

out. It was decided that medical aid should be flown to these injured personnel. A Walrus of No. 289 Squadron took off with two American Medical Officers, made rendezvous with the high speed launches out at sea and in this way, medical aid was brought to the wounded men three hours earlier than would otherwise have been possible. As a result, at least two lives were saved.

440. *Statistics of Personnel Rescued.*—The following figures show the totals of personnel rescued by the Air/Sea Rescue Services of A.D.G.B. and R.A.F. Coastal Command for the period 6th June to 30th September, 1944:—

Month.	Personnel Rescued.
June	685
July	313
August	247
September	600
	<hr/> 1,845 <hr/>

441. It will be seen from the above data that the Air/Sea Rescue services succeeded in rescuing many hundreds of valuable personnel, including aircrew and airborne troops. Without this organisation, the great majority, if not all of these airmen and soldiers, would have perished. Even more important, perhaps, than this direct saving of life has been the moral effect which the existence and known successes of the Air/Sea Rescue Service has had, particularly on aircrews. The value of such effect in air operations is obviously incalculable, but that it is of the greatest significance there can be no doubt.

Air Transport and Evacuation of Casualties.

442. In addition to the operational flying to carry airborne troops and supplies to their dropping and landing zones, the aircraft of the transport forces have flown many thousands of sorties on supply and evacuation missions.

443. The control of all scheduled and emergency airlift by Allied troop carrier and transport aircraft, other than those for airborne forces, was vested in CATOR (Combined Air Transport Operations Room), which was set up at my Headquarters at Stanmore. The operations section of CATOR allocated aircraft between operational tasks, scheduled and emergency demands, in conformity with the policy I laid down on your behalf. The supply section of this formation arranged for the supply and movement to the loading base airfields of the loads which were demanded.

444. The variety of equipment carried in these operations was extremely wide. It included jeeps, trailers, Radar equipment, picks and shovels, propellers and shafts, explosives, mines, petrol, containers, barbed wire, magazines, books, comforts and medical stores including blood plasma and penicillin.

445. Transport aircraft returning from the Continent were utilised to the fullest extent for the evacuation of the sick and wounded. This was in accordance with my policy that although no additional special ambulance squadrons should be formed, or aircraft specially tied up for air ambulance work, the maximum use should be made of all aircraft

returning to the United Kingdom after delivering supplies. This policy was naturally not always popular with the medical authorities, but no relaxation of it was found to be necessary save in conditions of extreme urgency. This policy was fully supported by you. In all, during the period from D-Day to 30th September, 107,115 medical cases were evacuated by air from forward positions.

446. The evacuation of sick and wounded in the aforementioned manner has been a great boon to the medical services and of inestimable value in securing adequate and early treatment for the seriously injured. The following is a good example—a tank trooper who was suffering from severe burns was evacuated from a landing strip on the Continent to R.A.F. Station, Broadwell, at 1815 hours, landing at base at 1945 hours. From Broadwell he was flown to R.A.F. Station, Odiham, and was admitted to the Special Burns Centre, Basingstoke, at 2100 hours, less than three hours after he had left Normandy.

447. The success of this work reflects great credit on all concerned—the doctors, nurses, nursing orderlies, stretcher bearers, aircrew and ambulance drivers. In view of the fact that the aircraft often operated from airfields within range of enemy shell fire, it is a remarkable fact that every evacuation from the Continent by air during the period covered by this Despatch, was carried out without mishap either to aircraft, aircrew or wounded.

448. When the advance of the Allied armies began to outrun the normal supply arrangements, special air supply services had to be instituted. In the critical 25-day period from 9th August to 3rd September, no less than 13,000 tons of supplies were flown to forward positions. Furthermore, during the full month of September, more than 10,000 sorties were flown and a total of nearly 30,000 tons of supplies carried. These supplies comprised principally petrol, ammunition and rations and occupied all and more than all of the available lift of the transport groups.

449. It was decided, therefore, to allocate special forces of heavy bombers, both of the United States Eighth Air Force and R.A.F. Bomber Command, to provide additional lift. This increased lift enabled enough fuel to be taken forward to keep the Armies moving.

450. I feel that in certain cases, air supply is an overriding consideration. This was an appropriate instance. However, the diversion of valuable specialised aircraft and crews from their proper operational tasks needs very grave justification and only vital emergencies such as had occurred at this time can warrant this action.

451. The principal lesson so far learnt from the campaign is that the tactical use of air transport to supply a rapidly advancing army can be of decisive importance, and that the limiting factor in its employment is not so much the availability of suitable aircraft as the availability of sufficient landing strips in the forward area and adequate loading and re-loading arrangements at the terminus. These forward strips are primarily constructed and earmarked for the fighter squadrons operating in support of the ground forces, and their use by transport