

*Strength of A.E.A.F. at 1st April, 1944.*

50. Details of the composition of the forces at my disposal at 1st April, 1944, are given at

Type				
Medium Bombers	...	...	...	...
Light Bombers	...	...	...	...
Fighter and Fighter Bombers	...	...	...	...
Transport Aircraft	...	...	...	...
Gliders	...	...	...	...
Reconnaissance Aircraft	...	...	...	...
Artillery Observation Aircraft	...	...	...	...

Appendix "C".\* The number of operationally available aircraft on hand at that date in these Commands was as follows:—

	Ninth Air Force	Royal Air Force
Medium Bombers	496	70
Light Bombers	96	38
Fighter and Fighter Bombers	607	1,764
Transport Aircraft	865	225
Gliders	782	351
Reconnaissance Aircraft	63	156
Artillery Observation Aircraft	—	164
	<hr/> 2,909	<hr/> 2,768

*Dislocation of Enemy Lines of Communication.*

51. Next to the winning of air superiority, the dislocation of the enemy's lines of communication was the most important task set the Air Force (see paragraph 27). The basic intention of my plan for attack on the enemy lines of communication was to force the enemy off the railways, initially within an area of 150 miles from the battle front. There were two broad plans for doing this; one was a short term policy which involved attacks on certain rail centres during the period immediately before D-Day; the other was a longer term plan of destroying the potential of the railway system in North-Western Europe.

52. The short term policy involved attacks on 17 specially selected rail focal points, plus an extra 7 points as cover. It was claimed for this plan that if the attacks were made immediately before D-Day, the enemy's reinforcements by rail would be adequately delayed. Further, it would allow the bomber forces to continue attacks on "Pointblank" and other strategic targets until just before D-Day. Complete success would, of course, have been necessary with all the 17 primary targets to achieve the desired result; moreover, several of the targets chosen were unsuitable for air attack, either by virtue of their location or their nature as bombing targets. Other disadvantages of this plan were that any failure to achieve complete success on the primary targets would have meant that the enemy could direct traffic through such gaps as would be left; the attacks would have to be made at a time when other demands on the available bomber forces were strongest; the successful outcome of a programme covering such a short period would depend entirely upon favourable bombing weather conditions—such conditions could never be guaranteed even in the summer.

53. The longer term plan involved attacks on a large number of repair and maintenance centres designed to reduce the movement potential and the motive power of the railway system, supported by complementary action in cutting railway lines and bridges on the canalized routes nearer D-Day. There were, however, limitations to this longer term plan. It would take longer to implement and would involve a greater diversion of the total effort of the bomber forces. If successful, it would hamper the Allies as effectively as it did the enemy, when the Allies came to move over the same territory. It was, however, a much more certain way of achieving the primary object stated above in paragraph 51, and was less dependent upon a period of good weather near D-Day.

54. In March, 1944, in consultation with the British Chief of Air Staff, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Charles Portal, G.C.B., D.S.O., M.C., the Commanders of the Strategic Air Forces and the representatives of the land forces, you accepted the longer term plan, and the targets selected for attack were allocated to the respective forces (see paragraph 57).

55. Later, the initial plan was amplified and the area selected for attack was greatly expanded. In fact, finally it had little limitation.

56. Attacks by heavy and medium bombers on railway centres were maintained up to and after D-Day. From D-7 they were supplemented by attacks designed to cut the lines and halt or destroy such traffic as could still be moved. In these tasks, fighter bombers played the major part, although the medium and heavy bombers also cooperated. The principal targets in these attacks were bridges, junctions, cross-overs and tunnels, as well as locomotives and rolling stock. I deal with these attacks in paragraph 74 onwards; but in view of special features involved in the attacks on bridges, I deal with those attacks separately, for the sake of clarity, in paragraph 83 onwards.

57. *Allocation of Targets.* A total of eighty rail targets of primary importance were scheduled for attack by A.E.A.F., Royal Air Force Bomber Command and the United States Eighth Air Force. These targets were finally allocated as follows:—

A.E.A.F.	...	...	...	...	18
R.A.F. Bomber Command	...	...	...	...	39
U.S. Eighth Air Force	..	...	...	...	23

58. In addition to these targets, the United States Fifteenth Air Force were allocated fourteen targets in Southern France and nine targets in Germany. However, this Command did not operate against these targets in Southern France until 25th May, 1944 and then only for three days. The targets allocated to them in Germany were not attacked.

59. A number of railway centres not included in the Directive were also lightly attacked, but I have not included these in the general survey of results which follows.

60. By D-Day, of the eighty targets allocated, fifty-one were categorised as being damaged to such an extent that no further attacks were necessary until vital repairs had been effected; twenty-five were categorised as having been very severely damaged, but with certain vital installations still intact, necessitating a further attack; the remaining four were categorised as having received little or no damage, and needing a further attack on first priority.

\* Appendices not reproduced.