

## BURMA: TASK INSTRUCTIONS

**The key question:** What should we remember about the 'Forgotten Army'?

The war still continued in the Far East after Nazi Germany surrendered in May 1945 ending fighting in Europe.

**Your task:** Your task is to prepare a presentation with the title: Burma: The Forgotten Forces?

Click on the [starter source](#) for more details then open the source box.

Use this Power Point template for your [presentation](#).

Download a PDF of this whole investigation.

## WHAT SHOULD WE REMEMBER ABOUT THE 'FORGOTTEN ARMY'?

In May 1945 Nazi Germany surrendered and the war in Europe was over. However, conflict was still raging in the Far East. Today, many veterans who survived that conflict feel that the campaigns in Europe are remembered and they are the forgotten forces. What can we do to put this right?

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### Your task

Your task is to put together a presentation with the title - Burma: The Forgotten Forces? Insert a new slide if there is not enough room to say what you have found out. Use or adapt the following plan for your presentation:

- **Slide 1: Title: Burma: The Forgotten Forces?**
- **Slide 2: Background**  
For more on the Burma Campaign see this link:  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/burma\\_campaign\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/burma_campaign_01.shtml)
- **Slide 3: Who fought on the Allied side?**  
Which national forces were involved in the conflict?
- **Slide 4: What did the men and women's services do?**  
What were the roles of the various services?
- **Slide 5: What conditions did they face?**  
What dangers and difficulties did they have to deal with?
- **Slide 6: Were the Burma forces forgotten at the time?**  
What was the attitude of the Allied governments to this conflict?
- **Slide 7: Why do some veterans feel forgotten now?**  
What do some witnesses feel about this?
- **Conclusion:** Why it is important to remember the Burma campaign and the people who served in it?

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**BRITISH AND INDIAN MEMBERS OF THE WOMEN'S AUXILIARY SERVICE  
(BURMA) AND THE NURSING SERVICE SHOWN SUPERVISING THE  
UNLOADING OF STORES, 1945.**

Catalogue ref: AIR 23/3598



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### What is this source?

This source is a part of a collection of official press photographs taken by army photographers. Many such photographs were taken and released to the public to support the role of the armed forces.

The official caption of the photograph describes the women as "helping to win the war on the Burma Front".

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### What's the background to this source?

WW2 broke out in Europe in 1939. In the Far East war broke out on December 7th 1941 when Japanese forces destroyed the US fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The Japanese quickly followed up this victory with attacks on British held possessions in Malaya, Singapore and Burma. There were real fears that the Japanese would reach India. However, troops from Britain and many parts of the Empire fought a hard campaign to stop the Japanese advance by May 1942. It was not until late 1943 and early 1944 that the Allied forces began to drive the Japanese back. Rangoon, capital of Burma, was finally taken in May 1945.

Burma was a key territory for the Japanese because the Allies used road networks through Burma to supply the Chinese forces fighting Japan. The fighting conditions in this campaign were some of the toughest in any campaign of the war.

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### It's worth knowing that..

The main British force in the Burma campaign was the Fourteenth Army commanded by General Slim. The Fourteenth Army was a truly multinational force made up of British, Indian (including Gurkhas), West African, Australian and New Zealand troops. British and Indian members of the Women's Auxiliary Service and the nursing service also served alongside this army as shown in this photograph.

The largest group in the Fourteenth Army were the Indian troops. There were also British and USA air forces in the Burma campaign.

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**ASIA 1939–1945: BURMA****How will you use this source?**

1. What can you see in the photograph?
2. Why do you think this photograph was taken?
3. Is there any evidence in this source that the forces serving in Burma felt forgotten?
4. What points from this source will you use in your presentation?

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**WHAT SHOULD WE REMEMBER ABOUT THE 'FORGOTTEN ARMY'?**

**Equipment issued to British forces serving in Burma**

Catalogue ref: AIR 23/4297



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**What is this source?**

This source comes from a training manual used to prepare RAF pilots and service personnel ready for combat in jungle conditions. The source shows equipment issued to help pilots who were forced to parachute out of their aircraft to survive.

The Training and Intelligence services wanted to ensure that all aircrews carried such equipment on operations.

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**What's the background to this source?**

WW2 broke out in Europe in 1939. In the Far East war broke out on December 7th 1941 when Japanese forces destroyed the US fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The Japanese quickly followed up this victory with attacks on British held possessions in Malaya, Singapore and Burma. There were real fears that the Japanese would reach India. However, troops from Britain and many parts of the Empire fought a hard campaign to stop the Japanese advance by May 1942. It was not until late 1943 and early 1944 that the Allied forces began to drive the Japanese back. Rangoon, capital of Burma, was finally taken in May 1945.

Burma was a key territory for the Japanese because the Allies used road networks through Burma to supply the Chinese forces fighting Japan. The fighting conditions in this campaign were some of the toughest in any campaign of the war.

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**It's worth knowing that...**

Many of the casualties in the Burma campaign were from diseases like malaria rather than enemy action.

The nature of the campaign meant that African and Indian troops were especially valued as many of them were more accustomed to the climate. Even so, many non-European troops also fell ill.

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**How will you use this source?**

1. Study the 25 items. Can you tell what each one was used for?
2. What does this list of equipment tell us about conditions in the Burma campaign?
3. Would you say this is a valuable and reliable source for the historian?
4. What points from this source will you use in your presentation?

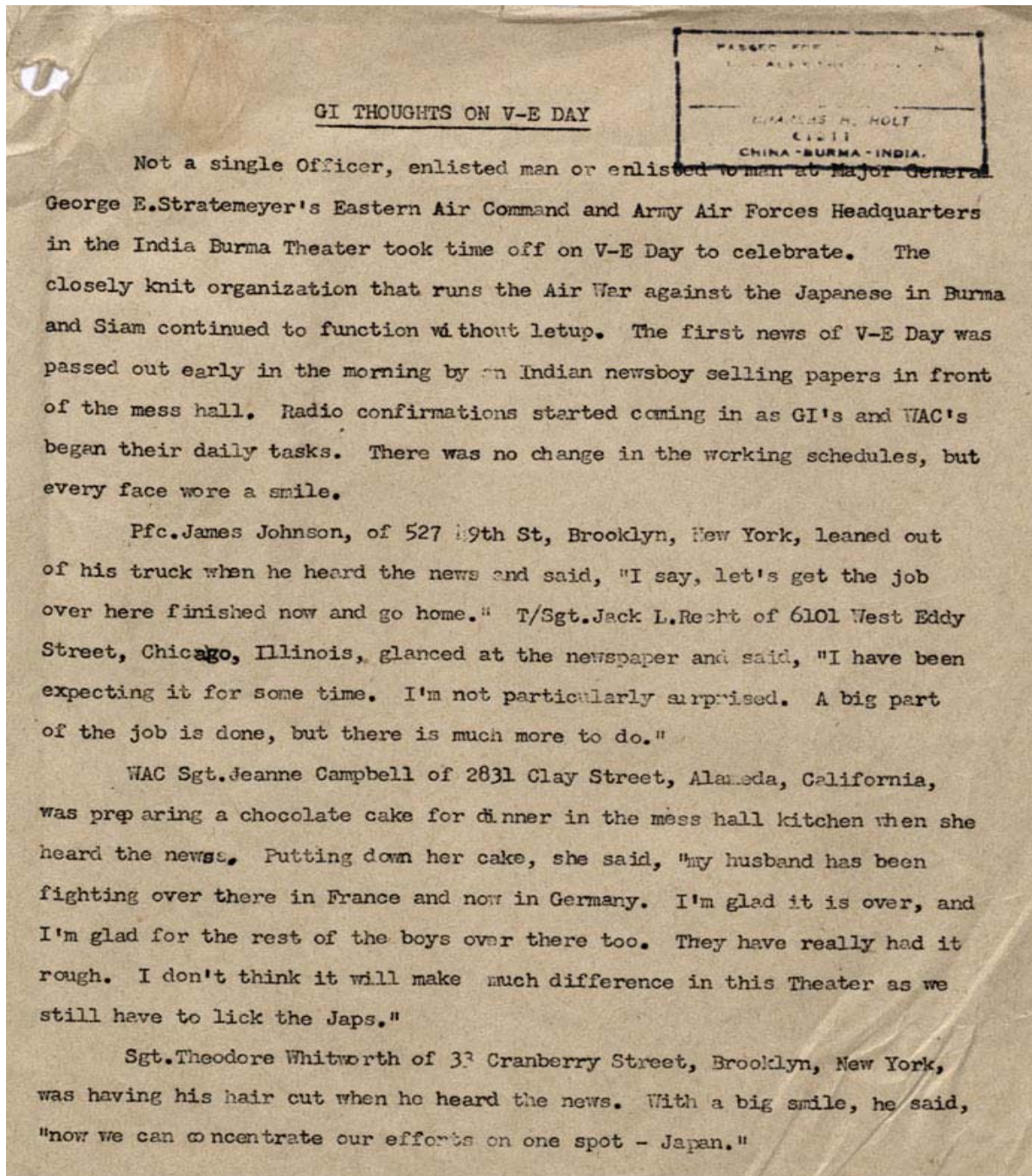
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WHAT SHOULD WE REMEMBER ABOUT THE 'FORGOTTEN ARMY'?

Reactions of American service personnel to the news of the end of war in Europe, May 1945

Catalogue ref: AIR 23/4297



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**What is this source?**

This source is part of a press release for the British and US media, as news of the surrender of Germany became known.

It comes from the Headquarters for the Army Air forces of the India Burma Theatre and Eastern Air Command.

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**What's the background to this source?**

By 1945 Allied forces were driving Japanese forces out of Burma. They captured the Burmese capital Rangoon in May 1945. It was an extremely hard campaign. The Japanese troops fought fiercely and skilfully and won the admiration of their enemies. However, by 1945 the Allies had enough troops and equipment to inflict major defeats on them.

A key element was air power. USA and British Empire pilots played an important role in the Burma campaign. Aircraft were vital for reconnaissance, attacking enemy positions and also for dropping supplies to troops who were deep in the jungle.

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**It's worth knowing that...**

There was a lot of celebrating in Europe when VE-Day was announced. Some of the British troops in the Far East felt this was inappropriate since the war was not over.

The attitude of some troops is easier to understand when you remember that they did not know when the war was going to end. Most of the planning was based on the assumption that the war would last well into 1946.

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**How will you use this source?**

1. How would you summarise the reaction of the troops in this source to the news of VE-Day?
2. Is there any evidence in this source that the men or woman feel forgotten?
3. Does this source give any sense of whether the US troops thought the war would last a lot longer or be over quickly?
4. What points from this source will you use in your presentation?

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## WHAT SHOULD WE REMEMBER ABOUT THE 'FORGOTTEN ARMY'?

### An extract from an article on British veterans commenting on the Burma Campaign

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4143196.stm>

By Courtesy of the [BBC](#).

By Katherine O'Shea

BBC News website, 14th August 2005.

For many veterans, VJ Day meant release from POW camps

As they prepare to mark the 60th anniversary of the Victory in Japan, three veterans have described their own reasons for remembering the event.

British soldiers in the Far East are often called the "forgotten army".

But their contribution will be honoured in a service at the Imperial War Museum on Monday.

Neville Hogan, John Hamilton and Gordon Graham reveal very different memories of VJ Day.

NEVILLE HOGAN MBE Second Battalion Burma Rifles

Deep in the Burmese jungle, Neville Hogan had no idea that the war was over. He suspects he carried on fighting for several days unnecessarily.

"News just took a while to filter through. We had no radios, and no time to listen to the BBC."

Mr Hogan has never forgotten the contribution of his people, the Karen, an ethnic minority in Burma, who he describes as the "backbone of the army" in the region.

They are now living on the Thai-Burmese border, having been forced out by the government. Mr Hogan, unable to return to Burma under the current regime, lobbies for them in London.

Mr Hogan cannot forgive the Japanese for brutalities that he witnessed in Burma.

"As a soldier, I admire them. As a man, I detest them".

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/>

**ASIA 1939–1945: BURMA**

JOHN HAMILTON First Gambia Battalion

In Madras, John Hamilton was with a group of Indian Army engineers, preparing to invade Malaya.

For these men, Victory in Japan was a miraculous reprieve, and celebrations lasted well into the night.

This Monday Hamilton will remember his Battalion of 100,000 African volunteers. He calls them "the forgotten part of the forgotten army".

He feels that the African contribution to the war is not sufficiently appreciated by either Britain or Africa.

"The Africans participated entirely voluntarily, and were fearless and skilful fighters" he said.

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**What is this source?**

This source is an extract from a news report that was published on the BBC news web site in August 2005.

The report was one of many reports produced around this date because 2005 marked the 50th anniversary of the end of WW2

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**What's the background to this source?**

WW2 broke out in Europe in 1939. In the Far East war broke out on December 7th 1941 when Japanese forces destroyed the US fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The Japanese quickly followed up this victory with attacks on British held possessions in Malaya, Singapore and Burma. There were real fears that the Japanese would reach India. However, troops from Britain and many parts of the Empire fought a hard campaign to stop the Japanese advance by May 1942. It was not until late 1943 and early 1944 that the Allied forces began to drive the Japanese back. Rangoon, capital of Burma, was finally taken in May 1945.

Burma was a key territory for the Japanese because the Allies used road networks through Burma to supply the Chinese forces fighting Japan. The fighting conditions in this campaign were some of the toughest in any campaign of the war.

**ASIA 1939–1945: BURMA****It's worth knowing that...**

The main British force in the Burma campaign was the Fourteenth Army commanded by General Slim. The Fourteenth Army was a truly multinational force made up of British, Indian (including Gurkhas), West African, Australian and New Zealand troops.

The largest group in the Fourteenth Army were the Indian troops. There were also British and USA air forces in the Burma campaign.

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**How will you use this source?**

1. Why do you think the British troops in the Far East felt forgotten?
2. Why did Neville Hogan not know the war had ended in 1945? What does this tell you about the conditions he was fighting in?
3. Which group did John Hamilton think had been forgotten?
4. How would you summarise the feelings of each soldier about the Burma Campaign?
5. What points from this source will you use in your presentation?

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**WHAT SHOULD WE REMEMBER ABOUT THE 'FORGOTTEN ARMY'?**

**Photograph of an American serviceman reading about the end of war in Europe, May 1945**

Catalogue ref: AIR 23/3598



**What is this source?**

This source is an official photograph taken in May 1945, as news of the surrender of Germany became known. It features US service personnel in the US Army Air Corps.

It was probably used by the US military as part of a press release for the British and US media.

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/>

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### What's the background to this source?

By 1945 Allied forces were driving Japanese forces out of Burma. They captured the Burmese capital Rangoon in May 1945. It was an extremely hard campaign. The Japanese troops fought fiercely and skilfully and won the admiration of their enemies. However, by 1945 the Allies had enough troops and equipment to inflict major defeats on them.

A key element was air power. USA and British Empire pilots played an important role in the Burma campaign. Aircraft were vital for reconnaissance, attacking enemy positions and also for dropping supplies to troops who were deep in the jungle.

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### It's worth knowing that...

There was a lot of celebrating in Europe when VE-Day was announced. Some of the British troops in the Far East felt this was inappropriate since the war was not over.

The attitude of some troops is easier to understand when you remember that they did not know when the war was going to end. Most of the planning was based on the assumption that the war would last well into 1946.

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### How will you use this source?

1. Is this a useful source for assessing how US troops reacted to VE Day?
2. Why do you think this photograph was taken?
3. Is there any evidence in this source that the forces serving in Burma felt forgotten?
4. What points from this source will you use in your presentation?

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## WHAT SHOULD WE REMEMBER ABOUT THE 'FORGOTTEN ARMY'?

### Extract from a British newsreel called *The Fourteenth's Victory*, July 1945

ITN Ref: BP190745115914

Courtesy of [ITN/Source](#), London.

Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, Governor of Burma meets Burmese leaders on board a British warship in Rangoon harbour to discuss Burma's future; epilogue to the 14th Army's total victory in that country.

It was in Rangoon that men of the 14th celebrated with a victory march their hard fought triumph over the Japs.

Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander in South East Asia took the salute. Once the forgotten army, 14th has written its name large in the history of Burma.

The monsoon rain, the old enemy of these jungle campaigners, couldn't even leave their victory parade alone.

Famous regiments of fighters from many nations were among the thousands of troops who took part in the march past. West Africans, Indians and Gurkhas proudly paraded alongside British marines and the men of county battalions.

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#### What is this source?

This newsreel was produced in 1945 after the British had taken Rangoon in Burma from the Japanese.

This newsreel was edited and broadcast to British audiences.

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### What's the background to this source?

WW2 broke out in Europe in 1939. In the Far East war broke out on December 7th 1941 when Japanese forces destroyed the US fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The Japanese quickly followed up this victory with attacks on British held possessions in Malaya, Singapore and Burma. When Singapore fell the Japanese were holding around 110 000 Allied prisoners. Some of these prisoners were held in Singapore. Thousands more were shipped out to Burma to work on a railway for the Japanese forces, as well as other projects.

The death rates in Japanese prison camps were extremely high. Estimates vary from around 30% to 37%. The main causes of death were disease, inadequate food and brutal treatment by Japanese captors.

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### It's worth knowing that...

The total death toll on the Burma Railway was horrendous. Around 12 600 Allied prisoners of war died building the railway alone. Around 85 400 civilian slave workers from Malaya, Singapore, Java and Burma also died.

The Japanese government has been pressured by veterans to openly admit and apologise for the horrors of the Burma Railway and other projects. Japan believes it has done so but most British veterans do not believe that Japan has properly acknowledged what happened.

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### How will you use this source?

1. What does this clip tell you about the Fourteenth Army?
2. Does the clip give any clues about the conditions they had to endure?
3. Does this clip prove that the Fourteenth Army was not forgotten at the time the war ended?
4. What points from this source will you use in your presentation?

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## WHAT SHOULD WE REMEMBER ABOUT THE 'FORGOTTEN ARMY'?

### Extract from a film called Burma Death Railway

ITN Ref: BP010145207222

Courtesy of [ITN/Source](#), London.

This film does not contain audio

#### What is this source?

This film was made after the Japanese surrender in Burma.

As far as we know this was never actually used in any broadcasts. This was probably because other footage was available and was used instead.

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#### What's the background to this source?

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<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/>

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**How will you use this source?**

1. Does the clip give any clues about conditions for allied prisoners of war forced to build the Burma Railway?
2. Does this clip help you to understand why the troops who fought in the Far East feel they were forgotten?
3. What points from this source will you use in your presentation?

Use this Power Point template for your [presentation](#)



Learning Curve

WORLD WAR II

ASIA 1939–1945: BURMA

**Your task:** Your task is to prepare a presentation with the title: Burma: The Forgotten Forces?

Use this Power Point [template](#) for your presentation.