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ROYAL AIR FORCE.

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COMMAND ROUTINE ORDERS

BY

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PART I - ADMINISTRATIVE

A.52

SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY

Men and Women of Bomber Command.

More than 5½ years ago, within hours of the declaration of War, Bomber Command first assailed the German enemy.

You were then but a handful. Inadequate in everything but the skill and determination of the crews for that sombre occasion and for the unknown years of unceasing battle which lay beyond horizons black indeed.

You, the aircrews of Bomber Command, sent your first ton of bombs away on the outbreak of war. A million tons of bombs and mines have followed from Bomber Command alone. From Declaration of War to Cease Fire a continuity of battle without precedent and without relent.

In the Battle of France your every endeavour bore down upon an overwhelming and triumphant enemy.

After Dunkirk your Country stood alone - in arms but largely unarmed - between the Nazi tyranny and domination of the world.

The Battle of Britain, in which you took a great part, raised the last barrier strained but holding in the path of the all-conquering Wehrmacht, and the bomb smoke of the Channel ports choked back down German throats the very word "Invasion" not again to find expression within these narrow seas until the bomb-disrupted defences of the Normandy beach-heads fall to our combined assault.

In the long years between much was to pass.

Then it was that you, and you for long alone, carried the war ever deeper and ever more furiously into the heart of the Third Reich. There the whole might of the German enemy in undivided strength, and - scarcely less a foe - the very elements, arrayed against you. You overcome them both.

Through the desperate years, undismayed by any odds, undeterred by any casualties, night succeeding night, you fought. The Phalanx of the United Nations.

You fought alone, as the one force then assailing German soil, you fought alone as individuals - isolated in your crew stations by the darkness and the murk, and from all other aircraft in company.

Not for you the hot emulation of high endeavour in the glare and panoply of martial array. Each crew, each one in each crew, fought alone through black nights rent only, mile after continuing mile, by the fiercest barrages ever raised and the instant sally of the searchlights. In each dark minute of those long miles lurked menace. Fog, ice, snow and tempest found you undeterred.

In that loneliness in action lay the final test, the ultimate stretch of human staunchness and determination.

Your losses mounted through those years. Years in which your chance of survival through one spell of operational duty was negligible. Through two periods, mathematically nil. Nevertheless survivors pressed forward as volunteers to pit their desperately acquired skill in even a third period of operations, on special tasks.

In those 5 years and 8 months of continuous xxxxxxxxxxxx battle over enemy soil your casualties over long periods were grievous. As the count is cleared those of Bomber Command who gave their lives to bring near to impotence an enemy who had surged

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swift in triumph through a Continent, and to enable the United Nations to deploy in full array, will be found not less than the total dead of our National Invasion Armies now in Germany.

In the whole history of our National Forces never have so small a band of men been called to support so long such odds. You indeed bore the brunt.

To you who survive I would say this. Content ourselves and take credit with those who perished, that now the "Cease Fire" has sounded countless homes within our Empire will welcome back a father, a husband or a son whose life, but for your endeavours and your sacrifices, would assuredly have been expended during long further years of agony to achieve a victory already ours. No Allied Nation is clear of this debt to you.

I cannot here expound your full achievements.

Your attacks on the industrial centres of Northern Italy did much toward the collapse of the Italian and German Armies in North Africa, and to further invasion of the Italian mainland.

Of the German enemy two to three million fit men, potentially vast armies, were continuously held throughout the war in direct and indirect defence against your assaults. A great part of her industrial war effort went towards fending your attacks.

You struck a critical proportion of the weapons of war from enemy hands. On every front.

You immobilised armies, leaving them shorn of supplies, reinforcements, resources and reserves, the easier prey to our advancing Forces.

You eased and abetted the passage of our troops over major obstackles. You blasted the enemy from long prepared defences where he essayed to hold. On the Normandy beaches. At the hinge of the battle of Caen. In the jaws of the Falaise Gap. To the strongpoints of the enemy-held Channel ports, St. Vith, Houffalize, and the passage of the Rhine. In battle after battle you sped our armies to success at minimum cost to our troops. The Commanders of our land forces and indeed those of the enemy, have called your attacks decisive.

You enormously disrupted every enemy means of communication, the very life-blood of his military and economic machines. Railways, canals and every form of transpor fell first to decay and then to chaos under your assaults.

You so shattered the enemy's oil plants as to deprive him of all but the final trickle of fuel. His aircraft became earthbound, his road transport ceased to roll, armoured fighting vehicles lay helpless outside the battle, or fell immobilised into our hands. His strategic and tactical plans failed through inability to move.

From his war industries supplies of ore, coal, steel, fine metals, aircraft, guns, ammunition, tanks vehicles and every ancillary equipment dwindled under your attacks.

At the very crisis of the invasion of Normandy, you virtually annihilated the German naval surface forces then in the Channel, a hundred craft and more fell victim to those three attacks.

You sank or damaged a large but yet untotalled number of enemy submarines in his ports and by mine-laying in his waters.

You interfered widely and repeatedly with his submarine training programmes.

With extraordinary accuracy, regardless of opposition, you hit and burst through every carapace which he could devise to protect his submarines in harbour.

By your attacks on inland industries and coastal ship yards you caused hundreds of his submarines to be still born.

Your mine laying throughout the enemy's sea lanes, your bombing of his inland waters, and his Ports, confounded his sea traffic and burst his canals. From Norway throughout the Baltic, from Jutland to the Gironde, on the coasts of Italy and North Africa you laid and relaid the minefields. The wreckage of the enemy's naval and merchant fleets litters and encumbers his sea lanes and dockyards. A thousand known ships, and many more as yet unknown, fell casualty to your mines.

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You hunted and harried his major warships from hide to hide. You put out of action, gutted or sank most of them.

By your attacks on Experimental Stations, Factories, Communications and Firing Sites you long postponed and much reduced the V. weapon attacks. You averted an enormous further toll of death and destruction from your country.

With it all you never ceased to rot the very heart out of the enemy's war resources and resistance.

His Capital and near 100 of his cities and towns including nearly all of leading war industrial importance lie in utter ruin, together with the greater part of the war industry which they supported.

Thus you brought to nought the enemy's original advantage of an industrial might intrinsically greater than ours and supported by the labour of captive millions, now set free.

For the first time in more than a century you have brought home to the habitual aggressor of Europe the full and acrid flavours of war, so long the perquisite of his victims.

All this, and much more, have you achieved during these 5½ years of continuous battle, despite all opposition from an enemy disposing of many a geographical and strategical advantage with which to exploit an initial superiority in numbers.

Men from every part of the Empire and of most of the Allied Nations fought in our ranks. Indeed a band of brothers.

In the third year of war the Eighth Bomber Command, and the Fifteenth Bomber Command, U.S.A.A.F. from their Mediterranean ~~mmkmx~~ bases, ranged themselves at our side, zealous in extending every mutual aid, vieing in every assault upon our common foe. Especially they played the leading part in sweeping the enemy fighter defences from our path and, finally, out of the skies.

Nevertheless, nothing that the crews accomplished - andit was much and decisive - could have been achieved without the devoted service of every man and woman in the Command.

Those who tended the aircraft, mostly in the open, through six bitter winters . Endless intricacies in a prolonged misery of wet and cold. They rightly earned the implicit trust of the crews. They set extraordinary records of aircraft serviceability.

Those who manned the Stations, Operational Headquarters, Supply lines and communications.

The Pilots of the Photographic Reconnaisance Units without whose lonely ventures far and wide over enmy territory we should have been largely powerless to plan or to strike.

The Operational Crew training organisation of the Command which through these years of ceaseless work by day and night never failed, in the face of every difficulty and unpredicted call, to replace all casualties and to keep our constantly expanding first line up to strength in crews trained to the highest pitch of efficiency; simultaneously producing near 20,000 additional trained aircrew for the raising and reinforcement of some 50 extra squadrons, formed in the Command and despatched for service in other Commands at home and overseas.

The men and women of the Meteorological Branch who attained prodigious exactitudes in a fickle art and stood brave on assertion where science is inexact. Time and again they saved us from worse than the enemy could ever have achieved. Their record is outstanding.

The meteorological reconnaissance pilots, who flew through anything and everything in search of the feasible.

The Operational Research Sections whose meticulous investigation of every detail of every attack provided data for the continuous confounding of the enemy and the consistent reduction of our own casualties.

The scientists, especially those of the Telecommunications Research Establishment, who placed in unending succession in our hands the technical means to

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resolve our problems and to confuse the every parry of the enemy. Without their skill and their labours beyond doubt we could not have prevailed.

The Works Services who engineered for Bomber Command alone 2,000 miles of runway track and road, with all that goes with them.

The works Staff, Designers and Workers, who equipped and re-equipped us for Battle. Their efforts, their honest workmanship, kept in our hands indeed a Shining Sword.

To all of you I would say how proud I am to have served in Bomber Command for 4½ years and to have been your Commander-in-Chief through more than three years of your Saga.

Your task in the German war is now com leted. Famously have you fought. Well have you deserved of your country and her Allies.

(Signed) A.T. HARRIS.

Air Chief Marshal,
Commanding-in-Chief.
BOMBER COMMAND.