

# Stop Press of the Jungle



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**T**HE VOICE FLIGHT of No. 52 Squadron is located at the Civil Airport, Bayan Lepas, in the south-eastern corner of the beautiful island of Penang, off the north-west coast of Malaya.

Side by side with Malayan Airways Dakotas and Dakotas of Thai Airways, against a background of palm trees and jungle-covered hills, stand "Faith" and "Hope", the Voice Dakotas; easily distinguished by the "four large yellow painted Bells" slung under the belly. A ground test of 2,000 watts output draws everyone's attention as the "Voice Dakota" tests out on its way to the take-off point, for a voice sortie over the Malayan jungle.

## Jungle "back-bone"

The peninsula of Malaya has a back-bone of jungle-covered mountains rising to over 7,000 feet. For the most part the land is trackless evergreen forest, and undergrowth. Towering up 150 to 200 feet above the ground, the trees form a canopy through which the light has difficulty in penetrating. This is known as "primary jungle". Where for any reason this primary jungle has been cut down, a secondary growth of every kind of bush creeper or bamboo takes command quickly, and soon forms a dense mass that is difficult to move through. Swamp underfoot in many cases, and

rapid mountain streams with only an "Aborigine" track (if one can recognise such a track) is therefore the only way into or through the jungle.

This is, and has been for the past 12 years, the home of the Communist Terrorist (C.T.). To the Commonwealth Forces engaged on the Emergency a "hot-house" atmosphere exists, in which a deadly game of hide and seek is to be played in flushing out the terrorists.

## Voice trials

The first Voice aircraft was operated by the Royal Air Force in Malaya in March, 1953. Original trials in broadcasting messages to the Communist Terrorists over the jungle were made by a Dakota loaned by the U.S.A.F. The trials proved satisfactory and two Valetta aircraft were equipped with broadcasting facilities, and operated by the Far East Transport Wing Detachment, based at Kuala Lumpur.

The Valetta did not prove a satisfactory aircraft for voice hailing due to (a) engine noise being too high; (b) comparatively high hailing speed (90 to 100 knots); and (c) the "Orbiting technique" necessary to give adequate coverage.

An urgent request by General Templar (the then High Commissioner and

Director of Operations, Federation of Malaya) resulted in the loan of a Dakota by the Royal Australian Air Force. This aircraft was fitted with the broadcasting equipment from one of the Valettas, then comparative trials were made in January, 1954, in which the Dakota gave superior audibility, greater clarity and an audible signal for two to three minutes when flown in a straight line.

It was therefore recommended that two Dakota aircraft that were available in the United Kingdom, should replace the two Valettas. One Valetta was withdrawn, and the other Valetta along with the Dakota continued to operate until 23rd February, 1954, when the Valetta crashed on Mount Ophir (4,187 feet high) in Johore, with the total loss of aircraft, crew and equipment.

## The Flight

Demands for Voice aircraft were on the increase and it was decided to form a "Voice Aircraft Flight". This became "C" Flight of No. 267 Squadron, based at Kuala Lumpur. The Flight was established with three Dakotas and two Auster aircraft (broadcast trials by an Auster had been made in January, 1954, and proved very satisfactory hailing from a height of 1,500 feet at 42 knots).

The first Royal Air Force Dakota



The four speakers are shown slung beneath the aircraft.

arrived on 12th June, 1954, and was made ready for operations by the 23rd, when the R.A.A.F. Dakota returned to Australia. A second Dakota arrived on 13th July, 1954, and the strength of aircraft was up to establishment by 1st October, 1954.

#### Move to Penang

No. 267 Squadron changed to No. 209 Squadron in November, 1958, and Voice Aircraft continued to operate from Kuala Lumpur until January, 1959, when due to the elimination of C.Ts and the declaration of "White Areas" in the southern part of Malaya, it was decided that the "Voice Flight" would be moved to Penang and so nearer to the remaining "Black Areas" of North Malaya. Due to the thicker jungle, and more mountainous terrain in North Malaya, the two Auster aircraft were disestablished at the same time. On 26th January, 1959, one Dakota crashed on take-off from Kuala Lumpur and was destroyed.

In November, 1959, No. 209 Squadron moved from Kuala Lumpur to an airfield on Singapore Island, and consequently the Voice Flight was transferred yet again to another Squadron; this time to No. 52 Squadron, at Kuala Lumpur, the Flight remaining as a Detachment at Penang.

#### Psychological warfare campaign

To achieve the maximum psychological effect upon the C.Ts, following an encounter with the Ground Security Forces, Voice Aircraft are used with the minimum amount of delay, when

morale is low, to exploit such eliminations – end of further activity – which may have taken place, or setbacks suffered by the C.Ts with promises of fair treatment to all who "Self-Renew" (the term "surrender" is not used, as this would mean loss of face).

The text of the broadcast is of primary importance, and certain principles must be adhered to.

All statements must be true. (This principle has been rigidly adhered to in Malaya, and it is noticeable in statements by surrendered terrorists that they never doubted information heard from Voice Aircraft.) Threats must not be used, unless the authorities intend to and can carry out the threatened action.

The messages must be brief and clear. Words or phrases must be carefully chosen. Six or seven short sentences are first drafted in English, and then translated into the required language,

and finally recorded in the correct dialect.

The recordings are normally made in Radio Malaya Studios under ideal conditions. Experience has shown however that recordings of a high standard can be made in the Flight office using an Acoustic Booth, or, in an emergency, on board the Dakota itself.

#### Equipment and operation

The interior equipment carried in the Dakota is a far cry from the transistor age in which we live. The first impression is more in keeping with "Battersea Power Station", with an Enfield Cub 5.6 K.V.A. diesel generator in the fuselage churning out 230 volts with a healthy knock.

Sound Recording/Reproducing Apparatus Type 7, is the tape recorder, and by using a special cassette, carrying 19 feet of tape, the two ends being spliced together to form an endless repeatable tape as it is drawn past the recording head, a 30-second recording can be achieved. On Operational Tapes the message lasts for 27 seconds followed by a three-second pause, before being repeated. The message is then amplified by four amplifiers, each of which delivers 500 watts output to the speakers. These speakers are mounted on a jettisonable "Boom" slung under the aircraft at an angle of 45 degrees to the vertical, and directed to the port side. A Burgess Acoustic Booth is also installed for "live broadcasting", and has been proved most useful during Search and Rescue Operations.

Positioned by the main door at his Control Station is the Tannoy Operator (volunteers from wireless tradesmen on the Flight). Through his headset he is constantly monitoring the quality of the broadcast and the correct functioning of the equipment. Changing tapes, as



Tannoy operator at the control station during hailing – Sgt. H. W. Batty, B.E.M.

requested by the Captain, into different languages as targets are "Hailed" and keeping a watchful eye on the diesel engine are also part of the Tannoy Operator's task.

#### Flying technique

To achieve successful ground reception and audibility of the "Voice" and not the aircraft over the target, the Dakota is flown in the following configuration - Speed: 70 knots+5 knots; 1,750 r.p.m.; and sufficient boost to maintain 70 knots (about 24 to 25 inches). Wings must be kept level, or the message which is "beamed" by the set angle of the speakers will be thrown off target. (Flying under these conditions in the turbulence of a Malayan afternoon in the mountains, one is constantly reminded that the stall is only a few knots on the minus side of the A.S.I. needle, as the aircraft is caught by a sudden gust coming round a mountain peak.)

Straight-line flying in squares, all turns to the left, and working towards the centre at 2,000-yards intervals, give the best results, as the speakers cover an area of 2,000 yards to the left of the aircraft and 500 yards to the right, from an optimum height of 2,500 feet above the ground. For a broadcast to a small target, or village, an "Orbiting" technique is used.

Broadcasting in or above cloud, or in rain, gives unsatisfactory ground reception.



Here the boom trolley is being removed from the Dakota. Left to right are: L.A.C. Ghodgoanikar, Sgt. G. J. Winsley, SAC. R. D. McMurrie and JT. P. Pyke.

At one time when eliminations were occurring frequently, the messages from Voice Aircraft were known as the "Stop Press of the Jungle", and although it is almost impossible to credit Voice Aircraft with actual numbers of S.E.P. (Surrendered Enemy Personnel), almost all surrendered terrorists admit to having heard the Voice Aircraft at sometime or another, and as proof of the esteem in which the Voice Aircraft is held, several S.E.P. have stated: "We heard from the Voice Aircraft that 'X' had been eliminated, so we knew that it must be true."

Inside the Dakota, setting the power supply from the diesel generator during ground test, is Cpl. A. D. Crowley.

