

430. The position at D + 90 (the end of the planned period) was:—

Type of Field	American Sector		U.S. Total	British Sector.		British Total	Grand Total
	Operational	Under construction		Operational	Under construction		
Fighter ALG ...	24	8	32	23	5	28	60
Medium Bomber ...	5	1	6	1	—	1	7
Transport ...	9	1	10	2	—	2	12
Tactical Aerodrome ...	1	—	1	—	—	—	1
Liaison Strip ...	1	—	1	—	—	—	1
	40	10	50	26	5	31	81

431. In addition to these airfields, which were in use at D + 90, five fields in the American sector and three in the British sector had been abandoned, as being too far from the scene of ground operations. These make the number of airfields actually completed by D + 90, 55 in the American sector and 34 in the British sector, a total of 89, as against the planned total of 93. The IX Engineer Command proved very effective and I feel that the Royal Air Force could well consider the adoption of a comparable organisation to ensure immediate operational facilities in overseas theatres. In particular, I feel that more heavy earth-moving equipment should be provided for British units and that the organisation should be reviewed to allow smaller and more flexible companies than the present Wings. These companies should be under the direct control of the air commander in the theatre and not under a ground commander.

432. The fact that airfield construction was still a little behind schedule at the end of the planned period, was due mainly to tactical reasons in the assault phase and to the consequent lack of adequate and suitable ground area, and to some delay in shipping sufficient material. The men of the American Aviation Engineer Battalions of the IX Engineer Command and of the British Airfield Construction units worked exceptionally well, as was proved by the setting-up of the first three Emergency Landing Strips at Pouppeville, St. Laurent sur Mer and Asnelles by D + 1. These men worked right in the battle area, through shelling and bombing, and as well as constructing the airfields often had to lay down their tools to deal with stray snipers in the area around the airfield strip.

Air/Sea Rescue.

433. Air Defence of Great Britain and Royal Air Force Coastal Command provided the aircraft for searches in the battle area and for the forces engaged in Operation "Neptune".

434. These Air/Sea Rescue forces had been working hard prior to D-Day and had effected many fine rescues of bomber and fighter crews. Their effort was, naturally, intensified from D-Day onwards especially during the early phases before landing fields were available on the French side of the Channel. Constant standing patrols were flown so that immediately a "Mayday" call was received, rescue aircraft could be vectored onto the position. Both Warwick and Spitfire aircraft were used for these standing patrols.

435. The weather was unfortunately extremely difficult for Air/Sea Rescue operations during almost the whole of June and when Walruses were employed on searches, it was frequently impracticable for them to make landings on the water. This laid a greater burden on the high speed launches and other surface craft which, operating in all conditions, did very effective work. Two high speed launches were attached to each of the Fighter Direction Tenders located off the beach-head and achieved a number of rescues which would have been extremely difficult and lengthy for home-based craft.

436. During the first forty-eight hours of the invasion, airborne operations led to many incidents and during this period, Air-Sea Rescue squadrons were either directly or indirectly responsible for rescuing 117 paratroopers, all of whom had been previously trained in the essentials of Air-Sea Rescue. Details of the total numbers of aircrew, paratroopers and others rescued are set out in the statistics at the end of this account. These rescues were, however, not effected without some of the inevitable hazards of war. The following three incidents are typical and illustrate the nature of the work.

437. Two Walruses of No. 275 Squadron were ordered to search for a pilot known to have gone into the sea just north of Cherbourg. On arrival at the scene, they found the pilot, who had not been able to get into his dinghy, floating alive in his Mae West. He was, however, not more than two miles from the Cherbourg coast. In spite of the fire from coastal batteries, the two Walruses landed and the pilot was picked up. When they came to take off, they found they had been hit and therefore set out to taxi back across the Channel; both aircraft subsequently sank when taken in tow, but the rescue was made and no one was hurt.

438. On another occasion, two high speed launches from Portsmouth were ordered to search in the same area for an American pilot. These launches faced concentrated fire from the shore batteries and came away unscathed.

439. The third rescue displays the resource and efficiency of the personnel engaged in Air/Sea Rescue work. Two high speed launches were returning after making a successful rescue of an American crew over 70 miles out to sea. A message was sent by one of the launches that some of the rescued aircrew and some of the boat's crew were seriously injured as a result of an attack by FW 190s further