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AIR OPERATIONS IN BURMA AND BAY OF BENGAL, JANUARY 1ST TO MAY 22ND, 1942.

General Headquarters, India,
New Delhi, India,
28th September, 1942.

From:

General Sir Archibald P. Wavell, G.C.B.,
C.M.G., M.C., A.D.C.

To:

The Chiefs of Staff, London.

I forward herewith two copies of a report by Air-Vice-Marshal D. F. Stevenson on Air operations in Burma and the Bay of Bengal from January 1st (the date on which Air-Vice-Marshal Stevenson assumed command) to May 22nd, 1942 (the date when the forces from Burma completed evacuation to India).

Air-Vice-Marshal Stevenson's report emphasises the remarkable work performed by a small air force in defence of Rangoon, and the difficulties which the Air Force, in common with the Army, suffered through lack of the necessary resources for the defence of Burma. I have already commented on these in my Despatch* of July 1st, 1942, on the Burma operations and I have nothing further to add.

In paragraphs 122 to 131 Air-Vice-Marshal Stevenson refers to certain telegrams addressed to ABDA Command to which he received no reply. From the records of ABDA Command it appears that both these telegrams were received with very considerable delay, and not until instructions had been received transferring Burma back from ABDA Command to the command of the C.-in-C. India. Also Air-Vice-Marshal Stevenson had included the proviso that "failing immediate instructions am putting this plan into action commencing

today". By the time, therefore, that these telegrams were received command had passed from ABDA and Air-Vice-Marshal Stevenson had presumably already taken action. No reply was therefore necessary.

Please pass one copy of this report to Air Ministry.

A. P. WAVELL,
General.

Despatch on Air Operations in Burma and the Bay of Bengal covering the period January 1st to May 22nd, 1942, by Air Vice-Marshal D. F. STEVENSON, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

AIR OPERATIONS IN BURMA AND THE BAY OF BENGAL, SPRING, 1942.

INTRODUCTION.

1. The following is a report on the air operations carried out by a small Allied Air Force (American Volunteer Group, Royal Air Force and Indian Air Force) against the Japanese Air Force in Burma and the Bay of Bengal and the subsequent movement of the R.A.F. and I.A.F. to India whence operations against the Japanese continue.

2. In reading this Despatch the following chronological summary may be of assistance:—

1941.

Dec. 9th—War declared by Japan.

Dec. 23rd—Struggle for air superiority over Rangoon commenced.

1942.

Jan. 18th—Mergui and Tavoy evacuated.

Jan. 29th—Japanese thrust through Tenasserim towards Rangoon commenced.

Feb. 15th—Singapore fell.

* General Wavell's despatch appears as a supplementary London Gazette No 38228 of the 11th March, 1948