
Creation of the Fifteenth Air Force



Abbreviations used in this report

AC/AS=Assistant Chief Of Air staff
AFHQ= Allied Force Headquarters
ASC= Air Support Command
AVALANCHE= Amphibious assault on Salerno,
September 1943
CBO=Combined Bomber Offensive
CCS= Combined Chiefs of Staff
DAF= Desert Air Force
GAF=German Air Force,IE Luftwaffe
JCS= Joint Chiefs of Staff
NAAF= Northwest Africa Air Force, 12th Air Force based
in Tunisia
NATAF= Northwest Africa Tactical Air Force, Support of
ground troops
NASAF= Northwest Africa Strategic Air Force, Bombers
attacking ground targets.
OVERLORD= Invasion of Western Europe in June 1944
POINTBLANK= Combined Bomber Offensive
QUADRANT= Quebec Conference of August 1943
Rhubarbs= A small scale harassing mission by fighter-
bombers against targets of opportunity
SOS=Service of Supply
* AA=Flak

The surrender of Italy and the conquest of the southern part of the Italian peninsula brought to the Allies a number of actual and potential-benefits. The first wedge had been driven into Hitler's Festung Europa, a heavy blow had been struck at German prestige. The elimination of thirty Italian divisions in the Balkans cut heavily into German reserves by forcing the Wehrmacht to police that area.

With the Italian fleet out of the war and the Mediterranean virtually an Anglo-American lake, the Allies could release heavy naval units for service elsewhere. The prospects for a successful cross Channel invasion were enhanced: men, materiel, ships, and planes could be spared for use out of the United Kingdom, and a pincer movement against the German armies in France could be planned. In the face of these threats the Germans would have to disperse further their air and ground forces.

For the air forces there were various advantages. From airfields near the Adriatic coast, heavy bombers could hit important targets in the Balkans, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and southern and eastern Germany. Ploesti's oil, the Danube supply route, and Wiener Neustadt's industries were within range. Allied air power from Italy could cooperate with the armies of the U.S.S.R. as they moved into Rumania and Bulgaria. Air bases on Sardinia and Corsica would allow NAAF to attack every part of northern Italy and to threaten, with fighter escorted mediums, the German-held littoral from Rome to Perpignan in France, and would assure air cover for any future amphibious operations between Rome and Marseille. NAAF's planes, flying from mainland and island airfields, could strongly aid the Allied ground armies as they continued their drive up the peninsula from the Volturno-Trigno line. It was the task of the air forces now to exploit those advantages

During the month which followed the occupation of Naples on 1 October, NAAF's operations were on a smaller scale than they had been in September. For one thing, the weather was bad. The inclement days in October actually proved to be hardly more than a mild introduction to the miserable winter which lay ahead, but there were enough bad days to interfere seriously with planned operations, both ground and air.

There were other interferences. During September, NAAF's aircrews and planes had operated under a scale of effort so intense that now the demands of weary men and aircraft for a reduction in effort could not be ignored; too, there were fewer crews