

bombing operations against shipping in the approach lanes and against the beaches. The fighter units operated mainly in a defensive role against Allied bomber attacks and principally in the Paris area and south of the Seine, where they tried to provide cover to the reinforcement assembly areas and to the main airfields.

342. The scale of effort by a few enemy units was, however, relatively high. On days when flying conditions were good, many aircraft flew more than one sortie and three and four sorties per aircraft were not unusual. The frequent periods of bad weather gave respite from Allied air attack, rested the pilots and allowed ground staffs to keep up serviceability.

343. Except on isolated occasions during this month, the enemy fighter and fighter bomber formations showed a marked disinclination to engage Allied fighters, and they were often deterred, with relative ease, from carrying out their primary tasks. However, the night fighter activity against Allied bombers continued to be fairly heavy and vigorous.

344. On D-Day, the first enemy air reaction to the assault was a reconnaissance of the Channel areas. At approximately 1500 hours, the first enemy fighters and fighter bombers appeared. This was nine hours after the assault began and fifteen hours after the first of very large formations of airborne transports and of the air bombardment squadrons had arrived over enemy territory. The enemy formations consisted of some FW 190s and one formation of 12 Ju 88s; four of this latter force were destroyed.

345. On the night of D/D + 1, approximately 85 enemy aircraft were active over the beach and shipping lanes. Some of the units operating were known to be specialised anti-shipping units. Activity on this scale was maintained on most nights during June.

346. During the morning of D + 1, a total of 59 enemy aircraft were sighted in the battle area. Ju 88s and Ju 188s were routed by low cover patrols and a formation of 16 FW 190s attempting to dive bomb the area north of Caen was forced by a Spitfire Wing to jettison their bombs. In all, fifteen enemy aircraft were claimed as destroyed by Allied fighters over the battle area during that morning.

347. In the afternoon of D + 1, the main enemy effort was defensive patrolling over assembly and rearward areas. Offensive fighter sweeps of Allied aircraft accounted for sixteen aircraft destroyed and five probably destroyed.

348. The principal enemy gains by air action during June were against shipping, and these were mainly as the result of night attacks. On D + 2, however, attacks against shipping off "Sword" beach resulted in a destroyer being sunk. Another destroyer was sunk by day by an aircraft torpedo attack off Portland Bill on 13th June. Sea mines laid in the shipping lanes and approach waters during the month also caused damage and loss to some ships and involved continuous employment of naval mine-sweepers. Considering the number of ships employed in narrow waters, these enemy gains were remarkably low.

349. *Enemy Air Opposition—July.*—Throughout July, the enemy air effort continued to be sporadic; in the first few days, a scale of effort of up to 450 day sorties was

observed, but this quickly fell away and was not again reached until 27th July. Most of the day sorties were directed against Allied positions in the battle area, particularly at the western end of the Allied line.

350. The aggressiveness of the enemy also fluctuated. On some days, attacks were pressed home, on others a marked disinclination to fight was evident. The reaction to our bomber forces also varied; on some days, there was almost no opposition, while on others, determined defensive efforts were put up. The reaction to R.A.F. Bomber Command's night attacks was, however, sustained and on some occasions produced violent activity. Night offensive operations by the G.A.F., principally against shipping targets, were also maintained.

351. *Enemy Air Opposition—August.*—At the beginning of this month, with the break-out of the Allied armies accomplished, the G.A.F. day forces became even more committed to ground support. It was also evident that the enemy could no longer support his ground forces on both the British and American sectors and for a time he left the British sector alone to concentrate on what he considered the more dangerous threat. At about this time, too, the enemy began to use his long-range bombers by night against land targets, with only occasional attacks on shipping. Another feature of his night activity was the use of single-engine day fighters to support twin-engine night fighters.

352. During the second week of August, when the enemy launched his strongest counter-attack in the Mortain area, the German Air Force again rose to an effort of approximately 400 sorties a day. To counter this activity I laid on heavy attacks on the airfields in use by the G.A.F. I refer to these attacks later. The enemy activity declined steeply after the first two days. The decline was due partly to our attacks and partly to the fact that the G.A.F. was compelled to move most of its units to airfields further east with the consequent need of reorganisation; the enemy shortage of fuel and his need of reinforcements for operationally tired units were additional causes.

353. This shortage of fuel was the result, not only of the air attacks on the various oil installations in Germany, but also of the attacks on the enemy's transport system. The G.A.F.'s problem of distribution of supplies to frequently changing bases had become one of extreme complexity.

354. By mid-August, new G.A.F. units began to appear on the Western Front, but although these units pushed up the average daily effort to nearly 300 sorties, the fighting value continued to deteriorate. An effort was, however, made by the G.A.F. throughout the fourth week in August, to assist the land forces trying to scramble back to the Seine by providing cover and relief from air attack at the Seine crossings, but on very few occasions were the attacks pressed home. The enemy losses mounted steadily all the time. On 25th August, United States Ninth Air Force fighters destroyed 77 aircraft in combat and a further 44 on the ground. On 29th August, there was evidence that the enemy units were in flight back to Germany.

355. *Enemy Air Opposition—September.*—Activity in the first ten days of September was not very heavy, the close support units of the