to the defence of its stations within the limit of available resources.

192. By December, 1943, R.A.F. Regiment personnel had been organised into units with independent establishments. It was possible to form only five field squadrons, the remaining personnel being organised into A.A. flights armed with light machine-guns, since there were not enough officers nor the requisite equipment to allow larger units to be formed. These units functioned with considerable efficiency and, in addition, station personnel instructors drawn from the Regiment trained in defence a large percentage of all personnel in threatened areas.

193. By January, 1944, Army garrisons west of the Brahmaputra had been withdrawn, but no static garrisons had been provided for the more vulnerable stations in either the 4 or 15 Corps areas. The local defence of these stations depended entirely upon the few R.A.F. Regiment Units and the station personnel. Despite repeated representations, the reduction of the Regiment to nearly half its initial strength was insisted upon by Air Ministry, and in February action to remuster personnel to other trades was initiated. The results were seen when in April the Air Commander, Third Tactical Air Force, was obliged to withdraw a number of operational squadrons from the Imphal Valley. I had no alternative but to direct that further reduction of the Regiment, already down to 3,434 all ranks, should be suspended. My Command Defence Officer was sent to England in May to explain the circumstances and to request, not only that the suspension of the Regiment reduction should be confirmed, but that a force adequate for the task of defending airfields and ancillary stations in the battle areas should be provided.

194. I append a comment by the Air Commander, Third Tactical Air Force, upon the Regiment units under his control:—

> "Units of the R.A.F. Regiment have proved themselves of the greatest value in this campaign, of which the insecurity of airfields and warning establishments in forward areas has been a feature. When Radar Stations were established at St. Martin's Island and later in the Maungdaw area, the unusual situation existed of Radar Stations being actually well in advance of the front line and within range of the enemy's guns and night patrols. It says much for the R.A.F. Regiment personnel that the Radar crews enjoyed undisturbed conditions in which to carry on their work under such trying conditions. It has proved to be quite unsound to rely on the Army maintaining troops for local defence in times of crisis when the land situation deteriorates. This is the time when they are really needed by us, but this is the time when they are invariably withdrawn to take part in the land battle".

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IX.—Air Sea Rescue

195. The Air Sea Rescue organisation in this Command has been based on that of the United Kingdom, with the necessary adaptations for local conditions and the scale of equipment that is available. The responsibility for operations has been delegated to the A.Os.C. of Groups, to whom in turn the Group Controllers of Naval Air Operations Rooms, keeping constant watch, are responsible for initiating such operations.

196. Officers responsible to their respective A.Os.C. for the efficient arrangement of Air Sea Rescue and for keeping squadrons informed of any new developments in methods of search and ancillary equipment have been established in Commands and Groups as follows:—

Eastern Air Command—One Squadron Leader.
Third T.A.F.—One Flight Lieutenant.
No. 225 Group—One Squadron Leader; One Flight Lieutenant.
No. 222 Group—One Squadron Leader.

197. Twelve Warwicks have now after some delay arrived in India and are undergoing major overhaul at Karachi, Allahabad and Jessore. Seven Sea Otters are being off-loaded at Karachi and crews have been detailed to take a conversion course as soon as the aircraft become serviceable. When they are ready for operational flying, these aircraft will join No. 292 Squadron, the Headquarters of which will be at Jessore.

198. Meanwhile searches have been carried out by the four Walruses already in the Command, and by operational aircraft, which, whenever possible, carry the Lindholme Dinghy Gear. Experiments are being made to fit this gear to Liberators.

199. Little progress has been made in the formation of A.S.R. marine craft and Units. This is chiefly due to the slow rate at which launches have been delivered. By July, 1943, there were nine in the Command. Between this date and January 1944 no more arrived, and as a consequence no additional units could be formed. With the improvement, however, in the shipping position, four launches have recently arrived from the United Kingdom and four from the U.S.A. There has also been notification of another seventeen being shipped to this Command.

200. Air Sea Rescue Units have been formed or are now in the process of forming at the following places: Chittagong, Maiakhal Island, Calcutta, Dhamra River, Vizagapatam, Madras, Cochin, Bombay, Karachi, China Bay, Colombo, Galle, Kayts (Jaffna), Jiwani and Jask (Iraq). The craft, however, allocated to most of these units have not yet arrived in the Command, or are still being fitted out and so are not yet operational.

201. The maintenance of these craft has been a difficult problem owing to the limited supply of spares and special tools, to the great distances between operational areas and the overhaul workshops, and to the lack of transport that prevails. The problem has been met by using naval facilities where possible for shipping and engine overhauls and by locating rescue craft by types, so that they are within as easy reach as possible of the workshops capable of doing the overhaul of their respective types of engines.

202. Thirty-seven aircraft in all were searched for. The number of aircrew personnel in these aircraft was 168, of which 102 were saved. An American amphibious Catalina, based on Calcutta, was responsible for two ocean landings and the saving of twenty-one