

following transport aircraft would be available :—

1-10 June—

8 R.A.F. Squadrons—240 C-47

4th C.C. Group—100 C-46

11 June-31 July—

8 R.A.F. Squadrons—240 C-47

197. On such a basis, the capacity for the daily lift on long tons of squadrons was estimated as under :—

1-10 June—

1,474 long tons

11 June-31 July—

800 long tons

198. This capacity measured against the Army's requirements of 14th May, 1945, showed the following situation in tons :—

Period	ALFSEA requirement	Capacity to Deliver
	tons	tons
1— 8 June	1,310	1,474
9—10 „	1,070	1,474
11—18 „	1,070	880
19 June—8 July	840	880
9—31 July	600	880

199. On calculation, therefore, a total surplus capacity of 2,120 tons existed from 1-10 June, and a deficiency of 1,520 tons from 11-18 June, giving a surplus airlift. The surplus airlift from 1-10 June, it was calculated, could be stock-piled to offset the deficiency from 11-18 June. From these calculations, therefore, it was considered that the transfer of the U.S.A.A.F. squadrons could be accepted without detriment to any foreseen operations. Unfortunately, a variety of factors militated against this target which had been so carefully planned.

Some Difficulties with the Army over Supply.

200. On 11th June, Advanced H.Q. A.L.F.S.E.A. signalled direct to the Supreme Allied Commander that the short fall in air transport for the first nine days in June totalled 955 long tons, and asked, therefore, for the retention of No. 238 Squadron already overdue to go to the Pacific.

201. I proceeded to Rangoon to discuss this matter more fully with Lieutenant General Sir Oliver Leese, C-in-C., A.L.F.S.E.A. and Major-General Bastyan (Major-General Administration), A.L.F.S.E.A.

202. The Army had come fully briefed, and it was obvious that any detailed discussion in Rangoon without a full knowledge of all factors would place the Air Force at a disadvantage. Accordingly, I signalled Air Command to take all possible measures to lessen the short fall and, for this purpose, to allocate 22 additional Dakotas at once. Upon my return to Command, at Kandy, I held a full discussion on the problem.

203. The varied aspects of the problem are worth detailing since they illustrate the many links upon which air transport depended at the time, and also the strong disinclination of the Army to accept responsibility for breakdowns in air supply. Factors which had upset the air supply target planned in the middle of May included the following :—

(a) The reinforcement flow had not been sufficient to equip the squadron up to a

Unit Equipment of 24 plus 6 as planned and, in consequence, aircraft strength was 12 per cent. deficient.

(b) Ramree airfield, which had been built by the Army for the express purpose of monsoon air supply operations, was often so waterlogged that aircraft could not get off.

(c) There had been an epidemic of main bearing failures in Dakota aircraft engines which had caused an appreciable drop in serviceability; one squadron needed 26 new engines.

(d) Although we had a margin of surplus lift available in May, the Army could not take advantage of it in June, owing to shortage of transport.

(e) Army demands remained high because they could not withdraw sufficient troops through Rangoon due to shipping and communication difficulties.

204. It was decided to take the following steps :—

(i) Inform B.A.F.S.E.A. that the allotment of 24 aircraft to each squadron was of the greatest urgency.

(ii) Press the Army for better drainage of Ramree airfield.

(iii) Transfer as soon as possible one or two transport squadrons from Ramree to Akyab.

(iv) Give the squadrons a target of 100 short tons per day. This was desirable, for it provided a goal that could be reached, and prevented the frustration that had so often been felt in the past at being given a target impossible of achievement. Any margin above the stated figure would be in the nature of a bonus and have a stimulating moral effect.

(v) Withdraw one of the two squadrons engaged from airborne training and employ it on transport. This would give a total of 810 long tons a day against the Army requirements of 880. The difference was so small that it could surely be made up by inland water transport or other means and would certainly entail no drastic cut in rations or amenities.

205. Even then, air transport problems were not solved. There were still in Burma tactical squadrons whose speedy withdrawal for refit and training in preparation for "Zipper/Mailfist" Operation could not be effected through the overloaded land and sea lines of communication. The only method of withdrawing these units in sufficient time was to fly them out. I decided, therefore, that such a task held priority over the airborne training 96 Squadron was accomplishing at that time, and accordingly I received the Supreme Allied Commander's agreement to 96 Squadron's temporary withdrawal to enable air lift to be provided for R.A.F. personnel and equipment of the units already mentioned.

Transport Preparations for "Zipper/Mailfist".

206. An important step was taken in July when I directed that Air Force representation should be made available for Army planning bodies in order to prevent the Army supply authorities from budgeting for airlift which