

From: S/Ldr. Pollock

To: W/Cdr. D. A. Starling, O.C. 292 Squadron.

Date: 2nd August, 1944.

Visit To "E" Flight Drigh Road

Sir:

I arrived at Drigh Road on the afternoon of the 25th., July, just in time to have tea with F/Lt. Almack and to meet the rest of the officers on his flight.

I was also introduced to W/Commander Nasklin???, who is acting as Station Commander in the absence of the Group Captain, and to S/Ldr. Lewes O.C. "T" & "B" Flight, both of whom are directly concerned with our Sea Otters.

On the morning of the 26th., Almack and I went into conference and from 9-0-clock until 12:30 we sorted through his pile of trials and tribulations the most troublesome of which are as follows.

There is only one aircraft serviceable and that not operationally. Mods. on the aircraft are an urgent necessity but due to the lack of co-operation from Delhi none are being carried. Out. Spares are still not available and no trace of those sent from Colombo has yet been found. Dual sets have not yet arrived although they have been given highest priority from Air Ministry and a signal to this effect has been received two weeks ago, this of course is holding up flying training. There is a great shortage of equipment of all kinds and no signs of any coming through. There is also a great deal of trouble over some of the equipment in the aircraft as I will explain later.

The flight M.T. is confined to one 15 cwt and driver loaned by the Station and there is no clerical staff in G.D's. Working space is confined to one room in which Almack has his office and crew room. The Station being a reception, assembly and delivery M.U. for single engined aircraft has no experience of forming squadrons, and consequently the process of getting things done is even more tedious and tiring than normal, and adds greatly to an already difficult situation.

During the afternoon we ran over the training situation re lectures etc. As most of the pilots are ex fighter types, ground training will have to be pretty thorough before they can be considered fit to fly on an A.S.R. search. Almack is doing the best he can but again the facilities of the station are insufficient, and he requires all the aid we can give him in regard to publications and gen etc.

A.M. on the 27th., I had a chat to S/Ldr Lowes about the Sea Otters and found out that the serviceability target for this month (Aug) was including three Otters and the remainder would be included in the target for next month.

Lastly I visited the C.T.O. and gave him your apologies for unavoidable absence and explained the reasons. With reference to the Flight he told me that he would be only too happy to help us in every way that he possibly could, and he was sorry that he had not been able to do more for us due to the extreme shortage of manpower that he was suffering from. We agreed that the Sea Otters will need a great deal of mods before they are fit for ops and providing we can persuade Delhi to give him a free hand in this respect to carry out same and submit successful results he will give the job every possible priority. As far as normal maintenance was concerned he could do very very little as he had no bodies to spar, this however should be O.K. now as the ground crews are on their way.

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Here are a few more details on some of the things that Almack would like us to clear up for him.

The original establishment of the flight calls for one officer pilot, two N.C.O. pilots and three N.C.O. Wop/A.Gs. at the moment there are six officer pilots, one N.C.O.. pilot, one officer G. and six N.C.O. W/Op A.Gs.

Almack would like some assurance that he will be able to keep these surplus bodies as he is unwilling to go to the trouble of training them only to have them posted. Further he would like six W/Op A.G's or better still six NAV. (W)'s posted as soon as possible so that he can start training in crews.

Good use could also be found for a M.T. driver and two ACM/GDs.

At the moment the Otters are carrying 18?17's (Naeshi??) and these are useless over the range that the Otters will be expected to operate. Delhi have refused to play in replacing these sets with Marconi jeeps although they are a vital necessity. There is also the matter of the A.S.V. which Delhi refuses to allow Almack take out although it is of very little use and unless it does come out H. H.F. cannot be fitted an so full co-operation with the H.S.L's is impossible. There is also difficulty in obtaining supplies of Jeeps??, and V.H.F. sets.

Here is a list of equipment that is required.

F 10?? Camera and films.

S? or M? dinghies with No.5?. or 7 packs (in Valise) these are urgent as the Otters are not equipped with any kind of dinghy.

Large first aid kits

Mae West type 1st aid kits

Emergency ration packs.

Axes (not fitted in the Otter)

Smoke floats

Flame floats

Lindholmes

Bircham Barrels.

Lastly there is the matter of surplus electrical equipment in the aircraft. There is a great deal of this as the Otters are fitted with two of everything. Almack estimates that he can dispense with at least 3?00 lbs of surplus and so take an extra body aboard in case of a "pick up". To cite one example there are tow bombing panels and duplicate equipment of each.

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To sum up.

Almack would like us to put all possible pressure on Delhi and 222? Group, to get them to give him all the help possible as fast as they can, and to give him fairly wide authority as to what is and is not go in to the aircraft to make them operationally serviceable. He needs more speed with spares and as much equipment as we can let him have.

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On the lighter side of my visit I spent a very pleasant afternoon with the flight on a visit to the N?S?W??? we pushed off in one of the H.S.L's for a short spin on the briny. We were out of an hour and a half and there was only one sick "bod", the M. T. driver, the one or two of the blokes came very near to heaving, as there was a slight choppy swell running.

Sunday morning found us at the Karachi Boat Club to have our ration of beer and to give the airmen their swimming practice. The beer won.

On Monday Almack took me up in the Otter and we did a sea landing in Karangi?? Creek. It's quite a nice aircraft with a surprisingly high cruising speed of 140 kts. But with a very distressing habit of porposing on take off from the water.

Almack sends his regards and hopes that you'll be able to come over and see him soon.

(signed) S? J. Pollock

Squadron Leader