

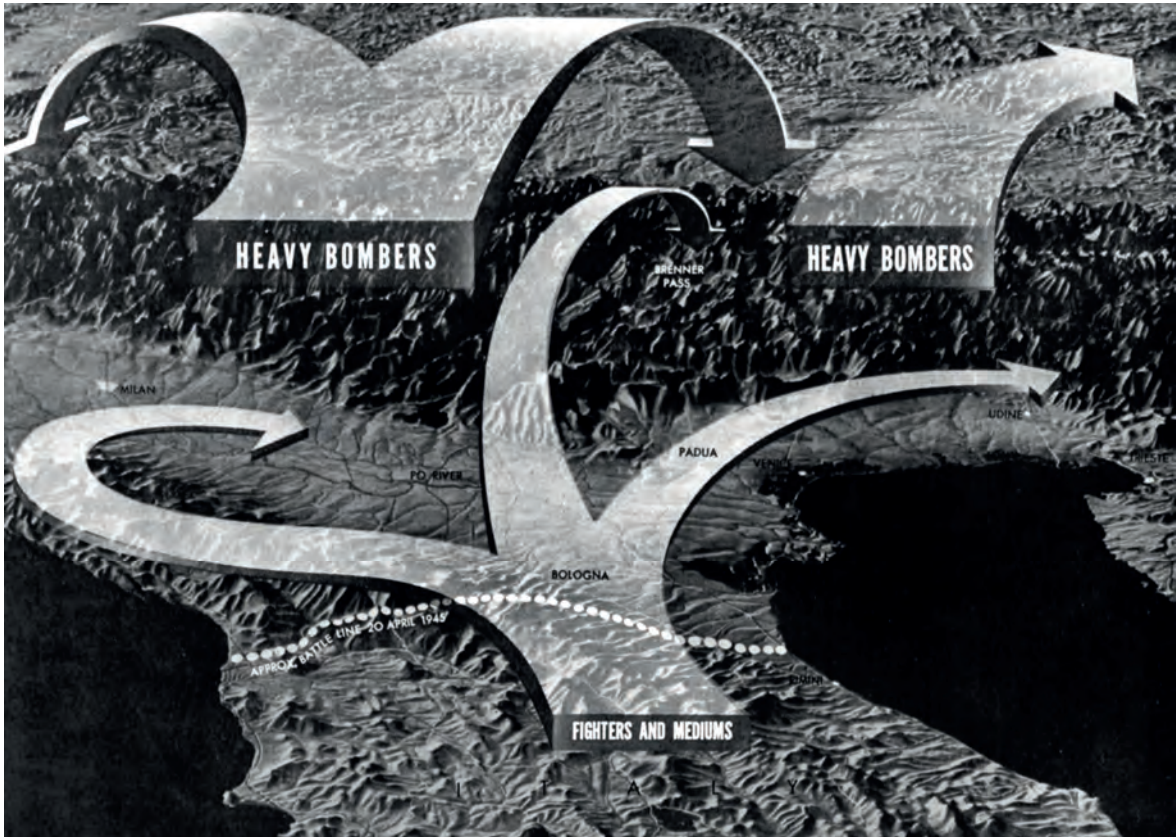


It was not always wet and uncomfortable: the airfield of 2nd Bomb Group, 20th Bomb Squadron, in Amendola on 19.IV.45 was an idyllic location with grazing sheep. (HF)

Prioritized, the 15th USAAF was ordered to fulfill the following tasks:

1. Destroy the German Luftwaffe, both in the air and on the ground.
2. Participate in the Combined Bomber Offensive "Point Blank". This was the definition of the cooperation between the American and British bomber forces aimed at crushing the German Reich: the British primarily attacked cities and the civilian population by night, the Americans bombed strategically important targets such as industrial and transportation facilities, refineries, armaments plants and the like by day.
3. Support ground troops in Italy, either directly – for example, by destroying the Monastery of Monte Cassino on February 15, 1944, a linchpin of the German "Gustav Line" – or indirectly by attacking German supply lines, in particular across the Brenner Pass.
4. Weaken German positions on the Balkans.

Fulfillment of those tasks was accomplished in an outstanding manner and we were to feel the effects; what Greater Germany was able to throw into the defense was pitiful.



The American concept for attacking Austria from Italy: support the advance of the ground troops with fighter-bombers and tactical bombers, and then to smash targets across the Alps in Austria, South and Central Germany with strategic bombers. (HF)

It was a massive challenge of logistics to supply and service this huge armada with fuel, bombs, ammunition and all other types of equipment; it was achieved in magnificent style and with growing intensity.



Standard maintenance work on aircraft of the 15th USSAF in Italy. On the left, engine maintenance on a B-17 G Flying Fortress on 28.II.45; on the right, ground crew are working on a P-51 C Mustang, its engine cowlings have all been removed to simplify the task. (HF)