

# Report on Character Operation Otter Area

by

**Lt-Col. E. H. Peacock, M.C.**

## **Preamble**

A record of this Operation would be incomplete without adequate reference to the inception of the Operation and related events. Although in command of only one CHARACTER area, I have been concerned with many of its phases since inception. Moreover the CHARACTER Operation in the Karen Hills was opened with 3 Special Groups of the Force known by my name, which were dropped by parachute at the same time and place into KARENNI, and were destined for the 3 main CHARACTER areas. Portions of this report, therefore, dealing with inception, training, etc. embrace the early phases of more than one CHARACTER area, and are both relevant and authoritative. The success of the first 3 Groups was later exploited by sending in reinforcements to the original and adjoining areas.

The Operation, as a whole, has been successful. Primarily the credit lies in the people of the Karen Hills whose record of unswerving loyalty is second to none in the Empire, and whose known loyalty alone justified an Operation so far ahead of the invading Army. Their work and their endurance throughout has been magnificent.

Secondly credit must rest with the 3 Special Groups of "P" Force and attached Jed teams, which accepted the hazards of a "blind" drop into a country which had been under the domination of the Japs for 3 years, and of whose state of subjugation or otherwise very little was known. Curiously enough, 80% of the men in these Groups were Burmese whom I had recruited in the CHINDWIN Valley in 1943. In spite of the hereditary antipathy between Karen and Burman, these men gained the trust of the Karens and were accepted in most cases as leaders of the Levies. Many people who talk loosely of the character of the Burmese would do well to study their record in CHARACTER Operation and consider whether the nature of the Burman or their own attitude towards him is responsible for many unpleasant incidents during the evacuation of 1942.

Thirdly, I would like, in common with all operatives, to acknowledge our debt to the R.A.F. who supplied us with food and stores by air, and who took the most abominable risks to find and approach our Dropping Zones, by day and by night, often under the most appalling weather conditions.

I fear I do not appreciate the difficulties of the staff as well as I might and my criticism of their work and methods, and particularly the latter, may be regarded as unkind. Nevertheless I do appreciate that the many who have done very good work are liable to bear the blame of those whose shoulders were far too narrow for the responsibilities placed on them. To these also we owe a debt of gratitude for many kindnesses and efforts of which the operative is necessarily ignorant.

I have left to the last all mention of Major SEAGRIM who, although not directly concerned in this Operation, was, at its inception, the focal point of all attempts to start a resistance movement in KARENNI. This is not the place to tell his story; of how he "stayed put" in BURMA and gave his life to save the Karens from persecution on his behalf; but he was very definitely an inspiration to them, and I like to think that his valorous spirit, and those of Majors NIMMO and McGRINDLE, who were dropped to him and died in KARENNI, were more than a little responsible for the loyalty and gallantry shown by these hillmen throughout this campaign.

[signed E. H. Peacock, Lt-Col.]

# Part I

## General

### A. (1) Inception

When it became known in 1942 that Major SEAGRIM was still alive, FORCE 136 (then G.S.I.K.) rightly considered that contact with him was an essential part of a resistance movement in the Karen Hills. In middle 1943 I was asked to plan an overland trip to this end, attempts by air having been abortive. My plan, however, was turned down in favour of a further attempt by air by Majors NIMMO and McGRINDLE, which was partially successful. They dropped into the KARENNI in December 1943 and contacted SEAGRIM, but were run down and killed by the Japs in early 1944. The Japs then commenced a campaign of "frightfulness" against the Karens for their help to, and association with, these Officers and SEAGRIM. To prevent further persecution of the Karens SEAGRIM gave himself up to the Japs and was later executed.

In early 1944 I was advised of a plan for entering KARENNI ahead of our contemplated invasion of BURMA. The plan envisaged the use of my guerilla force in groups of approximately 20 men each, it being rightly considered that smaller parties were unlikely to receive assistance from the Karens after their recent persecution. I was advised to select 80 to 100 of my best men for eventual use in this manner.

After the Jap thrust into MANIPUR, and during which "P" Force served under direct command of 20<sup>th</sup> Div., we were withdrawn to INDIA for rehabilitation and training (we had been 15 months in the Field).

### (2) Training

On withdrawal from IMPHAL we were sent in June 1944 to a place called TWEED Camp in BENGAL, where the conditions for rehabilitation and training during the rains could not have been worse in any part of INDIA. Riddled with malaria; with crude encampments close to villages in which splenic infection in children was over 80%; over 100 miles from the nearest large town and supply depot, and subject to constant heavy rain, training was quite impossible and rehabilitation a miserable farce.

Under protest this dreadful camp was inspected by medical authorities and forthwith condemned. We were then hurriedly removed and, no provision having been made elsewhere, the Force was sent to M.E.25, a disused artillery camp about 40 miles from COLOMBO, amongst coconut and rubber plantations. Most of the men fell sick of a virulent fever which the M.O. regarded as originating in TWEED Camp, and the whole force had to be hospitalised for 6 weeks. On their journey to M.E.25 these fever-stricken little men were put through a parachuting course at CHAKLALA where their conduct earned them the highest praise from their R.A.F. instructors. They passed this course with credit and this short period is outstanding in its record of kindness to our men and efficiency of organisation.

At M.E.25 very little training was done until Jed instructors under Lt-Col. MUSGRAVE took charge of the training camp in November 1944. Although unsuitable for training in jungle warfare (the nearest jungle is about 50 miles

away), and climatically unsuitable for the rehabilitation of men new from active service in BURMA, nevertheless the staff of M.E.25 used such material as lay in their hands very effectively, and with a measure of understanding and man-management to which they were previously unaccustomed.

At this establishment the training in weapons was good, in demolitions excellent, and the attention given to the men and organisation generally was good. Of training in jungle warfare the less said the better, but was not discreditable in instructors fresh from European theatres of war.

Under the regime at M.E.25 the men gained a measure of fitness and improved their knowledge of weapons and, particularly, demolitions.

### **(3) Move to Calcutta**

On 9 Feb 45 the 3 Special Groups, each of 20 "P" Force men under myself, Major POLES and Major TURRALL left for China Bay in CEYLON. From there we went by cruiser to CALCUTTA, arriving on the 16<sup>th</sup> and immediately proceeded to JESSORE. Here we were given a very kindly welcome by Major THORNTON and his R.A.F. and other personnel.

### **(4) Briefing**

On 17 Feb all Officers collected at CALCUTTA for briefing. As O.C. "P" Force I was privileged to receive details of the CHARACTER Operations in areas other than that to which I was personally assigned. The plan envisaged the launching of 3 Special Groups of 20 men each of "P" Force, under command Group 1 myself; Group 2 Major POLES; Group 3 Major TURRALL. The areas to be entered and established were — Group 1 OTTER, straddling the MAWCHI Road; Group 2 FERRET, North of OTTER; and Group 3 HYENA, South of OTTER. The date of launching was fixed as 20 Feb 45 by Dakota aircraft from JESSORE. 3 days was quite inadequate for briefing in such important Operations, and I never could understand the reason for the hurry.

The briefing Officer had not been in BURMA and knew very little about the conditions obtaining in the KARENNEI.

The DZ for Group 1 was close to the main LOIKAW/KEMAPYU Road, and the air photographs did not show clearly whether it was open scrub, forest or grassland. The briefing Officer, however, hoped it was the latter.

The DZ for Group 2 was so obviously dangerous (as proved later by Col. TULLOCH) that the Group Commander protested strongly.

The DZ for Group 3 appeared to be good and reasonably isolated.

To add to these incompatibilities we learned that each Group was to take a Jed team (recently arrived from Europe) consisting of two Officers and a Wireless Operator, with whom we had not previously associated, and whose duties were defined as: (a) for obtaining intelligence, and (b) for training Levies. Since these Officers had never been in BURMA, knew nothing of the language and were dependent entirely on the veterans of the Special Groups, the situation became confused. It was further learned that the Commander of Group 3 was to take with him an Officer with whom he was strongly antipathetic and another who was to come under his command in the first phase of the Operation, but was later to take command of him and assume the title of Area Commander.

Bedlam reigned!

The staff in CALCUTTA at this time were largely without knowledge of military procedure. That is the kindest explanation I can give of what to the normal mind might appear rank lunacy.

Briefing was stopped while Officers discussed the situation. The Jeds, all good men but unknown to us, naturally wanted to work in their teams of 3. The Special Groups were furious at unwanted last minute intrusions and implications against their ability to conduct jungle warfare. The potential Area Commander was much embarrassed. All agreed that the plan was unsuitable and asked me to formulate a new one from my previous knowledge of BURMA. I did so, recommending that all 3 Groups should drop into the DZ in HYENA area, and by a show of strength, ensure the co-operation of the Karens; thereafter to settle one area and with it as a foundation to move into the others. Incidentally this plan worked well and both the discarded DZs were later shown to be extremely dangerous if not actually suicidal. I further made it plain that all elements would be strictly under command of Special Group Commanders and would take orders irrespective of the briefing conditions, and that the potential Area Commander would abandon any claims made on his behalf. I then repeated this to the head of the BURMA Country Section, pointing out that the Operation could not proceed in default of his agreement to such modifications. This was grudgingly given in all respects except a "save our face" insistence that the DZ at KEMAPYU QB 8698 should be used by Groups 1 and 2. This insistence nearly wrecked the Operation because the DZ was found to be covered with trees and occupied by Jap posts.

We then returned to JESSORE in an atmosphere clouded by disagreements and doubts.

### **(5) Launching**

Major TURRALL and his Group 3 left for the DZ at PYAGAWPU QB 668228 and Major POLES and myself with our Groups for KEMAPYU on the evening of 20 Feb 45. My Group led and reached the DZ only to find it covered by trees and with rows of lights suspiciously like those of Jap encampments. I was jumping No.1 and had the doubtful privilege of standing at "action station" at the open door for half an hour while the pilot flew to and from the so-called DZ, considering whether it was fair to make us jump. I had a very fine view of this wretched DZ and the lights on it, and, when the pilot refused to let us jump, I did not insist.

We returned to JESSORE where signals received on the 21st and 22nd apprised us that Major TURRALL had landed safely at PYAGAWPU, but had found the Karens in a dubious mood. The justice of our condemnation of the original plan was so obvious that no attempt was made to prevent Groups 1 and 2 from dropping on the DZ at PYAGAWPU on the nights of the 23rd and 24th. There we found Major TURRALL safe but with only 4 recruits. The arrival of Groups 1 and 2 turned the balance, and the Karens voted in favour of joining us and never swerved from their decision.

During the drop of Groups 1 and 2 Major GUTHRIE and a "P" Force Rifleman, Mg. LU DAN, broke each an ankle, and Major POLES a rib. There were a dozen other lesser casualties owing to faulty droppings and descents on trees off the DZ. We jumped with full side-haversacks and with carbines slung round our necks.

## **(6) Control of Operation**

Owing to the change of plan resultant on the condemnation of the original one, control of the Operation at this time devolved largely upon myself and the speed with which I could get the Special Groups established in the areas assigned to them.

Rifles and Brens were at first dropped to us with commendable speed and within a week over 500 Levies had been armed. I then moved Northwards with Group 1 and 50 Levies into OTTER area, leaving Group 2 to follow as soon as Major POLES' broken rib should mend and Major GUTHRIE and other casualties be safely hidden. At this point I lost control of HYENA area, which was thereafter controlled by Major TURRALL and subsequently by Lt.Col. HOWELL, who was dropped in as Area Commander a month or so later.

Major POLES and Group 2 caught up with me at TALATA QB 618556 where I recruited a number of Levies, and accompanied me to SOSISO QB 623768, which I established as a Base, and where I continued recruiting.

On 18 Mar 45 Major POLES crossed the MAWCHI Road and proceeded to the area assigned to him, i.e. FERRET area. At HOYA LW 500430 he found a good DZ, recruited 200 odd Levies, and was in the process of establishing himself when he was ordered by signal from CALCUTTA to return to OTTER area in favour of Col. TULLOCH and party who were dropped into FERRET area, which was then renamed WALRUS.

At this time my Base at SOSISO was attacked and there was much fighting on the Road; I could not enter into an argument in respect of Major POLES' and Col. TULLOCH's claims to WALRUS area. After "cease fire" however I spoke to Col. TULLOCH about his apparently unwarranted dispossession of Major POLES. He informed me that he had been dropped into that area in ignorance of Major POLES' assignment and that his briefing had omitted all reference to Major POLES and his presence in the area.

Since then I have learned that this very dubious procedure was adopted in consequence of Army' urgent demands that WALRUS area be established as soon as possible with a view to attacking the Road and communications between LOIKAW and KEMPYU. Col.TULLOCH was ordered to drop on the DZ at YADO LW 3544, which is no nearer to this L. of C. than HOYA. In fact, he could not have operated any earlier than Major POLES. As it happened, however, Col. TULLOCH found YADO DZ unsuitable and after cruising around decided to take a chance and drop at DZ LW 7688 near LOIKAW.

Major POLES very naturally returned into my area in a very depressed and disgusted mood, and the whole business had repercussions of the most unpleasant kind, and undoubtedly rendered my Operations North of the MAWCHI Road less effective than they might have been. I deplore most strongly the procedure adopted, which to my mind is inexcusable and might very well have led to disasters North of the Road, were it not for the level-headed conduct of Col. TULLOCH and Major POLES.

## **(7) Intelligence**

Owing to the extreme loyalty of the Karens our Intelligence was as surpassingly good as the enemy's was execrable, and the complementary signals received from Army appear to support this opinion. The credit lies mainly with Major YOUNG of "Z" Force, who was attached to me in the role of Intelligence Officer and who coordinated all information brought in by informers and our spies.

## **(8) Ops**

The main feature of this Operation was the destruction done to the enemy by the use of the cordtex and explosive trap devised by us in the CHINDWIN Valley. This was used with the greatest effect on the MAWCHI Road as witness the 100 odd smashed Jap trucks in view between Milestones 35 and 100 on that Road. The same played havoc with enemy personnel following jungle tracks. The Japs could never fathom the use of these traps and for months walked into them with unfailing regularity. Ambushes in almost all cases were set in conjunction with the cordtex trap, which is the simplest conceivable and the principles of which can be understood by any Levy. The explosions and terrible effects of 100 or more yards of cordtex laid with grenades and heavy charges of explosive raises the morale of one side as much as it reduces that of the other. We used many hundreds of pounds of explosive and thousands of yards of cordtex as an offensive weapon, and I consider its adaptation to the regular Army is very well worth considering. Accidents occur, but they are negligible in relation to the harm done to the enemy. These traps do not fall under the category of "booby" traps, because they are usually and most effectively operated by pull switches and lengths of cord pulled by hand at the right moment. They can, however, be converted into "booby" traps at short notice when desired.

Only under exceptional circumstances did we ever give battle in positions not previously chosen by us. Our tactics were invariably based on fighting on our own ground rather than that of the enemy. The Karen can move faster on these high hills than any Jap, and knows far more about jungle craft than he does. No sooner did our Levies learn a measure of discipline and control than their natural attributes and cunning in the jungle gave them supremacy over the Jap to an almost unbelievable extent.

The early successes of the Jap in BURMA were undoubtedly due to his ability to live on the country and on such food as he carried in his pack. His training undoubtedly was founded upon the ability of any good soldier to carry up to a fortnight's rations on his person. This gave him a degree of mobility which our own road-bound troops could not approach. On the CHINDWIN as well as on these Operations my men were trained to carry their own food for periods extending from 1 to 2 weeks, and we never found any difficulty in outmanoeuvring the Jap wherever we found him and in choosing our ambushes ahead of his lines of approach.

The Bren gun was largely and successfully used in these Operations. Personnel should be trained to use it at shoulder height resting on a forked stick. The lying position and the use of the bipod is impracticable wherever there is high grass or undergrowth.

The .300 carbine is far lighter and more effective than the .303 in jungle warfare.

The Sten gun when properly understood and used is probably the best weapon of all in thick jungle.

I deplore the failure to send us M.M.G.s. They would have been ideal for covering the Road at long range and literally many hundreds of Japs are living today who should be dead were it not for this failure.

The Hawkins' grenade, which can be sown on a road without fear of being set off by enemy or our own personnel, was not supplied to me although repeatedly demanded. We devised other methods, but the lack of this grenade could never be quite got over. Curiously enough, the Hawkins' grenade was dropped to other Operations as early as March 1945 and also to OTTER RED, who were then off the Road, but not to me at OTTER BLACK which functioned continuously on the Road. Why?

The jungle technique for ambushes and patrols as practised by "P" Force fully justified itself and was used by the Levies when trained.

In assessing enemy casualties during Ops I fear I have invariably understated the numbers. This was very apparent when I recently checked up on the actuals of M.T. destroyed on the Road in comparison with claims made during the Ops. I never allowed more than 5 casualties for a troop transport destroyed. No claims were admitted for mere fire brought to bear on convoys and the like. Killings by Statics were not admitted unless verified by an Officer or substantiated by enemy badges and identity discs. Towards the end of the Op the half-armed, worn out parties of the enemy that crossed the SITTANG River were "sitting pigeons" and most of us lost interest in the claims preferred. 95% of our bag were very lively birds.

The Company of Gurkha Levies raised from MAWCHI well repaid the trouble. Lacking the jungle ability and knowledge of the Karens, nevertheless they made up for this on all occasions when men were required to "stay put".

I have been accused of a passion for "private armies" and neglect of subversive "one man and a boy" Ops. Nevertheless, if the methods we used in the Karen Hills had been adopted in the Atwin Yomas of the Upper CHINDWIN, I am quite sure the attacking Jap Divisions would not have reached the first spurs of the Chin Hills, much less the MANIPUR plain. This is not a sweeping statement; I studied the situations in both localities.

Recently some Army Officers have remarked to me that the Jap defences on the MAWCHI Road were almost impregnable owing to the steepness and general configuration of the country. I am convinced that this is a wrong view and that the defence of such jungle roads is one of the hardest tasks that any enemy could be given. Encircling movements are easily performed if conducted by troops trained to carry their own food for periods of a week or so, and particularly when supplied by air.

The town of MAWCHI harboured Japs in large numbers throughout this Operation. At one period there were no less than 3,000 to 4,000 in the town. My impassioned appeals to bomb and destroy this harbourage met with little response. Fighter planes occasionally strafed the outskirts of the town but only 2 or 3 bombs were dropped. When we occupied MAWCHI we found the greater part of the buildings quite intact and only a small proportion of the labourers' huts burnt down. The mine is a valuable one, but bombing could not possibly

have damaged the underground works. The destruction of the buildings would have been a fair price to pay for the loss of life and comfort that the enemy would have suffered.

### **(9) "Q"**

On the whole this was good, and I am not unappreciative of the difficulties in respect of airlift and the demands of other Operational Groups, etc. I would like, however, to ask some questions:

- (1) Why were 5-day jungle rations abolished in favour of compo 8-day tins? The latter are not suited to Levies.
- (2) Who are the miscreants responsible for misdirecting our letters and sending them without warning? We lost two bags of mail and should, except for the intervention of Providence, have lost the few others.
- (3) Why were not dhal, chillies and salt made available when I queried the diet of rice and compo rations?
- (4) Money was dropped frequently without warning or recognition marks. Why? At MAWCHI, at the close of the Ops, in spite of my appeals, 120,000 Rupees were dropped without warning in the jungle half a mile from the DZ.
- (5) Of 450,000 Rupees dropped in October, all was in notes and 150,000 were in excess of my demand. I appealed for a proportion of silver because the Karens much prefer it to notes. Why was this matter disregarded?

### **(10) Signals**

The executives in this branch were good in the matter of speed and accuracy of transmission, cyphering, and so on. The directional branch was not good, and very argumentative when lapses were drawn to their attention.

The A Mark III set failed entirely, and when I asked for B.2 sets Sigs told me that others had found it good. Others told me that they were told that I had found it good!!

The B.2 set was excellent.

Batteries were excellent.

Petrol Generators were also excellent.

Hand Generator gears were apt to strip after two hours turning.

Crystals were free-dropped with the result that half of them were diss.

Code books should have been replaced automatically. We, however, had to make repeated requests for replacements. One set of code books was discovered in a packet containing salt; fortunately we were in need of salt. Was this the fault of Sigs or "Q"?

The delays in sending B.2 sets to OTTER RED and WHITE appear to have been inexcusable.

### **(11) Air Supply**

From April onwards we lived from hand to mouth, seldom having reserves of food for more than a week. There were two food crises when it seemed as if we

should have to abandon Operations and I had to signal personally to Army Commander to tell him so. From 28 Jul 45 to 30 Aug 45 the Levies lived on  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. of rice per man per day. When we were swamped by 800 refugees, men, women and children, and had to feed them, no measures were taken other than to advise us to evacuate them through Jap lines — women with babies in arms! It was a horrible experience and for 3 weeks Operations were largely curtailed in order to shepherd these unfortunates to the Railway line. Could not a Dak load or two of rice have been dropped? I suppose there is a good reason, but I do not know of it.

I gave repeated warnings that it was essential to have reserves of food against the breaking of the Rains and it was clear that the tactical position of SOSISO, overlooking MAWCHI, was so good that it had to be held at whatever cost. No effort was made to help me build a reserve of food. In desperation I selected lowland DZs, some dangerously close to the enemy, and organised a transport system of elephants and porters. Even so supplies were meagre.

For the pilots and crews of the aircraft which supplied us with such food and stores as we received, I have nothing but good to say. They were admirable in every way. Our grateful thanks to the R.A.F. and sincere admiration of their skill and daring.

[signed: E. H. Peacock, Lt.Col.]

## Part II

### OPS

#### B. PHASE I — Prior to D Day

The drop into KARENNEI was a particularly "blind" one. There had been nothing in the way of preparatory Operations in the area and very little Intelligence was available. The sequence of events prior to D Day has been described in Part I of this Report.

#### C. PHASE II — D Day

Warning was given us for the Ops on 9 Feb 45 at M.E.25 and we left CEYLON on the 11<sup>th</sup>, arriving JESSORE on the 16<sup>th</sup>. We were launched on the 20<sup>th</sup>. The short notice given precluded good briefing, adequate preparation and time to study maps of the area.

I do not know of any good reason for this haste. When I was called for Ops at the end of December 1944 exactly similar conditions were experienced. I recollect protesting strongly on that occasion also. I presume the reason lies in lack of proper liaison with Army and knowledge of its plans, and particularly lack of systematic preparation for such sudden calls for Operations.

On arrival at PYAGAWPU DZ (see Part I) we found only one Jap in the vicinity. He was in charge of the local Karen Police Station. His Karen Police walked over to us with their arms and left their Jap Officer to wander around disconsolately in more or less complete ignorance of what was going on.

There were Jap garrisons in PAPUN and KYAUKKYI; strength unknown, and said to be variable. They made no move against us while I was in HYENA area. Within the first week we armed approx. 250 Mobile Levies and 350 Static Levies. Thereafter I moved North for OTTER area and was followed by Major POLES and Group 2 as described in Part I.

#### D. PHASE III — D plus 1 month: 23 Feb 45 to 23 Mar 45

On 3 Mar 45 my Group 1 plus about 50 Levies reached KHEBU Village on a spur above the main bifurcation of the YUNZALIN River. There was a good DZ here QB 540618, and a good defensive position at the village itself. We took 3 drops of food and arms here and recruited Levies. We sent patrols and spies out in all directions and spread the news of the Army's advance towards MANDALAY.

Major POLES and his Group 2, less Capt. GUTHRIE and Sgt. MOORE, arrived at KHEBU on the 6th. He reported that Sgt. MOORE, his Wireless Operator, had been badly burned by an incendiary and had been hidden in the jungle safely in the charge of Major TURRALL's Levies, and in company with Capt. GUTHRIE and Rifleman LU DAN, who had each broken an ankle during their drops.

We stayed at KHEBU Village recruiting and gathering information until the 10th. Briefly our information was that the main Jap forces were digging in and around TOUNGOO and THANDAUNG; that there were fairly large garrisons at MAWCHI and KEMAPYU; that the MAWCHI Road was lightly picketed and that Jap M.P. patrols were not very active.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> both Groups marched to SIDO QB 509658, where there was a good DZ on which we took two more drops of arms and food. SIDO is a "THOMPSONITE" Village with leanings towards strict neutrality, and recruiting was not a success. The "THOMPSONITES" were in no way hostile, merely perturbed at our presence.

WEWA DOKA, about 10 miles North of the MAWCHI Road, was reported to have a good DZ and to be fairly well situated as a Base for OTTER area. We decided to move in that direction via BUSAKYI QB 480722, THAEKYI QB 478822 and HOKYI QB 482868 with all our Mobile Levies, and to forward Major POLES and his Group from there to the FERRET area.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> when we were preparing to move North, our patrols found Japs at BUSAKYI on our proposed route and were seen by them. Further, we were advised that some Japs had come down from MAWCHI to investigate rumours of our presence. If battle were to be avoided till a more suitable time, it was obvious that we must sidestep these Jap patrols. That portion of the map showing the heights of the NATTAUNG and its long spurs had attracted me for some days, with its promise of open pine forests and certainty of DZs for air supplies. Moreover, it overlooked MAWCHI and the Road and would probably present ideal defensive positions. I may say here that the slopes of the NATTAUNG lived up to my expectations and failed only in not producing good roofing material during the rainy season.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> both Special Groups and 150 Mobile Levies, with all the porters we could get for our stores and food, climbed towards the NATTAUNG via LEKHI Village, through beautiful pine-clad hills. On the 17<sup>th</sup> morning we reached the long horseshoe Ridge at SOSISO from where practically unused jungle paths branch Westwards to THAEKYI; North to the NATTAUNG and North-East to MAWCHI via LOLAWTI QB 668800 and TODOKEKO QB 686790. This Ridge at 7,500 feet elevation was seldom used by anyone, overlooked the main Road only 6 miles away and MAWCHI town perhaps 8 miles distance as the crow flies. Obviously it was seldom visited by Jap or Karen and was ideal for my purposes. After sending runners to apprise our contacts in the villages near MAWCHI, we immediately set to work building defensive positions.

On the night of 18 Mar 45 we received the first drop at SOSISO. It was not a good DZ and supplies generally fell in the forest in the bend of the horseshoe Ridge; but we cut lanes through this to facilitate search, and later, when day drops were the rule, we had little difficulty in recovering most of the supplies.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> Major POLES and his Group moved across the Road on his way to the FERRET area. He found WEWA DOKA picketed by two Jap patrols and made haste Northwards in search of a DZ in his own area. He states that he maintained wireless contact with CALCUTTA, and advised his movements. By the 23 Mar 45 he reached PREHAWHKU QB 580250 and HOYA DZ QB 500430 on the 26<sup>th</sup>. His experiences thereafter are related in his Report.

At SOSISO we continued recruiting and sent messages to Gurkha regulars who had been left behind in BURMA in 1942 and to Gurkha employees of the MAWCHI Mines. We used the trained personnel of "P" Force and a number of "old soldier" recruits to train the Levies and sort them into sections, Platoons and Companies, and establish a series of Platoon Areas and Point Sections that defended the DZ in considerable strength all along the Ridge.

By 23 Mar 45 we had recruited and partly trained 350 Levies and issued rifles to 350 Static Levies without a single shot fired at a Jap; meanwhile the Army had taken MANDALAY and we awaited instructions for offensive Operations.

#### **E. PHASE IV — D plus 1 month to D plus 2 months: 23 Mar 45 to 23 Apr 45**

On the 27th our equanimity was somewhat shaken by the approach of Japs from the South. They were about a Company in strength and behaved in a very brave but foolish manner; deploying over the very steep open spurs and pressing up the escarpments to our advanced positions. It was very good practice for our Levies, most of whom had never fired a rifle before. One of our Levies was killed, Capt. MACLEOD was badly wounded and 3 or 4 Levies lightly wounded. The Levies behaved very well, and the Japs were not allowed to press home their attack. They lost many killed and wounded. The attack continued spasmodically by day and night for 48 hours, after which the Japs gave it up as a bad job, leaving only snipers to annoy us. When we found that they had withdrawn I sent a Platoon under Jem. SAW TE SEIN to raise the Statics on their line of withdrawal to the MAWCHI Road. SAW TE SEIN did this very well. He and his Platoon, with many Statics, ambushed the remains of this Company 4 times in the difficult country they had to cover and practically wiped them out. The Jap Company Commander died of wounds at THAKWISO.

The Army were in the neighbourhood of MEIKTILA in the first week of March, but no orders for action on the MAWCHI Road had yet been received by us. In anticipation of its arrival, I moved Platoons to NIDE QB 575880 within a couple of miles of the Road opposite Milestone 75; to another position close to the Road opposite Milestone 87; and to TODOLEKO and LOLAWTI Villages near MAWCHI. The stage was set and on 10<sup>th</sup> orders were received to start Operations on the Road. On the 13<sup>th</sup> we were ordered to stop or delay the Japanese 15<sup>th</sup> Division which was expected to come through MAWCHI on its way down the Road to reinforce TOUNGOO. On the 16<sup>th</sup> the Jap 15<sup>th</sup> Division entered MAWCHI and coincidentally PYINMANA was captured by our Army.

The Japs were extremely careless at first, and the Road was not well picketed. On 14 Apr 45 a party under Capt. MONTAGUE destroyed the bridge at Milestone 84, and another under Jem. SAW NA MU that at Milestone 81. The Japs appeared unaware of the fact.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> night troop-laden convoys came down from MAWCHI and were ambushed 3 miles short of the smashed bridges. Jem. Mg. PO SEIN, a Burman of "P" Force, inflicted the first casualty on the M.T., stepping on to the Road and dealing with the leading truck with gammon grenades. Unfortunately this V.C.O. lost his right eye from a splinter off the truck. Other Levies joined in the action further up the Road and the convoy turned back to MAWCHI. The Japs appeared at a loss to understand what was happening; perhaps they thought the British Army had arrived before time.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> night (all Jap movement at this period was by night) the performance was repeated, the Japs turning back after losing a few trucks.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> night the convoy was preceded by strong infantry forces that drove our people off the Road and set strong guards at the smashed bridges. Fighting

continued in a confused manner for 3 days while the bridges were repaired and the Jap 15<sup>th</sup> Division then continued on its way down the Road.

At Milestone 75, however, "P" Force Jem. SAW NA MU, a veteran of the CHINDWIN and MANIPUR campaign, had been peacefully setting explosive traps on long lines of cordtex at suitable points on the Road. Further down the Road Jem. TE SEIN was also laying traps and ambushes. All available Levies, both Mobile and Static, lined up along the Road as far down as Milestone 50.

The convoys of the Jap 15<sup>th</sup> Division had a most unpleasant journey on their way to TOUNGOO. The explosive trap worked like a charm, blowing up truck after truck, often far down the slopes, and the Levies were entranced at the effect of the 3 lb. gammon grenades, which they lobbed into the M.T. at every available opportunity. The Japs made futile rushes uphill after us and sprayed the hills with mortar and S.A. fire, but did little harm. Movement was confined to night-time for fear of the R.A.F. and was repeatedly stopped by our ambushes on the Road.

I do not know what proportion of this Division joined their friends of the 15<sup>th</sup> Army at TOUNGOO before our Army entered on 24 Apr 45; but I feel sure it was a very small proportion and that in a very evil temper. I think the greater part of this Division got down to find our troops in occupation. They were a brave but poor lot, with no idea at all of picketting the Road, and were a very different proposition to the Jap 113<sup>th</sup> Regiment that relieved them later. If one cut the telephone lines near the Road and set a grenade trap covered by Brens at the break, they jostled each other to mend the line and seemed surprised when they were blown up, but did not learn better. A large stone on the Road covering 10 lbs. of P.E. and a release switch would act like a magnet, and one was fairly certain to find the rock removed, and the remains of odd Japs lying about.

The Levies enjoyed themselves very much during this period. Being far more mobile than the Japs, we were never cut off and hardly one of us was killed. Indeed it is most difficult to kill these hillmen. One of them was shot squarely in the right lung, through the jaw and again through the left hand, and was left for dead. He was, however, very far from dead, and walked up nearly 2,000 feet and 3 miles during the night to our Point section, where I found him. He eventually recovered.

During this month we killed approximately 307 Japs and destroyed 30 M.T.

I received the following reinforcements of Officers and men during this period, who were dropped at the HOYA DZ and walked across to SOSISO; Major YOUNG and Sgt. CHARLESWORTH of "Z" Force with 2 Chin Wireless Operators; Capt. HEMPHILL, R.A.M.C.; Capts. TASCHEREAU and ARCHAMBAULT. All the above arrived on 15 Apr 45.

#### **F. PHASE V — D plus 2 months to 2 plus 3 months: 23 Apr 45 to 23 May 45**

This was an extremely trying month for all of us in OTTER area. With the fall of TOUNGOO on 24 Apr 45 we went "all out" to inflict casualties on the Jap, but found ourselves terribly short of food. Practically all forward positions were living on the country and the garrison at SOSISO went on half rations; in our case it was  $\frac{3}{4}$  lbs. rice per man per day and a little salt. Repeated appeals for food had no effect although dropping conditions were good. By the end of April

we had two days' supplies left, and the certainty of having to abandon our Base and disperse. In desperation I made a personal appeal to Army Commander. On 4<sup>th</sup> May aircraft came over and gave us sufficient food for a couple of weeks; but at this time refugees from MAWCHI began to come in and by the 12 May 45 there were 150 starving people on our hands, mainly women and children. The figures rose to 650 within a month. I appealed for special relief drops in my signals of 12 and 19 May 45 and 3 and 5 Jun 45, but was advised to send the refugees to TOUNGOO. This was impracticable in the face of large forces of Japs between the Railway and ourselves, and the presence of so many women and small children.

After the drop on 4 May 45 the food situation for ourselves and refugees was a constant menace, and affected our Ops unfavourably. I cannot understand the failures to assist us to build up reserves of food. Warning was given repeatedly.

We purchased such food as we could locally, but there was not much available and that only at very high prices.

From the 28 Apr 45 I established a sub-area, OTTER GREEN, under Capt. MONTAGUE with HQ at THAEKYI QB 478822. This was intended not only for greater intensity of attacks on the Road below Milestone 60, but to guard the South-Eastern escape routes via the YUNZALIN Valley to HYENA area. With some difficulty I obtained some drops of arms for this area in which finally 85 Mobiles and 157 Statics were armed and very well organised by Capt. MONTAGUE and SELL.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> May 4 Officers (Major SCURFIELD, Capt. BRIDGES, MURRAY and RAMSBOTHAM) and a Platoon of "V" Force Assam Rifles were dropped to OTTER area and reported to me at SOSISO on the 7<sup>th</sup>. They were a very welcome reinforcement to my own Gurkha Levies, and did good work on the Road from NIDE outstation and on the MAWCHI/KAWLUDO (QB 776513) escape route.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> Capt. NIMMO and BUCHAN arrived, and on the 11<sup>th</sup> Capt. VIVIAN and 8 Kachins. They were used at various outstations in the Southern and South-Eastern escape routes. From approximately Milestone 40 up to MAWCHI the Karens in villages near the Road and South of it stayed fast, merely moving their families into the neighbouring jungle. The armed Statics from these Villages acted splendidly, fighting off Jap foraging parties and harassing the Roads continuously in company with the Mobile Levies.

North of the Road, however, there was little done as a result of the conflicting orders given to Major POLES' Group 2. If he had not been turned back from the area assigned to him, I would have established and armed the areas North of the Road with my own Officers. As it was Major POLES and his Group came too late for the first phase of the fighting on the MAWCHI Road.

During this period I sent Capt. NIMMO with spare wireless crystals to contact 19<sup>th</sup> Div. and establish a wireless link. This was successfully done and we were able to send intelligence directly to this Div. via the L.O. at TOUNGOO. There was very little reciprocation of intelligence and our information re movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> Div. was obtained mainly from broadcasts and occasionally signals from 12<sup>th</sup> Army. The L.O. explained that this was due to overwork on his line. A change of L.O. produced better results later.

Between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May the Jap 113<sup>th</sup> Regiment (56<sup>th</sup> Div.) and 2 unknown "Butais" relieved the 15<sup>th</sup> Div. which withdrew to MAWCHI, where also

elements of the Jap 33<sup>rd</sup> Div. from the North gathered preparatory to moving in the direction of PAPUN via MOSAKI QB 755772 and KAWLUDO QB 776513 along jungle paths.

In OTTER GREEN area there was much movement of both Japs and I.N.A., either in search of the South-East escape route down the YUNZALIN Valley or in organised parties for foraging. With all this movement around us the fighting was continuous. I sent Capts. MARCHANT, BRIDGES and MURRAY to harass the MAWCHI/MOSAKI/KAWLUDO tracks with 3 Platoons, and Major SCURFIELD and Capt. RAMSBOTHAM to reinforce NIDE and conduct Operations on the main Road from Milestone 81 downwards.

The YUNZALIN Valley I closed with 2 Platoons under Capts. TASCHEREAU and BUCHANAN. Attacks on the Road were intensified. The Jap 113<sup>th</sup> Regiment were well worth fighting; a great improvement on the 15<sup>th</sup> Div. Their picketting along the Road was good and cost us some men.

It would be wearisome to detail the scores of ambushes and skirmishes that took place, and which cost the Japs approximately 680 dead in this period alone. SOSISO became the centre of a ring of outposts working from one to two days' march from it; but all in mutual support of each other and ready to fall back in defence of the Base if an organised attack should be made against it. We had a full Platoon of runners in addition to intercom wireless sets, and all posts were in constant touch with the Base.

It was lamentable that Major POLES could not get back to the Road at this time; he suffered many privations and finally decided to split forces with F/Lt. BREEN; whereupon two sub-areas were established — OTTER WHITE under F/Lt. BREEN with HQ at CHILO QB 6698 and OTTER RED with HQ at WEWA DOKA LW 5006. Unfortunately the Levies in both these sub-areas were not ready to act on the Road until 25<sup>th</sup> May in the case of OTTER WHITE and 15<sup>th</sup> June in that of OTTER RED. They were concerned with several actions away from the Road (see their Reports, Appendices "I" and ).

Had these areas North of the Road been in time to join in the battles on the Road, there is no doubt that the Japs would have incurred greater losses than they did. I attribute this failure entirely to the authorities responsible for briefing and keeping me informed of movements and intentions. Had I been informed of the proposal to drop Col. TULLOCH into FERRET area, I should have taken action to ensure that the areas North of the Road were brought into line far earlier than they actually were. I regard this as a signal failure on the part of the controlling staff.

One of our major disappointments during this period was the failure to bomb MAWCHI and the Jap staging camps on the MAWCHI Road. The weather was not too bad during April and May and the targets we gave were very good. Doubtless fighter and bomber planes were required to operate in other areas, but it was heartbreaking to look down on MAWCHI on a sunny day, to know it was overflowing with Japs, and to see no aircraft. Needless to say I sent signals repeatedly and laid out indicator strips and other target indicators.

The total killings in OTTER area to the end of this period were 988 dead and 75 trucks destroyed.

**G. PHASE VI — D plus 3 months to D plus 4 months: 23 May 45 to 23 Jun 45**

At the beginning of this period we had approximately the following numbers of Levies:-

OTTER BLACK	680	Mobiles	583	Statics
OTTER GREEN	85	"	157	"
OTTER RED	100	"	230	"
OTTER WHITE	95	"	120	"

Given 3" mortars, M.M.G.s, and sufficient food, we should have been in excellent shape to kill the Japs who were milling around us. As it was we were starved of all these requisites, and with the refugees to encroach on our medical stocks and food, our efficiency was reduced by practically 50%.

Appeals for food for the refugees having failed, we were obliged to consider evacuating these poor wretches to TOUNGOO as best we could. As a preliminary, refugee parties were sent down to THEKYI in Capt. MONTAGUE's area, and the latter arranged for his Static Levies to form a corridor along which the refugees might pass with a fair chance of obtaining warning of Jap movements. 500 refugees were collected at THAEKYI at the end of this period.

In other areas fighting continued on road and escape routes in the manner previously narrated. The Jap 113<sup>th</sup> Regiment was a tough proposition, but the records for this period show that 1,147 of them made, presumably, happy reunions with their ancestors.

Both OTTER RED and OTTER WHITE came into the action on the Road during this period and inflicted severe casualties on the enemy.

Total killings to the end of this period were 2,135 Japs killed and 89 trucks destroyed.

**H. PHASE VII — D plus 4 months to D plus 5 months: 23 Jun 45 to 23 Jul 45**

On 24 Jun 45 the first column of approximately 500 refugee men, women and children left THAEKYI in the charge of Capt. MARCHANT and Sgt. ROMAIN, under escort of two Platoons of Mobile Levies and a forward screen of Statics. The column went by jungle paths via ZINDAINGYI QB 3278 and TEIKPU QB 2674 and reached TANTABIN safely on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Much credit is due to Capt. MARCHANT and Sgt. ROMAIN for the handling of this column.

On 25 Jun the Japs led by a captured Karen Levy surprised our Platoon position on the main spur from SOSISO to Milestone 87. This Platoon had its ration parties out at the time, and were only at half strength when attacked. Nevertheless, the Gurkha Levies who manned it put up a grand fight till all ammunition was exhausted and then retired in good order. To my great regret Sgt. CHARLESWORTH of "Z" Force was killed in this action. The Japs followed up this success by attacking our position at TODOLEKO, where the Levies dispersed after some stiff fighting. Since any attempt to retake these positions would have been costly, I sent parties to hedge them round with grenade and explosive traps, which were duly sprung. A second set of traps was placed on all approaches and was again sprung. The Japs then evacuated the position, and we were able to give Sgt. CHARLESWORTH a decent burial. We found the Karen who had been

forced to lead the Japs to CHARLESWORTH's position lying outside the defences; but his head was lying a few yards from his body.

About the 10 Jul a second column of 250 refugees left THAEKYI in the charge of Capt. MACLEOD, Capt. BUCHANAN and again Sgt. ROMAIN. This column also reached the Railway Line safely. Both Capt. MACLEOD and BUCHANAN were evacuated to INDIA from TOUNGOO, the former on account of his wounded right arm and the latter owing to advanced dysentery. Sgt. ROMAIN remained at TOUNGOO to collect 180 rifles and some Brens which were to be supplied to us by Army.

There was little activity on the MOSAKI/KAWLUDO escape route or along the YUNZALIN Valley, but much North of the Road, where the 113<sup>th</sup> Regiment pushed OTTER RED out of their HQ on 21 Jul, and where OTTER WHITE was obliged to leave the Road in order to defend their HQ at CHILO against escapees from the North. Neither OTTER RED nor OTTER WHITE functioned again on the Road. The former went North-West to LEKADOKO and MAWWAKAW and the latter drew in at CHILO. Both were kept busy fighting Japs who had crossed the SITTANG River and were attempting to escape through WALRUS area to the MAWCHI Road.

Both of these Groups (OTTER RED and OTTER WHITE) were very worn and tired and were unable to follow my advices to coalesce and form a common HQ nearer the Road. Nevertheless they did much scathe to the Japs who crossed the SITTANG River in the later stages of the Operation. Up to the end of this period the totals were 2,749 Japs killed and 95 trucks destroyed.

#### **I. PHASE VIII — D plus 5 to D plus 6 months: 23 Jul 45 to 23 Aug 45**

Since the capture of TOUNGOO the 19<sup>th</sup> Div. had advanced up the MAWCHI Road at the following rate:- 7 Jun — Milestone 17½; 6 Aug — Milestone 31½; 10 Aug — Milestone 34. They appeared to have lost contact with the Japs and moved slowly up the Road.

Many of my Officers and Levies were in a strained and exhausted condition. In reply to my signal asking for Army's intentions, I was advised that 19<sup>th</sup> Div. was also worn and exhausted and would not press beyond Milestone 30 on the Road unless the Japs withdrew. The Japs were not particularly lively either, so fighting became rather flaccid.

Meanwhile the Japs West of the SITTANG were withdrawing in large numbers across the SITTANG River South of our area in an attempt to reach SIAM, and it appeared as if the whole Jap Army in BURMA would soon withdraw across the SALWEEN. The killings on the SITTANG River is a matter of history; but it was not until 26 Jul 45 that we were warned that 2,000 Japs were crossing between TOUNGOO and TANTABIN and would probably enter OTTER area. Therefore, on 28 Jul 45, I went with two Platoons as reinforcement for Capt. MONTAGUE and moved his force on to the probable escape routes. This was to prove the last serious fighting in our area before the end of the war.

The Japs were severely handled on the SITTANG River, and the broken remnants entered the Hills where they were mopped up by the Levies in all CHARACTER areas.

On the Road the Japs withdrew to MAWCHI and the Army advanced up the road, reaching Milestone 46 by the end of this period.

Since the menace from the Jap escapees across the SITTANG appeared to be negligible, I went through to the Railway line and to TOUNGOO, intending from there to visit OTTER RED area and to return to SOSISO via OTTER WHITE area. To my surprise, however, I heard of the impending surrender at TANTABIN, and was asked by Div. Commander to remain in TOUNGOO temporarily until the situation should become clearer. At TOUNGOO I found Major KYAW THU, Capt. PLANEL, DE VAILLEY, TATHAM, SAYERS, WADE and Sgts. JENKINS and JONES awaiting me for orders to relieve worn out personnel. I sent Capt. PLANEL, TATHAM and WADE to OTTER GREEN, Capt. SAYERS to OTTER RED and Major KYAW THU and Capt. DE VAILLEY to OTTER WHITE. Sgt. JONES fell ill and was evacuated from TOUNGOO; Sgt. JENKINS went on to OTTER WHITE.

On the way from Capt. MONTAGUE's area to TANTABIN on about 9 Aug, I met Sgt. ROMAIN and about 100 porters returning from TANTABIN with rifles and Brens. Major COULON also accompanied the party as a relief Officer. They reported that they had met a considerable force of Japs at TEIKPU and that about 60 porters had run away; also that Capt. LONGMUIR, another relief Officer, had been killed in this action, but they were not able to recover his body. When I passed by TEIKPU the Japs were still there, and, having only 3 or 4 men with me, I could do nothing about Capt. LONGMUIR's body. I arranged, however, with the Pastor of ZINDAINGYI and the Headman of TEIKPU to recover the remains later when the Japs should move out of TEIKPU, and to give them a Christian burial. This was later done and the position of the grave is described in Appendix "E".

Up to the end of this period we had destroyed 2,846 Japs and 95 trucks.

#### **J. PHASE IX — D plus 6 months to D plus 7 months: 23 Aug to 23 Sep 45**

On approximately 24 Aug 45 I went from TOUNGOO to THANDAUNG and thence to MAWWAKAW, the HQ of OTTER RED sub-area. Major Poles had the situation well in hand, and was killing Japs only when they attempted to loot villages. The necessity for Jap contact parties to pass news of the surrender to their friends in the forest was very evident. I was about to proceed to CHILO when I was recalled urgently to TOUNGOO to liaise with Div. once more. I returned to TOUNGOO on 29 Aug 45. As I had a large abscess on my back and boils in my ear I was placed in hospital for a week for treatment, but remained in touch with my command by signals through the L.O.

At SOSISO meanwhile, my HQ had made contact with the Japs who were willing to surrender their guns and equipment, but who stated they were under orders to surrender their personnel at CHIENGMAI in SIAM.

On 12 Sep 45 I flew to RANGOON and saw the B.G.S., 12<sup>th</sup> Army, and discussed the situation with him. By this time the Japs had moved back from MAWCHI to KEMAPYU on the SALWEEN, and my HQ had moved from SOSISO into MAWCHI. Forward elements of the Army (East African Brigade) were at Milestone 70 sweeping the road for mines and rebuilding bridges.

As a result of discussion with the B.G.S. in RANGOON I signalled my HQ to advise the Japs at KEMAPYU to move across to the East bank of the SALWEEN by the 20<sup>th</sup> at latest, and to leave their arms and equipment in dumps at given places. I then flew back to TOUNGOO and from thence by jeep on 16 Sep up the Road to Milestone 46 where Capt. MONTAGUE had moved his HQ.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> I continued up the Road by jeep and, since I considered sweeping the Road for mines a waste of time in view of the Jap assurances given to us, I went through to MAWCHI without incident. There I found my HQ settled in a good house and sitting rather self-consciously on chairs for the first time in 7 months.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> I went to KEMAPYU, contacted Jap liaison Officers and confirmed the orders that had been passed to them by signal. These Officers were polite, amenable and meticulous, and later distinguished themselves by the speed with which they went to the assistance of a barge which had overturned in the SALWEEN with certain personnel of the East African Brigade. I sent 3 contact parties of Jap P.O.W. Officers and men to OTTER RED and GREEN to round up parties of Japs in the jungle.

Killings up to the end of this period were 2,876. Of these only 30 were after "cease fire", and perforce owing to their own stupidity.

**K. PHASE X — D plus 7 months to D plus 8 months: 23 sep 45 to 23 Oct 45**

This Phase was concerned almost entirely with relief work for the Karens and in paying off and disbanding Levies.

I arranged drops of rice as follows by FORCE 136 Dakota aircraft:

TALATA QB 6155	—	2 Dak loads	—	10,000 lbs. per week
CHILO QB 6698	—	1 " "	—	5,000 lbs. " "
KEMAPYU	—	2 " "	—	10,000 lbs. " "
MAWCHI	—	2 " "	—	10,000 lbs. " "

19<sup>th</sup> Div. most kindly supplied our Levies with one ton of food per day with their own motor transport.

CAS(B) also came up the Road with food to Milestone 70, and we got 3 Jap 3-ton trucks in running order to assist them.

Liaison with CAS(B) KARENNI and TOUNGOO and with 1/1 K.A.Rs. at MAWCHI and KEMAPYU was amiable.

On 21 Sep in response to signals CALCUTTA dropped 120,000 Rupees but without T.C.T. and by Liberator, which dropped this money mixed with other requirements into the jungle about half a mile from the DZ. Two containers containing 8,000 Rupees in silver were found open and the contents missing. After a great deal of trouble we were able to arrest the thieves and recover the money. I protested strongly by signal against this casual method of dropping money. Thereafter we did not receive money again until the 7 Oct 45 and the closure of the Operation was delayed accordingly.

Having received 120,000 Rupees of the original demand for 450,000 Rupees, I signalled for this amount to be deducted from the next money drop. In spite of this 450,000 Rupees were dropped on 7 Oct 45 without exact T.O.T. and again into the jungle. We collected the containers with much difficulty.

From 7 Oct 45 to 20 Oct we paid off and disarmed all Levies except 50 which I left in villages along our Eastern boundary for local defence against dacoits and so on.

I liaised with CAS(B) KARENNE and TOUNGOO and arranged for Capts. VIVIAN and TASCHEREAU to stay behind at MAWCHI as FORCE 136 liaison Officers to CAS(B) and Army, and with their principal aim relief work for the Karens. These Officers are still in the MAWCHI area. On 21 Oct our HQ left MAWCHI arriving TOUNGOO on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The relief measures taken, though somewhat delayed, should be adequate and, except in the KEMAPYU area, the population were well fed. Reliefs to the KEMAPYU area were well in hand when I left.

Major POLES with his Special Group 2, after disbanding his Levies and handing over his records to me, evacuated to TOUNGOO on the 21<sup>st</sup>, to RANGOON on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and to CALCUTTA on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

#### **L. PHASE XI — RANGOON: D plus 8 months to D plus 9 months: 23 Oct 45 to 3 Nov 45**

Special Group 1 with self and HQ Officers arrived at Tac HQ, Force 136, RANGOON on the 24<sup>th</sup>. From the 25 Oct 45 to 3 Nov 45 I wrote this Operational Report, and dealt with matters concerning the future of the "P" Force Groups and the Levies

#### **M. AIR OPS**

##### **(1) Air Targets**

- (a) Generally speaking the bombing and strafing of targets was a failure. Notwithstanding the fact that we reported literally hundreds of A.1 targets and laid out target markers and indicators under hazardous conditions, the targets were attacked on only half a dozen occasions; a most depressing sequel to our efforts.

There seemed to be a distinct reluctance to bomb MAWCHI. In MAWCHI there were never less than 600 Japs and sometimes as many as 4,000. It is an easy target and I find it difficult to believe that weather conditions were solely responsible for the failure to bomb.

- (b) The targets on the MAWCHI Road were as stable as any targets could be. We called for strikes on permanent rest camps, M.T. concentrations, Battalion HQ, etc. etc., but it was quite evident that the tendency was to concentrate strafes just forward of Div. troops and ignore the vitally important L. of C. and the rear areas where the Japs were concentrating; in my opinion doubtful tactics, as the Japs were well dug in forward of Div. troops and presented difficult targets.

The daylight Spitfire patrol on the MAWCHI Road was successful in that it forced the Japs to move their M.T. at night.

- (d) The V.C.P. Party which arrived at CHILO in OTTER WHITE sub-area on 24 Jun never got into action. Their set did not work and no aircraft responded to their signals. Results nil, and a waste of an excellent idea.

##### **(2) Supply Drops**

- (a) Aircraft used were Dakotas, Liberators and Lysanders and occasionally Spitfires. The weather was excellent up to the middle of April, fair to the end of May, and bad during the monsoon. We had approximately 70 drops.

Army took over airlift on 25 May. The Dakotas on most occasions made perfect supply drops. Liberators were apt occasionally to drop from great heights and miss the DZ by miles.

- (b) We had the following DZs: SOSISO from 18 Mar; THAEKYI from 1 May; BUKI from 15 Jul; SIDO from 1 Jul; and TODOLEKO from 25 May. A glance at the map will show that TODOLEKO is very close to MAWCHI, but as we were very short of food we took a chance and pulled out our supplies safely on one occasion; on the second occasion the Japs attacked us and we lost the DZ.
- (c) The number of sorties from TOUNGOO and from JESSORE are not known by us.
- (d) On the whole stores were successfully dropped. Free dropping was good. Rice bags were apt to burst when tightly filled. See details under "Q" B. of this Report.

### **(3) Light Aircraft**

Owing to the type of country we were operating in it was impossible to build airstrips for light aircraft.

Lysander planes were frequently and most successfully used in later stages of the Operation for dropping special supplies.

[signed: E.H. Peacock, Lt-Col.]

RANGOON  
3 Nov 45

## PART III

### "Q"

#### A. Personal Arms, Clothing and Equipment

- (i) Issue — was fair and serviceable.
- (ii) Contents of rucksacks were very carefully worked out at M.E.25 where details are no doubt available. On the whole satisfactory.
- (iii) Replacements — There was much delay in replacing clothing, so we grew very lousy and bad tempered.

#### B. Supplies Dropped

##### A.

- (i) Rations — See my remarks under Part I, 9 "Q". We were on starvation rations for long periods owing to lack of airlift.  

The main criticism is that compo tins are not suitable for Levies. Dhal, chillies, dried meat, etc. would have been far more satisfactory.
- (ii) Arms — We could, of course, have done with many more rifles for arming Mobile and Static Levies. We asked for M.M.G.s in May and received them 6 days before "cease fire". A great pity!
- (iii) Insufficient carbine ammunition was dropped.
- (iv) Demolitions — In spite of repeated requests, we never received any Hawkins' grenades. They were, however, dropped to at least one other area as early as March 1945, and Major POLES received some when he was off the Road.
- (v) Clothing — From May onwards all Levies were in rags. British ranks suffered from shortage of footwear. Many Levies could not be issued with any clothing whatsoever.

##### B.

- (i) Types of Stores — as comment.
- (ii) Supply of Stores — See B (i) above.
- (iii) Conditions of Stores on arrival — Varied considerably. Generally good.
- (iv) Mail — No warning was given of mail drops. Two drops of mail were lost owing to there being no identifications on the parachutes. The careless handling of personal mail was very distressing to the Officers and men in the Field.

#### C. Local Purchases

We purchased a considerable amount of rice from locals during our food crises. This rice was obtained on the promise to replace it when we had rice available. On several occasions we were able to purchase buffaloes, bullocks and pigs for food.

#### **D. Standard and Special Containers and Packages**

- (i) Food — O.K.
- (ii) Demolitions — O.K.
  
- (iii) Ammunition — O.K.
- (iv) Specials — O.K.

#### Comment:

Coloured chutes are essential to distinguish specials, explosives and mail. We received no previous warning on several occasions when money was dropped to us.

(a) Contents; (b) Packing; (c) Essential and non-essential items; (d) Faults; (e) Other points and recommendations — No comments, generally good.

#### **E. Free Drop Stores**

See C.

[signed E.H. Peacock, Lt-Col.]

RANGOON

3 Nov 45

## **PART IV - MEDICAL**

### **1. Medical Kit**

- (i) No.5 small pocket medical kit, quite satisfactory.
- (ii) No.2. Contains most drugs likely to be required. Larger quantity of sulphaguanidine would be an improvement.

### **2. Medical Supply**

As the base in CALCUTTA held no stock of medical equipment, there was at least 2 weeks delay before medical supplies were dropped.

Supplies urgently required were dropped by Army.

### **3. Evacuation of Casualties**

No facilities.

### **4. Health**

- (i) Force 136 — Health was good throughout the Operation.
- (ii) Levies — General physical condition fairly good, although some degree of malnutrition and avitaminosis was evident in about 50%.

Malaria incidence 80%, frequently of cerebral type. One severe outbreak of Dysentery, treated with Sulphaguanidine, but as supply of this drug ran out, Sulphapyridine (M & B 693) was found to be quite satisfactory. Minor sepsis and skin conditions, mainly Jungle Sores, caused much disability.

### **Wounds**

Gun shot wounds in most cases were not severe. No head or abdominal wounds were seen. three chest wounds all made uneventful recoveries. The small calibre of Japanese bullets probably accounts for slightrness of damage.

### **Local Population**

Malnutrition present in some degree in most of the population, 50% - 60% mild Beri Beri.

Malaria almost 100%.

Dysentery — very frequent.

[signed: J. HEMPHILL, Capt., R.A.M.C.]

MAWCHI

14 Oct 45

# PART V — Signals

See W/T Operator's Report below. My comments have been given in Part I A (10) of Report.

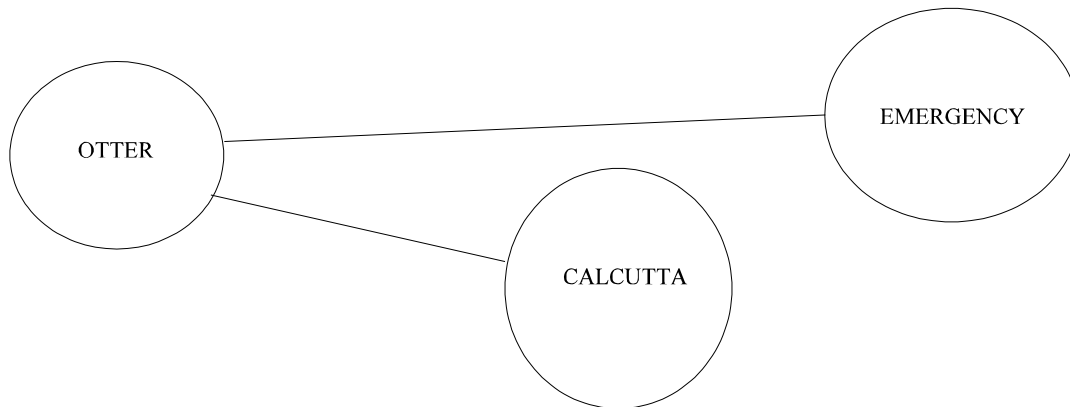
## 1. OTTER Plan 1.

Started 23rd Feb. Communication very good, interference nil.

### Signal Plan

HOME	F	11210	RHO
	H	8790	"
	J	5380	"
OTTER	M	10188	AYR
	Q	11262	CVP
	S	9146	DAX
	U	5631	EBL

### Signal Diagram



Ceased working 11<sup>th</sup> April.

## Plan 2.

Started approx. 12<sup>th</sup> April. Communication very good, interference by automatic station on freq. 12640

### Signal Plan II

HOME	F	12640	ULD
	H	10705	"
	J	8036	"
OTTER	M	11262	CVP
	Q	10186	AYR
	S	9146	DAX
	U	5631	EBL

Signal diagram same as Plan 1.

Ceased working this link 15 Aug.

**2. Working Calcutta dates:**

Plan 1        23 Feb to 11 April  
Plan 2        12 April to 15 August

**3. Emergency Channel**

Very hard to get contact. May call for a hour after which home station gives a strength 5 signal. Sometimes impossible to contact.

**4. Crack Signals**

Not used.

**5.**

Operators mostly very good, but think operators on the emergency link could do better.

**PHASE 2**

**1.**

Commenced W/T contact to Army on 18th April. Communication very good.

**Signal Plan**

HOME. ASM	K	7111	FMO
	P	9246	"
	I	8242	"
	W	6454	"
OTTER	A	6483	EBF
	B	7653	HGX
	L	9146	SRC
	J	5631	BUR

Communications good. Interference reasonable. Very weak signal from ASM for a short period approx 28<sup>th</sup> August and 6<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**2. Emergency channel**

Nil.

**3. Sub-Stations**

Otter Red – No contact on A3 set or B2 set at beginning of operation. Tried to make contact for three weeks but failed.

Tried to make contact again approx 1st August, made contact using freq 6588 and 6766 strength 5 signal both ways.

Otter White – Same as OTTER RED — at beginning of operation.

Made contact again approx 4 August using frequency 6858 and 6766 strength 5 both ways, ut lost contact about 10 days later; although we could still hear WHITE they could not hear us.

Otter Blue – Made contact straight away, strength 5 both ways. Good link.

Otter Green – Made contact straight away, strength 5 both ways. Good link.

Otter Pink – Contact straight away, strength 5 both ways. Good link.

Otter Purple – Not used.

When Otter Pink GREEN BLACK (Home) plan and crystals were dropped only crystals for out-stations were dropped. Also no substitution squares.

Only outstations that had emergency link to RANGOON were WHITE, RED, BLUE.

#### **4. Codes**

LQTP — excellent  
WOX — takes too long  
Poem — " " "

At start of operation when new LQTP code books were asked for there was approx 3 weeks delay before they were dropped. During this time we had to use WOX. Why cannot new code books OTTER-CALCUTTA be dropped automatically as home station knows when outstations have nearly finished their code books?

#### **5.**

Nil.

#### **Stores**

1. Supply of equipment good.

Replacements — nil.

#### **Packing Serviceability**

1. 1 complete B 2 and 4 batteries were smashed when parachute did not open. Intercom crystals were free dropped with the result that half of them were 'die'.
2. A Mk III — useless.  
B 2. — Excellent. Not one of our B2s gave the slightest trouble throughout the operation, although RED and WHITE seem to have had some trouble.  
MCRs — Very good but not used on W/T links.
3. Steam generator — excellent.  
Hand generator, Lucas — useless, gears strip after 2 hours turning.  
Polish hand generator — OK.  
Petrol generator — excellent.  
Pedal generator — not used.
4. Batteries — excellent.
5. Petrol engine was dropped to us but no petrol until three weeks afterwards. Loss of communication because of failure to supply petrol when asked for.

# **PART VI**

## **1. Population**

The majority of the people in OTTER area were Karens with a sprinkling of Shans in the KEMAPYU region, and some thousands of Gurkhas who worked in the MAWCHI Mines. By far the greater number of the Karens practised "taungya" cultivation. There is very little permanent cultivation in OTTER area. Christians and Animists are approximately equal in number amongst the Karens, the former being of both Baptist and Roman Catholic faiths. The "THOMPSONITE" cult was found only in the South-West and was negligible in number. Loyalty to the British was the main characteristic of all Christian and Animist Karens. The Gurkhas from the MAWCHI Mines were loyal in no less degree. The "THOMPSONITES" were neutral.

Since OTTER area did not include flat or undulating country, the Karens in it were of the strong, hardy, hill type.

## **2. Political Situation**

Our Base at SOSISO was on the boundary of the independent Karen States and BURMA proper. In the latter, however, Karens predominate right down to the flats of the SITTANG Valley.

In early days the Karen Hills were occupied and dominated by the Burmese, as may be seen from the Burmese place names of major hill features, streams, and important villages.

In those days the attitude of the dominating race led to events which have preserved the antipathy between Karen and Burman. The British Government, while dealing justly towards both, had necessarily to use Burmans as well as Karens for judicial and administrative work in areas solely occupied by Karens but falling within BURMA proper. The Karens in such areas naturally object to the continuance of Burman dominance even under British rule, and have always dreamed of a demarcation line which should exclude their Hills from the lowlands of BURMA and place them on a line with the existing Karen States. They have no wish to associate themselves in any Federation with the Burmese; their only wish is for isolation under British protection.

The leading Karens are aware of the possibility of the Burmese being given independence in the near future, and regard this possibility with much apprehension. It is quite possible that British interests in the East may continue to be sufficiently powerful to afford the protection the Karens require, but it has to be borne in mind that the markets for KARENNI lie in BURMA and that progress and civilisation generally lies in amicable collaboration with their neighbours. A long-sighted policy, therefore, which considers the future of the people, rather than any selfish political ends, should aim towards increasing the spirit of friendliness between the two peoples, with an ultimate aim to Federation. In this connection I have already mentioned in the preamble to my Report that the Karens in the Hills are indebted to a body of Burmans under British Officers for the commencement of the resistance movement in KARENNI described in this Operational Report.

### **3. Economic Situation**

This was seriously upset during the period of the Japanese occupation and during this Operation. The efforts made within the last month or two to relieve distress has met with considerable success and has already been described in Phase X.

### **4. Japanese Atrocities**

The Japanese conception of war is very different to the European conception, and he regards always with contempt an enemy, whether military or civilian, who is not prepared to accept death. Atrocities seem to depend largely on individual Commanders of the Units concerned.

### **5. Conditions of Roads, Bridges, Public Buildings**

Apart from the main MAWCHI Road OTTER area contained hardly anything that could be rightly termed a Road and very few public buildings. The first step towards the opening out of KARENNI must be roads: not necessarily for motor transport, but 6 ft. bridal paths which can be cut through the Hills at an expenditure of Rs.500/- or less per mile. Any attempts to consider questions relating to improvement of education, agriculture, etc. would be fatuous in default of reasonably graded bridal paths and occasional motor roads.

I understand that the MAWCHI Mines Company has leases covering a considerable area around MAWCHI, and that the existing Road was constructed wholly by them and might at their will be closed to any other interests likely to develop in competition with themselves. Obviously this would be to the disadvantage of KARENNI and no doubt the question of Government acquiring the MAWCHI Road and opening it to the public will be considered. Owing to the failure to bomb MAWCHI the existing buildings belonging to the Mines are mainly intact. The question as to the damage done in the underground works is one that should be answered by an independent committee of investigation. I do not believe rumours to the effect that 80% of the value of the property generally has been lost by action of the Jap.

### **6. Names and Full Details of Known Anti-British Locals**

There are only a few non-cooperators and their names have been recorded in Appendix.

### **7. Names and Full Details of Suspected Anti-British Locals**

Nil

### **8. Names and Full Details of Pro-British Locals Who Have Assisted Our Patrols**

See Appendix

[signed E. H. Peacock, Lt-Col.]

RANGOON  
3 Nov 45

# **Index to Appendices**

## **Appendix "A"**

Diary of main events. This Report has been written in a sequence of monthly periods. A diary is not necessary.

## **Appendix "B"**

List of Force 136 Officers and men who operated in OTTER area with dates of arrival and departure.

## **Appendix "C"**

Names and Addresses of Next-of-Kin of FORCE 136 and Levy Personnel killed.

## **Appendix "D"**

Names and addresses of FORCE 136 and Levy Personnel disabled.

## **Appendix "E"**

Description and sites of graves of British Officers and O.Rs.

## **Appendix "F"**

List of outstanding supporters.

## **Appendix "G"**

## **Appendix "H"**

List of arms received, handed in, and left in villages.

## **Appendix "I"**

Sub-Area Commanders' Reports attached from OTTERs WHITE, RED and GREEN.

## **Appendix "J"**

Accounts submitted to FIN.