

# Supplying War:



*Supply Line in Kunming, China (November 1945)*  
by Loren Russell Fisher.

U.S. Air Force Art Collection

## Interservice and Interallied Cooperation in China-Burma-India

By LEO J. DAUGHERTY III

**T**he China-Burma-India (CBI) theater, perhaps the most political front in World War II, has been largely ignored by students of military history. One reason for this inattention is the bitter interservice as well as interallied friction that nearly led to a collapse of cooperation between Great Britain and the United States in the southeast Asian theater of operations. The squabbles were over the

best strategy for defeating Japan, the command and control of forces and resources in theater, postwar decolonization, and U.S. policy toward China.<sup>1</sup> Finally, CBI was a backwater, receiving little in the way of men and equipment despite the extent of the front and the number of Japanese on the Asian mainland. Only through the dogged determination of those who fought there, and the belated importance attached to CBI after the Trident conference of May 1943, was the theater given resources for a three-pronged offensive aimed at removing the Japanese threat to British-controlled India as well as driving them from Burma, China, and Indochina.

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On the road to China.

Alexander McVean

### experiences in CBI influenced post-war joint and combined warfighting

One vital aspect of fighting in the CBI theater were the efforts between December 1941 and June 1944 by air and ground-based logistic forces to support the Chinese nationalist field armies under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the British Fourteenth Army under General William Slim, and the Fourteenth Air Force—formerly American Volunteer Group (AVG)—under General Claire Chennault.

This dimension of the war in CBI illustrates the complexities of both interservice and interallied cooperation that existed until the theater was reorganized after the Trident conference and the Anakim decision to retake northern Burma. Much of the bickering then can be traced to the failure of both the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to agree on a sound policy regarding CBI and the Japanese threat there. The U.S. inability to formulate a solid strategy led to postwar breakdowns in policy whereby Allied interests gave way to “recolonization” instead of “decolonization.” Ultimately, failing to prioritize support for CBI as well as relegating the theater to minor importance was directly linked to the political and military failures in Indochina in 1946–54 and again in 1965–73.

Students of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam should not ignore the obstacle which faced American and British planners in southeast Asia as they fought both among themselves and against the Japanese, all in the name of joint and combined operations. Thus, it is relevant to examine not only the Anglo-American command—later Southeast Asia Command (SEAC)—but also the often acrimonious Army-Air Force relations in supplying China. The lessons of the airlift and military assistance conducted in the CBI theater to interservice cooperation serve as important precedents for jointness. The experiences of the Army and the Army Air Forces in CBI, as well as between the United States and Britain, influenced post-war joint and combined warfighting.

### Background

Before the United States entered the war in the Pacific on December 7, 1941, China and Japan had been fighting for four and a half years, with the Chinese forces under Chiang Kai-shek being gradually pushed inland by the Japanese army. With the attacks on Pearl Harbor and Malaya the United States and Great Britain were drawn into the Sino-Japanese struggle. Even prior to the Japanese attacks on American and British forces across the south and southwest Pacific, however, U.S. lend-lease assistance had been flowing to embattled nationalist Chinese forces for a year and a half. AVG volunteers, led by Claire L. Chennault, a former Army Air Corps captain, at that time were fighting a desperate though successful air war against more experienced Japanese aviators. Chennault, an advocate of offensive airpower, accompanied the Chinese director of air operations, Major General Mao Pang-tzo, to Washington in December 1940 to plead China’s case to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Army chief of staff General George C. Marshall.

Along with a request from communist Chinese forces for 500 combat planes and crews, the nationalist Chinese government requested an additional lend-lease loan of \$30 billion in ground force materiel. Mao Tse-tung as well as T.V. Soong, the governor of the National Bank of China, also received a credit extension of \$100,000,000 in lend-lease assistance of which 25 percent was for armaments. Despite approval of this loan, the War Department, which was strapped by its own requirements, replied that it could not totally comply with the request. But Mao’s plea for aircraft fared better. Stanley K. Hornbeck, who was on the Far East desk at the Department of State, and the President assured that no objections would be raised to a request for aircraft. The sale of 500 combat planes was dealt with by the War, State, and Treasury Departments without difficulty.



Alexander McVean

Burma, 1944.

The first serious War Department effort to develop a unified military policy for China came in July 1941 at the suggestion of the British military attaché to China, Major General L.E. Denys. Fearing a Soviet collapse and subsequent release of thousands of Japanese troops in Manchuria for duty in China proper, he urged Washington to establish a military mission to coordinate lend-lease assistance. He argued that such a mission could serve as the basis for a theater command should the United States become involved in a war in the Pacific.

With Marshall's approval, the American Military Mission to China was to serve as a liaison for strategic planning and cooperation with China. Under Brigadier General John Magruder, the mission would coordinate lend-lease with the Chungking government to:

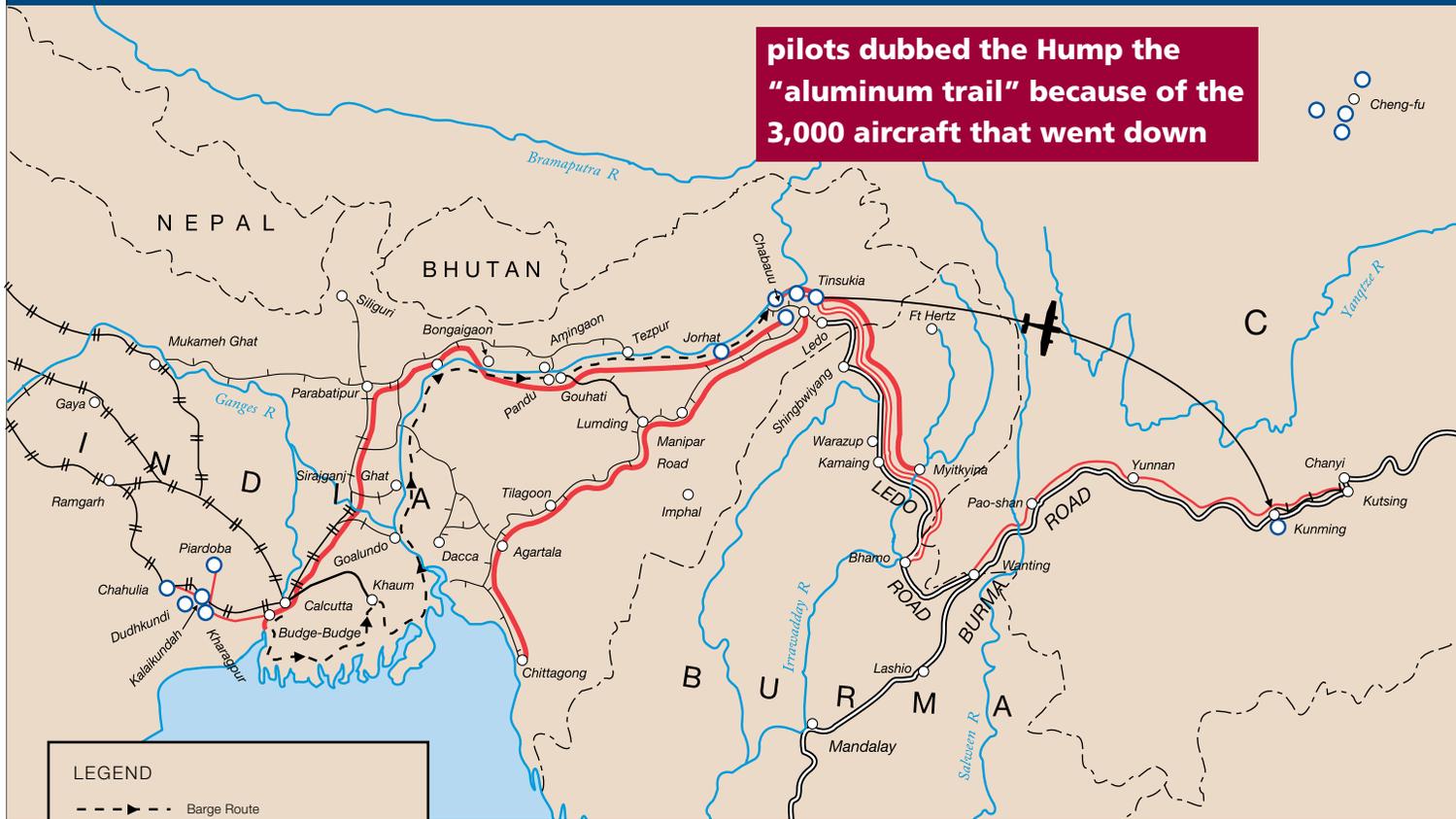
- advise and assist in all phases of aircraft procurement, transport, and maintenance
- advise and assist in the training, use, and maintenance of weapons and equipment
- when requested, assist the Department of State and other agencies in carrying out the Lend-Lease Act pertaining to China
- help obtain prompt and coordinated administrative action to ensure the orderly flow of war materiel to Chinese forces
- explore port, road, and railroad facilities with a view to establishing and maintaining an adequate line of communications.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after our entry into the Pacific war, Washington put the 500 planes promised China on hold pending review largely because of immediate requirements by both the U.S. Army and the Royal Air Force (RAF). The availability of 100 of the latest P-40B fighters produced a tentative agreement among Air Vice Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, Chennault, and the U.S. military whereby the former would transfer P-40s to China while Britain would receive a similar number of the new fighters. In addition, Brooke-Popham agreed to rearm the aircraft and offered the use of RAF airfields in Burma to train Chinese pilots and crews as well as logistical support.

Pre-war discussions between Washington and London on China or the CBI theater pointed to differences in Anglo-American strategy on the defense of the vital natural resources of Southeast Asia. As early as October 1941, the Americans and British, fearing further moves by the Japanese toward Burma and Southeast Asia, discussed forming AVG into an Anglo-American organization. China likewise grew in importance since Washington and London saw the Sino-Japanese conflict as a large holding action to delay Japanese armies from being committed elsewhere in the Pacific. Despite various attempts to make China a

Supplying War in CBI: From Dockside in Calcutta to Airfields in China

pilots dubbed the Hump the "aluminum trail" because of the 3,000 aircraft that went down



**LEGEND**

- Barge Route
- Pipeline (6 inch)
- Pipeline (4 inch)
- Airlift to China
- Major Airfields
- Broad Gauge, Double Track Railroad
- Broad Gauge, Single Track Railroad
- Meter Gauge, Single Track Railroad

Source: Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI. The China-Burma-India Theater. U.S. Army in World War II* (Washington: U.S. Army Center for Military History, 1985).

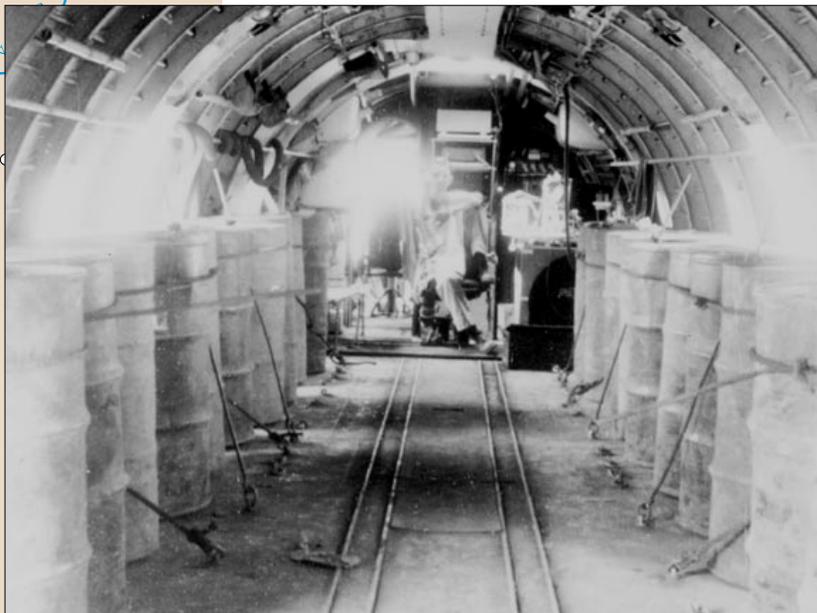
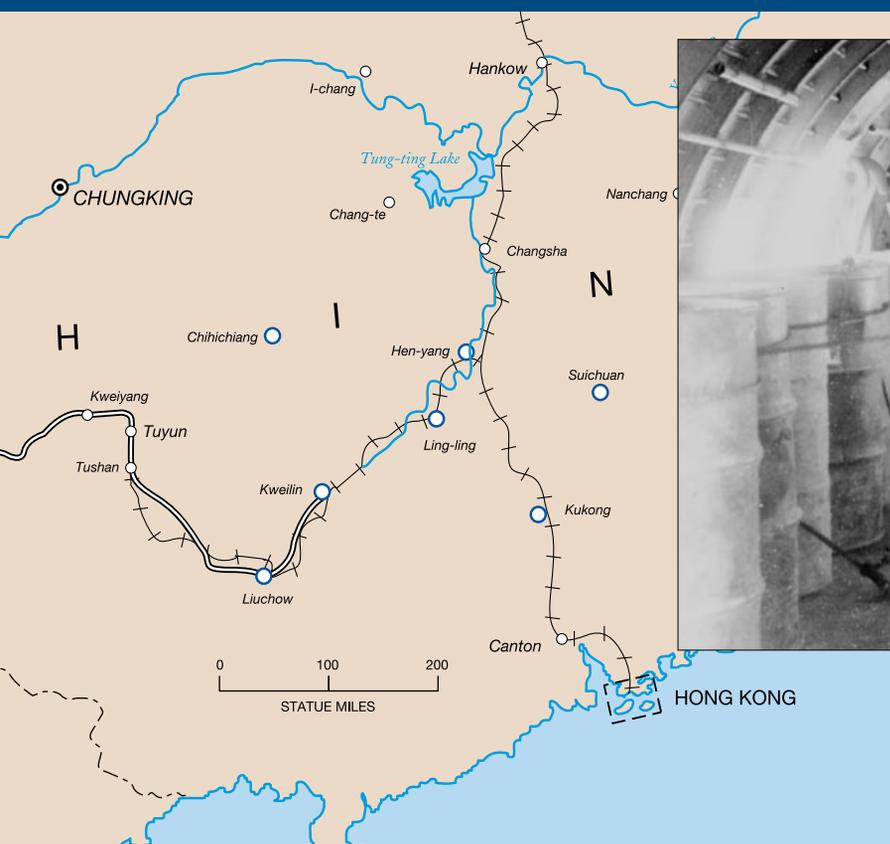
major wartime front, its significance diminished with the "Germany first" (Rainbow 1) strategy once America entered the war.<sup>3</sup>

**The Arcadia Conference**

Chiang Kai-shek, on the other hand, not surprisingly believed that China and Asia should be the Allied focal point. On the very day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, he called a meeting of Allied representatives in Chungking to discuss creating a council which he would chair to direct the war in that theater. Besides calling for severing Japan's lines of supply and communications through strategic bombing, he proposed that he now be given control "and priority" over all lend-lease equipment. The Generalissimo rightly thought Britain would try to "preempt the lend-lease arms that were piling up in Burma on consignment to China . . . [and] wanted American leadership of the war council to keep the British from taking his goods."<sup>4</sup>

Chiang's "Asia first" strategy was quickly set aside at the first major interallied conference.

During the Arcadia meeting in December 1941, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill reaffirmed the "Germany first" strategy though both acknowledged the necessity of defending Burma and supplying Chiang's beleaguered forces. They agreed, moreover, that CBI was to remain solely defensive until Germany was defeated. Despite the low priority assigned to China, Roosevelt believed it crucial to not permit it to either pull out of the war (as Chiang hinted several times) or side with the Japanese. He likewise advocated that China be given great power status and permitted to direct the war in China from Chungking (later Kunming) instead of granting General Sir Archibald Wavell overall command. Roosevelt also believed the British and French hold over Asian colonies would not survive the war, and thus a strong China would be needed as a "policeman" to arrest any Soviet moves into the region. Churchill, who was in not in the mood to compromise Britain's postwar position in Asia, including India, told Roosevelt in effect that what went on in British colonies was none of his business.



David C. Heil

Fuel for Chennault.

### By Land or Air?

As long as Britain controlled Burma and the vital "Burma Road" from Mandalay to Lashio and on into China, the Allies could supply both Chiang and Chennault. During Arcadia, Churchill in fact had been pressured by Roosevelt to focus British efforts at defending the only land route to China, much to the disgust of General Sir Alan Brooke, chief of the Imperial General Staff, who considered the scheme wild and half-baked. Throughout early 1942, British, Commonwealth, and Chinese forces waged a rear-guard action after losing Rangoon to protect both the Burma Road and Yenangyaung oilfields and prevent the Chinese from being cut off in the northeastern Shan states.

Loss of Burma and the vital rail and road networks into China would force the Americans to undertake an aerial resupply effort over the Himalayas in northern Burma. Lieutenant General Joseph W. Stilwell, the War Department's personal emissary to Chiang, proposed that a new truck route running through northern Burma, from Ledo to Myitkyina, be constructed after the area was cleared of Japanese by a three-pronged Allied offensive. The British and Chinese saw the idea as time-consuming and wasteful. The British proposed instead a new offensive to recapture the port of Rangoon and reopen the old Burma Road from Lashio to Kunming. To meet short term needs the British and Chinese suggested a massive airlift. The Combined Chiefs reached a com-

The Allied leaders nonetheless formulated a strategy that was purely defensive and would continue supporting Chiang against Japan as well as holding the line against further advances into Burma and India. China's strategic and operational importance was as a base to defend Burma, India, and the Malay-Java barrier and possibly as a "jumping off" point for retaking Indochina. In order to reduce the friction between Chiang and the British (whom Chiang believed imperialistic), the War Department would take responsibility for China while Southeast Asia Command assumed responsibility for Burma. This separation of Burma and China disrupted regular logistic channels, leading to problems of command and control in CBI that threatened the conduct of the war against Japan on the Asian mainland. It was at this point that the questions of how to supply both China and British forces fighting in Burma, while also maintaining Chiang's forces in the field, arose. For Marshall and the War Department, the problem did not center on the need to supply CBI but on how to do it with the limited assets available during the first fourteen months after Pearl Harbor.



Drawing water, India.

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**getting lend-lease to China even before U.S. involvement in the war was not simple**

promise: the Americans would undertake the airlift even as Allied forces launched a series of offensives to retake Myitkyina, opening the way to build a new land route to China.

Getting lend-lease to China even before U.S. involvement in the war was not simple. Prior to the fall of Rangoon in March 1942, ships carrying lend-lease supplies would dock and unload at Rangoon, then be trucked via the Lashio Road. The new

Burma Road was to stretch from Ledo, India, through Fort Hertz and Myitkyina to Lung-Ling in China. Chiang optimistically believed it would take only five months to build the road while Washington estimated two and a half years. Support nonetheless came quickly from Marshall and presidential adviser Lauchlin Currie. In fact, Currie told Roosevelt that building such a road under American auspices would eliminate many of the problems between Chiang and the British, permitting lend-lease to flow relatively uninterrupted to Chinese forces. But as Chiang and the War Plans

Division hammered out planning for the road, an interim route was found via Sadiya, India, and Kunming over a rough and forbidding stretch of terrain soon to be known as simply the “Hump.”

The Chinese foreign minister, T.V. Soong, estimated that 100 C-47 Skytrains or Dakotas could fly 12,000 tons of supplies into China every month. Despite Roosevelt’s concern that the unarmed transports would be easy prey for Japanese pilots, Soong assured him that “the supply route to China via India can be maintained by air even though there should be a further setback in Rangoon.” Though Soong promised air support, many transports flew missions under a constant threat of attack. And much of the fighter cover provided came from Indian based RAF squadrons. It was not until 1944 when Merrill’s Marauders retook the Japanese airbase in Burma at Myitkyina that the enemy air threat was eliminated.

Washington instructed Stilwell, appointed in January 1942 to command U.S. personnel and lend-lease in China, to “set up the airline to China even though the Burma Road was held.”



Gurkas jumping into Rangoon.

Despite emphasis on building a land route, logistical and engineering problems as well as the drain of manpower and materiel to other theaters delayed construction, forcing the War Department to resupply the Allies with a massive airlift. This would establish a vital link with Chiang's forces in China and set the stage for the retaking of Burma in 1944.

#### **CBI, 1942–44**

Despite delays in building a road to China and the shortage of men and aircraft because of more pressing needs, the Army inaugurated Project 7A which requisitioned 25 American Airways transports for the Assam-Burma-China Ferry Command. Its mission was to deliver equipment and supplies to British, American, Chinese, and Indian soldiers as well as aiding fleeing refugees.

Despite Washington's desire to placate Chiang, operations in Europe were a constant drain on transport aircraft for the Ferry Command. American strategy in China thus became hostage to the European theater with regard to JCS and CCS priorities on both men and materiel. Chiang, on the other hand, insisted that by August 1942 "the monthly aerial support should be 5,000 tons," impossible given the build-up for *Gymnast*, later renamed *Torch*, and *Sledgehammer*, the invasion of northwestern France. In fact, troop and support problems plagued Stilwell and

the American, British, Dutch, Australian Supreme Command (ABDACOM) throughout the theater. These same problems caused acrimonious debates among the Anglo-American leaders and China over strategy. Squabbling about who got which share of the little support reaching CBI strained tenuous relations between the Americans and British as well as between British and Chinese forces in Burma.

From the outset the British sought to have the airlift placed "at its disposal and under the air officer commander in chief (India)." Although JCS rejected this plan, Marshall personally assured Field Marshal Sir John Dill, the British liaison in Washington, that the Tenth Air Force would be turned over to British forces in India when necessary. Stilwell, suspicious of the lackluster British efforts in Burma and trying to placate Chiang's demands, drew up his own plans for a limited air and ground offensive that would keep the pressure on the Japanese and the Chinese fighting.

The center of Stilwell's program in summer 1942 was an air campaign to support a series of limited ground offensives in China and Burma. While Chennault's Fourteenth Air Force was to assist Chiang's forces inside China, Tenth Air Force, flying from bases in India, was to "bomb strategic targets in Burma and China" when they

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Arriving in Kunming, China.

could be supported there. India Air Task Force, activated in October 1942, supplemented India-China Ferry Command. Leading the airlift to CBI was Air Service Command, under Brigadier General Francis M. Brady. His task was to “receive and train crews for combat and transport operations” flying back and forth into China. Working through Brady’s American Air Service Command was its own Air Service Command. The group, based throughout northern India (Agra, Allahabad, Chakulia, Bangalore, Dinjan, and Chabua) and at Kunming in China, served as a maintenance and supply echelon. Directing the entire resupply effort for China was Major General Raymond A. Wheeler’s Service of Supply (SOS). Depending on a 12,000-mile, four-month odyssey by ship from Los Angeles to Karachi and through India’s vast interior to Assam on an antiquated rail and road network, SOS performed a miracle in getting supplies to Stilwell and Alexander.

### Over the Hump

Missions across the Hump and into Burma were long and dangerous. The Hump portion of the flight averaged over 600 miles from either Assam or Delhi to Kunming. It began on leaving Myitkyina where pilots with oxygen masks flew

at 17,000–20,000 feet. The transports, including converted B-24s, carried no armaments. Even machine guns in the rear of B-24s were removed to add room for cargo. “The old slow transports, not designed for such conditions, flew without aids to navigation or arms against Japanese pursuit.”<sup>5</sup>

Pilots flew from 13 to 14 hours a day, round the clock, seven days a week, in all types of weather. The only “down time” was during the monsoon from May to late October when only limited flights took place. The C-46s carried 500-pound bombs, 50-gallon drums of 100-octane aviation fuel, small arms ammunition, and whatever else Chiang or Stilwell required. Loaded by British, American, Indian, and Chinese ground crews, the tightly-packed “gooney birds” flew off runways made of steel mats or concrete and crushed gravel on flights of up to five hours.

When flying through the monsoon and at night, pilots relied on “AI,” or actual instrument flying. Chinese and American technicians likewise operated beacon radars to guide aircraft flying on instruments to Luliang and Kunming as

well as all major air installations in India. Pilots simply came to know the approaches and landing sites by heart.

Most problems with flying the Hump, however, were due to the weather. As one veteran, Lieutenant General William H. Turner, wrote:

*Looking at the Hump weather on a year-round basis, it's easy to see that it was no picnic any time of the year. The combination of weather and terrain would have made the Hump airlift a difficult one even if the route had been over the middle of the United States.<sup>6</sup>*

Pilots dubbed the Hump the "aluminum trail" because of the 3,000 aircraft that went down over the four years the Army Air Force ran the supply line, 85 percent of the losses due to weather.

Besides flying to Kunming and Luliang, 4<sup>th</sup> Combat Cargo Group supported the advance by Slim on Rangoon, ferrying and inserting into Burma radar teams and the long-range penetration units. The group also transported Chinese soldiers from bases in India and Burma to China. But the bulk of the flying before and after Trident was in support of Allied military operations in China and Burma. Slim wrote of the latter:

*There were, of course, some anxious moments: we had some over air supply. The American and British transport aircraft were proving too few to meet our increasing demands. . . . This difficulty was met by Admiral Mountbatten obtaining the permission of the Combined Chiefs of Staff to borrow aircraft from the Hump. Twenty-five Commandos [C-46s] were lent for three weeks, thus enabling Dakotas to be sent to [Orde] Wingate's force [Chindits] to tide over the peak demand.<sup>7</sup>*

In fact what made "flying the Hump" all the more successful was the flexibility of responding quickly to operational requirements which also has been typical of subsequent air relief operations. During Slim's advance down the Irrawady River in April–May 1945, American C-46s kept British forces supplied by flying round-the-clock during the battle for Kohima Ridge until relief came after two weeks of bitter fighting. Crews braved heavy anti-aircraft fire by dropping ammunition, water, and food to the beleaguered British and Indian forces. Kickers pushed bundles from pallets onto drop zones usually designated by flares or coordinates. This system was repeated during the U.S. resupply of Chiang's forces during the Chinese civil war (1945–49) and the first Indochina conflict when American-hired transport crews helped French paratroopers at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

## Anakim

The pace of the war in both the Pacific and the Mediterranean increased after the Casablanca conference in January 1943. As Trident and Quadrant demonstrated, Stilwell's and Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten's theaters became ever more dependent on an ever dwindling pool of logistical and air support. Even before Trident, JCS put forth a more aggressive plan, Anakim, for a series of offensives to reopen the Ledo Road into China. Marshall's motive for backing it met serious resistance from both the British and Chinese. The British maintained that any operation to open the Burma Road was a waste of resources that could better be used in the Mediterranean, for example. The Chinese, on the other hand, agreed to participate only if Britain provided adequate naval and air support. When Wavell informed the Generalissimo that Britain could provide only a "limited amount," the Chinese declined.

At Casablanca, Roosevelt and Churchill discussed problems confronting the Allies in the third full year of war. The President, aware that both the public and his chiefs wanted an expanded effort in the Pacific and China, sided with Churchill's desire to first secure the Mediterranean basin and prepare for an eventual "second front" in Europe (Bolero) to remove pressure from the Soviet army on the Eastern Front. Although they fought off suggestions for a major offensive in Burma, Marshall and Admiral Ernest J. King convinced the President to approve a limited Burma offensive for late 1943. Roosevelt and Marshall pledged that supplies expended in Burma would be replaced immediately from American stockpiles to placate Churchill's fears that CBI would drain lend-lease.

Marshall's desire for even a limited offensive was twofold. His first goal was to reopen the line of communications to China to secure bases for operations against Japan's home islands. The second, and more important to both him and JCS, was to obtain staging areas and airfields in north China for bombers to launch a strategic bombing campaign (Matterhorn) against Japan.

Despite Roosevelt's approval for a limited Burma offensive, Marshall and King stressed to Stilwell that priority must go to rebuilding the Chinese army into a credible offensive force. CBI was to get only enough logistical support to prevent collapse. In the end, Chennault's Fourteenth Air Force and not Stilwell's half-starved Chinese and American force received greater support due to the belief on the part of Roosevelt and a reluctant Marshall that airpower would be a "quick-fix" alternative to Stilwell's plan to refit 30 Chinese divisions. Despite this change of priorities in CBI, the impact of Anakim on SOS and Air Transport Command was immediate.



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Going behind Japanese lines.

During the Trident conference in spring 1943, Roosevelt, Churchill, and their Combined Chiefs sought to finalize the agreements made at Casablanca the previous winter, particularly with regard to Anakim. Both Chennault and Stilwell, the latter representing Chiang Kai-shek, presented their plans on how to best defeat Japan in China. After a lengthy presentation by Chennault on the efficacy of airpower, Stilwell discounted airpower and Chennault's grandiose plan warning that if compelled the Japanese had more than enough power to march on both Chungking and Kunming. Stilwell maintained that defeating the Japanese on the mainland required 120 Chinese divisions.

The British, on the other hand, believed any offensive in Burma would divert manpower and logistics just when the war in Germany was entering its most crucial phase. In fact, Churchill and the British chiefs advocated bypassing Burma as the Americans were about to do in the south and central Pacific. The British favored a limited amphibious campaign to retake the northern tip of Sumatra and reoccupy Singapore. They likewise thought it impossible to airlift sufficient supplies over the Hump to sustain even a limited offensive in Burma given other priorities.

### Supplying China

Any offensive to retake Burma or to assist Chennault in his proposed air campaign against Japan would demand flying increased tonnage over the Hump. Chennault based his requirements on 150 B-17 bombers; 32 B-24, B-25, and B-26 medium bombers; air and ground personnel; and

2,500–3,000 tons of supplies not only to protect air routes to China but to strike the Japanese along the Chinese and Burmese coasts. Despite Stilwell's opinion that airpower alone could not defeat the enemy, Marshall ordered the CBI commander in chief to give Chennault a "firm allocation" of 1,500 tons a month regardless of Chiang's needs. Stilwell complied and told JCS that Chennault would receive an added 1,000 tons per month. Chinese forces would still get 2,500 tons monthly, providing that in bad weather Chennault would "share equally with everyone else" no matter what it did to air operations. Chennault saw Stilwell's plan as undercutting his efforts to launch the air campaign against Japan. He not only insisted on priority in Hump tonnage but that he get enough "to fly and fight."

Aggravating Stilwell's command problems with Chiang and Chennault was interference by the President in theater operations. Roosevelt often circumvented the normal chain of command in Washington—Marshall and JCS—to conduct the war in the same ad hoc way that pre-war policy on China had been formulated. While Roosevelt's aim was to assure Chiang that "China was a full partner," his meddling frequently sent confusing signals, hampering the war effort. Moreover, his personal relationship with Chennault, which went back to 1937, hindered Stilwell in reforming the Chinese army into an effective force. In fact, it inhibited the war against Japan and later in creating a working coalition with the Chinese communists. Roosevelt's insistence that Chennault receive a "guaranteed monthly minimum" not only reduced the chance of Stilwell accumulating the requisite supplies, but forced a revision of the planned offensive into northern Burma. The decision to maintain the pressure on the Japanese via an air offensive also impeded an effective Chinese effort against the enemy in Burma and China.

Despite War Department pronouncements on the bravery and fortitude of Chinese soldiers, interallied squabbling and British mistrust of Chiang's pro-Indian sentiment slowed down efforts by Stilwell to build a Chinese army able to defeat the Japanese as well as the Chinese communists during the civil war (1945–49). Interallied friction over priorities, strategy, and operations likewise scuttled plans to resume the offensive in CBI in 1943. Not until the Quebec conference (Quadrant) in August 1943 and Mountbatten's appointment would the Allies resume a major offensive against the Japanese in Burma and China. In fact, Trident set in motion both the reconquest of Burma and the opening of the Burma Road in late 1944.

### Cooperation at Last

The immediate result of the Trident conference was increased Hump tonnage reaching both Chennault and Stilwell in China. Chiang's approval of the Trident decisions meant that training and equipping Y-Force (the 30 refitted Chinese divisions) had to go forward, and tactical plans for Burma had to be updated. Decisions

### with the increase of Hump tonnage to 10,000 per month came expansion of Wheeler's SOS

reached in Washington by Roosevelt, Churchill, and CCS on a limited offensive into Burma set in motion plans for Slim's reconquest and opening the Burma-Ledo Road in late 1944. Trident also gave more emphasis to Chennault's plan for an air campaign. Roosevelt's backing of Chennault diverted resources from road construction to airfields in India.

With the increase of Hump tonnage from 4,000 to 10,000 per month came the expansion and reinforcement of Wheeler's SOS. After Trident, his first task was to get SEAC permission to build several airfields to enlarge the effort in China and Burma. Wavell readily agreed and flew to Assam to survey construction of four main bases: Chabua, Mohanbari, Sookerating, and Jorhat. The British commander gave Wheeler's engineers license to requisition materiel for the airfields. Mountbatten rushed trucks, steel matting, and gravel crushers and rollers to Assam to complete the airfields in time for the planned spring offensives.

Despite Anglo-American differences, CBI began to experience a steady influx of men and materiel by mid-1943. Acting on Marshall's request for added aircraft for the China-Assam ferry, the War Department rushed 30 C-46 transports to Wheeler. In order to not strip the planes from Sledgehammer, the Army requisitioned them from Trans World and Northwest Airlines. Marshall, recognizing that Roosevelt's air campaign could not be launched without more men and equipment, started to divert both from Britain and the United States to bolster Stilwell and Chennault. By mid-1943 the theater was receiving a quarter of all supplies coming off assembly lines at home.

By summer ACT had three more transportation groups and four airway detachments, with more personnel arriving monthly. Whereas before each transport had one crew they now had two, permitting round-the-clock flights. By August 1943, JCS had assigned 46 extra crews to the CBI theater, thus alleviating shortages in event of losses. Despite the additional personnel and materiel after Trident, it became clear that a goal of

10,000 tons a month would not be reached until British and American engineers completed all airfields and maintenance facilities then under construction and each one was fully manned by maintenance personnel.

It was only at the Quadrant conference that the Combined Chiefs of Staff decided when and where to strike the Japanese in the Pacific. While approving of the central Pacific drive by Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, the chiefs sanctioned a series of limited offensives which would not only link India to China by a new road network but expel the Japanese from all of Burma. The conference culminated two years of interallied and interservice disharmony over how to supply China while defeating the Japanese. It became apparent that the enemy would have to be defeated on the Asian mainland before the status of British and French colonies and U.S. policy toward China could be resolved. It was only the persistence of Marshall and Mountbatten that focused the Allies to fight the Japanese instead of one another. The China-Burma-India theater provides an illustrious case for the study of joint and combined operations conducted under divergent and conflicting political and military objectives. **JFQ**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The author based numerous depictions of operational details on interviews with veterans who served in CBI during the events recounted in this article, including Platoon Sergeant Robert Boehm (Army Quartermaster Corps), Captain Ed Goodman (Army Air Force), and Captain David C. Hall (4<sup>th</sup> Air Cargo Group Command). For a discussion of the controversy surrounding Allied strategy in the China-Burma-India theater, see "Grave of a Dozen Schemes," by H.P. Willmott in *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 4 (Spring 1994), pp. 82-91.

<sup>2</sup> Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission to China. The China-Burma-India Theater. U.S. Army in World War II* (Washington: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1987), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Mark S. Watson, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations. The War Department. U.S. Army in World War II* (Washington: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1985), pp. 367-410.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-45* (New York: MacMillan, 1970), p. 234.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 303.

<sup>6</sup> William H. Tunner, *Over the Hump*, (Washington: Office of Air Force History, 1985), p. 75.

<sup>7</sup> William J. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 3<sup>d</sup> edition (London: MacMillan, 1988), p. 242.