forces in both the European (British-based) and Mediterranean (based primarily in Italy) Theaters, establishing a separate tactical and strategic air force in each theater. The argument for creating two strategic forces was that it would permit bombers to reach targets inaccessible from Britain, divide the German defenders, lessen the congestion of aircraft and units in England, and use Italian bases where the weather was better. Top U.S. leaders such as Arnold, Spaatz, Doolittle, and Eisenhower favored this scheme, while Eaker, commander of the Eighth, and Harris, head of RAF Bomber Command, opposed it. Eaker anticipated supply and maintenance problems and noted that weather was most critical over the targets, not over the bases. He also pointed out that only a few targets were closer to Italian bases. In addition, bombers operating out of Italy would have to cross the Alps going and returning, a much more daunting obstacle than the English Channel. Nevertheless, on 1 November 1943 the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the scheme. (3)

**Common Elements and Differences**

The Eighth and Fifteenth had many common elements and at first glance the two forces appeared to be essentially the same. Their personnel were trained in the same training centers, their equipment was essentially the same, they shared and attempted to apply the same doctrine, they pursued the same goals, and they bombed similar targets, sometimes the same targets. Both faced the same problems of weather, aircraft malfunctions, and of course German flak and fighters. It would seem the only difference was that one unit was based in England and mainly bombed targets in Germany, while the other was based in Italy and primarily bombed targets in southern Europe.

This impression, however, is only valid at the most casual level. The Eighth was about twice the size of the Fifteenth in terms of numbers of units and aircraft; at its peak it had forty heavy bomber and fifteen fighter groups compared to the Fifteenth’s twenty-one heavy bomber and seven fighter groups. (4) Thus the Eighth flew nearly twice as many sorties and dropped just over twice as many tons of bombs as did the Fifteenth. The English-based airmen also had the advantage of superior facilities. Many of the Eighth’s airfields were long-established compared with the recently constructed fields in Italy, many of which used PSP (Pierced Steel Planking). As a result,