

## Fighter units of the Netherlands East Indies Army Air Corps and their Curtiss P-40N, North American P-51D/K and other aircraft in Australia and Dutch New Guinea, December 1943-May 1946:

the story of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron RAAF, the Fighter Pool of the N.E.I.-Personnel & Equipment Pool and 121 Squadron.

© Dr P.C. Boer, Sept. 2019, revised 29 Oct. 2019, 18-28 Dec. 2019, 14 Feb. 2020.

### Introduction<sup>0</sup>

After the capitulation of the allied forces in Java on 8 March 1942 (effective the next day) part of the Militaire Luchtvaart KNIL (ML/KNIL, the Army Air Corps of the Royal Netherlands Indies Army) stranded outside the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) mainly with ferry detachments in British India and in Australia, the evacuated Depot Vliegtuigafdeeling (the air transport squadron of the ML) in Australia and with the evacuated Flying School and Observer School in Australia. A survey of early May showed that approximately 640 men remained. In Australia these remnants were concentrated within the framework of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). A medium-bomber squadron No 18 Squadron N.E.I. RAAF was established in April 1942. In the United States the instructors, cadre and students evacuated in the first instance to Australia were, together with Dutch naval air service personnel evacuated and escaped from the NEI, concentrated in the (later Royal) Netherlands Military Flying School (RNMFS) established in May 1942. The RNMFS was to train flying echelons, reserve pilots and crews and a core of ground personnel for Dutch and NEI combat squadrons to be established in the United Kingdom and in Australia. Within the framework of the RAAF apart from a second medium-bomber squadron and a Pool unit for the support of the operational NEI squadrons, also a fighter squadron was to be formed in 1943. A second fighter squadron was formed in Australia in March 1946 but outside the RAAF structure as the operational NEI squadrons were taken out of the RAAF force structure on 1 February 1946. It was transferred to the NEI with the original fighter squadron in April 1946.

This paper looks (from the Dutch side) at the history of No 120 Squadron N.E.I. later addressed to as 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron, the Fighter Section (later Fighter Pool) of the N.E.I.-Aircraft & Personnel Pool (on 1 April

1944 renamed N.E.I.-Personnel and Equipment Pool) and 121 Squadron (forming), their personnel and their aircraft. Besides being a descriptive detailed piece of military aviation history, this paper has a logistical component and is next to operations flown, focused on personnel and material (equipment) issues. The central question used was: how did the NEI Government-in-exile establish and kept operational a fighter squadron and eventually form a second fighter squadron during and in the period directly following the Pacific war, despite the scarcity of personnel and the difficulties with the procurement of new aircraft?

### ML Fighter pilots

Although a number of ML/KNIL fighter pilots ended up in Australia, British India and the United States after the fall of Java they were either posted at the RNMFS or (a total of seven) posted to 18 Squadron N.E.I. in the period of April to June 1942 to become North American B-25 medium-bomber pilots. The majority of fighter pilots for the planned NEI fighter squadron to be established within the RAAF force structure was therefore trained at the RNMFS in the United States. A total of 60 of the pilots who completed single-engine advanced training on the North American AT-6 as well as operational training on the Curtiss P-40 (including former AT-6/P-40 instructors) were transferred to Australia for the ML/KNIL. Others went to the United Kingdom. Two former instructors of the Marineluchtvaartdienst (MLD, Dutch naval air service) seconded to the ML/KNIL were reassigned to the MLD in July 1944, however, bringing down the number of fully trained fighter pilots to 58. One of the young fighter pilots who did complete the P-40 operational training further could not be transferred to Australia for a number of months due to medical reasons; 58 becoming 57.<sup>1</sup>

As the RAAF required an establishment of 24 pilots with a 150% reserve i.e. a total of 60, the ML was actually three men short. This was not considered a problem, though. The P-40 trained pilot with medical issues would probably become combat ready later. To compensate for the remaining shortage two of the B-25 pilots of 18 Squadron N.E.I. relieved in September 1943 after their operational tour and who had previously flown as a fighter pilot, were planned to be retrained as such.<sup>2</sup>

### The NEI Curtiss P-40Ns

The NEI Government-in-exile in Melbourne through the Netherlands Purchasing Commission (NPC) in New York and eventually following an advice from the RAAF, ordered through the U.S. Government a total of 67 Curtiss P-40N aircraft for the fighter squadron in Australia. All aircraft were delivered on Lend-Lease conditions from a number of pending contracts of the United States Army Air Force (USAAF). After initial difficulties with the Joint (U.S.) Chiefs of Staff who refused to authorise P-40 deliveries to the NEI until a discussion about the ground echelon was settled with the RAAF (see later), the first 12 ML P-40Ns reached Australia by ship in the second half of October and in November 1943. The initial complement of pilots for 120 Squadron N.E.I. were ready with their OTU training in September having followed a second three weeks of bombing and gunnery training with the USAAF as there were no P-40s to be delivered before October.

The 67 aircraft were delivered by the factory in the U.S.A. in the period of October 1943 up to and including September 1944. Of these aircraft 12 were exchanged for other new Lend-Lease aircraft from the same USAAF contract with the RAAF in December 1943. Ten more P-40Ns were exchanged for RAAF aircraft in the same manner in January 1944, these exchanges to be able to realise the planned working-up time schedule for 120 Squadron N.E.I. and the supporting Fighter Section of the Pool unit. After the first 24 aircraft for 120 Squadron N.E.I. a total of 33 NEI ordered replacement aircraft were delivered in Australia in several batches in the period of April 1944 up to and including November 1944. In 1945 the NEI War Office ordered (also on Lend-Lease conditions) 41 North American P-51D/K Mustangs for the re-equipment of 120 Squadron but these aircraft were, after VJ Day, used to equip 121 Squadron (forming).<sup>3</sup>

### Establishment and unit training in Australia

The first group of 23 fighter pilots including the future Squadron CO Kap H.A. Maurenbrecher arrived by ship from the U.S.A. in Sydney on 7 November 1943.<sup>4</sup> At Canberra a second medium-bomber squadron No 119 Squadron N.E.I. RAAF as well as a N.E.I.-Aircraft & Personnel Pool (N.E.I.-A&P Pool) had already been established on 1 September 1943 although both units existed on paper only during the first month.<sup>5</sup> The fighter squadron was also to be established at Fairbairn airfield, RAAF

Station Canberra. Tlt N.J.H. Daanen was seconded to the forming squadron from the Canberra based Transport Section of the N.E.I.-A&P Pool (the section was forming from early November) having been made responsible for the reception of the fighter squadron personnel and the initial “show around”. Daanen had just completed his operational tour with 18 Squadron N.E.I. as a B-25 pilot and was one of the former fighter pilots.<sup>6</sup>



Future CO Kap H.A. Maurenbrecher and future chief engineer D. Bodemeijer (then still a civilian aircraft engineer of the Technical Service of the ML/KNIL) about to test fly one of the Curtiss-Wright CW-22B Falcons for the ML/KNIL at the factory airfield in January 1942 (via G.J. Casius).

No 120 Squadron N.E.I. was formally established by the RAAF on 10 December 1943, Maurenbrecher being promoted to Major on the same day. The squadron establishment was the same as that of the RAAF P-40 squadrons, the flying part being organised in an A Flight and a B Flight each with a formal strength of 12 P-40s and 12 pilots and its own maintenance team. The unit came to resort under RAAF Eastern Area Command. In the first week of December the pilots were temporarily posted at No 2 Operational Training Unit (2 OTU) of the RAAF at Mildura (Vic.) for a familiarisation with RAAF operational procedures initially following a short ground school program only. On 3 January 1944 the operational work-up started at Canberra, three experienced RAAF P-40N pilots being seconded to assist. Daanen was checked out on the P-40N

in Canberra but was entitled to a non-operational period after his B-25 tour and returned to the Transport Section in January 1944.<sup>7</sup> Seven more fighter pilots arrived from the RNMFS in January and were absorbed in the training program at Canberra. The flying echelon moved to Mildura again for a gunnery practise, the pilots flying RAAF P-40Ns.

During January the training at Canberra progressed only slowly due to a lack of spares for the P-40s. The responsibility for spares support and 2<sup>nd</sup> line maintenance support initially was the sole responsibility of the N.E.I.-A&P Pool. When the squadron moved to an operations base this responsibility was to be taken over in part by a RAAF Repair and Servicing Unit (RSU). The ML/KNIL would supply the allocated RSU with all the necessary spares and components for 2<sup>nd</sup> line airframe and engine maintenance including spare engines.<sup>8</sup>

The first 14 P-40s were collected by ML fighter pilots at Air Depots of the RAAF late December 1943 and early January 1944 and ferried to Canberra. All 14 arrived from 1 January 1944 onwards and went directly to 120 Squadron N.E.I. (the C3-502, C3-503 and C3-512 to C3-523 incl.). Fourteen more arrived at Canberra in the period of 8 January up to and including 31 January (the C3-500, the C3-501, the C3-504 to C3-511 incl. and the C3-524 to C3-527 incl.) which also went directly to the squadron. As the unit was to be kept at the formal established strength of 24 the strength dropped from 28 to 24 when four P-40s were transferred as reserves to the A&P Pool on 5 February (the C3-500, C3-501, C3-511 and C3-524). On 15 February six more P-40s were issued to the A&P Pool (the C3-528 to C3-533 incl.).<sup>9</sup>

The NEI P-40s were assembled at three different Air Depots of the RAAF, No 1 Air Depot (1 AD), 2 AD and 3 AD. As mentioned already the RAAF delivered 22 of its own Lend-Lease aircraft to the ML in an effort to get 120 Squadron N.E.I. and the so-called Fighter Section of the N.E.I.-A&P Pool (see later) established as soon as possible. The first 12 former RAAF aircraft (re-registered C3-512 to C3-523 incl.) were reallocated to the ML in December 1943. The final ten (re-registered C3-524 to C3-533 incl. and originally all planned to go to the A&P Pool) were reallocated to the ML in January 1944. Of the latter ten aircraft most went to 120 Squadron N.E.I. after all, earlier deliveries being transferred to the A&P Pool to compensate. (See the Appendices for details). All aircraft were

delivered RAAF style that is somewhat lightened to enhance performance, although the P-40N already was a light weight version of the P-40, but still had the original USAAF gunsight. The RAF type gunsights used by the RAAF were ordered by the NEI and replaced the American ones just before the squadron was transferred to Merauke in May 1944.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile a ground echelon was formed. According to an agreement between the NEI War Office and the RAAF the latter service would supply the majority of the ground personnel which was to be replaced by NEI personnel as soon as possible. 120 Squadron N.E.I. received around 200 of the RAAF personnel initially posted to 119 Squadron N.E.I. which was dissolved on 10 December 1943 due to a lack of ground personnel. The remainder of the 119 Squadron N.E.I. RAAF personnel largely went to the N.E.I. Aircraft & Personnel Pool.<sup>11</sup> Administrative CO of the so-called RAAF Component of 120 Squadron N.E.I. became Squadron Leader C.B. Dolphin, formerly posted at 119 Squadron N.E.I. Other key RAAF officers taken over from this squadron were F/L K. McCullough, Adjutant of Dolphin (until 20 July 1944), F/O. A.R. Talbot (intelligence officer), F/O. T.R. Blewett (equipment officer) and P/O S.T. Salter (defence officer).<sup>12</sup>

Only one problem remained, the RAAF ground personnel had nil P-40 experience. Fortunately the RNMFS had trained small numbers of Dutch P-40 airframe and Allison engine specialists and a number of armament mechanics and radio mechanics who had worked on P-40s in the U.S.A. Part of these were posted at 120 Squadron N.E.I in January 1944 together with a few former 18 Squadron N.E.I. mechanics who were experienced all-round airframe/engine mechanics trained in the NEI before the Pacific war. Posted as chief mechanic on 4 February was the very experienced Olt J.J.J. de Jonge, later succeeded by the equally experienced Olt B. Prins, both coming from the RNMFS. Also, a small group of ML administrative and other ground personnel was posted to the new fighter unit. Ground equipment and vehicles were taken over from the RAAF.<sup>13</sup>

The initial group of NEI personnel was posted to the new unit in December 1943, January and early February 1944. The personnel strength of 213 RAAF and 28 ML on 31 December 1943, became 205

RAAF and 45 ML/KNIL at the end of January 1944.<sup>14</sup> Posted in December 1943 already were, apart from 24 pilots (including Maurenbrecher and Daanen), Tlts E.J.D. Nagelgast (engineering officer), H.H. van der Schalie (intelligence officer), A.M. Valkenburg (armament officer) and G.J.B. Rappange (signals officer). With the exception of Nagelgast these RNMFS and USAAF trained lieutenants for the ground echelon were posted temporarily and were replaced by more experienced personnel during January-February 1944, although also some of the personnel posted in February was temporary and to be exchanged for others, usually NEI personnel on its way to Canberra from the RNMFS or other postings elsewhere. Tlt B. Hmelnitsky, formerly operations/intelligence officer with 18 Squadron N.E.I. replaced Tlt Van der Schalie.<sup>15</sup>



P-40s of 120 Squadron N.E.I. at Canberra in January 1944 (collection author).

One of the officers still on its way to the squadron was Elt D. Bodemeijer, the Chief Engineering Officer, who had been transferred from the NPC in New York. Another was LTZ I L.N.H. Jungschlager (Dutch naval air service seconded to the ML), on its way from the RNMFS with a Douglas C-47 of the ML ferried from San Francisco to become Adjutant. He arrived in Melbourne on 5 February but was needed in the C-47 crew as navigator for a few more flights before he could take over from Elt A.J.A. Geurtz early March. Signals officer Geurtz had been posted temporarily as Adjutant on 3 February only to become Adjutant again some five

months later when Jungschlager was transferred to the Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service. Posted on 22 February as armament officer was Tlt C.M.J. Lalieu who replaced Tlt Valkenburg. The latter was reassigned to the forming Fighter Section of the P.E.P. (see below).<sup>16</sup> The initial personnel strength gradually grew to 55 NEI personnel (of which 30 pilots) and 249 RAAF personnel on 31 March 1944. Also, the RAAF posted a few more experienced mechanics (fitters), including Flight Sgt W.J. Brown who later at Merauke (as a Warrant Officer) was one of the RAAF men who assisted with the coaching of recently posted newly trained ML mechanics.<sup>17</sup>

### The Potshot emergency and the first aircraft losses

Just when the squadron started preparing for a transfer to Mopah airfield at Merauke in Dutch New Guinea and Maurenbrecher and Dolphin were returning to Canberra after a visit to Merauke, an emergency move of 120 Squadron N.E.I. to "Potshot" (codename for Operations Base Exmouth at Learmonth, near Onslow) in Western Australia was ordered on 8 March. A Japanese attack on Western Australia was expected and emergency movements at very short notice of allied ground and air forces were ordered. The move of 120 Squadron N.E.I. with 24 aircraft was to start on 9 March and the unit had to be operational at Potshot within 3x24 hours. Two North American TB-25 freight planes of the N.E.I.-P.E.P. and six airline operated Douglas DC-3/C-47 (five) and DC-5 (one) transport aircraft were to carry out the necessary air transport of personnel and freight. The transport aircraft all arrived in the afternoon of 8 March but one was unserviceable on arrival and could not be used during the entire emergency operation. The TB-25s were also to act as lead plane for the P-40s. The N.E.I.-Transport Section Melbourne (N.E.I.-T.S.M., formerly the Transport Section of the N.E.I.-A&P Pool), although still forming and working up at Laverton, Melbourne, became responsible for a part of the support with two TB-25 freight planes and a Douglas C-47 when more of the squadron personnel proved to be necessary at Potshot than the original envisaged 80 men (apart from pilots). Their assistance probably was arranged by LKol M. van Haselen, the CO N.E.I.-A&P Pool. The three aircraft arrived at Canberra in the period of 10 to 12 March.<sup>18</sup>



The two P.E.P. TB-25s were to leave with the first nine readied P-40s but one of the TB-25s had to return after take-off with a defect and had to be replaced. Therefore, only one TB-25 with seven P-40s were the first to leave on 9 March for Geraldton with Potshot, as it turned out, as a final destination. The P-40s were led by Maj Maurenbrecher. Four of the civilian operated transport aircraft left for Potshot on the same date. They were followed on the next day by the replacement TB-25 from the P.E.P. and the two remaining P-40s of the first echelon. The fifth civilian operated transport plane also left on the 10<sup>th</sup> after a defect had been repaired. The P-40s were made rather limited operationally serviceable and left without harmonized gunsights and all the crystals needed for the radios. The wing guns were all armed, however. The remaining 15 P-40s had all been readied on 12 March and left the next day guided by three TB-25s (one from the P.E.P. and two from the T.S.M.), the T.S.M. C-47 leaving on the 13<sup>th</sup> as well.<sup>19</sup>



P-40s of 120 Squadron N.E.I. at Potshot in March 1944 (collection Gordon Birkett).

It was an adventurous but no easy flight, the airfields en route were unknown to almost all of the pilots, the weather was bad and was getting worse the closer one came to the destination. The route was Canberra, Parafield (Adelaide), Ceduna (rest and refuelling stop), Forrest (rest and refuelling stop), Kalgoorlie (rest and refuelling stop), Geraldton, Potshot.

The first echelon had to fly through a sandstorm and then through a cyclone with very strong winds and much rain. Maurenbrecher received orders for the final destination at Geraldton but Potshot was incorrectly marked on the map, the marked field being a meadow with lots of sheep and no possibility to land. Eventually Potshot was found where six of the aircraft landed when the cyclone was raging, 36 hours after the departure from Canberra.<sup>20</sup> The seventh P-40 flown by Tlt J.C.N. van Boldrik had become lost in the sandstorm, the pilot making a precautionary landing at a small field. He arrived at Potshot the next day following a B-25 bomber he saw flying, landing safely although the cyclone was still raging.<sup>21</sup>

Three of the 15 P-40s that left on the 13<sup>th</sup> (the C3-515, C3-516 and C3-517) did not make it into Potshot but stranded at Ceduna and Port Pirie. The C3-515 ground looped on take-off on 14 March and ended up with a damaged port wing and landing gear. It was repaired by a team from 9 Repair and Salvage Unit RAAF from Werribee airfield and ferried to Canberra on 5 April to join the squadron again. The C3-516 made a forced landing at Ceduna with a holed crank case on 13 March. Its engine was changed by 1 Aircraft Park RAAF. The aircraft was administratively transferred to the P.E.P. The C3-517 did not even make it to Ceduna but made a precautionary landing at Port Pirie. A B-25 of the P.E.P. flew in a servicing party on 14 March, which returned again by B-25 on the 17<sup>th</sup> having made the aircraft flyable. This damaged aircraft also was transferred to the P.E.P. for further repairs.<sup>22</sup>

The living conditions at Potshot were appalling, there only were a few larger buildings which were already taken and everybody had to live and take shelter in trenches under large tarpaulins during the cyclone. When the latter had finally passed after three days the tents flown in by the transports could be put up and there was ground to sleep on instead of mud. Sleeping was usually disturbed multiple times a night, though, because of the vermin swerving around, although there were few flies.<sup>23</sup> After some two weeks of standing on Readiness the order to return to Canberra was issued, the squadron to return on 23 March. This date proved to be not feasible due to the non-availability of transport aircraft and became 27 March.<sup>24</sup>

Two TB-25s returned at Canberra from Potshot on 28 March with a total of 16 P-40s. The P-40s flew back via Kalgoorlie, Forrest, Ceduna and Parafield. A 17<sup>th</sup> P-40 crashed at Parafield. The C3-523 flown by Sgt T.H. Gottschalk crashed on landing on 27 March due to the bad weather. It had major damage and was repaired at Parafield by 5 Central Recovery Depot RAAF to flyable status and further repaired with the P.E.P. at Canberra. On the next day (29 March) two P-40s and two transport aircraft arrived from Potshot. Two other P-40s (the C3-524 and C3-527) that were flown to Parafield on the 28<sup>th</sup> crashed 80 kilometres south of Mildura. Pilots Tlt A.J. Geerts and Sgt J.D. Brameijer lost their way and finally had to bale out due to a lack of fuel after searching in vain for a field to land on. Both were reported safe the next day, although Geerts broke an ankle. A third TB-25 returned at Canberra on 30 March with equipment and personnel.<sup>25</sup>



The C3-527 after its crash at Parafield on the return flight to Canberra (collection Hans Berfelo).

Two of the remaining three P-40s safely returned at Canberra on 5 April (the C3-515 after repairs by 9 RSU at Ceduna), respectively on 6 April (the C3-516 after the engine change at Ceduna). The C3-517 (repaired at Parafield) was already flown to Canberra in March and had been transferred to the P.E.P. like the C3-516 and C3-523. The N.E.I.-T.S.M.

again lend a hand, augmenting the civilian operated transports and P.E.P. TB-25 aircraft. One of the transport aircraft made the final flight of the emergency operation. It returned at Canberra from Potshot on 8 April with the rear party of personnel.<sup>26</sup> The squadron had learned a lot but had it been necessary to fly operations it would not have been able to do very much without RAAF assistance as there were almost no (NEI ordered) spare parts for the P-40s. These began to arrive in the course of April, though.<sup>27</sup>

### Transferred to Merauke

Following the Potshot emergency 120 Squadron N.E.I. was informed on 31 March 1944 of its upcoming transfer to Merauke in Dutch New Guinea. The major part of the ground echelon (191 officers and men led by Sqn Ldr Dolphin) and the equipment and vehicles were moved by the ms *Gorgon*, which left Sydney on 27 April and arrived at its destination on 7 May. The advance echelon left on 10, 11 and 19 April with a number of transport aircraft of the N.E.I.-T.S.M. (in part on loan from 36 Squadron RAAF) and the N.E.I.-P.E.P. carrying an advance party of the squadron staff and maintenance sections led by F/O Salter and a minimum of spares and equipment. Maj Maurenbrecher with four other ML officers flew over a Lockheed 12A communications aircraft (the L2-101) departing for Merauke on 28 April. The P-40s of A and B Flights left on the same day in two groups, each with a Lockheed Ventura of the RAAF as a safety escort. The 24 aircraft took off in the early morning and first flew to Townsville and the next day to Merauke. All arrived safely on 29 April (18) and 30 April (four) apart from two P-40s which stranded with technical problems at Brisbane (the C3-504) and Horn Island (the C3-508), respectively. An American C-47 flew over the rear party with the remaining equipment and also left in the morning of 28 April.<sup>28</sup>

No 120 Squadron N.E.I. by now addressed to as 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron RAAF relieved a RAAF P-40 squadron, 86 Squadron, on arrival at Merauke. It took over the local air defence task from this unit, the defence of the Torres Strait (to prevent Japanese ships from reaching the Coral Sea via the Strait) and the air support of the allied so-called Merauke Force (see later). A rear party of 86 Squadron took care of the aircraft maintenance until the main party of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron had arrived. Also 12 Squadron RAAF equipped with Vultee Vengeance dive-

bombers was (since November 1943) based at the airfield Mopah of Merauke. Mopah, newly built and operational from June 1943, was situated near the coast in the south-eastern corner of Dutch New Guinea with a runway which was no more than a collection of perforated steel planking between swamps connected to rather small taxi roads leading into the surrounding jungle. The airfield services were the responsibility of 28 Operational Base Unit (28 OBU) RAAF and there also was a detachment of 1 Repair and Servicing Unit (1 RSU) RAAF to assist with repairs and ready aircraft that had to be flown to 1 RSU at Horn Island for scheduled maintenance (100 hours maintenance) or major repairs,



The C3-503 "Wham Bam" photographed in July 1944. This aircraft was lost on 19 September 1944 on a training flight, killing pilot Sgt G. van Alphen (collection B.E. de Smalen).

which was a RAAF responsibility. Four ML P-40s of the P.E.P. were kept as a reserve at Horn Island from late June-early July to be able to exchange aircraft or replace losses. There were only a few buildings, no hangars, and the personnel was housed in old tents offering little comfort. Living conditions were harsh with everything from skin deceases to malaria, snakes and poisonous insects being a constant danger. But there was great enthusiasm; finally, in action.<sup>29</sup>

The squadron came to resort under 72 Wing RAAF in Townsville belonging to RAAF North Eastern Area Command. From 28 April the Wing had an advanced headquarters at Merauke and on 9 May a connection with "Wing Ops" became operational. Maj Maurenbrecher also became NEI Territorial Commander per 15 July 1944 in which position he also was the NEI local military commander (responsible for the local services to all NEI military personnel in the area such as the postal service, medical service and quarter master service) and NEI liaison officer with the Australian Infantry Brigade (Minus) (see below). He worked closely with the local NEI civilian administration and the local so-called Veldpolitie (Rural Police) detachment. He took over these positions from the KNIL Infantry officer LKol L.A. van den Berge.<sup>30</sup> The Merauke area was a huge area of rain forest and coastal swamps and the only unoccupied part of Dutch New Guinea, with the Dutch guilder still as the local currency.

At Merauke there had been an Infantry company of the KNIL, No 1 N.E.I. Fuselier Company of approximately 160 men. This unit was attached to the Australian 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade (Minus) AIF which formed the main part of the allied *Merauke Force* commanded by the Australian Brigadier J.R. Stevenson (AIF). Also a few U.S. Army units were part of this *Force*. The defence of Merauke had become somewhat less important by now as allied troops had made substantial progress in the northern part of Dutch New Guinea. Hollandia was invaded in April 1944, Wakde Island in May, followed by Biak Island on 27 May 1944, forcing the Japanese to relocate and concentrate troops. A large number of Japanese troops were forced to evade into the interior with little chances of survival. The Americans started to withdraw from *Merauke Force* first but were closely followed by the KNIL. No 1 N.E.I. Fuselier Company was withdrawn to Camp Casino (NSW) on 1 June leaving behind a detachment of 20 men only. The detachment of the Rural Police at Merauke (which had been strengthened earlier with 19 KNIL soldiers), an operations group of five men of the interservice organization Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service (NEFIS) and 33 militarised Papuas for garrison duties remained based at Merauke.<sup>31</sup>

The Merauke based group of NEFIS operatives collected combat intelligence with the help of local Papuas. It was regularly strengthened

with personnel from Australia for specific operations and relieved by other operations groups. A Dutch submarine or a MLD Catalina flying boat was regularly based at Merauke to insert or extract groups of NEFIS inlichtingen-commandos (INCOs, intelligence commandos) at night either on a shore or via a lake or river, on the south coast as well as in the Vogelkop, the huge western part of Dutch New Guinea. When at Merauke, the Catalina also was available for Air-Sea-Rescue and as a transport for the local NEI government and KNIL units.<sup>32</sup>



P-40 C3-510 "J" in 50 hours inspection. At Mopah airfield there were no hangars and all maintenance had to be done in the open under trees and camouflage netting (collection B.E. de Smalen).

The personnel strength of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron on 30 April was 240 RAAF and 72 ML (including 30 pilots and three FCOs), becoming 238 RAAF and 74 ML on 31 May but grew slightly to 244 RAAF and 75 ML on 30 June 1944. The ML ground personnel at the squadron was integrated in the RAAF Servicing Party and as far as the technical personnel was concerned most fulfilled supervisor positions. The latter were the following senior airframe also engine mechanics:

Adj L.D. Stolk, SM J.A. Eijkelenboom, SM C.H. van Reesch, SM H. van Cornewal and Sgt J. Boogaard (Dutch naval air service seconded to the ML).

There further were a number of young mechanics trained at the RNMFS and factory or USAAF schools in the U.S.A.:

airframe mechanic Kpl J.B. Lugt (in his practise year before becoming a Sgt mechanic later in 1944), armament mechanic Sgt J. Vermeer and radio mechanic Sgt G. Lambrechts.

Chief Engineering Officer was Elt (later Kap) D. Bodemeijer, his deputy also liaison officer with 1 RSU Tlt (later Elt) E.J.D. Nagelgast and his chief mechanic was Olt B. Prins.

Other ML ground personnel included:

LTZ I Jungschlager, Adjutant of the CO (succeeded by Elt Geurtz on 1 August 1944), Tlt C.W. Rappard (a RNMFS and USAAF trained armament officer posted as air transport and equipment officer, on 15 June 1944 succeeded by Tlt J.L.J. Telders), Tlt Lalieu (armament officer, also messing officer) and Tlt Hmelnitsky (intelligence officer).

The NEI ground personnel were to be rotated with personnel in Australia after a maximum of 18 months.<sup>33</sup>

### Familiarisation and training

The aircraft complement of the squadron initially was 22 although five P-40s were received shortly after arrival at Merauke (the new C3-539, C3-540 and C3-541 and the repaired stranded aircraft C3-504 and C3-508). Aircraft that went to 1 RSU at Horn Island for engine change (also done by the squadron itself after July 1944) or other maintenance (the C3-528 and C3-502) and write offs (the C3-514, C3-515 and C3-540) kept the available strength at 22 on 31 July 1944. This number slowly increased later, though. The Lockheed 12A light transport flown to Mopah by Maj Maurenbrecher remained attached for communications (the L2-101, replaced by the L2-100 in June). Maurenbrecher was a very experienced fighter pilot who had flown Curtiss P-6 Hawk in the thirties and Curtiss H-75A Hawk in 1940 until posted in the U.S.A. as an acceptance pilot in September 1940. The operational P-40s were assigned to A Flight and B

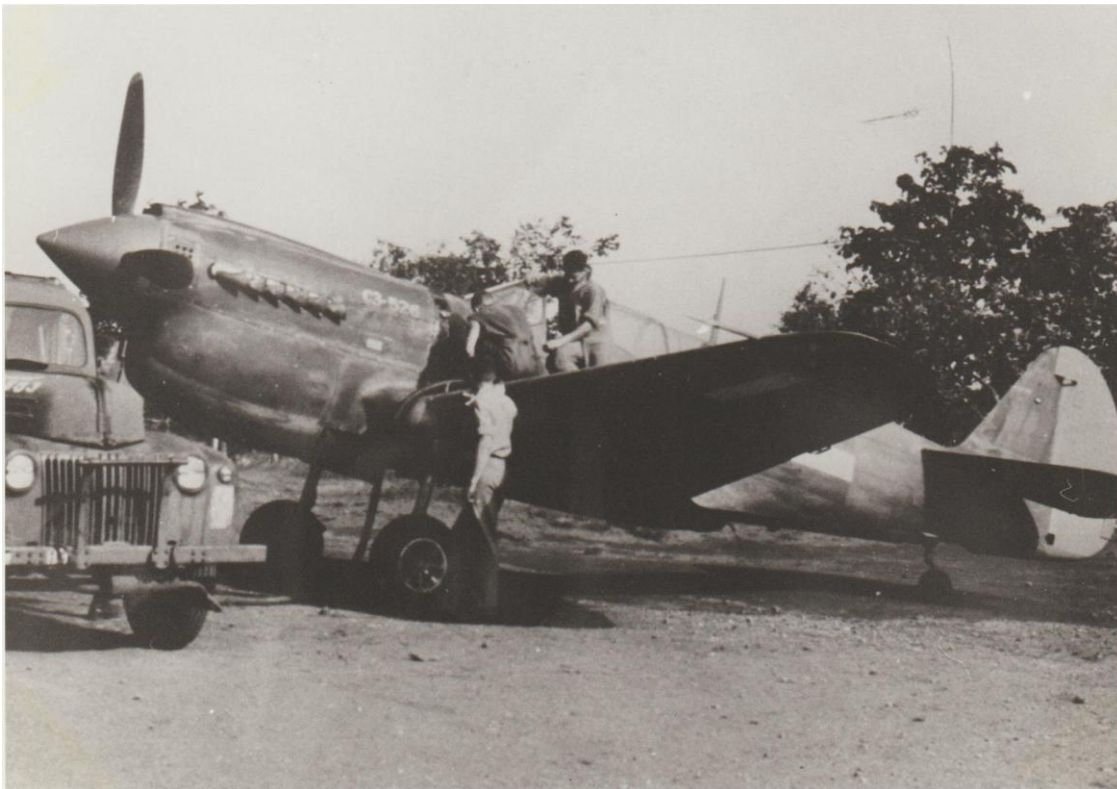


Flight commanded by respectively Elt (later Kap) H.H.J. Simons and Kap Y.H. Mulder. The Flight COs were experienced fighter pilots as well. Simons had flown Brewster 339 fighters in the fight for the NEI in the period of January-March 1942. Mulder flew Curtiss H-75A in 1940-1941 but was a Lockheed Lodestar transport pilot in the period of December 1941-March 1942. Each of the Flights was divided into three Sections with an established formal strength of four P-40Ns each. Each day one Flight was on Readiness with the pilots of the other one flying training missions and kept busy with sport and instruction. Pilot Tlt J. Flemer was appointed Operations Officer on 1 May, becoming responsible for the preparation and execution of Readiness and training schedules. He did not fly on operations initially but did so from July. The other pilots rotated through "duty ops" positions to assist him.<sup>34</sup>

In May 1944 the squadron (apart from local test flights and radio tests) made a number of orientation flights, trained in operational formation flying, made homing practise flights using the Merauke radio beacon and practised scrambles and intercepts led by the RAAF and NEI fighter controllers of the Fighter Control section of a RAAF Radar Squadron for vectoring the P-40s. Vultee Vengeances usually were the target.<sup>35</sup> One of the NEI fighter controllers was Elt G.J. Motshagen, a former RNMFS flying instructor who had followed P-40 operational training. He regularly came over to Mopah from May 1944 as he had been appointed liaison officer with 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron. The three NEI Fighter Control Officers (FCOs, radar controllers) were working for 322 Radar Squadron RAAF at Tanahmera, a former NEI detention camp in the middle of nowhere some 320 kilometres north of Merauke, guarded by an Australian Infantry company.<sup>36</sup> They were administratively on strength with 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron, though. Motshagen used the opportunity to make local test and continuation flights to keep current on the P-40N, a deal he made with Maj Maurenbrecher who "forgot" to ask permission in Melbourne until a need for additional NEI fighter pilots was officially established.<sup>37</sup>

Gunnery practise flights were made for the first time on 18 May with three aircraft. These first flights took a casualty in the ground crew. LAC R.C. Glenn of the RAAF Component was hit when the guns suddenly fired while cleaning the guns of the C3-510 on 18 May.<sup>38</sup> During June 1944 the training at Merauke got into a higher pace as sufficient

quantities of bombs and ammunition were finally available for a more intensive (dive, low level and skip) bombing and gunnery training. Elements of two and sections of four aircraft trained in pattern bombing.<sup>39</sup> Also air combat training and Army Co-operation (bombing and strafing and the dropping of cargo cylinders) were added to the training program. Aerial gunnery was not possible as the only drogue towing plane (of 12 Squadron) was unserviceable during June. In the final week of the month the training program had to be curtailed somewhat because of a shortage of 100 octane aviation fuel at Merauke due to the temporary stationing of USAAF bombers at Mopah. The serviceability of the P-40s was very good and averaged almost 80% in June.<sup>40</sup>



The C3-526 at Mopah in June or July 1944 (authors collection).

### The first operations and more operational training

The first operation, an armed reconnaissance, “recco” for short, was flown on 27 June with four P-40s led by Maj Maurenbrecher to the shores of Cooks Bay. Despite a low cloud ceiling and poor visibility the bombs could be pattern (skip) bombed from 500 feet but, unfortunately, no results could be observed. Scrambles to intercept unidentified aircraft started around the same day.<sup>41</sup>

When 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron arrived at Merauke the Japanese air activity had almost seized, although it had been pretty severe earlier with the small town of Merauke to a large part destroyed in over 20 Japanese bombing raids. Enthusiasm for Readiness duty soon withered away. Despite many alerts not a single Japanese aircraft was ever seen. There were many false alerts which usually turned out to be a Douglas C-47 with its Identification Friend Foe (IFF) set either unserviceable or accidentally not turned on. On 25 July eight P-40s tried to intercept two unidentified aircraft but these turned away and disappeared when at approximately 64 kilometres from Mopah. In the one year the squadron was stationed at Mopah on two occasions only Japanese reconnaissance aircraft came close to the airfield. In both cases the radar station gave its warning too late or lost track and the aircraft escaped.<sup>42</sup>

To be able to realise a system in which the pilots could be relieved gradually in small groups after the standard four months operational tour (extended to five months in August 1945) followed by a three to four months non-operational period, a first group of 13 pilots including Kap Mulder were relieved on 5 July already. They were replaced by 14 others who, however, had only been able to fly 5-10 hours P-40 in the about six months between leaving the RNMFS in the U.S.A. and their posting due to a lack of P-40 aircraft for training at the P.E.P. (see below). A Japanese Nakajima Ki-43 fighter (allied code name Oscar) captured by the Americans and in USAAF markings landed at Merauke on its way to Brisbane on 5 July, generating much interest with both pilots and ground personnel.<sup>43</sup> Pilot Sgt R. Spoor, one of the new arrivals, severely damaged a P-40 during taxiing with too high a speed on 28 July, his third P-40 taxi accident. He was grounded immediately and sent back to Australia on 1 August where he was posted to No 1 N.E.I. Infantry Battalion in Camp Casino (NSW) which had been recently established on 1 June 1944. His licenses were revoked. The C3-510 he had damaged after landing suffered from a collapsed landing gear and a damaged engine and propeller, costly major damage. Three more new pilots were posted in on 2 August.<sup>44</sup>

During July there was a lot of training by the new pilots in formation flying, combat flying and gunnery, although aerial gunnery was not

possible as the tow plane of 12 Squadron was still unserviceable. Gun camera training was not possible either as the film magazines received proved to be unserviceable, the films jamming as soon as the cameras were turned on. During July bombing training had to be cancelled as no bombs were available for training. Some night flying training could be done but only for a limited number of hours. Again, lots of scrambles were made which led to nothing but losses of P-40s because of accidents. The squadron also trained for three days with the Infantry and Artillery of the Australian Infantry Brigade. The squadron performed low level bombing, strafing and supply dropping, the results leaving much to be desired, however. Due to orientation problems with the pilots and the own troops not using smoke pots to guide them, bombs ended up in the line occupied by own troops. The Australians were very lucky that there were no casualties.<sup>45</sup>

Two sorties were flown for actual Army support on 14 July when two P-40s dropped a total of four containers for the supply of Army Post 6 at the Eilanden River (present day Pulau River), although the Army informed that the containers were dropped eight kilometres off at a deserted village. This seemed strange and Maj Maurenbrecher (an expert navigator himself) took off in the Lockheed L2-100 the next day to locate the post and check its position. It proved that the map position given to the squadron was 27 kilometres off. Apologies were kindly received.<sup>46</sup> Post 6 had been attacked by the Japanese from the sea in mid-January 1944 but the then 12 men at the Post (Australians with a few KNIL soldiers) succeeded in repelling the attack by sinking two landing vessels with anti-tank guns causing a large number of Japanese casualties. The Post was strengthened and had an occupation of 135 men in April but the Japanese did not try again.<sup>47</sup>

Only after much pressure on the Wing Headquarters the squadron was allowed to fly a number of bombing and strafing missions to the nearest Japanese bases at Timoeka and Japero, 600 kilometres west of Merauke on the south coast. Twice P-40s were sent out to strafe the encampment at Japero and to drop two 250 lbs bombs per aircraft. The first of these missions was flown on 4 July with six P-40s led by Kap Mulder but one of the aircraft had to return to base with engine problems and the remaining five had to turn back later due to bad weather.<sup>48</sup> The

mission was repeated the next day with again six P-40s now led by Elt Simons. This time all fighters reached Japero where some Anti-Aircraft (AA) fire was met. The attack on the encampment, a collection of huts and small buildings in the edge of the jungle bordering the shore, was not very successful. Some of the bombs fell into the sea and others in the jungle, while the effect of the bombs that did fall into the target area could not be observed.<sup>49</sup>



A section of the squadron on a training flight, June or July 1944 (authors collection).

The fighter of Elt J.P. Verspoor was hit in the oil cooler and forced down approximately 16 kilometres south-east of Cooks Bay. Verspoor successfully ditched his P-40 (the C3-515) and peddled to the coast only to take to the sea again fast after an encounter with obtruding Papuas. Two Vultees from 12 Squadron dropped three emergency packages but the pilot could obtain only one of them. He was picked up on the next day by a Consolidated Catalina of the Dutch naval air service (its crew at Merauke busy preparing for a mission to the Wisselmeren for the NEFIS) just in time. Verspoors aircraft was destroyed by gunfire.<sup>50</sup> More attacks on Timoeke and Japero followed in December 1944 and in January 1945 (see below).

There were no other losses on these first missions but on 24 July 1944 the unit lost its first pilot, Sgt C.R. Pelsmaker. Pelsmaker hit the tree tops and crashed with the C3-514 during a gunnery training flight near the small village of Nassam.<sup>51</sup> He survived the crash but succumbed on his way to Merauke. The cause of this accident was thought to be the oxygen tube becoming jammed between the steering cables. Something similar had happened to Maurenbrecher on an earlier flight, his P-40 turning upside down which could be redressed only just in time.<sup>52</sup> Other P-40s were lost or received major damage in accidents but without loss of lives. On 5 July Sgt G.W. Greene crash landed and damaged the C3-520 on a dispersal road due to a landing gear failure, a very well executed emergency landing which saved the airplane. Two days later the C3-540 crashed on landing with pilot Sgt N.E. Czismania de Somogy due to an overheating engine, the aircraft becoming a total loss. During July 127 operational sorties were flown of which 113 during interceptions, 12 on bombing and strafing missions and two for Army support. The aircraft strength on 31 July was 22 P-40s of which 18 (80%) were serviceable.<sup>53</sup>

No 12 Squadron RAAF was no longer necessary in Merauke and withdrew in July 1944 to Strathpine airfield near Brisbane leaving 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron without target aircraft for interception practise. Own P-40s were to be used instead.<sup>54</sup> The defence of Merauke had become increasingly less important as the allies had made further progress in the northern part of Dutch New Guinea. The island of Owi, eight kilometres from Biak was invaded on 2 June and within days a new airstrip was being built on it which was operational on 21 June. Noemfoor Island followed on 2 July; Kamiri Airdrome being secured on the same day. The capture of Noemfoor sealed off the strategic important Geelvink Bay. Further invasions on the western tip of Dutch New Guinea and Middelburg Island would follow late July and mid-August 1944.<sup>55</sup>

An allied convoy escorted by war ships was protected from the air by 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron but without the unit seeing any action on 2 and 3 August. On 16 August the transport aircraft of Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Blamey, the CG of the Australian Army forces, was escorted by a full Flight of 12 P-40s but nothing much happened during the remainder of this month. A large number of scrambles, the squadron

taking off with four or eight aircraft depending on the number of reported possible “hostiles” (one, respectively two), led to nothing. On 24 August Sgt Czismania de Somogy had to bale out of the C3-508 during a training scramble when he was warned by his pair lead that his engine was on fire. Czismania landed with nothing more than a sprained ankle some five kilometres NE from base. Six days later Sgt L.H. Hays, on a training flight, belly landed the C3-530 32 kilometres SE of Merauke due to engine trouble. Hays was unhurt and could be rescued quickly. Late August there were air support exercises with the Artillery and Infantry again.<sup>56</sup> After receiving a report from North Eastern Area Headquarters ascribing the low durability of the Allison engines in the squadron aircraft to operating under too much power and insufficient use of the carburettor air filter, all pilots followed a lecture on engine performance and handling in the course of the month. The P-40 engines indeed were good for only 140 hours on average.<sup>57</sup>

During August a total of 106 operational sorties were flown, eight for fighter cover above ships, 75 were scrambles with intercepts of friendly aircraft, 17 intercepts without results and six reconnaissance.<sup>58</sup> The training of the newly arrived pilots could be largely completed, although air to air gunnery and gun camera shooting could not be practised.<sup>59</sup> There were 25 P-40s on strength at the end of August, average serviceability during the month was 84%.<sup>60</sup>

In September the unit again flew sorties during Army Co-operation exercises. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of this month Sqn Ldr Dolphin the RAAF Component Administrative CO of the unit was transferred and relieved by Sqn Ldr K.A. Williams. On the next day Sqn Ldr L.R. Dawson, the former RAAF Component CO of 18 Squadron N.E.I. at Canberra in 1942 and by now RAAF liaison officer with the NEI War Office in Melbourne, visited the unit.<sup>61</sup> Ten pilots of the initial pilot complement of May 1944 were to be relieved on 6 September and from October onwards every month approximately six pilots would be relieved and replaced.<sup>62</sup>

Nine new pilots were posted in September, the first arriving on the 6<sup>th</sup> of that month, while Kap Mulder would return mid-September. The ten pilots were relieved as planned but the squadron suffered a heavy non-combat loss on 6 September 1944. Seven of the ten pilots, Elts R.Th. Braakensiek, H.P. Levy, J.S. Zwart, B.J. Salm, B. van Aken and O.

Leyding and Sgt A.C. Scholte, were reported missing when the Douglas Dakota of 1 N.E.I.T.S. (the former N.E.I.-T.S.M.) flying them to Australia vanished near Cairns in bad weather. One of the other passengers was Sqn Ldr Dawson. Also, a group of NEFIS operatives was on board. The Captain of the C-47 was former fighter pilot Elt Daanen, who had already been allocated for further training on the P-40 after his tour with 1 N.E.I.T.S.<sup>63</sup>

A new loss of life occurred on 19 September. The only recently posted Sgt G. van Alphen was killed near Merauke in the C3-503 when he lost consciousness after his oxygen mask had come loose during a practise scramble. His aircraft collided with the C3-544 of his pair lead Elt W.J. Heikoop who used his parachute and survived but with much difficulty as the cockpit hood jammed. One of the other two aircraft scrambled, the C3-550 flown by SM F.W. Verdier, became lost in the bad weather and



The rather primitive Orderly Room and Squadron Headquarters at Merauke (collection B.E. de Smalen).

had to be crash landed on a beach some 40 kilometres west of Merauke after the engine started to fail and throw oil on the windscreen following a complete electrical failure.<sup>64</sup>



There were only 46 RNMFS trained fighter pilots available in Australia after this accident as a total of nine were now lost in accidents, one pilot had been transferred to the Infantry on 1 August and one pilot had become medically unfit after a flying accident near Canberra in June (see below).<sup>65</sup> Two former 18 Squadron N.E.I. pilots (Kap A.J. de Vries and Elt Heikoop) were already trained on the P-40, however and the fully trained pilot Sld W. Inkenhaag who had to remain behind in the U.S.A. due to medical reasons started re-training in a P.E.P. organised OTU course with four others (including Elt Motshagen) in October 1944. Further replacement pilots for 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron would be trained by the RAAF ab initio at 5 SFTS and 2 OTU (see the Appendices).<sup>66</sup>

During September 87 operational sorties were flown, 71 scrambles which ended in "intercepts friendly" and 16 reconnaissance and search flights.<sup>67</sup> The number of P-40s at the end of the month was 25. There were a large number of official visits and inspections during this month, including one by Lieutenant-General L.H. van Oyen, the KNIL CG, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month. Air Commodore Sir John McCauley, the acting chief-of-staff of the RAAF visited for a conference with Major Maurenbrecher on 18 September. Three days earlier, after previous search flights, survivors of the missing ship *Cambrai* were located and a motor launch was directed to them. Kap Mulder had just returned as first of the original crew shift and also participated in the search flights. On 26 September he searched with the Lockheed 12A for four hours out to sea to locate two launches and a lighter that had been cut adrift on the way to Merauke, but in vain.<sup>68</sup>

The ML personnel strength increased significantly in the period of July-September. Groups of volunteers, enlisted men and liberated NEI PoWs arrived in July and September. During July first a group of 15 Sgt and Kpl mechanics (Sgt level) arrived raising the total number of mechanics from eight in June to 23. In September a group of 17 volunteers from Surinam and the Dutch Antilles and a few others were posted, including the very experienced airframe/engine mechanic Adj Th. van den Dolder (formerly 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron and N.E.I.-P.E.P.). Most of these men were trainees, however, who were to become assistant mechanic (Kpl level) in due course. The new mechanics were either trained with the RAAF or the N.E.I.-P.E.P. for approximately three to six months depending on

previous experience and training.<sup>69</sup> Total personnel strength on 1 July was 244 RAAF and 75 ML, becoming 244 RAAF and 91 ML on 1 August, 242 RAAF and 92 ML on 1 September and 230 RAAF plus 113 ML at the end of September.<sup>70</sup>

The NEI functional personnel break down of late September was: 31 pilots (six of the original crew shift including the CO, 24 of the new crew shift and Kap Mulder who returned mid-September for his second tour), one Adjutant (Kap), two Engineering Officers (Kap and Elt), one Chief mechanic (Olt), one Intelligence officer (Tlt), one Camp engineer (Tlt), approximately 24 mechanics (Adj, SM, Sgt and Kpl), approximately 17 men in "on the job" training as assistant mechanic (Kpl/Sld), three administrative NCO/Clerks (one Sgt and two Kpl/Sld), two photographers (Kpl/Sld) and approximately 30 Messman/Mess stewards (Kpl/Sld). A part of the young mechanics and trainee assistant mechanics were not to stay with the squadron but only there to gain experience, the NEI War Office in Melbourne using temporary postings at 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron for practical training.

The flying echelon was reorganised somewhat in September and early October. After Elt Simons had left mid-September for a non-operational period as a Douglas C-47 Captain with 1 N.E.I.T.S. and Kap Mulder had been reposted as Flight CO, the second Flight CO position was left vacant and was fulfilled in turn by Maurenbrecher and the older officers of the new crew shift until Simons return. The prime candidate Flight CO was Elt B. Sandberg Esq who arrived on 6 September but still had to complete his initial operational posting. Sandberg was a professional officer from the Army Aviation Corps of the Netherlands who had been seconded to the ML/KNIL to fly Glenn Martin 139 bombers in the late thirties and had shortly flown Fokker G.1 fighters in the May 1940 fighting against Germany. The position of Operations Officer also remained open, the officer pilots becoming acting Operations Officer in turn for a number of days. As the first group of pilots of the new crew shift had to be relieved early November six pilots of the original crew shift already returned for a second tour on 4 October (Fokkinga, Been and Brameijer) and 11 October (Trebels, J.P. Verspoor and De Raadt). The final five pilots of the original crew shift left at the end of their first tour on 4

October (Flemer, Scheffer, Van Boldrik, Soesman and Greene). Only Maurenbrecher remained as he had volunteered to stay on.<sup>71</sup>

Tlt Soesman made a dead stick landing at Mopah on 2 October after the engine of his C3-533 caught fire when flying at an altitude of 5,700 metres (19,000 ft). It was one of his very last flights before the end of his tour. Engineering officer Kap Bodemeijer took the engine to the RAAF Depot at Townsville two days later to witness the search for the cause of this. As a result, all P-40s of the squadron were grounded from 6 October up to and including 8 October. After the inquiries the maximum boost and revolutions permitted were considerably lowered. This was followed by a set of new rules from North Eastern Area Headquarters to bring down the number of flying hours made and orders for the CO to arrange mandatory lectures for the pilots to change their handling behaviour of aircraft and engine.<sup>72</sup> The lectures started in the next month (see below). All engines were to be inspected for signs of internal wear and had to be test flown which brought down the number of serviceable



The Stand-by Flight at Mopah in approximately November 1944 (collection B.E. de Smalen).

aircraft in October and November considerably. It would last until December before the final aircraft were test flown after engine inspection.<sup>73</sup> The Allison engines of the P-40s were troublesome to say the least. In October also at least one P-40 could not take-off because of engine trouble. On 25 October Mr E.G. Black of the Allison Engine Corporation arrived from Townsville to discuss the problems with Bodemeijer.<sup>74</sup>

In October 1944 apart from scrambles in search of unidentified aircraft which almost always proved to be friendly, the squadron also flew some Air-Sea-Rescue practise flights in co-operation with the Australian Navy and on 11 October supply containers were dropped at two outlying Army posts at Mappi and Koembe (two sorties).<sup>75</sup> The morale of the flying echelon suffered as there were no real war missions flown, neither in the fighter-bomber role nor actual intercepts of non-friendly aircraft. Also, very little training could be done due to the many aircraft in inspection. In October there were again a few accidents with damage to aircraft. On 19 October Kap Mulder crash landed the L12A L2-101 (which had replaced the L2-100) when the brake of the starboard main wheel failed causing the port leg of the landing gear to collapse. On the 30<sup>th</sup> Tlt De Raadt taxied against a squadron vehicle and severely damaged the port wing of his P-40, also slightly damaging the propeller and blowing a main wheel tyre. The C3-512 ended up with major damage and was shipped to the P.E.P. to be written off. A total of only 38 operational sorties were flown in this month, 32 interceptions "friendly", four interceptions "unidentified" and two sorties for Army support.<sup>76</sup>

To compensate for the relative inactivity and the living conditions a fairly active social life had already developed within the squadron community with lots of parties in the messes, hunting and fishing trips etc. Several of the ML fighter pilots including Maurenbrecher and also some of the RAAF members were experienced hunters and took squadron members on hunting trips shooting geese and deer to donate to the messes and kitchens. Relations were relaxed especially so between the Dutch officers and NCOs and enlisted men. There was no old fashioned rigid military discipline which was largely the result of the rather strange mix of the Dutch personnel consisting of regulars, reserve personnel many with a contract for two years or the duration of the war, militarised civilians

from the ML, KLM and KPM, enlisted men from the United States, Canada and South Africa, volunteers from Surinam and the Dutch Antilles, volunteers escaped from occupied Holland, former PoWs liberated during the allied advance in Dutch New Guinea etc. The respected and well-liked regular officer Maj Maurenbrecher kept it all together at the same time ensuring a good professional working discipline in the air and on the ground. He had no problem at all with putting an officer pilot a few days in the local jail and to second a NCO pilot who had not followed procedures to the ground crew for a number of days to assist with the repairs of the P-40 he damaged. Maurenbrecher also invested in a good relationship with the RAAF Administrative CO and key RAAF personnel to ensure that 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron was one organization in which the ML and RAAF worked together as one team as much as possible.<sup>77</sup>



The C3-500, the personal aircraft of Maj Maurenbrecher photographed at Merauke in approximately September 1944 (NIMH).

Major Maurenbrecher tried to get his squadron into a more active area of operations but having been unable to get anything done via the NEI War Office in Melbourne he rather desperately but with positive results visited the local headquarters of the Fifth Airforce USAAF and the RAAF at Owi and Noemfoor. Maurenbrecher flew along in a P-40 on a strike by one of the RAAF squadrons at Noemfoor before returning to Merauke on 10 October. The NEI War Office had no objection and supported his plan to second his section leaders to the RAAF squadrons at Noemfoor.<sup>78</sup> On 31

October the CO received a formal telegram from the RAAF granting permission to send four section leaders for a period of ten days to Noemfoor to gain experience in strafing and dive bombing under operational conditions. Maurenbrecher succeeded in getting a considerable enlargement of this initial permission. He got the approval of Group Captain W.N. Gibson of the RAAF (SASO 10<sup>th</sup> Group) to second all flight and section leaders of his squadron in groups of four, one group at a time, for a short period to Noemfoor to gain operational practise.<sup>79</sup>

### The Fighter Section of the P.E.P.

When 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron started the preparations for the transfer to Merauke the Fighter Section of the N.E.I.-Aircraft and Personnel Pool (per 1 April 1944 called Personnel and Equipment Pool, N.E.I.-P.E.P.) was forming at Canberra in March 1944. Apart from five or six posted as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot with the N.E.I.-T.S.M. based at Laverton, Melbourne and two temporarily posted to 18 Squadron N.E.I. at Batchelor Field (NT) in early February 1944 all fighter pilots arriving from the U.S.A. after the first 30 for 120 Squadron N.E.I. remained at the Fighter Section of the P.E.P. led by Kap A.J. de Vries. De Vries was a former flying instructor and an experienced fighter pilot (CO of 3-VI.G.IV in Java December 1941-February 1942) who had been Operations Officer of 18 Squadron N.E.I. and temporary CO of the Transport Section of the P.E.P. and the N.E.I.-T.S.M. The formation of the Fighter Section P.E.P. started on approximately 18 March and, at least on paper, it was operational on 1 April 1944.

Of the final 29 fighter pilots from the RNMFS who arrived in Australia from 14 January 1944 onwards Ovl I D.J.R. Beugeling, Ovl I H.F.C. Holtz and Elt H.A. Souman were appointed instructor with the Fighter Section in March. The other 26 were to follow refresher training in three groups, the training to start with a short stay at 2 OTU in Mildura to follow the same ground school program to get accustomed with RAAF operational procedures as the pilots of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron had followed in December 1943. The first group of about nine pilots (all transferred from the RNMFS to Australia on 28 December 1943) was already transferred to 2 OTU a few weeks before 18 March. The pilots made a few P-40 flights from Canberra before returning to Mildura in March to follow a

one-week gunnery refresher training. The P.E.P. seconded two P-40Ns at 2 OTU and would do this whenever a gunnery training was held at Mildura. The group of pilots was posted back to the Fighter Section after the gunnery refresher, flying very little after that moment.

The second group of about nine started refresher training on approximately 6 April. There was a great shortage of serviceable P-40s with the Fighter Section, however, and also the pilots of this group could make only a few local training flights from Canberra after their secondment to 2 OTU for the gunnery refresher. Part of this second group were Elts J.F. van den Dorpel and F. Stumpff who had been seconded to 18 Squadron N.E.I. in early February only to be quickly sent back as of no use, to return at Canberra around 6 April. Both did make several non-operational flights and four to five operational flights as a B-25 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot in the period of 8 February to 3 April 1944, though. Also, most of the fighter pilots who had been 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot with the N.E.I.-T.S.M. were included in this group. All pilots of this new group apart from one, were transferred from the RNMFS to Australia on 28 December 1943. One pilot was transferred on 8 February 1944, former RNMFS AT-6 and P-40 assistant instructor Sgt F.W. Verdier. The eight officer pilots and nine NCO pilots of the first two groups were the first to be transferred to 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron. Fourteen pilots relieved 13 pilots of the squadron on 5 July and three were posted on 2 August 1944, as mentioned earlier.<sup>80</sup>

The Fighter Section did not have its own ground personnel. Its aircraft were maintained by the Maintenance Department of the P.E.P. which, as in the operational NEI squadrons, had a mixed RAAF/ML manning. The technical personnel were all-round as far as aircraft types were concerned and did major repairs and scheduled maintenance (including engine changes) not done by the RSUs supporting the operational N.E.I. Squadrons, i.e. 3<sup>rd</sup> echelon maintenance work. It also did the daily 1<sup>st</sup> line maintenance and all necessary 2<sup>nd</sup> line (RSU level) maintenance of the aircraft operated by the Bomber Section and the Fighter Section of the P.E.P. The Department had a hard time during the first months due to shortages of P-40 and Allison spare parts and consequently a shortage of serviceable P-40s at Canberra. The afore mentioned two groups of pilots were able to fly only some five to ten hours P-40 in the period of March up to and including June, hours mostly flown at 2 OTU plus some

ferry time in some cases. Eight new P-40s were flown from 3 Air Depot RAAF to Canberra in June 1944.

Already on 16 April the nine original students (eight officers and an NCO pilot) of a third group arrived by Lockheed Lodestar LT936 of the N.E.I.-T.S.M. at 2 OTU Mildura for the ground school course. Apart from three who were transferred from the RNMFS to Australia on 8 February 1944 and Elt Sandberg Esq, transferred on 15 February, all had been transferred to Australia on 28 December 1943. Student Tlt J. Flemer was posted as Operations Officer at 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron on 1 May to become a part of the original crew shift of the squadron. He replaced Tlt Geerts. The latter was added to the group of students on 1 May. Geerts had broken his ankle after a bale-out on 28 March. One or two of the pilots had been flying as a 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot with the N.E.I.-T.S.M. from early February to early or mid-April, including Tlt P. Verspoor who had been the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot on the LT936 when with the T.S.M. Refresher flying on the P-40 from Canberra started on 1 May. All nine students went back to 2 OTU in June for the one-week gunnery refresher together with Elt Heikoop, a former (student) fighter pilot of 1-VI.G.V in Java, B-25 pilot of



The C3-534 with pilot Elt B. Sandberg Esq at the P.E.P. in August 1944 (collection Hans Berfelo).



18 Squadron N.E.I. and transport pilot with the N.E.I.-T.S.M. He had to follow the full 2 OTU Fighter Operational Training (F.O.T.) course of two months, consisting of a 1<sup>st</sup> phase on the CAC Wirraway and a 2<sup>nd</sup> phase on the P-40E and P-40N Kittyhawk. Training from Canberra continued after the gunnery refresher. One of the students, Tlt B.J. Veenstra, crash landed with the C3-535 some three kilometres south of Canberra during a training flight and was severely injured on 23 June. He did not get an operational assignment as a pilot anymore. The nine remaining pilots (including Heikoop) were posted to 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron in September, the first ones arriving at Merauke on the 6<sup>th</sup> of that month. Apart from Maurenbrecher who volunteered to stay the final group of five pilots of the original crew shift still at Merauke were relieved. The pilots, including Operations Officer Elt Flemer, left on 4 October 1944. In total 26 new pilots were posted of which Sgt R. Spoor was transferred back to Australia on 1 August and Sgt Van Alphen was killed in a flying accident on 19 September.<sup>81</sup>

It took until September 1944 before the problems at the Fighter Section were largely over. During September the three instructors were seconded for a number of weeks to 8 OTU RAAF at Narromine (NSW) to learn in practise how the RAAF did things. The following month a standardised refresher course was introduced with assistance from two experienced RAAF flying instructors, the first of which started in the first week of October. This refresher training course at the P.E.P. with gunnery training at Mildura using the facilities of 2 OTU (as facilities for gunnery training were not available at Canberra) encompassed approximately 15 flying hours on P-40s. The students started with general and X-country navigation training from Canberra (about one and a half to two weeks), followed by a week of combat flying and then went to Mildura for the gunnery refresher training (about one week). However, of the nine P-40s available at Canberra on average still only three had been serviceable in September 1944, the serviceability only slowly improving.

Flying instructors of the Fighter Section at the time, apart from De Vries, were Elt H.A. Souman (chief instructor) and Sgt J.D. Brameijer, the latter relieved from 120 Squadron on 5 July and posted again on 4 October 1944 for a second tour, also becoming the squadron flying instructor.

Around 1 October Sgt T.H. Gottschalk was posted as an instructor, who remained until he was transferred as a 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot to 1 N.E.I.T.S. (the former N.E.I.-T.S.M. based at Archerfield, Brisbane on 1 October 1944) in November 1944.<sup>82</sup>

From October 1944 every month six to eight pilots were enrolled in two successive groups at the Fighter Section-P.E.P. Approximately six pilots were posted to 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron each month from October but those posted at the squadron in October had not yet followed the new style refresher training. Among the first pilots who did were Lts P.J. de Jager and J.R.W. Hoekstra (who arrived at Merauke on 8 November), Lts P.H. Stam, G.H. Marchant, Ch.M. Schillmöller and B.E. de Smalen (on 21 November 1944) and Elt M.C. Soesman (29 November).

Fighter pilots in their non-operational period served in all kinds of positions, some were 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot with 1 N.E.I.T.S., others followed a course or training with the RAAF or P.E.P., a few were instructor with the Fighter Section or a RAAF unit, or were “base pilot” at the P.E.P. (for tasks as ferrying aircraft, test flying and performing mock attacks with P-40s on B-25 bombers of the Bomber Section) and some temporarily served in staff positions at various NEI Government agencies or offices and the NEFIS.

In October 1944 also an OTU course of approximately nine weeks (but with a shorter refresher version for those who had followed P-40 operational training earlier in their career) started with five students: Elt Motshagen, Kpl (later Sgt) Inkelaar, Sgt G.D. Brinkman, Sgt F.H. Florentinus and Sgt F.J.P. Goossens. De Vries and Souman trained Inkelaar, Motshagen and Goossens and Gottschalk Brinkman and Florentinus. It was not possible to organise more of these courses as the majority of the instructors were needed for operational postings after the loss of seven fighter pilots on 6 September while students became available at different times in (very) small groups. For the four or five ab initio student pilots in training with the RAAF in November, operational training with the RAAF (2 OTU) therefore was the more efficient solution.

The Fighter Section lost six P-40s during the new style refresher training courses, one pilot becoming unfit for flying due to injuries. A further P-40, the C3-543, was lost before delivery at Amberley when test flown at 3AD after assembly on 11 August 1944, taking the life of test pilot F/L F.W.

Grosvenor. The airplane disintegrated during a pull-up from a dive. Lost during crashes on training flights were the C3-513 on 20 December 1944, the C3-548 on 14 February 1945, the C3-517 in March or April 1945 and the C3-566 on 23 May 1945. Kap Sandberg Esq was injured when he had a landing accident with the C3-517 almost losing the fingers of one of his hands. The C3-519 was lost in a taxi accident at Canberra on 12 June 1945. P-40 C3-537 had a landing accident at Canberra on 21 March 1945 due to a hydraulics failure and was damaged. It was stored for possible rebuilding but written off in August 1945 and split up in components and spares.<sup>83</sup>



The C3-517 possibly photographed at Garbutt (Townsville) after the crash landing of (now) Kap B. Sandberg Esq in March or April 1945. Leading two others he landed too far down the runway and had to put his aircraft in a ground loop to prevent running off and into the sea. (collection Gordon Birkett).

### Sections seconded to Noemfoor

In November 1944 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron was finally allowed to take a more active part in the allied fight for Dutch New Guinea. From Noemfoor, an island on the edge of the Geelvink Bay close to Biak Island, pilots of the squadron would attack targets in the Vogelkop where an estimated 50,000 strong Japanese occupation force was based. Also, Japanese barges and other smaller ships would be attacked as far out

as the shores of the islands Ceram and Ambon. The operations were to be flown with one of the RAAF P-40 Squadrons based at Kamiri airfield in mixed formations. For the trip to Noemfoor (a flight of 3.15 to 3.50 hours) the sections had to fly some 1,100 kilometres, passing the mountain range running through central New Guinea and monsoon fronts. The pilots did this (after a failed try out) without a navigation plane and without a single loss (which was attributed to pure luck).



The flight-line of 77 Squadron RAAF at Kamiri in December 1944 showing the NEI P-40s H (C3-549), W (C3 serial unknown) and the C3-546 (the personal aircraft of Maj Maurenbrecher) without camouflage (via Gordon Birkett and Hans Berfelo).

The first section of four P-40s was based at Kamiri on 8 November. Pilots were Kap Mulder, Elt Sandberg Esq (acting Flight CO), Elt E.H.M.C. Poublon (who volunteered for a somewhat enlarged first posting to be able to attend) and Tlt J.L. van Olmen. They flew a total of 19 sorties while attached to 80 Squadron RAAF, including searches to Ceram and Doom Island. The detachments lasted seven to nine days and the first one returned at Merauke on 16 November. The second section arrived on 9 December at Kamiri. Assigned pilots this time were Elt P.J. de Jager, Elt C. Been, Tlt W.J.H. van Nus and Tlt Geerts, who also flew together with pilots from 80 Squadron RAAF. During a shipping search in the direction of the island Banda on 10 December a strafing attack on a Japanese schooner was carried out at Lantor Island during

which Elt De Jager (in the C3-554) was shot down and killed. After having flown a total of 18 sorties the section returned at Merauke on 16 December.<sup>84</sup>

Six days later a third section left consisting of Maj Maurenbrecher, Elt Soesman, Tlt Hoekstra and Tlt De Raadt but due to bad weather the section had to return. It reached Noemfoor on 23 December to be seconded to 77 Squadron RAAF. The section returned on 3 January 1945. Elt Soesman had a narrow escape the day before when flying on a shipping search/strike mission led by Sqn Ldr W.R.C. McCulloch. Soesmans wingman Pilot Officer H.A. Lucas had to leave his P-40 by parachute after AA hits during strafing, Soesman being the last one to stay above him until he had directed the rescue Catalina to his position. This meant staying up there to slightly beyond the calculated minimum of fuel needed to get back to base which Soesman did without hesitation, earning much praise from the RAAF.<sup>85</sup>

The final group of four was seconded to 78 Wing at Kamiri from 6 to 13 January 1945 and attached to 77 Squadron as well. Pilots were Elt Stam, Elt P. Verspoor, Elt Schillmöller and Elt F.W.A. Braun. They finally left for Noemfoor in the afternoon of 6 January 1945 after having had to return due to bad weather above the mountain range on the 5<sup>th</sup> and in the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately, 77 Squadron had largely gone “non-ops” on arrival due to an upcoming transfer to Morotai where it already had an advance party. The unit was fully occupied with preparations, performing a lot of dive-bombing exercises for newly posted pilots and test flights with hardly any operational flying. The section therefore largely flew with 80 Squadron, although this unit too was busy with preparations for a move. The ML pilots flew along on two larger strike missions, the final one on 12 January when a successful attack on Miti air strip at Halmahera Island was flown. The section returned the next day as scheduled. Further secondments were deferred due to the transfer of the RAAF units. The pilots who had flown from Kamiri all returned full of enthusiasm which had much to do with the relatively high operations tempo. They also reported that the operational skills of the ML pilots were up to the mark and comparable if not better in some cases than those of the RAAF pilots at Noemfoor.<sup>86</sup>

Air Defence at Merauke and missions to Timoeka and the Japero area

Despite the operations flown by the pilots at Noemfoor the normal work from Merauke continued: training, air defence usually ending in interceptions of friendly aircraft and not much else. In November 1944 just five search sorties, two armed recco sorties and four bombing/strafing (strike) sorties were flown from Mopah. There were 16 interceptions “friendly” and four interceptions “unidentified”. A total of a mere 31 operational sorties. Several aircraft were lost in accidents. The squadron received a CAC Wirraway for instrument flying training and communications on 17 November but this airplane only had a very short life span with the unit (see below). Thanks to some new deliveries and despite the high number of P-40s that sustained major damage or were lost completely, the aircraft strength on 30 November was 25 P-40s, one



The briefing room in the headquarters tent at Mopah. The “floor” consists of the same sand that was ruining the Allison engines of the P-40s (authors collection).

above the established strength. There also were four P.E.P. aircraft at 1 RSU in Horn Island as spares. The squadron was visited by a large number of NEI and RAAF authorities in this month, including Kol C. Giebel (KNIL General Staff) and Commandant Luchtstrijdkrachten (CO NEI Air Forces) LKol J.J. Zomer who visited from 21 to 24 November for a conference with Maj Maurenbrecher.<sup>87</sup>

An unidentified aircraft approaching Merauke at 6,000 m (20,000 ft) on 13 November resulted in a scramble with four P-40s led by Elt J.P. Verspoor but the radar station lost contact when the aircraft was at some 240 km from Merauke and nothing was found.<sup>88</sup> Probably on the same day a search mission was flown with three P-40s in the morning and two in the afternoon to re-establish contact with an Army party travelling by ship in the vicinity of Otakwa on the Eilanden River.<sup>89</sup>

In the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> an armed recco was flown by Maj Maurenbrecher and Tlt J.M. Huizer along the river to Otakwa village to provide cover for the Army patrol which had reported that it had been discovered by the Japanese. Two strafing runs were carried out on Otakwa village. There had been no trace of the Army patrol or the ships. When it was reported that the patrol had been attacked at Otakwa and was defeated, the recco was followed up by a bombing and strafing mission to Otakwa and Inoega on 16 November with four P-40s led by Elt B.G. de Vries.<sup>90</sup> Although strafings could be flown, the bombardment failed completely as not one of the bombs detonated due to faulty fusing of the bombs at the squadron. Also, an aircraft was lost when returning at Mopah. Elt J. Struik crashed on landing as the flaps were inoperative, or so the pilot claimed. P-40 C3-506 became a total loss, the pilot ending up with some minor injuries only. After inquiries the pilot got a temporary flying ban as the flaps proved to be in perfect working order.<sup>91</sup> Three days later Flight Commander and deputy CO Kap Mulder was killed when he hit the ground during a dive-bombing exercise at Merauke with live 250 lbs bombs in the C3-553. It was thought he had suffered a “black-out” during pull-out causing his aircraft to enter a high-speed stall.<sup>92</sup>

At the time of Mulders death, the squadron had just started flying training sorties again after a number of the P-40s had their engines checked and had been test flown. During November also a large part of the pilots followed a mandatory 40 hours academic refresher course on the P-40 airframe, the Allison engine and associated sub systems, the life-saving equipment and flying regulations. The first course was held from 6 November up to and including 22 November. On 27 November a second course started for new arrivals and those pilots who had missed the first

course. Mr Black also participated in these lectures as he had been temporarily attached to the squadron as an advisor.<sup>93</sup>

The Readiness Flight was reduced to four aircraft around 2 December to increase the number of aircraft available for strafing and (dive) bombing exercises to be able to implement lessons learned in Noemfoor. There was little flying in December, however, as the wet season started. During



Inspection by Dr. Van Mook and LtGen Van Oyen on 1 December 1944 (collection B.E. de Smalen).

a period of six days there even was no flying possible at all. Apart from the adverse weather also relatively little training could be done due to shortages of aviation fuel and a shortage of bomb fuses at Mopah. On 30 November Lt Governor General of the NEI Dr. H.J. van Mook and LtGen L.H. van Oyen, the (acting) KNIL CG, arrived by C-47 of 1 N.E.I.T.S. for a visit and inspection of the KNIL units at Merauke. Both were at 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron on 1 December.<sup>94</sup>

On a flight to Tanahmera to pick up a sick passenger in the Wirraway Elt Sandberg Esq on 7 December lost his way and had to make an emergency landing on a far-off course beach. P-40s of the squadron as well as aircraft of the RAAF and USAAF and also two C-47s of 1 N.E.I.T.S. searched for several days but found no trace. On 11



December Sandberg was finally located and subsequently rescued after he had been able to send a radio message to Port Moresby on reaching the village Kikori. He was back at Merauke on 23 December. The A20-11 was a total loss and was not replaced. Causes of the accident were the weather conditions, a pilot being unfamiliar with the compass type of the Wirraway and the lack of a radio connection with Merauke. On 12 December four scrambled P-40s guided in a C-47 flying on one engine. Five P-40s were flown for Army Co-operation exercises on 22 December 1944. On the same day also an allied aircraft of unknown type that was in trouble was intercepted by two P-40s 80 km NW from Mopah and escorted in.<sup>95</sup>

A new bombing and strafing mission to Timoeka was already flown on 20 December led by Maurenbrecher, with four P-40s. Fires were started at Timoeka and the enemy encampment at Japero was strafed. The mission was repeated on 29 December with six P-40s led by Elt Sandberg Esq to attack a reported warship but one P-40 had to return with engine trouble. The warship was not sighted but the airstrip at Timoeka was bombed. Four P-40s led by Ozw II R.J. Idzerda followed up on the next day but two of the fighters had to turn back with engine trouble and the other two had to return when Timoeka could not be reached due to bad weather.<sup>96</sup>

During December 1944 the squadron, according to the listing of the CO in his monthly report, made on operational flights from Merauke a total of just 40.30 flying hours (excluding intercepts “friendly” and escort flights to guide in allied aircraft in trouble which Maurenbrecher did not consider operational anymore) and 137.15 hours with 78 Wing at Noemfoor. Flown from Merauke were only 14 strike sorties (bombing/strafing) but there were also 20 sorties scrambles that ended in interceptions “friendly” and six sorties scrambles to intercept and guide in allied aircraft in trouble which would have been listed as operational in earlier months. A total of 65.15 hours was expended on search flights for the missing Wirraway.<sup>97</sup> Scrambles were kept to a minimum to save engine time and to prevent excessive engine wear which, as was now known, was largely due to dust and sand from the airfield surface and not primarily by the engine operation of the pilots. At the end of December 1944, the unit

strength was 212 RAAF and 89 ML personnel. There were 23 P-40s on strength.<sup>98</sup>

Although the unit lost quite a lot of aircraft, no pilots were lost late 1944 and early 1945. The first operation in January 1945 was a photo reconnaissance of Timoeka flown with the Lockheed 12A of the squadron (now the L2-102) on 5 January. Pilots were Maj Maurenbrecher and Tlt Geerts. The next day former FCO now fighter pilot again Elt Motshagen was posted (promoted to Kap on 30 January, with effect from 1 January) who became Flight CO. Mr Walling of the Curtiss factory visited the unit on the same day, leaving for Brisbane again on the 11<sup>th</sup>. January was a quiet month largely due to adverse weather conditions. Elt Sandberg Esq, acting Flight CO since November, was promoted to Kap on 9 January and formally became Flight CO but he left the squadron ten days later having finished his first operational tour. The position of Flight CO was taken over by Elt Simons who returned on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

On 7 January two P-40s sent out on a search for an overdue flying boat were called back as the flying boat had reported to be en route back to base. In the next period of 17 days the unit only made local training and test flights. As the Readiness duty had been ended late December there were no scrambles. A Japanese advance to Merauke along the coast had become a very remote possibility and a fighter squadron was no longer needed at Merauke. The RAAF Component CO Sqn Ldr Williams was succeeded by Sqn Ldr L.W. Smith on 22 January. The Japero area (Japero, Koeperapoka and Otakwa) could be attacked again only on 25 January by four P-40s led by Elt Simons (promoted to Kap the next day with effect from the 15<sup>th</sup>). The results were reported to be satisfactory which usually meant that no results could be observed.<sup>99</sup>

After the 25<sup>th</sup> it was all quiet again at Mopah, although change was in the air. Already on 24 January the squadron learned that it was to be transferred to Jacquinot Bay in New Britain, when Group Captain G. Parcker (SOA 1 TAF RAAF) with his Adjutant visited the unit for an initial conference on logistical and administrative preparations. One week later Group Captain J. Rijland (SASO 1 TAF) and his Adjutant discussed the operational consequences with the squadron staff. The various ongoing and planned moves of RAAF units also affected the RSU support of 120

(N.E.I.) Squadron. Because of the transfer of 1 RSU to Morotai the RSU support to the squadron ended in January, which also meant that the spare P-40s were to be based at far away Canberra with the N.E.I.-P.E.P. instead of the much closer Higgins Field in Horn Island.

Especially the latter was unsatisfactory and it was decided to place four P-40s as spares with the squadron itself. First four older and to be modified aircraft (the C3-502, C3-519, C3-529 and C3-533) were exchanged for newly delivered P-40s by the P.E.P. These P-40s (the C3-555, C3-559, C3-563 and C3-565) arrived on 5 February. Then the four promised spares (the C3-560, C3-561, C3-562 and C3-564 also newly delivered to the P.E.P.) were issued to the squadron on 28 March, to arrive from late March.<sup>100</sup>

During January 17.35 hours (four strike sorties) were flown on operational missions from Merauke and 152.25 hours with 78 Wing at Noemfoor according to the COs monthly report. Further flown from Merauke were 7.45 hours (two sorties) for Army Co-operation. These hours were actual operational support for the Army but were not listed as operational! Also, the one reconnaissance sortie with the L12A is not included in the operational hours as listed by the CO. The ML personnel strength slowly increased during January 1945. At the end of the month the personnel strength was 210 RAAF and 109 ML (of which 30 pilots). There were 24 P-40s on 31 January. The average number of P-40s serviceable during the month was 17 (71%).<sup>101</sup>

#### The final months of operations from Merauke

Two escort sorties to Kamiri airfield at Noemfoor were flown on 5 February 1945. Six P-40s made a navigation training flight to Tanahmera on 7 February but two of the aircraft did not return. These were the C3-534 flown by Tlt G.Y. Fokkinga and the C3-542 flown by Tlt De Raadt. The C3-542 was severely damaged on take-off from Tanahmera due to engine problems and proved to be total loss. Fokkinga returned later. Army Co-operation exercises were flown again on 8 February. On 13 February the squadron received orders that it was to go “non-ops” per the 14<sup>th</sup> because of a planned transfer to Jacquinot Bay. Test flights and a limited number of training flights were still flown, though. Also, the four aircraft that had been exchanged for new ones were flown to Canberra.

One of the latter was lost when flown by Tlt Been from Canberra to Bankstown (2 Air Depot) to be modified. The C3-533 crashed at Musselbroek on 17 February. The aircraft burnt out; the pilot had a concussion. Kap Simons flew to Jacquinet Bay with the L12A (L2-102) two days later to check facilities and make some initial arrangements for the upcoming transfer of the squadron.<sup>102</sup>

The squadron was to become a part of the force assembled for the attack on Rabaul. From 25 February it was largely packed and ready to move with all flying suspended. In March 1945 only test flights were made. Pilot strength at the end of March was 28.<sup>103</sup> On 5 February four and late March the first two of four new P-40s were received from the P.E.P. as mentioned above, while four P-40s of the squadron were ferried back to the P.E.P. in Canberra in February and one P-40 was lost during that month (the C3-542). This brought the aircraft inventory to 23 at the end of February and to 25 of which 23 serviceable (92%) at the end of March 1945.<sup>104</sup>

#### The P-40 operations of the P.E.P. and training at 2 OTU

On 1 and 2 March 1945 four ML P-40s of the P.E.P. were posted at 2 OTU in Mildura (the C3-505, C3-507, C3-511 and C3-523, the first three replaced by the C3-502, C3-516 and C3-529 on 12 March) for a longer period of time at the request of the RAAF. The RAAF had a shortage of P-40s for training and the ML wanted to expand its use of the training facilities of 2 OTU due to a shortage of instructors. Small groups of ab initio trained and just licensed ML pilots started to enter 2 OTU Fighter Operational Training (F.O.T.) courses while also the gunnery refreshers of ML fighter pilots continued. The latter were expanded from a one-week gunnery refresher into a two weeks refresher course on the P-40 at the request of the ML. The ML pilots, in fact, followed a shortened 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the F.O.T. course as did the RAAF refresher students. This solution also made it easier for the ML to keep abreast of the latest developments and tactics in the fighter field. It worked out as planned and from May 1945 the ML students were able to follow lectures on the North American P-51 and were able to sit in (but not fly) the P-51 as 2 OTU was in part re-equipped with the type. For the ML pilots the two weeks at 2 OTU were preceded by approximately two weeks of refresher training at Canberra with the P.E.P.

Although it were small numbers, already in March and April there was a continuous stream of groups of four ML pilots each. On approximately 5 March (Elts Bartelings, De Vries and Poublon and Sgt Backhuis Roozeboom) and on 12 March (Elts Van den Dorpel and Van Olmen and Sgts Czismania de Somogy and Hirdes) as well as on 9 April (Elt Geerts, SM Greene, Sld Verbon and one unknown) and on 16 April a group of ML pilots started with the two weeks refresher course. Elt Been, Elt P. Verspoor, Tlt De Raadt and Ozw II Idzerda arrived accompanied by Kap De Vries on 16 April just when all P-40s were grounded. The rudder structure proved to be not stiff enough giving deformed rudders, a factory error that had to be corrected. Flying was resumed on 29 April after the necessary modifications.

Thirteen of the above mentioned pilots were posted at 120 (N.E.I.) squadron after their refresher and arrived at Merauke, usually after about a week of final leave, on 27 March (Elts Poublon, Bartelings and De Vries and Sgt Backhuis Roozeboom), 4 April (Elts Van den Dorpel and Van Olmen and Sgts Czismania de Somogy and Hirdes), 11 May (Ozw II Idzerda, Elt Geerts and SM Greene) and in the second half of May (Elt P. Verspoor) and around 5 June (Sld Verbon). Some of the pilots preferred an immediate posting after their refresher course. Kap De Vries, the CO of the Fighter Section P.E.P., was a regular visitor at 2 OTU who always came along to introduce new students, attended graduation parties etc. but he also flew along himself as an instructor to keep fully current on the P-40.

Two ML students were planned for the full No 40 F.O.T. course and to start on 5 February with the 1st phase of the training on the CAC Wirraway and on 12 March with the P-40 training of the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase. For unknown reasons only Tlt B. Slosser finished the course on 5 April to be transferred to 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron a week later. No 41 F.O.T. course which started on 12 March and with P-40 flying one month later had two ML students in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase. This course ran into a delay when on 16 April P-40 flying was stopped because of the rudder problem. Vdg R.Th. Esser crashed at Mildura on 3 May with the RAAF P-40E A29-129 and was removed from the course for medical reasons on 16 May, to finish his training with 42 F.O.T. course in June. He arrived at 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron on 7 July. Tlt B. Ruesink graduated as planned on 17 May

1945 and arrived at Mokmer with the squadron also on 7 July. One ML student followed from 18 April No 42 F.O.T. course, former 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron air gunner SM W.E. Erkelens, who graduated on 14 June. He arrived at 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron on 9 August 1945. The four ML pilots were the first and final full course students. Further groups of ML OTU students were to be trained from September 1945 but by the Fighter Pool-P.E.P. (as the Section was called from August) at Bundaberg. The refresher training at 2 OTU continued until August 1945 but was also to be taken over by the Fighter Pool (see below).



The C3-507 after a belly landing at Canberra mid-1945. The fake A29 serial is a remnant from the secondment of the aircraft with 2 OTU in March 1945 (collection author).

The ML aircraft at Mildura were flown by RAAF as well as ML pilots. The C3-516 was damaged on 4 April and went to 2 AD for repairs to return in July 1945. All four aircraft were returned to the P.E.P. on 8 September 1945 after scheduled maintenance as the N.E.I.-P.E.P. was to take over the OTU and refresher training as mentioned. The P.E.P. was transferred from Canberra to Bundaberg in several echelons in the period of 1 August to 15 September 1945. The advance party that had to ready the base was transferred on 25 June, the Fighter Pool then came

over in early August. On 10 September the aircraft and main party of the Bomber Pool moved, leaving behind only a small rear echelon to clean up the hangar area and the aircraft dump. In April the ML had been informed that Canberra would have to be vacated and was given a number of options of which one was a move to Bundaberg. After some visits by ML officers Bundaberg was selected by the NEI War Office and in June 1945 the Australian Department of Air formally agreed with the move of the P.E.P. to this RAAF Station. Bundaberg had far better facilities than Canberra with nearby training areas also suitable for gunnery training. The RAAF Station was transferred to the ML with LKOl M. van Haselen who took over command of the P.E.P. from LKOl D.L. Asjes, MSc on 10 September, becoming CO of the RAAF Station at the same time.<sup>105</sup>



The P-40 C3-505 with practise bombs in a line-up also showing some of the first received P-51s at Canberra early June 1945 (collection author).

### Transferred to Biak

No 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron went “non-ops” per 14 February 1945 as planned. Some quarter makers left for Jacquinot Bay on 25 February

after a message confirmed that the squadron was to be stationed there together with 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron RAAF (North American B-25 Mitchell bombers). Due to allied transport priorities it took until 12 April before the assigned Dutch transport ship ss *Bontekoe* (now Y-13 of the allied shipping pool) finally arrived at Merauke, to sail two days later with the main party of the ground personnel, spares, equipment and vehicles. First stop was Darwin, from where the ground personnel resumed their journey on 21 April. Also, personnel and equipment of 79 Wing Hq, 83 OBU and 27 MCS (a mobile field hospital) RAAF and 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron and 2 Squadron RAAF left Darwin for Jacquinet Bay with the *Bontekoe*. Two new P-40s arrived early April and another new aircraft (the C3-557) arrived from Canberra on 16 April to replace the C3-542 that was formally written off in March 1945, giving the squadron an aircraft inventory of 28 P-40s on 30 April.

On arrival at Jacquinet Bay on 9 May No 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron received the order to go to Biak, an island on the edge of the Geelvinkbaai belonging to Dutch New Guinea. The original plan had been cancelled as a result of protests from the NEI Government-in-exile that wanted the NEI squadrons to operate from Dutch soil. No 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron received Morotai as its new destination. After three weeks of packing and unpacking things were finally cleared up for the flying echelon (temporarily reduced in strength as a number of the pilots were in Australia for refresher and other courses) and the rear party of ground personnel of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron was back in business. On 9 May 1945 also the part of the unit at Merauke received a formal order to prepare for a transfer to Biak.

From early 1945 the strength of the Australian troops at Merauke was reduced, although from 18 February to 25 March this was compensated by the KNIL when the 2<sup>nd</sup> Company of the 1st Infantry Battalion (approximately 160 men) was based at Merauke. From 1 April 1945 the reduced number of KNIL troops with a remaining strength of 51 men were organised in the Detachment Merauke (Merauke Detachment). The strength of the Rural Police was enlarged at the same time, however. On 1 March 1945 Maj Maurenbrecher passed on his position of NEI Territorial Commander to Res Maj A.L. van Assendorp (NICA).<sup>106</sup>





P-40N C3-505 being readied for shipment to Biak and about to receive a new engine in June 1945 at the N.E.I.-P.E.P. at Canberra (collection Gordon Birkett).

The main party of the ground echelon of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron arrived in Biak with the *Bontekoe* on 17 May, while the 28 aircraft arrived at Mokmer strip, Biak on 1 June (11 P-40s), 4 June (two P-40s plus the L12A), 7 June (12 P-40s of which five flown by pilots who returned from Biak with the L12A on 5 June, led by a N.E.I.-P.E.P. TB-25) and 8 June 1945 (three P-40s). The ferry flights had been postponed for a number of days until transport aircraft became available for the movement of the rear echelon. A transport aircraft flew over 25 staff and ground personnel on 7 June, the remaining personnel and equipment being transported by the TB-25. Five of the pilots ferried two aircraft as a number of their colleagues were still in Australia. The final group of 14 pilots departed on 16 May to Canberra for a one week refresher course and 14 pilots returned on 27 May. Of the previous group of pilots sent to Canberra Elt B.J. de Vries had been assigned as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot on a North American B-25 ferry flight, however. He was killed on 2 June when the B-25 crashed on a test flight near Sacramento in the U.S.A. De Vries arrived on 27 March at Merauke for another tour but had been sent back to the P.E.P. in April with approximately five other pilots. Elt Schillmöller, on 19 May, was entered in a six weeks bombing and gunnery instructor course at the Central Gunnery School at Cressy (Vic.).<sup>107</sup> Although the pilots had to

cross the mountains in central New Guinea with its tops of up to 4,500 m (15,000 ft) all P-40s arrived safely. A 29<sup>th</sup> P-40N the C3-505 arrived disassembled in Biak by ship from the N.E.I.-P.E.P. in August.<sup>108</sup>

No 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron quickly became active again and reported itself ready per 12 June. It did not have to support the final phase of the fighting on the island Biak that ended only in August 1944 but a large number of Japanese troops were still in the Vogelkop, the huge western part of Dutch New Guinea. From Biak the unit would attack targets all over the Vogelkop, including Manokwari. This small city had a large Japanese headquarters and garrison. The squadron came to resort under Northern Command RAAF.<sup>109</sup>

As mentioned above there was no RSU support from the RAAF after January 1945. As the unit had been based at Biak instead of Jacquinot Bay this could not be restored by the RAAF and the squadron out of necessity had to do the RSU task largely by itself. Apart from the mentioned spare P-40 aircraft, the P.E.P. had also shipped to Biak more spares and critical components such as engines. These were in part NEI owned items taken over by the P.E.P. from 1 RSU in January 1945. Some of the still inexperienced NEI technical personnel of the squadron (including some of the 17 volunteers from Surinam and the Antilles who arrived in September 1944) were transferred and replaced by personnel with experience in performing major repairs and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> line scheduled maintenance. These included Vdg J.A.J. Meyer a former KNILM flight mechanic who had become engineering officer. He arrived from the P.E.P. in May.<sup>110</sup> There also had been contacts between the RAAF and the USAAF Fifth Airforce which was willing to arrange for some assistance by an Air Depot Group based at Sorido strip in Biak. Engineering Officer at Mokmer was Kap P.E. Westerveld a former 18 Squadron N.E.I., RNMFS and N.E.I.-P.E.P. engineering officer, who had succeeded Kap Bodemeijer. Bodemeijer was posted at the P.E.P.<sup>111</sup>

#### A dedicated fighter-bomber squadron

The squadron was based at Mokmer strip or Mokmer Airdrome one of three air strips built by the Japanese on the island, just a few kilometres apart. From north to south these airfields were Mokmer, formerly used as a bomber base by the USAAF, Borokoe in use as a Depot base and

Sorido in use by the USAAF as a Depot base and a base for transport aircraft. Mokmer had been taken over by the RAAF with 89 OBU running the base facilities such as the air traffic control and the fire department. Biak proved to be an enormous improvement compared to Merauke, both the living conditions (with American rations instead of the austere Australian ones) and the expected action immediately giving the spirit of especially the pilots a solid boost. The ground echelon was happy with the open hangar available for aircraft maintenance as well as the forward support of the P.E.P. The engineering sections also quickly familiarised with the Americans of the Depot Repair Squadrons of the 13<sup>th</sup> Air Depot Group (13<sup>th</sup> ADG) at nearby Sorido of which the 60<sup>th</sup> Depot Repair Squadron (60<sup>th</sup> DRS) attached to the 13<sup>th</sup> ADG would initially assist with



The Squadron Headquarters or Administration Building at Mokmer was an American built office structure with a wooden floor offering a working comfort totally incomparable with the tents used at Mopah (collection B.E. de Smalen).

battle damage repair and other specialist maintenance work and indeed proved happy to do so whenever needed, the contacts further smoothed with some smuggled whiskey. The 13<sup>th</sup> ADG at Sorido would also assist with the spares supply.<sup>112</sup>

After some familiarisation flying the first major raid was already carried out on 12 June 1945 with 11 P-40s led by Maj Maurenbrecher, the pilots attacking fuel dumps and Japanese personnel near and at Moemi strip (also called Noemi), a small airfield on the east coast of the Vogelkop (the west coast of the Geelvink Bay). After this initial raid the squadron on the next three days deployed six aircraft on each day, also launching two additional aircraft as reserves which returned to base when all other aircraft proved to be still mission capable after a first part of the route to target. The Allison engines of the P-40s were even less reliable at Mokmer than they had been at Merauke. On the 13<sup>th</sup> Kap Simons had to return as no attack could be carried out due to weather conditions in the target area. On the following two days targets of opportunity in the Waren area, respectively barracks and ammunition dumps near and launches in the mouth of Prafi River were attacked, the six P-40s led by Maj Maurenbrecher, respectively Kap Simons.<sup>113</sup>

In the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup> two sections of five and four P-40s led by Maurenbrecher, respectively Elt Poublon searched the west and east coasts of the Geelvink Bay and attacked AA gun positions at Nabire (a Japanese built airfield near the coast of the southern part of the Bay) but three aircraft had to return en route due to engine trouble. Later in the morning a section of six P-40s led by Elt J.H. Knoop (including two of the pilots who had earlier returned due to engine trouble) was sent out to bomb and strafe the Nabire gun positions but the section returned prematurely after dropping the bombs due to faulty airspeed indicators in three of the aircraft. Sgt Rous (one of the pilots who returned during the early morning mission) damaged his P-40 (the C3-526) on landing at Mokmer strip due to engine trouble and brake failure. The airspeed indicator problem was caused by coral dust clogging the pitot tubes. This was solved by daily cleaning of the pitot tubes. Coral dust from the airfield surface also entered the engine, however, which was something that could not be prevented as very small coral dust particles went straight through the carburettor air filters.<sup>114</sup> An armed recco with four P-40s on the 17<sup>th</sup> (a 5<sup>th</sup> reserve aircraft returning en route) to Bentoni Bay led by Elt Stumpff was followed by a mission with six P-40s (again one more reserve aircraft returning en route) led by Kap Simons which again bombed and strafed AA gun positions at Nabire. Barracks along Kalussima River near Hamoeka were bombed and strafed by six P-40s

(a 7<sup>th</sup> reserve aircraft returned en route) led by Maurenbrecher on 18 June.<sup>115</sup>

After having flown eight missions the P-40s were grounded for engineering reasons.<sup>116</sup> A large number of aircraft were in need of repairs and inspections. Also, a mandatory rudder modification caused by a manufacturing error had to be implemented. On the 19<sup>th</sup> all aircraft were grounded on orders from Northern Command in relation to this modification. The Command did send six modified rudders but these had to be returned rather quickly on 6 July while it would take 15 ARD RAAF where the rudders had to be sent to relatively much time to modify dispatched rudders. Four men of the squadron ground staff were therefore seconded to this unit to speed up the modification.<sup>117</sup>

The remainder of the month no operations could be flown, the necessary modifications and inspections getting priority.<sup>118</sup> During June, nevertheless, a total of 72 sorties (including around 20 test and training sorties) were already made from Biak, the squadron dropping 20,050 lbs of bombs and expending 41,900 rounds of .50 ammunition. The bombing attacks (some 20 sorties in total) were usually carried out with two 500 lbs bombs per aircraft (although the P-40N-20-CU and later subversions used by the squadron could carry three 500 lbs bombs) but a few times a combination of 250 lbs and 500 lbs bombs were used.<sup>119</sup> The Dutch pilots by now used the so-called glide bombing technique which had already been trained a few times during the final months the squadron was based at Merauke. Maurenbrecher had gleaned the technique from the USAAF while the RAAF (at Noemfoor) still used traditional dive bombing in very steep dives. Bombs were no longer released in a steep dive but in a glide and from a higher altitude and farther out from the target. The pilots in a section still attacked individually but were gliding whenever possible to one and the same intended target from different directions, trying to get their bombs in one and the same confined area. This method was not only preferred by the pilots as it was considered to be safer (as individual dive bombing exposed the aircraft to medium-calibre AA) but it also gave better bombing results. Glide bombing proved to be almost twice as accurate as dive bombing.<sup>120</sup>



A section of P-40s armed with two 250 lbs bombs per airplane on a training flight in June 1945, Elt J. Flemer flying "Snafu" (authors collection).

### Target Manokwari

Due to the necessary modification to the rudders of the P-40s there also was no operational flying at all during the first six days of July. After having seen many Bristol Beaufort bombers of 15 Squadron RAAF pass through Mokmer during the month of June on their way to their new base on the island Middelburg, close to the north coast of the Vogelkop and to the north-east of Sansapur, the CO of 15 Squadron RAAF visited 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron on 5 and 6 July to coordinate missions to targets near Manokwari. In July an Advanced Operations Room Northern Command was established at Biak with Sqn Ldr Alenson in charge.<sup>121</sup>

In the morning of 7 July the NEI unit was out in strength and 17 P-40s were bombing and strafing AA gun positions, huts and buildings near Manokwari together with Beaufort bombers of 6 Squadron (three aircraft, one flown by the CO, detached to Mokmer on 7 July) and 15 Squadron RAAF (12 Beauforts from Middelburg; one more P-40 had to return with engine trouble). The P-40s each carried a 1,000 lbs load. The attack was repeated by 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron in the afternoon of the same day with

16 P-40s (two more aircraft had to return with engine trouble), the fighter pilots shooting up barracks and vehicles at Manokwari and also some barges in the vicinity of Mansinan Island. Both raids were led by Maj Maurenbrecher.<sup>122</sup>

In the morning of the next day first the Australian Beauforts attacked, followed by 14 P-40s led by Maj Maurenbrecher, Elt Scheffer and Elt Poublon. Targets were a suspected Japanese radio homing station that lured allied aircraft in bad weather above the AA gun positions at Manokwari. Two more P-40s had to return en route to target with engine problems. After another morning attack by the Beauforts, 14 P-40s of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron led by Kap Simons attacked Manokwari again in the afternoon of 9 July. Part of the pilots first attacked the AA guns that were still firing, glide bombing and strafing, the others then bombing the Japanese Headquarters encampment and warehouses with two 500 lbs bombs per aircraft or released filled drop tanks which were shot on fire. The latter was an experiment that was never repeated as it was thought to be not as effective as expected. This opinion was contradicted after VJ Day, however. The Japanese had a lot of AA guns at Manokwari but never opened fire with all their guns and always kept a few of them well camouflaged and in reserve for the next attack. The main target, the radio homing station, could not be found and attacked.<sup>123</sup>

One aircraft was badly damaged by anti-aircraft fire and Ozw II Idzerda had to bale out of the C3-528 above the island Biak. Nobody had seen him jump as he had done so flying in cloud. Also, wingman Tlt Slosser of Idzerda had initially been reported missing but he had lost sight of his pair lead and diverted with an engine running somewhat too hot to the emergency strip at Noemfoor to report in later. Twelve P-40s (one more returning with engine trouble) searched for Idzerda on 10 July together with RAAF and USAAF aircraft but in vain. On 13 July again a few P-40 aircraft were sent out to assist in the search for the missing pilot, by now largely done by USAAF aircraft, during which mission Idzerda was spotted by Kap Simons and subsequently rescued by American troops. He was picked up on the next day by a Dutch naval air service Consolidated Catalina.<sup>124</sup> After inquiries it was concluded that Slosser had been overcautious and had thus violated the standing order to stay above the position his companion had last been spotted to be able to

direct rescue aircraft or other aircraft for a search. However, this violation was attributed to his inexperience as he was one of the new pilots recently licensed. Slosser kept flying operations and normally finished his first tour leaving for the P.E.P. after four months on 11 August.<sup>125</sup>

From 11 July there was a lull in the fighting, 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron conducting operations with two to four aircraft a day although one or two others returning or failing to take off with engine trouble were usually the case. Due to bad weather there were no operations on 12 July and 17 July. Those missions flown in this period were to investigate reported barges, convoy cover flights, submarine searches and a reconnaissance of Manokwari on 16 July with three P-40s (two others not taking off due to engine trouble) but no bombings and strafings. The three Australian Beaufort bombers left Mokmer on 11 July for their base Dobodura. The engineering sections concentrated on getting as many of the P-40s serviceable as possible. The operations tempo changed again on 18 July when six aircraft were dispatched to Middelburg for an operation against a Japanese stronghold at Sorong together with 15 Squadron RAAF which had a large detachment at Middelburg.<sup>126</sup>

Three P-40s of the P.E.P. were allocated as a reserve to 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron in July 1945 but actually received only on 15 August (C3-522, C3-556 and C3-558), although two of these aircraft were damaged on or shortly after arrival in August (the C3-522) and September (the C3-558). The C3-522 and C3-558 never flew any operations but were repaired at the squadron itself and serviceable again in December or January 1946. Aircraft C3-556 was active on operations from September 1945.<sup>127</sup>

### Sorong, the north coast and Babo

The mission from Middelburg was planned for 19 July and that day targets at Sorong and in Dooms Island were attacked by 12 Beauforts and the six seconded P-40s led by Elt Braun. The latter bombed and strafed Jefman strip near Sorong despite accurate and intensive anti-aircraft fire. Five of the six P-40s returned with bullet holes of which the one flown by Elt Heikoop (the C3-546) crash landed at Middelburg and was a total loss, while the sixth (the C3-557) flown by Vdg Esser had to be ditched. Esser, who had been on his very first operational mission, was shot at from the shore in his dinghy despite covering fire from one of



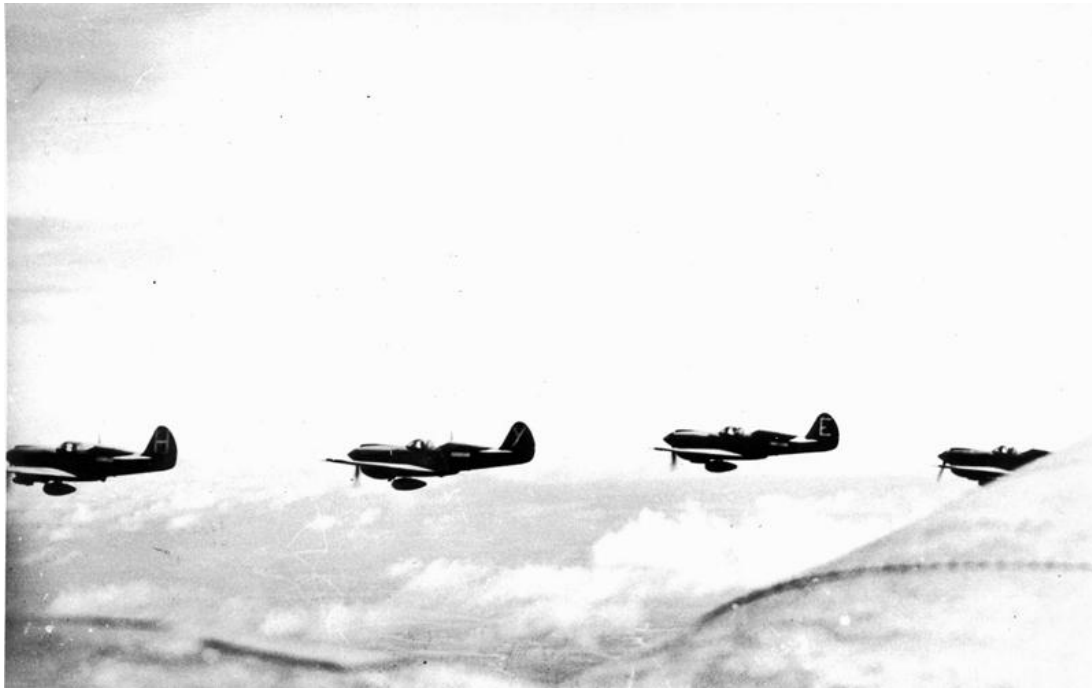


A section of four P-40s preparing for take-off at Mokmer armed with two 250 lbs bombs each in June 1945 (collection B.E. de Smalen).

the other P-40s, later released by two of 15 Squadrons Beauforts. He was able to paddle out to the sea far enough to get out of firing range, though. Among the aircraft searching for Esser the next day was the L12A of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron but he was found back by a Beaufort crew, transferred to a life boat dropped by an American Boeing SB-17 Air-Sea-Rescue aircraft and was covered by Beauforts again on the 21<sup>st</sup> until picked up by a rescue launch. Three of the remaining P-40s returned to Mokmer on the 19<sup>th</sup> but the fourth (pilot Elt Braun) had a landing gear collapse before take-off and had to stay at Middelburg for repairs. From 30 July 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron would again fly missions together with 15 Squadron RAAF (see below).<sup>128</sup>

Six P-40s operating from Mokmer led by Kap Simons bombed and strafed targets of opportunity and huts along the north coast of New Guinea in the direction of Wakde Island at Sarmi, Saborwa and Foemanoe Plantation in the afternoon of 19 July. Aircraft C3-520 of Kap Simons was damaged by AA fire during a bombing and strafing attack at Sarmi and although his P-40 was skimming the tree tops he made it safely to nearby Wakde Island (some 190 km west of Hollandia) for an

emergency landing. His aircraft had major damage and did not return to Mokmer with a new engine and emergency repairs until after VJ Day.<sup>129</sup>



P-40s H, Y, E and Q photographed on a training mission in June 1945, the aircraft loaded with two 250 lbs bombs each (collection Hans Berfelo).

Six P-40s led by Maurenbrecher flew an armed reconnaissance and strafed Japanese personnel at Moemi on 20 July. Two P-40s escorted the L12A on a photo reconnaissance flight to Mamberamo and Rouffaer Rivers on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Two days later two P-40s searched for a submarine and dropped their bombs on something that could not be identified, while four aircraft led by Elt Flemer flew an armed reconnaissance of the coasts of the McCluer Gulf. Four P-40s led by Maurenbrecher (two more aircraft returned with engine trouble) bombed and strafed the landing stage at Babo (a small harbour on the south coast of the McCluer Gulf), destroying some small ships, and targets of opportunity on the 24<sup>th</sup>. No operations were flown in the period of 25 up to and including 29 July. The P-40s had to be readied for a planned new series of large-scale attacks on targets at Manokwari.<sup>130</sup>

### Manokwari again

Major Maurenbrecher left for Australia on 27 July temporarily passing command of the squadron to now acting Major Simons. In the afternoon of 30 July 15 P-40s led by Maj Simons (one more returned with engine

trouble as did earlier a reserve aircraft) bombed and later strafed targets in the Manokwari area, including the power station of Manokwari which was damaged. No 15 Squadron attacked after the glide bombings by the P-40s with nine Beauforts, the latter having bombed up at Mokmer in the morning due to a shortage of bombs at Middelburg. The bombers attacked a bridge and the power station at Manokwari but failed to destroy the targets.<sup>131</sup> The attack on the Manokwari area was repeated twice on the next day.

In the morning of the 31<sup>st</sup> first three P-40 sections led by Elt Braun (four aircraft), Elt Fokkinga (five) and Elt Van den Dorpel (also five aircraft) bombed and then strafed targets at Manokwari (two more aircraft of the Braun section returned with engine trouble), followed that same morning by 16 P-40s led by Maj Simons (including two flown by the pilots that had to return on the early morning mission). The attacks were very successful and caused heavy damage. Both times nine Beauforts of 15 Squadron attacked directly after the P-40s, the Beauforts having loaded bombs for their second morning attack at Mokmer. During the first attack by the Beauforts barracks, stores and warehouses were bombed and during the second one camouflaged huts and houses.<sup>132</sup>

During the month of July 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron flew a total of 190 operational sorties, despite a flying ban during the first six days of that month and several days of non-flying or limited flying only due to bad weather. The serviceability during July had been relatively low due to continuing rudder modifications at 15 ARD RAAF. There also were several changes in the NEI personnel contingent. Kap Geurtz, the Adjutant from 1 August 1944, was transferred and succeeded by Kap E.O. Holmberg de Beckfelt Esq. The total of ML personnel dropped from 106 to 100 in the course of the month. The RAAF Component grew from 212 to 221 men.<sup>133</sup>

Six P-40 fighters destroyed a proah and some buildings near Manokwari on 1 August and that same morning three sections of five P-40s each led by Elt Heikoop, Elt Fokkinga and Elt Scheffer glide bombed and strafed targets at Manokwari resulting in big fires. One of the intended targets was the Japanese radio station, the fake beacon, but this was presumably housed in a cave and would therefore be hard to hit. Beauforts of 15 Squadron had repeatedly tried to home in on the beacon

for a location fix but these missions failed. After 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron had attacked AA gun positions, bombing with two 500 lbs bombs per aircraft, nine Beauforts of 15 Squadron RAAF bombed ridges with caves with “fragmentation clusters” but did probably little damage to the caves. The Japanese radio beacon was never located but a systematic bombing of everything that looked like radio antennas during follow-up missions seemed sufficient to keep it out of the air.<sup>134</sup>

Of the 15 P-40 fighters two had to be ditched (pilots Elt Fokkinga, flying the C3-562 and Sgt Backhuis Roozeboom, in the C3-504, both rescued by Catalinas), one was missing (Sgt Hirdes in the C3-534) and four other aircraft with combat damage had to make emergency landings at Biak (a belly landing with the C3-521 by Elt Scheffer) or Noemfoor (recently promoted Vdg Greene, SM Brameijer and Sld Verbon). The anti-aircraft fire had been heavy and accurate, hitting the afore mentioned aircraft during the strafing attacks. The missing Sgt Hirdes had been shot down and killed while strafing an anti-aircraft gun position, destroying the gun. He had been buried by the Japanese with military honour. These were the largest aircraft losses since the formation of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron.<sup>135</sup>

The attack was repeated in the afternoon with six P-40s led by Elt Flemer and again nine Beauforts of 15 Squadron from Middelburg. The latter bombed the radio station and a bridge with 250 lbs general purpose bombs but due to the weather without visible results. Also 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron did not report any results. Four P-40s led by Ozw II Idzerda flew an armed recco of the Manokwari area on 2 August and in the early morning of the next day 12 P-40s bombed and strafed AA gun positions and other targets at Manokwari. Six P-40s led by Elt Fokkinga attacked the Japanese encampment in the Waren area, two reserves returning to base en route, on 4 August. The aircraft of Tlt Esser was damaged by AA fire and landed at Noemfoor. In the period of 5 up to and including 8 August four P-40s on each day carried out an armed recco to the Manokwari area (two of the four P-40s returning with engine trouble on the 6<sup>th</sup>), also searching Andai on the 8<sup>th</sup>.<sup>136</sup>



The living quarters were again tents in Biak but these were of much better quality compared to those at Merauke. RAAF personnel is making a surf board in approximately September 1945 (authors collection).

### The final missions and finally peace

Eight aircraft led by Ozw II Idzerda and Elt Soesman bombed and strafed Japanese personnel and targets of opportunity in the Foe Manoe area in the afternoon of 9 August, the final major action flown by the squadron. Also a memorable day as the second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki leading to a Japanese surrender a week later. On the 9<sup>th</sup> also three P-40s flew air cover for three American C-47s searching for a C-47 missing in the Manokwari area. One more P-40 was lost before VJ Day. In the afternoon of 11 August Elt J.L. van Olmen was killed when nine P-40s flew armed reccos to the Nabire area (three P-40s led by Elt Fokkinga), the Andai area (three led by the now Olt Greene) and the Ransiki-Moemi area (three P-40s led by Elt Marchant). The aircraft of Van Olmen was seen to crash after hitting a tree and catching fire while strafing Moemi airstrip to the south of Manokwari. Van Olmen was the 14<sup>th</sup> fighter pilot lost by the ML/KNIL in WWII.<sup>137</sup>

After this day pairs of P-40s of the squadron flew searches for a missing C-47 on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> and for a missing B-25 on 14, 15 and 16

August. Operational missions were halted on 15 August already but on the 17<sup>th</sup> a final semi-operational mission was flown after the squadron had been notified of the Japanese surrender. On 17 August 1945 four P-40s led by Maj Simons flew a surveillance mission to the Manokwari area. The aircraft received accurate and intense AA fire when flying over Manokwari town. The Japanese garrison, obviously, had not yet received a confirmation of the surrender.<sup>138</sup>

On 16 August 1945 at nine o'clock in the evening local time the squadron was informed of the Japanese surrender and on 12 September the Japanese garrison at Manokwari surrendered on a RAAF launch from Noemfoor to an Australian Brigadier and Maj Maurenbrecher, who returned for the ceremony as he was the Dutch territorial commander. Also Maj Simons was present, his squadron flying top cover with nine P-40s above the launch from Noemfoor to Biak and again from Biak to Manokwari Bay and back via Biak to Noemfoor after the ceremony. On 30 August a ground and air parade had already been held at Mokmer, Maj Simons expressing thanks to all ranks for the splendid work done. The squadron had lost 13 pilots plus one during a non-operational period and one ground crew member.<sup>139</sup>

The acting CO transferred command of the squadron back to Maurenbrecher on 15 September 1945 and left for Australia to go on leave. The squadron was still fully operational during September making surveillance flights to check on Japanese movements and flying searches for and air cover missions above coastal barges. Also, a number of search flights for missing allied aircraft were made. Still active in October and November 1945 the squadron performed leaflet droppings above Japanese troop locations and again flew a number of search flights for missing allied aircraft. In November three P-40s operated from Middelburg to assist in the search for a missing RAAF Beaufighter.<sup>140</sup>

### Preparations for a transfer to the NEI

The KNIL wanted the squadron in Java, main island of the NEI and a transfer to Kemajoran, the former civilian airfield of Batavia in western Java was already planned in September 1945. When the military airbase Tjililitan proved secure in October, Kemajoran was changed into Tjililitan.

The British occupation forces by now established in Java refused authorization, however, although a small advance party consisting of Kap Westerveld, Elt Poublon and a few others had already left Biak for Batavia as “billeting party” on 6 October. They did not return and were given other postings in Java in October. Olt Prins became acting Engineering Officer at Mokmer. Late October 1945 the squadron received orders to prepare for a transfer to Balikpapan in eastern Borneo (NEI), the aircraft to be flown over in small groups via Morotai.<sup>141</sup>

During November the depot repair and supply squadrons and other units of the USAAF at Sorido and Borokoe started to depart and dispose of their excess equipment. This gave “Engineering” an opportunity that was not wasted. The unit needed tools as departing to be demobilised RAAF personnel (see below) took along much of the tools as these were RAAF property. Apart from tools a special effort was made to acquire some chassis of trailers to be able to build up mobile workshops for the Armament, Instrument, Electrical and Radio Sections. The Americans were successfully but incorrectly explained that everything they dumped and left behind was to become Dutch property in due course but some things indeed needed a special effort. The Dutch ground personnel led by Olt Prins knew how to “organize” things they needed.<sup>142</sup>

On 2 December the ss *Japara* arrived with orders to transport the equipment and vehicles, much to the surprise of everybody, to Java. On its way to Java it appeared that the British authorities did not approve a move to Java. The order for the move to Balikpapan was received from the British authorities on 11 December. Orders from the British South-East Asia Command (SEAC) Headquarters were received with some time lag via the NEI Headquarters in Melbourne. The KNIL CG and the ML Commander did not see any use for the squadron in Balikpapan, cancelled the orders but stopped their efforts to get the unit to Java. There would be no RAAF personnel that could be deployed in Java. The squadron already had made its aircraft combat ready and had made a few test flights to Morotai to check the fuel consumption of the “good” and the “bad” aircraft but all should be able to cover the distance involved. It was kept at Mokmer for the time being, however.

Nevertheless, all “excess equipment” (and only excess equipment as Maurenbrecher had assured Northern Command) of the unit had been

loaded on the *Japara* and was shipped to Batavia in December. There were no accompanying personnel in line with instructions from Northern Command RAAF. Also, no ammunition and bombs were loaded as had been the initial plan. Authorization to load these too was received after the *Japara* had already left. The *Japara* was unloaded in Batavia although the equipment and vehicles of 120 Squadron were distributed to other units of the ML. The bombs and ammunition at Biak would eventually be dumped into the sea as nobody needed them anymore, the ML having taken over the necessary ammunitions from the RAF in Java.<sup>143</sup>

In reality 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron was left under-equipped and with much ingenuity and thanks to the trading skills of some of the ground crew members some new equipment and a large number of new vehicles were received from American stores and dumps at Biak. The 22 remaining P-40s, including three with major damage which were being repaired at Mokmer, and one Lockheed 12A communications aircraft were kept serviceable as best as could be done in the salty climate, without hangar space for parking aircraft and with the dwindling numbers of ground personnel available. One more P-40, the damaged C3-521 which was already off strength, was awaiting shipment to the P.E.P. for major repair. The squadron also was understaffed.<sup>144</sup>

During September, October and November nearly all RAAF ground staff was withdrawn preceding demobilisation of most of this personnel with the final six apart from a liaison officer leaving in December. The ML/KNIL already had recruited war volunteers for technical and other ground staff positions in the liberated parts of the Netherlands but these men still had to be trained with the RAAF. Already 227 of these volunteers destined for ground staff positions were in Australia on VJ Day of which 150 to start training at 1 Engineering School (1 ES) during August. Approximately 70 were first enrolled in a two weeks jungle warfare course with 2 Personnel Depot (2 PD) on 30 July and around 80 directly started mechanic training with 1 ES in different classes from 30 July. Both RAAF units were in the Melbourne area.<sup>145</sup>





A class of the Technical School P.E.P. around October 1945 with P-40s and P-51s of the Fighter Pool in the back (authors collection).

The ML had another more serious problem, though. As the war had ended the war volunteers who had started their training late July and during the first two weeks of August had to be demobilised after completing their training and given their contract could no longer be posted to a ML unit for a reasonable period of time. All war volunteers were therefore asked if they would be willing to change their war volunteer contract into a five-year contract for service with the ML/KNIL. Not surprising only approximately 70 eventually did so, although almost all students continued their training either with a RAAF school or (as the RAAF ground staff all of a sudden had to be replaced) “on the job” at a NEI squadron, some of the latter after a short course at the P.E.P. The majority of the approximately 152 war volunteers who started training with 1 ES did not sign a new contract. Most were eliminated from their course shortly after VJ Day and reassigned on 1 September 1945. Approximately 30 to 35 students in a newly formed class, to a large part students who had first followed the jungle warfare training from around 1 August 1945, continued the training at 1 ES although a number of them

had not signed a new contract. All finished the course in January 1946.<sup>146</sup>

The above resulted in the posting of many of the students directly, or after a short technical introduction course at the P.E.P. only, to one of the by now three NEI squadrons in the RAAF for a training as assistant mechanic. Posted to 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron early September were initially 47 of the Dutch war volunteers, all men who had already some experience as a mechanic or in another technical job. All arrived at Mokmer in September many wearing the winter clothing they had been issued with on arrival in Australia.<sup>147</sup> At the end of September the total personnel strength of the squadron was 366 of which 148 NEI. Apart from the war volunteers there were some 32 mechanics (including men who had recently finished a five to six-month training with the RAAF followed by a short type familiarisation at the P.E.P. and were in their practise year before becoming a Sgt mechanic), some 40 other ground personnel and 29 pilots. In October another 25 to 30 ground personnel followed, a few of them war volunteers but mostly former P.E.P. personnel or men trained at the P.E.P. Technical School. The personnel strength became 98 RAAF and 176 NEI personnel on 31 October. On 26 October also Olt De Nijs arrived from the P.E.P. who took over from F/O Blewett as Squadron Equipment Officer. Blewett had held this position since the formation of the unit.<sup>148</sup>

A part of the ground training of the newly posted personnel was done on the three P-40s (the C3-520, C3-522 and C3-558) with major damage which were being repaired at Mokmer. Two were ready in December and one early January 1946.<sup>149</sup> Fortunately, in November 1945, when about 25 additional NEI ground personnel arrived, a number of former PoWs were posted who had recuperated at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Replacement Depot of the U.S. Army in the Philippines. This group of approximately 15 men were experienced airframe and engine mechanics but had nil experience on the P-40, the majority never even having seen one before. The experienced cadre of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron led by acting Engineering Officer Olt Prins and from 9 December (again) by Kap Bodemeijer with Elt Van Driel as a freshly posted assistant, had to arrange for their familiarisation training. Olt Prins (soon to become an Elt) was transferred to Melbourne as engineering officer on 11 December. On 30 November

the squadron had a personnel strength, apart from the last six RAAF men, of 202 ML personnel including about 27 pilots. The number of former PoWs had been increased, as had been the number of men who had recently finished their training with the P.E.P. or the RAAF.<sup>150</sup>

In December 1945 and January 1946, the squadron was kept on strength, replacement ground personnel mostly coming just out of a RAAF training course or the Technical School ran by the P.E.P. which was transferred to Bundaberg in August and September 1945. The flying personnel were regularly relieved and replaced by others in these months, although no flying at all was done apart from a few test flights. The squadron moved from Mokmer strip to Sorido strip in January 1946 as 89 OBU RAAF left Mokmer for deactivation while Sorido still had Base Operations of the USAAF. Personnel strength at the end of December was 1 RAAF liaison officer and 201 NEI personnel, as also on 31 January 1946. Morale dropped considerably in these months as the transfer to Java could take months and there was very little to do.

The RAAF officer left early February after the squadron had become a NEI unit under NEI command per 1 February 1946, the connection with Northern Command RAAF having been severed on 20 January already. By then the newly formed ground staff was considered ready to support operational flying, which was to be done under RAF operational command in the NEI. The final two P-40s lost in accidents while the unit was in Biak were the C3-563 and the C3-564 which both crashed in January 1946. The first one due to engine failure and the other one by inexperience and a faulty decision by the pilot (both pilots unknown).<sup>151</sup>

The Headquarters ML in Batavia (established late September/early October 1945) was already preparing new plans for a transfer to Java and in March all the necessary arrangements with the RAF such as, for example, the use of ammunition and bombs from RAF stocks, were complete. Also the technical support for the squadron when in Java had to be arranged. The unit was to be its own RSU (for which task it already had the specialist personnel) and it would receive support from a team from the 1e Vliegtuig Reparatieafdeeling (1<sup>st</sup> Aircraft Repair Unit, a 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> echelon technical depot) at Andir when necessary.

### The Fighter Pool at Bundaberg after VJ Day

Like the situation at 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron also at the P.E.P. the RAAF ground personnel was gradually withdrawn in the period of September to November 1945 for demobilisation and replaced by Dutch war volunteers, newly trained personnel and liberated PoWs. The P.E.P. trained most of the new personnel in its own Technical School in assistant mechanic courses and refresher courses for experienced mechanics.<sup>152</sup> Many dozens of liberated ML PoWs were temporarily posted at Bundaberg to recuperate usually taking along family members. There was a great shortage of available experienced personnel, however and the ML consequently decided to limit the number of new pilots and former PoWs who were to follow operational training on the P-40. The majority of the newly licensed pilots (ex 5 SFTS RAAF) and former fighter pilot/PoWs were given a short multi-engine transition on the TB-25 at the P.E.P. Bomber Pool or directly on the C-47 with 19 (N.E.I.) Squadron and became a 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot on transport aircraft of the P.E.P or 19 (N.E.I.) Squadron.<sup>153</sup>

On VJ Day the Fighter Pool had six P-40s in use (the C3-507, C3-511, C3-532, C3-538, C3-547 and the C3-551) while the four aircraft seconded with 2 OTU were returned to the P.E.P. in September 1945 as mentioned. The C3-523 (ex 2 OTU) crashed on take-off at Bundaberg on 28 November 1945 but was rebuilt with major components from other written off aircraft in March-April 1946. The C3-538 was badly damaged in a landing accident at Bundaberg on 29 January 1946 and was a write off. The nine remaining P-40s were ferried to Biak in April 1946 (see below).<sup>154</sup>

### North American P-51D/Ks or not?

In consultation with the RAAF the ML had ordered 41 (Lend-Lease) North American P-51D and P-51K Mustang fighters for the re-equipment of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron in the second half of 1945. After a so-called Purchase Negotiation Report had been approved by the U.S. authorities the aircraft were allotted from P-51 series already in production on U.S. contracts for delivery during the first half of 1945. Actual delivery by the factory was ten in March, ten in April and 21 in June 1945. A total of 51 more were offered for delivery in the second half of 1945 but formal



P-51K N3-605 with fighter pilot Lt A.H. de Jong at Canberra in the period of June-July 1945 (collection Herman Dekker via Gerard Casius, with thanks to Gordon Birkett and Edward Rogers for their assistance with the caption)

contracts with the USAAF and the factory for these additional P-51 aircraft could not be placed anymore due to the ending of Lend-Lease in September 1945. On VJ Day the ML had already received a total of 19 P-51s, at least 15 of which still delivered to the P.E.P. Fighter Section at Canberra. The first ten had been received by the RAAF for the ML in May 1945, followed by nine in June. A few ML fighter pilots and technicians followed a conversion training with 84 Squadron RAAF at Townsville (given by 2 OTU personnel) in the period of June to August 1945. Pilot Lt W.J.H. van Nus was assigned as a test pilot on 30 May after a P-51 conversion training at 2 OTU in Mildura. He ferried the first of the new aircraft to Canberra early June.

Already in May Engineering Officer Kap Bodemeijer of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron was transferred to the P.E.P., one of his new tasks to plan and arrange for the retraining of the technical personnel of both his own squadron and that of the P.E.P. on the P-51. He would return to the squadron in Biak on 9 December 1945. An experienced mechanic from 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron was also transferred to assist with the acceptance of the first 19 P-51s. Adj Van Reesch was picked up by a C-47 in

Jacquinet Bay around 10 May and was first seconded to 2 OTU at Mildura for a short P-51 training before going to 2 AD at Richmond (near Sydney, NSW), as did acceptance test pilot Van Nus. He then worked from early July to early August with Van Nus at 1 AD in Laverton (Melbourne, Vic.). Both men were administratively posted on 30 May at the KNIL Detachment Melbourne and seconded to engineering officer Kap P. van Lenning of the Kantoor Vliegtechnische Dienst (Flight Technical Services office) of the NEI War Office, who was temporarily posted in Sydney at the time. After another 14 days with the Maintenance Department of the P.E.P. at Bundaberg to give instruction on the P-51 to a group of P.E.P. and 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron colleagues, Van Reesch was transferred back to his squadron on 25 August.<sup>155</sup>



The Fighter Pool of the P.E.P. at Bundaberg showing 14 P-51s and five P-40s photographed approximately early September 1945 (via Gerard Casius)

The plan was to end refresher training on the P-40 at the P.E.P. as 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron would switch to the P-51 in October 1945. The final 22 Mustangs of the initial total of 41 aircraft allotted to the NEI (the N3-600 to N3-640 incl.) were received by the RAAF in August 1945. On 11 and 15 October the first six were delivered while three more followed on 25 October, in line with the original planning giving 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron 29 P-51s in October. The 29<sup>th</sup> aircraft, the N3-632, was probably damaged

when still on strength with or was received damaged by a RAAF Air Depot and could not be delivered. As the RAAF Air Depots (1AD, 2 AD, 3 AD and 6 AD) which assembled and readied the Mustangs saw a rather quick run-down of their capacity due the demobilisation of the personnel, the final ML P-51s were only delivered in February (ten) and March 1946 (two). Aircraft N3-632 was written off in December 1945.<sup>156</sup>

In October 1945 the Fighter Pool at Bundaberg took ten of the new P-51s into use for the transition training of the 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron pilots. The P-40 pilots planned for the first P-51 flying echelon of the squadron were already assembled in August 1945 with the Pool. They were not yet trained on the P-51 but did fly a number of hours on De Havilland DH-82 Tiger Moths. Six Tiger Moths were received on loan from the RAAF on 28 July to give the P-40 pilots some experience on an aircraft that was sensitive on the controls. In the opinion of the RAAF the P-51 was “much more sensitive on the controls” than the P-40 and this training was thought necessary at the time.<sup>157</sup>

A first group of six of these pilots (one more than planned to replace the sick Adj G.D. Brinkman) together with the former P-51 acceptance and ferry pilot Elt Van Nus were posted to the squadron in the course of September but the pilots returned in small numbers from Biak to the Fighter Pool at Bundaberg from October 1945 for a P-51 type transition. This was a somewhat improvised training as the conversion training that was planned with the RAAF at Townsville was cancelled after VJ Day. Fortunately, the P.E.P. did still get support from a Mobile Technical Instruction Section of the RAAF. This team had already instructed at Townsville flying and maintenance personnel of 84 Squadron and 86 Squadron RAAF, which received their first P-51 on 21 May, respectively on 9 July 1945 but were already de-activated in October, respectively in November 1945. The P-51 transition course for the pilots given at the Fighter Pool was based on the short RAAF course Van Nus had followed at Mildura in May 1945. Van Nus had already trained a few pilots at the Fighter Pool before he left for Mokmer for a new tour, where he arrived on 18 September. After the pilots of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron also all other available P-40 pilots, two newly (on 21 December 1945) certified pilots who received their OTU training on the P-40 at Bundaberg and one former PoW (fighter pilot) who was also trained on the P-40 at

Bundaberg, were checked out on the P-51. The latter three did not fly Tiger Moth anymore as these aircraft were returned to the RAAF in mid-November 1945.<sup>158</sup>

Although a complete crew shift of P-40 pilots had been trained on the P-51 at the end of October and a sufficient number of P-51s were available for the re-equipment of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron, this did not happen. The main reason preventing this was the lack of spares as the Lend-Lease contracts which included the spares supply were cancelled in September 1945 leaving the ML with a small initial spares delivery. Also, in October 1945, the U.S. War Department (following a State Department directive) made it clear that no surplus goods were to be delivered to the NEI that could be used to help reinstate colonial rule. This included spare parts. The State Department further blocked the acquisition of spares directly from U.S. factories. Fortunately, at the insistence of the AHQ NEI of the RAF in Java, a sizable package of already written off spares together with some smaller packages of P-40 spares could be taken over from the RAAF against "dump value" in April-May 1946. This went not exactly in accordance with the rules as these were Lend-Lease items. It took a few months before the acquired spares actually became available.<sup>159</sup>

#### The P.E.P. to Biak and Andir

In Biak the USAAF withdrew the last of its personnel from Sorido in March 1946, the ML formally taking over the base on 1 April, having been just in time to keep the Americans from dumping the radios and other equipment of the air traffic control.<sup>160</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> ADG and the other USAAF depot units at Sorido and Borokoe started to wind down in November 1945 as mentioned already and the USAAF stopped the support to the squadron completely in the next month. In February Kap A.G.J. van de Sluys, MSc (a war volunteer from the Netherlands) of the P.E.P. arrived from Bundaberg with a small group of personnel to take over the equipment and materials of the Depot Repair Squadrons and the 6<sup>th</sup> Engine Overhaul Squadron. The latter already disbanded in August 1945 but its equipment, materials and spares were still there. A large amount of equipment was then sold to the NEI through the American Foreign Liquidation Commissioner of the U.S. State Department. On 27 March 1946 Van de Sluys formed 1 Motor Reviserings Afdeeling (1 M.R.A., 1 Engine Overhaul Unit) at Sorido, as



a sub unit of the P.E.P. Sorido and Borokoe together became the airbase Biak of the ML on 1 April.<sup>161</sup>

The main part of the P.E.P. was transferred from Bundaberg to Biak, the first echelon on 1 April 1946. Apart from advance echelons of other parts of the Pool a group of personnel mostly consisting of engine mechanics and assistant engine mechanics, the latter including some war volunteers from the Netherlands, to man up 1 M.R.A. were transferred. The packing and crating of stores, spares and spare engines and even a Taylorcraft L-2M light plane began in March and was concluded in August 1946. The Fighter Pool was disbanded in April. As mentioned above the P.E.P. transferred all of its remaining P-40s to 120 Squadron in April giving it a strength of 29 P-40 aircraft in total. The P-51s had been organized into a new provisional squadron in March 1946 called the Fighter Pool Unit (FPU) in correspondence with the RAAF and the British SEAC Headquarters but "121 Squadron (forming)" by the KNIL (see below). The base operations at Bundaberg were run by 88 Operational Base Unit RAAF but this unit disbanded on 26 April 1946 after the ML had taken over its tasks. B-25 pilot and crew member training at Bundaberg stopped at the end of June, the ground party of the Bomber Pool moving to Sorido, Biak in July and August by ship.

The Maintenance Department was broken up and the majority of the equipment, materials, stores and spares of the P.E.P. was shipped to Java. Only the Bomber Pool, 1 M.R.A. and a part of the Parachute section were stationed in Biak. The main part of the Maintenance Department personnel was concentrated in a recently formed Onderhoudsafdeeling B-25 (Maintenance Unit B-25, 25 OA), an RSU performing 100 hours and 300 hours scheduled maintenance on B-25s which was transferred to Andir, Bandoeng in western Java. A small part of the maintenance personnel was posted to the new 121 Squadron (see below). All available spare components, airframe and engine parts and spare engines for the P-40s were shipped to Soerabaja, eastern Java, in May-June 1946. With the first ship that arrived in Soerabaja in May also a few mechanics for 120 Squadron from the former Fighter Pool arrived. No 120 Squadron was to be its own RSU for the time being (a situation which would last until 1 February 1947) and perform 100 hours and 300 hours scheduled maintenance itself (see later).

On 30 July the final transport aircraft of the P.E.P. the Lockheed C-60A LT935 left for Andir. The base was taken over by the Australian department of Civil Aviation from the RAAF on the next day, the ML hiring a part of the airfield. A small rear echelon of the ML remained behind for the servicing of transport aircraft and spare B-25s used for transport flights while also two cannibalized P-51 aircraft probably still had to be made serviceable. The two P-51s were transferred to Tjililitan together with the repair team in July or August. Nearly all of the remaining personnel, including instructors and students of the B-25 courses who mostly had been busy making transport flights or ferrying aircraft to Java in July and August, were transferred to Sorido in Biak on 1 September 1946. The B-25 training was continued at Sorido a few days later. The transfer of the Bomber Pool could not be completed earlier as the available shipping capacity was very limited at the time. Small detachments and some individuals were posted elsewhere in Australia.<sup>162</sup>

### The second fighter squadron

Within the KNIL and the P.E.P. the FPU was already addressed to as 121 Squadron (forming). Late March 1946 the new squadron received 16 of the P-51s as its initial equipment (the N3-602, -605, -608, -614, -621, -625, -626, -628, -631, -633 and N3-635 to N3-640 incl.). The unit was transferred from Bundaberg to Tjililitan, Java on 1 April 1946, the FPU formally becoming 121 Squadron of the ML/KNIL on 1 May. Maurenbrecher became its first CO.<sup>163</sup> No 121 Squadron (forming) initially had a ground crew of only around 50 men, apart from a few experienced mechanics almost exclusively former PoWs and war volunteers from the Netherlands, the latter mostly mechanics just out of training with 1 Engineering School RAAF in Melbourne (where a P-51 was available for ground training) and assistant mechanics trained by the P.E.P. itself and all still inexperienced. Chief engineering officer was Elt H. Doppenberg, MSc a war volunteer from the Netherlands who had flown fighters during the May 1940 fight against the Luftwaffe but also was engineering officer. Although he had followed a refresher course/<sup>2</sup>nd pilot training on the TB-25 at the P.E.P. he was needed as an engineering officer, becoming Chief Engineering Officer of the Maintenance Department P.E.P. in December 1945.<sup>164</sup>

A flying echelon was not yet formed, although a group of approximately 20 pilots was gathered at the P.E.P. late March-early April to ferry the P-51s to Tjililitan, Java. These were almost exclusively former 120 Squadron pilots but with three additions, the already mentioned former PoW, Kap P.G. Tideman, and two recently licensed pilots who went (as Tideman) through OTU training on the P-40 and P-51 transition training with the P.E.P. at Bundaberg, Vdgs P. van der Veer and M.J. van Asch. Van der Veer would ferry a P-51 but Van Asch was sent to Biak to ferry a P-40.<sup>165</sup> Maj Maurenbrecher, in fact, had temporarily become CO of both fighter squadrons and led the first ferry flight of P-51s which left Bundaberg on 3 April 1946 (see later).

### 120 Squadron finally to Java

In March 1946 it became clear that 120 Squadron was to go to Java after all but to Soerabaja. An advance party of two officers and ten NCOs and enlisted men arrived in Soerabaja on 20 March and was temporarily housed at the Dutch naval air service base Morokrembangan, situated next to Tandjoeng Perak, the former civilian airfield of Soerabaja. On 23 March the British authorities finally ordered the actual move of 120 Squadron which was to relieve 60 Squadron RAF at Tandjoeng Perak. A Landing Ship Tanks chartered by the NEI Government and in Hollandia at that time was immediately directed to Biak and loaded up with most of the spares, equipment and vehicles. It arrived at Soerabaja on 6 April 1946, also carrying approximately 150 men of the squadron personnel.<sup>166</sup>

The ferry flights to Java started on 20 April and were made with a stop at Ambon, a night stop-over at Makassar and a stop at Bandjermasin, before flying on to Tjililitan, a distance of some 3,400 kilometres in total. The first group of P-40s led by Maj Maurenbrecher left on 20 April and arrived at Tjililitan on the 21<sup>st</sup>. A large portion of the route a B-25 Mitchell of 18 Squadron based at Balikpapan acted as navigation plane. Consolidated PBY Catalinas of the RAAF and MLD were in the air and on stand-by for Air-Sea-Rescue. Two of the P-40s were lost on the ferry flights, Elt J.E. Scheffer abandoned the C3-510 by parachute near Bandjermasin on 21 April due to engine problems and the C3-561 (pilot unknown) crashed on approximately 28 April at Tjililitan during the arrival of the second ferry group (again led by Maurenbrecher) of which the C3-552 had stranded at Bandjermasin with technical problems. Scheffer was

rescued by locals and arrived at Bandjermasin by proah 14 days after his bale-out. A part of the pilots of the ferry operation were flown back by a 19 (N.E.I.) Squadron C-47 to Bundaberg for another ferry flight (see below).<sup>167</sup>

In the week of 27 April up to and including 3 May the P-40s at Tjililitan were flown to Tandjoeng Perak. On 1 May Maurenbrecher turned over his command to Maj De Vries there and two days later the transfer from Tjililitan to Soerabaja was concluded. Kap Bodemeijer stayed on as Chief Engineering Officer. The final three P-40s to be ferried left Sorido only on 3 May 1946, however, flown by Elt Trebels, Sgt Czismania de Somogy and Vdg Van Asch. The aircraft arrived in Soerabaja on 6 May also having flown large parts of the route behind a B-25 but with support of only a single MLD Catalina this time for Air-Sea-Rescue when passing large sea stretches. One day earlier the squadron had become operational again at Tandjoeng Priok under RAF operational control, albeit initially with a minimum of only some 15 pilots. This was no problem as the RAF prescribed daily available strength for operations was 14 aircraft, as it had been with 60 Squadron RAF.<sup>168</sup>



P-40s parading on 1 May 1946 at Tandjoeng Perak (collection author).

### The P-51 ferry flights

The ferry of the P-51s from Bundaberg to Tjililitan concerned a flight of approximately 5,200 kilometres via Cloncurry, Darwin, Timor, Bali and Soerabaja and took three days. Large parts of the route a North American B-25 bomber of 18 Squadron acted as a lead plane, its crew doing the navigation. All 16 aircraft of 121 Squadron, two groups of eight led by Maurenbrecher, respectively Tideman, safely landed at Tjililitan on 5 April. The eight pilots of the first group were Maj Maurenbrecher, Elt Hoekstra, Elt Marchant, Elt Fokkinga, Elt Greene, Tlt Van Boldrik, SM Gottschalk and Sgt Hays. The next ten P-51s left on 21 April with Kap Tideman in command and arrived on 23 April, again without any mishaps. Tideman left Bundaberg for a new ferry flight on 24 May with 12 P-51s. This time one of the aircraft was lost during the landing at Tjililitan. Tlt Esser crashed on 26 May due to fatigue, his N3-623 becoming a total loss. Apart from the former all ferried aircraft from the second and third ferry flight were temporarily attached to 121 Squadron. Two P-51s initially remained at the P.E.P. as they were cannibalized due to the lack of spares and were only ferried in July or August as mentioned above.<sup>169</sup>



Maj Maurenbrecher brings in the first P-51 at Tjililitan after the ferry flight from Bundaberg on 5 April 1946 (authors collection).

After the first ferry flight a number of the pilots were transported back to Bundaberg by a 19 (N.E.I.) Squadron Douglas C-47 to fly over a P-40

from Biak or another P-51 from Bundaberg. Most of the pilots ferried two aircraft and some three. The formation and organizing of 121 Squadron began in earnest on 20 May when Maurenbrecher arrived at Tjililitan after having ferried a P-51 and two P-40s and spending some time at the ML Headquarters in Batavia. Part of the pilots were transferred to 120 Squadron at Soerabaja on 24 May 1946, a second group following on 27 May to bring its flying echelon on strength with 24 pilots while leaving approximately 16 pilots for 121 Squadron. One of the latter was Kap Tideman who had become deputy CO of the new squadron. The training started in June, initially with familiarization flights from Tjililitan. During that month the 1<sup>st</sup> line strength was enlarged from 16 to 18 P-51s, the other P-51s were kept in reserve at Tjililitan or stored. Keeping the P-51s serviceable was quite a problem during the first few months as the spares were still in Australia and when collected by the P.E.P. had to be flown from Bundaberg to Tjililitan as needed with a Lockheed 12A (the L2-105, attached to the squadron in May) as initially there was no shipping capacity to transport the spares to Java.<sup>170</sup>

Although the ML had approximately 50 fighter pilots in its strength late 1945, around 20 were not available for postings with the fighter squadrons. Most were working for agencies and departments of the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA) which was performing critical government tasks in the vacuum after VJ Day, the British/NEI RAPWI (Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees) organization which absorbed the NICA in Java and Sumatra and developed into a temporary semi-government there, the ML Headquarters and the Leger Organisatie Centrum (LOC, the Army Organizational Centre) which was taking care of returning PoWs and organised those who passed a medical examination after a recuperation period into units or gave them a new posting.

Three of the fighter pilots, Elts P.H. Stam, W.J. Heikoop and P. Verspoor became a police superintendent in October 1945. Elt H. Souman of the Fighter Pool P.E.P., much to his joy planned to go to 120 Squadron for his first operational tour, was seconded to the RAPWI organization instead and also Elt Poublon, stranded at Tjililitan, joined RAPWI in October 1945. One or two of the fighter pilots flew with 19 (N.E.I.) Squadron as 1<sup>st</sup> pilot on the Douglas C-47. Four others were refreshed

as 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot on the B-25 at the P.E.P. and flew transport sorties in the period of September-December 1945 with the Bomber Pool and the so-called ML RAPWI Detachment established by the P.E.P. at Kemajoran, Batavia on 1 October. They were Elt Heikoop, Adj Brinkman, SM Florentinus and also Kap Motshagen, who had followed a 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot B-25 course preceding the ferry of a B-25. There was one casualty, Sgt W. Rous working for the LOC detachment Batavia was killed on 19 November 1945 when the road convoy he was travelling with from Tandjoeng Priok, the harbour of Batavia, to Tjililitan was attacked by Japanese armed Indonesian nationalists.<sup>171</sup>

The fighter pilots gradually became available again to the ML from the early months of 1946 but a number of them requested demobilization or discharge and left the ML or were hired by the KNILM (Royal Netherlands Indies Airline) and became a civilian or a civilian C-47 pilot in the second half of 1946. A few, including Poublon and Souman, were needed to fly Piper L-4Js for a couple of months. Additional pilots were posted at 121 Squadron from early July 1946 but were, apart from a few arriving in September-October who had flown with 322 Dutch Squadron RAF in Europe, former PoWs who had to be “refreshed” first while all had to be trained on the P-51. The former 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron pilots had never followed full operational training on the P-51 but only a type transition course. The ground crew was also re-organized and brought up to strength but largely with former PoWs and inexperienced Dutch war volunteers. The squadron had to concentrate on training and working up for the coming months and did not become fully operational before late October 1946. The operational tasks of the unit were taken over by 18 Squadron in this period. The remaining P-51s, as the P-40s, were kept in service and were bought against remaining value from the U.S. Government in July 1946.<sup>172</sup>

### Conclusions

No 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron was a unit built from scratch and by definition inexperienced. Only four of its pilots were experienced fighter pilots of which only one had flown as such in the battle for Java and one in the May 1940 battle for the Netherlands. Also in the ground echelon only a handful of the mechanics had worked under war conditions. The servicing party was of a mixed ML and RAAF composition but remained

largely RAAF during the war period. The RAAF Component could only be replaced with ML personnel after VJ Day. At the time of forming the squadron was a welcome addition to the RAAF as a Japanese attack on mainland Australia was still feared. Indeed, when in March 1944 an attack on north-west Australia seemed imminent the NEI unit was successfully deployed to Potshot as part of an emergency operation to strengthen the region at very short notice.

Although in the first instance posted in the second line at Mopah, Merauke in Dutch New Guinea in May 1944, this posting gave the ML/KNIL the opportunity to train all available fighter pilots in an operational area and in working with Fighter Control Officers and Army units. The original pilots rotated from July 1944 with pilots posted at the Fighter Section (later Fighter Pool) of the P.E.P. until from October 1944 every month approximately six pilots could be relieved by others after a four months operational posting. In the period of November 1944 to January 1945 the CO, Flight COs, section leaders and some of the deputy section leaders of the squadron were seconded to the RAAF at Noemfoor to get some experience in the fighter-bomber role under operational conditions and with a high operations tempo. By early 1945 the squadron was an efficient and well-trained fighter unit. After a transfer to Biak in June 1945 it proved itself and excelled in the fighter-bomber role especially in attacks on the large number of Japanese troops in the Vogelkop, the huge western part of Dutch New Guinea.

The squadron was supported by the N.E.I.-P.E.P., the Maintenance Department of which held spare P-40 aircraft and took care of a major part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> line maintenance of the P-40 aircraft of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron. The Fighter Pool-P.E.P. was responsible for the refresher training and timely rotation of the flying personnel. The Maintenance Department also performed the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> line maintenance of the P-40 aircraft operated by the Fighter Pool. The training of additional fighter pilots to compensate for losses was the responsibility of the NEI War Office and was largely done in RAAF training schools. Despite VJ Day, the squadron remained operational and kept flying up to and including November 1945. Although a re-equipment of the squadron with the North American P-51 Mustang in October 1945 did not happen, all fighter pilots were trained on the P-51 at the P.E.P. which did establish a second



fighter unit in March 1946 with P-51s. This 121 Squadron was formally established on 1 May 1946 and based at Tjililitan, Batavia in western Java but with a largely inexperienced ground crew. No 120 Squadron had come under NEI command on 1 February 1946 and was transferred to Tandjoeng Perak, Soerabaja in eastern Java to replace a RAF fighter squadron in April. All remaining 29 P-40s and 38 of the 40 delivered P-51s were ferried to Java by the fighter pilots themselves in April and May 1946. Two P-40s and one P-51 were lost in the ferry operation. No 120 squadron became operational again on 5 May 1946 under RAF operational command, while 121 Squadron had to concentrate on working up first and was ready late October 1946.

Thanks to the support and co-operation of the Australian Government and the RAAF the ML/KNIL had been able to build-up a small but efficient and effective fighter organization which, however, was largely dependent on RAAF ground personnel until around October 1945. Also, RAAF Base Bundaberg could be used by the ML for a reasonable period of time after VJ Day as a maintenance and repair base and a training base until the final detachment of the P.E.P. left for Biak in Dutch New Guinea on 1 September 1946. A relatively large number of liberated PoWs of the ML recuperated while temporary posted at Bundaberg. The RAAF further helped out by turning over excess P-40 and P-51 airframe and engine spares to the ML in April-May 1946. All this made it possible for the ML/KNIL to fight on in the NEI with its fighters from May 1946.

**Appendices** (all dates are mentioned day, month, year or month, year, a – between dates means up to and including)

**RNMFS trained P-40 pilots** (name, rank during OTU training RNMFS, date transferred to Australia, details on posting)

1. F. Stumpff, Elt, 281243.
2. E.H.M.C. Poublon, Elt, 281243.
3. J.P. Verspoor, Elt, 011043.
4. C. Been, Elt, 010143.
5. P.H. Stam, Elt, 011043.

6. R.J. Idzerda, Ozw III, 281243 (MLD seconded ML/KNIL).
7. P.J. de Jager, Cadet Vdg, 011043.
8. H.P. Levy, Cadet Vdg, 011043.
9. P. Verspoor, Cadet Vdg, 281243.
10. R.Th. Braakensiek, Mil Vdg, 011043.
11. J.E. Scheffer, Mil Sgt, 131243.
12. N.E. Czismania de Somogy, Mil Sgt, 281243.
13. O. Leyding, Mil Sgt, 131243.
14. W.J.H. van Nus, Mil Sgt, 011043.
15. J.S. Zwart, Mil Sgt, 011043.
16. Ch.M. Schillmöller, Mil Sgt, 011043.
17. R. Trebels, Mil Sgt, 011043.
18. F.J. de Raadt, Mil Sgt, 011043.
19. J.C.N. van Boldrik, Mil Sgt, 131243.
20. G.Y. Fokkinga, Mil Sgt, 011043.
21. J.R.W. Hoekstra, Mil Sgt, 011043.
22. G.W. Greene, Mil Sgt, 011043.
23. B.E. de Smalen, Mil Sgt, 131243.
24. A.J. Geerts, Mil Sgt, 011043.
25. B.G. de Vries, Mil Sgt, 281243.
26. J.M. Huizer, Mil Sgt, 281243.
27. B. van Aken, Mil Sgt, 131243.
28. J.F. van den Dorpel, Mil Sgt, 281243.
29. M.C. Soesman, Mil Sgt, 131243.
30. R.J. Salm, Mil Sgt, 131243.
31. O.J. Moojen, Mil Sgt, 281243.
32. R. Spoor, Brig, 281243.

33. A.C. Scholte, Mil Kpl, 011043.
  34. H.W. Backhuis Roozeboom, Mil Kpl, 281243.
  35. G.H. Verbon, Mil Sld, 281243.
  36. G.H. Marchant, Mil Sgt, 011043.
  37. R. Pelsmaker, Mil Sgt, 281243.
  38. J.L. van Olmen, Mil Sgt, 281243.
  39. A.H. de Jong, Mil Sgt, 281243.
  40. L.H. Haye, Mil Sgt, 011043 (rank Mil Kpl due to a disciplinary measure).
  41. F. Hirdes, Kpl, 281243 (MLD seconded ML/KNIL).
  42. T.H. Gottschalk, Sgt, 01043.
  43. F.W. Verdier, Sgt, 080244.
  44. J.H. Knoop, Elt, 281243.
  45. W. Bartelings, Tlt, 281243.
  46. J. Flemer, Mil Sgt, 080244.
  47. W.A. Braun, Mil Kpl, 281243.
  48. J. Struik, Mil Kpl, 281243.
  49. W. Rous, Mil Kpl, 281243.
  50. W. Inkelaar, Mil Kpl, 080244 (rank Mil Sld due to a disciplinary measure), transfer cancelled due to medical reasons (remained behind in USA), 0944 reassigned fighter pilot when attached to the Fighter Section-P.E.P.
  51. G. van Alphen, Mil Kpl, 080244.
  52. B.J. Veenstra, Mil Kpl, 080244, became unfit for flying due to a flying accident on 230644 and never assigned operationally.
  53. B. Sandberg Esq, Elt, 150244, temporarily staff RNMFS after completing OTU training.
- Former instructors:
54. H.A. Souman, Res Elt, 150244, instructor Fighter Section-P.E.P.; 0744 chief instructor Fighter Section-P.E.P.
  55. Y.H. Mulder, Elt, 011043

56. H.H.J. Simons, Res Elt, 011043

57. H.A. Maurenbrecher, Kap, 011043

58. J.D. Brameijer, Sgt, 011043, after a first operational tour with 120 N.E.I. Sq instructor Fighter Section-P.E.P 0744-0944.

59. D.J.R. Beugeling, Ovl I, 150244 (MLD seconded ML/KNIL), chief instructor Fighter Section-P.E.P.; 0744 transferred to MLD.

60. H.F.C. Holtz, Ovl I, 150244 (MLD seconded ML/KNIL), instructor Fighter Section-P.E.P.; 0744 transferred to MLD.

ML/KNIL fighter pilots (re)trained in Australia, 1944-1946 (posting dates at 120 Sq are the actual arrival dates at Merauke or Biak during their first posting; mentioned rank is the rank when first posted at 120 Sq or 121 Sq).

**Maj A.J. de Vries** Former Operations Officer of 18 Sq N.E.I. until 0943. Had been a flying instructor and fighter pilot with the ML/KNIL in 1940-42, CO of 3-VI.G.IV 1241-0242; became CO of Fighter Section-P.E.P. 0344 after having led the formation and work-up of the Transport Section-P.E.P. (later N.E.I.-T.S.M.) as temporary CO in the period of 1043-0344. Retrained on the P-40N at Canberra with gunnery refresher at 2 OTU from c. 0344; was to become CO 120 (N.E.I.) Sq 290745 but sent to the U.K. instead to coordinate the initial military training and the transport to Australia of Dutch war volunteers for the ML; 010546 posted as CO 120 Sq when the unit was based at Tandjoeng Perak, Soerabaja, Java.

**Elt N.J.H. Daanen** did complete an operational tour with 18 Sq N.E.I. 0943 but had been a fighter pilot in 1941. Seconded RAF 1941 but called back from a RAF OTU in the UK 1241. Posted at the N.E.I.-P.E.P. 1043 and 1143 to the Transport Section-P.E.P. (later N.E.I.-T.S.M.). Seconded to the forming 120 Sq N.E.I. at Canberra 1143 but returned to the N.E.I.-T.S.M. 0144 as he was entitled to a non-operational period. Was to be retrained as a fighter pilot but became missing 060944 when flying as Captain of a C-47 with 1 N.E.I.T.S.

**Elt W.J. Heikoop** completed an operational tour as B-25 pilot with 18 Sq N.E.I. 0943 but had been in training as a fighter pilot when transferred to Australia on 010342 for B-25 transition at Archerfield and the ferrying of a B-25 to Java. Posted to the N.E.I.-P.E.P. 1043 and a transport pilot with the Transport Section-P.E.P. (later N.E.I.-T.S.M.) from 1143. Transferred to the P.E.P. 0644 for retraining as a fighter pilot and flew a few hours on the P-40N with the Fighter Section. After operational training with 2 OTU RAAF 0744-0844, posted to 120 (N.E.I.) Sq 060944.

**Sgt W. Inkelaar** followed full operational training on the P-40 with the RNMFS and 080244 transferred to Australia. Transfer cancelled due to medical reasons; c. 0844 to Australia and 1044-1144 OTU training at the Fighter Section-P.E.P.; 291144 to 120 (N.E.I.) Sq.

**Sgt F.J.P. Goossens** did complete (single-engine) advanced pilot training with the RNMFS, military pilot and observer licenses 230743 but reassigned student air gunner 300743 due to medical reasons (kept pilot and observer licenses). Reinstated flying training 010843 and to Beechcraft AT-11 conversion; 240943 reassigned air gunner training (to be trained as a B-25 pilot in Australia when medically fit again). No operational tour as air gunner and planned 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot B-25 training cancelled 0944. P-40N OTU training with Fighter Section-P.E.P. 1044-1144. To 120 (N.E.I.) Sq 040245.

**Sgt G.D. Brinkman** completed an operational tour as a B-25 pilot with 18 Sq N.E.I. and subsequently flew with 2 N.E.I.T.S. from 1043 until 0944 when selected for retraining as a fighter pilot. OTU on the P-40N at the Fighter Section-P.E.P. 1044-1144. Posted 120 (N.E.I.) Sq 100145.

**Sgt F.H. Florentinus** completed an operational tour as a B-25 pilot with 18 Sq N.E.I. and subsequently flew with 2 N.E.I.T.S. from 0444 until 0944 when selected for retraining as a fighter pilot. OTU training on the P-40N at the Fighter Section-P.E.P. 1044-1144. Posted 120 (N.E.I.) Sq 100145.

**Elt G.J. Motshagen** flying instructor at the ML/KNIL Flying School 1941-42 and from 0642 the RNMFS, lastly with the "AT and OT Fighters" (North American AT-6 and Curtiss P-40) but did not follow or did not complete the gunnery phase of the operational training on the P-40N. Selected for Fighter Control Officer (FCO, radar controller) training with RAAF and transferred to Australia 0943. Posted 0544 as FCO Fighter Control Section/322 Radar Sq RAAF at Tanahmera (administratively with 120 (N.E.I.) Sq). From 0544 liaison officer of Fighter Control Section/322 Radar Sq with 120 (N.E.I.) Sq and assisted the squadron as a test pilot from 0544. Also flew locally on the P-40N for continuation training. Retrained in OTU course of the Fighter Section-P.E.P. 1044-1144 and posted to 120 (N.E.I.) Sq 030145.

**Tlt B.J. Ruesink** military pilot and observer licenses issued 250245 after training with 5 SFTS RAAF, 120345 to 2 OTU RAAF, graduated 170545. Posted 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron 070745.

**Tlt B. Slosser** military pilot and observer licenses issued 150145 after training with 5 SFTS RAAF, 050245 to 2 OTU RAAF, graduated 050445. Posted 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron 110445.

**Vdg R.Th. Esser** military pilot and observer licenses issued 250245 after training with 5 SFTS RAAF, 120345 to 2 OTU RAAF, graduated 140645. Posted 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron 070745.

**Sgt W.E. Erkelens** former air gunner 18 Squadron N.E.I., completed his operational tour 210544. Eliminated from single-engine advanced training RNMFS 1142 (probably because of medical reasons) and reassigned student air gunner 1142; possibly refresher training at 11 EFTS 1044-1144; c. 1244 posted 5 SFTS; pilot and

observer license issued probably c. 030445 after training with 5 SFTS; 180445 to 2 OTU, graduated 140645. To 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron 090845.

ML/KNIL fighter pilots trained in the OTU Course P.E.P., Bundaberg, 0146-0346:

**Vdg M.J. van Asch** 160645 graduated at 1 ITS (then student observer), 230745 to 6 SFTS (per 010845 EFTS course); 240945 transferred to 5 SFTS; military pilot and observer licenses issued 211245; 080146 to P.E.P.; P-40 operational training and P-51 transition training at Bundaberg; c. 010446 to 120 Sq Biak to ferry a P-40 to Java; after the ferry flight 070546 posted to 120 Sq, Tandjoeng Perak, Soerabaja, east Java.

**Vdg P. van der Veer** 160645 graduated at 1 ITS (then student observer); 230745 to 6 SFTS (per 010845 EFTS course); 240945 transferred to 5 SFTS; military pilot and observer licenses issued 211245; 040146 to P.E.P.; P-40 operational training followed by P-51 transition training at P.E.P. Bundaberg; ferried a P-51 to Java, served shortly with 121 Sq at Tjililitan, Java and was posted to 120 Sq at Tandjoeng Perak, Soerabaja, east Java 270546.

**Kap P.G. Tideman** Former flying instructor and fighter pilot of the ML/KNIL, CO of 3-VI.G.V 0142-0242; PoW 0342-0945; P-40 operational training followed by P-51 transition training at P.E.P. Bundaberg 0146-0346; ferried three P-51s to Java 0446-0546 and became deputy CO 121 Sq at Tjililitan, Batavia, western Java 0446.

Trained as a future fighter pilot with 5 SFTS RAAF but no P-40 training and not assigned to a fighter squadron anymore (see also the Remark below):

**Tlt W.J. de Vos van Steenwijk** c. 1144 to 1 ITS; 0245 to 11 EFTS; 240445 transferred to 5 SFTS; military pilot and observer licenses issued 150845; 0845 to P.E.P. for B-25 Conversion Course; on completion temporary 19 (NEI) Sq; 0846 to the Netherlands for demobilisation.

**Elt A.M. Valkenburg** trained as armament officer at the RNMFS (former student pilot basic training RNMFS until reassigned 270143, reasons unknown); 0245 to 11 EFTS; 240445 transferred to 5 SFTS; military pilot and observer licenses issued 150845; 190845 to P.E.P. for B-25 Conversion Course; on completion 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot B-25 with P.E.P. (transport flights with TB-25s and disarmed B-25s); 120646 posted 19 (N.E.I.) Sq; 080746 posted to 17 VARWA Sq (Soerabaja, later Palembang); retrained as a fighter pilot at Tjililitan, Java 151246-240247.

**Vdg F.C. van Es** c. 1144 to 1 ITS; 0245 to 11 EFTS; 240445 transferred to 5 SFTS; military pilot and observer licenses issued 150845; 0845 to P.E.P. for B-25 Conversion Course; 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot B-25 with P.E.P. on completion (transport flights with TB-25s and disarmed B-25s); 260846 from P.E.P. to 17 VARWA Sq, Tjililitan, Java; demobilised 1146.

**Vdg W.C. Melius** c. 1144 to 1 ITS; 0245 to 11 EFTS; 240445 transferred to 5 SFTS; military pilot and observer licenses issued 150845; 0845 to P.E.P. for B-25 Conversion Course; possibly temporary 19 (N.E.I.) Sq on completion; demobilised 1946.

**SM A.F. Bos** trained as a radio mechanic and air gunner at the RNMFS (former student pilot 6 SFTS 0342 and basic training RNMFS 0542-0742 until reassigned 0742, reasons unknown); completed tour as air gunner with 18 (N.E.I.) Sq 290145; 0245 to 11 EFTS; 240445 transferred to 5 SFTS; military pilot and observer licenses issued 150845; 0845 to P.E.P. for B-25 Conversion Course; temporary 19 (N.E.I.) Sq on completion; retrained as a fighter pilot at Tjililitan, Java 070147-240447.

**Elt J.W. Keuzenkamp** trained as a communications officer at the RNMFS; 070943 to 1 ITS; c. 011143 to 3 AOS; observer license (navigator-bombardier) 010444; did an operational tour at 18 (N.E.I.) Sq 240944-240545; 0645 to 5 SFTS (former student pilot primary training RNMFS 010642-120842; 120842 reassigned, reasons unknown); military pilot license issued 010945, 0945 to P.E.P.; 0945 seconded to NICA, Java; c. 0246 to P.E.P. for B-25 Conversion Course.

**Elt E.J. van Blommestein** trained as intelligence officer at the RNMFS; 070943 to 1 ITS; c. 011143 to 3 AOS; observer license (navigator-bombardier) 010444; did an operational tour at 18 (N.E.I.) Sq 220744-250245; possibly 0445-0645 refresher training at 11 EFTS; 0645 to 5 SFTS (former student pilot basic training RNMFS, became medically unfit for flying, reassigned 220143); military pilot license issued 010945; 0945 to P.E.P.; 0945 seconded to NICA in Java and became a temporary Police Superintendent 2<sup>nd</sup> class; c. 0246 to P.E.P. for B-25 Conversion Course.

**Sgt W.G.L. Sirks** trained as air gunner with 3 Bombing and Gunnery School RAAF 0943-1043, air gunner license 1043, operational tour as air gunner with 18 (N.E.I.) Sq 161043-190644; 291244 to 1 ITS, 0345-0645 11 EFTS, 250645-301045 5 SFTS, pilot and observer licenses issued 191045; 301045 to P.E.P. for B-25 Conversion Course; 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot B-25 with P.E.P. on completion (transport flights with TB-25s and disarmed B-25s); 150546 from P.E.P. to Tjililitan, Java to fly Piper L-4Js and 0746 to 17 VARWA Sq at Semarang, Java.

**Sgt B.T.W. van Hasselt** 291244 to 1 ITS, 0345-0645 11 EFTS, 250645-1045 5 SFTS, pilot and observer licenses issued 191045; 1045 to P.E.P. for B-25 Conversion Course; possibly temporary 19 (N.E.I.) Sq on completion; demobilised 1946.

**Vdg P.A. Kerstens Jr.** 291244 to 1 ITS, 0345-0645 11 EFTS, 250645-1045 5 SFTS, pilot and observer licenses issued 191045; 1045 to P.E.P. for B-25 Conversion Course; possibly temporary 19 (N.E.I.) Sq on completion; c. 0746 to 17 VARWA Sq, Java.

**Vdg G.M. Schildmeijer** 291244 to 1 ITS, 0345-0645 11 EFTS, 250645-281045 5 SFTS, pilot and observer licenses issued 191045; 281045 to P.E.P. for B-25 Conversion Course; possibly temporary 19 (N.E.I.) Sq on completion; 010946 demobilised.

**Vdg De Salle** (initials unknown) c. 0545 to 1 ITS; 230745 to 6 SFTS (per 010845 EFTS course); 240945 transferred to 5 SFTS; military pilot and observer licenses issued 211245; 0146 to P.E.P. for B-25 Conversion Course; retrained as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot B-25; 240246 posted 18 NEI Sq, Balikpapan.

**Vdg Kroes** (initials unknown) c. 0545 to 1 ITS; 230745 to 6 SFTS (per 010845 EFTS course); 240945 transferred to 5 SFTS; military pilot and observer licenses issued 211245; 0146 to P.E.P. for B-25 Conversion Course; retrained as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot B-25; 0346 posted 18 Sq, Kemajoran (RAPWI Detachment).

**Vdg Bouwens** (initials unknown) c. 0545 to 1 ITS; 230745 to 6 SFTS (per 010845 EFTS course); 240945 transferred to 5 SFTS; military pilot and observer licenses issued 211245; 0146 to P.E.P. for B-25 Conversion Course; retrained as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot B-25; remained posted P.E.P. (transport flights with TB-25s and disarmed B-25s 0346-0446).

Remark: The first five mentioned pilots followed No 1 NEI Course at 11 EFTS in the period of 0245-0445. The course started with 10 students at 1 ITS in 1144. Five of the students were licensed 010945 after further training at 6 SFTS. Nine students followed No 2 NEI Course of 11 EFTS in the period of 0445-0645. One student was eliminated at 1 ITS earlier. Five went to 5 SFTS of which four were licensed 191045. Sgt H. Baxmeier also was in training with 5 SFTS but crashed during an emergency landing with a Wirraway on a solo night training flight on 26 September 1945. He was severely wounded and became medically unfit for flying. Four students went to 6 SFTS for further training and were all licensed c. 021145. A third group of ten NEI students went to 6 SFTS for the elementary training course as 11 EFTS closed in July 1945. All ten entered 010845, one eliminated 0945 and nine completed the EFTS Course in September. Four continued training with 6 SFTS, all licensed 110146. Five went to 5 SFTS of which only two were further trained as fighter pilots, see with Vdg Van der Veer and Vdg Van Asch above. The other three (Vdgs De Salle, Kroes and Bouwens) were all licensed on 211245 and after their graduation at 5 SFTS retrained at the P.E.P. as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot on the B-25.

#### **Aircraft used by the fighter units of the ML/KNIL**

(ML serial if applicable, USAAF FY serial if applicable, c/n if no FY serial, operating unit/base with dates received or issued and transfer dates, details on loss or write off)

**P-40Ns Kittyhawks of the ML/KNIL, use and losses in Australia and Dutch New Guinea until May 1946** (NEI Lend-Lease ac until otherwise noted).



Remarks. 1. The following is based on extracts from correspondence from and between the Hoofdkwartier KNIL/Departement van Oorlog (KNIL/DvO, NEI War Office), Head of Afdeeling C (C Department) and the Commandant Luchtstrijdkrachten (CO NEI Air forces); various documents of the N.E.I.-P.E.P. about aircraft strengths, write offs and hours flown after last major overhaul, period February 1944-March 1946; the surviving Dutch language monthly reports of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron; surveys of ML aircraft strengths by type and unit period 1945-1946; the Operations Record Book (Forms A50 and A51) of 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron; the COs monthly reports 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron and the (aircraft ) status cards RAAF. 2. If there is a discrepancy between sources about a date "received" the issuing date is given instead (which usually precedes the date received by 1-3 days). The dates "received 120 Sq" are as much as possible the actual arrival dates of the ac at Merauke or Biak. Reader is advised that a check against logbook data showed that dates received 120 Sq mentioned on the RAAF status cards in some cases are telegram dates, one or two days after arrival, or issuing dates, one or two days before actual arrival. 3. If there is a discrepancy between sources about a "(transferred) to" date this normally concerns the day only which has been deleted in these cases. Mentioned dates of accidents and aircraft damaged are as much as possible copied from NEI and RAAF accident reports as the dates on (aircraft) status cards RAAF are telegram (reporting) dates in some cases. 4. Serials of ML ordered ac turned over to the RAAF and RAAF ac turned over to the ML are copied from: Letter NPC/Army Department to Australian Air Mission, RAAF Representative, 0-13195, 29 August 1945.

**C3-500** 43-22972 300144 issued 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0244; 0244 to A&P Pool Canberra; 0344 to 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0344-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-501** 43-22974 220144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0244; 0244 to A&P Pool Canberra; 0344 to 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0344-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-502** 43-22975 010144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0245 (damaged 021044); 0245 transferred to P.E.P. Canberra ex 120 Sq; P.E.P. 0245-0446 (120345 seconded 2 OTU, 080945 returned by 2 OTU to P.E.P. Bundaberg); 0446 transferred to 120 Sq Biak ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-503** 43-22976 010144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0944; 190944 total loss after mid-air with C3-544.

**C3-504** 43-22977 300144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0845; 010845 lost on operation (bale-out after hit by AA); 060845 permission for write off; 120945 written off.

**C3-505** 43-22978 170144 issued 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0944; 070944 issued to P.E.P. Canberra ex 120 Sq; P.E.P. Canberra 0944-0645 (010345 seconded 2 OTU, 120345 returned to P.E.P. Canberra); 0645 assigned 120 Sq ex P.E.P. and shipped (disassembled) to Biak; arrived Biak 0845, operational from 0945; 120 Sq Biak 0945-0446; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-506** 43-22979 080144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-1144; 161144 crash landing without flaps, major damage; 201144 reported being converted into components, written off.

**C3-507** 43-22980 080144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0244; 0244 to A&P Pool Canberra; A&P Pool/P.E.P. 0244-0844; 0844 transferred to 120 Sq Merauke ex P.E.P.; 1044 transferred to P.E.P. Canberra ex 120 Sq; P.E.P. Canberra 1044-0446 (020345 seconded 2 OTU Mildura, 120345 returned P.E.P. Canberra); 0446 transferred to 120 Sq Biak ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-508** 43-22981 080144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0844; 240844 bale-out NE Merauke strip with engine on fire, written off.

**C3-509** 43-22982 100144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-510** 43-22983 140144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0645 (280744 taxi accident Merauke, repaired 1 RSU); 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446; 210446 bale-out on ferry flight to Tjililitan near Bandjermasin; 050546 written off.

**C3-511** 43-22984 140144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0244; 0244 to A&P Pool Canberra; A&P Pool/P.E.P. Canberra 0244-0844; 0844 transferred to 120 Sq Merauke ex P.E.P.; 0944 transferred to P.E.P. Canberra ex 120 Sq; P.E.P. 0944-0446 (010345 seconded 2 OTU, 120345 returned P.E.P. Canberra); 0446 transferred to 120 Sq Biak ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

Original ML Lend-Lease ac C3-512 to C3-523 (incl.) turned over to the RAAF in exchange for earlier delivery RAAF aircraft (FY serial, RAAF serial):

43-23205 A29-603

43-23207 A29-604

43-23209 A29-605

43-23211 A29-606

43-23213 A29-637

43-23215 A29-638

43-23217 A29-639

43-23218 A29-640

43-23219 A29-641

43-23220 A29-642

43-23222 A29-643

43-23224 A29-644

43-23539 A29-600

43-23540 A29-601

43-23543 A29-634

43-23545 A29-645

43-23542 A29-607 (FY serial in original listing given as 43-23742, changed by hand into 43-23542 which is listed in all later summaries of aircraft turned over)

43-23794 A29-646

43-23901 A29-648

43-23903 A29-650

43-23904 A29-654

43-23905 A29-662

Lend-Lease aircraft received from the RAAF in exchange for the later to be delivered ML aircraft mentioned above.

**C3-512** 43-22789 010144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144; 0144 to A&P Pool Canberra; 050244 to 120 Sq Canberra; 0344 to A&P Pool Canberra; A&P Pool/P.E.P. 0344-1044; 1044 to 120 Sq Merauke ex P.E.P.; 291044 into operational use but 311044 taxiing accident Merauke; 1144 issued P.E.P. Canberra (major damage, left wing total loss) for write off; 121244 received P.E.P., written off, right wing to C3-547, remainder ac converted into components.

**C3-513** 43-22790 030144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0944; 070944 issued P.E.P. Canberra ex 120 Sq; 0944-1244 P.E.P.; crashed 201244 near Yass (NSW), major damage (details unknown); converted into components, probably 0345 written off.

**C3-514** 43-22793 030144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0744; 240744 crashed on training flight SE Nassam village after hitting tree tops, total loss.

**C3-515** 43-22799 010144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544 (140344 take-off accident at Ceduna, repaired by 9 RSU and 050444 ferried to Canberra); 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0744; 050744 crash landing 10 miles S of Cooks Bay (ditched with petrol leak, main fuel line broke on releasing belly tank); written off.

**C3-516** 43-22762 010144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0344; 130344 forced landing Ceduna (engine changed by 1 Aircraft Park); 130344 admin. transferred to A&P Pool Canberra (damaged) ex 120 Sq; 060444 ferried to Canberra; A&P Pool/P.E.P. 0344-0446 (120345 seconded 2 OTU, damaged 040445 and to 2 AD for repairs; 0745 returned 2 OTU; 080945 returned by 2 OTU to P.E.P. Bundaberg); 0446 transferred to 120 Sq Biak ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-517** 43-22763 010144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0344; 130344 precautionary landing at Port Pirie; 130344 admin. transferred to A&P Pool Canberra (damaged) ex 120 Sq; 170344 ferried to Canberra for further repairs; A&P Pool/P.E.P. 0344-c. 0345; 0345 or 0445 major damage (landing accident at unknown airfield on east coast of Australia, possibly Garbutt Aerodrome, Townsville; written off 0745.

**C3-518** 43-22769 010144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-519** 43-22771 010144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0245; 0245 transferred to P.E.P. Canberra ex 120 Sq; P.E.P. 0245-0645; 110645 major damage in taxi accident with a RAAF CAC Wirraway at Canberra; written off 0745.



The C3-519 and Wirraway A20-465 after their taxi accident on 11 June 1945 at Canberra. Both aircraft were severely damaged (collection Gordon Birkett).

**C3-520** 43-22772 010144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0645 (050744 crash landing on dispersal road due to landing gear failure, 0844 operational again); 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446 (190745 emergency landing Wakde, left there until engine change and emergency repairs could be carried out; further major repairs at 120 Sq Biak, 1245 or 0146 operational again); 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-521** 43-22774 010144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0845; 010845 belly landing Mokmer but little damage and flew again 220845; 230845 or 240845 take-off accident Mokmer (major damage, to P.E.P. by ship c. 1245; cannibalized); 070246 written off.

**C3-522** 43-22775 010144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0944; 070944 issued P.E.P. Canberra ex 120 Sq; P.E.P. 0944-0745; 0745 allocated 120 Sq ex P.E.P.; 150845 received 120 Sq Biak; 120 Sq Biak 0845-0446 (0845 major damage without having flown operations, repaired at 120 Sq Biak; 1245 or 0146 operational again); 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-523** 43-22777 010144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0344; 270344 crashed on landing at Parafield; 270344 admin. transferred from 120 Sq to A&P Pool Canberra (major damage) ex 120 Sq; repaired to flyable status at Parafield by 5 Central Recovery Depot; A&P Pool/P.E.P. 0344-1145 (010345 seconded 2 OTU, 080945 returned by 2 OTU to P.E.P. Bundaberg); 281145 crashed on take-off Bundaberg; 0346 awaiting rebuilding at P.E.P.; 0446 transferred to 120 Sq Biak; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-524** 43-22778 0144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0244; 050244 transferred to A&P Pool Canberra; 0344 returned 120 Sq; 290344 bale-out 50 miles S of Mildura, total loss and written off.

**C3-525** 43-22784 0144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-526** 43-22804 0144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645; 160645 landing accident Mokmer (badly damaged fuselage due to engine and brake failure, probably by ship to P.E.P.); 220845 written off.

**C3-527** 43-22757 0144 received 120 Sq Canberra; 120 Sq Canberra 0144-0344; 290344 bale-out 50 miles S of Mildura, total loss and written off.

**C3-528** 43-22985 0244 received A&P Pool Canberra; 0544 transferred to 120 Sq Canberra ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0745; 090745 lost on operation (bale-out above Island Biak); written off 0845.

**C3-529** 43-22986 0244 received A&P Pool Canberra; 0544 transferred to 120 Sq Canberra ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0245; 0245 transferred to P.E.P. ex 120

Sq; P.E.P. 0245-0446 (120345 seconded 2 OTU, 080945 returned by 2 OTU to P.E.P. Bundaberg); 0446 transferred to 120 Sq Biak ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-530** 43-22988 0244 received A&P Pool Canberra; 0344 transferred to 120 Sq Canberra ex A&P Pool; 120 Sq Canberra 0344-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0844; 300844 belly landing on beach 20 miles SE of Merauke (supercharger connection came loose); total loss and written off; 010944 transferred to 1 RSU for partial salvage.

**C3-531** 43-22991 0244 received A&P Pool Canberra; A&P Pool/P.E.P. 0244-1144; 1144 issued 120 Sq Merauke ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq Merauke 1244-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-532** 43-22995 0244 received A&P Pool Canberra; A&P Pool/P.E.P. 0244-0446; 0446 transferred 120 Sq Biak ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-533** 43-23003 0244 received A&P Pool Canberra; 0344 transferred to 120 Sq Canberra ex A&P Pool; 120 Sq Canberra 0344-0544; 120 Sq Merauke 0544-0245; 0245 transferred to P.E.P. ex 120 Sq; 170245 crashed on ferry flight from Canberra to Bankstown (2 AD) at Musselbroek (burnt); total loss and written off.

ML ordered Lend-Lease aircraft.

**C3-534** 43-24347 210644 received P.E.P. Canberra; 140944 received 120 Sq ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq Merauke 0944-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0845; 010845 lost on operation (crashed near Manokwari after hit by AA); 060845 permission for write off; 120945 written off.

**C3-535** 43-24349 210644 received P.E.P. Canberra; 230644 crashed near Canberra on training flight, total loss and written off.

**C3-536** 43-24353 260644 received P.E.P. Canberra; 201044 received 120 Sq Merauke ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq Merauke 1044-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-537** 43-24355 210644 received P.E.P. Canberra; P.E.P. 0644-0345; 210345 crashed Canberra (failure hydraulics system); 0845 written off (reduced to components and spares).

**C3-538** 43-24357 240644 received P.E.P. Canberra; P.E.P. 0644-0146 (290545 crash landed Braidwood, repaired); 0845 transferred to P.E.P. Bundaberg; 290146 crashed Bundaberg; 220246 written off (components used for rebuilding C3-523).

**C3-539** 43-24537 270644 received 1 RSU on behalf of P.E.P.; 040744 received 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0744-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645; 170645 or 180645 crashed Mokmer, Biak (engine trouble on take-off), total loss; 020745 written off.

**C3-540** 43-24540 250644 received P.E.P. Canberra; 280644 received 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0644-0744; 070744 crash landing due to engine overheat at Merauke (major damage); total loss and written off; to 1 RSU for salvage.

**C3-541** 43-24541 250644 received P.E.P. Canberra; 0744 received 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0744-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0845; 110845 lost on operation, shot down during strafing run S of Manokwari; 170845 permission for write off; written off 060945.

**C3-542** 43-24545 240844 received 1 RSU on behalf of P.E.P.; 010944 issued 120 Sq Merauke ex 1 RSU; 120 Sq Merauke 0944-0245; 140245 ground looped at Tanahmera on take-off (major damage); 280245 permission to convert into components; written off 0345.

**C3-543** 43-24549 assembled 3 AD for NEI but 110844 crashed on test flight with 3 AD at Amberley (structural failure); total loss and written off.

**C3-544** 43-24548 230844 received 1 RSU on behalf of P.E.P.; 010944 issued 120 Sq Merauke ex 1 RSU; 190944 bale-out after mid-air with C3-503, total loss and written off.

**C3-545** 43-24552 150844 received 1 RSU on behalf of P.E.P.; 160844 issued 120 Sq Merauke ex 1 RSU; 120 Sq 0844-0944; 080944 crash landing at night at Merauke; total loss and written off; salvaged by personnel 120 Sq.

**C3-546** 43-24553 150844 received 1 RSU on behalf of P.E.P.; 160844 issued 120 Sq Merauke ex 1 RSU; 120 Sq Merauke 0844-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0745; 190745 lost on operation (crashed Middelburg); declared total loss and 250745 written off.

**C3-547** 43-24556 271144 received P.E.P. Canberra; P.E.P. 1144-0446 (crash landing Canberra 041244, repaired P.E.P. with wing of C3-512); 0845 transferred to P.E.P. Bundaberg; 0446 transferred to 120 Sq Biak ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-548** 43-24544 201044 issued P.E.P. Canberra; P.E.P. 1044-0245; 140245 crash landing near Yea (NSW); 090345 allocated 1 AD for repairs but cancelled; 180745 permission to convert into components; 0845 written off.

**C3-549** 44-7195 040944 issued P.E.P. Canberra; 070944 received 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0944-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-550** 44-7198 040944 issued P.E.P. Canberra; 070944 received 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0944; 190944 forced landing with engine trouble due to defective electrical system, major damage and impossible to salvage due to crash location 25 miles W of Merauke strip; declared total loss and written off.

**C3-551** 44-7200 040944 issued P.E.P. Canberra; 070944 received 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0944-1144; 241144 taken off operational strength and issued P.E.P. Canberra due to unsafe diving characteristics; 181244 received P.E.P. Canberra; P.E.P. 1244-0446; 0446 transferred to 120 Sq Biak ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546 (to be used for training only).

**C3-552** 44-7202 081144 received P.E.P. Canberra; P.E.P. 1144-1244; 1244 repaired 13 ARD; 0145 received 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0145-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446; c. 280446 stranded at Bandjermasin with technical problems during the ferry flight to Tjililitan.

**C3-553** 44-7205 250844 received P.E.P. Canberra; 070944 received 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0944-1144; 191144 dived into the ground during dive bomb exercise Merauke; total loss and written off.

**C3-554** 44-7209 141044 received P.E.P. Canberra; 011244 received 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 1244; 091244 lost on operation during strafing of enemy schooner; total loss and written off.

**C3-555** 44-7856 020245 received P.E.P. Canberra; 050245 received 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0245-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-556** 44-7857 150245 received P.E.P. Canberra; P.E.P. Canberra 0245-0845; 0745 allocated 120 Sq ex P.E.P.; 150845 received 120 Sq Biak ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq Biak 0845-0446; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-557** 44-7858 240145 received P.E.P. Canberra; P.E.P. Canberra 0145-0445; 160445 received 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0445-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0745; 190745 lost on operation (ditched); declared total loss and 250745 written off.

**C3-558** 44-7859 150245 received P.E.P. Canberra; P.E.P. 0245-845 (010345 taxi accident Canberra, nosed over, repaired P.E.P.); 0745 allocated 120 Sq ex P.E.P.; 150845 received 120 Sq Biak; 120 Sq Biak 0845-0446 (0945 major damage without having flown operations, repaired at Biak by 120 Sq; 1245 or 0146 operational again); 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-559** 44-7860 020245 received P.E.P. Canberra; 050245 received 120 Sq Merauke ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq Merauke 0245-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-560** 44-7861 240145 received P.E.P. Canberra; 280345 issued 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0345 or 0445-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.



**C3-561** 44-7862 240145 received P.E.P. Canberra; 280345 issued 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0345 or 0445-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446; c. 280446 crashed on landing at Tjililitan after the ferry flight from Biak; written off 170546.

**C3-562** 44-7863 150245 received P.E.P. Canberra; 280345 issued 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0345 or 0445-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0845; 010845 lost on operation (ditched 10 miles N of Sorong with AA damage); 060845 permission to write off; 120945 written off.

**C3-563** 44-7864 020245 received P.E.P. Canberra; 050245 received 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0245-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0146; 0146 crashed Biak probably at Sorido, total loss (cannibalized and remnants later transferred to P.E.P. at Sorido); written off in period 050346 to 160646 incl.

**C3-564** 44-7865 260145 received P.E.P. Canberra; 280345 issued 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0345 or 0445-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0146; 0146 crashed Biak probably at Sorido, total loss (cannibalized and remnants later transferred to P.E.P. at Sorido); written off in period 050346 to 160646 incl.

**C3-565** 44-7866 300145 received P.E.P. Canberra; 050245 received 120 Sq Merauke; 120 Sq Merauke 0245-0645; 120 Sq Biak 0645-0446; 120 Sq Soerabaja 0546.

**C3-566** 44-7867 040245 received P.E.P. Canberra; crashed 230545, wreckage to Mascot (details unknown); declared total loss and written off 0845.

**North American P-51D/K Mustangs of the ML/KNIL use and losses until May 1946** (NEI Lend-Lease ac, operated by the Fighter Pool of the N.E.I.-P.E.P. and 121 Squadron ML/KNIL; sources: RAAF aircraft status cards; Aircraft inventory P.E.P. March 1946, engine Nos, hours flown since last major overhaul; various logbooks).

**N3-600** 44-12749 300545 issued P.E.P.; 1946 to Tjililitan.

**N3-601** 44-12750 070645 received P.E.P.; 1946 to Tjililitan.

**N3-602** 44-12751 260645 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-603** 44-12752 020645 received P.E.P.; probably 230446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-604** 44-12753 060645 received P.E.P.; 0446 or 0546 to Tjililitan.

**N3-605** 44-12754 270645 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-606** 44-12755 050645 received P.E.P.; 1946 to Tjililitan.

**N3-607** 44-12756 030745 received P.E.P.; 230446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-608** 44-12757 270645 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-609** 44-12758 270645 received P.E.P.; 230446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-610** 44-13040 110745 received P.E.P.; 1946 to Tjililitan.

**N3-611** 44-13041 030845 received P.E.P.; 1946 to Tjililitan.

**N3-612** 44-13042 040745 received P.E.P.; 0446 or 0546 to Tjililitan.

**N3-613** 44-13043 050745 received P.E.P.; 0446 or 0546 to Tjililitan.

**N3-614** 44-13044 030845 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-615** 44-13046 250745 received P.E.P.; 230446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-616** 44-13047 030845 received P.E.P.; 260546 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-617** 44-13048 030845 received P.E.P.; 0446 or 0546 to Tjililitan.

**N3-618** 44-13049 070745 received P.E.P.; 1946 to Tjililitan.

**N3-619** 44-13045 290346 received P.E.P.; 1946 to Tjililitan.

**N3-620** 44-84469 120246 received P.E.P.; 0446 or 0546 to Tjililitan.

**N3-621** 44-84470 210246 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-622** 44-84471 130246 received P.E.P.; 0446 or 0546 to Tjililitan.

**N3-623** 44-84472 290346 received P.E.P.; 260546 arrived Tjililitan but crashed on landing; total loss, 110646 written off (fuselage to mechanics training school Batavia).

**N3-624** 44-84473 251045 received P.E.P.; 0446 or 0546 to Tjililitan.

**N3-625** 44-84474 151045 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-626** 44-84475 111045 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-627** 44-84476 210246 received P.E.P.; 1946 to Tjililitan.

**N3-628** 44-84477 251045 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-629** 44-84478 130246 received P.E.P.; 1946 to Tjililitan.

**N3-630** 44-84793 130246 received P.E.P.; 1946 to Tjililitan.

**N3-631** 44-84794 44-84793 151045 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-632** 44-84795 not delivered; 1245 written off, details unknown.

**N3-633** 44-84796 111045 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-634** 44-84797 130246 received P.E.P.; 0446 or 0546 to Tjililitan.

**N3-635** 44-84798 151045 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-636** 44-84799 111045 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-637** 44-84800 210246 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-638** 44-84801 251045 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-639** 44-84802 120246 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**N3-640** 44-84803 120246 received P.E.P.; 0346 transferred 121 Sq ex P.E.P.; 050446 arrived Tjililitan.

**Lockheed L12As** (NEI owned communications/light transport ac also used for (photo) reconnaissance by 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron; sources: ORB 120 (N.E.I.) Sq, various logbooks).

**L2-100** c/n 1308 0644 to 120 Sq ex P.E.P. (seconded from N.E.I.-T.S.M.); 120 Sq 0644-c. 0944; c. 0944 to P.E.P. ex 120 Sq; 1245 to 120 Sq ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq 1245-0446; 0446 transferred from Biak to Soerabaja, east Java; 120 Sq 0446-0546 (further assignments not known).

**L2-101** c/n 1305 0444 to 120 Sq ex P.E.P. (seconded from N.E.I.-T.S.M.); 120 Sq 0444-0644; 0644 to P.E.P. ex 120 Sq; c. 0944 to 120 Sq ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq c. 0944-1144 (191044 crash landing Merauke and damaged); 1144 to P.E.P. ex 120 Sq; 0245 to 120 Sq ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq 0245-0645; 0645 to P.E.P. ex 120 Sq; 0845 to 120 Sq ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq 0845-c. 1045; c. 1045 to P.E.P. ex 120 Sq.

**L2-102** c/n 1307 1144 to 120 Sq ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq 1144-0245; 0245 to P.E.P. ex 120 Sq; 0645 to 120 Sq ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq 0645-0845; 0845 to P.E.P. ex 120 Sq.

(prob.) **L2-104** c/n 1310 c. 1045 to 120 Sq ex P.E.P.; 120 Sq c. 1045-1245; 1245 to P.E.P. ex 120 Sq.

**L2-105** c/n 1312 0546 transferred to 121 Sq at Tjililitan ex 18 Sq.

**CAC Wirraway** (RAAF owned, operated by 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron and Fighter Pool-P.E.P. as instrument flying trainer and communications aircraft; sources: RAAF aircraft status cards, ORB 120 N.E.I. Sq).

**A20-11** 171144 received 120 Sq Merauke, 071244 crashed, 080145 written off.

**A20-282** 030745 received P.E.P., returned RAAF 250945.

**De Havilland Tiger Moth** (RAAF owned, operated by the Fighter Pool N.E.I.-P.E.P.; ac were originally to be returned to RAAF 250945 but use on loan was extended; sources: RAAF aircraft status cards).

**A17-54** 280745 received N.E.I.-P.E.P. Canberra ex 11 EFTS; 010845 transferred to P.E.P. Bundaberg; 131145 received 10 EFTS ex P.E.P.

**A17-166** 280745 received N.E.I.-P.E.P. Canberra ex 11 EFTS; 010845 transferred to P.E.P. Bundaberg; 201145 received 10 EFTS ex N.E.I.-P.E.P.

**A17-268** 280745 received N.E.I.-P.E.P. Canberra ex 11 EFTS; 010845 transferred to P.E.P. Bundaberg; 131145 received 10 EFTS ex N.E.I.-P.E.P.

**A17-328** 280745 received N.E.I.-P.E.P. Canberra ex 11 EFTS; 010845 transferred to P.E.P. Bundaberg; 131145 received 10 EFTS ex N.E.I.-P.E.P.

**A17-558** 280745 received N.E.I.-P.E.P. Canberra ex 11 EFTS; 010845 transferred to P.E.P. Bundaberg; 131145 received 10 EFTS ex N.E.I.-P.E.P.

**T5459** 280745 received N.E.I.-P.E.P. Canberra ex 11 EFTS; 010845 transferred to P.E.P. Bundaberg; 131145 received 10 EFTS ex N.E.I.-P.E.P.

## **Endnotes**

0 Geographical names are spelled as they were at the time. Local time is used unless otherwise noted.

1 Maandverslagen (Monthly Reports) RNMFS (NIMH); Posting data of D.J.R. Beugeling and H.F.C. Holtz (via N. Geldhof, with thanks to Nico Geldhof, deceased). Reader is advised that in the correspondence of the Commandant Luchtstrijdkrachten (the NEI air forces CO who directed the NEI air units,

administratively only for the squadrons under operational command of the RAAF) and the Hoofdkwartier KNIL/Departement van Oorlog, Afdeeling C (the NEI War Office/C Department, the department realising all the necessary coordination with the Department of Air and the RAAF Headquarters, hereafter KNIL/DvO; extracts from the correspondence received from SLH, 1968) 56 is mentioned as the number of fighter pilots originally available in Australia ex RNMFS. This number, however, is the number available in July 1944 after one of the pilots was seriously injured in a crash on 23 June 1944 to become medically unfit for flying and after two former instructors (MLD seconded ML) were transferred to the MLD in July 1944, see Appendices.

2 Interviews author with A.J. de Vries and B.J. Fiedeldij; Military record of W.J. Heikoop (via NIMH).

3 Maandverslagen (Monthly Reports) RNMFS (NIMH, transfers of fighter pilots to Australia, see also the Appendices; the P-40N was not the first choice of the ML, as the P-38 could not be obtained due to shortages with the USAAF the NEI War Office initially chose the Bell P-39 following the advice of the CG RNMFS but switched to the P-40 after discussions with the RAAF); Interview H.A. Maurenbrecher by R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LLM (1962, with thanks to René Wittert van Hoogland, deceased); U.S. National Archives, RG169, Box 345 Requisition Control Cards (New Series), P-40N requisitions N2040 and 2040A-1 (after delivery of 67 aircraft remainder of assignments cancelled; unfortunately, the RG has been "cleansed" and is no longer available); Letter Netherlands Purchasing Commission, Army Department to Australian Air Mission, RAAF representative, No 0-13195, 29 August 1945 (lists by the FY serial the ML P-40s turned over to the RAAF and the P-40s received from the RAAF, ANA also National Archives of the Netherlands); Extracts from correspondence KNIL/DvO and Commandant Luchtstrijdkrachten with regard to P-40 deliveries and losses 120 Squadron and P.E.P., also confirms P-51 requisition of 41 ac and offer of 51 more (SLH, 1968). Ten more P-40Ns (requisition N2027) were ordered for training at the RNMFS (delivered May 1943) of which one was written off February 1944 and nine became reverse lend-Lease (delivered USAAF February 1944). Data on the P-51D/K allocations and deliveries were found in U.S. National Archives, RG169, requisition N2075, see also the Appendices. With many thanks to Gerard Casius for making available the data on the P-40 and P-51 requisitions and deliveries he collected during his research in the U.S. National Archives and AHRA in the first half of the seventies.

4 O.G. Ward, *De Militaire Luchtvaart van het KNIL in de Jaren 1942-1945* (Unieboek, Weesp, The Netherlands, 1985; hereafter Ward, 1942-1945) p. 297; Interview H.A. Maurenbrecher by R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LLM, 1962 (via R. Wittert van Hoogland, deceased); Interview author with H.H.J. Simons (confirmed arrival date in Sydney).

5 KNIL/DvO, Korpsorder No. 148, 1 September 1943 (NIMH); Operations Record Book, A50 and A51 Forms 119 Squadron N.E.I. (ANA). Hereafter ORB (ANA)=ORB 120 (N.E.I.) Squadron, unless otherwise noted.

6 Interviews author with A.J. de Vries and B.J. Fiedeldij; see also my paper Netherlands East Indies Air Transport Units of the Militaire Luchtvaart KNIL, p. 26 on [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) (search Peter Boer, military history).

7 Letter KNIL/DvO Afdeeling CLG/K-5, Zeer Geheim, 26 November 1943 (NIMH); Letter KNIL/DvO Afdeeling C Nr. C-62-CA/AIR2-0/37 Zeer Geheim, 6 March 1944, pt. 1b (NIMH); ORB (ANA; reader is advised that the ORB wrongly states 1 OTU instead of 2 OTU).

8 ORB (ANA); Military records pilots concerned (see also Appendices); Establishment HD635 (via RAAF Historical Section). The ML aircraft were cleared for cross country flying when picked up at the RAAF Air Depot but they still had to gather some more engine time before they could be cleared for operational flying (including gunnery practise at 2 OTU).

9 See Appendices for individual aircraft data and sources.

10 Ibid.

11 Report concerning organisation and provisions for NEI Squadrons in Australia, 15 September 1943 (Hoofdkwartier KNIL/DvO, not numbered, copy via B.J. Fiedeldij); ORB (ANA); ORB 119 Squadron N.E.I. (ANA). It is noted that the N.E.I.-A&P Pool did not have a RAAF Component as the other NEI units had, its RAAF personnel was administratively attached to the organization of RAAF Station Canberra.

12 ORB (ANA).

13 Maandverslagen (Monthly Reports) RNMFS (NIMH); Military records mentioned personnel; Interview author with A.J.A. Geurtz.

14 Cf 12.

15 Ibid.; Military records mentioned personnel.

16 Ibid. See my paper Netherlands East Indies Air Transport Units of the Militaire Luchtvaart KNIL on [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) (search Peter Boer, military history) for the ferry flights of the ML transport aircraft from the U.S.A. to Australia.

17 Cf 12; Interview author with A.J.A. Geurtz.

18 ORB (ANA); Report on Operation Potshot 10, 20 May 1944, Annexure D No 120 Squadron (NEI) Report on move and stay at Potshot (ANA via Gordon Birkett); Interview with M. van Haselen by R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M., 1963 (via R. Wittert van Hoogland, deceased). Reader is advised that Ward, 1942-1945, pp. 299-300 mixes up local times and Z-times and consequently, incorrectly,

mentions too high a number of transport aircraft. He does also not mention that one of the transport aircraft became unserviceable on arrival and was not used.

19 Ibid.

20 Interview H.A. Maurenbrecher by R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LLM, 1962 (via R. Wittert van Hoogland).

21 Diary J.C.N. van Boldrik (NIMH).

22 ORB (ANA); Letter Headquarters No. 4 Maintenance Group to Secretary Air Board No 301/4/POL (253A) Restricted, on Policy, Overhaul and Repair N.E.I. Aircraft, 13 June 1944 (ANA). See also Appendices for aircraft data.

23 Diary J.C.N. van Boldrik (NIMH); Interview H.A. Maurenbrecher by R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LLM, 1962 (via R. Wittert van Hoogland).

24 ORB (ANA); Report on Operation Potshot 10, 20 May 1944, Annexure D No 120 Squadron (NEI) Report on move and stay at Potshot (ANA, via Gordon Birkett).

25 Ibid; Letter Headquarters No. 4 Maintenance Group to Secretary Air Board No 301/4/POL (253A) Restricted, on Policy, Overhaul and Repair N.E.I. Aircraft, 13 June 1944 (ANA). See also Appendices for individual aircraft data.

26 Ibid.

27 Report on Operation Potshot 10, 20 May 1944, Annexure D No 120 Squadron (NEI) Report on move and stay at Potshot (ANA, via Gordon Birkett); Interview author with A.J.A. Geurtz.

28 ORB (ANA). See my paper Netherlands East Indies Air Transport Units of the Militaire Luchtvaart KNIL on [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) (search Peter Boer, military history) for the transport flights by the N.E.I.-T.S.M.

29 ORBs 120 Sq, 86 Sq and 12 Sq (ANA); Interviews author with A.J.A. Geurtz and B.E. de Smalen; Diary J.C.N. van Boldrik (NIMH).

30 ORB (ANA); Information received from J.J. Nortier (with thanks to J.J. Nortier).

31 J.J. Nortier, "De landstrijdkrachten van het KNIL in Australië... het jaar 1944" in: *Stabelan* (17, No 1), 1 October 1990, p. 24.

32 Data supplied by J.J. Nortier (with thanks to J.J. Nortier).

33 ORB (ANA); Military records mentioned personnel; Interview author with A.J.A. Geurtz.

34 See Appendices for individual aircraft data and sources; ORB (ANA); Interviews author with B.E. de Smalen and A.J.A. Geurtz.

35 ORB (ANA); CO 120 N.E.I. Squadron Monthly Report (hereafter CO Monthly Report, ANA).

36 [www.radarreturns.net.au](http://www.radarreturns.net.au) p. 96 (September 2018; see also [www.miramar.com.au](http://www.miramar.com.au) for radar stations RAAF in WWII); military record G.J. Motshagen (via NIMH); ORB (ANA). Motshagen was one of the three professional officers selected after a request from the RAAF for officers with an aircrew background to be trained as FCO. They were transferred from the RNMFS to Australia in September 1943. The ML used the opportunity to acquire knowledge of radar technology and use.

37 Interview author with A.J.A. Geurtz.

38 CO Monthly Report (ANA).

39 ORB (ANA); CO Monthly Report (ANA).

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 ORB (ANA); Interview with H.A. Maurenbrecher by R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M, 1962 (via R. Wittert van Hoogland).

43 CO Monthly Report (ANA); Diary J.C.N. van Boldrik (NIMH).

44 CO Monthly Report, July 1944 (ANA, says 25 July 1944); ORB (ANA, says 28 July 1944, the latter is considered a more reliable date); date of establishment of 1 N.E.I. Infantry Battalion via J.J. Nortier (with thanks to J.J. Nortier).

45 ORB (ANA); CO Monthly Report (ANA).

46 Ibid.

47 J.J. Nortier, "De landstrijdkrachten van het KNIL in Australië... het jaar 1944" in: *Stabelan* (17, No 1), 1 October 1990, p. 24.

48 ORB (ANA); CO Monthly Report (ANA), incorrectly dates this mission on 5 July.

49 ORB (ANA); CO Monthly Report (ANA), incorrectly says four aircraft delivering 8x250 lbs bombs at Japero.

50 Cf 45; Diary J.C.N. van Boldrik (NIMH). See also Ward, 1942-1945, p. 307. It is remarked that J.P. Verspoor says in his report he forced landed an estimated three to four miles SE of Cooks Bay.

51 Honour List RNLAFF; ORB (ANA), wrongly says C3-540.

52 Cf 45.

53 ORB 12 Sq RAAF (ANA).



54 Ibid.

55 Gordon L. Rottman, *World War II Pacific Island Guide: A Geo-military study* (Westport, CT, USA. 2002), pp. 242-247.

56 Cf 45.

57 CO Monthly Report (ANA).

58 ORB (ANA), says 129 sorties but also counts 12 escorts and one test flight.

59 Cf 45.

60 CO Monthly Report (ANA); Extracts from correspondence KNIL/DvO and Commandant Luchtstrijdkrachten (SLH, 1968).

61 ORB (ANA).

62 CO Monthly Report (ANA).

63 Cf 45; Honour List RNLAF; Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.

64 Cf 45.

65 Extracts from correspondence KNIL/DvO and Commandant Luchtstrijdkrachten (SLH, 1968); Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.

66 Ibid.; Interviews author with W.J. Heikoop and B.E. de Smalen.

67 ORB (ANA); 25 other sorties mentioned in the ORB were Army Co-operation sorties flown during exercises.

68 ORB (ANA).

69 Cf 45; Data on the volunteers from Surinam and the Dutch Antilles received from J.J. Nortier (with thanks to J.J. Nortier); Military record Th. van den Dolder.

70 ORB (ANA) says 101 ML on 1 Aug but this is in error compared with the figures of the NEI War Office (monthly strength figures via J.J. Nortier, with thanks to J.J. Nortier). Reader is advised that the strength figures of the NEI War Office should be studied with care as some versions of the strength reports do not take into account personnel of the KNIL Infantry and Cavalry seconded with the ML/KNIL for a longer period of time. Some of the monthly strength figures of 120 N.E.I. Squadron do, for unknown reasons, not include the militarised KPM personnel.

71 Extracts from correspondence KNIL/DvO and Commandant Luchtstrijdkrachten (SLH, 1968); Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.

72 CO Monthly Report (ANA).

73 Cf 45.

74 ORB (ANA).

75 Cf 45.

76 ORB (ANA).

77 Interviews author with W.J. Heikoop, B.E. de Smalen and J.H. Knoop.

78 Cf 45. See also Ward, 1942-1945, pp. 311-312.

79 Cf 45; Interview H.A. Maurenbrecher by R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LLM, 1962 (via R. Wittert van Hoogland). It is noted that 10<sup>th</sup> Group shortly after became 1<sup>st</sup> TAF RAAF.

80 Interviews author with A.J. de Vries, B.J. Fiedeldij and W.J. Heikoop; Maandverslagen (Monthly Reports) RNMFS (NIMH); ORB (ANA); ORB 2 OTU (ANA); ORB 18 Squadron (ANA); Extracts military records D.J.R. Beugeling and H.F.C. Holtz (via N. Geldhof, with thanks to Nico Geldhof, deceased) and H.A. Souman (via NIMH).

81 Cf 45; Interviews author with A.J. de Vries and A.J. van der Heiden (who had P. Verspoor as his 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot while flying the LT936); Logbook A.J. van der Heiden (with thanks to Guus van Oorschoot); (Aircraft) Status Cards RAAF (ANA); Honour List RNLAf; Description of the "Technische Dienst" (Technical Service) P.E.P. received from Th. van den Dolder.

82 Cf 71; ORB (ANA); interviews author with A.J. de Vries and T.H. Gottschalk.

83 Interviews author with A.J. de Vries, T.H. Gottschalk, F. Florentinus and B.J. Fiedeldij; Military records of a number of fighter pilots including J.H. Knoop and B.E. de Smalen; Ward, 1942-1945, p. 344; (Aircraft) Status Cards RAAF (ANA), see also Appendices; <https://bodosandberg.webs.com>. It is noted that the Bomber Pool of the P.E.P. organised B-25 OTU courses, B-25 Conversion Courses, from approximately April 1944 already, training RAAF crews for 2 Squadron RAAF, RAAF air gunners for 18 Squadron N.E.I. and newly trained ML flying personnel for 18 Squadron N.E.I.

84 Cf 45; Logbook E.H.M.C. Poublon (extract via O.G. Ward, with thanks to Otto Ward, deceased); interview H.A. Maurenbrecher by R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LLM, 1962 (via R. Wittert van Hoogland).

85 Cf 45; ORB 77 Sq RAAF (ANA); Report on the loss of Kittyhawk A29-911 (via Gordon Birkett, with thanks to Gordon Birkett).

86 Cf 45; ORB 77 Sq RAAF and 80 Sq RAAF (ANA).

87 ORB (ANA). See also endnote 1 for the position of Commandant Luchtstrijdkrachten (CO NEI air forces).

88 Ibid.

- 89 ORB (ANA, says 14 November, mission is only mentioned in the A50 Form).
- 90 ORB (ANA, as mentioned in A51 Form); ORB North Eastern Area Headquarters (ANA, 14-16 November 1944).
- 91 CO Monthly Report (ANA).
- 92 Cf 45.
- 93 CO Monthly Report (ANA).
- 94 Cf 45.
- 95 Ibid.; <https://bodosandberg.webs.com>.
- 96 Cf 45.
- 97 Ibid. Further made from Merauke were: 113.05 hours on training, 45.00 hours on ferry flights, 7.00 hours on interceptions "friendly", 4.20 hours on the escort flights to guide in allied aircraft in trouble and 24.50 hours on test flights.
- 98 Ibid.; Interview author with B.E. de Smalen.
- 99 Cf 45.
- 100 See the Appendices for individual aircraft data and sources; CO Monthly Report (ANA); Extracts from correspondence KNIL/DvO and Commandant Luchtstrijdkrachten, period February-April 1945 (SLH, 1968).
- 101 Cf 45. Further made from Merauke were: 173.35 hours on training, 21.15 hours on ferry flights, 1.00 hours on a search for the overdue flying boat and 33.05 hours on test flights.
- 102 Letter KNIL/DvO Afdeeling C AIR 2-0/518 Zeer Geheim, 20 February 1945 (confirmation of the transfer to New Britain); ORB (ANA); CO Monthly Report (ANA). See Appendices for data on the P-40s.
- 103 CO Monthly Report (ANA).
- 104 Ibid. See Appendices for data on the P-40s.
- 105 ORB 2 OTU (ANA); Interviews author with A.J. de Vries and B.J. Fiedeldij; ORB (ANA); military records B. Slosser, B. Ruessink, R.Th. Esser, M. van Haselen and D.L. Asjes, MSc (via NIMH); ORB RAAF Station Canberra (ANA, says evacuation of Canberra by N.E.I.-P.E.P. completed on approximately 12 September 1945); Dated official photograph of final B-25 about to leave gives the date as 10 September 1946; Boer, jachtvliegtuigen, p. 26; Aircraft status cards RAAF (ANA); Extracts from correspondence KNIL/DvO and Commandant Luchtstrijdkrachten (SLH, 1968), gives the transfer of the P.E.P. as 1 August to 15 September 1945. The transfer date of the Fighter Pool is unknown but it was transferred first in early August, probably on 1

August, given the military records (transfer dates) of various personnel of the section. See also ORB (ANA) for transfer dates Bundaberg-Biak and vice versa.

106 Cf 45; Letter KNIL/DvO Afdeeling C AIR2-0/720 Zeer Geheim, 7 May 1945; Operational Instructions 95/1945, 9 May 1945 (ANA); Ward, 1942-1945, p. 317; Interview author with J.H. Knoop; Information on the posting of KNIL troops in Merauke received from J.J. Nortier (with thanks to J.J. Nortier).

107 Cf 45; RNLAH Honour List; Interview H.A. Maurenbrecher by R.W.C.G.A. Esq, LL.M, 1962 (via R. Wittert van Hoogland, wrongly states that De Vries was transferred to 18 Squadron).

108 Extracts from correspondence KNIL/DvO and Commandant Luchtstrijdkrachten (SLH, 1968).

109 Cf 45.

110 Cf 108; Maandrapporten (Monthly Reports) Kap D. Bodemeijer, January-February 1945 (aircraft status and maintenance reports for KNIL/DvO, Afdeeling E; via B.E. de Smalen); Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.

111 Maandrapporten (Monthly Reports) Kap D. Bodemeijer, January-February 1945 (aircraft status and maintenance reports; via B.E. de Smalen); Military record P.E. Westerveld (via NIMH); Interview author with Th. van den Dolder. Based at Sorido were initially the 13<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> Air Depot Groups of the USAAF, of which the 60<sup>th</sup> ADG apart from the 60<sup>th</sup> Depot Repair Squadron (which was attached to the 13<sup>th</sup> ADG) was transferred to the Philippines in June 1945 (with thanks to Edward Rogers for the copies of the unit history sheets of the 60<sup>th</sup> Depot Repair Squadron and the 322<sup>nd</sup> Depot Supply Squadron).

112 Descriptions by H.H.J. Simons, Th. van den Dolder and J.H. Knoop.

113 ORB (ANA).

114 Cf 45.

115 ORB (ANA).

116 CO Monthly Report (ANA).

117 Ibid.

118 Cf 45.

119 Ibid.

120 CO Monthly Report (ANA).

121 Cf 45; ORB 15 Sq (ANA).

122 ORB (ANA); ORB 15 Sq (ANA); Interview H.A. Maurenbrecher by R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M., 1962 (via R. Wittert van Hoogland).

123 Ibid.

124 Cf 45.

125 ORB (ANA); Interviews author with B.E. de Smalen and J.H. Knoop.

126 Cf 45.

127 CO Monthly Report (ANA); Extracts from correspondence KNIL/DvO and Commandant Luchtstrijdkrachten (SLH, 1968).

128 ORB (ANA); ORB 15 Sq (ANA).

129 ORB (ANA); Summary period October-December 1945 (Report by Kap D. Bodemeijer (aircraft status and maintenance reports for KNIL/DvO, Afdeeling E, via B.E. de Smalen).

130 ORB (ANA); CO Monthly Report (ANA).

131 ORBs 15 Sq and 120 Sq (ANA).

132 Ibid.

133 ORB (ANA); CO Monthly Report, July 1945.

134 Cf 131.

135 Cf 45; Interview H.A. Maurenbrecher by R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M., 1962 (via R. Wittert van Hoogland).

136 Cf 45; ORB 15 Sq (ANA).

137 Cf 45.

138 Ibid.

139 Ibid.; Ward, 1942-1945, p. 321-322.

140 Cf 45.

141 ORB (ANA); P.C. Boer, *De jachtvliegtuigen, Army Co-operation- en lesvliegtuigen van de Militaire Luchtvaart KNIL 1945-1950* (De Bataafsche Leeuw, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2009, hereafter Boer, jachtvliegtuigen), pp. 30-31, 42-43; Interview with B. Prins by Jan Hagens (with thanks to Jan Hagens).

142 CO Monthly Report (ANA); Interview author with R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.

143 Cf 45; Boer, jachtvliegtuigen, pp. 42-43.

144 Descriptions by B. Prins and D. Esser (via G.J. Hagens and O.G. Ward, with thanks to Jan Hagens and Otto Ward, deceased); Interview author with H.H.J. Simons. See Appendices for individual aircraft data.

145 CO Monthly Report (ANA); Interviews author with H. Doppenberg, MSc and A.W. Gloudemans; O.G. Ward et al, *De Militaire Luchtvaart van het KNIL, 1945-1950* (Houten, The Netherlands, 1988, hereafter Ward, 1945-1950), pp. 86-90. It is noted that 50 students were enrolled in various other RAAF schools including 1 Air Ground Radio School at Ballarat, 4 Radio School in Melbourne and 4 School of Technical Training in Adelaide while the remaining 27 were in part posted at the P.E.P. and in part directly to a unit or the NEI War Office as they were already fully trained.

146 Ward, 1945-1950, pp. 87-88; Interviews author with A.W. Gloudemans and H. Doppenberg, MSc; CO Monthly Report (ANA).

147 CO Monthly Report (ANA); interviews author with H. Doppenberg, MSc and A.W. Gloudemans.

148 Cf 45; Summary period October-December 1945 (Report by Kap D. Bodemeijer (aircraft status and maintenance reports for KNIL/DvO, Afdeeling E, via B.E. de Smalen). The third NEI Squadron was 19 (N.E.I.) Squadron the former 1 N.E.I.T.S. which had become a RAAF squadron per 15 August 1945.

149 CO Monthly Report (ANA); Interview author with F. Florentinus; Maandrapporten (Monthly Reports) Kap D. Bodemeijer (aircraft status and maintenance reports for KNIL/DvO, Afdeeling E, via B.E. de Smalen)

150 ORB (ANA); Maandrapporten (Monthly Reports) Kap D. Bodemeijer (aircraft status and maintenance reports for KNIL/DvO, Afdeeling E, via B.E. de Smalen).

151 ORB (ANA); CO Monthly Reports, December 1945 and January 1946 (ANA); Boer, *jachtvliegtuigen*, p. 43; interview author with T.H. Gottschalk. The pilot of the aircraft that crashed due to a faulty decision by the pilot probably was SM F. Florentinus. Florentinus had been flying B-25s at the P.E.P. for transport flights in November and December 1945 before being reposted to 120 Squadron in January 1946.

152 Personnel strength figures (DvO monthly strength figures, via J.J. Nortier, with thanks to J.J. Nortier); Interview author with H. Doppenberg, MSc. It is noted that the total of approximately 265 RAAF personnel on VJ Day included some flying personnel in training on the B-25 destined for 2 Squadron and at least 20 air gunners to be trained on the B-25 for 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron).

153 Military records of various retrained PoWs. It is remarked that a few pilots who were ready with their training on 8 March 1942 but did not receive wings anymore were issued a military pilot license in December 1945 while following refresher training on the TB-25.

154 Boer, jachtvliegtuigen, p. 26 (Reader is advised that I incorrectly mentioned on this page that the C3-523 was written off, that should have been the C3-538); <https://bodosandberg.webs.com> (July 2019).

155 Boer, jachtvliegtuigen, pp. 27-28. See also Appendices for data on individual P-51 aircraft. The Kantoor Vliegtechnische Dienst (Flight Technical Services office) among others arranged for the delivery of aircraft, engines and spare parts through the NPC, the acquisition of tools and materials for aircraft and engine maintenance, arranged for scheduled maintenance of aircraft and engines with civilian companies (North American TB-25 freight planes, Douglas C-47A/Bs, Lockheed C-60As and Lockheed L12As) and support from the RAAF for certain 3<sup>rd</sup> echelon maintenance work such as modifications and specific repair work on Curtiss P-40s and North American B-25 bombers that could not be done by the P.E.P.

156 Boer, jachtvliegtuigen, pp. 28-29, 335 notes 26 and 27. See also the Appendices for data on individual P-51 aircraft.

157 Boer, jachtvliegtuigen, pp. 28-29. See Appendices for data on the De Havilland Tiger Moth trainers. It is noted that at Bundaberg both operational sections of the P.E.P. were called Pool, although the Bomber section of the P.E.P. when still at Canberra used to call itself Bomber Pool from at least February 1944. This was presumably not an official name at the time although it was also used by the Commandant Luchtstrijdkrachten (CO Air forces).

158 ORB (ANA); Boer, jachtvliegtuigen, p. 29; Military record W.J.H. van Nus (via NIMH); Interviews author with P.G. Tideman and M.J. van Asch; ORBs 84 Squadron RAAF and 86 Squadron RAAF (ANA). The two RAAF squadrons in Townsville disbanded on 20 December 1945 (86 Squadron) and 29 January 1946 (84 Squadron).

159 Boer, jachtvliegtuigen, pp. 29-30; Interviews author with P.G. Tideman and H. Doppenberg, MSc. The RAF in Java was withdrawing from March 1946 and needed the ML squadrons there to relieve its own units. The British Army in Java also turned over some Lend-Lease items (such as Stuart tanks) to the Dutch/NEI Army force forming at the time and later cleared this with the U.S. State Department. According to Doppenberg the spare parts were, however, listed as written off by the RAAF and turned over directly by the RAAF after contacts between AHQ NEI in Batavia and the RAAF.

160 Ward, 1945-1950, p. 72; Interview author with O.G. Ward. It is remarked that Mokmer was taken over by the NEI Government/ Department of Public Works when the USAAF left.

161 Ward 1945-1950, pp. 89-90; CO Monthly Report (ANA). No 1 M.R.A. specialised in the overhaul of Wright Cyclone engines for the North American B-25s.

162 Boer, jachtvliegtuigen, pp. 26-27, 31-32; Ward, 1945-1950, p. 144. The Parachute section P.E.P. (repair and scheduled maintenance of parachutes) was now called 1 Valscherm Reparatieafdeeling (1 Va.R.A., 1 Parachute Repair Unit). A part of 1 Va.R.A. was based at Andir (Bandoeng, western Java) and became operational again in July 1946. The other part at Sorido was operational again on 1 September 1946. 25 OA, as 1 Va.R.A., remained a sub unit of the P.E.P. and was transferred to Andir airbase together with part of 1 Va.R.A.. It was operational again in July 1946, possibly already in June 1946. The first ship with equipment, materials and spares, also carrying personnel for the units transferred to Andir arrived, via Soerabaja, in Batavia in May 1946. The equipment, materials, spares and personnel then had to be transported from Batavia to Bandoeng via a dangerous convoy route. 1 Va.R.A., 25 OA and also 1 M.R.A., became independent units on 1 November 1946 with 1 M.R.A. and part of 1 Va.R.A. remaining in Biak when the P.E.P. was disbanded on 1 November 1946. The final shipment of stores and supplies for the P.E.P. in Biak left Australia by chartered LST only mid-October 1946.

163 Boer, jachtvliegtuigen, pp. 31, 49; Aircraft inventory P.E.P. with Engine No. and hours flown since last major overhaul, March 1946, pp. 1-2.

164 Interviews author with H. Doppenberg, MSc and P.G. Tideman.

165 Interviews author with P.G. Tideman and M.J. van Asch; military records M.J. van Asch and P. van der Veer (NIMH).

166 Boer, jachtvliegtuigen, p. 43.

167 Ibid., pp. 44-45; Interview author with P.G. Tideman.

168 Boer, jachtvliegtuigen, pp. 44-45; Interview author with A.J. de Vries.

169 Boer, jachtvliegtuigen, pp. 31, 49-50.

170 Ibid., pp. 49-50; Interviews author with P.G. Tideman and H. Doppenberg, MSc.

171 Ward, 1945-1950, pp. 34-39; Military records of personnel concerned (NIMH); Honour List RNLAf.

172 Boer, jachtvliegtuigen, pp. 52-55; Military records mentioned pilots; Interview author with F.H. Florentinus; Various logbooks.

## **Abbreviations**

A&P Aircraft and Personnel Pool

AA Anti-aircraft

Ac Aircraft

ACS Airfield Construction Squadron



AD Aircraft Depot  
ADG Air Depot Group  
Adj Adjutant (Adjutant, Warrant Officer)  
AHRA Airforce Historical Research Agency  
AHK Algemeen Hoofdkwartier (General Headquarters)  
AHQ Air Headquarters  
AIF Australian Imperial Forces  
ANA Australian National Airways or Australian National Archives  
AOS Air Observers School  
A&P Aircraft & Personnel (Pool)  
ARD Aircraft Repair Depot  
Brig Brigadier (professional Corporal of the KNIL)  
C Circa (approximately)  
Cadet Vdg Cadet Vaandrig (Ensign, professional officer candidate)  
CG Commanding General  
C/n Construction number (manufacturer serial number)  
CO Commanding Officer  
DRS Depot Repair Squadron  
DvO Departement van Oorlog (NEI War Office)  
FCO Fighter Control Officer  
F/O Flying Officer  
FPU Fighter Pool Unit  
FY (U.S.) Fiscal Year  
Hq Headquarters  
IFF Identification Friend Foe  
Inf Infanterie (Infantry)  
ITS Initial Training School

Kap Kapitein (Captain)

KLM Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij (Royal Netherlands Airline)

KNIL Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger (Royal Netherlands Indies Army)

KNILM Koninklijke Nederlands-Indische Luchtvaartmaatschappij (Royal Netherlands Indies Airline)

Kol Kolonel (Colonel)

Kpl (Militie) Korporaal (Enlisted Corporal)

KPM Koninklijke Paketvaart-Maatschappij (Royal Packet Navigation Company)

LAC Lance Corporal

LKol Luitenant-kolonel (Lieutenant-colonel)

LOC Leger Organisatie Centrum (Army Organization Centre)

LtGen Luitenant-generaal (Lieutenant-general)

LTZ I Luitenant-ter-zee 1e klasse (Lieutenant Commander)

Maj Majoor (Major)

MCS Medical Clearing Station (Field Hospital)

Mil Militia (Enlisted)

Mil Vdg Militie Vaandrig (Cadet reserve officer candidate)

ML Militaire Luchtvaart (Army Aviation Corps)

MRA Motor Reviseerings Afdeeling (Engine Overhaul Unit)

MLD Marineluchtvaartdienst (Naval air service)

NCO Non-commissioned officer

NEFIS Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service

NEI Netherlands East Indies

NEITS Netherlands East Indies Transport Squadron

NICA Netherlands Indies Civil Administration

NIMH Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie (Netherlands Institute for Military History)

NPC Netherlands Purchasing Commission

OA Onderhoudsafdeeling (Maintenance Unit)  
OBU Operations Base Unit  
Olt Onderluitenant (Sub Lieutenant)  
Ops Operations or operational (in non-ops)  
ORB Operations Record Book  
OTU Operational Training Unit  
Ovl Officier vlieger (Officer pilot, a MLD officer rank)  
Ovl I Officier vlieger 1e klasse (Lieutenant Commander)  
Ozw Officier zeewaarnemer (Officer sea observer, a MLD reserve officer rank)  
Ozw III Lieutenant Junior Grade  
Ozw II Lieutenant Senior Grade  
PEP Personnel and Equipment Pool  
P/O Pilot Officer  
PoW Prisoner of War  
RAF Royal Air Force  
RAAF Royal Australian Air Force  
Res Reserve  
RG Record Group  
RAPWI Recovery of Prisoners of War and Internees  
RNMFS Royal Netherlands Military Flying School  
RSU Repair and Service Unit or Repair and Salvage Unit  
SASO Senior Air Staff Officer  
SEAC South-East Asia Command  
SFTS Service Flying Training School  
Sgt Sergeant  
Sld Soldaat (Private)

SLH Sectie Luchtmacht Historie (Airforce History Section, presently a part of the NIMH)

SM Sergeant-majoor (Sergeant-major, Flight Sergeant)

SOA Senior Officer of Administration

Sq Squadron

Sqn Ldr Squadron Leader

TAF Tactical Air Force

Tlt Tweede luitenant (2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant)

TSM Transport Section Melbourne

USAAF United States Army Air Force

VaRA Valscherm Reparatieafdeeling (Parachute Repair Unit)

VB Vliegbasis (Airbase)

Vdg Vaandrig (Ensign)

VJ Victory Japan (15 August 1945)

Z Zulu (time)

## **Acknowledgement**

Apart from the veterans of the ML/KNIL (all mentioned in the endnotes but apart from Ton Gloudemans, sadly, all deceased now) who were kind enough to supply information for this paper I would like to thank the following persons (in random order): Gordon Birkett, Edward Rogers, Jan Hagens, Hans Berfelo, Gerard Casius, Guus van Oorschot, Henk Schakelaar and Nico Geldhof (deceased). Their most appreciated help was received over the many years I was busy collecting data for and writing parts of this paper. The research I did with the NIMH was done largely in the eighties and nineties of the previous century before the recently completed electronic index of the record collection. Thanks to Henk Kauffman and Rob van der Kruyk for their assistance and efforts to locate interesting files and documents.