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ITALIAN APPRECIATION OF
ALLIED INTENTIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
AND DEFENSIVE PLANS - AUGUST 1943

An extract from an Italian Air
Ministry file dealing with Italo-German
relations. Dated 26th August 1943.

TRANSLATED BY:-
AIR MINISTRY, A.H.B.6.
5th November, 1947.

1. Enemy Intentions

The present situation permits the enemy to begin new large-scale landing operations within a short period of time.

The concentration of landing materials in the French N.African ports (especially in Tunisia), the important convoys which recently entered the Western Mediterranean and the repeated air bombardments of the main railway centres and ports in Southern Italy, show the particularly menaced areas as being Sardinia and S. Italy (lower Tirreno, Calabria and Puglie). Moreover, landing operations in these zones can be carried out under the protection of fighters, a method which has always been used by the enemy. This, of course, does not exclude operations to the North of the above mentioned areas (mainly against Corsica), with the use of the 3 aircraft-carriers of the Illustrious class and the 5 auxiliaries now in the Western Mediterranean.

At the first indications of any landings, all the necessary counter-measures must be ready to be put into operation. The directives issued on 8th May, 1943, with the following amendments should meet the present situation.

2. Sea Reconnaissance.

The H.Q. is at Naval High Command (Supermarina) which is also the permanent H.Q. of the 'Committee of Strategical Naval Reconnaissance' consisting of representatives of Supermarina, Superaereo and the German side.

This Committee makes daily plans, in accordance with the situation, of the reconnaissance to be carried out by Naval units and by the Italian and German Air Forces. The daily orders relating to the reconnaissance to be carried out by units of the Italian Air Force are given by Superaereo whilst that to be carried out by Naval Reconnaissance aircraft is under the direct control of Supermarina.

The main aim of the reconnaissance is to ensure control of the bases from which the enemy may possibly launch the operations and to control the possible enemy approach routes for the purpose of:

- (a) following the course of the preparations,
- (b) observing when the enemy operations are imminent.
- (c) ensuring that enemy convoys are sighted at the maximum distances.

Special attention must be given to organizing the transmission of the news supplied by the reconnaissance aircraft.

3. Air/Sea Co-operation.

The instructions regarding air escort of the Italian Fleet specify that two Fighter Groups (8th & 160th), which are to be used for the protection of the Fleet, are to provide an escort of 9-10 aircraft. If the Fleet should be attacked by large numbers of enemy air formations; other aircraft of the Fighter Units in the area can be sent into operation if available.

The Commands concerned are to make the necessary arrangements in order to prepare the airfields for the reception of the Fighter Units and for the maximum assistance to be given in refuelling.

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An Italian Air Force Officer responsible for controlling the activities of fighter aircraft has taken up his duties on board the ship which is the Fleet Command H.Q. It is vital that the escort formations are able to get in touch with the battle-ships at any time in order to receive orders from this Air Force Officer.

German fighter units will also take part in the protection of the Fleet. Italian fighters will provide high altitude escort and the German fighters will provide escort at low altitude.

4. Army/Air Co-operation

As it is vital for the Air Force to co-operate with the ground forces, the objectives against which it is to operate are to be established by the Commanders responsible for the ground forces. Requests will be passed directly to the Air Force Commands concerned by the Army Commands and by the Sardinia and Corsica Armed Forces Commands.

The Sardinia and Corsica Air Commands are to have their H.Q.'s near those of the corresponding Armed Forces Commands; this is already being arranged.

As it is not possible to have similar arrangements for the 3rd and 4th Squadra Commands, high ranking officers of the different forces have been assigned to the Commands.

Army and Air Force Commands have contacted one another in order to establish the methods and directives to be followed.

5. Order of Battle

The following will be the disposition of forces in the event of enemy landings on Sardinia and Corsica:-

3rd Fighter Stormo	-	Sardinia
4th " "	-	Lazio
21st " Group	-	Puglie
5th Assault Stormo	-	Sardinia.

1st and 2nd Fighter Groups and 1st Assault Group to be located at Borgo, Ghisonaccia and Ajaccio.

(Sgd.) Chief of Air Staff.

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