

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 88TH AND 89TH REGIMENTS
(30TH CHINESE DIVISION) AT MYITKYINA, BURMA

26 MAY - 3 AUGUST 1944

(INDIA - BURMA CAMPAIGN)

(Personal experience of an
American Liaison Officer.)

Type of Operation: 30TH CHINESE DIVISION IN THE ATTACK

by

Major Robert L. Waters

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Many of the statements made in this monograph are in variance no doubt with the opinions and beliefs held by many American officers regarding our Chinese Allies. I have tried in too few words to give a truthful and colorful picture of the incidents as they actually occurred and sincerely hope that they will be consummated by all concerned.

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 30th Chinese Division in the Battle for Myitkyina, Burma, from 26 May to 3 August, 1944. The latter date marked the termination of all organized Japanese resistance.

At this time I wish to orient the reader properly as one must fully understand the fabulous compound of logistics, despotism, corruption and nonsense that we Americans had to work and put up with while acting in the capacity as liaison officers.

The China-Burma-India theatre of operations was set up by the American government in the spring of 1942. Our sole purpose it seemed and later clarified itself was to keep China in the war. It was the C.B.I.'s primary mission to supply China, re-group, re-equip and re-train her armies and upon completion of such a hazardous task to commit them once again to the art of blood-letting, or to die of malnutrition, starvation or disease, while enroute to the front. (1) Billions of dollars were spent, thousands of American lives were lost but it was indeed an essential mission. Much was accomplished in the C.B.I. but these accomplishments were awarded with little or no recognition from America's war effort. We were given hardly any encouragement and I might truthfully say less support than in any other place or theatre of operations. We definitely and earnestly felt that we were fighting a holding action and could be classified as G.I. expendables. (2)

(1) A-8 My own observations when stationed in China. Words could never express the plight of these troops. Thousands of men were physically examined and culled over before they were accepted as replacements for General Stilwell's X-Force in Burma. (2) My own observation.

Speaking in a military way, the C.B.I. could not compare to the great struggle in Europe or the Pacific as its importance was fundamentally political in nature. Men of the "great western democracy" for the first time in history had come to Asia to fight and die side by side with Asiatics. Our efforts might not have been in vain, and would have no doubt justified themselves, if high policy hadn't stopped our very thoughts, actions and speech when we attempted to inculcate American idealisms into the Asiatic mind.

? high
policy - China
U.S.?

In the summer of 1942 General Stilwell began training at Ramgarh, India, the Chinese force that would eventually re-open the main life supply artery into China. Americans taught Chinese officers modern war theories and instructed them in infantry and artillery defensive and offensive tactics, with the latter taking priority as the Chinese were prone to believe that the offensive had any merit. For the first time in Chinese military history troops were actually paid; they were given medical care if need be and clothing. (3)

?
latter
?

General Stilwell's first mission, as with all commanders, was to start training the remnants of the old 22nd and 38th Chinese Divisions that had escaped the disastrous Burma campaign of 1942. In the fall of the year 1942 we find these units at Ramgarh, India, undergoing strenuous training as these units would be the spearhead in the campaign for the recapture of northwestern Burma. These divisions would reduce the eastern Japanese salient at points in north Burma, sufficiently far enough north, making it impossible for Japanese supply or re-supply of her northern garrisons.

duplication

Another training center was opened at Kunming, China, and was situated about 12 kilos from the city itself, just off the old Marco Polo Road, which is still used today by pack trains and civilians. At this training center Americans taught basic techniques to all Chinese military ranks. Various schools were set up and classes were held in old airplane hangers, to include a tactical and weapons school, medical, engineers, signal and, yes, even a veterinary school as the Chinese were indeed antiquated in the art of horse shoeing. This force was to strike south along the Burma border, and at the barrier from within, and with whatever strength that we could call upon. These two visionary forces would act as a pincers - one starting at Ledo-Assam just north of the Burma border, the other from Paoshan on the Salween in western China. The meeting of these two forces would terminate the blockade of western China - once again opening a supply route to the beleaguered Chinese. Only a long range plan could ever hope to see the fulfillment of these plans. (4)

Late in the year 1943 a trustful old friend of General Stilwell's, Brig. Gen. Thomas Arms, Sr., established a third training center in eastern China at Kweilen. By no means could this center ever hope to turn out a finished product like the first two, as it was impossible to supply sufficient equipment and personnel. Our primary mission at this training center was to indoctrinate large Chinese masses on the eastern front with American methods. These

(4) A-8 The author was one of the original cadre at the Kunming Training Center.

troops when given the order to attack would move south-east with the keen desire for offensive combat. These troops would eventually link up with American naval units at Canton. Three famous words were used to differentiate these forces from one another - so they were aptly called X, Y and Z: X for X-ray (Burma), Y for Yoke (Western China) and Z for Zebra (Eastern China). (5)

The plans for these three forces formulated General Stilwell's strategy. The overall strategy was indeed simple. The Chinese and British agreed on the general plan of campaign but would do nothing to set it in motion. General Stilwell wanted to strike at Burma in the fall of 1942 and again in the spring of 1943 but each time the British for no reason at all said, "No". Finally in November of 1943 he received the go sign and started a determined effort to break the blockade of China. The above was granted by the combined chiefs of staff at the Cairo conference but also included in the Cairo plan was an amphibious landing by the British on the coast of southern Burma, coupled with a Chinese push across the Salween front with the Yoke forces. (6)

By March 1943 Burma had been conquered and over-run by the Japanese. During the six month period, December 1941 to May 1942 the enemy had over-run the Philippines, much of Oceania, all of the Netherlands East Indies, all of the Malay Peninsula and most of Burma. Australia was threatened due to the rapid advance of the Japs in the Pacific Ocean Area. India was menaced by the conquest of Burma; the last supply line to China was out, and in doing so the Japs had added considerable raw resources to abet

(5) Brig. Gen. Arms founded the training center at Kunming in early 1943. Many "Old China Hands" accompanied Gen. Arms to Kweilen, China to start the training center. (6)A-2,p.157

her war efforts. (7)

For the conquest of Burma the Japanese had concentrated two divisions in southern Thailand. In mid January, 1942, they struck toward Moulmain, which fell on the 30th. British, Indian and Burmese forces, aided by the Royal Air Force and the American Volunteer Group, resisted the Salween and Sittang river crossings but were overwhelmed by enemy superiority in numbers, equipment and planes. Rangoon, the capital and principal port, was taken on 8 March. The Japanese then turned north in two columns. One division pushed up the Sittang where Chinese forces under Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell were coming in to defend the Burma Road. The other Japanese division pursued the Indian and Burmese forces up the Irrawaddy Valley. On 1 and 2 April, the enemy took Toungoo on the Sittang and Prome on the Irrawaddy. From Yenangyaung, north of Prome, a column pushed westward and on 4 May took the port of Akyab on the Bay of Bengal. The conquest of southern Burma was complete. (8)

A third enemy column of two divisions, which had landed at Rangoon on 12 April 1942, was now attacking on the east from the Shan States into the upper Salween Valley and driving rapidly northward to take Lashio, junction of the rail and highway sections of the Burma Road. Mandalay, completely outflanked, was evacuated by its Chinese defenders and occupied by the Japanese on 1 May. From Lashio the Japanese pushed up the Salween Valley well into the Chinese province of Yunnan. In north central Burma they sent a small patrol northward along the Irrawaddy almost to

(7) A-3, p.1 (8) A-3, p.3

Fort Hertz, and to the west they took Kalewa on the Chindwin. The main remnants of General Stilwell's forces retired from north Burma to India by way of Shingbwiyang, while British, Burmese and Indian survivors withdrew up the valley of the Chindwin and across the Chin Hills. The Allied withdrawal was made on foot for no motor road or railway connected India with Burma.

When the monsoon rains came in June the Japanese held all of Burma except for fringes of mountain, jungle and swamp on the north and west. General Stilwell grimly summarized the campaign: "I claim we got a hell-of-a-beating. We got run out of Burma, and it is as humiliating as hell. I think we ought to find out what caused it, go back and retake it." But this counter-offensive could not start at once, and the Japanese were able to make further advances in the next fighting season. (9)

At the end of October they pushed northwestward along the coast from Akyab toward Bengal. Approximately a month later British forces counterattacked strongly along this same coast, but their gains could not be held and the Japanese force reached the frontier of Bengal. In February of the next year the enemy began to drive northward from Myitkyina. He had covered some 75 air miles by early March and was closing in on Sumprabum, threatening to occupy the whole of northern Burma and to destroy the British-led Kachin and Gurkha levies which had hitherto dominated the area. The Allies were in no position to stop this advance. Their regular forces had retired from the area to India in May and were separated from the Japanese by densely

(9) A-3, p.4

forested mountain ranges and malarial valleys.

The enemy was apparently secure in southeast Asia. The question of the moment was whether his advance would halt at the Burma border or would continue into India.

In the spring of 1943 the strategic situation in Burma began to change from the defense to the offense with an experimental operation behind the enemy lines. This expedition was commanded by Maj. Gen. (then Brigadier) Orde C. Wingate, British Army, who led long range penetration units of the 77th Indian Infantry Brigade across the Naga Hills between India and Burma into Jap held territory. Wingate's total troop strength was 3,200 men and officers, divided into eight jungle columns and composed of British, Indian, Burmese and Gurkha nationals. During the period February to June 1943 his troops covered over 1,000 miles. While engaged in harassing actions, they gathered invaluable information. Their actions confused the Japanese forces and tied down from eight to ten Jap battalions. Enemy lines of communication were cut, topographical and intelligence information of great value was gathered and later ^{disseminated} ~~disseminated~~ to all. Upon receipt of orders to return to India Wingate's eight columns dispersed in small groups, each of which fought its own way out of Burma. (10) Maj. Gen. Wingate was admired and respected by all American officers and I can truthfully say here, he was the only British senior officer that actually and earnestly cooperated with us. } who is U?

(10) A-8 Many of Wingate's men infiltrated through Jap lines in and around Myitkyina and were evacuated by plane to rear hospitals. The author spoke to many of Wingate's men in an attempt to gather G-2 information of the enemy.

After the first penetration of the Hell that is known as Burma, seasonal rains (monsoons) restricted all ground action. The only activity during this period was air activity by the Tenth Air Force, under the command of Major General George E. Stratemeyer. The Tenth continued their attacks on Jap supply lines in both Burma and Thailand. By November 1943 General Stratemeyer's force had established definite air superiority over Burma. November was the beginning of the dry season, during which, a ground offensive was possible, and from all indications the Japs would resume their long overdue offensive against India.

Japan to bolster herself in North Burma had brought two more divisions into the area. Her divisions were distributed along the India border and totaled five in number. Only one of their divisions was active and extremely aggressive, that being the 55th on the front beyond Akyab. Three others to include the 15th, 31st and 33rd were organizing for a strong offensive into Manipur Province. The remaining Jap Division was positioned in northern Burma and was ready to oppose any Allied advance from Assam.

At the Teheran conference in December 1943 Stalin and the American public clamored for a massive all-out effort across the English Channel to relieve the pressure on Russia. If such an effort was to take place and succeed no land ^{ing} boats, craft or ships could be spared for Burma. The British landings on the coast of south Burma were, therefore, cancelled. Generalissimo Chiang upon receipt of this information told General Stilwell if the British did not carry out their share of the plan he would call

off the Salween offensive. Chiang did exactly that, (it was rumored he never was too overly enthusiastic about the Salween offensive, although he agreed to the plan at Cairo) but told General Stilwell he could have full authority to do as he wished with the three Chinese Divisions that he had created, supplied and trained in India. General Stilwell pleaded and argued with the British in Delhi and the Chinese in Chungking but was convinced he could gain nothing so decided to fight the Burma campaign alone. General Stilwell did exactly that, and in January 1944 started his never to be forgotten jungle campaign. (11)

The Burma campaign was indeed primitive and total war as no quarter was given by the Japs, disease or jungle. During the period from December 1943 to May 1944 the allies to include Chinese, Merrill's Marauders, Kachin scouts led by American officers and British troops of the Northern Combat Area Command (X-Force) were killing Japs and in turn being killed by them. The terrain these troops fought over contained some of the densest jungles of any place in the world.

The Allies, too, were preparing for major offensive operations from both India and China. The plan for the invasion of North Burma was known as the Capital plan. General Stilwell's forces were to make the initial penetration from Ledo to Shingbuiyang, and then proceed down the Hukwang and Mogaung valleys, with Mogaung as the objective. This was the primary objective with Myitkyina the ultimate and main objective. The British 14th Army was to advance from Imphal over the Tiddim Road to the Chindwin

with Mandalay the ultimate objective. The Wingate force was to be flown into North Central Burma by American gliders to create a diversion by cutting Jap lines of reinforcement and supply to their troops facing Stilwell. The British, in addition, were to attack down the Mayu Peninsula and try to seize Akyab. (12)

In addition to the effort by the British and Stilwell, the Chinese, in the early months of 1944, had agreed to attack down the Salween from Yunnan. It was known that Stilwell would have put sixteen divisions in a fair state of equipment and ammunition in by that time and American personnel would handle supply and medical facilities. Even though these Chinese forces would not be well trained in the Western sense, it was presumed that they would have little difficulty cleaning up the small detachments of Japanese that could be spared to meet them.

What forces? —>
The Japanese had been reinforced in Burma since the fiasco of January 1943 and numbered nine divisions when Stilwell got ready to kick off. The Allies, however, had sixteen British and Indian divisions, three Chinese divisions and a provisional American regiment under Stilwell, five British and Indian brigades (equivalent to American regiments) under Wingate, and sixteen Chinese divisions under Marshall Wei-Li-haung in Yunnan. This, then gave the Allies thirty-five established divisions, plus provisional forces equal in strength to another division, to match nine enemy divisions. In addition the Allies had gained control of the sea and complete mastery of the air.

(12) A-1, p. 180

The Japanese presumed that advantage of interior lines of communication could be nullified by hitting at several points on his perimeter so that he would be unable to mass his forces in any one place. To an impartial observer the Japanese position was impossible. (13)

Largely by the sheer force of General Stilwell's determination and insistence that the Chinese could and would fight, General Stilwell on December 21st told General Sun to move out and fight or suffer the consequences. Thus we see a ten month ^{as} campaign in which the Chinese not only learned they could fight but learned to like it. The ten month campaign of continuous jungle fighting was terminated with the capture of Myitkyina, Burma, which ended the north Burma campaign.

In the history of the China war the Burma campaign stands by itself. This was the only offensive combat victory won by Chinese Troops against the Japs in eight years of campaigning. (14)

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

As mentioned previously in the Introduction the re-opening of land communications with China was the main aim of Allied strategy. The total reconquest of Burma would give the Allies control of the old route (Burma Road) from Rangoon. But to accomplish this task would require months, so a daring effort was conceived to drive a new route from northeast India across north Burma, tapping the Burma Road at the frontier of China. The road was to start at Ledo in Brahmaputra Valley where rail and water connections with

(13)A-5, p.108 (14) A-1, p. 159

Bengal were available. Nearly 300 air miles separated Ledo from the projected point of link-up with the Burma Road near Bhamo. (15)

The plans for the Ledo Road included the laying of pipe lines designed to relieve the road and air traffic of carrying fuel from Assam to China. Once the construction of the road was settled, it was decided that two 4-inch lines from Tinsukia, 30 air miles northwest of Ledo, would follow the road. They were to be fed by gasoline pumped from Calcutta to a station near their starting point. (16)

The River Systems of Burma

Most of the streams of Burma flow from north to south following the trend of the mountains and valleys.

1. The Irrawaddy System. (a) The Irrawaddy arises in the extreme north of Burma and drains an area of some 160,000 square miles. The upper course is constricted and there are three main defiles. One is just below Sinbo where the river decreases in width from one mile to 50 yards. There are rocks in midstream, sudden abrupt curves, and seething whirlpools. A few miles below Bhamo is the second defile; not as narrow as the first, but containing eddies and whirlpools. The third defile is near Thabeitkyin, the river port for the Ruby Mines of Mogok. Below these defiles the river winds lazily through the Dry Zone and Delta to the sea. About nine miles north of the town of Henzada the Bassein River branches off from the master stream forming the westernmost distributary of the Irrawaddy. The easternmost

(15) A-8 The link-up of the Ledo-Burma Road occurred at Mong Yu, which was 15 miles from the city of Wanting, China and 105 miles from Lashio. The writer was the first American in Mong Yu to make liaison with Marshal Wei's Salween forces. At that time I was Chief Liaison Officer with the 112th Regt., 38th Chinese Division. (16) A-3, p. 18

stream of the main delta is the Rangoon River which receives water from small distributaries of the Irrawaddy and from short streams on the slopes of the Pegu Yomas.

(b) There are serious floods in the lower reaches of the Irrawaddy nearly every year. The river has begun to cut away its banks, and so much silt has been deposited in its channel that the flow is impeded. Embankments built along the river prevent proper drainage of the surrounding delta.

(c) The Irrawaddy receives three tributaries between the confluence of the Mali and Nmai Rivers, 30 miles north of Myitkyina and Mandalay. Near the first defile the Mogaung River joins on the right bank and about a mile north of Bhamo the Taping River joins on the left bank. The Shweli River joins on the left bank just below Katha.

(d) Below Madalay the Irrawaddy is joined by three tributaries; the Myitnge about 14 miles southeast of Mandalay, the Mu at Myinma in Sagaing district and the Chindwin some 10 miles northeast of Pakokku. The Myitnge drains a large part of the northern Shan States and one of its tributaries has cut the famous Gokteik Gorge in the plateau limestone to a depth of 2,000 feet. The Mu River arises in the Katha district and flows in a southerly direction, maintaining its course parallel to the Chindwin. The Chindwin arises in the hills southwest of Thama in the Myitkyina district, flowing northward for about 60 miles until it enters the southeastern corner of the Hukawng Valley where it flows northwest across this valley and then turns south.

2. The Sittang. The Sittang rises in the Shan hills of Yamethin district and flows due north for about 50 miles until it enters the plains, where it turns south and flows to the Gulf of Marataban. This river has a strong tidal wave owing to the funnel shape of its mouth where two currents from the Indian Ocean join to form a huge tidal bore about 9 feet high which flows up the river at the rate of about 12 miles per hour. The Sittang even more than the Irrawaddy has become shallow due to the deposition of sand and silt and frequently changes its course.

3. The Salween. (a) The Salween has its source in the Tibetan Highlands and enters Burma about 24 degrees N. Latitude from whence it flows through the Shan Plateau to the Gulf of Marataban at Moulmein. Its course is almost parallel to that of the Irrawaddy and flows in a deep gorge sometimes 3,000 and 4,000 feet deep. The average difference between high and low water level of the Salween through the Shan States is from 60 to 90 feet.

(b) One of the major reasons for the destructive floods in Amherst and Thaton districts is the fact that the waters of the Salween flow past the mouths of the tributaries, Gyaing and Ataran, and hold back the waters of these rivers, thus causing them to overflow.

Natural Vegetation

(a) Differences in elevation and rainfall are responsible for the major types of natural vegetation in Burma. Local differences in soil and drainage account for the minor subdivisions of vegetation types.

(b) The 3,000 foot contour line marks the great change in vegetation because below this line frosts almost never occur. Above this line are evergreen oak forests,

scattered pine forests, wide areas of open land with bracken or grass and the rhododendrons above 5,000 feet.

(c) Below the "frost line" (roughly 3,000 feet elevation) vegetation depends mainly upon the rainfall.

The following divisions may be recognized:

1. Over 80 inches - evergreen tropical rain forest consisting of tall trees, usually hardwoods.

2. Between 40 and 80 inches - monsoon forests which lose their leaves in the hot season. These forests contain teak and pyinkado, (a large hardwood), and other useful timber trees.

3. Less than 40 inches - semi-arid scrub land. Below 3,000 feet there is practically no true grassland.

4. Areas in the Irrawaddy Delta are covered with tidal forests containing tall trees, some reaching to 100 feet or more.

(d) Much of the land below 3,000 feet is cultivated and the remainder consists of various types of forest land although these types grade from evergreen rain forest through monsoon and savannah forests to thorn and thorn-scrub or even nearly semi-desert, depending on the amount and effectiveness of the rainfall. All the forests which are exploited at present lie below 3,000 feet. The most important regions of tidal forests are the seaward part of the Irrawaddy Delta and the lower islands of the Mergui Archipelago.

(e) The Arakan Coastal Region is, except for the alluvial valleys, covered with dense bamboo thickets which have taken the place of the original evergreen tropical forest. On the western flanks of the Arakan Yomas there are large areas of oak forest, usually open, the trees gnarled and stunted, wreathed in lichens and mosses, with the under-

growth mainly grasses. Many of these oak forests are wet, dark and unhealthy. Above these oaks are patches of pine forest. Still higher on the Arakan Yomas, along the upper ridges, are large areas of rhododendrons which give way on the level ridge tops to mountain grassland.

(f) The eastern flanks of the Arakan Yomas have monsoon forests composed of broad-leaved hardwood trees, such as the teak and pyinkado. The Pegu Yomas are covered with this type of forest as are the foothills of the Shan Plateau. Most of the Irrawaddy-Sittang Delta is under cultivation except along the coast where there are dense swamp forests. The Shan Plateau has a great variety of vegetation, evergreen forest ridges with pines on the higher slopes, and open grassland valleys being the general rule. The Tenasserim region is covered for the most part with dense evergreen tropical forest.

(g) Throughout Burma, and particularly in the lower, wetter forested areas and in rice paddies, precautions should be taken by troops to guard against poisonous snakes. Also numerous species of both troublesome and poisonous insects must be guarded against.

Climate and Weather

The entire country has a tropical monsoon climate in spite of the fact that the northern part lies north of the Tropic of Cancer. There are three seasons: the rainy season, the cool season, and the hot season. There are myriads of mosquitoes which make mosquito nets essential troop equipment throughout the year.

(a) The rainy season. 1. Temperature. The rainy season begins about the middle of May or the first of June.

During this season central Burma is a hot, steaming land but the heat is much more bearable than in the hot season because of the cool air drawn in from the sea. Temperatures fall considerably with the beginning of the monsoon.

(b) Rainfall. The monsoon rains tend to come in heavy thundershowers accompanied by wind and lightning. The coastal regions and the far north of Burma have heavy rainfall, generally from 100 to 250 inches per year. The highlands of the Shan States and the eastern flanks of the Arakan Yomas have between 40 and 80 inches average annual rainfall. The Central part of the Irrawaddy Valley, the Dry Zone, has between 20 and 40 inches per year which, with the high temperatures, is a very small amount and causes the region to be almost semi-desert. The rains usually stop about the latter part of September. October has little rain and is a transitional month between the rainy and cool seasons.

3. Winds. There are frequently high winds in this season especially at the beginning. The prevailing winds are the southwest monsoon winds which assume a southerly direction in Burma because of the north-south alignment of the mountains and the valleys. Cyclonic storms are prevalent over the seas around Burma and over the land making it necessary for airmen and ship commanders to have daily weather forecasts.

(b) The cool season. 1. Temperature. The cool season begins in November and lasts until February. During this period the daily temperatures are between 60 and 90 degrees F. In the mornings and evenings they are around 70 degrees F. or slightly lower, but nearly always above 60 degrees F. in Rangoon and other towns on the plains, although there are

some variations from place to place.

2. Rainfall. Occasional showers may occur during this season.

3. Winds. In this season Burma is under the influence of the Northeast Trade Winds which blow almost directly from the north down the central valley.

C. The hot season. 1. Temperature. By the middle of March the hot season is strongly in evidence with the temperatures reaching 90 degrees F. or above in the middle of the day, but dropping 8 or 10 degrees in the evening. About the middle of April the heat becomes intense; the temperatures rising to 90 degrees or 98 degrees F. without much relief at night. During May the heat may increase to 130 degrees F. or higher at midday and the nights are stifling on the plains.

2. Rainfall. There is almost no steady rainfall but during the hot season scattered light showers that are known locally as the "mango showers" may occur.

3. Winds. Wind direction is virtually the same as in the cool season, but at the close of the hot season the winds become variable and strong as the monsoon approaches.

4. Fogs. There are occasional morning fogs on the lowlands. (17)

(17) A-6, Section II

THE ALLIED ADVANCE SOUTH TO MYITKYINA

The Allied offensive in April of 1944 in North Burma was putting heavy pressure on the Japanese. The forces under General Stilwell were fighting just 45 miles north of Kamaing at Inkangahtawng. British-led Kachin and Gurkha forces fighting in the Irrawaddy Valley, 45 miles north of Myitkyina, were driving south toward a large enemy supply base at Nsoptup. To the southeast of Myitkyina, in the Yunnan province of China, Marshal Wei-Li-Lung was massing Chinese divisions for an offensive in May across the Salween River.(18)

The Japanese salient in north Burma was threatened by attacks from three directions. To complete the encirclement, General Wingates 3rd Indian Division, less one brigade, was flown into Burma from Manipur. The fifth brigade made its way overland from Ledo to Mohnyin. On the 16th day of March at Mawlu, 80 miles south of Myitkyina, the division set up a road block on the single railroad into north Burma. This left the Japs with only water transport up the Irrawaddy as their principal means of supply.

The ultimate objectives of the campaign were three, and they were crucial to the whole Allied strategy in the Far East:

1. To break the outer shield of Jap land power in Southeast Asia.
2. To re-open land communication with China and to secure the chain of bomber airfields in the north.
3. To destroy the Jap armies wherever they were concentrated in force.

The Jap plan of campaign for 1944 was bold, simple and well thought out. Its primary objectives were:

1. To hold Stilwell's Chinese-American forces to the northeast with the Jap divisions they already had there.
2. To stage an offensive, with two divisions and supporting troops, in Arakan; and to capture Chittagong, India's fifth largest port and a vital air supply base.
3. To capture Kohima and cut the Bengal-Assam railway running along the valley north of it, which formed General Stilwell's principal line of communications; thus isolating from their source of supplies not only the Allied troops already operating in northeast Burma but also the Chinese divisions in Yunnan.

The Jap's ultimate objective was nothing less than an invasion of India. He had a large enough army in Burma and it was, therefore, an objective not at all beyond the range of possible achievement.

One factor was vital in the battles which followed from the clash of these two strategies - the Allied air superiority. The Allied air forces, which operated at the end of supply lines 13,000 miles long, had been set four tasks: to sweep, to support, to supply and to strangle.

1. They had to sweep the sky clear of Jap fighters.
2. They had to support our ground forces, bombing and strafing Jap positions, blasting military and economic targets,

and providing accurate close air support.

4. They had to strangle the Jap lines by bombing his sea communications and his docks at Rangoon, shooting up his river craft, smashing his bridges and roads and cutting and recutting the crucial Bangkok-Rangoon railroad. (19)

While these operations were in progress the great design was unfolding in northeast Burma. General Stilwell was fighting his way from Ledo, dragging his road after him. Stilwell's Chinese divisions pushed steadily on from the railhead of the Assam-Bengal railroad, with Merrill's Marauders, an American force of 3,000 men, cutting up the Japs on either flank. A mile path had to be converted into a thirty-foot, double-tracked highway, metaled, trenched, banked, bridged and inclined, over some of the worst country in the world, under the worst weather conditions in the world; so close to the heels of a fighting advance that the forward engineers were constantly attacked by infiltrating Japs and each man kept his rifle as handy as his pick and shovel.

General Stilwell, taking advantage of these developments planned to continue his drive down the Mogaung corridor toward Kamaing, with the Chinese 65th Regiment of the 22nd Division protecting the right flank. The 63rd and 64th Regiments of the 22 Chinese Division had as their primary objective the capture of Kamaing. The Chinese 38th Division was to move southeast and capture Mogaung. In the

(19) A-5, p.110

meantime General Stilwell decided to strike at Myitkyina itself, the chief objective of the campaign. Myitkyina was the principal Jap base for the defense of Burma from the north. Situated 170 air miles southeast of Ledo, it was the northern-most point of a railroad from Rangoon and was also the head of navigation on the Irrawaddy River. Myitkyina lay in the proposed path of the Ledo Road, some 170 air miles north of the Burma Road junction with the railway at Lashio. If the mission was successful, it would effectually dispose of the principal air base from which Jap aircraft had menaced American transport planes flying supplies to China. (20) The seizure would also deprive the enemy of an important stronghold center of an extensive military framework and would quickly paralyze Jap operations radiating from Myitkyina.

For General Stilwell's strike at Myitkyina three forces were organized. H force was composed of the 1st. Bn. 5307th and the Chinese 150th Regt., (50th Division) Col. Hunter was in charge of this force with Lt. Col. Osborne remaining in charge of the American element. K force was commanded by Col. Kinnison, and was composed of the Chinese 88th Regt., (30th Division) and the 3rd Bn. 5307 commanded by Col. Beach. M force composed the remaining men and officers of the 2nd Bn. 5307, as this unit had sustained heavy casualties, especially at Nhpum Ga. The remaining men were formed into two rifle companies, one heavy-weapons company and a Bn. Hqrs. Co., which included an intelligence and reconnaissance platoon, a pioneer and

(20) A-8 Transport planes after the capture of Myitkyina could fly the southern route to Kunming, China. This would save thousands of gallons of gasoline and do away with the 24,000 foot northern route which took its share of human life and airplanes.

demolition platoon and a communications platoon.

Three hundred Kachin guerrillas were attached to the Bn. The group was commanded by Col. McGee. (21)

On April 27th the three forces completed organization. General Stilwell flew into Naubaum to make final arrangements with General Merrill for the operation, with the airfield at Myitkyina as the first objective. On the same day General Merrill issued orders to the forces for their movement towards Myitkyina. H and K forces would move northward from Naubaum at Taikoi, then head east across the main Kumon Range and south to Ritpong. From Ritpong they would continue south to the edge of the Myitkyina plain. M force was to screen the southern flank by patrolling the Senjo Ga - Hkada Ga area.

By a forced march of twenty days across a 7,000 foot pass, General Merrill's American and Chinese forces were in sight of Myitkyina. The forced march was no picnic as the monsoon season was commencing. Rain fell everyday and the damp heat was stifling. In some places the trail was so steep that footholds had to be cut for the pack animals; in others the animals were unloaded and their loads manhandled up precipitous inclines. During these 20 days numerous casualties were suffered, as all three forces had minor engagements with the enemy.

THE PLAN FOR THE ATTACK OF MYITKYINA

On the afternoon of the 16th of May, H force had crossed the Namkwi River, south of the village of Namkwi, which placed them 4 miles from the Myitkyina air strip.

(21) A-8 As told to author by Capt. Martin J. Waters, Jr., the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon leader of the 2nd Bn., 5307th.

With the help of Kachin guerrillas, his men rounded up all the inhabitants of Namkwi, some of whom were known to be of doubtful loyalty and confined them within H forces' lines until the next morning. The force at this time cut neither the railroad nor the telegraph line, wishing to maintain secrecy about its arrival so close to the airfield. Evening found the Americans in position with security elements posted on all trails.

Col. Hunter set the time of attack on the airfield at 1000, 17 May. The attack plan was for the 1st Bn. of the 5307th, under Lt. Col. Osborne, to lead the Chinese 150th Regt. to the southwest end of the field and leave the Regt. to attack the strip at that point. Osborne and his men were then to push southwest to the ferry terminal at Pamati. By taking this terminal, we would control the nearest crossing of the Irrawaddy River. Col. Hunter's plan for the attack on the air strip was based on the knowledge that because of recent strafing of the field, the Jap habitually withdrew during daylight to positions in the thick scrub and bamboo clumps at some distance from the strip. In addition intelligence patrols brought back information that only a few Jap troops and Burmese workmen were about the strip on 16 May.

THE ATTACK ON MYITKYINA

The attack jumped off as planned. The 150th Regt. made good progress as the air strip was not strongly defended. The thrust by the Chinese had come as a complete surprise to the enemy but throughout the day sporadic fighting went on in widely separated spots around

the airfield. The Chinese by 1200 hours on the 17th of May had secured the air strip. Meanwhile the Marauders under Lt. Col. Osborne had by 1100 hours taken the village of Pamati and a small force of Americans by 1700 hours were near Rampur where they bivouacked for the night in position to move on Zigyun the next morning.

Col. Hunter concluded that if Jap reinforcements were to appear they would have arrived at the air strip on the 17th from Myitkyina. Intelligence reports showed the Japs did not hold Myitkyina in force so Col. Hunter decided to assault Myitkyina before the Japs could reinforce their garrisons already there. Upon the capture of the air strip Col. Hunter radioed Gen. Merrill and asked for more troops and supplies. Late that afternoon one battalion of the Chinese 89th Regiment, 30th Division, was flown in from Ledo. Meanwhile M and K forces were contacted and were ordered to proceed immediately to assist H force. Each force was about 2 days march from Myitkyina, so both forces started southward by forced marches. On the 18th K force bivouacked 8 miles north of the city. Kachin guides leading Col. Kinnison and his men lost their way in the darkness, this being the sole reason why K force did not join up with H force late that night. On the morning of the 19th General Merrill contacted Col. Kinnison and ordered him to attack and secure Charpate. The village was taken during the morning without too much enemy resistance. Kinnison's 3rd Battalion dug in around the village, while the 88th Regiment moved to the southwest on a line from the vicinity of Charpate to the railroad.

The 3rd Battalion placed a road block on the Mogaung - Myitkyina road, and actively patrolled all trails converging on Charpate. The 3rd Battalion when digging in forgot all about the high commanding ground just 500 yards to the northwest of Charpate, and in doing so left themselves wide open for a Jap attack. Small elements of the enemy retreating from Mogaung via Myitkyina engaged this 3rd Battalion repeatedly and succeeded in breaking through to Myitkyina.

On the evening of the 19th M force arrived at Namkwi. This force was very weak and ill from hunger, for the supplies requested while enroute never were dropped. H force supplied sufficient food to M force that evening. The next morning M force outposted Namkwi, actively patrolling all trails to the west and southwest.

We now see the Allies so placed that reinforcement of Myitkyina by the enemy is impossible, with the exception of one route from Nsozup via Radhopur into Myitkyina. Our troops were disposed in a semi-circle covering all approaches from the northwest, west, southwest and south. Enemy activity up to this time could be considered light, but continuous enemy sniping wrought havoc amongst our troops.

As previously mentioned, Col. Hunter in trying to capture the city ordered two battalions of the Chinese 150th Regiment to attack the city from the north on the 18th of May. After reaching the railroad station, these two units, "God only knows why," became involved in confused fighting, lost their way and engaged each other. Such an ill coordinated attack by the Chinese was exactly what the Japs

had hoped for and in all the confusion they, too, brought down everything they had upon the Chinese. Late that afternoon the Chinese regained control and withdrew to a line about 800 yards west of the town. There they dug in. Major Frank C. Hodges of Hodges, South Carolina, one of the battalion liaison officers and a good friend of the writer, was killed in this action. (22)

Having failed in his original attempt to take Myitkyina, General Merrill now realized that a complete reshuffling of units under his command was necessary if he ever hoped to make a co-ordinated attack on Myitkyina. For the above mission the Myitkyina task force was formed. M and K forces were dissolved and Col. Hunter took command of these American forces. The Chinese operated independently as separate units. Shortly after this reorganization General Merrill was evacuated and Col. McCammon, his Executive, was placed in command. Col. McCammon was relieved shortly thereafter by Brig. Gen. H. D. Boatner.

During the last 10 days of May the Allies were thrown back to the defensive and vigorously repelled one Jap counter attack after another on the air strip. During this period, the Japs had reinforced their garrisons with an estimated 4000 additional troops from the Nsopzup, Mogaung and Bhamo areas. The allies had tried desperately to cover the main approaches to Myitkyina but could do nothing as the Jap strength in the area was now greater than ours.

Everything depended on our holding the airfield as there would be no way left to escape except over the jungle

(22) A-8 Major Fred Huffine was with the other battalion but managed to come through without a scratch. Major Huffine told me that the two battalions had massacred themselves right in the face of one another.

trail from whence we came and by no means were we in any condition for such an ordeal. Drastic measures had to be taken to collect a force somewhere in the theatre. Evacuation of the sick and exhausted was halted. Marauders convalescing in hospitals at Dinjan were rushed to Myitkyina to bolster our forces. A group of approximately 3000 men who had just arrived in India (these troops were to have been replacements for the Marauders and were to have had 6 months training at Ramgarh before being committed) were also rushed in by air. In addition two, so called, combat engineer battalions, the 209th and 236th (somewhere along the line, some bright Personnel Adjutant had classified these troops as combat engineers. This classification was highly erroneous. Units as high as companies were pulled out of line to receive training in mechanical nomenclature, functioning, and firing of supporting weapons. Small tactical problems were set up to give officers and N.C.O's training in troop leading procedure.) were also flown in to bolster our forces.

On the night of May 23 at 2200 hours a battalion of Japs launched an attack on Charpate from the northeast. The enemy succeeded in penetrating the 3rd battalion's position but by a well co-ordinated counter-attack were quickly repulsed. At 0935 on the 24th of May the Jap renewed his attack and succeeded in occupying a portion of the battalion's front line. Seeing that the 3rd Battalion was badly outnumbered, Col. Hunter ordered Col. Beach to break contact with the enemy and move to the railroad $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the south. The Japs in force occupied Charpate.

The Japs 2 days later hit Nankwi in force and forced the 2nd Battalion back to a ridge about halfway to Myitkyina. The enemy now controlled two of the towns on the main approaches to Myitkyina.

On May 27th Company C of the 209th Engineer Combat Battalion was attached to the 2nd Battalion. Col. McGee was ordered to reconnoiter the Charpate area and attempt to reach Radhapur once again. The 2nd Battalion when just south of Charpate ran into enemy but could do nothing as the unit was no longer effective for combat.

Fatigue, dysentery, malaria and malnutrition had so wasted all units that evacuation to the rear was started immediately. About 200 men of the 1st Battalion remained until Myitkyina fell on the 3rd day of August. These were used as perimeter security guards around the Myitkyina Task Force Command Post.

During the first two weeks of June additional replacements were flown in to augment our forces. These additional forces comprised the remaining two battalions of the Chinese 89th Regiment of the 30th Division and one regiment of the Chinese 14th Division. Nothing of great tactical importance took place. Units were stalemated and forced to revert to the old style of trench warfare. If advances were made we counted them by yards. In no given day during this period did any unit advance more than 50 yards. All of the Chinese units suffered terrific casualties. Evacuation was indeed primitive. The writer spent many hours at forward aid stations trying to break the bottleneck of evacuation. Chinese officers were reluctant to offer men or

materials to expedite this mission. Chinese officers showed no regard for human life and at times swore and laughed at the badly wounded.

As assistant Chief Liaison officer of the 30th Chinese Division, my chief duties could be summed up by the excellent paragraphs in Fred Eldridges book "Wrath In Burma", "American liaison teams were functioning down as low as battalions. These teams had their own radios and sent daily coded reports to Stilwell's Hqrs. The liaison officers had no command authority over the Chinese but they had a powerful purchase on the Chinese Commanders because they relayed supply requirements back to Stilwell. These officers had the power to veto Chinese requisitions, which put them in the position of exerting a strong influence on the actual commanders.

Although these liaison teams had supply and advice to the Chinese leaders as their primary official function, their greatest value lay in being able to furnish Stilwell with accurate information on Chinese and Japanese dispositions, and information on what the Chinese were doing as differentiated from what the Chinese said they were doing. Often there was a vast difference. These American officers and men were Stilwell's eyes and ears. In addition they had to be prophets, because often they had to predict Chinese intentions which were frequently at variance with Chinese statements. These things added up to one of the most delicate and difficult jobs given any Americans in World War II. The Americans were policemen. Cops seldom are popular, but the liaison officers were supposed to

maintain cordial relations and respect, despite the nature of their job, the language bar, and the mixing of two vastly different cultures.

Added to all this was the morale problem involved. These officers and men were destined to spend months on end in the heart of the densest jungle with no amenities, with what food they could prepare themselves or get from the Chinese, and having for companions only themselves and the alien Chinese. It is a tribute to their essential strength of character and Stilwell's personal power to inspire them that only a very few blew up as the campaign progressed."

In addition to the above duties we spent many hours forward with company and battalion commanders pin pointing on air photos enemy installations that were holding up our advance. We would thoroughly evaluate each pill-box, trench etc. and then classify each as to primary or secondary targets and then call for an air strike. At Myitkyina liaison personnel actually supervised and directed by radio all air-ground and artillery support given to forward Chinese elements. We were right in the thick of it at all times, as we directed air-ground bombing many times no greater than 50 yards in front of our main lines. Many of my fellow officers were wounded seriously and in proportion to the liaison personnel actually engaged our dead list continued to haunt the High Command.

The 30th Chinese Division was a green outfit, from the lowly private to the Commanding General. A few officers and men had received American training at Ramgarh but forgot everything they had been taught in the heat of battle.

Chinese officers rather than lead their men were contented cowards and passed the waking hours in the comfort of their command posts. From our defensive positions just east of the air strip we would attack frontally in the face of murderous enemy machine gun, mortar and artillery fire day after day never to secure more than 50 yards of ground. We pleaded and argued with the Divisional Commander to attack immediately upon the lifting of supporting fires, but to no avail. We worked over the area first with fighter bombers, then shelled the area with what artillery preparations were allotted to us, bolstering this with 4.2, 81 and 60 mortar barrages. We succeeded in killing a few Japs, but the remaining enemy during all these preparatory fires would fall back to well dug-in secondary positions, and upon lifting of these fires would immediately reoccupy their forward positions. Everything would have gone according to plan, but as usual the Chinese waited just long enough after this softening up phase before attacking for the enemy to reoccupy his forward positions and stop us yards short of our objective.

About the 16th of June General Boatner was relieved by General Stilwell and was succeeded by Brig. Gen. T. F. Wessels. Gen. Wessels was rare in that he was one general officer who kept all commanders and liaison personnel informed of tactical plans, not only in the present, but for the future. General Wessels was a hard and tireless worker and could usually be reached at some forward observation post directing the efforts of that unit. He definitely was that type of leader that men would go through hell for, and if need be die. General Wessels' first two

attempts to take Myitkyina were foiled by General Hu of the Chinese 30th Division as he refused to obey orders. General Hu never would attack on time, he was either a day early or a day late, always refusing to support other divisions and consequently not being supported on his own un-co-ordinated moves. When we did attack our Chinese troops were accordingly massacred. Lt. Col. Rockis, my senior chief liaison officer, and I pleaded with General Hu to co-ordinate his attack with other units. We went out of our way trying to advise and help him in every contemplated move. We accomplished nothing. Shortly thereafter, General Hu was relieved, placed under guard, and was flown to Chungking for investigation.

During the first two weeks of July American units on our left flank to the north had made steady progress and were fighting in the northern section of the city. The Chinese 50th Division, under the very capable leadership of General Pan, had shaken off their earlier blundering commanders and were fighting desperately to capture the railroad station in the center of the city. On the 19th of July the 90th Regiment of the 30th Division was flown in and immediately committed.

On the 20th of July the writer was ordered to report as Chief Liaison Officer to the Fort Hertz Area Command. This force was composed of two Gurkha Battalions and 7 Companies of Kachin Rangers. Our mission was to cross the Irrawaddy River just north of Mankrin and occupy the villages of Maingna and Naungtalaw and vigorously patrol all roads and trails south and southeast of Myitkyina. After two weeks of jungle fighting we succeeded in

accomplishing our mission. On the 3rd day of August, after 78 days of seige, Myitkyina fell to the Allies. Myitkyina, a city of some 20,000 before the war, was in complete ruins. Nothing was left standing to testify that at one time it had been a city where men laughed, cried, and went about their duties as proud law-abiding citizens.

ANALYSIS & CRITICISM

The capture of Myitkyina, Burma, is an excellent example of how the aggressive spirit and leadership of two American Generals (Stilwell and Wessels) facing insurmountable odds, actually knit together the unbelievable and in the end proved to all concerned that the impossible could be accomplished.

The mission given General Stilwell in Burma was one of the most difficult of the war. He was at the end of the thinnest supply line of all ~~other demands of the war,~~ exceeded our resources. He faced an extremely difficult political problem and his purely military problem of opposing large numbers of enemy with few resources was unmatched in any theatre.

Refusal of the 30th Division to fight needs some explanation. It was based on politics and the old Chinese Army system. On the other hand nearly all of the Chinese generals were imbued with the belief that a smart general never commits his troops if he can help it.

All troops suffered from malaria, dengue fever and were covered with Naga sores. These ulcers, usually caused by infected leech bites or leech heads left under the skin, caused large areas of flesh literally to rot away. Troops

suffering from jungle diseases are never considered to be totally combat effective.

General Stilwell personally was the only American General who could actually command the Chinese. Chinese commanders failed to obey orders unless that order had the general's personal signature.

Credit should be given to all officers and men of the P-40 "sniper" squadron. Fighter bomber support when used properly can and ^{does} did take the place of artillery.

The preparations and orders for carrying out medium bombardment support were as full and complete as the circumstances would permit, but the Air Corps failed miserably in the reading of air photos.

LESSONS LEARNED

Among the lessons learned as a result of the Myitkyina battle are the following:

1. Once an attack has been launched, personnel and material must be used to force a successful conclusion.
2. Aggressive leadership is necessary for any type of attack to succeed and by all means must be displayed in all units from the smallest to the largest.
3. All missions regardless of their degree of difficulty when once assigned must be accomplished by that unit on schedule.
4. Surprise is an essential element of a successful attack.
5. When Allied armies are fighting together against a ^wcommon enemy, fire power maneuver and shock action must be co-ordinated if the attack is to succeed.)

6. Failure of any commander to obey an order should immediately ^{result in his} be relieved of his command.

7. All troops, no matter what their branch of service might be, must, by all means, undergo basic infantry training, if they are to be committed as infantry troops. Failure to do so results in unprecedented massacres.

8. The infantry attack has as its basis the fighting spirit and aggressiveness of the officers and non-commissioned officers with fearless, intelligent leading on their part, and the individual initiative on the part of the individual soldier.

9. The futility of expecting successful infantry jungle combat or any combat without trained small teams from squads on up. } ?

10. The lack of co-operation of Chinese units with each other, even battalions of the same regiment, results in disaster.

isn't this true will units of our mat. units?