

my appreciation. On the 20th January ABDA Command (00186 of 20/1) informed the Air Ministry that while the reinforcements asked for were undoubtedly required, it was not known whether they would have to be found from the aircraft allotted to the South Pacific theatre. The full position was asked before agreement to allocate from the total pool was possible—since the need in the Southern Malayan theatre was more immediate than that in Burma.

27. *Proposals for immediate Fighter reinforcement.*—On the 2nd February the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff telegraphed the Air Ministry's proposals for reinforcements for Burma in the immediate future (Webber W.446 of 2/2). This approved an immediate reinforcement of 2 further Hurricane Squadrons, bringing the programme to 6 Hurricane Squadrons in all, but assumed that we should be able to re-equip 67 Squadron with Hurricanes. There were never enough Hurricanes to do that. After the fall of Singapore on February 15th the Chiefs of Staff diverted these 2 Squadrons (30 and 261 Fighter Squadrons) to Ceylon. Thus the total Fighter force actually available throughout the air campaign in Burma was reduced to 3 Hurricane Squadrons.

28. *Initial Equipment of Hurricane Squadrons and the Hurricane Flow.*—The inability adequately to equip our Squadrons with Hurricanes and to maintain them during air action had a serious effect on the air campaign. For example, it led to a situation in which it was only possible for 6 Hurricane II's to take the air against the first heavy attack on our air base at Magwe on 21st March—and except for 1 aircraft every Hurricane II in the Command was present at Magwe on that day.

29. The requirement initially to equip 17, 135 and 136 and to re-equip 67 Squadron was a total of 80 Hurricanes (i.e. 16 I.E. plus 4 I.R. per Squadron). Additionally, a flow of at least 24 per month was necessary to meet minimum war wastage. Therefore over the campaign which lasted three months, the total requirement was at least 128. During this period a considerable number of our Hurricanes due for Burma were diverted to Singapore. Thus of this total requirement only a proportion arrived in Burma and of these a number were obsolescent, worn-out Hurricane I's.

30. *Hurricane Effort.*—Consequently the maximum number of Hurricanes reached in action with the enemy was about 30 Hurricanes, i.e. the equivalent of 2 instead of 4 Squadrons. This strength, moreover, fell away rapidly due to lack of reinforcing aircraft, proper operational facilities and absence of spares, and was on 11th February 15 serviceable Hurricanes, and on 5th March only 6.

31. *Maintenance, Spares and Tool Situation.*—With the exception of 2 Hurricane "pack-ups," no spares for the Hurricane II's arrived in the country before the fall of Rangoon. Consequently, aircraft becoming unserviceable for lack of small parts remained so unless requirements could be provided from the cannibalisation of other unserviceable aircraft. There was a great shortage of tools and rotol kits, while the lack of air screw-blades was serious. Moreover, since the equipment of our

R.S.U.s. and A.S.P.s. did not arrive before the fall of Rangoon, there was no proper organisation for the repair and salvage of aircraft. This factor exercised a considerable influence on our small fighter force and contributed towards the critical shortage of serviceable Hurricanes at Magwe on the 21st March.

32. *A.V.G. Maintenance.*—The A.V.G. Squadron at Rangoon usually had 21 P.40 aircraft of which about 15 would be serviceable. Later in March this figure fell to 10 or 7. But here again the shortage of replacement aircraft, spares, and proper maintenance for the A.V.G. reduced the effort available. The maintenance crews of the A.V.G. did remarkable work in maintaining their aircraft, often under bombing attack. As the A.V.G. were short of trained personnel, R.A.F. personnel were attached to them.

33. *Bombers.*—As regards Bombers, the D.C.A.Ss. telegram indicated that of the 7 Squadrons promised, we should only have 3 in the immediate future. This assumed that Blenheims would be available to equip 60 Squadron. There were never enough Blenheims to do that. The aircraft, personnel and "pack-up" of 113 Squadron arrived in January and early February. The aircraft of 45 Squadron (Blenheim) also arrived but were unaccompanied by personnel or "pack-up." There was a great shortage of tools and spares. Additionally, the R.S.U. and A.S.P. organisation did not arrive in time. Consequently, the average daily bomber effort of the combined Blenheim force stood at about 6 aircraft a day. Thus throughout the campaign, we had the equivalent of one Bomber Squadron available for operations instead of 7.

34. *General Reconnaissance.*—In respect of G.R. aircraft, No. 4 Indian Flight equipped with Wapiti and Audax aircraft arrived in Burma at the end of December. This was later replaced by No. 3 Indian Flight which was armed with an I.E. of 4 Blenheim I's. After the fall of Singapore, 139 Squadron en route for Java was held up in Burma and, equipped with Hudsons commencing at 6 I.E., undertook our G.R. requirements. There were no personnel or Squadron equipment and the Hudsons were maintained by No. 3 and No. 4 Indian Flights.

35. *Army Co-operation.*—2 Squadrons armed with Lysanders, No. 1 Indian A.C. Squadron and No. 28 A.C. Squadron, were made available for operations in Burma.

36. Constant requests were made for the re-equipment of these Squadrons with modern aircraft. The Mohawks, however, were not available and the Lysanders were retained until the Squadrons returned to India.

37. *Indian Air Force.*—The units of the Indian Air Force referred to above proved their war efficiency and gallantry on active service. In addition to a number of tactical reconnaissances, No. 1 Indian Squadron's Lysanders provided 41 bomber sorties against enemy aerodromes and direct support targets. The standard of accuracy achieved in bombing was satisfactory. No Lysanders were shot down by enemy fighters. The G.R. aircraft and, in particular the Blenheim I's of No. 3 Flight, carried out a considerable number of reconnaissances in the Prepara Channel and the Gulf of Martaban.