

55. "Having taken a vital part in the defeat of the Japanese in Burma", I said, "the U.S.A.A.F. units are being withdrawn from Eastern Air Command to fight the Jap in another Theatre. The closing down of the fully integrated Eastern Air Command Headquarters is, therefore, an important milestone in the war against Japan."

"Eastern Air Command was formed on 15th December, 1943, at a critical time in the Battle of Burma, in order to weld into one Command the British and American Air Forces on this front."

"The British Army was hanging on to the western fringes of Burma, having stemmed the Japanese advance into Bengal."

"When the British Army was besieged in Imphal due to Japanese infiltration resulting from their superior mobility, the first task of the newly formed Eastern Air Command was to obtain air superiority in order to enable our close support squadrons to assist the land forces."

"Within a short time air superiority was obtained, due in no small measure to the long range fighter squadrons of the U.S.A.A.F. It enabled the Allied Transport Squadrons to supply and reinforce the beleaguered Army; also, it gave them the mobility which previously the Japanese had monopolised. From this time, until the capture of Rangoon in May, 1945, the Allied Land Forces enjoyed all the benefits of air supremacy which, in turn, kept inviolate the air supply lines and endowed the Allied Army with the mobility and striking power to forge ahead to Mandalay, followed shortly by Rangoon. It made possible the isolation of the Japanese Army in Burma by Allied aircraft, thus preventing the arrival of reinforcements and supplies from Siam and Malaya."

"In Northern Burma, the Tactical and Transport Squadrons of the 10th U.S.A.A.F. played a decisive part in the repulse of the enemy from the Chinese border and in the re-opening of the overland route to China."

"A Japanese officer who was captured in Burma attributed the defeat of the Japanese Army to the superior mobility of the Allied Army. This mobility was almost entirely due to the air supply provided by the Allied Air Forces, whose record tonnage exceeded 2,900 tons per day in April, 1945. Due mainly to their superior numbers and operating at maximum effort, the American Transport Squadrons carried the greater portion of the air lift in support of the land forces in Burma."

"In conclusion, it is fair to say that without the support of the American Air Forces in Burma, we could not have defeated the Japanese Army as rapidly and as decisively in 1945. All British Forces, both land and air, are deeply grateful for the whole hearted support and complete harmony that existed between the American and British Air Force units in this Theatre."

"I am exceedingly proud to have had these American Air Force units in my Command, and, together with all members of the British Air Force in South East Asia, wish them good luck, and good hunting."

56. In my Order of the Day announcing disintegration of Eastern Air Command, I did not make especial mention of units of the Air Service Command, but, instead I wrote to

Lieutenant General D. I. Sultan, Commanding General, India-Burma Theatre, U.S. Army, and expressed the valuable and splendid work which the Air Service Command had performed under Major General T. J. Handley, Jr. Without this help, we should have failed to carry through the intensive operations of the previous 12 months."

57. While it was necessary to sever the British and American Combat units of Eastern Air Command, and Air Command, South East Asia, there was, however, no break as yet with the Air Service Command."

58. With disintegration of Eastern Air Command, the air offensive in South East Asia now passed in its entirety to the Royal Air Force, and an exceedingly active period in the deployment of squadrons in Burma began. Thus, the integration ordered by the Supreme Commander in December, 1943, had been fulfilled in so far as it concerned the integration of British and American Air Forces employed in the defeat of the Japanese in Burma."

The Impact of "Tiger Force" on Air Command

59. For some time after the capture of Rangoon in May, there were indications that Tiger Force was going to be favoured by London in men and material resources previously promised to South East Asia Command."

60. The Supreme Allied Commander, Admiral Mountbatten, showed his reliance on the Air Force in this Theatre, by a strong signal to the Chiefs of Staff expressing his intense disappointment at the contemplated step since he considered it would delay his carrying out their directive to open up the Straits of Malacca and to recapture Singapore at the earliest possible date."

61. I also communicated the concern felt by the Supreme Allied Commander to the Chief of Air Staff, emphasising that future strategy and operations in this Theatre had been based on the agreed rate of build-up of the British Air Forces and especially of British Transport and Heavy Bomber squadrons. Moreover, the withdrawal programme of the U.S.A.A.F. forces for China which had now begun, had been agreed and phased in with the rate of build-up of the British Air Forces."

62. The question of airfields in South East Asia for staging Tiger Force through to the Far East also presented some difficulties, since the most suitable area was Rangoon where insufficient bases for our own aircraft were available. In the United Kingdom it was thought that Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar were too far from Manila, and they were not accepted as alternatives."

63. It became clear that Air Command, South East Asia, must accept the situation wherein the air war in the Pacific against Japan received higher priority than ourselves. This was finally confirmed by a signal from the Chief of Staff in London on June 22nd, part of which read:—

"In case you are in doubt, 'Zipper' and 'Mailist' have been approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff with the proviso that these operations are conducted without prejudice to the preparation and execution of operations for the invasion of Japan and other operations directly connected therewith."