



On January 28, 1942, the Eighth Air Force was activated in the former National Guard Armory in downtown Savannah, Georgia. Its mission held two critical components. The first, destroy the German Luftwaffe to gain air superiority over Europe. The second, help bomb and destroy Germany's war production: factories, transportation systems, refineries, air fields and fortifications throughout Nazi-controlled Europe. Achieving both would make a cross-Channel land invasion of Continental Europe possible.

Lieutenant General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, United States Army Air Force Commander, chose Major General Carl Spaatz to command the Eighth Air Force and later named him commander of all

United States Army Air Forces in Europe. Brigadier General Ira Eaker was first head of VIII Bomber Command and later named Commander of the Eighth Air Force. Brigadier General Frank "Monk" Hunter was named head of VIII Fighter Command. Eaker left first for England on February 4, 1942 to set up the Eighth's logistic base of supply and repair depots, air fields, living quarters, etc. needed to support what would become the largest, most powerful air force on Earth while Spaatz stayed behind to manage the plane and crew assignments.

East Anglia, an area of farm land north of London, was chosen to become the home of these approximately one hundred 8th AF bomber and fighter airfields. In early May 1942, General Spaatz, thirty nine officers and three hundred forty eight enlisted men arrived to join Eaker in England to begin the daunting task of readying the airfields. Later that month another eleven thousand men sailed to England and the Eighth AF. Eighth Air Force Command worked closely with the English Royal Air Force (RAF) to set up the Eighth's infrastructure and mission support. Many of the RAF units used to support 8th AF missions in the beginning were later replaced by American support units. There was tremendous cooperation, friendship and respect between America and England through the entirety of the war.



Finally, on July 1, 1942 the first aircraft, B0in 41-9085, assigned to the Eighth AF arrived in England for the 97th Bomb Group.