

ALLIED SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON JAPANESE  
STRATEGY: NORTHERN BURMA, 1942-1945

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## ABSTRACT

ALLIED SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON JAPANESE STRATEGY: NORTHERN BURMA, 1942-1945, by Nathan B. Custer, 148 pages.

From 1942-1945, the Imperial Japanese Army and Allied forces from the United States, the British Empire, and Nationalist China fought fiercely to control northern Burma and its border areas. The region was vital for both sides, who sought to expand or regain strategic advantages in southeast Asia. At the end of long lines of communication with few resources, Allied commanders employed special operations forces with greater density and to greater effect in northern Burma than in any other combat theater of World War II out of necessity. American and British special operations forces were the only combat units in northern Burma in 1943; they operated extensively behind Japanese lines in spring 1944, and were the only forces in contact with the enemy in autumn 1944. In 1945, they directly enabled achievement of the Allies' two stated theater strategic aims. Japanese strategy at the theater and national levels changed several times in response to events in northern Burma, including campaigns where special operations forces played an essential role. This thesis analyzes operations by two types of Allied special operations units in northern Burma—Long-Range Penetration Groups (LRPGs) and Unconventional Warfare (UW) units—and identifies two occasions on which those operations directly or indirectly led to Japanese theater or national strategy changes.

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## ACRONYMS

BCS	SOE Burma Country Section
BIA	Burma Independence Army
CAI	Chinese Army in India
CBI	China-Burma-India Theater
CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff
COI	United States Coordinator of Information
IGHQ	Japanese Imperial General Headquarters
IJA	Imperial Japanese Army
LRPG	Long-Range Penetration Group
NCAC	Northern Combat Area Command
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
SEAC	Southeast Asia Command
SOE	British Special Operations Executive
UW	Unconventional Warfare
Y-FOS	American Yoke-Force Operations Staff



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The warfighting experience in Burma from 1942-1945 was unique to that in any other theater in World War II. Allied and Japanese belligerents fought each other brutally in some of the world's worst conditions. The British-Indian Army, American units, and Chinese units under American command were some of the most poorly resourced of any Allied forces in World War II, fighting half a world away from their bases at the end of austere supply lines.<sup>1</sup> Japanese forces endured similar logistical hardships, with constant supply shortages and a lack of effective transportation capabilities throughout the war.<sup>2</sup> Without a steady stream of combat power to conduct large scale offensives, Allied commanders relied heavily on special operations as an economy of force effort to achieve effects against Japanese forces.

Geography is an important starting place for any discussion of the history of the war in Burma. Burma is a land of many topographical and environmental extremes which present severe challenges and limitations to military operations and to daily life for its inhabitants (see figure 1). The landscape includes the mangrove swamp-covered Arakan Coast (now Rakhine State), dry central plains, and dense, primeval rainforest. The terrain rises from rolling hills into steep ranges reaching 12,000 feet. These mountains are part of the Himalaya range and isolate Burma from India in the west, China in the north, and

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Allen, *Burma, The Longest War 1941-45* (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), xvii.

<sup>2</sup> Meirion Harries and Susie Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun: The Rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Army* (New York: Random House, 1991), 370.

Siam in the east. With a geographical area approximately the size of Texas, Burma had few transportation routes larger than tribal footpaths. The Burma Road, the country's main artery, was a 750-mile single-track which over 100,000 Chinese coolies cut by hand between 1937 and 1938.<sup>3</sup> Three major river systems—the Chindwin, Irrawaddy, and Salween, cut through the country's interior and flow into alluvial deltas on the Bay of Bengal. During the monsoon season, months of constant, torrential rain swell the rivers to impassable levels, turning rainforest into swamp and destroying sections of the few existing roads. Soldiers in Burma suffered crippling diseases such as malaria, scrub typhus, and dysentery carried by seemingly infinite swarms of mosquitoes, ticks, mites, and leeches.<sup>4</sup> Winston Churchill termed Burma “the most forbidding fighting country imaginable,” stating that “one could not choose a worse place for fighting the Japanese.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Allen, *Burma*, 8, 310.

<sup>4</sup> David W. Hogan, Jr., Center of Military History Publication (CMH Pub) 72-5, *India-Burma: The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1992), 5.

<sup>5</sup> Troy J. Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma: Jungle War against the Japanese* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013), 1.



Figure 1. Burma, 1942

Source: Clayton R. Newell, Center of Military History Publication 72-21, *Burma, 1942* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1994), 7.

Burma's population is as diverse as its geography (see figure 2). Its people represent over a hundred separate ethnic groups and speak hundreds of local languages. They follow religions ranging from animism and Hinduism to Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. Making up 70 percent of the population, the dominant, Buddhist Burmans inhabit Burma's fertile lowlands.<sup>6</sup> The Burman-led monarchy fought multiple wars with the East India Company throughout the nineteenth century until Britain annexed and secured the territory in 1886. Ethnic Burmans grew increasingly resistant to British rule over time, conducting anti-colonial riots in 1930 and 1938. The Japanese would later exploit this nationalist sentiment, gaining the support of a Burman 'fifth column' during their invasion and subsequently forming a collaborationist government and military force under Premier Ba Maw.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> William R. Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," *Military Review* 28, no. 3 (June 1948): 10, <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p124201coll1/id/926/rec/1>.

<sup>7</sup> Allen, *Burma*, 7, 9, 11; Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 6-7.



Figure 2. Approximate Ethnic Distribution: Burma, 1940s

Source: Adapted from William R. Peers, “Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma,” *Military Review* 28, no. 3 (June 1948): 11, <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p124201coll1/id/926/rec/1>.

In contrast to the anti-colonial Burmans, the disparate ethnic groups of the hill tribes proved to be the most supportive to the British colonial government. The hill tribes lived in an area surrounded by Burman and Chinese populations, which afforded the British with a buffer between the two. Because of their inaccessible territory and strong

tribal government, the hill people enjoyed semi-autonomous rule and relative peace under the colonial administration. Hill tribes also embraced Christianity as the result of extensive missionary efforts in the region, which greater endeared them to western people.<sup>8</sup> The Kachins, a small minority group of the hill tribes, became a powerful partner for Allied special operations units during the war. Their ancestors invaded northern Burma from Tibet in the thirteenth century, claiming territory taken from other hill tribes. They developed a strong hatred for the ethnic Burmese, who they did not have sufficient strength to remove from the fertile river valleys in Burma's interior. This hatred remains through the present day.<sup>9</sup> As the Burmese majority collaborated with Japanese occupiers in 1942, the Kachins began to conduct armed resistance. Their loyalty to the British, warrior culture, centralized tribal government, and unparalleled jungle expertise made the Kachins an excellent addition to Allied special operations in enemy-occupied areas.<sup>10</sup>

### Strategic Overview

Japan's national strategic aims during the war stemmed from a desire to become an uncontested world power. As a resource-poor, island nation under constant threat of Soviet aggression or European encroachment, Japan's Imperial General Headquarters (IGHQ) and civilian government viewed imperial expansion onto the Asian mainland as

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<sup>8</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," (June 1948): 10.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

an imperative for national survival.<sup>11</sup> The 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth ended the Russo-Japanese war and provided Japan with the Kwantung leased territory and government administration on the Chinese Liaotung Peninsula, as well as exclusive rights to the Southern Manchuria Railway zone. In 1910, the Imperial Japanese Army annexed Korea as an additional buffer from Russia.<sup>12</sup> In 1915, the Japanese imposed their “Twenty-one Demands” on the fledgling Chinese Republic, which provided joint control of significant mining infrastructure, railway building rights, and access to ports along the Chinese coast.<sup>13</sup> Years of constant conflict escalated into war in 1937, becoming increasingly costly for Japan with no end in sight.

In the interest of building strategic capabilities to bring a decisive end to the war in China, the Japanese IGHQ developed plans for a ‘southern expansion’ into the resource rich colonial possessions of French Indochina, the Dutch East Indies, and British Malaya.<sup>14</sup> They justified this plan with the rhetoric of “Pan-Asianism,” stating that Japan was the most qualified nation to lead the greater community of Asian countries out of western imperialism.<sup>15</sup> The ‘southern expansion’ became increasingly significant as

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<sup>11</sup> Harries and Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun*, 66-67, 75, 115.

<sup>12</sup> Harries and Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun*, 98-100.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>14</sup> Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 42.

<sup>15</sup> Harries and Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun*, 98-99.



Japan failed to defeat Nationalist Chinese forces and failed to gain needed resources from its Manchurian puppet state, Manchukuo.<sup>16</sup>

The war in China began in July 1937. Japanese forces seized China's key coastal ports and drove inland. Their goal was to starve Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist forces, who fled from Nanking to form a new capital in Chungking (Chongqing). In 1938 and 1939, Japanese diplomats in Rangoon attempted to persuade the Burmese Premier, Dr. Ba Maw, to close the Burma Road to further restrict overland supply to Chiang's forces.<sup>17</sup> When these efforts failed to end Nationalist Chinese resistance, the Japanese IGHQ used diplomatic pressure in 1940 to close overland supply routes and establish military airfields through northern French Indochina.<sup>18</sup> Nationalist China's only remaining connection to the outside world was the Burma Road, which the United States was using to forward large quantities of Lend-Lease materials.<sup>19</sup> By invading Burma in 1942, the Japanese hoped to complete the blockade of Chiang's army by severing the Burma Road, to exploit rich rice production, seize oil fields, and block any British counteroffensive into Malaya from India.<sup>20</sup>

IGHQ and Japanese forces in Burma changed their national and theater strategies, respectively, multiple times between 1942-1945 to maintain their increasingly tenuous position. First, from the end of the First Burma Campaign in May 1942 to September

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 275-276.

<sup>17</sup> Allen, *Burma*, 11.

<sup>18</sup> Harries and Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun*, 276.

<sup>19</sup> Hogan, CMH Pub 72-5, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Harries and Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun*, 310.

1943, Japanese forces consolidated control in northern Burma as part of a theater strategy to defend against an inevitable Allied counteroffensive.<sup>21</sup> Second, in September 1943, IGHQ resolved to form impregnable defenses in Burma as part of an “absolute national defense sphere” comprising what national-level strategists determined was the minimum area required for Japan to achieve the war’s objectives.<sup>22</sup> Third, from September 1943-March 1944, IGHQ and the Burma Area Army modified their strategies from a defense in Burma to an invasion of eastern India.<sup>23</sup> Fourth, in response to the failing invasion of India and increasing costs of Allied special operations, the Japanese Southern Army committed their strategic reserve division from Singapore to rear area operations in northern Burma.<sup>24</sup> Fifth, as defeats in India, the southwest Pacific, and the Marianas disrupted the imperial national strategy, IGHQ ordered the Burma Area Army to achieve two irreconcilable theater strategic objectives in northern Burma—maintain the blockade of the Burma Road as long as possible, and form strong defensive positions against an Allied attack into Siam, French Indochina, and Malaya.<sup>25</sup> Finally, at the end of February

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<sup>21</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *Burma Operations Record: 15th Army Operations in Imphal Area and Withdrawal to Northern Burma (Revised Edition)*, (Japanese Monograph No. 134, 10 October 1957), 4-5, <https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4013coll8/id/2605>.

<sup>22</sup> Lewis Morton, Center of Military History Publication (CMH Pub) 5-1, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1962), 546.

<sup>23</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 17-18.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-147.

<sup>25</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *History of Imperial General Headquarters, Army Section (Revised Edition)*, (Japanese Monograph No. 45, 11 May 1959), 201, 222, <https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4013coll8/id/2473>.

1945, the Burma Area Army abandoned the theater strategy of protecting northern Burma and the Burma Road to support Fifteenth Army's last stand in central and southern Burma.<sup>26</sup>

For the Allies, retaking Burma from the Japanese achieved two national strategic objectives. For the United States, Burma was essential to keep China in the war. Maintaining a line of financial and military support to Chungking enabled Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist army to keep large numbers of Japanese divisions tied down in China's interior and prevent them from reinforcing the Central Pacific Theater.<sup>27</sup> Also, Chiang's forces secured air bases which the Americans wished to use for future long-range bombing attacks on the Japanese home islands.<sup>28</sup> For the British, reconquering Burma was essential for the protection of India and restoration of imperial control in the region.<sup>29</sup> These contrasting motives fueled tension between the Allies and shaped the way each fought the war.

### Research Questions

As the previous section illustrates, Japanese national and Burma theater strategies changed on several occasions from 1942-1945. Allied special operations played a

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<sup>26</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *History of Imperial General Headquarters*, 253.

<sup>27</sup> Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, ed., *Casablanca Conference, January 1943: Papers and Minutes of Meetings*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 1944), 7.

<sup>28</sup> Field-Marshal Viscount William Slim, *Defeat into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India, 1942-1945* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 250.

<sup>29</sup> Allen, *Burma*, xv; Spector, *Eagle against the Sun*, 324.

prominent role in combatting Japanese forces in Burma throughout the war, sometimes as the only Allied combat forces in contact. The primary question this study seeks to address is whether Allied special operations contributed to changes in Japanese theater or national strategy throughout the war. The research also addresses which type of special operations produced the greatest effects, both in terms of scale and level of impact, and what conditions led to success or failure of special operations throughout the war.

### Claim

From 1942-1945, the Imperial Japanese Army and Allied forces from the United States, the British Empire, and Nationalist China fought fiercely to control northern Burma and its border areas. The region was vital for both sides seeking to expand or regain strategic advantages in Southeast Asia. At the end of long lines of communication with few resources, Allied commanders employed special operations forces with greater density and to greater effect in northern Burma than in any other combat theater of World War II out of necessity. The Japanese strategy at the theater and national levels changed several times in response to events in northern Burma, including campaigns where special operations forces played an essential role.

Allied special operations in northern Burma contributed to Japanese strategy changes on two occasions during the war. In the spring of 1943, the 77th Indian Infantry (Chindit) Brigade's Operation Longcloth unintentionally inspired the Japanese Fifteenth Army commander to alter Burma theater strategy by planning and executing the 1944 invasion of India. In the spring and summer of 1944, Allied special operations directly contributed to Japanese strategy changes at the theater and national levels by severing critical lines of communication and diverting large numbers of forces from multiple

fronts, including the strategic reserve division for all Southeast Asia. Both effects hastened the defeat of Japanese forces and made northern Burma untenable for continued operations.

### Scope of Research

The scope of analysis for this study is northern Burma between March 1942 and March 1945, when Allied special operations units operated in the region. The study begins with a broader, contextual overview of the conventional war in northern Burma, organized into three separate phases. The first is defeat and rebuilding, between December 1941-September 1943. The second is a period of contesting offensives, from October 1943-August 1944. The third is reopening the Burma Road, from September 1944-March 1945. Each of the following three chapters detail Allied special operations during and their effects on Japanese forces during those respective time frames.

Delimitations for the research include the location, timeframe, and units selected for analysis. This study limits analysis to operations in northern Burma, the area north of the town of Lashio, and its border areas with China and India (see figure 1). Northern Burma is the area in which Japanese forces executed proactive national and theater strategy against Allied forces after the First Burma Campaign, including establishment of an “absolute defense,” the invasion of India, and withdrawal to central Burma. After the Allies seized northern Burma, Japanese theater strategy devolved into a series of delaying actions and withdrawals in central and southern Burma until cessation of hostilities in August 1945.<sup>30</sup> Northern Burma is also where Allied forces achieved their strategic

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<sup>30</sup> Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater: Time Runs Out in CBI* (Washington, DC: United States

objective of reopening ground communications with China by connecting a road from Ledo, India to the Burma Road.<sup>31</sup> The research timeframe is limited to encompass major campaigns in northern Burma. Analysis begins with the start of the First Burma Campaign at the end of December 1941, Japan's first proactive strategy in Burma. The analysis ends on March 7, 1945, when Chinese forces seized the town of Lashio to end the northern portion of Operation Capital and complete the Allied strategic objective of reopening land communications with China.<sup>32</sup>

The analysis focuses on the two broad categories of Allied special operations units which fought in northern Burma—units developed for conducting unconventional warfare (UW) through the indigenous population, and units developed for conducting unilateral, long-range penetration operations. The UW units consisted of Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Detachment 101 and the British Special Operations Executive (SOE). Long-Range Penetration Groups (LRPGs) included two British units, 77 Indian Infantry Brigade (Chindits) and Special Force, as well as two American units, the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) (Merrill's Marauders) and the 5332nd Brigade (Provisional) (Mars Task Force). The OSS expanded its organizational presence in the CBI Theater throughout the war, peaking in June 1944 with seven separate organizations—three in China, two in India, one in Ceylon, and Detachment 101 in

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Army Center of Military History, 1987), 223; Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *History of Imperial General Headquarters*, 380.

<sup>31</sup> Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, ed., *Quadrant Conference, August 1943: Papers and Minutes of Meetings* (Washington, DC: Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 1943), 68.

<sup>32</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 227.

Burma.<sup>33</sup> However, this study will only focus on Detachment 101, and specifically the unit's UW operations through its Kachin Ranger guerrillas.

The analysis does not include other Allied forces which possess some characteristics of modern special operations units. SOE trained and fielded several irregular units in northern Burma using indigenous personnel, including the Kachin Levies and V-Force.<sup>34</sup> While their organization and training was irregular, these units operated under the control of conventional forces to conduct tactical-level reconnaissance and security tasks.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, the United States Army embedded combat advisors throughout Nationalist Chinese forces under the Chinese Army in India (CAI) and Yoke-Force Operations Staff (Y-FOS). The advisors, assisting headquarters at battalion level and higher, consisted of conventional force personnel who advised Chinese units to conduct conventional maneuver operations.<sup>36</sup>

### Significance of Research

This study contributes to World War II and special operations historical literature through its approach. This study combines multiple historical accounts of Allied special

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<sup>33</sup> For an overview of all OSS activities and organizations throughout the Far East, see Kermit Roosevelt, *War Report: Office of Strategic Services (OSS)*, vol. 2 (New York: Walker, 1976), 357-364.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma: Jungle Warfare and Intelligence Gathering in World War II* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2018), 41, 97.

<sup>35</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 238n38.

<sup>36</sup> Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater: Stilwell's Command Problems* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1987), 34. <https://history.army.mil/html/bookshelves/collect/ww2-chiburin.html>.

operations units with primary sources of Japanese operational and strategic perspectives to examine special operations effects through the lens of enemy strategy. As a result, the study makes conclusions which are inconsistent with the common historical narrative. Examination of Burma as a case study is beneficial for several reasons: the conflict's setting in mainland Asia; the prevalence and importance of special operations throughout the conflict; the number of Japanese strategy changes; and the large-scale involvement of Chinese forces. The results of the study have implications for current and future special operations forces, as national-level policy makers continue to employ special operations capabilities for strategic-level effects at low cost.

#### Critical Definitions

Several terms from the study require explanation for purposes of clarity: strategy, special operations, unconventional warfare, guerrillas, and long-range penetration group. This study uses modern terms from United States doctrine to describe World War II units and operations to the maximum extent possible to achieve greater clarity and understanding. United States doctrine defines strategy as “a prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives.”<sup>37</sup> This study divides strategy at the theater and national levels, describing each as ideas encapsulated in policies and objectives for employing the military instrument of national power.

“Special operations” is a term modern doctrine uses to describe a wide variety of operations “requiring unique modes of employment, tactical techniques, equipment and

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<sup>37</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, June 2020), 204.



training often conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and are characterized by one or more of the following: time sensitive, clandestine, low visibility, conducted with and/or through indigenous forces, requiring regional expertise, and/or a high degree of risk.<sup>38</sup> 1944 OSS doctrine ascribes the term to operations which closely reflect the modern definition of the term “unconventional warfare” (UW).<sup>39</sup> Modern United States doctrine defines UW as “activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area.”<sup>40</sup> Modern United States joint doctrine defines “guerrillas” as “a group of irregular, predominantly indigenous personnel organized along military lines to conduct military and paramilitary operations in enemy-held, hostile, or denied territory.”<sup>41</sup>

There is no direct, modern equivalent to the term “Long-Range Penetration Group” (LRPG). This study uses a definition adapted from a description by Brigadier Bernard Fergusson, the commander of 16 Brigade of the British Special Force: a small, military force inserted, by air or ground, deep into enemy-held territory to disrupt or destroy enemy forces in support of larger conventional operations. The primary

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<sup>38</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 18 April 2011), GL-11.

<sup>39</sup> Office of Strategic Services, Strategic Services Field Manual No. 4, *Special Operations Field Manual-Strategic Services (Provisional)* (Washington, DC: Office of Strategic Services, 23 February 1944), 3. The OSS definition was limited to “sabotage,” “direct contact with and support of underground resistance groups,” and “conduct of special operations not assigned to other Government agencies and not under direct control of theater or area commanders.”

<sup>40</sup> JCS, JP 3-05, GL-12.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, GL-7.

distinctions between L RPGs and guerrilla units were their focus and their force composition. The focus of L RPGs was the destruction or disruption of enemy forces and infrastructure, while UW units performed a wide range of military and paramilitary operations. Additionally, the L RPG consisted of military personnel organized in quasi-conventional military units. UW units consisted of mixed military, civilian, and indigenous personnel organized into irregular units based on mission requirements.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Bernard Fergusson, *Beyond the Chindwin* (London: Anthony Mott, 1983), 21.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE NORTHERN BURMA WAR IN CONTEXT

The purpose of this chapter is to provide contextual understanding of the major campaigns and major Japanese strategic inflection points throughout the war in northern Burma. Subsequent chapters will examine special operations and their relationship with both the campaigns and Japanese strategic decisions. The war in northern Burma occurred in three main phases: defeat and rebuilding; contesting offensives; and reopening the Burma Road. The first phase, from December 1941 to September 1943, consisted of a rapid Allied defeat followed by a period of rebuilding as both sides prepared for resumed offensives. The second phase, from October 1943 and August 1944, consisted of three simultaneous offensives: the Allied advance from Ledo to Myitkyina, in the center; the Japanese advance to Kohima-Imphal, across the Burma-India frontier; and the Chinese advance across the Salween River, near the Burma-China border. During the third phase, from September 1944 to March 1945, Allied forces conducted two offensives to reopen the Burma Road and end the Japanese blockade of China.

#### Defeat and Rebuilding, December 1941–September 1943

##### The First Burma Campaign

The Japanese invasion of Burma, known to the British as the First Burma Campaign, occurred in four phases.<sup>43</sup> The first phase began on December 8, 1941 when

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<sup>43</sup> Edward J. Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2009), 225; Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 48-49.

Lieutenant General Iida Shōjirō's Fifteenth Army invaded Tenasserim and Point Victoria, the southernmost point of Burma. The initial phase ended when the Japanese seized the coastal town of Tavoy on January 19, 1942. The second phase began as two divisions of the Japanese Fifteenth Army—the 33rd and 55th—enveloped the retreating British from Siam to the east. It ended after a costly British retreat across the Sittang River and the Japanese seizure of Rangoon on March 8, which effectively severed the Burma Road. The third phase began as two additional Japanese divisions—the 18th and 56th—landed near Rangoon and split the northward advance along two axes. One continued pursuit of the retreating Commonwealth forces through Mandalay, while the other severed the Burma Road at its northern terminus of Lashio. The fourth phase continued until the two Japanese columns seized the western Akyab Coast and the northern Myitkyina airfield, respectively.

To complete their conquest, the Japanese Fifteenth Army employed over 250,000 soldiers from four divisions, reinforced by two tank regiments and an air division.<sup>44</sup> Japanese units throughout the campaign maintained an advantage over their road-bound adversaries through rapid jungle envelopment tactics supported by dedicated attack aircraft with air superiority.<sup>45</sup> Advancing forces received additional support from the

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<sup>44</sup> Allen, *Burma*, 53, 59. Japanese forces during the First Burma Campaign totaled approximately 150,000 combat troops and another 100,000 support troops; United States War Department, Technical Manual-E 30-480, *Technical Manual: Handbook on Japanese Military Forces* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1 October 1944), 54, <https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/Japan/IJA/HB/index.html#index>. A Japanese air division consisted of approximately 200 total aircraft organized into regiments by function—fighter, bomber, reconnaissance, and transport—along with their supporting ground forces.

<sup>45</sup> Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, 225.

collaborationist Burma Independence Army (BIA). BIA's ranks included Nationalists and dacoits "sniping, falling upon isolated parties of refugees and stragglers, looting, burning and killing," often in Burmese or British attire, to create widespread chaos and panic.<sup>46</sup>

Allied forces fled the advance by all available means (see figure 3). The British 1st Burma Corps (Burcorps), under the command of Major General (later Field Marshal) William Slim, marched into India as "gaunt and ragged as scarecrows" after four months and nine hundred miles of withdrawal under constant combat.<sup>47</sup> Attempting to protect the Burma Road and assist their Allies, two initial divisions of Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist Chinese forces entered northeastern Burma in early February 1942 under the nominal command of his American deputy, Lieutenant General Joseph W. Stilwell. Out of disrespect and distrust, British forces strongly objected to larger Chinese intervention until forced to evacuate Rangoon in early March.<sup>48</sup> By the end of April, three Chinese Field Armies with a total of nine divisions formed the right flank of Allied defenses in northern Burma.<sup>49</sup> As Japanese forces enveloped both flanks of the new Allied line,

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<sup>46</sup> Frank Owen, *The Campaign in Burma* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1946), 23. Dacoit is the local term for an armed robber; Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 40, 54-55. The Japanese formed the BIA from a cadre of thirty Burmese Nationalist leaders under Major General Aung San. The unit grew from three hundred to five thousand fighters during the First Burma Campaign, promoted by Japanese propaganda and tacit support from a fearful population of over thirty thousand Burmese villagers.

<sup>47</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 110.

<sup>48</sup> Allen, *Burma*, 58-59. British leaders concluded that "the Chinese had no supply system and lived off the land like locusts. There was profound mistrust between them and the Burmese, and their command arrangements were chaotic." Chiang's impressions of the British were no better, as he "had no faith in British strategy or morale" after their losses of Singapore, Malaya, and Burma.

<sup>49</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 37, 43, 61, 74.

orderly withdrawal became disorganized retreat as British forces fled on foot to eastern India. Chinese forces split in two directions, with one group walking to India and the other group retreating to China.<sup>50</sup>



Figure 3. First Burma Campaign, April-May 1942

Source: Clayton R. Newell, Center of Military History Publication 72-21, *Burma, 1942* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1994), 20.

<sup>50</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 79, 87, 108, 143-144; Spector, *Eagle against the Sun*, 331-332.

Allied special operations units played a small but critical role throughout the campaign. British Special Operations Executive (SOE) personnel and their Kachin Levies facilitated withdrawal of British and Indian stragglers from the invading Japanese and fought delaying actions in support of the withdrawal. Additionally, these forces prevented the Japanese from enveloping the Allied left flank in northern Burma, enabling British forces to withdraw to India and to maintain a garrison in Burma at Fort Hertz.<sup>51</sup>

Japanese units reached the Burma-India border in no better condition than their Allied enemies. The Fifteenth Army occupied the hilly frontier at “little more than a blind stagger,” exhausted from four months of continuous fighting through “the humid jungles, the gushing mountain streams, the muddy paddy-fields, and almost vertical ascents and descents.”<sup>52</sup> Countless numbers suffered from tropical diseases and malnutrition, surviving on “poor meals of just rice and salt.”<sup>53</sup> To complicate matters further, monsoon rains during the final phase of the campaign “seal[ed] off the mountain passes to India with a wall of mud.”<sup>54</sup> Japanese operational objectives at the end of the campaign were to secure a defensive line east of the Chin hills, which formed a natural barrier between Burma and India (see figure 4). From this position, Fifteenth Army units could protect the

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<sup>51</sup> Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 60-66.

<sup>52</sup> Martin J. Waters, “The Operations of a Provisional OSS Platoon, Night Reconnaissance Operations, the Arakan Coast, Burma, Oct. 1944-Apr. 1945” (Monograph, U.S. Army Advanced Infantry Officers Course, 1948) 3-4, <https://www.benning.army.mil/Library/Donovanpapers/wwii/index.html>.

<sup>53</sup> Kazuo Tamayama and John Nunneley, *Tales by Japanese Soldiers of the Burma Campaign 1942-1945* (London: Cassel, 2000), 98.

<sup>54</sup> Waters, “The Operations of a Provisional OSS Platoon,” 4.

port of Rangoon, blockade China from ground resupply, and enable preparations for a renewed offensive at the end of the monsoon season.<sup>55</sup>



Figure 4. Disposition of Japanese Fifteenth Army, December 1942

Source: Adapted from Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *Burma Operations Record: 15th Army Operations in Imphal Area and Withdrawal to Northern Burma (Revised Edition)* (Japanese Monograph No. 134, 10 October 1957), 2. <https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4013coll8/id/2605>.

<sup>55</sup> Drea, *In the Service of the Emperor*, 53.



## Reorganization and Preparation for the Offensive

The Japanese Fifteenth Army began to consolidate its gains and establish military governance throughout Burma shortly after the completion of the First Burma campaign. IGHQ rechristened a core cadre from the BIA into the Burma Defense Army (BDA) in August 1942. This force served under the control of a provisional Burmese government led by Dr. Baw Maw.<sup>56</sup> They established the Burma Area Army under Lieutenant General Masakazu Kawabe in March 1943. As the Fifteenth Army maintained control of northern and central Burma, the Area Army Headquarters provided centralized control over the Akyab region.<sup>57</sup> Garrison units settled into “an idle daily life” of board games, poetry, and dance to fill time between convalescing, duty, training, and inspections.<sup>58</sup> Japanese soldiers and conscripted Burmese laborers built or repaired road and rail infrastructure, often by hand with no heavy machinery.<sup>59</sup> In August 1943, the Burmese government declared independence, transitioning the BDA into National Defense Army (NDA), signing an alliance pact with Japan, and declaring war on Great Britain and the United States.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Headquarters, Army Service Forces, M354-18A, *Civil Affairs Handbook, Japan, Section 18A: Japanese Administration Over Occupied Areas-Burma* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2 August 1944), 9-10.

<sup>57</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 14.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>59</sup> Tamayama and Nunneley, *Tales by Japanese Soldiers of the Burma Campaign 1942-1945*, 110-111; Headquarters, Army Service Forces, M354-18A, 15-16.

<sup>60</sup> Headquarters, Army Service Forces, M354-18A, 20-21.

Japanese forces quickly set to establish defenses in Burma and control the territory they captured. The British, American, and Chinese armies began intensive efforts to rebuild their forces and train for a counteroffensive, with a strong desire to resume operations as soon as possible. Unfortunately for the British Army in India, drastic combat power shortages and multiple crises marred its efforts.

The understrength British Eastern Army, headquartered in Ranchi, had responsibilities to defend four provinces of eastern India from both the external threat of Japanese invasion and the internal threat of growing Indian Nationalism. Two anemic corps—IV Corps in the north and XV Corps in the south—were the only forces available to “control an uneasy area as large as a major European country, with a population of millions” and to “defend against probable invasion seven hundred miles of coast, uncovered by any naval force.”<sup>61</sup>

Eastern Army’s first crisis was internal. During the August 1942 the “Quit India” Movement, organized rebel groups attacked police stations, strategic rail infrastructure, and communications facilities across eastern India, which led to multi-day stoppages in supplies bound for units on the Burmese front.<sup>62</sup> Eastern Army deployed nearly sixty battalions of infantry—approximately thirty-five thousand troops—to repress the widespread violence. British authorities also approved military aircraft to strafe civilian attackers with machine guns on six separate occasions.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 126-127.

<sup>62</sup> Richard J. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War against Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 159; Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 135-137; Spector, *Eagle against the Sun*, 337.

<sup>63</sup> Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War against Japan*, 159-160.

As Eastern Army finished quelling the violence, its focus returned to the front and training for an early counteroffensive into Burma. Commanders focused their training on several hard lessons from the First Burma Campaign. These lessons included individual combat skills for every soldier, mobility and survivability of headquarters, and large-scale operations in the jungle to dispel “the fatal idea that the Japanese had something we had not.”<sup>64</sup> Physical preparations for counteroffensive operations accompanied rigorous and realistic training. British engineers constructed bases, airfields, roads, and rail infrastructure to facilitate better sustainment of upcoming offensive operations.<sup>65</sup>

While British forces focused on threats to India in the months after defeat, the United States focused on keeping China in the war to prevent Japanese reinforcement of other fronts and to develop an eastern offensive capability against the home islands.<sup>66</sup> Beginning in mid-1942, Stilwell led two separate training programs for Chiang’s forces. At Ramargh, India, American cadre organized, trained, and equipped the 22nd and 38th Divisions under the newly-formed Chinese Army in India (CAI), or Chih Hui Pu. In Yunnan, China, a cadre of American advisors prepared another thirty divisions for operations in Burma.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 138-142, 146.

<sup>65</sup> Tamayama and Nunneley, *Tales by Japanese Soldiers of the Burma Campaign 1942-1945*, 17-18.

<sup>66</sup> Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater: Stilwell’s Mission to China* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 2002), 65.

<sup>67</sup> Office of the Chief of Military History, *Order of Battle of the United States Army Ground Forces in World War II: Pacific Theater of Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1959), 239-240.

To supply the divisions in Yunnan with Lend-Lease food, fuel, weapons, and equipment, the United States established an aerial supply route known as “The Hump” in April 1942. Pilots flew one hundred C-47 aircraft day and night over the Himalaya mountains, facing terrible weather conditions and constant threat of attack from Japanese fighter aircraft. Upon their return from China to India, the same aircraft transported thousands of Chinese recruits to fill the divisions training at Ramargh.<sup>68</sup> The United States had also begun planning to construct a road linking Ledo, India to the Burma Road to reopen ground transportation with China. To secure the planned route for the road, Stilwell planned to invade northern Burma from two directions using the Chinese forces in Ramargh and Yunnan—codenamed “X-Force” and “Y-Force,” respectively. U.S. engineer units began carving the road out of the jungles and hills in late 1942, adding over 80 miles by October 1943.<sup>69</sup>

As Allied and Japanese forces prepared for the inevitable resumption of conflict in southeast Asia, their heads of state and chiefs of staff vigorously debated the way in which future operations would unfold. The debate focused on where to conduct a counteroffensive. At the Trident Conference in May 1943, British and American leaders wrestled over the options of a land campaign in northern Burma, amphibious operations in southern Burma, or bypassing Burma altogether.<sup>70</sup> At the Quadrant Conference in

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<sup>68</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission to China*, 77-78; Allen, *Burma*, 333-334.

<sup>69</sup> Hogan, CMH Pub 72-5, 8.

<sup>70</sup> Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, ed., *Trident Conference, May 1943: Papers and Minutes of Meetings* (Washington, DC: Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 1943), 265-276. The combined amphibious and land operations in the south were codenamed Operation Anakim. The Combined Chiefs of Staff initially decided to execute the operations in summer 1943. However, Wavell withdrew British commitment to the

August, the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) directed the establishment of Southeast Asia Command (SEAC), under the command of Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, as a headquarters capable of implementing any course of action for defeating Japan.<sup>71</sup> The CCS also concluded that the recapture of land communications with China, particularly through the opening of the Ledo Road and an associated fuel pipeline, was a strategic necessity.<sup>72</sup>

Japanese leaders debated an end point for Imperial expansion. The first discussion took place during the middle of the First Burma Campaign, when IGHQ held a liaison conference to determine its national strategy for the months and years of war ahead. Based on their estimates of Allied operational timelines, IGHQ elected to adopt a national strategy of expanding its gains in the Pacific and building a strategic defensive perimeter from Hawaii to the Indian Ocean. At a subsequent conference on September 30, 1943, Japan's strategic ambitions changed after months of heavy losses in the central Pacific. IGHQ announced the development of a consolidated "absolute national defense sphere," from which there would be no retreat. The zone's boundary would stretch from the Kurile islands, through the central Pacific, south of New Guinea, and to the western border of Burma. The line would consist of "impregnable defenses" and an "undefeatable strategic position."<sup>73</sup>

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plan, citing a lack of available naval assets to support amphibious landings to recapture Rangoon.

<sup>71</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission to China*, 360.

<sup>72</sup> Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, ed., *Quadrant Conference*, 467-468, 481-482.

<sup>73</sup> Morton, CMH Pub 5-1, 545-547. Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, 230-231.

Although overextension caused them to adopt a defensive national strategy, a troubled IGHQ sought offensive means to improve the absolute national defense sphere in Burma. A plan for invading eastern India from Burma emerged in August 1942. The plan, named Operation No. 21, involved a limited offensive to fight a decisive battle with British forces in eastern India after blocking the mountain passes along the Burma-India border (see figure 5). A strengthened defensive position in eastern India would make additional troops available for deployment to the central Pacific. While IGHQ approved the plan, deteriorating situations in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands in autumn 1942 caused them to indefinitely postpone its execution.<sup>74</sup>

In April 1943, planning for offensive operations into India resumed through a combination of personal ambition and bureaucratic acquiescence. Lieutenant General Mutaguchi Renya, the newly-appointed Fifteenth Army Commander, formulated and aggressively promoted a modified version of Operation No. 21 to Kawabe for approval. Mutaguchi's plan included a large-scale invasion of eastern India which would foment a widespread uprising and enable the newly-formed Indian National Army (INA) to complete the liberation of India from the British Empire.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 13-14; Allen, *Burma*, 153.

<sup>75</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 35-36; Allen, *Burma*, 167-170. The Japanese built the BIA as an anti-British force from prisoners captured in Malaya, Singapore, and Burma. The INA's commander, Subhas Chandra Bose, was a Nationalist revolutionary who established the Provisional Government of Free India. Bose, a skilled politician whose unbridled ambition equaled that of Mutaguchi, convinced the wary IGHQ to include Indian liberation in their strategic plans.

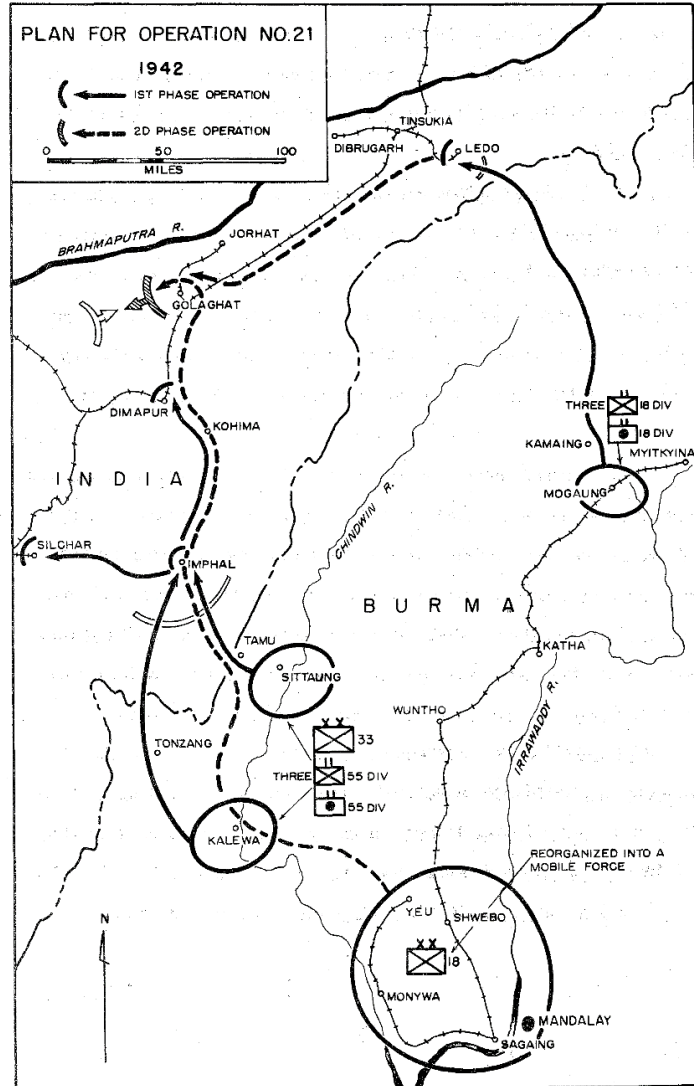


Figure 5. Plan for Japanese Operation No. 21 (Limited Offensive into India), 1942

Source: Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *Burma Operations Record: 15th Army Operations in Imphal Area and Withdrawal to Northern Burma (Revised Edition)*, (Japanese Monograph No. 134, 10 October 1957), 12. <https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4013coll8/id/2605>.

Kawabe agreed to a limited attack in principle as an ‘offensive defensive’ against Allied counterattack, but he believed an invasion would involve too much political and

strategic risk.<sup>76</sup> Major General Inada Masazumi, the Southern Army Vice Chief of Staff, threatened to disapprove the plan if Mutaguchi persisted, “risk[ing] an offensive which might well prove to be strategically and tactically unsound.” In August 1943, IGHQ reluctantly issued the order to prepare for an attack which closely mirrored Operation No 21.<sup>77</sup> At the end of December 1943, Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki gave the limited plan its final endorsement from a steaming bathtub in his official residence, despite its unresolved issues.<sup>78</sup> With no one willing to forcefully object to his version of the plan, Mutaguchi continued to prepare for the large-scale invasion he envisioned.<sup>79</sup>

#### Contesting Offensives, October 1943-August 1944

As the monsoon season ended in 1943, both Allied and Japanese forces mobilized for offensive operations along the border areas of northern Burma (see figure 6). Stilwell and the two divisions of the CAI planned to invade Burma from the northwest to seize the transportation hub and fighter base at Myitkyina.<sup>80</sup> While fighting to delay the CAI advance, the Japanese Fifteenth Army prepared logistical networks for a large-scale invasion of eastern India.<sup>81</sup> In Yunnan Province, China, divisions of Y-Force prepared to cross the Salween River with an initial mission to seize a critical town along the Burma

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<sup>76</sup> Harries and Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun*, 407, 408.

<sup>77</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 27-28, 30-32.

<sup>78</sup> Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, 236-237.

<sup>79</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 30.

<sup>80</sup> Richard Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines: With the OSS in Burma* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1979), 267-268.

<sup>81</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 27.



Road.<sup>82</sup> Combat in northern Burma reached a violent crescendo in spring 1944, as all three campaigns occurred simultaneously.



Figure 6. Disposition of Conventional Allied and Japanese Forces, December 1943

Source: Adapted from Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater: Stilwell's Command Problems* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1987), 120, <https://history.army.mil/html/bookshelves/collect/ww2-chiburin.html>.

<sup>82</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 329, 333.

## The March to Myitkyina: Operation Albacore

In late October 1943, Stilwell and Mountbatten met with Chiang to discuss plans for their upcoming offensive into northern Burma. The campaign objective was the transportation hub of Myitkyina, which would end Japanese interference against the Hump and provide existing transportation infrastructure to facilitate connecting the Ledo Road to China.<sup>83</sup> Stilwell began the advance with CAI's two divisions—the 38th and 22nd—against five battalions of the Japanese 18th Division in the Hukawng Valley.<sup>84</sup> A force of British Gurkhas and Kachin Levies also advanced southward from Fort Hertz to seize the Japanese logistical hub at Sumprabum.<sup>85</sup> In early 1944, Stilwell gained control of two special operations units—Galahad, or Merrill's Marauders, and Special Force—to disrupt the flanks and rear areas of the opposing Japanese 18th Division.<sup>86</sup> Detachment 101's Kachin Ranger guerrillas, operating at a strength of three thousand to four thousand fighters from six base locations, also provided invaluable assistance to the offensive.<sup>87</sup>

Stilwell's plan to capture Myitkyina, codenamed Operation Albacore, occurred in four phases based on construction progress of the Ledo Road (see figure 7). During the first two phases, the Chinese 38th Division marched from Ledo to the Burma border to

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<sup>83</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 9-10.

<sup>84</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 33; Charlton Ogburn, Jr., *The Marauders* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 88.

<sup>85</sup> William R. Peers and Dean Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America's Most Successful Guerrilla Force* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), 162.

<sup>86</sup> Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 267-268.

<sup>87</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 74.

protect road construction and Allied bases in India.<sup>88</sup> The third phase, Albacore Three, began in early October 1943 as 38th Division advanced into Burma's Hukawng Valley.

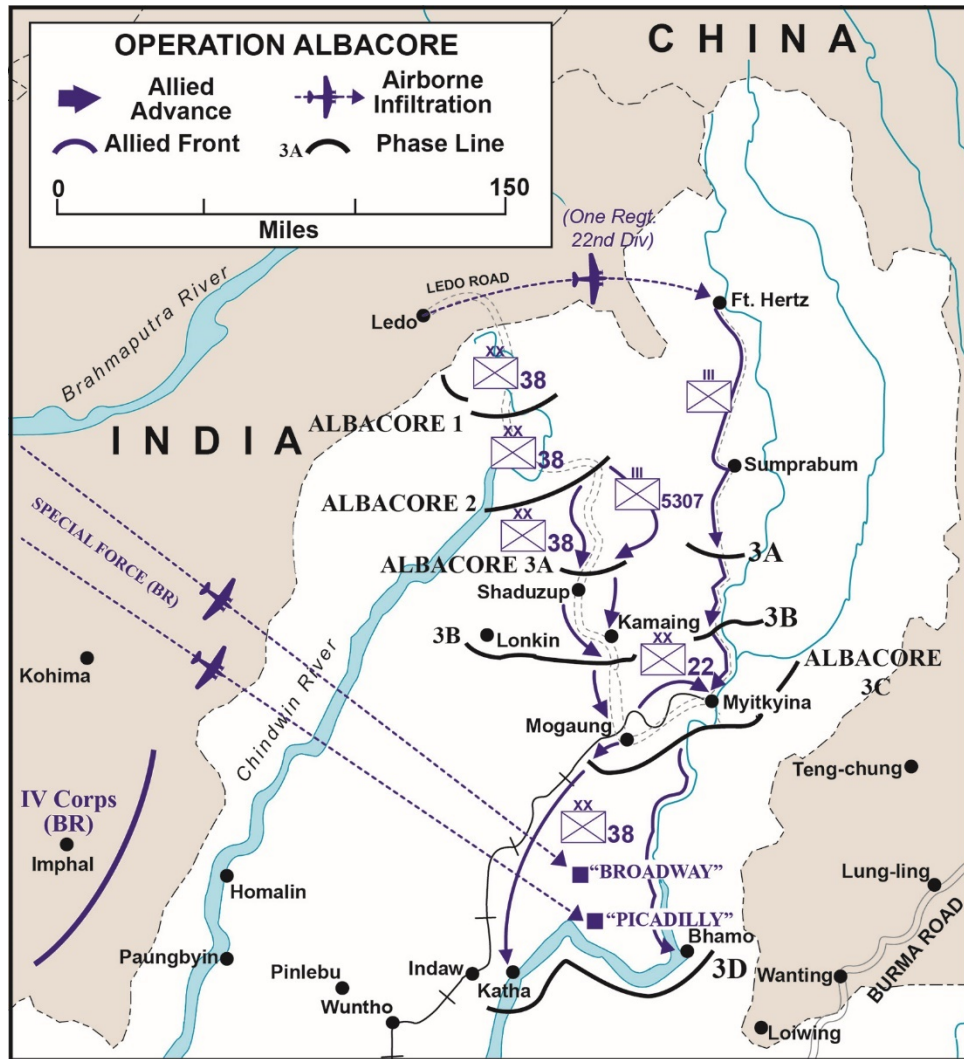


Figure 7. Operation Albacore

Source: Adapted from Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater: Stilwell's Command Problems* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1987), 40. <https://history.army.mil/html/bookshelves/collect/ww2-chiburin.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 41, 45.

Overcoming strong resistance from the Japanese 18th Division, CAI advanced over sixty miles to the opposite end of the Hukawng Valley by late February 1944.<sup>89</sup> From March to Late April, the Chinese 38th and 22nd Divisions advanced through the Mogaung Valley, critically supported by special operations units. Stilwell employed Galahad, an American LRP, to envelop Japanese positions which slowed the conventional Chinese advance.<sup>90</sup> On 17 May, a combined force of Galahad, two Chinese Regiments, and three hundred of Detachment 101's Kachin Ranger guerrillas seized the airfield at Myitkyina.<sup>91</sup> From the end of May to the end of June, Chinese forces supported 77 Brigade of the British Special Force to capture the town of Mogaung.<sup>92</sup> After a three month siege, Chinese forces finally captured the town of Myitkyina in early August to end the campaign.<sup>93</sup>

#### High-Water Mark of the Japanese Empire: Kohima and Imphal

As Mutaguchi's Japanese Fifteenth Army struggled to delay Allied conventional offensives on two fronts and fought increasingly destructive Allied special operations units in its rear areas, the Burma Area Army continued to support the plan to invade India

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<sup>89</sup> Hogan, CMH Pub 72-5, 13; Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 45-48.

<sup>90</sup> Hogan, CMH Pub 72-5, 13-17.

<sup>91</sup> United States Army Center of Military History (CMH), Center of Military History Publication (CMH Pub) 100-4, *Merrill's Marauders, February-May 1944* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1990), 93-113.

<sup>92</sup> Michael Calvert, *Chindits-Long Range Penetration* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), 135-147; Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 219-220.

<sup>93</sup> Hogan, CMH Pub 72-5, 17-20.

in spring 1944. The campaign represented the last Japanese employment of offensive strategy in Southeast Asia. Fifteenth Army's defeat, the largest in the history of the Imperial Japanese Army, was a turning point which opened central Burma for a British counteroffensive in autumn of the same year.

To initiate the Indian invasion plan, the Japanese Twenty-Eighth Army launched a diversionary attack in the Arakan region, codenamed Ha-Go, in February. The operation intended to draw British troops away from the campaign's main objectives in the Assam region to the north. The attack failed to achieve its diversion effect, and waves of under-supplied Japanese soldiers fought in vain against stiff British stronghold defenses reinforced with air support.<sup>94</sup> Despite Ha-Go's failure, Mutaguchi remained as confident as ever in the success of his main invasion, codenamed U-Go.

Mutaguchi did not hesitate to start the offensive in March, convinced the Fifteenth Army would achieve its objectives by April 29—the Emperor's birthday.<sup>95</sup> In early March, elements of four divisions under Mutaguchi's Fifteenth Army advanced along four axes towards three Anglo-Indian divisions of the British IV Corps.<sup>96</sup> First, Japanese 33rd Division attempted to isolate Imphal from the south by attacking 17 Indian Division at Tongzang and cutting the Tiddim-Bishenpur Road.<sup>97</sup> Next, Yamamoto Force, an independent subordinate unit of 33rd Division, attacked 20 Indian Division near Palel in

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<sup>94</sup> Harries and Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun*, 409-410; Slim *Defeat into Victory*, 241-243.

<sup>95</sup> Harries and Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun*, 409.

<sup>96</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 97; Allen, *Burma*, 191, 193.

<sup>97</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 297-298.

an attempt a breakout onto the Imphal plain and seize a major airfield.<sup>98</sup> Next, The Japanese 15th Division isolated Imphal from the north by blocking the main road to Kohima, which succeeded until Allied counterattacks in early June.<sup>99</sup> Finally, the Japanese 31st Division attacked Kohima, fighting a bloody siege and preventing British reinforcements in Dimapur from reinforcing Imphal to the south.<sup>100</sup> Upon assessing the speed of the Japanese advance, the British IV Corps planned to conduct a concentric withdrawal of forces in the south, east, and north to protect a ‘citadel’ at Imphal with their superior armor, artillery, and air support.<sup>101</sup>

Mutaguchi’s grandiose plans turned into costly failure by the summer of 1944. 33rd Division’s offensive ground to a halt by late March with overwhelming casualties, and its commander refused orders to continue to pursue 17 Indian Division.<sup>102</sup> The Yamamoto Force conducted two small attacks on Palel airfield but withdrew under pressure in June, despite Mutaguchi and Kawabe declaring it the “last hope to salvage some advantage from the Imphal operation.”<sup>103</sup> 15th Division established strong roadblocks on the Kohima-Imphal Road in early April, which held until British units

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<sup>98</sup> Allen, *Burma*, 191, 193, 206.

<sup>99</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 299; Allen, *Burma*, 191, 193.

<sup>100</sup> Harries and Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun*, 410-411.

<sup>101</sup> Allen, *Burma*, 195.

<sup>102</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 134-150, 153-154; Harries and Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun*, 413. For a more detailed description of 33rd Division’s advance south of Imphal, see Allen, *Burma*, 195-206.

<sup>103</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 151; Allen, *Burma*, 206-212.

severed road behind their positions in late June.<sup>104</sup> The Japanese 31st Division seized nearly all of Kohima from its defending garrison until the British 2 Division broke through to reinforce it. The two-month brutal, attritional battle ended on June 1, as Major General Sato Kotoku ordered an “unauthorized retreat” of the 31st Division.<sup>105</sup> At Kawabe’s request, the Southern Army issued the order to suspend the campaign on July 4.<sup>106</sup> From July to September, ragged bands of Fifteenth Army units limped back into Burma through monsoon rains, under appalling conditions and constant pursuit from British forces.<sup>107</sup>

Operation U-Go was an overly ambitious plan which placed ill-equipped soldiers at the end of precarious supply lines with the assumption of using a cattle train and captured enemy materiel for sustainment and transportation.<sup>108</sup> Mutaguchi’s divisions

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<sup>104</sup> Allen, *Burma*, 193, 248-289, 246-260, 295; Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 153.

<sup>105</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 305-323; Allen, *Burma*, 227-289. Fighting at Kohima was reminiscent of World War I combat. Soldiers spent weeks living in fighting positions under constant fire, punctuated by brutal hand-to hand fighting. Both sides suffered from meager rations of food and water. Casualties in aid stations received additional wounds as they lay in aid stations awaiting evacuation.

<sup>106</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 156.

<sup>107</sup> Harries and Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun*, 412-414; Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 152, 155, 157-163. During the retreat, wounded Japanese soldiers unable to continue the march laid on the roadside, “beg[ing] passers-by for hand-grenades with which to finish themselves off.” Those who reached the opposite side of the Chindwin River suffered immeasurably from malnutrition and disease.

<sup>108</sup> Allen, *Burma*, 193; Drea, *In the Service of the Emperor*, 53. Mutaguchi’s logistical plan failed miserably, as cattle died in large numbers and left the Fifteenth Army without food or supplies by the time the unit reached India. When Japanese units also failed to capture vehicles or supplies, their hopes of operational sustainment vanished.

starved as the supply situation failed to improve throughout the campaign. Allied special operations forces in northern Burma played a significant role in exacerbating Fifteenth Army's command and sustainment issues. British Special Force and OSS Detachment 101 disrupted Japanese rear area operations to the extent that Mutaguchi kept his headquarters deep in Burma until April and diverted large units from the front to conduct counter guerrilla operations.<sup>109</sup>

#### Opening a Chinese Front: Y- Force attacks along the Salween River

At the completion of the Burma invasion in summer 1942, the Japanese 56th Division and the divisions of the Chinese Expeditionary Force, or Y-Force, faced each other across the Salween River, approximately 50 miles inside of China.<sup>110</sup> For nearly two years, the front remained stable as neither IGHQ nor Chiang Kai-Shek were interested in resuming operations.<sup>111</sup> From December 1943 to April 1944 President Roosevelt wrote a series of letters to Chiang, urging him to conduct an offensive across the Salween River to support Operation Albacore.

On April 14, 1944, Chiang reluctantly agreed to begin operations after the President threatened to withdraw Lend-Lease support to his forces. The Chinese and CBI Theater staffs developed the plan with two objectives in mind—the Japanese fortifications at Teng-Chung and Lung-Ling. Both objectives were critical points along

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<sup>109</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*. 149-150; Harries and Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun*, 409, 411.

<sup>110</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *Burma Operations Record: The 33rd Army Operations*, (Japanese Monograph No. 148, [1952?], Combined Arms Research Library Archives), 6.

<sup>111</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 6.



the Burma Road and the projected line of communications from India, and the offensive would divide Japanese defenders along the front.<sup>112</sup>

At the start of the campaign, Y-Force consisted of twelve divisions under the command of General Wei Li-huang, with assistance and support of the American Yoke-Force Operations Staff (Y-FOS).<sup>113</sup> Wei's forces crossed the Salween River at three points on the night of May 11-12, 1944 and commenced the attack against the over-extended 56th Division (see figure 8).<sup>114</sup> At more than a twenty-to-one disadvantage, 56th Division established battalion-sized garrisons at key locations and ordered each to "assume independent holding actions completely encircled by the enemy."<sup>115</sup>

In the north, The Chinese Fifty-Third and Fifty-Fourth Armies (corps equivalent) advanced slowly over mountain passes against stiff Japanese resistance to lay siege to Teng-Chung by the end of June. In the south, after rapid initial advances, the Chinese Second Army ground to a halt near Ping-Ka, where units ceased offensive operations in

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<sup>112</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 297-314, 329.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 336-345. Y-FOS, under the command of Colonel Frank Dorn, included a large headquarters staff, services of supply units, and combat advisors. Advisor teams varied in size from six to twenty personnel and served at headquarters down to regimental level. Y-FOS's primary functions were to provide training and supplies to Chinese forces, to exchange intelligence, to conduct air-ground liaison, and to conduct reconstruction and improvement of the Burma Road.

<sup>114</sup> Mark D. Sherry, Center of Military History Publication (CMH Pub) 72-38, *China Defensive* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1995), 16; Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 7. Y-Force benefitted from an unintended effect of years of stalemate—days before the attack, the Japanese Thirty-Third Army reduced 56th Division's strength on the Salween front to two regiments and moved a large ammunition stockpile to Myitkyina to reinforce 18th Division against Stilwell's offensive.

<sup>115</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 11, 20-21, 23.

early June.<sup>116</sup> By the second week of June, units from the Chinese Seventy-First Army surrounded Lung-Ling, the critical position in 56th Division's defensive line. However, a force from the 56th Division relieved the garrison on 16 June and drove the Chinese three miles east of the city.<sup>117</sup> During the monsoon season from July to September, the Salween front stabilized as both sides planned for another offensive, aimed at breaking or maintaining the Japanese blockade of China.<sup>118</sup>

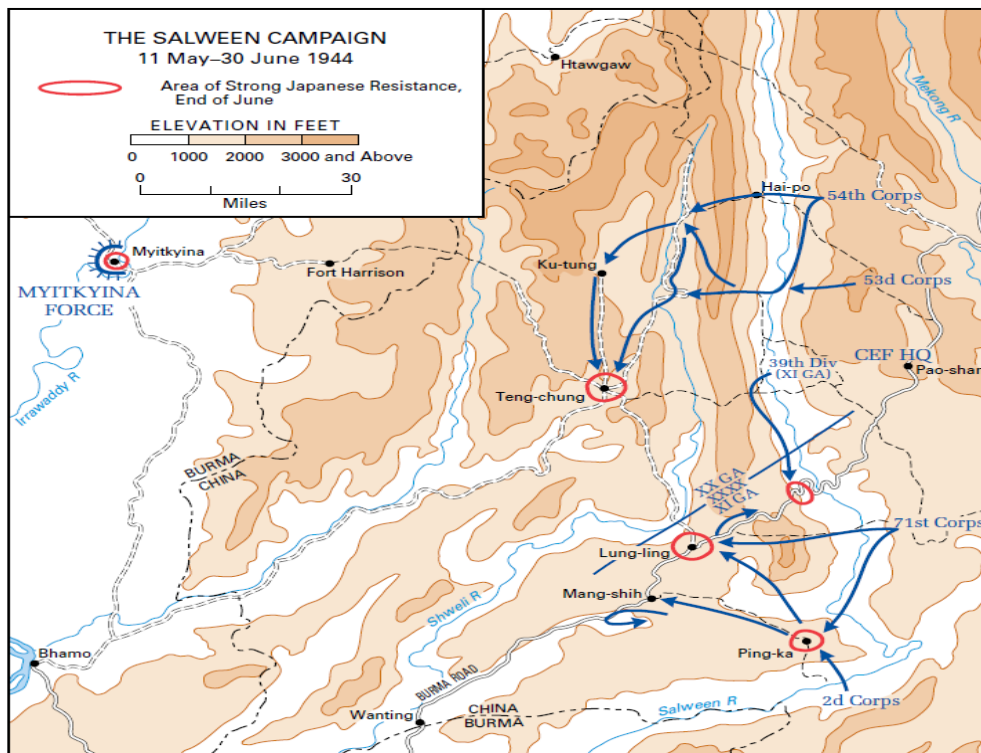


Figure 8. Y-Force Salween Offensive, May 11, 1944-June 30, 1944

Source: Mark D. Sherry, Center of Military History Publication 72-38, *China Defensive* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1995), 17.

<sup>116</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 343-354.

<sup>117</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 11-12; Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 354-359.

<sup>118</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 14.

By the halt of the offensive, Y-Force reclaimed four thousand square miles of Chinese territory and severely reduced the Japanese 56th Division's strength, but at a high cost.<sup>119</sup> According to Y-FOS advisors, Chinese commanders "endlessly wasted manpower and ammunition on costly frontal attacks."<sup>120</sup> Allied special operations did not play a role in the offensive, as Chiang's government refused to allow independent intelligence forces to operate within Chinese territory.<sup>121</sup>

### Reopening the Burma Road, September 1944-March 1945

Destruction of the Japanese Fifteenth Army on the Imphal plain left the entire Burma Area Army vulnerable to the upcoming Allied offensives from three directions. As a result, the Japanese had to dramatically alter their strategy at the theater and national levels.<sup>122</sup> Costly defeats in India, the southwest Pacific, and the Marianas created political instability in Japan, which forced the Tōjō cabinet to resign in July 1944.<sup>123</sup> IGHQ abandoned its 1943 absolute national defense sphere strategy in favor the Shō (Victory) Plan. This strategy focused on defense of the Philippines, Formosa (Taiwan), the Ryukyu Islands, and the Japanese home islands at the expense of all other theaters.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 13.

<sup>120</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 348, 350.

<sup>121</sup> Kermit Roosevelt, *War Report: Office of Strategic Services (OSS)*, vol. 2 (New York: Walker, 1976), 359.

<sup>122</sup> Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, 238.

<sup>123</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *History of Imperial General Headquarters*, 201.

<sup>124</sup> Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, 240.

In September 1944, in pursuit of the Victory Plan, IGHQ diverted large amounts of resources to the central Pacific and informed the Burma Area Army they would no longer receive reinforcements.<sup>125</sup> IGHQ then assigned Burma Area Army two irreconcilable objectives: to secure “strategic areas in southern Burma to form a strong northern flank for the Southern Area”—Siam, Malaya, and French Indochina; and to continue preventing ground communications between India and China.<sup>126</sup> The Burma Area Army, then under the command of General Hoyotaro Kimura, developed a three-part theater strategy to meet those objectives: Operation Dan, the continued blockade of China with the Thirty-Third Army; Operation Ban, Fifteenth Army’s decisive defense of central Burma; and Operation Kan, Twenty-Eighth Army’s defense of the Burmese coast.<sup>127</sup>

In September 1944, the CCS finalized their plan for the coming fall offensive, codenamed Operation Capital, during the Octagon Conference.<sup>128</sup> The plan included offensives along four fronts (see figure 9). In the south, the British XV Corps would advance along the Arakan Coast. In central Burma, the six divisions of the British IV and XXXIII Corps would continue to pursue the Japanese Fifteenth Army it defeated in

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<sup>125</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *History of Imperial General Headquarters*, 174, 183; Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 98-99.

<sup>126</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *History of Imperial General Headquarters*, 222; Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 100.

<sup>127</sup> George L. MacGarrigle, Center of Military History Publication (CMH Pub) 72-37, *Central Burma* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1995), 7; Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 100.

<sup>128</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 83-85.

eastern India toward Mandalay.<sup>129</sup> In northern Burma, Stilwell's Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC) and Y-Force would converge to connect the Ledo Road to the Burma Road.<sup>130</sup>



Figure 9. Disposition of Conventional Allied and Japanese Forces, October 1944

Source: Adapted from Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater: Time Runs Out in CBI* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1987), 76.

<sup>129</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 353, 375.

<sup>130</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 82.

Allied special operations forces played a vital role in support of all four fronts, particularly through intelligence gathering and guerilla operations. Mars Task Force, a follow-on American LRPG which included remnants of Galahad, led NCAC forces to achieve the strategic goal of reopening the Burma Road at the end of January 1945.<sup>131</sup> Detachment 101's Kachin Ranger guerrillas provided guides to other Allied units, conducted intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance activities, and continued to conduct guerilla attacks deep in Japanese rear areas.<sup>132</sup>

The ultimate objective of Operation Capital was “the destruction or expulsion of all Japanese forces in Burma,” but with the intermediate objective of “attainment of overland communications with China.”<sup>133</sup> To implement Operation Capital, Mountbatten activated a new subordinate headquarters, known as Allied Land Forces, Southeast Asia (ALFSEA). This combined headquarters assumed control of all British land forces, NCAC, CAI, and Chinese forces operating within SEAC.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Troy J. Sacquety, “Over the Hills and Far Away: The MARS Task Force, the Ultimate Model for Long Range Penetration Warfare,” *Veritas* 5, no. 4 (Autumn 2009): 15, [https://arsof-history.org/articles/v5n4\\_over\\_the\\_hills\\_page\\_1.html](https://arsof-history.org/articles/v5n4_over_the_hills_page_1.html).

<sup>132</sup> William R. Peers, “Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma,” *Military Review* 28, no. 4 (July 1948): 14, <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p124201coll1/id/927/rec/6>.

<sup>133</sup> Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, ed., *Octagon Conference, September 1944: Papers and Minutes of Meetings, Octagon Conference and Minutes of Combined Chiefs of Staff Meetings in London, June 1944* (Washington, DC: Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 1944), 47.

<sup>134</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 384.

## Y Force and the Completion of Fighting on the Salween Front

To support Operation Dan, the Japanese 56th Division, reinforced by newly-arrived units from the 2nd Division, developed plans for a two-phase offensive to begin on 3 September 1944.<sup>135</sup> The first phase consisted of destroying the main body of Y-Force near Lung-Ling, liberating the garrisons at Lameng and Teng-Chung, and reforming blocking positions on the Burma Road to prevent a link-up between NCAC and Y-Force. During the second phase, 2nd and 18th Divisions would liberate Myitkyina and Bhamo before blocking the Ledo Road.<sup>136</sup>

The Thirty-Third Army failed to accomplish any of its aspirational objectives during the campaign and achieved little more than a delaying effect against Y-Force.<sup>137</sup> During the first two weeks of September, the Japanese 2nd and 56th Divisions advanced to Lung-Ling, where they attacked the seven divisions of the Chinese siege force from the north with few results.<sup>138</sup> During the same time, Y-Force annihilated the major Japanese garrisons at Lameng and Teng-Chung.<sup>139</sup> From September 20-24, 56th Division successfully liberated the besieged garrison at Ping-Ka.<sup>140</sup> September fighting exhausted

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<sup>135</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 26.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-15, 20.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 29; Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 424; Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 130.

<sup>139</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 30-32; Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 435.

<sup>140</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 33-34.

both the Chinese and Japanese forces, with both sides reduced respectively by twenty three and thirty-eight percent strength within the first week alone.<sup>141</sup>

The rest of the campaign progressed in fits and starts over the next three months, much to the chagrin of Y-FOS.<sup>142</sup> Chinese forces halted for nearly the entire month of October to reconstitute their heavy losses at Lung-Ling. The Japanese Thirty-Third Army used the operational pause to send 2nd Division back to central Burma to plan a delaying action with 56th Division which would keep the Burma Road blocked until the end of 1944.<sup>143</sup> In November, Y-Force drove the remaining Japanese defenders out of the garrisons at Lung-Ling, Mang-Shih, Meng-Ka, and Che-Fang (see figure 10).<sup>144</sup> The Chinese advance halted again for the month of December, as the Japanese 56th Division consolidated its forces for a last stand at Wanting and made plans to reinforce the besieged garrison at Bhamo.<sup>145</sup> From January 3 to January 20, 1945, Y-Force fought savagely to seize Wanting, clear the Burma Road in China, and link up with the CAI in the Burmese towns of Mong-yu and Mu-se.<sup>146</sup> The campaign ended in the last week of January, as 56th Division conducted a fighting withdrawal south along the Burma Road

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<sup>141</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 32-33.

<sup>142</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 131, 133.

<sup>143</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 35.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-38; Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 131, 133.

<sup>145</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 133; Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 40.

<sup>146</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 40, 44-47; Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 133-135.



against the CAI and Chiang ordered Y-Force to regroup north of the China-Burma border.<sup>147</sup>

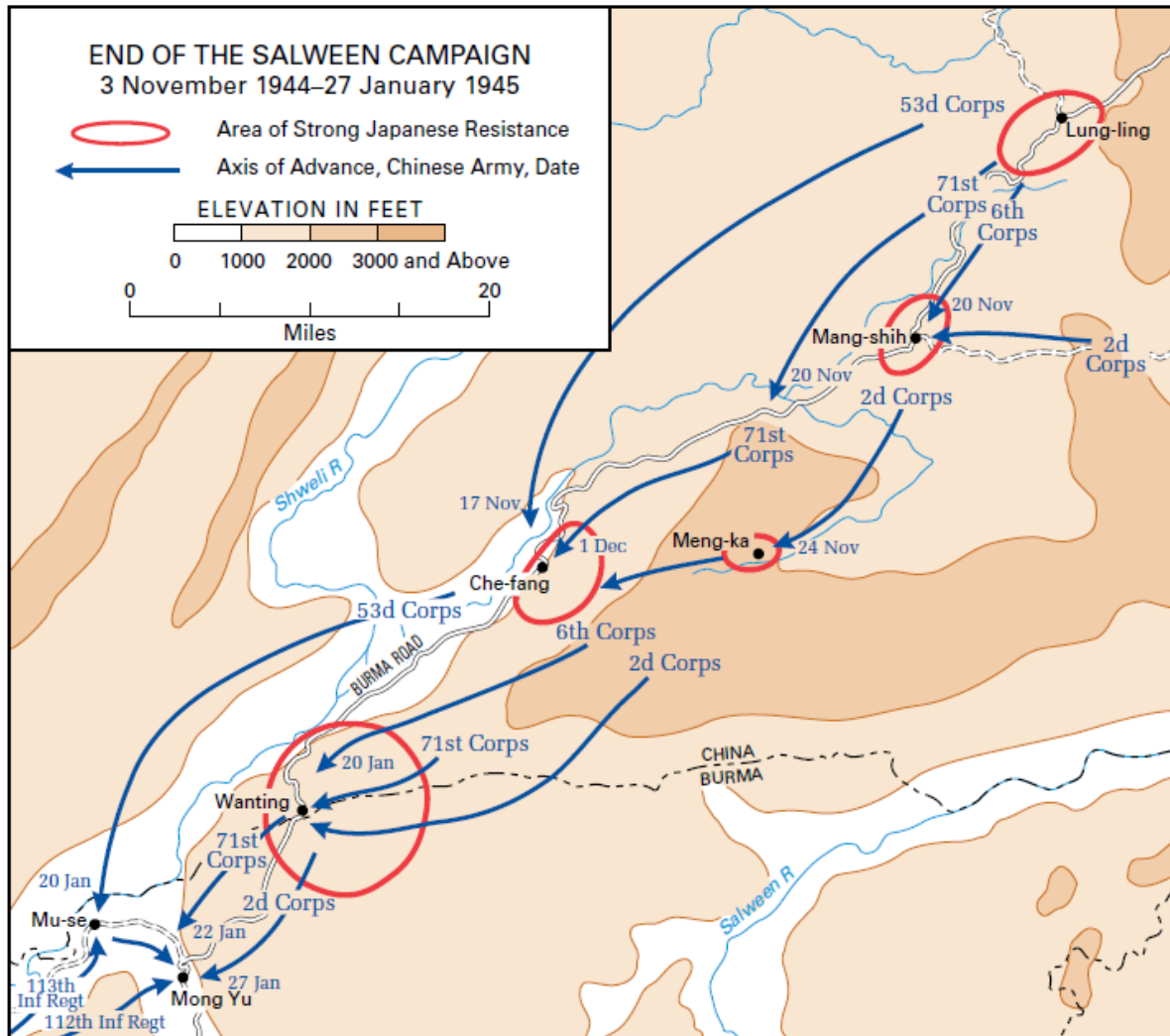


Figure 10. Y-Force Salween Offensive, November 3, 1944-January 27, 1945

Source: Mark D. Sherry, Center of Military History Publication 72-38, *China Defensive* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1995), 22.

<sup>147</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 48; Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 135.

## NCAC's Race to the Burma Road

In mid-October 1944, Chiang Kai-Shek persuaded President Roosevelt to recall Stilwell from command in Burma, and three new generals arrived in theater to fill Stilwell's former roles.<sup>148</sup> After assuming command of NCAC, Sultan planned a three-pronged offensive to achieve Operation Capital's objectives in northern Burma from October 15, 1944 to February 15, 1945 (see figure 11).<sup>149</sup> In the west and center of the line, Allied forces advanced approximately seventy miles south to the Katha-Indaw area to prevent the Japanese 53rd and 18th Divisions from interfering with the planned route of the Ledo Road.<sup>150</sup> OSS Detachment 101 guerrillas screened both flanks of the movement and isolated the Katha garrison in advance of the offensive, enabling the British 36 Division to occupy the town with no resistance in early December.<sup>151</sup> In the east, the Chinese New First Army—consisting of the 38th and 30th Divisions—followed the route of the Ledo Road and seized the fortified stronghold of Bhamo on December

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<sup>148</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 382, 471. Lieutenant General Daniel Sultan assumed command of NCAC and the new U.S. Army India-Burma Theater (IBT). Lieutenant General Albert Wedemeyer assumed command of the U.S. Army China Theater and the role of Chiang's deputy. Lieutenant General Raymond Wheeler became the Deputy Supreme Commander of SEAC.

<sup>149</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 89, 101; Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 384-385.

<sup>150</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 101, 114.

<sup>151</sup> Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," (July 1948): 14; Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 105-106. Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 388. The 36 Division Commander credited Detachment 101 with saving the division after agents provided intelligence which prevented a surprise Japanese counterattack on the British flank.

15, 1944, after three weeks of heavy fighting.<sup>152</sup> Although Chinese forces failed to prevent escape by nine hundred Japanese defenders from the city, seizing Bhamo set the conditions for CAI and Y-Force to converge the following month.<sup>153</sup>

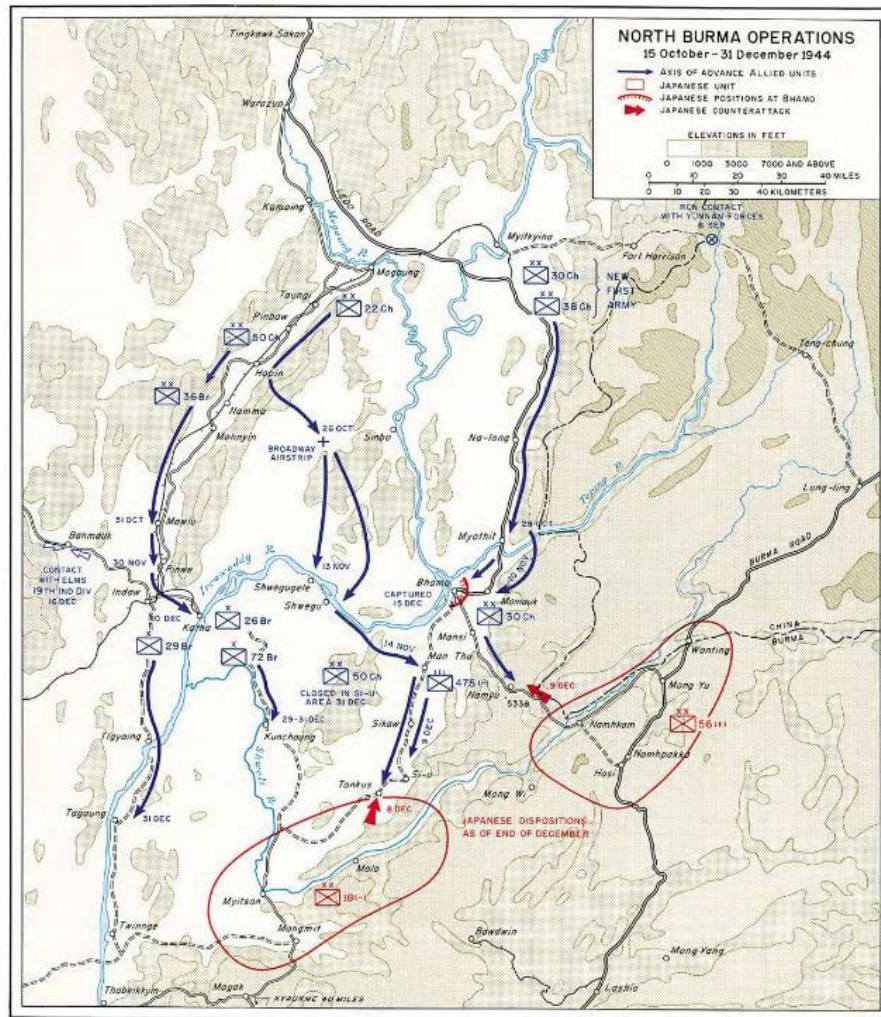


Figure 11. Allied Northern Burma Operations, October 15-December 31, 1944

Source: Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater: Time Runs Out in CBI* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1987), 100.

<sup>152</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 36-43.

<sup>153</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 122-123.

Next, the Chinese New First Army and Mars Task Force, an American LRP, advanced east through the Shweli River valley to sever the Burma Road and force nearly twenty thousand troops of the Japanese Thirty-Third Army to withdraw from northeastern Burma.<sup>154</sup> To achieve its objectives, NCAC advanced eastward to sever the Burma Road in multiple places (see figure 12). In early January 1945, the two divisions of the Chinese New First Army advanced northeast through the Shweli valley, seizing the towns of Namkhan and Mu-Se as Japanese forces consolidated their defensive positions along the trace of the Burma Road.<sup>155</sup> The brigade-sized Mars Task Force advanced rapidly towards the Burma Road but faced much stronger resistance near the town of Namhpakka as the Japanese 56th Division fought desperately to withdraw its forces from Wanting toward central Burma.<sup>156</sup> OSS Detachment 101's Kachin Ranger guerrillas provided guides to and collected intelligence in advance of both the Chinese and American advances.<sup>157</sup>

On January 27, 1945, the Allies reached the strategic objective of reopening the road to China, as CAI and Y-Force converged near the town of Mong-Yu.<sup>158</sup> In February, NCAC continued its advance to clear the Burma Road southward to Lashio, occupying the town with little resistance by March 7 completing the northern portion of

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<sup>154</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 114, 123.

<sup>155</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 36-46; Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 126-127, 130.

<sup>156</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 48-49; Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 186-205.

<sup>157</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 388-389.

<sup>158</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 138, 184.

Operation Capital.<sup>159</sup> As Allied forces moved south to secure more of the Burma road, the Japanese Thirty-Third Army abandoned its defense of the Burma Road to consolidate forces with Fifteenth Army near Mandalay.<sup>160</sup>

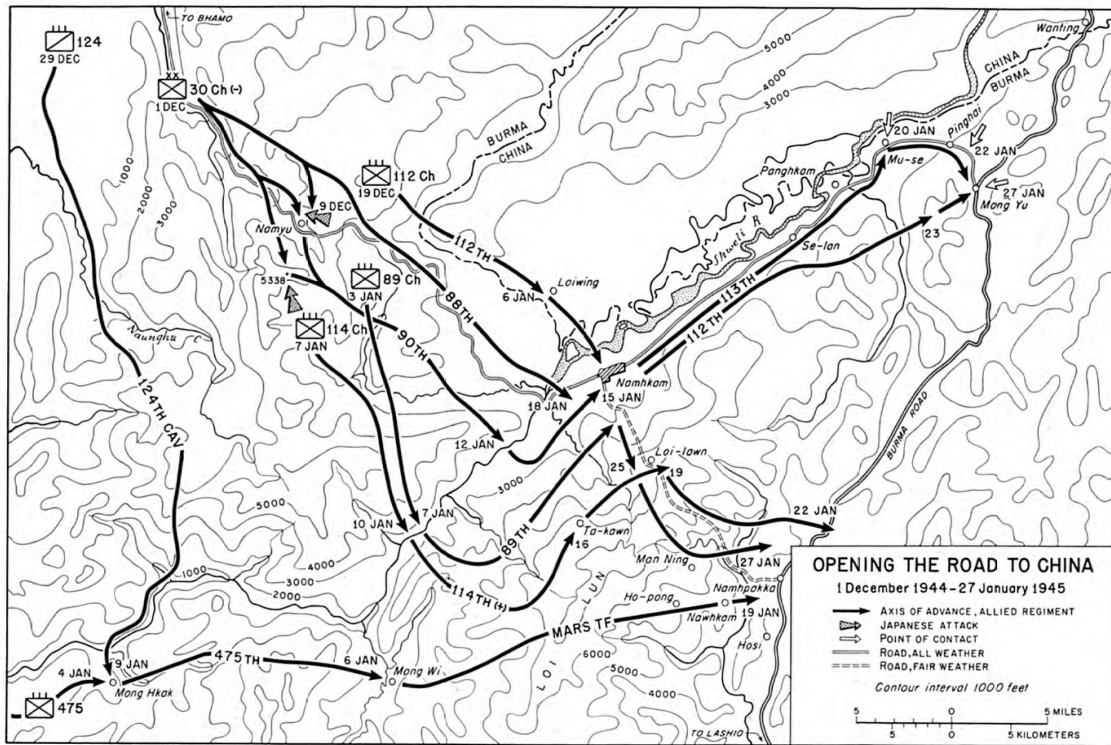


Figure 12. CAI and Mars Task Force Open the Road to China

Source: Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater: Time Runs Out in CBI* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1987), 124.

<sup>159</sup> MacGarrigle, CMH Pub 72-37, 14; Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 226-228.

<sup>160</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *History of Imperial General Headquarters, Army Section*, 253.

The next chapters address Allied special operations contributions to each phase of the war in northern Burma and their effects on Japanese forces. While this study does not analyze the remainder of the war from March to July 1945, the events merit mention for the sake of contextual understanding. After completing the strategic objective of restoring ground communications to China through northern Burma, Allied forces continued their offensive in central and southern Burma to achieve their second strategic objective—removing Japanese forces from Burma entirely.<sup>161</sup> When the Chinese divisions and American Mars Task Force were recalled to China in March, OSS Detachment 101's four battalions of guerrillas served as NCAC's only combat unit, driving ten thousand Japanese troops from the Shan states from April until July.<sup>162</sup> From January to March 1945, Slim's Fourteenth Army advanced from India, seizing Meiktila and Mandalay by the end of March. At the beginning of May, British forces, aided by OSS Detachment 101, seized Rangoon.<sup>163</sup> The end of July marked the end of fighting in Burma, and in mid-August Japanese forces surrendered.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> For a detailed overview of the Allied offensives of February-August 1945, see Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, ch. 6, 7, 10. For more information about OSS Detachment 101's large-scale combat during the same period, see Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 173-217.

<sup>162</sup> Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," (July 1948): 14-15.

<sup>163</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 217-223, 325-328.

<sup>164</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *History of Imperial General Headquarters, Army Section*, 380.

## CHAPTER 3

### SPECIAL OPERATIONS, DECEMBER 1941-SEPTEMBER 1943

The period between December 1941 and September 1943 consisted of four months of savage fighting, followed by months of rebuilding, experimentation, and preparation. As fronts stabilized at the Chindwin and Salween Rivers in May 1942, conventional forces from every belligerent were too exhausted to continue fighting. In the wake of the Allied conventional military defeat, American and British intelligence services introduced nascent special operations forces to the theater. These organizations strove to provide value through intelligence collection and armed resistance in Japanese-occupied areas while conventional forces planned for the reconquest of Burma. While Allied special operations forces failed to produce significant operational effects before August 1943, their experiments provided critical lessons which would propel them to success in later phases of the war.

The British and United States governments both formed special operations forces as components of their civilian intelligence organizations in the early 1940s. The purpose of these forces was to collect foreign intelligence, distribute propaganda, and to conduct offensive guerrilla operations in foreign areas occupied by hostile powers.<sup>165</sup> The British Government established the Special Operations Executive (SOE) shortly after evacuation of their forces at Dunkirk. President Franklin Roosevelt established the United States Coordinator of Information (COI) under Major General William Donovan in the summer

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<sup>165</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 1, 1-2; Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 1-2, 20.

of 1941, after a three-month evaluation of British SOE operations.<sup>166</sup> The COI, which a Presidential Executive Order redesignated as the OSS shortly after its creation, rapidly changed its focus from peacetime espionage to direct armed forces support as the United States entered the war in December 1941.<sup>167</sup> As the war progressed, Allied military commanders in Burma began to conceive and develop their own distinct form of purpose-built special operations units—LRPGs—to conduct direct action missions in enemy rear areas in support of broader campaigns. Much like their conventional counterparts, Allied special operations units during 1942-1943 underwent a series of failures, reorganization, and experiments.

#### Unconventional Warfare Units: Special Operations Executive

In October 1940, the leadership of the newly formed SOE decided to expand their operations into Asia in preparation for a potential war with Japan.<sup>168</sup> They organized the Far Eastern Mission (FEM), under the leadership of civilian Valentine St. John Killery, to conduct intelligence operations in China and southeast Asia under the control of military Commanders-in-Chief and colonial governments.<sup>169</sup> Throughout 1941, SOE attempted to establish operations in Burma by recruiting a cadre of agents and sending them to train in

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<sup>166</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 14.

<sup>167</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 1, 2.

<sup>168</sup> Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 27.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.



Singapore. However, substantial bureaucratic obstacles prevented SOE from building an effective presence by the start of the Japanese invasion at the end of December.<sup>170</sup>

In the first months of the Japanese invasion of Burma from December 1941 to March 1942, SOE Oriental Mission made futile attempts to field agents in support of the retreating colonial government. SOE developed a two-part plan to establish 'left-behind parties' of specially trained soldiers to hide as the Japanese invasion passed their locations, and to later emerge and attack their rear areas. The concept, initiated by Lieutenant Colonel H.N.C. Stevenson, included two components. The first was based in rural, outlying provinces and relied extensively on indigenous 'Levies' recruited and trained for the purpose. Their tasks included village defense, destruction of supplies and bridges to deny enemy use, and limited offensive guerrilla operations. The other component would operate in central Burma, centered around Rangoon and its surrounding hills. Their mission was to collect intelligence and conduct disruption operations against occupation forces in urban centers.<sup>171</sup>

SOE's left-behind parties failed to provide any results. However, several SOE officers built up and successfully employed over three thousand Shan and Kachin Levies in central Burma against the Japanese invasion, conducting heroic delaying actions for

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<sup>170</sup> Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 33-50; Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War against Japan*, 106, 112. British colonial governments in Asia prevented SOE from 'preparing for war' due to Parliament's non-provocation policy toward Japan. British Army leadership dismissed FEM as a "purely civilian outfit" and refused to cooperate with its aims. Despite Governor Reginald Dorman-Smith's endorsement, the Commander-in-Chief Far East, Air Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, strictly forbade recruitment of the Burmese, as they were British subjects.

<sup>171</sup> Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 52-54.

Allied forces and aiding British stragglers.<sup>172</sup> Kachin Levies under Stevenson destroyed bridges which allowed British forces to retain Fort Hertz and portions of northern Burma.<sup>173</sup> In May 1943, to augment exhausted British forces defending the Burma-India border, SOE India Mission recruited and trained over one thousand indigenous guerrilla fighters from eastern India, who they combined with five battalions of the Assam Rifles to form the East Bengal Guerrilla Force. Transferred to Army control in July, the force became known as V-Force and conducted intelligence collection, weather reporting, and pilot rescue from a series of observation posts ahead of the Imphal front.<sup>174</sup>

In the same way as their conventional counterparts, August 1942 to January 1943 was a time of reorganization and experimentation for SOE in Burma. Major Colin Mackenzie's India Mission took control of operations in Burma, restructuring them into the Burma Country Section (BCS). Mackenzie began to establish a relationship with the British Army to synchronize activities with conventional operations.<sup>175</sup> Despite delays in establishing training camps and logistical systems, BCS reported one hundred recruits trained and ready to deploy in January 1943.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> The [British] National Archives, HS 1/27, "Capt. N.E. Boyt's Diary of Oriental Mission Work in Burma 1942," 2 March 1943, 1, quoted in Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 60-61. 67.

<sup>173</sup> Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 57-67.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 83; Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 238n8. The British War Office directed SOE to transfer control of the East Bengal Guerrilla Force upon concluding "SOE should not operate in areas under Army command."

<sup>175</sup> Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 76-77.

<sup>176</sup> The [British] National Archives, HS 1/194, "Note on Functions and Operations of Indian Group, 14 July 1943, quoted in Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 91.

BCS conducted five operations in 1943 with the intention of building up guerrilla forces and conducting sabotage against Japanese occupiers across northeastern and central Burma. Sabotage of Japanese transportation would support a planned offensive along the Arakan Coast.<sup>177</sup> Failures in each mission provided critical lessons for future BCS operations. During Operation Dilwyn, the single BCS mission in northern Burma, BCS successfully parachuted three agents into the Kachin hills between Bhamo and Myitkyina at the end of March. Without a functioning radio, the team did not begin operations until November.<sup>178</sup> Dilwyn would remain in the Kachin Hills conducting operations with few results until June 1944.

#### Unconventional Warfare Units: Office of Strategic Services Detachment 101

Detachment 101 was activated on April 22, 1942 as the first special operations unit under the COI and one of the first U.S. special operations units of World War II.<sup>179</sup> The Detachment evolved from Scheme Olivia, a COI concept for a special operations unit capable of employment in support of an active theater of war. Donovan originally conceived Scheme Olivia for providing a “softening-up process” on Atlantic islands in

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<sup>177</sup> Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 93

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-95.

<sup>179</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 16.

support of invasion plans for North Africa.<sup>180</sup> After continued discussion, however, Stilwell authorized the COI to employ the unit in the CBI Theater.<sup>181</sup>

To organize and command the new unit, COI chose an officer with whom Stilwell had pre-war experience. The selectee, Major (later Colonel) Carl Eifler, was serving as a reservist in charge of an internment camp for Japanese-American civilians in Hawaii when he received a telegram from the COI, asking his availability for an assignment in the Far East.<sup>182</sup> Within a few months he hurriedly recruited a cadre of twenty-one personnel, trained with them at an SOE school in Canada, and deployed them to the CBI Theater. The unit procured its weapons and individual equipment “mainly from mail-order catalogs.” Eifler sought to establish a base, recruit agents, and begin operations with extremely unclear guidance to “carry out espionage, sabotage, guerrilla warfare, propaganda, escape, and evasion in an as-yet-undesignated country in the Far East.”<sup>183</sup>

Eifler arrived in India in July 1942 with a small advance contingent to establish a mission and area of operations. The contingent encountered substantial obstacles, particularly from the American Headquarters Office of the CBI Theater.<sup>184</sup> After failed

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<sup>180</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 1, 18; William J. Donovan to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Memorandum No. 123, January 3, 1942, Exhibit W-5, Roosevelt, vol. 1, 264, Donovan’s intended phases for the operation included (1) “short-wave penetration”, (2) “ascertainment of detailed information,” and (3) “installation of a group [ . . . ] able to strike at the moment [the commander] would designate.”

<sup>181</sup> Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 65.

<sup>182</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 369; Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 68-71.

<sup>183</sup> Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 76-77, 89.

<sup>184</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 38. Members of the CBI Theater staff had no knowledge of Detachment 101 or the COI, as COI’s headquarters in Washington completely failed to coordinate for their arrival. The understaffed U.S. Army

negotiations with officials in China, Stilwell directed Detachment 101 to conduct intelligence collection and guerilla operations in northern Burma.<sup>185</sup> Stilwell's orders to the Eifler, on November 11, 1942 were to deny Japanese use of the fighter base at Myitkyina by severing its surrounding road and rail networks. Additionally, Detachment 101 was to establish close liaison with Slim's Fourteenth Army to coordinate operations and prevent mutual interference. Stilwell expressed his desire to hear "booms from the jungle" within 90 days.<sup>186</sup> Shortly after the meeting, the Detachment acted on advice from British SOE counterparts and established its base of operations, Experimental Station, Detachment 101, on a tea plantation in Nazira, India. The Detachment's first objective was to rapidly recruit and train intelligence collection teams for immediate deployment to northern Burma in early 1943.<sup>187</sup>

With substantial assistance from the SOE and Burma's colonial government-in-exile, Detachment 101 rapidly began to recruit and train agents of Burmese, Anglo-Indian, or Anglo-Burman descent.<sup>188</sup> The Detachment established several training camps

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headquarters, consisting of only fifteen officers, made every attempt to disintegrate Detachment 101 to fill its own personnel shortages.

<sup>185</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 361, 369, 415. From negotiations with officials in Chungking, Detachment 101 learned that Chinese officials were uninterested in an "independent American intelligence organization" conducting operations within their borders. Stilwell assessed that further attempts to conduct clandestine operations in China would only aggravate the sensitive political situation there.

<sup>186</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 42-43; Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 121.

<sup>187</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 369; Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 25-26.

<sup>188</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 42, 59; Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 89. Like the SOE, Detachment 101 quickly arrived at the conclusion that they could not send fair-skinned agents into Burma unnoticed. SOE assisted Detachment 101 to find possible recruits, although they demanded the first right

to provide instruction in communications, demolitions, weapons, hand-to-hand combat, and jungle survival. By October 1942, Detachment 101 had fifteen students in training. By the end of December, Eifler reported to the Washington OSS headquarters that the first team of agents were ready to deploy.<sup>189</sup>

Determined to prove Detachment 101's value within Stilwell's ninety days, Eifler deployed teams of agents to conduct two types of experimental operations. The first were long-range penetration operations.<sup>190</sup> Eifler intended to insert teams of British or Commonwealth agents hundreds of miles into occupied Burma to establish intelligence networks and conduct 'strategic sabotage' against critical infrastructure. Once in place, these teams would also establish smuggling routes back to India to infiltrate agents and to exfiltrate materials and recruits.<sup>191</sup> The second were short-range penetration operations. For these operations, a combined unit of American, British, and Commonwealth personnel would infiltrate by foot to occupied areas with friendly indigenous populations, where they would establish intelligence and resistance networks to support upcoming Allied operations. Over time, short-range units developed their resistance networks into

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of refusal as the senior intelligence service in theater. Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, the former colonial governor of Burma, assigned Lieutenant Colonel Wally Richmond as a British liaison officer to Detachment 101 for additional assistance.

<sup>189</sup> Troy J. Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 26, 242n67.

<sup>190</sup> Although Wingate's operational concept shares the name "long-range penetration," the two concepts were unrelated and unknown to one another. Unlike Wingate's later operations, Detachment 101's long-range penetration involved much smaller units (8-12 personnel) who conducted operations by, with, and through larger indigenous forces.

<sup>191</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 30, 32. Before World War II, Eifler learned extensively about smuggling as Customs agent on the U.S.-Mexico border and wished to apply the methods to operations in Burma.

increasingly larger forces capable of conducting large-scale UW operations.<sup>192</sup> While Eifler predicted long-range penetration operations as the primary means of providing value and achieving strategic-level effects, short-range penetration operations proved far more valuable to the Allies throughout the remainder of the war.

Between February 1943 and January 1944, Detachment 101 conducted six long-range penetration operations in rapid succession, hoping to demonstrate value to Stilwell. Five of them failed with no results.<sup>193</sup> The first, codenamed “A-Group,” was the Detachment’s sole success. A-Group consisted of eight Burman or Anglo-Burman personnel, all of whom had years of Burmese mining or timber industry experience and most of whom had prior military experience.<sup>194</sup> After a failed attempt to infiltrate the group on foot from Fort Hertz, Detachment 101 added four Kachin Levies to A-Group and parachuted the party into the Koukkwee Valley, one hundred miles south of Myitkyina, between February 5-6, 1943.<sup>195</sup>

Within three days, A-Group walked approximately one hundred miles to their objectives along the Mandalay-Myitkyina railway corridor—the same line the Chindits would target a few weeks later. The group planted twenty-seven charges along a five-mile stretch of railway on their first evening in the area. On their second evening, they

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<sup>192</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 370; Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 31.

<sup>193</sup> Failure, in the case of these operations, meant the loss of the entire team inserted. For a summary of Detachment 101’s long-range penetration failures, see Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 32, 37-44.

<sup>194</sup> Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 122.

<sup>195</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 67-69, 72; Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 90. The four Kachins who joined A-Group for its airborne infiltration were Levies the party met at Fort Hertz.

planned to simultaneously destroy three rail bridges in the Namhkwin area.<sup>196</sup> A Japanese patrol found and attacked one A-Group demolition team as they planted their charge, claiming Detachment 101's first casualty and causing the remainder of the party to disintegrate.<sup>197</sup>

One part of A-Group, led by Patrick "Red" Maddox, fled to Fort Hertz on foot, arriving in mid-May. Another group, under Jack Barnard, decided to move to the area between Bhamo and Myitkyina, where they would establish a base for conducting intelligence collection and guerrilla operations.<sup>198</sup> They remained in the field for eighteen weeks, providing intelligence estimates of the enemy, infrastructure, and local tribes before arriving at Fort Hertz in mid-June (see figure 13).<sup>199</sup> As A-Group's members fled the actively-pursuing Japanese, Kachin locals provided substantial assistance. A-Group learned from their hosts that "the Japanese were trying to locate elements of a British combat force" and thought A-Group was a component thereof. According to Peers, this was the first Detachment 101 learned of the ongoing Chindit operation.<sup>200</sup> While the mission provided valuable intelligence, A-Group's sabotage failed to achieve its intended strategic effects.

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<sup>196</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 81-83.

<sup>197</sup> Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 159, 161.

<sup>198</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 85; Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 10.

<sup>199</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 94.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-86; Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 37.



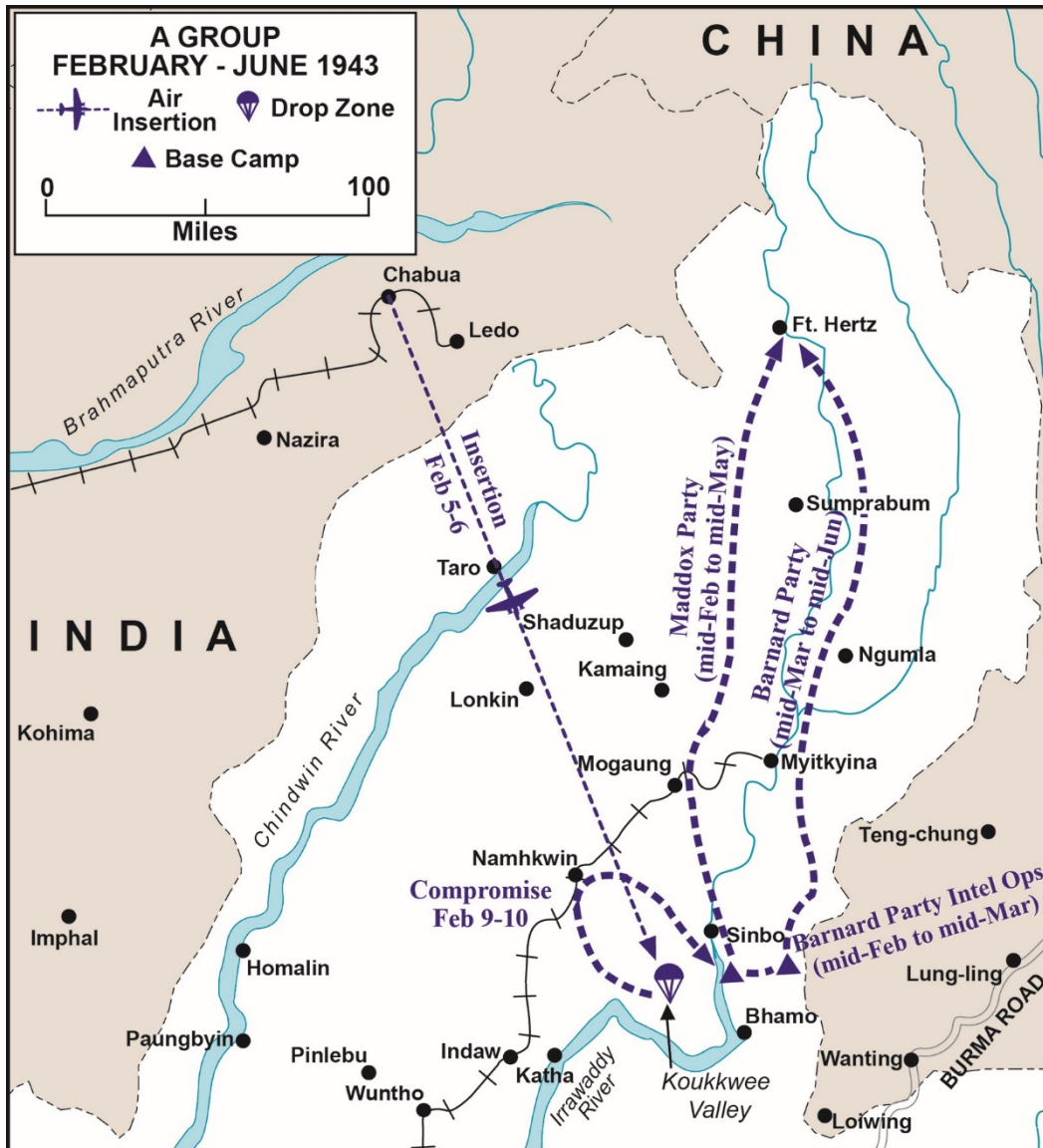


Figure 13. A-Group, February-June 1943

Source: Adapted from Richard Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines: With the OSS in Burma* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1979), 160.

In December 1942, Detachment 101 deployed the first of its short-range penetration operations at the same time it was conducting its first long-range experiment with A-Group. Detachment 101 developed the short-range penetration concept with the intention of providing intelligence from enemy occupied areas. This intelligence, the unit

hoped, would provide value to Stilwell beyond the expected effects of its long-range operations.<sup>201</sup> By the summer of 1943, Detachment 101 established two bases between fifty to seventy-five miles behind Japanese lines, in proximity to major Japanese garrisons. The bases passed intelligence reports to the Detachment 101 headquarters in Nazira using hand-built radios which could transmit thousands of miles further than Allied military communications equipment.<sup>202</sup> The bases also employed hundreds of Kachin locals to carve landing strips for light aircraft out of the jungle and to conceal them with fake bamboo houses which could be moved within minutes.<sup>203</sup>

Forward was Detachment 101's first short-range penetration operation. Forward's small contingent originally established operations at Fort Hertz at the end of December 1942. After Kachin Levies repelled a Japanese advance in January 1943, Forward established a base near Sumprabum under the command of Captain William Wilkerson.<sup>204</sup> Forward provided immediate value to the Allies as the base began to provide weather reports and early warning of Japanese air movements at the beginning of

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<sup>201</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 48.

<sup>202</sup> Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 124-125; Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 63. To build the radios, three Detachment 101 personnel used cannibalized Lend-Lease equipment, electrical components from the local market, and pieces of scrap. Their finished product in December 1942 weighed fifty-three pounds. On its first test, the radio transmitted clearly over one thousand miles, and under the correct weather conditions transmissions could reach stations half way around the world.

<sup>203</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 370; Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 106.

<sup>204</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 48-49.

February. The unit compiled British intelligence reports with its own and sent them to Nazira by radio, shortening British message transmission times by two to three days.<sup>205</sup>

After Forward and its Kachins rescued nine of Wingate's Chindits between March and April, Eifler offered downed pilot rescue as another service to Stilwell and the United States Tenth Air Force. In May, Forward moved its base of operations to Ngumla, fifty miles behind Japanese lines. From this location, the unit began to expand its intelligence network, build up its Kachin Ranger guerrilla forces, and conduct limited sabotage operations.<sup>206</sup> Unlike the long-range penetration operations of early 1943, Forward demonstrated immediate value to Stilwell and became the pattern for Detachment 101's operations in support of the upcoming Allied offensives in northern Burma.

In the spring of 1943, Stilwell requested that Detachment 101 conduct operations along the planned Ledo Road route to provide information about Japanese forces and the terrain.<sup>207</sup> Stilwell also ordered the detachment to establish a ground line of communication from Ledo into Burma for future expansions of the Kachin Ranger guerrilla force.<sup>208</sup> Detachment 101 organized three teams of indigenous intelligence agents for the purpose, named L Group, M Group, J Group.<sup>209</sup> L Group, a two-agent team led by a veteran Sino-Burmese agent codenamed "Skittles," infiltrated the upper Hukawng valley, 50 miles beyond the front. The group established a local intelligence

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<sup>205</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 375; Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 49.

<sup>206</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 50-51.

<sup>207</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 375-377.

<sup>208</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 52.

<sup>209</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 112.

network which located two missing V-Force officers and supplemented Allied intelligence collection efforts before becoming the intelligence arm for a larger short-range penetration base.<sup>210</sup> M Group infiltrated into the adjacent Taro Valley and conducted intelligence collection for a short time before they withdrew for fear of falling victim to local Naga headhunters.<sup>211</sup> J Group deployed to observe the area of Miao, an unprotected border crossing site from Burma into the Brahmaputra River valley. The group established several outposts through the area, which caused occupying Japanese forces to withdraw under the belief they faced a large Allied force.<sup>212</sup> Although the three intelligence-gathering missions were short in duration, each demonstrated the value of employing indigenous agents into occupied areas far beyond the front to provide intelligence through clandestine radio messages. Each of the missions provided detailed reports about Japanese positions and order of battle, which resulted in bombing targets for Tenth Air Force.<sup>213</sup>

Although Detachment 101 achieved few effects against Japanese forces between July 1942 and September 1943, the unit learned critical operational lessons from experimentation to develop successful concepts for success in 1944 and 1945. Long-range penetration missions, except for A Group, failed with no results. Forward, the unit's first short-range penetration, showed promise for Stilwell's headquarters and provided Detachment 101 with a model of success for clandestine intelligence collection

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<sup>210</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 52-53.

<sup>211</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 112.

<sup>212</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 377.

<sup>213</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 52-53.

and guerrilla warfare as components of UW.<sup>214</sup> Reinforcing that success in August 1943, the unit established its second short-range mission, Knothead, in the Hukawng Valley to increase guerrilla forces and intelligence networks for Stilwell's autumn offensive.<sup>215</sup>

Long-Range Penetration Groups: 77 Indian Infantry Brigade, The "Chindits"

The British military's first special operations unit was born of desperation from a rapid and humiliating defeat. Seeking to stem the Japanese advance in early 1942, Wavell summoned Brigadier Orde Wingate from the Middle East to assume command of all guerrilla operations within Burma.<sup>216</sup> Wingate had no immediate successes, spending a short time in Burma before evacuating to India with the Burcorps. At the Army headquarters in New Delhi, however, Wingate developed the concept for a new type of unit which would disperse to wreak havoc in enemy rear areas, aided extensively by wireless communications and aerial resupply. He convinced the Army Staff of the concept's efficacy, leading Wavell to support the creation of the first LRPG.<sup>217</sup>

In the summer of 1942, British forces contributed what they could spare to build the 77 Indian Infantry Brigade as an experimental unit to test Wingate's LRPG concept. The unit consisted of two battalions of Gurkhas, a force of Burmese Infantry, one British

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<sup>214</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 48.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>216</sup> Christopher Sykes, *Orde Wingate: A Biography* (Cleveland, OH: World Publishing Company, 1959), 360. Calvert, *Chindits*, 9. Wingate established a reputation for success on both sides of irregular war campaigns in the Middle East, successfully repressing an Arab revolt in Palestine in 1938 and leading an Ethiopian uprising against Italian occupation forces in 1941.

<sup>217</sup> Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 366-368.

regiment, communications personnel, Royal Air Force ground control detachments, remnants of the ad-hoc “Bush Warfare School”—renamed the 142 Commando, and several hundred pack mules.<sup>218</sup> The brigade trained under grueling conditions in complete secrecy in the central Indian jungle at Saugor during the latter half of 1942. In January 1943, the brigade moved by rail and on foot to Imphal for final deployment preparations.<sup>219</sup> During the movement to Imphal, Wingate chose to designate the brigade as the ‘Chindits’—a mispronounced version of the Burmese word *chinthé*—for the winged lions which served as symbolic guardians of Buddhist pagodas in the region.<sup>220</sup>

Allied leaders originally planned the 1943 Chindit operation to coincide with larger Chinese and British operations in northern and central Burma, respectively. When British IV Corps and Chiang withdrew support for those operations, Wavell consulted Wingate about whether to continue alone.<sup>221</sup> Despite Wavell’s fears that a lack of support would jeopardize the force and negate any of its results, Wingate made a convincing

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<sup>218</sup> Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 361-362, 370-372. The “Bush Warfare School” was a secret training center the British developed in Burma to train officers and noncommissioned officers for service with guerrilla units in China before the war began. During the withdrawal to India, the school’s cadre fought several limited guerrilla and rearguard actions against Japanese forces. They were the only unit officially under Wingate’s command before the establishment of the 77 Brigade.

<sup>219</sup> Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 373-381.

<sup>220</sup> Calvert, *Chindits*, 9; Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 378, 380, 442-443.

<sup>221</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 347.

argument to execute the operation, codenamed Longcloth.<sup>222</sup> At the beginning of February, the Chindit Brigade crossed the border into Burma on foot.<sup>223</sup>

Wingate divided his force of approximately three thousand personnel into seven ‘columns,’ who crossed the Chindwin River in mid-February in two larger groups. These two groups moved east approximately seventy miles to sabotage the north-south-running Mandalay-Myitkyina railway (see figure 14). On their route of march, the brigade lost two entire columns to enemy ambushes but employed deception techniques to conceal the remainder of their strength, disposition, and intended objectives.<sup>224</sup> In early March 1943, Chindits successfully destroyed multiple sections of the railway and killed hundreds of Japanese soldiers with few casualties. After these successes, Wingate made a fateful decision to move his entire force east across the Irrawaddy River in search of additional opportunities.

Local Burmese tribes informed Japanese forces of the Chindit river crossing, and two of three river crossing parties made contact soon after reaching the opposite side.<sup>225</sup> After weeks of suffering in terrain with low water supply, high enemy concentration, and no maneuver space, Wingate received an order from IV Corps to withdraw to India. Over the next two months, Scattered groups of Chindits fled to the east and north, leaving their

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<sup>222</sup> For details on Wingate’s argument to Wavell, see Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 384-385.

<sup>223</sup> Calvert, *Chindits*, 10.

<sup>224</sup> Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 398-401. 77 Brigade’s deception techniques included dispersed movements, sophisticated feints at river crossing sites, posting of warning signs ‘signed by the Japanese Commander-in-Chief,’ and establishment of false bivouac sites.

<sup>225</sup> Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 405-410.

dead and wounded at the mercy of their pursuers. Just over two thousand soldiers, approximately two-thirds of the brigade’s original strength, arrived safely in India by the end of May. Of them, only six hundred were fit for continued military service due to injury and disease.<sup>226</sup>

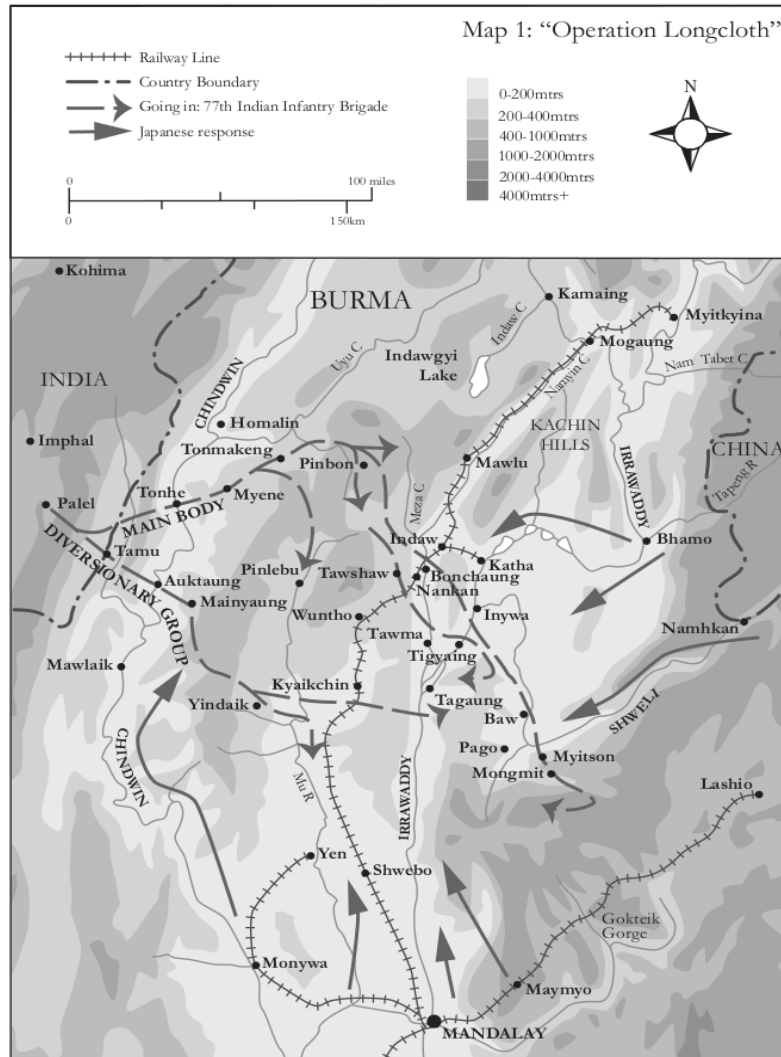


Figure 14. First Chindit Operation (Operation Longcloth), 1943

Source: The Chindit Society, "Operation Longcloth: 1943 Burma," <https://thechindit.society.org.uk/operation-longcloth>.

<sup>226</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 162; Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 432.



Operation Longcloth achieved physical results at the tactical and operational levels. Destruction to the Mandalay-Myitkyina railway in over seventy places disrupted resupply and reinforcement of northern Japanese divisions, who had to reroute north-bound cargo to roads and smaller rail lines during a four-week period.<sup>227</sup> The Chindits' tactical deception succeeded brilliantly, as "reports from combat units were conflicting and it was difficult for [the Japanese Fifteenth] Army headquarters to grasp the general situation."<sup>228</sup> Fifteenth Army deployed elements of three divisions to respond to Chindit operations, unsure of their enemy until gaining intelligence from interrogating the sick and wounded they captured. Counterguerrilla operations proved very costly to Japanese units, as casualties mounted from ambushes and from physical exhaustion. The toll was serious enough that "[Fifteenth] Army's plan for restoration of fighting potential and the retraining of troops had to be abandoned."<sup>229</sup> The operation also achieved its intended effect of relieving pressure on Fort Hertz, as Japanese forces concentrated on finding and destroying the Chindits to the south.

Operation Longcloth's psychological results proved more significant than its physical ones, achieving unintended but direct effects on Japanese theater strategy and Allied morale. Mutaguchi, who commanded 18th Division's response to the Chindits, drew profound inspiration from the large unit capable of sustained jungle operations. The Chindits demonstrated that Japanese forces needed to expand their defensive perimeter

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<sup>227</sup> Allen, *Burma*, 130-131, 147.

<sup>228</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 7.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 8. Japanese units sent to counter the Chindit threat included elements of the 18th, 56th, and 33rd Divisions, some of which they diverted from the Arakan front, where British conventional forces were advancing.

west of the Chindwin River to effectively defend against future Allied counterattacks in the dry season.<sup>230</sup> When he took command of Fifteenth Army one month later, the inspiration drove him to aggressively advocate resumed planning to invade India, which he had opposed in his previous role.<sup>231</sup> Operation Longcloth also achieved strategic effects in support of Allied war efforts. News of the Chindit's exploits spread rapidly through English-speaking press in the summer of 1943, destroying the myth of Japanese supremacy in jungle combat and bolstering Allied morale after repeated defeats in Burma.<sup>232</sup> The operation caught Prime Minister Winston Churchill's attention, which led him to advocate for expanding the LRPG concept for operations in 1944.<sup>233</sup>

### Analysis

From the Japanese invasion of Burma in December 1941 to the middle of the monsoon season in September 1943, Allied special operations forces arrived in theater, then conducted organization, buildup, and experimental employment. Between March-June 1943, SOE's Operation Dilwyn, OSS Detachment 101's A-Group, and 77 Indian Infantry Brigade's Operation Longcloth achieved tactical and operational effects by disrupting northern Burma's main railway for four weeks and keeping Fifteenth Army leaders in a state of confusion as their soldiers exhausted themselves in pursuit. Operation

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<sup>230</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 17.

<sup>231</sup> Allen, *Burma*, 153; Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 14, 17-18.

<sup>232</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 163.

<sup>233</sup> Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 444-445; Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, ed., *Quadrant Conference*, 403.

Longcloth achieved unintended, theater and national strategic-level effects against Japanese forces, which directly inspired Mutaguchi to advocate the invasion of India as a new theater strategy. Although the Allies never learned of the operation's strategic effects, Operation Longcloth's tactical and operational-level effects convinced the CCS to expand the LRPG concept for operations in 1944.

Failures from early operations provided political leaders, conventional commanders, and Allied special operations forces with several critical lessons and proved concepts for full-scale execution of special operations in 1944. The first critical lesson from 1942-1943 was the necessity of strategic guidance and authority for action. Detachment 101 began with unclear guidance from Donovan and Stilwell in the latter half of 1942, but the unit had a clear understanding of its intent for its 1943 operations. The Detachment also benefitted substantially from operational autonomy granted by Donovan and Stilwell, which provided the latitude to make necessary changes.<sup>234</sup> The Chindits also benefitted from a close relationship with their theater command, as Wingate convinced Wavell and his staff of the efficacy of the LRPG concept.<sup>235</sup> BCS, however, suffered from a lack of clear guidance and a series of bureaucratic obstacles which prevented the unit from providing value to the British military commanders it supported.

Next, Allied special operations units learned the vital necessity for close coordination and liaison. SOE India Mission and Detachment 101 experienced friction upon the latter's arrival in India, as both units competed for recruits from the same indigenous population groups and both felt pressure to establish operations in Burma as

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<sup>234</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 22-23.

<sup>235</sup> Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 384-385.

quickly as possible. Informal division of labor agreements between Eifler and Mackenzie were insufficient to prevent overlap between operations in the Kachin Hills in mid-1943.<sup>236</sup> Tensions intensified until the CCS later developed an organizational solution at the Quadrant Conference.<sup>237</sup> Coordination between the Chindits was no better with Detachment 101 or BCS. With no knowledge of the Chindits' presence in northern Burma, Detachment 101 placed its timed explosive charges at exactly the point on the Mandalay-Myitkyina railway where the Chindits later crossed.<sup>238</sup> Without adequate communications, the Allies missed an opportunity to unify their efforts for a greater effect against the Japanese in 1943. These failures led to increased liaison between special operations units and their adjacent conventional headquarters for future operations.

Early failures allowed units to develop concepts for successful employment in later campaigns. Eifler and Stilwell originally envisioned long-range penetration operations as the best means of providing rapid, strategic effects in the CBI theater. However, the risk to mission and force for the experiments were too great for them to achieve success. Detachment 101 recruited agents from India and deployed them to areas for which the unit had no intelligence, the agents had no experience, and in which hostile populations lived.<sup>239</sup> Detachment 101 later reinforced the success of its short-range

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<sup>236</sup> Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 106.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 72, 88-91.

<sup>238</sup> "Minutes of a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff (India), 22nd mtg, 21 May 1943, British India Office Department Records, WS/1/1346, quoted in Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 179.

<sup>239</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 43-47.

penetration missions to achieve the unit's greatest effects in 1944 and 1945. Short-range penetration operations proved sustainable and more valuable by remaining within the range of organic aerial resupply and operating through local indigenous forces.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," (June 1948): 16.

## CHAPTER 4

### SPECIAL OPERATIONS, OCTOBER 1943-AUGUST 1944

As Allied leaders finalized their preparations for 1944 counteroffensives into northern Burma, they sought to incorporate special operations forces in multiple supporting roles. Stilwell's headquarters saw the value of OSS Detachment 101's operations and supported continued expansion and employment of Kachin guerrilla forces in advance of upcoming operations.<sup>241</sup> At the Quadrant Conference in August 1943, the British proponents within the CCS suggested an expansion to Wingate's concept with the intention of developing six brigade-sized LRPCs to support Allied northern Burma advances in 1944.<sup>242</sup> The CCS also sought to improve coordination issues between "U.S. and British quasi-military agencies" in the theater after a year of near-constant friction, formalizing a "Combined Liaison Committee" under SEAC. Mountbatten and Donovan later refined the concept into an organization known as "Priorities Division" or "P Division."<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 362.

<sup>242</sup> Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, ed., *Quadrant Conference*, 403, 427-428, 449-450; Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 455. Winston Churchill and Sir Alan Brooke both advocated for expanded Chindit operations throughout the conference. Sir Alan Brooke also invited Wingate to accompany the British Chiefs of Staff to present his conclusions from Operation Longcloth and to build consensus for another Chindit expedition.

<sup>243</sup> Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, ed., *Quadrant Conference*, 127, 260; Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 362; Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War against Japan*, 178-186. Mountbatten served as the director of P Division, assisted by a staff of OSS and SOE liaison officers. The organization required units to gain concurrence for planned operations and helped to deconflict use of scarce resources, primarily pools of eligible agents in occupied areas for recruitment.

With improvements in place, Allied UW units and L RPGs made their largest operational and strategic impacts during the 1944 campaigns. Through both direct and indirect support to maneuvering conventional forces, special operations imposed large enough costs in northern Burma that the Japanese Burma Area Army altered its theater defense strategy.<sup>244</sup> Japan's defeat in India, in which Allied special operations forces played a critical role, was one of several major defeats which drove Tōjō's cabinet out of power in Japan and led to national strategic changes for 1945.<sup>245</sup>

Unconventional Warfare Units: Special Operations  
Executive Burma Country Section

SOE BCS launched most of their missions into Burma between the end of 1943 and the end of 1944. Their plan was to infiltrate teams along the length of Burma's eastern border to support future British Army operations.<sup>246</sup> In northern Burma, BCS conducted the second failed iteration of their Dilwyn UW mission between October 1943 and June 1944. The operation infiltrated agents into the northeastern Kachin hills with several objectives which included establishing an 'underground railway' to the south, recruiting Kachin guerrillas and guides, denying Japanese use of river boats, and conducting unofficial administration on behalf of the colonial British government.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 149-150.

<sup>245</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *History of Imperial General Headquarters, Army Section*, 201; Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 98-99.

<sup>246</sup> Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 99, 106.

<sup>247</sup> Charles G. Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 164-165.

The Dilwyn mission failed to achieve effects for several reasons. First, communication and information sharing between Allied special operations units was still poor, even after the development of P Division as a theater-level coordination mechanism. The Dilwyn team arrived in the Kachin hills to find that OSS Detachment 101 was actively conducting guerrilla operations in the area. The Chindits also conducted an operation, codenamed Dah Force, into the area with its own mission to raise Kachin guerrilla forces.<sup>248</sup> Second, British Army leaders still had little confidence in SOE's capabilities. In September 1944, Slim sent a message to Mountbatten demanding that SOE teams work directly for conventional unit commanders and that OSS operations replace SOE throughout the rest of Burma.<sup>249</sup> Third, the British Foreign Office forced SOE to assume a political role in support of objectives to resume imperial control after the war. During 1944, SOE served more as colonial plenipotentiaries and political officers than as Allied combat forces.<sup>250</sup> After months of disagreement between Allied forces on recruitment and operations, Burma Country Section withdrew Dilwyn II's personnel and ceded control of the area to OSS Detachment 101.<sup>251</sup>

#### Unconventional Warfare Units: Office of Strategic Services Detachment 101

After increasing success with short-range UW operations in early 1943, OSS Detachment 101 continued to expand its network of guerrilla bases in occupied northern

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<sup>248</sup> Calvert, *Chindits*, 122.

<sup>249</sup> Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*, 170.

<sup>250</sup> Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 116, 124.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-108, 110. For a list of archival documents and a more detailed narrative of the Dilwyn feud, see Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 275n23.



Burma. By the end of 1943, the unit's thirty field personnel operated six bases across a three-hundred-mile front. Their total strength of Kachin Ranger guerrillas expanded from nine hundred to three thousand fighters as the unit prepared to support NCAC's upcoming offensive, Operation Albacore.<sup>252</sup> In March 1944, Stilwell requested another expansion in strength to four thousand guerrillas, and in May requested an expansion to ten thousand after Kachin Ranger guerrilla operational successes.<sup>253</sup>

To assist the unit's expansion, Stilwell transferred seventy-five American and Kachin personnel from the British V-Force to Detachment 101 to increase their available number of trained cadre members.<sup>254</sup> Peers, who assumed command of Detachment 101 in mid-December 1943 established his headquarters as a central operations section located adjacent to the Tenth Air Force headquarters in India to provide intelligence sharing in exchange for aerial support.<sup>255</sup> Detachment 101 was the only Allied unit, conventional or special operations, to participate in every phase of Operation Albacore, and would also contribute substantially to disrupting the rear areas of the Japanese Operation U-Go.<sup>256</sup>

Detachment 101 performed three vital functions in support of Operation Albacore: independent guerrilla operations; maneuver support to other combat units; and

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<sup>252</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 127-129, 138-139; Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 74.

<sup>253</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 75, 90, 125.

<sup>254</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 141. The new personnel included five officers, thirty enlisted soldiers, and forty Kachins.

<sup>255</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 72.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

liaison support to other headquarters. To organize for the upcoming campaigns, Peers altered the Detachment 101 command and control structure to empower field commanders and to allow the central headquarters to more effectively coordinate and support independent operations.<sup>257</sup> The field units organized into four area commands, numbered I-IV in order from east to west (see figure 15).<sup>258</sup> With area commanders responsible for all subordinate operations within their geographic boundaries, Detachment 101 altered its operating scheme to ensure mutual support between guerrilla, sabotage, and espionage operations. Each area command conducted guerrilla operations from fifty to one hundred fifty miles in front of advancing conventional forces. One hundred to one hundred twenty miles beyond the guerrillas, an ‘espionage screen’ conducted clandestine intelligence collection and information operations. Regions for both operations moved southward as the Allied conventional front advanced.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 136, 138.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 136-139; Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 90. Of the six original bases, Oscar moved southward to Bhamo, Drown consolidated under Forward, and Red assumed control of the former V-force area under the new name Tramp.

<sup>259</sup> Peers, “Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma,” (July 1948): 16.

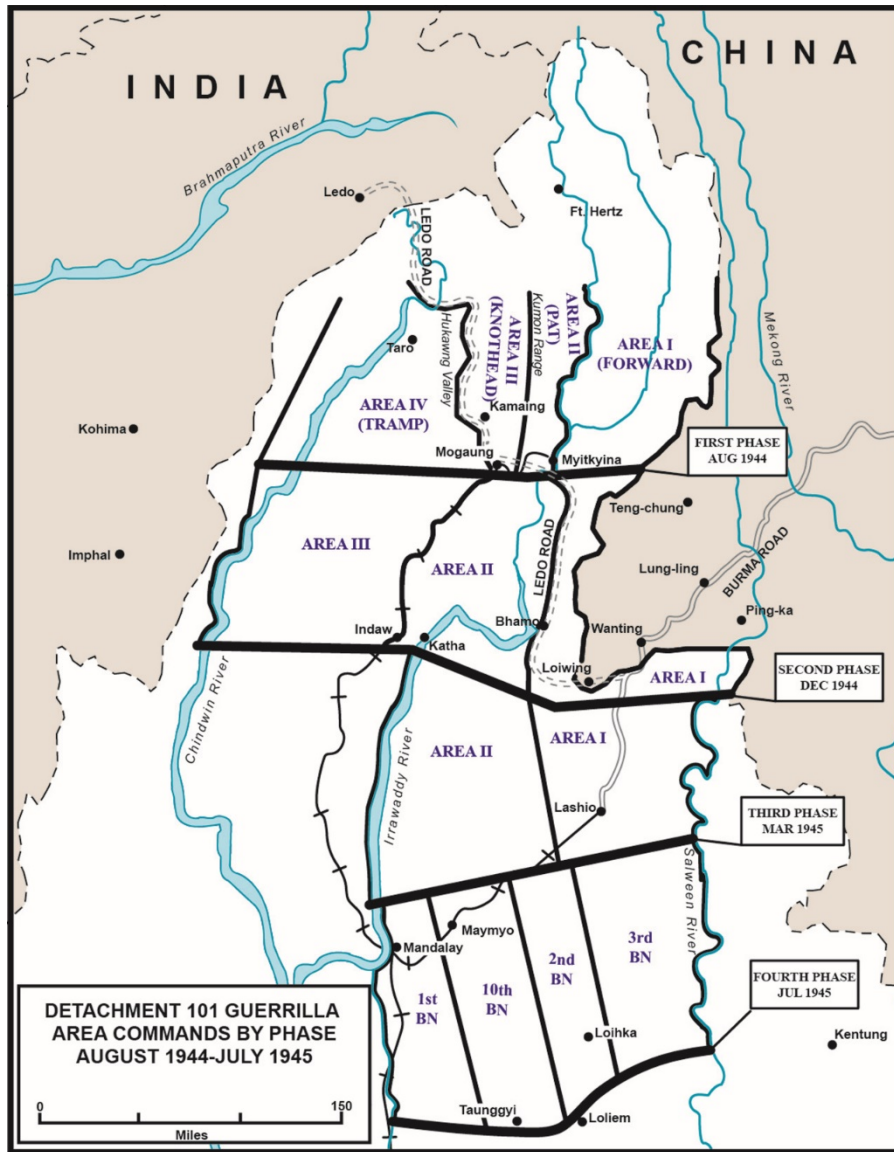


Figure 15. Detachment 101 Area Commands by Phase, August 1944-July 1945

Source: Adapted from William R. Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," *Military Review* 28, no. 4 (July 1948): 13, <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p124201coll/id/927/rec/6>.

Area I, under the command of Lieutenant Commander Jim Luce at Forward, conducted independent operations between the Irrawaddy River and the Burma-China border to indirectly support to Operation Albacore and the Salween front. The headquarters organized and built a force of one thousand five hundred Kachin Ranger

guerrillas, operating in eight companies of approximately one hundred fifty men each.<sup>260</sup> During Operation Albacore, they collected vital information on enemy troop dispositions in the town of Myitkyina and as far south as Bhamo.<sup>261</sup> Forward's units also conducted sabotage missions against Japanese lines of communication to Myitkyina from the south and east.<sup>262</sup> They seized or destroyed several supply and ammunition dumps which supported the Japanese 56th Division on the Salween front.<sup>263</sup> They also seized multiple villages and raided military installations, seizing and occupying the Japanese fighter base at Kwitu.

Forward's guerrilla operations also imposed significant costs on Japanese forces. The units ambushed reinforcements bound for Myitkyina on roads and rivers, most notably deteriorating the strength of a battalion under Major General Mizukami Genzo diverted from the Salween front.<sup>264</sup> When the remnants of the Myitkyina garrison force fled the town for Bhamo in early August, Forward's Kachin Rangers severely diminished their numbers through relentless pursuit and ambushes.<sup>265</sup> By the end of August, Forward's Kachin Rangers killed over five hundred Japanese soldiers and cleared

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<sup>260</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 121.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>262</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 139, 162.

<sup>263</sup> Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," (July 1948): 12-13.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 13; Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 10.

<sup>265</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 168.

Japanese forces completely from the area between the Irrawaddy River and the Chinese border north of Myitkyina.<sup>266</sup>

Area II, commanded by Burma Army Captain Patrick Quinn at his namesake base, Pat, organized and built a force of four hundred Kachin Ranger guerrillas. Their primary mission was to conduct independent guerrilla operations between the Kumon mountain range and the Irrawaddy River. They conducted attacks along enemy lines of communication, including ambushes and destruction of rail infrastructure, to prevent Japanese reinforcement of Myitkyina from the north and west.<sup>267</sup> However, Quinn's forces also supported operations by an American LRP—Galahad—as the unit moved through their area.<sup>268</sup> As the geographic frontage of Burma narrowed south of Myitkyina, Quinn combined forces under Knothead's area command in July 1944.<sup>269</sup>

Area III, commanded by U.S. Army Captain Vincent Curl in cooperation with Kachin leader Zhing Htaw Naw at Knothead, organized and built a force of six hundred Kachin Ranger guerrillas. Their forces operated on the western side of Myitkyina, including the Kamaing Road, the primary line of communications and withdrawal for the Japanese 18th Division fighting the CAI in the Hukawng Valley.<sup>270</sup> Area III's primary mission from March to May 1944 was to support Galahad's operations in the Hukawng

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<sup>266</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 162, 167-168. For examples of Kachin Ranger tactics for raids and ambushes, see Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 142-147, or Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," (July 1948): 17.

<sup>267</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 51, 126.

<sup>268</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 162.

<sup>269</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 127.

<sup>270</sup> Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," (July 1948): 13.

Valley. Knothead's forces also conducted independent intelligence collection and sabotage missions in the Japanese 18th Division's rear areas. Between May and August, Knothead's Kachin Rangers killed up to three hundred fifty Japanese soldiers attempting to escape from the besieged Myitkyina garrison.<sup>271</sup> South of Myitkyina, Knothead absorbed Quinn's forces and became Area II.

Area IV, commanded by Burma Army Major Red Maddox at Tramp, organized, and built a force of five hundred guerrillas which increased to two thousand throughout the campaign. Tramp's forces deployed in four outposts across a two-hundred-mile-wide sector from the Mandalay-Myitkyina Railway corridor west to the Chindwin River.<sup>272</sup> Their mission was to interdict threats as the only Allied force in the gap between CAI's western flank and the British Fourteenth Army's northern flank.<sup>273</sup> When Japanese forces began Operation U-Go, Tramp began operations to collect intelligence and conduct sabotage against Japanese the Fifteenth Army rear area.<sup>274</sup> Attacks against Japanese supply installations proved lucrative for Tramp's forces. In one example, a force of three hundred Kachin Ranger guerrillas burned a supply dump containing eleven warehouses and over a thousand tons of supplies intended for the Imphal front.<sup>275</sup> The supply dump

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<sup>271</sup> Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," (July 1948): 13-14.

<sup>272</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 173-174, 176.

<sup>273</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 388; Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," (July 1948): 14. Tramp's personnel suffered to a much greater extent than other area commands throughout the campaign due to the terrain, weather, and lack of population in their operational area.

<sup>274</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 270n74.

<sup>275</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 171, 174-176.

raids prompted a response from two Japanese infantry battalions and groups of poorly-trained intelligence agents, who withdrew from the area following heavy losses.<sup>276</sup> The command became Area III as the headquarters consolidated south of Myitkyina.

In addition to conducting independent guerrilla operations, each of the Detachment 101 area commands conducted maneuver support to other combat units, both conventional and special operations. In support of Tenth Air Force, Kachin Rangers provided evacuation assistance to over one hundred eighty downed American airmen in Burma by September 1944.<sup>277</sup> In support of Special Force, Detachment 101 provided a team of Kachin intelligence agents under A-Group veteran Saw Judson to collect intelligence around Chindit strongholds and to capture local collaborators. Additionally, four teams of Detachment 101 intelligence support personnel assisted with analysis and dissemination of intelligence, and a Detachment 101 liaison officer became the sole link between the Special Force and NCAC headquarters.<sup>278</sup> Knothead and Pat provided use of their runways and light aircraft to evacuate wounded Chindits and Marauders on several occasions.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 176.

<sup>277</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 387.

<sup>278</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 173; Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 120, 122, 124-125. The intelligence support teams consisted of OSS Nissei (second-generation Japanese) personnel. Brigadier Michael Calvert, a Chindit Brigade Commander, requested the first team, codenamed Davis, after his unit found and tapped a Japanese phone line. Over time, the Detachment 101 cohort attached to the Chindits, later named Group #10, consisted of three additional teams, named Mates, Adams, and Burns.

<sup>279</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 126; Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 165;

In support of Galahad, Detachment 101 provided Kachin Ranger guides to each Marauder battalion, screened the flanks of all maneuvering Allied units, and conducted ambushes on Japanese units to enable freedom of movement to friendly forces.<sup>280</sup> Most notably, in support of capturing the Myitkyina airfield on May 17, 1944, Kachin Rangers from Forward tied down three battalions of Japanese units while other OSS-provided Kachin guides led the Marauders along unknown trails to attack the airfield with the complete element of surprise. Shortly after Galahad seized the Myitkyina airfield, Colonel Charles Hunter, the commander who succeeded Merrill, sent a cable to Peers stating “Thanks to your people for a swell job. Could not have succeeded without them.”<sup>281</sup> In a radio transmission to Donovan, Stilwell stated that Detachment 101’s support to Galahad was of “great value” and that he intended to “further [develop] this organization because of its future potential value.”<sup>282</sup>

The two most valuable liaison support services Peers and his central operations section provided to other Allied units were intelligence sharing and targeting. Intelligence sharing began in December 1943, after a query from Fourteenth Air Force led Detachment 101 to disseminate weather data to Army Air Forces units. As demands for aviation-related intelligence increased, Detachment 101 transmitted weather three times daily.<sup>283</sup> Forces from Pat also established an observation post on a hill ten miles from the

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<sup>280</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 385; Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 162; Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 116, 120-121.

<sup>281</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 386; Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 122.

<sup>282</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 387. Cited “JCS Memorandum for Information No. 258.”

<sup>283</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 64.



Myitkyina airfield, which enabled them to report Japanese fighter activity to the Tenth Air Force headquarters within minutes. The intelligence provided early warning for cargo aircraft flying the Hump and allowed Detachment 101 to determine when its aerial resupply aircraft required a fighter escort.<sup>284</sup> For analysis and dissemination of reports from ground units, Peers established a headquarters intelligence section to track reports and produce daily summaries for dissemination on twelve separate communications schedules with Allied conventional headquarters.<sup>285</sup>

Detachment 101 proved itself a vital asset for Tenth Air Force targeting efforts. From March to August 1944, Detachment 101 personnel were the only ground observers or battle damage assessment (BDA) collectors for Tenth Air Force, and their intelligence led to over sixty percent of Tenth Air Force's total air-ground support missions.<sup>286</sup> Detachment 101's targeting support enabled Tenth Air Force to reduce Japanese rolling stock to three effective locomotives west of Myitkyina at the start of campaign and to bomb targets which were unobservable from the air, including concealed fighter bases.<sup>287</sup>

Detachment 101's variety of operations across northern Burma in support of Allied 1944 campaigns directly produced effects at the tactical and operational levels, and indirectly produced strategic-level effects. Kachin Rangers fixed or diverted

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<sup>284</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 147-148.

<sup>285</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 65. Detachment 101's dissemination schedules included two with British units, four with U.S. Army warning networks, four with U.S. Army Air Forces warning networks, one with naval observers in China, and one with naval observers in India.

<sup>286</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 130; Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 387.

<sup>287</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 148-149; Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 55-56, 115.

thousands of Japanese troops, preventing them from reinforcing multiple fronts. They severely diminished forces and sustainment infrastructure in and around Myitkyina, killing over one thousand Japanese soldiers and destroying tons of supplies with few casualties.<sup>288</sup> Their widespread presence deceived Japanese headquarters as to actual composition, disposition, strength of advancing Allied forces.<sup>289</sup> Detachment 101 operations and airstrike targeting against lines of communication contributed indirectly to the Japanese Fifteenth Army's defeat in India. The unit's independent guerrilla operations, maneuver support, and liaison support contributed substantially to Allied success in seizing Myitkyina and further securing the aerial line of communication from India to China.

#### Long-Range Penetration Groups: Special Force

British LRPG expansion for 1944 began while the first Chindit expedition was still conducting operations in Burma the year prior. A confident patron of Wingate, Wavell ordered the British Army to develop a second LRPG, 111 Brigade. Like its predecessor, 111 Brigade was composed of a mix of British and Commonwealth forces recruited from the Indian Army. The formation included one battalion of Cameroonian infantry, two battalions of the Gurkha Rifles, and a battalion of the King's Own

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<sup>288</sup> Troy J. Sacquety, "A Special Forces Model: OSS Detachment 101 in the Myitkyina Campaign, Part II," *Veritas* 4, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 52, [https://arsof-history.org/articles/v4n3\\_myitkyina\\_part\\_2\\_page\\_1.html](https://arsof-history.org/articles/v4n3_myitkyina_part_2_page_1.html).

<sup>289</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 386.

Regiment.<sup>290</sup> Wavell selected Brigadier (later Major General) William Lentaigne, with previous Gurkha experience, to command the unit.<sup>291</sup>

During the August 1943 Quadrant Conference, the CCS agreed to expand Wingate's LRPG concept to six brigade-sized groups to support Allied operations in northern Burma in 1944.<sup>292</sup> The concept the CCS envisioned for LRPG employment was similar to 77th Indian Infantry Brigade's operations in 1943—mobile columns of infantry, advancing ahead of conventional forces, sustained by aerial resupply. However, Wingate developed a new concept of employment for 1944, the 'stronghold.' Under this concept, advance columns of infantry would infiltrate occupied areas to seize and fortify a position where they could build an airstrip and land a brigade of reinforcements within thirty-six hours.<sup>293</sup> By Wingate's logic, the stronghold concept would present Japanese forces with multiple dilemmas—while fighting Allied conventional units on multiple fronts, the Japanese would have to attrit themselves attacking strongholds or exhaust themselves chasing small patrols through the jungle in their rear areas.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 434.

<sup>291</sup> Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 434, 440. Neither Wingate nor Lentaigne were enthusiastic about Wavell's decision to create 111 Brigade. Wingate doubted that the new Brigade or its commander could learn to properly execute his long-range penetration concept. Lentaigne, a rigidly conventional thinker, did not wholly believe in Wingate's ideas.

<sup>292</sup> Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, ed., *Quadrant Conference*, 403, 449-450.

<sup>293</sup> Calvert, *Chindits*, 27; Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 495.

<sup>294</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission to China*, 366.

Wingate raised and trained the five additional LRPB brigades by the end of 1943.<sup>295</sup> His new organization, known as “Special Force” or 3 Indian Division, consisted of the rebuilt 77 Brigade, 111 Brigade, three brigades formed from 70 Indian Division troops, and 3 West African Infantry Brigade, which trained for airfield defense. The Chindits of Special Force conducted jungle training in central India in the same manner as their 1943 predecessors—through “toil, hardship, and specili[z]ation.”<sup>296</sup> To prepare for the 1944 operation, however, training also included glider operations and airfield construction.<sup>297</sup> To fully enable the expanded LRPB Concept, Marshall provided Wingate with an American air component. This “custom-made aggregation of liaison aircraft, helicopters, light bombers, fighters, gliders, and transports” became the 5318th Air Unit, later renamed the No. 1 Air Commando Group, under the co-command of Colonels Philip Cochran and John Alison.<sup>298</sup>

The 1944 Chindit expedition was codenamed Operation Thursday. During the operation, Special Force would support offensives on the Hukawng and Salween fronts by severing lines of communications to the Japanese 18th and 56th Divisions, respectively (see figure 16).<sup>299</sup> Transport aircraft from No. 1 Air Commando enabled five

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<sup>295</sup> Calvert, *Chindits*, 12.

<sup>296</sup> Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 483-484.

<sup>297</sup> Michael Calvert, *Prisoners of Hope* (London, Leo Cooper, 1996), 15.

<sup>298</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission to China*, 366. For the history of No. 1 Air Commando Group during Operation Thursday, see R. D. Van Wagner, Military History Series 86-1, *1st Air Commando Group: Any Place, Any Time, Any Where* (Montgomery, AL: United States Air Force Command and Staff College, 1986). <https://www.afsoc.af.mil/Portals/86/documents/history/AFD-051227-003.pdf>.

<sup>299</sup> Allen, *Burma*, 318.

of the six Chindit brigades to infiltrate into northern Burma by air. The brigades established fortified strongholds near major Japanese lines of communication, inside of which they would construct airfields to land heavy equipment—primarily artillery—and to evacuate casualties.<sup>300</sup> Brigadier Michael Calvert, the 77 Brigade Commander, likened the cooperation of Operation Albacore and Operation Thursday with the metaphor of destroying a wheel. Stilwell’s forces would apply pressure to the rim, while the Chindits would cut the spokes.<sup>301</sup>

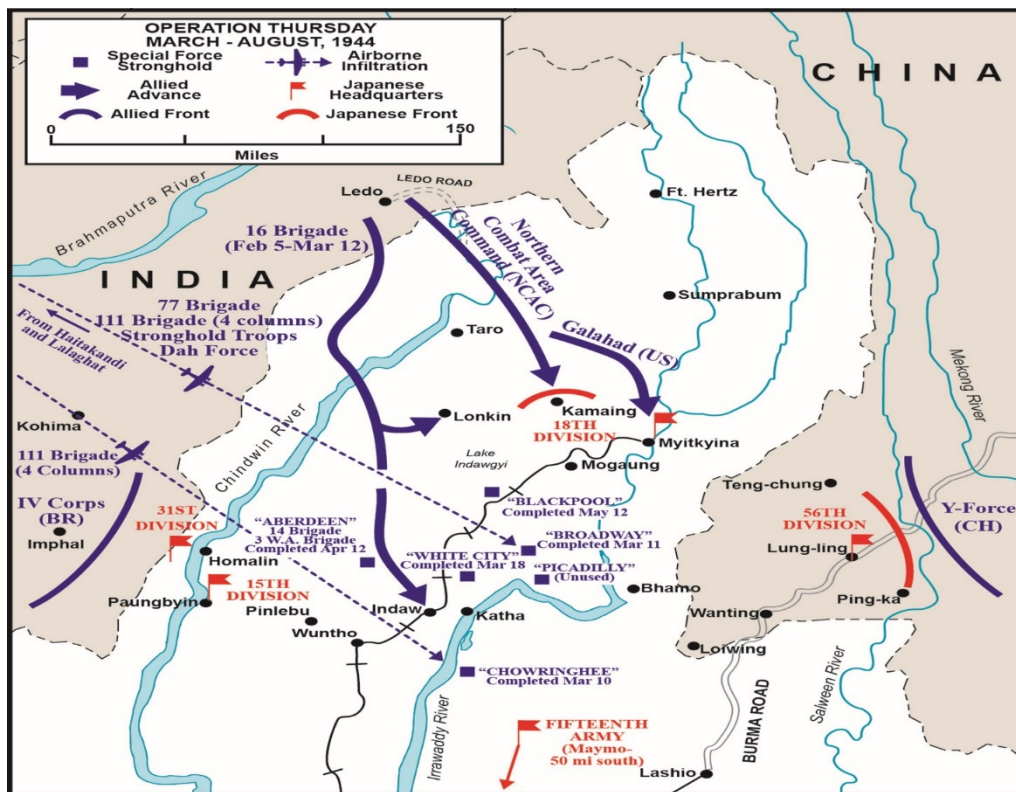


Figure 16. Operation Thursday, March-August, 1944

Source: Adapted from Louis Allen, *Burma, The Longest War 1941-45* (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), 317.

<sup>300</sup> Calvert, *Prisoners of Hope*, 26.

<sup>301</sup> Calvert, *Chindits*, 12.

Between March 5-11, 1944, No. 1 Air Commando conducted nearly six hundred glider and cargo sorties into two landing zones—codenamed “Broadway” and “Chowringhee”—east of the Japanese garrison in Indaw.<sup>302</sup> The flights enabled Special Force to deliver over nine thousand Chindits, over one thousand mules, equipment, artillery, and anti-aircraft guns over one hundred fifty miles into Japanese-occupied territory. Within two weeks, the Chindits established three strongholds and conducted battalion-level operations in a circle with roughly a fifty-mile radius around Indaw.<sup>303</sup> The first stronghold was Broadway, which 77 Brigade developed from its initial landing zone. For the second, 77 Brigade established multiple blocking positions and a stronghold named “White City” straddling the major Mandalay-Myitkyina road and railway near Mawlu, north of Indaw.<sup>304</sup> 16 Brigade established the third, named “Aberdeen,” to the northwest of White City after completing a three hundred sixty-mile march from Ledo.<sup>305</sup> At the beginning of May, Special Force abandoned its initial positions and established another stronghold, codenamed “Blackpool,” on the Mandalay-Myitkyina railway south of Mogaung.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 519-520.

<sup>303</sup> Derek Tulloch, *Wingate in Peace and War* (London: Macdonald, 1972), 211.

<sup>304</sup> Calvert, *Chindits*, 45-53, 93. Calvert named the stronghold for the large number of trees draped by cargo parachutes which the Chindits could not cut down. At peak strength, over two thousand Chindits occupied the White City perimeter, with additional columns conducting external patrols. Defenses included barbed wire “in places twenty yards thick interspersed with anti-tank mines and booby traps and other anti-personnel devices.”

<sup>305</sup> Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 526.

<sup>306</sup> Shelford Bidwell, *The Chindit War: The Campaign in Burma, 1944* (London: Book Club Associates, 1979), 222.

Pressure from Allied conventional commanders complicated Special Force's efforts throughout Operation Thursday. Slim, who claimed control over Special Force, held two Chindit brigades in reserve on the Imphal front.<sup>307</sup> In exchange for deploying 14 Brigade to Aberdeen, Slim demanded that Wingate divert units from supporting Stilwell to severing the Japanese Fifteenth Army's east-west lines of communication to Imphal.<sup>308</sup> Wingate resisted the demand until his death on March 24, 1944, when a B-25 bomber carrying him crashed into a mountainside in eastern India. Wingate's sudden death left Lentaigne to inherit the long-range penetration concept which he did not fully understand and could not properly articulate to his chain of command.<sup>309</sup> Lentaigne made the changes by moving 14 and 111 Brigades to block three of Mutaguchi's largest supply routes while 16 and 77 Brigades continued to support Stilwell.<sup>310</sup> Stilwell, after assuming control of Special Force in late April, employed Chindits as conventional infantry units to seize heavily-armed Japanese garrisons 'at all costs.' The attacks rapidly deteriorated the Chindit columns to the point they were no longer combat effective after several weeks.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Calvert, *Chindits*, 69, 96-97.

<sup>308</sup> Bidwell, *The Chindit War*, 164.

<sup>309</sup> Calvert, *Chindits*, 63-67, 89.

<sup>310</sup> Bidwell, *The Chindit War*, 167. Lentaigne's changes lasted approximately two weeks. On April 9, Mountbatten decided that Slim would retain 23 Brigade at Imphal and that Special Force would solely support Stilwell.

<sup>311</sup> Calvert, *Chindits*, 125-127. Stilwell ordered Morris Force, an independent Chindit detachment operating north of Bhamo, to conduct a series of costly attacks which depleted the unit's officers by seventy percent and its enlisted force by fifty percent; Calvert, *Chindits*, 135-147. To assist Stilwell's siege at Myitkyina, 77 Brigade lost sixty percent of its strength to capture the nearby town of Mogaung.

Chindit operations gained immediate attention from senior Japanese commanders, who diverted large numbers of forces to counter the strongholds in their rear areas. Mutaguchi, whose Fifteenth Army was simultaneously fighting on three fronts, drew a battalion from each front to form a counter guerrilla unit under a Lieutenant Colonel Nagahashi.<sup>312</sup> Kawabe also diverted several units from other regions to fight the Chindits, including the 24th Independent Mixed Brigade from Tenasserim, a battalion from southern Burma, and a regiment from Malaya.<sup>313</sup> By the end of March, the Japanese massed over twenty thousand troops in the Indaw region to conduct rear area operations.<sup>314</sup> At the beginning of April, the Southern Army, the Japanese theater force with responsibility for the war in Southeast Asia, New Guinea, and the Philippines, committed its strategic reserve—the 53rd Division—to northern Burma.<sup>315</sup> To relieve Mutaguchi of all responsibility except the Imphal front, Kawabe formed the Thirty-Third Army under Lieutenant General Honda Masaki to assume responsibility for counter guerrilla operations and the two northern fronts.<sup>316</sup>

Operation Thursday imposed severe costs upon both the Japanese Fifteenth and Thirty-Third Armies, both in supplies and troops. Chindit strongholds along several

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<sup>312</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 94-95. Fifteenth Army was simultaneously engaged on the Hukawng front against Stilwell, the Salween front against Y-Force, and the Imphal front against Slim.

<sup>313</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 95-96.

<sup>314</sup> Calvert, *Chindits*, 59.

<sup>315</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 147-148, 150. Upon arrival in Burma, Kawabe sent 53rd Division to fight against the Chindits rather than reinforce the faltering 15<sup>th</sup> Army at Imphal.

<sup>316</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 4.



major lines of communication south of Myitkyina severely restricted resupply to all three Japanese fronts.<sup>317</sup> Their effectiveness caused the Japanese 53rd Division to divert its counteroffensive away from relieving the besieged Myitkyina garrison.<sup>318</sup> The remnants of the Japanese 5th Air Division further contributed to supply shortages, as their aircraft attacked the airstrip at Broadway rather than conducting aerial resupply at Imphal.<sup>319</sup>

Through a sabotage operation and calling an airstrike, Chindits successfully destroyed large stockpiles of Japanese malaria medication and ammunition bound for front-line units, respectively.<sup>320</sup> To fight against the Chindits, the Japanese Burma Area Army committed a strength of nearly two divisions away from its three fronts.<sup>321</sup> With no forces in reserve, Burma Area Army could only create and employ ad-hoc units. These units suffered excessive casualties and achieved few results from attacking fortified positions with no understanding of the terrain or enemy situation.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> John Diamond, *Burma Road 1943-1944: Stilwell's Assault on Myitkyina* (Oxford: Osprey, 2016), 64. After 77 Brigade cut the road and rail lines to Myitkyina at White City, Japanese forces could only transport supplies to 18th Division with small boats on the Irrawaddy River; Calvert, *Chindits*, 122, 124. Morris Force destroyed bridges along two major roads south of Bhamo which forced Japanese supply units to hand-carry supplies bound for the Hukawng and Salween fronts across rivers; Calvert, *Chindits*, 73, 75. 111 and 14 Brigades severed the major road from Indaw to Homalin, which severely limited supplies and exhausted the Japanese 31st Division before arrival at the Imphal front.

<sup>318</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 9.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>320</sup> Calvert, *Chindits*, 69, 72, 118-119.

<sup>321</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 94-96.

<sup>322</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 5.

Operating under Wingate's stronghold concept from March and May 1944, Special Force inflicted over twelve thousand Japanese casualties at the cost of a few hundred Chindits.<sup>323</sup> From May to August, while Special Force fought as a front-line infantry formation to seize Japanese garrisons, the unit suffered nearly four thousand casualties—approximately forty percent of their total strength. By August, after five months of fighting, the Chindits were incapable of continuing combat operations. The remnants of the brigades returned to India, where they convalesced for several months before disbanding.<sup>324</sup>

#### Long-Range Penetration Groups: Galahad

As the CCS approved LRPG expansion from the Indian Army at the August 1943 Quadrant Conference, General George Marshall, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, agreed to contribute Americans to the project. A regiment-sized unit, codenamed Galahad, would train and fight under Wingate's command in 1944.<sup>325</sup> The U.S. War Department recruited approximately three thousand volunteers to form Galahad in September 1943. The soldiers came from the South and Southwest Pacific Theaters, the Continental United States, and the 33rd Infantry Regiment on Trinidad, a component of U.S. Caribbean Defense Command.<sup>326</sup> The soldiers were selected for their jungle warfare experience and

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<sup>323</sup> Calvert, *Chindits*, 116.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>325</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission to China*, 366.

<sup>326</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 35.

“physical ruggedness.”<sup>327</sup> Shipped under the code name Casual Detachment 1688, Galahad’s three battalions arrived in India by November 1943 and began training near the town of Deogarh.<sup>328</sup>

Galahad organized each of its three battalions into two ‘combat teams’ at Wingate’s suggestion.<sup>329</sup> For two months, the unit conducted rigorous training in jungle operations, supervised by a SEAC training officer and one of Wingate’s column commanders.<sup>330</sup> During training, On January 1, 1944, in the presence of Mountbatten and a small press corps, the unit activated as the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional). When Brigadier General Frank Merrill arrived to take command of the unit three days later, correspondent James Shepley of *Time and Life* coined the unit “Merrill’s Marauders.”<sup>331</sup>

Although Galahad trained for employment under Wingate, Mountbatten transferred the unit’s operational control to Stilwell after the Sextant Conference in December 1943.<sup>332</sup> Galahad’s concept for employment changed with its command

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<sup>327</sup> Charlton Ogburn, Jr., *The Marauders* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 9.

<sup>328</sup> Charles Hunter, *Galahad* (San Antonio: Naylor Company, 1963), 35.

<sup>329</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell’s Command Problems*, 36; United States Army Center of Military History, *Merrill’s Marauders*, 11; Hunter, *Galahad*, 13. Each combat team included an infantry company reinforced by a heavy weapons platoon, which included mortars, machine guns, and rocket launchers. Each combat team also included a combat engineer platoon, a reconnaissance platoon, and a medical detachment.

<sup>330</sup> Ogburn, *The Marauders*, 52-55; United States Army Center of Military History, *Merrill’s Marauders*, 11,14-16.

<sup>331</sup> Ogburn, *The Marauders*, 64, 69-70.

<sup>332</sup> Hunter, *Galahad*, 10; Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 255-256; Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, ed., *Sextant Conference, August 1943: Papers and Minutes of Meetings* (Washington, DC: Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 1943), 505. At the Sextant conference, Marshall recommended employing Galahad in support of Stilwell’s

relationship, as Stilwell disagreed with Wingate's ideas about long-range penetration and strongholds.<sup>333</sup> Stilwell intended to use the Marauders in direct support of the Chinese divisions advancing down the Kamaing Road, in the Hukawng Valley. The Marauders would conduct short-range envelopments to establish roadblocks between ten and twenty miles behind the Japanese front. From those positions, the Marauders would ambush Japanese units fleeing the oncoming Chinese.<sup>334</sup>

At the beginning of February, the Marauders began a two-week, one hundred forty-mile foot march along the Ledo Road to the Hukawng Valley.<sup>335</sup> Between February and May 1944, the time of the unit's effective existence, Galahad conducted three large missions in Burma (see figure 17). On their first mission, the Marauders marched to seize Walawbum and hasten a Japanese withdrawal by cutting supplies to their front at Maingkwan, ten miles to the north.<sup>336</sup> Their success at Walawbum enabled Stilwell and the Chinese divisions to gain control of the Hukawng Valley.<sup>337</sup> Second, Galahad fought harrowing actions at Shaduzup, Inkangahtawng, and Nhpum Ga which forced Japanese

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X-Force advance after the Combined Chiefs of Staff cancelled British operations in central Burma. Mountbatten made the transfer under pressure from Stilwell.

<sup>333</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 256.

<sup>334</sup> Ogburn, *The Marauders*, 89; United States Army Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders*, 31, 35. The Kamaing Road was the sole motor-road through the Hukawng Valley and the main supply route for the Japanese 18th Division in the area. The route was also a planned section of the Ledo Road.

<sup>335</sup> Ogburn, *The Marauders*, 86; Hunter, *Galahad*, 19.

<sup>336</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 64-65; United States Army Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders*, 32.

<sup>337</sup> Ogburn, *The Marauders*, 127-132, 134.

withdrawal and prevented envelopment of the Chinese 22nd Division along the Kamaing Road.<sup>338</sup>

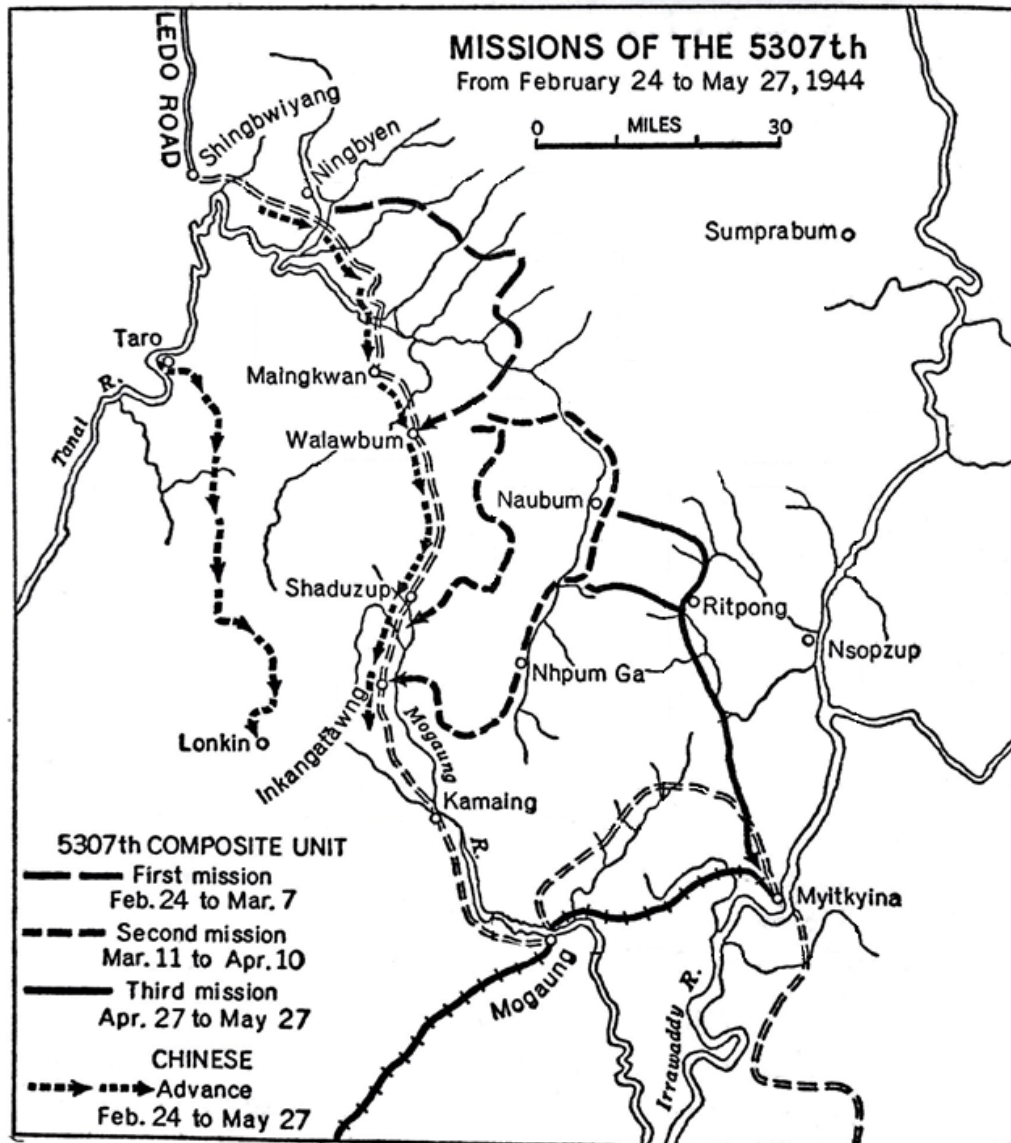


Figure 17. Galahad Missions, February-May 1944

Source: Charlton Ogburn, Jr., *The Marauders* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 85.

<sup>338</sup> For more information on the engagements at Shaduzup, Inkangahtawng, and Nhpum Ga, see Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 67; United States Army Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders*, 47-91.

Galahad's third mission was the unit's last and most difficult. To take advantage of the effects of Chindit disruption operations south of Myitkyina, Stilwell ordered the Marauders to seize the town and airfield at Myitkyina.<sup>339</sup> With no additional American soldiers in the theater to replace Galahad's seven hundred losses, Stilwell attached two Chinese regiments and three hundred of Detachment 101's Kachin Ranger guerrillas to the unit.<sup>340</sup> Using the Kachin Rangers as guides along uncharted trails, Marauders and the Chinese 150th Regiment took Japanese defenders completely by surprise and easily captured the airfield on May 17.<sup>341</sup>

Galahad's luck rapidly changed as two Chinese battalions failed to capture the town the following day, and the Japanese 18th Division reinforced the area with between three and four thousand soldiers.<sup>342</sup> The Marauders fought to complete exhaustion to defend the Myitkyina airfield at the end of May, which expended the unit.<sup>343</sup> Of the roughly three thousand Marauders who began the march from Ledo, twenty percent—just over six hundred—remained by June.<sup>344</sup> Of them, less than two hundred remained in

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<sup>339</sup> United States Army Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders*, 93-94.

<sup>340</sup> Ogburn, *The Marauder*, 228.

<sup>341</sup> Ogburn, *The Marauders*, 241-244; Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 146.

<sup>342</sup> United States Army Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders*, 109-111; Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 146.

<sup>343</sup> Ogburn, *The Marauders*, 247-252.

<sup>344</sup> United States Army Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders*, 113.

Burma for the final attack to capture Myitkyina on August 3, 1944. The unit disbanded a week later.<sup>345</sup>

### Analysis

Allied special operations from October 1943 to August 1944 produced direct and indirect effects against the Japanese on the tactical, operational, theater strategic, and national strategic levels. At the tactical level, Allied special operations forces inflicted nearly fifteen thousand casualties on Japanese units and destroyed tons of supplies, preventing reinforcement of the conventional fronts.<sup>346</sup> OSS Detachment 101 and Galahad directly enabled maneuver for conventional Chinese divisions along the Hukawng front. Detachment 101's operations provided vital intelligence to conventional and special operations headquarters throughout the theater, and their Kachin Ranger guerillas inflicted psychological effects on Japanese units conducting counter-guerrilla operations. Detachment 101 learned that Japanese soldiers refused to volunteer for patrols in Kachin-occupied areas due to typical casualty rates of 50 percent.<sup>347</sup> Japanese units

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<sup>345</sup> Hunter, *Galahad*, 212-213; United States Army Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders*, 113.

<sup>346</sup> Troy J. Sacquety, "A Special Forces Model: OSS Detachment 101 in the Myitkyina Campaign, Part II," 52; Calvert, *Chindits*, 116; United States Army Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders*, 45, 57, 66, 91. Kachin Ranger guerrillas estimated over one thousand Japanese killed, Special Force estimated over twelve thousand Japanese casualties, including killed and wounded, and Galahad estimated nearly two thousand Japanese killed.

<sup>347</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 115.

moving through those areas often did so only at night, firing indiscriminately into the jungle from fear.<sup>348</sup>

In post-war interviews, Japanese commanders discussed many of the effects of special operations at the operational level.<sup>349</sup> Fifteenth Army officers reported that Allied special operations disrupted the timeline for Operation U-Go and prevented the offensive from occurring before Slim could launch a counteroffensive into Burma.<sup>350</sup> Special operations “contributed materially to the failure in the Imphal and Hukawng operations” by severing lines of communication to the 15th, 31st, and 18th Divisions.<sup>351</sup> Special operations disrupted command and control between the Fifteenth Army headquarters and its subordinate divisions during the first month of Operation U-Go, as Mutaguchi kept his headquarters in central Burma to control counter-guerrilla operations rather than the front-line units.<sup>352</sup> In response, the Japanese Burma Area Army created the Thirty-Third

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<sup>348</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 50.

<sup>349</sup> Japanese commanders, unaware of the number or identity of the units who harassed their rear areas, often refer to Allied special operations units broadly in post-war interview monographs as ‘airborne forces.’

<sup>350</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 149.

<sup>351</sup> Calvert, *Chindits*, 75; Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 149, 150, 163. Fifteenth Army reported losing over seventy percent of its vehicles, horses, and oxen during Operation U-Go. Water transportation was impossible, as Allied special operations units destroyed all usable boats on the Chindwin and Irrawaddy Rivers. The only available means of transportation, the Mandalay-Myitkyina Railway, was only usable during short periods at night.

<sup>352</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 149; Harries and Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun*, 411.



Army headquarters to relieve Mutaguchi of the rear area responsibilities.<sup>353</sup> The Fifteenth Army defeat in India and widespread disruption in Japanese rear areas left the Burma Area Army vulnerable to the multi-pronged Allied offensives which would begin after the monsoon season.<sup>354</sup>

Allied special operations between October 1943 and August 1944 affected Japanese theater strategy in two ways. First, the scale of special operations in rear areas forced the Japanese Burma Area Army to divert the equivalent of a division's strength from its three fronts, hastening the defeat of their front-line units against well-supplied Allied conventional forces. When those units failed to neutralize the special operations threat, the Japanese Southern Army devoted its strategic reserve division to rear area counter guerrilla operations in northern Burma rather than fronts in India, China, or the Southwest Pacific. These units fought costly frontal attacks against Chindit strongholds while suffering withering attrition from disease, starvation, and ambushes.<sup>355</sup>

Second, special operations effects made northern Burma untenable as a strategic defensive position upon the withdrawal of the Thirty-Third Army south of Myitkyina and the Fifteenth Army from India. Widespread destruction of logistical infrastructure and continuous rear area security threats, according to Japanese commanders, "greatly affected army operations and eventually led to the total abandonment of northern

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<sup>353</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *History of Imperial General Headquarters, Army Section*, 187.

<sup>354</sup> Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, 238.

<sup>355</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 94-96, 147-148, 150.

Burma.”<sup>356</sup> The cumulative effects led to the failure of the Burma Area Army’s Indian invasion strategy and necessitated a change to the three-part defensive strategy focused on defending central Burma, maintaining the blockade of China as long as possible, and defending Burma’s coasts from invasion—Operations Ban, Dan, and Kan, respectively.<sup>357</sup>

The failure of Operation U-Go, to which Allied special operations units contributed substantially, also affected Japanese national strategy. The close timing of defeats in India, the Southwest Pacific, and the Marianas led to popular unrest in Japan and the resignation of the Tōjō cabinet. IGHQ ended the national strategy of the absolute national defense sphere and implemented the Shō (Victory) Plan, which diverted all available resources the northwest Pacific at the expense of reinforcing other theaters, including Burma.<sup>358</sup>

During 1944, Allied conventional commanders with control over special operations forces often employed them improperly, which prevented them from achieving greater effects. British Army commanders, including Slim, remained skeptical of SOE capabilities and demanded to employ them strictly in a tactical support role.<sup>359</sup> To complicate the issue, SOE’s civilian leadership at the British Foreign Office sought to employ BCS as a tool for advancing a colonial political agenda rather than for defeating

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<sup>356</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 149.

<sup>357</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 100.

<sup>358</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *History of Imperial General Headquarters*, 201; Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, 240.

<sup>359</sup> Cruikshank, *SOE in the Far East*, 170.

the Japanese.<sup>360</sup> Stilwell and Slim disregarded Wingate's LRP concept and employed the units under their command as they saw fit, with the same disastrous results—Special Force and Galahad fought to complete combat ineffectiveness within a few months.

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<sup>360</sup> Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 116, 124.

## CHAPTER 5

### SPECIAL OPERATIONS, SEPTEMBER 1944-MARCH 1945

During September 1944, Allied conventional units remained in garrisons around Myitkyina to train and prepare for executing Operation Capital, starting in mid-October. A new American LRPG codenamed Mars Task Force, composed of Galahad veterans and new replacements from the United States, trained in one such garrison for side-by-side operations with the CAI.<sup>361</sup> Detachment 101 continued its area command operational concept as the only remaining special operations unit in the field, moving south of Myitkyina to prepare central Burma for future operations.<sup>362</sup> The Kachin Ranger guerrillas were the only Allied units in contact with Japanese forces in Burma from August to October 1944.<sup>363</sup>

From October 1944 to early March 1945, Detachment 101 and Mars Task Force reached the peak of organizational capabilities to conduct UW and American-style long-range penetration operations, respectively. Both forces conducted independent operations in support of NCAC's conventional British and Chinese divisions. Detachment 101 expanded its capability to provide maneuver, liaison, and intelligence support to every Allied headquarters in Burma with larger guerrilla units and new enabling components. Allied special operations in support of Operation Capital directly enabled NCAC to

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<sup>361</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 90.

<sup>362</sup> Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 367.

<sup>363</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 173.

complete the first of the campaign's two strategic objectives—reopening ground communications with China.

#### Unconventional Warfare Units: Office of Strategic Services Detachment 101

Since the cessation of Operation Albacore in August, Detachment 101's Kachin Ranger guerrilla units, now organized into three area commands, continued to conduct independent operations in Japanese rear areas south of Myitkyina.<sup>364</sup> Patrols tracked and ambushed Japanese units withdrawing southward toward Mandalay, but the weather severely limited their operational tempo and supplies. In accordance with Stilwell's earlier request to increase forces, Detachment 101 conducted extensive guerrilla recruiting activities. By the end of 1944, the unit employed nearly ten thousand guerrillas, organized into seven battalions, for independent operations and maneuver support to NCAC (see figure 18). To meet the high demand from Allied headquarters for intelligence support, Detachment 101 also managed nearly five hundred clandestine intelligence agents deployed throughout central Burma.<sup>365</sup> To maximize coordination with other Allied headquarters during Operation Capital, Peers expanded the Detachment 101 liaison network.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," (July 1948): 14.

<sup>365</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 176; Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 182-183. Of the clandestine intelligence agents Detachment 101 employed at the end of 1944, sixty operated at long ranges—between one hundred and two hundred miles ahead of the front—while four hundred operated at shorter ranges.

<sup>366</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 179. By the end of 1944, Detachment 101 embedded liaison officers in the headquarters of British 36 Division, NCAC G-2 (Intelligence), Mars Task Force and its subordinate regiments, First Provisional Tank Group, British IV Corps, SEAC, the First Chinese Army, and the Sixth Chinese Army.

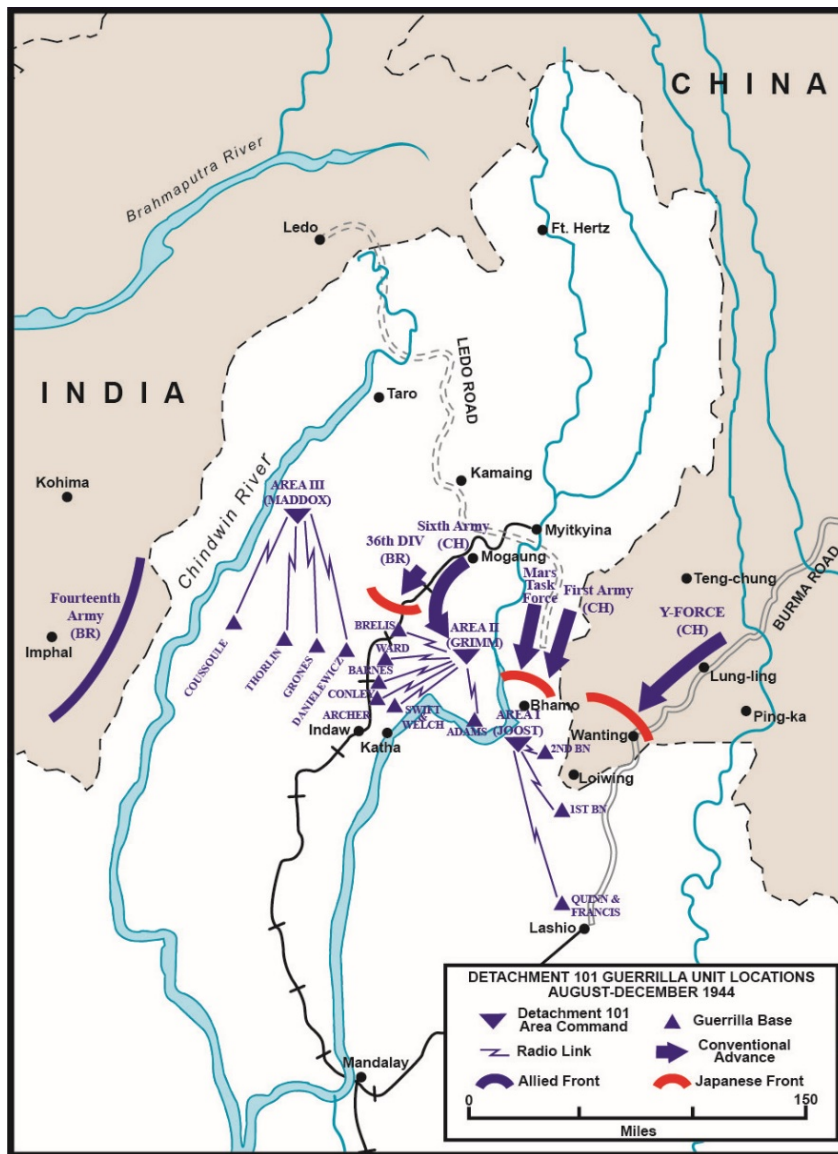


Figure 18. Detachment 101 Guerrilla Unit Locations, August-December 1944

Source: Adapted from William R. Peers and Dean Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America's Most Successful Guerrilla Force* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), 175.

In Area III, the western area command, Major Red Maddox's headquarters and its four subordinate guerrilla units remained the only Allied forces in the one-hundred-mile

gap between NCAC and the British Fourteenth Army.<sup>367</sup> In this sector, guerrilla forces grew to a strength of two thousand fighters. A growing number were Shans and Burmans, who defected from their posts at Japanese garrisons.<sup>368</sup> Area III guerrilla units conducted ambushes to harass ragged columns of the Japanese Fifteenth Army retreating from the Imphal front towards Mandalay. Guerrillas also conducted large-scale sabotage operations against Fifteenth Army logistical facilities intended to feed retreating divisions and munitions stockpiles intended to be evacuated for future operations in central Burma.<sup>369</sup> Area III's operations protected the exposed flanks of the NCAC and British Fourteenth Army advances and deceived the Japanese Fifteenth Army headquarters to believe much larger operations would occur in the sector.<sup>370</sup> After months of successful operations, Area III disbanded in January 1945. The unit's few remaining Kachin Rangers moved to Area II, where Maddox assumed command of future operations.<sup>371</sup>

In Area II, the central area command, Captain Laurence Grimm's six guerrilla units moved south of Myitkyina to isolate the Japanese garrison at Katha in preparation

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<sup>367</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 388.

<sup>368</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 174, 176; Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 179.

<sup>369</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Area Operations*, 162-163, 165.

<sup>370</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 388. Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Area Operations*, 165. Japanese commanders stated in post war interviews that the Fifteenth Army headquarters anticipated "large-scale enemy airborne operations" interfering with its planned evacuation of munitions from the northwest side of the Irrawaddy River toward Mandalay.

<sup>371</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 147, 182. The unit's Kachin Rangers refused to advance further south and operations began to overlap with British Fourteenth Army patrols in the Area.

for the upcoming offensive.<sup>372</sup> As the British 36 Division advanced toward Katha, guerrilla forces provided frontal and flank security.<sup>373</sup> The guerrillas operating ahead of the front continually harassed remnants of the Japanese 53rd Division and 24th Independent Mixed Brigade, who withdrew toward Pinwe after defeats at Kamaing and Myitkyina.<sup>374</sup> Through ambushes and effective target reporting for air interdiction, guerrilla forces made areas in the path of the 36 Division untenable for Japanese forces.<sup>375</sup> Intelligence agents near Katha reported activity by Japanese 18th Division units moving through the area from the northeast to reinforce Fifteenth Army in Mandalay.<sup>376</sup> When a force of one thousand Japanese from 18th Division attempted a surprise flank attack on the British 36 Division near Myitson, Guerrillas from Area II provided early warning which allowed a brigade headquarters to displace before being overrun.<sup>377</sup> Area II's efforts enabled the British 36 Division to enter Katha nearly unopposed and end the first phase of the NCAC offensive on December 11, 1944.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 177. The six guerrilla units in Area II varied in strength, from one hundred to four hundred fighters each.

<sup>373</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 388.

<sup>374</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Area Operations*, 166-167.

<sup>375</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 178.

<sup>376</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 388; Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 51.

<sup>377</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 186; Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 216; Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 51; Roosevelt, *War Report*, 388. Each of these sources specifically mention this event with a slightly different perspective.

<sup>378</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 177.



In Area I, the eastern area command, Major Pete Joost and Burma Army Major Lazum Tang developed the largest UW network of any Detachment 101 unit. Area I grew from two to seven guerrilla battalions, each with one thousand fighters.<sup>379</sup> The headquarters also operated an intelligence and logistics network among all of the Kachin villages in the Sinlumkaba region, less than 20 miles from the major Japanese garrison at Bhamo.<sup>380</sup> Guerrilla units in Area I conducted ambushes and highly effective air interdiction against Japanese forces in the area north of Myothit, which enabled the Chinese New First Army to advance toward Bhamo with little resistance.<sup>381</sup> Area I provided Kachin guides and flank security forces to Mars Task Force, the Chinese 38th Division, and the Chinese 30th Division for their advance to Namhkan. Additional guerrilla units ambushed the Japanese Yamakazi Detachment as they retreated southward from Namhkan toward Namhpakka.<sup>382</sup> When NCAC units reached Namhkan, Area I's seven battalions moved south to operate in the vicinity of Lashio.<sup>383</sup> The guerrilla battalions nearly cleared the city of Japanese forces and provided critical terrain and enemy information to the approaching Chinese divisions. On March 7, 1945, the Chinese

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<sup>379</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 187.

<sup>380</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 177.

<sup>381</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 177-178.

<sup>382</sup> Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 418; Headquarters, United States Army, *Japan, 33rd Army Operations*, 46.

<sup>383</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 388.

divisions occupied Lashio and completed NCAC's portion of Operation Capital with minimal resistance.<sup>384</sup>

To increase the unit's operational flexibility, Detachment 101 also began to build and employ 'small combat teams' led by one American and composed of approximately ten indigenous guerrillas.<sup>385</sup> Similar to a miniature version of the unit's 1943 long-range penetration groups, their mission was solely to conduct raids against Japanese targets rather to recruit and train additional guerrillas. Between January and March 1945, Detachment 101 parachuted three small combat teams, codenamed MM, Jacko, and Leonard, along routes Japanese forces used to retreat from the British Fourteenth Army advance. In a short amount of time, small combat teams reported killing hundreds of Japanese soldiers.<sup>386</sup>

By the end of 1944, Detachment 101 included over a thousand American personnel. The headquarters included a surgical hospital, a fleet of seventeen light aircraft, known as the "Red Ass Squadron," and personnel from every department of the OSS.<sup>387</sup> Gold Dust, a team from the Morale Operations (MO) department, achieved operational-level effects with military information support operations in February 1945. Under the name Operation Fully, Gold Dust produced false Japanese surrender orders

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<sup>384</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 187; Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 227.

<sup>385</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 178.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>387</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 179-181. For more information on the status of Detachment 101's enabling staff sections at the end of 1944, see Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 140-172.

which Detachment 101 disseminated to Japanese forces. Within weeks, Detachment 101 received reports of Japanese feigning illness to comply with the orders, and Japanese deserters began to arrive at allied lines carrying the Gold Dust leaflets.<sup>388</sup>

Combat in northern Burma ended for Detachment 101 as Chinese forces entered Lashio. However, when Mars Task Force and the Chinese New First Army departed to be transferred to China, Detachment 101's guerrillas became NCAC's only combat force to continue operations into central Burma.<sup>389</sup> After more than ninety percent of Area I's Kachin guerrillas demobilized in Lashio, the unit reorganized into four battalions and fought as conventional units with exceptional air support until their last combat mission in late June 1945.<sup>390</sup> Comprising only one percent of NCAC's highest combat strength, Detachment 101 inflicted twenty-nine percent of the command's reported Japanese casualties throughout the campaign, killing over four thousand and capturing fifty three.<sup>391</sup>

#### Long-Range Penetration Groups: Mars Task Force

Plans for a second American LRPB developed as the first was conducting operations in northern Burma. Stilwell, upon news of a large number of American

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<sup>388</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 181; Ann Todd, *OSS Operation Blackmail: One Woman's Covert War against the Imperial Japanese Army* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2017), 99-103. Todd's book chronicles every MO operation in the CBI Theater during World War II and sheds light on a lesser-known OSS capability.

<sup>389</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 204; Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," (July 1948): 14.

<sup>390</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 187, 207-210.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, 184; Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 389.

replacements bound for the CBI Theater, made his desires of commanding an American division clear to the United States War Department. The War Department, seeing the utility of the LRPG concept in reopening the Burma Road, authorized Stilwell to plan for a division-sized unit consisting of one Chinese and two American regiments to employ at the end of the monsoon season.<sup>392</sup> On July 26, 1944, NCAC activated the 5332nd Brigade (Provisional), also known as the Mars Task Force, under BG Thomas Arms.<sup>393</sup>

The core units of the Mars Task Force were the 475th Infantry Regiment (Long Range Penetration, Special) and the 124th Cavalry Regiment (Special), which would operate in the same ‘combat team’ method as their Galahad predecessors.<sup>394</sup> The 475th Infantry Regiment formed around the remaining combat effective veterans of Galahad, including their commander, Lieutenant Colonel William Osborne. Activated on August 5, 1944, two days before the fall of Myitkyina, the unit trained during the monsoon season at Camp Robert W. Landis to the north of the city.<sup>395</sup> The 124th Cavalry Regiment was a federalized unit of the Texas National Guard who traded horses for mules during pre-deployment training in spring 1944. The Regiment conducted LRPG tactics training at the Ramargh Training Center in India before arriving at Camp Landis in November.<sup>396</sup> Although the 1st Chinese Regiment received the same LRPG training as the 124th

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<sup>392</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 90.

<sup>393</sup> Sacquety, “Over the Hills and Far Away,” 3.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>395</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 91, 94. Camp Landis took its name from the first Merrill’s Marauder killed in action.

<sup>396</sup> John Randolph, *MARSmen in Burma* (Columbia: University of Missouri-Columbia, 1990), 17, 56.

Cavalry Regiment, NCAC maintained the unit as a reserve and never allowed Mars Task Force to employ it.<sup>397</sup> Taking lessons from Galahad's organizational shortcomings, Mars Task Force also included robust supporting units to improve the unit's self-sufficiency deep in enemy-held areas.<sup>398</sup>

NCAC, under Sultan's command, employed the Mars Task Force in two phases to support its campaign to reopen ground communications with China.<sup>399</sup> On November 15, 1944, one day after the start of NCAC's fall offensive, the 475th Infantry Regimental Combat Team embarked on its first phase. The Regiment marched south toward the town of Si-u, where the Chinese 22nd division operated at the center of the NCAC line. Initially intended to support the Chinese, two battalions of the 475th Infantry Regiment replaced the 22nd Division between December 6-12 as the latter received orders to redeploy to China.<sup>400</sup> From December 12-24, the 475th Infantry Regiment defended a perimeter near the town of Tonkwa against elements of the Japanese 18th Division. The Regiment's actions enabled the Chinese 22nd Division to conduct an uninterrupted

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<sup>397</sup> Sacquety, "Over the Hills and Far Away," 3.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-7. Mars Task Force included two mule-pack field artillery battalions formed specifically for the LRP mission, mobile medical and veterinary facilities, quartermaster pack troops, war dogs, a civil affairs section to pay locals for war damages, and a Japanese language translation and interrogation unit. Mars Task Force also cooperated extensively with Detachment 101 for reconnaissance support, as three platoons of Kachin Ranger guerrillas served as a screening force for each combat team.

<sup>399</sup> Sacquety, "Over the Hills and Far Away," 10.

<sup>400</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 109-110.

withdrawal and killed over two hundred Japanese soldiers at the cost of fifteen Americans.<sup>401</sup>

Second, after uniting the unit's two combat teams, Mars Task Force received orders to sever the Burma Road near Namhpakka to prevent Japanese forces from retreating from the Salween front.<sup>402</sup> The primary reasons NCAC selected Mars Task Force for the mission were to prevent Japanese forces from moving south to mass on the flank of the British advance in central Burma and to shame hesitant Chinese divisions into pressing the attack on the Japanese as a face-saving gesture.<sup>403</sup> After seventeen days of marching and relying on airdrops for resupply, Mars Task Force made contact with the Japanese 4th Regiment on January 17, 1945.<sup>404</sup> Through a ten-day series of meeting engagements and interdiction with fires, Mars Task Force pressured Japanese forces to retreat southward in small parties until the Burma Road was clear for Allied convoys on January 27 (see figure 19).<sup>405</sup> From January 28 to February 10, the 475th Infantry Regiment and 124th Cavalry Regiment cleared Japanese forces from the two last occupied villages on high ground overlooking the Burma Road—Hpa-pen and Loikang.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 110-113.

<sup>402</sup> Sacquety, "Over the Hills and Far Away," 10; Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 186.

<sup>403</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 184.

<sup>404</sup> Sacquety, "Over the Hills and Far Away," 12.

<sup>405</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 186-202.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*, 205-214.

During their two major combat operations, Mars Task Force lost just over one hundred killed and nine hundred wounded out of their initial strength of seven thousand. Their short-lived operations enabled NCAC to achieve the Allied strategic objective for northern Burma.<sup>407</sup> As the NCAC advance continued south toward central Burma, Mars Task Force no longer had a combat mission. The force moved its personnel and mules to China to train additional Nationalist Divisions until disbanding on June 11, 1945.<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI*, 213.

<sup>408</sup> Sacquety, "Over the Hills and Far Away," 15.

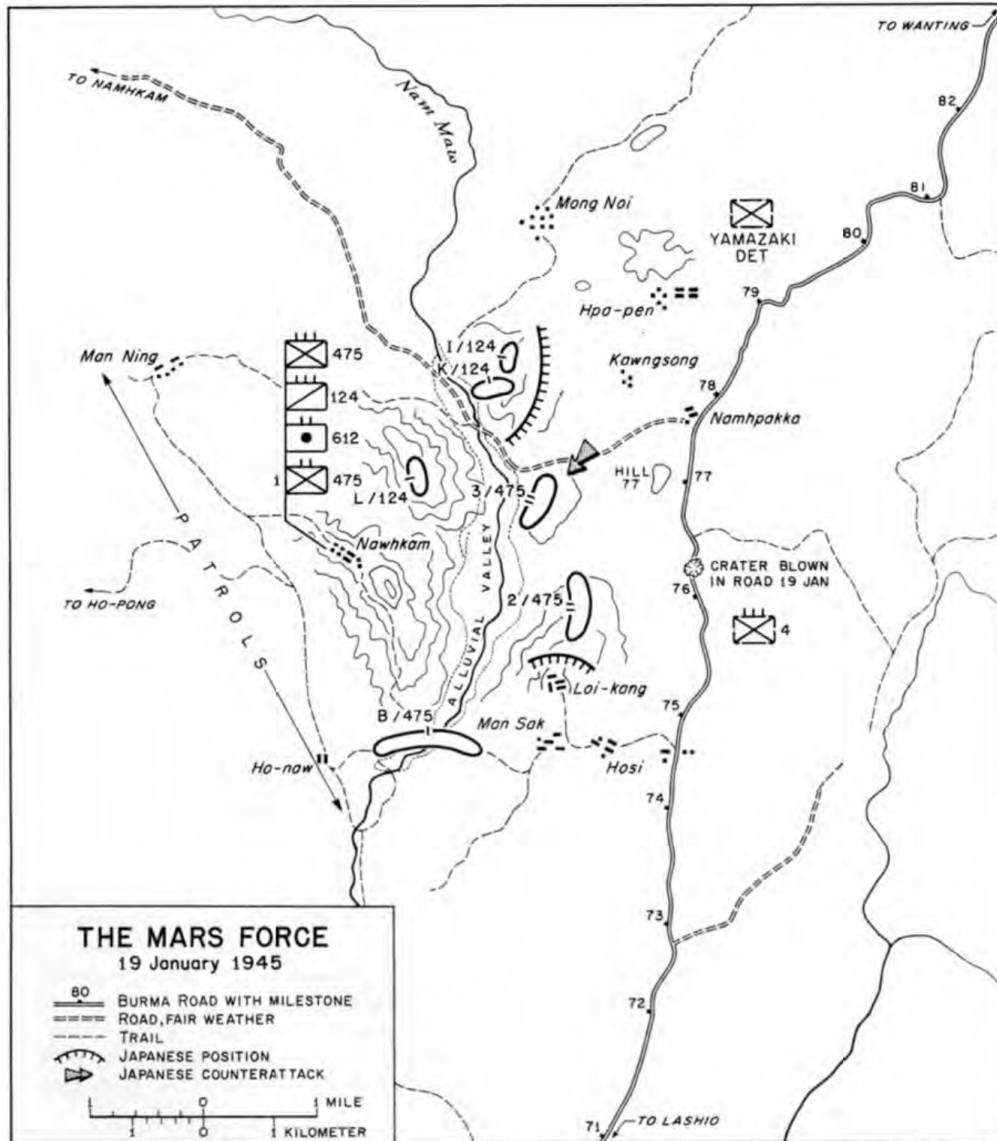


Figure 19. Mars Task Force Dispositions, January 19, 1945

Source: Charles Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater: Time Runs Out in CBI* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1987), 191.

### Analysis

Between September 1944 and March 1945, Mars Task Force and Detachment 101 implemented two years' worth of hard-learned lessons to operate at peak organizational capability in support of Operation Capital. Their operations directly enabled NCAC and



Y-Force to achieve the Allied strategic objective of reopening ground communications with China at a reduced the cost of victory for Allied forces. The operations achieved tactical and operational effects with theater strategic implications against the Burma Area Army but did not lead to a change in strategy.

At the tactical level, Detachment 101 and Mars Task Force operations produced considerable effects. Both forces cleared areas of Japanese forces in advance of larger Allied offensives and produced large numbers of Japanese casualties. For Detachment 101 south of Bhamo, however, transition to open warfare in battalion strength was not a complete success. Kachins who were accustomed to jungle fighting in their own tribal areas adapted poorly to attacks against Japanese defensive fortifications on open terrain, reinforced by artillery and tanks.<sup>409</sup> Detachment 101 battalion-level operations continued to move Japanese forces south, but did not have the same scale of effects as operations during Operation Albacore.<sup>410</sup>

At the operational level, both Detachment 101 and Mars Task Force hastened the defeat of Japanese forces by Chinese and British Divisions. Detachment 101's guerrilla forces deteriorated Japanese units far in advance of the front, enabling NCAC forces to occupy several population centers unopposed. Mars Task Force led the NCAC advance to the Burma Road and hastened the Japanese withdrawal to the south. However, Mars Task Force failed to contain or fully destroy the retreating Japanese 56th Division on the

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<sup>409</sup> Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," (July 1948): 14.

<sup>410</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 185-186.

Burma Road, which kept Chinese divisions in Burma as operational requirements grew in China.<sup>411</sup>

At the theater strategic level, special operations contributed directly to Allied success but failed to affect Japanese decision making. Detachment 101 and Mars Task Force operations contributed directly to the Allied pressure which caused the Japanese Thirty-Third Army to abandon its blockade of Burma Road and to reinforce Fifteenth Army in central Burma. However, the southward withdrawal was a planned phase of the existing Burma defense strategy, not the failure of a different one.<sup>412</sup> Japanese commanders in post-war interviews stated that Thirty-Third Army “completed the Dan Operation” before abandoning the blockade of China. The Burma Area Army intended Operation Dan to be a delaying action along the Burma Road rather than a decisive battle against Allied forces. To this end, Japanese forces delayed the NCAC and Y-Force offensives for as long as possible before reinforcing the theater main effort, Fifteenth Army, near Mandalay.

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<sup>411</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *33rd Army Operations*, 48.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

From 1942-1945, special operations forces performed critical functions in support of Allied objectives in northern Burma. American and British UW forces and L RPGs produced effects on the tactical, operational, theater strategic, and national strategic levels against Japanese forces. In spring 1943, 77 Indian Infantry Brigade's Operation Longcloth directly influenced Japanese commanders in Burma to alter their theater strategy, which produced additional effects at the national strategic level. Cumulative special operations effects reached a peak in the spring and summer of 1944, when Detachment 101 UW operations, Special Force strongholds, and Galahad envelopments severed lines of communication, diverted large numbers of Japanese forces away from multiple fronts, and made northern Burma untenable for continued Japanese operations. These effects directly enabled Allied strategic success in northern Burma and directly contributed to Japanese strategy changes at the theater and national levels. However, no single special operation produced results which immediately or visibly sabotaged Japanese strategy—the effects which altered strategic decisions were either unknown to the Allies or accumulated from multiple operations over time.

#### Analysis of Effects by Special Operations Unit

Allied special operations in northern Burma produced cumulative effects which directly affected Japanese theater and national strategic decision making. However, each special operations unit made different contributions to the war effort, and some units were more successful than others. Detachment 101, through the conduct of UW operations with indigenous forces, provided the greatest impact to Allied and Japanese

objectives in northern Burma. Detachment 101's guerrilla units sustained continuous operations in enemy-occupied territory for over two years and imposed costs on Japanese forces at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. At the tactical level, they inflicted over fifteen thousand Japanese casualties and destroyed large amounts of Japanese logistical infrastructure at a cost of fifteen Americans and two hundred indigenous personnel killed. At the operational level, guerrilla operations cleared Japanese forces from large areas of northern and eastern Burma without conventional support. At the strategic level, their widespread disruption contributed to the Japanese Fifteenth Army defeat in India, contributed to diverting large Japanese forces away from multiple fronts, and made northern Burma untenable for continued defensive operations under Operation Dan. Detachment 101 achieved its results with a remarkable economy of force, employing approximately five hundred fifty American military personnel in the field at the height of operations.<sup>413</sup>

Detachment 101 also provided a much wider range of support to the larger Allied war effort in Burma than any other special operations unit. As the critical enabling function for all Allied operations in northern Burma, Detachment 101 provided communications between conventional headquarters with the most advanced radio network in the theater, furnished an average of ninety percent of NCAC's intelligence, designated an average of sixty five percent of Tenth Air Force's air interdiction targets, rescued over two hundred downed American airmen, and performed intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) functions for nearly every maneuver unit,

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<sup>413</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 391.

including Special Force and Galahad.<sup>414</sup> In the absence of conventional units, Detachment 101 also provided a tool to theater commanders to maintain contact and initiative against Japanese forces. Detachment 101's successful legacy continues to endure long after the unit disbanded in July 1945. CIA paramilitary forces and United States Special Forces claim a direct lineage to the unit and continue to incorporate Detachment 101 operational tenets into modern UW doctrine.<sup>415</sup>

Throughout World War II, SOE in Burma suffered from a failed trust relationship between the British Army and the civilian intelligence agency. Allied commanders arrived in Burma with negative opinions of SOE, built on a history of poor performance in the Middle East. As a result, British commanders failed to capitalize on SOE intelligence and guerrilla capabilities by refusing to allow them within Army battlespace. The British Foreign Office overseeing the SOE complicated matters further by directing units to advance British imperial interests rather than military operational ones. Also, political jockeying and rivalry with OSS prevented effective synchronization, and caused multiple overlaps between BCS and Detachment 101 field units.

1943 L RPGs in northern Burma—77 Indian Infantry Brigade's Operation Longcloth and Detachment 101's A Group—achieved tactical and operational-level effects but suffered from the same issues: a lack of logistical support, a mobility disadvantage to their Japanese opponents, a lack of organic firepower, no indigenous

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<sup>414</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 221; Roosevelt, *War Report*, vol. 2, 391-392.

<sup>415</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 223-225.

culture or language expertise, and no concurrent conventional offensive.<sup>416</sup> The two simultaneous operations caused the Japanese Fifteenth Army to commit elements of three divisions to pursuit, and their sabotage operations limited transportation capacity in the Myitkyina area for four weeks. The operations also created psychological effects against Japanese forces as tactical deception confused pursuers about the size and disposition of Allied forces in their rear areas.<sup>417</sup> However, without a conventional invasion occurring on another front, Japanese forces easily overwhelmed A Group and Chindit columns with their mobility advantage. Under constant pursuit, neither force could not effectively conduct aerial resupply operations. Operations for each lasted less than forty-five days.

Operation Longcloth's most significant impact remained unrealized to Allied forces. Mutaguchi's decision to invade India was an unintended psychological effect of the operation, which altered Japanese theater strategy and affected national strategy.<sup>418</sup> Allied forces were never aware of the effect. This conclusion is contrary to the official historical record, which portrays Operation Longcloth as a mission with negligible strategic success at high cost.<sup>419</sup> Detachment 101's A-Group also deserves recognition

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<sup>416</sup> Sykes, *Orde Wingate*, 384-385. Despite Wavell's concern about the lack of a concurrent offensive, Wingate persuaded him to approve execution of Operation Longcloth.

<sup>417</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 7-8; Allen, *Burma*, 147.

<sup>418</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 14, 17-18; Allen, *Burma*, 153.

<sup>419</sup> Bisheshwar Prasad, ed., *Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War (1939-1945)*, vol. 1, *Reconquest of Burma* (Calcutta, Orient Longman, 1958), 136. <https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/NHC/NewPDFs/INDIA/IAF-Reconquest%20Burma%20I.pdf>; S. Woodburn Kirby, *The War Against Japan*, vol. 2, *India's Most Dangerous Hour* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1958), 327; Fergusson, 241; Calvert, *Chindits*, 10. The British and Indian governments published

for its contributions to the overall effects of Operation Longcloth. The unit conducted sabotage missions on the same transportation infrastructure as the Chindits and amplified Japanese confusion about the size and disposition of forces in their rear areas.<sup>420</sup>

Operation Longcloth also produced the invaluable effects of boosting Allied morale, destroying the myth of Japanese jungle warfare superiority, and convincing the CCS to expand LRPG operations for 1944.

Wingate applied many operational lessons from Operation Longcloth to build and employ Special Force in 1944, which enabled the unit to achieve effects at a much larger scale. The unit's size and stronghold concept enabled the unit to produce large numbers of Japanese casualties while remaining fully supplied by air. No. 1 Air Commando's dedicated support enabled the unit's massive aerial transport requirements. The unit's artillery and anti-aircraft units provided considerable firepower within their strongholds.

Special Force also benefitted from Allied air superiority and concurrent, conventional offensives on three fronts. The combined threat of Allied conventional offensives and Operation Thursday led the Japanese Burma Area Army to form the Thirty-Third Army and assign large forces to operations in the rear area.<sup>421</sup> The strategic effects of Operation Thursday were neither direct nor immediate—Japanese theater and

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their official histories around the same time as the United States published its post-war interview findings from Japanese commanders. This likely precluded the historians from establishing the connection between Operation Longcloth and Mutaguchi's theater strategy decision.

<sup>420</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 85-86; Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 10. Japanese commanders conceded that A-Group's intelligence network was "entirely beyond Japanese anticipation" but had no knowledge of OSS field units. They credited the operation to 77 Indian Infantry Brigade.

<sup>421</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 146-147.

national strategies changed in 1944 as the cumulative result of multiple unit operations and conventional offensives. Two reasons why effects were not as immediate as those from Operation Longcloth were that the LRPG concept was no longer a surprise to Japanese forces, and that the Burma Area Army was already committed to its final decisive offensive in the theater on the Imphal front.

Galahad failed to produce effects above the tactical and operational levels for two main reasons. First, the unit was a light infantry regiment with inadequate support. The unit had no organic artillery, scant medical capabilities to combat rampant disease and high casualty rates, and no available replacements in theater. Galahad completely depended on aerial resupply and suffered considerably when weather or combat prevented airdrops. The unit completely lacked cultural or language expertise to enable cooperation with the local Kachin population.<sup>422</sup>

Next, commanders failed to employ the unit to maximum effect. Poor employment began before the unit's first combat mission. At the recommendation of his subordinate commanders, Merrill insisted upon marching forces over one hundred miles of rugged terrain to their pre-mission staging area "as a means of separating the men from the boys" rather than riding by truck.<sup>423</sup> Exhaustion compounded as Stilwell employed Galahad battalions in 'short jabs' to spur his hesitant Chinese divisions rather than in long-range envelopments.<sup>424</sup> The result was that a light infantry unit often attacked the

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<sup>422</sup> United States Army Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders*, 14, 23-27, 94; Sacquety, "Over the Hills and Far Away," 5.

<sup>423</sup> Hunter, *Galahad*, 19-20.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.



flanks of front line Japanese defenses rather than weaker rear area targets. Galahad inflicted casualties and hastened the withdrawal of Japanese 18th Division, but at great costs.<sup>425</sup> As a result of rapid deterioration from combat, exhaustion, and disease, Galahad's could not sustain operations for longer than ninety days. By the end of May 1944, the unit reported a casualty rate of eighty percent, of which sixty six percent were from disease.<sup>426</sup>

Mars Task Force achieved effects at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels, but the unit's operations had no effect on Japanese strategic decision making. The unit owed much of its tactical and operational success to the lessons learned from Galahad's failures. Larger formations with organic artillery and medical units made Mars Task Force far more capable as a front-line combat unit than its predecessor. The improvements allowed the unit to succeed in conducting offensive operations against fortified Japanese positions ahead of slow-moving CAI divisions and to effectively apply pressure to the Japanese 56th Division upon reaching the Burma Road. However, like Galahad, Mars Task Force had no organic language capability or cultural expertise. Effective partnership with Detachment 101's Kachin Ranger guerrillas mitigated issues and provided valuable intelligence from indigenous sources. Mars Task Force played a critical role in hastening the Japanese withdrawal southward along the Burma Road and enabling Allied convoys to enter China. However, the unit's road blocks allowed Japanese 56th Division troops to escape in sufficient numbers to still provide effective resistance in later battles for central Burma.

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<sup>425</sup> United States Army Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders*, 45.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

### Conditions for Success and Failure

In the case of Operation Longcloth, novelty and unpredictability were two critical aspects of the mission's strategic success. The LRPG concept achieved complete surprise against the Japanese Fifteenth Army because the operation was completely inconsistent with the Japanese understanding of Allied capabilities and intentions.<sup>427</sup> Effective tactical deception, coupled with A-Group's overlapping operations, provided 77 Indian Infantry Brigade with an initial advantage. That advantage quickly deteriorated, however, as nearly three divisions of Japanese forces, unhampered by any conventional front, rapidly encircled and pursued the Allied columns.

One of the biggest shortcomings of Allied special operations in Burma during World War II was the lack of special operations unity of command at the theater level. Before the end of 1943, special operations units coordinated solely with their supported conventional headquarters to conduct operations. Distrust, political jockeying, and lack of awareness stifled communications between units, which led to multiple overlapping operations. SEAC's P Division and Detachment 101's robust liaison network were admirable attempts to mitigate operational conflicts.<sup>428</sup> However, the overlap between Detachment 101's Area I, SOE BCS's Dilwyn, and Special Force's Dah Force in 1944 demonstrated continued flaws in the system.<sup>429</sup> P Division served in a passive role as a

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<sup>427</sup> Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, *15th Army Operations*, 10. Post-war interviews revealed that Japanese Fifteenth Army intelligence estimates failed to "correct their outdated assumptions of the British-Indian forces" and to "conceive a counterattack plan based upon the concept of close air-ground cooperation."

<sup>428</sup> Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War against Japan*, 179.

<sup>429</sup> Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*, 107-109.

“traffic policeman for proposed clandestine operations,” but the organization fell short of directing special operations and synchronizing their effects.<sup>430</sup> With an organization similar to a modern Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF), Allied special operations could have avoided unnecessary duplication of effort and achieved greater overall success at the operational and strategic levels.<sup>431</sup>

Another shortcoming was improper or poor employment of special operations forces. Employment issues began with Detachment 101’s series of failed long-range penetration experiments in 1943. The operations placed teams of intelligence agents in unfamiliar territory with no local expertise and no logistical support. The unit’s short-range operations to establish guerrilla bases in areas with known, friendly indigenous populations and within the range of sustainment capabilities were far more successful and enduring. When Detachment 101’s operations moved south of Lashio, the unit rapidly deteriorated as Kachin guerrillas returned to their homes. SOE BCS suffered improper employment by both military and civilian leaders. Conventional commanders, who did not trust SOE, wrested control of the unit’s trained guerrillas for tactical reconnaissance and security roles. In 1944, the British Foreign Office employed SOE BCS teams in northern Burma to advance colonial policy rather than to achieve military results against the Japanese. Stilwell and Slim both misemployed L RPGs under their command, with the effect of rapid attrition.

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<sup>430</sup> Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War against Japan*, 183.

<sup>431</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication (JP) 3-05.1, *Joint Special Operations Task Force Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 26 April 2007), III-2. Modern United States Joint doctrine states that a CJSOTF provides centralized, responsive, and unambiguous command and control to special operations units to fully integrate and synchronize them into the larger plan.

### Applicability and Future Research Recommendations

The case study of northern Burma in World War II has many relevant applications in a contemporary context. The first is the idea of employing special operations forces to achieve strategic effects, particularly cognitive effects on strategic decisionmakers. In the contemporary threat environment, where powers seek to achieve national security advantages below the threshold of armed conflict, the idea is particularly impactful. Modern special operations planners must consider not only what strategic effects they intend to produce. They must also devise means to effectively measure and assess both intended and unintended effects in an actionable timespan.

In the case of northern Burma in World War II, special operations strategic effects were either unknown to Allied forces or the cumulative result of multiple operations over time. Allied forces had no effective means to assess their effects above the tactical and operational level in either case. The discussion raises the following questions for contemporary and future special operations: how do units and headquarters better anticipate special operations effects, and how can they better measure effects? Is the solution to this shortcoming better-conceived intelligence requirements and indicators, is it a new surveillance capability, or is it a combination of the two?

Another important consideration from this historical study is the continued significance of Burmese internal tumult. The conflict between ethnic Burmans and minority hill peoples, began in the thirteenth century and continues into the twenty-first. The British colonial period, Japanese occupation, and Allied liberation were merely episodes of violence with the same conflict, split along the same ethnic lines. Burma remains a thought-provoking example of UW as multiple non-profit organizations

currently partner with minority populations within Burma, including the Shans and Kachins whose ancestors fought alongside Detachment 101 against the Japanese.<sup>432</sup>

Finally, an understanding of conflict in Burma is particularly significant because of the country's strategic location on the Asian mainland. Burma, now Myanmar, shares borders with the regional powers of India and the People's Republic of China. Ports along the Indian ocean and Admaman seas provide positions of advantage for controlling traffic into the Strait of Malacca from the north. In 2020, Chinese Premier Xi Jinping signed agreements with the Myanmar government for four major One Belt One Road infrastructure projects, including a high-speed rail line along the path of the Burma Road from Rangoon (now Yangon) to the Chinese border near Wanting.<sup>433</sup>

This study proposes three recommendations for future research. First, future scholars should examine strategic impacts of Allied special operations in other parts of SEAC to obtain a more holistic understanding of total effects on Japanese national strategy. For example, the OSS conducted multiple operations in China under the Sino-American Cooperative Organization (SACO), the Air and Ground Forces Resources and Technical Staff (AFGRTS), and the Dixie Mission. According to the OSS official history, units in China made important contributions to American strategic objectives, including

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<sup>432</sup> David Eubank, "Letter from the Director," Free Burma Rangers, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.freeburmarangers.org/>; Tim Heinemann, "About," Worldwide Impact Now, accessed May 3, 2021, [https://www.linkedin.com/in/tim-heinemann-b0162b7#:~:text=Worldwide%20Impact%20Now%20\(WIN\)%2C,Social%20Responsibility%20and%20Environmental%20Protection](https://www.linkedin.com/in/tim-heinemann-b0162b7#:~:text=Worldwide%20Impact%20Now%20(WIN)%2C,Social%20Responsibility%20and%20Environmental%20Protection). The founders of the Free Burma Rangers and Worldwide Impact Now are both former United States Army Special Forces officers committed to aiding continually oppressed minority tribes in Burma.

<sup>433</sup> Bertil Lintner, "Myanmar a Perfect Fit on China's Belt and Road," *Asia Times*, January 27, 2020, <https://asiatimes.com/2020/01/myanmar-a-perfect-fit-on-chinas-belt-and-road/>.

“strengthening Chinese resistance as so to pin down as many Japanese divisions as possible.”<sup>434</sup> There are several historical accounts of OSS activities in China. These works include Milton Miles’s *A Different Kind of War* and Yu Maochun’s *OSS in China: Prelude to Cold War*.

Next, scholars should continue to broaden understanding of historic special operations effects, future scholars should examine other theaters or conflicts to challenge assumptions in the historical record. In a similar manner to this study, more recent literature from the enemy perspective may enable scholars to uncover more examples of special operations strategic effects. An abundance of historical literature about special operations in the European and Mediterranean Theaters of World War II exists to provide a foundation for research.

Finally, scholars should research special operations conducted by other nations throughout history. Study of special operations conducted against the United States and its allies would provide an interesting alternate perspective. Primary source literature written in English could be difficult to obtain, but successful corroboration of enemy reporting with American or allied assessments could prove valuable.

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<sup>434</sup> Roosevelt, *War Report*, 416.

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