183. The stranglehold on the Japanese supply and communications system was further tightened on June 24th, when Liberators destroyed two important bridges at Kanchanaburi, eighty miles west of Bangkok. The raid on these bridges across the Meklong River at Kanchanaburi was a disruption of serious consequence on the Burma—Siam railway. The ultimate result of this attack was that three spans were demolished and one span displaced.

184. Strategic bombing by the air forces of this Command drastically cut down the use of the enemy's railroads, compelling the transfer of more and more supplies to road and sea transport, which inevitably slowed up the enemy's war supply machine.

185. When the A.C.S.E.A. Command formed in December, 1943, our heavy bomber effort was only 449 tons dropped by Liberator aircraft. In 1944 the figure had risen to 3,846 tons, and by August, 1945, it had again risen to a total of 9,441 tons.

186. Behind these tonnages is evidence of the contribution by the heavy bomber aircraft of this Command to the overall strategy of the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, in bringing about the disruption of Japanese supply and road, rail and sea communications.

## AIR SUPPLY

### *A Testing Period for Squadrons During Monsoon*

187. Although the capture of Rangoon brought an end to the more intensive Army-Air co-operation in Burma, the day by day air supply for ground troops concentrated in Southern Burma, and still engaging large isolated forces of the enemy, was still maintained.

188. There was no alternative. Air supply, it was realised, would have to meet the Army's demands until seaborne supplies began to function, and road and rail communication inland from Rangoon were re-established.

189. Much was being done to hurry forward rehabilitation in Rangoon generally and to get port facilities working, but this was no easy task. Looting of property and bomb damage to those essential services which are the mainspring of a busy commercial port were extensive. Entry of larger ships into the harbour was also delayed until dredging of the river channel was completed, while there was the additional task of repairing docks, wharves, and badly disrupted road and rail communications. All these were vital factors which indirectly affected supply to a vast Allied ground force which had pushed its way into Rangoon.

190. The period May to August, 1945—covering the re-entry of the Allied forces into Rangoon, and later the surrender of Japan—cannot be termed spectacular in air supply operations, when reckoned against such efforts as persisted during the Allied advance down through Burma earlier in the year, and the supply tonnage record was broken in April, 1945, with 2,900 tons on one day. But it was, nevertheless, an exacting period for squadrons and personnel alike, for the following reasons:—

(*a*) The period of the monsoon had set in, making flying exceedingly hazardous in so mountainous a country as Burma.

(*b*) With the disintegration of the British and American Air Forces after 1st June, 1945, American Transports were withdrawn, leaving R.A.F. squadrons of No. 232 Group to continue air supply operations unaided.

(*c*) Supply demands made by H.Q. Allied Land Forces were not immediately reduced after entry into Rangoon. On the contrary, the Army persisted in a continuance of air supply on a scale which it was not always practicable to meet in face of atrocious weather and fewer available aircraft.

191. The departure of the American transport squadrons towards the end of May, 1945, resulted in a corresponding reduction in air supply to the ground forces. With hostilities in Burma virtually over, this was only to be expected. What air supply did not anticipate was the enormous concentration of Allied ground forces which had pushed into Rangoon at the last minute to ensure its speedy capture. These troops had still to be fed and supplied, as had the Allied ground forces engaging the remnants of the Japanese main Army trapped in the Pegu Yomas of Southern Burma as the result of the rapid Allied drive to Rangoon.

192. Throughout the campaign in Burma it had been the practice to pool the air resources for the mutual benefit of the British and American elements of Eastern Air Command. The result had been a building up of a balanced organisation known as Combat Cargo Task Force, capable of operating at an intensive rate of air supply.

193. The operational achievement of Combat Cargo Task Force, covering the period October, 1944 (the date of its inception) to the end of May, 1945, when disintegration took place, is best indicated by the following figures:—

| | |
|---|---|
| Total hours flown ... ... | 386,283 |
| Supplies carried (short tons) | 332,136 |
| Number of persons carried | 339,137 |
| Number of casualties carried | 94,243 |
| Total tonnage carried, including weight of persons and casualties ... ... | 379,707 |

*Forecast for Air Lift after Rangoon.*

194. From the examination of results achieved during the advance through Burma, and the lessons learned, it was possible, in the middle of May, to agree that each transport squadron's effort as from 1st June, 1945 to 31st July, could be 125 hours per aircraft for the month. This demanded an effort of 156 hours per aircraft on the squadron strength.

195. A better flow of reinforcement aircraft was expected, which would thus greatly help towards making the new transport effort possible, also a stepping-up and increase in efficiency of maintenance organisation, with consequent increased monthly output and quicker turn-round of aircraft undergoing repair, was taking place.

196. On the assumption that two R.A.F. squadrons were made available for airborne training by 1st June, that internal airlines requirements were met, and that U.S.A.A.F. transport squadrons were all out of the Theatre from 10th June, it was calculated that the