Wings Over Burma:
Air Support in the Burma Campaign

by Troy J. Sacquety

A C-47 careens through a narrow jungle-covered valley bordered by towering mountains. The crew finally spots the ground signal, and after determining that the drop zone (DZ) is correct, the "kickers" push the cargo out the door. First, bags of rice free fall to the ground. As they land with a thud, the airplane circles for another pass. Ammunition and other supplies float to earth under multi-colored parachutes. The airplane then makes a beeline for home, keeping low to the ground while the crew watches for Japanese fighters. This was a daily event in north Burma during WWII. The following article gives a brief overview of how aerial resupply overcame the logistical difficulties of north Burma operations, and then explains how it was utilized by a specific unit, the paramilitary Detachment 101 of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). It is relevant today because the pioneering efforts in the skies over north Burma influenced how aerial resupply would be done in numerous post-WWII conflicts.

The rugged, trackless, jungle-covered terrain that dominated north Burma made aerial resupply necessary. The lack of roads made it the best solution to meet the American-led Northern Combat Area Command's (NCAC) logistics requirements. This was despite the Japanese air threat, which was significantly reduced when NCAC forces captured the Myitkyina airfield on 17 May 1944.[1] North Burma was the one major American operational theater where aerial resupply to non-airborne ground forces was a routine practice. Cargo was delivered by the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) in three ways; by landing and unloading an airplane at an airstrip; by free-dropping supplies; or by parachuting cargo bundles. By 1945, the ability to conduct aerial resupply in north Burma was so well-developed that the USAAF drop squadrons sustained five Chinese and one British division, the MARS Task Force, numerous service troops, and 10,000 OSS-led guerrillas.[2]

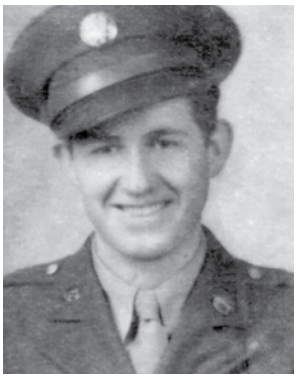
The USAAF accomplished this difficult task by applying modern industrial assembly-line principles. Drop crews simply could not customize each supply run. Instead, most drops consisted of standard

In operations in Burma, U.S. troops required the most expensive rations, as shown above. Other troops, such as the Chinese, lived predominately on more simple fare like rice.

A kicker pushes supplies out the aircraft cargo door to a Detachment 101 group in Burma, 1944-45.

An OSS enlisted man attaches a parachute container to an ammunition crate. Critical items like ammunition and radios were air-dropped by parachute.

Right: Corporal George W. Patrick, 475th Infantry Regiment

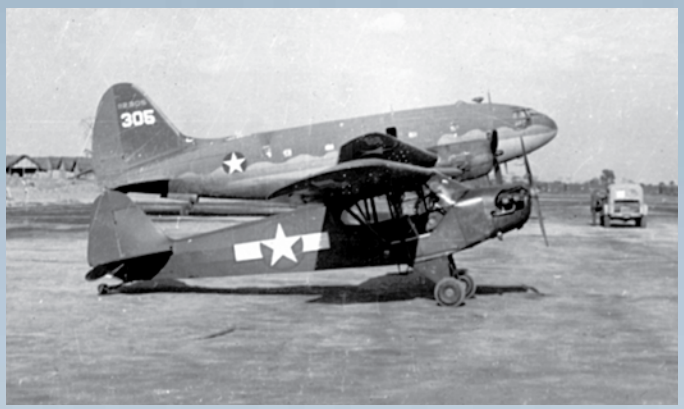


Left: First Lieutenant (1LT) Joseph E. Lazarsky headed the Detachment 101 Air Drop Section in early 1944. He later commanded the 1st Battalion of American Kachin Rangers.

packaged loads based on the number and type of troops. Differing food items for each of the multi-ethnic Allied groups fighting in north Burma required separate rations for each. For instance, Hindu troops would not eat beef, Muslim troops would not eat pork, Chinese troops required large amounts of rice, and American troops ate pre-packaged rations. Regardless of the nationality or ethnic group they were intended for each ration had basic components. They were nutritionally balanced and had the equivalent of a grain, a vegetable or fruit, and a meat or protein. These ration loads were loaded separately into the drop aircraft depending on the receiving unit and in the order that they went out of the airplane.[3] Free-dropped items were loaded last so they could be dropped first and not foul parachute dropped supplies.

Aircraft were loaded overnight so they could take off early the next day, drop their load, and return to conduct a second supply mission if time allowed. Not only did this enable more supplies to get into the field, but it also maximized the use of scarce drop aircraft. First Lieutenant (1LT) Bernard M. Brophy, serving with OSS Detachment 101, recalled the grueling schedule. To load the aircraft he said, "we would be down at the airstrip at about four or five o'clock in the morning." By the time that they returned he said, "you could be out fifteen hours a day."[4] While the aircraft were loaded, ground crews performed maintenance checks and refueled them. Around the clock operations were necessary. The number of troops requiring support, the limited number of cargo aircraft, and the unpredictable weather—especially during the monsoon season—dictated that supplies reach the field whenever possible.

Corporal George W. Patrick of the 475th Infantry Regiment of the MARS Task Force, recalled that they received air drops every three days.[5] But, the efficiency of the USAAF made aerial resupply look easier from the ground than it was. Getting the supplies out to the field



The C-46 Commando (in background) had more power and carrying capacity than a C-47, but was not as easy to fly or as dependable. In front of the C-46 is a Piper Cub, in Army nomenclature, the L-4 Grasshopper, which was used for liaison and observation.

on time was even more crucial because most drop planes flew by day. Although done occasionally, the cargo aircraft did not have the navigational systems necessary for low-level night flights in the uncharted mountains.

The main resupply aircraft was the venerable Douglas C-47 Skytrain. Developed as the pre-war DC-3 airliner, the C-47 became the U.S. Army's major troop carrier in WWII and remained in service long after the war. The aircraft was so well-engineered and robustly built that numerous DC-3/C-47 airplanes are still commercially operated or serving foreign militaries almost seventy-five years after the first model was flown. The other major cargo aircraft was the Curtiss C-46 Commando. Originally designed to replace the C-47, it was rushed into wartime production. The airplane had numerous design flaws and was not as stable as the C-47. Although the C-46 could carry nearly twice the payload of a C-47 (6,000-7,000 pounds) pilots much preferred the latter.[6] For special missions, the small, fast, .50 caliber-armed North American B-25 Mitchell medium bomber was used, but the smaller cargo capacity limited its usefulness. On occasion, B-24 Liberator heavy bombers were employed. Several kinds of parachutes were also critical to safely airdrop supplies.

American-made "silk" (usually nylon or rayon because natural silk was scarce) parachutes performed the best. But, they were expensive and often not recoverable. At seventy dollars each—a substantial sum when a U.S. Army private during WWII made approximately $50 a month—they simply could not be used for every item. Only fragile or explosive items such as ammunition, radios, and medical supplies, were dropped using these parachutes.

Much cheaper locally-produced parachutes made of jute (burlap) were substituted to make air resupply as simple and economical as possible, especially when heavy loads required more than one parachute. Lieutenant General William J. Slim, commander of the British 14th Army, explained that since Burma was at the bottom of the priority list for just about everything, and because the world's jute was grown in India, it was easy for the military to work with the cloth manufacturers. Within a month, they had designed a prototype parachute made entirely of jute—including the parachute lines—that proved to be "eighty-five per cent as efficient and reliable as the most elaborate parachute, at a twentieth of the cost."[7] Cheaper parachutes were not the only challenge. The NCAC needed to devise ways to properly pack the supplies for air-drop.

Because of the large scale of the aerial supply in north Burma, NCAC had to make use of local packing materials. An easy-to-produce, sturdy, and cheap solution was the "country basket." It proved ideal. This was a burlap-covered bamboo basket that cost less than $4 and was capable of holding 450 pounds. Secured to a parachute with heavy ¾ inch ropes, several could be kicked out in a single drop pass.[8]

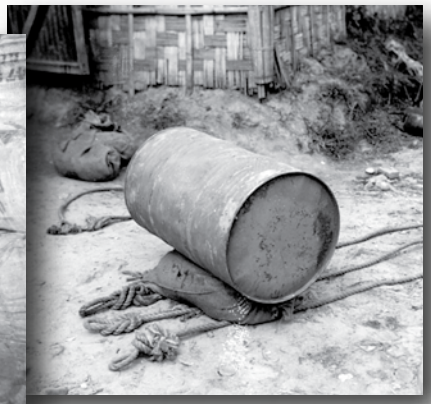
Some supplies required special packing. Gasoline was put in individual fifty-five gallon drums, padded with sacks of rice hulls, and secured to a parachute.

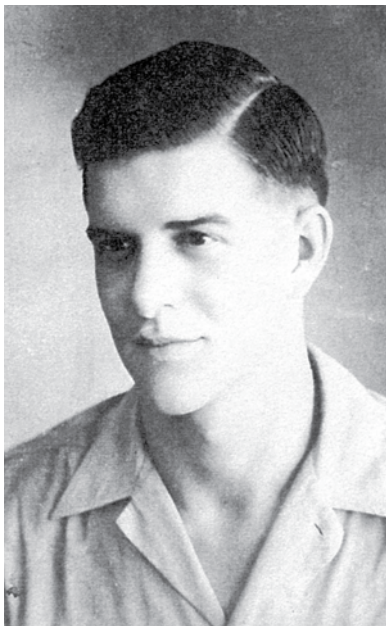
A B-25 Mitchell makes a supply drop to an OSS Detachment 101 group near Htinnan, Burma, in late 1943 or early 1944. B-25s were used for the more dangerous supply runs, which required a faster, well-armed aircraft.

Unbreakable and bulky items, like rice or clothing, were free-dropped. For rice, the most common practice was to sew a half-full sack weighing thirty-five pounds into a second burlap bag. This prevented the bag from "exploding" when it hit the ground. Animal feed and salt were dropped the same way. The kickers on the drop aircraft had to be especially careful when free-dropping. An errant sack could easily demolish an indigenous hut, or *basha*, or kill personnel and pack animals. Although most Allied troops tried to get under cover during a free drop, some Asian troops did not understand the danger. Chinese troops in particular were indifferent when trying to "steal" supplies dropped to other groups. First Lieutenant Joseph E. Lazarsky, serving as an Air Drop Officer with OSS Detachment 101 in early 1944 recalled, "You had to really train the Kachins [the north Burma ethnic group working with the OSS] that rice is coming down … don't try to catch it or you would be digging your own hole." Nevertheless, he recalled that the Chinese tried to steal what they could from airdrops and often were "out there trying to catch the rice and were killed."[9]

Once a drop was on the ground, the lack of roads meant delivery by animals. Here the MARS Task Force receives an air drop in Burma on 6 February 1945.

Above left, a C-47 conducts a free-drop. Below, another has landed for a medical evacuation (ambulances in foreground.) Free drops packed in burlap sacks accomodated less fragile supplies such as clothing (shown below center left) while gasoline was dropped in fifty-five gallon drums padded with rice hulls or sawdust (below center.) The "country basket," a cheap, locally produced container, was used for fragile items. A logistician packs eggs in layers of sawdust or rice hulls to buffer the landing impact (shown below center right).





Private First Class (PFC) Richard W. Hale, 475th Infantry Regiment, MARS Task Force. The 5332nd Brigade (Provisional), known as the MARS Task Force, was a U.S. Army Long Range Penetration Group (LRPG) that served in Burma from late 1944 through mid-1945. It was then sent to China to help train Nationalist Chinese soldiers.

The rugged terrain made collection and transportation of airdropped supplies difficult. Despite the twentieth century marvel of delivering supplies by air, ground transportation was nineteenth century. Supplies were carried by the soldiers themselves, indigenous porters, or by pack animals, usually mules. Standard twenty-five pound grain rations, supplemented with salt and minerals, were dropped to feed the mules.[10] Generally, these techniques worked well with the conventional Allied forces in Burma.

> ***"...don't try to catch it or you would be digging your own hole."***

Aerial resupply was crucial to the American ground campaign in north Burma. It allowed the infantry to conduct offensive combat operations against an enemy that had to rely on ground transportation for resupply. This enabled the Allies to attack the Japanese forces far behind their lines. Private First Class (PFC) Richard W. Hale, 475th Infantry Regiment, said; "EVERYTHING came by parachute, except free dropped grain for the mules! There were times on the trail when we missed some drops and missed a meal or two, but where it was really important … the Air Corps did a great job. We did have one complaint about the packers back in Myitkyina: We had heard that the "K" rations had changed "Corned Pork and Egg (Yuck) Yolk" to "Ham and Eggs" for breakfast, and "Hamburger" for supper instead of some potted meat. We never saw any of that. We found out later that the peckerwood packers were pulling the new rations out of the packages and saving them for their snacks, and putting the old crap in the drop packages.

Before and after photos of a basha *struck by an errant drop. A falling sack of rice could easily kill a soldier or a mule.*

We would have shot them if we could have. On the other hand, one time the bakers in Ledo [India] made up a ton of fresh bread, and they dropped enough in bamboo baskets that we each got a loaf!"[11] Aerial resupply made it possible to drive the Japanese out of Burma. Although fighting was still going on in Southern Burma and to the east near the Thai border, by March 1945—five months before Japan surrendered—NCAC conventional forces were being withdrawn for missions in other theaters. Only the American-led indigenous guerrilla troops of OSS Detachment 101 remained in Burma.

Allied areas of operations in Japanese-occupied Burma.

Detachment 101

Detachment 101 had unique supply requirements. The unit had numerous assignments behind Japanese lines. It recruited, armed, and led indigenous guerrilla troops, while its agents were the most valuable intelligence collectors on the battlefield. They regularly found hidden targets for 10th USAAF bombers and rescued downed Allied aircrews. Called "the most effective tactical combat force in OSS," Detachment 101 was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for its service in north Burma.[12] It was the OSS unit that most closely mirrored the capabilities found in today's U.S. Army Special Forces Groups. Its Air Drop Section was the key element to sustaining field operations. It provided "guides" and supply kickers that flew aboard USAAF cargo aircraft.

Established late in 1943 to better resupply Detachment 101 groups behind the lines, the Air Drop Section conducted eighteen airdrops to deliver 84,000 pounds of supplies in its first two months of operations, (November to mid-December 1943).[13] Supply requirements grew as the OSS guerrilla force expanded. By October 1944, the Air Drop Section was preparing and "kicking" more than a million pounds of supplies into the field monthly. By March 1945, the increased supply requirements of Detachment 101 caused the 10th USAAF to dedicate ten C-47s to that mission.[14]

Resupply began in the Detachment 101 Supply Section. Requests from units in the field were drawn out of stocks at Detachment 101 headquarters in Nazira, India, and shipped to Dinjan, where the USAAF drop squadrons were stationed.[15] Later in the war, the OSS established warehouses at Dinjan to hold mission-specific and general use items. The group divided its storage facilities by the supplies or functions in each. One warehouse was dedicated for packing parachutes and bundles; two for arms and ammunition; and the remainder for other supplies which included silver Indian rupees and opium to pay the indigenous troops. Ammunition was stocked for a multitude of weapons; British .303 caliber Enfield Rifles and Bren light machineguns; .45 caliber Thompson submachineguns; .30-06 caliber M1 Garand and M1941 Johnson Rifles; .30 caliber M1 Carbines; and 9mm Sten and Marlin UD-42 submachineguns.[16] This arrangement reduced the packing time. By March 1945, the Detachment had sixteen warehouses at Dinjan to store a two-month supply reserve; 2,225,925 pounds of rations and 1,000,000 pounds of ordnance and quartermaster supplies.[17] These stores were often rapidly depleted. In March 1945 alone, 249 C-47, 7 B-24s, and 9 B-25 sorties delivered 1,476,942 pounds of supplies; more than half of the on-hand reserve.[18]

The 2nd Troop Carrier Squadron (TCS) was one of the USAAF units that provided valuable support to

The Stinson L-1 Vigilant was the preferred liaison aircraft for Detachment 101's unofficial air force, the "Red Ass Squadron."

Enlisted men of the Detachment 101 Air Drop Section rest on bundles inside a cargo aircraft. Corporal Ernest J. Tsikerdanos is on the left and Technician Third Grade Damon S. Diomandes is in the middle.

Detachment 101. The aircrews—all experienced and skilled volunteers—were given a security brief and told never to reveal the location, cargo, or personnel dropped.[19] The role of Detachment 101 Air Drop personnel was demanding. 1LT Joseph E. Lazarsky, who directed the Air Drop Section in early 1944 before commanding a field unit, worked at the 2nd TCS headquarters at Dinjan. "I stayed with them, and I ate with them. My relationship with the 2nd was so good … we became priority number one."[20] First Lieutenant Oliver A. Ryder, another Air Drop officer who worked with the 2nd Combat Cargo Squadron in 1945, said, "I had flown a lot more than the aircrews … simply because there was only one of me." Ryder flew so much that the squadron's flight surgeon grounded him because he was so worn out after more than 600 hours of flight time. While hospitalized, Ryder had a Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster pinned on his pajamas.[21]

Air Drop supply bundles are rigged with parachutes at a Detachment 101 supply warehouse, 1944-1945.

A Detachment 101 "kicker" readies a bundle to go out the door over Burma in 1944.

Supply requests from the units in the field came to Detachment 101 headquarters. From there, and depending on where the flight was to go, the orders went either to Dinjan, or to supplementary Air Drop personnel based at Myitkyina (after June 1944.)[22] Airplanes were loaded by indigenous laborers. 1LT Bernard Brophy, working out of Myitkyina in mid-1944, based each unit's ration supply on the size of the group and the time since their last drop. "We had a formula for food. We knew how much we had to get in there."[23] Brophy recalled, "It took a couple of hours" to pack each airplane. "Some of the things would come in

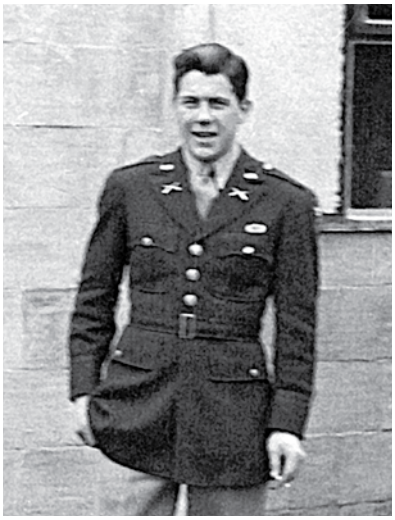
China-Burma-India Theater SSI

Detachment 101 Kachin (Jingpaw) Ranger Patch

10th Air Force SSI

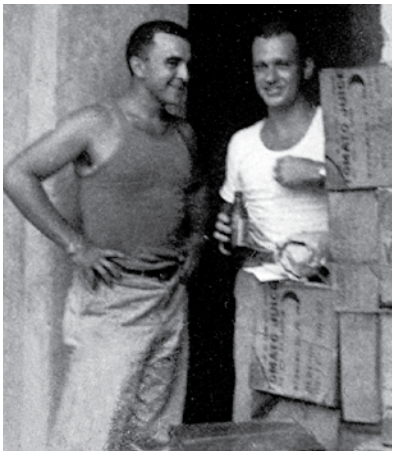
MARS Task Force Patch

already packaged with the parachute on it. Other times we had to put it in boxes or crates, attach the parachute to it, and make sure we had the right weight. You didn't want it too heavy otherwise some of the panels on the chute would blow, come down too fast, smash-up, and ruin the drop. So, we had to be careful about that … most of the time everything went fine."[24] Brophy said that the weight distribution aboard the C-47 was also a concern. "You had to make sure that you had the weight on both sides the same and not too much in the tail. You had to distribute it [evenly] throughout the fuselage so that you had good take offs and good landings."[25] 1LT Ryder, at Dinjan said, "You could not tell from one time to the next what the hell it [the load] would be." Then, it was simply a matter of getting the aircraft into the air.



1LT Bernard M. Brophy, initially part of the OSS Jedburgh program, was later assigned to Detachment 101. He served in Air Drop before going to the field.

Early in the war, Detachment 101 could dedicate few personnel for door kicking. By 1944, however, there were several OSS kickers on each drop aircraft, usually an officer and some enlisted men. Ryder remembered, "We would take off before dawn. I will never forget that. I would stand between the pilot and copilot to see the beautiful dawn. It was a gorgeous and beautiful sight. They reminded me of sunrises over Nags Head, North Carolina."[26] Once the drop aircraft reached north Burma, "the jungle looks all the same from up above. But, even where it was bad [no landmarks], I knew where the [OSS] guys were," said 1LT Lazarsky.[27]



1LT Oliver A. Ryder (left) was a qualified parachutist assigned to the Detachment 101 Air Drop Section. On the right is CPT Zachariah Ebaugh, who served in a field unit.

The OSS personnel on the ground were to signal the incoming drop if they had seen any Japanese fighter aircraft in the area. Otherwise, unarmed drop airplanes would have been sitting ducks if intercepted. Should the Japanese appear, the drop aircraft turned around, because it was "not worth it … you get your ass shot down and that's it," said Lazarsky.[28] This reality had been driven home on 18 January 1944. Japanese "Zero" fighters shot down three 2nd TCS C-47s as they tried to resupply Detachment 101's FORWARD Group. Seventeen airmen and six OSS men were killed, including Second Lieutenant (2LT) Thomas R. Riley, then chief of the Air Drop Section.[29]

By 1945, when 1LT Ryder was flying Air Drop out of Dinjan, the Allies had air superiority so Japanese fighters were not a factor. "I knew the targets, having been there more than they had. I was an aerial observer in a sense. To get to the DZ, you had to recognize certain landmarks, like rivers, landforms, and villages. You simply learned your way to the DZ. [Once] we got over the target … it was pretty much up to me. The pilots would fly circles over the area and make runs … one, two, three, four. You kind of half-ass knew when to get it out the door. We knew when we were in the target area and you just give the green light kick signal and out it would go. It was reasonably accurate," said Ryder.[30] The regularity of the runs enabled him to recognize particular OSS men on the ground. 1LT Daniel Mudrinich, "was always standing out on the dropzone. I got to know him as a little black haired kid. I would stand in the door and have the pilot make another pass to wave goodbye and he would wave back. I got to know him through those drops." It was only years later that the two met one another at a postwar reunion.[31]

> ***"I had flown a lot more than the aircrews … simply because there was only one of me."***

1LT Brophy, flying Air Drop out of Myitkyina in mid-to-late 1944, had shorter flights. "It would take maybe six to eight hours off the airdrop time. Guys were only 150 or as close as 25 miles away … It made it a lot easier to get stuff to them," recalled Brophy.[32] However, there could also be problems during an airdrop. "The pilots were good. They knew how to come into the DZ and how to maneuver the airplane to keep the tail up, so that the stuff going out the door did not hit the tail. With a new pilot the stuff going out would hit the tail and [the wind would cause it to] hang there … until he slowed the plane down to a point that it would fall off."[33]

Tremendous wind gusts, especially over mountainous terrain, caused other problems. Brophy recalled, "Sometimes it got a little tricky. You would be carrying a bag of rice and hit a downdraft. The bag of rice would go up in the air and you could hold it up with one finger. On the other hand, you'd hit an updraft and [the rice sack]

A Detachment 101 drop zone as seen from the air. Notice how parachutes were used as marking panels.

On 18 January 1944, three C-47s of the 10th USAAF 2nd Troop Carrier Squadron (TCS) were shot down, and seventeen airmen and six OSS personnel killed. One of the crashed C-47s was located by Detachment 101 agents. Although inactivated in December 1945, the 2nd TCS was reactivated as the 2nd Airlift Squadron at Pope Air Force Base (AFB), NC, on 1 June 1992. It is still based at Pope AFB.

would weigh 250 pounds. It would push you down to the floor of the plane."

Uncharted areas were also an issue. "You'd be flying into unexplored mountains. On the map there would be a blank space, just plain white. In the middle of that space it would say 'unexplored.' You did not know what was there, so we were a little concerned about that," chuckled Brophy.[34]

If all went well, the pilot would activate the jump lights in the rear of the airplane to tell the kickers when to push the supplies out. "The red light meant that you were to get ready and move the loads into position. We would check for the panels at the drop zone to see if everything was all right there, and keep an eye on that light. As soon as that green light went on, everything would be pushed out the door. You would have one guy on the left side of the door, one on the right, and one guy with his back [braced] against the opposite side of the fuselage with his feet up against the back of the stuff that you were kicking out the door. I would say 'go' and one guy would push with his right arm, the other guy with his left arm, and the guy in the back would push with both feet. I would usually be [guiding the load] and looking out the door," said Brophy.[35]

"...the stuff going out the door would hit the tail and hang there...until the pilot slowed the plane down to a point that it would fall off."

Second Lieutenant Thomas R. Riley was the first qualified parachutist in charge of the Air Drop Section at Detachment 101. He was killed on 18 January 1944 when his C-47 was shot down by Japanese fighter aircraft. Colonel William R. Peers, the last commanding officer of Detachment 101, kept a photograph of Riley above his desk for the remainder of the war.

One final hazard involved getting the supplies out the door. The kickers did not have any safety straps. "There was [only] a bar on each side. They [the kickers] held on with one hand, and pushed with the other. They went halfway out the door as they pushed. We got used to that; it was no problem," remembered Brophy.[36] But, it was hazardous duty. Staff Sergeant "Bud" Banker, who, as a first-time kicker, recalled one incident. "The pilot tilted the airplane to help get the cargo out because it was quite heavy. When

2nd Troop Carrier Squadron Patch, WWII

2nd Airlift Squadron Patch, Pope AFB, NC

that happened, we were on our own. We had to hang on with our arms. One of the kickers got his foot caught [in the cargo] and he starting to go out of the plane. I reached out and was lucky. I grabbed him around his waist and held on for dear life. At the last minute his foot released

> ***"...They held on with one hand, and pushed with the other. They went half way out the door as they pushed..."***

from the cargo," said Banker. "He could have been pulled out of the door. We had no parachutes because they would have been in the way."[37] No matter what might occur on a drop, after it was finished, the kickers went back to base, got some sleep, because "early the next morning you were doing the same thing" recalled Brophy.[38] Most drops were done in daylight, but some were made at night.

Night drops required more preparations by the receiving personnel. On 9 March 1944, during the Myitkyina campaign, the FORWARD Group desperately needed a resupply drop. That night, the OSS personnel positioned kerosene by their campfires to quickly raise the flames when the drop aircraft were heard approaching. As the group was sitting down to eat at dusk, the airplanes showed up. 1LT Daniel Mudrinich wrote in the group's daily log, "They had a little trouble at first. They were circling way east of us. Finally, the third [C-47] saw our fires and panel. He let go with a free drop which went well beyond the target. I got a flashlight and redirected them … It took over 30 minutes for the entire drop to come down. All hands worked until 10 P.M," to collect the supplies. By noon the next day, Mudrinich reported that all loads had been stored away and that "everyone was tired as hell."[39]

Detachment 101 elements inadvertently performed Civil Affairs. The indigenous people had been unable to obtain basics like cloth, salt, and yarn since the Japanese invasion in 1942. The OSS included these basic essentials in their supply requests and endeared themselves to the locals. The drop parachutes were often "gifted" to the people as thanks for supporting the Allies. These simple presents greatly helped the Allied effort.

"Kickers" prepare to drop supplies over north Burma. A soldier pushes from each side as one helps with his feet from the rear.

Lieutenants Harry Council, Joe Lazarsky, and Daniel Mudrinich pose by a C-47 in 1943. The photo was taken just prior to Council and Mudrinich being inserted to join the FORWARD group, northeast of Myitkyina.

Aerial resupply was the lifeline for Detachment 101 of the OSS. Operating in enemy-occupied territory, the group could not rely on the local population for support.

A USAAF C-47 "buzzes" the field after completing a drop to a Detachment 101 group in Burma, 1944-1945.

Detachment 101: Air Drop by the Numbers...

1. Supply warehouse at Detachment 101 Headquarters in Nazira, India.

2. Air Drop personel pack supplies outside an improvised warehouse.

5. Technical Sergeant Steven J. Wargo (center facing) checks drop containers at Nazira, India, (late 1943). These were later replaced by more economical and practical versions.

6. Detachment 101 personnel load cargo into a C-47 Skytrain.

9. OSS personel demonstrate how they pushed supplies out of the aircraft. Notice there are no safety straps and the parachute is simply boxed.

10. Two supply bundles for an OSS Detachment 101 group float to earth in north Burma, 1944.

3. Detachment 101 supply personnel in India tie together cases of corn, peas, and spinach for air drop. Locally-hired laborers helped package the loads.

4. Sergeant Harold "Bud" Banker checks a British Bren light machinegun out of the Detachment 101 supply warehouse in Nazira, India. The Indian porter in the front carries a case of .303 caliber bullets on his head.

7. The interior of a C-47 cargo aircraft loaded with supplies for air drop. Most are burlap (jute) wrapped packages.

8. Detachment 101 Air Drop personnel wait to kick supplies from a fully loaded C-47 over Burma, 1944.

11. An OSS Detachment 101 group receives a supply drop in north Burma, late 1944-early 1945.

12. An ammunition crate after landing. Note how the "boxed" parachute was secured to the crate.

Detachment 101's 7th Battalion, American Kachin Rangers, repacks a supply drop for movement near Langtawk, Burma, February 1945.

Sergeant Harold "Bud" Banker works on a United Defense UD-42 or "Marlin" submachinegun at the Detachment 101 supply depot at Nazira, India.

Detachment 101 armed thousands of indigenous guerrilla troops. Pictured are ethnic Shans near Wan Kat Ping, Burma, April 1945, armed with a variety of weapons: .30-06 caliber Johnson light machineguns, Johnson rifles, .45 caliber Thompson submachineguns, and a .303 caliber Bren gun.

While logistics in Detachment 101 got little recognition, aerial resupply was the unit's most dangerous mission. The vast majority of fatalities in Detachment 101 were from aircraft accidents. Of these, most were personnel involved in supply drops. Without its Air Drop Section, Detachment 101 could not have armed and supplied the 10,000 indigenous troops fielded in early 1945.

Aerial Resupply Costs in Burma

Aerial resupply solved many Allied logistical problems in Burma and helped to end the war there much sooner. But, it came at a high cost. American nylon parachutes cost $72.00 in 1945 (the equivalent of $860 in 2008 dollars). Even with burlap parachutes, the price to air drop a ton of supplies—without including the average flight costs of $1,285 per sortie ($15,300 in 2008)—was $1,909.65 (or $22,800 in today's dollars). Free dropping supplies—excluding the sortie cost—was only $94.07 ($1,123 today). Considering that 30,000 tons of supplies were parachuted, another 33,000 free dropped, and 90,000 tons air landed by the USAAF supporting NCAC from April 1943 to March 1945, it was expensive, but vital.[40]

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Endnotes

1 See Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, "A Special Forces Model: Detachment 101 in the Myitkyina Campaign, Part 1," in *Veritas: The Journal of Army Special Operations History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2008.

2 Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater: Stilwell's Command Problems.* (Washington DC: Center of Military History, 1987), 102.

3 Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 104-106.

4 Bernard Brophy, telephone interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 9 April 2008, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

5 George W. Patrick, interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 23 April 2008, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. Patrick was an infantryman in B Company, 1st Battalion, 475th Infantry Regiment. The MARS Task Force was the second American Long Range Penetration Group in Burma. Merrill's Marauder's was the first.

6 Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 99-100.

7 William J. Slim, *Defeat Into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India, 1942-1945* (New York, NY: Copper Square Press, 2000), 225-226.

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14 D.V. Cavanaugh to William R. Peers, "Operational Summary, Air Drop Monthly Report, March 1945," 25 March 1945, F 23, B 35, E 190, RG 226, NARA.

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16 R.T. Walsh to Supply and Procurement, "Supply Report for January 1945," [1 February 1945], F 20, B 34, E 154, RG 226, NARA.

17 R.T. Walsh to William R. Peers, "Supply and Air Drop Monthly Report," 24 March 1945, F 23, B 35, E 190, RG 226, NARA.

18 D.V. Cavanaugh to William R. Peers, "Operational Summary, Air Drop Monthly Report, March 1945," 25 March 1945, NARA. A breakdown of the pounds dropped per group can be found at Wesley S. Bogdan to William R. Peers, "Air Drop Monthly Report, March 1945," 24 March 1944, F 23, B 35, E 190, RG 226, NARA.

19 Dow S. Grones to Quinn, "Air Drop and Air Activities, January Report," 30 January 1945, F 20, B 34, E 190, RG 226, NARA.

20 Lazarsky interview, 26 March 2008. For more on the 2nd Troop Carrier Squadron, see W.E. Smith, ed., *2nd Troop Carrier Squadron: AAF-CBI-WWII* (Cullman, AL: The Gregath Company, 1987).

21 Oliver A. Ryder, telephone interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 9 April 2008, Fort Bragg, NC, notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

22 Ryder interview, 9 April 2008.

23 Brophy interview, 9 April 2008.

24 Brophy interview, 9 April 2008.

25 Brophy interview, 9 April 2008.

26 Ryder interview, 9 April 2008.

27 Lazarsky interview, 26 March 2008. Joseph Lazarsky was later awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for actions in Burma for taking the controls of a damaged C-47 from a wounded pilot.

28 Lazarsky interview, 26 March 2008.

29 Richard Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines: With the OSS in Burma* (New York, NY: Rand McNally, 1979), 252-255.

30 Ryder interview, 9 April 2008.

31 Ryder interview, 9 April 2008.

32 Brophy interview, 9 April 2008.

33 Brophy interview, 9 April 2008.

34 Brophy interview, 9 April 2008.

35 Brophy interview, 9 April 2008.

36 Brophy interview, 9 April 2008.

37 Banker interview, 14 April 2008.

38 Brophy interview, 9 April 2008.

39 FORWARD Daily Log January 23 to April 8 [1944], 9 March [1944], copy in author's possession.

40 Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 105, 108-109.