

Joseph Stilwell



an Old China Hand

Four Intelligence Officers in the China-Burma-India Theater: Stilwell, Eifler, Peers, and Chan

*For too many years in the preparation of officers for command assignments, we had overlooked the need for specialization in such activities as intelligence.... In some stations, the G2 became the dumping ground for officers ill-suited for command. I recall how scrupulously I avoided the branding that came with an intelligence assignment in my own career. —Omar N. Bradley in *A Soldier's Story**

Lyman B. Kirkpatrick, Jr., a junior officer on the intelligence staff of Gen. Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group at the Battle of the Bulge, recalled in his book, *Captains Without Eyes*, the prevailing feeling about military intelligence officers. "In the United States Army prior to World War II a military officer who attempted to make a career in intelligence could well jeopardize his chances of promotion. If he wished to stay in the service he had to take the usual rotation of command, staff and training assignments. If he indicated preference for intelligence in the staff assignments, to the exclusion of operations or plans, he might be viewed by the promotion boards not as an officer trying to make himself expert in a vital element of the military profession, but as an eccentric or specialist who would not be considered for highest rank."

If G2 assignments were generally thought to be damaging to an Army career in the first half of the 20th century, the case of Joseph Stilwell would seem to be the exception. In fact, it was precisely because of his knowledge gained through language studies and intelligence assignments that he was chosen to command the China-Burma-India theater during World War II. He finished his career as a four-star general.

From a middle class New York family, Stilwell's lively and sometimes playful intelligence was channeled toward a West Point education by his father, Benjamin, a well-to-do vice president of a New York utility company with both law and medical degrees. The younger Stilwell graduated in 1904 in the top one-third of his class and selected the infantry and an assignment with the 12th Regiment in the Philippines. He shipped out in October 1904.

Accompanying his company on jungle patrols and discharging all those miscellaneous duties that fall to a second lieutenant, he earned the economium of his commander who found him to be "exceptionally bright,

hardworking and efficient,” all characterizations that would describe him throughout his life.¹ After a 14-month tour in the Philippines, he returned to the U.S. Military Academy to become an instructor in the Department of Modern Languages, teaching English, French and Spanish. After three years, he was moved to the Department of Tactics where he taught history and coached the 1908-9 basketball, baseball and track squads.

During the summers, he requested postings to Latin America to brush up on his Spanish. During the summers of 1907, 1908 and 1909 he undertook “Confidential” intelligence missions to Central America, particularly Guatemala and Mexico. In Guatemala, for instance, he was charged with compiling in six weeks a topographical study, noting not only lines of communications, but landing sites and fortifications. He covered the ground on foot in civilian clothes, using an assumed name to shield his connection with the U.S. Army.

In January 1911, accompanied by his bride of three months, Winifred A. Smith, he sailed for the Philippines to rejoin his regiment. Promoted to first lieutenant at Fort William McKinley near Manila, he and his wife traveled to Japan in September, where Stilwell began his study of Japanese, and in November, having sent his pregnant wife back to the states, he visited China for 17 days. His Asian travels were his introduction to a culture in which he would become inextricably bound up for the greater part of his life.

In January 1912 he returned to the U.S. and duty with the 12th Infantry at the Presidio of Monterey until August when he resumed teaching duties at West Point once again, this time in the Department of History. He was endeavoring to get back into intelligence work and repeatedly applied to the War Department in 1913 for appointment as Military Attache to Santo Domingo and then as a military observer with the French army in 1915. Both requests were turned down, but he did get an assignment to Madrid in the summer of 1914 to further his language studies.

With America’s entry into World War I on the horizon, Stilwell was ordered to the 80th Division at Camp Lee, Virginia, where he was given the temporary rank of major and the duties of brigade adjutant. In December 1917 he received new orders sending him to France and duties as an intelligence staff officer. He reported to General John J. Pershing in January 1918 and was made the G2 of the IVth Corps. Before undertaking his work at the front, he was sent to the British 58th Division to learn first-hand the workings of front-line intelligence. There he observed the placing of outposts to track enemy activity, the night patrols sent out from the trenches to

take German prisoners, the role of aerial reconnaissance, and the importance of camouflaging friendly positions.

Then he was sent to the Intelligence course at Langres, the General Staff School near the American General Headquarters at Chaumont. His schooling was cut short after one week when he was needed to help organize the G2 section within the General Headquarters, a detail that lasted for three weeks. His education continued when on March 20th he was attached to the French XVII Corps for more hands-on experience. There he toured the French forward positions, went out with patrols, and learned from his French counterpart, Major Armand Belhomme, about every facet of intelligence work in combat. Major Belhomme spoke highly of Stilwell. Recording his impressions in later years, he said, "we learned to appreciate his culture, his cartesianism and his equanimity." At a farewell party, Stilwell expressed his gratitude to his French tutors and said he would remember them "with all the pleasure in the world."² This mutual respect was helped along by Stilwell's facility with the French language.

He returned to the AEF GHQ on 29 April as "a damned waffle-tailed clerk in a bloody office" and immediately began a campaign to get reassigned to line duty. As the Americans planned an attack on the German salient at St. Mihiel for early September, Stilwell was given the new assignment at IV Corps coordinating intelligence planning for the American offensive, organizing the divisional G2s and their training schools. It was a job that kept him on the move throughout the American sector. From Corps headquarters at Neufchateau, he traveled to the headquarters of the 1st, 42d and 89th Divisions to put together the total corps intelligence effort prior to and during the St. Mihiel campaign. On the eve of the American offensive, September 11, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel.

Stilwell's intelligence work in the St. Mihiel offensive and the subsequent attack in the Meuse-Argonne sector was recognized by the IV Corps Chief of Staff in October when he awarded him the Distinguished Service Medal and promoted him to full colonel. General Briant Wells said Stilwell was "unusually intelligent [and] one of the most capable G2 officers developed in the war. ...Nothing but praise of your section has come from any of the Divisions that have served with the Corps."³

But not all AEF officers would agree that Stilwell was deserving of nothing but praise, especially those that had been bamboozled by the famous Stilwell hoax. His counterpart G2 in the I Corps, Col. Sherman Miles, checked with Stilwell several times daily looking for fresh intelligence. There being no new developments, Stilwell decided to invent one. He reported to Miles that he had

captured the “great Otto Schmierkase, the German bichloride gas expert,” giving his fictitious captive a surname that translated to “cottage cheese.” When Miles rushed his chemical officer to IV Corps headquarters to interview the prisoner, Stilwell kept the joke going by informing the I Corps officer that Schmierkase had been moved up the chain to First Army G2 for questioning. Miles was not the only victim of this ruse. The press picked up the story and reported over a Reuters news wire that “One of the leading German gas experts has been captured by the Americans according to word from the St. Mihiel front. He was arranging a gas projector when nabbed.” Stilwell was proud of his creation but the G3 at First Army, George C. Marshall, was not amused and later expressed disapproval of the prank.⁴

Stilwell went to Washington in July 1919 to lobby for a new assignment that would satisfy his penchant for foreign travel. “As far away from home as possible” was how he put it to a former classmate who worked in personnel. His friend had just the ticket. The Military Intelligence Division was sending officers overseas for language training, part of a program that would strengthen their attache system by creating area experts. When he learned the quota for Japan was filled, Stilwell opted for China and became the first Army language officer posted to that country in August 1919. He was a year beyond the age limit of 35, but his other qualifications clearly made him the man for the job.

After a year of studying Chinese at the University of California at Berkeley, he set sail with his family in September 1920. He enlivened his duties as a student at the North China Union Language School by accepting scouting and engineering assignments. From April to July 1921, on loan to the International Famine Relief Committee, he acted as the Chief Engineer of a road-building project in Shansi, learning customs and language at a grass-roots level. It also was a means to meet warlords in the areas in which his work took him and assess their warfighting capabilities. His intelligence reporting earned him the approbation of the head of the MID, Colonel Sherman Miles, who referred to him as “our best man out there.”⁵

From 1923 to 1924 he attended the Infantry School at Fort Benning and then, from 1925 to 1926 he went to the Command and General Staff School. In 1926 he was back in China, this time as a battalion commander in the 15th Infantry stationed at Tientsin. The regimental executive officer there was George Catlett Marshall who took notice of Stilwell’s abilities. He became acting chief of staff of the American force and by the time he left China in 1929, he had been promoted to Lieutenant Colo-

nel.

It was in May of 1927 that Stilwell undertook a dangerous intelligence mission that tested his knowledge of the Chinese people and his courage. It was a time of civil war, Japanese military buildup in China, Russian mercenaries, and rampant anti-foreign feeling. The American legation badly needed information on the strength of southern forces moving on Hsuehchow and the probability of the invasion eventually reaching the foreign treaty ports and even Peking. The job fell to Stilwell who left by train for Hsuehchow on May 26 with his Chinese servant Chao who proved not only loyal to his employer in the face of great danger, but was an indispensable guide in hostile territory.

In the train rolling north, Stilwell saw disorganized soldiers, bandit-dominated railroad stations, White Russian cavalry in the hire of plundering warlords, and hordes of refugees. He was unable to see the warlord who controlled Hsuehchow, so he scouted the town on his own, counting the numbers of troops of various units and estimating their armament. On his fourth day amid the chaos, he saw the northern forces pulling out of the city. Realizing that the southern troops would pour into the vacuum left by the retreating northerners, panic set in and civilians and soldiers alike jammed the railroad yards and fought for space on the departing trains. Chao hid Stilwell in the home of the local YMCA secretary for six days, while the Kuomintang Army occupied the town. Then the two men made a break for it, fighting their way on a southbound train. The train stopped at P'eng Pu, stranding them for 36 hours of hunger and fear of being attacked by other passengers.

They were able to board some freight cars headed south, along with the mobs of refugees. The hostile passengers tried to provoke the foreign devil so that they could have an excuse to attack him. Chao saved his life with his quick thinking, demanding that they be arrested and taken to the authorities at the next stop, pretending to have great influence with Chiang Kai-shek. When the train pulled into the next station, they jumped from the car before it rolled to a stop and ran for the river. There they paid a sampan to take them out to the *USS Pittsburgh*, a cruiser anchored in the river.

Having gained safe haven, Stilwell made his report which was received with much gratitude since it was the only credible information that the legation had on the situation. General Castner, the commander of the U.S. forces in China, digested his report with "great admiration [for Stilwell's] intrepid personal qualities." He commended the major for "the highest type of efficiency, military intelligence, splendid determination and coura-

geous conduct...alone and unaided, with hundreds of ignorant, hostile anti-foreign Chinese troops of two contending armies.”⁶

Over the next three years he was an instructor and section chief at the Fort Benning Infantry School, the commandant of which was George C. Marshall who had hand-picked his staff. It was there that he picked up the nickname “Vinegar Joe” from a student who had circulated a cartoon with Stilwell’s head atop a vinegar bottle. He became known not only for his sour aspect, but his stress on initiative and judgment in unique circumstances.

One of the instructors assigned to the school was Omar N. Bradley, who found his new boss, Stilwell, to be “a feisty, iconoclastic intelligence officer.” Bradley agreed in his memoirs with Stilwell’s description of himself as “unreasonable, impatient, sour-balled, sullen, mad, hard, profane, vulgar,” but hastened to add that he also found Stilwell to be “brilliant, professional, visionary, ingenious, aesthetic, [and] athletic.” Bradley was especially happy to find that his section chief shared his dislike of the horses that were so prized by their rival cavalry branch. Stilwell had described his equine aversion when he wrote: “If there is a woodener, less intelligent animal on earth than a god-damned hammer-headed horse, show him to me. All prance and fart and no sense.”⁷

In his efficiency report, Marshall detected “a genius for instruction” and found him “qualified for any command in peace or war.” He added that “modesty and unassuming methods have prevented this officer from being widely known as one of the exceptionally brilliant and cultured men of the army.”⁸

In 1933 and 1934 Stilwell was back in California, training reservists in the IX Corps area in San Diego. There he came across a capable and rugged company commander named Carl Eifler who would later figure into the drama of the China-Burma-India theater.

He began his third tour in China in 1935, this time as a military attache and full colonel working for the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department. Accompanied by his family, he arrived in Peking on 7 July 1935. He was now a full-time intelligence officer, cultivating official and unofficial sources and reporting to MID information of military importance.

It was a time when the Japanese were militarily encroaching in the north of China. The Chinese Communists led by Mao Tse-tung took the lead in resisting the Japanese occupation while the nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek seemed to be biding their time until they could build an effective Army with the help of German advisors.

Stilwell, never one to rely on second-hand reports,

undertook several personal reconnaissances throughout the country, going to places no American official had ever gone before, some destinations requiring 30-mile hikes. His reports of the byzantine events in China were widely circulated in Washington. Most American officials were in the dark about Communist military capabilities. Stilwell made contact with Ho Lung who had led the Communist Second Red Army on the Long March in 1935. His notes revealed that the Communists “have good intelligence work, good organization, good tactics. They do not want the cities. Content to rough it in the country. Poorly armed and equipped, yet scare the Government to death.” Col. George A. Lynch, commanding the 15th Infantry in Peking, said of Stilwell that he “knows China and the Far East better, in my opinion, than any other officer in the service,” largely, Lynch thought, because of his personal reconnaissances.⁹

Sino-Japanese relations were in crisis and Japanese designs on China needed only the pretense of an incident to break into full-scale war. That incident was provided on 7 July 1937 when Chinese troops fired on Japanese troops at the Marco Polo Bridge in Wanping. The Japanese rushed troops into the northern provinces. Stilwell established a network of observers, made up of his five senior language officers who were also his assistant attaches. They were dispersed to major cities to report on breaking events. Also part of his circle of informants were journalists, consuls, and Standard Oil employees.

Stilwell got permission from the Japanese to visit the frontlines, but needed a Japanese linguist. He was sent a language officer from Tokyo, 36-year-old Captain Maxwell Taylor. But freedom to visit the front was short-lived. Both the Japanese and Chinese curtailed visits to the combat zones. Only Captain Frank Dorn, one of his assistant attaches, defied the order and made “unofficial” visits to both the Japanese and Chinese lines. But little information was forthcoming and Stilwell could only stew in Hankow. “I sit here and chew my nails..., work myself into a black rage.”¹⁰

It was at this time that the beleaguered attache fell afoul of his new superior in MID. Colonel E. R. McCabe has been described as a “petty despot” and “pedantic bureaucrat.” Although Brig. Gen. H. E. Knight and Col. F. H. Lincoln, previous chiefs of MID, put Stilwell down as “especially well suited” for intelligence work and “keenly intelligent,” McCabe constantly found fault with the lack of information out of China at a time when no information was available. He also tried to personally control the assignments within China of Stilwell’s five assistant attaches. Stilwell wrote in his diary, “Bastards in Washington don’t like me.”¹¹ If Stilwell’s re-

ports failed to impress his boss in Washington, they did prove of use to intelligence counterparts in the Office of Naval Intelligence. A Navy officer later wrote that his assessments had kept his service “oriented on the war in China.”¹²

In August 1938 more fuel was added to the feud with McCabe. Stilwell failed to ask permission to relocate himself and his family to Peiping for the summer. The MID chief felt his authority threatened and chastised Stilwell for “a serious error of judgment...when major military developments are in progress.” He ordered in no uncertain terms not to go on any further travels, or send subordinates, without prior MID approval. This was made necessary, McCabe explained, because the “coverage, quality and quantity of information received was not (repeat not) satisfactory.” The information received was not justifying the outlay of G2 funds.

This long-range, patronizing supervision from Washington continued throughout his tour, believed by historian Barbara Tuchman to be designed to provoke Stilwell’s resignation so that he could be replaced by a regular member of the *attache’s* clique.¹³

This naturally angered Stilwell who was laboring mightily in a massive theater of operations. But the bureaucratic infighting did nothing to slow down Stilwell’s efforts in the field. In August 1938 he set out with the British and French *attaches* to visit Hankow, now cut off from Peiping by Japanese troops. The Englishman dropped out and the French colonel contracted a fatal case of dysentery. In Hankow, under continual Japanese air attack, he made his report, concluding, “The Chinese soldier is excellent material, wasted and betrayed by stupid leadership. ...Suppose the Chinese soldier were well-fed, well-armed and equipped, well-cared for and well led...?”¹⁴

By late October Hankow and Canton fell. Stilwell used his ingenuity to find his way to Chunking where he had his first meeting with Chiang Kai-shek. He reported about that leader, “Chiang Kai-shek is directly responsible for much of the confusion that normally exists in his command. ...His first consideration is to maintain his own control over the best troops and material so that his position cannot be threatened.” Privately, he added, “He wanted to keep all his subordinates in the dark because he didn’t trust them.” He kept the best military equipment from the fighting units, “always thinking of what he could save for later on when perhaps his own position would be threatened.”¹⁵

Back in Peiping he met reluctantly with the Japanese commander of the city’s occupation forces. In May 1939 his tour was up and he and his family disembarked for

Honolulu. His career prospects looked bleak. He had 29 years in the Army, four years without promotion, and the negative efficiency reports of Colonel McCabe. It did not appear that it would be a joyful homecoming.

When George C. Marshall became chief of staff of the army in 1939, he singled out a number of officers he found capable for positions of leadership, often jumping them over more senior officers for promotion. Stilwell was one of these select officers and he was promoted to brigadier general. On the occasion of his promotion to general officer, there were the usual flood of congratulatory messages, including one from his onetime victim and new head of MID, Sherman Miles. Miles showed himself to be a good sport when he wrote, "Ever since I bit on your damned Smirkase joke 20 odd years ago, I have been convinced you deserved it [the promotion]." Many of the well-wishers expressed pleasant surprise that a man of Stilwell's unorthodox views could make it in an Army which was not always inclined to reward "independence of thought."¹⁶ When promoting Stilwell, General Marshall refused to consider the objections of McCabe who had called for Stilwell's removal as military attache and had given him damaging efficiency reports. Marshall later told the historians Romanus and Sunderland that he was "not impressed by the very elegant set of stuffed shirts" that comprised the McCabe clique of attaches.¹⁷

With the star came the command of the 3d Brigade of the 2d Division at Fort Sam Houston. Before long he commanded the 2d Division as a major general, and in July 1941 was given the three-star command of the III Corps with headquarters at the Presidio of Monterey.

When the command of the proposed allied invasion of North Africa did not materialize, Marshall gave Stilwell a job in a part of the world that most Americans knew almost nothing but for which Stilwell was particularly qualified. Marshall was personally aware of Stilwell's abilities as field commander and a trainer, which he considered outweighing his shortcomings as a diplomat. Asked by Marshall if he would accept the position, he answered "I'll go where I'm sent."¹⁸

At age 59, he was appointed chief of staff to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek on 10 March 1942, concurrently holding down the positions as commanding officer of all American forces in the CBI theater, and commander of the Chinese 5th and 6th Armies. These duties also entailed administering the Lend Lease in China and the management of the Chinese Training and Combat Command. In 1943 he was given the additional responsibility of deputy commander of the newly organized South East Asia Command under Lord Louis Francis Mountbatten. Mountbatten saw the problem with these

multiple and far-reaching responsibilities that had been placed on his deputy. He was quoted as saying that “only the Trinity could carry out [Stilwell’s] duties which require him to be in Delphi, Chungking and the Ledo Front simultaneously.”¹⁹

He had two culturally different allies to work with in addition to campaigning against the Japanese, and was not known for his diplomatic skills. He was at odds with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and General Claire Chennault who had headed Chiang’s air force since 1934. Chennault and Chiang felt that air power was the key to China’s eventual resurrection while Stilwell was convinced that well trained and equipped Chinese ground forces were the only hope to both protect Chinese air force bases and launch an offensive to drive the Japanese out of China. In the battle for scarce resources, the air force priorities would win out over Stilwell’s need to organize, equip and train 26 Chinese combat divisions. He once characterized the CBI’s low supply priority this way: “Peanut [his uncomplimentary name for Chiang] and I are on a raft, with one sandwich between us, and the rescue ship is headed away from the scene.”²⁰

He arrived in the theater at a critical time, when the Japanese were overrunning Burma and he narrowly escaped capture when he, along with about 100 others, walked out of Burma into India.

As his G2, Stilwell appointed his assistant attache from the Sino-Japanese War period, Frank Roberts who recently headed the China desk in MID. Upon reassignment, he was replaced with Stilwell’s 30-year-old son, Col. Joseph Warren Stilwell, Jr., who in 1942 was nine years out of West Point.²¹

Stilwell saw as his first task the training and revitalization of the Chinese Army so that the Japanese could be pushed out of northern Burma. That goal was accomplished by his campaign during the monsoon season of 1944.

His differences with Chiang about the offensive role of the Chinese Army came to a head in August 1944, at a time when Stilwell received his fourth star and was being proposed by Washington to command the Chinese Army. Deferring to the insistence of the Chinese leader, Washington officials recalled Stilwell to Washington and ordered him to remain silent about the shift.

So confident were his superiors, General Marshall and Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, in his abilities that they never considered that he might be overburdened. Only later would Stimson concede that “We knowingly gave him the toughest task in this war and it proved even harder than we anticipated.” Stilwell himself summed up his service in the CBI in his usual terse and caustic

manner: "I've done my best and stood up for American interests. To hell with them."²²

Stilwell was quick to recognize his lack of diplomacy in positions that demanded that quality. He had the utmost faith in the Chinese soldier, but did little to mask his low opinion of their leader Chiang Kai-shek, who seemed to be content to let the Americans defeat the Japanese and save his strength for the post-war struggle for political dominance.

At the time Stilwell was leading the campaign to drive the Japanese from Myitkyina and northern Burma, Peers said "there is little doubt in my mind that he was going through indescribable pain" from the intestinal cancer that would kill him within a few years.²³ Peers also believed that the October 1944 relief of General Stilwell from command of the CBI was "a grave error" that was "one of the first steps toward the ultimate victory of the Chinese Communists."²⁴

William "Ray" Peers, who commanded the OSS Detachment 101 in the CBI, remembered this story about Stilwell. In the spring of 1944 when Stilwell urged the Chinese troops nominally under his command to attack the Japanese who were threatening to drive into India and cut off their lines of communication, they balked. Stilwell personally tried to light a fire under the division commanders. When that did not work, he went to the regimental commanders. When they would not budge, he went to the battalion commanders, then the company commanders, even to the platoon and squad leaders. Failing to get them moving at each level, he eventually moved out in front of the combat formations himself, waving them to follow. The Chinese infantryman, rather than lose face, began to fall in behind him until both divisions were fully in motion. It was a leadership challenge that few three-star generals in World War II had to face.²⁵

Stilwell was essentially a field soldier, preferring to share the hard conditions with the troops at the front rather than becoming emerged in the routine of a rear headquarters. He lived modestly in a bamboo hut with a packing case for a desk. He slept on a cot, used his helmet to wash up and shave, and waited his turn in the chow line for a mess kit full of C-rations. He was quick to pass his cigarettes out to his Chinese soldiers and mingle with the troops.

One story tells about Stilwell sitting on a log by the side of the road during a monsoon, without any signs of his rank visible. He was joined by a sergeant from an engineer battalion and after a conversation, the sergeant remarked, "Soldier, you look too old for this sort of thing. Why don't you ask them to send you on home?" The

anecdote goes to the heart of Stilwell's lack of pretension and disdain for the pomp of his rank.²⁶

He was seen to work his hardest to improve conditions at the hospital, stripping his SEAC offices in the Imperial Hotel of their fans so that they could be moved to the typhus wards. Unlike many desk-bound commanders, he had a real appreciation for the trials of his men.

When he was to be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross in a surprise ceremony for his personal example in motivating Chinese units forward to capture Taunggyi in April 1942, he grumbled through the whole affair and later told his wife, "The whole thing is bunk, pumped up out of a very minor incident and entirely undeserved. It is embarrassing but luckily time moves on and such things are forgotten."

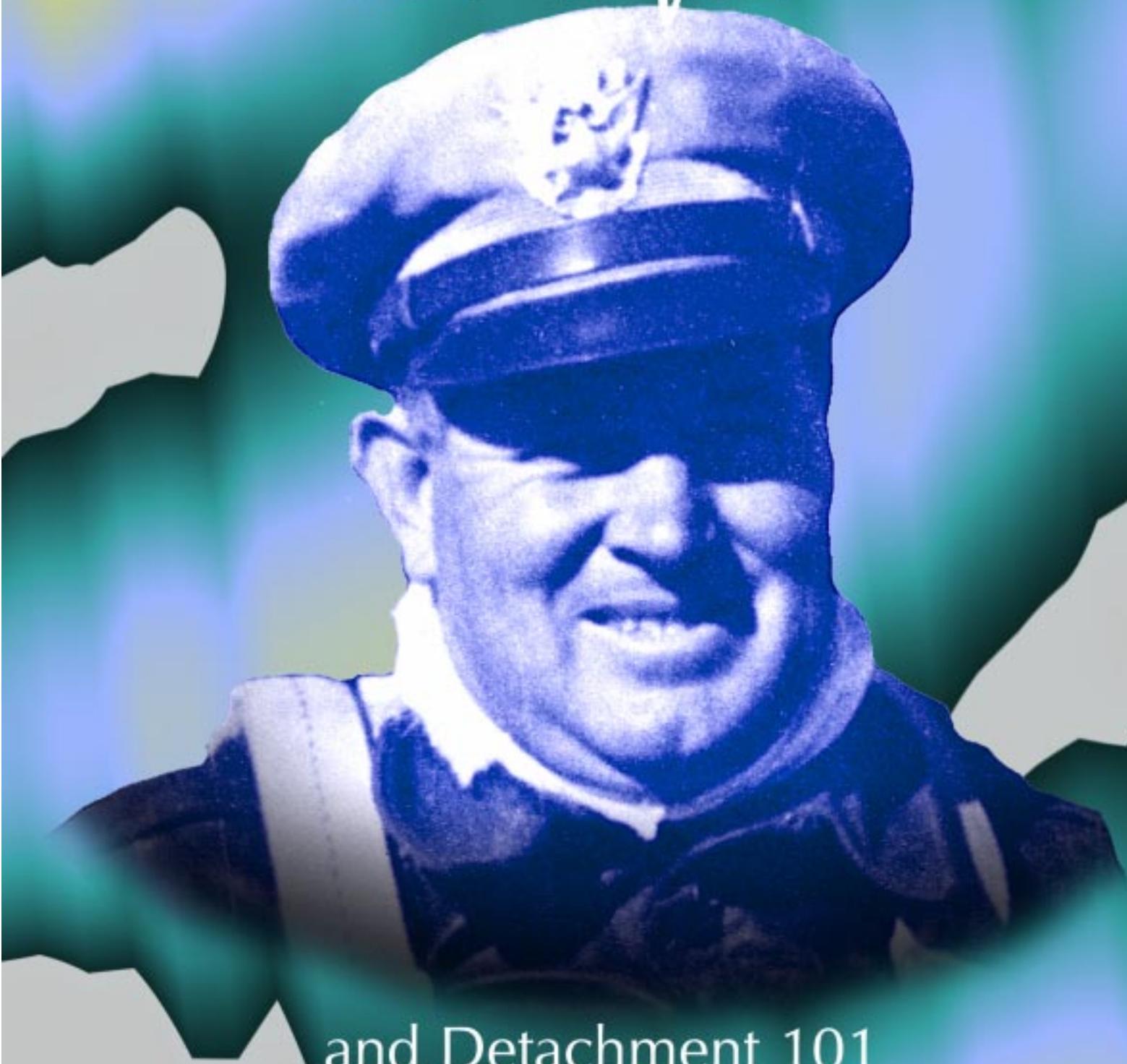
A junior intelligence officer in the theater, Capt. Won-Loy Chan, described Stilwell thusly:

[He] was the prototype of the middle-class American. Of medium height, skinny, craggy of feature, wearing steel-rimmed GI spectacles, he looked every one of his sixty years, and resembled a country schoolteacher more than he did the commander of thousands of Chinese and American troops. He wore baggy green GI pants tucked into old-fashioned canvas leggin's and a much-washed khaki shirt under an unpressed khaki field jacket. On his head, in place of his usual battered Army campaign hat, was a Chinese army forage cap. He showed no insignia of rank, wore no ribbons, and carried no weapons, not even a general's pistol. ...General Stilwell...wasn't known to hand out compliments very often. ...In Burma General Stilwell lived like the rest of us. His tent or basha was no better than ours. He took his place in the chow line and ate his C-rations with the rest of us. Gourmet food it wasn't and a great part of the time it wasn't even appetizing, but I never heard him complain.²⁷

In the opinion of a staff officer who served with him during the Second Burma campaign, Stilwell "could have gone down in American military history with Eisenhower, MacArthur, and Bradley had he been given the field command he so wanted. Instead, he was plunged into the politico-military arena known as the China-Burma-India theater and wound up relieved of his command, sacrificed to expediency."²⁸

Chan said that when the word of his relief came down to the men on 21 October, it "hit like a bombshell." The men speculated as to his health because "no one could conceive of the relief and recall of a general who had just won a brilliant victory against all odds in the jungles of north Burma during the monsoons." Chan believed "Stilwell was a patriot, a proud man who practiced for

Carl Eifler



and Detachment 101

forty-six years the tenets of duty, honor, and country.”²⁹

In January 1945 he was given a training assignment with American Ground Forces and five months later made commanding general of the Tenth Army in Okinawa where he presided over the surrender of Japanese forces on that island. After a brief stint as president of the War Equipment Board, he became commanding general of the Sixth Army headquarters at the Presidio of San Francisco.

He was found to have stomach cancer and his liver was badly deteriorated. He died at the Presidio of San Francisco on 12 October 1946, remembered by one subordinate as “a great soldier and a great American.”³⁰ Looking at him only as an intelligence officer, we see a man who one superior said had “a love and flair for this work.”³¹

Eifler

One man who would emerge from the war as a legendary figure within the intelligence and commando brotherhoods was Carl Eifler, a man whose 250-pound, 6-foot, 2-inch frame matched his sizable reputation as a tireless and fearless leader of Detachment 101.

His volatile temper earned for him the name Colonel Thundercloud. He was a solid 250 pounds, and thrived on physical challenge. He was a skilled marksman and practiced in jujitsu and boxing. He was prepared for the field of Mars not by military schooling, but by a youth in the oil fields of Los Angeles that early cultivated his survival skills.

He began his military career before most teens had their driver’s licenses. His size, maturity and mother’s connivance enabled him to fraudulently enlist in the Army at the age of 15. He was sent to cooking school in the Philippines, but later managed to get transferred to a photo reconnaissance unit and acquire some of the intelligence skills that would be called upon in a future crisis.

When his father became ill, his mother revealed his true age to authorities and Eifler’s Army career was cut short at age 17. In 1926 he joined the Los Angeles Police Department. In this job, too, he had falsified his age and was released by the department for this infraction of rules. Next it was a stint with the Newport Beach Police Department and then he went to work for the U.S. Customs service.

It was 1928 and Eifler was 22 years old. He enlisted in the Army Reserves in May as a private and before the year was out he was commissioned a second lieutenant. Over the next six years, as a border patrolman with U.S. Customs, Eifler worked the border along California and

Arizona, involving himself in gun battles with smugglers. He determined to improve his marksmanship.

While with the Customs in 1934, his lawman's nose for the out-of-the-ordinary caused him to become suspicious of the groups of Japanese men he spotted in Mexican border towns like Tijuana. By the end of his month-long surveillance, he had counted some 400 Japanese in the border area, all of them having a military bearing. He even followed them across the U.S. border where they visited U.S. naval installations at Long Beach and San Pedro. He reported his finding to his superiors, but they were not interested in matters outside of the customs purview. So he approached the new commander of his reserve unit, a regular Army lieutenant colonel named Joseph Stilwell, who relayed the information to Washington where it eventually reached the notice of naval intelligence and Secretary of State Henry Stimson. A mutual respect grew out of their association that would later bring Eifler and Stilwell together in wartime.

Eifler was promoted to chief inspector in 1935 and transferred to Hawaii where he stayed busy in the Army reserves. In 1939 he crossed paths again with Stilwell who was passing through Honolulu on his way home from China and had just received his first star.

In March of 1941, Eifler was called to active duty and took command of a company in the 35th Infantry regiment. Here he encountered some exceptional soldiers who would become a part of his wartime unit, Captain John Coughlin, commander of a rival company, and Eifler's first sergeant, Vincent L. Curl.

His next job was to command the 111th Military Police Company which guarded 400 alien detainees on Sand Island and then to bring up to strength and train the 811th MP Company.

His career took a sudden shift in direction on 17 February 1942 when he received a query from Lt. Col. M. P. Goodfellow of the G2, General Staff, in Washington. "Are you available for a Far East assignment?" was all it said. The commanding general of the Hawaiian Department answered that Eifler was not available unless it was urgent. The next communication from the War Department said, "Glad you are joining this operation. Will have orders issued assigning you immediately to Coordinator of Information. Leave as quickly as possible for Washington." It was signed by Goodfellow who, according to Eifler, had forged the Secretary of War's signature to orders overriding the objections of the commander of the Hawaiian Department.

Eifler flew to the mainland on March 17th. In Washington he met with Goodfellow who outlined what the Coordinator of Information had in mind. He was asked

to command a unit of saboteurs in China. He returned the next day to accept the assignment and ask for a number of men to be assigned to him for the mission, including Coughlin and Curl. Eifler had been handpicked from a list of 20 by General Stilwell.

Stilwell's nickname for Eifler was "Buffalo Bill," and he would introduce him to other staff officers as the Army's number one "thug."

Detachment 101 was an outgrowth of the examination of the allied defeat in the first Burma Campaign when the Japanese used to such good effect behind-the-lines ambushes and sabotage. General Stilwell and William "Wild Bill" Donovan of the COI, later OSS, reasoned that American forces could benefit from the same kind of guerrilla warfare. The man who would make the concept a reality was a man who Stilwell had known from his time in Hawaii named Carl Eifler.

A fellow officer described Eifler as "intelligent, imaginative, and he had a gambler's insight into understanding how much to leave to chance. He was a natural for the job...." Donovan found him already on active duty commanding a company in the 35th Infantry in Hawaii and called him to Washington.

Eifler continued to look for people in Washington, D.C., who filled his special requirements for this commando unit, even recruiting an engineer officer he met in a bar. By the time he was through, he had twelve officers and nine NCOs.

Detachment 101 was officially activated as a unit of the Coordinator of Information on 14 April 1942, picking its unit designation out of the air to make it look as if the unit had been around for a long time. Eifler and the initial group underwent training in England in a British school for secret operations. Many of these men would act as instructors for the remaining commandos back in the United States. The men trained for two weeks in a place called B Camp in the Catoctin Mountains of Maryland, which later became a presidential retreat named Camp David by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The training covered such areas as "methods of agent operations, secret writing, resisting an interrogator, searches for downed aircrews, cryptography, experimenting with a variety of high explosives, learning the difference between blowing a stone bridge or steel bridge" and the use of detonators.

With their hurried and rudimentary training completed, they now turned to the job of equipping themselves, a daunting task given the scarcity of items in wartime and the seemingly impossible deadline to have the supplies at shipside in Charleston, South Carolina, by 20 May. At the same time they were scrambling to fill their equip-

ment needs, the men acquired books and knowledgeable contacts about the area to which they would soon find themselves.

They arrived in Karachi on the 4th of July, 1942, celebrated the American holiday at the new American Officers Club, and moved on to New Dehli, Stilwell's CBI headquarters. There they got their marching orders from Stilwell himself. It read: "(a) Establish a base camp in northeast India and from there be prepared to (b) conduct operations to deny the Japanese the use of the Myitkyina airport and the roads and railroad leading into it from the south, and (c) closely coordinate operations with the British authorities (XIV Corps) to insure that there would be no mutual interference and that effective liaison be established."³²

In October 1942, Detachment 101 established a base camp at Nazira, Assam, on the extensive holdings of a British tea plantation. Far from any allied installations and on the India-Burma border, it seemed an ideal spot for launching special operations. It was from this base throughout the war that they mounted operations to sabotage Japanese lines of communication, gather intelligence on enemy strength and operations, and rescue downed allied air crews.

Just after setting up their headquarters, a training program was launched with 26 separate schools being organized for the natives in enemy-held areas in the arts of sabotage and espionage. Recruits were taught basic military skills, radio communications, codes and received parachute training to jump into Japanese-occupied territory.

The day after Christmas, 1942, Eifler personally led a team into Burma to set up a radio station which would receive all communications from sub-stations in the field. In February 1943 the first radio post began broadcasting from Japanese territory, some 250 miles behind their lines. In the same month, Eifler's agents mined the railway in northern Burma and cut the line in 21 other places.

In November the first Japanese pilot was kidnapped and spirited out to friendly bases, with Eifler piloting the small Piper Cub from Burma to India with the reluctant prisoner drugged at his side.

During a dangerous seaborne sortie behind enemy lines to rescue downed British fliers in May of 1943, Eifler was buffeted by waves and tossed among rocks while trying to get a landing party ashore. Narrowly escaping Japanese patrol launches, he suffered head injuries that were to plague him for the rest of his life. The landing party was intercepted by the Japanese and killed to a man. Eifler experienced debilitating headaches and bouts of temporary amnesia. Always a heavy drinker, he turned

increasingly to bourbon to fight the pain. Despite the suffering, he remained in command until a visiting representative of Donovan reported back that Eifler's condition hampered his effective command. He checked into the hospital in Ledo where he was visited by General Stilwell, who jokingly confirmed the doctor's opinion that he "was crazy."

In October, still suffering crippling pain, Eifler visited one of his forward bases deep in the jungle. After crashing their plane trying to take off from a short landing strip, Eifler and his party had to make the long walk out of the wilderness against all odds. Upon reaching Chabua, Eifler learned that Stilwell was visiting there and reported to him, bearded and barefooted. Stilwell cautioned him against "taking these damn fool chances" and advised him to "know the capabilities of [his] planes."³³ During his exodus from the jungle, Eifler had been promoted to full colonel.

The detachment set up four landing strips for light planes in enemy territory and successfully camouflaged them. They were indispensable during the battle of northern Burma and for evacuating the wounded. They enabled Eifler to make contact with his agents by air in a matter of hours instead of weeks. In October 1943 he flew into the Japanese-held jungle with the first detachment-owned plane. The unit completed its second airfield in November and was used by General Merrill as his headquarters. A third field was opened during the same month some 30 miles north of Myitkyina.

During a visit by General Donovan in December, the OSS chief informed Eifler that he was recalling him to the U.S. for a morale tour of OSS headquarters and bases in Europe and North Africa. He was assured that he would be returned to Nazira upon the completion of his temporary duty. On 11 December he left the theater, putting John Coughlin in command. He would return in June 1944 long enough to officially put Coughlin in command of all OSS operations in the China-Burma-India theater and designate Ray Peers as Detachment 101 commander.

Back in the states, Eifler began the planning of an operation that would land Korean agents in both Korea and the Japanese mainland to mount raids and guerilla operations against the Japanese. On the day he was to depart with the Napko unit for the Pacific, the Japanese surrender was announced.

In October 1947, after his discharge, he resumed his career in Honolulu with the Customs Service. He continued to suffer black outs and paralyzing pain. Turning to religion and giving up drinking entirely, he enrolled in Jackson College in 1952 and graduated four years later

William R. Peers



and Special Intelligence Operations

with a bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology and a Bachelor of Divinity. Following graduation in 1956 he retired from the government service and moved with his family to California. In 1963 he received his doctorate in psychology from the Illinois Institute of Technology. Dr. Eifler returned to California to take a job in clinical psychology in Salinas.

Following the war, Detachment 101, or the Kachin Rangers as they were known in the theater, would receive a Presidential Unit Citation for its actions and Eifler would receive another Legion of Merit.

Ray Peers suggested in his book about Burma operations that Carl Eifler may have been too impulsive about undertaking new and far-ranging missions. He said he "felt quite strongly that it was best for us to do a little and do it well rather than try to do many things and not do any one of them with the perfection that was necessary." Eifler, on the other hand, bridled "contemptuously at any suggestion that we were moving too fast." But Peers acknowledged that daring and imagination was what was needed in these kinds of special operations. He explained, "If there is one thing that a unit such as ours needed it was a dreamer, a dreamer strong enough by the force of his will and personality to penetrate beyond dream into reality. Carl gave us this stimulus."³⁴

Peers

When Colonel Eifler's health and mental attitude forced his evacuation, Lt. Col. William "Ray" Peers was put in charge of Detachment 101. Peers was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1938 after completing the University of California at Los Angeles. He took command on 17 December 1943 and later wrote that "The command came easily because there were so many faithful, brave men ready to serve. I was not there to betray them." The detachment's mission was to be expanded dramatically within a few months.

By the end of 1943, Detachment 101 was capable of delivering behind enemy lines 84,086 lbs. of equipment, food, ammunition, and radio supplies. In January of 1944, they doubled this capability and inserted 35 of their agents into Japanese territory. They rescued or assisted a total of 26 Army Air Corps men who had been shot down behind enemy lines.

Eifler said of Peers that he was one of the most difficult men he ever had to manage. Eifler's biographer Tom Moon said that the two men respected each other, their respective talents complimenting each other. Peers was the organizer, the detail man, while Eifler specialized in bold ingenuity. Moon wrote that Peers would

“listen to suggestions and was capable of evaluating quickly and moving quickly once his decision was made. He was well respected by all the 101 personnel.”³⁵ Peers’ duties involved securing school sites, providing building and feeding facilities, supervising the provisioning of students, drawing up training schedules, teaching and supervising instruction. In the absence of Eifler, Peers acted as the commander of the detachment.

General Joseph Stilwell was planning a summer campaign to retake northern Burma from the Japanese. In early 1944 he called in William “Ray” Peers, commander of Detachment 101, Office of Strategic Services [from December 1943 to July 1945], to brief him on what he expected of his Army commandos and Kachin natives. He was convinced that the Kachins who made up the bulk of the guerrilla detachment would be of immense help in gathering the intelligence the allied planners would need.

He told Peers to “expand your guerrilla force to a strength of about three thousand as quickly as you can. The bulk of the guerrilla forces should be located around about Myitkyina so that when the combined forces of Chinese and American troops get ready to put on their final push, you will be prepared to give them maximum assistance. The other thing I want is intelligence. No matter how difficult, expand your espionage activities; I want to see agents well south of Myitkyina and Mogaung and even further south if you would like; but, above all, make certain we can depend upon their information. Now that is about it. Can you do it? I am not going to try to tell you how to do it, that is your job.” Peers accepted.³⁶

By November 1944, after Lt. Gen. Daniel I. Sultan took over the CBI from Stilwell, Detachment 101 had been greatly enlarged and had widened the scope of its operations. It had grown to 250 U.S. Army officers and 750 enlisted men. They were air-dropping almost 1.5 million pounds of supplies monthly to behind-the-lines units, sending 10,000 messages a month in three different cryptographic systems, and encoding and decoding 300 messages per day. They had their own hospital at Nazira and a private air force of 17 aircraft and 20 pilots.

Long-range intelligence operations were set up in the Southern Shan States, south of Mandalay. The commander gave this report of their activities:

Aside from the guerrilla and espionage activities, there was a wide variety of other activities underway. To coordinate them with one another and with the operations of the combat forces kept the operations officer, Major Moore and his staff, and the communicators at their jobs around the clock seven days a week. One mock airdrop had already been carried out to assist the

British Fourteenth Army in their drive on Mandalay; another was being planned. Several weather stations had been set up behind the lines to collect meteorological data for the Air Corps Weather Service. Detachment 101's X-2 (counter-intelligence personnel) were working with NCAC Headquarters to ferret out Burmese traitors and war criminals, and there were more than a few. The black propaganda operations under Lieutenant Colonel George Boldt started paying dividends: several Japanese soldiers had already surrendered, carrying leaflets supposedly printed by the Japanese high command, but which actually had been printed and distributed behind the lines by 101. And above and beyond all of this, in Southern Burma our detachment had a unit of over one hundred officers and men working with British V Corps carrying out espionage and maritime operations—underwater swimmers and the like. There was very little going on within the combat units in Burma in which, directly or indirectly, 101 was not involved.³⁷

From May through June of 1945, the detachment became involved in conventional warfare, capturing the strategic enemy strong points of Lawksawk, Pangtara, and Loilem in the Central Shan States, depriving the Japanese 15th Army of the only eastern escape route and protecting the Stilwell Road against enemy counterattack. A War Department citation issued in January 1946 summarized the scope of the action. Detachment 101 and its "Kachin Rangers:"

...remained in constant contact with the enemy during the entire period and persistently cut him down and demoralized him. During the vicious struggle for Lawksawk, 400 Rangers met 700 Japanese veterans supported by artillery and, in a 12-hour battle, killed 281 of the enemy while suffering only 7 casualties. They took Loilem, central junction of vital roads, despite its protecting system of bunkers and pillboxes, after 10 days of unremitting assaults. Under the most hazardous jungle conditions, Americans of DETACHMENT NO. 101 displayed extraordinary heroism in leading their coordinated battalions of 3,200 natives to complete victory against an overwhelmingly superior force. They met and routed 10,000 Japanese throughout an area of 10,000 square miles, killed 1,247 while sustaining losses of 37, demolished or captured 4 large dumps, destroyed the enemy motor transport, and inflicted extensive damage on communications and installations....³⁸

Det 101 inactivated on 12 July 1945, after 3 1/2 years of organizing and conducting guerrilla combat and producing intelligence. These statistics are some measure of the detachment's contribution to the allied effort: Japanese killed (known)-5,428; Japanese killed or seriously

wounded (estimated)-10,000; Japanese captured-75; bridges destroyed-51; railroad trains derailed-9; military vehicles destroyed-277; supplies destroyed (estimated)-3,000 tons; supplies captured (estimated)-700 tons; U.S. Air Force personnel rescued-232; other allies rescued or flown out-342; Americans killed-22; native personnel killed-184; native personnel captured or missing-86; total agents lost-38; greatest number native troops (February 1945)-10,200; agent groups with radio, parachuted or overland-122; total 101 personnel in Northern Burma operation (does not include Calcutta or Southern Burma)-131 officers and 558 enlisted men; total Americans parachuted into operations-187; total native personnel parachuted into operations-247, and total casualties from parachute jumps-0.³⁹ Most combat casualties for native forces came at the end of the war when they undertook more conventional tactics in ground warfare.

Beyond the statistical totals, there were many less definable contributions made by Detachment 101. Allied guerrilla efforts had a pronounced effect on the thinking of the Burmese, providing a rallying point for anti-Japanese occupation and demonstrating that the Japanese could be beaten by native forces. Air rescue operations gave allied pilots the hope of bailing out behind enemy lines and coming home alive. There was a noticeable improvement in the morale of the Air Corps. Guerrilla reconnaissance units screened allied units from surprise by enemy assault.

Finally, the unit's most important contribution may be the intelligence it provided to NCAC and the 10th Air Force. Ray Peers explained:

The G2 of NCAC estimated that Detachment 101 provided NCAC with between 85 and 95 percent of all usable intelligence. Considering all of the numerous sources available to that command, including Chinese, British and American troops, prisoner of war interrogations, aerial photography and a wide variety of other sources, the magnitude of the 101 intelligence collection effort can be readily appreciated. According to the 10th Air Force, up to 85 percent of the targets attacked by them were initially designated by 101. As they improved their own target detection capabilities, principally through aerial photography, the number of targets designated by 101 tapered off to about 60 to 65 percent—still a very respectable figure. After a target had been attacked by the Air Corps, 101 agents surveyed it to estimate the amount of destruction. Detachment 101 would submit damage assessment reports to the 10th Air Force to assist them in determining whether or not additional air attacks would be required. Based upon the damage assessment reports, 10th Air Force estimated that they killed on the

order of 11,000 Japanese. This figure is probably very conservative.⁴⁰

The intelligence challenges in the CBI were legion. The environment was not the least of problems for intelligence soldiers in the CBI. The heat and humidity were oppressive. Most of the time they were operating in dense jungles. Landmarks were few and place names were confusing. Native allies had a poor eye for estimates. Peers said "Kachin agent reports had to be *increased* by a factor of three," while Chinese exaggerations of enemy strengths had to be divided by ten.

Following the war, Peers taught intelligence at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He took over as director of training at the CIA from 1950-51 and then became chief of the CIA's Taiwan station. He left the CIA in 1952 and reached the rank of lieutenant general in Vietnam in 1968. He headed the investigation of the My Lai massacre. He is the co-author of *Behind the Burma Road*, a history of Detachment 101 published in 1963. General Peers died in Letterman Army Medical Center, Presidio of San Francisco, on 6 April 1984. An intelligence officer in the CBI said Peers was an "outstanding example of what an officer and a gentleman should be."⁴¹

Chan

Won-loy "Charlie" Chan was born in North Bend, Oregon, in 1914. Educated at Stanford University, he was granted a ROTC commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Field Artillery Reserve in June 1936. His education at Stanford Law School was cut short by the death of an elder brother and the need for him to help run his parents' grocery business in North Bend.

He was called to active duty in January 1942 and was ordered to report to the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G2), Fourth U.S. Army, at the Presidio of San Francisco. From there he was assigned to the newly created Fourth Army Intelligence School at Crissy Field until the school was relocated to Camp Savage, Minnesota, in May. At the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS) he studied general intelligence subjects and spoken and written Japanese until 10 November when he was inexplicably graduated one month ahead of his class and given orders to ship overseas. Embarking on 8 December 1942, his troop ship put in at Pearl Harbor, Wellington, New Zealand, and finally, at Bombay, India, on 14 January 1943.

Aboard ship he was ordered to learn Mandarin Chinese and studied for three hours a day for six days a week. He reported in to the Ramgarh Training Center,

the headquarters for the Chinese Army in India (Chih Hui Pu). He was initially assigned as the G4 at the Chinese headquarters until April when Headquarters, Combat Troops, Ledo Sector was established at Margherita in northern Assam near the Burma border. He was reassigned to that headquarters to become assistant G2 under Lt. Col. Edward J. McNally, who served as both the G1 and G2. Lieutenant Chan was one of five Americans and five Chinese on the staff. Because his boss was preoccupied with his personnel duties, most of the intelligence work fell to Chan. One of the first things he did was to ask for a Japanese-language team. The first team arrived in December 1943. It was made up of two Japanese Americans who had graduated from the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS) in Minnesota.

Chan described some of the problems faced by an intelligence officer in the CBI theater:

Collecting enemy intelligence—how to do it, collect it, pass it on, and effectively use it in preparing tactical plans—is taught in all U.S. Army schools. The problem was that the textbooks and teachers at MISLS didn't, perhaps couldn't, take into account the myriad nationalities we'd be working with in the CBI: the diversity of systems; the languages spoken and written—English, Chinese, Tamil, Hindi, Burmese, and various tribal dialects that had no written form; and the multiplicity of command channels. We had ours, the Chinese had theirs, and the Chih Hui Pu was supposed to meld these two. The British also had their own system and except at the lower levels of command weren't too anxious to share their intelligence with us. Nevertheless, we tried. While the Chinese troops fighting Japanese forces did not filter back good intelligence when left to their own devices, these units were accompanied by some American liaison personnel and so I was able to develop a pretty good order of battle for the Japanese units that confronted us—an essential to tactical planning. Indoctrinating newly assigned American personnel was also essential and we did this for all newcomers at our headquarters before they joined their Chinese units.

* * *

Intelligence gathering has always been one of the most important activities for any military force. A commander—whether he commands a battalion, division, or army—bases his plans for either attack or defense largely on the information available to him regarding the strengths, weaknesses, weapons, supplies, and morale of the enemy he faces. Intelligence gathering in the CBI and, in particular, in Burma was a difficult task. The enemy spoke and wrote only one language: Japanese, a

language written in *kanji* (characters similar to those used in Chinese) that very few persons outside of Japan, unless they of Japanese origin, spoke, read, or wrote. Only the few Nisei assigned to General Stilwell's headquarters, the Nisei with Merrill's Marauders, and I had this ability. There weren't very many of us and we were all products of the MISLS.

Chan recognized that in order to succeed, he needed the "raw data, enemy documents, and, of course, prisoners to interrogate." But he would have few prisoners to question since the Chinese claimed that Japanese prisoners were killed while "trying to escape." Most captured documents were out of date by the time they got back to Captain Chan. General Haydon Boatner explained the problem in a letter to General Stilwell's Chief of Staff.

This headquarters is fully aware of the great value of captured prisoners and documents. Very little of them have been obtained for the following reasons. The Japanese in this sector, as in all sectors, prefer being killed to being captured—taken prisoner. The Chinese, who are our frontline troops, greatly prefer killing them rather than taking them prisoner, because of their experiences in the last six or seven years. Only one Japanese prisoner has been taken. He was badly wounded. He has been courted and pampered by presents and special hospitalization in order to have him talk freely. He's a private and unfortunately too dumb to give us much information. The Chinese are very reluctant to give up captured documents because they themselves have ample facilities for translating them and feel they know more about their value than we do. Nevertheless we put pressure on them and get such documents whenever possible. We have two Japanese translators and one officer trained in Japanese intelligence who then go over the few documents we do receive. In this way the maximum information is obtained with a minimum of delay. After that the documents are sent to your headquarters.⁴²

In Captain Chan's words, "Getting prisoners and documents from the Chinese was more difficult than pulling teeth!"⁴³

In the summer of 1943 Chan was given the job of coordinating all intelligence activities with 10th Air Force headquarters and with U.S. Army Supply Services at New Dehli. In order to get in synch with the air force, he studied their "maproom techniques, aerial-photo techniques, and air-mapping systems and discussed G2 record keeping, POW interrogation, document translation, and the Japanese unit order of battle, especially that of the Japanese 18th Division in Burma."⁴⁴

There were several members of the G2 section that had no intelligence background but were merely fillers.

Major Boyes was a medical doctor and Lt. Harvey Patton was a Coast Artillery officer. These temporary staffers would stay for a few months, then move on. Chan provided the only continuity in the office, and sometimes was the single officer in the G2, like in October 1943.

The fall of 1943 was rough indeed. With Colonel McNally at the front I was working twenty-four hours days. Fighting units were yelling for air-photo missions; briefing after briefing became a way of life; additional reports and estimates were ordered by the chief of staff almost daily; enemy documents that filtered back required translation ASAP. I was again the only one at combat headquarters with Japanese-language capability. Added to all that, the enemy was active in our rear areas and G2 was involved.

He got some help in November when Capt. Robert Greene was assigned. Chan also got promoted to captain, which puzzled him since he “never did officially hold the rank of first lieutenant.”⁴⁵

As General Stilwell’s Second Burma campaign was getting underway in January of 1944, Chan was transferred to the forward echelon of the combat headquarters, Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC), to work for the NCAC G2, Col. Joseph W. Stilwell, Jr.

When Chan visited the front lines to help with some document translation, he ran the considerable risk of being mistaken for a Japanese and shot by the Chinese troops manning the perimeter. His Asian features would also make him suspect to Americans, British and native Burmese. He would typically be set to work in a stuffy bunker and, in one case, provided toilet paper and a pencil stub to transcribe his translations. He would often be blamed for the disappointing contents of the document.

In order to improve the total lack of Chinese cooperation with intelligence operations, procedural changes were put in place in March 1944. Henceforth, all field orders were accompanied by an intelligence annex that explained the channels for prisoners and documents. The annex was authenticated by a Chinese officer, in the name of Chiang Kai-shek. This had some beneficial results and Chan was not required to visit the field as often. Chan said, “intelligence reports, captured documents, and prisoners came to us with some regularity. ...I was impressed with the newfound quality of their reports.”⁴⁶

Every day Chan would review all the translated reports coming in on the telegraph and flag those he thought would be of interest to the G2, Col. Stilwell. All the reports from the two Chinese divisions had to be translated. In the area of order of battle, Chan had started keeping a OB notebook since April 1943. It came in handy for the daily OB sessions he had with Stilwell.

New information was confirmed by American liaison officers who were with the Chinese troops. They got help from photo missions flown by their own L-4 and L-5 aircraft. Their order of battle was rounded out by POW and documentary information that were sent back from the field.

In June 1944 while awaiting a long overdue leave, Chan was told that instead he would be going to the Myitkyina Task Force which needed an experienced, bilingual intelligence officer. He reported in at the MTF headquarters on 13 June 1944. His boss here was Maj. Carroll Wright. General Boatner was in command and he gave Chan the additional duty of being his personal recon officer, taking a liaison plane up as often as possible to reconnoiter the Myitkyina defenses. During this time he was again forced to work around the clock, assisted by Major Wright and Lieutenant Tenney. Chan explained the division of work.

Wright attended the staff meetings where he gave the G2 portion of the daily briefing sessions. He was also called on to give separate briefings to whatever visiting firemen were audacious enough to drop in at MTF and there were a few. He did the necessary coordinating with the G3 and the A2/3 attached to MTF from the USAAF. Ed Tenney minded the store, keeping in daily contact with and receiving reports from the Peers Group (Det. 101), the British Morris Force, the Marauder units, the U.S. Combat Engineers, the Kachin Levies, and the American liaison officers from the Chinese divisions and regiments. My first priority, of course, was to fly General Boatner's recon missions. I also did the initial prisoner interrogations and translated captured documents. Never a dull moment as we tried to keep everyone from General Stilwell and General Boatner on down abreast of the enemy situation. Oh yes, don't forget that daily G2 roundup to which all three of us contributed.⁴⁷

Chan pays special tribute to the host of Nisei, products of the MISLS at Camp Savage, who served "galantly with United States and Allied combat forces in Burma, in particular with the 5307th Com Unit Provisional (Merrill's Marauders), the 475th Infantry and the 124th Cavalry of the British 36th Division."⁴⁸

One officer who worked with him, Ray Peers, said Charlie Chan "was the central figure of the intelligence staff." He remembered him as a hard-working man who always maintained his sense of humor. He "had a ready smile and was never too busy to talk with people—an attribute which contributed immeasurably to his success as an intelligence officer."⁴⁹

Evaluating his working habits, Peers said Chan "would accept no piece of information at its face value, it had to

be proved. He went to great lengths to assemble all the material and details and then carefully evaluate them in order to convert them into reliable intelligence for use by NCAC as well as by all senior and subordinate commands. This was not an easy task.”⁵⁰

Chan headed for home on 21 December 1944 for a puzzling job with the Field Artillery Replacement Training Center Headquarters, strange only because Chan had never fired a artillery piece or served with an artillery unit. He said his only brush with his branch was sampling “field artillery and French 75 punches at the Officers Club.” Fortuitously, Stilwell visited the post as commanding general of the U.S. Army Ground Forces, and ran into Capt. Chan, asking him “what the hell are you doing here? You don’t belong here, Charlie.” Stilwell arranged for his reassignment to the Pacific Military Intelligence Research Section (PACMIRS), Military Intelligence Division, War Department, at Fort Ritchie, Maryland.

With his new wife Ruby, Chan began his post-war intelligence career as a “staff wallah” in the Washington area. He worked for MID and the Office of Naval Intelligence until 1946 when he was transferred to the Central Intelligence Group where he would remain for the next 27 years. He retired as a colonel in 1968 at Fort Myer, Virginia, and settled in San Mateo, California.

Notes

1. Tuchman, Barbara W., *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-45*, Macmillan, New York, 1971. p. 23.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 65-6.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-1.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 709.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
7. Bradley, Omar N., and Blair, Clay, *A General’s Life*, Simon and Schuster, NY, 1983, pp. 64-66.
8. Tuchman, p. 157.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 200, 206.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 228-9.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 255.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 241-2.
14. *Ibid.*, 246.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 250-1.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 719.
18. Romanus, Charles F., and Sunderland, Riley, *Stilwell’s Mission to China*, Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, Washington, 1953, p. 73.

19. Spiller, Roger J., ed., *Dictionary of Military Biography*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn, Vol. III of three volumes, pp. 1053-57.
20. *Ibid.*
21. The younger Stilwell went on to a distinguished career as an infantry officer, never after 1945 serving as an intelligence officer, winning many decorations while serving in Vietnam as the commanding general of the U.S. Army Support Group, RVN. While the commanding general of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center in July 1967, he was presumed killed when his plane never returned from a flight over the Pacific Ocean.
22. *Military Biography*, pp. 1053-57.
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25. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
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32. Peers, pp. 42-43.
33. Eifler, Carl F., and Moon, Thomas N., *The Deadliest Colonel*, Vantage Press, New York, 1975, p. 152.
34. Peers, p. 100.
35. Moon, p. 109.
36. Peers, pp. 19-20.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 180-1.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 208-9.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 217, 220.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 219.
41. Chan, p. 42.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-6.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-8.
49. Peers, p. x.
50. *Ibid.*, p. x.