

The 70th British Division completed its special training as L.R.P. brigades in the Now-gong area by the end of October. Two extra British Infantry battalions were added to the Division to enable the requisite number of columns to be formed.

Troops other than infantry which were absorbed in the Special Force, included two field artillery regiments, an anti-tank regiment, a reconnaissance regiment, and two regiments of the Royal Armoured Corps. On joining the Special Force, the men of these units severed for the time being their connection with their original arm of the service.

6. The Special Force Headquarters opened at Gwalior on the 25th October, for the training, organisation and administration under H.Q. Central Command of all L.R.P. forces and later as required by South East Asia Command for their operational control. This headquarters was formed from resources made available from the 70th Division and from personnel from the United Kingdom. Its more important appointments were duplicated to allow of training and planning to proceed concurrently, and it provided staffs where necessary for wings of the L.R.P. brigades.

This was the general position of the Special Force in November, and while the training of it continued under me, it operated later in strength against the enemy communications in North Central Burma under the direction of the Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia Command. The untimely death of Maj.-Gen. Wingate at the outset of these operations was a tragic loss to the Force which had been his conception from the start.

#### 7. *Airfield Defences.*

Another extensive development was in the land defence of airfields and airforce installations. The existing policy held good whereby general and local land defence was the task of the Army; but the R.A.F. were now to assist to the limit of their own available resources.

Extensive camouflage measures were undertaken to conceal airfields in the vulnerable area of the Provinces of Assam, Bengal, Bihar, the southern districts of Orissa, and in a coastal belt of twenty-five miles from Orissa to Cape Comorin.

To obliterate the traces of recent construction constituted a major difficulty, and a vast campaign of grass and creeper growing had been undertaken. The camouflage of the strips themselves remained, however, the main problem owing to lack of materials, transport and labour. Nevertheless progress was made. Dummy aircraft of various designs were manufactured and put in use, and thirty decoy sites in Bengal had been projected as a defensive measure against night attack.

#### 8. *Chemical Warfare and Special Weapons.*

The use of gas by the Japanese seemed unlikely, particularly so in view of the strategical conditions on the Burma front.

In order to lighten the load on the individual fighting soldier, I decided, with certain exceptions, to withdraw respirators and anti-gas equipment from formations and units joining the field army. Exceptions were the crews of tanks and carriers. The equipment withdrawn was, however, stored in forward ordnance depots under special arrangements to admit of its

being rapidly issued in emergency. Anti-gas training also continued, and a high standard was maintained, and for security reasons Commanders were directed to exercise discretion in promulgating this policy.

#### 9. *Flame Weapons and Coloured Smokes.*

A number of flame weapons, both man-pack and carrier-borne, were ordered from England for 1943 and 1944, but their tactical use, the arm of the service that will use them, and the scales and method of maintenance in the field remain to be decided after trials and demonstrations have been carried out.

While it was decided to use coloured smokes with mortars and certain smaller calibre guns, none were yet available for these weapons. Two thousand coloured smoke generators only were provided from England, and small quantities of grenades, filled with red and yellow smoke only, were available from indigenous production in India.

### TRAINING

10. The experience gained in recent operations and in Arakan exposed various shortcomings in our training, and this gave rise to many of the measures carried out during the period under review. Indeed, some of the measures introduced constituted fundamental changes in our policy and practice in regard to military training as a whole. In addition to the expansion of our training framework in various directions, much reorganisation and improvement of existing training formations, and installations was effected. The most important of these developments are summarised below.

#### 11. *The selection of candidates for commissions.*

Since the war expansion of the Indian Army began, selection has been by means of interview boards. These boards consisted originally of certain senior civil and military officers, and were district and provincial in character. Though this system had met with considerable success, there was a high subsequent wastage at Officers' training schools. During the period, these boards were centralised in General Headquarters, and scientifically organised on the system already evolved in the United Kingdom. By these means it was hoped to save time and effort, as well as to select the embryo officer at the outset for the work to which he was most suited.

Similarly selection of officers for the Women's Auxiliary Corps (India) was commenced by means of interview boards on the same lines.

#### 12. *The Training of Officers.*

In order to provide the large number of staff officers that were required for static formation headquarters, it was decided in August to start at the Staff College a series of short courses, each of 60 students. The students for these short courses were primarily selected from those who were over age for the ordinary Staff College course, and physically incapable of carrying out staff duties in active formations.

The syllabus for instruction at the Tactical School was completely revised to cover jungle warfare and warfare in Eastern countries rather than desert warfare on which its efforts had primarily been concentrated.