

transport were met in accordance with the policy laid down by Headquarters, 11 Army Group.

(c) To advise and assist formations dependent on air supply, and formations training or preparing for air transported operations.

168. Rear Airfield Maintenance Units were formed and the existing Air Supply Companies, renamed Air Despatch Companies, were re-organized to handle daily, 80 tons of stores for air dropping. The duties of these companies included the collection of stores from the nearest depot, packing, loading and the provision of crews for dropping stores. Each Rear Airfield Maintenance Organization also included an Air Despatch and Reception Unit which was a combined passenger and freight section to control the loading of aircraft and to exercise general flying control on the airstrip.

169. I emphasised in my first Despatch the vital part played by air supply in Arakan and at Imphal during the first half of the year. As it was obvious that the success of our future operations would be equally, if not more, dependent on air transport, I was determined that the system of control which I have briefly outlined should be introduced as soon as possible. In spite of the shortage of manpower and other difficulties, it was introduced on the 18th October. As our operations expand changes may become necessary, but the organization is sufficiently flexible to allow this.

170. The extent to which formations were supplied by air is best illustrated by the total monthly tonnages dropped or, when airstrips were available, landed. In June, the figure was 5,854 tons; this fell to 4,019 tons in August, when only two divisions were operating on the Chindwin front and only two brigades of Special Force were in North Burma; it then rose steadily, and by November, when 81 (West African) Division in the Kaladan Valley, certain brigades of 33 and 4 Corps on the Chindwin, and 36 British Division in North Burma were being supplied by air, reached 10,573 tons.

The airfields upon which transport aircraft were based were:—

| <i>Airfield.</i> | <i>Formations Served.</i> |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Dinjan ... | Fort Hertz. |
| Moran ... | 36 British Division. |
| Sylhet ... | Special Force, 4 and 33 Corps. |
| Agartala... | Lushai Brigade, 4 and 33 Corps |
| Comilla ... | 81 (West African) Division. |
| Chittagong | Corps Troops, 4 Corps. |

171. *P.O.L.* In the early part of the year the supply of petrol and lubricants had been difficult, but by decreasing consumption and by increasing our bulk storage and methods of distribution this had improved.

Imperial requirements increased during the last six months from 11½ million gallons to nearly 14½ million per month, but decreased consumption during the monsoon enabled us not only to meet the increase, but to build up our reserve stocks to 30 million gallons by the 1st November. To make this possible we had to:—

(a) Increase the storage of *P.O.L.* in bulk at Chittagong port from 11 million to 20 million gallons.

(64487)

(b) Increase the capacity of tanks at airfields and army depots by 3½ million gallons.

(c) Increase the capacity of our rail cars by 485,000 gallons.

(d) Greatly extend our pipelines.

172. *Situation as regards Rations.* The supply of fresh meat for Indian troops is still difficult. In October, the supply of sheep and goats only permitted the issue of meat on three days with another half day in Assam and on two days in Arakan during the month. There is little hope of improvement, but I hope to compensate for the loss of protein in the ration by issuing dehydrated fish.

The production of dehydrated goat meat has improved, but is still insufficient. The Commander-in-Chief, India has been asked to increase production and to arrange to import dehydrated meat, if the religious objections of Hindus and Mohammedans can be satisfactorily met.

During October, there were larger stocks of frozen meat in India and frozen meat was flown in to British and African troops of Fourteenth Army. Cold storage plants in forward areas are being built.

173. A new Field Service scale of rations for Indian troops was introduced on the 1st November. The new scale is not only more lavish than the old, but it is designed to give a higher calorific value to meet arduous conditions in this Theatre.

174. Various projects to increase local supplies of fresh food to reduce the tonnage on the lines of communication are being developed. In spite of the shortage of labour and agricultural equipment, much progress has been made and I expect that we shall produce vegetables, livestock and salted fish in sufficient quantities for our needs in 1945.

Maintenance.

175. (a) The supply of vehicles, particularly jeeps and load carriers, is unsatisfactory. Fighting units are not yet fully equipped and only by strict economy and careful control of issues is it possible to maintain formations engaged in operations. Administrative units in rear areas inevitably go short, with a consequent loss in efficiency.

(b) The design and provision of equipment which can be carried by air has been thoroughly examined. R.E.M.E. are making machine trailers which can be carried by air for their workshops in forward areas. These are improvised from existing equipment until those designed in the U.K. arrive. The Wireless Testing Trailer is reported as being up to the standard of the Home pattern. The selection and preliminary trials of vehicles, other than these, for air transport are made by the staff of G.H.Q., India, to specifications supplied by my staff.

(c) I have set up a committee to examine and if possible reduce the number of modifications which are demanded in equipment.

The Engineering Effort. A. Road Communications.

176. *The Arakan Road.* At the beginning of July the policy in Arakan was to provide a new single-way brick road alongside the existing one-way road, the latter to