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OPERATIONS IN BURMA AND NORTH-EAST INDIA FROM  
 16th NOVEMBER, 1943 TO 22nd JUNE, 1944.

*NOTE.*—A set of maps for this Despatch is on separate sale at 1s. 0d. net. This set of maps also covers the operations described in the other Army and Air Despatches of the Burma Campaign from 16th November, 1943 to 12th September, 1945.

*The following Despatch was submitted to the Secretary of State for War on the 19th June, 1945, by GENERAL SIR GEORGE J. GIFFARD, G.C.B., D.S.O., A.D.C., Commander-in-Chief, 11 Army Group, South-East Asia Command.*

PART I.—INTRODUCTION.

1. This Despatch covers the operations in Burma and North-East India between the 16th November, 1943, the date on which the Supreme Allied Commander,\* South-East Asia, assumed responsibility from the India Command, and the 22nd June, 1944, the date on which our lines of communication from Manipur Road (Dimapur) to Imphal were reopened, after the defeat of the Japanese forces at Kohima. By this date, also, the enemy had been cleared from the area north of Kamaing, Mogaung and Myitkyina by the Chinese-American forces under General Stilwell,† and a re-adjustment of our dispositions to meet monsoon conditions had been made in Arakan. Thus a definite phase of the campaign may be said to have ended. The Despatch also gives an account of the administrative situation and certain major changes in our organization during the period.

*Forces allotted and assigned to South-East Asia Command (S.E.A.C.).*

2. The formation of the South-East Asia Command necessitated a reorganization of the system of command of the land forces. Until then, the Eastern Army had been under the command of the Commander-in-Chief, India,‡

who was responsible for the conduct of operations in Burma and Assam. The assumption of command by the Supreme Allied Commander entailed the formation of 11 Army Group Headquarters and of Fourteenth Army Headquarters, which then assumed command of the operations which had, up to then, been directed by me as G.O.C.-in-C., Eastern Army.

I was appointed to command 11 Army Group and Lieut.-General W. J. Slim,\* was selected for command of Fourteenth Army.

The undermentioned formations, etc., previously under India Command, were allotted to South-East Asia Command:—

FOURTEENTH ARMY.

4 Corps.

Lieut.-General G. A. P. Scoones.†

17 Indian Light Division.

20 Indian Division (less 32 Brigade—joined end of November).

23 Indian Division.

15 Indian Corps.

Lieut.-General A. F. P. Christison.‡

5 Indian Division (less 9 Brigade—joined in December).

7 Indian Division.

26 Indian Division (less 4 Brigade—joined in February, 1944).

81 (West African) Division (less 3 Brigade, allotted to Special Force).

\* Now Vice-Admiral The Earl Mountbatten of Burma, K.G., P.C., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., K.C.B., D.S.O.

† The late Lieut.-General Joseph W. Stilwell, United States Army.

‡ General (now Field-Marshal) Sir Claude J. E. Auchinleck, G.C.B., G.C.I.E., C.S.I., D.S.O., O.B.E.

\* Now Field-Marshal Sir William J. Slim, G.B.E., K.C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

† Now General Sir Geoffrey A. P. Scoones, K.C.B., K.B.E., C.S.I., D.S.O., M.C.

‡ Now General Sir A. F. Philip Christison, Bart., G.B.E., C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

## CEYLON ARMY COMMAND.

Lieut.-General H. E. de R. Wetherall.\*

11 (East African) Division.

99 Indian Infantry Brigade.

Royal Marine Group, Mobile Naval Base  
Defence Organization (less one A.A.  
Brigade assigned to S.E.A.C. in  
Southern India).

## INDIAN OCEAN BASES.

<i>Addu Atoll</i>	} Containing small garrisons.
<i>Diego Garcia</i>	
<i>Cocos Islands</i>	

In addition, the following troops in India were assigned to South-East Asia Command, being allotted later :—

Headquarters 33 Indian Corps (Lieut.-General M. G. N. Stopford).†

2 British Division.

19 Indian Division (Did not arrive until October, 1944; in the interim 25 Indian Division was substituted for it).

36 Indian Division (This consisted of two British brigades, and of divisional troops, some of which were Indian; but it was called "Indian" for deception purposes. It was renamed 36 British Division in July, 1944, and I shall refer to it as such throughout this Despatch).

3 Indian Division (Cover name of Major-General Wingate's‡ "Special Force": consisting of six Long-Range Penetration Brigades; 14, 16 and 23 British Infantry Brigades; 77 and 111 Indian Infantry Brigades and 3 (West African) Infantry Brigade. It contained Gurkha but no Indian units. I shall refer to it hereafter as "Special Force").

50 Indian Tank Brigade.

3 Special Service Brigade (consisting of No. 5 Commando and No. 44 Royal Marine Commando).

Details showing when these "assigned" formations were actually transferred to my command, and allotted to Fourteenth Army, will be given later in this Despatch.

In November, 1943, 15 Corps, consisting of 7 Indian Division and 36 Brigade of 26 Indian Division and 81 (West African) Division (which was just moving in), was holding a line in Arakan approximately from Teknaf to Taung Bazaar facing 55 Japanese Division. The enemy Division had its Headquarters in Akyab, its 143 Regiment was on a line from Maungdaw to Buthidaung, with 112 and 213 Regiments disposed in depth behind this line, in reserve.

4 Corps, composed of 17 Indian Light Division and 20 and 23 Indian Divisions, was responsible for the defence of the Imphal and Tiddim areas of the Central front. The Light Division (48 and 63 Indian Infantry Brigades) was holding the Fort White—Tiddim area against 214 and 215 Regiments of 33 Japanese Division, which was disposed generally along the line of the Chindwin River as far north as Mawlaik. 23 Indian Division was in the Imphal Plain, and had under command 80 Indian Infantry Brigade of 20 Indian Division which was coming forward in relief of 23 Indian Division.

\* Now Lieut.-General Sir H. Edward de R. Wetherall, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

† Now General Sir Montagu G. N. Stopford, G.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

‡ The late Major-General O. C. Wingate.

In the north of Burma (designated Northern Combat Area Command—N.C.A.C.) the American-trained and equipped Chinese 22 and 38 Divisions under the command of General Stilwell were in the general area between Ledo and Maingkwang towards which they were advancing. They were opposed by 18 Japanese Division, with 114 Regiment between Myitkyina and Sumprabum, 56 Regiment around Katha and Rail Indaw, and 55 Regiment between Wuntho and Shwebo.

In no sector was there close contact but we, and the Japanese, were patrolling to gain contact; and in Arakan we were preparing for an offensive. The Headquarters of Fourteenth Army was at Barrackpore (later at Comilla) and of 15 Japanese Army at Maymyo.

*Geography and Topography.*

3. Before discussing the numerous plans which were made and discarded for various reasons and describing the operations which actually took place, it is essential to appreciate the extent to which all operations for the capture of Burma are affected by peculiar topographical and climatic conditions such as exist in few other parts of the world.

4. The Indo-Burmese frontier, from where it leaves the sea in Arakan, near Maungdaw, until it joins the Sino-Thibetan frontier on the Salween River north of Myitkyina, follows a series of mountain ranges, the general axes of which run from north to south. The main features of these mountain ranges are their precipitous sides and the fast flowing rivers in the deep valleys. These mountains are at their maximum heights at the north-east end of the frontier, where they rise to heights of ten to twelve thousand feet and more. Their height gradually declines as the ranges run southwards, though in the Naga and Chin Hills there are many peaks of 9,000 feet, until they reach the lesser ranges in Arakan where the maximum heights are seldom over 2,000 feet. The main spine, however, of this range continues southwards, parallel to the coast, towards the mouth of the Irrawaddy and finally disappears just north of the town of Bassein. Throughout these ranges the hillsides are for the most part covered with jungle so dense that it is not possible to move without cutting paths. In the whole length of this mountain system there are only three roads, none of them of good quality, over which wheels can pass. These are the Ledo—Myitkyina road, the Dimapur—Imphal—Tamu road and the Taungup—Promé road, none of which has been completed to a standard which will carry heavy traffic all the year round.

5. East and south of this great mountain system lies the main river basin of the Irrawaddy with its principal tributary the Chindwin to the west and almost parallel to it until it joins the Irrawaddy at Myingyan. The Irrawaddy forms a delta which begins just north of Henzada, but the main mouth reaches the sea just south of Rangoon. The Irrawaddy is navigable by various craft, according to the time of the year, as far north as Myitkyina; and the Chindwin can be navigated up to Tamanthi. These two great rivers provide, therefore, first class lines of communication throughout the year. The valley of the Irrawaddy and other tributary valleys provide access for a system of railways which, starting

at Rangoon, pass through Mandalay to Myitkyina. There are various branches such as that from Rangoon to Prome and from Sagaing to Ye-U. The road system in Burma is reasonably good, especially from Ye-U southwards. Communications, therefore, in Burma, may be said to be adequate for the maintenance and movement of large forces. It is clear, therefore, that it should always be possible for the Japanese with these communications to concentrate superior forces to meet any advance by us over the three indifferent roads over the mountains.

6. In Arakan the "chaungs" (or waterways) with which the coastal strip is intersected are almost as great an obstacle as the hills and the jungle. In dry weather they can be forded by infantry at low water, but at other times a six-foot tide makes them difficult to cross. In the rains of the South-West monsoon they are swollen by flood water which makes them greater obstacles. The banks are usually muddy and crumbling. Bridging presents considerable difficulties and special arrangements have to be made at each for the passage of tanks and mechanical transport.

7. There are other difficulties also for our forces operating southwards in Arakan. The two main rivers, the Mayu and the Kaladan, with their tributaries, converge on the main Japanese base at Akyab. By his command of the entrance to these two waterways, the enemy was able to make use of excellent water communications which were denied to us.

#### *Climatic Conditions.*

8. The climate of Burma is affected by the two monsoons, the North-East in the winter and the South-West in the summer. The influence of the former produces fine dry weather with little cloud and conditions are good for operations both on land and in the air. The South-West monsoon on the other hand, blowing as it does across the Bay of Bengal, is heavily charged with moisture which it discharges over Burma and Eastern Bengal during the months of May to October. Precipitation of rain, especially on the Arakan coast, is extremely high, reaching in places as much as 200 inches. The climate varies too, according to the altitude, the temperatures above 3,000 feet being reasonably low and above 5,000 feet cool and invigorating. In the lowlands along the coast, the temperatures are high, with a high humidity which makes campaigning in those areas exhausting.

9. Malaria is endemic throughout the country below 3,000 feet but it is worse in some areas than others; for instance, the Kabaw Valley is reputed to be one of the worst malarial valleys in the world. There are two seasonal increases in the rate of infection, one at the beginning of the monsoon in May, and the other at the end of the monsoon in October and November. Much has been done to reduce the casualties from malaria during the past two years and the ineffective rate amongst all troops has fallen very considerably. This is due to much improved personal discipline, efficient draining of bad areas on the lines of communication, training and various medical prophylactic measures which have been introduced. In such a climate there are other

diseases which are products of the conditions; dysentery, the worst effects of which have been reduced by discipline and good hygiene measures, skin diseases of various types, especially during the rainy season, and scrub typhus which is endemic in various areas.

10. While the South-West monsoon has a bad effect upon the health of troops and causes them also acute discomfort from wet, its really worst effect is upon the communications in the country. The heavy rain turns Arakan, a rice growing area, into a muddy swamp quite impassable to wheeled vehicles unless the roads have proper foundations and surfaces capable of withstanding heavy rain. In Assam and Burma there is very little stone, most of the hills, which are clothed in forest or bamboo, being composed of a soft shale quite useless for road making. The making of roads is, therefore, very difficult as they have to be built to a high standard in order to stand up to the torrential rains which fall between May and October. The heavy rains also make the ordinary native tracks very nearly impassable as they get so slippery on the steep hillsides that neither man nor beast can stand up on them. Finally, as can be imagined, these heavy rains make the rivers and streams into very formidable obstacles, all of which have to be bridged to allow the passage of troops and transport.

Indeed, campaigning in the monsoon in Burma may be said to be one of the most arduous operations anywhere in the world today.

#### *The Japanese Soldier.*

11. The Japanese soldier is fanatically brave when ordered to succeed or die, yet he is liable to panic when surprised or in doubt. His planning is bold yet he is at a loss if plans go wrong. Although most secretive and careful, he will go into action carrying diaries and military papers. He takes infinite pains to conceal his positions and then nullifies the result by talking in them at night. An expert in the use of ground and in silent movement, yet his patrol work is frequently bad. Although bold at infiltrating into, and then rushing a position from an unexpected direction, he becomes easily nonplussed by determined resistance. He is good at laying fixed lines of fire and skilful in the use of snipers, yet he is a bad shot.

12. Our successes in the fighting have, in no small measure, been due to the fact that we have taken full advantage of the enemy's weak points. The results have been gratifying, not only tactically, but also psychologically: signs are not lacking that the blind obedience, fanatical courage and determination to die rather than surrender, which the Japanese soldier has hitherto displayed, may not withstand the continuous reverses which he is now suffering and will suffer in the future. That this fact has been recognised by the Japanese High Command, and is causing some misgiving, has been seen in captured orders.

This must not be taken to mean, however, that the Japanese soldier now surrenders easily. His whole up-bringing and outlook make him regard capture as the worst disgrace. Conse-

quently, even when cornered, he not only sells his life dearly, but will frequently commit suicide rather than surrender. The mopping-up of captured enemy positions is, therefore, a slow process, as every Japanese officer and man has usually to be ferreted out and killed. Since the crushing defeat inflicted on the enemy in the Imphal battle, and the failure of his lines of communication, there have been a few surrenders of unwounded men, but they are still rare.

13. To sum up, I would say that, although his discipline and training are good, the Japanese soldier has shown himself lacking in initiative and self-reliance when his leaders have been killed and he is faced with the unexpected. The very fact that surrender has now made its appearance, though on a very small scale, in an army where such a thing was undreamt of, is not without significance.

#### *The Outlook in November, 1943.*

14. Strategically, Burma is important for three reasons:—

(a) The only way in which we can, either now or in the immediate future, send help to China is through or over Burma.

(b) Burma is the principal area in which we can contain and destroy considerable Japanese forces.

(c) In our hands Burma provides a stepping stone for operations further east or south. In Japanese hands it is a base for operations against the eastern frontier of India.

15. As a result of decisions reached at the Quebec Conference, the Chiefs of Staff directed the Supreme Allied Commander to undertake operations in Burma with two objects:—

(a) The security and improvement of the air ferry route to China and the establishment of land communications with China.

(b) The close and continuous engagement of Japanese land and air forces, so as to cause attrition and diversion from the Pacific Theatre.

To execute these orders meant, of course, offensive operations whenever and wherever possible; but it was obvious that the main operations to secure Northern Burma, without which complete security of the China air route could not be ensured, would have to be launched from Imphal, Yunnan and Ledo.

16. As our resources were limited, it was essential to decide on the southern limits of such an offensive. Examination showed that only the capture of the Shwebo—Mandalay area would fulfil the instructions of the Chiefs of Staff but this was beyond our resources, either in troops or transport aircraft. Plans of a less ambitious nature which would obey the spirit of the instructions to the Supreme Allied Commander had, therefore, to be considered.

17. The plan generally approved at Quebec was:—

(a) The capture by Long-Range Penetration Forces of the Katha—Indaw area which would be then held by a division, flown in or moved overland across the Chindwin with light equipment.

(b) The capture of Mogaung—Myitkyina by Chinese-American forces from Ledo with possible exploitation southwards.

(c) An advance on Bhamo—Lashio by Chinese forces from Yunnan.

The plan which I had thought gave the best chance of success was made in September 1943, when the Commander-in-Chief, India, was still in command of the operations and I was G.O.C.-in-C., Eastern Army. This plan aimed at forcing a crossing of the Chindwin on the Imphal Front, and the introduction with the aid of airborne troops of a force of all arms, including tanks and medium artillery, into the Central Burma plain in the Ye-U area. A detailed examination of the many problems which such a plan created, among them the capacity of the Assam lines of communication, and the delays in the concentration programme caused by the breaching of the main railway line to Calcutta from the west by the Damodar River, showed that the launching of such an offensive before early March was not possible.

This plan was submitted to the British Chiefs of Staff, who preferred an airborne operation against Katha—Indaw because there would be closer support and co-operation with Chinese forces advancing south from Ledo and across the Salween. This plan, approved at the Cairo conference in November 1943, had eventually to be abandoned as the necessary transport aircraft were not forthcoming. It became necessary, therefore, to make a less ambitious plan.

18. It was not easy, within the means at our disposal, even partially to achieve the objects given by the Chiefs of Staff. After several alternatives had been examined and rejected, I submitted to the Supreme Allied Commander, in December, the following plan.

(a) An advance down the Kabaw Valley towards Kalewa—Kalemyo; the construction of an all-weather road, via Tamu, as far as possible towards Yuwa and Kalewa on the Chindwin.

(b) The use (initially) of three Long-Range Penetration Brigades in the Katha—Indaw area.

The objects I had in mind were:—

(i) To achieve a greater, though not complete measure of security for the China air route, by forcing the enemy further south.

(ii) To obtain greater freedom of action for offensive operations in 1944-45, when more resources might be expected.

(iii) To destroy the maximum possible number of Japanese land and air forces.

(iv) To gain some control of Upper Burma by the employment, in conjunction with our main forces and those of the Chinese Army in India (C.A.I.), of Long-Range Penetration Troops to confuse the enemy and inflict casualties.

19. This plan was approved by the Supreme Allied Commander and was referred by him to the Chiefs of Staff early in December. It depended for success not only on overcoming strong enemy defences in the Tiddim area, but also on progress in road construction. At the end of January, the Chiefs of Staff were told that we did not anticipate reaching the Kalewa—Kalemyo area before the monsoon. Actually the all-weather road of a two-way standard

had only reached a point ten miles south of Palel, though it was all-weather one-way for a good many miles south of that point, when the enemy launched their March offensive.

20. Concurrently with planning for operations on the Imphal Front, planning for operations in Arakan was, of course, in progress. Several plans, which included amphibious operations against Akyab in conjunction with an advance down the Mayu Peninsula, were examined, but all were eventually abandoned either for lack of resources or for other reasons, and I was thrown back on a plan for an advance with the limited objective of the Maungdaw—Buthidaung road, and the mouth of the Naf River. Once the latter was captured, supplies could be brought in by sea, not only to Maungdaw but also to Teknaf.

21. Other plans for amphibious operations, among them one for the capture of the Andamans, were also examined, but all were in the end rejected as the resources for them were needed for more important operations in other theatres of war.

I was finally compelled, therefore, to limit the operations of the Army to a short advance in Arakan and advances down the Tiddim road and Kabaw Valley with the object of capturing the Kalewa—Kalemeyo area.

## PART II—OPERATIONS.

### *Operations by 15 Indian Corps in Arakan.*

22. In November, 1943, we were in contact with the Japanese in Arakan, the Imphal Front and in North Burma (N.C.A.C.).

The situation in Arakan at the end of the monsoon of 1943, was that we held positions covering Cox's Bazaar with 26 Indian Division on the general line Teknaf—Taung Bazaar, while the enemy held the Maungdaw—Buthidaung road. The advance to close contact started in the middle of October.

23. Between October and the end of December other changes were made in our dispositions :—

(a) 26 Indian Division was relieved by 7 and 5 Indian Divisions.

(b) 7 Indian Division moved across the Mayu Range, complete with all its guns and lorries. A fair-weather road was built over the Ngakyedauk Pass, which lies north-west of the village of that name, to provide the necessary communications.

(c) 5 Indian Division took over the western sector of the front.

(d) Our rear areas were re-adjusted.

(e) Finally we drove in the enemy's out-post line.

At the end of December, 5 Indian Division held from the sea to the crest of the Mayu Range, while 7 Indian Division had moved over complete into the Kalapanzin Valley. The stage was set for an attack on the main enemy position.

24. Early in January, I issued an Operational Instruction to the Commander, Fourteenth Army, Lieut.-General W. J. Slim, directing him to secure the mouth of the Naf River; Maungdaw—Buthidaung; and exploit success to the maximum. These instructions were based on an Operational Directive issued

by the Supreme Allied Commander. My objects were, first, to improve our general situation in Arakan, and, second, to contain and destroy Japanese forces.

25. A period during which certain subsidiary operations were undertaken to secure the necessary jumping-off places for our offensive then followed. The enemy defended these positions stubbornly.

On the 15th January, the dispositions of the forward elements of 15 Indian Corps (Lieut.-General A. F. P. Christison), were as follows :—

**5 Indian Division:** Maungdaw—Magyi Chaung—Rehkat Chaung—Point 1619, with a brigade in reserve west of the Mayu Range.

**7 Indian Division:** One brigade in the hills north and north-east of Htindaw. One brigade Tatmakhali to Sinohbyin, with forward troops on the Letwedet Chaung. One brigade Kyaukit *massif*—Pyinshe—Windwin, with a detachment on the Saingdin Chaung.

**81 (West African) Division:** Daletme—Satpaung area, in the Kaladan Valley.

**Tanks:** One regiment, in support of 5 Indian Division.

**Medium Artillery:** One battery in support of each division.

26. The enemy had turned the area about the Tunnels, through which the road runs in its passage through the highest portion of the Mayu Range between Maungdaw and Buthidaung, into a fortress with two strong buttresses—Razabil on the west and Letwedet on the east.

The general plan of attack was framed to capture these two buttresses in turn and surround the garrison of the Tunnels fortress. 5 Indian Division was to take Razabil and 7 Indian Division Buthidaung, thus cutting in behind the Letwedet buttress. 81 (West African) Division was to advance down the Kaladan River to capture Kyauktaw, with the ultimate object of cutting the Kanzauk—Htizwe road, which was the enemy's main lateral line of communication between the Kaladan and Kalapanzin Valleys.

27. The main offensive was launched on the 19th January, and, despite strong opposition, our preliminary operations against the enemy's outposts were very successful. The original plan had included a sea landing by 2 British Division further south down the Mayu Peninsula. As we did not wish to drive the Japanese into the toe of the Peninsula until 2 British Division had effected a firm lodgement, our attack on the main enemy positions was deferred to synchronize with the sea landing, the date of which could not be put forward as it was governed by the state of the tide and moon. Unfortunately, the craft required for the amphibious operation were taken away and, therefore, this "right hook" had to be cancelled. Thus our land offensive had been held up to no purpose. By the 4th February, however, the attack on Razabil had achieved a measure of success, but the main position still held out. Progress elsewhere had been steady, but slow.

28. It was at this moment that the enemy launched his counter-attack and our offensive

had to be delayed until the enemy attack had been defeated. This took some four weeks, but when it was finished the attack on our original objectives was continued.

29. This Japanese counter-attack merits attention, both on account of the boldness of its conception and also on account of the firm stand made by 7 Indian Division which was surrounded and attacked from all sides. The Division was supplied by air and thus did not have to retire when its lines of communication were cut. This was the main cause of the defeat of the Japanese counter-attack.

30. In the last week of January, identification of a fresh enemy regiment was obtained. On the 1st February, documents ordering the J.I.Fs. (Indians fighting for the Japanese) to concentrate east of the Mayu Range at once for an operation were captured. I was in Fourteenth Army area at that time and discussed the position with the Army Commander. We concluded that these moves indicated a counter-attack by the Japanese, but were unable to decide upon the exact form it was likely to take, though it seemed probable that an attempt to outflank 15 Indian Corps was the most probable. We agreed that if 5 and 7 Indian Divisions held their positions against a frontal attack, while at the same time preparing an all-round defence to meet attacks from the flank or rear, it would be possible to destroy any Japanese outflanking detachment with the reserves. I placed 36 British Division, which had arrived at Chittagong for another operation, at General Slim's disposal and he ordered one brigade of this Division, together with 26 Indian Division, which was in Fourteenth Army reserve in the Comilla area, to move south at once. He ordered all formations in the forward areas to hold their ground. He made arrangements for the packing for air transport of three days' rations, ammunition and medical stores and with the R.A.F. for their delivery by air to 7 Indian Division, if called for. These preparations had a far-reaching effect on the battle.

31. When the enemy's blow actually fell on the 4th February, it so happened that preparations for transferring our offensive from the west to the east of the Mayu Range were in progress. One infantry brigade of 5 Indian Division had moved over to the east of the range to free one brigade of 7 Indian Division for this operation; thus 15 Indian Corps had available at that time a reserve infantry brigade and a tank regiment east of the range, which was the flank menaced by the Japanese threat.

32. The Japanese plan, captured early in the battle, was to pass through and round the left flank of 7 Indian Division, take Taung Bazaar from the east, and cut the Bawli Bazaar—Razabil road. This move completed, the Japanese intended to attack 7 Indian Division from the rear and drive it through the Ngakyedauk Pass. This would isolate 5 Indian Division which would in turn be mopped up and the remnants driven over the Naf River. So certain were they of success, that the Tokyo radio announced victories at the appropriate times, according to their pre-arranged timetable, regardless that this time-table bore no relation to the facts.

33. The attack against 7 Indian Division began with the appearance in rear of its left flank

at Taung Bazaar of an enemy regiment, with elements from two others, which had passed partly round our left flank through the jungle and partly through the positions held by 114 Brigade. Almost simultaneously, strong frontal attacks were made by two regiments in the area north and north-west of Buthidaung. A brigade of 7 Indian Division, which had been relieved by 5 Indian Division, but had not yet been committed to their new task, was sent north to check the enemy advance southwards from Taung Bazaar. In this it partially succeeded, but, owing to the closeness of the country and the enemy's numerical superiority, was outflanked by a party of the enemy which overran the Headquarters of 7 Indian Division in the early morning. The Divisional Commander, however, regained control of the operations that evening. Brigades and divisional troops had been ordered to prepare positions capable of all round defence as soon as the enemy's presence in Taung Bazaar had been discovered. 9, 33 and 114 Brigades, therefore, dug in on their positions, while another defended area which contained Divisional H.Q., part of 89 Brigade and Divisional Troops was hastily prepared in the area of Awlanbyin and Sinzweya. These areas were called "boxes" during the battle.

34. The enemy cut the Ngakyedauk Pass and closely invested these boxes. One Japanese battalion also crossed by the Maunghnama Pass further north and began to harass 15 Indian Corps Headquarters and the rear of 5 Indian Division from a position in the hills on the east of the road. But they made no further headway, although on the 9th February the situation in 7 Indian Division's defended area (Sinzweya) was difficult and continued so for several days. 26 Indian Division, which had been moved up to Bawli Bazaar by 15 Indian Corps, now began to make its presence felt, but it was evident that its operations, in conjunction with those of 5 Indian Division from the west to clear the Ngakyedauk Pass, would take time.

35. Supply dropping to the various boxes began on the 9th February, and an airstrip for the evacuation of casualties was ready by the 12th at Taung Bazaar, which had by then been cleared of the enemy.

36. In spite of continuous attacks, supported by the fire of 150-mm guns and by fighter bombers, the enemy were unable to reduce any of our strongholds. On the 12th the Commander, 7 Indian Division issued orders to take the offensive to prevent any further hostile infiltration and the escape of any enemy already in his rear. The enemy was now "in the bag" and it was the task of 7 Indian Division to keep him there until destroyed.

37. Severe fighting continued with the Japanese trying to stem the advance of 26 and 5 Indian Divisions and overcome what their orders described as "the hysterical defence" of the areas of 7 Indian Division. Hysterical or not, it may one day be called historical as it was the first successful reply to Japanese large-scale infiltration tactics in jungle country. The bitterness of the fighting is illustrated by the remark made by a veteran of Dunkirk, who spent two days on the beaches; he stated he would willingly have spent a fortnight at Dunkirk if he could have been let off with two days in 7 Indian Division's defended area.



38. On the 16th February, 36 British Division began to relieve 26 Indian Division to enable it to concentrate east of the Mayu Range.

39. By the 20th February, the shortage of food and ammunition, severe casualties and lack of any tactical success began to have their effect upon the Japanese forces, and they began to try to escape, at first in dribbles and then in larger parties. Many of them failed to run the gauntlet and were wiped out. By the 24th February the Ngakyedauk Pass had been re-opened and the Japanese offensive, heralded as the beginning of the march on Delhi, had been defeated.

40. It is convenient at this stage to examine the enemy's plan and analyse the cause of its failure.

The Japanese have always supported the doctrine that the best defence is the attack. They proved it to their satisfaction in Arakan in the Spring of 1943 and they confidently expected to prove it again in 1944. Their attacks have usually taken the form of an enveloping movement combined with infiltration and frontal attacks.

These tactics achieved success in 1943, partly owing to the lack of training of our forces and partly owing to the fact that it was not possible, for lack of supplies, for forward troops to hold out when their lines of communication were cut.

41. The Japanese plan was bold, typical of their readiness to take risks, and its execution went smoothly for the first thirty-six hours. It then began to fail, at first slowly but with increasing momentum until disaster overtook it. The main reasons for this failure were:—

(a) The Japanese conviction that we should retire if our rear was threatened, as we had done in 1943. His whole plan was based on this assumption. A captured directive, by the Commander of 55 Divisional Infantry Group, ended with this significant phrase:—"As they have previously suffered defeat, should a portion of the enemy waver the whole of them will at once get confused and victory is thus certain".

(b) The fine fighting spirit of all ranks who, in this the first large encounter with the Japanese this year, showed their superiority in jungle-fighting when well trained and adequately equipped.

(c) The ability to supply forward troops by air.

Contributory factors to its failure were our successful use of tanks over ground much of which was regarded as "untankable", the use of medium artillery, and our continual harassing from the air of the enemy's water-borne and road communications. The Japanese under-estimation of their enemy and their conviction that they would capture large quantities of supplies in the first few days, led them to neglect their arrangements for the supply of food and ammunition and their troops carried only five days' food. We defeated all their attempts to bring food or ammunition forward. In consequence, their troops soon began to suffer from hunger and starvation and shortage of ammunition. Their casualties amounted to 4,500 killed and wounded out of a total of 7,000 men.

The basic reason for our victory was, however, the refusal of our troops, or any portion of them, to waver, and their unflinching courage in exceptionally trying circumstances.

42. Mopping up in the thick mountainous jungle was a difficult and necessarily slow operation, and it was not until the 5th March that we were able to resume the interrupted course of our offensive. Razabil was captured by 5 Indian Division on the 12th March. It was found to be a position of great strength, complete with underground rooms, etc. The Tunnels position was surrounded by the 19th March, and was finally captured by 36 British Division some days later. Meanwhile, 7 Indian Division had taken Buthidaung and had also captured the outer ring of the Kyaukit defences. These defences were evacuated by the enemy on the 23rd March and considerable equipment fell into our hands. On the 25th, about 500 enemy again infiltrated to the Ngakyedauk area, but were dealt with expeditiously.

43. At the end of March, 25 Indian Division began to take over from 5 Indian Division and the latter was transferred by air to 4 Corps' front.

44. Fighting to improve our positions continued throughout April against strong opposition. As a result of successful actions by 26 Indian Division in the Buthidaung area in the first week in May, we withdrew from Buthidaung, as planned, to positions more suitable for the monsoon; forward brigades of 15 Indian Corps taking up positions on the general line Godusara—Tunnels Area—Taung Bazaar.

45. 36 British Division was withdrawn to Shillong in Assam to rest and refit, with a view to its being transferred to General Stilwell's command in North Burma at a later date. 7 Indian Division, two brigades moving by air, also left Arakan in April for 4 Corps' front.

By the end of May, therefore, we were holding Arakan with 15 Indian Corps, comprising three divisions. Our monsoon dispositions being:—

*25 Indian Division:* In the Tunnels Area, covering the Maungdaw—Buthidaung road, up to and including, the East Tunnel.

*26 Indian Division:* One brigade in the Bawli—Goppe—Taung Bazaars area. One brigade at Taungbro and the third at Cox's Bazaar.

*81 (West African) Division:* Concentrating at Chiringa.

We also had detachments on the Sangu River as flank protection against a small Japanese force which had infiltrated into that area.

46. The term "monsoon dispositions" does not imply static defence. We occupied positions of our own choice, selected for their strength and to preserve the health of our troops by avoiding the worst malarial areas. The necessity, during the monsoon in Arakan, to evacuate certain flooded districts and take up positions which are defensively strong and accessible for supplies, did not mean that every opportunity for local offensive action was not taken.

*Results of the Arakan Campaign.*

47. As already mentioned (paragraph 24), the objects of the Arakan campaign were to improve our general situation and engage and destroy Japanese forces. Our success had led me to hope that we could clear the whole of the Mayu Peninsula, but the need for providing reinforcements (5 and 7 Indian Divisions) for the Imphal Front frustrated this.

Although this further advance was not possible, the objects of the campaign had been generally achieved. Maungdaw had been firmly established as a base; the Mayu Range, including the important Tunnels area, together with the eastern foothills, was firmly in our hands; and the lateral road was in daily use.

55 Japanese Division, despite reinforcements, had been outfought and was weak and tired. In spite of the reduction in the strength of 15 Indian Corps by three divisions (the 5th, 7th and 36th), operations after their withdrawal went according to plan. To sum up, the Japanese offensive, from which they confidently expected great results, had been defeated, and we had captured our objectives. Last, but not least, we had established a moral ascendancy over the enemy which promised well for the future.

*Operations in the Kaladan Valley.*

48. The Japanese threatened our left flank during the previous year's operations by advancing up the Kaladan River, and I was determined that this should not happen again. 81 (West African) Division was, in consequence, moved across into the Kaladan Valley to protect the left flank of 15 Indian Corps.

Our ability to supply troops by air made it possible for a division to operate down this valley, but the physical difficulties of moving into the valley were great. A jeep track 73 miles long had to be built from Chiringa to Daletme across four mountain ranges. It was begun on the 18th November and finished on the 17th January—an engineering feat which reflected the greatest credit on all ranks.

49. 81 (West African) Division concentrated in the Satpaung—Daletme area in January and started its move down the Kaladan at the end of that month. They captured Kyauktaw by the 3rd March and were then advancing on Apaukwa when a strong Japanese counter-attack developed from the south-east. The advance had to be stopped in order to meet it. The enemy captured our position near Kyauktaw and the Division withdrew to positions south of Kaladan Village. Thereafter, it continued its rôle of flank protection in the Paletwa area.

50. In April, this Division (less one battalion left at Paletwa, where it was joined by two battalions of Indian troops, one of which was withdrawn later) was moved westwards across the Arakan Yomas to the east of the Kalapanzin River, to provide closer protection to the left flank of 15 Indian Corps. Subsequently, it was withdrawn via Buthidaung—Taung Bazaar to the neighbourhood of Chiringa.

51. The battalion left in the Kaladan was later reinforced by Headquarters 6 (West African) Brigade and another battalion. One Indian battalion also remained in the area. The rôle of this force was to frustrate attempts

which the Japanese were making to infiltrate across the hills into the Sangu Valley. It was later withdrawn into this valley and, in June, was providing detachments along the Sangu River, which were successful in driving back, with considerable losses, small enemy forces which had penetrated this area.

*The Chin Hills.*

52. The link between Arakan and the Imphal Front is the Chin Hills; the strategic importance of which lies in the fact that it covers the approaches to Chittagong and Aijal, via Lungleh. It also flanks the Japanese lines of communication through Gangaw to Kalemoyo.

53. The Chin Hills and the Lushai Hills lying west of them, were garrisoned by two detachments of Levies, each with a stiffening of one regular battalion; Headquarters being at Aijal. The rôle of these detachments was to interrupt the enemy's communications and to hamper his movements in the area Aijal—Champai—Falam—Haka. Early in November 1943, however, just before the assumption of command by Admiral The Lord Louis Mountbatten, the enemy advancing in some strength, had, though they suffered severe casualties in gaining these minor successes, driven our Irregulars out of Falam and Haka and caused our regular troops to withdraw from Fort White.

54. Early in April, another battalion was added to the Chin Hills detachment, which then became the Lushai Brigade. This force has performed its task very satisfactorily, laying ambushes, obtaining information, and inflicting considerable losses. It was reinforced by an additional battalion in June, and ordered to interfere with the Japanese communications along the Imphal—Tiddim road.

*The Chindwin.*

55. 4 Corps (Lieut.-General G. A. P. Scoones), with Headquarters at Imphal, had been responsible for the defence of the Indian frontier east and south of Manipur since 1942. The area for which the Corps was responsible extended from its boundary with Northern Combat Area Command (N.C.A.C.) on the line Mawlu—Taro—Wakching (40 miles east of Jorhat) down to and inclusive of the Chin Hills. In November 1943, 23 Indian Division had its Headquarters at Tamu, and 17 Indian Light Division with its Headquarters was on the Imphal—Tiddim road at Milestone 102. 20 Indian Division, with its Headquarters at Shenam, about 10 miles south-east of Palel, was engaged in patrolling across the Chindwin. At the end of December the whole of this Division had been concentrated in the Tamu area, its Headquarters having moved forward to Sibong. This Division relieved 23 Indian Division which was withdrawn from the Imphal Plain for rest and training; having been in the forward area without relief since June 1942.

56. The task which I had allotted Fourteenth Army on this sector of the front was to carry out offensive operations with the objects of:—

(a) Clearing the Chin Hills as far as the foothills south-east of Tiddim.

(b) Dominating the area between the Yu and Chindwin Rivers, south of the Tamu—Sittaung road.



(c) Containing and killing Japanese in the Kabaw Valley and Atwin Yomas.

(d) Pushing forces across the Chindwin, if the Long-Range Penetration Brigades created a favourable situation.

57. On the 13th January, patrols reported considerable enemy activity east of the Chindwin, between Sittaung and Paungbyin, and also east of Homalin, some forty miles further up the river. This information, which supplemented previous air reconnaissance reports, indicated that the enemy might be preparing for an offensive.

58. On the 17th January, we attacked enemy positions at Kyaukchaw, eighteen miles south-east of Tamu in the Atwin Yomas, and there were other small operations in the same area during the month.

59. Throughout January and February, 17 Indian Light Division was continually engaged with the enemy in the Tiddim area; attack and counter-attack following each other in quick succession.

#### *The Japanese Offensive against Imphal and Kohima.*

60. During February, it became steadily more evident that the Japanese were preparing for an offensive across the Chindwin and from the area about Fort White against 17 Indian Light Division. The general situation remained unchanged until the 8th March, when the anticipated Japanese offensive was launched. This began with two main advances, one up the west bank of the Manipur River, the other northwards up the Kabaw Valley, from which Japanese columns moved westwards to cut the Imphal—Tiddim road. It was also apparent, from the enemy's dispositions, that he would probably launch an offensive farther north from the Thaukdut—Homalin area against Tamu, Ukhrul and Kohima.

61. Our dispositions at the beginning of March were :—

*50 Indian Parachute Brigade:* Kohima. This Brigade (less one battalion) had been flown in from India as a reinforcement to 4 Corps early in March.

*23 Indian Division:* One brigade in the Ukhrul area; the remainder south and south-east of Imphal.

*20 Indian Division:* On the Tamu road and in the Kabaw Valley.

*17 Indian Light Division* (two brigades only): Tiddim area.

62. On the 7th March, I had sent an instruction to the Commander, Fourteenth Army, of which the following were the main points :—

(a) A warning that the impending Japanese offensive against 4 Corps' area would probably be on a considerably larger scale than anything the enemy had yet attempted in Burma.

(b) An indication of the tactical difficulties of the situation, due to the fundamental weakness of our line of communication being parallel to the enemy's front along the Chindwin River.

(c) The strategical importance of the Imphal Plain: (i) as a base for the maintenance and operation of our air and land

forces, and (ii) its value to the Japanese as a base for attacks against the Surma Valley in Eastern Bengal and our Assam lines of communication. Attacks against Bengal would have an adverse and widespread moral effect; while interruption of the Assam lines of communication would seriously jeopardise both the Sino-American operations based on Ledo and the air ferry route to China. I pointed out that the enemy's effort without control of the Imphal Plain, would probably have to be confined to raids, owing to the indifferent communications and the paucity of food supplies in the hill tracts.

(d) The security of the Imphal Plain was his primary task.

(e) A confirmation of the authority I had recently given General Slim verbally that he might, if necessary, give ground in the Chin Hills and the Kabaw Valley. In this event, I stated he would be justified in using Long-Range Penetration forces to operate boldly against the enemy's flanks and communications.

(f) I stated that, apart from 25 Indian Division, Long-Range Penetration Brigades, and 50 Indian Parachute Brigade, immediate reinforcements for 4 Corps must come from Fourteenth Army sources, and that, therefore, preparations should be made for the quickest possible moves of troops to reinforce 4 Corps, although this might (i) limit the depth of our advance in Arakan, (ii) cause troops to be retained in Arakan longer than desirable and (iii) interfere with intended reliefs. 77 and 111 Long-Range Penetration Brigades were already in the Fourteenth Army area; 16 Long-Range Penetration Brigade was marching into North Burma, 14 and 23 Long-Range Penetration Brigades, and 3 (West African) Long-Range Penetration Brigade, were about to move into Fourteenth Army's area from India. I promised to investigate whether the projected moves of 14 and 23 Long-Range Penetration Brigades could be accelerated.

63. The relative dispositions of our own troops and those of the enemy and the topography of the country all combined to facilitate infiltration, which is the basis of Japanese tactics in fighting in close country. General Slim, therefore, decided very rightly, that to leave 17 Indian Light Division at Tiddim, and 20 Indian Division east and south of Tamu would not only give the Japanese excellent opportunities of cutting off these two Divisions, but would imperil the defence of the Imphal Plain which was his primary task.

He also appreciated that, if he could engage the Japanese forces in the neighbourhood of the Imphal Plain, he would impose upon them all the difficulties and disadvantages of a long line of communication over difficult country and preserve to himself the advantages of a short line of communication.

64. The G.O.C.-in-C. 4 Corps gave instructions to Commander, 17 Indian Light Division, that he was to withdraw if his line of communication was seriously threatened. The Commander, 17 Indian Light Division, not finding himself unduly pressed frontally, and not realising the extent to which the enemy were infiltrating behind him, postponed his retirement somewhat too long. 17 Indian Light

Division, therefore, became so closely involved that the Commander, 4 Corps had to make use of the greater portion of 23 Indian Division, his only reserve, to assist in extricating it. This had serious results as the forces defending Ukhrul were so reduced that the enemy was able to capture the place.

65. I had for many months been anxious to increase the strength of 4 Corps by another division; but the low capacity of the line of communication had prevented its maintenance in that area and I had to be content, therefore, with one extra brigade, 50 Indian Parachute Brigade, which was brought in early in March.

66. With the start of the Japanese offensive, administrative risks had to be taken and General Slim decided to move 5 Indian Division from Arakan to the Imphal—Kohima area. Its move by train and air began on the 19th March. Divisional H.Q., 9 and 123 Indian Infantry Brigades, were moved to Imphal and 161 Indian Infantry Brigade was moved to Dimapur. The move was finished on the 12th April.

The Army Commander also transferred 3 Commando Brigade from Arakan to Silchar early in April, with the rôle of operating along the track to Bishenpur.

Shortly after this, General Slim moved 7 Indian Division from Arakan (two brigades by air and one by rail): one brigade joining 4 Corps by the 18th April, whilst the Division less this brigade was allotted to 33 Corps, the Headquarters of which had been flown from India to the Dimapur area. 2 British Division was moved by air and train from Bombay to Dimapur, the move being completed between the 25th April and the 2nd May. 33 Corps then comprised 2 British Division, 7 Indian Division (less one brigade), one brigade of 5 Indian Division, 23 Long-Range Penetration Brigade, which had been brought forward from India by that time, and the equivalent of a regiment of tanks. It was later reinforced by a lorried infantry brigade.

67. The situation caused me some anxiety during this time and I was very grateful for the valuable assistance which was given me both by the Commander-in-Chief, India, and by General Stilwell. The former, with that unflinching readiness to help which he has always displayed, had put H.Q. 33 Corps, 2 British Division, H.Q. 21 Indian Division (late H.Q. 44 Indian Armoured Division), 268 Indian Lorried Infantry Brigade, two regiment of tanks and other troops at my disposal. General Stilwell undertook the defence of aerodromes and communications in an area agreed on between him and General Slim, deflecting Chinese troops for this purpose.

68. 17 Indian Light Division pulled out of Tiddim on the 17th March and, after hard fighting, in which the enemy suffered heavy losses, succeeded in cutting its way through to Imphal early in April. This Division in spite of many difficulties had succeeded in bringing through most of its transport and vital stores, together with its wounded during the withdrawal up the Tiddim road. The Silchar—Bishenpur track was cut by the enemy's advance.

On the 15th March, 15 Japanese Division crossed the Chindwin at Thaungdut and their 31 Division at Homalin and Tamanthi. 20 Indian Division was withdrawn to better positions north-west of Tamu, astride the road leading to Imphal.

A few days later, the enemy attacked 50 Indian Parachute Brigade at Ukhrul in force and after heavy fighting it was forced to withdraw fighting towards Imphal.

69. Early in April, we were forced to evacuate Kanglatongbi, astride the Dimapur road, about 15 miles north of Imphal, and thus lost the use of our lines of communication between the railhead at Dimapur and Imphal.

#### *4 Corps Operations on the Imphal Front.*

70. The plan of the Commander, 4 Corps on the 10th April was as follows:—

(a) To prevent the enemy gaining access to the Imphal Plain by either the Palel—Imphal or Tiddim—Imphal roads.

(b) To re-establish a force in the Ukhrul area and cut the enemy's line of communication from the east.

(c) To use the largest possible force offensively against either 15 or 33 Japanese Divisions in succession.

71. The successful withdrawal of 17 Indian Light Division and 20 Indian Division in the face of heavy pressure has already been mentioned. 20 Indian Division was now holding positions in depth along the Palel—Tamu road. The gallant delaying action of 50 Indian Parachute Brigade near Ukhrul had proved most useful, as it held up the Japanese advance down the Ukhrul—Imphal road for several days and thus gave time for the recently arrived 5 Indian Division to concentrate in this area.

20 Indian Division was now still further withdrawn in order to release troops for a counter-attack against the Japanese 15 Division, north-east of Imphal.

72. Determined enemy attempts against Imphal from the south and south-east continued, but were successfully withstood by 20 Indian Division. At the end of April, 23 Indian Division on the right, 5 Indian Division (less one brigade) in the centre, and a brigade of 17 Indian Light Division on the left were advancing north and north-east from Imphal, and had moved twenty-three miles up the track running north-east to Ukhrul and ten miles up the main road north to Kohima. (Imphal to Ukhrul is sixty-seven miles as the track goes and Imphal to Kohima is eighty-four miles.)

73. It was apparent from the enemy's efforts that he considered the capture of Imphal to be essential before the monsoon set in. By the first week in May, however, his advance had not only been checked, but forced back in all sectors, except in that of 20 Indian Division. This division had had to give ground slightly in the face of heavy attacks by the Japanese Yamamoto Force, composed of parts of 33 and 15 Japanese Divisions, up the Palel road.

74. Heavy fighting had been in progress in the area of Bishenpur, south-west of Imphal, for some time, and 33 Japanese Division had been pressing strongly against 17 Indian Light

Division. It was decided that the situation must be cleared up, as any further Japanese advance here would endanger not only Imphal itself but the neighbouring aerodromes upon which the air supply of 4 Corps entirely depended.

The Commander, 17 Indian Light Division decided, therefore, to engage the enemy closely south of Bishenpur, and simultaneously to make a flank movement with two battalions west of the Imphal—Tiddim road. These battalions cut the road behind the enemy positions which they then attacked from the rear. This attack, coming as it did simultaneously from the north and the south, took 33 Japanese Division by surprise and inflicted heavy casualties, though the nature of the country, lack of sufficient reserves and maintenance difficulties prevented decisive results.

75. While these actions were in progress 23 Indian Division had relieved 20 Indian Division on the Palel—Tamu road, south-east of Imphal, and had thrown back continuous enemy attacks. 20 Indian Division was transferred to the area east and north-east of Imphal, whence operating in two columns it continued the advance on Ukhrul. 5 Indian Division made slow progress northwards, astride the main road, and by the first week in June, had cleared the strong enemy position at Kanglatongbi, fifteen miles north of Imphal. During the succeeding fortnight, this Division advanced slowly in the face of strong opposition in difficult country and under most adverse weather conditions.

#### *Operations by 33 Corps in the Kohima Sector.*

76. Early in April, my main preoccupation had been the Japanese advance on Kohima which, if successful, would have threatened the Assam Railway, our main line communication with North-Eastern Assam, upon which General Stilwell's forces operating in North Burma and the air ferry route to China were both based.

77. When the scale of the Japanese offensive was disclosed and it was apparent that there was a threat to Kohima and that the road to Imphal was likely to be cut, it was clear that 4 Corps could no longer control operations in this area in addition to those to the south and north of Imphal. As a temporary measure, therefore, Kohima was placed under the Commander, 202 Line of Communication Area\*, and an extemporised headquarters was set up at Kohima under Colonel Richards†, who had formerly commanded an infantry brigade in 81 (West African) Division. Headquarters 33 Corps was meanwhile flown to Jorhat from India and moved forward from there to Manipur Road, where it arrived on the 8th April.

#### *The Siege of Kohima.*

78. The strength of the Japanese advancing on Kohima was originally estimated at three battalions, with possibly one more in reserve, and the orders given to Colonel Richards were to hold Kohima and to deny the area Jessami—Kharasom—Kohima to the enemy. It was thought unlikely that the Japanese could move a force greater than this through the Naga

Hills, whose tracks were narrow, steep and scarce.

On the 29th March, however, it had become evident that 31 Japanese Division was moving against the Kohima area.

79. Jessami and Kharasom cover the tracks leading to Kohima and Tuphema, the latter is on the main road some fifteen miles due south of Kohima. The enemy attacked Kharasom on the 27th March and Jessami the next day. The garrisons of these two posts, found by 1 Assam Regiment, put up a most spirited defence for several days and then made a gallant fighting withdrawal, which gained valuable time for the preparation of the defences of Kohima.

80. 161 Brigade of 5 Indian Division had concentrated at Manipur Road on the 30th March, and was sent to reinforce the Kohima garrison, but it was withdrawn to meet a reported enemy threat further north which menaced the Dimapur base. As the enemy closed in on Kohima, however, the Commander, 202 Line of Communication Area, sent back the 4th Battalion, The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment of that brigade to assist in its defence, and it arrived on the day on which the Japanese opened their attack. When it became apparent that the threat to Manipur Road from the east was not serious, and that, moreover, the enemy were making no attempt to cut the railway, although it would have been easy for them to do so by sending forward small demolition parties by forest tracks, the remainder of 161 Brigade less one battalion already in Kohima was again ordered forward towards Kohima. It advanced into the hills to within four miles of Kohima on the west, but, being itself engaged, was unable to reach the garrison, although two companies actually succeeded in fighting their way in on the 18th and proved a welcome reinforcement in the bitter fighting which occurred on that date.

81. The Japanese launched their attack on Kohima itself on the night 4th-5th April, using two regiments (the equivalent of two of our brigade groups) and pressed it incessantly for fourteen days. It was gallantly held by the garrison consisting of the 4th Battalion, The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment, the Assam Regiment, the Shere Regiment of the Maharaja of Nepal's Troops and a number of administrative units and men collected from the convalescent camp.

82. Ammunition and food were adequate, but the water ration had to be reduced to half-a-pint a man for some days as the enemy got astride the water pipeline on the 5th April and it was not till the 13th that a new source of water was fortunately discovered.

83. On the 11th, the Air Force was asked to drop water and mortar ammunition. Boxes of three-inch mortar bombs were dropped, some of which were delivered in error to the enemy. When the Japanese used them against the garrison it was reported that they had started using a new and most effective type of bomb.

84. On the 15th, and again on the 18th, the enemy made determined assaults, but were ejected from the footings they gained; the air support given to the defenders on these

\* Major-General R. P. L. Ranking, C.B., C.B.E., M.C.

† Now Brigadier H. U. Richards, C.B.E., D.S.O.

dates by bombing and cannon fire proving most helpful.

85. Kohima was relieved by 6 Brigade of 2 British Division on the 20th April. This Division had hard fighting before it was able to break through the defences which the enemy held astride the Dimapur—Kohima road and gain touch with the garrison which by that time had been driven on to one small hill called Summer Hill in the centre of the area.

86. I have dealt with this comparatively small operation in some detail, not only in justice to a gallant defence, but because the holding of Kohima was of great importance, and its successful defence proved to be the turning point in the campaign.

#### *The Relief of Imphal.*

87. H.Q. 33 Corps reached Dimapur on the 8th April. The general outline of the Commander's plan was as follows:—

(a) Cover the Manipur Road base.

(b) Capture Kohima area as a starting point for offensive operations.

(c) Operate offensively on the general axis of the Dimapur—Imphal road, as soon as the concentration of his forces permitted.

88. The Japanese held the Kohima area in strength except for Summer Hill. Their strongpoints were nearly, although as it proved not quite, inaccessible to our tanks: but Kohima was cleared of the enemy by the 2nd June by 2 British and 7 Indian Divisions, after some weeks of severe hand-to-hand fighting in which the Japanese lost heavily. Our casualties were not light. By the 6th June, we had captured the Aradura Spur, which covered the road some two miles south of Kohima.

89. While these operations were in progress, columns of 23 Long-Range Penetration Brigade of Special Force were clearing the country north-east and east of Kohima, and moving southwards by the jungle tracks on Jessami.

90. The capture of Kohima and the clearing of the difficult and hilly country which lies immediately to the east and south of it, marked the first step in our counter-offensive. The Japanese offensive against our base at Manipur Road had been driven back with very heavy losses to the enemy, and the threat to our road and rail communications in North-East Assam had been removed. There remained the urgent task of re-opening the road to Imphal.

91. Our dispositions at this time were:—

268 *Indian Lorried Infantry Brigade* (33 Corps): Holding Kohima.

23 *Long-Range Penetration Brigade*: Clearing Jessami area and moving southwards parallel to the Kohima—Imphal road.

2 *British Division*: Advancing south down the Imphal road from Kohima in pursuit of the retreating enemy.

7 *Indian Division*: Less 89 Brigade (still under 4 Corps), but with 161 Brigade (5 Indian Division) under command, operating on the left flank of 2 British Division.

92. The advance south from the Aradura Spur entailed severe fighting and our progress, especially that of our tanks, was hindered by

minefields covered by Japanese artillery; but, by the 21st June, the leading elements of 2 British Division had reached Milestone 102. As forward troops of 5 Indian Division from 4 Corps at this time were in the vicinity of Milestone 111, the gap between the two Corps had been reduced to nine miles.

93. 7 Indian Division, which had been operating through very difficult country east of the road, had naturally been unable to keep level with 2 British Division astride the road; but they had contributed greatly to its advance by capturing several enemy positions on the Japanese lines of communication leading east from the Imphal road, and had thus compelled the enemy to retire.

23 Long-Range Penetration Brigade operating further east, wide on the left flank of 7 Indian Division, caused further interference with the enemy's communications by cutting the Kharasom—Ukhrul track and other tracks to the southward.

94. At about 1245 hours on the 22nd June, 2 British and 5 Indian Divisions met at Milestone 109 from Dimapur (twenty-nine miles from Imphal) and the road to Imphal was open. 31 Japanese Division, which had been allotted the task of capturing Kohima and the base at Dimapur, had been severely defeated, and was shortly to meet with virtual annihilation.

95. I think the somewhat confused fighting may be more easily followed if I here briefly summarise the phases of the battle for the Imphal Plain. The main stages were:—

(a) The fighting withdrawal of 17 Indian Light Division and 20 Indian Division.

(b) The Japanese attack on Kohima.

(c) The rearguard action by 50 Indian Parachute Brigade from Ukhrul, and the making of a defensive position north-east of Imphal by 5 Indian Division.

(d) The further withdrawal by 20 Indian Division to shorten the southern front and thus enable troops to be released for the attack on 15 Japanese Division north-east of Imphal.

(e) The transfer of effort to the south to deal with 33 Japanese Division, and thus to clear the threat to Imphal from that quarter before launching a major offensive northwards, in co-ordination with the drive south by 33 Corps, to clear the Imphal—Kohima road.

(f) The operations to open the road, combined with the subsidiary operations to capture Ukhrul, which was the vital point on the lines of communication of 15 and 31 Japanese Divisions.

96. The elimination of the threat to our lines of communication in North-East Assam and the opening of the road from Kohima to Imphal ended a definite phase of the campaign. 31 Japanese Division had been so roughly handled that it had practically lost all fighting value. Similarly, the offensive value of the enemy's 15 and 33 Divisions had been greatly reduced by the very heavy losses they had incurred. A conservative estimate of the enemy's casualties in killed alone amounted to 13,500, which excluded losses by our air action. To this, of course, must be added their wounded

and the toll taken by disease, from which, on their own admission, they suffered severely. The total Japanese casualties on this front, after they crossed the Chindwin in March up till the middle of June, may safely be put at not less than 30,000. Against this, our own losses in killed, wounded and missing, from the 4th March to the 17th June totalled 12,525, of whom only 2,669 were killed. We captured a large amount of equipment, including nearly 100 guns.

97. The results achieved had been due to the determination and skill shown by all Commanders in surmounting difficulties and the fine fighting spirit displayed by the troops who had shown a marked superiority over the Japanese. 4 Corps was entirely dependent on supplies brought in by air and in spite of the splendid work of Air Transport Command, which is mentioned later in this Despatch, there were occasions when our stocks of ammunition ran dangerously low. Rations too had to be cut although the numbers of mouths to be fed had been greatly reduced by the movement out of Imphal, by road, before the Japanese cut it, and subsequently by air, of every man whose presence was unnecessary. In spite of these handicaps the spirit of 4 Corps remained as high as ever and officers and men fought splendidly throughout the long battle. This, coupled with the determination and vigour displayed by 33 Corps, led, in the words of the Supreme Allied Commander, to the Japanese Army suffering a defeat greater than ever before in its history.

#### *Fort Hertz.*

98. This isolated outpost, in the extreme north of Burma, was originally occupied by a small detachment in September 1942, in order to protect the landing ground and to raise and support Kachin Levies to operate towards Myitkyina. These Levies have carried out many very successful operations and, indeed, at one time, became such a thorn in the side of the enemy that the Japanese made a direct threat against Fort Hertz. To counter this, the 4th Battalion, The Burma Regiment was flown there from India at the end of November 1943.

99. In November 1943, the Americans agreed to maintain the Fort Hertz garrison by air, as there was no road link with India. Command of this detachment was transferred to General Stilwell in February 1944.

100. These troops, including the Levies, after many skirmishes, subsequently made a steady advance down the Mali Hka Valley (which constitutes the headwaters of the Irrawaddy), in conjunction with General Stilwell's forces moving south from Ledo. They did most useful work, inflicting many casualties on small enemy parties, and by the 19th March they had occupied Sumprabum. From the beginning of June they co-operated with the Chinese-American troops in the Myitkyina area.

#### *Northern Burma-Ledo-Myitkyina.*

101. The rôle allotted to the Chinese troops which were under the command of General Stilwell in India, in January, was to advance on Mogaung and Myitkyina with the object of covering the construction of an overland

route to China via Ledo and Myitkyina and of securing the air route from Assam to China.

This force, known originally as the Chinese Army in India (C.A.I.), which had been trained with the help of American officers and equipped with American material, comprised initially 22 and 38 Chinese Divisions, and was joined later by 30 Chinese Division. These three divisions were subsequently reinforced by 50 and 14 Chinese Divisions, which were flown from China in April and May respectively. The force was completed by the addition of U.S. 5307 Provisional Regiment, consisting of three battalions of Long-Range Penetration troops which had trained with Major-General Wingate's Special Force in India and were now being used as medium-range penetration battalions. Known officially by the code name "Galahad Force", they were more usually referred to—after the name of their commander—as Merrill's Marauders.

102. General Stilwell, the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, South-East Asia Command, personally assumed command of these troops in the Field. They never formed part of my Army Group, but General Stilwell agreed, until C.A.I. forces had captured Kamaing, to accept instructions from General Slim, who was, of course, under my command.

103. On the 17th May, C.A.I. had reached the outskirts of Myitkyina and captured the airfield, Galahad Force having contributed much to this very notable advance. Kamaing was captured on the 16th June and Mogaung invested. The situation in the Mogaung Valley on the 22nd June was that the Japanese in the Kamaing area were being forced into the southern end of the valley; while Special Force was attacking their supply lines in the area north of Indaw. Special Force also had a detachment, known as "Morrisforce", blocking the Myitkyina—Bhamo road.

104. Supply of all forces was largely by air, as owing to the weather the construction of the Ledo Road did not keep pace with the advance of the troops.

#### *Special Force.*

105. I have already mentioned Special Force. This Force consisted of six Long-Range Penetration Brigades, which were specially selected, trained, organised and equipped by the late Major-General Wingate to give them the maximum mobility in jungle fighting. The plan was to concentrate this Force within a circle of forty miles radius from Indaw, with the objects of:—

(a) Assisting the advance of the Chinese-American forces on Myitkyina by drawing off and harassing the Japanese forces opposing them, and by preventing reinforcements reaching them.

(b) Creating a situation which would enable the Chinese forces to advance from Yunnan.

(c) Causing confusion, damage and loss to the enemy forces in North Burma.

I hoped that General Wingate's operations might also interfere with the Japanese advance against Imphal.

106. The operations of both Special Force and the Sino-American forces moving south from Ledo were co-ordinated by the Commander, Fourteenth Army.

107. The operations of Special Force began on the night of the 5th-6th March, and between then and the night of the 10th-11th March nearly six hundred Dakota and one hundred glider sorties carried 77 and 111 L.R.P. Brigades, totalling 9,500 troops and 1,100 animals, into the heart of Japanese-occupied Burma. The initial rôle of these glider-borne forces was to secure sites for and to prepare landing strips west of the Irrawaddy. Last minute air reconnaissance disclosed that one of the two potential strips selected, thirty-five miles north-east of Katha (called "Piccadilly") had been deliberately obstructed. General Sim, who was present at the starting point when this news was received, was faced with the difficult decision whether to launch the operation, since it appeared that the enemy had got wind of it, or to postpone it until fresh plans could be made. He decided to let the operation go forward and on the first night the landings were confined to one strip only, called "Broadway", which was some twenty-seven miles south-east of Hopin on the Myitkyina—Mandalay railway.

108. The landings at Broadway, and subsequently on another strip ("Chowringhee") some twenty miles south-south-east of Katha, achieved complete surprise and until the 12th March no ground opposition was met. Air attacks did not begin until the 10th and were directed against the Chowringhee strip which, by that time, had fulfilled its purpose and had been abandoned. The Broadway strip was not attacked until the 13th March, when our fighters were present and A.A. defences had been established. The Japanese lost about 50 per cent. of their attacking aircraft.

109. Our losses during the initial fly-in amounted to only one per cent. of the total personnel transported. The only animal casualty was one mule. The smallness of these losses is remarkable in view of the fact that, at the peak period of the fly-in, double the planned effort was achieved, and aircraft were coming in and taking off at the rate of one "landing" and one "take-off" every three minutes.

110. A special American air force, called No. 1 Air Commando, had been formed to co-operate both tactically and administratively with Special Force. It was a composite force comprising some 250 aircraft—long- and short-range fighters, light bombers, Dakotas and gliders. This force carried out the hazardous and difficult glider-borne operations, flying fully laden gliders, some in double tow, over 9,000 foot mountains by night, a distance of 300 miles to the selected area. Equally important was the action of the fighters and bombers of this force, before, during, and after the actual landings, against targets which it was vital to attack. No. 221 Group, R.A.F., also did splendid work in these operations. I wish to express my appreciation of the work carried out by these air forces, without whose assistance Special Force could not have operated.

111. 77 and 111 L.R.P. Brigades were followed by 14 L.R.P. Brigade, whose fly-in was completed by the 4th April. 3 (West African) Brigade, which formed part of Special Force,

was to have operated in the same way as the other brigades of the Force. But before the operations actually started, it was decided to split up the brigade and attach one battalion to each of the 77, 111 and 14 Brigades, to act as a garrison for the stronghold which was to form the base of each of the three above-mentioned brigades. 3 (West African) Brigade completed its fly-in by the 12th April. These formations used airstrips established near Marhnton ("Aberdeen"), twenty-seven miles north-north-west of Indaw; Mawlu ("White City"), twenty miles north of Katha, and in the Hopin area. During this second phase some 6,000 troops, 850 animals and 550,000 lbs. of stores were transported with the very slight casualties of 15 killed (all in one aircraft) and six injured.

112. General Wingate originally estimated that about twelve weeks would be the maximum period which troops would be able to withstand the rigorous conditions under which they would be called upon to operate. His original plan, therefore, was (i) to march in 16 L.R.P. Brigade from Ledo, because the route was known to be practicable and this formation would be able to co-operate more closely with General Stilwell's forces advancing in the same area, and (ii) later to fly in 77 and 111 L.R.P. Brigades, retaining the other brigades as a "second wave" which might, or might not, be used to operate during the monsoon, in relief of the three brigades sent in initially. This plan was later modified, however, as General Slim decided to fly in 14 and 3 (West African) Brigades early in April. On the 5th February 16 Brigade marched in from Ledo as planned, via Singkaling Hkamti, after a long march during which it had a few minor engagements, and began operations in the Indaw area in March. 23 L.R.P. Brigade was sent into Burma, but was subsequently employed by the Army Commander in the Naga Hills and Manipur area in co-operation with 33 Corps.

113. It is impossible, in a report of this nature, to give a detailed summary of the varied activities of the five brigades of Special Force which operated independently in North Burma. The damage they inflicted on the enemy, both human and material, was considerable, comprising, at it did, the laying of many ambushes, the destruction or blocking of rail and road communications, and the destruction of supply dumps and other military installations. The operations carried out by these columns, combined with the story of how American aircraft released their gliders, filled with British troops and American engineers, to make their landings in jungle clearings in pitch darkness, forms one of the outstanding episodes of the war, but an account of the operations will not be given until a subsequent Despatch.

114. I have nothing but praise for the organization of the initial landings, and the gallantry and endurance displayed by all ranks in the operations which followed. Events have shown, however, that these operations had less effect upon the enemy than I hoped for. The enemy did not divert troops from his forward areas, nor did he alter his main strategical plan. In fact, the results achieved did not prove to



be commensurate with the expenditure in manpower and material which had been employed. These operations:—

(a) Did not affect the launching of the Japanese offensive against Assam.

(b) Had but little effect on the enemy's lines of communication to Assam. They delayed for one month up to three battalions of 15 Japanese Division, which might otherwise have reached the Imphal Front earlier.

(c) Although they severed the rail communications of 18 Japanese Division for about three months, only one battalion (from the 18 Divisional Reserve) was actually diverted from the front of General Stilwell's forces and that only for about a month.

(d) On the other hand, the Japanese were compelled to collect troops to meet the threat but they did not amount to more than twelve battalions at any one time, although the number of enemy battalions which were employed at one time or another added up to sixteen. The concentration of twelve battalions was not complete until two months after the original landings.

115. 16 L.R.P. Brigade, which had originally marched in from Ledo, was evacuated by air early in May. On the 17th May, the three remaining brigades of Special Force came under the command of General Stilwell in the Northern Combat Area Command and subsequently operated, in a normal infantry rôle, in the Kamaing—Mogaung—Myitkyina sector.

"Dahforce", which was composed of Kachin Levies, was flown in with Special Force and later amalgamated with three columns of 111 Brigade, the whole being re-named "Morrisforce" (already briefly mentioned in paragraph 103).

Before leaving the subject of Special Force, I wish to pay tribute to its gallant commander, Major-General Wingate, whose death occurred in a flying accident late in March. He was that rare combination of the dreamer and the man of action and his example and spirit will remain an inspiration to the men he trained. He was succeeded by his Second-in-Command, Major-General W. D. A. Lentaigne, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.

#### *Lessons of the Campaign.*

116. The following important facts emerge from a study of the operations undertaken during the first six months of 1944:—

(a) The reinforcements received were well trained, thanks to the training arrangements made by the Commander-in-Chief, India, and our troops, both individually and collectively, were able to engage the Japanese with confidence.

(b) Our ability to make full use of air supply by virtue of our air superiority has fundamentally altered the tactical picture, and enabled our troops not only to operate in country hitherto considered impassable and so attack the enemy, but also to hold positions when the enemy has cut their lines of communication.

(c) The operations have shown that ordinary formations can be transported quickly by air. They have also shown the need, for fighting under Far Eastern conditions, of a "Standard Infantry Division" which can be readily transported by rail, sea, M.T. or air.

(d) The urgent need for plenty of infantry in this theatre of war has again been emphasised. All divisions, except 19 Indian Division which was the only reserve at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief, India, were engaged in the course of the fighting and no proper relief of formations was possible. The relief of tired troops is most important and it was not solved satisfactorily owing to shortage of troops.

Some of my divisions had, by last June, been in the forward areas for twenty-eight months. I need not stress the mental and physical strain which jungle warfare, under adverse climatic conditions, imposes on the soldier.

#### *Naval Operations.*

117. I wish to acknowledge the assistance given by coastal forces in the Arakan operations, which carried out valuable raids against vulnerable points on the coast, and were protection against possible small sea-borne raids by the enemy.

In March, 3 Commando Brigade (No. 5 Commando and No. 44 Royal Marine Commando) carried out successfully a small amphibious operation in the Alethangyaw area from St. Martin's Island, with the object of containing the enemy in that area and preventing the movement north of reinforcements during our main attack on the Maungdaw—Buthidaung road.

Although there was no large-scale naval activity in conjunction with land forces during the period under review, it was the ever present threat of amphibious operations which tied nearly two Japanese divisions to coastal areas.

#### *Air Co-operation.*

118. *Tasks.* The general tasks performed by Eastern Air Command during the first six months of the year were as follows:—

(a) Strategic air offensive to destroy enemy forces, transportation, and maintenance installations.

(b) Support of Fourteenth Army operations.

(c) Air defence of Calcutta and the adjacent industrial areas and, also, of the airfields used by the American Air Transport Command in North-East Assam for the China ferry service.

(d) Air transportation for airborne and air transit forces.

(e) Photographic reconnaissance.

119. *Strategic Air Force.* I am, of course, chiefly concerned with the air transport and tactical support given to Fourteenth Army, but I wish to acknowledge the assistance rendered by the Strategic Air Force. Their attacks on Rangoon and Bangkok, and, also, those on Saigon by 14 U.S.A.A.F. from China, have greatly impeded the flow of Japanese reinforcements and material into Burma. In fact, up till the time when monsoon conditions reduced air activity, Rangoon was practically denied to the enemy as a port. Operations against enemy-held ports have been supplemented by constant attacks against coastal shipping and, most important from my point of view, against rail communications and military installations. On

several occasions, also, elements of the Strategic Air Force have acted in a tactical rôle and furnished most valuable close support both by bombing and by ferrying supplies.

120. *Tactical Air Force.* The successful provision of ground support in this Theatre, although facilitated by our complete air supremacy, is faced by two difficulties:—

(a) the problem of target recognition in dense jungle (enhanced, as it is, by the enemy's skill in camouflaging his positions and dumps), and

(b) the Japanese skill in building field defences which require direct hits from heavy bombs to neutralise them.

The difficulty of target recognition was, to a great extent, overcome by use of smoke and wireless.

121. The occasions when air support has been called for and most effectively provided are too numerous to mention but it has not always been easy to assess the results achieved. I have no hesitation in stating, however, that neither in offence nor defence could the Army have achieved the success it did, had it not been for the casualties inflicted on the enemy, and the disruption in forward areas of both their land and water communications by Eastern Air Command. Further, the effect produced on the morale of our troops by the obvious evidence of our air superiority has been most inspiring. Conversely, its disheartening effect on the enemy is evidenced by the statements of prisoners and from captured documents.

122. *Air Transport Operations.* In November 1943, only one R.A.F. Transport Squadron was available for operations with Fourteenth Army, but two Troop Carrier Squadrons, U.S.A.A.F., were working with General Stilwell's forces in the Northern Sector, and other squadrons, both British and American, were on their way as reinforcements. Other reinforcements were sent subsequently from the Mediterranean and elsewhere.

Unified operational control of these forces was effected in December by the formation of Troop Carrier Command, Eastern Air Command, under Brigadier-General W. D. Old of the U.S.A.A.F., with Headquarters at Comilla, where were situated the Headquarters of both Fourteenth Army and 3 Tactical Air Force, as well as the main supply bases. On the 1st May, in order further to integrate air transport with army operations, Troop Carrier Command was placed under the control of the Air Commander, 3 Tactical Air Force, until it was dissolved on the 4th June—a measure rendered necessary by the increasing dispersal of the operational areas and the growing intensity of General Stilwell's operations in North Burma.

123. It is only possible for me here briefly to mention the major air transport operations carried out during this period. These were, in chronological order:—

(a) The routine supply-dropping missions to our detachments in the Chin Hills, which I mention because of the hazardous flying conditions.

(b) The maintenance of 81 (West African) Division in the Kaladan, which was entirely dependent on air supply.

(c) The maintenance of the Chinese divisions advancing south-east from Ledo, which included supplies for our Fort Hertz garrison and the Levies operating in that area.

(d) The delivery by air of some 2,000 tons of supplies of all kinds to 7 Indian Division during the fighting between the 8th February and the 6th March.

(e) The fly-in of the Brigades of Special Force to the centre of Burma.

(f) The move by air of 50 Indian Parachute Brigade from Northern India to the Imphal area, followed by the transfer of the personnel of 5 Indian Division, two brigades of 7 Indian Division, together with a proportion of their heavy equipment, including artillery, from Arakan to the same area. An infantry brigade of 2 British Division was flown from the Calcutta area to Jorhat in North-Eastern Assam.

(g) The air supply, on an unprecedented scale, of 4 Corps during the period that the line of communication to Imphal was cut.

(h) The evacuation by air of 16 Brigade of Special Force from the Hopin area to India.

(i) Concurrently with all the above, the evacuation of casualties from Arakan, North Burma and Imphal, which had a most beneficial effect on the morale of the troops engaged.

124. It is not within the scope of this Despatch to give a detailed account of the operations, but I wish to comment on two of them: the maintenance by air of 7 Indian Division, when cut off in the Arakan, and that of 4 Corps when surrounded in Imphal. The former was the first occasion, in this theatre of war, when a large formation was supplied by air, and was thus able to maintain its positions after its land communications had been severed. This allowed us to inflict a crushing defeat on the enemy. The latter—the air supply of 4 Corps—deserves a more detailed account:

The magnitude of the effort involved in keeping an Army Corps of four divisions and the air forces based at Imphal supplied, was enormous, when it is regarded in relation to the number of aircraft available.

Calculations showed that the Army required 323 tons *per diem*, and the supporting R.A.F. squadrons 75 tons, if we were to hold Imphal. This target figure was, generally speaking, maintained, though we had anxious periods when a shortage of aircraft seemed probable and when bad weather restricted flying. There is no doubt that, if we had not had air supply, we should have lost the Imphal Plain and the position on the eastern frontier of India would have been grave.

125. It is with gratitude and admiration that I acknowledge the immense debt which the Army owes to the Air. No one who, like myself, has watched them, is likely to forget the courage, determination and skill of pilots and crews who have flown through some of the worst weather in the world, and over appalling country in performing their allotted tasks.

#### *Enemy Strengths and Dispositions.*

126. To trace the Japanese build-up in Burma, it is necessary to go back to July, 1943, when their total strength consisted of four

divisions, disposed as follows:—Arakan, 55 Division; Kale and Kabaw Valleys and Lower Chindwin, 33 Division; Upper Chindwin and Hukawng Valley, 18 Division; Salween River, 56 Division. By November, 31 Division, a new one raised from formations in Central China and elsewhere, and, also, 24 Independent Mixed Brigade (four battalions) had arrived. 54 Division from Java followed in February. Reinforcements during February and early March amounted to two more divisions, the 15th coming from Central China, and the 2nd, originally destroyed in Guadalcanal, but reformed in the Philippines in June 1943. In February, also, a second Army Headquarters, the 28th, was created to control the forces in South Burma.

127. The strength of the Japanese army in Burma at the beginning of March was, therefore, eight divisions and one independent mixed brigade, giving a total of seventy-six infantry battalions. These forces were under the control of two Army Headquarters: the Southern (Twenty-Eighth) Army containing thirty-two battalions and the Northern (Fifteenth) Army forty-four.

128. In May, a fresh division made its appearance: the 53rd, coming from Japan, via Malaya. It was located in the Mogaung area. Thus the total Japanese strength in Burma had gradually been augmented from four divisions to nine in the twelve months ending June 1944.

#### *Japanese Subversive Agencies.*

129. There are certain non-Japanese forces which the enemy raised to oppose us in Burma, the most prominent being:—

- (a) The Japanese-inspired Indian Fifth Column.
- (b) The so-called Indian National Army (I.N.A.).
- (c) Forces of disaffected Burmans.

The first-named are known as J.I.F.s., a term which, strictly speaking, should only be applied to Indians working for the enemy, who are not members of the I.N.A. These J.I.F.s. have been used in an intelligence offensive against India and the Indian Army since the outbreak of the Japanese war, mainly on propaganda and espionage tasks. Some have been landed in India by submarine or parachute, and considerable numbers have infiltrated across the Indo-Burman border. This movement, which has been in the main a matter for India Command to counter, was largely defeated. Its effects on the troops under my command have been negligible.

130. The I.N.A. is principally composed of Indian prisoners of war taken in Singapore, though civilians are now also being recruited. This army, which had a rather ill-starred beginning in 1942—at the end of which year it was disbanded by the Japanese—was re-formed by Subhas Chandra Bose, the Bengali revolutionary, soon after his arrival in the East from Germany in 1943. It is now organised in three divisions, of which two are alleged to be fit to take the field. Its headquarters was at Maymyo, with a rear headquarters at Singapore. A strength of 13,000, including No. 1 Division, has been moved up into Burma since last November, while No. 2 Division (approximately 7,000) is prepared to follow.

131. Elements of the I.N.A. first appeared in a fighting rôle in the Arakan operations in February, but the main body was concentrated on the Chindwin front, and was generally employed on foraging and fatigue duties. They did no fighting on either front beyond occasional company actions, in which their morale was not high. Special parties, attached to Japanese units, have been used to try to suborn our Indian troops, but all attempts have been met with fire. Reports show that the Japanese have been disillusioned regarding the value of these troops, the great majority of whom are not really traitors; most of them only accepted service under the Japanese to escape inhuman treatment and in the hope of getting back to India.

132. The activities of the J.I.F.s. and the I.N.A. are directed by an organization composed of Japanese officers and men, under a lieutenant-general, which has its headquarters in Burma and is known as the Hikari Kikan (Rising Sun Organization). Liaison between I.N.A. brigades and the Japanese Army is carried out by Hikari personnel. This organization also controls Bose's "Provisional Government" and the "Indian Independence League" into which Indians in the Far East have been enrolled.

In addition to the Hikari Kikan, there is the Japanese Nishi Kikan (Western Organization) which is trying to organize the peoples of Northern and Western Burma into units somewhat analogous to our own Chin and Kachin Levies.

133. It is difficult to estimate the strength and fighting value of the force of disaffected Burmans. It has done little fighting, and has, up to date, been employed chiefly on lines of communication duties. It contains some definitely anti-British elements who, when the Japanese are being evicted from Burma, may be expected to try to interfere with our pacification of the country. Other elements have, however, probably been forced into the organization by "voluntary compulsion" methods and will leave it as soon as they can.

134. I wish to pay a tribute to the tribesmen of the Naga, Chin and Kachin Hills, who have remained staunchly loyal to us, in spite of all the enemy's efforts to suborn them.

135. *Casualties.* The following table shows the battle casualties inflicted on the enemy between November, 1943, and June, 1944, both months inclusive:—

	<i>By Fourteenth Army</i>	<i>By C.A.I.</i>
Killed	26,203	13,232
Wounded	39,305	19,848
Prisoners	288	57
Total	98,933	

This proportion of killed to wounded is calculated from captured returns and may be assumed to be reasonably accurate.

This estimate does not include the losses the enemy has suffered from our sustained air attacks or from disease, the incidence of which captured documents have shown to be high. There is of course, always a tendency to over-estimate enemy casualties but I think it would be no exaggeration to assume that the total Japanese losses, on all counts, during the eight months under review amounted to at least one hundred thousand.

## PART III—ORGANIZATION.

136. I have already given a summary of the land forces transferred to me from India Command with effect from midnight on the 15th-16th November 1943 when the Supreme Allied Commander assumed command. In addition, the following formations passed to my command between November 1943 and June 1944:—

9 Indian Infantry Brigade (5 Indian Division). (December.)

32 Indian Infantry Brigade (20 Indian Division). (Late November.)

254 Indian Tank Brigade (less 45th Cavalry, but plus 3 Dragoon Guards). (December.)

25 Indian Division. (February and March.)

14 and 16 L.R.P. Brigades. (In March and January respectively.)

77 and 111 L.R.P. Brigades. (January.)

36 British Division. (Between late January and early March.)

23 L.R.P. Brigade. (Early April.)

Advance H.Q., 3 Special Service Brigade (with No. 5 Commando and No. 44 Royal Marine Commando). (February.)

50 Indian Parachute Brigade. (Early March.)

2 British Division, which moved to Assam as follows:—

5 Brigade. (End of March.)

H.Q., 2 British Division and 6 Brigade. (Early April.)

4 Brigade. (Mid-April.)

Also a cavalry regiment, a medium regiment R.A., and two Indian battalions.

28 (East African) Brigade arrived in February and replaced 99 Infantry Brigade in Ceylon, which reverted to India Command.

Headquarters, 21 Indian Division, consisting of a proportion of the H.Q. Staff and a few ancillary units of the late 44 Indian Armoured Division, arrived in Jorhat (Assam) on the 5th March.

268 Indian Lorried Infantry Brigade was lent by India Command early in May (*vide* paragraph 67).

137. A skeleton Order of Battle of the undermentioned formations will be found in the appendices:—

*Appendix "A"*—Skeleton Order of Battle of 15 Indian Corps on the 1st January 1944, at the commencement of our offensive in the Arakan.

*Appendix "B"*—Skeleton Order of Battle of 4 Corps on the 8th March 1944, the date the Japanese launched their offensive across the Chindwin.

*Appendix "C"*—Skeleton Order of Battle 33 Indian Corps on the 31st May 1944, when that formation was engaged in driving the enemy from the Kohima area.

*Appendix "D"*—Skeleton Order of Battle 11 Army Group on the 22nd June 1944, the date on which this Despatch closes.

138. The major re-organizations, which were finished, or which were begun, during the period covered by this Despatch were:—

11 (East African) Division.

81 and 82 (West African) Divisions.

Standard Organizations for:—

A Corps Headquarters.

An Infantry Division.

Armoured Formations (re-organization of Tank Brigades).

Organization for the movement and maintenance of Air Transported Formations.

Assumption of full control by 11 Army Group of Fourteenth Army and Land Forces, Ceylon.

The principal changes involved, together with my reasons for effecting them, are summarized in the succeeding paragraphs:—

139. 11 (*East African*) Division. At a conference held in Ceylon in January, at which the G.O.C.-in-C., East African Command was present, I decided to increase the artillery of this formation up to the scale of that in an Animal and Motor Transport (A. and M.T.) Division on the Indian Establishment.

I also decided to reduce the scale of both unit and 2nd line motor transport, and to provide an element within the infantry battalions for carrying fighting equipment under conditions when M.T. could not operate.

140. 81 and 82 (*West African*) Divisions. In May, at a conference attended by the G.O.C.-in-C., West Africa, I considered the advisability of amalgamating these two divisions; for 81 Division, which had given up one of its brigades to Special Force, consisted only of two brigades. Owing, however, to the shortage of formations with which to carry out reliefs, I decided to retain both divisions, but to effect certain changes in their organization. These included:—

(a) The divisional artillery to consist of one light regiment (three batteries of 3.7-inch howitzers and one battery of 3-inch mortars) and one anti-tank regiment (three batteries, each of twelve six-pounder guns). Field regiments could not be formed, but would be attached when required.

(b) A reconnaissance battalion to be included in each division.

(c) A proportion (25 per cent.) of the unarmed soldiers, who act as porters, to be armed.

West African resources did not, unfortunately, admit of certain other desirable increases, such as the inclusion of a Divisional Headquarters battalion.

I also decided that 3 (West African) Brigade of 81 (West African) Division should continue to be employed with Special Force.

I intended to bring these two West African divisions and the East African division, into line with the standard divisional organization (*vide* paragraph 142) in due course.

141. *Corps Headquarters and Corps Troops.* In order to secure uniformity, a standardised War Establishment for a Corps Headquarters and, also, a standard Order of Battle for Corps Troops, is to be adopted.

142. *Standard Organization for Infantry Divisions.* I have already briefly referred to the desirability of having one standard organization for all infantry divisions operating in this theatre of war, and for some time past I had been examining the possibility of this. Experience had shown that, with our limited

resources, it was not practical to have a number of specialised formations such as Airborne, Assault, Armoured, Light, M.T., and Animal and M.T. Divisions. Such a policy was not only uneconomical, but circumstances inevitably forced their use sooner or later in rôles for which they had not been trained or organized.

Early in May, I recommended to the Supreme Allied Commander that the policy of having a Standard Division should be accepted, such a division to be capable of fulfilling all the rôles which it might be called upon to perform within South-East Asia Command, viz.:—

- (a) Normal jungle fighting.
- (b) Operations involving transportation by air.
- (c) Amphibious operations (though, for this rôle, special training and the attachment of certain special units such as beach groups, would of course be necessary).

The Supreme Allied Commander gave his approval to my proposals and they have since been accepted by the War Office and General Headquarters, India. In addition the formation of an airborne division has been agreed to.

Action to put this new policy into force is being taken in order to bring the maximum number of divisions on to the standard organization before the end of 1944. This organization will include three infantry battalions per brigade (to be increased to four when practicable, as is the case in the War Office Light-Scale Division for Far Eastern Theatres), two artillery regiments of 25-pounders (in place of the existing one 25-pounder and one jungle field regiment in A. and M.T. divisions), one 3.7-inch howitzer mountain regiment of three batteries (instead of the present four-battery regiment), and one anti-tank regiment having an alternative armament of 3-inch mortars (instead of the existing anti-aircraft cum anti-tank regiment). The division will also include a reconnaissance battalion organized on similar lines to the normal infantry battalion, but with extra signal equipment, and, as soon as the manpower situation permits, a medium machine gun battalion.

A major feature of the new Standard Division is the reduction in the number of lorries, both in unit 1st line transport and in 2nd line M.T. companies, and the introduction of a large number of jeeps. Eventually it is hoped to have two types of vehicles only; the jeep and the 3-ton four-wheel-drive lorry (apart, of course, from a limited number of specialist vehicles).

143. *Re-organization of Armoured Formations.* A review of the rôle required of tank brigades operating in this Theatre led me to the conclusion that certain major changes in their organization were necessary. I considered that the value of these brigades would be greatly enhanced if (a) all regiments were re-equipped with medium tanks, (b) a troop of flame-thrower tanks was included in each squadron, and (c) an infantry battalion was included in each brigade. By making certain reductions in the existing establishment, it would, I decided, be possible to adopt this re-organization of the armoured units, while

at the same time, effecting a saving in manpower.

This matter is still being discussed with the Commander-in-Chief, India, and will be referred to again in my next Despatch.\*

144. *Organization for the Movement and Maintenance of Air Transported Formations.* Recent experience has shown that there is an urgent need for a permanent organization to handle the movement and maintenance of forces by air, instead of the improvisation that has hitherto existed.

Such an organization must, obviously, be designed to ensure the closest co-operation between the staffs at the headquarters of the air force and the army concerned and, also, the staffs at the airfields affected. To achieve this, four elements are required:—

(a) An Army Link with the R.A.F. Headquarters dealing with air transport.

(b) Joint Army and R.A.F. Air Despatch and Delivery Units at airfields.

(c) An Airfield Maintenance Organization to ensure that maintenance requirements at airfields are met.

(d) Air Supply and Maintenance Companies to deal with the packing, loading and ejection of supplies.

My proposals for an organization, which will produce the necessary continuity and flexibility, are under consideration by Headquarters, Air Command, S.E.A.C., and General Headquarters, India.

145. *Assumption of Full Control by 11 Army Group.* As I have already stated in the opening paragraphs of this Despatch, Fourteenth Army, together with Ceylon Army Command and the Indian Ocean bases of Addu Atoll, Diego Garcia and Cocos, came under my command from the 16th November 1943, but certain administrative matters continued to be dealt with by General Headquarters, India, until more staff became available for 11 Army Group. My Headquarters, however, assumed full control with effect from the 1st May, 1944, with the exception of some administrative matters which were more conveniently handled by G.H.Q. India.

#### PART IV—ADMINISTRATION.

146. In order to view the administrative problem which confronted us in this Theatre in its correct perspective, it is necessary to understand the background against which the present organization developed. Eastern Army, the forerunner of Fourteenth Army, came into being at a time of reverses in Burma and unpreparedness in Eastern India. The whole of that rear organization, on which the success or failure of an army depends, had therefore to be built up from nothing, under the most difficult conditions. While the early stages of this build-up have already been described in Despatches from the India Command, a brief recapitulation of the facts may be opportune here.

147. Our strategy, in 1942, was defensive and our advanced bases were selected accordingly. The area of operations was, and still is, divided administratively into two fronts—Arakan and

\* Operations in Assam and Burma from 23rd June, 1944 to 12th November, 1944.

Assam—each of which is served by a separate line of communication, connected by poor lateral communications (though air supply is now an important factor which can be, and has been, used to unite these separate lines).

The natural advanced base for the Arakan front is Chittagong. This port was prepared for demolition in 1942 and many "denial" measures were actually carried out. It only narrowly escaped being occupied by the Japanese in the summer of that year; and in fact, our subsequent advance in October 1942, when we passed from the defensive to the offensive, began while Chittagong was still under sentence of death. Both the port and advanced base at Chittagong had then to be developed while active operations were in progress, and while they were both having to perform their administrative functions to the forces in the field. These forces rose to a strength of two divisions, and, incidentally, had a sick rate of over 6 per 1,000 *per diem*. Not only was there no all-weather road in Arakan, but no road at all worthy of the name. We were, therefore, compelled to rely largely on coastal shipping and inland water transport and, for many months, there was a serious shortage of both types of vessels. The difficulty was eventually overcome to some extent by the construction of a road which had to be surfaced with bricks, the coal for which had to be imported from India. Ordinary metalling was impossible, owing to the absence of stone.

148. While we were on the defensive, Mymensingh was being prepared as an advanced base, but was only about half finished when our strategy changed. We were not sufficiently certain of success to discontinue construction and, in the light of subsequent events, it is fortunate that we continued to build.

149. On the Imphal Front, we had to construct a large advanced base in virgin jungle, under the most adverse climatic and weather conditions. This base at Manipur Road, or Dimapur as it is sometimes called, had to start work while its construction was yet incomplete.

As a site for a base, Dimapur possessed almost every conceivable disadvantage: heavy rainfall; unhealthy climate; and uneven ground (which did not become apparent until the dense jungle had been cleared). Moreover, it lies on a narrow tongue of land between two rivers, both of which are liable to overflow during the monsoon. To these local topographical disadvantages must be added the further one of the liability to interruption of the railway to Assam by the rivers and streams which pour down from the huge catchment area of the Himalayas, the foothills of which the railway skirts. In 1942, the railway was cut by floods from the 24th June till the 30th November.

150. The railway system, which is metre gauge, had never previously had to tackle more than a moderately heavy seasonal load of cereals and tea. It now had to undertake a much increased load of civil traffic and had to be further pressed to meet the needs not only of the large Imperial forces operating on the Northern and Southern Fronts, but also of the Sino-American forces based on Ledo and, last but not least, the air ferry service to China. Concurrently, road and river transportation had been developed to take some of the strain.

151. The Northern and Southern Lines of Communication areas are divided by the Garo and Jaintia Hills and the only lateral communication connecting them is the hill section of the Bengal and Assam Railway.

152. The whole area was without airfields and so low-lying as to render airfield construction difficult. It entailed, not only the transportation of heavy tonnages of engineer stores, but also of coal, since much surfacing had to be done with burnt brick.

The move and maintenance of forces by air, as well as our probable future commitments, have necessitated a large increase in airfield construction, but I shall deal with this subject in greater detail later on.

153. I propose to deal with the work of my Administrative Services under the following main headings:—

- (a) Adjutant-General questions.
- (b) The Lines of Communication.
- (c) Supply and Maintenance.
- (d) The Engineering Effort.
- (e) The Civil Affairs Service, Burma.

#### *Adjutant-General Questions.*

154. *Manpower.* The "divisional slice" in this Theatre has averaged 56,000, excluding civil labour, and 70,000 including it, whereas, I believe, the "divisional slice" in Normandy is 40,000. The high figure in the Burma campaign is mainly due to the large administrative "tail", comprising numerous engineer and labour units, which are needed to overcome the physical difficulties on our lines of communication.

155. *Reinforcements.* The demand for reinforcements is heavy, owing to the high sick rate which is, however, much lower than anticipated, and to the time lag between demand and arrival, due to the distances which reinforcements have to cover over a long and indifferently transportation system.

Reinforcement has been below wastage; but, apart from British infantry, in which the shortage is most acute, it has not been so serious as to impair fighting efficiency. Broadly speaking, the numbers available have been in excess of battle casualties, but they have not been sufficient to meet the total wastage and thus keep reinforcement camps full.

156. British reinforcements for Fourteenth Army are provided by General Headquarters, India, from (a) the British Base Reinforcement Camp at Deolali, (b) personnel freed by the disbandment of units, e.g. A.A. Brigades, and (c) returning sick from hospitals in India. Except for (c), who go direct to reinforcement camps in the Fourteenth Army area, drafts pass through 52 Training Brigade, where they carry out a two months course of hardening and jungle training. Indian reinforcements, from Regimental Centres and Depots, pass through either 14 or 39 Indian Training Divisions to Fourteenth Army reinforcement camps. There are twelve such camps in the Army area, consisting each of two British and eight Indian Sections. Each Section is 300 strong, and the total capacity of each camp is thus 3,000. Training staffs are available in each camp to keep reinforcements at a proper state of efficiency.



157. *The Medical Aspect—A. Organization.*

(a) The medical organization in Fourteenth Army was originally based on the assumption that the main operations would be forward of Imphal. Hospitals were consequently, largely concentrated in the north and, in order to avoid evacuation down a long line of communication, they were sited well forward. The Japanese thrust against Imphal however, necessitated their removal, and a situation arose in which about twenty-five per cent. of our hospitals became temporarily non-effective. This would have been serious had it not been for two saving factors: firstly, air transport provided a link between our northern and southern lines of communication, enabling casualties to be rapidly cleared to hospitals serving the Arakan Front; and secondly, the sick rate on both fronts fell far short of the estimate for which provision had been made.

(b) In the south, where extensive operations had not been originally contemplated, and where the forces engaged were smaller, our hospitals had not been concentrated so far forward.

Considerable discussion took place early in the year between 11 Army Group and General Headquarters, India, regarding the adequacy or otherwise of the hospitals.

The decisions then taken proved to be sound on the whole, in spite of our forecasts being wrong and of radical alterations in the lines of evacuation. Although there is still a decided shortage of medical officers, and a serious shortage of nurses and nursing personnel, there has been no general shortage of hospital accommodation, but anxiety is always present in an unhealthy tropical theatre of war.

158. At the beginning of the year, facilities for evacuation were reviewed, and as a result of representations made by me to the Supreme Allied Commander, six hospital ships were allotted to Fourteenth Army.

Further, a co-ordinating committee, invested with executive authority, which includes representatives of 11 Army Group and General Headquarters, India, and of the many services affected, has been set up to deal in detail with the complicated problem of medical evacuation. Its measures have so far proved effective, notwithstanding the many problems which have arisen.

159. One interesting feature of the recent fighting is that the medical units have found themselves on occasions called upon to undertake part of the responsibility for their own defence. That medical personnel had to fight proved to be a necessity—it was not a question as to whether they should defend themselves, but how best they could do so.

160. (a) The complicated problem of medical evacuation from Arakan involved the use of almost every conceivable form of transport. Hand carriages, mules, jeeps, ambulances, D.U.K.Ws., sampans, flats, paddle steamers, hospital ships, ambulance trains, and light and heavy aircraft have all had to be employed over one stage or another of the journey.

(b) To and from 81 (West African) Division operating in the Kaladan Valley, medical

supply and evacuation has had to be entirely by air. That the arrangements worked smoothly is due both to the medical officers concerned and to the skilful co-operation of the R.A.F.

(c) I have already mentioned how the evacuation of casualties by air from the Imphal Front prevented a serious situation developing when certain hospitals had to be closed down. This air evacuation continued throughout the operations about Imphal and was instrumental in saving many lives. In addition to casualties, two large General Hospitals were flown out with all their valuable equipment.

(d) The total number of casualties evacuated by air during the first half of 1944, from all fronts, was over 24,000. Rapid and adequate air transport facilities abolish at one stroke the unsatisfactory and difficult clearance of casualties down long surface lines of communication, with all their attendant disadvantages. This method of moving the wounded has a most beneficial effect on the morale of the fighting soldier.

161. *The Medical Aspect—B. Sick Rate.*

The most satisfactory feature on the medical side has been the surprisingly low sick rate during the first six months of the year. The expected rise to 5 or 6 per 1,000 *per diem* has not happened and the rate in May was as low as 3.1 per 1,000 including battle casualties. This is an almost incredibly low figure compared with that for 1943, which was 6 per 1,000 *per diem*; and, in spite of the seasonal increase of malaria, it has since dropped to 2.9.

Since November 1943, food supply greatly improved, and more fresh meat, fruit and vegetables became available. It is probable that this improvement in rations has been a major cause in keeping down the sick rate.

162. The most serious menace we have to face, where disease is concerned, is of course malaria, and this can only be overcome by unremitting effort and vigilance. The malaria rate, up till the end of June, has remained consistently low compared with last year. This is remarkable, since operations have been carried out on a greatly extended scale, and many more troops have been exposed to the risk of infection. If the same rate had obtained in Arakan and at Imphal from March to June as in the same months of 1943, the effect on operations would have been serious.

I attribute this satisfactory state of affairs to four factors—firstly, better anti-malarial discipline; secondly, the improved anti-malarial organization which, under medical control and aided by the engineers, has freed certain areas from the mosquito; thirdly, the ample flow of anti-malarial supplies of all kinds; and last, but not least, improved morale, since troops in good fettle look after themselves better in every way than when they are depressed.

The efficacy of D.D.T. as an anti-mosquito spray is shortly being tested in the Kabaw Valley.

163. *The Medical Aspect—C. Miscellaneous Medical Points.*

(a) There has been no noticeable change in the physical standard of British reinforcements, which can only be classed as average.

(b) The physical standard of young soldiers in the Indian Army has improved during the period under review, particularly in combatant units.

164. The Army Pathological Service suffers, in this Theatre, from the lack of laboratories. The importance of accurate laboratory diagnosis requires no stressing.

165. Dental facilities are altogether inadequate. The accepted ratio of dental officers to troops is one per 1,000 for British and one per 10,000 for Indian. The present ratio is one per 7,000 and 30,000 respectively.

166. The present standard of training of medical personnel in this Theatre does not compare altogether favourably with that in others, but, taking into consideration the expansion which the Medical Services have undergone, and the acute shortage of medical officers in India, it is, I am sure, as good as can be expected. Training is, I know, continuous and intensive in the India Command and the situation is improving.

167. The supply of medical stores, including drugs, has been most satisfactory. The consumption of mepacrine in Fourteenth Army as a malaria suppressive has reached twelve million tablets a month.

168. The problem of providing adequate medical supervision for the large amount of civilian labour employed in the Fourteenth Army area is being met at present, but it may become more difficult when civilian labour forces have to be moved into re-conquered territory as our troops advance.

169. The thirteen convalescent depots in 11 Army Group have proved their value as an essential link between hospital and reinforcement camp. The "patients" in the British Depot at Kohima played a notable part in the defence of that place during the siege, though such strenuous work had hardly been recommended as part of their convalescence.

#### *Miscellaneous A.G. Points.*

170. *Legal and Judicial.* (a) As a result of the Supreme Allied Commander's Proclamation No. 1 of 1944, under which he assumed control of re-occupied territory, British Military Administration Courts have been set up in Burma.

(b) Arrangements have been made with General Headquarters, India, for assistance to be given to Fourteenth Army in the prosecution of those suspected to be military traitors who fall into our hands. More detailed interrogation is now to be carried out at Forward Interrogation Centres and the majority of prisoners will be dealt with in forward areas.

171. *Leave.* (a) All British personnel have had to be restricted to fourteen days leave during 1944, owing to the lack of accommodation in suitable areas, and to transportation difficulties which can only be solved by the provision of more aircraft.

(b) Representations were made that British Service officers, both with British units and those seconded to the Indian Army, who were willing, should be granted home leave in lieu of repatriation. Many such officers have valuable experience in jungle warfare and their retention is most desirable.

(c) Transportation difficulties originally precluded the achievement of the target of twenty-eight days leave per annum for Indian ranks, but these have since been overcome.

172. *Morale and Welfare.* The large number of troops who have taken part in operations have gained confidence from their contact with the enemy. It is universally felt that the Japanese soldier, although a good infantryman, is no match for our well-trained and well-equipped troops, supported by a powerful air force.

173. The still inadequate but increased and, I may add, well deserved publicity now being given to this theatre of war, coupled with the introduction of more amenities such as mobile canteens, cinemas, wireless sets, sports equipment, a daily newspaper ("SEAC"), and also visits from "Ensa", have all contributed to the improvement in morale. Men are beginning to feel that they do not belong to "The Forgotten Army".

In all my efforts to improve the lot of the British rank and file, I am closely in touch with the Commander-in-Chief, India, whose troops share with mine in the severe handicaps of climate, homesickness, and the feeling that the Burma Border is not, at present, the decisive Theatre. In spite of all the steps that have been, and are being taken, the undercurrent of feeling against service in the East still persists, and many "grouses" are still in evidence, though the spirit of the troops in forward units is magnificent.

Among British troops, the most burning question has been, and is, that of repatriation. In particular, the disparity in the terms of overseas service between the Army and the R.A.F. is a continual source of grievance. The measures recently taken to improve this will, it is hoped, allay some of the feeling that has undoubtedly existed.

174. The chief anxiety of Indian troops, as always, is the welfare during their absence of their families, but the leave situation is now satisfactory. The effect of enemy propaganda on the Indian soldier has been negligible.

175. The work of philanthropic bodies such as the Red Cross, the Y.M.C.A. and Toc H has been most valuable and I am very grateful indeed to the large body of voluntary workers who have contributed so much to the welfare of the troops, both British and Indian.

#### *The Lines of Communication.*

176. I have already referred to the Northern and Southern Lines of Communication Areas, but there are in fact three lines of communication supplying Fourteenth Army:—

(a) *The Assam Line of Communication*, which has three railheads: that at Manipur Road, also called Dimapur, supplying the Imphal Front; and those at Ledo and Chabua which supply the Chinese-American forces operating in Northern Burma, and the air ferry route to China.

(b) *The Eastern Bengal Line of Communication*, which serves our bases in Eastern Bengal and the airfields in the Surma Valley, which are extensively used for air supply.

Some flexibility between the Eastern Bengal and Assam lines of communication

is provided by the rail link between Lumding and Badarpur, but the capacity of this link is limited owing to the gradients.

(c) *The Arakan Line of Communication*, which supplies 15 Indian Corps southwards from Chittagong.

The following paragraphs give a brief general description of these lines of communication, the difficulties which have been encountered and the measures taken to overcome them.

177. *The Assam Line of Communication*. This line of communication has four main routes:—

(a) The metre gauge rail route from Mokameh Ghat\* to Amingaon, across the Brahmaputra by wagon ferry, and onwards to Dimapur and the American bases in the Ledo area. Stores arrive at Mokameh Ghat by broad gauge railway from depots in Northern and Central India.

(b) The broad gauge route from Calcutta to river ghats on the lower Brahmaputra and to transshipment stations of the metre gauge route. The stores carried come from the Calcutta Base Area and from Southern and Western India.

(c) The river route. This includes an all water route up the Brahmaputra from Calcutta and, also, lifts between intermediate rail-served ghats on the Ganges and Brahmaputra.

(d) A road, known as the Assam access road, from Siliguri where it connects with the broad gauge railway, to Bongaigaon on the metre gauge route.

The control of the Assam line of communication rests with General Headquarters, India.

178. Communications in Assam are complicated and rendered unreliable, by both operating and physical difficulties. The operating difficulties are due to the fact that a far greater load has been imposed on the railway than could be handled by the normal civil organization. The physical difficulties are due to the seasonal liability of both road and rail communications to serious flooding, and also to the vagaries of the Brahmaputra. At some places, sudden rises in the river will wash away ghats, with all their connected installations, completely; while at others, sand banks will form and render them unapproachable by river craft.

The operating difficulties have been overcome to a great extent by the employment of military transportation units to assist the civil staff. The control of a considerable section of the metre gauge main line has been taken over by the United States Transportation Corps which has resulted in a great increase in traffic. The physical difficulties are being met by the provision, where possible, of alternative means of communication.

179. Very extensive measures have been, and are being, taken to improve the capacity of this line of communication. They include the doubling of certain sections on both the broad and metre gauge lines, the conversion of one section from narrow gauge to metre gauge, the construction of additional ghats and ferries, the improvement of existing facilities, and the provision of more river craft.

A proposal to erect a railway bridge across the Brahmaputra at Amingaon was rejected on the grounds that it would take too long to build. The alternative was to increase the capacity of the Amingaon—Pandu ferry, and this has been done.

180. *The Eastern Bengal Line of Communication*. This line consists of three main routes:—

(a) The sea route from Calcutta and Vizagapatam to Chittagong.

(b) From the Calcutta area to the Eastern Bengal metre gauge railway system, either by rail (via the Tistamukh wagon ferry), or by inland water transport, or by a combination of both. This railway system converges on Akhaura, and from there divides into two branches. The northern branch serves the Surma Valley airfields joining up with the Assam line of communication across the hill section of the railway between Badarpur and Lumding, and the southern supplies the Chittagong area.

(c) The road running south from the Assam trunk road, through Shillong, Sylhet and Comilla, to Chittagong.

181. The difficulties encountered on this line of communication are, as regards the railways:—

(a) The Eastern Bengal system is unable adequately to cope with the increased lift to airfields used for air supply.

(b) The capacity of the hill rail link between Badarpur and Lumding, which is limited to only nine trains a day each way, with a nett load of 140 tons each.

182. The principal developments of the railways in Eastern Bengal have been made with a view to providing a supplementary rail route for the Assam line of communication. These include:—

(i) The provision of additional crossing stations between the wagon ferry terminal at Bahadurabad and Badarpur.

(ii) Re-laying the hill section between Badarpur and Lumding to permit of the use of more powerful locomotives and longer trains.

In June, an investigation was carried out by representatives of 11 Army Group; General Headquarters, India; Headquarters, Supreme Allied Commander, South-East Asia Command; and the United States forces. Their recommendations, which are already being adopted, will increase line and terminal capacity throughout the whole system.

183. *Chittagong Port*. The limited capacity of this port originally restricted the use of the direct sea route, but steady increase has been obtained by improving the railway serving the wharves, providing additional moorings and jetties, building more storage accommodation, re-erecting equipment dismantled and removed under the denial scheme and by the supply of more lighters.

The working of the port has also improved as a result of its reorganization when Fourteenth Army assumed control on the 1st February.

The stores imported have increased by 150 per cent. since November 1943.

\* "Ghat" means a landing stage.

Further development is still going on and by March 1945, the port will have been expanded to the maximum practicable extent.

184. *The Arakan Line of Communication.* This line supplies the area to the south of Chittagong, and the lack of all-weather roads causes the burden to fall mainly on sea and river transport. There are two main routes:—

(a) By road, from Chittagong, via Ramu, to Tumbru at the head of the Naf River, and thence on to Bawli Bazaar and Maungdaw. The road is all-weather up to Tumbru, with the exception of the section between Chittagong and Dohazari.

(b) By water, from Chittagong to Cox's Bazaar and Utakhali; from Chittagong to Maungdaw direct; and by the Naf River from Tumbru to Maungdaw.

In addition to the above, there were two subsidiary sections of the line of communication:—

(i) On the Sangu and Kaladan Rivers, to support 81 (West African) Division.

(ii) On the Mayu River, to support the left flank of 15 Indian Corps.

185. The main difficulties met with on this line of communication are the physical difficulties of road construction in an area which is either mountainous or liable to inundation in the monsoons and where no stone exists; the limited capacity of Chittagong and the very restricted capacities of Cox's Bazaar, Utakhali and Maungdaw; and the shortage of craft on rivers, the mouths of which are under enemy control.

The diversity in the types of rivercraft employed is another factor which causes added difficulties; small coasters, ordinary tugs, "D" type diesel driven tugs of wooden construction, cargo flats, ramped cargo lighters, Eureka tow boats, Higgins barges, a variety of country craft fitted with outboard motors (with a horse-power ranging from 9.8 to 22), and last, but not least, the sampan.

186. As on the other lines of communication, very considerable development has taken place in Arakan. The road southwards from Dohazari has been converted to a fair weather two-way road as far as Maungdaw and an all-weather one-way one as far as Tumbru. The development of the road to Tumbru to two-way all-weather standard is in progress.

Our water communications have been improved by increasing the capacity of the ports in the Cox's Bazaar area from 400 to 1,000 tons a day. Tumbru Ghat is also now capable of handling 1,000 tons daily; and as soon as Maungdaw was captured, Transportation Construction Units raised its daily capacity to 600 tons.

Perhaps the most creditable feat, however, was the way in which much needed reinforcements of rivercraft were sailed into the Naf River. In spite of the fact that the mouth of the river was held by the enemy, Inland Water Transportation units, during the early stages of the winter operations, ran craft down the coast and up into the river—air cover being provided—to supplement the water transport which had been used the previous season. The river fleet in the Naf was thus increased until it was capable of handling 1,000 tons a day

between Tumbru and the numerous jetties which have been constructed between this ghat and Maungdaw

187. *Oil Pipelines.* Oil pipelines are under construction which will, of course, relieve the load on other forms of transport. An American 6-inch pipeline has been completed from Calcutta to North Assam and work on a similar line from Chittagong to the same area has been started. We are laying 4-inch pipeline from Chittagong to Imphal, via Manipur Road, which is nearly finished. The American line from Ledo to the Myitkyina area is being extended, and a British line from Imphal to Kalewa will probably be built.

188. *Summary of Developments on our Lines of Communication.* The main features have been:—

(a) The increase in the capacity of the Assam line of communication.

(b) The increase in the capacity of Chittagong.

(c) The development of the capacity of the sea and river line of communication southwards from Chittagong, from 400 tons to 1,000 tons a day.

(d) The increase in air supply due to the development of the airfields in the Surma Valley and the lines of communication leading to them.

(e) The construction of oil pipelines.

#### *Supply and Maintenance.*

189. The base for our operations in Burma is, of course, India, and all imported or indigenous stores pass through the Indian Reserve Base Depots.

The stocks of stores which we intended to hold on both the northern and southern lines were sixty days' working stock plus thirty days' reserve.

Stores from the Indian Reserve Bases are delivered to Advanced Bases in the Fourteenth Army area, which, for Arakan, are located about Chittagong and Mymensingh, and, for the northern line, at Gauhati and Manipur Road.

190. *Arakan Front:* During the last six months, an average of some 64,000 tons monthly has been moved through the port of Chittagong. A further 4,600 tons is shipped direct from Calcutta to the small ports south of Chittagong. The railway "lift" in this area, ex India, has averaged, over the same period, 19,000 tons monthly.

The northern part of East Bengal is served by Mymensingh from which the requirements of the air force, reserve formations in the district, and the air supply base airfields are met.

The Chittagong depots supply the Arakan, using road, sea and inland water transport.

191. *Assam Front:* For the first three months of the year, the line of communication on this front was unable to meet in full the heavy demands of both the British and United States forces. From the beginning of April 1944, however, its capacity has been notably improved and it can now lift the full requirements of the Allies; the tonnage having risen, in the last six months, from some 3,800 tons *per diem* to 5,200.

From our railhead at Dimapur, a long road line of communication leads up to, and beyond, Imphal. Before the Japanese advance in March, a division was fighting beyond Tamu, which is 195 miles from railhead, and another was engaged south of Tiddim, 300 miles from railhead. Imphal is 135 miles from Dimapur.

192. The maintenance of Special Force was entirely by air. For this purpose, bases at airfields in East Bengal were originally organized and stocked, but at a later stage in the planning, the base was transferred to the Surma Valley, and from the airfields there maintenance by supply-dropping and landing has been carried out throughout the operations.

193. The building up of stocks on both the northern and southern lines was a matter of some anxiety during the earlier part of the period. On the southern line, the capacity of the port of Chittagong, in spite of progressive expansion, barely kept pace with the needs of the forces, while on the northern line of communication, the total capacity available until April was only just sufficient for maintenance. Reserve stocks of many commodities, especially petrol, fell to dangerously low levels.

194. A supply difficulty which exists in both Assam and Arakan is that, with the exception of the rice crop which barely meets the needs of the civil population, no foodstuffs are obtainable in either area. In Bengal last year, this caused famine; and in parts of Assam the local inhabitants can barely support themselves. This imposed on the Army the need for importing fresh meat, vegetables, fruit, etc., from distant areas over difficult lines of communication; and of having to supply large quantities of tinned and dehydrated substitutes to rectify deficiencies in the fresh ration.

195. I have already mentioned the extent to which air supply has developed, but the subject is of such outstanding importance that the following figures are of interest. From the 8th to the 21st February, when the Japanese attack severed the communications of 7 Indian Division, a total of 923 tons of supplies of all types was dropped on the surrounded elements of that division. The month's total for February of air-dropped supplies in Arakan was 2,710 tons. In April, the total tonnage dropped was:—

Arakan, 1,316 (for 81 (West African) Division in the Kaladan Valley).

Special Force, 1,073.

From the 16th April to the 22nd June (the date of the re-opening of the Kohima—Imphal road), the amount flown into Imphal for 4 Corps was 13,155 tons. Nearly 10,000 casualties were evacuated by air from Imphal between these dates.

196. The operation of road transport between railhead (Dimapur) and Imphal, and forward thereof, is also of interest. A "round the clock" or L.G.O.C.\* system has been

adopted which works throughout the twenty-four hours. Vehicles run independently, drivers being changed at intervals which give them adequate rest. The following figures cover the month of January:—

Number of task vehicles	...	1,321
Tonnage delivered	...	47,304
Total mileage run	...	4,463,454
Average daily mileage per vehicle	...	110
Casualties:		
(a) Miles per accident	...	19,239
(b) Vehicles evacuated	...	103

At this time, as already mentioned, divisions had to be supplied up to 300 miles from railhead. Much of this is narrow and dangerous mountain road and I think the above figures demonstrate the efficiency of Indian lorry drivers.

197. The importance of labour in an undeveloped Eastern Theatre cannot be overstated. The construction of hundreds of miles of railways, roads, and pipelines; the preparation of new airfields and the expansion of existing ones; transportation works on the lines of communication, including port development; the expansion of hospitals, depots and camps in rear areas, etc., all mean an unending demand for more and more labour.

On the 1st May, the figure of organized labour employed by Fourteenth Army was over 178,000, while demands for a further 18,600 were under examination. In addition to this, some 200,000 civilian (contractor) labour was employed on Army projects. These figures include labour supplied to the United States forces. In spite of this total of nearly 400,000, the deficit on this date was 31,400.

198. As regards supplies, the two most pressing problems have been the provision of fresh foodstuffs, and of petrol.

I have already mentioned that dehydrated meat and vegetables were being supplied to meet the inadequacy of fresh supplies. I may add that every encouragement and assistance is given to units to grow their own vegetables where this is practicable.

A Local Resources branch of the staff, assisted by an agricultural expert borrowed from the Government of Assam, which is bringing some 18,000 acres under vegetable cultivation, was established. Pig breeding, goat rearing, and chicken farming have also been planned on an extensive scale.

199. The supply of petrol and lubricants, including those for aviation, has caused some anxiety. The monthly quantities, to be supplied through Army channels, were estimated last May to exceed eleven and a quarter million gallons, of which nearly half was high grade aviation spirit.

In spite of the progressive improvement in the capacity of our lines of communication, which has been more than doubled since December 1943, it has not been found possible as yet to do more than provide the quantities for maintenance. The ever increasing demands of our Allies in Upper Assam have continued to tax our oil resources. I do not foresee much improvement in the situation until more pipelines have been finished.

\* L.G.O.C. = London General Omnibus Company (which was absorbed into the London Passenger Transport Board).

200. Before leaving the subject of supply and maintenance, there are two matters which deserve notice.

The first is the projected reorganization of mechanical transport in the Royal Indian Army Service Corps. At present, there are no less than eight types of M.T. units—an organization which is both wasteful in manpower, and insufficiently flexible, as well as possessing other disadvantages. My recommendation to General Headquarters, India, that the existing eight types should be reduced to three, has been accepted, and the new reorganization is being adopted.

The second point of interest affects the Veterinary Service. In order that animals with Special Force should not betray the position of our troops in operations behind the enemy's lines, a muting operation was performed. This has achieved its object and there has been no loss of efficiency.

#### *The Engineering Effort.*

201. I have already described (with one exception—the Ledo Road) development of the railways, roads and pipelines and I have also mentioned airfield construction. The latter, however, merits more detailed description. I propose, too, to touch on bridging, which is so important in this Theatre, and, also, to discuss briefly the general problem of rapid road construction across mountain barriers or through thick jungle tracts, for on its solution the success of future operations will largely depend.

202. *The Ledo Road.* This road, which, in conjunction with air supply, is the line of communication of General Stilwell's Chinese-American forces operating in Northern Burma, has not been described because it does not form part of Fourteenth Army's northern line of communication. It is, of course, entirely under American control and, begun by British, is being built by American engineers.

It is now "all-weather two-way" to just north of Shaduzup and the intention is to complete it through to Myitkyina in another three months. Roadhead and railhead are to be at Namti, six miles north-east of Mogaung.

203. *Airfields.* Airfield construction in the area under my control can be divided into three categories: construction in the Fourteenth Army area; construction in North-East Assam for the United States Army Air Force, which is primarily in connection with the air-lift to China; and construction in Ceylon.

There were eighteen main airfields in the Fourteenth Army area last November. Since that date, three more large fields have been begun and the others have been made up to an all-weather standard.

For future operations, as outlined by the Chiefs of Staff at the end of March, it became necessary to build airfields adequate to allow additional transport to operate during the monsoon. In consultation with Air Command, South-East Asia, it was decided to increase the capacity of fifteen of the existing twenty-one airfields and to raise the standard to admit of their use by Dakotas and certain types of bombers.

204. On the 1st April 1944, the responsibility for the completion and upkeep of the American airfields in North-East Assam was

transferred from General Headquarters, India, to 11 Army Group. There are eleven main airfields in this area, all of which have now been completed to all-weather standard, with the exception of two which have been allotted a low priority by the Commanding General, United States Air Forces, China-Burma-India Theatre.

205. Airfields in Ceylon are built by the Air Ministry Works Department, but they remain the responsibility of the Chief Engineer, Ceylon Army Command. There are nine main airfields on the island, work on the improvement and extension of which continues.

206. It would have been quite impossible to attain the target dates fixed for the completion of this large-scale expansion by using normal materials such as concrete. Use has, therefore, been made of the new (and hitherto untried) bitumenized hessian ("Bithess") process for the provision of all-weather standings and runways. This material prevents water penetrating the ground which accordingly retains its full bearing capacity in wet weather. The experiment has already proved a success and may be of great value in future operations in a Theatre where monsoon rainfall is so heavy.

The magnitude of the engineering effort involved in airfield construction may be judged from the fact that, for the American airfields in North-East Assam alone, some 16,000 British military officers and men and 45,000 civil labour under British military supervision, are employed.

207. *River Crossings.* (a) The problem in this Theatre is complicated by the width of obstacles (the Chindwin and Myittha Rivers at Kalewa are some 330 yards and 200 yards across respectively in the dry season); the speed of current; the great seasonal variation in water levels; and the presence of floating debris. Wide rivers can, of course, only be bridged quickly by using floating equipment, as the construction of piers is a major engineering task, but the factors mentioned above, especially fast currents, render the anchoring of floating bridges precarious.

To overcome these difficulties, a bridge (known as the Falls bridge) has recently been designed and satisfactorily tested. It is composed of steel pontoons—widely spaced to admit of the passage of debris—with a Bailey superstructure, and with a large gantry at each end to control the landing bay during the marked variations which occur in water level.

Other measures, which are under investigation, include a proposal that only assault equipment should be carried in divisions, bridging companies to be Army or Corps Troops. Experiments are also being undertaken to produce a standard type of vehicle capable of carrying all bridging loads.

(b) The alternative method of crossing rivers by ferry assumes a special significance in this Theatre owing, not only to the width of gaps, but to the fact that the water level is liable to such sudden changes.

Ferrying is largely resorted to on the lines of communication, especially on the Brahmaputra.



*Speeding-up Communications.*

208. The rate of building all-weather roads in mountainous or thick jungle country has never amounted to more than one third of a mile a day. This is not fast enough to support a major land operation. The methods by which movement can be accelerated, particularly across physical barriers, are:—

(a) By the carriage of formations with weapons and M.T. in aircraft and gliders.

(b) By cutting jeep tracks in advance of the all-weather main road axis.

(c) By the deployment of the maximum possible engineer force and equipment, with the aid of aircraft, along the proposed alignment.

Both (a) and (b) restrict the size of modern transport. The only way in which larger vehicles can be transported by air is by so designing them that they can be broken down for air transport and re-assembled quickly on landing.

As regards (c), the deployment of an engineer force along a road alignment can only be done if no interference by the enemy is likely.

209. This presupposes the extensive use of airborne troops in an initial operation, to secure focal areas on the line of advance from which engineers and their machines can work in several directions simultaneously and thus rapidly provide a road artery. Without such an artery, operations for permanent occupation will be seriously hampered.

Assuming that aircraft and landing fields for gliders are available for such operations, there remains the necessity for designing types of mechanical equipment which can be broken down for transportation by air and re-assembled quickly after landing. The mechanical equipment at present transportable by air is either too small or, in the larger types, takes too long to assemble.

210. The crossing of mountain and jungle barriers can be accelerated by the use of airborne engineers, and airborne engineer machinery and bridging equipment.

The emplacing of engineer detachments along a proposed alignment is a tactical operation.

The provision of engineer equipment for air travel designed for rapid breakdown and re-assembly, is essential.

Research has reached an advanced stage. Steps are also being taken to strengthen the allotment of engineer units under Corps control, to facilitate reinforcement of forward divisions or, alternatively, to reduce the divisional task.

*The Civil Affairs Service, Burma.*

211. The Civil Affairs Service (Burma) (C.A.S.B.) came into being in February 1943, with the appointment of a Chief Civil Affairs Officer (C.C.A.O.). Originally under the control of the Commander-in-Chief, India, it was transferred to the South-East Asia Command, as part of 11 Army Group, on the 1st January 1944.

On the 1st January 1944, the Supreme Allied Commander, South-East Asia Com-

mand, assumed full judicial, legislative, executive and administrative responsibility for all the territories of Burma which were then occupied, or might at any future time be occupied, by the forces under his command, and he delegated to the Chief Civil Affairs Officer full authority to conduct on his behalf the military administration of the civil population in these territories.

212. *Administration.* (a) In the Fort Hertz and Sumprabum Sub-Divisions of the Myitkyina District, the zone of military administration began to expand in March 1944, Sumprabum itself being re-occupied on the 19th March. By the end of that month, the number of freed inhabitants had reached 80,000 and the administration was in charge of a Senior Civil Affairs Officer, responsible to the Deputy C.C.A.O. at Headquarters, Fourteenth Army.

(b) In the Kamaing Sub-Division the whole Hukawng Valley had been liberated by the 31st March, and was similarly in charge of a Senior Civil Affairs Officer.

The number of inhabitants under administration was 9,000.

(c) The Japanese offensive in March only left some 25,000 tribesmen of the Chin and Naga Hills and Upper Chindwin under the British Military Administration, but the situation since that date has changed and the figure has risen to 186,000.

(d) In Arakan, the line has fluctuated during the past six months. At the end of March, the administered civil population was 100,000.

213. *Supplies.* The replacement of the Government of Burma Directorate of Supply by a C.A.S.B. Lines of Communication organization became effective in November 1943. Only in exceptional cases is this organization allowed to purchase locally in the open market; normally, it obtains its requirements from Army depots.

214. *Police.* Early in 1944, the Inspector General of Police, Burma, joined the C.A.S.B. as Chief of Police, bringing with him a large part of the organization he had built up since the evacuation. The Intelligence Bureau, established for the collection of information concerning civilians on conditions in enemy-occupied territory, was absorbed into the C.A.S.B., but the Burma Police Depot (in India) remains for the time being under the Government of Burma.

215. *Public Health.* A controller of Medical Services was appointed to the C.A.S.B. in February, from the Government of Burma.

The frontier fringes are served by small hospitals and dispensaries.

216. *Welfare.* The C.A.S.B. Welfare Organization, under a Staff Officer, Civil Affairs, began work in January, when the recruitment of field staff began.

Plans for this organization to work in the Hukawng Valley, and in 4 Corps' area (Naga Hills, Upper Chindwin and Chin Hills), were not put into effect. The Commanding General of the Sino-American forces operating in the Hukawng Valley decided that he did not require its services, and the Japanese offensive nullified plans for 4 Corps' area. These plans have not been prepared in vain.

In Arakan, there was the problem of villagers rendered homeless by military operations, and, at present some 50,000 civilians are being accommodated, supervised, and supplied under the auspices of the welfare organization.

217. *Representation in China.* In November 1943, an officer of the C.A.S.B. was, with the approval of the War Office, attached to the staff of our Assistant Military Attaché at Kunming (China) to advise on Civil Affairs matters generally and, in particular, on political questions arising out of the operations of the Chinese forces over the Burma border from Yunnan.

218. *Future Commitments.* While administering the relatively small area of Burma which is at present under our control, we have also to look forward to the future, when the whole of Burma is re-occupied and returns under British Military Administration.

With this in view, it has recently been decided to combine into a single team the C.A.S.B. planning team and the Government of Burma planning team, for the preparation of a two-year plan covering, from every aspect, the re-establishment of the administrative and economic life of Burma. This will, I hope, ensure continuity, and a fair start for the Administration when conditions permit of the Government of Burma taking over the country from the C.A.S.B.

#### *Tribute.*

219. I referred in my introductory remarks on administration to the well known fact that the success or failure of an army is largely dependent on the efficiency of rear organization. It follows, therefore, that the successes which the Fourteenth Army has achieved are attributable, in no small measure, to the magnificent work of the rearward services. I have given some indication of the size and complexity of the problems which have had to be tackled. That they have been, or are being, solved, is due to the skill and determination displayed both by the Administrative Staff and Services of 11 Army Group and its subordinate formations, and the Commander-in-Chief, India, and his staff who not only laid the foundations on which we have built, but on whose administrative support we continue to depend.

#### *Location of Headquarters.*

220. I cannot finish this Despatch without referring to the difficulties by which I was continually hampered in commanding and administering 11 Army Group by the decision of the Supreme Allied Commander to move his H.Q. to Kandy in Ceylon in April 1944.\*

Before South-East Asia Command was set up in October 1943, the Commander-in-Chief, India, commanded the land forces operating against the Japanese and the roots of the Army, which was predominantly Indian, were deeply embedded in India. It was obvious that, even after the transfer of command to

the Supreme Allied Commander, very close administrative connection between the two Commands would be necessary and indeed orders were issued by the Chiefs of Staff that the forces of S.E.A.C. would be based upon India. It was clear that the relationship between G.H.Q. India and 11 Army Group which was formed to command and administer the British land forces of S.E.A.C. would have to be very intimate.

The formation of H.Q. 11 Army Group was slow, for while it was possible for the Commander-in-Chief, India, to provide some of the officers and clerks required, it was clear that the majority of both would have to come from outside India; and as the needs of other theatres of war were urgent many months elapsed before these officers and men could be sent. It was, in consequence, impossible for H.Q. 11 Army Group to move with H.Q. S.E.A.C. in April owing to shortage of staff, much of whose work had still to be done by G.H.Q., India.

The decision of the Supreme Allied Commander to move his H.Q. in April, therefore, entailed the splitting—difficult for any staff however efficient—of H.Q. 11 Army Group before it was fully formed, because it was necessary for me to be represented at Kandy. I had to send my M.G. G.S., the most senior officer on my staff, as I had no other officer of adequate experience. This was a grave handicap to the efficient formation and training of the staff and to me. I had in addition to send with him some 40 officers and the necessary clerks. As no telephone communications existed—the highest priority telegrams took several hours and letters not less than 3 days—consultation between my main H.Q. at Delhi and the Advanced H.Q. at Kandy was slow and difficult.

In addition to the work at Delhi, I had of course continually to visit the forward troops and the Commander, Fourteenth Army, to control operations. I could only make occasional visits to Kandy, a journey to which from Delhi or Calcutta took more than 12 hours, except in the fastest aircraft. I was compelled to do much unnecessary travelling.

I pointed out on several occasions the very serious disadvantages of trying to control operations in Assam and Arakan from a H.Q. more than 1,500 miles from either area, without telephones, with slow telegraphic and long, and at certain times of the year unreliable air communication; further that the Air Commander responsible for the support of the Army would not be at Kandy. I continued to press for the establishment of H.Q. 11 Army Group at Calcutta. In August it was at last agreed that H.Q. 11 Army Group should move to the Calcutta area but much time had been lost and the move could not be completed until the beginning of December, at which moment operations would be in progress.

#### *Acknowledgements.*

221. My thanks are due to many officers for their ungrudging assistance, but it is not possible to mention more than a few of them.

\* *War Office footnote*—The views of the Supreme Allied Commander and his reasons for the move to Ceylon are set out in Part A., paragraphs 12-14 of his Report, "South-East Asia, 1943-1945."

To General Sir Claude Auchinleck my principal thanks are due, because without his wholehearted and generous support and wise advice, 11 Army Group could not have achieved success. I can never adequately express my gratitude for all he has done.

I should also like to include in my thanks to him my gratitude to his staff for their unselfish help during many months.

I wish also to thank Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse, and the R.A.F. and the U.S.A.A.F. for their magnificent support during the fighting in Arakan, Assam and in Central and Northern Burma.

Admiral Sir James Somerville gave every assistance possible to the Army, though resources did not permit of a major combined operation.

Upon Lieut.-General Slim, Commander, Fourteenth Army, fell the brunt of operations and well and truly did he stand up to the strain of the continuous and heavy fighting which began in February and ended in August. He remained unshaken during the Japanese offensive and was quick to take advantage of opportunities to counter-attack. To him is due the resounding victory achieved by Fourteenth Army this year.

Lieut.-General Scoones greatly distinguished himself in command of 4 Corps upon which the principal strain of the fighting fell during the operations round Imphal between February and June. Lieut.-General Christison in command of 15 Indian Corps in Arakan first defeated the Japanese in Burma. He has shown fine qualities of leadership.

Lieut.-General Stopford, Commander, 33 Corps, showed great staying power, professional knowledge and dash in the operations which resulted finally in opening the Kohima—Imphal road.

To my own staff ; officers, N.C.Os. and men ; I owe the greatest debt of gratitude for their splendid support and their fine team work. Always short-handed, split into two with one detachment 1,500 miles from the other, they have never failed to do the work which has continued steadily to increase.

It is difficult to single out from so many first-rate officers and men, many individuals for special praise, but I must mention particularly my two principal Staff Officers upon whom fell special responsibility.

Major-General I. S. O. Playfair, M.G., G.S., has been the greatest help to me throughout, but especially after the staff was split in April when he went to Kandy as my representative. There, the whole responsibility for representing my point of view to the Supreme Allied Commander fell upon him. I relied entirely upon his unflinching judgment, strength of character and tact and he never failed me.

Major-General E. N. Goddard, M.G.A., 11 Army Group, must have carried one of the heaviest administrative loads in any theatre of war. No man could have discharged his duties with more unsparing devotion and no operations could have succeeded if his work had not been of the highest standard.

## APPENDIX "A"

Skeleton Order of Battle, 15 Indian Corps,  
1st January 1944.

### 5 Indian Division.

9 Indian Infantry Brigade.  
123 Indian Infantry Brigade.  
161 Indian Infantry Brigade.

### 7 Indian Division.

33 Indian Infantry Brigade.  
89 Indian Infantry Brigade.  
114 Indian Infantry Brigade.

### 26 Indian Division.

4 Indian Infantry Brigade.  
36 Indian Infantry Brigade.  
71 Indian Infantry Brigade.

### 81 (West African) Division.

5 (West African) Infantry Brigade.  
6 (West African) Infantry Brigade.

*Note :* 3 (West African) Brigade formed part of Special Force.

## APPENDIX "B"

Skeleton Order of Battle, 4 Corps,  
8th March 1944.

### 17 Indian Light Division.

48 Indian Infantry Brigade.  
63 Indian Infantry Brigade.

*Note :* This formation comprised only two brigades, but it included a Divisional Headquarters Battalion, a Divisional Signals Battalion, and a Divisional Reconnaissance Battalion.

### 20 Indian Division.

32 Indian Infantry Brigade.  
80 Indian Infantry Brigade.  
100 Indian Infantry Brigade.

### 23 Indian Division.

1 Indian Infantry Brigade.  
37 Indian Infantry Brigade.  
49 Indian Infantry Brigade.

### 50 Indian Parachute Brigade (less one Battalion).

### 254 Indian Tank Brigade.

*Note :* For comparison with the Order of Battle of 33 Corps at the end of May (*vide* Appendix "C"), the following formations must be added to those shown above:—

5 Indian Division (less 161 Brigade).  
89 Indian Infantry Brigade (7 Indian Division).

## APPENDIX "C"

Skeleton Order of Battle, 33 Indian Corps,  
31st May 1944.

### 2 British Division.

4 Infantry Brigade.  
5 Infantry Brigade.  
6 Infantry Brigade.

### 7 Indian Division.

33 Indian Infantry Brigade.  
161 Indian Infantry Brigade (from 5 Indian Division).

*Note :* 89 Brigade was under 4 Corps, and 114 Brigade *en route* from the Arakan Front.

268 Indian Infantry Brigade (*Lorried*).

*Lushai Brigade.*

3 *Special Service Brigade (two Commandos).*

*Corps Troops:*

149 Regiment, R.A.C.

7 K.O.Y.L.I. (less one squadron).

11 Cavalry.

*Headquarters 21 Indian Division.*

(late H.Q., 44 Indian Armoured Division).

*Note:* This Headquarters, which had become available on the disbandment of 44 Indian Armoured Division in India, assumed operational control of the lines of communication of 33 Corps.

#### APPENDIX "D"

Skeleton Order of Battle, 11 Army Group,

South-East Asia Command, 22nd June 1944.

FOURTEENTH ARMY.

Special Force.

36 British Division.

4 *Corps.*

5 Indian Division (less 161 Brigade).

7 Indian Division (less 33 Brigade).

17 Indian Light Division.

20 Indian Division.

23 Indian Division.

50 Indian Parachute Brigade.

33 *Corps.*

2 British Division.

21 Indian Division.

161 Brigade, 5 Indian Division.

33 Brigade, 7 Indian Division.

15 *Indian Corps.*

25 Indian Division.

26 Indian Division.

81 (West African) Division.

CEYLON ARMY COMMAND.

11 (East African) Division.

Garrisons of the Indian Ocean bases at Addu Atoll, Diego Garcia and Cocos Islands.

*Note: i.* 82 (West African) Division was about to arrive.

*Note: ii.* The strength of forces in Northern Burma not under the operational control of 11 Army Group was:—

Fort Hertz area	...	...	2,012
American forces	...	...	65,784
Chinese forces	...	...	147,396



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