

not cheerful. As regards a British replacement for the Dakotas, we could no longer demand the highest priority for labour in Britain, now that the war had ended, thus making progress automatically slow in production.

R.A.F. REGIMENT OPERATIONS.

A record of achievements in the South East Asia Command.

489. In the various campaign stages of the war in South East Asia I have been left in no doubt whatsoever about the usefulness, efficiency and fine example of that most junior of all our forces—the R.A.F. Regiment.

490. The R.A.F. Regiment adequately carried out the task of close defence of airfields in Burma and in other operational areas in South-East Asia.

491. I have it on record from one of my Group Commanders who moved with Fourteenth Army all the way through Burma, that he considered it probable that the Group could not have occupied air strips as far forward as they did—with consequently better air support for the Army—had he not been confident that the R.A.F. Regiment could have maintained the necessary security.

492. In South East Asia the R.A.F. Regiment proved itself a force capable of carrying out more than the tasks which its originators claimed the Regiment could accomplish. It was not a force of men dressed up as guards and picqueted around some airfield or supply dump with guns propped in their hands. These men were so trained in the art and strategy of ground defence and of jungle warfare, that they were able to undertake with success counter measures against Japanese infiltration parties who might set themselves up near the perimeter of some airfield and constitute a menace until hunted down and destroyed.

493. When the advance through Burma began in January, 1945, there were ten Field Squadrons, seven A.A. Squadrons and seven Regiment Wing Headquarters, working with the Tactical Air Forces. On the capture of Rangoon in May, 1945, these had been increased to fourteen Field Squadrons, nine A.A. Squadrons and eight Wing Headquarters.

494. For the D-Day operations planned for the assault on Malaya, the Regiment was also scheduled to play a prominent part. Five Regimental Wings of nearly 2,500 officers and men, made up of nine Field Squadrons and five A.A. Squadrons were available. One A.A. Squadron had been brought out of the Cocos Islands, where its twenty millimetre Hispano cannons had given protection to the heavy bomber and transport airfield there.

Defence of Airfields and Mopping Up.

495. When it is considered that few Japanese were ever taken prisoner in Burma, electing to face death rather than capture, and that the principal task of the R.A.F. Regiment was to protect our air strips rather than to make enemy captives, the effort of the Regiment between January and May, 1945, in all forms of service was exceedingly high. While operating at seven strips during that period, the A.A. Squadrons succeeded in destroying one enemy aircraft and registering hits on three others out of a total of nine enemy aircraft attacking these particular strips.

496. The most outstanding episode of the R.A.F. Regiment's service in this theatre was the assistance they gave in the defence of Meiktila airfield. It was essential to comb the airfield and its environs each morning for snipers before permitting aircraft to land. Every gully, fox-hole or other feasible hiding place of a sniper had to be examined. The patrols started just after daybreak and took almost two hours to complete. It was thorough and effective, but the only sure method of clearing the area of the enemy, to ensure the safety of our aircraft.

497. In mopping up isolated parties of Japanese in Burmese villages at the time of the advance on Rangoon, certain units of the R.A.F. Regiment gave considerable assistance to Civil Affairs Officers and also helped in the clearing and disposal of mortar bombs, booby-traps, mines and anti-tank traps. Extensive searches, including patrols up rivers, were also carried out by the Regiment in their efforts to arrest wanted and known collaborators and to enforce the surrendering of illegally held arms and ammunition. The river patrols on these occasions were necessary owing to the difficulties of communication and the nature of the country. During March and April, for example, one Field Squadron covered an area of 2,600 square miles, visited or "raided" 250 villages, arrested 100 Japanese collaborators and recovered 26 rifles. Large quantities of ammunition of British and Japanese make were also recovered, together with clothing, equipment, parachutes and rations.

The Occupation of Singapore.

498. In the protection of newly captured airfields and the guarding of vital radar sites once the assault on Malaya had begun, the R.A.F. Regiment would have been indispensable to the Air Force and could have been relied upon to fulfil its task thoroughly and well. Even in the peaceful occupation of Singapore, units of the Regiment, within 24 hours, were maintaining the security of Kalang, Changi, Seletar and Tengah airfields—one of which had three hundred police in peacetime.

499. Up country in Malaya, during the early days of occupation by our forces, a squadron of the R.A.F. Regiment sent out a patrol into one of the thickly wooded areas and succeeded in recovering 600 gallons of petrol from a party of Malays and Chinese.

500. On September 10th, two days before the official surrender ceremony at Singapore, No. 1329 Wing R.A.F. Regiment, with four Field Squadrons, arrived at Penang and took over the entire garrison duties from the Royal Marines. On the day following it was decided that the Regiment should also occupy Port Butterworth and Prai area, Province Wellesley, as part of the Penang commitment.

501. If the R.A.F. Regiment in South East Asia had done nothing more than provide vital protection for our airfields, the record of its achievements would still read with commendable credit. That it was able to perform further additional services and maintain a smartness and discipline which called forth praise from Army and Navy alike, demonstrates the value of the Regiment as an adjunct to the Royal Air Force. In my many