

DRAFT

TOP SECRET

A.A.C. IN C'S DESPATCH

AIR OPERATIONS FOR CLANDESTINE ORGANISATIONS.

1ST JUNE 1944 TO 31ST MAY, 1945

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General

1. Air operations in connection with the clandestine intelligence and guerilla raising effort in this theatre have increased in number very rapidly month by month during the last year. In spite of aircraft and personnel shortages it has been found necessary to increase the Air Forces engaged in this role from two squadrons totalling 15UE aircraft in June 1944 to three squadrons and one flight totalling 61 UE aircraft at the present time. Even this large proportion of the total Air Forces in this theatre will be insufficient to fulfill the extensive requirement of the Supreme Allied Commander.
2. The S.D. operational year can be divided up into three distinct phases.
  - (a) First Phase: June – September 1944.  
A period of preparation and build up of forces.
  - (b) Second Phase: October 1944 – January 1945.  
Devoted to the infiltration of small intelligence parties and to put in the nucleus of the guerilla raising liaison officers.
  - (c) Third Phase: February – May 1944.  
In which the Battle for Burma called for the rapid arming and feeding of the large guerilla forces giving active assistance to the 14th Army.

The First Phase – June to September 1944.

3. At the beginning of this phase No. 357 S.D. Squadron consisting of 6 Liberators Mk III and 3 Hudson Mark III and No. 628 Squadron with 6 U.E. Catalinas, Mark Ib were the only Squadrons available for this work. Their aircraft were old, indeed, the Hudsons were obsolescent, and a constant drain upon the maintenance resources.

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<sup>1</sup> The copy in this file only had Appendix D.

4. The Hudsons had done valuable work mainly through the enthusiasm of their crews but it was most necessary to replace them with Dakotas for work in the narrow valleys of Burma where the Liberators were at a disadvantage. The urgent need for intelligence forced the Clandestine Organisations to increase their demands for air lift far beyond the capacity of the two under-equipped S.D. Squadrons. Long range land-planes were most necessary as also were reliable short ranged supply dropping aircraft.

5. In September 1944 it was decided to increase No. 357 Squadron's U.E. to 10 Liberator Mark VI and 10 Dakota Mark IV but in order to provide the maintenance personnel which had to be found within the Command, it was found necessary to disband No. 628 Squadron. This Squadron's potential S.D. effort had not been fully utilised owing to the difficulties of operating Catalinas during the S.W. monsoon months.

6. During this phase also, an endeavour had been made to find a suitable H.B. airfield close to Calcutta where the Clandestine Organisations rightly have their air operations and packing centres. Digri, where No. 357 had been based since February, 1944 was most inconvenient for road transport from Calcutta. After much negotiation Jessore was chosen and No. 357 Squadron moved there in the last week of September 1944.

7. In spite of the move, changes in type of aircraft, bad weather, and the difficulties of expansion No. 357 squadron carried out 25 successful operations out of 52 attempted. No. 628 Squadron in the final lunar month of its existence made six sorties of which four were successful. These were sea pick-ups in enemy waters.

Second Phase – October 1944 to January 1945.

8.. It was November before the first S.D. Dakota became operational and Hudsons carried on until January when the last Hudson on No. 357 Squadron had to be left at Kunming, unserviceable after completing a successful pick-up operation in French Indo China. The pilot on this occasion was F/Lt. J. King, who had taken part in the first clandestine air operation in this theatre in June, 1942. F/Lt. King has been decorated with the D.S.O, the D.F.C. and bar for his excellent work with the S.D. Squadrons.

9. Two Catalinas and three crews of the disbanded No. 628 Squadron were added to the establishment of No. 240 G.R. Squadron at Redhills Lake and earmarked for S.D. operations. In the October/November 1944 moon period these two aircraft carried out 11 S.D. sorties of which 7 were successful.

10. From the beginning of operations right up to the end of this phase the majority of S.D. sorties were carried out at night in the moon periods with only very occasional day sorties. Nevertheless, in the three moon periods between October 1944 and January 1945, 110 sorties were despatched of which 95 were successful giving the remarkable success rate of over 86%.

Third Phase. February – May 1945.

11. Although the R.A.F. had been doing their utmost during the second phase to put agents and Army Liaison Officers in the field and keep them supplied, the Japs counter espionage system helped by the unfriendly natives resulted in a harassing time for the Clandestine personnel. Many parties were captured, and others had to lie low or keep continually on the move. Reliable native agents were difficult to find.

12. In February 1945 the position was improving rapidly and after the fall of Meiktila the 14th Army's advance southwards enabled the Clandestine Organisations to build up and commit to action the now large and friendly guerilla forces in Southern Burma. The two main areas were the Karenni hills and the country to the west and southwest of them.

13. Character. "Character" was a project to recruit, arm and operate Karenni levies, probably the most loyal of all the populations of Burma, with whom Force 136 had been in touch since early 1943. Originally conceived by Force 136 the operation now developed into a composite operation of 4 other Clandestine Organisations. In addition 4000/5000 levies were raised to harass the enemy's lines of communication and retreat, in four main areas; North along the Loikaw-Bawlake road, North Central in the Toungoo area, South Central in the Kyaukpyi area and the escape roads to Siam, and South in the Papun area. One of the main results of this operation in the Burma Battle was to prevent the Japanese 15th division from taking any part in the defence of Toungoo. During the period between mid-February and mid May S.D. Squadrons flew 366 sorties to the "Character" area dropping 596 tons of arms and supplies including rations for native refugees. Japanese casualties amounted to several thousands in the "Character" area but the levies were sometimes in very difficult situations, as for instance when Southern H.Q. was surrounded for several weeks. 200 Japanese were killed before the small H.Q. staff were able to break the cordon.

14. Nation. Nation was an operation covering the whole of Burma to make contact with the underground movement. This was organised in three main groups. The basis used for this task was the 'Jedburgh' type of party consisting of two officers and one W/T operator. The main areas of penetration were round Tharrawaddy and Rangoon. Nation controlled some 7000 men in all areas. they cut the Toungoo/Rangoon Railway twice at a very important juncture and killed up to 700 Japs, including a General, in this area alone.

Other Operations in the Burma Battle Area.

15. A number of other important operations were active in the Burma Battle Area at this time including 'Nutshell' in the South down to Moulmein, "Heavy" on the Burma/China border at Kentung, and "Dilwyn" at Takaw which had been an operational area for clandestine activities for over two years.

16. Japanese casualties claimed by the British Organisations alone from 1st January, 1945 to 27th May, 1945 amount to 5196 killed, 735 wounded and 50 taken prisoner. Force 136 casualties for the same period are quoted as 44 killed and 49 wounded. In addition, there is no doubt that air attacks on targets indicated by Force 136 caused much damage and inflicted many casualties

on the Japs and contributed in no small degree to the final break-up before the fall of Rangoon. They also had a profound effect on winning the "locals" to our support. Examples of successful attacks were a bombing and strafing mission against the railway station and surrounding buildings at Pyu, reported as a troop day-light staging post. Our attack coincided with a troop train arrival and over 1,000 casualties were inflicted. Another example was an attack on a pagoda reported as a petrol/ammunition dump; the pagoda was hit and blew up with a huge explosion.

17. French Indo China. In January 1945 an attempt was made to reinforce Free French forces in French Indo China and to supply them with arms and munitions, and re-establish French influence. The effort increased during the ensuing three months, over 300 sorties being flown but, owing to a very difficult weather over the mountain territory in which the guerilla forces were forming, only about 50% were successful. At the end of February the Japanese, well aware of our activities turned passive occupation of French Indo China into active military occupation. Regular French Units fought the Japanese and in some cases retreated into the mountains, existing<sup>2</sup> as guerilla bands. Many of the guerilla parties were overpowered although they fought well, within the limited means at their disposal. It is to be regretted that lack of aircraft prevented us giving them all the supplies we would have wished. The movement has gone to earth again and is supplied by a modest effort of about 40 sorties a month which is as much as can well be afforded.

18. China. The difficulties of using S.D. aircraft for supplying and reinforcing I.S.L.D. Coast Watchers and British Army Aid Group parties in occupied China have been very great. Aircraft had to stage from Kunming and all petrol had to be flown in by operational aircraft as U.S.A.A.F. stocks were very short. A number of S.D. aircrew received special training for the flight over the "Hump" but owing to the sporadic nature of the tasks they were unable to keep in practice. Flying conditions in China are often difficult owing to unpredictable weather. R.A.F. pilots suffered from unfamiliarity with the complicated U.S.A.A.F. signals and homing procedure. These reasons are assumed to have caused the loss of two Dakota, one in March and the other in May. Both these aircraft were engaged on carrying medical supplies to the British Army Aid Group parties.

19. Siam. The Siamese Army and Air Force are ripe for revolt against the Japanese and lack only the materials of war to be an effective ally. Force 136 and O.S.S. parties, mainly infiltrated by Catalinas of No. 240 Squadron, are in close touch with responsible Siamese officials and the situation looks quite promising provided sufficient air support can be given in the near future. The main dilemma of the Siamese at present is that they dare not arm themselves for the expected break with the Japanese, for fear of precipitating the break before they are ready.

20. Malaya. Just before the fall of Singapore S.O.E. (the parent organisation of Force 136) infiltrated officers to prepare guerilla forces. these officers lived up in the mountains and the guerilla movement grew rapidly in strength, consisting mainly of Chinese. A Japanese massacre of many thousands of young Chinese, intended to exterminate potential guerillas, had the reverse effect and young Chinese flocked to guerilla camps in the mountains, fighting the Japanese spasmodically from the fall of Singapore to the present date. There were a few attempts to

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<sup>2</sup> This word may be incorrectly transcribed from the record; it is part of a hand written addition to the draft, and very hard to read.

establish contact with the Guerilla movements and the British Officers by Submarine operations, but the lack of air operations made contact with them almost impossible. This was partly due to the difficulty of working through the coastal belt from the few places suitable for submarine operations.

At the end of 1944 a determined effort was made to fly Liberator S.D. operations to Malaya. This involved taking off at the excessive All Up weight of 66,000 lbs with very small margins of safety in petrol. The first successful operation was flown in December 1944 and was followed by many record breaking flights by Liberators of Nos. 357 and 358 Squadrons. On one such flight 3785 air miles were covered in a non stop trip lasting 22 hours 55 minutes and another occasion the aircraft was airborne for 23 hours 50 minutes. Both these sorties were started from Jessore to D.Z's within 100 miles North of Singapore. Monsoon weather from June 1945 now makes such flight practically impossible from the North so that, in order to carry out a big Malaya programme, No.8 and No. 160 Squadrons together with the Liberators of No. 357 Squadron are based in Ceylon to continue the work throughout the monsoon until the end of September 1945. Even from Ceylon the task of reinforcing and supplying parties in Malaya will require long and difficult over sea flights but it is considered that the expected dividends will justify the extra risks to aircraft and crews involved. As a result of these operations underground movements in Malaya are now flourishing and producing valuable intelligence. Considerable sabotage has been carried out and it is expected that over 500 guerillas will be trained and armed by the time Malaya is invaded.

21. Conclusion. The rapid increase of S.D. Operations during the last 12 months has forced the R.A.F. to misemploy H.D. and G.R. Squadrons in the S. D. role. Naturally this expansion of effort required much hard work by the Staff at this H.Q. and at H.Q. Strategic Air force admirably backed by the Squadrons' aircrew and ground personnel. The Clandestine Organisations also have had to solve many problems connected with supplies and lack of personnel but team work with the R.A.F. has resulted in a remarkable combine effort.

During the course of the year aircrews of the S.D. Squadrons have received a total of 31 British decorations including 5 D.S.O's, 18 D.F.C's, 2 bars to the D.F.C., and 6 D.F.M's. Each member of one crew of a No. 357 Squadron Liberator was decorated with the Croix de Guerre for a particularly fine effort over French Indo China.

A total of 1317 sorties were flown during the 12 months. Of these 900 were successful an overall success rate of 68.3%. Fourteen aircraft were lost or destroyed during the same period. Nearly the whole of this effort was concentrated in the last six months during which period 1183 sorties were flown of which 827 were successful. This shows that 92% of the unsuccessful sorties were flown during the last six months.

## MONTH BY MONTH DIARY OF OPERATIONS

Month	Sqdn.	Type	Sorties Attempted	Sorties Successful	Aircraft Loss
1944					
June	357	Hudson	15	6	--
	"	Liberator	9	1	--
			24	7	
July	"	Hudson	9	3	--
	"	Liberator	2	2	--
			11	5	
Aug.	"	Hudson	3	2	--
	"	Liberator	2	2	--
			5	4	
Sep./Oct.	"	Hudson	3	2	--
	"	Liberator	9	7	--
	628	Catalinas	6	4	--
			18	13	
Oct/Nov	357	Hudson	7	3	--
	"	Liberator	13	7	1
	240	Catalina	11	7	1
			31	17	2
Nov/Dec	357	Hudson	3	3	--
	"	Dakota	5	2	--
	"	Liberator	35	22	--
	240	Catalina	2	--	--
			45	27	
Dec/Jan	357	Hudson	1	1	--
	"	Dakota	23	17	--
	"	Liberator	38	31	--
	240	Catalina	2	2	--
			61	51	

Jan/Feb 1945	357	Dakota	45	39	--
	"	Liberator	65	48	--
	358	Liberator	75	32	3
	240	Catalina	6	6	--
			191	115	3
Feb/Mar	357	Dakota	60	37	1
	"	Liberator	73	54	--
	358	Liberator	107	53	3
	240	Catalina	11	11	--
			251	155	4
Mar/Apr	357	Dakota	83	63	--
	"	Liberator	75	50	1
	358	Liberator	127	98	1
	200	Liberator	4	3	--
	240	Catalina	12	11	--
			301	225	2
Apr/May	357	Lysander	7	5	1
	"	Dakota	88	74	1
	"	Liberator	64	45 ½	--
	358	Liberator	117	79 ½	1
	200	Liberator	90	68	--
	240	Catalina	10	9	--
			376	281	3