

Abstract: Takoradi Air Route en

The „Takoradi Air Route“: a strategically significant supply route of the Allies in the Second World War

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Many people have become aware of West-Africa and the Sahel, which connects West-Africa with North-Africa and which reaches to Sudan and even farther, only since the turbulent events of the last ten years, in view of the crises, fights and missions in Sudan, Chad, Libya, and Mali recently. Meanwhile, sometimes people even talk about „Sahelistan“ when they discuss this new problem zone of the fight against Islamic terrorists. At the same time the connections in this region have become apparent, whereas the traditional view rather tended to differentiate between North-Africa to the north of the Sahara and “black Africa” to the south. On the other hand, the essay at hand deals with the importance of this region during the Second World War, when it became an important element of a supplies route for the Allies, leading from the USA across Brazil and West-Africa to the Near East and forward into the Soviet Union and China. Normally war history is more dedicated to operations than to logistics, but especially this example is proof of the relevance of the latter. Whereas the German and Italian advances into Chad - although they are interesting due to the achievements of the involved desert specialists and pilots - have remained only episodes without any greater relevance for the battle events in the end, the establishment and operation of the „Takoradi Air Route“ represented both a superb logistic feat and a strategically significant operation, which not only influenced the course of the war in the Near East, but also became effective in the Soviet Union and China. The AFLOC-Route as well, which, as a whole, naturally was less important, gives evidence for the talent of the Allies' warfare concerning supply and logistics. As an example for a successful lengthy airlift-operation, the „Takoradi Air Route“ represents a milestone in the history of air supply. The „Air Corps Ferrying Command“, established on 29th May 1941 as a forerunner of the present „Air Transport Command“ of the US Air Force, set itself up with the operation of this and other supply routes during the Second World War, and became an essential element of US-warfare. Apart from the effects on the course of the Second World War one must also mention the consequences of this supply route for the population of this region. Factories were built, roads, railroads and airports were extended, and infrastructure of any kind was created. In Chad, for example, the production of cotton tripled from 1939 to 1945. Previous workflows were disturbed and changed in such a way that it was nearly impossible to re-arrange them after 1945. New labour markets and dependences developed. All of these had both positive and negative effects. In order to realize them all, separate studies would be necessary (and justified as well), but these would also overstep the limits of this summarizing survey.

