

## **Early NAA B-25C *Mitchells* of the ML/KNIL, February 1942-June 1942**

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### The NEI contracts

The Netherlands East Indies (NEI) government, through the Netherlands Purchasing Commission (NPC) in New York, ordered 162 North American (NAA) B-25C-5-NA *Mitchell* medium-bombers during April 1941. These bombers had to replace the outdated Martin B-10 medium-bombers of the Militaire Luchtvaart (ML, army aviation corps) of the Koninklijke Nederlands-Indische Leger (KNIL, Royal Netherlands East Indies Army). The contract was signed on 30 June 1941 and the 162 aircraft were to be delivered in the period from November 1942 up to and including February 1943. [1] The NPC immediately tried to speed up deliveries and succeeded in securing the co-operation of the USAAF for this. The latter agreed to swap a substantial number of its own B-25C-NAs, from an already placed order for 863 aircraft, with later to be delivered ML B-25C-5-NAs. The ML aircraft could then be delivered in the period from March 1942 up to and including February 1943, with the first 114 B-25s during 1942. The ML and the NPC tried to speed up deliveries even further but got a negative response from the U.S. War Department a few weeks after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor. [2]

By mid-January 1942 the priorities had changed, however, and the War Department started processing a Defence Aid (DA) transfer of 60 USAAF B-25Cs to the “NEI Air Force”. This transfer was approved by the Under Secretary of War on 21 January 1942. B-25s for the ML were needed at short notice as part of a planned huge build-up of allied air forces in the NEI. The U.S. Defence Aid assignment for 60 B-25C-NA bombers came on top of the already ordered 162 aircraft, with the 60 extra aircraft to be delivered during January (ten), February (43) and March 1942 (seven). [3] The delivery schedule (ex factory) of B-25Cs and C-5s for 1942 became:

January	10	July	9
February	43	August	9
March	20	September	9
April	6	October	15
May	9	November	15
June	9	December	20

The cost of the 60 aircraft was to be reimbursed (in cash) later by the government of the Netherlands. Administration of the NEI-DA assignment was to be done by the Office of the Lend-Lease Administration but, as said, the aircraft were not to be financed with Lend-Lease funds but were a cash purchase. One problem remained, the Norden bombsight and the Automatic Flight Equipment Control (AFEC, the autopilot system, coupled to a drift meter and the bombsight) of the B-25C were both secret equipment and not cleared for delivery to the NEI. In view of the urgency the aircraft were nevertheless delivered with the Norden bombsight but without the AFEC, as modifying the aircraft for other types of equipment would cost too much time. [4]



Publicity shot of the flight line of the Chicago & Southern Airlines Modification Center, showing B-25s for the USAAF, NEI, Russia and Great Britain. The censor has removed the Air Corps serials on the tails of the aircraft (collection G.J. Casius)

All of the (priority) deliveries of B-25C and C-5 aircraft against the original contract were cancelled, with none delivered to the ML yet, during the second half of March 1942. This was a purely administrative matter as Materiel Command USAAF introduced a new system of allocations per production block from 1 April. Allocations of new production aircraft were now to be done by the Munitions Assignment Board, MAB, an advisory body to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. This board quickly reassigned to the NEI 101 B-25Cs (following the original delivery schedule but deleting the thirteen aircraft of March) and added one extra B-25D. These new assignments were later reduced, cancelled and replaced by other assignments several times. For the year 1942, eventually, only ten (still NEI owned on paper) B-25C-5 aircraft were assigned and delivered to the NEI for use at the Royal Netherlands Military Flying School at Jackson (Mississippi). At the time of the policy change nearly all the NEI-DA B-25Cs were already delivered by NAA, however. [5]

Materiel Command of the USAAF diverted batches of aircraft from the USAAF contract for B-25C-NAs to the NEI at the production line of NAA at Inglewood, Los Angeles (California). All of these were built to the original USAAF specifications and were test flown from Inglewood airport in the standard USAAF paint scheme. NEI national insignia and ML registrations, N5-122 up to and including N5-181, were probably applied at Memphis (see below). The N stood for North American, 5 for bomber and 122 for the 122<sup>nd</sup> bomber of the ML (M5121 was the final Martin B-10). USAAF representatives did the formal acceptance at factory. After delivery during February and March 1942, slightly behind schedule, the NEI B-25s were ferried to a Modification Center run by Chicago & Southern Airlines in Memphis, as were all the B-25s, to bring the aircraft up to war standard. This was a matter of a few days. [6] The NPC took delivery of the first NEI *Mitchells* (aircraft to be flown to Java via Australia

as well as British India) around 10 February 1942. This was in fact an informal administrative affair with the NPC representatives at Inglewood, Captain T.H. Leegstra (pilot) and 1Lt Th.J. Hooegeveen (technical officer), periodically accepting a group of aircraft, the majority at the Air Corps Office at Long Beach (California) which had first taken over the aircraft for the USAAF from factory pilots. [7]. The first group of aircraft had been accepted by the USAAF during the second half of January 1942 and delivery to Long Beach started on or around 6 February. The *Mitchells* were then flown to Memphis by crews of Air Corps Ferrying Command and subsequently from Memphis back to Long Beach or to West Palm Beach (Florida).



Another shot of the flight line at Memphis showing the B-25C No 41-12462/N5-126 for the ML as third in line. The black rimmed triangle national markings were replaced by U.S. markings at Hamilton Air Depot just before the airplane left the U.S. This marking was then replaced by a new Netherlands East Indies red-white-blue flag marking (introduced on 24 February 1942) by the 30<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron USAAF at Archerfield (collection author).

#### Delivery and ferry contracts

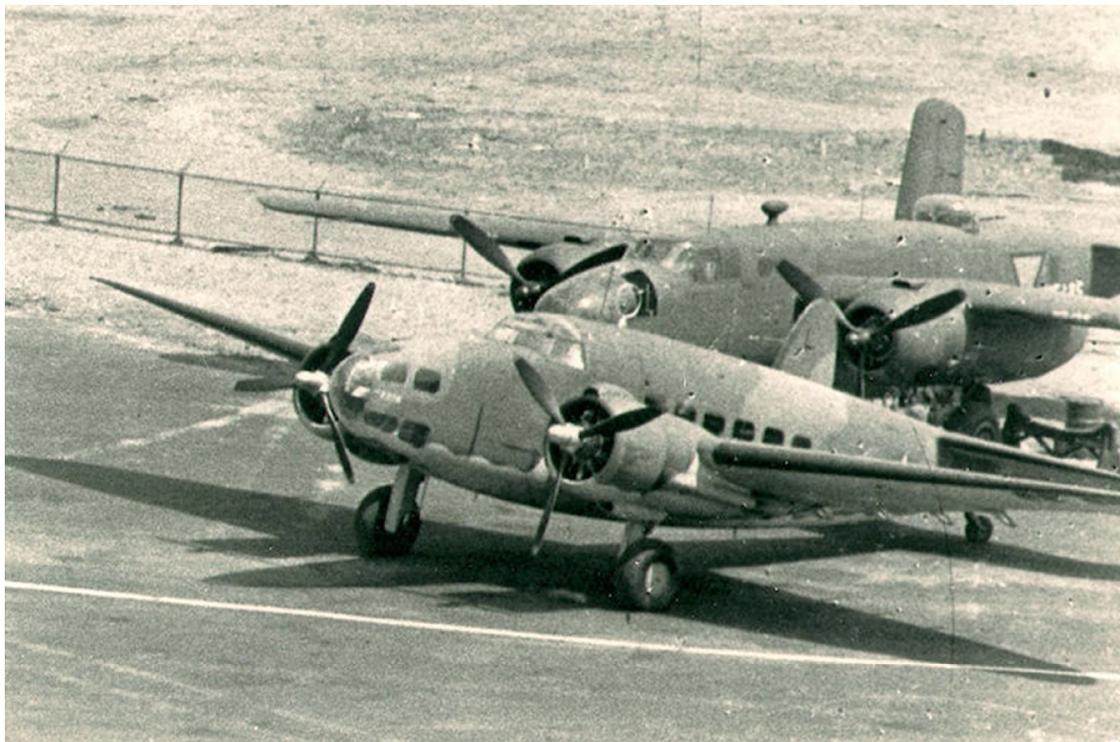
Air Corps Ferrying Command (USAAF) concluded an agreement with the Government of the Netherlands East Indies (made up at the NPC) for coordinating the ferry effort and prepared contracts on behalf of the NEI for delivery of the B-25s with Consolidated Aircraft

Corporation (Flight and Training Department), British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC), Pan American Air Ferries Incorporated (PAAF) and also Ferry Command of the RAF (RAF FC). A contract with Consolidated was concluded on 6 February 1942. It arranged for the ferry to Australia of eight aircraft in February, sixteen aircraft during March and fifteen to 32 aircraft each month from April 1942, depending on actual deliveries. AC Ferrying Command officially only assisted in concluding the contract as the formal contract was signed between the Netherlands Purchasing Commission (for the Kingdom of the Netherlands) and Consolidated, as the NPC had to pay Consolidated directly due to legal considerations. But all planning, coordinating and executive tasks concerning the ferry of the aircraft were delegated in full to AC Ferrying Command. The contract covered the ferry of planes from both NEI contracts. On this basis “ferry arrangements” (in fact detailed specifications based on the contract) were concluded between Consolidated and AC Ferrying Command, the first covering the ferry of fourteen (DA) B-25s and a second that of another sixteen (DA) B-25s. BOAC was to ferry 25 B-25s of the accelerated original contract. [8] PAAF could not ferry B-25s itself but Ferry Command of the RAF could. PAAF already had a contract with RAF FC for the supply of a number navigators (later expanded to include pilots also) for certain ferry flights.

RAF crews could ferry twenty (DA) B-25s to British India via the South Atlantic ferry route and central Africa route plus ten (DA) B-25s to Australia via the Pacific route also to be used by Consolidated. Contracts between the NPC and PAAF and RAF Ferry Command were concluded around 9 February 1942, with RAF Ferry Command to do the actual ferrying and PAAF to give support from their Miami and San Francisco offices and Pan American stations en route. The two ferry arrangements subsequently concluded by AC Ferrying Command with RAF Ferry Command covered 20 and 10 aircraft respectively. [9]

Consolidated and PAAF would ready the aircraft for the ferry flights at San Diego (California) and Miami (Florida), respectively. The USAAF was to give maintenance assistance when needed, only the aviation fuel was at the expense of the NPC after leaving U.S. soil. The NPC also arranged for assistance of the USAAF with the transition of Martin B-10 personnel of the ML to the B-25, for which three pilots and three bombardiers were to go on a short temporary assignment with the ML in Java. It also contracted technical representatives from NAA and a few other American factories (including Bendix, producer of the turrets of the B-25) and entered a few ML officers in technical training courses run by US factories such as Wright, producer of the B-25 *Cyclone* engines. [10]

The overall ferry planning for the 60 DA aircraft was made up by Air Corps Ferrying Command. The earliest known schedule dated early February 1942 was changed quite a few times, however. This was caused, amongst others, by problems with Consolidated in concluding the first ferry arrangement for fourteen aircraft (which resulted in AC Ferrying Command switching some of the first eight B-25s to be ferried by Consolidated to RAF Ferry Command and airgunner training for Consolidated radio operators) and by problems with NAA in keeping production schedules. The ferry planning by Air Corps Ferrying Command was done on the basis of the expected delivery of aircraft by NAA. This resulted in B-25s being assigned in batches to Consolidated respectively RAF FC. When deliveries of the NEI B-25s were firmly underway the largely global ferry planning evolved into a more “finalised” one but Air Corps Ferrying Command nevertheless had to make a number amendments to this ferry batch structure. Main causes were the switch from the ferry to British India to Australia after the first six aircraft, an accident that occurred at West Palm Beach involving two B-25s that had to be replaced and the inability of Consolidated to furnish the required number of ferry crews. The latter resulted in RAF FC receiving some additional aircraft on the first ferry arrangement. See Appendices, Table I for the ferry batch structure that evolved and the switches between Consolidated and RAF FC. [11]



*Mitchell* No 41-12457/N5-125 at Dorval airport of Montreal, Canada where it was in use for the transition training of ferry crews of RAF Ferry Command together with the Lockheed Hudson bomber parked in front of the aircraft (collection author)

As mentioned earlier, the aircraft readied at Memphis were flown to Long Beach Municipal Airport at Long Beach (California) or to Morrison Field, West Palm Beach (Florida). Crews of Air Corps Ferrying Command flew the planes planned for British India from Long Beach (some B-25s originally assigned to Consolidated but switched to RAF FC) or directly from Memphis to Morrison Field. RAF FC crews took over the airplanes there and flew them from Morrison to Municipal Field, Miami (Florida) for their final flight checks with PAAF. The aircraft to go to Australia were picked up at Long Beach by ferry pilots of Consolidated and ferried to Lindbergh Field, San Diego (California) for their preparation for the ferry flight. This preparation took some time as each and every B-25 had to be checked thoroughly for hidden defects that might cause safety hazards during the long ferry flights. A few minor (NAA approved) modifications were also carried out. When ready the Australian bound B-25s (apart from the first four) were transferred to Sacramento (California) awaiting departure orders. A 609 US Gallon bomb bay overload tank and a few smaller extra tanks (in the bombardier station and in the crawl way passages between the nose and the navigator station and above the bomb bay) had already been installed in all planes on leaving the NAA factory. The tanks above the bomb bay, however, were removed by Consolidated as they blocked passage of crewmembers through the fuselage while the extra fuel was not needed on the Australia flights.

Besides AC Ferrying Command also NPC was informed by Materiel Command USAAF about the assignment of production batches to the NEI (and their expected delivery) which allotted the N5 serials to the aircraft concerned. However, individual aircraft sometimes had to be replaced by others as they were to be delivered later than anticipated, with the “filler” aircraft receiving the originally planned N5 serial. The NEI aircraft were among the very first

production B-25Cs and NAA had some trouble in meeting production schedules and also USAAF quality standards at the time. At least six aircraft destined for the ML/KNIL were delivered about a month behind schedule and had to be replaced by later produced planes in the ferry schedules. The actual ferrying of individual aircraft was also arranged by Air Corps Ferrying Command, which gave Consolidated and RAF Ferry Command its “special operations orders”, the latter through the Montreal branch of Air Corps Ferrying Command in Canada. At Dorval airport of Montreal RAF FC assembled its ferry crews.

Apart from the above mentioned delivery problems several planes developed defects during the period they were parked at San Diego, Sacramento or West Palm Beach and a few ended up in unserviceable condition at various airfields after test flights or ferry flights by factory or ferry pilots. Besides, two aircraft were used for the training of Consolidated and PAAF ground personnel and ferry crews for a while. To complicate things even further, as already mentioned, the initial ferry effort of RAF Ferry Command to British India was switched to Australia after the invasion of Java by Japanese forces. As a consequence, many of the B-25s arrived at their destination in a way that had little to do with the original ferry planning. [12]

### The ferry to Australia

After the first four aircraft had left for Australia from Hamilton Field, Sacramento became the B-25 collection point for the flights to Australia, as Hamilton Field (San Rafael, near San Francisco), the actual starting point of the ferry route, was far too busy. [13] A number of materiel squadrons were available at Sacramento for first and second line maintenance assistance and there was also an Air Depot for third and fourth line maintenance. The Pacific ferry route consisted of six sea stretches. These were San Francisco (Hamilton Field)-Honolulu (Hickam Field), Honolulu-Palmyra (changed to Christmas Island after the first four B-25s), Palmyra (later Christmas Island)-Canton Island, Canton Island-Nandi (Fidzji Islands), Nandi-Noumea (New Caledonia) and Noumea-Brisbane. Some adjacent stretches could be flown in one day depending on take off time and weather conditions, deleting one or two stop overs. As the international datum line was crossed, the flight took a day extra but nevertheless could be flown in four to five days. Total flying time was about 26 hours. [14] The armament was transported to Hawaii by ship and put back into the B-25s at Hickam Field, where USAAF armourers also loaded the necessary ammunition for the upper and lower turret guns in the B-25s. The ferry crews then tested the .50 inch machineguns of the turrets in the air. The flights ended at Archerfield, Brisbane, where the aircraft were taken over by personnel from a 43 men strong detachment of the ML (ML Det Archerfield). The detachment arrived from Java on 17 and 18 February 1942 in Lockheed *Lodestars* of the ML. The CO was Captain W.F. Boot. [15]

Four B-25s flown by civilian Consolidated crews accompanied by NAA Technical Representative Mr Jack Fox (originally part of the NEI B-25C-5 contract) were the very first to leave Hamilton Field on 27 February 1942 for the flight to Archerfield. This was almost two weeks behind planning (which was 15 February) but Consolidated had first arranged for a short airgunner training for its radio operators and had then taken the initiative (on 14 February, after the first plane had already been flown to Hamilton Field) to postpone departure. The company demanded a deposit of 320,000.- U.S. dollar for the ferry of 14 B-25s in view of the risks involved. The deposit was obviously paid and three aircraft safely arrived at Archerfield on 3 March (one) and 4 March 1942 (two). The fourth plane arrived on 5 March having been delayed at Palmyra because of fuel contamination. On the day of arrival the B-25s were first taken in by the American Air Depot (30<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron USAAF) at Archerfield for an inspection.



*Lodestar* LT922 of the ML was one of four *Lodestars* used to transport the ML Det Archerfield. It was hit when parked at Archerfield by an Australian DC-3 during taxiing in the night of 17 and 18 February 1942 when the DC-3 pilot had to use the brakes on the wet grass surface of the airfield. The accident portended little good for the future B-25 operations (collection F. Smith, via G.J. Casius)

On 8 March the KNIL and allied forces on Java capitulated (effective the next day) and, consequently, on 9 March the ferry to Australia was put on hold. Ten aircraft were already scheduled to leave on the latter date or shortly after but their departure was cancelled and the B-25s already at Hamilton Field were flown back to Sacramento. Air Corps Ferrying Command gave clearance to resume the ferry flights to Australia on 13 March and the first two B-25s left that same day. The aircraft were now to go to a NEI unit to be formed at Archerfield. Next to arrive at Archerfield were:

18 March: two B-25s flown in by RAF FC (one of which may have arrived on 17 March).

21 March: five B-25s flown in by Consolidated (four) and RAF FC (one).

24 March: one B-25 flown in by RAF FC.

25 March: five B-25s flown in by RAF FC, of which one aircraft crashed on arrival.

28 March: one B-25 flown in by RAF FC.

29 March: two B-25s flown in by FAF FC.

The RAF FC crews, incidentally, consisted for a large part of American citizens originally hired by the RAF in the U.S. for the ferrying of planes to Great Britain, using the North Atlantic route. [16] It often took over a week before the ferry crews were back in San Francisco. They had to wait for available seats on the weekly service from Townsville to Honolulu of the U.S. Navy flown with *Coronado* flying boats (for which they had a priority) and made the remainder of the trip by civil airliner. [17]



The five B-25Cs initially assigned to 18 Squadron NEI in the squadron hangar at Canberra during April or May 1942 with in the back aircraft 41-12464/N5-134 and with its nose to the camera aircraft 41-12501/N5-161 (collection J. Schellekens, via G.J. Casius)

### NEI training at Archerfield

The three USAAF pilots arranged for by the NPC never reached Java and were probably given an alternative destination by the USAAF early on. However, six USAAF B-25 pilots (all 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants from the 17<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group at Spokane, Washington) by coincidence ended up at Archerfield about 28 February 1942. They were destined to fly Martin B-26 Marauder medium-bombers, which were to be ferried to Archerfield from the U.S.A. by the 22nd Bombardment Group (22 BG). Training of NEI personnel started on 6 March. The pilot and the navigator of the Consolidated crew that arrived the day before gave some ground training on the operation of the B-25 to Captain Boot and a few of his most senior pilots before leaving Archerfield around 9 March. On 6 March also Jack Fox started training the mechanics of the ML in performing pre-flight checks, engine start-up and testing and post-flight checks. He also gave the ML pilots and radio operators some training on B-25 systems for a couple of days until the 17 BG pilots took over. On the advice of Jack Fox Captain Boot succeeded in arranging for a short secondment of the six USAAF pilots to the ML detachment via the NPC. [18] When the mechanics were ready for the first line work, after about a week, the first group of pilots and radio operators, including Captain Boot, started conversion training on three of the first four B-25s delivered. The final group started flying on 18 March. By 23 March the majority of the ML pilots available at Archerfield, including a few very experienced pilots with at least 2,000 to 3,000 flying hours, were finally solo on the B-25. Crew training had already started by then, facilitated by Jack Fox giving ground and air training to the mechanics who were to fly in the top turret and the radio operators and mechanics who were also to operate the bottom turret. [19]



Captain W.F. Boot, CO of the ML Det Archerfield, organised the transition training of pilots of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group (Light). The photograph was taken at Charters Towers probably in May-June 1942 when Boot was posted as a liaison officer with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group (Light) (collection Alexander Evanoff, via Edward Rogers)

One of the very first flights with Captain Boot and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant H.V. Maull at the controls almost ended in disaster as the hatch of the life raft came loose during flight, the hatch and life raft badly damaging the port stabilizer. The B-25 could be safely landed by Maull and fortunately the American Air Depot (30<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron) at Archerfield could assist the ML mechanics with the repairs. Two aircraft were damaged in the morning of 25 March of which 41-12437/N5-132 was severely damaged when a landing Martin B-26 bomber skidded off the wet grass runway and hit the parked B-25. Another B-26 hit a Douglas DC-3 while landing and shot through the fence to crash into a house just outside the field. Then the crew of 41-12462/N5-126 tried to take off from the wet grass runway for a training flight and stalled. It ended up with a damaged landing gear, engine nacelle, rudder and elevator. Later that same day the five new B-25s mentioned earlier arrived in the moderate rainfall. The first one landed without problems but the second one skidded on the roll out and narrowly missed a parked B-26. Then the third B-25 (41-12481/N5?) came in with one engine running rough, because of fuel starvation as it turned out later. The RAF FC pilot turned in for a landing just after this engine went dead and ended up short of the field in a group of trees. The plane was a write off but the crew was safe. Lieutenant Maull then guided the remaining two B-25s in a North American O-47 plane to nearby Amberley, where there was a hard surface runway available. ML pilots flew the B-25s back to Archerfield on 28 March 1942 when the weather had finally improved. Also aircraft 41-12443/N5-137, newly arrived at Amberley on that day, was flown to Archerfield by an ML crew. Two more new arrivals followed the next day.

One of the B-25s which arrived on 21 March showed a damaged nose wheel assembly during the inspection after arrival and had become a “hangar queen”, gradually losing some parts to be able to keep the remaining B-25s in operation. Parts for repair and completion were ordered from North American through the NPC and did indeed arrive with another B-25,

although the aircraft was repaired by then with parts taken from the crashed 41-12481. Damaged parts were often a nightmare for the ML mechanics as the B-25s, the very first B-25s in the theatre, were delivered without any spare parts apart from a limited number of parts taken along during the ferry flights. Jack Fox and the ML mechanics displayed much ingenuity in keeping the planes serviceable, however. [20]

### The ferry to British India

The South Atlantic ferry route and central Africa route to British India and Russia started at Municipal Field, Miami (Florida). Miami was too busy to act as a collection point and Air Corps Ferrying Command crews consequently flew the B-25s from Long Beach or Memphis to Morrison Field, West Palm Beach. At this field the USAAF could support the ferry operation with a materiel squadron for first and second line maintenance and with a sub depot for third and fourth line maintenance. [21] The first B-25 was flown to West Palm Beach on 9 February 1942. The first six aeroplanes that got their final flight checks at Miami were all NEI aircraft, but these were to be followed by mixed batches of B-25s meant for both Russia and the NEI. [22] Only six of the ML aircraft left Miami, however, as two were damaged in a ground collision at West Palm Beach on 22 February and all others collected at Morrison Field were redirected to Sacramento. [23] The first B-25 left for British India on 26 February 1942, another two the next day and the sixth and last took off from Miami on 1 March 1942. Some B-25s of the next group of six aircraft were scheduled to leave on the next day but one had a malfunctioning engine and departure was postponed for a day. [24]



B-25C No N5-144 "C" of the ML Detachment Bangalore photographed at Bangalore in April 1942. The airplane carries the new style "flag" national marking painted on the aircraft during the post ferry inspection by the Hindustan Aircraft Factory at Bangalore (collection F. Pelder, deceased, via G.J. Tornij)

The first part of the route went from Miami, via Puerto Rico to Trinidad and from Trinidad via British Guyana and Belem (Brazil) to Natal in Brazil. From Natal the aircraft were flown via Roberts (Liberia) to Accra (Ghana) and then to Lagos (Nigeria). From Lagos across Africa to Khartoum (Sudan). From Khartoum, via stops at Aden and Bahrein, the B-25s for the ML went to Karachi and the next day to Bangalore. All in all a very demanding trip (especially as the aircraft had no autopilot installed) with long stretches over water and wilderness that even with fair weather took eleven to fourteen days to complete. Total flying time was over 60 hours so relatively shortly after arrival the planes had to go through a 100 hours inspection. These were carried out by American civilian technicians working at the Hindustan Aircraft Factory at Bangalore who also did the post ferry inspections after arrival. [25]

Of the first three B-25s that left one (41-12468/N5-140) crashed near Accra with the loss its crew. [26] The first of the B-25s arrived on 8 March 1942, a second the next day and the remaining three aircraft followed on 14 March (two) and 16 or 17 March (one). An ML detachment (ML Det Bangalore) was present from 1 March. CO was Captain R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M. and total strength was 20 men. Six pilots and a technical officer of the ML were added later. The three USAAF bombardiers sent to Java also ended up at Bangalore and although two of them were rather quickly transferred back to the United States they instructed the ML pilots and mechanics on the Norden bombsight. A few of the ferry pilots, navigators and radio officers (RAF personnel but in fact American citizens) gave some ground instruction on aircraft operation and demonstrated the equipment on board of the aircraft before leaving with a Pan American transport plane. [27]

Six more ML B-25s were readied for the ferry flight on 1 March 1942 and part of these aircraft were about to leave from Miami when the ferry to Bangalore was put on hold the next day. This order was based on a decision by the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCOS) in Washington. [28] The flights from Bangalore to Java in the NEI had become too dangerous due to Japanese advances. Southern Sumatra had already been invaded on 14 February 1942 and Java followed in the night of 28 February on 1 March 1942. CCOS switched the ferry of the B-25s to Australia. Air Corps Ferrying Command took immediate action and the RAF ferry crews at Miami and West Palm Beach were sent on to Sacramento. Crews from Air Corps Ferrying Command flew the B-25s from West Palm Beach to Sacramento, starting around 3 March. Two B-25s were flown from Memphis to Sacramento directly. Time was of the essence but on arrival at Sacramento the planes had to be checked out again and when the first six aircraft were ready to leave, Java capitulated. As a consequence the ferry was suddenly put on hold again on 9 March only to be resumed quickly. The first two RAF manned B-25s already left Hamilton Field for Australia on 13 March 1942. Probably because they were unserviceable two B-25s were left behind at West Palm Beach and were later ferried to Russia via the South Atlantic and central Africa route. However, contrary to the NEI B-25Cs NAA produced all Russian airplanes with wiring for a Sperry bombsight and a Sperry A3 autopilot so they must have been modified first. [29]

The ML Det Bangalore was left with just five B-25s but nevertheless started transition training, all pilots being solo on the B-25 on 20 March already. Tools were taken over from the KLM station at Karachi together with small amounts of general parts. There were no spare parts for the B-25 airframe and its engines, however. After a request from Air Marshal Sir Richard Peirse (who made a flight with Captain Wittert van Hoogland in one of the B-25s from New Delhi airport on 24 March) the RAF, in concert with the Dutch Government in exile in London, decided about 4 April to employ the detachment and its five B-25s as a Photo Reconnaissance Unit (PRU). The aircraft were eventually transferred on 12 April 1942 to the RAF for use as long-range photo-reconnaissance aircraft. A few days later it was concluded that the ML personnel was not necessary as sufficient numbers of RAF personnel were available to man a PRU which was to form at Karachi. One B-25 was already there for

turret maintenance and training of ML personnel while the four other airplanes were flown over in the period from 13 April up to and including 15 April for the necessary modifications. All of the B-25s had already received a 100 hours inspection at Bangalore with Hindustan Aircraft and were in a good condition. The gun turrets were removed as was all armament and armour. The turret openings were faired over while in the bomb bay the fuel tank used on the ferry flight was remounted. Unnecessary equipment was removed, a British camera was installed and some ballast was put in the tail section before Capt Wittert van Hoogland flight tested the airplanes. The training of assigned RAF personnel actually began on 12 April already when Sqn Ldr A.C. Pearson, the CO of 5 PRU, arrived at Bangalore. He was checked out on the B-25 by 1Lt P.C. Andre de la Porte before returning to Karachi with aircraft N5-145 on 15 April together with Andre de la Porte and Capt Wittert van Hoogland. At Karachi the remainder of the 5 PRU personnel was trained on the B-25. Between 18 April and 1 May 1942, while the training of the RAF personnel was completed, the aircraft were subsequently



Personnel of the ML detachment Bangalore. From left to right: pilots Sgt G. Tijmons, 1Lt H. van den Broek, Ensign F. Olsen, 2Lt G. Cooke, Ensign N.H.J. Daanen and Ensign J.A. Kuneman and far right SubLt L.D. Stolk, the technical officer of the detachment. Besides a wooden "ops hut" the detachment had some large tents as quarters (collection author)

delivered to 5 PRU, then at Calcutta. Wittert van Hoogland personally delivered the final aircraft on 1 May after the initial transition training was completed.

No 5 PRU had been formed on 11 April 1942 at Karachi to operate the five B-25s and was renumbered 3 PRU on 28 May 1942. The ML personnel left for Australia on 30 April, with only Wittert van Hoogland and 1Lt Andre de la Porte remaining behind as instructors with 5 PRU. Both made some interesting test flights to check the attainable altitude (and circled the top of Mount Everest) and maximum speed (slightly above 280 knots). Both pilots also flew some high level reconnaissance missions with RAF co-pilots and crewmembers during May and June 1942. Andre de la Porte (who had flown with the Royal NEI Airline on the Douglas DC-5, like the B-25 a modern nose wheel aircraft) had also test flown the B-25 during March and had instructed the other pilots of the ML. The ferry pilots wisely refused to give flying instruction, but one did taxi a B-25 with Andre de la Porte and demonstrated some engine run-ups. See Appendices, Table II for details about the NEI operated airplanes. [30]

### NEI B-25s to the USAAF

When the allied forces at Java in the NEI capitulated for the Japanese on 8 March 1942, effective the next day, a substantial number of ML personnel was available in Australia. This number included the men of ML Det Archerfield, the crews of the Depot Vliegtuigafdeeling (the ML transport squadron) with their Lockheed *Lodestars* and the flying school with nearly all of its students and instructors, but without any aircraft. Also the Air Officer Commanding (AOC) of the allied Java Air Command, Major-General L.H. van Oyen (the former AOC of the ML) arrived by ML *Lodestar*. Van Oyen was instructed to take command of all the KNIL personnel in Australia (mainly of the ML) and to form combat units to continue the fight with the allies from Australia. The ML Det Archerfield was to be enlarged to an “escadrille” equipped with eighteen B-25s, including reserves. Captain Boot and the NPC in New York were informed about this around 13 March 1942. [31] Van Oyen spoke with American and Australian authorities about the formation and organisation of the NEI B-25 unit at several conferences about the disposition of NEI aircraft stranded in Australia or about to arrive by ship held between 17 March and 26 March 1942. [32]

Materiel Command USAAF withdrew the priority assignments of B-25 aircraft to the NEI (on the initiative of the NPC and to ensure that no more B-25Cs would be delivered to the NEI during April, May and June 1942) on 23 March 1942 but most of the 60 Defence Aid B-25s were already in NEI hands. About 30 planes were gathered at Sacramento. All the aircraft at Sacramento and a few at other locations in the U.S. were to be returned to the USAAF. [33] Major Te Roller received a telegram from Major-General Van Oyen the day before, confirming that (for the moment) only eighteen B-25s were needed for the NEI medium-bomber escadrille to be formed in Australia and informing Te Roller that he could stop the five B-25s that had just arrived at Hickam Field and were still in Hawaii. [34]. Although the NPC was desperately trying to run down its huge logistic pipeline from the U.S., these planes could not be stopped. The crews had already left Hawaii. [35]

The Chief of the Air Staff wrote to Materiel Command USAAF on 28 March 1942 that a number of changes in the disposition of the NEI-DA B-25s had to be made at the request of the NPC. [36] Of the 60 B-25 aircraft that left the factory:

18 were now to go to the NEI in Australia (to be charged to the NEI),

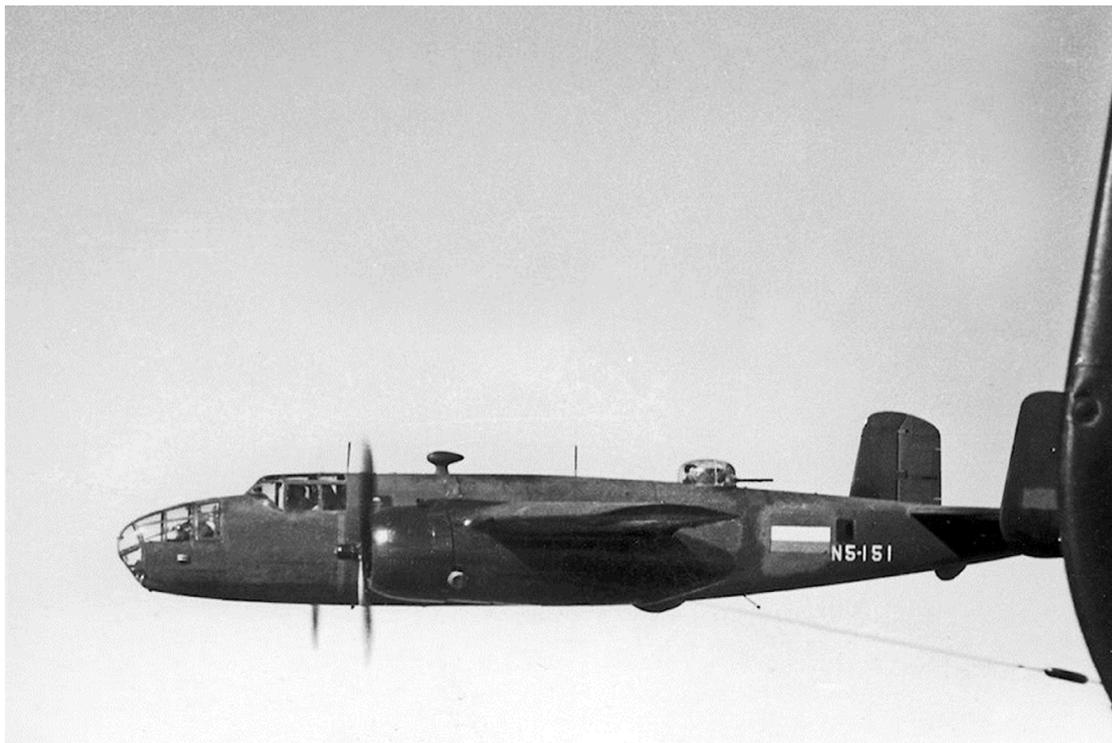
24 to General MacArthur in Australia,

5 to be allocated to the Air Force commander in India,

6 to the USAAF in the U.S. for delivery to Brazil or as a replacement for other aircraft delivered to Brazil and

4 aircraft still at the Modification Center were either to be sent to Australia or to go to an Operational Training Unit in the U.S.

Of the remaining three B-25s one crashed in Africa (to be paid for by the NPC) and two were damaged at Palm Beach West (to be repaired at the cost of the NPC)



*Mitchell* No 41-12482/N5-151 was received at Archerfield on 29 March 1942. The photograph was taken in April or May 1942 during a training flight from Canberra (collection J. Schellekens, via G.J. Casius)

The Chief of the Air Staff further directed on 28 March that “..19 B-25s in addition to those which have already left the United States be dispatched to Australia with the least practicable delay”. And also: “The ferrying of these 19 B-25s should utilize either crews available under NPC contract with Consolidated or the crews furnished by the RAF”. The ferry of the B-25s to Australia continued while Air Corps Ferrying Command reviewed the situation and also the ferry contracts as the changes had financial consequences for Consolidated and RAF FC. The order from the Chief of the Air Staff meant that Consolidated ran into problems as the company could not furnish ferry crews at short notice. All 19 additional B-25s were consequently ferried to Australia by RAF Ferry Command. The Defence Aid assignment for the 60 B-25C aircraft (apart from the 18 aircraft for the NEI) was formally cancelled on 2 April 1942.

In the mean time, Lieutenant-General G.H. Brett, Commanding-General of the U.S. Army Forces in Australia (USAFIA) and from 20 April 1942 Commanding-General of the Allied Air Forces in the South West Pacific Area, had taken over twelve NEI B-25s. This was agreed to in principle on 23 March 1942 between Van Oyen and Brett. The aircraft were urgently needed for the 3rd Bombardment Group (Light) of the USAAF (3 BG), the main party of which was to arrive in Brisbane in two days, but without aircraft. The next eighteen B-25s to arrive were to go to the ML, however. Van Oyen and Brett talked again about the transfer of the twelve aircraft on 25 March and finalised an “understanding”. Two of the B-25s involved, as already described, were damaged on the same day. [37] The twelve B-25Cs transferred on 25 March were the following.

41-12442, 41-12444, 41-12455, 41-12462, 41-12466, 41-12472, 41-12483, 41-12494, 41-12496, 41-12498, 41-12511 and 41-12514.

The loan of the B-25s created some administrative chaos, as NPC, Air Force Staff and Materiel Command of the USAAF were also busy reassigning NEI B-25s.

Brett received orders from the Commanding-General USAAF on 26 March 1942 that of 23 B-25s that had left the U.S. for Australia eighteen were to be reserved for the NEI. [38] Most of these 23 aircraft were already at Archerfield, however, of which 12 were on loan to Brett. Van Oyen informed the NPC, through the Dutch military attaché in Washington, that same day that he had agreed to release 36 of 54 B-25s to be delivered in Australia to the USAAF at the urgent request of Brett. [39] Brett informed his superiors in Washington about the details of the “understanding” with Van Oyen and reported on 28 March that he already had taken over twelve B-25s from the Dutch. [40] Van Oyen, by then, had agreed to deliver an additional six B-25s, before completing the eighteen needed for the NEI squadron. [41] Of the B-25s that arrived in the period of 28 March up to and including 2 April three were now added to the loan to Brett, aircraft involved being: 41-12441, 41-12443 and 41-12480.



Former ML B-25Cs with USAAF crews and servicing personnel of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group (Light) at Charters Towers (official USAAF photograph)

The KNIL HQ in Melbourne had already notified Captain Boot that six additional aircraft were destined for the USAAF. Apart from the three mentioned above these were three B-25s still en route: 41-12476, 41-12499 and 41-12485. The last mentioned airplane was the final one ferried for the NEI in line with new instructions from AC Ferrying Command, which put the ferrying effort on hold again on or around 1 April. This was probably a consequence of

the already mentioned cancellation of the DA assignment of the B-25s to the NEI. [42] The first two B-25s arrived at Amberley on 6 April of which, unfortunately, aircraft 41-12476 had a landing gear collapse on arrival and was severely damaged. Although it was initially considered repairable it was eventually left with the ML and salvaged for parts by the 30<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron and written off at the expense of the ML. Aircraft 41-12499 and 41-12485, the latter arrived on 7 April, were taken over by the USAAF on arrival as planned. [43]

The ferry of the final six aircraft went to Amberley, the new end station of the Pacific ferry route. Archerfield had become too busy as it was a refuelling station in the air transport route from the South to New Guinea and Darwin. The ML detachment had to leave and it was notified on 26 March 1942 that it had to go to Canberra as the nucleus for the NEI B-25 escadrille as soon as the USAAF squadron based there would have left. [44]

Groups of personnel of 3 BG arrived at Archerfield on 25 March, 27 March and 1 April and took over the 12 B-25 initially transferred, followed by the three that arrived in the period of 28 March up to and inclusive 2 April. Personnel of the Air Depot painted American insignia on the B-25s and painted out the N5 serials of the ML. Jack Fox gave a briefing on the B-25 and its systems and after studying the Technical Orders and check outs by ML personnel the 3 BG crews, mostly trained on Douglas A-20 light bombers in the US but including some former Douglas A-24 single engine pilots (however, with some twin-engine experience), left for their base Charters Towers near Townsville. Departure was on 29 March, 30 March and 3 April 1942, with a total of 15 aircraft.



Former ML *Mitchell* No 41-12485 of 3 BG (L) photographed at Port Moresby around January 1943 (official USAAF photograph)

Pilot check outs were done by Capt A.J. de Vries and 1Lt J.A. Butner, two of the most experienced pilots in the ML Det Archerfield. Both had their doubts, but Lt Col J.H. Davies, the CO of 3 BG, insisted that his first pilots were good and well trained. Indeed, all of them

were declared solo after handling checks at altitude and three good landings. Nevertheless, two aircraft (41-12494 and 41-12514) crashed on landing at Charters Towers on 30 March. Aircraft 41-12514 was severely (structurally) damaged after a very heavy landing. Aircraft 41-12494 slid on landing, skidded and then had a landing gear collapse but could be made flyable and was flown back to Brisbane for repairs. A third B-25 landed just behind it and its pilot had to resort to excessive braking to prevent a collision which caused a blown out main wheel tire and light damage to the aircraft. The 3rd Bombardment Group (Light) reported a B-25 strength of eight aircraft in commission and six aircraft under repair on 4 April 1942. Aircraft 41-12514 was declared damaged beyond repair. [45]

As already mentioned, B-25 41-12485 arrived at Amberley (somewhat delayed probably because of bad weather) on 7 April. This was the final and 24th B-25 flown to Australia by a ferry crew for the NPC. The original ferry contracts were still operational (but in their final days) when the RAF FC ferry crew left Hamilton Field on 27 March 1942. [46] The ferry contracts were amended by Air Corps Ferrying Command and all subsequent B-25 deliveries of now former NEI aircraft were to go the USAAF in Australia. The 18 aircraft remaining to be ferried were all assigned to RAF Ferry Command as Consolidated could not provide the necessary ferry crews at short notice. The first twelve B-25s were nevertheless to be transferred to the NEI to complete the eighteen B-25s in the ML escadrille. It took a while before additional aircraft could be ferried, as most of the assigned RAF FC crews were on their way back from Australia. Only on 12 April could the ferry flights be resumed. [47]

Summarising the above, the USAAF took over from the ML “on loan”, that is the aircraft to be replaced from new deliveries at a later date, 17 B-25s during March and April 1942. One of these 17 B-25s was, however, considered a write off at the expense of the USAAF.



Aircraft No N5-126 (formerly N5-161) of 18 NEI Squadron after a crash on Moruya airstrip on 21 July 1942 (official RAAF photograph)

### The formation of 18 Squadron NEI

Five aircraft remained in the hands of the ML and these formed the initial equipment of 18 Squadron NEI. These were B-25s 41-12437/N5-132, 41-12464/N5-134, 41-12439/N5-136, 41-12482/N5-151 and 41-12501/N5-161. The aircraft were renumbered N5-122 to N5-126 in the same order around 21 June 1942, when aircraft 41-12494, becoming N5-127, arrived from Brisbane after repairs (see later). No 18 Squadron NEI formed at Canberra on 4 April 1942 but with a mixed ML/RAAF personnel establishment. The planned NEI escadrille (a standard ML “afdeeling” with nine first line aircraft and a first line reserve of another five aircraft) had to be enlarged in strength to twelve aircraft in first line with a first line reserve of six aircraft at the request of the RAAF. This necessitated more personnel than the NEI had available and the limited number of RAAF personnel foreseen originally grew to a slight majority of RAAF personnel, although eventually all pilots and the majority of crewmembers remained ML. Most of the ML personnel at Archerfield left that base on 10 April 1942. The B-25s arrived at Canberra on 1 April (one), in the period of 10 to 12 April (three) and on 21 April 1942 (one). Other ML personnel arrived from Melbourne and during May 1942 RAAF personnel filled the remainder of the squadron establishment. [48]

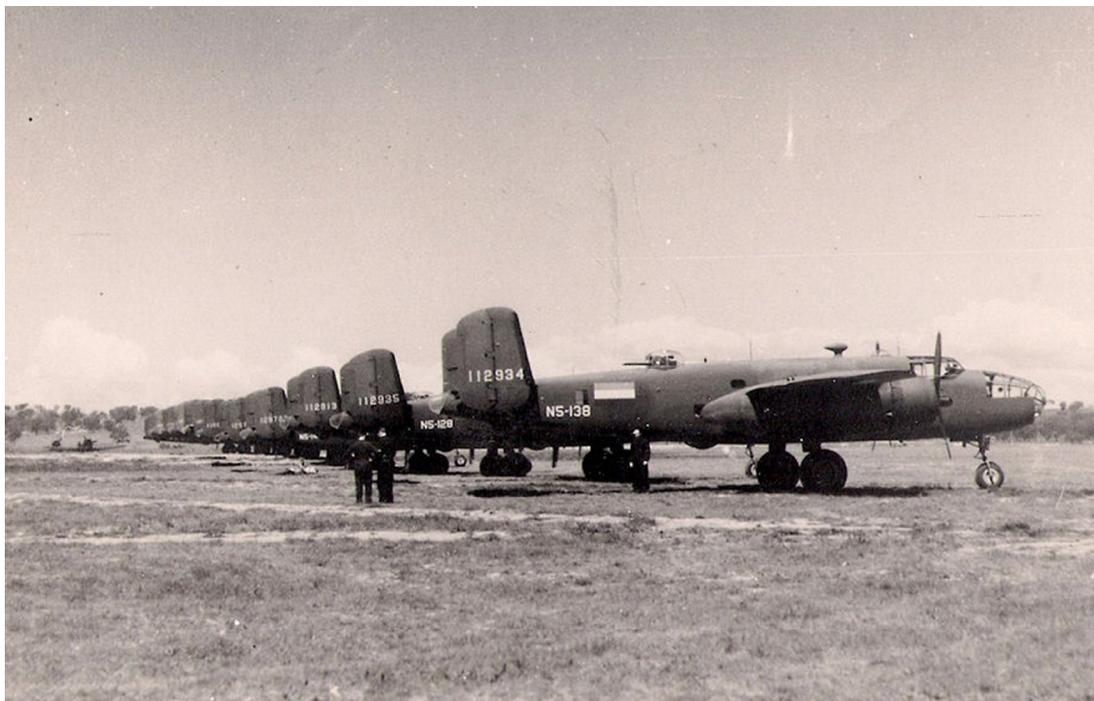
A detachment including Captain Boot (the first CO of 18 Squadron until succeeded by Major B.J. Fiedeldij on 1 May 1942) stayed behind at Archerfield to pick up the next batch of six B-25s. These aircraft left Hamilton Field on 12 April 1942 and four safely arrived at Amberley six days later, the two others being delayed. The ML crews arrived a little too late at Amberley. Crews of 3 BG had taken over the aircraft without proper authorisation and had already left for Charters Towers in the evening of 18 April. USAAF personnel refused to return the aircraft and after some angry telex and telephone traffic between various headquarters it turned out that Lieutenant-General Brett was no longer prepared to stick to his promises to Van Oyen (who had left for the U.S.A. on 11 April). Boot and his ferry crews were ordered to Canberra as well and arrived on 21 April 1942. The Dutch did not take the incident lightly and took the affair to the political level in Washington almost immediately. [49]

The squadron had a hard time getting operational with only five and later six B-25s on strength, little ground equipment and very little B-25 airframe and engine spares, and the technical representatives of NAA and Bendix “kidnapped” away by 3 BG. The *techreps* were to return to their NEI assignment when no longer needed for the 3 BG transition, but this never happened. Both NAA and Bendix had to assign a new man after some months. The fourteen crews initially formed consisted of ML personnel that for the most part had previous experience on Martin B-10 bombers and a large percentage of these men had flown operations against Japanese targets from Singapore and Java. Morale dwindled fast. The USAAF and RAAF tried a temporary re-equipment with Douglas A-20As and DB-7B *Bostons* late May 1942 but the Dutch refused to give up the B-25s as they wanted aircraft that could operate over occupied NEI territory and wanted to make a statement. They did succeed in keeping the *Bostons* on strength for a while and these aircraft were flown for training together with B-25s during June 1942. Despite the difficulties the squadron also started to fly operations at the request of the RAAF on 5 June 1942. These were anti-submarine patrols in the defence of allied shipping flown from Canberra and Moruya. A Japanese mini-sub was claimed sunk on the first day. [50]



B-25C No N5-124 (ex N5-136) photographed in the hangar of 18 NEI Squadron at Canberra around July 1942 (collection G.J. Casius)

The protests along diplomatic channels worked and eventually the Chief of Staff of General MacArthur informed the NEI Headquarters in Melbourne in a carefully drafted letter dated 14 June 1942 that eighteen B-25s were to be delivered. The project was called Project Mark I and re-equipment of 18 Squadron with eighteen B-25C and B-25D aircraft not belonging to the original NEI Defence Aid assignment should start in July 1942. The five aircraft assigned to 18 Sq NEI were to be returned to the USAAF. The USAAF suddenly showed good will and transferred a sixth B-25 (the repaired 41-12494 becoming N5-127) which arrived at Canberra around 21 June 1942. This aircraft was possibly an exchange for the salvaged 41-12476. [51] During August 1942 the first of the new B-25s (registered N5-128 up to and including N5-145) were finally received. Although these aircraft were equipped with the rather rudimentary D3A Estoppey bombsight, replaced by the ML on its B-10 bombers in 1937 already, 18 Squadron NEI soon became a very efficient medium-bomber unit operating in the Darwin area under operational control of the RAAF. Former NEI B-25s were put to good use some months earlier. The 3rd Bombardment Group (Light) flew B-25 operations from 5 April 1942 but suffered severe losses. [52]



Project Mark I *Mitchells* of 18 Squadron NEI at Canberra during September 1942 (collection author)

### The final “bean count”

The bookkeeping people in the U.S. must have been hard pressed to keep up with all the changes in the B-25 deliveries and Major Te Roller of the NPC made several summaries indicating, by the FY serial, which plane went where and to whom. In a telegram to Materiel Command USAAF dated 21 August 1942 he noted the FY serials of the B-25s that were (supposedly, the listing included several mistakes) ferried to the ML in Australia and India. NPC and Materiel Command finally agreed that five B-25s transferred to the RAF in British India were to be considered Lend-Lease to the RAF and in the end the U.S. War Department charged the NEI for the use or the loss of a total of 25 B-25s. A total of 24 aircraft was delivered to the ML and left for Australia (of which two crashed on arrival) and one B-25 crashed on its way to India. Of the 60 NEI-DA aircraft eventually 42 arrived in Australia and apart from the two that crashed on arrival all were transferred to or went directly to the USAAF. Eight were ferried by Consolidated and 34 by RAF Ferry Command. The 162 B-25C-5-NAs of the original NEI contract (including the ten B-25C-5-NAs used by the Dutch flying school at Jackson, Miss.) became “reverse Lend-Lease”, with the USAAF initially becoming the borrower of the NEI owned aircraft before taking over the aircraft. [53]

### Endnotes

- [1] Contract 7131 NA (Smithsonian/NASM).
- [2] Letter 11 August 1941 Gen Spaatz to NPC, Te Roller (U.S. National Archives, 452-1-3295 J, via G.J. Casius); letter 26 December 1941 Executive Material Division, Lt Col Meyers to NPC, Te Roller (U.S. National Archives, 452-1-3295 C, via G.J. Casius).
- [3] PNR-N-202 New Series (U.S. National Archives, RG 169, via G.J. Casius).

- [4] Letter 11 August 1941 Gen Spaatz to NPC, Te Roller, see [2]; letter Ph. Young to Stettinus, 8 October 1941 (U.S. National Archives, RG 169, Box 206); letter Materiel Division to British Air Commission, 8 November 1941 (U.S. National Archives, 452-1-3295 J); letter Van Oyen to Stettinus, undated but c. 1 December 1941 (U.S. National Archives RG169, Box 175); interview with A.J. de Vries 19 September 1973 (confirms delivery of the B-25s with Norden bombsights); extract memoir of Jack Fox (via Edward Rogers, email correspondence, October 2008, April 2009, confirms delivery of the B-25Cs without AFEC).
- [5] Various files MAB (U.S. National Archives, RG 169, via G.J. Casius); telegram War Dept to USAFIA, Col Perrin, 23 March 1942 (AHRA, Maxwell AFB, records of 5th Air Force, via G.J. Casius).
- [6] Aircraft Delivery Unit, Statistical Control Unit, 1 June 1942 (sic), "Airplane and Glider Acceptances, Factory Deliveries and Departures from the U.S.A., By Type, Model and Country, Period Jan 1940 to Dec 1942 incl." (via AHRA, Maxwell AFB); interview with H.A. Maurenbrecher, 1962 (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.); information received from Don McVicar (formerly RAF Ferry Command) c. 1982.
- [7] Telegram NPC (HOLPURCOM) 10 February 1942, stated that eight B-25s will be ferried by American civilian pilots; the first four to leave San Francisco around 15 February and the next four around 21 February 1942 (CAD/Dutch DoD, via Coen van den Heuvel). W.F. Boot was briefed on 12 February 1942 about the ferry of B-25s to Australia and was, incorrectly, told that four B-25s of a first group of eight were already delivered and on their way (interview with W.F. Boot, 1962, via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.). On 20 February 1942 NPC (HOLPURCOM) reported by telegram that still no information was available about the delivery and arrival dates of the B-25s. Interview with H.A. Maurenbrecher, 1962 (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M. mentioned the acceptance procedure by Leegstra and Hoogeveen); letter dated 4 January 1979 of T.H. Leegstra to G.J. Casius (with thanks to Gerard Casius).
- [8] Craven and Cate, vol. 7, pp 175-77; G.J. Casius, "De aanschaf van B-25 bommenwerpers voor de ML-KNIL 1941-1942", pp 9-10, Mars et Historia, XXII-1 (January/February 1988); various memo's and telegrams of the NPC (records Military Attaché, Dutch Embassy, Wash., Map Roos). The contract with BOAC was later cancelled by Air Corps Ferrying Command.
- [9] Ibid.
- [10] Extract memoir of Jack Fox (via Edward Rogers, email correspondence October 2008, April 2009); diary and other notes R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.; tel. interview with Don McVicar c 1982 about the ferry to British India by RAF FC; interview with A.J. de Vries 19 September 1973; personnel record card J.J.J. de Jonge (via Dutch DoD, followed a course on the Cyclone engine).
- [11] Various memo's and telegrams of the NPC (archive of the military attaché Dutch Embassy, Wash., Map Roos); Air 38-24 Mitchell B-25's Pacific (The National Archives UK, archive Ferry Command RAF); data on ferry planning RAF FC via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M. (1990, from his diary and other notes) and Don McVicar (see [6]).
- [12] Ibid.; memoir of Jack Fox (via Edward Rogers, email correspondence October 2008, April 2009); data from individual aircraft record cards (Smithsonian/NASM, via G.J. Tornij and AFHSO, Bolling AFB, email 22 July 2005); interview with H.A. Maurenbrecher, 1962 (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.; see also Appendices, Table I for mentioned individual aircraft).
- [13] Craven and Cate, vol. 7, p 9; various memo's and telegrams of the NPC (archive of the military attaché Dutch embassy, Wash., Map Roos).
- [14] Craven and Cate, vol. 7, p 174; original navigation maps of F/O E.R. Oppenheimer (E.R. Oppenheimer, deceased, was a former navigator of RAF FC); extract memoir of Jack Fox (via

Edward Rogers, email correspondence October 2008, April 2009); logbook A.J. van der Heiden (completed a similar B-25 ferry in 1944).

[15] Extract memoir of Jack Fox (via Edward Rogers, email correspondence, October 2008, April 2009); Boer et al, Indië, pp 261-62.

[16] Listing of B-25s and B-26s arrived at Townsville and Archerfield 3-8-42 to 3-22-42 (listing pilot, type and AC number, arrival place and date (AHRA, records USAFIA, via Gordon Birkett; reader is advised that this listing records for the first four B-25s the place and date the pilots reported for the return trip to Hawaii i.e. the transportation office at Townsville instead of place and date of arrival); Air 38-24 Mitchell B-25's Pacific (The National Archives UK, archive Ferry Command RAF); CinC Pac War Diaries for March 1942, May 1, 1942 (U.S. National Archives, RG 38, file A16(4)(05), sn 01311, reel A15, the dates for Flight 23 are reporting and not actual dates); Group Headquarters Fiji 1940-1943, War Diary-Operations December 1941-March 1942 (The National Archives of New Zealand, AIR 129, Box 1, the dates on US Flight 23 are reporting and not actual dates); extract memoir of Jack Fox (via Edward Rogers, email correspondence October 2008, April 2009); letter 14 February 1942 NPC to Stettinus (U.S. National Archives, RG 169, Box 175); strength reports of 22, 25 and 30 March 1942 in "De belevenissen van Boot in Australie" (NIMH, collection Veuger/De Smalen). The strength of ten aircraft (in use, there was also an unserviceable B-25) on 22 March 1942 is also mentioned in a report on a conference held 22 February 1942, see [31]. See also Appendices, Table I for arrival dates and dates left Hamilton Field of the individual B-25s.

[17] G.J. Casius, "De aanschaf van B-25 bommenwerpers voor de ML-KNIL 1941-1942", pp 9-10, Mars et Historia, XXII-1 (January/February 1988); information received from Don McVicar c 1982.

[18] Diary notes A. Hagers (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.); interview with A.J. de Vries, 19 September 1973; extract memoir of Jack Fox and information on 17<sup>th</sup> BG pilots (email correspondence with Edward Rogers, October 2008, April 2009).

[19] Ibid.

[20] Email correspondence with Edward Rogers, October 2008, April 2009 (17<sup>th</sup> BG pilots) and 28 May 2014 (History 30<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron/22<sup>nd</sup> Air Base Group); Aircraft ferried from the U.S.A., B-25 in History 5th Air Force, p 248 (AHRA, Maxwell AFB, file 730.01); Mark, p 164; diary notes A. Hagers (see [18], Hagers flew back one of the B-25s with A.J. de Vries); interview with W.F. Boot, 1962 (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.); interview with A.J. de Vries, 19 September 1973; extract memoir of Jack Fox (incorrectly states that one of the B-25s hit a B-26 on landing; email correspondence with Edward Rogers, October 2008, April 2009); see also Appendices, Tables I and II for mentioned individual aircraft.

[21] Craven and Cate, vol. 1, p 337; W. Donald Thomas "Flight Radio Navigator: adventures with Pan American Air Ferries-1942" in Journal American Aviation Historical Society, Summer, 1984.

[22] History Ferry Command operations, foreign ferry deliveries Jan.-June 1942 (ATC, via AHRA, Maxwell AFB); see also Craven and Cate, vol. 1, p 338. PAAF started to ferry 72 B-25s for Russia March 1942.

[23] Logbook Don McVicar (information from his logbook supplied by Don McVicar c 1982); telegram NPC, Te Roller to Materiel Command, Lt Col Dyson, 21 August 1942 (U.S. National Archives, 452-1-3295 J).

[24] Letter NPC to Dutch Colonial Office, London, 18 September 1942 (NIMH, collection Ward, confirms the Air Corps Fiscal Year serials and the crash of 41-12468); logbook Don McVicar (see [23]).

[25] Craven and Cate, vol. 1, p 329 and vol. 7, pp 228-29 (maps); W. Donald Thomas “Flight Radio Navigator: adventures with Pan American Air Ferries-1942” in Journal American Aviation Historical Society, Summer, 1984; information supplied by Don McVicar c 1982 and R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M., 1990; photographs taken by former Radio Operator Charles Rector, who flew on N5-139 (Netherlands East Indies Aviation Yahoo Groups, message by Micky West, 9 July 2014). It should be noted that the island Ascension did not have an airfield at the time and that Christmas Island was not used on the Pacific route at the time the first four B-25s were ferried.

[26] Letter NPC to Dutch Colonial Office, see [24]; diary and other notes R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M. (information supplied by R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland, Esq, LL.M., 1990).

[27] Diary and other notes R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M. (see [26]); correspondence with A.D.M. Moorrees and H.J. Burgers, 1985; interview series with F. Pelder, 1990; Telegram HQ India for AOC, 16 March 1942 (via G.J. Tornij, with thanks to Gerben Tornij, confirms four B-25s delivered on this date); USAAF aircraft record cards of the five B-25s delivered (all show 17 March 1942 as the final date in the column Transferred/received, which is the date AC FC received the telegram from PAAF confirming delivery); photographs taken by former Radio Officer Charles Rector (see [25]), who flew on N5-139 and took a photograph also showing N5-145, on delivery (which is dated 14 March in the caption) at Bangalore.

[28] Logbook and other information supplied by Don McVicar (see [23]); diary and other notes R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M. (received a telegram from Java on 5 March 1942 mentioning that the ferry to British India was stopped after the sixth plane, see [26]).

[29] Logbook and other information received from Don McVicar (see [23]); telegram BDZ, London to Stove, Washington, 0321-1749-119, 21 March 1942 (Beleidszaken 1940-1942, telegrams 21 March 1942, copy with NIMH, collection Ward); interview with H.A. Maurenbrecher, 1962 (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.). See Appendices, Table I for movements of individual aircraft.

[30] Diary and other notes R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M. (see [26]); correspondence with A.D.M. Moorrees and H.J. Burgers, 1985; letters Geoffrey J. Thomas to G.J. Casius dd 20 August 1987, 17 May 1989 and 21 June 1989 (with thanks to Gerard Casius); letter Paul Jackson, Air International, April 1993, p 206.

[31] Telegram Van Mook to Dutch Colonial Office, London, 15 March 1942 (Beleidszaken 1940-1942, telegrams 15 March 1942; copies with NIMH, collection Ward).

[32] Reports on conferences held on 17, 18, 19, 22 and 23 March 1942 (AHRA, Maxwell AFB, file 706.168-1, Vol. 2, via J.L. Horsthuis and G.J. Casius and Australian National Archives, location Canberra). It is known that Van Oyen, or his representative Col C. Giebel, was also present at conferences about the disposal of NEI aircraft on 25 and 26 March 1942, but I was unable to retrieve conference reports.

[33] Telegram BSO to NPC, 0323-0940-21, 23 March 1942 and telegram HOLPURCOM, van den Broek, to prime-minister Gerbrandy, London, 23 March 1942 (Beleidszaken 1940-1942, telegrams 23 March 1942, copies with NIMH, collection Ward); memo NPC, Te Roller to Dutch representatives CCOS, 24 March 1942, “Summary of airplanes delivery” (NIMH, collection Ward). Reader is advised that telegrams of 23 March reflected the situation of the day before.

[34] Memo NPC, Te Roller to Dutch representatives CCOS, 24 March 1942, “Summary of airplanes delivery” (NIMH, collection Ward). From correspondence of B.J. Fiedeldij it is known that Van Oyen sent his telegram (mentioned in the memo of Te Roller) after a conference held in the afternoon of 22 March 1942.

- [35] Memo Te Roller, see [34]; interview with A.J. de Vries, 19 September 1973. See also Appendices, List I. It is unclear why the five airplanes at Hawaii were to be stopped as the number of 18 B-25s had not yet been reached.
- [36] Memo Chief of Air Staff to CG AAF Materiel Command, 28 March 1942 (U.S. National Archives, file 452.1-3295 J, via G.J. Casius); PNR-N-202 New Series (U.S. National Archives, RG 169, via G.J. Casius).
- [37] Report on conference held 23 March 1942, see [32]; interview with W.F. Boot, 1962 (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.); interview with A.J. de Vries, 19 September 1973; see Appendices, Table I for individual aircraft data.
- [38] Telegram CG AAF to Brett, Air 892, 26 March 1942 (AHRA, Maxwell AFB, records of 5th Air Force, via G.J. Casius); see Appendices, Table I for details about transferred airplanes.
- [39] Telegram Loudon, Washington, to Dutch Foreign Office, London, 29 March 1942 (Beleidszaken 1940-1942, telegram 497, forwards the text of the earlier telegram from Van Oyen, copy with NIMH, collection Ward).
- [40] The AAF in Australia to the Summer of 1942, p 59 and associated endnote 63 (AHRA, Maxwell AFB, numbered USAF historical studies 9); telegram Brett to War Dept, 28 March 1942 (AHRA, Maxwell AFB, records of 5th Air Force).
- [41] Interview with A.J. de Vries, 19 September 1973; see Appendices, Table I for individual aircraft data.
- [42] Ibid; Air 38-24 Mitchell, B-25's Pacific (The National Archives UK, archive Ferry Command RAF); Aircraft assignments 3rd Bomb Group, B25C (AHRA, Maxwell AFB, records of 5th Air Force); Aircraft ferried from the U.S.A., B-25 in History 5th Air Force, p 248 (AHRA, Maxwell AFB, file 730.01).
- [43] See Appendices, Table I for data on mentioned individual aircraft.
- [44] Diary A. Hagers (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.); strength report 30 March 1942 in "De belevenissen van Boot in Australie" (NIMH, collection Veuger/De Smalen).
- [45] History of the 3rd Bomb Group (Light) AAF (via AHRA, Maxwell AFB); The AAF in Australia to the Summer of 1942, p 59, p 61 and associated endnotes 63, 64 and 73 (AHRA, Maxwell AFB, numbered USAF historical studies 9); interview with A.J. de Vries, 19 September 1973 (confirms that additions to the original 12 B-25s were delivered from 28 March); diary notes of involved 3 BG pilots (email correspondence with Edward Rogers, October 2008, April 2009); see also Appendices, Table I for details on mentioned individual aircraft.
- [46] Cf [43].
- [47] Telegram Brett to CG AAF, 14 May 1942 (AHRA, Maxwell AFB, records of 5th Air Force); Air 38-24 Mitchell, B-25's, Pacific (Air 38-24, The National Archives UK, archive Ferry Command RAF); interview with A.J. de Vries, 19 September 1973; entries Technisch Journaal 18 Sq NEI and letters technical officer 18 Sq NEI (NIMH, collection Veuger/De Smalen).
- [48] Letter OC NEI Forces to Air Chief Marshal Charles S. Burnett, no 25, 31 March 1942 and subsequent comments of Burnett (Australian National Archives, location Canberra; copies with NIMH, collection Ward); Air Board establishment HD-53 (Australian National Archives, location Canberra); Operations record book 18 Sq NEI (Australian National Archives, location Canberra, copy with NIMH, collection Ward); diary A. Hagers (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.); memo nr. 1, C-18 Sq NEI to KNIL HQ, 28 May 1942 (NIMH, collection Ward); see Appendices, Table II for details on mentioned individual aircraft.
- [49] Cf [42]; diary notes A. Hagers (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.); interview with W.F. Boot, 1962 (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.). After

the war the incident grew to mythical proportions among former 3 BG personnel, with ever larger numbers of B-25s involved.

[50] Memo's nr. 1, 2 and 3 C-18 Sq NEI to KNIL HQ (NIMH, collection Ward); Operations record book 18 Sq NEI (Australian National Archives, location Canberra, copy with NIMH, collection Ward).

[51] Memo nr. 2, C-18 Sq NEI to KNIL HQ, 18 July 1942 (NIMH, collection Ward); Operations record book 18 Sq NEI (Australian National Archives, location Canberra, copy with NIMH, collection Ward); USAAF and RAAF individual aircraft record cards Project Mark I aircraft (Smithsonian/NASM, via J.L. Horsthuis, M.Sc. and Australian National Archives, location Canberra); see also Appendices, Table II for details on mentioned aircraft. The Project Mark I deliveries were considered to be the replacements for 18 Defence Aid aircraft given on loan to the USAAF.

[52] History of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group (Light) AAF, see [45]; Operations record book 18 Sq NEI, see [50].

[53] Telegram NPC, Te Roller, to Materiel Command, Lt Col Dyson, 21 August 1942 and letter NPC, Te Roller, to Lt Col Dyson, 8 September 1942 (U.S. National Archives, file 452.1-3295 J, via G.J. Casius); Aircraft Delivery Unit, Statistical Control Unit, 1 June 1942 (sic), "Airplane and Glider Acceptances, Factory Deliveries and Departures from the U.S.A., By Type, Model and Country, period Jan 1940 to Dec 1942 incl." (via AHRA, Maxwell AFB).

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### Abbreviations

AAF     Army Air Forces  
AC       Air Corps  
AOC     Air Officer Commanding

AFEC Automatic Flight Equipment Control  
 BDZ Bevelhebber der Zeestrijdkrachten (Commander Royal Neth. Navy)  
 BG Bombardment Group  
 BOAC British Overseas Airways Corporation  
 BSO Bevelhebber Strijdkrachten Oosten (Commander Neth. Forces in the Far East)  
 CAD Centraal Archieven Depot (Central Archives Storage, Dutch DoD)  
 CCOS Combined Chiefs of Staff  
 CG Commanding General  
 CO Commanding Officer  
 DA Defence Aid  
 DET Detachment  
 DoD Department of Defence  
 KNIL Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger (Royal Neth. East Indies Army)  
 MAB Munitions Assignment Board  
 ML Militaire Luchtvaart (Army Aviation Corps KNIL)  
 NAA North American Aviation  
 NEI Netherlands East Indies  
 NIMH Netherlands Institute for Military History  
 NPC Netherlands Purchasing Commission  
 PAAF Pan American Air Ferries Incorporated  
 PNR Purchase Negotiation Request  
 PRU Photographic Reconnaissance Unit  
 RAAF Royal Australian Air Force  
 RAF Royal Air Force  
 RG Record Group  
 RNMFS Royal Netherlands Military Flying School  
 USAAF United States Army Air Force  
 USAFIA United States Army Forces in Australia

## Appendices

**Table I B-25Cs ferried to Australia and British India © P.C. Boer (September 2009, revised August 2011, December 2012, June 2014, November 2014 and August 2016)**

**FY41-/ ML serial/ factory delivery date/ (to be) ferried by (details)/ destination +arrival date (date left Hamilton Field)**

(all dates day/month, year 1942; dates are local time)

Aircraft of the first ferry arrangements (14 Cons and 20 RAF FC respectively; became 36 ac in total as two were damaged (and returned USAAF) and replaced with ac brought forward from the second ferry arrangement of RAF FC). Eventually only eight ac were ferried by Consolidated, of which two were originally assigned RAF FC, as Cons could not furnish crews. Also ac 41-12438 de facto (due to late delivery after repairs) switched to 2<sup>nd</sup> ferry arrangement of RAF FC.

12440 N5-122 c 6/2; Cons ("received" NEI 13/2 but not officially transferred NEI, never ferried nor delivered to any USAAF unit); believed crashed on ferry flight with AC FC crew in USA, February 1942 [1]

12442 N5-123 6/2; Cons; prob. used as a ferry crew trainer Cons San Diego (rep. SAD 11/3; rep. Ham. AD 13/3); A 21/3 (left 17/3) [2]

12444 N5-124 9/2; Cons; A 4/3 (left 27/2) [2] [6]

12457 N5-125 6/2; RAF FC (rec. WPB 9/2; used as ferry crew trainer RAF FC from c 9/2; temp. based Dorval, Montreal, Canada; allocated AC FC 5/3, destination changed to A but at WPB 1/4; rep. WPB 2/4 destination Russia [3]

12462 N5-126 19/2; Cons changed to RAF FC c 25/2 (rec. WPB 1/3, rep. SAD 5/3; rep. Ham. AD 11/3); A 18/3 (left 13/3) [4]

12470 N5-127 17/2; Cons changed to RAF FC c 25/2 (rec. WPB 26/2, rep. SAD 5/3; scheduled to leave for A period 9-12/3, but initially remained at SAD; rep. Hamilton AD 26/3); A 6/5 (left 12/4 but delayed en route) [10] [26]

12471 N5-128 19/2; Cons changed to RAF FC c 25/2 (rec. WPB 26/2; allocated AC FC 5/3, destination changed to A but at WPB 1/4); rep. WPB 4/4 destination Russia [10]

12476 N5-129? 25/2; RAF FC (rec. WPB 2/3, arr. SAD c 5/3); A 6/4 (left 25/3) [9] [25]

12478 N5-130? c 25/2; RAF FC (arr. SAD c 3/3, rep. SAD 7/3; ferry orders crew dated 5/3; rep. Ham. AD 6/3; scheduled to leave for A period 9-12/3, but initially remained at SAD; rep. Hamilton AD 21/3); A 18/4 (left 12/4) [20] [25]

12481 N5-131? 25/2; RAF FC (rec. WPB 2/3; arr. SAD c 5/3; scheduled to leave for A period 9-12/3, but initially remained at SAD); A 25/3 (left 21/3); crashed on arrival Archerfield, total loss [7] [9] [25]

12437 N5-132 6/2; Cons changed to RAF FC c 18/2 (possibly damaged and repaired, arr. Memphis 2/3; rep. SAD 5/3; rep. Ham. AD 11/3); A 17/3 or 18/3 (left 13/3) [8]

12455 N5-133 c 15/2; Cons (rep. SAD 12/3); A 21/3 (left 17/3) [23]

12464 N5-134 7/2; Cons; A 4/3 (left 27/2) [6] [8] [11]

12466 N5-135 12/2; Cons; A 5/3 (left 27/2) [6] [23]

12439 N5-136 c 6/2; Cons; A 3/3 (left 27/2) [6] [8]

12443 N5-137 5/2; Cons changed to RAF FC c 18/2 (rec. WPB 2/3 possibly ex Memphis; arr. SAD 3/3); A 28/3 (left 19/3) [2] [5]

12472 N5-138 18/2; Cons changed to RAF FC c 18/2 (rec. WPB 21/2; engine out 1/3 and in repair Miami; rep. SAD 11/3); A 25/3 (left 19/3) [5] [7] [9]

12507 N5-139 11/2; RAF FC (rec. WPB 22/2); Bangalore 14/3 [13]

12468 N5-140 11/2; RAF FC (rec. WPB 22/2); crashed Accra (with loss of three crew) en route to Bangalore [12] [13] [16]

12493 N5-141 14/2; RAF FC (rec. WPB 22/2; damaged WPB, ran into 41-12510 22/2; returned to USAAF but remained at WPB for repairs); repaired USAAF ?/4 and reassigned continental U.S.A. [14] [16]

12510 N5-142 c 18/2; RAF FC (rec. WPB 22/2; damaged WPB when 41-12493 ran into it 22/2; to be repaired at the cost of the NPC but condemned by the USAAF 7/4 [14] [16]

12445 N5-143 11/2; RAF FC (rec. WPB 20/2); Bangalore 16-17/3 [13]

12595 N5-144 17/2; RAF FC (rec. WPB 22/2); Bangalore 8-9/3 [13]

12509 N5-145 14/2; RAF FC (rec. WPB 22/2); Bangalore 14/3 [13]

12494 N5-146 17/2; RAF FC (rec. WPB 21/2; rep. SAD 11/3; rep. Ham. AD 13/3); A 21/3 (left 17/3) [15]

12496 N5-147 19/2; RAF FC changed to Cons (rep. in repair 5/3, probably stranded Memphis; rep. SAD 11/3; rep. Ham. AD 13/3); A 21/3 (left 17/3) [16]

12508 N5-148 14/2; RAF FC (rec. WPB 26/2); Bangalore 8-9/3 [13]

12438 N5-149 7/2; Cons but eventually ferried by RAF FC (rep. transferred SAD 2/3, but transfer deleted from ac record card; rep. in repair 5/3, stranded at Hamilton with engine problems and nose wheel brake assembly to be replaced, ac had been the reserve for the first Cons. ferry; 16/3 still in repair; rep. allotted Cons 26/3; rep. Memphis 26/3; rep. SAD 8/4, received RAF FC 17/4); A 25/4 (left 18/4) [17] [18]

12480 N5-150? c 27/2; RAF FC (rep. SAD 16/3); A 2/4 (left 23/3) [21] [24]

12482 N5-151 c 28/2; RAF FC (rep. SAD 13/3); A 29/3 (left 19/3 or 21/3); arrived Amberley, 29/3 ferried to Archerfield [8] [9]

12483 N5-152? c 1/3; RAF FC; A 25/3 (left 19/3) [7] [9] [24]

12511 N5-153? 28/2; RAF FC but changed to Cons (rep. SAD 11/3; rep. Ham. AD 13/3); accepted USAAF 19/2 but delayed delivery; A 21/3 (left 17/3) [24]

12441 N5-154? c 1/3; RAF FC (rep. SAD 13/3; rep. Ham. AD 19/3); A 29/3 (left 21/3); arrived Amberley, 29/3 ferried to Archerfield [9] [24]

12497 N5-155? 25/2; RAF FC (rec. WPB 2/3; rep. SAD 5/3; scheduled to leave for A period 9-12/3, but initially remained at SAD; rep. Hamilton AD 26/3); A 25/4 (left 12/4 but delayed arrival) [22] [25]

12498 N5-156? 25/2; RAF FC (rec. WPB 2/3; arr. SAD c 3/3; rep. Ham. AD 4/3; scheduled to leave for A period 9-12/3, but initially remained at SAD; rep. Ham. AD 16/3); A 25/3 (left 17/3) [7]

[9] [21] [22] [25]  
12499 N5-157? 24/2; RAF FC (rec. WPB 2/3; arr. SAD c 5/3; rep. Ham. AD 6/3; scheduled to leave for A period 9-12/3, but initially remained at SAD; rep. Ham. AD 19/3; A 6/4 (left prob. 25/3, delayed arrival) [25]

Aircraft of the second ferry arrangements (16 Consolidated and 10 RAF FC respectively; became 25 ac in total as two ac were brought forward to the 1st ferry arrangement of RAF FC and one ac was added, possibly to compensate for ac 41-12440 of the 1st ferry arrangement of Cons). Eventually ten ac to be ferried by Cons were ferried by RAF FC as Cons was unable to furnish crews. (Ferry batch structure unknown, first ten possibly as given below).

12484 N5-? c 28/2; RAF FC (rep. Ham. AD 16/3; rep. SAD 17/3; rep. Ham. AD 21/3); A 18/4 (left 12/4) [19]  
12485 N5-? c 3/3; RAF FC (rep. Ham. AD 16/3; rep. SAD 19/3; rep. Ham. AD 21/3); A 7/4 (left prob. 27/3, delayed arrival)  
12489 N5-? c 28/2; RAF FC (rep. Ham. AD 15/3; rep. SAD 17/3; rep. Ham. AD 22/3); A 18/4 (left 12/4) [19]  
12501 N5-161 c 26/2; RAF FC (rep. Ham. AD 8/3; scheduled to leave for A period 9-12/3, but initially remained SAD); A 25/3 (left 21/3) [7] [8] [9]  
  
12486 N5-? c 3/3; Cons changed to RAF FC; A 21/4 (left 18/4) [19]  
12487 N5-? c 3/3; Cons changed to RAF FC (rep. Ham. AD 16/3; rep. Memphis 26/3; rep. SAD 8/4); A 29/4 (left 22/4) [19]  
12500 N5-? c 3/3; Cons, not ferried (possibly used as a crew trainer by Cons) [19]  
  
12502 N5-? c 26/2; RAF FC (rep. Ham. AD 8/3; scheduled to leave for A period 9-12/3, but initially remained at SAD; rep. Memphis 26/3); A 22/4 (left 18/4) [19]  
12514 N5-166 c 26/2; RAF FC (rep. Ham. AD 8/3; scheduled to leave for A period 9-12/3, but initially remained at SAD); A 24/3 (left 19/3 or 21/3) [7] [9] [28]  
12515 N5-? c 27/2; RAF FC (rep. Ham. AD 8/3; scheduled to leave for A period 9-12/3; but initially remained at SAD; rep. SAD 11/3; rep. Ham. AD 23/3); A 18/4 (left 12/4) [19]  
  
12491 N5-? c 7/3; Cons changed to RAF FC; A 28/4 (left 22/4)  
12449 N5-? c 8/3; Cons changed to RAF FC; A 30/4 (left 23/4)  
12451 N5-? c 11/3; Cons changed to RAF FC; A 22/4 (left 18/4)  
12488 N5-? c 12/3; Cons changed to RAF FC; A 30/4 (left 23/4) [27]  
12490 N5-? c 14/3; Cons changed to RAF FC; A 22/4 (left 18/4)  
12448 N5-? c 18/3; Cons changed to RAF FC; A 6/5 (left 28/4)  
12447 N5-? c 20/3; Cons changed to RAF FC; A 28/4 (left 22/4)  
12450 N5-? c 26/3; Cons changed to RAF FC; A 22/4 (left 18/4)  
12492 N5-? c 9/3; ?, not ferried  
12503 N5-? c 10/3; ?, not ferried  
12512 N5-? c 11/3; ?, not ferried  
12513 N5-? c 12/3; ?, not ferried  
12506 N5-? c 17/3; ?, not ferried  
12505 N5-? c 25/3; ?, not ferried  
12452 N5-? c 31/3; ?, not ferried

Aircraft assigned NEI administratively only, probably to compensate for two ac of the 1<sup>st</sup> ferry arrangement of RAF FC that were returned to the USAAF and for the replacement of which two aircraft of the 2nd ferry arrangement of RAF FC had been added to the 1<sup>st</sup> ferry arrangement

12454 N5-? 20/4; not ferried; ac came from the NAA repair pool; ac not actually received NEI  
12460 N5-? 20/4; not ferried; ac came from the NAA repair pool; ac not actually received NEI

Not certain if the final two ac actually had a N5 serial allotted (this seems unlikely)

## General remarks

a. Basic research material used in compiling the dates for the above table were: Air 38-24 Mitchell B-25's Pacific (The National Archives UK, archive Ferry Command) and the USAAF ac record cards (Smithsonian/NASM via G.J. Tornij and AFHSO, Bolling AFB). The arrival dates in Australia are usually not mentioned on the ac record cards (see also c) and were copied from: Air 38-24; Listing of B-25s and B-26s arrived at Townsville and Archer Field 3-8-42 to 3-22-42, listing pilot, type and AC number, arrival place and date (AHRA, Maxwell AFB, records USAFIA); Aircraft assignments 3<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group, B-25C (AHRA, Maxwell AFB, records 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force) and Aircraft ferried from the U.S.A., B-25 in *History 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force*, p 248 and the original hand written document (AHRA, Maxwell AFB, File 730.01; reader is advised that in this doc. some arrival dates are one day later than the delivery dates given in Air 38-24, whenever this is the case I have considered the date in Air 38-24 as correct); diary notes A. Hagers (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M., confirms arrival dates first three ac in Australia), extract Memoir of Jack Fox (via Edward Rogers, confirms arrival date fourth ac that arrived in Australia); W.F. Boot, "De belevnissen van Boot in Australië" (NIMH, collection Veuger/De Smalen, confirms that two ac arrived on 29 March 1942 and five ac on 25 March 1942) and logbook info and notes received from Don McVicar c. 1982. The arrival dates in Bangalore were copied from the diary and other notes of R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M., dated photographs made by former Radio Officer Charles Rector, telegram HQ India for AOC, 16 March 1942 and the final transferred/received date on the USAAF ac record cards. The circa factory delivery dates are acceptance dates (=dates received) as mentioned on the ac record cards plus one day. Factory delivery dates mentioned in Table I are the dates the ac were delivered ex factory to the USAAF (see also c).

b. From NPC memo's and telegrams about the (planning of) ferry flights it is known that the ac (to be) ferried by RAF FC respectively Cons were grouped in separate batches and were allotted separate batches of N5 serials. The above table follows the ferry batch structure. Each ferry batch consisted of several smaller NEI assigned production batches (although these batches did not always fully overlap the ferry batches). The N5 serials were allotted by the NPC to individual ac on the basis of the expected delivery to the USAAF, mostly in small batches of three to five ac. (copies of NPC memo's and telegrams, records Military Attaché Dutch Embassy Wash. DC, Map Roos; nowadays deleted from the archive and destroyed already by 1990). Only 18 FY-N5 serial combinations are known directly from primary sources (FY serials of NEI ac N5-122, -123, -124, -125, -126, -132, -134, -137, -139, -143, -144, -145, -146, -148, -149, -151, -161 and -166 see the respective endnotes). The remaining combinations shown follow from the ferry batch structure and other evidence (see the respective endnotes).

c. The dates Transferred/received NEI given on the ac record cards are reporting dates that do not reflect actual take over (delivery to NEI) dates. For the first four ac ferried to Australia the date given is the date of arrival in Australia of the lead aircraft of the ferry group (which is the correct formal delivery NEI date for ac 41-12439 only), the system then changing to mentioning the date the ac left Hamilton Field as the date Transferred/received NEI (but with some mistakes and writing/copying errors), later changed to "Transferred/received X"=the date the aircraft left Hamilton Field for Australia with destination USAAF. Also many of the other dates (shipped or received) in the column Transferred of the ac record cards are reporting dates and not actual transfer dates, while other dates are "administrative" only referring to received or sent out paper work and not to the transfer of the ac itself. The final two dates in the Transferred/received column for the ac delivered in British India are telegram dates confirming the final ac has left Miami and the final ac has arrived Bangalore, respectively.

d. Basic policy of the NPC was not to use an N5 serial again for a new ac when the airplane carrying this serial originally was lost or reassigned (which was standard ML policy).

e. Basic policy of the NPC was to keep the FY serials in "up going" order when a batch of N5 serials was allotted (which was the standard pre-war ML policy with regard to c/n's).

f. Validity of the reconstruction given in Table I. Did I indeed research what I was trying to shed light on i.e. the ferrying of the ML registered B-25Cs that were actually received by the ML in Australia and British India?

1. The reconstruction of the ferry batches from NPC data given in Table I should in that case at least in part be confirmed by info from the ac record cards.

2. The reconstruction given in Table I of the order of the FY serials within the ferry batch structure which results in the presented order of N5 serials should in that case produce N5 serial-arrival date combinations which are in line with N5 serials from ac known from primary sources to have been with ML Det Archerfield or ML Det Bangalore.

3. As both Materiel Command and AC Ferrying Command used (expected) factory delivery dates for assigning B-25 production batches to the NEI respectively for the initial planning of the ferry flights for the NEI, the actual ferry dates of individual ac must be approximately in line with the factory delivery dates.

In my opinion all three questions can be answered positively. There are ac record cards of 20 aircraft which contain notes of the ac received at WPB and of one other ac (41-12478) it is known from the original ferry orders

for the crew that it was a RAF FC ferried ac with destination Australia. These 21 ac fall precisely in the RAF FC ferry batches given. The N5 serials known from logbooks, photographs and documents are the following. ML Det Archerfield: N5-123, -124, -126, -132, -133, -134, -135, -136, -137, -146, -151, -156, -161 and -166 plus (mentioned only once) "N5-165" which is probably a miswriting for N5-156 (flying hours summary A.J. de Vries, logbook K. de Bruyn and flying hours summary on a page from a military pocket book of an unknown pilot probably A. Hagers, via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.; memo C-18 Sq see endnote [8] and History 30<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron/22<sup>nd</sup> Air Base Group, see endnote [2]). ML Det Bangalore: N5-139, -143, -144, -145 and -148 (diary, logbook and other notes from R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M. and logbook notes H.J. Burgers; photographs Charles Rector of N5-139 and N5-145). Apart from N5-165 these N5 serials do all "fit". Going down through the batches the arrival dates, apart from ac that did not leave according to ac record card data, in general do go up when the delivery dates are followed and taking into account "filler aircraft".

#### Endnotes Table I

[1] According to NAA 41-12440 was the very first ac to be delivered to the NEI Air Force; ac also figured in a Cons brochure (photograph probably made February 1942 at San Diego). The ac record card for this ac suddenly ends on 13 February 1942 and there is no further mentioning of this B-25 in any USAAF record. There is also no accident report for this ac but when AC FC lost a plane that was DA/Lend-Lease in the period late 1941, early months of 1942 a report was often not made up.

[2] Flying hours summary A.J. de Vries (noted FY serials) and logbook K. de Bruyn (both flew these two ac while WOP/AG De Bruyn identifies them as N5-123/442, resp. N5-137/443). Ac 41-12444 is identified as Dutch 124 in History 30<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron/22<sup>nd</sup> Air Base Group (AHRA, via Edward Rogers).

[3] Photograph of ac at Dorval airport, Montreal mid February 1942 (RAF Ferry Command); identifies ac as 41-12457, while N5-125 is visible on fuselage and wing roots.

[4] NAA Publicity photograph dated February 1942 (FY serial and N5 serial both visible), serial link confirmed in History 30<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron/22<sup>nd</sup> Air Base Group (AHRA, via Edward Rogers).

[5] According to Don McVicar (former ferry pilot RAF FC) 41-12472/N5-138 was the first ac ferried to WPB from a new ferry batch; he took this ac as the lead ac of a group from the second six B-25s to go to India (switched to Australia 3 March). 41-12472 was followed a couple of days later by several more B-25s including 41-12443 which Don took when 41-12472 could not leave to Miami on 1/3 with an engine out. He eventually left San Francisco in 41-12443 for Australia on 19 March and arrived at Nandi on 27 March and at Archerfield on 28 March 1942 (telephone interview Don McVicar c 1982, citing from his logbook and notes).

[6] Telegram HOLPURCOM 27 February 1942 (lists FY serials of these ac as the first four that left for Australia).

[7] Memoir of Jack Fox, p. 25 as well as several witnesses of the Boot detachment state that five B-25s arrived on 25 March of which one crashed. However, according to Air 38-24 six B-25s arrived on that day (see [9]).

[8] Memo C-18 Sq to KNIL HQ nr. 2, 18 July 1942 (NIMH, collection Ward; mentions original N5 serials for these five ac); RAAF photograph of N5-151 (shows the ac with painted out but in part still readable FY serial); entries Technisch Journaal and letters from the technical archive of 18 Sq's Technical Officer on major repairs/overhauls (NIMH, collection Veuger/De Smalen) confirms FY serials of N5-132, -134 and -161. FY serial of N5-132 is also confirmed in History 30<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron/22<sup>nd</sup> Air Base Group (AHRA, via Edward Rogers). As the five FY serials from the first B-25s of 18 Sq are known from the AHRA documents mentioned in general remark a it is certain that N5-136 can only be 41-12439.

[9] According to the ML witnesses one B-25 arrived on 24 March and I have assumed that this was the lead plane of a group of six that arrived one day before the main party of five. The US aircraft record cards give only one B-25 with an arrival date of 24 March, the 41-12514. Of the five aircraft which arrived on 25 March it is certain that these included 41-12481 and 41-12501.

[10] In view of general remark e, the delivery dates and the ferry batch structure, and the known serial links of N5-122, -123, -124, -125 and -126, the serial links given are the only ones possible

[11] N5-134 was flown from Archerfield to Canberra on 1 April 1942 (18 Sq Operations Record Book, Australian National Archives, location Canberra but copy with NIMH, collection Ward).

[12] Date crash unknown; ac noted condemned 20 March 1942 (ac record card).

[13] Letter NPC to Dutch Colonial Office London, 18 September 1942 (NIMH, collection Ward; confirms FY serials and crash of 41-12468). Serial links derived from diary, logbook and other notes of R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M., logbook notes H.J. Burgers and correspondence with A.D.M. Moorrees (supplied the last three digits of FY serial and N5-serial of ac "M" for Moorrees). See note [4] of Table II for a discussion on the N5-serial for airplanes 41-12507 and -12509.

[14] Letter NPC Major Te Roller to Materiel Command Lieutenant Colonel Dyson, 8 September 1942 (U.S. National Archives, file 452.1-3295 J) confirms FY serials of the damaged aircraft.

- [15] Entries Technisch Journaal and letters from Technical Officer 18 Sq NEI (NIMH, collection Veuger/De Smalen; confirms this aircraft was redelivered to the ML ex USAAF and became N5-127, see Table II).
- [16] In view of general remark e, the ferry batch structure and the known serial links in the batch, N5-140, -141, -142 and -147 cannot be any other ac than 41-12468, 41-12493, 41 -12510 and 41-12496 respectively.
- [17] Photograph (collection A. Bovelt) confirms serial link, shows ac with USAAF stars.
- [18] Extract memoir of Jack Fox (via Edward Rogers) confirms 41-12438 stranded at Hamilton Field with engine problems and was the spare for the first four aircraft to be ferried to Australia by Cons; its nose wheel brake assembly was put onto 41-12439 at Hamilton Field.
- [19] The N5-serials with question mark and the order in which N5-? s are mentioned are just a suggestion of the author as there is insufficient data available to identify the serial links.
- [20] Date of ferry orders conform the original orders: AC Ferrying Command, Montreal Airport, Dorval, P.Q., Canada, Special operations order 54-14 date March 5, 1942 (via E.R. Oppenheimer, deceased, at the time navigator RAF FC).
- [21] Ac 41-12480 and -12498 flown by A.J. de Vries at Archerfield March 1942 (flying hours summary noting FY serials).
- [22] According to Don McVicar (tel. interview, c 1982) N5-155 and N5-154? (should, perhaps, be N5-156 in view of the order in which the serials were given) were two ac of a new ferry batch received by RAF FC; Don went along on test flights in both ac and noted N5 serials (the piece of the note with the FY serials was unfortunately torn off) but did not record test flights in his logbook. Ac N5-156 is also noted (once) in the logbook of K. de Bruyn.
- [23] FY serials mentioned in flying hours summary of A.J. de Vries and N5 serials mentioned in logbook K. de Bruyn more than once, indicating that these serials did belong to B-25s actually operated by the ML Det Archerfield. In view of general remark e, the factory delivery dates and the ferry batch structure, the given serial links are the only ones possible as the serial links for N5-132, -134, -136, -137 and -138 are known (see also [2] and [8]).
- [24] N5-serials with a question mark are just a suggestion of the author as there is insufficient data available to identify serial links. It is known from NPC data that 41-12441, -12480, -12482, -12483 and -12511 formed a separate ferry batch, while ac 41-12497, -12498 and -12499 were assigned RAF FC as “additional” ac see [25].
- [25] Telegram HOLPURCOM to KNIL HQ 5 March 1942 (lists all six as “additional” ac to be ferried to Australia by RAF FC); N5-serials with a question mark are just a suggestion of the author as there is insufficient data available to identify serial links. Judging from the delivery dates these ac are probably “filler ac”; one of the six is also mentioned in logbook K. de Bruyn (N5-156, mentioned once).
- [26] Noted as “diverted NEI” 27 July 1942 on the individual aircraft record card. This was probably done to indicate the source of the aircraft, which was lost 26 July 1942.
- [27] Noted as “diverted NEI” 1 June 1943 on the individual aircraft record card, probably to indicate the source of the aircraft. This aircraft was confirmed missing in action 1 June 1943.
- [28] E-mail Edward Rogers to author, 23 August 2016, with photograph of 41-12514 showing original N5-166 serial.

#### Abbreviations

- A Australia  
 Ac Aircraft  
 AC FC Air Corps Ferrying Command (USAAF)  
 C Circa (approximately)  
 Cons Consolidated  
 DA Defence Aid  
 Det Detachment  
 FC Ferry Command RAF  
 FY Fiscal Year (Air Corps serial)  
 Ham. AD Hamilton Air Depot (USAAF)  
 NIMH Netherlands Institute for Military History  
 NPC Netherlands Purchasing Commission  
 PAAF Pan American Air Ferries  
 Rec Received  
 SAD Sacramento Air Depot USAAF  
 WPB West Palm Beach  
 Rep. Reported

**Table II Early B-25Cs operated by 18 Sq NEI in Australia and ML Det Bangalore in British India period April-August 1942** © P.C. Boer (September 2009, revised August 2011, December 2012, June 2014 and August 2016)

(all dates: day/month/year 1942; all dates are local time)

N5-132 41-12437 ML Det Archerfield, arrived Canberra 10-21 April and to 18 Sq NEI, renumbered N5-122 c 21 June, became “hangar queen” July, nose wheel used to repair (the second) N5-126 (ex N5-161), transferred to USAAF 1 September, readied at Canberra with USAAF supplied wing tank and nose wheel and ferried to Amberley 7 December. [1] [2]

N5-134 41-12464 ML Det Archerfield, arrived Canberra 1 April and to 18 Sq NEI, unserviceable from 11 June as left engine needed overhaul, renumbered N5-123 c 21 June, serviceable again August, transferred to USAAF 1 September, ferried to Amberley 3 September. [1] [2]

N5-136 41-12439 ML Det Archerfield, arrived Canberra 10-21 April and to 18 Sq NEI, renumbered N5-124 c 21 June, transferred to USAAF 1 September, ferried to Amberley 3 September. [2]

N5-146 41-12494 ML Det Archerfield, transferred to 3 BG 25 March, 30 March damaged on landing at Charters Towers, reported reparable by USAAF late April. Transferred to the ML on completion of repairs in Brisbane June 1942, arrived at Canberra c 21 June and to 18 Sq NEI (became N5-127), transferred to USAAF 1 September, ferried to Amberley 3 September. [1] [2]

N5-151 41-12482 ML Det Archerfield, arrived Canberra 10-21 April and to 18 Sq NEI, renumbered N5-125 c 21 June, transferred to USAAF 1 September, ferried to Amberley 3 September. [1] [2]

N5-161 41-12501 ML Det Archerfield, arrived Canberra 10-21 April and to 18 Sq NEI, unserviceable May and June as parts needed for repair of nose wheel were ordered in the U.S., renumbered N5-126 c 21 June, serviceable again July, damaged in emergency landing near Moruya airstrip 21 July, flown to CMU Tocumwal RAAF for major overhaul after temporary repairs c 4 August, transferred to USAAF 1 September while still under repair with CMU. [1] [2]

N5-139 41-12507 ML Det Bangalore, ind. ac letter R, 7 April flown to Karachi for turret maintenance and training of NEI personnel, transferred to RAF 12 April (became E). [3][4]

N5-143 41-12445 ML Det Bangalore, ind. ac letter K, transferred to RAF 12 April, probably 14 or 15 April delivered at Karachi after completion of 100 hours maintenance (possibly became D). [3]

N5-144 41-12495 ML Det Bangalore, ind. ac letter C, transferred to RAF 12 April, 14 April delivered at Karachi (became B). [3]

N5-145 41-12509 ML Det Bangalore, ind. ac letter B, transferred to RAF 12 April, 15 April delivered at Karachi (became C). [3][4]

N5-148 41-12508 ML Det Bangalore, ind. ac letter M, transferred to RAF 12 April, 13 April delivered at Karachi (became A). [3]

Endnotes Table II

[1] Technisch Journaal 18 Sq NEI and letters technical officer 18 Sq NEI (NIMH, collection Veuger/De Smalen)  
[2] Operations record book 18 Squadron NEI (Australian National Archives, location Canberra; copy at NIMH, collection Ward).

[3] Diary notes R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.; logbook notes H.J. Burgers; correspondence and interviews with A.D.M. Moorrees, F. Pelder and H.J. Burgers; letters of Geoffrey J. Thomas to G.J. Casius, 20 August 1987, 17 May 1989 and 21 June 1989; letter of Paul Jackson, Air International, April 1993, 206. Although it may seem strange it is certain that N5-144 and -145 were “C” (for G. Cooke, its 1<sup>st</sup> pilot) respectively “B” (for H. van den Broek, its 1<sup>st</sup> pilot) when with the ML at Bangalore (see the photograph of N5-144 “C”) and vice versa when with 5/3 PRU April-May 1942.

[4] A photograph of airplane N5-145 shows it with 112509 on its tail; however, the logbook of H.J. Burgers gives for N5-145 serial AC41-12507. It may be possible that the wrong serial was painted on the tail of this airplane as happened in a few other cases documented. For example the later delivered N5-135 and N5-136 which went to 18 Sq NEI in Australia had their serials switched; N5-136 which was 41-12933 according to the aircraft documents, had 112912 (the serial of N5-135) on its tail judging from a photograph.