

ashore on D-Day to set up control communications and radar screens, as an early occupation of Kelanang air strip in a serviceable condition would allow Spitfires to be flown in the following day and made ready for action.

373. The R.A.F. Wings made available for the operation were Nos. 901 Wing, to be first located at Kuala Lumpur; 902 Wing at Kelanang; 904 Wing at an air strip to be sited and constructed; 905 Wing at Port Swettenham and 907 Wing at Batu Pahat or an alternative.

374. A prominent role in the "Zipper" operation was also allocated to the R.A.F. Regiment. Five Wings of nearly 2,500 officers and men, made up of nine Field Squadrons and five Light Anti-Aircraft Squadrons were to capture and hold the aerodromes and also to protect radar sites. The majority of the men had been on active service in India and Burma.

Other Operational Aspects of "Zipper".

375. Air operations in "Zipper", once our position ashore had been consolidated and airfields established, would have followed closely to plan thus:—

(a) Eight squadrons of Thunderbolts would have supported the drive on Singapore.

(b) Fighter Reconnaissance cover would have been provided by Spitfire F/R Mk. XIV's, and, as in Burma, they would have flown protective patrols over the traffic lanes of the supply dropping Dakotas.

(c) Two squadrons of Transport Command supply freighters were allocated to the task of carrying supplies from the beach head air strip at Port Swettenham to the forward troops. A start would first be made with a target of 150 tons per day from D plus 23.

(d) With the possibility of an airborne assault force deep behind enemy lines after the third or fourth week of the operation, six squadrons of Dakotas would have been flown in from Rangoon and out again immediately afterwards for this purpose.

(e) Mosquitos were to be employed as light bombers, night fighters and photographic reconnaissance aircraft.

(f) Air evacuation of casualties was to have been the task of Sentinel and Auster aircraft. As in Burma, they were to operate from a main strip flying as required to 400 yard clearings in the flight zone to pick up wounded and to carry them back to the Dakotas. The more seriously wounded were to have been ferried by Dakotas to Rangoon.

(g) Three D.D.T. spraying Dakotas operating from Kelanang were to spray mosquito infested zones over a wide area.

(h) To answer emergency calls from D plus 4, three Sunderland aircraft were to be available for air-sea rescue while three high-speed launches were also to be deck-carried to the beach head.

(i) Rocket firing Beaufighters were to be employed from about D plus 43 in attacks on shipping, enemy rolling stock, targets on Singapore Island and also in assisting in the bombardment plan for the crossing of the Johore Strait for the final assault on Singapore itself.

Modified Operation "Zipper" Goes Forward.

376. In the closing days of August, before even the "Zipper" convoys had left India for Malaya, the emergency operation "Tiderace" was ordered, since it was essential that air units should fly into Penang and Singapore without further delay. This brought No. 185 Wing, controlling Dakotas, Spitfires and Mosquitos from Burma to Penang, and No. 903 Wing from Akyab to Singapore, together with Nos. 152 and 155 Spitfire Squadrons flying Zayatkwim (Rangoon)—Penang—Singapore (Tengah), and 110 Squadron from Hmawbi (Burma)—Penang—Singapore (Seletar). No. 903 Wing elements reached Singapore on 6th September, some three days before the first "Zipper" elements arrived off the west coast of Malaya on September 9th.

377. With "Tiderace" operation completed, and air, ground and sea forces occupying Singapore, the modified "Zipper" operation went forward on September 9th with convoys standing off the beaches at Ports Swettenham and Dickson. The naval air support programme, however, had been called off.

378. The air effort for the original "Zipper" was considerably reduced and of the five R.A.F. Wings scheduled to take part in the operation, the following wings did not enter Malaya and were phased out:—

No. 901 Wing. No. 904 Wing. No. 907 Wing.

This left the Wing Order of Battle for "Zipper" as under:—

No. 902 Wing.	No. 905 Wing.
Tengah.	Kuala Lumpur.
No. 185 Wing.	No. 903 Wing.
Penang.	Kallang.
S.S. "Manela" Sunderland H.Q. Ship—	
Seletar.	

379. The following squadrons were also phased out:—

Spitfires	Squadrons No. 132 and 615
Thunderbolts	Squadrons No. 530 and 261.
Dakotas	Squadrons No. 96 and 62.
Beaufighters	Squadrons No. 22, 217 and 45.
Mosquitos	Squadrons No. 82 and 211.

leaving the undernoted squadrons of the original plan:—

Spitfires	Squadrons No. 11, 17 and 681.
Thunderbolts	Squadrons No. 131, 258, 81 and 60.
Mosquitos	Squadrons No. 89, 684 and 84.
Austers	Squadron No. 656.
Sunderland Det. ...	Squadron No. 205.

The "Zipper" Landings which took place.

380. On D-Day, September 9th, the first of the "Zipper" landings under the modified plan took place, with ground forces and R.A.F. parties leaving the anchored convoys and going peacefully ashore in the Port Swettenham and Dickson areas.

381. This was the start of the large scale landing in Malaya—and under very different circumstances from what had been envisaged when the operation was first planned.