

their total stocks of Dakota spares in the country.

165. Despite the increased operational effort, the serviceability of squadrons has been well maintained. To some extent the higher wastage of aircraft has had to be met from reserve stocks, whilst the number of airframes and engines under or awaiting repair has increased. It is not certain that this back-log will be fully eliminated during the monsoon, because of shortage of personnel in the various trades and the inherent shortcomings of an organisation of rapid growth working with inadequate local resources.

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III.—SIGNALS, COMMUNICATIONS AND RADAR

166. One of the major problems of the Command has always been the provision of efficient communication facilities over long distances. Trunk telephone and telegraph systems give poor and unreliable service, nor can any appreciable improvement be expected until the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department is reinforced by Military signals units. Meanwhile the construction of long-distance overhead carrier systems is proceeding, although the maintenance problems that will arise when they are complete cannot be solved without additions to personnel. The six Air Formation Signals units within the Command have worked well in view of their deficiency of seven Officers and 270 British Other Ranks on the 1943 target. Indeed, shortage of personnel has been the greatest single limiting factor in the expansion of signals facilities. The situation was further aggravated by the need to supply to Special Force 185 Wireless Operators and Mechanics and eight Officers. These personnel are still with the Division.

167. The formation of Eastern Air Command resulted in a high degree of co-operation and exchange of technical information between American and British forces, particularly in the sphere of radar. Two G.C.I. stations were sited to cover American bases in the Brahmaputra Valley and another was sited at Shinbuiyang in May to provide early warning for the Chinese-American forces advancing down the Hukawng Valley. Further British and American Light Warning sets were also deployed in the area. Another G.C.I. set has been modified in order that it may be carried by air and made available to U.S. forces. New American Light Warning sets have been tested jointly by R.A.F. and U.S.A.A.F. officers. Moreover, with the prospect of Loran stations for the use of A.T.C. aircraft proceeding to and from China being installed, the operational use of this device by the R.A.F. in the Command has come nearer to realisation. Information on Radio Counter Measures has been provided to XXth Bomber Command and to other American units. Finally, all American units in this theatre have adopted the R.A.F. call-sign procedure.

168. All signals planning for future operations has been undertaken with mobility as the keynote. Specialist signals vehicles have been produced within the Command and are designed to meet needs peculiar to this theatre. Moreover, static establishments in operational units in the Third Tactical Air Force have been replaced by mobile units with the result that

(11548)

Group and Wing Headquarters will in future be self-contained and fully mobile as regards signals requirements. The formation of No. 5 Base Signals Unit provided the cadre for operational training under field conditions. Personnel thrown up by the substitution of Wireless Observer Units by Indian Mobile Wireless Observer Companies were among the first to use these training facilities. It has thus been possible to establish No. 4 Group Control Centre and 104 Mobile Air Reporting Unit which will replace the existing organisation in the Tactical Air Force of Group Operations Rooms, Filter Rooms, etc. The installation of Radar units in barges has been used to good effect already. In November, the most advanced units were those along the Cox's Bazaar—Ramu Road and the terrain in front of these was unsuitable for more extended siting. As soon as the Army had advanced to Maungdaw, an Air Ministry Experimental Station (A.M.E.S.) was anchored off St. Martin's Island. This station, together with a G.C.I. and Mobile Radar Unit (M.R.U.) sited at Maungdaw, provided most useful cover and assisted in successful interceptions off the Arakan coast. G.C.I. sets have also been installed in a jeep, amphibious jeep and an amphibious DUKW.

169. There has been an overall increase of 30 per cent. in navigational aids since November. The installation of static H.F. D/F* stations is practically completed and the delivery of V.H.F. D/F† equipment permitted a start to be made on its erection at all airfields along the main transport and reinforcement routes within India. An up-to-date map is issued quarterly giving details of all aids to navigation, and the combining of R.A.F. and U.S.A.A.F. facilities has been of great value.

170. Details of the airborne investigations of enemy Radar have been given in Part Two of this Despatch.

171. Signals traffic saw a large increase with the creation of Advanced Headquarters, Air Command, South East Asia, in Ceylon, and of Eastern Air Command, Strategic Air Force, No. 230 and 231 Groups in Bengal. Cypher traffic increased from 11½ to 15½ million groups per month, and a High Speed Automatic W/T channel was installed to handle the increased traffic between Delhi and Colombo arising from the move of the Supreme Allied Commander's Headquarters to Ceylon. To offset the increase rendered inevitable by the creation of many new Headquarters, an airgram service has been started within the Command. That such a step was necessary is an apt comment on the vast distances over which messages have to travel in this theatre.

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IV.—FLYING CONTROL

172. Although the value of Flying Control facilities has always been recognised in the Command, development has been hampered by the continued shortage of trained personnel and necessary equipment. An efficient Flying Control organisation has become more and more essential in this theatre where bad weather, a lack of land-line communications, and widely dispersed landing grounds make diversion a

* H.F. D/F—High Frequency Direction Finding.
† V.H.F. D/F—Very High Frequency Direction Finding.