

mand, but R.A.F. Bomber Command continued to implement its extensive sea mining programme (which now embraced "Overlord" requirements) and made heavy attacks, referred to below, on shipping in harbours. Aircraft of A.E.A.F. also made attacks on coastal shipping and on E and R boats. After D-Day, Second British Tactical Air Force took over the commitment previously shouldered by A.D.G.B. to provide "Channel Stop" squadrons. The function of these squadrons was to attack enemy surface vessels attempting to enter the Channel from either end. A.E.A.F. fighters also provided escort for the strike aircraft of R.A.F. Coastal Command. Apart from the sea mining of R.A.F. Bomber Command, all these operations were co-ordinated through my headquarters.

388. *Anti-U-Boat Operations.*—In anticipation of an enemy attempt to move U-boats into the invasion waters, R.A.F. Coastal Command flew anti-submarine patrols from the Scillies to Ushant and from St. Albans Head to Cap de la Hague. Through these barriers the enemy had to try to infiltrate. The first U-boats sighted were approaching from the western entrance to the assault area on the night of D-Day. Six of these U-boats were attacked. During the next day and night, a further ten sightings were made and seven were attacked. Some of these attacks resulted in kills.

389. Because of these continuous patrols, U-boat commanders were forced to remain submerged for very long periods; these tactics restricted their freedom of manoeuvre and from P.O.W. statements, it is obvious they had a most distressing physical effect on the crews. During June, 80 U-boat sightings were made in the approaches to the assault area; 46 were attacked, 3 of these jointly with the Navy, and 18 of the attacks appeared promising. During July, the enemy was forced to continue maximum diving tactics. This made detection and attacks by aircraft more difficult, but at least two U-boats on or near the surface were destroyed. A further 20 conning tower or periscope sightings were made and 13 attacks delivered.

390. With the Allied advance in August, the enemy began to move his U-boats away from the ports of North-Western France to the southern portion of the Bay of Biscay. This movement gave the aircraft of R.A.F. Coastal Command a splendid chance to strike. 24 sightings were made in the Bay during August, and 14 attacks resulted; six U-boats were probably sunk, three of these shared with Naval forces, and two more damaged. From D-Day to 30th September, R.A.F. Coastal Command sunk or probably sunk 12 U-boats in the Channel or the Bay of Biscay, shared the destruction of five more with surface forces and damaged a further 12.

391. *Anti-Shipping Operations.* Attacks against enemy surface vessels, including naval vessels, were made by aircraft of A.E.A.F. and by R.A.F. Coastal Command. The first of these actions took place on the 6th June, when the enemy endeavoured to bring into action three heavy destroyers from the west coast of France. These ships were attacked, west of Brest by R.A.F. Coastal Command. Some

damage was caused, one was set on fire and the ships were delayed. On 8th June, they again attempted to move into the invasion waters, but were met by Allied destroyers. One was sunk, one driven ashore and the third forced back to Brest.

392. Other attacks were made against smaller enemy naval vessels and merchant shipping and some of these attacks were very successful; details of two are given below. However, not only these missions which saw and attacked enemy vessels should be reckoned as successful. Continuous patrols by fighters of A.E.A.F. and R.A.F. Coastal Command in the Western Approaches and down into the area of the Channel Islands ensured that no enemy surface vessels were able to support the garrisons holding out in coastal areas. These offensive fighter patrols were co-ordinated with the sorties of the reconnaissance aircraft of R.A.F. Coastal Command.

393. On the night of 7th June, Beaufighters and Albacores attacked a formation of E-boats in the Channel; two E-boats were sunk and a further three damaged. In the early morning of 15th June, a force of 42 Beaufighters, escorted by 10 Mustangs of A.D.G.B. attacked a north-bound convoy consisting of a merchant vessel of 8,000 tons, a naval auxiliary of 4,000 tons and seventeen escort ships off the Frisian Islands. The large merchant vessel and the auxiliary were torpedoed and sank, one minesweeper blew up and sank, another was hit by a torpedo and probably sank, while five more minesweepers were seen on fire and four other escorts were damaged by cannon fire.

394*. A brief summary of the work of R.A.F. Coastal Command shows that over 200 sorties were flown in attacks on surface craft during the month of June in the invasion area and its approaches. In July more than 500 aircraft made anti-shipping attacks in the Channel area, off the Dutch and Belgian Coasts, in the Bay of Biscay and off the Coast of Norway. In July, six merchant ships, 10 escort vessels and five E/R boats were sunk, one merchant ship, 11 escort vessels and two E/R boats were seriously damaged, and a further seven merchant ships, nineteen escort vessels and 6 E/R boats were damaged. August saw an even higher scale of shipping effort. Nightly attacks on E/R boats operating in the Channel, five large scale attacks off the Dutch and Norwegian coasts and numerous attacks on the enemy in the Bay of Biscay produced excellent results. Nine merchant ships plus one shared, seventeen escort vessels, 2 destroyers, and 1 E/R boat were sunk. Eleven escort vessels and 1 E/R boat seriously damaged and a further four merchant ships, 1 destroyer, 4 E/R boats and twenty-eight escort vessels were damaged.

395. These air operations directed against enemy surface forces, including the protective mine-laying by R.A.F. Bomber Command, not only assisted the safe-guarding of the Allied merchant fleets from surface attacks, but also prevented any German attempt to evacuate by sea his beleaguered coastal garrisons.

396. *Attacks on Shipping in Ports.*—The majority of the E and R boats operating against the Allied cross-channel shipping in the early

* These figures may be liable to review when enemy documents have been subjected to research.