

ahead of the regular supply points. Army control was maintained by continuous visits by air, but was extremely difficult to keep up to date.

387. The great distances covered, and the leap-frogging of formations on a single-way road, with close convoy timings, imposed a great strain on the forward airfield engineers. On one occasion the convoy timings were so tight that the last grader took its final run over the last apron, and drove direct to the starting point with only a few minutes to spare. Loss of this timing would have delayed the group for twelve hours. Under these conditions, the opening of nine airstrips over a distance of 200 miles in eleven days must be accounted a magnificent achievement.

388. The forward airfield construction described in the preceding paragraphs amounts to nearly 60 airstrips built or reconditioned, apart from light aircraft strips, but it only takes into account the principal airfields. As I said in the description of Base airfield work, many more airfields were used at various times than those actually specified here.

389. Turning now to 15 Indian Corps, it will be remembered that support was provided by 224 Group, R.A.F., whose five tactical wings operated from the all-weather airfields from Cox's Bazaar northwards, and in the dry season from fourteen fair-weather strips to the south. After the 1944 monsoon the first task was to resuscitate these strips, which had been out of action during the rains, as soon as possible. Six of them had also to be lengthened by 600 yards (to 2,300 yards) to take P.47 fighters, and all the accommodation associated with the airfields required heavy repairs. The first of these fair-weather airstrips was ready on the 10th November and the last on Christmas Day, 1944.

390. Directly Akyab Island was occupied, work began on expanding the existing all-weather airfield so that it could accommodate three transport and three and a half tactical squadrons, with a target completion date of the 15th May. At the same time, to meet the immediate and pressing needs of Fourteenth Army, a fair-weather transport field for two squadrons was constructed and opened on the 17th February. Two tactical strips were also made. Fourteenth Army's rapid progress, however, made further demands on the airfield development of Akyab. A second fair-weather transport strip was called for, and an advance on the completion date for the all-weather airfield, and finally an increase in the operational capacity of the latter was required. Despite many difficulties this programme of work was completed ahead of schedule. The works on Akyab Island were begun by the Chief Engineer, 15 Indian Corps, but early in February, the responsibility was taken over by the commander of an Army Group Royal Engineers, working directly under my Chief Engineer.

391. After the capture of Kyaukpyu, on Ramree Island, the existing Japanese fair-weather airstrip was repaired by Divisional engineers, despite heavy denial measures by the enemy. Work was begun immediately on the advanced Air Supply Base, at Akyab, which included the construction of an all-weather airfield for three transport and three and a half

tactical squadrons. These works were controlled by a Deputy Chief Engineer working directly under my Headquarters.

392. Apart from the transport airfields on Akyab and Ramree mentioned above, 15 Indian Corps engineers constructed nine fair-weather fields for the air supply of 81 and 82 (West African) Divisions in the Kaladan, and 25 Indian Divisional Engineers constructed one transport strip at Myebon. In addition 42 light aircraft strips were made during the Arakan operations.

393. This section does not pretend to be comprehensive. No mention has been made of the more technical problems, or the provision and transport of the many stores and materials which airfield work required, nor of the methods used to overcome natural and enemy-created difficulties. The principal airfields have been mentioned, and in the above account eighty-six strips, apart from light aircraft strips, have received notice, but there were others. This will give a fair indication of the extent of the task performed.

SECTION XXV (paras. 394-419) ADJUTANT-GENERAL STAFF AND SERVICES MATTERS

Reinforcements: Organization matters: Leave, repatriation and release: Morale: Recovery of Allied prisoners of war: "Indian National Army": The work of the Medical Services: The work of the other services controlled by the Adjutant-General's Department of the Staff.

394. Before dealing with the services under the control of the Adjutant-General's staff, I will deal with the direct responsibilities of that staff itself; that is, provision of reinforcements, raising of units, leave, repatriation, release, morale, recovery of Allied prisoners of war and matters in connection with the Japanese-sponsored "Indian National Army."

395. There were twelve Reinforcement Camps in the Allied Land Forces, South-East Asia area; six at Comilla, four at Gauhati, one at Chittagong and one, for 36 British Division while they were operating with Northern Combat Area Command, at Dibrugarh. Up till the end of November, 1944, the flow of reinforcements through these camps was satisfactory, except in the case of British infantry. From December onwards, however, as the land L. of C. lengthened, the main reinforcement problem became one of movement rather than of provision, since the air L. of C. became the only practical means of transport. In December, for example, although 10,618 reinforcements were received from India, the onward flow was limited to about 150 men per day, the total flown forward during the month being 4,641. This was solely due to shortage of aircraft and to the fact that other forms of transport were required for other purposes, including the lifting forward of men other than reinforcements. The numbers flown forward, however, steadily improved from February, 1945, onwards; in April, for example, 10,066 reinforcements were flown in to Fourteenth Army during the month, including 5,473 to 4 Corps in eight days to replace losses in the Meiktila fighting. But the intake of reinforcements from India Command, together with the men discharged fit from hospitals and returning leave details, continued to exceed