

fields must be built, runways extended, and additional steel mat shipped in.

By October plans were reaching their final form. On 9 October, Arnold submitted to the JCS, and subsequently to the CCS, a plan for splitting the Twelfth Air Force into two air forces, one tactical and, one strategic. In support of the plan, he argued that by utilizing Italian air bases important targets beyond the range of bombers from the United Kingdom could be destroyed, enemy air and ground defenses dispersed, shuttle bombing made possible, and the offensive need not be held up by adverse weather in one theater. He recommended that the Twelfth become the tactical force and that a new strategic air force be established as the Fifteenth Air Force. Both forces would operate under the direction of the theater commander, but the Fifteenth from time to time would be given directives by the CCS governing its employment.

The six groups of heavy bombers presently assigned to the Twelfth would serve as a nucleus for the Fifteenth, and fifteen additional groups would be diverted from current allocations to the Eighth. Strenuous objections to the proposal came from General Eaker in England. Alarmed at the prospect of losing bombers previously earmarked for the Eighth Air Force, he argued that the proposal, in violating the principle of concentration of force, would jeopardize POINTBLANK and so OVERLORD itself. He doubted that the necessary fields could be provided in Italy and that the problem of providing facilities for heavy maintenance could be overcome. He questioned too that the weather of Italy would prove generally more favorable for bombing operations. General Doolittle, on the other hand, endorsed the proposal. Doolittle maintained that for purposes of high-level bombardment of targets in southern and eastern Germany and the Balkans during the winter months the prospect favored Foggia as a base "from two to one to three to one" over bases in the British Isles. He felt that there would be little advantage in one area over the other during the summer, but he estimated that from 1 November to 1 May the number of days on which bombers might be expected to operate was fifty-five for those in Italy against thirty-one for those based in the United Kingdom. The general supported his argument by noting that winter storm tracks were more frequent and more severe in England than in eastern Italy; that Foggia was better protected from the weather than were the East Anglian bases; that icing below 10,000 feet was worse over western Europe because planes had to pass through cold fronts, whereas from Foggia they generally could fly between fronts; and that in the Balkans some of the best weather was experienced during the winter months.

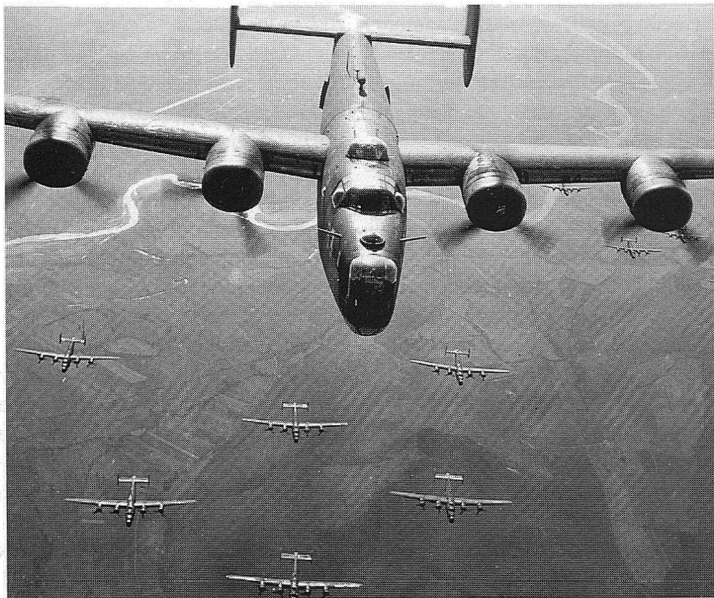
The Fifteenth Air Force, was to be created from the 12th

Bomber Command, and when necessary could be used in support of ground operations, but its primary mission would be strategic bombing. On 22 October the question came before the Combined Chiefs of Staff, who exercised an ultimate control over the CBO.

Agreement there was reached on the establishment of the

force with its proposed build-up, but with a proviso that if "logistical potentialities in Italy developed more slowly than was anticipated, the bomber groups for which there were no accommodations would be sent to the United Kingdom.

On that same day, 22 October, a cable to Eisenhower informed him that effective 1 November the Fifteenth Air Force (Strategic) would be established under his command. The provisions contained in the SOS proposed directive of 16 October were made more specific: the new air force would consist initially of six heavy bomber groups and two long range fighter



groups presently assigned to 12th Bomber Command; by 31 March 1944 it would be built up to twenty-one bomber groups, seven fighter groups, and one reconnaissance group. These forces would be employed primarily against CBO targets as directed by the CCS, but the original units might be used, even chiefly, against objectives other than those called for by POINTBLANK until such time as air bases above Rome had been secured. In the event of a strategic or tactical emergency the theater commander in chief was authorized to use any part of the Fifteenth Air Force for purposes other than the primary objective. Coordination of operations with the Eighth, for the time being at least, would depend upon liaison.

The decision did not pass without further objections from the ETO. Portal, who earlier had favored the plan, expressed strong opposition, as did Eaker and Harris. They were afraid that the build-up of the Fifteenth would cripple the CBO and jeopardize OVERLORD, and they did not believe that Italy either offered a better base for operations than did the United Kingdom or would be able to handle fifteen additional groups of heavies. But, again, there was renewed approval from the Mediterranean, Spaatz and Doolittle—like Arnold—believing that the Combined Bomber Offensive should be conducted from both theaters, and at this point the British chiefs, apparently convinced that the Fifteenth would be established "whether or no," announced that they "welcomed" the idea. The Prime Minister also approved, provided the build-up of the new air force did not interfere with the battle for Rome and the airfields of central Italy. Arnold in a reply indicated that he had refused to reopen the question of basing the additional groups of heavies in the Mediterranean.

On 1 November, Eisenhower announced the activation of the 15th Air Force force with Doolittle in command.