

# RAF COLLEGE CRANWELL

## “V-J Day”



### A Review of Cranwellian Involvement in WWII Far East Campaign

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# Swords of Surrender



On 26 July 1945, US President Truman, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and China's President Chiang Kai-Shek issued the Potsdam Declaration calling for, and outlining the terms of surrender for the Empire of Japan. Truman told Japan, "Surrender or suffer prompt and utter destruction". On 29 July, Japan rejected the terms.

On 6 August, the US dropped an atomic bomb, 'Little Boy', on Hiroshima and on 9 August another, 'Fat Man', on Nagasaki. On the 10th, the Emperor of Japan notified the Allies through Swiss diplomatic channels of Japan's intention to surrender unconditionally. Accepting the surrender on the 11th, the Allies did not announce the surrender publicly until the 14th.

On 2 September an official surrender ceremony was held aboard USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay; President Truman declares September 2 as the official "V-J Day". Two weeks later, on 12 September 1945 at 11.10 am, local time, another Japanese surrender ceremony was held at the Municipal Building of Singapore (now known as City Hall), which was accepted by Lord Louis Mountbatten. It officially ended the Japanese Occupation of Southeast Asia.

A copy of the Japanese Document of Surrender to Earl Mountbatten used to be displayed in the College Library, flanked by two Samurai swords with one of the fountain pens actually used to sign the Surrender Treaty.



# Far East Command - the Cranwellian Contribution



The former Royal Air Force Far East Air Force, more simply known as RAF Far East Air Force, was the Command organisation that controlled all Royal Air Force assets in the east of Asia (Far East). It was originally formed as Air Command, South East Asia in 1943 during the Second World War.

The first organisation dedicated to this task was formed in Singapore in 1930 as Royal Air Force Singapore. This was upgraded to Headquarters Air Force Far East Command in 1933. During the Second World War, when Malaya (31 January 1942), Singapore (15 February 1942), Burma (May 1942) and Hong Kong (25 December 1941) were overrun by the Japanese, the command retreated to India and was renamed Air Headquarters Bengal.

When Supreme Allied Commander Lord Louis Mountbatten assumed control of South East Asia Command (SEAC), the air element was initially called South East Asia Air Command, but became Air Command, South East Asia (ACSEA) on 30 December 1943. On 1 July 1944, ACSEA comprised RAF Groups 222, 225 and 229, and Eastern Air Command, itself being made up of the Strategic Air Force (comprising 7th Bombardment Group USAAF and 231 Group RAF).

The war in the Far East, which started with the surprise attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 in December 1941, would see the seemingly invincible Japanese navy, army and air force overrun much of South-East Asia in the space of just six months. The British-Indian forces in Burma were to be pushed back to the very borders of India. From this perilous position, however, the Allied forces would defeat the attempt in 1944 by the Japanese army to invade Eastern India itself and by mid-1945 would recapture Burma and take the surrender of their erstwhile enemy across South-East Asia.

Our research suggests that seven Cranwellian flight cadets lost their lives in combat, as summarised in our 'Roll of Honour' presented on the last page of this tribute; to date, we have not been able to establish whether any aircrew trained on SFTS courses at Cranwell were lost on operations in the Far East. These totals are based on an analysis of the 2006 RAF College Journal Roll of Honour, archived flight cadet and SFTS trainee records and the Middle East Command losses recorded in the Air81 database whose records beyond May 1942 have yet to be released. Any errors and omissions are regretted and will be rectified as verified data emerges.



# Far East Ops - Cranwellian Contribution (1)



## Retreat - Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong & Burma (1942)

Prior to the commencement of hostilities, the Allies in Malaya and Singapore had four fighter squadrons: 21 and 453 RAAF, 243 RAF, and 488 RNZAF; they were equipped with the underpowered Brewster Buffalo B-399E. The remaining offensive aircraft consisted of four RAF squadrons of Bristol Blenheim I and IV light bombers (27, 34, 60, 62 Squadrons), two RAAF squadrons (1 and 8) of Lockheed Hudsons, and two RAF squadrons of the obsolete Vickers Vildebeest torpedo bombers (36 and 100). There were also two PBY Catalina flying boats of 205 Squadron RAF and three Catalinas from the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army Air Force at Singapore. Beset with technical problems, inexperienced aircrew and an insurgent Japanese intelligence network, this force was unable to defend Malaya from the Japanese forces.

The speed of the Japanese advance meant that on 9 December 1941, two days after the attack was launched, all but two allied squadrons were withdrawn to Singapore. This was the last line of defence, to defend the naval base, to enable reinforcements to come in by sea. By mid-January, the RAF had only 56 operational fighters left spread across five squadrons. Warning radar stations being overrun, the remaining force that now included some imported and hastily assembled Hurricanes was unable to halt the Japanese advance.

On the same morning as the attack on Pearl Harbor, forces of the Empire of Japan attacked the British Crown colony of Hong Kong. The Hong Kong garrison consisted of British, Indian and Canadian units, also the Auxiliary Defence Units and Hong Kong Voluntary Defence Corps; the RAF possessed only two Supermarine Walrus amphibious aircraft and three out-dated Vickers Vildebeest torpedo-reconnaissance bombers, flown and serviced by seven officers and 108 airmen. Against overwhelming odds, within a week the defenders abandoned the mainland and less than two weeks later, with their position on the island untenable, the colony surrendered.

The Burma Campaign lasted from 14 December 1941 till 13 September 1945 (11 days after VJ Day). Allied forces suffered a series of setbacks throughout 1942/3 before the tide turned in 1944.



Casualty	Decorations	Entry	Description	Date
Ault K		J35	KIA 11 Sqn; Blenheim IV V5992; Ratmalana-air combat; crashed Trincomalee, Ceylon.	9/4/42
Garrard P	DFC; MiD	A40	KIA 59 Sqn; <i>believed captured by the Japanese; Sumatra. Probably flying a Hudson III.</i>	25/3/42
Rowland ITBT	MiD	J35	KIA 100 Sqn <i>Vildebeest III</i> ; Far East.	26/1/42
Steedman EB	MiD*	J24	Died Java PoW camp; reports of being shot for inciting disobedience to Japanese orders.	17/5/42
Whistondale GF		J25	KIA CO Kalidjati; missing believed killed, enemy action at Kalidjati Aerodrome, Java;	1/3/42
Wilkins JT	MiD	S35	KIA 100 Sqn; <i>Vildebeest K6377</i> ; Indonesia	1/3/42



Vildebeest III



11 Sqn Blenheim IV



Hudson III



# Far East Ops - Cranwellian Contribution (2)



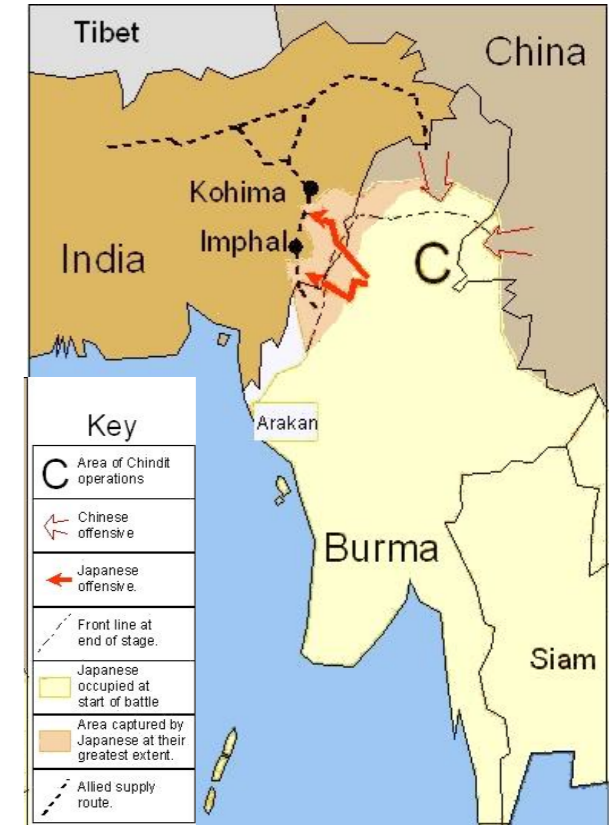
## Fight Back - The Burma Campaign (14 December 1940 - 13 September 1945)

From December 1943 to November 1944, the strategic balance of the Burma campaign shifted decisively. Improvements in Allied leadership, training and logistics, together with greater firepower and growing Allied air superiority, gave Allied forces a confidence they had previously lacked. In the Arakan, XV Indian Corps withstood, and then broke, a Japanese counterstrike, while the Japanese invasion of India resulted in unbearably heavy losses and the ejection of the Japanese back beyond the Chindwin River.

The Allies launched a series of offensive operations into Burma during late 1944 and the first half of 1945. The major effort was intended to be by American-trained Chinese troops of Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC) - "the Northern Front" - under General Joseph Stilwell, to cover the construction of the Ledo Road. Under the British Fourteenth Army, the Indian XV Corps prepared to renew the advance in Arakan province - "the Southern Front" - while IV Corps launched a tentative advance from Imphal in the centre of the long front - "the Central Front" - to distract Japanese attention from the other offensives.

A Cranwell cadet from 1923-24, Air Commodore the Earl of Bandon commanded 224 Group between 1944-45, fighting against the Japanese in the Arakan sector to drive them out of Burma. As AOC, he very unofficially continued to fly on operational sorties, removing his air commodore rank badges and flying instead in a flying officer's uniform.

Following the "Race for Rangoon" and Operation Dracula - the amphibious assault on and capture of Rangoon - the Japanese attempted a disastrous breakout to rejoin the Burma Area Army and were driven back, leaving the way open for the Allied Forces to move on and retake Malaya, under Operation Zipper. The dropping of the atomic bombs forestalled this operation, but it was undertaken post-war as the quickest way of getting occupation troops into Malaya.



Casualty	Decorations	Entry	Description	Date
More JWC	OBE; DFC	S28	Ex BoB; KIA; SASO Far East; aircraft shot down, reported to be a 615 Sqn Hurricane (RAF Commands database) or more likely a 615 Sqn Spitfire VIII (James J Halley) hit by ground fire whilst en route Maungdaw to brief crews for an attack on Prome; taken POW; POW boat from Singapore to Japan sunk by allied forces. Gp Capt More was last seen on a raft.	12/9/44



Gp Capt JWC More



Churchill addresses 615 Sqn



Cranwellian Air Commodore the Earl of Bandon, Air Officer Commanding 224 Group, sits to the right of Keith Park at Kyaukpyu landing ground, Burma

# Far East Command - Cranwellians KIA

These totals will be updated as more verified data becomes available



	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	Totals
Far East Command	0	0	0	6	0	1	0	7