

AIR CO-OPERATION IN DIEPPE RAID

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Air action in/Combined Operations raid on Dieppe began with an attack on heavy gun positions by Spitfires, Hurricanes and Bostons of Fighter Command.

This was carried out before the first raiding troops reached the landing beaches at Dieppe.

It was just getting light when the Spitfires and Hurricanes dived down on the German heavy batteries south of Dieppe.

The moment the British forces began to disembark on the beaches Spitfire squadrons arrived over the boats to form a protective umbrella over the landing.

While they were patrolling, Boston fighter-bombers went in to attack another heavy gun position to the east of the town to prepare the way for the assault troops.

Their attacks were followed by Hurricane bombers which gave attention to a heavy four-gun battery, one and a half miles south of the town.

Fighter squadrons attacked enemy gun-posts and other defence positions on the headland of Dieppe.

MINESWEEPER ON FIRE

An early report received at the Headquarters controlling all the aircraft in the operation was from a Spitfire squadron which said a minesweeper was on fire a few miles north of Dieppe.

Hurricane bombers which attacked another four-gun battery a mile south of Dieppe had to fly through a hail of "flak". It came from the centre of the town, from ships in the harbour, and from the east and west cliffs.

Fighter squadrons, diving low through the hail of bullets and shells, attacked gun emplacements on the beach time after time, and then dived low to send cannon-shells into the A.A. batteries on the Casino.

An American Eagle squadron of Fighter Command reported that a 4,000-ton ship was ablaze in the harbour.

"Guy Fawkes Day wasn't in it", said a Spitfire pilot, describing the flak, smoke flares and bombs dropping as the troops landed on the beaches.

Throughout the fore-noon fighter squadrons flying in relays kept up constant protective patrols over the Dieppe area while bomber squadrons with strong fighter escort dealt effectively with troublesome gun positions.

One Hurricane bomber squadron detailed to silence a coastal gun battery which had been firing continuously scored direct hits on the position in a series of low level attacks, and left fires blazing.

Another bomber squadron, attacking a further heavy gun position, was itself attacked by 25 enemy fighters but succeeded in dropping its bombs on the target and fighting its way out.

"THE BATTERY WENT UP"

A Spitfire pilot who was part of a fighter escort to one of these bombing raids said:

"There was a battery to the west of the town firing consistently and bashing at one little ship. Suddenly the whole battery went up in a huge orange flame which burned for half a minute. These guns fired no more."

/Meanwhile

Meanwhile Abbeville aerodrome, a German fighter base some 40 miles east north-east of Dieppe, was receiving the attention of Flying Fortresses of the U.S. Army Air Forces. Escorted by Spitfire fighter squadrons, the U.S. bombers concentrated their attacks on aerodrome buildings and hangars many of which were destroyed.

A Belgian fighter squadron found itself involved in a general melee high above Dieppe.

This squadron saw two fires west of the town and a big building on the dock in flames. Another building was seen to be ablaze.

A Spitfire squadron of the U.S. Army Air Force patrolling the Dieppe area was continuously engaged by about 25 Focke-Wulf 190s. As they fought, two R.A.F. Spitfires squadrons engaged above them in dogfights of their own.

When the re-embarkation of our land forces was well under way, Fighter Command's score of enemy aircraft shot down had mounted to 69 aircraft destroyed.

#### AIR "UMBRELLA"

A vast number of fighter and fighter-bomber sorties had been carried out by late afternoon and hour after hour saw the procession of our fighters crossing and recrossing the Channel maintaining a vast protecting "umbrella" over the returning convoys. To add to the German confusion other aircraft were sent out to lay down a smoke screen.

When our troops began to embark the Germans threw in a variety of aircraft, from Me. 110s and Dornier 215s to the latest bomb-carrying FW.190s. Some of the Focke-Wulfs carried Italian markings.

Dorniers, Junkers, Heinkels, Messerschmitts and Focke Wulfs fell to our pilots' guns in combats ranging from almost sea level to 20,000 feet.

Time after time the fighter pilots intercepted formations of bombers and either drove them away from the returning convoys or shot them down.

#### POLES AND CZECHS

The Germans threw in large numbers of heavy bombers in a bid to get the ships, and two Polish squadrons on "umbrella" patrol found the scene almost reminiscent of the Battle of Britain. They waded into a formation of fighters and bombers and returned home with several successes.

A Czech squadron returned from one patrol claiming a long string of fighters and bombers severely damaged if not destroyed.

The third American Eagle squadron found Dieppe covered in a pall of smoke. Scarcely a single patrol came back without stories of combats with fighters or bombers, or both, and one Spitfire squadron which went out to escort Hurricane bombers reported that they were unable to see the result of the bombing because of the smoke drifting from the town of Dieppe.

In addition, British and Canadian squadrons of Army Co-operation Command, flying Mustang aircraft, took a notable part in the operations. Their main task was reconnaissance.

Throughout the day an almost continuous procession of these aircraft was leaving and arriving. The pilots reported the State of the battle to the British and Canadian Army Air Liaison officers.

While the primary task was to get information and bring it back again, the Mustangs were engaged in several combats and had their successes.

Never before have ground forces been provided with such air support, and the enemy were compelled to fight on a large scale for the first time since the Battle of Britain. The air operations had two aspects, the direct support of our troops and the intensive air battle.

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