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OPERATIONS IN THE INDIA COMMAND, FROM 1ST JANUARY, 1943,
TO 20TH JUNE, 1943.

PREFACE BY THE WAR OFFICE.

SINCE the conclusion of hostilities with Japan, certain Japanese documents, handed over to the Headquarters of the 12th Army in Burma after the Japanese surrender have been examined. It has been established from these documents, that the Japanese plan of operations in Burma for the winter 1942-43, was to make an offensive into India against the oilfield at Tinsukia via the Hukawng Valley, and with another force to capture Imphal and then Dimapur, in order to cut off any Allied Troops in the Tinsukia area and to occupy Northern Assam. A Japanese document gives as the reasons why these plans were not put into effect, first the Allied offensive in Arakan and secondly the penetration of Brigadier Wingate's 77th Brigade into Northern Burma. By Japanese admissions, Field Marshal Viscount Wavell's operations, described in this Despatch, accomplished their main purpose, which was by offensive action to keep the Japanese forces engaged and thereby prevent an offensive into India at a time when India was unprepared.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Secretary of State for War on 27th June, 1944, by FIELD-MARSHAL VISCOUNT WAVELL, G.C.B., C.M.G., M.C., A.D.C., Commander-in-Chief, India.

1. This despatch deals with the operations and general situation in the India Command from January 1st to June 20th, 1943, the date on which I ceased to be Commander-in-Chief in India. It includes an account of the fighting in Arakan and in Upper Burma during the first half of 1943, and of the planning and preparations which took place during the same period for the campaigning season of 1943-44.

PLANS FOR FIRST HALF OF 1943.

2. The objectives I had laid down for the Winter of 1942-43 were the capture of Akyab in Arakan; the strengthening of our position in the Chin Hills (i.e., about Tiddim and Fort White), and the establishment of forces on the Chindwin river between Kalewa and Sittaung, whence the Japanese lines of communication further east were to be raided, and preparations were to be made for a further advance into Upper Burma should opportunity offer.

These British operations were to be combined as closely as possible with operations by Chinese troops directed by General Stilwell (who held the post of Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo, Marshal Chiang Kai-shek). These aimed at occupying North-East Burma as far as an approximate line Myitkyina—Bhamo—Lashio, with the object of covering the construction of a road from Ledo into China, which was being made by American engineers. A Chinese force from Ledo, with American direction but under my control, was to advance on Myitkyina to join hands with a Chinese force from Yunnan, which General Stilwell informed me would advance in strength on March 1st, 1943. I had a conference with General Stilwell on December 10th, at which I undertook to do all I could towards assisting a Chinese advance from Yunnan and reoccupying Upper Burma in the spring of 1943; but I emphasized the seriousness of the administrative problem, our limited resources, and the unlikelihood of any rapid progress owing to road-making difficulties, both from Ledo towards Myitkyina and eastwards from the Imphal plain towards the Chindwin.

The troops actually available in India at the beginning of 1943 and the state of their training and equipment are shown in Appendix A.

OPERATIONS IN ARAKAN.

3. The operations in Arakan had only a limited objective, the capture of the air-fields on Akyab island at the end of the Mayu peninsula. There is no practicable land route out of Arakan into Burma proper, from which it is separated by a range of steep jungle-clad hills with no roads. Arakan itself is extremely difficult campaigning country with poor communications, much thick jungle and steep hills, and a wet and unhealthy climate. In the First Burmese War more than one hundred years previously it had been the scene of a British expedition, in which the force had been almost entirely destroyed by disease.

The capture of Akyab had been originally planned as a seaborne expedition, for which the 6th British Brigade of the 2nd Division had been specially trained and was to form a landing force with the 29th British Brigade, which had taken part in the Madagascar operations. The rôle of the 14th Indian Division in this plan was a purely diversionary advance from Chittagong. Unfortunately, I was not provided with the necessary resources for the landing operations.* The 29th Brigade and their landing crews suffered from malaria in Madagascar and had to be sent to South Africa to recuperate. It became apparent that neither naval escorts, transports, landing craft, nor air forces to cover the landing would be available in sufficient numbers during the winter of 1942-43 to undertake the sea-borne expedition against Akyab; which had every prospect of success, if it could have been carried out at the end of 1942 or beginning of 1943, since the Japanese garrison was small and there were few defences on the island.

4. I was unwilling, however, to give up the attempt to capture Akyab, and considered that it might be possible by a rapid advance down the Arakan coast by the 14th Indian Division to reach the southern end of the Mayu peninsula (Foul Point) and thence launch a short-range assault in the few landing craft available and in local vessels, by the 6th Brigade and part of the 14th Division. Speed in the advance was essential so as to reach Akyab before the Japanese could reinforce the island or strengthen the defences.

There were, however, serious obstacles to a rapid advance in the nature of the country and the communications. There were no road communications other than those we could make as we advanced, which entailed the bridging of numerous creeks. The forward echelons had to be organised on a pack transport basis, which caused difficulties in a formation which had been trained on a mechanised basis. Sea communications were hampered by the nature of the coast line, which offered no landing facilities except within the Naf and Mayu rivers; they could only be used as their mouths were secured by our advance. Supply by air was out of the question, owing to our lack of transport aircraft.

5. At the beginning of the campaign the enemy held Maungdaw and Buthidaung with a force estimated at two battalions with eight guns. The initial advance of the 14th Division

* The landings in North Africa and later in Sicily (November, 1942—July, 1943) took higher priority and there were insufficient resources for both operations (Note by the War Office)

was delayed by the weather and administrative difficulties. The leading Brigade, the 123rd Indian Infantry Brigade, was about to attack the enemy positions, in the middle of December, 1942, when the enemy withdrew, and we occupied Maungdaw on December 16th and Buthidaung on December 17th. The 14th Division followed up on a two-brigade front; the 47th Indian Infantry Brigade moving down the coast towards Foul Point, and the 123rd Brigade east of the Mayu river towards Rathedaung. By December 27th, the 47th Brigade had reached Indin, and a patrol actually rounded Foul Point and reached Magyichaung; by the same date the 123rd Brigade arrived opposite Rathedaung and a patrol reported it clear of the enemy, though this cannot have been correct. At this time it appeared that the Japanese did not intend to hold the Mayu peninsula. If the troops had been able to push on at once, the whole peninsula might have been secured.

6. There now occurred an unfortunate delay of some ten days, due to administrative difficulties. It may be that the urgency of the situation was not fully realised and that troops should have been pushed forward in spite of all difficulties to take advantage of the situation. But the brigades were operating at the end of a very tenuous line of communications of over 150 miles from railhead, and the weather was unfavourable, heavy rain making the road impassable.

When the advance was resumed on January 6th, the enemy had constructed strong defences in the Donbaik-Laungchaung area and at Rathedaung. The 47th Brigade attacked the Donbaik position on January 18th and 19th. The attack failed, mainly owing to the difficulty of locating enemy machine-guns and mortars in the jungle.

The 47th Brigade was now relieved by the 55th Indian Infantry Brigade, and preparations were made for a fresh assault with the aid of tanks. This was made on February 1st and failed, two of the six tanks used being ditched and two knocked out by anti-tank fire. An attack on Rathedaung by 123rd Brigade on February 3rd also failed after some initial success. The 55th Brigade attacked Donbaik again on February 17th and again failed. It was now relieved by the 71st Brigade of the 26th Indian Division. The intervals between the attacks were due entirely to difficulties of communications which made reinforcement and supply very slow. The long stretch of hastily constructed road was continually interrupted by rain; and supply by sea was hampered by the lack of vessels of suitable size and draught to enter the river and use the anchorages at Cox's Bazaar and Maungdaw; it even proved necessary to withdraw vessels of the R I N from mine-sweeping and patrol duties, to remove their guns, and use them as cargo ships.

7. By this time it became obvious that the Japanese had been reinforced and had probably the whole of one division on the Arakan front. Strong defences had now been made on Akyab island. I discussed the situation with General Irwin, commanding the Eastern Army. It seemed improbable that the Mayu peninsula could be cleared in time to deliver the assault on Akyab before monsoon conditions, which

appear about the middle of March, made landing hazardous, and it was obvious that the enemy had by now made full preparations to defend all landing places. General Irwin recommended that we should prepare defensive positions and give up the attempt to clear the Mayu peninsula. I refused to accept this recommendation and to take up a defensive attitude without first obtaining a marked success over the enemy, so that the troops should be confident of their ability to beat the Japanese. I directed General Irwin to use the 6th Brigade (British) of four battalions, which had been held at Chittagong in readiness for the attack on Akyab, to assault the Donbaik position in conjunction with the 71st Indian Brigade. My intention was that the attack should be delivered in great strength and depth with the object of swamping the Japanese positions.

8. Meanwhile the Japanese began a counter offensive, directed in the first instance against our eastern flank on the Kaladan river. Two small columns had moved into the Kaladan valley at the time of our advance on Rathedaung. One column, consisting of a battalion of Indian infantry from the 123rd Brigade, moved from the Mayu valley by a track across the hills into the Kaladan valley; the other, consisting of two companies of Tripura Rifles (State Forces), came down the valley from the north. Our forces had occupied Kyauktaw by the time of the Japanese attack. The enemy appears partly to have come up the Kaladan river from Akyab and partly to have infiltrated through the hills from Pakokku on the Irrawaddy. They employed their usual enveloping tactics against communications and forced the battalion of the 123rd Brigade to withdraw westward across the hills with some loss, and the Tripura Rifles to retreat northwards up the valley. The enemy followed up this success by crossing the hills and attacking the communications of 123rd Brigade opposite Rathedaung. After some heavy fighting, the 123rd Brigade, which had been closely engaged for three months, was relieved by the 55th Brigade and withdrew to Buthidaung.

9. The attack of the 6th Brigade on the Donbaik position took place on March 18th and failed. The troops succeeded in advancing some distance into the enemy defences, but were unable to deal with the enemy's underground strong points, which remained in action behind our forward troops; while the enemy guns, mortars and machine-guns, concealed in the jungle, carried on firing on our troops which had penetrated the line quite regardless of their own troops which were still holding out. Our forward troops were eventually all killed or compelled to withdraw. The attack was made with great dash and determination but was not carried out in the strength or depth that I had considered necessary to overrun the enemy position. The losses of the attacking troops were heavy, especially in officers.

10. Meanwhile the 55th Brigade opposite Rathedaung was attacked in flank and rear and cut off from Buthidaung on March 17th. By a counter-attack and with the assistance of 71st Brigade it succeeded in extricating itself from a dangerous position but lost some equipment and a considerable number of

animals. East of the Mayu river we were now forced back to a position covering Buthidaung.

The enemy then began similar infiltration tactics against our troops west of the Mayu range, and at Indin on April 5th overran the headquarters of the 6th Brigade. There was heavy fighting here, and severe casualties were inflicted on the enemy in counter-attacks; but by the middle of April we had withdrawn on this flank to positions covering Maungdaw.

11. By the end of March, the 26th Division had taken over the greater part of the front, most of the 14th Division being withdrawn further north to rest. Some of the troops were tired and many units were weak through battle casualties and disease; reinforcements took some time to settle down to the abnormal conditions of jungle fighting. But in view of our command of the air I still hoped we could regain the initiative. I accordingly issued the instructions to Eastern Army which are given in Appendix B. They were to the effect that positions to cover the Maungdaw-Buthidaung road, the Maungdaw air-field and the mouth of the Naf river were to be held for the monsoon period in as great depth as possible, and that we were meanwhile to regain the initiative by offensive action on both sides of the Mayu river.

12. Shortly afterwards, in the middle of April, I was summoned to the United Kingdom to discuss plans for the winter of 1943-44 (see paragraph 46 below). During the first three months of 1943 I had visited the Eastern front on a number of occasions and had kept in close personal touch with Commanders and operations. During the remainder of the period under review, I was in the United Kingdom or U.S.A. and in touch only by long-range telegraph reports.

13. We failed to regain the initiative, and in fact lost our positions at Maungdaw and Buthidaung. Japanese forces continued their infiltration tactics through the thick jungle along the spine of the Mayu ridge; and by early May established themselves with a strength of at least two battalions on the road between Maungdaw and Buthidaung and destroyed a bridge. All attempts to dislodge them failed, so that it was necessary, on May 7th, to withdraw the force from Buthidaung by the Ngakyedauk Pass to the west of the Mayu ridge south of Bawli Bazaar. The movement was carried out without interference by the enemy; but a quantity of transport which could not be removed had to be destroyed.

14. The enemy continued to infiltrate against our communications; and it was finally decided to take up positions further north, abandoning Maungdaw, although it had been developed as an advanced base since its capture in December, and its loss involved the destruction of considerable quantities of stores. An attempt might have been made to hold and maintain it by means of the Naf river; but in view of the tired state of the troops and their lack of jungle training the attempt was not judged advisable. By the start of the monsoon, our forces in Arakan were back approximately in the positions from which the advance had begun five months earlier. The enemy, who was also obviously suffering,

from maintenance difficulties, withdrew to the Maungdaw-Buthidaung line which he had held at the beginning of operations. This ended active operations in Arakan except for small patrol enterprises.

On May 20th I decided to replace Lieut.-General N. M. S. Irwin, Commander of the Eastern Army who had been for some time suffering from ill-health, by General Sir George Giffard.

15. The result of these Arakan operations was undoubtedly disappointing. But they must be viewed in their proper perspective. They were represented in some quarters as an "invasion of Burma". Actually, as already stated, they had one objective only, Akyab island, and I should not have committed troops deeply into the unhealthy Arakan jungles had I had available the naval and air forces, landing craft and transports for a sea-borne assault on the island.* When it became obvious that these would not be forthcoming, I took the risk, sooner than keep my troops standing idle, of trying to reach Akyab by an overland advance. I was well aware of the difficulties and dangers, and that the troops I was employing were not fully trained or equipped; they had been organised and trained up to the autumn for the defence of Bengal.

16. When these operations were initiated, I had been informed by General Stilwell that the Chinese Armies in Yunnan would advance into Upper Burma in force early in 1943, and I had intended that the IV Corps from Assam should advance in co-operation with them. I had therefore reason to suppose that the Japanese in Upper Burma would be fully occupied and unlikely to move reinforcements to Arakan. Actually, the Chinese made no move; and the IV Corps, owing to administrative difficulties, was unable to be as active as I had hoped. The Japanese were therefore able to reinforce Akyab and Arakan from Upper Burma.

17. That Japanese defences, skilfully prepared and concealed, and held to the last, are difficult to overcome without considerable superiority of numbers and equipment and good training has been abundantly shown in the fighting in New Guinea and elsewhere in the S.-W. Pacific, and in the actions which have taken place this spring on the Burma frontier. We had never the necessary superiority in these respects to assault positions such as Donbaik and Rathedaung; and our tactics were not always appropriate, owing to inexperience. The enemy counter-offensive was skilfully planned and executed; and their mobility and infiltration tactics in the jungle are undoubtedly difficult to counter. It was not possible to feed by air troops which had been cut off from their base by these tactics, owing to the lack of transport aeroplanes.

18. In the initial advance the troops of the 14th Division fought boldly and well. It was only in the latter stages of the fighting, after several months continuous engagement in an unhealthy climate and under the discouragement of failure that there was any deterioration in the endurance and fighting capacity of the troops.

19. Strategically, we failed to reach Akyab and finished in the same positions from which we had started, but the capture of Akyab by an overland expedition was always in the nature of a gamble. We suffered some 2,500 battle casualties and probably inflicted at least as heavy losses on the enemy. The greatest gain from the campaign was experience, of the enemy's methods and of our own defects in training and organisation. The serious loss was in prestige and morale.

On balance I shall certainly never regret that I ordered the campaign to take place in spite of lack of resources.

SUPPORT BY R.I.N. AND R.A.F.

20. Launches and coastal craft of the Royal Indian Navy played a considerable part in these operations, both along the coast and in the Naf and Mayu rivers, and showed much enterprise in a number of small actions, of which the following are examples. On January 27th a launch on patrol in the Mayu river rammed and sank a large launch full of enemy troops, at least fifty of whom were killed. On the night of February 21st-22nd Coastal craft landed a raiding party at Myebon, about sixty miles south-east of Akyab, which inflicted casualties, destroyed stores, and re-embarked without loss. On February 26th motor launches on patrol north of Ramree Island intercepted two Japanese motor launches, sank one and damaged the other, inflicting at least 50 casualties on the enemy.

21. The R.A.F. gave invaluable aid to the Army during these operations, both by attacks on enemy positions in close support and by attacks on other targets in forward areas, such as boats on the rivers or transport on the tracks and roads. The action of the R.A.F. is described in greater detail in paragraphs 32 to 36

OPERATIONS IN NORTHERN BURMA.

22. My intention had been that during the winter the IV Corps (17th and 23rd Indian Divisions) should advance into Burma and establish itself on the Chindwin river between Kalewa and Sittaung. The only strategic objective of these operations was to assist the advance of the Chinese forces into Northern Burma (see paragraph 2 above) by engaging as many enemy troops as possible.

There were two possible routes leading towards the objective from the Imphal plain in Manipur over the high range into Burma. The road from Imphal by Palel to Tamu (in the Kabaw valley) had been constructed in 1942, from Palel to Tamu it was a single-way mountain road liable to frequent interruption in the rains; the distance from Imphal to Palel is 28 miles; and from Palel to Tamu 36 miles. The other possible route was from Imphal by Bishenpur to Tiddim (145 miles), thence to Fort White and down into the Kabaw valley at Kalemyo; this route had certain obvious advantages in the approach to Kalemyo, since it was screened by hills to the east until close to Kalemyo, whereas an advance to Kalemyo from Tamu was exposed throughout to enemy attacks from across the Chindwin. General Irwin favoured the development of the Tiddim route and placed most of our limited road-making resources on it. A visit to the front early in February convinced me that our

* The landings in North Africa and later in Sicily (November, 1942—July, 1943) took higher priority and there were insufficient resources for both operations (Note by the War Office.)

resources were quite insufficient to develop the lengthy Tiddim route in time, and that it was in fact unlikely that it could ever be made into a serviceable line of communication owing to the engineering difficulties. It seemed likely that the monsoon would find us with no reliable road into Burma at all. I therefore ordered the diversion of our road-making effort to the improvement of the Tamu road, which was at least known to be practicable.

23. The lack of transport, of road-making material and of other administrative resources, which are referred to elsewhere in this despatch, made it necessary to postpone operations against Kalewa and Sittaung. When it was found that the Chinese troops in Yunnan had no intention of making a move, the strategical basis of our advance disappeared; and in the end operations in the Kabaw Valley were confined to strong offensive patrols.

OPERATIONS OF 77TH INDIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE.

(WINGATE'S FORCE.)

24. Early in 1942, while operations in Burma were still being conducted, I had asked for the services of Lieut.-Colonel O. C. Wingate, D.S.O., who had served under my command in Palestine in 1938 and in Abyssinia in 1941, to organise guerilla activity in Burma. He arrived too late to effect anything in Burma; but on the withdrawal from Burma in May 1942 he put before me a proposal to train a brigade for long-range penetration behind the enemy lines. The brigade was to have a special organisation and was to be independent of the normal lines of communication and to be supplied from the air. I approved Colonel Wingate's proposals, and placed him in command of a Brigade formed of the 13th Battalion of the King's Regiment, the 3/2nd Gurkha Rifles, 142nd Commando Company and 2nd Battalion of Burma Rifles. These were not picked units in any way, but were the only ones easily available at the time. The formation was known as 77th Indian Infantry Brigade and began jungle training in the Central Provinces in July 1942. Its original rôle in the reconquest of Burma was to penetrate into Central Burma at a time when both Upper and Lower Burma were being attacked by large forces. When our restricted resources permitted only a very limited advance in Upper Burma, I considered whether I should employ the Brigade at all during the winter of 1942-43. With a view, however, to giving the maximum possible assistance to the Chinese advance which was due to take place on March 1st (see paragraph 2 above), I decided to use the Brigade in Upper Burma to cut the enemy line of communication to Mvitykina and if possible also to Bhamo and Lashio. It was accordingly moved to Imphal early in 1943. At the beginning of February I learnt from General Stilwell that the Chinese in Yunnan had no intention of advancing. The operations of the 77th Brigade would thus have no support and no strategical purpose. I had therefore to decide whether it was wise to employ the Brigade at all. I went to Imphal and had a long discussion with Brigadier Wingate on the evening of February 6th, as a result of which I decided to let the operation continue, in order to gain experience of the working of these

columns. I inspected the Brigade, which was organised into seven columns, on February 7th; and it began its move next day. Each column was self-contained with pack transport, and had machine-guns and mortars. There was no artillery, and supply was by local purchase and air.

25. The directive given to the Brigade was to enter Burma through the front held by the 4th Corps; to cut the main North and South railway line between Mandalay and Myitkyina; to harass the enemy in the Shwebo area; and then, if circumstances were favourable, to cross the Irrawaddy and cut the railway line Maymyo-Lashio.

To assist the main body to cross the River Chindwin (about Tonhe) and reach the railway some 150 miles distant without opposition, two of its Gurkha columns were sent to cross the river 50 miles to the South, and to co-operate with movements by the 23rd Division in that area, who were to simulate an attack on the enemy position at Kalewa. These two columns were to cross the river three days before the main body of the Brigade, and then, after moving south to attract the attention of the enemy, to move quickly to the east, cross the river Irrawaddy at Tagaung, and await the arrival of the main force in the mountains around Mongmit. Supply dropping for these columns during this period was to be by day so as to attract attention; otherwise the normal practice was to drop supplies by night.

So far as can be judged the deception was successful; at any rate the main body had crossed the Chindwin without opposition by the 18th February, and succeeded in reaching the railway unopposed.

Two columns fell out of the enterprise at an early stage. One of the two southerly columns was trapped in an ambush, broke up and returned to Assam in small parties; and one column of the main body, in a brush with some enemy, became scattered, lost much equipment and was cut off from the other columns; as this column had shown poor fighting qualities its commander decided to march it back to the Chindwin.

26. The main body reached the railway and successfully carried out a series of demolitions; four bridges were destroyed, the side of a gorge blasted to bring down thousands of tons of rock on the line, and the track was cut in 70 other places.

I had given Brigadier Wingate a free hand to decide whether after cutting the railway he returned to Assam or crossed the Irrawaddy and raided further east. As one of the main objects of the expedition was to gain experience, he eventually decided to cross the Irrawaddy, largely in order to ascertain whether the equipment and methods of river-crossing evolved during training were practical. The crossing of the Irrawaddy by the various widely separated columns was accomplished between March 9th and 18th.

27. Across the Irrawaddy the Brigade began to encounter difficulties. It was hot, water was not easy to find, and the health of men and animals began to suffer. There were more Japanese in the area than had been expected, and many M.T. tracks which gave the enemy mobility, hence it became difficult to

arrange supply dropping. Eventually the operations against the Mandalay-Lashio railway were abandoned, and it was decided to recross the Irrawaddy and return to India. An attempt to cross the Irrawaddy at Inywa (south of Katha) was discovered by the enemy, and failed. The order was therefore given for the force to break up into Dispersal Groups—a manœuvre which had been practised during training—and to cross the river on a very wide front and return to India independently. This was successfully done, most Groups reached the Chindwin in the area occupied by the 23rd Division near Sittaung; one column crossed it as far north as Tamanthi and went thence to Kohima; one marched due north and won out by Fort Hertz, one went east to Paoshan, was hospitably received by the Chinese Army and flown back to India by the Americans. The majority of the force had returned by the first week in June. The Brigade had spent four months inside territory occupied by the Japanese.

28. The enterprise had no strategic value, and about one-third of the force which entered Burma was lost. But the experience gained of operations of this type, in supply dropping from the air, and in jungle warfare and Japanese methods, was invaluable. The enemy was obviously surprised and at a loss, and found no effective means to counter the harassment of our columns. The operations showed the necessity for a very high standard of training and physical fitness in troops employed on such expeditions. In general, Brigadier Wingate's theories and leadership were fully vindicated. A detailed and frank account of the enterprise is given in his printed report of the operations. As soon as the expedition started, I had issued orders for the formation of another brigade (III Indian Infantry Brigade) on similar lines.

OPERATIONS IN N.-E. BURMA.

29. Early in 1942 the construction of a road from Ledo (in North-East Assam) towards Myitkyina in Upper Burma had been begun. Work had been interrupted by the evacuation of Burma and by the monsoon; but had been resumed in November. In December the Americans took over the construction, with the intention of eventually driving a supply route through to China. By June 20 roadhead had crossed the Paungsa Pass, 46 miles from Ledo. The nature of the country and the climate made the work extremely difficult. To protect the construction, the Americans employed a part of the Chinese troops who had been trained in India under American supervision (see paragraphs 15 and 16 of my Despatch on operations in the Eastern Theatre based in India, Mar.-Dec. 1942).*

30. I mentioned in my last Despatch* (paragraph 22) the reoccupation of Fort Hertz in the extreme north of Burma to support the operations of the Kachin Levies towards Myitkyina. These levies, under Lieut.-Colonel Gamble, did most valuable work in harassing the Japanese forces in the Myitkyina area during the early part of 1943; so much so that they stung the enemy into retaliation. Early in March a considerable Japanese force advanced on Sumprabum, temporarily dispersed the levies, and seemed to threaten Fort Hertz.

There was a moment when it was represented to me that only a brigade could save Fort Hertz. There was no brigade available; the only means of communication with Fort Hertz were by air; and very few transport aircraft were available. I had one additional company flown in to Fort Hertz. The Japanese did not advance beyond Sumprabum and the levies soon recovered their morale.

OPERATIONS OF R.I.N.

31. Apart from the assistance given by small craft in the Arakan operations (see paragraphs 6 and 20 above), there is little to record of the operations of the Royal Indian Navy, which carried on its normal escort and patrol duties. There was no enemy naval activity in the Indian theatre during the period.

AIR OPERATIONS.

32. During the period under review the R.A.F. continued to expand in numbers and began to receive more modern aeroplanes and equipment. In 1943 it can be said to have passed definitely from the defensive to the offensive. We were still, however, much below our requirements, and our aircraft were deficient in range and performance, and included many obsolete or obsolescent types. The operational strength of the R.A.F. by June 1943 was—

- 18 Fighter squadrons,
- 2 Squadrons long-range bombers,
- 2 Squadrons medium bombers,
- 11 Squadrons light bombers,
- 2 Squadrons torpedo bombers,
- 6 Squadrons Flying-boats,
- 2 Squadrons Transport aircraft,
- 2 General Recce. Squadrons,
- 1 Photographic Recce. Squadron,
- 1 Coastal Fighter Squadron,
- 1 Night Fighter Squadron.

The Fighter Squadrons were equipped with Hurricanes and Mohawks; the heavy bombers were Liberators, the medium bombers Wellingtons, and the light bombers Blenheims and Vengeances. The torpedo bombers were Beauforts, the flying-boats Catalinas, and the transport aircraft Hudsons and Dakotas. There were also a few Spitfires and Hurricanes used for photographic reconnaissance. The General Reconnaissance Squadrons were equipped with Hudsons whilst the Coastal Fighter Squadron and the Night Fighter Squadron were both equipped with Beaufighters.

The strength of the 10th American Air Force also increased and by June it had available approximately 60 fighters (Kittyhawks), 50 heavy bombers (Liberators) and 70 medium bombers (Mitchells). Working in close co-operation, the R.A.F. and U.S.A.A.F. together established air superiority over the Japanese air forces operating from Burma.

33. The objects of the Air Force operations during the period under review were:—

- (a) To establish and maintain air superiority in Burma;
- (b) To support the operations of the Army;
- (c) To disrupt enemy communications in Burma;
- (d) To defend India against air attack; and
- (e) To supply from the air, forces which could not be supplied by normal means.

The first object was attained by attacks by day and night on enemy-occupied airfields and air installations and bases and by taking every opportunity to engage the enemy in the air.

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Direct support of the Army was centred on the Arakan operations where the main fighting took place. The nature of the country, mainly dense jungle, made location of the enemy forward troops usually impossible; and though considerable success was achieved on occasions by bombing on targets indicated by artillery fire or pin-point methods, greater effect was obtained by attack on objectives in the immediate rear of the enemy's forward troops, *i.e.*, sampans and small boats on the waterways, bullock carts and other vehicles on the roads, or the forward movement of troops. These attacks were carried out chiefly by low-flying fighters.

Attacks on communications in Burma were made on railways (marshalling yards, bridges, rolling stock), on road-bridges and transport, on river craft, on depôts and similar objectives. In general, the R.A.F. bombers attacked the short-range targets up to 250 miles from our forward airfields, while the Americans with their larger range and bigger armament attacked the more distant objectives. All bombing by U.S. aircraft and by R.A.F. light bombers was carried out by day, night bombing being carried out by R.A.F. medium and heavy bombers. Hurricanes with long-range tanks were also used for attacks on transportation.

The defence of India against air attack requires little mention. In December 1942, as recorded in my last despatch,* the enemy made a series of small raids on the Calcutta area. In response to my request for night fighters, a flight of Beaufighters arrived in Calcutta on January 14, 1943. On January 15th three enemy aircraft attempted to raid Calcutta and were all three shot down by a single Beaufighter. Four enemy aircraft made a raid on January 19th, of which two were certainly destroyed and one probably. There were no further attacks west of the Brahmaputra.

34. Apart from attacks on India, the enemy air force made occasional raids on our forward airfields and attacks on our troops or bases in Arakan. These attacks had little success; and generally the enemy's air activity was surprisingly small. Our constant attacks on his airfields forced him to keep his main air forces outside range of our bomber effort; his practice was to fly in a force of bombers from Thailand or Malaya, carry out one or two raids and then fly back again to distant bases. His bomber raids were always escorted by fighters; these fighters were a match or more than a match for our Hurricanes, unless they could gain an effective height before the approach of the enemy; and it became obvious that re-equipment with Spitfires of at least some of our fighter squadrons was required.

35. Supply dropping was carried out to maintain the 77th Brigade (see paragraphs 24 to 28), also to our forward troops in the Chin Hills and in the extreme north-east of Burma between Fort Hertz and Sumprabum, where our levies were operating. 300 tons of supplies were dropped on 77th Brigade and nearly 1,500 tons on other forces. Operations were over jungle country in difficult conditions, but not a single aircraft was lost.

36. The R.A.F. from North-East India also carried out regular sea reconnaissance over the Bay of Bengal, while aircraft from Southern India and Ceylon patrolled convoy routes and shipping lanes.

Photographic reconnaissance was carried out regularly over Burma; while long-range aircraft also made photographic reconnaissance flights over Sumatra, the Nicobar Islands, Andaman Islands and the west coast of Thailand.

ADMINISTRATIVE EFFORT.

37. These operations by land and air on India's north-eastern frontier, though on a comparatively small scale, required a very considerable administrative effort to support them. The difficulties of the lines of communication to Bengal and Assam were stated in paragraphs 10 to 13 of my last despatch.* Work on the improvement, both of the railways and on Inland Water Transport routes, has been continuous, but has not always been able to keep pace with the increasing demands. In particular, the narrow gauge railway to North-East India had during the first half of 1943 to meet the following demands, which competed with each other:—

- (a) Supply of troops of IV Corps in Manipur to enable them to advance into Burma;
- (b) Supply of American and Chinese troops in Ledo area and for Ledo road construction,
- (c) Supplies to be transported by air route into China;
- (d) Materials and labour for construction of airfields in north-east Assam;
- (e) Supplies for civil population of Assam.

The first of the above demands involved the building up of depôts and stores along 350 miles of road; materials for a very large programme of road construction (see paragraph 22); the making of additional hospitals and other administrative establishments; as well as the daily maintenance of nearly 100,000 men, at distances up to over 200 miles from railhead.

The continual increase of American and Chinese forces employed on the Ledo road in the extreme north-eastern corner of Assam threw an additional strain on the transportation system. In February, after the visit of General Arnold to Chungking (see paragraph 43), the Americans suddenly decided to double the monthly tonnage target of air-borne supplies to China, from 10,000 to 20,000 tons. Though it did not prove possible, during the period under review, to reach the higher figure, plans had to provide for the delivery of this additional quantity of supplies at air-head, and for large increase of petrol, oil and other supplies for the extra aircraft required on the Chinese route. Further, the Americans demanded as a matter of urgent necessity the construction of more air-fields in Assam, which involved the transport of large quantities of materials and the diversion of engineering resources and labour from other important projects.

Besides all these military needs, the civil population of Assam had to be kept supplied by the same tenuous line of rail. If the priorities between all these conflicting requirements had remained constant, the task would have been difficult enough; but it was continually being complicated by the introduction into the programme of some fresh project of prior urgency; which often meant the removal of the limited resources in labour, machinery,

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etc., from one site to another. The fact that the requirements and views of the British, Americans, Indians and Chinese were involved and did not always coincide still further complicated the problem and introduced the danger of international friction. The wonder was not that projects were seldom completed by the target date but that so much got done.

38. I gave orders for a through road from India to Assam to be constructed, in order to assist the supply problem and to avoid the necessity of all wheeled vehicles being sent to Assam by rail instead of under their own power. This Assam access road ran through Bihar and north Bengal, but progress in construction was slow due to lack of resources.

MEDICAL.

39. The medical situation continued to require constant enlargement of hospitals in the operational area and strained India's inadequate resources to the utmost. Malaria remained the chief problem. During the Arakan operations casualties from malaria were extremely heavy, and the sick rate in Assam was also high. Weekly admissions to hospital in Eastern Army reached 10,000 in June, of which over half were due to malaria.

A Medical Mission from the United Kingdom visited India to investigate our shortage of medical personnel, and made valuable recommendations.

FOOD SUPPLIES.

40. By the end of 1942 the supply of food-grains in India was obviously short of her needs, and we had great difficulty in obtaining foodstuffs for the Armed forces. I was compelled to draw the attention of the Government of India to the dangers of the food situation; and in January had to make a reduction in the flour ration of the Army.

CEYLON AND OCEAN BASES (ADDU ATOLL, DIEGO GARCIA, COCOS ISLANDS).

41. These continued to remain the responsibility of Commander-in-Chief, India, but there is little to record of them during the period. The enemy made no attack or threat against any of them. There were some changes in the garrison of Ceylon, the 16th British Brigade of the 70th Division (see paragraph 8 of my previous Despatch)* being moved from Ceylon to rejoin its Division.

Ceylon was a valuable training ground for jungle warfare. At Addu Atoll A.A. guns were installed and airfields developed, the health situation was much improved.

INTERNAL SITUATION.

42. The internal situation in India during the first half of 1943 was quiet. The operations in Sind against the Hurs, undertaken to guard vital railway communications and restore public order and confidence (see paragraph 23 of my last despatch),* ended on June 1st, when martial law was removed. The head of the sect, the Pir Pagaro, was tried and executed.

The situation on the North-West Frontier of India gave no trouble during the period.

Recruiting continued at a generally satisfactory rate, but it became obvious that the Indian Army had reached its expansion limit

on a voluntary basis; the intake was now only sufficient to maintain the existing strength. The intake of Indian officers for the Army and the R.A.F. was disappointing both in quantity and quality.

PLANNING FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS.

43. In January I received information that Field-Marshal Sir John Dill, General Arnold, commanding the American air forces, and General Somervell, head of the American Service of Supply, would visit India after the Allied Conference at Casablanca to discuss plans for the recapture of Burma. They arrived at the end of January, and General Stilwell came also from China. Discussions were held on February 2nd and 3rd at Delhi. I had given orders some time previously for the preparation of a plan to recapture Burma during the cold weather of 1943-44, and the draft of this plan, which had been completed just before the arrival of the party, formed the basis of our discussions. As a result of these I submitted to the Chiefs of Staff an outline plan which may be summarised as follows.

The plan provided for an offensive in three phases:—

Phase 1.—To begin in November 1943, consisted in an advance by 10 Chinese divisions from Western Yunnan towards Myitkyina, Bhamo, Lashio, and eventually Mandalay; by the Chinese troops which had been trained at Ramgarh, from Ledo on Myitkyina; and by 3 British divisions from Manipur on Pakokku and Mandalay.

Phase 2.—Was to take place in December 1943, and was to consist of simultaneous seaborne assaults on the Western coast of Lower Burma, and landings were to be made on Ramree island, Taungup, Sandaway, Gwa, and Bassein, with the main object of securing airfields, also of advancing from Taungup on Prome; during this phase the British and Chinese advance in Upper Burma would be continued.

Phase 3.—Was to take place in January 1944, and was to consist of a direct seaborne and airborne assault on Rangoon, while the operations in Phases 1 and 2 continued.

Field-Marshal Dill and General Arnold then went to Chungking to discuss the plan with the Generalissimo, and I took General Somervell for a short tour of the Eastern Front. We met again in Calcutta and confirmed the outline plan.

44. The plan was admittedly a bold and hazardous one; but it was the only one which offered, to my mind, a chance of recapturing Burma in one campaigning season, between two monsoons; and this was what I had been instructed to do. The plan did not commend itself to my A.O.C.-in-C., Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse, nor to Admiral Sir James Somerville, Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, who had been unable to be present at the discussions with the Americans but who visited Delhi later in February. Their objections were mainly that the cover by air forces would be insufficient; and that the direct assault on Rangoon would be impracticable if the enemy installed a heavy scale of defences in the Rangoon river. My comment was that I thought that by the winter of 1943-44 the Japanese air

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strength might have been considerably reduced, and that while I agreed that an assault up the Rangoon river would be extremely hazardous if the Japanese had installed a heavy scale of defence, there was at present no sign that they had done so or intended to do so.

I never received from the Chiefs of Staff or War Cabinet either approval or condemnation of the plan; but the resources required to implement it were obviously not forthcoming. I had stated our requirements at 182,000 tons per month beginning in March if the plan was to be prepared and executed in the winter 1943-44. The shipping programmes for March and April provided less than half of this.

45. Meanwhile in the middle of February I had ordered my planning staff to prepare plans for operations against Sumatra and Java, so as to have available alternative plans, if the Combined Chiefs of Staff decided against the scheme for the reconquest of Burma. Plans for the capture of the Andaman Islands and for the invasion of Northern Sumatra were also examined.

46. I had intended to visit Australia in May to see the progress of the war against the Japanese in South-West Pacific, to learn what I could from their tactical methods and training, and to discuss the co-ordination of operations from India with those in South-West Pacific. I proposed then to suggest a visit to London in June to settle plans for the winter. When, however, I put this programme to the C.I.G.S. early in April, I was instructed to proceed forthwith to U.K. without visiting Australia, to discuss future plans for the war against Japan. I left India on April 18th and arrived in London on April 22nd.

47. The War Cabinet did not favour the plan I had proposed and which the Americans had accepted. It was decided to discuss operations from India against Japan at a conference in Washington to which I accompanied the Prime Minister and Chiefs of Staff, with the A.O.C.-in-C., India, and the Commander in Chief, Eastern Fleet.

The discussions in Washington did not result in any new proposals for action from India in 1943-44. It was decided that—

- (a) First priority should be given to developing the air route to China to a capacity of 10,000 tons a month;
- (b) There should be land and air operations into Upper Burma from Ledo and Imphal, combined with a Chinese advance from Yunnan.
- (c) Akyab and Ramree Islands should be captured by amphibious operations.

In fact, the only difference from my plan for 1942-43 (see paragraph 2) was the addition of Ramree Island to the objectives.

48. On the instructions of the Prime Minister I returned to London from Washington for further discussions. In June, His Majesty the King was graciously pleased to appoint me to be Viceroy of India, and on June 20th I was succeeded as Commander-in-Chief in India by General Sir Claude Auchinleck.

GENERAL REMARKS.

49. This despatch marks the end of my active military career. During the present war, in just under four years, from September, 1939,

to June, 1943, I have directed some fourteen campaigns; in the Western Desert of North Africa, in British Somaliland, in Eritrea, in Italian Somaliland, in Abyssinia, in Greece, in Crete, in Iraq, in Syria, in Iran, in Malaya, in the Dutch East Indies, in Burma, in Arakan. Some have been successful, others have failed.

I should like to express my admiration for the general strategy of the War Cabinet and for the bold and imaginative use made of our limited resources during these first four years of war. I have always been placed during these years at the far end of the Supply line, and have always been short of troops and equipment and air forces for the tasks I have had to undertake; but I have always been conscious that everything possible was being done to support me, that my lack of resources was due to a general shortage, that my difficulties were sympathetically understood and that I was being given all possible help and encouragement. For this I am most grateful.

50. I regret to have one exception to make. During the operations recorded in this despatch I received neither encouragement nor help nor understanding of the difficulties, only criticism for the failure of a bold attempt to engage the enemy with inadequate resources, in hazardous circumstances.

That my plans were not unsound is, I think, shown by the fact that the plans adopted by the South-East Asia Command for the winter 1943-44 have been practically the same as those I laid down for the previous winter; and that the Long Range Penetration Groups which were initiated by Major-General Wingate under my direction have been adopted and extended as a result of the experience I originated. That I had considerable difficulties to encounter is shown by the fact that in spite of greatly increased resources and another year's training and experience, progress in Burma in the campaigning season of 1943-44 has been little, if any, greater than in the corresponding period of 1942-43.

A glance at a map will give some idea of the distances involved in operations from India, and therefore of the magnitude of the administrative problem.

THE SOLDIER.

51. In this my last despatch I should like to pay a tribute to the British soldier. He has shown himself in this war, as in all others, the finest all-round fighting man in the world. He has won so many victories that he never doubts of victory; he has suffered so many disasters and defeats on his way to victory that defeat seldom depresses him. He has adapted himself to desert and to jungle, to open plains and to mountains, to new foes, new conditions, new weapons with the same courage and humorous endurance of difficulties and dangers which he has always shown. His staying power is a sure guarantee of final success.

Whatever the qualities of the soldier, the value of an army depends in the end on the leadership of the regimental officer, and in the British Army this still remains worthy of the men they lead. Whatever method may be adopted in the future to officer the British Army, it must ensure the same standard of leadership and the same close relations with the soldier.

My experience is that our staff system and system of command is too cumbersome and over elaborated, and needs revision. We have lost the merit of simplicity in our system of command, in our tactics and in our equipment, by always trying to provide for every possible contingency.

52. Next to the British, I have had most to do with the Indian soldier, and owe much to him. In this war he has shown in addition to his proved fighting qualities a remarkable ability to adapt himself to the complexities of modern war and to learn new weapons and new methods.

53. I have had the honour to have had placed under my command during this war troops of many other nationalities: Australian, New Zealand, South African, American, French, Polish, Czech, Greek, Dutch, Sudanese, East African, West African, Burmese, Chinese. To them all I tender my gratitude and respect.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

54. During the two years I have been Commander-in-Chief in India, I have been most fortunate in having the support and advice of a great and wise man, His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General, the Marquess of Linlithgow. I offer him my grateful thanks.

55. During the period under review, the Commander of the Eastern Army Lieutenant-General N. M. S. Irwin, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., held a most difficult post, with heavy and extended responsibilities both for command and administration. In spite of frequent ill-health, he carried out his task with great energy and devotion to duty.

56. I am indebted to the Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, Admiral Sir James F. Somerville, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., for his ready help in all matters which were within his resources; these did not unfortunately allow of the Eastern Fleet supporting the operations in Arakan.

57. Air-Chief-Marshal Sir Richard E. C. Peirse, K.C.B., D.S.O., A.F.C., has always given me the closest possible support of the Air Force, and has helped me in every possible way. We have worked closely together for nearly 2½ years, and I shall greatly value the association.

58. I have acknowledged the services of my principal assistants and staff in paragraphs 41 to 43 of my last despatch.* They continued to give me most able and loyal support during the period under review.

59. A list of recommendations for honours and awards has already been submitted and approved.

APPENDIX "A"

SKELETON ORDER OF BATTLE

FORCES OF THE FIELD ARMY, INDIA COMMAND,
JANUARY, 1943.

EASTERN ARMY.

Army Troops.

1 Hybad. L. (Div. Recce Regt.) Ranchi.
12 F.F.R. (M.G. Bn.) Calcutta.

88 Ind. Inf. Bde.

5 Jat
14 F.F.R
1/16 Punjab } Comilla—
Chittagong
Area

14 Ind Div

129 Fd. Regt.
130 Fd. Regt.
23 Mtn. Regt.
44 L.A.A. Regt.
9 Jat (M.G. Bn.) } Arakan.

47 Ind. Inf. Bde.*

1 Innisks.
1 Rajput
5/8 Punjab } Arakan.

55 Ind. Inf. Bde.*

2/1 Punjab
8 Raj. Rif.
1 Dogra } Chittagong
Area.

123 Ind. Inf. Bde.*

10 L.F.
8 Baluch.
1/15 Punjab } Arakan.

26 Ind. Div.

160 Fd. Regt.
3 Ind Fd. Regt.

4 Ind. Inf. Bde.

6 Sikh
8/8 Punjab
3/9 G.R.

36 Ind. Inf. Bde.

1 N. Staffs
8 F.F. Rif.
5/16 Punjab } Calcutta Area.

71 Ind. Inf. Bde.*

1 Lincolns
7/15 Punjab
9/15 Punjab

39 Ind. Lt. Div.

24 Ind. Mtn. Regt. ... Shillong.
27 Ind. Mtn. Regt. ... Ambala.
24 A.A./A. Tk. Regt. ... Calcutta.
2 D.W.R.—Div. Sp.

Bn.
1 Sikh—Bde. Recce Bn.
2 F.F.Rif.—Bde. Recce
Bn. } Ranchi.

106 Ind. Inf. Bde.

2 Rajput
1 Jat
1/8 G.R. } Shillong.
... (Tempy. with 16
Ind. Inf. Bde.)

113 Ind. Inf. Bde.

2 K.O.Y.L.I.
5/1 Punjab
1 R. Garhwal Rif. } Shillong.

16 Ind. Inf. Bde.*

2/8 Punjab ... Risalpur
(joined in
Feb.).

7 Jat
7/14 Punjab } Digboi.

109 Ind. Inf. Bde.*

9 Rajput... Chin Hills.
Area Imphal-
Palel.
Dets Manipur
Road.
Shungann and
Ledo.

Nepalese
Kali Bahadur
Shere

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* Mixed Tpt.—Animal and M.T.

4 CORPS.	ASSAM.	1 Ind. Inf. Bde.	} Imphal Area.
17 Ind. Lt Div	} Imphal Area	1 Seaforth	
21 Ind. Mtn. Regt.		1 Assam R.	
29 Ind Mtn. Regt.		1 Patiala Inf	
129 Fd. Regt.		37 Ind. Inf. Bde.	
82 A.A./A. Tk Regt.		3/3 G.R.	
1 W. Yorks—Div. Sp. Bn.		3/5 R G.R.	
4 F.F.R.—Bde. Recce Bn.		3/10 G.R.	
7 Baluch—Bde. Recce Bn.		49 Ind. Inf. Bde.	
48 Ind Inf. Bde.		4 Maharattas	
1/4 G R		5 Raj. Rif.	
2/5 R G.R.	6 Maharattas		
1/7 G.R.	77 Ind. Inf. Bde.	} Manipur Road.	
63 Ind. Inf. Bde.	(Independent).		
1 Glosters	13 Kings		
1/3 G R	3/2 G.R.		
1/10 G R	2 Burif.		
23 Ind Div.*	142 Coy.		
28 Ind. Mtn. Regt.			
158 Fd Regt			
2 Ind A /Tk. Regt.			
28 L.A.A. Regt.			

* Mixed Tpt—Animal and M T.

FIELD ARMY UNITS IN INDIA OUTSIDE THE WAR ZONES,
JANUARY, 1943.

			<i>Remarks.</i>
15TH IND. CORPS.	Ranchi Area	Corps units short of vehicles, and training incomplete.	
70 Div.	Ranchi Area	Training incomplete; artillery short of signal equipment and vehicles.	
50 Ind. Tank Bde.	Ranchi Area	Deficient of tracked carriers and certain types of small arms.	
16 Inf. Bde.	Detached from 70 Div. in Ceylon.	Units much under strength, and short of equipment; animals unfit.	
33RD IND. CORPS.	Madras Area	Incompletely trained Corps units.	
19 Ind. Div.	Madras Area	Below strength in leaders and personnel. Three months further training required to become fully efficient.	
25 Ind. Div.	Salem—Trichinopoly—Kolar Gold Field.	Recently completed to full equipment and in process of training with it.	
GENERAL RESERVE.			
32 Ind. Armd. Div.	Dhond Area (near Poona)...	Subject to provision of necessary equipment, was expected to be ready for war by June, 1943.	
43 Ind. Armd. Div.	Secunderabad	Concentrating and in an early stage of training.	
251 Ind. Tank Bde.	Dhond Area	Unready for war. Many units newly raised or reorganised.	
254 Ind. Tank Bde.	Dhond Area	Short of equipment and training.	
2 Div.	Bombay—Ahmednagar Area.	Under training in Combined Operations.	
7 Ind. Div.	Chindwara (C.P.)	In process of jungle training; 30 per cent. very young and raw soldiers; short of some of its artillery.	
50 Ind. Parachute Bde....	Campbellpore (N.-W.F.P.)	Forming.	
CEYLON ARMY COMMAND.			
20 Ind. Div	Mayugama		
34 Ind. Div	Kandy		
21 E. African Bde.	Anuradiapura	Adv. Bde. of 11th E. African Div. arriving.	
99 Ind. Inf. Bde.	Trincomalee Fortress.		

APPENDIX "B."

G.H.Q. OPERATION INSTRUCTION NO. 19.
To
G.O.C.-in-C., Eastern Army.

1. Since there is now no possibility of capturing Akyab before the monsoon, His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief directs that the object of operations before the rains in that area will be to regain the initiative and inflict a severe defeat on the enemy. To this end offensive operations will be initiated on both sides of the Mayu River.

2. At the same time you should consider, and prepare—so far as this can be done without weakening your offensive action—positions to be held during the monsoon period.

3. Your positions must cover the Maungdaw—Buthidaung road, Maungdaw airfield and the mouth of the Naf River, with as much depth as possible in front of them. If possible, the Indin landing strip and the Yezogyaung—Apaukwa track should be covered. The latter offers the shortest route to the Kaladan Valley, which may be of considerable importance in operations after the monsoon.

4. The forces under your command in the Mayu area have advantages over the enemy of numerical preponderance, better equipment and the support of superior air forces. If these advantages are skilfully used, it should be possible to take successful offensive action and achieve your object. The enemy's over-confidence engendered by recent successes may lead him to expose himself to an effective counter-stroke; particularly East of the River Mayu.

5. You will, in conjunction with A.O.C., Bengal, draw up joint plans to implement the above policy. An appreciation and copies of Directives issued to the Naval and Air Force Commanders are attached.

(Sd.) A. W. S. MALLABY,
Major-General,
for Chief of the General Staff.

New Delhi, 1st April, 1943.

Copy to G.O.C.-in-C., Eastern Army; Lieut.-Commander R. D. Franks, O.B.E., R.N., C.O., Mayu Force; A.O.C., Bengal; D.M.O.

Dated 1st April, 1943.

AIR HEADQUARTERS (INDIA) OPERATION
INSTRUCTION NO. 1.

(Issued in conjunction with G.H.Q. Operation Instruction No. 19, dated 1st April, 1943.)

This instruction relates to the air action to be taken between now and the end of the monsoon.

Object.

2. The object of these operations for which you are jointly responsible in conjunction with G.O.C.-in-C., Eastern Army, is to inflict a defeat upon the Japanese land forces and secure before the rains and hold until next dry season a position in Arakan which has been indicated to G.O.C.-in-C.

3. Accordingly, the policy for the employment of the air forces under your command must be directed to gaining and maintaining a favourable air situation best calculated to assist the military object.

Air Operations: Bengal Command.

4. The air action to be undertaken by the air forces under your command should be considered as being in two phases, viz.:—

1st Phase:—from now until the monsoon breaks.

2nd Phase:—during the monsoon.

1st Phase.

5. To keep the Japanese air forces on the defensive and maintain air superiority over the area of our land operations.

(a) *Fighter Operations.*—Offensive operations in strength are to be undertaken primarily in forward areas. In this connection the operation of fighter aircraft from Maungdaw and establishment of an effective warning system will be important.

(b) Bomber and long-range fighter attacks are to be carried out against enemy occupied air-fields as a primary task.

(c) Attacks against opportunity targets and enemy communications leading towards the theatre of operations, particularly river communications north of Akyab, are to be undertaken as a secondary task.

2nd Phase.

6. (a) You are to endeavour to maintain a forward fighter offensive policy, to ensure the continuance of local air superiority, and to protect our coastal shipping southwards from Chittagong.

(b) Attacks against enemy occupied air-fields are to be continued when opportunity offers and with the same priority attacks against lines of communication and shipping in the enemy forward areas.

7. Subject to the above you are to conserve your air effort during this phase, and to build up reserves in order to operate with maximum force in support of sea and land operations immediately after the monsoon.

8. Copies of Directives issued to the Naval and Army Commanders are attached.

(Sd.) G. B. A. BAKER,
Air Vice-Marshal,
Senior Air Staff Officer.

To

A.O.C., Bengal.

Copies to G.O.C.-in-C., Eastern Army (5 copies); Lieut.-Commander R. D. Franks, O.B.E., R.N.

Office of F.L.O. (India), New Delhi.

OPERATIONAL INSTRUCTION—MAYU FORCE.

Forces.

1. Your command consists of the two Burma M.Ls. and two L.C.S. at present in the Mayu River. Your immediate Naval Superior is the Naval Officer in Charge, Chittagong.

Object.

2. Your object is to assist by all means in your power the military operations.

Method.

3. In determining the method by which you render such assistance you are constantly to keep in mind the needs of the Commander, 14 Division. The following courses are, amongst others, to be considered:—

- (a) Maintain attack by night patrols, on the enemy's river L. of C., both in forward areas and south of Rathedaung. Our air forces will endeavour to force the enemy to operate these L. of C. by night.
- (b) Attack enemy armed craft in the Mayu River.
- (c) Harass the enemy forces on the river banks.
- (d) Increase the mobility of our land forces by carrying troops or towing sampans.

You are to bear in mind that your repair facilities are limited and that it will not be possible to provide you with reinforcements before the end of the monsoon.

Administration.

4. For administration and maintenance you are to be guided by paragraphs 4 to 9 inclusive of the instruction, dated 19th March, 1943, left with you by S.O. Force "Z."

Enclosures.

5. Copies of the instructions issued to the Army and Air Force Commanders are attached.

(Sd.) A. F. E. PALLISER,

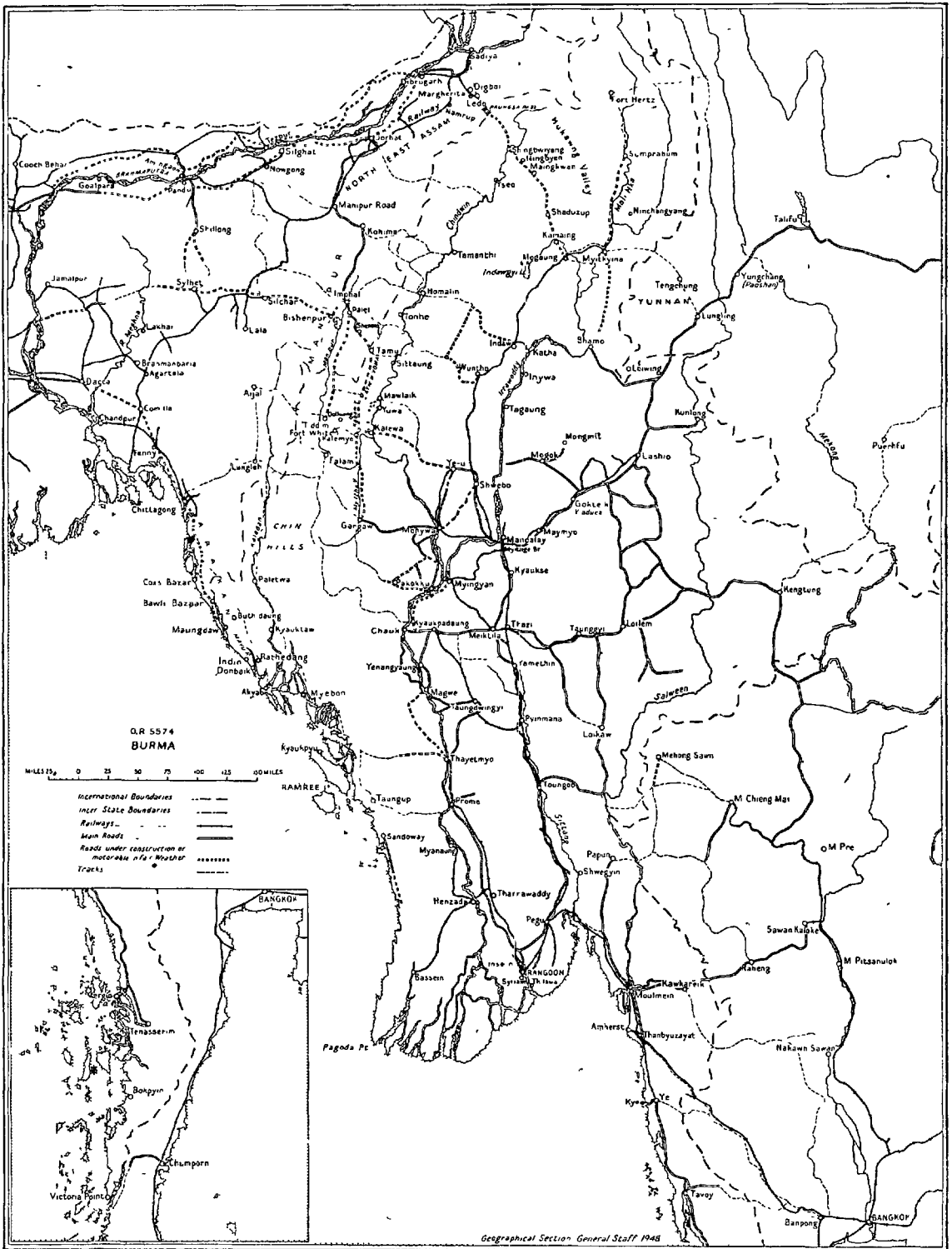
Rear-Admiral,

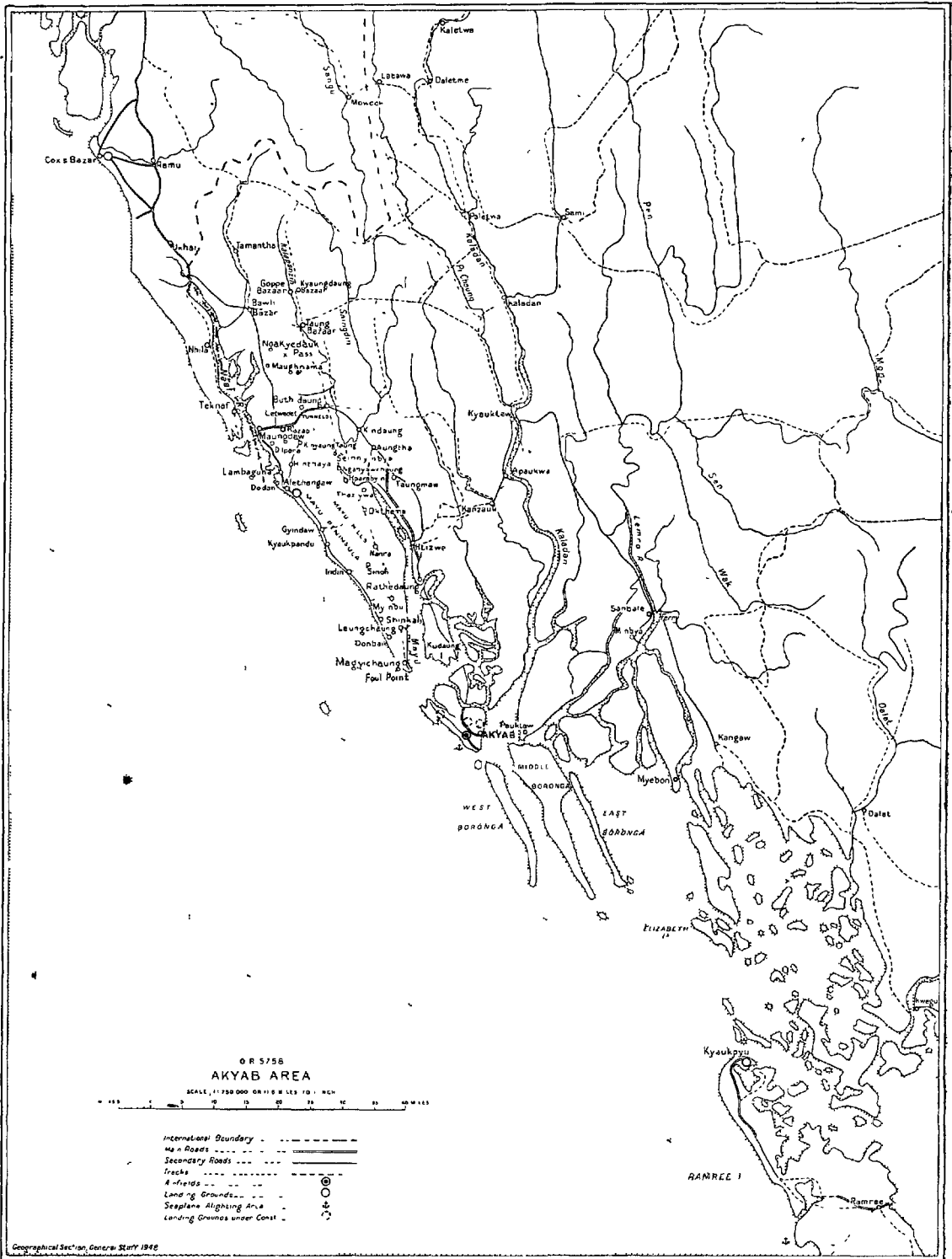
for Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet.

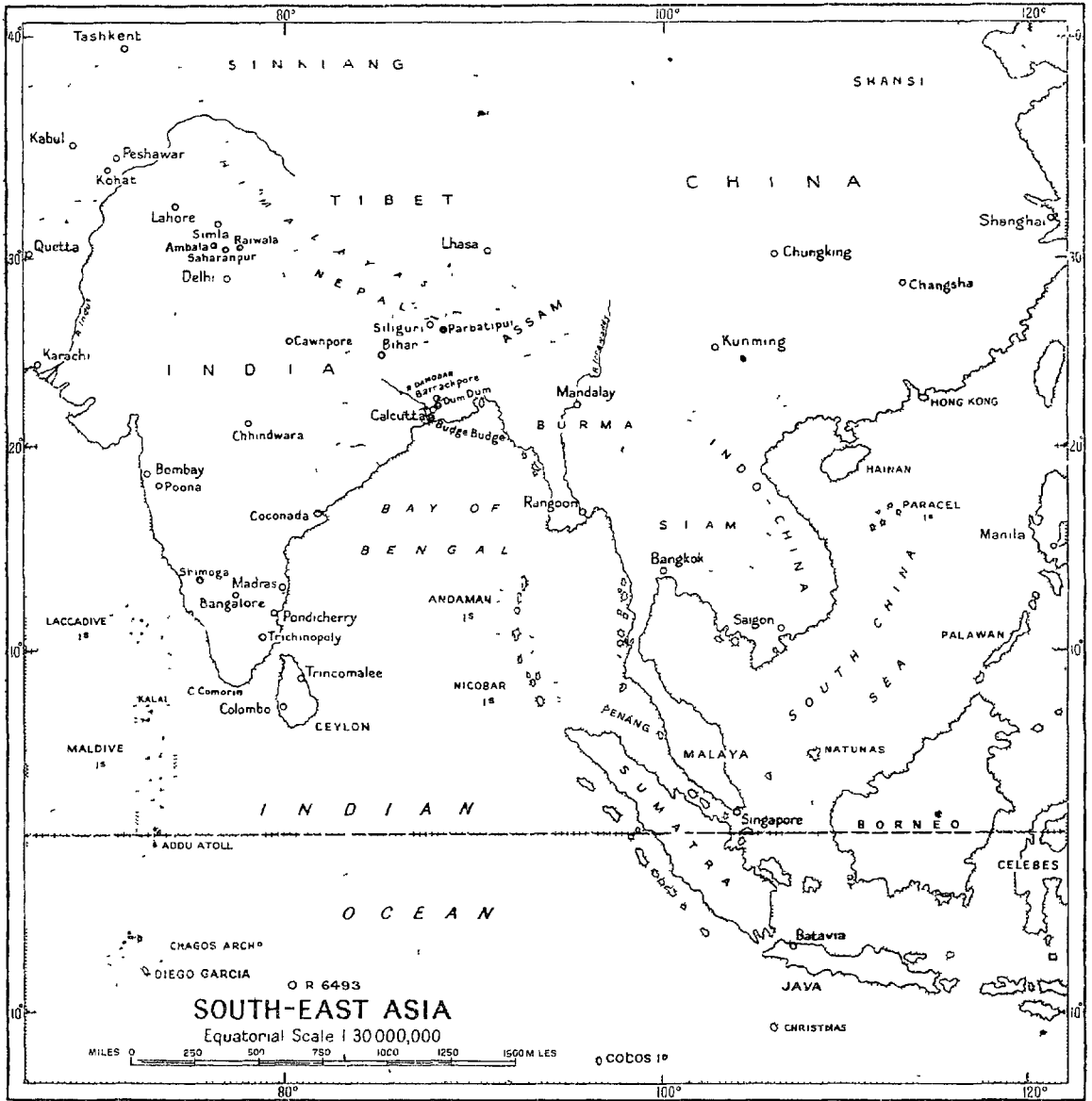
To

Lieut.-Commander R. D. Franks, O.B.E.,
R.N. (C.O. Mayu Force).

Copies to N.O.I.C., Chittagong; G.O.C.-in-C., Eastern Army; A.O.C., Bengal Command.







Geographical Sect on General Staff 1948

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