149. The demands of all three services for photographic cover were very varied and so great in number that it was necessary to set up a controlling body to deal with them. Accordingly, the Central Reconnaissance Committee was established at your headquarters. This inter-service committee received requests for photographic cover from all services and allocated the task to the most suitable reconnaissance force. One of the most important functions of this Committee was to watch the security aspect of the reconnaissance effort and by ensuring that this effort was judiciously distributed, conceal from the enemy our special interest in the assault area.

150. The bulk of this invaluable reconnaissance effort was flown by aircraft of A.E.A.F. which, in the period 1st April to 5th June flew no less than 3,215 photographic reconnaissance sorties. Aircraft of other commands, however, including 106 Group, R.A.F. Coastal Command and United States Eighth Air Force, operating under the control of R.A.F. Station, Benson, also contributed notably to this work, flying a total of 1,519 sorties during the same period. The excellent co-operation between British and American reconnaissance units in fact enabled the needs of all services to be fully met by D-Day.

151. If we had had to rely, however, entirely on orthodox high altitude reconnaissance aircraft for this work, not more than a small proportion of these needs could have been met. The weather in Western Europe, never very suitable for high altitude photography, was particularly bad in the early part of the year. There was an urgent need for a medium/low altitude photographic reconnaissance aircraft to supplement high altitude reconnaissance. It was decided, therefore, to convert some Mustang fighters into tactical and strategical medium/low altitude reconnaissance aircraft. They were equipped with oblique cameras, were armed to protect themselves and were fast enough to outpace most German fighters.

152. Low altitude reconnaissance, however, whether visual or photographic was at all times a hazardous business in view of the risk of being jumped by higher flying enemy fighters. None the less, early results achieved by Mustangs were very encouraging and eventually a number of reconnaissance squadrons were partly re-equipped with converted Mustangs to supplement their high altitude aircraft. Their work proved invaluable and the development of this aircraft for photographic reconnaissance work has been one of the outstanding lessons of the air war.

Protection of the Assembling of the Assault Forces.

153. I stated in paragraph 25 that one of the main tasks of the air forces was to support the landing of the Allied armies in Europe. As a corollary, the air force was required to protect the assembling of the assault forces. A.E.A.F. was directly charged with this responsibility.

154. More than 2,000 ships and landing craft were used to lift the initial assault forces and other equipment, and they were supported by task forces of over 100 warships including battleships and more than 200 escorts and other naval vessels. In all, over 6,000 ships and landing craft were employed in the first week.

155. The assembly, preparation and loading of these ships and other special beach installations necessitated the concentration of enormous forces in the ports and harbours of the south coast of England, in the Bristol Channel and in the Thames Estuary, over long periods, with especially heavy concentrations in the final six weeks. Moreover, large scale embarkation had to be practised to ensure that speed and flexibility could be attained. To provide this practice, a series of exercises were staged in which the forces to be employed were brought into the concentration areas and in some cases, embarked and sailed to practice assault beaches on the south coast of England.

156. *Enemy Action against Assault Forces.*—It was estimated by my Planning Staff that the German Air Force would have available 850 aircraft, including 450 long range bombers to use against the Allied assault operation. I anticipated that these bomber forces would be used against shipping in ports and in transit, both in bombing attacks and in sea mining. It was further estimated that this force would be capable of the following scale of effort over a period of three weeks during the assembling and loading periods:—

	Sorties.
Sustained per night	25
Intensive per night for 2-3 nights per week	50-75
Maximum in any one night ...	100-150

157. In fact, the enemy activity did not reach this maximum scale of effort. There were three periods of activity in the six weeks prior to 6th June, and they involved only 377 bombing sorties.

158. On 25th-26th April, approximately 40 aircraft operated against Portsmouth and Havant. On 26-27th April, approximately 80 aircraft again attacked Portsmouth and a triangular area between the Needles, Basingstoke and Worthing. On 29-30th April, approximately 35 aircraft operated over and off Plymouth.

159. The second phase of these attacks took place on the nights 14-15th and 15-16th May, when approximately 100 and 80 aircraft respectively operated against Southampton and along the coast, and against Weymouth.

160. The third phase was during 28-29th 29-30th and 30-31st May; on the first of these nights, approximately 35 aircraft attacked from Dartmouth to Start Point and on the next two nights small forces operated indiscriminately.

161. The night fighter forces of the Air Defence of Great Britain were ready to deal with this activity. Of the total of 377 enemy sorties, night fighters claimed 22 destroyed, 6 probably destroyed and 5 damaged, while a further 2 were destroyed by anti-aircraft fire.

162. A valuable contribution to the defence of the assembly areas for the assault forces was made by balloons and anti-aircraft guns. Units were provided for this purpose by R.A.F. Balloon Command, the R.A.F. Regiment, Anti-Aircraft Command and certain Anti-Aircraft artillery formations of the United States forces. Operational control of these units was in general exercised on my behalf by the Air Marshal Commanding, Air Defence of Great Britain.

163. The work of these units not only in protecting the assembly, but later, in defence