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for the interdiction of rail traffic.

With Italy's surrender, Italian pilots had flown about 225 of their planes to Sicily; they had immediately started training to fly with NAAF but had been held out of combat pending an Italian declaration of war on Germany which came on 13 October and a favorable decision by AFHQ on their employment. Early in October, AFHQ decided to use five squadrons of fighters, one each of bombers and torpedo bombers, two of seaplanes, and half a squadron of reconnaissance aircraft, mainly in support of the Italian armed forces and the Balkan patriots, as couriers and for air-sea rescue. The IAF planes would be serviced by IAF specialists, many of whom were from the old Regia Aeronautica. The technicians proved especially valuable to the Allied air forces, with which the IAF continued to operate until the end of the war.

Accordingly, to reduce drastically the flow of reinforcements and supplies it would be necessary for NAAF to cut a large number of rail lines and cut them quickly and as nearly simultaneously as possible hence the decision to concentrate on knocking out bridges and sections of track so located that repairs would be difficult and time consuming. Heretofore, it should be noted, the critical communications targets had been located in southern Italy, where to keep out of operation a relatively few marshaling yards had presented no such problem as did the numerous yards of central and northern Italy. Conversely, the railroads above a line from Rome to Pescara as they filed through mountain passes or along a narrow strip of coast offered many vulnerable targets—bridges, tunnels, and trackage along the precipitous incline of a hill or mountain.

Fortunately, the targets were within reach. NAAF's heavies still were in Tunisia but within comfortable range. The three groups of B-26's (17th, 319th, 320th) operated from bases near Tunisia but were preparing to move to Sardinia. The B-25's were scattered: the 310th Group and part of the 321st were in North Africa, the remainder of the 321st en route to Grottaglie on the Heel; from Sicily the 340th already was en route to Grottaglie and the 12th would move to Foggia Main during the first week of November. The 47th Group's A-20's had been at Grottaglie since the end of September and currently were moving to the Foggia complex. The American units could also count on the assistance of the four wings of RAF Wellingtons, now based at Kairouan in Tunisia.

Ample escort fighters were available. 12th Bomber Command's three groups of P-38's (1st, 14th, and 82nd) and one of P-40's (325th) were on the mainland. Four of XII Air Support Command's five groups of fighters, the 31st (Spits) and 33rd (P-40's) in western Italy and the 57th and 78th (P-40's) in the east, had been on the mainland since early in September, while the other—324th (P-40's)—was to move in before the end of October. Also available were the RAF Spitfires and P-40's of Desert Air Force in eastern Italy. The fighters of 12th ASC and DAF on the east coast could fly escort beyond their sector when necessary, all of them being within range of the bombers' objectives. The construction of new airfields was proceeding slowly, but the fields in the Naples and Foggia complexes and around Lecce and Grottaglie, although crowded, provided accommodations for all planes which currently could not operate except from bases on the mainland. NAAF's decision to concentrate on bridges was in line with current thinking in Washington. General Marshall cabled Eisenhower on 29 October suggesting that an increase of operations by medium, light, and fighter-bombers would take care

of the needs of the Fifth and Eighth Armies, leaving the heavies free to attack the nine rail lines entering the Po Valley; specifically, he suggested that the simultaneous destruction of several adjacent bridges on each line would stop traffic for a long time. Brig. Gen. L. S. Kuter, AC/AS, Plans, had suggested in a memorandum for Marshall prepared on 27 October that the destruction of eleven bridges on nine major rail lines in northern Italy and five bridges on a line approximately between Pisa-Ancona might "starve" the Germans into withdrawing into the Po Valley.

When Marshall's message arrived in the theater, NAAF's program of bridge-smashing already had been in operation for ten days. Strategic started the assault on the 19th, and for five days bridges on the central Italian rail system took a hard beating. The heavies and mediums which staged the blitz flew around 650 sorties and dropped 1,350 tons of bombs. Damage was widespread, almost all rail traffic north of the Rome area being interdicted pending extensive repairs. The enemy was forced to resort to an increased use of motor transport; and coastal shipping—which in turn were attacked by light and fighter-bombers.

Effective maintenance of the road blocks which had been imposed depended, however, upon continuing steadily and relentlessly the assault on the lines. After the 23rd this became increasingly difficult. The weather was variable but generally so bad that it became the practice to give the heavy bombers as many as four alternative targets. It grounded all of Strategic's bombers on the 27th and 28th, limited them to one mission on the 26th and again on the 28th, and on other days forced a number of planes to return without having bombed the primary target. On the four days of favorable weather which fell before the end of the month, Strategic continued to attack its targets of the preceding week. Six missions scored hits on three out of five bridges attacked between Grosseto and Ancona. Against a new set of targets farther north—between Pistoia and the French border—234 effective sorties unloaded 575 tons against Pistoia and towns along the Ligurian coast: Genoa, Imperia, Porto Maurizio, and Varage. The attack on Genoa was unusually heavy, 133 B-17's and 20 B-24's dropping 405 tons which severely damaged tracks, rolling stock, the Ansaldo steel works, the San Giorgio instrument factory, and electric and ordnance plants. Thus the interdiction program was extended to include the most direct line from Rome to northwest Italy and southern France. A third set of targets consisted of Civitavecchia and Anzio. The former took seven direct hits on rail lines and warehouses; the latter had all of the buildings on its north dock destroyed. An incidental advantage resulting from the bombings around Genoa and Imperia was the creation in the minds of the Germans of a fear that the Allies would launch an amphibious operation against the area between La Spezia and Imperia, a fear which would be present until the last days of the Italian campaign.

It also proved possible for Strategic to undertake damaging attacks on German fighter bases in the neighborhood of Rome. Marcigliana and Casale each were attacked twice and Cerveteri, Furbara, Perugia, and Guidonia once each. B-17's, B-25's, and Wellingtons flew more than 250 sorties, dropping 400 tons of bombs. Some forty aircraft were destroyed on the ground, the fields were well postholed, and a number of installations were smashed or burned. Supplementary raids were conducted by U.S. A-20's and A-36's of NATAF, which attacked Tarquinia airdrome, airfields at Cassino and Aquila, and other fields or grounds near Civita Castellana, Cerveteri, Viterbo, Acquapendente, Tarquinia, and