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BLOOD FLOWN TO FRONT LINE

Arakan front (April 5th delayed)

Blood, given by soldier volunteers from a British battalion in Calcutta less than 24 hours before, came into a front line hospital in Arakan today as the first consignment under a new transfusion service for 14th Army wounded, writes an officer observer.

In containers packed with ice, the blood was flown from Calcutta, transferred to a waiting car at a forward airfield and then rushed to a refrigerator at the hospital. This hospital is a mile from the fighting round the tunnels on the Maungdaw-Buthidaung road. In the battle are men of a West Country regiment, the same regiment from which the blood donors came. The blood was fresh and better for the treatment of certain battle casualties than the dry or liquid plasma which has so far been supplied by the transfusion service back in India. Front line surgeons who wanted fresh blood for their wounded often found themselves up against battle conditions. It was very difficult, in the time available, to trace men of the correct blood group - blood from the wrong group will kill a patient as surely as a bullet - so the problem was put up to the battalion in Calcutta and a call made for men of the universal group which can be transfused to anyone without harm.

The first fifteen volunteers from the battalion gave their blood at 4 p.m. on Monday; it was sealed in containers and put to cool in a refrigerator overnight. Early today, it left by air for the Arakan travelling in a special ice box. At 2.30 pm it reached the hospital near the tunnels.

Fresh blood has this disadvantage - even when refrigerated it can be used for only ten days after it is taken from the donor so to keep up the supply for Arakan wounded, a weekly air despatch service has now been organised. Universal group volunteers from other British regiments in India will carry on as new sources of supply are needed.