

the coast of Burma or near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands were also attacked with success.

As a result of continued reconnaissance and attacks on shipping, enemy use of the port of Rangoon practically ceased during the period.

During the whole period U.S.A.A.F. bombers shot down twenty-four enemy aircraft, probably destroyed eighteen and damaged thirty-one.

#### 16. *Tactical Bombing.*

The 4th Corps was effectively supported by attacks on the Japanese bases at Kalewa, Kalembo and on other similar targets. In August light bombers co-operated with land forces in raiding operations, thereby obtaining useful experience of co-operation in jungle country. In this it was found that our existing ground to air radio telephony control arrangements were inadequate, and methods such as the use of smoke mortar bombs to indicate enemy targets close to our own troops and positions were developed.

By the middle of September, Vengeances almost entirely replaced Blenheims for day tactical bombing, and the pilots of these machines rapidly became skilled in the identification and bombing of small camouflaged targets.

#### 17. *Fighters and Fighter Bombers employed offensively.*

Aircraft were deployed to support both the 4th Corps front from Assam to the Southern Chin Hills, and the 15th Corps front in the Arakan. Weather conditions, however, restricted land activity; and fighters were confined to answering calls for support from our land patrols, and to attacking enemy forward positions and their lines of communication immediately in rear.

On the 15th Corps front our offensive air operations made the enemy progressively more cautious in the siting of his monsoon quarters. Our attacks also considerably reduced his freedom of movement, and often he was only able to move by night or in bad weather.

The enemy reacted strongly to our attacks by placing light anti-aircraft defences at or near all likely targets, and thereafter this type of attack proved more expensive for our own aircraft. The damage inflicted upon the enemy, however, fully justified such losses as we incurred.

#### 18. *Maintenance of Air Superiority.*

We were ready for the enemy when towards the end of the period he resumed operations in the air. The results, however, of our efforts to intercept his raids were disappointing because of advantages the enemy aircraft had over the Hurricanes which formed the bulk of our defensive force. Whenever contact was made, however, attacks were carried out with vigour, and losses as high as could be expected were inflicted by the Hurricanes. However, as already mentioned, the first appearance of our Spitfires altered this.

During the whole period our air superiority was definitely unchallenged, and with the expansion and re-equipment that has been carried out it should remain so.

#### 19. *Fighter Reconnaissance.*

Hurricanes accomplished a particularly satisfactory task in their reconnaissances in support of the 4th and 15th Corps. Their assignments included photographic, reconnaissance of the enemy's forward positions, tactical reconnaissance in tracing enemy movements in the immediate rear of their forward positions, and continual survey of the rearward lines of communication. Bengal Command was also responsible for seaward reconnaissance to a depth of twenty-five miles from the coast along the whole Sunderbans and Arakan coastline, from Calcutta to Pagoda Point. This work, done as it was in the worst part of the monsoon weather, was of great merit.

#### 20. *Air Supply.*

Isolated radar and Observer Corps posts cut off by the monsoon rains were supplied by air. Also the almost daily service to and from the forward areas transported essential spare parts, the lack of which was keeping operational aircraft on the ground.

The main tasks however, of the squadron engaged on this work were for the Army. It followed up its successful work in supplying the Long Range Penetration Brigade in its raid during the spring of 1943 by supply dropping in inaccessible country where, without its aid, land detachments could not have been maintained. It carried out 1,100 sorties, and almost 1,200 tons of supplies were dropped.

#### 21. *Air Operations for the Defence of India's Coastline and Ceylon.*

Two groups comprising twelve squadrons were allocated to this duty. Operational control of all general reconnaissance in this sphere was vested in the headquarters of one of these groups under the strategical direction of the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, modified from time to time by mutual agreement with the Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet.

Control of operations in the Arabian Sea was also strengthened, and a Naval Air Operations Room established at Bombay.

The threat of seaborne attack against India and Ceylon receded, and we should get at least two or three months warning of any such enterprise. We relied therefore on our existing strength in coastal areas for immediate air defence, while taking all necessary measures for expansion and reinforcement that did not actually involve the holding of aircraft, e.g., organisation of fighter control, installation of communications, etc.

#### 22. *General and Photographic Reconnaissances.*

The strengthening of our island bases at Addu Atoll and Diego Garcia and the retention of Cocos Island, extended the range of our general reconnaissances.

Considerable development of photographic reconnaissances also took place. Strategical photographic reconnaissances of enemy occupied territory in Burma, China, Assam and the Andamans were carried out.

The main task, however, was greatly increased intelligence cover of Sumatra, Malaya, the Andamans and Nicobar Islands.\* Mosquitos were only able to cover the Northern Andamans, and it was therefore necessary to use Liberators also, based in Ceylon and on the East coast of India.

\* See Part I, paragraph 6