

resources, it was not practical to have a number of specialised formations such as Airborne, Assault, Armoured, Light, M.T., and Animal and M.T. Divisions. Such a policy was not only uneconomical, but circumstances inevitably forced their use sooner or later in rôles for which they had not been trained or organized.

Early in May, I recommended to the Supreme Allied Commander that the policy of having a Standard Division should be accepted, such a division to be capable of fulfilling all the rôles which it might be called upon to perform within South-East Asia Command, viz.:—

(a) Normal jungle fighting.

(b) Operations involving transportation by air.

(c) Amphibious operations (though, for this rôle, special training and the attachment of certain special units such as beach groups, would of course be necessary).

The Supreme Allied Commander gave his approval to my proposals and they have since been accepted by the War Office and General Headquarters, India. In addition the formation of an airborne division has been agreed to.

Action to put this new policy into force is being taken in order to bring the maximum number of divisions on to the standard organization before the end of 1944. This organization will include three infantry battalions per brigade (to be increased to four when practicable, as is the case in the War Office Light-Scale Division for Far Eastern Theatres), two artillery regiments of 25-pounders (in place of the existing one 25-pounder and one jungle field regiment in A. and M.T. divisions), one 3.7-inch howitzer mountain regiment of three batteries (instead of the present four-battery regiment), and one anti-tank regiment having an alternative armament of 3-inch mortars (instead of the existing anti-aircraft cum anti-tank regiment). The division will also include a reconnaissance battalion organized on similar lines to the normal infantry battalion, but with extra signal equipment, and, as soon as the manpower situation permits, a medium machine gun battalion.

A major feature of the new Standard Division is the reduction in the number of lorries, both in unit 1st line transport and in 2nd line M.T. companies, and the introduction of a large number of jeeps. Eventually it is hoped to have two types of vehicles only; the jeep and the 3-ton four-wheel-drive lorry (apart, of course, from a limited number of specialist vehicles).

143. *Re-organization of Armoured Formations.* A review of the rôle required of tank brigades operating in this Theatre led me to the conclusion that certain major changes in their organization were necessary. I considered that the value of these brigades would be greatly enhanced if (a) all regiments were re-equipped with medium tanks, (b) a troop of flame-thrower tanks was included in each squadron, and (c) an infantry battalion was included in each brigade. By making certain reductions in the existing establishment, it would, I decided, be possible to adopt this re-organization of the armoured units, while

at the same time, effecting a saving in manpower.

This matter is still being discussed with the Commander-in-Chief, India, and will be referred to again in my next Despatch.\*

144. *Organization for the Movement and Maintenance of Air Transported Formations.* Recent experience has shown that there is an urgent need for a permanent organization to handle the movement and maintenance of forces by air, instead of the improvisation that has hitherto existed.

Such an organization must, obviously, be designed to ensure the closest co-operation between the staffs at the headquarters of the air force and the army concerned and, also, the staffs at the airfields affected. To achieve this, four elements are required:—

(a) An Army Link with the R.A.F. Headquarters dealing with air transport.

(b) Joint Army and R.A.F. Air Despatch and Delivery Units at airfields.

(c) An Airfield Maintenance Organization to ensure that maintenance requirements at airfields are met.

(d) Air Supply and Maintenance Companies to deal with the packing, loading and ejection of supplies.

My proposals for an organization, which will produce the necessary continuity and flexibility, are under consideration by Headquarters, Air Command, S.E.A.C., and General Headquarters, India.

145. *Assumption of Full Control by 11 Army Group.* As I have already stated in the opening paragraphs of this Despatch, Fourteenth Army, together with Ceylon Army Command and the Indian Ocean bases of Addu Atoll, Diego Garcia and Cocos, came under my command from the 16th November 1943, but certain administrative matters continued to be dealt with by General Headquarters, India, until more staff became available for 11 Army Group. My Headquarters, however, assumed full control with effect from the 1st May, 1944, with the exception of some administrative matters which were more conveniently handled by G.H.Q. India.

#### PART IV—ADMINISTRATION.

146. In order to view the administrative problem which confronted us in this Theatre in its correct perspective, it is necessary to understand the background against which the present organization developed. Eastern Army, the forerunner of Fourteenth Army, came into being at a time of reverses in Burma and unpreparedness in Eastern India. The whole of that rear organization, on which the success or failure of an army depends, had therefore to be built up from nothing, under the most difficult conditions. While the early stages of this build-up have already been described in Despatches from the India Command, a brief recapitulation of the facts may be opportune here.

147. Our strategy, in 1942, was defensive and our advanced bases were selected accordingly. The area of operations was, and still is, divided administratively into two fronts—Arakan and

\* Operations in Assam and Burma from 23rd June, 1944 to 12th November, 1944.