

all ranks of the R.A.F. from the Commander-in-Chief, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse, to the latest joined airman for their magnificent support and co-operation.

#### *Lessons of the Campaign.*

122. (a) The operations which I have described in this Despatch have emphasised the lessons which I mentioned in my first Despatch, particularly the need for first-class basic training of the junior leaders and the rank and file, physical fitness and good discipline.

(b) They have also shown that it is possible for troops to operate in the monsoon if air supply is possible.

I should like, however, to add a word of warning about the possibility of campaigning at full scale in the monsoon. In the operations for which I was responsible, we were compelled by the Japanese offensive to fight in the monsoon.\* We did so successfully, and drove the Japanese back from the positions they reached in and about Imphal. The cost was high, all divisions, especially 2 British Division, were much reduced in strength by sickness and both officers and men were much exhausted.

The pursuit which continued until the end of November was, with the exception of 5 Indian Division, made by fresh troops, who then had to be withdrawn to rest.

The time limit for troops operating in the monsoon in the Burmese jungle appears to be about three months, after which they need rest in a rear area. The conditions under which troops operate in the dry weather are so infinitely better and the communications both air and ground so much more reliable that it is in my opinion uneconomical to use more troops than are absolutely necessary under monsoon conditions. It may be vital to fight in the monsoon, but a high wastage rate must then be expected and operations in the dry weather will be reduced or delayed by the need for resting and reinforcing those formations which operated during the monsoon, unless there are available very large reserves to take their places.

(c) The increasing accuracy of air bombardment of tactical targets in jungle. This was of the greatest help as divisions which were wholly supplied by air had frequently a very limited supply of artillery ammunition.

(d) The increased ability of brigades and larger formations to leave the road and move by tracks through the jungle to attack the enemy's flanks and rear.

#### *Intelligence.*

123. *Enemy Strengths and Dispositions.* As mentioned in my first Despatch, the Japanese strength in Burma had increased from four divisions to nine in the twelve months ending June, 1944. One additional division (the 49th) arrived in this Theatre in October.

124. *Enemy Casualties and Morale.* The total number of enemy killed (actually counted) between July and October amounted to 8,859 on the Fourteenth Army front and 3,724 on the Northern Combat Area Command front. No captured documentary

evidence is available regarding the number of wounded and sick, but it was undoubtedly high.

These severe losses added to those of the earlier months, coupled with the steady and increasing pressure which we maintained on his retreating divisions, must have weakened his morale. Though the individual officer and man will doubtless continue, in accordance with Japanese tradition, to resist fanatically when occupying defensive positions, I have no doubt that the standard of training and will to battle will deteriorate and that we shall not again meet Japanese forces of their former standard.

#### PART II. RE-ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMAND ARRANGEMENTS.

##### *Availability of Infantry Formations.*

125. (a) I mentioned in my first Despatch\* the acute shortage of infantry, especially British, reinforcements, and I of course discussed the situation with the Supreme Allied Commander on many occasions. On the 24th June, I wrote to him that I had been examining his instructions of the 8th June, to exact the maximum effort during the monsoon season. I pointed out that there were two major difficulties to overcome:—

(i) The need to withdraw certain divisions, which had been engaged for long periods in active operations, for rest, re-organization and training.

(ii) The general shortage of reinforcements.

(b) My examination showed that we had two alternatives, each bound to affect operations. Either we had to—

(i) Accept the necessity for resting formations, and thereby reduce the number available for operations, or

(ii) Decide against any rest, and thereby so reduce the efficiency of formations that, by the end of the Winter, they would be unfit for further fighting.

(c) The general reinforcement situation was such that—

(i) It appeared that we could not maintain 2 British Division at war strength.

(ii) Special Force must be substantially reduced.

(iii) We should have the greatest difficulty in finding a formation to replace 36 British Division, about to relieve Special Force, when its replacement became necessary.

(d) I, therefore, recommended that—

(i) We must accept the fact that some divisions would have to be rested during the coming Winter.

(ii) The programme of rest should be planned on the basis of using nine divisions; three in the Arakan, with one in reserve, and four in Assam, with one in reserve.

I added that I should leave no stone unturned to discover ways and means for improving the supply of reinforcements.

126. This letter was followed by a discussion with the Supreme Allied Commander and the Commander-in-Chief, India. In consequence, I decided that in future we should try

\* War Office footnote: See also the Supreme Allied Commander's Report, South-East Asia, 1943-1945, Part A., para. 59; Part B., paras. 185-186 and 201-203.

\* Operations in Burma and North-East India from the 16th November, 1943 to the 22nd June, 1944.