

(c) Squadrons were given their full U.E. of aircraft instead of retaining a proportion of them in the Maintenance organisation as hitherto.

(d) Each Repair and Salvage Unit and Air Stores Park worked for a wing and specialised in the types of aircraft operated by the wing.

475. Re-organisation was necessary for yet another important reason. The great distance which, at that time, obtained between operational areas in Burma and bases in India, precluded the return of short range aircraft to Maintenance Units for major inspections and engine changes. Thus, it became necessary to transfer the responsibility for this maintenance work to the squadrons and other flying units. Owing to the different problems, including beaching facilities, involved in carrying out major inspections on flying boats, this maintenance continued to be centralised at Koggala in Ceylon.

476. Hitherto, all repair and salvage units in the Command were controlled by Headquarters, Base Air Forces through Nos. 222, 226 and 230 Groups on a regional basis. In the re-organisation no change in policy, however, was effected in the case of units under 222 Group, Ceylon, and 226 Group, whose area extended throughout India, but excluded Bengal and Assam. The R. & S.U.s. on the other hand, had, of necessity, to be fully mobile and to move with the units they supported.

477. When the re-organisation was put into effect the establishments of flying units were increased by 25 per cent. in order to cover aircraft undergoing major inspections at units. This increase was effected by feeding in additional aircraft from the R. & S.U.s. as and when the squadron or unit became due for a major inspection.

478. The base at Rangoon carried heavy responsibilities—not only for the continuance of operations during the mopping up period in Burma, but in preparing its organisation to meet the coming operations against Malaya.

479. A Forward Equipment Unit and a Forward Repair Unit were maintained in Rangoon to support the Air Forces in Southern Burma and to act as backing, if necessary, for the "Zipper" forces which would deploy through Southern Burma bases. The pressure on maintenance at this crucial period is illustrated by the amount of work tackled. During the months from May to August, the Repair and Salvage Units returned to service 830 aircraft and dismantled a further 420 which had been written off. The heaviest month was May, after the entry into Rangoon, when 300 aircraft were repaired—an indication of the strenuous use to which they had been subjected during the last stage of the lightning advance to Rangoon.

480. It was thought that the Repair and Salvage Unit in Rangoon would build up a fairly extensive repair depot, but with the capitulation of the Japanese in August this was no longer necessary, and personnel were switched to Singapore to re-occupy and build up the original Repair Depot at Seletar on Singapore Island.

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Difficulties arising from Lend/Lease termination.

481. President Truman's announcement of the Surrender of Japan brought with it the declaration that Lend/Lease to Allied Governments was at an end except for assistance to forces engaged against Japanese who had not surrendered.

482. The repercussions in Air Command, South East Asia were serious. There was a world-wide shortage of Dakota spares. The U.S.A.A.F., however, as a result of the termination of Lend/Lease had cancelled the production of spares for their earlier Marks I, II and III and there were 200 Dakotas included in this range within South East Asia Command.

483. To ascertain the position as it affected Air Command, investigation revealed that, excluding Dakotas, Expeditors, Thunderbolts and Cornells, there were some 1,600 American aircraft and gliders in India and South East Asia which would gradually become unserviceable through lack of spares.

484. The Command's most urgent attention at the beginning of September, therefore, was directed with the utmost speed to securing alternative arrangements for supply of necessary spares. In some respects, but by no means all, the situation was partially alleviated by the arrangement reached at Washington that the U.S.A.A.F. would meet, on a cash basis, limited demands in respect of Liberator, Dakota and Skymaster aircraft only. No stock demands, however, were permitted. The literal interpretation of this ruling was that a demand could not be raised until an aircraft was actually grounded or until repair was held up. A period of from eight to ten weeks also must elapse before the necessary parts could be obtained from America.

485. What became quite certain was that no demand whatsoever would be met in other types of aircraft, which included the following:—

Thunderbolt.	Cornell.
Sentinel.	Vengeance.
Argus.	Catalina.
Expeditor.	Harvard.

486. It was clear, therefore, that as stocks for any particular item became exhausted, so also would the repair of aircraft, their engines, and associated equipment automatically cease. Cannibalisation, or robbing another aircraft, was of very limited value as the bulk of the spares required were rendered necessary by wear and tear or by climatic deterioration.

487. In a signal to the Air Member for Supply and Organisation, I stated that if we did not get the essential parts, I could foresee us falling down badly on our agreed commitments, and urged that dollars should be made available for purchase of our essential requirements for replacement arising from wear and tear.

488. But the difficulties in England over the termination of Lend/Lease were greater than it was at first realised. There were dollar quotas to be considered, and in this connection it was learned that demands on available dollars were extremely heavy, especially for foodstuffs. The situation in respect of aircraft spares and replacements, therefore, was

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