Command, South-East Asia) and its administrative echelon became Headquarters, R.A.F., Bengal/Burma.

374. The Strategic Air Force, with its Headquarters in Calcutta, operated the strategic bomber squadrons, some of which were based on airfields in the Allied Land Forces, South-East Asia area, for whose construction and maintenance my engineers were responsible. The air supply part of air operations was controlled by the Combat Cargo Task Force which was formed shortly after my arrival. The air transport service to China was operated by the U.S. Air Transport Command, but a considerable proportion of my Allied Land Forces, South-East Asia engineer resources was devoted to the construction of airfields and associated installations in North-East Assam. The ground operations of Northern Combat Area Command were supported by 10 U.S.A.A.F., and the airfield engineer works in this area were largely constructed by American engineer aviation battalions, although the Divisional engineers of 36 British Division provided their own light aircraft strips.

375. To meet the air forces organization described above, my Chief Engineer (Major-General K. Ray, seconded from the U.D.F.), working under the Engineer-in-Chief, South-East Asia Command, through the Deputy Engineer-in-Chief (Air), exercised technical control over the Deputy Chief Engineer, Fourteenth Army, and formed the link on airfield matters with Headquarters, Eastern Air Command and Combat Cargo Task Force. When I moved my Advanced Headquarters from Delhi to Barrackpore, the Deputy Engineer-in-Chief (Air) also moved there from Comilla, and the air elements of the Allied Land Forces, South-East Asia engineer staff came under his control. He worked with Headquarters, R.A.F. Bengal/Burma, which as I have stated above was the administrative echelon of the R.A.F. Headquarters. When the development of Akyab and Ramree airfields was undertaken, special engineer forces were formed for airfield development under the direct control of my Headquarters.

376. In describing the engineer work carried out I have divided work into various categories. First, the Base airfields for both strategic and tactical squadrons, next the transport airfields (excluding those for the China supply lift), then those built for the China lift, then some miscellaneous airfield work in the rear areas, and lastly and in greater detail, the forward airfield construction, including the development of the Advanced Bases at Akyab and Ramree.

377. Of the Base airfields, the bulk of those which were intended for the Strategical Air Force were sited in India, but thirteen bomber airfields had been constructed by the Chief Engineer, Fourteenth Army. Three of these were later transferred to the Engineer-in-Chief, India Command, and of the remaining ten, five were used by medium and light bombers during the period covered by this Despatch, and the other five were converted for use by transport aircraft and fighters. During the early stages of Fourteenth Army and 15 Indian Corps' offensive, base airfields were used by tactical squadrons, fighters operating from Imphal and Palel, and also from the bomber fields at Kumbirgram, Chittagong, Chiringa, Cox's Bazaar and Comilla, which were adapted to meet fighter requirements.

378. Initially, the air supply lift for Fourteenth Army was flown from bomber airfields which had been converted for this purpose. The airfields used were Sylhet, Comilla, Fenny and Chittagong, and supplies were carried to the airfields in the Imphal Plain. The increase in the tonnage carried has already been described. All this had to be met by more maintenance, development and construction by the airfields engineers. The building of the advanced air bases will be described under forward airfield development. I will only add here that during the year ending the 31st March, 1945, 550,000 tons of supplies and stores had been carried by air to forward areas from airfields constructed by Allied Land Forces, South-East Asia engineers.

379. The American air lift to China reached gigantic proportions considering the difficulty of the route, and it has received world-wide publicity. What is not so generally realised, and certainly received less publicity, is that the airfields in North-East Assam to support this traffic, were built almost entirely by British agency, first under the Chief Engineer, 11 Army Group, until November, 1944, and thereafter by the Chief Engineer, L. of C. Command. One United States engineer battalion assisted in the later stages. Owing to the diversity of the works, it is not practicable to give full details of the construction undertaken during the period covered by this Despatch, but the following table shows the situation at about the time I took over command in November, 1944, giving the work completed and the amount in hand as regards the eleven all-weather airfields in North-East Assam:

Description	*Completed*	*Under Construction*
Runways	13 miles	—
Taxi tracks	25 miles	7 miles
Aircraft standings	486	20
Aircraft parking aprons	37 acres	23 acres
Roads	80 miles	23 miles
Accommodation	33,106 men	—
Covered Storage	63 acres	4¼ acres

The effect of these works on the air supply lift to China is indicated by the fact that the lift was trebled between June, 1944, and March, 1945, as shown by the following figures.

	June 1944	*March* 1945
No. of completed sorties per month	3,702	11,347
Tons lifted to China ...	14,150	41,580

380. A considerable amount of other rear airfield work was undertaken in the L. of C. Command area, in addition to what has been mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. For example, twenty-one fair-weather satellite airfields had to be maintained. These had been out of action during the monsoon and subsequent drainage and repair work was heavy.