

allotted to the S.W. Approaches and to be transferred to bases on the East coast should the necessity arise.

Tasks of Coastal Groups.

5. The tasks of my various Groups in the United Kingdom in the anti-U-Boat role were briefly as follows:—

19 Group (Plymouth).

(i) To provide adequate air cover in the S.W. Approaches to protect the flanks of the Allied Assault Convoys.

(ii) To provide cover or close escort to Allied Assault Convoys in the S.W. Approaches.

(iii) To hunt and destroy enemy U-Boats attempting to attack Allied Assault Convoys in the S.W. Approaches.

16 Group (Chatham).

(i) In the event of a threat by U-Boats to the Eastern flank of the Allied Liberation Forces by way of the North Sea, to hunt and destroy enemy U-Boats attempting to enter the English Channel from the east.

(ii) To provide cover or close escort by Fleet Air Arm Squadrons allocated to the Group to Allied Liberation Convoys on passage between The Nore and Beachy Head.

15 Group (Liverpool).

(i) To provide cover to threatened Atlantic Shipping.

(ii) To cover the entrances of the North Channel against the passage of enemy U-Boats.

(iii) To provide A/U cover in the Northern Transit Area.

18 Group (Rosyth).

(i) To provide A/U cover in the Northern Transit Area.

(ii) To provide aircraft for Fleet Reconnaissance duties.

The Main Threat.

6. In the main area of the S.W. Approaches, the first principle adopted was that of "the cork in the bottle", the object being to flood an area of sufficient depth to kill or keep submarines submerged from the Western limits of the St. George's and Bristol Channels and the English Channel up to a point as near as possible to the route of our cross-channel convoys. The patrols were so calculated as to provide a cover of thirty minutes density in the area. By this plan I expected a high percentage of kills if the U-Boats came through on the surface, or, alternatively, it would force upon them maximum caution tactics throughout their passage. In the latter event there would be a zone to the East of the flooded area in which U-Boats would be forced to surface for prolonged periods to recharge their batteries, and in which they could be attacked and hunted by air and surface forces with good prospects of success. Moreover, individual patrol areas were so designed as to be readily removable from one part of the main area to another, so that one portion could be immediately strengthened at the expense of another in the light of the situation as it developed. Further, the "cork" could be pushed home or withdrawn at will. In this way the plan preserved flexibility without detriment to the principle upon which it was based.

The Need for Fighter Cover

7. The extent to which the "cork" could be inserted was considered dependent upon the degree of fighter cover that could be provided by A.E.A.F., since the Southern boundaries of our patrols ran close in to the coast of France along which the enemy was expected to move his U-Boats under cover of his fighters and shore defences. Once the assault was launched it was expected that the enemy fighters would be heavily engaged in the area of the main battle and that no substantial numbers of S.E. fighters would be able to be spared for the protection of U-Boats. The commitment for providing fighter cover was not therefore likely to be a prolonged or heavy one, but it was reasonable to expect from the enemy some early reactions to the preparations in progress and also to any exercises which took place before D-day. One such exercise, known as *FABIUS*, was considered sufficient in scope to make it possible that the enemy might believe the assault was starting. Should this happen, I considered that it might be necessary prematurely to implement the plans of my Command in full, and in this case the requirement for S.E. fighter cover would become much more serious. I considered, however, that at this stage our fighters would not be heavily committed elsewhere, and Air Commander-in-Chief, A.E.A.F., confirmed that full scale fighter support could be provided any time up to D-day. Provision for the protection of A/U aircraft against enemy long range fighters (Ju 88s) was to be met by allotting Mosquito and Beau-fighter aircraft of my own Command for this task.

Convoy Cover

8. In addition to flooding the selected area, plans were made for the protection of our cross-channel convoys sailing along the South coast of England. I allotted this task principally to the Fleet Air Arm Squadrons (eight of which were placed under my operational control for "Overlord"), backed by such 19 Group aircraft as I could spare from their main task.

Operation of Surface Hunting Groups

9. Surface hunting groups were to be operated under the control of the Naval Commanders-in-Chief, Plymouth and Portsmouth. Co-operation between these Groups and aircraft was arranged between A.O.C. 19 Group and C-in-C Plymouth, who co-ordinated his own requirements and those of C-in-C Portsmouth.

ANTI-SHIP OPERATIONS

Tasks of 16 and 19 Groups

10. It was expected that the enemy would launch an offensive with destroyers and light surface craft against our convoys sailing to and from their assembly ports and on passage across the Channel. Air operations to meet this threat were to be conducted by 16 and 19 Groups, whose tasks were as follows:—

19 Group.

(i) To hunt and destroy E-Boats and destroyers in the S.W. Approaches and Western Channel.

(ii) To provide anti-E-Boat and destroyer reconnaissance in conjunction with Naval Surface Forces operating in the area in (i).