MINE UNITS

Summary of the locations of the Mine Units

Mine Unit 25 was located in Tezpur [lat. 26-38, long. 92-48], Assam, India.

Mine Unit 14 was located in Kunming [lat. 25-03, long. 102-42], Yunnan Province.

Mine Unit 25 was located at the airport on north side of Tezpur, Assam, India. Supplies for SACO were shipped from five major airfields in Assam – Chabua, Dinjan, Jorhat, Mohanbari, and Tezpur.

In 1942, on his first trip to China during the war, CDR Miles carried a stripped-down magnetic influence mine that recently had been invented by the British; there was little space for personal belongings in his 66 pounds of allotted luggage. The plan was hopefully to reproduce these locally and mine the rivers and coastal waters of China.

> Mining was my idea of a lot of result for comparatively little effort. The damage wasn't confined alone to the ships that were actually sunk by mines, for good planning could often force many ships into waters where they were vulnerable to other forms of attack. Each month Japan was losing more ships than she had time or facilities to replace, and our efforts helped produce this result.
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> Navy Mine Detail 14 arrived in Kunming early in 1943 and was assigned duties having to do with the laying of mines. The mines themselves were already in Assam . . . (Miles, 1967, p 310)

Naval mines had been requisitioned by the 10th Army Air Force from depots in North Africa and were stockpiled in Assam. By mid 1944 COMO Miles arranged to use the mines in China.

> After some months we established "Mine Unit 25" at Tezpur, Assam, and it was there that we stored and "readied" the three types of mines we used. The base was well designed, with a hard-surfaced road leading to the railroad station of Rangapara and with concrete revetments that had been built originally for P-40 fighters but were equally practical for mine stowage. But in hot weather we found it advisable to cover the mines with tarpaulins that were fitted with pockets to hold water. This was our way of trying to "air condition" the possibly fretful creatures.
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> In an average month Lieutenant Nathaniel H. Prade and his men readied about a hundred mines for use, and in their best month readied 138. Lieutenant Commander McCann in Kunming arranged the laying of the mines and, once laid, the mine fields were regularly photographed for indications of mine sweeping or sunken ships. When new fields were laid,

> ships often milled around like frightened sheep, offering good targets for our planes and submarines, and when that effect ultimately wore off it was usually time to mine again. (Miles, 1967, p 312)

In October 1943 coast watchers organized by Capt. Robert Meynier reported a convoy of nine or ten ships heading for Haiphong.

> . . . [T]he 14th went out in B-24's with Kotrla, DuBois, and McCann along to ease the mines into the channel while other planes bombed the nearby Haiphong airbase as a diversion. (Miles, 1967, p 311)

A three-thousand-ton freighter stuck one of the mines and sank in the harbor's entrance. Haiphong Harbor remained blocked for the rest of the war.

> In the meantime, the approaching convoy picked up all the excitement by radio and nervously stopped in a little, unprotected port on Hainan Strait. But they didn't keep radio silence themselves, and SACO Radio Intelligence, listening to their radio chatter, got a position on them. They promptly reported this to Chennault's boys, of course, whereupon the 14th quickly went out again. They used bombs this time and sank six ships of that convoy and damaged at least two more. It was well-coordinated work and the pickings were lucky. (Miles, 1967, p 311-312)

Mine-trained naval officers from Unit 14 in Kunming accompanied all mining runs of Gen. Chennault's 14th A.A.F. after one pilot jettisoned four activated mines from his iced-up plane. The mines dropped into 200 feet of ocean; that was safe enough for surface ships but a real hazzard for submarines.

Mining of the Chinese coast ceased in May, 1945 after the U. S. Fleet arrived in the Phillippines. Potentially mines would be more dangerous to the Allies than to the enemy.

About 1,000 mines were laid; they were accredited with the sinking of 24 ships. In addition the Japanese ships were forced from the coastal areas into open waters where they were prey to submarine and air attacks.

At war's end Mine Unit 25 exported all of the unused naval ordnance from Burma.

Cited reference:

Miles, M. E., 1967, A Different Kind of War: Doubleday & Co, Garden City, NY. 629 p.

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