

airfields and supply bases at Akyab and Ramree. On these depended both the ability of Fourteenth Army to make its final dash for Rangoon and the safety of that army's supplies if the monsoon came before Rangoon was reached. Finally it was 15 Indian Corps which mounted the very hazardous operation for the capture of Rangoon by the "sea gate," and by its successful accomplishment, to open the port at least fourteen valuable days earlier than would otherwise have been possible.

The operations of 15 Indian Corps and Fourteenth Army were inter-dependent and only by the combination of these geographically separated campaigns was the reconquest of Burma made possible.

457. This campaign was above all a combined operation, in which command of the sea and air was vital to the land battle. The destruction of the Japanese armies, and therefore the main responsibility for the success or failure of the campaign, fell to the Army's lot. But since we were compelled to do this by the worst natural line of approach, and against the grain of the country, we were forced to depend heavily on the sea and air for our supply lines. The Royal Navy and Royal Indian Navy protected and kept open the one, while the Royal Air Force and U.S. Army Air Force dominated the other. The Army's debt to the other Services is large.

458. Under Admiral Sir Arthur Power, Commander-in-Chief, East Indies Fleet, the Royal Navy and Royal Indian Navy played an outstanding part throughout the campaign. I wish to express to him the Army's gratitude and admiration for the gallantry, enterprise and seamanship displayed by all ranks and ratings under his command. The series of combined operations leap-frogging down the Arakan coast were carried out with limited resources, against the hazards of an exceptionally treacherous and intricate shore. I should like to pay a special tribute to those men of the Royal Indian Navy who manned the landing craft. It was appropriate that the final assault of all—that of Rangoon—should also have been the highest test of seamanship and skill, since both the weather and the navigational problems were exceptionally severe.

459. Air power was a vital element and dominating factor in our strategy. The resources were never able to meet the demands without exacting the utmost from both man and machine. The achievements of the Air Forces, both those of the British Empire and those of the United States' were of the highest order and our success is due in great part to their efforts. To Air-Marshal Sir Guy Garrod and Air-Marshal Sir Keith Park, his successor in command, I would like to express the Army's gratitude and admiration for the gallantry and devotion to duty of all ranks under their command.

In particular, I would like to pay tribute to General Stratemeyer, the Commanding General of Eastern Air Command, who had control of the tactical air battle and of all the aircraft taking part in it. While Air Command, South-East Asia was at Kandy, near the Supreme Commander, Eastern Air Command was close beside my Advanced Headquarters at Barrackpore, 2,000 miles away. Inevitably I spent most of my time here, and the co-operation between

General Stratemeyer's staff and my own was both continuous and successful, and Eastern Air Command provided us with invariable assistance and unfailing support.

I cannot speak too highly of the work done by the squadrons which swept the Japanese from the skies, disrupted their land communications, and provided our troops with close fire support which was all the more valuable owing to the restricted amount of artillery available.

Air transport was used on a scale hitherto unprecedented in modern war. In the administrative part of this Despatch the tonnages handled daily are recorded, but to get the true measure of the effort, it should be remembered that the air-crews who delivered the goods often made three or four journeys a day over hazardous jungle country, often flying in appalling conditions of weather; many casualties were caused by these fearful conditions, but the risks were unflinchingly faced. The ground crews worked unceasingly by day and night in the open, sometimes in torrential rain, to keep the aircraft in commission and to enable the very high rates of service to be maintained.

460. I should like to pay tribute to the allied army forces, American and Chinese, which operated under Lieutenant-General Dan. I. Sultan. Although they did not take part in the later phases of the conquest of Burma they accomplished the politically important task of opening the Ledo/Burma Road to China. Particularly I thank General Sultan for his loyalty and whole-hearted co-operation throughout the campaign. I also pay tribute to General Sun Li Jen and General Liao Yo Hsiang for the way in which they inspired and led their forces.

461. On behalf of my own staff, and of the whole of the Allied Land Forces, South-East Asia, I should like to express our gratitude to His Excellency General (now Field-Marshal) Sir Claude Auchinleck and the staffs, troops and workers of the India Base for their unfailing and whole-hearted support throughout our operations. Since India was our base, the immense administrative task of supplying and maintaining our forces fell on India Command. The speed at which the campaign moved meant many alterations and our requirements sometimes necessarily came at short notice. Despite the difficulties which India's transportation system imposes, they never let us down.

462. To single out any branch of the Army for particular mention would be invidious, when all contributed so notably to the common victory. Their achievements have, I hope been made clear already in the Despatch. I will, however, mention the Army organization created to deal with the problems of air supply, the Army Air Transport Organization, commanded by Brigadier J. A. Dawson, since it was new and achieved such striking results. This is a field in which all have much still to learn. But enormous credit is due to this pioneer organization, not only for its solid achievements, but for the speed with which it improvised fresh methods and strove constantly to improve the technique of air-dropping. This method of supply will, I am sure, be greatly developed in the future, and the work of A.A.T.O. will have laid valuable foundations.

463. Just as Fourteenth Army's success was an outstanding feat of arms by the fighting