

In addition, to ease the supervision of this organisation, three AA Corps were created:

1 AA Corps in the South (1, 5, 6, 8 and 9 Divisions) corresponding with 10 and 11 Groups R.A.F.

2 AA Corps in the Midlands (2, 4, 10 and 11 Divisions) corresponding with 9 and 12 Groups R.A.F.

3 AA Corps in the North (3, 7, and 12 Divisions) corresponding with 13 and 14 Groups R.A.F.

8. When I was appointed to the command of the Anti-Aircraft defences on 28th July, 1939, I was faced with the most grave shortage of equipment. At the outbreak of war the total number of Heavy Anti-Aircraft guns under my command was 695, many of which were of old and obsolescent types and a number of which were only on loan from the Royal Navy. The approved and recommended total at this time was 2,232.

The position with Light Anti-Aircraft guns was even worse, there being only 253 out of an approved total of 1,200, some of which again had been borrowed from the Royal Navy. Of the best Light Anti-Aircraft gun, the 40-mm. Bofors, there were only 76.

Searchlights were in a somewhat better position, as there were 2,700 equipments out of an approved total of 4,128 and a recommended total of 4,700.

9. The increase in equipments throughout the period under review may conveniently be noted here.

At the end of 1939 there were 850 Heavy guns, 510 Light guns and 3,361 Searchlights.

At the beginning of July, 1940, when air attacks on the United Kingdom began in earnest, there were 1,200 Heavy guns, 549 Light guns and 3,932 Searchlights.

By May, 1941, there were 1,691 Heavy guns, 940 Light guns, and Searchlights had reached a total of 4,532 early in 1941 but owing to shortage of manpower the number of equipments in action had to be reduced before May, 1941.

10. The Anti-Aircraft defences at the outbreak of war were entirely manned by units of the Territorial Army. Their total strength at the time they were mobilised was 106,690.

While the training of a Territorial Army in peace time bristles with difficulties, the Territorial system has many advantages which far outweigh the disadvantages.

The Territorial Army has always attracted men anxious to fit themselves to defend their country. These men were the cream of the manhood of the country. In the Command it is no exaggeration to say that the success which it achieved was due in great part to the excellence of the personnel and without some similar voluntary organisation in the future I do not see how the Anti-Aircraft defences of this country can be adequately manned except at prohibitive cost.

11. As a result of the introduction of conscription early in 1939 it was intended to allot 20,000 militia every three months to help man the defences. In actual fact, war began three months before the arrival of the first allotment. By July, 1940, the total manpower in Anti-Aircraft Command was 157,319 and in May, 1941, just over 300,000.

12. It very soon became evident that the quality of the conscripts allotted to the Command was inferior and that I was not receiving such a good selection of the Army intake as other arms. This was due to restrictions as to age and medical fitness on the men to be posted to Arms liable to serve overseas, and I later had occasion to protest against a process of allocation of manpower which involved the posting of the best type of recruits to other Arms at the expense of A.A. Command.

13. Throughout the period covered by this part of my despatch, and indeed throughout the war, I was constantly faced with manpower problems. The shortage of manpower and the large demands made on the Command to supply personnel and units for the Field Army (in all 170 gun or searchlight regiments went overseas) led first of all to the introduction of Mixed Units and later to the Home Guard manning anti-aircraft equipment. It led also to drastic reductions in the number of searchlight units.

14. The deployment of the anti-aircraft defences at the outbreak of a war is a very delicate matter. The possibility of an immediate and paralysing attack from the air means that they must be ready at a very early stage, before the normal process of mobilization has been developed. They have a big responsibility at that time for the protection of the national economy upon which the whole war effort must depend.

15. The various means by which the troops might be called up before official mobilization took place in such a way as not to damage further any strained international relations were investigated. The B.B.C. was obviously out of the question and might in any case be off the air at the time it was needed; the telephone service would undoubtedly be overloaded; letters or telegrams provided no confirmation of delivery of the message and I finally concluded that messages by hand to key men, through whom the order would be spread downward to all who were involved, provided the only satisfactory solution. It so happened that when mobilization was required the defences were already manned in part and had been as a precaution since 28th April, 1939, with the result that the problem in the end was not fully presented.

16. When war began without any major air attack the first task was to improve the standard of training throughout Anti-Aircraft Command. Training in an anti-aircraft rôle requires progressive development. First, the individual has to be trained for his particular task on the equipment; next, the detachment has to be trained to work as a team and finally, the various detachments have to learn to co-ordinate their efforts as a tactical whole.

17. While I have already placed on record the splendid service which the Territorial units rendered in the early months of the war, their training, limited as it had been both by lack of equipment and the little time they had been able to spend on it, fell far short of that required for war. Some units, forcibly converted to a searchlight rôle, were found to contain some men unsuitable for the work and others who preferred their original rôle. The targets with which they had had to practise had been very slow and had taken no evasive action. Attempts to secure more up-to-date aircraft