

available, for many combat personnel had completed the required number of missions and had been withdrawn.

Actually, the tactical situation was such that it was not necessary for the Allied air arm to continue to put forth its maximum effort. The battle lines were beginning to stabilize so that the need for tactical cooperation with the ground troops was less constant than it had been earlier, while the steady decline in the enemy's air effort reduced the demands on NAAF's offensive and defensive fighters. By the end of September 1943 the Luftwaffe was in no position to interfere seriously with Allied operations, whatever their character. Its bomber units had been forced back to bases in the Po Valley. Most of its fighters had been withdrawn only as far as the area between Rome and Pistoia, but units in need of refitting—and there were many—had been sent to northern Italy, entirely out of range of the battle zone. Noticeable deficits on the peninsula of airplane tires, engines, and fuel and airfield ground equipment bore testimony to the effectiveness of Allied bombing. The GAF was suffering from a shortage of crews, and many of the crews which it did have were of low quality.

Under these conditions it was not surprising that the activities of the Luftwaffe during October were limited and spotty. Defensively, it offered only occasional opposition to NAAF's bombers until after the middle of the month; then, being better established at its new bases, it was able to attack about one-half of all Allied missions, although on a small scale and without aggressiveness. However, the enemy partly offset his weak aerial defenses by an increased use of flak, so that NAAF's units reported heavier damage from flak than at any time in the past, one bombardment group, the 340th, having ten of twelve planes holed by AA fire on a mission against Venafro.

In offensive operations, the GAF's record was similarly poor. In the largest effort since the first week of AVALANCHE, its fighters and fighter-bombers on 15 and again on 16 October put in approximately seventy-five sorties against bridges and other Allied communications targets along the Volturno. But the effort quickly declined after NATAF shot down eleven of the enemy without loss to itself. Although in long-range attacks the GAF made a better showing, it accomplished little. For the first time since August its bombers staged a major raid on an Allied convoy—near Oran. This was followed by an attack on shipping near Cap Tenes, the bombers coming from the Istres-Montpellier complex in southern France. The two raids cost the Allies one ship sunk, although three others were damaged by aerial torpedoes. On the night of 21 October the enemy staged his greatest offensive effort in more than two months by laying on three separate attacks. Some twenty Ju-88's bombed the harbors at Naples and near-by Bagnoli; destroying a gun position, military personnel were killed and 100 were wounded. Twenty-five Do-217's and He-111's attacked a convoy off Algiers, the raiders coming in at an unusually low altitude with torpedoes and radio controlled bombs to damage two ships. Night fighters and AA knocked down six of the enemy. The third raid of the night was against bridges along the Volturno. The enemy's burst of activity ended on the 23rd with a night raid on Naples; the twenty Ju-88's, which attacked, used strips of tinfoil (commonly known as Window or Chaff) in order to upset the Allies' radar control and succeeded in setting one vessel on fire.

With the GAF reduced to such an innocuous state, NAAF was able to devote most of its attention during October to the needs

of the Fifth and Eighth Armies as they continued to move up the peninsula. Following the capture of Naples the Fifth had quickly reached the Volturno River, and by the 15th had crossed to the north bank; a week later the Eighth was at the lower reaches of the Trigno above Termoli. By the end of the month the battle line ran roughly from Mondragone, on the Gulf of Gaeta, to above Teano, Piedimonte, and Boiano, and thence northeast along the Trigno. In the latter half of October the advance had been slow in the face of stubborn German resistance and against the obstacles imposed by mountainous terrain, rivers, poor roads, blown bridges, and unfavorable weather.

Both NATAF and NASAF had aided the Fifth Army in its drive to the Volturno, Tactical by close support and Strategic by continuing its program of creating road blocks along and above the Volturno.

Mediums and fighter-bombers attacked enemy supply lines along the Volturno and at a secondary defense line which ran from Formia to Isernia. Three main highways ran through this second line and into the battle area: the coast road through Terracina and Formia, the center road through Arce and Mignano, and the inland road through Isernia. Strategic hit each of these towns and a bridge at Grazzanise and one near Capua. The attacks stopped all traffic on the coast road, slowed up traffic on the other two, and so jammed military transport that units of Tactical were able to claim the destruction of more than 400 vehicles. Going farther afield, B-17's and Wellingtons dropped 9912 tons on the yards at Pisa, Bologna, Civitavecchia, and Mestre, rendering all of them inoperative. The attacks brought out such an unusually strong GAF fighter reaction that, on the night of 5 October, Wellingtons dropped eighty-two tons on Grosseto airdrome, destroying eleven aircraft.

Photo reconnaissance having revealed that the GAF had increased its fighter and bomber strength in Greece and on Crete and the Dodecanese Islands to around 350 planes, Grecian airfields during the first week of October became targets of high priority. The enemy's buildup posed a triple threat to the Allies: to the port of Bari and the airfields around Foggia; to Allied holdings in the Aegean and to Allied shipping in the narrow waters between Crete and the Cyrenaican bulge. Between 4 and 8 October the Twelfth Air Force went for the larger fields, as B-24's, B-25's, and P-38's dropped thousands of frags and several hundred tons of GP bombs on Grecian airfields. A number of enemy planes were destroyed, and hangars, runways, and installations were well covered. Concurrently, two groups of B-24's, one of P-38's, and a squadron of B-25's were sent on detached service to the Bengasi and Gambut areas to strike at the enemy's Aegean shipping. The P-38's operated for only four days but claimed seventeen planes shot down.

The outstanding mission of the month was flown on 1 October against Wiener Neustadt. It was the third operation from the Mediterranean (the first two were the Ploesti attack of 1 August and the Wiener Neustadt mission of 13 August) undertaken in behalf of the Combined Bomber Offensive. The mission plan called for four groups of 12th Bomber Command's B-17's to attack fighter aircraft plants at Augsburg and five groups of B-24's, which included the three on loan from the Eighth, to attack plants at Wiener Neustadt. Unfortunately, the B-17's failed to locate Augsburg because of a solid overcast, but many of them bombed alternate targets at Gundelfingen, Germany and Bologna and Prato, Italy. A few others attacked transports and barges between Corsica and