



Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Carew

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Tom Carew parachuted into France on the night of August 26, 1944, as a member of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) "Jedburgh" Team "Basil". His companions were Captain Robert Rivière of France and Technical Sergeant John L. Stoyka of the US Army. Dropped south of Besançon, close to the Swiss frontier, their task was to make contact with the local Resistance groups and help to arm and organise them. His personal motto was "Luck comes to the prepared mind", but his first Jedburgh operation had an inauspicious start.

Their pilot had difficulty finding and identifying the drop-zone recognition letter but eventually dropped them at low altitude after six circuits. Rivière broke a finger, none of their personal kit was dropped with them and the vital radio set was lost. They made almost immediate contact with the local Resistance, however, and were taken to the nearby Château de Grange-Maillot where, according to Carew, they suffered from excessive hospitality. Discovery of a radio, not their own, the following day, allowed contact with London to be established and a request was dispatched for arms for the 500 members of the Resistance in the area.

Ninety-three Jedburgh teams, or "Jeds", as they were known, each of three men, were dropped in France in the days and weeks following D-Day on June 6, 1944, two on the actual day. They were not spies and dropped in uniform as proof of that. The team members were drawn almost exclusively from British, French and American volunteers, but a few others with appropriate skills were included. All trained at Milton Hall, Peterborough. The teams were dropped in widely dispersed locations but the overall purpose was to harness the activities of the local Resistance movements to help rather than hinder the Allied defeat of the German forces — and the liberation of France.

Having established contact with London, Carew's Basil team and another, which dropped on August 28, were instructed to prepare an attack by the Resistance Groupement Frontière and a regular French battalion on the German garrison at Mouthe. The town was taken after two days fierce fighting. Carew then left for Salins to concentrate on organising what became the partisan Régiment Franche-Comté. Following the liberation of Paris on August 25, he was withdrawn from France, being mentioned in dispatches for his services and awarded the Croix de Guerre.

Thomas Arthur Carew was born in Dublin, the son of a former officer of the Royal Navy who had served at the Dardenelles. He was educated at the Perse School, Cambridge, and the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, from where he was commissioned into the Royal Artillery in 1938.

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He took part in the ill-starred campaign in Norway and volunteered for service with SOE after serving for a while in Gibraltar. On return from France in the autumn of 1944, he and the other surviving British Jeds were given the option of going back to their parent units or volunteering for service with the SOE Force 136 against the Japanese in the Far East. Carew chose the latter and sailed for Bombay with other volunteers in early November.

Promoted to major to lead a Jedburgh team comprising Captain John Cox and Sergeant John Sharp, who had served with Jedburgh teams in France, and an officer familiar with the people and language of Arakan, he was parachuted into western Burma two days after Christmas 1944. There had been no time for any jungle training — they had been in the South-East Asian theatre for barely a week. His team's task was to make contact with local partisans and report back on the movement and concentration of Japanese troops to assist in the 14th Army and RAF operations against them.

After making contact with a local guerrilla group, Carew called for an air attack on a concentration of Japanese troops at Minzegyang, which inflicted about 200 casualties on January 4, 1945. Subsequently, he organised a series of ambushes by the guerrilla groups, inflicting more than 100 casualties and, rather more importantly, disrupting the enemy's logistic support at the time of General Slim's third and decisive campaign to clear Arakan of Japanese troops.

The success of this operation, code-named Camel, was attributed very largely to Carew's personal courage, coolness and resourcefulness, for which he was awarded the DSO. By the time the citation for this award was submitted, he had been withdrawn from Arakan and parachuted in to the Pegu Yomas. This broad strip of territory, between the Irrawaddy river and the Rangoon-Mandalay railway, was the obvious refuge for the bulk of the Japanese 28th Army withdrawing southwards as General Slim advanced south from Meiktila into central Burma.

Carew attributed his success in working with the Burmese resistance and other groups to his "Irishness" and belief in a new independent Burma, in sharp contrast to the British civil servants of the prewar regime who, isolated in northern India for the duration, persisted in the view that restoration of the old colonial structure was an essential precursor to any form of political advance.

The most significant event of his second Jedburgh operation in Burma was his meeting with the commander of the Burma Defence Army, General Aung San, father of Aung San Suu Kyi, today's leader of the Burmese National League for Democracy. Slim was suspicious of Aung San, because of his prewar anti-British stance and co-operation with the Japanese, but was interested to meet and persuade him to operate under Allied command. Carew had a hand in facilitating safe conduct for Aung San to 14th Army headquarters in April 1945, when Slim decided he could do business with him and subsequently arranged for their co-operation in the final defeat of the Japanese in Burma.

At the end of the war in the Far East, Carew returned to the Royal Artillery and served with 6th Airborne Division in Palestine. He was later an instructor at the Mons Officer Cadet School in Aldershot and an intelligence officer in Trieste. He retired as a lieutenant-colonel in 1958 to begin a new career as a boat builder. He also set up his own management consultancy and was a pioneer of employee out-placement. He later built a house in France and lived there.

His wartime marriage to Margot Goodchild was dissolved soon after the war and he married Jane Suckling in 1953. This was also dissolved and in 1975 he married his business partner Jill Strahan, who predeceased him. He is survived by two sons and two daughters of his second marriage.