

VI.—TRAINING

182. The re-orientation of the training organisation early in the period allocated responsibility on a geographical basis, and No. 227 Group was no longer regarded primarily as the training group. From January onwards, each group supervised and administered training within its own area.

183. Much of the available resources have been absorbed by the need to convert crews to the latest types of aircraft, since reinforcements arriving in the Command have not been familiarised with these types, and many existing squadrons are re-equipping. The change-over from Vengeances to Mosquitoes, from Wellingtons to Liberators and from Hurricanes to Thunderbolts are the outstanding examples. As a result, it is hoped that there will be five trained Liberator and nine Thunderbolt squadrons by November, and two Mosquito squadrons by October. Wastage replacement crews are trained concurrently and provide a valuable reserve without calling upon outside assistance.

184. Refresher flying training was provided at Poona for 614 aircrew either newly arrived in the Command or returning to operations after a period of rest. Air Gunner Instructor courses, I.A.F. ab initio W/Op. A.G. courses and R.A.F. Pilot Refresher courses have been carried out continuously at Bairagarh in Bhopal where two I.A.F. squadrons (Nos. 3 and 9) also completed armament and gunnery training. The Air Fighting Training Unit gave advanced courses on tactics and gunnery control, through which 71 pilots and 83 gunnery leaders passed, and which were attended by many U.S.A.A.F. personnel. No. 22 Armament Practice Camp carried out six bomber and fighter refresher courses, one of which was attended by No. 459 Squadron U.S.A.A.F. whose results improved markedly during the course. No. 231 Group Navigation School passed 420 aircrew through its courses.

185. I.A.F. G.D. recruiting did not come up to expectations. The following table of output during the period indicates the scale of I.A.F. production and wastage :

From I.T.W.	...	...	224
From E.F.T.S.	...	...	101
From S.F.T.S.	...	...	80
From O.T.U.	...	...	113

186. Ground training was mainly of I.A.F. personnel, of whom 8,049 were admitted to Recruit Training Centres. A fraction over 9,000 I.O.R.s were under training of all kinds at the end of the period. One important task, the training of flight mechanics, was taken over from the Director of Civil Aviation, and as a result the civilian schools were closed or taken over as Schools of Technical Training.

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VII.—INTERNAL AIR ROUTES

187. The formation early in December of No. 229 Group of Transport Command enabled me to introduce a stricter supervision of internal transport flying, passenger and freight services, and of the movement of aircraft in India and Ceylon. The need for this had long been apparent but the means had been lacking. One of the more positive results of the decentralisation of control I was able to make was a reduction in the accident rate for

the aircraft which came under No. 229 Group's control from 46 per 10,000 in December, 1943, to 13 in May, 1944.

188. The number of aircraft available for internal services continued to be small in comparison with requirements and the distances involved. Since it was necessary to earmark nearly all Dakotas for the replacement of wastages in squadrons operating at pressure on the Eastern frontier, the formation of another transport squadron (the sixth) had to be continually postponed, and the conversion of No. 353 Squadron from Hudsons to Dakotas delayed. This squadron, based on Palam at Delhi, together with the B.O.A.C. and the few aircraft belonging to Indian civil air lines, was all I could make available for the Air Routes. No. 229 Group's task was thus no easy one. In the six months from December to May, Hudson aircraft of No. 353 Squadron flew 7,570 hours on transport work. The age of the Hudsons makes this a creditable figure. It was only achieved by a high standard of maintenance and by using as engine spares such parts from obsolete Mohawks as were available. Six Dakotas were also made available to the squadron in April and May as a detached flight based on Dum Dum. They flew 860 hours in these two months on services between Calcutta, Colombo and Bombay. This flight was given concurrently two Dakotas to maintain a service to China which had formerly been carried out by No. 31 Squadron. Thus this one squadron was operating services extending from Ceylon to Kunming and Calcutta to Bombay.

189. Ferrying and the movement of reinforcing aircraft accounted for an average of over 1,300 aircraft deliveries a month within the Command. These flights were used to the fullest extent to supplement the internal air services. By this means, over 1,060 passengers and 500,000 pounds of freight were flown from Karachi alone.

190. I am glad to say that trunk routes to the United Kingdom have been vastly increased. The weekly R.A.F. Liberator service from Karachi has been doubled and a weekly service by R.A.F. Dakota from Colombo has been started. In May a B.O.A.C. Sunderland began to ply twice weekly from Calcutta. For communications with the Mediterranean there has been since March a B.O.A.C. Ensign service three times a week between Cairo and Calcutta. The establishment of No. 229 Group in my Command, followed by a personal visit of the A.O.C.-in-C. Transport Command and many representatives of his staff has been amongst the happiest auguries for the future that I have to record in this Despatch.

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VIII.—R.A.F. REGIMENT

191. The strength of the R.A.F. Regiment throughout has been insufficient to justify the acceptance of full responsibility for the local defence of Royal Air Force Stations and to meet the threat of infiltration by enemy ground raiding parties to airfields and Radar stations. A remedy was sought in November, 1943, whereby the Army agreed to withdraw all static garrisons from R.A.F. stations in areas remote from enemy action, and to provide them at stations where attack was possible. The R.A.F. was to have made a contribution