

SPECIAL DUTY OPERATIONS.

An Integral Part in the War Strategy of South East Asia.

273. Operations by S.D. aircraft of my Command contributed very materially to the success of the highly organised guerilla forces of this Theatre which, themselves, were an integral part of the strategy of the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia.

274. In the initial stages, S.D. operations were primarily in support of our own forces operating in the enemy-occupied territories, concerning which our Intelligence from ground sources was exceedingly scarce. In the closing stages of the war, however, operations by aircraft in introducing personnel to the Japanese-occupied areas of Burma, Siam, French Indo-China, Malaya, Sumatra and Singapore Island, and supplying them as well as the guerilla formations under their control, grew to proportions which called for the maximum effort of aircraft and crews engaged on this special work. Indeed the true picture was that our Liberator position in the Command was exceedingly tight, since the S.D. effort was carried out largely by this type of aircraft.

275. By May, 1945, guerilla organisations in the Theatre had become firmly established, so much so, that the Burmese Guerillas played a prominent part with our Air and Ground Forces in the killing of ten thousand Japanese troops during an attempted mass escape from the Pegu Yomas in July.

276. A brief account of their activities in co-operation with the Tactical Air Forces is covered in another chapter.

Control of the Guerilla Organisations.

277. The control of the Guerilla Organisations in this Theatre was vested in the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, with a branch, known as "P" Division, which delegated part of its functions to special staff officers at various lower formations.

278. Guerilla operations in South East Asia took on an entirely different character from the work of the underground forces in Europe, where patriots speedily organised themselves as a resistance movement. In South East Asia the sympathies of Asiatics had first to be won over to our cause by special agents and leaders, and parties of guerillas organised among the local inhabitants and often fanatical hill tribesmen. Aircraft made flights of 2,000 and 3,000 miles regularly on these expeditions for on aircraft almost entirely did the build-up of these secret forces depend.

279. Briefly, the Guerilla Organisations operating in the Theatre were as follows:—

(a) *Force 136.* This was a British Organisation mainly responsible for raising, training, arming and controlling guerilla forces and sabotage teams. It also had a tactical intelligence role and operational control of "Z" Force which had a more limited but similar function.

(b) *O.S.S.* The American Officers of Strategic Services had a similar object to that of Force 136, and also collected and distributed strategic intelligence.

(c) *I.S.L.D.* The Inter-Service Liaison Department was a British Organisation and was

concerned mainly with the collection and distribution of strategic intelligence from many sources.

280. In addition to the above, there were also miscellaneous organisations which had guerilla functions, and sometimes called upon Special Duty aircraft to assist them.

Allied Air Force Units Involved.

281. Liberators, Dakotas, Catalinas, Lysanders and L.5 (Sentinels) were used for the S.D. operations. The principal units employed were:—

(i) *No. 357 Squadron.* This squadron was the one permanent complete S.D. squadron in this Theatre. It consisted of 10 Liberators, 10 Dakotas and a detached flight of up to 10 Lysanders. The role of the Lysanders was the infiltration and withdrawal of men and mail by landing in enemy territory. The Dakotas were also available for similar landings, as well as for parachute operations.

(ii) *No. 240 Squadron.* This G.R. Catalina squadron included three Catalinas for Special Duty Operations in alighting in enemy waters. These Catalinas were also capable of minor parachute operations.

(iii) *No. 358 Squadron.* This heavy bomber squadron was transferred indefinitely from 231 Group to the S.D. role, and consisted of 16 Liberators which were modified to S.D. standards.

(iv) *10th U.S.A.A.F.* Until the withdrawal by the American Army Air Forces from the Command on 1st June, 1945, a proportion of the effort of the 10th U.S.A.A.F., by arrangement with the O.S.S., was allocated to S.D. operations.

(v) *Tactical Groups.* By local arrangements between the Guerilla Organisations and No. 221 Group, Tactical squadrons sometimes carried out S.D. operations authorised by the Group Headquarters.

(vi) *S.D. Air/Sea Rescue Operations.* Special Duty Air/Sea Rescue operations were carried out from time to time by A.S.R. Catalinas under the control of No. 222 Group. These operations were concerned with installing dumps of foodstuffs and equipment for missing aircrews on coasts in enemy waters, and were arranged by "E" Group.

282. As the S.D. squadrons during the closing stages of the war in South East Asia were operating regularly at an intensive rate of effort on these missions, other units were also brought in to supplement the S.D. work.

Planning of S.D. Air Operations.

283. The training of aircrews and army personnel to the R.A.F. standards took as high priority as the operations themselves. Where practicable, and when the Guerilla Organisations agreed, the training of army personnel and aircrews was combined. This was particularly essential during training for night landing operations on enemy territory, and for ground-to-air special radar and signals equipment.

284. It was estimated that a sustained rate of five successful sorties per aircraft per month could be maintained by an S.D. squadron of twelve aircraft, giving a total of