bizerta and La Goulette and 1 Infantry and 2 Armoured Divisions at the old established training area of Arzew, near Algiers. 45 Division had been trained in Chesapeake Bay before embarking, and had a short rehearsal at Arzew after their arrival in North African waters.

The tasks of the Naval forces (British and United States) fell under four main heads: the cover of the whole operation against interference by enemy naval forces, the close support of the convoys to their destination and the delivery of the troops to the beaches, close support of the landings by gunfire, and the maintenance by sea of the forces landed, including the protection of shipping off the beaches. The Naval Covering Force, consisting of four battleships, two aircraft carriers, four cruisers and some eighteen destroyers, was concentrated in the Ionian Sea by 9th July. In this position it was well placed to meet any threat from the Italian Taranto fleet, or from the Spezia fleet if it should attempt to reinforce through the Straits of Messina. An additional force of two battleships, two cruisers and six destroyers, based at Algiers, provided cover for convoys on the North African coast and constituted a reserve for the reinforcement or relief of the covering force if required. A light covering force of cruisers and destroyers was despatched on 9th July to protect the northern flank of Eighth Army. The main bases of this covering force were Mers-el-Kebir, Alexandria and Malta, with fuelling and ammunitioning facilities at Tobruk and at Benghazi.

For the air forces of Mediterranean Air Command the battle for Sicily could be said to have begun with the last minute of the battle for Tunisia, or even, to some extent, still earlier, and D-day represented merely a peak of intensity. They were faced first by an administrative problem. After the enemy surrender in Tunisia many air force units required rest and refitting and an extensive programme of airfield construction in northern Tunisia was put in hand. Although, therefore, preparatory bombing of enemy installations began at once it was not intended to apply more than steady pressure until about one week before the assault. During the preparatory phase targets were mainly strategic but a steady programme of interference with the enemy ground and air build-up in Sicily was carried out. A particularly heavy scale of attack was directed against the Messina rail ferry. By 1st June only one of the original five ferry boats was still in operation and the harbour facilities at both ends were very heavily damaged. The traffic was continued by lighters and small craft. From about 1D minus 7 the air forces went over to a concentrated and powerful attack on the enemy air force; enemy airfields in the island were attacked both by bomber aircraft and, where within range, by fighter sweeps. Radar installations, which would give warning of the approaching invasion fleets, were also successfully attacked. We were thus able to ensure air superiority over the landing beaches and very shortly, when the captured airfields in the south-east came into use, over the whole island. The total aircraft, including transports but excluding gliders, employed in the operation came to over four thousand, divided into one hundred and ten British and one hundred and thirty-two American squadrons.