

From: O.C. 292 Squadron Ceylon Flight.

To: O.C. 292 Squadron, Dhubalia.

Date: 3rd September, 1944.

Report for Period 19th August to 1st September, 1944.

Your Bulletins Nos. 7 & 8 have just come in, so I will reply to points raised in these before commencing our own news.

2. First of all, reference the signal referred to in No. 7, and to which it seems exception was taken, it was no part of my intention to be "impertinent", and if indeed it warranted such an appellation, I apologise.

The circumstance under which it was deemed necessary to signal Squadron H.Q. are, I think not fully appreciated, so I will try to clarify.

Some time ago the China Bay Detachment pranged Walrus HD807, so successfully that the hull was twisted, the engine mountings and centre section were badly bent, and altogether it was made to resemble a chicken house rather than an aeroplane. It was then proposed to repair it 'in situ' by an M.U. To this I took exception, for with the tools and gear which I knew to be available, I was not prepared to accept the job which would have been turned out. Following representations to 222 Group, and after telling them that I should not be prepared to allow my people to fly this aircraft until the hull and rigging had been properly re-aligned and jig-tested, permission was obtained for the write-off of the machine.

At the same time, another Walrus was reported to be ready for collection from the Navy at Puttalan, to replace HD807.

During all this time it has been increasingly obvious to all down here that it is, and will continue to be, impossible to maintain permanently more than 50% serviceability, and occasionally 75% serviceability, with an I.N.? of only 4 aircraft; bearing in mind that with the long trips we do when operation, it only needs three operations and a few non-op. trips to use the hours between minors, and bearing in mind also, that as Squadron H.Q. has priority on spares in India, almost everything we need has either to be made by our own chaps here, or must come out from the U.K. 222 Group were just about to take up in the appropriate quarter the question of our having at least on more Warwick (even if it had to be our 1 I.R. aircraft) when a signal arrived saying that a Warwick was being sent down to us to replace the Walrus which had been written off. Obviously this was a mistake by A.C., S.E.A., but it was hailed by all and sundry as a heaven-sent mistake, particularly as we had only to go and collect a Walrus replacement as well. Everything went along beautifully until 222 Group and ourselves received a copy of a signal which someone at Jessore had sent to A.C., S.E.A., which, after three checks and repeats said: "Restricted ref your T545?? 23?/7 HD807 Wallur{sic} a/c undamaged should be despatched replacement unless 9. Decide with 222 Group refers you to ACSEA signal T 635? 10/7"

This signal, of course, apart from being completely incorrect in every readable detail, absolutely upset the arrangements made with 222 Group, the Navy, and all concerned. Consequently several irate persons rang me up from Group and said in effect (each in his own individual style of course!) "What the B..... Hell do your people at Jessore think they are up to? For Christ's sake do something to stop them from messing things up like this in the future" :! All very difficult and trying.

2. This whole incident raised the ever-present question of the almost insuperable difficulties entailed in controlling Ceylon from India, with the communications system being as almost negative quantity, as it is. Although it is appreciated that nothing should be done without the prior approval of the C.O., such a state of affairs obviously could not exist in practice. Just as it is quite impossible to deal through 231 Group from here. So far, although our formation orders, operational orders, and just orders, say that 231 Group will do everything for us, control us, administer us, and generally mess us around, in point of fact I

still have not had one single letter, order, or instruction from them. That of course, is excellent, for were we to get all or any of these things they would be certain to conflict with the instructions of 222 Group, with whom we work in absolute harmony and understanding. Incidentally, in conjunction with position with 222 Group, it is proposed that we request official regularisation of our position with 222 Group, and second officially from 231 Troup. Of course copies of the correspondence will be passed to you in order that you may be fully aware of the position.

3. I am glad you had an opportunity of meeting W/Cdr. Laye and Freddie Finch. I met the former when I visited D.A.S.R. just prior to leaving the U.K., and found him to be one of the few people there who knew A.S.R. from brass monkeys. I think he is justifiably keen on "Walter". We are using it constantly down here, for supply dropping, (on parties of troops in the jungle), and for training purposes. Almack is completely wrong in thinking the A.S.V. will not pick it up at his operational height at sea. We can pick it up without any doubts whatever from heights in the region of 100 feet, and that not at sea, but among mountains, and with "Walter" on the ground in jungle so thick that its operators cannot see the sky through the trees.

4. Incidentally, there are two inventions of my own which might be worth trying in your part of the world. The first is a very simple, and concerns the training of W/Ops in getting accustomed to "Walter", without using precious aircraft hours. All that is necessary is a "Radar" petrol electric generator connected to any aircraft on the ground, and a "Boy on a Bicycle" (as required by bishops;). "Walter" is fixed to the bicycle, or soap-box on wheels, and at a distance of some 200 yards in front of the aircraft, it is wheeled back and forth irregularly across the aircraft's heading. If a "walkie-talkie" set is available, the A.S.V. operator by R/T directs the bloke with "Walter", just as if he were the pilot of the aircraft, the "pilot" of course, reversing the steering directions of the A.S.V. operator, in order to come on to 'steady'.

On second thoughts, I will delay description of the second and somewhat more universally useful – idea until I can give you test reports and photographs of the apparatus.

5. It is noted that H.Q. has at last a roost to go home to. There is also talk of our moving again, but we have given up bothering unduly about such things.

6. Full replies to your queries re the use of "Walrui" for sick-evacuation will be furnished on Sunday, for I am visiting Bird towards the end of the week. I thin, however, I can definitely assure you that Neil Robertson stretchers can be used without any hull modification, for our "Walrui" are occasionally used as ambulances now.

7. One minor correction to your No. 8 – para. 10. Three Sea Otters have been allotted to us, not two as stated. Full appreciations (or otherwise), together with test reports, will be sent to you as soon as trials can be commenced and completed. So far, there is no sign of anything other than the allotment. I have indented for all the necessary "gen" and maintenance schedules for Otters, and have been advised by A.P.F.S. that they are actually on the way by post. We shall probably get them before we get the aircraft this time – possibly the first time in the history of A.C.S.E.A. that the thing has been accomplished the right way round.

8. I am still Station Commander, of course, until about the 20th. It makes a lot of work, for I am also O.C. of No. 2 Camp, on which three units are quartered. In on day recently I received: the A.O.C., the Deputy A.O.C. in C. (A/M Sir Guy Garred??), General Giffard??, General Playfield? Admiral Holland??, and the Supreme Allied Commander (Lord Louis, who comes in and out so often that he now persists in addressing me as "youngster Alcock" – hardly due deference to a Station Commander::)

Squadron Leader, Commanding.
292 Squadron Ceylon Flight.