"The Most Forgotten Unit in the Most Forgotten Theatre of That War:" A History of the Mars Task Force in the Burma Theatre of World War II, August 1944-October 1945

Abstract
This thesis discusses the significance of the (MTF) in Burma during World War II and how the MTF has been generally overlooked by historians. What little historical attention the Mars Task Force has received has frequently been brief and inaccurate. The Mars Task Force was a classified Long Range Penetration Force that trekked some 300 miles behind enemy-lines and went on the offensive in Burma to weaken the Japanese in their war with the Nationalists Chinese. This epic march was on foot, with mules, and supplied through airdrops. This thesis represents one of the few studies of the Mars Task Force of any length and uses numerous primary sources to chronicle their activities during World War II. This thesis is also of significance in that it relieves the few surviving veterans of the burden of having been largely ignored and bestows on them the credit they have long deserved.

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The war was in many respects a continuation, after an uneasy 20-year hiatus, of the disputes left unsettled by World War I. The 40,000,000–50,000,000 deaths incurred in World War II make it the bloodiest conflict, as well as the largest war, in history. Along with World War I, World War II was one of the great
watersheds of 20th-century geopolitical history. It resulted in the extension of the Soviet Union's power to nations of eastern Europe, enabled a communist movement to eventually achieve power in China, and marked the decisive shift of power in the world away from the states of western Europe and toward the United States and the Soviet Union. The Allies suffered many defeats in the first half of the war. Two major British warships, HMS Repulse and HMS Prince of Wales were sunk by a Japanese air attack off Malaya on 10 December 1941. Following the invasion, the government of Thailand formally allied itself with Japan on 21 December. Japan invaded Hong Kong in the Battle of Hong Kong on 8 December, culminating in surrender on 25 December. January saw the invasions of Burma and the Dutch East Indies and the capture of Manila and Kuala Lumpur. Malaya and Singapore. Japanese forces met stiff resistance from III Corps of the Indian Army. Early in the war, India's military was more focused on British interests in the Middle East, especially as British planners feared the possibility of Russian military action in Asia, particularly to threaten India by an invasion in Afghanistan. Indian divisions first saw action in both North Africa as well as in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, where they gained valuable combat experience against the Italians (121). While they did not see front-line service against the forces of the Raj until 1944, they represented a serious propaganda threat (295). The section dealing directly with military history is perhaps the driest, in part because it reverts to a series of unit numbers and movements that are difficult to keep track of.