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the Meuse and were fighting at the approaches to the Siegfried Line. Aircraft of XIX TAC frequently attacked targets over the German border. Except for some miscellaneous cleaning up and some extremely hard frontier fighting, the Battle of France was over and the Battle of Germany had begun.

In mid-August General Patton commended XIX TAC's cooperation with the Third Army, for which General Weyland was awarded the Bronze Star. The commendation read: *The superior efficiency and cooperation afforded this army by the forces under your command is the best example of the combined use of air and ground troops I have ever witnessed. Due to the tireless efforts of your flyers, large numbers of hostile vehicles and troop concentrations ahead of our advancing columns have been harassed or obliterated. The information passed directly to the head of the columns from the air has saved time and lives. I am voicing the opinion of all the officers and men in this army when I express to you our admiration and appreciation of your magnificent efforts.*

Highlights of Day by Day Air Operations: 1 August. On this first day of XIX TAC operations, unfavorable weather kept the fighters grounded until well into the afternoon. Armored-column cover was so arranged as to maintain eight fighter-bombers over each armored division, the eight-plane flights being relieved every hour. Planes and tanks worked closely together, talking to each other by VHF radio.

While General Patton had enjoined XIX TAC not to blow up bridges, it might have been expected that the enemy would do so in order to retard pursuit, but so headlong was the Germans' panicky withdrawal that they had no time to conduct any such demolition. Thus the leading American armor often outran its communications, and the Army's latest information on the location of its forward elements frequently came from reconnaissance or fighter-bomber pilots. To make the most of this source of information, XIX TAC pilots were instructed to include in their reports, whenever possible, the point at which the head of the column was last observed.

In 10 missions of 147 sorties, 22 tons of bombs were dropped. No enemy aircraft were encountered and no losses were sustained.

2 August. Another wing, the 100th, and two more groups, the 405th and 363rd, were placed under XIX TAC's operational control. They were most welcome additions, because the command was saddled with the twin commitment of covering armored fingers probing toward the Breton capital of Rennes and toward Brest, and of supplying protection to the Avranches bottleneck.

Although the 363rd Group was grounded by weather all day, the others could operate after about 1000, flying 23 combat missions consisting of 223 sorties and dropping 35.75 tons of bombs, representing a marked increase over the previous day's activity. There were no claims against enemy aircraft, but two planes were lost to flak.

3 August. Weather again was on the enemy's side. The air plan for the day provided cover for the XV Corps' 79th Infantry and 5th Armored Divisions, in addition to protection of bridges and roads in the Avranches Pontaubault locality and to continued cover for the three armored detachments pushing westward through Brittany. But bases were non operational most of the day, with low stratus, nimbostratus, and light showers. Only 6 missions, of 8 aircraft each, were able to take off, of which 4 were unsuccessful because of weather, all bombs being jettisoned or returned to base. The other 2 missions resulted in the destruction or damaging of 40 odd motor and horse drawn vehicles, including ammunition trucks, in the path of the 4th and 6th Armored Divisions. Total sorties were

48; tons of bombs dropped, 3.25. One aircraft was lost. Twenty-four tactical reconnaissance and two photographic reconnaissance sorties were flown.

This was the date on which, with continued Luftwaffe night attacks against Third Army troops, Ninth Air Force was requested by XIX TAC to supply night fighters.

4 August. Although only four groups were available and low ceilings over bases prevented operations until 1030, the scale of air activity rose sharply to 30 missions consisting of 424 sorties.

Activities of the day included cooperation with the 4th Armored Division, in which 15 enemy tanks were destroyed or damaged; attacks on the strong concrete pillbox defenses of St. Malo in the face of intense flak and fire from warships; and armed, tactical, and photographic reconnaissance flights along the flanks and routes of the advances and as far south as Angers and east as Laval. Some aircraft were damaged by flak, but no planes or pilots were lost and there were no claims against enemy aircraft. The four groups in action dropped 52.5 tons of bombs on the targets.

5 August. On this date the XIX TAC order of battle was raised to five groups when the 36th was placed under General Weyland's control. Only part of the day was flyable, since the wind blew low stratus clouds from the English Channel onto coastal airdromes at about 1100 and they were not clear until late afternoon. Nevertheless, 246 combat sorties and 10 successful tactical and photographic reconnaissance missions were flown. Forty-four tons of bombs were dropped, results including 58 motor vehicles, a headquarters, nine horse-drawn vehicles, and eight gun positions destroyed, plus damage to a naval vessel in St. Malo harbor.

In the first 5 days of blitz warfare, United States style, the Third Army had conquered most of Brittany, and XIX TAC fighter-bombers had flown 1,088 sorties. In the face of our patrols the Luftwaffe had put up no resistance by daylight. Losses totaled only three aircraft. Claims against ground targets for this period have been given earlier.

6 August. With the fall of Rennes and the acquisition of airfields around that city, XIX TAC fighters were not only much closer to the scene of operations but also in a locality more favored by weather than the rain pelted Normandy peninsula.

The picture had changed; the encirclement had begun. In view of this, the main weight of XIX TAC's air power was shifted to the eastern front and the Loire valley, with patrols over the danger area in the Avranches corridor.

Squadrons covering XV Corps' 78th and 90th Infantry and 5th Armored Divisions between Laval and Mayenne found the hunting good, especially in tanks. One P-47 was lost; while strafing tanks it "mushed in" and exploded.

The day's combat sorties totaled 293. There were no enemy aircraft claims, but 35.5 tons of bombs were dropped on varied targets. In addition, 26 successful tactical and photographic reconnaissance missions were flown, and B-26's of IX Bombardment Division attacked the defenses of St. Malo in response to the XIX TAC request of 4 August. "A successful day," pronounced Third Army's G-3 (Air) Section, "With attacks on all types of targets, from boats to field guns, movement east, south, and west by ground troops was greatly facilitated."

7 August. To meet its increased responsibilities, strength of XIX TAC was again augmented, with nine full groups of fighter-bombers now under its operational control. These were the 36th, 358th, 362nd 371st 405th, and 406th all equipped with P-47s and the 354th and 363rd Groups, flying P-51's. Seven of these