

plant which provided electricity for the shipyards; then three other bombers left Kweilin for Tien Ho airdrome hoping to destroy a gasoline dump. Failing to locate that target, they bombed the warehouse area in Canton.

The medium bombers then moved to West China to carry out an order from General Bissell to neutralize Lashio. In their absence, P-40s continued the assaults on the Canton-Hong Kong area, using dive-bombing attacks for the first time.

During the first three weeks of November, CATF activity consisted largely of routine missions in support of Chinese armies along the Siant-siang, but on the 23rd, nine mediums and seven fighters sunk a large freighter and damaged two others on the Gulf of Tonkin. Later, the same day, six Mitchells and 17 fighters reached Tien Ho to bomb and strafe the airdrome. Hangars, barracks and storage tanks were riddled, while an estimated 42 planes were destroyed on the ground. Two days later, a similar force crippled three freighters near Canton.

On November 17th, Chennault sent out the largest mission of the CATF to that date. Ten bombers and 25 fighters from Kweilin flew north toward Hankow, then swung southeast to attack shipping and harbor installations at Hong Kong. They met no enemy interceptors. On their return to base, though, they encountered a large formation of enemy fighters, but once again the fighters succeeded in protecting the bombers while destroying several enemy aircraft. Following these successful missions, the CATF received from General Arnold a special message of congratulations, the task force brought one of its best months to a close with attacks at Hongay and Campho Port on the Indo-China coast.

#### India Air Task Force (IATF)

As autumn brought clearing weather to India and Burma, it was realized that the IATF, activated on October 3, 1942, would face serious responsibilities. There were signs of enemy preparations to move northward from Myitkyina toward Fort Hertz, and it was believed that the enemy would try to bomb highly vulnerable air installations in Assam. Col. Caleb V. Haynes was given command of the new task force, which comprised all combat units then in India, with the dual mission of defending

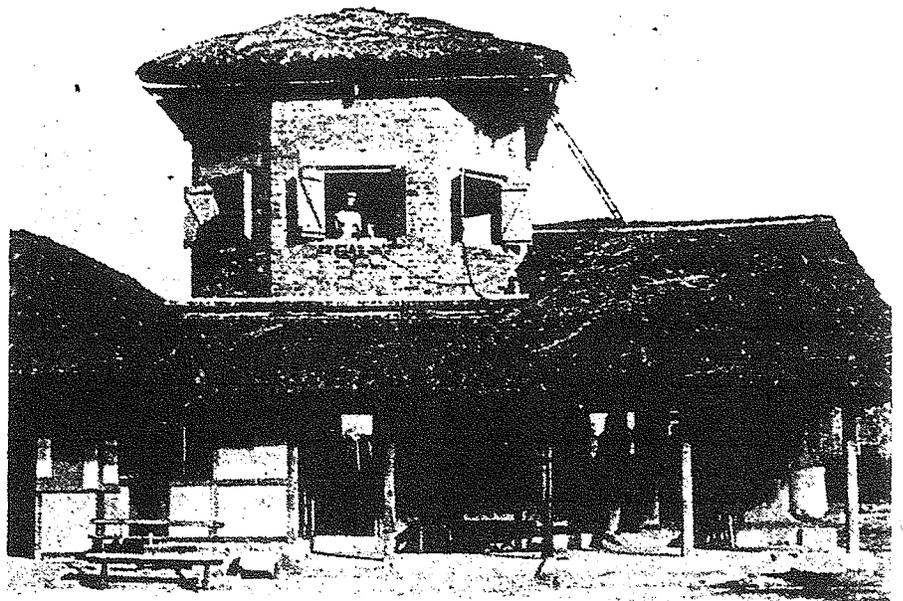
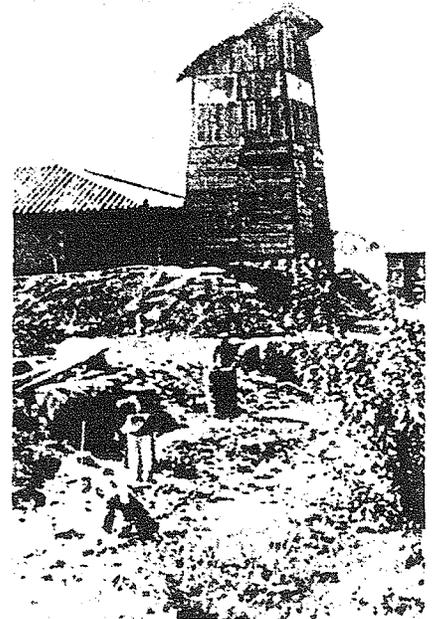
Assam and doing everything possible to check the enemy drive toward Fort Hertz.

On paper, the IATF had nine squadrons, but not one was fully operational. Of the four heavy bombardment squadrons of the 7th Group, the 9th had not yet been returned from the Middle East, the 436th was just receiving its aircraft, and the other two, the 492nd and 493rd, were mere cadres. The recently activated 341st Bombardment Group (M) had only three squadrons in India, and two of them, the 490th and 491st, were without aircraft. The 22nd Squadron was just receiving its planes and had not completed training. A detachment of the 26th Fighter Squadron had moved to Dinjan, but the other squadron of the 51st Fighter Group, the 25th was in training at Karachi.

During the summer months, the defense of Assam had consisted largely of monsoon weather. As the end of the rainy season neared, Haynes moved the remainder of the 26th Fighter Squadron to Assam and alerted the partially trained 25th Squadron, but before the defenses of Assam could be greatly bolstered, the long-expected enemy assault took place. On October 25th, flights of enemy bombers and fighters appeared over targets in Assam almost before warnings were received. Fortunately, three IATF fighters were already airborne and six others managed to take off. Dinjan, Chabua, Mohanbari and

Sookerating were all hit, but only the important airdromes at Dinjan and Chabua were heavily bombed. In all, about 100 planes took part in the mission. Severe damage was done to runways and buildings, but the most serious loss was in parked aircraft. Five transports and 13 fighters were badly damaged. The enemy lost six fighters, two reconnaissance planes and one bomber.

On the following day, a number of enemy aircraft, estimated at from 42-50, strafed the same area, concentrating on Sookerating. Again the warning was too short to permit interception. No planes were lost on the ground, but a



Control Towers, CBI

Above: Kunming, China. Below: Jorhat, India

freight depot containing food and medical supplies for China was burned. Two enemy planes were destroyed by ground fire. A third raid on October 28th did little damage.

Expecting enemy attacks from Myitkyina, we had kept the airdrome there under close surveillance, but the enemy had achieved surprise by using belly tanks and mounting the flights from more distant bases. General Bissell believed the missions originated from Lashio and ordered Chennault to bring his B-25s from eastern China to destroy that airdrome. Because CATF reconnaissance sorties had revealed no unusual number of planes at Lashio, Chennault believed that the missions came from bases in southern

Burma. Consequently, he expressed reluctance to divert his small force from lucrative targets in the east to bomb what he thought was an empty airfield. When Bissell repeated his order, Chennault complied, but the incident widened a rift between our two commanders which had existed since the time of the AVG.

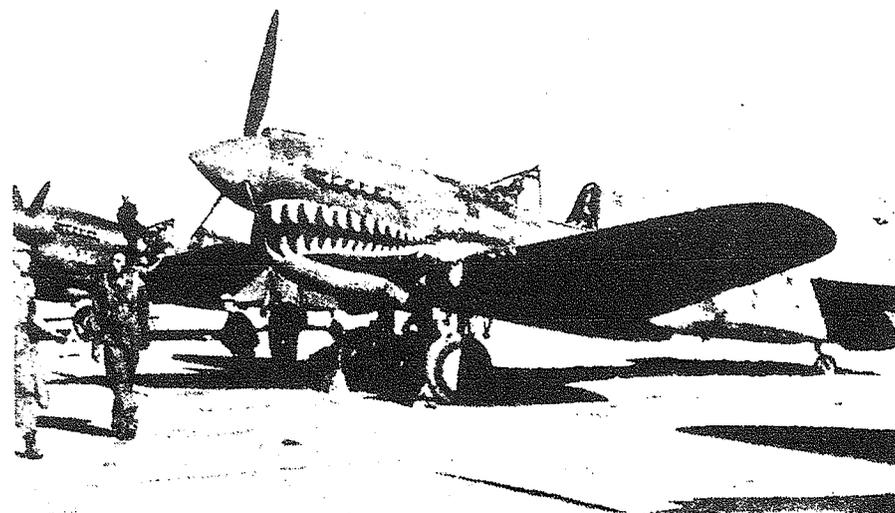
Immediately after the raids on Assam, all available fighters in India were rushed there. The 26th Fighter Squadron was established at Dinjan, while the 25th Squadron arrived from Karachi on October 31st to take up its duties at Sookerating. Additional antiaircraft batteries arrived on the day after the first raid, but ground defenses were still inadequate. Moreover, the air warning net could not be

improved until more equipment arrived. Bissell took advantage of the occasion to repeat his appeal for the return from the Middle East of all 10th AF personnel and aircraft.

There was no recurrence of the October raids on Assam, and fighters of the IATF were able to increase their frequency of raids into North Burma. The bombers were as yet incapable of accomplishing more than harassing missions. It proved possible, however, to resume a regular run to the Rangoon area with raids on November 5th and 9th, and on the 20th, eight B-24s bombed in the midst of some 600-700 units of rolling stock in the marshalling yards at Mandalay. Two days later, the attack was repeated by six Liberators. On November 28th, nine Liberators, under LCol. C. F. Necrason, made a 2,760-mile round trip to Bangkok, where they seriously damaged an oil refinery.

Two days later, the heavies extended their attempted interdiction of the water approaches to Burma by beginning a series of raids on Port Blair in the Andaman Islands. On the night before Christmas the mission to Bangkok was repeated by twelve B-24s. The Japanese offered no aerial resistance to these heavy bomber missions. They did, however, begin a counteroffensive bombardment late in December. In the face of ineffective interception by RAF fighters, they repeatedly attacked docks and shipping at Calcutta and Chittagong and damaged airfields at Dum Dum, Alipore and Fenny. As the year came to a close, the exchange of bombing attacks continued with neither offensive effort meeting effective resistance.

By January 1943, headquarters of the IATF had been established near Calcutta at Barrackpore, and the following deployment of combat units was completed: the 25th and 26th Fighter Squadrons were at Sookerating and Dinjan, in Assam; the 436th and 492nd Bombardment Squadrons (H) were at Gaya; the 9th and 493rd Bombardment Squadrons (H) at Pandaveswar; the 22nd and 491st Bombardment Squadrons (M) at Chakulla; the 490th Bombardment Squadron (M) at Ondal. The newly activated squadrons, though not yet at full strength, were ready to participate in combat, and it appeared that for the first time the 10th AF was in a



position to challenge Japanese air supremacy in Burma.

Although deployment and training had advanced to a stage permitting combat operations, other fundamental problems had to be worked out before the IATF could hope to achieve success comparable to that of the CATF. The 10th AF, as a whole, was a fairly well balanced organization, with one heavy group, one medium group, and two fighter groups. Yet, requirements of the task force in China, where many fighters were necessary and only a few bombers could be supported, had left a badly balanced task force in India. Responsibility for carrying out the major phase of the Tenth's mission, protection of the Hump operation, was divided between the two task forces, but enemy deployment and the geography of the theater made it inevitable that the IATF should bear the greater responsibility. Assam installations were larger and thus more inviting to the enemy than those at Kunming, and while there was a fine air warning system protecting Kunming, the one serving Assam was still rudimentary.

(Extracted from the History of the Army Air Forces in World War II, by Joe Shupe. Part V will appear in a future edition of SOUND-OFF.)

### China's Goiter Problem Attacked

By David Dale

Upon arriving in Yunnan Province of China, 55+ years ago, two physical conditions of the older female population were most apparent. These were their bound feet and their prominent goiters. The custom of binding feet had already ceased by the time of our arrival but the goiter problem has been solved.

The Wall Street Journal, in its June 20 issue, carried an exhaustive front-page story about the

goiter solution written by its staff reporter, Leslie Chang. The article pointed out that five years ago "only a third of the Chinese population, then 1.2 billion, consumed iodized salt. The lack of iodine in the diet caused a range of health problems, from goiters to the severe mental retardation known as cretinism to lower IQs, among a generation living in rural areas. Today, more than 90% of Chinese eat iodized salt."

The article describes the negatives incumbent with most "top-down" solutions to national prob-

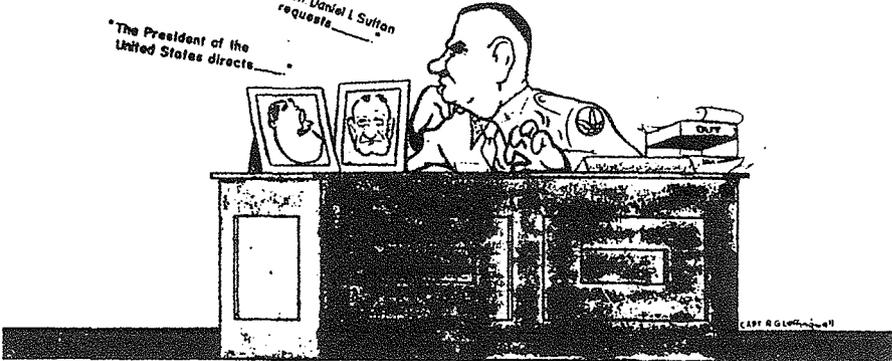
lems. These included smuggling of cheaper, non-iodized salt, competing non-government sources, corruption that accompanies a system that both exercises a monopoly and polices itself. This writer believes "squeeze" may be in the genes of the Chinese because even a monolithic society has been unable to eradicate it.

We recommend those who have an interest in the solution of a problem which has afflicted the Chinese for millennia, read a copy of this report in your public library.

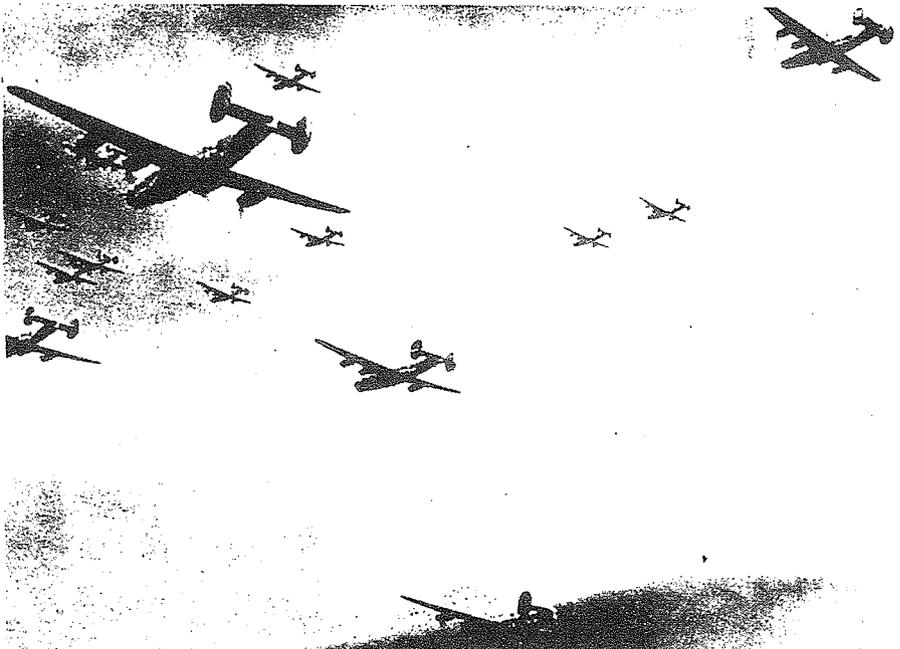


"By command of Lt Gen J W Stilwell" "The Supreme Commander desires it immediately!" "As directed by Gen George C Marshall" "Generalsissimo Chiang Kai Shek wants it now!" "Ordered by the Commanding General, U S Army Air Forces" "By the suggestion of Air Commander in Chief, Sir Richard Peirse"

"Gen Daniel I Sultan requests" "The President of the United States directs"



General Stratmeyer's Bosses



7th Bombardment Group enroute to Burma target.

SEND SOUND-OFF COPY BEFORE DEADLINE TO DAVID DALE PO BOX 190374 ST. LOUIS, MO 63119

# History of the Army Air Forces In the CBI Part V - 1943 Problems of Command

By Joe Shupe

When the Combined Chiefs of Staff met at Casablanca in January 1943, they faced a big problem in the CBI. Gen. Stilwell said that it was necessary to reopen a land route to China and to train Chinese armies at Ramgarh as the X Force.

In Yunnan, he hoped to train 27 divisions as the Y Force. These forces were needed to get the Japanese out of North Burma. He planned to build a new road behind the X Force SE from Ledo until land communications could be re-established with China by the juncture of the two forces. Chennault was opposed to this; he wanted to do it by air power, and that Stilwell's plan could prolong the war by devouring too much materiel and manpower. He felt that with 500 aircraft in Chinese bases, he could destroy Jap air power in China. Besides, occupied areas along the coast protected Jap vital sea communications. With a small air force, he could jab at will anywhere and destroy the enemy's air strength. This would help American forces in the Pacific and permit their approach to the China coast. A modest investment of man and aircraft could pay off.

Chennault's proposal rested on the basis of an expanded airlift. Gen. Marshall supported Stilwell. The British were on the side of Chennault. As it became evident that Stilwell could not take the offensive for a long time, Chennault's plan had the advantage of more immediate results at less cost.

## A Separate Air Force for China

Chennault's plan required that he be given a free hand in China; he disliked being a part of the 10th Air Force. Friction developed between him and Gen. Bissell. The latter had one day's seniority over Chennault in the promotion to a Brigadier General. Chiang Kai-shek wanted more air power in China and was suspicious of British influence over India-based 10th Air Force; he wanted to resurrect the Chinese Air Force, which had

trained pilots but no aircraft. Chennault had a unique advantage which enabled him to by-pass Stilwell and Marshall. Dr. T. V. Soong, brother-in-law of Chiang, was at the time in Washington; and he had an approach to the White House with Harry Hopkins, the President's aide.

Since operations in Europe had the priority of resources; this left little for the CBI. So, at the Casablanca conference, it was agreed that British forces would continue operations in South Burma for the recapture of Akyab. But, it was decided that Stilwell's operations be delayed until November 1943, if then. Meanwhile, the recently established India-China Wing of the ATC (ICWATC) should be reinforced.

After adjournment at Casablanca, Gen. Arnold, along with Gen. Somervell and Field Marshal Dill, left for India and China. They met with Stilwell on February 1, 1943. Arnold was aware that Chennault and the Chinese wanted to have the CATF (China Air Task Force) become a separate air force.

But, Arnold did not want an independent air force under Chennault; he said to Marshall in a radiogram that all air operations from China required fuel and other supplies which had to come by airlift from India. He also felt that Chennault was weak on administration and advised that the CATF should remain a part of the 10th Air Force. He, however, promised much help for Chennault including: an increase of transports operating with the India-China Wing of the ATC from 62 planes to 137 by March 15, 1943; also, C-47s would be replaced by larger C-46s as soon as possible. He further stated that with an increase of ground and air crews that should keep a minimum of 90 aircraft operating at all times. Also, that each of the operational craft should be able to make 20 round trips over the Hump per month. Since twelve of the new planes would be four-engine C-87s, he believed that by

April, the ATC lift into China could be raised from the 1,263 tons of January 1943, to a monthly rate of 4,000 tons. Arnold also promised that the 308th Bomb Group (H) equipped with B-24s would leave the US in a few days for attacks from China. He hoped that a light bomb group could be added by November 1, 1943; he also approved the supply of aircraft for Chinese pilots.

With these plans in mind, Arnold conferred with Chiang who demanded an independent air force in China with 500 planes and an increase in the airlift to 10,000 tons a month. Arnold at first said, "I'll be God-damned if I take any such message back to the President." He did, however, send just such a message, dated February 7, 1943, from Chiang to Roosevelt. In this letter, Chiang repeated the demands made in person to Arnold. Chennault was presented as a man of genius who enjoyed the confidence of the Chinese people and with whom Chiang could work in complete cooperation. He should have an air force of his own with 500 aircraft.

The President went along with Chiang. Wendell Willkie said the same to the President a few months earlier when he returned from his round the world trip. Harry Hopkins, too, was for the idea, and has been credited with persuading the President to activate the 14th Air Force.

Marshall, on February 19, 1943, told Stilwell of a decision to put AAF units in China independent of Bissell's command, but that the air force would remain under Stilwell as theater commander. Additional personnel for Chennault with a competent staff would be provided, and both Bissell and Chennault would be promoted.

The activation of the 14th Air Force was premature. The CATF, though not formally assigned to the 14th Air Force until April 24th, became an independent command. Responsibility for its supply remained with the 10th Air Force. So, Chennault had won greater freedom of action.

Headquarters USAF promptly carried out its promises. The 308th Bomb Group came to China in March. They helped the ATC along by carrying their own bombs and fuel from India. This group, plus four fighter squadrons, one medium squadron, and a photo reconnaissance detachment already

on hand, would be the full strength of the 14th Air Force until late in the following summer.

In February, when Arnold was in China, Chennault had asked for a bomber command of one heavy and one medium group, a fighter command of two groups, an air service command, and eventually to provide Chinese combat units under our leadership. In a letter of March 4, 1943 to Arnold, Chennault asked that the bomber and fighter units be authorized immediately for later activation and that two fighter squadrons and a medium squadron be promptly activated in China with fillers to be provided later from the US. Need for the air service command was not immediate and that could wait, but the other units were urgently needed. He also wanted immediate formation of one fighter and a medium or light bomb squadron for Chinese pilots. For these Chinese units, he asked for the return to China of AVG and CATF veterans in the US. He also asked for 150 fighters, 32 medium bombers, and eight photo reconnaissance planes in addition to the 33 heavy bombers of the 308th Group.

Arnold's reply early in April, said the build-up of the new Air Force would have to proceed more gradually. No combat squadrons were to be activated in the theater, and a possible transfer of units from the 10th AF to China was the only immediate promise. AVG and CATF veterans could not be returned soon. He promised several high caliber officers (BGen Edgar E. Glenn, and Julian Haddon) for chief of staff and leadership of the service command.

To increase airlift, by March 23 there were 120 transport planes, and on 27 March there were 133 transports either on hand or en route. By June 8, 46 of the 50 C-46s were received.

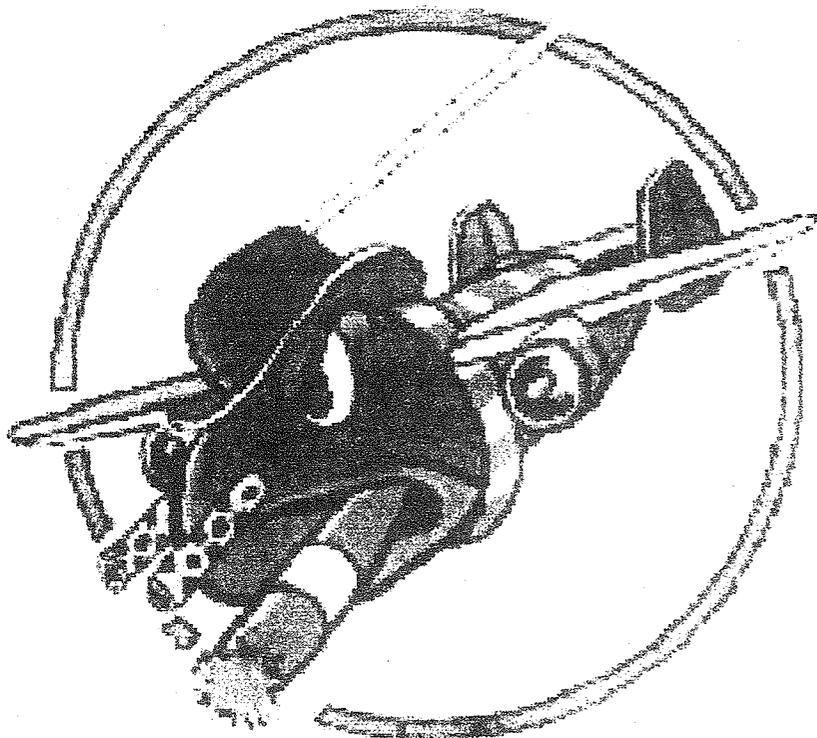
Meanwhile, the airlift failed badly to deliver the promised 4,000 tons, and with operations in China at a standstill for want of fuel, the goal had been raised to 10,000 tons. So, activation of the 14th AF was only a partial victory for Chiang's effort for more air operations, and he regarded the President's promises as insufficient. Chiang asked the President that Chennault be called to Washington to explain his plan. In response, the War Department asked both Chennault and Stilwell to appear

before the Combined Chiefs of Staff May TRIDENT meeting.

At TRIDENT, Chennault and Stilwell made bitter exchanges; they agreed only about expectation of gigantic aerial operations from China against Japan. Stilwell continued to argue for a land supply line to China, and that the Hump operations could never be developed to a point to remove that need. Until the Ledo Road had been completed, Chinese forces in Yunnan should be given the bulk of airfreight to support reconquest of Northern Burma. Chennault argued that the Burma campaign would be long drawn out, and that China might collapse before its completion. He also argued for the seizure of a port city on the China coast as a more practical way to get forces into China for the final destruction of Japan. So, every effort should be made to build up the airlift for support primarily of the 14th AF. Development of air bases in Assam should be given priority over the Ledo Road. He had no fear that the enemy would capture our bases in China, and he looked forward for an air offensive to prepare for an Allied landing on the China coast. British leaders agreed that Assam air bases should have priority over the

Ledo Road, and were in favor of a delay in Burma. Dr. Soong said that Chennault should be reinforced immediately and Hump tonnage greatly increased.

The War Department argued that the immediate problem was to keep China in the war and for continuance of plans for the Burma offensive. In the end, the Hump route was given the highest priority and Chennault was promised the bulk of the freight. But, Stilwell's Burma offensive was on for the end of the monsoon in the fall, with coordinated amphibious operations to retake Akyab and Ramree Island. Also, Chennault was to have an addition to the 308th Group, a medium bombardment group, but not until ATC tonnage reached 10,000 tons per month. The strength of his fighter command would be brought up to two groups. Also, the Chinese would get 80 fighters, and 40 medium bombers for operation under Chennault. Arnold suggested to Stilwell a shuffling of units between India and China. The 80th Fighter Group had been scheduled for India, and Arnold suggested that on its arrival the whole of the 51st Group might join the 16th Squadron in China. When the 311th Bomb Group (311th Fighter-



22nd Bombardment Squadron (M) - "The Battlin' Bulldogs"

Courtesy Bill Edwards

Bomber Group after Sept. 30/43) became available for India, the India based squadrons of the 341st Bomb Group could join the 11th Squadron in China. Thus would units long divided be reunited and Chennault would have experienced personnel.

#### Failure Over the Hump

During June 1943, the India-China Wing of the ATC with more than 140 transports, including 12 C-87s and 46 C-46s, lifted just about 2,200 tons into China. The existing schedule called for twice that much. In July, Chennault's share was to be 4,790 tons; the total lift was about 4,500 tons. In September, when the 14th was to get 7,128 tons, ICW moved only 5,000 tons for all purposes.

The goal set by TRIDENT was dependent on (1) getting the required number of planes; (2) increased flow of supplies along the Calcutta-Assam line of communications; (3) enough people and equipment to process and load freight; and (4) adequate airdrome facilities in Assam.

Re (1) enough planes, though there was serious trouble with many of them. Re (2) movement by rail proved disappointing, but rarely any acute shortage to be flown to China; but heavy equipment needed for construction of airdromes did not arrive on schedule. Also, motor transport and loading equipment destined for airdromes in Assam were delayed enroute. As a result, handling of freight at the airdromes was not as efficient as it should have been and this slowed down operations.

Enough fields were available in China, but the picture in Assam was different. The British promised to have eight fields ready by May and three more by October 1943. Monsoons impeded construction; natives panicked by enemy bombings and construction equipment was delayed.

On the date scheduled for completion of the eight fields, there were only two serviceable ones and 14 hardstandings available in all Assam. Of these two, Jorhat could not be used by four-engine planes because its taxiways were not yet paved. This meant that all B-24s of the 308th Group, which hauled its own supplies to China, and 80 odd other planes were using Chabua. So crowded was this field that ATC had been forced to park more than 50 C-47s, C-87s and B-24s on the airdrome during the day, with an

estimated 147 enemy aircraft based with 2-1/2 to three hours flight. Two other fields, Mohanbari and Sookerating, were unpaved and not usable because of heavy rains. The field at Dinjan was used by the China National Aviation Corps (CNAC) and the fighters who protected the area. But, the British continued their work and asked that three American engineer battalions be sent to Assam to help in maintaining the fields and to assist in construction of the remaining ones. The British also asked that delivery of machinery that was promised be expedited from the United States.

On June 22/43, BGen. Howard C. Davidson on a theater inspection, reported that the airdrome situation was slowly improving, even though the lightly constructed Chabua runway was being pounded to pieces by the heavy four-engine planes and in the future would be used only by two-engine craft. Dinjan, which could not stand under the heavier transports, was still being used by CNAC and by fighters; Sookerating had been completed and was suitable for all types of aircraft; Mohanbari was still under construction to be ready by July 1st; Jorhat had a good runway, suitable for heavy aircraft but had to be shared with the RAF.

By July 13, BGen Edward Alexander of the ICW reported 59 hardstandings with connecting taxiways were available at Chabua, Sookerating, and Jorhat, with none yet completed at Tezpur or Monhanbari. This promised a marked improvement in the airlift during August. Serious bugs in the C-46s resulted in their being grounded for modifications. This problem was aggravated when overhauls made at depots in India proved unsatisfactory. The effort to handle the maintenance and repair in Assam overwhelmed the personnel there. During August, an average of over 100 ICWATC planes were grounded per day; this month was also marked by an increasing diversion of ATC planes for trans-India flying and for food dropping missions in N. Burma.

Meanwhile, CNAC gave some indication of what could be accomplished. In four weeks during June, ATC, with 146 planes, delivered 2219 tons to Kunming, while CNAC, with only 20 small Douglas craft moved 761 tons to the same

destination (38 tons per plane vs. 15 tons by ATC).

In four weeks in September, CNAC moved 1134 tons with 23 planes, while ATC lifted 5198 tons with more than 225 planes on hand. At that time, ATC had 43 four-engine C-87s and more than 100 C-46s. Yet, CNAC was lifting 49 tons per plane vs. ATC's 23 tons per plane. ATC operations were obviously less efficient than the CNAC. Also, newly-arrived troop carrier squadrons, inexperienced in the theater, carried out more efficient operations in their first month than ATC squadrons.

Authorities in Washington had been concerned with the peculiar problems of the ICW, and reports from MGen George Stratemeyer, Chief of Air Staff, and 1st and 2nd Troop Carrier units of the 10th AF.

Eddie Rickenbacker, after visits in the spring, made it clear that the situation in Assam was serious. MGen Harold George of the ATC command said that the ICW was a relic of the 1st Ferrying Group which in the spring of 1942 was assigned over the protests of BGen Robert Olds of the Ferrying Command, to the 10th AF.

ATC had not been able to overcome all the inheritances from past mistakes. There was something to this argument. Supplies and equipment for the ferrying unit had gone into a theater pool; personnel and aircraft had been regularly given assignments which had no connection with ordinary transport activities; and in other ways, customs at variance with the principle of ATC independence had carried over. The ferrying group had done well in developing the aerial cargo line on a shoestring, but bad living conditions, mail service, scarcity of supplies, slow promotions, few replacements had caused the initial high morale to deteriorate until, in the autumn of 1942, it had reached a dangerous point.

In December 1942, ATC had taken over the India-China Ferry from 10th AF. Under Alexander, there had been a marked improvement in morale, but the transition was not easy and relations between the 10th and ATC at times became quite bitter, each calling the other "robber." As for the difference in operational efficiency between troop carrier units and ATC squadrons, Gen. George argued that troop carrier materiel sent to CBI was inviolable, while ATC supplies were still being ap-

propriated by other organizations in the theater.

Rickenbacker was able to put his finger on other weaknesses. He rejected the explanation that pay between CNAC and ATC personnel for the same work made the difference, but called attention to the comparative inexperience of many of the ATC pilots. The limited number of airdromes, a shortage of expert weather, communications, engineering and maintenance personnel, and the lack of radio aids and direction finders received mention. Rickenbacker shared with Gen. Bissell the opinion that control of ICW should be returned to the theater commander. The last, though, ran counter to the basic concept on which ATC was built, and neither Stratemyer nor Davidson shared Rickenbacker's view.

Bissell felt that control should be returned to the 10th AF because an independent ICW would be more division of responsibility. Fields in Assam were planned by Americans and constructed by the British. Later, our engineers would help in construction. Flying of cargo into China was done by the ICW, troop carrier units, and CNAC, and the responsibility for moving freight into Assam from Calcutta was British.

The fields in Assam were used by US, British, and Chinese aircraft. Gurkhas guarded the fields as did Chinese at Kunming, but anti-aircraft defenses were largely ours. Strictly US functions also were affected by this separation of responsibility and authority. The ATC did not control loading and unloading of planes; this was a function of SOS and theater troops. ICW policies were made in Washington, but priorities on its freight were controlled by a board in New Delhi. Chennault, who depended upon air supply, had no representative on that board. Base protection was now divided between the 10th AF and the 14th AF.

Stilwell was aware of this and he tried in April 1943 to clarify Bissell's responsibilities. So, a decision was made to create the Assam American Air Base Command under Gen. Haynes, who was relieved from his job with the IATF.

On June 13/43, Haynes was told of his mission. Primary job of his was to defend ICWATC; secondly - destruction of the enemy. He was to coordinate in Assam the

activities of the 10th AF with ICWATC, X Air Service Command, CNAC, AAF Weather Service, Army Airways Communications System, and parts of the 14th AF operating in Assam. Under him was the 51st Fighter Group (less the 16th Squadron), 679th Air Warning Co., 2nd Troop Carrier Squadron, all AA batteries in Assam, the Anti-Smuggling Detachment.

**Reorganization**

Our military organization in CBI was not ideal. All US Army forces were under Stilwell with a forward headquarters at Chungking where he spent most of his time, and a rear echelon headquarters in New Delhi. The 10th AF had its headquarters in New Delhi; the 14th had its at Kunming, some distance from Chungking. The IC Wing of ATC was at Chabua. Most troops were AAF, and the ASF troops were used in support of air operations.

The planned ground offensive in Burma was expected to change this situation. This caused apprehension among AAF leaders that the air effort might suffer as a result. So, it appeared that a high-ranking AAF officer be on Stilwell's staff. Stilwell felt that Chennault might make an effort to command all CBI air forces, so he wanted someone else. Being Gen. Stratemyer had some knowledge of the problems in CBI, he was selected by the President for the job.

Stratemyer was told not to interfere with the special relations between Chennault and Chiang; he would have only supervisory authority over the 14th AF. This led to the division of the AAF in CBI into the India-Burma Sector (IBS), and the China Sector, with Stratemyer given little more control of the 10th AF.

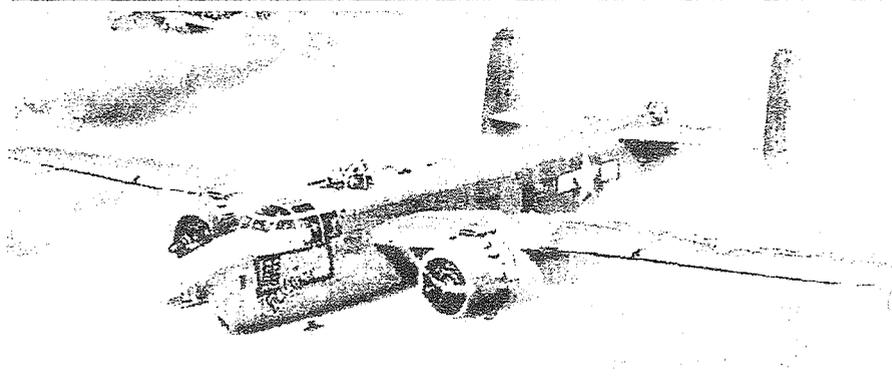
To end the Bissell friction, Chiang asked the President to remove Bissell. So, on July 20/43,

Davidson was appointed commanding general of the 10th AF, and he assumed command on August 19th, and the next day Stratemyer assumed command of Headquarters USAAF IBS, CBI. Stilwell on August 20th, activated Headquarters USAAF, India-Burma Sector, CBI, under Stratemyer; also Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, CBI Air Service Command (Prov.), and asked authority to inactivate the X and XIV Air Service Commands.

The Karachi American Air Command, which trained Chinese pilots, was to be inactivated. In its place, Headquarters, CBI AF Training Unit (Prov.) was activated at Karachi under BGen Julian Maddon. Thus, training of Chinese-American units, which was controlled by Chennault, would now be exercised by the theater air advisor. Stilwell transferred the Headquarters 10th AF to Calcutta, and inactivated the IATF (India Air Task Force).

The following units were assigned to Stratemyer's command: 10th AF, Hqs & Hqs Squadron, CBI Air Service Command; CBI Air Forces Training Unit; 10th Weather Squadron, 10th AAC Squadron and 22d Statistical Control Unit. In addition, he was responsible for the supply and maintenance of the 14th AF in China, and to protect the Hump route

Also, he was expected to coordinate activities of the IC Wing, ATC, with theater operations, assist Stilwell in over-all planning for air warfare, and supervise air training of Chinese personnel at Karachi. He was given a small staff (Col. Charles Stone, C/S; Col. Edward Streeter, DC/S; Col. Alvin Luedecke, Operations; Col. W. DeWitt, Surgeon; LCol. Jos. Clark, Management Control; and LCol



North American B-25H: Medium Bomber.

Courtesy of Bill Edwards

Frank Schneider, Deputy Management Control.

Then at the QUADRANT allied conference at Quebec in August 1943, more changes were made in CBI. The creation of a unified command was considered necessary, but the problem was selection of a commander acceptable to the allies. A British commander would not be acceptable to the Chinese. An American commander might be agreed by the Chinese but not the British. So, at Quebec, a Southeast Asia Command (SEC) was established, and Lord Louis Mountbatten to be Supreme Allied Commander, with Stilwell as his deputy. But, within that command, China, Indo-China and India were excluded. The position occupied by Stratemeier was not made clear. Selection of the air commander at SEAC was of the highest importance. British wishes prevailed, and Sir Richard Peirse got that job. All AAF and RAF units assigned to SEAC were to be integrated, with Stratemeier having operational control of Peirse. The ATC and certain elements of the British Navy were not included in SEAC command structure.

Mountbatten issued a directive integrating the 10th AF and the Bengal Command of the RAF under the unified control of Peirse. The combined forces were formed into a unit subordinate to Air Command, Southeast Asia and designated Eastern Air Command (EAC), with Stratemeier as commander. In effect, the British, while retaining the top-ranking position in the air organization, had relinquished operational control of all combat units to Stratemeier.

The organization of EAC created some problems. There were fighters and bombers in both the 10th AF and the Bengal Command. It seemed logical, that for operational purposes they should again be divided, forming a tactical and strategic force, one under command of an American and the other under a Briton. Subsequently, Air Marshal John Baldwin of the Bengal Command was selected for the tactical force and Davidson, of the 10th AF, for the strategic.

On December 15/43, Stratemeier assumed command and he appointed Air Vice Marshal T. M. Williams as assistant commander of EAC. The command was to be divided into four components: a strategic air force, composed of

AAF and RAF heavy and medium bombers, under Davidson; a tactical air force, composed of fighters and fighter-bombers of RAF and AAF, under Baldwin; a troop carrier command composed of AAF and RAF troop carrier units, under BGen William Old; a photographic reconnaissance force under a commander to be announced later.

American contribution in December 1943, to the EAC was much greater than would have been possible a few months earlier. Since Davidson assumed command of the 10th AF in August, the 80th Fighter Group and the 311th Fighter-Bomber Group had arrived and gone into action.

The 51st Group had finally moved to China, and movement of the remainder of the 341st Bomb Group (less the 490th Sqdn) was imminent. An additional bombardment group was en route to take the place of the 341st in India.

Thus, the AAF contributed one heavy bombardment group (7th), one medium group, one fighter group, and one fighter-bomber group to the Strategic and Tactical Air Forces which were to take over operations in the India-Burma Sector. In addition, the 5306th Photographic Reconnaissance Group was assigned to the Photographic Reconnaissance Force, and four AAF troop carrier squadrons, the 1st, 2d, 27th, and 315th, were integrated with the Troop Carrier Command. Other AAF units were added to EAC early in 1944. The entire command setup in the CBI remained most complex, and final arrangements for the organization of EAC and SEAC were still in progress as 1943 drew to a close.

*Extracted from the History of Army Air Forces in World War II, by Joe Shupe. Part VI will appear in a future edition of SOUND-OFF.*

## - LETTERS -

### Commissary Privileges

To the Editor:

To Whom It May Concern and to whomever might deem this important enough to do something to aid and help all Honorably Discharged Veterans that served in any branch of the Armed Forces:

My suggestion and hope is that all honorable discharged veterans be allowed entrance to any commissary so as to aid them and afford them the opportunity to make

purchases so as to help them in this time of ever-increasing costs to maintain a better standard of living.

Whatever position you hold and whatever help you can give to this cause to help all honorable discharged veterans will in a small way help better their living conditions.

May God bless you and keep you and May God Bless America and all the veterans that have faithfully served our country in its time of need.

Respectfully yours,  
Edward J. Achtner, Ex Army AF  
Served in China, Burma, India and  
Okinawa 1943-1946.  
6 Sycamore Court,  
Grasonville, MD 21638-9667



Do you recognize the G.I. portrayed above? He was painted by the late Layton H. Wicksten while he was stationed at Bengal Air Depot and his daughter-in-law would like either the subject or his family to have the original portrait. The daughter-in-law, Linda Wicksten, lives in Sparks/Reno, NV and if anyone thinks he or she knows this transient soldier who was at Agra waiting for transportation to Ramgarh or the action in Burma, contact SOUND-OFF and we will put you in touch with the owner.

Mrs. Wicksten says the rest of her father-in-law's collection of CBI paintings and memorabilia has been given to the Eisenhower Museum in Abilene, KS. The curator said it was the largest WW II collection they had received.

SPRING HAS SPRUNG  
THE GRASS HAS RIZ  
WHERE LAST YEAR'S  
DRUNKEN DRIVER IS  
BURMA SHAVE

# History of the Army Air Forces In the CBI

## Part VI The Pattern of India-Burma Operations - 1943

By Joe Shupe

Plans made in 1942 for the reconquest of Burma in the spring of 1943 had to be changed with a promise from the Combined Chiefs of Staff at Casablanca that the offensive might be undertaken by the following November. Their only major activity was by Brig. Orde Wingate who led the 77th Brigade into Burma in February and got 100 miles behind the Japanese lines, but after suffering heavy losses, he withdrew in June.

There was, however, one phase of Stilwell's plan for 1943 that was begun - the construction of the Ledo Road. By midsummer of 1943, the road had been pushed across the border into Burma and was approaching Shingbwiyang. Military operations in Burma until the fall of 1943 were limited to the activities of the RAF and AAF. On January 1, 1943, the RAF had four groups at Colombo, Bangalore, Calcutta and at Chittagong; they were responsible for general reconnaissance and for the defense of their areas. Coordination of the RAF and AAF activities against the Japanese was through headquarters of the India Air Task Force (IATF) at Barrackpore. Neither the RAF nor the IATF was strong enough in January 1943 to seriously challenge the Japanese air superiority over Burma. But, the allies had the courage to assume operations against the enemy and by the end of the year had the experience and strength to gain supremacy early in 1944.

The British were engaged in giving ground support to troops in the Akyab offensive and in activities east of Imphal, also in defending allied airfields. The pattern of operations followed by the 10th AF was almost identical with that of the RAF except that the 10th was not involved in the land battles fought during the first 3-4 months of 1943 so they were able to concentrate upon three objectives. First, to defend their airfields in Assam while challenging the Japanese air force in North Burma in protection of the Hump route.

Second, by heavy bomber operations in the south to cut off enemy supplies coming in by sea and from Thailand. Third, an effort by medium bombers in Central Burma to disrupt Japanese communications between Rangoon and the battlefield in the far north.

### Defense of the Assam Airfields

Following the Japanese bombings of our airfields in Assam during October 1941, all available fighters were rushed there. Only two fighter squadrons were then in India, the 25th and 26th Squadrons of the 51st Group, and they were responsible for aerial defense until late the following summer. The monsoons gave some respite in May, but before then the group commander, Col. John F. Egan (Vice Col. Homer L. Sanders, March 23, 1943), faced a nearly impossible task. With only 40 planes, inferior in many respects to the Japanese fighters, he was expected to thwart further bombing attacks and also protect the Hump transports. Formation flying by the transports was impossible because of inadequate facilities, so that fighter planes had to be airborne over the paths of the single transports to protect them. Also, because of an inadequate air warning net, planes had to be aloft constantly over Assam to prevent repetition of attacks such as those of October.

Meanwhile, an enemy movement north from Myitkyina begun in January in connection with a similar drive toward Yunnan, threatened Fort Hertz in North Burma. That fort was the last vestige of British authority in Burma, and its loss could easily alienate those Burmese who had remained loyal, especially the Kachins. Ft. Hertz was also a forward emergency base for patrols protecting Hump flyers, an important weather and radio station, and a center for native intelligence activities. Moreover, its loss might result in it being an enemy fighter base to interrupt the whole Hump operation. Also, it could flank the entire route

of the Ledo Road. So, providing a defense now would be less expensive than mounting an offensive later. Some 750 Kachins and a company of Ghurkas were astride the enemy line of advance, but they needed reinforcements, and the only troops then available were the trained Chinese in Ramgarh, which could not reach Ft. Hertz in time. So, it fell to the 25th and 26th Squadrons to help the British forces delay the enemy. As the Japanese advanced toward Ft. Hertz, the small 10th AF increased its offensive missions as resources would permit. With the aid of exact information from the ground defenders, our forces successfully bombed and strafed many well-hidden targets. Eventually, the 51st Group revolved a five-point program to help stem the enemy advance, meanwhile preventing the enemy ground force from benefiting from direct aerial support. The program included (1) persistent strafing and "fragging" of trails north of Sumprabum, in close support of British troops; (2) making Sumprabum untenable by bombing; (3) persistent fighter sweeps against motor convoys, troops concentrations, and supply dumps along the road from Myitkyina to Sumprabum; (4) dive bombing assaults against bridges; (5) bombing attacks against main bases and nerve centers at Myitkyina and Mogaung.

In this program, the fighters received some help from bombers. The B-24s of the 14th AF bombed key points on their freight hauling trips to and from Assam, and B-25s occasionally struck targets in Upper Burma. The burden, however, fell to the fighters. The results of their missions could seldom be assessed, but pilot morale was kept high by reports from ground forces on successful missions. In spite of this, Japanese forces edged northward; also their supply line, the railway into Myitkyina continued to function. Only by destroying several bridges could we hope to stop traffic there for any appreciable length of time. P-40s were not then equipped to carry bombs large enough to do the job. Plans were made to interrupt the campaign in Central Burma long enough for B-25s to bomb out these bridges, but Yankee ingenuity prevailed, and it was never necessary to bring in the bombers. LCol. John E. Barr, executive officer of the 51st Group,

proved by a series of daring experiments that the P-40s could be modified to carry the 1,000-pound bombs that were intended for the B-25s. Once the new technique was mastered, the P-40s were able to carry this size of bomb, twice their previous bomb load. The new "B-40s" soon became accurate and destructive dive bombers and the attacks against bridges were far more successful. While they were not able to block the railway entirely, they did make strafing of stranded rolling stock rewarding. Bombing of railway bridges at critical points were effective enough to cause Japanese construction crews to build by-pass bridges. Before the monsoons, our fighters had forced the enemy to restrict troop and supply movements to the hours of darkness. The dive-bombers also found their new bombs to be effective against enemy airdromes and kept the crews at Mogaung and Myitkyina busy repairing damage. In May, because of rains and our fighters, the enemy was forced to halt their drive just north of Sumprabum.

As expected, the monsoons ruled out all flying in Assam and North Burma for weeks at a time, but as the summer of 1943 dragged on, the 51st ran missions, weather permitting. Work was pushed on additional fighter fields, and training of replacement pilots made some progress. In July, a brief clearing of the weather allowed a short flurry of missions, but in August the monsoon closed in again. In frequent reconnaissance flights, however, revealed the enemy was still stalled above Sumprabum.

In September, arrival of the 80th Fighter Group from Karachi and the transfer of the two remaining squadrons of the 51st Group to the 14th in China broke the monotony of the rainy season in Assam. Originally trained for P-17s, bound for Europe, the 80th had been forced to go through training in Karachi to become accustomed to the P-40s. Upon arrival in Assam, there was a shuffling of personnel between this new group and the 51st so that the Assam defense would not be left entirely in the hands of inexperienced pilots. The 80th Fighter Group, comprising the 88th, 89th and 90th Squadrons under the command of Col. Ivan W. McElroy was equipped with P-40Ns, which

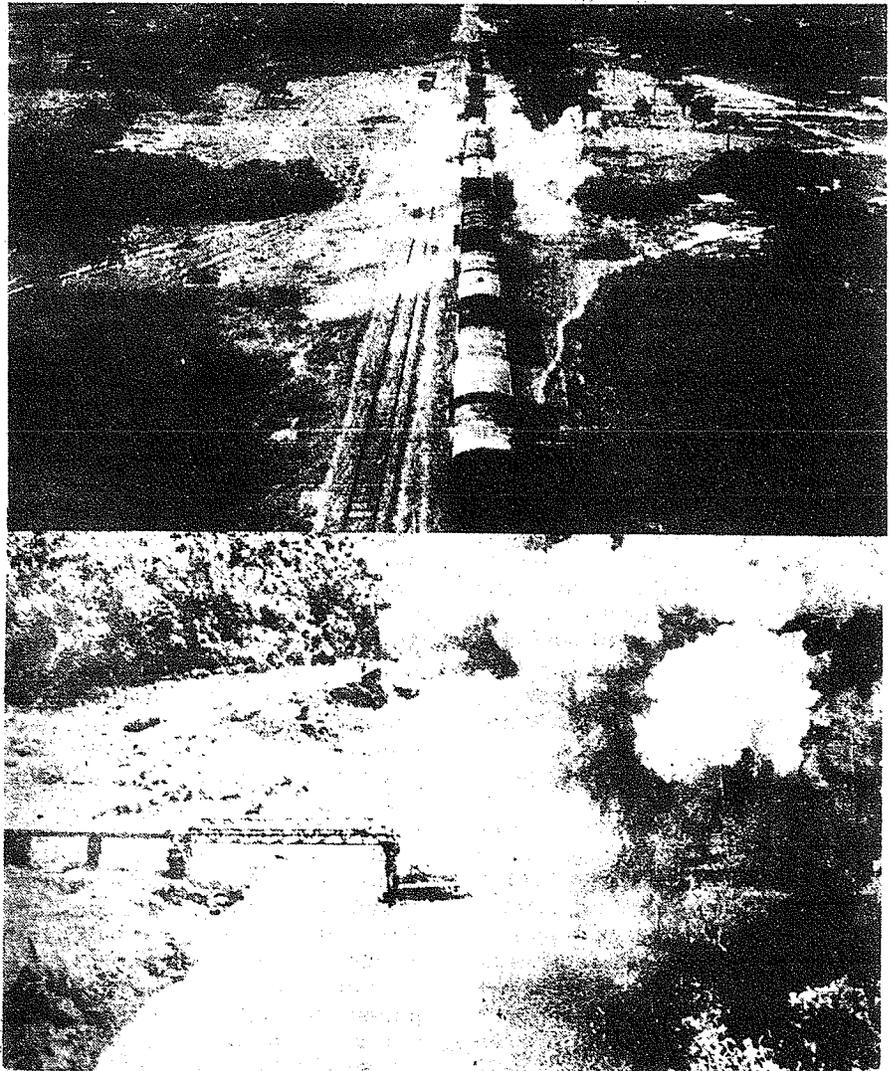
were better climbers than the heavier models used by the 51st.

In the remaining weeks of the monsoon, men of the 80th became accustomed to their surroundings and adopted much of their predecessor's routine. They flew patrols, made reconnaissance flights and weather checks, escorted transports on food-droppings and occasionally bombed and strafed enemy areas. They also adopted the 1,000-pound bomb as the standard weapon for use against major targets. Rarely did they see enemy aircraft; and antiaircraft fire encountered was generally light and ineffective.

Meanwhile, General Haynes, after long service in CBI, returned to the U.S., BGen W. D. Old assumed command of the American Air Base Command (formerly AAABC) and Col. Torgils Wold took over command of the IATF. Old,

having served with the Assam-Burma-China Ferry and as chief of staff of the 10th AF, was well informed on the situation in Assam, and Col. Wold as commander of the 341st Bomb Group had long since become familiar with conditions in Bengal and Assam.

Before the monsoon ended, the situation in Assam was further improved by the arrival of the 311th Fighter-Bomber Group under Col. H. R. Melton, Jr. One of its squadrons had been inactivated upon arrival in CBI and much of its personnel transferred to the 459th (P-38) Fighter Squadron, whose flight echelon had recently arrived from the Mediterranean Theater. The 459th, assigned to the 80th Fighter Group, was sent to Kurmitola in Bengal, where it operated in conjunction with the B-25 Squadrons. The other three squadrons of the 311th Group -

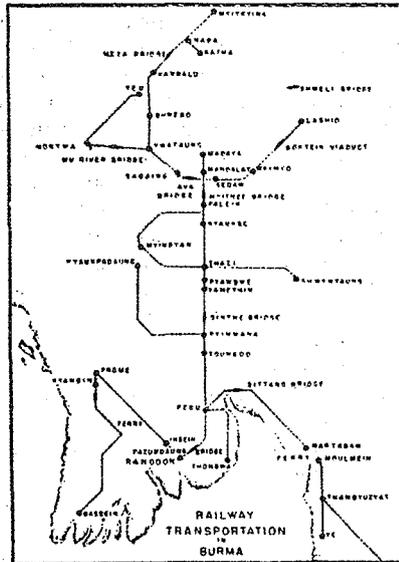


*Enemy Communications in Burma. Above: Attack on Train, Mandalay-Yeu Railway. Below: Bombing Meza Bridge, 30 January 1944.*

the 528th, 529th and 530th – were equipped with A-36s and P-51As. Thus, the fighter strength of the 10th AF was greatly increased in the space of a few weeks. The number of squadrons jumped from two to seven, and instead of having old model P-40s – P-40Ns, P-51As, A-36s and P-38s were available, and all had superior altitudes. For the first time, there could be a division of labor among fighters in the 10th AF. Versatility of the fighter force promised to make it more effective against the enemy in Burma. P-38s of the 459th in the south soon gave bombers their first long-range fighter escort, while in Assam the P-40Ns took over patrol duties, as well as an occasional bombing and strafing mission. P-51As and A-36s engaged largely in air support to ground forces, but they frequently flew reconnaissance and patrol missions. Late in November 1943, the 530th Squadron was pulled down into Bengal to fly escort to bombers on a series of special missions against Rangoon.

Before the new squadrons had time to be lulled into a feeling of security by enemy inactivity, the Japanese again challenged our air ascendancy over North Burma. Then the enemy repaired many old airfields and built new ones and on October 13th, their fighters appeared over Sumprabum and they shot down one GNAC transport, one ATC C-46, and one ATC C-87, while damaging one B-24 of the 14th AF and two C-47s of a troop carrier squadron. On the 16th, three A-36s of the 311th failed to return from a mission over Sumprabum. On the 20th, another C-46 was lost and three days later three others were missing. On the 27th, still another C-46 was shot down and two B-24s of the 14th AF were attacked, but they destroyed eight enemy fighters and damaged several others.

Meanwhile, Gen. Old put out a new policy, despite a greater altitude, all transports were to cross well north of Sumprabum. In retaliation, we attacked the field at Myitkyina nine times in October and November and five times in December 1943, using P-40s. These had an effect as no transports were shot down in November, but in December we lost two, although in December we lost a B-25 and four troop carrier C-47s in a single day.



The Japanese once more attacked Assam on December 13, 1943. Twenty bombers, escorted by 25 fighters, appeared over Dinjan causing little damage. Our fighters engaged them before they could get out of the area; then they ran into another group of our fighters returning from a mission to Bhamo. In both of these engagements, 12 enemy bombers were shot down and also five escorts. Again, the enemy showed that they could slip through our warning net.

#### Enemy Communications in Burma

While relatively few 10th AF fighters were protecting the China ferry route, the remainder of the force, medium and heavy bombers were engaged in destroying enemy installations, supply routes, and lines of communications in Burma. The Japanese used most of their motor transport to move supplies from terminals of the railway system to outlying posts and stations. As a result, the rail system from Rangoon to Mandalay and Myitkyina became the main line of communication of enemy armies in North Burma and along the Salween front. This rail net was some 2,000 miles of meter-gauge single-track line from Ye on the Malay Peninsula to Myitkyina. At Mandalay, all rolling stock was re-routed for ultimate destinations. The railway net provided many widely dispersed potential targets, also at points where river traffic joined the rail net. The railways offered numerous bridge targets whose elimination would disrupt the flow of supplies through Burma. So, in Burma, there were

two phases of enemy transport offering targets to the bombers. The first were the seaports; the second phase was movement of supplies over the interior transportation system. Both heavy and medium bombers ran many missions to break this flow of supplies.

Rangoon, Bangkok, Moulmein, Tavoy, Mergui, Singapore, Saigon and other coastal towns served as ports of entry for the enemy, but Rangoon became a regular bombardment objective for the heavy bombers. The 10th AF intelligence estimated that 30-40,000 tons of shipping passed weekly along the Rangoon River; much of this was of gas and oil for air units in Burma. It was not until January 1943 that the air force obtained suitable mines for mining operations. No information was available as to the number of ships sunk by this operation but it kept the enemy sweeping the river and reduced the number of ships docking at Rangoon.

Liberators also struck at rail targets, largely in the area south of Thazi, though they occasionally lent aid to the B-25s which assumed responsibility for rail targets in Central Burma.

In Central Burma, the Liberators hit Ywataung rail yards and Monywa on June 12th and struck Mandalay on 20 July and 1 September. A second strike at Monywa on September 19th was followed the next day by a mission to Sagaing and another to Naba on the Mandalay-Myitkyina line. In October, Sagaing and Myingyan were hit once and Kanbalu twice. On October 17th, Liberators along with Mitchells gave Naba a thorough going over, and on December 30th, B-24s completely knocked out Monywa.

Among the bridges which the heavy bombers tried to destroy were Sinthe, Myitnge (and Myittha just to the south), Meza, Gokteik and Shwell. Some damage was done to nearly all these targets, but always the Japanese were able to make them usable in a short time. Myitnge was the most frequently visited bridge target. Of the ten times when the heavies bombed they could claim only superficial damage. One of the most interesting was a minimum-altitude attack by two old B-17s, recently made flyable; but this experimental mission, too, brought no success.

Sea searches continued throughout 1943, but with questionable results. This activity eventually became only a part of the main effort to knock out ports and close Rangoon by mining. The water expanse of the Andaman Sea was too great for the limited force available.

Aside from shipping, all worthy targets in the range of the B-24s were near Rangoon, so most of the efforts of the 7th Group were in that region. The distance on these missions was greater than that required for our planes based in Britain to strike Berlin. These targets were a milk-run for India-based Liberators, despite the fact that the enemy built up their AA defenses there until Rangoon became one of the most heavily fortified areas in all SE Asia. In addition, the enemy had the larger part of enemy fighter strength based at Mingaladon and other-nearby airdromes. So, most missions to Rangoon met resistance, and as the 10th AF had no long-range fighters until arrival of P-38s and P-51s late in 1943, all missions were flown without escort. Once the enemy found that the current model B-24 lacked adequate defense against frontal attack, he exacted an alarming toll. In October, B-24Js with better frontal firepower arrived, but were a disappointment in early operations. Over Rangoon, on December 1, 1943, they suffered heavy losses from frontal attacks. Inexperience in handling the new turrets was given as an explanation. Yet, they flew many successful daylight missions which caused damage to Rangoon.

From the first of 1943 until the monsoons, the heavy bombers concentrated on knocking out the Central Railway Station, Mahlwagon roundhouse and rail yards to upset the land transportation system. Destruction of Pazundaung bridge which would have delayed all rail traffic to the north was tried but the bombers were able to make it unserviceable only for short periods. Other heavily bombed targets before the monsoons were Syrian oil refineries, Thilawa oil storage area, and the large airdrome at Mingaladon.

Rain and fog cut down the number of missions to Rangoon during the summer, but in July the weather allowed a flight to bomb Syrian refineries, and in September both the refineries and

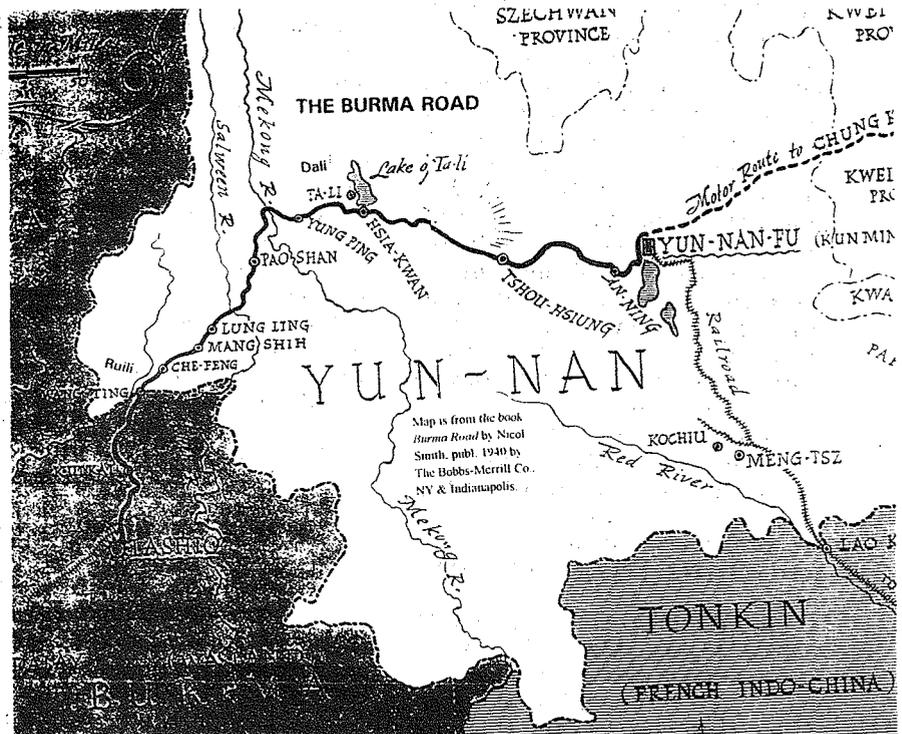
Sule Pagoda docks and storage areas were bombed. With better weather in October regular missions were resumed. Just before the combined effort of the 10th and 14th AF and the RAF to give Rangoon a knockout blow in late November and early December 1943, Liberators hit the most important fields where interceptors might be based, dropping heavy loads of bombs.

When Gen. Stratemeyer arrived he proposed the Air Chief Marshal Peirse that both forces collaborate in a series of attacks to completely destroy most vital installations around Rangoon. Stratemeyer then proposed to Chennault that the 308th Bomb Group be temporarily moved to India to help out. Chennault agreed since this would relieve pressure on the Hump, and forestall any impeding air attacks on Assam where supplies for the 14th were massed. Top priority was given to the locomotive works at Insein. Strafing and bombing along the railways had done much damage to locomotives, and Insein was the only place in Burma to repair them. Mahlwagon marshalling yards and engine sheds were picked as good night targets and easily spotted. Docks at Rangoon were another lucrative target and chosen as a third major objective. All night attacks were by RAF Wellingtons and Liberators, and all AAF missions were flown by day. Bombers were escorted by recently

arrived P-38s of the 459th Squadron. Later the 530th Fighter-Bomber Squadron brought its P-51s to help the P-38s.

The 490th Bomb Squadron (M) was to attack, along with the heavy bombers of the 308th and 7th Groups. When the 308th arrived, half of it went to Pandaveswar and half to Panagarh where the 7th Group was located. Thus, the ground men of the 7th could help the 308th in maintenance. Arrangements for the fighters and mediums was not so easy. Neither had sufficient range to fly from their base at Kurmitola, so forward staging fields had to be used. The medium squadron would stage at Chittagong, 484 miles from Rangoon, and the fighters at Ramu, 430 miles from Rangoon; 750-gallon refueling trucks were sent to service the aircraft; fighters, of course, were equipped with belly tanks.

The plan was that on D-Day, 25th November, the maximum strength of B-24 and B-25s of the AAF, escorted by fighters, was to attack in two waves. The 7th Group (first wave) was to hit Insein locomotive shops; the 308th Group and 490th Squadron (2d wave) would bomb fighter fields. That night, maximum strength RAF bombers would attack Mahlwagon marshalling yards, with the AAF following up on the same target the next day. D plus 1, the RAF and AAF would strike by night and day



against the wharves. These missions were expected to last six days and five nights. On approximately D plus 8, the AAF was to mine shipping lanes at Rangoon and Moulmein.

Misfortune set in from the take-off of the first mission when two B-24s crashed, killing all on board. At the point where the heavies were to pick up their escorts, bad weather prevented the fighters from making contact, so the bombers had to proceed to the target alone. Bad weather at Insein prevented the attack; same for the second major target; one B-24 crashed due to a flak hit. The only success for the day was performed by the 490th Squadron, which bombed Mingaladon with some success. Enemy fighters intercepted and in the battle the P-51s claimed one enemy aircraft and four probables. Two P-51s were shot down and two others damaged. Gunners on the Mitchells shot down one plane, damaged two, and claimed three probables, the mediums escaping without damage.

The result of the initial effort was extremely disappointing. The enemy was now aware that two heavy groups were operating from India and would take necessary precautions.

On November 16th, all flights were called off because of weather. Then, on the 17th, we struck at Insein. Despite interception by a large number of enemy fighters, results were excellent. Gen. Davidson (10th AF Commander) estimated that at least 70% of the buildings and installations of the locomotive works were destroyed. We lost four P-51s, two P-38s, and three B-24s. One of the mustangs shot down was piloted by Col. Melton, CO of the 311th Group, who was seen to bail out. One of the B-24s landed off the coast and nine of the crew was rescued. Thirteen enemy fighters were claimed destroyed, seven probables and four others damaged.

On the next day (28th), the mediums attacked Sagaing with little resistance and without loss. They shot down four interceptors and five probables. Results were very good - heavy damage to the dock area.

On December 1, the B-24s revisited Insein while the B-25s bombed Myitnge Bridge. Due to bad weather, only 15 P-38s were available to protect the bombers.

The enemy reinforced its fighter strength. Sixty odd fighters made head-on attacks out of the sun. The 7th Group bore the brunt of the attack, the group leader, his left wingman, and a squadron leader were knocked out. Three other planes then closed the gap and one was lost without completing the bomb run. The P-38s were occupied with enemy fighters so they could give no help. When the 308th Group arrived, they too were attacked. The lead plane was shot down and the plane replacing it was badly hit. Attacks continued after the bombing; then the P-51s finally arrived to help out, losing one plane. Bombing results were mostly unobserved but believed good. Our losses though were devastating - six B-24s and one P-51 lost; five B-24s were seriously damaged.

Our phase of the operation ended on December 4th when our bombers ran successful mining missions to Rangoon and Moulmein, without loss. Our missions on 25, 27 and 28 November and December 1 resulted in the loss of 12 B-24s, eight P-51s and two P-38s, while many other craft of various types were temporarily unusable due to damage sustained.

The RAF flying night missions during this period, plus on December 2, 5 and 6 consisted of 66 sorties, with a loss of three Wellingtons.

The many factors involved make it almost impossible to reach an objective evaluation of these combined missions. Due to the limited time the 308th Group was available the plan could not be flexible in timing, and when bad weather intervened, the alternatives were either to call off the operation or to try to carry it out due to undesirable flight conditions. Once the element of surprise was taken away by an abortive mission, each succeeding mission was more risky. It must be remembered that on all previous missions, the Liberators had flown to Rangoon without escort and without heavy losses from fighters. Hence, it was not unreasonable to expect that the small escort provided would be sufficient to minimize losses.

The operation was an expensive one in a small air force where loss of every plane was felt. Though on a percentage basis, loss of eight P-51s in 60 sorties where interceptors were numerous was not

unreasonably high. Among B-24s we lost 12 in 205 sorties. Only on the December 1st mission did heavy bomber losses exceed 10 percent.

On the plus side were the great destruction at Insein and a very successful mining mission which affected both Moulmein and Rangoon. The Locomotive Work Shops were effectively damaged, so that it is doubtful whether they would work again.

Less tangible results were the cooperation between the RAF, 10th AF and the 14th AF. This was a good omen for the CBI.

Several important operational lessons were learned. Staging medium bombers from Chittagong and fighters from Ramu was entirely feasible but that they should arrive the night before the mission to permit refueling. Both P-38s and P-51s showed their value as escorts, but the P-51, with greater belly tank load per engine, was better for close support, while the P-38 was better as high altitude top cover. Gunners, though, needed more training. Most of all - fighter escorts would probably be needed for all later daylight missions to Rangoon.

A new target was identified - the enemy was expanding docking facilities at Bangkok and building a railway to connect to the Yemoulmein railway, and thus to the railway system of all Burma. On the night of December 19th, 21 B-24Js dropped 110 x 500-pound bombs; substantial destruction was wrought. A second attack was made on December 23rd - target, the railway terminal. Nineteen of 21 Liberators reached the target unleashing 110 x 500-pounders of which 59 were incendiaries. Huge fires were started along with heavy explosions, with no opposition. These two Bangkok raids did much to raise morale of the 7th Group after its heavy losses at Rangoon.

#### **Medium Bomber Operations in Central Burma**

The B-25s of the 22d, 490th and 491st Squadrons, 341st Group carried out the second phase by attacking enemy communications farther north. They concentrated the Mandalay regions between Thazi and Myitkyina.

Weather was more favorable there so they could adhere closer to operational plans. Also, there was less AA and enemy interceptors. They had other problems, however, objectives were widely

scattered and few were large enough for area bombing. The biggest problem was in "bridge busting," they were difficult to hit and destroy, and when they did, it was a matter of luck.

Three types of targets were involved - river, rail and motor. Since the British destroyed much of the river craft, movement of supplies by river was limited. Our mediums, however, sometimes attacked tugs, barges and ferry boats, and also planted mines in the Irrawaddy River. Motor transport provided few targets except for bombing of motor pools, highway bridges and cuts in highways where landslides might be caused, or in a few cases strafing motor convoys. The main targets, however, were the rail systems from Rangoon to Mandalay and Myitkyina. These served enemy armies in Burma. Only three undermanned B-25 squadrons got the job and before the end of 1943, these were reduced to one squadron. The only reinforcement was the 459th (P-38) Squadron which operated there in the autumn. The enemy, though, was adept at making repairs and unsnarling traffic. As a result, we concentrated on destroying locomotives and rolling stock. It was estimated that the enemy had 113 locomotives and 9,602 rail cars.

Marshalling yards in Burma were good targets for railway equipment. Only on rare occasions bomb damage to bridges caused congestion to traffic. Thazi was bombed 22 times from March to October 1, 1943. Against Kyaukse, Myingyan, Pyawbwe, the Meiktila (all south of Mandalay) 175 sorties were flown. Over 12 missions, of about 100 sorties, attacked Mandalay. On the Lashio Road, Sedaw and Maymyo were attacked seven and 15 times respectively.

Beyond Mandalay, Sagaing and Ywataung rail yards received the most severe treatment of all by some 240 planes in 23 missions. Farther up, Monywa suffered five attacks, while on the main line Kanbalu, Naba and Shweba was hit hard and often. When the new model B-25 with 75 mm guns arrived late 1943, they were sometimes used against flak guns.

At first, the enemy was able to quickly make repairs but later reconstruction lagged. They used tricky methods to confuse our bombers and as a result our missions became less fruitful. At the

same time, enemy rail transportation became less effective. In October, two of the three squadrons, the 22d and 491st were alerted for duty in China so they flew practically no missions for two months.

Meanwhile attacks on bridges, a special responsibility of the 341st Group, failed to keep pace with the destruction of the rail centers. Of the nearly 100 bridges of 200 feet or more in Burma, only a few on the road from Bhamo to China were targeted. All of the difficulties of the bridge campaign are illustrated in attacks on one bridge - Myitnge. Cumulative statistics on this target indicate the failure of bridge bombardment from medium and high altitudes. In 39 missions of 337 sorties, Liberators and Mitchells dropped 1,219 bombs (542 tons) with 18 hits on the bridge (less than 1.5%). The B-25s had 17 hits in 254 sorties; B-24s, one hit in 81 sorties. The AA fire over Myitnge was relatively ineffective; two B-24s were shot down and two were damaged. A survey of attacks on the six major bridge targets in Central Burma during 1943 shows how expensive the operation was, and also how ineffective. Against these bridges, Myitnge, Gokteik, Shweli, Meza, Mu and Myittha, 696 sorties were flown from February 4, to 31 December 1943; 2,398 bombs were dropped (almost 1100 tons) about 17% of the bomb tonnage which fell on Burma during that time. Only 34 bombs struck bridges (accuracy rate of less than 1.5%). With the exception of Myitnge, none of the bridges were rendered useless for extended periods.

Although the record of the mediums for accuracy was far poorer than that of the B-24s, which were obviously misused in attacking bridges. Morale was lowered in the 490th Squadron, which was left with the responsibility for bridge attacks when the 22d and 491st Squadrons left for China, and they began to look with dread upon such missions. LCol. Robert D. McCarren refused to be discouraged and started a training program to solve this problem. On January 1, 1944, Major Robert A. Erdin, pilot of the lead Mitchell bombing the Mu River Bridge, by accident found the secret of successful bombing. Avoiding a tree on a bomb run, he dumped his bombs as he suddenly pulled up, and to his surprise they toppled two spans of the bridge into the

river. This was the correct way of angling the bombs, so after refining this method, the 409th became more proficient as to merit the title, "BURMA BRIDGE BUSTERS." But, this success came in 1944, after a year of relatively futile effort.

In summary, the interdiction program in Central Burma had not succeeded by the end of 1943. Supplies still moved into North Burma but on a reduced scale; the Burma railway system was still usable; yet the campaign was not a complete failure. Some irreplaceable locomotives and rolling stock had been destroyed, warehouses burned, railway yards damaged and certain key bridges closed for a while. But, the real success was in upset train schedules, delays caused by damage to bridges, loss of supplies, and employing so much effort in repairs. Possibly, if considered a campaign of attrition, it could be called successful. But, as a preparation for all out ground attack to reconquer Burma, it was a failure.

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(Extracted from the "History of the Army Air Forces in World War II" by Joe Shupe. Part VII will be published in a future edition of SOUND-OFF.)



Eleanor Wilson outshines the Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine RR, All West Reunion, Fresno.

Syd Wilson Photo

## CBI QUIZ

The following concern events in our Theater 50 years ago during 1943:

1. General Wavell, commanding Allied forces in India realized that he would not be ready for a major invasion of Burma until the dry season of late 1943 or early 1944. He was still worried about the psychological effects of the defeats suffered in 1942, and hoped during the dry season of 42-43 to revive the spirit of British troops by success in two small carefully planned offensives. The first of such operations was called:

- The First Arakan Campaign
- The First Myitkyina Campaign
- The Maymo Campaign
- The Mandalay Campaign

2. Another famed undertaking by the British in 1943 was the test of Brigadier Orde C. Wingate's concept of "Long Range Penetration" with his 77th Indian Brigade. After crossing the Chindwin River on Feb. 18, 1943, his initial objective was to cut the Mandalay-Myitkyina, and the Mandalay-Lashio railroads. This raid was considered by military experts as a military failure because their losses totaled 1,000 men (over 1/3 of the total force engaged) to justify the small damage inflicted. The Allied media, however, hailed this as a great Allied victory because:

- They successfully cut the Mandalay-Lashio railroad.
- British troops had successfully raided behind Jap lines and fought their way out again.
- The Japs thought the Allies would not attempt another undertaking in Burma at this time.
- The British temporarily interrupted the Mandalay-Myitkyina railroad.

3. Meanwhile in February 1943, in North Burma, the Japs pressed closer to the India-Burma border in the Hukawng Valley. Gen. Stilwell feared the Japs might invade NE India where American, Chinese and Indian engineers were beginning to push a road toward the border from Ledo. He, therefore, moved some troops to protect the road building operation. There were minor clashes of patrols just inside Burma. The Japs withdrew back into Hukawng Valley. The



Florida State Commander John Casey is either lip-synching a rock number or having his words recorded for posterity as he speaks to the Tampa Bay Basha in March.

Alleyne Windmuller Photo

troops Stilwell used were:

- U.S. engineer units on the Ledo Road.
- The Chinese 38th Division from Ramgarh.
- The British 14th Division.
- OSS Det. 101.

4. Oct-Nov '43, Stilwell, disappointed by British and Chinese failure to undertake a major invasion into Burma to open the land route to China, decided to return to Burma using resources at his disposal. With a Chinese Division, he pushed southeastward through mountains on the India-Burma border into the Hukawng Valley. One result of this operation was:

- The Japs withdrew from North Burma.
- Allowed more progress on the road from Ledo as more American engineer troops arrived.
- Boosted the morale of Americans everywhere.
- Prompted the JCS to consider sending several U.S. Divisions to the CBI.

5. In 1943, the quantity of supplies flowing to China over the Hump was inadequate to meet the conflicting needs of China. This led to serious disputes involving American leaders in China. Chennault's China Air Task Force was having a success comparable to that which he had earlier with his "Flying Tigers" (a 10-1 ratio over the Japs), but because of restric-

tions on supplies over the Hump, Chennault felt that he had not had the opportunity to prove the full potential of his force. Stilwell, however, ordered that a substantial amount of Hump tonnage should go to the Chinese Army in China. This, then, would allow an attack on North Burma from China; while his troops in India were attacked from the West. Who won the argument:

- Chiang supported Stilwell.
- Chiang supported Chennault.
- President Roosevelt supported Stilwell.
- Chiang, already displeased with Stilwell, supported Chennault, who finally obtained the support of President Roosevelt.

## Answers to CBI Quiz

(Questions found on page 14)

- (Note: Instead of rebuilding confidence, this campaign had made British troops still more fearful of Japanese jungle fighting ability. The campaign ended on May 12, 1943, where it started.)
- b & d
- b
- b
- b & d (Note: As a result, Chennault was promoted to major general; his command was enlarged, and redesignated the "Fourteenth Air Force." With increased Hump tonnage, Chennault's force was able during the remainder of 1943 to gain air superiority over most of China. His bombers ranged as far as Formosa. Also, because of this, Chiang would not permit Chinese troops in China to participate in Stilwell's planned two-prong offensive into North Burma. Only with reluctance, he gave his assent to the advance of Chinese troops from India, since this would not interfere with the flow of Hump supplies to China.)

\* \* \* \* \*

26th AAA Bn.  
Battery "A", 26th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, 24th Infantry Division (1949-1953) will hold its reunion in Nashville, TN, September 9-12, 1993. Contact: Curtis Henderson, 7312 Friendship Rd., Hixson, TX 37343. Phone: (615) 842-4917.

# History of the Army Air Forces in the CBI

## Part VII

### The Allied Offensive in Burma

By Joe Shupe

With the loss of Burma in spring of 1942, Gen. Stilwell labored to train the Chinese armies and to perfect the plans for its reconquest and re-establish overland communications with China. The Combined Chiefs of Staff in May, 1943 gave Chennault immediate priority, also gave Stilwell the promise to support his effort to free the trace of the Ledo Road. This included the assurance that diversionary British offensives

in Central and Southern Burma would be undertaken in support of Chinese forces from Yunnan and Assam. The CCS meeting in Quebec in August 1943, reaffirmed these commitments and assigned to the newly-established Southeast Asia Command (SEAC) of Lord Louis Mountbatten a mission to capture North Burma and increase supplies to China.

Included in above was a plan to use "long range penetration

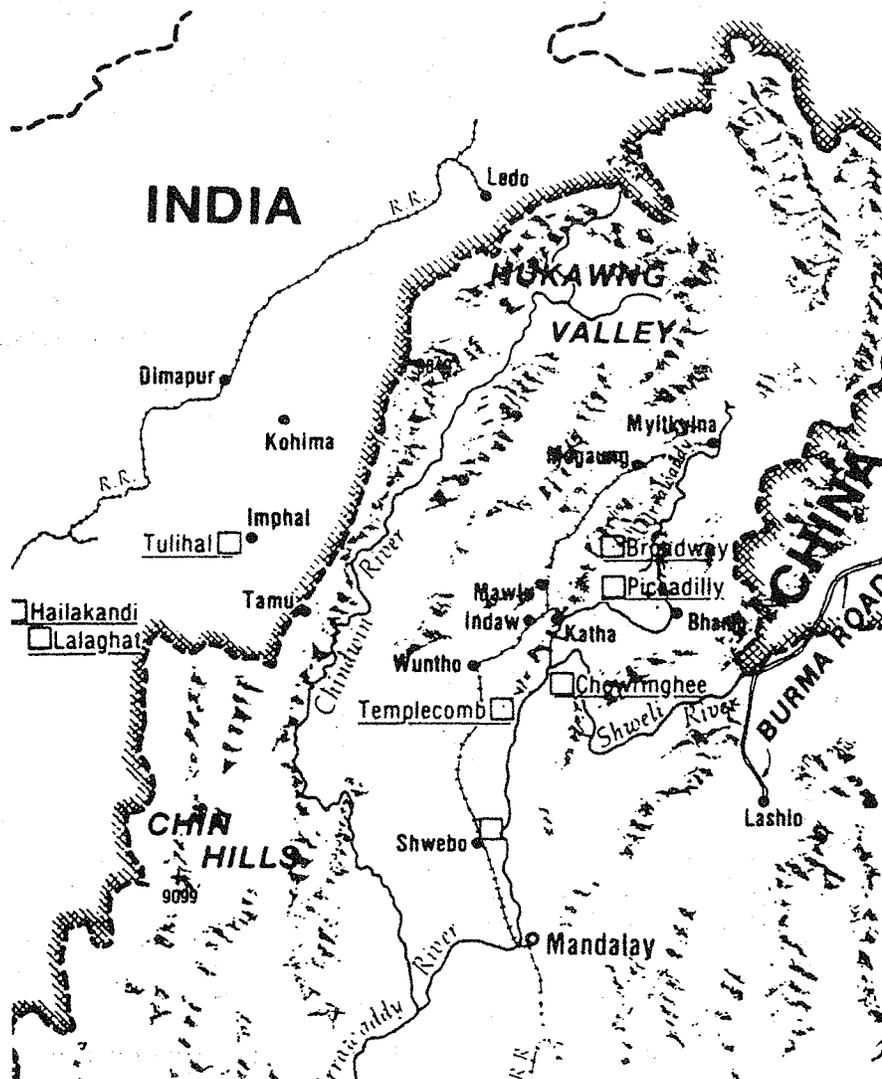
groups" (LRPG's) for operation behind enemy lines based on Brig. Orde Wingate's spring of 1943 "First Expedition." So, it was decided to organize another such move under Wingate with British imperial reserves. This force was to be joined by 3,000 American combat troops to support Allied forces from Ledo, Yunnan and Imphal. Wingate's original force depended upon air support, and the new plans gave the air transport an even larger role. Gen. Arnold promised a special unit for this purpose.

Mountbatten arrived on Oct. 6, 1943, and activated his headquarters on November 16th. He immediately conferred with the Chinese government. He returned to New Delhi with Gen. Stilwell; together they drafted plans to be sent to the CCS at the forthcoming SEXTANT conference at Cairo. The plans included support from British fleet units to undertake amphibious operations in South Burma, which was desired by the Generalissimo as a condition for the commitment of his Yunnan force.

In the meantime, the Allied offensive started on Oct. 31, 1943, when Stilwell started a drive toward seizing the Mogaung-Myitkyina area. The Chinese 22d and 38th Divisions were already engaged in combat with the Japanese 38th Division as Mountbatten and Stilwell took their plans for final approval to Cairo late in November.

At Cairo, the reaction was favorable. The Generalissimo received the assurance that forces would be made available for amphibious operations. So, Chiang with some vacillation agreed to commit his Yunnan force. But, then at the Tehran (EUREKA) allied conference there was a set-back. As a condition for Stalin to join the war against Japan, the plan for the amphibious offensive was dropped. As a compromise, Mountbatten promised a smaller amphibious operation on the Mayu Peninsula. So, the Generalissimo negated his promise of a Yunnan offensive, although he agreed to permit the Ledo force to continue the ongoing offensive. So, Mountbatten had to reduce his commitment to Stilwell with no more than three small operations. One across the Chinwin River, a limited offensive in the Arakan, and the use of LRPG in the heart of Burma. The attempt to

### Northern Burma 1944



build the Ledo Road was postponed and instead to concentrate on building more airports in Assam to assure the 14th AF could step up attacks on the enemy air force in China and on Japanese shipping down the China coast. As a substitute for Stilwell's Burma campaign, Lord Louis proposed an attack on Sumatra and Singapore after the defeat of Germany in coordination with the developing Allied offensives in the Pacific. Stilwell, however, stood by his plans for the advance across Burma. Both sent representatives to Washington in an effort to win CCS support.

**Thrusts into Burma**

As the year 1943 drew to its close, the military situation was not encouraging. Allied forces made no important gains. The enemy held strong positions on the Burma frontier with India. They had to use dirt roads from the railheads to the battlefield, which was a disadvantage during the rains. The situation for the Allies was also serious, as our forces had to depend upon air supply.

In December 1943, there were four points where the Allies were in contact with the enemy. The British 15th Corps was just over the Burma frontier in the Arakan, and the 4th Corps was in Assam. They were part of the 14th Army under LGen. William Slim. In North Burma, there was the Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC) under Stilwell who controlled the Chinese 22d and 38th Divisions, with the 30th Division held in reserve. Around Fort Hertz, there was a small garrison of Kachins under British officers, and on February 1, 1944 they were given to Stilwell's NCAC. In India, Wingate was preparing his LRPG for operations in Burma. The enemy had the 55th Division in the Arakan, and four divisions of the 15th Army (115,000 troops) in Assam and North Burma. With more reinforcements arriving, the Japanese would have in Burma eight divisions and an independent brigade.

Despite his set-backs, Stilwell felt that he could still take Myitkyina. His main forces had to advance 170 miles over low mountains into the Mogaung River Valley. Within five months, he accomplished a victory which had been regarded as impossible. Stilwell was satisfied for it was the first

successful sustained Allied offensive in Burma, but operations in the south distracted attention from the Ledo region.

The main Japanese effort was to be aimed at Imphal and it was hoped that northern Assam could be occupied, thereby completing



*TEN MILES A DAY was the average rate of movement over the Ledo Road for the Marauder column.*



*TROOPS OF MERRILL'S MARAUDERS rest on a mountain trail.*

the isolation of China. The enemy expected to maintain their forces from captured British stores. The British found themselves outflanked by as many as 10,000 of the enemy.

The Indian 7th Division was cut off, and the Japanese expected the British forces to retreat toward Chittagong. The Third Tactical Force had the fighter strength to challenge Japanese air superiority above the Arakan battle area, and they had transport planes to provide supplies to the beleaguered Allied forces. At the same time, sufficient reinforcements were brought in by air to turn defeat into victory by February 29. The Japanese failed completely to understand the possibilities of air supply. The Allies however, came to see the significance of air logistics. The RAF had some earlier experience in air supply. Still later in the Burma retreat, our 7th Bombardment Group gave air transportation and supply support.

During April 22 and June 15, 1942, the 10th AF used its planes to evacuate from Burma to India 4,499 passengers and 1,733,026 pounds of freight, and the RAF evacuated 4,117 persons and dropped 155,652 pounds of supplies to the armies below. Air supply continued to be used throughout the late spring and summer of 1942 to assist Chinese troops still operating in North Burma in a

protracted retreat. After the enemy stopped some distance south of Fort Hertz, British efforts to supply the garrison by ground transport failed and air supply was adopted.

Still later, when air-warning stations were established in the Burmese hills, these, too, were supplied by air. Again, early in 1943, Chinese troops in the Naga Hills were supplied by air.

It is significant that in March 1943, a year before Wingate's second expedition, serious thought was given to a system for airlifting supplies. This became one of the keys to our success in air supply. A new organization was set up under the Services of Supply consisting of a unit to pack and drop supplies and seven detachments located in the forward areas to receive and issue supplies. This was functioning by April 14, 1943; first at Sookerating, later shifted to Chabua, and by July 1, 1943, in Dinjan.

By the end of 1943, the potentialities of air supply were widely recognized. As plans for the reconquest of Burma developed, the conviction was held that the advancing armies would have to be supplied by air. Thus, in September 1943, Stratemeyer said that the only way we can supply any force that advances into Burma is by air, and that we must have troop carrier squadrons.

With the creation of the Eastern

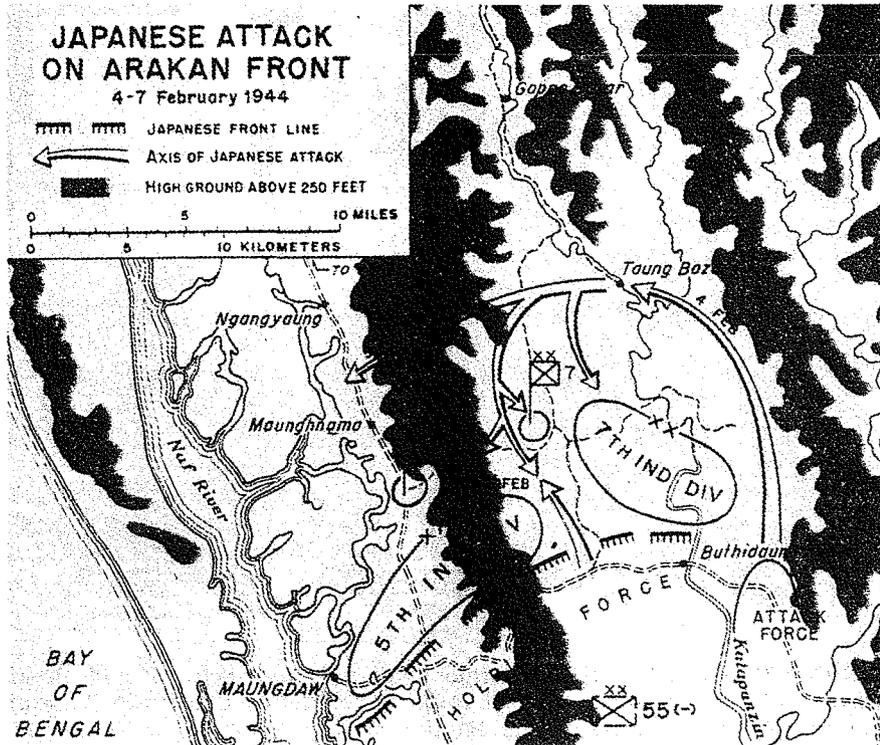
Air Command on December 15, 1943, it was decided to bring all air supply activities of the AAF and RAF under one command. As a consequence, the EAC established the Troop Carrier Command (TCC), containing AAF and RAF units, under the command of BGen. William D. Old. Their mission was to provide air transportation for airborne and air transit forces in the support and training of the Army Group and other land or air forces involved in operations in Burma.

On January 2, 1944, Gen. Old established his headquarters at Comilla. Though the original concept of TCC's role was not one of air supply the force of events threw it into the business of transporting and supplying contingents of ground forces. The 1st and 2d Troop Carrier Squadrons were already engaged in this activity in North Burma when the British troops began their move into the Arakan in January 1944, and from mid-January until early February, the British troops advancing toward Akyab received more than 1,000 tons of supplies by air.

By February 8th, four days after the Japanese isolated the British, the situation became acute, with 22,000 troops having only two days rations. Twenty-five C-46s were temporarily transferred to TCC from ATC and saved the situation despite AA and attacks by fighters. The most acute needs were met by 10 February, but supplies were flown to the troops throughout February. With sufficient supplies and some reinforcements, the British troops beat back the Japanese in defeat. As Stratemeyer wrote Arnold, "All in authority here are convinced that General Old's TCC . . . was to a large extent responsible for the success of the battle."

At Imphal, the British felt secure with plenty of supplies for its 170,000 troops and civilian support. In India, west of that city, Wingate's Special Force was getting ready for its glider flights over the Japanese lines to land far east of the Burma border. By March 1st, it was a question of who would strike first, the enemy east of Imphal, or Wingate's Special Force west of Imphal. Wingate struck on March 5th, and five days later, the Japanese broke through the British lines north of Tiddim.

The Special Force was made up of two Indian Brigades and three



British Independent Brigades. Arnold, fulfilling his promise, committed the 5318th Air Unit under Col. Philip G. Cochran. This unit became an air task force under the Third TAE for operational control but was strictly limited to the movement and the supply and evacuation of Wingate's LRPG. The task force was also to provide Wingate's forces with an air covering and striking force was equipped with: 13 C-47s, 12 C-64s, 225 gliders, 100 L-1 and L-5 aircraft, six helicopters, 30 P-51s and 12 B-25s.

When Gen. Marshall had called for 3,000 volunteers to meet his promise to the LRPG's, there were brought together some 950 veterans of the SW Pacific, 950 from the Caribbean Defense Command, and about 1,000 from highly trained units in the US. They were designated the 5307th Composite Group (Prov.), and given the code name GALAHAD Force. They arrived in India in the autumn of 1943 and went into training under Wingate. They were intended to serve under Wingate, but in the end they were assigned to Stilwell's Ledo force in North Burma. Under the command of BGen. Frank D. Merrill, they became popularly known as "Merrill's Marauders," and they played a vital part in Stilwell's campaign from late February.

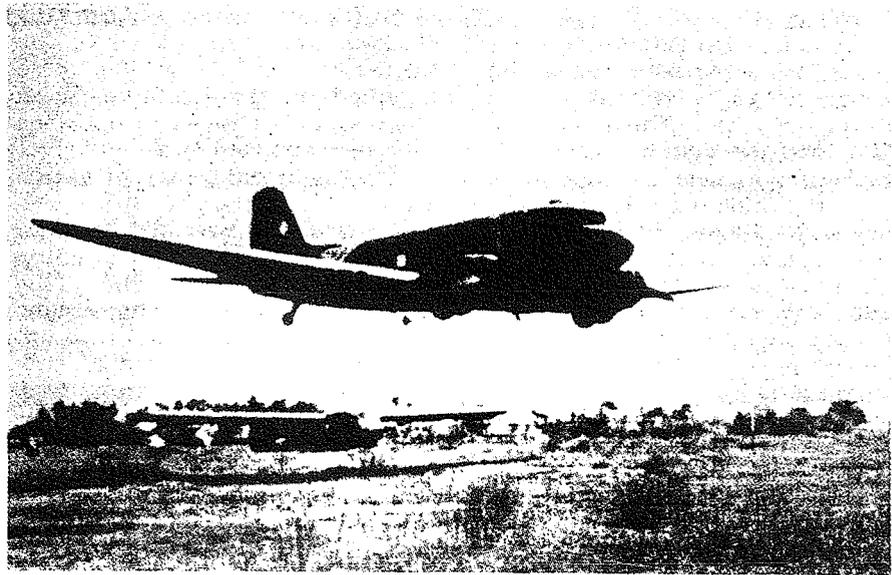
Despite previous plans to have the Special Force transported and supplied by Cochran's "Air Command" force, Old's TCC received responsibility to supply the expedition by air. It was agreed in the end that the task force should direct all glider operations and TCC be in charge of transport planes.

The gliders were supposed to land at three places: Broadway, Piccadilly, and Chowringhee. One group was to be flown into Piccadilly and Chowringhee. Because Wingate objected to reconnaissance flights over the area none were made. D Day was set for March 5th at 1740 hours to place the first gliders over Broadway and Piccadilly just after dusk, but it was discovered in photos taken a few hours earlier, that large trees were across the Piccadilly area, but that Broadway apparently was still in good shape. The photos were taken without the consent of Wingate, but they saved his expedition from a major disaster.

It was then decided to put all the gliders down on Broadway. At

first, the tug aircraft took up a double tow of gliders, which proved to be an unsatisfactory load. Frequently ropes broke in take-off, or

consumption of fuel was too great. The first gliders to land at Broadway found that the field was ditched in several places and had a



ABOVE: A Douglas C-47 tow plane snatches a CG-4 glider off the ground at Asanol, India. This technique proved to be extremely delicate, even for experienced pilots.



AIR COMMANDER LEADERS: Major Walter V. Radovich, Lt. Col. Arvid Olson, Col. John R. Alison, Lt. Col. Ralph T. Smith and Col. Philip Cochran (left to right) pose beside Colonel Smith's North American B-25 "Barbie III" at Hailakandi, India.

number of water buffalo holes. Early arrivals had their landing gear wrecked and could not be moved before the second group of gliders came down to crash into them. As soon as possible, word was radioed to the base that no more gliders could be received because of the condition of the field. Of a total of 67 gliders dispatched on the night of March 5th, 32 reached Broadway; nine landed in hostile territory, nine others landed in friendly country and the others were unreported or were turned back after Broadway warned that no more gliders could be received. Almost all the gliders reaching Broadway were wrecked or damaged. Thirty-one men were killed and 30 injured. Nevertheless, great achievements were recorded in the history of air transportation the first night. All told, 539 men, three animals, 65,972 pounds of stores had been safely put down, including heavy items as bulldozers and lighting apparatus, and within 24 hours an airstrip, 5,000 feet long, was cleared and prepared. During the next five days additional men, animals and supplies were landed by C-47s and more gliders.

Chowringhee was opened on the evening of March 6th by 12 single-tow gliders with less difficulty than had been encountered at Broadway, and an airstrip was immediately prepared. It was abandoned on March 10th as the troops advanced eastward. Ten hours later, the field was attacked by air, but Broadway was not hit until March 13th. Thereafter, the enemy was frequently over Broadway but with little effect. On March 27th, the enemy made a frontal attack on the field, only to be driven back by the garrison.

The initial phase of Wingate's second expedition ended by March 11th. The statistics of the operation as sent by Old to Stratemeyer were: 579 C-47 sorties; 74 glider sorties, 9052 persons moved, 1359 animals moved, 254 tons of stores moved.

Upon landing, the brigades were split into 26 columns of 300-400 men each. By March 10th, some were 20 miles west of the Indaw-Mohnyin railway, and others were in the Indaw area. All were sustained by air; an air officer was attached to each column to help arrange for dropping zones. Requests for air supply were radioed to brigade headquarters and from

there to Special Force Headquarters, which placed demands on TCC.

Between March 13-19, the 27th TC Squadron completed 156 sorties and dropped 816,200 pounds of supplies. Separate figures for the 315th and 117th Squadrons are not available for the same period, but from March 20th and April 5th, the 27th TC Squadron completed 106 sorties and dropped 530,000 pounds; the 315th had 95 sorties and dropped 475,000 pounds; and the 117th Transport Squadron, RAF, made 179 sorties and dropped 895,000 pounds of supplies. All flights were at night and without escort.

During the night of March 24th, the first part of the 14th Brigade was flown in by transport planes to Aberdeen, a strip about 15 miles north of Mawlu. During early April, the West African 3rd Division was flown in. The 16th Brigade meanwhile had marched in from Ledo to Mohnyin thereby bringing the Special Force in Burma to full strength.

Meanwhile on March 25th, the expedition suffered a grievous loss in the death of Gen. Wingate due to a crash of a B-25 enroute from Broadway to Imphal. He was succeeded by MGen. Walter D. A. Lentaigne, former commander of the 111 Brigade. The Special Force did not achieve the intended goal of complete isolation of the Japanese 18th Division. Failure to place a strong force across the Bhamo-Myitkyina road allowed the enemy to bring in important reinforcements to Myitkyina which helped to hold up Stilwell's advance for many months. Withdrawal of the Special Forces began on April 29th when the 16 Brigade showed signs of fatigue. Other columns continued to operate in the north assisting the Chinese-American drives on Mogaung and Myitkyina, and the fly-out of the Special Force was not completed until August.

Scarcely had the first units of Wingate's second expedition landed behind enemy lines when the enemy struck with force against the British positions and four days later cut the road north of Tiddim isolating the 17th Division, which tried to retreat through the jungle to Imphal. They reached Imphal April 1st but the reserve supplies at Tiddim were lost to the Japanese. The enemy reached Tamu airfield, and by the end of March besieged the garrison at

Kohima, thereby cutting ground communication between Dimapur and Imphal. Both Kohima and Imphal were thereafter dependent upon air supply.

The Allies then concentrated the British 33rd Corps at Dimapur and sent reinforcements and supplies by air to the besieged forces at Imphal. The TCC could not meet the new demands as well as supply the Special Force. In the emergency, a full troop carrier group was borrowed from the European Theater, along with the RAF 216th Transport Squadron. With the promise of such reinforcements, SEAC settled down to retrieve the situation. The entire British 5th Division was flown to Imphal from the Arakan, and their 50th Parachute Brigade was brought in to fight a rear-guard action west of Ukhrul.

On April 6th, the fly-in of the 7th Division began. By April 8th, the 64th TC Group arrived from the Mediterranean, containing the 4th, 16th, 17th, 18th and 35th TC Squadrons. The reinforcement situation was on target but supply situation fell short of plans. Increased Japanese fighter activity and bad weather added to the problem. The bad news was that the 64th Group, with its five TC squadrons and the RAF 216th Squadron, would have to return to Europe on May 8th. This meant that the 14th Army would be 70 aircraft short to meet requirements. This was helped by the removal of some 25,000 administrative personnel out of the besieged area, so that less rations would be needed.

Then, again later the departure date of the 64th Group was delayed until June 1st, and some Wellingtons and B-25s of the Strategic Air Force were pressed into service. Then, the 64th Group was given a second extension until the arrival of the 3rd Combat Cargo Group. As a result, the rate of airlift rose rapidly and deliveries began to exceed planned schedules.

As the British forces in Imphal and Kohima gained in strength, they took the offensive from the Japanese and fanned out in all directions. On June 22, the 5th Division made contact with the 33rd Corps; and the next day the first truck convoy came through to the plain and the siege of Imphal was over.

Because of the Imphal emergency, the TCC was called upon to

add an enormous burden to its existing responsibilities, but its commitments elsewhere were not lessened. In addition to its other tasks, the TCC made it possible for 28,000 British and 30,000 Indian troops to maintain combat for three months entirely by air supply while at the same time supporting the Special Forces. The Japanese admitted their defeat as a result of Allied air supply; their difficulty on the other hand was due to lack of supplies and air supremacy, said a Tokyo broadcast, while the Allies received food supplies through the air route, while our men fought while eating a handful of barley or grain.

**Air Combat Operations**

It is obvious that without Allied control of the air, the battle could not have been won. It was not until the end of 1943, and with the establishment of the Eastern Air Command (EAC) on December 14, 1943, that the Allies seriously threatened enemy air superiority in the area. The enemy then had about 277 aircraft during January 1944 with well-equipped bases in the rear and many forward area strips. They had pilots and crews who were experienced and courageous. But, the tide turned by January 1944 as our industry was producing planes in numbers that not only met the needs of the European theaters but also out-matched the enemy in Asia. The EAC in January had some 532 RAF and 287 AAF aircraft, total of 819, of which 576 were fighters, 70 medium bombers, 79 heavy bombers, 10 reconnaissance, and 84 transports. One hundred fighters though were held back to defend air installations in Assam and the Hump route and also 100 aircraft which were nonoperational. Nevertheless, 400 Allied fighters against an estimated 100 Japanese gave us an overwhelming advantage.

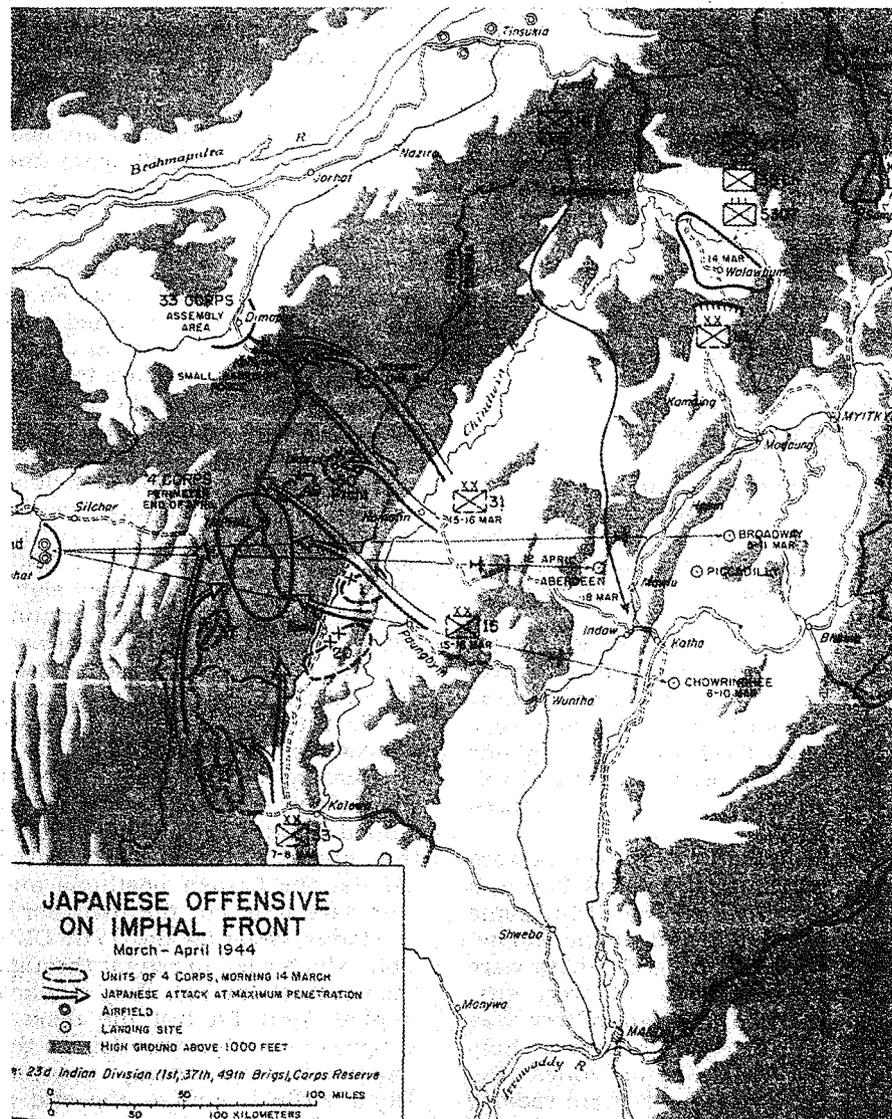
The work of the counter-air force operations was under the Third TAF, a subordinate command of EAC, under Air Marshal Sir John Baldwin with headquarters at Comilla. The enemy opened an air offensive in January 1944 against the Hump route, there they ran head-on against the TAF. The enemy next shifted his efforts to the Arakan. There were vicious sweeps over Allied ground and air installations during the first week of February 1944, and again they faced the Third TAF. This time

using newly arrived Spitfires the Allies inflicted serious damage to the enemy. In March, enemy effort for air supremacy increased; they moved up a large number of planes to the forward fields in Central Burma. They were spotted by the TAF which destroyed 61 planes and 11 were damaged on the ground. In March, the enemy lost 117 planes, 18 probables and 47 damaged. During this period, EAC lost 38 and 32 damaged planes. By the end of March, the enemy combat aircraft strength in the theater had dropped to 216, and their operations then became more defensive. In April, we claimed another 107 planes destroyed and 15 probables, with 61 damaged; whereas we lost 34 planes including those damaged.

The enemy made their last effort to keep control of the air by bringing in more planes. By May 7th,

they had 348 in Burma, 18 in the Bangkok area, and 132 in Malaya and Sumatra. During May, EAC's records indicate that the enemy lost 84 planes destroyed, 24 probables, and 86 damaged; whereas EAC lost 33 destroyed, 12 missing and 62 damaged. By June 1944, Allied air superiority over Burma was no longer challenged.

The creation of EAC also gave an impetus to "strategic bombing" never known during the first two years of the conflict. The Strategic Air Force (SAF), under Gen. Davidson, had its headquarters at Belvedere Palace in Calcutta. It originally consisted of the 7th and 341st Bombardment Groups and the 175, 184 and the 185 Wings of the RAF 221 Group (later redesignated the 231 Group). The 7th Group was heavy bombardment, flying B-24s, and the 341st Group was medium, using B-25s. One



British Wing, the 175th, was medium, using Wellingtons, the other two wings, the 184th and 185th were both heavy, using Liberators. So, in January 1944 SAF had 48 AAF B-24s, 37 B-25s, 31 British Liberators and 33 Wellingtons for a total of 79 heavy and 70 medium bombers. In January, however, the 341st Group, except for the 490th Squadron, was transferred to China, and the number of SAF B-25s was reduced from 37 to 16. Then, by mid-April, the 12th Bombardment Group (M), recently transferred from the Italian front, began service with SAF, and the number of B-25s increased from 66 in April to 85 in May

SAF's job was to disrupt the enemy's transportation system in Burma. Early in 1944 the first priority was naval and merchant ves-

sels; #2 was communications leading into Burma and within the country, particularly locomotives and rolling stock; #3 enemy air installations; #4 ports and shipping facilities; and #5 depots, dumps and military installations. The purpose was first to sever Japanese long-distance water communications; and second to destroy the enemy's power of resistance to the Allies within Burma by disorganizing railway and roadway communications and razing military supply dumps and industrial areas.

The attacks on the waterway communications were not particularly fruitful. The actual tonnage sunk by SAF in the Gulf of Siam and the Andaman Sea was negligible. Its heaviest blows at enemy stripping were by aerial

mining and by raiding harbors and port facilities. Because of air superiority after May 1944, large Japanese vessels did not enter from the Andaman Sea because of the risk they would have faced.

Meanwhile, operations within Burma and Thailand were concentrated against railways. The best targets were bridges, because they were vulnerable in view of the "BRIDGE BUSTING" techniques developed in January 1944. In selecting bridges, an attempt was made to isolate segments of the lines and then to destroy the stranded locomotives and rolling stock. The Burma-Thailand railway system had three weaknesses. There was a lack of sidelines over which the traffic might be run if the yards in Bangkok, Pegu and Mandalay were cut.

Second, there was a stretch of 420 miles between Bangkok and Pegu which, if broken, would sever the system. Third, there were in Burma alone 126 bridges over 100 feet long and 176 other bridges over 40 feet long. The successful bombing of any two successive bridges, therefore, isolated the intervening track and opened to destruction the trapped rolling stock. The enemy then had to detour around the breaks. This was the job assigned to British Liberators and AAF B-24s, which carried out missions against marshalling yards, repair depots and turntables. Emphasis was given to railway centers of Bangkok, Rangoon and Mandalay. Night operations were against rail stations and yard facilities by Wellingtons, and B-25s were used in daylight on rail lines and bridges.

Attacks on bridges were constant, many damaged during the day were made serviceable again; they were makeshift and many reconstructions were washed away by the monsoons. Between February and May, movement of supplies on the Mandalay-Myitkyina was largely interrupted but there were alternative supply routes which could handle only a small part of the traffic.

Attacks were also made on roadways, especially those leading toward the Imphal sector, one from Yeu and the other from Wuntho. These attacks began on April 18th with the destruction of bridges, and the medium bombers strafed motor and animal traffic. Wellingtons at night dropped their loads



*DOUGLAS C-47 TRANSPORT taking off in a cloud of dust from an airstrip near Man Wing, Burma. Air supply operations were maintained by both British and American troop carrier squadrons, flying night and day from bases in the Brahmaputra Valley to points of rendezvous with Allied group troops in Burma. Air supply made the Burma campaign possible.*

on convoys, and also at the base of cliffs to cause landslides.

Concentrated bombing of the refinery at Yenangyaung reduced its output from about 5,000 gallons of gasoline per day to 1,680 gallons. Also, the Chauk gasoline plant, with an estimated production of 3,500 gallons a day, was severely damaged and also many thousands of gallons of stored gasoline was destroyed.

While these attacks created a shortage of fuel, yet the enemy always succeeded in meeting its minimum requirements.

The conduct of these bombing operations depended upon air photographic reconnaissance. This was the responsibility of the Photographic Reconnaissance Force. Photographic liaison officers at Headquarters of SAF, TAF and TCC received requests for missions which were then assigned to the appropriate squadron.

**Stilwell's Advance to Myitkyina**

While the Japanese offensives were conducted in the Arakan, and Wingate's Special Force was in progress, Stilwell's troops in the north, also supplied by air, were advancing on Myitkyina. The Chinese troops fighting their way up the Hukawng Valley were helped by Wingate's raids in the south and by Merrill's Marauders to the north.

On March 19th, the Ledo force took Jambu Bum and broke into the Mogaung Valley where the Marauders outflanked the Japanese. Myitkyina then seemed within reason, but with the monsoons coming, Stilwell felt he had to hasten the advance. He decided to have most of the Chinese continue down the Mogaung Valley and to send the Marauders and some Chinese across the high Kumon range directly into the Irrawaddy Valley for a surprise descent upon Myitkyina. Needing more troops from China, Chiang agreed to let Stilwell have the 50th Division. The decision to fly the 50th from China imposed another burden on the airlift system in the north during April. ATC brought the troops as return loads from China to Sookerating, then lifted to the front in Burma by the 1st TC Squadron.

On April 28th, the Marauders along with the 150th Regiment of the 50th Division and 300 Kachins went over the Kumon range toward Myitkyina. On May 16th, they were within four miles of their goal. The airstrip, more important than the

city, could handle transport aircraft. Without the airstrip, Allied troops would lack supplies since the monsoons would soon make air drop less dependable. The attack was set for 1000 hours, May 17, by the Chinese 150 Regiment. The enemy was surprised and by 1530 hours, Stilwell was told that transports could land. He immediately ordered reinforcements to be flown in. It looked like Stilwell had achieved a magnificent victory. Meanwhile, EAC was prepared to fly in AA units and the 89th Regiment. The result was confusion. Then, there was trouble with the Marauders, whose numbers shrank from 3,000 to 1,000 by the time they reached Myitkyina. They believed their mission would not exceed three months, so when they realized they would be required to serve long after they occupied the airstrip, this broke their morale.

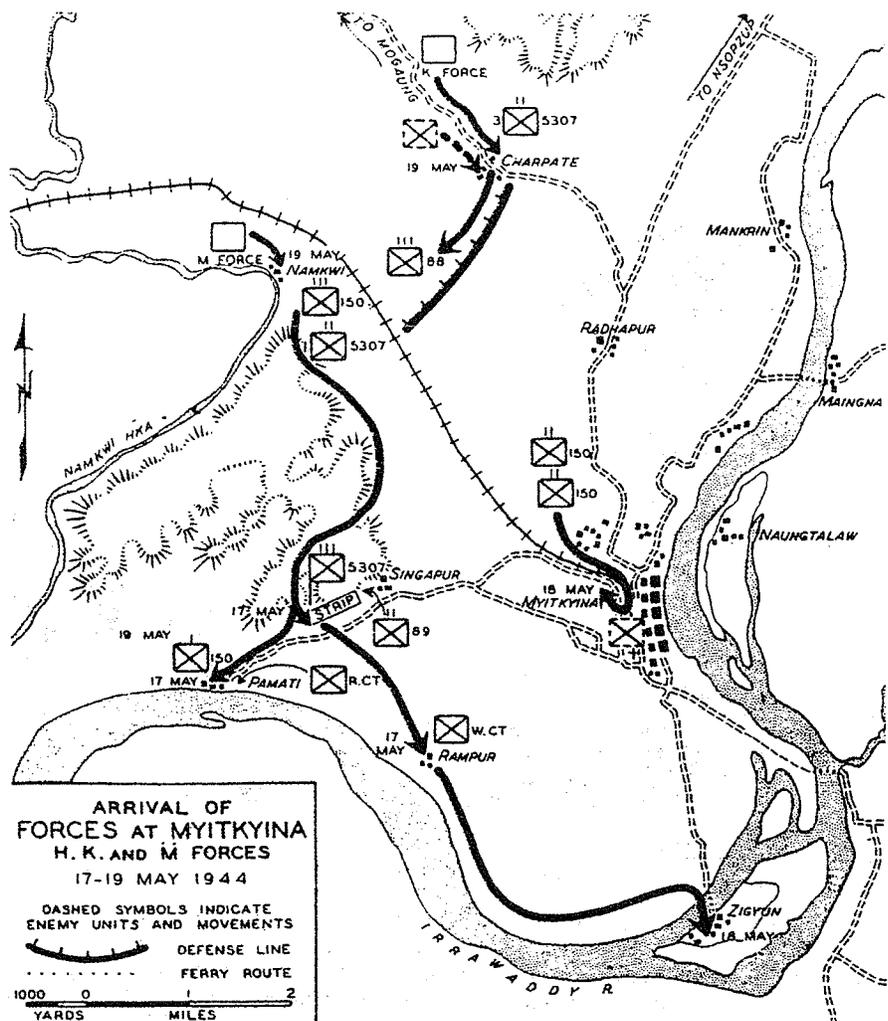
Thirdly, the Chinese 150th Regiment had no experience in battle. During the night of May 20th, when the Marauders hoped

to take the city, the Chinese became confused, fired on their own men, and ran away in panic. The enemy strength soon rose from about 500 to over 3,000, and they held strong defensive positions. Gen. Stilwell was then faced with a long siege, dependent upon air supply, and with the coming monsoons.

As for the future, the most significant feature of the campaigns in Burma during the first half of 1944 lay in the air support of large bodies of troops in the Arakan, at Imphal, in Central Burma, and in the advance on Myitkyina.

*(Extracted from the History of the Army Air Forces in World War II, by Joe Shupe. Part VIII will appear in a future edition of SOUND-OFF.)*

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# History of the Army Air Forces in CBI

## Part VIII

# 14th AF Operations

### January 1943 - June 1944

By Joe Shupe

In January 1943, Gen. Arnold felt that an additional squadron of medium bombers was the only aid which the Hump lift would permit and Chennault agreed that more mediums would increase the striking power of the China Air Task Force (CATF). With the decision to activate the 14th AF, however, more planes were needed. But a significant increase in Hump traffic was yet to be achieved and the 308th Bomb Group (H), which arrived in March, plus the four fighter squadrons, one medium squadron and a photo reconnaissance detachment were all the 14th AF had until late in the

summer.

Meanwhile, our air force in China fought a battle for survival. Since December 1, 1942, the few medium bombers available had almost ceased operations due to lack of fuel. Fighter squadrons had to be pulled out of eastward posts (Kweilin, Ling-ling and Hengyang) for maintenance and to rest the pilots. It even became impracticable to continue token assistance to Chinese troops in West Yunnan.

#### B-24s Join the Fight

Because of adverse conditions, none of the squadrons could return to the eastern bases, but stayed near Kunming and Yun-

nan. So, only minor operations in Burma and along the Salween were undertaken. A few missions to Indo-China by bomb-carrying P-40s damaged phosphate mines, warehouses, rolling stock and river transportation there.

On April 1st, an enemy attack on Ling-ling was turned back by the 75th Fighter Squadron. Bad weather then restricted activity for three weeks, although the 16th Fighter Squadron, recently moved to Kweilin, had a successful mission of 10 planes over Ft. Bayard. Meanwhile, the 74th Fighter Squadron had operations along the Burma Road, and on April 14th, mediums from Kunming hit the Namtu mines in Burma and two days later Japanese attacked us on Yunnan. They destroyed five of our planes on the field and damaged the others.

Two days later the enemy hit Kunming in an attack but two of our fighters were airborne which saved the base from serious damage. BGen Edgar Glenn (Chennault's chief of staff) was injured, but the 75th Squadron from Ling-ling came to the rescue and shot down ten of the enemy fighters.

Col. Eugene Beebe's 308th Bomb Group made its first attack on May 4th, with 18 B-24s, 12 B-25s, along with 24 Fighters. Taking off from Cheng-kung, Yankai and Kunming, they hit targets in Haiphong and the Hainan Island without enemy opposition. One B-24 was lost. This first heavy bomber raid was considered a success.

Four days later, a similar force struck an airdrome at Canton. We lost one B-24. After the bombing, some 20 enemy fighters attacked, but the fighters of Col. Clinton D. Vincent managed to destroy some 13 of them.

On May 10th, our fighters from Kunming made a bombing and strafing mission in North Indo-China. Then, on May 15th, 30 enemy bombers, along with 40 Zeros, made their heaviest attack on Kunming. Considerable damage was done to our base including the loss of a B-24 and B-25. After the raid, our fighters exacted a heavy toll on the enemy planes. So, twice in a month, the enemy slipped through the normally dependable air warning net. Only inaccurate bombing saved the nerve center of the 14th Air Force.

The reason behind the attacks



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on our bases was because the enemy started a ground campaign towards Chungking. It was close to Hengyang, one of our important listening posts. The enemy tried to gain air supremacy by attacking our bases within range of their ground offensive. Early in May, we received 50 odd fighters so we were able to bomb and strafe enemy ground positions and airdromes. The outcome was undecided for many days and when the enemy went out of range of our fighters they seemed to be on their way to a successful campaign. At this point, Chennault said that we could check the enemy advance by air power since their advance must be made along rivers. The Chinese, being alarmed by the enemy's advance, asked for more air support. Our fighters, at the time, were out of range so B-24s were used. They flew out of Chengtu, escorted by Chinese fighters. They ran missions against ground forces in the Yangtze gorges, until the enemy began to fall back. On June 2d, Tokyo radio announced the end of their offensive west of Tung-ting.

The B-24 squadrons, on June 8th, returned to the task of destroying shipping. They went after Haiphong but due to the fog they hit Hanoi and Hongay and sunk a 7,000-ton freighter. Due to bad weather, the Liberators turned to hauling freight over the Hump for the rest of June.

In the East, we were enjoying temporary air ascendancy. Dive-bombing and strafing P-40s found many good targets in regions where the enemy was retreating while Mitchells continued to hit lightly defended airdromes. Sweeps over the Yangtze paid big dividends while Yochow a key railroad and port proved a lucrative target. These raids came to a halt, however, because of rumors of enemy air reinforcements and imminent assault on our bases.

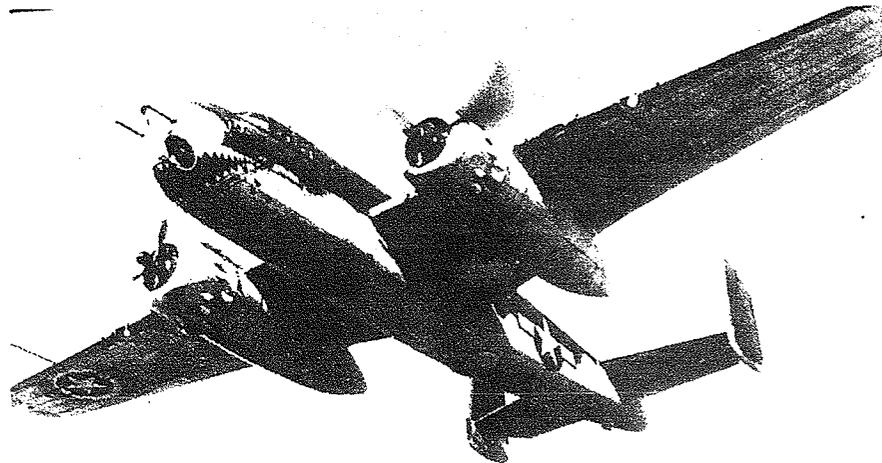
On July 23rd, the predicted assault began. For three days they made many attacks. By spreading their attacks, they hoped to divide and weaken interceptor strength, preventing any opposition by our two fighter squadrons in the area. Hengyang runways were made useless on the first day. On the second day, after feinting at Kweilin, the enemy again hit Hengyang as well as Ling-ling. Meanwhile lesser attacks were made at nearby rarely used fields, all of which were severely damaged.

After three days, we mounted a counterattack on the airdrome at Hankow and inflicted damage, but the next day in a follow-up attack we met a large number of enemy fighters. The enemy suffered severe losses; a few of our planes were shot down, but many were so badly riddled that they had to be temporarily grounded. The raids on Hankow, and the bad weather that followed, probably saved our fighters from making another withdrawal from eastern bases.

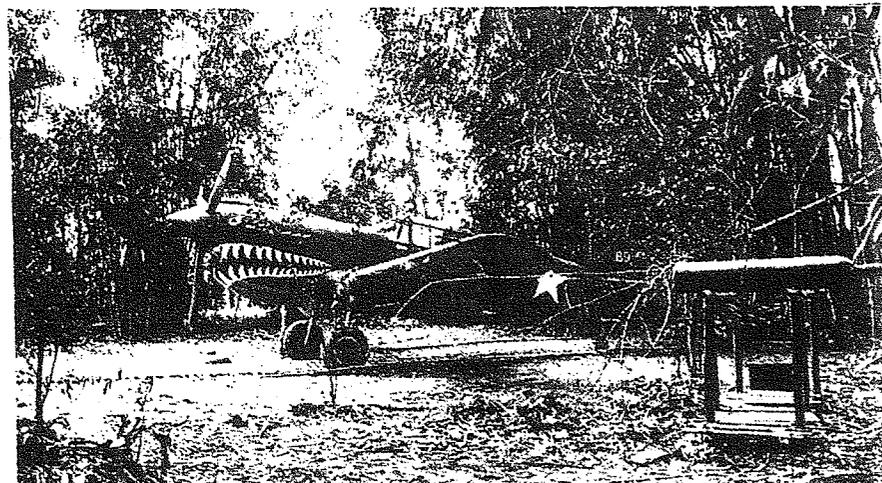
By the end of July our fighter strength in China was reduced to 64 planes for four squadrons, with only 33 at the eastern bases. P-40Ks and P-40Ms arrived during May, June and July, and July brought six P-38s which were sent to the East; but we needed more and more aircraft because of attrition. The P-38s were a welcome addition but they used more fuel. The newest model P-40s were rugged and had great firepower but

were slow climbers and still had limited ceilings. All the while, there were more new-model enemy fighters which could dive with the P-40s and almost equal it in level-flight speed. Our planes, though, could absorb more punishment and return to base to fight again, but the outlook at eastern bases on August 1st was dark.

While clinging on to the eastern bases, plans were being made to use the 14th AF bombers to hit enemy shipping just off the China coast. Our submarines were already doing this faster than shipping could be replaced. The 14th AF was already doing this on the lakes and rivers in Central China, so Chennault decided that this would be his #1 priority during July. The B-25s, from Kunming, would strike shipping farther south. Both were to be escorted by fighters because enemy air forces were concentrated farther north. As a result, the bombers claimed



U.S. AIRCRAFT USED IN CHINA DURING 1942-43. North American Mitchell medium bomber B-25 (top); Curtiss single-seat fighter P-40 (bottom). In July 1942 U.S. air strength in China consisted of about 40 aircraft against some 200 enemy planes.



41,000 tons of shipping sunk, and 35,000 tons damaged during the latter two weeks of July.

During the first 12 days of August, there was no air activity because of bad weather. On August 13th, the 16th Fighter Squadron, from Yunnan resumed patrols over West China and Burma, flying over 20,000 feet. This revealed that some new pilots were not sufficiently trained for flying at such altitudes so they were transferred to transport and low altitude flying.

Meanwhile our East China fighter pilots had a different type of altitude problem. Enemy fighters, in new aircraft, started to attack from such high altitudes that our P-40s could not reach. On August 20th, enemy fighters copying Chennault's tactics dived on our planes below, made a pass, then climbed back to safety. We lost three P-40s, while they lost two planes. That afternoon, eight B-25s and 11 P-40s from Kweilin struck at an enemy base at Tien Ho from where the morning raiders were based. Our planes were attacked which demonstrated the improved tactics of the enemy fighters. We, then, realized that the P-40s were outmoded and unless we got better fighters, eastern air bases would be lost.

A mission, on August 21st, by 14 B-24s of the 374th and 375th Squadrons from Chengkung was to be joined at Hengyang by seven B-25s with P-40 escorts to bomb Hankow. Everything, unfortunately, went wrong. Just before the B-24s were to arrive at Hengyang, Col. Bruce Holloway sent his 22d Fighter Group against some enemy planes; the enemy withdrew, Holloway called in the P-40s for servicing; time being short only six of the 12 were available to join the Hankow mission. The B-24s missed Hengyang so they went on without fighter protection to Hankow. They bombed the dock area. Then, they were attacked by an estimated 60-100 enemy planes. One of our planes, with squadron leader Bruce Beat, was shot down and several other pilots were wounded. A second B-24 crash-landed with three dead and two wounded; a third was badly shot up and forced down at Ling-ling. The others reached Kweilin. Of the 14 B-24s, two were lost and 10 badly damaged. Meanwhile, the B-25s came in later from Kweilin, to Hengyang with a full escort of 12

fighters. They got to Hankow sometime after the B-24s and caught the enemy planes on the ground (those that attacked the B-24s). It was thought that the enemy knew in advance of the forthcoming attack. Also, there was some question about the wisdom of allowing the B-24s to go on the mission without fighter protection.

Immediately after, the other two squadrons of the 308th planned a second raid on Hankow. On August 24th, seven B-24s from the 373rd Squadron and seven from the 425th, left Kunming and planned to meet six B-25s from Kweilin with an escort of 14 P-40s and eight P-38s at Hengyang to attack Hankow. Again, more trouble. The 373rd bombers met with bad weather and had to return to base leaving the seven planes of the 425th to rendezvous alone.

After the other elements came on schedule, all went well until the bombs were away. Some of the planes mistook Wuchang airdrome for Hankow and dropped some of their bombs, but saw their mistake and saved some for Hankow. They met heavy AA fire, but managed to do major damage to the airdrome. Forty enemy fighters then attacked, mainly the B-24s. This went on for 45 minutes. When the enemy finally turned back, only three of the seven B-24s were able to reach Kweilin, all badly crippled, with two dead and six wounded. Bad luck continued for the 425th Squadron as one of the three surviving planes crashed on the return trip to Kunming the next day, killing ten and injuring two. Of the seven planes that left Kunming, only two returned and of the 70 men on the B-24s, more than 50 were killed, wounded or missing. A whole squadron was immobilized for some time. Again, surviving B-24 crews claimed heavy enemy losses but again the B-24s and fighters escaped without loss.

For several days, the 14th turned its attention to the Canton-Hong-Kong area attacking shipping and docks without serious opposition. B-25s of the 11th Squadron, P-38s of the newly arrived 449th Squadron, and P-40s of the 76th Squadron struck targets in the Tung-ting Lake area. The 308th had one more mission in August along with 22 P-40s and two F-38s; they tried to damage and flood the Gia Lam airdrome at Hanoi. Considerable damage was done to the runways and build-

ings. On the way back, eight P-40s lost their way and ran out of gas. Six pilots had to bail out and two made forced landings. Seven of our planes were destroyed and one pilot was lost.

In September, the arrival of the 25th Fighter Squadron from India made it possible to send the 16th Squadron from Yunnan to Kweilin for added security. Despite the superiority of enemy fighters, the mediums and fighters from Kweilin, Ling-ling and Hengyang continued their attacks on targets throughout the Hankow-Kiukiang-Amoy - Swatow - Hong-Kong - Fort Bayard sector. Enemy action against our forces there had little success. Good intelligence provided by Chinese in occupied areas gave our planes lucrative targets. Chinese guerrilla activity also helped our air effort. These strikes interdicted enemy shipping between Hankow and Kiukiang.

The B-24s, during September 1943, spent their time hauling supplies over the Hump, also picking up bombs in India and using them on targets in Burma and along the Salween. On the 14th and 15th, they flew unescorted to Haiphong but unsettled weather resulted in less than positive results. Then, on the 16th, enemy fighters appeared and shot down three of our planes and damaged two others, again demonstrating that the enemy was determined to knock out our B-24s.

During September, the enemy left the 14th alone in the east. While the eastern bases were reinforced, those in the west had only two fighter squadrons, so the enemy sent their major striking forces there. On September 20th, 27 enemy bombers hit Kunming causing much damage. They were intercepted by fighters of the 16th and 75th squadrons with 15 bombers destroyed. There were no other attacks on our bases, but enemy fighters were active mainly in North Burma. During the third week of September, the 14th flew numerous fighter sorties from Yunnan to protect the Hump flyers.

#### **The Chinese-American Composite Wing (CACW)**

October 1943 was a memorable month for the 14th AF; the 26th Fighter Squadron arrived from India and was reunited with the 51st Fighter Group. Also, the first group of the Chinese-American forces

arrived from Karachi. This resulted in incorporating CACW into the 14th Air Force. Gen. Davidson was in charge of this project.

Chennault proposed that an operational training unit (OTU) be set-up in India and operated by the 14th AF to train Chinese fighter and bomber crews. When trained, our officers and Chinese officers who instructed them would later serve as commanders of CACW combat units.

They trained at Malir Airdrome in Karachi using old model P-40s and B-25s and were to be ready by August 5, 1943. The plan was to train eight fighter and four medium and light bomb squadrons by March 15, 1944.

The Headquarters, CACW, was activated in India early in October 1943, consisting of the 3d and 5th Fighter Groups and the 1st Bombardment Group (M), to move to China on October 17, 1943. This extra air strength was needed in China due to the reinforcement of enemy air strength, a threat to 14th AF bases in the east and in Kunming.

In November 1943, Col. Vincent resumed command of the forward echelon. With the first CACW forces another medium squadron joined. The P-38s present since August were reinforced with 16 old P-51As, and the base at Sui-chan was made ready. Photo reconnaissance showed that 75 enemy bombers were at Sinchiku airdrome. On November 3, 1943, eight P-51s and 14 B-25s took off under Col. David L. (Tex) Hill from Sui-chuan. They flew across the Formosa Strait and surprised the enemy. The Lightnings claimed 15 or 20 enemy planes in the air; then the B-25s followed, protected by the P-51s, and bombed the airdrome. Our force claimed 42 enemy planes destroyed; most on the ground.

By the middle of November 1943, an enemy offensive took place in the Tung-ting Lake region, and threatened Chang-te and Changsha. Our air units at Hengyang were to support the Chinese army. Fighters of the 23d Group, and the 16th and 449th Squadrons of the 51st were in direct support, while bombers of the 11th Squadron and of the CACW 2d Squadron assisted in this effort. Even B-24s of the 308th Group made strikes at enemy bases in the rear of the land action. Chang-te

fell to the enemy on December 3, 1943, but for the next few days 14th AF planes attacked the city and on December 9th, the Chinese reoccupied it as the enemy withdrew to positions they occupied when the offensive began.

In December 1944, the enemy counterattacked our airfields at Hengyang and Ling-ling, as they retreated from Chang-te. Those fields were damaged but enemy losses were severe as our planes at the time were airborne. On December 30th, Sui-chuan was bombed and strafed by 20 fighters. In the west, Kunming and Yunnani were bombed on December 18th and 19th, but enemy losses were so high that their offensive moved were soon stopped. Renewed enemy attacks on the Hump flyers on December 1943 made necessary an increased number of our fighter sorties from Yunnani.

Major attention was given to support Chinese ground troops at Tung-ting Lake operation; also fighters from Kunming hit targets in Indo-China and Thailand. The latter area became more important with the completion of the Bankok-Moulmein railway by the enemy.

Some reorganization became necessary due to the immense area covered by the 14th AF, also because of the arrival of additional air units in China. This led to establishment of a provisional forward echelon under Vincent. Transfer of the full 51st Fighter Group to the 14th AF, and imminent arrival of the remainder of the

341st Bomb Group (M); also, the case of the CACW Squadron (with three more to arrive shortly) made need for these changes. On December 23, 1943, the 68th and 69th Composite Wings were activated; the 68th under Vincent to operate in the East, and the 69th, under Col. John Kennedy, to the West. CACW units were attached to the 68th Wing for operations. After March 1, 1944, responsibility for airfield construction would pass from SOS to the 14th.

#### Plans for 1944

From the start, the multiplicity of air tasks in China made it impossible to use available aircraft in sustained operations. Late in 1943, with Allied successes in other theaters gave hope that more resources would be devoted against Japan. So, Chennault drew up a plan to use an expanded air force in China.

He realized he would need more supplies over the Hump; also improvement of his supply line from Kunming to Kweilin. His plan called for more strikes against enemy shipping and air force to be climaxed by long range bombing from China of Japan's home islands. From January through June 1944, attacks were concentrated from our Western Sector, being weather was not just right in the East. Then, from July to the end of 1944, there would be more attacks from the East. For these operations he would need six fighters, two medium and three heavy groups.

Stratemeyer expressed doubts



BRIDGES ACROSS THE YELLOW RIVER were repeatedly bombed by planes of the Fourteenth Air Force.

that ATC tonnage could support Chennault's needs. Also, he revealed plans were being made to send VERY LARGE RANGE (VLR) bombers to China, along with fighter support. These new planes were to be controlled by AAF Headquarters in Washington. He approved minor parts of Chennault's plan such as improvement of the Kutsing bottleneck on the Kunming-Kweilin supply line. This did not sit well with Chennault that the crucial blow against Japan would not be made under his direction; also that the basing of B-29s in India, staged through Chengtu, would put the 14th AF into constructing more airdromes to complicate his problem of supply. The B-29s, it was assumed, would haul their own bombs and gas over the Hump, and that the 14th AF would have some of his Hump quota diverted to a fighter group in Chengtu to defend the B-29 bases.

The above disappointment was offset by new units assigned to the 14th AF. In January 1944, the 341st Bomb Group (less 490th Squadron) arrived. The second part of CATV (1st Bomb Squadron, and 7th and 8th Fighter squadrons) arrived in February.

During January 1944, the weather in East China was so bad that the 68th Wing could do little to interview, despite information that the enemy was continuing to mass troops nearby. The weather in February was a little better so the B-25s had their best month in tonnage of shipping sunk; but didn't do as well in March.

With better weather, the 69th Wing in Yunnan was more active. Using the base at Nanning, fighter-bombers continued their assault on North Indo-China. Months of our effort there had almost paralyzed shipping and industries along the Tonkin Gulf coast. Also, we seriously hampered movement of supplies to Burma and the Salween front.

Meanwhile, intelligence revealed that enemy troops and supplies were massing to the north and east of our forces. These appeared to be much larger concentrations than we were successful in combating in the past. The appearance in China of enemy ground forces from Manchuria foreboded a campaign with far reaching objectives. This could imperil the 68th Wing in the east. If the campaign succeeded, the enemy would have an overland

route from Peiping to Indo-China; and would eliminate 14th AF bases from which anti-shipping strikes originated. Also, they would have dominance over the China coast hinterland, which our forces in the Pacific might want to penetrate. It also could eliminate the Chinese Army and lead to the downfall of the Chinese Nationalist Government.

With these dire possibilities in mind, the 14th AF prepared to meet the challenge. CACW units were prepared to operate in the Yellow River bend and the remaining squadrons of the 69th Wing were to support a Chinese offensive along the Salween River. Chennault recommended to Stilwell that his offensive along the Salween be postponed, so that the 69th Wing could be used to reinforce the 68th Wing. The ground offensive was nevertheless launched, thus tying down at least three squadrons of the next several months during which the 68th Wing fought a losing fight against overwhelming odds.

The Salween drive was part of an Allied effort to reoccupy Burma, and open up a land route to China. The mission of the 69th Wing was to give close tactical support to the attackers isolate the battlefield and to provide air supply. This was to be provided by the 25th Fighter Squadron, and the 22d Bomb Squadron. The recently arrived 17th Troop Carrier Squadron was attached to the 69th for air dropping. The campaign continued throughout the summer and when Myitkyina finally fell, the Salween drive was still stalled.

Despite the growing threat of enemy air power at Hankow and Canton, Chennault's plan was to move four fighter squadrons and one medium squadron of the CACW to Chinese Air Force (CAF) bases where they would operate with the two squadrons of the CAF. The squadrons were to be at their bases ready to attack a few days before the enemy drive started; upon arrival they found adverse operating conditions. Chinese intelligence failed to foretell when the attack would start; Chennault thought it would be on May 1, 1944, but it started on April 17th; before the CACW squadrons were ready for action.

Greatly disturbed, Chennault flew to Chungking on April 22d, but found the main interest there was on the impending Salween

offensive. Finding he could not draw on his resources in Yunnan, he ordered his B-24s of the 308th Group and a few fighters of the 23d group to Chengtu to try to knock out the Yellow River bridges. On April 25th, 27 B-24s, led by LCol James Averill and escorted by 10 fighters under Col. Tex Hill, struck a vital rail junction inflicting only light damage on both bridges. The next day, 24 B-24s escorted by ten P-51s accompanied by 12 of the first P-48s (Thunderbolts) tried to bomb another vital bridge, but they had to return because of bad weather. By this time, the CACW was almost ready to take over.

The task force for this first important CACW project included the 2d Bomb Squadron (M), and four squadrons of the 3d Fighter Group. Col. Winslow Morse headed the force with Col. T. Alan Bennett in command of the fighter group. At the main base at Liang-shan was the medium squadron and the 7th and 8th Squadrons. The 32d Squadron was at Nan-cheng, and the 28th at En-shih. The CAF Squadrons were based at An-kang and Nan-cheng and Sian was to be an advanced base.

Meanwhile, the enemy force in the north moved rapidly. Except in a few well fortified places, the Chinese offered very little resistance; nor were the CACW units allowed to operate after they arrived. On April 30th and May 1st, before the fighter squadrons had arrived, the B-25s had to desert their Liang-shan base and fly rearward to a base to avoid bombing attacks. On May 3d, the B-25s scored 11 direct hits on the Yellow River bridges, which the 308th recently damaged. On the way back, they strafed enemy ground forces, catching them by surprise while on the march; these strafing missions continued for a few days by fighters and bombers until the enemy started to disperse. Throughout the month of May, CACW pilots held their own with the enemy who bombed CACW airfields frequently. The 28th Squadron at En-shih was close enough, however, to intercept enemy bombers during daylight hours. The most successful attack in May was an unopposed B-25 hit on Sinyang rail and supply areas which severely damaged enemy installations.

By June 1944, the CACW Task Force continued operations up north and never did move south.

They failed to prevent the enemy from occupying the rail corridor, but nevertheless harassed them there. CACW fighters suffered heavy losses on the ground by enemy bombing and also some operational mishaps. One B-25 was lost in a taxiing accident and four more flew into a fogged-up mountainside. On June 8th, P-51s of the 26th Squadron arrived; they hit railroads, rolling stock and destroyed 22 locomotives on their first sweep. They remained at Liang-shan until the end of the month until the Honan campaign ended.

The Chinese effort at I-chang was a diversionary action; it had neither the ground or air support to give it a chance of success. CACW fighters were helped by CAF planes but bad liaison led to mistakes. Enemy planes were encountered but the CAF help was minimal. The CAF planes were there to support their ground forces, but not to engage in air combat. They invariably flew away at the first sight of enemy planes.

The CACW by itself could not have saved the railway at Sinyang, but they slowed down the enemy advance and destroyed much enemy supplies. They also caused many casualties to enemy ground troops. It proved one thing though, that Chinese pilots trained and operated by our forces performed as well as enemy pilots.

Meanwhile on May 26, 1944, the major phase of the Japanese summer offensive began. They moved south from the Yangtze; their strength was at least 100,000, the largest the Japanese had employed in China. The magnitude of the force confused the Chinese; they didn't know where exactly to put up a defense, thinking the main thrust would be at Changsha. They did not commit themselves to a definite defensive plan until enemy intentions were known. When it was seen that Changsha was in the line of the main drive, it was too late to set up a firm defense.

Moving south in at least six lines of attack, the enemy refused to pile up before fixed points of resistance. They used all kinds of transport and their speed of advance and tactics threw the Chinese defenders into a panic. Within a few days, their columns converged into three main drives - one toward Changsha, and one to each side directed at points south of

Changsha on the Hsiang River. As the summer of 1944 approached, it was evident that a crucial battle was at hand upon whose outcome hung the future of air operations in East China.

*(Extracted from the History of the Army Air Forces in World War II, by Joe Shupe. Part IX will appear in a future edition of SOUND-OFF.)*

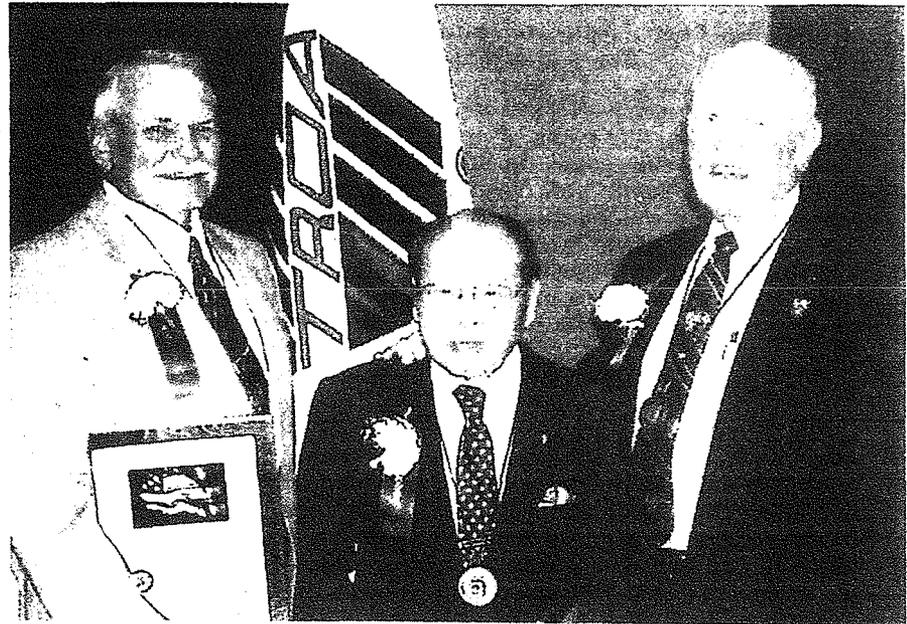
**DONT LOSE YOUR HEAD  
TO GAIN A MINUTE  
YOU NEED YOUR HEAD  
YOUR BRAINS ARE IN IT  
BURMA SHAVE**

### **GRAVE MARKER**

**A CBI grave marker with  
Theater name and patch  
is now available.**

**Cast Aluminum  
with a two-foot staff**

**D. O. CARLILE  
1309 Otley Ave.  
Perry, IA 50220**



Pictured above are three of the 20 distinguished men and women who were inducted into the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame as the "Class of 2002" on November 7, 2002. They are LCDR Terry Tassin, USN (ret) who was recognized for his Navy service as well as for his 20 years of exceptional achievements during his tenure as JROTC instructor; LTC Bill Toy, USA (ret) for his Army service as well as for his life-long support and commitment to both veterans' organizations and his community including service as president of the Arizona Chapter of the retired Officers of America; and LtCol and Arizona State Senator Tom Smith, USMC (ret) for his Marine Corps service as well as his tenacious legislative efforts and generous support of all veterans issues as a member of the Arizona state legislature. LTC Toy is a member of the Valley of the Sun Basha, CBIVA. ((Reproduced from the TROA website by CBI Message Center Director, Tom Miller-TEM1911@aol.com)

## **- LETTER -**

### **Air Service Groups**

To the Editor:

I am trying to compile a list of all the Air Service Groups and Ferrying Command units and the units assigned to them in the CBI. If you were a member of an Air Service Group or Ferrying Command unit, please contact me with the following information:

1. Your group and squadron/unit; 2. Where you were stationed (and years); 3. Any other squadrons/units in your Air Service Group or Ferrying Command unit that you recall.

Thank you.

Gary Goldblatt,  
1345 Timberwyck Ct.,  
Fairborn, OH 45324  
Garyg@dnaco.net

**DROVE TOO LONG  
DRIVER SNOOZING  
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT  
IS NOT AMUSING  
BURMA SHAVE**

# History of the Army Air Forces in the CBI

## Part IX

### The VLR (Very Long Range) Project

By Joseph B. Shupe

In the European Theater (ETO), the AAF was engaged in a bomber offensive against Nazi industries. No such effort was made in the war against Japan. In the CBI, the 10th and 14th AF kept open the air link between India and China; cooperated with ground forces; and the 14th had been able in East China to take a toll of Japanese shipping in the China Sea. Japan proper, though, was far beyond the range of the B-17s or B-24s from any U.S. airfield in the Pacific area. Now, as summer of 1944 came in, joint U.S. forces were ready for a new type of air operation.

For the air strategist, distance was the controlling factor. Looking at the map there were two areas within 1,600-mile radii - one at Chengtu and one at Saipan. Very long-range bombers (VLR) at either of these two places, properly supplied, could bomb Japan proper, with the same type of attack that paved the way for the invasion at Normandy. By June 15, 1944, B-29s, in moderate numbers, were available. One of the base areas (Chengtu) had been developed, and the other (Saipan) was being taken from the enemy. For the Chengtu base a system of supply, but barely workable, had been devised. For the Saipan plan, the logistical problem appeared to be much simpler.

#### The Weapon

The B-29 program was started on November 10, 1939, when Gen. Arnold, then Chief of the Air Corps, asked the War Department to take action to develop a four-engine bomber of 2,000 mile range and superior to the B-17B and the B-24. Authority was granted and on January 29, 1940, data for the future bomber was circulated among five leading aircraft companies. Boeing, Lockheed, Douglas and Consolidated were the companies selected in that order. Their experimental planes were designated, respectively, the XB-29, XB-30, ZB-31, and XB-32. Lockheed and Douglas later withdrew

from the competition. Orders were placed on September 6, 1940 for two experimental models each from Boeing and Consolidated, then later increased to three.

The XB-32 was the first to fly, but after 30 flights it crashed on May 10, 1943. Frequent changes in design delayed the development of the B-32 so that only in the closing days of the war did a few of them get into combat.

The first XB-29 made 22 test flights between September 21 and December 28, 1942. The second model crashed on February 18, 1943 and wiped out most experienced B-29 personnel. This delayed the program for several months, but in June the third model made eight successful flights, and was turned over to the AAF at Wichita for additional testing.

The first production model rolled off the line in July. Ordinarily a plane must pass rigorous service testing before purchase contracts are made, but time seemed short so the process was expedited. It took four years, instead of the normal five years, to get the B-29 started and deploy overseas. But, Boeing's experience with heavy commercial transports with the various B-17 models and with the abortive XB-15 proved invaluable. Earlier models did not have enough power, but a new engine designed by Wright solved that problem. Its range was calculated at 4400 miles without bombs, 3,500 miles with a four-ton bomb load. Pilots with B-17 or B-24 experience found the B-29 "hot" to handle and at first compared it unfavorably with their former planes. Eventually, however, they swore by, rather than at, the Superfort.

#### Early Plans for the Use of the B-29

When the superfortress was conceived, the Air Corps faced other problems more immediate than the destruction of Japanese cities. In its development stage,

uncertainty existed as to when the B-29 could become operational. Plans for its use changed with readjustments in the production schedule and with changes in the strategic or tactical situation. Only in late 1943 were those plans firmly oriented toward Tokyo.

The theory of strategic bombardment received much emphasis within the Air Corps during the 1930s and had stimulated interest in the development of very long-range heavy bombers. Yet, at that time, to develop such planes and to secure the necessary funds had to be based on the security they could afford through long range reconnaissance and sea strikes against an attempted invasion of the USA or its possessions. So, in the summer of 1939, \$4,700,000 was allocated to procure five experimental heavy bombers. These enabled General Arnold to start the competition which eventually produced the B-29.

As early as September 9, 1939, Col. Carl Spaatz suggested that the future B-29 might be used against Japanese industry from bases in the Philippines, Siberia or the Aleutians. When in the spring of 1941, British and our military staffs began a plan for collaborations should we get drawn into the war, the VLR bomber became, in anticipation, the AAF's most potent offensive weapon. In the Air Staffs first war plan, the original defensive plan for the B-29 was no longer considered. By 1944, 24 B-29/B-32 groups were to be used in bombing Germany from bases in Great Britain and Egypt; and two groups might operate against Japan from the Philippines. This was predicted on the Anglo-American strategy to defeat Germany first, meanwhile containing Japan wherein Naval forces would predominate. So, for the first year of the war, the plans were to use B-29s and 32s, almost exclusively in Europe. Only after victory in Europe would the VLR bomber be used against Japan.

This plan, persisted in Headquarters USAF until the spring of 1943; then the plan was to use bases in Tunisia against German industry, shuttling B-29s between England and North Africa, since no groups would be combat ready before the end of the year. But, by summer, plans for the use of the B-29s began to favor their use against Japan.

In the meantime, other uses for the B-29s were suggested: for anti-submarine warfare; Brereton in the CBI requested them; Emmons in Hawaii, likewise, after the Battle of Midway; but the 5th AF in SW Pacific received the most serious consideration. In the end, the plan to

use the B-29s in the SW Pacific was changed in favor of the CBI due to the threatened crisis there.

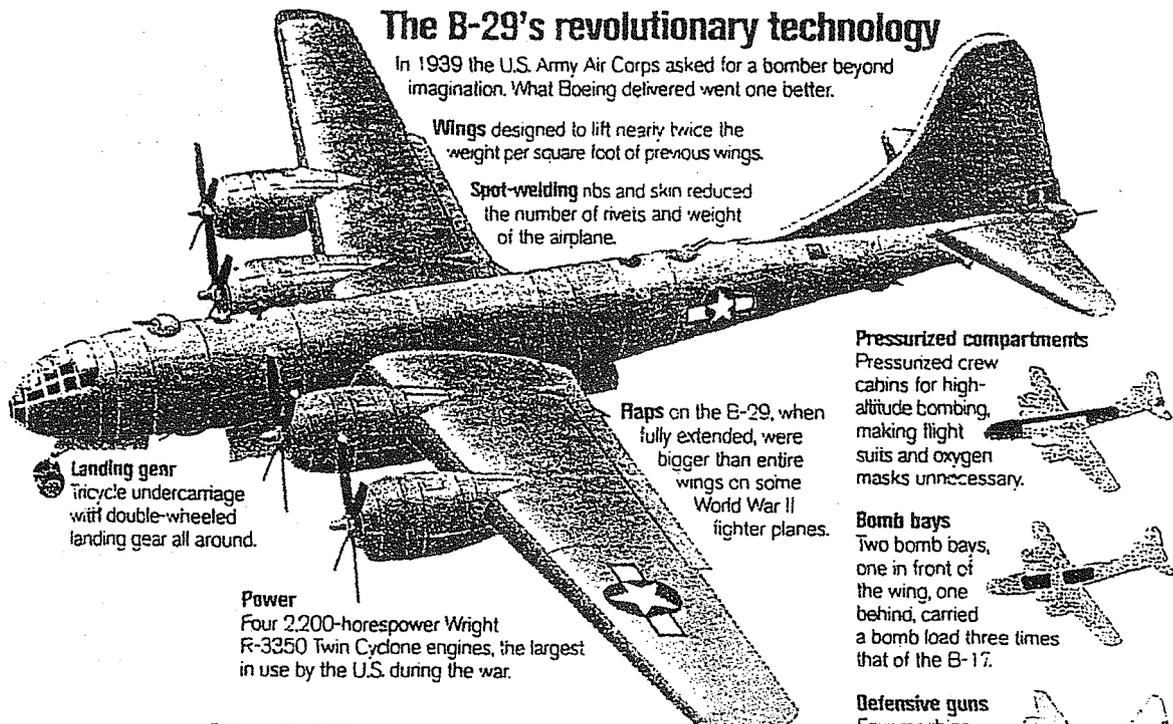
A final decision was not reached until after months of debate.

From the outset, the Allies refused to commit strong forces in China. The war could not be won

there; supply was difficult and available units were needed elsewhere. With China's unlimited manpower, it was thought best to help them through lend lease and to provide minimal air forces. Thus, China might be saved to serve later as a base area for the

### The B-29's revolutionary technology

In 1939 the U.S. Army Air Corps asked for a bomber beyond imagination. What Boeing delivered went one better.



Wings designed to lift nearly twice the weight per square foot of previous wings.

Spot-welding ribs and skin reduced the number of rivets and weight of the airplane.

Flaps on the B-29, when fully extended, were bigger than entire wings on some World War II fighter planes.

Landing gear tricycle undercarriage with double-wheeled landing gear all around.

Power Four 2,200-horsepower Wright R-3350 Twin Cyclone engines, the largest in use by the U.S. during the war.

#### Pressurized compartments

Pressurized crew cabins for high-altitude bombing, making flight suits and oxygen masks unnecessary.

#### Bomb bays

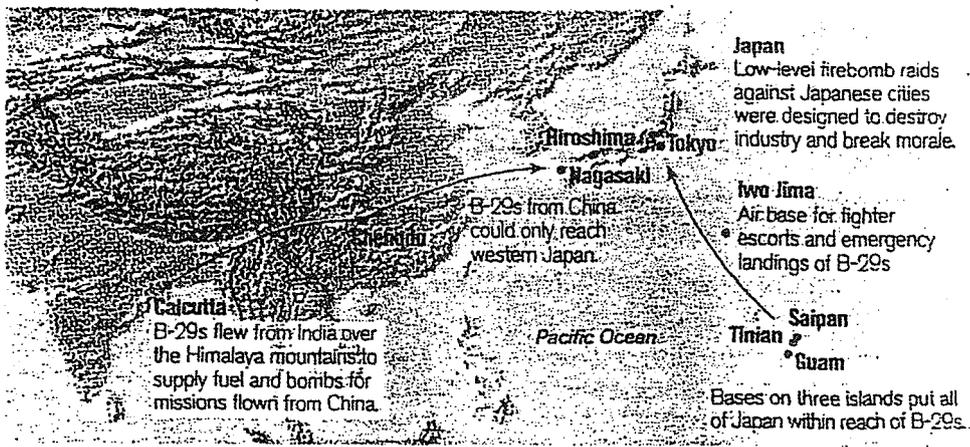
Two bomb bays, one in front of the wing, one behind, carried a bomb load three times that of the B-17.

#### Defensive guns

Four machine gun turrets operated by remote control. Some were aimed by radar.

### The B-29 at war

Plans for winning the war in the Pacific relied on taking the battle to Japan without landing troops on the island nation. B-29s first attacked from bases in China. A major goal of the war was building bomber bases on islands closer to Japan. In August 1945, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by B-29s from the base on Tinian.



Japan Low-level firebomb raids against Japanese cities were designed to destroy industry and break morale.

Iwo Jima Air base for fighter escorts and emergency landings of B-29s

Tinian Saipan Guam Bases on three islands put all of Japan within reach of B-29s.

### Fixing before flying in the Battle of Kansas

The B-29 was rushed into production before some of the bugs were worked out. Design flaws in early models were corrected at B-29 training bases around Kansas in what became known as the Battle of Kansas.



eventual assault on Japan. The Japanese conquest of Burma spoiled all that. To break the Japanese blockade would require the conquest of Northern Burma to open a road to Kunming, or a sharp increase of air transport out of Assam.

At Casablanca in January 1943, the Allied leaders had promised much aid toward those goals, but performance had fallen short of promises. In April, Chiang Kai-shek asked Roosevelt to summon Gen. Chennault to Washington to present a new plan for an air offensive by his 14th AF. Other top Allied leaders participated on this matter in the TRIDENT conference.

Two strategies were presented. Gen. Stilwell wanted to regain Burma to open the road to China, and the use of much of the tonnage to equip the Chinese army. Chennault's plan called for greatly increased airlift to augment his air force. In the Washington debates, Chennault's argument won out; the British were not eager for intensive campaigns in Burma. This strategy called for more operations in China and Burma, but its main concern was to carry the war to Japan. Hong Kong was to be recaptured, and from bases in East China the Allies were to conduct an overwhelming bomber offensive preparatory to a final invasion. Hong Kong was the logistical kingpin of this plan, which in turn must await advance from the C & SW Pacific by US forces.

The finished plan counted heavily on the naval and air superiority of the Allies after redeployment from Europe. The Allied planners expected the bomber offensive to begin only in 1947.

#### MATTERHORN

At the TRIDENT allied conference on May 11, 1943, the war against Germany was the primary concern. Nevertheless, the allied leaders were confronted with serious problems in Asia and the Pacific. The war against Japan, so far, had been a defensive one. Except for naval forces, the build-up for the Pacific and Asia would continue to be subordinated to the needs of the European War, but it was time to take stock in the Far East.

Since hope existed that Germany might be defeated by the end of 1944, plans must be made for a strategic offensive against Japan before and after that move. Mean



Gen. Hap Arnold

while, Japan was gaining in China. British failures in Burma had damaged our cause in China. A more vigorous policy in CBI, both by the Allies seemed necessary if China was to be kept in the war.

No solution could be found at TRIDENT, and they were to reappear at the Quebec conference in August and at Cairo in November 1943. In the meantime, a fair estimate of the readiness date of the initial B-29 groups had become available. Too late for the B-29s to play a part for the Normandy invasion, they could be ready for operations against Japan. Little opposition was voiced at high planning levels over their use in the Far East. But, within our military, there were different opinions how the B-29s could best be used.

To open up Hong Kong, US planners submitted a faster schedule of operations in the Pacific so that Japan could be defeated within 12 months after Germany's surrender. The US Air Force plan was to use VLR bombers in China against Japan (10 B-29 groups of 28 planes in each group) - these might be available by October 1944. Bases in China were within range to bomb Japan proper. This would help raise morale of the Chinese and unify China under Chiang Kai-shek, it was hoped. The AAF, therefore, proposed to build a chain of airfields along a 400-mile axis north



Maj. Gen. Kenneth B. Wolfe

and south of Changsha. Within a radius of 1500 miles, B-29s could then attack most of Japanese industries - all this within benefit of an East Coast port. Logistical support then would come from India without hurting other CBI operations. For the bomber offensive, all supplies were to go by air, Calcutta to Kunming to Changsha. In this task, B-24s released by victory in Europe and converted into transports (C-87s) were to be used at the rate of 200 per B-29 group. Port facilities were thought adequate for estimated requirements of 596,000 tons per month.

Regarding above plan, Stilwell cited logistical difficulties (especially port capacity of Calcutta) and thought the time schedule was entirely too optimistic. He offered an alternative plan. This called for the use of several airfields along the Kweilin-Changsha railroad, but as advanced rather than as permanent bases. For security and better maintenance facilities, the B-29s would be stationed in the Calcutta area. Much of the fuel could be carried by the combat planes. Extra supplies would be hauled by 45 converted B-24s and 367 C-54s or C-87s direct from Calcutta to Kweilin. By April 1945, these transports could sustain ten B-29 groups flying 500 sorties per month. Calcutta could handle the 58,000 tons monthly of dry cargo and the POL. Installations could be built on time with US aid. Later, B-29 groups might be stationed in the Mandalay area. Stilwell argued (and Doolittle's Tokyo raid seemed to bear him out) that the Japanese would react sharply against a bomber offensive with large-scale air and ground campaigns in China. Now, Stilwell insisted on 50 US trained and equipped Chinese divisions for protection of the airfields, and for air defense a reinforced 14th AF, plus five fighter groups attached to the B-29s.

Stilwell sent BGen Robert C. Oliver to Washington to give a more detailed description of his plan. Headquarters USAF in Washington accepted this plan but set an earlier target date. The idea was to use bases in China for a year until the Marianna's were captured.

Gen. Arnold then called in BGen Kenneth B. Wolfe and asked him to prepare an operational plan for bombing Japan at the earliest possible date. At Wright Field, Wolfe

had earlier been responsible for the B-29 production program. In April 1943, Gen. Arnold had set up a B-29 Special Project with Wolfe as chief. His job now was to organize, equip, and train B-29 units for combat. With production schedules promising 150 B-29s early in 1944, Wolfe had organized the 58th Bombardment Wing (H) and in September was in training at Salina, Kansas. By September 24th, he planned his first mission on June 1st, 1944. He proposed to make his project virtually self-supporting with supplies for 100 B-29s based in the Kweilin area and with 150 other B-29s working out from fields near Calcutta.

Wolfe expected to have 150 planes and 300 crews by March 1944, 300 planes and 450 crews by September 1st. These he proposed to organize into a bomber command with two wings of four combat groups each. Stilwell was to provide bases in India and China. All B-29s were to base in the Calcutta area, staging through advanced fields around Kweilin. Operations would begin about April 1, 1944. Supply would be by the B-29s themselves, aided, until an initial stockpile had been accumulated, by the 14th AF, 308th Bombardment Group (H), reinforced by 20 C-87s. Air defense would be furnished by the 14th AF. Col. G. C. Carey (a former CBier in Washington) pointed out that Stilwell's insistence that 50 Chinese divisions would be needed to defend Kweilin, suggested that Chengtu be used instead. Wolfe accepted that proposed change.

On October 13, 1944, Gen.

Arnold approved the "Wolfe" project endorsing it in his own hand. "I have told the President that this will be started (in India to Japan) on March 1st. See that it's done! H.H.A." Even this further advance did not satisfy President Roosevelt. He wrote to Gen. Marshall on the 15th: "I am still pretty thoroughly disgusted with the China-India matters. The last straw was the report from Arnold that he could not get the B-29s operating out of China until March or April of next year. Everything seems to go wrong. But, the worst thing is that we are falling down on our promises every single time. We have not fulfilled one of them yet. I do not see why we have to use B-29s. We have several other types of bombing planes."

At Marshall's request, Arnold prepared a reply explaining the problems of getting a new plane into combat; he offered to divert B-24s to China, but reminded the President that only B-29s could hit directly at Japan. His offer was not accepted and the March-April target date held.

Stilwell felt the Wolfe plan was better in view of the lighter defense forces required at Chengtu (only two fighter groups and no extra ground troops). He did not think it possible to deliver a knockout blow from Chengtu (nor did Washington), but accepted the plan and asked for an early decision since he needed four to six months to prepare the airfields. The air staff in Washington continued to refine the plan until November 9th. The finished plan was called "Early Sustained Bombing of Japan" and

eventually coded MATTERHORN. Briefed on the MATTERHORN plan, President Roosevelt approved it and in November apprised Churchill and Chiang of its salient features, asking for aid in securing the airfields. Both promised the needed sites and aid in construction. CBI Theater commanders were advised to do the job of preparing the installations that were required.

Other actions followed rapidly. Orders went out for the activation of XX Bomber Command, Wolfe commanding, with two VHB wings, the 58th and 73rd. The War Department then alerted for shipment on December 15th, certain service units for building the Calcutta installations.

There followed much debate between FDR, Churchill, Stalin and Chiang Kai-shek at allied conferences during November and December 1943. At these conferences, the decision was made to invade Normandy and the French Riviera; also Stalin promised to enter the war against Japan after the defeat of Germany. Plans were also presented for a large scale British landing in South Burma. The latter was requested by Chiang to help in Stilwell's campaign in North Burma.

The final report to the President and the Prime Minister regarding China were to postpone the South Burma landings in favor of carrier and land based bombing attacks in South Burma; an increase in Hump tonnage; and conduct of a heavy B-29 campaign from the Kweilin area. But, the reversal of commitments made to Chiang



Some 500 Chinese laborers - men and women alike - strain to pull a 10-ton concrete roller over a bed of mud, stone and gravel to pack a runway at an American airstrip near Chengtu. Since there were no bulldozers available in China, the Fourteenth Air Force depended on manpower to build their bases.

made necessary a more immediate assignment of B-29s to China. This was because of the prestige value of receiving the first B-29s was intended to salve his wounded pride. The target day of May 1, 1944 was set for B-29s based at Calcutta with advanced bases at Chengtu to attack vital targets in the Japanese "inner zone."

On April 10, 1944, the JCS made the decision that the MATTERHORN force would be cut to the 58th Wing's four groups (which were just beginning their flight to India) the 2d Wing to be sent to the Mariannas to be reinforced as units and bases become available there, for a total of 10 or 12 groups.

Already the first B-29s had landed in India where Wolfe had long preceded them to get the fields and supplies ready for the first mission. The diversion of his second wing to Saipan could not be fully implemented; moreover there was already an indication that the 58th Wing might not be permanently stationed in the CBI. Missions out of China would test the B-29s without inflicting much of a blow to Japan's economy. When Saipan bases are ready, they could be more easily supplied and also within range of Tokyo; they might well replace Chengtu completely.

#### **The Twentieth Air Force**

The plan adopted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) on April 10, 1944 was to remain the basic guide for the strategic bombardment of Japan. They hoped to provide operational control by establishing the 20th AF under command principles much different from those governing other Army Air Forces.

#### **The Strategic Air Force**

In the first two years of the war, under the prevailing doctrine of unity of command, air units were assigned the theater commander working under the broad directives from the Joint or Combined Chiefs of Staff. Those units were organized into a numbered theater air force and divided into fighter, bomber, air service, etc., commands. The system worked well in tactical air operations. Strategic air operations posed special problems. They had been recognized by the British during World War I. So, the practical solution was an independent RAF directly responsible to the Air Ministry. In WW II, the



*Maj. Gen. Howard C. Davidson*

British did the same whereby the Chiefs of Staff committee directed the RAF Bomber Command's campaign against German industries. When the 8th AF joined its efforts with those of Bomber Command, this fit into the system since the European Theater was of "prime strategic responsibility" for the British. Had the B-29s been assigned to the ETO, they probably would have operated under the same command structure as the 8th AF. Since neither in Asia or the Pacific was there unity of command, rivalries within the CBI and between Nimitz and MacArthur would make it difficult to shift a force from one command to another. There was much controversy among the service chiefs in Washington over this, so the President resolved the problem in February 1944 that control of VLR forces would be retained in Washington under the JCS; Arnold as Commanding General AAF would exercise "executive direction"; later the British added that "theater commanders" might in an emergency divert the B-29s from their primary mission.

The JCS, on April 10, 1944, wrote the formal charter under which the 20th AF would operate: 1 - A strategic army air force, designated the 20th, was to be established, to operate directly under the JCS with the Commanding General, AAF as executive agent to implement their directives for the employment of VLR bombers; 2 - Major decisions concerning deployment, missions and target objectives were to be made by the JCS and executed by the Commanding General, AAF; 3 - Should a strategic or tactical emergency arise, theater or area commanders might utilize VLR bombers for purposes other than the primary mission, immediately informing the JCS; 4 - Responsibility for provid-

ing suitable bases and base defense would rest with theater or area commanders as directed by the JCS; 5 - Theater or area commanders would be responsible for logistics; 6 - JCS directives for VLR operations would be so framed as to minimize possible friction within theaters; and 7 - Arnold was to have direct communication with VLR leaders in the field, advising appropriate theater commanders.

Early in March 1944, Headquarters USAF set up an Operations Section, US Strategic Air Force; its director was Col. Cecil F. Combs (formerly with CBI). Then, on April 4th, the 20th AF was activated in Washington, Arnold was named commander. As Chief of Staff, Arnold named BGen. H. S.



*BGen. Haywood Hansell*

Hansell, Jr., with Combs as his deputy for operations. The JCS advised Stilwell of this plan; the British, however, wanted control under the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) instead of JCS. The JCS did not agree and with four B-29 groups already in India on May 21st, they did not think an early change was necessary until such time as British VLR forces were assigned. There, the matter rested.

#### **Bomber Command and the CBI**

The XX Bomber Command was activated at Salina, Kansas on November 27, 1943. At the Cairo conference the MATTERHORN plan meant that the new command would go to the CBI. According to MATTERHORN, B-29 units would base in India and bomb from China. Only when viewed against the tangled command structure, and divided interests between British, US and China, can the troubles in establishing the XX Bomber Command in the CBI be appreciated.

The MATTERHORN plan stipulated that control of B-29 units should be vested in the Com-

manding General, AAF-IBS (Gen. Stratemeyer), and that operational control and security of advanced bases would be the responsibility of the Commanding General 14th AF (Chennault); no mention was made of Adm. Mountbatten's SEAC.

Gen. Stilwell reported that the above scheme was feasible but difficult. He proposed to delegate direct command and control to his air advisor (Stratemeyer), and to charge Chennault (thru Stratemeyer) with responsibility for fighter defense of staging areas, for fighter escorts on China based missions and for airdrome construction and supply in China. For missions in SEAC, Stratemeyer would furnish escort by 10th AF fighters. JCS approved this arrangement on January 18, 1944.

On January 12, 1944, BGen Kenneth B. Wolfe arrived in New Delhi with the advanced echelon of his XX Bomber Command staff. CBI Headquarters then issued General Order #13, January 30, 1944, describing the command setup for XX Bomber Command citing the aforementioned delegations. Stratemeyer was authorized to make the needed arrangements, and he issued a directive to Chennault regarding his responsibilities.

Stratemeyer wrote Arnold of February 3rd, that there were complete mutual understandings between Wolfe, Chennault, Stilwell and himself of their respective responsibilities for the B-29 force. Chennault, though, was not entirely satisfied and wrote to Arnold on January 26th an unfavorable critique of the MATTERHORN plan. He felt that the job in China could only be done by establishing a "unified air command to consist of all Air Forces and supporting services operating in China." Arnold sent Chennault's letter to his deputy Gen. Kuter saying "This looks like another one of Chennault's independent thoughts and ideas with no coordination with our headquarters. He has already expressed these sentiments to Chiang Kai-shek, who sent them here." But, before Washington could answer Chennault, his relations with the Bomber Command were re-stated in the CBI Theater.

On February 11th, Wolfe arrived at Stilwell's advanced headquarters in the North Burma jungles. There, Stilwell rescinded General Orders #13 and replaced it with



Major General  
George E. Stratemeyer

#16. In this new order, Stilwell charged Stratemeyer, as CG AAF IBS, the responsibility for logistics and administration of the XX Bomber Command; after consulting with Wolfe, he was to make recommendations for B-29 missions in SEAC. Chennault had responsibility for fighter defense of B-29 bases in China and for complete support of XX Bomber Command there; after consulting Wolfe, Chennault was to make recommendations to Stilwell through Stratemeyer (this time as air advisor) for B-29 missions from China. In essence, Stilwell, not Stratemeyer, would exercise operational control and would coordinate the activities of the two theater sectors. Washington was told about it and apparently found it acceptable. No notice was sent to Mountbatten.

Mountbatten, after receiving General Order #16, was unhappy at not having been consulted. He sent a message to the British Chiefs of Staff deploring Stilwell's neglect, and suggested certain modifications. He said that the JCS, commanding all B-29 units should issue mission directives to Stilwell, to Chiang and to Mountbatten. Stilwell was to then coordinate and issue mission orders. Local fighter defense would fall to the pertinent theater commander; in SEAC this would be delegated to Stratemeyer as CG EAC thru Peirse. Since Stratemeyer was Stilwell's air advisor, this would leave operational control of B-29s in SEAC to one person. The British Chiefs of Staff referred this message to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. This was smoothed over with an apology for the oversight and

assurance that in the future Mountbatten would get information on all orders to the XX Bomber Command. This seemed to be a squabble over protocol, but to planners in Washington it showed the difficulties of coordinating B-29 operations in the CBI under the existing command structure and with the personalities involved. All this was confirmed in a decision made at the White House that control of the B-29s would be retained directly by the JCS.

A decision was made by the JCS on March 28th, to set up a Headquarters Air Force with Arnold as commander. This lessened the responsibilities of the theater commanders; it assigned the XX Bomber Command to the 20th AF (and not to the CBI). Stilwell was to coordinate B-29 missions with other operations in the CBI; consult with Mountbatten on missions affecting SEAC, and inform Chiang (to the extent that security would permit) of missions planned from bases in China. Mountbatten was to provide and defend bases in SEAC, Stilwell in China; the latter was also responsible for logistic support in both sectors. In an emergency, Stilwell might divert the B-29s from their primary mission, then informing the JCS.

Then in April, pressure from the Japanese in East China led Chennault to suggest to Stilwell that MATTERHORN's air transport allocation be temporarily diverted to the 14th AF and, in an emergency, the diversion of all MATTERHORN resources to tactical rather than strategic purposes. The B-29s were to hit enemy bases in China, not in Japan.

A few days later, Stilwell advised Marshall that Chiang was insisting that he command the VLR project in China. Marshall informed the President, who then cabled Chiang, that he would command the force from Washington, and that the Generalissimo would have the responsibility for coordinating VLR missions with other operations in the theater.

Only the emergency clause in Stilwell's general directive left to him any chance of operational control over a bombardment force for which he had administrative and logistical responsibility. The tactical situation in China promised to provide soon an emergency which would threaten the whole MATTERHORN plan.