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AIR OPERATIONS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA 3RD MAY, 1945
 TO 12TH SEPTEMBER, 1945

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 Air and Army despatches of the Burma Campaign from 16th November, 1943 to 12th September, 1945.

The following despatch was submitted to the Secretary of State for Air in August, 1946, by AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR KEITH PARK, G.C.B., K.B.E., M.C., D.F.C., Allied Air Commander-in-Chief, South East Asia.

4. Instead, squadrons of the Royal Air Force re-directed their energies to the most extensive mission of mercy by bringing relief and liberation, in the initial stages, to tens of thousands of Allied prisoners-of-war and internees in the many Japanese prison camps scattered throughout the vast territories of South East Asia.

FOREWORD.

1. Air Power's contribution to the overthrow of Japanese land forces during the closing stages of the war in South East Asia, is reviewed in this Despatch, which opens with the period following the Allied Forces' victorious entry into Rangoon on 3rd May, 1945, and culminates in the official surrender of the Japanese Southern Army to Admiral The Lord Louis Mountbatten, at Singapore, on 12th September, 1945.

5. The successful accomplishment of this task made a fitting conclusion to Air Power's participation in a war against a ruthless and fanatical enemy whose years of aggression in these territories ended with crushing and complete defeat.

2. During this period, squadrons of the Royal Air Force played a conspicuous rôle in the last battle against the enemy land forces on Burmese soil. More than ten thousand Japanese troops, ill-equipped, sick and demoralised, were annihilated by our air and ground forces while attempting a mass escape from the Pegu Yomas across the Sittang River and south to Moulmein. Their Air Force had already been eliminated from Burma.

PART I.

RANGOON AND AFTER.

THE SITUATION IN MAY, 1945, AFTER THE FALL OF RANGOON.

3. August 1945 brought with it Japan's realisation of defeat and her decision to surrender. It forestalled by only a few weeks the planned invasion of Malaya in which over 500 aircraft of the Royal Air Force and about 200 carrier-borne aircraft of the Royal Navy would have demonstrated again the power of air superiority.

1. With unconditional surrender of Germany on 8th May, 1945, the conflict in South East Asia and in the Far East against the last remaining of the Axis Powers took on a new significance, with the balance weighted heavily in favour of the Allies against Japan.

2. The only outcome of the war in the East, like the one prescribed for Germany, could be complete and unconditional surrender of Japan.

3. Decisively beaten in Burma, and with Rangoon recaptured only five days before the surrender of Germany in Europe, Japan, fighting alone, faced almost certain invasion of her homeland in the coming months. The systematic loss of territories throughout South East

Asia which she had invaded during her orgy of conquest some three years before, was now inevitable.

4. A redeployment of manpower and material resources from Europe for the war against Japan was scheduled to begin, which would thus quicken the tempo of operations. But long before the collapse of Germany had taken place in Europe, the plans for the reconquest of Malaya and Singapore had been prepared. With the other Commanders-in-Chief in this Theatre, I shared the conviction that the second half of 1945 would bring the reinforcements promised by London.

5. On the entry into Rangoon on 3rd May, 1945, theatre strategy was directed to the liberation of Singapore at the earliest possible date with a view to opening up the sea-route to Indo-China and the East Indies, and to liberating enemy-occupied countries. Thereafter, strategy subsequent to the re-occupation of Singapore would depend upon the march of events in the Western Pacific Theatre.

6. It had been the contention, hitherto, that the capture of Singapore would involve at least two intermediate operations before the final goal could be achieved. Firstly, it was considered that an initial operation would be necessary to establish an advanced air and naval base. Through this base, aircraft and assault craft could be staged and operated in support of the next operation for the seizure and occupation of a bridgehead on the Malayan Peninsula. Occupation and development of this bridgehead on the mainland was considered an essential prelude to the final overland advance on Singapore itself.

7. Hastings Harbour was originally selected as the initial objective, but this was postponed to take place after the Monsoon. Further examination by the Joint Planning Staff at Headquarters, S.A.C.S.E.A., however, indicated that a stepping-stone still further south than Hastings Harbour was not only desirable in relation to the time margin, but also a practicable proposition as regards the fly-in of single-engined fighters and close support aircraft. It was essential, however, from the aspect of resources available, that such an operation should be a limited commitment as a military operation and also as regards the shipping lift. These limitations, therefore, narrowed down the selection of this objective to a lightly defended island. Puket Island fulfilled this requirement. Its occupation was therefore planned for June, 1945.

Puket Operation or "Roger"

8. The Puket operation—"Roger"—was approved in principle by the Chiefs of Staff in February, 1945, but they reserved judgment as to its timing in relation to the fall of Rangoon. A plan for the operation was nevertheless prepared by the Joint Planning Staff and Force Commanders' Staffs were appointed.

9. Force Planning began in Delhi on February 2nd, but it became apparent that the occupation of an island so close to the mainland would involve a greater military commitment than had been envisaged earlier. The Army concept of this operation demanded one Division for the assault and initial occupation of the island, including a small bridgehead on the

mainland, and one follow-up Division to consolidate the position. The Japanese garrison of this island was reported to be approximately one battalion, but other land forces could have been assembled on the mainland once the attack was disclosed.

10. Owing to the distance from our own mainland bases, air cover and support would have to be given by carrier-borne aircraft initially until the capture of the first airstrip, when the Air Forces would accept full responsibility for all air operational requirements. I suggested that the Army demands, both in manpower and material, were excessive for so small an operation (the same opinion being expressed by the Supreme Allied Commander and the Naval C. in C.). I felt that if such demands were persisted in, it might mean that the operation (which would have given vital air bases to support a major operation) would have to be dropped. These fears were well-founded, as the proposed operation was subsequently abandoned, mainly for this reason.

11. Development of the air base at Puket envisaged the completion of three runways to all-weather standard, with an initial force of three Single Engine Fighter Squadrons and an ultimate build-up to:—

3 S.E.F. Squadrons.

1 Fighter/Recce Squadron.

3 Light Bomber Squadrons.

2 Heavy Bomber Squadrons.

Detachments of Air Sea Rescue and Photographic Reconnaissance Unit.

Staging facilities for air transport and other types of air traffic.

12. In addition to this, the base would also require to be capable of staging airborne operations in relation to future requirements of the campaign in Malaya. The air base, too, would require to be fully operational by D plus 100 days, while its development to full capacity was so timed as to provide the necessary air support and cover for the next stage of operations comprising re-occupation of the Ports Swettenham and Dickson areas, and a bridgehead for the final overland advance on Singapore. The occupation of this bridgehead was planned to take place some four months after the initial occupation of Puket with a view to the final assault for the capture of Singapore.

13. Events in Burma, however, had forced a change of plan, which envisaged the necessity to capture Rangoon from the sea before the monsoon broke, and open it as a port to relieve the other overworked supply routes.

14. In this connection, it can now be put on record that a R.A.F. Mosquito aircraft, carrying Wing Commander Saunders, made a low reconnaissance of Rangoon the day before the British Armada disembarked. Finding the city empty of Japanese, and Allied flags flying over P.O.W. camps, he landed at the nearest airfield, hitchhiked into Rangoon and released some of our P.O.W's. Wing Commander Saunders then borrowed a native boat and rowed down the river to tell the British Commander that Rangoon was unoccupied by the enemy, and offered his services as guide to the Expedition. This unusual incident revealed that the enemy forces in Rangoon itself had departed between the times of departure and arrival of the sea convoy. It was later revealed

that the Japanese Commander of the Burma Area Army had been ordered to hold Rangoon to the end, but on his own initiative decided to withdraw in the face of the Fourteenth Army's pressure.

15. It was realised after Rangoon's capture that to postpone the Puket operation later than mid-June, 1945, would inevitably retard the progress of subsequent operations timed progressively for the capture of Singapore by the end of the year. The Puket operation was therefore abandoned. With it, there vanished a stepping-stone to Singapore which the British Air Forces could well have utilised to great advantage.

Effect of Delay upon Future Strategy

16. The importance of accelerating the Allied Malayan offensive had been emphasised. In the first instance, it necessitated planning for the occupation and development of Puket approximately one month after the Monsoon had set in. Any further delay than this incurred a steady deterioration in weather conditions and a heavy swell on exposed beaches. The cumulative effect of rain was also calculated to cause a steady increase in the saturation of the ground and proportionately greater difficulty in airfield and road construction.

17. It was estimated that the closing stages of the campaign in Burma, involving at the eleventh hour a mounting of the amphibious operation "Dracula" to make doubly certain Rangoon's capture, had imposed a minimum of nine weeks delay in the initiation of the operation to capture the weakly held Puket. It followed, therefore, if Malayan strategy was to be implemented to meet the proposed time schedule for the capture of Singapore that this initial delay must be made good quickly.

18. To achieve this there were three courses open for consideration, each of which involved much planning:—

(1) To select an alternative objective where airfield development was an easier proposition in relation to weather conditions and time available, or where airfields already existed.

(2) To retain the existing objective but on a less ambitious scale of airfield development and military occupation, thereby speeding up development.

(3) To abandon any project for development of a stepping-stone, and to embark upon the second phase of our overall strategy which envisaged a bridgehead on the Malayan Peninsula as a prelude to the final advance on Singapore.

19. Course 1, on examination, revealed that areas more suitable for airfield development did not fulfil the operational requirements, while the occupation of existing airfields in suitable areas was likely to require a major military operation.

20. As regards Course 2, if some reduction in the scale of effort was acceptable, particularly as regards the requirements of heavy bombers, then a substantial reduction in runway development could be achieved. This, however, would reduce the overall period of development to the extent by which the base could be fully operational to provide the necessary air support and softening up operations on a

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lighter scale in relation to the next phase of Malayan operations as timed. Furthermore, if reduction in base development were accompanied by a decrease in the scale of military effort required to occupy the island, this would result not only in saving time, but also in a general economy in resources and shipping. The Army, however, would not agree to any reduction in strength of assault and garrison forces.

21. Course 3, when considered, had the great advantage of making up the total time lost, which, for reasons which have already been stated, was of paramount importance.

22. It was obvious, however, that without intermediate air bases, close support by land based aircraft could not be provided either as a prelude to or during the initial occupation of the bridgehead.

23. For this purpose, complete reliance had therefore to be placed upon air support and air cover by carrier-borne aircraft until suitable airstrips could be prepared within the bridgehead. Furthermore, the degree of heavy bomber support would be severely limited by distance and weather. Even on the most optimistic assumption that one or more heavy bomber airfields would be available in Burma by September, air bombing involved a distance to targets of 1,000 miles with a consequent reduction in bomb load and intensity of effort.

24. It was obvious, therefore, that operations at such a range could not afford the required support for the initial occupation of the bridgehead. The lack of an advanced air base also introduced difficulties as regards the fly-in of aircraft for the build-up, and a routine service for aircraft replacement.

25. When the problem was examined, the Joint Planning Staff recommended Course 3, provided that carrier-borne air forces could be assured.

26. Course 3 was therefore adopted, and the operation which, in planning, became known as "Zipper", envisaged the occupation of a bridgehead in the Port Dickson—Swettenham area. The assault, it was intended, should be carried out by two Divisions of No. 34 Indian Corps, with 15 Corps in the following-up rôle. The amphibious operation would be undertaken by a naval task force.

27. It was planned that air cover and support would be provided initially by carrier-borne air forces, presupposing that at least three light fleet carriers would be available for the operation in addition to the escort carriers already in the Theatre. The R.A.F. Squadrons of 224 Group, which had given outstanding service in Burma, were to be flown into the bridgehead as soon as strips were available.

28. As complementary to operation "Zipper", planning was also initiated for the occupation of Singapore Island under planning code word "Mailist".

29. The initial assault for "Zipper" was timed to take place in early September, 1945, and subsequent exploitation southwards in Malaya was so timed as to permit of the final assault on Singapore by the end of December.

30. From the air point of view I consider the "Zipper" plan for the assault on Malaya possessed one distinct disadvantage—its great

range from established air bases, principally in Burma. Had it not been for the diversion of considerable military resources to the capture of undefended Rangoon, I would have preferred an intermediate step to Singapore which would have permitted adequate air support and staging of aircraft. Time, however, was not on our side. In view of the Army's commitments at Rangoon, and of the naval disinclination to make an assault without a suitable anchorage nearby, the prospects of any intermediate operation completely faded away.

31. The "Zipper" plan, on the other hand, gave the recently occupied Cocos Islands a new and important rôle as an offensive air base in addition to its primary function as a staging post to the South West Pacific. Originally, it was intended that the garrisoning Air Forces to be based in the Cocos should comprise one Single-Engined Fighter and one Coastal Torpedo Fighter Squadron. The inclusion of the Coastal T.F. Squadron was mainly on account of a possible threat of enemy sea-borne attack. This threat, however, had steadily declined. In consequence, the operational rôle of the T.F. Squadron virtually disappeared, while the limited range of T.F. aircraft precluded them from employment offensively against targets within and beyond the Netherlands East Indies barrier. Therefore, I decided to substitute one Long Range General Reconnaissance squadron in the Cocos in place of the T.F. Squadron, thus enabling General Reconnaissance Liberator aircraft to carry out strikes from the Cocos on targets along the coast of Malaya and N.E.I. An additional advantage of the Cocos was the certainty of more favourable weather conditions during the monsoon.

32. In short, the R.A.F. developed the Cocos Islands into a most valuable offensive air base, and air staging post.

THE AIR BUILD-UP IN BURMA FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS.

33. From the review of strategy and planning for the impending assault of Malaya, it was evident that the air forces would be called upon to fulfil commitments extending over a vast area from Central Burma southwards to Southern Malaya and around N.E.I., until the defeat of the enemy in the South East Asia Theatre.

34. As the result of this trend in future operations, the problem of command and control of the Air Forces became far wider in responsibility than that which had obtained hitherto. Accordingly, it was decided that operational command and control of all R.A.F. Groups other than those serving in Burma should be exercised directly by Headquarters, Air Command, South East Asia, through the respective Group Commanders. Air power, it was realised, would soon embark upon a large-scale intensification of operations against the Japanese, not only in South East Asia, but also in the South West Pacific Theatre.

35. While the tempo of air operations had eased off considerably after the capture of Rangoon, the immediate task nevertheless facing the Air Forces was to secure bases and all weather airfields for the future redeployment and reinforcements of the squadrons in Burma and Malaya in the quickest possible time.

36. The decrease in air operations which coincided also with the arrival of the monsoon, was, in every respect, a welcome relief for squadrons. The task of the preceding six months in supporting and supplying the Allied land forces in the non-stop advance to Rangoon had exhausted R.A.F. personnel to a degree never experienced in the Middle East or North West Africa or the Central Mediterranean during 1942-1945. Headquarters S.E.A.C. required our squadrons to operate at maximum effort for a longer period than called for in other Theatres. Aircraft, too, had withstood the gruelling test of climate and semi-developed airfields. In the race through Burma to beat the Jap and the monsoon, No. 221 Group Headquarters had moved four times; moves of Wing Headquarters totalled twenty-five, and squadrons made no less than 112 movements. These moves by the Air Forces in Burma through a tortuous country whose roads and communications were notoriously bad, had meant some disorganisation and much discomfort, but hardly an operational sortie had been lost owing to any forward movement. Neither the men, nor the aircraft, however, could go on indefinitely. For the former a period of rest was necessary; for the latter, re-equipment was in many instances, already long overdue.

37. It was during this lull in operations that certain of these squadrons in Burma were rested and re-equipped before the next phase in the campaign in South East Asia was due to begin. The "Battle of the Break Through" by thousands of Japanese forces trapped in the Pegu Yomas of Southern Burma had still to come—a battle in which the Air Forces had conspicuous success.

38. At this time there were ominous signs that the Japanese Empire was beginning to reel under the fury of American air attack, which was now directed upon it without pause.

39. With the next blows in South East Asia about to descend upon Malaya, the trend of the Air Forces was a movement to the south—as far south as possible with Southern Burma as the springboard for the major operation which was to come.

40. The plan required a gradual movement of squadrons of fighter bombers, light and medium bombers and indeed, heavy bombers, to Southern Burma. It was hoped that by August, 1945, Mingaladon Airfield, Rangoon, would be capable of providing facilities for 100 aircraft, Toungoo with a capacity for 70 aircraft; Pegu 70 aircraft; Zayatkwint 48 aircraft; Pabst 50 aircraft; Myingyan 70 aircraft; and Meiktila 70 aircraft.

41. This phased build-up was by no means firm, for there was a decided lack of engineers' information on the eventual ability of certain of the more important and vital airfields. In face of Army representations that the original plan for the net of airfields in Southern Burma could not be met without diverting Army engineers from other tasks in Rangoon, I had to agree, most reluctantly, to a much reduced constructional programme in the Rangoon area.

42. On entry into Rangoon, speed in airfield construction was absolutely essential. Delivery of bitness, for servicing the only airstrip, was,

however, retarded owing to the land communication difficulties within the area, and I had to give orders that No. 96 (Dakota) Squadron should be given the task of flying-in bitness from Bengal to Mingaladon. The task was completed to scheduled time.

43. I regret that the Air Forces should have had to call upon the Army for airfield construction in Burma owing to the absence of R.A.F. airfield construction units and Air Ministry Works Supervisory personnel in this Theatre. There is no doubt that the American system of providing aviation engineer battalions in Burma proved better and more satisfactory. It might also be noted that some fifteen thousand R.A.F. constructional personnel were allocated by Air Ministry to the Tiger Force Operation in the Pacific, although South East Asia Command was deplorably short of engineers, and it must have been evident that this new Air Force was most unlikely to operate before the defeat of the Japanese.

Hastening Construction of Burma Airfields.

44. Early in June, my Air Marshal Administration visited Rangoon to obtain first-hand details of the problems being encountered, and to hasten construction of airfields as much as possible. On my own visit to Rangoon on June 15th, I was assured by Major General Administration, Headquarters, A.L.F.S.E.A., that all points brought up by my Air Officer Administration were receiving attention.

45. The enormous increase in the Air Forces' radius of action which the new airfields under construction would afford was foreshadowed in June, when R.A.F. heavy bombers, operating from bases in Bengal, attacked and sank a 10,000-ton Japanese tanker in the Gulf of Siam. One aircraft damaged by flak was forced to land at Mingaladon Airfield, Rangoon, which was not yet completed, and over-ran the available length of the runway, killing the crew.

46. The continued pressure by Air Command on the Army for more speedy construction brought better results, and it was a little more heartening, on June 28th, to be given dates estimated for the various stages in the completion of the following airfields in the Rangoon area:—

Zayatkwın—1,750 yards. A/W runway by July 20th.

Zayatkwın—2,000 yards. A/W runway by July 31st.

Mingaladon—1,750 yards. A/W runway by July 31st.

Mingaladon—2,000 yards. A/W runway by August 15th.

47. By October 1st, it was estimated that Mingaladon Airfield would be capable of accommodating a total of 150 aircraft for operational purposes. The airfield at Zayatkwın was expected to handle 130 Thunderbolts or Mosquitos, and would be staging through the Squadrons for "Zipper" by 1st October. Pegu was also being developed as quickly as possible as a heavy bomber airfield.

48. While it was expected that squadrons would be able to move into the new airfields by the end of July, No. 224 Group, which had been linked with Lieutenant-General Sir Philip Christison's 15 Corps in some of the fiercest fighting in Burma, was preparing to leave the

Arakan with its units and to proceed to India for training and re-equipment in preparation for the mounting of "Zipper".

49. The move of 224 Group squadrons was greatly delayed and handicapped on account of the shortage of shipping and the inadequate land transport facilities in Burma. The fact that Army units were also leaving Burma at the same time did not make the position easier for the movement of Air Force personnel and their equipment. June, indeed, ended with the move of 224 Group far from complete, and it soon became apparent that units would not succeed in clearing from the Arakan before the third week in July.

Withdrawal of U.S.A.A.F. from Air Command, South East Asia

50. On June 1st, 1945, because of our air dominance, the narrowing front, and the fact that the tactical situation after Rangoon permitted no offensive action by the 10th U.S.A.A.F., the British and American Air Forces reached the parting of the ways in South East Asia Command. The American commitment in Burma had ended with the capture of Northern Burma and removal of the enemy threat to the supply line to China.

51. Each Air Force was now to prosecute the air war against the Japanese in neighbouring Theatres. For the Royal Air Force, the offensive now headed down the Malay Peninsula to Singapore. For the U.S.A.A.F., however, the route lay across the Himalayas to China, since the sphere of the American Command was designated the China-Burma-India Theatre. Yet another reason for the withdrawal of the 10th U.S.A.A.F. was the critical air supply situation in the Northern Combat Area Command, due mainly to the high rate of effort at which the 10th Air Force Transport Squadrons had been operating and which was now beginning to tell on personnel and aircraft alike. At the same time, the American squadrons required refitting and rest before their impending move to China.

52. The withdrawal of American Squadrons for service in another Theatre did not affect the strategic situation in South East Asia Command. The only aircraft which could have been retained with advantage were (a) the transports which were being phased out gradually to bridge the gap until the arrival of our Stage 2 aircraft, and whose withdrawal could not be further delayed on account of the urgent need in China, and (b) the photographic Liberators of the 24th Combat Mapping Squadron.

53. The period of integration between British and American Forces in South East Asia had shown a very real spirit of close co-operation—a fact which I emphasised in a special Order of the Day published on June 1st, announcing the withdrawal from Air Command, South East Asia, of the United States Army Air Forces under Major General George E. Stratemeyer, Eastern Air Command, Calcutta.

54. In my Order of the Day, which I sent to General Stratemeyer, I revealed how air power had followed the basic principle in modern warfare—that the air battle had first been won before embarking on the land battle. Once the air battle was decided, air power was then able to provide the ground forces with direct forms of assistance.

55. "Having taken a vital part in the defeat of the Japanese in Burma", I said, "the U.S.A.A.F. units are being withdrawn from Eastern Air Command to fight the Jap in another Theatre. The closing down of the fully integrated Eastern Air Command Headquarters is, therefore, an important milestone in the war against Japan.

"Eastern Air Command was formed on 15th December, 1943, at a critical time in the Battle of Burma, in order to weld into one Command the British and American Air Forces on this front.

"The British Army was hanging on to the western fringes of Burma, having stemmed the Japanese advance into Bengal.

"When the British Army was besieged in Imphal due to Japanese infiltration resulting from their superior mobility, the first task of the newly formed Eastern Air Command was to obtain air superiority in order to enable our close support squadrons to assist the land forces.

"Within a short time air superiority was obtained, due in no small measure to the long range fighter squadrons of the U.S.A.A.F. It enabled the Allied Transport Squadrons to supply and reinforce the beleaguered Army; also, it gave them the mobility which previously the Japanese had monopolised. From this time, until the capture of Rangoon in May, 1945, the Allied Land Forces enjoyed all the benefits of air supremacy which, in turn, kept inviolate the air supply lines and endowed the Allied Army with the mobility and striking power to forge ahead to Mandalay, followed shortly by Rangoon. It made possible the isolation of the Japanese Army in Burma by Allied aircraft, thus preventing the arrival of reinforcements and supplies from Siam and Malaya.

"In Northern Burma, the Tactical and Transport Squadrons of the 10th U.S.A.A.F. played a decisive part in the repulse of the enemy from the Chinese border and in the re-opening of the overland route to China.

"A Japanese officer who was captured in Burma attributed the defeat of the Japanese Army to the superior mobility of the Allied Army. This mobility was almost entirely due to the air supply provided by the Allied Air Forces, whose record tonnage exceeded 2,900 tons per day in April, 1945. Due mainly to their superior numbers and operating at maximum effort, the American Transport Squadrons carried the greater portion of the air lift in support of the land forces in Burma.

"In conclusion, it is fair to say that without the support of the American Air Forces in Burma, we could not have defeated the Japanese Army as rapidly and as decisively in 1945. All British Forces, both land and air, are deeply grateful for the whole hearted support and complete harmony that existed between the American and British Air Force units in this Theatre.

"I am exceedingly proud to have had these American Air Force units in my Command, and, together with all members of the British Air Force in South East Asia, wish them good luck, and good hunting."

56. In my Order of the Day announcing disintegration of Eastern Air Command, I did not make especial mention of units of the Air Service Command, but, instead I wrote to

Lieutenant General D. I. Sultan, Commanding General, India-Burma Theatre, U.S. Army, and expressed the valuable and splendid work which the Air Service Command had performed under Major General T. J. Handley, Jnr. Without this help, we should have failed to carry through the intensive operations of the previous 12 months.

57. While it was necessary to sever the British and American Combat units of Eastern Air Command, and Air Command, South East Asia, there was, however, no break as yet with the Air Service Command.

58. With disintegration of Eastern Air Command, the air offensive in South East Asia now passed in its entirety to the Royal Air Force, and an exceedingly active period in the deployment of squadrons in Burma began. Thus, the integration ordered by the Supreme Commander in December, 1943, had been fulfilled in so far as it concerned the integration of British and American Air Forces employed in the defeat of the Japanese in Burma.

The Impact of "Tiger Force" on Air Command

59. For some time after the capture of Rangoon in May, there were indications that Tiger Force was going to be favoured by London in men and material resources previously promised to South East Asia Command.

60. The Supreme Allied Commander, Admiral Mountbatten, showed his reliance on the Air Force in this Theatre, by a strong signal to the Chiefs of Staff expressing his intense disappointment at the contemplated step since he considered it would delay his carrying out their directive to open up the Straits of Malacca and to recapture Singapore at the earliest possible date.

61. I also communicated the concern felt by the Supreme Allied Commander to the Chief of Air Staff, emphasising that future strategy and operations in this Theatre had been based on the agreed rate of build-up of the British Air Forces and especially of British Transport and Heavy Bomber squadrons. Moreover, the withdrawal programme of the U.S.A.A.F. forces for China which had now begun, had been agreed and phased in with the rate of build-up of the British Air Forces.

62. The question of airfields in South East Asia for staging Tiger Force through to the Far East also presented some difficulties, since the most suitable area was Rangoon where insufficient bases for our own aircraft were available. In the United Kingdom it was thought that Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar were too far from Manila, and they were not accepted as alternatives.

63. It became clear that Air Command, South East Asia, must accept the situation wherein the air war in the Pacific against Japan received higher priority than ourselves. This was finally confirmed by a signal from the Chief of Staff in London on June 22nd, part of which read:—

"In case you are in doubt, 'Zipper' and 'Mailfist' have been approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff with the proviso that these operations are conducted without prejudice to the preparation and execution of operations for the invasion of Japan and other operations directly connected therewith."

64. At the beginning of July, Air Vice-Marshal Sharp and Satterly arrived at Air Command on their return from the West Pacific where they had been making preliminary arrangements for air bases of Tiger Force.

65. I then learned that, owing to the lack of airfields, operations by the V.H.Bs. (Very Heavy Bombers) were not expected to begin until the end of 1945. This delay greatly simplified the problem of providing staging posts for Tiger Force aircraft through India and Burma since, by the time Tiger Force could be in transit, both the monsoon and "Zipper" would have finished, leaving fair-weather airfields available for Tiger Force in the Rangoon area.

66. It was indicated by the visiting Air Vice-Marshal that A.C.S.E.A. were expected to provide staging facilities, not only for the initial aircraft, but also for the reinforcement flow and for a daily transport service of three aircraft each way. They further expressed the hope that the maintenance of their reserve aircraft would be accepted by this Command.

67. I consider it worthy of note that while Air Command South East Asia was barely making do with transport resources of Dakotas which still constituted the major life-line of the 12th Army, engaged with the Japanese at bay in the Sittang area of Southern Burma during July, the representatives of Tiger Force assumed that Yorks and C.87s would be forthcoming as a matter of course, for their transport requirements.

68. Other examples of this clash in priorities were not lacking, for it was disappointing to learn from Air Ministry by signal on July 21st that, owing to prior needs of Tiger Force, no Lancasters or Lincolns could be expected save for Air/Sea Rescue before mid-1946.

69. My appeal to Air Ministry for Lancasters and Lincolns had been for no other reason than I was concerned about the future heavy bomber supply situation in the Command. I took the long view that we could not expect to rely upon U.S. supplies of Liberators and, as the result of the difficulties which were already arising over spares and maintenance backing, I was, therefore, anxious to start the re-equipment of the heavy bomber squadrons and to introduce Lancasters vice Liberators into Air/Sea Rescue, Meteorological and several training units.

PART II.

THE AIR WAR IN BURMA AND BEYOND.

AIR SUPERIORITY.

Won and Maintained after Air Battles over Arakan in 1943-44.

70. Allied air superiority in South East Asia was won and maintained in the Theatre after the air battles over Bengal and Burma late in 1943 and the Spring of 1944, and remained almost unchallenged until the final surrender of the Japanese.

71. This air superiority is not always given its full value when the fortunes of war in Burma are weighed. Without it, the history of the indomitable 14th Army might well have centred around a fighting force, justly capable of defence, but not capable of sustained offence. Air superiority too, meant a

"safe conduct" for the air transport fleets engaged upon air supply and reinforcing of the advancing troops. At one time no single Dakota in Burma could with safety have taken the air on any supply mission had not the air lanes been protected by our short range fighters.

72. Air superiority, whether used for the close support of the ground forces, or the interdiction of lines of communication far beyond the battle area, or in air supply or in casualty evacuation, was indisputably ours, a fact which Japanese Army Commanders themselves confirmed after their surrender in August, 1945.

73. In the Japanese Army, one Commander had said, there had never been any real plan to develop the Military Air Forces. The air weapons he said, had been neglected from the beginning in favour of ground weapons. Ever since the China Incident, however, there had been a growing feeling that Japanese air power must be developed at all costs, but this realisation had come too late, and even then, the Army's claims had over-ridden the long term policy which recognised the absolute necessity of a wide expansion of air power and the production of aircraft.

74. Another Japanese officer, after fighting against us in South East Asia, said that almost always the Japanese Army had left the construction of airfields until the last, having concentrated firstly upon its own ground defences.

Few Airfields left to J.A.F. in Burma.

75. While the main Japanese Army had retreated to Moulmein after the fall of Rangoon in May, it still preserved enough strength to make a spirited stand during July at what came to be known as "The Battle of the Sittang Bend."

76. The Japanese Air Force, on the other hand, had been driven out of Burma completely broken. No attempt, indeed, was made to alleviate the distress in which the thousands of trapped Japanese forces in Burma found themselves during July.

77. Only twelve months earlier, the Japanese Air Force in South East Asia had made 333 sorties in May of 1944 in their last bid to tip the scales in their favour at the siege of Imphal, but had failed. For them, this air effort was a record for the Japanese Air Force for any single month when the targets were Allied airfields and troop concentrations in the Manipur Valley.

78. The enemy had behind them at that time the important air bases at Shwebo, north of Mandalay, and, in Central Burma, they possessed the airfields at Meiktila, Magwe, Pyinmana, Prome and Toungoo. Their most southerly bases were those which comprised the Rangoon group of airfields.

79. The Allies' sweep through Burma and the capture of Rangoon however, had taken all these airfields from the Japanese. All that remained to them in Southern Burma were three serviceable airfields located at Tavoy, Mergui and Victoria Point, on the Tenasserim Coast, and these soon became the regular targets for our aircraft based at Rangoon.

80. In June, 1945, yet another indication of the weakness of the Japanese air power in South East Asia in face of air superiority was

the withdrawal of R.A.F. fighter protection for the air transports—a protection which had been maintained consistently from the beginning of the Allied advance through Burma after Imphal in 1944, and had involved fighter cover over a front extending many hundreds of miles.

81. When Fourteenth Army marched a thousand miles through Burma in six months they achieved a great military feat in a country which had been deemed hitherto to be almost physically impassable and medically disastrous for the mass movement of men. With that Army, the Air Forces went every mile of the way—scouting, supporting, reinforcing, supplying, evacuating wounded and striking ahead of the advancing troops, to disrupt Japanese lines of communication and supply bases.

82. The same air-ground co-operation which brought about the fall of Rangoon and the re-conquest of Burma would have been repeated on a grand scale for the assault planned on Malaya—forestalled only by Japanese surrender. Even then the flexibility of Air Power was such that, in the emergency which followed the cessation of hostilities, it was able to re-direct its energies in one of the greatest relief and liberation operations of World War II.

83. In any final analysis of the war in South East Asia, air superiority is of paramount importance, and an indispensable factor upon which maintenance and supply of all our Forces in the Theatre depended.

TACTICAL AIR OPERATIONS.

After Rangoon.

84. When the Japanese pulled out of Rangoon, and the remnants of the main army succeeded in reaching Moulmein after the disastrous retreat down the Central Corridor in April, hostilities in Burma were by no means over.

85. There was no question of the enemy's capacity to stage a serious comeback; his supply lines were no longer reliable and the Japanese Air Force was out of the race.

86. But there was one aspect of the campaign which was not yet complete and one which began to assume greater importance now that the Allied Forces had established themselves firmly in Southern Burma and Rangoon. It was the presence of the large isolated forces of Japanese troops in Central and North Burma, estimated at over 50,000 men. While the Allied advance down the Central Corridor during March and April had driven a wedge through a crumbling enemy defence, it had, at the same time, forced a considerable strength of Japanese troops into the hill regions of Eastern and Western Burma, isolating them from the main Japanese army as it retreated on Moulmein.

87. The Air Forces, principally those of No. 221 Group, and the Allied ground forces deployed in Southern Burma, swung round to face these large concentrations of Japanese troops in the north between the Irrawaddy and the Mandalay railway corridor in Central Burma and the railway corridor and the Sittang and Salween Rivers to the east. Their object was to close the principal escape routes which these Japanese forces must pass through to get out of Burma.

88. Few factors sustain the morale of fighting men more than the knowledge that supplies of provisions and equipment are assured. The isolated Japanese forces in Burma, however, as the result of disruption and disorganisation of their rear lines of communication, were ill-equipped, and certainly denied any possibility of supply by air. They suffered considerably through shortages of food, also medical supplies, and took to eating attractive looking but dangerous fruits.

89. So long as these trapped Japanese forces remained on Burmese soil, however, they required considerable effort from the air to watch their movement and to destroy them as opportunity arose.

The Competitive Spirit of Squadrons.

90. The task of hunting and destroying these isolated pockets of Japanese forces, in co-operation with the Allied ground troops, fell largely upon the squadrons of No. 221 Group, since No. 224 Group, after its fine record of achievement in Burma, was now in the process of pulling out for training and re-equipment in Southern India prior to the assault on Malaya.

91. The competitive spirit among squadrons soon produced keen offensive patrols in seeking out the enemy with Mosquitos, Beaufighters, Hurricanes, Spitfires and Thunderbolts covering wide areas of country—in spite of Monsoon weather—and succeeding in driving parties of Japanese troops off the main escape routes and forcing them to seek the cover of jungle or scrub.

92. In this offensive drive by the squadrons during May and June, a total of 4,813 sorties was flown by our aircraft in monsoon weather to bomb and strafe the enemy.

93. It was during this period that a return was made to jungle warfare in Burma, as grim and fierce as anything experienced by the air and ground forces during previous months. The air forces faced the considerable hazards of monsoon flying conditions as they attacked enemy troop concentrations attempting to regroup and reach appointed regrouping areas.

94. The effectiveness of these R.A.F. jungle strikes was not only substantiated in appreciative messages by the Army, but also by Japanese officer prisoners-of-war captured at this period. Of the air forces operating against them, a Japanese officer, a L/Cpl., and a Superior Private had said during interrogation:—

“Dawn found us heading towards a village on the opposite shore. Later, we found that it was near Mumbu. We cooked some rice and afterwards all went to sleep in a bamboo clump on the bend of the river. Sleep, however, was not so easy, for the enemy planes were roaring overhead, and we would awake in a cold sweat in the midst of a horrible nightmare.”

95. There could be no doubt that the enemy had a healthy respect for our British Air Force and sought the cover of undergrowth when surprised by our fighters, which strafed them incessantly. A Japanese Private of the 82nd Air Field Battalion, captured in Burma, when shown a collection of silhouettes of Allied aircraft, picked out the Spitfire as the aircraft most feared by the Japanese.

Closing the Net around the Enemy in Burma

96. By the end of June, the net was gradually tightened around the isolated Japanese land forces holding out in the Pegu Yomas in Central Burma. The monsoon continued. The heavy rains made the movement of Allied troops and their supporting arms exceedingly difficult on the fringes of the Pegu Yomas and along the Mawchi Road east of Toungoo.

97. The Japanese, however, got no nearer to escape. Whenever weather permitted, the squadrons of 221 Group were overhead endeavouring to locate the enemy in the most difficult of wooded country, and bombing on every occasion whatever targets presented themselves. For days, aircraft continued to search for heavily laden animal transports which the enemy were pressing into service to carry accoutrement of every description. Even lumber elephants, taken from their work in the famous Teak Forests of Burma, were employed in carrying light guns and other heavy equipment for the enemy. If the monsoon proved a handicap to the Allied Forces it was worse for the Japanese, who were completely cut off from sources of supply. In the Pegu Yomas, the plight of the enemy, as a result of the vigilance of air power and the movement of Allied ground troops, became desperate as they struggled against malaria and starvation, or suffered foot-rot and stomach and skin troubles. Some, indeed, were like skeletons when captured, while the remainder, still imbued with fanaticism of glory and death, rather than disgrace in surrender, struggled on.

98. In their jungle strikes and "hunting" expeditions, the squadrons obtained a large number of good results in spite of the difficulties of weather and thick ground cover. If the enemy looked for a lull in operations as a result of the monsoon, thus giving them an opportunity to regroup, they got none from the R.A.F. squadrons and ground forces.

99. In the Mokpalin area, where No. 20 Squadron had damaged much enemy transport, a message sent by Headquarters, 4 Corps, after the strike, said:—

"Thanks for the magnificent efforts yesterday on the Mokpalin road."

100. When Mosquitos of 47 Squadron went out on a strike, they bombed a village north east of Nyaunglobin, where it was reported that the Japanese, moving south, had taken cover during the day. The Mosquitos dispersed their bombs well among the bashas and on dumps of packing cases seen on either side of the roadway, while many low flying attacks made across the area did extensive damage.

101. An Army report which reached 221 Group Headquarters stated that during an air attack in the Meprawse area, some 30 to 40 bullock carts carrying food were accounted for, two petrol dumps destroyed and 50 to 70 Japanese troops killed.

102. Up the Mawchi Road, Hurricanes went after a number of guns or tanks stated to be moving in the district. Two attacks which they made on heavily camouflaged objects, revealed large guns with limbers or tractors. They left the targets in flames.

103. The plight of the enemy as a result of these jungle strikes worsened. A report brought in, following an air strike by No. 11

Squadron, said that "the villagers reported that they carried away 30 Japanese corpses after the strike."

104. Some time earlier, a strike by Nos. 79 and 261 Squadrons brought the following message from Headquarters, 20 Indian Infantry Division:—

"One 75 mm gun, one 70 mm gun, one 77 mm A/T gun, one 20 mm A/T rifle, six pistols, six swords, approximately 100 rifles, three stacks of ammunition and much artillery ammunition."

were found by ground forces after a successful air attack.

105. In the last week of June, the main concentration of Japanese forces in Central Burma, was opposite Nyaunglobin, with protective forces north west of Pegu and south west of Pyu, which gave R.A.F. Thunderbolts opportunities for attacks. During one raid, six aircraft of 79 Squadron bombed the village of Thaingon. Some days later it was learned that 170 Japanese and 40 mules had been killed.

106. On the Sittang river too, where movement by the enemy became more active, Spitfire aircraft undertook patrols down the river, damaging and sinking small river craft of every description almost daily, thus helping our ground forces to interrupt enemy efforts in that area to escape across the river.

"Force 136" and Sittang River Air Patrol.

107. There were other major difficulties which stood in the way of the trapped Japanese forces in escaping from Burma. The guerilla tactics of "Force 136", which later played a conspicuous part in the slaughter of the enemy on the Sittang River, helped to seal this stretch of water against any large scale enemy crossing.

108. The forces of Burmese guerillas, which began to assume considerable importance at this time in Burma, had caused the utmost concern to small parties of Japanese stragglers, who suffered severe losses at their hands. These guerillas had been operating with success during the latter weeks of March, and throughout April, but they were even more active during June and July, as the Japanese casualty figures testified.

109. Organising the Burmese patriots was the work of the British Organisation in Burma known as "Force 136". It was an independent body which operated both with the Air Forces and the Army. The Force consisted of trained and specially picked officers who were dropped by parachute into enemy-occupied areas to organise Burmese levies and to wage surprise attacks against the Japanese. This guerilla warfare demanded the closest liaison with the Air Forces. Supplies, including arms and ammunition, were air dropped once the parties of levies had been organised.

110. It was through the machinery of "Force 136" too, that much valuable information on enemy dumps, troop movements, headquarters, and concentrations of transport carrying food, stocks and equipment, was passed by W/T to Army Headquarters, and special air-strikes quickly organised for the squadrons of 221 Group, R.A.F. These tasks were carried out eagerly by pilots, and many profitable and successful strikes were made against the

enemy. The Japanese casualties showed a sharp rise as a result of these sudden air attacks.

111. The air patrol on the Sittang River, on the other hand, consisted of three standing patrols daily—dawn, midday and dusk. The duration of the patrols up and down the river was so varied that the Japanese could never be certain of escape.

112. During one such patrol in June, two Hurricanes of 28 Squadron came upon 50 river craft of all types in the Suppanu Chaung and, after damaging them by strafing, went on to Letpan and there strafed several boats drawn up on the bank of the river near some villages.

113. There could be no doubt that the vigilance maintained by aircrews engaged on offensive patrols over the Sittang River was a contributory factor to holding up any river crossing in strength, which the Japanese may have contemplated during June.

Disaster overtakes the Japanese in Burma.

114. Disaster overtook the Japanese during July, when their final bid to break through the Allied net and escape from Burma ended in a debacle.

115. It was one of the blackest periods for the enemy throughout their ill-fated campaign. More than 10,000 men were killed in the month's operations. Those who succeeded in getting away and joining the main Japanese forces at Moulmein, took with them a picture of the punishing they had faced from the British air forces, the warring guerillas, and the newly-formed 12th Army under Lieutenant General Sir Montague Stopford.

116. Operations by the air and ground forces in this last major battle in Burma took on an entirely new character from the mobility and speed which had so characterised the pursuit of the enemy down the central railway corridor during April and May. Instead, the lull period in June had given the squadrons and ground forces a better opportunity to deploy at strategic points in Southern Burma, so that the enemy break-through from the Pegu Yomas, when it ultimately took place, developed into a wholesale killing. The monsoon forced R.A.F. Squadrons to base themselves at airstrips other than they would have preferred, but, even so, the operations were maintained.

117. The squadrons of 221 Group, R.A.F., accounted for at least 2,000 Japanese casualties. Throughout the campaign it was always difficult to assess with accuracy the number of actual casualties inflicted by the air forces and our own artillery.

118. Four separate phases characterised the July battle.

(a) There was a sudden flare-up of enemy activity on the Sittang Bend at the opening of the month where the Japanese, firmly established at Mokpalin, succeeded in making a bridgehead across the river and, after some grim fighting, succeeded in holding on the right bank, an area of approximately one square mile of country, encompassing the villages of Nyaungkashe, Abya, and Myitkye.

(b) Up country, on the Sittang, taking in an area between Shwegyin and Kyaukkye,

parties of Japanese troops, as they endeavoured to escape by crossing to the left bank of the Sittang, continued to fall into the hands of organised guerillas.

(c) Yet further to the north 19 Indian Division and Patriot Burmese Forces in the worst of monsoon weather, were struggling along the Mawchi Road from Toungoo in an effort to reach Mawchi, and cut the main escape route of large Japanese forces retreating southwards down the road from Loikaw, and Kemapyu, on the Salween River, and then south by valley tracks which led to Papun and Kamamaung. From Papun, one escape route continued south-west to Bilin with easy access by road and rail to Moulmein. The second escape route from Papun went south-east to Kamamaung, thence by ferry down the Salween to Shwegun, and there joined a track leading through Pa-An to Moulmein.

(d) The final, and major phase, was the large scale attempted break-through across the railway corridor from the Pegu Yomas, starting on July 21st, by Japanese troops whose strength had now been estimated to be about 18,000, of which about 1,000 were left behind sick in the Yomas and could not take part in the breakout operations.

119. Squadrons which played such a conspicuous part in these operations were deployed as follows:—

(a) When the sudden flare up at the Sittang Bend began, No. 906 Wing with Nos. 273 and 607 Squadrons; one detachment of night Beaufighters, and the H.Q. and one flight of No. 28 Fighter Recce Squadron, were based at Mingaladon, Rangoon, thus within easy reach of this enemy force.

(b) Based at Kinmagon was No. 908 Wing with Nos. 47 and 110 Mosquito Squadrons, which were able, weather permitting, to afford valuable support to the parties of guerillas in their successful attacks on the Japanese in the Sittang river area.

(c) No. 910 Wing was based at Meiktila with four Thunderbolt squadrons, Nos. 34, 42, 79 and 113, ready for action at the first sign of the break-through from the Pegu Yomas.

(d) Assisting 19 Indian Infantry Division on the Mawchi road, was 909 Wing at Toungoo, with No. 155 Spitfire Squadron, and later strengthened by No. 152 Spitfire Squadron which moved down to Thedaw for a short period, and, at other times, staged through Toungoo.

120. When the break-through by the Japanese from the Pegu Yomas started on July 21st, the whole of the air support was switched over to this area and, for eight or nine days, the bewildered enemy was strenuously harassed by the squadrons supporting the 12th Army.

Battle of the Sittang Bend.

121. In an attempt to create a large scale diversion of the Allied ground forces, the Japanese, at the opening of July, launched an offensive at the Sittang from the bridgehead which they tenaciously held on the right bank opposite Mokpalin.

122. It was flat, open country with scattered scrub, and some very fierce fighting took place in appalling weather at Nyaungkashe, Abya, and Myiky. The village of Nyaungkashe, indeed, changed hands several times.

123. Air support thrown in by 221 Group, included the Spitfire and Thunderbolt squadrons operating continuous patrols or "Cabanks" in the Nyaungkashe area. The enemy took exceedingly heavy punishment. His determination to hold this area, at all costs, however, until the large Japanese forces to the north got down past Bilin, with the strategic town of Mokpalin on their right, safeguarded by the Sittang troops, was obvious.

124. Day after day, gun positions, troop concentrations, and river craft of all descriptions were subjected to intensive attacks by the air forces, bringing sincere thanks from the Army. On July 4th, No. 42 Squadron's Thunderbolts had a most successful day, when a 105mm gun was wrecked and two other guns silenced at Nyaungkashe.

125. It was at this time that some forces of 7 Indian Infantry Division found themselves in a precarious position as a result of the determined Japanese thrust, but, assisted by air attack, succeeded in extricating themselves.

126. "With the help of excellent air support quickly given," wrote Lieutenant General Messervy to Air Vice-Marshal Bouchier, A.O.C. 221 Group, "I have been able to extricate some four hundred men, including sixty wounded, from a difficult situation with good knocks to the Japs at the same time."

127. It was noted throughout these air operations, and further substantiated by ground reports, that a considerable number of Japanese troops were killed as a result of air attacks.

128. By July 11th, the Japanese offensive at the Sittang Bend had been contained, though the enemy still retained their foothold on the right bank of the Sittang, opposite Mokpalin.

Air Power Assists the Guerillas.

129. As the month advanced, a notable movement of enemy troops endeavouring to cross the Sittang River in parties at various points between Shwegyin and Kyaukke, kept the Spitfire squadrons on continuous patrol over the Sittang River exceedingly active. Thunderbolt squadrons, too, came down from the Meiktila area to attack forces of Japanese numbering, in some instances, one thousand strong, as they made their way eastwards. The large scale break-through from the Pegu Yomas had not yet started.

130. It was in this area of the Sittang, and also in the east, on the right bank of the Salween, that the organised guerillas, which had been brought under the control of 12th Army, ambushed hundreds of escaping Japanese troops moving down from Loikaw to Papun, and literally massacred them. No enemy party was safe from these guerillas under Force 136 who, with portable W/T, kept base informed of the enemy's movements and as a result provided the Mosquitos and Spitfires with definite targets, which they bombed and strafed untiringly.

131. The guerillas' flag was seen regularly by pilots heading for their targets. They were assisted by large indicator arrows on the ground, and even cryptic messages which the

levies had conceived. On one occasion, pilots, correctly interpreting a message, "In M", located a Japanese force in a marsh.

132. Following a heavy raid on Pa-An, one of the principal staging villages used by the Japanese while moving down the Salween valley, a message sent from our land forces to 273 and 607 Squadrons on July 1st said:—

"More than five hundred Japs killed in last heavy raid on Pa-An. Did not tell you before as awaiting confirmation. Congrats to pilots."

133. An earlier report had described this whole area after the raids as covered in dust and smoke, with Japanese soldiers seen running about in panic and rushing for shelter as aircraft came down to strafe them. The Mosquito Squadrons got equally effective results for, during a strike at Kawludo, an enemy staging post in the Salween valley, north of Papun, a ground report stated that over one hundred Japanese troops had been killed.

134. Thunderbolts and Spitfires carried out a very successful attack on July 15th and 16th, in the Shwegyin Chaung area of the Sittang, and a message from Kyadwin to 113 Squadron and 607 Squadron said:—"Tell R.A.F. strike great success."

135. North East of Kyadwin, at Paungzeik, Mosquitos of 47 Squadron, on July 16th, made a bombing and strafing attack in the Paungzeik valley and 51 dead Japanese were counted after the attack. Yet another attack by aircraft on the 19th, at Shanywathit, resulted in two direct hits being made on a house which was full of Japanese troops, and over eighty are believed to have been killed.

136. The reports of successful air strikes against the escaping enemy were many and varied. In the credit for their success the guerillas of Force 136 must equally share. Their daring in approaching large enemy parties and making sudden furious assaults on them with gunfire and grenades before retiring to their hideouts to plan further surprise raids, was outstanding in this final killing of the Japanese in Burma. The risks, too, which they ran, while blatantly guiding aircraft on to enemy concentrations, frequently involved them in hazardous escapes. Many escapes were only made possible indeed, by aircraft swooping in between the levies and the enemy, strafing the Japanese pursuers. If caught, guerillas were tortured cruelly by the enemy.

Tribute to R.A.F. from Guerilla Leader.

137. A tribute paid to the Royal Air Force in Burma came from the leader of one of these courageous parties operating in the Okpyat area of the Sittang.

"Both I and every guerilla would like to make it known to every pilot who took part in the battle of the Okpyat area just how much all the brilliant offensive action of the R.A.F. fighter-bomber pilots was appreciated," wrote Captain J. Waller, British Officer in charge of Force 136 Guerillas, Okpyat. "From our point of view on the ground, we wished that we had more air ground strips so that we could write in full—'Hats off to the R.A.F. pilots. You are killing hundreds of Japs and your perfect co-ordination and patience in reading our crude signals is saving the lives of many thousands of defenceless civilians.'"

138. Whilst these exploits revealed the magnificent work of aircrews, they illustrated at the same time the confidence and daring of the British-led irregular, for whom the pilots of 221 Group squadrons felt most strongly that it was a case of "Hats right off" to the guerillas.

139. "From Letpangon we were attacked by two hundred Japs at 23.30 hours. We only killed fifteen of them, but we kept them there for you to attack next day when you put in two good strikes. They cleared out after dark, and went on to Yindaikaein where you were able to attack them again," said Captain Waller.

140. The combined attacks on the Japanese aircraft and guerilla parties constituted a war of attrition on the enemy. They could never be sure of safety in any village they passed through, and roads, planked with thick scrub, were a perpetual nightmare. The guerillas were masters in the art of ambush. With the air forces to supply and assist them they seemed to be everywhere, and to know the enemy's next move. This was evident from the casualties they inflicted against the Japanese.

141. It was after an attack by air forces on a large concentration of Japanese troops at Letpangon, that the Okpyat Guerilla party, which had been pinning down the enemy until the aircraft arrived, went out in a most successful mopping-up task.

142. Captain Waller reported to the R.A.F., "We only killed 15 of them but you killed 105 in three cracking good air strikes. You also saved the lives of almost three thousand occupants and evacuees in Okpyat who were completely cut off."

Japanese Break-through from Pegu Yomas Fails

143. The desperate and last bid by the 28th Japanese Army to escape across the Sittang began on July 21st, when some 15,000 to 18,000 enemy troops, sick and demoralised, moved out of the jungle and scrub shelter of the Pegu Yomas.

144. The moment for which the squadrons and Allied ground forces had been awaiting had now come. The ground forces of 17 Indian Infantry Division, ranged in groups along the 100 miles stretch of roadway between Toungoo and Pegu, which formed part of the railway corridor, engaged the enemy, bursting over the road at several points simultaneously, and slaughtered them.

145. The squadrons of 221 Group were switched over to this battle area in support of 17 Division, and for almost nine days air assault was directed on the wretched Japanese as they made desperate attempts to reach the Sittang River.

146. From a captured enemy document it was revealed that the main break-through from the Pegu Yomas had been delayed by the enemy to allow the move of the Japanese 28th Army to co-ordinate. The greater part of the Mayazaki Group (Lt.-Gen. G.O.C. 54 Division) had planned to attempt to cross the Sittang between Nyaungbentha and Pyu. Coinciding with this move, Koba Group (Major-General Koba) had planned another major break out, and while the area of the

move was not determined, it was anticipated that it would take place north of Toungoo in 19 Division area where troops were deploying along the Toungoo-Mawchi Road.

147. The enemy's plan was to form road blocks at selected points and to pass through them assisted by "Jitter Squads" to create diversions. All movements were to be made by night and the keynote of the break-through was to be "speed" so that the maximum time would be available for the collection of boats and rafts from the Sittang river in order to complete the crossing before daylight. The enemy had planned, on reaching the Sittang, to cross on a wide front using barges, rafts, logs, bamboo poles and even petrol tins to assist the buoyancy of escapees in the water.

148. It would be invidious to state that one squadron, more than another, inflicted the greatest punishment on the escaping enemy. All squadrons thrown into the "Battle of the Break-through," overcoming monsoon with low clouds and heavy rain for long periods, did what was expected of them with credit. The keenness of squadron ground personnel was equal to the occasion. They worked hard and ungrudgingly. All, indeed, in the air, as well as on the ground, felt that something substantial was being accomplished in this last show-down with the Japanese in Burma.

149. The July killing lasted until the 29th. The Thunderbolt squadrons, carrying three 500 lb. bombs on each aircraft, played havoc among concentrations of moving Japanese troops. The Spitfires too, carrying one 500 lb. bomb on each aircraft, pursued the enemy relentlessly, strafing them as they ran for cover. As many as 62 sorties were flown on July 23rd by Nos. 152 and 155 Squadrons.

150. The extent of the full air effort by the R.A.F. squadrons in this battle cannot be adequately measured in the many squadron reports which told of the effectiveness and killings made during their strikes. The confusion and disruption caused among the Japanese forces, amounted to almost chaos. More convincing, perhaps, were the reports sent by 12th Army Divisional Commanders to H.Q. 221 Group, who were not slow to express their gratitude for the support given to their troops.

151. After almost nine days of intense fighting, the attempted break out by the Japanese from the Pegu Yomas ended in utter and complete failure. More than 10,000 men were killed, as against only three hundred odd casualties sustained by the Allied forces. Out of approximately 1,300 Japanese troops who succeeded in crossing the Sittang between Meikthalin and Wegyi, it was estimated that 500 of their number had been killed during air strikes by Spitfires and Thunderbolts.

152. The whole Japanese plan for organised escape petered out in the closing days of July, and the air and ground attacks were then transferred once more to the Sittang Bend, where the other Japanese forces, to their credit, had held out bravely in their struggle to keep open the last doorway leading out of Burma. In the July battle, R.A.F. squadrons had flown a total of 3,045 sorties—92 per cent. of which were offensive strikes in support of ground troops, while a total weight of 1,490,000 lb. of bombs had been dropped.

153. As the last few hundreds of exhausted Japanese were making their escape to Moulmein with bitter recollections of the ordeal they had passed through, Lieutenant-General Sir Montague Stopford, G.O.C. 12th Army, when recalling the severity of the weather, its flooding, rains and cloud, showed his appreciation of the R.A.F. in these words:—

“Grateful if you would accept and pass on to all ranks under your command my most grateful thanks for the admirable support given during break-out battle and my congratulations on splendid results achieved. Flying conditions must have been most difficult but on all sides I hear nothing but praise of the keenness and determination of pilots to get through. You have all played a great part in the Twelfth Army’s first big operation.”

154. Over and above the R.A.F. contribution, our victory was won by our superiority over the Japanese in training, fighting ability and weapons; the accurate intelligence which was obtained before the battle began; the fine work of the guerillas, and above all the high morale and fighting efficiency of the troops.

STRATEGIC AIR OPERATIONS.

A Well Sustained Offensive against Enemy Supply and Communications.

155. With the capture of Rangoon and the disbandment of the integrated Anglo-American Strategic Air Force on June 1st, the R.A.F. heavy bombers of 231 Group were left to carry out the next phase of the battle against the enemy’s communications leading to Singapore, and on other important targets.

156. The partnership which had been forged between heavy bomber units of No. 231 Group, R.A.F., and the 7th Bombardment Group, U.S.A.A.F. had, over a period, produced a striking force so effective that it brought about a serious disruption to Japanese strategic communications in this Theatre, with a critical decline in the quantity of supplies intended for their ground forces in Burma.

157. The departure of the 7th Bombardment Group had one important significance. The Group had operated twelve aircraft fitted with “Azon” equipment, consisting of a radio transmitter in the aircraft and a radio receiver on the bomb which, once released, could be guided in such a way that line errors could be eliminated. Throughout the series of “bridge-busting” missions on the Burma-Siam railway, which, on account of anti-aircraft defences could not be attacked from low level by Liberators, the Azon equipment was used with great success.

158. The destruction of bridges in Burma and Siam, notably on the Bangkok-Pegu railway, which was one of the principal tasks of the Strategic Air Force, was a vital factor in crippling the enemy’s land communications.

159. In a six-month period between December 1944 and May 1945, there was photographic confirmation of bridge destruction as shown hereunder:—

				<i>Destroyed</i>	<i>Damaged</i>
Rail	...	...	...	96	36
Road	...	...	...	13	4
Total	...	...	...	109	40

160. Feverish efforts made by the Japanese engineers, who worked with great energy repairing and rebuilding bridges, failed to keep open many of the vital communications upon which the Japanese in Southern Burma depended.

Greater Distances Flown to Target Areas.

161. On the Allied occupation of Rangoon, R.A.F. Liberators carried the heavy bomber offensive much further afield into the enemy-occupied territories of South East Asia, involving frequent flights of over 1,000 miles radius from their Indian bases in Bengal. This was inevitable, as the newly occupied airfields in Southern Burma, after the capture of Rangoon, were not yet big enough to take heavy bombers. The long distance flights undertaken by these aircraft across the Bay of Bengal in difficult monsoon weather were most hazardous.

162. From Moulmein, at the mouth of the Salween River, to Victoria Point, the southernmost tip in Burma, is nearly 500 miles. This coastal tip, known as the Tenasserim, together with Japanese bases in the Andaman Islands, came in for attention by the heavy bombers after our entry into Rangoon. Nearly 1,000 tons of bombs were dropped by the R.A.F. squadrons during May, which reflected the determination of the crews to carry on their heavy bombing work in the disruption of the enemy’s communication system. Indeed, what was to have been a V.E.-Day celebration in May, was spent by crews of the squadrons standing by for an attack on shipping in the Andamans. This culminated in a bombing raid on May 17th against the most westerly Japanese base in the Bay of Bengal—Port Blair. The bombing force on this occasion concentrated on important harbour installations, including marine workshops at Phoenix Bay, while buildings at Hope Town, the main coaling point, were destroyed. A large orange red explosion, with flames rising up to 1,500 feet, was seen by the crews after they had hit their target. The enemy had fortified the whole area of Port Blair with shore batteries and A.A. guns, which succeeded in shooting down one of our aircraft.

163. But the main battle against the enemy’s communications—notably those affecting Singapore—was now on. The same air strategy which had disrupted the Japanese supply line between Bangkok and Rangoon was applied in the succeeding months with equal effectiveness to the line linking Bangkok with Singapore.

164. Communications on this mountainous peninsula, embracing territory of three States—Burma, Siam and Malaya—had, for the most part, been seaborne, though, as the Japanese advance in 1941 showed, Singapore still had a backdoor by means of the rail route to the north.

165. With the sea lanes in the Strait of Malacca made more and more hazardous for Japanese shipping through the effectiveness of our mine-laying from the air and the vigilance shown by R.N. submarines, the enemy was forced to fall back steadily on the use of the Bangkok-Singapore railway for the movement of supplies. This line snaked for a thousand miles up the narrow neck of land between the Gulf of Siam and the Andaman Sea.

166. Not all the stretch of railroad was within range of the R.A.F. Liberators. With persistence, however, they succeeded in getting as far south from their bases in India as the Bay of Bandon at the Isthmus of Kra, to inflict heavy damage on the important railway junction of Jumbhorn at the narrowest part of the Isthmus.

Enemy's concern over Systematic Damage

167. I must express most sincere admiration for the aircrews who flew these Liberators such abnormally long distances, frequently through atrocious monsoon weather, to bomb their targets in Siam and Malaya.

168. Crews of Bomber Command in Europe flew 1,200 mile round trips to Berlin when attacking targets in the capital of the Reich, but the R.A.F. Liberators in South East Asia flew from their bases in India round trips well over 2,000 miles to bomb objectives at Bangkok, and other targets on the Isthmus of Kra. This is equal to a flight from London to Naples or well to the east of Warsaw—flights, it should be noted, which the R.A.F. Liberators in my Command carried out regularly against the Japanese.

169. The concern of the enemy over the systematic damage to, and destruction of, their lines of communication in Siam and Malaya was revealed in a document which came into our hands entitled "Protection of Communications". This document called upon Japanese Unit Commanders to overhaul their A.A. defence methods as "enemy aircraft are carrying out continuous and unceasing attacks on our rear communications and planning to cut our rear lines altogether. We must perfect our counter-measures."

170. The enemy's increased vigilance, however, appeared to make no material difference to the preservation of their rail bridges, dumps, water towers, locomotives, rolling stock and shipping.

171. On June 5th, seven Liberators attacked railyards at Surasdhani on the Bangkok-Singapore line. Surasdhani was an important supply post for the Japanese and, to reach it, our bomber crews flew for 17 hours, mostly across the Bay of Bengal, and through some of the worst weather which the monsoon during 1945 had produced. This flight of 2,400 miles was one of the longest undertaken, up to that time, on a heavy bombing mission in this Theatre. The bombing was well concentrated, and the results were good. Subsequent reconnaissance confirmed all claims made by the crews.

Liberators sink 10,000-ton Japanese Tanker.

172. A shipping strike in Siamese waters on June 15th, when a 10,000-ton Japanese tanker was set on fire and left sinking by the stern, was one of the most noteworthy operations of its kind during the closing stages of the war against Japan in South East Asia.

173. To effect this strike, aircraft had to make a round trip of approximately 2,500 miles to the expected anchorage, the route being almost entirely over the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea.

174. The tanker was the largest enemy vessel reported in Siamese waters for many months, and was believed to be one of the last of its

size remaining to the Japanese in the Southern Area. It was sighted by a Sunderland aircraft of 222 Group when it was apparently trying to make a northbound run through the Gulf of Siam and along the east coast of the Malay Peninsula. The tanker had an escort.

175. The Air Forces at the disposal of 231 Group for this strike were four heavy bomber squadrons—Nos. 99, 159, 355 and 356, equipped with Liberator Mark V aircraft. A detachment of six aircraft from No. 159 Squadron, based in India, moved down temporarily to Akyab, on the Arakan, for the operation. This enabled the aircraft of the detachment to load up during the night and to take off at 0900 hours on the day of the strike. They were, therefore, the last squadron in to attack.

176. Due to exceedingly bad weather encountered by all aircraft on the route to the target, a number of the aircraft were forced to abandon the operation and returned to base. The master bomber and deputy master bomber were, unfortunately, included in this number. The remaining aircraft, which pressed on, came upon their target in the early afternoon as the tanker was moving past Samui Island. An escort was some distance away.

177. Three aircraft of 99 Squadron attacked the tanker at low level but did not succeed in securing hits. All three aircraft were damaged by A.A. fire from the escort vessel and the tanker itself. One aircraft had a fin shot off. After delivering its attack, it eventually reached Mingaladon Airfield, Rangoon, where it crash-landed. The second aircraft, also damaged, by A.A. fire, crash-landed at Akyab.

178. The battle against the tanker was continued later with three aircraft of 356 Squadron attacking at low level, and a direct hit produced fire and a series of explosions. The tanker still fought back fiercely, and all three aircraft were damaged by A.A. fire, one of which crashed when landing at Salbani in Bengal. The fight continued with the arrival of three further aircraft from 159 Squadron which pressed home the attack, claiming four and possibly six hits. With smoke billowing to 7,000 feet, the tanker was left burning from stem to stern and sinking. The tanker's escort succeeded in making its escape.

179. Subsequent reconnaissance showed that the tanker was sunk, the funnel and mast were seen showing above the sea.

180. Loss of so vital a supply vessel as an oil tanker of 10,000 tons, particularly at a time when supply meant everything to the enemy in South East Asia, added further to the embarrassment of the Japanese.

181. For this outstanding success I sent a message of congratulation to Major-General J. T. Durrant, S.A.A.F., who, on June 15th, had assumed Command of 231 Group, vice Air Commodore F. J. W. Mellersh, C.B.E., A.F.C., repatriated to the United Kingdom.

182. The attack on the Japanese tanker ended a month of most successful shipping strikes by the air forces of 231 Group during June, for, on June 1st, Liberators had surprised enemy vessels at Satahib in the Gulf of Siam, when a 335-foot submarine depot ship—"Angthong"—was sunk.

183. The stranglehold on the Japanese supply and communications system was further tightened on June 24th, when Liberators destroyed two important bridges at Kanchanaburi, eighty miles west of Bangkok. The raid on these bridges across the Meklong River at Kanchanaburi was a disruption of serious consequence on the Burma—Siam railway. The ultimate result of this attack was that three spans were demolished and one span displaced.

184. Strategic bombing by the air forces of this Command drastically cut down the use of the enemy's railroads, compelling the transfer of more and more supplies to road and sea transport, which inevitably slowed up the enemy's war supply machine.

185. When the A.C.S.E.A. Command formed in December, 1943, our heavy bomber effort was only 449 tons dropped by Liberator aircraft. In 1944 the figure had risen to 3,846 tons, and by August, 1945, it had again risen to a total of 9,441 tons.

186. Behind these tonnages is evidence of the contribution by the heavy bomber aircraft of this Command to the overall strategy of the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, in bringing about the disruption of Japanese supply and road, rail and sea communications.

AIR SUPPLY

A Testing Period for Squadrons During Monsoon

187. Although the capture of Rangoon brought an end to the more intensive Army-Air co-operation in Burma, the day by day air supply for ground troops concentrated in Southern Burma, and still engaging large isolated forces of the enemy, was still maintained.

188. There was no alternative. Air supply, it was realised, would have to meet the Army's demands until seaborne supplies began to function, and road and rail communication inland from Rangoon were re-established.

189. Much was being done to hurry forward rehabilitation in Rangoon generally and to get port facilities working, but this was no easy task. Looting of property and bomb damage to those essential services which are the main-spring of a busy commercial port were extensive. Entry of larger ships into the harbour was also delayed until dredging of the river channel was completed, while there was the additional task of repairing docks, wharves, and badly disrupted road and rail communications. All these were vital factors which indirectly affected supply to a vast Allied ground force which had pushed its way into Rangoon.

190. The period May to August, 1945—covering the re-entry of the Allied forces into Rangoon, and later the surrender of Japan—cannot be termed spectacular in air supply operations, when reckoned against such efforts as persisted during the Allied advance down through Burma earlier in the year, and the supply tonnage record was broken in April, 1945, with 2,900 tons on one day. But it was, nevertheless, an exacting period for squadrons and personnel alike, for the following reasons:—

(a) The period of the monsoon had set in, making flying exceedingly hazardous in so mountainous a country as Burma.

(b) With the disintegration of the British and American Air Forces after 1st June, 1945, American transports were withdrawn, leaving R.A.F. squadrons of No. 232 Group to continue air supply operations unaided.

(c) Supply demands made by H.Q. Allied Land Forces were not immediately reduced after entry into Rangoon. On the contrary, the Army persisted in a continuance of air supply on a scale which it was not always practicable to meet in face of atrocious weather and fewer available aircraft.

191. The departure of the American transport squadrons towards the end of May, 1945, resulted in a corresponding reduction in air supply to the ground forces. With hostilities in Burma virtually over, this was only to be expected. What air supply did not anticipate was the enormous concentration of Allied ground forces which had pushed into Rangoon at the last minute to ensure its speedy capture. These troops had still to be fed and supplied, as had the Allied ground forces engaging the remnants of the Japanese main Army trapped in the Pegu Yomas of Southern Burma as the result of the rapid Allied drive to Rangoon.

192. Throughout the campaign in Burma it had been the practice to pool the air resources for the mutual benefit of the British and American elements of Eastern Air Command. The result had been a building up of a balanced organisation known as Combat Cargo Task Force, capable of operating at an intensive rate of air supply.

193. The operational achievement of Combat Cargo Task Force, covering the period October, 1944 (the date of its inception) to the end of May, 1945, when disintegration took place, is best indicated by the following figures:—

Total hours flown	386,283
Supplies carried (short tons)	332,136
Number of persons carried	339,137
Number of casualties carried	94,243
Total tonnage carried, including weight of persons and casualties	379,707

Forecast for Air Lift after Rangoon.

194. From the examination of results achieved during the advance through Burma, and the lessons learned, it was possible, in the middle of May, to agree that each transport squadron's effort as from 1st June, 1945 to 31st July, could be 125 hours per aircraft for the month. This demanded an effort of 156 hours per aircraft on the squadron strength.

195. A better flow of reinforcement aircraft was expected, which would thus greatly help towards making the new transport effort possible, also a stepping-up and increase in efficiency of maintenance organisation, with consequent increased monthly output and quicker turn-round of aircraft undergoing repair, was taking place.

196. On the assumption that two R.A.F. squadrons were made available for airborne training by 1st June, that internal airlines requirements were met, and that U.S.A.A.F. transport squadrons were all out of the Theatre from 10th June, it was calculated that the

following transport aircraft would be available :—

- 1-10 June—
 8 R.A.F. Squadrons—240 C-47
 4th C.C. Group—100 C-46
 11 June-31 July—
 8 R.A.F. Squadrons—240 C-47

197. On such a basis, the capacity for the daily lift on long tons of squadrons was estimated as under :—

- 1-10 June—
 1,474 long tons
 11 June-31 July—
 800 long tons

198. This capacity measured against the Army's requirements of 14th May, 1945, showed the following situation in tons :—

Period	ALFSEA requirement	Capacity to Deliver
	tons	tons
1— 8 June	1,310	1,474
9—10 „	1,070	1,474
11—18 „	1,070	880
19 June—8 July	840	880
9—31 July	600	880

199. On calculation, therefore, a total surplus capacity of 2,120 tons existed from 1-10 June, and a deficiency of 1,520 tons from 11-18 June, giving a surplus airlift. The surplus airlift from 1-10 June, it was calculated, could be stock-piled to offset the deficiency from 11-18 June. From these calculations, therefore, it was considered that the transfer of the U.S.A.A.F. squadrons could be accepted without detriment to any foreseen operations. Unfortunately, a variety of factors militated against this target which had been so carefully planned.

Some Difficulties with the Army over Supply.

200. On 11th June, Advanced H.Q. A.L.F.S.E.A. signalled direct to the Supreme Allied Commander that the short fall in air transport for the first nine days in June totalled 955 long tons, and asked, therefore, for the retention of No. 238 Squadron already overdue to go to the Pacific.

201. I proceeded to Rangoon to discuss this matter more fully with Lieutenant General Sir Oliver Leese, C-in-C., A.L.F.S.E.A. and Major-General Bastyan (Major-General Administration), A.L.F.S.E.A.

202. The Army had come fully briefed, and it was obvious that any detailed discussion in Rangoon without a full knowledge of all factors would place the Air Force at a disadvantage. Accordingly, I signalled Air Command to take all possible measures to lessen the short fall and, for this purpose, to allocate 22 additional Dakotas at once. Upon my return to Command, at Kandy, I held a full discussion on the problem.

203. The varied aspects of the problem are worth detailing since they illustrate the many links upon which air transport depended at the time, and also the strong disinclination of the Army to accept responsibility for breakdowns in air supply. Factors which had upset the air supply target planned in the middle of May included the following :—

- (a) The reinforcement flow had not been sufficient to equip the squadron up to a

Unit Equipment of 24 plus 6 as planned and, in consequence, aircraft strength was 12 per cent. deficient.

(b) Ramree airfield, which had been built by the Army for the express purpose of monsoon air supply operations, was often so waterlogged that aircraft could not get off.

(c) There had been an epidemic of main bearing failures in Dakota aircraft engines which had caused an appreciable drop in serviceability; one squadron needed 26 new engines.

(d) Although we had a margin of surplus lift available in May, the Army could not take advantage of it in June, owing to shortage of transport.

(e) Army demands remained high because they could not withdraw sufficient troops through Rangoon due to shipping and communication difficulties.

204. It was decided to take the following steps :—

(i) Inform B.A.F.S.E.A. that the allotment of 24 aircraft to each squadron was of the greatest urgency.

(ii) Press the Army for better drainage of Ramree airfield.

(iii) Transfer as soon as possible one or two transport squadrons from Ramree to Akyab.

(iv) Give the squadrons a target of 100 short tons per day. This was desirable, for it provided a goal that could be reached, and prevented the frustration that had so often been felt in the past at being given a target impossible of achievement. Any margin above the stated figure would be in the nature of a bonus and have a stimulating moral effect.

(v) Withdraw one of the two squadrons engaged from airborne training and employ it on transport. This would give a total of 810 long tons a day against the Army requirements of 880. The difference was so small that it could surely be made up by inland water transport or other means and would certainly entail no drastic cut in rations or amenities.

205. Even then, air transport problems were not solved. There were still in Burma tactical squadrons whose speedy withdrawal for refit and training in preparation for "Zipper/Mailfist" Operation could not be effected through the overloaded land and sea lines of communication. The only method of withdrawing these units in sufficient time was to fly them out. I decided, therefore, that such a task held priority over the airborne training 96 Squadron was accomplishing at that time, and accordingly I received the Supreme Allied Commander's agreement to 96 Squadron's temporary withdrawal to enable air lift to be provided for R.A.F. personnel and equipment of the units already mentioned.

Transport Preparations for "Zipper/Mailfist".

206. An important step was taken in July when I directed that Air Force representation should be made available for Army planning bodies in order to prevent the Army supply authorities from budgeting for airlift which

could not possibly be met. By means of closer liaison it was hoped that the Army would make bids for air transport which would be practicable, so that there would be no need for the Air Forces to overwork their squadrons in order to make good the backlog. In addition, it was possible, in planning, to leave some airlift for domestic requirements such as the carriage of A.O.G. spares, etc.

207. For the coming months air transport commitments could be divided into the following categories:—

(i) The requirements of "Zipper/Mailfist" Operation.

(ii) The supply of 12th Army fighting in Burma.

(iii) The maintenance and expansion of internal airlines.

(iv) The continuance at a higher rate than hitherto of airborne training.

208. In order to meet requirement (i) it had been anticipated that there would be a sharp diminution in the supply of 12th Army in Burma as the port of Rangoon became cleared. It became apparent in the first week of July, however, that the requirements of the Army in Burma were going to be very considerably in excess of the figures that had been estimated at the time when aircraft had been allocated for "Zipper/Mailfist."

209. A complete review of air transport plans was thus once again necessary. The Army suggestions for meeting the new situation were given in a signal from H.Q., A.L.F.S.E.A., which, however, could not be agreed. The Army was accordingly asked to await recommendations which would be available with all data at the next meeting of the Supreme Allied Commander, when the whole question of air transport requirements would be reviewed and priorities adjusted.

Hazards of Weather in Monsoon.

210. Weather was the one dominant factor which affected air supply operations throughout Burma after the breaking of the monsoon. It is no exaggeration to state that the transport aircraft, probably more than any other aircraft employed in the Burma Theatre, had to wage a day to day battle against the elements.

211. During the crucial months, while the Allied advance down through Central Burma was in progress, transport aircraft had been able to fly long hours, often in good weather, which greatly contributed to the successful completion of their commitment.

212. The proposition, however, was different in May, after the arrival of the monsoon. Not only did weather make flying hazardous and difficult, but it was frequently impossible for meteorological staffs to determine in advance what weather the transport aircraft were likely to encounter en route to their destination.

213. The monsoon in Burma is at its worst during June and July, when cumulo nimbus cloud, the greatest enemy of aircraft flying over Burma, builds up frequently from low level to above aircraft ceiling.

214. Comparing aircraft effectiveness in the monsoon months of June and July with that of February and March, 1945, it appeared that the effectiveness dropped to 70 per cent.

As the average length of trip was less during June and July, however, the cargo tonnage carried per aircraft dropped only to 76.5 per cent. of the fine weather standard.

215. An indication of the monsoon's toll on aircraft and crews may be seen from the study of figures of losses for the month of June, 1945. During this period No. 232 Group lost 12 aircraft due to bad weather; casualties to crews and passengers inclusive of those killed, injured and missing totalling 72. This was a high price paid in men and material for the continued success of air supply in Burma.

216. It is on record that one Dakota aircraft flying over Burma actually found itself turned upside down in a storm, and it was only the skill and presence of mind of the pilot which averted disaster.

217. Yet another example of the hazards which faced transport supply crews in Burma during that monsoon was the experience of a pilot who found himself completely closed in with cumulo nimbus cloud during a return journey from Meiktila to Akyab. After three attempts, a break in the cloud was found which brought the aircraft out on to the coast opposite Ramree Island. The aircraft descended to 300 feet but cumulo nimbus again closed in behind, and the pilot, after making several unsuccessful attempts to climb out of the cloud, was eventually forced down to sea level. For almost an hour the aircraft circled around until the pilot finally succeeded in climbing to 7,000 feet where more cumulo nimbus was encountered and the radio compass was rendered unserviceable. The aircraft then turned on a reciprocal course and found a small gap in the cloud which again closed in. In the face of this predicament, the pilot decided there was no alternative but to descend and to risk a blind forced landing. The pilot succeeded in bringing the aircraft to a standstill in a paddy field without injury to any of the crew.

Stocking Rear Airfields with Supplies.

218. Most of the supplies carried by the R.A.F. Transport Squadrons in Burma after the departure of the American units were for the purpose of stocking rear airfields, where the Army organisations distributed the supply to various Army and R.A.F. units. Civil commitments also continued to be fulfilled in Northern Burma.

219. With the experience gained in June regarding the consumption of petrol required by C-47 aircraft for each trip during average monsoon flying conditions, squadrons located at Ramree, Akyab, and Chittagong were instructed to increase their load from 5,500 lb. to 6,000 lb.

220. In preparation for the final showdown with the trapped Japanese forces in Burma, during July, special instructions for supply dropping in the Toungoo area were issued. Weather, however, was again the big handicap, and as dropping operations were frequently impossible in this area, arrangements had to be made to land loads in Central Burma so as to form a stock-pile near the source of ground operations and later take advantage of periods of fine weather in which to deliver the backlog. This system made it unnecessary for aircraft to carry undropped supplies back to base, with a consequent increase in the number of

hours required to deliver them. In the event of abortive trips producing a back log at Toungoo, aircrews were briefed to proceed to that area on supply dropping operations, after which the aircraft landed at Toungoo or Magwe and carried out second and possibly third trips before returning to base.

221. During the flare up in ground operations in the third week in July, when the break-through from the Pegu Yomas by the trapped Japanese forces began, air supply to the Allied ground forces engaging the Japanese assumed considerable importance until the battle had ended. Rainfall was widespread over the whole area of operations, and difficulties under which aircraft had to operate were acute. With exceedingly bitter fighting taking place, and thousands of Japanese troops pressing forward in their anxiety to escape, the state of the ground situation was ever fluid, and made the accurate dropping of supplies no easy task. Many of the dropping zones used, indeed, were less than 100 yards from local enemy forces and there were occasions when a dropping zone was surrounded by Japanese troops and some of the containers overshot the mark and fell into enemy hands. It speaks well for the aircrews trained in dropping supplies that more containers did not fall into the hands of the Japanese, whose desperate plight during the previous two months was due to lack of air supply and to the fact that the enemy were cut off from their Headquarters and bases in Southern Burma and Siam by our land forces. Even in this last and major battle with the Japanese in Burma it was significant that air supply—of which the enemy had none—was one of the cardinal factors in assuring triumph for the Allied ground forces and disaster for the enemy. Air supply in Burma made history which outdistanced in merit and achievement the more publicised air supply operations of the war in Europe such as that of Arnhem, or the food dropping to the Dutch in Holland. These, without doubt, were important and commendable efforts in themselves, but they bore no comparison to the enormous and sustained efforts of transport aircrews who faced the hazards of monsoon weather.

End of the War Affects Air Supply Operations.

222. With the Japanese surrender in South East Asia in August, air supply operations to the Allied ground forces in Burma took on a new aspect in keeping with the new situation.

223. This did not mean that the commitment of the air supply squadrons would cease, or indeed, that fighting in Burma was entirely over. On the contrary, it was expected that in certain respects air supply commitments would increase. There could be no doubt, however, that the nature and the location of loads which would be carried, would greatly change. Evacuation of prisoners-of-war and internees, the "fly-in" of Allied ground forces to occupy large and vast territories held by the Japanese, were all commitments which faced the transport squadrons in South East Asia on the cessation of hostilities. Materiel of war, on the other hand—so important a cargo throughout the campaign in Burma—ceased to have a first priority. Movement of personnel, carriage of rations and civilian supplies replaced the transport of military supplies.

224. Operations of the transport squadrons during August fell into two distinct categories. The first half of the month, when Japan was still at war, supply operations continued much the same as on previous months. After 15th August, when surrender was announced, the situation became somewhat confused.

225. The supply tasks by aircraft during the first half of August were confined principally to the carrying of ammunition and petrol for the two most active areas of fighting in Burma—the Mawchi Road and the lower Sittang—where the remnants of the Japanese forces who had survived the July "Killing" were still holding out. There were, of course, other numerous and important supply tasks, the biggest of which was the stocking of airfields in Southern and Central Burma in preparation for the sustained effort which would be required once the assault on Malaya, under operation "Zipper", began.

226. One squadron during the first half of August had the sole task of taking food supplies to the civilian population of Northern Burma. This was an important commitment owing to the lack of other means of transport.

Operations to relieve Allied Prisoners of War.

227. With the Japanese surrender in the second half of August, there came orders for the move of six R.A.F. Transport squadrons to the Rangoon area to transport stores, and to evacuate Ps.O.W. from Siam, French Indo-China, Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies. As the result of these squadron moves, and the military situation at the time, the number of normal transport operations fell away very considerably. The majority of the trips, indeed, were concerned with moves by squadrons and the stocking up of the Rangoon airfields with provisions for the liberated territories and the P.O.W. Camps.

228. August 28th—the historic date on which Operation "Mastiff" was launched to bring relief to the thousands of Allied Ps.O.W. in the prison camps throughout the vast territories of South East Asia—saw the transport squadrons, as well as other aircraft of the Command, including those of the R.A.A.F., take part in what was described as "one of the greatest mercy missions of the war."

229. Many of the flights undertaken in these operations were equivalent to a Transatlantic flight, and yet 75 per cent. of the crews succeeded in reaching their targets and dropping their messages as well as parachuting medical supplies, Red Cross parcels and teams of medical and signalling personnel provided mainly by airborne formations. Later, many thousands of Ps.O.W. and internees were evacuated from these territories by air.

230. It is not difficult to visualise the plight in which our Allied Ps.O.W. would certainly have found themselves after the official Japanese surrender, had not all resources, including Air Power, been used, and organised quickly, to bring relief, comfort and sustenance to these unfortunate men, many of them too weak to stand on their own legs. Only Air Power could have penetrated these vast territories throughout South East Asia with the speed required to initiate that essential relief. The pin-pointing of many Japanese P.O.W. camps, in addition to the great distances flown.

by aircraft and the hazards of weather encountered in these tropical regions, speaks magnificently for the navigational and flying skill of our aircrews.

231. The period, May to August, 1945—covering the re-entry of the Allied Forces into Rangoon and later the surrender of Japan—cannot be termed spectacular in air supply operations when reckoned against such efforts during the Allied advance down through Burma earlier in the year, when the mobility of Fourteenth Army was almost entirely provided by the Allied Air Forces whose record

supply tonnage averaged 2,900 tons per day in April, 1945.

232. The period, May to August, was not only the monsoon period but the period, with the exception of the July battle in Burma, during which the Allied Forces on ground, sea and in the air were building up their organisation and strength to deliver the next blow which would have fallen upon the Japanese in Malaya in early September. Nevertheless, the R.A.F. Transport supply squadrons met the demands required of them, and the supply effort for that period may be summarised as follows:—

	May	June	July	August	Total
Tactical Trips	7,998	7,211	8,258	3,779	27,246
Personnel Carried	7,795	2,321	3,017	4,651	17,784
Casualties Evacuated	3,899	2,515	2,044	1,514	9,972
Supplies Delivered (Short Tons)	23,172	19,978	22,170	9,418	74,738
Estimated Total (Short Tons)	23,951	20,210	22,472	9,883	76,516

CASUALTY EVACUATION

A Prominent Lesson which Emerged from the Campaign in Burma.

233. The great saving of lives and raising of morale due to air casualty evacuation was one of the main lessons which emerged from the Campaign in Burma.

234. This service was easily one of the best morale builders among Allied front-line troops. It inspired the fighting man's confidence and allayed any fears he may have had about being wounded, with the possibility of falling into the hands of the Japanese as a prisoner.

235. Air casualty evacuation, once it became known as the recognised method for dealing with serious cases by flying them out of the forward areas in Burma, was a triumph both for the Allied medical staffs and the aircrews alike. The Japanese had no air organisation for similar evacuation of their troops, and the low condition in which many enemy prisoners were found as a result of acute sickness in the jungle areas was, in itself, a contributory factor to their defeat.

236. The general policy was for supply aircraft to deliver supplies and take back from forward airfields on their return trips loads of casualties to the base hospitals, and the special centres established at Comilla, but when adverse landing conditions compelled supply by dropping, there were temporary difficulties in clearing casualties from Corps and Army medical centres. Austers and L.5 aircraft (Sentinels) were used in the Theatre with conspicuous success in the forward areas.

237. For the purpose of handling casualties from forward medical units and forward transport landing grounds, R.A.F. Casualty Air Evacuation Units were set up. These units were situated on the transport air strip covering a particular area. Emplaning of the casualties on to the aircraft was effected according to their degree of urgency for base hospital medical treatment. The average strength of a Casualty Air Evacuation Unit was 40 British other ranks, with a varied number of Indian personnel. Approximately 100 wounded could be staged at these C.A.E.U.s. for as long as was necessary. As many seriously wounded and sick personnel required medical attention whilst travelling in aircraft to base, an air

ambulance orderly pool was established at base. This was composed of specially trained nursing orderlies who flew in all aircraft. It is noteworthy to record that these nursing orderlies flew as much as 200 hours a month. They carried with them complete first-aid equipment, including oxygen-giving apparatus. In the Burma Theatre, due to the mountainous nature of the country, portable oxygen equipment proved to be essential in air casualty evacuation work, and its employment actually saved many lives.

238. The Casualty Air Evacuation Units in the forward areas were also responsible for the off-loading, treatment and conveyance of casualties received direct from the battle line in light aircraft such as the L.5. These aircraft proved invaluable in evacuating casualties from jungle clearances and small strips in the forward areas.

239. Air evacuation of casualties began in Burma in the opening months of 1944, when the Allied ground forces found themselves encircled in the Arakan, and later during the period of the Siege of Imphal. By September of that year, some 48,789 casualties had been evacuated by air, and as the months passed, and the campaign developed in intensity, the casualty evacuation figures steadily increased.

240. By the end of April, 1945—three days before the fall of Rangoon—the total casualties evacuated by British and American aircraft in Burma was 110,761, of which 50,285 were evacuated by R.A.F. aircraft.

241. In the period May to August, 1945, the closing stages of the war against the Japanese, R.A.F. aircraft evacuated a total of 9,972 casualties.

242. That air casualty evacuation proved itself a triumph both from the point of view of morale and the lives saved, is undisputed. Perhaps more convincing is the fact that, throughout the campaign, only one death in the air among ground personnel evacuated was recorded, and only one aircraft, carrying 24 casualties, was lost due to weather.

243. H.Q. A.L.F.S.E.A. stated that air evacuation reduced mortality of wounded by 60 per cent.

American Experience in Casualty Evacuation.

244. Since American aircraft operated as part of the Allied Air Forces in the Theatre until integration in the Command ceased on 1st June, 1945, it is not inappropriate to mention something of the interesting experience of American L.5. aircraft employed in Burma in casualty evacuation and in other secondary important tasks associated with supply to the ground forces.

245. A special research report on evacuation of casualties from the forward areas in Burma which was produced in July, 1945 by Air/12G (Research) Headquarters, Allied Land Forces, South East Asia, described the work of two American squadrons operating L.5. aircraft with Fourteenth Army in the campaign.

The purpose of the report was:—

(a) To consider the best method of using L.5. aircraft for casualty evacuation in the light of the American experience.

(b) To estimate the number of aircraft required to evacuate the casualties from a Corps in action with varying degrees of battle activity.

246. Throughout the period considered in the report—November, 1944 to April, 1945—the squadrons worked with 4 Corps and 33 Corps from a rear strip close to the Casualty Clearing Station. The squadrons of light aircraft were allotted on the basis of one for each Corps of three Divisions. The C.C.S. was sited at the edge of the strip. Forward strips were made by the troops, and the location of the strips was signalled to the squadrons. A reconnaissance plane would fly over the site in the early morning and photograph the strip. If it was considered satisfactory for landing and take-off, the required number of aircraft flew out immediately.

247. During the Meiktila-Rangoon advance of 4 Corps, the number of strips constructed was greater than that during a corresponding period at any other time, yet none of the strips was refused by the squadrons. When the strips could be built more than 500 yards long, it was possible to evacuate two sitting cases in one sortie, but there were few opportunities for this.

248. All the squadron commanders understood their primary role to be casualty evacuation. But important secondary tasks were also performed. Except in the case of the fly-in of important medical supplies, these secondary tasks were never allowed to interfere with the evacuation of casualties.

249. The secondary tasks undertaken were:—

(a) The emergency flying-in of medical supplies, especially whole blood.

(b) Flying-in reinforcements, mail, food, ammunition and items of personal kit. These trips were always part of an evacuation sortie.

(c) Transporting V.I.P.s. within the Corps area.

(d) Spotting for artillery.

(e) Dropping and picking up messages.

(f) Reconnaissance flights.

250. The importance of the evacuation of casualties relative to other duties was, indeed,

interesting. The total trips by one squadron over a given period of one month, when activity was intense, was 12,017 of which 9,238 were casualty evacuation flights, or 77 per cent. of the total, as against 2,779 secondary missions.

251. In an analysis of the secondary tasks undertaken by these aircraft, the flying-in of reinforcements proved exceedingly valuable, since these missions could be combined readily with the collection of a casualty, while most of the other missions could not. In various ten-day periods, for example, the total number of casualties evacuated was 7,705 as against 3,345 reinforcements flown in. The percentage of evacuated casualties which were replaced by reinforcements was therefore 43.

Evacuating Casualties from a Corps in Action.

252. For the peak period March, 1945, a squadron of 32 American light aircraft operated under 33 Corps.

253. During this period, all the cases required to be evacuated were taken out by air. No cases were evacuated by road or rail. The aircraft were based at Shwebo during the first half of the month and flew as far as Ondaw, 35 miles away. In the second half of the month, the aircraft were based at Ondaw and flew as far as Wundwin, 65 miles away. The numbers of ground forces evacuated and the hours flown in three ten-day periods were as follows:—

Date	Number Evacuated	Hours Flown
1—11 March	1,793	1,604
11—22 March	1,464	1,431
21—31 March	1,362	1,688
Total	4,619	4,723

Maximum distance between base and forward strip (miles)	65
Minimum distance between base and forward strip (miles)	35
Average per cent. aircraft in commission daily	96.7
Average number of aircraft in commission daily	30.6
Average number of hours flown per plane per day	5.2
Average number of hours flown per plane per month	153
Average number of cases evacuated per plane per day	5
Average number of hours flown per day ...	157
Average number of cases evacuated per day ...	154
Maximum number of flying hours a pilot a day	9

254. The above achievement by this squadron was a record for the American squadrons in the Group. The effort was believed to be near the maximum which any squadron could reach in similar circumstances.

255. During the period some of the pilots flew for nine hours a day for five consecutive days, and made up seven sorties in one day on several occasions. This intensification of activity for short periods could not have been achieved without the very high level of maintenance attained, nor could it have been exceeded without putting too great a strain on the pilots or replacing some of the aircraft. Three of the pilots had to be replaced before the end of the operation owing to exhaustion, and 14 aircraft had to be replaced when the squadron came out. The deterioration of the engines, however, cannot be ascribed simply to this operation, as the aircraft had had three months of operations before operating with

33 Corps. The Squadron Commander, it was interesting to note, considered that the factor limiting the monthly carrying capacity of a squadron was the ability of the pilots, rather than that of aircraft, to withstand the strain of intense activity. Few of the pilots in question could have remained efficient if the squadron had attempted to carry on for longer than six weeks at the same level of activity.

Maximum Monthly Carrying Capacity of L.5 Aircraft.

256. While the average daily number of cases evacuated per aircraft was 5, some of the aircraft actually exceeded this number, while some failed to reach it. On the other hand, had all aircraft been used to the same extent as those which flew more than the average for the whole squadron, the average daily number evacuated would have been six, or 180 for the squadron of 30 aircraft. This figure was agreed upon by the Squadron Commander, who estimated that the maximum daily carrying capacity of a single squadron of light aircraft was 180 and the maximum monthly capacity 6,000. This, of course, was based on the maximum distance of 65 miles between the rear and forward strips.

257. The situation was somewhat altered in the instance of 4 Corps' advance down the Meiktila-Rangoon road in April, 1945, when an American light aircraft squadron was evacuating cases from Toungoo to Meiktila for a short period. The distance involved was 330 miles for a whole sortie, and the flight lasting approximately four and a half hours. This meant that it was not possible to evacuate more than two cases per plane per day for more than a total of 60 casualties per day for the whole squadron. It was interesting to note in this connection, however, that 4 Corps' rate of advance in April was approximately 14 miles per day. While the distances flown by light aircraft engaged on casualty evacuation were correspondingly great, the squadron was nevertheless well able to handle all cases, because ground casualties were very light.

258. Altogether the data derived as a result of the operational experience of these light aircraft in Burma suggests that one squadron of 32 L.5 aircraft is sufficient to evacuate all the cases requiring evacuation from the forward areas of a Corps of three Divisions, provided the average daily number of cases does not exceed 180 and the average distance flown is not greater than 60 miles per trip (120 miles per round sortie). One other important proviso, of course, is that we have air superiority and that there is no prolonged heavy fighting with an exceedingly high sickness rate.

GENERAL RECONNAISSANCE.

A Period of Great Versatility for G.R. Aircraft.

259. When the period under review opened, offensive general reconnaissance had become effectively established as the primary operational function of air-sea power in this Theatre. The opening weeks of 1945 had incontestably indicated an entire absence of enemy U-boats throughout the vast expanses of the Indian Ocean, and pointed to the urgent need for alternative employment. Thus evolved the plan for an intensive anti-shipping campaign

to disrupt the enemy's sea transport in and around the waters of the Andaman Sea. Four months of vigorous anti-shipping strikes and carefully planned air-sea mining operations revealed that these tactics were greatly harassing the enemy, and an intensification of offensive general reconnaissance was rightly considered a remunerative policy to pursue.

260. Although the primary operational rôle of 222 Group in May 1945 was that of sinking and immobilising the enemy's shipping, it must be borne in mind that there were continued and increasing commitments in the spheres of photographic reconnaissance, meteorological flights and air-sea rescue. I had, in fact, delegated the responsibility for the organisation and control of air-sea rescue operations and units to Air Marshal Commanding 222 Group as from 1st April, 1945, for the whole of South East Asia Command. Moreover, there was always the possibility that the enemy might recommence his U-boat warfare with renewed vigour, and the G.R. forces under my control had always to be prepared for such a contingency.

Developing the Anti-Shipping Campaign.

261. With the re-occupation of Rangoon on May 3rd, 1945, it became possible to establish a new and invaluable base from which to develop the anti-shipping campaign in more easterly waters. Sunderland aircraft of 230 Squadron (relieved in July by a detachment of 209 Squadron, similarly equipped) operating from the depot ship S.S. "Manela" under the operational control of 346 Wing were able to spread their tentacles over the areas of the Tenasserim Coast, Kra Isthmus, Gulf of Siam and South China Seas, adding confusion and perplexity to the enemy with their constant armed reconnaissance and timely attacks wherever suitable targets presented themselves.

262. As a counterpart to this newly established base of Rangoon in the north, the development of Cocos Island in the south constituted an equally important strategic base for similar operations off the west coast of Sumatra, the south coast of Java and the Sunda Straits. No. 321 Squadron, equipped with Liberators (Mark VI), commenced operating a detachment of six aircraft from Cocos Island on July 22nd, 1945.

263. No. 354 Liberator Squadron, which had initiated the offensive anti-shipping strike aspect of the campaign in early February, disbanded on 15th May, 1945. No. 203 Liberator Squadron, however, which had commenced strike operations on 20th March, 1945, continued its programme of incessant and forceful attack over the Andaman Sea, Straits of Malacca, Gulf of Siam, Java Sea, Bangka Strait and off the west coast of Sumatra until the cessation of hostilities. This squadron was based at Kankasanturai (North Ceylon) but frequently operated detachments from Akyab, Ramree and Cocos Island under adverse conditions.

264. The paramount problem of the shipping strike operations was the lack of forward bases. Liberator aircraft had been operating from bases far removed from this scene of operations, and the period of patrol in the operational area was inevitably curtailed, thus

detracting from the efficacy of the sorties. Furthermore, flying-boat facilities at Rangoon were inadequate, and prevented the Sunderlands from being used to the fullest operational capacity. For example, there were no slipway or beaching facilities, so that it was impossible for flying-boats to undertake operations likely to cause severe damage to their hulls. Neither the Sunderland nor the Liberator aircraft is ideal for low-level shipping attacks, but the nature of the operation and existing conditions demanded long-range aircraft and these were the only types available.

265. It is interesting to note that Liberator aircraft of Nos. 203 and 354 Squadrons carried out a series of long-range sea reconnaissance patrols during May 13th-19th which proved invaluable in the location and eventual destruction on May 16th of the Japanese heavy cruiser "HAGURO" in the Straits of Malacca by H.M. Naval forces. (26th Destroyer Flotilla—Captain M. L. Power, C.B.E., D.S.O., in H.M.S. "SAUMAREZ".)

266. Having regard to the many and varied complexities of conducting strike operations within this vast theatre of operations, such as the unfortunate paucity of air bases, the irremediable problem of distance and the unsuitability of aircraft, my G.R. Air Forces achieved results both impressive and commendable. The enemy's shipping sustained considerable blows at a time when every ship in his possession was of vital importance. When the war came to an abrupt conclusion, offensive general reconnaissance was getting into its stride. Had hostilities continued, past experience permits an optimistic speculation in connection with the heavy toll general reconnaissance would have taken of Japanese sea transport, particularly on the shipping routes between Batavia and Singapore.

Air-Sea Mining as Part of the Campaign.

267. Mine-laying operations were planned as an essential part of the anti-shipping campaign, to be executed concurrently with the more directly offensive anti-shipping strikes programme. Initially, it was planned to lay mines during the hours of darkness in the shipping lanes of Northern Sumatra and Northern Malaya, and 160 Squadron (Liberators Mk.V.) underwent an intensive period of training in long range flying and the technique of mine-laying to implement these plans. They commenced these operations on 21st January, 1945 and continued until 24th May—a period of 124 days during which 196 sorties were flown. After operational experience had been gained, the mining commitments were increased to include drops in the areas of Sonchkla, Chumborn, Port Swettenham and Singapore. Mine-laying operations were discontinued after 24th May, 1945, because the stage was then being finally set for Operation "Zipper", and to have continued mine-laying beyond that date might have had serious repercussions when Allied landings took place on the west coast of Malaya.

268. It is difficult, if not impossible, to assess accurately and fully, the damage and inconvenience caused to the enemy by these particular operations. The strategy employed was to mine a number of different and well-separated targets at frequent intervals so as

to cause the enemy the greatest possible inconvenience in constantly deploying his inadequate force of mine sweeping craft over a large area. It is reasonable to assume that many thousands of tons of enemy shipping were immobilised at a time when they could ill be spared, and the task of constant mine-sweeping must have been heart-breaking if not overwhelming. Whatever the material achievements of these operations, it must be added that the programme was extremely well-conceived and well executed.

Employment of General Reconnaissance Aircraft on Special Duty Operations.

269. The year of final and complete victory in South East Asia Command was a period of strenuous re-orientation for G.R. Air Forces. With the Indian Ocean no longer a hunting-ground for enemy U-boats, the days of vigilant defensive warfare had passed, and it became essential to re-model the defensive Air Forces into a strong and penetrating arm of offence with which to sever the enemy's sea communications. (The broad strategy of general reconnaissance in the Indian Ocean had always been concerned with the passive protection of shipping rather than the hunting of U-boats—a strategy rendered inevitable by the enormous expanse of water to be reconnoitered and the inadequate number of aircraft and few advance bases at our disposal.)

270. Unfortunately, it was impossible to devote our entire G.R. resources to the execution of this offensive plan, for there were more urgent operational demands to be satisfied, and general reconnaissance aircraft could be quickly and satisfactorily diverted to the rescue. When mine-laying operations ceased, it was envisaged that 160 Squadron, together with Nos. 8 and 356 Squadrons, would reinforce the shipping strike campaign, but the growing requirements of the S.D. organisation absorbed these squadrons to the detriment of offensive general reconnaissance. The effort of G.R. aircraft operating in the S.D. role does not properly belong to this chapter, but rather to that of S.D. operations as a whole. Suffice it is to say here that these squadrons acquitted themselves in a creditable fashion, and manifested once again the comparative ease with which Air Power can be moulded into different forms or styles to meet the changing requirements.

271. Towards the end of the war, No. 222 Group had become responsible for the operational control of some six squadrons engaged on S.D. operations, with the result that the functional and administrative experience gained therefrom provided the Command with a competent and well-versed organisation for the vital and intricate operations immediately following the end of the war. No. 222 Group also played a large and important part in Operations "Birdcage" and "Mastiff", for the requirements of these operations were in many ways similar to those of S.D.

272. The achievements of general reconnaissance aircraft engaged upon the relief and liberation of Allied prisoners-of-war, are recorded in the appropriate chapter. It was a satisfying conclusion to the history of general reconnaissance in the Indian Ocean—a history of dexterous and highly competent adaptation to the many and varied exigencies of an immense and complicated theatre of war.

SPECIAL DUTY OPERATIONS.

An Integral Part in the War Strategy of South East Asia.

273. Operations by S.D. aircraft of my Command contributed very materially to the success of the highly organised guerilla forces of this Theatre which, themselves, were an integral part of the strategy of the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia.

274. In the initial stages, S.D. operations were primarily in support of our own forces operating in the enemy-occupied territories, concerning which our Intelligence from ground sources was exceedingly scarce. In the closing stages of the war, however, operations by aircraft in introducing personnel to the Japanese-occupied areas of Burma, Siam, French Indo-China, Malaya, Sumatra and Singapore Island, and supplying them as well as the guerilla formations under their control, grew to proportions which called for the maximum effort of aircraft and crews engaged on this special work. Indeed the true picture was that our Liberator position in the Command was exceedingly tight, since the S.D. effort was carried out largely by this type of aircraft.

275. By May, 1945, guerilla organisations in the Theatre had become firmly established, so much so, that the Burmese Guerillas played a prominent part with our Air and Ground Forces in the killing of ten thousand Japanese troops during an attempted mass escape from the Pegu Yomas in July.

276. A brief account of their activities in co-operation with the Tactical Air Forces is covered in another chapter.

Control of the Guerilla Organisations.

277. The control of the Guerilla Organisations in this Theatre was vested in the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, with a branch, known as "P" Division, which delegated part of its functions to special staff officers at various lower formations.

278. Guerilla operations in South East Asia took on an entirely different character from the work of the underground forces in Europe, where patriots speedily organised themselves as a resistance movement. In South East Asia the sympathies of Asiatics had first to be won over to our cause by special agents and leaders, and parties of guerillas organised among the local inhabitants and often fanatical hill tribesmen. Aircraft made flights of 2,000 and 3,000 miles regularly on these expeditions for on aircraft almost entirely did the build-up of these secret forces depend.

279. Briefly, the Guerilla Organisations operating in the Theatre were as follows:—

(a) *Force 136.* This was a British Organisation mainly responsible for raising, training, arming and controlling guerilla forces and sabotage teams. It also had a tactical intelligence role and operational control of "Z" Force which had a more limited but similar function.

(b) *O.S.S.* The American Officers of Strategic Services had a similar object to that of Force 136, and also collected and distributed strategic intelligence.

(c) *I.S.L.D.* The Inter-Service Liaison Department was a British Organisation and was

concerned mainly with the collection and distribution of strategic intelligence from many sources.

280. In addition to the above, there were also miscellaneous organisations which had guerilla functions, and sometimes called upon Special Duty aircraft to assist them.

Allied Air Force Units Involved.

281. Liberators, Dakotas, Catalinas, Lysanders and L.5 (Sentinels) were used for the S.D. operations. The principal units employed were:—

(i) *No. 357 Squadron.* This squadron was the one permanent complete S.D. squadron in this Theatre. It consisted of 10 Liberators, 10 Dakotas and a detached flight of up to 10 Lysanders. The role of the Lysanders was the infiltration and withdrawal of men and mail by landing in enemy territory. The Dakotas were also available for similar landings, as well as for parachute operations.

(ii) *No. 240 Squadron.* This G.R. Catalina squadron included three Catalinas for Special Duty Operations in alighting in enemy waters. These Catalinas were also capable of minor parachute operations.

(iii) *No. 358 Squadron.* This heavy bomber squadron was transferred indefinitely from 231 Group to the S.D. role, and consisted of 16 Liberators which were modified to S.D. standards.

(iv) *10th U.S.A.A.F.* Until the withdrawal by the American Army Air Forces from the Command on 1st June, 1945, a proportion of the effort of the 10th U.S.A.A.F., by arrangement with the O.S.S., was allocated to S.D. operations.

(v) *Tactical Groups.* By local arrangements between the Guerilla Organisations and No. 221 Group, Tactical squadrons sometimes carried out S.D. operations authorised by the Group Headquarters.

(vi) *S.D. Air/Sea Rescue Operations.* Special Duty Air/Sea Rescue operations were carried out from time to time by A.S.R. Catalinas under the control of No. 222 Group. These operations were concerned with installing dumps of foodstuffs and equipment for missing aircrews on coasts in enemy waters, and were arranged by "E" Group.

282. As the S.D. squadrons during the closing stages of the war in South East Asia were operating regularly at an intensive rate of effort on these missions, other units were also brought in to supplement the S.D. work.

Planning of S.D. Air Operations.

283. The training of aircrews and army personnel to the R.A.F. standards took as high priority as the operations themselves. Where practicable, and when the Guerilla Organisations agreed, the training of army personnel and aircrews was combined. This was particularly essential during training for night landing operations on enemy territory, and for ground-to-air special radar and signals equipment.

284. It was estimated that a sustained rate of five successful sorties per aircraft per month could be maintained by an S.D. squadron of twelve aircraft, giving a total of

sixty sorties per month. Generally, planning did not exceed more than fifty sorties per month, in view of the maintenance difficulties, the extremely long sorties which had to be flown, and the fact that the Guerilla Organisations might not have continuous operations in hand. While it was possible to carry out the majority of the operations over Malaya with safety during daytime, or under last light conditions, it was not considered wise to make these flights in daylight in the immediate vicinity of Singapore.

285. The three principal home bases for the S.D. operations were at Jessore in Bengal, Minneriya in Ceylon, and later the Cocos Islands. The operations from the Cocos did not begin until mid-July, when sorties were flown to all parts of Malaya. From Bengal, the S.D. operations were principally over Burma and French Indo-China, but flights were also made deep into Malaya, one aircraft logging twenty hours thirty-nine minutes for one of its sorties.

Operations Increased for Malaya.

286. The strategic plan for the assault on Malaya called for an even greater effort by the S.D. squadrons based in Ceylon. By July, the underground forces had been so organised by our personnel, and supplied with arms and equipment to such proportions, that they constituted a very real threat to isolated garrisons of Japanese troops. The time was considered opportune to foster and galvanise these organisations into a formidable fighting force to harass the enemy at the time of our own landings in Malaya. For this purpose, therefore, it was decided to use heavy bomber aircraft, based on the Cocos Islands, to supplement the S.D. operations into Southern Malaya, and to employ these aircraft on the first ten nights of the July and August moon periods. These operations were controlled by Headquarters, No. 222 Group. Aircraft airborne from the Cocos Islands were routed in daylight through the gap in the Sumatra mountain range between 1° North and 2° North, and carrying a payload of 5,000 lbs. In this way, approximately 75 per cent. of the Malayan dropping zones was covered.

287. In order to carry out very long range S.D. operations within the Command with worthwhile payloads, Liberators at one time were operating with an all-up-weight (a.u.w.) of 66,000 lbs. This had paid a great dividend in establishing links with the underground forces in Malaya.

288. To keep the a.u.w. within the margin of safety, however, and at the same time carry the maximum payloads, it was necessary, on occasion, to cut the amount of extra petrol carried to the irreducible minimum; to strip aircraft of non-essential equipment, and to carry only essential crews.

289. In the weeks immediately preceding the Allied landings on Malaya, a considerable weight of weapons, ammunition and concentrated food was dropped to thousands of organised guerillas, together with trained guerilla leaders.

290. The operational records of the aircraft engaged on S.D. operations in the Command show that aircraft of No. 222 Group alone flew nearly 11,000 hours between May and

September, 1945. The Cocos squadrons, although not altogether fully experienced in S.D. work, speedily established an enviable reputation for accurate dropping. When it is realised, too, that the sorties carried out by Catalina aircraft entailed, for the most part, night landings on enemy waters in varying conditions of sea, without benefit of flare-path, some idea is gained of the high skill required from these R.A.F. pilots.

291. The sudden end of the war in South East Asia did not conclude the tasks of the S.D. squadrons, but brought instead a new series of commitments under Operation "Mastiff" for the relief and liberation of Allied prisoners-of-war, an aspect which is dealt with in a later chapter of this despatch.

Outstanding Operations by Lysander Aircraft:

292. Any report or narrative on S.D. operations would be far short of completeness without mention of the magnificent work done by light aircraft, notably Lysanders. The untiring efforts of Lysander pilots, indeed, greatly assisted Force 136 to carry on their activities behind the enemy lines during the drive through Burma, and I feel justified in singling them out for especial mention.

293. Particularly outstanding work was done by the Lysander Flight of 357 Squadron. Not only were personnel infiltrated, but seriously wounded personnel were evacuated from the field. In addition to the urgent operational stores flown in, commitments had included transport of Staff Officers to Party Commanders in the field, and the evacuation of enemy prisoners-of-war and documents.

294. The versatility of the flight had increased with each operation. Sorties often necessitated flying in foul monsoon weather and landing on very small strips. On one occasion a landing was attempted at Ntilawathihta, near the Papun-Momaung Road, on a very short strip and on wet and slippery grass. The aircraft slid into a deep ditch at the end of the strip, but escaped with negligible damage. In attempts to extricate the aircraft, lumber elephants would not go near, but the combined efforts of fifty local inhabitants eventually succeeded in hauling the plane back on to the strip; the pilot then flew back to base.

295. On many occasions Lysander sorties came near to failure owing to the presence of Japanese troops in the area. Force 136 nearly always had to cover the landing area for fear of surprise by Japanese patrols.

296. On another occasion, a pilot was involved in a skirmish between Japanese troops and Force 136 Guerillas at Lipyekhi, when his aircraft failed to start for the return journey to Rangoon. Firing took place across the strip, but the aircraft escaped damage. It was rendered serviceable next day by a rescue sortie, and was able to return to base.

297. Another escapade was accomplished when Squadron Leader Turner, Flight Commander, damaged his Lysander in an attempt to pick up personnel at Ngapyawdaw, near Kinmun. Shortly after he had landed, the neighbourhood was compromised by Japanese forces and repair of the aircraft was impossible. Attempts to rescue Squadron Leader Turner were abortive until ten days later,

when a rescue aircraft made a well-timed evacuation. In the meantime, the Flight Commander stayed with Force 136 Guerillas.

The Advantages of the Lysander Aircraft.

298. The advantages of the Lysander for the unique type of work it was called upon to carry out were as follows:—

(i) Weight lifting capacity.

(ii) Automatic flap action, meeting all the conditions of flight, e.g. a sudden loss of lift in a sudden violent turn or in conditions of turbulence over the hills.

(iii) Capability of cruising at low speed in conditions of bad visibility.

(iv) High rate of turn, of great value in confined spaces.

(v) Fixed undercarriage, strong and able to stand the shocks of heavy landings.

(vi) High engine power and light wing loading, facilitating quick take-off from waterlogged strips, and an immediate high rate of climb.

(vii) Reasonable flying endurance of aircraft, the pilot never being embarrassed in a difficult operation by shortage of fuel.

299. But even with these advantages, the technique required of the Lysander pilots was one of skill, particularly when landing on very small strips. On such occasions the normal approach speed of 85 m.p.h. had to be reduced to 70 m.p.h., and a precision touch-down at the very beginning of the strip, with throttle promptly closed, had to be accomplished.

300. From May, 1945, to October, 1945, 357 Squadron Lysanders flew no less than 1,310 hours. 405 sorties were attempted and 363 of these were successful. Personnel infiltrated had numbered 214, and evacuations, 330. In addition, some 104,580 lbs. of stores were landed behind the enemy lines.

301. A fitting tribute to the Lysander operations was paid by Headquarters, Group "A" of Force 136 on 23rd June, 1945.

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECONNAISSANCE

A Record of Achievement Built on Perseverance of Crews.

302. Photographic reconnaissance has come out of the South East Asia Theatre with a record of achievement built upon the perseverance of its air crews to master the difficulties of climate and terrain. A flight of 2,600 miles in nine hours five minutes was one of the longest flights ever done in P.R.

303. The radius of P.R. cover in December, 1943, when the Command was formed, was not more than 680 miles, since long range reconnaissance by Mosquitos was only in process of being attempted in the coverage of the Andaman Islands from Comilla and, a little later, of Bangkok in Siam. When the war with Japan ended in August, 1945, the range of P.R. aircraft in South East Asia Command was such that coverage of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands from Ceylon, flights deep into Siam and French Indo China from Rangoon, and a detailed coverage of targets in Sumatra, Southern Malaya, Singapore and Java by aircraft based on the Cocos Islands, had become normal routine.

304. The Mosquito indeed made amends for the structural defect which had curtailed its use in this Command, for it set up two records in 1945. Firstly, a Mosquito XVI broke the long distance record on March 22 for this type of aircraft in any theatre of war, with a flight of 2,493 miles in eight hours forty-five minutes, covering the Bangkok—Singapore railway to a point south of the Malayan frontier. This performance, however, was eclipsed by a Mosquito XXXIV based on the Cocos Islands, which on 20th August, 1945, flew 1,240 miles to Penang Island and then went on to cover Taiping town and airfield at 17,000 feet. On the return home a survey run was made on the K8/12-inch camera. This was the longest P.R. flight to be made in the Command, and covered a total of 2,600 miles in nine hours five minutes.

Photographic Survey of Burma.

305. Possibly the two most outstanding contributions by photographic reconnaissance to the war in South East Asia were its survey photography of Burma at the beginning of 1944, and its detailed coverage of enemy occupied territories after the fall of Rangoon in May, 1945, in preparation for the large scale assault on Malaya.

306. The survey photography of Burma fulfilled a long-felt want by supplying accurate and up-to-date maps of Burma which were practically non-existent up to this time—the Air Force and Army having to use 1914-15 ground surveys which, as photographic reconnaissance proved, showed major errors. The new survey of Burma was one of the best examples of R.A.F. assistance to the Army in this Theatre.

307. Faced with the urgent and extensive programme of photographic reconnaissance in Malaya and Sumatra for Operation "Zipper", a detachment of 684 Squadron (Alipore) commenced operations from the Cocos Islands in July, 1945, with four Mk. XXXIV Mosquitos which had just been released for service use in temperate and tropical climates. The P.R. programme for "Zipper" went steadily forward and, by the end of July, was 60 per cent. completed. A second detachment of 684 Squadron Mosquitos was operating at this time from China Bay, Ceylon, for the coverage of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

P.R. organisation after fall of Rangoon.

308. At the time of Rangoon's capture in May, 1945, the Photographic Reconnaissance Force was commanded by Colonel Minton W. Kaye, United States Army Air Force, with Group Captain S. G. Wise, D.F.C., as Assistant Air Commander:

309. The Force controlled two R.A.F. Squadrons, No. 681 (Spitfires) and No. 684 (Mosquitos), while the Americans had a P.38 (F.5) Squadron, a P.40, and a B.24 Mapping Squadron. The American Units, however, had completed their task as a P.R. integrated force in the Command and, after carrying out a few P.R. sorties at the beginning of May, they then retired to prepare for withdrawal to China with the remainder of the American Air Forces in the Theatre. The two R.A.F. squadrons, therefore, were left to operate on their own.

310. It became apparent, after the fall of Rangoon, that Photographic Reconnaissance in the Command would have to be endowed with a mobility which would allow it to move forward with the tide of battle. Accordingly, No. 347 P.R. Wing, which was formed in April, became effective as a formation in May, 1945. The new Wing Headquarters absorbed all of the R.A.F. element of the Photographic Reconnaissance Force and certain sections of the Station Headquarters at Alipore and Bally (India), where the two R.A.F. Squadrons of Spitfires and Mosquitos were based.

311. In May, No. 684 Squadron continued to be based at Alipore, but No. 681 Squadron moved to Mingaladon, Rangoon and flew most of their sorties in support of the Twelfth Army's mopping up operations along the Mawchi Road, the Sittang Bend and the road and river communications between Pegu and Moulmein.

312. On 9th June, 1945, the Wing passed to the Command of Group Captain C. E. St. J. Beamish, D.F.C.

Working against the Monsoon in Operational Areas.

313. Bad weather was the enemy which photographic reconnaissance had to combat almost continuously. Only by dint of sheer perseverance were many of the most important covers accomplished.

314. With the arrival of the Monsoon in May over the operational areas in Southern Burma and Siam, coverage from a photographic point of view became extremely difficult and flying more hazardous.

315. The inter-tropical front appeared at the Isthmus of Kra and moved as far north as Mergui, but generally it kept more to the south. By the end of May, weather deteriorated considerably and the Monsoon entered into its own for the season.

316. While Spitfires, based in Southern Burma, were able to take advantage of local weather conditions for short P.R. sorties in support of the Army, the task was more difficult, long range Mosquitos undertaking many flights of more than 2,000 miles for each sortie. More than one aircraft on occasions returned to base with torn fabric and other evidence of severe climatic conditions.

317. In August, with the weeks drawing near for the assault on Malaya, No. 2 Mosquito Detachment of 684 Squadron (based on the Cocos Islands), succeeded in flying 282 operational hours with only four crews. Some of the beach targets necessary for operation "Zipper" were exceedingly exacting, since photography had to be done at low tide in order to secure a full picture of the state and condition of beaches in preparation for the landings.

318. Intimation of Japan's surrender was the signal for P.R. to work at greater pressure than ever. The "Zipper" programme, which was all but complete, was cancelled, and a new programme substituted entailing cover, three times a fortnight, by P.R. aircraft of all important targets ranging from Penang Island to Sourabaya in Java. It is worth noting that P.R. aircraft, during this period of uncertainty among Japanese units regarding their country's

surrender, met with more opposition than at any other time. At Palembang, pilots reported that enemy A.A. fire was intense.

319. Probably the most outstanding P.R. sortie from a general and humane interest at this time was that undertaken by a pilot of 681 Squadron (Spitfires) when covering prisoner-of-war camps in the Kanchana Buri area of Siam, ten days after the declaration of Japan's surrender. Prisoners at one of the camps were crowded together and swarming over the watch towers, waving and cheering to the pilot of the aircraft. Signs were also laid on the ground, including a giant Union Jack to indicate to the pilot that the prisoners also knew of events which had caused excitement in the world outside.

PART III.

THE SURRENDER OF JAPAN.

THEATRE BOUNDARIES AND DEPLOYMENT OF AIR FORCES DECIDED AT MANILA CONFERENCE.

320. August, 1945 saw the war against Japan move with over-whelming speed towards its culmination.

321. Throughout the war, research in Britain, America and Germany had pursued the possibility of harnessing to war the potentialities of atomic energy, and the first atomic bombs were dropped with devastating effect on metropolitan Japan at Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 5th and 9th August, 1945, respectively. Adding further to the plight of Japan was the declaration of war by Russia on 8th August, followed by Soviet Forces crossing the Manchurian and Korean borders.

322. From these momentous events, and faced with certain Allied invasion of the homeland, for which air power had paved the way, Japan could see no escape. The end came in the form of surrender, which was broadcast from Tokio on 10th August, and the acceptance of the Allied terms on 14th August.

323. As the result of the Japanese intimation that they were prepared to discuss and to receive surrender terms, the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, directed that a Mission representing himself and his three Commanders-in-Chief should be despatched to Manila in the Philippines. The primary object of this Mission was to discuss the terms of surrender with General MacArthur and his staff, with a view to co-ordinating measures to be adopted to implement the terms of surrender both in the South West Pacific area and in South East Asia.

324. As my representative on this Mission, I selected Air Commodore W. A. D. Brook, C.B.E., Deputy Senior Air Staff Officer. Other members of the Mission which left Kandy by York on 16th August, refuelling at Calcutta en route, and continuing the flight by night over enemy occupied territory, were:—

Major-General Penney, S.A.C.'s representative. Head of the Mission, and also representing C.-in-C., A.L.F.S.E.A.

Vice-Admiral C. Moody, representing C.-in-C., E.I.F.

Colonel Mitford-Slade, representing J.P.S., S.A.C.S.E.A.

Colonel Bull, representing J.P.L.C.-S.A.C.S.E.A.

Lieut.-Colonel Maugham, representing Intelligence Branch, S.A.C.S.E.A.

Lieut.-Commander Galley, R.N., Flag Lieutenant to Admiral Moody.

2nd Officer Price, W.R.N.S., Secretary to the Mission.

325. The Mission arrived at Manila shortly after dawn on 17th August. The return journey, following the same route, was completed on 21st August, crossing occupied territory once again by night.

Political Situation at Time of Surrender.

326. At the time of the S.A.C.S.E.A. Mission's arrival at Manila, the visit of the Japanese Mission to obtain the surrender terms was still awaited. It was thought that some delay might have occurred arising out of the political confusion in Japan and the lack of communication facilities generally as the result of continuous and heavy bombing.

327. The general opinion in the South West Pacific Area appeared to be that the South East Asia Command Theatre was being far too precipitate in implementing the surrender terms which had not yet been agreed by the contracting parties. Furthermore, General MacArthur was adamant that any implementation of the surrender terms could only take place after the surrender terms had been formally agreed and signed by the Japanese Government either at Tokio or on board a ship in adjacent waters. This, it was calculated, would be at least a week after the presentation of the Allied terms to be collected by the Japanese Mission to Manila, to whom certain points would need clarification.

328. The Japanese Mission consisting of some eight Japanese officers arrived at Manila on the evening of August 19th, having flown in two Betty Bombers from Japan to Okinawa where they had transferred to a C.54. The Mission was led by Lt.-Gen. Kawaba Takashiro, Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Altogether, the representatives were a dejected looking gathering of very small men, clad in shabby and ill-fitting uniforms. They were treated with respect and allowed to wear their swords throughout their visit—an uncomfortable privilege, as each member was carrying a sword nearly as tall as himself. The members of the Mission were housed in the same building as the S.A.C.S.E.A. Mission—a partially repaired building in which they were granted the hospitality of the top floor, the least repaired of all. After a brief meal on arrival they were summoned to a conference at G.H.Q. where they were presented with the terms of surrender for explanation and transmission to their Government. On their part, they provided full details of their Order of Battle, strength of garrisons and the necessary information regarding Prisoner-of-War camps in various Theatres.

329. The Japanese Mission returned to Okinawa from Manila at midday on 20th August. No untoward events occurred during their visit to the Philippines, but such was the mixture of feeling within their own country at that time regarding the peace terms that they were shot at by their own fighters when leaving Japan for Okinawa. A similar reception was contemplated on their return to Japan, and, in consequence, they took the precaution of approaching Japanese territory in the dark.

330. There is little doubt in my mind that the Japanese Government, at the time of surrender, was up against some very strong opposition from certain fanatical factions. It was stated that in Singapore, before our occupation in September, a group of young Japanese officers had planned to fly to Tokio and there weed out what they considered to be the "corrupt elements" around the Throne, where defeatist policies, they held, had greatly influenced the Emperor.

331. The conference at Manila revealed an exceedingly interesting feature. Opinion in the South West Pacific Area apparently attributed a far higher value to the enemy's fighting qualities than was attributed to those Japanese whom we fought and defeated in Burma. It appeared that the morale and determination of the enemy forces in the metropolitan area was on a far higher level than that experienced in the outer regions of Japanese conquest, where forces had been virtually isolated for months and, in any case, were not directly involved in the defence of their homeland. For this reason, G.H.Q. Manila expected considerable opposition to their occupying forces in Japan proper, in the form of sabotage and other subversive activities by fanatical elements.

332. At this time, the American airborne division was standing by at Okinawa to fly into Japan. The ultimate figure for the build-up of U.S. Army Forces for occupation was put at some 18 Divisions together with the whole of the 5th Air Force, although it was not thought that this would include V.H.B. aircraft owing to the lack of suitable runways in Japan.

333. I think it is important to note the American attitude at that time towards the participation of Air Forces, other than American, in the initial occupation of Japan. General Kenney, Commanding General, Far Eastern Air Forces, was not disposed to discuss the occupation of Japan by Allied Air Forces, which he apparently regarded as unnecessary representation in a country where airfield facilities were limited. Furthermore, it seemed that any inclusion of British Air Forces in Japan would inevitably raise the question of Russian Air Forces in a similar role, to which the Americans were strongly averse in every way. On the other hand, the Americans favourably accepted the occupation of Hong Kong and elsewhere by our Air Forces, since they did not regard Hong Kong as their own problem. The fact that the British "Tiger Force" project for Okinawa was no longer contemplated, as the result of Japan's sudden surrender, also produced for the Americans a general feeling of relief, mainly on logistical grounds. The British airfield engineers, who were already in transit for "Tiger Force" constructional requirements, were delayed at the island of Quajalin in the Pacific, pending further instructions to proceed, and it was suggested to us that we might like to divert these forces for our own airfield requirements in Malaya and elsewhere.

334. Australia, however, let it be known that they had every intention of being represented in the forces of occupation of Japan. General MacArthur was informed, through General Blamey, that the Commonwealth proposed to provide a representative garrison for Japan, including three tactical squadrons of the Royal

Australian Air Force. It is interesting to note that this was the first official intimation which had been received by Headquarters, South West Pacific Area regarding the representation of Allied Air Forces in Japan.

335. With Japan's surrender, H.Q. South West Pacific Area were not unnaturally anxious that we should accept full responsibility, as soon as possible, within the new Theatre boundaries originally discussed at a meeting between Admiral Mountbatten and General MacArthur, which had taken place at Manila during July.

336. In the division of responsibility for implementing the surrender terms, South East Asia Command was allotted the following:—

(a) Andamans.	Nicobars.
Burma.	Thailand.
F.I.C. (South of 16° N.).	Malaya.
Sumatra.	Java.
Bali.	Lombok.

Australia accepted responsibility for:—

(b) British New Guinea.	Borneo.
Bismarck Islands	Solomons.
Flores.	Timor.
Soemba.	Ceram.
Boeros.	Amboina.
Kai Aroe.	Tanimbar.

Islands in the Arafura Sea.

337. This division, however, left a gap comprising the Celebes, Halmahora Islands and Dutch New Guinea, for which no forces were available to implement the surrender terms unless the Dutch did so—a commitment which would obviously have introduced a shipping problem to transfer the necessary forces from Europe. The Australians, too, were anxious to hand over Borneo to us as soon as possible.

THE SURRENDER IN SOUTH EAST ASIA.

Ceremonies at Rangoon and Singapore.

338. In accordance with the orders of the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, Japanese envoys, headed by Lieutenant General Takazo Numata, Chief of Staff to Field Marshal Count Terauchi, Japanese Expeditionary Force, Southern Regions, arrived at Rangoon by air on August 26th to be given their instructions for the implementation of the local surrender terms. Thus, after inflicting on the Japanese one of the greatest defeats of the war in the Far East, in a campaign which had lasted for over three years and in which the enemy's losses amounted to 100,000 men, it was at Rangoon that the Japanese Generals arrived to take their orders from the Allied Forces in South East Asia.

339. The meetings in Rangoon with the Japanese plenipotentiaries were, in no sense, negotiations. There was no question of discussion of terms. The Japanese were there to accept Unconditional Surrender. It was intended also that a binding act of surrender should be signed at Rangoon and that the official ceremony of surrender would be carried out at Singapore after the Supreme Allied Commander's instructions had been completed at the Rangoon meetings.

340. The conditions insisted upon by the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, included immediate relief to prisoners-of-war and internees; Allied aircraft to begin day and night reconnaissance flights over South East Asia; Allied vessels to begin mine-sweeping operations in hitherto Japanese-controlled waters, and also for Allied vessels to enter ports in Malaya and elsewhere with full facilities provided.

341. The meetings with the Japanese plenipotentiaries, which were resumed at Rangoon in the opening days of September, brought to light many positive facts concerning the plight of the Japanese Army in Burma from the time of the enemy's disastrous retreat at Imphal in June, 1944. It was apparent from one important statement read by Major General Ichida, at Rangoon on September 11th, that the Japanese in Burma had not reckoned with two important and vital factors which upset their calculations and placed their forces at disastrous disadvantages:—

(a) Allied air supply, which permitted ground forces in Burma to consolidate their positions without being forced to retreat, and thus rendered the enemy's infiltration and encircling tactics abortive.

(b) Allied air superiority, which so disrupted Japanese supply lines, both in Burma and further afield, that starvation and illness overtook thousands of Japanese troops facing Fourteenth Army, and also denied them the essential supplies of fuel, equipment and material with which to fight a superior equipped, and better supplied, Allied Force.

342. With the disruption of the enemy's lines of communication, and the systematic attacks on their rear supply bases, it was not surprising that Major General Ichida should declare:—

“From the time of the Imphal operation, last year, our Army in Burma carried on its operations continuously for a period of a year with its main force, and during that period the army hardly ever received any reinforcements in its manpower—none since December last year—the replenishment of military stores also being very meagre.”

343. The situation of the Allied ground forces, ranged against them, presented a happier picture. Thanks mainly to Allied air superiority, and resulting air supply, they had withstood the siege of Imphal, and, on the siege being raised, had taken the offensive down through Burma with the knowledge that fuel, rations, ammunitions and miscellaneous equipment would be air-dropped or air-landed to them, throughout the advance, while casualties inflicted by the enemy would be taken care of and evacuated safely to base.

The Ceremony at Singapore.

344. With the Supreme Allied Commander, and other Commanders-in-Chief, it afforded considerable satisfaction to witness General Itagaki sign, for his defeated compatriots, Admiral Mountbatten's terms for Unconditional Surrender in the South East Asia Theatre at Singapore, on 12th September, 1945.

345. There was not displayed at that ceremony any deliberate outward show of pride in Allied military achievement. It was more, I consider, an atmosphere of confident achievement which reflected the mood of the three

services in South East Asia that no matter how long the struggle against the Japanese might have taken, victory would be with us in the end. In South East Asia we had good reason to remember that unequal contest during the dark days of 1941 and 1942, when the enemy, powerful and well prepared, swept through Malaya, occupied Singapore and later Burma. But their ultimate and decisive defeat—when the tide turned against them, must surely have caused them to remember the sting of our air forces which, in due course, swept clear the skies over Burma, and disorganised the land communications of the Japanese army as the ground troops rolled the enemy back through Burma during the advance from Imphal to Rangoon.

346. The Instrument of Surrender was drawn up in English—the only authentic version. In case of doubt as to the intention of our meaning in that Instrument of Surrender, the decision of the Supreme Allied Commander was unequivocal and final.

347. Under the terms of surrender, all Japanese Army, Navy and Air Forces in South East Asia passed to the control of the Supreme Allied Commander.

348. I was much impressed by one noticeable characteristic on the part of our enemies which was in striking contrast to their previous behaviour in this Theatre—some of it an exhibition of unmitigated barbarism. After the surrender there was a widespread attitude of subservient willingness by the Japanese to obey our orders. In Singapore, as in other parts of the Command, I observed that the Japanese, officers and men alike, conducted themselves with strict discipline in our presence. They were super-punctilious too, when paying respects to members of our forces. While this was no doubt correct, it did appear somewhat unreal.

349. If, at Singapore, the Japanese myth of invincibility still lurked in the midst of the more fanatical Japanese elements, the Supreme Allied Commander must have corrected sharply any such belief which was held, in so far as it concerned the campaign in South East Asia. Admiral Mountbatten made it clear and emphatic to Itagaki during the surrender ceremony that it was not a negotiated surrender, but complete capitulation by the Japanese, after total military defeat. He informed Itagaki that not only did he possess superior naval, military and air forces at Singapore, but, in addition, he had a large fleet anchored off Port Swettenham and Port Dickson where, three days previously, on September 9th, considerable forces had started disembarking at daylight. On the 10th, the strength of that force was 100,000 men ashore. Indeed, at the very time of the Japanese signing the Instrument of Surrender at Singapore, R.A.F. units were firmly established at strategic points throughout the vast territories of this Theatre which, a few weeks beforehand, had been held by the Japanese.

350. It was also emphasised at the Singapore ceremony that the invasion of Malaya would have taken place on September 9th whether the Japanese had resisted or not, and it was stressed for the particular benefit of General Itagaki, therefore, that the Japanese were surrendering to a superior Allied force in Malaya.

PART IV.

THE RE-OCCUPATION OF JAPANESE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES ON SURRENDER.

OPERATIONS "TIDERACE" AND "ZIPPER".

351. South East Asia Command's assault on Malaya, planned for 9th September, 1945, was forestalled by Japanese surrender, thus bringing about a last minute change in plan involving more than 500 aircraft of the Strategic, Tactical and General Reconnaissance units of the R.A.F. which had been assembled in India, Burma, Ceylon and the Cocos Islands for the attack.

352. While Operation "Zipper" went forward on 9th September as arranged, it did so on a much modified scale, having quickly transferred a proportion of its original strength to Operation "Tiderace" and leaving itself more in the nature of a display to show the flag.

353. The sudden capitulation of Japan on August 14th had brought with it the gigantic task of effecting rapid occupation of the principal key points throughout the Japanese occupied territories in South East Asia and further afield.

354. South East Asia, in this respect, bore no comparison to the situation in Europe where, on the eve of Germany's capitulation, the armed might of the Allied forces could roll along the roads of the Reich to Berlin, and the Air Forces sweep over Germany at will from their bases behind the victorious troops. In South East Asia, the Japanese occupied territories were vast. They covered Siam, French Indo-China, the Tenasserim Coast of Southern Burma, Malaya, Singapore Island, Sumatra, Java and Borneo. Even far off Hong Kong became a commitment.

355. Headquarters, Air Command, South East Asia, based at Kandy, Ceylon, was 1,500 miles distant across the Bay of Bengal from its principal air bases in Burma. Yet, such was the flexibility of air power, and despite the many and intricate formalities with which the Command was confronted in implementing the surrender terms on the eve of the planned invasion of Malaya, that air formations occupied bases at Penang on September 5th, Singapore on the 6th, Bangkok on the 5th and Saigon and Hong Kong on September 12th.

356. More vital still was the fact that the air forces of my Command had also launched upon one of the greatest missions of mercy of the war—the relief and liberation of thousands of Allied prisoners-of-war from the misery and privations of their prison camps, and assisting in their transportation westwards.

The Advent of "Tiderace" for Occupation of Singapore.

357. Capitulation by Japan naturally rendered planning and preparations for the assault on Malaya somewhat abortive. But this was only on a limited scale.

358. At the end of July, the mounting curve of Allied air assaults on Japan was such that it did seem reasonable to presume that an early collapse was a distinct possibility. Accordingly, emergency planning was put in preparation for the rapid occupation of Singapore

at an early date should the enemy agree to accept the terms of the Potsdam declaration of July 26th.

359. The wisdom of this planning made itself apparent early in August when the first atomic bomb was dropped on the Japanese homeland and Russia entered the war.

360. It was the possibility of Japanese treachery, however, which decided the course that planning would take, and the initial occupation of Singapore, known as Operation "Tiderace" was, therefore, mounted from resources other than those earmarked for Operation "Zipper". In this way, it was possible to counter any Japanese opposition to "Tiderace" which may have taken place, by continuing to mount the strong fighting "Zipper" operation as originally planned.

361. Although the first objective in the re-occupation plan was Singapore, a necessary step in order to establish an advanced air and naval base to clear the Straits of Malacca for shipping, it became clear that Bangkok in Siam, and Saigon in French Indo-China, would also have to be occupied soon after the Japanese surrender.

362. Operations known as "Bibber", which involved the occupation of the Bangkok area, and "Masterdom", involving the re-entry into French Indo-China to gain control over the forces of Field Marshal Count Terauchi, whose Southern Army Headquarters were at Saigon, had therefore to be worked out in detail. Moreover, it had been indicated by the British Chiefs of Staff that the former British port of Hong Kong must also be occupied at an early date.

363. To meet these exigencies, therefore, it was found necessary to modify to some extent the air effort for Operation "Tiderace" so that the Dakota Squadrons, based in Rangoon, could be utilised for essential trooping and air lift during the occupation of Bangkok and subsequently of Saigon. This was exceedingly important, since a long voyage with troops from existing Allied bases to Siam and French Indo-China would almost certainly have prohibited the speedy occupation of these territories had not the ground forces been lifted by air.

364. That 14,000 Army and Air Force personnel for the garrison at Bangkok and Saigon were carried in by our Air Forces without loss after the Japanese surrender, was evidence of the additional role which the Air Forces of my Command were called upon to play on the cessation of hostilities, at a time when it was imperative to establish ground troops at key points within the scattered enemy-occupied territories in the quickest possible time.

Original "Zipper" Plan Forestalled.

365. The Surrender by Japan cut right across the ambitious air plan for Operation "Zipper" which had been so carefully conceived to support the landings by ground troops on the Southern region of the Malay Peninsula.

366. Landings on the beaches at Ports Swettenham and Dickson on D-Day, September 9th, were to have been made under air cover provided by carrier-borne aircraft of the Royal Navy, whose task would have included attacks on the enemy's lines of communication and troop concentrations until the fly-in of R.A.F. fighters was accomplished. Two aircraft

carriers, H.M.S. SMITER and H.M.S. TRUMPETER, carrying short-range Spitfires and Sentinels and Austers for casualty evacuation, were to carry these aircraft to a point off shore for pilots to fly them from off the carriers and land them on the newly-occupied aerodromes.

367. The planned effort of the naval carrier-borne fighters was 190 sorties a day from the moment of their arrival in the areas of the bridgeheads for about a week. This would be further augmented, within six days, by an additional 72 sorties a day from the first land-based squadrons of R.A.F. Spitfires, and six sorties per night from the night fighter Mosquitos. From the outset, therefore, air superiority was assured. The enemy was not expected to produce any serious air threat which could not be dealt with adequately by our fighters.

368. As more than a thousand miles separated the existing R.A.F. bases in Rangoon and the Cocos Islands from the landing beaches, and almost 1,500 miles in respect of other R.A.F. bases in Ceylon and Ramree Island, it was impossible for light bomber, fighter and fighter bomber squadrons to operate in immediate support of the bridgehead ground forces until the position ashore was consolidated, an airfield captured, repairs effected and runways made serviceable.

369. Basing its time-table on the speed of the Army's advance and the rapidity by which constructional engineers could repair damaged runways and taxi-tracks, it was estimated that strips could be brought into operation at the rate of approximately one per week. Once the newly-occupied airfields had been established, the long-range Thunderbolts, Mosquitos and Dakotas, flying a thousand miles from Rangoon, would then make the flight south to Malaya, being guided on the way by three navigational aid ships at specified positions off the Tenasserim Coast and Malayan Peninsula.

370. The first strip—Kelanang—was calculated to be operational by D plus 6; Port Swettenham by D plus 12 and Kuala Lumpur by D plus 20. It was possible that a fourth strip might be established at Batu Pahat, or Malacca, in order to accommodate a light Mosquito bomber and rocket-firing Beaufighter aircraft by D plus 40.

371. The value of the Cocos Islands prior to and during Operation "Zipper" would have been considerable. The Strategic and G.R. squadrons were to have taken part in large-scale pre-D-Day operations directed against radar installations covering the approaches to the assault area, and also to cutting the Bangkok-Singapore railway north of Kuala Lumpur. Other tasks included the neutralising of the Japanese Air Force, estimated at a little more than 170 aircraft in Malaya and Sumatra, also attacking enemy shipping employed in carrying supplies or reinforcements to Malaya to oppose our landing. The aerodromes at Kelanang, Port Swettenham and Kuala Lumpur were not to be bombed, since they were the first objectives on establishing the bridgehead.

372. Five R.A.F. Wings were detailed to operate in the tactical forces contained within Air Vice Marshal Bandon's 224 Group, whose advanced Headquarters were to be established

ashore on D-Day to set up control communications and radar screens, as an early occupation of Kelanang air strip in a serviceable condition would allow Spitfires to be flown in the following day and made ready for action.

373. The R.A.F. Wings made available for the operation were Nos. 901 Wing, to be first located at Kuala Lumpur; 902 Wing at Kelanang; 904 Wing at an air strip to be sited and constructed; 905 Wing at Port Swettenham and 907 Wing at Batu Pahat or an alternative.

374. A prominent role in the "Zipper" operation was also allocated to the R.A.F. Regiment. Five Wings of nearly 2,500 officers and men, made up of nine Field Squadrons and five Light Anti-Aircraft Squadrons were to capture and hold the aerodromes and also to protect radar sites. The majority of the men had been on active service in India and Burma.

Other Operational Aspects of "Zipper".

375. Air operations in "Zipper", once our position ashore had been consolidated and airfields established, would have followed closely to plan thus:—

(a) Eight squadrons of Thunderbolts would have supported the drive on Singapore.

(b) Fighter Reconnaissance cover would have been provided by Spitfire F/R Mk. XIV's, and, as in Burma, they would have flown protective patrols over the traffic lanes of the supply dropping Dakotas.

(c) Two squadrons of Transport Command supply freighters were allocated to the task of carrying supplies from the beach head air strip at Port Swettenham to the forward troops. A start would first be made with a target of 150 tons per day from D plus 23.

(d) With the possibility of an airborne assault force deep behind enemy lines after the third or fourth week of the operation, six squadrons of Dakotas would have been flown in from Rangoon and out again immediately afterwards for this purpose.

(e) Mosquitos were to be employed as light bombers, night fighters and photographic reconnaissance aircraft.

(f) Air evacuation of casualties was to have been the task of Sentinel and Auster aircraft. As in Burma, they were to operate from a main strip flying as required to 400 yard clearings in the flight zone to pick up wounded and to carry them back to the Dakotas. The more seriously wounded were to have been ferried by Dakotas to Rangoon.

(g) Three D.D.T. spraying Dakotas operating from Kelanang were to spray mosquito infested zones over a wide area.

(h) To answer emergency calls from D plus 4, three Sunderland aircraft were to be available for air-sea rescue while three high-speed launches were also to be deck-carried to the beach head.

(i) Rocket firing Beaufighters were to be employed from about D plus 43 in attacks on shipping, enemy rolling stock, targets on Singapore Island and also in assisting in the bombardment plan for the crossing of the Johore Strait for the final assault on Singapore itself.

Modified Operation "Zipper" Goes Forward.

376. In the closing days of August, before even the "Zipper" convoys had left India for Malaya, the emergency operation "Tiderace" was ordered, since it was essential that air units should fly into Penang and Singapore without further delay. This brought No. 185 Wing, controlling Dakotas, Spitfires and Mosquitos from Burma to Penang, and No. 903 Wing from Akyab to Singapore, together with Nos. 152 and 155 Spitfire Squadrons flying Zayatkwim (Rangoon)—Penang—Singapore (Tengah), and 110 Squadron from Hmawbi (Burma)—Penang—Singapore (Seletar). No. 903 Wing elements reached Singapore on 6th September, some three days before the first "Zipper" elements arrived off the west coast of Malaya on September 9th.

377. With "Tiderace" operation completed, and air, ground and sea forces occupying Singapore, the modified "Zipper" operation went forward on September 9th with convoys standing off the beaches at Ports Swettenham and Dickson. The naval air support programme, however, had been called off.

378. The air effort for the original "Zipper" was considerably reduced and of the five R.A.F. Wings scheduled to take part in the operation, the following wings did not enter Malaya and were phased out:—
No. 901 Wing. No. 904 Wing. No. 907 Wing.

This left the Wing Order of Battle for "Zipper" as under:—

No. 902 Wing.	No. 905 Wing.
Tengah.	Kuala Lumpur.
No. 185 Wing.	No. 903 Wing.
Penang.	Kallang.
S.S. "Manela" Sunderland H.Q. Ship— Seletar.	

379. The following squadrons were also phased out:—

Spitfires	Squadrons No. 132 and 615
Thunderbolts	Squadrons No. 530 and 261.
Dakotas	Squadrons No. 96 and 62.
Beaufighters	Squadrons No. 22, 217 and 45.
Mosquitos	Squadrons No. 82 and 211.

leaving the undernoted squadrons of the original plan:—

Spitfires	Squadrons No. 11, 17 and 681.
Thunderbolts	Squadrons No. 131, 258, 81 and 60.
Mosquitos	Squadrons No. 89, 684 and 84.
Austers	Squadron No. 656.
Sunderland Det.	Squadron No. 205.

The "Zipper" Landings which took place.

380. On D-Day, September 9th, the first of the "Zipper" landings under the modified plan took place, with ground forces and R.A.F. parties leaving the anchored convoys and going peacefully ashore in the Port Swettenham and Dickson areas.

381. This was the start of the large scale landing in Malaya—and under very different circumstances from what had been envisaged when the operation was first planned.

382. Included in the convoy was Headquarters ship H.M.S. BULOLO which carried Air Vice-Marshal Bandon and his advance H.Q. 224 Group staff who moved ashore to Kelanang airfield on September 10th; Telok Datok on September 14th; Kuala Lumpur on September 18th and Singapore on September 22nd.

383. The landing at Port Dickson, some fifty miles south of Swettenham, went forward as planned and without untoward incident.

384. On the eve of the 11th September, the D-plus-3 convoy dropped anchor among the great concentration of shipping already lying off Morib Beach. The scene, with every vessel twinkling lights, resembled more a Cowes regatta than one of the largest amphibious operations of the campaign.

385. The landings at Morib cannot be described as attaining the same degree of success as those experienced at Ports Swettenham and Dickson—due principally to the difficulties encountered on the water-covered beaches which, at that part of the coast, are nothing more than mud brought down by the Klang River. Morib is some 20 miles south of Port Swettenham and 30 miles north of Port Dickson. While there was much to commend Port Swettenham and Port Dickson for landings by a fighting force, this unfortunately, could not be said of Morib. A number of M.T. vehicles which were driven off the landing craft by their Army drivers into what was considered axle-deep water, later plunged into slime and mud while negotiating the shore and remained fast. There were several casualties.

386. These are important factors which might well have produced serious consequences had "Zipper" been mounted against opposing forces on dry land at this part of the coast.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE OCCUPATION OF SIAM, F.I.C. AND HONG KONG.

387. On the occupation of Siam, the Don Muang airfield at Bangkok provided two important functions. It enabled released Allied prisoners-of-war to be evacuated by our aircraft to Rangoon and Singapore, while it also formed a valuable staging post to Saigon in French Indo-China as well as a refuelling point for aircraft lifting there.

388. In Bangkok, the Siamese Air Force was found to be extraordinarily co-operative and markedly pro-R.A.F., since many of them had, in fact, been trained in England.

389. An unusual document, giving an outline of the activities and organisation of the Siamese Air Force, and also emphasising its attitude of passive resistance to the Japanese throughout the enemy's occupation of Siam, was handed over by the Siamese Air Force to R.A.F. Intelligence.

390. History must judge this document for itself. Whatever may have been happening politically behind the scenes in the Far East, in these dark days of December, 1941, there seems to be no doubt that units of the Siamese Air Force, on December 8th, took the air to resist the Japanese invader, only to be outnumbered and overwhelmed by units of the more superior Japanese Air Force. While this commendable spirit of resistance by the Siamese Air Force may have been evident, they

were to learn sadly, the same day, that the Siamese Government in Bangkok was actually negotiating with the Japanese Ambassador.

391. "From outer appearances we played up to mislead the Japanese", is one comment in the Siamese document when discussing the defence of Siam during the period of Japanese occupation. In their participation in the defence of Don Muang airfield and Bangkok against Allied aircraft, it was maintained by the Siamese Air Force that "we just did it in a formal fashion. The United Nations aircraft would fly one way and our aircraft the other way, or at different heights. If by rare chance we had to meet we carried on just for appearances sake."

392. Such are some of the statements by the Siamese Air Force. But it is on fact, rather than on professions of loyalty, that any final assessment must be made. In this respect, there is one incontrovertible fact concerning Allied prisoners-of-war, which does reveal the silent co-operation rendered by the Siamese Air Force from the time of their first prisoner-of-war—William MacClurry, an American pilot from the American Volunteer Group (Tiger Squadron), who bailed out at Cheing Mai at the onset of the war in the Far East, and whose custody by the Japanese was vigorously contested by the Siamese Air Force, until they finally confined him themselves to ensure his better treatment and safety.

393. It must also be marked to the credit of the Siamese Air Force that they did, to our knowledge, assist in furthering liaison and communication work within Siam, which included the conveyance of passengers in and out of the country; rendering assistance to, and providing safeguard for Allied personnel sent into Siam to gather information, and also indicating for our benefit, precise targets in the hands of the Japanese. Such acts of co-operation were fraught with grave risk, and it is not surprising that the Japanese ultimately adopted an attitude of suspicion.

The occupation of Saigon.

394. The outward welcome accorded to the Allied Forces from both the French and Annamese alike on our entry into French Indo-China was decidedly embarrassing. Our Forces obviously found themselves in a divided house.

395. The main R.A.F. party flew into Saigon from Burma on September 12th, and was given a demonstrative reception by the French. At the same time, there were banners throughout Saigon's streets erected by the Annamese which welcomed the Allies but bore caustic anti-French slogans.

396. R.A.F. reconnaissance parties who inspected Japanese Air Force installations at Than Son Nhut and Saigon, found them most disappointing. Comparatively few aircraft were discovered, and none, indeed, were serviceable. It appeared that all serviceable aircraft had either been withdrawn for the defence of Japan or flown to Phu My aerodrome, twenty miles east of Saigon, after the cessation of hostilities. The majority of Japanese Air Force personnel previously at Saigon had also been withdrawn.

397. The Saigon-Than Son Nhut area was the maintenance and repair unit base for the Japanese in French Indo-China, but, since only

two engine test benches were found, the normal capacity for engine repairs must have been very low. No sign of any centralised production line was apparent.

398. Of characteristic orderliness in Japanese storage equipment there was none. All kinds of equipment were found mixed together in each warehouse apparently without rhyme or reason, and there appeared to be little attempt to keep any detailed record of stock and issues. It is surprising how any items were found when required, or further commitments even calculated.

399. Arms discovered tallied with the list provided by the Japanese, but there was nothing to show that this list was, in fact, definite. Judging by the aggressive attitude of the Annamese towards the French at this period, it may well have been that considerable stocks of Japanese arms had not been declared.

The occupation of Hong Kong.

400. On August 29th a strong naval force under Rear Admiral C. H. J. Harcourt, C.B., C.B.E. (Flag in H.M.S. SWIFTSURE) arrived off Hong Kong and landed a force on August 30th, being joined by Rear Admiral C. S. Daniel, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.C. (Flag in H.M.S. ANSON). The formal surrender of the Japanese at Hong Kong took place on September 16th. An air headquarters was established on September 12th.

401. One Spitfire squadron was conveyed in an aircraft carrier and the remainder of the air units, which included a Mosquito L.B. squadron, another Spitfire squadron, a Sunderland squadron, and one Dakota squadron, were flown in to Kaitak Airfield at Kowloon, on the mainland.

402. Air defence of Hong Kong, and the provision of air support for any operations which might be necessary by the ground forces involving security of the base, were the primary duties of the air forces as planned. In addition, however, Hong Kong provided a link in the chain of air communications for, and reinforcement of the British and Dominion Air Forces which would garrison Japan.

403. The "Shield" convoy, which was at sea at the conclusion of the Japanese war and, accordingly, was diverted while proceeding to Okinawa in connection with the Pacific "Tiger Force" operation, arrived in Hong Kong on September 4th with 3,400 officers and men of various R.A.F. units. A large percentage of "Shield" Force was composed of personnel of No. 5,358 Airfield Construction Wing, whose original task had been rendered redundant.

404. The variety of rehabilitation tasks undertaken by R.A.F. personnel on the occupation of Hong Kong and Kowloon on the mainland, and accomplished without any previous experience, showed that the Royal Air Force, apart from its qualities as a fighting service, could be extremely versatile in other spheres. It was gratifying to observe at Hong Kong how aircrew personnel, mainly fighter pilots, could apply themselves to ground duties varying from prison supervision to billeting and requisitioning, whereas those with greater technical knowledge, such as R.A.F. Airfield Construction Personnel, were largely responsible for the initiation and maintenance of the public services; power, light, transport, etc.

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405. In the first few days of occupation, some 18,000 Japanese forces, including many senior officers, were rounded up, disarmed, and concentrated in Shamshui Po prison, previously a concentration camp on the mainland.

406. The first commandant of what, under British occupation, became a Japanese concentration camp, was a R.A.F. squadron leader whose previous experience had been limited to operational flying. He proved himself a competent prison governor during his short term of office before handing over his duties to an Army officer.

R.A.F. undertake many public services.

407. The total neglect of civic administration by the Japanese in Hong Kong and Kowloon, except in so far as it affected themselves, was all too apparent. Transport did not exist; electric power was unreliable and the supply severely limited; public health services had been totally ignored, and the streets stank with accumulated rubbish and filth. There was, too, large scale looting by the Chinese who, until checked, literally stripped every house they entered of all furniture, fittings and every piece of wood including floor boards and window and door frames. Wood for fuel purposes, indeed, was at a premium in Hong Kong due to the absence of coal.

408. The problems of occupation which faced our forces on arrival were so numerous and varied that it was difficult to know where to make a start. Yet, at this time, when the R.A.F. personnel were busily engaged in establishing an occupation force, many important public services were undertaken with willingness.

409. To overcome the transport difficulties, every motor car available was requisitioned. This in itself involved considerable labour for R.A.F. personnel in rehabilitating and maintaining decrepit and mechanically unsound vehicles which had been left behind by the Japanese. In particular, restoration of the dock area to a standard capable of unloading the freight ships of "Shield" convoy presented big difficulties. The wharves were broken in many instances and covered with debris and dilapidated equipment. Sunken vessels in the bases were also hazards to navigation.

410. The power station at Kowloon was manned by a R.A.F. supervisory staff. While the plant did not work to full capacity, principally on account of fuel shortage, it was, nevertheless, made to function and supply all the requirements of light and power in Kowloon and the docks area. This work included the reconditioning of furnaces, boilers, and the repair of certain turbine power units.

411. In their search for wood as fuel, an R.A.F. reconnaissance party of ground personnel penetrated into the New Territories which were still occupied by the Japanese. Large stocks of wood were discovered at Taipo and Fanling, twenty and fifteen miles respectively. An incidental on this trip was that a chit was given to the Chinese Communist Army Troops which allowed the party to cross over the border to collect a number of abandoned

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railway trucks. A fuel supply for the Kowloon power station was thus assured, but the margin was so close that on one occasion the power house was within 15 minutes of closing down completely.

412. Railway workshops were also under the initial supervision of a R.A.F. staff, which was later augmented by suitable personnel through arrangements with Civil Affairs. Under R.A.F. supervision these workshops completed repair to three locomotives, some twenty goods wagons, and three passenger coaches. As a result, the rolling stock augmented by this output from the railway workshops was sufficient to meet the requirements of the railway within the colony.

413. Even Hong Kong's municipal water supply included an element of R.A.F. supervisory staff, though in this respect the water supply as a whole had suffered little during enemy occupation and therefore met existing requirements.

414. The morale of our Air Forces in the execution of these extraordinarily varied tasks was wonderfully high, and once the initial excitement and novelty associated with their misemployment in the role of shock troops, guards, policemen and municipal authorities had worn off, R.A.F. units took stock of the situation and turned their attention to the tasks of resuming their normal service duties.

THE LIBERATION OF ALLIED PRISONERS OF WAR AND INTERNEES

Operations "Birdcage" and "Mastiff"

415. The relief and liberation of almost 100,000 Allied prisoners-of-war and internees confined in Japanese prison camps throughout the vast territories of South East Asia, is an episode in the Far Eastern War which relied almost entirely upon Air Power for its success in the initial but vital stages of its operation.

416. It would be inaccurate to record that the Air Forces alone were responsible for the ultimate rescue and liberation of these thousands of prisoners, but the Air Forces of this Command carried out vital tasks as follows:—

(a) Spread the news of Japanese surrender in millions of leaflets dropped over the principal towns and known sites of Japanese prison camps scattered throughout South East Asia.

(b) Warned Allied prisoners-of-war and internees of their impending liberation.

(c) Dropped medical supplies, medical teams, administrative personnel and W/T operators to make first contact with prisoners and to signal back vital information regarding numbers imprisoned and supplies required.

(d) Air dropped, or air landed, quantities of food, clothing and other necessities to relieve the privations suffered at prison camps.

(e) Evacuated by air hundreds of prisoners from Malaya, Siam, French Indo-China, Sumatra and Java, including cases of very serious illness.

417. In a message to all formations of Air Command which took part in the inauguration of this task on August 28th, 1945, the operation was described as "the greatest mercy mission of the war".

418. It was a mission of paramount importance to thousands of families in Britain, the Dominions and, indeed, in Holland, who eagerly awaited information about relatives interned and captured during the Japanese conquest of Malaya in 1942.

419. In Singapore alone, about 35,000 prisoners were held in the various Japanese prison camps throughout Singapore Island, the most notorious of which was the Changi Gaol. The inmates of these camps had been subjected to coarse indignities and even torture.

420. The feeling in Britain found expression in a message from the British Foreign Secretary to the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, in which he drew Admiral Mountbatten's attention to the numerous enquiries which the Government had received since the publication of atrocity stories from Singapore and elsewhere, and saying that there was grave concern in respect of Sumatra, since deaths actually reported by the Japanese through the International Red Cross were much higher in proportion to numbers anywhere else in the Far East.

421. It can be seen, therefore, how well suited was Air Power to perform this vitally important task involving great distances across great tracts of land—a task also in which speed was essential for its success.

Operation "Birdcage" launched.

422. As soon as the Japanese surrender had been universally accepted and confirmed, action was taken to issue instructions contained in specially prepared leaflets to:—

(a) Japanese Prison Guards.

(b) Allied Prisoners-of-war.

(c) Local Japanese forces.

(d) The local native population.

423. The operation to implement this action was allotted the code name of "Birdcage," and was launched by the Air Forces of Air Command on August 28th, operating from bases in Ceylon, Cocos Islands, Bengal and Burma.

424. Thereafter, Operation "Mastiff", was planned to ensure that medical aid, comforts, food, clothing, R.A.P.W.I. Control Staffs where necessary, and any other essential preliminary needs were introduced into the camps as early as possible.

425. Operation "Birdcage" was completed by August 31st. In the space of four days, leaflets had been dropped over 236 localities and 90 prisoner-of-war camps throughout Burma, Siam, French Indo-China, Malaya and Sumatra. Where sorties were at first rendered abortive by weather and by difficulty in locating targets or by mechanical trouble, they were persisted with on the following days. Very few priority targets remained uncovered. One group of towns in the hinterland of Malaya was successfully covered only at the third attempt.

426. In addition to Liberator sorties flown from bases in Ceylon, Cocos Islands and Bengal, Thunderbolts operating from Burma dropped one million leaflets on thirteen localities in Southern Burma extending as far south as the Kra Isthmus. No target was left uncovered. One Thunderbolt was lost during these operations—the aircraft crashing in flames at Kraburi.

427. I think it is worthy of note that Operation "Birdcage" was carried out in very indifferent conditions. Even more important still was the fact that an all round trip of many of the sorties was equivalent to a trans-Atlantic flight. Nevertheless, 75 per cent. of the crews reached their targets, which included towns and camps as far east as Hanoi, Tourane and Saigon.

Success of Leaflet Dropping.

428. The news of Japanese surrender contained in the millions of leaflets dropped met with great enthusiasm throughout the scattered territories of South East Asia. They were picked up on the streets of towns and read eagerly by the civilian population. The messages also dropped to the Allied prisoners-of-war stated, "We want to get you back home quickly, safe and sound".

429. Many of the prisoners had been Japanese forced labour for the building of the notorious Bangkok-Moulmein railway—a slave task which will take its place among the list of incredible efforts carried out by captive men.

430. August, 1945, saw the greatest effort in leaflet dropping attempted by aircraft of the Command.

431. Prior to the surrender, and immediately after, some 33,000,000 leaflets were dropped over the enemy-occupied territories in South East Asia. This form of psychological warfare had been stepped up very considerably after the defeat of the Japanese in Burma, and in July the total dropped by aircraft of the Command reached 22,000,000.

432. One particular form of leaflet, dropped over the trapped Japanese forces in the Pegu Yomas of Southern Burma during July, not only called upon the enemy to surrender after telling them of the hopeless position of their homeland, but, on the reverse side offered them a safe conduct through the Allied lines with the added assurance that they would be given food, medical attention and honourable treatment.

Launching of Operation "Mastiff".

433. The saturating of towns and prison camps with leaflets announcing the Japanese surrender was, in itself, a laudable effort, but the main task which awaited the Air Forces was unquestionably that of Operation "Mastiff" in bringing practical relief and comfort to those who needed them most.

434. Hundreds of these prisoners were emaciated, gaunt and pitiful beings—some, indeed, were too weak to stand upon their legs. The majority of prisoners were deficient of proper clothing. There were instances, too, where some were completely naked.

435. The need of medical supplies was perhaps the greatest, for the Japanese had shown little ability or willingness to appreciate the needs of prisoners-of-war in many cases. The immediate requirements in drugs, therefore, could only be taken to sufferers by air, and, as a large percentage of prisoners and internees, particularly in Singapore, were affected by malaria, it was estimated that 1,250,000 tablets of Atabrine, or substitute, were essential for delivery each week.

436. The "Mastiff" operation in the early stages was carried out by ten Liberator squadrons (including one R.A.A.F. squadron) and one Dakota squadron. Three Liberator squadrons operated from bases in Bengal—Jessore, Salbani and Digri—covering targets chiefly in Siam and French Indo-China. From bases in Ceylon another three Liberator squadrons operated over Malaya and Sumatra, while areas in Malaya and Java were supplied by three Liberator squadrons based in the Cocos Islands, though these were chiefly employed on targets in Sumatra.

437. The Dakota squadron operated from Rangoon over Siam and the Tenasserim Coastal Area of Southern Burma. The tasks undertaken by this Dakota squadron must not be confused with the all-out effort made by five Dakota squadrons of No. 232 Group, R.A.F., based on Rangoon, which were employed on the air-lift to Bangkok, where the Don Muang Airfield was quickly in use. The operations of these Dakota squadrons in the air landing of supplies and in the evacuation of prisoners-of-war was one of the outstanding features of the air operations associated with "Mastiff".

438. From 1st to 5th September, approximately 200 Dakota sorties were flown from Rangoon, and some 400 tons of stores were dropped or landed. The same aircraft carried back 4,000 prisoners-of-war and internees. On the following week the Dakotas carried out a further 360 sorties, and dropped or landed 600 tons of stores. On their return trips they carried back some 3,700 prisoners-of-war. It was a tribute to the enthusiasm shown by the Dakota aircrews at this time that 12th Army, by September 10th, was able to report that approximately 9,000 prisoners-of-war had been carried back to Rangoon from Bangkok. Early in the month, practically all the U.S. prisoners-of-war had been evacuated from the Bangkok area, the figure being approximately 162. This evacuation was carried out chiefly by U.S. airlift, which was also responsible for bringing out a number of British and Allied sick.

Use of Thunderbolts and R.A.A.F. Liberators.

439. Though not actually engaged upon Operation "Mastiff", a number of Thunderbolt aircraft flew from their bases in Burma and assisted in the problem of locating camps and determining their circumstances. Many of these Thunderbolt sorties were rendered abortive by weather, but other sorties resulted in the bringing back of valuable information. It was noted, for example, that several of the prison camps on the Burma-Siam railway, in the area stretching N.W. from Kanchanaburi, were deserted and empty, while prisoners-of-war in other scattered camps greeted the appearance of the Thunderbolts with understandable enthusiasm expressed by frantic cheering and waving.

440. The inclusion of a series of sorties by Liberators of the R.A.A.F. which took off from bases in North Western Australia to drop supplies over Magelang Airfield, in Java, also greatly assisted in the success of operations in the opening weeks. These aircraft landed in the Cocos Islands, loaded up with fresh supplies, and repeated the drop on Java en route back to Australia. The R.A.A.F. Liberators completed 21 sorties, all of which were successful. Other sorties of a similar nature were

flown by these aircraft. At this time too, the presence in Singapore of Dakotas belonging to 31 Squadron, which operated over Sumatra, assisted materially in bringing out of Sumatra some of the first prisoners-of-war.

441. For purposes of comparison, the under-noted table shows the air effort over different target areas of South East Asia for the first three weeks during which Operation "Mastiff" was in progress, and which covers the particular period of my Despatch.

Target Area	August—September			September			September		
	Week 30th—5th			Week 6th—12th			Week 13th—19th		
	Successful	Abortive	Missing	Successful	Abortive	Missing	Successful	Abortive	Missing
Siam ...	42	8	—	49	—	—	49	3	—
F.I.C. ...	13	1	1	11	—	—	11	1	2
Malaya...	22	2	—	10	2	—	6	—	—
Sumatra	23	2	1	29	1	—	38	4	—
Java ...	—	—	—	2	—	—	22	1	—
	100	13	2	101	3	—	126	9	2

Working of RAPWI and the S.D. Squadrons.

442. The evacuation of prisoners-of-war and internees required the maximum co-operation between Naval, Land and Air Forces.

443. An Inter-Services Inter-Allied Committee was therefore established at the Headquarters of the Supreme Allied Commander, at Kandy, Ceylon, for planning and co-ordination of control. This Committee acted as the clearing house for information, and declared the decisions of the Supreme Allied Commander on policy, priorities, and allocation of responsibility.

444. The working organisation was known as RAPWI (Release Repatriation of Allied Prisoners-of-war and Internees), which had a Central Control for aid by air at Kandy, with Army and Air Force Officers, and Sub-Controls at Calcutta, Rangoon, Colombo and Cocos. As the necessity for air dropping decreased, these Controls were incorporated in the RAPWI Control Organisations with Naval, Army, Air and Allied representation. Subsequently a Control was opened at Singapore.

445. The RAPWI Controls were responsible for co-ordination of executive action in all matters of supplies for RAPWI, and the evacuation of personnel by aircraft and white and red ensign ships.

446. For the prodigious effort put up by the Cocos based squadrons engaged on operation "Mastiff", Red Cross and other stores for RAPWI were packed at Sigiriya, Ceylon, and handed over to the R.A.F. for delivery to the Cocos Islands. This demanded a very heavy ferrying commitment to the Cocos as two-thirds of the prison camps were supplied by the Cocos based squadrons. Every available Liberator and Sunderland aircraft was used during the inauguration of "Mastiff".

447. This extra effort by the S.D. Liberators based on the Cocos was due to the large loads which had to be carried to the prison camps at Singapore and Southern Sumatra—loads which averaged from 3,500 to 4,000 lbs.

448. No praise could be too high for the air and ground crew personnel of these Cocos based squadrons. Despite the severe shortage of experienced crews and, indeed, aircraft, a daily average of seven sorties, and sometimes nine, was maintained. One squadron flew to

widely differing dropping zones throughout Malaya, Sumatra and Java. Ninety-five personnel were dropped on these sorties, of which 65 were doctors or medical orderlies, and all arrived safely despite the short notice at which most of the sorties were laid on. On the first day of the "Mastiff" operations, indeed, one of the aircraft dropped a medical team on Changi Airfield at dawn on August 29th, making a round trip of 3,400 miles.

449. The great distances covered and the adverse weather conditions encountered were difficulties which were not overcome lightly and without danger. A Liberator on a supply dropping mission to the prison camps at Palembang was seen to spin whilst executing a steep turn and all nine crew members were killed.

450. It became obvious that Operation "Mastiff" would continue for some considerable time until the last prisoner of war and internee had been evacuated from all areas by air and sea. As September advanced the numbers brought out mounted steadily. There has been praise on all sides for our squadrons co-operating with the other Services in this rescue of men and women who have endured untold hardships, indignities and, in some cases barbarous cruelties—comments of praise which I have confirmed myself during talks with repatriated prisoners of war flown out of the prison camp areas.

THE JAPANESE PLANNED COUNTER MEASURES TO INVASION OF MALAYA.

451. The the Allies' powerful "Zipper" operation for the landing in Malaya would have succeeded, and that mastery of the air covering the landing would have been secured almost from the start, seems a justifiable claim after careful examination of evidence made available through interrogation of Japanese officers following the surrender in South East Asia

452. It was evident that the Japanese, in their defence of Malaya, were unable to conform to one of the first principles of modern warfare—that air superiority must be gained, and that the battle in the air must first be won, before ground forces can wage their operations with any likelihood of success.

453. The Japanese counter invasion plan was based on the fact that very few operational aircraft were available since it had been

decided to concentrate all forces for the defence of the homeland. The aircraft available, therefore, were mainly trainers which were not easy to send back to Japan. In all, the enemy had, for the defence of Malaya, Sumatra and Java, approximately 800 serviceable aircraft all of which, in the last resort, were to be used as Tokkoki (special attacker suicide aircraft).

454. On D-Day, the enemy planned that there should be no daylight sorties whatever owing to the difficulty in providing sufficient fighter cover to break through the British fighter defences. About 50 to 60 suicide sorties were to be made at twilight with a fighter escort of 30 to 40 aircraft. The suicides were to fly in flights of about 5 aircraft and all attacks were to be concentrated on shipping. Even if balloons were used by the Allied convoys no other method of attack than that of suicide attack was considered feasible. Ground targets were also to be ignored and no fighter defence put up against R.A.F. bomber attacks. Once the Japanese fighters had fulfilled their escort tasks to the suicide aircraft they, in turn, were to be used as suicide aircraft themselves since there were not enough aircraft to use for both purposes.

455. One Japanese source of information, as the result of interrogation, was extremely revealing. This source declared that the whole of the aircraft available to the Japanese for the defence of Malaya against the Allied invasion would, as the result of the mass suicide attack policy, "have been knocked out in about a week".

Direct attack on Mainland not Expected.

456. Following upon the Allied victory in Burma, and the capture of Rangoon in May, the Japanese expected attacks by the Allies on the Andamans, Nicobars, Mergui and Puket in August or September, with the main attack on Malaya coming at the end of October or nearly in November.

457. As soon as the airfields around Rangoon had been made serviceable by the Allies, the Japanese expected there would be a programme of softening-up attacks on Japanese bases by R.A.F. aircraft, with some 200 bomber sorties and 200 escorting fighter sorties daily. The enemy intended to put up little opposition on air attacks against Mergui, the Nicobars or Andamans, while no defensive fighter sorties were to be flown against the R.A.F. softening-up attacks unless Singapore itself were attacked.

458. A direct landing on the mainland of Malaya was not anticipated at the outset. Instead it was expected that the Allies would work gradually south, during which time there would be consolidation and the systematic building up of bases. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the Japanese considered any landing in the Puket area (an operation which we had earlier planned and then abandoned after the fall of Rangoon) would have proved exceedingly dangerous for them, as the short range of the available Japanese fighter aircraft would have made it most difficult to oppose a landing there. The area of Port Swettenham on the Peninsula, it was believed, would not be reached until the end of 1945.

459. As "Zipper" was planned for September, and would undoubtedly have taken place

on that date but for the cessation of hostilities, it is evident that the dispositions by the Japanese for counteracting the Allied invasion would have been lamentably behind schedule.

Japanese Build up of Suicide Aircraft.

460. Taking into account the enemy's limited aircraft resources, the Japanese air strategy, on paper, was quite logically prepared.

461. In February, a little more than six months before surrender came, the Japanese Southern Area Army in South East Asia was informed by Tokio that there must be a change in air strategy in the Southern Area. The High Command had visualised that, before long, the Southern Area (French Indo-China, Siam, Malaya, Burma and Netherland East Indies) would be almost entirely cut off from the Empire and would have to develop their own air defence from an already diminishing air force in that area.

462. Training was accordingly speeded up, and all training aircraft and some operational and second line aircraft were ultimately modified to carry bombs.

463. As far back as February, 1945, the Japanese had already had some experience in the use of suicide attacks in the Philippines campaign and had seen how effective these suicide attacks could be against concentrations of shipping and, in particular, against large battleships and carriers.

464. It was the eventual plan of the Japanese, once the Allied invasion of Malaya had started, to use all their aircraft (first line, training and transport) as suicide aircraft against Allied shipping and then continue to fight on the land without an air force.

465. In the Southern Area, all Japanese aircraft were widely dispersed over the vast areas of Malaya, Sumatra and Java, while airfields were, in many instances, poor in condition. To effect this concentration of aircraft in Malaya, Sumatra and Java in preparation for the Allied invasion of Malaya, the Japanese had left Siam and French Indo-China almost bare of aircraft, except for some trainers, and it had not been thought possible to transfer to Malaya.

No Shortage of Suicide Pilots.

466. It seemed that there was no shortage of pilots in the Southern Area to man Japanese suicide aircraft, and that Major-General Kitagawa, G.O.C., 55th Air Training Division could, on his own admission, have called on 2,000 pilots for the 8/900 suicide aircraft at his disposal. On the other hand, few had any operational experience and consisted of training instructors and student pilots with little more than 100 hours flying. It was from these that only the best were selected as suicide pilots. Here, however, an exceedingly interesting and important factor must be noted. This special attack corps of suicide pilots was made up of ardent volunteers. They had determination to proceed to their doom elated in the thought that they were dying for their Emperor.

Major Factors Overlooked by Japanese.

467. The Japanese considered that they would have been able to defeat the Allies' first attempt at landing in Malaya by the use of their suicide aircraft, but considered that when the second attempt at landing was made by the

Allies, they would have no more aircraft left and the second landing would therefore have been easy.

468. I refute the Japanese contention that the first attempt at landing by the Allies would have met with reverse. On impartial examination of the facts made available by the Japanese after surrender, there were several major factors which the Japanese most decidedly overlooked. Briefly these factors were:—

(i) No attacks were to have been made by Japanese suicide aircraft until dusk on D-Day, thus giving our air forces taking part in the large scale invasion of Malaya at least twelve hours to neutralise, as they would have done, Japanese aircraft in the Penang/North Sumatra area.

(ii) R.A.F. Intelligence had estimated that 175 Japanese first line aircraft would be immediately available in Malaya and Sumatra. Of this number, only 20 were thought to be bombers, and 120 fighters—the remainder being reconnaissance and floatplanes.

The general preparation of all the trainer units in these areas for suicide attacks was well known to the R.A.F., and the estimated number available in Malaya and Sumatra was 245 in Malaya and 20 in Sumatra. The estimated number of trainer aircraft in Java was 346.

By early September, the intended move of the Japanese trainer aircraft in Java to airfields in North Sumatra and Central Malaya had only just got under way, so that it seems fairly certain that many of these trainer aircraft would never have been able to leave Java, as the Japanese had quite overlooked the Allied threat by our air forces established in the Cocos Islands which had started operations in August.

(iii) It was unlikely that any reinforcements of aircraft could have been withdrawn from French Indo-China and Siam. In any event, the numbers and types of aircraft available from that source were negligible—a fact borne out on the entry of the R.A.F. into French Indo-China during the course of occupation after the surrender.

(iv) Without exception the Japanese officers interrogated after surrender were well aware of the fact that their communications were so unreliable that no High Command such as 3rd Air Army could have hoped to control operations once "Zipper" had started. Decisions, it should be noted, were to have been left to subordinate commanders and even to unit commanding officers. This undoubtedly would have meant a great deal of wasted effort.

(v) The Japanese had planned to rely on air reconnaissance for advance information on "Zipper" and the location of targets for suicide attacks in the preliminary stages of the invasion. They were so short of aircraft for this essential commitment, however, that it would have been exceedingly difficult for them to spot and hold any of the Allied Forces. Indeed, it is more likely that complete surprise would have been achieved on D-Day by the R.A.F. units taking part in "Zipper" and that large numbers of Japanese aircraft would most certainly have been destroyed on the ground.

(vi) Lastly, the Japanese Air Force had anticipated a breathing space between the air attacks on the Penang area and the attacks on Singapore. It is doubtful, however, if they could have withdrawn and re-deployed many of their aircraft from that area as well as from Sumatra without our knowledge through superior photographic reconnaissance.

MAINTENANCE.

Meeting the needs of overhaul in face of advancing front

469. The Maintenance Organisation in South East Asia was faced with two major issues during the period May to September, 1945, following upon the re-occupation of Rangoon and, later, the sudden termination of hostilities in August.

470. The influencing factors were:—

(a) The need for a re-orientation of the Maintenance Organisation as the result of the battle front having moved further away from the static repair and overhaul bases which had been built up in India.

(b) The termination of Lend/Lease by America to the United Nations following upon the surrender of Japan, this causing acute difficulties in providing replacements and spares for American types of aircraft in operational use within the Command.

471. On the one hand, the re-organisation of maintenance to meet the needs of the advancing front was not an insuperable task and soon righted itself once necessary changes had been effected, but the denial of spares, on the cessation of Lend/Lease, was distinctly serious as there were some 1,600 American aircraft and gliders in India and South East Asia for which spares were absolutely essential.

472. With the arrival in Southern Burma of the victorious Air Forces in May, it was considered that a reversion from the existing centralised system of maintenance in the Theatre should be initiated. The six months rapid advance down through Burma had been a testing time for every branch of maintenance. Burma could not be compared to the great flat desert stretches of the Middle East. Transport of the mobile units negotiated appalling roads after an equally difficult journey from India. At one time, indeed, it was doubtful if transport would last until Rangoon was reached.

473. These difficulties must be emphasised because it was to this mobile ground organisation, embracing Repair and Salvage Units, Air Stores Parks, Motor Transport, Maintenance Units and Motor Transport Light Repair Units, that the Air Forces in Burma were tied and were fully dependent upon for their servicing if not their very existence during operations.

474. The re-organisation of Maintenance which took place after our arrival in Southern Burma can be summarised as follows:—

(a) The Forward Repair Depots in the operational areas were abolished and Salvage units built up.

(b) Group Commanders were invested with the responsibility of repair and overhaul of their squadron's aircraft.

(c) Squadrons were given their full U.E. of aircraft instead of retaining a proportion of them in the Maintenance organisation as hitherto.

(d) Each Repair and Salvage Unit and Air Stores Park worked for a wing and specialised in the types of aircraft operated by the wing.

475. Re-organisation was necessary for yet another important reason. The great distance which, at that time, obtained between operational areas in Burma and bases in India, precluded the return of short range aircraft to Maintenance Units for major inspections and engine changes. Thus, it became necessary to transfer the responsibility for this maintenance work to the squadrons and other flying units. Owing to the different problems, including beaching facilities, involved in carrying out major inspections on flying boats, this maintenance continued to be centralised at Koggala in Ceylon.

476. Hitherto, all repair and salvage units in the Command were controlled by Headquarters, Base Air Forces through Nos. 222, 226 and 230 Groups on a regional basis. In the re-organisation no change in policy, however, was effected in the case of units under 222 Group, Ceylon, and 226 Group, whose area extended throughout India, but excluded Bengal and Assam. The R. & S.U.s. on the other hand, had, of necessity, to be fully mobile and to move with the units they supported.

477. When the re-organisation was put into effect the establishments of flying units were increased by 25 per cent. in order to cover aircraft undergoing major inspections at units. This increase was effected by feeding in additional aircraft from the R. & S.U.s. as and when the squadron or unit became due for a major inspection.

478. The base at Rangoon carried heavy responsibilities—not only for the continuance of operations during the mopping up period in Burma, but in preparing its organisation to meet the coming operations against Malaya.

479. A Forward Equipment Unit and a Forward Repair Unit were maintained in Rangoon to support the Air Forces in Southern Burma and to act as backing, if necessary, for the "Zipper" forces which would deploy through Southern Burma bases. The pressure on maintenance at this crucial period is illustrated by the amount of work tackled. During the months from May to August, the Repair and Salvage Units returned to service 830 aircraft and dismantled a further 420 which had been written off. The heaviest month was May, after the entry into Rangoon, when 300 aircraft were repaired—an indication of the strenuous use to which they had been subjected during the last stage of the lightning advance to Rangoon.

480. It was thought that the Repair and Salvage Unit in Rangoon would build up a fairly extensive repair depot, but with the capitulation of the Japanese in August this was no longer necessary, and personnel were switched to Singapore to re-occupy and build up the original Repair Depot at Seletar on Singapore Island.

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Difficulties arising from Lend/Lease termination.

481. President Truman's announcement of the Surrender of Japan brought with it the declaration that Lend/Lease to Allied Governments was at an end except for assistance to forces engaged against Japanese who had not surrendered.

482. The repercussions in Air Command, South East Asia were serious. There was a world-wide shortage of Dakota spares. The U.S.A.A.F., however, as a result of the termination of Lend/Lease had cancelled the production of spares for their earlier Marks I, II and III and there were 200 Dakotas included in this range within South East Asia Command.

483. To ascertain the position as it affected Air Command, investigation revealed that, excluding Dakotas, Expeditors, Thunderbolts and Cornells, there were some 1,600 American aircraft and gliders in India and South East Asia which would gradually become unserviceable through lack of spares.

484. The Command's most urgent attention at the beginning of September, therefore, was directed with the utmost speed to securing alternative arrangements for supply of necessary spares. In some respects, but by no means all, the situation was partially alleviated by the arrangement reached at Washington that the U.S.A.A.F. would meet, on a cash basis, limited demands in respect of Liberator, Dakota and Skymaster aircraft only. No stock demands, however, were permitted. The literal interpretation of this ruling was that a demand could not be raised until an aircraft was actually grounded or until repair was held up. A period of from eight to ten weeks also must elapse before the necessary parts could be obtained from America.

485. What became quite certain was that no demand whatsoever would be met in other types of aircraft, which included the following:—

Thunderbolt.	Cornell.
Sentinel.	Vengeance.
Argus.	Catalina.
Expeditor.	Harvard.

486. It was clear, therefore, that as stocks for any particular item became exhausted, so also would the repair of aircraft, their engines, and associated equipment automatically cease. Cannibalisation, or robbing another aircraft, was of very limited value as the bulk of the spares required were rendered necessary by wear and tear or by climatic deterioration.

487. In a signal to the Air Member for Supply and Organisation, I stated that if we did not get the essential parts, I could foresee us falling down badly on our agreed commitments, and urged that dollars should be made available for purchase of our essential requirements for replacement arising from wear and tear.

488. But the difficulties in England over the termination of Lend/Lease were greater than it was at first realised. There were dollar quotas to be considered, and in this connection it was learned that demands on available dollars were extremely heavy, especially for foodstuffs. The situation in respect of aircraft spares and replacements, therefore, was

not cheerful. As regards a British replacement for the Dakotas, we could no longer demand the highest priority for labour in Britain, now that the war had ended, thus making progress automatically slow in production.

R.A.F. REGIMENT OPERATIONS.

A record of achievements in the South East Asia Command.

489. In the various campaign stages of the war in South East Asia I have been left in no doubt whatsoever about the usefulness, efficiency and fine example of that most junior of all our forces—the R.A.F. Regiment.

490. The R.A.F. Regiment adequately carried out the task of close defence of airfields in Burma and in other operational areas in South-East Asia.

491. I have it on record from one of my Group Commanders who moved with Fourteenth Army all the way through Burma, that he considered it probable that the Group could not have occupied air strips as far forward as they did—with consequently better air support for the Army—had he not been confident that the R.A.F. Regiment could have maintained the necessary security.

492. In South East Asia the R.A.F. Regiment proved itself a force capable of carrying out more than the tasks which its originators claimed the Regiment could accomplish. It was not a force of men dressed up as guards and picqueted around some airfield or supply dump with guns propped in their hands. These men were so trained in the art and strategy of ground defence and of jungle warfare, that they were able to undertake with success counter measures against Japanese infiltration parties who might set themselves up near the perimeter of some airfield and constitute a menace until hunted down and destroyed.

493. When the advance through Burma began in January, 1945, there were ten Field Squadrons, seven A.A. Squadrons and seven Regiment Wing Headquarters, working with the Tactical Air Forces. On the capture of Rangoon in May, 1945, these had been increased to fourteen Field Squadrons, nine A.A. Squadrons and eight Wing Headquarters.

494. For the D-Day operations planned for the assault on Malaya, the Regiment was also scheduled to play a prominent part. Five Regimental Wings of nearly 2,500 officers and men, made up of nine Field Squadrons and five A.A. Squadrons were available. One A.A. Squadron had been brought out of the Cocos Islands, where its twenty millimetre Hispano cannons had given protection to the heavy bomber and transport airfield there.

Defence of Airfields and Mopping Up.

495. When it is considered that few Japanese were ever taken prisoner in Burma, electing to face death rather than capture, and that the principal task of the R.A.F. Regiment was to protect our air strips rather than to make enemy captives, the effort of the Regiment between January and May, 1945, in all forms of service was exceedingly high. While operating at seven strips during that period, the A.A. Squadrons succeeded in destroying one enemy aircraft and registering hits on three others out of a total of nine enemy aircraft attacking these particular strips.

496. The most outstanding episode of the R.A.F. Regiment's service in this theatre was the assistance they gave in the defence of Meiktila airfield. It was essential to comb the airfield and its environs each morning for snipers before permitting aircraft to land. Every gully, fox-hole or other feasible hiding place of a sniper had to be examined. The patrols started just after daybreak and took almost two hours to complete. It was thorough and effective, but the only sure method of clearing the area of the enemy, to ensure the safety of our aircraft.

497. In mopping up isolated parties of Japanese in Burmese villages at the time of the advance on Rangoon, certain units of the R.A.F. Regiment gave considerable assistance to Civil Affairs Officers and also helped in the clearing and disposal of mortar bombs, booby-traps, mines and anti-tank traps. Extensive searches, including patrols up rivers, were also carried out by the Regiment in their efforts to arrest wanted and known collaborators and to enforce the surrendering of illegally held arms and ammunition. The river patrols on these occasions were necessary owing to the difficulties of communication and the nature of the country. During March and April, for example, one Field Squadron covered an area of 2,600 square miles, visited or "raided" 250 villages, arrested 100 Japanese collaborators and recovered 26 rifles. Large quantities of ammunition of British and Japanese make were also recovered, together with clothing, equipment, parachutes and rations.

The Occupation of Singapore.

498. In the protection of newly captured airfields and the guarding of vital radar sites once the assault on Malaya had begun, the R.A.F. Regiment would have been indispensable to the Air Force and could have been relied upon to fulfil its task thoroughly and well. Even in the peaceful occupation of Singapore, units of the Regiment, within 24 hours, were maintaining the security of Kallang, Changi, Seletar and Tengah airfields—one of which had three hundred police in peacetime.

499. Up country in Malaya, during the early days of occupation by our forces, a squadron of the R.A.F. Regiment sent out a patrol into one of the thickly wooded areas and succeeded in recovering 600 gallons of petrol from a party of Malays and Chinese.

500. On September 10th, two days before the official surrender ceremony at Singapore, No. 1329 Wing R.A.F. Regiment, with four Field Squadrons, arrived at Penang and took over the entire garrison duties from the Royal Marines. On the day following it was decided that the Regiment should also occupy Port Butterworth and Prai area, Province Wellesley, as part of the Penang commitment.

501. If the R.A.F. Regiment in South East Asia had done nothing more than provide vital protection for our airfields, the record of its achievements would still read with commendable credit. That it was able to perform further additional services and maintain a smartness and discipline which called forth praise from Army and Navy alike, demonstrates the value of the Regiment as an adjunct to the Royal Air Force. In my many

tours and inspections throughout this Theatre I have noted the almost "jealous-like" pride which the Regiment Squadrons have in their own service.

PART V.
ADMINISTRATIVE AND OTHER
ASPECTS.

THE REPERCUSSIONS FELT BY AIR COMMAND
AFTER DEFEAT OF GERMANY AND JAPAN.

502. The period May to September, 1945, witnessed a series of important changes associated with the administrative development of Air Command, South East Asia, and the recasting of plans already made to meet the changed conditions after the defeat of Germany and, later still, defeat of Japan.

503. The Command felt the full effects of the global shipping and manpower shortages; of pre-election uncertainties in England; of the change in emphasis of attacks on Japan's outlying conquests to the Japanese homeland; of the vastness of the task involved in building up the Southern Burma net of all-weather airfields in preparation for coming operations; of the monsoon; the sharp contraction in air supply resources consequent upon the withdrawal of the American squadrons, and finally, the task of re-occupying liberated territories.

504. Following the reconquest of Burma in May, the future trend of the Command's administrative development was largely influenced by the following factors:—

(i) Disbandment of the integrated Eastern Air Command Headquarters on 1st June, 1945 and the withdrawal of the United States Army Air Forces from the Command.

(ii) Reorganisation of Headquarters, R.A.F., Burma, on the assumption of full operational and administrative control of the Air Forces in Burma.

(iii) Administrative planning in anticipation of the forthcoming operations in South East Asia associated principally with the re-conquest of Malaya and the build-up of the strategic base of Singapore.

(iv) Planning for the reorganisation of the Command, subsequent to the re-occupation of Singapore.

505. It was not unnatural, on the defeat of Germany, that attention should be focussed suddenly upon the impressive array of air power promised for South East Asia in Phase II of the war. Not only was the number of squadrons expected to be increased, but more modern and more powerfully armed aircraft were envisaged. There were expectations too, of plentiful supplies of spares and ancillary equipment calculated to abrogate, for the duration of the Far Eastern war, the parsimony of indigenous industrial resources. South East Asia, it was confidently hoped, would achieve a higher place in the list of priorities as from VE-Day. But this illusion was soon shattered. At the beginning of June it was officially revealed that the Pacific Tiger Force and post-war events in Europe would take priority over South East Asia's demands. The decision was occasioned not so much by the shortage of equipment as by the global deficiencies in shipping and manpower which implied that drastic cuts in the Phase II Target of 116 squadrons

would have to be accepted. It became evident, therefore, that the basis for planning was not what the Command was entitled to expect, but what was actually available.

506. In spite of these difficulties—and they had been many in South East Asia—it was necessary to cut the administrative cloth to suit the operational coat. A target of 87 squadrons which, it was reckoned, would have to meet the air effort, both for "Zipper" and "Mailfist" and other commitments, was therefore accepted.

507. Although these factors did not seriously affect Operation "Zipper", the enforced economy would have had some bearing upon the final assault on Singapore itself and upon operations contemplated early in 1946 into Siam, had the war with Japan continued. Other tasks too, included action on the development of the air base in Southern Burma and the Cocos Islands, both closely associated with "Zipper" and the redeployment of the strategic forces, once heavy bomber bases further east and south east became available.

Important Changes After Fall of Rangoon.

508. The ease with which Rangoon fell caused future administrative planning to proceed along more ambitious lines. Before further operations could be undertaken, however, it was necessary to have a reshuffle of offensive and defensive units; introduce a revised maintenance policy and new equipment to meet conditions of the Malay Peninsula; to withdraw many air forces from Burma for rest, refit and concentration for "Zipper".

509. The most important change in Command organisation at this time was the departure of the American Air Forces which were withdrawn from the Theatre as from 1st June, 1945. The disintegration of the British and American Air Forces in Burma involved the disbandment of Headquarters, Eastern Air Command, and the transfer of the Air Staff from that Headquarters to H.Q. R.A.F., Burma, which then became an independent R.A.F. Command under H.Q. Air Command, South East Asia.

510. A series of other changes was brought about as a result of the revised responsibilities of Headquarters, R.A.F. Burma, upon disbandment of Eastern Air Command. Operational control of all R.A.F. formations and units, formerly under Eastern Air Command, was taken over by H.Q. R.A.F., Burma.

511. The title of "Strategic Air Force", which had included British and American squadrons, ceased to be used with effect from 1st June, 1945, and No. 231 Group, R.A.F., continued strategic operations alone. In the same way the disintegration of Combat Cargo Task Force was carried out and, on the departure of the American squadrons, No. 232 Group took over the full operational control of all R.A.F. transport units in the A.L.F.S.E.A. area.

512. Yet another important change at this time was the reorganisation of the R.A.F. Element of H.Q. Photographic Reconnaissance Force as a Wing (No. 347 Wing), after the withdrawal of the American Forces. Included in the wing's establishment was No. 1 Photographic Interpretation Detachment. The object

of the change was to give the former R.A.F. Element of Photographic Reconnaissance Force more mobility as a wing which could be moved forward as required for operational purposes.

513. Throughout the campaign in Burma, Headquarters 230 Group had been charged with the control of all maintenance and storage units in the area of Headquarters, R.A.F., Burma, but the Group itself was under the direct control of the C.M.O., Headquarters, Base Air Forces. This arrangement was unsatisfactory because it meant that the R.A.F. operational commander in Burma did not have complete control of his maintenance organisation. It was therefore decided to disband No. 230 Group and to absorb the Maintenance Staff of the Group into Headquarters, R.A.F., Burma, with effect from 15th May, 1945. The units under No. 230 Group were, at the same time, placed directly under the operational groups they served, and the staffs of these groups were increased to cope with this commitment by the addition of some of the posts thrown up from the disbandment of No. 230 Group.

Withdrawal of 224 Group in Preparation for "Zipper".

514. The main assault on Malaya, scheduled for early September, made necessary the withdrawal of No. 224 Group and units from the Arakan and Burma.

515. This was started early in May. The withdrawal was handled directly between Headquarters, R.A.F., Burma, and Headquarters, Base Air Forces. As from 1st June, 1945, H.Q. 224 Group was placed directly under the control of H.Q. Base Air Forces for the purpose of mounting operation "Zipper", but the A.O.C. 224 Group and his staff retained the right to visit all units during mounting and to advise on all matters concerning the training of units for their various tasks. Headquarters 224 Group undertook the responsibility for force planning.

516. It was decidedly unfortunate, if not serious, that owing to the acute shortage of shipping, the withdrawal of units from Burma did not go off as smoothly as might have been expected. Many of the units, indeed, came out of the Arakan with no equipment or M.T., while the equipment and M.T. of other units which arrived in India lay on the docks awaiting the arrival of the units for many weeks. When units ultimately reached India they were deployed on airfields which had been prepared for them, but owing to the non-arrival of equipment or personnel, the commencement of training was badly delayed.

Re-organisation of Air Command in 1945-46.

517. In view of the extension of the responsibilities of Air Command, South East Asia, towards Singapore and beyond, the future organisation of formations in the Command required consideration.

518. The principal factors which necessitated reorganisation were as follows:—

(a) Mopping up operations of the enemy in Burma would continue for some time, but, so far as the Air Forces were concerned, these could be undertaken by one composite group (No. 221).

(b) Since No. 224 Group had been withdrawn from Burma for participation in Operation "Zipper", the Group would come directly under the operational control of Headquarters, Air Command, during the next stage of the Campaign.

(c) The Heavy Bomber Group (No. 231) was no longer suitably located in Burma. It would be based at the Cocos Islands for "Zipper" support.

(d) Photographic Reconnaissance, Special Duties and Air Supply Operations would no longer be concentrated on Burma, but would be required in widely separated areas. This called for direct control from the Headquarters of the Air Command of the groups engaged in these duties.

(e) The above factors reduced the responsibilities of H.Q. R.A.F. Burma, which had hitherto controlled several functional groups.

(f) The altered military situation had also called for the move of Headquarters, Allied Land Forces to Kandy, while Headquarters, Supreme Allied Command, together with the Headquarters of the three Commanders-in-Chief, would move to Singapore at the earliest practicable date.

(g) The 10th U.S.A.A.F. had been moved to China and Eastern Air Command dissolved. At the same time the R.A.F. Target Force for South East Asia in Phase II was not to be as large as originally planned.

519. These factors, it was considered, required revision of previous operational plans, and would enable a considerable reduction of planned overheads to be effected in Headquarters and Administrative Services.

520. On the fall of Singapore the following moves were scheduled to take place:—

(a) Headquarters, Air Command would move there in company with Headquarters, Supreme Allied Commander, H.Q. Allied Land Forces and part of the E.I.F. H.Q.

(b) Headquarters, No. 222 Group would move from Ceylon to Singapore and undertake responsibilities in that area similar to those undertaken by Mediterranean Allied Coastal Forces or Air Defences, Eastern Mediterranean.

(c) Headquarters, No. 231 Group would move to Singapore and be possibly employed either as a heavy Bomber Group Headquarters, the Headquarters of a Task Force, or be disbanded.

(d) Headquarters, No. 224 Group would also move to Singapore area and remain a composite group, being modelled as necessary to undertake further operations for the reconquest of Sumatra, Java and Borneo.

521. A small Headquarters, R.A.F. Ceylon, was also planned to take over area responsibilities for:—

(a) Ceylon.

(b) Island Flying-boat, Emergency Landing Grounds and Met. Stations to the south.

(c) Cocos for administrative services.

522. Although the future strategy for South East Asia Command was not yet determined, making it impossible to forecast reliably for the future deployment of forces, it was considered that the reorganisation as planned would meet all the probable requirements.

THE MANPOWER SITUATION IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

523. The energetic stepping up of operations in the Pacific directly against Japan, brought about a wide variety of circumstances which combined to deny Air Command, South East Asia that priority in personnel which the Command had expected would be forthcoming.

524. Demands in Europe and the Pacific for shipping; the sudden announcement, preceding the General Election, to reduce the Overseas Tour for Army personnel by approximately 10 per cent; the operation of the Release Scheme, and the priority accorded to the Pacific "Tiger Force", all adversely reacted upon Air Command, South East Asia.

525. In May, 1945, the establishment and strength of the Command for British personnel were as follows:—

	<i>Estab.</i>	<i>Strength</i>	<i>Surplus/</i> <i>Deficiencies</i>
Ground Officers	8,103	7,573	— 530
Other Ranks ...	105,470	110,459	4,989 —

526. The 6½ per cent. deficiency in ground officers affected principally the branches in Administration, Code and Cypher, Tech. (E) and Catering. On the other hand, the position as regards airmen was that the technical trades carried a surplus of 7,100, whilst the trade of Clerk G.D. was deficient by not less than 36 per cent., equipment assistants by 20 per cent. and cooks by 28 per cent.

527. By September, 1945, the position had so deteriorated that an overall deficiency was shown, although certain trades continued to carry a surplus. The strength of personnel was as follows:—

	<i>Estab.</i>	<i>Strength</i>	<i>Surplus/</i> <i>Deficiencies</i>
Ground Officers	8,116	7,525	— 591
Other Ranks ...	123,466	114,419	— 9,047

528. The 7 per cent. deficiency in ground officers was spread over a great many branches. Physical Fitness carried a deficiency of 36 per cent. and Code and Cypher a deficiency of 22 per cent.

529. The overall 8 per cent. deficiency in other ranks, however, clouded the very large deficiencies carried in the following trades:—

	<i>(Per cent.</i> <i>deficiency.)</i>
Clerks G.D. ...	43
Clerks Acctg. ...	36
Cooks ...	32
Driver M.T. ...	18
Equip. Asst. ...	36

530. The Command had clearly to take measures to rectify this weakness if it was to function administratively, and compulsory mis-employment of surplus tradesmen and aircrew was therefore introduced. It was fortunate that, on the defeat of Japan, an opportunity was offered for a large scale reduction of establishments and disbandments to begin.

531. The Release Scheme, coming so soon after the cessation of the European War, reacted very materially against the Command. It brought further grave losses in the difficult trades at a time when the efficient administration of the Command was essential for the prosecution of the war against Japan.

532. An even greater disadvantage was the fact that it withdrew from the Command the more senior and experienced personnel. Consequently, while the position in a branch or trade as far as actual personnel were concerned, may have appeared satisfactory on paper, it was not always so in actual performance of work, and efficiency thereby suffered.

Reduction in overseas tour for personnel.

533. On 6th June, 1945, the War Office suddenly announced a reduction in the overseas tour of Army personnel. This factor had every promise of producing serious repercussions in South East Asia, in which either coming operations, or morale, or both, might well have been affected. The fulfilment of the War Office announcement was rendered virtually impossible by the lack of homeward personnel shipping and the congestion in transit camps in India.

534. To avoid a parallel situation with regard to the Air Force in this Command, I signalled the Chief of Staff emphasising that any announcement of a reduction in overseas tour for the Air Force would be premature and impracticable at this juncture.

535. At the same time, I strongly recommended that shipping and air transport should be found in order to bring into effect, by 1st December, 1945, a reduction of tour from four to three and a half years, for all single officers and airmen. This reduction was agreed upon in August in principle, but was not fully implemented until December.

536. Between May and September, 1945, some 559 officers and 2,263 airmen left the Command under the Release Scheme. During the same period 2,201 officers and 12,932 airmen were repatriated in addition to those despatched on release.

537. The celebration of V.E.-Day in the Command was a sincere enough occasion for everyone, though it was only natural that it did not hold the same high spirit of enthusiasm for those in the East still fighting the last of the remaining Axis powers. The announcement that the Burma Star had been inaugurated gave general satisfaction to personnel serving in Burma—an award well merited—but personnel in India and Ceylon felt that the burden of their overseas service was not sufficiently recognised by the award of the Defence Medal.

538. The postal voting scheme for the General Election in July, 1945, was put into operation successfully during May and June, and ballot papers for personnel in South East Asia were flown out from England by transport aircraft. The papers were given priority over all other mails handled by R.A.F. Post Staffs. The total number of completed application forms for postal voting received by 25th June at R.A.F. Post Karachi was 33,500. A last minute supply of forms to the Cocos Islands, whose original consignment was mislaid in transit, produced satisfactory results.

539. Altogether, a total of 30,013 ballot papers was finally forwarded by air to the U.K. from the Command.

PART VI.
CONCLUSIONS

Japan's defeat.

540. Japan, in her disastrous war against the Allied Powers, was defeated largely by her own misjudgment—embarking upon a policy of expansion which lengthened too far her lines of communication without providing adequately armed forces for their protection and maintenance.

541. Expansion brought the Japanese, in their initial flush of success, to the very threshold of India at a time when the Allies were least prepared to resist her westward march.

542. Defeat for the Japanese in South East Asia, I consider, had its beginning in the air battles over the Arakan in late 1943 and the opening months of 1944, when Allied air superiority was obtained.

543. It is my opinion that the cardinal weakness in Japan's war of aggression was undoubtedly a badly balanced war machine, which showed too heavy a bias in favour of land forces, and a much too weak air force, also air potential.

544. Without air support, the Japanese Army in South East Asia fought a losing battle after Allied air superiority had been won. The numbers actually killed during their campaign in Burma were enormous, whilst the number that perished in the jungle will never be known. This Japanese Army provided a grim reminder to any Army that embarks upon operations without adequate air support.

Close Support operations.

545. According to the Japanese, it is impossible to state definitely which of our Allied fighters had the greatest effect morally upon their ground forces in South East Asia, as each fighter had its own characteristics. The effect differed according to the nature of the target attacked and the time of the attack, whether by day or by night. On an assessment of the Allied fighter aircraft individually, however, it appears that the enemy considered the Spitfire, the Thunderbolt and the Mustang surpassed all others.

Fighter, and fighter/bomber offensive operations.

546. The effect of the Beaufighter and Mosquito attacks on Japanese shipping in the Gulf of Martaban during the early months of 1945 was such that the enemy stopped movement of shipping by day, and did movements only at night. In this way enemy shipping was conserved.

547. On the other hand, the harassing attacks these aircraft carried out on the enemy's road, rail and river transport areas was exceedingly effective. While it cost them few casualties to men, the air attacks, according to the Japanese, made troop as well as supply movements virtually impossible. Materials and food, they stated, became difficult to move, and this had a bad effect upon the civilian population.

548. Our policy of surprise raids on the enemy's rear airfields was most effective. In this respect the American fighter attacks on these airfields were not only effective, but greatly helped to reduce the operational strength of the Japanese Army Air Force.

Heavy Bomber Operations.

549. The heavy bomber attacks which our aircraft carried out on Rangoon, and on supply dumps in the vicinity, cannot be compared, in effectiveness, to the heavy air attacks made on bridges, railway tracks, marshalling yards and important installations in other enemy occupied areas. The dumps in the Rangoon area which were targets of attack were, according to the enemy, destroyed to some extent, but they did not greatly affect Japanese morale. The bombing of Rangoon itself, however, which was continued for almost a month before the enemy's evacuation, had a marked effect upon their morale. The effect of the bombings on the civilian population appeared to be small because only military targets were bombed.

550. Bombing raids on military installations in the rear areas were admitted by the Japanese to be most effective, and many targets, some highly important to the Japanese war effort, were destroyed. The attacks, it appears, could have been even more effective had our bombers struck at the targets over a wider area, as enemy installations were immediately divided up into sections and scattered once a target area was hit.

Air Mining Operations Affect Supply.

551. I consider it exceedingly gratifying, and indeed, interesting, to have it confirmed by the Japanese themselves that the isolation of large sea transports, as the result of our air mining operations, seriously affected the Japanese supply situation. The mines were laid by our aircraft in the Rangoon River and off the Tenasserim and Malayan coasts. The sowing of these mines, the Japanese stated, was directly responsible for the sinking of important supply ships.

552. Our air mining programme, which began on 21st January, 1945, and was discontinued on 24th May, 1945, since the stage was then being set finally for the assault on Malaya, resulted in a total of 925 mines being dropped in the specified areas. The minelaying operations were 86.9 successful—only 29 mines being dropped foul, and 80 being brought back by aircraft to base.

553. From a tactical point of view, I was interested to learn that, of all the weapons which we used against the Japanese in Burma—rockets, machine-guns, cannon, bombs and Napalm—the machine-guns had the most effect, both morally and physically, upon their ground forces.

554. During the advance of our ground troops, the feints and dummy attacks by our supporting aircraft proved very effective in keeping the Japanese under cover—a highly important factor when troops are storming strongly-held positions.

555. Close support by the Japanese Army Air Force was negligible. Its development was dependent upon adequate air strength, and as the Japanese Army Air Force gradually dwindled away to nothing, close support for their ground forces was therefore impracticable.

556. While the Japanese also used Visual Control Posts to indicate targets to their aircraft, shortage of wireless equipment greatly hindered them in putting through demands for air support. This is in striking contrast to our own use of V.C.P.s., which we exploited to the full with excellent results.

Air supply.

557. Burma proved how an Army could march for a thousand miles through some of the worst country in the world so long as air supply was guaranteed by our retaining air superiority and having adequate air transport.

558. There is no doubt that the Japanese fully appreciated how vitally important Allied air supply was to the success of our operations. They confessed that all means possible were used to interfere with Allied air supply, but, due to the small size of their Air Force, they failed in their efforts.

559. Burma, I consider, has given us the classic example of an Army in the field existing on air supply, and the technique evolved from these air supply operations must surely command serious attention.

Lessons which emerged in South East Asia.

560. The war in South East Asia, has immeasurably enriched our experience in air operations in the East; quickened our perception to the dangers of a purely static defence system for these Empire territories, and shown how essential is air power for future defence.

The need for greater squadron mobility.

561. One of the most noticeable features of our operations in South East Asia was the clumsy and inadequate method which we had been forced to employ to maintain the mobility of our squadrons, their personnel and equipment.

562. This implies no reflection on the ground staff and maintenance organisation, who succeeded in achieving good results with the equipment and facilities available when moving the squadrons forward, month after month, through a country devoid of proper communications and faced with flooding during the monsoon, when roads turned into quagmires.

563. But a squadron working in support of front-line troops must have greater mobility

to enable its ground organisation to move to its next base, and not find itself on some narrow inadequate road, choked for miles ahead with slow moving army transport.

564. It is on record that during April, 1945, when over 80 R.A.F. units moved forward in Burma to new bases in keeping with the overall plan of advance, one R.A.F. wing, having insufficient road transport, had to use bullock carts. Against this, there is the more logical instance of another R.A.F. wing which moved from Akyab to Rangoon by air, taking with it all its equipment and personnel and leaving behind only M.T., since it was picking up a new allotment of vehicles at its destination.

565. With so many moves by squadrons in the forward areas—many going ahead with the bare minimum of staff to keep aircraft operational pending the arrival of the remainder of their ground personnel bringing up essential equipment—squadrons often found themselves separated from a proportion of their servicing echelons for several days due to lack of transport. Until the full staff of the echelons arrived, an enormous amount of work was thrown upon ground crew, since aircraft at the time were being pressed into service in support of the advance and had to be loaded with bombs and with ammunition. They also needed daily servicing.

566. This, I consider, is one of the most important lessons which emerged from operations in South East Asia. Experience has shown that Air Power, in the movement of its ground organisations, must have infinitely greater mobility in future, and be air-lifted by its own transports.

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