

flown by these aircraft. At this time too, the presence in Singapore of Dakotas belonging to 31 Squadron, which operated over Sumatra, assisted materially in bringing out of Sumatra some of the first prisoners-of-war.

441. For purposes of comparison, the under-noted table shows the air effort over different target areas of South East Asia for the first three weeks during which Operation "Mastiff" was in progress, and which covers the particular period of my Despatch.

| Target Area | August—September<br>Week 30th—5th |          |         | September<br>Week 6th—12th |          |         | September<br>Week 13th—19th |          |         |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|----------|---------|----------------------------|----------|---------|-----------------------------|----------|---------|
|             | Successful                        | Abortive | Missing | Successful                 | Abortive | Missing | Successful                  | Abortive | Missing |
| Siam ...    | 42                                | 8        | —       | 49                         | —        | —       | 49                          | 3        | —       |
| F.I.C. ...  | 13                                | 1        | 1       | 11                         | —        | —       | 11                          | 1        | 2       |
| Malaya...   | 22                                | 2        | —       | 10                         | 2        | —       | 6                           | —        | —       |
| Sumatra     | 23                                | 2        | 1       | 29                         | 1        | —       | 38                          | 4        | —       |
| Java ...    | —                                 | —        | —       | 2                          | —        | —       | 22                          | 1        | —       |
|             | 100                               | 13       | 2       | 101                        | 3        | —       | 126                         | 9        | 2       |

#### *Working of RAPWI and the S.D. Squadrons.*

442. The evacuation of prisoners-of-war and internees required the maximum co-operation between Naval, Land and Air Forces.

443. An Inter-Services Inter-Allied Committee was therefore established at the Headquarters of the Supreme Allied Commander, at Kandy, Ceylon, for planning and co-ordination of control. This Committee acted as the clearing house for information, and declared the decisions of the Supreme Allied Commander on policy, priorities, and allocation of responsibility.

444. The working organisation was known as RAPWI (Release Repatriation of Allied Prisoners-of-war and Internees), which had a Central Control for aid by air at Kandy, with Army and Air Force Officers, and Sub-Controls at Calcutta, Rangoon, Colombo and Cocos. As the necessity for air dropping decreased, these Controls were incorporated in the RAPWI Control Organisations with Naval, Army, Air and Allied representation. Subsequently a Control was opened at Singapore.

445. The RAPWI Controls were responsible for co-ordination of executive action in all matters of supplies for RAPWI, and the evacuation of personnel by aircraft and white and red ensign ships.

446. For the prodigious effort put up by the Cocos based squadrons engaged on operation "Mastiff", Red Cross and other stores for RAPWI were packed at Sigiriya, Ceylon, and handed over to the R.A.F. for delivery to the Cocos Islands. This demanded a very heavy ferrying commitment to the Cocos as two-thirds of the prison camps were supplied by the Cocos based squadrons. Every available Liberator and Sunderland aircraft was used during the inauguration of "Mastiff".

447. This extra effort by the S.D. Liberators based on the Cocos was due to the large loads which had to be carried to the prison camps at Singapore and Southern Sumatra—loads which averaged from 3,500 to 4,000 lbs.

448. No praise could be too high for the air and ground crew personnel of these Cocos based squadrons. Despite the severe shortage of experienced crews and, indeed, aircraft, a daily average of seven sorties, and sometimes nine, was maintained. One squadron flew to

widely differing dropping zones throughout Malaya, Sumatra and Java. Ninety-five personnel were dropped on these sorties, of which 65 were doctors or medical orderlies, and all arrived safely despite the short notice at which most of the sorties were laid on. On the first day of the "Mastiff" operations, indeed, one of the aircraft dropped a medical team on Changi Airfield at dawn on August 29th, making a round trip of 3,400 miles.

449. The great distances covered and the adverse weather conditions encountered were difficulties which were not overcome lightly and without danger. A Liberator on a supply dropping mission to the prison camps at Palembang was seen to spin whilst executing a steep turn and all nine crew members were killed.

450. It became obvious that Operation "Mastiff" would continue for some considerable time until the last prisoner of war and internee had been evacuated from all areas by air and sea. As September advanced the numbers brought out mounted steadily. There has been praise on all sides for our squadrons co-operating with the other Services in this rescue of men and women who have endured untold hardships, indignities and, in some cases barbarous cruelties—comments of praise which I have confirmed myself during talks with repatriated prisoners of war flown out of the prison camp areas.

#### THE JAPANESE PLANNED COUNTER MEASURES TO INVASION OF MALAYA.

451. The the Allies' powerful "Zipper" operation for the landing in Malaya would have succeeded, and that mastery of the air covering the landing would have been secured almost from the start, seems a justifiable claim after careful examination of evidence made available through interrogation of Japanese officers following the surrender in South East Asia.

452. It was evident that the Japanese, in their defence of Malaya, were unable to conform to one of the first principles of modern warfare—that air superiority must be gained, and that the battle in the air must first be won, before ground forces can wage their operations with any likelihood of success.

453. The Japanese counter invasion plan was based on the fact that very few operational aircraft were available since it had been