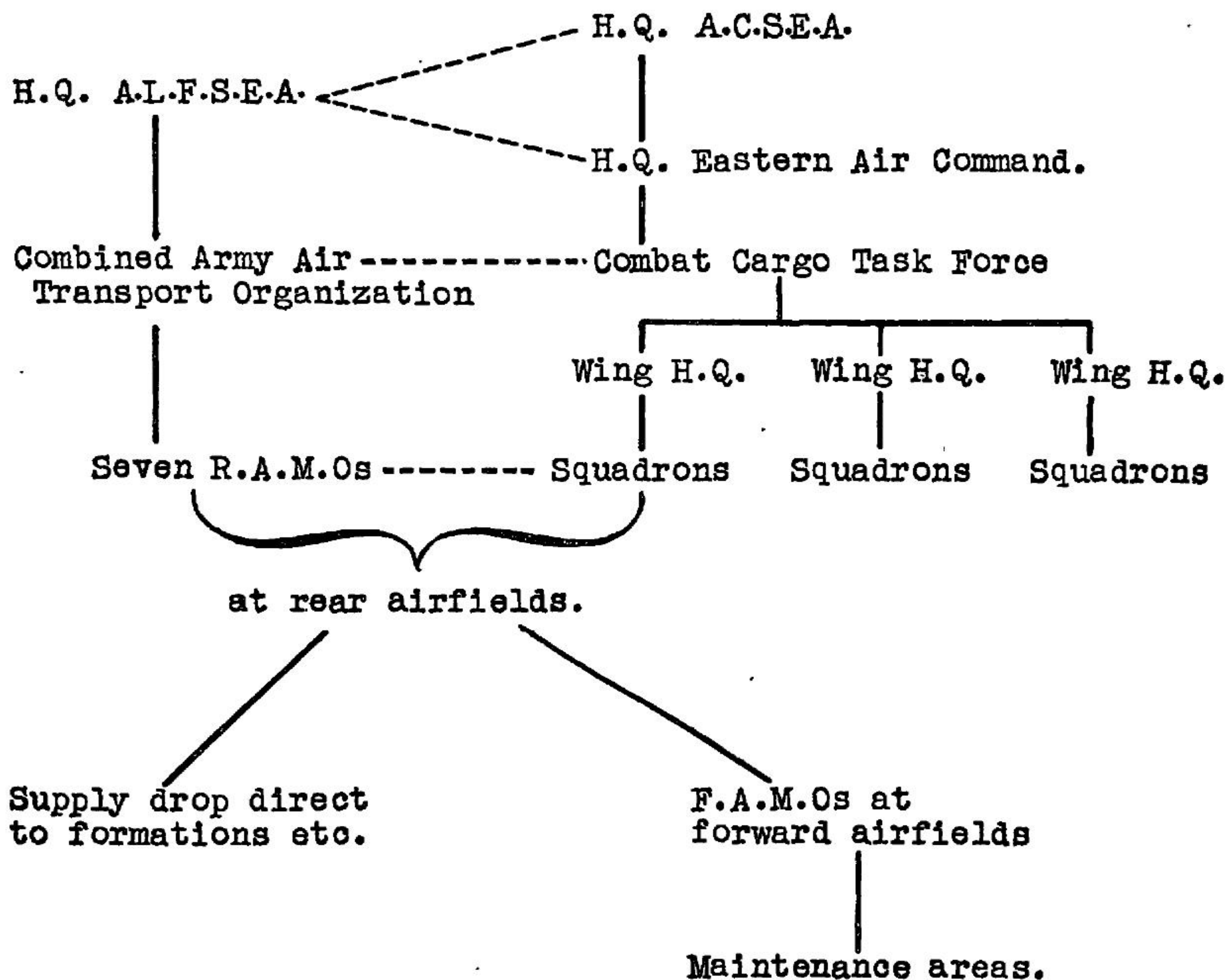


The Organization was thus as follows:—



360. One thing is vital for an organization such as C.A.A.T.O., and that is first-class communications. Not only must the aircraft deliver the correct loads at the right places, but the system must be sufficiently flexible to allow of demands being changed at very short notice—for instance, ammunition may suddenly be required instead of petrol where unexpected opposition is met. It must be possible for demands from forward formations to be sent back at top speed so as to allow the proper sorting of these demands by C.A.A.T.O.'s staff and for the correct instructions to be sent out to the R.A.M.Os. Information must also be sent back to allow the correct briefing of pilots so that supplies are landed at the right airfield or dropped over the right dropping zone. The situation forward is a constantly changing one, and in the case of supply-dropping where units are in the jungle away from roads and tracks, the use of a central dropping zone is impracticable and deliveries have to be made to each brigade or unit.

It was in this matter of communications that C.A.A.T.O. was insufficiently well provided, and such mistakes as occurred were in the main attributable to this cause. Unfortunately Signals personnel and equipment were among the most serious shortages in the theatre and so it was not possible to bring C.A.A.T.O.'s communications up to the standard required.

361. As Fourteenth Army's advance progressed and the capture of Rangoon became likely, so the necessity for increasing the air supply lift and getting the air supply bases forward became more pressing. The Imphal group of airfields was particularly unecon-

omical as not only were they the most distant, with a bad mountain crossing *en route*, but all stores sent from them were a charge on road transport from Manipur Road forward. This situation had been improved by the opening of the petrol pipeline on the 2nd March (see paragraph 332), but by this time the airfields were already too far behind to allow operation at economic ranges.

The original plans for Akyab and Ramree Advanced Bases were that all-weather airfields would be completed at Akyab by the 30th April for three transport squadrons, and at Kyaukpyu for the same number by the 15th May. These dates were, however, not nearly early enough to support Fourteenth Army's rapid advance and it became necessary to develop fair-weather airfields and to put them into operation simultaneously with the construction of the all-weather ones. Two squadrons of C.47 aircraft began supply operations from Akyab on the 20th March, with No. 1 R.A.M.O. which had been switched from Imphal, and a further two squadrons by the end of the month. Half a squadron operated from Kyaukpyu during April for the supply of troops in Arakan only. The all-weather airfields were in fact completed in both places in early May, when each base operated three squadrons of C.47 transport aircraft.

362. The extent of all this development and the effect of the increased number of aircraft we eventually received are shown in the tonnage figures. The table given in paragraph 352 showed a total average daily tonnage of 247. This average rose each month until in March, 1945, the figure of 1903 tons daily was