

could only operate over our own territory thus having no chance to meet large enemy air forces. Prior to this the enemy had been able to carry out reconnaissance flights with impunity by flying at great heights and out-distancing the Hurricanes. The first three reconnaissance aircraft the enemy sent over after the Spitfires arrived were all destroyed, and the enemy did not again attempt a reconnaissance or a raid in the area where the Spitfires were located.

So important was the success of the Spitfires that my Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief asked the Chief of Air Staff urgently for the flow to be increased as far as possible, and the great successes later against large enemy formations fully justified the request.

11. *Expansion of Squadrons and their Distribution on the 15th November, 1943.*

Although a considerable inflow of aircraft had occurred, our actual front line air strength had not increased very greatly by November.

The target for the end of 1943 was 76 squadrons. In detailed planning, however, targets agreed on from time to time with the Air Ministry have been substituted. Forward administrative planning and organisation was finally based on the 146 squadron target, which is what has been promised on conclusion of the war with Germany.

12. *The 10th U.S.A.A.F.*

While dealing with the developing strength of air power in this theatre, it is appropriate to mention the American Air Forces. My R.A.F. Headquarters have been in constant touch with the U.S. Air Force, and there has

been perfect co-ordination of air operations between the two. In general, the 10th U.S.A.A.F. attacked distant objectives over Burma by day; R.A.F. medium and heavy bombers operated by night; and R.A.F. fighters and light bombers attacked by day objectives within 250 miles of the forward airfields. The introduction of Mustangs (A.36's and 51's) to augment our attacks on enemy communications in forward areas was notable, and the American fighter strength was employed to protect their airfields in Assam and sometimes to escort day bombers and supply dropping aircraft.

The air ferry to Kunming carried an increasing tonnage to China. In June the total was 3,100 tons, and in October 8,632 tons.

13. *Enemy Air Effort.*

I have already remarked that the enemy practically ceased operations in the air during the monsoon period. A few intercept sorties in Burma and some reconnaissance flights were all that were undertaken. Presumably the bulk of enemy squadrons were withdrawn for rest or training.

There was, however, an increase in October and November and raids were carried out on Chittagong, Agartala, Fenny, Palel, Imphal, Khumbhirgram, and Tiddim.

Reconnaissance aircraft appeared a few times also over the Madras coast and Ceylon. Two of these were shot down in October and November by our Beaufighters. The enemy fighter defences and warning system in the Andamans, Nicobars and over Northern Sumatra were fairly efficient, and in each of these areas we lost Liberators shot down while engaged in photographic reconnaissances.

AIR OPERATIONS.

14. *The Bengal Command.*

In June, 1943, dispositions of squadrons were as follows:—

In forward airfields	...	...	5 Hurricane Squadrons.
			1 Beaufighter Squadron
			1 Blenheim Squadron.
			1 Bisley Squadron.
At Cox's Bazar	...	...	1 Hurricane Squadron (detachment).
In Assam	...	...	1 Bisley Squadron.
			1 Mohawk Squadron.
In second line airfields (in Jessore and round Calcutta)	...	...	3 Bomber Squadrons.
			5 Fighter Squadrons.
			1 Photo Reconnaissance Squadron.
			1 Transport Aircraft Squadron.
Training at Digri and Salbani	..		3 Vengeance Squadrons.

Until the weather improved at the end of September this distribution remained substantially unchanged.

The policy regarding the employment of these forces during the monsoon had been laid down as follows:—

To maintain a forward fighter offensive policy.

To ensure the continuance of local air superiority.

To protect our costal shipping southwards from Chittagong.

To attack enemy occupied airfields wherever possible.

To attack enemy lines of communications and shipping in the enemy forward areas.

Actually, while the maintenance of air superiority remained a primary task, medium and heavy bomber effort was concentrated on attacking L. of C. targets.

15. *Strategic Bombing.*

In June/July heavy and medium bomber operations were much handicapped by bad weather and shortage of spares. Nevertheless, the high percentage of successful sorties under difficult weather conditions during this period reflects great credit on the crews concerned.

Between June and August the 10th U.S.A.A.F., operating by day inflicted considerable damage on the Thilawa and Syriam oil installations and took toll of railway rolling stock. The Myitnge Bridge was cut and the Gotteik Viaduct damaged. Enemy vessels off