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Form SF298 Citation Data

Report Date <i>("DD MON YYYY")</i> 00061999	Report Type N/A	Dates Covered (from... to) <i>("DD MON YYYY")</i>
Title and Subtitle Air Leadership in Joint/Combined Operations: LT GENERAL George E. Stratemeyer of the Eastern Air Command, 1943-1945		Contract or Grant Number
Authors Cain, Gregory M. "Box"		Program Element Number
		Project Number
		Task Number
Performing Organization Name(s) and Address(es) School of Advanced Airpower Studies Air University Maxwell AFB, AL 36112		Work Unit Number
		Performing Organization Number(s)
		Monitoring Agency Name(s) and Address(es)
Sponsoring/Monitoring Agency Name(s) and Address(es)		Monitoring Agency Acronym
		Monitoring Agency Report Number(s)
Distribution/Availability Statement Approved for public release, distribution unlimited		
Supplementary Notes		
Abstract		
Subject Terms		
Document Classification unclassified		Classification of SF298 unclassified
Classification of Abstract unclassified		Limitation of Abstract unlimited
Number of Pages 92		

AIR LEADERSHIP IN JOINT/COMBINED OPERATIONS:
LT. GENERAL GEORGE E. STRATEMEYER OF THE
EASTERN AIR COMMAND, 1943 – 1945

BY

Major Gregory M. “Box” Cain

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF
THE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIRPOWER STUDIES
FOR COMPLETION OF GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIRPOWER STUDIES
AIR UNIVERSITY

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

JUNE 1999

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About the Author

Major Gregory M. “Box” Cain, a senior pilot with over 2800 hours flight time, is a 1984 graduate of the University of South Dakota where he earned a bachelor of arts degree in computer science. He went to undergraduate pilot training at Columbus AFB, Mississippi, graduating in the spring of 1986. His first assignment was to the 644th Bombardment Squadron, 410th Bombardment Wing to fly B-52s at K.I. Sawyer AFB in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. After 16 months and 450 hours in the B-52, he was assigned to the 37th Bomb Squadron, 28th Bomb Wing at Ellsworth AFB in his home town of Box Elder, South Dakota. He remained at Ellsworth flying B-1s until 1997 when he left to attend Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell AFB, Alabama. In March 1998, Major Cain earned a masters of aeronautical science from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University.

Major Cain was flight outstanding contributor and distinguished graduate at Squadron Officer School and Outstanding Graduate and Flying Award winner at the US Air Force Weapons School. After his own graduation, Major Cain instructed five B-1 Weapons School classes and was selected by his students as Outstanding Flight Instructor three times and Outstanding Academic Instructor once. He was named the US Air Force Weapons School Instructor of the Year and the Air Combat Command Instructor of the Year for 1995.

Major Cain’s next duty assignment will be to 9th Air Force, Shaw AFB, South Carolina where he will be working in the Combat Plans division.

Acknowledgments

I thank Dr. Jim Corum, my advisor, for his patience, insight, encouragement and guidance. I am indebted to him also for suggesting that I embark upon a study of General Stratemeyer's work. The experience proved as challenging as any task I have ever undertaken in the academic environment and I am convinced it will influence my military career forever.

I also thank the seasoned military aviator Dr. David R. Mets, my thesis reader, for his constructive and very productive criticisms of this work. Through his advice and counseling I was better able to assess the mountain of historical evidence and determine an appropriate direction to travel.

I also thank the entire staff at the US Air Force Historical Research Agency who were very gracious and giving of their time and assistance, allowing me to pore for countless hours over the aforementioned mountain. I owe an especial debt of gratitude to Ann, who was always extremely patient and never too busy, even if she really was.

Most importantly, I thank my wife Julie and my son Benjamin for making these last two years the greatest of my life. I cannot thank Julie enough for the sacrifices she has made over this past year when I was less husband than I should have been; I cannot thank Benjamin enough for the arms-raised-high, grinning-ear-to-ear, running-at-top-speed-on-18-month-old-legs reception that I get when I come home. It is impossible to describe the way it makes me feel when I know I have been gone too long for too many days and I can still get that kind of greeting.

I thank my daughters Taylor and Bailey who live in San Marcos, Texas but are forever in my heart. I am only whole when they are sleeping under my roof and that does not happen often enough.

Finally, I thank my Dad, a retired USAF Chief Master Sergeant, who is the most impressive and inspirational military leader I have ever met, and my Mom, who has always told me I was great even when I knew better. If it were not for them, I would not be here to appreciate life in the greatest air force in the greatest military in the greatest country in the whole wide world. For me, theirs was and is the greatest of contributions.

Abstract

This study analyzes the career of Lieutenant General George Edward Stratemeyer, USAF, emphasizing his leadership in joint/combined operations in the China-Burma-India theater during World War II. Specifically, it demonstrates how, from his position as Chief of the Air Staff under General Arnold, General Stratemeyer witnessed the evolution of US interests as well as the buildup of forces in CBI and the creation and employment of the Northwest African Air Force under command of General Carl Spaatz. These two experiences colored General Stratemeyer's initial conception of his responsibilities as air commander of a combined USAAF-RAF air organization in the CBI, the Eastern Air Command. His air-minded perspective and genial nature enabled him to overcome early shortfalls in this conception and greatly contribute to the overall winning strategy employed by the Allies in Burma. Under his command, individual air commanders were allowed to innovate and thus make the most of the meager resources at hand and, as a consequence, Eastern Air Command was instrumental in the combined arms operations that drove the Japanese completely out of Burma by May 1945.

The key lessons derived from this study are four. The first is that there is no single template for coalition organization or operations. The US will fight in coalitions in future but every situation is unique and will call for an organization and pattern of operations that may differ significantly from those existing or envisioned in peacetime. The second key lesson is that doctrine and innovation are most important in a resource-constrained combat environment. The Allies in Burma were resource limited by virtue of CBI's tertiary priority in the war effort

against the Axis powers. Today's US military will face similar constraints in time of war; they will have to fight with a relatively small force, with long lines of communication connecting the domestic economy to the fighting front, and in a joint/combined environment on a relatively limited budget. Arguably the most important finding of this study is that effective communication of the air perspective is an airman's most important contribution to military operations. General Stratmeyer was able to convince Allied surface forces leadership in CBI that airpower could contribute decisively to the combined arms effort; that they listened to him can be attributed to the final important lesson of this study—personalities are important in the leadership of joint/combined operations. All US military members should remember that the services are coequal, independent, and increasingly interdependent and that there is a unique perspective that comes from being educated, trained and raised in a parent service. Only an airman can adequately provide the air perspective.

Chapter 1

From the Past...

Introduction

In the post cold war era, airpower seems to be the force of choice when America becomes involved in military conflicts around the world. In these conflicts, US forces generally fight as one member of a coalition. There is a good probability that any future military operation undertaken by the US will have multinational aspects as well.¹ With that said, it is interesting to note that one facet of US Air Force air leadership and training that receives little peacetime attention is consideration of the intricacies and complications of coalition operations in wartime.

We have in our heritage a wealth of experience in coalitions, and this is a good well from which to draw as a first step toward increasing the awareness of and preparedness for these operations.² The US experience in World War II's China-Burma-India (CBI) theater, and particularly the war in Burma, is prominent within that base of experience because it is a piece of history that reflects how US air forces may have to operate in the future. In Burma, US and Allied forces fought with a relatively small force, with long lines of communication connecting

¹ Joint Pub 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), 10 January 1995), III-13.

² Two examples of coalition operations in which US air forces participated during the last decade alone include Operation Desert Storm and the ongoing Crisis in Kosovo.

the domestic economy to the fighting front, and in a joint/combined environment on a relatively limited budget.

The subject of this study is Major General George E. Stratemeyer' leadership of air operations in the CBI. While he ultimately commanded a combined US Army Air Forces (USAAF) and Royal Air Force (RAF) air organization in operations against the Japanese in Burma, that was not immediately the case. In fact, when he arrived in the CBI in August 1943, the first obstacle facing Stratemeyer was a less-than-complete picture of what his exact duties were to be. As he quickly found out, they were largely left to his own interpretation, and this was but the first challenge he was to face.

Command arrangements were a microcosm of the whole war effort against Japan which contrasted sharply with those in Europe: In short, there was a general lack of unified command in the war against Japan and also in its component efforts being waged in the Pacific and in the CBI. Historians Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate point out that "the tangled command situation in the CBI [was] perhaps the worst in any theater of the war."³ Adding to the complication was the fact that personal and professional conflicts between senior theater leaders had been a constant feature of the CBI that was often played out in the American press.⁴

³ Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II, Volume Four: The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942 to July 1944* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), xiii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 436. See also History of United States Army Air Forces, India-Burma Sector, China-Burma-India Theater, August 1943 – April 1944, USAFHRA 825.01B (Hereafter referred to as "History, IBS CBI"), 11; Joseph W. Stilwell, *The Stilwell Papers*, arr. and ed. Theodore H. White (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1948), 37; and Barbara W. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-45* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1970), 335-337. Craven and Cate describe friction between General Chennault, 14th Air Force commander and General Bissell, Tenth Air Force commander, as reaching a head after the latter was purposely given one day's seniority over Chennault. History, IBS CBI says the "increasingly strained relations between [the two] reached the point where it [was] publicized in the American press and thus was common knowledge." On 9 Feb 1942, Stilwell wrote in his diary that "I spoke for Bissell and insisted that he rank Chennault. Arnold so ordered." Tuchman observed that Chennault and Stilwell disagreed strongly on the emphasis of the CBI strategy. The former, "with the bitter intensity of a man who has fallen out with the establishment, wanted to gain immortal vindication by winning the war alone with his Flying Tigers." The latter "insisted that a major share of the supply effort over the Hump be channeled to the Chinese infantry for ground campaigns." There was no love lost between the senior theater leaders.

Another important and challenging aspect of the CBI was geography and climate. Mountainous terrain and dense jungles greatly hindered conventional movement of ground armies and targeting by air forces; continental distances remained the hallmark of lift operations throughout the entire campaign; and the unique monsoon weather patterns, which lasted from about the last week of May to the end of October, at times made military ground and air operations difficult to impossible. In addition to the monsoon's attendant downpours followed by near unbearable heat and humidity, malaria, dysentery and other ailments plagued military personnel throughout the theater.⁵

The fourth complicating factor was that the CBI, in the Allied grand strategy of World War II, was the lowest priority of any combat theater, leading Lt. General William Slim to label his British 14th Army the "Forgotten Army."⁶ Further, the lowly status afforded to CBI was exacerbated as a result of the Casablanca Conference of 1943. While Roosevelt, US senior military leadership and Allied political and military leadership had long held a "Germany first" strategy, it was further emphasized at Casablanca when "destruction of the capability and will of the German nation to resist" became the announced goals of the Combined Bomber Offensive.⁷ While the CBI had from the start been the tertiary priority of the three American war theaters, this renewed emphasis on Germany helped push the allocation of aviation assets to the CBI to an even lower priority.

⁵ RAF Air Ministry, *Wings of the Phoenix: The Official Story of the Air War in Burma* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1949), 18.

⁶ Air Commodore Henry Probert. *The Forgotten Air Force: The Royal Air Force in the War Against Japan, 1941-1945* (London: Brassey's 1995), xi.

⁷ Richard G. Davis, *Carl A. Spaatz and the Air War in Europe* (Washington, DC: Center for Air Force History, 1993), 156.

Scope

This study examines Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer's role and influence in the China-Burma-India theater of World War II from the period beginning in the fall of 1943 and ending in the summer 1945. Of greatest significance is the creation and air operations of Eastern Air Command under Stratemeyer as commanding general. Eastern Air Command (EAC) was the air arm of Southeast Asia Command (SEAC), the combined US/British forces responsible for accomplishing the reconquest of Burma. This thesis evaluates Stratemeyer's leadership effectiveness in this joint/combined operation with the intent of extracting lessons for air leaders. Stratemeyer's subsequent rise to commander of Air Defense Command, commanding general of Continental Air Command, and commanding general of the Far East Air Forces during the early stages of the Korean conflict, are all important in the career of General Stratemeyer but, given limitations of time and space, are beyond the scope of this study. However, George Stratemeyer, as a senior US Air Force wartime commander, does deserve his own biography.

Overview

The intent of this study is not to rehash in great detail specific air events in the CBI except inasmuch as they contribute to understanding and evaluating General Stratemeyer's leadership. In addition, the ground operations of General Joseph Stilwell's Chinese forces and the British 14th Army under General William Slim are important but are well covered elsewhere.⁸ This study goes beyond that to discuss the CBI as a politically sensitive theater that saw British and American air forces united under one commander for a common cause.

⁸ See Joseph W. Stilwell, *The Stilwell Papers*, arr. and ed. Theodore H. White (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1948) and Field-Marshal Sir William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory* (London: Cassell and Company LTD, 1956). For further background information, see also Philip Ziegler, *Mountbatten* (New York: Knopf, 1984).

Analysis of the subject begins with a review of Stratemeyer's life and career up to 1943, by which time he had become Chief of the Air Staff, US Army Air Corps, under General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold. It is also necessary to briefly discuss developments in CBI from December 1941 to July 1943 as well as the situation in North Africa while Stratemeyer was Chief of the Air Staff as both of these experiences ultimately influenced Stratemeyer's conception of his role and responsibilities as commanding general, Eastern Air Command.

Chapter Three describes events up to and including Stratemeyer's assumption of command of Eastern Air Command, demonstrating how his perceptions were shaped by earlier events. The organization and pattern of operations of EAC will be used as a framework to examine Stratemeyer's relationships with other senior military leaders in the theater and to show how General Stratemeyer influenced the overall campaign strategy which ended in victory for the Allies in Burma. In that chapter I will also describe important innovations that occurred in Burma air operations as a case study of how innovation was influenced by a senior air commander.

Chapter Six concludes the study by evaluating Stratemeyer's command style and his overall impact on operations in CBI and by detailing the implications of this study for modern airmen.

Chapter 2

Background

George Edward Stratemeyer was born on 24 November 1890 in Cincinnati, Ohio. Most of his childhood was spent in Peru, Indiana where he lived until graduating from high school in 1909. He received an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point and enrolled in 1910.⁹ While Stratemeyer started in the same class as Carl Spaatz—the class of 1914—he did not graduate until 1915, a class that included Omar Bradley and Dwight D. Eisenhower. More than thirty of Stratemeyer's classmates eventually became generals.¹⁰ Following graduation from West Point on 12 June, Stratemeyer was commissioned a second lieutenant of infantry. He was promoted to first lieutenant on July 1, 1916; to captain on May 15, 1917; to major on June 30, 1918; to lieutenant colonel on June 16, 1936; to colonel on March 1, 1940; to brigadier general on August 4, 1941 and to major general on February 16, 1942.¹¹

Stratemeyer was first assigned to the 7th Infantry in Texas, and served with the 7th and 34th Infantry, successively, at Galveston and El Paso, Texas, and Nogales, Arizona, until September 1916. From there he was detailed in the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps at Rockwell Field,

⁹ Col. Flint O. DuPre, USAFR, *US Air Force Biographical Dictionary* (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1965), 225.

¹⁰ The H.W. Wilson Company, *Wilson Biographies Plus*, n.p.; on-line, Internet, 8 May 1999, available from http://www.hwwilson.com/_solinet/solinet.htm.

¹¹ Robert P. Fogerty, *Selected Air Force Case Histories: Biographical Study of USAF General Officers, 1917-1952*, USAF Historical Study No. 91, Volume II: L Through Z (Maxwell AFB, AL: USAF Historical Division, 1953), 47.

San Diego, California for pilot training.¹² He earned his wings and went to Columbus, NM for duty with the 1st Aero Squadron. In May of 1917, after promotion to Captain, he was selected to organize and command the School of Military Aeronautics at Ohio State University. In January of 1918, Stratemeyer went to Kelly Field, Texas to be chief test pilot and later commanding officer of the Air Service Mechanical School.¹³

After promotion to permanent major in August of 1920, he moved to Chanute Field, Illinois as head of its mechanics school.¹⁴ During that year, Stratemeyer was officially transferred to the Air Service from the Infantry.¹⁵ He became commanding officer of Chanute Field in July of 1921. During the following three years he was stationed in Hawaii as, successively, commander of 10th Air Park at Luke Field, commander of the Division Air Service at Schofield Barracks, and commander of Luke Field. He arrived at Luke the second time in April 1922 and commanded the field for the next two and one-half years.¹⁶

Stratemeyer returned to West Point in August of 1924 as an instructor in tactics and remained there until August 1929.¹⁷ The following June he graduated from the Air Corps Tactical School at Langley Field, Virginia, and then enrolled in the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth. He graduated in June 1932 and stayed on as an instructor at Leavenworth for four years.¹⁸ Thus, for nine years, from the mid-20s until the middle 1930s—an interwar period spanning almost one-third of his career and one which was important in a formative sense for the Air Service and the Air Corps—he was largely in ground forces-

¹² Dupre, 225.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Fogerty, 48.

¹⁵ *Wilson Biographies Plus*, n.p.; on-line, Internet, 8 May 1999.

¹⁶ Dupre, 225.

¹⁷ *Wilson Biographies Plus*, n.p.; on-line, Internet, 8 May 1999.

dominated academic circles. The only exception was his brief stint at the Air Corps Tactical School at Langley during 1929-1930.¹⁹

In June of 1936, Stratmeyer was promoted to lieutenant colonel and then assigned to Hamilton Field, California, where he became Commanding Officer of the 7th Bombardment Group.²⁰ It was while he was at Hamilton Field that Stratmeyer first met Charles B. Stone III, one of the B-10 pilots at Hamilton, who would later be his Chief of Staff while Stratmeyer was in command in the CBI.²¹

Stone was interviewed in 1984 as part of the US Air Force Oral History Interview program and had this to say about his time at Hamilton Field with “Strat”:

Stratmeyer was a spit-and-polish type of soldier. He always dressed beautifully. He was a good flier. He was inclined to be the type of fellow that those of us who knew him would follow. We considered him a fine officer...[a professional soldier], quiet, very pleasant, and we all just loved him. He was the group commander. We had an unfortunate maneuver at Hamilton Field. The Coast Guard had a ship out there at sea that they wanted sunk, destroyed. So Stratmeyer said, “Well, we will destroy it for you.” The day we were supposed to destroy it, dense fog set in over there. So the Coast Guard had to go out there and sink it with their guns. We had the airplanes all primed, all ready to go, all loaded with bombs. They went out, but they never could locate it. They had to stay above the clouds. [That made the newspapers and] Stratmeyer almost got relieved because it did. This was the time when the people in Washington, Arnold and Westover [Maj Gen. Oscar] and people like that, were fighting for a place for the Air Force in the scheme of things. Here was a ship off the coast that could not be destroyed by airpower. It was just an unfortunate day. Stratmeyer had to bear the brunt of that.²²

¹⁸ Dupre, 225-226.

¹⁹ Ibid., 226.

²⁰ Fogerty, 48.

²¹ Lt. Gen. Charles B. Stone, III, USAF Oral History Interview (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 26-28 April 1984), USAFHRA, K239.0512-1585, 54-55.

²² Ibid.

Stone went on to say that everything eventually “died down” and that this particular event did not ruin Stratemyer’s career, but that it was “a big setback.”²³

Notwithstanding the setback, Stratemyer was selected for the Army War College in September 1938 and following graduation in 1939 he was assigned to the Office of the Chief of the Air Corps, Washington, DC, where he was named Chief, Training and Operations Division.²⁴ He was promoted to colonel in March of 1940 and in November he became Executive Officer to General Hap Arnold, Chief of the Air Corps. While serving in that capacity, Stratemyer was promoted to Brigadier General and sent by Arnold to command the Southeast Air Corps Training Center at Maxwell Field, Alabama in January 1942.²⁵ Five months later, in June 1942, Stratemyer returned to Washington as Chief of the Air Staff for General Arnold, with promotion to major general. He remained in that position until July 1943.²⁶

²³ Ibid., 56.

²⁴ Dupre, 225.

²⁵ *Wilson Biographies Plus*, n.p.; on-line, Internet, 8 May 1999.

²⁶ Dupre, 226.

Chapter 3

Contextual Elements

There were two primary formative experiences that influenced General Stratemeyer's perception of his role and responsibilities as commanding general in CBI. First of these was the evolution of US interests in the CBI and the concomitant buildup of US forces there. From his position as Chief of the Air Staff, these developments were particularly visible to Stratemeyer. In that capacity he visited the CBI Theater in the spring of 1943.²⁷

The second important contextual element concerned Allied involvement in Northwest Africa. Stratemeyer followed closely the accomplishments of his one-time classmate, General Carl Spaatz, who commanded the Northwest African Air Force (NAAF).²⁸ During the period immediately preceding his assumption of command under Eisenhower, both Stratemeyer and Arnold engaged in encouraging and advisory correspondence with Spaatz; Stratemeyer also visited Tunisia in May 1943 after Axis ground forces had surrendered there.²⁹ Having witnessed Spaatz's achievements and successes, there is little doubt that Stratemeyer's later perception of his own command responsibilities in CBI was influenced by events in Northwest Africa.³⁰

²⁷ History IBS CBI, USAFHRA 825.01B, 12. See also Craven and Cate, Volume Four, 450.

²⁸ Richard G. Davis, *Carl A. Spaatz and the Air War in Europe* (Washington, DC: Center for Air Force History, 1993), 178-220. See also Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Case Studies in the Achievement of Air Superiority* (Washington, DC: Center for Air Force History, 1994), 223-269.

²⁹ Cooling, 262.

³⁰ Ltr., Stratemeyer to Arnold, 31 October 1943, Stratemeyer Papers, USAFHRA 168.7018-1-12. Also Headquarters, Eastern Air Command, General Order No. 1, 15 December 1943, Stratemeyer Papers, USAFHRA 168.7018-1-12. Both documents also attest to the connection. In the October letter to Arnold,

Developments in CBI

Allied geographic interests in the theater were bounded by its designation: China-Burma-India. In the Allied grand strategy, however, each of these three countries played a different, but interrelated role. Further, while US and British interests came together in the ultimate goal of defeating Japan, they diverged significantly in the CBI.

In order to support Chinese resistance to Japanese forces on the Asiatic mainland, the United States had extended Lend Lease aid to China long before US official entry in the war.³¹ The primary line of communication over which these US supplies traveled was an overland route known as the Burma Road. It originated at Rangoon and ran north to Lashio and then on to Kunming, China. (Map 1) The RAF Air Ministry's *Wings of the Phoenix* describes Rangoon's importance to Burma and the Burma Road:

Rangoon was not only the start of the supply line to China; it was also the only entrance to most of Burma itself. That country, from the military aspect, worked like a ratchet, for in all history there had been only one way along which an army had moved or, it seemed, could move over its sharply serrated terrain—upwards and to the north, traveling always with the power and the supplies that came from Rangoon. A wall of mountains isolated north Burma from the world, so that no army had ever been able to take Rangoon from that direction.³²

Even after Burma was lost to the Japanese in the spring of 1942, official US policy remained supporting China.³³ This policy was the main root of American interest in India: the goal was to

Stratemeyer indicated that it would be “desirable to put all British and American air units into one integrated Air Command on the Northwest African model,” assuming that US and British officials could agree on China's priority in the CBI. Later, in the General Orders announcing creation of Eastern Air Command, Stratemeyer once again referred to Spaatz' Northwest African Air Force when he concluded that the “standard of cooperation which we must strive to surpass has been set by the inspiring example of joint achievement of our colleagues of the Northwest African Air Force.”

³¹ Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II, Volume Four: The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942 to July 1944* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), 405.

³² RAF Air Ministry, *Wings of the Phoenix: The Official Story of the Air War in Burma* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1949), 2.

³³ Craven and Cate, Volume Four, 406.

use India as a base for the establishment of an air supply route up the Assam Valley and across northern Burma, over the Himalayas, and into Yunnan province in China.³⁴ Development of the “Hump” route, as it was known, depended on “the provision in India of necessary bases by a British ally whose interests in Asia were often in conflict with those of our Chinese ally.”³⁵

Map 1

China-Burma-India Theater



Source: Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II, Volume One: Plans and Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 491

³⁴ Eastern Air Command, *Despatch on Air Operations in Eastern Air Command (SEA)*, 15 December 1943 to 1 June 1945, USAFHRA 820.04B, 1.

³⁵ Craven and Cate, Volume IV, 406.

Primary British interests in the CBI were the protection of India and reconquest of the British colonies of Burma, Malaya, and Singapore. In addition, the British wanted to drive the Japanese out of the Andaman Islands, the Nicobar Islands, Sumatra and Thailand.³⁶ (Map 2)

Map 2

Southeast Asia



Source: Henry Probert, *The Forgotten Air Force: The Royal Air Force in the War Against Japan, 1941-1945* (London: Brassey's, 1995), 10

Despite these divergent national interests, US and British forces fought on a cooperative basis virtually from the beginning. When the Japanese invasion of Burma began on Dec. 16, 1941, the small Burma Army—which consisted only of two ill-equipped divisions of British,

³⁶ *Despatch on Air Operations*, 1.

Indian, and Burmese Troops—was supported by a very small RAF contingent.³⁷ This was the 67 Squadron, which flew obsolescent Buffaloes and which was the only RAF combat flying unit in Burma when the war began.³⁸ They were assisted by one squadron of American P-40s from the American Volunteer Group (AVG).³⁹ The AVG was under the command of Claire Chennault, a retired Army Air Corps officer.⁴⁰ Chennault formed the group while he was employed by the Chinese Army under Generalissimo Chiang K'ai-Shek to train his pilots.⁴¹ Instructors under command of Chennault were

American Army, Navy and Marine Corps airmen who had resigned their commissions in order to accept employment with a foreign government. As the United States drew nearer to active participation in the war, Chennault saw an opportunity to utilize the training of these instructors in actual combat with the Japanese. He accordingly secured for them contracts from the Chinese Government and organized them into the American Volunteer Group whose mission it was to keep the Burma Road open, to defend China from Japanese air attacks and to support the ground troops of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek.⁴²

Aircraft for the AVG, which quickly became famous as the “Flying Tigers,” were supplied to the Chinese Government under the Lend-Lease program.⁴³

Even with this most unusual form of assistance from the AVG, however, the British and Chinese combined arms forces were unable to halt the rapidly advancing Japanese. On March 9th the Japanese captured Rangoon, effectively cutting off the Burma Road and thus preventing supplies from reaching China by land.⁴⁴ The problem became one of trying to buildup Allied

³⁷ Major-General S. Woodburn Kirby, *The War Against Japan*, Volume I (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1961), 6.

³⁸ Probert, 84.

³⁹ Kirby, Volume I,

⁴⁰ Chronology of the Tenth Air Force, USAFHRA 830.052-1, 1

⁴¹ History IBS CBI, USAFHRA 825.01B, 2.

⁴² Ibid., 1.

⁴³ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁴ *Wings of the Phoenix*, 8.

combat power and infrastructure while concurrently continuing to defend the rest of Burma and preventing the conquest of India.⁴⁵ The latter was of prime importance because if Burma fell, ports in western India would be the only ones available for American supplies bound for China as everything east was in Japanese hands.

As Army Air Forces units moved into theater, it became their job and that of the AVG—both flying from primitive bases in Burma and India—to support General Joseph W. Stilwell in his effort against the Japanese.⁴⁶ Stilwell was the head of a United States military mission in China and had arrived just ten days before the fall of Rangoon.⁴⁷ He soon found himself placed in command of the Chinese Fifth and Sixth Armies and began fighting the Japanese in Burma on 19 March 1942.⁴⁸ Before his famed Burma walkout in May, there was one other significant air development in the CBI Theater.

After the Japanese advance in Burma intensified in late March and early April, the War Department on 21 April ordered Tenth Air Force to cooperate with the British under the command of the RAF.⁴⁹ The immediate priority of the combined RAF/USAAF forces was to gain and maintain air superiority over Burma and “do all they could to support the Army;” both efforts had the immediate goal of slowing the Japanese onslaught.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ History IBS CBI, USAFHRA 825.01B, 3.

⁴⁶ HQ USAAF, Burma and India, General Orders No. 1, 5 March 1942. USAFHRA 825.01B. Command of Tenth Air Force (Special) and the Army Air Forces in India was assumed by Major General Lewis H. Brereton on 5 March 1942. History, IBS CBI, USAFHRA 825.01B, 1. Tenth Air Force proper was activated earlier at Patterson Field, Ohio on 12 February 1942.

⁴⁷ Joseph W. Stilwell, *The Stilwell Papers*, arr. and ed. Theodore H. White (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1948), 43.

⁴⁸ History IBS CBI, USAFHRA 825-01B, 4.

⁴⁹ Chronology of the Tenth Air Force, USAFHRA 830.052-1, 1.

⁵⁰ Probert, 87.

In spite of the combined air effort, on 2 May 1942—after he and his Chinese forces were defeated by the Japanese —Stilwell began his retreat across Burma to India.⁵¹ USAAF aircraft supported the retreat by dropping food, medicine and other supplies to Stilwell’s troops marching to India along narrow trails across the mountains.⁵² This was an important event because it portended the potential of air drops to support ground forces on the move, a capability that later proved decisive in the Allied victory in Burma.

The result of the Allied defeat in Burma was a drastically changed theater organization and command system. Stilwell was made Commanding General of the United States Forces in China-Burma-India and moved his Headquarters to Chungking and Delhi; the former served as Forward and the latter as Rear Echelon Headquarters.⁵³ At the same time, General Brereton established Headquarters, Tenth Air Force at New Delhi as well.⁵⁴ As the Japanese moved into Burma, the AVG moved into China with headquarters at Chungking and began operating from Chinese airfields.⁵⁵

With the American naval victories of the Coral Sea in May and Midway in June 1942, the danger to India passed, and the main problem facing the Allies was how to keep China in the war.⁵⁶ As commanding general of US forces in theater, Stilwell was handed the assignment of

⁵¹ *The Stilwell Papers*, 95.

⁵² General Orders No. 13, Tenth Air Force, 22 June 1942, USAFHRA 825.01B. See also *Ex-CBI Roundup*, Vol. 50, No. 9, November 1995, 31. Emerging from this walkout on May 20 at Imphal, India, Stilwell made his now famous statement: “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.”

⁵³ History IBS CBI, USAFHRA 825-01B, 11.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁵ Russell Whelan, *The Flying Tigers: The Story of the American Volunteer Group* (New York: Viking, 1943), 37. See also History IBS CBI, USAFHRA 825-01B, 7.

⁵⁶ Major General S. Woodburn Kirby, *The War Against Japan: The Decisive Battles, Volume III* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1961), xvii.

clearing Burma of Japanese forces and restoring the land supply route to China.⁵⁷ Accordingly, on 24 May, General Marshall sent Stilwell a message rescinding the War Department action which put the Tenth Air Force under command of the RAF.⁵⁸ In close succession, the AVG was disbanded, renamed the China Air Task Force (CATF), and assigned to the Tenth Air Force on 4 July 1942⁵⁹ The CATF remained under the command of (now) Brigadier General Chennault.⁶⁰

Shortly before CATF was activated, General Brereton departed for the Middle East on 23 June 1942.⁶¹ His orders were to take with him “all available heavy bombers,” necessary staff and cargo planes to form the nucleus of the Ninth Air Force; his purpose was to help in the fight against Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, who was threatening to break through the British lines to Suez.⁶² When Brereton departed, “he left in India hardly so much as the skeleton of an air force.”⁶³

Brereton was succeeded by Brigadier General Earl L. Naiden who only remained in command until 18 August. On that date, Brigadier General Clayton Bissell, who had arrived in India in March and was serving as Air Adviser to Stilwell, succeeded Naiden as Commanding General of the Tenth Air Force.⁶⁴

On 3 October the Tenth Air Force activated the India Air Task Force (IATF) at Dinjan under the command of Brigadier General Caleb V. Haynes.⁶⁵ Far from clarifying the command and operations situation, activation of the IATF fractured it even more: Tenth Air Force now had

⁵⁷ History IBS CBI, USAFHRA 825-01B, 6.

⁵⁸ Chronology of the Tenth Air Force, USAFHRA 830.052-1, 2.

⁵⁹ Craven and Cate, Volume Four, 422.

⁶⁰ Chronology of the Tenth Air Force, USAFHRA 830.052-1, 3.

⁶¹ Craven and Cate, Volume Four, 409.

⁶² History IBS CBI, USAFHRA 825-01B, 8. See also Craven and Cate, Volume Four, 408-410.

⁶³ Craven and Cate, Volume Four, 409

⁶⁴ History IBS CBI, USAFHRA 825-01B, 8-9. See also *The Stilwell Papers*, 138.

Tactical Headquarters in India controlling air operations over Burma and Tactical Headquarters in China to control air operations there. Under this organizational format, and until March 1943, Tenth Air Force continued to conduct its primary mission: To keep the supply route to China open which allowed Stilwell's Chinese-American forces to operate and allowed the US to fulfill its Lend-Lease commitments to China.⁶⁶

The last major organizational change that occurred before Stratemyer's arrival was taken to "correct the [confused command and operations situation], and also possibly to reward General Chennault for his efforts in support of China."⁶⁷ On 10 March 1943, the CATF was inactivated and the Fourteenth Air Force stood up in its place.⁶⁸ This was important because the 14th was now operationally independent of the 10th Air Force.⁶⁹

Even with this new development, however, Stilwell was still in overall command of US Army Forces in CBI and Tenth Air Force and Fourteenth Air Force were responsible to him.⁷⁰ The biggest short-term impact that activation of 14th Air Force had was its effect of highlighting the clash between Chennault and Bissell; the latter was sent back to the US on 19 August 1943, and Brigadier General Howard C. Davidson assumed command of 10th Air Force.⁷¹

By the summer of 1943 it appeared that the numerous organizational, operational and command changes in CBI had been dictated by necessity and personalities rather than any deliberate plan. This would continue to be the case until well after Stratemyer arrived in

⁶⁵ Ibid., 9

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 10.

⁷¹ Ibid., 11. "Increasingly strained relations between Bissell and Chennault had reached the point where it had been publicized in the American press and thus was common knowledge...such a situation was not conducive to

August 1943.⁷² But this, briefly, was the military and strategic situation he faced upon his arrival.

Developments in Northwest Africa

In the summer of 1942, while Major General Carl Spaatz was Commanding General, Eighth Air Force and Commanding General, AAF ETO (European Theater of Operations), events in the Middle East had the effect of changing Allied strategic plans. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had been “jolted by the disasters to British Arms suffered at the hands of the Japanese in Malaya, Burma and the East Indies and now needed to shore up a rapidly crumbling situation in the Mediterranean.”⁷³ By July 30, 1942 Churchill convinced Roosevelt that a North African campaign was needed; thus, Operation TORCH—the Allied invasion of French North Africa—was born.⁷⁴ Spaatz was charged with organizing and training a new air force, the Twelfth, which would be assigned to this operation.⁷⁵

Creation of the Twelfth Air Force had the side effect of diminishing Eighth’s effectiveness, a fact that disconcerted Spaatz considerably.⁷⁶ Though he voiced his concern to General Eisenhower, Commanding General, ETO, and to General Arnold, Spaatz did not get the response he desired.⁷⁷ General Arnold did, however, get another inspiration, in effect attempting to turn

‘utmost efficiency’ in the air offensive against the Japanese.” Maj. Gen. Bissell became A-2 on General Arnold’s staff; later he became G-2 on the War Department General Staff.

⁷² Ibid., 11a.

⁷³ Richard G. Davis, *Carl A. Spaatz and the Air War in Europe* (Washington, DC: Center for Air Force History, 1993), 106.

⁷⁴ Eduard Mark, *Aerial Interdiction: Air Power and the Land Battle in Three American Wars*, (Washington, DC: Center for Air Force History, 1994), 22.

⁷⁵ Davis, 109.

⁷⁶ Mark, 29.

⁷⁷ Davis., 109. In fact, when Spaatz disagreed with Eisenhower on the substance of Eighth’s support to creation of the Twelfth Air Force, Eisenhower ordered Spaatz to “cease all combat operations by the Eighth at once.”

this lemon into lemonade. In September he suggested that “because TORCH could not be averted, perhaps it could be deflected or at least be made to serve other AAF goals.”⁷⁸ Essentially Arnold’s contention was that TORCH should proceed with great vigor and any forces which could help achieve success should be as strong as possible. This, of course, included Eighth Air Force.

The logical follow-on which would help facilitate Arnold’s suggestion was the notion of a single USAAF commander for all operations in Britain and Africa. Accordingly, both Arnold and Stratemeyer urged Spaatz to discuss the matter with Eisenhower. Undoubtedly, Stratemeyer was speaking as a second for Arnold, though the former was still quite intimately engaged in these command developments. From his office as Chief of the AAF Staff, Stratemeyer wrote Spaatz and told him that he “really should be designated as the Commanding General, American Air Forces in Europe, not just of the ETO; such a request should come from Eisenhower, and I am sure that it would be approved here.”⁷⁹ One week later, on 20 November, Stratemeyer was brief but even more adamant: “You should be in Ike’s pocket.”⁸⁰

Stratemeyer’s letters had no impact on Eisenhower’s decision to appoint Spaatz as his Deputy Commander in Chief for Air on 5 December 1942. They do clearly demonstrate, however, that Stratemeyer was watching closely as those events unfolded. After his appointment as Deputy C-in-C for Air under Eisenhower, Spaatz wrote to Stratemeyer saying that “this is a temporary solution to a situation which will eventually require further clarification.”⁸¹ In the event, Spaatz was right on the mark and did not have to wait long to be proven so. On 31 December Eisenhower suggested that all the air forces in Northwest Africa be grouped under a

⁷⁸ Ibid., 113.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 114.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 115.

new organization which was to be commanded by Spaatz.⁸² The Allied Air Force, as this new organization was called, was activated on 5 January 1943.⁸³

As mentioned previously, the Casablanca conference of January 1943 exacerbated what was already a resource-limited situation in CBI. That effect was collateral, however, in that it stemmed from the main emphasis of the conference. The emphasis was on the US-British Combined Bomber Offensive and on dividing the Allied forces into two separate theaters to facilitate the ongoing operations in Europe and the Mediterranean.⁸⁴

For the Mediterranean Roosevelt, Churchill and their respective military staffs decided to adopt British organizational principles; “the conferees prescribed a general structure of command that replicated the tried-and-tested British system.”⁸⁵ Under the new unified command arrangement, Air Chief Marshal Arthur Tedder became Air Commander in Chief, Mediterranean, while Spaatz became commander of the Northwest African Air Forces (NAAF) under Tedder.”⁸⁶

For the NAAF

Spaatz particularly embraced the idea of an integrated headquarters so as to provide greater scope for mutual understanding and pooling of ideas and techniques. While squabbles could be anticipated about relative ranks, duties, and approaches to problem-solving between the Allies, unanimity of purpose among the top commanders predictably would lead to uniformity of effort down the chain of command. When the NAAF came into existence on February 18, the mission of this new element was clear. It was to destroy the enemy air forces’ support of land operations, to attack enemy ships, ports, air bases, and road nets with the object of interfering to the maximum extent possible with enemy sea, land, and air communications.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Ibid., 143.

⁸² Mark, 32.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Richard G. Davis, *Carl A. Spaatz and the Air War in Europe* (Washington, DC: Center for Air Force History, 1993), 155-156.

⁸⁵ Mark, 32.

⁸⁶ Cooling, 238.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

The NAAF was created from units of the USAAF Twelfth Air Force, the RAF Western Desert Air Force, and the RAF Eastern Air Command and comprised three major commands: the Strategic Air Force, the Tactical Air Force, and the Coastal Air Force.⁸⁸ Their missions, respectively, were to destroy the Axis' ports and airfields; to gain and maintain air superiority and conduct close air support; to protect Allied shipping and destroy Axis shipping.⁸⁹ In addition, NAAF had a Photographic Reconnaissance Wing, an Air Service Command and a Training Command.

Soon after the NAAF was conceived, and while Spaatz was still working out the details of this all-encompassing reorganization, he confided in Stratemeyer in a letter dated 8 February 1943:

The most serious difficulty which I see confronting us is the different conception which obtains in the RAF and in our own War Department as to the place of aviation. It is difficult to have aviation treated as a co-equal with the Army and Navy in our set up, whereas the RAF will not submit to being considered in any other way. A number of instances have developed indicating that the ground general considers his air support as a fundamental part of his forces, even to the point of dictating as to how to do the job. Such employment, I am afraid, will not be accepted by the RAF. With Coningham, a full-fledged veteran of the Battle of the Mediterranean with all of his prestige behind it, at the head of our Air Support command, it can readily be seen that something is bound to break out in a very short period.⁹⁰

The successes of the NAAF, which began operations on February 18 and had helped Allied ground forces to crack Axis enemy defenses in Tunis and Bizerta by May 7, are well known and require no further elaboration.⁹¹ What is important for this study is to note that the Tunisian campaign had a profound effect on the doctrine of US Army Air Forces and on their relation to

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Mark, 32.

⁹⁰ Ltr., Spaatz to Stratemeyer, 8 February 1943, quoted in Davis, *Carl Spaatz and the Air War in Europe*, 178.

⁹¹ Cooling, 260.

Army ground forces. As early as March 7, Spaatz began communicating with Arnold on the deficiencies in AAF doctrine:

I cannot believe that the situation here is of such a special nature that it requires a peculiar form of organization, but rather that it approximates the conditions under which our land forces will be confronted at least during the European phase of the war. It has become evident that what we considered the Air Support Command and the air support forces are not adequate for the purpose either in composition or organization, and by their very term give an erroneous impression to the ground army.⁹²

In that same letter Spaatz discussed the importance of a good relationship between air and ground commanders when he said that “it must be based on the principle that the airman knows his job and the ground man knows his job, with a mutual respect for each others’ capabilities and limitations...The ground or the air commander should be eliminated who cannot get along with his opposite number.”⁹³

Arnold disseminated this and other Spaatz letters widely and, in his position as Chief of the AAF Staff, Stratemeyer had access to these letters. Further, Stratemeyer was among the ten officers who carefully reviewed and approved the June 1943 draft of Field Manual (FM) 100-20, *Command and Employment of Air Power*, “which echoed many of the principles detailed in Spaatz’s letters.”⁹⁴ In addition, Stratemeyer met with Allied leaders in Tunisia during May and his visit prompted him to write to Arnold on how positive were the developments concerning centralization of airpower in the hands of air commanders.⁹⁵

⁹² Ltr., Spaatz to Arnold, 7 March 1943, quoted in Davis, 178.

⁹³ Ibid. In this letter Spaatz also listed five requirements for effective support of the ground army: 1) The establishment of a fighter offense and defense, including a complete radar network; 2) The use of the fighter force to protect the army and to gain air superiority; 3) The creation of a tactical reconnaissance force to meet the needs of the army; 4) The creation of a fighter-bomber force to attack targets in the battle area; 5) The employment of a bomber aircraft capable of operation at altitudes up to 10,000 feet. Achieving these five elements, Spaatz said, would lead to the formation of a tactical air force.

⁹⁴ Davis, 211-214.

⁹⁵ Cooling, 262.

As important as Spaatz's thoughts on his experiences in Northwest Africa were to the development and publication of FM 100-20, they seem to have influenced Stratemeier just as much. The idea that "land power and airpower are co-equal and interdependent" stuck with Stratemeier until well after war's end.⁹⁶ While this can in no way be regarded as problematic, Stratemeier's later conception of his own CBI command position as similar to Spaatz's in the NAAF did cause him grief.

⁹⁶ See George E. Stratemeier, "Administrative History of US Army Air Forces," *Air Affairs*, June 1947, 525. This article, Stratemeier's sole entry in the debate over AAF independence, touted co-equality and interdependence.

Chapter 4

The Bumpy Road to Command

This new Command setup and your relationships with Generals Stilwell, Mountbatten, and Chennault, is somewhat complicated...

—General H. H. Arnold
Commanding General, Army Air Forces
Letter to General Stratemeyer of 28 Aug 1943

The decision to send Stratemeyer to CBI in a combat command role was not based solely on his extensive flying, administrative, and command background. In spite of an earlier career “faux pas,”⁹⁷ Arnold had obviously been pleased with Stratemeyer’s work as Executive Officer and the same can be said for his work as Chief of the Air Staff. While Brigadier General Howard C. Davidson, who later served as commander of the Strategic Air Force under Stratemeyer’s Eastern Air Command, was commander of 10th Air Force in the CBI, he claims to have “first suggested to Arnold that Stratemeyer be sent out to take over Command in Asia.”⁹⁸ The record does not readily support Davidson’s claim as he did not take command of Tenth Air Force until 19 August 1943 and Stratemeyer arrived in the theater on 7 August.⁹⁹

Testimony by contemporaries indicates that Stratemeyer was a genial man, well-liked, well-connected in the US Army proper and in the US Army Air Corps and that, while he was serving

⁹⁷ See Chapter 2.

⁹⁸ Interview with General Howard C. Davidson at Bhamo, Burma, 10 March 1945, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, AL., Call No. 830.051-1.

⁹⁹ History, IBS CBI, USAFHRA 825.01B, 11.

as Chief of the Air Staff, he was being groomed for high command by General Arnold and his staff. Evidence to substantiate that contention is apparent in events that occurred in the spring of 1943.

General Arnold did not hold Chennault in high regard despite the latter's well-publicized successes in China. Arnold's view was that Chennault was very capable tactically but "weak on administration."¹⁰⁰ In addition, the summer of 1943 saw the planned offensive in Burma quickly approaching. Marshal, Arnold, Stilwell and Chennault discussed this when the Combined Chiefs of Staff met at Casablanca in January of 1943. At that time, Stilwell's proposal for a two-pronged offensive from north and south to effect completion of the Ledo Road had been postponed until November 1943, at the earliest.¹⁰¹ Stilwell's insistence on the importance of the Ledo Road in that offensive caused Arnold to be concerned that the "air effort in CBI might suffer from diversions to that project."¹⁰² Therefore, it seems likely that two factors—Arnold's negative assessment of Chennault's administrative/organizational abilities and his concerns about the approaching ground offensive—weighed heavily in the decision to send Stratemyer to CBI.

The Army Air Forces in World War II asserts that Stilwell himself may have had direct influence on the decision to send Stratemyer.¹⁰³ Craven and Cate point out that as early as March 1943 Stilwell suggested that a high-ranking AAF officer—one senior in rank to Chennault—should be placed on his staff and in the position of theater air commander.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II, Volume Four: The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942 to July 1944* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), xiii.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 435.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 450.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Stilwell was anticipating and wary of an effort to “gain for Chennault the command of all CBI air forces.”¹⁰⁵ This wariness stemmed from the fact that Stilwell intensely disliked Chennault and vice-versa.¹⁰⁶ Notwithstanding, there were important professional differences between the two in that: 1) Stilwell and Chennault disagreed vehemently on the strategy for CBI,¹⁰⁷ and 2) Stilwell was disturbed by Chennault’s politics vis-à-vis the Generalissimo and President Roosevelt.¹⁰⁸ With those factors in mind,

it is altogether possible that this [Stilwell’s suggestion] had some effect on the decision to send General Stratemeyer on a special mission to the Far East in the spring, and that even this early (March 1943) Marshall and Arnold had him in mind for the proposed command.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Tuchman, 309, 312, 337. Actually, Arnold shared Stilwell’s feelings and his earlier preference for Bissell “reflected his distaste for Chennault.” In a letter to General A. C. Wedemeyer of June 1945 (Appendix A), Arnold’s disdain for Chennault was thinly veiled in a request to move Stratemeyer to command of all air forces in China. These bad feelings on the part of Stilwell and Arnold are understandable given Chennault’s history as a man who fell out of favor with the US Army, resigned his commission before the war, and was now in a position of undue and undeserved influence as Fourteenth Air Force commander. See also *The Stilwell Papers*, 204, 305, 312. Stilwell felt that there was “a deliberate plan in the Fourteenth Air Force to belittle everything [he did] and to invent catchy phrases to make [him] look like an old-fashioned stooge.” As the controller of Chinese Lend-Lease material, Stilwell was also in the unfortunate position of getting blamed for supply shortfalls that occurred for reasons beyond his control. Adding to the complication was the fact that Chennault was in great favor with the Generalissimo and Madam Chiang and they lobbied not only for him to get his own Air Force, but for him to be the American commander of all US forces in China. As a result, when Bissell was given seniority to Chennault, Chiang Kai-Shek took it as a “direct kick in the teeth.”

¹⁰⁷ Craven and Cate, Volume Four, 438; Tuchman, 337. Chennault claimed that with only 105 fighters, 30 medium bombers and 12 heavy bombers, he could “accomplish the downfall of Japan within six months, one year at the outside.” See also *The Stilwell Papers*, 204. Stilwell thought that “any increased air offensive that stung the Japs enough would bring a strong reaction that would wreck everything and put China out of the war,” and that the “first essential step was to get a ground force capable of seizing and holding airbases and opening communications to China from the outside world.”

¹⁰⁸ Interview, General A.C. Wedemeyer by Dr. Murray Green, Rockville, MD, 5 October 1970. Part of the Dr. Murray Green collection on Henry H. Arnold, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, AL, Call No. MICFILM 43828. In this interview, Green and Wedemeyer discuss Chennault’s practice of writing letters direct to President Roosevelt. These letters were on the subject of Chennault’s needs in China. The letters “would have an attachment on top of them, not an enclosure, but a transmittal. And the transmittal would be written by Joseph Alsop, a Lt. in Chennault’s Headquarters, and addressed to Grace Tully, who was Roosevelt’s secretary.” Alsop was related to both sides of the Roosevelt family. See also Captain Mark C. Cleary, *United States Air Force Oral History Program: Interview of Lt. Gen. Charles B. Stone, III* (Office of Air Force History, Headquarters USAF, 26 – 28 April 1984), USAFHRA K239.0512-1585, 54-55.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

During an interview conducted in January 1949 Stratemeyer denied Stilwell's involvement but confirmed the Arnold connection when he said that "as far as he knew his mission of inspection had nothing to do with the idea suggested by Stilwell but it may have been in the back of General Arnold's mind when he sent me over for the first time."¹¹⁰ The first time of which Stratemeyer spoke was April – June 1943 when he, still in the capacity of Chief of the Air Staff, embarked on a "secret air mission" to the CBI.¹¹¹ While on that mission, he viewed firsthand the ongoing air operations in the theater and acquired a unique knowledge of the situation in the CBI.

Clearly, there were other factors that weighed heavily in the decision to send a senior airman to command all air operations in the CBI. Now, however, whether by design or happenstance, those other considerations became relatively moot. Stratemeyer was a two-star general and worked directly for Arnold, who by now understood well Stratemeyer's loyalty and work ethic. When Stratemeyer returned to Washington in June, he possessed firsthand information regarding the problems of CBI. Thus, by the spring of 1943 he was eminently qualified and a logical choice for the position.

On 28 June 1943 President Roosevelt informed Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek that General Stratemeyer would be sent to "straighten out the movement of personnel and supplies through India and Burma to China;" Stratemeyer arrived in CBI on 7 August.¹¹² With that decision, Marshall, Arnold and Stilwell had expected Stratemeyer to be placed in command of the Tenth and Fourteenth Air Forces. In the event diplomatic considerations regarding the Generalissimo's relationship with Chennault prevented Stratemeyer's taking over Fourteenth Air

¹¹⁰ Lt Gen George E. Stratemeyer, transcript of interview by Dr. Henry Lee Bowen conducted at HQ Continental Air Force, Mitchel Field, Long Island, 11 January 1949, USAFHRA 105.5-13, D

¹¹¹ History IBS CBI, 7.

Force. He would have only “advisory” authority over the Fourteenth while Chennault, a hero to the Chinese nationalist regime, remained in command.¹¹³

The end result of this arrangement was a division of Army Air Forces in CBI into an India-Burma Sector (IBS) and a China Sector. On 20 August 1943, General Stratemeyer assumed command of Headquarters USAAF IBS, CBI.¹¹⁴ In addition he carried the title of Theater Air Officer and Air Adviser to Stilwell, the Commanding General, China-Burma-India.¹¹⁵

In this capacity, a “delicate and responsible position,” Stratemeyer had many duties, none of which were made easier by the still-complicated command arrangements.¹¹⁶ His primary functions were to give tactical and strategic air support to Stilwell’s projected operations in Burma and logistical support to Chennault’s air operations in China.¹¹⁷ The former would be accomplished by direct command of the Tenth Air Force and the X Air Service Command. To aid Chennault’s efforts, Stratemeyer had to provide supplies and maintenance for the 14th Air Force and protect the Hump operations of the India-China Wing, Air Transport Command. In sum, his missions were (1) To advise the theater commander on air operations in China, Burma, and India; (2) To conduct, as commander, air operations against the enemy over Burma and in defense of India and the air line to China; (3) To assure the continued and increasing flow of supplies by air to China; (4) To coordinate the activities of the Air Transport Command with those of other theater agencies and; (5) To provide air training for Chinese and American

¹¹² Craven and Cate, *Volume Four*, 450.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 451.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ History, IBS CBI, 14.

¹¹⁶ Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, Riley, *Stilwell’s Mission to China* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, 1953), 340.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

personnel through the Air Force Training Command which had been established with Headquarters at Karachi.¹¹⁸

First of the many problems Stratemeyer encountered was the difficulty of staffing his headquarters. The original conception of his command operations envisioned a “small and extremely mobile headquarters which could be moved about the theater by airplane as the occasion demanded.”¹¹⁹ As a result of that concept of operations, the original staff allocation only called for sixteen officers and fourteen enlisted men. Stratemeyer soon found that number inadequate. To address the situation, he used creative organizational ideas centered on locating his headquarters in New Delhi. In this way, he would have access to important theater decision makers and administrative functions—at Delhi were located British and Indian authorities, Services of Supply, the Rear Echelon of General Stilwell’s Headquarters, British GHQ, Air Headquarters Royal Air Force, and the Government of India. In addition, locating at Delhi allowed Stratemeyer to use 10th Air Force and Air Service Command facilities and personnel to best advantage. Accordingly, he placed the Commanding General, X Service Command in a dual-role position, the other being that of USAAF CBI IBS logistics officer, A-4.¹²⁰

Scarcely had Stratemeyer gotten his hands around a final organizational concept when the need for change once again presented itself. With the end of the monsoon season in Burma would come the first opportunity for the long-awaited ground offensive to push the Japanese out of Burma. The concept of this offensive, as well as a well-recognized need for cooperation between the Allies in CBI were both on the agenda of the Combined Chiefs of Staff at the Quebec conference of 12-24 August 1943. The important outcome of that meeting, as it related

¹¹⁸ Lt., Marshall to Stilwell, 20 Jul 43, Stratemeyer Papers, USAFHRA 168.7018-3.

¹¹⁹ History, IBS CBI, 15.

¹²⁰ “History of the CBI Air Service Command,” *Ex-CBI Roundup*, Vol. 7, No. 6, October 1953, 19.

to CBI, was the creation of Southeast Asia Command (SEAC) with Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten designated as Supreme Allied Commander-in-Chief and Stilwell his Deputy.¹²¹ “In this new organization it was contemplated that General Stratemeyer would be Commanding General of all United States Army Air Forces units assigned to SEAC.”¹²² As it turned out, however, “the position to be occupied by Stratemeyer in this new organization was not immediately clear.”¹²³ The difficulties were obvious and General Arnold discussed the complex command situation with General Stratemeyer in a letter dated 28 August 1943:

You have undoubtedly learned by this time of the new Southeast Asia Command and the appointment of Lord Louis Mountbatten as Supreme Allied Commander and General Stilwell as Deputy Supreme Allied Commander...You remain responsible for the training in India of air personnel for the 14th Air Force and the Chinese Air Force. Operational control of the 10th Air Force is vested in Stilwell. It is necessary therefore that Stilwell, Mountbatten and yourself work out plans for its operational control and use in the Southeast Asia Command. It is contemplated that some or all of the combat units will be employed in the Southeast Asia Theater. This new command setup and your relationships with Generals Stilwell, Mountbatten and Chennault, is somewhat complicated and will have to be worked out to a great extent among yourselves. We feel that it can and must be made to work efficiently. The success of this complicated setup depends in great measure on personalities. If a true spirit of cooperation is engendered throughout the command, it will work. If the reverse is true, it is doomed to failure. I know I can count on you to play your part and to pass the word right down the line.”¹²⁴

As evidenced by Arnold’s letter, Southeast Asia Command was from the start a politically sensitive organization and the air command situation was jumbled. As a theater where air power employment was supremely important, however, selection of the air commander was important to SEAC’s chances for success.

¹²¹ History, IBS CBI, 15.

¹²² Ibid., 17.

¹²³ Craven and Cate, *Volume Four*, 454.

¹²⁴ Ltr., Arnold to Stratemeyer, 28 August, 1943, Stratemeyer Papers, USAFHRA 168.7018-2

Colonel Charles B. Stone III, Stratemeyer's Chief of Staff, felt that Stratemeyer's extensive administrative experience "eminently fitted him for the position and that the major role to be played by American air units in the theater justified appointment of the senior American air officer as air commander of SEAC."¹²⁵ Accordingly, Stone prepared a memorandum for Stilwell's Rear Echelon commanding general which explained "why General Stratemeyer should be considered for Air Forces Commander" of SEAC.¹²⁶ In this memo Stone justified his stance with several arguments: Stratemeyer's previously mentioned responsibilities as Commanding General, USAAF India-Burma-Sector CBI; the fact that Stratemeyer had been Chief of the Training Division in the Office of the Chief of Air Corps where his planning and foresight were now reflected in the quality of "US Air Force Units everywhere." Stratemeyer had worked as Arnold's Chief of Staff and had commanded the 7th Bomb Group in 1936 and 1937 where he "sifted out faults and impractical ideas" about high altitude bombing. The 10th Air Force, Stratemeyer's striking force, had "developed in one year from a skeleton force into the most powerful aviation striking force in this Theater," and had dropped more tons of bombs in May, June and July 1943 than the RAF forces in theater. Finally, the Army Air Forces were "responsible for the maintenance and supply of a relatively large section of the RAF aircraft" as well as US aircraft since the War Department had made it policy that the AAF was "responsible for the maintenance and supply of common user type American built aircraft" in the CBI.¹²⁷ Clearly, Stone had a personal bias in favor of Stratemeyer.

In addition to Stone's memorandum, Stratemeyer and his staff prepared their conception of air command arrangements in SEAC and recorded their desires in a "Plan for [a] System of

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Memorandum, CG Rear Echelon, USAF CBI, 3 September 1943, History IBS CBI, USAFHRA 825.01B.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

Operational Command in Southeast Asia.”¹²⁸ In this document, Stratemeyer and his staff conceived of an Air Force under SEAC commanded by Stratemeyer and comprising the following:

1. China Air Force
2. India-Burma Air Force
3. Southeast Asia Coastal Command
4. Southeast Asia Training Command
5. Southeast Asia Air Service Command

In this conception, both the China and India-Burma Air Forces would consist of a Strategic and a Tactical Air Force. Further, each of these Air Forces would have Bomber and Fighter Commands. Coastal Command would be responsible for sea reconnaissance and patrol while Training and Service Command components would supplant those already existing with the same function.¹²⁹

While these plans were admirable for contemplating “a unity of purpose, a unity of organization and a unity of command whose sole mission [was] the destruction of a dangerous enemy,” it appears that their fascination with the Northwest African air organizational model may have gotten the best of Stratemeyer and his staff. US Air Forces in China were not at the time, nor would they ever be, part of the Southeast Asia Command, and the plan was predicated on the assumption that “China [accepted] this principle of combined command.”¹³⁰

The other major consideration that this conception failed to consider was the political necessity to have a British Air Commander for the Air Forces operating in India and Burma. The concern was that if the top air command were granted to an American, it might be “purposely misconstrued by the enemy and Indian malcontents and propagandized as a British admission of

¹²⁸ “Plan for System of Operational Command in Southeast Asia,” History IBS CBI, USAFHRA 825.01B, Appendix I.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

weakness.”¹³¹ In the event, British concerns won out and Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse was named Air Commander, Southeast Asia; Stratemeyer would be his deputy.¹³² The complications did not end there, however.

While on the one hand General Stratemeyer began work to integrate the RAF and AAF staffs in theater almost immediately upon hearing of the new air command arrangements, he strongly opposed complete integration of AAF and RAF combat forces.¹³³ As to the integration of staffs, Stratemeyer on 26 October made his recommendations as follows: Stratemeyer would supply to the staff of the Air Commander, Southeast Asia Command,

one brigadier general or colonel for plans, one colonel for operations, one major for intelligence, and one lieutenant colonel for administration and supply. He also recommended that SEAC furnish the staff of Army Air Forces, India-Burma Sector, one group captain for operations and one wing commander and one squadron leader for intelligence. Similar integration of staff officers for the combat units was recommended, but because of the peculiar functions of the Air Service Command and because the Air Transport command was primarily concerned with supplying China he did not feel that further integration of these commands was necessary or desirable.¹³⁴

Two days after Stratemeyer wrote this memorandum, Mountbatten held a meeting in his office to discuss integration of RAF and AAF combat forces. In the minutes from that meeting, it is recorded that Mountbatten put forth an organizational diagram that he said was “for command and administration of the American and British Air Forces within South East Asia

¹³¹ History IBS CBI, 20.

¹³² Ibid. See also Probert, *The Forgotten Air Force*, 55, 106, 149. Air Marshal Sir Richard Peirse, “one of the RAF’s most experienced commanders,” had previously been Commander in Chief (C-in-C) RAF Bomber Command from October 1940 until 1941 when “his Command’s performance inevitably fell short of expectations;” he was succeeded in Bomber Command by Air Marshal Harris. In December 1941, Churchill decided Peirse should be sent to the Far East because he was “loyal, able, and hard-working and would be a strong support to C-in-C India.” On 2 March Peirse arrived in New Delhi to become Air C-in-C India. In SEAC, the British argument for placing Peirse in overall command of the air forces went like this: “The Americans needed support from the Indian Government but they were in no way answerable to it; yet if the concept of integrated command was to mean anything, a way had to be found to bring them into the new air command.”

¹³³ Craven and Cate, *Volume Four*, 450.

¹³⁴ History IBS CBI, 21.

Command, regardless of directives that may have been issued by the Air Commanders.”¹³⁵ Mountbatten claimed that when he created it “the sole consideration in mind was the organization that would provide the most effective control of the Air Forces for the defeat of the enemy.”¹³⁶ Both Stilwell and Stratemeyer bristled at the suggestion to disregard directives stemming from the Quebec Conference and Stratemeyer lodged his complaints both at the meeting with Mountbatten and in a letter to Arnold:

I have had several meetings with Lord Louis Mountbatten, General Stilwell, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse, Major General Wedemeyer and Air Marshal Sir Guy Garrod concerning the proper organization for the Southeast Asia Air Command and its relationship to our commitments to China. I had originally hoped that Lord Louis’ trip to China would result in an agreement to have one Theater out here under unified command. If this could have been arranged, it would have been desirable to put all British and American air units into one integrated Air Command on the Northwest African model. However, my trip to China with Lord Louis and further study of Quadrant satisfied me that this is not possible, and that the Southeast Asia Command cannot properly assume any of the American commitments within China. Since meeting these commitments is the primary mission of General Stilwell and myself, we have felt that we must retain the right to withdraw any part or all of the American air units which are initially assigned to the Southeast Asia Air Command, if such course should become necessary in order to protect the CBI ATC Wing in Assam, the Hump route and the China Theater. For example, a Japanese offensive from Hanoi directed at Kunming might require me to send the entire Tenth Air Force to Chennault’s assistance. With this in mind, I submitted a plan calling for separate AAF and RAF Air Forces for the Southeast Asia Command, both under the operational control of Air Chief Marshal Peirse, with an exchange of key officer staff personnel to insure coordination and cooperation. The British were disappointed at this suggestion. Peirse is anxious to have one integrated air force under his command and wants to be assured that the American units assigned to him will remain under his control. He accordingly submitted a plan under which I would have under me a Strategic Air Force, a Tactical Air Force and a Reconnaissance Wing composed of mixed RAF and AAF units, including the entire Tenth Air Force. General Stilwell and I pointed out that this would violate Quadrant, and Lord Louis stated that he intended to request you and General

¹³⁵ “Integration of American and British Air Forces Within Southeast Asia Command,” Record of a Meeting held in the office of the Supreme Allied Commander at New Delhi on the morning of Thursday, October 28, 1943, History IBS CBI, USAFHRA 825.01B, Appendix I.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Marshall to reconsider the Quadrant decisions to the extent necessary to permit this plan to be effected.¹³⁷

Stratemeyer wanted to make sure that everyone knew he was following directives from his superiors. Because of his personal viewpoint and those his original directives, he believed that American commitments toward China were more important than helping the British retain their colonial possessions. In general, the US government, too, remained ambivalent about maintaining the British colonial system.

Despite Stratemeyer's initial resistance, however, some progress was made toward an integrated command before the Cairo conference in November and December 1943. By the time Stratemeyer and Mountbatten met face to face with Arnold, Stratemeyer could say that he was fundamentally in agreement with the integration concept. Most likely his acquiescence was due to the fact that he would have operational control of all AAF and RAF combat units assigned to SEAC and he felt he would have the power to ensure that American commitments to China were met. On 3 December 1943, Arnold informed Mountbatten that the Combined Chiefs of Staff had approved the integration concept with few concessions.¹³⁸

Shortly after [Mountbatten's] return [from Cairo] he issued a directive integrating the Tenth Air Force and the Bengal Air Command of the Royal Air Force under the ultimate unified control of Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse. The purpose was to form within the administrative organization of Air Command, Southeast Asia, an integrated operational unit. The combined forces thus integrated were formed into a unit subordinate to ACSEA, and it was designated Eastern Air Command. General Stratemeyer was placed in command.¹³⁹

Faced with yet another organizational design dilemma, Stratemeyer set out to form the Eastern Air Command in a manner very similar to his earlier proposal. He divided EAC into four components as follows:

¹³⁷ Ltr., Stratemeyer to Arnold, 31 October 1943, Stratemeyer Papers, USAFHRA 168.7018-2.

¹³⁸ Craven and Cate, *Volume Four*, 458.

- (a) . The Strategic Air Force under the operational control of Brigadier General Howard C. Davidson.
- (b) The Third Tactical Air Force under the operational control of Air Marshal Sir John Baldwin.
- (c) c. A Troop Carrier Command under the operational control of Brigadier General commander to be determined at a later date.¹⁴⁰

In this organizational conception, Stratemeyer and his staff outlined the functions of the various air forces in the following manner: The Strategic Air Force would conduct a strategic air offensive over Burma and adjacent areas to destroy enemy air forces and air installations, lines of communication, depots and other maintenance facilities; the Third Tactical Air Force would be responsible for the defense of Calcutta and adjacent industrial areas, the Assam Area and the Air Transport Command India-China transport route as well as for the air support of Army and Amphibious operations; Troop Carrier Command would provide air transportation for airborne and air transit forces in the support and training of the Army Group and other land or air forces involved in operations in Burma; and the Photographic Reconnaissance Force was to conduct photographic and tactical reconnaissance as required for the support of the Strategic Air Force, the Tactical Air Force or the Army ground forces. It was further ordered that units of the Photographic Reconnaissance Force would be attached to and placed under the operational control of the Commanders of the Strategic and Tactical Air Forces as required.¹⁴¹

The general system of operational control used for conduct of air operations was that Headquarters, EAC, would issue operational directives to the air commanders of the component air forces as the occasion demanded. These directives would implement even more general guidance issued by Peirse, the Air Commander-in-Chief, Air Command Southeast Asia. “All

¹³⁹ History, IBS CBI, 25.

¹⁴⁰ Headquarters, Eastern Air Command, General Order No. 1, 15 December 1943, Stratemeyer Papers, USAFHRA 168.7018-4.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

directives emanating from Headquarters, EAC were to be broad in scope to permit individual commanders latitude in command and control.”¹⁴² In this way, commanders could issue the detailed operation orders and instructions to their own units which would then give force and action to EAC operational directives. The only exception to this broad guidance was that “if a coordinated effort by two or more of the air forces was to be undertaken, instructions [would] be given by Headquarters, EAC.”¹⁴³

Tasking of the Photographic Reconnaissance Force was slightly different:

Since the force dealt primarily with strategic photography and survey, requests for photography came into HQ, EAC from the Joint Intelligence Committee of South East Asia Command, who coordinated these requests with those from the various RAF, Naval and Army formations or from outside sources such as Washington and London. Requests from 14th Army, Strategic Air Force, Third Tactical Air Force and Troop Carrier Command were submitted direct by those commands to EAC. Finally, details of photographic requirements were issued by HQ, EAC to the commanding officer, Photographic Reconnaissance Force, who, again, had a free hand in the tactical execution of his sorties.¹⁴⁴

Despite several subsequent organizational changes, this was the general procedure that EAC air forces used for operational control throughout the war in Burma.

For the time being, Stratemeyer was relieved to have this organizational task behind him and on 15 December 1943, he enthusiastically welcomed his subordinates in General Orders No. 1, which carried this appeal in its closing paragraphs:

A resourceful, able and wily enemy must be blasted from the jungles of Burma and driven from its skies in days to come. His lines of communication must be obliterated, his shipping destroyed, his will to resist crushed. Against the inevitable day of retribution when Japan's cities will meet the fate of Berlin, our life line to China must be strengthened and protected. Every ounce of energy of every man of this Command will be required to accomplish this purpose. We must merge into one unified force, in thought and in deed—a force neither British

¹⁴² Major General George E. Stratemeyer, *Despatch on Air Operations in EAC, 15 Dec 1943 – 31 May 1944*, USAFHRA 820.04A, 5.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 6

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

nor American, with the faults of neither and the virtues of both. There is no time for distrust or suspicion.

I greet the forces of the Bengal Air Command, and their Commander, Air Marshal Baldwin, as comrades in battle, as brothers in the air. A standard of cooperation which we must strive to surpass has been set by the inspiring example of joint achievement of our colleagues of the Northwest African Air Force. We must establish in Asia a record of Allied air victory of which we can all be proud in the years to come. Let us write it now in the skies over Burma.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Headquarters, Eastern Air Command, General Order No. 1, 15 December 1943, Stratemeyer Papers, USAFHRA 168.7018-4.

Chapter 5

Leadership and Air Operations: Organization, Pattern and Innovation

The Japanese took Burma in 1942. We had to get them out of there.

—General George E. Stratemeyer
Commanding General, Eastern Air Command

General Stratemeyer, from his position as Chief of the Air Staff, witnessed the evolution of US interests as well as the buildup of Allied forces in CBI. From that position Stratemeyer followed closely the creation and employment of the Northwest African Air Force under the command of General Carl Spaatz and he corresponded extensively with Spaatz on that subject. These two experiences initially colored General Stratemeyer's conception of his responsibilities as air commander in CBI. Nevertheless, SEAC's Supreme Allied Commander, Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, was able to persuade Stratemeyer to adopt a palatable air command arrangement in the form of Eastern Air Command. Even after the sweeping administrative and organizational changes necessitated by the standup of EAC, however, Stratemeyer soon found its structure unsatisfactory when he turned his attention to the task at hand. In addition, while conducting operations with EAC Stratemeyer was not completely relieved of his role as quasi-ambassador. In order to see that airpower was used to best effect in the war against the Japanese in Burma, he had to convince coalition leadership that airpower could be effective in supporting the operations of a ground army on the move. All the while—when Stratemeyer was tweaking the organization and selling airpower to theater surface force commanders—he and his

subordinate commanders and air forces were able to innovate and thus make the most of the relatively meager resources at hand.

Organization

With his closing remarks in EAC General Orders No.1 General Stratemeyer codified his intent for Eastern Air Command to adopt an organization and pattern of operations similar to that employed by General Spaatz and the Northwest African Air Force. While the organization of SEAC eminently suited the political situation, Stratemeyer found that his new organization, EAC, did not suffice at the operational level; exigencies of the war in Burma dictated several organizational changes.

As a result of the organization of Eastern Air Command, 10th Air Force had ceased to function as a combat command; it became instead an administrative organization and remained as such until June 1944. By that time, the Chinese/American Allied ground offensive in North Burma, which was under the command of Stilwell, was substantially independent of the British ground campaigns. Stratemeyer felt that a more efficient operation could be conducted if the 10th Air Force were reconstituted as a tactical air force with the mission of supporting Stilwell's campaign.¹⁴⁶ This would also have the effect of permitting the Third Tactical Air Force to concentrate its attention on British operations in central and southern Burma.¹⁴⁷

In that same restructuring, Stratemeyer divided the Troop Carrier Command units between the 10th Air Force and the Third Tactical Air Force. This permitted the commanders of those two forces to have under their control a transport air command engaged in supplying the ground

¹⁴⁶ *Despatch on Air Operations in EAC, 15 Dec 1943 – 31 May 1944*, USAFHRA 820.04A, 5.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

forces with which they were cooperating.¹⁴⁸ Accordingly, the Troop Carrier Command was eliminated and, as a result of this reorganization, EAC now consisted of the following subordinate commands: Strategic Air Force, the Third Tactical Air Force, Photographic Reconnaissance Force, and 10th Air Force.¹⁴⁹

By September 1944, it had become obvious to all that air supply would play a vital role in the reconquest of Burma.¹⁵⁰ Since General Arnold placed restrictions on the combat cargo and air commando USAAF groups, they were required to operate under an American commander.¹⁵¹ Accordingly, Stratemeyer activated the Combat Cargo Task Force under the command of Brigadier General Frederick Evans on 15 September 1944.¹⁵² The USAAF 1st Air Commando Group, the Combat Cargo Group and two RAF transport squadrons were placed under Evans' operational control and were charged with the task of supplying all Allied ground forces in central and southern Burma and "such other airborne missions as pending operations might require."¹⁵³

With the move of Headquarters, Allied Land Force, Southeast Asia (ALFSEA) to Barrackpore near Calcutta in the fall of 1944, all Allied ground forces operating in Burma were brought under the operational control of the ALFSEA commander, Lt. General Sir Oliver Leese.¹⁵⁴ Since Stratemeyer had moved his Headquarters in April 1944 to Hastings Mill, ten miles north of Calcutta, he felt this new proximity made it desirable for HQ EAC to work

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹⁴⁹ Probert, 152.

¹⁵⁰ General H.H. Arnold, "The Aerial Invasion of Burma," *National Geographic*, Volume 86, August 1944, 47-53.

¹⁵¹ *Despatch on Air Operations*, 9.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 11.

¹⁵⁴ Probert, 226.

directly with HQ ALFSEA.¹⁵⁵ Consequently, Stratemeyer eliminated Headquarters Third Tactical Air Force and merged its personnel with Headquarters, EAC. He then assigned to RAF 221 Group the task of supporting the 14th Army in central Burma and to RAF 224 Group the task of supporting the 15th Indian Corps' advance in the Arakan.¹⁵⁶ This final organizational structure for Eastern Air Command was adopted by Stratemeyer in December 1944 and remained in place until EAC's dissolution in June 1945.¹⁵⁷ Constituent commands until that date, which "provided the essential structure for the 1945 offensive," were as follows: Strategic Air Force, 10th Air Force, Combat Cargo Task Force, 221 Group, 224 Group and Photographic Reconnaissance Force.¹⁵⁸

Pattern and Innovation: Counter Air Force Operations, Strategic Air Operations, Air Operations in the Battle Areas and Air Supply

In 1993, Dr. Williamson Murray made the following observation regarding history and airpower:

War in the third dimension presents historians and analysts with intractable problems in determining a coherent picture of operations or even in determining the effects of such operations. In most respects, the history of ground and naval wars has been relatively easy to write. Ground war, with its ebb and flow, provides ready patterns on which to construct narratives. The key events announce themselves, victors and vanquished are generally obvious, and one can trace outcomes to specific events and trends that give rise to climactic or crucial moments on the battlefield.

Air war, on the other hand, possesses none of this clarity. One might best characterize the differences between air war and other forms of war by looking at how differently air units fight in comparison with their comrades in other dimensions: Where ground forces fight as groups under command of individuals who enjoy some limited control even under the worst of circumstances, air forces

¹⁵⁵ *Despatch on Air Operations*, 9.

¹⁵⁶ Headquarters, Eastern Air Command, General Orders No. 11, 1 December 1944, Stratemeyer Papers, USAFHRA 168.7018-4.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

in combat almost immediately break down into their smallest units, into groups as small as flights of four or elements of two.¹⁵⁹

Murray's observations hold true for the operations of Stratemeyer's Eastern Air Command. For that reason, and to overcome the problem, this section examines the EAC pattern of air operations to analyze some of General Stratemeyer's key command and leadership decisions, actions and innovations.

Counter Air Force Operations

As late as May 1944, General Stratemeyer did not have a clear conception of how airpower could be used to the best effect in CBI. In that month he wrote to General Arnold that "the overall future strategic plans for the employment of airpower in and from this theater are not firm. The effect of this here is one of constantly changing plans."¹⁶⁰

Notwithstanding Stratemeyer's dismay at the lack of strategic agreement, there was one thing that CBI theater commanders agreed upon: the need to gain and maintain air superiority. In fact, this requirement had been clear since 5 December 1943, ten days before the formation of Eastern Air Command, when

thirty-five Japanese bombers escorted by thirty-seven fighters attacked the city of Calcutta. Considerable damage was done to the dock area, but the raid was significant for another reason. The fact that the enemy could mount an attack of that size against India's largest city and the chief supply center of the Allied effort indicated that he possessed a strong and aggressive air force in this theater. The Japanese, in fact, controlled the air over Burma.¹⁶¹

Given that development, there was a visible threat to EAC's stated missions: to guard the air supply route to China, to interdict the enemy lines of communication, to furnish air-ground

¹⁵⁹ Dr. Williamson Murray, "Operations," in *Gulf War Air Power Survey, Volume II: Operations and Effects and Effectiveness*, dir. Dr. Eliot A. Cohen et al. (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1993), 6-7.

¹⁶⁰ Ltr., Stratemeyer to Arnold, May 1943, Stratemeyer Papers, USAFHRA 168.7018-2.

¹⁶¹ *Despatch on Air Operations*, 11.

cooperation to Allied land forces, and to furnish air supply where needed.¹⁶² Clearly, to accomplish those objectives it would be necessary to neutralize the effectiveness of the Japanese Air Force.

Complicating achievement of air superiority was the fact that the Japanese basing situation was very good in late 1943 and early 1944. Rear area bases at Rangoon and Moulmein (Map 1) were beyond the range of friendly fighters and were served by effective water, rail, and overland transportation.¹⁶³ Japanese forward area operating locations, which were plentiful and well-supplied by overland logistics support, were advantageous as well because they allowed for effective strikes against Allied objectives.

This situation had the effect of allowing the Japanese air forces to be extremely mobile—one of their most important characteristics. Bases in lower Burma allowed them to stage forward to the numerous available strips, strike quickly and then on recovery disperse to various landing strips for refueling and return to southern Burma.¹⁶⁴ At the time of EAC's activation, the Japanese had an estimated 250 fighter and bomber aircraft operating in this manner.¹⁶⁵

To oppose the threat by these Japanese operations, Stratemeyer had under his control 424 RAF aircraft and 264 USAAF aircraft for a total of 688 operational aircraft.¹⁶⁶ Obviously, not all of these were dedicated to the counter air mission, but all could potentially contribute to that mission. In spite of that, and even with a clear numerical advantage, attainment of air superiority was not an immediate given.

¹⁶² HQ, Eastern Air Command General Orders No. 1.

¹⁶³ *Despatch on Air Operations*, 13.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ History IBS CBI, Appendix 11.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Stratemeyer found that being on the defensive was an immense strain on his air forces capabilities. The requirement to defend the Hump route called for more air patrols than were possible; the great defensive arc from the Upper Assam Valley through the Imphal Plains into the Arakan also required the use of extra planes for defense because in January 1944 the Japanese still held the initiative. Other aircraft were needed to protect and cooperate with ground troops wherever they were engaged; and still more aircraft were needed to mount the strategic aerial interdiction offensive that was just beginning in early January.¹⁶⁷ To make matters even worse, Stratemeyer found that he could not achieve maximum defensive effectiveness because available Allied radar equipment “was insufficient to cover areas screened by intervening mountains.”¹⁶⁸ All these factors made the defensive posture even more untenable.

Mountbatten, Peirse, and Stratemeyer decided that “the way to make the numerical strength of the Allies count was to take the offensive.”¹⁶⁹ This meant employing a combination of bombing and strafing enemy aircraft on the ground as well as achieving kills in aerial combat. With the latter form of operations, RAF and USAAF fighter planes were able to take the heaviest toll of Japanese aircraft. Consequently, the Third Tactical Air Force became the organization most clearly identified with counter air force operations; when that command ceased to exist in December 1944, 10th Air Force, 221 Group, 224 Group and the Combat Cargo Task force became the components most concerned with the counter air force mission.¹⁷⁰

The two major turning points in the air superiority battle occurred in March and December 1944. In March, during Lt. Col. Orde Wingate’s famed airborne invasion of North Burma, P-51s and B-25s of the First Air Commando Group, which came under the Third Tactical Air Force to

¹⁶⁷ *Despatch on Air Operations*, 15.

¹⁶⁸ Ltr., Stratemeyer to Arnold, January 1945, Stratemeyer Papers, USAFHRA 168.7018-1.

¹⁶⁹ *Despatch on Air Operations*, 15.

cooperate with that operation, covered enemy airfields in the area to neutralize any possible Japanese fighter effort.¹⁷¹ They destroyed 40 enemy fighters in two days, greatly decreasing the number of operational Japanese aircraft and allowing the famous “Operation Thursday” to be carried out without interference from the Japanese Air Force.¹⁷²

By mid-1944, the Allies were able to claim local air superiority. However, even as late as December the Japanese still were capable of mounting operations of the style prevalent in January 1944. This was facilitated by moving air forces forward from Sumatra whenever the Japanese undertook an offensive operation. It was not a style of operations they embarked upon daily, but it was nevertheless an irritant to the air and ground operations of allied forces.

Stratemeyer and his EAC staff responded by assigning areas of responsibility to Allied air units in Burma. In addition, they inaugurated a new system that coordinated counter air force efforts to afford full coverage of enemy escape routes.¹⁷³ EAC set up and controlled a special radio net over which “flash instructions could be quickly sent out to the 10th Air Force, 221 Group and 224 Group.”¹⁷⁴ The system operated as follows:

All known enemy airfields in north and central Burma, which were normally used for staging purposes, were assigned to the nearest Allied force. When it was reported that enemy aircraft were staging at any of these forward fields, the Allied air commander in whose area of responsibility the bases lay, fixed the time at which he planned to attack the fields in his zone. This information was sent over the net to each of the three area commanders who then sent all available fighters against assigned enemy airfields in their zone at the same time. Further, when it was learned that an enemy attack was in progress, each area commander dispatched his aircraft to attack all enemy airfields in his zone at the time the enemy planes would be landing to refuel. This plan provided for coordinated attacks against fields which the Japanese were likely to use, minimized the

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 38

¹⁷¹ General H.H. Arnold, “The Aerial Invasion of Burma,” *National Geographic*, Volume 86, August 1944, 47-53.

¹⁷² *Despatch on Air Operations*, 14.

¹⁷³ History IBS CBI, 32.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

chances of their aircraft escaping by splitting up into small groups, and caught their planes at their most vulnerable time—when they were landing, refueling and taking off.¹⁷⁵

Using this system and by the end of 1944, EAC was master of the air over Burma in every respect.

Strategic Air Operations

The main purpose of the Strategic Air Force (SAF) was to disrupt the enemy's entire transportation system in the India-Burma Theater and to conduct attacks against enemy air force installations.¹⁷⁶ Like so much else in the theater, this fundamental mission was only a beginning; the function of strategic bombing developed as experience revealed its full potential.

For example, only 16 days after being issued, Operational Directive No. 1 was amended to include mine laying operations as part of the Allied air offensive.¹⁷⁷ This amendment left enemy air forces and installations as the first priority but moved enemy shipping in Bangkok, Moulmein, Port Blair and Rangoon to a close second. Third priority was given to rail lines of communication, with primary emphasis on "locomotives, locomotive sheds and rolling stock wherever found."¹⁷⁸

The pattern of operational directive changes continued in a cycle that responded to the hampering effects of the regional monsoon. For example, in June 1944, the month when the monsoon's detrimental effects were greatest on SAF's ability to conduct strategic operations, Stratemeyer declared that the primary SAF objectives would be those targets that were

¹⁷⁵ *Despatch on Air Operations*, 28.

¹⁷⁶ EAC General Orders No. 1. See also General George E. Stratemeyer, Eastern Air Command Operational Directive No. 1, 11 January 1944, Stratemeyer Papers, USAFHRA 168.7018-2.

¹⁷⁷ *Despatch on Air Operations*, 47.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

“calculated to best assist the 14th Army.”¹⁷⁹ Notwithstanding these constant changes in directives, it is possible to divide SAF operations into two major categories for analysis: 1) Attacks against sea lines of communications (LOCs), and 2) Attacks against targets within Burma and Siam.

Attacks against sea LOCs were a secondary mission for EAC; they were begun by 14th Air Force before EAC’s creation and, even after the command was activated, the “first try against enemy ships bound for Burma remained with the 14th.”¹⁸⁰ For that reason, it will suffice for this study to note that as a result of the joint EAC/14th Air Force effort, by May 1944 the Japanese were denied entry to the Andaman Sea and they would not “dare risk their dwindling tonnage to the mines and bombs dropped by Allied air forces. The effect was to sever one of the life lines of the Japanese in Burma.”¹⁸¹

Attacks against ground LOCs within Burma fell into a pattern of operations that is best described as a four point program. First, SAF struck railroads most frequently because they were the most important LOCs. Second, the best targets on the railways were bridges because they were most vulnerable and the most difficult to repair. Third, in bombing railways SAF attempted to isolate segments of the rail lines and to destroy locomotives and rolling stock to prevent transfer of materiel across a single breach. Finally, SAF employed diversity in its attacks in order to confuse the enemy.

SAF operations evolved into this pattern when EAC planners were deciding what would be the most lucrative targets. Because intelligence estimates indicated that support of the Japanese Army required the daily transport by rail in Burma of over 490 tons for the ground forces and

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 52.

¹⁸⁰ Eastern Air Command Operational Directive No. 1, 11 January 1944, Stratemeyer Papers, USAFHRA 168.7018-2.

113 tons for the air forces, for a total of 603 tons per day, rail lines of communication were an obvious choice.¹⁸² The fact that in Burma alone there were 126 bridges over 100 feet long and 176 bridges over 40 feet long stood out prominently as well, destruction of two successive bridges could have the effect of isolating rolling stock thereby making them a vulnerable target. EAC planners rightly believed that destruction of rail targets in this way would necessitate a slow transfer of materiel by road with a long and possibly deadly delay in supplying a sector of the Japanese fighting front.¹⁸³

When SAF began its operations in January 1944, attacks by RAF Liberators and USAAF B-24s against marshalling yards/repair depots and B-25 attacks against bridges were somewhat disappointing due to inherent inaccuracy. In addition, the Japanese proved to be very industrious—bridges and railway sections damaged during the day were often made serviceable again overnight.¹⁸⁴ While such repairs were temporary and makeshift—done by using sandbags, bags of dry cement, and newly felled trees—they sufficed and allowed needed supplies to get through.¹⁸⁵

In response to this problem, SAF first modified its bombs by adding a simple nose spike, which was developed to prevent ricocheting when the bombs were dropped on railroad tracks. “While this type of bomb was employed both by the Germans and the Allies in North Africa, it reached its full potential in the India-Burma Theater.”¹⁸⁶ The spike was made from 2 ¼ inch mild steel, was 18 inches long, and was threaded at one end to fit the nose fuse cavity of

¹⁸¹ *Despatch on Air Operations*, 57.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

demolition bombs.¹⁸⁷ With this modified bomb, SAF was able to improve its effectiveness against rail lines. However, there was still the problem of inherent inaccuracy.

In February 1944, Major General Howard Davidson, SAF Commander, met with Colonel Milton Sommerfelt of the Office of Commitments and Requirements for Heavy Bombers, HQ USAAF, Washington DC. Sommerfelt was touring the CBI as a member of a Fighter Advisory Board whose function was to suggest possible new equipment and tactics. The two men discussed the possibility of 10th Air Force bombers assigned to SAF using radio-controlled Azon bombs in their operations in Burma.¹⁸⁸

The Azon bomb was radio controlled in azimuth by the bombardier in the releasing aircraft and consisted primarily of a tail kit assembly that was attached to a 1,000 pound bomb. The tail kit included two rudders, two ailerons and one flare. Eight seconds after an Azon was released, the flare in the tail kit would ignite enabling the bombardier to see the bomb until it impacted its target. It was possible to employ different colored flares (red, green, or white) to aid the bombardier in distinguishing his own bomb.¹⁸⁹ As a steerable weapon, the Azon's potential for "bridge busting" was obvious.

Davidson was enthusiastic about the potential of the Azon and requested 500 tail kits, 10 modified B-24Js, and necessary technicians and crews.¹⁹⁰ In July he received 300 tail kits and in September the B-24s arrived with their specially trained crews and an additional ten tail kits apiece. All were assigned or allocated to the 7th Bomb Group of 10th Air Force. Unfortunately, the promised and required test equipment was not on board.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Headquarters, Tenth Air Force, *Azon in India Burma Theater*, 20 March 1945, USAFHRA 830.04-3, 1.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 2

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 3.

The Azon aircrews had been specially trained during a six week course at Fort Dix, N.J. where they attended ground school on the theory and employment of Azon and engaged in detailed study of the tail kit mechanism. Each crew made twenty Azon drops at Dix, primarily from an altitude of 20,000 feet. Clearly they were ready and they were also very enthusiastic about the Azon's effectiveness.¹⁹² Other aircrew of the 7th Bomb Group were not as enthusiastic, however, because reports on the use of Azon in other theaters had not been favorable; in addition, manufacturing of the Azon in the US had been discontinued.¹⁹³

The test equipment did not arrive until December at which time the project representatives conducted a two-week instructional course on the Azon for the rest of the 7th Bomb Group. Finally, on 27 December 1944, the first Azon mission in Burma was undertaken.¹⁹⁴

The target was an important bridge along the Rangoon-Mandalay railroad, which had withstood numerous attacks during the past year. Three Azon-equipped B-24s were tasked with the mission in the lead flight along with three other B-24s in the second. Each aircraft in the lead formation carried three Azons of 1000-pound class. The lead B-24 crew scored a direct hit on the target on its first pass, knocking one span askew; a second pass knocked the span into the river. Two more direct hits on the bridge by following aircraft and crews left the bridge "completely unserviceable."¹⁹⁵

Results of the initial mission were very promising. Aircraft of the 493rd Bomb Squadron, 7th Bomb group, Tenth Air Force continued to employ the Azon bomb throughout the rest of the war

¹⁹² Ibid., 17.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 18.

in Burma. They eventually became known as “The Bridge Busters,” at one point in the war they destroyed 13 bridges in 13 days.¹⁹⁶

Azon provided several advantages such as improved accuracy, increased ability to strike and destroy bridges, and increased survivability (because it could be employed from medium to high altitude). There were, however, a few minor drawbacks. Azon bombs created new supply problems, required some extra maintenance time and personnel, and were unusable in less-than-perfectly-clear weather.¹⁹⁷

In spite of the disadvantages, Azon bombs were particularly well-suited for the CBI where, by December 1944, there was little enemy fighter or anti-aircraft gun defense. The equipment was simple and easy to operate and it resulted in the most accurate high altitude bombing attained in the India-Burma Theater.¹⁹⁸ When employed properly it seemed that Azon’s advantages outweighed the disadvantages which had made it ineffective in other theaters.¹⁹⁹

“Proper” employment of the Azon included a psychological aspect. This was because in Burma, the Japanese enjoyed the advantage of friendly relations with the Burmese during much of the time they occupied the country. As a consequence, railways were run for the Japanese by the regular native Burmese crews.²⁰⁰ Before dropping Azons, SAF dropped leaflets to warn the natives away from railroad tracks and installations and “with more effective bombing to drive home this warning, trackmen, switchmen, and other laborers feigned illness or without excuse

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 5.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 6.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ *Despatch on Air Operations*, 42.

vanished into the hills. At least partly because of this, during 1945 the enemy suffered a critical shortage of labor for his railway system.”²⁰¹

In April 1945, SAF “swept everything before it. Attacks were concentrated against Rangoon and the rail lines from Siam.”²⁰² This time destruction was complete and the climax was reached on 24 April when the 7th Bomb Group sent 40 aircraft against the Bangkok-Rangoon Railway line. In this one day 30 bridges were smashed and destroyed and 18 damaged by all forms of bombardment—Azon and other.²⁰³ These successes helped make the Japanese position in Burma untenable; Rangoon was so isolated from the east that no help could be brought through from Siam, the source of Japanese logistics support in Burma.²⁰⁴ Supplies and storage dumps in Rangoon were destroyed and, in the north, the enemy’s beaten and starving army offered little resistance to Allied troops. On 3 May Rangoon fell and for all practical purposes, the campaign in Burma was over.²⁰⁵

Air Operations in the Battle Areas

For air operations in the battle areas, or what is now known as close air support (CAS), EAC employed various aircraft including Vengeances, Hurricanes, Spitfires, P-38s, P-40s, P-51s, P-47s, B-25s, Mosquitoes, Beaufighters and B-24s. Attacks varied with the kind of target being struck and included strafing with guns and dropping incendiaries, fragmentation bombs, or high explosive bombs. Success in this phase of operations depended on gaining, as a minimum, local air superiority. As noted, EAC was able to do this early in 1944.

²⁰¹ Craven and Cate, Volume V, 238-239.

²⁰² *Despatch on Air Operations*, 69.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Craven and Cate, Volume V, 251.

In spite of the proclaimed virtues of integration, CAS evolved along separate British and American lines in CBI, although there were some techniques employed commonly. By the middle of 1944, the RAF 224 Group and 221 Group had sufficient experience in ground attacks to frame an organization and establish methods for the necessary coordination between ground and air forces when conducting CAS. The essential features of that organization and employment were as follows:

- 1) Targets were selected by the ground unit meeting resistance.
- 2) Requests for CAS were transmitted through Royal Artillery channels to brigade and division levels.
- 3) At division level, priority targets were selected and requests were then made to the Royal Artillery liaison officer at Army-RAF Headquarters.
- 4) The decision with respect to requests was made by the RAF Wing Commander at his Headquarters.
- 5) The decision was implemented by notifying interested parties and briefing pilots.²⁰⁶

The American Northern Sector Air Force, the subdivision of Third Tactical Air Force whose task was to support Stilwell's Chinese, and subsequently the 10th Force, adopted a slightly different organization and pattern of CAS operations.

In May 1944, the Allied forces had seized the Myitkyina airfield in northern Burma, but the town of the same name remained in Japanese hands. Along the Irrawaddy River that bordered the town on the east, the Japanese deployed along a front that consisted of a series of strong points. The siege that followed in the next several months placed heavy demands on air forces

²⁰⁶ *Despatch on Air Operations*, 75

supporting friendly troops on the ground, thus allowing a system of CAS to be developed and adjusted.²⁰⁷

The front during the siege was at times only 2500 yards from the Myitkyina airstrip, which complicated the defense considerably, but also afforded ample opportunity for coordinated action.²⁰⁸ USAAF A-2 and A-3 and Army G-2 and G-3 planned the joint operations. Ground planners decided which targets were to be attacked and the air office planned the attack, determining the number and type of aircraft, bombs and attacks to be used. When that was complete, the air planners briefed the selected crews.²⁰⁹

Stratemeyer's Photographic Reconnaissance Force (PRF) became an important factor in the operations of all three forces. By taking pictures of tactical objectives in the battle areas and developing them into mosaics, the PRF was able to provide aircrews with useful combat maps. In the closing months of the campaign in Burma, the 10th Air Force developed their attacks on "the sole basis of aerial photography," and the 224 Group was provided with complete photographic coverage in the areas of the advancing ground troops as they made their way toward Rangoon.²¹⁰

To a large extent, the effectiveness of CAS can be determined by the level of satisfaction of the ground commanders, and in this the CBI is no exception. General Slim, 14th Army commander, found his air support arrangements very much to his liking, and particularly so since Third TAF's Air Marshal Baldwin had located his Headquarters alongside Slim's at Comilla. With this arrangement, Slim found that "direct references to Eastern Air Command became less

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 82.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 85

and less frequent, although occasionally Stratemeyer and I issued joint directives. In effect, Baldwin became my opposite number in the air and this made coordination a simple matter.”²¹¹

Stratemeyer found Stilwell less easy to please, but support to the latter’s forces was nevertheless effective. From Stratemeyer’s perspective, the main problem was that “Stilwell was very anti-British.”²¹² On several occasions, “General Stilwell asked for air support specifying that it had to be American. Because of circumstances, I could not always give purely American support and as a consequence, he sometimes was supported by the British, though it was against his will and of course without his knowledge.”²¹³

The final good measure of CAS effectiveness comes from enemy ground troops, and evidence for this contention was found by all the Allied ground armies as they bore down on Rangoon:

Captured diaries written by Japanese soldiers confirms the view that CAS had a demoralizing on them. These diaries showed that at times, bombing so stunned the Japanese that for several minutes after the attacks they were in a stupor. Allied ground troops learned to take advantage of this condition and coordinated their movements with the action of the Air Forces.²¹⁴

As effective as Eastern Air Command’s close support of the ground armies was, it can in no way compare to the decisiveness of the other major form of support supplied by Stratemeyer’s aircrews.

²¹¹ Field-Marshal Sir William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory* (London: Cassell, 1956), 212.

²¹² Lt Gen George E. Stratemeyer, transcript of interview by Dr. Henry Lee Bowen conducted at HQ Continental Air Force, Mitchel Field, Long Island, 11 January 1949, USAFHRA 105.5-13, B.

²¹³ Ibid., D. To be fair, Stratemeyer did say he could “always deal with Stilwell satisfactorily if we met personally but I found it difficult to get on with Stilwell’s Headquarters.”

²¹⁴ *Despatch on Air Operations*, 91.

Air Supply

Air supply was the sine qua non of the Allied effort in Burma. As such, it has been adequately covered in many other histories and will not be discussed in detail here.²¹⁵ It is important for this study, however, to give a general feel for the impact of air supply on SEAC's strategy against the Japanese and to discuss General Stratemeyer's contribution in that regard.

With the Japanese in control of Burma, Mountbatten saw for SEAC two strategic options: 1) To retake Burma by invading the Rangoon area from the sea and thus avoiding the mountain barrier by coming up the great central valley; or 2) To strike across the mountains, building a logistics supply road along the way.²¹⁶ The first option was obviously the most desirable but was overcome by events. As Stratemeyer noted, "the landing craft necessary for such an operation were all being assigned to theaters with higher priorities, notably for the establishment of the beach head at Anzio."²¹⁷

With option one now unavailable, a review of option two was in order. It, too, proved untenable because of uncooperative terrain over which support vehicles could not travel and also because advances gained would be stagnated or withdrawn during the monsoon season. With that in mind, Mountbatten fell back on a plan to "conduct limited offensives until such time as the naval forces and landing craft became available."²¹⁸ Even this conception was modified,

²¹⁵ See for example General H.H. Arnold, "Aerial Invasion of Burma;" Joe Taylor, *Air Supply in the Burma Campaigns*, USAF Historical Study No. 75 (Maxwell AFB, AL: Research Studies Institute, April 1957); Lt. Col Charles E. Miller, *Airlift Doctrine* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1988); Probert, *The Forgotten Air Force*; RAF Air Ministry, *Wings of the Phoenix*.

²¹⁶ Lt. General George E. Stratemeyer, "Airpower in India-Burma," unpublished statement, no date, USAFHRA 820.04E, 1.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

however, when Stilwell insisted on construction of the Ledo Road to connect with the Burma Road at the Chinese border.²¹⁹

In February 1944 there occurred what was the turning point of the war in Burma. At that time, the British undertook an offensive in Arakan in southwest Burma. Japanese infiltration tactics effectively cut off the forward columns of this thrust, isolating them from their supplies and leaving them to contemplate a retreat. Stratemyer suggested to Mountbatten that air supply could reestablish the line of communication and make it possible for the offensive to continue and, “after a good deal of staff discussion, the doubts of British ground forces commanders were overcome” and Mountbatten issued orders forbidding the retreat.²²⁰

After the orders were issued, AAF and RAF transport planes of EAC began to supply the British ground forces. During this emergency more than six and a half million pounds were carried by air to the British division on the ground.²²¹ This enabled them to hold their position and ultimately defeat the Japanese in Arakan and then resume their offensive. In addition, this victory helped establish what was to become the decisive pattern of air operations in the Burma theater.²²²

For example, in operations at Imphal in March, when Japanese troops cut the Tiddim and Dimapur Roads, a British army of over 200,000 men was completely cutoff and surrounded. Every available Troop Carrier Command transport was put into use, including 79 C-47s diverted from the Mediterranean.²²³ For three and a half months, from March until the end of June, this

²¹⁹ History IBS CBI, 42.

²²⁰ Ibid. See also *Despatch on Air Operations*, 95; and Slim, *Defeat Into Victory*, 259.

²²¹ *Wings of the Phoenix*, 69.

²²² *Despatch on Air Operations*, 96.

²²³ *Wings of the Phoenix*, 75.

British force was supplied entirely by air. Moving supplies in at a rate of over 500 tons a day, air supply allowed the British to reopen the road from Imphal to Dimapur on 22 June.²²⁴

The other important Troop Carrier Command capability that was revealed at Imphal was its ability to evacuate sick and wounded. As a morale factor that would continue to be of paramount importance throughout the war, it started at Imphal when over 10,000 sick and wounded soldiers were evacuated in April, May and June.²²⁵

Even more remarkable than support of static defensive operations was EAC's ability to support the *offensive* advances of full-sized Allied armies. By the close of 1944, the Allies were progressing south towards Rangoon without ground lines of communication and totally dependent on air supply for their advance.²²⁶ In fact, when the Combined Chiefs of Staff pulled American C-47s from Burma to support Operation Grubworm, "the effect of the loss of these squadrons was even greater than the forfeiture of the armies' soldiers."²²⁷

So completely reliant had the army now become on air supply that in January 1945 the Commander-in-Chief of Allied Land Forces, Lt. General Sir Oliver Leese, circulated a memorandum stating that without extra resources of transport aircraft not only would the advance to Mandalay and beyond be arrested but that he might even be forced to withdraw beyond the Chindwin for the 1945 monsoon. The problem was that the armies were traveling faster than had been expected, and the farther they advanced from the air supply bases the greater was the number of aircraft required to carry even the same amount of tonnage to maintain them; payloads decreased as distances grew.²²⁸

²²⁴ Ibid., 92.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ George MacDonald Fraser, *Quartered Safe Out Here: A Recollection of the War in Burma*, (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 96-97.

²²⁷ *Wings of the Phoenix*, 118. Operation Grubworm was an airlift of 25,000 Chinese soldiers with guns, jeeps and pack animals over the Hump to blunt the Japanese thrust that threatened Kunming. Interestingly, this same Japanese offensive effectively closed the airfields in eastern China from where Chennault thought he could strike the death blow to Japan.

²²⁸ Ibid.

Mountbatten asked for additional C-47s and received two RAF squadrons in March, but that did not ease the problem. “The more radical solution to the shortage of transport aircraft was provided by General Leese himself.”²²⁹ As Fourteenth Army advanced into the plains they carved out of the paddy level strips for the C-47s to land upon. These strips facilitated stockpiling of supplies which, in turn, allowed the Allies to capture airfields in Arakan for use in the final push to Rangoon.²³⁰

Beginning in February 1945 Eastern Air Command began the task of supplying Fourteenth Army on its overland advance to Rangoon. “The job was immense, the greatest air supply task of the war.”²³¹ C-47s of the 10th Air Force, 221 Group and 224 Group supplied 300,000 men during their three-prong advance and encirclement of the Japanese at Rangoon. This immense effort was remarkable by any standard and led Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park to remark that “whereas in North Africa the Eighth Army advanced under the wings of the Air Force, in Burma the Fourteenth Army advanced *on* the wings of the Air Force.”²³²

Mountbatten, too, praised the air supply effort in his farewell letter to Stratemeyer in June of 1945:

From the day when I ordered the integration of the British and American forces in December 1943 you have labored unceasingly to produce a thoroughly happy and efficient integrated air force in the Eastern Air Command. You have achieved the greatest air supply in history. Through your action you made it possible to reconquer Burma from the north, which was generally held to be militarily impossible.²³³

²²⁹ *Despatch on Air Operations*, 93.

²³⁰ *Wings of the Phoenix*, 119-120. Akyab, in the Arakan area, was particularly important as a base for aircraft and a port to which ships could bring supplies direct for air-ferrying to the Fourteenth Army. (See Map 1)

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 121

²³² *Ibid.*, 104. Park had replaced Peirse as Allied Air Commander-in-Chief in December 1944.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 138.

Eastern Air Command's combination of air supply and evacuation for static or mobile armies was a capability the Japanese never really appreciated and could never hope to match. For the Allies, too, it was a service repeated in no other theater of war in such elaborate detail.²³⁴ General Stratemeyer was instrumental in making it so.

²³⁴ *Despatch on Air Operations*, 93.

Chapter 6

...the Future

Summary of Findings and Key Lessons

General Stratmeyer played an important role in the Allied campaign in Burma and demonstrated effective leadership in defeating the Japanese in CBI. In the dark days of December 1941, such an outcome could not have been contemplated. While the CBI was, from the start, very limited in resources, that situation was exacerbated by the decisions of Allied leaders at the Casablanca conference of 1943. Even so, Casablanca did not change the nature of the US commitment in CBI to provide Lend-Lease equipment to the Chinese Nationalists under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek. From his position as Chief of the AAF Staff, General Stratmeyer aided in the planning of CBI strategic priorities and watched as events unfolded in that theater. He became even more keenly aware of the unique situation in the CBI when he visited the theater in the spring of 1943.

Concurrently, Stratmeyer carried on extensive correspondence with his one-time classmate, General Carl Spaatz, who was the Commanding General, Eighth Air Force and AAF, European Theater of Operations. No doubt under General “Hap” Arnold’s influence, Stratmeyer encouraged Spaatz to lobby for the position of Commanding General, American Air Forces in Europe. Both Stratmeyer and Arnold thought Spaatz was the only logical choice for such a position. Eventually, General Eisenhower decided to appoint Spaatz as his Deputy Commander-

in-Chief for Air. Later, at Casablanca, a new Allied air organization was formed and British Air Chief Marshal Arthur Tedder was named Air Commander in Chief, Mediterranean and Spaatz was placed in command of a subordinate organization called the Northwest African Air Force.

As NAAF commander, Spaatz's achievements inspired sweeping changes in US Army doctrine for employment of airpower and, as a result, had a great impact on airmen in the USAAF. Stratemeyer was no exception. He saw in Spaatz's organization and employment of NAAF a model for his own command in the CBI, which was announced by President Roosevelt in June 1943. However, this conception did not prove possible to implement under the complicated political conditions of the CBI.

The Quebec Conference of August 1943 had as one of its most important outcomes the creation of Southeast Asia Command with Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten named Supreme Allied Commander. Immediately thereafter, Stratemeyer and his staff conceived a subordinate air command for SEAC with Stratemeyer in command. This command, unquestionably inspired by Spaatz's NAAF, completely ignored the political intricacies of the CBI and was rejected.

One key lesson to be drawn from analyzing these organizational disputes is that *there is no single template for coalition organization or operations*. Every situation is and will be unique, though there is one constant: the US will fight in coalitions. This has been a common thread through American history and, with the extensive network of alliances, friendships, and mutual interests established by America around the world today, there is a high probability that most future military operations undertaken will have some multinational aspects.²³⁵

The role of combatant commanders, including air commanders, is crucial to multinational coalition creation and maintenance. As noted, such a role requires acute political sensitivity.

²³⁵ Joint Pub 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), 10 January 1995), III-13.

Even though General Stratemeyer had visited CBI in the spring of 1943 and was intimately familiar with the operational level matters in the theater, he overlooked the politically sensitive nature of appointing an American to the position of air commander in a British colonial possession. More curious than that was Stratemeyer's proposal for the operational structure of such a command because it included Chinese elements in its subordinate commands. General Stratemeyer learned that preconceived notions will not necessarily suit the task at hand.

For the modern case, this means that even when there are existing alliances or organizations military leaders will not be relieved of the political sensitivity requirement. If and when these organizations prove inadequate or are non-existent, it may be necessary to create and sustain an ad hoc coalition.

The second key lesson of this study, and one that does not solely apply to coalition operations, is that *doctrine and innovation are most important in a resource-constrained combat environment*. After Mountbatten imposed upon Stratemeyer the integrated RAF-AAF Eastern Air Command, the latter adopted what was by that time a familiar pattern of operations and one which had been codified in 21 July 1943's FM 100-20, *Command and Employment of Air Power*. That doctrine was to 1) Gain and maintain air superiority; 2) Conduct aerial interdiction; and 3) Provide close air support for surface forces.

This pattern eminently fit the situation and available resources in the Burma war and was made even more effective by several important innovations. In the battle for air superiority, EAC employed a radio network and implemented a sector division of geographic responsibility for each subordinate command. In this way, commanders of individual tactical air forces were able to notify all other sector commanders which allowed EAC to mass available airpower against the Japanese at decisive times and locations. For strategic air operations, employment of

spike-nosed and Azon bombs greatly improved the effectiveness and accuracy of the Strategic Air Force. With the accuracy provided by Azon, SAF was able to increase interdiction effectiveness even more by conducting psychological operations prior to attacking rail lines and bridges, thus rendering native railroad support for the Japanese completely ineffective. Both types of bombs had been tried in other theaters of the war and were found ineffective or unsuitable. However, Stratemeyer and EAC were enthusiastic about these new weapons and found them highly compatible with operations in CBI where, by mid-1944, the Allies enjoyed complete air superiority.

Air superiority also facilitated air supply and air evacuation operations, which were the sine qua non of the Burma war. EAC's Combat Cargo Group, and other organizational predecessors that conducted air supply and air evacuation operations, were able to provide for Allied ground forces a form of operational support that the Japanese could neither negate nor duplicate. By May 1945, the retreating Japanese were opposed by an Allied army of over 356,000 men that was completely supplied by air with over 74,000 tons a month.²³⁶ This was one of the most remarkable and innovative achievements of the war in Burma.

Air supply of ground armies on the move was not, however, an obvious first choice of strategies for Burma. SEAC planners first conceived of a plan that relied on doing an amphibious assault in the Rangoon area, but this was negated by a higher priority requirement for the landing craft in another theater. This led to a renewed emphasis on Stilwell's effort along the Ledo Road and left Mountbatten to contemplate undertaking limited guerilla-type offensives until such time as the naval forces and landing craft became available. Stratemeyer and his staff were able to convince theater leadership that air supply was a viable alternative to these plans, a

²³⁶ *Wings of the Phoenix*, 131.

reality that did not immediately present itself to Mountbatten and other surface force commanders. In other words, Stratemeyer's perspective as an airman was crucial to selection and implementation of SEAC's winning strategy in Burma. This is arguably the most important lesson of this study.

It was Clausewitz who said that "the first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have is to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking: neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature."²³⁷ For that observation to attain true modern relevance it must be updated to include the air commander in the determination of a war's character. It is not enough for a single military leader from a single military service to determine the nature of the war and then dictate the strategy to achieve its objectives. For example, an airman would be a fool to tell an army commander how to deploy his division or a naval commander where to place an aircraft carrier. On the other hand, *effectively communicating the air perspective may be an airman's most important contribution to military operations.*

The final key lesson of this study is related to effective communication and professional/interpersonal relationships. That lesson is that *personalities are important in the leadership of joint/combined operations.*

In spite of some initial misunderstandings in the early days after SEAC's formation, Mountbatten found Stratemeyer to be fiercely loyal and even called him a "great American."²³⁸ For his part, there can be little doubt that Arnold had complete faith in Stratemeyer's ability to deal with cranky characters like "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell and "Leatherface" Chennault. In the event, Arnold was proven right. Stratemeyer, by virtue of his genial nature, was able to deal

²³⁷ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 88-89.

with these diverse personalities and to provide—and have accepted—the air perspective that Mountbatten and his surface forces counterparts did not possess. It would be unrealistic to suggest that airmen adopt Stratemeyer’s personal or operational style, but there is an approach, an attitude, an outlook that Stratemeyer gained from his experiences in the CBI that may help modern airmen ensure that their perspective is asked for and heard.

In 1947, Stratemeyer entered the debate over Air Force independence while he was Commander, Air Defense Command. His voice was not nearly among the loudest heard in the independence debate; in fact, it was relatively obscure. Yet in an article published in *Air Affairs* in June 1947, Stratemeyer wrote with an attitude that is sorely needed in 1999:

Airpower has come of age, and has justified by performance its claim to autonomous organizational existence. In World War II, airpower was the new weapon of a new kind of war that was fought all over the globe. In such a war, necessitating joint operations of air, sea, and ground power, as well as such independent air operations as the strategic bombing of Germany and of Japan, *separate military organizations lose importance and significance*. Hence, airmen today call less for a separate air force than for a single department of national defense in which the air arm, *directed by an airman*, has its proper autonomous position.²³⁹ (emphasis added)

For the joint/combined fight to be most effective, for the sake of ensuring that the US military is able to correctly identify and achieve national objectives, today’s airmen, soldiers, sailors and Marines must accept the fact that the services are coequal, independent, and increasingly interdependent. There is a unique perspective that comes from being educated, trained, and raised in a parent service and only an airman can adequately provide the air perspective.

²³⁸ Philip Ziegler, *Mountbatten* (New York: Knopf, 1984), 247.

²³⁹ Stratemeyer, George E., “Administrative History of US Army Air Forces” *Air Affairs*, June 1947, 525.

Appendix A

HEADQUARTERS EASTERN AIR COMMAND

New Delhi, India

15 December 1943

GENERAL ORDERS}

}

NUMBER 1}

1. Pursuant to instructions contained in South East Asia Command Directive No. 5, Headquarters SEAC, dated 12 December 1943, and Policy Directive No. 1, Headquarters, Air Command, South East Asia, dated 15 December 1943, I hereby assume command of the Eastern Air Command.

2. The Eastern Air Command will consist of units of the Tenth Air Force and units of the Bengal Air Command.

3. The Eastern Air Command will be organized into four components in accordance with diagram attached, Inclosure #1:

a. A Strategic Air Force under the operational control of Brigadier General Howard C. Davidson.

b. A Tactical Air Force under the operational control of Air Marshal Sir John Baldwin.

c. A Troop Carrier Command under the operational control of Brigadier General William D. Old.

d. A Photographic Reconnaissance Force under the operational control (to be announced).

4. The missions of the respective components of the Eastern Air Command are as follows:

a. Strategic Air Force: The Commander, Strategic Air Force, will conduct strategic air offensive over Burma and adjacent territory in conformity with a general plan to destroy enemy air forces

and air installations; selected rail, river and road communications; depots and other maintenance facilities.

b. Tactical Air Force: The Commander, Tactical Air Forces is charged with full responsibility for the defense of Calcutta and adjacent industrial areas, the Assam Area and the Air Transport Command India-China transport route, and in addition has full responsibility for the air support of Army and Amphibious operations.

c. Troop Carrier Command: The Commander, Troop Carrier Command, will provide air transportation for airborne and air transit forces in the support and training of the Army Group and other land or air forces involved in operations in Burma.

d. Photographic Reconnaissance Force: The Commander, Photographic Reconnaissance Force, will conduct photographic and tactical reconnaissance as required for the support of the Strategic Air Force, the Tactical Air Force or the Army Group Forces. Individual units of the Photographic Reconnaissance Force will be attached to and placed under the operational control of the Commanders Strategic and Tactical Forces as required.

5. In exercising operational control of these integrated forces, the respective commanders will observe the following principles:

a. Administrative control and responsibilities for supply and maintenance will remain under the respective USAAF and RAF commanders.

b. The integrity of USAAF Groups and RAF Wings will be retained.

c. The operational staffs of the respective Force Commanders will consist of USAAF personnel and RAF personnel in such proportion as deemed necessary and desirable by the respective Force Commanders.

6. The Strategic Air Forces, the Tactical Air Force, the Troop Carrier Command and the Photographic Reconnaissance Force will consist initially of the units listed in Inclosure 2 attached. Station locations and certain unit designations, as listed in Inclosure 2, are tentative and may necessarily be changed by Force Commanders as circumstances require.

7. It is desired that military personnel of the Command, both RAF and AAF, comply with customary rules of military courtesy in their dealings with one another. Personnel of the USAAF will render the salute to RAF personnel and it is the wish of the Commander, Eastern Air Command, that RAF personnel do likewise to USAAF personnel.

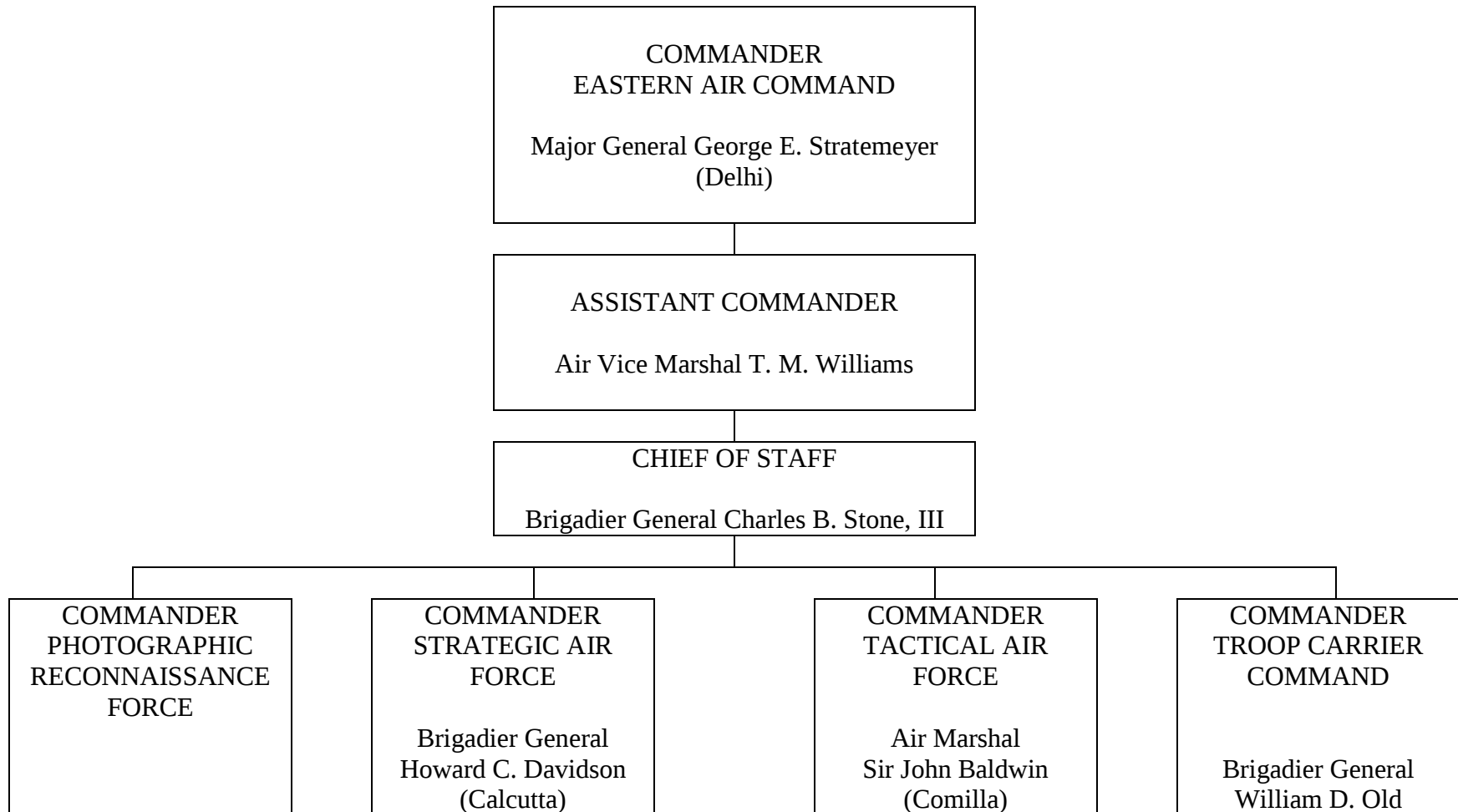
8. A resourceful, able and wily enemy must be blasted from the jungles of Burma and driven from its skies in days to come. His lines of communication must be obliterated, his shipping destroyed, his will to resist crushed. Against the inevitable day of retribution when Japan's cities will meet the fate of Berlin, our life line to China must be strengthened and protected. Every ounce of energy of every man of this Command will be required to accomplish this purpose. We

must merge into one unified force, in thought and in deed—a force neither British nor American, with the faults of neither and the virtues of both. There is no time for distrust or suspicion.

I greet the forces of the Bengal Air Command, and their Commander, Air Marshal Baldwin, as comrades in battle, as brothers in the air. A standard of cooperation which we must strive to surpass has been set the inspiring example of joint achievement of our colleagues of the Northwest African Air Force. We must establish in Asia a record of Allied air victory of which we can all be proud in the years to come. Let us write it now in the skies over Burma.

George E. Stratemeyer
Major General, USA
Commanding

ORGANIZATION CHART
OF
EASTERN AIR COMMAND



EASTERN AIR COMMAND
HEADQUARTERS
NEW DELHI, INDIA

STRATEGIC AIR FORCE
Headquarters Calcutta

UNITS

Unit Designation	<u>Type of Aircraft</u>	<u>Station</u>
7 th Bombardment Gp (H) (AAF)	B-24	Pandaveswar
9 th Bomb Sq (H)	“	Pandaveswar
436 th Bomb Sq (H)	“	Panagarh
492 nd Bomb Sq (H)	“	Panagarh
493 rd Bomb Sq (H)	“	Pandaveswar
341 st Bombardment Gp (M) (AAF)	B-25	Kurmitola
22 nd Bomb Sq (M)	“	Chakulia
490 th Bomb Sq (M)	“	Kurmitola
491 st Bomb Sq (M)	“	Chakulia
221 st Group (RAF)		
175 th Wing (RAF)	Wellington X	Jessore
99 th Sq	“	Jessore
215 th Sq	“	Jessore
154 th Wing (RAF)	Liberator III	Salbani
355 th Sq	(HB Conversion)	Salbani
1584 th Flight	“	Salbani
1577 th Flight	Lancaster/Halifax	Salbani
185 th Wing (RAF)	Liberator III	Digri
159 th Sq	“	Digri

TACTICAL AIR FORCE

Headquarters		Comilla
224 th Group (RAF)		Chittagong
165 th Wing (RAF)		Ramu
607 th Sq	Spitfire VC	Ramu
615 th Sq	“	Chittagong
81 st Sq	Spitfire Viii	Ramu
20 th Sq	Hurrican IID (F/B)	Rainikhopalong

Unit Designation	<u>Type of Aircraft</u>	<u>Station</u>
166th Wing (RAF)		Chittagong
152nd Sq	Spitfire VIII	Chittagong
79th Sq	Hurricane IIC	Double Moorings
258th Sq	“	Dohazari
261st Sq	“	Chiringa
167th Wing (RAF)		Dohazari
8th IAF Sq	Vengeance	Double Moorings
82nd Sq	“	Dohazari
84th Sq	“ (after Jan. 30)	Dohazari
169th Wing (RAF)		Argatala
27th Sq	Beaufighter	Argatala
177th Sq	“	Fenni
252nd Sq	“ (To be activated by Jan. 30)	
243rd Wing (RAF)		Fenni
11th Sq	Hurricane IIC (F/B)	Lalmai
60th Sq	“ (F/B)	Argatala
123rd Sq	“	Fenni

134th Sq	“	Parashuram
168th Wing (RAF) (221 Gp)		Kumbaigram
45th Sq	Vengeance	Kumbaigram
110th Sq	“	Kumbaigram
211th Sq	Beaufighter X	Ranchi
170th Wing (RAF) (221 Gp)		Imphal
155th Sq	Mohawk (Spitfire VIIIP)	
28th Sq	Hurricane IIB (F/R)	Imphal
1 IAF Sq	“ (F/R)	Not determined
113th Sq	“ IIC (F/B)	Manipur Road
189th Wing (RAF)		Palel
5th Sq	Hurricane IIC	Palel
34th Sq	“ (F/B)	Palel
42nd Sq	“	Palel
293rd Wing (RAF)		Calcutta
67th Sq	Hurricane IIC	Alipore
146th Sq	“	Baigachi
136th Sq	Spitfire VC	Alipore

176th Sq	Hurricane/Beaufighter (night)	Baigachi
Unit Designation	<u>Type of Aircraft</u>	<u>Station</u>
5320th Air Defense Wing (Prov)	(AAF)	Dinjan
311th Fighter Bomber Gp (AAF)		Dinjan
528th Fighter Bomber Sq	A-36	Sookerating
529th Fighter Bomber Sq	A-36	Dinjan
530th Fighter Bomber Sq	P-51A	Mohanbari
80th Fighter Group (AAF)		
88th Fighter Sq	P-40	Balijan
Flight “A”		Lillibari
Flight “B”		Mohanbari
Flight “C”		Lillibari
89th Fighter Sq	P-40	Sadiya
Flight “A”		“
Flight “B”		“
Flight “C”		Nagaghuli
90th Fighter Sq	P-40	Jorhat
459th Fighter Sq	P-38	Kurmitola

5318th Air Unit (Prov)	(Air Commando Force)	Lalaghat
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P-51

C-47

UC-64

CG-4A

L-4, L-5

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECONNAISSANCE FORCE

Headquarters

Not Determined

5306th Photo Reconnaissance Group (P)	(AAF)	Gushkara
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9th Photo Sq	F-4, F-5, B-25	Barrackpore
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24th Heavy Mapping Sq	F-7	Gushkara (enroute)
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20th Tactical Reconn Sq	P-40	(Enroute)
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10th Combat Camera Unit		Ondal
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171st Wing		Comilla
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681st Sq	Spitfire	Chandina
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684th Sq	Mosquito, B-25	Comilla
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Unit Designation	<u>Type of Aircraft</u>	<u>Station</u>
Headquarters	<u>TROOP CARRIER COMMAND</u>	
	Not Determined	
177th Wing (RAF)		Rawalpindi
62nd Sq	C-47	Chaklala
117th Sq	“	Chaklala
194th Sq	“	Basal
Separate Squadrons:		
31st Sq (RAF)	C-47	Kharagpur
1st Troop Carrier Sq (AAF)	“	Sookerating
2nd Troop Carrier Sq (AAF)	“	Dinjan
27th Troop Carrier Sq	“	Not Determined
315th Troop Carrier Sq	“	“

Appendix B

Manila, P.I.
17 June 1945

Dear Al:

It has been evident to me that the situation in China is developing into a war of movement, aimed at isolating the Jap in Indo-China and defeating him or at least containing a substantial bulk of his forces in Southern China. In such a war of movement I know that air must be a most important arm in maintaining your mobility, strengthening your striking power, and eventually destroying the beaten Jap. In order to give you proper advice and to enable your air operations to proceed with a balance and drive that will produce the desired results, you need a senior, experienced air officer, in whom both you and I have confidence. It is my opinion that you should give this job to General Stratemeyer. As you know, he has just completed his mission with Eastern Air Command, culminating in driving back the beaten Jap forces from Burma. This campaign, involving a war of movement and large scale use of air transports, is similar to the type of campaign with which you are confronted.

General Chennault has been in China for a long period of time fighting a defensive air war with minimum resources. The meagerness of supplies and the resulting guerilla type of warfare must change to a modern type of striking, offensive air power. I firmly believe that the quickest and most effective way to change air warfare in your theater, employing modern offensive thought, tactics and technique, is to change commanders. I would appreciate your concurrence in General Chennault's early withdrawal from the China Theater. He should take advantage of the retirement privileges now available to physically disqualified officers that make their pay not subject to income tax. Otherwise he may be reduced and be put back to the retired list at his permanent rank.

I understand that the tonnages which I am largely responsible for making available to you have been substantially allocated to the ground forces, thereby reducing the amount of tonnage available to air. This has resulted in your available air striking power being dissipated from India-Burma and China to other theaters and to the United States. There are no plans which I know of for increasing your air forces at a later date and I therefore recommend that you re-evaluate your present situation and create conditions which will permit the redeployment to China of essential air striking power now available in India-Burma. I feel sure that if you can do

this, the Joint Chiefs of Staff will not object to the additional change in the air plans which will permit you to introduce into China these units, which I feel should be the bulk of those of the Army Air Forces, India-Burma Theater. Any units of the Tenth Air Force which you can program for employment in China can be held in India; the others will be redeployed as soon as we can get shipping.

I trust that in line with my comments above you will be enabled to put into effect the organization which you recommended to the War Department on your recent visit; that is, that you have a Commanding General, Army Air Forces, China Theater, directing the employment of these air forces in a predominantly tactical cooperation with ground forces role, and the other a strategic force.

Sincerely,

H. H. Arnold,
Commanding General, Army Air Forces.

Lieut. General A.C. Wedemeyer,
Commanding General,
US Forces, China Theater,
APO 879, c/o US Army

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