

bomb, because their main role was to attack enemy convoys well out to sea. Facilities for them to operate with torpedoes from Kota Bahru had been established.

Flying Boat Squadron.

89. There was one Flying Boat Squadron in the Command, No. 205 Squadron, based at Seletar with a detachment in Ceylon.

90. The squadron did not have sufficient trained crews. When its establishment was raised from 4 I.E. Singapore III's to 6 I.E. Catalinas, no additional crews were available. These were therefore trained by the squadron. One or two trained crews were based in Ceylon for work in the Indian Ocean, where, unfortunately, two crews were lost in accidents in September/October, 1941.

Photographic Reconnaissance.

91. Long-range Hurricanes had been requested for photographic purposes but were not available. In November, 1941, a P.R.U. with 2 I.E. (later raised to 4) aircraft was formed in Singapore with Buffaloes drawn from local resources, and personnel were trained in photographic reconnaissance. By stripping all armament and non-essential equipment and providing additional tankage, the Buffaloes range was increased to 1,400 miles. The formation of this flight proved a most valuable asset to the resources of the Command. Concurrently a Photographic Interpretation Unit was formed.

Malayan Volunteer Air Force

92. The Malayan Volunteer Air Force had flights located in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh and Penang. Its miscellaneous collection of about 30 aircraft comprised two Rapides, one Dragonfly, and a number of Moths and Cadets. Flights were organised for transport duties under A.H.Q., and for communication and reconnaissance in affiliation with Army formations. Moths were fitted with 20-lb. bomb racks and pilots were trained in their use, but none of the aircraft could be fitted with defensive armament. The enthusiasm of the unit was most marked and it made excellent progress.

Elementary Flying Training School

93. An E.F.T.S. had been established at Kallang in 1940 from local resources: instructors and technical personnel were obtained from units stationed in Malaya, and from the M.V.A.F., whose club aircraft were made available for its use. It did excellent work. A number of pilots were trained by it, some subsequently serving in other theatres of war and some in Malaya.

Signals Organisation

94. Signals organisation was generally backward. There was a shortage of W/T equipment, particularly of mobile sets.

Teleprinter lines existed between A.H.Q. and aerodromes on Singapore Island, but not between A.H.Q. and aerodromes up the peninsula.

There were two telephone lines from Singapore to N.W. Malaya and one to the N.E. and east. These were quite insufficient for joint needs, Army, Air Force and Civil, and all passed through civil exchanges. Secraphones were very few and were apportioned between the services in a strict order of priority.

There was no V.H.F., which limited the effective control of fighters to about 10 miles; this was still further limited by atmospheric conditions during thunder periods.

Centralisation of Work at A.H.Q.

95. Appendices A and C will show how many, and scattered, were the units in the Far East Command and how varied were their duties by land, sea and air: their administrative problems were correspondingly numerous and varied.

A degree of decentralisation of work from A.H.Q. was achieved by:—

(a) forming, in March, 1941, No. 221 Group H.Q., with a small staff in Rangoon, to which all work of formations in Burma was decentralised,

(b) forming, in March, 1941, No. 222 Group H.Q. in Ceylon for controlling flying boat operations based on Ceylon: this Group had no administrative staff, so that A.H.Q. continued to administer direct all its bases throughout the Indian Ocean.

(c) forming, in August, 1941, No. 224 (Fighter) Group H.Q. in Singapore, for supervising fighter training and air defence arrangements within Singapore Island: this Group also had no administrative staff (see para. 83) so that A.H.Q. dealt direct with its stations and units on administrative matters.

But this was the limit of decentralisation. It resulted in a heavy load of centralised work at A.H.Q. This was particularly felt once the expansion programme began to take effect. It fell heavily enough on Air Staff, but still more so on the Administrative Staff and on that of the Air Ministry Works Department.

The need for an A.O.C. Malaya, with an appropriate staff to whom to decentralise local problems in Malaya, became increasingly apparent during 1941, but it was not found possible to meet this need.

This state of affairs was complicated by a shortage of qualified officers—(see next paras.)—caused by the demands of the war in Europe.

Supply of Officers for Staff and Administrative Duties

96. Officers for filling vacancies on the staff of the greatly expanded A.H.Q. and at the new stations were largely found by enrolling personnel from Australia and New Zealand. More than 140 were obtained from this source. It was possible to give them only a short disciplinary course combined with a brief survey of their duties. Their average age was 45. They naturally varied much in their qualifications. The remainder, more than 50 in number, were obtained by commissioning local business men in Singapore; most of them just before, but some after the outbreak of war in the Far East. For them no training was practicable. The majority of these officers were willing and able, but their value was limited owing to their unavoidable lack of service knowledge, experience and training.

97. Of the regular officers, there were few with Staff experience; and the brunt of the work consequently fell on the few. The work of A.H.Q. was increased by the inexperience of officers at stations, which needed more "nursing" than is normally the case.