

## Part 4: FEBRUARY 1944: ETO – European Theater abcd

### A. CHAPTER I & 2 Supreme Command, Pogue; The Supreme Commander and Coalition Command xyza Feb 1944 xyza

Christmas eve, 1943, was the fourth year of WWII. Their positions had improved with victories in the Mediterranean, Eastern Front, and Pacific, but Allied Powers at last agreed upon the strategy to break Hitler. Radio audiences heard the President announce Gen Dwight Eisenhower as Supreme Commander of Allied Expeditionary Force to march against Germany. His appointment was an important milestone as the last phase of the war seemed nearer than it had before.

**1. The Selection of the Supreme Commander.** Nearly a year after Casablanca decided upon one Supreme Commander, he was announced. In the interim his Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (COSSAC), Gen Morgan, formed the future Supreme Headquarters whose **23** commander belonged to the nation furnishing the greater forces, which then was Great Britain. Morgan created a “British” staff, but after April 1943 all knew an American would command. At Quebec, Roosevelt and Churchill agreed upon Gen Marshall, **24** but FDR dithered -- he needed Marshall in Washington. It was a case of “being too good” for “your own good”! Rumor leaks found both support and fault. Some saw it as a plot to boot Marshall out of the new Pentagon by Stimson. Other Joint Chiefs had concerns over losing Marshall given his ability to speak for U.S. interests. **25-26** The venerated Gen Pershing said it would be a “very grave error in our military policy.” FDR wanted Marshall to remain, but felt the Chief deserved the right to lead the Army he created. Others felt it a “demotion”.

U.S. planners wanted both the operational command of OVERLORD and certainty that U.S. arguments were forcibly presented in the CCS. The British preserved their national identity by rejecting U.S. proposals for one U.S. commander for European and Mediterranean Theaters. **27** Americans assumed Marshall would command and he indicated that he anticipated the job. Morgan arrived in the U.S. to press for naming of the commander, but FDR floundered in deciding on Marshall’s replacement – which stalled the announcement as leaders left for conferences at Cairo and Tehran. **28** For instance, Adm King told Eisenhower in front of Marshall that the latter would be the “supreme commander”. U.S. Chiefs voted to request British consent to Marshall’s appointment, which embarrassed Marshall. The British objected to one Supreme Commander over all joint theaters, an argument through which Marshall sat with embarrassment. **29** The nexus was the U.S. commander would remain in Washington with the dominant voice on strategy – a remote command of sorts. Obviously, this was a “cake and eat it too” idea that left Marshall in Washington in charge of Eisenhower in Europe. It meant a “theater commander” not in the “theater” with Marshall as top commander answerable to himself on the CCS!

Gen Morgan



They left for Tehran with the issue “open”. At Tehran Stalin pressed. **30** FDR replied he would decide in three days. “Marshal Stalin's pressure ... may have hastened by a few days the announcement ... but ... (it was already) essential by the fact that the Allies were scheduled to launch the cross-Channel operation in May 1944, less than six months from the time of the conference.” Historian Pogue opines:

Mr. Roosevelt well realized, that (Marshall) would not be available to press the U.S. case in sessions of the Combined Chiefs of Staff ... (not to) handle the ticklish problems of relations with the Pacific theater and with members of Congress. These ... could be better handled by the Chief of Staff than by General Eisenhower ... (but) Eisenhower could handle the European command successfully ... (He had) a firm grasp of the military situation and ... (Eisenhower) was completely acceptable to the British for the post.

Obviously from guilt, FDR **31** sent Mr. Hopkins to ask Marshall to state his wishes, but Marshall declined.

“On Sunday, 5 December, Mr. Roosevelt ... remarked that he believed he could not sleep at night with the Chief of Staff out of the country. The President then decided to name General Eisenhower Supreme Commander.” The British took command of the MTO under Gen Sir Henry Maitland Wilson. A 7 December radiogram from Marshall stated: “In view of the impending appointment of a British officer as your successor ... in the Mediterranean, please submit to me ... the best arrangement for ... (Mediterranean) troops assigned to Allied Force under this new command.” Then Eisenhower met FDR in Tunis to learn he was the new Supreme Commander. **32** On 24 December Churchill announced Gen. Montgomery would command 21 Army Group as Eisenhower left to meet with the U.S. Joint Chiefs.

**2. The New Commander and Heads of Government.** Eisenhower graduated from West Point and checked off the Army Tank School, the Command and Staff School, Army War College, and Army Industrial College. Three assignments stood out: 1) in Europe on the *American (WWI) Battlefield* effort, 2) two years as Gen. MacArthur’s Chief of Staff, and 3) four years (1935-39) as his senior military advisor in the Philippines. In 1939 he zoomed through executive officer 15<sup>th</sup> IR, chief of staff 3<sup>rd</sup> ID, and chief of staff IX Corps. He was chief of staff to Gen Krueger's Third Army in the Louisiana maneuvers.

His Philippines experience put him in War Plans Division as lead Army Asian planner. Upon his generalship, he became Chief of OPD as Marshall’s principal advisor. His meteoric rise was capped **33** In July 1942 when this unknown officer became the U.S. Commander for the ETO. The question was: “Eisen ... whoer?” Thus, a Pacific expert became a European general. He succeeded because he melded two rare traits: a command presence and diplomacy. Patton had the former; but not the latter. MacArthur had to learn the latter. German intelligence files declared:

Eisenhower is an expert on armored formations ... his great energy, and his hatred of routine office work ... (leaves) initiative ... subordinates whom he ... inspires(s) to supreme efforts .... His strongest point is ... an ability for adjusting personalities to one another and smoothing over opposite viewpoints. Eisenhower enjoys the greatest popularity with Roosevelt and Churchill.

This was 100% accurate; he motivated people with different nationalities and views to work together. U.S. Mediterranean officers joked: “Ike is the best commander the British have”. The impossible Charles de Gaulle **34** said he could do business with Eisenhower. Anger brought blistering reprimands, but he was slow to anger. He revealed a thin skin over press criticisms and politics. He did not always received

CCS or JCS orders with calm, but he never “embarrassed his boss”, Gen Marshall, which was the cardinal rule of command. His year in the Mediterranean proved a “knack for making a coalition work.” 35

Pogue explains most CCS work occurred in Washington D.C. under the British Mission of Sir John Dill acting for the British Chiefs on a daily. CCS cooperation was greater and more intimate than most histories suggest. Large conferences managed unsettled matters U.S. and the British Chiefs’ counterparts in Washington, D.C. Hence, the impact of Sir John Dill was unique, but unrecorded relation with Marshall makes much greater sense. 36

Eisenhower was frustrated with Churchill’s constant meddling. Battle commanders filed reports with their Minister of Defence; completely foreign to U.S. Officers and War Secretary Stimson. One can hardly imagine FDR chiding Adm King because his battleships were in the wrong location --- not so for Churchill. Eisenhower complained of: "the traditional and persistent intrusion of the British Chiefs of Staff into details of our operation--frequently delving into matters which the Americans leave to their Field Commanders." It was "the inevitable trend of the British mind towards 'committee' rather than 'single command.'" U.S. Chiefs’ efforts to curtail this gained a protest from Churchill who demanded reports from Eisenhower. Although perturbed, Eisenhower complied.

**3. Combined Chiefs of Staff and Unity of Command.** Again, the CCS was far more active than joint meetings every four months. 37-38

Normally the decisions of the Combined Chiefs of Staff were made in Washington in periodic meetings ... The British Chiefs of Staff in London generally made their views known in cables to Field Marshal Dill ... (who generally negotiated) directly with General Marshall before the British views were taken up formally in the meetings. **Because of the close relationship ... between the two men ... Dill ... (ironed) out differences of opinion before the Combined Chiefs of Staff considered them formally ... Dill was responsible in part for Marshall's desire to centralize Combined Chiefs of Staff activities in Washington.** The British (found it) much easier to settle matters with ... (Eisenhower) 39

This explains why coordination was uncontroversial but highlights the contentious of the battles that did rage between the British and U.S. chiefs when they unsuccessfully “mediated the dispute” before taking it to the level of the President and Prime Minister! Orders from the Combined Chiefs were directed to the Theater through the commander’s national Chief. Thus, Marshall gave Eisenhower his orders ensuring both understood the intent. Conversely, short-cuts evolved where British chiefs sent proposals directly to Eisenhower for his support or criticism. At least, this reduced disputes between the various chiefs. This meant the Washington staff knew his position before Gen Dill presented it. 40 This also explains the close personal relationship between Marshall and Eisenhower. The Marshall audio tapes reveal the mutual respect between the two generals. 41 On unity of command:

Eisenhower ... (was intent on) escaping the practice ... (where) "unity of command" had been a "pious aspiration thinly disguising the national jealousies, ambitions and recriminations of high-ranking officers, unwilling to subordinate themselves ... to a commander of different nationality

or different service" (by seeking) an integrated command in which British and American officers were intermingled in each section ... (Even so, Ike still) had to struggle against the influence of differing national points of view and a tradition of far looser alliances. **42**

**4. Control by the Supreme Commander.** The two sets of chiefs struggled over command, starting with Supreme Commander, Eisenhower. The British saw a chair of the board – detached watching stock values. The RAF wanted a political Supreme Commander detached from “operational” items. Morgan pressed for a ground and a tactical air commander. The invasion was under British command until the Brest peninsula was captured, or a U.S. army group formed. Gen Devers wanted U.S. and British land, air and sea zones under a Supreme Commander. COSSAC argued Supreme Headquarters was strategic, not **43** a tactical, command. The British divided command in many distinct levels: 1) by the three arms; 2) tactical vs strategic; and 3) independent, common, or joint. Morgan attempted to put each into a “bucket”. So COSSAC assumed the three arms were independent needing coordination. COSSAC limited its efforts to tactical, not strategic, operations. Thus, strategic air and navy commands were under the Supreme Commander as COSSAC lacked a “super supreme commander.” Per British concepts, a “supreme” commander only controlled forces other commanders permitted. If the invasion of Europe was to be the “supreme” effort, all else was secondary. If Eisenhower was to command the “supreme effort” then he had a right to choose, organize and dispose of his forces.

The political and military leaders believed everyone had to go all out for the supreme effort, except for them there were “exceptions.” One suspects Gen Morgan saw this reality when he visited the U.S. Pogue recites the “orthodox issues”. First, a “supreme commander” could not exist until the command was large enough for a “supreme” commander. By analogy, an entrepreneur could not be the “president” of a company until it was large enough for its stock to be publicly traded! Second, a “supreme” commander could fully “interfere” with the ground, land, and naval operations. This placed “form over substance”. The Supreme Commander could not “direct the battle in the early phases and still be in touch with the Allied governments.” The U.S. Chiefs rejected this as unsound. Gen Morgan realized a Supreme Commander had to be involved throughout; not just when the effort became too large for separate commanders to handle. The supreme effort needed one final commander. So ran the thought that the supreme commander did not command from the start!

The issue next moved to air forces and including “strategic” air forces under the Supreme Commander. **44** Marshall stated a “committee could not fight the war” and wanted both strategic and tactical air forces under the Supreme Commander. The British Chiefs of Staff agreed after the invasion, but before then the RAF Bomber Command was “off limits”.

Gen Morgan “solved” the ground command issue in November by issuing, in the name of the unnamed, future Supreme Commander, he unilaterally issued orders to the 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group for an assault by two corps under the Commanding General, First U.S. Army, who would oversee land operations” until “a second army headquarters should be brought in.” When this later became two armies, not two corps, the 21<sup>st</sup> Commander automatically became the *de facto* commander of the ground forces, but without the tittle. This remained for the Supreme Commander to decide.

**5. The Organization of the Subordinate Commands.** In the interim, **45** subordinate commands were organized. The Royal Navy provided most naval forces, so Adm Little, C-in-C, Portsmouth planned the naval cross-Channel attack. U.S. Navy’s Adm Stark led the U.S. Naval Planning Branch of COSSAC and

provided logistics. On 25 October 1943, Churchill promoted Adm Ramsay, of Dunkerque fame and a Mediterranean commander, the **46** Allied Naval Commander for OVERLORD. U.S. Rear Adm. Kirk became the U.S. naval forces cross-Channel attack commander. On 1 April 1944, Adm Ramsey gained control of U.S. naval forces. **47** The navies had created a new force for assault ships and craft, which required forming hundreds of new crews for entirely new landing force.

Allied tactical (not strategic) air plans for OVERLORD began in the spring of 1943. Air Marshal Leigh-Mallory, RAF Fighter Command, led the tactical Allied Air Forces. In late June 1943 he formed an embryo Allied Expeditionary Air Force. In mid-November RAF tactical air forces left the Air Defence. Brereton's Ninth U.S. Air Force, created in September 1943 for American tactical air forces in the U.K., joined on 15 December 1943. Next came strategic air forces and a massive "Bruhaha". Bomber men, Spaatz and Harris, refused to engage their powerful instruments of mayhem for a land army. It was heresy; violated all strategic bombardment cannons – the ones that did not exist until 1940! The Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces (England and Italy) were under Gen Spaatz to conduct "shuttle" bombing between the two theaters. Spaatz gained "logistical" control of the Eighth (strategic) and Ninth (tactical) force in England with two restrictions. **48** The CCS coordinated strategic bombing and U.S. theater commanders could take command of strategic forces in an emergency. A huge battle over strategic air forces was simmering.

Given a British commander (Montgomery) would lead the assault phase. Gen Morgan and Devers urged a U.S. invasion HQ. In October the 1st U.S. Army Group and First U.S. Army were activated under Gen Bradley. Gen Montgomery commanded the assault. Montgomery chose Gen. Dempsey for the British Eighth Army and Gen Henry Crerar for the First Canadian Army.

#### **6. The Supreme Commander's Directive for the Greatest Allied Army in the History of the World.**

Eisenhower took command mid-January 1944 after a brief return to Washington. Bickering between the two Allies caused the delay. **49** Obstacles arose from different policies that existed since 1942!

The differences had their origins in the national interests ... history ... (and) political philosophy ... (The multiple) controversies ... reflected the fact that allies ... can ... have entirely opposite concepts of the way in which the main object is to be reached. A failure to understand this fact could reduce the story of this great allied coalition, perhaps the most successful in history, to a study in personal and national recriminations.

In the making of Allied grand strategy, the selection of a Supreme Commander, and the writing of his directive, the Allies often disagreed ... **50** The United States, believing that only a power drive to the heart of the Continent would defeat the enemy quickly ... The British ... preferred to approach the enemy by flanking movements in the Mediterranean theater.

... (The U.S. wanted) to end the war in Europe quickly ... British ... interests in the Mediterranean ... were no affair of the United States ... (or its) resources ...

To the British, the attack in the Mediterranean ... (engaged) the Germans, ... (and aided) British interests ... **51** Some ... (felt) the **United States was not thoroughly aware of all the political and**

strategic implications ... (so) there was a ... British to attempt to instruct the U.S. ... (on) proper ... This created the impression ... the British were trying to control Allied operations ...

Since the Supreme Commander would be American, British Chiefs sought to limit his authority by broadening that of their air, navy and ground forces under him. Conversely, U.S. Chiefs sought broad authority. On 5 January 1944, the British Chiefs defined duties of subordinate commanders. Gen Morgan had warned Marshall they were far too broad. The U.S. Chiefs accepted the British papers as "informational" only, not binding on the Supreme Commander. The British Chiefs had to eliminate them, thus leaving Eisenhower to develop control over his forces. The Combined Chiefs had left control of strategic air forces in Europe open. **52** U.S. Chiefs objected the British limit of "operations to secure lodgments from which further offensive action can be aimed at the heart of Germany" **by adding "and undertake operations striking at the heart of Germany and destroy her forces."** "This bold declaration seemed unrealistic to the British in view of the fact that the available Allied force of forty divisions was obviously insufficient to overwhelm the German Army." Final orders on 12 February provided:

1. You are hereby designated as Supreme Allied Commander ... for the liberation of Europe ...
2. *Task.* You will enter ... Europe, and ... undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her armed forces ... (in) May 1944 ... exploitation will be directed to securing an area that will facilitate both ground and air operations against the enemy.
3. (You) will be prepared ... to take immediate advantage of (earlier) favorable circumstances ...
4. *Command.* You are responsible to the Combined Chiefs of Staff ...
5. *Logistics* ... You will be responsible for the co-ordination of logistical arrangements ...
6. *Co-ordination of operations of other Forces and Agencies* ... Sea and Air Forces, agencies of sabotage, subversion and propaganda ... are now in action. You may recommend any variation ...
7. *Relationship to United Nations Forces in other areas* ... Soviet forces will launch an offensive at about the same time as OVERLORD ... The Allied Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean **53-54** Theater, will conduct operations designed to assist ... including ... an attack against the south of France at about the same time as OVERLORD ... The Combined Chiefs ... will place under your command the forces operating in Southern France ... (when you can) assume such command ...

Eisenhower finally had command under vague terms that gave him great freedom. He was not a figurehead; he had the greatest allied army in history had been placed under his control. **55**

## **B. Chapter 18: OVERLORD Planning and Mediterranean Options: Feb 1-15, 1944; Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare Vol II* xyza**

**1. OVERLORD Planning and Mediterranean Options.** As mentioned, when Eisenhower arrived, COSSAC's "Outline Plan" had not changed since it was issued in July 1943! Nothing! Montgomery and Bedel Smith "took up the cudgels for a revised plan ... **412** stronger... (and) on a broader front ... They ... insisted on a first assault by five divisions ..." But they could not find more landing craft. The only source was ANVIL's 2-divisions' worth of craft. The most important WWII invasion "hung on" too few landing craft. The Navy, in retaliation for TORCH, made huge cutbacks in European landing craft, but not so for the Pacific! In January 1944, the premiere issue was finding landing craft. The only source in four months were Italy, nine hundred miles distant (vs. 3,470 to New York). It meant cancelling ANVIL, which fortunately was delayed due to the failure to capture Rome.

No one asked or ever explained why the first Normandy waves landing were three, then five divisions, instead of seven, then ten, for instance? The Navy decided how many craft the Army needed alone. There is no doubt the U.S. Navy limited production. Consequently, the Navy claimed more "craft could not easily be diverted in time from" from their Pacific fleet. ANVIL would have to be canceled.

**2. Debate Over OVERLORD, ANVIL, and the Italian Campaign** I clearly appreciate ... (OVERLORD) is the decisive act ... (but) the question ... (is) insurance in obtaining the first foothold on the beaches against the advantages that would accrue from a really successful ANVIL." Yet, the Soviets were promised ANVIL and the U.S., was invested in building the new French Army in Africa. **413** D-Day Normandy changed to June – an anticipated delay. The upside was additional time for: the Soviet Spring offensive; Combined Bomber Offensive; a five-division assault; and more of everything: fighter planes, transport planes, troops, and landing craft. But Churchill demanded Italy be strengthened and gain a major victory. Yet, Italy had continued problems as actions beyond the Volturno stalled in rugged terrain, awful weather, and a stubborn German defense. British Gen Wilson replaced Eisenhower in the MTO with U.S. Gen Devers as his deputy. This gave Churchill greater command over the Italian Campaign and greater interest in its success. Per Matloff, **414** Churchill had a freer hand to direct the Italian campaign and to break the stalemate. On 26 December 1943 he had announced the Operation SHINGLE (amphibious operation at Anzio) for an amphibious end run of the German Winter and Gustav Lines to force – a glittering victory.

FDR had agreed to keep 56 LST's in Italy for SHINGLE but had 27 (including from the ex-Andaman force) sent to England. **415** The U.S. delayed transferring the 504<sup>th</sup> AIR (Parachute Infantry Regiment) and AAF air groups for SHINGLE. Launched on 22 January it faltered. The Germans contained both the main forces south and amphibious force north. With OVERLORD pending, the MTO exploded in warfare, but Army staff seemed unruffled if the "campaign" finished by April. If not, ANVIL was cancelled. Ike had the uncomfortable ground between the two in an "unplanned" conflict with Marshall who. **416** saw "Americans ... arguing strongly for a Mediterranean operation ... as a curious turnabout."

He noted the landing craft problem and that British- American agreed they had "sufficient lift to stage a seven division OVERLORD (five divisions in the assault, two for follow-up) and at the same time a two-division ANVIL" on 31 May. Marshall noted if ANVIL was off, the Allies had 8 or 9 excess divisions in Italy for the ETO that were unavailable! He wanted these in France, not Italy. Gen Handy queried Gen Smith:

"{Marshall} wants to know how much of this business is Montgomery and how much is Eisenhower."

**417** Had Eisenhower succumbed to "local-itis"? Eisenhower assured:

... I have occasionally had to modify slightly my own conceptions ... but I assure you that I have never yet failed to give you my own clear personal convictions ... (No) one here has tried to urge me to present any particular view, nor ... am particularly affected by local itis. I merely recognize that OVERLORD ... represents ... a crisis ... Real success should do much to hasten the end of this conflict, but a reverse will have opposite repercussions ...

Eisenhower then assured Marshall. If there were enough landing craft for seven OVERLORD divisions and also for a two for ANVIL, Eisenhower favored ANVIL. The issue again became "loading capacity" of 14,000 troops out of 176,000 and 1,000 vehicles out of 20,000 – small percentage differences!

**3. London Landing Craft Conference.** A Pentagon team of experts arrived in London **418** to decide on landing craft. The Americans quickly grasped the British did not see a "direct connection" between OVERLORD and ANVIL. To the U.S., ANVIL was imperative to keep Axis forces in Southern France. **419** On 19 February Eisenhower proposed reallocating six AKAs to Italy for ANVIL and 41 LST's and LCI's to England for OVERLORD, leaving the latter 15 LST's short. But British Chiefs insisted ANVIL be cancelled due to the bogged down Casino-ANZIO campaigns. Montgomery wrote Eisenhower 21 February to abandon ANVIL and focus on two good campaigns: OVERLORD and Italy. The Pentagon turned to FDR who replied they had promised ANVIL to Stalin. Finally, FDR had fully backed his Chiefs. Eisenhower **420** compromised on 24 February. The current battles in Italy had priority, but ANVIL remained a possibility.

## C. February 1 – 15, 1944: Davis Combined Bombing Offensive xyza

### 1. February 1-15 Chronology: **274**

8 February: Fifteenth Air Force—reaches strength of 10 heavy bomber groups.

8–9 February: Bomber Command—617 Squadron drops first 12,000-pound bomb.

February: Gen Arnold rescinds policy on return of aircrews after a set time period or missions flown. Eighth Air Force—combat tour for heavy bomber crews extended to 30 missions.

15 February: Fifteenth Air Force—bombs Monte Cassino Benedictine abbey.

15–16 February: Bomber Command—heaviest attack on Berlin—2,960 tons.

Bomber Command launched five major Germany attacks in February 1944; none into France. But Bomber Command Mosquitoes guided AEF pilots hitting French airfields and V-rocket sites. (*Comment: The bomber logs below show there were two big bombing missions of V-1 rocket sites*). No. 617 Squadron made two-night precision attacks in France against an undefended Gnome et Rhone aeroengine plant at Limoges on 8 and 9 February. Dropping 12,000-pound bombs a hundred feet away obliterated machine tools and buildings for the rest of WWII. On 12 February, the Antheor rail viaduct, a link between France and Italy, had been repeatedly struck and this sally achieved nothing.

The first major raid that month struck Berlin the night of 15 February with 806 sorties dropping the largest British tonnage yet from of 2,960 tons (with 1,582 tons of incendiaries). Berlin had not suffered the hell of a firestorm and its wide avenues and stone buildings saved the capital for a terrible fate. The RAF lost 43 bombers (5%), sustainable but expensive. Bombing was through 100% clouds using H2S.

Crews and Mosquitoes flying later reported smoke to 20,000 feet. Yet, this did not mean major damage. US strategic air had planned an all-out attack on German air industry (Argument) meaning clear weather and Bomber Command coordination upon 275 fighter plane production.

Waiting for weather, the U.S. sent raids into Germany. RAF air staff wanted Harris to follow Allied plans and on 14 January called him out for non-cooperation with the Pointblank directive. His intransigence forced the RAF to order strikes on six targets: Schweinfurt, Leipzig, Brunswick, Regensburg, Augsburg, and Gotha. Disregarding his staff, Harris sent four major attacks to Berlin. To defeat the Luftwaffe, the U.S. had to hit targets they had to defend. Doolittle smashed at targets. On 3 February were eight major raids: three to France, five to Germany. The French effort hit V-rocket launch sites and fighter fields while 552 bombers used H2S to bomb Wilhelmshafen. Next day, 474 bombers hit Frankfurt and again four days later. On 10 February 138 bombers were deep after Brunswick aircraft plants but had to hit Brunswick city instead. On 11 February, 88 bombers struck Frankfurt again, but 111 planes overshot to attack Saarbrücken and Ludwigshafen. (Note: Saarbrücken is nowhere close to Ludwigshafen.) The order was “bomb the city area as a primary or secondary target” as they were easily spotted on H2X radar. It cost 70 bombers, but U.S. fighters claimed 118 German fighters vs. losing 34 of their own.

Ultra-intercepts showed within 30 days of 276 Doolittle free fighters to roam, Germans suffered serious fighter losses and could not stand the attrition rate imposed.

276 The Fifteenth AAF in Italy was mired in thick mud as the Anzio battles obligated it to provide ground force air support. The Germans mounted two serious Anzio beachhead counterattacks. Between 1 through 9 February, the Fifteenth had just two bomb days on RR yards, airfields, close infantry support aircraft, and hitting the Antheor viaduct. On 10 February 110 bombers hit Anzio targets and again two days later 108 bombers hit Anzio battle targets. On 14 February, 224 planes hit north Italy rails and airfields. No. 205 Group also concentrated on rails and highways.

2. **On 15 February the Fifteenth Air Force in Italy flew its most controversial mission.** (Note: this briefly covers the very controversial bombing of the Abbey of Monte Cassino in Italy. While it is an Italian Theater matter, it impacted all air forces, including the Fifteenth who was so instrumental in bombing Germany via the south over the Alps. As between the two atomic bombs in Japan and the Dresden fire bombing, this attack embroiled the AAF in another great moral debate when Gen Twining—Fifteenth Air Force commander under Gen Eaker sent 172 of his aircraft to destroy the 1,000-year-old Benedictine monastery, the Abbey of Monte Cassino. Forty-one planes overshot, but the other 136, with mediums and Fifth Army heavy artillery reduced the abbey to rubble. According to British official intelligence “not a single scrap of intelligence placed German soldiers on the grounds of the institution before its destruction.” The US Army official history agreed saying the Germans sought to maintain good relations with the Vatican and 277 did have great military advantage beyond areas held.

The decision to bomb was not universal. It crisscrossed nation and service lines. Gen Clark (US Fifth Army), Gen Keyes (U.S. II Corps), and two division commanders opposed bombing the monastery. But Gen Jacob Devers (the deputy Allied theater commander and of US ground forces) and air commander, Ira Eaker, saw Germans in the building and “no reason not to bomb.” But Gen B. C. Freyberg, New Zealand Corps, whose 4th Indian Division made the decision for his troops. “The British had yet to live down the loss of an Australian division at Singapore and a South African one at Tobruk. If Freyberg

believed that smashing the monastery would save his men's lives, let it be so." Even with precautions, **278** there were 40 casualties in the Indian forces.

The author: "The Allies gained nothing of military value ... and received a self-inflicted black eye in world opinion. The bombing ... became an icon to those who criticized the Anglo-American Allies' methods of combat operations." Here the author interestingly comments: to "critics, the ... uncultured Americans, valued the lives of military men (by implication a lower sort of person anyway) over the unique art and cultural treasures of western civilization created by generations of European artists and craftsmen."

Besides the Abbey, in this period the bombers flew with great regularity. There were only three days in which under 100 bombers flew, the rest were greater. The B-17s' effort was large and constant, the B-24s were steady, but much smaller in numbers. One should further note the U.S. fighters consistently flew 450 to 500 sorties per day. For bombers and fighters, this was during the worst weather of each year with little daylight. But one can sense the "day after day" strain on plane crews, but also the unease of so many defenders hearing planes, or hearing of planes, bombing day-after-day.

#### **D. February 1 - 15, 1944: Eighth AF Bombing Logs Excel Format, Buresh xyza**

There was significant air activity on 11 of the first 15 days of February 1944, plus at least 10 leaflet sorties to warn citizens of bombing raids. For a first, there were six V-1 rocket attacks all in France, the beginning of a frustrating, fruitless effort rid the French coast of the V-1 quasi jet-propelled flying bombs. There were only four bomb attacks into Germany in these two weeks: just two large ones (over 200 bombers) bomb mission in Germany. But fighters had seven major day attacks. These were in conjunction with bomber missions, but four major fighter attacks with bombs struck V-1 sites. All the while, the Army Air Force was still building toward its crescendo, which was labeled "Big Week".

Bombing logs for 2 February to 15 February 1944 portray increased activity over January 1944. Five of 15 days had 225 B-17's flying with about 90 B-24's taking off on six days. Three days lost a large 160 to 295 bomber crews downed. P-47's had seven big days 357 to 537 fighters up with minimal losses. But Luftwaffe losses to bombers were slight, but far greater to U.S. fighter planes – about 150 in two weeks.

EIGHTH AIR FORCE DAILY RECORDS																									
AAF#	Area	Count	Type	B-17's				B-24's				US Bomb Crw			Luftwaffe Loss			P-47 Escort				P-51 Escort			
		>200	Fly	Dwn	Fin	Rep	Fly	Dwn	Fin	Rep	KIA	WIA	MIA	Dwn	Rep	50%	Fly	Dwn	Fin	Rep	Fly	Dwn	Fin	Rep	
Wed, 2 FEB 1944		110																							
205	St Pol	Fran	V-1					95	2	1	2	10	0	19				183	0	0	0				
Thr, 3 FEB 1944		871																							
206.1	Wilhelmshaven	Germ	Navy	309	4	1	47	Recalled -Abort				2	9	42	0	1	0	508	8	3	13	50	1	0	0
206.2	Oldenburg	Germ	Info	1																					
207	Paris	Germ	Info	7	0	0	0																		
Fri, 4 FEB 1944		755																							
208	Frankfurt	Germ	Indus	560	18	2	300	73	2	1	59	7	20	203	4	0	1	537	0	1	4	44	0	0	0
209	Lorient	Fran	Info	7	0	0	0																		
Sat, 5 FEB 1944		514																							
210	Various	Fran	Air	294	0	3	39	98	2	1	31	1	15	22	5	0	5	496	2	1	1	46	0	0	0
211	Ghent	Belg	Info	5	0	0	0																		
Sun, 6 FEB 1944		648																							
212	Various	Fran	Air	160	4	1	43	46	0	1	7	7	3	43	3	3	0	506	1	2	1	47	0	0	0
213	Brussels	Belg	Info	6	0	0	0																		
Tue, 8 FEB 1944		470																							
214.1	Siracourt	Fran	V-1					110	0	0	41	0	0	10				89	0	0	0				
214.2	Frankfurt	Germ	Rails	195	13	2	108					11	4	130	1	3	0	435	3	1	4	41	4		
215	Caen	Fran	Info	6	0	0	0																		
Thr, 10 FEB 1944		255																							
216.1	Brunswick	Germ	Indus	143	29	1	52					2	3	295				357	4	1	6	45	0	0	0
216.2	Gilze	NInd	Air					27	0	4	0	26	14	0								91	0	0	0
217	Rennes	Fran	Info	5	0	0	0																		
Fri, 11 FEB 1944		429																							
218.1	Siracourt	Fran	V-1					94	1	1	17	1	1	10				85	0	0	0	41	0	0	0
218.2	Frankfurt	Germ	Rails	223	5	3	124					1	26	51	3	0	2	486	4	2	4	38	2	1	0
219	Ghent	Belg	Info	5	0	0	0																		
Sat, 12 FEB 1944		99																							
220	St Pol	Fran	V-1					97	0	0	29							84	0	0	0	41	0	0	0
Sun, 13 FEB 1944		469																							
221	Pas Calais	Fran	V-1	226	4	2	74	150	0	2	57	7	23	24	0	1	0	189	0	0	4	43	1	0	0
Mon, 14 FEB 1944		0																							
Gen Eisenhower establishes HQ SHAEF to take over from COSSAC																									
222	Eindhoven	NInd	Air	Bombing Mission														46	0	0	0				
Tue, 15 FEB 1944		60																							
223	St Pol	Fran	V-1					52	0	0	29	0	0	0											
224	Various	Fran	Air	Cancelled P-47																					
225	Orleans	Fran	Info	6	0	0	0																		

Note there were four days out of 15 when over 300 bombers launched. The fighter force had little trouble 500 fighters one-half of the days. Given English winter weather, this was a great feat.

## E. Chapter 2: 19 February was Big Week; Craven and Cate Army Air Forces in WWII, Vol III xyz

On 19 February 1944, weather over German fighter factories cleared. Six days constant as hoped in November as ARGUMENT had Eighth and Fifteenth on highest-priority targets in central and south Germany with RAF night bombing airframe, fighter assembly, aero engines and antifriction-bearings as greater priorities. Target were hit. **30** Weather since November delayed it: so destroying German fighter production was mandatory and Spaatz ordered it done by 1 March 1944!

**1. ARGUMENT.** Wonderful 19 February lost out when **31** Fifteenth AF was jerked away for the critical Anzio battle. Spaatz appealed and lost to both Portal and Churchill. **32** The Eighth was alone.

The force ... largest in the history of the American strategic forces (had 16) combat wings ... over 1,000 ... (heavies with) 941 were credited with sorties. All available AAF fighter escort ... 17 groups ... (12) assembly and component plants for Me-109's, Me-110's, Ju-88's, Ju-188's and FW-

190's (were hit) ... Six combat wings of bombers were sent (north, the rest to) ... central Germany ... (and) they were given all the available escort ...

... RAF had bombed the city of Leipzig heavily (and) ... **33** suffered relatively little ... only 21 were lost out of ... almost 1,000 ... Severe damage was ... (hit four plants with major) structural damage. Machine tools ... (were lost for) one month's output ... (40 complete) aircraft ... were destroyed ... (and) killed some 450 workers ... (But of) machine tools, a surprising number of which remained undamaged ... (But led to) a serious policy of dispersal (and inefficiencies) ...

ISUCCESS as Big Week began and it “was the big chance.” The night of 20/21 February, Bomber Command hit Stuttgart hoping Ninth Air **35** Force mediums and British heavies would cooperate. Neither did. Next day Eighth attack was another all-out effort, but clouds forced pathfinder bombing. The next two days were for Regensburg and Schweinfurt as the Fifteenth joined. The Eighth AAF hit plane factories at Schweinfurt, Gotha, Bernburg, Oschersleben, Aschersleben, and Halberstadt with Regensburg for the Fifteenth. It was a bad day. **36** The Schweinfurt's force had B-17s collide in harsh weather. B-24s to Gotha were recalled. Only five wings flew to Oschersleben, Halberstadt, Bernburg, and Aschersleben with Halberstadt under clouds. Just 99 of 466 Eighth bombers hit primary targets; just 255 even bombed. The Fifteenth sent 183 bombers to Regensburg; 118 bombed with “uneven” results. Yet, 34 bombers at *Aschersleben Motor Works* (Ju-88's) caused 50%, and at Bernburg 70%, production losses. At Halberstadt German fighters took a heavy bomber toll. **37** The Eighth lost 41 bombers of 430 (10%).

Prospects on the 23rd looked poor. Doolittle's and fighter crews were exhausted after three-straight days, but so were the Germans. Fifteenth AF sent a small force to hit Steyr ball-bearings. Next day, 24 February, resumed the “knock down full effort” on Schweinfurt ball bearings. Five B-17's wings hit here, three B-24 wings hit Gotha's Me-210 factory and five wings hit other FW-190 plants. **38** A third force bombed Rostock as Fifteenth dropped on aircraft plants in Austria. The Schweinfurt-Gotha and Fifteenth forces had troubles. The 87 B-17's of the Fifteenth had huge losses to fighters of 17 bombers. Gotha had the with 33 of 239 bombers lost. Downing 47 German fighters was a no solace. The British fire-bombed Schweinfurt that night, but **39** it lost value after 40% of operations dispersed. Yet, again, the ball bearing production was “unaffected”. Sort of: “It was bad, not really bad, sort of ...”

Gotha became important than Schweinfurt. Over 400 big bombs and 180 tons of fragmentation bombs damaged every building, but machine tools survived; most damage was by fires, not by collapse. **40** “Big Week” ended 25 February with perfect in all areas for an “all-out Eighth, Fifteenth and Bomber Command Day” against Regensburg, Stuttgart, Augsburg and Fürth. Fifteenth again faced heavy defenses as 400 bombers hit Regensburg, Flume, Pola and other local areas. Regensburg force lost 33 of 176 bombers while the Eighth only lost 31 of 738 bombers. **41** “It was another proof ... that a daylight bomber force without full fighter cover could not hope to get through an aggressive enemy without excessive losses...” “Claims that bombers could fend for themselves had long since vanished.

Bombing Regensburg and Augsburg “was the heart of the Me-109 production ... worth any reasonable risk ...” One-third of all machine tools and 70% of stored materials were damaged. The Allies missed

that 42 that remote sites were in massive use and machine tools were not damaged and the decentralization by February 1944 as Big Week ended.

**2. How Big Was the Big Week?** Post-war reports show 3,800 sorties dropped 10,000 bomb tons, which exceed the entire Eighth AAF total for its first year of operations! Losses were just 137 bombers over six days. Fifteenth AAF (Italy) lost 89 bombers (6%). Fighter sorties were 2,548, 712 and 413 (Eighth, Ninth and Fifteenth) with only 28 fighters were lost, but 2,600 (260 air crews) airmen were lost. The RAF launched 43 2,351 planes with 9,198 tons for 157 bombers (6.6%) lost.

This great effort saw its claims disputed by the postwar U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey. Airmen claimed the report was flawed -- without proof. Yet, all agreed 4,000 tons damaged 75% of the aircraft buildings in 90% of the plants. Per the AAF: "... (It) helped to precipitate a crisis in the over-all organization of aircraft production ... (and) shifting of responsibility from Goering's Air Ministry to ... the Albert Speer Ministry of Armaments and Munitions ... (The) February bombings had the effect of galvanizing the aircraft industry into feverish action." The "emphasis" suggests exaggeration of evidence followed by mitigation: ... (The Germans mitigated) the effects of the February bombings .... (Damage was) less severe ... in the vital category of machine tools ... (where) a very high percentage ... was salvaged.<sup>1</sup> Dispersal was especially successful in the airframe and final assembly ... (with shelters) in wooded areas ... (Aircraft) recuperated ... 44 February bombings ... caused less total delay in aircraft production than did the lighter ... attacks ... in August and 1 October 1943 ...

Allied assessments woefully underestimated recuperation and overstated damage. Bombs did not harm heavy steel fixtures that were reset and restarted. In 1944 the Germans built 1,581 planes/month vs. Allied estimates of only 655. Ball bearing damage estimates were far off --- tools were indestructible with huge inventories, Big Week's "glory" rested upon shaky facts. The great number of planes lost was severe but short-lived. Even the caustic U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey held the February effort forced the Germans into a large dispersal effort. 45

Craven & Cate argue: 1) dispersal meant wasted effort, 2) put more loads on railroads, and 3) the Allies still gained air superiority -- the most important result. When the AAF history was prepared in 1952, the British had, but had not released, German records. German high command records (not *Luftwaffe*) showed from June 1941 to December 1943 2,581 fighters lost; January to March 1944 were: 307; 533 and 567. 46 The authors state *Luftwaffe* reactions altered from full opposition to "picking and choosing formations to attack ... (the) policy was one of conservation of strength and it conceded to the Allies the vital point of air superiority." The Allies could freely bomb. 47 By March they were provoking a GAF response, not protecting bombers. "Escort" became "seek and kill" missions escorting bombers all the way to Berlin! This was true "air superiority".

## **F. February 16 – 29, 1944: Davis Combined Bombing Offensive xyza**

---

<sup>1</sup> This is entirely consistent with the finding of the first Schweinfurt raid that bolted down machine presses were indestructible under any method. They could be bounced around factory floors and still stamp out parts.

### 1. February 16-28 Chronology: 274

17 February: Fifteenth Air Force—reaches strength of 12 operational heavy bomber groups.

20 February: Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces—commence Operation Argument on the German fighter aircraft industry and airfields with the Eighth's first over 1,000 heavy bomber raids.

20–25 February: Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces—continue Argument or “Big Week.” Results have air commanders change to other targets. Germans decide to disperse their air industry.

23–24 February: Bomber Command—Mosquitoes drop 4,000- pound bombs for first time.

25 February: Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces—one B-17 and B-24 of each land in Switzerland.

2. **February Battles over OVERLORD Strategic Bombing and Its Targets.** Gen Spaatz followed Eisenhower's air plans but did not agree “to play ball” with him. Normandy cost him two months – a loss that squashed proving Germany could have been defeated by Air power alone. A bitter pill for air advocates. When Leigh-Mallory refused to make air superiority before D-Day a mandate, Spaatz revolted against him. Eisenhower tried to modify Spaatz's position; 222 Spaatz refused. Eisenhower asked Spaatz for ideas; Spaatz said: “Fire him”! They did agree to leave “Leigh-Mallory's operating in his own area of expertise” without authority. 223 When “Bomber” Harris appealed to Churchill to overrule Eisenhower, Tedder wrote his “two strategic air forces are determined not to play.” Spaatz ... will not accept orders ... from Leigh-Mallory, and ... Harris's representatives ... (only know) mass fire-raising on very large targets.” With a “quite irremediable cleavage”, Eisenhower dined with Churchill who was impatient with the 224 airmen. Eisenhower had Tedder settle the before Churchill to thus end “Leigh-Mallory's claim over invasion air forces.”

On 29 February Churchill made Tedder Eisenhower's “aviation lobe”, but retained strategic bombing decisions to the CCS. 225 “Eisenhower ... violently contested ... if Bomber Command did not come under his control, he ‘would simply have to go home.’” At the end of February, Americans began Operation Argument as Harris' Bomber Command began fire bombing. Both Harris and Spaatz were waiting his crack at the German air industry. On 16 February 225 bombers hit nine transportation targets in Italy. The next day they hit the same number at the Anzio battlefield. 278

3. **“Big Week” 19 February.** Operation Argument was to be a combined Eighth and Fifteenth Air Force effort with RAF Bomber Command adding night attacks for **the first air battle with all strategic air forces.** Spaatz sent Eaker after Regensburg and Augsburg aircraft and Stuttgart ball bearings. 279 Breslau, the Fifteenth's secondary mission, would hinder German focus on the Eighth, but then the Fifteenth was out with Anzio hanging. British Gen Wilson confiscated it for Anzio.

Bomber Command boldly struck out for Leipzig -- 270 miles east of the Rhine losing 78 of 730 bombers (11%!). This with 15 February Berlin losses changed Bomber Command tactics of 280 more spoofs, feints, and misdirection. The failure of Fifteenth AF support raised tensions with Spaatz's HQ on 19 February. The Eighth was to follow-up the Bomber Command Leipzig attack the next day, but Doolittle and Brereton questioned it and forecasts were poor. Plus, the P-38 proved unsuited to Europe's winters as engines balked at extreme cold and high humidity. VIII Fighter Command had 40% P-38 engine

troubles with over 50% of its loss's due engines. But Spaatz ordered it, so 16 wings (over 1,000 bombers), all 17 fighter groups (835 fighters) and 16 RAF squadrons **281** hit 12 major enemy fighter plane plants -- the largest force dispatched to date for Posen and Tutow. Others struck Leipzig and Brunswick radar to divert Germans from the north force.

This plan had 12 targets with small formations, showing commander's confidence, will strike hard and research proving the first 45–75 bombers were most accurate. Assigning 16 bomb groups to 12 targets, Doolittle maximized destruction and only 21 of 899 bombers (2.3%) were lost -- down from 60 planes! The Baltic force hit Rostock with H2X, Tutow via dead reckoning, but the main force bombed 8 Brunswick and Leipzig air plants and 11 more targets with serious damage to six plants. Again, 282 machine tools were little damaged, but buildings were leveled.

On 20 February, Bomber Command hit Stuttgart ball bearings and aircraft for nine bombers of 552. On 21 February the Eighth hit 14 factory, airfields and aircraft targets for 16 bombers vs 33 enemy. On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Fifteenth flew 151 bombers Regensburg and 42 at Ochieng rail yards but lost 14 bombers (7%).

For a third day, 22 February, the Eighth sent over 800 bombers, weather scattered them as B-24's o 2<sup>nd</sup> Bombardment's hit "opportunities" saw 74 bomb Dutch Enschede, Arnheim, Nijmegen, and Deventer -- killing many! The 1<sup>st</sup> Bomb Division was deep with 151 planes after planes at Halberstadt Aschersleben and Bernberg losing 19 bombers to a strong Luftwaffe. **283** A Bunde wing lost 11 of 29, Wernigerode had 4 of 19, 1<sup>st</sup> Bomb Division lost 35 bombers. Sixteen fighter groups (659 fighters), claimed 59 Germans to 11 of theirs. Fifteenth AAF flew over the Adriatic and Yugoslavia's turning into Austria and Germany over Alps as 150 bombers hit the Diamler-Puch plant at Steyr, Austria losing 17 (11%).

On 24 February the Fifteenth hit again with 114 planes but lost 17 heavy bombers (15%). Bomber Command's No. 205 Group struck that night losing 6 of 40 bombers (5%). Neither could afford it. No. 205 Group with worn-out planes usually took a beating if it attacked Germany without escorts.

The Eighth had heavy losses but sent out over 800 bombers and 767 fighters. Those hitting air plants at Rostock had no escorts but lost only five planes of 236. B-24s of the 2 BD (Bombardment Division) hit Gotha Bf-110 plants. **284** The 2 BD had heavy losses, 33 bombers out of 213 (15.5%). But 1<sup>st</sup> BD showed that the "tide had turned" on the Germans. The Eighth sent 266 planes to finish Schweinfurt ball bearings, which was just one one-third of the Eighth's strength—no longer a maximum effort. They lost 11, not 60, planes (4.6% vs 20% of old). That day, the Eighth lost 49 bombers (6.6%) but the Luftwaffe lost 38 planes. On 24 February, Bomber Command finally joined Schweinfurt with 2,534 tons (1,160 tons of incendiaries) to lose 33 of 662 planes (5%). Germans dispersed ball bearings, yet German production was cut by 50%. Next day was south Germany for Messerschmidt Regensburg plants which built one-third of the Me-109s. Fifteenth hit **285** first but lost 32 of 116 bombers (28%)! The highest loss in WWII due to lack of escort. The 301<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group was trailed to and from the target as crews pressed on while the Eighth's force came an hour later as fighters were refueling to lose just 12 planes.

The 1 BD hit the huge Augsburg Messerschmidt and VKF ball bearing plants at Stuttgart losing 13 planes (5.3%). The 2 BD had 161 B-24s over Bf-110 plants at Fürth to lose 3.7%. The last Big Week day saw a new P-51, 363<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Group joint joined as 899 took off. This armada only had 26 "kills" losing three of its own. Yet, the Luftwaffe did not tamely roll over. Conversely, Americans proved they could fly

through the Luftwaffe and with fighter escort they had a less than 5% loss rate. Then Fifteenth AF got its new P-51s, to include the all-black 332 Fighter Group.

Bomber Command ended “Big Week” 25 February hitting Augsburg with 2,048 tons losing 21 of 528 planes (4%). **286** Fifteenth Air Force, which lacked P-51s, lost 89 bombers for a much higher percent lost. USSTAF lost 266 big bombers (2,600 crew) and 28 fighters – half when bombers were unescorted (or under escorted). Eighth write off 299 bombers, one-fifth, in February! Luftwaffe lost one-third of its planes, 18% of its pilots and two-months of fighter production. Field Marshal Milch (plane production) told Speer his March output would be just 35% of February. The two pushed vast fighter increases when 70% of factory buildings were gone. Production did recover, but then gasoline was too short to train pilots! Plus, “Big Week” forced a huge German plane dispersal with 29 **287 companies** using 85 airframe factories and 249 aeroengines sites. It increased labor 20%, destroyed “economies of scale”, burdened railroads and added to production times. By October 1944, their air industry had 450,000 workers: 103,000 women, only 48% native Germans, 36% foreigners and 16% Jews, POWs or political prisoners on double factory shifts and a seven-day, 72-hour workweek.

“Big Week” (20-25 February) had actual and psychological damage on the GAF. In one week, Doolittle dropped what Eighth did its entire first year. Bomber Command made five big attacks. But AAF proved day bombing performed as claimed and at no greater cost than area or night bombing. USSTAF claimed escorts destroyed 600 enemy planes (a vast exaggeration). It also had kills by **bomber gunners, but 288 these men actually “killed” no more than 10% of German planes they claimed!** Spaatz “glowed in a letter he sent to Arnold ... ‘The resultant destruction ... to the very existence of the German Air Force, can be considered a conspicuous success in the course of the European war.’” He noted his Eighth flew 5,400 more sorties than Bomber Command leaving 5,000 more tons of bombs, all with a lower loss rate.

**4. AAF Comes of Age in February 1944.** The AAF had come of age. Although the Luftwaffe increased bomber scores into April, Big Week marked the “beginning of the end for the German daylight fighter.” Most of the senior Airmen in Europe agreed with Col Hughes’s statement three weeks later it was “the funeral of the German Fighter Force” as USSTAF could bomb any target in Germany at will **289** which led to a hunt for that one crucial target system. It was the German synthetic oil industry.

**5. United States Wins Daylight Air Superiority.** Doolittle’s freeing of the fighters changed the attitude of American fighter pilots. He found a system that gave bombers reasonable protection, but let fighters chase down German planes, with four points: 1) Free fighters from the close escort restrictions. 2) Get long-range fighters to the ETO. 3) Have an escort relay system. 4) Increased strafing of ground targets by fighters. Along with Spaatz and Doolittle came large numbers of long-range P-38 and P-51 fighters and the P-47 range increased 100 miles. This allowed refined escort plans. Doolittle could always put several hundred fighters per day into the air. Spaatz had the power to allocate planes for all AAF forces in the UK. He switched P-51 allocations from the Ninth to Eighth and the P-47 was an excellent ground-attack aircraft. Spaatz had promotion power over **290** a recalcitrant Ninth Air Force. The differing escort ranges impacted the final system. Plane actual ranges were at best 3/8<sup>th</sup> of the “claimed” ranges. Escort cut the range more. On penetration the bombers flew an indicated airspeed of 150 mph while fighters, throttled for optimum gas consumption, were 100 mph faster and consumption was much higher. So, fighters flew zigzag that skewed their straight-line range. The Eighth

used a relay escort system of shuttle escorts replacing those on station every 150 to 200 miles. It was also the only way to provide escort for deep targets. The fix used many more fighters

As the deep penetration raids flown in 1943 had shown, if the bombers did not have escort all the way to their target, the Luftwaffe would simply wait until the bombers had flown beyond the escort's range and then attack. At first glance this system had the apparent disadvantage of using several times more fighters than necessary for a given mission. Instead, this relay system **291** mixed planes with ranges. The Eighth used three fighters: P-47's close to home, P-38's midway and P-51's at the targets. At times, the bombers had double fighter protection. Otherwise, fighters flying to and from the "bomber stream" attacked enemy targets. In the end, the fighters were sweeping vast areas of Germany. Until late March 1944, RAF Spitfire squadrons provided the initial escort in and final escort out for heavy bombers. Then U.S. planes developed extended ranges so that by 1 April, with a diminished GAF, the U.S. provided its own fighter escorts the bomber roundtrip. The effort did delay RAF and Ninth AAF fighter training for ground support missions after D-Day.

German interception required overwhelming numbers of planes in massed formations. But just a few Allied fighters could disrupt the GAF timing and formations. Worst case, **292** they only had time for two passes before U.S. escorts arrived. And here it took brave, skilled pilots to make solo attack on a heavy bomber formation. Plus, the U.S. fighter relays left returning fighters to shoot up German sites. On 9 February 1944, Gen Kepner wrote: "Any target of opportunity within the boundaries of Germany can be attacked" to encourage his fighter pilots who were high on bravery, low on a sense of survival. They flew treetop levels on returns to strafe any enemy and for stimulation the Eighth recorded these as official kills – *i.e.*, planes destroyed on the ground.

## **G. February 16 - 29, 1944: Eighth AF Bombing Logs Excel Format, Buresh xyza**

The second one-half of February witnessed another dramatic increase in bombing activity for big bombers and for fighters. The bombers flew 7 "Big Week" sortie. They were "big" in February, but exceedingly small as the months continued. Calling it "Big Week" was a bit of an oxymoron, since air leaders knew it would quickly become a "small week" in comparison. However, for propaganda and troop motivation purposes it was brilliant. Plus, it ended February "with a bang," which was needed given the dreary weather in Europe for that time of the year. That planes flew, and then as much as they did fly, was a testament to the courage of the pilots who located targets and return airfields more by dead reckoning than by electronic flight guidance aids. Interestingly, there were no flights at all from 16 to 19 February. Thus, all activity occurred in only eight days – a harbinger of the AAF ability to concentrate attacks.

"Big Week" (green shade) shows 11 air attacks by 200 or more bombers. Note that three of the eleven flights were finally by the larger, newer B-24's coming "on-line". The B-24's was a better plane. The B-17, very ancient by that date (over six years ancient), was still a valuable, even though a cramped, asset. There were seven "leaflet" or information drops warning citizens in France of bombing raids to come. At the very end, targeting of V-1 rocket sites began with attacks of 49, 132 and 38 bombers. In those 10 days, B-17's in groups over two hundred planes struck on five days and B-24's over 200 planes on eight

These two weeks, the bombers flew 6,574 sorties; fighters flew 8,800 sorties. YTD the B-17 and B-24 bombers flew 11,514 sorties, and the fighters had 13,672 sorties. While 436 bombers had been lost through 29 February, only 98 fighters were downed. The fantastic P-51 Mustang was in the theater, but the fighter only had a few days of small sorties. But out of 1,439 sorties YTD, the P-51 had only lost 24 planes or just 2%, which seems fantastic given new pilots until one looks at the loss rate for P-38 and P-47's to see it was just 1%. In February, the P-38/P-47 duo flew 89% of all sorties, as the Mustang had just 11%. In February, the B-17's flew 74% of all bomber sorties. Little changed in ratio between the two bomber types, but total sorties were excellent.

EIGHTH AIR FORCE DAILY RECORDS																																	
		B-17's						B-24's				US Bomb Crew				Lutwaffe				P-38 & P-47 Escort				P-51 EscOrt				Lutwaffe			US Crews		
No.	Mission	Area	Type	Fly	Dwn	Fin	Rep	Fly	Dwn	Fin	Rep	KIA	WIA	MIA	Dwn	Rep	50%	Fly	Dwn	Fin	Rep	Fly	Dwn	Fin	Rep	Los	Dam	Prob	KIA	WIA	MIA		
No Flights were Recorded Between 15 and 20 February 1944.																																	
Sun, 20 FEB 1944																																	
226.1	Leipzig	Germ Air	1003	BIG WEEK STARTS	340	7	1	161							7	17	72		688	2	2	4	73	1	0	0	61	7	37	0	0		
226.2	Tulow	Germ Air			191	6	1	37						3	0	60	15	15	10														
226.3	Brunswick	Germ Air							224	8	3	37		10	10	77	36	13	13														
227	Tours	Fran Info			4	0	0	0																									
Mon, 21 FEB 1944																																	
228.1	Gutersloh	Germ Air	866	BIG WEEK CONTINUES	285	8	3	63						4	13	75	12	5	8							0	1	0	0	0	0		
228.2	Diepholz	Germ Air			263	5	3	36						20	4	57	2	5	2	542	2	2	3				19	3	14	0	0	0	
228.3	Achmer	Germ Air							214	3	1	6		0	3	31	5	6	4				68	3			14	1	4	0	0	0	
229	Rouen	Fran Info			5	0	0	0																									
Tue, 22 FEB 1944																																	
230.1	Aschersleben	Germ Air	799	BIG WEEK CONTINUES	181	38	4	141						35	30	367	32	18	17								1	0	0	0	0	0	
230.2	Schweinfurt	Germ Cancel	233					2												535	8	0	12				39	6	15	0	0	0	
230.3	Enschede	Nlnd Oppor							177	3	0	0		0	0	30	2	0	0				51	3	0	3	19	1	10	0	0	0	
Wed, 23 FEB 1944																																	
231	Coast	Fran Recon		Sweep																													
232	Rennes	Fran Prop			5	0	0	0																									
Thur, 24 FEB 1944																																	
233.1	Gotha	Germ Air	814	BIG WEEK CONTINUES					213	34	0	29		3	6	324	50	10	20								2	0	0	0	0	0	
233.2	Schweinfurt	Germ Air			238	11	1	161						2	5	110	10	1	7	609	4	0	11				30	0	0	0	0	0	
233.3	Pozan	Pol Air			272	5	1	60						0	8	40	23	11	45				88	2	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	
234	L																																

20

Turning to the German figures (in pink), they had to have been disheartening to the *Luftwaffe*. They lost 226 fighters to bomber gunners and 364 to U.S. fighter planes. Air-air combat in two weeks cost 590 fighter planes, with another 130 fighters deemed shot down, but excluding those guessed to be “repairable”. *(Comment: determining which enemy planes flew away with damage that was or was not repairable was speculative! But only in terms of absolute numbers. For purposes of evaluating the effectiveness of U.S. planes in combat it was a terrific standard if “grading” factors did not change.)* Year-to-Date the U.S. claimed it shot down 1,595 German fighter planes with another 318 shot down by bombers and another 554 and 284.5 downed or probably downed by U.S. fighter planes. *(The poor .5 German was the butt of jokes!)*

Setting aside the miserable weather, the USAAF had to have been encouraged late February 1944 three years of effort were melded into the most powerful air force ever to fly. Putting injuries and captivity aside, the bombers ended the month with a very low 4% and 3% loss rate for the B-17 and B-24 bombers, and only 1% for fighters, 2% for the new Mustangs. For the bomber crews that had to fly twenty-five missions, 4% was the exact odds faced – odds were a plane would be shot down over 25 missions. Literally speaking, to obtain an eternal rest, one had to “beat the actual odds.”

The fascinating aspect of the bombing data is from here forward we track cumulative bombing, air attacks and loss data which is possible since the data approximates enemy planes destroyed by bomber and separately by fighters. As a *caveat* the author found no disclaimers of duplicated data, which at a minimum would be an issue with Allied fighters and bombers tacking *Luftwaffe* fighters.

So, the cumulative, day after day, week and then month after month. A constant pounding on German infrastructure, air defense systems and the *Luftwaffe*, hit both day and night with Bomber Command, Eighth Air Force, the Ninth U.S., and 2<sup>nd</sup> British Tactical air forces, soon to be reinforced by the Mediterranean Fifteenth AF bombers. Readers will enjoy finishing this “complete” history in the November – December 1944 period when the Year End 1944 figures reveal the magnitude of the airmen efforts – “day after day”; week after week”; “month after month”; never ending, constant, shatteringly predictable.

Second, one views the bombing efforts of late 1943 and even up to D-Day Normandy in 1944, even D-Day itself – so magnificent, so grand and powerful, and so overwhelming. Yet – “it was peanuts”, “just crumbs”, “not even a good start” for what would follow. For December 1944 to return to see and comprehend how abysmally small these figures were, but at the time they were monstrously important and touted as being “beyond belief”. One suspects that neither Eisenhower or Tedder had any true grasp of this air effort, but one further suspects Spaatz, Harris, Arnold, Doolittle and so many other leaders also failed to grasp how massive and overwhelming it became. Further, we do not have comparable data for the Fifteenth Air Force, which was not yet positioned to commence long range strikes – but would soon be effective.