

The first shipment had just arrived at Calcutta when Gen. Stilwell advanced into N. Burma shortly before the monsoon season of 1943, despite the engineers warning that they could not get a roadway into the Hukawng Valley ahead of high water. Col. Neal rushed quantities of the valuable field cable from Calcutta over the Naga Hills and strung it before the floods came. Though the water rose on schedule, Sig C men kept the lines serviced, using boats and elephants to do the job.

Nor were monsoons and elephants the only oddities in CBI signal experience. There was, for instance, Col. Janes' laconic and startling report of a temporary outage of communications: "Monkey in switchboard truck; operator fainted." Neal recalled the incident. Soon after Stilwell's descent into the Hukawng Valley and his first combat with the enemy in the vicinity of Shingbwiyang, a switchboard had been set up in a 2 1/2 ton truck at his headquarters, when suddenly the wire service went dead. It was expected that a Japanese infiltrator had sabotaged the truck. Looking into it, investigators found a monkey fiddling with the board mechanism and the operator out cold. It seems that the latter, tense and tired, when he suddenly discovered his strange co-worker, could take no more of the strain of the jungle and fainted dead away.

Open wire lines were installed along the jungle road. All kinds of wire were used. "We even got 10,000 miles of wire from S. Africa" recalled Col. Neal, "Every kind of wire except what the T/O&E called for." That the lines worked well was due to the skills of such signal engineers as Col. Janes and Maj. Clarence D. Sheffield. The latter could make the necessary calculations on the spot whenever unexpected developments occurred, such as catenary suspensions across obstacles that desk engineers, plotting the first blueprints in New Delhi, could not foresee. Sheffield could determine at the site the correct transposition needed to keep the lines electrically balanced. "He must have walked every foot of the Ledo-Muse stretch a dozen times," said Neal with pardonable exaggeration.

Wire supply difficulties in CBI had at least one light moment. It occurred after a U.S. Senator had

visited the theater. When he asked the troops what they most wanted, they answered "beer." Some weeks later, Col. Neal received word that a ship was docking at Calcutta with urgently needed wire. When the holes were opened, they all contained nothing but beer. A recreation camp was set up in Calcutta, complete with beer, and troops were rotated there on rest leave from the jungles.

As the copper wires stretched on, carrying direct communications to the front from as far away as New Delhi, Gen. Reeder commented to the Chief Signal Officer in Washington on Dec. 30, 1944, that these tremendously long lines "bring forcibly to mind the fact that we of these theaters are definitely in the trans-continental telephone business."

The opening of the Calcutta-Chabua circuit, making possible successful conversations between Delhi and Myitkyina, brought an immediate request from the Air Forces for a through circuit from Calcutta to Bhamo. The eventual wire plant in CBI would call for engineering and maintenance skills beyond the know-how of the usual Sig C wire units.

Gen. Reeder, urging that something be done about an organization for a long lines team wrote: "Petzing and Borgeson who recently completed a painstaking tour from Calcutta and Myitkyina have evolved a special long lines team and have convinced me of the

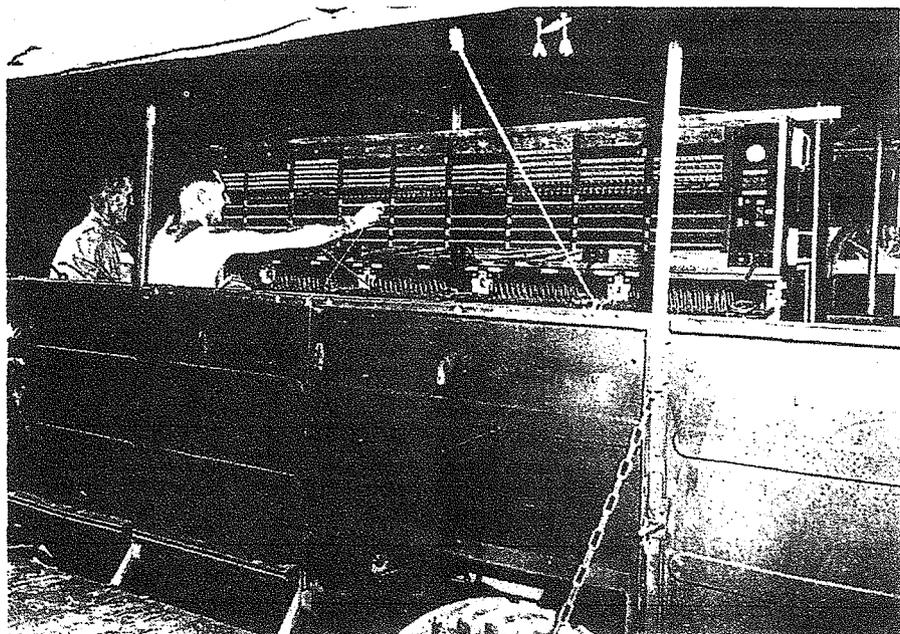
need for it. It is not to be found among any of the T/O&E 11-500 at the present time."

Lt. Col. Carl A. Borgeson had pointed out that the main wire line traversing the India-Burma and China theaters was "becoming rapidly the longest military wire network of all time." Borgeson buttressed his claim with a tabulation that showed the status of the enormous project as of December 29, 1944.

Among the Sig C units that worked on the Calcutta-Kunming pole line were a number of Sig C battalions - the 31st, 96th, 428th, 432d, 445th, Co. B of the 3199th Signal Service Bn., and a detachment of Co. C of the 835th. The 432d helped complete the last link in China early in 1945, the line-men working both ways out of Yunnanyi - westward to Paoshan, and east to Kunming. Three Indian pioneer companies also helped - the 1296th, the 1297th, and the 1298th.

The work was accomplished under the most trying conditions. Besides the hazards of tropical jungles - diseases and pests, the monsoons and the mountains - there were great rivers to cross, the rivers subject to extreme flooding. Across the Brahmaputra on the way to Chabua, a group from the 31st Signal Construction Bn, laid a heavy 15-pair cable obtained through lend-lease.

Just east of Chabua, on the road to Ledo in India, lay the Burhi

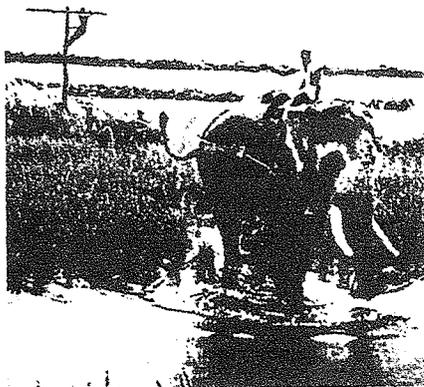


Testing a 200-line switchboard installed in a British Bedford QL truck ready to move, July 1945.

Dihing River, over which the men stretched 10 wires in a single 1,300-foot jump. Using flat bottom boats, they made 18 attempts to pull the wires across the swift moving current before they finally succeeded.

In Burma the Irrawaddy, athwart the Ledo Road near Myitkyina, presented the greatest challenge. At the narrowest point, the river channel was 2,300 feet wide. Sig C men put up teakwood poles 65 feet high on either bank and stretched 32 strong copper-steel wires over the flood. Because the high water in the monsoon season might reach and wreck these wires, the men erected a supplementary catenary suspension cable. Here they put up even taller teakwood poles - the two primary ones next to the river bank ran up to 76 feet. Two secondary poles standing behind them stood 65 feet tall. Each was guyed to teakwood anchors. Across the top from bank to bank a 26-pair cable was run, held taut and high by a messenger wire to which the cable itself was lashed - the messenger wire taking the weight of the suspension.

The far-reaching pole line progressed section by section. Not every section was finished before work on the next section began. On Oct. 1944, when the line was advancing through Burma, activity began in the eastern portion of the



Elephant draws wire taut during pole line construction near Shampur, India. 31st Signal Construction Battalion.

wire line in China. Equipment arrived first. Then in December, near Paoshan, Sig C men commenced stringing the wire. There were delays because of the monsoons.

In September, the region around Mogaung in Burma was so flooded that the men could not place poles. They continued working nevertheless, trimming treetops and placing crossarms on them. Elsewhere, there were problems of clearing the line right of way and keeping it cleared. Engineer construction on the road and the pipeline used powerful equipment that often sideswiped poles and knocked over trees that fell on the wires.

Progress was rapid through the last months of the war. The five

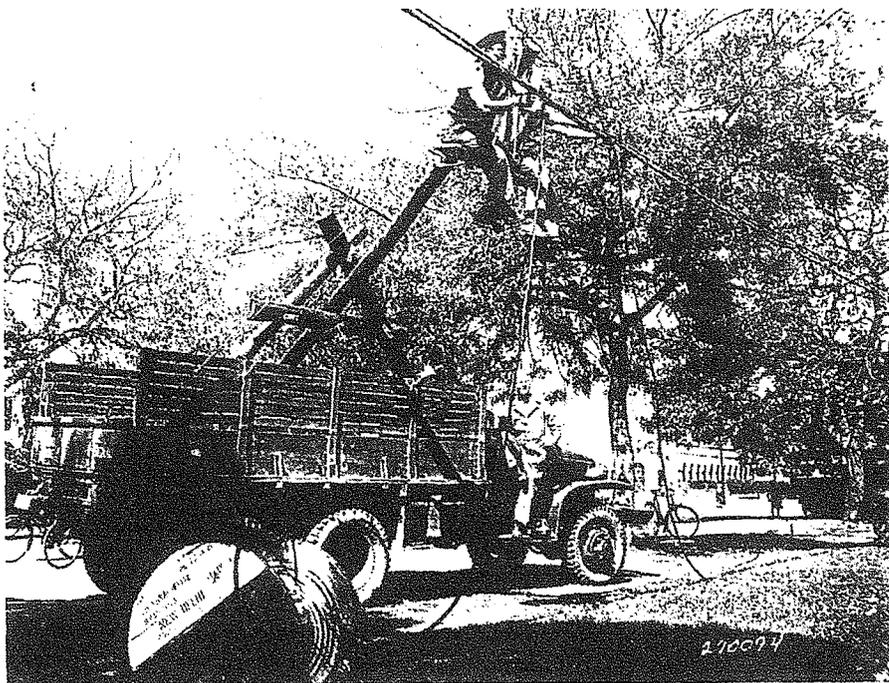
wire pairs that reached from Calcutta to Chabua and Ledo, thence over the Naga Hills into Burma and across to the China border at Muse, had been extended as of late 1944 by four pairs stretching to Paoshan. From there, two pairs ran deeper into China, to Yunnanyi. Additional circuits were added to some sectors and the eastern terminus continued to be extended to Kunming, the first major Chinese city linked by wire to India, then to 300 miles further east to Kweiyang, and finally by July 1945, another 100 miles to Tushan, some 2,300 miles from Calcutta.

The India-Burma Theater headquarters, announcing in June 1945, that the Kunming-Calcutta link had been finished, gave the dates of some of the first long-distance calls over these wire lines: from Chabua and from Ledo via Calcutta to New Delhi to Dec. 22, 1944; from Myitkyina on Dec. 25, 1944; from Bhamo on Feb. 1, 1945, and from Muse, Paoshan and Yunnanyi on March 5, 1945, April 20 and May 1, 1945 respectively.

"Over this vast communications system, men were now talking by telephone and sending telegraphic messages over one of the most rugged and undeveloped regions on earth," concluded the India-Burma Headquarters.

Of this tremendous and remote military wireless system, Gen. Reeder made a comparison in one of his letters to Washington. Writing about construction problems, Reeder said: "My only comment has to be that the Alcan Highway must have been a very quiet sector as compared to Upper Assam." Jungles and floods presented immense difficulties and men had to work overhead lines by boat. The Signal Supply Officer of NCAC, Capt. George A. Weiss, obtained "through some undisclosed source," Moynahan later recalled "pontoons and outboard motors and employed them to set up a supply line which kept signal construction in operation.

Taking pride in these accomplishments, the Sig C men were understandably annoyed when a War Department publicity release bestowed credit on other CBIers, especially members of the Corps of Engineers, and overlooked such other Army supporting troops as the wiremen. Gen. Reeder was also



Repairing telephone lines, March 1944, 835th Signal Bn. Photo from National Archives provided by Ross Netherton, Stilwell Basha.

CBI Medical Units Real Unsung Heroes

By Albert O. Wilkat

If you have viewed the Merrill's Marauders video tapes, you obviously were thoroughly moved by their actions under gawd awful conditions but you also have to be impressed by the outstanding job that the US medical units did in CBI. Several of our readers have been kind enough to share their experiences which are representative of all other CBI Veterans who served in medical units.

Grace K. Coulson of Pennsylvania was a nurse with the 20th General Hospital Unit. She graduated from University of Pennsylvania nursing school in 1940. Dr. Isidor S. Ravdin at the U of Penn hospital, in 1941, was requested to form a hospital unit and the first members assembled as a group on the evening of December 7, 1941, in his hospital office. During the ensuing months, men and women were found to fill administrative posts, pharmacists, brace makers and other technicians. They were augmented later by some 400 corpsmen, mostly from a medical battalion of the New Jersey National Guard. The quota of 120 nurses was quickly filled and that was when Grace joined the unit in 1942.

The unit boarded a troop train on May 15, 1942, for Camp Clairborne, Louisiana. They trained there for almost eight months waiting an overseas assignment. Finally, on January 5, 1943, they began a journey to a staging area at Camp Anza, near Riverside, California. Due to incompetent quartermastering, the nurses were first issued raincoats and overshoes and then had them recalled. The enlisted men carried no spare

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annoyed, as he had received letters from his men who had toiled in the forward areas of Burma; he said that he'd have to remind the powers-that-be that all last summer his bridges were out and his roads under water, while the Sig C men rowed along and kept wire circuits in operation.

(Excerpted by Joe Shupe from the History of the Signal Corps in World War II. The final segment, Part III, "Combat Communications" will appear in a future edition of SOUND-OFF.)

boots and only one change of cotton uniforms. When the unit boarded the SS Monticello and sailed from Wilmington on January 20, 1943, the nurses wore the old-fashioned blue woolen uniforms and black oxford shoes; as poorly equipped as possible for duty in a steaming jungle. Also, aboard the Monticello were two other medical outfits, the 69th and the 73rd, along with a medical battalion, an engineer's regiment, quartermaster, signal corps and other service groups, totalling about 10,000.

Sailing for India

The Monticello sailed unescorted and after 17 days of overcrowding and equatorial heat, they arrived at Wellington, New Zealand. After several hours of shore leave, their voyage continued to Perth, Australia, on February 17, and finally arrived in Bombay, India, on March 3, 43 days after leaving the US.

"After a short stay in Poona, south of Bombay, we traveled across India for five days on an Indian troop train. We ate all of our meals, prepared by our staff, when the train stopped. We were cautioned not to purchase anything, not even oranges, from the vendors who approached the train at every station. We spent two nights and one day on a barge in the wide Brahmaputra River.

"After landing at Pandu, we were taken to Gauhati, Assam Province, where we were housed at a Baptist mission, staffed by female doctors from Central Pennsylvania. Then, onward by narrow gauge railroad for 36 hours to our destination of Margherita. Here we were in Assam

Province in the northeastern-most corner of India, just 30 miles from the Burma border.

"Ordinarily, the monsoon season does not begin until late in May, but in 1943, it staged a full scale preview in March when the rains began on the day we arrived. Our quarters were bamboo bashas with mud floors and no electricity. Daylight could be seen through the thatched roofs. Apparently, the sacred cows had just left the basha. The only furnishings were Indian rope beds."

Open for Business

The 20th General opened a hospital on April 3, 1943, with 236 patients. By July, the census was 1,350. There were three small buildings with concrete floors, tin roofs and open fronts. The rest of the hospital patients were housed in bamboo bashas, with dirt floors and walls of coarse woven matting. Each bed required a tarpaulin half-suspended over it to guard against showers and insects. Commonly, wards were no facilities for laundering hospital linens or personal clothing.

Nothing ever dried out. Nurses waiting in mess lines became mired in the mud and walked right out of their low-cut shoes. Water was boiled and distributed hot to Lister bags for chlorinization. Kerosene lanterns were scarce. Sleeping was difficult on the rope beds and jackals howled at night as they prowled the hospital area. Scrawny cows were apt to wander into living quarters and leave their calling cards. One became wedged in the entrance to a latrine which had to be dismantled to release the



Personnel of the 45th PSH moved to Kamaing on June 23, 1944. We set up shelters under tarps and air-drop parachutes for living tents.

Photo by Dr. Paul Theobald

Signal Corps in the CBI - Part III

Combat Communications

By Joseph B. Shupe

(This is Part III of the Signal Corps History in the CBI. It is the final part.)

Communications for the Chinese troops who helped wrest Northern Burma from the Japanese in 1944 were supplied by Signal Corps elements under Lt. Col. George Moynahan. Transferred in April 1944 from Italy, to Shaduzup, Burma, to become Stilwell's signal officer in the Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC), Moynahan found the Allied forces "attempting to carry out a tactical corps type effort with far fewer signal troops than are normally allocated to a U.S. Army infantry division."

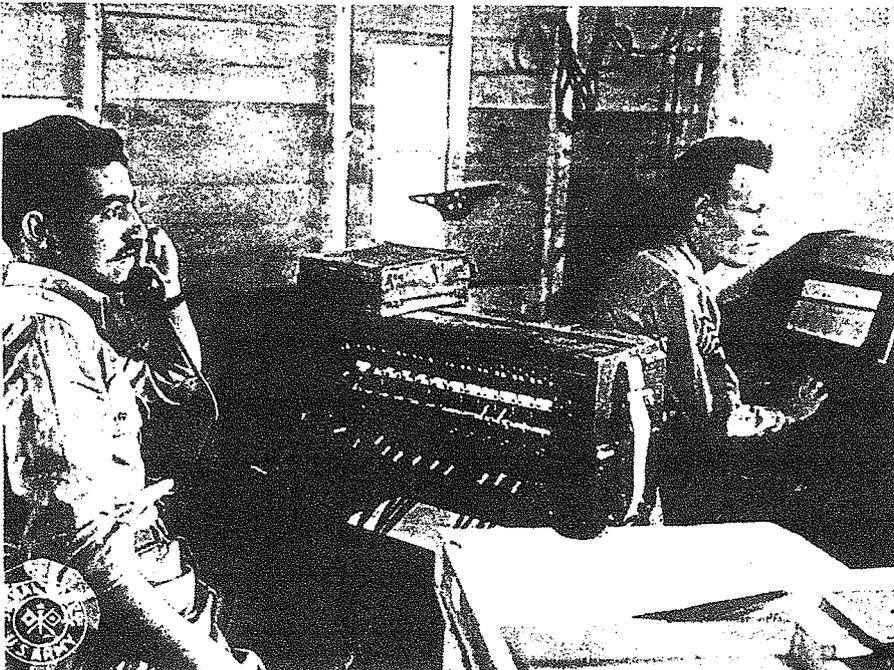
Teams of the 988th Signal Operations Co., (later a Bn.), which had been constituted and briefly trained in 1943 from Signal, Air Corps, Ordnance, QM, and Medical Troops in the Ramgarh and Ledo area, provided and operated radio and wire facilities not only for NCAC Hqs., but also for the Chinese divisions. These signalmen at first bore the full weight of all Chinese signal needs - from a radio team at Fort Hertz, to the elements

serving all along the advance southward toward Myitkyina. Thus, they were thinly distributed between NCAC Hqs. and five divisions, as well as among intelligence and tank groups, until April 1944 when the Signal Corps unit, the 96th Signal Bn, lent help. Together they installed, operated and maintained the NCAC Hqs. signal network and provided headquarters teams (radio, wire and message center) to the Chinese 22nd, 38th and 50th Divisions. In addition, they built and maintained open wire and spiral-four cable lines between Ledo and Shaduzup. Among other signal units serving in Burma were a repair team from the 181st Signal Repair Co., and a one-kilowatt radio team from the 835th Signal Service Bn.

The signal communications requirements in this campaign involved around the clock telephone, teletype, radio, and messenger service throughout the wide-spread NCAC elements, often in areas where only footprints existed. They also involved radio links with the British 14th Army, the Ft. Hertz group, the V-Forces on the Salween River, and the Hqs. at Chungking and in New Delhi.

The need to speed traffic to New Delhi brought to the CBI radioteletypewriter circuits "probably the first time" wrote Col. Moynahan.

Photos provided by Ross Netherton of the Stilwell Basha; obtained from the National Archives.



Field switchboard and teletype

han, "that such equipment had been employed by a mobile field army over such a distance." He was right as to the distance. And, certainly the conditions were abnormal - unlike those the Signal Corps experienced anywhere else, except in the tropical islands of the Pacific.

Moynahan described the adversities: dense jungle growth, high water along the rivers, and the torrential rains of the monsoons, all of which severely handicapped the laying of wire and cable lines. Low ground conductivity and the masking effect of heavy vegetation and high mountain ridges adversely affected radio communications, not to mention the effect of dank heat and fungus growth on the equipment itself. The operation of FM radios in tanks also were affected by these circumstances.

An effort to use an L-5 liaison plane with its commercial radio set to work with an SCR-245 on the ground was tried and found not altogether successful. A better solution proved to be an SCR-528 in the airplane, which could maintain good communications over line-of-sight paths with the sets in the tanks.

Artillery fire was directed by radios SCR-284, 300, and V-100. The SCR-300, when employed in liaison aircraft, proved excellent for reporting artillery fire. This set was also much used in ground combat and communications with aircraft by the GALAHAD FORCE (the 5307th Composite Unit), or Merrill's Marauders - whose direction and supply had to depend entirely upon radio.

Just as Signal Corps troops during the early days of the CBI had improvised in every possible way to maintain communications, so likewise when they encountered shortages in Burma combat during 1944, they continued to improvise as best they could. Col. Moynahan later recalled with gratitude the technical skills of men of his signal section of NCAC, of the 96th and 988th Signal Bns. and of elements of the 835th Signal Bn.

For example, during the fight for Myitkyina the battery supply for the SCR-300 walkie-talkies ran out, Signal Corps men thereupon opened up hundreds of batteries intended for SCR-195 sets and reconnected the cells so they could be used to power the SCR-300's. When rectifiers used in the CF-1

and CF-2 carrier equipment went bad, they improvised bridge rectifiers converted from vacuum tube units that they cannibalized from troop entertainment receivers. They built two complete radio teletype systems from repair kit parts.

Radio communications were absolutely necessary for the control and integration of a campaign in roadless jungles; this compels the highest degree of dependence upon radio. And, ironically, in the environment of jungle fighting presents conditions that are the most hostile to facility communications. Electromagnetic radiations are absorbed by the surrounding walls of foliage. Raising antennas above the forest roof is difficult and time consuming. Vagaries of ionospheric reflections do not help matters. Yet, radio had to serve! And, it did, as troops moved in separate columns down isolated river valleys and in tunnel-like trails through the vegetation tangle across mountain ravines and ridges.

Not only advance troops movements had to be coordinated by radio. Every man in such formations as the 5307th Composite Unit had to depend entirely upon air support for all his supplies - for every last item of food, ammunition and medicine. Replacements could come only by air, and only airlift could remove the wounded and desperately ill to base hospitals over the mountains in India. The all-essential communications that could call for air support, and that guided the aircraft to the exact drop site, had to depend upon radio.

This dependence brought on difficulties and criticisms. Radio failures occurred, often not the fault of the operators or the equipment, but of the physical laws of ionospheric reflection that could fail to reflect high-frequency radio waves after sunset, in effect blacking out vital radio communications. Night, on the other hand, was generally the only time the advancing troops halted and the radiomen had time to erect antennas, set up the transmitters, and establish a radio net.

Communications failures in the campaigning of Merrill's Marauders caused some repercussions. Gen. King, CBI Theater Signal Officer, attributes the radio failures of this unit to inadequately trained

communicators. He believed the radio needs of so unique a combat outfit could only be met by Signal Corps men well-trained in radio, a point he persistently pressed.

In May 1944, he went so far as to draft a message to sent to General Marshall. He said in the draft:

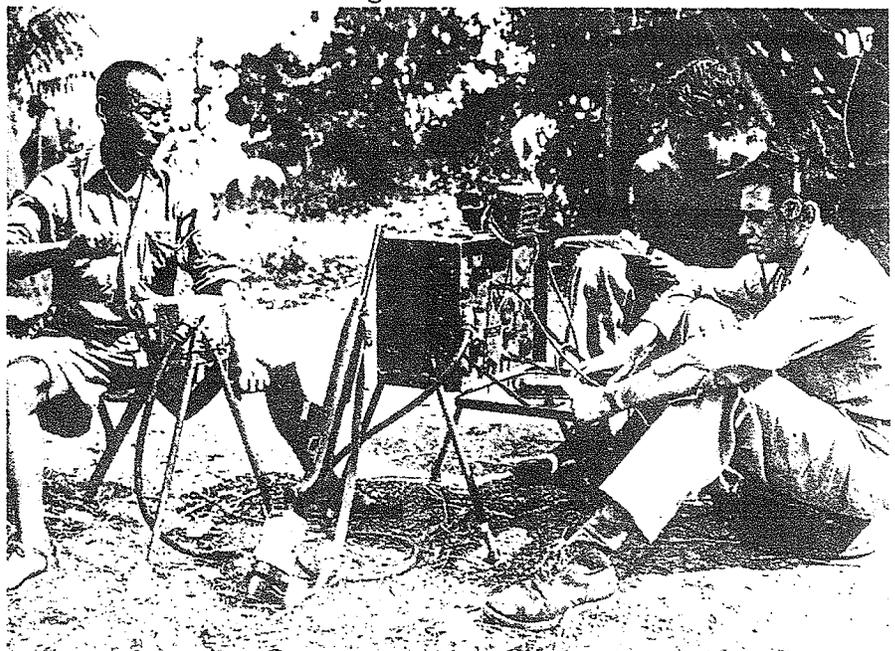
Present Galahad organization has made a remarkable showing. Its communications, however, have been unsatisfactory. Failures in communications have caused constant concern. Units of this type which are on independent missions with radio the only practical communication between battalions, higher headquarters, and supporting airbase, . . . need radio personnel and equipment which is not normal in an infantry regiment . . . constant repair of equipment is necessary . . . recommend that radio personnel for Galahad replacements be made a subject of special consideration and not treated as usual infantry replacement matter. Number of personnel should be twice that in original T/O . . . Personnel who operated and maintain a radio net should receive special training in Signal Corps School.

But, to have granted Gen. King's request would have violated the rule that Signal Corps troops should not operate in the Army below division level, below the division signal company. Officers in the CBI general staff hewed to this line. They upheld the decision the War Department had made in 1920 when it removed Signal

Corps men from the front lines, where they had served in World War I; also that combat-trained and combat-minded communicators are better than Signal Corps specialists in battle units forward of the division headquarters. Col. Francis Hill on the general staff in New Delhi, recommended no action on Gen. King's request, his reasons:

"There is no evidence that Signal Corps personnel are essential. I have yet to see a radio set that can be packed on a mule that cannot be as well operated by a communications trained infantryman, artilleryman, or LRP (long range penetration group) man, as by a Signal Corps man. In fact, the knowledge of such combat personnel of the procedures, terminology, and tactics of their branch makes them, in my opinion, superior to a Signal Corps man for combat units. War Dept. practice seems to bear out the correctness of this contention.

The fact that our first Galahad arrived in the theater late, was hastily trained, had no regimental headquarters battery, was filled with Signal Corps personnel carefully selected but not trained in LRP tactics and had communications difficulties is no proof that Signal Corps personnel are essential. In fact, I consider it proof that Signal Corps personnel are undesirable and that better results can be obtained from key-clicking dough-boys who know their basic branch."



Hand-generated radio, operated by men of the 988th Signal Battalion message center in Burma.

General King's views had validity in this and other theaters. In the Pacific, for example, Signal Corps men were being assigned to regimental combat teams below division level, for the very reasons that Gen. King believed called for Signal Corps specialists in the regimental-sized GALAHAD.

A number of Signal Corps personnel did serve in GALAHAD, although the battalion communications platoons were hardly filled with them, nor were all of them the radio specialists that were needed. The signal officer serving in the 5307th Composite Unit was a competent electrical engineer from the CBI Headquarters Signal Section. He was Capt. Milton A. Pilcher, who brought with him two more Signal Corps officers, 2nd Lts. John W. Travis and William B. Filiak.

Travis, a telephone man, assisted Pilcher in the unit headquarters. Filiak, a radio operator, commanded the communications platoon of the 3rd Bn. Still another Signal Corps officer and GALAHAD volunteer, 2nd Lt. Alexander E. Graves, a radio expert, commanded the 2nd Bn, communications platoon.

The leader of the 1st Bn communications platoon was a Signal Corps officer too, more by chance than by intent. He was Lt. Charlton Ogburn, Jr., who had entered the Army as a Signal Corps photographer. When in early 1943, he volunteered for the mysterious LRPG that became the fa-

mous Merrill's Marauders, he found himself assigned command of the 1st Bn, communications section. This, in Burmese jungles, meant a radio platoon. He learned about military radio, as did so many other WW II communicators, the hard way.

Pilcher, originally assigned to the Hqs. Signal Section, CBI, to serve as one of Gen. King's liaison officers with the 10th AF, had volunteered for GALAHAD in the summer of 1943. After conferring with Col. Fairweather, signal officer under British Gen. Orde C. Wingate, the originator of LRP tactics, Pilcher proceeded to organize communications for GALAHAD. For one thing, he requested and obtained 33 Signal Corps men to serve in the battalion communications platoons along with infantry communicators. He specifically asked for radio men stating that "radio will be the life-line for the unit," and he emphasized, "it must be adequately manned." But not all the Signal Corps specialists he received were competent, though they learned with a will, and fast. Some of them completely lacked experience. Some came from fixed radio stations, some from AA units in the US. Because their experience was limited and because they were not hardened to the rigors of Burma campaigning, as were the infantrymen, Pilcher concluded after the GALAHAD action that infantry communicators were in general preferable to Signal Corps men (just as Col. Hill in CBI Hqs had

said earlier).

Some of the infantry communicators proved outstanding, for example Lt. Wm. T. Bright in Lt. Ogburn's platoon. But Signal Corps men, if they had been adequately trained in the type of radio work employed in the campaign, would have been better, Pilcher later remarked.

Specialized training and experience with the equipment, its use, and its maintenance are basically more crucial in communications task than whether the men are Signal Corps or other troops. Only Signal Corps specialists are likely to possess sufficient knowledge and experience in the intricate business of radio maintenance and repair.

Despite all difficulties, radio communications in GALAHAD, Pilcher recalled, were reasonably good. Long-range radio however, between 5307th and the rear base in the Ledo-Dinjan area to summon a/r supply, had problems. Planners had provided adequate radio for use in the battalions and Burma Hqs. but not so for the more powerful radio needs to cover the hundreds of miles back over the Naga Hills to India. No batteries were designed to power the receivers, its energy had to be cranked up on the hand generator, a tedious task; it strained the arm and shoulders of the men. At GALAHAD Hqs, Pilcher often pressed military police to crank the generators hour after hour.

With the men on the trail, weary from daylong marches, they had to work the radio at night without much help. Pilcher gave them full credit in his after-action report:

However routine their jobs may be, the work of a communications man is as important and is as arduous as that of any man in the organization. Without communications, no unit can fight well, and without communications, a long range communications unit cannot fight. He walks all day with his unit and at night he "pulls his shift." If traffic is heavy or radio conditions poor, he works all night. In a fight, he stands by his set clearing traffic until relieved.

Actually, the radiomen and their radio sets served rather well in Burma. GALAHAD could not have done its mission had this not been true. The failures tend to be remembered, and the successes forgotten - in a typically American



General Sun Li-jen using SCR-300 near the Stilwell Road.

manner that takes communications for granted, ignoring the amazing provision of any kind of adequate communications amid so primitive and unfavorable circumstances

That in general, the radio communications of both American and Chinese forces in Burma succeeded is further attested by the frequent mention of radio commands and control in the combat histories of GALAHAD and the NCAC. Air supply and air evacuation provided entirely successful and large scale sustained operations. The 1944 campaign depended heavily on the radios that first summoned the supporting aircraft, designated the drop or landing areas, and then communicated directly between the troops below, difficult to locate under tropical forest cover, and the planes overhead.

Although, in general, little notice has hitherto been granted by American military students to radio communications, either to their need or dependency in the wars that we fought in this century, it is notable that the decisive element in the Allied recovery of Burma in 1944 were not overlooked by the Japanese. For, in addition to superior American air power and air support of ground troops were decisive; the enemy acknowledged further the superior communications had made possible, in turn, the air support. To quote a Japanese officer:

"With a good signals system and air supplies, the Allies were able to carry out their operations freely and unhindered whereas the Japanese without air supplies and with their only means of supply - ground support - cut-off, were in a paralyzed state. The difference in ground-air cooperation between the Japanese Army and the Allies was the difference between victory and defeat."

The essentiality of Army signal communications had not impressed the average CBI officer to the extent that it had impressed leading European Theater commanders and would impress men of the postwar era of supersonic vehicles and weapons - when communications would be elevated in Army doctrine to constitute one of the vital triad: fire power, mobility, and command control (signal communications).

Upon the capture of Myitkyina

on August 3, 1944, the hard-fought N. Burma campaign came to an end. A forward thrust of special units - GALAHAD Bn., with attached Chinese regiments - had, on 17 May, seized the airstrip and cleared it for limited use, amid continuing combat. Their communications were at first in dire straits - not enough wire and still less radio. Throughout the first week, radio communications from the airstrip to the rear, totaling about a hundred messages a day fell upon one officer and a very few men salvaged from the exhausted communications section of one regiment. Cipher work broke down because the regular cryptographers were flown out due to wounds or disease. The mule drivers and others were used for this exacting work, and were unable to handle it. For four days, Pilcher reported "important traffic was delayed, garbled or confused," a grave situation, until rear headquarters was able to fly in more skilled men and equipment.

Troops of the 835th, incorporated into the 988th Signal Bn, under the NCAC signal section, were among the Signal Corps men who came to the rescue of the Allied communicators at Myitkyina. A team from Ledo came on July 9 with some equipment.

Under combat conditions, frequently in foxholes, they managed to put their station on the air by July 11. More of the 835th arrived and when Myitkyina fell, they installed a BD-38 in a tent in the

stalled a BD-38 in a tent in the town and strung field wire to the railhead, the airstrip, and combat headquarters.

Later, bulldozers, as they cleared roadways, ripped out lengths of wire, and natives, who prized the line as pack lashing, helped themselves. Even so, the operators kept the circuits open despite all of this.

For example, late one night a call came in good English asking for a connection to Ledo; there at this time was no wire connection back to that base. Then the operator heard "banzai," and the Japanese, who had cut in on the line, cut the wire and the circuit as well.

Throughout the Burma fighting, the 96th Signal Bn. provided a variety of wire, radio, and message services, including message dispatch by liaison aircraft. This was provided with an exceptional variety of workers that included a Chinese Engineer Bn., a construction company from the 3rd Chinese Signal Bn., Kachin and Karen civilians, and three Indian Pioneer companies, all under the command of the NCAC signal officer.

One of the 96th's sergeants rigged a mast and boom arrangement on a flatcar to rehabilitate wire lines along the railroad between Pinbaw and Hopin. British soldiers dubbed this the "wind-jammer." As a result, armed signal men were able to string 18-20 miles a night, working after dark because supply trains crowded the



65th Regiment Headquarters.

rails during the day.

They got illumination from landing lights salvaged from a C-47 plane, and protection from 50-caliber machine guns mounted on the car.

Before Bhamo was taken, the 96th skirted the town with spiral-four cable. Within a week after the town fell in December 1944, the Bn had a mobile signal center in operation. This included a mobile radioteletypewriter link that they established with Myitkyina which proved to be a life-saver according to the battalion history, whenever the wire line service was interrupted. Interruptions occurred. Three wiremen lost their lives along the lines; two were victims of an enemy shell, and one was shot by a rifleman.

Other instances, apart from the GALAHAD experience, of Signal Corps officers doing combat communications work contrary to Army restrictions limiting the service of Signal Corps troops further forward than the division signal company. This became a necessity, when the American artillery advisor for the 22nd Division (Chinese), Lt. Col. Trevor N. Dupuy, who also commanded the Artillery Group (Chinese), was ordered to provide artillery support to two Chindit units in Burma in mid-'44. He needed an artillery communications section; as none were available in the area. Col. Moynahan then provided a Signal Corps team from the 988th Signal Bn along with the necessary equipment.

This team was commanded by Lt. Louis Frieberg, a radio expert. As his plane arrived in the combat zone, the airstrip was under fire, but Dupuy said Frieberg pitched right in and quickly learned the duties of a regular artillery battalion communications officer. He served through five months of heavy fighting down the railroad

line to Indaw, from early August, when the offensive in lower Burma began, to its conclusion in December 1944. One of his wiremen was killed in action. The Japanese having broken the wire lay in wait until the lineman came to make repairs.

Whereas the enemy in Burma collapsed by the end of 1944, sooner than was expected, the enemy in China continued to succeed in his drives, against Allied air bases there. Supply of China from seaports in Calcutta rose impressively in 1945. Motor convoys were by then moving the material over the Ledo (Stilwell) Road to Kunming and beyond. "We began to get some of the supplies we'd been screaming for," recalled an officer of the 835th Signal Service Bn, in Kunming. "That made a hell of a difference," he added. "not only in the job we did but in the way the men felt about the work. It was quite a change from the isolation and discouragement of the early days in the CBI.

The CBI signalmen, especially those of the 835th, had lived through the tremendous changes since they arrived in 1942. "Many of them," reminisced the unit historian, "could remember the day when all Delhi code work was done in a hotel bathroom, when all messages were pounded out on a hand key, and when the available circuits numbered only two. Now a traffic load of half a million code groups a day was only normal."

During early 1945, new Signal Corps units arrived, and older units were reorganized. Those arriving in April/May '45 included four signal service companies (the 3340th, 3152d, 3182d and 3183d). In early April, Gen. Reeder transferred the 432d Signal Heavy Construction Bn (Avn) to China to help extend the long pole line from Kunming to Tu-shan.

By May, the China Theater asked for the 96th and 988th Signal Bns, as well. Despite these transfers to China, the I-B Theater Signal Corps troop strength by the end of the war stood at 687 officers, 11,980 enlisted men.

In May, 1945, Col. Petzing was named Chief Signal Officer of the I-B Theater, vice Reeder. The long pole line remained a major signal effort in both theaters, as military demands upon its circuits continued to grow.

The demand upon the facilities

of the communications system reached the point where they cannot clear the PX's over the Hump by radio in time to beat the planes in. Theater commanders preferred wire line teletype service and the I-B Theater Signal Officer intended they should have it. The coordination of the Hump Lift and Hump Allocations, and the supply services required good communications between the depots of Calcutta and Chabua and the China SOS in Kunming.

Suddenly in August 1945, the war ended. Allied effort had kept the enemy out of India, driven him out of Burma, and maintained encouragement and assistance to China. In all, the top signal officer (Gen. Reeder) felt that the help to China in signal matters compared well with the work of others. "The splendid plans which were laid in the past, (most of it due to Gen. King, Cols. Neal and Petzing) are coming to fruition. As a result, we are able to implement the Chinese plans better with troops than are most of the branches here," said Gen. Reeder to the Chief Signal Officer in Washington.

Gen. Reeder had foreseen that the pole line in China might never meet a war need, but he saw other values that it might have. "Any pole line construction will . . . be of service to the Chinese government and to the Chinese people," he said. If these communications facilities provided by the Signal Corps help strengthen good relations between the USA and the Chinese, he felt all the effort and cost were well spent."

(Excerpted from the History of the Signal Corps in WW II, by Joe Shupe. This concludes the series of History of the Signal Corps in CBI. The next series will be the History of the Corps of Engineers in the CBI.)

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Transportation Within the CBI

By Joe Shupe

When the Japanese cut the Burma Road, the only alternative to supply China was via the air route over the Hump.

From the outset, transportation loomed as a major problem in order to keep China in the war (our main mission). Indian ports were limited and were unable to handle greatly expanded traffic. Also, the highway system (except on the NW frontier) was undeveloped, ports were served mainly by rail, coast-wise shipping, and river transportation. When Assam became the scene of airfield construction and combat forces moved into Burma, transportation in that area was very deficient.

It was first necessary to use ports on the west coast of India because those in the east were blocked by the Japanese. As a result, supplies had to be moved 2,100 to 3,000 miles to Assam; first by rail, then by air to Kunming. Within China they had to be moved to Chungking and to advanced bases by rail, highway, river, and coolie or animal transport.

The Indian railway system was ill-prepared to handle additional traffic. The worst bottleneck was the meter-gauge railway on the eastern frontier; it was limited in capacity and the Brahmaputra River was unbridged.

Inland water transport was concentrated mainly on the Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers, and their tributaries; supplemented by railways in E. Bengal and Assam.

This tremendous job was given to BGen Raymond Wheeler, then heading the Iranian Mission. Gen. Stilwell placed him in command of the Services of Supply (SOS) of the CBI Theater. He arrived in Karachi on March 9, 1942, and established SOS Headquarters there. Three days later, the first contingent to arrive in the CBI was air force troops diverted from Java. Borrowing some of them, as well as some from the Iranian mission, and casuals destined for Stilwell's headquarters, Wheeler got port and other operations underway.

In May, he moved his headquarters to New Delhi and divided the SOS organization geographically. Base Section (BS) #1 in Karachi; BS #2 in Calcutta; Advance Section #2 at Dibrugarh (and

later at Chabua); BS #3 at Ledo (the base for projected combat operations in N. Burma); Advance Section #3 at Kunming (June 42); later Advanced Section #4 at Kweilin for US troops in E. China. The two sections in China were consolidated in January 1944 to form a single SOS agency in China.

The US Army, wherever possible, relied on the British for transport within India. Other than air operations, our transport activities were confined to base hauling and to small scale port operations at Karachi, Bombay, and later Calcutta.

During 1942, Karachi received almost all our cargo. Then in October 1942, the US Army assumed responsibility for construction of the Ledo Road. In China, the US Army was almost totally dependent, initially, on the Chinese for land transportation. By early 1943, plans were made for a greatly expanded operation to support 100,000 US troops in China, and a major emphasis on support of an air offensive in China; a goal to move 10,000 tons a month over the Hump by November 1943. To do this, supplies were now entering Calcutta which was emerging as the major American cargo port, but the major bottleneck was the inadequate transport facilities leading to Assam. So, we negotiated with the British to use American troops and equipment to ease this bottleneck and develop the Assam Line of Communications (LOC). This task was described by logisticians in Washington as the most fascinating and complex problems in the world consisting of rail, water,



Arthur Angstenberger and friend Stella enjoyed the Irvine Reunion.
Sydney C. Wilson Photo

rail/water, water/rail and with limited highway routes.

Planning for rail operations though proved more difficult. We wanted to use our troops on the meter-gauged portion of the Bengal and Assam Railway from Assam to Ledo. The British objected but later our officials convinced them that if commitments to the Chinese were to be met, this was necessary. Result - a Military Railway Service (MRS) was approved and we took control of the meter gauge line between Katshar and Ledo effective May 1, 1944. Meanwhile, additional port troops and equipment arrived in Calcutta; a US barge line was organized; and inland waterway troops and equipment had been shipped from the US.

By the time CBI was split into two separate theaters in October 1944, major transportation problems had been overcome in the India-Burma Theater. The once congested Calcutta port was now one of the worlds best US Army ports.

Capacity targets for the Assam LOC were being exceeded and supplies were flowing smoothly to forward areas, thanks to centralized movement control, the Military Railway Service (MRS), US and British pipeline and other construction.

Our barge equipment, though, proved unsuitable for the long hauls on the Brahmaputra, but proved useful in Calcutta port operations and for the support of airfields in E. Bengal. Karachi now became a minor port, and the Bombay Port of Debaration was operating efficiently.

Also, good progress was made in air deliveries to China. The capture of Myitkyina airfield in May 1944 greatly improved air routes to China. In October 1944, ATC and other air carriers delivered over 35,000 tons to China vs 8600 in October 1943. Myitkyina by August 1944 was converted into a forward supply and air base.

Transportation activities expanded into early 1945 when the Stilwell Road was opened into China. Hump deliveries reached a peak of over 73,000 tons by July 1945. The 4-inch pipeline along the Stilwell Road from Ledo to Kunming was opened in June, and China road deliveries were kept near peak levels through the middle of 1945. The Port of Karachi

Transportation Within the CBI Part II - Indian Ports

By Joseph B. Shupe

Part I appeared in the Fall Issue, 1996, gave an overview of Transportation.

* * * * *

When US Army transportation operations began in the CBI early in 1942, the ports available in India were limited. The presence of the enemy within striking distance of the east coast precluded the use of ports in that area.

Bombay on the west coast was the main British port and was heavily congested with British traffic. As a result, KARACHI on the NW coast became the first American port. It had 22 ship berths and large ships could be moored in 60 feet of water. Most cargo was unloaded from ship to railway cars with the aid of floating cranes. Since there was no ship-side or transit sheds, cargo was transported by rail, truck, or lighter.

Upon arrival of the first US troops in March 1942, Gen. Wheeler, the SOS commander, set up a provisional port detachment. Their first job was to move 20,000 tons of China lend-lease cargo that was diverted from Singapore and Rangoon.

This detachment was replaced in May by two companies of the 393rd Port Bn. Port operations were under Headquarters Base Section 1 of the SOS. During 1942,

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was closed, and our troop debarkations were transferred from Bombay to Calcutta. Then, by V-J Day, shipments to the India Burma Theater were curtailed. By October 15, the MRS Railway was turned over to the British and the Barge Line was abandoned. Hump and pipeline deliveries ended shortly afterwards.

SOS in India was inactivated in May 1945 and its functions were assumed by the Theater G-4.

Subsequent articles, in a little more detail, on this subject will be included in future editions. These will include: Transportation within China, The Indian Ports, the ASSAM LOC, the Military Railway Service, American Barge Lines, and Motor Transport on the Stilwell Road. (Source: History of the Transportation Corps in the CBI.)

most US supplies entered through Karachi. The port troops used native coolie labor.

During 1942, the port discharged and transhipped 130,342 tons of cargo; in addition to debarking 13,800 troops. As soon as the tactical situation permitted, an east coast port closer to the forward areas was opened.

Starting in September 1942, supplies were transhipped from Karachi to Calcutta. The latter was opened to vessels arriving from the US in March 1943, and soon surpassed Karachi in importance.

With the shift from Karachi to Calcutta, the two port companies were transferred, one moving in February 1943, the other in August 1943. Continuing port activities at Karachi were handled by a small Army staff supervising native labor, but this did not impair operational efficiency. During 1943, Karachi, on three occasions, stood first among overseas US Army ports in monthly cargo discharge performance, and in December set a new port record for itself, unloading 5,645 tons from the SS Mark Hopkins in three days and 10 hours working time.

Karachi handled a dwindling traffic load in 1944; after January 1944, it became unimportant as a supply base. The port's outstanding job during the year was the unloading of the "Mark Twain" with 5,597 tons of cargo in 48.5 hours after docking. Later, the need for an Army port in NW India gradually disappeared.

On May 15/45, Base Section #1 was inactivated with the exception of a small detachment to unload small shipments from tankers and some coast-wise cargo; then all troops were transferred throughout the CBI.

At war's end, Karachi Port was reactivated for debarkation of personnel (August '45); many troops were brought in by rail from the Ledo and Chabua areas. As aircraft were withdrawn from the Hump run, they supplemented and later supplanted the troop trains. The troops were billeted at the Replacement Depot at North Malir, 14 miles from the port, and after processing were trucked to ship-



Although he spends his winters in Florida, Sid Fyke was a welcome site at the summer meeting of the Tennessee Volunteer Basha.

side and embarked. The first troop transport to arrive, the GENERAL McRAE on September 22d, took on 3,008 passengers. Evacuation operations peaked in October when 26,352 troops were loaded on eight transports. The port was closed in January 1946 having embarked 80,185 personnel. Then, all port troops were either transferred to Calcutta or returned to the US.

BOMBAY

Despite its magnificent deep-water harbor and excellent port facilities, Bombay was overtaxed by British and Indian traffic, and remained so into 1943. As a result, it was not used to handle American cargo. However, since neither Karachi nor Calcutta could accommodate large transports, Bombay became the major port of debarkation for American troops entering CBI. During 1943, a total of 118,893 Americans passed through the port, including troops for the Persian Gulf Service Command.

Initially, American operations were conducted by a small staff from Base Section #1, SOS. They made arrangements with the British, who directed the debarkation of troops and the discharge of cargo; providing berthing and staging facilities; and handled the onward rail movements. From Bombay, the troops traveled 1,300 miles by rail to Calcutta, and more than 2,100 miles to East Bengal or Assam.

On December 31, 1943, the Bombay Port of Debarkation was formally established with a small number of personnel which gradu-

ally grew to 500. The mission was the debarkation of US Army troops from transports which were usually berthed at Ballard Pier. They also processed personnel leaving on American ships and also some coastwise cargo.

Every action had to be cleared with British authorities which Americans found to be unsatisfactory. This caused delays in unloading troops because of lack of rolling stock and poor timing of trains. Gradually, though, one function after another was transferred, so that the US port commander, eventually, assumed responsibility for most activities. Reliance on British staging facilities ended in July 1944 when an American staging area was opened at Lake Beale, 125 miles from Bombay at one of the main trans-India railway connections. That camp continued until October when a section of Camp Kalyan, a British staging area in Bombay was made available for personnel departing the theater.

Camp Beale was then assigned to the SOS Replacement Service and was used exclusively as a



Paul and Florence Spencer with Sumit K. Saha, General Stiney Basha meeting, at Gaylord India Restaurant. Saha is owner of Gaylord. His father was India Consul in S.F. years ago. The Spencers were friends of the Saha family for many years. Spencer is Gen. Stiney Basha chaplain and arranged the dinner to celebrate India's 50th anniversary of independence from England.

Syd Wilson Photo

staging area for troops arriving in CBI.

Until late spring of 1944, most US Army troops arrived on British transports after transshipment from War Service Administration (WSA) vessels in the Mediterranean. Thereafter, they were brought in by US Navy transports of the P-2 type. The first of these, the GENERAL BUTNER, arrived in May, following in July by the GENERAL RANDALL. This was a learning experience for the port commander. By the latter part of 1944, the Bombay port operation was proceeding satisfactorily. The timing of the arrival of troop trains, however, at quayside persisted, but this was steadily improved. The goal was to insure a five-day turnaround for the ships, although the wait for convoy escorts occasionally extended the time to seven days.

American operations were ended when the British wanted exclusive use of the port for anticipated post V-E Day redeployment of their troops to India. After a successful trial run for two American transports to Calcutta in February 1945, it was decided to give up the Bombay port. The last transport to arrive at Bombay, the ADMIRAL BENSON late in March debarked 4,866 troops and took on 1,363 passengers. All debarkation activities were then shifted to Calcutta, and on June 1st, Bombay was officially closed as an American port.

CALCUTTA

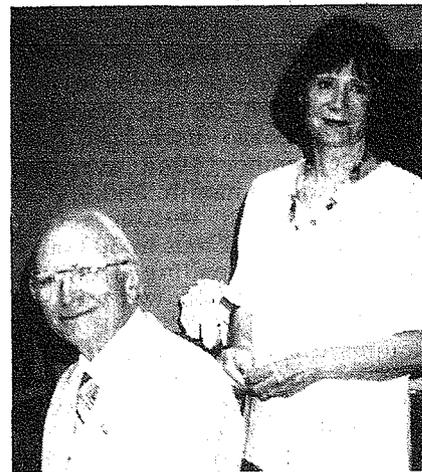
Calcutta is located in Bengal Province, 80 miles up the Hooghly River. The steam followed a winding course and was relatively shallow, accommodating ships with a draft of 22 to 30 feet, depending on the season; it had 49 berths, most of which could accommodate ocean going vessels, and 44 ships could be anchored in the stream. The more modern of these facilities, the King George and the Kiddepore Docks, were inside the tidal locks. Most wharves were equipped with transit sheds, and there was a fair amount of shore and floating equipment.

The port was served by three broad-gauge rail lines; the Bengal and Assam Railway having tracks into the docks. The labor supply was ample. Proximity of the enemy precluded its use earlier, but by the end of 1942, six small vessels, under the supervision of a US Army Engineer unit, had been discharged.

Port operations began to expand when, upon the recommendation of the Anglo-American Shipping Mission, shipping was routed directly from the US to Calcutta. About 8,000 tons of US Army and China-aid supplies arrived in March 1943, and incoming tonnage mounted steadily thereafter. The two port companies from Karachi (540th and 541st) took over operations. The King George Docks were used mainly, and also the Kiddepore Docks. The port troops supervised coolie labor and in an effort to unload maximum tonnage, they operated in 12 hour shifts and worked as long as 18 hours at a stretch.

As the work load increased, and insufficient personnel were on hand, ships arriving from Colombo, Ceylon, had to be bunched in convoys, and thus delayed from 3-10 days awaiting berths.

At the same time, the inability of the Assam Line of Communication (LOC) to carry the cargo, caused an accumulation of freight at the docks and warehouses. This congestion, in the latter part of 1943, handicapped projected military



50th Anniversary of India Independence lured John and Eileen Thompson up from Pebble Beach to the Gen. Stiney Basha meeting at Gaylord India Restaurant.

Syd Wilson Photo

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operations. Relief came in late December 1943 and early January 1944, when two port battalions (the 497th and 408th), a total of eight port companies, arrived.

As the new port troops tackled the congestion problem at Calcutta, arrangements were made to discontinue convoys from Colombo temporarily to relieve the pressure. Madras was then opened as a support to which overflow traffic could be diverted from Calcutta. Gradually the amount of cargo discharged monthly more than doubled in January 1944, and in February totaled 128,397 tons, a record for the year.

By March, the bottleneck was broken. Between June and October, the maximum time lost waiting for a berth was one day; this was helped when American barge equipment and low-bed trailers and tractors were received. As will be seen (in a later article), the Assam LOC increased its ability to move supplies up to forward areas.

During 1944, the port handled most American cargo arriving in the CBI (1,092,625 vs Karachi's under 100,000 tons). Calcutta played an important role in making the CBI the leader in US Army port discharge performance throughout overseas theaters.

Increased cargo arrivals, beginning in November 1944, resulted in further expansion of port activities; they peaked in March 1945, when 173,441 tons were discharged from 66 vessels. After March 1945, monthly cargo arrivals fell off although still greater than most of 1944. Except that in May, a large number of British and foreign vessels arrived in preparation for the Rangoon operation. Cargo discharged from June-September 1945 averaged 122,549 tons a month, and in July they set a new theater record discharging 3,034 tons in 30 hours. The one large loading operation before the end of the war was the transfer of the XXth Bomber Command to the Pacific. This involved 10,257 men and loading 10 cargo ships with 13,932 tons of cargo and 2,291 vehicles.

Meanwhile, Calcutta had taken over the theater's debarkation and embarkation activities. After the successful experimental run of two C-4's arrived there on April 27, 1945, and anchored in the stream; 5,752 troops were ferried to Princep Ghat and loaded on trains.



Richard (Buck) Weaver, vice-commander of the Tennessee Volunteer Basha, made arrangements for and presided over the summer meeting.

Embarking troops were then ferried to the ships and were all aboard on May 6.

Procedures were improved as successive troopships arrived, but selection of Shalimar Siding for embarkation proved unfortunate since troops had to carry their duffle bags one-fourth mile before reaching the ferry. Later, the Princep Ghat was used and improvements were made when transports came aside the jetties and delivered personnel directly to shore without use of ferries.

To deal with delays in obtaining trains, troops were then moved by river steamer from Princep Ghat to Kanchrapara staging area. Later, such movements were made by truck.

Towards the end of the war, efforts were made to ship troops aboard cargo vessels as well as troop transports. From May 20-September 2, 1945, a total of 17,666 troops embarked at Calcutta with 16,028 debarked.

With war's end, the flow of traffic into Calcutta was reversed. Eleven of 29 ships enroute to CBI were returned to the US and three were diverted to Shanghai. Cargo and troop arrivals at Calcutta declined sharply in September and were negligible thereafter. At the same time, personnel being evacuated from China and all parts of India and Burma began moving into the Calcutta area.

The main postwar cargo opera-

tions involved the shipment of petroleum products and general cargo to the newly-opened port of Shanghai; the dumping at sea of deteriorating ammunition and chemical warfare toxics; and the return to the US of all other materials. By the end of February 1946, most of the facilities at the King George Docks were returned to the Calcutta Port Trust. From the start of October 1945 through April 1946, a total of 320,437 tons was shipped to the US, Shanghai, or to other overseas areas.

In the meantime, Calcutta had joined Karachi in evacuation of troops. The first ship, the GENERAL BLACK arrived on September 26, 1945 and took on 3,005 passengers. Subsequent arrivals were either other C-4 "General" troopships or smaller WSA "Marine" vessels capable of carrying about 2,500 passengers. Transports were generally berthed at Princep Ghat or the Man-of-War Mooring. Embarkation activities reached a peak in November when 21,990 embarked on eight transports.

The closing of Karachi in January 1946 kept Calcutta busy for another month. By the end of April, 187,761 troops had departed the theater by water. Of these, 197,576 left from Calcutta. The final embarkation took place on May 30, when 812 passengers boarded the "MARINE JUMPER."

MADRAS AND COLOMBO

These ports were used at first as emergency ports to lighten vessels whose draft did not permit entrance into the Hooghly River. Madras was opened as a support of Calcutta in February 1944 to handle overflow shipping. After discharging 24,363 tons in February and March, the port received only minor tonnages. These were limited to lightening of vessels and the discharge of small coastwise shipments.

Another minor American port was established at Colombo following the transfer of the SE Asia Command Headquarters from New Delhi to Kandy, Ceylon. It was used for the discharge of cargo for US Army personnel. By October 1945, cargo arrivals had ceased.

(Source: History of the Transportation Corps, CBI)

Happy Holidays!!

Transportation Within the CBI - Part III The Assam Line of Communications (LOC)

By LTC Joseph B. Shupe (Ret.)

Part II appeared in the Fall issue, 1997, on Indian Ports.

The transportation system leading from Calcutta into Assam called the Assam LOC, was described by an Army logistician in the War Department as "The most fascinating and complex problem we have in the world." It consisted of rail, water, rail/water, water/rail, and to a limited extent rail highway routes.

The Bengal and Assam RR was the main carrier on the LOC. Supplies were shipped from Calcutta over a broad-gauge line 200 and 275 miles respectively to Santahar and Parbatipur. They were the principle points for transfer from broad-gauge to meter gauge railroads. The rail wagons then moved to the Brahmaputra River where they were ferried across, and then proceeded to Tinsukia, whence they traveled over the short meter-gauge Dibru-Sadiya RR to Ledo, 576 miles from Parbatipur.

The railroads were supplemented by two steamship lines, which hauled supplies approximately 1,100 miles up the Brahmaputra from Calcutta to Dibrugarh in Assam. The river and rail systems were closely intertwined and there were numerous junctions along the route where supplies might be shipped by rail to Goalundo, barged to Dhubri or Neamati, and thence proceeded by rail to final destination.

There was no all-weather through highway from Calcutta to Assam. A motor road, however, did extend eastward from Siliguri at the northern terminus of the Bengal and Assam RR, through Bongaigaon to Jogighopa. From this point, vehicles could be ferried across the Brahmaputra and then proceed over the Assam Trunk Road to Chabua and Ledo. Late in 1943, a limited convoy operation was in operation by our SOS Intermediate Section #2 from Bongaigaon to Chabua.

The LOC was ill-prepared to take on wartime traffic. Part of the broad-gauge line and most of the meter-gauge line were single tracked. The latter was a bottleneck; there were no bridges across the Brahmaputra; the steep gradient at the eastern end of the line made travel slow and hazardous; and monsoons annually disrupted service by washing out tracks and damaging rail bridges across smaller rivers. Also, the

Bengal and Assam RR was called upon to handle increasing traffic. Like the railways, the inland waterway lines were disrupted during the monsoons. At the start of the war, the Assam LOC carried only about 1,000 to 1,500 tons daily. To increase its capacity, in order to support military activities in northeast India, military movement control was gradually introduced. By Oct. '42, the capacity for military traffic had been increased to 2,800 tons a day, but this was inadequate to cope with the supplies being poured into the LOC.

The British then planned in 1943 to construct double tracks, sidings, and a bridge over the Brahmaputra; but few of these projects were completed during the year. As a result, the port of Calcutta became congested. Supplies to Assam took up to 55 days for delivery; and it was not uncommon for shipments to be held more than 30 days on river barges as the year ended. This was of vital importance to our military which was then engaged in expanding construction and airlift operations in Assam, and was about to launch a cam-

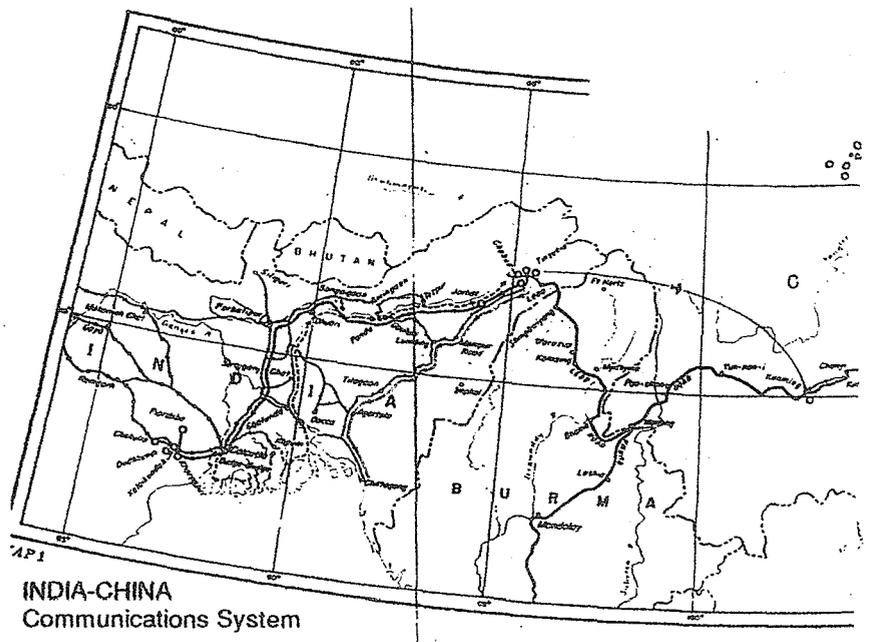
paign in north Burma.

We pressed the British to militarize transport on the LOC. In a comprehensive (Feb. '44), they agreed to a system of semi-military control and with our participation in a control board. So, then, a LOG panel implemented allotments and controlled day by day operations.

The British made improvements at important rail and river transshipment points. Also, they constructed a four-inch pipeline on the Chandranathpur-Manipur Road sector. That line was later extended from Chittogong to Tinsukia. These new pipelines eased the burden on the hard pressed railways, and greatly increased the capacity of the LOC.

Playing a vital part in the LOC's development was the transfer to our control of the meter-gauge line from Katihar to Ledo, a portion of the LOC long considered to be a major obstacle to rapid movement of supplies to Assam.

What had been a major transportation problem in March '44, was being licked in May. CBI SOS reported to the War Department on July 15 that the target for LOC tonnage set for January '46 had been exceeded, except for the movement of petroleum products which were then unavailable in sufficient quantities. When the India-Burma Theater was created in October '44 (and a separate China Theater), the Assam LOC was no longer a problem for the movement of supplies to the forward areas. US and British



shipments had increased from 112,500 tons in March '44 to 209,748 tons in October. Some problems remained, however, such as handling of heavy lifts at trans-shipment points, and in meeting the ever-increasing demand for petroleum products for the E. Bengal and Assam airfields.

Traffic mounted steadily into the spring of '45. In March '45, a record 274,121 tons of US and British military supplies were shipped by river, rail, and by pipeline. The largest new addition to the LOC came in March '45 with the completion of our six-inch pipeline from Chittogong to Tinsukia; this augmented deliveries by the Calcutta-Tinsukia pipeline and the rail and river carriers. Together they provided petroleum products needed for Hump deliveries; fueled the US pipelines extending from Tinsukia into Burma toward China; and supplied fuel for the vehicles on the Burma Road.

When campaigns in Burma ended, demand for supplies lessened; but this was partially offset by the need for deliveries to China, especially for fuel needed for air, truck and pipeline operations. This amounted to 135,796 tons in August '45.

Upon termination of hostilities, traffic dwindled; the joint US-British panel was discontinued, and by the middle of October '45, our railway troops were removed.



John Allen assembling his famous smoked tenderloin and rolls at the Tennessee Volunteer Basha Christmas party. He is now vice-commander. M. Daniels Photo

The Military Railway Service (MRS) In India-Burma

The use of our railway troops on the bottleneck meter-gauge rail portion of the Assam LOC was approved by the Government of India in February '44. The MRS would operate 804 miles of the railway

from Katihar eastward to Tinsukia; branch lines from Dhubri and from Neamati; and from Furkating to Jorhat; and also on the short Dibru-Sadiya line to Ledo.

In December '43, MRS Headquarters was set up at Gauhati under Col. J. A. Appleton (later by Col. Yount). In January '44, a railway grand division (five railway operating battalions, and a railway shop battalion) arrived.

In March '44, the MRS took over the railroad; its 4200 troops were super-imposed on the existing civilian staff of 13,000. The 705th Railway Grand Division was stationed at the midway point at Gauhati; the 758th Railway Shop Bn., at Saidpur with a detachment at Dibrugarh.

To relieve the bottleneck, the MRS forced the loading of the maximum number of wagons (up to 100) at Parbatipur. This greatly expedited the movements. As a result, the meter-gauge railway was soon hauling more tonnage than the 233 mile broad-gauge system running north of Calcutta.

As critical points of the MRS line were brought under control, Parbatipur (the trans-shipment point between the broad and the meter-gauge lines) controlled by the British became the bottleneck. So, in October '44 the MRS, through the 28th Traffic Regulating Group took over all trans-shipment activities at Parbatipur.

In the path of the railroad were some 30 rivers and tributaries that were a constant threat during the monsoons. The MRS took flood control measures by reinforcing bridges, cutting diversionary channels for the waterways, and other such measures.

The 758th Railway Shop Battalion improved the repair and maintenance function. Before they took over, much of the existing rolling stock had deteriorated. With critical short spare parts obtained from the US, they no longer had to cannibalize existing equipment. In 1944, the unit repaired over 47,000 cars and converted about 188 boxcars into troop trains, refrigerator cars and low side gondolas.

From the time the MRS took over, records for tonnage hauled continued to be broken, and the number of troops carried by rail reached a peak of 92,000 (US and Allied) moving east through Pandu, and later moved 133,000 returning.



Mules being driven from corral into the entrance of handling chutes at 698th Remount Depot at 15-Mile Point on Ledo Road.

U.S. Army Signal Corps Photo

In December '44, the Supreme Allied Commander, SEAC, (Adm. Mountbatten) wrote of the MRS:

"In the first few months of my appointment to this command, the inadequacy of the Assam LOC to meet in full the requirements of the forces in the forward area and of the airlift over the Hump into China was a major obstacle hindering the full deployment of our strength against the enemy.

"Already the capacity of the Assam LOC, as a whole, has been developed to a stage where planned development is being reached months ahead of schedule. Through the hard work and resourcefulness of your railway battalions and those associated with them, the volume of traffic handled has mounted steadily until the LOC is functioning with a substantial margin over essential requirements which will enable unforeseen contingencies to be met."

Traffic over the MRS line continued to increase into the first months of '45. At Parbatipur, the arrival of modern cargo handling equipment enabled the MRS to increase the number of wagons trans-shipped from 13,470 in October '44, to 26,796 in May '45. Operations were further improved with the arrival of additional US equipment. By May '45, 263 out of 444 locomotives were US made, plus 10,113 freight cars.

After August '45, rail movements, with the exception of westward movement of evacuated troops, fell off sharply. The MRS troops were evacuated starting late August '45, and transfer of the line to the Bengal and Assam RR was completed by October 15.

Rail Operations in Burma

The MRS also provided personnel for an unusual rail operation in support of Allied troops driving down the rail corridor from Myitkyina. The 61st Composite Co., of 160 men, began operating the captured portion of the railway. Only 376, out of 571, rail wagons were unscathed from Allied bombings, and most of the tracks were not serviceable.

The 61st, set up shops, mounted armed jeeps on flanged wheels, placing them at each end of the trains for motive power and protection. These were used to move supplies and troops mainly in support of the British 36th Division. Engineer troops had already begun

to repair tracks and bridges over the 38 miles of track from Myitkyina to Mogaung. Despite nearby enemy activity, they moved 15,615 troops and 1883 tons of supplies in August 1944.

During the ensuing months, jeeps were replaced by locomotives and other repairs were made. By the end of January '45, the rail line extended 128 miles to Mawlu. They also supplied the 10th AF Base at Sahnaw. After moving 40,271 passengers, and 73,312 tons of freight in January '45, traffic declined. In March '45, the unit returned to Assam. In August '45, the 61st became the first unit from the Theater to return to the US for demobilization.

American Barge Lines (ABL) In India

In May '43, it was proposed to establish an ABL on the Irrawaddy River, between Rangoon and Bhamo. In Washington, preparations were made to procure the necessary equipment and personnel. Later, the Combined Chiefs of Staff decided to use the ABL on the Brahmaputra River. The requirements were for 400 barges, 180 Chrysler sea mules, and 114 wooden patrol boats. Personnel needs were for a headquarters unit, four harbor craft companies, a port battalion, and an engineer battalion. Still later it was found that the equipment procured was not suited for the Brahmaputra River so the ABL was to be used for harbor duty and short river hauls.

Meanwhile, the ABL Headquarters was established near Calcutta (November 1943). Equipment began arriving early in 1944, and assembly was started by the Engineer troops, assisted by native labor. The 326th and 327th TC Harbor Craft Co's arrived in April, and they began operations in the Calcutta area. By mid 1944, they were hauling approximately 5,000 tons a month from the shipside to depots and airfields up river.

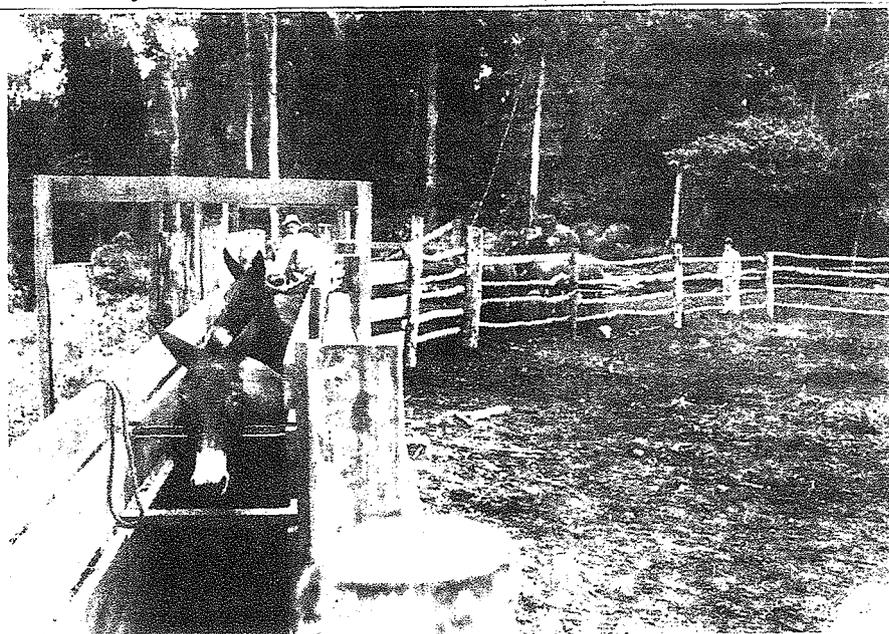
A second important activity (in August '44) was to support two US airfields at Tezgaon and Kurmitola, near Dacca in E. Bengal. They hauled petroleum products from Goalundo to Dacca, a round trip of about 200 miles. Also, they hauled dry cargo for the Air Force from Khulma to Dacca.

ABL operations around the port of Calcutta continued to expand; they moved about 20,000 tons a month, and also provided general passenger service.

To support Hump operations, and lighten the load on rail and pipelines, the ABL began to deliver almost four million gallons of fuel monthly from Goalundo to Dacca; as well as over 10,000 tons of dry cargo from Khulma to Dacca.

In August 1945, the ABL operation closed and the remaining craft and personnel were used at Calcutta to assist in the evacuation of troops and supplies.

NO DUES - NO SOUND-OFF!



*Mules in the handling chute at Remount Depot, 15 Mile Point Ledo Road.
U.S. Army Signal Corps Photo*

Transportation in the CBI

Part IV

Motor Transportation on the Stilwell Road

By Lt. Col. Joseph B. Shupe (U.S. Army - S.O.S. Ret.)

The task of restoring land communications with China was started in December '42. Pending the recapture of the Line of Communication (LOC) from Rangoon northward, it was decided to follow a route from Ledo through the Hukawng and Mogaung Valleys in North Burma to a junction with the Burma Road. After we assumed responsibility for construction of the road, our troops took over and continued work begun by the British.

The mountainous jungle of the Patkai Hills between Ledo and Singbwiang, at the foot of the Hukawng Valley, presented a formidable barrier. After trucks went as far as the road would permit, native porters took over through narrow trails and mud. This precluded the use of elephants and pack animals. Supplies were air-dropped by the Spring of 1943. Construction went slowly and was virtually halted during the monsoons in May. In October '43, Col. Lewis A. Pick (later Major Gen.) was appointed commander of Base Section 3 (later called Advanced Section 3), and took command of all SOS forces on the Ledo Road. When the monsoons ended, rapid progress was made. By the end of 1943, bulldozers had reached Shingbwiang at the 103 mile mark, and in late December, the first convoy arrived there from Ledo. All Allied forces struck deeper into North Burma, the road was pushed forward behind them.

Plans, when the road was completed, called for movement of about 85,250 tons a month to Kunming, and 16,500 tons for use in Burma.

Assuming that the Allies would recapture North Burma down to Bhamo by February '44, and that the rest of Burma would be retaken before the monsoon in May '44, the plans called for the development of the LOC, first from India through North Burma, and then northward from Rangoon. It called for water shipments to Calcutta and Rangoon, the latter to receive the bulk of shipments for China; onward movement from Calcutta by rail and river to Ledo, and from

Rangoon by barge on the Irrawaddy River to Bhamo; and final deliveries to Kunming by truck and pipeline from Bhamo and Ledo. This called for the use of 18,000 drivers, 12,000 3/4-ton truck-tractors, and 10,000 5-ton semi-trailers; all to arrive between January - June '44. The Combined Chiefs of Staff, later decided that combat operations in the dry season of '43-'44 would be limited to North Burma. As a result, all attention was then given to the Ledo-Burma Road. Thus, the combination of the 5-ton 4x2 truck-tractor, and the 5-ton semi-trailer was selected for the planned operation, and the War Dept. undertook procurement action on 8,000 of these units in September '44.

At the Allied QUADRANT conference, new plans were made based on an input of 96,000 tons at Ledo, of which 65,000 tons would go to Kunming. The result was in February '44, a block system of operations requiring 8,270 truck-trailers and 92,800 service troops. The plan called for bitumen surfacing of two lanes. Later plans cut this down to a monthly input of 57,000 tons of which 45,000 would go to Kunming, and included 36,727 service troops (drivers, maintenance and support).

By April '44, approximately 300 cargo vehicles were being dispatched daily over the Ledo Road.

Until the fall of '44, plans for the Ledo-Burma Road operations were based on two-way traffic from Ledo to Kunming and the use of truck-trailers. But then there was the possibility that such vehicles would be unable to operate over the mountainous Ledo-Shingbwiang section. This then gave rise to proposals for the partial use of 2-1/2-ton 6x6 trucks. In the meantime, the War Dept., in order to make more resources available for the Pacific, cut back construction plans for the Ledo Road. In August '44, CBI was notified that a two-track gravel all-weather road would be completed from Ledo to Myitkyina; also that the existing trail from Myitkyina would be improved with the minimum con-

struction required to complete projected pipelines into China and to deliver vehicles and artillery, (i.e. two-way traffic to Myitkyina but only one-way traffic to Kunming). As a result, scheduled production of truck-tractors and semi-trailers was cut back to 5,050 and 4,210 respectively. When the China Theater was created in October '44, the Ledo Road was then operational only as far as Warazup, 190 miles from Ledo, and was being pushed rapidly toward Myitkyina.

To provide drivers, a training school was opened at Ramgarh with 500 Chinese students. Other Chinese were flown in from China and a number of Chinese tank battalions at Ramgarh were converted to truck units.

Tests in December '44, confirmed that truck-trailers were unsuitable over the mountainous Ledo-Shingbwiang run, so the India-Burma Theater requested that 2-1/2-ton trucks be substituted. Further changes were then made by the War Dept. which provided that road operations would be limited to one-way deliveries of vehicles; also that the six-inch pipeline originally planned for extension into China would be suspended at Myitkyina, leaving only a four-inch line to be completed to Kunming; also that Hump deliveries would be greatly increased.

By January 12, 1945, the Ledo Road had been joined with the old Burma Road, and the Japanese were being cleared from the route, so, restoration of land communications with China was at hand. Accompanied by the media, engineers, military police, and Chinese drivers and convoy guards, American drivers under Col. Dewitt T. Mullett, the convoy commander, pushed off for China with the first convoy. After being delayed by fighting enroute, the vehicles rolled into Kunming on February 4. Three days earlier, the dispatch of regular convoys had begun.

The opening of the Ledo-Burma Road, soon to be redesignated the Stilwell Road, forged the last link in the chain of land communications between Calcutta and Kunming. To feed this supply line, vehicles were moved by rail from Calcutta to Siliguri, Bongaigaon, or direct to Ledo. Under the direction of SOS Intermediate Section 2, vehicles were convoyed from Siliguri or Bongaigaon to Chabua for delivery to Ledo and onward ship-

ment to China. Thus, the highway LOC actually extended 1,759 miles from Siliguri to Kunming.

The Stilwell Road itself was 1,079 miles long. From Ledo to Myitkyina the road was of two-way, all weather, gravel construction, the first 103 miles traversing the Patkai Mills before extending across the flat jungle country of the Hukawng and Mogaung Valleys to Myitkyina. From Myitkyina to Bhamo, a one-lane route continues to join the Burma Road at Mong Yu, 470 miles from Ledo. From Mong Yu to Kunming, the road was two-lane, all-weather, and hard surfaced over most of the distance, but rough with long grades.

Anxious to begin operations as soon as possible, SOS Headquarters, on January 21, '45, ordered Advance Section #3 (AS3) to start the one-way movement of vehicles to China immediately; but the AS3 was not yet organized to set up the necessary convoy details. The only vehicles available to AS3 in the Ledo area were trucks in poor repair condition. As a result, ordnance personnel worked through the night to recondition the vehicles. Drivers were provided by the Chinese Army in India, and personnel from a QM truck company in Burma were diverted to accompany convoys as far as Myitkyina. On the following morning, 50 vehicles and 100 drivers made the start.

Early in 1945, a Motor Transportation Service (MTS) was established under Col. Charles C. Davis, operating under AS3.

THE BURMA HAUL

Burma convoy operations had been established long before the Stilwell Road was opened in China. Since late 1943, QM truck companies had the job of carrying personnel and supplies from Ledo to Shingbwiyang and beyond as road construction moved forward. Although the men and animals in combat were dependent on airdrop, the forward air supply bases at Shingbwiyang and Warazup were themselves supplied by road. Throughout the year, the QM truck drivers moved supplies from Ledo to Burma bases, negotiating steep grades and hairpin turns traveling through dust and mud. In the rainy season it was not unusual to see bulldozers dragging vehicles over flooded-out muddy roads.

As the monsoons neared its end in October '44, all available drivers

and vehicles in AS3 were assigned to Burma convoy operations. In the latter part of the month about 550 tons a day were being carried. By January '45, 46 QM truck companies were engaged in the Burma haul. At this time, 13 other companies were assigned to intrabase and depot operations, and 13 additional units were enroute to the CBI.

In early 1945, all shipments to Burma were made by 2-1/2-ton trucks, which returned to Ledo; beginning in February '45, five-ton truck-tractors and semi-trailers were substituted over the rest of the Burma run. By May '45, there were 38 QM truck companies assigned to the Burma haul.

For a time, our trucking units were implemented by convoys driven by Chinese military units. The Chinese never proved satisfactory because American liaison officers assigned to the units had no command function. This problem ended with the movement of Chinese troops out of Burma.

CHINA CONVOY OPERATIONS

The first month of China convoy operations was one of constant crisis, with a lack of drivers being the most serious problem. After the first regular convoy on February 1, 1945, efforts were made to use Chinese drivers with American officers in charge, but the experiment proved a dismal failure. The training at Ramgarh was inadequate, and on February 24, Gen. Pick reported that he had 1,400 Chinese graduate drivers at Ledo, none of which were prepared for convoy duty. Additional training was then given at AS3, but the trainees never proved entirely satisfactory, so their use came to an end in June '45. To keep the vehicles moving to China, several converted tank battalion, with experienced drivers, were used, 150 of them were returned by air for additional hauls after delivering vehicles. Other drivers were obtained from the 330th Engineer Regiment, and from Chinese completing advanced training to Ledo. In addition, American units moving to China were assigned vehicles consigned to China. With the foregoing, 22 convoys (of 1,333 vehicles, and 609 trailers, carrying 1,111 tons of cargo) made it to Kunming in February '45.

In the months that followed, the

MTS used volunteers from all over the India-Burma Theater, Chinese and American casuals, and units moving to China, some Chinese trainees, and such QM truck drivers as could be spared from the Burma operations. Volunteers and other MTS drivers were returned by air over the Hump. In this manner, MTS was able to increase deliveries of 2,342 vehicles, 1185 trailers and 4198 tons of cargo in April '45; but no firm solution to the driver problem had yet to be found.

Relief came in May and June with the end of the combat operations in Central Burma, and the assignment of Indian civilian drivers. This permitted the release of QM truck companies for China convoy duty, and in June enabled the MTS to discontinue the use of Chinese drivers. On July 17, 1945, a total of 26 QM truck companies were being used for China convoy duty. Also, the only other vehicles consigned to China were those added to U.S. Army units moving to China.

A China Traffic Branch was set up to control all convoys from Ledo to Kunming. Nine stations, in all, were there to provide maintenance, messing, communications, and overnight quarters. Also, a Borders Guard Station at Wanting and later at Mong Yu was established manned by our MPs to see that only authorized personnel passed through. Problems crept up, such as poor convoy discipline and laxity in maintenance of vehicles by drivers. This was corrected by vigorous MP control and assignment of tools and native labor at these control stations.

By May '45, operations were in high gear; 78 convoys delivered 4,682 trucks, 1,103 trailers, and 8,435 tons of cargo. With exclusive use of American drivers in June, the average time from Ledo to Kunming (originally 18 days) was reduced to 12-14 days.

THE CLOSE OF

STILWELL ROAD OPERATIONS

With war's end, most operations were terminated. In September '45, only 4,112 tons were delivered to bases in Burma. On August 27, the final delivery was made to Kunming, and it consisted of 4,000 trucks, and 8,000 tons of cargo. Vehicle dispatches ended on September 23, except for a few special movements. By November 1, the

(Concluded on page 61)

WHEELER was preparing to cast off from the dock she gave a deep, rasping blast of her voice, signifying she was leaving. It was the first time we had heard our lady's bellow and it left vibrations throughout her dimensions which our dogs responded to with a farewell salute of their own.

As we headed down the channel some of the industries located along the shore would wish us well with their horns or whistles and to each the WHEELER would acknowledge with a short blast of thanks; followed immediately by our dog's response.

To this day, I have often wondered what these people might have thought to have their signal responded to by not only the ship but by 108 dogs in full voice as well. I wouldn't argue as to who had the most audible home-coming but in the matter of leave taking we'll take on all comers.

One of the first adjustments after putting out to sea was to adapt to the long, slow rollers of Madame Pacific and as the ship slowly rose and dipped in unison with sea, several stomachs decided the best place for their owners was alongside the rail. But of more importance was to see how our dogs were responding. Except for a few initial staggers, they didn't have too much trouble; save for one small detail. In the three days we had been aboard they'd had no problem accepting the deck and rail or stanchions for nature's call. But that was when we were docked and all was stable - now it was something different. What was a poor dog to think when, standing three legged against a stanchion, he would see that same stanchion suddenly start leaning toward or away from him? The world had gone daft indeed and there was much initial wide-eyed frustration. But they had the same options as we; adapt or be miserable. Adapting won by a landslide.

But there were still more sea lessons to be learned and one of the first was in relation to the old sailor's adage of "never spit into the wind." Heading generally southwesterly as we were, our bow was almost always into the face of prevailing winds. Whenever a dog would use the deck his handler would grab one of the available shovels and, gauging the roll of the ship and velocity of the wind, fling the waste over the side.

During the first few days, some of our people ignored this nautical science and paid the price by looking as though they'd come out second best in encounters with gigantic, low flying pigeons. Hilarious to others but not so to those who had defied mariner wisdom. Even worse, to the ship's captain at least, sometimes the wind would catch the thrown matter, push it back in a gentle arc, and deposit it along the side of the hull. In a few days, the sides of the WHEELER began to look as though they'd been given a coat of abstract camouflage paint that would have befuddled the periscope eye of any submariner. The captain, fastidious man that he was, must have prayed for heavy weather to cleanse the sides of his ship from the indignities being visited upon it.

While our voyage was unique in many ways, we also lay claim to a singular distinction. To the best of our knowledge we were the only unit that blazed a trail on the ocean floor from the pier at Wilmington directly to King George Dock in Calcutta.

(Transportation - from page 59) Stilwell Road was officially closed; six days later the MTS was inactivated.

From February 1-October 8, '45, a total of 25,783 vehicles and 6,539 trailers were delivered to China by MTS drivers and by American and Chinese units, in addition to 38,062 tons of cargo.

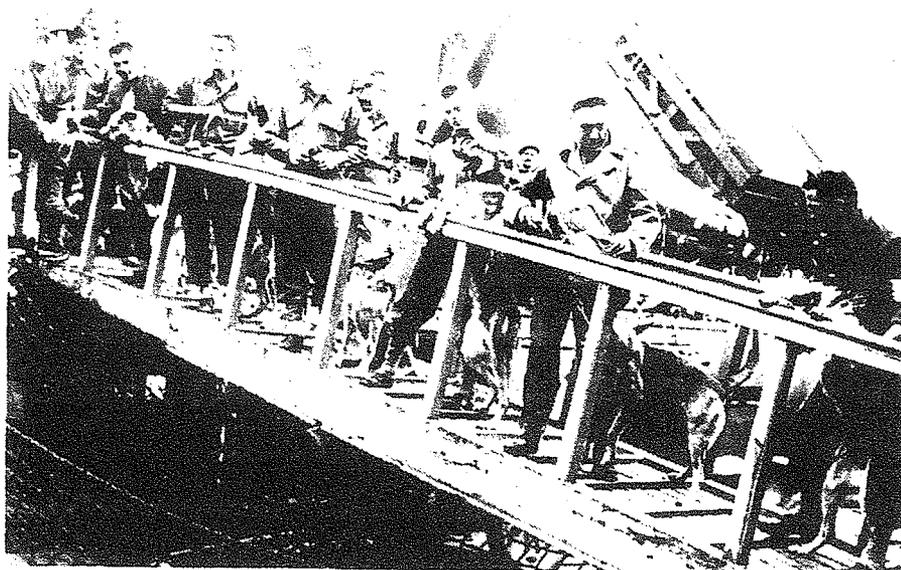
Stilwell Road deliveries were overshadowed by the Hump airlift, and after the pipeline to Kunming was operating, its deliveries exceeded the net cargo over the road.

Considering the problems of drivers, road and climatic conditions, the record of motor transport on the Stilwell Road is impressive. The number of vehicles delivered greatly relieved the critical transportation situation in China. Cargo delivered to Burma helped make the Burma campaigns, and road and pipeline construction possible. Within the confines of its mission, and the resources available, the Stilwell Road made a valuable contribution to the war in Southeast Asia and materially improved the intra-China transportation system.

1st Air Commando Assn.

The 1st Air Commando Assn. (CBI) (WW II) will hold its reunion, Sept. 2-6, 1998, at the Holiday Inn of Moline, Illinois. Contact: Will Mitsdarffer, 1215 N. Marquette St., LaSalle, IL 61301; phone (815) 223-7515.

Change of Address!
Send to
Adj/Fin. Off. Kenneth Ruff
PO Box 780676
Orlando, FL 32878-0676



January 24, 1944. Casual Dog Det. (later to be known as War Dog Det.-CBI) boarding Liberty Ship BENJAMIN IDE WHEELER, Wilmington, Los Angeles. Reading from top to bottom of gangplank, trainer and dog: Raymond Brewer, Danny; Walter Katnich, Rex; Charles Williams, Sissy; Bob Smith, Robbin; Fred Vatke, Mike; Theodore Both, Mitzi;. Zika Photo

Transportation in the CBI

Part V

U.S. Army Transportation in China

By Joseph B. Shupe

Delivery of supplies over the Hump to airfields in Yunnan was a job half done. From Kunming, they had to be hauled forward by rail, road, and water, over the Eastern Line of Communication (ELOC), a complex and difficult route (see map). Supplies were moved from Kunming to Kutsing by meter-gauge railroad. From Kutsing (later Chanyi when that railroad was extended), the Southwest Highway Transport Administration (SWHTA), a quasi-governmental agency, or other carriers, trucked cargo eastward to Kweiyang, and thence north to Chungking, or south to Tushan. A standard-gauge railroad delivered supplies from Tushan to Liuchow and/or Kweilin, and from those bases movement was by rail, truck, river craft or coolie.

Before 1944, we relied almost completely on Chinese agencies for transportation. When the Services of Supply, U.S. Army, was established in Kunming in July '42, few men, and practically no equipment, were available for this function. With the closing of the Burma Road, and with scarce Hump capacity, most early SOS activity was devoted to receiving air freight and expediting forward movement of supplies.

As SOS activities was extended forward, officers were stationed at important trans-shipment points

to expedite movement. When SOS opened a branch office at Hengyang in May '42, a few vehicles were purchased locally and operated by SOS personnel, to carry bombs and ammunition to newly-constructed 14th AF bases. Later depots were established at Yunnanyi, Chanyi, and Chungking.

The ELOC assumed importance in late 1943. Maj. Gen. Claire Chennault began to expand his operations, and by the end of October, had seven fighter squadrons and two medium bomber squadrons, which were dependent on this ELOC and limited air transport, for support.

The transportation situation in China had long been difficult; pre-war vehicles had to use primitive roads, with no replacements, and few spare parts. By the end of '43, trucks were being rapidly reduced to junk, bringing motor transport almost to complete collapse. The main bottleneck on the ELOC was the 400-mile highway linking the railheads of Kutsing and Tushan. This road was rugged, poorly maintained, and full of steep grades. It included the often photographed 21 hairpin road (see photo).

Toward the end of '43, Chennault exerted strong pressure to improve the ELOC to allow for expanded air operations in east China. Early in 1944, Col. Sheahan was appointed SOS Transporta-

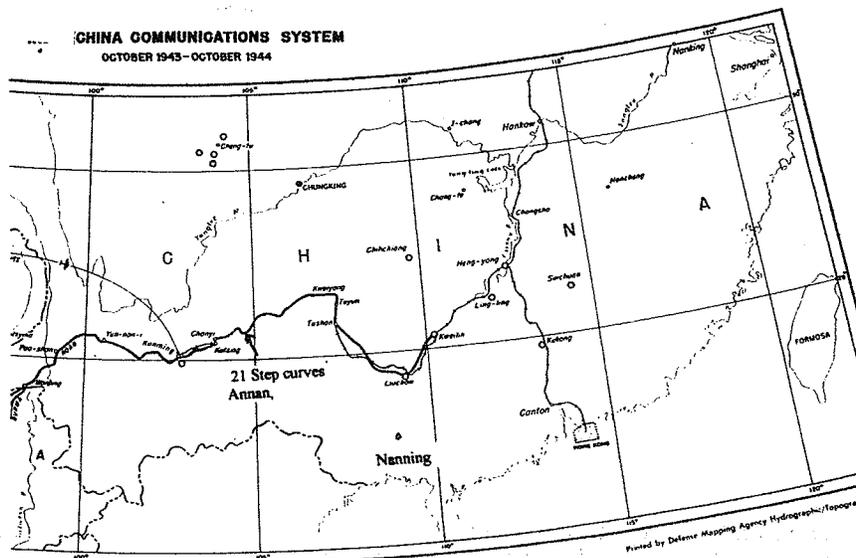
tion Officer of Advance Section 1, to improve the critical shortcoming. He found disheartening conditions. The SWHTA, the principal carrier, owned 1196 vehicles but only 183 were operable, and most trucks were using substitute fuels. Preventive maintenance was practically non-existent, and over-haul work was primitive.

To provide better support to the 14th AF, Sheahan in Feb. '44, proposed the movement of 8000 tons of cargo per month from Kutsing to Tushan. That goal required rehabilitation of 1500 Chinese trucks, and the use of some American motor transport. The plan involved shipment from India (over the Hump) of 700 trucks, and 2000 tons of spare parts. Also, he needed several QM Truck Companies and an Ordnance Heavy Automotive Maintenance Company. (Project TIGAR). The plan also included extension by the Chinese of the rail lines from Kutsing to Chanyi, and from Tushan to Tuyan. When this plan came to fruition, shipments eastward from Chanyi increased from 1931 tons in Feb. '44 to 3068 tons in May, even before the US Army trucks began operations.

In addition, U.S. officers were assigned to Chanyi, Annan, Kweiyang, and Tushan to coordinate shipments. By the end of August, Sheahan's organization had 27 officers at Kunming and key points along the ELOC. By the end of May, the 857th Heavy Automotive Ordnance Co. set up shop at Chanyi. The 3842nd QM Truck Co., arrived in Chanyi on June 1st, and three days later with 93 trucks, began to run convoys to the Tuyan railhead. The first round trip took seven days, in contrast with the 2-12 weeks previously required by Chinese trucks. By the end of the month, US Army vehicles were carrying 17% of the tonnage on this part of the route.

All the above effort brought a substantial increase in ELOC traffic. During June, 3379 tons of cargo went from Chanyi for the 14th AF. This, however, was less than half the needs of Chennault, who along with the Chinese armies, was faced with the task of containing a major Japanese offensive.

Despite many obstacles, the ELOC's output increased during the summer of '44, and in August the arrival of two additional QM



truck companies, and additional trucks, helped considerably. Operations reached their peak in September, and tonnage for the first time approximated what Chennault needed. The improvements, however, came too late, for by then the enemy had overtaken the east China air bases, and were threatening those in central and south China.

In April '44, the Japanese had driven south of the Yellow River. In their continuing offensive, they took Heng-yang in August, and then moved on to Kweilin, which had to be evacuated by the end of October. It appeared also that Liuchow and Nanning would follow. As a result, alternate routes had to be set up, but none survived except that from Kweiyang to Chihchiang which alone among the eastern airfields withstood the enemy's offensive. In these actions, our transportation personnel helped evacuate refugees and troops from eastern bases.

Disruption of traffic on the ELOC became increasingly severe during the fall of '44. In August '44, traffic forward of Kweiyang and Chihchiang was at a standstill except between Liuchow and Nanning. Roads were clogged with refugees, and truck service on the Chanyi-Tushan highway was overtaxed because of Chinese troop movements. As a result, east bound shipments from Chanyi dropped to 2772 tons in October, and in November only 1760 tons were moved. During the first 20 days of December, transport was practically nil, with only 189 tons moving eastward from Chanyi. By the end of '44, the ELOC extended only as far as Tushan and Chihchiang, just half the length before the Japanese offensive began, yet the tactical situation needed more supply for operations in the north. In October, two of the three QM truck companies were diverted from the ELOC to support B-29 bases in the Chengtu area, and other northern fields.

The critical tactical situation in the latter part of 1944 necessitated a radical reorganization of the motor transport function. Chinese carriers were pulled off of ELOC hauling for the 14th AF and used to evacuate and move Chinese troops into defensive positions. This required the diversion of three US truck units along with their Chinese drivers. Operating from

Kweiyang, the 3731st QM Truck Co., helped in the evacuation of Liuchow and Nanning, and also hauled supplies to the besieged air base at Chihchiang. The other two units, after being diverted to the support of the northern airfields, were returned to the ELOC for the movement and supply of Chinese troops. Only such vehicles that could be spared were used to supply the US Air Force, so they had to move most of their supplies by air from Kunming and Chanyi to their remaining airfields.

The transportation pictured continued bleak in early 1945. Chinese civilian carriers were failing to meet their commitments by 50-75%, and American truck units showed no marked improvement.

The arrival in Feb. '45 of the first

vehicles over the Stilwell Road offered some improvement, but the first large addition to ELOC operations came with the arrival of the LUX Convoy in March. This was the 517th QM Group which included seven truck companies, and an Ordnance medium automotive maintenance company. That unit brought in 600 2 1/2 trucks and 83 truck-trailers.

The LUX Convoy came from the Persian Gulf Command. Initially they were to come by land, 5534 miles by rail and highway from Iran to Chungking, via Soviet Turkestan. The USSR at first was unwilling to permit this move, but later in September '44 they finally agreed, but news of disturbances in Sinkiang Province caused the move to be delayed. Finally, the unit was shipped by water to India for



(Note: In 1944, the 3842nd QM Truck Co., under Capt. Elrod operated this route. What stories the Drivers would tell of their gun battles with Chinese Bandits who would board the slow moving vehicles to pilfer supplies.)

The United States Army convoy operating between Chanyi and Kweiyang ascends the famous 21 curves at Annan, China, March 26, 1945.

movement over the Stilwell Road, arriving in Kunming in March 1945.

Later in March, the 517th Group was reinforced by other QM truck companies. A block system was started over the 327 mile route from Chanyi to Kweiyang. They also carried supplies from Chungking and from Nekiang to Kweiyang, also from Kweiyang to Chihchiang.

The addition above, produced immediate results. In March, they hauled 12,506 tons; almost double that of February. With additional reinforcements, the 517th by the end of June had 436 US and 2367 Chinese drivers operating 1318 trucks. Then in May, two Chinese tank battalions, which were converted into truck units in India, joined the ELOC. These were under the command of the Chinese SOS, but under operational control by the American SOS. By May '45, US controlled vehicles were hauling more than five times than Chinese carriers.

As the enemy began withdrawing from south and central China, the LOC was lengthened to the south and east. From May through July, the job was to haul Chinese troops and supplies to combat areas in SW Kwangsi and W. Hunan Province to support actions that resulted in the liberation of Nanning and Liuchow and the opening of a drive from Chihchiang toward Heng-yang.

During the above period, the 517th QM Group handled increasing traffic from Chanyi to Kweiyang and Chungking; and they

also set up a route from Chanyi to the new Luhsien air base. Peak traffic was attained in June '45, when US controlled carriers moved 58,156 tons.

As the end of hostilities approached in August, 546 American, 2511 Chinese civilian, and 7010 Chinese military drivers were operating under our control.

In the last months of the war, SOS base sections took over complete control of motor transport. The LOC from Chanyi to Chihchiang, Liuchow and points east became the responsibility of Base Section 3 at Kweiyang; support for the Ft. Bayard operation was assigned to Base Section 2 at Nanning.

Inland water transport had been the principal way to move people and supplies, but since the Japanese seized areas near the great rivers of China American use of that mode was minor. Some tributaries of the Yangtze were used for shipments to the Chengtu and Chungking area. Also, in May '45, the Yuan River between Chanyan and Chihchiang was used with about 950 boats. When Nanning was secured in June '45, the Hsiyang River was used with enough craft to move 3000 tons a month.

Following the Japanese surrender in August '45, our task was to assist the Chinese in disarming the Japanese and reoccupying liberated territory. Motor transport in West China was then used to haul supplies to Chihchiang where Chinese forces were being airlifted

to Nanning and Liuchow.

By mid-August, all north-south traffic on the LOC, with a few exceptions, had been halted and vehicles were placed on the run from Chanyi to Chihchiang to support Chinese forces. By Nov. '45, the Stilwell Road, pipeline and Hum operations were terminated, and from then on all supplies and personnel were being brought in through Shanghai. By the end of the year, a total of 47 vessels and 156,989 tons of cargo had arrived at that port operated by the U.S. Army.

(This is the last of the series "US Army Transportation in the CBI" excerpted from the official history of the Transportation Corps in World War II.)

— LETTERS —

Norm and Marie Collard

To Our CBI Friends:

The Collard family extends its sincerest thanks for your prayers, calls and cards and for your concern for Marie's recovery from a very difficult surgical procedure. She is slowly recovering at home with TLC from husband Norm and the visiting nurses.

I have been in CBI for over 30 years and learned early on that "CBI FRIENDS ARE FOREVER." This has been proven over the last four weeks.

Thank You and God Bless,
Norm Collard
Suncoast Basha

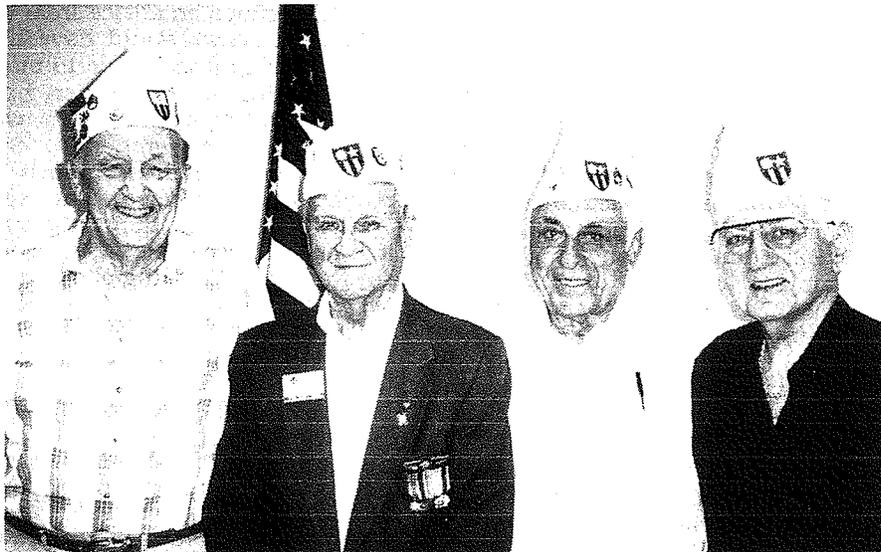
Harold T. Gillham

To the Editor:

I know it's a long shot, but I am trying to locate someone who might have known my father while in the CBITO. His name was Harold T. Gillham and he was a sergeant in the 3844th (?) Truck Co. He enlisted in December of 1942 in Des Moines, IA, and discharged in November 1945 at Jefferson Barracks, MO. The records I have, indicate he was a truck driver but also show "dog trainer."

Anyone who thinks he may have known my father, please contact me at:

Rebecca McFarlane
3130 Quarry Drive
Lafayette, IN 47905
(765) 477-2562
E-Mail: larrym@wcic.cioe.com



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PEARL HARBOR DAY

Out of nowhere . . .

A view from another side

The Ray Noble orchestra was in its second set for the dinner show at the elegant Mayfair Hotel in London. It was a little after 1900 hours on Sunday, December 7. The room's maitre 'd, followed by a bellhop-chasseur with a phone came to a table and spoke, "Mr. Fitzpatrick, your office is on the phone." Fitzpatrick was the London Times' Ex. Editor. Fitzpatrick took the phone, listened, then gave it back. "I'm afraid we'll have to miss dinner here. I have to go to the office" he said to the maitre 'd. What Fitzpatrick had heard was the office's Bob Tenant say, "We picked up a Mackay Radio message from Berlin which originated in Shanghai, China. Something about some Jap planes circling over Honolulu and dropping some incendiaries into the lagoon. It smells like something is up." Fitzpatrick began to wonder, Jap planes? Where in the devil did they come from? There were no Japanese airfields anywhere in Hawaii, east or west, he mused. And, so, Pearl Harbor came to pass.

But, Pearl Harbor, December 7 would have happened probably much later in the month, say Christmas, had it not been for a peculiar circumstance. Here is the scenario:

Japanese enjoy Saburo Kuruusu had been ordered by his government to go to Washington and try to negotiate with Cordell Hull of the U.S. State Department a peaceful solution of the two countries differences in the Pacific area.

Time was of the essence. The only fast transport for Kuruusu was to go by air and Pan-American was the only trans-Pacific scheduled carrier. U.S. Ambassador Joseph Grew was approached in Japan to get Kuruusu a seat on the 'HongKong Clipper' which was being readied in HongKong for the scheduled flight to Manila.

Problem was Kuruusu's plane

from Tokyo (to make connection in HK with the Clipper) could not land at Kaitak-HongKong. Britain was fearful that the Japanese would strike at Singapore and HongKong soon and had withdrawn landing rights for Japanese planes. Not even Japanese water traffic was allowed to enter the harbors. Now diplomatic wires began to buzz from Tokyo to Washington to London's Downing Street to persuade the Governor of HongKong to lift the plane embargo for the Kuruusu trip. He did, although grudgingly. Washington then asked Juan Trippe, President of Pan-Am, to issue a ticket to Kuruusu and staff. He did. In fact he held up the Clipper's HongKong departure two days in wait for Kuruusu's Tokyo plane.

The envoy boarded the Clipper on the sixth of November for Manila. He changed there on the 'China Clipper' which also had been held to make the 'HongKong Clipper's' connection. Next stop was Midway Island in the Pacific. A two-day delay occurred due to engine trouble. The next stop was Honolulu where another change of planes was made. This one was the 'California Clipper.' The Clipper's captain said upon arriving at Treasure Island base on November 14 that they had flown 12,000 miles of which 2,400 miles was for the segment from Hawaii to San Francisco and was done in 17 hours.

Ironically, the 'HongKong Clipper' was again in HongKong on the Kowloon side of Pearl Harbor Day. He was being readied for the usual trip to Manila. But, then, the Japs came on the morning of December 8 and their dive bomber aircraft shot-up the Clipper to a skeleton. A fleet of CNAC planes was also parked on the field and some were destroyed by machine gun fire. The remaining five were able to escape to the Chinese airfield at Mamyung, 200 miles away.

Bill Bond, the HongKong station manager and also of CNAC was able to assemble passengers and Chinese evacuees at the Peninsula hotel. then take them by ferry to the airfield. On one such night flight was Mrs. Sun Yat-sen and her sister, the wife of H. H. Kung, Chinese finance minister. From Namyung, other smaller planes (DC-2s) brought the passengers to Chungking in the interior. In 16 trips in the two days after December 8, CNAC pilots, some were

Americans, flew out 400 adults-children as well as plane spare parts.

Who was Kuruusu? He was known as being strongly pro-America. He was consul in Chicago in the period 1936-38. He also met his future wife Alice Little, there.

In August 1939 while being Japanese Ambassador to Germany in Berlin, he signed the Tri-Partite document which made Japan, German and Italy the so-called Axis in a war which was unfolding in Europe. He didn't see much value in the Axis arrangement and lost no opportunity to say so in public and for that was censured by his government.

After arriving on the Clipper, Kuruusu then proceeded by air to Washington where he talked with FDR and had a number of meetings with Cordell Hull, the Secretary of State. According to press reports their last meeting was December 7 at 2:20 p.m. Hull, at this point, was unaware of the Japanese attack (7:30 a.m. Hawaiian time, 1 p.m. Washington time) and so were apparently the two Japanese diplomats, Ambassador Momyura and Kuruusu.

In the end, as everyone knows, the two factions could not agree and bombs fell. Some historians claim the Kuruusu trip was only a smokescreen to divert attention and give the Japanese carrier fleet adequate time to reach the launch site.

Now we come to the 'What If' part which would have delayed Pearl Harbor. Yes, 'what if' HongKong's Governor had refused the Kuruusu Tokyo plane landing permit, perhaps on advice from his military. Kuruusu would have had to take a ship from Tokyo to make the Washington trip. It so happened, the Taiyo Maru ship was available on November 4. She would have taken a month to reach San Francisco. The ship actually sailed (without Kuruusu) and arrived December 4. Plus, two days to reach Washington, December 6, plus two weeks of negotiating with Hull (as before) and we come to December 25. So, you see that the Pearl Harbor attack could have come during Christmas.

It would have been a better attack day from the Japanese viewpoint: The U.S. fleet, the Airforce as well as the Army would have been on Christmas standdown which meant only minimum crews were on duty.

China-Burma-India - 1944

In observance of the Fiftieth Anniversary of WW II in CBI, SOUND-OFF would like to retell the story of 1944 in chronological terms rather than episodic. The relatively few histories of "Our War" recount these events separately and there is a tendency to forget that while Merrill's Marauders and the Chinese 38th and 22nd Divisions were moving south from Ledo on the road to Myitkyina, the Chindits were fighting behind Japanese lines in Central Burma and the British forces were fighting for their survival in the Battle of Kohima and Imphal while the Japanese were sweeping back the Chinese armies and retaking the 14th AF airfields in China.

The reason historians have not written this story in this fashion is because each of the operations deserves to have its history written in detail. Also, professionals may have learned that the story can't be told this way. All that may be achieved will be a giant headache.

With the caveat that "Fools rush in . . ." and that, in no way can this synopsis be represented as authoritative, we will proceed. Our hope is that your interest in these events as a whole or piecemeal will provoke you to read the works of professional historians.

* * * * *

At the end of two years of war with the Japanese and with one another, it is remarkable that the Allies have not suffered greater losses. The Chinese are happy to have the Americans fight for them and are reluctant to commit men and resources against the Japanese which can later be used against the Communists. The latter also give the Japanese few major problems. Only the 14th Air Force represents a threat to the Japanese and that force is dependent on air supply over the Hump for every drop of gasoline, every bullet fired and every bomb dropped.

Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell's orders are that the prime mission of U.S. forces in CBI is to keep China in the war and to keep the million plus Japanese in China so occupied that they cannot be used against the U.S. forces which are moving island to island in the Pacific, ever closer to the Japanese homeland. It is Stilwell's contention that this can be done by the creation of U.S. armed and trained Chinese troops to be used against the Japanese in China. ("X" Force)

To do this requires a portion of the tonnage flown over the Hump and this portion becomes a great source of friction between Chiang Kai-shek and Gen. Claire Chennault, head of the 14th AF, on the one hand and Stilwell on the other.

In addition to this inter-Allied friction, there exist variations in objectives between the British and American leadership. The American objective is strictly China-



Brig. Orde Wingate

(Courtesy of Command magazine)

oriented while the British objective is to restore the British Empire

in the Far East. The British have been deeply wounded in both national pride and fear of future loss of Empire by the Japanese capture of Singapore, Malaysia and Burma. At the same time there is an active Indian National Army marching with the Japanese and much political unrest in India.

In the first two years of war the British and Americans, and as a result, the Chinese, have all shared a common problem - low priority in supplies and manpower. The prime target of the Allied High Command is to defeat the Germans first and then cope with the Japanese. Shortages of men and materiel plagued the Southeast Asia Command, headed by Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten.

As 1944 begins, the British don't feel they can mount a major invasion of Burma until the post-monsoon dry season of 1944-1945 but have agreed to assist the Northern Combat Area Command (two Chinese divisions and Merrill's Marauders) in its efforts to take Myitkyina before the start of the 1944 monsoons. This would take the form of the 2nd Chindit Expedition, a long-range penetration raid which would cut supplies to the Japanese in North Burma. Also, it was decided to mount an effort in the Arakan Peninsula in the hope that the vital base of Akyab could be captured.

The Japanese on the other hand had very aggressive plans for both India and China. In Burma, Lt. Gen.

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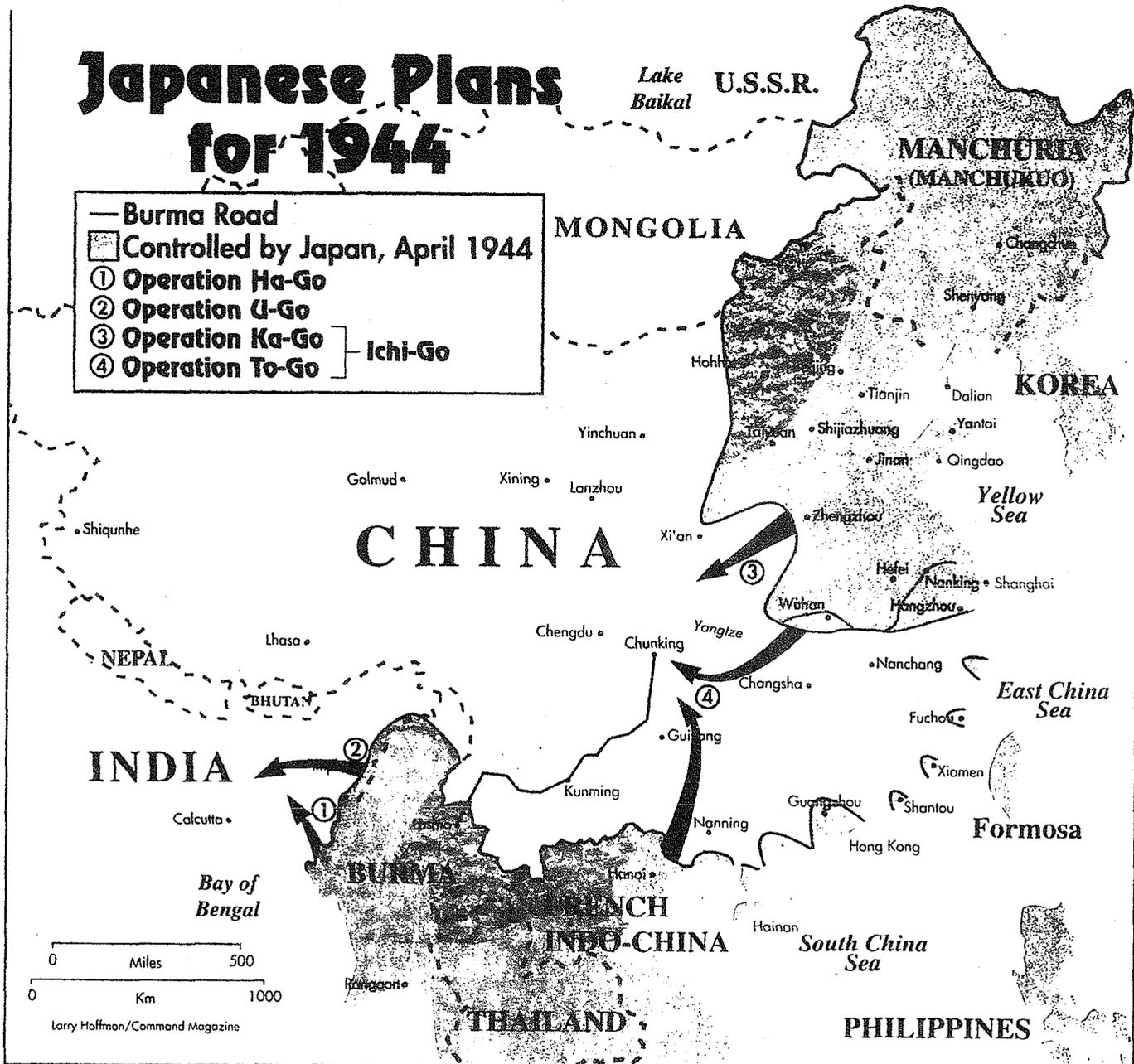
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Courtesy Command magazine Jan-Feb 1994/Larry Hoffman

Renya Mutaguchi's Fifteenth Army, consisting of three divisions which totaled 100,000 veteran combat troops when accompanied by the normal attached units, was to seize Kohima and Imphal and the surrounding Manipur plain. This would take away the staging area for any allied invasion of Burma and would also cut the supply line connecting Calcutta and the airfields of Assam from which all supplies to China were flown. (The Japanese identified this as Operation "U-Go.")

In China, the Japanese "Operations Ichi-Go" was planned to

push the Chinese out of their remaining positions north of the Yangtze River and clearing the segments of the Beijing-Wuhan Railroad in Hunan Province which was controlled by the Nationalist Chinese. This securing of their right flank was identified as "Ka-Go."

The second portion of "Ichi-Go" was Operation "To-Go" which had as its primary objective the capture of the 14th AF airfields south and west of the Japanese area of control in China. This would remove a potential launching pad for attacks on the

Homeland and coastal shipping. In addition, the Japanese had found that the presence of the U.S. air forces stiffened the resistance of the Chinese ground forces.

With the success of U-Go and Ichi-Go, China would be forced out of the war and many hundreds of thousands of Japanese troops would be available for use elsewhere and vast supplies of food in both India and China would be available for the starving Japanese armies. It was expected that once the Japanese were firmly implanted on the Manipur plain the discontented Indian people would

rise to their cause and drive out the Allies.

The Second Arakan Campaign

In the first quarter of 1944, three divisions of the British XV Corps moved into the Arakan in an effort to take Akyab. They were soon halted by the Japanese 55th Division which had fortified a mountain spur extending westward to the sea near Maungdaw, blocking the only possible overland route to Akyab. For nearly two months the British vainly hammered at this defensive position. The C-I-C of Burma Area Army, Lt. Gen. Shozo Kawabe, then sent the 54th Division into Arakan as reinforcement for the 55th.

From their successes against the Commonwealth forces in the Arakan in 1943, the Japanese felt they would be able to invade India from this direction as well and they identified this as Operation Ha-go. Using the same tactics that had worked a year earlier, the Japanese 55th Division counterattacked on February 4, while elements of the 54th circled through the jungles to the east, crossing the mountains behind the British flank and cut the lines of communications of both divisions, isolating them from one another and from many of their smaller units. General Slim, refusing to permit any withdrawal, rushed reinforcements and initiated emergency air drops to the surrounded forces.

In the period of February 13-25, the British counterattacked and the encircling Japanese now found themselves surrounded by deter-

mined British and Indian units. The two front-line British divisions re-established contact on February 24 and increased pressure on the trapped Japanese, most of whom were wiped out.

North Burma Campaign

While the British were engaged in the Arakan, the Chinese 38th and 22nd Divisions had advanced along the Ledo Road trace, across the Patkai Mountains and into northern Burma. When they met Japanese Major Gen. Shinichi Tanaka and his 22nd Division in the Hukawng Valley in January 1944 the movement became stalemated. Stilwell returned from New Delhi and was able to get things moving again.

The 5307 Composite Unit (Prov.), tagged by newspaper men at Shingbwiang with the sobriquet "Merrill's Marauders" after their commander, Brigadier Gen. Frank D. Merrill, now was called into action. With the two Chinese divisions pressing down the Hukawng Valley, the Marauders engaged in an enveloping maneuver which culminated in the March 3-7 Battle of Maingkwan and Walabum.

This battle resulted in a severe defeat and heavy losses for Tanaka and the 18th Division but not destruction. Able to escape encirclement, Tanaka established a line along a jungle ridge separating the Hukawng and Mogaung Valleys.

In the period from March 28 to April 1, one battalion of Merrill's Marauders and a Chinese regimental task force circled deep be-

hind the Japanese lines to take a blocking position behind the 18th Division at Shaduzup. Two of Tanaka's regiments were trapped but fought their way out through obscure trails after suffering severe losses and abandoning much equipment and ammunition. Tanaka, nevertheless, counterattacked and briefly isolated another of Merrill's battalions in the mountains southwest of Shaduzup (Battle of Walabum, March 29-April 8).

Second Chindit Expedition

While Commonwealth Forces were engaged in the Arakan and the two Chinese divisions were advancing from Ledo to the Hukawng Valley, preparations were being made from January to early March for the Chindits to return to Burma. Under British Brigadier Orde Wingate, five infantry brigades were organized as the 3rd Indian Division (so-named as a deception because no Indians were involved), also known as "Special Forces" but commonly called "Chindit." Two columns were to be flown via gliders to fields which would be constructed behind Japanese lines and a third column, numbering approximately 3,000 men were to march from Ledo, across mountains along a track parallel to that occupied by the Chinese and Marauders, to the railroad which connected Mandalay and Myitkyina. There they would support Stilwell by cutting supplies to the Japanese in north Burma.

These two columns were to be flown to airfields designated "Broadway" and "Chowringhee" and then supplied by air by USAF Col. Philip Cochran's 1st Air Commandos. The operation got under way March 5-11, as engineers and troops were first landed by gliders and then by transports to the fields prepared by the glider-borne troops. While a few columns spread out behind the Japanese lines to sever lines of communication and generally wreak havoc, the main body moved to Mawlu. By March 16 a strong road block was established, blocking the railroad and the supply line to Tanaka's forces opposing Stilwell. This defensive position was called White City after an amusement park in London and because of the many white parachutes employed by Cochran's Americans to supply the Chindits.

A terrible blow was suffered by



Brig. Gen. Frank D. Merrill (far left) watches troops cross into Burma on the Ledo Road (DA photograph)

the Chindits as their leader, Brig. Wingate, was killed in an air crash March 25. He was succeeded in command by Major Gen. W.D.A. Lentaigne.

Japanese Invasion of India

Gen. Mutaguchi refused to take seriously the news that a British force of undetermined size and unknown objective was being flown into areas behind his lines in north Burma. On March 6, his 15th Army crossed the Chindwin on a broad front. One division headed for Kohima, two for Imphal.

Although the British had been expecting the offensive, they had under-estimated the size of the Fourteenth Army; they were amazed by the speed and power of its advance. British outposts holding the Chin Hills around Tiddim and Fort White were cut off by the Japanese 33rd Division, but succeeded in breaking their way through Japanese roadblocks to reach Imphal, just before the arrival outside that city of the Japanese 15th Division, which unexpectedly was approaching over rugged mountain trails from the east (April 5).

The Japanese 31st Division had begun to invest Kohima the previous day. The British IV Corps, three divisions, was now almost completely isolated with the bulk of the corps in and around Imphal and a small garrison holding Kohima.

In the period April 15-April 20, Imphal and Kohima were under siege. Hastily assembled transport planes (borrowed from the Hump operation) began an airlift to maintain some 50,000 men in the IV Corps and the 40,000 civilian inhabitants of the two communities. At the same time, Gen. Slim assembled his XXXIII Corps at the railroad at Dimapur and pushing back Japanese patrols began a drive to relieve the dangerously pressed garrison of Kohima.

Bitter fighting flared continuously around both perimeters and several times Kohima was close to collapse. The margin was the air support from American and British fighter planes and medium bombers, which harassed the Japanese mercilessly.

In addition to moving to relieve Kohima, Slim also began flying in reinforcements from the Arakan as reinforcements for the IV Corps at Imphal. Once Kohima was relieved, the XXXIII Corps was able to turn

its attention to Imphal. Progress in that direction was painfully slow as the Japanese dug in and held with typical tenacity. The garrison at Imphal had been doubled by the troops being flown in, now totaled more than 100,000 men and the Commonwealth forces now outnumbered the besieging Japanese.

Amazingly, the Japanese held back violent assaults against their lines by both British corps. Basic to the Japanese strategy had been the seizure of supplies when they defeated the garrisons of Kohima and Imphal. With the accomplishment a failure, they were starving. Because of hunger, disease, and loss of troops, their fighting strength began to crumble. The IV and XXXIII Corps were able to hack their way through the remaining roadblocks and the siege of 88 days was broken on June 22.

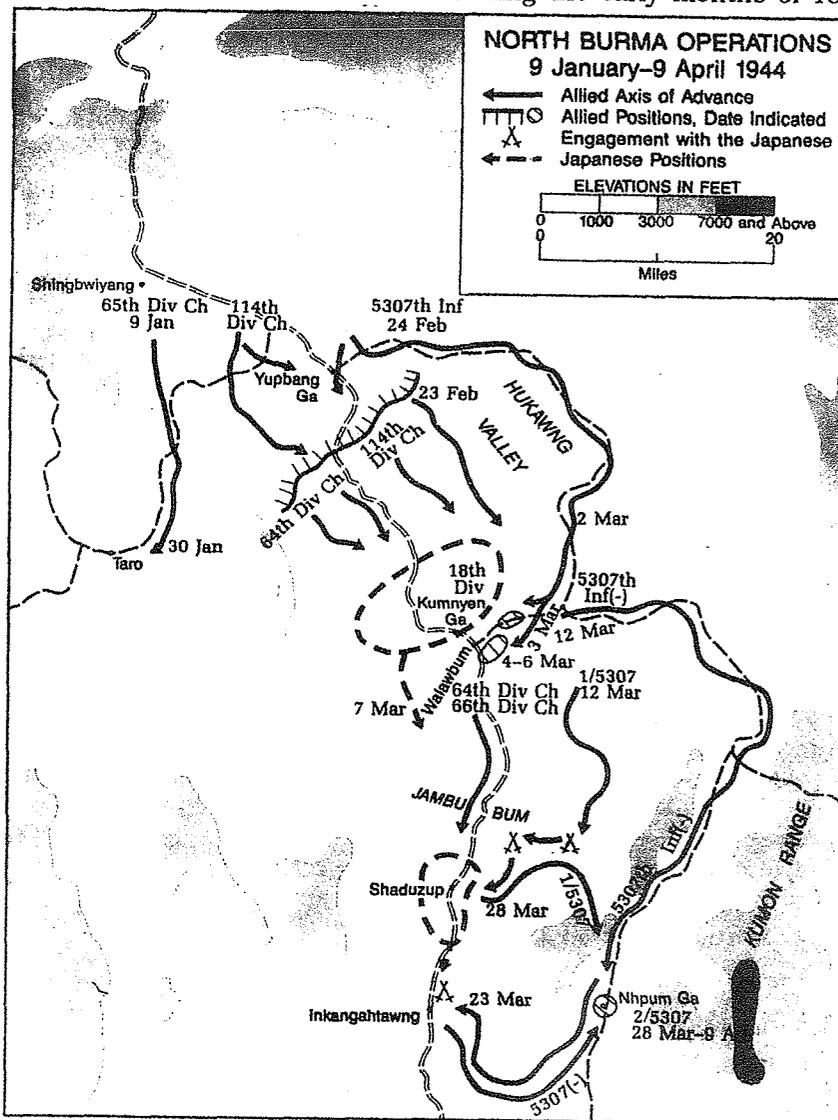
China

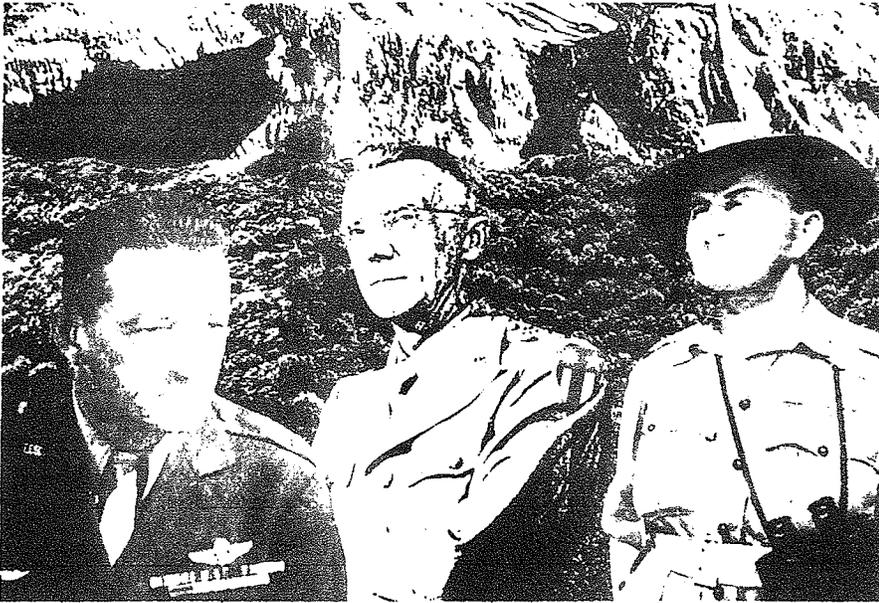
Both the Japanese and Allies

made plans and preparations for campaigns for 1944. The Japanese operations in China, under the title of "Ichi-Go" was timed for after "U-Go" was under way in India. The Japanese planners believed that the American Hump flights with supplies would be severely limited while their bases in Assam were being threatened. This assumption proved correct as we have just seen these planes being used to fly supplies to besieged Imphal and Kohima.

With no activity on the front controlled by the Chinese Communists, a condition tacit or negotiated not known, the Japanese felt that this was the time to recompense for the punishment they had been receiving from Chennault's Fourteenth Air Force.

An all-out effort would be mounted to capture the American airfields by ground offensive. During the early months of 1944





This picture was made up of four different black and white pictures; then tinted and painted in detail by Jim Fletcher. It was then photographed by "Joe Sulkowsky. The timing was fine for the SOUND-OFF three-parter on the 1944 War in CBI. You can identify all three, can't you?

Gen. Yasuji Okamura's Chinese Expeditionary Army, 820,000 strong, undertook Operation Ka-Go, clearing the Chinese armies from their remaining positions north of Yangtze River and from the segments they controlled of the Beijing-Wuhan Railroad.

Operation Ka-Go was launched in mid-April with spectacular results. The Chinese blocking the

railroad were easily cleaned out. The Japanese strongly pursued the retreating Chinese to the edge of Communist Territory. But, there was little more they could do since they had no supplies stockpiled to go further in this direction.

Operation To-Go had to wait until May until it could get started. The Japanese Eleventh Army, 250,000 strong, initiated a south-

westward drive from Hankow on Changsha on May 7. The Twenty-third Army, 50,000 strong, that same day thrust west from the Canton area (Guangzhou). Chinese resistance was spotty and on June 19, Changsha fell.

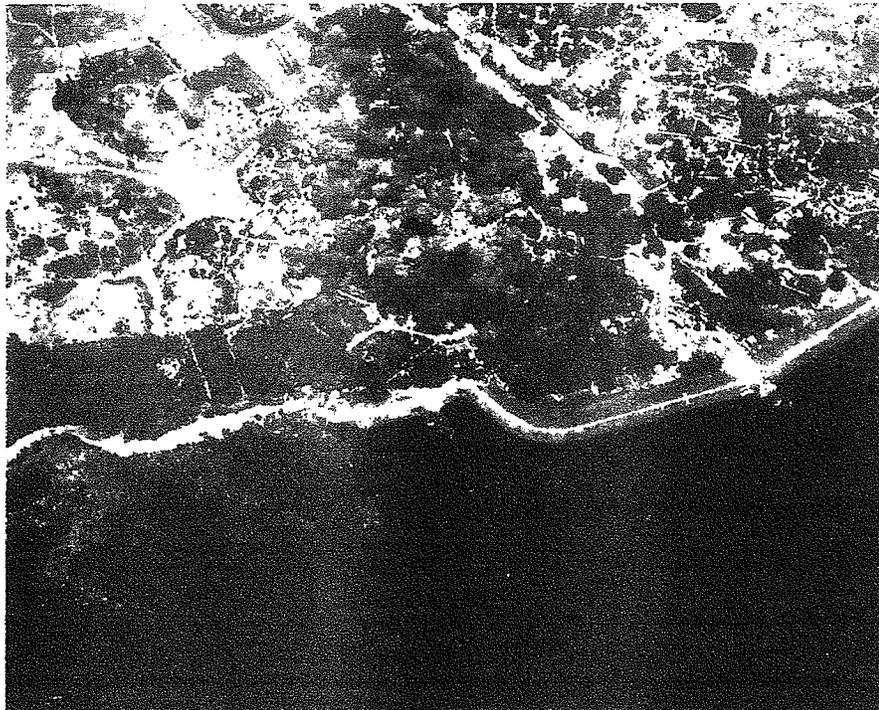
Allied Plans

While the Japanese planned Operation Ichi-Go for eastern China, the Allies did offensive planning themselves for Yunnan Province. Having witnessed the successes of Stilwell's Chinese-American forces in northwest Burma, Chiang Kai-shek reconsidered his earlier veto on an advance against northeast Burma from Yunnan.

He approved an offensive down the Burma Road by a small army of 72,000 men, the "Y-Force," commanded by marshal Wei Li-huang. The American Chinese Combat Command supported this army with liaison officers with the artillery and infantry forces as well as signal, medical and other support personnel.

These troops were not as well-trained, equipped or staffed as the Ramgarh-trained forces now in Burma and were not necessarily superior in force to the 15,000 men of the Japanese 56th Division opposing them. This force is defending a line marked by the Salween River which ran from north to south between the Chinese troops and the border of Burma.

This first segment has hit the high spots of the action on six fronts in Burma and China in the pre-monsoon period of 1944 in CBI. What has not been touched upon in this period are the strategic and tactical air operations. This and "CBI-1944" will be continued in the next issue.



The 492nd Bomb Squadron bombs Rangoon Dumps area.
U.S.A.F. Photo, property of Charles Serra.

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China-Burma-India - 1944

Part Two

The first part of SOUND-OFF's synopsis of the war in China-Burma-India in 1944 was carried in the Spring issue. In that treatment we left the Second Arakan Campaign with a British victory and the forces of the Northern Combat Area Command (two Chinese Divisions and Merrill's Marauders in the action so far) had driven the Japanese out of the Hukawng Valley and stood poised to strike for Myitkyina, hopefully before the onset of the monsoons.

The Chindits had completed their glider and transport landings behind the Japanese lines and had consolidated their position with road-blocks on the Mandalay-Myitkyina rail line at "White City." Their leader, Gen. Orde Wingate, had just been killed in an air crash and command had been assumed by Gen. W. D. A. Lentaigne.

The Japanese 15th Army, nearly 100,000 combat-tested troops, had invaded India, besieged Imphal and Kohima for 88 days, but had been unable to take these Commonwealth strongholds. They now were a defeated, diseased, starving, ineffectual force which was poised to retreat back into Burma.

In eastern China the Japanese had launched Ichi-Go, were meeting little resistance and had taken Changsha. In Yunnan, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek had given the go-ahead to the Y-Forces to retake the Japanese-held portion of the Province and meet with the X-Forces in Burma.

* * * * *

2nd Arakan Campaign

While the Commonwealth forces in the Arakan had been successful in largely wiping out the Japanese troops which had earlier encircled them, they had not broken the line which prevented them from moving to their goal of Akyab. In March and April, in extremely bitter fighting, the British XV Corps gradually fought its way through the Maungdaw position.

Having broken through, the corps was about to continue its advance to Akyab when it was forced to halt and send reinforce-

ments to the Imphal front (see last issue). No further activities took place in this area from May to December 1944 because of the monsoon season.

North Burma

After the victories of Shadazup and Walabum (April 8), Stilwell paused until convinced that the British would be successful in preventing the Japanese from severing his supply line in Assam. In an effort to capture the target city of Myitkyina before the arrival of the monsoons, the Marauders and two Chinese divisions were sent on

a secret march over the high, extremely rugged ridge between the Mogaung and Irrawaddy valleys to take Myitkyina.

The Marauders are now commanded by Lt. Col. Charles N. Hunter who succeeded the ill Gen. Merrill. The force has been reduced by casualties and disease to 1400 men, less than half of the number which departed Ledo. On May 17-18, the attack quickly gained control of the Myitkyina airfield. Supplies and reinforcements were rushed in by air while the field was still under Japanese small-arms fire.

Attempts by the exhausted and disease-ridden troops to seize the city of Myitkyina were repulsed and, with fresh Japanese reinforcements crossing from the east bank of the Irrawaddy, the fresh, air-transported Chinese reinforcements were also repulsed.

So, while the Japanese 15th Army is besieging Imphal and Kohima, the American-Chinese forces are trying to invest Myitkyina and the Chinese 22nd and 38th Divisions are moving down the Mogaung Valley where, the 22nd (with reinforcements from China) captured the important communications hub of Kamaing with a good, old-fashioned bayonet charge.

Soon after, the Chinese were joined by the 77th Brigade of Chindits and in a joint Sino-British operation captured the town of Mogaung on June 26. The Japanese defenders were operating on a "hold-to-death" order because their high command could not tolerate any Allied forces operating behind their lines while they were trying to take Imphal and Kohima.

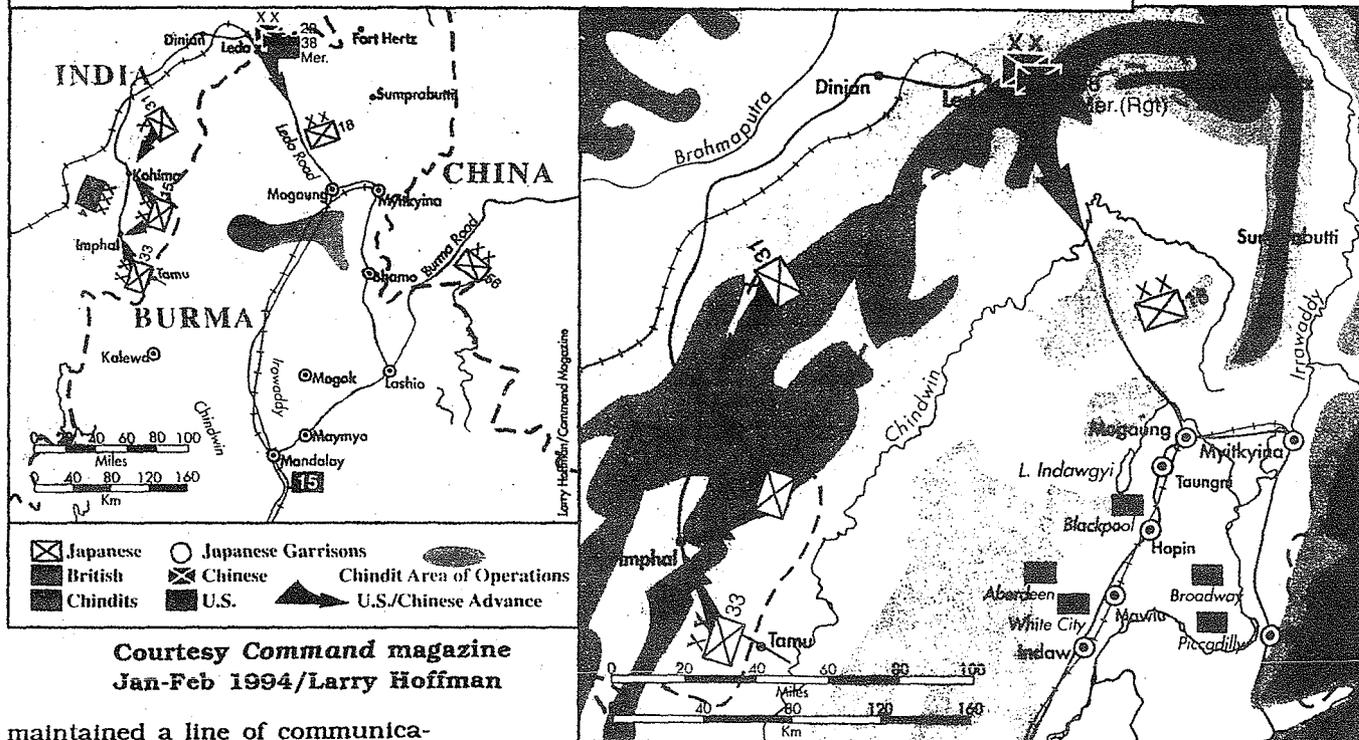
As an aside, both the Marauders and Chindits had long overstayed the ninety-day period which was the maximum it was believed a long range penetration force could be effective. Stilwell was afraid their withdrawal to hospitals and rest areas through the Chinese lines would cause serious damage to the morale of the Chinese troops who had started from Ledo earlier and had no rotation to anticipate. The morale and health problems need far more space than this synopsis permits but the books are available for your edification.

Despite the monsoon, the Allies continued to press against Myitkyina. The Japanese defenders



Generals Stilwell (left) and Merrill. (DA photograph)

The Situation in Northern Burma — March–August, 1944



Courtesy Command magazine
Jan-Feb 1994/Larry Hoffman

maintained a line of communications across the Irrawaddy and some reinforcements and supplies were available. The defense was the typical, valorous, bitter Japanese effort and, although seldom more than 3500 effectives at any time, the defenders held off the poorly organized Allied attackers. (Although only approximately 700 Japanese were present when the first Chinese and Marauders took the airfield, the first reinforcements flown in were primarily anti-aircraft and service units instead of infantry.)

When the siege ended August 3rd, 600 of the remaining defenders slipped across the Irrawaddy, 187 prisoners were taken and their commander, Gen. Mizukami, had committed hari-kari (seppuku).

With the capture of Myitkyina, the road from Ledo could be pushed forward and the airways to China had been considerably improved. With no hostile planes threatening them from the airfields of Myitkyina, the Hump pilots were no longer forced to fly over the higher ranges and were able to move safely carry heavier loads.

Second Chindit Expedition

In the first installment of this synopsis we left the Chindits at Mawlu in their blocking position called "White City." Their leader, Brig. Orde Wingate, had been killed in an air crash, and he had been

succeeded by Maj. Gen. W.D.A. Lentaigne.

Newly-arrived Japanese reinforcements began to concentrate against "White City" and Lentaigne decided to abandon the base. Now under Stilwell's command and a part of Northern Area Combat Command, he established a new base, "Blackpool" near Hopin, about midway between Mawlu and Mogaung. Blackpool was soon

attacked by strong Japanese forces and a violent battle raged.

The hard-pressed Chindits, close to exhaustion and having suffered heavy casualties, withdrew again, this time to the relative safety of the mountains farther west. The Chindits gathered in the vicinity of Indawgyi Lake and in June and July flying boats were used to evacuate the sick and wounded back to India. Meanwhile,

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the two brigades that had suffered the least continued to act in concert with Stilwell's forces.

As we have already seen, the 77th Brigade had acted with the Chinese in the capture of Mogaung. The 3rd West African Brigade of Chindits was being used by Stilwell to protect his right flank against possible counterattack up the Mandalay-Mogaung railway line. This Brigade was ordered to advance down the railroad from Mogaung to seize Pinbaw. They were immediately stopped by Japanese defensive positions on the railroad south of Mogaung.



During the Battle of Myitkyina, one American plane burns while another circles the field. The picture was made up and painted by Jim Fletcher and photographed by Joe Sulowsky.



Marauders rest during a break along a jungle trail. (DA Photo)

The British 36th Division, under Major Gen. Francis W. Festing was transferred to Stilwell's command on July 7 to replace the now exhausted Chindits.

The Railroad Corridor Campaign

Flown into Myitkyina, the 36th marched to Mogaung, where they relieved the 3rd West Africans. Festing's troops then fought down the long, sheltered corridor against determined Japanese resistance, during the height of the monsoon season, to take Pinbaw, their objective, on August 28.

Gen. Festing, ever-aggressive, then got Stilwell's permission to strike an additional 50 miles down the railroad, driving the Japanese out of a series of hastily prepared defensive positions.

Dupuy and Dupuy comment in their "Encyclopedia of Military History" that: "This 100-mile-long campaign was the first instance in modern military history of a large-scale offensive in Southeast Asia during the rain and mud of the monsoon season."

Japanese Invasion of India

In the first installment we saw the Japanese Fifteenth Army, a force of 100,000 men, cross the Chindwin and the intervening ranges to move into Assam and lay siege on the bases of Imphal and Kohima. After surrounding these bases for 88 days but being unable to invest them, the Fifteenth Army now was also overcome by other enemies.

The Japanese had never anticipated that the British would not retreat and abandon their sup-

plies. Those supplies were what the Japanese were counting on to provision the Fifteenth Army while it remained in India.

With this source of supplies denied and with the monsoons making large-scale supply operations impossible in the mountain jungles, they had no choice but to retreat. Slowly and stubbornly, they fell back to the Chindwin Valley, harassed from the air and by pursuing British troops. Amazingly, they never lost cohesion or combat effectiveness. The Fifteenth Army had been virtually ruined, however, by a combination of battle casualties, malaria and starvation. The Japanese lost 65,000 dead, less than half of whom were actual battle casualties. (Only 600 were taken prisoner.)

Gen. Slim's Commonwealth forces had suffered 16,700 casualties, amounting perhaps to 25% of its combat power.

Ichi-Go

In the first installment we found that the Japanese Eleventh Army, 250,000 strong, had occupied Changsha June 19. The first stiff Chinese resistance was at Hengyang, which fell after an eleven day siege on August 9. The 50,000 strong Twenty-third Army had also moved out of Canton. Chinese resistance began to collapse.

Methodically, despite the fierce aerial opposition of Chennault's flyers, seven of the US 14th Air Force's 12 airfields were captured and the Japanese movement then turned westward (November 15) to threaten Kunming and Chungking.

Operations in Yunnan

Many precious, pre-monsoon months had been lost for the Y-Forces in a move across the Salween River gorge against the remaining units of the Japanese 56th Division by the refusal of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to approve the attack. (Units of the 56th had been sent to assist in the defense of Myitkyina.)

The 56th was thinly stretched over a 100-mile-front with two strongly fortified locations in Lungling and Tengchung. The retreating Chinese had destroyed the two bridges across the Salween when the Japanese had advanced from Burma two years earlier. A deep, wide, swift, wild river now had to be ferried and the Chinese

started their crossings May 11.

Two columns were formed; the northern column moving aggressively to invest the walled city of Tengchung in early July. It penetrated the walls through breaches made by supporting fighter-bombers of the 14th AF and after a bitter house-by-house battle, the Chinese annihilated the defenders on September 15. This made available a passable road, via Fort Harrison, to Myitkyina, although the road was never used for military purposes.

The southern column had greater difficulty. They had surrounded Lungling less than a month after crossing the Salween but a June 16 counterattack drove the column back. Rallying, the Chinese finally halted the smaller pursuing force and slowly re-established a partial blockade of the city. After the loss of Tengchung, the Japanese again mounted another counterattack, driving the southern column of the Y-Forces almost back to the Salween before events in Burma forced them to abandon the pursuit.

Nevertheless, this relatively small Japanese force had prevented the Y-Forces from sweeping all before them and entering Burma along the Burma Road. A key salient for the Japanese was the fortified position on Sung Shan Mountain which overlooked the Burma Road bridge (Hui-tung) and actually controlled six miles of the Burma Road.

The southern column had bypassed Sung Shan to attack Lungling. With their failure to take Lungling, the Chinese decided they needed to be able to truck materiel across the rebuilt bridge and down the Road so Sung Shan must be taken. Chinese ineptness and Japanese tenacity prevailed for it took two months, several divisions, artillery barrages, aerial bombing, flame-thrower attacks, and finally, tunneling under the positions and blowing off the top of the mountain to dislodge the Japanese defenders. Of the 1,200 defenders, nine were captured and ten were believed to have escaped. The Chinese dead numbered 7,675.

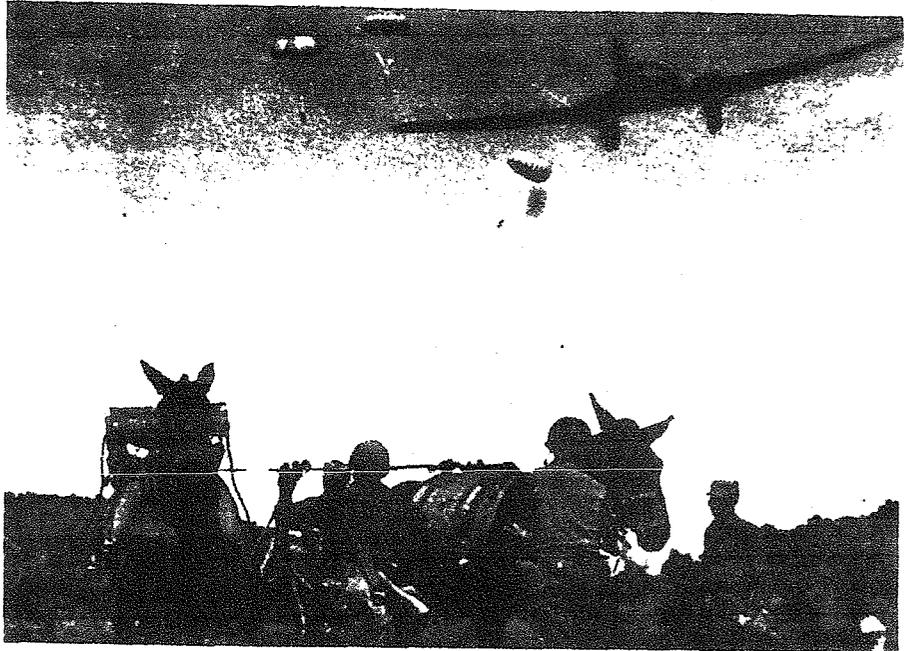
Air Operations

Prior to 1944, the Japanese enjoyed air superiority in the skies of both India and Burma and in China were at least in a position to contest. In the first quarter of 1943, the Japanese were able to con-

tinue long-range bombing raids against Calcutta and the Hump air bases in Assam. These raids were not very effective and didn't cause a great deal of damage but they harassed the Allies considerably. By the second quarter, as British and American combat air strength built up in India, the Japanese

were forced to abandon their raids over the mountains. The Allies then began to carry the war into Burma and soon gained air superiority over much of the country.

During the 1943 monsoon lull, the Japanese built up their anti-aircraft defenses and rebuilt their over-all air strength in Burma.



The only means of receiving food and ammunition for our ground troops in the Burma jungle was low flying cargo planes.

Jim Fletcher Photo



Members of the Kachin Raiders who risk their lives to obtain information vital to the battling builders of the Ledo Road that will supply China. In defensive position against the Japanese, if you look closely, you can see at least 14 men in the thick jungle. Picture taken by War Correspondent Frank Cancellara of Acme and the Washington Post.