

deployment on a small stretch of the coast. I replied that half-measures would be worse than useless, and that, taking the view that no more than a tactical re-orientation of resources already at my disposal was involved, I had decided to order the complete move on my own responsibility, and in fact had done so. In accordance with his custom where purely defensive measures were concerned, he did not question my judgment and made no further comment.

100. I was greatly relieved to hear that evening that the move had begun without a hitch, for I was convinced that, whatever the risks involved, we were now on the right track. I had made my decision in full knowledge of the issues at stake and the responsibilities which I was incurring. I was aware that the immediate effect on the performance of the fighters was bound to be adverse, and that if improved results from the guns did not counter-balance this loss within a few weeks, and things went wrong, I alone should be held to blame.

101. In the event, I did not have to wait so long. Within a few days the Air Ministry informed me officially that the Air Staff considered that I ought not to have ordered a major re-deployment of the guns without prior reference to themselves. The move itself was not explicitly disapproved, but I was left in no doubt that thenceforward I should be held personally responsible for the outcome and that any blame or credit that might accrue would be laid upon my head.

102. Despite this intimation the Air Staff continued to give me full support; and I found that at the price of incurring a formal stricture I had purchased an appreciably greater degree of operational freedom than I had hitherto enjoyed. This was to be invaluable in subsequent operations. Happily the performance of the guns in their new positions vindicated the change of plan before many weeks were out, thus proving incontestably the soundness of the deployment which had grown out of Air Commodore Ambler's proposal. The Air Staff were as good as their word in the matter of responsibility for the decision to move the guns; and the effect of the move on the operational results eventually obtained received notice in a letter of approbation sent by the Air Council to my Command at the close of the main attack.

(e) *The Attacks: Second Phase (17th July to 1st September).*

103. Nevertheless the next few weeks were an anxious time. The new system went into effect at dawn on the 17th July. During the following six days 204 bombs reached Greater London out of 473 that came within the compass of the defences. These figures reflected a substantially lower rate of destruction than that achieved during the last week under the old system, although a somewhat better one than we had obtained during the first four weeks of the attacks, before the defences had got into their stride. Analysis of the week's figures showed that—as critics of the new plan had predicted—improved results from the guns and from an expanded and denser balloon barrage had not sufficed to outweigh a sharp decline in the achievement of the fighters.

104. Still, it was encouraging that the performance of the guns had improved at all during a week which had begun with a major upheaval and afforded little time for the gunners to get used to their new positions. As for the decline in the performance of the fighters, this was no more than I had expected. I was not disheartened. Thanks to the energy and skill of the operational and administrative staffs of all Services concerned, the change from the old system to the new had been made without any serious setback. The machine had been brought safely to its new position. It was in running order, as witness, for example, the bringing down of sixty bombs between sunset on the 20th and sunset on the 21st July.\* Already the gunners were showing that they knew how to make good use of their opportunities. I felt that one of my main tasks must now be to ensure that the forces directly under my command were made thoroughly familiar with their part in the new plan.

105. I realised that this was a task I must undertake myself. My own staff had their hands full: to devise and apply measures which would ensure that the safety of our own aircraft was not endangered by the "Diver" defences was only one of many duties that called for much careful staff work and painstaking liaison. The Air Officer Commanding, No. 11 Group, and his staff were preoccupied with matters arising out of the operations in Normandy. Realising that this would be so, I had arranged that the Sector Headquarters at Biggin Hill should become a co-ordinating centre for "Diver". I found, however, that the practical, hour-to-hour supervision of operations left the Sector Commander and his staff with little time for other work; and it seemed to me that, in any case, the study and dissemination of tactical doctrine and the promotion of disciplined enthusiasm amongst pilots faced with a novel weapon ought to proceed from a rather higher level than that of a Sector Headquarters.

106. I daresay that, if the circumstances had been slightly different, the best answer to this problem might have been the creation of a Task Force commanded by an officer of air rank answerable to myself for all fighter operations against flying bombs. It would have been necessary to make such an officer responsible for studying tactical methods and the technique of improvised training under operational conditions, as well as for the actual conduct of operations. This would have meant giving him a small staff. I had not the resources to do this, nor the smallest chance of persuading the Air Ministry to provide them. Indeed, in the circumstances this hope would have been quite unreasonable, and I did not entertain it. I felt that this was a case where I must give a direct lead to the Station and Squadron Commanders concerned with flying bombs.

\* This figure was made up as follows :

*Bombs brought down by*

Guns alone ... ..	23
Fighters alone ... ..	19
Guns and fighters jointly ...	1
The balloon barrage ... ..	17
	—
	60
	—