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THE OPERATIONS OF THE Y-FORCE OPERATIONS STAFF,
U.S. ARMY, IN THE SALWEEN CAMPAIGN, YUNNAN,
CHINA, 10 MAY 1944 - 20 JANUARY 1945
(CHINA OFFENSIVE)
(Personal Experience of a Long Range Infiltra-
tion Patrol Leader)

Type of operation described:
THE CHINESE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN THE ATTACK,
SUPPORTED BY Y-FORCE OPERATIONS STAFF

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INTRODUCTION (See Map A)

This monograph covers the operations of Y-Force Operations Staff, U.S. Army, in support of the Salween Campaign, Yunnan, China, 10 May 1944 - 20 January 1945 in the China offensive. Personal experience of a long range infiltration patrol leader.

By way of orientation, a brief review of events from the early part of 1937 up to the use of American Ground Force personnel in China is necessary.

In the early part of 1937, Japan witnessed the forming of an alliance between Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, leader of the Central Government of China, and the Communist Party. The new alliance meant a united China which gave rise to the possibility of her becoming the leader of all Asia. This was definitely a threat to Japan's power in the Far East. She realized that there was no time to be lost.

During the night 7-8 July 1937 war broke out between China and Japan. The first shot was fired at the Marco Polo Bridge near Peking. (1)

Japan's plan to conquer China consisted of two courses of action:

1. Destroy the military might of China. (2)
2. Destroy the economic and political status of China by capturing her industries, and severing her supply routes with the outside world. (3)

The first course of action was accomplished without much difficulty. At the beginning of the war, the military might of China consisted of approximately 100 divisions, each averaging 5,000 men. (4)

These divisions were not properly organized, trained, or equipped to meet the impact of Japan's modern armies. The Japanese air force possessed complete air superiority in the skies. Tanks were unknown to the Chinese while the Japanese columns led by tanks, struck key industrial centers and

(1) A-1, p.46-47; A-2, p.6; (2,3) A-1, p.48; A-2, p.6; A-7, p.9; (4) A-4; (1,2,3,4) Statements by Lt Tso Shih-Tsun and Lt Wang Hsing, Chinese Army, Advanced Infantry Officers Class No II.

lines of communication with lightning speed. (5)

The greater part of China's military machine collapsed with the fall of Shanghai, main industrial center of China, in November 1937; and Nanking, capital of China, in December of the same year. It was here that Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek placed 80 of his best divisions into action against the Japanese. Combined Japanese ground, air, and naval action defeated the Chinese attackers. The will of the Chinese people to resist was fully exemplified at Shanghai where the flesh and courage of the Chinese soldier met Japanese barrages of steel. (6)

In the second course of action, Japan failed. She had not contended with the spirit of the Chinese people. The incidents of the battles of Shanghai and Nanking had created a bonfire of patriotic fervor that knitted the nation into one family possessed with one thought, that of defeating the Japanese invaders. (7)

As the Japanese armies captured one industrial center after another, China began to move from the coastal areas into the interior. Many industries and higher institutions of learning were evacuated into the mountainous areas of Yunnan and Szechwan. All equipment that was evacuated into the interior had to be moved by hand. The following example serves to illustrate the extent of the evacuation of China's industries into the interior.

The Han-Yan Steel Company, Ta-Yeh Steel Company, and the Liu-Ho-Ko Steel Furnace Company were moved to Szechwan and incorporated into one concern with an output of approximately 30,000 tons per month. (8)

By the summer of 1939, the long evacuation into the interior was over. China evacuated no further. The Japanese armies occupied the industrial centers in Eastern China. New industries were installed along the coast

(5) A-1, p.49; A-2, p.3; (6) A-1, p.51-53; A-2, p.8; Personal Knowledge; Statement of Major General Li Wren-Tow, Chinese Army, a former Regimental Commander in the Battle of Shanghai; (7) A-1, p.54; (5,6,7,8) Statements of Lt Tso Shih-Tsun and Lt Wang Hsing, Chinese Army, Advanced Infantry Officers Class No II; (8) A-4.

and operated at maximum capacity for the Japanese war effort. In the mountains of Western China, the Chinese settled down in new homes; all industries that were salvaged were operating again; and students were attending classes in the universities.

From the summer of 1939 to the early part of 1944, Japan increased her gains in Asia by capturing French Indo-China, Thailand, and Burma. This action closed the Burma Road, the last important supply route between China and the outside world.

In China, all was quiet. The war between the two nations settled down to small isolated incidents rather than large scale operations. Japan's policy in China now was primarily one of economic strangulation. During this period China was organizing new armies in preparation for future operations against Japan. (9)

With the closing of the Burma Road, China was completely blockaded from the outside world. However she continued to resist the enemy. The only means of supply during this time was over the Himalaya Mountains by air. But the tonnage of supplies delivered over this route was not enough to permit any decisive action against the enemy. (10)

GENERAL SITUATION

Following the Casablanca conference in January 1943 between the Combined Chiefs of Staff, additional aid was authorized for China. It was directed that the blockade of China be cut and a surface road be re-established with China to handle the added tonnage of supplies. The general plan was to organize, train, and equip an efficient combat force in the minimum time to drive the enemy out of North Burma and Western China and reopen the Burma Road. (11)

Let us examine the plan in more detail. To the west of Burma, the remnants of the Chinese 22d and 38th Divisions that had escaped to India from Burma in 1942, were to be equipped with American equipment and trained

(9) A-1, p.55-61; A-2, p.10; A-3, p.115-116; A-5, p.54-57; (10) A-6, p.22; (9,10) Statements of Lt Tso Shih-Tsun and Lt Wang Hsing, Chinese Army, Advanced Infantry Officers Course No. II; (11) A-1, p.146; A-5, p.55.

in its use by American personnel at Camp Ramgarh, India. Additional units were flown from China and similarly equipped and trained. Later these troops, under the command of American officers, would be used to spearhead the attack of Allied Forces to drive the Japanese from North Burma in conjunction with the Salween Campaign. Immediately to the rear of this attack American and Chinese engineers were to construct the Ledo Road, the connecting link between the supply bases in India and the Burma Road in China.

In the western part of Yunnan, China, training centers were established at Kunming. Units of the Chinese Expeditionary Force in defensive positions on the Salween River front, were to be rotated to the rear areas and similarly trained and equipped. These troops would be used in the Salween Campaign to attack the Japanese forces along the Salween River, thus forming a pincer movement. When the two forces met, the blockade of China would be cut and the Ledo-Burma Road would provide the much needed land route to carry the added tonnage of war material for the Chinese Armies. (12)

THE SALWEEN CAMPAIGN

THE PREPARATIONS PHASE

It was realized that the combat efficiency of the Chinese troops could be increased if they were equipped by the United States and the other allied nations. However it was necessary to reorganize and retrain these troops to obtain maximum use of the equipment. To accomplish this mission, Y-Force Operations Staff was organized with headquarters in Kunming, China. The task of reorganizing, equipping, and training the Chinese Expeditionary Force for the Salween Campaign began in the early part of 1943. (13)

Y-Force Operations Staff was composed entirely of American personnel from all branches of service of the United States Army and commanded by Brigadier General Frank Dorn. In broad terms, the mission of Y-Force Operations Staff was to advise and assist in every possible way with the training; receipt and distribution of American equipment and supplies in the field; and with the planning and execution of tactical operations by the Chinese (12) A-1, p.155-156; Personal Knowledge; (13) A-1, p.156; A-8,p.1; A-9, p.61.

Expeditionary Force. Its mission did not include any command function over the Chinese units. All Chinese forces remained under Chinese command at all times. (14)

Let us examine the activities of Y-Force Operations Staff during the preparation phase for the Salween Campaign.

An Infantry Training Center was established on the western outskirts of Kunming in April 1943 to provide instruction by Y-Force Operations Staff personnel, aided by interpreters, in the following subjects:

1. Effective use and maintenance of American weapons.
2. Effective use and maintenance of American signal equipment.
3. Effective use and maintenance of American engineer equipment.
4. Ordnance.
5. Minor tactics.
6. First aid and medical evacuation.
7. Care of animals.

On the northern outskirts of Kunming, an Artillery Training Center was established to provide instruction in Field Artillery tactics, technique, and maintenance. (15)

Time and adequate facilities were not available at Kunming to provide proper training for all units of the Chinese Expeditionary Force. To overcome these deficiencies, selected officer personnel from the different Chinese Armies were ordered to attend courses at the different training centers. After completing the course they returned to establish similar courses of instruction for officers and enlisted men within their units. This training was closely supervised by Y-Force Operations Staff Field Liaison Teams who operated in an advisory capacity. (16)

The mission of each team also included technical aid, professional aid, and organizing and equipping the unit with American equipment as the items arrived. The structural organization of a team was dependent upon the size of the Chinese unit to which it was assigned. Colonel Spengler writes that the organization of a team assigned to an Infantry Division was as follows:

(14) A-8, p.1; A-9, p.61; Personal Knowledge; (15) A-6, p.22; A-8, p.1; A-9, p.61-64; Personal Knowledge; (16) A-8, p.1-2; A-9, p.61-64; Personal Knowledge.

"For each division receiving American equipment, there was to be an American group consisting of a group commander, S-1, S-2, S-3, S-4, headquarters commandant, signal officer, medical officer, veterinary officer, six infantry officer instructors, and sufficient enlisted personnel to serve as radio operators, assistant instructors, clerks and medical technicians, a total of approximately twenty-seven officers and men." All divisions with organic artillery battalions also had four artillery officers and five enlisted men in addition to the above group. Later in the operations phase, each team accompanied their respective unit into combat to continue in their advisory capacity. (17)

Meanwhile American equipment and supplies were being flown in added quantities into China from supply bases in India. The Air Transport Command flew day and night over the Himalaya route to build up the needed supplies and equipment for the coming campaign. All classes of supplies were included in the cargoes. These were distributed to the Chinese units with the least delay, by any and all means of transportation available.

Simultaneous with reorganization, equipping, and training, plans for the Salween Campaign were being formulated at the Chinese Expeditionary Force headquarters, assisted by members of Y-Force Operations Staff. (18)

THE TERRAIN (See Map B)

The Salween front extends parallel to the Salween River for approximately 170 miles. Its northern flank lies in the vicinity of Lushui, 65 miles northeast of Tengchung, and its southern flank in the vicinity of Kunlong, 80 miles south of Lungling. The Burma Road passing through Lungling, almost bisects the front. (19)

The Salween River, better known by the Chinese as "Angry River" flows through a deep gorge in the mountains of western Yunnan. The surface of the river is almost 3,000 feet above sea level with mountains on both sides towering almost vertically 9,000 feet and more above the river bed. The river is rarely more than 150 yards wide, but it runs deep and cold. Its water

(17) A-8, p.1; A-9, p.62; Personal Knowledge; (18) Personal Knowledge; (19) Personal Knowledge.

flows at approximately 12 miles per hour. In the 170 miles of front there are 17 ferries which can be used. The three bridges across the Salween in this area were destroyed to stop the Japanese advance in 1942.

West of the Salween River in the northern part of the combat area, the area of the main effort, lie the Kaoli Kung Mountains rising sharply to elevations averaging 11,000 feet. The Kaoli Kung ridge line is parallel to the Salween and forms the southern spur of the Himalaya Mountains. There are three passes through these mountains, Hpimaw Pass (9,000 feet), Mamien Pass (11,430 feet), and the pass on the trail from Mengta Ferry at Chiangtso (11,410 feet). Trails are precipitous and dangerous, and in many places so narrow as to permit passage of pack trains only in single file.

The western slope of the Kaoli Kung range drops gradually to the Shweli River forming the Shweli River Valley averaging 6,000 feet elevation. Combat in this area was less difficult topographically as compared to that in the Kaoli Kung mountains.

The mountains continue south of the Kaoli Kung range. The average elevation of the southern mountain range is approximately 8,000 feet. The Burma Road passes through the area formed by the Kaoli Kung range and the Shweli River northeast to Lungling. From here it continues in a northeasterly direction over the Kaoli Kung ridge at an elevation of 7,500 feet.

Due to the ruggedness of the area it is sparsely populated. Cities, towns, villages, and small settlements lie in valleys through which the rivers and their tributaries flow, and along roads and trails over the mountains. The characteristics of the terrain did not permit a continuous battle front nor even a continuous line of supply along normal military lines.

In this area the monsoon season begins in the middle of May and terminates in the middle of October. During this period the torrential rains turn the rivers into roaring torrents. The mountain trails become slippery mud which makes it difficult to maintain footing. In the Kaoli Kung Mountains the precipitation changes to sleet and snow, while fog and mist constantly hamper visibility. In the valleys below the climate is practically tropical.

(20)

(20)A-10, p.321; A-11, p. 41; A-12, p.19-20; A-13, p.54-55; Personal Knowledge.

THE PLAN OF ATTACK (See Map C)

The plan for the Salween Campaign to drive the Japanese from southwest China and reopen the Burma Road involved two main thrusts by five separate task forces in a coordinated attack across the Salween River, and a sixth task force to retain the Japanese in the Kunlong area. (The designation of these forces by letters, as given below, is purely for convenience of reference.)

Task Force A - to cross the river at the Mengku Ferry, drive west through Mamien Pass to the Shweli River, south through Chiatou to Kaitou, and continue south to assist in a coordinated attack on Tengchung.

Task Force B - to cross the river at the Mengta Ferry, drive west through Tatangtzu and the pass to Chiangtso, on to Watien on the Shweli River, and then south along the Shweli to assist in the coordinated attack on Tengchung.

Task Force C - to cross the river at Hwei Jen Bridge area, attack west through Hungmoshu to Laochai to Kanlanchai. It would then be in a position for a westward drive on Tengchung.

After the capture of Tengchung, Task Forces A, B, and C would advance south to assist Task Forces E and F in a coordinated effort to drive the Japanese from Lungling, Mangshih, Chefang, and Wanting.

Task Force D - to cross the river at the Tahai Ferry and attack north to capture Lameng and Chenanso to permit the rebuilding of the Hwei Tung Bridge which carries the Burma Road across the Salween River. It would then be in position for a drive to the southwest on Lungling.

Task Force E - to cross the river in the Santsun area and attack through Pingka and Hsiangta to Mangshih. These two forces were aimed at cutting the Burma Road to prevent any Japanese reinforcements from the south.

After the fall of Tengchung, Lungling, and Mangshih, the Chinese forces would then be in a position for a drive down the Burma Road to Wanting on the China-Burma border, thus opening the road in southwest China.

Task Force F - to start well east of the Salween River, drive back the enemy forces which had crossed the river in the Kunlong area and continue the advance to capture the city. From Kunlong, continue the attack along the motor road which runs due west forty miles to the Burma Road at Hsenwi. This force represented a secondary effort to keep the Japanese forces occupied in that sector and prevent the enemy from sending reinforcements to the north.

By 1 May, four Chinese Armies on the Salween front were considered sufficiently trained for offensive combat. These four armies, totalling about 100,000 men, were organized into the 11th Army Group and the 20th Army Group. These units comprised the Chinese Expeditionary Force commanded by General Wei Li-Huang.

Japanese forces to the west of the Salween River had occupied the area west to the India-Burma border for almost two years. They had prepared strong defensive positions in and outside of cities, towns, and villages, and were entrenched firmly throughout the mountains. The Japanese forces on the Salween front consisted of the 18th Division on the north, 56th Division in the center, and the 37th Division on the south. (21)

THE OPERATIONS PHASE (See Map D)

The Chinese 20th Army Group, commanded by General Huo Kuei-Chang, was organized into Task Forces A, B, and C. The 11th Army Group, commanded by General Sung Hsi-Iien, was organized into Task Forces D, E, and F. On 10 May these units were poised on the east bank of the Salween prepared to assault the west bank during darkness.

On the night 10-11 May 1944, troops of all Task Forces began to cross the Salween River according to plan. American Field Liaison Teams accompanied these troops into action. This marked the beginning of China's first major offensive on Chinese soil in more than seven years of war against Japan. The Chinese troops crossed in pneumatic rubber boats furnished by American engineers of Y-Force Operations Staff. The crossings were further expedited (21) Personal Knowledge.

by using bamboo rafts and rafts supported by empty oil drums. The initial river crossings were performed efficiently and quietly without incident, suffering one casualty by drowning. This can be attributed to river crossing training and rehearsals earlier on the Mekong River, east of the Salween River, under close direction and supervision of American engineers.

The Japanese forces on the western bank at all crossings were completely surprised by the attack. At dawn the Japanese forces came to life and resisted the attack with small arms, automatic fire, mortars, and artillery. But this opposition was beaten off by the Chinese troops advancing up the steep slopes, aided by the supporting fires of friendly forces on the east bank.

North of the Burma Road, Task Force A completed its crossing of the Salween River before midnight on 11 May. One column advanced to the southwest, by-passed Lengshuikuo and the Mamien Pass, and continued toward the Shweli River. A second column reached Mamien Pass and were in position to attack the Japanese fortified positions in that area on 15 May.

Efforts to reduce the Japanese positions in the Mamien Pass area were hampered by difficult terrain, weather, logistical problems, and the fanaticism of the enemy. Mamien Kwan, just west of the pass, was captured by the Chinese on 18 May. On 22 May an attack was launched to capture Chaikungtang, two miles northwest of Lengshuikuo, and two days later attacks on Lengshuikuo itself began. These attacks continued until 14 June, when the Japanese units withdrew westward into the Shweli River Valley, followed by the Chinese.

Meanwhile the first column which had by-passed Mamien Pass, advanced westward, attacked and captured the Japanese strongpoint of Chiatou on 17 May. A week later they captured Kaitou, 4 miles to the south. But Japanese counterattacks, with reinforcements from Watien, drove the Chinese units from Kaitou on 26 May, and Chiatou on 28 May. Chiatou changed hands two times in the next two weeks, and Kaitou changed hands once more. The second column, successful in clearing the Japanese positions in the Mamien Pass

area joined the first column on 15 June and gave the added strength necessary to capture Chiatou and Kaitou on 16 June, driving the enemy to the south.

Task Force B crossed the Salween River at Mengta Ferry and advanced toward Tatangtzu. Initial contact was established with the Japanese east and northeast of Tatangtzu on 12 May. On 13 May a Japanese counterattack drove the attackers back towards the river, but Chinese reinforcements on the following day drove the enemy back into the town. Another attack to capture the town was launched but without success. Chinese efforts to capture Tatangtzu were finally successful on 23 May when additional strength was brought up.

From Tatangtzu the Chinese attack developed into two movements, one in Chiangtso and the other on Watien. On 3 June Tapa, 1 mile south of Chiangtso, was captured. A Japanese counterattack on 5 June was repulsed but another counterattack on the following day, supported by reinforcements and artillery, drove the Chinese out of Tapa into defensive positions to the south of the village.

The drive on Watien followed a similar pattern. On 29 May villages surrounding Watien on the northeast, east, and southeast were captured by the Chinese. Japanese counterattacks drove the Chinese from their newly gained villages on 3 June. Chinese counterattacks on the following day recovered the villages.

On 10 June units of Task Force B were holding defensive positions around Chiangtso and Watien in readiness for favorable conditions to renew attacks on the two towns.

Chinese units of Task Force A moving from Kaitou, joined with Task Force B on 18 June in the Watien area. With the added strength of Task Force A, attacks on Watien and Chiangtso were launched on the following day. Watien fell to the Chinese on 20 June, and Chiangtso on the 21st. The enemy withdrew across the Shweli River toward Tengchung followed closely by the Chinese. By 22 June Task Forces A and B had moved passed Chuchih and Poshangtsun to within 10 miles of Tengchung where they went into defensive positions awaiting further instructions.

Task Force C completed crossing the Salween River on the evening of 11 May and the following day were engaged with the Japanese northeast of Hungmoshu. The town was captured on 15 May. The usual Japanese counter-attacks prolonged the operations in this area for almost a month. On 17 May the enemy recaptured Hungmoshu but it fell again to the Chinese in an attack on 20 May. A Japanese counterattack on 29 May drove the Chinese out again. Finally on 12 June the Chinese forces launched a coordinated attack, captured Hungmoshu, and drove the enemy westward through Laochai and across the Shweli River. By 15 June Chinese units had taken up defensive positions 10 miles east of Tengchung.

The Chinese operations in the Kaoli Kung Mountains and the Shweli River Valley by units of the 20th Army Group were now completed. Approximately 4,000 square miles of Japanese held territory had been regained in some 40 days of operations. The Chinese forces now occupied defensive positions to the north and east of Tengchung, preparing to launch a coordinated assault on the Japanese stronghold. (22)

On 27 June the Chinese 20th Army Group launched a coordinated attack to capture Tengchung. This attack was supported by fighters and bombers of the 14th U.S. Air Force with the coordination of Y-Force Operations Staff.

Chinese forces moving to the southwest, captured Mienching on 28 June 7 miles west of Tengchung. Elimination of Japanese positions in the hills surrounding Tengchung on the east, north, and west continued.

On 1 July, the capture of Laifengshan, a well fortified hill in the outer defenses of Tengchung was effected. The attack and subsequent capture of this hill illustrates the assistance rendered by Y-Force Operations Staff personnel.

The plan of attack on Laifengshan was formulated by the Chinese with the assistance of the accompanying American personnel. A thorough reconnaissance of the position was made by officers of units concerned, employing American reconnaissance principles. When the attack was launched, units were employed in a coordinated effort instead of the piece-meal fashion (22) Personal Knowledge.

often dictated by Chinese military tradition. Troops continued to advance steadily after capturing intermediate objectives, instead of the usual pause for consolidation, thereby preventing the enemy to regain the initiative. American flamethrowers were flown to the area and quick instruction in their use was given by American engineers. American personnel accompanying the attacking troops spotted targets for the 14th Air Force fighters and bombers supporting the attack. In the reduction of the hill, the Chinese killed or wounded over 600 enemy, captured a considerable quantity of materiel, and repulsed several Japanese counterattacks, each of battalion strength.

Chinese units continued to move south and southeast of the city, cutting the Tengchung-Lungling Road. Several fortified positions surrounding the air strip, southeast of Tengchung, were taken on 5 July while other units advancing from the east captured Tatung on the same day. These units continued to move down the road, eliminating Japanese resistance making contact with units of Task Force D at Chiaotoukai on 10 August.

In the vicinity of Tengchung Chinese units had advanced up to within half a mile of the city walls on all sides by 6 July. The period 6 to 29 July was devoted to eliminating all enemy resistance in the suburbs as the advance continued toward the walls of the city. By nightfall 29 July, all areas outside of the city walls were in Chinese possession. All units were ordered to dig in and reorganize in preparation for the assault on the high walls of Tengchung. Strong enemy attempts to break the encirclement around the city were repulsed with many casualties on both sides.

The city of Tengchung was not an easy objective to take. It was a natural fortress, completely surrounded by a wall approximately 30 feet high and 8 feet wide at the top, sheer in the front and sloping down to thicknesses of 15 feet or more inside the city. On these walls the Japanese had constructed hundreds of pillboxes which had to be captured individually by the attackers. Compounds and temple areas throughout the city had also been fortified into strongpoints.

On 2 August Chinese attempts to breach the walls with artillery, mortars, and rockets failed. On the following day 14th Air Force Mitchell bombers,

using skip-bombing technique, made gaps through the walls in the southwest corner of the city. Chinese units assaulted through the gap shortly after the bombing and proceeded to engage Japanese strongpoints with small arms fire, rockets, and flamethrowers.

American Air Force fighters and bombers strafed and bombed Tengchung again on 4 August, making two additional breaks in the southeast portion of the wall. Friendly forces assaulted through the gaps to engage enemy units inside the city. On the night of the same day, Chinese forces battling in the southwest part of the city were forced to withdraw under pressure of strong enemy counterattacks. Similar counterattacks to eliminate Chinese units in the southeast portion of Tengchung were repulsed by small arms fire and flamethrowers.

On 7 August the assaulting troops used scaling ladders to scale the northwest portion of the wall. Flamethrowers, rockets, and grenades were used to eliminate enemy pillboxes and other defensive positions on the wall.

Tengchung was captured on 14 September after a bitter fight lasting 51 days. Heavy casualties were suffered by the attackers due to the hand fighting. The hundreds of pillboxes on the walls and in the compounds within the city had to be eliminated one by one. In many cases pillboxes were destroyed by pouring gasoline through small embrasures and then firing them with flamethrowers. With the fall of Tengchung the Japanese power in this area was broken.

After the fall of Tengchung all units of the 20th Army Group were reorganized, additional supplies and equipment distributed, and preparations made to move south to assist 11th Army Group in a coordinated attack on Lungling and Mangshih. After the reorganization period the Chinese 20th Army Group, less the Fifty-third Army, advanced southeast on the Tengchung-Lungling Road toward Lungling.

The Fifty-third Army, commanded by General Chou Fu-Cheng, advanced south with the mission of eliminating all Japanese resistance in the Shweli River Valley west of the Burma Road. (23)

(23) Personal Knowledge.

South of the Burma Road, Task Force D crossed the Salween River at Tahei Ferry and by midnight of 11 May were advancing northward toward Lameng and Chenanso. On 14 May the rear of Task Force D was attacked by the Japanese, inflicting heavy casualties. Continuous harassing action by the enemy forced the Chinese to take up defensive positions about 10 miles to the southeast of Lameng. Reinforcements were sent across the Salween on 28 May to strengthen the Chinese units.

On 4 June Task Force D attacked and captured the village of Lameng, the first Burma Road village west of the Salween. The Japanese withdrew to strong fortified hill positions north of Lameng.

This area consists of a series of mountain peaks. Shungshan, the principal peak, dominates the entire area. Almost every peak and village in the area contained strong pillboxes. The mountain walls were cut by deep curving caves and tunnels which the enemy used for communications and protection from bombings. Japanese light tanks were dug into the mountain side and used as fortified artillery positions.

From here Task Force D was organized into two columns. The first column was given the mission of reducing these positions while the second column advanced down the Burma Road toward Lungling.

On 15 June the Chinese launched their attack to reduce the positions in the Shungshan area. Tayakou, southwest of Shungshan, was captured on the first day. Two days later the Chinese troops stormed up the almost vertical slopes of Yingtungshan to capture the second peak in the area. American antiaircraft batteries were placed on this peak and later employed to fire direct fire in support of Chinese attacks on other positions. Only Shungshan and Kunglungpo, which dominated the Burma Road to the southwest, remained to be reduced. From 17 June to 1 July, reorganization and preparations for full scale assault on these enemy-held positions were made. Meanwhile action was limited to patrolling.

Under the supervision of Y-Force Operations Staff personnel friendly artillery fire from the east bank of the Salween bombarded the Japanese

positions almost daily. American antiaircraft batteries on Yingtungshan added to the artillery fire in the softening-up process.

On 4 July a special combat team which was specially trained and rehearsed under supervision of American personnel for the operation, attacked Shungshan and Kunglungpo with demolitions, flamethrowers, and rockets, supported by artillery, mortars, and small arms automatic fire. The attack was repulsed and the Chinese were driven back down the slopes. Several more attempts to reduce the heavily fortified enemy positions were made by the Chinese without success.

On 20 August Chinese engineers, under direction of Y-Force Operations Staff officers, planted 6,000 pounds of dynamite under the main Japanese positions and blew the peak and its defenders into oblivion. This was the beginning of the final assaults which ended with the extermination of the Japanese defenders on 7 September. Of the estimated 2,000 enemy on Shungshan, nine were captured, ten escaped. Chinese casualties in this operation ^{was} ~~was~~ approximately 7,700.

The Shungshan operation had reduced the strength of this force considerably. It was reinforced with Chinese units from the French Indo-China front. Following a reorganization the Chinese troops advanced southwest along the Burma Road to form a junction with the second column of Task Force D in the vicinity of Lungling.

Meanwhile, the second column of Task Force D advancing down the Burma Road, captured Chenanso on 8 June. Two days later the Japanese in Lungling were surprised and the city captured without many casualties to either side. But enemy reinforcements moving up the Burma Road from Mangshih in the south and down the Tengchung-Lungling Road in the north, forced the Chinese to withdraw on 17 June. The Chinese withdrew to defensive positions 5 miles to the northeast, east, and southeast of the city. A portion of this force moved around to the north of Lungling to effect a junction with units of the 20th Army Group advancing south from Tengchung, and to cut the Tengchung-Lungling Road near Chiaotoukai. The Japanese made numerous attacks on the Chinese positions to force them to withdraw from the Lungling area, but were unsuccessful.

On 5 July the Chinese resumed the initiative and launched an attack to drive the enemy from Lungling again. Heavy monsoon rains limited the operation to small local skirmishes and intensive patrolling by the Chinese. Continued attacks on limited objectives by the Chinese improved their tactical positions. The occupation of the hills around Lungling changed hands several times with the Chinese gradually pressing forward. This pressure was maintained on the enemy until 25 September at which time the Chinese occupied defensive positions surrounding the city on the north, east, and south.

Meanwhile, on 10 August troops north of Lungling contacted the 20th Army Group units moving to the south from Tengchung.

The Chinese force which had been successful in reducing Shungshan, joined the second column of Task Force D northeast of Lungling on 11 September. Task Force D was again intact.

From 25 September to 29 October, there was little activity in the Lungling-Mangshih sector. Monsoon rains confined the operations to minor skirmishes and patrol activities. The Chinese forces took this opportunity to regroup their units, collect supplies, and prepare for the final assault in Lungling.

A coordinated attack to capture Lungling was launched on 29 October. Throughout the attack, American Air Force fighters and bombers flew strafing sorties and bombed the city in support of the Chinese ground attack. The continuous fire from Chinese positions in the hills surrounding Lungling forced the enemy to withdraw into the hills to the west on the night 2-3 November. Chinese forces moved into the city early on the morning of 3 November and found a shattered city with scarcely a building standing intact. From Lungling units of the Chinese Expeditionary Force, less Task Force F and the Fifty-third Army, continued the advance down the Burma Road preparatory to launching a coordinated attack to drive the remaining Japanese from Mangshih, Chefang, and Wanting. (24)

(24) Personal Knowledge.

Task Force E crossed the Salween in the vicinity of Santsun, advanced eastward, and attacked Pingka on 12 May. It fell on 15 May. At this point, Task Force E was organized into two columns. One column remained to continue mopping up operations in the Pingka area while the second column proceeded northwest to attack the village of Hsiangta.

On 23 May Japanese reinforcements launched a counterattack and recaptured Pingka. Chinese attempts to retake the town were unsuccessful. Fighting continued in the Pingka area through 13 July.

On 13 July an enemy force estimated to be a reinforced battalion, attempted to reinforce the Pingka garrison. This column was engaged by Chinese troops from 13 to 16 July. During the night 16-17 July, the Japanese column divided into several forces and launched a coordinated attack on the Chinese from the west, south, and north attempting to penetrate the defenses around the town, but were unsuccessful. Simultaneously the Pingka garrison endeavored unsuccessfully to break through and join the relief column. Successive attacks by the enemy column were repulsed with considerable Japanese casualties. The remainder of the column withdrew towards Mangshih on 18 July.

Other columns from Mangshih attempted to relieve the Pingka garrison during the next two months, all without success. On the night 22-23 September, a Japanese column estimated at one battalion engaged the Chinese in the hills around Pingka. During the attack, the Pingka garrison succeeded in withdrawing from the town. All enemy forces in the area withdrew towards Mangshih, closely pursued by the Chinese. This column joined the second column of the Task Force which had established a road block three miles northeast of Mangshih.

Meanwhile units of the second column which had advanced toward Hsiangta, occupied positions in the surrounding hills on 10 June. On 13 June, the Chinese captured the village, driving the enemy westward toward Mangshih. Heavily reinforced, the Japanese counterattacked on 14 June and recaptured Hsiangta. However they were unable to take advantage of their success and could not drive the Chinese from all positions around the village. The

Chinese regained the initiative on 19 June and recaptured Hsiangta in a night assault on 24-25 June, driving out all enemy troops from this area.

From Hsiangta the Chinese continued to advance west over the Mangshih-Hsiangta Road. On 26 June they succeeded in cutting the Burma Road 3 miles northeast of Mangshih. No attempt was made to attack the city. Until the assault on Mangshih the activities of Task Force E were confined to harassing the enemy communications in the Lungling-Mangshih area. (25)

With the loss of Lungling, the Japanese in Mangshih began to withdraw the major portion of their forces to the southwest along the Burma Road. Enemy forces in the Shweli River area withdrew following the river towards Wanting.

American air spotters on the ground directed 14th Air Force fighters and bombers to Japanese supply dumps, troop concentrations, truck columns, fortifications, and many other vital installations in the Mangshih, Chefang, and Wanting areas. The 14th Air Force flew two to three missions each day in the softening-up process preceding the ground attack.

Japanese resistance in the entire area to the south of Lungling was confined entirely to a delaying action. Mangshih was captured on 20 November and Chefang on 1 December. The retreating enemy moved into defensive positions in Wanting on the Burma-China border in an attempt to halt the attacking Chinese. Wanting fell on the night of 20-21 January 1945. With the capture of Wanting, all Japanese were cleared from Yunnan Province. (26)

Further to the south Task Force F started its advance to the west toward Kunlong on 11 May in conjunction with the assaults across the Salween by Task Forces A, B, C, D, and E. On 17 May, it made contact with the Japanese in the Hopang area, 6 miles east of Kunlong. Hopang was captured on 28 May. With the capture of Hopang, the Chinese organized defensive positions and there was little activity in this area for the remainder of the campaign. However, a large Japanese force was kept engaged preventing reinforcements for the enemy units fighting in the north.

(25,26) Personal Knowledge.

THE ENDING OF THE SALWEEN CAMPAIGN

The Salween Campaign ended on 20 January 1945, concluding the first successful major offensive waged against the Japanese by the Chinese in over seven years of war on Chinese soil. The campaign to break the Japanese blockade around China was over and a land supply route via India from the United States and other allied nations was open.

On 4 February 1945, the first land-route convoy over the Ledo-Burma Road reached Kunming from India. This convoy of American military vehicles and military supplies for China, driven by both American and Chinese drivers was the first to reach China from the outside world by a land route since 5 May 1942.

In opening this road, the Chinese Expeditionary Force had suffered many casualties. The units were forced to assault Japanese defensive positions which had been in the process of construction for two years. Some of these positions were located on mountain peaks and had to be attacked up almost vertical slopes practically bare of cover.

In summarizing the casualties, more than 40,000 Chinese casualties were suffered during the campaign. Of this number, approximately 17,000 died of battle wounds, about 2,000 died of diseases, and more than 21,000 were wounded in action. Of the enemy casualties, approximately 15,000 were estimated killed in action. (27)

SUMMARY OF SUPPORT BY Y-FORCE OPERATIONS STAFF

During the campaign, officers and men of almost every branch of the American Army ~~was~~ represented among the liaison teams accompanying the Chinese units in the field. The Chinese soldier's expression of "Ding Ho" (meaning "the best") for the American officers and men speaks for the support rendered by Y-Force Operations Staff towards the success of the first major offensive against the Japanese in China.

The support rendered by the American personnel may be summarized briefly as follows:

(27) A-6, p.24; Personal Knowledge.

1. Y-Force Operations Staff personnel constantly rendered advice on all tactical plans and operations.
2. Artillery officers supervised the placing and firing of the American-supplied 75mm pack howitzers.
3. American personnel directed artillery fire, in many cases, on the ground and from the air.
4. American engineers supervised the use of American river crossing materiel in the assaults across the Salween and in subsequent river crossings.
5. They also supervised the use of demolitions, and gave instruction in the use of engineer equipment.
6. The engineers further supervised the construction of bridges across the many rivers in the area. (28)
7. Many roads and trails, notably the Burma Road, were maintained and kept open by the engineers. (29)
8. L-5 planes, attached to Y-Force Operations Staff, performed supply missions, acted as couriers, and evacuated wounded under the most adverse conditions of weather and enemy air activity.
9. American tactical air control parties were responsible for the destruction of many targets by the 14th Air Force fighters and bombers.
10. All landing strips were operated under direct supervision of American personnel.
11. In the rear, American supply personnel expedited the delivery of all classes of supplies by trucks along the Burma Road, by pack trains or laborers over the mountain trails, or by air dropping. (30)
12. The American Troop Carrier Command, in coordination with Y-Force Operations Staff, supplied Chinese ground forces operating in areas inaccessible to motor transportation.
13. All supplies dropped by the American Troop Carrier Command were packed by Y-Force Operations Staff Air Dropping Detachment. (31)
14. American personnel were used at all air-drop fields.

(28) Personal Knowledge; (29) A-12, p.18; Personal Knowledge; (30) Personal Knowledge; (31) A-11, p.40; Personal Knowledge.

15. American personnel supervised the use of Chinese truck regiments in moving supplies. Later American SOS personnel took over all motor transport to further expedite the movement of supplies to the using units.

16. The use of communications were constantly supervised by American signal corps personnel.

17. Medical support was rendered by American medical personnel assigned to the Chinese units. In addition, the 21st and 22nd American Field Hospitals supported the entire campaign. Over 15,000 Chinese casualties were treated by American medical personnel. Of this figure approximately 5 per cent died, a low figure considering the many difficulties of terrain, supply, and climatic conditions.

18. American veterinary officers and men personally cared for the animal transport. Pack animals were used to a very large extent in the mountainous terrain.

19. Much needed information of the enemy and the terrain to the west of the Salween was obtained by long range infiltration patrols.

a. The first of a number of long range infiltration patrols was organized under the G-2 section in the latter part of August 1943. Its mission was to obtain information of the enemy and terrain in the area of Pingka-Mangtui-Mangshih-Hsiangta. The patrol was organized into two groups; an American group of two officers, one enlisted man, and two interpreters, and a Chinese group of ten officers. Due to the American group having no command function over the Chinese group and vice versa, it was necessary that close cooperation and a friendly attitude be maintained at all times between the two groups. In the latter part of September the patrol successfully infiltrated across the Salween River after a decision had been reached whereby all uniforms were discarded in favor of civilian attire. The mission was successfully accomplished in the latter part of November without any serious casualties.

b. Another long range infiltration patrol, similarly organized, penetrated the enemy lines in the latter part of February 1944. Its mission was to obtain information of the enemy, attitude of civilian population, and the terrain west of the Burma Road to the Nam Ti River, with special emphasis

on the Tengchung-Kuicheng Road. Information obtained added materially in the success of the Salween Campaign.

c. The advance of the Fifty-third Army in the area to the west of the Burma Road and the capture of Mangshih and Chefang were aided materially by a similar patrol operating in the hills to the west of Mangshih. This patrol had penetrated the enemy positions in the early part of November 1944 with the mission of obtaining information of the enemy activities in Mangshih, Chefang, and the hills west to the Shweli River.

20. Additional intelligence support was rendered from aerial photographs furnished by the American Air Force in support of the ground attack through coordination with Y-Force Operations Staff.

21. During the campaign, Y-Force Operations Staff personnel continued to train and equip officer and enlisted replacements in training centers at Kunming.

22. Training in higher level staff duties was given in the General Staff School at Kunming, organized during the early phase of the campaign. (32)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

A study of this operation shows that the logistical and tactical principles taught in our service schools are sound.

The success of the entire Salween Campaign depended on American equipment and supplies; training of Chinese units in their proper use; and correct employment of our logistical and tactical principles.

Formerly the armament of the Chinese Armies consisted of a conglomeration of weapons from many countries. The infantry soldier was armed either with a 7.9mm German Mauser type rifle or the muzzle loading rifle of our civil war days. There were French, Russian, German, and Japanese machine guns. Anti-tank weapons included the English 20mm Boy's antitank rifle. Artillery pieces were confined to German and Russian guns of World War I. We can realize that the logistical problems concerning class V supplies alone would be a tremendous task under these conditions. In supplying the Chinese Expeditionary Force with American arms, two objectives were accomplished.

(32) Personal Knowledge.

1. The logistical problems were reduced considerably.

2. For the first time since the start of the war, Chinese units possessed arms equal to and better than the Japanese weapons. (33)

THE American logistical principle of maintaining a continuous flow of supplies regularly from rear to front was heretofore unheard of in Chinese military operations. In the Salween Campaign motor transport; animal transport to include oxen, coolies; and air transport to include large troop carriers and L-5 liaison planes were utilized to keep the front line soldier supplied. This problem was especially difficult in view of the terrain and weather conditions. Our basic principles governing supply were proven to be sound.

The overall plan of the operation conforms to the principle of simplicity. However more consideration should have been given to the terrain and weather conditions as they affect the soldier. In the battles for Mamien Pass and Tatangtzu, over 10,000 American raincoats had to be air-dropped to the Chinese troops for protection against the combination of altitude, sleet, and snow. This action saved many from ^[EXHAUSTION DUE TO] exposure to the elements.

The successful coordinated assault across the Salween River by the Chinese Task Forces shows the value derived from prior training and rehearsals. Without prior training, confusion at the river crossings might have alerted the Japanese positions and delayed the campaign for some time. Also the successes of small unit tactics throughout the campaign, tactics which were foreign to Chinese principles, further illustrated the value of prior training.

But at the same time the campaign indicated two strong weaknesses in the training program. First, a complete lack of training to reorganize a position for counterattacks after capturing an objective. The enemy's counterattacks were successful in most cases. Secondly, no training was given in the attack of a walled city. This was a glaring weakness in that it was a known fact that most cities and towns in the western part of China are surrounded by thick walls. These weaknesses resulted in the needless expenditure of lives, time, and equipment, and delayed the successful conclusion of the campaign.

(33) A-2, p.3; Personal Knowledge.

Credit must be given to the Chinese interpreters who overcame the language difficulties between the American personnel and the Chinese. Without their assistance, the cooperation and successful interpretation of American advice, would not have been possible.

It is true that the advice rendered by American personnel concerning tactics was usually followed by Chinese lower unit commanders. However it was not always the case with the higher commanders. The piece-meal fashion of employing the units in this operation, an approved Chinese military principle, reduced the effectiveness of the entire campaign. I believe this problem would not have existed if the Chinese higher commanders were ^{HAD BEEN} given instruction in American tactical principles. They were using principles which did not conform to the capabilities and limitations of the new weapons. This error was realized and corrective measures were taken by establishing a General Staff School at Kunming.

A fortified dominant terrain feature is difficult to reduce. Credit must be given to the courage and spirit of the Chinese infantry soldier in the attack on Shungshan. The inability of the combined efforts of air, artillery, and infantry attacks to reduce the Japanese stronghold illustrates the effectiveness of such positions. In my opinion, the reduction of Shungshan would have taken less time if the decision to blow the peak and its defenders into oblivion with TNT had been made sooner.

A great deal of credit is also due to the Chinese officers and men who manned the artillery pieces throughout the campaign. Their fire was accurate for the most part, considering the limited training which they had received in American artillery technique and tactics. Their accurate fire was responsible for reducing many Japanese strong points thereby permitting the infantry to advance up the steep slopes.

Air support by the 14th Air Force for the Chinese ground attack in this campaign was instrumental in the capture of many objectives. The best example is that of breaching the wall around Tengchung.

In this campaign, the Japanese had violated an important principle, namely, do not under-estimate or over-estimate the enemy. The Japanese had under

estimated the ability of the Chinese to overcome the hazards of the Salween River, the difficulties of the terrain, and the monsoon weather.

In summarizing, completion of the Salween Campaign marked the first successful major offensive against the Japanese by Chinese units in over seven years of war. (34)

Japan's two-year blockade of China was broken. The overland supply route to China from India was reopened. It was estimated that the land route would increase the delivery of supplies and equipment into China by 10,000 to 15,000 tons each month. The newly constructed four inch pipe line along the road was capable of carrying approximately 12,000 tons of gasoline per month. (35)

Psychologically, the success of the Salween Campaign illustrated that the Japanese were not invincible as was supposed by the Chinese. It proved that the Chinese soldier, properly trained and adequately supplied, can win battles.

From a military standpoint, the added tonnage of supplies delivered over the road can be used to equip the Chinese forces throughout China for further offensive action against the enemy.

In supporting the Chinese, many difficult problems in politics, language, customs, etc were encountered by Y-Force Operations Staff personnel. In solving these problems numerous lessons were learned and much experience gained. These lessons and experiences will be of considerable value in the future when and if the United States will be called upon to render similar assistance to allied countries.

LESSONS

In this campaign not many new lessons were learned but certainly many old lessons were emphasized. Some of those lessons are:

1. In planning an operation, simplicity is the best way. Combat entails much confusion. A simple plan will lesson confusion and insure better chances of success.

2. Cooperation is essential to the success of an operation. The close cooperation between the Chinese units and the American personnel, acting

(34) Personal Knowledge; (35) A-6, p.24.

18. Do not consider any barrier impassible to ground troops.
19. Attacking infantry troops must have adequate supporting artillery fire.
20. Prompt reorganization ~~for~~ counterattack must be effected immediately following capture of an objective. Chinese units were not trained to reorganize their positions ~~for~~ counterattacks. Many examples of successful counterattacks by the enemy illustrates this lesson.
21. Attack against a fortified position is extremely difficult in mountain operations and requires more time for planning, organization, and preparation than in ordinary terrain. The attack to reduce Shungshan is an excellent example.
22. Do not underestimate or overestimate the enemy.
23. Movement down a valley, without security on the high ground, invites ambush.
24. In mountain operations, a force must not be moved into a valley from a ridge before the next ridge has been secured.
25. Adequate communications are necessary. In mountain operations visual signalling proved most reliable. Radio communication was frequently unreliable due mainly to mountain and tree masks, rough handling, and adverse weather.