

main responsibility was the protection of U.S. Army and Air Force installations.

The largest number of U.S. anti-aircraft troops so deployed at any one time had been just over 10,000. During the summer of 1944 English and American Light Anti-Aircraft units exchanged parties of all ranks, each party taking a fully operational rôle with their hosts and this exchange similarly provided a valuable exchange of ideas and did much to foster goodwill. The U.S. forces were naturally anxious to participate in all our major activities.

66. Before any additional defences were introduced for the protection of invasion ports, the equipments between Great Yarmouth and South Wales consisted of 842 Heavy and 332 Light guns and 4 smoke screens. These were supplemented from A.A. Command resources with 252 Heavy and 244 Light guns and 13 smoke screens. In addition we were to receive from our field forces 248 Heavy and 360 Light guns and from the U.S. forces 32 Heavy and 184 Light guns. The total defences of the various ports would therefore amount to 1,374 Heavy and 1,120 Light guns and 17 smoke screens. In addition the Balloon defences were to be increased from 342 to 535. As it turned out these figures had to be reduced by 56 Heavy and 188 Light guns in order to provide a reserve against the possibility of a simultaneous attack by flying bombs which had for some time been feared and to which I shall refer again later.

67. So important in its effect on the whole course of the war was the plan now unfolding and so well known to the German Intelligence that considerable interference from the German air forces was anticipated. In the event, however, raiding of invasion ports was not serious and in most cases the deterioration in German navigation enabled even those few places which were attacked to escape without serious damage.

68. Apart from some desultory intruder activity in March and April, 1945, these were the last attacks by piloted German aircraft on this country. There were, however, fears towards the end of March, 1945, that a desperate low flying suicide attack on London might be launched and plans were made to increase the Light anti-aircraft defences of the capital from 36 to 412, Anti-Aircraft Command providing 236 of the guns and the R.A.F. Regiment the remaining 140. Whether the attack would ever have taken place or not, had the Germans retained control of the airfields in north-west Germany, it is impossible to say but in the end this deployment never took place.

SECTION III.

Attacks by Robot Weapons.

69. The first official intimation that attacks might be made by pilotless aircraft upon the country were received on 7th December, 1943. The estimated scale of attack at that time was 200 missiles an hour and targets were expected to be London, the Solent and Bristol.

70. Plans were at once made to meet the threat. London was to be protected by a belt of about 1,000 Heavy guns, sited on a line south of Redhill and Maidstone to the southern bank of the Estuary. There was to be a belt of searchlights in front for co-operation with fighters and a belt of balloons behind. A similar plan was made for the defence of Bristol, with a gun belt to the north and a

searchlight belt to the south of Shaftesbury and a balloon belt south of Shepton Mallet. Little could be done for the Solent beyond a readjustment of the Isle of Wight defences.

The decision to deploy well inland was taken in order to reduce enemy jamming of radar equipment; to allow fighter aircraft the maximum area for manoeuvre and to leave the coast defences free to engage attacks by piloted aircraft. It was not intended to use either static guns or mixed units in these plans.

The constant attacks by Bomber Command on the launching sites on the French Coast caused the threat to recede, and with the increasing need for a large deployment to protect the invasion ports the plans were at first abandoned and then revived in a very modified form so as to interfere as little as possible with that deployment.

Had the enemy begun his flying bomb attacks before or even at the time the invasion was launched, the strain upon our resources would have been extremely serious, but fortunately at the time the attacks began it was already apparent that no serious scale of attack was to be expected against the ports.

71. On the night of 12th/13th June, 1944, the first missiles, known by the code name "DIVER", arrived.

72. It was believed that these were only tests and no special deployment was ordered until sustained attacks began on 15th/16th June, 1944. The original plan for the defence of London was then put into operation in the modified form it had had to assume to permit the simultaneous protection of the invasion ports, although certain withdrawals from those defences were made.

Three hundred and seventy-six Heavy and 592 Light guns were deployed and in addition the R.A.F. Regiment on the south coast was operating 560 Light equipments, consisting of 192 40-mm. Bofors and 368 20-mm. guns. To achieve these figures without seriously affecting the defences elsewhere, units of the Royal Navy (including D.E.M.S.* personnel) and the Royal Marines, from the Field Army, from training camps and others were employed. It had been estimated that 18 days would be necessary to complete this deployment but it was actually completed in a week and was quickly in action since Anti-Aircraft Command Signals had, ever since the first warning in December 1943, been laying the necessary lines for intercommunication all over the area. The Signals under command of Brigadier G. C. Wickins, C.B., C.B.E., T.D., were outstandingly efficient throughout the whole war. The personnel was drawn largely from the G.P.O.

For three nights the guns in London fired at those targets which had penetrated the primary defences, but after that they were restricted since it was clear that it was better to allow the flying bombs a chance of passing the more densely populated parts of the Capital rather than to shoot them down into it.

73. Reference has been made in the first part of my despatch to the peculiar difficulties of Heavy Anti-Aircraft gunnery, the chief of which was that an assumption had to be made as to the behaviour of the target between the initial plotting and the burst of the shell in the sky. Any form of evasive action, however slight, could seriously affect the accuracy of

* Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships.