

Two companies of the Burma Army were based on Fort Hertz, and were supplied by air. In addition, there were some seven hundred and fifty Kachin Levies—irregulars with a few British officers. The Kachins were loyal and hated the Japanese intensely. They had much success in patrols and in laying traps for Japanese troops.

As a reserve in case of emergency one Indian battalion was kept in North East Assam at call. The need for it did not arise, which perhaps was fortunate because it could only have been taken to Fort Hertz by air, and then only if the necessary aircraft could have been spared from other operations.

Dispositions of the levies have varied somewhat from time to time, but generally speaking they held as far south as Sumprabum, and a few detachments were east of the Mali Hka.

A complication in North East Burma was the presence there of certain Chinese whose arrival was first reported early in July. They appeared to be weak irregular armed forces, who were apparently expected to live on the country. The Kachin country however is extremely poor, and can barely produce enough for the Kachins themselves to live on. The presence of the Chinese was embarrassing. Indeed, the Kachins were nearly as hostile to them as they were to the Japanese. Urgent steps were therefore taken to secure their withdrawal by representation to Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek through H.B.M.'s Ambassador in Chungking. Eventually, except for a few small detachments, they left the area and went back across the Salween to China early in September.

Subsequently, at the request of General Cheng Po, the Commander of Chinese Guerilla Forces, an operational boundary was fixed between the British and Chinese Forces in North East Burma. This was done in order to define the area in which the British and Chinese were respectively responsible for preventing Japanese infiltration. The boundary runs roughly in a north and south direction near the Burma-Yunnan border, and the arrangement made was that our Forces would be responsible to the west, and the Chinese to the east of this line.

#### 7. Ceylon Army Command.

There were no active land operations in the Ceylon Army Command during the period under review. The Japanese, however, carried out several air reconnaissances, and two of their aircraft were destroyed.

The arrival of the 11th East African Division was completed, and intensive training was carried out by this formation.

In August a new defence scheme for Ceylon was approved as a result of a re-appreciation of the rôle of the Army in that Command. It included the reorganisation of the garrison on the arrival of the East African Troops.

On the 10th September the Italian warship *Eritrea*, acting on the orders of Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, put into Colombo.

On the 1st September the shore organisation of the Eastern Fleet arrived in Colombo, and on the same date also, the Rear Admiral, Naval

Air Stations, Indian Ocean, set up his Headquarters there.

In the Maldiv Islands, a new flying boat base was established during the period at Kalai. Intensive constructional work at Addu Atoll continued.

The Japanese about once a month made air reconnaissances of Cocos Island.

#### 8. Operations of the Royal Indian Navy.

H.M.I. Ships "*Jumna*" and "*Sutlej*" operated in the Mediterranean with the Royal Navy during the period. Otherwise, normal escorts were provided for convoys to and from Aden, the Persian Gulf, Colombo and along the coasts of India. In the course of these escort duties a number of depth charge attacks were made on enemy submarines with unknown results.

### THE AIR.

#### 9. General.

The monsoon inevitably curtailed operations in the air, but not to the same extent as on land. From time to time all-weather runways were flooded, and throughout the period fair-weather strips were unusable. Administration was also hampered by breaking of rail and road communications and the rupture of signal channels.

Nevertheless, unlike the Japanese who practically discontinued air operations during the rainy season, we continued to be active in the air as far as conditions allowed, and we prepared for the dry weather by training and equipping squadrons, and building up reserves of supplies.

An important development was the improvement in meteorological services. It was found possible to establish what can and cannot be done from the air over North East India and Burma during the monsoon. In particular, monsoon conditions were found not so very bad over central Burma, and it was generally possible to locate targets on enemy lines of communications. Moreover, given reliable route forecasts of weather over enemy territory, night bombing was practicable over a wide area. In fact, unless all-weather airfields are actually flooded, large scale air operations can be undertaken safely even at the height of the monsoon.

The extent of our air effort during the period under review is given under the appropriate headings in the paragraphs which follow, and the training and administrative side of it is dealt with in Part III of this Despatch.

#### 10. Aircraft Flow and its Effect on Operations.

There was a great increase of aircraft held in the Command, and obsolescent types were largely replaced by modern aircraft. In all there were in India the following aircraft of all types, 2,453 on 25th June, and 3,699 on 17th November, 1943.

The most important development, however, was the extensive modernisation of our fighter defence. Hurricanes rose from 677 to 1,088. Spitfires increased from 13 to 153. They had a most decisive effect on operations, though this did not fully develop till later. Spitfires went into action in November for the first time, and not being supplied with long range tanks