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HEADQUARTERS
38TH TROOP CARRIER SQUADRON AAF
LAURINBURG-MAXTON ARMY AIR BASE

Maxton, North Carolina
1 April 1944

HISTORICAL REPORT FOR MONTHS OF FEBRUARY & MARCH, 1944

ENGLISH GLIDER SNATCHED FROM GROUND BY C-47: This caption would have appeared in daily newspapers had reporters been present at the colossal event. For the first time in the history of the world, an English "Horsa" Glider was picked up from the ground by a C-47.

The first "Horsa" was sent to us from the Philadelphia Navy Yard sometime back in October 1943, when the 38th Troop Carrier Squadron was stationed at Camp Mackall, North Carolina. Lt. Col. "Mike" Murphy was the first member to fly the English Glider. He, in turn, taught 2nd Lt. Julian H. Hall, who continued in the capacity of "Horsa" instructor.

Since that period in October, 2nd Lt. J. R. Hall has checked out approximately 30 men as first pilots. Hundreds of students have been given familiarization rides, and a ride in a "Horsa" is now considered part of a GP's curriculum.

When interviewed about the "Horsa" pick-up episode, Lt. Hall exclaimed "Smoothest pick-up I ever flew". For a half hour, Lt. Hall went into raptures about the "Horsa" and the pick-up system.

The pick-up system was introduced to the 38th Troop Carrier Squadron in November 1943 by 1st Lt. O. J. Decker, who came to us from Wright Field, Ohio.

This system is a method of towing a glider from the ground into full flight condition by a plane which remains in flight during the entire operation. Its advantages over the standard glider take-offs are manifold. Several of the important advantages are as follows:

- a. Terrain unsuitable for towship operation such as soft, uneven ground and limited areas, still allow glider take-offs via the pick-up method.
- b. Recovery of the valuable glider following a tactical mission effectively decreases materiel expenditure.

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- c. Delivery of an airworthy glider ready to perform again at a substantial saving in time and man hours.

The necessary pick-up equipment consists of the following:

- a. A C-47 modified with the pick-up unit (an installation weighing approximately 700 pounds)
- b. Special length nylon ropes and two poles 12' high to support the nylon rope in the air. This allows the pilot of the pick-up plane to swoop down low over the poles and hook on to the nylon rope with a hook that is supported below the airplane by a 20' wooden arm.

The pick-up procedure, itself, is fairly simple. The glider, to be snatched, remains at rest in a position facing into the wind. A rope attached to the glider angles off to the right and extends outward 225 feet. A nylon loop with a circumference of 80 feet supported by two 12 foot poles approximately 22 feet apart is attached to the end of the 225 foot rope. The plane swoops down on the starboard side of the glider at a speed determined by the weight of glider and condition of ground. A wooden arm guides the rope into the hook and the hook unclips from the arm. The hook is attached to 1050 feet of 5/8" flexible cable and is wound around the drum in the pick-up unit installed in the C-47. The Cable pay-out is resisted by a set of multiple disk brakes which gradually and smoothly accelerates the glider to the speed of the tow-ship. The glider usually ends its acceleration period in seven or eight seconds and 600 or 700 feet behind the plane. The pick-up unit is equipped with a motor to wind in the cable when the occasion requires. (Exhibit 44-3A, "Pick-up of Horsa", and diagrams, Exhibit 44-3B showing "Pick-up System", are attached hereto.)

On March 9, 1944, Lt. Col. "Mike" Murphy was towing a CG-13 from Stout Field, Indianapolis, Indiana. The glider was flying in low tow position when suddenly the rope broke loose from the tug ship, flew back, and wrapped itself around the wheel. Lt. Hall, who was piloting the CG-13, was forced to land near the town of Abemarle, approximately 60 miles northeast of Charlotte, North Carolina. Two hours and fifty-five minutes after the emergency cut-off, the CG-13 was in the air. How was this feat made possible? Again, it was Lt. Decker and his pick-up system which had come to the rescue. It is estimated that at least 400 man hours were saved by this operation.

Since November 1943, at least 500 "Pick-ups" have been accomplished. Immediately following the December maneuver, 55 gliders were salvaged by this method, with 76 gliders salvaged following the January maneuvers. At least 16 were snatched from various areas; 55 gliders were picked-up at Trop, Ohio. The cost of dis-assembling, freighting and re-assembling these gliders would have been enormous had the pick-up system not been used. Potential savings in time, manpower and capital remains unlimited for future operations.

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