

63. As the result of this reconnaissance, extensions to the grounds at Lho'nga and Sabang were put in hand to make them suitable for modern aircraft.

64. Assistance was also given to B.O.A.C. to organise facilities at Sabang for the operation of an alternative seaplane route Rangoon—Port Blair—Sabang instead of the normal one via Bangkok.

Java.

65. Visits were paid to Java by a number of staff officers from A.H.Q. who thus gained useful information about Dutch maintenance establishments and resources generally.

DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIAN OCEAN AND BAY OF BENGAL.

66. A memorandum was prepared about June, 1941, and issued by A.H.Q. detailing the bases to be developed in this area; their status was defined and priority of provisioning was laid down. By December, 1941, the position was as follows:—

Andamans and Nicobars—at Port Blair and Nancowrie, moorings and petrol had been laid, and limited accommodation constructed for operating flying boats. Port Blair was also prepared by B.O.A.C., with R.A.F. assistance, as an alternative to the route Rangoon—Penang.

Ceylon—H.Q. No. 222 Group was established, with a joint Naval/Air Ops. Room, at Colombo.

China Bay—one flight of Vildebeestes was located here for target towing and local reconnaissance. This station was being developed as a permanent base for one G.R. Squadron and one F.B. Squadron, the accommodation for which was practically completed.

Ratmalana—Aerodrome was being constructed for one G.R. Squadron.

Koggala—was being developed as the main base for flying boats operating in the Indian Ocean. Accommodation for one Squadron was nearly ready.

<i>Christmas Island</i>	} Fuel and moorings had been laid and limited accommodation provided for operating flying boats at each of these places.
<i>Cocos Islands</i>	
<i>(Direction Island)</i>	
<i>Maldives (Male)</i>	
<i>Seychelles (Mahe)</i>	
<i>Chagos (Diego Garcia)</i>	
<i>Mauritius</i>	
<i>Tanganyika (Lindi)</i>	

<i>Durban</i>	} Were being developed as permanent bases for one F.B. Squadron each.
<i>Mombasa</i>	

Much credit is due to the Air Ministry Works Department for the great volume of construction which had been carried out in these outlying parts of the Command, as well as for that executed in Malaya, in a relatively short space of time despite many and considerable handicaps.

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY OF UNITS IN MALAYA.

Intelligence Organisation.

67. In June, 1941, A.H.Q. had no Intelligence Organisation of its own. All air intelligence

personnel and records in the Far East had been centralised in the Combined Intelligence Bureau (F.E.C.B.) which functioned under the control of C-in-C. China Station. Theoretically it served, inter alia, the needs of A.H.Q. In practice, however, its means for obtaining air information throughout the Far East was totally inadequate; its staff was insufficient to cope fully even with G.H.Q. Air Intelligence requirements; and although the information it possessed was always available to A.H.Q., F.E.C.B. had not the means of supplanting the missing intelligence machinery at A.H.Q.

Representations were therefore made by A.H.Q. of the need for a thorough intelligence system throughout the Command. About July, a conference was held with G.H.Q., who wished to create a second Combined Intelligence Centre to serve the joint needs of A.H.Q. and H.Q.M.C. A second joint organisation of this nature would not, however, have been suitable for building up the Intelligence organisation required throughout the Command at all levels from A.H.Q. downwards. This view was accepted.

An establishment for an Intelligence organisation for the whole Command was drawn up and submitted to the Air Ministry, and in late autumn, in anticipation of approval, personnel were made available locally and were appointed to H.Q. and Units. The nucleus organisation thus formed was fortunately in being when hostilities broke out, but its development was backward, and in particular the information it had collated for briefing crews was scanty.

68. According to intelligence current in the Command, the efficiency of the Japanese Naval Air Units was known to be good, but that of their Army Air Units was not high despite the fanatical valour of their personnel.

This wrong assessment of their Army Air Units was partly due to the fact that the system for collecting intelligence throughout the Far East was only sufficient to enable F.E.C.B. to obtain incomplete air information, and the reliability of most of this was far from high. And it was partly due to the fact that A.H.Q., stations and squadrons possessed only the embryonic intelligence organisation already referred to: the result was that such intelligence as the Command received was not effectively digested, promulgated or acted upon.

A particular outcome of this state of affairs, which was destined to have far-reaching consequences in Malaya, was that the personnel of the Command remained unaware up to the outbreak of war of the qualities of the Japanese fighter squadrons, whose Zero fighters were to prove superior in performance to our own fighters. This naturally affected training in our squadrons, particularly in the tactics to be adopted by our fighters.

The need for an Operational Training Unit.

69. The Air Ministry had been unable to approve requests made during the year to establish an O.T.U. in Malaya. But in September, 1941, owing to the fact that large numbers of personnel required operational training, A.H.Q. established a makeshift O.T.U. at Kluang from the resources available in the Command. Its rôle was:—

(a) To train pilots for Fighter Squadrons who had been, for some time, arriving from