

XX Bomber Command and the

58th Bombardment Wing (VH)

As plans for the use of the B-29s were being debated by allied leaders, the combat force which was to carry the air war to Japan proper slowly assumed form. By the time the 20th AF was activated on April 4, 1944, its striking force XX Bomber Command was being formed and sent overseas - its units were being strung out between Salina, Kansas and Chengtu. Planners had two wings in mind, the first to operate from Calcutta in Spring 1944, and the second in September. The JCS, on April 10th, diverted the latter, in anticipation, to the Mariannas. The MATTERHORN story, thereafter, becomes the story of the 58th Bomb Group (VH), whose first B-29 landed at Kharagpur only a few days before. At that time, the B-29 project, which had fostered the 58th was about a year old. Like other AF commands, the XXth had to complete its training overseas.

Arnold had given the B-29 program the highest priority for personnel.

By May 7th, Wolfe had evolved a tentative organization to utilize the first 150 planes. Of 452 combat crews to be trained, 261 would be assigned to this original wing (this meant double crews for each plane, plus reserves) and 190 would be used for replacements.

On June 1, 1943, the 58th Bomb Wing (VH) was activated at

Marietta Army Airfield. The Second AF provided four training fields near Salina, Kansas, close to Boeing's Wichita factory. The Wing Headquarters was transferred to Salina on September 15th. On November 27th, the XX Bomber Command was activated at Salina with Wolfe as commander. Col. Leonard F. Harman was appointed to command the 58th Wing.

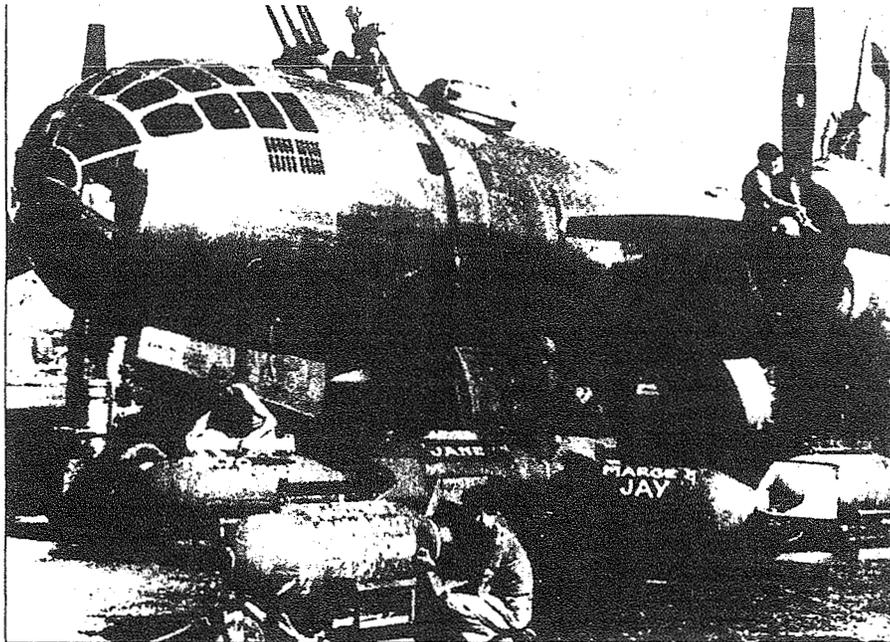
By January 13, 1944, the tables of organization for the combat units had finally been authorized. This would consist of a bomber command headquarters, a wing headquarters and four groups each containing four bombardment and four maintenance squadrons. Each crew was to consist of eleven; pilot-commander, co-pilot, two navigator-bombardiers, flight engineer (all officers), engine mechanic, electrical specialist, power-plant specialist, central fire control specialist (these last four trained in gunnery), radio and radar operators. The use of double crews with five officers each, gave the wing an unusually high percentage of officer personnel (3,045 officers with eight warrant officers) and 8,099 enlisted men. To make this force self-sufficient, there was need to provide service units for maintenance and housekeeping. These, along with aviation engineer units temporarily assigned for construction of the India airfields, brought XX Bomber Command on its arrival overseas to something over 20,000 officers and men.

Scheduled to leave for India on a two-month voyage as late as December 31, 1943, there was a shortage of 40% in authorized maintenance personnel, so training was necessary on shipboard and in India.

For flight echelons, the problem was more complex. Wolfe was authorized to procure 25 pilots and 25 navigators, all experienced. The main difficulty was a dearth of planes; the first B-29 delivered was in August 1943; by October 7th, flight characteristics of the B-29 had been approved and a number of key pilots had been checked out. First, they used 50 B-26s. When XX Bomber Command was established on November 27th, there was only one B-29 for each 12 crews; only 67 first pilots had been checked out. During January 1944, there was some improvement - practically all the ground schoolwork was completed and most of the flying was done in B-17s.

Various deals made it impossible to ship out at the expected time, so a team from Washington came to expedite their readiness to go overseas. This was carried out during the tail-end of a hard winter which was known locally as "the Kansas-Blitz," a fitting send-off for men headed for Bengal's heat. At the time of their belated departure for India, the combat units still had much to learn about their untried plane, but even so, they had an experience level higher than that of the average group shipping overseas. And, for reasons that lay outside the ken of XX Bomber Command, there would be little time for training in the CBI before their first mission.

(Extracted from the history of the AAF in WWII, by Joe Shupe; Part X (XX Bomber Command Missions Against Japan) will appear in a future edition of SOUND-OFF.)



A B-29 is bombed up for a mission to Japan.

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History of the Army Air Forces in the CBI

Part X

XX Bomber Command Against Japan

By Joseph B. Shupe

For their strategic bombing, the XX Bomber Command borrowed from the 8th Air Force many of its operational techniques. For nearly 10 months (June 6/44 to March 31/45), XX Bomber Command operated in the CBI, running 49 missions with a total of 3,058 sorties.

The MATTERHORN plan, as approved by the JCS, gave preference to five target systems - aircraft industry, coke and steel, shipping in harbors, urban areas and refineries. Based on the capabilities of the force for the first phase of operations (April to September), they calculated 750 sorties out of China bases. Of these, 576 were to be directed against coke ovens, 74 against shipping in harbors, and 100 against urban areas. The refinery at Palembang was to be hit by staging through Ceylon, and the aircraft industry to be saved for the second phase of operations.

The above estimate was grossly optimistic. Except for the attack on Palembang and small efforts against shipping and urban areas, it was steel - through coke ovens - which absorbed the main effort through September.

First Phase

This involved three stages: the mass flight to the CBI, the long weeks of hauling supplies over the Hump, and the first combat mission against Bangkok on June 5th, was more of a dress rehearsal.

From the fly-out to India and from the Hump, operations crews learned much about the B-29 and its R-3350 engine under varying climatic conditions. But, the transport job absorbed much of their energies so that crews joked about being a goddam trucking outfit. Because of serious gaps in their training program for which no amount of gas-trucking would substitute, Gen. Wolfe decided to have his first go at the enemy at night, with planes bombing individually. Gen. Arnold vetoed that plan and insisted that only a daylight precision attempt would provide practice needed for the type of operations contemplated.

By May 27, 1944, the command had piled up in the theater a total of 2,867 B-29 flying hours, mostly on transport service. This was an average of two hours apiece for the 240 crews on hand. Wolfe postponed an intended strike; instead bombardment runs were made at a range on Halliday Island.

The main target for the Bangkok mission was the Makasan railway shops. The 2,000-mile round trip and the Japanese defenses at Bangkok would give a real, but not too severe test. The take-off was set at 0545 so that the round trip could be made during daylight. Ninety-eight planes, from several airfields, were aloft within 63 minutes. At Chakulia, Major John B. Keller's B-29 crashed after take-off, killing all but one crewmember. Fourteen bombers aborted and a few failed to reach target. Approaching Bangkok, the planes climbed from 5,000 feet to the stipulated bombing heights of from 23,000 to 25,000 feet.

The first plane was over target at 1052, the last as 1232. The intervening time was not an orderly affair. Heavy overcast obscured the target and 48 of 77 planes bombing did so by radar and since few crews had training in radar bombing, "learning by doing" proved a hard way. Fortunately, enemy opposition was feeble; also enemy flak scored only a holed rudder. Fighter opposition was minimal; nine Japanese fighters made about a dozen of half-hearted passes, while others were out of range. We claimed one probable, and two enemy planes damaged.

The trip home was more hazardous because of the weather and mechanical troubles. Major B. G. Malone's B-29 ran out of gas 60 miles short of his goal which was Kunming. Ten of the crew parachuted safely and were fetched in by Captain Frank Mullen of Ground Aid Service, Kunming.

Another plane crashed at Dum Dum in a forced landing; others landed away from home - 12 at wrong B-29 bases; 30 at fields out-

side the command. Two planes ditched in the Bay of Bengal. One B-29 was headed for Chittagong when its engines sputtered out. Captain J. N. Sanders put the plane down into a smooth sea. A few minutes later, Spitfires of Air Sea Rescue were overhead and within 45 minutes motor launches picked up nine survivors from rafts and two crewmen were lost.

Another returning B-29 had a problem with its fuel system and had to ditch. The pilot and radio operator were killed; but ten men rode out the night in two rafts. Then the next noon, they picked up two others, still afloat (both badly wounded and badly chewed by crabs). One, Sgt. W. W. Wiseman, kept his buddy (unable to swim) alive through the night by his heroic action.

After another day and night of suffering, the ten men were washed ashore near the mouth of the Hooghly River. They were later picked up by an Air Rescue PBV. The recovery was credited to a home made survivor's vest, designed by Lt. Louis M. Jones, Squadron S-2, which was filled with essential supplies and drugs.

The Bangkok mission, nevertheless, was called an "operational success" despite the loss of five B-29s with 15 dead and two missing. This was more than offset by experience gained, even though bombing results were spotty.

Then, on June 6th, Wolfe received a message from Arnold saying the JCS wanted an attack on Japan proper to relieve pressure on East China where Chenault's bases were threatened and to assist an important operation in the Pacific. Wolfe replied that he could put 50 planes over the target by June 15th and 55 by the 20th. Arnold insisted on a minimum of 70 by June 15th. Wolfe, by austere measures to ration gas and push his maintenance crews, started to stage on June 13th.

Of 92 B-29s leaving India, 79 reached the forward bases in China with the loss of one plane and crew. With four B-29s already forward, this gave Wolfe a striking force of 83. Staging bases were at Hsinching, Kwanghan, Chung-Lai and Pengshan.

The mission was the Imperial Iron and Steel Works at Yawata. The choice, as well as the timing, was influenced by the assault of

Saipan. The secondary target was Laoyao harbor, outlet for much coking coal, manganese and phosphates.

The B-29s left Bengal battle-loaded, requiring only refueling in China. Each plane carried two tons of 500-pound bombs. The flight to and from Yawata was about 3,200 miles, so Washington ordered a night mission with planes bombing individually.

Seventy-five planes were dispatched; 68 got airborne. One crashed and four were forced back because of mechanical failures. The target, Yawata, was blacked out by haze and smoke so only 15 planes bombed visibly; 32 by radar. The enemy was alerted in advance. Only 16 enemy fighters were encountered and only three fired at our planes but scored no hits. Heavy flak caused but minor injury to six B-29s.

A total of 47 B-29s made it to Yawata. One crashed, near Kiangyo, killed its crew and six other planes jettisoned their bombs due to mechanical difficulties. Two others bombed the secondary target at Laoyao, and five bombed targets of opportunity. Two planes were listed missing but later tracked down by search parties. Both had crashed killing all aboard.

The only known combat loss was on the return flight; Capt. Robert Root's B-29 (engine trouble) landed at a friendly Chinese airfield (Neihsiang). He called for friendly fighter cover (in the clear); his message was intercepted by the enemy who came and left Root's plane a smoldering ruin. Two crewmembers were wounded; the rest were rescued by a B-29 from Hsinching. Another loss (not charged to the mission) crashed when going out to photograph bomb damage. In all, seven planes and 55 men were lost without much enemy activity.

Luckily, the enemy did not attack the Chengtu fields where the B-29s offered a fat target for several days because of lack of fuel to return to bases in India.

Photos of damage at Yawata was unimportant. Only one hit on sprawling shops far away from the coke ovens. The Japs reported that we bombed only hospitals and schools. The prime target, steel industry was unhurt, but indirect results were considerable - the first raid since Doolittle's brought home to the Japanese the realities of the war. One curious enemy

report was that one B-29 shot down resulted in the capture of six lieutenant colonels and a major - a lot of rank on one plane! The report gave the names, ranks and hometowns of the POWs, all accurate, but the error was that none of the alleged POWs had been on the mission. It took a lot of messages to the U.S. to reassure the next of kin.

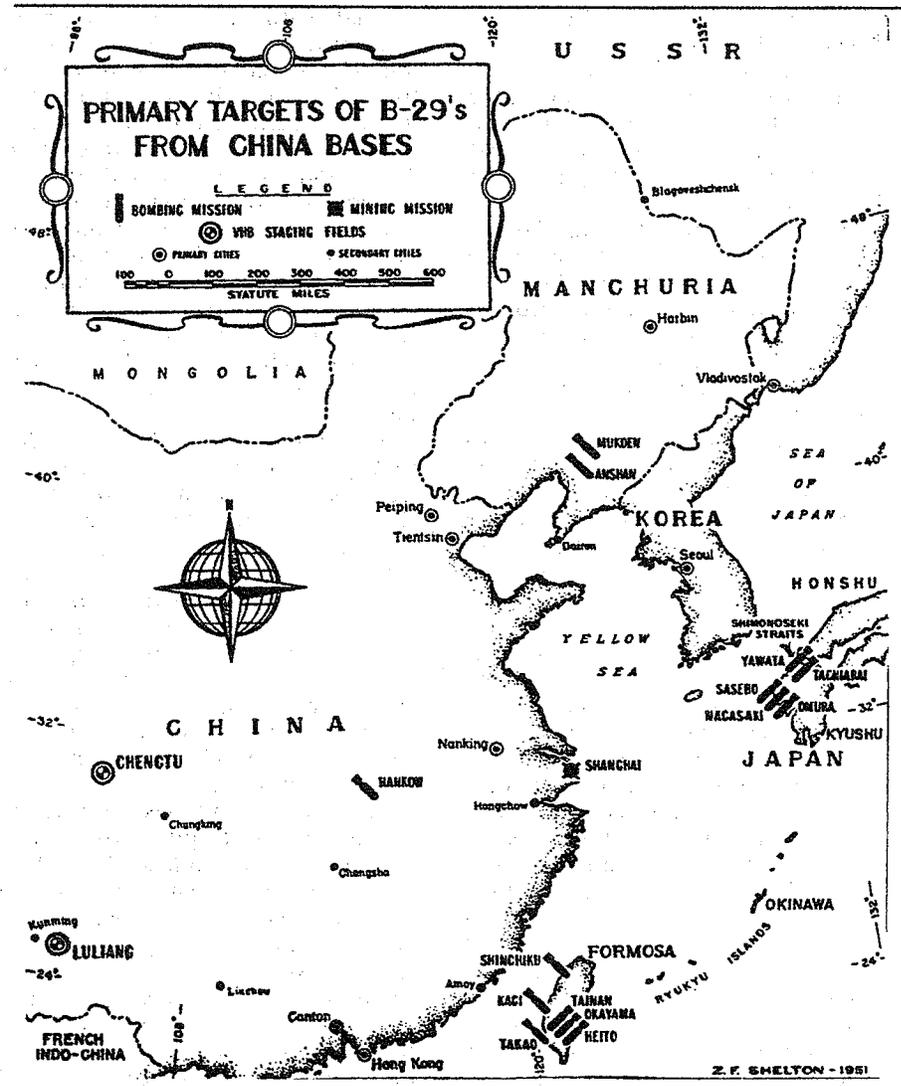
Unfortunately, in the U.S. the news of the Yawata raid had to compete with news of the Normandy Beachhead in the headlines.

Two days later, Gen. Arnold told Wolfe, despite low fuel supplies in China, to hit the enemy with increasing pressure. Immediate objectives - a major daylight attack on Anshan (near Mukden, Manchuria), small harassing raids on Japan, and a strike against refineries at Palembang from Ceylon. Wolfe told Arnold, sorry not enough fuel (only 5,000 gallons at

Chengtu) to hit Anshan, unless ATC could deliver 1500 tons in July.

Nevertheless, Arnold on June 27th told Wolfe to undertake a 15-plane raid over Japan between July 1-10th, and a minimum of 100 plane-raid against Anshan between July 20-30. Also, a 50-plane mission to Palembang as soon as Ceylon airfields were ready. Wolfe's operational plan of June 30 was to set up the Anshan mission for 50-60 B-29s, not 100. Arnold then ordered Wolfe back to the U.S. (presumably a step up - to command the Materiel Command). Arnold, some time later was quoted to say: "With all due respect to Wolfe, he did his best, and he did a grand job, but LeMay's operations make Wolfe's very amateurish." General Saunders was put in temporary command, vice Wolfe.

A small raid was made on July 7th to follow-up on the Yakota strike. The targets were: the Naval



docks and arsenal at Sasebo; the Akunour Engine Works at Nagasaki, the aircraft factory at Omura; Steel Works in the Yawata-Tobata area; and Laoyao Harbor. For this raid, 24 B-29s took off in China, one aborted, but 17 bombed some target. Two others had fuel transfer problems; they turned back to bomb Hankow. No estimate of damage could be made because of defective photos. All 17 got back to base safely; only one plane had minor flak damage.

On July 7th, Washington reiterated the demand for a 100-plane precision daylight attack on Anshan sometime in July. The ATC and B-29s hauled in sufficient fuel; but the shortage was in planes. Surmounting all problems, by the 29th Saunders had 106 planes in China bases. Only one plane crashed enroute from India (all crewmen were killed), and only four of the 111 had mechanical troubles; so 107 were available for the strike.

Primary target was the Showa Steel Works at Anshan, Manchuria, specifically its Coke Plant. Secondary target was Chinwangtao Harbor; tertiary target was Taku Harbor near Tientsin and as a last resort, the railroad yards at Chenghsien.

With rain threatening, D-Day was moved to the 29th; one group was unable to get off, but the other three groups got 72 planes up out of 79. One B-29 fell a few minutes later, killing eight crewmen. Mechanical problems prevented 11 bombers from reaching Anshan; seven, though, managed to bomb targets of opportunity, and four failed to bomb.

Sixty got over Anshan; clear skies, but the first wave hit a by-products plant which shrouded the area with smoke. Flak caused minor damage to a few B-29s and fighters scored only two important hits. Gunners claimed three probables and four damaged enemy planes. The only combat loss was Captain Robert T. Mills' B-29 over Chenghsien. Eight men (not including Mills) parachuted safely and with the help of Chinese guerrillas walked out reaching Chengtu a month later. Chinese also helped save another B-29 which made a forced landing at a CACW field near Ankang. On the ground five days, this plane was repaired and returned to its base at Chung-Lai.

The group, which was unable to take off with the rest, managed to

get its 24 planes up, nearly five hours behind schedule. The group headed for Taku where they bombed and three bombed Chenghsien.

The results, if not perfectly executed, were at least heartening. Ninety-six B-29s had been airborne, close to the 100 sorties mission directed. Eighty planes reached targeted areas, although other problems kept the weight of bombs dropped to 73% of that dispatched. Photos indicated a substantial amount of damage at Anshan. Damage at Taku and Chenghsien, too, seemed substantial. The loss of five B-29s seemed not exorbitant.

The 5th and 6th missions were, on the night of 10-11 August, at Palembang in Sumatra and Nagasaki in Kyushu, 3,000 miles apart.

The refinery, at Palembang, was estimated to produce 70% of Japan's aviation gasoline and 22% of its fuel oil. Arnold set D-Day by August 15th as a daylight precision attack of 112 aircraft. With only one departure field in Ceylon (provided by the British), this meant staging in waves, a very ticklish job. Because of this, 20th AF Headquarters relented and directed a dawn or dusk strike of at least 50 planes; this was later changed to a night radar attack. Part of the force was to mine a river where Palembang's exports were shipped. The secondary target was the refinery; the last resort target was a cement plant on Sumatra.

On August 9th, 56 B-29s landed in Ceylon; all took off (except one was slightly delayed). All but 12 of the planes failed for various reasons to reach the target, but 39 reached their goal. Crewmen later reported seeing explosions and fires. Photos taken were too poor to reveal results. Flak was reported and also for the first time ground to air rockets; also 37 enemy planes, some of which followed them back for 350 miles, but not one B-29 was hit.

Losses of our planes were not as bad as feared, despite a round trip of close to 4,000 miles. Several B-29s turned back without bombing due to threatened fuel shortages. Only one was lost at sea; one gunner was killed at the ditching, but the other crewmen were picked up.

Photo reconnaissance, on September 19th, revealed that only one small building and several

others were destroyed. This was a small return for the mission.

With an increase of 1,500 tons of tonnage to China, plans were made for more bombing of Japan. This was to combine nightly precision bombing and incendiary attacks on crowded Nagasaki. Saunders specifically proposed to fire-bomb Nagasaki, with a Shanghai area as a secondary target. The Hankow docks were chosen as a last resort target as a gesture to Chennault.

Staging for the Nagasaki attack - 33 B-29s left Bengal with 31 arriving at forward bases (one was lost enroute with two crewmen killed). Twenty-nine planes headed for the target; two returned early; three bombed targets of opportunity; the other 24 bombed Nagasaki. The city was blacked out so only eight planes bombed visually. A later intelligence report showed damage to be not too significant. Enemy resistance (flak and fighters) was weak; not a single B-29 was scratched. T/Sergeant H. C. Edwards, a gunner, knocked out a Jap fighter at 600 yards which was seen to crash. This was the 20th Air Force's first kill.

On the way home, Captain Stanley Brown's B-29 got lost and landed at Hwaning held by the Chinese near three enemy fields. Stuck in the mud, the Japs attacked and knocked out two engines. The 312th Wing sent out fighters and shot down three enemy planes and scored heavily on Jap fighters parked in a nearby field.

Parts and fuel were flown in to repair the damaged B-29. With heroic efforts, the Chinese by building a short runway and sinking 4,500 railroad ties, this enabled the plane with only four crewmen aboard to return to base at Chung Lai to complete a most extraordinary job of salvage.

With a worsening of the tactical situation, Chennault asked for 300 sorties against Hankow and Wuchong, but was overruled by Arnold who favored more bombing of Japan.

On D-Day, August 20, 98 B-29s gathered at the forward base with the loss of one enroute from India. They took off for Yawata, but one plane smashed up blocking the runway, delaying the others. Five planes aborted, with 75 B-29s airborne for the day mission and 13 for the night.

On the daylight run, 61 planes

dropped 96 tons of bombs on the target area. Six others hit secondary targets (Laoyao and Kaifeng). B-29 gunners claimed 17 kills; 13 probables; and 12 damaged enemy planes.

That night, ten more B-29s got over Yawata and dropped an additional 15 tons of bombs without harm from the enemy. Strike photos showed hits on two coke ovens (Japs claimed damage was not serious). Our losses, though, were heavy; besides the four B-29s lost over Yawata, ten were lost to other causes and 95 airmen were dead or missing. Later, it was learned, one crew bailed out over Soviet territory, and by the end of 1944, two others (including the much-publicized General H. H. Arnold). Soviets, at peace with Japan, interned the crews but later allowed the flyers to escape via Tehran; they kept the B-29s which were to serve as models for a Red Air Force bomber TU (70).

On August 29, 1944, Major General Curtis E. LeMay assumed command of the XX Bomber Command.

On September 8th, 115 B-29s gathered in the forward area and 109 got off the runways. Of these, 95 reached Anshan; dropped 106.5 tons of bombs on the Showa Works; three bombed other installations; five hit the Sinsiang Railroad Yards; and three others struck at various targets of opportunity. Enemy flak and fighters were no problem. Total losses were four (a crack-up on the way; two forced landings in China; one destroyed on the ground by enemy planes; one partly salvaged; and one plane missing but the crew later walked out with loss of one man). In return, B-29 crews claimed eight kills, nine probables and ten enemy planes damaged.

Photo results of the second Anshan raid showed considerable damage to the Showa plant. Its most immediate effect was to cause the Japs to counter-attack forward B-29 bases. The 312th Fighter Group seemed capable of preventing this in daylight, but as yet no night fighter capabilities were available.

Shortly after the Anshan attack, enemy bombers hit Hsinching; storage areas and parked B-29s were hit causing minor damage to the one B-29 and to a C-46. No contacts were made by our fighters.

General LeMay was on the Anshan II attack. Upon return, he felt certain changes were needed insofar as attacking formations were concerned; and more daylight raids. Another change was his doctrine of "synchronous bombing" in which both the bombardier and the radar operator would control the plane during the crucial seconds before releasing bombs.

Precision bombing required more training so more B-29 crews were to be released from Hump transport duty. A school for that purpose was set up at Dudhkundi.

LeMay decided his next attack would be between September 25-

27. Washington decided the target - another attack on Anshan. On D-Day, September 16, LeMay had 117 B-29s at the forward bases, plus one photo plane. One hundred nine planes got airborne. Unfortunately, bad weather moved in so only 88 planes got over Anshan; but only 73 bombed the Showa Works, and all by radar. Later, photos indicated no damage inflicted. Two planes bombed Darien; four Sinsiang and nine bombed targets of opportunity. Enemy planes were active but ineffective, but no B-29s were lost from any cause; this was some solace for the ineffective mission.



TOP: The B-29 named for test pilot Eddie Allen and assigned to the Fortieth Bomb Group of the Twentieth Bomber Command, shown nearing its target during the November 3, 1944, bombing raid against Rangoon, Burma.

USAF photo

BOTTOM: Boeing B-29 Superfortresses of the 462nd Bomb Group, Twentieth Bomber Command, returning to home base after bombing enemy installations at Rangoon, Burma, on November 3, 1944.

USAF photo



Even so, the enemy got even; they hit the Chengtu area and damaged five B-29s, two seriously. This set a pattern for later Jap raids after B-29 missions. To challenge them, P-61s of the 426th Night Fighter Squadron came to Chengtu on October 6, but not until mid-November did the 843d AAA Battalion arrive. Jap attacks continued until December 19th. In ten raids, only 43 enemy planes were counted and the damage done was more annoying than serious.

The 3d raid on Anshan marked the end of the first phase of MATTERHORN operations. A reorganization was needed to tie in with the Pacific command. Only two missions were successful (Anshan I and II) with no important dislocation of the Jap steel industry. It was a learning experience.

Reorganization

From the start, the B-29 project has been experimental (a great combat testing laboratory, according to one historian). So, LeMay, in October, made organizational changes to streamline his command. This was based on his experience in Europe. Each of his fields was to house a bombardment group, a service group, a weather detachment and an AACS detachment.

Meanwhile, command headquarters was changed to combine the 58th Wing Headquarters with the headquarters of the XX Bomber Command. This eliminated 2560 people from the previous set-up. Saunders was injured

on an administrative flight and evacuated to the U.S.; Hansell left the Washington Headquarters to take command of the XXI Bomber Command in Saipan. He was succeeded by B/General Lauris Norstad as Chief of Staff of the 20th Air Force.

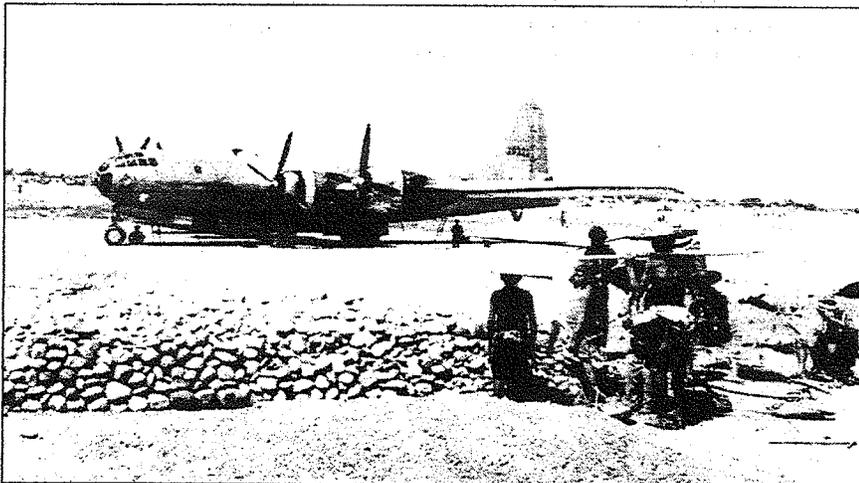
On November 2nd, LeMay reported to Washington that his organization was now practically complete. He said that 75 officers and 484 men were surplus and can be reassigned. He, then, asked for about 900 men for air transport duty to support strikes out of China.

Unable to get enough supplies into China for its monthly quota of missions posed a problem for the XX Bomber Command. It was also required to support some operations in the Pacific. Also, the 14th Air Force needed more help because of its threatened East China bases. The command did not want to continue to run their own air transport line into China.

By mid-October 1944, LeMay agreed to a Washington plan to have the ATC take over his C-46 squadrons and all of its C-109s, provided he could get enough tonnage for planned missions. Thus, the theory of a self supporting XX Bomber Command had to be changed by the harsh realities of CBI.

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



In April 1944, USAAF B-29s began to arrive at advanced bases in China's Chengtu Valley. The bases had been literally constructed by hand by thousands of Chinese laborers, some of whom are pictured resting beside a mound of stones used in the tedious task of leveling the airstrips.

USAF photo

- LETTERS -

Thanks, Tom

Hi Tom Miller,

This is just a note of thanks for the hard work you put in on the Bulletin Board. I know that is has been useful to more than one of my friends. Awhile back you carried a request for information about a tragic B-25 crash in which one of the crew was trapped and finally, mercifully, killed. Your correspondent had written at the request of a friend whose son had died in the crash and who, over all these years, wondered if he had been the one shot by the CO of the base. Out of my own curiosity I had written a request for information about the crash that was published in the *Ex-CBI Roundup*. You are certainly right about CBI vets - they are unique. I was overwhelmed with information and reprints of magazine articles - even copies of court records! The engineering officer of the base, who took an active part in the rescue efforts, but who was unable to bring himself to shoot the trapped GI, wrote me a personal note.

Anyway, because of the request for information that you posted, the family, at long last, knows that their son was not shot but died of smoke inhalation trapped in a mass of wires and cables in the waist. I was told that they were grateful, but I felt that you deserve credit for putting out the request for information.

I should also like to say that your "public service" announcements are certainly valuable.

Appreciatively,
Nick Pareis

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History of the Army Air Force In the CBI

Part XI

Delay in Burma, Disaster in China

When the B-29's launched their offensive against Japan midway in 1944, the military situation in the CBI was anything but hopeful. In April the Japanese started an offensive in NE China which by summer threatened all our airfields east of Kunming. In May, Stilwell's offensive in Burma was stalled just short of Myitkyina. Though the allied forces seized the nearby airfield, the town itself remained under enemy control and was taken only after a three-month siege.

Personality problems continued to be a problem. Stilwell wanted to save China by reopening a land route through Burma. He developed contempt for Chiang and was suspicious of Chennault who had the full confidence of Chiang. The latter had direct contact with the White House. Chennault had no faith in the Ledo Road; he had long argued that he be furnished all available supplies for the build-up of the 14th Air Force. This, he felt,

would strengthen our Pacific forces by striking the enemy on the China coast and in the South China Sea.

In a letter to General Marshall, Stilwell contended that the Jap army must be fought on the mainland of Asia, and that the original mission of the CBI was to increase the effectiveness of the Chinese army but "only when we get on a realistic basis" with Chiang. He asked Marshall that if he had a different view that perhaps it would be proper "to cut our effort here" to support the ATC and "whatever air force you consider suitable for China." Marshall replied that the Combined Chiefs of Staff had said that CBI's primary mission was to support the Pacific forces; and that Japan could be defeated without a major campaign on the mainland of Asia. In the future, Stilwell was told to devote his chief effort "to the Hump lift and its security; to develop the maximum effectiveness of the 14th Air Force consistent with maxi-

imum support of all other activities in China."

This change in mission had little effect on immediate operations. To help the air route, Myitkyina had to be cleared. So, this was Stilwell's job for most of the summer of 1944.

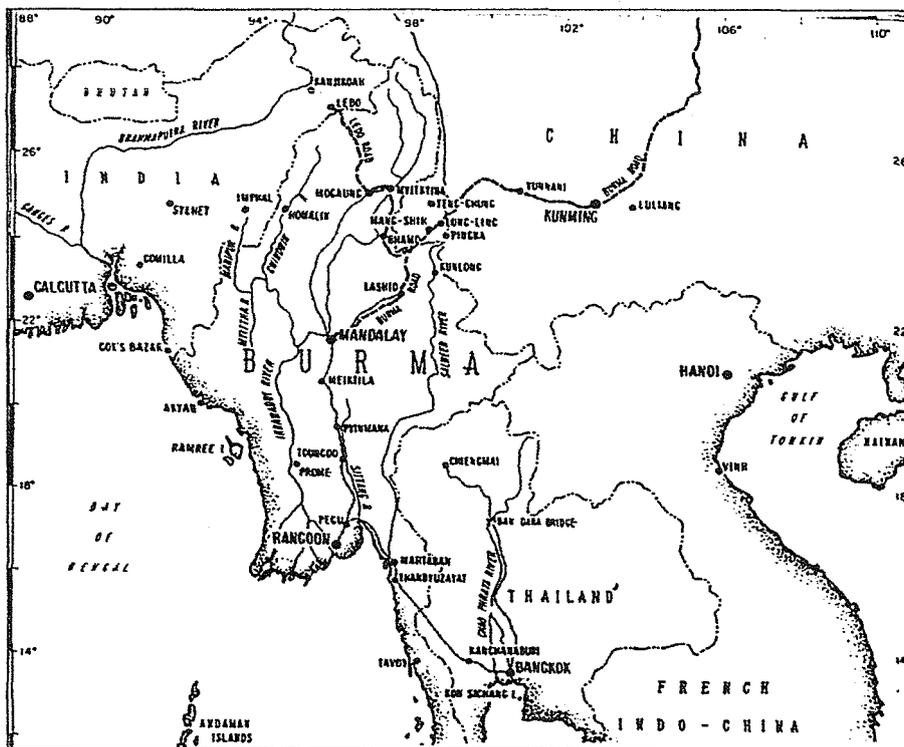
Reorganization of EAC

The Eastern Air Command was organized under General Stratemeyer in December 1943 as an integrated command combining the 10th Air Force and the RAF Bengal Command. The complex situation in CBI presented problems in practice, so by summer of 1944, it was agreed that reorganization was needed.

Conflicting interests of the British, Americans and the Chinese doubted the wisdom of an integrated air command. The British were interested mainly in the liberation of Singapore, and we were chiefly concerned with the support of China. Despite many differences of opinion, EAC endured as long as the Japanese remained in Burma, and it was not until Rangoon was occupied in May 1945, that integration was altogether abandoned. Meanwhile in June 1944, adjustments were made within EAC which slightly departed from the original concept.

The changes resulted in Admiral Mountbatten moving his headquarters to Kandy on Ceylon; Stratemeyer transferred EAC to Hastings Mill near Calcutta. On April 28, 1944, the EAC staff agreed that the Troop Carrier Command (TCC) should be disbanded and its units placed under the Third TAF. It was also agreed that both the Strategic Air Force and the Photographic Reconnaissance Force should continue.

On June 20th, EAC was reorganized into six components: Strategic Air Force, Third Tactical Air Force, Photo Reconnaissance Force, 10th AF 293 Wing, and an air task force. The Strategic Air Force, under Air Commander Sir Francis Mellersh, remained an integrated organization composed of the 7th Bomb Group (H) and the RAF 231 Bomb Group. The Photo Reconnaissance Force was composed of 171 Wing and the 87th Photo. Group. Third TAF kept the RAF 221 and 224 Groups, the 12th Bomb Group (M) and the 3d Combat Cargo Group. The 10th Air Force, under M. Gen. Howard C. Davidson, had the 80th Fighter



Group, the 311th Fighter-Bomber Group, the 443d Troop Carrier Group and the 11th Combat Cargo Squadron. An air task force consisted of Air Commando Unit No. 1, and the 3d Combat Cargo Gp.

Davidson then established his 10th AF Headquarters in the Upper Assam Valley, a place favorable to his new responsibilities, which included defense of the Assam-Myitkyina area, protection of the air route in China, and air support and supply for allied forces still at Myitkyina. This did nothing, however, to simplify an already complex command structure.

The Siege of Myitkyina

On May 17, 1944 Stilwell seemed to have Myitkyina within his grasp. But, the enemy had time to dig in and Stilwell faced the necessity for a long siege. Reinforcements were flown in and by June the Allied lines tightened around the strongly entrenched enemy. On the north, two battalions of Merrill's Marauders held one flank. The 209th and 236th Combat Engineer Battalions, recently flown in, were to the south. The Chinese 30th Division was in the west and the Chinese 50th Division was on the south. A small column of the Wingate Force had worked its way to the north to complete the encirclement of Myitkyina by taking up positions east of the city. By June 14th, there were up to 12,000 troops besteging Myitkyina, but their morale was low.

The engineers had no experience in combat, and some lacked the most fundamental training in self-defense. The Marauders, greatly depleted by casualties and sickness, were especially depressed. Not until the fourth week of June could Stilwell report that his forces had "snapped into it." During the next four critical weeks, the Japs might have counterattacked if they had not believed the Allied forces numbered 30,000 men or more.

Stilwell's fear was that the air supply might fail to meet his needs. Happily his fears were ill founded. The techniques of air supply had been well developed. The main responsibility for air supply had fallen to the Troop Carrier Command. By late July as many as 551 planes had landed and taken off from the west strip on a single day and the supplies delivered more than met the need through the preceding two months.

The fact that the deliveries were made through the rainy season to a strip only 50 feet wide and 4,200 feet long greatly added to the significance of this achievement.

Equally important was the close-in ground support by the 10th Air Force. The infantry had artillery support of only two 155-mm, two 105-mm and eight 75-mm howitzers, thus the 10th Air Force had to supply a big deficiency in supporting firepower.

Fortunately when Stilwell first began his advance, it was expected that heavy demands would be made on the 10th Air Force for close-in ground support. At the time (autumn of 1943), the AAF fighter units in Assam consisted of the 80th Fighter Group (P-40s) and the 311th Fighter-Bomber Group (two P-51 squadrons and one squadron of A-36s). The first move was to establish an air-ground support radio team in the 1st Tactical Communication Squadron to receive requests for support, and to convey accepted requirements to air headquarters together with the necessary information for the execution of the mission. Also, liaison had to be established with G-2 and G-3 to keep air headquarters apprised of the precise positions of friendly and hostile troops.

In the advance toward Myitkyina, it had been agreed that troops asking close support would lay out a panel at a specified distance from the target and pointing toward it. This was difficult to do in the deep jungle, so smoke shells were mortared on the target according to a

predevised code. A third device was the use of coordinates superimposed on special photographs of enemy held areas. To assure coverage of target areas, a detachment of the 9th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron and the 17th Photo Interpretation Detachment were at the air headquarters. The highest efficiency in close support was achieved by combining the use of coordinates with ground-controlled radio guidance.

The system worked. The most elaborately hidden enemy position were hunted and destroyed. Errors became increasingly few and good cooperation grew up between ground and air personnel.

By May 1944, airstrips had been built along the Hukawng and Mogaung valleys that were suitable for use by fighters and transports. The 88th Fighter Squadron was based at Shingbwiyang, the 528th Fighter Sqdn at Tinghawk Sakan along with a flight from the 20th Tactical Reconnaissance Sqdn. In Assam, there were two more squadrons of P-40s and P-51s.

As the siege of Myitkyina began, it was decided to have a flight of eight P-40s on the newly captured west strip to support operations. These planes (later raised to 12) operated from a base that was probably closer to enemy lines than ever before in the history of aerial warfare, for enemy machine guns were only 1,000 yards away and fired on the aircraft at every take-off and landing. Although the first line of the hostile emplacements was soon destroyed by dive-



A 75-mm. Pack howitzer supports GALAHAD's siege operations at Myitkyina. (DA photograph)

bombing attacks, there were other machine guns, a short distance to the rear which was a constant threat. A detachment of three P-40s of the 20th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron was also ordered to Myitkyina along with a small field laboratory to produce prints of target areas.

In the weeks that followed, the planes on the Myitkyina strip carried through most of the missions against the town and its defenses. The pilots became so proficient that they were called upon even when friendly troops were within 75 yards of the target. Other planes were called in from nearby fields for less exacting performances; these planes depended on radio direction for locating the target.

The intensity of the supporting effort at Myitkyina was in itself remarkable. There were days when pilots flew as many as six missions each, and it was not unusual for a flight of four planes to do 20 sorties within 24 hours. In all, the fighters ran a total of 2,515 sorties between May 17th (when the siege began) and August 3 when the city fell. That was an average of 33 sorties per day, and it was accomplished during the rainy monsoon, when there were many hours in which weather prohibited flying. That meant that a disproportionate burden of close support had to be carried by aircraft based on the strip. All too frequently, clearing weather gave way to rain and low

ceilings before fighters from Tinghawk Sakan, though only 20 minutes away, could reach the targets.

The fighter pilots developed their own technique of dive-bombing to keep the bomb strike within 15 yards of the target. Using a 45° angle of dive, usually begun at 5,000 feet with a pull-out at 1,000 feet, and sighting between the second and third wing guns; they could detect the slightest deviation. Mostly the bombs were 250 pounders, fused for one tenth of a second delay to permit penetration and narrow the area of explosion.

As Stilwell's troops moved closer to the center of Myitkyina, the enemy was edged toward the Irrawaddy River. On the other side, the British were advancing. On August 1st, it was evident the end was near. By August 3rd, the city was completely occupied but many of the enemy had escaped.

At the same time, the Allies seized Mogaung. After its capture, the British 36th Division drove the enemy south along the Burma Highway. The 10th Air Force was to supply them while they were on the move. To solve the problem, the 10th Air Force installed a communications network within each brigade. As at Myitkyina, the liaison between air and ground was so close that the Air Force was able to hit a pinpoint target within 40 minutes after the request was received using aircraft based 50 miles to the rear.

After the August victories, troops from Myitkyina joined those advancing south of Mogaung. A week later, Taungni fell and allied forces established a defense along the Taungni-Kazu line. Stilwell felt his troops needed a rest after August 10th. There, his army stayed until the offensive resumed in mid-October 1944. His decision was a disappointment to Chiang who was persuaded against his will to commit his Yunnan Force of 50,000 (commanded by BGen. Frank Dorn).

There was every reason to believe that Myitkyina would easily fall and that contact would be made between the X Force advancing from Ledo and the Y Force advancing from the Salween Valley. The 14th Air Force was expected to play a similar role in the battle which the 10th Air Force performed around Myitkyina and Mogaung. It so happened that the campaign got underway at the same time when the need became critical for these same forces in East China.

In preparing for the campaign, a forward echelon of the 69th Composite Wing was set up on May 2nd with Major A. B. Black in command. The 25th Fighter Squadron, and the 22nd Bomb Squadron (M) was to support the Chinese armies. Also, the 308th Bomb Group (B-24s) was to bomb Lung-ling, Teng-chung, Wanting and Lashio, and the 27th TC Squadron from EAC was attached on May 21st to the 69th Wing to supply the Chinese armies.

It was expected that the Y Force alone advancing against strong enemy positions east of the Salween could accomplish nothing. The objective was to take Teng-chung, Lung-ling, Mang-shih, and Pingka in a pincer movement with the X Force, but the wisdom of committing the Y Force was made questionable by the long siege at Myitkyina. The Y Force had little to show for its efforts except dead and wounded personnel. That's why Chiang felt that his worst fears were justified when victory was held up from May 17th to August 3rd and he became very impatient with Stilwell when he halted his advance on August 10th a short distance from Mogaung. The Chinese felt that the Salween campaign was a waste from the time Stilwell failed to take Myitkyina until October 15th when the advance on Bhamo was resumed.



Kickers prepare to drop supplies in North Burma.

The Y Force did not score until September 14th when Teng-chung fell.

**Loss of the
Kaifeng-Hanoi Axis
(East China Bases)**

Long before Myitkyina fell, the enemy was well advanced toward conquering the Hengyang-Kweilin-Nanning corridor. The Japs were content until 1944 to occupy only those parts of the Chinese coast south of Shanghai to protect their sea communications. They now intended to join through East China the northern and southern parts of their empire. They also hoped to overrun Allied airfields which posed a threat to their sea communications just when U.S. Pacific Forces menaced them from the east. Moreover, it was hoped to knock China out of the war before our forces in the Pacific begin an assault on Japan.

The Jap offensive started April 17, 1944 at Kaifen down the railway leading to the Yangtze. Contact was made with the Jap forces at Hankow a month later. Then, on May 26th, they drove southward toward Changsha on the Hsiang River. This forced the Chinese armies to fight on widely scattered fronts. Two of our trained divisions, the 30th and 50th, were committed to the siege of Myitkyina; on May 11th the Yunnan Force (87th and 88th Divisions) launched their own offensive into Burma across the Salween to support Stilwell's forces.

In East China, Marshal Hsueh Yo tried to stem the enemy drive with a force of about 150,000 men (none American trained), and sadly deficient in modern equipment. The enemy committed about 250,000 men, although not more than 60,000 were front line combat troops. They were better equipped and trained, and were supported by fighters and dive-bombers, apparently from Formosa.

Chinese hopes depended upon the assistance Chennault could provide. He had early in April ordered to forward bases four fighter squadrons and one medium bombardment squadron of the Chinese-American Composite Wing (CACW).

Although delays in the completion of this movement left the enemy free of interference in the initial stage of their advance, B-24s of the 308th Group and P-51s of the 23rd Fighter Group moved up to the Chengtu bases in time to strike

the first blows on April 25th. By May, the CACW units were also in the fight.

Chennault had now gotten his long cherished hope for an air force of 500 planes of which 400 were in operational condition. Instead of the envisioned air offensive against enemy communications along the China coast, however, he found himself committed to defensive operations under most stringent logistical limitations. The 25th Fighter Squadron, the 22nd Bombardier Squadron and the 27th TC Squadron were tied down by combat along the Salween, and much of their strength was committed to defend the B-29 bases in Chengtu. The 33rd and 81st Fighter Groups were still in the process of going northward to their new bases; this was not completed until July.

For support of the hard-pressed Chinese Army, Chennault had the P-51s of the 23rd Fighter Group, the B-24s of the 308th Bomb Group, the B-25s of the 11th and 491st Bomb Squadrons, the aircraft of the 118th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, and, as elements of the CACW, the 5th Fighter Group (P-40s) and the 3rd and 4th Bomb Squadrons (B-25s). These units were organized as a special task force under Col. Clinton D. Vincent, who was also given operational control of the 322nd TC Squadron and the 21st Photo Squadron.

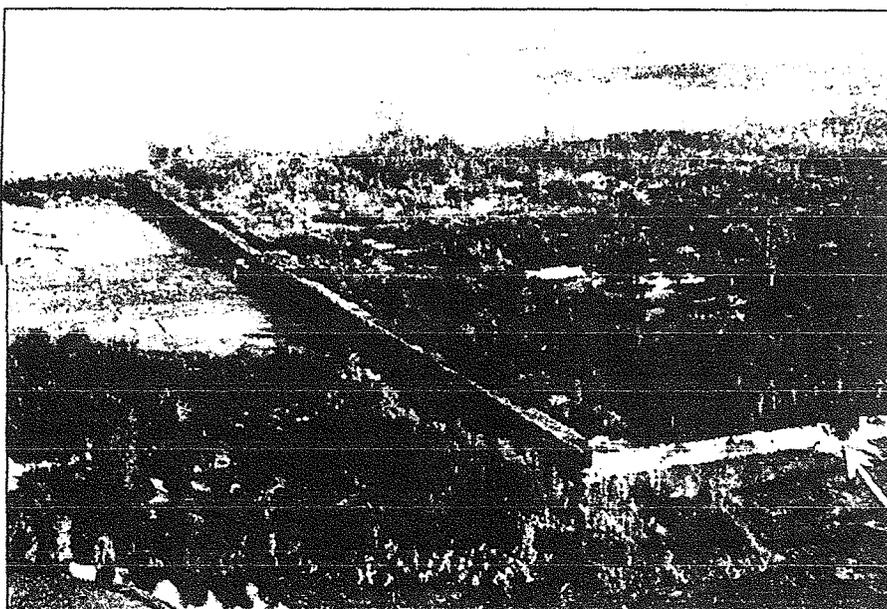
Although not all of Vincent's units were in top shape to fight, a

shortage of supply rather than of planes proved to be the critical factor. A reduction of Hump tonnage was at fault. As a result, fuel reserves were low. Chennault had vigorously protested the priority given to the B-29s, and warned Stilwell on March 31st, that the fate of China itself might be at stake.

Stilwell advised cutting back operations to build up reserves. On May 15th, Chennault complained that intelligence had been unduly cautious and conservative on the Kaifeng offensive.

With the renewal of the enemy offensive on May 26th, Chiang asked Stilwell to return to Chungking for a conference; he replied that the situation at the front made the trip impossible and that Chiang could radio "what is wanted," or he could "send a representative to see me." On Chennault's advice, Chiang, on May 31st, appealed to President Roosevelt requesting that the reserve fuel, aircraft and parts at Chengtu be turned over to the 14th Air Force, and that further assistance be provided for the strengthening of the Chinese Air Force. He also asked for increase of the firepower of Chinese ground forces. In the War Department, there was some inclination to discount Chiang's estimate of the situation.

Stilwell later recognized the danger, at least in part, and he diverted for the use of the 14th Air Force, 1,500 tons of ATC Hump lift previously allotted to the B-29s for



The Walled City of Teng-chung after an air attack that breached the wall (arrow).

the month of June. Chiang, again, summoned Stilwell to Chungking; this time on June 5th Stilwell went; this served to eliminate some of the difficulties occasioned by wide separation, and for the remainder of the year, the 14th Air Force received relatively high tonnage.

This increase in tonnage did not solve Chennault's problem, for the extra fuel was not given in time to meet the crisis. In the absence of a previously stocked reserve in East China, Vincent's forces continued to operate under serious limitations.

Vincent's only hope of stopping the enemy's advance was that effective air support might fortify the morale of the Chinese army. The Japs moved southward on a broad front, bypassed fixed defensive positions and dispersed; that cut down the effect of Vincent's attacks. Enemy planes rarely accepted combat, but continued to find opportunity to assist the advancing enemy.

Hankow itself, the vital center of the enemy offensive was an inviting target. The 14th Air Force leaders hoped that Gen. Wolfe's B-29s might be used against the city. General Arnold, though, refused a diversion of B-29's mission. Vincent's bombers struck repeatedly at targets in Hankow during early June but fuel restrictions limited those attacks. Before the month of June was gone, the shortage of fuel forced Vincent temporarily to withdraw his bombers even from short-range attacks on the enemy front.

Almost from the first, the burden fell chiefly on the fighter planes. During the first two weeks of June, the P-40s based at Hengyang averaged three or four sorties per plane each day, a rate of operation destructive to both planes and pilots. Vincent sent his planes out day after day to strafe and bomb the Jap columns. This did not help much to accomplish any major halt in the enemy advance, as the Chinese infantry did not capitalize on this help. Even the bad weather, which came early in June, did not reduce the pace of air operations.

The Mustangs had to level-bomb from under hundred-foot ceilings because they could not get enough altitude under the soup to dive-bomb. Mechanics worked all night to repair damage, replace worn parts and have enough planes for a dawn take-off. As fast as the planes returned from combat, armorers hung new loads of demolition and frag bombs under the wings and reloaded the guns. On many a mission, pilots barely had time to brief and report the mission before they were back on a new mission.

These efforts were indeed heroic, but pitifully inadequate to halt the offensive. Changsha fell on June 18th and within another ten days after encircling Liuyang, the enemy was approaching Hengyang.

Hengyang was of vital importance, for it controlled the main lines of communication from Hankow to Nanning. If the city fell, the southern half of the Hankow-Hanoi

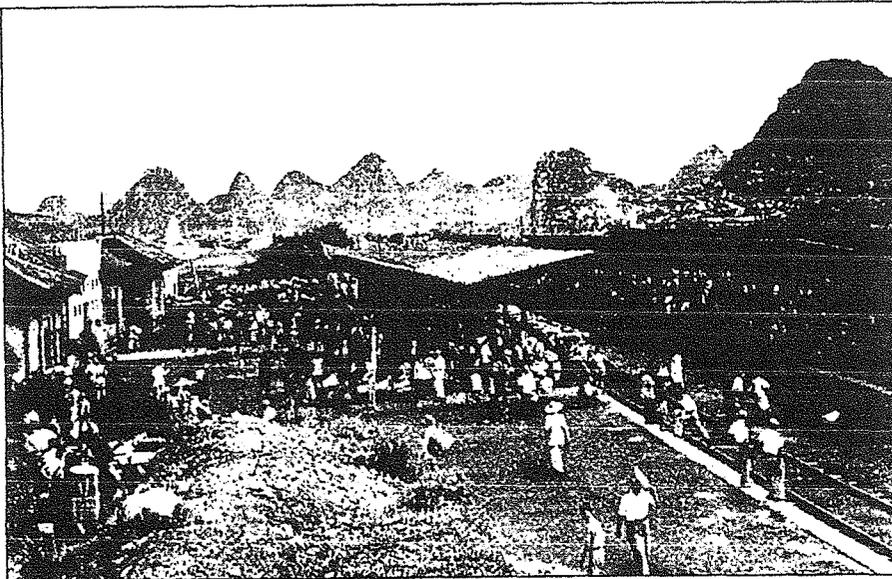
axis was almost certainly doomed. General Fon Hsien-chien was determined to hold out. He had the advantage of terrain which forced the Japs to follow a narrow avenue of approach.

Hengyang held for 49 days. During the first week of July the 14th Air Force performed superbly. There were indications that the enemy was preparing to withdraw. But, again, a fuel problem with no resupply. On July 12th, the 491st Bomb Squadron, fearful of capture, withdrew and temporarily left Liuchow for the Salween. Air operations were drastically cut, and between July 17-24, the 68th Composite Wing was practically grounded.

On August 8th, Hengyang fell. An enemy drive from Canton turned west toward Liuchow, and the northern force late in August headed down the railway through Ling-ling to Kweilin. It soon became evident that in only a few weeks East China would be completely isolated. Already, the air warning system had collected speed, with the result that the strips at Kweilin and Liuchow were exposed.

Kweilin was so endangered by the fall of Hengyang, that the next job for Vincent was the defense of Liuchow. If his prospect was hopeless, it was no fault of his air task force. From May 26 through August 1st, its planes had flown 5,287 sorties, over 4,000 of them by fighter aircraft. A total of 1,164 tons of bombs had been dropped, and more than a million rounds of ammunition had been expended, chiefly in strafing attacks. Out of an over-all strength of about 150 aircraft, 43 had been lost but only three were credited to enemy pilots. It was estimated that the task force cost the enemy 595 trucks, 14 bridges, some 13,000 casualties, 114 aircraft and more than 1,000 small boats.

It was ironical that the increased Hump tonnage in June did not help until sometime in August when the battle was in its last stage. Nevertheless, Vincent increased his activity. In September, his pilots logged 1,469 sorties. It was all in vain. Ling-ling fell on September 4th, and on September 26th the enemy overran Tachuk. By October 11th, the Kweilin airstrip faced envelopment; it was taken on November 10th and Liuchow on the 11th. Only Nanning to the south remained in our hands,



Evacuation of Kweilin. Refugees at the Kweilin railroad station wait for transportation.

but obviously doomed. Japan had all but completed the axial corridor between Manchuria and French Indo-China.

Chennault was determined, nevertheless, with more supplies coming to the front, to keep part of the 14th Air Force in the East China provinces. He placed his other units along a line of airfields, which paralleled the corridor Sian to Posh. The 321st Fighter Wing was in the north; the CACW was between Laohokow and Chinkiang; and Vincent's 68th Wing, commanded now by Col. Clayton Claasen, occupied new fields between Kunming and the axis, following the Hengyang-Liuchow line. Thus, the 14th Air Force was ready to continue the fight, and in some ways was stronger than ever before.

General Stilwell, however, could find nothing favorable in the situation. In his final report to the Chief of Staff in Washington covering the period May 21 to October 24, 1944, he spoke about the loss of the China airfields, built at the cost of two billion Chinese dollars and intended to help our strategy in the Pacific. All was gone, he said, two and one-half years of our effort had been destroyed, and our air power was pushed back against the base at Kunming. He attributed the disaster to the rejection of his advice at the allied conference at TRIDENT in the spring of 1943.

Stilwell's Recall

The loss of airfields in East China aggravated the relationship between Chiang and Stilwell. His command of CBI, in addition to its diplomatic aspects was primarily one of an air theater, and his departure thereafter affected the organization and operations of the AAF units in CBI.

The misunderstanding between Chiang and Stilwell was deep rooted, but the relationship between the two had become especially critical in the spring of 1944. Stilwell had long enjoyed control of lend-lease materials intended for China; this probably gave affront to Chiang. In December 1943, at the allied conference at Tehran, the promises made to Chiang at Cairo were revoked, and he found confirmation of his suspicion that the British were unwilling to fight for anything other than their own interests in CBI.

Later, our embassy at Chungking suggested with backing from CBI headquarters, that an Ameri-

can mission might be sent to Chinese communists in Yen-an. In December 1943, Chiang refused to commit his Yunnan Force to Burma unless the British supported an amphibious operation in Burma. As a result, Stilwell was determined to force Chiang's hand. Stilwell then increased tonnage for April to the 14th Air Force. Chennault was the immediate beneficiary of this decision; as a result Chiang agreed to commit the Yunnan Force to the Salween offensive in May. This offensive made no progress and meanwhile the enemy started their offensive in East China.

When the Vice President (Henry Wallace) visited Chungking on June 20, 1944, he found a danger-

ous situation. Chiang asked for a personal representative to act as liaison between the President and himself. Chiang bluntly stated that Stilwell no longer enjoyed his confidence. Chennault had Chiang's full confidence and that he should be left in his present military position. Since Stilwell, at the time, could not abandon his responsibilities to Burma, the appointment of another commander for China seemed to Wallace a logical move. Such a commander might be Stilwell's deputy in China with some right to deal directly with the White House. Lt. General Albert C. Wedemeyer had been recommended to Wallace for such a post.

The JCS, on July 4, 1944, urged the President to get Chiang's



agreement to place all Chinese forces under Stilwell's command and that he be promoted to full general. Two days later, the President told Chiang to do this and Chiang agreed, but political considerations would require some delay in accomplishing this. Stilwell felt this as another example of his old tendency to procrastinate.

Meantime, and in harmony with Wallace's recommendations of late June, the President sent BGen. Patrick Hurley as his personal representative to Chiang. On September 6th, Hurley told the President that Chiang had agreed that Stilwell would get to command Chinese armies.

Then, on September 15th, Chiang and Stilwell met; he told Stilwell he would withdraw his Yunnan Force to the east bank of the Salween unless Stilwell got his forces moving from below Myitkyina toward Bhamo within a week. Stilwell, then, reported to Marshall that his troops were not ready to renew the offensive. To settle this,

Stilwell and Hurley made two propositions to Chiang as a basis of settlement; first, that Stilwell be sent to the Chinese communists with proposals to accept the authority of Chiang and Stilwell's command of their forces in return for a promise to equip five divisions; and second, that Chiang be given control of Chinese lend-lease materials, on the understanding that the "X and Y forces," those committed in Burma at Ledo and the Salween, enjoy first priority.

Hurley then went to Chiang to discuss the above and he was promptly told that Stilwell would have to go. Two days later, on September 25th, Hurley got a message from Chiang to send to the President formally requesting Stilwell's recall. Chiang agreed to the choice of an American general as commander of the Chinese-American forces fighting against Japan in China. But, he asked for Stilwell's relief from duty in CBI.

On October 5, 1944, the President urged Chiang to reconsider.

In a second message (October 9th) to the President (via Hurley), Chiang charged that Stilwell had sacrificed East China for the sake of his campaign in Burma.

On October 13th, Hurley advised Roosevelt "that if you sustain Stilwell in this controversy, you will lose Chiang Kai-shek and possibly China with him." The President replied on the next day with a request that Chiang's choice of a successor. Eisenhower had been his first choice, since this was out of the question; the list was Patch, Wedemeyer, and Krueger, with preference of Wedemeyer because of age.

On October 18th, Stilwell received orders to proceed to India at once and thence to Washington. That same day Roosevelt informed Chiang of Stilwell's recall emphatically protest his own, rather than Stilwell's, responsibility for the decision to concentrate on opening the Ledo Road. Also, that Wedemeyer had been selected as the Generalissimo's chief of staff for the China Theater.

CBI was now to be divided into the China Theater, with Wedemeyer in command, and the India-Burma Theater with Lt. General Daniel I. Sultan in command. Chiang was requested to place under Sultan the Chinese forces committed to the Ledo offensive. Wedemeyer took command on October 31st. The change pleased Mountbatten who had his own difficulties with Stilwell.

The EAC, too, underwent a final reorganization in December 1944. Stratemyer inactivated the Third TAF and reorganized EAC as follows:

The 10th AF to protect the ATC and NCAC.

Strategic Air Force (AAF and RAF) - Strategic offensives.

The 221st Group (RAF) - Support of 14th Army.

The 224th Group (RAF) - Support of 15th Corps.

Combat Cargo Task Force (AAF and RAF) - Air support for 14th Army.

Photo Reconnaissance Force (AAF and RAF) - Photo missions for EAC.

Wing Headquarters (Baigachi RAF) - Defense of Calcutta area and VHR bases.

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



Smiling for the birdie at the July meeting of Rice Paddy Basha in Marysville, CA are L-R: PBC Don Salisbury, Joe Dantonio, Nat'l Commander Mel McMullen and PBC Harry Mall. McMullen Photo



Standing with newly-installed Basha Commander Eldon L. Snyder at the monthly Rose City Basha meeting are past commanders Jim Hill, Bill Burghardt, Commander Snyder, Joe Mascari and Ron Alpaugh. In front is Past Commander Stan Wald. Rose City Basha was chartered, April 1977.

History of the Army Air Forces In CBI

Part XII

EXIT MATTERHORN (B-29s Leave CBI)

XX BOMBER COMMAND flew its 9th mission, an attack against Anshan's coke ovens, on September 26, 1944, its 10th against Okayama on Formosa on October 14th. With an increase of supplies, LeMay quickened the tempo of the attack; never again such a long pause (18 days). New objectives were chosen and with closer integration with other commands.

As the Marianas-based B-29s raided Honshu in Japan, the strategic importance of the Chengtu fields waned - indeed, by September, Arnold was seriously considering transfer of the XX Bomber Command to a more profitable site. Because of the desperate tactical situation in China, the B-29s pulled out of its Chengtu fields in the last week of January 1945, but it continued to fly missions from India until March 30, 1945. Soon afterwards, the combat groups and their supporting units moved to the Marianas and XX Bomber Command Headquarters moved out to Okinawa only to be dissolved and absorbed by the 8th Air Force in July.

During its last six months in

CBI, the command's efforts were against tactical objectives in China and SE Asia. Strikes were made in support of General MacArthur's campaign in the Philippines; attacks in behalf of Mountbatten's operations; also seven attacks against aircraft industry targets. All this came just as XX Bomber Command was reaching its peak of performance.

Thus, the history of XX Bomber Command, after September 1944, divides itself into three phases (China-based missions, of India-based missions, and of withdrawal to the Pacific).

Missions from China

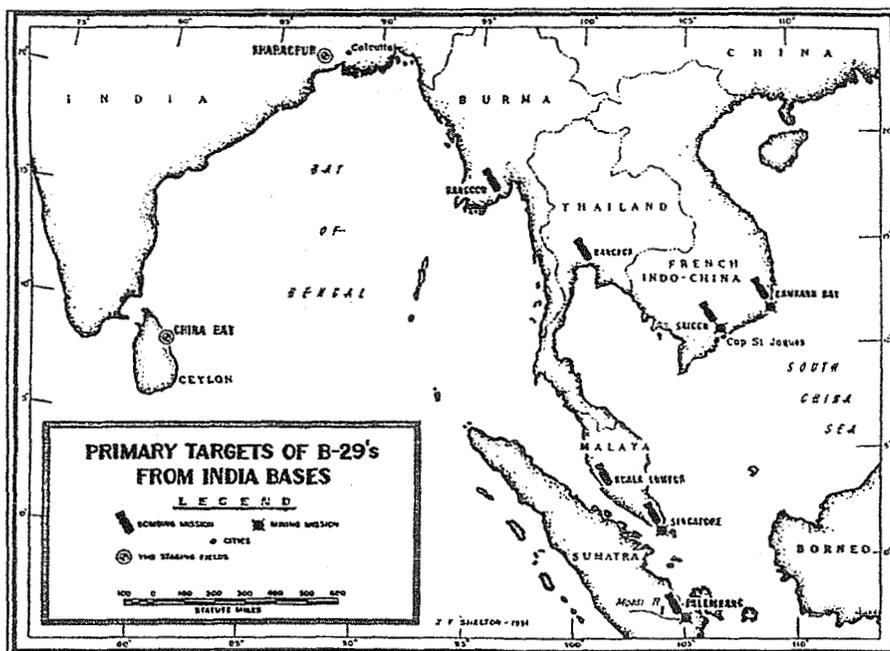
In October 1944 and January 1945, the XX Bomber Command flew a number of missions to support operations in the Pacific. This tied in closely with its new target system from the coke toward the aircraft industry. These aircraft plants were in Omura, Mukden, Watanabe, and Okayama. They were not the most important enemy airplane plants but were the best within range of the B-29s at Chengtu.

It was a Pacific plan which rele-

gated the CBI to a secondary role. As stated by a JCS committee: "Having decided on our strategy in the Pacific and accepted it as the basic and primary strategy against Japan, our Asiatic strategy should be planned primarily on the basis of how it can most promptly and effectively be integrated with Pacific strategy." The approach to the Philippines and Formosa could be aided by China-based planes. Chennault's working out of East China fields and the B-29s from Chengtu. This was the logic behind a JCS message of May 2nd directing Stilwell to commit XX Bomber Command to support the Mindanao operation in November and the Formosa assault in February. This was also behind a July decision to augment ATC's Hump potential. LeMay then figured his October potential of 221 MATTERHORN and 125 Pacific sorties to be increased to 425 in January provided he had fuel in China. Stilwell guaranteed tonnage to support the 250 October sorties. The B-29 missions were to be coordinated with strikes by Admiral Mitscher's carriers, scheduled to attack Okinawa on October 10th and Formosa on the 12th and 13th. With bad weather, though, the strike dates were postponed to the 14th and 16th.

The B-29s began moving up to Chengtu on October 9th and five days later 130 of them got off without incident. The 104 bombers dropped about 650 tons on Okayama (Formosa). Weather was good and so was the bombing. The few fighters sighted offered no resistance and flak was meager. Five B-29s bombed Swatow; two bombed the Jap-held airfield at Hengyang and six bombed targets of opportunity. A dozen planes made emergency landings at friendly fields in China, one crashed near Changteh, with only one crewman missing. This was a cheap price to pay for very severe damage done to Okayama.

LeMay's B-29s returned to hit Okayama (Formosa) on October 16th and a nearby airfield at Heito. Next day, they returned to bomb an air depot near Tainan. Damage assessment made by the B-29s and the U.S. Navy attacks from the Pacific revealed many hangars, assembly plants, an air depot, and many buildings were destroyed. In addition, about 116 aircraft were hit on the ground. This was the



first case of major damage suffered by enemy land installations in Japan proper as a result of B-29 attacks.

On October 11th, the first priority for the B-29s from Chengtu was to disrupt the enemy's aircraft industry. The primary target was the Omura Aircraft Factory on Kyushu.

LeMay got 103 B-29s to Chengtu and on a predawn take-off, on October 25th, for an attack over Omura, but only 78 managed to take off. Over target, 59 planes dropped 156 tons of bombs and incendiaries while 11 more were hitting various other targets. Enemy opposition was moderate, but one B-29 crashed after most of its crew had jumped safely into China. One plane, with crew, was listed as an operational loss. Much damage was inflicted to an aluminum fabrication plant.

Out of India, XX Bomber Command ran a training mission against Rangoon and a spectacular attack two days later at Singapore, on November 5th. LeMay then returned to the bombing of Omura with a 120 sorties strike on November 12th and 110 sorties about the 17th. Bad weather affected these missions, so some planes were diverted to bombing Nanking and five B-29s were lost from operational causes.

On November 21st, 109 B-29s took off; one crashed off the runway, killing all but one crewman. Then, again, bad weather caused many deviations to the planned target. Of the wanderers, 13 bombed the secondary target at Shanghai and ten hit various other targets. Among those, five B-29s made navigational errors. At the primary target, Omura, 61 planes bombed by radar. Strike photos showed no additional damage to the factory area. Enemy fighters, though, were more aggressive; they caused the loss of five B-29s with 51 crewmen dead or missing. Our planes claimed 27 enemy planes, 19 probables and 24 damaged. Our losses were rather high for the XX Bomber Command, but modest compared to the 8th Air Force in Europe.

After another training mission to Bangkok on November 27th, XX Bomber Command returned to its enemy aircraft campaign in an attack on the Manchuria Manufacturing Company at Mukden on December 7th. The 108 B-29s got to Mukden; ten of them hit a rail

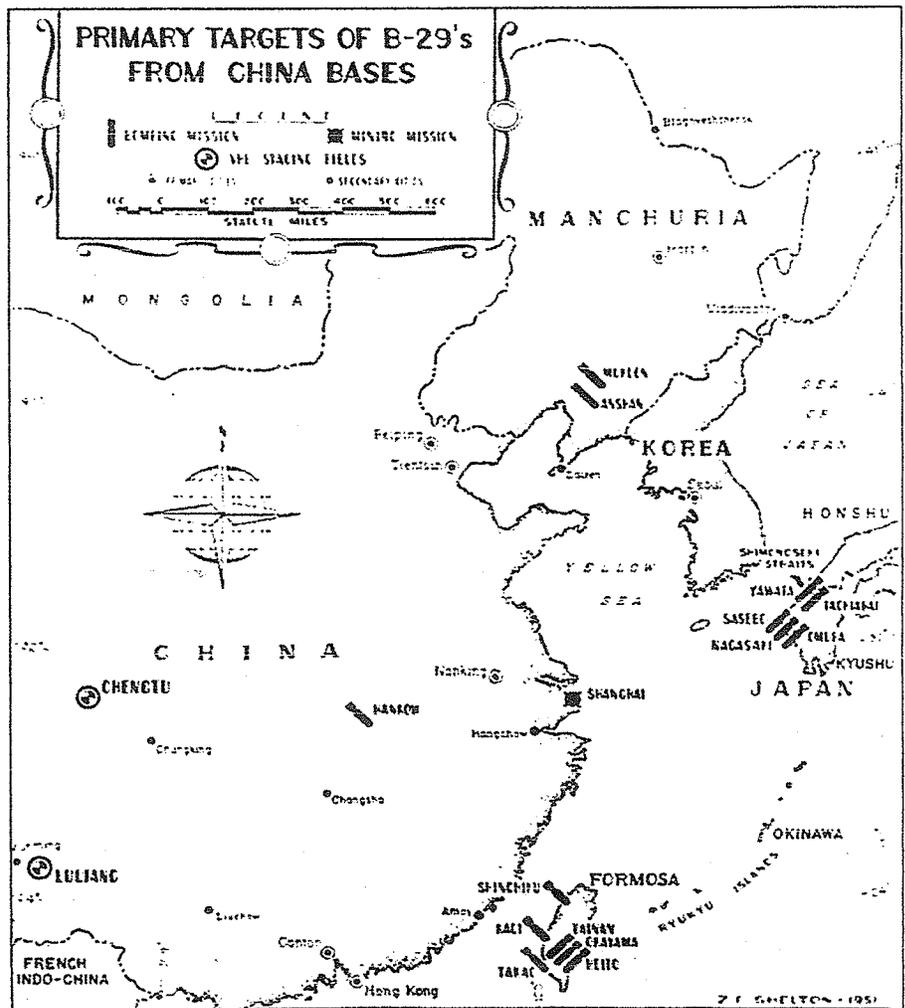
yard nine miles short of the target but 80 planes did hit the target area with 261 tons of bombs damaging factories and an arsenal. Enemy fighters again were aggressive with 247 attacks on the B-29s; three collisions were reported.

Again, there was an interlude in the strategic bombing campaign so a third training mission to Bangkok on December 11th was made and an incendiary attack on a supply base on Hankow on the 18th. This raid was requested by Chennault.

With the loss of bases in East China and an enemy drive from Luichow aimed at Kweiyang and Kunming, General Wedemeyer, who replaced Stilwell in China on October 18th asked for a B-29 strike on Hankow. The threat to Kunming would certainly seem to have been one of those emergencies foreseen by the JCS in April 1944 when they gave theater commanders the right to divert B-29s from strategic to tactical uses. Wedemeyer proposed that the XX Bomber Command run 100

sorties against Hankow. LeMay, who had already made plans for December, hesitated to consent since Wedemeyer commanded only in China and the B-29s were based in the India-Burma Theater. Washington, though, backed Wedemeyer. LeMay then made a coordinated plan with the 14th Air Force. The latter was to hit the airfields and the B-29s to attack dock and storage areas in a daylight incendiary attack.

D-Day was set for December 15th, then changed to the 18th. LeMay got 94 B-29s airborne, and of these 84 fire bombed Hankow. Because of a communications failure between the two commands, the 14th Air Force 40th Group bombed out of order. As a result, smoke hid the intended targets from the other planes. Consequently, only 33 planes in the first three formations and a few individual planes were on target. It was estimated that 40-50% of the target area had been destroyed by 38% of the weight of attack. Chennault said later that Hankow was



was destroyed as a major base. This was the first mass fire-bomb raid the B-29s attempted.

LeMay was thoroughly pleased by the results against an Asiatic city. When he moved to the Marianas to command the entire B-29 force there, he switched from high altitude daylight attacks with high explosives, to the devastating fire-bomb night raids that burned the guts out of Japan.

A small night incendiary raid against Nagasaki had been staged in August and Washington had urged more. Both there and at Kharagpur there had been sentiment in favor of low-altitude fire bombing at night, the tactic which LeMay was later to use.

The diversion to Mukden on December 7th left LeMay with a big strike at Omura still to be made, but the mission of the day after the fire raid at Hankow was only at half strength. Next to a fuel problem in China was the problem with the R-3350 engine. It was untried when the command moved to the CBI, and the wide range of temperatures there had aggravated the ills attendant upon breaking in a new plane motor.

Engine failures had been frequent and the job of maintaining a supply of spares at Kharagpur taxed their resources. The Bengal Air Depot did a good job but the bulk of used engines had to be sent back to the States; upon overhaul they were sent back to CBI. Various changes were made

to the engines (100 by November).

Now on the eve of the Omura mission, LeMay decided to send only those B-29s equipped with fully modified engines. But, LeMay again had to use planes with old-model engines to round out his 12 plane formations. The bombers had stayed in China for maintenance after the Hankow mission, but only 36 got off for Omura on the 19th. Seventeen bombed the main target through heavy clouds, with little success, while at Shanghai (the secondary target), 13 B-29s hit the docks, warehouses and shipping. Light enemy opposition caused little trouble, but two planes crashed (with no casualties) from operational causes.

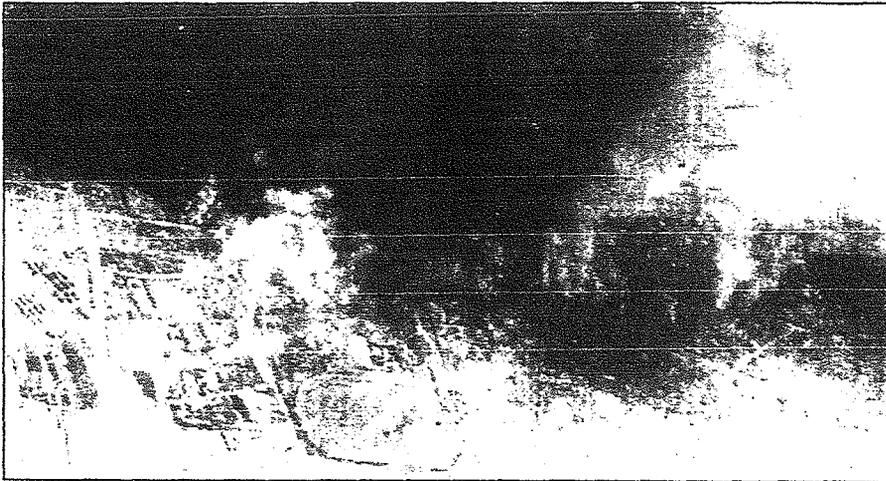
On December 21st, 49 planes left for Mukden, but 40 reached the target area. No damage was done to the aircraft factory but the arsenal and rail yards were slightly damaged. The enemy had a dense smoke screen over the aircraft factory. Two collisions occurred, one bringing down both B-29 and the Jap fighter, the other destroying the fighter. Another bomber was lost when hit by an air-to-air bomb.

The XX Bomber Command ushered in the New Year with a training mission to Bangkok on January 3rd, then returned to China to support Pacific operations. General Wedemeyer was directed by the JCS to allot XX Bomber Command enough tonnage for 250 January sorties in support of the landings

in the Philippines, but targets there were considered unsuitable for B-29 operations, so instead LeMay set up his mission for January 6th against an aircraft assembly and repair shop in Kyushu, Japan and Omura. But, because of cloudy weather, the 49 airborne B-29s from Chengtu, 28 bombed Omura, 11 bombed the secondary target at Nanking, and six dropped at targets of opportunity. Only one formation got on target and the cost was one B-29 shot down.

MacArthur asked that the XX Bomber Command help out in his Philippine invasion by bombing airports in Formosa. LeMay figured his stockpiles could handle 125 sorties in early January, 50 of which had been expended on the 6th. An urgent appeal to Wedemeyer brought promise of help. BGeneral William Tunner of ATC and he promised to bring into Chengtu by January 16th, 2,700 tons of gasoline. Stockpiles at Kunming were leveled, and ATC and XX Bomber Command transports brought in 7,474 tons in January, which was second only to October's record of 10,830.

On January 9th, 46 B-29s got up and because of weather dropped by radar 293 tons of bombs and incendiaries at Kiiun in Formosa, with unobserved results. After that mission, such planes as were in condition returned to India for a strike at Singapore from the Kharagpur bases. That job completed, LeMay sent all fully modified planes back to Chengtu for a double-barreled blow at Formosa air installations. By January 14th, he had enough fuel to get 82 bombers up. Because of weather conditions, 54 planes hit Kagi. Reconnaissance showed that 10% of the building area had been destroyed, 46% damaged and 16 planes on the field had been hit. Twenty-one planes bombed other targets, and the most important damage was done to Taichu airdrome by 13 planes. The next day, 79 planes hit the primary target of Shinchiku and visually dropped 397 tons of bombs and incendiaries. Again, there was no fighter opposition (one plane was lost on take-off). The B-29 attacks on Formosa were mixed in with attacks by our naval forces. All this helped MacArthur's forces to land in the Philippines, as few planes from Formosa interfered with his



Fourteenth and Twentieth Attack, Hankow, China - The dock area, storage and supply center of Hankow, China, is seen here under attack by B-29 Superfortresses of the U.S. Army 20th Air Force. They were followed by more than 200 bombers and fighters of the U.S. Army 14th Air Force, in China's heaviest coordinated bombing mission. This was the first joint operation of the Fourteenth and Twentieth, planned by Major General Albert C. Wedemeyer, commanding the China Theater. (Courtesy of U.S. Army Air Force.)

landings.

The strike against Shinchiku was the end of XX Bomber Command strikes to help in the Pacific campaign, and it was the last mission to be staged out of the Chengtu bases.

Missions from India

It was understood from the beginning that the XX Bomber Command might be transferred from the CBI when more convenient bases were available. The early diversion of the 73rd Wing to Saipan and General Arnold threatened to withdraw the 58th Wing.

During September 1944, LeMay raised the need to resurface the Chengtu strip and was told that he could count on nine more months in the CBI, and was asked by Washington if he could use more B-29 units in India. LeMay refused the offer on logistical grounds. Washington then agreed and expressed the hope of moving the command earlier than was suggested before.

The November drive of the enemy which overran the 14th Air Force bases in East China threatened to curtail LeMay's December operations out of Chengtu. More Hump tonnage had to be diverted to help Chinese ground forces block the threat to Kunming. LeMay was asked on November 21st to look for other staging areas such as Myitkyina, but he and General Sultan advised against such a move.

On December 4th, Wedemeyer sent General Marshall his estimate of the situation. To improve the logistical situation of the 14th Air Force and the Chinese Army, he recommended that the XX Bomber Command be removed from China as early as possible after January 15, 1945. Wedemeyer, at this stage, pretty much agreed with Stilwell with regard to Chiang's Nationalist Army. He said the Nationalists were showing little will to resist and withdrawal of the XX Bomber Command would allow Hump tonnage to increase the supplies for Chinese forces and for the 14th Air Force. It would also make Chengtu fields available for B-24 use and release the 312th Fighter Wing from its defensive mission.

The JCS concurred on January 15th in Wedemeyer's request. The XX Bomber Command was to withdraw from China immediately and was to conduct limited opera-

tions from India - taking over bombing, mining, reconnaissance performed by the 7th Bomb Group, now to be transferred to China. The 311th Fighter Wing was to be temporarily assigned to the 14th, subject to later recall by XX Bomber Command, which was to prepare to move into the Marianas.

At Kharagpur there was no shortage of fuel or bombs and with moderate range there were targets where enemy defenses were not too rugged. In choosing targets, LeMay had more independence than in strategic missions, and there were few whose importance warranted a full scale B-29 attack. But, LeMay agreed with his intelligence section that "any target is still a target for training purposes."

The first training mission was made on November 3rd by the XX Bomber Command in a coordinated attack with EAC's Strategic Air Force and the Third Tactical Air Force. Forty-eight planes got over the target and destroyed the roundhouse in Rangoon's railroad yard, plus other buildings. Much damage was also done to tracks and rolling stock. No combat losses were incurred, except one B-29 had to be ditched; its crew after being afloat for 36 hours was rescued by the Royal Indian Navy. LeMay said this was the command's "first job of precision bombing."

At Stratemeyer's request, 55 B-29s on November 27th hit marshalling yards at Bangkok with 382 tons of bombs and with excellent results. One B-29 was lost on the way home. They returned to

Bangkok on December 14th to bomb a railroad bridge but cloudy weather caused the planes to divert to the railroad station at Rangoon. Excellent results were achieved but an unfortunate accident happened when two bombs collided causing four B-29s to blow up and a fifth was a total loss when it made an emergency landing. The 33 planes that dropped at a bridge made no hits. This failure confirmed earlier skepticism about bridge-busting by B-29s.

LeMay sent the B-29s for another try at the Bangkok bridge on January 3rd. This time luck was better with excellent weather and almost no enemy resistance, 44 B-29s got over target to score a direct hit putting the bridge out of service for the time being. For training missions, they were not a milk run as losses were heavy. During the same period, they made two attacks on Singapore; these were in direct support of Pacific operations.

At Singapore the British naval base taken over by the enemy in February 1942 was improved and considered their finest station outside the home islands. A raid on Singapore was a 4,000-mile round trip operation.

On November 5th, 76 B-29s targeted several dry docks there which were knocked out, along with a 465-foot freighter in it. Secondary targets were in Sumatra where direct hits were made on a refinery. The enemy put up a feeble defense thinking the distance from Allied bases were too far away, but the trip took a toll of two planes



Precision Bombing - Marshalling Yards at Rangoon, Burma are destroyed in this pin-point bombing by the 462nd Group. (Courtesy of T. R. Vaucher.)

the trip took a toll of two planes and 12 crewmen, including Colonel Ted L. Faulkner, commander of the 468th Group.

On another raid over Singapore on January 11th, with 47 B-29s taking off, 27 planes divided their loads between the two docks without scoring; 21 planes bombed elsewhere at Penang, Mergui, and various targets of opportunity. At Penang, the docks went untouched, with the loss of two planes.'

These missions from India had been subordinated to strategic and Pacific aid strikes from the China bases. The abandonment of those bases changed the whole character of the VLR (very long-range) program. The rate of mission picked up rather than declined - 20 missions were flown in two months against 29 in the previous seven - there was at Kharagpur an atmosphere of expectancy as the various units awaited the move to the Pacific.

LeMay, on January 18th, went to the Marianas to assume command of XXI Bomber Command. LeMay's successor, XX Bomber Command's fourth within a year was BGeneral Roger M. Ramey, who more recently served as chief of staff for Hansell in XXI Bomber Command. It would be Ramey's job to move the command to the Pacific, but meanwhile he would continue bombardment operations from India. The program included Bangkok, Rangoon, Singapore, plus a new target - Saigon, a convoy point between Japan and Singapore, as well as lesser targets. A number of the strikes were training missions.

Ramey started mine-laying operations from January 20-30th. The first was with 76 sorties, over Singapore, Saigon and Camranh Bay. A total of 404 mines were laid.

Then on February 17th, 12 planes returned to Singapore; 10 planes dropped 55 mines and one dropped at Panang, with no loss of planes. On February 18th, upon the request of Chennault, 12 B-29s moved up to China to mine along the Yangtze River. They used Luliang instead of Chengtu as a staging field. Then, on March 28/29th, they returned to China for more mining operations. This was especially good training for the 313th Wing which was destined to later wreak havoc in the inland sea of Japan.

During the monthly intervals between these missions, the command had run some 13 conventional bombing missions, starting on January 27th. They found that the mining operations failed to cause a traffic jam around Saigon.

With the command now at 180 aircraft, the 444th and 462nd Group put up 67 B-29s at Saigon; 44 found heavy clouds - 11 planes dropped their bombs prematurely and 33 hit the residential section; 19 planes diverted to Phnon Penh and did some damage in town.

The 40th and 468th Groups did better at Bangkok. Fifty-eight planes bombed the Rami VI bridge which this time was definitely knocked out on the third strike.

On February 11th, at the request of EAC's Strategic Air Force, the 20th initiated a series of attacks on storage dumps in the

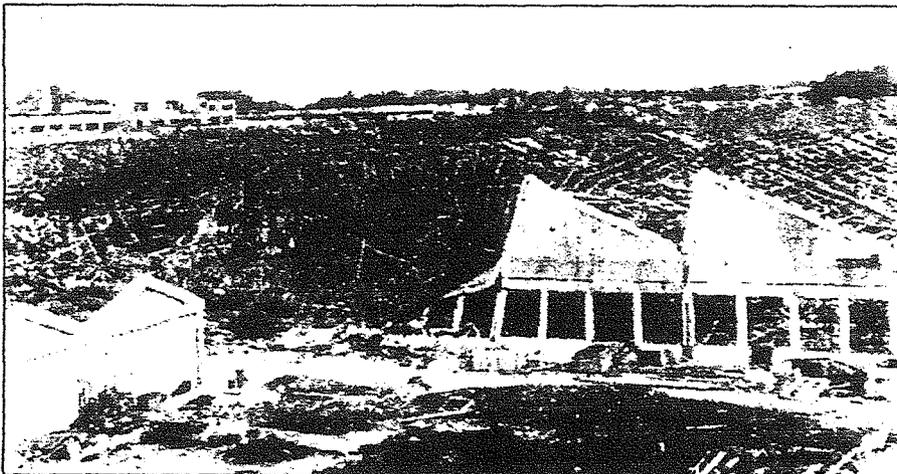
Rangoon area. Four groups got 56 planes over the primary target. Photos later showed much destruction by both the B-29s and 79 B-24s sent out by the EAC on the same day. A month later, the XX Bomber Command again joined EAC in a similar attack with very good results. This continued on, then on March 22nd with a further destruction of storage dumps and nearby facilities. This was something of a comedown for the B-29s going back repeatedly to blow up ammunition dumps or peck away at enemy soldiers in barracks.

In the meantime, XX Bomber Command hit other targets. On February 19th, they put 49 planes over Kuala Lumpur and went as low as 11,000 feet to bomb the Central Railroad Repair Shops where they damaged 67% of the target. They went back to the same target on March 10th with 26 planes to bomb the roundhouse and railroad equipment.

The rest of the missions in February and March were against Singapore. On February 24th, 116 planes hit the Empire Dock area; then in an all-incendiary attack, 105 planes burned out 39% of the warehouse area. One plane, with all the crew, was lost when it ran out of fuel on the way back.

On March 2nd, 64 B-29s hit Singapore again. The target was the shop and warehouse area in the naval base. Two planes were lost to flak. Then, on March 12th, 44 planes dropped 93 tons of bombs and incendiaries at oil storage areas with poor results. In its 49th and last mission, XX Bomber Command sent 29 B-29s back to Bukum Island in a night attack. At best, destruction of the target would cause the enemy only some inconvenience, but it was time for the 58th Wing to put into practice some of the tactics LeMay was using against the home islands of Japan. So, the planes went in low at 5,000 to 7,000 feet, to bomb individually. Out of the 49 tanks in the farm, they destroyed seven, damaged three and fired several others.

The story of the XX Bomber Command would not be complete without a brief summary of the photo reconnaissance missions. They obtained information in advance of missions and provided damage assessment after raids. They mapped large areas of Asia; they located defense installations



Musahino Aircraft Engine Plant - this is all that remains of the plant outside Tokyo after repeated attacks by the 20th Air Force. (Courtesy of U.S. Air Force.)

and performed surveillance at sea. The first reconnaissance plane crashed on the first Yawata mission to Japan. They photographed possible airfield sites on Okinawa; also in North Luzon where they lost two planes in an effort to aid MacArthur's recapture of the Philippines. They performed reconnaissance missions at Mountbatten's request in which they flew 160 sorties. These missions were tedious averaging as high as 15 hours per sortie in SEAC. But, of the value of their work, there could be little doubt.

XX Bomber Command: Exodus

During the 10 weeks after LeMay's departure, XX Bomber Command continued combat mission over SEAC. Then, they became a quasi-tactical force without a vital mission striking such targets as Mountbatten would permit or Stratemyer suggested. Preparations for the move to the Pacific bases, though, interfered somewhat with combat missions. Other than the 58th Wing, the 20th Bomber Command, once Arnold's pride, on the eve of victory over Japan, stripped of its combat units, was dissolved.

This stripping began on February 8, 1945 when the 312th Fighter Wing was assigned to the 14th Air Force. On that date, Ramey reactivated the 58th Bomb Wing. Until its transfer to a Pacific base, the Wing headquarters would have no essential function.

On February 6th, General Sultan was told to provide transportation. The first water echelons (of 2275 and 2863 men) was to sail from Calcutta about February 22nd for Tinian and Guam. A second water echelon would leave Calcutta in April. Two air echelons, each comprising of 90 B-29s, and miscellaneous aircraft and carrying 1330 and 1620 airmen were to arrive at Tinian and Guam on April 1st and May 1st. All others (Hqs & Hqs Sqdn, 22nd Air Depot, 1st Transport Sqdn), and various other units were to be prepared to move by June 1st.

An advance element of the 58th Wing flew out via Luliang on March 20th. When the last shipment arrived in the Marianas on June 6th, the transfer of the 58th Wing had been completed without loss of a single life or plane.

Ramey went along with the 58th as wing commander, General Smith taking over XX Bomber

Command on April 25th and continuing preparations for the move in June to a site not yet designated. Later the JCS ordered the command to move to Okinawa to provide control for the 316th and other VHB wings to be deployed on that island, movement to begin on June 2nd.

In mid-June, General Smith was called to Washington; he was told that the 8th Air Force, without a mission since V-E Day would be converted to a VHB organization with headquarters in Okinawa. Together with the 20th Air Force it would comprise U.S. Army Strategic Air Force (USASTAF). As a result, the XX Bomber Command would be inactivated using its personnel to form the nucleus of the 8th Air Force headquarters.

Starting on July 3rd, the air echelon left for Okinawa via Bhamo, Luliang, Clark Field and Guam. The rest went by sea in two lots, July 12th and August 4th. Only a few small detachments were left back in India-Burma.

On July 16th, LGeneral James Doolittle arrived to take over, so the XX Bomber Command was inactivated on July 18th.

So, what did the XX Bomber Command contribute to the air offensive against Japan? From the start, MATTERHORN was a controversial project. An evaluation board reviewed the record in the autumn of 1944; their tentative judgment was: "There is no question but that strategic bombing pays big dividends and perhaps the diversion of such (logistical) effort to the XX Bomber Command is more than justified in the big picture, all of which cannot be seen from this theater." The US Strategic Bombing Survey, though, was unfavorable in its judgment. There is one general tone which is favorable, however, the strategic operations from Chengtu were not a decisive factor in the Japanese surrender. But, it's useful to judge

that from its envisaged purpose. General Arnold's staff saw in the B-29 as a weapon to hit the Japanese homeland.

There was no base to do that, at the time, save in China. For want of a better site, the staging fields were located at Chengtu. They foresaw difficulties in the supply area, so the B-29s were used as a self-sufficient weapon. They chose the steel industry in Japan as the first target system. The planners did not expect to win the war by strikes from Chengtu; the early diversion of the 73rd Wing to Saipan indicated the failure of the logistical system to meet the original expectation. By this diversion, MATTERHORN was doomed to failure before the first mission. Arnold's staff hoped to achieve certain other ends - to bolster Chinese morals; to take the war home to the Japanese people; to tie down fighter planes needed elsewhere; and to combat test a new plane.

Even if one tries to qualify some of the adverse criticisms, the record of XX Bomber Command was not a successful one. The title for the MATTERHORN plan was "Early sustained Bombing of Japan." The bombing was neither early nor sustained. It achieved no significant results of a tangible sort and the intangible effects were obtained at a dear price. This failure should not be charged to XX Bomber Command, who men showed courage, determination and skill. They lost to an impossible logistical system, not to the Japanese. And, though, the command was dissolved, its combat units in the 58th Wing were to go on with the war under more favorable conditions in the Marianas.

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



The Hump - Aerial view taken along China-Burma border. (U.S. Air Force.)

History of the Army Air Force In CBI

Part XIII

THE LIBERATION OF BURMA

After the occupation of Myitkyina on August 3, 1944, more than two months elapsed before the Allied forces were ready to renew offensive operations. During that time, SEAC strategists planned three coordinated attacks. Operation CAPITAL to liberate North Burma, Operation ROMULUS to clear the Arakan of the enemy, and operation TALON for capture of Akyab. Of these, the first was the most important.

Plans for Operation CAPITAL were completed at the end of September, under the overall command of Gen. Oliver Leese; forces under him were deployed along three fronts. Stilwell's NCAC, which would soon be under LGen. Daniel E. Sultan from positions south of Myitkyina; in NE Burma, BGen Frank Dorn's Chinese Y Force held positions along the Salween River; west of NCAC, the British 14th Army, under LGen. William Slim occupied positions southward toward the Arakan, where the British had their 15th Corps under LGen. Montague Stapford.

The Allies had an overwhelming numerical superiority. British and Indian combat troops numbered 618,000 in addition to 58,000 Chinese, 32,000 Africans, 10,000 Kachins and 7,000 Americans. Some 275,000 support troops brought the total strength to over 1,000,000 men. Some Japanese had an estimated 220,000 in Burma, with about 190,000 others in Thailand, Indo-China, Malaya and Sumatra. EAC at the time had 900 aircraft and increased to almost 1,500 with a strength of 100,000 to 150,000. In contrast, the enemy was estimated to have only 160 planes in October and 300 in December.

Under Stilwell was the Chinese First Army and Sixth Army, the British 36th Division and a composite Chinese American force (the Mars Brigade, a Chinese regiment, a Chinese tank brigade and a force of Kachins). The EAC had the 10th AF to support the NCAC. The RAF 214th and 221st Groups supported the 15th Corps and the 14th Army respectively. The Combat Cargo Task Force, activated in

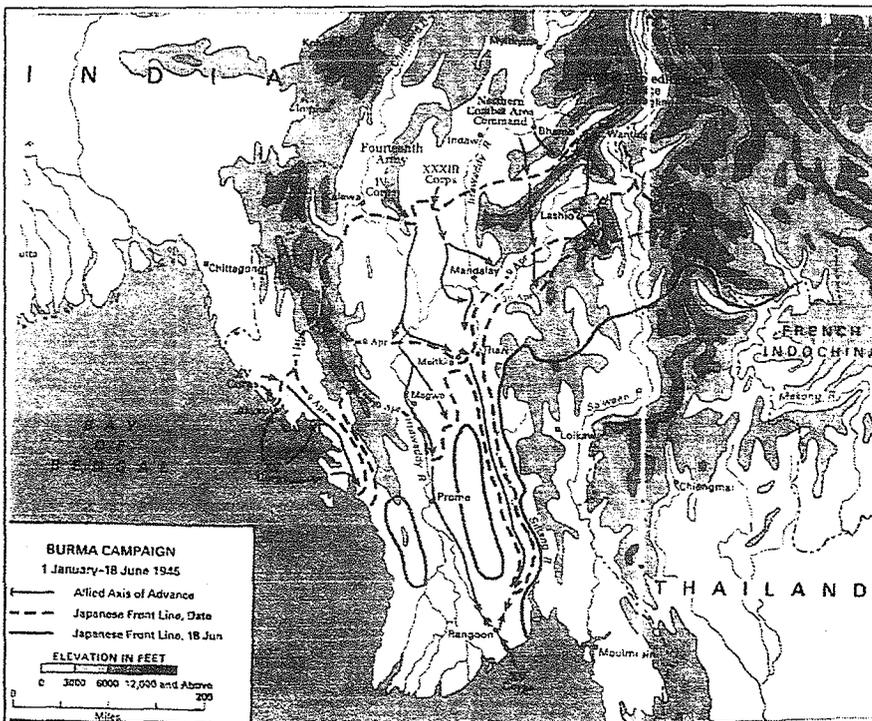
September, under BGen. Frederick W. Evans provided air support for the latter force. The Strategic Air Force carried on attacks in South Burma, Thailand and Malaya.

The enemy was at a disadvantage because of a threat to their position in the Philippines and Formosa. This made it difficult for them to get the needed men and supplies. They already had lost control of the air and the EAC (Eastern Air Command) made sure that Allied air superiority would be maintained. A special radio net by the EAC would alert Allied air forces for any enemy action. This method was so effective that by the end of 1944, EAC was complete master of the Burma air and the enemy was made incapable of any serious offensive action.

Strategic Air Force (SAF) Operations

The SAF had responsibility for all targets lying south of the 22nd parallel and east of the Salween River (reaching into Malaya and Indo-China and all of Thailand). Their objectives included: mining of ports, destruction of enemy shipping and disruption of communications. In addition, bombing attacks were made on locomotives and rolling stock, air installations, ports and shipping facilities, military depots and centers of Japanese administration.

On September 12, 1944, the Pakchan River was heavily mined which disrupted the flow of traffic. In October, mining of the approaches to Penang by 15 Liberators each of which dropped four 1,000 mines. They flew in from Kharagpur to Penang, a round trip of 3,000 miles. Also mined in October were Mergui Ye and the Pakchan River. During that month, anti-shipping raids were made against docks and jetties of Moulmein. In November, the SAF flew 697 sorties and dropped over 1,000 tons of bombs; they also wrecked the Ban Dara Bridge and the Makasan workshops at Bangkok; also the Insein works at Rangoon. As the month advanced, attacks continued against tunnels, bridges and railway facilities. On November 15th, the Mergul waterfront was bombed by 15 Liberators and three days later the jerry at Martaban was fired. On November 22nd, they hit the port of Kao Huakang. At the close of the month, the SAF counted a total of 3,078 tons of bombs dropped in



1,513 sorties flown during the preceding six months.

At full operating strength in December 1944 following a training period, the air force flew 4,500 sorties and dropped 13,000 tons of bombs, almost double the total for the period January 1 - May 31, 1944. The bombs themselves had been made more effective; a simple nose spike, inserted to prevent ricochet when the bomb was dropped on railroad tracks. This was used in North Africa by the Germans and the Italians but improved in the India-Burma Theater.

The Azon bomb, radio controlled, received its first combat test by the 10th AF on December 1944. It proved especially helpful against rail lines. To save personnel, all Azon bombing equipment was concentrated in the 493rd Bomb Squadron, 7th Bomb Group.

In April 1945, Stratemeyer wrote Arnold: "The 7th Bomb Group's Azon bombing continues to be highly successful, with one mission getting four bridges with four bombs, and another getting six direct hits on two bridges with six bombs."

With the new bombs, SAF added a psychological weapon - leaflets to warn natives away from railroad tracks and installations. As a result, native workers stayed from work causing a critical shortage of labor for the enemy's railway system.

SAF's operations in December 1944 centered on denial of supplies to the Jap Army in Burma; this continued into 1945. Leaving to the B-29s of XX Bomber Command such distant targets as Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, SAF's Liberators carried their attacks from the Malay Peninsula as far as Na Nian. Bridges, railways, roads and canals were broken more rapidly than the enemy could repair them thru January, February and March 1945.

In April, supply dumps in the Rangoon area were attacked five times by bombers varying in strength between 20 and 60 planes. Stores at Moulmein were hit on April 7th and a week later the 7th Bomb Group knocked out the Sarsen Power Station near Bangkok. The climax was reached on April 24th when the 7th Bomb Group sent 40 planes against the Bangkok-Rangoon railway line claiming on this day 30 bridges smashed and 18 damaged between

Kanchanaburi and Thanbyuzayat. These raids were supplemented by those of SAF's medium bombers to deny the enemy full use of transportation facilities leading northward from the major depots to the battle lines.

The cost to the SAF was surprisingly low. During the first five months of 1944, SAF had lost eight heavy bombers (six US, two British), and 14 medium bombers (12 U.S. and two British). Between June and November 1944, the British lost two Wellingtons and 14 Liberators, while we lost four B-24s. Between December 1944 and end of April 1945, the British lost 14 more Liberators and we lost seven B-24s. In all, 63 EAC aircraft went down under enemy fire (34 British and 29 of ours).

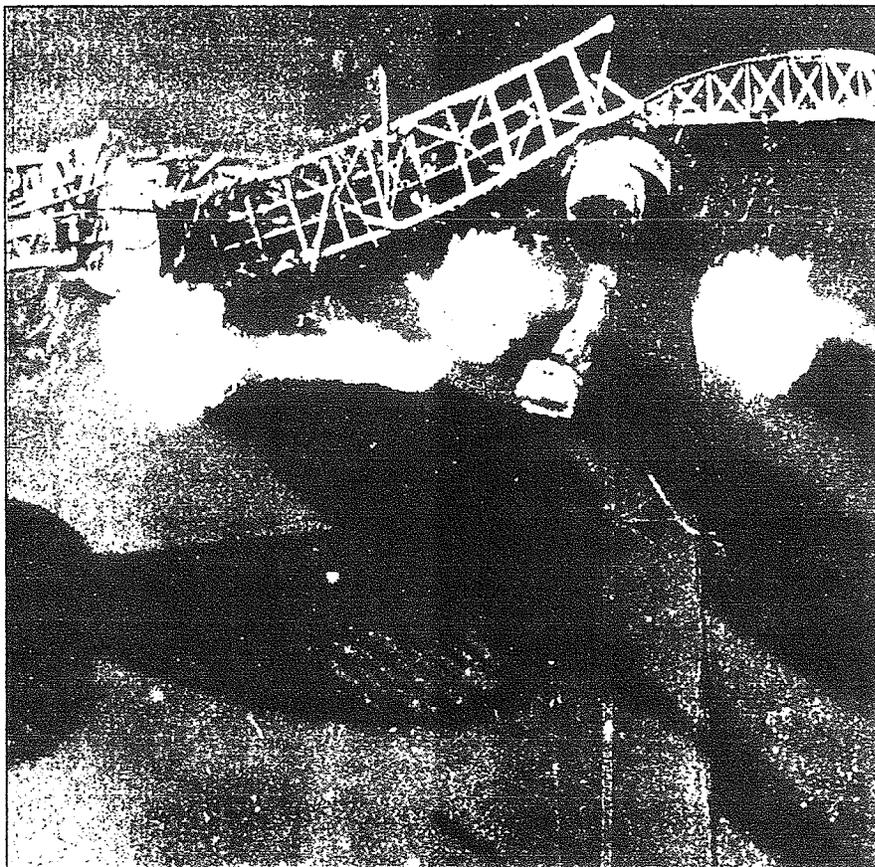
Compensation for these losses was the cumulative effect of the bombing. It was learned that some enemy detachments had died of starvation. By December 1944, the enemy suffered from a shortage of locomotives and sections of railway lines were unserviceable for weeks at a time. When the enemy turned to the use of trucks, these were attacked by planes of shorter range. The damage to ports and to

shipping by aerial mining added to the enemy's troubles. It is impossible to measure exactly SAF's contribution to the victory in Burma but there can be no doubt of the substantial assistance rendered.

The Freeing of Northern Burma

On October 1, 1944, the 38th Division, Chinese Army, started the offensive moving south toward Bhamo. At the same time, the Chinese 6th Army moved SW and soon swept through Shwegugale and Shwegu. Along the Salween, China's Yunnan forces captured Teng-chung, Lung-ling and Mang-shih and then moved west toward Wanting. By December 1st, the 38th Division bypassed Bhamo and began with Dorn's Yunnan forces advanced west of Wanting, an encircling movement of Namhkam. It was captured in mid-January 1945. By January 27th, the trace of the Ledo Road had been cleared all the way from Ledo to China.

At the Irrawaddy, a juncture was made with the Allied forces which had advanced down the rail corridor from Mogaung to within 30 miles of Mandalay. These forces were the British 36th Division,



Rail bridge in Burma destroyed by the 7th Bombardment Group.

which remained under NCAC until April 1st and the Chinese 22nd Division. That force quickly took Mohnyin, Mawhun and Mawlu. The 36th Division took Indaw on December 10th and Katha the next day. Tigyaing was taken on December 23rd and Twinngge on January 24. At that point the 36th Division, having reached the southern limits of NCAC's responsibility, turned to the east toward Mogok.

At the same time, the British 14th Army was engaged in a four-pronged drive from Imphal toward Sittaung and then south to Tonzang. Finding themselves outflanked in the west, the Japanese retreated toward Wuntho, and before December 25th, the 14th Army was working with the 36th Division, having reached the southern limits of NCAC's responsibility, turned to the east toward Mogok.

At the same time, the British 14th Army in West Burma was engaged in a four-pronged drive from Imphal toward Sittaung and then south to Tonzang. Finding themselves outflanked in the west, the Japanese retreated toward Wuntho and before December 25th, the 14th Army was working

with the 36th Division to clear the enemy out of the Mogaung-Mandalay rail corridor. By early January 1945, Ye-u was captured; Shwebo fell by the middle of the month and thereafter met with little opposition until they were within 12 miles of Mandalay, then to the south to the frontier of the Arakan.

On November 8, 1944, Mountbatten ordered the clearing of the Arakan (Operations ROMULUS and TALON). By the end of January 1945, the Allied line was just east of Maungdaw to the outskirts of Minbya. Following the coast line, they took Akyab, occupied half of Ramree Island, and at Kangaw landed behind the enemy at Minbya. When an amphibious landing was made on Akyab Island on January 3, 1945, they found the enemy in retreat.

When the offensive started in October 1944, LGen. William Slim said that the "whole plan of battle" was based on Allied air support. Only with that assistance, could the expulsion of Japanese from Burma be accomplished.

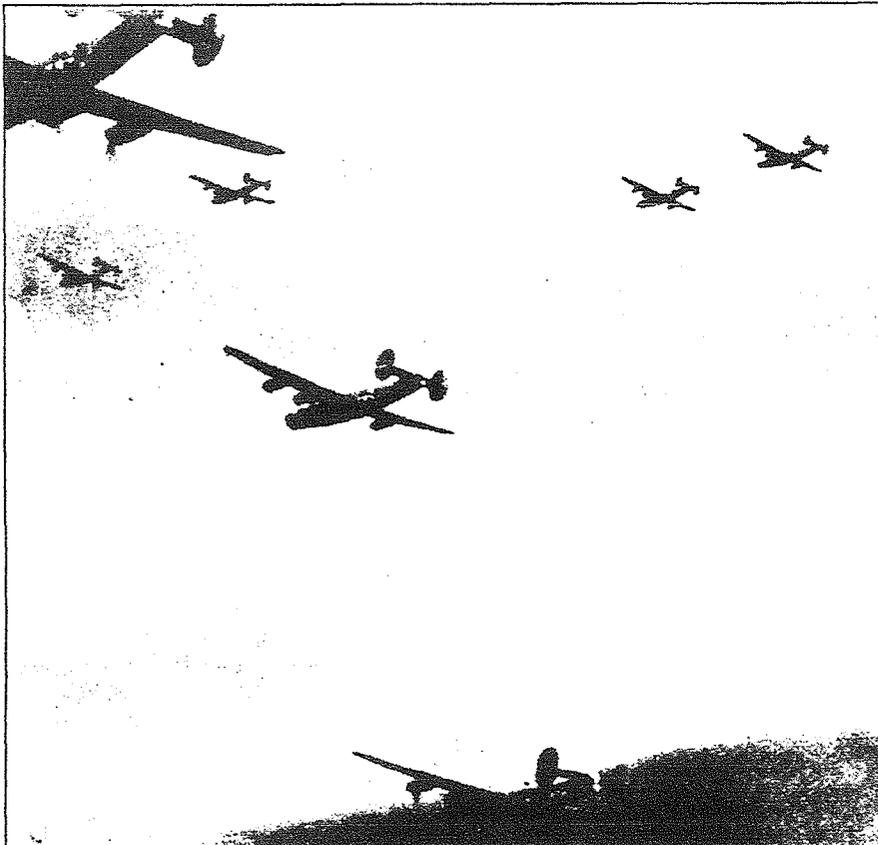
Among the varied activities of EAC (Eastern Air Command), none was more important than the air transport provided by the 10th AF

and the Combat Cargo Task Force. During September 1944, troop carrier and combat cargo aircraft had carried 18,170 tons of supplies necessary for the build-up. Cargo consisted mainly of food and ammunition, but also essential engineer items as trucks, bulldozers and grading equipment. These were flown into Myitkyina to help airdrome construction. Pipeline equipment also was flown in to complete a pipe-laying project from Tinghawk Sakan to Myitkyina by October 1st.

After September 10th, the Combat Cargo Task Force (CCTF) supported the 14th Army. At Comilla, a Combined Army-Air Transport Organization was established alongside Gen. Evans Headquarters. Headed by the air supply officer of 14th Army (all British personnel), they worked in close cooperation with CCTF. In October, they had 163 transport aircraft belonging to the 1st Combat Cargo Group, the 1st Air Commando Group and the RAF 177th Wing. By the close of the campaign in the spring of 1945, the CCTF had two combat cargo groups, two air commando groups, and three RAF Wings. By March 1945, they had 354 planes. CCTF units operated at first from fields at Sylhet and Tamu, but later flew from no less than 11 bases along the coast from Comilla to Akyab and inland as far as Meiktila and Toungoo. The transport planes had moved forward with the advancing armies, serving as the vital link upon which the ground advance depended.

There were landings at primitive forward strips and air drops, both of men and supplies, at critical points along the battle line. On the return trips, thousands of casualties (victims of enemy fire or disease), were evacuated to points behind the line for medical care. The impressive totals for all types of cargo carried by the CCTF between October 1944 and May 1945 are as follows: Supplies short tons - 332,136; number of persons - 339,137; number of casualties - 94,243; total tonnage - 379,808.

No less impressive, in view of the difference in strength, was the record compiled by the troop carrier units of the 10th Air Force. Although the CCTF had 354 planes, TC units of the 10th Air Force never had more than 120 planes. The ATC's 821st Medical Evacuation Squadron assisted our



7th Bombardment Group enroute to Burma Target

troop carrier planes. Most of these evacuees were delivered to hospital installations at Ledo and the peak of deliveries was reached in February 1945 when 10th Air Force units brought out 3,189 casualties. The tonnage of supplies and the men delivered to the front areas by 10th Air Force units from July 1944 through April 1945 were: number of sorties - 108,886; tonnage of cargo - 211,602; and number of men - 225,384.

Air transport, represented only one part of EAC's activity during the climatic battle for Burma. Tenth AF P-47s and B-25s were especially active during October and November during the ground offensive through Central Burma. Air opposition by the enemy was negligible and by the end of the year it had virtually disappeared. Fighters and bombers struck at enemy defensive positions, troop concentrations and movements, and at supplies on the road or in dumps. The medium bombers hit enemy airfields and transportation targets, supplementing the heavy bomber blows against more distant rail communications. In West Burma, RAF units supported the predominantly British ground forces, but the 12th Bomb Group occasionally lent the assistance of its B-25s. In East Burma, the 14th AF 25th Fighter Squadron and the 22nd Bomb Squadron assisted Gen. Dorn's Yunnan forces.

As the Allied armies advanced farther into Burma, they met less and less resistance, so there was less need for direct support of the troops. So, the planes devoted their attention to ammunition dumps and enemy communications immediately behind the fighting. Motor trucks were inviting targets, between June 1, 1944 and May 2, 1945, nearly 8,000 Jap vehicles were claimed as destroyed. As the upper parts of the Burmese railway system were worked over, bridges, junction points, water towers, stations, rolling stock and waterway transportation were subjected to repeated attack. The 490th Bomb Squadron (M) of the 10th Air Force, known as the Bridge Busters, claimed 13 bridges within Burma during the first 13 days of October. RAF Hurribombers and Beaufighters continued to harass shipping along the coast and on the Chindwin River. So skillful did the air forces do their job that some ground commanders, sensing the promise that they

might quickly overrun all of Burma, argued for a curtailment of air activity lest continued attacks on the Jap lines of communications cripple facilities needed by the advancing Allied ground forces. Stratemeyer, at first objected, but by the spring of 1945 he agreed to a more selective policy of bombing.

Capture of Rangoon

When Phase II of Operation CAPITAL opened in February 1945, the Allies had air superiority and if Allied advantages on the ground seemed less impressive because Jap armies remained intact, overall the situation favored the Allies. Moreover, the Allies had broken into open country and had the necessary logistics to press their advantage. Stratemeyer informed Arnold that the enemy had pulled east so much of their limited air strength in Burma as to leave Rangoon virtually undefended and to remove all cause for fear concerning the safety of the Hump air route.

The final phase of the Burma offensive began with skirmishes east of the Irrawaddy by NCAC and with important gains by the 14th Army between Pauk and Pakoklu. The enemy held the Shwebo plain only long enough to cover his retreat across the river (Irrawaddy). Since Gen. Slim lacked the strength to force a crossing against strong positions, he decided on a landing some distance to the north of Mandalay as a feint to draw enemy attention from the region south of the city where he intended to make the main crossing.

Realizing that the enemy would offer much resistance to the Allied advance across the Irrawaddy, Gen. Slim asked Stratemeyer for additional support from the 10th AF, the 224th Group and the Strategic Air Force (SAF).

The first crossing of the river was made about 65 miles north of Mandalay at Thabeikkyin. After a few days consolidating positions on the eastern bank, 17th Division, spearheaded by 254th Tank Brigade, struck east across Burma for Meiktila and Thazi. On February 27th, the first of the airfields around Meiktila was taken. Soon, thereafter, C-47s of the 1st and 2nd Air Commando Groups flew in a brigade of the British 17th Division from Palel. This move surrounded the main body of the enemy in the Mandalay area. This opened the great battle with the whole of South Burma as the prize.

After the city of Meiktila was taken on March 4th, the Allied forces closed in on Mandalay from all sides. By March 9th, the siege began. It was expected that the enemy would hold to the last Mandalay Hill, the dominant feature of the area. The second strongpoint was Fort Dufferin, an old fortress with thick walls of stone and earth. The Hill was taken without too much trouble, but on Fort Dufferin the Japs held on stubbornly. On March 11th, artillery breached the north wall, and troops tried to storm the opening. Casualties were heavy so the attacking troops retreated. A week later, the Allies tried again but failed.

On March 15th, 10 Thunderbolts of the 224th Group dropped 14 tons of bombs on the northwest corner of the fort; the next day the 221st Group knocked three gaps in the southwest corner with 13 tons of bombs; on March 17th nine Thunderbolts of the 221st Group breached the north wall; and two days later the B-25s of the 12th Bomb Group breached the north wall again with 2,000-pound bombs. On March 20th, the final aerial assault began. Thirty-five B-25s of the 12th Group dropped 104 x 500-pound and 262 fragmentation bombs, followed by Hurricanes of the 221st Group which bombed and strafed the entire fort. Thunderbolts, each carrying two 500-pounders, finished off the job. At the end of an hour, 130,000 pounds of bombs had broken the walls in 26 places. Then, the ground forces took the fort without difficulty, and the way was open for the occupation of Mandalay. The fall of the city was followed by the rapid expulsion of all enemy forces in the triangular area between the railway and the Irrawaddy River. Rangoon was the next objective.

On March 22nd, while the enemy was withdrawing from the triangle, Allied leaders met at Meiktila and Mandalay, Gen. Leese doubted whether his armies could reach Rangoon before the monsoon. This was disturbing news, especially for our forces who thought the Burma campaign would soon be over.

All Allied forces in Burma were maintained in offensive action almost entirely by air supply. Personnel totaled 300,000 men and at least 90% of their supplies and equipment was flown in by C-46s and C-47s. The evacuation of

wounded was handled almost entirely by air and substantial reinforcements were flown in daily. Total airborne tonnage for the 14th Army during March was about 70,000 tons and another 26,000 tons for NCAC. This was twice the ATC Hump lift for China during the same period. The 14th Army was advised about the middle of March that as it advanced to the south and away from existing air transport bases, the tonnage which could be carried to the forward area would necessarily decrease. Nevertheless, the EAC committed itself to maintain an average daily lift of 2,000 tons until the fall of Rangoon, on the understanding that the seaport would be taken prior to the monsoon. Mountbatten ordered that an amphibious landing should be made near Rangoon to make contact with the armies coming down from the north before the monsoon, and D-Day for DRACULA was set for May 2nd.

Actually, the operation consisted of three parts: the continued advance of the armies southward from Mandalay, the use of paratroopers and the use of a strong naval force in a supporting amphibious assault. During April, the 14th Army continued to advance toward Rangoon, supported by air.

Even though the weather began to turn bad, 84,822 tons of supplies were transported into or within Burma by all air agencies during April.

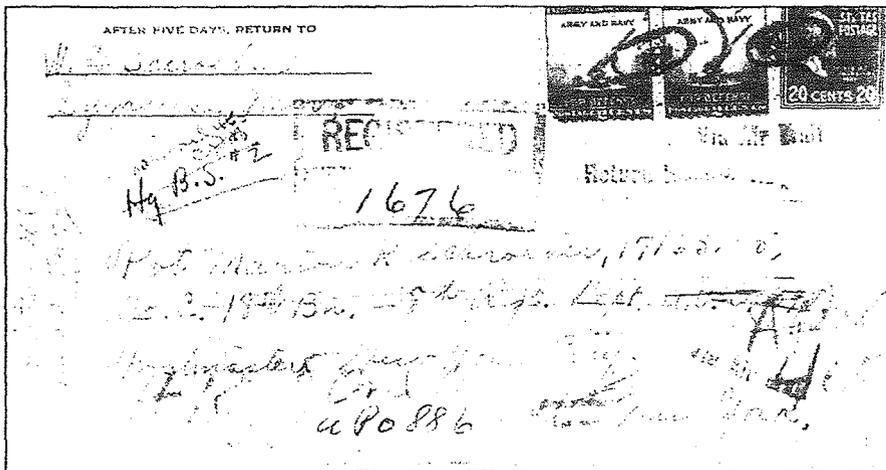
By May 1st, the army spearheads were at Pegu and Prome, the first 40 miles and the second 150 miles from Rangoon. Meanwhile, British naval units assembled at Trincomalee in Ceylon. A covering force sailed from there for the Andaman Sea on April 27th and maneuvered off the coast of Malaya for a week. A destroyer force sailed the same Gulf of Martaban. A carrier force had left Trincomalee on April 23rd for rendezvous with the Navy transports in the vicinity of Akyab and Kyaukpyu and together they sailed on April 30th for the estuary of the Rangoon River.

In preparation for the air phase of DRACULA, the 317th and 310th Troop Carrier Squadrons, augmented by ten aircraft from the U.S. 2nd and 4th Combat Cargo Squadrons, had moved to Kalai-kunda for modifications and training during the latter half of April. Between April 26th and May 2nd, the Strategic Air Force attacked gun emplacements and troop concentrations within the Rangoon area, especially along the banks of the Rangoon River.

On April 29th, the paratroop force of 800 Gurkhas, with their Canadian jumpmasters, were flown by the troop carriers to Akyab, whence they would take off for the drop at Rangoon. Plans for fighter cover by four squadrons of the two air commando groups having been completed at 0230 hours on May 2, 1945, two Pathfinder aircraft took off for a final check on the weather. Though they found clouds and rain along the way, the target was clear. A thunderstorm swept the field at Akyab as the 38 transports assembled for the flight to Rangoon, but there were no mishaps and the jump began at 0633, three minutes behind schedule. The paratroopers landed at Elephant Point, about 20 miles south of Rangoon, encountering no opposition and reporting only eight minor injuries. They had no trouble in their advance inland. Reinforcements and supply were delivered during the afternoon.

At 1130 hours, Group Captain Grandy, flying over the city observed a sign painted by Allied prisoners of war on the roof of the Rangoon jail: "Japs gone." He landed his plane at Mingaladon airfield and entered the city without difficulty. That afternoon the British 15th Corps disembarked from landing craft of the British Navy on both sides of the Rangoon River. The next day, May 3rd, the paratroopers and 15th Corps occupied Rangoon and advanced north to make contact with the army column marching in from Pegu. Although numerous pockets of enemy resistance in the north had still to be cleaned out, for all practical purposes, the Burma campaign was over.

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



This registered letter was mailed to me on Dec. 17, 1943 from Syracuse, Nebraska by my father. It went to six APOs, 398, 886, 936, 686, 465 and to the 498. The last date on the letter was April 10, 1944. It took over 116 days or three months, 25 days before I received it. The reason he sent it registered was he knew something had to happen to me as his letters were returned to him. We had a code to write every week letting him know where I was, and if I was all right. He knew that I was in Africa by the last letter he received from me. He did get my letters sometime in January, I don't know why they were held up, and that I was not in the Signal Company anymore, but now I was in the Ordnance and in CBI, I had left Oran Africa and boarded ship November 25, 1943, my birthday. That's all I could tell him. Marion K. Schroeder, 482 8th Street, Syracuse, NE 68446; (402) 269-2440.

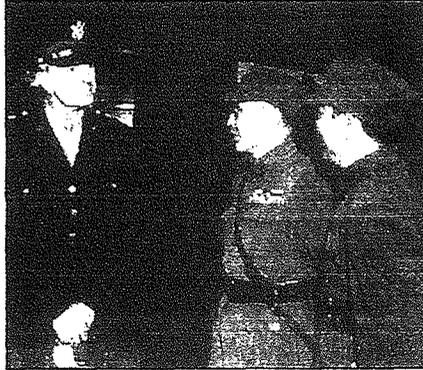
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History of the Army Air Force in CBI - Part XIV

VICTORY IN CHINA

When LGen. Albert C. Wedemeyer arrived in China as Stilwell's successor on October 31, 1944; he assumed duties of chief of staff to the Generalissimo and of Commanding General, U.S. Forces in the China Theater. He was faced with many problems, some of long standing, while others resulted from the Japanese victories of the past summer months. As Wedemeyer saw it, the Japanese strategy, based upon maintenance of an outer zone of defense in the Pacific, had been lost by the MacArthur-Nimitz advance, and an alternative plan, an inner zone of communications to be defended by her forces, was now being implemented. Within this zone, the enemy proposed to have two major lines of communication between the home islands and their southern possessions - an inland corri-



General Wedemeyer arrives in Chungking in October 1944.

dor on the Asiatic mainland and, of secondary importance, a coastal waterway protected by naval units and land-based air power.

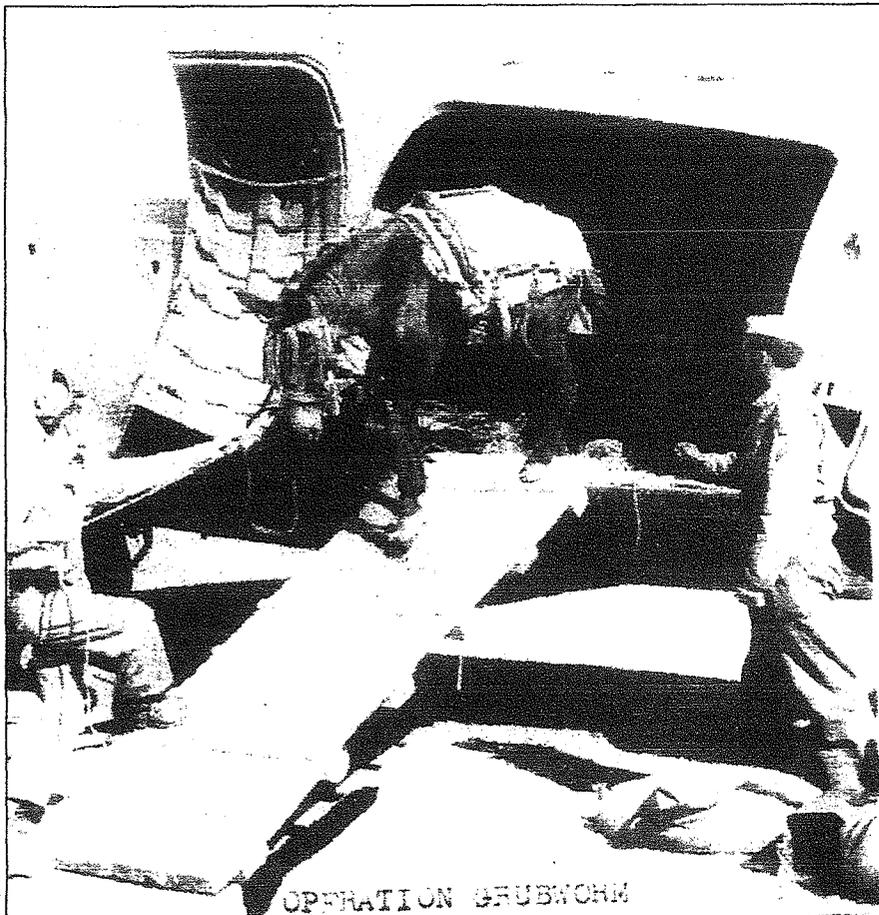
Wedemeyer believed that the Japanese summer campaign, by limiting the 14th Air Force to interfere had achieved its strategic

goal. Their drive south from Hankow had taken Kweilin before Wedemeyer arrived in the theater. On November 11, two weeks after his arrival, Liuchow fell and their troops were moving west toward Nanning and they soon established overland communications with Indo-China. By the end of November, the 14th Air Force major airfields had been occupied and communications between Manchuria and Southeast Asia had been established. It was believed he would try to move on toward Kunming, or to push west toward Chengtu - it was possible to do both at the same time. Success in either of the moves might eliminate China from the war.

Wedemeyer felt that the drive toward Kunming was the more likely move so he made plans toward that end. The first five months between December 1944 and April 1945 were to be dedicated to strategic defensive actions: Chinese troops were to be returned to China from Burma, additional Chinese troops were to be trained and equipped, and the 14th Air Force was to continue its counter-air activity and bombing attacks on enemy communications. Beginning on or about May 1, 1945 it was hoped that a Chinese-American offensive could sweep the enemy back toward Manchuria, sever the newly established line of communications and force an evacuation of Southeast Asia.

Operation Grubworm

On November 29, 1944, Chiang and Wedemeyer told the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the Supreme Allied Commander SE Asia that Chinese troops in Burma were needed in China. The CCS approved but Mountbatten protested that action. The Chinese 14th and 22d Divisions, the Chinese 6th Army Headquarters, one heavy Mortar Company, one Signal Company, and two portable surgical hospitals were scheduled to move by air. The operation, called GRUBWORM, was under the direction of the 10th Air Force, with Col. S. D. Grubbs in charge. The operation was to be done without interference with normal transport and combat operations in Burma. Only a few combat planes were needed to protect the fields from which take-offs were planned. Eastern Air Command (EAC) transferred the 317th and 319th



Troop Carrier Squadrons of the Air Commando groups to Myitkyina North, under the operational control of the 10th Air Force and the ATC furnished additional planes to assist. So no great strain was put on the 10th Air Force and Gen. Davidson was able to continue his airlift to the ground forces advancing toward Mandalay.

Operation GRUBWORM was carried on from Myitkyina (North and South fields), Sahmaw, Warazup, Nansin and from Ledo. Four of these six fields had been constructed only within the previous two months by 10th Air Force engineers, working directly behind the retreating enemy; the 5th field was completed the day before GRUBWORM began. At Nansin, the transports were loaded so close to enemy artillery that in one instance the take-off of a battalion was delayed while the troops searched the area for snipers. The first transport took off December 5, 1944 and the last of the transports landed in China on January 5, 1945, in one month.

To help out, the Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC) provided personnel at each of the fields. When the troops arrived in China they were quartered and provisioned at a nearby field. Since the Chinese troops needed the use of hundreds of draft animals, specially trained personnel were needed for this purpose.

The 1348th AAF BU of ATC's India-China Division, located at Myitkyina South, under LCol. Frank Thornquest coordinated the effort out of Suyung. To transport the Chinese 14th Division, ATC used C-46s based in Assam and Luliang; for the 22d Division, ATC used C-47s from Chanyi, Kunming and Chengkung, as well as China-based combat cargo C-47s.

Altogether, GRUBWORM required 1,328 transport sorties (597 ATC, Air Commando Squadrons for 488 and 10th Air Force for 243). At the close of the operation, which must rank as one of the major transport achievements of the entire war, a total of 25,095 Chinese soldiers had been moved by air from Burma to China. In addition, the lift had included 396 American soldiers, 1,596 animals, 42 jeeps, 48 - 75mm howitzers, 48 - 4.2mm mortars, and 48 A/T guns. Throughout the operation, the weather was very unfavorable, and in many cases the crews were new to the Hump. Nevertheless, only

History of the Army Air Force in CBI Part XIV

Should have run in the Summer 2004 issue but was misfiled. Sorry. - Ed.)

three planes were lost: two of the 317th TC Squadron, crashed into the first ridge of mountains from Myitkyina to China, and one belonged to the 10th Combat Cargo Squadron, its fate unknown. All in all, the achievement was nothing less than SPECTACULAR.

On their arrival in China, the GRUBWORM soldiers became the nucleus of a larger force being organized by Wedemeyer during the winter of 1944-45. The troops were located near Kunming, where they were to serve as a defense force if

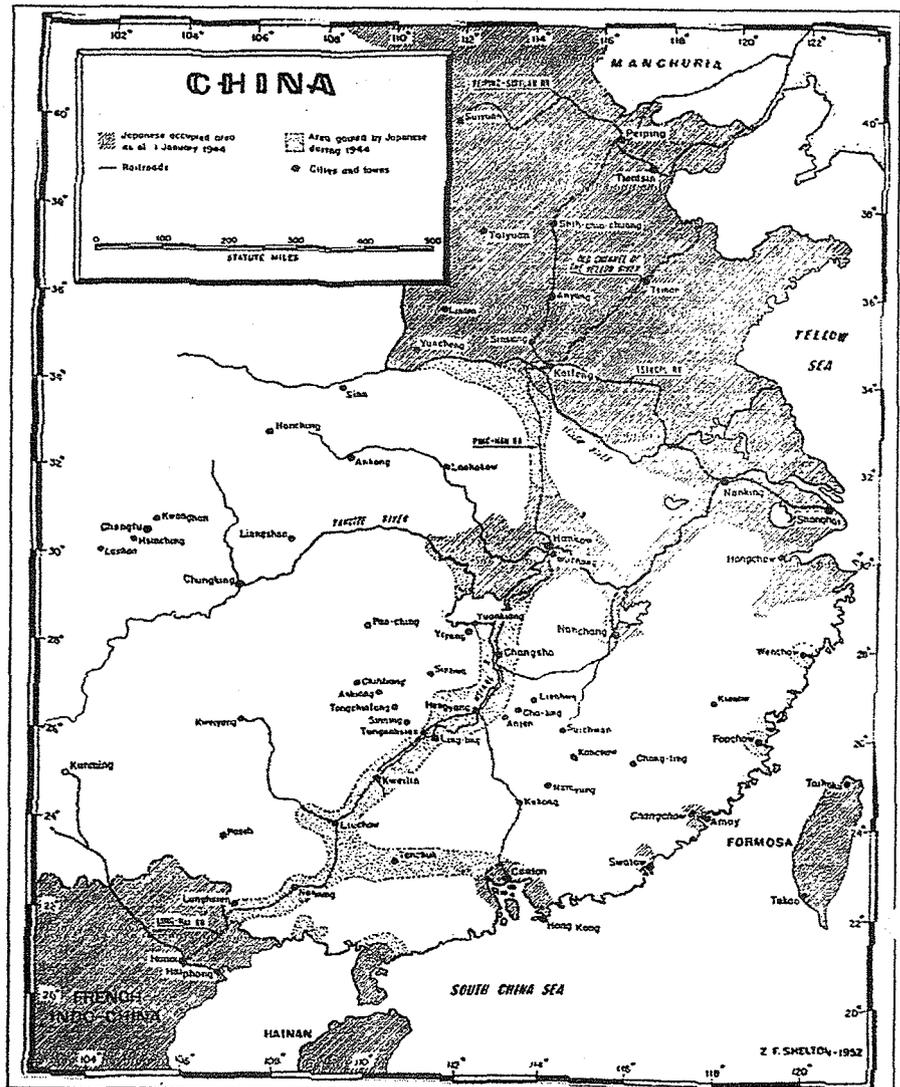
Kunming was threatened. Fortunately, the enemy did not come this direction. Instead, he concentrated on the 14th Air Force bases in East China. That decision gave Wedemeyer an opportunity to prepare for his own offensive.

14th Air Force Operations

While Wedemeyer planned to take the initiative in China, the immediate combat burden fell heavily on the 14th Air Force. Despite the loss of its key bases in East China, it was now greatly augmented.

In January 1944, the 14th Air Force had a strength of 5,758. By October 1944, they had 16,187 and gradually increased to 26,594 by June 1945.

In January 1944, they had 194 fighters, 38 medium bombers and 50 heavy bombers. From October 1944 to June 1945, they went from 457 fighters to 483; medium bombers from 105 to 127; and for heavy bombers from 45 to 65.



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Deliveries of fuel and supplies by the ATC to the 14th Air Force increased from 13,014 tons in October 1944 to 18,307 by May 1945. After the reconquest of Burma in May 1945, Hump tonnage rose to 55,396 tons in June and 71,042 in July. Until the summer of 1945, China remained primarily dependent upon air transport for the sustenance of military operations.

In November 1944, the 14th Air Force had 36 combat squadrons, grouped under the 68th and 69th Composite Wings, the Chinese-American Composite Wing and the 312th Fighter Wing. The 69th Composite Wing (the 16th, 25th, 26th and 449th Fighter Squadrons) and the 341st Bomb Group (M) (11th, 22d and 491st Bomb Squadrons), with Headquarters at Kunming - its mission was the defense of the Hump route and SW China. The 68th Composite Wing (23d Fighter Group with the 74th, 75th and 76th Fighter Squadrons) and the 118th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, was given the job of supporting the Chinese ground forces along the Hankow-Canton railway, interdicting enemy communications in South and Southeast China, and maintaining a counter air campaign. The Chinese-American Composite Wing was composed of the 3d Fighter Group, the 5th Fighter Group and the 1st Bomb Group (M), each with four squadrons; it had as its combat area Central China. The 312th Fighter Wing, made up of the 311th Fighter Group (528th, 529th and 530th Fighter Squadrons); and the 81st Fighter Group (91st and 92d Fighter Squadrons) had been limited to defend the Chengtu airfields, but by the end of 1944, its mission was defined as the interdiction of the Tungpu, Ping-Han, Lung-Hai, Tsingpu and Suiyuan-Peiping railways.

During the last two months of 1944, the 69th Composite Wing's primary mission was in French Indo-China and part of Kwangsi Province. Since it was also assigned to defend the Hump route, the 69th Wing supported the British in the last phases of the Salween Campaign and the reoccupation of Central Burma. After the occupation of Central Burma, the 69th Wing devoted most of its attention to interdiction in Indo-China, giving support to the resisting French along the Yunnan border.

With its increase of planes and

personnel, the 14th Air Force increased its missions at a time when the enemy appeared to be victorious everywhere in China, but they fought at a decided disadvantage. Within the newly overrun areas, a Chinese army of some 150,000 poorly equipped troops continued to fight. To help them out, Chennault in November 1944 organized the East China Air Task Force (ECATF). Under a plan called STRONGPOINT, he divided the 68th Composite Wing: the 75th and 76th Fighter Squadrons remained west of that corridor, while the 74th Fighter Squadron and the 118th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron were located east of it. These two squadrons were strengthened by a detachment of Liberators from the 308th Bomb Group (H), the 21st Photo Squadron and a few transports.

As always in China, the main problem of the Task Force was supply. So the strength of those units was reduced to lessen the amount of supplies needed, in order that some of those supplies could go to the beleaguered Chinese forces.

On November 12, the first units of the ECATF reached Suichwan and one week later Operation STRONGPOINT began. Already the enemy began to concentrate troops near Cha-ling and Anjen, 85 miles northwest of Suichwan. This suggested that the Japanese planned to overrun the remaining eastern airfields before moving westward toward Kunming. On January 15, 1945, the enemy struck along the Chaling-Lienhwa road. Meanwhile, the 14th Air Force found it impossible to get the needed 1,000 tons of ground supplies to the Chinese troops every month because the Chinese government refused to release the needed supplies; so the Chinese forces had to retreat. On January 27th, Suichwan was occupied; Kanchow fell on February 7th; then Namyung was lost. By mid-February the only field left was Changting and Operation STRONGPOINT was over.

Despite this early disappointment, the ECATF had made a valiant effort. The enemy in that area had air superiority - perhaps as many as 160 bombers and 400 fighters. They remained relatively inactive because of a lack of an adequate warning system. Time and time again our planes swept over their fields strafing planes parked wing to wing and met little

or no opposition. All told, 747 sorties were flown and 110 tons of bombs were dropped. The ECATF claimed that as many as 312 enemy planes were destroyed or damaged. Our air units lost no planes in aerial combat, but 15 Mustangs were shot down by ground fire and 13 planes were lost to other causes.

These counter-air strikes by the ECATF protected the Chinese Army from enemy air attacks; they also helped pin down the enemy air force. It also helped allied efforts in the Pacific. All of the 14th Air Force shared in the offensive, but the 312th Fighter Wing, now free from defending B-29 bases at Chengtu played an active role. Under BGen. Russel E. Randall, their Mustangs, between November 1944 and February 1945, raided enemy fields all over Central China. Japanese reaction against our airfields was mainly at night and never in great strength. We lost six fighters, three B-24 tankers and 4,000 gallons of fuel on these attacks, but the effect on ECATF operations was slight.

The ECATF put enemy communications as their second priority after its counter-air activity. Although the interdiction strikes were constant, it was of small size - a "big show" was the 16-plane raid against Nanking and the 13-plane attack against Hankong on December 8, 1944. Throughout January 1945, the 5th Fighter Group of CACW had daily raids against ammunition dumps at Hankow and Wuchang. As a result, by February, the enemy air force was so well in hand that most 14th Air Force units concentrated on interdiction of enemy supplies bound to the Japanese Army. This also prevented overall communications in the southern parts of the Empire. Consequently, railroads, bridges, canals and motor vehicles became the chief targets. Within a month, 142 locomotives and 37 bridges were either destroyed or temporarily rendered unserviceable.

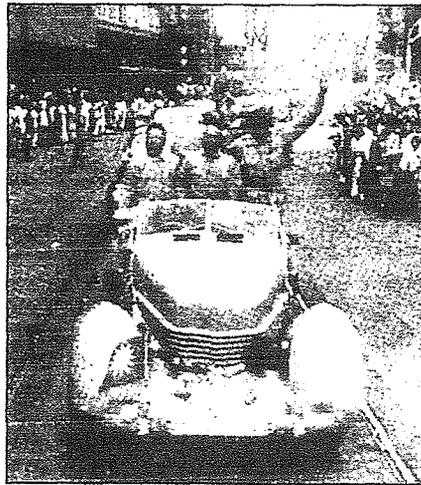
The damaged locomotives were hauled up to North China for repair. Three squadrons of the 308th Bomb Group were then used for strikes against repair depots up north. On March 9, 1945, 31 Liberators with a fighter escort struck warehouses and locomotives; they made a similar raid on March 16 and caused much destruction. On March 23d, 28 Liberators, escorted

As a result of the new spirit among the Chinese troops and the close air support by the 14th Air Force, the Japanese were decisively defeated in the Chihkiang campaign. By May 15th, the enemy was in full retreat. And, this was the turning point in China. Within a few days, the enemy was moving back toward the Indo-China border and preparations were being made to abandon Liuchow. By June, it was quite certain that the enemy would not try to re-deploy their troops south of the Yellow River and before the end of that month, hitherto strongly-held coastal positions below Shanghai were being evacuated. There were even signs that the estimated 100,000 troops in the Canton region were also going to be moved out. By the end of July, Central China and the China coast were nearly free. There was the possibility of a fight along the southern border of Manchuria, but within another two weeks the Japanese government had surrendered. With that surrender, "the China incident" was closed.

There is no evidence to suggest that the failure of the Chihkiang offensive in any way affected the Japanese decision to surrender. The American victory was won in the Pacific and China remained at the close of the war as she had since the attack on Pearl Harbor, outside the main theater of combat. The enemy's decision to extend his grasp on China came too late to affect the ultimate decision and served chiefly to deny the 14th Air Force the opportunity to play its anticipated part in cutting the enemy's lifeline through the China Sea. That our Pacific forces were able to move speedily to the accomplishment of their purposes in the final phases of the war without substantial aid from China-based air forces is one more comment on the frustration which had plagued the history of AAF operations in China from the beginning of the war. For the men of the 14th Air Force, however, there was the satisfaction of a fight well fought and of postwar testimony by ranking Japanese officers in China that, but for the 14th Air Force "we could have gone anywhere we wished."

A Final Reorganization

At the end of the war, Chennault no longer commanded in China, and plans for reorgani-



Allied victory drive along Nanking Road in Shanghai. (U.S. Army Military History Institute).

zation of AAF forces on the mainland were being put into effect. These plans had their origins earlier in 1945 in two considerations: the prospect of an early liberation of all Burma, and the desire to use all available AAF resources in Asia for cooperation with our forces in the Pacific as they approached the mainland of China. Termination of the Anglo-American effort in Burma would re-emphasize the contrasting interests between the two nations. Britain looked southeastward toward reoccupation of Singapore, but, on the other hand, our primary aim in CBI had from the first been to help China. Strategic plans for the Pacific still rested to some extent upon the assumption that an amphibious landing on the China coast might be a necessary preliminary to the final assault on Japan; such a landing would depend in great measure for its success on an enlarged AAF force in China. Even if there was no amphibious assault on the China coast there would be work enough for China-based planes in operations off the China coast in cooperation with Philippines or Formosa-based planes of our Pacific air force.

Before the start of the final offensive in Burma, Gen. Stratemeyer and his staff planned to dissolve the Eastern Air Command (EAC) and transfer its AAF components to China. These proposals provided for an AAF headquarters in China to command both the 10th and 14th Air Forces. This was approved on January 15, 1945. Chennault was against this plan.

Wedemeyer was to take the proposal for final approval to the Pentagon in person. When Wedemeyer went to Washington in March he took with him Col. Howard Means as Chennault's personal representative, MGen. Charles B. Stone III, Chief of Staff, EAC, and several ATC officers also accompanied Wedemeyer. Means' argument against the plan was that it could not be justified because of available logistical support. His argument was countered by a promise that the Hump lift would be augmented by many more C-54s. The reaction to the proposed plan in Washington was favorable.

It was expected that by July 1945, sufficient tonnage being available, and the USAAF participation in Southeast Asia Command Operations being terminated, air units of the AAF India-Burma Theater would be deployed to China as required. The 10th Air Force was to be based south and west of Chihkiang for direct support of the Chinese army and for the isolation of the battlefield by attacking railway and road communications from Hengyang through Hanoi and down the West River to Canton-Hong Kong. The 14th Air Force, organized as a bomber command and based along the Chengtu-Yellow River bend, was to be charged primarily with strategic operations. Stratemeyer, who would head the new organization, was to locate his headquarters close to Wedemeyer's.

By that time, the campaign in South Burma was almost ended, with the occupation of Rangoon a matter of days; also, fewer and fewer aircraft were needed. Accordingly, plans were made for an early move of some 10th Air Force units to China, and on May 5, 1945 Wedemeyer gave the necessary authorization. But, almost immediately, he reversed his decision and told Stratemeyer that because of Hump tonnage, it was impossible to receive the 10th Air Force at that time. Wedemeyer offered Stratemeyer the over-all command of a much smaller air force in China with Chennault and Davidson dividing the command under him. Stratemeyer replied frankly that he did not want the job and advised Wedemeyer to accept Stone as air force commander and make Chennault, Davidson and himself available for return to

the U.S. One of the reasons was that fewer C-54s would be available for the Hump. After deactivation of the EAC on May 31st, some transports and perhaps one heavy bombardment group would be assigned to the Hump route; other cargo planes and one fighter group would be sent to the 14th Air Force. The 10th Air Force would then be liquidated.

On May 16th, Arnold's deputy in Washington wrote Wedemeyer that in any event Chennault would be replaced. By May 22d, it was reported that the promised C-54s were on the way to India. There seemed to be a failure in communication between China and Washington. Early in June, Arnold met Stratemeyer in Manila and he was surprised that Stratemeyer had not yet assumed command in China and that he was recently promoted to LGeneral for that specific purpose.

Arnold wanted to avoid any complication regarding Chennault's presence in China. When Stratemeyer left for China on June 17th, he carried a letter from Arnold to Wedemeyer advising him of the need for a senior experienced in which you and I have confidence.

The letter also said that Chennault has been in China fighting a defensive war; this must change to a modern type of striking offensive air power. Also, that he would appreciate Wedemeyer's concurrence in Chennault's early withdrawal from the China Theater, that Chennault should take advantage of the retirement privileges now available to physically disqualified officers that make their pay not subject to income tax. Otherwise, he may be reduced and put back on the retired list in his permanent rank (captain).

Arnold's letter had been preceded by a message of June 8th from General Marshall expressing surprise that Wedemeyer's original plan had been dropped and that Stratemeyer had not yet assumed command. Wedemeyer, on June 20th, concurred and that Stratemeyer would command the "China Theater Air Force," and under him Chennault would command the "Strategic Air Force" and Davidson the "Tactical Air Force." Six days later, Chennault entered a vigorous protest against the whole plan, and not until July 6, 1945 did he hand in his request for retirement. Stratemeyer promptly approved

and designated Stone as Chennault's successor in command of the 14th Air Force. During June, a number of officers flew to Chungking to arrange for quarters and office space; this was followed on July 4th of a group of officers from Hastings Mill to Chungking to organize a Headquarters AAF, China Theater. General Stratemeyer left for China twelve days later and on July 23rd the 10th Air Force Headquarters opened in Kunming. When the war ended, the move to China was still in process. During these last days of combat, the 14th Air Force carried on operations, but for the 10th Air force, its war ended, not inappropriately, with the problems of one more major reorganization engaging the attention of most of its personnel.

* * * * *

(Extracted from the History of the AAF in WWII by Joe Shupe. This is the last series on the operations of the AAF in CBI.)

- LETTERS -

ATC Gets Too Much Credit

To the Editor:

I want to compliment Joe Shupe on his excellent articles about operations in the CBI Theater. For that reason, I am reluctant to take an exception to the article in the previous issue giving ATC all the credit for starting the Hump Operation. He apparently was not aware of the excellent work of the Second Troop Carrier Squadron, which did such an outstanding job before ATC was finally geared up. I would like to cite a memo written by Lt. Col. Richard Knight, Executive Officer of the India-China Wing of ATC, dated June 9, 1943.

"On March 9, 1943, the Second Troop Carrier Squadron was attached to the India-China Wing for the purpose of lending a hand in the task of transporting supplies and ammunition from India to China. Its personnel were young and inexperienced. There was no time for extended special training. With only meager instructions in the technique of "flying the Hump" was told to go for it. It did more than lend a hand in the India-China transport operation. It made a very fine record, unexcelled by any other comparable unit of the India-China Wing. On July 1, 1943, the Second Troop Carrier Squadron is to be relieved of its present mission and re-attached to the Tenth Air Force.

"It is hoped that at some future date, the Commanding Officer of the Second Troop Carrier Squadron and the personnel under his command may receive the public recognition that they so clearly deserve. In accordance with the publicity policy of the India-China Wing, ATC, as approved by the War Department, an effort has been made to suppress all publicity relating to the India-China transport operations of the Second Troop Carrier Squadron . . . as a security measure."

Through the years, ATC has received all the credit from the writers of Hump articles but Second Troop never has been recognized. All they did from March 17, 1943 to June 30, 1943, was to fly 651 round trip missions over the Hump, hauling 1,768 tons and unnumbered military personnel from India to China. From that date, the Second Troop Carrier Squadron began flying drop missions to the ground fighting forces but, until the end of the war, the squadron was called upon at different times, to continue flying the Hump as requested. It was at these times that other Troop Carrier and Combat Cargo Squadrons also commenced flying the Hump when called upon but you would never know it! ATC keeps getting all the credit and, while they did a fine job, they do not deserve all the credit, sad to say, you would think so if you read so many articles and publications relating to the Hump Operation.

Albert O. Wilkat,
7520 NW 7th St.,
Plantation, FL 33317

(Gee, I've been led to believe CNAC deserves more credit for pioneering and making a success of the Hump Operation. The power of the pen! - Ed.)



Mary Gress with Basha Commander Frank Tozer. Mary drove down from Fair Oaks to attend the September meeting of the General Sliney Basha.

Sydney Wilson photo

The Signal Corps (Sig C) in the CBI

In the CBI, the struggle with the Japanese sprawled over an immense area. This contrasted sharply with the relatively compact and homogeneous theaters of operation against Germany. In both areas, Signal units served within a similar organizational framework.

The circumstances and problems, however, differed. In Europe, massive supply of equipment, specialists and communications services for large armies in relatively small areas, were seldom approached in the CBI. Instead, CBI had relatively small forces and little equipment, all widely dispersed.

The various headquarters contended with problems of water and air movement over enormous distances, measured in the thousands of miles, rather than in the hundreds. More often than not, CBI signal units operated in regions where there had existed previously no communications facilities.

In Europe, the Sig C regularly rehabilitated and then heavily used facilities that had long served those nations. In the CBI, Sig units had to bring virtually everything with them, all the radio and wire the Army required for both headquarters and field use. Sig C men also had to construct the buildings for the facilities, from the ground up, such as in wilderness areas in Assam and Burma.

The First Sig C Troops in CBI

In February 1942, some Sig C men from the 52nd Sign Bn., were sent to Java together with a number of Sig C teams, which had recently arrived in Australia. They never reached Java. At Fremantle, in W. Australia, they found themselves suddenly transferred to vessels which sailed into the Indian Ocean. In Mid-March, the ships docked Karachi. Seven of these men immediately set up a message center while Teams C, J, and a part of E went to work erecting a radio station.

Team H went to New Delhi to construct a station which would control the future radio network of the CBI Theater of Operations.

Back in Karachi, they first installed a 300-watt transmitter in an airplane crate, and made contact with New Delhi on April 7th.

What they wanted most was to contact station WAR in Washington. They had a powerful 10-kw transmitter but no generator which was left behind in the States. But they had a smaller 1-kw transmitter with a suitable generator. They improvised by sending a strong signal across the North Pole to Station WAR by April 22. Station WVNA Karachi thus entered the ACAN system. This was not always dependable, so they later installed a 10-kw transmitter and got a 75 KVA generator from Standard Oil Co., in Arabia. In May, they were able to reach Chungking where a Navy transmitter, taken from a Yangtze River boat, replied.

During April and May, other teams moved from Karachi throughout India. The movement increased after the 835th Signal Service Co. (which later became a battalion) arrived on May 16 when the BRAZIL docked in Karachi. Men of the 835th were amazed to find that other Sig C troops had preceded them; they commiserated with them about conditions as they moved to barracks at New Malir, about 17 miles from Karachi. Communication nets had to be set up and maintained over the large area comprising the CBI, where teams would soon penetrate, even outside to Asmara in Eritrea - team 7 went there to install a relay station. That allowed the unreliable circuit over the North Pole to be bypassed.

Even before the 835th arrived, the first Sig C teams were on the move. In April, Team L went to Asanol (north of Calcutta) to service the RAF who were operating against the Japanese in Burma; they were later sent to Allahabad (halfway to New Delhi). As the airbase there became the headquarters of the 9th Bomb Group, they set up a 300w transmitter, but were asked to set up wire lines. Being unfamiliar in telephone and wire work, they soon leaned and put in and operated 30 miles of wire, 40 telephones and two switchboards.

Team I tossed a coin with Team J, to see which would win a better assignment to Bangalore. Team I lost and was sent to Assam. Before the team could set up, they were ordered into Burma to provide communications for Gen. Stilwell, then at Lashio, which the enemy was attacking. As the British, then

the Chinese, abandoned Lashio, the Sig C men stayed on, except for a detail of seven men who were to report to Stilwell's headquarters at Maymo. Even as the detail forced its truck through retreating troops, it found that Maymo too was already being abandoned, but the men pushed on to Mandalay, and then turned northwards under Japanese bombing, to Schwebo where Gen. Stilwell halted briefly. During their four days there, they set up and operated a message center, amid bombing each day.

As the Burma campaign ended, Stilwell called for air transport and it was the detail from Team I that sent the call. One plane flew in. Part of the detail boarded it, the rest remained and escaped on foot with Stilwell. At first their radio truck accompanied the Stilwell party, later it had to be abandoned in the jungle along with the rest of the party's motor vehicles.

The remainder of Team I had stayed at Lashio which was not cut off by the enemy. These forgotten Sig C men never got orders to retreat. They now had only one escape route left, the Burma Road leading into China. They loaded their equipment, including a 300w transmitter, into broken down trucks. Two sergeants in one of the trucks won out against the heated argument of a colonel who wanted to throw off the signal supplies and load some relatively useless equipment instead. After some bad moments when they were pursued by the enemy, they reached Kunming early in May. Their transmitter was the first large Sig C radio in that area of China. A month later, the men were ordered to Chungking. The equipment they brought in was worth its weight in gold. The transmitter then became the circuit between Chungking and New Delhi and for over a year it transmitted allied traffic.

Signal Corps Problems

The first signal officer in China was LCol Joseph Heinrich, who served with the mission under Gen. Magruder in Chungking before Pearl Harbor. Stilwell's party (who arrived in March 1942) included Col. George Townsend as his signal officer. When Stilwell went into Burma, Townsend was his acting signal officer. Team I of the Sig C shared with Gen. Stilwell and his staff, the bitter defeat in Burma.

Later in 1942, as Gen. Stilwell

sought to train and equip the Chinese forces, and as the Army Air Force built up an airlift over the Hump, Col. Townsend left the theater, and was replaced by Col. Samuel S. Lamb, signal officer of the 10th AF, who became the acting signal officer on the CBI staff in New Delhi. During the months thereafter, Sig C men fared austere in their operations support of the Allied effort in CBI.

Signal Corps supported the Army Air Forces and assisted in training of Chinese troops toward the day when offensive action against the enemy in Burma might resume. In small detachments, stretched from Karachi to Chungking, they built and operated facilities for ACAN and for AAF operations, which during the two years the enemy sat astride the Burma Road, provided the Hump lifeline to China.

From the early days of 1942, until late 1943, Sig C men in the CBI continued to struggle with chronic communications exigencies and shortages. Those who worked for the ACAN stations at Karachi, and at New Delhi, were somewhat better provided for, as were also those serving at some of the AAF activities, such as the Hump airlift. But, for many others - those with the Chinese, and the teams that put them in remote AWS jungle sites in Assam, and in N. Burma - the story was much different.

Among the latter, were small teams serving as aircraft observers who radioed out their sightings of enemy planes amid most primitive wilderness environments. Their neighbors were sometimes head-hunters. Experiences with the tribesmen were often weird and occasionally hair raising. Such was an incident that befell members of a Signal EEIS team in the Naga Hills on the India-Burma border, seeking the electronic equipment of a wrecked Japanese airplane. Spending a night near a Naga village, they found that the natives had placed a guard over them. Late in the night awesome torch rites were performed close by, which the uncomprehending Americans feared were hostile. Not until morning did they learn that the guard and ceremonies were intended to defend them from evil spirits.

The Naga tribesmen prized not money but salt, and took it as pay

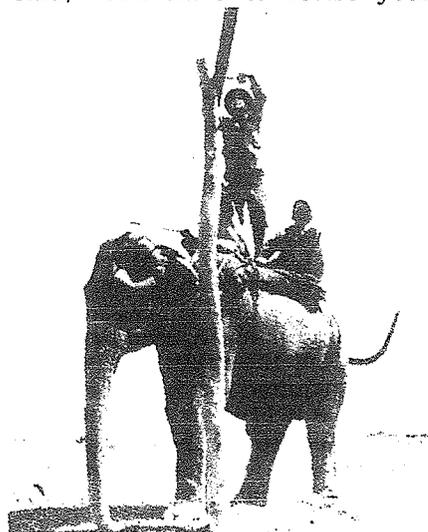
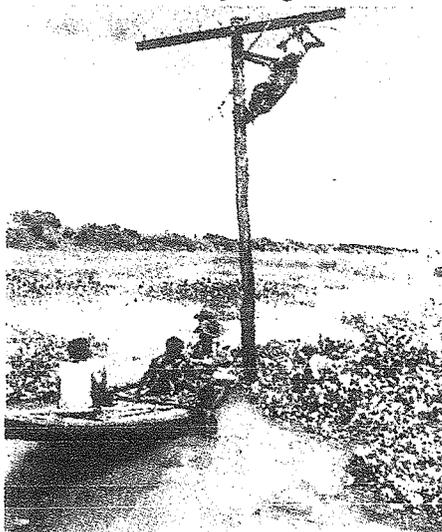
for their occasional services to the Americans. Their chieftans hankered for red blankets, which Capt. John G. Haury of the 679th Sig A/C Warning Co., judiciously gave out to win native allegiance. None of Haury's teams ever suffered violence at the hands of the natives, but at times they were worried, as evidenced by a radio message Haury once received from one of his spotter groups: "Haury from Cranmer. Party Nagas went seven miles from here. Wiped out village of 250. Passed through with 30 heads. Have photos verifying this. Would like hand grenades. May need them!"

The lack of equipment and supplies that were badly needed harrowed the spirits of many Sig C men, while other items that were not needed might abound. "The soldier starts out young and full of

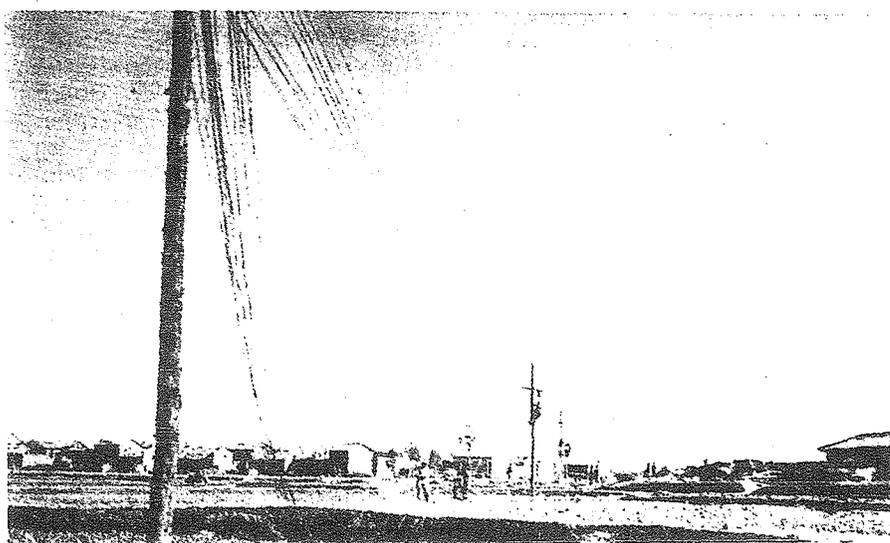
hope," said a sergeant of the 835th Signal Service Bn describing the CBI trooper, "Then he does not get equipment. At first, he thinks he will make up for the lack of material by putting in more effort.

After a while, he finds out that equipment just is not coming and that effort is not enough. He feels forgotten and discouraged." He added, "We get little information, instruction books or the like. When we got something, it was 7-8 months old. In the early days of the war, communications equipment, if it arrived at all, arrived in poor shape." "It almost broke our hearts to get a set in China and find 2-3 tubes out," CBI veterans recalled later. "We might just as well not get any set."

There were other supply problems summed up by a CBler who said, "You have to revise your



Communications in CBI depended frequently upon the initiative of individual members of small Signal Corps units. From the swamps and plains of India (upper left and right) to the rice paddies of China (below) wire lines were installed and maintained.



thinking about signal supplies when you are fighting in a part of the world where everything that doesn't rust quickly will corrode or rot away even faster, where batteries have less than half the normal life, and insects do everything but march away with your poles bodily."

Amid these harassment's, the Sig C men first on the CBI scene did as well as they could with what they had. In India, they supplemented their meager supplies with odds and ends of British equipment. Everywhere they used whatever salvaged parts they could obtain. Wire circuits were simple, often primitive, and radios, even ancient types, were few.

The theater signal officer, Gen. King, stated that during the early months of the war "little more was provided than the minimum needed to support the Army Air Forces. Gen. Stilwell recognized the Signal Corps plight, and he, in fact, took upon himself some of the onus for CBI communications inadequacies during the early months of the war, subsequently admitting that communications had been "handled very poorly, principally due to my own ignorance."

A Sig C footnote to the Allied defeat in Burma in 1942 was put on record two years later: "It now seems apparent that the unsuccessful defense in Burma in April-May, 1942, can be attributed, in part, to a shortage of signal communications equipment and an inadequate co-ordination of the communications facilities which were available."

By mid-1943, conditions in the Theater were at least improving as Gen. King arrived to become the CBI chief signal officer, in June, bringing with him Col. Paul L. Neal who would become the SOS signal officer under Gen. Wheeler.

By July 1943, the number of Sig C troops in the CBI had increased to several thousand. The majority of them supported the AAF. The remainder, under the Theater chief signal officer, included the 955th Radio Intelligence Co., a few V-mail personnel, and, of course, the 835th Signal Service Bn., whose men operated in detachments scattered all over China and India. Gen. King soon would have more troops. By June 30, 1944, Sig C troops in CBI would number about 800 officers and warrant officers,



Dick and Miriam Bettinger of Gen. Sliney Basha. Syd Wilson photo

and nearly 13,000 enlisted men.

The Hqs Signal Section in New Delhi was expanded to 60 officers and 196 enlisted men. The SOS Hqs Signal Section numbered nearly as many. Entire new units soon arrived. Two signal operation companies, the 988th and 993rd in mid-1943, to meet the need of Chinese forces readying to retake Burma.

In October 1943, the 219th Depot Co., and the 181st Signal Repair Co., arrived for duty in signal depots. In December, the 96th Signal Bn, and half of the 31st Signal Construction Bn, arrived, the former to work on pole line construction along the Ledo Road, and the latter to build lines in India from Calcutta to Kharagpur, and along the route to Assam. Not all of the remaining half of the 31st arrived. Their transport, HMS ROHNA, was sunk by enemy action in the eastern Mediterranean.

There were still shortages, of course - the universal lack of spare parts and of maintenance facilities, as Col. Heinrich the signal officer of the Y-Force (Yunnan Chinese divisions) lamented in December 1943. That same month, Col. Neal urged that he be enabled to stockpile pole line material (despite War Dept. strictures) and switchboards to meet needs presently unspecified but certain to arise. He cited needs for cable types, of which there were no supplies in India. And, he added that nowhere in the country was a single set of cable splicer's equipment to be found. In September 1944, the new CBI chief signal officer, Brig. Gen. Wm. G. Reeder, explained, "We will work up a project for a stockpile without using the word and make it modest enough to be defensible."

But, already, before the end of 1943, as Allied combat troops and the Ledo Road builders drove eastward from Ledo over the Naga Hills of India, and down into the narrow valley of N. Burma, troop and supply activities were mounting and so were the enabling communications - both wire and radio.

Radio, in fact, preceded the wire. Along the Ledo Road, for example, as bulldozers first broke track into Burma in 1943, Sig C men at a 75-watt radio station in Ledo maintained communications with mobile radios at the advancing roadbed. By the time the workers pushed the track to Shingbwiyang, in N. Burma, 100 miles across the mountains from Ledo, the Sig C had six stations operating in the net, which primarily supported the road construction. Traffic over these radio channels alone reached 25,000 messages a week before wire service took over.

By the spring of 1944, as Sig troops erected the pole line along this stretch, the radio net began to revert to a standby status in case the wire lines went dead. Radio continued to be needed, however, for the initial communications along the advance sections of the road as it penetrated deeper into Burma, until wire lines could catch up.

By August 1944, there were 12 stations in two nets serving the road. As the route reached China, the last radio stations in this network opened at Wanting, on the China border, on February 21, 1945, and at Kunming on March 5, 1945.

In addition to these local radio services, the Sig C was making progress in long-range radio-communications spanning the CBI. On December 23, 1943, the radio sites numbered 22, scattered over 3,500 miles from Karachi to Kweilin.

The year 1944, would bring tremendous progress, as rapidly as equipment arrived, toward faster, large communications capacity with the increasing application of radio-teletype and on-line automatic cipher sets.

When Gen. King, former CBI chief signal officer came back to the Pentagon, he labored to improve signal service in the CBI. He helped in assuring that the CBI got more people and equipment. Much impetus toward better com-

munications arose during 1944 because of the MATTERHORN project, in which the XX Bomber Command would attack Japan from B-29 bases from Chengtu, China, with support from India airfields. Operational control over that command came direct from Hqs AAF in Washington, from Lt. Gen. Henry Arnold acting for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was the first time that military operations in an Army theater were commanded over such great distances, much in the manner in which the Navy Dept., in Washington, operated its ships over the seven seas. Tremendous radioteletype facilities provided by the Sig C would give Gen. Arnold the singular control that he desired.

Gen. King, exhausted and broken in health, he could no longer carry on with his tasks and was replaced in June 1944, by Gen. Reeder who with fresh energy attacked signal operations. On November 17, 1944, the chief signal officer of the War Dept. appraised the Sig C job of CBI:

"In my opinion, Gen. Reeder has the most difficult Signal job in any of the overseas theaters, I want all staff divisions and services of this office to give him all possible assistance. It is particularly desirable that the Plans and Operations Divisions do everything possible to fight his battles in the War Dept., and secure War Dept. approval of actions he desires to take."

Gen. Reeder soon visited the widely scattered signal activities and noted variations in each area. He found that in road and pipeline operations under Gen. Pick, SOS was the commanding authority, and the signal officer of the area reported directly to that officer. Also, that the signal officer serving the X-Force in the 1944 Burma campaign, LtCol Geo. Moynahan, Jr., reported to Gen. Stilwell, who commanded the Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC), and the CBI Theater. Regardless of the ambiguous theater relationships in general, Reeder wrote on September 14, 1944:

"There is an area of twilight between the combat authority of the X Force (under Gen. Stilwell), a case of Grant fighting Meade's Army, and the authority of Pick. This is occasioned by the fact that the X Force has no army troops other than the Sig C troops we have assigned them. Therefore, Pick



Edgar Fulwider and Lorelie of Gen. G. W. Stiney Basha.

Syd Wilson photo

builds their roads, bridges, run their depots, handles their air dropping and a host of other things.

"For certain other reasons, the rear echelon of the X Force remains west of Ledo although the forward echelon is 160 miles further down the road and will soon be in Myitkyina. There results from this set-up, a rather difficult problem for the theater signal officer."

Col. Moynahan was inclined like the rest of the staff, Reeder recommended, to issue orders in the name of Gen. Stilwell, the theater commander. This could raise doubts as to just who might be Gen. Stilwell's signal officer – the chief signal officer of the CBI theater or the NCAC signal officer. But Reeder said, "I have no doubt," and he set about doing his utmost to exert strong control over this most ambiguous tortured of theaters.

In his visits, Gen. Reeder probed all Sig C installations from Calcutta to Chungking, finding in general great growth and improvements. In supply, so much signal equipment was at last arriving that there now arose the problem of having enough troops to handle it; in the China area, he found the signal depot at Kunming had but one officer and seven men to do the work. He found his message centers prospering everywhere. The one in New Delhi was moving as many as 400,000 groups of traffic a day; at Chabua, 120,000 a day. "Compare the number of personnel doing it with big headquarters of other theaters, and I think the CBI is doing all right," he exulted in September.

During 1944, a CBI attempt was made to combine the two signal sections of SOS and CBI theater

headquarters. Since SOS already handled the signal supply system (except for AAF and part of the China signal supply), that headquarters felt that they should set up a signal communications service to take over construction, installation, operation and maintenance of all permanent and semi-permanent signal facilities in the theater, except those serving the AAF and combat troops. This was meant to conserve personnel, but the idea was rejected by theater headquarters.

Hardly had Gen. Reeder begun to consolidate and strengthen his signal responsibilities than he lost a third of his area of responsibility. In October 1944, the War Dept. separated the China portion of the theater from the India and Burma portion. Gen. Reeder remained the chief signal officer of the I-B Theater under Lt. Gen. Daniel Sultan. Just before breakup, Reeder went to China to strengthen Sig C support. There had been much unhappiness in those quarters regarding theater signals.

The Signal Section at New Delhi had tried to control Army communications in China through three signal area officers assigned to Chungking, Kunming and Kweilin, but the three officers had too few troops for efficient operations.

The 14th Air Force had many more, and it was they who actually did most of the signal work in China. Consequently, the 14th Air Force tended to regard the ineffective area signal officers "rather a nuisance," and seven proposed to take over all signal communications in China. Reeder sought to placate the air-men, and to convince them that he would provide them with better signal support in the future.

But all this was to no avail, as on October 27, 1944, Maj. Gen. Wedemeyer took command of the China Theater, and the new theater's signal responsibilities devolved upon Col. James H. Marsh, who had been the China area officer in Chungking, with a total office force of one enlisted man. Being understaffed, he asked Reeder to continue to operate as the theater signal officer for both theaters. Wedemeyer rejected Reeder's offer to send either Col. Neal or Col. Petzing there.

As Gen. Reeder saw it, the

separate China Theater was a mistake. As new people were brought into China, they did not have the experience of the old India-Burma hands. And, as expected, after the collapse of the enemy in Burma late in 1944, the I-B Theater became primarily a source of supply to China, which was being increasingly isolated by Japanese advances in E. China.

For purposes of supply, Col. Guest in Washington, told Reeder "We still would like to consider the two theaters as an entity and hope there will be no attempt to set up separate stocks . . ." That wish, Reeder replied was "optimistic," and he added "The War Dept. could have thought up other ways of confusing our complicated situation, but I believe they have hit upon the best."

Actually as matters did turn out, Reeder did manage to maintain close relations with Col. Marsh and to provide men and supplies (particularly toward completion of the Calcutta-Pole line into China.

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Source: "The Sig C in the CBI" official history of the Sig C in WW II. Part II: The Calcutta-Kunming Pole Line; and Part III - Combat Communications will appear in future issues of the SOUND-OFF.

— LETTERS —

Auchinleck Appeal

To the Editor:

Reading through the Summer, 1998 SOUND-OFF, a thought struck me concerning something very close to my heart and something I feel many of my fellow CBiers would relate to. Regardless, I would very much appreciate it if you would give it your consideration and, if appropriate, to give this letter space in the next edition.

What I am writing about concerns the Auchinleck Appeal, a fund created and administered by the Indian Army Association (IAA), a Britain-based group with a membership of former officers of the British Indian Army, which, of course, ceased to exist upon the birth of independent India and Pakistan in 1947. The fund was created when we learned of the failure of the two countries to use the large sums of money the British government had given for the purpose of providing aid and



Savvy Savinelli; holds a 16' x 20' piece of silk fabric with the Donald Duck insignia, personally designed for the 21st Field Hospital by Walt Disney himself. The lettering was embroidered by Chinese women at Paoshan in Yunnan province where the 21st was stationed in 1943. Savvy's article, in the Summer SOUND-OFF, evoked a few letters from former comrades.

assistance to needy former Indian soldiers ("jawans") of the old army. These sums of money just disappeared into thin air, and we were soon made to understand that nothing had been done to mitigate the sad situation afflicting so many of our fine former comrades.

With the assurance of assistance by a British charitable organization operating in both countries, we members of the IAA decided to take on the responsibility of coming to the help of the jawans by providing cash grants from a fund to be called the Auchinleck Appeal. As some of you would know, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck was the last C-in-C of the British Indian Army, and was someone we all - British and Indian - highly esteemed.

Unfortunately, as the years have passed by, so have many of our IAA members: in other words, with the passage of the years as our annual "Roll of Honor" has lengthened, so the number of contributors to the Auchinleck Appeal has shrunk. The IAA membership has faced up to the situation and through dint of increased publicity and the use of several quite unusual fund raising

techniques, I am happy to report that the fund's financial condition is quite healthy - regardless, we must still keep up the fund raising effort, for the number of old comrades requiring our support remains high.

One thing we do to raise additional money, and which I am very much involved with over here, is collecting cancelled foreign (i.e. non-British) stamps for sale to British professional philatelist firms. It doesn't raise "huge" amounts, but our fine IAA Honorary Secretary, who must be one of the world's most devoted and hardest working men - and whose efforts were officially acknowledged just a couple of years ago by the award of the Order of the British Empire, is able to report reasonably healthy sums raised as the result of this effort.

In this country, I stress the fact that those 32¢ stamps on incoming mail, which so often are merely thrown away with the envelope, represent real value as far as the Auchinleck Appeal is concerned. Now, I am able to regularly send to our Hon. Sec. packages of used stamps which I collect from local friends and others scattered around the country, and last month a large cardboard box, filled to the brim with thousands of foreign and American "seconds" from the collection of a former WW II USAAF B-17 bombardier went forward from here. It took my wife and myself a very long time going through the "horde" stamp-by-stamp to pick out British issues, for the British philatelists do not, in any way, want them - why, I don't know, but business is business!

So, CBI comrades, I am asking you to consider coming to the aid of your former Indian, and as a result of the division of India, also, Pakistani WW II comrades by taking the time to "snip" off incoming foreign (which, undoubtedly, would be mostly American) stamps and sending them to me. Some send just a hundred or so, and I greatly appreciate that help, but you all can be assured that once they are in my hand it will take only as long as a worthwhile quantity can be assembled to have them on their way to the IAA in Britain. There is one thing I would ask of those kind enough to send stamps, and that

Signal Corps in the CBI - Part II

The Calcutta-Kunming Pole Line

By Joseph B. Shupe

Among the major Signal Corps (Sig C) projects approved for the CBI in 1943 was the start of a pole line eventually to run nearly 2,000 miles from Calcutta through Assam, to Ledo, and on across N. Burma to Kunming. It would run beside the Ledo (Stilwell) Road. The line was to be built in two major segments - the first through cultivated land from Calcutta to the Chabua-Ledo area; the second crossing wild mountain terrain from Ledo to Kunming.

The logistical build-up for the war in Burma and the support of China required large-scale road building and such supply facilities as pipelines. These in turn required communications of high capacity, able to handle thousands of words day in and day out. "You can't pump oil," General Reeder wrote in Oct. '44 to the War Dept., "without wire communications."

The Chief Signal Officer in Washington gave priority to CBI requests for sufficient signal corps troops to do this job. Gen. Somervell, Chief of the Army Services of Supply (SOS) in Washington, having just returned from a

visit to the CBI, put the road and pipeline at the top of CBI needs.

The necessary wire communications facilities were planned and provided by the Sig C. They had long provided Army Air Forces radio communications between Chabua and Kunming. "The remarkable results being achieved over the Hump," General Reeder noted in Sept. '44, "are due in large part to excellent communications in the Chabua district." And, he added: "In order not to impede rapidity of communications, we are doing some things that violate crypto security. The onus is on me if anything ever happens and I will accept it." In this matter, Gen. Reeder accepted responsibility for a practice that Stilwell himself had authorized on the recommendation of his NCAC Signal Officer, Col. Moynahan.

Meanwhile, the reliable long-distance wire facilities that the Sig C had planned were becoming available. Earlier in Jan. '44, the Army Communications Service in Washington had completed the engineering of a long distance high-capacity wire line system - C carrier - from Calcutta to the Chabua-Ledo area. It also completed by that spring, a complete circuit plan for the Chabua-Kunming stretch, that is, across rugged country into N. Burma, across still more rugged country and mighty river chasms, then over the Chinese border to

Kunming. This involved 1,234 miles of 10-wire line, excluding poles, as follows:

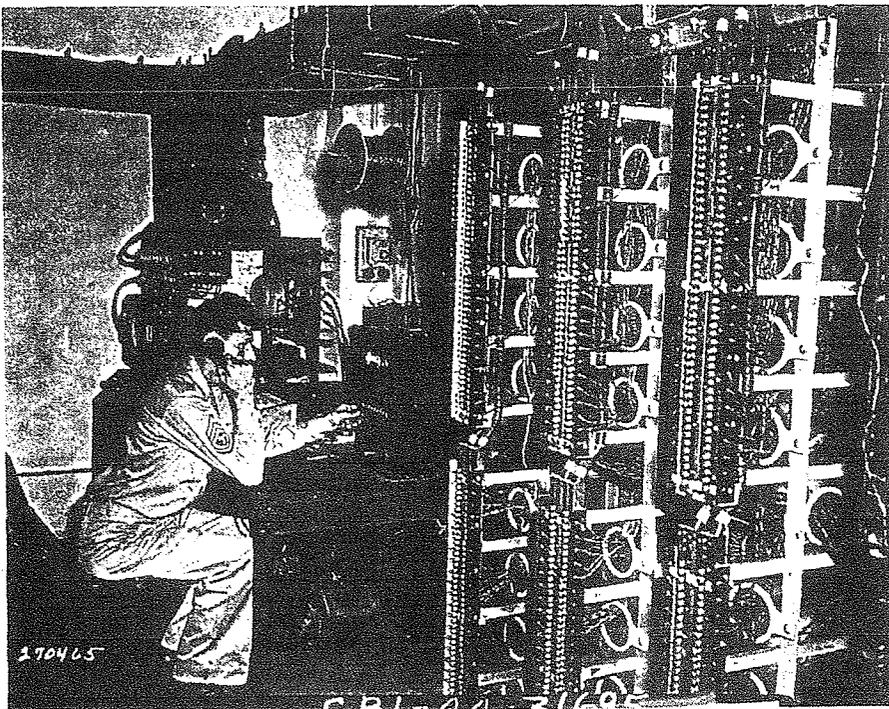
- 10 C-type carrier telephone systems
- 16 carrier frequency telegraph systems
- 47 carrier repeaters
- 96 voice frequency repeaters
- 13 repeater stations
- 7 common battery exchanges

Communications of the Calcutta-Kunming pole line was comparable in length with that other great wire project, the Alcan Highway pole line in Canada and Alaska. It began with the erection of the first 750-mile leg of the overall project along the river valleys and rice paddies from Calcutta to Chabua. Sig C units completed this portion by Dec. '44. They also built a parallel line from Parbatipur, some 200 miles north of Calcutta, to Ledo. This followed the tracks of the Bengal-Assam Railroad. It was started in August '44, and completed in December and provided 560 miles of supplementary wire facilities. It was built under most difficult conditions; the paddies were flooded at that time of the year; vehicles could not be used, and men had to work in deep mud and water all the time. Sig C men also built other lines in the Calcutta area, linking bomber bases at Chakulia and Kharagpur.

Work on the Ledo Road pole line had begun in mid-'43 in a small way when Major Clinton W. Janes, commanding a group of QM troops and a few Indian Pioneers (for want of enough Sig C men), built the first 37 miles of line out of Ledo using British materials. Later that year, the 430th Sig Heavy Construction Co., Avn., helped push the line eastward. The work proceeded slowly over the mountains, but upon the arrival of the 9th Signal Bn, at year's end, progress became more rapid. The poles, bearing five circuits, reached Shingbuiyang in the Hukawng Valley of N. Burma by April 7, 1944.

Throughout the year, 1944, as additional Sig C units and materials arrived, this pioneer line was pressed close behind the troops fighting towards Myitkyina by August '44; and soon after, to Bhamo and juncture with the Burma Road, which the Japanese closed in 1942.

Some of the earliest wire connections were made by spiral four.



Switchboard at Base Section No. 2, CBI Theater HQ, November 1944.