

~~SECRET~~

COPY NO. 14

RESTRICTED

R.A.F. NARRATIVE

(FIRST DRAFT)

Downgraded to RESTRICTED - AHSI(RAF)/S259 11/12/73

THE CAMPAIGNS IN THE FAR EAST

VOLUME VI

R.A.F.

AIR TRANSPORT IN THE SOUTH WEST

PACIFIC AREA

FEBRUARY 1945 TO FEBRUARY 1946

AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH (1)

AIR MINISTRY.

NOTES ON SOURCES

For the compilation of the following narrative, certain documentary sources have been used to supplement verbal information. A list is appended.

No. 300 Group Intelligence Summaries
(Somewhat exiguous)

Forms 540 of the units concerned (With the exception of No. 238 Squadron incredibly poor in quality.

No. 300 Group Administrative Survey dated 13 April and 14 August (Ref:- 300G/S.301/Org).

No. 300 Group Progress Reports.

Various files of No. 300 Group.

Much information was secured by conversations with many people, both R.A.F. and R.N. (but not R.A.A.F.) in Australia and in the Pacific Islands.

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	1
The Arena	3
Genesis	7
Movement of the Force to Australia	9
No. 300 Wing Establishes itself in Australia	13
Operations of the British Pacific Fleet	17
Survey Flights to the Pacific Islands	19
Commencement of Scheduled Services	21
No. 300 Wing's First Casualty	23
First Phase of the Build-up Completed	25
Communications Facilities	27
Intermezzo	29
Survey of the Eniwetok Route	31
Arrival of No. 238 Squadron	33
Arrival of R.A.F. Staging Posts	35
No. 300 Wing becomes a Group H.Q.	37
The Japanese Surrender - Impact on 300 Group	39
Post VJ-Day Commitments and Events	41
Special Flights	43
Dispersal	45
Other Aspects	47
(i) Maintenance	
(ii) Casualty Evacuation	
(iii) Meteorology	
(iv) Flying Accidents	
Conclusion.	53

APPENDICES

- I. Statistics
- II. Minutes of a Conference between A.O.A., H.Q. Transport Command and the R.A.A.F., C.A.S.
- III. Location Lists.
- IV. Flying Accidents Summary.
- V. Relative Distances - South West Pacific.

MAPS

- I. Reinforcement Route flown by No. 300 Group from Canada to Australia.
- II. Survey Flight of the Manus-Leyte Route - February, 1945.
- III. Scheduled Services flown by No. 300 Group in May, 1945.
- IV. Survey Flight of the Eniwetok Route.
- V. Scheduled Services flown by No. 300 Group in December, 1945.

CHRONOLOGYNOVEMBER 1944

5th First R.A.F. Transport Command personnel arrived in Australia, No. 45 Group detachment.

23rd No. 238 Squadron formed at Merryfield, U.K.

DECEMBER 1944

7th No. 45 Group Detachment, Sydney, renamed No. 145 Staging Post.

15th No. 243 Squadron formed under W/Cdr. T.W. Gillen.

26th W/Cdr. R.E. Bailey, D.S.O., D.F.C. assumed command of No. 238 Squadron.

JANUARY 1945

1st No. 1315 Flight formed at Merryfield, U.K.

11th Group Captain D.F. Anderson became O.C. 300 Wing.

27th First sea party of No. 300 Wing arrived at Sydney.

29th W/Cdr. H. Burton, D.S.O., M.B.E. took over No. 238 Squadron.

29th W/Cdr. R.E. Bailey, D.S.O., D.F.C. became C.O. of No. 1315 Flight.

FEBRUARY 1945

3rd First aircraft of No. 243 Squadron arrived in Australia.

14th First aircraft of No. 238 Squadron left Merryfield for India.

12-20th Survey flight of Manus and Leyte route carried out.

21st First operation by No. 300 Wing carried out.

22nd Second sea party of No. 300 Wing arrived Sydney.

26th First scheduled service commenced. Twice weekly. Route Sydney - Townsville (NS) - Port Moresby (NS) - Manus (NS) and return. Round trip 6 days.

MARCH 1945

6th Twice weekly service commenced Sydney - Melbourne (NS) and return. Round trip two days.

MARCH 1945 (Contd.)

9th Once weekly service commenced Sydney - Melbourne - Adelaide (NS) - Cedune - Kalgoorlie - Perth (NS) and return trip 4 days.

21st New service commenced three times weekly. Sydney - Brisbane - Townsville (NS) - Milne Bay - Manus (Night stop) - Biak - Palau (Night stop) - Leyte and return. Round trip 7 days.

22nd Sydney - Manus service, northbound flights re-routed from Townsville to Milne Bay and Finschhafen by-passing Port Moresby, reducing round trip to four days, night stopping only at Townsville and Manus.

23rd B.P.F. Task Force sails for Ulithi for operation Iceberg I.

23rd Sydney - Perth schedule amended to Sydney - Melbourne - Adelaide - Forest - Perth cutting out Ceduna and Kalgoorlie.

24th Sydney - Melbourne service twice weekly. Service increased to one daily.

APRIL 1945

12th Sydney - Manus service extended to Leyte to clear backlog of freight and mail.

12th Sydney - Melbourne service cancelled to provide aircraft from Leyte service.

12th Sydney - Perth service suspended temporarily.

12th Thrice weekly Sydney - Leyte service increased to daily.

14th Second half of No. 243 Squadron - 1315 Flight arrived in Australia.

19th Sydney - Perth service resumed one per week.

21st Sydney - Manus service cancelled on introduction of daily service to LEYTE.

21st Sydney - Melbourne daily service resumed.

23rd B.P.F. Task Force returned to Leyte after successful conclusion of Iceberg I.

26th Sydney - Perth service increased to three aircraft per week.

28th Sydney - Manus service re-introduced twice weekly.

28th Sydney - Melbourne service again suspended.

30th B.P.F. Task Force sailed from Leyte for operation Iceberg II.

MAY 1945

4th Sydney - Leyte service. Four additional aircraft per week to operate.

9th Sydney - Leyte service now two aircraft daily with an additional aircraft on Saturdays.

9th Twice weekly Sydney - Manus service cancelled. One aircraft detached to Manus to operate Manus - Leyte shuttle and often non-scheduled points in S.W.P.A.

9th No. 1315 Flight commenced operations.

12th Communication Flight formed at Mascot.

13th Service amended to one aircraft daily Sydney - Leyte, two aircraft daily Sydney - Manus with one aircraft located Manus for Manus - Leyte shuttle.

29th First casualties evacuated from Manus by No. 300 Wing aircraft.

30th B.P.F. Task Force returned to Manus after successful completion of Iceberg II.

JUNE 1945

2nd Following amendments to services effected:
Sydney - Manus three aircraft daily.
Sydney - Leyte two aircraft weekly.

2nd New shuttle services commenced:
Sydney - Brisbane - Sydney once daily.

13th First Liberator C.87 left Ceylon to inaugurate new Ceylon - Australia twice weekly service terminating at Perth.

26th First flight of No. 238 Squadron Adelaide left India for Australia.

28th British Pacific Fleet Task Force left Leyte for operations against the Japanese homeland.

JULY 1945

1st W/Cdr. W.J. McLean, D.S.O., D.F.C., A.F.C. (R.A.A.F.) took over No. 243 Squadron from W/Cdr. G.T. Gillen.

2nd First flight of No. 238 Squadron arrived Adelaide from India.

3rd-9th Survey of Eniwetok route carried out.

JULY 1945 (Contd.)

- 19th Sydney - Manus services re-routed. Northbound from Townsville via Port Moresby - Kokoda - Dobadura to Manus. Southbound from Manus via Dobadura, Kokoda and Port Moresby to Townsville, thus cutting out Milne Bay where weather at this time of the year is constantly poor.
- 28th 2,000 R.A.F. Staging Post personnel arrived at Sydney.

AUGUST 1945

- 2nd Sydney - Manus service increased from three to four daily.
- Manus - Guam - Eniwetok shuttle commenced.
- 6th Camden becomes an R.A.F. Station.
- 11th A/Cdre. A. Earle, arrived at Melbourne to command No. 300 Group.
- 12th B.P.F. Task Force returned to base after a successful series of operations against the Japanese homeland.
- 14th Japanese surrender unconditionally.
- 18th Manus - Eniwetok shuttle discontinued but Manus - Guam shuttle continues.
- 23rd. Two of the daily Sydney - Manus aircraft continue through to Leyte.
- 25th New weekly service introduced Adelaide - Learmouth, primarily for the supply of rations to No. 190 Staging Post.

SEPTEMBER 1945

- 3rd New service Adelaide - Melbourne - Sydney (Night stop) and return. Twice daily.
- 6-16th Survey flight of Hong Kong route carried out.
- 7th Mascot - Leyte service extended to Hong Kong. Daily frequency.
- 15th Adelaide - Learmouth weekly service suspended.
- 15th Sydney - Perth service suspended.
- 20th Scheduled services amended to:-
- Two a/c daily Adelaide - Sydney.
One a/c daily Sydney - Manus.
One a/c daily Sydney - Leyte.
One a/c daily Sydney - Hong Kong.

OCTOBER 1945

1st Scheduled services amended to:-
Two a/c daily Adelaide - Sydney.
One a/c daily Sydney - Manus.
One a/c daily Sydney - Hong Kong.

11th Manus - Guam shuttle suspended.

15th Sydney - Hong Kong service re-routed through Cloncurry - Darwin - Morotai - Leyte.

28th Communications Flight disbanded.

NOVEMBER 1945

5th Adelaide - Sydney service reduced to one aircraft daily.

17th New service commenced twice weekly.
Sydney - Brisbane - Cloncurry - Darwin (Night Stop) - Balikpapan (Night Stop) - Labuan - Singapore (Night Stop) and return. Round trip six days.

26th Sydney - Manus daily service reduced to two aircraft weekly.

DECEMBER 1945

1st Trans-Pacific service ceased.

31st No. 238 Squadron's last operation.

JANUARY 1946

1st Sydney - Singapore service re-routed to by-pass Brisbane and Labuan.

1st Sydney - Hong Kong service re-routed from Darwin through Balikpapan and Saigon by-passing Morotai and Leyte.

2nd A/Cdre. A. Earle, CBE left Melbourne to take up post of A.O.C. No. 232 Group Rangoon.

4-7th Twelve a/c of No. 238 Squadron left Australia for the United Kingdom.

8-12th Thirteen a/c of No. 238 Squadron left Australia for Singapore and Rangoon there to be handed over to HQ. ACSEA.

FEBRUARY 1946

9th No. 238 Squadron disbanded.

18th-23rd No. 198 S.P. Manus and No. 199 S.P. Port Moresby flown out to Camden.

17th Sydney-Manus route suspended.

18th-23rd No. 193 S.P. Townsville moved by rail to Camden.

MARCH 1946

1st	No. 189 S.P. Perth flown out from Perth to Camden.
15th	No. 1315 Flight disbanded.
26th	No. 197 S.P. Darwin and No. 190 S.P. Cloncurry flown out to Camden.
26th	No. 300 Wing formed at Hong Kong.

APRIL 1946

2nd	Concentration of all R.A.F. personnel in the Sydney area completed.
6th	Last two aircraft left for Singapore.
15th	No. 243 Squadron disbanded.
26th	Bulk of No. 300 Group personnel moved to Despatch Centre, Sydney for embarkation.

HEADQUARTERS, NO. 300 GROUP, R.A.F.INTRODUCTION

Prior to the advent of the British Pacific Fleet, Great Britain had played no part in the gathering momentum of Allied offensives in the South West Pacific Area although Dominion participation had been on a considerable scale. By the end of 1944, the strategic situation in the European and Mediterranean theatres of war was such that Great Britain could at least provide effective assistance to the American and Dominion forces deployed in the Pacific arena.

Great Britain's contribution lay in the provision of a Naval Task Force which formed as the British Pacific Fleet under Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser. The Commander-in-Chief realising the difficulty of maintaining communications throughout the vast area in which his Fleet was to operate demanded that an R.A.F. air transport force should be placed at his disposal in order to establish essential services, the most important of which was the provision of a fast postal service between the Fleet's main base at Sydney and the advanced outposts in the Pacific islands. But also important was the need for an air transport organisation capable of endowing Naval personnel with a mobility which would ensure speedy deployment and capable of ensuring the swift transportation of vital items of equipment.

Towards the end of 1944, the Air Ministry sanctioned the formation of No. 300 (Transport) Wing R.A.F., which, it was envisaged, would control two and a half Dakota squadrons. Transported to Australia and controlling at the outset but one squadron, air routes were pioneered and opened by February 1945 in spite of the paucity of resources and consequent necessity to rely on the Royal Australian Air Force and the Americans for the bulk of the ground facilities and organisation essential to the operation of regular services. The American outlook was at first coloured by the erroneous impression that No. 300 Wing was a civil air line in disguise.

The story of No. 300 Wing, later No. 300 Group is perhaps unromantic since their work could not hope to match the glamour which surrounds the bomber or fighter formations. Moreover, R.A.F. air transport in the South West Pacific, though essential to the maintenance of the B.P. Fleet, was not so vital a factor as was the case with combat cargo units in other theatres. Perhaps the British Pacific Fleet could have fought its battles without the aid of No. 300 Group and yet without the backing of an air transport force it is certain that the efficiency of the Fleet would have been seriously affected. For this reason alone No. 300 Group justified its existence which from February 1945 until February of the following year they built up a creditable record. Fleet demands were met, and eventually with the assistance of the R.A.A.F., staging post facilities were provided for both parochial and trunk services and considerable assistance was given to R.A.A.F. air transport.

Surrendering unconditionally in August 1945 the enemy robbed No. 300 Group of the chance to bring full maturity to their organisation designed to assist the British Pacific Fleet during the final onslaught upon the Japanese homeland. From September onwards, the dispersal of No. 300 Group was inevitable and their continued existence was only made necessary to cater on the one hand for B.P.F. requirements during their move from Australia to Hong Kong and on the other for the maintenance of air services to connect the South West Pacific with South East Asia Command until such

time as the trunk routes through Singapore to Australia and Hong Kong could be opened.

By the end of the year, the trans-Pacific service, established in 1944 to meet military needs and operated by No. 45 Group ceased, possibly owing to American pressure and in January and February 1946, No. 300 Group units on the move of part of the Headquarters to Hong Kong in the reduced status of a wing, started to disperse.

In the pages that follow is an account of the work of No. 300 Group, R.A.F. their difficulties and their achievements and the opposing forces encountered. We cannot, however, include the enemy among the latter since the Japanese did not at any time interfere with the operations of No. 300 Group. The question of air superiority and of combat does not therefore arise.

THE ARENA

Before analysing the efforts of No. 300 Group it is necessary, firmly to establish in the readers mind, the extent of the enormous parish known as the South West Pacific Area. The incredible expanses and tenuous lines of communications which existed created logistical problems unknown in other theatres of war and although it has been said that the operations of our American allies were sustained along a pontoon bridge of merchant vessels, air transport constituted an important aspect of communications and supply. Indeed, the American surface supply routes were backed by an impressive array of transport aircraft, providing a scale of effort which could not be matched by the R.A.F., not even on a percentage evaluation. Nevertheless, while the bulk of supplies for the British Pacific Fleet were transported over surface routes, this was in itself, insufficient and the importance of the work carried out by the small R.A.F. air transport force can best be illustrated by an examination of No. 300 Group's area of operations and by visualising the situation that would have obtained had air transport not been available. Statistics alone cannot provide adequate evidence of the part played by the R.A.F. in the South West Pacific. This particularly applies to tonnage figures since a single ton of freight might well be transported upwards of 4,000 miles. Let us examine the vastness of the South West Pacific.

Perhaps it is beyond the province of this narrative to comment upon the air communications provided by the trunk routes of Transport Command from Great Britain to Australia but it is as well to mention that the British Pacific Fleet and No. 300 Group operated many thousands of miles from the seat of the British Chiefs of Staff. Moreover, the base supply depots of Britain and the United States were 12,000 and 7,000 miles respectively from Sydney. In turn it was the responsibility of No. 300 Group to span the immense distances which separated Sydney and Melbourne from the Pacific bases.

Australia alone, with an area of nearly three million square miles, is larger than Europe and yet contains only seven million people, most of whom are concentrated along the Eastern seaboard of the continent. Thus in bridging the 2,200 miles from Sydney to Perth or the 2,000 miles from Sydney to Darwin (about the same distance as that which separates England and Newfoundland), great areas of desert and sparsely populated plains must be covered. A forced landing here would create difficult problems and would seem to warrant the employment of an air/land rescue organisation. But trans-Australian flights cannot be said to be unduly hazardous. The climate generally speaking is fairly good for flying, except in the tropical regions, although the route from Melbourne to Sydney is apt to be bad because of icing in winter and the build-up of fronts and turbulence in hot weather. In North-east Queensland and in the Darwin area cumulo-nimbus build-ups frequently occur and great thunderstorms and tropical rain are experienced. The Australian continent, topographically, is not difficult. It is mainly flat and the principal range of hills, never rising more than 7,500 feet seal off the well populated Eastern coast from the Australian hinterland. In the early months of No. 300 Wing's existence, air routes flown were generally north and south which meant that R.A.F. aircraft were obliged to fly mainly over hilly but comparatively well populated country. In the final stages R.A.F. routes were south-east to north-west which involved crossing great areas of desert and scrub.

Flying outside the Australian continent is a far different proposition. North of Townsville and Darwin the particular characteristic flying hazards of the tropics are met. Tropical storms and cumulo-nimbus clouds, with their associated severe turbulence, soaring up to 20,000 feet and more are only too common. Aircraft of No. 300 Group plying between Townsville and Manus often encountered such climatic conditions, but in addition there was another problem of overflying the mighty Owen Stanley range of mountains whose peaks rise up to over 16,000 feet, more often than not obscured by a mantle of cloud. The beautiful and verdant contours of these mountains invariably capture the imagination of the tourist but the aircrews who had to cross them had a different picture to offer of dangerous peaks and consistently bad weather and of country which offered small chance of survival if a crash landing had to be made. The Owen Stanleys were badly charted and heights shown on navigational maps could not be relied upon. Pilots therefore had to allow a considerable margin for safety and quite often the mountains were crossed at 19,000 feet. When possible the path taken by R.A.F. aircraft through this formidable barrier was somewhat to the east of the higher peaks, a gap where the mountains were 9,000 feet above sea level. The same cloud hazard was still to be met in this opening and it was soon learnt that unless aircraft cleared the mountain range in the forenoon they would meet the impenetrable wall of cloud which invariably descended before midday.

Similar flying conditions prevailed to the north of Darwin. Between the Australian port and Labuan island, just off the north-east coast of Borneo, not only were there large areas of ocean to be crossed but mountain peaks of considerable heights added to the pilot's difficulties. The route from Darwin to Balikpapan, situated in the south-east corner of Dutch Borneo, passed over the island of Timor with its 7,000 foot mountains, and across the south-western spider leg of the Celebes. From Balikpapan the mountains of Borneo had to be crossed. These spread out over the island like the spokes of a wheel and, in the main, range from 3,000 to 7,000 feet with but fewer loftier peaks the highest of which reaches to 13,000 feet. Flying over Borneo involves similar risks as crossing the Owen Stanleys and cumulo-nimbus clouds are ever likely to rear their treacherous heads both over the mountains and over the sea. Flying over Borneo is in some respects worse than over New Guinea. The high ground in Borneo extends for two hundred miles or more. Vigilant and experienced piloting and navigation were the only means to combat these conditions since meteorological information was skimpy and emergency landing grounds few. Borneo, the third largest island in the world, with an area of 290,000 square miles, covered mostly by dense tropical forest, is inhabited by about three million people. In all it constitutes a poor outlook for aircraft forced down in the interior.

Mountains and inhospitable country were not the only contingencies met by aircraft of No. 300 Group. There were the inevitable difficulties attendant upon flying twin-engined aircraft over vast expanses of ocean; an inadequate air/sea rescue organisation, poor meteorological services, the complete absence of emergency landing grounds and the like all militated against safety. The small size of island bases also added to the navigator's difficulties. In the South West Pacific many long oversea flights had to be undertaken as mere routine, the longest of which were on the Manus-Eniwetok sector. This schedule involved two long ocean crossings, the first from Manus to Guam (1,100 miles) and the second from Guam to Eniwetok (1,200 miles). Other scheduled flights entirely over water included the three legs of the Manus-Leyte

route, the aggregate mileage being over 2,000, Singapore to Labuan some 850 miles and Labuan to Saigon over 700 miles. The routes mostly over the sea such as Leyte-Hong Kong, Townsville-Manus or Darwin-Morotai might also be mentioned to emphasise the enormous stretches of water flown over by aircraft of No. 300 Group.

Finally, let us examine the overall distances of No. 300 Group air routes. Darwin to Perth has already been mentioned but that distance palls to insignificance compared with the schedules from Sydney to Eniwetok, Hong Kong and Singapore which amounted to 4,600, 4,700, and 4,500 miles respectively. The round trip Sydney-Hong Kong-Sydney is greater in distance than two round trips between England and Newfoundland.

Thus the South West Pacific. It is as well to remember the foregoing when reading the following narrative, it is as well to remember the maintenance problem involved when practically no facilities exist at the end of a long outward journey and lastly, the advantages with which the British Pacific Fleet were endowed should be appreciated, particularly since the Fleet's area of operations could be likened to a main base at Aden, an advanced base at Gibraltar, a refuelling base in the Azores and a battle ground in the River St. Lawrence.

GENESIS

An aircraft captained by Air Commodore C. J. Powell, C.B.E., the Senior Air Staff Officer of H.Q., No. 45 Group (Dorval, Canada) arrived at Sydney on 5 November, 1944 from Canada, a flight which marked the inauguration of the regular R.A.F. trans-Pacific service of Transport Command. Squadron Leader W. B. Wright, O.C. designate of a Staging Post which was to be set up at Sydney to cater for the newly created service was a passenger on this first R.A.F. Pacific aircraft. On 14 and 26 November a few additional R.A.F. personnel reached Sydney and the small body comprising three officers, one civilian traffic officer and seventeen other ranks assumed the title of No. 45 Group Detachment. On 7 December this detachment was renamed No. 145 Staging Post, the first R.A.F. Transport Command unit to be formed in Australia.

Soon after the formation of No. 145 Staging Post, the first seeds were sown in Naval/R.A.F. co-operation when No. 45 Group placed a Liberator aircraft at the disposal of the Royal Naval Commander-in-Chief, Sir Bruce Fraser, pending the arrival of the R.A.F. transport force.

On 4 January, 1945, the Air Officer Commanding, No. 45 Group accompanied by a party of staff officers, landed at Sydney in order to carry out preliminary negotiations with the Royal Australian Air Force in anticipation of Air Ministry sanction for the provision of an R.A.F. air transport force in Australia.

Although sympathetic and promising every assistance it seems that the R.A.A.F. did not want the R.A.F. in Australia. They considered that since sufficient R.A.A.F. aircrews were available, the R.A.A.F. could meet the requirements of the British Pacific Fleet providing more transport aircraft were allotted to them which could well operate within the framework of their existing organisation. But Fraser had demanded that the air transport backing for his Fleet should be British, an opinion which had been endorsed by the British Chiefs of Staff. As subsequent events were to show, the decision was a wise one since the British Pacific Fleet was able to receive the individual attention of an air transport force. In due course an agreement was reached with the Australian Air Board whereby an R.A.F. transport force could be set up in Australia to operate by utilising the existing facilities of the R.A.A.F. transport organisation.

In the meanwhile planning had commenced in England and a nucleus of No. 300 Wing Headquarters, No. 243 Squadron and No. 4243 Servicing Echelon were assembled. In the event, planning proved somewhat sketchy and while the major formations were formed, albeit thinly staffed, ancillary units were not provided for initially and did not in fact move to Australia until many months after the arrival of operational formations. This might have seriously affected the efficiency of operations during the first few months of No. 300 Wing's existence, but as always in the R.A.F., the personnel concerned by their initiative and zeal and helped by the R.N. and R.A.A.F. accomplished an arduous task competently.

MOVEMENT OF THE FORCE TO AUSTRALIA

The R.A.F. force originally contemplated for the South West Pacific constituted No. 300 Wing Headquarters, No. 243 (Dakota) Squadron and its Servicing Echelon, No. 1315 (Dakota) Flight and No. 238 Squadron. It was planned that the first elements consisting of No. 300 Wing and half of No. 243 Squadron should move in two echelons followed closely by the remainder of No. 243 Squadron, No. 1315 Flight and No. 238 Squadron. In January, 1945, however, the over-riding need to reinforce the air supply squadrons in Burma resulted in the diversion of No. 238 Squadron to the South East Asia theatre of war, conditional that the squadron should move on to Australia when commitments in Burma became less pressing.

Assembling at West Kirby on 17 December, 1944 under the command of Wing Commander G. T. Gilbert, S.A.S.O. of No. 300 Wing, the first sea party consisting of the main body of No. 300 Wing and half of No. 243 Squadron, sailed from Liverpool on 22 December. Travelling by way of the Panama Canal this echelon arrived at Sydney, New South Wales on 27 January, 1945 where they were accommodated at Bradfield Park Camp until 9 February on which date R.A.A.F. Station, Camden some forty miles south-west of Sydney, accepted them. A second sea party arrived at Sydney on 22 February and with their arrival the main body of No. 300 Wing and No. 243 Squadron were concentrated at Camden.

The air party which embraced the aircrews and key personnel of No. 243 Squadron (half) under the command of Group Captain D. F. Anderson, D.F.C., A.F.C., Officer Commanding No. 300 Wing, embarked at Grennock on 17 December, 1944 and arrived at Halifax, Nova Scotia on Christmas Day. That night and the following day were spent in a train bound for Quebec and R.A.F. Station, Dorval (Montreal) which was reached on 27 December, 1944.

At Dorval the echelon was attached to Headquarters, No. 45 Group, R.A.F. and it was here that the party first ascertained that they would be responsible for ferrying fifteen Dakota IV aircraft to Australia. This entailed special training for every crew member in order to ensure that they were fully competent to carry out the flight, the distance of which was some 11,000 miles. The training which lasted eleven days, consisted of both technical lectures and flying practice on Dakota aircraft for the pilots with special emphasis on the complex system of radio range "Airways" flying as practised in the United States. Navigators concentrated on astro-navigation in the Southern Hemisphere and the wireless operators grappled with American W/T and R/T procedure together with the formidable task of understanding American R/T operators.

No. 45 Group was responsible for the full briefing of crews prior to despatch from Dorval and the routing of aircraft from Dorval to Sacramento, California on the first stage of the trans-Pacific flight to Australia.

On 8 and 9 January, 1945, the aircrews collected fifteen new Dakota IV aircraft each specially equipped with eight 100 gallon overload tanks rigged in the fuselage. Commanded by Wing Commander G. W. Gillen, Officer Commanding, No. 243 Squadron, the aircraft were flown to Nashville (Tennessee) where it was decided that three flights each of five aircraft should proceed independently to Sacramento at one day intervals so that congestion at any one airfield might be avoided. This did not turn out to be practicable

since the pilots were not permitted to fly in or above clouds in the United States without the American "Instrument Flying Rating", a rating which of course none of the crews possessed. As a result, flying was restricted to very fair weather and an even flow of aircraft proved to be impossible.

Several days were spent at Nashville after which the aircraft flew on to Sacramento night stopping on the way at Dallas (Texas), Tucson (Arizona) and Riverside (California). At all these airfields the accommodation was excellent and the officers' clubs would have provided food and thought for an epicure. Sacramento was reached on 16 January and the aircraft were thoroughly overhauled at the airfield of Matherfield in preparation for the trans-Pacific flight. Great difficulty was experienced in getting this final check carried out. General Marshall had ordered that Superfortresses were to have priority over everything else and so the R.A.F. could get little attention. The American method of clearing all the electrical faults, then all the instrument faults and so on, led nowhere and it was many days before a few aircraft could be made serviceable. The Americans also insisted that the overload tanks should be filled all the time. This coupled with the odd arrangement of having tanks piled on each other caused extra pressure in the bottom tanks which eventually began to leak. When the flight was first ordered off, about four days after arrival, not one aircraft was fully serviceable for the trip, so bad was the liaison between operations and engineering at Matherfield.

Briefing consisted of a general consideration of the whole route to Sydney and a detailed survey of the first lap, that is from Sacramento to Honolulu. A feature of the briefing, and of briefing at all stages on the route, was the showing of films illustrating interesting points which might assist the aircrews in identifying their destinations, demonstrating navigational aids and warnings, views of airfields and the correct approach and let down procedures.

Matherfield, Sacramento was the springboard for the long ocean hop to John Rogers Field, Honolulu, probably the longest non-stop flight so far attempted by Dakota aircraft of Transport Command. To cover the 2,300 statute miles, 10,000 lbs. of fuel and oil were carried. Flying individually, the first six Dakota aircraft took off on 24 January in fair weather. Astro navigation was possible for the most important periods of the flight, the first and last four hours, and radio ranges and M.F. beacons in the Hawaiian group, as in most of the islands, were excellent. On the 25th, the six Dakotas landed at John Rogers Field, Honolulu after an uneventful flight of some seventeen hours. The remaining aircraft, however, were held up at Sacramento, first by maintenance troubles and then by adverse winds; it was not until many days later that they took off from California.

It is as well to follow the movements of the first flight since although the remainder followed at irregular intervals, their path was similar to that of the pioneers. Two days were spent by the first flight at Honolulu and on 28 January they took off on the next hop to Christmas Island where a night stop was made. Here one aircraft retired with a burst tyre and the other Dakotas continued their flight with night stops at the barren island of Canton and at sweltering Nandi in the Fijian Group to Auckland, New Zealand which was reached on 1 February, 1945. Two days later, the notorious Tasman Sea was crossed in typical Tasman weather and five aircraft landed at the Mascot airport, Sydney on 3 February, 1945 after flying 8,000 nautical miles entirely over the sea. In due course they were joined by the remainder of the fifteen Dakotas.

Back in England the next phase in the build up of the R.A.F. Transport Force was proceeding. The second half of No. 243 Squadron and No. 1315 Flight were formed on 1 January, 1945 at Merryfield, U.K. where training on Dakota aircraft was carried out although this training was somewhat delayed by the priority given to No. 238 Squadron destined for the Burma front. Eventually training was completed and personnel of the two units assembled at Morecambe and embarked on 13 March, 1945. Moving to Dorval via New York, similar training to that carried out by the first half of No. 243 Squadron was undertaken and nineteen Dakota IV aircraft flown by Squadron and Flight aircrews with surplus aircrews as passengers flew from Dorval to Sydney where they arrived on 16 April, 1945. A large number of personnel were lifted by these Dakotas from Dorval to Sacramento where many had to be left owing to the impossibility of Dakotas carrying too many passengers over the long ocean flight to Honolulu. This problem was overcome by timely aid from the Americans who transported surplus personnel from Sacramento to Honolulu ~~from~~ whence the No. 300 Wing Dakotas with shorter flights before them were able to lift all R.A.F. personnel.

NO. 300 WING ESTABLISHES ITSELF IN AUSTRALIA

It has already been mentioned that the first party arrived in Australia on 27 January, whereupon the small body of officers tackled the task of arranging the reception of No. 243 Squadron's aircraft, for which the time available was all too short, and to harness the meagre resources available so that air services might be commenced at the earliest possible date.

Arrangements had already been made with the R.A.A.F. for three airfields to be made available for the Royal Air Force and that many facilities such as minor servicing, meteorological, signals and the like would be provided by the R.A.A.F. whose existing organisation, it was supposed, was available to meet R.A.F. requirements. In the event, however, No. 300 Wing obtained the use of one airfield only, Camden some forty miles south-west of Sydney where an R.A.A.F. Beaufort Squadron on delayed standby for a Pacific operational station was still in residence. Prior to their evacuation, accommodation was exceedingly tight.

The main operational base of the British Pacific Fleet was Sydney and it was necessary, therefore, for all transport operations to originate at the New South Wales capital. With this in mind the offer of an airfield at Bunderberg in Queensland was rejected as No. 300 Wing's first base since it would involve either too much unproductive flying from Bunderberg to Sydney or delay in transit caused by changing passengers and freight from one aircraft to another. Camden, the only suitable airfield available in the Sydney area was accepted. It was thought that the forty-five Dakotas of No. 243 Squadron and No. 1315 Flight could be housed there initially, while time was still available to find a second base for No. 238 Squadron which was not expected to arrive for some months. Mascot airport, Sydney was used as a terminal base, the Staging Post there being augmented with servicing personnel of No. 243 Squadron so that minor servicing and daily inspections could be carried out. Four Liberator aircraft of the Communications Flight were based at Mascot and constituted an additional commitment for No. 145 Staging Post. The requisite personnel to meet this extra commitment were transferred from Camden to Mascot. Camden, it should be noted, was unsuitable for heavy aircraft.

The responsibility for the allocation of loads for No. 300 Wing aircraft was vested in the Vice-Admiral Quartermaster (VAQ), British Pacific Fleet whose offices were located at Melbourne. Also in Melbourne were the Headquarters of the R.A.A.F. with whom continuous contact had to be maintained by No. 300 Wing. Thus the obvious home for the R.A.F. Headquarters was Melbourne. A few weeks had been spent by Wing personnel at Camden and on 25 February, 1945 a move to Melbourne was commenced. Accommodation was an impossible business and frantic efforts to find even the minimum of office space were of no avail. Eventually and after many false starts, three rooms were made available in a building housing the R.A.F. Liaison mission. With these meagre offices No. 300 Wing attempted to organise a Headquarters which could control effectively air transport operations. That No. 243 Squadron's operations were controlled at the outset is sufficient evidence of the efforts of the embryonic H.Q.

No. 300 Wing experienced great difficulty in implementing H.Q. Transport Command policy which broadly speaking was:-

(a) That the sole responsibility for operational efficiency and the control of all R.A.F. Transport Command units in Australia should be vested in the Officer Commanding, No. 300 Wing.

(b) That the Wing should be integrated within the R.A.A.F. transport system in so far as a joint Transport Operations Control Room, to be formed and manned by both R.A.F. and R.A.A.F. personnel with a liaison officer attached from the staff of the Royal Navy.

(c) That the Wing should operate to meet as a first priority commitment, the requirements of the Commander-in-Chief, British Pacific Fleet and only after that should any available aircraft space be placed at the disposal of the R.A.A.F. It was recognised that the scheme should work both ways with both R.A.F. and R.A.A.F. transport aircraft.

Unfortunately the views of No. 300 Wing on the above policy did not always agree with those of the R.A.A.F. It had been fairly clear all along that the R.A.A.F. Air Board did not want R.A.F. Transport Command units in Australia but as they had now agreed to accept the R.A.F. they would have preferred that both operational and administrative control should be given to the R.A.A.F. However, the doubtful efficiency of R.A.A.F. operations coupled with the unbelievably poor conditions prevailing at all R.A.A.F. Staging Posts made it most undesirable for any delegation of authority to be made in that direction.

But in addition to the aim of the R.A.A.F. at absorbing No. 300 Wing, the Royal Navy had their own ambitions. No. 300 Wing, therefore, had to consider two forces of opposition - eternal vigilance was always necessary to guard against losing the identity of No. 300 Wing as a unit. The root of the trouble lay in the fact that No. 300 Wing was not a self supporting unit and was forced to rely upon the R.A.A.F. and the Royal Navy for the provision of resources. The British Pacific Fleet was inclined to regard R.A.F. aircraft as R.N. property and No. 300 Wing as a potential nucleus of an R.N. Air Transport Service. The R.N. obtained C-45 (Beechcraft) aeroplanes from the United States and began an inter-state service of their own and this competed with No. 300 Wing, at one stage, for airfield accommodation which was urgently required. In amplification of the foregoing, part of the trouble was due to a lack of understanding on the part of those concerned as to where respective responsibilities started and finished in the joint operation of air transport.

Since it was clear that the operation of No. 300 Wing aircraft was likely to be the subject of attack and criticism from two directions, action was deemed necessary to obviate the possibility of No. 300 Wing's annihilation by the guns of two powerful opponents. On 14 April, 1945, the Air Officer Administration of H.Q., Transport Command, Air Vice-Marshal S.E. Storrar, C.B.E. attended a conference,⁽¹⁾ the chairman of which was Air Vice-Marshal Jones, Chief of the R.A.A.F. Air Staff. Others present included the R.A.F. Liaison Officer and staff officers of the Air Board and No. 300 Wing. The chief item discussed was the chain of operational control for squadrons of No. 300 Wing and co-ordination with operations of the R.A.A.F. It was agreed that a Combined Operations Room should be formed the senior officer and co-ordinator being the S.A.S.O. of No. 300 Wing. Among other subjects discussed by

(1) See Appendix II.

the conference were the extent of R.A.A.F. assistance to No. 300 Wing in maintenance, meteorology, accommodation and catering, staging facilities and airfields.

As a result of this and many other conferences held with the R.A.A.F. during March and April 1945, the task of No. 300 Wing was somewhat eased. Unfortunately the assistance promised by the R.A.A.F. was far greater than that which could in fact be provided and maintenance difficulties as described elsewhere in this narrative remained.

OPERATIONS OF THE BRITISH PACIFIC FLEET

Admiral Fraser's British Pacific Fleet moved to the South West Pacific early in 1945 and set up its main base at Sydney, New South Wales. Elements of the Fleet later moved to the principal advanced base at Manus island in the Admiralty Group which form part of the Bismark Archipelego, in anticipation of operations against the enemy due to commence in March 1945. The American naval base of Ulithi was used as the springboard for the British Fleet's first operation in the Pacific war.

In order to provide support for Fraser in these operations, the transport aircraft of No. 300 Wing, which arrived in Australia in February 1945, inaugurated in that month an air route from Sydney to Manus, a creditable achievement in view of the difficulties experienced by the Wing in the early days of their existence. Thus when the British Pacific Fleet sailed from Ulithi on 23 March they had the benefit of an air transport backing. Manus was of course the base of the Fleet train which supported the British Task Force while at sea.

The March/April/May operations of the British Pacific Fleet consisted of assaults designed to neutralise the enemy airfields in the Sakishima Gunto group, thus guarding the left flank of the American invasion forces attacking Okinawa against the possible reinforcement of the objective by Japanese aircraft located in the Philippines and Formosa which might use the Sakishima group for staging purposes. The operation was divided into two phases, the first known as Iceberg I following the successful completion of which the British Pacific Fleet Task Force moved to Leyte on 23 April, an advanced base in the Phillipines to which No. 300 Wing had extended its services on 21 March. The British Task Force sailed from Leyte for phase II of the operation on 30 April returning to Manus on 30 May. Thus ended the British Pacific Fleet's first assault.

From Manus the B.P.F. moved back to its main base at Sydney in order to prepare for its next operation - the bombardment and bombing of the Japanese homeland. The object of these operations was to inflict the maximum destruction on Japanese airfields, aircraft and shipping as a prelude to the main assault upon Japan scheduled for November 1945. Leaving Sydney on 28 June for the preliminary attack on Japan the B.P.F. Task Force after successful sorties returned to base on 12 August.

The fact that the British Pacific Fleet remained in the battle area for so long emphasises the usefulness of air transport support No. 300 Wing's part in the Fleet operations was a significant one since not only was mail carried to Manus and Leyte for delivery to units of the Fleet at sea, but essential spares and items of equipment so necessary to the Fleet Train were also lifted by air. For instance, the function of the Fleet Train was to refuel combat units and effect minor repairs at sea. Refuelling hoses were constantly breaking and aircraft of No. 300 Wing on many occasions flew new hoses from Australia to Manus or Leyte whence they were delivered to the Fleet by surface communications. Another important commitment for transport aircraft involved the transportation of Fleet Air Arm spares, particularly tyres and this did much to enable carrier borne aircraft to remain serviceable. On one occasion during the July/August operations the unserviceability of certain radar apparatus nearly necessitated the return to base of H.M.S. Indefatigable, but the ship was able to remain at sea by the

timely aid rendered by No. 300 Wing whose aircraft flew spare radar equipment to Leyte.

It has already been mentioned that the British Pacific Fleet returned to base on 12 August. This was in order to prepare for participation in the main invasion of Japan for which an advanced base at the island atoll of Eniwetok was considered necessary. No. 300 Wing therefore extended its services from Manus through Guam to Eniwetok in July 1945 but the route was only maintained for a short period since the preparations for the invasion of Japan were rendered abortive when the Japanese unexpectedly surrendered on 14 August.

SURVEY FLIGHT TO THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Three aircraft captained by the O.C. of No. 243 Squadron and his two Flight Commanders, carrying Naval officers and staff officers of No. 300 Wing left Camden on 12 February on a survey flight, the chief aim of which was to investigate suitable routes and staging points through which the advanced bases of the British Pacific Fleet might be served. Flying northwards through Townsville (Queensland), Port Moresby and Medang (New Guinea) to Manus, the party planned to proceed to Leyte. On arrival at Pelelui airfield in the Palau Islands, the Americans refused clearance for the Dakotas since General MacArthur had ruled that only essential flights could be made to the Philippines where at that time fierce battles were raging. The objection although a reasonable one under the circumstances was a serious setback to the surveyors since the British Pacific Fleet had intimated a wish for an air route to be opened in the near future and a survey was considered essential. Following energetic representations, American permission was obtained for one aircraft to proceed providing no night stop was made at Leyte and on condition that the aircraft was clear of the island by midday.

Two aircraft were sent back to Camden and the other took off from Pelelui with the intention of landing at Tacloban airfield, Leyte soon after first light; this gave the party but four hours in which to negotiate their claims. Tacloban was some twelve miles from the American G.H.Q. on Leyte and two hours were lost traversing the road which was jammed tight with M/T convoys carrying supplies to the battle area. However, satisfactory arrangements were made with the Americans and an agreement reached whereby one aircraft per day could use Tacloban as soon as the tactical situation allowed but no night stop would be possible until the heavy U.S. air transport traffic had decreased. The R.A.F. Dakota flew to the airfield of Dulag, which was close by the American G.H.Q. to pick up the R.A.F. party for the return flight to Palau. From Palau the aircraft returned to Camden staging through Biak Island, Merauke (New Guinea), Higgins field and Townsville (Queensland). The survey was completed on 20 February.

Valuable data was collected by the survey party and arrangements made at various points for staging facilities to be provided. At all places visited either American or R.A.A.F. assistance was promised and a route through Townsville, Port Moresby, Manus, Biak and Palau was decided upon. The Royal Navy were told that air lift was available as soon as a load could be arranged - at their request an aircraft took off on 21 February carrying a full load of Naval personnel and stores for Manus.

COMMENCEMENT OF SCHEDULED FLIGHTS

Subsequent to the maiden flight commenced on 21 February, 1945, several other trips were made to Manus and elsewhere in the Pacific islands which were well utilised by No. 243 Squadron crews to become familiar with peculiarities inseparable from flying in the tropics. The difficult landing strips in New Guinea and other islands, the characteristically bad weather over the Coral Sea, the treacherous build up of cumulo-nimbus clouds over the 16,000 foot peaks of the Owen Stanley range and the lack of many facilities which in other theatres of war would have been considered essential for safety in navigation and in flight, all constituted hazards of no mean proportions. The Royal Navy, however, required an aerial artery and this was provided notwithstanding the parsimony of resources.

The first scheduled service commenced on 26 February a flight from Sydney to Manus and back, a round trip of five days which was, soon after the commencement of the service, cut down to four. Initially operated at twice weekly frequency, the schedule was gradually increased until several aircraft were operating over the route every day. 6 March saw the commencement of a second scheduled service, this a link between the B.P.F. operational base at Sydney and their administrative echelon at Melbourne. Originally a twice weekly service it was stepped up to once daily on 24 March.

Sydney and Perth were connected on 9 March by a weekly service which staged through Melbourne - Adelaide - Forrest and was introduced to link up with the Transport Command Indian Ocean service. By the middle of March the situation at Leyte had improved sufficiently to allow No. 300 Wing aircraft to use Tacloban airfield on a limited scale and a thrice weekly service commenced on the 21st over the route Sydney - Brisbane - Townsville - Port Moresby - Manus - Biak - Palau - Leyte. In addition to scheduled services many special flights were carried out to points not on scheduled routes, these tasks including the movement of Fleet Air Arm squadrons and R.A.A.F. units.

It soon became apparent that No. 300 Wing could not rely entirely upon others for staging facilities. The first few weeks of operations had shown that the R.A.A.F. was not capable, because of manpower shortages, of handling the servicing of No. 300 Wing aircraft at staging points both in Australia and in the Pacific islands. At night stopping places there were cases where daily inspections were not carried out and instances where D.I's were disposed of in an haphazard manner. This state of affairs was challenged but the R.A.A.F. declared that they were so short of ground crews that even daily inspections on visiting aircraft could not always be undertaken.

The Director of Repair and Maintenance and the Organisation Branches of both the R.A.A.F. Air Board and H.Q. Eastern Area (R.A.A.F.) made it quite clear that the R.A.A.F. manpower situation was so acute that they could guarantee no assistance to the R.A.F. The Americans too, while more co-operative, were so tied by their own intensive operations that they found difficulty in carrying out their promises without assistance in manpower from No. 300 Wing. The Americans servicing system was of course entirely different from the R.A.F. and no guarantee could be obtained that inspections would be carried out to our standards. It was therefore necessary to send small servicing parties from No. 300 Wing resources, already too few in number, to night stopping places on No. 300 Wing routes. The Wing was thus

forced to provide personnel for tasks not envisaged during initial planning. Personnel were required for the following airfields:-

- (a) PERTH To carry out inspections on No. 229 (Transport) Group Indian Ocean Liberators and daily servicing of one Dakota per day.
- (b) GAWLER Daily servicing of No. 229 Group Liberators.
- (c) TOWNSVILLE } Daily inspections of up to ten aircraft per day.
- (d) MANUS } to ten aircraft per day.
- (e) PALAU } Leyte also to carry out base check on five of these aircraft daily.
- (f) LEYTE }

These personnel subsequently were absorbed into the staging posts which arrived in Australia towards the end of July 1945.

In spite of the many difficulties encountered No. 300 Wing services were soon appreciated by the British Pacific Fleet. On 11 March, the Vice-Admiral (Quartermaster) signalled No. 300 Wing:-

"Request you convey my appreciation to all concerned and especially to No. 243 Squadron on the successful efforts made to institute an air transport service between Sydney and forward base. The efficiency of this service is of great importance to the British Pacific Fleet both from the operational point of view and for the carriage of mails. The fact that mails were delivered in Manus within ten days of leaving London is most satisfactory and reflects credit on all concerned".

Sir Bruce Fraser on 16 May forwarded to Vice-Admiral (Quartermaster), B.P.F. a letter from H.M.S. Argonaut

'From H.M.S. Argonaut. Dear Sir Bruce Fraser, the mail service has been so exceptionally good that all hands on board the Argonaut very much desire that those engaged in dealing with the Fleet mail, and especially the pilots of the mail planes, should be informed that their efforts are greatly appreciated. I was asked to do this and feel that the best way is to inform you of the wishes of the ships company. The arrival of mail so frequently in such remote areas has been a wonderful tonic and they realise that big efforts are being made to keep them in touch with their homes. Apart from the beneficial effect on those on board there is no doubt that it is also helping those at home to stand the strain of separation'.

The above letter was forwarded by V.A.(Q) to No. 300 Wing with the following comments:-

"There is no question that the fine efforts of all personnel handling mails has contributed greatly to the success of our operations, perhaps you will be good enough to promulgate to all concerned".

NO. 300 WING SUFFERS ITS FIRST CASUALTY

At 1210 hours local time on 20 March, 1945 a Dakota piloted by Flying Officer F. Carnell ditched in the Coral Sea while bound for Townsville from Port Moresby. Lack of fuel pressure resulted in engine trouble when flying at 9,000 feet. Losing height slowly, the aircraft headed back to Port Moresby but when at 8,000 feet, the second engine developed the same trouble and stopped.

The Dakota alighted on the sea about 120 miles south of Port Moresby and foundered in approximately four minutes. All the passengers and crew escaped satisfactorily from the aircraft with only one slight casualty among the passengers. Some of the personnel embarked on to two small dinghies while the remainder were obliged to remain in the sea (they had no Mae Wests) until help arrived. The weather was bad with a moderate sea running. After drifting for about 90 minutes an R.A.A.F. Sunderland arrived overhead but was prevented from alighting owing to the heavy swell. Shortly afterwards, a No. 243 Squadron Dakota appeared. The two aircraft dropped seven dinghies, four of which were secured by the ditched personnel. A watch over the dinghies was maintained by various aircraft until night fall and at 0515 hours the following morning an R.A.A.F. Sunderland arrived to direct a rescue launch to the dinghies. All passengers and crew were taken on board the launch at 0850 hours having endured life afloat for over twenty hours in overcrowded rubber dinghies.

This, however, was not the last of their ordeal for it was found that the launch could not carry its load safely, it leaked badly and shipped much water over the gunwales. Passengers and crew were eventually transferred to another vessel out of Port Moresby, where the party arrived nearly thirty-three hours after ditching. The captain of the aircraft F/O F. Carnell was subsequently awarded the Air Force Cross for his admirable handling of the situation.

This incident emphasises the difficulties under which No. 300 Wing worked. Strictly speaking, the aircraft should not have been allowed to operate without adequate safety equipment and air/sea rescue facilities. Of the former, supplies were not available at that time from either R.A.F. or R.A.A.F. sources and the latter was considered to be an R.A.A.F. responsibility for which they had insufficient resources available. The risks attendant upon operating aircraft over difficult air routes without the necessary safety devices were fully realised but were accepted as a justified hazard.

FIRST PHASE OF THE BUILD UP COMPLETED

The operations of No. 300 Wing during February and early March 1945 were carried out solely by the fifteen aircraft of No. 243 Squadron which had been ferried to Australia by Squadron crews and by two communications Liberators. During March a number of Dakotas were flown in from Canada by No. 45 Group ferry crews and No. 243 Squadron found that while they had plenty of aircraft available, intensity of operations was limited by the shortage of aircrews. It will be remembered that the second half of No. 243 Squadron and No. 1315 Flight had been held up in the United Kingdom and did not reach Australia until 16 April. With their arrival the first phase in the build up of the R.A.F. Force was completed, the composition being:-

H.Q., No. 300 Wing, Melbourne.
 No. 243 (Dakota) Squadron, Camden.
 No. 1315 (Dakota) Flight, Camden.
 No. 145 Staging Post, Sydney.

No. 1315 Flight initially based at the overcrowded airfield at Camden moved to Archerfield near Brisbane on 3 May, an airfield obtained from the R.A.A.F. after negotiations extending over a considerable period. On 9 May, No. 1315 Flight commenced operations and with the advent, No. 300 Wing effort to the forward areas had increased to:-

One a/c daily Sydney - Leyte
 Two a/c daily Sydney - Manus
 One a/c located at Manus for shuttle services between Manus and Leyte and for flights to other non-scheduled points in the Pacific islands.

In addition to the foregoing, inter-state services were maintained.

The manpower shortage, aggravated on the one hand by the necessity for scattering maintenance personnel to various staging points in the Pacific islands and in Australia, and on the other by the virtual non-existence of personnel for passenger and freight handling, presented a problem which could only have one interim solution. This solution, the employment of Naval personnel, while being unavoidable proved far from satisfactory since a ready appreciation of air transport complexities only comes after long experience and though sound training was given to Naval personnel they could not be expected to attain the accepted Transport Command standard of proficiency in passenger and freight administration. In early March, for instance, muddles at Townsville and Manus involving both R.A.A.F. and R.N. were so serious that on the 14th of that month it was decided to send liaison officers in the hope that the inefficiency and confusion which was so apparent at these places might be reduced. The R.A.F. officers who were aircrew personnel drawn from the squadrons, co-ordinated the demands of the Royal Navy and the various Australian forces with the O.C. Flying at Camden and with Operations No. 300 Wing, a measure which quickly brought satisfactory results.

It was obvious that No. 300 Wing would never operate at maximum efficiency while reliance had to be placed upon other services. Representations were therefore made and authority subsequently obtained for the establishment of R.A.F. staging posts in the South West Pacific.

In the meanwhile, the absence of R.A.F. staging posts coupled with the equipment and accommodation difficulties resulted in the Royal Navy building up freight handling

sections manned by R.N. personnel. This was a helpful move by the R.N. They assisted by providing M/T and accommodation. But the arrangement did give rise to a tendency of interference by the R.N. with the control, of R.A.F. aircraft. In May 1945 the situation was such that No. 300 Wing asked H.Q. Transport Command to settle R.A.F. staging post establishments with all expedition and to despatch key personnel by air in order to resolve the staging post problem. It was not until the end of July that R.A.F. staging post personnel reached Australia by sea.

It seemed at one time that the Royal Navy was adopting infiltration tactics since there was a tendency on their part to tell No. 300 Wing how to run its aircraft. It was made clear, however, that the function of the R.N. was to state their requirements and to provide the load and that No. 300 Wing's responsibility was to transport loads in the most economical way possible. Perhaps it will be as well to quote the views of the R.N., views which had they reached maturity would probably have led to gross mis-use of air transport and a great wastage of effort. Broadly speaking the R.N. considered that the decision to give the British Pacific Fleet first call on all aircraft space was an admirable one since they could fill aircraft according to their own wishes, spare lift could be used for non-priority personnel and freight, and a naval rating travelling on leave could be given priority over an air commodore travelling on duty. It seems, therefore, that the R.N. Booking Officers did not appreciate the value of utilising aircraft space in the most economical way.

Thus the Air Priorities Board which was later set up in Australia only controlled such air lift as was available after the R.N. had stated their requirements. The initial policy of allowing the Royal Navy to exercise this power was perhaps suspect but when R.A.F. personnel were placed alongside the Naval Movements Officers, persuasion and diplomacy did much to mitigate to some extent the promiscuous use of air transport.

COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES

In December 1944, Air Ministry decided that communications facilities were to be provided by H.Q. Transport Command for the Commander-in-Chief, British Pacific Fleet to the extent of one VIP Liberator and one VIP Dakota, both aircraft to be held on the establishment of No. 243 Squadron. This decision was subsequently reviewed when Admiral Fraser voiced his opinion that the establishment was totally inadequate. He asked for two VIP Liberators, two Liberators to return ferry standard (RFS), two VIP Dakotas and four Dakotas suitably modified for passenger carrying.

By March 1945 two Liberators had been flight delivered to Sydney where No. 145 Staging Post, augmented by servicing personnel of No. 243 Squadron, took charge of the aircraft. The decision to place the Liberators in the care of the Staging Post was made since Camden was unsuitable for heavy aircraft. Mascot airport was used.

During the visit of the A.O.A., H.Q., Transport Command to Australia in April, verbal sanction was given for the formation of a Communications Flight which would relieve O.C. No. 243 Squadron of all responsibility for the aircraft. The Flight formed on 12 May, 1945 at Mascot under the command of Squadron Leader C. R. Glen, A.F.C. with an aircraft establishment of one VIP and two Passenger Liberators, two VIP and four RFS Dakotas plus one reserve Liberator.

The impact of Royal Naval monopoly was soon felt by the Communications Flight. A serious divergence of views existed between the Royal Navy and R.A.F. regarding the control and operation of VIP and passenger aircraft. No. 300 Wing endeavoured to use communications aircraft as governed by Air Ministry policy, which was for the benefit of all users. It was considered that the R.N. should have first priority with one VIP Liberator always available for the personal use of Admiral Fraser.

The R.N. view, however, was that all communications aircraft were for their own exclusive use. A letter from Admiral Fraser to VAQ which confirms this outlook stated -- "When more Liberator aircraft become available in what will eventually become the C-in-C's Command Squadron, one or more will be based at Leyte for the use of Flag and senior officers of the B.P.F."

At one time Admiral Fraser laid on all flights direct with the Communications Flight with the result that No. 300 Wing often did not know where the aircraft were located. The Communications Flight was partly to blame for taking instructions which had not come through No. 300 Wing. On 24 May a signal was sent to H.Q. Transport Command asking that the matter should be cleared through the Admiralty. In due course, the Naval C-in-C agreed that aircraft should not remain idle but might be used to the best advantage although the C-in-C, B.P.F. would have first call and that one VIP Liberator and one VIP Dakota would remain at immediate availability. It was also agreed that No. 300 Wing should control all flights. In actual fact the communications Squadron aircraft particularly the Liberators were little used; this was probably due to the fact that the Liberators gained a reputation for unreliability.

INTERMEZZO

June 1945 marked a definite milestone in the history of No. 300 Wing, since from July onwards a new era commenced with the arrival of No. 238 Squadron and many staging posts and with the extension of services to Eniwetok.

Let us therefore review briefly the evolution of No. 300 Wing up to June 1945. With the advent of an S.A.S.O. and S.O.A. and an unbalanced staff of personnel insufficient to run a skeleton staff of a Headquarters and a Station Administrative Section (Camden), No. 300 Wing was established in Australia in February 1945. Aircraft arrived before adequate ground services and No. 300 Wing was expected and did in fact operate schedules for the Royal Navy as far afield as Manus and Leyte upon their immediate arrival.

The Wing Headquarters in its initial stages was hampered (it was not until August that any relief was felt) by the following:-

- (a) The ground organisation not arriving well ahead of the aircraft in order to plan and make necessary arrangements for operations.
- (b) Local limitations of airfield facilities, accommodation and equipment to allow efficient zoning or operation of units under No. 300 Wing.
- (c) Lack of key personnel until their subsequent late arrival in August.
- (d) Predominance of political influence curtailing implementation of policy and British works services which would have helped (b) above.
- (e) Preference given to the Royal Navy over R.A.F. requirements under (b) above.

The execution of administrative policy and planning governed by the decisions made at the conference between A.O.A., H.Q., Transport Command and the C.A.S., R.A.A.F. (Appendix II) was affected mainly by the curtailment of works services, unavailability of airfields and accommodation for units analogous with the shortage of R.A.F. personnel. Urgency for certain facilities, works, supplies etc., was retarded chiefly by the failure to appreciate the problems of No. 300 Wing as really essential needs to implement a really efficient programme. The time involved in obtaining decisions greatly affected progress throughout but was governed mainly by War Cabinet 1 (Aust) Decisions. Moreover, no financial arrangements were made to pay for No. 300 Wing Services required in Australia and the Pacific.

In spite of the disadvantages under which No. 300 Wing worked, their achievements were praiseworthy. With one and a half Dakota squadrons frequent services were operated from Sydney to the western seaboard of Australia and to the advanced bases of the British Pacific Fleet. Communications aircraft fulfilled an important role for the Fleet and casualty evacuation by air was begun on 29 May, a subject which will be covered by a separate chapter elsewhere in this narrative. But in addition to the control of their own aircraft, No. 300 Wing was responsible for the aircraft of Transport Command operating the trunk routes which terminated in Australia.

At the end of June 1945, scheduled services in operation were:-

Sydney - Manus Three a/c daily
 Sydney - Leyte Two a/c daily
 Sydney - Perth Three a/c weekly

During June there was a change in Vice-Admiral (Quartermasters) of the British Pacific Fleet, and the departing VAQ signalled his congratulations to No. 300 Wing on their work:-

"On my departure from Australia I take this opportunity to congratulate and thank Commanding Officers, officers and men of No. 243 Squadron and No. 1315 Flight for their sustained efforts in supplying the Fleet by air. This has materially contributed to the success of recent operations."

Thus at the beginning of July the stage was set for the next phase of No. 300 Wing's operations. Existing services plus special flights covered air transport support for the British Pacific Fleet's July/August operations against the Japanese homeland and in the month of July preparations commenced in anticipation of support of the Royal Navy during their part in the invasion of Japan. For the Royal Air Force this required the early inauguration of a new air route from Manus to Eniwetok, a Naval base which was to be the springboard for the B.P.F.'s major operation.

THE AIR ROUTE TO ENIWETOK ATOLL IS SURVEYED

During the July/August operations of the British Pacific Fleet, Manus and Leyte remained the advanced bases for the assaults against the Japanese homeland by the Naval Task Force. In anticipation of further operations by the Fleet during the actual invasion of Japan scheduled for early November, the Royal Navy planned to use an advanced base in the atoll of Eniwetok, situated some 1,200 miles east of Guam, and about 1,600 miles north-east of New Guinea.

Apart from providing air communications between Manus and Eniwetok for general purposes it was anticipated that the route would enable the important task of casualty evacuation to be carried out. The inauguration of this route meant long ocean crossings by twin-engined aircraft and the direct flight from Manus to Eniwetok involved flying through a hornets nest of Japanese fighters still based in Truk, Ponape and adjacent islands. The obvious route, therefore was one that would by-pass this danger area since the chances of getting even a reasonable percentage of unarmed transport aircraft through seemed very remote. The Royal Navy were accordingly informed that the direct flight from Manus to Eniwetok could not be undertaken but the B.P.F. were of the opinion that the risk should be taken and insisted on a survey flight being carried out.

A Dakota of No. 243 Squadron with staff officers of No. 300 Wing and the B.P.F. as passengers flew from Camden to Manus arriving there on 4 July, 1945. It was planned to take the aircraft direct from Manus to Eniwetok but on arrival at Manus, the American Navy who were in command of the area, fortunately for the R.A.F., refused to clear the aircraft. Alternative routes had already been considered and on 5 July, the Dakota took off from Manus and flew to the island of Guam, a thousand miles or so north of the Admiralty Islands.

Guam was controlled by the United States Navy. The American Commander there agreed to allow the R.A.F. to stage through the island providing a small servicing party was sent there. Office and domestic accommodation, P.O.L. and aircraft spares could be provided. Six hardstandings, all briefing, signals and intelligence facilities were available and medical arrangements could be made for casualty evacuation. The U.S. Navy were therefore in a position to meet all R.A.F. requirements with the exception of ground personnel. But before an air route was opened, permission had to be obtained from the American Commodore Commanding the Marianas.

On the following day, 6 July, the R.A.F. Dakota took off from Guam and covered the 1,200 miles to Eniwetok entirely over water in seven hours and twenty minutes. Eniwetok, a small coral atoll, possessed an airfield which with the airfield installations more or less took up the entire land area of the island. Here it was found that the Americans could meet all R.A.F. requirements within limits governed mainly by the extent of the land area. Commitments of the island base were rapidly increasing and, owing to the small amount of land, extension of domestic and technical sites was severely restricted. Eniwetok at that time was preparing to cater for four task forces, one of which was to be British. It was therefore, necessary that the number of shore based personnel should be low as possible. However, the American Commander proved extremely helpful and promised to meet R.A.F. requirements as far as possible.

The next base investigated was Kwajalein, 355 miles south-east of Eniwetok, a flight which was made by the R.A.F. Dakota on 7 July. Although many facilities were available at Kwajalein the United States Navy had an extensive building programme in hand which was not due for completion until the middle of November. Only a limited number of aircraft could be handled at the airfield and while occasional sorties might be staged through a regular service it was out of the question at that time.

It was originally intended that a call at Tarawa would be made but owing to the difficult route and information on the poor conditions prevailing there the survey aircraft flew direct from Kwajalein to Bougainville in the Solomon Islands, a flight of 1,180 miles which took the aircraft within range of Japanese occupied islands. The route from Eniwetok to Bougainville meant passing over Ponape which was still held by the enemy who had operational aircraft based there. The route from Bougainville to Manus was also a long overseas flight of over 500 miles and since no aircraft were allowed to fly within fifty miles of the coast of New Britain and New Ireland, a series of dog legs would have to be flown.

The obvious route to Eniwetok was therefore through Guam where the necessary facilities existed and only one intermediate stage would have to be set up - this in the centre of the B.P.F. operational area and on a route well clear of enemy occupied territory. No further investigations were therefore made in view of the hazards and difficulties attendant upon taking the eastabout route. The survey was concluded on 9 July when the aircraft arrived back at Manus.

On reaching Manus the survey party returned to Australia by scheduled services and the original Dakota remained at Manus to operate a Manus - Eniwetok shuttle.

ARRIVAL OF NO. 238 SQUADRON IN AUSTRALIA FROM BURMA

It has already been mentioned that No. 238 Squadron was originally destined to proceed to the South West Pacific under similar arrangements as those which governed No. 243 Squadron and No. 1315 Flight. The desperate need to reinforce the air supply squadrons in Burma who were operating at intensive rates to maintain the rapid advance of the Fourteenth Army on Rangoon, resulted in the diversion of No. 238 Squadron to that theatre of war.

In June, however, the British Pacific Fleet were preparing for further operations against Japan and their requirements had reached proportions far in excess of the effort which could be mounted by one and a half squadrons. Air Ministry therefore gave instructions for No. 238 Squadron to move from South East Asia to Australia on the highest operational priority. The Squadron was relieved of its onerous air supply tasks to the Fourteenth Army on 9 June, 1945 but many difficulties arose which delayed the Squadron's departure. Many aero-engines required replacement before long sea crossings could be attempted, there was a complete absence of long range tanks and some trouble was experienced in obtaining air/sea rescue equipment.

Following discussions with the Chief Maintenance Officer, S.E.A., it was decided that all aircraft except two would be replaced from No. 229 (Transport) Group's stock of reserve aircraft which would be suitably modified prior to allotment to the Squadron.

The original plan was to fit four 100 gallon overload tanks into the fuselage of the Dakotas but a more detailed study of the flight plan revealed that on the longest stages of the route a full load of petrol would only give a safety margin of 24% with four overload tanks which was considered insufficient in view of the distances involved, lack of navigational aids and the possibility of adverse weather coupled with the complete absence of emergency landing grounds while flying over the Indian Ocean. Five overload tanks were therefore fitted.

For ease of maintenance, flights made up of five aircraft each were considered to be the most satisfactory but the maximum number of aircraft which could be handled through the route tube daily was three. Since only three airmen could be carried in each aircraft, that is, nine airmen per flight, the composition of the servicing parties was very unbalanced. For instance, each flight required a representative of each trade and the result on arrival in Australia was that approximately even numbers of each trade were available, an undesirable ratio for a twin-engined Squadron. As always in the R.A.F. the maintenance personnel did an excellent job but at times they were very hard pressed.

By 22 June six aircraft were ready, sufficient to start the flow which from that time onwards could be maintained but permission to move was not given until the 26th. Briefing for the flight from Comilla (Bengal) to Ratmalana (Ceylon) was carried out by No. 117 (Transport) Wing. No. 222 Group assumed responsibility for the routing of the Squadron from Ceylon to Australia and for the provision of air/sea rescue cover.

The first three aircraft led by the C.O., Wing Commander H. Burton, DSO, MBE took off from Comilla for Ratmalana on 26 June, three aircraft leaving every day thereafter until the entire Squadron was on the move. The route flown was:-

1st Day - Comilla(Bengal) - Ratmalana(Ceylon)
 3rd Day - Ratmalana - Cocos Island.
 4th Day - Cocos Islands - Learmonth (W.Aust.).
 5th Day - Learmonth - Perth.
 7th Day - Perth - Parafield (Adelaide).

The flight from Comilla to Ratmalana was used for final consumption tests in preparation for the long ocean crossing and as a training flight for crews, particularly navigators. A clear day was spent at Ratmalana to allow for clearance from India Command and for briefing purposes a special party for which was sent down by No. 229 Group. The sixth day was spent at Perth to allow crews to rest.

The whole move was carried out according to schedule with the exception of one aircraft which burst a tyre at the Cocos Islands where it was delayed five days.

For the first nine days of June No. 238 Squadron continued army support operations and from the 10th to the 25th they were almost completely re-equipped, trained and ready to undertake a long distance flight of over 5,500 miles, a flight never before attempted by Dakota aircraft, and moreover, a flight carried out by a squadron self sufficient to maintain itself on route. A creditable achievement.

On 11 July, the A.O.C. of No. 229 (Transport) Group, India signalled O.C. No. 238 Squadron:-

"I congratulate you and your Squadron personnel for the successful completion of your flight from Comilla to Australia. That this was achieved with only one minor delay shows great credit to the Squadron and has given us valuable experience for the future".

Parafield airfield near Adelaide was the Squadron's base in Australia. Prior to the arrival of No. 238 Squadron a liaison officer had been sent to Parafield to arrange the reception of the Squadron. His assistance during the first few weeks proved invaluable.

The movement of the main body of No. 238 Squadron was greatly delayed by the shortage of shipping and it was not until 14 October that they reached Parafield. For three months, therefore, the Squadron operated with the minimum of its own ground personnel assisted from August onwards by the maintenance party of the Staging Post which was set up there.

ARRIVAL OF R.A.F. STAGING POSTS

From its arrival in Australia in February 1945, No. 300 Wing had been maintaining air services by using resources provided by either the R.A.A.F. or by the United States Navy and by the handful of R.A.F. maintenance personnel drawn from Camden and detached to the more important points on No. 300 Wing routes. It was soon learnt that air transport operations in the South West Pacific required more than a sufficiency of transport aircraft and aircrews; it needed the support of an efficient ground network of administration and adequate equipment which would mitigate to some extent the unsatisfactory and sometimes embarrassing business of enlisting the aid of Dominion or Allied authorities. In all fairness it must be said that the R.A.A.F. units and the Americans gave the R.A.F. considerable assistance. But the former were woefully short of manpower and equipment while the United States forces were preoccupied with their own enormous commitments.

The situation improved somewhat when on 28 July, 1945 about 2,000 R.A.F. personnel disembarked at Sydney bearing with them the number plates of Nos. 189 - 199 Staging Posts. This is how they were distributed:-

- No. 189 Staging Post - Perth, Western Australia.
- No. 190 Staging Post - Learmonth, Exmouth Gulf.
- No. 191 Staging Post - Parafield, Adelaide.
- No. 192 Staging Post - Essendon, Melbourne.
- No. 193 Staging Post - Garbutt, Townsville.
- No. 194 Staging Post - Archerfield, Brisbane.
- No. 195 Staging Post - Leyte, Philippine Islands.
- No. 196 Staging Post - Pelelui, Palau Islands.
- No. 197 Staging Post - Biak Island.
- No. 198 Staging Post - Manus, Admiralty Islands.
- No. 199 Staging Post - Milne Bay, New Guinea.

Later, when the Japanese surrender necessitated the re-orientation of units, No. 190 Staging Post moved to Cloncurry (Queensland), No. 191 Staging Post was dissolved, No. 196 moved to Morotai (N.E.I.) and No. 197 Staging Post moved to Darwin, Northern Territory.

NO. 300 WING BECOMES A GROUP H.QTRS.

No record appears to exist of the exact date on which No. 300 Wing became No. 300 Group but the expansion did coincide with the arrival of No. 238 Squadron and the Staging Posts. It seems reasonable to suppose that the Headquarters became a Group on the arrival of the Air Officer Commanding, Air Commodore A. Earle, an event which took place on 11 August, 1945.

During July and August 1945, No. 300 Wing expanded to the extent indicated by the following:-

Units controlled in July 1945

One and a half Dakota Squadrons.
One Communications Flight.
One Staging Post.

Units controlled in August 1945

Two and a half Dakota Squadrons.
One Communications Flight.
Twelve Staging Posts.
One Station H.Q.

R.A.A.F. Station, Camden became an R.A.F. Station Headquarters on 6 August and was commanded initially by Wing Commander W. J. McLean, DSO, DFC, AFC, an Australian who was also Officer Commanding No. 243 Squadron. On 10 October Group Captain J. Pelly-Fry, DSO assumed command of the only R.A.F. station in Australia.

THE JAPANESE SURRENDER - IMPACT ON NO. 300 GROUP

The unexpected surrender of the Japanese on 15 August, 1945 shattered the ambitions of No. 300 Group. The fulfilment of their original tasks were never to be realised. Over many heartbreaking months the Group had struggled to complete the evolution of an efficient air service. This achieved, the R.A.F. personnel in the South West Pacific felt confident that they would play an important role with the British Pacific Fleet during the final Allied onslaught upon the Japanese homeland. Although disappointed, there was a general feeling of relief that there would be no more bloodshed and it is certain that a large number of lives would have been lost had the invasion of Japan been necessary.

But the work of No. 300 Group was not yet finished as will be evidenced by the following signal from the Commander-in-Chief, British Pacific Fleet:-

"On the conclusion of the Japanese war the B.P.F. thank all personnel of the R.A.F. Transport Command in Australia and particularly the air crews for the invaluable part they have played in the support of the task groups. Our mutual task now is to assist in releasing our people still in Japanese hands"

Though the disintegration of No. 300 Group was therefore heralded much important work was carried out before dispersal took place in January and February 1946. Eniwetok, now no longer required as an offensive base for naval task forces was the first route to be affected, the Manus - Eniwetok shuttle service being cancelled on 18 August. The Perth - Sydney Dakota service, originally introduced to link up with the Indian Ocean Liberator schedule was cancelled on 15 September since the Liberator (C.87) Ceylon - Perth service was suspended on the introduction of a C-54 Ceylon - Sydney schedule.

Other routes were, however, being opened. On 6 September a Dakota commenced a survey of an air route to Hong Kong, a route which was to increase in importance as the interests of the British Pacific Fleet were transferred from Australia to the British Colony.

By the end of September, the No. 300 Group effort was reduced to:-

Two a/c daily Sydney - Adelaide.
One a/c daily Sydney - Manus.
One a/c daily Sydney - Hong Kong.

Another important factor governing air transport operations post VJ-Day was the cessation of lease-lend which meant that all new aircraft and spares for American aircraft would have to be paid for. All services were therefore cut to the minimum, the B.P.F. co-operating. With the transfer of the B.P.F. to Hong Kong a percentage of Royal Naval mails were carried over the Calcutta - Hong Kong route by aircraft of No. 232 (Transport) Group. But the move of the Fleet resulted in additional commitments for the Sydney - Hong Kong service, commitments which were likely to continue at least until the end of February 1946. Economy had therefore to be effected mainly in the operation of transport aircraft. Since no further requirement existed for air lift over the Manus - Leyte air route, the Sydney - Leyte schedule was cancelled and the Sydney - Hong Kong service re-routed through Cloncurry - Darwin - Morotai and Leyte. This enabled two American bases, Biak and Palau, to be by-passed

and the overall distance on the Hong Kong route was considerably reduced by the change of route. The change was effected on 15 October when R.A.F. personnel were withdrawn from Biak and Palau.

November saw further changes in schedules. The twice daily Sydney - Manus service was reduced to twice weekly on the 26th and the Sydney - Adelaide to once daily. At the request of H.Q., Air Command, South East Asia a Sydney - Singapore service was inaugurated, thrice weekly, on 17 November staging through Brisbane - Cloncurry - Darwin and Balikpapan. Routine services at this time were therefore:-

- Two a/c weekly Sydney - Manus
- One a/c daily Sydney - Hong Kong
- Three a/c weekly Sydney - Singapore
- One a/c daily Sydney - Adelaide.

Hitherto the aircraft strength of Nos. 243 and 238 Squadrons and No. 1315 Flight had been seventy-five aircraft but in the interests of economy the number of Dakotas to be flown was reduced to fifty. The Communications Flight was disbanded and one of the VIP Dakotas was transferred to No. 243 Squadron.

POST VJ-DAY COMMITMENTS AND EVENTS

The disintegration of the No. 300 Group Organisation was an inevitable sequel to the Japanese surrender since the Group's usefulness as a force only remained after 15 August, 1945 for the transitional period during which the British Pacific Fleet transferred its interests from Australia to Hong Kong. Post VJ-Day, the responsibilities of No. 300 Group can be defined as:-

- (a) the maintenance of an air service for isolated Fleet detachments still in the Pacific islands,
- (b) assistance to the British Pacific Fleet during their move from Australia to Hong Kong and the maintenance of an air artery between forward and rear echelons,
- (c) the provision of an air link between Sydney and Singapore and
- (d) the maintenance of staging facilities to cater for Transport Command trunk services.

The Hong Kong service, it was envisaged, would be required as long as the British Pacific Fleet was divided. Once they were united at Hong Kong it was thought that the schedule might cease, the target date being 1 March, 1946. After that date a mail link with Australia could be obtained through Singapore.

At the end of the year the only American bases used by the R.A.F. were Manus and Leyte and as it was desirable to avoid such bases on account of dollar expenditure and since the Royal Navy's commitments for an air service to Leyte had been liquidated, the Hong Kong service was re-routed from Darwin through Balikpapan - Labuan and Saigon (French Indo-China) on 1 January, 1946. At the opening of the New Year the only American base used was Manus, a schedule which was continued twice weekly until early February 1946 when the R.N. and R.A.F. personnel were withdrawn.

The Hong Kong Service

Soon after the Japanese surrender elements of the British Pacific Fleet moved into Hong Kong. A request for an air link with Australia was soon received and a scheduled service commenced on 7 September, it being really an extension of the Sydney - Leyte service. For the first few weeks, therefore, the aircraft were staged through Brisbane - Townsville - Manus - Biak - Palau and Leyte to Hong Kong.

The Leyte - Hong Kong leg was soon found to be the most difficult sector of the route since the weather was uncertain and signals facilities meagre. At Leyte, No. 300 Group was entirely dependant upon the Americans for signals communications. Transmission and reception was carried out by U.S. ships and signals had to be sent ashore for delivery to the R.A.F. Staging Post, outgoing signals involving the same procedure. This all took time and the net result was that aircraft invariably arrived at Leyte or Hong Kong before the departure signal had been received. The obvious solution would have been to instal an R.A.F. point-to-point link at Leyte but the need to economise in dollars and the American desire to keep the number of outsiders in their territory down to the minimum constituted an insoluble problem.

Kai Tak, the only airfield in the Hong Kong area is an unsatisfactory base for running a regular air service. It

has two runways, each of some 1,500 yards. Landings have normally to be made towards the hills and take offs away from them. The runway normally in use has a hill 300 feet in height only a quarter of a mile from one end and the ground rises rapidly to 600'-700' at the other. There are high hills close to the airfield on two sides and many of the islands in the Bay rise to 1,500 - 3,000 feet. As a result instructions were issued that aircraft must not attempt to land unless the ceiling was at least 1,500 feet. Unfortunately the signals situation at Leyte prevented the passing of up to date weather forecasts before aircraft were due to take off in the morning. A procedure was therefore adopted of despatching aircraft if the latest meteorological report available gave reasonable promise of satisfactory weather conditions. Aircraft contacted HMS Vengeance, which provided all signals aids at Hong Kong for some weeks as soon as possible after taking off from Leyte to obtain local weather forecasts. Actual reports of the weather at Hong Kong were transmitted hourly by H.M.S. Vengeance and forecasts could be obtained by aircraft on request if aircraft could contact the Vengeance - sometimes a difficult business. But delays on this route were inevitable since the Hong Kong area is subject to long periods of bad flying weather.

On 15 October, the Hong Kong service was re-routed through Cloncurry - Darwin - Morotai and Leyte thereby reducing considerably the overall distance of the flight and on 1 January, 1946 the route was again changed in order to avoid the United States base of Leyte but the new route through Balikpapan, Labuan and Saigon lengthened the flight somewhat.

The Singapore Service

The air route between Sydney and Singapore which was opened on 17 November, 1945 was important for several reasons. Towards the end of 1945, preparations were being made for the occupation of Japan by British and Dominion forces. The Commander-in-Chief was to be an Australian. Air Force and Army contingents for the force of occupation were being mounted in India and South East Asia and air communication with Australia was therefore imperative.

With the cessation of the No. 45 Group trans-Pacific ferry the only air connection between the United Kingdom and Australia was the trunk service operating over the Indian Ocean, a service which was not likely to increase in frequency until the route could be switched through Singapore and Darwin, a change which was not to be effected until March 1946 when airfields on Singapore Island had been developed sufficiently to allow regular schedules to be operated by heavy aircraft. Hence the importance of the No. 300 Group Dakota service which as time went by became more and more difficult to maintain since the aircraft were rapidly deteriorating although sufficient spares were held to carry No. 300 Group on to their disbandment date.

On 1 January, 1946, the Singapore service hitherto staging from Sydney through Brisbane - Cloncurry - Darwin - Balikpapan and Labuan was re-routed, Brisbane and Labuan being by-passed.

SPECIAL FLIGHTS

The greater part of No. 300 Group's effort lay in the maintenance of scheduled air services along routes for which a regular commitment for haulage existed. But these scheduled services could not cover all requirements and a large number of special flights were carried out in order to meet commitments which could not be liquidated by routine services.

It is impossible to single out particular flights for comment in view of the large number flown, a general coverage must therefore suffice. Special flights for the Royal Navy fell into well defined categories. R.N. personnel were moved from base to base as and when required by the Headquarters of the British Pacific Fleet, some of these flights taking aircraft to New Zealand. Freight and mail were delivered on many occasions to points both within Australia and in the islands. Fleet Air Arm squadrons were often moved entirely by air.

The movement of Naval staff officers was handled competently by Liberators and Dakotas of the Communications Flight whose aircraft ranged over many widely separated areas. On one occasion following the capitulation of Japan, a Dakota flew to Yokohama. And in addition to the special flights for the Royal Navy many were flown for the R.A.A.F. included in which were many cases of casualty evacuation from Lae and Morotai. Finally, several flights were carried out with Government officials and stage personalities as passengers.

Immediately following the Japanese surrender the number of special flights increased mainly because of the many important passengers who required air transport to convey them to many parts of the South West Pacific in connection with political negotiations and in view of the greater dispersal of service personnel following the occupation of liberated territories. Some assistance was given to the movement of released prisoners of war and Red Cross teams from Australia to Darwin and the Philippines and a number of ex-prisoners of war were brought back to Australia on the return trips. For a short time a shuttle service was maintained between Manila and Leyte to meet RAPWI commitments.

Some special flights carried out might be classed as clandestine. These consisted of three separate operations, the first when one aircraft flew from Brisbane to Java carrying special military personnel and equipment who were landed there post VJ-Day. On the second occasion three aircraft flew from Brisbane to Balikpapan where two of the Dakotas went unserviceable. The third aircraft carried out three trips to Java. The last operation was the transportation of agents to Batavia an operation which is said to have been a very important task although no evidence is available to indicate that this should be so. In addition to the above a number of sorties were flown by Dakotas from Brisbane carrying clandestine personnel and equipment to Morotai ~~from~~ whence the final stage of their journey was completed by sea.

DISPERSAL

Early January saw the commencement of the first stage in the dispersal of No. 300 Group and its units. On 2 January, 1946, Air Commodore A. Earle, C.B.E. left Melbourne to take command of H.Q., No. 232 (Transport) Group, Rangoon and the Group S.O.A., Group Captain E. C. Bates C.B.E. A.F.C. was appointed Officer Commanding No. 300 Group. On the 4th, an advance party of No. 300 Wing which was to be set up at Hong Kong to operate air line services under H.Q., Air Command, South East Asia, left Melbourne.

But there were many commitments still to be completed in Australia and so, No. 300 Group remained in existence for a further period during which the dispersal of most R.A.F. units was arranged. In January the Staging posts at Leyte and Morotai were withdrawn as were those at Townsville, Brisbane, Port Moresby and Manus during the following month.

No. 238 Squadron was the first flying unit to be dissolved. Twelve of their aircraft flown by Squadron crews of early release groups with other personnel in the same category travelling as passenger, left Adelaide for the United Kingdom in flights of three on 4, 5, 6 and 7 January. On the 8th and for the following five days a further fifteen aircraft departed Adelaide, also in flights of three, for Rangoon where they were handed over to H.Q., Air Command, S.E.A. Two of these aircraft, however, returned to Australia with the ferry crews. This left the Squadron with five Dakotas and these were handed over to R.A.F. Station, Camden. The Squadron officially disbanded on 9 February, 1946 but the Commanding Officer left a few days earlier, on 29 January, to take up the appointment of S.O.A., No. 300 Group.

Air transport operations had still to be carried out until the Royal Navy had evacuated Sydney and Manus. No. 1315 Flight and No. 243 Squadron also continued to operate the Singapore service and a service through Singapore to Hong Kong. The number of aircraft available for operations gradually became fewer and those still flying were in a very bad shape, the resultant unserviceability rendering schedules somewhat irregular. The Sydney-Manus service continued until 17 February, 1946. Between 18 and 23 February the staging posts at Manus, Port Moresby and Townsville were withdrawn to Camden.

On 1 March, 1946, aircraft of No. 243 Squadron positioned themselves at Perth to fly out the Staging Post to Camden and at Brisbane, No. 1315 Flight began to disband. Meanwhile, at Melbourne, the Group H.Q. was being reduced by direct postings and the formation of No. 300 Wing at Hong Kong ~~from~~ whence it was intended that the Wing should control all R.A.F. staging posts in China and Japan. The arrangement proved to be unworkable and led to the dissolution of the Wing.

In mid-March, the closing of No. 300 Group units had reached a stage where all personnel and equipment, except the equipment of No. 1315 Flight had been withdrawn to the Sydney area. Then on 15 March, No. 300 Group withdrew from Melbourne to Camden by air and road.

Gradually all aircraft were sent to the United Kingdom or ACSEA. On 6 April, 1946, fourteen months after the arrival of No. 300 Wing in Australia, the last two R.A.F. aircraft left Camden for Singapore. Of the eighty-six aircraft despatched to U.K. and ACSEA, only one, which required an engine change at Mingaladon (Rangoon), did not arrive on schedule.

The disposal of 2,000 personnel and 5,000 tons of equipment belonging to No. 300 Group presented no small problem. When Camden closed down in June 1946, it was necessary for the Group Accountant Officer to remain behind with a small staff to clear the accounts as far as possible before presentation for audit. The R.A.A.F. allocated offices in Sydney and there for a further six months, the task of winding up the Group went on. By October 1946 the work was well advanced and following a visit by the A.O.A., R.A.F. Liaison Mission, Headquarters ACSEA decided to close the No. 300 Group H.Q. By December 1946 all equipment for local disposal had been taken over by the Commonwealth Disposal Commission. The Rear H.Q. No. 300 Group left Australia for Singapore on 10 December, 1946.

OTHER ASPECTS(i) Maintenance

The story of R.A.F. maintenance in the South West Pacific is one of disappointment and the efforts of the servicing personnel there were largely absorbed in an eternal struggle to "keep them flying" without even the minimum of necessary resources. One and a half Dakota squadrons plus communications aircraft arrived in Australia as self contained flying units and it was assumed that workshop facilities and equipment would be forthcoming from the R.A.A.F.

Within a few weeks of the commencement of operations, personnel resources of the R.A.F. were, of necessity, stretched to enable small parties of maintenance personnel to be stationed at places on No. 300 Group air routes where night stops were made.

It soon became obvious that a servicing wing organisation at Camden was essential. This was set up with the intention of pooling all aircraft of No. 243 Squadron and No. 1315 Flight. At the time only the former unit was in Australia and it was anticipated that No. 1315 Flight would be located at either Camden or at another airfield in the near vicinity. In the event No. 1315 Flight were obliged to use Archerfield, near Brisbane which therefore rendered the Servicing Wing organisation at Camden ineffective in so far as No. 1315 Flight was concerned. Thus No. 1315 Flight and later No. 238 Squadron remained self contained units while the Servicing Wing at Camden was left with only No. 243 Squadron and the Communication Flight aircraft to cope with. Camden however, remained throughout the major Dakota equipment holding unit.

No. 300 Group was responsible for the maintenance of seventy-five Dakota aircraft flying 120 hours per month and four Liberators at 100 hours per month. They were also responsible for the maintenance of No. 45 Group R.Y.3 aircraft operating the Pacific service and of No. 229 Group aircraft operating across the Indian Ocean. The flying units of No. 300 Group carried out all inspections up to and including majors, for engine changes and to a limited extent, repairs to airframes. The R.A.A.F. were responsible for all engine overhauls, the planned turn round time being two months. This work was carried out at Quantas Airways, Randwick, near Sydney.

At the meeting between A.O.A., Transport Command and C.A.S., R.A.A.F. in April 1945 it was decided that the technical control of maintenance of No. 300 Wing aircraft would be the responsibility of the R.A.A.F. since this work could be integrated with that of the R.A.A.F. Moreover, although Transport Command would give general instructions, the channel of communication would be through the R.A.A.F. Headquarters, but where maintenance work was wholly carried out by No. 300 Group, the R.A.A.F., H.Q. would only pass on and police Transport Command instructions. In other cases Transport Command would accept R.A.A.F. rulings on the application of R.A.F. instructions, it being left to the R.A.A.F. to ensure co-ordination.

This arrangement in practice proved unsatisfactory since it involved dual control by an Area H.Q. on behalf of the R.A.A.F. and by No. 300 Group on behalf of Transport Command. Furthermore it often happened that the R.A.A.F. issued instructions to units through Area Headquarters' without reference to No. 300 Group. This matter was taken up by Headquarters, R.A.A.F. and they agreed to treat No. 300 Group as

an Area H.Q. for all engineering matters with the exception that No. 300 Group would regard R.A.A.F. instructions as optional. The instructions of H.Q. Transport Command were to be considered mandatory.

Servicing at all units was carried out under field conditions, but did not suffer in quality because of this. There were delays caused by the shortage of manpower and equipment but after the staging post personnel had arrived in July 1945, the delays largely disappeared. Dakotas were serviced on a major/minor scheme; minors were carried out at 100 hours and majors at 800. In spite of the many limitations, serviceability of aircraft was maintained at approximately 70% and the flying intensity of Dakotas reached 100 hours per month. The Liberators were not kept fully employed, mainly owing to lack of demand and the time lost waiting while passengers carried out inspections or attended conferences. These aircraft only averaged 38 hours per month.

During the earlier months of 1945, aircraft serviceability was fairly high since all aircraft were new and for some time the Group had more aircraft than crews. Later, however, when engine changes became more frequent, serviceability dropped, a trend which was aggravated by supercharger clutch failures at between 400 - 600 hours. For instance, the low serviceability of aircraft in No. 238 Squadron at one period was caused by the abnormal number of aircraft requiring engine changes. New engines were demanded but a long time elapsed before these reached the Squadron and when they did arrive it was found that of eight replacement engines allotted only three were fit for installation. A further five engines were demanded and these were obtained only after further delay. In order to improve servicing, the number of aircraft in use was reduced from seventy-five to fifty aircraft, flying intensity was increased and this saved a considerable amount of work in a Group whose manpower was diminishing through repatriation and to conserve the spares available.

(ii) Casualty Evacuation

According to the Royal Navy, the original plans for the British Pacific Fleet called for a service capable of evacuating 450 casualties per month from forward bases to the Australian mainland. This figure was chosen because it would take one hospital ship one month to carry the same number of casualties from the islands and return, so that if 450 casualties could be evacuated by air one hospital ship less would be required by the British Pacific Fleet -- an important consideration.

When the Senior Medical Officer of No. 300 Wing was sent to the South West Pacific Area he sought instructions about casualty evacuation from H.Q., Transport Command and Air Ministry. This was in December 1944. It appeared that no plans existed but that on arrival in Australia the matter would have to be considered and such recommendations as considered desirable submitted. No medical personnel were allocated for casualty evacuation duties. This was supported by the Air Ministry who stated "We had allowed for this commitment as sitting cases in aircraft allocation but no provision was made for special medical facilities or stretcher cases". It appears, therefore, that in the early stages of planning there was a misunderstanding between the Admiralty and Air Ministry from which the unsatisfactory position in Australia could be traced.

Air Ministry, and H.Q. Transport Command later confirmed R.A.F. responsibility for the medical part in casualty

evacuation and promised the provision of one medical officer, twenty-one nursing orderlies, seven aircraft hands and one cook. Until the arrival of these personnel the Royal Navy were expected to provide the necessary manpower.

The Royal Navy wished to commence casualty evacuation on 16 April and in conjunction with the R.A.A.F., they trained and equipped a unit which was placed at Manus and which consisted of one medical officer, six R.N. nursing sisters, seven sick bay attendants and a thirty-six bed sick quarters near the air strip. Three ambulances with all the necessary barrack and medical equipment were also provided. Co-ordinated arrangements were made at all likely alternative airfields on the route and a signals procedure decided upon. The whole service was ready to function on 19 April and was built up in consultation with the S.M.O. No. 300 Wing who was given every assistance in examining and inspecting every link in the chain, and all of whose suggestions for the form and organisation were adopted. All the work, however, was carried out by the Royal Navy.

On 7 May, No. 1 Medical Air Evacuation Transport Unit, R.A.A.F. at Lae, New Guinea requested the assistance of No. 300 Wing aircraft in carrying Australian casualties. Since they required no medical facilities but only space in aircraft this was agreed subject to Royal Naval requirements receiving first priority.

Towards the end of April 1945, the Vice-Admiral, British Pacific Fleet called a conference with No. 300 Wing to discuss the scope and allocation of responsibility for the air evacuation service. The conference was held on 23 May, 1945. V.A.(Q) maintained that the Navy were running the service satisfactorily and would continue to do so, extending it when necessary, in spite of the fact that an R.A.F. Casualty Air Evacuation Unit had been despatched from the United Kingdom on 16 May. An extension of the evacuation service to Leyte was contemplated in July entailing the formation of a second unit for which the Royal Navy proposed to equip and man with personnel trained by themselves. The discussion on the deployment of the R.A.F. C.A.E.U. was tactfully deferred.

The R.A.F. Casualty Air Evacuation Unit reached Australia on 18 June and was accommodated at Camden. The medical officer was experienced in casualty evacuation but only one of the orderlies had had previous experience and only two had volunteered for air attendant duties. Furthermore a call for volunteers elicited a response of only ten men, one of whom was entirely unsuitable. While there was no doubt that the required number of air attendants could be produced from the resources of the Wing, the facts would indicate an absence of forethought on the part of those responsible for the composition of the C.A.E.U.

Further discussions took place with VAQ. on 22 June. Since the Fleet's strategic plans had changed there was no immediate likelihood of a second C.A.U.E. being required. V.A.Q. refused to withdraw his experienced unit from Manus and intended to continue his programme of training further Naval personnel for these duties. Moreover, V.A.Q. gave no indication of a future desire, save in an unforeseen emergency, of using the R.A.F. personnel. Perhaps their attitude was not unreasonable under the circumstances and although it was not in accordance with Air Ministry policy a firm assurance could be given of the efficiency with which the medical part of the scheme was being handled. In any case it was beyond the power of the O.C. No. 300 Wing to

change the intention of V.A.Q. If any change was to be made it was a matter for Air Ministry to clear with the Admiralty.

The R.A.F. C.A.E.U. was absorbed into No. 300 Wing. All medical personnel except eight orderlies were kept fully employed in their trades and with the growth of the Wing the remainder were quickly found tasks to perform in keeping with their trades. In the interim they were employed on medical duties with the R.A.A.F.

This situation obtained for some months and it was not until September that the Royal Navy would consider the substitution of R.N. personnel by the R.A.F. By that time the usefulness of a casualty air evacuation unit had largely diminished.

The R.A.F. Casualty Air Evacuation Unit which consisted of one medical officer, one Flight/Sergeant nursing orderly, one hospital cook and twelve nursing orderlies arrived at Manus by air on 1 October, 1945. The Unit had an unpleasant duty to fulfil in displacing a carefully built up Naval organisation. Natural resentment which might have been felt was not, however, obvious and the R.N. medical authorities were helpful.

Most patients requiring evacuation from Manus were either resident at the Royal Naval Sick Bay or the United States hospital. As soon as the patients were considered fit to travel they were collected by the C.A.E.U. on the afternoon preceding evacuation. Some casualties arrived from Leyte and other places west none of whom were accompanied by attendants. Patients were staged overnight, premedicated where necessary and transported to the air strip in each case half an hour before take-off which was usually between 0530 and 0630 hours. On all trips, one or two orderlies accompanied the patients even when not considered essential; this was done to give maximum experience.

At the outset concern was expressed that R.N. nursing sisters would no longer be accompanying patients but subsequent events proved that there was no cause for alarm. All cases evacuated were of a nature which could have travelled quite well with no orderlies at all, their care being entrusted to other passengers. But as air evacuation had progressed to a very high standard the additional attention of nursing orderlies was considered desirable if not absolutely imperative.

By the end of October it was evident that the C.A.E.U. would make no further contribution to casualty evacuation and it was decided to disband the unit. This occurred on 5 November. During the one month of their existence only thirty casualties were handled by the R.A.F. Casualty Air Evacuation Unit.

(iii) Meteorological

There was no R.A.F. meteorological organisation in the South West Pacific and No. 300 Group relied on the R.A.A.F. and the U.S. Forces for the provision of these services an arrangement which, if not always satisfactory, was nevertheless unavoidable.

When the Senior Meteorological Officer of No. 300 Wing proceeded to Australia in February 1945 he was made responsible for advising the Officer Commanding on meteorological matters and the S. Met. O's task also included liaison with the

Australian Meteorological service to keep them informed of No. 300 Wing's requirements. The Australian Meteorological Service undertook the provision of actual forecasting facilities at the airfields from which No. 300 Wing operated. Thus the S. Met. O's primary duty was in respect of O.C. No. 300 Wing but in addition he had to give whatever advice the Director of Australian Meteorological Services required. The S. Met. O., No. 300 Wing was not responsible for meteorological arrangements for flights between Ceylon and Australia.

A brief summary is appended below outlining the meteorological facilities in various parts of the South West Pacific.

Auckland - Sydney

An organisation similar to Transport Command's Meteorological Organisation for Overseas Flights (MOOF) was introduced in August 1945 which provided a satisfactory service although there remained a lack of regular information from the Tasman Sea area.

Colombo - Perth

An organisation on the lines of MOOF existed which provided reasonable service. A disturbing feature was the lack of information from the Southern Indian Ocean. Bearing in mind the techniques being used at Perth in forecasting developments in the South Indian Ocean, little confidence could be placed in the accuracy of the forecasts being provided since no meteorological reconnaissance flights were being carried out and no reporting ships were available.

Perth - Sydney

By September 1945 an organisation essentially similar to MOOF was operating. Lack of control organisation and inadequacy of signals facilities prevented the passing of amendments to aircraft in flight. Fresh forecasts for the sections 140° E. to Mascot and 125° E. to Perth were, however, passed to eastbound and westbound aircraft as they entered the respective zones. The overloading of air/ground channels prohibited the passing of in flight weather reports.

No. 300 Group Operations within Australia

The meteorological information available from within Australia was considered sufficient to provide the basis for reasonably accurate forecasting. But insufficient upper air information made it difficult at times to be specific about the height of tops of low cloud and of upper cloud structure and also with regard to fog depth and dispersal.

With the introduction of the procedure whereby Perth sent a forecast for the route section Forrest - Perth - Forrest for collection by westbound aircraft landing there, the service provided within Australia was considered satisfactory regarding extent of service.

No. 300 Group Operations to the Islands

Generally speaking, weather conditions in the Equatorial regions are governed by convective developments of a rather local nature, and not due to moving atmospheric systems and associated fronts as in temperate latitudes. In practice, most of the forecasting for flights over routes in the Equatorial regions depended upon the conditions experienced by

the latest incoming aircraft to have flown over the particular route. In many cases the forecast given was identically so owing to several factors. There was a serious lack of necessary information since there were vast expanses of sea about which no reports were received, there was the absence of the necessary inter-terminal facilities for the desirable inter-change of advices and forecasts. Moreover, the ground/air channels were inadequate, owing to overloading of existing facilities, for passing meteorological advices to aircraft in flight and passing "in flight" weather reports from aircraft. Thus the meteorological situation to the north of Australia could not be regarded other than most unsatisfactory.

Although they considered it to be unnecessary, the R.A.A.F. meteorological authorities agreed to an inter-change of forecasts etc. being instituted between terminals on trans-ocean routes, providing 300 Group supplied the signals facilities.

It is worthy of note that in personal conversations, captains and navigators invariably expressed their strong dissatisfaction with the quality of the service being provided on the island routes. In their written reports, however, they did not confirm these views. The remarks usually made concerning meteorological services were either "O.K." or "Satisfactory". For instance, in thirty-four reports examined, only three adverse comments were made.

(iv) Flying Accidents

During the period March to November 1945, the only period for which figures are available, No. 300 Group maintained an excellent accident rate, a rate made all the more creditable in view of the conditions under which the aircraft operated. During the period under review 44,604 hours were flown, this includes training flights, and of fourteen accidents, six were serious. The accident rate was therefore just under 3.2 per 10,000 hours.

Of the six serious accidents, two aircraft ditched following engine trouble, two aircraft were lost from causes unknown, probably adverse weather, and two aircraft crashed, one in very bad weather conditions over the sea and the other on take off due to a pilot's error. Thus it is likely that only one serious avoidable accident occurred. The eight minor accidents consisted of seven Cat. AC and one Cat. B of which five were unavoidable and three avoidable.

Brief details of the major accidents are included in Appendix IV, but the first casualty is omitted since the accident has already been recorded elsewhere in this narrative.

CONCLUSION

When the provision of an R.A.F. air transport force for Australia was first mooted it was intended that flying units only should be provided and for these to utilise the existing framework of the R.A.A.F. and United States ground organisations in Australia and in the Pacific islands. No. 300 Group proved through bitter experience that the wisdom of this procedure was questionable since facilities and assistance promised during the planning stages were seldom available or fulfilled. It is evident that promises were made without proper examination of the means available to fulfil them. There is no doubt that the R.A.A.F. and the Americans were willing to assist the R.A.F. but in the event this assistance did not materialise largely because on the one hand there was an acute shortage of manpower in the R.A.A.F. and on the other because the United States Forces were fully preoccupied with their own intensive operations. Moreover, such facilities as existed often fell far below the level of efficiency usually expected for Transport Command operations.

The difficulties experienced by No. 300 Group during the first six months of their existence might have been avoided had a fuller investigation been made of the conditions prevailing in the South West Pacific. Indeed the advantages with which the British Pacific Fleet were endowed by the provision of an R.A.F. force might have been largely vitiated but for the initiative of the R.A.F. personnel and for their adeptness at improvisation to meet any contingency. The obvious lesson, therefore is that an R.A.F. force must be as self sufficient as resources allow. It may be, however, that additional ground resources could not be made available until after the conclusion of the war in Europe. But there is no evidence available to show that the provision of vital facilities was even contemplated during initial planning.

It is unreasonable to suppose that a small R.A.F. force of two and a half squadrons warranted the provision of full facilities for the operation of Air transport services. For instance, the establishment of independent meteorological, air/sea rescue and signals facilities would have been uneconomical since these services did exist even if they were inadequate according to R.A.F. standards. They had to be accepted as an unavoidable hazard. But the avoidable difficulties of No. 300 Group lay in the sphere of maintenance and passenger and freight handling for which the required number of personnel were not available until six months after the commencement of operations. As a result the R.A.F. had a hard maintenance task to perform and an opening was left for Royal Naval interference in passenger and freight administration with the accompanying evils of mis-use of aircraft space brought about mainly by inability to appreciate air transport problems. In an attempt to counter indiscriminate use of air transport, R.A.F. liaison officers are essential for duty with the chief bidders in order to persuade users to demand air lift only for those personnel and that freight which cannot, in view of urgency, be transported by surface routes.

Air transport was undoubtedly an indispensable asset to the British Pacific Fleet and it is obvious that all future naval task forces must be backed by adequate air communications. That is perhaps an elementary principle but the experiences of No. 300 Group appear to provide a few lessons with regard to the methods whereby air services are maintained. When air transport resources are limited, services should be operated for the benefit of all users and all services except in the case of forces which depend entirely upon air transport for their life's blood. But in all cases, control must be retained by the Air Forces since it is they alone who possess

the necessary knowledge to decide what effort is needed to meet demands for air lift. When forces are operating without land lines of communication then those forces must bid for air lift leaving the Air Forces to decide what aircraft are required to meet it. When forces are operating and sustained, as in the case of the British Pacific Fleet mainly by surface communications, then air lift should only be provided for essential personnel and equipment. The British Pacific Fleet should have been given first priority on No. 300 Group aircraft for priority passengers and freight but should never have been endowed with the power to claim all aircraft space. The situation which materialised was that the British Pacific Fleet could use air lift available as they wished and it was only when the Navy were unable to utilise fully the air lift available that other customers could obtain R.A.F. assistance to clear priority commitments. A senior officer of the V.A(Q) staff stated that at times the B.P.F. sent non-priority passengers and freight by air because there was insufficient priority traffic to complete aircraft loads.

Summarising, it can be said that the requirements of the British Pacific Fleet could have been met through the medium of an Air Priorities Board under the system practised in other theatres. But in Australia the A.P.B. only controlled aircraft space thrown up by the B.P.F., and had no control over civil aircraft loading of which was decided by the Australian authorities ~~above~~.

It is important that when a unit or number of units are sent to a new locality an advanced party proceeds well ahead of the main bodies in order to arrange reception and accommodation and in order to plan the future organisation in detail. In the case of No. 300 Group, a large number of personnel arrived in Australia followed closely by aircraft and aircrews. Not only did the officers of the first party have to cope with a large body of men immediately on arrival but time was too short to arrange reception of the aircraft and complete negotiations with the R.A.A.F. The advantages of organised reception were amply demonstrated by the arrival of No. 238 Squadron at Adelaide. No. 300 Group sent a liaison officer there and as a result No. 238 Squadron was able to settle in smoothly and efficiently.

The importance of maintaining the morale of Naval personnel in ships at sea and advanced bases on shore alone justified the operation of air mail services. The comments of the Commander-in-Chief, British Pacific Fleet and of his subordinate commanders emphasised the beneficial effect that a fast and efficient mail service had upon morale. The transfer of personnel from the Pacific bases to the Australian mainland, including submarine crews requiring rehabilitation and sick personnel in need of medical attention, was an important aspect of air communications in the South West Pacific and did much to engender the confidence of the fighting services.

As found in other theatres of war, so it was in the South West Pacific that the first principle is to keep the vital arteries open. The mobility of staffs, the despatch of urgent freight and close contact with advanced bases must always be a prime consideration when assessing priorities for air transport resources. That is why the work of No. 300 Group can be classed as vital. The British Pacific Fleet derived great benefit from the R.A.F. air services operated by No. 300 Group who made possible, within the limits of their resources a closer study of transport problems and a more efficient supervision of this specialised type of flying. Moreover, it is on the air routes that the air forces can reap a dividend from the transport aircraft which are so often operated for the use of others. The R.A.F. should use the speed and mobility of its transport squadrons to improve the efficiency and flexibility of its own organisation.

APPENDIX 1

STATISTICAL SUMMARY
March to November 1945

MONTH	HOURS	SHORT TONS	PASSENGER MILES	TON MILES
MARCH	1,057	290	1,569,179	427,305
APRIL	1,978	555	2,360,024	615,064
MAY	4,519	1,113	3,860,150	477,077
JUNE	4,511	1,173	5,487,506	1,141,538
JULY	6,027	1,072	5,541,999	1,220,901
AUGUST	6,847	1,220	7,929,487	1,671,158
SEPTEMBER	7,070	1,870	9,447,792	1,718,692
OCTOBER	5,563	1,922	7,069,200	1,532,358
NOVEMBER	4,822	1,226	6,298,051	1,555,838

1044

NOTE: Statistics are not complete. Above figures do not include No. 1315 Flight and Comm. Flight mileages for May, or No. 238 Squadron figures for July.

March 1945

Total strength of aircraft

Total hours flown

Total weight lifted (Short tons)

Passenger miles flown

Ton miles flown

30 (Dakotas)
1,057
290
1,569,179
427,305

UNIT	A/C ON STRENGTH	MILES FLOWN	HOURS FLOWN		PASSENGER MILES FLOWN	TON MILES FLOWN	LOAD FACTOR	HRS. PER E.U. A/C	TOTAL UPLIFT (SHORT TONS)
			DAY	NIGHT					
No. 243 Squadron	30	202,402	1,024	33	1,569,179	427,305	83%	35	290
No. 1315 Flight	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Comm. Flight	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

April 1945

Total strength of aircraft
 Total hours flown
 Total weight lifted (Short tons)
 Passenger miles flown
 Ton miles flown

39
 1,978
 555
 2,360,024*
 615,064*

* No. 243 Squadron only

UNIT	A/C ON STRENGTH	MILES FLOWN	HOURS	FLOWN	PASSENGER MILES FLOWN	TON MILES FLOWN	LOAD FACTOR	HRS. PER U.E. A/C	TOTAL UPLIFT (SHORT TONS)
			DAY	NIGHT					
No. 243 Squadron	30	272,144	1,823	59	2,360,024	615,064	82%	63	531
No. 1315 Flight	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Comm. Flight	6 Dak. 3 Lib.	N/K	81	15	N/K	N/K	-	11	24

3

May 1945

Total strength of aircraft
 Total hours flown
 Total weight lifted (Short tons)
 Passenger miles flown
 Ton miles flown

54
 4,519
 1,113
 3,860,150*
 477,077*

* No. 243 Squadron only

UNIT	A/C ON STRENGTH	TOTAL MILES FLOWN	HOURS FLOWN		PASSENGER MILES FLOWN	TON MILES FLOWN	LOAD FACTOR	HRS. U.E.	PER A/C	TOTAL UPLIFT (SHORT TONS)
			DAY	NIGHT						
No. 243 Squadron	30	446,803	3,019	173	3,860,150	477,077	80%	106		660
No. 1315 Flight	15	N/K	1,223	10	N/K	N/K	-	82		427
Comm. Flight	6 Dak. 3 Lib.	N/K	75	19	N/K	N/K	-	10		26

June 1945

Total aircraft on strength	54
Total hours flown	4,511
Total weight lifted (Short tons)	1,173
Passenger miles flown	5,487,506*
Ton miles flown	1,141,538*

* Does not include Communication Flight

UNIT	A/C ON STRENGTH	TOTAL MILES FLOWN	HOURS FLOWN		PASSENGER MILES FLOWN	TON MILES FLOWN	LOAD FACTOR	HRS. PER U.E. A/C	TOTAL. UPLIFT (SHORT TONS)
			DAY	NIGHT					
No. 243 Squadron	30	448,536	3,098	203	4,523,533	970,897	80%	110	473
No. 1315 Flight	15	71,038	1,093	37	963,973	170,641	82%	75	660
Communication Flight	6 Dak. 3 Lib.	N/K	127	53	N/K	N/K	-	N/K	40

July 1946

Total aircraft on strength
 Total hours flown
 Total weight lifted (Short tons)
 Passenger miles flown
 Ton miles flown

84
 6,027
 1,072*
 5,541,999*
 1,220,901*

* Does not include No. 238 Squadron

UNIT	A/C ON STRENGTH	TOTAL MILES FLOWN	HOURS FLOWN		PASSENGER MILES FLOWN	TON MILES FLOWN	LOAD FACTOR	HRS. PER U.E. A/C	TOTAL UPLIFT (SHORT TONS)
			DAY	NIGHT					
No. 243 Squadron	30	409,091	3,273	-	3,824,889	865,575	85%	109	464
No. 248 Squadron	30	N/K	1,575	-	N/K	N/K	-	53	N/K
No. 1315 Flight	15	162,066	1,002	53	1,594,288	351,819	85%	70	597
Comm. Flight	6 Dak, 3. Lib.	17,344	124	-	122,822	3,507	-	14	11

August 1945

Total aircraft on strength	84
Total hours flown	6,847
Total weight lifted (Short tons)	1,220*
Passenger miles flown	7,929,487*
Ton miles flown	1,671,158*

* Does not include 238 Squadron

UNIT	A/C ON STRENGTH	TOTAL MILES FLOWN	HOURS FLOWN		PASSENGER MILES FLOWN	TON MILES FLOWN	LOAD FACTOR	HRS. FLOWN PER A/C	TOTAL UPLIFT (SHORT TONS)
			DAY	NIGHT					
No. 243 Squadron	30	432,395	3,678	13	3,708,422	915,453	89.5%	123	627
No. 238 Squadron	30	140,002	1,120	53	1,335,126	204,270	55.4%	39	190
No. 1315 Flight	15	226,480	1,538	62	2,572,976	509,774	91.3%	106	403
Comm. Flight	6 Dak. 3 Lib.	30,317	290	93	312,963	41,661	66.6%	64	-

September 1945

Total aircraft on strength	84
Total hours flown	7,070
Total weight lifted (Short tons)	1,870
Passenger miles flown	9,447,792
Ton miles flown	1,718,692

UNIT	A/C ON STRENGTH	TOTAL MILES FLOWN	HOURS		PASSENGER MILES FLOWN	TON MILES FLOWN	LOAD FACTOR	HRS. FLOWN PER A/C	TOTAL UPLIFT (SHORT TONS)
			DAY	NIGHT					
No. 243 Squadron	30	269,734	2,538	69	2,559,676	548,629	80%	87	817
No. 238 Squadron	30	362,290	2,606	36	4,435,550	756,704	82%	89	639
No. 1315 Flight	15	164,358	1,293	137	1,987,167	355,798	88%	95	271
Comm. Flight	6 Dak. 3 Lib.	65,996	342	59	465,399	57,561	51%	46	143

October 1945

Total aircraft on strength	50
Total hours flown	5,563
Total weight lifted (Short tons)	1,922
Passenger miles flown	7,069,200
Ton miles flown	1,532,358

UNIT	A/C ON STRENGTH	TOTAL MILES FLOWN	HOURS FLOWN		PASSENGER MILES FLOWN	TON MILES FLOWN	LOAD FACTOR	HOURS PER H.E. A/C	TOTAL UPLIFT (SHORT TONS)
			DAY	NIGHT					
No. 243 Squadron	20	262,661	2,687	67	2,338,132	514,007	72.5%	138	604
No. 238 Squadron	20	295,591	1,800	99	3,789,127	665,100	67.5%	95	898
No. 1315 Flight	10	110,524	872	38	941,941	353,251	65.5%	91	320

November 1945

Total aircraft on strength	50
Total hours flown	4,822
Total weight lifted (Short tons)	1,226
Passenger miles flown	6,298,051
Ton miles flown	1,155,838

UNIT	A/C ON STRENGTH	TOTAL MILES FLOWN	HOURS FLOWN		PASSENGER MILES FLOWN	TON MILES FLOWN	LOAD . FACTOR	HOURS PER U.E. A/C	TOTAL UPLIFT (SHORT TONS)
			DAY	NIGHT					
No. 243 Squadron	20	158,523	2,272	76	3,378,123	538,141	77.5%	117	295
No. 238 Squadron	20	204,933	1,505	76	2,106,743	359,228	64.5%	78	664
No. 1315 Flight	10	99,323	819	74	813,185	258,469	59.5%	89	267

APPENDIX II

File 15/501/281

R.A.F. TRANSPORT COMMANDOPERATION AND ADMINISTRATION IN S.W.P.A.Minutes of a conference held in the GAS
office on 14 April, 1945 at 0930 hours

PRESENT: Air Vice-Marshal Jones - Chief of the Air Staff,
R.A.A.F.
Air Vice-Marshal Storrar } - R.A.F. Transport
Group Captain Allan } - Command.
Air Vice-Marshal Guest - H.Q. No. 229 Group
(India)
Group Captain Grindell - R.A.F. Liaison Office.

A.M.E.M.	D.T.M.
A.M.S.E.	D.F.S.
D.C.A.S.	D.Tels & R.
D.A.S.P.	D.D.W.B.
D.R.M.	D.D.O.
D.D.R.M.	D.Met.S.

The following decisions were recorded:-

ITEM 1. Chain of operational control for squadrons of
No. 300 R.A.F. Transport Wing and tie up with opera-
tions of R.A.A.F. transport squadrons

Co-ordination of effort of R.A.A.F. and R.A.F. trans-
port squadrons in the S.W.P.A. is a responsibility of the
R.A.A.F. Operations will be directed from a Combined
Operations Room in which there will be a controller for
No. 300 Wing and a R.A.A.F. controller with co-ordination
exercised by a senior officer. W/Cdr. Gilbert R.A.F. will
act as co-ordinating officer.

ITEM 2. Division of responsibilities (administrative)
between R.A.A.F. and No. 300 Wing

R.A.A.F. will provide non-technical stores, petrol,
oil, rations, barrack equipment etc. The financial
provisions relating thereto remain to be settled.

R.A.F. will supply technical spares. These will be
held by R.A.F. and not integrated with R.A.A.F. stores. At
bases on aircraft routes the R.A.A.F. will hold for the
R.A.F. spares supplied by the R.A.F.

The R.A.F. will provide personnel for No. 300 Wing.
Higher local administrative control and discipline of
No. 300 Wing will be exercised by the R.A.A.F. but matters
peculiar to the R.A.F. will be the responsibility of the
R.A.F. Liaison Office, e.g. pay and accounts, duplication of
P.O.Rs for Air Ministry, repatriation of personnel etc.
These matters to be finally allocated specifically after
further discussion having regard to R.A.F. Transport Command
procedure in other theatres as set out in document tabled by
Air Vice-Marshal Storrar.

ITEM 3. To what extent can Australian resources be used for
maintenance backing of No. 300 Wing

R.A.A.F. can integrate engine overhauls for Dakota

aircraft of No. 300 Wing with the R.A.A.F. engine overhaul organisation, making use of D.A.P. to the order of 25 to 30 engines per month, assuming the R.A.F. makes a contribution of 75 engines to the pool.

It is considered that similar arrangements can be made for engines for other aircraft (e.g. RY3 and C54) if the R.A.F. provide sufficient contribution of engines to the pool and spare parts not common to types in use by the R.A.A.F. R.A.F. to advise extent of commitment before definite undertaking given by R.A.A.F.

With regard to technical control of maintenance of No. 300 Wing aircraft, it is recognised that R.A.F. Transport Command may give general instructions, but will accept rulings of the local command as to their application. The channel of communications from R.A.F. Transport Command on matters of technical control will be through the R.A.A.F. Headquarters.

With regard to aircraft of R.A.F. Transport Command not held by No. 300 Wing, R.A.A.F. will endeavour to comply with Transport Command requirements as communicated to R.A.A.F. Headquarters. R.A.F. will provide maintenance facilities at staging posts.

Though aircraft of Governor General's Flight are on establishment of No. 300 Wing they are detached to R.A.A.F. which is responsible for their maintenance and technical control. R.A.F. Transport Command will communicate with R.A.A.F. Headquarters on any requirements as to modifications etc. in relation to such aircraft. Aircrew replacements for Governor General's Flight will be provided by R.A.A.F.

Airframe maintenance of No. 300 Wing aircraft will be the responsibility of that Wing short of complete overhaul. R.A.A.F. cannot undertake additional commitments for airframe overhaul without provision of personnel by R.A.F., but if the R.A.F. can provide the equivalent of an R.S.U., say 500 personnel, for airframe overhaul work, R.A.A.F. will undertake full responsibility for airframe overhaul.

ITEM 4. Standards of accommodation and messing for aircrews and transients at static and operational staging posts.

Air-Vice Marshal Storrar advised that R.A.F. Transport Command seeks uniform standards and conditions of accommodation and messing for its personnel in all parts of the globe and endeavours to ensure that the local command provides facilities at these standards.

C.A.S. pointed out differences between R.A.F. and R.A.A.F. standards, and the difficulties arising from two separate standards operating side by side.

D.C.A.S. advised that he had the matter under consideration in consultation with No. 300 Wing and D of O with a view to improving standards. The requirements for accommodation for female passengers was noted.

ITEM 5. To what extent can R.A.A.F. or civil authorities provide, at staging posts to be set up in Australia both for No. 500 Wing internal services and for the Ceylon/Australia service, the facilities referred to below.

(a) Signals. There is no fundamental relating to point to point communications that cannot be arranged.

R.A.F. and R.A.A.F. systems of aircraft reporting differ

APPENDIX II

in that the R.A.A.F. does not aim at providing at central operations room information of exact aircraft location at any one time but relies on pre-departure information. To introduce R.A.F. system would require extra personnel (estimated at 100 on the route to Morotai). The route beyond Morotai with U.S. control needs further investigation. Air Vice-Marshal Storrar indicated that the R.A.F. would be prepared to meet this commitment to obtain this service.

The complete signals plan at Learmouth will be in full operation by 1 September, 1945. R.A.F. is co-operating in supply of equipment. R.A.F. will install, operate and maintain. This involves an extra 30 personnel.

(b) Meteorology. Satisfactory provision by R.A.A.F. is assured.

(c) Accommodation
(d) Messing } See Item 4

(e) Traffic Handling. To supplement T.M.O. organisation R.A.F. will provide approximately 45 personnel for supervisory and administrative purposes. No call will be made on R.A.F. to provide additional labourers ex U.K.

ITEM 6. Any decision to operate Ceylon/Australia service from Learmouth direct to Sydney or Brisbane instead of via Perth would depend upon accommodation and refuelling possibilities at Learmouth. Does any development programme exist for Learmouth?

It was advised that the normal trans-Australian route will be via Perth, and Learmouth will require to be developed only as a topping up point. Daily petrol requirements will be advised by R.A.F. (NOTE: A figure of 1,374 gallons daily peak was cited but is being checked). A top priority for necessary works was requested by R.A.F. who will advise their immediate requirements. No hangar accommodation is required. R.A.F. will provide servicing and refuelling party which will comprise a self-contained staging post integrated in No. 76 O.B. Unit.

ITEM 7. What arrangements exist at the various staging posts for passenger and freight handling?

See Item 4.

ITEM 8. Present accommodation at Camden is sufficient only for the squadron already located there. No. 1315 Flight is due to arrive in Australia in a few days. Where is it proposed to locate this unit?

Alternative sites, principally Archerfield and Parafield are under discussion between D of O and No. 300 Wing. An early decision is expected.

ITEM 9. It is understood that approval has been given for the erection of additional hangars at Camden. What is the priority of this project?

The nature of this requirement was not apparent, assuming that Camden is not required to accommodate No. 1315 Flight. D.A.S.P. will discuss with No. 300 Wing.

Other matters discussed

As the temporary use of Amberly as the terminal for trans-Pacific and Indian Ocean services may continue for some time until Mascot can be fully used, D.Tels & R. will negotiate for the retention at Amberly of the radio range now operated by the United States.

No provision has been made for air/sea rescue on the Ceylon/Australia route between Cocos Island and Australia. R.A.A.F. are unable to provide such facilities. R.A.F. will take up the matter with ACSEA.

16 April, 1945

(Signed) A. Garran, W/Cdr.
for Air Commodore, D. of O.

CONFIRMED

(Signed) G. Jones,
Air-Vice Marshal,
Chief of the Air Staff.

(O.236/45)

APPENDIX IIILOCATION LISTS1 March, 1945

H.Q., No. 300 Wing. Melbourne, Victoria.
(G/Capt. D. F. Anderson, DFC)

No. 243 (Dakota) Squadron. Camden, New South Wales.
(W/Cdr. T. W. Gillen)

No. 145 Staging Post. Mascot, Sydney.

12 May, 1945

H.Q., No. 300 Wing. Melbourne, Victoria.
(G/Capt. D. F. Anderson, DFC)

No. 243 (Dakota) Squadron. Camden, New South Wales.
(W/Cdr. T. W. Gillen)

No. 1315 (Dakota) Flight. Archerfield, Brisbane.
(W/Cdr. R. E. Bailey, DSO, DFC)

Communications Flight. Mascot, Sydney.
(S/Ldr. C. R. Glen, AFC)

No. 145 Staging Post. Mascot, Sydney.

2 July, 1945

H.Q., No. 300 Wing. Melbourne, Victoria.
(G/Capt. D. F. Anderson, DFC)

No. 243 (Dakota) Squadron. Camden, New South Wales.
(W/Cdr. W. J. McLean, DSO, DFC, AFC)
(RAAF)

No. 238 (Dakota) Squadron. Parafield, Brisbane.
(W/Cdr. H. Burton, DSO, MBE)

No. 1315 (Dakota) Flight. Archerfield, Brisbane.
(W/Cdr. R. E. Bailey, DSO, DFC)

Communications Flight. Mascot, Sydney.
(S/Ldr. C. R. Glen, AFC)

No. 145 Staging Post. Mascot, Sydney.

11 August, 1945

H.Q., No. 300 GROUP. Melbourne, Victoria.
(A/Cdre. A. Earle, C.B.E.)

No. 243 (Dakota) Squadron. Camden, New South Wales
(W/Cdr. W. J. McLean, DSO, DFC, AFC)

No. 238 (Dakota) Squadron. Parafield, Adelaide.
(W/Cdr. H. Burton, DSO, MBE)

No. 1315 (Dakota) Flight. Archerfield, Brisbane.
(W/Cdr. R. E. Bailey)

Communications Flight. Mascot, Sydney.
(S/Ldr. C. R. Glen, AFC)

R.A.F. Station, Camden. New South Wales.
(W/Cdr. W. J. McLean, DSO, DFC, AFC)

No. 145 Staging Post.	Mascot, Sydney.
No. 189 Staging Post.	Guilford, Perth.
No. 190 Staging Post.	Learmouth, W.Aust.
No. 191 Staging Post.	Parafield, Adelaide.
No. 192 Staging Post.	Essendon, Melbourne.
No. 193 Staging Post.	Garbutt, Townsville.
No. 194 Staging Post.	Archerfield, Brisbane.
No. 195 Staging Post.	Leyte, Philippines.
No. 196 Staging Post.	Pelelui, Palau Is.
No. 197 Staging Post.	Boroke, Biak Island.
No. 198 Staging Post.	Manus, Admiralty Is.
No. 199 Staging Post.	Milne Bay, New Guinea.

1 November, 1945

H.Q., No. 300 Group. (A/Cdre. A. Earle, C.B.E.)	Melbourne, Victoria.
No. 243 (Dakota) Squadron. (W/Cdr. W. J. McLean, DSO, DFC, AFC) (RAAF)	Camden, New South Wales
No. 238 (Dakota) Squadron. (W/Cdr. H. Burton, DSO, MBE)	Parafield, Adelaide.
No. 1315 (Dakota) Flight. (W/Cdr. R. E. Bailey, DSO, DFC)	Archerfield, Brisbane.
R.A.F. Station, Camden. (G/Capt. J. Pelly-Fry, DSO)	New South Wales.
No. 145 Staging Post.	Mascot, Sydney.
No. 189 Staging Post.	Guilford, Perth.
No. 190 Staging Post.	Cloncurry, Queensland.
No. 191 Staging Post.	Parafield, Adelaide.
No. 192 Staging Post.	Essendon, Melbourne.
No. 193 Staging Post.	Garbutt, Townsville.
No. 194 Staging Post.	Archerfield, Brisbane.
No. 195 Staging Post.	Tacloban, Leyte.
No. 196 Staging Post.	Morotai, N.E.I.
No. 197 Staging Post.	Darwin, N.Territory.
No. 198 Staging Post.	Manus, Admiralty Is.
No. 199 Staging Post.	Port Moresby, N.G.
No. 214 Staging Post.	Balikpapan, Borneo.

APPENDIX III

1 December, 1945

- (h) H.Q., No. 300 Group. Melbourne, Victoria.
(A/Cdre. A. Earle, C.B.E.)
- (g) No. 243 (Dakota) Squadron. Camden, New South Wales.
(W/Cdr. W. J. McLean, DSO, DFC, AFC)
- (a) No. 238 (Dakota) Squadron. Parafield, Adelaide.
(W/Cdr. H. Burton, DSO, MBE)
- (e) No. 1315 (Dakota) Flight. Archerfield, Brisbane.
(W/Cdr. R. E. Bailey, DSO, DFC)
- (h) R.A.F. Station, Camden. New South Wales.
(G/Capt. J. Pelly-Fry, DSO)
- (h) No. 145 Staging Post. Mascot, Sydney.
- (d) No. 189 Staging Post. Guilford, Perth.
- (f) No. 190 Staging Post. Clonourry, Queensland.
- No. 191 Staging Post. Labuan, Borneo.
- (h) No. 192 Staging Post. Essendon, Melbourne.
- (c) No. 193 Staging Post. Garbutt, Townsville.
- (c) No. 194 Staging Post. Archerfield, Brisbane.
- (b) No. 195 Staging Post. Tacloban, Leyte.
- (b) No. 196 Staging Post. Morotai, N.E.I.
- (f) No. 197 Staging Post. Darwin, N. Territory.
- (c) No. 198 Staging Post. Manus, Admiralty Is.
- (c) No. 199 Staging Post. Port Moresby, N.G.
- No. 214 Staging Post. Balikpapan, Borneo.

- (a) Disbanded 9.2.46
- (b) Disbanded Jan. 46
- (c) Disbanded Feb. 1946
- (d) Disbanded 1.3.46
- (e) Disbanded 15.3.46
- (f) Disbanded 26.3.46
- (g) Disbanded 15.4.46
- (h) Disbanded Apr. 1946

APPENDIX IVHEADQUARTERS, NO. 300 GROUPAIRCRAFT ACCIDENT ANALYSESFOR THE MONTHS UP TO AND INCLUDINGNOVEMBER 194523 May, 1945

A Dakota of No. 1315 Flight carrying a crew of three and fifteen passengers while flying between Palau and Biak experienced engine trouble when at 1,000 feet. The weather at the time was bad, 10/10 cloud base 1,000 feet but descending to the sea level in showers. The pilot turned back to Palau intending to effect a forced landing at Anguan airfield but height was lost gradually. At 100 feet when 10 miles from Anguan it was decided to ditch. The aircraft alighted on the water satisfactorily and all the passengers and crew, wearing life jackets, escaped safely into rubber dinghies. An SOS had been transmitted when at 800 feet, D.R. position being given and acknowledged. Soon after ditching an aircraft was circling overhead and shortly afterwards a destroyer arrived and embarked the waterborne personnel after they had been afloat but one hour.

2 July, 1945

A Dakota aircraft of No. 1315 Flight was reported by the R.A.A.F. as missing on a flight from Townsville to Milne Bay. A Sunderland from Milne Bay searched from 1800 to 2359 hours on the 2nd and a Catalina from Madang from 0700 to dusk on 3 and 4 July. Also on the 3rd, two Beauforts of an R.A.A.F. Squadron carried out a search but in all cases no sightings were made. Naval surface craft were diverted along the estimated track of the aircraft but they too had no success. This casualty remained a mystery since no normal distress signals were heard and two other Dakotas were cleared from Townsville for Milne Bay at the same time as the missing aircraft and they arrived safely with apparently no difficulties. Although not certain it seems likely that weather was the cause of this casualty.

19 July, 1945

No. 300 Wing's worst accident occurred on 19 July when a Liberator of the Communications Flight crashed when taking off from Mascot airfield Sydney and became a total wreck. The crew of five and seven Royal Naval passengers all perished. The subsequent Court of Inquiry revealed that the pilot allowed the aircraft to become airborne too soon, consequently the aircraft had insufficient airspeed with which to climb. It struck a tree 18 feet high a few hundred yards from the end of the runway.

23 July, 1945

A Dakota of No. 243 Squadron carrying a crew of four and six passengers (3 RN, 2 RM and 1 RAAF) bound from Palau to Leyte crashed into the sea off Leyte with the loss of all passengers and crew. Information received was meagre but it appears that the aircraft was last seen in an apparent stall at 500 feet in atrocious weather conditions, 10/10 cloud at 1,000 feet with heavy tropical storms and ground fog. The aircraft was said to disintegrate on impact with the water. All the bodies were recovered and with the exception of one, identified.

They were buried in a military cemetery at Leyte.

14 September, 1945

A Dakota of No. 243 Squadron made a successful ditching after engine trouble had developed while bound for Hong Kong from Leyte. All three passengers and the crew of three escaped safely and were picked up by an R.N. destroyer after they had spent 24 hours in their rubber dinghies. A watch was maintained throughout first by a Dakota of 243 Squadron and then by an RAAF Catalina.

ACCIDENT RATE BY UNITS

PER 1,000 HOURS

FOR THE MONTHS UP TO AND INCLUDING JULY, 1945

NON OPERATIONAL

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>ACCIDENTS</u>	<u>HOURS FLOWN</u>	<u>ACCIDENT RATE</u>
No. 243 Sqdn.	3	15,044	1.9
No. 238 Sqdn.	Nil	1,058	Nil
No. 1315 Flt.	3	1,480	20.0
Comm. Flight	1	494	20.0
Total No. 300 Gp.	7	18,076	3.8

TRAINING

No. 243 Sqdn.	Nil	103	Nil
No. 238 Sqdn.	Nil	15	Nil
No. 1315 Flt.	Nil	299	Nil
Comm. Flight	Nil	-	Nil
Total No. 300 Gp.	Nil	417	Nil

LIST OF ACCIDENTS - PERIOD ENDING 31 JULY, 1945

<u>Aircraft Ty. & No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Cat Accident</u>	<u>Cause</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Unit</u>
Dak. IV KN. 343	20.3.45	E Ditching	Fuel Starv.	P/O. Carnell	No. 243 Sqdn.
Dak. IV KN. 370	19.5.45	AC Taxying at Biak	Ran in to shell hole	F/O. Jarret	No. 1315 Flt.
Dak. IV KN. 376	23.5.45	E Ditching	Burst oil pipe	F/O. Hopes	No. 1315 Flt.
Dak. IV KN. 149	3.6.45	AC Taxying	RAAF a/c	F/O. Smith	No. 243 Sqdn.
Dak. IV KN. 344	2.7.45	E Missing	Unknown	F/O. Young	No. 1315 Flt.
Lib. EW. 631	19.7.45	E Take off	Pilots error	S/L. Raynor	Com. Flt.
Dak. IV KN. 530	23.7.45	E Missing	Unknown	F/O. Steel	No. 243 Sqdn.

APPENDIX IVACCIDENT RATE BY UNITSPER 10,000 HOURSFOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST 1945NON OPERATIONAL

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>ACCIDENTS</u>	<u>HOURS FLOWN</u>	<u>ACCIDENT RATE</u>
No. 243 Sqdn.	Nil	3,624	Nil
No. 238 Sqdn.	Nil	1,137	Nil
No. 1315 Flt.	Nil	3,122	Nil
Comm. Flight	Nil	383	Nil
Total No. 300 Gp.	Nil	8,266	Nil

TRAINING

No. 243 Sqdn.	Nil	67	Nil
No. 238 Sqdn.	Nil	36	Nil
No. 1315 Flight	Nil	32	Nil
Comm. Flight	Nil	-	Nil
Total No. 300 Gp.	Nil	135	Nil

LIST OF ACCIDENTS - PERIOD ENDING 31 AUGUST, 1945

NIL

ACCIDENT RATE BY UNITSPER 10,000 HOURSFOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER, 1945NON OPERATIONAL

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>ACCIDENTS</u>	<u>HOURS FLOWN</u>	<u>ACCIDENT RATE</u>
No. 243 Sqdn.	1	2,417	4.2
No. 238 Sqdn.	2	2,578	7.75
No. 1315 Flt.	1	1,393	15.0
Comm. Flight	Nil	401	Nil
Total No. 300 Gp.	4	6,789	5.8

TRAINING

No. 243 Sqdn.	Nil	140	Nil
No. 238 Sqdn.	Nil	72	Nil
No. 1315 Flt.	Nil	93	Nil
Comm. Flight	Nil	-	Nil
Total No. 300 Gp.	Nil	305	Nil

LIST OF ACCIDENTS - PERIOD ENDING 30 SEPTEMBER, 1945

<u>Aircraft Ty. & No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Cat</u>	<u>Accident Cause</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Unit</u>
Dak.IV	14.9.45	E	Ditched Fuel Stav.	F/L. Shanley	No. 243 Sqdn.
Dak.IV	4.9.45	AC	Over-shot Wet a/f surface	F/O. Speed	No. 238 Sqdn.
Dak.IV	2.9.45	AC	u/c retract-ed on gd. Pilot's error	F/O. Temple	No. 238 Sqdn.
Dak.IV	19.9.45	AC	Air-fr. damaged Pilot's error	F/O. Maxto	No. 1315 Flt.

APPENDIX IVACCIDENT RATE BY UNITSPER 10,000 HOURSFOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 1945NON OPERATIONAL

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>ACCIDENT</u>	<u>HOURS FLOWN</u>	<u>ACCIDENT RATE</u>
No. 243 Sqdn.	Nil	2,595	Nil
No. 238 Sqdn.	Nil	1,787	Nil
No. 1315 Flt.	Nil	912	Nil
Comm. Flight	Nil	Disbanded	Nil
Total No. 300 Gp.	Nil	5,294	Nil

TRAINING

No. 243 Sqdn.	Nil	155	Nil
No. 238 Sqdn.	Nil	111	Nil
No. 1315 Flt.	Nil	64	Nil
Comm. Flight	Nil	Disbanded	Nil
Total No. 300 Gp.	Nil	335	Nil

LIST OF ACCIDENTS - PERIOD ENDING 31 OCTOBER, 1945

NIL

ACCIDENT RATE BY UNITSPER 10,000 HOURSFOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER, 1945NON OPERATIONAL

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>ACCIDENT</u>	<u>HOURS FLOWN</u>	<u>ACCIDENT RATE</u>
No. 243 Sqdn.	2	2,347	8.6
No. 238 Sqdn.	1	1,360	7.3
No. 1315 Flt.	Nil	585	Nil
Total No. 300 Gp.	3	4,292	7.0

TRAINING

No. 243 Sqdn.	Nil	295	Nil
No. 238 Sqdn.	Nil	230	Nil
No. 1315 Flt.	Nil	171	Nil
Total No. 300 Gp.	Nil	696	Nil

LIST OF ACCIDENTS - PERIOD ENDING 30 NOVEMBER, 1945

<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Cat</u>	<u>Accident</u>	<u>Cause</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Unit</u>
Dak.IV	14.11.45	B	Burst tyre	Unknown	F/O. Mackay	No. 243 Sqdn.
Dak.IV	18.11.45	AC	Taxying at night	A/c struck engine stand in run up area	W/O. Holliday	No. 243 Sqdn.
Dak.IV	13.11.45	AC	A/c overshoot	Pilot's error	F/O. Hill	No. 238 Sqdn.

APPENDIX V

RELATIVE DISTANCES - APPROXIMATE MILEAGES

(Statute Miles)

Sydney - Manus 2,350 miles

Sydney - Brisbane	450 miles
Brisbane - Townsville	700 "
Townsville - Manus	1,200 "

Sydney - Leyte 4,450 miles

Sydney - Manus	2,350 miles
Manus - Biak	800 "
Biak - Palau	600 "
Palau - Leyte	700 "

Sydney - Eniwetok 4,650 miles

Sydney - Manus	2,350 miles
Manus - Guam	1,100 "
Guam - Eniwetok	1,200 "

Sydney - Perth 2,000 miles

Sydney - Melbourne	400 miles
Melbourne - Adelaide	350 "
Adelaide - Forrest	450 "
Forrest - Perth	800 "

Sydney - Hong Kong 4,700 miles

Sydney - Cloncurry	1,100 miles
Cloncurry - Darwin	850 "
Darwin - Morotai	1,050 "
Morotai - Leyte	650 "
Leyte - Hong Kong	1,050 "

Sydney - Singapore 4,700 miles

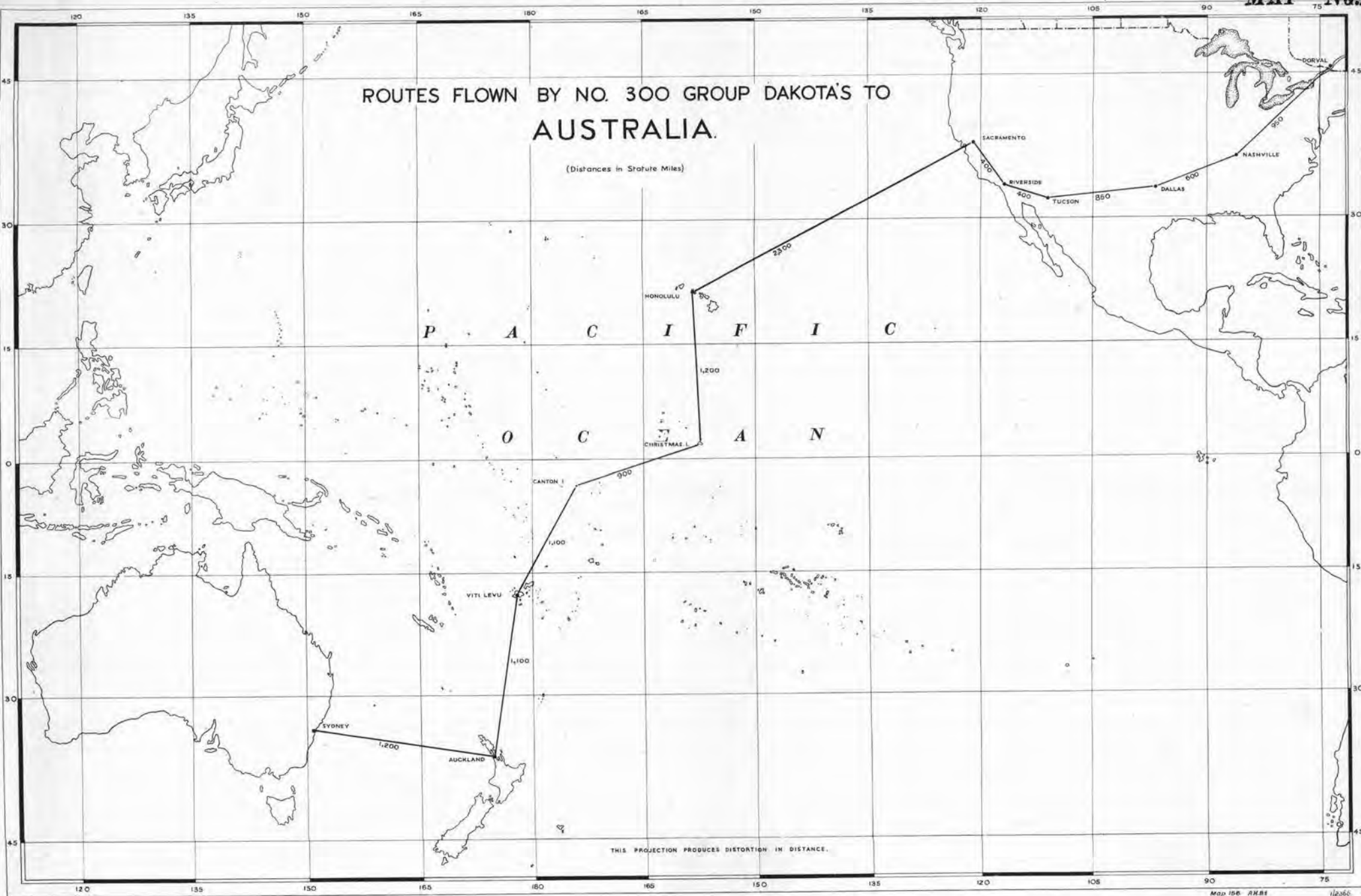
Sydney - Brisbane	540 miles
Brisbane - Cloncurry	800 "
Cloncurry - Darwin	850 "
Darwin - Balikpapan	1,300 "
Balikpapan - Labuan	450 "
Labuan - Singapore	850 "

Sydney - Hong Kong 5,350 miles

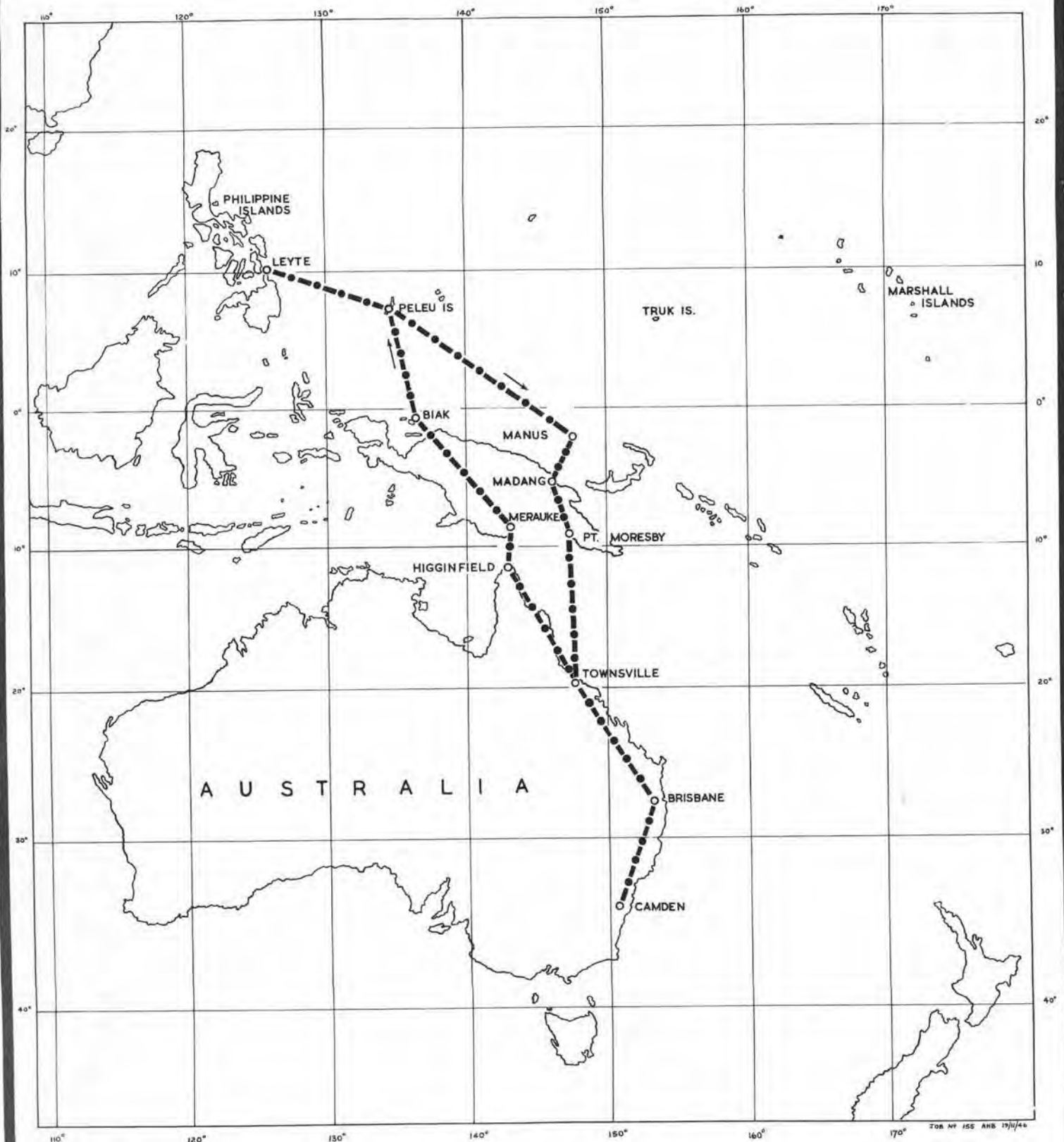
Sydney - Labuan	3,700 miles
Labuan - Saigon	700 "
Saigon - Hong Kong	950 "

ROUTES FLOWN BY NO. 300 GROUP DAKOTA'S TO AUSTRALIA.

(Distances in Statute Miles)

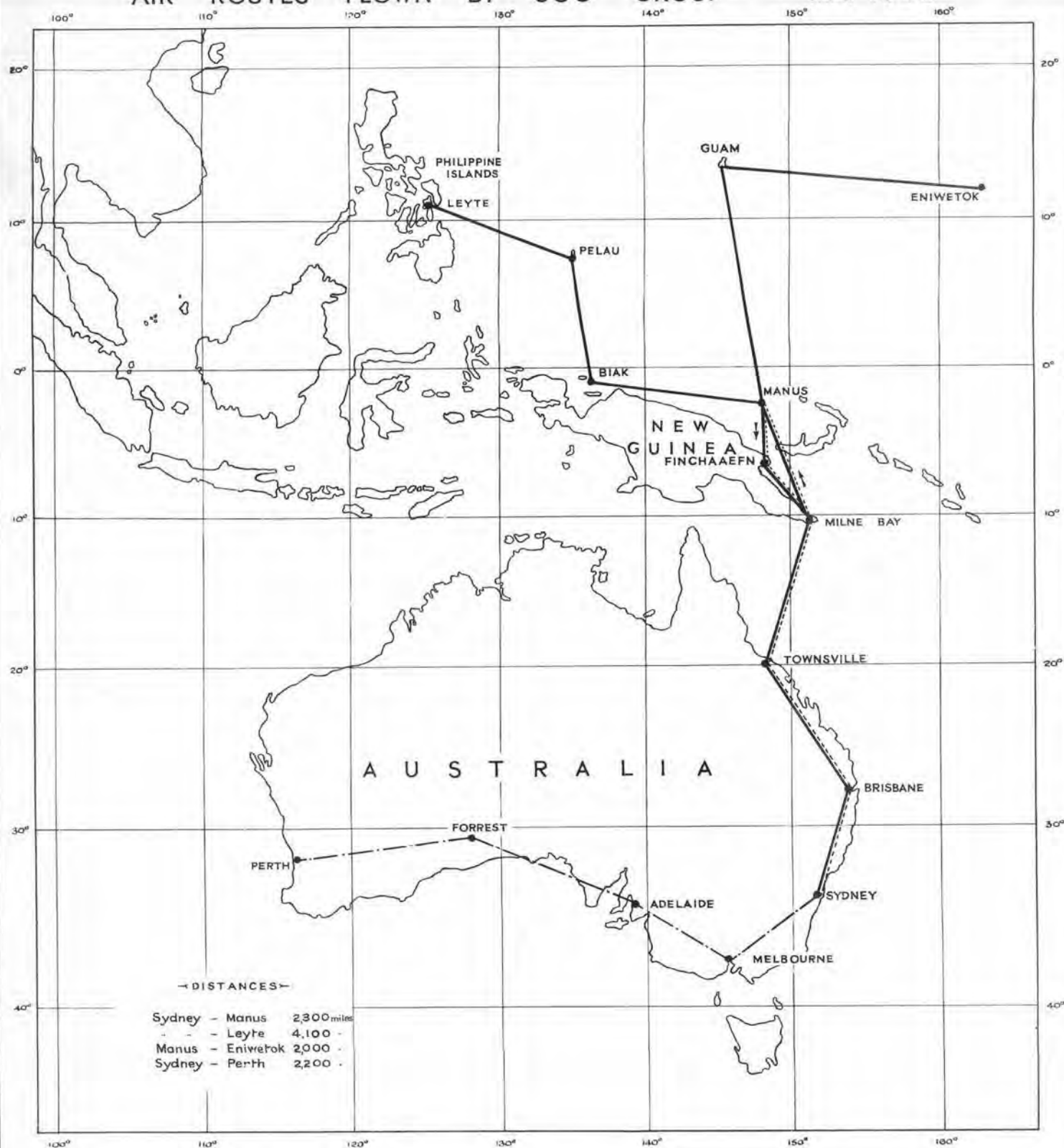


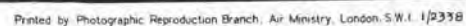
Nº 300. GROUP R. A. F.



--- FIRST SURVEY FLIGHT.

AIR ROUTES FLOWN BY 300 GROUP — MAY 1945





AIR ROUTES FLOWN BY 300 GROUP — DECEMBER 1945

