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"THEIR VICTORY"

A SIX MONTHS' HISTORY OF THE NORTHWEST AFRICAN
COASTAL AIR FORCE



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A DAY OF BATTLE FOR N.A.C.A.F.

Each day, in the life of an air force entrusted with responsibilities as varied as those of N.A.C.A.F., is a "day of battle", for some of its crews and some of its aircraft. One day, the battle may be waged heavily in one locality, and on another day, it may require the exertions of other types of aircraft in another part of the combat theater. This is the story of one day of battle. It is not necessarily a typical day, for in operations of the character of those performed by N.A.C.A.F., the only thing that is "typical" is change. It is a day, like other days, in the diversity of duties; in the risks and hazards of air war. As such, it should be of interest to all those, both in the air and on the ground, whose exertions make the battles of each day possible.

The day of Sept. 24, one day in the history of N.A.C.A.F., is depicted here. This map shows the scope and diversity of the operations that were carried on to protect our convoys against both air and sea attack, to hunt down submarines, to attack enemy aircraft in offensive fighter actions, to protect our own coasts and to seek out and to destroy enemy shipping, and to find and rescue airmen forced down at sea.

Each line on the map (see legend) represents a type of mission flown by an N.A.C.A.F. aircraft. Actual routes flown are not represented, the course indicated being only approximate, as represented in the Daily Operational Summary, inasmuch as it is not the purpose of this illustration to indicate exactly or precisely, each separate sortie. The intent is to indicate graphically, the extent and diversity of a day's effort as a whole and an attempt has been made to represent each operation by an appropriate line symbol.

Twelve convoys were given day and night protection by our fighter and anti-submarine aircraft. Eighty fighter sorties, somewhat fewer than normal, were flown during the day in convoy escort. Eleven of the convoys are shown on the map by symbols which represent both fighter and other aircraft on escort duty. The twelfth is not shown on this chart.

Fourteen aircraft searched for U Boats. There was one sighting, off Licoza Point 25 miles, by Bealeys of 13 Squadron. Four 250 pound torpedoes were dropped across a swirl, four seconds after disappearance of a submarine, sighted fully surfaced.

Our reconnaissance aircraft, covered the West coast of Sardinia and Corsica, and the Three Wellingtons of 459 Squadron, on a road 12 miles north of Piombino, 12 on a road 20 miles North of Piombino.

Six B 25s (Cannon bearing) attacked shipping in two strike actions. Four B 25s, attacking on the stern of an escort vessel. They also struck Bastia and the mainland where the Italians were direct hits on a barge five miles North of which one fell short, one got a direct hit and one missed. They sank a barge and damaged a tug.

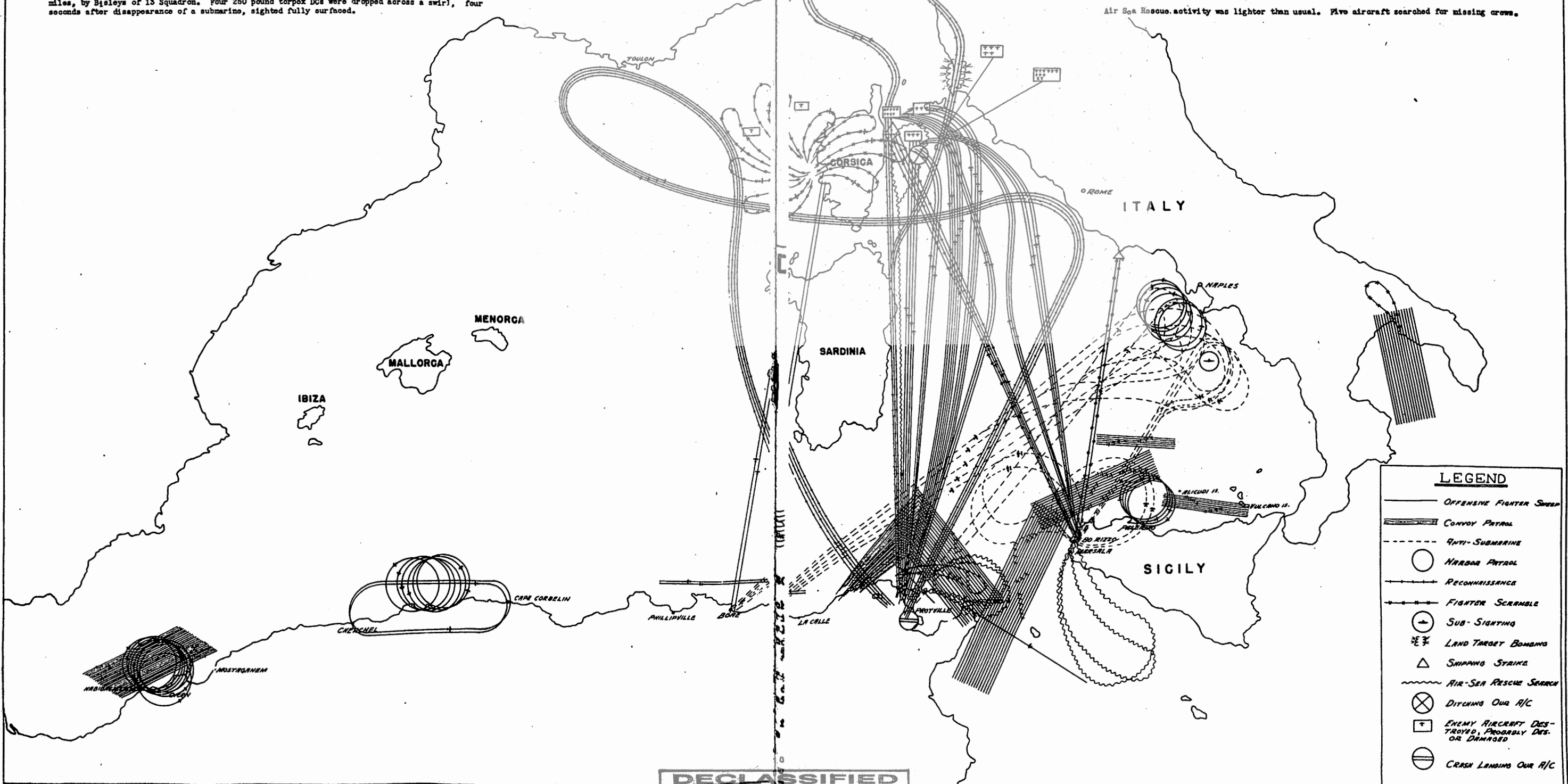
Beaumonts on offensive sweeps against enemy transport aircraft had a field day, destroying 21 Ju 52s, probably destroying 2 and damaging 8 more, in 27 sorties. Four Beaumonts of 39 Squadron shot down three Ju 52s, eleven miles North-Northeast of Alitro; three Beaumonts of 39 Squadron sighted 3 Ju 52s, 15 miles West of Pianosa Island and attacked without results and one Beaumont was forced to ditch off Pianosa Island. Four Beaumonts of 39 Squadron attacked 12 Ju 52s off Bastia and destroyed two of them and left one smoking. One of these Beaumonts crash landed at base as the result of damage, and another ditched five miles West of Pianosa Island. Three Beaumonts of 47 Squadron attacked 12 Ju 52s, nine miles West of Elba, but were driven off by fighters. Six Beaumonts of 39 Squadron spotted 14 Ju 52s seven miles Southeast of Bastia and destroyed four, probably destroyed one and damaged four in this attack. One of these Beaumonts was shot down by an Me 109 after destroying two Ju 52s. The crew now is in a hospital in Sardinia, the pilot well and the navigator injured.

Three Beaumonts of 603 Squadron, on a sweep between Bastia and the Italian mainland, intercepted six Ju 52s and destroyed three and damaged two. Four Beaumonts of 272 Squadron sighted eight Ju 52s and a single engine fighter, 20 miles South of Elba and three more farther away. They destroyed nine of them, probably destroyed one and damaged one without any loss to Beaumonts.

The enemy was sufficiently occupied in Corsica and Italy to attempt little enemy action against our coasts. As a result, there were only ten scrambles during the day, but these involved 12 combats over Ajaccio, in which the enemy lost one PW 190, and probably lost another, to French Spitfires of 2/7 Squadron. One Spitfire also was lost. Only one enemy aircraft was plotted in approaches to the North African Coast. Two of our aircraft were scrambled (P 38s of 91 and 93 Squadrons), but the enemy turned back ten miles from Cape Bon.

Harbor protection sorties were flown by 28 of our aircraft, off Algiers, Oran, Cape Corbelin to Cherchel, Ajaccio, Naples and Palermo.

Air Sea Rescue activity was lighter than usual. Five aircraft searched for missing crews.

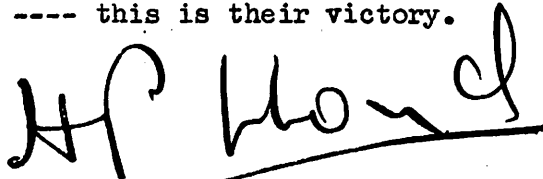


HEADQUARTERS, NORTHWEST AFRICAN COASTAL AIR FORCE.

This account of the work of the Northwest African Coastal Air Force well discloses the immensely varied effort required of the officers and men charged with a military responsibility in many aspects unique.

They have had to make secure against air and sea attack immense convoys proceeding through seaways and in and out of harbors in close proximity to enemy bases. They have had to defend the great ports in which each attack against the enemy was organized and formed. They have, in addition, been required to wage an unremitting offensive war on the enemy's air and sea transport and his undersea craft. They have added to this heroic efforts to rescue allied and axis airmen forced down at sea.

Their primary credit is not reflected, as is that of many military forces, in terms of forts destroyed, lines broken, enemy killed, prisoners captured, territory gained, great battles won. Individual triumphs, many and glorious, they have had in combat with the foe. Their real and great achievement is more than this. To have had a share, and we may be sure a great share, in all the victories of all the many allied forces supplied and transported through the Mediterranean, to have participated in each success of their compatriots everywhere by their unrelenting struggle to command the airways above these vital seaways ---- this is their victory.



Air Vice Marshal,
Air Officer Commanding,
NORTHWEST AFRICAN COASTAL AIR FORCE.

NORTHWEST AFRICAN COASTAL AIR FORCE

A Review of the Activities of N.A.C.A.F.
in the Western and Central Mediterranean
from March to 30 September 1943.

Northwest African Coastal Air Force was formed in March 1943 to take over from R.A.F. Eastern Air Command and U.S.A.A.F. XII Fighter Command, the fighter, anti-submarine, deep-sea reconnaissance, strike and air-sea rescue operations which these units had, until then, controlled in the Western and Central Mediterranean.

The coastal air force thus created, since the beginning, has combined the functions exercised in the United Kingdom by both Coastal and Fighter Command. At the time of the invasion of Italy, at Salerno, for example, 29 of the 43 squadrons controlled by N.A.C.A.F. were day and night fighter squadrons.

"North African Coastal Air Force" is a term which conjures up a picture of a series of G. R. stations dotting the North African Coast line. The force which operates under this name, however, now controls not only a chain of G.R. stations but also a similar chain of fighter sector headquarters, from Casablanca to the Tripoli border, to Malta and across Sicily and Southern Italy, to Taranto and Brindisi, and even to Corsica. Day and night fighter escort to innumerable convoys, protection of shipping concentrations in harbours, and prevention of enemy reconnaissance necessitates all the complex organization that goes to make up a first class fighter organization in England.

The function of this "Fighter-G.R.-Anti-submarine-Coast based Airforce" can be broadly defined as the exercise of air power in close cooperation with sea power over both friendly and hostile sea supply routes, so as to command the air over these routes, and also over the freed territories behind our battle line.

The goal in this theatre has been and is to defeat the enemy on land. But to achieve this our sea communications and the enormous volume of supplies necessary to the Allied armies had to be assured.

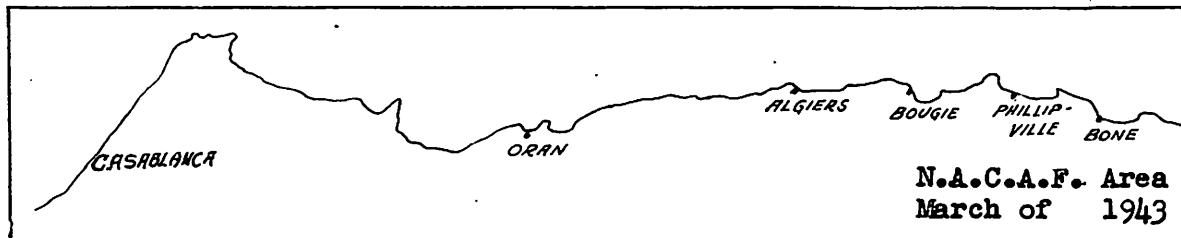
At the same time the enemy's routes had, if possible, to be disrupted and his supplies destroyed before they could reach their destination.

N.A.C.A.F. has had, and still has therefore, an offensive no less than a defensive function.

The Photograph

Of a convoy, taken by N.A.C.A.F. aircraft is illustrative of only one of the countless phases of Coastal Air Force Activity.

FIGHTER AND G/R COMMITMENT



GROWTH OF N.A.C.A.F.

At the time of its formation in March 1943, N.A.C.A.F. controlled only seven single engined fighter squadrons, composed of P-39s, Spitfire Vs and Hurricane 11s, three Night Beaufighter (Mk IV) squadrons, two Hudson day and night anti-submarine squadrons, one Marauder long range overseas reconnaissance squadron and a very short range striking force of one Fleet Air Arm Albacore squadron.

With this force N.A.C.A.F. had to defend Northwest Africa from Casablanca to some way East of Bone and all the crowded shipping in convoy and harbours along its coast.

It had also to be the eyes of the special strategic air force ship-striking force, which was assigned to sink by bombing the enemy's supply ships enroute for Tunisia from Sicily and Naples.

With every gain of territory these commitments increased, so that by the end of the period, September 30th 1943, Northwest African Coastal Air Force have come to control 20 single-engined fighter squadrons, made up of Spitfires IX, P-39s (with some P-38 aircraft), P-40s, Spitfires Vs and Hurricanes 11c, two coastal day Beaufighter squadrons and seven night Beaufighter squadrons (3 Mk VIII and 4 Mk IV); seven anti-submarine squadrons (comprising Bisleys, Wellingtons and Hudsons); two long range reconnaissance squadrons, (Marauders and Baltimores); two day torpedo Beaufighters and one night torpedo Wellington squadron, one B-25 squadron - 75 mm guns. Two air sea rescue squadrons, (Bisleys and Walrus') and four balloon squadrons.

By this time also, however, N.A.C.A.F. had become responsible for the Air Defence of Southern Italy, Sicily, Corsica, Sardinia and all Northwest Africa from Casablanca to the Tripolitanian border and for the protection against air, surface or submarine attack of all the immense volume of shipping moving along these coasts and across the intervening seas. This area is shown on the map which forms a cover for this section.

This coastal air force had enabled the Allied navies and the merchant navies to build up that great reservoir of supplies which were to make possible the invasion first of Sicily and then of the Italian mainland.

It had enabled the same navies to ferry to their objectives the greatest amphibian forces ever assembled, and to maintain those forces in their hundreds of thousands over supply routes that extended from just East of Gibraltar to Salerno and to Taranto, vulnerable at every point to submarine and air attack and, to the threat of the Italian fleet, until the date of its surrender.

The problems involved and how they were met and overcome is shown in the paragraphs that follow.

CONTROL OF THE AIR OVER THE WEST AND CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN SEA ROUTES

Every advance of our land forces Eastward has meant a direct increase by the same distance of the sea routes and land communications requiring protection.

Additional day and night fighters and anti-submarine squadrons have therefore to be trained in escort procedure largely from reserves available in Africa. and additional fighter sectors and G.R. stations moved at very short notice.

DEFENCE AGAINST AIR ATTACK ON ALLIED CONVOYS AT SEA

That this expansion was effected without loss of Fighter efficiency is borne out by the extreme rarity of air attacks in coastwise convoys, despite the convenient bases available to the enemy in Sardinia. Those that were made were confined to dusk attacks, and throughout the entire period only succeeded in sinking seven ships and damaging fifteen.

On the 5th April four Savoia Marchetti 79s, torpedo-bombers, which attempted a dusk attack on a convoy near Bone were all intercepted and destroyed by Hurricanes of 253 Squadron.

On the 13th April as a big convoy made its way Eastward towards Algiers 12 German torpedo bombers in Southern Sardinia took off for a dusk attack. This contingency had been anticipated for some time and Beaufighters of 255 Squadron were patrolling across their anticipated track to South west of Sardinia and over 200 miles from the convoy. Two torpedo bombers were destroyed, one probably destroyed and three damaged. While the remainder jettisoned their torpedoes and fled.

From that day, though convoys steamed Eastward in preparations for the Sicilian invasion, no further attempt was made to attack our convoys at sea from the air until the assault of Pantelleria in June when a motor torpedo boat and a water carrier were destroyed in the capture of the island. This is all the more significant since during May two large Eastbound convoys were escorted through the Sicilian narrows on their way to the Middle East without loss or air attack. The Mediterranean route to the East was indeed open once more.

On the 26th June the enemy did however make a serious attempt to destroy an Eastbound convoy as it passed Cape Bon on the North East tip of Tunisia, but by this time 242 Group, which had transferred to N.A.C.A.F. on May 26th, was established at Bizerte with Fighter Sectors at Tunis and Sousse, and our fighter organization was ready.

Over 100 enemy aircraft were involved including Ju 88s, CZ 1007s, and FW 109s Fighter bombers, the attacks began in the afternoon and were continued through the night. No major damage was inflicted on any vessel and our protecting day and night fighters not only destroyed six enemy aircraft and damaged a number, but what was more important, caused many of them to jettison their bombs before reaching their targets. (The complete run of this convoy "EDWORTH" while under N.A.C.A.F. protection is shown in the sketch at the conclusion of this review, and gives in pictorial form some idea of the effort and organization involved).

From this time until the middle of August the enemy devoted his bomber effort to attacks on harbours (with what little effect is shown further on), and it was not until August 13th that an attempt was made from South of France to attack a convoy East of Gibraltar at dusk near Alboran Island beyond the range of our single engined fighters. In spite of a mixed force of nearly 50 He 111s and Ju 88s only two ships were damaged both reaching port for a certain loss to the enemy of seven aircraft.

A more determined attack by five He 111s on a vessel coming out of Bone to join a convoy sunk the ship and with it 325 Italian prisoners of war for a cost of three Heinkels destroyed, two by 219 Squadron Beau-fighters, and one by the convoy's guns.

It became evident therefore that the enemy bomber bases in Southern France were likely to remain a constant menace to convoys Westbound to and Eastbound from Gibraltar.

Ju 88s from South of France made torpedo attacks on a convoy between Algiers and Oran on the evening of Sept. 2nd damaging a destroyer.

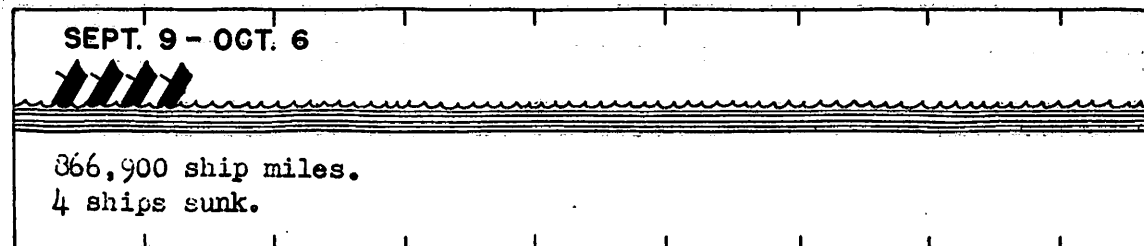
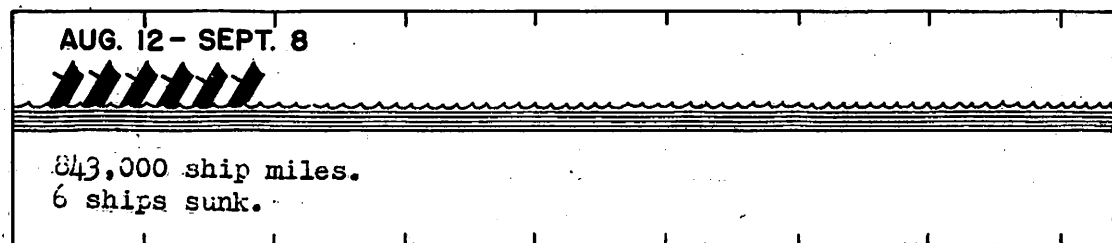
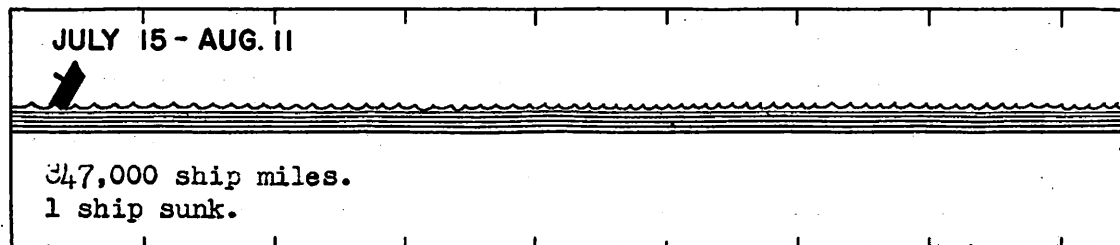
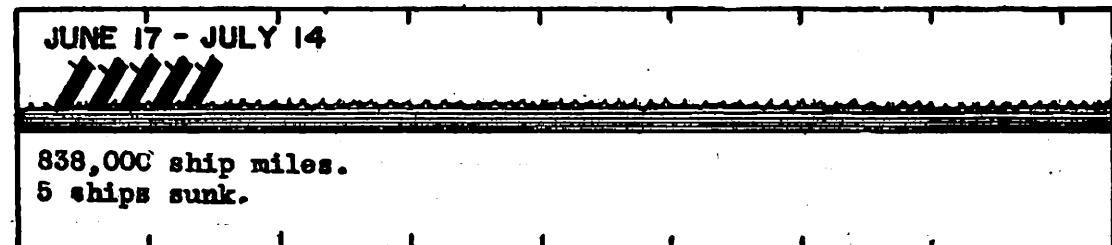
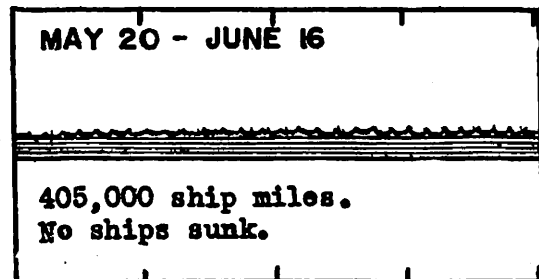
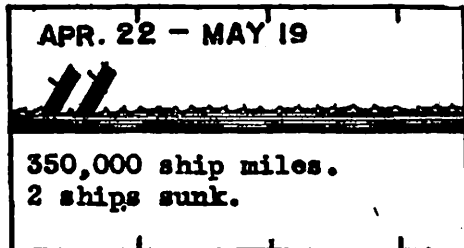
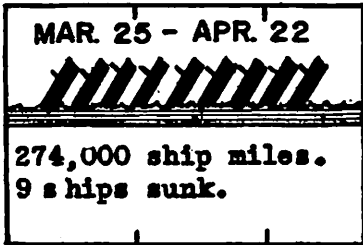
Furthermore, with the abandonment of Corsican and Sardinian bases, and their occupation by Coastal Air Force fighters, the likelihood that he would concentrate his attacks more and more on convoys between Bone and Gibraltar increased. This necessitated the retention of day and night fighters all along the Northwest African shore. Though it is outside the period under review, a combined torpedo and glider bomb dusk attack from bases in South of France by Heinkels and Do 217s respectively on an Eastbound convoy just West of Algiers on the 6th October is concrete evidence that the Coastal Air Force commitment against air attack along the Algerian coast is likely to remain a serious one. Four ships were damaged, by Dornier Hs 293 glider bombs, one of which had to be sunk. French P-39s of N.A.C.A.F. prevented more serious loss and the enemy lost three aircraft.



SHADOWING THE ITALIAN FLEET

On the way to its rendezvous with Allied Naval forces was one unique task of N.A.C.A.F reconnaissance aircraft.

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0 100,000 200,000 300,000 400,000 500,000 600,000 700,000 800,000
SHIP MILES

SHIP SINKINGS

Allied shipping losses in waters protected by N.A.C.A.F. amounted roughly to one ship sunk for every 200,000 ship miles travelled in the four weeks period ending 6 Oct., showing a definite improvement over the loss ratio of the preceding four weeks when there was a loss for every 140,000 ship miles, in round numbers. Ship miles travelled and losses sustained for each of seven four week periods from 25 March to 6 Oct. are shown by the graphs on this page.

The first period, when one ship was sunk for every 30,000 ship miles was definitely the worst of all the periods. Exceptionally good were the periods 20 May - 16 June when no sinkings took place; and 15 July to 11 August, when in spite of a large volume of shipping only one ship was sunk.

On the graphs, each black symbol represents one sinking. The number of ship-miles in each month is indicated by the length of the charts themselves, with the 100,000 mile units ticked off at the foot of the page. The term "ship-mile" indicates the movement of one ship for the distance of one mile. It is determined by multiplying the number of ships in movement during a period by the total miles traversed by all ships.

AIR ATTACKS ON N.A.C.A.F. PORTS

Attacks on Harbours were entirely confined to the hours of darkness, with the exception of afternoon attack by Do 217s with Glider Hs 293 bombs on 30th September when one L.S.T. was sunk and a French destroyer damaged at Ajaccio, Corsica. The following tables show very clearly the immense achievement of N.A.C.A.F. Deafighter squadrons in conjunction with the Anti-Aircraft and Balloon defences.

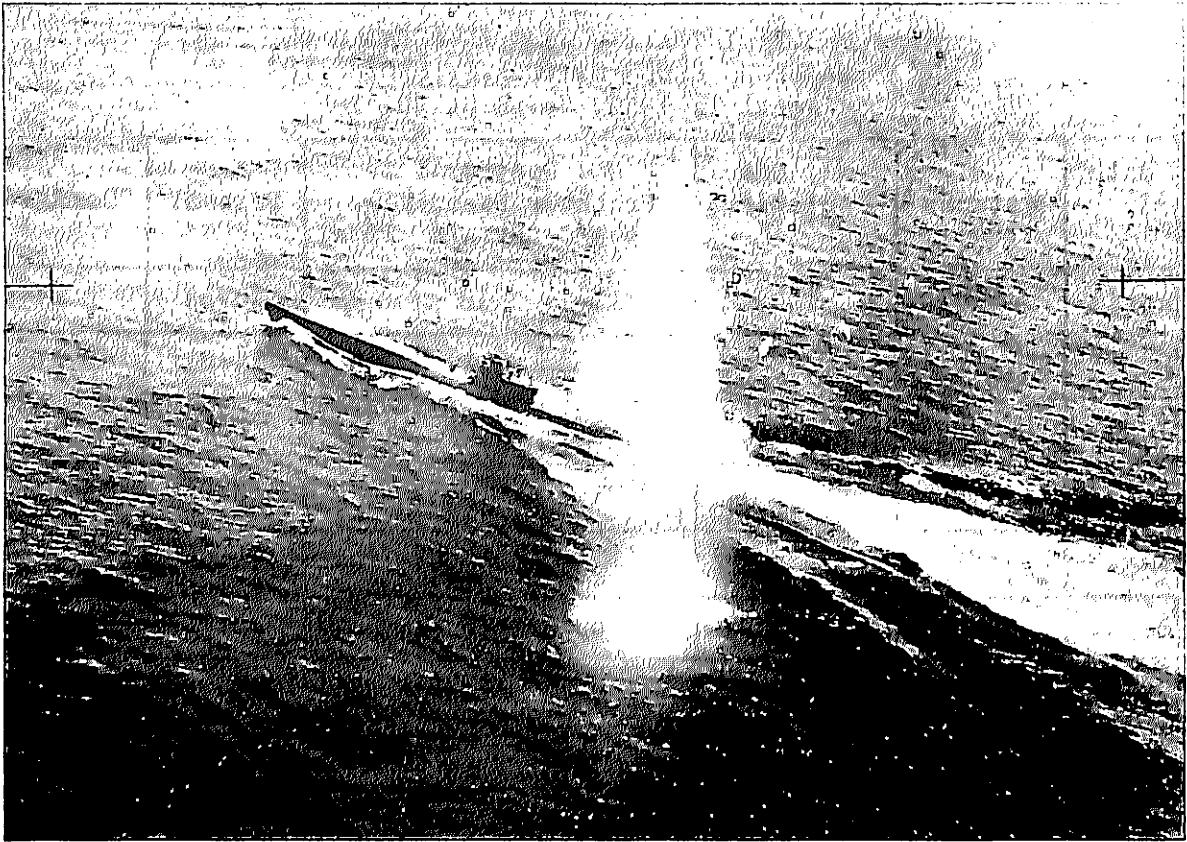
This achievement is all the more remarkable when it is remembered that every port from Oran to the Tripolitanian border was packed with shipping built up throughout May and June for the Sicilian invasion in July and later not only these ports but those in Sicily as well preparatory to the invasion of the Italian mainland at Salerno South of Naples. Never have such targets been presented and yet out of a total of 63 attacks on Ports under N.A.C.A.F. protection involving 1047 enemy aircraft only seven vessels of all kinds were sunk and nine damaged, while remarkably little damage was done to port facilities.

For this the enemy is estimated to have paid with 146 of his aircraft destroyed of which 62 fell to the night Beaufighters.

DAMAGE TO ALLIED SHIPPING IN HARBOUR RESULTING FROM ENEMY ATTACK														
Cities	April		May		June		July		Aug.		Sept.		Total.	
	S	D	S	D	S	D	S	D	S	D	S	D	S	D
Oran				2									-	2
Bougie		1*	1										1	1
Djidjelli	1	2											1	2
Philippeville													-	-
Bone				1									-	1
Bizerte									1	1			1	1
Sousse						1							-	1
Palermo									3	1			3	1
Ajaccio											1	-	1	-
TOTAL	1	3	1	3	-	1	-	-	4	2	1	-	7	9
* Near miss on submarine.														

ENEMY AIRCRAFT LOSSES IN ATTACKS ON HARBOURS UNDER N.A.C.A.F. PROTECTION April 1, 1943, - Sept 30, 1943							
Month	No. Attacks	No. E/A Partaking	No. Destroyed or Probably Destroyed.			Percent	Damaged.
			By A/C	By A/A	Total		
April	14	146	12	12	24	16.44	2
May	21	297	13	31	44	14.81	2
June	15	213	12	6	18	8.45	-
July	1	50	1	3	4	8.00	-
Aug.	9	278	16	25	41	14.75	1
Sept.	3	63	8	7	15	23.80	-
TOTALS	63	1047	62	84	146	13.94	5

COMPILATION BY CITIES								
Cities	No. Attacks	No. E/A Attacking	Aver. E/A per Attack	No. Destroyed or Probably Destroyed			Percent Damaged	
				By A/C	By A/A	Total		
Oran	1	12	12	-	2	2	16.67	-
Algiers	6	128	21	7	19	26	20.31	-
Bougie	1	3	3	-	-	-	0.00	-
Djidjelli	11	123	11	14	7	21	17.07	1
Philip'vle	4	47	12	2	2	4	8.51	-
Bone	18	209	12	13	15	28	13.40	3
Bizerte	11	329	30	15	29	44	13.37	1
Tunis	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	-
Sousse	5	112	22	-	1	1	0.89	-
Sfax	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.00	-
Palermo	4	71	18	7	9	16	22.54	-
Ajaccio	2	13	7	4	-	4	30.77	-
TOTALS	63	1047	17	62	84	146	13.94	5



U - BOAT MENACE

Just as with the fighter commitment, N.A.C.A.F.'S anti-submarine responsibility has extended continually Eastward, with no corresponding decrease in responsibilities in the Western Mediterranean where the threat was no less on 30 September than it had been at the end of March.

The numerous Italian submarines, opposed to us up to the Italian collapse, had little or no bearing on this problem, since they appeared to have been employed more as an "anti-invasion warning screen" than as an offensive force.

The German U-Boats, however, with well equipped bases at Toulon and at Pola, in the Adriatic, although fewer in number, presented a continuous threat, while the necessity for routing our convoys within fighter protection made interception no problem whatsoever for the enemy.

The two Hudson squadrons (500 and 608), and 315 Swordfish Squadron, which had done so well in Winter and Spring were fitted with Mk 11 ASV and with the increased use by the enemy of listening devices, the number of attacks and sightings fell away toward the end of July.

During May, 36 Squadron Wellingtons was attached to N.A.C.A.F. A number of these aircraft were fitted with Mark 111 ASV. Also 13 and 614 Bisley Squadrons were transferred to N.A.C.A.F. from Tactical Air Force for daylight anti-submarine duties.

It is not possible to deal in detail with the N.A.C.A.F. submarine effort maintained with such skeleton forces throughout the period. The policy in the main has been to give direct escort to convoys and to institute intensive hunt procedure in conjunction with naval surface forces wherever the presence of a U-Boat was known or suspected.

In this connection, the following extract from the Monthly Anti-

Submarine report for June 1943 is significant:

"During the months of April, May and June, a total of some 1074 ships had been passed in convoy along the coast with the loss of six vessels. It is estimated that an aggregate of 184 U-Boats were within striking distance of these convoys at different times".

An interesting phase of the anti-submarine effort has been the training of the Hudson squadrons at Blida in rocket attack. This undertaking achieved a success soon after operations commenced when a Hudson of 608 Squadron sighted an enemy submarine on 28 May at 1330 sixty miles North of Mallorca and made a most successful attack upon it.

The submarine was sighted at eight miles from a height of 4,000 feet, bearing 100. It was fully surfaced and painted a light grey with upper surfaces rusty in color. The conning tower was stepped back and a gun was mounted forward of the conning tower. Apparently the U-Boat was taken by surprise and did not sight the aircraft until the attack started. After the attack, the U-Boat was seen to be damaged and down by the stern. It began turning slowly and the Hudson dived low over it machine-gunning the personnel and sustaining no damage itself in spite of some return fire. The crew finally jumped over board and the U-Boat settled by the stern, sinking with the bows up at an angle of 80 degrees. The photograph at the top of the page shows this attack which commenced the use of the rocket weapon in the Mediterranean.

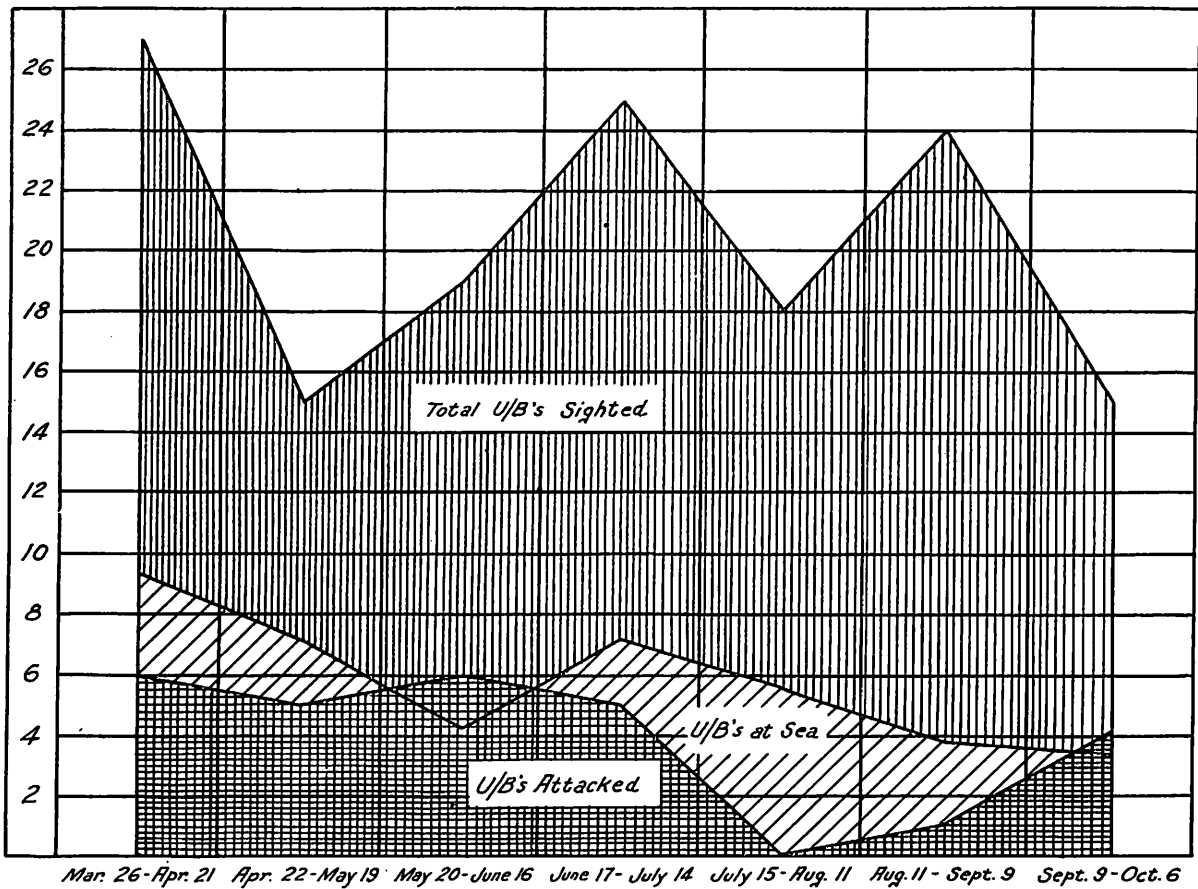
The tremendous effort put forth to track down and keep down the enemy submarines is shown in the table below. Altogether, in the period under review, 4,311 sorties were flown and 21,235 hours were spent in the air. Thirty-five submarines were sighted. Twenty-one attacks were made.

ANTI-SUBMARINE EFFORT G/R AIRCRAFT

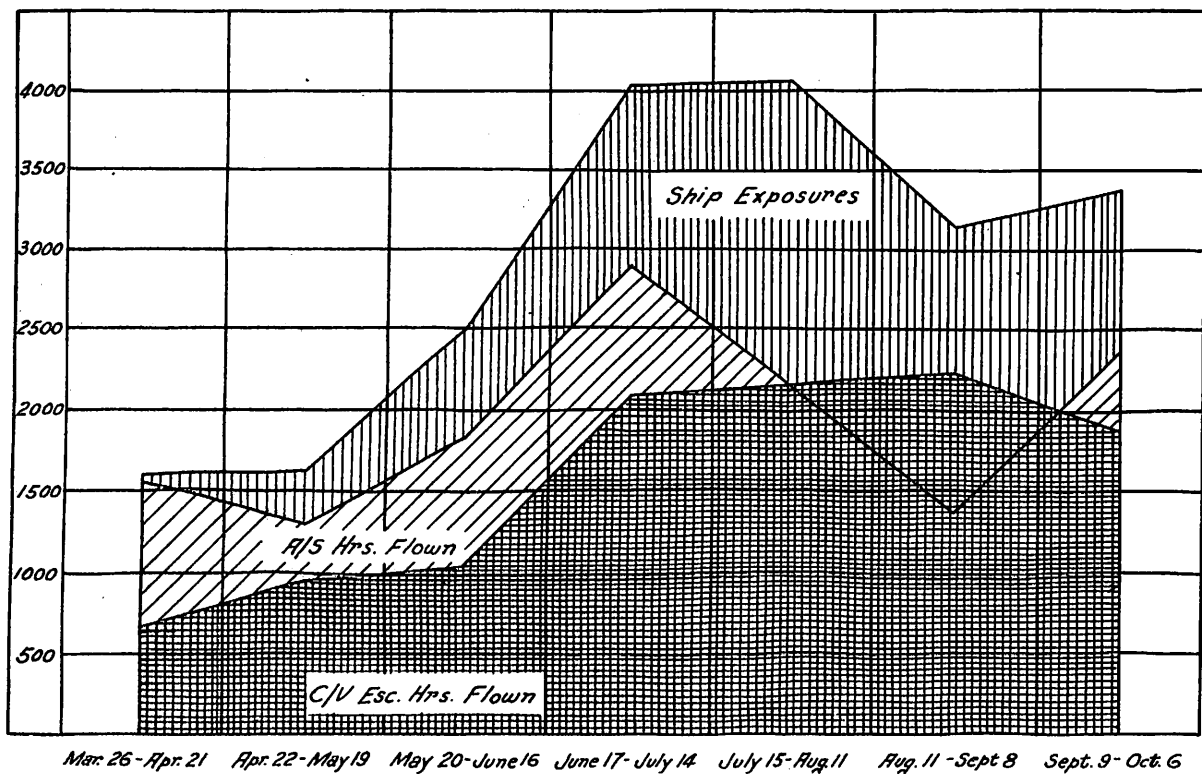
(In the tables below C/V represents Convoy Escorts and A/S represents Anti-Submarine Patrols and U-Boat Hunts and Strikes)
 PERIOD: April 1st to 29 September, 1943.

	Sorties		Hours		Sightings		Sorties		Hours	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Per Sight.	Per Sight.	Per Sight.	Per Sight.
C/V Day	1337	31.0	6439	30.3	5	14.3	267		1288	
C/V Night	746	17.3	3894	18.3	3	8.6	249		1298	
SUB TOTAL	2083	48.3	10333	48.6	8	22.9	260		1292	
A/S Day	1560	36.2	7128	33.6	12	34.3	130		594	
A/S Night	668	15.5	3775	17.8	15	42.8	45		252	
SUB TOTAL	2228	51.7	10902	51.4	27	77.1	83		404	
TOTALS BOTH	4311	100.0	21235	100.0	35	100.0	123		607	
TOTALS DAY	2897	67.2	13566	63.9	17	48.6	170		798	
TOTALS NIGHT	1414	32.8	7668	36.1	18	51.4	79		426	

ANTI-SUBMARINE EFFORT MAR. 26-OCT. 6



Curves for U/B's sighted and U/B's attacked show 28-day Cumulations plotted at the middle of the 28-day period. Curve for U/B's at sea shows 28-day average plotted at the middle of the 28-day period.



Mar. 26-Apr. 21 Apr. 22-May 19 May 20-June 16 June 17-July 14 July 15-Aug. 11 Aug. 11-Sept. 8 Sept. 9-Oct. 6

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ENEMY AIR RECONNAISSANCE

An ever present problem for N.A.C.A.F. has been the necessity for preventing enemy reconnaissance of our convoy routes and of the immense periodic concentrations of merchant shipping and naval forces in our Mediterranean ports.

For the greater part of the period the enemy based his overseas reconnaissance forces in Sardinia.

Up to the end of April he employed mostly Ju 88s and N.A.C.A.F. Hurricane, Spitfire V and P-39 squadrons were able to a great extent to deny to the enemy the knowledge he required.

Early in May therefore he resorted more and more to the use of FW 190 and Me 109 reconnaissance aircraft fitted with long range tanks and capable of high speeds at considerable altitudes.

From their Sardinian bases these single-engined aircraft could overlook our routes and harbours as far West as Algiers.

Spitfire Vs and P-39s being relatively poor in climb and altitude performance, though well capable of dealing with the Ju 88 which still covered the Oran area, were unable to get up to the single-engined reconnoissances further East.

Spitfire IXs and P-38s had long been pressed for, but could not be made available until the beginning of June, and then only in small numbers, when two P-38s were attached to each U.S. P-39 squadron and a few Spitfire IXs were attached to some British Hurricane and Spitfire squadrons expressly for anti-reconnaissance work. Towards the end of August and beginning of September, by stripping his single-engine fighters down and increasing their performance at altitude, the enemy did occasionally obtain a view of our shipping. With the landing at Salerno in September the bulk of his reconnaissance concentrated on the battle area, and with the abandonment of his Sardinian bases, the Ju 88s from the South of France and later Perugia in Central Italy had to take up the burden. These continued to be severely handled and, as hitherto, tended to fly far out on the sea-ward side of our coastal sea routes.



PHOTOGRAPHS.

Of North African harbors such as this one became so expensive for Nazi Photo-reconnaissance aircraft that attempts to get them virtually ceased.

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RADAR

With the reorganisation of Air Forces in March under Mediterranean Air Command, the dividing line of Fighter Defence Responsibilities of N.A.C.A.F. and the Tactical Air Force was defined as 50 miles behind the front line. The Fighter Defence Area of N.A.C.A.F. has therefore extended during the period as that line advanced, with the exception of the Tunisian Campaign when Tactical Air Force possessed no Night Beau-fighter squadrons and had to call upon N.A.C.A.F. for night fighter operations in the Battle Area.

Phase 1 - The Tunisian Campaign

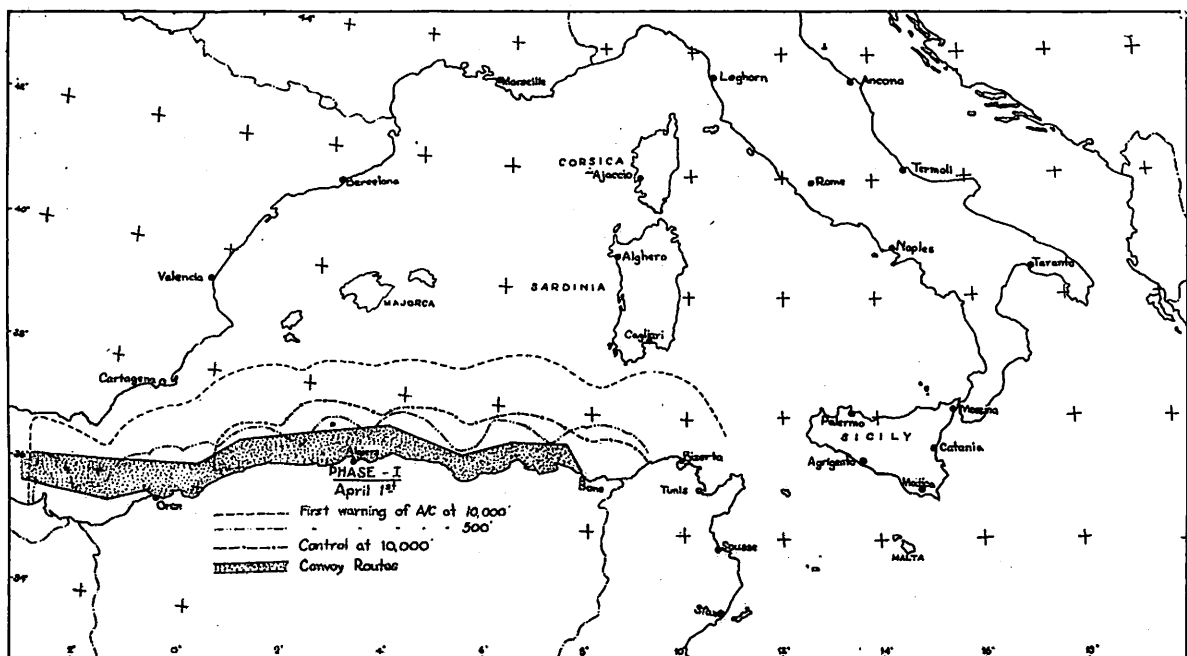
Introduction

In this first phase N.A.C.A.F. had to safeguard supplies in and between the Ports of Oran, Algiers, Djidjelli, Philippeville and Bone.

The RADAR problem was therefore two-fold.

- (a) The provision of adequate protection against air attack employing ground RADAR for warning and controlling purposes.
- (b) The employment of A.I. Fighters for night interception work in conjunction with R.D.F. control.

The way in which these problems were met in the operations proceeding the fall of Tunis are described in the following paragraphs.



(1) GROUND R.D.F.

In the beginning of April there existed along the coast a chain of R.D.F. Stations from the West of Oran to the East of Bone. These stations installed in the main by Eastern Air Command were of all types.

Note: Control at 500 feet is the same as the area of first warning at 500 feet, except where the area of control at 10,000 feet is closer to the coast than the 500 feet warning area. At these points the area of 500 feet control is identical with the area of control at 10,000 feet.

M.R.U., L.W., G.C.I., and C.O.L. The M.R.U.s and L.W. Sets were for warning purposes only and the G.C.I/C.O.L. for the control of fighters. The C.O.L. station, designed originally for warning and information only, was not able to control fighter aircraft until provided with V.H.F. and controlling personnel. The C.O.L.s when thus equipped were sited along the coast for the protection of convoys against low flying attack. The G.C.I.s with their higher cover were reserved in the main for the defence of ports, Oran, Algiers, Djidjelli, Philippeville and Bone.

By the beginning of the period under review the network of R.D.F. coverage (as shown on the accompanying Map for Phase 1) was installed, and connected with the various operation and filter rooms situated along the coast. Air Formation Signals were responsible for the installation of landlines, and W/T facilities were available should these break down.

Apart from the re-siting of a few stations to provide better low cover the chain was altered little before the capture of Tunis. Although, with the arrival in this country of American Radar equipment, it was substituted in the West for British units, which then became available for use elsewhere, as the area of the Coastal Air Force expanded.

From the Map of Radar coverage can be seen the effectiveness of the protection we were able to give to convoys.

I:

(2) A.I. FIGHTERS IN CONJUNCTION WITH GROUND R.D.F.

The protection of convoys and ports in the daytime was effected by the use of single engined fighters either directly under Radar control, or vectored as a result of Radar information. To co-operate at night however without Ground R.D.F. there were available three Beaufighter Squadrons equipped at this stage with Mark IV A.I.

One squadron based at Maison Blanche was responsible for the defence of shipping in the Algiers area and westward to Oran. It was responsible also for the defence of these two ports, and it detached aircraft away as the situation demanded it.

The other two squadrons based at Setif operated aircraft on forward aerodromes for the defence of shipping and the ports of Bone and Philippeville.

At that time however the tactical Air Force had no night fighter organisation of its own. Elements of these two squadrons therefore were employed, on request, in the battle areas at night, both in the South by Monastir and to the West in the Mateur Sector. They also intruded in Sardinia when they were vectored to and from this island by G.C.I/C.O.L. stations situated first on Cape Takouca and later, when the military situation allowed, on Cap Serrat.

By the middle of April the enemy's tactics had altered. In the earlier days his high and medium bombing, both of ports and shipping, had been effectively countered by the use of Mark IV A.I. But as a result of the increasing casualties he suffered he brought in low level attack. For the bombing of ports he climbed to the necessary height as close in as possible - so shortening our period of warning. And for the attack on shipping he utilised the Torpedo bomber.

The interception of low flying aircraft, even with the necessary equipment, is an undertaking of considerable skill. But shortly after the innovation of this form of attack the matter was under active review.

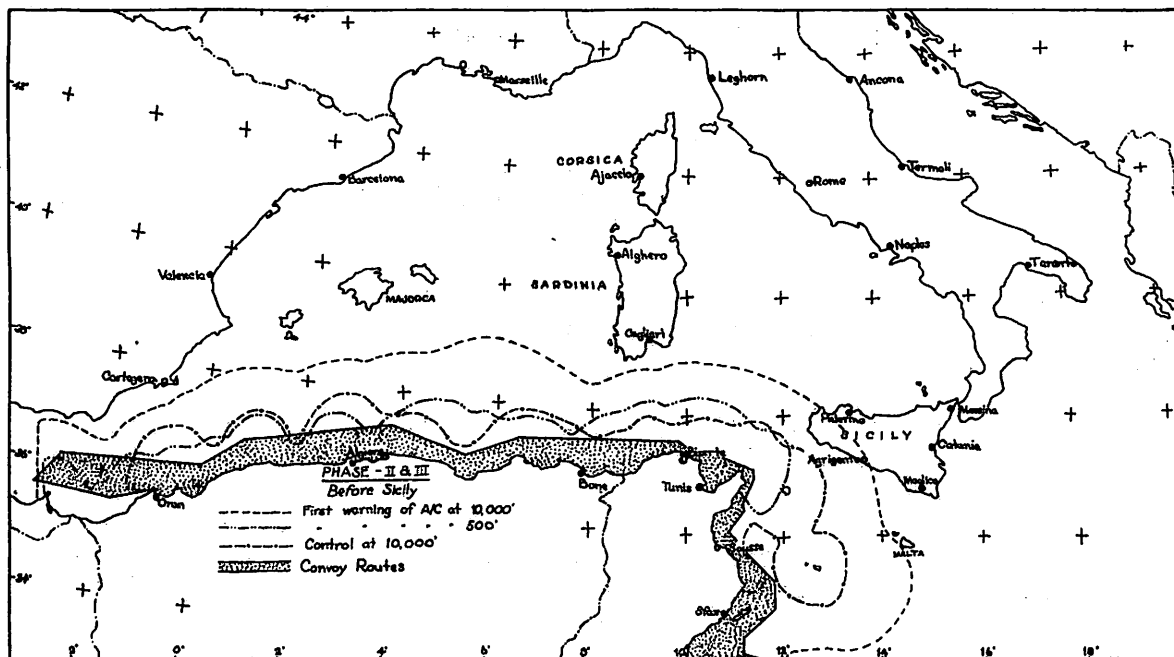
It was established in conjunction with the Navy that these attacks on shipping were being delivered from heights of 200 feet. All C.O.L. stations along the coast were therefore tested for their ability to pick up aircraft at this height at ranges of 45 miles. They were re-sited if necessary to enable them to do this.

A Training School for Controllers was then established at Algiers. With Mark VII A.I. Beaufighters (which had been made available from the U.K. on request) practice interceptions at low altitude under C.O.L. control were carried out. The experience thus gained was then employed operationally and the enemy's losses became as great in either form of attack.

The Mark VII equipment was then reserved entirely, until the end of this phase, for the protection of shipping routes, and Mark IV was used exclusively for the higher form of defence necessary against the attack on ports.

Towards the final stages of the Tunisian campaign, after the occupation of Bizerte and before the surrender of Cap Bon, Mark IV aircraft controlled from the area North of Tunis intercepted enemy machines leaving the cape. This was effected directly under G.C.I/C.O.L. control as although it was known that the aircraft were flying low no Mark VII A.I. was available.

In the twelve days ending April 15, five enemy aircraft were destroyed by night fighters. In the latter half of the month 21 were destroyed, while in May nine were shot down.



Phase 2 - After the Fall of Tunis and Bizerte

With the fall of Tunis and Bizerte the Coastal Air Force became responsible in the normal way for the defence of these two ports and the shipping in their area. Since the southern shores of the Mediterranean

were now entirely clear of enemy forces, it would also be responsible for the defence of convoys sailing through the Sicilian Straits both to the Middle and Far East.

In addition to the setup necessary for this routine responsibility, preparation had also to be made for the operations against Pantelleria and Lampedusa. These would be in the nature of a try-out for the larger amphibious assaults planned against Sicily.

Although not really within the province of N.A.C.A.F., this job was undertaken at the request of the Tactical Air Force as there was then no night fighter organisation under its control.

The responsibilities, therefore, which faced the Coastal Air Force during Phase 2 were threefold: (1) The establishment of Radar coverage throughout the newly captured Tunisian territory; (2) Operations against Pantelleria and the other islands, and (3) the installation of R.D.F. on these after their capture.

(1) THE DEFENCE OF THE TUNISIAN COASTLINE

With the British Radar Stations arriving from the U.K. together with those released from the West by the installation of American equipment, the necessary cover for Tunis and Bizerte was provided. While to the South in the Sousse-Sfax area coverage was given by units from the Middle East. To operate in conjunction with this R.D.F., a Mk VIII A.I. squadron based near Tunis was available.

The extent of our coverage included Pantelleria which was later to be of considerable assistance, in the attack on that island.

(2) OPERATIONS AGAINST PANTELLERIA

For these operations experiments were made with the use of G.C.I./C.O.L. sets installed in L.C.Ts. with considerable success. These accompanied the assault convoys, controlling fighters for their protection while doing so. After the actual landing had been made they were driven ashore and established in suitable sites as soon as possible.

It was as a result of these experiments and the technical information gained and forwarded to the Air Ministry by the Coastal Air Force that L.C.Ts. thus equipped, were made available for the assault on Sicily.

(3) THE INSTALLATION OF R.D.F.

With the capture of Pantelleria and these islands two R.D.F. stations were installed on Pantelleria and one on Lampedusa. Coverage thus provided, which can be seen from the accompanying Map for Phase 2, served to fill the gaps between that given from Tunisia and Malta for the protection of convoys in this area. It also gave advance low-level coverage for Sousse and Sfax where the ground was of insufficient height for the efficient siting of a C.O.L.

Phase 3 - Invasion of Sicily

As a result of the experience gained during Tunisia and Pantelleria, it was decided that the Tactical Air Force should possess a night fighter squadron of its own backed up by the necessary R.D.F. facilities. For this purpose, therefore, a squadron equipped with Mk IV A.I. was transferred from Coastal to T.A.F., and arrangements made for another squadron to replace this from the U.K.

Since we were then freed from all obligations other than those strictly our own, our responsibility lay solely in the straightforward protection of shipping and ports as they were vacated by the Tactical Air Force 50 miles behind the front line.

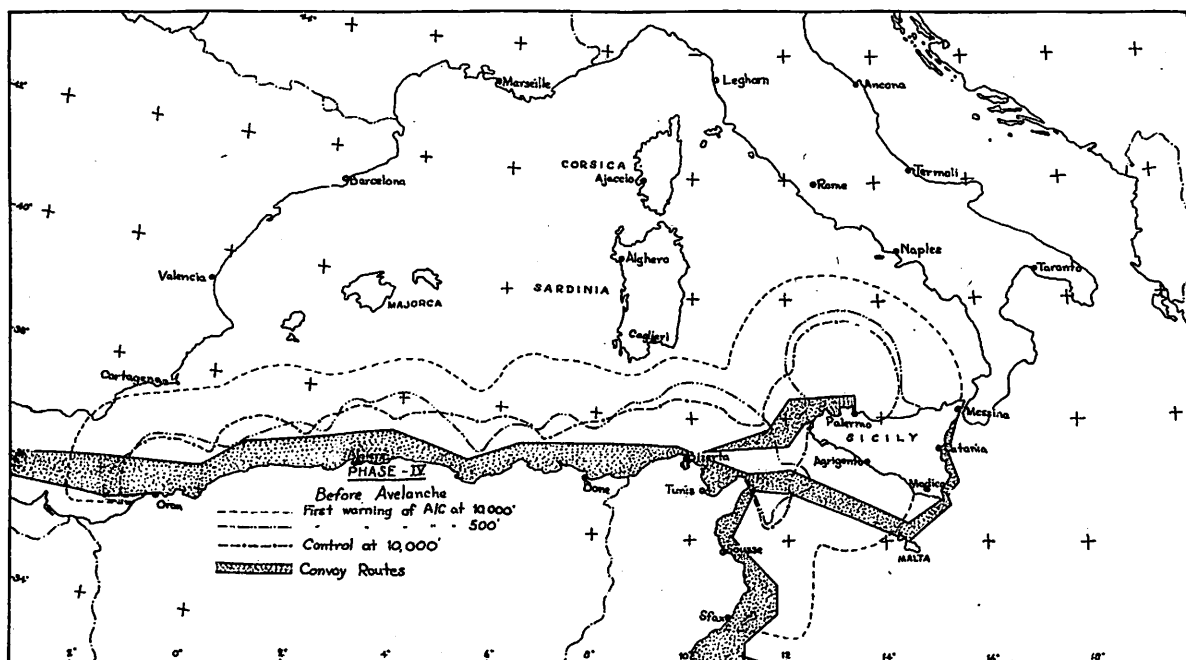
When we took over the Western part of Sicily, in order to protect Palermo and its shipping, a Mk VIII squadron operating from Sebala maintained continuous night patrols over this port. They operated in conjunction with the G.C.Is. established in that vicinity and also a C.O.I. situated on the little island of Ustica. This advanced Radar station was of considerable assistance and was able to plot aircraft as far away as Naples bay.

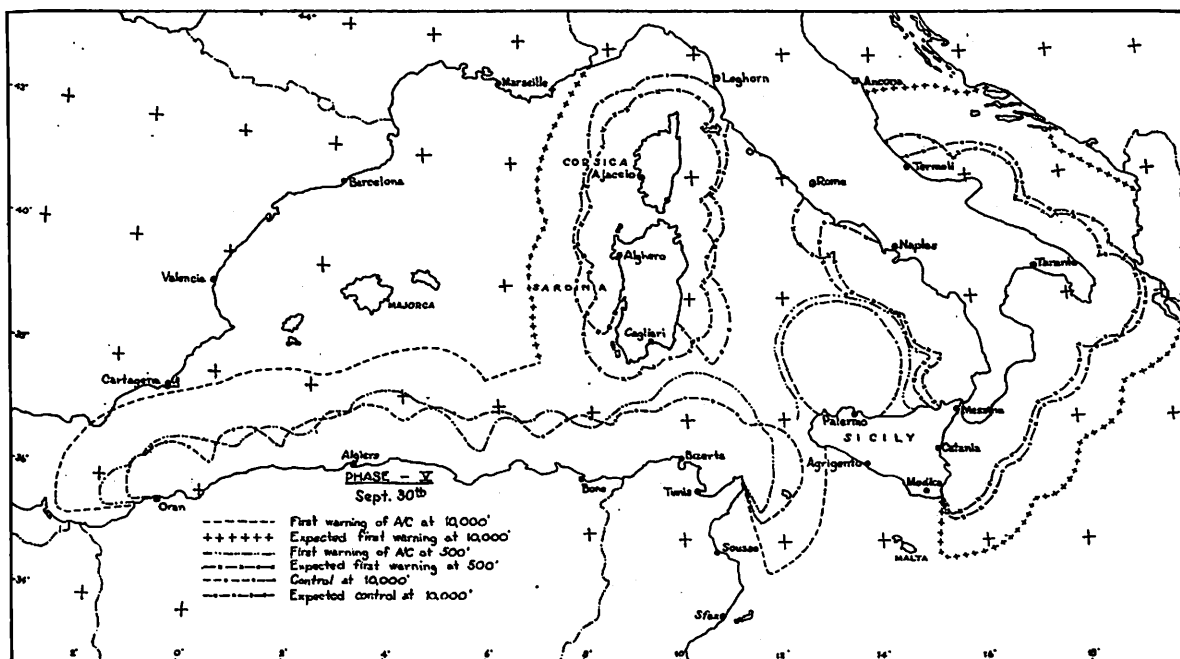
As can be seen from the map for Phase 3, the R.D.F. coverage extended from Africa to Sicily, thus providing efficient protection for convoys routed straight through the Mediterranean.

As the area of battle moved Northward, stations in the Southern area were gradually withdrawn for use elsewhere. First from the Sousse area, then Pantelleria, Lampedusa and finally Malta, leaving the island with sufficient only for its defence.

American Night Fighter squadrons became operational during this period, equipped initially with Mk IV A.I. In the main they were reserved for the defence of ports while the British squadrons, equipped with Mk VIII, were used for convoy protection.

In addition to these new commitments, the Coastal Air Force was still responsible for the defence of ports along the North African coast and shipping in those areas. The threat to these had not seriously diminished, as it was known that the enemy were constructing bases along the South coast of France from which to attack this important supply route.





Phases 4 & 5 - Italy and Corsica

After the final occupation of Sicily it was decided that another Night Fighter squadron should be handed over to Tactical, and accordingly an American Beaufighter squadron was transferred.

With the actual attack on Salerno, which took place on September 8th, N.A.C.A.F. was concerned only with protecting convoys within a given distances of the beaches. In conjunction with N.A.T.A.F., Nighter Fighter cover was also provided over the area in general, by Mk VIII aircraft based at Borizzo in Sicily. They were controlled on occasions by waterborne G.C.I/C.O.L.

In the theatre generally the responsibilities of Coastal were constantly on the increase, and by September there were 90 Radar ground stations within the Command.

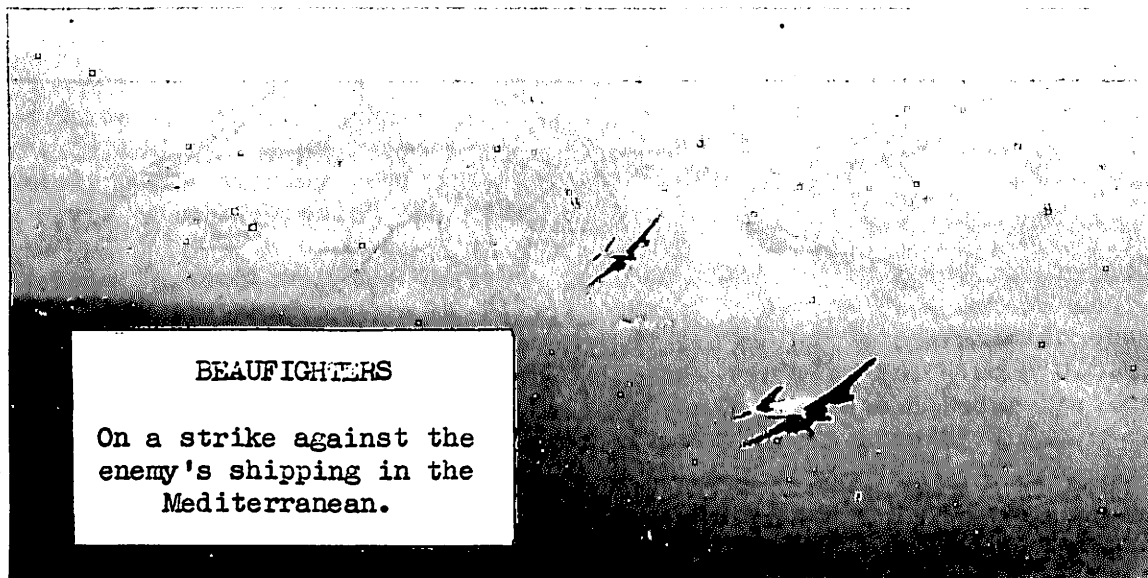
With the advance of the Eighth Army up the East coast of Italy, Coastal assumed responsibility for the shipping in the South centered in the main around the port of Taranto; additional Radar facilities were required for this.

The final Map for Phase V shows the actual Radar installed and operational on September 30th, including Corsica.

CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of these measures has already been shown in the achievements of N.A.C.A.F. fighters by day and night in safe-guarding of convoys, defence of our ports, and the defeat of enemy reconnaissance.

Despite the almost continuous moving of units, and the frequent necessity for hasty improvisation to meet each new development it is evident that a high level of efficiency was obtained, and that the part played by N.A.C.A.F. RADAR Units had a very great bearing on the astonishing degree of immunity from air attack maintained throughout the period.



OFFENSIVE ACTION

DISRUPTION OF ENEMY'S WESTERN AND CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN SEA AND AIR COMMUNICATIONS

The foregoing paragraphs have dealt largely with the defensive action of Coastal Air Force operations in insuring the life-lines to our armies in the battle area.

No less important was the vital task of dislocating and destroying the enemy's communications. It was unfortunate that the real weapons for this task were not available until nearly July.

At the beginning of the period when N.A.C.A.F. was formed in March, the grave lack in Northwest Africa of an adequate day and night long-range reconnaissance and ship striking force had become only too apparent from the great number of large ships which, routed well to Northwest of Sicily, had reached Bizerte and Tunis in spite of the considerable number destroyed by naval and air action from Malta.

The one squadron of torpedo carrying Marauders were much overworked, since they had to do their own reconnaissance and were therefore limited in range.

It was, accordingly decided to throw away the torpedoes of 14 Squadron, and turn these Marauders into genuine long range reconnaissance aircraft, while two squadrons of B-17s of Strategic Air Force were allocated to N.A.C.A.F. daily were to follow up ship sightings.

A Fleet Air Arm Albacore squadron was also based as far Eastward as possible for short range offensive reconnaissance of the Bizerte approaches.

Even these make-shift arrangements soon effected results, and interfered to quite an extent with the enemy's strenuous efforts to keep open his life-line to Tunisia.

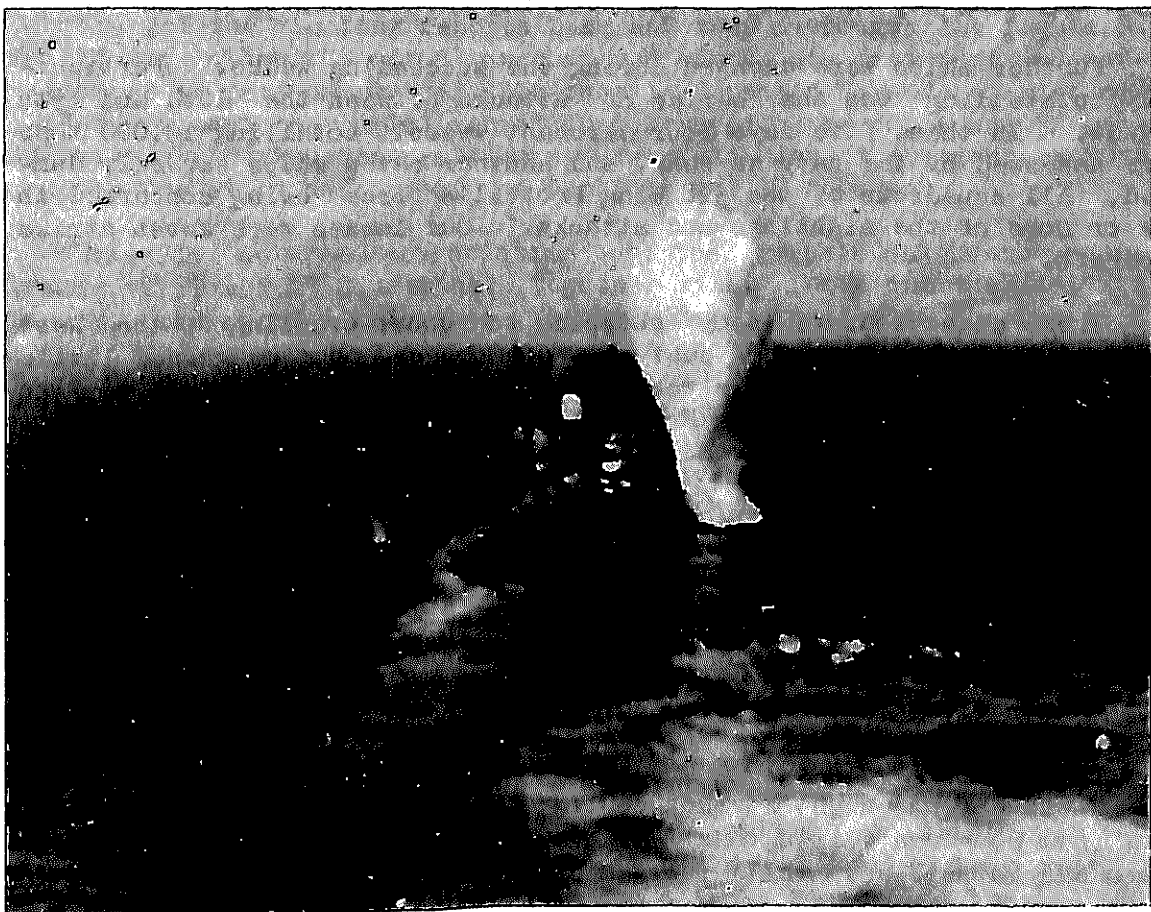
A fine example of the degree of co-operation achieved was evidenced on the 23rd April when a 14 Squadron Marauder on morning reconnaissance sighted a 6,000 ton merchant vessel heading southwest from Naples, escorted by air and surface craft.

It was shadowed throughout the day in spite of the enemy air escort and the final shadower saw it sunk by the B-17s at 1635 hours some 30 miles North of Palermo.

Unfortunately these Strategic Air Force B-17s were withdrawn very soon after. For nearly two months the complete lack of a ship striking force permitted the enemy to route his ships at will in the Tyrrhenian Sea, vulnerable only to Allied submarines and to long range attacks from Malta. The Marauder offensive reconnaissance, however, assisted by a flight of Coastal Beaufighters and for a short time a flight of Mustangs did considerable damage to enemy air transport flying between Corsica, Sardinia, South of France and Italy, often penetrating right into the "flak" defended harbours to kill their birds. Together with the information they obtained, their gunfire attacks on small craft, and the continual air raid warnings they must have caused, they undoubtedly remained a thorn in the enemy's side.

Throughout June air reconnaissance and photographs of ports showed a very considerable movement of shipping into Sardinian ports, as though the enemy anticipated an assault on his western flank. Having no striking force, N.A.C.A.F. could do little to impede this movement.

However by the third week in June forces had been made available to N.A.C.A.F. which made it possible to build up a trained and balanced day and night ship-striking force under 328 Wing at Protville near Bizerte. This Wing, together with the fighter and Air Sea Rescue organisation of Tunis was controlled by 242 Group with H.Q. at Bizerte under N.A.C.A.F. 328 Wing consisted of two day torpedo Beaufighter squadrons and one night torpedo-bomber Wellington squadron together with a flight of night reconnaissance Wellingtons and a squadron of day reconnaissance Baltimore in addition to the original Marauder squadron.





ENEMY SHIPPING DISRUPTED

This force obtained immediate and striking results, and brought out only too clearly the relative immunity which enemy shipping had been allowed to enjoy for so long.

On the night of the 18th June a 458 Squadron torpedo bomber Wellington made the first torpedo attack from Protville and left a tanker listing to port off the East coast of Corsica.

On the 21st and 23rd June the torpedo Beaufighter squadrons claimed their first kills, a 4,000 ton merchant vessel east of Corsica and a tanker North of Sicily to which they had been diverted in flight following a sighting report from the co-operating reconnaissance aircraft.

Further ships were damaged during the succeeding weeks. Particularly outstanding was the series of attacks between the 10th and 15th August. In these five days four merchant vessels totalling 13,000 tons were assessed by the navy as sunk, and another seven ships severely damaged, all squadrons of the 328 Wing Protville force being concerned in one or more of the sightings and attacks. Our losses were seven strike aircraft.

These attacks drove enemy shipping to coast-crawling up the West coast of Italy and down the east side of Corsica, but he gained little by this evasion and after a week of bad weather in the middle of the month 242 Group directed its Protville forces against the Naples, Leghorn and Eastern Sardinian coastal shipping to the further discomfort of the enemy.

The Beaufighter torpedo attacks were at first made by torpedo bombers only, but the enemy flak defences soon necessitated a mixed force of cannon and torpedo carrying Beaufighters.

Such a force had the additional advantage of being able to damage with cannon fire the targets which were too small to justify a torpedo attack.

These day and night strikes continued throughout August and September, 458 Squadron Wellingtons going out as far afield as the Gulf of Genoa and Marseilles, while the Beaufighters reached up past Elba to North Corsica and the approaches to Leghorn.

All enemy shipping hugged the coasts and the enemy resorted more and more to the use of 'F' lighters, speedboats, Siebel Ferries and similar craft which would be less vulnerable to torpedo attack.

In the middle of September innumerable small craft were used to augment the enemy's supply facilities to the Salerno battle area from Leghorn.

For this reason an American B-25 squadron of the 321 Bombardment Group armed with 75 mm. cannon joined the Protville forces and during the ensuing four weeks sank a number of large armed barges and lighters and inflicted severe damage on many more armed coastal vessels along the Italian coast and later around Elba during the evacuation from CORSICA at the end of September.

During the six months period this trained and balanced day and night reconnaissance and striking force sank 14 ships and inflicted severe damage on a further 76 vessels of all types and this was largely achieved after the 18th of June, a period of barely three and a half months.

ENEMY AIR OPPOSITION AND DESTRUCTION OF ENEMY TRANSPORT

The disruption of enemy shipping routes was not the only achievement of these forces.

In the comparatively narrow waters of the Tyrrhenian Sea no enemy convoy ever lacked for fighter cover.

Our Marauders and later the Baltimores as well, went out alone in the certain knowledge that fighters would be waiting for them wherever a ship was sighted.

They got the sighting reports back and they outfought the fighters. They did not allow the often encountered enemy air transport and reconnaissance to pass unmolested. In fact 14 Squadron Marauders which operated throughout the period scored 10 destroyed, 3 probable and 32 damaged while the 52 Squadron Baltimores from mid June to September 30th accounted for eight destroyed, one probable and 17 damaged.

Similarly no true appreciation of the Torpedo and Cannon Beau-fighters of 39 and 47 Squadrons, together with, for a short while, 144 Squadron, can avoid a reference to their determination in the face of waiting fighters and to their successes in the air.

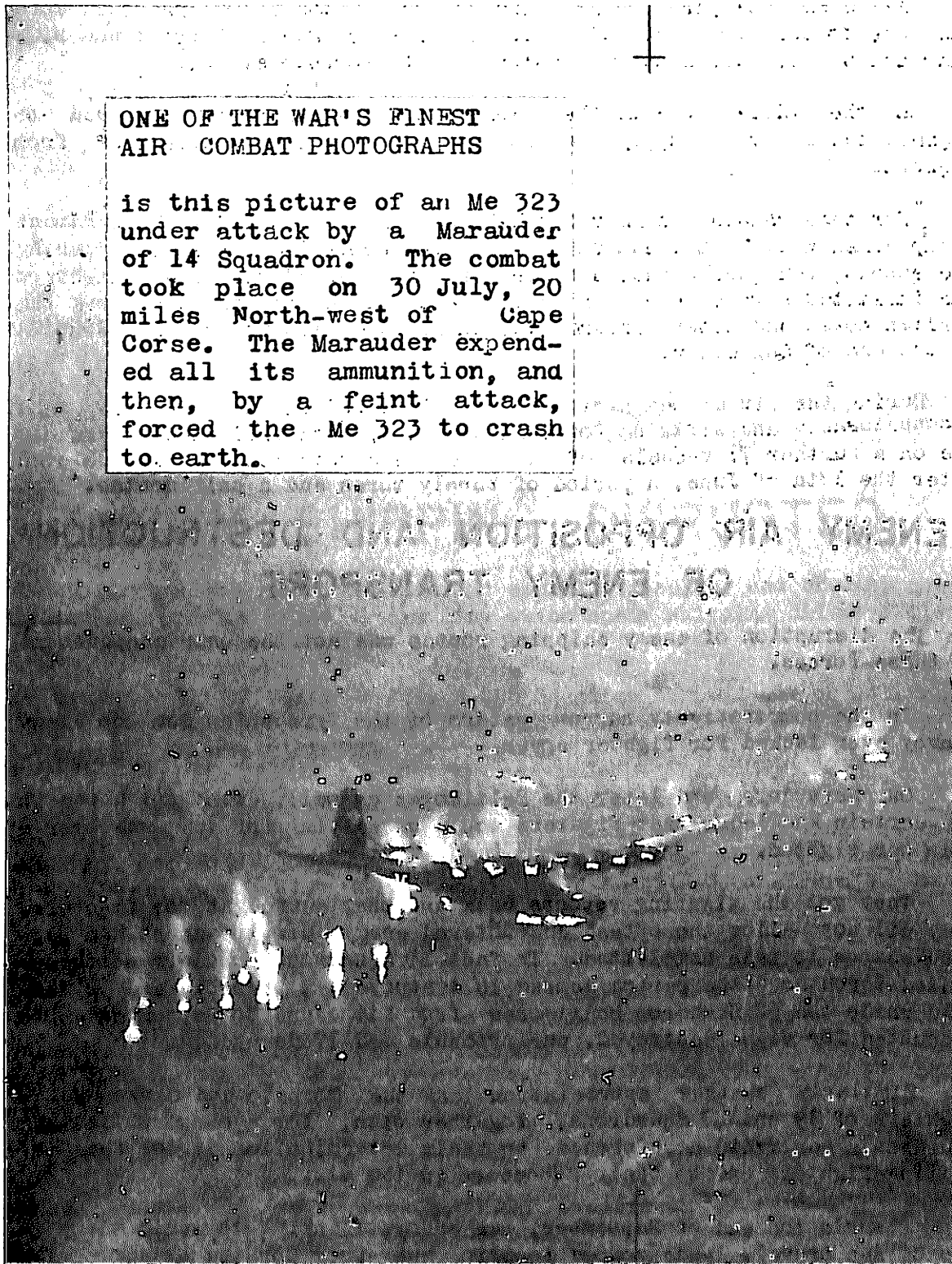
Towards the end of September, the enemy, thinking to avoid the perils of sea travel, endeavoured to slip away from Corsica by air. The torpedo Beaufighter squadrons showed themselves equally capable of dealing with air transport. The same forces which had made the sea a graveyard for Axis shipping joined with the two Coastal Beaufighter squadrons 272 and 603 and struck his air transports out of the sky.

Between Corsica and Leghorn on the 23rd and 24th of September 28 enemy air transports were claimed destroyed, three probably destroyed and nine damaged.

The enemy replied by concentrating the bulk of his scanty single engined fighter force at Bastia and Pisa. These were reported by our Marauders and Baltimores and by P.R.U. It availed him little for two N.A.C.A.F. French Spitfire squadrons had been moved quickly into Ajaccio, and on the 29th and 30th of September in attacks round ELBA the 1/3 and

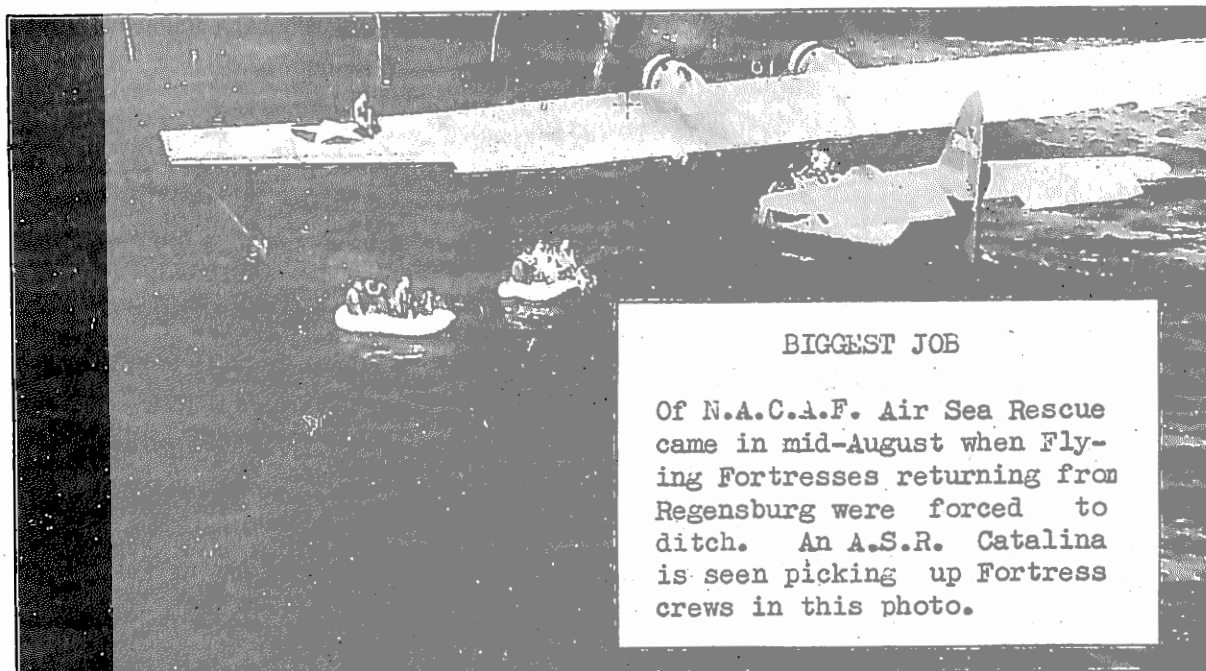
ONE OF THE WAR'S FINEST
AIR COMBAT PHOTOGRAPHS

is this picture of an Me 323 under attack by a Marauder of 14 Squadron. The combat took place on 30 July, 20 miles North-west of Cape Corse. The Marauder expended all its ammunition, and then, by a feint attack, forced the Me 323 to crash to earth.



2/7 French squadrons claimed eight air transports destroyed, two probables and one damaged in addition to breaking up a Dornier 217 glider bomb attack on their base on the 30th to the tune of three Do 217s and a Ju 88 which appeared to be co-operating with the bombing force.

The full effect of N.A.C.A.F. offensive against enemy sea and air communications and strength in the central Mediterranean cannot be measured alone in ships sunk or aircraft destroyed. The continual threat to the enemy undoubtedly caused an enormous diversion of his surface and air forces at a time when he needed every vessel that would steam or aircraft that could fly, while the continuous passage of our day and night reconnaissances right up to the shores of France provided a permanent headache for his radar, fighter and gun defences.



BIGGEST JOB

Of N.A.C.A.F. Air Sea Rescue came in mid-August when Flying Fortresses returning from Regensburg were forced to ditch. An A.S.R. Catalina is seen picking up Fortress crews in this photo.

AIR SEA RESCUE

In the period May 1 to September 30, N.A.C.A.F. conducted a total of 81 successful rescue operations resulting in the saving of 253 airmen, 206 of whom were Allied and 47 of whom were enemy airmen. The rescue of the enemy airmen was not only a humanitarian service, but proved highly valuable to the war effort, for it made available for interrogation, enemy pilots and crews who had participated in raids upon convoys and harbours, and who provided information of great value to the Allies both in their offensive and defensive operations.

Beginning July 1, an order was put into effect coordinating the air sea rescue facilities at the disposal of Malta, Middle East and NACAF commands and forming a uniform ASR service for the Central Mediterranean, each command having its own area of responsibility, and each establishing an Air-Sea Rescue Operations Room in communication with each other by W/T. The N.A.C.A.F. zone of responsibility was itself split into two halves by a line drawn North and South through Cape Serrat. The central Air Sea Rescue operations room at Bizerte was made responsible for all air sea rescue operations to the East of this line within the N.A.C.A.F. area of responsibility. To the West of Cape Serrat it was responsible for the proper allocation of search aircraft and launches, but did not participate in actual operations which were carried out solely under the appropriate N.A.C.A.F. Fighter Sector Operations Room.

Due to the great scarcity of heavy flying boats capable of long range patrol, and able to land on, and take off from, rough water, NACAF was provided with none of these, and was forced to do the best it could with what it had. The following craft were available to air sea rescue operations Bizerte: 10 Walrus, four Wellingtons, three Catalina aircraft and 28 launches. The Catalinas and Wellingtons had been provided for deep sea searches and for undertaking rescues in conditions for which the Walrus aircraft are not suited.

Like all N.A.C.A.F. functions, Air Sea Rescue was expanded to meet the requirements brought about by the constant advance of our forces, and units were set up and operated from Tunis and Sfax, Lampedusa and Pantelleria as these areas fell into Allied hands.

To provide the fullest possible range of ASR facilities in the Coastal Mediterranean prior to and during the invasion of Sicily, three

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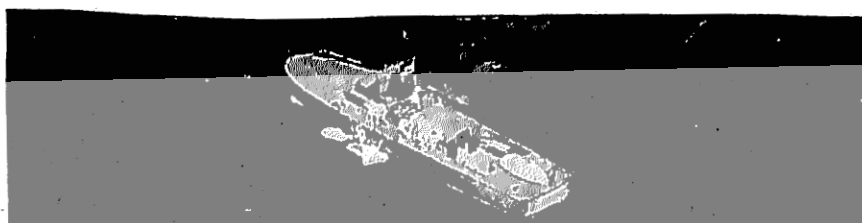
zones were set up in which N.A.C.A.F., Malta and the Middle East were respectively responsible. The adjoining commands made exact arrangements between them to deal with distress calls plotted in the vicinity of the demarcation lines between their areas of responsibility. Under N.A.C.A.F. the following ASR Air and Marine craft were available: six Walrus, three PBV, four Wellingtons, 21 HSL and six pinnaces. A total of 45 lives were saved from July 3 to July 18, the period immediately preceding and following the main invasion of Sicily which took place on July 10.

The real test, however, of N.A.C.A.F. Air Sea Rescue facilities came quite unexpectedly during the day of August 17 and immediately following. This was the day of the big Fortress raid on the Messerschmitt factory at Regensburg in South Germany, the aircraft landing in North Africa. Following this raid seven Fortresses were reported down in the sea North of Bone. An extensive search was carried out by night and day for three days, using Beaufighters, day fighters, reconnaissance and anti-submarine aircraft, Catalina and Walrus aircraft and high speed launches. The rescue operations involved 67 aircraft and several HSLs. Forty-two were rescued.

Special provisions were, of course, made for the invasion of Italy, and these involved increases in communications and rescue organisation under the control of 242 Group. This organisation also included navigational aids. H.M.S. Antwerp, equipped with VHF and VHF Homer to take bearings on distressed aircraft served as a depot ship, carrying P.O.L. for refuelling rescue launches and flying boats in an emergency, and a Medical officer and medical facilities were available on board. A shuttle service between ship and shore was arranged to return the rescued to Sicily.

The island of Ustica was equipped with C.O.L. and two controllers, and also a medical officer and supplies and P.O.L. for H.S.Ls. and Walrus. The island of Salina (Lipari Group) was similarly equipped with the exception of the A.I. Beacon and radio track guide. A VHF Fixer and Homer were made available at Termini, and night landing facilities and a flashing beacon were made available at Borizzo airfield. The control center for air sea rescue in the area was set up at Palermo and worked in cooperation with Air-Sea Rescue control at Bizerte, the two controls being coordinated by the A.O.C., 242 Group. Areas of responsibility were divided between Palermo and Bizerte control centers with N.A.T.A.F. responsible for the immediate landing areas on hostile shores. Twenty-seven men were rescued during the period September 4 to 12, the period of the opening of the invasion of Italy. In addition, in a large number of cases of ditching, aircrews were picked up by passing convoys and naval patrols.

Throughout the period covered by this report, through the weekly summary, through squadron and station intelligence officers and by every available means, instruction was given in ditching and methods of keeping alive until rescued. Due to this instruction many lives were saved as is demonstrated by the story of the A.S.V. operator of Wellington "O" of 458 Squadron which crashed on the night of 4/5 August. Though this man was in a dinghy for eight days, he still had left five tins of water out of an original twelve, and four tins of Horlicks tablets out of an original five, when he was rescued.



IN CONCLUSION

Of the duties and responsibilities of North African Coastal Air Force in the future, only one thing may safely be said. They will change as they have changed, from the very beginning.

Frequently, in the past, this and that interval in the history of the force has been described as a transitional phase. In fact, the organization has been in transition at all times, altering its composition, its equipment and its methods to meet the challenge of new areas to defend or attack, or of new enemy equipment or strategy.

Air warfare, under conditions of such fluidity, requires of all personnel an ability to adapt quickly to altered circumstances. It demands the highest degree of coordination. This is all the more necessary in a force composed as is N.A.C.A.F. of units of the Royal Air Force, the United States Army Air Force and the French Air Force.

The nature of this review has not permitted a full discussion of all aspects of the services and facilities involved in the diverse work of N.A.C.A.F. No attempt has been made to appraise the indispensable work of the barrage balloon units which have always hampered the enemy. How much they have hampered him has been made clear in the dread of barrages expressed by prisoners of war. No appraisal of the work of the ground personnel, apart from that of the force as a whole, has been undertaken, since this has been an effort to treat of the whole work of N.A.C.A.F. In this, all ranks and services share of both the burden and the credit.

In the coming six months it is likely that N.A.C.A.F., (in common with Allied forces everywhere), will have a role marked by more offensive action against the enemy than the very considerable offensive operations of the past. The trend has been under way here and elsewhere as the enemy has been more and more forced to the defensive. It will still be vital to maintain the defensive efforts, any relaxation of which would quickly be capitalized by the enemy. The forces of N.A.C.A.F. are already directed against the east coast of the Adriatic and the southern shores of France as well. New types of aggressive action will be added to those undertaken in the past against the enemy's undersea craft, his merchant shipping, his air transport and fighting forces and his coastal installations.

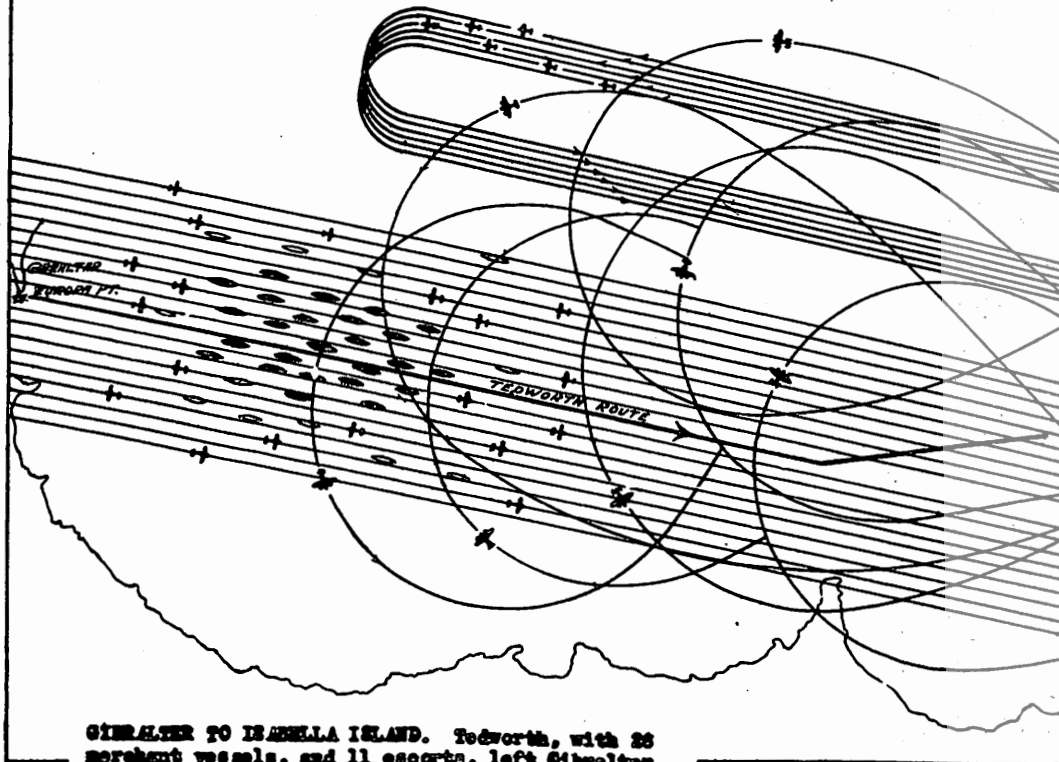
These operations will give to "coastal air force" an even broader connotation. The coastlines of concern to N.A.C.A.F. are not only friendly coastlines, but those of the enemy as well; and the "coastal" targets that are proper objects of N.A.C.A.F. attack are those on both the seaward and landward sides of the enemy coastlines.

BIOGRAPHY OF A CONVOY

This is the story of Fedworth, a convoy which passed through the Mediterranean, from Gibraltar to Tripoli, during the period of 22 June-27 June. During this interval, it traversed waters infested with the enemy's U Boats, and within range of the enemy's aircraft. It was given protection against both by the aircraft

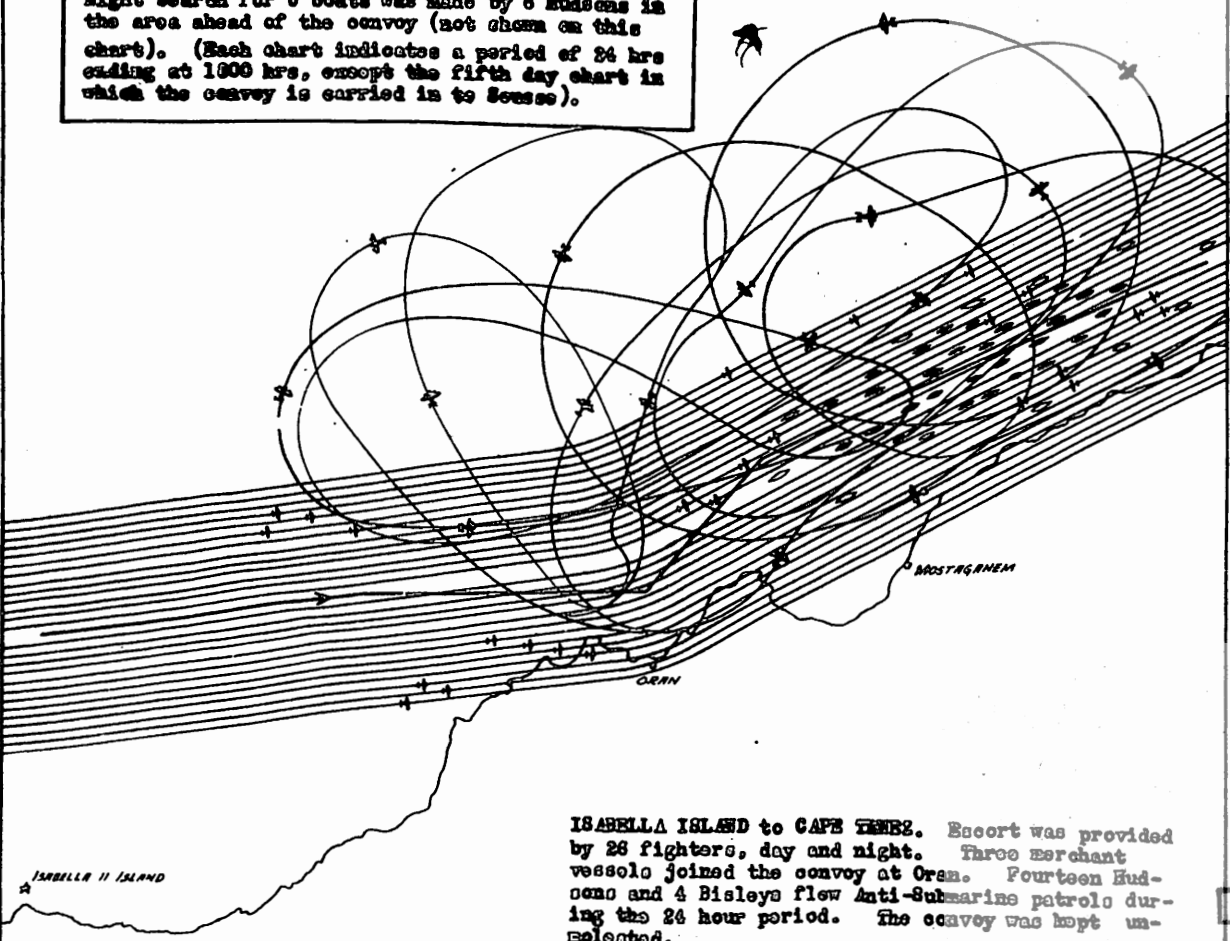
of the North African Coastal Air Force. It arrived at its destination without the loss of either merchant vessel or escort craft. These illustrations have been designed to show in a graphic way the extent of the task involved in escorting, not only this convoy, but in protecting any convoy.

FIRST DAY



GIBRALTAR TO ISABELLA ISLAND. Fedworth, with 26 merchant vessels, and 11 escorts, left Gibraltar at 220001 (B time) and reached a point off Isabella Island at 221800. While it passed thru this area it was escorted by 20 fighters. Four Bisleys made a daylight U Boat search off Melilla, and 4 Hudsons made a night search in the same area. Night search for U boats was made by 6 Hudsons in the area ahead of the convoy (not shown on this chart). (Each chart indicates a period of 24 hrs ending at 1800 hrs, except the fifth day chart in which the convoy is carried in to Sousse).

SECOND DAY



ISABELLA ISLAND TO CAPE TENEZ. Escort was provided by 26 fighters, day and night. Three merchant vessels joined the convoy at Oram. Fourteen Hudsons and 4 Bisleys flew Anti-Submarine patrols during the 24 hour period. The convoy was kept un-

Merchant vessels are indicated by the black ship symbols.

Escort vessels are indicated by the outline ship symbols.

Approximate course of the convoy is indicated by the heavy black line.

Escorting Aircraft are indicated by the thin, straight lines on either side of the route.

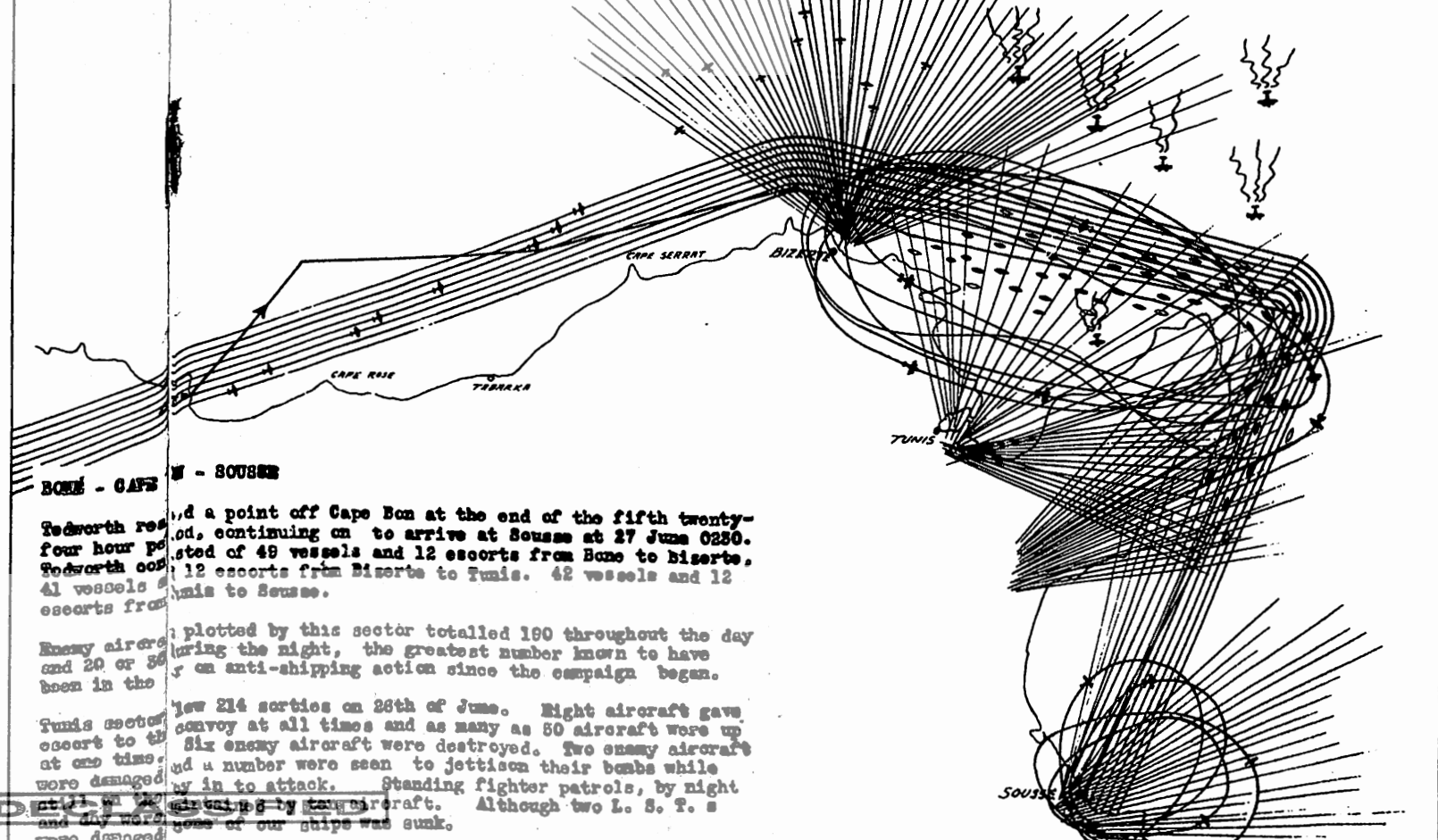
Fighter Patrols are shown in closely grouped straight lines (upper left diagram one).

Anti-Submarine patrols are shown by looping and circling lines.

Fighter Area Patrols and Scrambles are shown by straight lines that fan out from central points. (Fifth Day).

Enemy Aircraft shot down are indicated by AC symbols and wavy lines.

FIFTH DAY

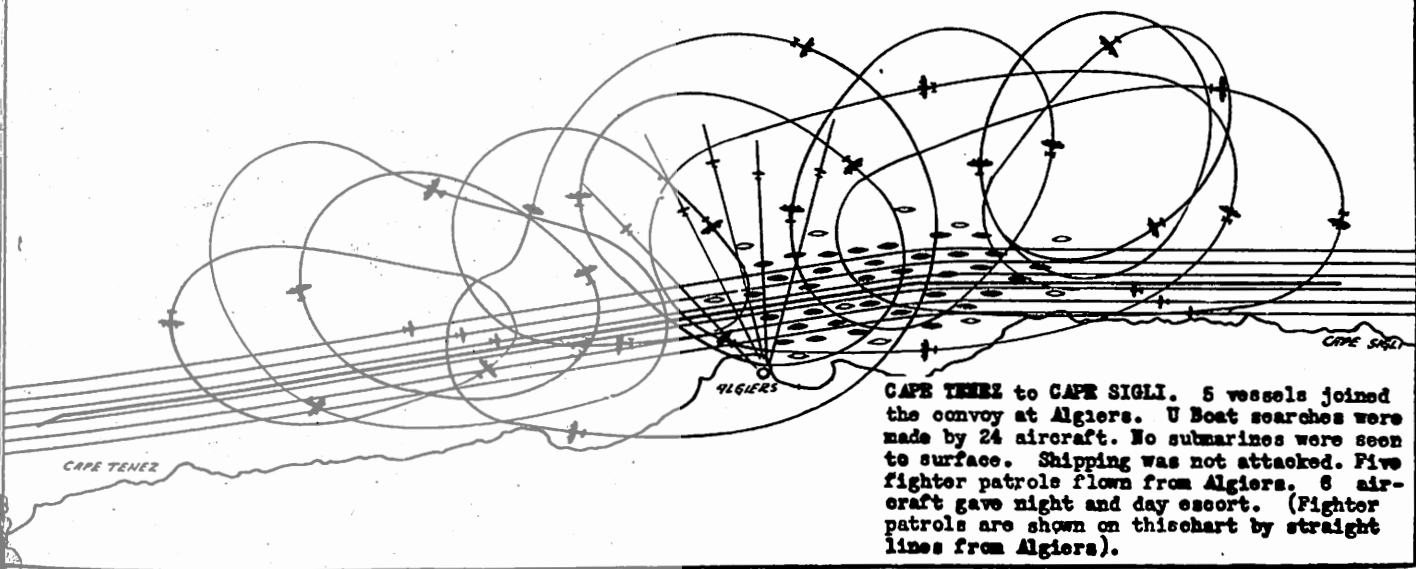


BOUE - CAPE BON - SOUSSE

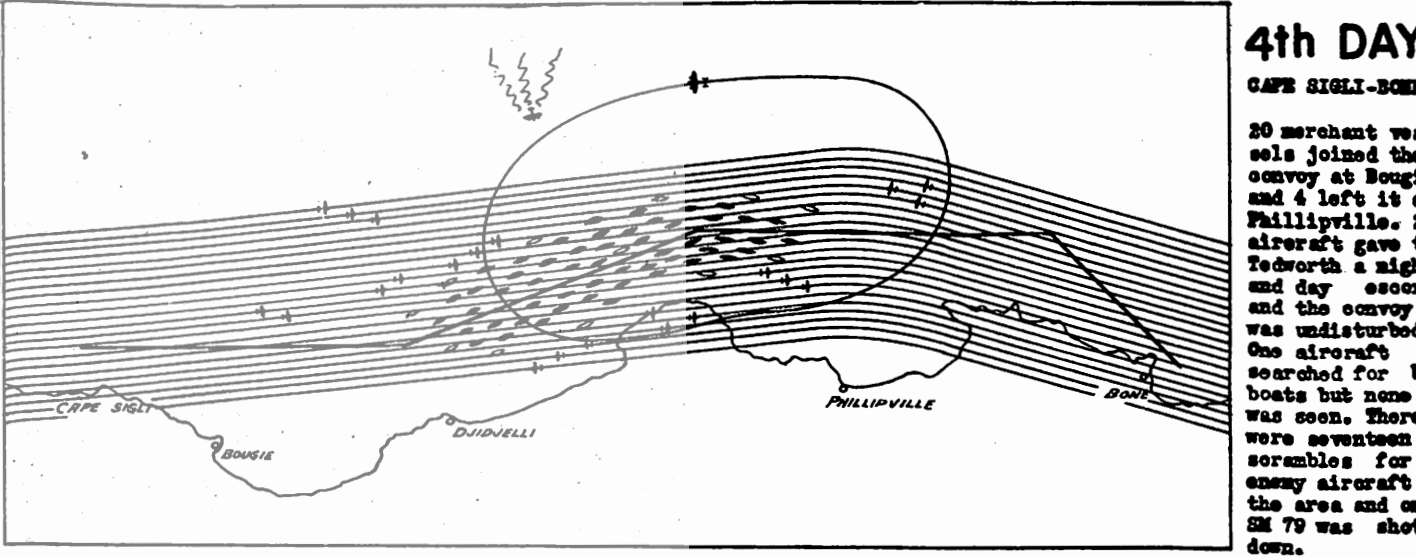
Fedworth reached a point off Cape Bon at the end of the fifth day, continuing on to arrive at Sousse at 27 June 0250. Fedworth consisted of 48 vessels and 12 escorts from Boue to Bizerte. 12 escorts from Bizerte to Tunis. 42 vessels and 12 escorts from Tunis to Sousse.

Enemy aircraft plotted by this sector totalled 190 throughout the day. During the night, the greatest number known to have been in the area on anti-shiping action since the campaign began.

Tunis sector plotted by this sector totalled 190 throughout the day. During the night, the greatest number known to have been in the area on anti-shiping action since the campaign began. Few 214 sorties on 26th of June. Eight aircraft gave escort to the convoy at all times and as many as 50 aircraft were up at one time. Six enemy aircraft were destroyed. Two enemy aircraft were damaged. A number were seen to jettison their bombs while in to attack. Standing fighter patrols, by night were maintained by standing fighter patrols. Although two L. S. F. were damaged and one was shot down.



CAPE TENEZ TO CAPE SIGLI. 5 vessels joined the convoy at Algiers. U Boat searches were made by 24 aircraft. No submarines were seen to surface. Shipping was not attacked. Five fighter patrols flown from Algiers. 8 aircraft gave night and day escort. (Fighter patrols are shown on this chart by straight lines from Algiers).



4th DAY

CAPE SIGLI-BOUE
20 merchant vessels joined the convoy at Bougie and 4 left it at Phillipville. 22 aircraft gave to Fedworth a night and day escort and the convoy was undisturbed. One aircraft searched for U boats but none was seen. There were seventeen scrambles for enemy aircraft in the area and one SM 79 was shot down.

DECLASSIFIED



MEDITERRANEAN AREA

SCALE: 1:6,000,000. OR 94.7 MILES TO 1 INCH.



DECLASSIFIED