

Virginians at War

WWII: China-Burma-India

Resource Packet

Contains: Glossary, Timeline, Images, Discussion Questions, Additional Resources

Program Description: Virginians at War: China-Burma-India delves into the oft-untold conflicts that were critical to the success to the American campaign in the Pacific. Hear personal stories from the men and women who fought the Japanese from the Western front of mainland Asia, and their reactions to the dropping of the atomic bomb in August 1945 and returning home.

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Length: 14:21

Streaming link: <https://vimeo.com/367061858>

Featured Speakers:

CPL Hiram Boone, Richmond
CAPT Joseph Boone, Hopewell
SGT Robert A. Carter, Richmond
TSGT Walter Conoly Jr., Richmond
MM2/C Andrew M. Fleming, Richmond
CAPT William C. Guinn Sr., Richmond
Brig Gen Anna Mae Hays, Arlington
1st LT Barry Leonard, Manassas
TEC5 George Rose, Richmond
SGT Kent Wade, Mechanicsville



GLOSSARY

IMPORTANT TERMS

- **B-29:** Boeing B-29 Superfortress; heavy bomber plane flown by U.S. forces during WWII and the Korean war
- **Bridge over River Kwai:** a fictional novel (and later, film) that depicts the story of the construction of the Burma Railway
- **Chauvinistic:** feeling or displaying aggressive or exaggerated patriotism or prejudice
- **Flak:** anti-aircraft fire
- **Flying Tigers:** First American Volunteer Group (AVG); an Air Force active during the CBI theater composed of U.S. Army Air Corps, Navy, and Marine Corps pilots, commanded by Lt. Gen. Claire Chennault
- **The Hump:** an aerial route from India to China that supplied Chinese forces against Japanese forces
- **Krait:** a species of highly venomous snake found in India
- **Merrill's Marauders:** 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional); a U.S. Army special operations jungle warfare unit that fought Japanese forces in Burma, named after unit commander Brig. Gen. Frank Merrill

IMPORTANT PLACES

- **Brahmaputra River:** river that flows through Tibet, India, and Bangladesh
- **Burma:** Myanmar; country in Southeast Asia, occupied by British Empire prior to WWII; occupied by Japanese forces during WWII
- **Burma Road:** road connecting Burma and China that allowed British forces to supply China; cut off by Japanese Empire in 1942
- **Calcutta:** Kolkata; port city in India
- **China:** country in Asia, occupied by Japanese forces during WWII; one of the four major Allies of WWII
- **India:** country in Southeast Asia, occupied by British Empire prior to WWII; Indian troops fought in both the British Indian Army (Allied) and the Indian National Army (Axis)
- **Ledo Road:** Stilwell Road; road from India to China that allowed Allied forces to supply China in their war efforts against the Japanese Empire once Burma Road was closed by Japan
- **Myitkyina:** town in Burma captured by Japan, recaptured by Allies in 1944
- **Rangoon:** Yangon; biggest city in Burma during British colonization; occupied by Japanese forces (42-45); capital city of the Union of Burma when Burma gained independence from British Empire in 1948

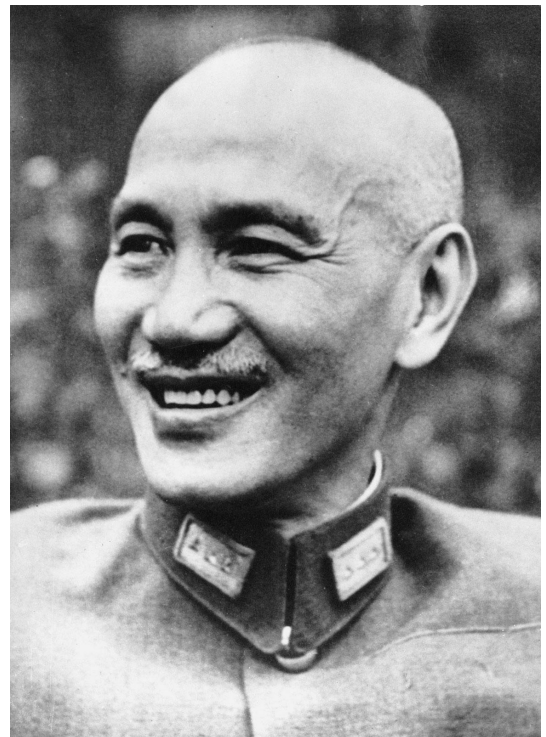
GLOSSARY

NOTABLE PEOPLE

- **Lieutenant General Claire L. Chennault:** commander of the 1st American Volunteer Group “Flying Tigers”; friend of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and bitter rival of Gen. Joseph Stilwell
- **Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek:** leader of the Republic of China during WWII; supreme commander of Allied forces in China
- **Brigadier General Frank A. Merrill:** commander of the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) “Merrill’s Marauders”; led his unit through five major engagements until he suffered a heart attack in March of 1944
- **Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten:** British Royal Navy officer; supreme Allied commander of the Southeast Asia theater; oversaw the recapture of Burma by Allied forces
- **Lieutenant General William J. Slim:** British military commander; led the 14th Army during the Burma campaign
- **General Joseph W. Stilwell:** “Vinegar Joe”; commander of U.S. forces in China, Burma and India; military advisor to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek; deputy commander to Lord Louis Mountbatten
- **Lieutenant General Daniel I. Sultan:** commander of the Burma-India theater in 1944, replacing Stilwell
- **General Albert C. Wedemeyer:** Chief of Staff to Lord Mountbatten; commander of U.S. forces in China and advisor to the Generalissimo in 1944, replacing Stilwell



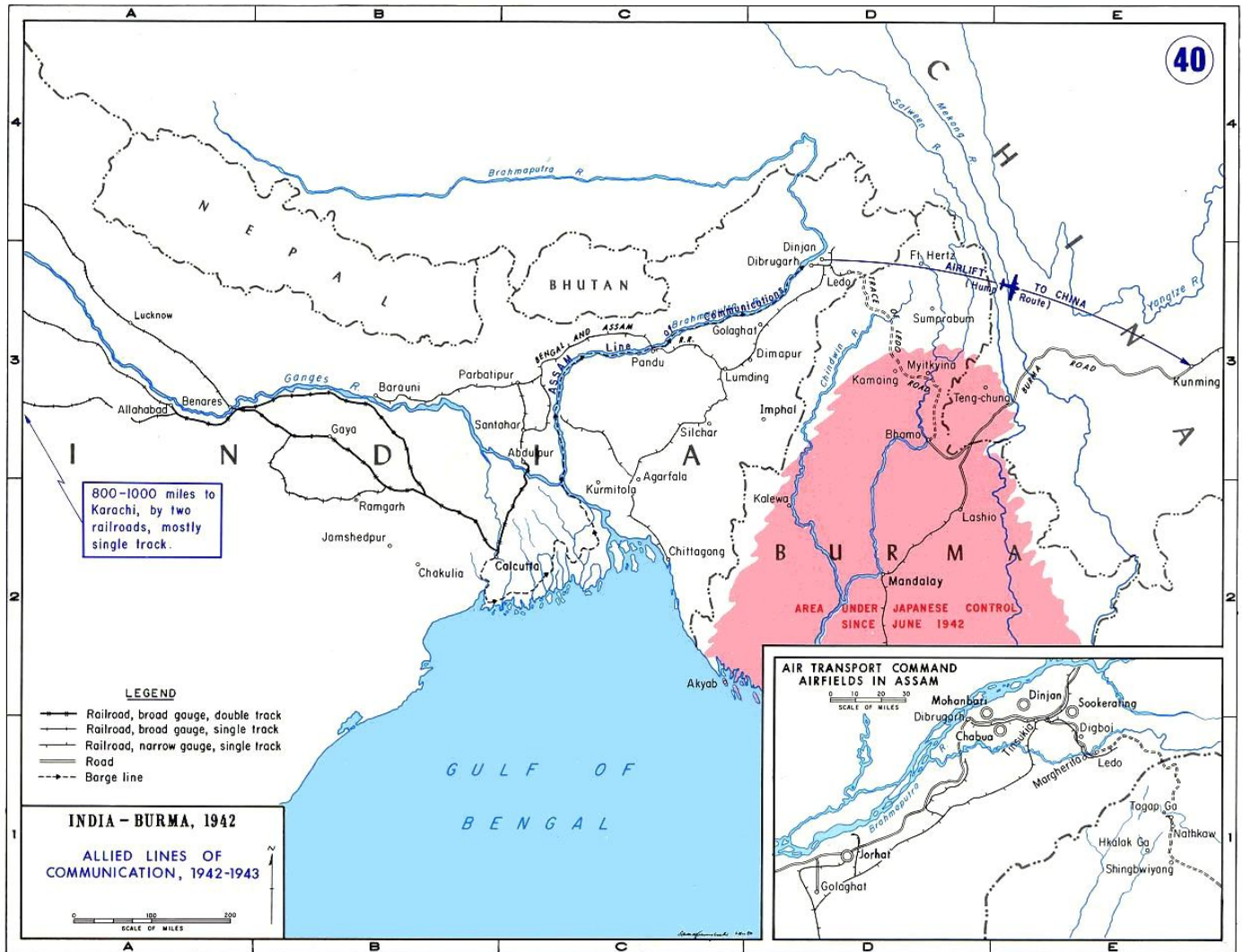
Maj. Gen. Claire Chennault
(U.S. Air Force)



Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek
(Encyclopedia Britannica)

CBI TIMELINE

- **December 11, 1942:** Japanese planes bomb a British outpost on the Andaman Sea, south of Burma
- **December 12, 1941:** Japanese ground forces invade Burma, U.S. sends limited support to British soldiers in Rangoon
- **January 23, 1942:** Maj. Gen. Stilwell is appointed as the Allied chief of staff for the China-Burma-India theater
- **February 13, 1942:** Stilwell's staff leave Florida for Southeast Asia
- **February 15, 1942:** Singapore is captured by Japanese forces
- **February 23, 1942:** Japanese forces defeat British-Indian forces at the Battle of the Sittang Bridge
- **March 8, 1942:** Japanese forces capture Rangoon
- **April 9, 1942:** Chennault's Flying Tigers join Stilwell's operations
- **April 29, 1942:** Japanese forces capture Lashio, effectively closing the Burma Road and forcing Allied forces to evacuate to China and India
- **May 26, 1942:** the last of Allied forces exit Burma
- **June 1942 - :** supplies to China come exclusively through "The Hump," the aerial route from India to China
- **May 1943:** U.S. and British leaders plan a new ground route from India to China (Ledo Road)
- **August 1943:** U.S. deploys jungle commando unit "Merrill's Marauders"
- **October 1943:** Stilwell's forces begin to move from India to Burma for a future assault on the China-Burma border
- **March 1944:** Japanese forces strike India, postponing Allied advance
- **May 17, 1944:** Chinese troops and Merrill's Marauders capture airfield and Myitkyina
- **July 1944:** Allied forces push Japanese forces out of India and begin the initiative to retake Burma
- **August 3, 1944:** Allied forces retake Myitkyina
- **October 1944:** Maj. Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer replaces Stilwell as chief of staff for Chinese operations, Lt. Gen. Daniel I. Sultan takes over initiatives in Burma and India
- **January 1945:** Allies regain control of the land route to China, and the last of U.S. bombers are pulled from China
- **February 4, 1945:** first successful passage of the Ledo-Burma Road is completed, Japanese troops withdraw from southern Burma
- **April 9, 1945:** Allied forces begin a surge down the Irrawaddy and Sittang rivers, splitting up Japanese forces in the south and east of Burma
- **May - August, 1945:** Allied forces trap and defeat remaining Japanese forces
- **September 12, 1945:** virtually all Japanese forces are removed from Southeast Asia



Lines of Transport from India to China during the CBI Theater, including the “Hump” route, the Ledo Road, and the Burma Road

(U.S. Military Academy Dept. of History)



U.S. Army convoy on Ledo (Stilwell) Road during WWII

(National Archives)



“Flying Tiger” flight leader Robert “R.T.” Smith

(U.S. Air Force)



Brig. Gen. Merrill and Lt. Gen. Stilwell

(U.S. Army)



Merrill's Marauders resting

(National Archives)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why are the stories of the CBI theater so well known but the theater itself almost forgotten about?
2. What was the reaction of some of the soldiers to the end of the war? Why did they feel this way?
3. Why was the CBI theater so important in the fight against the Japanese?
4. What were some of the hardships faced by the soldiers in the CBI theater?
5. Would it have been more difficult to defeat the Japanese if the CBI theater had not existed?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To learn more about the experiences of Virginians in World War II, view *Virginians at War: WWII Submarines* and other films at vawarmemorial.org. Looking to do more research? Check out the links below.

- https://history.army.mil/html/books/009/9-3/CMH_Pub_9-3.pdf
- <https://history.army.mil/brochures/burma42/burma42.htm>
- <https://history.army.mil/brochures/centburma/centburma.htm>
- <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Joseph-W-Stilwell>
- <https://www.westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/world-war-two-asia>
- <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Chiang-Kai-shek>