

expeditionary air force, Mediterranean command and India command. During the year 1943 we grouped these squadrons together within each command as far as their operational role permitted. As a result of this move we have a bomber group, fighter wings, reconnaissance wing, and a number of auxiliary units.

The following statistics will give you a general idea of the Royal Canadian Air Force squadrons' participation overseas in the war against the enemy during 1943 and to the middle of February, 1944:

Sorties flown .....	38,544
Operational hours flown .....	129,461
Tons of bombs dropped .....	21,990
Enemy aircraft destroyed .....	208
Enemy aircraft probably destroyed and damaged .....	162
Locomotives destroyed .....	150

To which must be added enemy U-boats, merchant vessels, tugs, barges, military installations, motor vehicles, transports of all kinds, et cetera.

A very large number of operational sorties were flown and a large tonnage of bombs dropped, bearing in mind that seventeen squadrons were converted from obsolescent to modern aircraft during the year, during which period they were of necessity out of the line. For example, at the beginning of 1943 the majority of our bomber squadrons were equipped with two-engined medium bombers of the Wellington class and before the end of the year had been converted to heavy four-engine aircraft. You will readily appreciate that it is a considerable undertaking to convert a squadron from Wellington to Halifaxes or Lancasters, involving as it does additional crew members and the necessity of making old crews conversant with and competent on the new equipment. Due to these conversions to larger aircraft a substantial increase in the tonnage dropped was shown during the later months of 1943. An increase which is each month being exceeded as the Royal Canadian Air Force's participation with the Royal Air Force in the round the clock attack on Germany is speeded up.

**Fighter squadrons.** Our day fighter and fighter reconnaissance squadrons, operating from bases in the United Kingdom under the command of the allied expeditionary air force and fighter command, are grouped together into Royal Canadian Air Force fighter wings and a Royal Canadian Air Force reconnaissance wing.

These wings are employed on offensive sweeps over the continent against the enemy. They provide protection to bombers of the air forces of the British empire and of the

United States army air force on daylight attacks against continental targets. They also undertake close escort duties, convoy patrols, air-sea rescue flights, interception patrols and general reconnaissance flights.

During the period 1st January, 1943, to 11th February, 1944, these wings and squadrons flew 21,965 operational sorties, destroyed 158 enemy aircraft and probably destroyed or damaged 135 others. In addition to these successful attacks on enemy aircraft, many locomotives, railway yards, enemy ships, motor vehicles, military installations, trains, et cetera, were damaged.

**Intruder and night fighter squadrons.** Royal Canadian Air Force intruder and night fighter squadrons are operating under the operational control of the Royal Air Force fighter command. These squadrons are employed on offensive duties against enemy targets on the Continent and on the defensive protection of Great Britain against enemy day and night raiders.

These squadrons have carried out 2,056 operational sorties, during which they have destroyed forty-two enemy aircraft and probably destroyed or damaged twenty-four others, to say nothing of some eighty-one locomotives.

**Bomber squadrons.** At 0001 hours, 1st January, 1943, the Royal Canadian Air Force assumed responsibility for a bomber group within the Royal Air Force bomber command. As I have already mentioned, the majority of these squadrons were equipped with medium twin-engined aircraft at this time, and during the year converted to and are now operating on heavy four-engined aircraft.

Shortly after the formation of the Royal Air Force pathfinder force, the Royal Canadian Air Force assumed its share of responsibility in this group. The purpose of the pathfinders, is to mark the route of the main body and then to indicate the target with special flares to enable the main force to drop its bombs in the correct spot. This particular work is highly specialized and the Royal Canadian Air Force is making a name for itself in this field.

Some idea of the extent to which the Royal Canadian Air Force bomber group has participated in bomber command's devastating offensive against the enemy's vital centres of war industry may be gathered from a list of the main targets attacked during the first thirteen months of the group's existence. The effect of the high explosive and incendiary loads released by its aircraft was felt by more than forty important manufacturing and communications centres, seaports, shipbuilding yards, submarine bases, et cetera, in Germany, Italy and occupied France.