

bombs carried by light bombers and fighter-bombers did little damage unless they made direct hits, and the use of medium and heavy bombers for the task was of necessity restricted. Moreover, when heavy attacks were carried out with the help of the Strategic Air Force no really decisive success was achieved, and as yet the Army has not been able to make an effective assault in conjunction with these attacks. What advantage medium and heavy bombers have in the weight of their blow is offset by their greater margin of bombing error, which makes it necessary to allow a safety margin and so forces troops to start their assault at a greater distance from their objective than is the case with light bombers and fighter-bombers. A good example of the difficulty of co-operation between heavy bombers and ground forces is given in the operation at Razabil, which is described later. Of such attacks, the Air Commander, Third Tactical Air Force, noted in his report for this period: "The Army have not yet been able to carry out an effective assault in conjunction with these attacks. . . . However, the accession of Mitchells in a forward location and under Third Tactical Air Force is expected to be a very considerable help in enabling us to put an adequate and timely weight of attack on . . . strongpoints".

74. Another way in which such bombing assisted ground forces was in disclosing the enemy's positions by clearing thick undergrowth from around them. This tactic was of great assistance to our artillery and tanks, but was inclined to be a double-edged weapon in the opinion of the infantry, since not only was the enemy exposed to view, but their own line of advance was also stripped of cover so that they were forced to attack either at night or by a flanking movement.

75. The technique of air attack was determined by the nature of the terrain in which the target lay. Where thick jungle made approach necessary at a height sufficient to locate the target by reference to its surroundings, then dive or shallow-dive-bombing was used. When the location of targets, as for instance on the lines of communication, was not so difficult, then low-level attacks could be carried out. Dive-bombers therefore and fighter-bombers were used principally against pin-points and specified areas, the ground attack fighters against concentrations of troops and supply dumps immediately to the rear.

76. The results of attacks made in ground support could not always be observed from the air, but an analysis of the reports of Army units that followed up the attacks or watched them as they took place, testifies to their effectiveness in terms of men and animals killed and positions weakened, if not destroyed. Although great destruction of life was not necessarily the primary object of these attacks and was not always achieved, the Army was unanimous in its belief that the air support given helped it to advance when the initiative was ours and to hold out and later counter-attack when the enemy were attacking. Army formations repeatedly expressed their thanks to the air force units that had helped them, and further tribute to the effectiveness of this support is to be found in many reports. One of these may be quoted as being typical of many others: "10th May air strike on

Japanese in Lynch position (near Tengnoupal) reported by forward troops to be most successful. Bunkers were seen to be blown in and bodies flying about". This was the work of twelve aircraft of No. 42 Squadron.

77. A more intangible result of direct support was the effect that it had on the morale of our troops. It was the opinion, for instance, of the Commander of the garrison at Kohima in April, that the audible and visible evidence of the arrival of air support on the two critical days, the 15th and 18th April, put new heart into his men towards the end of the siege. The obverse side of the picture is given by prisoners of war who bore complete witness to the effectiveness of our bombing and machine gunning.

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78. In November and December, squadrons gave the limited scale of support called for by Fourteenth Army, which was then occupied in regrouping for forthcoming operations.

79. In the 4 Corps area the enemy advanced into the Chin Hills and occupied the line Fort White—Falam—Haka. They were held south of Tiddim, and both sides spent the rest of the year consolidating their positions. During this phase Nos. 45 and 110 Vengeance Squadrons did good work in direct support and in destroying supply dumps particularly around the area of Milestone 52 on the Tiddim—Kalemyo road.

80. During the same period in the Arakan, 15 Corps was also regrouping in preparation for an advance, and many attacks were made on enemy positions in order to inflict casualties and disperse enemy troops. Among the targets successfully attacked were the Headquarters of the Japanese 55th Division at Rathedaung.

81. In January the rate of effort increased to support the several intended thrusts forward. 4 Corps took the offensive during this month, and on the 25th occupied Kyaukchaw in the Atwin Yomas, an enemy fortress that blocked their line of advance from Tamu to Yuwa on the Chindwin. From the air point of view this was the most interesting operation of the month, since the first ground assault was preceded by an air attack in which aircraft of both the Strategic and Tactical Air Forces took part. Eighteen U.S. Liberators (B.24) and nine Mitchells (B.25) escorted by R.A.F. fighters, dropped thirty-five tons of bombs including depth-charges; twenty-four Vengeances and twelve Hurricanes dropped eighteen tons. The bombing was accurate and the whole area of jungle and undergrowth was covered. On the other hand there were no direct hits on bunker positions, and the near misses did little damage to personnel or to positions. The attack took place at 16.30 hours in the afternoon, but the Army did not advance until 08.30 hours the next morning, by which time the effect of the bombing had mainly worn off. The unintended result of the operation, therefore, was that the Army's advance was made more difficult by the lack of cover where blast had laid the undergrowth flat.

82. Meanwhile in Arakan, 15 Corps had begun to move forward shortly before Christmas towards the line Indin—Kyauktaw. At the beginning of January, Maungdaw was taken and the approach towards the Maungdaw—Buthidaung road was continued till the