

Commander. I pointed out the grave disadvantages of such a system and urged the Supreme Allied Commander to arrange for the appointment of a commander of the Allied Land Forces. He eventually agreed to my recommendation and put forward his proposals to the Chiefs of Staff in September.*

143. It had originally been intended that the headquarters of 11 Army Group which, under the new organization was to become H.Q., Allied Land Forces, should go to Kandy. I pointed out in my first Despatch the grave disadvantages of placing this headquarters at a place so far distant from the area of operations to which both signal and other communications were so bad.† I continued therefore, to press during the summer for the move of H.Q. 11 Army Group, to the neighbourhood of Calcutta. The Supreme Allied Commander finally approved this proposal and arrangements were made to move my Headquarters to Barrackpore. The Commander-in-Chief, India, with that readiness to help which always distinguishes him, moved H.Q., Eastern Command, to provide my staff with the necessary accommodation and offices.

144. The need for the closest co-operation between the Army and the Air Forces at all levels of command had led the Supreme Allied Commander to set up a committee to examine and report upon the best method of improving co-operation.

Its principal recommendation was that army and air headquarters should be alongside each other at all levels down to and including composite group level. I strongly supported this proposal, which involved the following re-organization of air commands:—

(a) Eastern Air Command absorbed Third Tactical Air Force and was to work in conjunction with Advance Headquarters, Allied Land Forces.

(b) 221 Group became a Composite Group for co-operation with Fourteenth Army.

(c) 224 Group was to provide support for 15 Indian Corps in the Arakan.

(d) 10 U.S.A.A.F. was to continue to operate with Northern Combat Area Command.

In each case, the army and air headquarters were to be located together. Operations subsequent to those covered by this Despatch have shown the wisdom of these decisions.

PART III.—ADMINISTRATION.

Adjutant-General Questions.

145. *Reinforcements.* I have already mentioned the shortage of infantry reinforcements in discussing the availability of formations, but the demand for all types of reinforcements has continued to exceed the supply. The general position has, except that of certain highly technical trades, however, improved since the situation described in my first Despatch.

* *War Office footnote:* Additional particulars regarding the re-organization of the command of the Allied Land Forces in South-East Asia are set out in the Supreme Allied Commander's Report, South-East Asia, 1943-45, at Part A., para. 43; Part B., paras. 170-172; 226-227; 231 and 268-269.

† *War Office footnote:* The views of the Supreme Allied Commander and his reasons for the move to Ceylon are set out in Part A., paragraphs 12-14 of his Report, South-East Asia, 1943-45.

Shortages, although a very severe handicap, have not made it necessary to withdraw units but it has been necessary to send some British infantry drafts to reinforcement camps without previous jungle training in order to maintain battalions at minimum fighting strength. This does not mean that drafts are sent forward wholly untrained since they are given some training by the camp training staffs.

146. *Releases.* As a result of the announcement of the scheme for the "Re-allocation of British Manpower" on the cessation of hostilities in Europe, instructions were issued to units early in November, together with provisional Class A release rolls. Personnel fell into three categories:—

(a) Surplus to manpower requirements.

(b) Those called out for vital post-war reconstruction.

(c) Compassionate cases.

147. *Repatriation.* The reduction, in September, of the period of overseas service to 3 years and 8 months caused widespread satisfaction. The numbers affected, however, were large and their despatch had to be spread over the following four months, except in the case of the officers and men of the Royal Corps of Signals. The repatriation of Signal personnel had unfortunately to be delayed and spread over the period January to March 1945, whilst officers had to wait longer and were to be sent home between February and April as the replacements had to arrive before repatriates left their units.

148. *Leave.* (a) The opening, in August, of the Indian Army leave scheme for officers filled a long felt want. All British officers and British other ranks who had completed 5 years' service abroad were eligible, but the number was so large that leave could only be granted to those with 8 years' overseas service. Even so, it is likely that it will take over 12 months to send these officers home, owing to the limited number of passages.

(b) A special war leave programme was arranged between July and October. This enabled Indian other ranks, whose leave was overdue, to go to their homes.

Medical.

149. *Evacuation of Casualties.* While Imphal was still surrounded, all casualties had to be flown to the base hospitals as described in my first Despatch. I had always pressed for the movement of sick and wounded to hospital by air, but until operations in Arakan and Imphal this year there had never been enough aircraft. Their increasing use on this important duty reduced the number of men who had to travel by the old types of transport. As we advanced down the Tiddim and Tamu roads, airstrips were constructed for use by light aircraft in the first place, and, later, by cargo aircraft as the strips were enlarged and their surfaces improved. Casualties were sent to a central air maintenance area in Imphal and thence by returning supply aircraft to the base hospitals. All casualties from the Tiddim road were flown back. From Tamu, sick and wounded travelled both by air and road.

On the Arakan front, the movement of casualties by air was limited almost entirely to those of 81 (West African) Division in the Kaladan Valley, since water transport was available for other formations.