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To: Air/Sea Rescue Officer, Headquarters. Eastern Air Command.

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Final Monthly Progress Report

No. 292 Squadron

March, 1944.

1. Operations.

In spite of an acute shortage of aircraft this month, we have flown a record number of hours. The average strength was 4 – 5 and the average serviceability was 3. The first part of the month was comparatively slack, there being just the usual patrols and two searches. In the latter part of the month the press of operations was very high, and all round efforts were required to maintain a turn round of aircraft.

Again this month the uselessness of the Warwick was proved, the shortest search or patrol being 12 ½ hrs and the longest 18 hrs 10 mins.

A welcome break in the normal run of routine patrols, were two jobs laid o by H.Q. No.2321 Group. The first was a photo recce, of a suspected crash off Moulmain, and the second a jungle rescue search in the Sunderbans, which was successful in finding one missing member of a crashed crew.

The high light of the month was the dropping of Lindholme gear to the crew of a B.29, only 25 mins after they had bailed out into the sea 1130 miles from base.

Hours flown during the month were: -

Ops. day	248 hrs. 30 mins.
Ops. night	115 hrs. 15 mins.

Due to the aging of the aircraft and the rising air temperatures, it has been found necessary to leave one bomb-bay tank empty. A case has been put up for the cutting of more trees at the end of the runway. We require the laid down clear one in fifty from the end of the runway, increased to 1 in 70. The recent take-off crashes in the Group at a larger aerodrome than Agartala, I feel more than justify this.

2. Liaison with other services

The practice dropping of supplies to troops in the jungle, using "Walter" was laid on with the local R.A.F. regiment. Unfortunately the customary unserviceability of the Warwicks prevented this from being carried out.

3. Training.

The training of three more Liberator crews is going on as and when it can. With the improved aircraft situation this month, the training should go ahead satisfactorily. Two crews are also being trained on Warwicks.

A flight engineer leader has been appointed and some very intensive training has been given with good results both to engineers and pilots. Other sessions of ground training have gone ahead satisfactorily.

4. W/T & R/T.

A test rig for the Liberator aircraft W/T & R/T installation has been obtained from Cox's Bazaar, and is being installed in the workshops. This is going to be very valuable both for servicing and learning of aircrew.

The position of headset and microphone supplies is being chased and an endeavour made to find the exact numbers available, but the aircrew do not seem fully to appreciate this, and the appropriate paragraph of S.R.O. Serial No.22 of 20th March, has not been obeyed by all aircrew.

Crystallisation of all V.H.F. sets installed in aircraft for the following channels has been completed: -

Channel A – Not used. Channel C – World Gaurd.
Channel B – S.A.F. common freq. Channel D – E.A.C. Common Freq.

5. Radar.

All equipment for the Sea Otters has either been despatched or serviced here. Apart from one item, all Sea Otters can be fitted here with A.S.V. II –being about a ten man hour job.

Power supplies have been difficult due to climate, unskilled attention and overwork, but the situation is much improved now.

One I.F.F. failure was experienced during the month due to a faulty valve.

Training on the new equipment (Radio Altimeter) and technical subjects is being carried on for the mechanics.

6. Navigation.

Five Mark 9A bombsights have been received without levelling brackets to install them in the aircraft. Home-made brackets have proved useless and on demanding same, the M.U. require the bomb-sights to be returned. If we do this, it will probably be months before we get them back.

In spite of continued demanding of Nav. Log Forms, only 30, instead of 500 have arrived.

The standard of navigation has proved disappointing, but we have found that two of our navigators are lazy and particular attention is being paid to them. Our drift taking procedure has been revised owing to certain faults that have come to light. Special attention is being paid to rear turret drifts as well as a new drift scale modification which is in hand.

7. Armament

Flame-float troubles were cleared up, and there is little to report except that Station facilities for the storage of same., and explosives are inadequate, making compliance with all regulations impossible. Now that we definitely come under No. 900 Wing, the matter is being taken up with them.

8. Photography.

Progress has been nil, awaiting installation of electricity and completion of works demanded from I.W.S.

Essentials necessary for progressing are (i) Electricity, (ii) Motor for drying box, (iii) Printing Box.

9. Engineering

A month outstanding for its intensive periods of flying. Percentage 50 hr inspections have been out of the question as in one case a Liberator flew 50 hr. inspection to 50 hr. inspection with only a total of eight hours on the ground. In other words three trips with a quick turn round between each trip. Spares for Liberators are coming in quite quickly, but spares of u/s Warwicks are not available in the country.

The Liberator A.O.G. for Fuel Cells was eventually transferred to No.136 R.S.U. and a replacement aircraft EW273 obtained. Liberator EV908 developed high oil consumption, was replaced by EV977 and this had to be put up for allotment owing to the state in which it arrived. The replacement EV993 arrived with American Type headsets and also had to be put up for allotment. Hence our shortage of aircraft during the month.

Troubles experienced have been with C.B. Springs, erratic Artificial Horizons, and "George".

Warwicks have been arriving back with extremely high oil consumption and having to be allotted for engine changes. Mr. Spooner, Vickers Rep. Is here now and making up a report on our troubles. He says that until these Warwicks are brought up-to-date with their modifications, continued unserviceability is to be expected. He also found that the new fabric is already showing signs of fatigue. We were disappointed to hear that the much vaulted Warwick V cannot give us our minimum requirements i.e. a three hour search, 1,000 miles from base.

Three N.C.O. Fitters and one Cpl. Fitter have been repatriated with no replacements.

10. "E" Flight (Sea Otters) Engineering

Towards the end of the month, the Squadron Engineer Officer paid a visit to the Sea Otter detachments at Cox's, Akyab, & Ramree. The Headquarters of the Sea Otters is at Cox's Bazaar where the minor inspections are done for the forward detachments.

The stores position for Sea Otters is much better, but a hold up has occurred in procuring Lanoline for anti-corrosive treatment of Hulls. This is of extreme importance as the facilities for washing down the aircraft with fresh water after sea landings is non-existent.

Much work is needed at Akyab and Ramree to keep the aircraft clean owing to the bad dust, but the general serviceability is good. At both these places the R.S.U.s are co-operating very well, which makes a tremendous difference as the strength of the flights does not permit one of each trade to be at Ramree and Akyab.

F/Sgt Nunn {??} has arrived at Cox's to replace Sgt. Sears as N.C.O. i/c.

One item of equipment that is missing from the Sea Otters is a Iwicky {??} Hand Pump and hoses. These are necessary for filling from drums, and more important from Naval Launches at sea when operating at extreme range. It is not understood how this item of equipment did not arrive with the aircraft, as the mountings are there and it is standard equipment for all flying boats. These have now been demanded.

11. Welfare {??}

The position has at last been clarified – we come under H.Q. 224 Group for Welfare. Their Welfare Officer has visited and a general improvement is expected.

12. Fire Services.

Delivery of fire appliances still outstanding. Ladders demanded from local I.W.S. still not delivered. Buckets full of sand at strategic points, a 15 cwt lorry full of sacks for beating and plenty of willing helpers in the Squadron, is what we tackle the very frequent bush fires in and around the camp. Over 40 up to now. Two Bashers and one 3 ton truck destroyed during the month. Inquiries either complete or under way.

13. Hygiene and Sanitation.

The worst that can be said of our domestic site now, is that it is untidy. Previously it was disgustingly unhygienic. I.W.S. have been bullied into improving the drainage and it has been imposed to obtain local civilian labour to supplement our limited K/F sweeper labour.

14. Water Supplies.

A continual source of difficulty. I.W.S. seem incapable of keeping pumps in repair and one or more always u/s. Not the water supply seems to be drying up altogether. When we asked for authority to employ coolie labour to pump water, H.Q. No.231 Group replied that this was a Station responsibility. What Station? If we do not devote almost daily attention to the problem of water, the troops just go without it.

15. Office Equipment & Stationary.

Our stationary demands for the new quarter have been submitted without any deliveries having been made from the previous quarters demands. We have been without stencils and typing paper for weeks. There are limits beyond which it is impossible to improvise, and if supplies are not forthcoming within a very short time, the Orderly Room will just close down, and will have to close the Squadron with many reports and returns not done. WE are now reduced to using the books of current R.A.F. Forms, instead of obsolete ones.

16. Conclusion.

The new set-up should be a great improvement, and is a thing I have been advocating for a long time. There will be difficulties in the actual change-over because everything is based on Warwicks and Liberators are being used. I have it on the authority of a Vickers representative, that even the Warwick V has insufficient range, so the sooner Warwicks are forgotten, the better it will be for A.S.R. in India. I feel that there is a risk of the new scheme failing if higher levels do not take a more personal interest in the practical side of the job. The Flights will be in the charge of Squadron Leaders under Groups and Wings with only a very tepid interest in A.S.R., and it will rest with those up to in the A.S.R. Union, to encourage, sponsor, and generally help and not stone-wall the Flight Commanders. I sha'nt be there as a kind of buffer.

Here endeth 292. Here's to its resurrection when the Flights can be built up into Squadrons.

Wing Commander Commanding
No. 292 Squadron, R.A.F.