

Elba. The B-24's, having found Wiener Neustadt, dropped 187 tons of bombs in the target area to damage assembly shops, storage areas, a hangar, and near-by rail lines. Both the B-24's and the B-17's ran into strong fighter opposition. The Fortresses were attacked over the Leghorn-Pontedera area by fifty to sixty planes, but with the help of P-38's eight enemy planes were destroyed and five probably destroyed for the loss of three B-17's. The Liberators met heavy flak and around sixty fighters, some with 37-mm. cannon in their wings and others which lobbed rocket-type shells into the bomber formation with considerable accuracy. Fourteen of the bombers were shot down and fifty-two damaged. Enemy losses were undetermined, but apparently did not equal the Liberator losses.

After this mission the B-24's which had been borrowed from the Eighth Air Force were returned to England. During the first week of October, Tactical flew around 2,600 sorties for the Fifth and Eighth Armies. On the 1st and 2nd, 160 U.S. P-40's paved the way for an Eighth Army landing at Termoli on the Adriatic by bombing and strafing troops and vehicles on roads north and west of the town. On the day of the landing on 3 October and the day after, despite bad weather, fighter-bombers with some help from B-25's inflicted severe punishment on enemy traffic. Fighters and fighter-bombers then went all-out to help the Eighth hold the bridgehead against a series of hard German counterattacks. On the two most critical days, the 5th and 6th, Spitfires and P-40's of the RAF and the U.S. 57th and 78th Fighter Groups flew approximately 950 sorties over the battle area. They broke up the main enemy concentration, struck hard against road movement, especially around Isernia, flew direct-support missions over the battle line, and protected the ground troops against a few Luftwaffe raids. Without their efforts it is doubtful that the bridgehead could have been saved. After the crisis had passed, P-40's bombed the German escape route through Palata.

NATAF's operations over the Fifth Army were more routine. Fighters and fighter-bombers bombed and strafed bridges, towns, junctions, enemy positions, and transport, while fighters flew defensive patrols over the ground troops and the Naples and Salerno areas.

Ordinary activities were curtailed for four days after the 8th as heavy rains held up the advances of both Allied armies and sharply limited air operations. Tactical's fighters and fighter-bombers got in a few licks in the eastern battle area, while small groups of B-25s, Baltimores, and A-20's attacked roads, troop concentrations, and gun positions from Capua in the west to Vasto in the east. Strategic managed to make two attacks on Italian roads, Wellingtons hitting Formia and Terracina on the west coast, and to continue its operations against airfields in Greece and the Aegean. The GAF made so few appearances over Italy that not more than one Allied mission out of six saw enemy fighters.

On the night of 12 /13 October the Fifth Army attacked along its entire front in an effort to cross the Volturno. The crossing would be accomplished by the 15th with but little aid from NAAF's planes, which were almost entirely grounded by the weather. The 13th was NAAF's best day, and then only 250 sorties were flown, half of them by P-40's. For each of the other two days, Tactical's fighters and fighter-bombers flew scarcely more than 100 sorties. Strategic's bombers made a few attacks against communications behind the German lines and against targets in

the battle zone. The heaviest attack was against Terni, where thirty-four B-17's dropped 102 tons and met the first opposition in almost a week; thirty to forty enemy fighters attacked, losing two planes while shooting down one Fortress. Conditions were no more favorable in the Eighth Army sector. Strategic flew two small missions against the Ancona-Pescara-Foggia line of communication, the enemy's only primary line of supplies on the east coast, and Tactical operated on a limited scale against transportation. B-25's were able to fly two very successful missions against Tirana and Argos airdromes in the Aegean.

For the rest of October the weather continued to limit NAAF's operations. On the 15th and 16th while the Fifth Army was consolidating its Volturno bridgeheads and beginning its effort to push Kesselring back, fighters and fighter-bombers of Tactical's 27th and 86th Fighter-Bomber Groups and 33rd Fighter Group put in around 150 sorties against targets along the highways leading from Rome to the Volturno, and mediums flew 36 sorties, light bombers 96, and nightflying Bostons 16 in attacks on rail and road junctions between Rome and the bomb line. For the next four days, TAF continued to batter roads, rail lines, and towns immediately north of the Fifth Army, the targets being on or close to three highways which converged a few miles above Capua. On the 21st and 22nd, with better weather, Tactical directed a heavy effort against the Cassino area. Between the 7th and 23rd it also struck farther up the peninsula, hitting airdromes at Tarquinia, Viterbo, and Lake Bracciano and destroying some thirty enemy planes on the ground. The GAF was offering so little opposition that Tactical's bombers operating over the battle front now flew without fighter escort.

On the Eighth Army front, from the 15th through the 22nd, air force operations were largely against the coast road in an effort to choke off Kesselring's flow of supplies into the easternmost part of the battle zone. P-40's also operated over the Adriatic, trying to interrupt enemy shipping to Italy, Greece, and Yugoslavia. On the 16th, P-38's of the 82nd Fighter Group dive-bombed merchant vessels in the Levkas Channel.

For the first time the Americans were escorted by Italian pilots, flying Macchi 205's. During the last week of October the weather relented enough to permit Tactical to fly almost its normal routine of defensive patrols and reconnaissance missions; of attacks on strongpoints, bridges, transport, stores, dumps, gun positions, troops, roads, rail lines and locomotives, radio and weather stations, and airdromes; of escort and Rhubarbs.

On some days the weather sharply reduced the number of sorties, but there was never a day when TAF's planes failed to record at least a few blows against the enemy. And at all times they were so completely masters of the air over the battle areas that one German general, noting that "they pick out each individual vehicle" in strafing attacks, described their superiority as "terrible." NASAF during the latter half of October operated chiefly beyond a line running approximately from Rome northeast to the Adriatic. The command's operations were divided between lines of communication—mostly rail lines—in central Italy, communications and airdromes in Greece and the Balkans, and airfields used by the German fighter force, chiefly in the Rome area, but the emphasis was on communications in Italy, principally a group of bridges in the area between Grosseto and Ancona.

The emphasis on bridges marked a change from previous tactics in which NAAF had concentrated on key marshaling yards. Marshaling yards no longer appeared to be the best type of target