

DECLASSIFIED
SECRET

REPORT ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE
DURING THE CAMPAIGNS IN MALAYA AND NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES
8TH DECEMBER 1941 to 12TH MARCH 1942

BY

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FROM 11TH FEBRUARY, 1942

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- Malaya, showing aerodromes.
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 - Singapore Island.
 - Java.
 - Western Java, showing Japanese advance.
 - Indian Ocean.
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FORBWORD

A report on the operations in Malaya and the N.E.I. would be incomplete without a survey of the situation in the Far East before war broke out there. A convenient date for beginning such a survey is 1st June 1941, soon after the date, 24th April 1941, on which the late Air Vice-Marshal C.W. Pulford, C.B., O.B.E., A.F.C., became Air Officer Commanding, R.A.F., Far East Command.

A number of other newly posted Senior Officers also took up their new duties about the same time, the more important amongst them being Lieut.Gen. A.E.Percival (G.O.C. Malaya - 16th May 1941), Air Commodore C.O.F.Modin (A.O.A. at A.H.Q. 10.6.41), Group Captain A.G.Bishop (Group Captain Ops. at A.H.Q. 1.6.41) and the late Group Captain E.B.Rice (Fighter Defence Commander of Singapore and Co-ordinator of Air Defences of Malaya, both newly established appointments, 10.7.41).

Although some reference is necessarily made to several matters which occurred before 1st June 1941, the survey, in general, deals with the period between that date and the outbreak of war. It indicates the measures taken immediately beforehand to prepare the Command for war, and paints a picture of the situation as it existed on the outbreak of hostilities.

The narrative contains only brief reference to developments at Hong Kong, Burma and Indian Ocean bases, operational control of which ceased to be the responsibility of the A.O.C., Far East Command, soon after the Japanese landed in Malaya. Their presence in the Command during the pre-war period did, however, very appreciably divert the attention and work of the staff and services of the Command from other pressing matters of local application, and to this degree affected the preparations for war in Malaya.

Some reference is necessary to the sources of information on which the report is based.

Official records are few and incomplete, and consist chiefly of brief situation reports and a few files of correspondence at the Air Ministry on important matters. Most records kept in the Far East had to be destroyed to prevent their capture by the Japanese.

Reports have been obtained from a number of officers who held responsible appointments in the Far East; but these are by no means authoritative. Most of them were written in December 1945 or January 1946 when the writers had been actively employed in other theatres of war, or had been prisoners for more than three years since the events took place which they were asked to describe. Several officers who could have given valuable information have died in captivity or on operations.

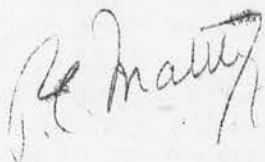
Much detail has been omitted which might have been included; but it has been considered preferable, for the sake of clarity, to mention only those matters which are necessary to establish important events, and to elucidate the factors governing action taken at the time.

Within these limitations, every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, and the report, as a whole, is believed to give a true picture of the campaign from the air aspect. It

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should, therefore, contain the necessary data from which correct deductions can be drawn.

The whole of the report has been written under my direction and on my responsibility. The first two sections are written on behalf of the late Air Vice-Marshal Pulford who held his command until the 11th February 1942, two days before he left Singapore. I myself arrived in Singapore on the 4th January 1942, and I firmly believe that there is nothing in the report covering the events with which Air Vice-Marshal Pulford was concerned with which he would not agree. For the sake of continuity the third person has been used throughout.



Air Vice-Marshal
Royal Air Force

LONDON
24th July 1946

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF IMPORTANT EVENTS

1940.

- July. Appreciation of the situation in the Far East by Chiefs of Staff.
- October. Conference at Singapore on defence of Far East.
- November. Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham appointed C-in-C., Far East.

1941.

- April 24. Air Vice-Marshal C.W. Pulford appointed A.O.C., R.A.F. Far East Command, vice Air Vice-Marshal J.T. Babington.
- May 16. Lieut.-Gen. A.E. Percival appointed G.O.C., Malaya, vice Lieut.-Gen. L.V. Bond.
- August. Aircraft, probably Japanese, reported flying over N. Malaya.
- September. Conference between Allied Far East Representatives in Singapore.
- November. R.A.F. Commission sent to S. China to report on possible formation of an International Air Force.
- November. Increasing Japanese activity in S. Indo-China. Japanese cruisers and destroyers arrive in S. China Sea. Japanese treble aircraft strength in Indo-China.
- November 22. Major Japanese expedition reported to be assembling in French Indo-China ports.
- December 2. H.M.S. "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse" arrive in Singapore.
- December 3. Plan for Allied air Reconnaissance of S. China Sea put into full force.
- December 6. Two Japanese convoys escorted by warships sighted off south point of Indo-China steaming west. Admiral Sir Tom Phillips appointed C-in-C., Eastern Fleet.
- December 7. Japanese ships sighted heading south of Singora.
- December 8. Simultaneous outbreak of hostilities at Hong Kong and in Malaya, the Philippines and Hawaii. Japanese land at Kota Bahru. Singapore bombed, northern aerodromes in Malaya attacked. "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse" put to sea for Singora.
- December 10. H.M.S. "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse" sunk by aircraft S.E. of Kuantan.
- Mr. A. Duff Cooper appointed Cabinet Representative in the Far East.
- December 12. Army withdraws south of Jitra.
- December 17. Army withdraws to Perak River
- December 18. Inter-Allied Conference at Singapore.
- December 23. Withdrawal of R.A.F. to bases on Singapore Island.

/December 25.

December 25. Hong Kong surrenders

December 27. Lieut.-Gen. Sir Henry Pownall succeeds Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham as C-in-C. Far East.

December 30 -
January 3, 1942. Fighting at Kuantan.

December 31. R.A.F. activity over Borneo ceases.

1942.

January 2. Army withdraws south of Kampar.

January 7. Army falls back behind Slim River line.

January 13. Arrival at Singapore of first Hurricane reinforcements.

January 14. Army withdraws south of Gemas.

January 15. Gen. Sir Archibald Wavell takes over Supreme Allied Command, S.W. Pacific (Abdacom).

January 22. Army withdraws south of Muar.

January 26. Japanese landing at Endau.

January 28-31. Withdrawal of all troops to Singapore Island.

January 30. Withdrawal of R.A.F. Squadrons to Sumatra completed except for a token force of fighters. Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse appointed Chief of the Air Staff to Abdacom.

February 8. Japanese land on Singapore Island.

February 10. Last R.A.F. aircraft withdraw from Singapore to Sumatra.

February 11. Air Vice-Marshal P.C. Maltby (Assistant A.O.C. from January 12th) appointed A.O.C. vice Air Vice-Marshal C.W. Pulford.

February 14. Japanese paratroops attack P.l. aerodrome Sumatra.

February 15. Singapore surrenders. Japanese troop-carrying barges engaged in the Palembang River. Second paratroop landing at P.l. Japanese established near Palembang town.

February 16. Sumatra evacuated.

February 22. Abdacom disbanded.

February 26. Japanese convoy located at southern end of Macassar Straits steaming south.

February 27-28. Battle of Java Sea.

March 1. Japanese land in east, west and central Java.

March 8. Java surrenders.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE REPORT.

- G.H.Q. - General Headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief, Far East.
- H.Q.M.C. - Headquarters of the General Officer Commanding, Malaya Command.
- A.H.Q. - Air Headquarters of the Air Officer Commanding, R.A.F. Far East Command.
- Norgroup - Code name for operations group H.Q. controlling air operations in Northern Malaya.
- Abdacon - Code name for Supreme Allied Headquarters, S.W. Pacific, which formed on 15th January 1942 and then absorbed G.H.Q.
- Abdair - Code name of the Air Section of Supreme Allied H.Q. S.W. Pacific.
- Westgroup - Code name for A.H.Q. on the formation of Supreme Allied H.Q., S.W. Pacific.
- Recgroup - Code name for Allied Air Reconnaissance Group, responsible for seaward reconnaissance of whole sphere of Supreme Allied Command, S.W. Pacific.
- Britair - Code name for A.H.Q. in Java after the dissolution of Supreme Allied H.Q., S.W. Pacific.
- A.H.K. - Headquarters of the Dutch Commander-in-Chief at Bandoeng, Java.
- F.E.C.B. - Far East Combined Bureau - inter-service intelligence organisation absorbed into G.H.Q.
- A.I.F. - Australian Imperial Forces.
- M.V.A.F. - Malayan Volunteer Air Force.
- A.M.E. Station - Air Ministry Experimental Station (Radar)
- R. & S.U. - Repair and Salvage Unit
- A.S.P. - Air Stores Park
- M.U. - Maintenance Unit
- P.R.U. - Photographic Reconnaissance Unit
- A.A.C.U. - Anti-Aircraft Co-operation Unit
- O.T.U. - Operational Training Unit
- I.E. - Initial Equipment
- I.R. - Immediate Reserve
- (F) - Fighter
- (B) - Bomber
- (G.R.) - General Reconnaissance
- (T.B.) - Torpedo Bomber
- (F.B.) - Flying Boat

SECTION I

PRE-WAR PREPARATIONS

SCOPE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE,
FAR EAST

By mid-summer 1941 the geographical area of the Far East Command, Royal Air Force, included Hong Kong, Borneo, Malaya, Burma and then, embracing Ceylon, stretched across the Indian Ocean to Durban and Mombasa.

2. The main function of the Command was the protection of the Naval Base in Singapore. The secondary function, in co-ordination with the Royal Navy, was to ensure the security of the trade routes in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. The Headquarters of the Command was in Singapore.

3. In November 1940, Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham was appointed Commander-in-Chief, Far East, and became responsible for the operational control and general direction of training of all British land and air forces in Malaya, Burma and Hong Kong, for the co-operation of the defence of those territories, and for similar responsibility for the British Air Forces it was proposed to locate in Ceylon, the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal. He was provided with a small operational staff and set up his headquarters at Singapore.

4. The formation of G.H.Q. in no way relieved the Air Officer Commanding, Royal Air Force, of his responsibility (which was now within the policy laid down by the Commander-in-Chief) for ensuring the effective co-operation of his Command with the Naval and Military Commands throughout the area, and it did not alter his position vis-à-vis these Commands, or the several Civil Governments and authorities with which he dealt on administrative matters.

THE BASIS OF DEFENCE IN THE FAR EAST

General Plan

5. The general defence plan was based on an appreciation written by the Chiefs of Staff in July 1940 (C.O.S. (40) 592 dated 31.7.40). Briefly stated, this paper laid down that defence was to rely, in the absence of a Fleet, primarily on air power. Until this air power became available substantial additions to the land forces in Malaya would be required.

The Chiefs of Staff recognised that, for the defence of the Naval Base, it was no longer sufficient to concentrate upon the defence of Singapore Island but that it had become necessary to hold the whole of Malaya. Their intention was to replace, by the end of 1941, the existing establishment of 84 obsolete and obsolescent aircraft by an air strength of 336 modern first-line aircraft backed up by adequate reserves and administrative units. This strength was allocated to the defence of Malaya and Borneo and to trade protection in the N.E. half of the Indian Ocean; it did not include aircraft necessary for the defence of Burma.

6. On the basis of this C.O.S. paper, the three Services in Malaya produced a tactical appreciation, which became the agenda of a conference held at Singapore in October 1940 attended by representatives from all Commands in the Far East. This conference recommended that the C.O.S. figure of 336 aircraft should be increased to 582 which it considered the minimum strength of Air Forces required to meet defence commitments in the Far East. The Chiefs of Staff considered, however, that the Commanders in the Far East over-assessed the threat and that 336 first-line aircraft should give a sufficient degree of security. The conference also recommended that until the additional air forces were provided,

the Army in Malaya should be substantially reinforced.

7. Meanwhile, talks had been initiated between the British, U.S.A. and Dutch Staffs with the object of obtaining concerted action in the event of war breaking out with Japan. After the appointment of the Commander-in-Chief, Far East, in November 1940, further Allied conferences were held in Singapore. By April 1941 agreed general plans had been drawn up.

Allied Air Plans

8. For the purpose of planning, it was assumed that the Japanese would not be able to attack simultaneously at several widely dispersed places in the Far East, in particular that they would not challenge the combined British, American and Dutch might. It was assumed, therefore, that Allied air forces would be able to reinforce one another. Preparations for mutual help were to be made as follows:-

- (a) From Malaya to reinforce the N.E.I. - 4 Bomber Squadrons R.A.F.
- (b) From N.E.I. to reinforce Malaya - 3 Bomber and 1 Fighter Squadrons, Dutch Army Air Service.
- (c) From the Philippines to reinforce Malaya - All U.S. Army and Navy Air Service Units available, but only if the Philippines were evacuated.

Each service accepted responsibility within its own territory for providing the necessary bases, where stocks of bombs petrol and lubricants peculiar to the respective air forces which might use them were to be laid down.

9. Further matters of importance which were settled at these conferences were:-

- (a) Responsibility for air reconnaissance over the South China Sea; this was co-ordinated and defined.
- (b) Allied cypher and signal procedure.
- (c) Allied Naval/Air recognition signal procedure.

10. Concurrently with the above, the Far East Command R.A.F. was authorised to provide for operating general reconnaissance aircraft in the Bay of Bengal, Ceylon and the Indian Ocean.

Implications of the Plans

11. Here it is opportune to stress the implications of the expansion programme authorised by the Chiefs of Staff; for the mere statement that the strength was to be raised from 84 obsolete or obsolescent aircraft to 336 modern types conveys no true impression of the extensive preparatory measures required before this force could be accommodated and operated.

12. It should be remembered that until the new policy had been decided by the Chiefs of Staff, defence had been ^{largely} confined to the vicinity of Singapore Island: thereafter it included the whole of Malaya.

13. The first step was the construction of bases. 16 new ones had to be found and built in Malaya, a country largely covered with secondary jungle remote from human habitations. Of the bases in existence in the colony 5 needed modernisation and 2 reconstruction. Concurrently, construction of new maintenance and storage units was necessary, also throughout the colony.

14. Fighter defence had to be built up ab initio; none whatever had existed hitherto. In addition to bases for fighter squadrons provision was necessary for an extensive radar system, for a modernised Observer Corps expanded on a primitive one already existing, for communications throughout the colony, and for Fighter Headquarters to control the whole.

15. At the same time, 8 new bases had to be built in Burma and 3 in Ceylon. Refuelling bases for flying boats were needed at numerous islands in the Indian Ocean from the Andamans to the coast of Africa.

16. The second step was to provide the authorized increase - the new units; the new aircraft; the ancillary services and the staffs for their operation on modern lines; and finally the modern equipment, supplies and local reserves for all.

17. The third step was to train the whole Command in conjunction with the Navy, Army and Civil Defences under the circumstances existing in the Far East, and concurrently to introduce up-to-date methods of operating.

18. The whole presented a truly formidable expansion programme, made still more formidable by the fact that time was short. The end of 1941 was the date by which the Chiefs of Staff planned for the expanded force to be ready for war. A combination of circumstances was, however, to result in realisation falling far short of the mark, dominating all of which were the prior and acute claims of the war in Europe and the Middle East.

ACTION TAKEN IN MALAYA TO IMPLEMENT PLANS

Development of Air Bases

Difficulties of construction

19. The siting of aerodromes in Malaya was mainly influenced by the topography of the country. A rugged, heavily forested mountain chain runs down the centre of the Peninsula cutting off the eastern and western coastal belts from each other until Johore is reached at its southern end. Much of both coastal belts is covered by a medley of broken hills; the rest consists of plains planted with rubber and paddy or of potential mining sites. Rainfall is heavy throughout the year, increasing as the central mountain range is approached. Constant cloud over this range handicaps flight from one side of the peninsula to the other. Consequently, in order to provide reconnaissance over the South China Sea a number of aerodromes had to be sited on the exposed East Coast.

20. Workable sites were difficult to obtain; a number were sited with little reference to the tactical needs of their defence. In particular those at Kota Bahru (originally a civil landing ground) and Kuantan were sited close to long and excellent landing beaches with weak tactical features. The repercussions of this on the dispositions of the Army in Malaya will be discussed later.

21. Every effort was made throughout 1941 to accelerate construction but progress was not as rapid as had been hoped, despite the fact that, in some cases, sites involving a minimum of work were selected at the sacrifice of operational requirements.

22. There were eleven separate provincial government authorities in Malaya concerned with the acquisition of land; negotiations with each had to be separate. In the earlier stages, delay occurred owing to misunderstanding of the land acquisition legislation; later, emergency powers of acquisition were invoked and

/this

this source of delay ceased.

23. Mechanical plant was very short. That which was available was in poor condition, whilst there were few personnel qualified to operate or maintain it.

24. Labour generally throughout Malaya was insufficient to meet the needs of the defence expansion programmes of the three Services, and later of the Civil Government. A permanent Labour Committee existed but its function was, in practice, mainly limited to controlling wages in order to eliminate expensive and wasteful competition between the three fighting Services and Government departments. The powers of this Committee were limited; all labour was voluntary, not conscripted, and no control could be exercised over the rates paid by civilian firms. By mutual agreement, however, it was possible to arrange a certain priority of employment of the labour available; and this was exercised to the benefit of the Royal Air Force in Kelantan State (in N.E. Malaya).

To improve the labour situation, negotiations were opened with the Civil Government in May 1941 for forming locally enlisted works units uniformed and officered by Europeans. Approval was obtained in August 1941 and the matter was then put to the Air Ministry by whom final sanction was given in December 1941 - too late to be effective. Fortunately an aerodrome construction unit arrived from New Zealand at the end of October 1941. It did excellent work.

25. Most R.A.F. sites were in remote and sparsely populated spots in the jungle to which it was necessary first to build roads. Native labour had to be collected, conveyed to the spot and housed. When this had been done it was still necessary to carry to the area almost all the building material required.

26. Much effort was necessarily diverted to the anti-malarial measures, which had to be put in hand concurrently with construction in order to protect labour from epidemic. On completion, drained areas had to be maintained and oiled.

27. Supplies of material fell far short of the total needs of the services and civil departments. A Joint Priorities Committee was established in the Spring of 1941. It sat regularly and allocated supplies in accordance with the priorities decided from time to time. During the latter half of 1941, some shortages became particularly acute, e.g. roofing material was almost unobtainable, and a saw mill strike seriously curtailed the supply of sawn timber. Metallurgy material for runways was also always short, a serious matter on aerodromes constantly subjected to tropical rainfall.

28. It is clear, therefore, that the problems which confronted the Air Ministry Works Department were as numerous and complicated as any encountered in other theatres in war time. That it did excellent work does not alter the fact that it was severely handicapped in executing quickly a very large programme of expansion by the absence of the accelerated administrative procedure which the situation demanded.

State of Construction, 1st December 1941

29. The locations of R.A.F. Stations and Establishments in Malaya and Singapore Island, together with remarks about their state of completion a few days before war broke out in the Far East, are shown in Appendix "A".

30. Of the occupied bases in Malaya, both Alor Star and Kota Bahru were old civil grounds with little room for dispersal. The buildings at Alor Star had been constructed on the old R.A.F. peacetime layout and were congested and too near the runway. This

/station

station was high in the priority list for reconstruction when opportunity offered. Both stations were in the forefront of operations in the first days of the war; their deficiencies proved a great handicap.

31. The old bases, and the first of those built on the new programme, had no form of camouflage. The ground had first been deforested and no attempt had been made to use natural surroundings or irregular outlines to obtain concealment. They stood out, stark and bare, against the surrounding country. This arose mainly from financial control at the time restricting the acquisition of land to the minimum essential. In later bases, excellent concealment was obtained by retaining natural surroundings, avoiding straight lines and using a type of construction which, amongst the trees, was indistinguishable from the native huts.

32. Dispersal areas and splinter-proof pens at aerodromes in Malaya were arranged on what was then thought to be an adequate scale based on:-

- (a) The scale of attack in accordance with the information then available about the Japanese Air Services.
- (b) The ultimate scale of A.A. defences to be provided at each aerodrome.
- (c) The development of a fighter defensive system.

By the 1st December, 1941, however, neither time or resources had permitted satisfactory development of the fighter system, and few anti-aircraft weapons were available. The Commander-in-Chief, Far East, had laid down that each aerodrome was to be protected by eight heavy and eight light A.A. guns. At no aerodrome in Malaya was this scale approached; on the outbreak of war, some aerodromes had no A.A. guns at all (for details see Appendix A., Column 5(b)).

33. Each base was provided with a supply of metal and labour for the repair of aerodrome surfaces in the event of damage by enemy attack.

Ancillary Construction

34. In addition to aerodromes the following important works were either completed or in hand at the 1st December 1941:-

- (a) Combined Army/Air Operations Room: This was completed and occupied by H.Q., R.A.F. Far East Command (A.H.Q.) and H.Q. Malaya Command (H.Q.M.C.) at Sime Road, Singapore.
- (b) Alternative Combined Army/Air Operations Room: in view of the above-ground vulnerable position of the main Combined Operations Room, an alternative position was being prepared in Singapore.
- (c) Fighter Control H.Q.: A fighter control H.Q. in Singapore was ready for occupation. It had an operations room, a filter room, a W.T. station, etc.
- (d) A.M.E. Stations: The ultimate intention was to have 20 Radar Stations throughout Malaya. Six stations only, all in the vicinity of Singapore Island, were completed by the 1st December 1941.
- (e) Radio Installation and Maintenance Unit: This was partially completed at Ponggol, Singapore.
- (f) Ammunition Park: Construction at Batak Quarry, Singapore, and occupied although extensions were in progress.

(g) Storage of Petrol:

- (i) Reserve storage accommodation for 6,500 tons of aviation petrol was under construction at Woodlands North, Singapore.
 - (ii) Reserve storage accommodation for 7,500 tons of aviation petrol at Port Dickson was more than 50% complete.
 - (iii) Reserve storage accommodation for 930 tons of Kuantan completed.
- (h) Universal Holding Unit: Completed and occupied by 152 M.U. at Bukit Panjang, Singapore, and extensions in progress. This reduced the congestion and concentration of stores held at the M.U. at Seletar.
- (i) Engine Repair Depot and Universal Holding Unit: This depot was completed at Kuala Lumpur, provided with its own railway siding and occupied by No.153 M.U. It was designed to service squadrons based in North Malaya and so to reduce the congestion and concentration which had hitherto persisted at Seletar.

Allied Reinforcement Arrangements

U.S.A. Reinforcements from the Philippines

35. The actual number of aircraft that might be expected in Malaya, should the evacuation of the Philippines occur, was of necessity indefinite; so was the amount of equipment peculiar to the U.S. Naval and Army Air Services which might accompany them.

36. Reconnaissance was carried out and dispersed moorings planned for a total of 20 reinforcing Catalinas of the United States Naval Air Service. A provisional plan for their maintenance was also prepared.

37. The Commander-in-Chief ruled, in September 1941, that four bases were to be prepared for the accommodation of B.17's of the United States Army Air Corps; two in the North and two in the South of Malaya. Gong Kedah and Butterworth in the North and Tebrau and Yong Peng in the South were selected. Extensions of the runways to 2,000 yards at each were put in hand but only those at Gong Kedah were completed.

Dutch Reinforcements from N.E.I.

38. In the mutual reinforcement programme arranged with the Dutch Army Air Service, it was assumed that:-

- (a) Three Bomber Squadrons (27 Glen Martins) would be based at Sembawang;
- (b) One Dutch Fighter Squadron (9 Buffaloes) would be based at Kallang;

and plans were made accordingly.

39. The Dutch Squadron and Flight Commanders concerned visited these stations, toured Malaya and were given a short course in R.A.F. operational methods. Appropriate stocks of Dutch bombs were procured.

40. The Dutch Naval Air Service had been allotted, in the initial seaward reconnaissance plan, responsibility for the area Kuantan - Great Natunas - Kuching (B. Borneo). To execute this task, it had to base a Group (3 Catalinas) of Flying Boats at Seletar. Provision

was made for this; and stocks of petrol and moorings were also laid down at Kuantan. The Group remained under Dutch operational command.

41. Liaison Officers of the Dutch Army Air Service and the Royal Air Force were interchanged and were attached to A.H.Q. in Singapore and at Dutch Army Air H.Q. in Java respectively.

Preparations within R.A.F., Far East Command

Role of Squadrons in War

42. Until July 1941 some confusion existed because squadrons had not been informed of their role in war and because appropriate training instructions had not been issued. A memorandum was then, however, circulated and training syllabi issued. Strict supervision was imposed to ensure that the fullest training value was obtained in all exercises and that the maximum number of practices of different kinds was arranged whenever a training flight was undertaken.

Preparation of Initial Reconnaissance Plan

43. Seaborne invasion from the N.E. constituted the main threat to Malaya. A reconnaissance plan was therefore drawn up to detect its approach at the maximum distance, responsibility for its execution being divided amongst the Allies. R.A.F. Far East Command was allotted responsibility for the area Kota Bahru - Southern tip of Indo-China - Great Natunas - Kuantan and a reconnaissance plan was prepared accordingly. Its execution necessitated the employment of one G.R. (Hudson) Squadron based on Kuantan and one based on Kota Bahru. The use of two Catalinas was superimposed to ensure an overlapping with the Dutch area which was immediately to the South. Squadrons were exercised in this plan from their war stations.

44. When the Japanese occupied Indo-China in July 1941, A.H.Q. queried the fact that this reconnaissance plan made no provision for searching the Gulf of Siam but G.H.Q. confirmed that, desirable as this might be, the limited reconnaissance force available must be concentrated initially upon the more likely area of approach.

Concentration of Squadrons in War

45. In accordance with the principle that squadrons were to be concentrated in the defence of whatever area was threatened, alternative locations for squadrons, dependent on the axis of attack, were prepared.

Transition to a War Footing

46. In the past, a considerable number of code words had been issued, each governing the action of units in various kinds of emergency. As a whole, they were most confusing and liable to result in unco-ordinated action. To rectify this situation, G.H.Q. instructed all Commands, in May 1941, to prepare for three "degrees of readiness" and laid down the general principles governing each. A.H.Q. took the opportunity to issue Units with an exact description in detail of the action to be taken on promulgation of these degrees of readiness. The transition to a full war footing was thereby smooth and rapid.

Co-ordination of Night Flying Arrangements

47. Before the autumn of 1941, arrangements for night flying had not been co-ordinated, each Unit employing its own method of laying out a flare path and other lighting. A standardised procedure was drawn up in October 1941 as it was essential to ensure that all squadrons could operate by night with confidence and use any aerodrome in the Command.

Establishment of Air Corridors

48. Air corridors "in" and "out of" Singapore were established and promulgated, whilst a standardised procedure for "approach" to all aerodromes in the Command was issued in July.

Establishment of Operations Rooms

49. Operations rooms were opened at each base as it became available for use, the ideal aimed at being that squadrons on arrival should find the same layout, information and procedure as that which existed at their parent aerodromes. This was designed to avoid the delay and disorganisation caused by the necessity of transferring material, and so speed up the efficiency of operations.

Mobility of Squadrons

50. The paramount role of Air Forces in the defence of the Far East in general, and of Malaya in particular, demanded a high degree of mobility in squadrons to permit rapid reinforcement. But the composition of the forces allotted to the Far East by the Chiefs of Staff included no transport aircraft; and although A.H.Q. drew attention to the deficiency on several occasions no aircraft could be provided. The Dutch Army Air Service had a fleet of some 20 Lodestars and promised assistance, provided their own circumstances permitted; a situation which made any specific planning of doubtful value. However, in the autumn of 1941, Lodestars were borrowed, and selected squadrons were practised in the organisation required for moving.

51. A shortage of M.T. in Malaya made the position more serious. Orders for the M.T. required were placed in the U.S.A. but could not be met in time. There was no M.T. unit nor even sufficient spare vehicles to form a Command pool. Individual units were themselves below establishment in M.T.

DEVELOPMENTS IN HONG KONG

52. No Air Forces were allotted for the defence of Hong Kong. There was a station flight at Kai Tak on the mainland for target towing purposes, but apart from local reconnaissance no war role was envisaged or arranged for this flight.

53. In the summer of 1941, an urgent request was received from Hong Kong pressing for some fighter aircraft because of the great support they would give to civilian morale. This request could not be met. Eventually some dummy aircraft were despatched in the hope that the sight of them and their cases would deceive the Japanese and hearten the civilian population. In case it should prove possible later to meet the request for fighter aircraft, a Fighter Sector Control room and Radar Stations were sited and plans were prepared for the provision of a fighter defensive system.

DEVELOPMENTS IN BRITISH BORNEO

54. Facilities for land planes in British Borneo were confined to one aerodrome and one landing ground at Kuching and Miri respectively. The former was not large enough for bomber aircraft but its extension was in hand when war broke out. Flying boat moorings were also laid in the river nearby. There were no A.A. defences but a battalion of the Indian Army, with H.Q. in Kuching, was located in Borneo for the protection of the aerodrome and landing ground areas and the Miri oil fields.

DEVELOPMENTS IN BURMA

55. As a result of the Singapore Conference in the autumn of 1940 (para.6), the findings of which were generally endorsed by the C.-in-C. Far East on his arrival, the Government of Burma co-operated actively
/in

in constructing and developing the eight air bases, and additional satellite strips, considered necessary for air operations from Burma. These bases stretched from Mergui on the Tenasserim Coast in a half circle round the Siamese frontier to Lashio in the Northern Shan States. In anticipation of approval, Flight Lieutenant C.W. Bailey, Inspector of Landing Grounds at A.H.Q., had been sent by A.H.Q. to Burma in November 1940. He had drawn up plans for extending old and constructing new aerodromes. Further, in co-operation with the Government of Burma, arrangements had been made for re-organising the Public Works Department so that it could undertake supervision of construction, which was immediately begun.

56. In March 1941, H.Q. No.221 Group (Commander, Group Captain E.R. Manning) was established at Rangoon to develop these bases and command the Air Forces located in Burma. Progress was so good that all bases were completed by the end of 1941 with accommodation at each for some 450 all ranks. Facilities for dispersal were reasonable; pens were provided and some satellite strips. There was a measure of A.A. protection in the Rangoon area but none elsewhere.

57. Co-operation with the Army in Burma was excellent. H.Q. Army in Burma and No.221 Group R.A.F. were in close proximity and the G.O.C. and his staff could not have done more to assist the R.A.F. in their preparations. From the outset of planning in November 1940 the G.O.C. was in the picture of R.A.F. development, and the raising and training of aerodrome defence troops was conducted in parallel with construction.

58. During 1940, an air observer system was developed by the G.O.C. under the active direction of the Post Master General. From the outset its functions were made clear and, despite difficulties of training, it developed and operated most usefully on the outbreak of hostilities; control of it passed to the R.A.F. on the formation of 221 Group Headquarters. One Radar Station was completed at Moulmein and two others in the Rangoon area were nearing completion. A Fighter Control Operations room was designed and constructed in Rangoon.

59. No. 60(B) Squadron (Blenheim I's) ex India, was located at Rangoon from February 1941. G.H.Q. considered it important to ensure some measure of fighter defence at Rangoon; consequently, pending the availability of an established fighter squadron, half of No.60 was re-equipped with Buffalo fighters for the period August - October 1941 and this affected the squadron's operational efficiency. As soon as No.67(F) squadron (Buffaloes) in Malaya was fully trained it was transferred to Rangoon; the transfer took place in October 1941. This squadron was the best trained fighter squadron in Malaya but because of the transfer was not available there when war broke out.

Heavy demands on No.60(B) Squadron for communication flights occupied much of its flying effort; and although it had a very high standard of flying in monsoon conditions over Burma, it became desirable to transfer the squadron to Malaya to bring it operationally up-to-date in armament practice. All its aircraft and crews were therefore sent to Kuantan, the new Air/Armament Station of the Command, where they arrived shortly before the Japanese attacked Malaya.

60. In addition there was a flight of six Moths used for training Burma's Volunteer Air Force. The aircraft of this flight were allotted the role of maintaining communications and carrying out certain limited reconnaissance.

61. There was one set plan in co-operation with the Army

in Burma, the object of which was to destroy communication facilities in the Siamese Isthmus. Land forces were to advance across the isthmus and conduct a "burn and scuttle" raid on port, rail and air facilities at Prachuab Kirrikand. Their arrival was to synchronise with air attack under A.H.Q. arrangements. Circumstances in Malaya at the time did not permit co-operation with this plan.

62. The question of the Command of the forces in Burma had been raised on several occasions. Those who considered the question from the angle of India's defence recommended that control should be by India. A.H.Q. advocated the retention of Burma in the Far East Command as it considered that the effective co-ordination of the air forces operating from Burma and Malaya in defence of the Far East could only be achieved by such unified command. This view was accepted.

63. Finally, reference must be made to the American Volunteer Group under Colonel Chennault, who was given all possible assistance, particularly in relation to maintenance, training and accommodation. R.A.F. Base, Toungoo, the training aerodrome for the Force, was visited by the A.O.C. and Staff Officers from A.H.Q.; officers with fighter experience in Europe were sent to lecture and assist in training. Excellent work was later done by this Force, in co-operation with the R.A.F., in the defence of Burma.

DEVELOPMENTS IN N.E.I.

Dutch Borneo

64. In accordance with the mutual reinforcement plan, the Dutch allocated Sinkawang and Samarinda in Dutch Borneo for use as bases for four R.A.F. bomber squadrons. Each of these bases was to be provided with accommodation for two bomber squadrons and stocked in peace with the supplies peculiar to the Royal Air Force. Their only method of supply was by transport aircraft provided by the Dutch. By December, Sinkawang was ready and had been inspected by the C.O. and Flight Commanders of one of the squadrons allocated to it. Samarinda was not ready.

Sumatra

65. Permission was also obtained from the Dutch in the Summer of 1941, to reconnoitre all aerodromes in Sumatra. This was required because A.H.Q. anticipated that, in the event of war, Sumatra would be required for:-

- (a) An alternative air reinforcement route from India owing to the vulnerability of the old route to Singapore via Burma and N. Malaya once the Japanese had penetrated into Siam.
- (b) Potential advanced landing grounds for operations against the flank of a Japanese advance down Malaya.

The main preoccupation was therefore with those aerodromes which were situated in the Northern half of Sumatra.

66. As the result of this reconnaissance, extensions to the grounds at Lho'nga and Sabang were put in hand at A.H.Q. request to make them suitable for modern aircraft.

67. Assistance was also given to B.O.A.C. to organise facilities at Sabang for the operation of an alternative seaplane route Rangoon - Port Blair - Sabang instead of the normal one via Bangkok.

Java

68. Visits were paid to Java by a number of staff officers from A.H.Q. who thus gained useful information of Dutch maintenance establishments and resources generally.

DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIAN OCEAN AND BAY OF BENGAL

69. A memorandum was prepared about June 1941 and issued by A.H.Q. detailing the bases to be developed in this area; their status was defined and priority of provisioning was laid down. By December 1941 the position was as follows:-

Andamans and Nicobars - at Port Blair and Nancowrie moorings and petrol laid and limited accommodation constructed for operating flying boats. Port Blair was also prepared by B.O.A.C. with R.A.F. assistance as an alternative to the route Rangoon-Penang.

Ceylon - H.Q. No.222 Group established with joint Naval/Air Ops. Room at Colombo.

China Bay - one flight of Vildebeestes located for target towing and local reconnaissance. Being developed as a permanent base for one G.R. Squadron and one F.B. Squadron; accommodation practically completed.

Ratmalana - Aerodrome being constructed for one G.R. Squadron.

Koggala - Being developed as the main base for flying boats operating in the Indian Ocean. Accommodation for one Squadron was nearly ready.

<u>Christmas Island</u>	}	Fuel and mooring laid and limited accommodation provided for the operation of flying boats.
<u>Cocos Islands</u> (Direction Island)		
<u>Maldives</u> (Mahe)		
<u>Seychelles</u> (Mahe)		
<u>Chagos</u> (Diego-Garcia)		
<u>Mauritius</u>		
<u>Tanganyika</u> (Lindi)		
<u>Durban</u>	}	Being developed as permanent bases for one F.B. Squadron each.
<u>Mombasa</u>		

Credit is due to the Air Ministry Works Department for the great volume of construction carried out in these outlying parts of the Command, as well as for that executed in Malaya.

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY OF UNITS IN MALAYA

Intelligence Organisation

70. In June 1941, A.H.Q. had no Intelligence Organisation of its own. All air intelligence personnel and records in the Far East had been centralised in the Combined Intelligence Bureau (F.E.C.B.) which functioned under G.H.Q. Theoretically, this Combined Bureau also served the needs of A.H.Q. and H.Q.M.C. but, in practice, its staff was insufficient even to cope with G.H.Q. requirements.

Representations were made on the need for a thorough intelligence system throughout the Command. About July, a conference was held with G.H.Q., who wished to create a second Combined Intelligence Centre to serve the joint needs of A.H.Q. and H.Q.M.C. A second joint organisation of this nature would not, however, have been suitable for building up the Intelligence organisation required throughout the Command and at all levels from A.H.Q. downwards to squadrons. This view was finally accepted.

An establishment for an Intelligence organisation for the whole Command was drawn up and submitted to the Air Ministry and, in late autumn, in anticipation of approval, personnel made available locally were appointed to H.Q. and Units. The nucleus organisation was fortunately in being when hostilities broke out, but its development was backward and in particular the information it had collated for briefing crews was scanty.

71. According to current intelligence, the morale and efficiency of the Japanese Army and Naval Air Services was low: an assessment which naturally affected training, particularly in the tactics to be adopted by our fighter squadrons. In this connection an important item of intelligence must be mentioned. About July 1941 a detailed description of the Japanese "Navy O" Fighter was received in Singapore. It was written in Chinese and is believed to have been sent by the Air Attaché, Chungking. A translation was made by Flight Lieutenant Cox, R.A.F. Station, Kallang. It is not certain what then happened to the report. In the absence of an Intelligence section at A.H.Q. it ought to have gone to F.E.C.B.; but whether it did so cannot now be established. What is certain is that the report was never examined by A.H.Q. which consequently remained unaware up to the outbreak of war of the performance and characteristics of an aircraft that was to prove superior to our own fighters.

The need for an O.T.U.

72. The Air Ministry had been unable to approve requests made during the year to establish an O.T.U. in Malaya. But in September 1941, owing to the fact that large numbers of personnel required operational training, A.H.Q. established a makeshift O.T.U. at Kluang from the resources available in the Command. Its role was:-

- (a) To train pilots for Fighter Squadrons who were arriving from New Zealand direct from Service Flying Training Schools:
- (b) To convert personnel of No.36 and No.100 (T.B.) Squadrons from Vildebeestes to twin-engine aircraft in preparation for their re-equipment with Beauforts:
- (c) To train pilots from New Zealand on twin-engine aircraft to fill vacancies in Bomber Squadrons.

Training aircraft were provided by Wirraways thrown up by No.21(f) Squadron when it re-armed with Buffaloes, and by Blenheims borrowed from No.34(B) Squadron. The Wing Commander Training at A.H.Q. (Wing Commander Wills-Sandford) was appointed Commanding Officer. The Unit had to be disbanded on 8th December on the outbreak of hostilities but it had completed most valuable work.

Lack of Armament Training Facilities

73. Up till October 1941, the only armament training facilities in the Command were on Singapore Island, and at an improvised range near Penang. Maximum use was made of the Singapore ranges but they were insufficient to provide for the requirements of training. In October 1941, the new Command Armament Training Station at Kuantan was opened, allowing time for one squadron only to complete a course before the outbreak of war. Unfortunately, the Station had to be "blown" at an early stage of hostilities.

74. The air firing situation was particularly unsatisfactory. There was an acute shortage of target towing aircraft, and the few available were slow.

Lack of Transport and Communication Aircraft

75. The lack of transport and communication aircraft was acutely felt during the pre-war period when training was all

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important. G.H.Q. and H.Q.M.C. made many demands for aircraft which had necessarily to be found mainly by G.R. Squadrons. Although such requests were pruned and co-ordinated, flights were nevertheless sufficiently frequent to interfere seriously with the training of squadrons, many of whose vital flying hours were thus expended. Furthermore, visits to subordinate units by A.H.Q. staff had to be correspondingly curtailed.

Fighter Squadrons

76. In June/July 1941 a Fighter Group Operational Cadre was formed to take over the training and operation of all fighter aircraft in Singapore: the Senior Officer (Group Captain E.B. Rice) at the same time being appointed Air Defence Co-ordinator, Malaya.

77. The following Fighter Squadrons, with an establishment of 16 I.E. and 8 I.R. Buffaloes, were formed on the dates shown:-

No.67 (F) Squadron, formed end of March 1941. Squadron and 2 Flight Commanders appointed from U.K. Remaining pilots from bomber squadrons within the Command; numbers completed with pilots from new Zealand F.T.S.'s. Transferred to Burma October 1941.

No.243 (F) Squadron, formed April 1941. Personnel as for No.67 but a slightly higher proportion of F.T.S. personnel.

No.453 (F) Squadron, formed October 1941. Squadron and 2 Flight Commanders from U.K. This was an R.A.F. "infiltration" squadron* filled from F.T.S.'s in Australia. Some of the personnel were not entirely suitable for a Fighter Squadron, and the Squadron Commander was in Australia at the commencement of hostilities selecting replacements.

No.488 (F) Squadron, formed October/November 1941. Squadron and 2 Flight Commanders from U.K. This was an R.N.Z.A.F. infiltration squadron and filled from F.T.S.'s in New Zealand with excellent material; but their standard of flying on arrival was low. This squadron had taken over the aircraft on which No.67(F) Squadron had trained and many of these were in poor condition.

78. In addition No.21(F) Squadron, R.A.A.F., which had formed as a General Purpose Squadron in Australia and moved into the Command in 1940, was in October 1941 re-equipped with Buffaloes and converted into a Fighter Squadron, with 12 I.E. and 6 I.R. aircraft. The squadron had been previously equipped with 2-seater Wirraways, some of which were returned to Australia, the remainder being retained to assist in the training of Nos.453(F) and 488(F) Squadrons. It will be observed, therefore, that the pilots of this squadron had not been selected originally for fighter aircraft and some were not in fact entirely suitable for this role.

79. The main role of the Buffalo Squadrons was "day defence" only, primarily of the Singapore area, but night flying training was instituted to ensure that pilots could land or take off by night.

80. Except for No.488(F) Squadron, squadrons were considered operationally trained by the outbreak of war. No.488(F) Squadron was deficient in squadron and flight training and was not passed as operationally ready until the latter half of December 1941. Training and assessment of operational readiness of all squadrons had, however, been based on the assumption that a third-rate enemy was to be met.

an underestimation of the enemy. /The

* i.e. an R.A.F. as distinct from a Dominion squadron but manned by Dominions personnel.

The tactics thus taught and practised proved unsuitable and costly against the Japanese Navy 'O' fighter which was greatly superior to the Buffalo in performance.

81. The standard of gunnery in all squadrons was low for the following reasons:-

- (a) Too few and too slow towing aircraft.
- (b) Lack of cine gun equipment.
- (c) Continual trouble with the .5 gun and synchronising gear. This was largely overcome by local modification by October 1941. Nevertheless many pilots were still not altogether confident about their armament.

82. The Buffalo had a disappointing performance. It was heavy and underpowered and thus had a slow rate of climb. Maintenance was heavy, which meant a low standard of serviceability. Wastage during training was high and many of the aircraft in Squadrons suffered from rough handling. There was no V.H.F. and the maximum range of R.T./W.T. was 9 miles and frequently less owing to bad atmospheric conditions. Intercommunication between aircraft was unreliable.

83. There was one multi-seat fighter squadron in the Command, No. 27, a night fighter squadron equipped with Blenheim I's. The aircraft were old and in poor condition, and A.H.Q. did not expect that the squadron would be of much value in its night-fighting role. Permission was requested to convert it into a bomber squadron, for which personnel were available, but this was not approved.

Observer Corps

84. In July 1941 control of an existing Observer Corps system with Headquarters at Kuala Lumpur was transferred from the Army to A.H.Q. It had been organised chiefly as part of the civil air raid warning system and needed a great deal of development for use in an active air defence system. The personnel were enthusiastic, but unfortunately little time was available to train them in their new duties. It was found impossible to establish the necessary Observer Posts in the jungle-clad mountainous country of Central Malaya where there was, therefore, a serious gap in the warning system. Observer Corps Operations Rooms were established at Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, and were linked up to the Dutch system in the Rho Archipelago to the South.

Radar Stations

85. The approved policy of priority for the development of radar facilities was:-

- (a) Singapore Island.
- (b) The East Coast of Malaya.
- (c) Penang and the West Coast.

All Stations were to look seaward with only restricted overland cover behind, the hinterland being covered by the Observer Corps.

86. By December 1941, four stations only were operating - Serasing, Tanah Merah Besar (in East of Singapore I), Bukit Mertajam (S.E. tip of Johore) and Tanjong Kupang (S.W. tip of Johore). A further station, Kota Tinggi, in Johore was nearly ready and was being accelerated to help close the gap down the central portion of Malaya. A sixth, at Kota Bharu, had been /built

built but no radar had yet been installed. The general position was, therefore, that there was fair cover for Singapore but little elsewhere.

Fighter Operations Room

87. A Fighter Group Operations Room in Singapore was designed, constructed and occupied by December - almost too late to do more than break the ice in training the squadrons for which it was responsible. The Fighter Group H.Q. Cadre had no administrative staff. It was, in fact, an off-shoot of the Air Staff of A.H.Q.

88. An Air Defence system was organised which, while it was by no means as efficient as it would have been if the resources and equipment had not been so short, yet provided Singapore with a scale of defensive effort that was by no means insignificant. Great credit is due to those who achieved this result with such a short time for preparation.

Bomber and G.R. Land-based Squadrons

89. There were two Blenheim and two G.R. land-based squadrons in Malaya:-

No. 62 Squadron (Blenheim I)	-	Alor Star
No. 34 Squadron (Blenheim IV)	-	Tengah
No. 1 (R.A.A.F.) Squadron (Hudson II)	-	Kota Bahru
No. 8 (R.A.A.F.) Squadron (Hudson II)	-	Sembawang

These two types of squadron, Bomber and G.R., are bracketed together because, owing to the small size of the total force, specialisation was impracticable. Although the Hudson squadrons were the main over-sea reconnaissance force, the Blenheims had also to be trained in these duties. Similarly, both types of squadron had to be trained in all types of bombing over the sea and over the land, both by day and by night.

90. From May 1940 until the Spring of 1941, there had been severe flying restrictions imposed on Blenheim Squadrons owing to the lack of spares in the Command. For this period, flying hours were restricted to 5 hours monthly per I.E. aircraft. In Spring 1941, the Blenheims were mulcted of selected pilots to assist in the formation of the first two fighter squadrons in Malaya.

91. Nos. 1 and 8 (G.R.) Squadrons R.A.A.F., had a high standard but it was necessary for the Australian Air Board to withdraw crews as they became fully trained and to replace them by inexperienced ones. There was, therefore, a wide variation between crews in the standards of their efficiency especially in night flying in which a high standard was demanded owing to the prevalence of tropical storms over Malaya at night. This also applied to the Blenheim squadrons.

Torpedo/Bomber Squadrons

92. There were two Torpedo/Bomber Squadrons, Nos. 36 and 100, both based on Seletar. Their personnel were highly trained and of long experience, but their aircraft, Vildebeestes, which had a speed of 90 knots and a range of less than 400 miles, were obsolete. With modern aircraft these squadrons would have been invaluable, especially in the first days of the war. The approved re-armament programme, with Beauforts, had been delayed, however, by technical complications in production in Australia. In the training of these two squadrons more emphasis had been placed on the torpedo than the bomb owing to their main role of attacking enemy convoys well out to sea. Facilities for operating with torpedoes had been established at Kota Bahru.

Flying Boat Squadron

93. There was one Flying Boat Squadron in the Command, No.205 Squadron, based at Seletar with a detachment in Ceylon.

94. The squadron did not have sufficient trained crews. When its establishment was raised from 4 I.E. Singapore III's to 6 I.E. Catalinas, no additional crews were provided, these having to be trained by the squadron. One or two trained crews had to be based at Ceylon for work in the Indian Ocean, and, unfortunately, two crews were lost during accidents in that area in September/October 1941. Training in this squadron was hampered by the necessity for providing boats for various authorities to visit Manila, Borneo, Ceylon and Hong Kong.

Photographic Reconnaissance

95. Long-range Hurricanes had been requested for photographic purposes but were not available. In November 1941, a P.R.U. with 2 I.E. (later raised to 4) aircraft was formed in Singapore with Buffaloes drawn from local resources, and personnel were trained in photographic reconnaissance. With the stripping of non-essential equipment and the provision of additional tankage, the aircraft were given a range of 1,400 miles. The formation of this flight proved a most valuable asset to the resources of the Command. Concurrently a Photographic Interpretation Unit was formed.

Malayan Volunteer Force

96. The Malayan Volunteer Force had flights located in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh and Penang. Its miscellaneous collection of about 30 aircraft comprised two Rapides, one Dragonfly, and a number of Moths and Cadets. Flights were organised for transport duties under A.H.Q. and for communication and reconnaissance in affiliation with Army formations. Moths were fitted with 20-lb bomb racks and pilots trained in their use, but none of the aircraft could be fitted with defensive armament. The enthusiasm of the unit was most marked and it made excellent progress.

Signals Organisation

97. There was a general shortage of W/T equipment, particularly mobile sets.

98. Teleprinter lines existed between A.H.Q. and aerodromes on Singapore Island, but not between A.H.Q. and aerodromes up the peninsula.

99. There were two telephone lines from Singapore to N.W. Malaya and one to the N.E. and east. These were quite insufficient for joint needs, Army, Air Force and Civil, and all passed through civil exchanges. Secraphones were very few and were apportioned between the services in a strict order of priority.

100. There was no V.H.F., which limited the effective control of fighters to about 10 miles; this was still further limited by atmospherics during thunder periods.

Centralisation of Work at A.H.Q.

101. By the end of March, 1941, No.221 Group Headquarters, with a full staff was established in Burma, and all work there was decentralised to it. Apart from this no decentralisation was organised except:-

- (a) That of supervising fighter training and air defence arrangements of Singapore which was decentralised to an

/operational

operational group cadre (No.224 Group) which formed in Singapore in August 1941; it had no administrative staff.

- (b) That of controlling flying boat operations based on Ceylon which was decentralised to a similar operational group cadre (No.222 Group), which had no administrative staff.

A.H.Q. retained administrative control of all units other than those in Burma, and operational control of all others not under the Groups mentioned above. The details of units with which it dealt direct are shown in Appendices "A" and "C".

102. The lack of decentralisation was acutely felt during the development of the large expansion programme which was occurring over a vast geographical area. It fell particularly heavily upon the Administrative Staff and upon the A.M.W.D. which was much understaffed.

103. The need for an A.O.C.-Malaya, with an appropriate staff, to whom to decentralise local problems became increasingly apparent during 1941. Tentative representations were made to this effect but were not accepted: G.H.Q. felt that headquarters staffs in Malaya were already top-heavy and that staff demands should be kept to a minimum in the interests of more vital theatres of war.

Supply of Officers for Staff and Administrative Duties

104. Officers for filling vacancies on the staff of the greatly expanded A.H.Q. and at the new stations were largely found by enrolling personnel from Australia and New Zealand. More than 140 were obtained from this source. It was possible to give them only a short disciplinary course combined with a brief survey of their duties. Their average age was 45. They naturally varied much in their qualifications. The remainder, more than 50 in number, were obtained by commissioning local business men in Singapore; most of them just before, but some after, the outbreak of war. For them no training was practicable. The majority of these officers were willing and able, but their value was limited owing to their unavoidable lack of service knowledge and experience.

105. Of the regular officers, there were few with Staff experience; and the brunt of the work consequently fell on the few. The work of A.H.Q. was increased by the inexperience of officers at stations, which needed more "nursing" than is normally the case. Appendix "B" details the names of officers holding senior appointments at A.H.Q.

106. There was a gap between the departure of the A.O.A. in May 1941 and the arrival of his replacement on 10th June 1941. In the interim, the A.O.C. centralised into his own hands many of the administrative preparations of the Command and thereafter retained this control to ensure continuity. This re-acted unfavourably on his health, which was poor even when he arrived. He overtaxed his strength and was already a tired man when war descended on Malaya.

Equipment Problems

107. The equipment position was bad in almost all important items. Except for Buffaloes there were no reserve aircraft whatsoever in the Command; there was an acute shortage of spares, especially for Blenheims and even more for Hudsons, and also all tools. M.T. was very short, with an effect on mobility that has already been noted. Small arms were insufficient to arm more than a small proportion of R.A.F. personnel. All these were items which were badly needed during 1941 in Europe and Africa, and the requirements of the Far East had necessarily to take second place.

On the other hand, stocks of petrol and bombs were good; almost too good as events turned out, for large and elaborate demolitions were required in order to deny them to the enemy.

Personnel Problems

108. The following major personnel problems affected the efficiency of the Command:-

- (i) There were no reserve aircrews in the Command.
- (ii) The strength of the Command in airmen was doubled in the last six months of 1941 but most of these reinforcements came direct from training establishments in the United Kingdom and needed further training. At the same time, a number of time-expired airmen were relieved, with the result that at the outbreak of war three-quarters of the strength was new to Malaya.
- (iii) A number of the reinforcements were posted to the Command in anticipation of the completion of the expansion programme. A surplus was therefore built-up, which was employed partly as infantry guards on Singapore Island, to relieve the Army of such duties.
- (iv) Special courses were organised in musketry and also, in the expectation of the defection of native employees, in cooking and M.T. driving.

Other Measures

109. The following preparatory measures were also put in hand:-

- (i) Formation of an Air/Sea Rescue organisation with six launches and some light aircraft of the Malayan Volunteer Air Force. It commenced operations in mid-December 1941, and altogether saved the lives of 24 aircrew. Five of the launches were provided locally and without their provision the formation of the unit would have been impossible.
- (ii) Formation of a Bomb Disposal Unit in June 1941 to serve all Services, including Civil Defence.
- (iii) Organisation of Welfare Services. Holiday facilities were provided at Butterworth and Malacca. A fund of 20,000 dollars was raised and used by a central welfare committee. Mobile canteens were made and equipped locally.
- (iv) Arrangements for hospitalisation and evacuation of sick and wounded; these facilities were provided by the Army.
- (v) Construction of dummy aircraft, which were distributed to various operational stations, and also of a dummy landing ground near Kluang. These deceptions diverted numerous bombs.

RELATIONS WITH G.H.Q.

110. The Commander-in-Chief, Far East, (Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham) being an Air Force officer naturally took a keen personal interest in the R.A.F.; and relations between G.H.Q. and A.H.Q. were correspondingly close and cordial.

111. G.H.Q., however, contained only an operational staff, which made it more difficult for the administrative problems of A.H.Q. to be fully appreciated. Moreover, the practice had arisen at A.H.Q. of consulting the C.-in-C. on all important signals to Air Ministry and, when approved, of adding the phrase "C.-in-C. F.E. concurs", with the object of adding weight to recommendations. This practice was gradually extended until the C.-in-C. was

/brought

brought into nearly every aspect of the R.A.F. Far East Command, with the effect that the main channel of communication on air matters was from G.H.Q. to Air Ministry.

112. In the absence of an administrative staff it was difficult for G.H.Q. to realise the true state of affairs in the subordinate Command. Consequently, in the view of a number of responsible officers at A.H.Q., the plans and appreciations of G.H.Q. were based on the availability of the forces approved by the Chiefs of Staff rather than on the realities of the situation.

113. For the same reason, it was felt that the Air Ministry was not made aware of the full implications of the numbers and types of aircraft available, the standard of training of aircrews and the state of the Far East Command as a whole if war should break upon it.

114. On the operational side G.H.Q. was responsible for the higher control of operations. Its estimate of the Japanese Air Force was that although their numbers were high their efficiency and morale were low. For most of 1941, G.H.Q. doubted if the Japanese would challenge the Allied position in the Far East, a doubt which was strengthened when, in the late Summer of 1941, the U.S.A. decided to reinforce the Philippines. There was support for the same point of view from the Chinese, who felt sure in the early Autumn of 1941 that the next major Japanese effort would be made on the line Hanoi-Kuming to cut the Burma road at its terminal. In November 1941, the Commander-in-Chief reaffirmed that Japan was unlikely to attack Malaya now that the N.E. monsoon had set in, which would make it difficult to land troops on the north-east coast. It was reckoned that attack was unlikely before February, 1942.

115. It is significant that during the Autumn of 1941 a project for the early operation of R.A.F. bombers and fighters from South China was in preparation, the intention being that with the American Volunteer Group under Colonel Chennault, an International Air Force should be formed to support the Chinese. Administrative preparations had begun, petrol stocks had been sent to Chinese airfields, and bombs and components were being packed. Early in November 1941 an R.A.F. Commission was despatched from the Far East to investigate operational conditions. It included the Group Captain Operations and Chief Signals Officer from A.H.Q., and the Station Commander, Tengah, who were still away when the Japanese landed in Malaya. The whole project meant no small commitment for A.H.Q. as G.H.Q. had insufficient staff to undertake the detailed planning and administration; and it entailed a diversion from the main function of the R.A.F. in the Far East, the defence of the Naval Base at Singapore.

CO-OPERATION WITH NAVY

116. A.H.Q. had advocated a combined Naval/Air Operations Room in Singapore to co-ordinate and control the seaward air operations of the Command with the naval forces of the Commander-in-Chief, China Station, but it was decided that such co-operation would be better conducted on a G.H.Q./C.-in-C. China Station level.

117. Five days after the outbreak of war, a liaison staff of junior naval officers was provided in the Army/Air Combined Operations room. In the event this proved adequate for subsequent needs; but had the Far Eastern Fleet remained in being based on Singapore it is doubtful if the arrangements would have proved sufficient for the close co-operation which would have been essential.

118. Co-operation with the C.-in-C. East Indies was close, and a Combined Operations Room had been established at Colombo. There was real understanding of the problem facing the R.A.F., particularly the difficulty, owing to the shortage of flying boats, of assisting

in the control of sea communications in the Indian Ocean. There were never more than two Catalinas, often only one, available in Ceylon for this work.

119. Invaluable memoranda, received from Coastal Command and other sources covering maritime operations, were available at A.H.Q. These were collated and revised to suit local conditions and a Far East Command handbook was printed and issued in August 1941 to R.A.F. Units and Naval Commands for guidance in carrying out all types of operations over the sea.

CO-OPERATION WITH ARMY IN MALAYA

Close Support

120. Co-operation with the Army in Malaya had not been highly developed or exercised in the past. No. 21 Squadron, R.A.A.F., when it was equipped with Wirraways, had been regarded in part as an A.C. Squadron, and had carried out some limited exercises with troops in the field. The methods of co-operation which had been practised were, however, not in line with recent developments in Europe and the Middle East.

121. There was much material available at A.H.Q. of the experience gained in other Commands but, owing to lack of staff, the lessons had not been digested. Active steps were taken to remedy this and instructions for the joint information of Army and Air Force Units to cover the operations of bombers in support of troops were produced and issued in September 1941 with the concurrence of the G.O.C. Malaya Command. Similarly, instructions were compiled and issued for joint information to cover the operations of fighter aircraft employed on tactical reconnaissance.

122. Classes were started for training aircrews in Army organisation and tactics. Each bomber and fighter squadron in the Command was affiliated to an Army formation and was allotted so many flying hours per month for combined training. But owing to lack of equipment, signal communications were improvised and primitive, which severely restricted the type of support which could be given.

Aerodrome Defence

123. Until a few months before war broke out there had been insufficient consultation between the R.A.F. and the Army in Malaya in selection and defence of aerodromes on the mainland of Malaya. Prior to the issue of a co-ordinated defence policy by the Chiefs of Staff in July 1940 the two services had been developing their defence plans on different lines. The R.A.F. were planning aerodromes on the mainland of Malaya in order to provide defence in depth for the Naval Base at Singapore. The Army preferred a more limited commitment, especially on the little developed East coast, in view of the limited forces available. The issue between the two was settled by the Chiefs of Staff appreciation which laid down that the whole of Malaya was to be defended and that air power was to be the prime means of defence for some time to come. But the divergency that had existed resulted in a number of aerodromes being selected without that consultation with the Army which was necessary if they were to be tactically defensible. Full co-operation was not established until the spring of 1941 with the changes that were then made in the Army and R.A.F. Commanders in Malaya.

124. Those aerodromes that were located in the Singapore fortress area were covered by the general A.A. umbrella. Sabotage was regarded as the main threat, particularly during the initial stages of war.

125. The defence of aerodromes on the mainland was a more difficult problem. There were three areas of major importance:-

- (i) N.E. Malaya - Kelantan aerodromes.
- (ii) E. Coast Malaya - Kuantan.
- (iii) N.W. Malaya - Kedah aerodromes.

126. Most of these aerodromes were in tactically weak, and some were also in exposed positions. Inadequate consultation with the Army, the need for selecting sites close to existing communications and sources of labour, and also for locating some sites as close to the coast as possible in order to obtain the maximum seaward range for operations, had all contributed to this dangerous situation.

127. It meant that on the west coast, down which the main enemy thrust on land was expected to develop, large detachments had to be made from the Field Army to protect aerodromes.

128. On the east coast, the direct defence of aerodromes was the prime function of the Army. Accordingly, the Brigadiers at Kota Bahru and Kuantan were, by agreement between the A.O.C. and G.O.C., appointed Aerodrome Defence Commanders in their respective areas. The arrangement, with certain safeguards, worked well and resulted in good co-ordination of the resources available for defence.

129. The training experience, quality and numbers of the forces manning the defences of the aerodromes other than those at Kota Bahru and Kuantan were much under requirements. They were mostly composed of Indian State troops. A further handicap was a general paucity of weapons of all kinds, particularly A.A. guns and their equipment.

130. Every effort was made to improve aerodrome defence against ground attack. Old tanks, armoured cars and any form of out-of-date weapons were sought from other Commands and from the U.S.A. H.Q.M.C. did its best but the men and weapons required could not be made available. On the mainland, financial authority was given in the autumn by the A.O.C. to put in hand urgent work on defence schemes, without the necessity for prior reference to A.H.Q.

131. Joint Army and R.A.F. Aerodrome Defence Boards were set up about July 1941 throughout Malaya to co-ordinate defence schemes; and from this time on, care was taken to ensure that the defence aspect was considered at the outset when new aerodrome construction was put in hand.

132. Full instructions were prepared and issued to guide local Commanders in their denial and destruction schemes and arrangements were made for obstructing all airfields not in use.

133. The first two major aerodrome defence exercises were held in the late summer - one at Tengah in co-operation with Fortress troops and one at Kluang in Johore with the Australian Division - in the presence of large numbers of Army spectators for instructional purposes.

134. Finally, in conjunction with A.H.Q. and H.Q.M.C., G.H.Q. produced about this time a handbook on aerodrome defence which detailed the probable scale of attack to which each would be subject, the minimum defences required and the priority of their provision.

Co-operation with A.A. Defences

135. A.A. defence exercises threw a heavy strain on air resources. During the latter half of 1941 A.A. equipments were rapidly increasing, in Singapore especially, and demands for air co-operation for the training of A.A. crews were on the upgrade. Special aircraft for the purpose were few and A.A. defence exercises

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were combined with other forms of training in order to make full use of flying hours. Nevertheless they resulted in many flying hours of operational units, which were all too precious for their own training, being expended on this work; yet they never approached the A.A. Defence Commander's requirements.

Photographic Survey

136. Photographic survey of large areas in Malaya for both the Army and the Civil Government was another commitment which had to be met. It necessitated the allotment and training of a special flight.

Joint Army/Air Planning: Operation "Matador"

137. During July 1941, under directions from G.H.Q., G.O.C. Malaya held a conference of representatives of all Army formations in Malaya and a representative from A.H.Q. to consider a plan for a joint Army and R.A.F. advance into the Singora-Patani area of S.E. Siam, and thus deny to the Japanese the port and aerodrome facilities there which, if exploited, constituted the main threat to Northern Malaya.

138. A.H.Q. was strongly in favour of, at the least, a "burn and scuttle" raid to destroy the aerodrome facilities in this area. It was evident that the development of these aerodromes by the Siamese could only be linked up with the spread of the Japanese over Indo-China and their increasing influence in Bangkok. It appeared obvious that these aerodromes would soon contain all the facilities required by Japanese aircraft, particularly fighters, which would then be able to support effectively landings in Southern Siam and Northern Malaya.

139. The conference finally adopted the more ambitious plan of "seizing and holding" the area: a plan known as Operation "Matador". The A.H.Q. representative was strongly pressed to state definitely what squadrons would be available to take part, with particular reference to breaking the railway running south from Bangkok, along which it was presumed a Japanese advance would come concurrently with attack from seaward. An offer was made of a Singapore III flying boat to carry a demolition party to some suitable stretch of railroad near the Siamese coast, but it was not taken up. Otherwise, no definite allotment could be made because of the meagre air resources in Malaya and their many commitments. The force available would depend on the situation at the time and the priority of tasks allotted by G.H.Q. to the R.A.F. as a whole. From the Army point of view this was a most unsatisfactory reply.

140. At this conference it was apparent that, in spite of the value of the operation, the Army had not the resources to carry it out. Moreover the chances of launching it, dependent as it was on political factors and the most accurate timing, appeared remote. However, the benefits deriving from it if it were successful were held by G.H.Q. to outweigh the risks involved. Careful and comprehensive plans were therefore drawn up by the Army to move elements of the IIIrd (Indian) Corps by road and rail into Siam, with the R.A.F. supporting from aerodromes in Northern Malaya with such units as the situation at the time permitted.

Control of Army/Air Operations

141. For the control of operations in support of the Army in the north, A.H.Q. formed a nucleus Operations Group H.Q. It was designated Norgroup and in war was to be located with H.Q. IIIrd (Indian) Corps. Its functions were:-

- (i) to command such air forces as A.H.Q. might allot to it from time to time:
- (ii) to act as an air adviser to G.O.C. IIIrd Corps and to command such air forces as might be placed under the command of IIIrd Corps. A Combined IIIrd Corps/Norgroup Headquarters was established at Kuala Lumpur with an advanced H.Q. close to Butterworth.

Group Headquarters was formed in July 1941, exercised in its functions and then disbanded, but was held in readiness for mobilization when required.

On Singapore Island, under G.H.Q. orders, a combined Army/Air Operations Room was constructed alongside A.H.Q. in Sime Road, Singapore, and was ready just before war broke out. As its wooden buildings, standing above ground, were very vulnerable the construction of an alternative Operations Room was put in hand. It functioned at the level of A.H.Q. and H.Q.M.C., thus G.H.Q. and C.-in-C. China Fleet were not represented in it.

SUMMARY OF SITUATION, 22ND NOVEMBER 1941

General Weakness of the Command

142. Enough has been said to paint a pre-war picture of the Command and, it is hoped, of the vigorous efforts which were made to carry out the expansion programme authorised by the Chiefs of Staff. But the fact remains that by December 1941, the R.A.F. Far East Command was not in a position to fulfil its responsibility of being the primary means of resisting Japanese aggression.

143. The role of the Command remained constant, viz:-

- (a) To find the enemy at sea as far away from Malaya as possible: then
- (b) to strike hard and often.
- (c) To continue attacks during the landing operations: and
- (d) in co-operation with the Army to delay his advance.

But while real progress had been made in fitting the Command for its allotted tasks, deficiencies were still apparent in almost every aspect of its functions.

144. The Japanese had already occupied Indo-China, and while no certain information could be obtained by F.E.C.B., it was patent that they were building up their forces there and also preparing operational facilities in Siam. Japanese reconnaissance flights over Borneo and Malaya had become so frequent by October 1941 that a section of Buffaloes had been stationed at Kota Bahru to curb those over Malaya.

145. On our side, re-equipment of squadrons had not taken place and was not likely to do so in the near future; Vickers Vildebeestes were still our main striking strength. Buffalo fighters had arrived, it is true, but their performance and armament were disappointing and inexperienced pilots were still being trained to man them. In a country like Malaya, it was not difficult for the enemy to obtain information about our Air Forces. It was unlikely that the Japanese would be misled by official propaganda declaring the completeness of our defence preparations.

146. The Army in Malaya was still weak; its additional interim

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strength considered necessary to ensure security until such time as the air strength had been built up was not present in the Colony. It was over-extended in its dispositions, a state of affairs forced upon it by its many and widely scattered commitments.

147. The aerodromes in Northern Malaya on which so much was certain to depend, especially in the early stages of the war, had none of the pre-requisites of secure bases for occupation in the face of the enemy. There were insufficient aircraft for effective fighter cover, both heavy and light A.A. guns were quite inadequate, and in the absence of an adequate warning system the aerodromes were open to surprise attack. In the absence of a proper air defence system the arrangements that were made for dispersal of aircraft and their protection against blast, in themselves not as complete when war broke out as was planned, were largely nullified.

Suggested Modification of Defence Plan

148. These facts impelled the Air Staff at A.H.Q. to submit to the A.O.C. in October 1941 an appreciation, which, after reviewing the situation, forecast that Northern Malaya would be quickly overrun by the Japanese and that the loss of these aerodromes would seriously handicap any effort to support the Army since the next line of bases was right back in Singapore Island itself. The appreciation recommended:-

- (a) That aerodromes in N.E. and N.W. Malaya should be regarded temporarily as advanced landing grounds only and stocked accordingly.
- (b) That two further bases with proper protection should be developed (one new) on the west side of Malaya in the Kuala Lumpur area.

It was envisaged that this interim arrangement might also materially assist the Army in making its dispositions for the defensive delaying role it would probably have to adopt.

149. The A.O.C. agreed generally with the appreciation but stated that it was too late to adopt what amounted to a retrograde step in the plan of defence. It is not known whether he discussed it with G.H.Q.

Deterioration of the Political Situation

150. During 1941, relations with Japan became increasingly strained, with the exploitation of Indo-China and a simultaneous intensifying of Japanese political and military activities in Siam. The attitude of the Siamese Government was doubtful. It professed great friendship for Britain and sent two goodwill missions to Singapore to cement this friendship. Nevertheless, the Japanese continued to reconnoitre Siam and to make preparations for utilising that country as a Base: they accelerated the provisioning of the aerodromes at Singora and Patani which they also extended to make them suitable for modern aircraft. As November 1941 progressed, evidence of Japanese activities increased until, on 22nd November, 1941, the information at G.H.Q.'s disposal was sufficient to indicate that Japan was about to embark upon a further major venture in South-East Asia. The resultant action initiated by G.H.Q. is dealt with in Section II.

SECTION II

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS BASED ON MALAYA.

EVENTS FROM 22nd NOVEMBER TO MIDNIGHT 7/8th DECEMBER 1941

G.H.Q. Appreciation of the Situation - 22nd November, 1941

✓ 151. On 22nd November 1941, G.H.Q. issued their appreciation of the situation. Briefly this appreciation considered that any further major action by Japan in the near future would take place from South Indo-China against Siam, rather than from North Indo-China against the Burma road. G.H.Q. did not, however, disregard the possibility of Japan making a "gambler's throw" against Malaya or even against Singapore itself. G.H.Q. concluded that the most likely operation which would be called for on our part in the immediate future would be the set plan ("Matador") for the advance by our land forces into South-East Siam. A.H.Q. was accordingly instructed to make all preliminary moves and to be ready to implement "Matador" at 72 hours' notice and was informed that air requirements for "Matador" were to take precedence over the preparations then being made for the formation of an International Air Force to operate in S. China. A.H.Q. was also warned that the full reconnaissance plan to detect the approach of any sea expedition threatening Malaya, might be ordered later.

152. The Order of Battle of the Far East Command in Malaya at this stage is shown in Appendix "C".

Action taken by A.H.Q. to implement Operation "Matador".

✓ 153. A.H.Q. immediately adopted the following measures for reinforcing N. Malaya:-

- ✓ (a) Formed Headquarters Norgroup which assembled at Kuala Lumpur with Headquarters IIIrd Indian Corps on 24th November. The Commander appointed was Wing Commander R.G. Forbes, Station Commander, Alor Star, in the absence of the Commander designate, Group Captain A.G. Bishop, who was away in South China.
- ✓ (b) Ordered No.21 (F) Squadron, R.A.A.F., to move to Sungei Patani: move to be completed by 25th November.
- ✓ (c) Put No.34 (B) Squadron (Blenheim IV) at short notice to move to Alor Star.
- ✓ (d) Made provisional arrangements for the move of No.60 (B) Squadron aircraft (7 Blenheim) from the Armament Training Camp, Kuantan, to Butterworth. This move would be necessary if the reconnaissance plan was brought into force as No.8 (GR) Squadron, R.A.A.F. would require the accommodation at Kuantan.
- (e) Instituted certain other precautionary measures including warning fighters at Kota Bahru, Sungei Patani and Singapore of the action to be taken if unidentified aircraft were sighted. Training was allowed to proceed with certain restrictions.

154. Commander, Norgroup, was informed that the following squadrons would support Operation "Matador":-

- (a) No.62 (B) Squadron (Blenheim I) from Alor Star.
- (b) No.34 (B) Squadron (Blenheim IV) from Alor Star.
- (c) No.21 (F) Squadron, R. .A.F. (Buffaloes) from Sungei Patani.
- (d) No.27 (NF) Squadron (Blenheim I) from Sungei Patani.

Further G.H.Q. Appreciation - 28th November 1941.

✓ 155. On 28th November 1941, G.H.Q. informed A.H.Q. of a report

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received from Saigon that the Japanese intended landing troops in South Siam on 1st December, 1941. G.H.Q. stated that the Japanese had adequate forces to carry out such a move but placed no great credence in the report. They assumed that if such a convoy did leave Saigon, it would travel at 15 knots or less and anchor off Nakwan or between Singora and Patani on the S.E. coast of Siam on the morning of either the 30th November or 1st December. G.H.Q. ordered A.H.Q. to despatch air reconnaissances daily with a view to locating this Force but explicitly stated that "a striking force will not be ordered to attack the convoy if found". From this day until 3rd December, reconnaissance proceeded without event except that on the 3rd December two large cargo boats were sighted.

- ✓ 156. On 29th November, 1941, the notice for Operation "Matador" was altered by G.H.Q. from 72 hours to 12 hours.

Arrival of Naval Reinforcements.

- ✓ 157. On the 2nd December, H.M.S. "Prince of Wales" and H.M.S. "Prince of Wales" and H.M.S. "Repulse" arrived in Singapore as a counter-measure to continued Japanese encroachment in the South-West Pacific. The former wore the flag of Admiral Sir Tom Phillips, the new C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet.

Initiation of full Reconnaissance Plan.

- ✓ 158. On 3rd December, 1941, orders were issued by G.H.Q. for the full reconnaissance plan to be put into force the following day. As a result, in the afternoon of the 3rd, a Dutch group of flying boats (3) arrived at Seletar in accordance with prearranged plans (see para.40). The reconnaissance areas allotted to the Dutch and British respectively were:-

Dutch: Kuantan - Gr. Natunas - Kuching (British Borneo)

British: Kota Bahru - Southern tip of Indo-China -
Gr. Natunas - Kuantan.

An extension of the reconnaissance area into the Gulf of Siam as part of routine reconnaissance, although desirable, was not possible owing to the shortage of aircraft.

- ✓ 159. The execution of the British section of the reconnaissance plan involved the operation of Nos. 1 and 8 (GR) Squadrons, R.A.A.F., based on Kota Bahru and Kuantan respectively. Their effort was reinforced by Catalinas to fill in gaps and to ensure overlapping the Dutch.

- ✓ 160. The initiation of the full reconnaissance plan cancelled the special reconnaissance which had been carried out to that date and involved the movement of No. 8 (GR) Squadron, R.A.A.F. from Sembawang to Kuantan; owing to lack of transport aircraft and inadequate land communications, the ground personnel and equipment of this squadron had to proceed by sea.

Assumption of No. 2 Degree of Readiness.

- ✓ 161. On 4th December, 1941, G.H.Q. ordered the Command to be brought to "No. 2 degree of readiness". The promulgation of this degree informed the Command that "the international situation was deteriorating" and brought it into a position to operate at short notice. In particular it meant that the full air warning system was brought into being.

Reconnaissance period 4th - 6th December 1941.

✓ 162. On the 4th December, owing to bad weather, aircraft at Kota Bahru (No.1 (GR) Squadron, R.A.A.F.) were unable to operate, but the Kuantan G.R. Squadron (No.8 (GR) Squadron, R.A.A.F.) carried out its part in the reconnaissance plan, as did the Dutch, with nothing to report. Reports of the sightings of strange submarines in the reconnaissance area had been received, so a special reconnaissance was carried out by No.60(B) Squadron from Kuantan but was negative. On this day a Catalina took Admiral Sir Tom Phillips, Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, to Manila.

✓ 163. On 5th December 1941, bad weather still prevented No.1 (GR) Squadron, R.A.A.F. at Kota Bahru operating, but again the Dutch Reconnaissance Group and No.8 (GR) Squadron, R.A.A.F. at Kuantan gave negative reports. On this day, a special anti-submarine patrol was maintained by three Vildebeestes ahead of H.M.S. "Repulse" which proceeded at slow speed en route from Singapore to Australia.

164. On the 6th December 1941, three crews were despatched to Sourabaya to collect three Catalinas loaned by the Dutch. The anti-submarine patrol in co-operation with H.M.S. "Repulse" was also maintained.

First sighting of Japanese Expedition - 6th December, 1941.

✓ 165. On the 6th December, Kota Bahru aerodrome was serviceable and the full reconnaissance plan was operated. The first enemy sighting was received at 1130 hours identifying one battleship and 10 cruisers accompanying transports. This was amplified at 1400 hours when two definite convoys were sighted. These consisted of:-

(a) 1 battleship, 5 cruisers, 7 destroyers, 25 merchant vessels:

(b) 2 cruisers, 10 destroyers, 10 merchant vessels.

✓ 166. Information on the latter convoy was subsequently further amplified to the effect that it contained 21 merchant vessels which were cruising in two lines astern. This amplification was received by telephone at A.H.Q. at 1517 hours.

✓ 167. The position of these convoys was about 80 miles S.S.E. of Cape Cambodia, off the Southern tip of Indo-China, both steering west, one slightly ahead of the other. It was stated that one of the Hudson aircraft had been chased by a single float aircraft and that there could be no doubt the Japanese knew they had been spotted.

✓ 168. In the meantime, there were reports of what appeared to be Japanese reconnaissance aircraft taking photographs at various points. G.H.Q. confirmed that no offensive action was to be taken by fighters against them, although A.A. defences were given authority to open fire on unidentified aircraft.

✓ 169. As a result of the enemy sighting reports Kota Bahru was instructed to send Hudsons from No.1 (GR) Squadron, R.A.A.F. to shadow the convoys. Catalinas of No.205 (PB) Squadron from Seletar were ordered to take over this shadowing from the Hudsons, and to maintain it during the night 6/7th December until relieved by Hudsons again in the morning of 7th December.

Assumption of No.1 Degree of Readiness.

✓ 170. On receipt of sighting reports, the Command was also put by G.H.Q. at "No.1 degree of readiness" which meant that it was to be "ready for immediate operations and prepared for enemy attack without

/prior

prior warning."

Action taken by A.H.Q. on Enemy Sighting.

✓ 171. The following action was taken by A.H.Q. as a result of the reconnaissance reports received:-

- (a) 7 Vildebeestes of No.36 (TB) Squadron were despatched from Selotar to Kota Bahru. (9 were ordered but only 7 could proceed). Aircraft proceeded armed with torpedoes.
- (b) Norgroup was informed that No.62 (B) Squadron at Alor Star was removed to A.H.Q. control.
- (c) No.34 (B) Squadron was retained at Tengah at short notice to move to Alor Star.
- (d) The one Beaufort in the Command was moved to Kota Bahru to stand by there for a special photographic reconnaissance required by G.H.Q. (see para.177).

Attempts to maintain contact with Enemy.

✓ 172. On the afternoon of the 6th December, Hudsons despatched from Kota Bahru to shadow were unable to contact the convoys and bad weather prohibited relief aircraft being sent. The first Catalina of No.205 (FB) Squadron left according to programme to shadow the convoy during the night.

✓ 173. During the lat evening of the 6th, scrutiny of reports and records revealed that the Japanese convoys were probably one hour ahead of the positions reported. It was assumed, therefore, that the convoys on rounding Indo-China had turned to the N.W. into the Gulf of Siam, thus passing out of the reconnaissance area (vide para.158). This, perhaps, appeared at the time to explain why Hudsons despatched to shadow had not contacted: visibility conditions, however, had been poor.

✓ 174. No reports having been received from the first Catalina despatched to shadow the convoys, orders were issued to a second Catalina, before it took off to relieve the first, that if no contact was established, a search was to be made off the West coast of Cambodia. This was done because G.H.Q. considered the convoy had probably anchored at Ko Kong, for which it might be making as the next step towards Siam. The aircraft was ordered to keep 10 miles off the coast. No report was ever received from this second Catalina which was afterwards confirmed as having been shot down by the Japanese.

/Reconnaissance

✱ 6 Beauforts had recently arrived but 5 were sent back to Australia owing to lack of training facilities and 'teething' troubles with the aircraft. Nos.36 (TB) and 100 (TB) Squadrons were due to be rearmed with this type.

Reconnaissance Plan for 7th December 1941.

175. For the 7th December 1941, No.8 (GR) Squadron, R.A.A.F., at Kuantan was instructed to continue the set reconnaissance plan in case a further invasion convoy was on the way from Indo-China, but the Kota Bahru G.R. Squadron was detailed to carry out a special reconnaissance sweep into the Gulf of Siam. Vildebeestes were instructed to maintain an anti-submarine patrol ahead of H.M.S. "Repulse" which had been recalled from Australia.

Events on the 7th December 1941.

176. Owing to bad weather, it was not until 0635 hours on the 7th that the reconnaissance aircraft from Kota Bahru were able to take off for a sweep into the Gulf of Siam. Shortly afterwards, owing to rain, low clouds and bad visibility, two of the three aircraft returned; the third proceeded alone.

177. At 1025 hours the C.in-C., Far East, visited the Combined Army/Air Operations Room and stated he was satisfied with the situation. He:-

- (a) Wished B.O.A.C. to continue using Bangkok until the last possible moment and confirmed that flights on the 8th December were to go through Bangkok.
- (b) Was considering allowing our aircraft to fire at aircraft not established as friendly.
- (c) Would issue orders shortly for the reconnaissance of Ko Kong anchorage which he wished the P.R. Beaufort, now at Kota Bahru, to carry out.

178. Shortly afterwards, G.H.Q. issued their orders for the reconnaissance of Ko Kong. The aircraft left Kota Bahru at 1120 hours, but returned at 1445 hours owing to bad weather. During the morning, the Catalina with Admiral Sir Tom Phillips on board returned from Manila.

179. Meanwhile at 1345 hours on the 7th December, one cargo vessel of from 6,000-8,000 tons had been sighted in the Gulf of Siam steaming west and this was followed by a further sighting at 1545 hours by a Hudson from Kota Bahru, one other Japanese merchant vessel being seen steering south. This latter vessel was stated to have a large number of men on deck in khaki.

180. Three Hudsons from Kota Bahru were immediately directed on a diverging search north of that place and 10 miles off the Siamese coast. At 1750 hours one merchant vessel and one cruiser steaming 340° were sighted. The cruiser opened fire on the aircraft. At 1848 hours, under conditions of very bad visibility, four Japanese naval vessels, perhaps destroyers, were seen off Singora steaming south.

181. Owing to subsequent loss of records the exact positions of the ship sightings mentioned above cannot now be given.

Resulting Action.

182. In consequence of these reports, G.H.Q., late on 7th December, cancelled Operation "Matador" and issued orders for the B.O.A.C. aircraft to avoid Bangkok and to use the West Coast route.

183. Conditions at midnight 7th/8th December 1941, were therefore:-

- (a) Contact with the main Japanese convoys located on the 6th had not been re-established.
- (b) Conditions for air reconnaissance in the Gulf of Siam had been bad but in the late evening four ships had been sighted off Singora steaming south.
- (c) Norgroup with Nos. 21 (F) R.A.A.F., and 27 (NF) Squadrons was standing by in support of IIIrd Corps but Operation "Matador" had been cancelled. *b2 (B) but see 171 (B) which contradicts*
- (d) The following aircraft under the command of the Officer Commanding, Kota Bahru were fully armed and ready to take the offensive:-
 - (i) Five Hudsons of No. 1 (GR) Squadron R.A.A.F., and one Section (2) Buffaloes of No. 243 (F) Squadron at Kota Bahru.
 - (ii) Seven Vildebeestes (No. 36 (TB) Squadron), with torpedoes, at Gong Kedah, to which it had been transferred owing to congestion at Kota Bahru.

The Command was at the fullest degree of readiness but there was no undue alarm owing to G.H.Q.'s view that the Japanese expedition was directed against Siam.

184. A.H.Q. decided to send at first light on the 8th a coastal reconnaissance to the Lakon Roads, north of Singora, to identify whether or not the Japanese had landed in S.E. Siam as forecast in the G.H.Q. appreciation (para. 151).

OPERATIONS FROM 8TH DECEMBER 1941 UNTIL FINAL EVACUATION OF NORTHERN MALAYA BY ROYAL AIR FORCE, ON 23RD DECEMBER, 1941.

Japanese landing at Kota Bahru.

185. At midnight 7th/8th December the weather at Kota Bahru cleared, but the aerodrome surface was extremely boggy owing to heavy rains. About 0030 hours on the 8th, O.C., Kota Bahru rang up A.H.Q. and stated that three ships had been seen by the beach defences. This message was followed by another at 0100 hours confirming the presence of these ships, stating that shelling was taking place and that Brigade H.Q. were being asked to clarify the situation. On this, A.H.Q. ordered the despatch of a single Hudson with flares to see what was happening. Before this could be done, at 0115 hours definite information came through from Kota Bahru that landing on the beaches by the Japanese had started from 3-5 ships lying three miles off shore.

Orders issued by A.H.Q.

186. O.C., Kota Bahru was immediately ordered to take offensive action with all available Hudsons and to order the Vildebeestes at Gong Kedah to deliver a torpedo attack at first light. It must be remembered that the orders issued to O.C., Kota Bahru as a result of G.H.Q. instructions (para. 155) specifically stated that no offensive action would be taken against the convoy when sighted. He could not, therefore, initiate the first offensive action of the campaign without further orders.

187. A.H.Q. also issued orders to Nos. 8 (GR), 27 (NF), 34 (B),

60 (B) and 62 (B) Squadrons to take off at first light and attack shipping in the Kota Bahru area whilst No.100 (TB) Squadron was ordered to proceed to Kuantan on the following morning and stand by for orders.

188. Norgroup was informed that No.27 (NF) as well as No.62 (B) Squadron reverted to A.H.Q. control, leaving only No.21 (F) Squadron R.A.A.F., for co-operation with IIIrd Corps.

189. The Beaufort at Kota Bahru was instructed to carry out the photographic reconnaissance at first light to Lakon Roads (para.184).

190. At Kota Bahru by 0200 hours the first five Hudsons of No.1 (GR) Squadron, R.A.A.F. had taken off, whilst at 0500 hours the two Buffaloes had been despatched against barges reported entering the river.

First Operations against Kota Bahru landings.

191. At 0730 hours on 8th December, the O.C. Kota Bahru gave a resume of the night's operations. 17 Hudson sorties had been carried out, one transport had been destroyed and two others severely damaged and perhaps sunk. Landing barges en route to the beaches had been attacked and it was estimated that at least 3,000 Japanese had been killed. Intensive A.A. fire had been experienced, particularly accurate from a cruiser covering the landing. Two Hudsons had been shot down and a third badly damaged, leaving him still six. One Buffalo had also been hit. The Vildebeestes from Gong Kedah were in the air.

192. Apparently some 8 transports covered by one cruiser and several destroyers had been involved, and O.C., Kota Bahru thought all vessels had now retired to the north. He intended to carry on using the Hudsons for mopping up small craft and beach parties still visible. At 0800 hours, he confirmed that all vessels had retired to the north and that he was mopping up the few small craft left with bomb and machine-gun fire. He added that there had been some infiltration into the Brigade area.

193. Meanwhile the Vildebeestes of No.36 (TB) Squadron from Gong Kedah, in heavy rain, found the cruiser (para.191), delivered an attack with torpedoes which it evaded, and landed at Kota Bahru on their return.

194. Nos.8 (GR) R.A.A.F., 27 (NF), 34 (B) and 60 (B) Squadrons also arrived on the scene and found little to attack in the area; a signal sent them whilst they were airborne to search further north was not received. Nos.8 and 60 Squadrons returned to Kuantan, No.27 to Sungai Patani, whilst No.34 Squadron landed at Butterworth. All squadrons were to refuel and re-arm.

195. No.62 (B) Squadron which had also been ordered to attack, not finding any target, proceeded north to Patani to bomb transports there. This squadron (11 Blenheim I's) encountered fighter opposition and fairly intensive A.A. fire. It carried out its attack from 8,000 ft. but the results obtained were not seen.

First Air Attack on Singapore.

196. Whilst the first landings had been taking place at Kota Bahru, Singapore had its first air raid shortly after 0400 hours on the 8th December. Ample warning (at least 30 minutes) of the raid was received and promulgated but in consequence of an error in the Civil Government organisation the H.Q. of the A.R.P. organisation was not manned, with the result that the civil population received no

/warning

warning, nor was the Civil Defence Scheme put in operation. Some 17 aircraft took part in this raid, the majority of the bombs falling at Seletar and Tengah. At the latter place 3 Blenheims of No.34 (B) Squadron were damaged and the aerodrome cratered.

Japanese attacks on Northern Airfields.

✓ 197. Between 0730 and 0800 hours, Kota Bahru, Gong Kedah and Machang aerodromes were attacked by bombers and low-flying fighters; except for dummy aircraft, the latter two were unoccupied at the time. These attacks were repeated throughout the day mainly by low-flying fighters with little effect save in delaying the refuelling and re-armament of aircraft at Kota Bahru.

198. Sungei Patani, Penang and Butterworth in N.W. Malaya were also attacked throughout 8th December by formations of from 27 to 60 bomber aircraft with serious results. The Japanese used light bombs only, directed against aircraft and personnel; they studiously avoided damaging aerodrome surfaces. Personnel on the spot noted that for the next few days Japanese attacks in this area frequently synchronised with aircraft landing or getting ready to take off. Evdnts later were to indicate a leakage of information to the Japanese.

199. There was a particularly serious attack on the 8th against Alor Star, delivered immediately after No.62 (B) Squadron had landed after its attack at Patani. The aerodrome was first bombed by 27 Japanese aircraft which then came down low and machine-gunned aircraft on the ground. As a result of this raid No.62 (B) Squadron had only two aircraft left serviceable.

200. Nos.21 (F) R.A.A.F. and 27 (NF) Squadrons at Sungei Patani also suffered badly and were each reduced to 4 serviceable aircraft; and in consequence of the repeated low attacks on this airfield both squadrons, with their personnel, were withdrawn to Butterworth. It was later learnt that the guns in the Buffaloes had given trouble and were all unserviceable from lack of solenoids. The serviceable Blenheim fighters of No.27 Squadron had carried out periodic patrols over N.W. Malaya without result. No.34 (B) Squadron at Butterworth was also seriously reduced in number of aircraft.

Ground Situation in N.W. Malaya.

201. Aircraft losses from enemy attack thus gravely weakened the air forces available in N.W. Malaya where the main enemy advance on land was expected to develop. On the 8th there was little opposition from the air to our own ground forces owing to the enemy's concentration on the bombing of our aerodromes.

202. "Matador" having been cancelled, the Army was taking up positions forward of a partially prepared line at Jitra. Covering forces were advancing north and north-east from Kedah province: one to make contact along the line of advance from the Singora area the other to occupy what was known as The Ledge, an important feature on the Siamese border which guarded the right flank of the Jitra position.

203. The first made contact at 2130 hours on the 8th at Ban Sadao ten miles inside Siam. The other (Krohcol) reported some opposition from Siamese forces but continued its advance.

Evacuation of N.E. Malaya by R.A.F. on 8th December.

204. It is now necessary to return to the Kota Bahru area. At 0915 hours on the 8th December the P.R. Beaufort returned from its recce, of the Lakon Roads. En route, it had been heavily attacked by fighters and landed in a badly shot up condition,

/subsequently

subsequently having to be destroyed. The pilot reported verbally that a large concentration of vessels was landing troops in the Singora-Patani area. His photographs were flown back to Singapore by the remaining Buffalo fighter. Shortly afterwards, Norgroup, under orders from IIIrd Corps, despatched 3 Buffaloes of No.21 (F) Squadron R.A.A.F. on a tactical recce, to Singora. This recce, confirmed the presence of the main convoy in the Singora area and also revealed a force of about 60 Japanese aircraft, mainly fighters, on Singora aerodrome.

205. By noon on the 8th December, it appeared as if the situation on the ground at Kota Bahru was in hand, although at 1245 hours news was received of the landing of further troops from one transport covered by a cruiser and several destroyers. O.C. Kota Bahru reported he had despatched 4 Hudsons and 4 Vildebeestes to deal with this. It transpired later that the report of this further landing was false. Aircraft continued mopping up barges and machine-gunning beaches.

206. However, towards 1600 hours, reports unexpectedly revealed that the Kota Bahru situation on the ground had become serious. Penetration had been made up to the aerodrome boundary and aircraft and personnel came under sporadic fire. On representation by the O.C., Kota Bahru, A.H.Q. approved the evacuation of the aerodrome. All aircraft were ordered to Kuantan, personnel and stores to proceed by train, whilst the denial scheme was to be put in operation. This was successfully achieved and 5 Hudsons and 7 Vildebeestes arrived at Kuantan. The Hudsons en route bombed the railway bridge north of Kota Bahru on the Siamese border with doubtful success although the permanent track was damaged. This withdrawal as far south as Kuantan was unavoidable as Gong Kedah, the only aerodrome in the Kota Bahru area that might have been used, was virtually undefended and in a very exposed situation near the coast.

207. During the day, various reports of suspicious vessels off the East coast had been received, necessitating reconnaissances which, however, were all negative.

Summary of situation on the evening of the 8th December 1941.

208. That night (8th/9th December) the situation was, therefore:-

- (a) The Japanese expedition to capture the Kota Bahru aerodrome area was succeeding; and the use of aerodromes in this area was now denied to the R.A.F. Our troops in the area were thus without close air support.
- (b) The Japanese main forces were landing unimpeded in the the Singora-Patani area, covered by air operations against our aerodromes in N. Malaya. Their advance towards the north-west frontier of Malaya had already begun and our forward troops had made contact. The sniping at Singora had not been attacked partly because the aircraft at Kota Bahru were fully engaged there by the time it was reported, and partly because heavy Japanese air attacks against our virtually undefended aerodromes in N.W. Malaya had seriously reduced the small air forces available.
- (c) The Japanese Air Force was already operating in strength from Singora aerodrome. From the narrow view point of the Royal Air Force, it was apparent that the cancellation of Operation "Matador" was to have a far-reaching influence on air operations in Northern

/Malaya

Malaya.

Air Operations in the North West - 9th December 1941.

209. In the N.W. aerodrome area, enemy air attacks continued and early on the 9th, No.62 (B) Squadron was forced to withdraw from Alor Star to Butterworth.

210 To counter these attacks, it was decided to destroy the Japanese fighters based on Singora. Two attacks against this aerodrome were planned. The first was to be made by the aircraft of No.34 (B) Squadron still left at Tengah, reinforced by No.60 (B) Squadron, which had now moved there from Kuantan (see para. 219): the second by all available aircraft of Nos.34 and 62 Squadrons, by now at Butterworth. A.H.Q. issued orders that both attacks were to be escorted by the maximum strength of Buffaloes from No.21 (F) Squadron, R.A.A.F., also at Butterworth.

211. The first attack - a mixed force of 11 Blenheim I's and IV's from Nos.34 (B) and 60(B) Squadrons - was made in the early afternoon of the 9th. Heavy fighter opposition was encountered and 5 of our aircraft were shot down. Results of the attack were not observed but returning crews claimed that, at least, a congested aerodrome had been hit.

212. No fighter escort had been available. No.21 (F) Squadron, R.A.A.F., had two aircraft serviceable only, which were on tactical reconnaissances for IIIrd Corps. It may be noted here that these aircraft on the morning of the 9th reported the presence of Japanese light tanks, which were observed at Ban Sadao moving south.

213. The second attack - a mixed force of Blenheim I's and IV's from Nos.34 (B) and 62 (B) Squadrons already at Butterworth - due off at 1700 hours, was never launched. Just before the time of "take-off" Japanese bombers carried out a high bombing attack followed up by machine-gunning aircraft on the ground. One aircraft only of No.62 (B) Squadron - Captain, Flight Lieutenant A.A.K. Scarfe - took off as the attack was developing; the remaining aircraft on the ground were all rendered unserviceable. Flight Lieutenant Scarfe circled the aerodrome until it became apparent that no other aircraft were joining him. He then proceeded to Singora and pressed home his attack. During his approach to the target and subsequent get-away, A.A. fire and heavy fighter opposition were encountered, and Flight Lieutenant Scarfe was mortally wounded. This very gallant officer felt unable to make the longer journey back to Butterworth, but managed to retain consciousness until he reached Alor Star, where he crash-landed without injury to his crew. He died in hospital that evening. He was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross.

214. As a result of this day's operations against Singora, A.H.Q. decided that no more bombing by day should take place over land until such time as fighter escort could be provided.

Preparations for withdrawal from the N.W.

215. At 0900 hours on the 9th, Adv. H.Q. Norgroup opened at Bukit Martajim (near Butterworth), but it became evident that the evacuation of the N.W. bases could not long be delayed. Up till this time, no A.A. defences were at Butterworth. 8 Bofors guns arrived on the afternoon of the 9th but their presence was not, of course, any deterrent to high flying bombers.

216. A.H.Q., therefore, issued instructions that all airfields on the mainland to the southward were to be got ready for immediate

/operational

operational use. At the same time, orders were issued to do everything possible to improve dispersal arrangements at aerodromes on Singapore Island.

The evacuation of Kuantan Aerodrome by R.A.F. on 9th December.

217. The position on the east coast also worsened on the 9th December. During the night of the 8/9th, there were many reports and alarms of further landings, fears of which were to persist throughout the brief campaign and cause many hours to be spent on coastal reconnaissances at the request of H.Q.M.C.

218. On the 9th, two pairs of Vildebeestes were sent at 0300 hours to sweep the coast north and south of Kuantan. During the day, 6 Hudsons were employed on similar duties whilst Catalinas extended the search area into the South China Sea. The remainder of the aircraft at Kuantan "stood by" to attack whatever might be found. Confirmation was obtained of the large concentration of ships of all natures unloading in the Singora-Patani area, but no threat of further seaborne attack was discovered, although 3 Vildebeestes were despatched on a false report to attack a ship 60 miles east of Kuantan.

219. However, with the destruction of aircraft on the ground in N.W. Malaya in mind, it became evident to A.H.Q. that a dangerous congestion of aircraft existed at Kuantan as there was no A.A. protection there. Orders were issued to O.C. Kuantan, early on the 9th, to retain 12 Vildebeestes and the 13 Hudsons of Nos. 1 and 8 (GR) Squadrons R.A.A.F. and to despatch the remainder to Singapore.

220. At noon, the expected attack took place and Kuantan was subjected to its first experience of high bombing followed up by the bombers flying low and shooting up at will. A.H.Q. thereupon decided to evacuate Kuantan, the surviving 10 Hudsons and 8 Vildebeestes returning to Singapore. From then on Kuantan was available as an A.L.G. for refuelling only. The withdrawal of the ground party might have been better controlled.

Reports of a Landing at Kuantan - 9/10th December, 1941.

221. During the night 9/10th, reports were received of a landing in progress north of Kuantan. 6 Vildebeestes and 3 Hudsons were ordered to attack. The Vildebeestes found 3 small ships and bombed them with doubtful results, but the Hudsons which arrived later found no target although they prolonged their search of the area past daylight. There is reason to believe that the beaches at Kuantan had been fired on during the night, but the enemy force was only a light reconnaissance to test the defences, and its size had been magnified in the telling.

222. Further bombing of Kuantan aerodrome on the morning of the 10th added to the uncertainty of the situation and all available bombers in Singapore were put at short notice to await developments. Sharks from the target-fowing flight carried out reconnaissance of the approaches to Singapore, whilst Blenheim IV's from No. 34 (B) Squadron, using Kuantan for refuelling purposes, continued reconnaissance of the east coast up to 50 miles north of Singora, confirming once more the large concentration of shipping off the Siamese coast.

223. The false report of a landing at Kuantan proved to have a vital bearing on the movements of H.M.S. "Prince of Wales" and H.M.S. "Repulse", and it is now necessary to turn

to turn to the events leading up to the sinking of these two vessels.

Sinking of H.M.S. "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse" - 10th December, 1941.

224. The C-in-C., Eastern Fleet, Admiral Sir Tom Phillips, decided to sail on the 8th December, 1941, with H.M.S. "Prince of Wales" and H.M.S. "Repulse", accompanied by four destroyers, with the object of attacking the concentration of Japanese transports reported between Singora and Patani. He intended to arrive in the target area at dawn on the 10th December.

225. Before leaving on the 8th December (p.m.), the C-in-C. asked for the following:-

- (a) Reconnaissance 100 miles to north of the force from daylight, Tuesday, the 9th December:
- (b) Reconnaissance to Singora and beyond ten miles from the coast starting at first light on the 10th December:
- (c) Fighter protection off Singora at daylight on the 10th December.

The A.O.C. gave tentative replies that he could provide (a), hoped to be able to provide (b), but could not provide (c). It was decided that he should go thoroughly into the problems involved and give definite replies to the Chief of Staff, Eastern Fleet, Rear Admiral Palliser, who remained at the Naval Base in close liaison with G.H.Q.

226. The doubt about the reconnaissance required in (b) above, was due to the fact that the reconnaissance would have to be provided by Blenheim IV's based on Kuantan, and it was uncertain whether this aerodrome would be out of action or not.

227. The reason why the fighter protection asked for in (c) could not be provided was mainly that the northern aerodromes were either untenable or else had been badly damaged by bombing; this meant that the fighters would have to operate from aerodromes at considerable distance from Singora, and, owing to the short endurance of the Buffalo, would have been able to remain only a very short time over the Singora area before having to return to refuel. These factors meant that a short patrol might possibly have been provided at intervals at Singora, but that it was impossible to guarantee appreciable fighter protection.

228. On the evening of the 8th December, the A.O.C. confirmed his tentative replies to the Chief of Staff, Eastern Fleet, and this information was passed by the latter to the C-in-C. The signal as received by him on board "Prince of Wales" expressly stated that no fighter protection could be provided on 10th December, 1941.^x

229. The agreed air reconnaissances were carried out on both the 9th and 10th December.

230. In the early hours of 10th December, a signal was received at Singapore indicating the Fleet might return sooner than was originally planned. Apart from this no communication was received from the C-in-C. and his position was unknown.

231. Suddenly at 1219 hours on the 10th December news was received, originating from H.M.S. "Repulse", in the Operations Room at A.H.Q. of enemy air attacks on H.M.S. "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse" in a position /some

^x The words "off Singora" did not appear in the text of the signal, but were implied in the ~~context~~ ^{light} of Admiral Phillips request (para. 225(c)).

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some 60 miles S.S.E. of Kuantan. No. 243 (F) Squadron (11 aircraft) which was standing by specifically to provide protection for these ships in case of their return to Singapore left six minutes later, only to arrive in the area to find destroyers picking up survivors from these two great vessels. For the rest of the day a number of sorties by flying boats and fighters were carried out in connection with the return of these destroyers to Singapore.

232. It subsequently transpired that the Fleet had been located by Japanese reconnaissance P.M. 9th December, whilst later that day the C-in-C. received news of the landing at Kuantan already narrated in para. 221. These two events must have decided the C-in-C. to abandon the Singora operation and close Kuantan on the 10th December.

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233. Had the C-in-C. notified his change of plan, it is conceivable that A.H.Q. might have moved No. 243 (F) Squadron to Kuantan where it could have stood by at call; R/T inter-communication between the two ships and the squadron aircraft had already been arranged. Some effective support might then have been given. Actually no call for assistance was sent until the Japanese attack had been pressed home, by which time intervention from Singapore was impossible.

234. The sinking of these two ships was a serious shock to the morale of everybody in the Far East. Their loss, combined with the American losses at Pearl Harbour, gave the Japanese an undisputed command of the sea in Malayan waters.

Arrival of Dutch Reinforcements.

235. During the morning of 9th December, the three Dutch Bomber (22 Glen Martins) and one Fighter (9 Buffaloes) Squadrons arrived at Sembawang and Kallang respectively in accordance with the mutual reinforcement plan. It was found that the Dutch bomber crews were not trained in night flying, and so one squadron (9 aircraft) was sent back to the N.E.I. to train; the intention being, on its return, to send the other squadrons in succession for the same purpose. As A.H.Q. had already decided not to use British bomber squadrons in their bombing role by day until fighter escort or cover could be provided, it was obviously essential to apply the decision to the Dutch Bomber squadrons, particularly as their Glen Martins were slower and no better protected than the British Blenheims.

Evacuation of Aerodromes in N.W. Malaya.

236. Meanwhile in Northern Malaya, it was evident that the main line of advance by the Japanese Army was from Singora across Malaya to the Alor Star area and thence by the West Coast route down the peninsula. The 11th (Indian) Division was being pressed back towards Jitra and the vital position on the right flank at the 'Ledge' had not yet been secured.

237. Bombing of our aerodromes in N.W. Malaya continued during the 10th December and A.H.Q. decided that the area must be evacuated. From Butterworth No. 62 (B) Squadron (reduced to 2 aircraft) was evacuated to Taiping; No. 21 (F) Squadron R.A.A.F. (6 repairable aircraft) to Ipoh, where 8 Bofors guns had by now been installed, leaving No. 27 (NF) Squadron (nil serviceability) still at Butterworth. All the unserviceable aircraft of Nos. 27, 34 (B) and 62 (B) Squadrons which were capable of flying were flown to Singapore for repair.

238. In an endeavour to improve repair and maintenance facilities in N.W. Malaya an R. & S.U. was formed at this time from No.151 M.U. at Seletar and ordered to Taiping: on arrival it detached a Mobile Salvage Section to Butterworth where conditions for maintaining operations were very primitive.
239. The morale of the personnel of the Air Force Units evacuated from Sungei Patani had deteriorated. Their helplessness on scantily protected aerodromes in the face of severe and constant bombing and machine-gun attacks, during which aircraft were remorselessly destroyed without replacement, had its due effect. This was aggravated by a growing feeling of futility at the opportuneness of these attacks (see para.198) and by the pernicious effect of rumours of disaster in the land fighting. These rumours were eventually traced to their source and on the morning of the 11th December, an Army Intelligence Officer was arrested, at Butterworth, charged with assisting the Japanese and sent to Singapore for trial. He was also suspected of passing to the Japanese advance information of squadron movements.
240. The misfortunes of units were also heightened by the wholesale defection of native personnel as a result of the bombing attacks. Only improvised and sketchy arrangements could be made in conditions which at the best were primitive owing to the numerous moves which squadrons had been forced to make.
241. The defection of labour also spread to the railway in the area. It was due to the untiring energy of a small party of the Royal Air Force headed by Flight Lieutenant R.D.I. Scott, who personally drove a locomotive, that salvaged material was got away to the south.
242. There was no senior R.A.F. officer at Butterworth with sufficient weight to take control and there was no doubt that some personnel got out of hand. It should be made clear, however, that the loss of morale applied only to personnel evacuated from Sungei Patani, viz. Nos.21 (F) R.A.A.F. and 27 (NF) Squadrons, particularly No.21. In view of this, the A.O.C. convened a Court of Inquiry to review the circumstances. Group Captain McCauley, R.A.A.F., was appointed President and, in conditions of some difficulty, took evidence and submitted a preliminary report to the A.O.C. at some date between 20th and 24th January. Unfortunately, all record of it has been lost. In his written recollections (submitted during 1946) Group Captain McCauley stated the general findings were that while the planning and control of the evacuation was not up to the desired standard and there was lack of co-ordination between Squadron and Station Commanders, the evidence did not reveal any instance where disciplinary action was called for against any individual.
243. Meanwhile the commencement of denial schemes at Alor Star on 10th December had had unfortunate repercussions. The sight of large fires and the sounds of explosion in their rear had caused a measure of alarm amongst our own forward troops. So much so that strict orders were issued to Commander, Norgroup, that no fires were to be started and no demolitions by explosion carried out. Buildings were to be damaged only, petrol and oil run to waste and demolitions of the aerodromes left to Corps R.E.'s to touch off.

Scale of Enemy Air Effort.

244. On the 8th., 9th and 10th December, the Japanese had used a daily average of over 120 aircraft sorties in N. Malaya, mostly against R.A.F. aerodromes. Fighters and some bombers were based on S.E. Siam, the majority of bombers on Indo-China. It was estimated that over 100 aircraft were in the Singora-Patani area and at least 280 in Indo-China. Types identified were:-

/Fighters

Fighters	-	Navy 'O'
Twin Engine Bombers	-	Navy 96 and Army 97
Dive Bombers	-	Junkers 87N (Japanese version)

Formation of War Council, Malaya.

245. On the 10th December, Mr. Duff Cooper, whose ministerial duties had taken him to Singapore, formed a War Council, the composition of which was as follows:-

Mr. Duff Cooper, Chairman
 H.E. the Governor of the Straits Settlements
 C-in-C., Far East
 C-in-C., Eastern Fleet
 G.O.C., Malaya
 A.O.C., Far East
 and later, Sir George Sansom as being responsible for
 Propaganda and Press control.

This War Council met daily for deliberation mainly in connection with the conduct of the war in Malaya.

Events on the 11th December 1941.

246. On the night of the 10th/11th December a number of rumours were current - paratroops being dropped, flares being fired, etc. - which proved to be unfounded.

247. On 11th December, the squadrons in N. Malaya were not in a position to take offensive action. Coastal reconnaissance, however, to the north of Kuantan by sections of Hudsons continued. Catalinas extended the search into the S. China Sea, whilst the P.R. Buffalo continued to register Japanese activities off the South Siamese coast. Enemy submarine reports necessitated the despatch of sections of Vildebeestes without result.

248. No.21 (F) Squadron, R.A.A.F., had no aircraft available for tactical reconnaissance for IIIrd Corps, and so A.H.Q. issued orders that the squadron was to be brought up to strength (16 I.E.) at Ipoh immediately with a proportion of new pilots.

249. Eighty Japanese aircraft attacked Penang Town; no aircraft were available for its protection.

250. On the ground, in addition to advances in the N.E. and N.W., the Japanese had also infiltrated down the east coast as far as Trengganu. In the north-west, where the main Japanese forces were advancing there was considerable pressure on the 11th (Indian) Division but no major action had been fought. Attacks from the air on our forward troops increased in weight on the 11th, though the enemy air effort was still being expended chiefly on our aerodromes.

251. To assist the defence of Borneo, the Dutch placed at Sinkawang under A.H.Q. operational control one squadron (9) Glen Martins and one Flight (4) Buffaloes.

Consideration of Bomber Policy.

252. On the evening of the 11th December, it was decided to attack Singora aerodrome once more, the arrival over the objective to be just before first light on the 12th. Eight aircraft of No.34 (B) Squadron at Tengah were detailed. The attack was unsuccessful: few aircraft got through the bad weather and flying accidents took their toll.

253. This raid was carried out as part of the current policy for bombing Japanese aerodromes in order to reduce the scale of their air activity against our ground forces. The Air Staff at A.H.Q., however, strongly held the view that the correct employment of air forces was in the attack of the shipping and troop concentrations in the Singora area where the main landing had taken place and through which reinforcements were still entering. They felt that the time had not yet come to concentrate on co-operation with the Army to delay the Japanese advance on the ground. Furthermore, the resources available for the bombing of aerodromes were not sufficient to produce any real effect on the Japanese effort. This was the view of the A.O.C., but he considered that he could not alter the policy which was selected to meet the wishes of the G.O.C., Malaya, who was anxious that action should be designed to reduce the scale of air attack on our troops. The G.O.C. was approached again at this time but reiterated that "bomber policy must give immediate relief to his troops" which, in his view, could only be achieved by bombing aerodromes.

254. It was indeed noticeable that with the increase in the number and weight of attacks against our forward troops some deterioration of morale had set in, largely because this type of attack was being experienced for the first time. It was the moral effect of air attack rather than the number of casualties that was sustained that continued to be the main feature of this aspect of the campaign amongst army, air force and civilians alike.

255. However, the G.O.C.'s point of view was confirmed by G.H.Q. who, on 12th December, issued a War Instruction, the relevant paragraph of which read:-

"For the present, assistance to the 11th Ind. Division is to take precedence over other R.A.F. offensive tasks".

On the 12th December, the C-in-C. visited A.H.Q. and re-emphasised the importance of providing support to the Army in the north-west.

Provision of Support for the Army.

256. On the 11th/12th December, the land position in the north-west worsened. The 11th Indian Division was forced back to the Jitra line and Krohcol came under heavier attacks. The withdrawal of the latter force would have grave consequences as it would expose the right flank of the 11th Indian Division and thus necessitate a general withdrawal out of Kedah province.

257. The only aircraft still available in the area for direct support of the Army were two or three Buffaloes of No.21 (F) Squadron, R.A.A.F., at Ipoh; the rest of the squadron was being re-equipped at Singapore. The A.O.C. decided, therefore, to send the aircraft and pilots of No.453 (F) Squadron from Singapore to Ipoh where they would be serviced by the ground crews of No.21 Squadron. It was intended to return them to Singapore when the rest of No.21 Squadron had been re-equipped.

258. No.453 (F) Squadron arrived at Ipoh on the morning of the 13th and began operating from there, using Butterworth as an advanced landing ground. Connection was established with the Observer Corps Operations Room at Kuala Lumpur in the hope of obtaining at least a short warning of attacks upon the station.

259. Operations were vigorously undertaken from Ipoh between the 13th and the 15th December. Japanese convoys were attacked on the road Simpang - Alor Star - Kepala Bantas. Tactical reconnaissances were carried out and enemy bombers and reconnaissance aircraft in the area were engaged with some success, notably on the 13th when

5 enemy aircraft attacking Penang were claimed by the squadron. As a result, it was reported that the morale of our troops sharply appreciated.

260. On the 15th December, No.21 (F) Squadron, R.A.A.F., left Singapore to reinforce Ipoh, but owing to bad weather five aircraft force-landed and crashed and only six aircraft got through.

261. Operations in support of the Army seriously reduced the serviceability of No.453 (F) Squadron and further losses were caused by the intensive bombing of Ipoh aerodrome which now commenced. In consequence, on the 15th December, G.H.Q. issued an instruction that the role of the Ipoh fighter force was primarily reconnaissance for IIIrd Corps; it was not to be used against ground targets and wastage was not to be made good at the expense of the squadrons allotted to the defence of Singapore. In practice, the squadrons in the north functioned mainly in the defence of the Ipoh area, carrying out such tactical reconnaissance as was required by IIIrd Corps. They continued in this role at Kuala Lumpur, to which enemy air attacks had driven them on the 19th December.

Demolition of Aerodromes.

262. The salvage of equipment from aerodromes in N.W. Malaya continued. Sungei Patani, Butterworth and Taiping were successively cleared and all stores and personnel sent back to Kuala Lumpur by road and rail for sorting. It subsequently transpired that, by an oversight, nearly 200,000 gallons of aviation petrol had been left intact in the Sungei Patani area.

263. Experience was to show that the demolition of aerodrome surfaces had little more than nuisance value and only slightly retarded the Japanese efforts to bring them into service for their own forces. Speedy repairs were possible as -

- (a) large stocks of metal had been accumulated on each aerodrome for repairs, and proved too bulky for their removal and denial to the enemy;
- (b) occupation by the Japanese followed demolition so quickly that the heavy rains had no time to take effect;
- (c) the abundant native labour was forcibly impressed by the enemy for repairs.

Withdrawal of Air Forces in N.W. Malaya to Singapore.

264. As early as the 20th December Japanese bombers and fighters were using aerodromes in the north-west, particularly Sungei Patani, and the scale of attack in the Kuala Lumpur area correspondingly increased. By the afternoon of 22nd December these attacks had reduced the combined strength of Nos.21 (F) R.A.A.F. and 453 (F) Squadrons to four operationally serviceable aircraft.

265. In view of the enemy's great numerical superiority, further attempts to reinforce these squadrons only meant dissipating aircraft from their main role - the defence of Singapore. It was decided, therefore, to withdraw the force to Singapore, and this was done on 23rd December. It meant that operations in support of the Army in the north-west could be undertaken only by using Kuala Lumpur and airfields to the south as advanced landing grounds.

266. The two fighter squadrons had been forced to operate under very difficult conditions. Maintenance and servicing facilities had been necessarily primitive, whilst the warning system gave little, if any, notice of attack.

267. They had fought courageously but their heavy losses and the unexpectedly high calibre of Japanese aircraft and pilots and the superior numbers of the enemy, caused some loss of morale.

268. However, the work of these squadrons had a good effect, if only a temporary one, on the attitude of our troops to the air, although the number of enemy aircraft shot down was only small.

269. With the withdrawal of the R.A.F. from the north-west, Norgroup was disbanded and a Liaison Officer was left at H.Q. IIIrd Corps.

Army Situation.

270. While these operations and moves of air forces had been taking place the Army had been compelled to give more ground. On 15th December the Japanese broke through on the right of the 11th (Indian) Division and threatened to push through the gap between the division and Krohcol. A big withdrawal had therefore to be made out of Kedah province to the Krian river. Penang was thus left isolated and was evacuated on the night of 16th/17th December.

271. Between the 17th and 26th December our forces fought for the Taiping - Ipoh area, preparatory to taking up positions in the Kampar district which offered the best possibilities for prolonged defence in this part of Malaya.

272. The prospects of stabilising the situation, however, were not good; and as early as 16th December the sole Command Reserve, consisting of a weak Brigade Group, had been committed to the fighting in the north-west.

273. In the rest of Malaya were,

- (i) A Brigade Group in Kelantan which was already engaged with Japanese forces advancing from Kota Bahru.
- (ii) A Brigade Group at Kuantan which was already threatened by Japanese infiltration down the Trengganu coast.
- (iii) A Division (2 Brigades) of the Australian Imperial Forces in Johore, particularly to guard against landings in the Mersing area on the East coast.
- (iv) Two Brigade Groups for the defence of Singapore Island.

All these forces were either already committed actively or potentially. Adequate reinforcement for the forces in the main battle area therefore depended on the safe arrival of reinforcements from outside Malaya.

Preparations for transfer of Units to N.E.I.

274. The evacuation of the northern aerodromes had been foreseen and as this would eventually result in congestion of aerodromes on Singapore Island, A.H.Q. issued orders as early as the 14th December for stocks of bombs together with refuelling and re-arming parties to be sent to aerodromes in Sumatra. Shortly after, two staff officers from A.H.Q. and an officer of the A.M.W.D. were ordered to Sumatra to accelerate work in connection with:-

- (a) providing facilities for the transit of reinforcing aircraft;
- (b) the operation of bombers from Sumatra, including the selection of a Bomber Group H.Q.

275. For these movements it was possible to call upon an Air Transport service from Singapore - Sumatra - Java which had been instituted by the Dutch Army Air Service. The number and capacity of the transport aircraft were limited but they enabled the movements to Sumatra to be carried out rapidly. The Dutch considered it inadvisable to operate these aircraft in Northern Malaya, where little fighter protection could have been provided. Their value in this area would have been inestimable for the maintenance of bomber and fighter squadrons and their subsequent withdrawal.

276. A warning order was also issued on the 22nd December for the move of No.153 M.U. from Kuala Lumpur to Java. By that time the Japanese had advanced as far south as Taiping, and Kuala Lumpur was threatened. It was felt that the work of the unit could be more satisfactorily carried out in Java.

Japanese Attack on Borneo.

277. It is now necessary to revert to operations off the East coast of Malaya leading up to the Japanese attack on Borneo.

On the 13th December, G.H.Q. received information from a reliable source that a large convoy of well over a hundred ships was heading S.S.W. from the direction of Saigon. Its destination was not known for some days, and it constituted an obvious menace to Malaya where there were several good beaches, with little or no defence, at which a successful landing would have had serious consequences to the Army, which was still closely engaged on the western side of Malaya.

278. Accordingly, reconnaissance activity from Malaya was materially increased, and during the period 13th to 24th December most of the available bombers stood by to attack the enemy convoy when found.

279. From Malaya, an average of 2 Catalina, 6 Hudson and 6 Glen Martin sorties was sent out daily to locate the expedition, whilst Dutch Glen Martins from Sinkawang in Dutch Borneo were similarly employed. On the 14th, 6 cruisers were reported south of Saigon, and on the afternoon of the 16th a landing was reported at Miri. The ships in the area were attacked by the Dutch in bad weather on the 17th, 18th and 19th. Hits were claimed on a cruiser and transports, and several near misses against transports.

280. The reconnaissance activity continued, spreading south-east to the Rhio Archipelago, and on the 23rd December an expedition headed towards Kuching was detected. Both Kuching and Sinkawang aerodromes had been attacked by Japanese aircraft on the preceding days, and the former had been "blown". The Dutch aircraft at Sinkawang were withdrawn to Palembang in Sumatra on the 24th, though before they were transferred they were able to carry out a few attacks against the enemy convoy.

281. This same convoy was attacked on the 24th by 3 Hudsons and also by 5 Blenheim IVs of No.34 (B) Squadron. Several near misses were claimed but no positive sinkings. A Dutch submarine claimed to have sunk 3 transport and 1 tanker in the area.

Heavy Demands for Reconnaissance.

282. Seaward reconnaissance at this time absorbed almost all the G.R. and bomber aircraft in Malaya. In addition to major Japanese expeditions east of Malaya, Japanese forces were still infiltrating south down the East coast towards Kuantan; and on the 15th December a flight of M.V.A.F. was established at Kahang to carry out local coastal reconnaissance for the Australian forces in Johore who were responsible for guarding against landings in the Mersing - Endau area. Reconnaissance up the West coast also became an increasing commitment during the second half of December. Regular reconnaissances were instituted from 22nd December, as the Japanese were already showing signs of infiltrating in small boats by day and night down the West coast behind our Army's left flank. Their discovery and attack was difficult as the boats moved in waters flanked by luxuriant tropical undergrowth. By day, the Japanese protected their movements with fighter patrols.

283. At this period, further calls upon our limited air forces arose from the need for night reconnaissances over Singapore Island in an endeavour to locate signalling by fifth columnists in Singapore. Nothing definite was discovered but suspicions continued.

284. The possibility that the Japanese might spread across from Malaya to Sumatra had also to be faced, and from this date a squadron of Dutch Glen Martins at Pekanbaru in Sumatra were employed on reconnaissance to detect any such movement.

Minor Reorganisations.

285. Meanwhile, certain reorganisations of squadrons had taken place. One flight of Wirraways (6) was formed at Kluang on the 18th and training in dive-bombing commenced, whilst the aircrews of No.60 (B) Squadron were sent back to Burma by sea and by B.O.A.C. to join their ground personnel at Rangoon. No.60 Squadron aircraft were left in Malaya (7 Blenheim I's) and were taken over by No.62 (B) Squadron. They were all in poor condition.

Order of Battle - 24th December 1941.

286. At this stage of the campaign the disposition of squadrons and their approximate strengths in serviceable aircraft were as follows:-

Bomber Squadrons:

Blenheims	No.34 Squadron	-	10	Tengah
	No.62 Squadron	-	9	Tengah
Dutch Glen Martins	Two Squadrons	-	15	Sembawang
Wirraways	One Flight	-	6	Kluang

T.B. Squadrons.

Vildebeestes	No.36 Squadron	-	16	Seletar
	No.100 Squadron	-	13	Seletar
Albacores	One Flight	-	5	Seletar

Fighter Squadrons.

Buffaloes	No.21 Squadron	-	reorganising	
	R.A.A.F.)			
	No.453 Squadron			Sembawang
	No.243 Squadron	-	15	Kallang
	No.488 Squadron	-	14	Kallang
	Dutch Squadron	-	9	Kallang
Night Fighter (Blenheims)	No.27 Squadron	-	reorganising	Kallang

G.R. Squadrons.

Hudsons	No.1 Squadron R.A.A.F. - 5	Sembawang
	No.8 Squadron R.A.A.F. - 8	Sembawang
Catalinas	No.205 Squadron - 4	Selatar

Miscellaneous

No.4 A.A.C.U. Swordfish	One Flight - 4	Tengah
Sharks	One Flight - 4	Tengah
M.V.A.F. (Various)	Recce. Flight	Kahang
M.V.A.F. (Various)	Comm. Flight	Kallang
Dutch Squadron (Glen Martins)	One Squadron - 9	Pakanbaroe (Sumatra)

Reinforcement Situation.

287. From the 8th December onwards many messages had been interchanged between the Air Ministry and the Far East on the subject of reinforcements which, commencing with rather a long range policy of supply, developed, with the steady advance of the Japanese Army, into a ~~hand to mouth~~ arrangement of diverting to the Far East ~~any~~ squadrons from other Commands which could arrive in time. By the 25th December, the position as understood by A.H.Q. was:-

for emergency

<u>Hudson II's</u>	-	6 arrived from Australia on 25/12 to reinforce Nos.1 and 8 (GR) Squadrons, R.A.A.F.
<u>Hudsons III's</u>	-	52 to be flown out from England commencing about 20/12.
<u>Blenheim IV's</u>	-	12 from Middle East - 7 arrived by 25/12: remainder en route.
<u>Hurricanes</u>	-	51 in crates with 24 pilots en route by sea due on or about 8th January, 1942.
<u>Catalinas</u>	-	4 en route with 2 spare crews.

The plan for their disposition was:-

<u>Hudson III's</u>	-	to (a) re-equip No.62 (B) Squadron; and (b) surplus, reinforce Nos.1 and 8 (GR) Squadrons R.A.A.F.
<u>Blenheim IV's</u>	-	to be absorbed into No.34 (B) Squadron.
<u>Hurricanes</u>	-	to be used from Kallang and Johore in defence of Singapore: it was anticipated Buffalo Squadrons would be whittled away by the time these Hurricanes arrived.
<u>Catalinas</u>	-	One to remain at Ceylon, remainder to reinforce No.205 (FB) Squadron at Selatar.

/NARRATIVE

NARRATIVE FROM 25TH DECEMBER 1941 - 30th JANUARY, 1942.

Change in High Command.

288. On the 27th December, General Sir Henry Pownall relieved Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham as Commander-in-Chief, Far East.

Arrival at Singapore of Reinforcement Convoys.

289. From the 26th December 1941, arrangements for the reception of reinforcement convoys at Singapore became of overriding importance; not the least factor being the urgent necessity to maintain the secrecy of their arrival. This was successfully accomplished.

290. Reinforcement troop convoys arrived in Singapore during the period under review on 3rd January and the 13th January, 1942, the latter also containing 51 crated Hurricanes (see para.287). In view of the importance of these convoys to the defence of Malaya G.H.Q. issued an instruction on the 27th December that "air protection for convoys bringing reinforcements will now take precedence before the other tasks".

291. Reinforcements were, if anything, more important to the Army even than to the R.A.F. All the fighting since the beginning of the campaign had fallen on the IIIrd Corps, particularly the 11th (Indian) Division, and the troops badly needed a rest; and as the reinforcements contained a complete fresh Division (18th) as well as anti-aircraft regiments, it was vital from the Army point of view that the Air Force in Malaya should do everything in their power to ensure that the convoys got through. The first Brigade of the 18th Division landed on 13th January.

292. Air protection for these convoys involved widespread reconnaissance sweeps into the S. China Sea, close anti-submarine protection from the Banka Straits onwards and fighter escort for the final approach to Singapore. An extremely vulnerable part of the route was through the Banka Straits off E. Sumatra and for the protection of the convoys in this area the Dutch Fighter Squadron based at Kallang was moved to Palembang on the 29th December and again on the 9th January. Apart from the fighters, operations in co-operation with these convoys for periods of three days for each convoy, employed at least 2 Catalina, 6 Hudson and 4 Glen Martin sorties daily. In addition, during these 3-day periods all other available aircraft in the Command had to be kept at short notice in case the convoys were attacked by enemy naval or air forces. In this situation the absence of effective naval strength in Malayan waters was acutely felt. The only available alternative to it was our aircraft, appreciable numbers of which had consequently to stand by for this duty and were thus unable to participate in the battle on land.

293. It is difficult here adequately to convey the sense of tension which prevailed as these convoys approached Singapore and the sense of exultation at their safe arrival. The feeling spread that at least the Japanese were going to be held on the ground if not driven back, whilst it was confidently expected that the Hurricanes would sweep the Japanese from the sky.

Withdrawal of the Army to Johore.

294. But by the time that the first reinforcements arrived the position of the Army had seriously worsened. On the West coast a withdrawal from the strong Kampar position had been forced upon IIIrd Corps by an out-flanking landing at Telok Anson on the West coast.

The forcing of a line on the Slim river and further landings in the Kuala Selangor region led to the evacuation of Kuala Lumpur and Port Swettenham on the 10th January; and by the middle of January the bulk of our forces were back to the northern frontier of Johore, little more than 100 miles from Singapore.

295. On the East coast, the Brigade that had originally held the Kota Bahru area had fallen back without serious losses to Central Malaya where it joined the 11th (Indian) Division. The Brigade defending Kuantan had also been forced to retreat before strong Japanese forces which began to attack on the 30th December.

296. Thereafter, the Japanese on the East coast began to move steadily down towards Mersing. There had been no attacks in this area up to the middle of January, but a major Japanese landing was expected daily.

297. The progress of the Japanese Army was quicker than had been anticipated, chiefly as the result of its possession of an armoured component, its superiority in jungle warfare, and its ability to pass parties in boats down the West coast round the left flank of our Army. Infiltrating Japanese frequently got behind our forward troops and formed road blocks on their lines of communication which proved difficult, and sometimes impossible to clear. Our own demolitions were swiftly repaired or circumvented by the enemy; and in general the speed and aggression of his follow-up came as a surprise.

Co-operation with the Army.

298. The heavy commitments of the air forces for reconnaissance, convoy protection and the air defence of Singapore, reduced the number of aircraft available for the direct support of the Army during this period.

299. In response to requests from H.Q.M.C. and IIIrd Corps action was taken against Japanese landing parties on the West coast. Daily offensive reconnaissances were carried out by 4 to 6 Glen Martins or Blenheims, unescorted at first but later, after 4 aircraft had been shot down in one day, with fighter protection. 5 Shark aircraft were moved up to Batu Pahat on 2nd January and also took part in this type of operation.

300. Barges off Port Swettenham were attacked by Blenheims on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th January: several near misses were observed but no definite sinkings.

301. With increased Japanese activity against the West coast from 15th January air attacks were made on an increased scale:-

15th Jan: by 6 Hudsons, 6 Glen Martins and 3 Blenheims escorted by 12 Buffaloes on barges in the Linggi River: two barges were sunk and three damaged by the Hudsons.

16th Jan: 15 Buffaloes attackdd transport and movements on the road Tampin/Gemas whilst 9 Blenheims and 6 Glen Martins followed by 4 Buffaloes attacked barges in the Muar River where further landings were taking place.

17th Jan: 9 Vildebeestes escorted by 6 Buffaloes continued attacks on barges in the Muar River whilst fighter cover was provided for a move by road of the A.I.F. in the area.

18th Jan: Attacks on barges in the Muar River and on troop concentrations in the Gemas area continued - a total force of 6 Blenheims, 5 Hudsons and 14 Buffaloes being employed.

302. In addition, tactical reconnaissance by one or two sections of Buffaloes was carried out for IIIrd Corps, chiefly in the Seremban - Tampin - Gemas area. Special bombing attacks were carried out by Blenheims on 10th January to destroy trains full of Army stores which owing to the congestion and dislocation of the railway system, had been stranded at Malacca. The attacks were at least partly successful as were attacks made on 12th January against some oil tanks which had been left intact at Port Swettenham.

303. Part of our offensive effort continued to be made against Japanese-held aerodromes in order to meet the wishes of G.O.C. Malaya for a reduction in attacks against our forward troops. These had continued concurrently with attacks against our aerodromes both in Malaya and on Singapore Island and against our road and rail communications behind the battle front.

304. Daily flights over Northern Malaya by our P.R. Buffaloes revealed that aerodromes "blown" in the withdrawal were quickly repaired and occupied. Gong Kedah was occupied on the 31st December, Ipoh on the 4th January and Kuantan on the 9th January.

305. Consequently, attacks on aerodromes in Northern Malaya were made at frequent intervals during the latter part of December and the first half of January. They entailed long flights by night, often in very bad weather conditions. Altogether, between 20th December and 15th January, some eighty sorties were carried out against this type of target. Sungei Patani was attacked six times Gong Kedah twice, Ipoh and Alor Star once. Good results were achieved by Blenheims of No. 34 (B) Squadron at Sungei Patani on 27th/28th December: photographic reconnaissance on the following day confirming that at least 7 fighters had been destroyed and 5 fighters and 3 bombers damaged.

306. Good results were also obtained at Gong Kedah on 1st/2nd January by Catalinas. These aircraft had by this time largely been withdrawn from reconnaissance work, which was instead carried out by Hudsons, owing to the vulnerability of the Catalina to fighter attack. Their range and bomb load proved very useful for night bombing operations. Twice in January Catalinas attacked the main enemy base at Singora a target which by this time was beyond the range of any other aircraft in the Command.

307. In addition, two attempts were made to carry out strong fighter attacks against Kuantan aerodrome; but bad weather on each occasion forced our fighters to return.

308. That these operations inflicted losses upon the enemy is certain. It is equally certain that the enemy had more than sufficient reserves to replace his losses without delay.

Japanese air operations against Singapore.

309. During this period also, the Japanese extended their attacks to Singapore Island, particularly against Tengah, on which our Blenheim force was based. Night raids were a constant occurrence but these were mainly of a nuisance value and little damage was done by them. No. 27 (NF) Squadron, which had been reorganised at Kallang, and which now had 5 Blenheim I's serviceable, was used in an endeavour to intercept these attacks but without success owing to the poor performance of their aircraft.

310. Day raids took place with increasing intensity, at first by bombers alone, and later by bombers escorted by fighters. On the 1st January the first serious attack against Tengah took place as a result of which coolies stampeded and native labour disappeared. This was to happen at all aerodromes as they became attacked, necessitating the replacement of domestic personnel by Europeans and making it increasingly difficult to repair damage to aerodrome surfaces. At all Stations on the Island dispersed accommodation for personnel was provided, mobile kitchens improvised, and, in the case of Seletar, married families were moved to alternative quarters.

311. Tengah was attacked again on the 6th January, 9th January, 12th January, 13th January and 14th January. On the 15th, the naval base was attacked and on the 16th, aerodromes and the docks. The 17th was a particularly bad day. Attacks on aerodromes were carried out by escorted bombers and, under their cover, low flying fighters slipped in and attacked Sembawang and Seletar. At Seletar, 2 Catalinas at their moorings were burned out and another two damaged. Six Blenheims at Tengah were damaged to a varying degree, whilst at Sembawang 3 Buffaloes on the ground were destroyed and 4 damaged. Attacks were carried out by some 80 bombers of which 2 were brought down and another 4 damaged. The attack was repeated on the 18th against the naval base and the docks, and again 2 were brought down and possibly 6 damaged for the loss of 8 Buffaloes.

312. The absence of a first-class fighter aircraft prior to the second half of January was a handicap. An attempt was made to improve the performance of the Buffalo by reducing its petrol load and replacing the unsatisfactory .5 guns by .303; but it remained inferior to the Navy 'O' in dog-fighting.

313. Moreover, owing to the short warning of attacks our fighters were frequently still climbing to meet the enemy when they were themselves attacked. A warning of at least thirty minutes was required, as it took almost that time for the Buffalo to reach 24,000 feet, which was the height at which the enemy formations normally flew. But the successive evacuation of Observer Corps Posts on the mainland as the Japanese advanced, and the inadequate radar cover available, meant that the period of warning was almost always insufficient. The best warnings frequently came from intercepts of the R/T conversations of Japanese aircrews whilst en route to the target.

314. The Dutch Fighter Squadron in Singapore was transferred in the middle of January to Palembang (para. 354) leaving only 2 squadrons of Buffaloes - Nos 243 (F) and 488 (F) - for the defence of Singapore, as Nos. 21 (F) R.A.A.F., and 453 (F) Squadrons based at Sembawang were used primarily for Army co-operation and escorts to bombers operating by day on the west coast. Apart from other handicaps, therefore, defending fighters were outnumbered in the air by the Japanese fighters in varying degrees between 6 - 1 and 15 - 1.

315. The A.A. defences of the Island were of limited effect in countering air attacks. The Bofors guns gave protection against all but a few surprise low level attacks. But the great majority of the enemy's bombing was carried out from altitudes of over 20,000 feet where they were well above the effective range of the 3" guns which formed one-third of the heavy A.A. defences. At such heights only the 3.7" guns, of which there were only 40 for the defence of the many targets on the Island, could reach them.

316. On 1st January, 1942, the small Fighter H.Q. in Singapore

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was expanded, albeit on a restricted scale. It became known as No. 224 (F) Group and Group Captain E.B. Rice remained in command. Circumstances did not permit full administration of its units and stations being transferred from A.H.Q.

Changes in High Command.

317. Air Vice-Marshal P.C. Maltby arrived in Singapore on the 4th January as Chief of Staff designate at G.H.Q. He remained at Singapore to assist Air Vice-Marshal Pulford. An explanation of the circumstances which decided him to take this course, is contained in Appendix "D".

318. At the beginning of January, it had been decided by the Allied authorities to appoint General Sir Archibald Wavell as Supreme Allied Commander in the S.W. Pacific, and that he should absorb into his Headquarters the Commander-in-Chief, Far East, and his Staff. As a result, General Wavell arrived in Singapore on the 7th January and moved on 11th January to Batavia with the late G.H.Q. Staff. This latter included the Far Eastern Intelligence Bureau which moved complete with all its records.

319. On the 15th January, General Wavell officially assumed command of the S.W. Pacific, the short name for his H.Q. being Abdacom. The dual appointment of Chief of the Air Staff at General Wavell's Headquarters and Commander of Allied Air Forces, was filled temporarily by Major General Brereton, U.S. Army Air Corps, pending the arrival of Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse. The short name for the latter's Air Headquarters was Abdair. These two abbreviations - Abdacom and Abdair - will be used henceforth.

320. To facilitate control of air operations within the S.W. Pacific Command, the area was divided by Abdair into six Groups of which only two need be mentioned in this Narrative:-

- (i) Westgroup - consisting of R.A.F. Far East Command including Units still in Malaya and those in transfer to N.E.I.
- (ii) Recgroup - formed for all seaward reconnaissance in S.W. Pacific Command from Dutch and American resources. Its Headquarters was in Java.

Directive to Air Forces in Malaya.

321. On the 18th January, Abdacom stressed the importance of Singora as a target and also issued a general directive to govern the operations of the Air Forces. This directive reiterated that "protection of convoys at present takes precedence over action against other Japanese forces. If, however, new expeditions are located threatening the east coast of Malaya or endeavouring to pass south of Singapore all available air effort should be directed to destroying such targets". The directive also stressed the importance of slowing up the Japanese advance on land by attacking Singora, intervening in the land battle, and of reducing the scale of Japanese air attack.

Relative Strength of Air Forces in Malaya.

322. To carry out efficiently all these tasks was beyond the strength of the Air Forces available. On the afternoon of 18th January the serviceability state of the Air Forces in Malaya showed 74 bomber and G.R. aircraft and 28 fighters all based on Singapore with the exception of a small detachment at Kahang. Moreover, many of these aircraft were obsolete or obsolescent. Against these it was estimated that the Japanese were maintaining in Malaya at this time a force of 150 fighters and 250 bombers. Concentration was therefore made, in general, on one task at a time in the order of priority given in the directive but influenced by the situation.

Arrival of Further Convoys.

323. Special attention, as the directive instructed, continued to be paid to the provision of protection for reinforcing convoys arriving at Singapore. Further convoys came in on 22nd, 24th and 28th January, bringing the remainder of the 18th Division, a Brigade Group from India, two to three thousand troops from Australia, and more anti-aircraft units.

324. Five Hudson sorties were made daily over wide areas around the convoys to detect the approach of Japanese naval forces. One Catalina was maintained on anti-submarine patrol and during the final approach to Singapore a fighter escort of six aircraft was maintained. All other aircraft were maintained at short call as the convoys approached, in case of attack.

Deterioration of Land Situation.

325. Despite the arrival of reinforcements the position on land continued to deteriorate during the second half of January.

326. On the west coast, the Japanese took full advantage of their command of the sea to land behind the Army positions. Between the 16th and 18th January there was a succession of landings on the Johore coast between Muar and Batu Pahat which, with heavy frontal attacks, forced our troops to withdraw to the line Batu Pahat - Mersing. The heaviest casualties of the whole campaign were suffered by our troops in these actions.

327. On the east coast, the long expected landing in the Mersing - Endau area took place at Endau on 26th January. The lateral communications available in north Johore permitted a junction between the Japanese forces in the east and west of the peninsula, while a Japanese advance from the Endau area threatened the communications of the main British forces in the west.

328. Our losses in the west coast battle and the threat from the east dictated a general withdrawal of our forces to Singapore Island itself, a decision which was taken on the 27th January. The withdrawal was achieved in good order. Nevertheless, it had been hoped that the arrival of reinforcements would at least permit the holding of a bridgehead in Johore. Air action during this phase is narrated in paras. 330 and 351 and 367 - 385.

Capture of Borneo.

329. Borneo had also been lost by this time. Kuching had been captured on 26th December and its garrison of one Indian Battalion forced to retreat. It was located by our reconnaissance as it made its way to Sinkawang, where supplies were dropped for it by three aircraft on 31st December. Apart from a further reconnaissance on 9th January to ascertain the state of Kuching aerodrome, no further air action was possible.

Air Action against the Japanese Advance: Off the East Coast.

330. With the withdrawal south through Malaya in January, the battle area came within range of aircraft based on Singapore and air action both on the east and west coasts was carried out as vigorously as commitments elsewhere, particularly the protection of reinforcing convoys and the air defence of Singapore, would permit.

331. Off the east coast, there was considerable reconnaissance and activity. On 27th December, photographic reconnaissance confirmed the arrival of 34 ships at Singora, which were proved subsequently to have brought a reinforcing Division. Further reports of enemy shipping necessitated sweeps by Hudsons to the Natunas on the 3rd and 4th January.

332. Daily east coast reconnaissances to the north from Endau beyond Tranganu required at least 6 Glen Martin or Hudson sorties, whilst the M.V.A.F. continued their close reconnaissance for the A.I.F. in the Endau - Mersing area.

333. On the 8th, 9 Glen Martins and 4 Hudsons bombed and scored many direct hits on a ship anchored in the South China Sea, believed to be used by the Japanese as a navigational aid for their aircraft. On 9th January, 9 Glen Martins bombed with success ships unloading at Kuantan.

334. Meanwhile, Kuantan had been occupied by the Japanese on the 4th January and infiltration down the coast towards Endau and Mersing immediately commenced. By the 13th January A.H.Q. became convinced of the possibility of a landing in this vital area and a general direction was therefore issued to all squadrons governing their action in such a contingency. A daily reconnaissance by 6 Hudsons was instituted to detect the approach of any convoy from Indo-China; and reconnaissance northwards up the east coast, although restricted, was still maintained.

Air Action against the Japanese Advance: Off the West Coast.

335. The Japanese exploitation of their superiority at sea led on the west coast, as well as the east, to frequent reconnaissances and sweeps over the left flank of the Army by our Air Forces. Attacks against Japanese-held aerodromes in Central Malaya were also carried out.

336. On the 19th January, the situation at Muar was reported to be serious. Twelve Buffaloes carried out an offensive sweep of the area, using surplus ammunition on barges during their return. The latter were also attacked twice during the day by 3 Hudsons escorted by Buffaloes. That night, 19th/20th January, 9 Vildebeestes bombed the aerodrome at Kuala Lumpur, where some twenty fighters had been observed by Buffaloes of No.488 (F) Squadron.

337. On the 20th January, two Blenheims made an offensive reconnaissance against shipping off the coast. Later 6 Buffaloes carried out an offensive sweep of the Muar - Gemas area where the Army reported heavy dive bombing against troops of IIIrd Corps. They met a formation of 6 Army 97's, destroyed one and forced the others to jettison their loads. That evening, at last light, 7 Blenheims bombed and machine-gunned Kuala Lumpur with great success claiming the destruction of over 20 fighters. 6 Hudsons attacked Kuantan at the same time. These attacks were followed up that night by 24 Vildebeestes, 12 bombing each aerodrome.

338. From the 21st to 24th January, many requests for support of the Army in the Muar area were received, but these were days during which the protection of convoys took precedence and little was available with which to meet them. On the 21st January, 6 Buffaloes carried out sweeps in the morning and afternoon in the Parit Salong - Batu Pahat area; 2 Albacores and 2 Buffaloes attacked small boats near Batu Pahat; and 2 Albacores dropped supplies successfully for troops who had been cut off and thus assisted them to extricate themselves.

339. On 22nd January the Japanese were infiltrating from Muar to Batu Pahat, and this road was attacked by 2 Albacores, 1 Shark and 6 Buffaloes. More supplies were dropped by Albacores of No.36 Squadron to troops cut off in the Parit Salong area. That night, 22nd/23rd January, 21 Vildebeestes again bombed Kuala Lumpur.

340. On the 23rd January, 5 Buffaloes protected the withdrawal of

/troops

troops from the Yong Peng area (N.N.E. of Batu Pahat) and engaged 12 Navy 'O' fighters which were harassing our troops. All available Sharks, Albatrosses and Wirraways attacked troops on the road leading south from Muar. That night, 23rd/24th, 12 Vildebeestes bombed Kuantan aerodrome.

341. On the 24th January, 5 Vildebeestes attacked troops on the bridge at Labis on the Segamat - Singapore road, whilst 3 others bombed oil tanks left standing at Muar.

342. On the 25th January, 12 Buffaloes carried out sweeps, morning and evening, in the Kluang - Gemas-Batu Pahat area, whilst that night 24 Vildebeestes and 3 Albatrosses carried out 2 sorties each to cover the sea evacuation of a battalion which had been cut off in the Muar area. During that day, 5 U.S.A. Fortresses from Java carried out an attack against Sungai Patani under Abdair direction. At night, 3 Hudsons attacked Kuala Lumpur.

343. By the evening of the 25th January, the airfields at Kahang, Kluang and Batu Pahat became untenable and were demolished, as were also the strips which had been prepared in S. Johore. Their loss was a severe blow, as it had been hoped they would be available for the reinforcing Hurricanes, and they had been specially prepared and equipped for that purpose. Seletar, which had now to be used instead, was not so well equipped with dispersal points.

Air Action against the Landing at Endau.

344. The landing at Endau (para. 327) met as strong a reaction as was possible with the meagre forces by now available. On the 26th January, at 0930 hours, Hudson reconnaissance sighted 2 cruisers, 11 destroyers and two 10,000 ton vessels accompanied, by barges, 10 miles off the coast approaching Endau. They were being protected by Japanese fighters based on Kuantan.

345. The forces available for the attack of the convoy were:-

9 Hudsons of Nos. 1 and 8 (GR) Squadrons, R.A.A.F.
21 Vildebeestes } of Nos. 36 and 100 (TB) Squadrons.
3 Albatrosses }

346. The attack was organised in two waves. The first wave comprised 9 Hudsons and 12 Vildebeestes and was escorted by 15 Buffaloes and 8 Hurricanes; the second, 3 Albatrosses and 9 Vildebeestes, escorted by 4 Buffaloes and 8 Hurricanes.

347. Unfortunately, as both Nos. 36 and 100 (TB) Squadrons had been operating throughout the whole of the previous night, the first wave of attack could not be launched until the early afternoon. By this time most of the Japanese troops were probably clear of their transports.

348. However, the first wave, consisting of 9 Hudsons and the Vildebeestes of No. 100 (TB) Squadron, was able to press its attack home, being helped by rather cloudy conditions. 5 Vildebeestes were lost to one cruiser and two destroyers sunk, both transports hit (one set on fire), and severe casualties caused to troops in barges and on the beaches.

349. With the arrival of the second wave, the Vildebeestes of No. 36 (TB) Squadron, the weather in the area suddenly cleared and enemy fighters intercepted the squadron before it could attack. 6 Vildebeestes and 2 Albatrosses were shot down and other
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aircraft damaged and aircrews wounded. Later, 5 Hudsons of No.62 (B) Squadron from Sumatra arrived in the area and attacked barges.

350. The fighter escort problem had not been easy owing to the slow speed of the T.B. aircraft and the distance of the target area from their Island aerodrome. During both attacks, 12 Japanese Navy 'O' fighters were shot down and 4 damaged for the loss of 2 Hurricanes and 1 Buffalo, one Hurricane pilot personally accounting for 4 Japanese fighters.

351. Neither No.36 (TR) nor No.100 (T) Squadron was employed in Malaya again, both being withdrawn to Java for reorganisation on the 29th/30th January.

Effect of Japanese Advance on R.A.F. dispositions:
Decision to Transfer Units to N.E.I.

352. The advance of the Japanese into Johore meant that our aircraft had to operate from the four aerodromes on Singapore Island, which meant a dangerous congestion of aircraft on the ground, especially as enemy air attacks steadily grew in violence during January. Moreover, aircraft reinforcements were beginning to arrive from the United Kingdom and the Middle East during January and there were prospects, therefore, of still greater congestion. Dispersal beyond the confines of Singapore Island was therefore imperative.

353. During December, the first preparations had been made for operating R.A.F. Units in the N.E.I. (paras. 274-6); on 4th January, No.153 M.U. was moved to Java, and on 16th January, No.225 (B) Group Headquarters was formed in Singapore and moved to Sumatra two days later.

354. By mid-January it was clear to A.H.Q. that transfers of Units must be accelerated even though facilities for their operations and maintenance in Sumatra were not yet ready. In accordance with the prior agreement made with the Dutch Army Air Force, that Dutch Units should be moved first, a progressive withdrawal took place as follows:-

19th January

- Dutch Buffalo Squadron at Kallang was withdrawn, and on arrival in N.E.I. reverted to Dutch control, in order to maintain as requisite the fighter cover required for future convoys through Banka Straits.

22nd January

- 2 Dutch Glen Martin Squadrons withdrew to Java and reverted to Dutch control.

23rd-27th January

- Nos. 27 (NF), 34 (B) and 62(B) Squadrons except for small aircraft handling parties were withdrawn and based on Sumatra, as were also the main parties of Nos. 1 and 8 (GR) Squadrons, R.A.A.F.

355. Concurrently:-

(a) No. 151 M.U. was ordered to prepare for a move to Java less a party approximately 100 strong who were to remain and salvage and pack equipment.

(b) Base Accounts and Record Offices were ordered to Java.

(c) Station H.Q. Sembawang was ordered to Sumatra.

356. Each Unit was instructed to proceed with 30 days' rations, certain barrack stores and 28 days' pack-up of aircraft equipment. All ground personnel had to proceed by sea and it will be seen later that,
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owing to confusion at the Singapore docks caused primarily by bombing, and owing to enemy attacks on shipping en route, the arrangements made for their transfer were badly disorganised. Dutch Lodestars helped in these moves to Sumatra and were invaluable.

Arrival and Allotment of Air Reinforcements.

357. Certain of the aircraft that began to arrive in the Far East from the United Kingdom and the Middle East were also diverted to Sumatra. This affected Nos. 84 (B) and 211 (B) Squadrons (Blenheim IV's) which began to arrive in Sumatra on 23rd January. Their ground crews were following by sea.

358. 16 Hudsons arrived from the United Kingdom in Singapore, the first of them in the third week in January, and were allotted to Nos. 62(B) and No. 8 (GR) R.A.A.F. Squadrons. Of the 52 Hudson III's that were reported to be en route to the Far East, these were the only ones to arrive. Three reinforcing Catalinas had also arrived on 7th January.

359. A.H.Q. was also notified that a further 48 Hurricanes (additional to the 51 that had arrived on 13th January) would be flown in late in January from H.M.S. "Indomitable"; in addition, 39 crated Hurricanes were en route at sea.

Further Transfers to N.E.I.

360. On the 27th January, No. 8 (GR) Squadron, R.A.A.F. was transferred to Sumatra, and No. 205 (FB) Squadron on the 28th to Java; the latter on arrival in Java was placed by Abdair under Dutch control as part of Regroup. No. 205 Squadron left 1 Catalina at Seletar until the 30th January in connection with the arrival of a further convoy. On the 29th and 30th January the remaining G.R. Squadron (No. 4, R.A.A.F.) was transferred. This general transfer was necessary as with the occupation of the mainland not only would the Singapore aerodromes come under still heavier bombardment from the air, but three out of the four aerodromes would be within range of enemy artillery fire. (See para 387)

361. On the 31st January, apart from fighters, there were left at Singapore only 3 Swordfish which were still under Army control for coast defence spotting purposes, as H.Q.M.C. at this stage still did not rule out the possibility of a landing from the sea on Singapore Island itself.

Changes in appointments in the Command

362. Owing to the arrival of reinforcements, there was a reorganisation of senior appointments in the second half of January.

363. About 17th January, Group Captain G.E. Nicholletts replaced Group Captain A.G. Bishop as Group Captain, Operations, at A.H.Q., the latter having been appointed to command the Bomber Group (No. 225) in Sumatra.

364. About 19th January, Air Commodore W.E. Staton arrived and began taking the duties of S.A.S.O. from Air Commodore B.J. Silly.

365. On the 29th January, Air Commodores S.F. Vincent and H.J.F. Hunter arrived from the U.K. They had been sent by the Air Ministry as Commanders designate of Fighter and Bomber Groups respectively. Air Commodore Hunter was sent to Sumatra on 1st February, to command No. 225 Group which had already formed at Palembang.

366. By the 30th January, owing to the transfer of units to the N.E.I., the A.O.C. decided to make preparations for the establishment of a rear A.H.Q. Air Commodore Silly was sent to Sumatra as Deputy

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A.O.C. in order to select its site and begin its organisation.

Sustained Japanese Air Attacks on Singapore

367. From the middle of January onwards the Japanese carried out two and sometimes three attacks daily by formations of from 27 to 80 bombers escorted by fighters. The main targets were aerodromes. The raids were made in perfect formation and the accuracy of the salvo bombing from heights of over 20,000 feet was most marked.

368. This continual pounding made it difficult to keep aerodrome surfaces serviceable. Kallang was built on reclaimed mud which oozed up through the bomb craters, whilst drainage at Tengah had never been satisfactory. Effective repairs were difficult and unfortunately rainfall at the time was exceptionally heavy, which in itself was a further handicap.

369. With the attacks, all native labour disappeared. On the 7th January, the War Council had appointed a Director of Labour who was to organise and control all labour, allotting to the Services in accordance with an arranged priority programme. But by this time there was in practice but little labour to organise and allot.

370. First priority of what labour there was, was given for the repair of aerodromes. The G.O.C. Malaya diverted some of his reserves, at the expense of the construction of defence works, to reinforce R.A.F. labour parties. Later, parties of 100 sailors each, survivors from H.M.S. "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse", were stationed at each of the 4 airfields in the Island.

372. These heavy attacks on the aerodromes in the Island and thus the necessity for providing additional facilities for the operation of aircraft had been appreciated some weeks earlier by A.H.Q. On various dates in the latter half of December, six sites had been selected in the Island and the construction of new landing strips put in hand. Labour difficulties slowed up their construction and, as will be narrated later, they had all to be demolished before they could be brought into use.

373. A number of aircraft were destroyed or damaged on the ground by bombing but personnel casualties were few. Nevertheless, the morale of some at Tengah and Sembawang became affected; it was to these two stations that personnel who had sustained the early attacks in N.W. Malaya had been withdrawn. On the other hand, the spirit maintained at Kallang and Seletar was good, particularly at the former; at the latter field No. 151 M.U. worked unceasingly on the maintenance of aircraft, as did all units at both stations at their respective duties.

Operations by Fighters in the defence of Singapore.

374. During the third week in January the 51 Hurricanes which had arrived on the 13th January (para. 290) were being assembled preparatory to joining Buffaloes in the defence of the Island.

375. On their arrival the Hurricanes were immediately unloaded and the majority dispersed to previously selected concealed positions where they were erected and wheeled to nearby airfields for test; the remainder proceeded direct to No. 151 M.U. for erection at other dispersed points.

376. Twenty-four pilots from Nos. 17, 135 and 136 (F) Squadrons had arrived with the aircraft; some had had experience in the Battle of Britain. When A.H.Q. first heard of their diversion to the Far East, it had been planned to give aircrews a spell before employing them in operations. This spell was obviously desirable not only because of the length of their sea voyage, but also because of the need for acclimatising pilots to local conditions. However, events had moved too fast and the stake was too high for delay to be acceptable; and the Hurricanes had to be used immediately they had been erected and tested. They were in action as a squadron by the 20th January, exactly a week after they had
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been landed in crates.

377. The aircraft were accompanied by some ground personnel of No.232 (F) Squadron, the deficiency being made good by personnel from the transit camp. They were based at Seletar and Kallang and the whole operated as No.232 (F) Squadron. Spares were ample but tool kits were scarce.

378. The aircraft were Hurricane IIIs; they were fitted with desert oil filters as their original destination had been the Middle East. This was the primary cause for their speed being some 30 m.p.h. slower than in the U.K. They were not as fast as the Navy 'O' near the ground, but as height increased the Hurricane gradually overhauled it, until at 20,000 feet the latter had an advantage in speed and rate of climb. The Hurricane could also dive at higher speeds. But at all heights the Navy 'O' was more manoeuvrable.

379. The Hurricane pilots were informed of the characteristics of the Navy 'Os' and particularly warned of the inadvisability of getting involved in "dog-fighting" owing to the Navy 'Os' small turning circles. Despite this, some pilots became involved in "dog-fights", which led to casualties.

380. The limitations of the warning system for Singapore have already been described (para.313). Some help was obtained at this stage from Army G.L. sets; but the short time of warning, 10-15 minutes, remained a great handicap to efficient fighter defence. Japanese R/T verbosity continued but these intercepts diminished in value as the Japanese successively occupied aerodromes closer to Singapore. Operational control remained restricted owing to the lack of V.H.F. and the unreliability of R/T.

381. The Hurricanes' first day, 20th January, was most successful. Twenty-seven bombers came over unescorted and 8 were shot down without loss. It appeared as if confidence in their decisive influence was to be justified. This was the last occasion, however, on which Japanese bombers came over unescorted. The following day, 5 Hurricanes were shot down, including the C.O., S/Ldr. Landells, and a Flight Commander, against no loss, so far as was claimed, to the Japanese.

382. From then on, the Hurricanes were constantly airborne, carrying out 3 to 5 "scrambles" daily. Owing to their being constantly outnumbered by the escorting fighters, which were well handled, bombers could seldom be attacked. But with the realisation that "dog-fighting" did not pay, the revised "in and out" tactics adopted gradually gave increasing success.

383. It must be admitted here that too much had been expected of this handful of Hurricanes. Civilians and the armed forces alike had anticipated that these modern aircraft would carry all before them. This this was not so was no fault of the pilots who under S/Ldr. Brooker D.F.C. achieved in the face of overwhelming numbers results which stand greatly to their credit. Nevertheless the false hopes which had been placed in them reacted keenly when they were not realised.

384. The average daily serviceability of Hurricane from the 21st January to 28th January was 16, and by the latter date the position as regards the 51 crated aircraft was:-

17 destroyed (some of them at their bases)
2 repairable at Unit
7 repairable at Depot
21 available + 4 more in 24 hours.

On the 29th and 30th January, 20 were available,

385. During this period, the Buffaloes of Nos. 21 R.A.A.F. and 453 (F) Squadrons were employed mainly on operations in support of the Army (paras. 336 - 342). Nos. 243 and 488 (F) Squadrons had continued in their role, in co-operation with the Hurricanes, in the defence of Singapore. By the 30th January, the number of Buffaloes had so dwindled that all (6) were concentrated in No. 453 (F) Squadron. Nos. 21 R.A.A.F. and 243 (F) Squadron personnel were evacuated, whilst No. 488 (F) Squadron was retained to service the Hurricanes, together with a few of the pilots of these squadrons to replace casualties.

PERIOD 30TH JANUARY UNTIL THE SURRENDER OF SINGAPORE

Decision to reduce the Fighter Force in Singapore.

386. It will be remembered that the Army withdrew into Singapore Island on a programme to be completed on the 31st January. On the 30th January, it was decided to blow all fighter strips under construction and to obstruct all open areas in the Island. This action was taken as it was thought there was a real danger of the Japanese employing paratroops in these areas followed up by troop carriers and gliders in order to accelerate the reduction of the garrison. This danger could otherwise only be averted by large detachments of protective troops, which could not be spared.

387. This action restricted our fighters to the four main aerodromes of the Island and negated any possibility of their further dispersal. These aerodromes were under constant bombardment and considerable difficulty was being experienced in maintaining serviceable strips upon them. Further, three of them - Tengah, Sembawang and Seletar - were sited on the northern side of the Island and were therefore likely to be exposed to observed artillery fire from Johore at ranges as close as 1500 - 2000 yards.

388. On the 30th January, therefore, General Wavell approved A.H.Q. plans to maintain in Singapore only a fighter strength of 8 Hurricanes reinforced by the remaining Buffaloes. It was agreed that the further reinforcing Hurricanes now arriving in H.M.S. "Indomitable" should be based on Sumatra and from there not only maintain the strength at Singapore but also reinforce it as opportunity permitted.

389. To implement this policy A.H.Q. :-

- (a) Decided to retain in Singapore for the maintenance of the Fighter Force - an Air Stores Park, a Repair and Salvage Unit and an Ammunition Park.
- (b) Formed No. 226 (F) Group with H.Q. in Palembang and appointed Air Commodore Vincent the Group Commander. The staff for this Group H.Q. was to be provided partly from the reductions now possible in the Staff of the existing Fighter Group in Singapore and the remainder from H.Q. No. 266 (F) Wing, known to be arriving by sea in the N.E.I.
- (c) Issued orders for the move to Java of No. 151 M.U. less the repair and salvage party referred to in para. 355(a).

390. Concurrently with this reduction in strength, General Wavell approved the A.O.C's proposal that, consequent on the transfer of the bulk of the strength of the Command to the N.E.I., he should proceed himself with the main body of A.H.Q. to the N.E.I. whence it would be possible to control more effectively the conduct of further air operations. It was intended to leave in Singapore a small advanced A.H.Q. to maintain liaison with H.Q.M.C. whilst H.Q. No. 224 (F) Group would also

/remain

remain to control fighter operations.

391. A.H.Q. was reduced in accordance with this plan, personnel being despatched to Palembang in Sumatra for attachment to H.Q. No.225 (B) Group pending the decision on the site for the rear A.H.Q. which Air Commodore Silly had been instructed to find.

392. On the 5th February, however, Abdair reversed Abdacom's decision in respect of the move of the A.O.C. and instructed him to remain in Singapore. Abdair's view was that the A.O.C. should remain in close contact with the G.O.C. Malaya to ensure that future air operations were planned in relation to the best means for the defence of Singapore. The signals exchanged on the question at this time are fully expanded in Appendix "D" to this Report.

393. By this day, the 5th February, it was clear that no suitable site for a Rear H.Q. existed in Sumatra, and so Air Commodore Silly was instructed to proceed to Batavia and take administrative charge there.

394. Not only were personnel and equipment from Singapore now arriving at that Port but also the ground personnel of the reinforcing squadrons. It was also in the Batavia area that it was anticipated the site for a Rear A.H.Q. would best be located.

Dislocation of shipping arrangements at Singapore Docks.

395. There was a scarcity of suitable shipping for the transfer of equipment, particularly M.T., to the N.E.I: a difficulty aggravated by the disinclination of a few Masters of vessels to bring their ships alongside to permit loading. Those who did come alongside, of whom there were many, deserve great credit. Owing to enemy air bombardment, ships had to be dispersed, which further delayed loading. Air bombardment also caused dock labour to disappear; their replacement by Service personnel could not be on a scale adequate to meet requirements; and the conditions at the docks became steadily more and more confused as the scale and intensity of air attack increased. Plans made for the embarkation of personnel and stores were largely disorganised. Personnel in units became separated, whilst much equipment, urgently required by the Bomber Force in Sumatra, could not be loaded. In some instances, owing to air attack, ships sailed before being fully loaded. Severe losses were inflicted by the Japanese air attacks on ships en route from Singapore during the final 14 days of evacuation. Considerable quantities of equipment, including some 200 M.T. vehicles, were lost, all of it urgently needed in the N.E.I.

Final Operations from Singapore.

396. Except for a small number of Hudson sorties for convoy protection and a sweep by Buffaloes over the Batu Pahat area on 28th January to cover the evacuation of troops cut off by the Japanese advance, air operations from Singapore itself from the last days of January to the fall of the Fortress were nearly all carried out by fighters for the defence of the Island. #

397. An attack was carried out on the night of 2nd February by the Swordfish flight, released by the Army for the purpose, against the aerodrome at Kluang, where the Japanese had by now /established

Bomber operations from Sumatra for the support of the defence of Singapore are narrated in Section III.

established a strong fighter force. Subsequently this Flight had to be destroyed as the aircraft were in no condition to be flown away.

398. The P.R. Buffalo Flight, which had functioned almost daily with outstanding success under the command of Squadron Leader Lewis since the beginning of the campaign, finally lost its aircraft by enemy air attacks on the 7th February. This Flight had carried out over 100 sorties, the majority of which proceeded as far north as Singora. Aircraft were intercepted by Japanese fighters and hit on numerous occasions, although none was shot down. Throughout no armour or guns had been carried; pilots had relied entirely upon evasion in order to fulfil their missions. The greatest credit is due to them for the valuable work they did.

Final Fighter Operations from Singapore.

399. On the 31st January, the fighter strength of Singapore was 8 Hurricanes of No. 232 (F) Squadron and 6 Buffaloes taken over by No. 453 (F) Squadron. The small Buffalo force gradually wasted away but the Hurricanes were maintained from Sumatra at an average daily strength of 10 aircraft until withdrawal.

400. These aircraft were too few in number to affect materially the scale of enemy attack. But they put up a stout fight, and throughout the first ten days of February were almost constantly airborne throughout the hours of daylight attempting to ward off the constant Japanese attacks.

401. Most of their sorties were for the defence of the Island, particularly the aerodromes. Fighter cover was provided on 30th January for the final withdrawal of the Army across the Johore causeway; and a few sorties were also flown against aircraft attacking our troop positions on the Island. On 9th February, the day following the Japanese landing on the Island, Hurricanes took off at the request of the Army, and engaged enemy dive bombers, shooting down at least one.

402. A number of patrols were made for convoy protection. The final reinforcing convoy reached Singapore on 5th February, when the "Empress of Asia" was attacked and set on fire during its final approach. This was the only loss incurred by reinforcing convoys, which escaped unscathed partly because of the protection they were given but partly also, it must be admitted, because the Japanese made no very determined attacks upon them. In fact they almost seemed to permit them to arrive. In contrast, many ships leaving Singapore during February were heavily attacked and there were many losses.

403. The devotion to duty of the fighter pilots and of the ground crews who serviced the aircraft and maintained landing strips during these last few days were exemplary. Warning of attack was short and on occasion the Japanese bombers had dropped their bombs and were withdrawing before our fighters could reach them. But with experience of the enemy's tactics results steadily improved; and on the final day of operations, 9th February, 6 enemy aircraft were shot down and a further 14 seriously damaged for the loss of 2 Hurricanes and 1 pilot. It was significant that on 5th February the remaining pilots were all experienced men who had had previous battle experience before coming to the Far East.

404. On the 4th and 5th February Seletar, Sembawang and Tengah came under steady observed shell fire and all operations had then to be carried out from Kallang. The Japanese Bombers concentrated their attack on this station and the landing area was soon so riddled

with craters that only by constant and arduous labour was a landing strip 750 yards long maintained in operation. Even so, by 6th February our pilots were having to swing their Hurricanes round craters when taking-off and landing.

405. On the 10th February, by which time the Japanese were established in strength on the Island, all aircraft were withdrawn to Sumatra. G.O.C. Malaya concurred in this decision which was also endorsed by C-in-C. South-West Pacific who visited Singapore the same day. A few Buffaloes were left, owing to their condition, and were destroyed.

Results of Fighter Operations.

406. Total results of the fighting in the air over Singapore are difficult to assess with any accuracy as definite confirmation of successes was in most cases impossible. Group Captain Rice, who commanded the Fighter Force during the whole of its operations over Malaya, estimated that 183 Japanese aircraft were destroyed exclusive of others lost by them during our attacks on aerodromes.

407. It is felt that this claim may be excessive, though not by much. Reports which have been received from all sources appear to establish that the Buffalo Squadrons shot down a total of 30 Japanese aircraft; others were damaged and a proportion of them probably crashed during their return to base. It is probable that the Hurricane force destroyed, or so seriously damaged that they failed to return to base, a total of 100 Japanese aircraft. For this total, 45 Hurricanes were lost from all causes, including flying accidents and enemy air bombardment. In view of the odds which were faced these figures speak for themselves.

Final Evacuation of Singapore by R.A.F.

408. On the 10th February, the S.A.S.O. (Air Commodore Staton) and Air Vic-Marshal Maltby were sent by air to Sumatra. On arrival at Sumatra, Air Vice-Marshal Maltby, who up to date had been Assistant A.O.C., was appointed A.O.C. Westgroup in the N.E.I. by Abdacon.

409. On the 10th February, A.V.M. Pulford ordered the immediate evacuation of all remaining R.A.F. personnel, under the instruction of General Wavell who had visited Singapore that day. Evacuation started on the 11th February.

410. Aerodrome surfaces were ploughed up. All equipment which could not be got away had been, as far as possible, either destroyed or rendered ineffective, except for the salvaged equipment from N.W. Malaya which was housed in the town of Singapore. Its location prohibited destruction by fire, whilst neither time nor circumstances permitted its transfer or destruction by hand. However, little of immediate value to the enemy was in this dump.

411. On the 13th February, Air Vice-Marshal Pulford, after assuring himself that all R.A.F. personnel who could be, had been evacuated, left Singapore by sea for Sumatra. The circumstances in which he lost his life in attempting to follow his Command to the N.E.I. are outlined in Appendix "D".

412. On the 15th February, Singapore Fortress was compelled to surrender.

SECTION III

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS BASED ON SUMATRA

INTRODUCTION

413. As has already been narrated in Section II of this Report, by the 16th January 1942, all Air Force units in Malaya had been driven back to Singapore Island. Even with the existing strength, Island aerodromes were already congested; they would become more congested when reinforcements, now well on their way, arrived. The scale of Japanese air attack against these aerodromes was increasing. It had become imperative to disperse more widely.

414. If bomber units could be transferred to Sumatra, not only would they be dispersed more safely but fighter squadrons could then be distributed to all the aerodromes in Singapore. This elbow room was particularly desirable owing to the fact that H.M.S. "Indomitable", with 48 Hurricanes on board, was due to arrive at the end of January.

415. A.H.Q. therefore decided, on the 16th January, that the time was becoming imminent when bomber units would have to be transferred to Sumatra. For this reason H.Q.225(B) Group was formed at Singapore on this date, and sent to Palembang in Sumatra on the 18th January 1942. Initial appointments made by A.H.Q. were:-

Group Commander	...	Group Captain A.G. Bishop
S.A.S.O.	...	Wing Commander K. Powell
S.A.O.	...	Squadron Leader Briggs.

On the 30th January, Air Commodore H.J.F. Hunter, who had been appointed by the Air Ministry as Commander designate of a Bomber Group in the Far East, arrived in Sumatra and took over Command, Group Captain Bishop becoming S.A.S.O. of the Group.

DEVELOPMENT OF R.A.F. ORGANISATION IN SUMATRA

Instructions to No.225 (B) Group

416. On formation of the Group Headquarters, the A.O.C. instructed the Group Commander:-

- (a) to establish a Bomber Group H.Q;
- (b) to accelerate, to the maximum, arrangements for operating bomber units from Sumatra; such arrangements not only to provide for all bombers then in Singapore but also for the following reinforcements:-
 - (i) Nos.84 and 211.(B) Squadrons (Blenheim IV) then en route from Middle East;
 - (ii) Hudson IIIs en route from U.K. which were to re-equip in succession No.62 (B) Squadron, and Nos. 1 and 3 (GR) Squadrons, R.A.A.F.

417. The A.O.C. also decided that, dependent on the situation, when bomber units were located in Sumatra, either Group H.Q. would be responsible for the selection of targets (within the policy laid down by A.H.Q.) and the briefing of squadrons, or alternatively squadrons would proceed to bases in Singapore and be briefed there under A.H.Q. arrangements. For this latter arrangement, refuelling and re-arming parties for bomber units would be maintained at Singapore Island bases. At this time, it was fairly confidently anticipated that the situation on the ground in Malaya would be stabilised and a bridgehead held of sufficient area for the deployment of reinforcements preparatory to a counter-offensive being undertaken. That it would be necessary later to transfer fighter squadrons from Singapore was not at this time "on the cards".

/General

General Conditions in Sumatra

418. Sumatra, an island nearly 1,000 miles long, lies west of and runs parallel to the west coast of Malaya, but extends far to the southward. Its main features are a mountain range running down the west coast throughout the whole length of the island, and a relatively low-lying belt of country eastward of it, consisting mainly of jungle and swamp, which is intersected by many rivers with a west to east trend. It is developed in scattered areas only.

Roads are few, and although there are railway systems in the north and south, they are not connected, and communications are consequently poor. From the Allied point of view, the chief economic importance of Sumatra was the oil field and refinery near Palembang of which the normal outlet is to the east via Palembang river to the sea, though there is a single-track railway running to the Port of Oesthaven in the extreme south. There was a radio telephone system inter-connecting the principal towns in Sumatra with an external connection to Java. This telephone system was open and insecure.

419. At the time this Section of the Report opens, the wet monsoon was still in progress over Sumatra. A feature of this monsoon was the prevalence of torrential thunderstorms, both by day and night, of great local intensity which completely blacked out all visibility. Aircraft were bound to encounter one or more of them during the course of every long flight.

State of Aerodromes

420. Up to this date, 18th January, the policy of A.H.Q. had been to develop aerodromes in Northern Sumatra as refuelling grounds for reinforcements arriving by air from India, and as advanced landing grounds for operational use on the flank of Malaya. In consequence constructional work on them had been given priority over that at aerodromes in the South. By the middle of January small refuelling and re-arming parties of varying strengths, up to 50, had been established since December 1941 for landplanes at the following places:-

- (a) Sabang (also for Flying Boats)
- (b) Lhg'nga
- (c) Medan Civil Aerodrome (a large military aerodrome was also being constructed in this area)
- (d) Pakanbaroe
- (e) Padang
- (f) Palembang - at the civil aerodrome known as P.I.
- (g) A secret military aerodrome 20 miles south of Palembang known as P.II.

In addition there was a strip at Lahat, and a field under construction by the Dutch at Oesthaven. Wing Commander Duncan, Squadron Leader Briggs and Squadron Leader Wightwick (A.M.W.D.) were already located at Palembang for liaison with the Dutch in connection with the development of these aerodromes, and were absorbed into No.225 (B) Group.

421. There were no A.A. defences at any aerodromes in Sumatra. Those in the north were all within range of Japanese fighters which had already destroyed Dutch aircraft on the ground at Medan and Pakanbaroe.

Development by No.225 (B) Group H.Q.

422. On arrival at Palembang on the 18th January, Group Captain Bishop decided to:-

- (a) Establish Group Headquarters at Palembang.
- (b) Expand and accelerate the provision of accommodation at P.I. and P.II aerodromes, and improve aircraft dispensals at each.

/(c)

- (c) Develop Lahat for use by bombers.
- (d) Reconnoitre the area to the south of Palembang for the selection and development of further strips.

At the same time, reconnaissance was put in hand for siting an Ammunition Park, an Air Stores Park and an R.S.U., which were to be provided for the maintenance of the Force.

A.H.Q. were informed and approved of these decisions.

423. P.I. was, at that time, a large 'L' shaped aerodrome with two hard runways, and it possessed dispersal possibilities requiring, however, a lot of labour. There was no accommodation nearer than the town, 8 miles away.

424. P.II was a huge natural field about 10 miles in perimeter with good natural cover for aircraft. It was not visible from the road and its construction had been successfully kept secret from the Japanese. Similar clearings in the neighbourhood made it difficult to locate from the air, even by our own pilots briefed as to its location. Great care was taken to preserve its secrecy and, although at one time more than 100 aircraft were based on it, Japanese reconnaissance, which frequently flew over it by day and night, never located it. Communications between Palembang and P.II were handicapped as there was no bridge over the Palembang river, on the north of which lay Palembang town and P.I; the river had to be crossed by a small ferry which had a limit of 4 to 6 vehicles at a time.

425. Neither aerodrome had any internal telephone system and instruments could not be obtained.

Condition of Units on Arrival in Sumatra

426. However, Japanese progress in Malaya was quicker than anticipated; and the transfer from Singapore had to be accelerated and expanded beyond what had first been contemplated. In the event, all aircraft had to be based on P.I and P.II, although the personnel of one Bomber Squadron moved to Lahat on the day before the evacuation of Singapore, Group Captain Noble having been appointed Station Commander.

427. Accommodation had to be found for 1,500 personnel in the P.II area when provision was only ready for 250, whilst in Palembang town about 2,500 had to be accommodated in the schools and cinemas.

428. This Report has already narrated the plans made by A.H.Q. in Singapore for transferring and re-organising in Sumatra and Java, and how these plans were largely frustrated by the speed of the Japanese advance in Malaya and by the dislocation caused at the docks in Singapore by air attack. These plans were further frustrated by Japanese action against shipping at sea en route to the N.E.I. Many ships were sunk and others re-routed at sea to alternative ports. The cumulative effect was disastrous. Practically all equipment destined for Sumatra went astray. In particular no M.T. arrived except some light motor cars about the 8th February, few bomb trailers, few rations, and most important of all on the domestic side, no tentage and no domestic field equipment. Aircraft spares were limited, particularly for Blenheims in view of the arrival by air of two reinforcing squadrons, Nos.84 and 211 (B) Squadrons. There were only three refuellers available. Three months anticipated requirements of P.O.L. had already arrived at each aerodrome. Bombs had been sent across, but owing to enemy action, only a limited supply arrived: these were distributed between P.I. and P.II. For point-to-point communication a W/T set was improvised

/locally;

locally; fortunately sets were already installed at Sabang and Lhg'nga for reinforcement aircraft. There was one telephone line linking Group H.Q. with both aerodromes.

429. Local buses were requisitioned and gradually came into service. An organisation for the local purchase of supplies was set up and contracts already placed for the manufacture of domestic equipment were expedited and expanded.

330. By the end of the first week in February, personnel were reasonably accommodated. Throughout, however, the operational and maintenance facilities remained primitive in the extreme. The Dutch aerodromes were virtually landing grounds "in the blue".

431. The Dutch gave magnificent assistance in all these local preparations, headed by the Resident at Palembang who personally inspired and directed the civil authorities in their efforts.

432. From the 22nd January onwards, personnel and aircraft started streaming in; the former were in some disorder owing to loss of kit and a splitting up of units through the confused conditions of embarkation at Singapore. The situation was further aggravated because the arrivals included units destined for Java which had been re-routed at sea to Palembang. All had to be sorted and re-organised and units for Java entrained for Oesthaven and shipped thence to Batavia.

433. On the 23rd January, Blenheim IV's of Nos.84 and 211 (B) Squadrons began to arrive from the Middle East (para.357). Their ground personnel, who came by sea, landed at Oesthaven about 14th February. Their arrival coincided with the Japanese attack on the Palembang area, (which will be related in due course), and they had to be re-embarked for Batavia before they could join their Squadrons. Each squadron had 24 aircraft when it left the Middle East. Sixteen of No.84 Squadron arrived at P.I but 2 crashed on landing; 18 of No.211 Squadron arrived on different days between 23rd January and 14th February. Unfortunately, the change of route from Singapore to Palembang had resulted in the loss of 3 aircraft of No.84 Squadron as a result of wrong briefing on the location of landing grounds in Sumatra given to them on leaving Burma.

Dispositions arranged for Units

434. On the 23rd January, P.I. aerodrome received its first air attack. Twenty-seven unescorted bombers dropped their loads from 22,000 feet with great accuracy, but caused only slight damage to the surface of the aerodrome. The Dutch Buffalo Squadron on the aerodrome established contact with the formation and damaged at least two Japanese bombers without loss to themselves.

435. In view of this raid it was decided to keep P.I. as clear as possible, using P.II for operating all bombers, whose aircraft cover and dispersal were so good. It was also anticipated that P.I. would later be required for at least a proportion of the fighter force known to be arriving in H.M.S. "Indomitable" in the near future. The disposition arranged for Squadrons was therefore:-

P.I - Nos.84 and 211 (B) Squadrons - serviceable aircraft moving to P.II daily so as to clear P.I during Japanese raid danger hours. By this time knowledge of Japanese habits was such that complete confidence was felt that no attack would take place before 0830 hours or later than 1700 hours on any day.

- M.V.A.F.

P.II - Nos.1 (GR), 27 (NF), 34 (B) and 62 (B) Squadrons, whose strength in aircraft when they arrived from Singapore was certain to be low.

/After

After providing for the servicing of Nos. 84 and 211 (B) Squadrons, there were many personnel surplus to requirements and these were sorted out and despatched to Java.

436. Owing to the early influx of aircraft and personnel, Wing Commander Powell, S.A.S.O. of the Group, had to be appointed Station Commander P.II until relieved by Group Captain McCauley on 29th January. Wing Commander Powell then took over P.I from Wing Commander Duncan, the latter being placed in charge of the refuelling party at Pakenbaroe.

State of Ground Defences

437. By the end of January 1942, Abdacon allotted A.A. defences to the area:- 6 heavy and 6 Bofors guns to each aerodrome and 4 of each type to the oil refinery. Ships carrying ammunition for these guns had been sunk and there was little available. There were two Dutch armoured cars and 150 native Dutch troops allotted to the defence of each aerodrome. These troops had not behaved steadily during the air attack on P.I on the 23rd January; and with the arrival of R.A.F. ground personnel, aerodrome defence parties were organised to reinforce them.

438. There was one Dutch native regiment for the defence of the whole Palembang area, but there were no defences on the river leading to the town. On the 23rd January, representations were made both to the Dutch naval and military authorities and to Abdacon on the inadequacy of the defences in the Palembang area, but no reinforcements were available. It is thought that plans were in hand to strengthen the defences, as General Sir John Lavarack, Commanding 1st Australian Corps, visited Palembang about 25th January and indicated that an Australian division might be expected in the near future. Presumably owing to the general situation in the Far East, the move was cancelled.

439. In short the aerodrome defences were very weak and few troops were available for the defence of the area against invasion.

OPERATIONS CARRIED OUT BY NO. 225 (B) GROUP. 22ND JANUARY - 14TH FEBRUARY

440. - No. 225 (B) Group was responsible for reconnaissance northwards from the Sunda Straits to cover the convoys that went through to Singapore during the last week in January and the first in February. During the passage of a convoy through the Banca Straits on the 27th January, Blenheim IV's had to maintain a fighter escort as no fighters were available in Sumatra; the Dutch Buffalo Squadron had by this time been withdrawn to Java. All other available bomber aircraft stood by during these periods in case convoys were attacked by Japanese naval forces. The whole resources of the Group were directed towards the protection of these convoys during the two day periods each took to traverse the area for which it was responsible.

441. On the 26th January, the Endau landing took place, (paras. 344-51) and No. 225 (B) Group was ordered to despatch all available aircraft to the scene. A force of 6 Hudsons from No. 62 (B) Squadron and 5 Blenheim I's of the same squadron but manned by No. 84 (B) Squadron aircrews was scraped up. The Hudsons arrived on the scene during the late afternoon, and landed at Senbawang for the night, returning to Palembang on the 27th January. The Blenheims arrived too late to participate and so were ordered to land at Tengah and await orders from A.H.Q. This force was used on the night 27/28th January to bomb Kuantan, returning to

/Palembang

Palembang on 28th January.

442. Also on the 26th January, 6 Blenheim IV's of No.34 (B) Squadron and 6 Hudsons of No.8 (GR) Squadron R.A.A.F. were despatched to Java under orders from A.H.Q. in connection with the arrival of H.M.S. "Indomitable" with 48 Hurricanes on board. The carrier, protected by a close anti-submarine Catalina, flew off the Hurricanes to the south of Java, and the bomber and G.R. aircraft navigated then to Java and subsequently to Sumatra and Singapore. This bomber force returned to P.II on 2nd February and became available again for operations.

443. By the 30th January, Singapore was clear of all but fighter aircraft. The strengths of bomber squadrons in Sumatra then were:-

No. 1 Squadron, RAAF	.....	16 Hudson II: many overdue for inspection and showing signs of wear and tear.	
No. 8 Squadron, RAAF	.....	6 Hudson III	} Not available until 2nd February.
No. 34 Squadron	.....	6 Blenheim IV	
No. 62 Squadron	.....	10 Hudson III	
No. 62 Squadron	.....	5 Blenheim I	} Particularly poor condition
No. 27 Squadron	.....	3 Blenheim I	
No. 84 Squadron	.....	10 Blenheim IV	} Most aircraft required inspection and minor repairs, after their long flight from the Middle East.
No. 211 Squadron	.....	4 Blenheim IV	
M.V.A.F.	.....	Mixed Flight.	

444. From the 30th January - 5th February, as convoy duties permitted, the following attacks were carried out during the nights shown:-

30th Jan - 31st Jan. ---	6 Blenheims - Ipoh aerodrome - using Pakanbaroe for refuelling.
31st Jan. - 1st Feb. ---	6 Hudsons - Alor Star aerodrome - using Medan for refuelling. Hits were scored on the runway and aerodrome buildings.
1st Feb - 2nd Feb. ...	5 Blenheims - Penang aerodrome - using Medan for refuelling.
2nd Feb - 3rd Feb. ...	7 Blenheims, 3 Hudsons - Singora docks - using Medan for refuelling.
4th Feb - 5th Feb. ...	5 Blenheims, 4 Hudsons - Kluang aerodrome - using Singapore for refuelling.
5th Feb - 6th Feb. ...	8 Blenheims - proceeded Medan en route Singora; cancelled owing to bad weather.
12th Feb - 13th Feb ..	12 Hudsons - Kluang aerodrome.

The policy was for aircraft to arrive at the advanced landing ground just before dusk, refuel and rest. Then after delivering their attacks, aircraft either returned direct to base, or alternatively, refuelled again at the appropriate advanced landing ground and returned to base at first light. On account of Japanese fighter patrols, aircraft

/could

could not remain on undefended grounds in Northern Sumatra during daylight hours.

445. These long flights in themselves imposed great strain on crews: it was still the wet monsoon season in Sumatra; torrential thunderstorms were prevalent particularly at night. Not all the crews of reinforcing squadrons were up to the standard of night flying required for such conditions particularly in the absence of radio aids to navigation: those that were showed outstanding determination and skill, and of them Wing Commander Jeurwine, C.O. of No.84 (B) Squadron, was pre-eminent. It was only rarely that results of bombing could be observed in any detail owing to the bad conditions of visibility.

446. On the 6th February there were reports of a Japanese force assembling in the Anambas. This was located by Hudson sorties; it was attacked on the night 7th/8th February by 9 Blenheims in most adverse weather conditions, and again on the 11th/12th February by 10 Blenheims.

447. Up to the 6th February, No.225 (B) Group had maintained daily reconnaissances across the South China Sea to Borneo to detect any Japanese movement southwards. From this date, owing to the breakdown of communications between Palembang and A.H.Q. Singapore, Abdair assumed operational control of R.A.F. Units in Sumatra. From the 7th February onwards, all reconnaissance by No.225 (B) Group was discontinued under orders from Abdair, who wished to economise aircraft by centralising all reconnaissance under Reconnaissance Group in Java and so increase the size of the striking force available in Sumatra.

448. Throughout this period many transit flights to and from Singapore were carried out by Hudson aircraft either escorting Hurricanes or assisting in the evacuation of personnel.

Serviceability in all units was low.

The M.V.A.F. at Palembang were invaluable throughout in maintaining communications between P.I. and P.II. and Lahat, providing a twice daily reconnaissance of the river approaches, and locating crashed aircraft.

Appointment of Air Officers

449. Air Commodore Silly, Deputy A.O.C., arrived in Palembang on the 30th January with orders from the A.O.C. to site a Command H.Q. in Sumatra. In this he was unsuccessful and left on 6th February to organise the R.A.F. Base, Batavia.

450. Air Vice-Marshal P.C. Maltby arrived in Palembang on the 10th February and on the following day became A.O.C. Westgroup, which comprised all R.A.F. and R.A.A.F. Units ex-R.A.F. Far East Command now located in Sumatra and Java. Whilst in Palembang, he picked up a nucleus staff and moved with it on 12th February to Java, having first reconnoitred S. Sumatra and ascertained that no suitable site for a H.Q. existed in that area. It was arranged that, pending the establishment of H.Q. Westgroup in Java, Abdair would continue in direct control of all operations carried out by Westgroup Units.

Operations against Enemy Convoys by No.225 (B) Group, 12th - 14th Feb.

451. On the 13th February, the shipping situation as known at H.Q. 225 (B) Group appeared most confused. Reconnaissance reports made by Reconnaissance Group and received through Abdair showed that Japanese naval forces were in strength south of Singapore. These

/reports

reports were 5-7 hours old by the time they reached 225 (B) Group owing to bad communications; locations of convoys had by then completely changed. To confuse matters still further, a stream of shipping of all kinds was at the same time passing south from Singapore to Java despite the presence of Japanese forces; friend was difficult to distinguish from foe.

452. By the 13th February (p.m.), it was felt at H.Q. 225 (B) Group that, despite orders to the contrary, a reconnaissance must be carried out to clear the situation and ascertain whether or not there was an immediate threat to Sumatra. One Hudson of No.1 (GR) Squadron, RAAF, was sent in the afternoon and reported a concentration of Japanese shipping north of Banka Island which confirmed impressions that a landing at Palembang was imminent. All available Blenheims were immediately despatched to attack the enemy force but results were difficult to assess owing to darkness and rainstorms.

453. On the 14th February an offensive reconnaissance of 5 Hudsons was despatched so as to be over the area at first light. This located and attacked a convoy consisting of 25-30 transports, heavily escorted by naval vessels, at the northern entrance of the Banka Straits, heading towards the Palembang river. The convoy was protected by fighters believed to be from one or two aircraft carriers which were not, however, located. This was followed up by attacks by all available Hudsons and Blenheims, during which at least 6 transports were sunk or badly damaged. All of these attacks, except the first, were unescorted and carried out in the face of heavy A.A. fire and strong fighter defence. Six to eight of our aircraft were shot down or destroyed on landing in a damaged condition, whilst the majority were hit to a varying degree. Nevertheless, the successes already achieved more than balanced these losses and during the night of the 14th everything possible was done to prepare for further attacks the following morning.

454. The reason why no fighter escort had been available except for the first attack was because the Japanese had, in co-ordination with the approach of their convoy, staged a parachute attack on P.I. aerodrome, on which our fighters were based. It was the only occupied aerodrome which they had located in Sumatra. Presumably by attacking it they hoped to neutralize all air resistance to the convoy. As events will show, their failure to locate P.II and neutralize it as well cost them very dear. However, before proceeding further it is now necessary to turn to the operations of the fighters up to the time of the Japanese attack on P.I. aerodrome.

ORGANISATION - NO.226 (F) GROUP

454. On the 1st February, 1942, Air Commodore Vincent arrived in Palembang and formed H.Q. No.226 (F) Group. For this purpose he brought with him personnel drawn from No.224 (F) Group Singapore and absorbed those of H.Q.266 (F) Wing which was now arriving in Sumatra from U.K.

457. In anticipation of the formation of a Fighter organisation, and with the energetic co-operation of the Dutch, a Fighter H.Q. Operations Room had already been established at Palembang on the 25th January by H.Q.225 (B) Group. This Operations Room was connected to a naval transmitter in the docks some distance away, for communicating with aircraft. At first, orders from the Operations Controller had to be relayed to aircraft; later this arrangement was improved and the Controller was connected direct to the transmitter. Arrangements were made for the Gun Operations Room to be in the same building.

458. The role of the Group was:-

(a) Defence of the Palembang area:

/(b)

(b) Protection of shipping in the Banka Straits, by means of escort patrols and offensive sweeps:

(c) Up till the 8th February 1942, maintenance of a token force of fighters in Singapore.

459. A civil Dutch Observer system existed at Palembang consisting of two concentric circles of posts round Palembang, at 50 and 100 kilometres radius. There were a few posts still further out - one on the north end of Banka Island, one at the mouth of the Palembang river and one on Tanjong Pinang Island, just south of Singapore. Posts were too widely spaced to be effective; most warnings came from the 50 kilometre circle only. Communication between posts and the centre was by W/T or telephone. Aircraft recognition was poor and consequently reports were erratic. No radar existed at all.

460. With the most willing and energetic co-operation of the head of the Observer Corps, steps were immediately taken to improve the system. Additional posts were selected, manufacture of W/T sets began and additional personnel were trained. But events moved too fast for these measures to take effect. The original system only was available during the actual events which followed.

461. V.H.F. was not available, nor was D/F for assisting homing aircraft. The absence of the latter was a serious handicap because of the daily intense thunderstorms.

462. All aircraft of the Fighter Group were based on P.I. aerodrome, the administrative shortcomings of which have already been related. It had a telephone from the Operations Room in Palembang but no instruments were available for dispersal points round the aerodrome.

Strength of Fighter Squadrons available

463. About 50 Hurricanes were available when the Group formed, the majority direct from H.M.S. "Indomitable"; the remainder were part of the original consignment which had arrived in crates in Singapore on the 13th January.

464. Forty-eight Hurricanes flew off H.M.S. "Indomitable" on 26th January; 5 of these crashed on arrival in Java. All flew off with their guns completely covered with anti-corrosion grease with which they had been protected during the voyage. Fifteen flew via Batavia and P.I. to Singapore, arriving on the 29th January. Their guns were cleaned at Seletar. The remainder remained at P.II. to have their guns cleaned before transfer to P.I. Cleaning of these guns was a most difficult operation owing to lack of all the usual facilities, and considerable delay occurred before squadrons were able to go into action.

465. Pilots were drawn from Nos. 232, 242, 258 and 605(F) Squadrons and operated as 2 composite squadrons - Nos. 232 and 258. Most pilots, with the exception of the Commanding Officers and Flight Commanders, were straight from O.T.U's, and deserve credit for the spirit with which they went straight into action. They had experienced a long sea voyage but once again no time could be spared for acclimatization or training.

466. When they first arrived the aircraft were serviced by personnel from Buffalo squadrons: from the 6th February onwards, however, ground personnel of No.266 (F) Wing began to arrive, including advanced parties and stores with the Air Stores Park and R.S.U. There was a deficiency of Hurricane tool kits and few battery starters for aircraft and no battery-charging facilities were available at the aerodrome: factors which contributed to a low standard of serviceability.

467. To improve the climb and manoeuvrability of the Hurricane, the four outside guns were removed as it was considered that 8 guns were ample against the unarmoured Japanese aircraft.

OPERATIONS CARRIED OUT BY NO. 226 (F) GROUP

468. From the 2nd - 5th February many sorties were carried out escorting shipping proceeding north and south through the Banka Straits. On the 3rd February, 9 aircraft of No. 258 Squadron left for Singapore to co-operate with a bomber force in a combined attack on Kluang aerodrome, returning the following day. They landed at Tengah but owing to disorganisation at that Station the Squadron was not ready to take off at the appointed time, and the attack was a failure.

469. Meanwhile Japanese reconnaissance was maintained daily over Palembang and was quick to note our activity. Air attacks on P. I. aerodrome took place on 6th, 7th and 8th February by formations of bombers escorted by fighters.

470. On the 6th, warning was short, and the Hurricanes, caught at a tactical disadvantage, lost 4 and claimed one Navy 'O'. No. 232 Squadron were away at Singapore on this day conducting operations from the Island.

471. On the 7th warning was even shorter and results were serious. The Japanese combined a high bombing attack with a low attack by fighters. Three Hurricanes were destroyed and 11 others damaged on the ground, whilst 3 were shot down in the air. In addition 4 unserviceable Blenheims on the ground and one Hudson, which arrived as the attack was in progress, were destroyed. Only one Navy 'O' fighter could be claimed.

472. On the 8th and 13th February, fresh attacks on the aerodrome took place, but more warning was received: on the 8th an inconclusive interception took place but, on the 13th, 3 Navy 'O' fighters and 2 Army 97 bombers were shot down for the loss of one Hurricane.

473. On the 12th February the Group was reinforced by Wing Commander Maguire and 8 aircraft. These were part of a reinforcing party which consisted of 39 Hurricanes, a pool of 15 pilots, and the ground crews of Nos. 232, 258 and 605 Squadrons; it had arrived at Batavia by sea on the 4th February.

474. Unfortunately, on the 13th, a further 9 aircraft from Batavia arrived at P. I. while the attack on the aerodrome was in progress. They were short of petrol and, in ensuing engagements, six either were shot down or crashed.

Parachute Attack on Palembang I Aerodrome, 14th February.

475. On the 14th February, all serviceable Hurricanes were away escorting, under orders from Abdair, No. 225 Group's bombers attacking shipping north of the Banka Straits. At 0800 hours the Observer Corps reported the approach of a large force of hostile aircraft. Attempts to recall the fighters failed. After the aerodrome had been lightly bombed about 350 paratroops were dropped. The majority of the returning Hurricanes were diverted to P. II.; others proceeded there after refuelling and re-arming, having made an unsuccessful attempt to locate the paratroops in the jungle. A narrative of this paratroop attack leading up to the evacuation of the aerodrome and Palembang town is contained in Appendix "E" attached.

EVENTS FROM 14TH FEBRUARY (P.M.) - 18TH FEBRUARY

Attacks on Japanese Convoy off Palembang, 15th February.

476. By 14th February, (p.m.), therefore, the total Air Forces located in Sumatra were at P.II aerodrome. The strength consisted of:-

- 22 Hurricanes
- 35 Blenheim I's and IV's - many of which were unserviceable.
- 3 Hudsons (the remainder of the Hudson force was flown to Java for repairs on the 14th February)

The whole was placed under the command of the Station Commander, P.II., Group Captain McCauley, who was instructed by the A.O.C. No.225 (B) Group to continue attacks on the Japanese convoy entering the Palembang River from first light on the 15th (paras.452-4).

477. Reconnaissance on the 15th pin-pointed the position of transports and barges and revealed approximately 20 naval vessels and transports steaming through the Banka Straits, whilst other transports and landing craft were in the river mouth.

478. The first attack, off at 0630 hours, was made by 6 Blenheims escorted by Hurricanes. It met strong fighter opposition but pressed home the attack. From then onwards until 1530 hours a constant stream of our aircraft proceeded to attack the convoy and, as all enemy fighter opposition had ceased, Hurricanes were employed in shooting up barges whilst bombers similarly expended their ammunition after dropping their bombs. The limiting factor in the number of attacks was the speed with which re-armament and refuelling could be carried out. The Japanese in barges and transports fought back for a time with A.A. and small arms fire but by 1100 hours this opposition ceased. By 1530 hours all movement on the river was stopped and surviving barges and landing craft had pulled in to the thick undergrowth. Troops had dispersed on to the river bank, and against them attacks continued.

479. It is difficult to assess the damage done. All pilots reported upon its extent. Thousands of troops in barges were caught in the open by machine gun fire, particularly by the Hurricanes, and very heavy casualties were inflicted upon them. Bombing accounted for many more whilst, in addition, at least 3 transports were sunk, a number of others hit, and an unknown number of troop carrying landing craft was sunk.

480. As a fitting finale to the day, a number of Navy 'O' fighters were located on a strip on the beach on Banka Island and were destroyed by Hurricanes. It was understood at the time that a Japanese carrier covering the landing had been sunk by a Dutch submarine and that these fighters were part of its complement and had been encountered during the initial sorties.

481. Air action possibly assisted by the Dutch submarine, thus brought the landing to a standstill. The Japanese were punished heavily for their failure to locate P.II aerodrome. Unfortunately, there were no troops or naval light craft available in the area to take advantage of the situation.

Evacuation of Sumatra

482. A further paratroop landing took place at P.I on the morning of the 15th and the Japanese established themselves

in the vicinity of Palembang town. There was thus a distinct possibility that P.II. aerodrome might be over-run during the night 15th/16th February. Also by 15th February (p.m.) stocks of bombs and ammunition at P.II were almost expended whilst food supplies were cut off.

483. In view of these factors and the lack of any supporting troops, Abdair approved the evacuation back to Java of all R.A.F. units and this was effected by road and rail on the evening of the 15th via Oesthaven. All flyable aircraft were flown to Java, the remainder destroyed. Aircraft of Nos. 84 and 211 (B) Squadrons, which had borne the brunt of the attacks during the day, finished their last sorties too late to proceed that evening. They remained on the aerodrome, flying to Java on the morning of the 16th February.

484. Personnel at landing grounds in N. and Central Sumatra were instructed to proceed by road to west coast ports for evacuation in accordance with pre-arranged plans.

485. Special mention must be made here of the valuable services rendered by the General Manager, Sumatra Railways. Despite orders received from his superior authorities, he delayed destruction of rail facilities and personally arranged for the trains required during the night 15th/16th February. He himself did not leave until after the departure of the last train conveying R.A.F. personnel.

486. At Oesthaven on the 16th, it was found that the Dutch had already fired the bazaar and destroyed all military property, and the town was covered with a pall of smoke. At the docks, the British Military Embarkation Commandant stated that he had been given orders that all personnel were to be clear by midnight: personnel only were to be evacuated, not M.T. or equipment. Remonstrances proved fruitless. As a result, essential and vital aircraft equipment, including that brought from Palembang was left behind. This was particularly unfortunate because spare engines and other urgent stores for the Hurricanes which had been landed at Oesthaven with No. 41 Air Stores Park, of No. 266 (F) Wing, were left behind. No. 266 (F) Wing's R.S.U. similarly lost valuable equipment. A.A. guns and ammunition which had been brought to the port from P.I. and P.II aerodromes had also to be abandoned. Section IV of this Report will show that the loss of this R.A.F. and A.A. equipment had serious results during operations conducted later in Java. Fortunately the light tanks were re-embarked and all personnel, Army and R.A.F., were evacuated.

487. The evacuation of the port was covered by a screen of R.A.F. personnel from No. 84 (B) Squadron acting under the command of Group Captain G.E. Nicholetts, who had been appointed R.A.F. Base Control Officer about ten days previously.

488. It was unfortunate that Oesthaven was evacuated so hastily. Two days later Group Captain Nicholetts, with a party of 50 volunteers of No. 605 (F) Squadron, returned from Batavia to Oesthaven by sea in H.M.S. "Ballarat" which was commanded by a Royal Australian Naval Reserve officer specially appointed for the voyage owing to his knowledge of Oesthaven Harbour. On arrival, early on the 18th, twelve hours were spent by the party loading the ship to the gunwales with R.A.F. equipment and some Bofors ammunition. At the same time the railway track was damaged, loaded rolling stock and petrol dumps were fired, and the water by the dockside was obstructed by pushing into the sea abandoned heavy M.T. and other vehicles.

489. That this work of salvage and destruction proceeded unhampered by the enemy must not detract from the spirit shown by both the R.A.F. party and the crew of H.M.S. "Ballarat", who volunteered for the adventure with a full knowledge of the hazards involved.

490. As it happened, by this time air reconnaissances from Java had made it clear that the casualties and disorganisation caused as a result of our air attacks on the convoy off Palembang during the 14th and 15th February had been so severe that the Japanese were in no state to run through from Palembang to Oesthaven at the speed which had been anticipated when the port was evacuated.

SECTION IV

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS BASED ON JAVA

INTRODUCTION

Early Days of War in the N.E.I.

491. Before hostilities had broken out in the Far East the Dutch considered that their best interests lay in co-operating with the British from the outset with the object of repelling a Japanese attack in its early stages. They felt confident that, by joint means, it could be halted in the north and that war would never reach Java itself.

492. Dutch air units, therefore, operated from the first day of war - in Malaya, Borneo and the northern islands of the N.E.I. where they suffered considerable casualties. Dutch naval units also played an early part and suffered considerably

493. Early reverses caused apprehension but acted as a spur to Dutch co-operation. Their will to help was then most marked although their resources were very limited.

Formation of H.Q. S.W. Pacific Command (Abdacom) in Java.

494. Later, Dutch confidence was again raised when, on 15th January 1942, Gen. Wavell arrived in Java to take control of all Allied Forces in the S.W. Pacific and formed his H.Q. (Abdacom) near Bandoeng. Confidence was further raised by news of expected reinforcements - British, Australian and American - and still further by the actual arrival, towards the end of January and early February, of the first of them. More were on the way.

495. Even when the British forces in Malaya were, by 31st January, invested on Singapore Island, it was believed that the Fortress, the key of the Far East, would hold out for some while and would provide the necessary time for adequate forces to be built up in the N.E.I. for the successful defence of the rest of the Far East.

Then came a series of unpleasant events.

Effect of Japanese Capture of Singapore and Sumatra

496. On 8th February the Japanese secured a foothold on Singapore Island and within a couple of days its imminent capitulation became evident.

497. On 14th February they attacked and overran South Sumatra, admittedly at heavy cost. The British forces, mainly air units, had to withdraw to Java.

498. Between 12th and 18th February large numbers of personnel, evacuated from Singapore and Sumatra, arrived in considerable confusion in Western Java; amongst them were approximately 10,000 R.A.F. of all ranks. They augmented considerable numbers who had preceded them in a steadily growing stream from the same places and from other N.E.I. Islands.

499. At this time, mid-February, Abdacom was still established in Bandoeng, reinforcements were arriving and more were expected. Nevertheless it was evident now that Java would be attacked in the near future. A civilian exodus from Java on a grand scale replaced the small stream which had been leaving for some time through Sourabaya and Batavia.

Congestion in Batavia

500. At Batavia the exodus became confused with incoming reinforcements and evacuees from Singapore and Sumatra. For

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several days, the harbour of Batavia, and the roadstead outside, were congested with shipping. This unloaded as best it could with the result that the quays, warehouses and the roads leading from them rapidly became congested with an inextricable confusion of merchandise, equipment, M.T., abandoned cars and goods of every description. The town of Batavia became congested with personnel - outgoing refugees, incoming reinforcements, incoming evacuees and Dutch troops mobilised for defence of the locality.

501. Into this confused area the R.A.F., evacuated from Singapore and Sumatra, arrived, for the most part, between 12th and 18th February.

502. Those from Singapore had embarked there under heavy air attack, on shipping of all kinds as it came to hand, and amongst a welter of civilian refugees. Units had become much mixed, many personnel were separated from units and many had become separated from their equipment. It had proved impracticable to embark much equipment owing to conditions at Singapore docks, and some of what had been embarked had been lost at sea through enemy action.

503. Units from Sumatra had also suffered by reason of the hasty withdrawal from aerodromes near Palembang and still more so by circumstances at the port in South Sumatra, Oesthaven, at which they had embarked: such small amount of equipment as they had possessed in Sumatra, and which they had succeeded in removing to Oesthaven, could not be embarked (para.486).

504. An appreciable number of bombers and fighters had, however, reached aerodromes in the Batavia district, though a high proportion of them were unfit for operations.

505. Such was the situation in Batavia on 16th February. It was from personnel and equipment so placed that a maximum air fighting strength with ancillary services had to be evolved, and surpluses evacuated from Java, during the twelve days before the Japanese landed.

506. Not the least of the problems to be dealt with was that of re-establishing morale and discipline; these had naturally suffered in spite of the energetic efforts and outstanding example of many individuals, and of the excellent behaviour of the majority.

507. An unfortunate incident must be mentioned. One squadron, No.453 (F) Squadron, had not behaved steadily when its aerodrome Sembawang, in Singapore, came under observed shell fire about 3rd February. This caused a few light casualties. Subsequent action taken to encourage the squadron to recover was incorrectly received by some of its personnel, and it was shipped to Java. There, on about 18th February, the A.O.C. informed the officers of the squadron what was expected of it and that there was a possibility of re-arming it with Hurricanes in Java. The reaction was again such as to make it apparent that the unit was unlikely collectively to recover sound morale. It was therefore shipped to Ceylon with a recommendation that it should be disbanded on arrival. It is unfortunate that this had to be done as the unit had earlier done some good work in Malaya; but strong measures were essential at this particular juncture.

R.A.F. RE-ORGANISATION IN JAVA

Position on 16th February.

508. On the 16th February, the date of the evacuation of Sumatra, the position in Java was as follows:-

- (a) H.Q. Westgroup (A.O.C. - A.V.M. P.C. Maltby) - A.O.C. and a nucleus staff had arrived at Soekaboemi on 14th February and were organising a H.Q. there; this was still known as Westgroup. Soekaboemi was chosen because it is centrally located in Western Java, where all Westgroup units were being located. Westgroup assumed administrative responsibility for

them on 16th February. As it was not yet ready to take operational control, this was retained by Abdair, which had assumed it on 7th February whilst units were still operating in Sumatra.

- (b) No. 205 (F.B.) Squadron - (Wing Commander Councell in command) had arrived in Batavia on 1st February and was operating as part of the Allied Reconnaissance Group (Recgroup), using anchorages at Batavia and Oesthaven.
- (c) Nos. 36 and 100 (T.B.) Squadrons - (Squadron Leader Wilkins in command). Aircraft had arrived on 29/30th January from Singapore for re-organisation. After being based on various aerodromes they were rejoined by their ground personnel on 15th February at Tjikampok.
- (d) No. 153 M.U. - (G/Capt. Ridgway in command) had arrived in Java on the 9th January and moved to Djocjacarta, where it was ready to start work on 15th January.
- (e) No. 152 M.U. - (Squadron Leader S.G. Aylwin in command) had arrived in Batavia on 14th February and moved on the 17th to Poerbolingo to form a transit store.
- (f) R.A.F. Base, Batavia (Group Captain Ridgway in command until 18.2.42 when Air Commodore Silly relieved him). This base had been established in Batavia on the 24th January to organise the reception, sorting and despatch of personnel arriving by sea from Singapore and Sumatra and of air reinforcements from the Middle East and the United Kingdom. It also organised the reception and erecting of a number of boxed Hurricanes. By 18th February, this base was administering 5 transit camps in Batavia and one at Buitenzorg. Personnel of all other units not mentioned in (a) to (e) above passed through this base for re-organisation and disposal, a total of over 12,000 being handled.
- (g) Certain A.M.E. Units were installing radar facilities in the Batavia and Sourabaya areas.
- (h) Thirty-nine crated Hurricanes had been erected in Batavia during the first ten days of February. Seventeen had proceeded to No. 266 (F) Wing in Sumatra where a number of them were lost. Twelve had been handed over by Abdair to the Dutch Army Air Force. For diplomatic reasons they could not be withdrawn in spite of the losses which our fighter squadrons had just sustained in Sumatra. Thus, only 10 were left as replacements for our squadrons.

Allocation of Aerodromes

509. On the evacuation of Sumatra, on 16th February, Abdair allocated aerodromes as follows:-

- (a) All Hudsons to Sampalak:
- (b) All Blenheims to Kalidjati:
- (c) All fighters to Tjilitan.

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These aerodromes had not been highly developed, dispersal being limited, aerodrome ground defences weak, internal signals and night flying arrangements lacking. No A.A. defences were available.

510. On the 18th February, in view of the reduced strength of squadrons and the fact that no further bomber re-inforcements could be expected, A.O.C. Westgroup decided to concentrate all aircraft by types into selected squadrons as follows:-

(a) Semplak:

Station Commander - Group Captain Brown
No. 1 (G.R.) Squadron R.A.A.F. - Commander, W/Cdr. R.H. Davies
Strength 14 Hudson II's and 12 Hudson III's (about 12 operationally serviceable).

(b) Kalidjati:

Station Commander - Group Captain Whistondale (pending availability of Group Captain Nicholetts)
No. 84 (B) Squadron - Commander, W/Cdr. Jeurwine
Strength 26 Blenheims (about 6 operationally serviceable)

(c) Tjikampek

No. 36 (T.B.) Squadron - Commander, S/Ldr. Wilkins
Strength 9 Vildebeestes and 1 Albacore
(No torpedo facilities were available in Java)

(d) Tjililitan:

No. 232 (F) Squadron - Commander, S/Ldr. Brooker	} Total strength of 25 Hurricanes (about 18 operationally serviceable)
No. 605 (F) Squadron - Commander, S/Ldr. Wright	

The former had been in action since its arrival in the Far East, in Singapore and Sumatra: the latter had hitherto been mainly employed in erecting Hurricanes for No. 266 (F) Wing as a whole, but was not armed until it came into action on 23rd February with 8 Hurricanes. Two fighter squadrons were retained as there were prospects of rearming one of them with P.40's en route in U.S.S. "Langley".

Reformation of Bomber and Fighter Groups

511. On the same day H.Q. Nos. 225 (B) and 226 (F) Groups which had not been reformed in Java after being withdrawn from Sumatra were reformed in skeleton to assist Westgroup in re-establishing their squadrons in Java.

No. 225 (B) Group, under Air Commodore Hunter, reformed in Bandoeng, on 18th February. Bomber aerodromes were visited and assistance given, in co-operation with the Dutch, to units to solve their acute problems of housing, rationing and transportation. Air Commodore Hunter was absorbed into Abdair on 19th February to act as A.O.A.; the remaining members of Group H.Q. were absorbed into H.Q. Westgroup on its arrival in Bandoeng on the 23rd February.

No. 226 (F) Group, under Air Commodore Vincent, took charge of Nos. 232 (F) and 605 (F) Squadrons based on Tjililitan aerodrome, and of a fighter operations room in Batavia and its local warning

/system.

system. This had made good progress during the preceding few days thanks largely to the initiative of Wing Commander Bell, previously Station Commander at Kallang, Singapore. Owing to the highly developed nature of communications in Java efficient operations and filter rooms were quickly connected to the Dutch Observer Corps, the fighter aerodrome, the A.A. defences of Batavia and Abdair's (later Britair's) operations room in Bandoeng. Two R.D.F. and two G.L. sets were quickly erected in the Batavia district and were also connected with them. The Dutch provided the utmost assistance, including the provision of many volunteer Dutch youths and women to man the filter and operations rooms; their alertness and enthusiasm could hardly have been bettered.

512. To maintain this Force it was decided to retain:-

- (a) No. 153 M.U. (already organised for work at Djocjacarta)
- (b) No. 81 R.S.U.
- (c) No. 41 Air Stores Park for Unit supply
- (d) An improvised Air Stores Park for collection and sorting of equipment.

513. Establishments were drawn up and issued; and instructions were given that all personnel surplus to establishment were to be evacuated via the A.A.F. Base, Batavia, as shipping became available and as far as possible with their original units. Preference was to be given in the following order, after women and children evacuees - formed units, aircrews, technical personnel and selected details.

514. Aircraft serviceability for various reasons was low: the Hudson and Blenheim Squadrons had about six serviceable each, the two fighter squadrons not more than 18 in all. For the next few days minor operations only were carried out (under Abdair orders), and all efforts were directed towards improving the condition of aircraft and to getting ready generally for the serious operations to come.

AIR OPERATIONS 18TH TO 24TH FEBRUARY

515. While re-organisation described above was progressing under Westgroup direction, the following operations were carried out under the directions of Abdair.

516. On the 18th February, one Hudson reconnoitred the port of Oesthaven and the road to Palembang. No signs of Japanese activity were observed.

517. On the 19th all available (5) Blenheims attacked shipping at Palembang. On this day a bombing attack was launched by the Japanese against Semplak and 6 Hudsons were destroyed. Semplak had no A.A. defences and dispersal facilities were poor.

518. On the 20th February 4 Hudsons and 3 Blenheims bombed shipping once more at Palembang in the face of severe fighter opposition from aircraft based on P.I. The following day 2 Hudsons and 5 Blenheims continued the attacks against shipping at Palembang. On this occasion it was possible to observe results;

many hits were obtained and one 10,000-ton ship was set on fire.

519. On the 22nd February, Semplak, which had no A.A. defences, sustained low flying attacks by some 20 fighters. Six Hudsons were burnt out and three others damaged beyond repair. As a result of this raid Abdair approved the move of the remains of No. 1 (G.R.) Squadron R.A.A.F. to Kalidjati where a light battery (8 Bofors) had by 20th February been located as part of the aerodrome defence. Six aircraft were transferred the next day, a rear party being left at Semplak to repair the unserviceable aircraft on the aerodrome, and to strip the rest of serviceable parts. Whilst they were there, another attack was sustained on 24th February and more aircraft, unserviceable, were destroyed.

520. On the 23rd February, 3 Blenheims bombed 4 submarines off the coast and claimed that one had been sunk.

521. On the 24th February, Kalidjati was bombed by the enemy and again twice on the 26th. The Bofors guns successfully prevented a low flying attack from developing on the latter date.

522. Four Blenheims attacked P.1 on the 25th. By this time there were only 2 Hudsons operationally serviceable with 9 others repairable: the Blenheim position, however, was slowly improving.

SUPREME ALLIED H.Q. S.W. PACIFIC LEAVES JAVA

523. The enemy's unexpectedly rapid advance had frustrated the hopes, originally entertained, of building up a large Allied strength in the S.W. Pacific under the direction of Abdacon in Java, which was by now under imminent threat of invasion. Being without appropriate forces to handle, Abdacon could serve no useful purpose by remaining in the island: on the contrary such action could only result in the loss of a valuable Allied staff the capture of which would have given great prestige to the enemy. About 22nd February its withdrawal was approved and it withdrew during the next few days.

524. It was decided that the British forces remaining in the island should in future operate under the Dutch Naval and Army Commanders-in-Chief in the N.E.I. In conformity with this decision H.Q. Westgroup moved on February 23rd from Soekaboemi and took over the H.Q. in Bandoeng vacated by Abdair. It took over operational control of its squadrons from Abdair on 24th February and was renamed Britainair. It was placed under the orders of Maj. Gen. van Oyen, the Dutch A.O.C., whose staff was already installed in Abdair's operations room. Abdacon, including Abdair, left Java on 25th and 26th February.

525. Gen. van Oyen issued instructions that the operations room, vacated by Abdair, was to be maintained for the combined use of his H.Q. and of Britainair and that it was to be organised for covering all operations in the S.W. Pacific. This necessitated a last minute augmentation of Britainair's staff - for details see Appendix "G".

526. As the Japanese invasion fleet began its approach to Java, from bases in and around Borneo on 25th February energetic action was essential for collecting and organising the necessary personnel and material, or for establishing the contacts with the various Dutch, American and British authorities with whom Britainair was now to deal.

527. The gist of the instructions in the directive given to A.V.M. Maltby, A.O.C. Britainair, and Senior British Officer left in Java, is contained in Appendix "F". During the following days encouraging messages were received from the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Air and from the Chief of the Air Staff emphasising the importance of every day which could be gained by resistance in Java. These were

/promulgated.

promulgated.

FORCES AVAILABLE AND DUTCH PLAN FOR
DEFENCE OF JAVA

528. Before proceeding further with the narrative of events it is advisable to give a brief description of the outstanding topographical and climatic features of Java, of the Dutch naval, army and air resources, and of the Dutch plan of defence.

Topography and Weather

529. Java is approximately 650 miles long with an average width of 80 miles. Its northern coast, the one most exposed to Japanese attack, affords innumerable landing beaches throughout its length. The western end is dominated by aerodromes in South Sumatra. Highly developed road and rail communications cover the Island, the main arterial lines of which run east to west: these are exposed at many points throughout their length to attack by landings on the northern coast. An outstanding feature of the island is its mountainous southern coast, parallel to which runs a series of mountainous massifs along the centre of the island. During the season under consideration, S.W. winds pile up tropical thunderstorms on them from midday until far into the night. Whilst these are raging, aircraft based on aerodromes in the southern (mountainous) half of the island are, for the most part, seriously handicapped by them.

Squadrons based on aerodromes along the northern coastal strip are, on the other hand, not so severely handicapped: although heavy cloud and rain occur throughout the afternoon and night, aircraft can effectively operate at all hours. Mornings are usually bright and cloudless. Aerodromes in the northern coastal strip are, however, subject to another factor: they are not far from exposed landing beaches. Their occupation was therefore not unattended by risk.

Naval, Army and Air Resources.

High Command

530. Bandoeng, in central western Java, was the wartime seat of the Dutch Government, and of Naval and Military Headquarters. The latter was known as A.H.K. (The Dutch have no separate air force - their navy and army having their own air contingents.)

The High Dutch Commanders were:-

Governor-General of N.E.I. -- Jonkheer Dr. A.W.L. Tjarda van Starkenborgh Stachouwer.

C.-in-C. Royal N.E.I. Army -- Lt. Gen. ter Poorten

C.-in-C. Royal N.E.I. Navy -- Admiral Helfrich

Navy

531. A Combined Allied Fleet was based on Sourabaya, with a subsidiary base at Batavia. It consisted of one British, one Australian, one American and two Dutch cruisers, some Dutch and British destroyers, some Dutch submarines and other auxiliary craft, and was commanded by the Dutch Naval C.-in-C.

Army

532. (a) The Dutch had approximately 25,000 regular troops, made up of four regiments of infantry (native) with artillery, garrison and ancillary units. They had a few obsolete A.F.V's, having been

unable to obtain modern tanks from the Allies. Units had been heavily depleted of white personnel for various reasons, from a proportion of one white to five native to a proportion of one to about forty. An attempt to re-arm and to re-organise on modern lines had failed because modern armaments were unobtainable for the new units which had been formed for handling them. The Dutch Army was consequently neither the efficient colonial military gendarmerie it had been, nor the modern army it aimed to be.

(b) In addition there was a Home Guard of about 40,000. They were static in role, and necessarily poorly armed and trained. Those in west Java were reported to be the best, particularly those in the vicinity of Soebang near Kalidjati aerodrome (eventually to be occupied by British bombers) where there were about 1,000 men with twelve armoured cars.

(c) To the Dutch Army was added a token British force under the direction of Major-General H.D.W. Sitwell. It consisted of a squadron of light tanks, two Australian infantry battalions (one a machine-gun unit without its machine guns), and a number of small administrative units, but no signals. The whole was organised hastily into a mobile striking force for operation in western Java and was under the command of Brigadier A.S. Blackburn (Australian Imperial Forces). To it were added an American Field Battery, and a contingent of 540 hastily armed and trained R.A.F. airmen under Wing Commander Alexander. It was called "Blackforce". It co-operated closely with the Dutch troops (under the command of General Schilling) located in western Java for the defence of the Batavia area.

(d) British A.A. batteries were concentrated on aerodrome defence as follows:-

Tjililitan - 12 Bofors soon after 15th February.

Also one battalion Australian Infantry relieved on 25th February by 15th Heavy A.A. Regt. armed as infantry. The former were required as part of "Blackforce".

Kalidjati - 10 Bofors soon after 15th February.

Also some Dutch Infantry relieved on night 28th February/1st March by 12th Heavy A.A. Regt. hastily armed as infantry. The former were wanted for service with the Dutch field army.

Air Forces

533. (a) The Dutch had about 5 Bomber, 3 Fighter and 2 Observation Squadrons in Java, most of which were much depleted as the result of protracted operations in the north. Serviceability of aircraft was low. They and their administrative units operated under Dutch control decentralised from Bandoeng.
- (b) There were 12 to 15 American heavy bombers, (believed to be B.17's) and a few fighters (P.40's) whose serviceability was low. These were located under American control in east and central Java.
- (c) There was also a mixed Dutch, American and British Reconnaissance Group based in Java for seaward reconnaissance, which operated under a Dutch Commander. No. 205(F.B.) Squadron formed part of it.
- (d) To this force was to be added the British Air Contingent under Westgroup alias Britair, whose re-organisation has already been described.

/During

During the time that Abdair remained in Java all the above air formations acted under its direction, control of the first two being exercised through the Dutch A.O.C., General van Oyen. When Abdair left Java, the latter took command of them all.

Strategy

534. An invasion of Java was considered most likely to approach down the east or west sides of Borneo, or both. The Dutch High Command feared simultaneous landings at both ends of the island, near Sourabaya in the east and in the Sunda Straits on the west: this was the most difficult form of attack to parry, and it was to be expected that the enemy would adopt it. A landing in central Java was not thought to be likely. The Dutch plan was laid accordingly.

Dutch Plan

535. This was:-

- (a) To watch, by means of air reconnaissance, as far northwards as possible on both sides of Borneo, and the whole of the Java Sea - this being undertaken by the Reconnaissance Group. Submarine patrols supplemented this watch.
- (b) An invasion was to be opposed, as far out to sea as possible, by air action: all bomber and reconnaissance aircraft were to be used for the purpose when occasion arose.
- (c) A Combined Allied Fleet was based at Sourabaya and would engage the main threat when it appeared.
- (d) Finally, should the enemy land he was to be resisted on the beaches at certain points only. Suitable landing beaches were so numerous that only a few of the most obvious could be defended. Elsewhere the plan was to keep troops in local reserve and to counter-attack landings with them, the Army falling back, if necessary, on to previously prepared positions covered by demolitions.
- (e) As a successful invasion was all too probable it was decided that there should be two centres for a final stand, a decision which was enforced by a shortage of troops and by the length of the island. The two chosen centres were Malang Plateau in the east and Bandoeng volcanic plateau in the west.

APPROACH OF ENEMY CONVOYS

536. On the 25th February, air reconnaissance on the east side of Borneo reported that shipping, which had been collecting for some time past in ports in the Macassar Straits, was forming up at Balikpapan, evidently in preparation for putting to sea. The invasion of Java was imminent.

537. On 26th February a convoy of more than 50 ships and transports, accompanied by a strong naval escort, was located in the southern end of the Macassar Straits steaming south.

538. On the 27th February it was again located, now in the Java Sea, on a course and speed which would bring it to the north coast, westward of Sourabaya, at midnight 27th/28th February.

539. The Allied Fleet put to sea and fought an engagement with the escort during the night 27th/28th February. The latter was very superior in numbers, weight and metal. The Allied ships were either sunk or disabled. This gallant action afforded the land defences another 24 hours' grace because the transports turned away northwards at the beginning of the sea action and steamed towards Borneo during the night.

540. On 28th February, the transports were again located steaming south at a speed which would bring them to landing beaches westward of Sourabaya about midnight 28th February/1st March.

541. Meanwhile, the situation on the west side of Borneo had not developed so clearly. Invasion forces had been suspected in the Natuna or Anambas Islands and possibly at Muntok on Banka Island. Reconnaissances had failed up to 26th February to clarify the situation.

542. On the 27th February, a small convoy with escort was located about 50 miles south of the southern tip of Banka Island steaming slowly on a north-easterly course. This might or might not be part of an invading convoy "marking time" before turning south towards Western Java.

543. On the 28th February about noon the situation became clearer. A convoy was sighted at that hour approximately 100 miles north by east of Batavia steaming on an easterly course at high speed. It consisted of 11 transports, one cruiser with three destroyers being disposed some 30 miles to the south on a parallel course. Another and larger convoy was located to the north-west: strength, course and speed were not clear. Both were at a distance which would make landings possible at two points in western Java about midnight.

544. The moon was one day past full, wind off shore. All was evidently set for simultaneous landings - one at the eastern end of Java probably just west of Sourabaya and two at the western end of Java in the vicinity of Batavia.

BOMBER OPERATIONS 27TH FEBRUARY to 1ST MARCH

545. To revert to the night of 27th/28th February. It then appeared that the major threat would develop against Eastern Java. It was, therefore, decided to move No.36 (T.B.) Squadron (9 Vildebeestes and 1 Albacore) at once to Madioen (near Sourabaya) to co-operate with American B.17's in resisting it. No.36 (T.B.) Squadron arrived at Madioen on the afternoon of 28th February and during the night 28th February/1st March carried out two sorties per aircraft, the first against transports, the second against landing barges. The first attack entailed a long search because reconnaissance information with which they had been briefed proved inaccurate. A convoy of 28 ships was eventually found 5 miles off the Coast, north of Rembang, some 100 miles west of Sourabaya. Most pilots claimed hits on transports and execution amongst the barges. Subsequent reports received from American H.Q. in the area stated that attacks had been most successful and that No.36 (T.B.) Squadron had sunk 8 ships - the Americans themselves claimed 7 others. On completion of the second attack, No.36 (T.B.) Squadron returned direct to Tjikampek, less three aircraft which had been shot down, including that of the C.O., Squadron Leader Wilkins, an outstanding leader who was unfortunately killed. Each aircrew of this squadron, operating from a strange aerodrome, thus carried out two night attacks in 24 hours, involving over 15 hours flying in open cockpits - a magnificent achievement.

546. In the meantime, during 28th February, the threat to western Java had crystallised (para. ~~544~~) in the form of two Japanese convoys approaching from the north with the evident intention of landing on both sides of Batavia.

547. All available Blenheims and Hudsons were directed against the convoy to the eastward of Batavia. During the night, 28th February/1st March, 26 Blenheim and 6 Hudson sorties were carried out against it from Kalidjati. The first attack found it 50 miles north of Eritanwetan, a point on the north coast about 80 miles east of Batavia; it was steaming south at high speed. Weather conditions were bad and by this time only one narrow strip was serviceable on the aerodrome. Not all pilots were sufficiently well trained to cope with the conditions; of those that were, some carried out three sorties each. There is no doubt that attacks were successful and were pressed home from a low level with great determination. When attacks began, 15 ships formed the convoy: early on 1st March, only 7 were seen anchored off the disembarkation beach which was at Eritanwetan. At least three and possibly as many as eight of its ships, are believed to have been sunk. The larger figure may be an exaggeration as other Japanese ships were seen on 1st March lying off some miles N.W. of the main convoy.

548. Disembarkation at Eritanwetan began at about 0100 hours on 1st March and continued during the rest of the night despite a number of attacks by our aircraft while landing was in progress.

549. It was decided to "stand down" bombers at Kalidjati at the end of the night's operations because:-

- (a) Crews had been on a stretch for 36 hours, standing by during much of the night of 27th/28th February, and then operating at high pressure throughout late afternoon and the night of 28th February/1st March. They had worked splendidly, achieved good results, and needed a rest.
- (b) There would be plenty for the crews to do at high pressure for several days to come.
- (c) Previous experience had shown that Blenheims and Hudsons were particularly vulnerable if employed in the cloudless conditions which prevailed during the morning at this season, because the Japanese normally provided their landings with strong Navy 'O' fighter cover.

It was therefore decided to employ bombers daily during the late afternoons (when cloud cover could be relied upon) and under cover of darkness, and to use all available fighters, which could look after themselves, to continue the opposition during the cloudless mornings.

550. On completion of the night's work, the Station Commander at Kalidjati was instructed about 0700 hours, 1st March, to disperse his aircraft and to prepare them for further operations later in the day, the Dutch A.O.C., Gen. van Oyen, having advised, during the previous night, that it would be inadvisable to withdraw the bomber force from Kalidjati to aerodromes further inland, where they would be relatively ineffective for opposing landings. Shortly after daybreak, however, the Dutch squadrons at the aerodrome withdrew under orders from Gen. van Oyen, though no warning that they were going to do so was given to the R.A.F.

551. About 1030 hours, the aerodrome was overrun by Japanese light tanks supported by infantry in lorries - part of the force which had landed at Eritanwetan some hours earlier - and the aerodrome was captured. The whole force of Blenheims, by now reduced to 8 serviceable aircraft, being fully dispersed, was captured. 4 Hudsons

managed to take off under fire and reach Andir aerodrome, near Bandoeng. A description of the events concerning the loss of Kalidjati aerodrome is contained in Appendix "H".

552. The captured aerodrome was only a few miles from Tjikampek, the aerodrome on which No. 36 (T.B.) Squadron was also resting after having operated throughout the night (para. 545). The latter aerodrome had no defences whatever and was in considerable danger of being overrun by the same troops which had already captured Kalidjati. The squadron was, therefore, immediately withdrawn to Andir and was later moved to Tjikamber in S.W. Java, Group Captain Nicholetts being placed in command of the Station.

FIGHTER OPERATIONS IN BATAVIA AREA - 1ST FEBRUARY
TO 3RD MARCH 1942

Consolidation of Fighter Strength

553. Before proceeding further it is now necessary to turn to earlier operations of the Fighter Force.

554. It will be remembered that Nos. 232 (F) and 605 (F) Squadrons were operating at Tjililitan under a Sector Control (a skeleton of No. 226(F) Group) whose operations rooms and warning systems were installed in and around Batavia.

555. From 17th to 27th February this force was continually in action in its role of the air defence of Batavia. Normal odds met were in the vicinity of 10 - 1. Its operations were handicapped, particularly during the earlier part of the period, by insufficient warning of approaching enemy aircraft.

556. A Fighter Group H.Q. had become redundant by 27th February, its squadrons and overhead controlling organisation being well established by then. The Group Commander, Air Commodore Vincent, and several members of his staff were ordered on that date by the A.O.C. to leave Java, which they subsequently did by sea.

557. By noon on 28th February the combined strength of the two fighter squadrons was less than that of one. The U.S. aircraft carrier "Langley" had been sunk by the Japanese when bringing in a full load of P.40 fighters, with some of which it had been hoped to re-arm one of the squadrons. The last prospect of keeping two fighter squadrons at reasonable strength had gone. It was decided to retain No. 232(F) Squadron which, under Squadron Leader Brooker's leadership, had volunteered en bloc to remain in Java. Vacancies in it were filled from amongst a considerable number who had also volunteered in No. 605(F) Squadron. No. 605 Squadron, except the volunteers who could be employed, was withdrawn for evacuation after it had handed over its remaining aircraft to No. 232(F) Squadron on the afternoon of 28th February.

Fighter Operations 1st - 3rd March

558. In accordance with the decision (para. 549) not to employ bombers during the cloudless mornings, but to oppose the landings during these hours by means of fighters, instructions were issued to No. 232(F) Squadron to employ all its Hurricanes throughout the forenoon of 1st March, in co-operation with 10 Dutch Kittyhawks and 6 Buffaloes, in attacking two Japanese landings which had occurred simultaneously during the night.

559. One of these landings was that which had been made at Eritanwetan (para. 534). Twelve Hurricanes which assisted in opposing it encountered intense A.A. fire. Severe losses were inflicted on troops in barges, and at least six small sloops and three tanks were set on fire. Several later attacks against the same targets also produced good results.

560. The other successful landing in Western Java had occurred simultaneously with the foregoing one but on the extreme western beaches on either side of Merak in the Sunda Straits. It was in greater strength. The remaining Hurricanes of No.232 (F) Squadron made several sorties against it during the morning at the request of the Dutch Army: they successfully engaged enemy columns, including cavalry and M.T., advancing along the roads from the landing beaches towards Batavia.

561. After the British bombers had been overrun at Kalidjati the fighters continued their attacks against the landing at Eritanwetan. Shortly after midday, the Hurricanes brought to a standstill a cyclist column proceeding westwards towards Batavia. In addition, three Japanese flying boats were destroyed on the water.

562. All No.232 (F) Squadron aircraft suffered damage in varying degree from A.A. fire as a result of the above attacks.

563. On 2nd March, Tjililitan aerodrome was under constant attack and the squadron was in action all day defending their base and carrying out road reconnaissances in western Java for the Dutch Army. The aerodrome was also becoming somewhat exposed to attack by Japanese forces which had landed at Eritanwetan: these were, by the afternoon, reported to be approaching Poerwokerto and the river crossings thirty miles or so to the N.E. of the aerodrome. Withdrawal along the road which passes through those places was already out of the question. Moreover they were held by Dutch troops on similar lines to Soebang and the river crossings protecting Kalidjati aerodrome but even more lightly; a repetition of the Kalidjati debacle, involving the only remaining British fighter squadron, was distinctly possible during the night or following morning. The A.O.C., therefore, when visiting the aerodrome on this day, ordered No.232 (F) Squadron, now 10 Hurricanes, to move back to Andir near Bandoeng, the move being completed along the Buitenzorg road by the following day. Group Captain Noble was appointed Station Commander at Andir.

564. In the early morning, the squadron returned to Tjililitan from Andir under orders issued by Gen. van Oyen. It was airborne throughout the morning repelling Japanese air attacks. At noon it was finally withdrawn to Andir, en route to which the squadron made a successful attack on Kalidjati aerodrome, destroying several enemy aircraft. A running fight took place with Japanese fighters from Kalidjati to Bandoeng.

Withdrawal from Batavia.

565. As the Dutch announced on 3rd March their intention of declaring Batavia an "open" town, the operations and filter rooms, together with the radar stations in the vicinity, were destroyed and their staffs were withdrawn to Bandoeng during the 3rd March.

OPERATIONS BY NO. 205 (F.B.) SQUADRON - 1ST FEBRUARY TO 3RD MARCH

566. No.205 (F.B.) Squadron during the whole of its stay in Java operated as a unit of the Allied Reconnaissance Group which was responsible for all seaward reconnaissance throughout the S.W. Pacific Command. This Group, under Dutch Command, took its orders first from Abdair and then, after Abdair left Java, from Gen. van Oyen, the Dutch A.O.C. Britair was responsible for its administration only.

567. Based on Batavia and Oesthaven, it carried out reconnaissances between Borneo and Sumatra and also undertook anti-submarine patrols in the Sunda Straits.

568. When the Japanese descended upon the Batavia area on 1st March it was ordered to transfer its base to Tjilitjap, an unserviceable flying boat having to be destroyed when it left. The squadron operated from Tjilitjap on anti-submarine patrols until 3rd March, by which time it could no longer be usefully employed. The squadron was then ordered out of the island, two boats going to Ceylon and one, with a damaged aircrew, to Australia.

FINAL AIR OPERATIONS - 4TH MARCH TO 8TH MARCH 1942

569. The position on the morning of 4th March was:-

- (a) H.Q. Britair - Bandoeng.
- (b) No. 1 (G.R.) Squadron, R.A.A.F., 7 Hudsons (3 serviceable) - Andir
- (c) No. 232 (F) Squadron, 10 Hurricanes (all in dubious condition) - Andir.
- (d) No. 36 (T.B.) Squadron, 5 Vildebeestes (4 just serviceable) - Tjikamber.
- (e) About 450 armed R.A.F. personnel under Wing Commander Alexander operating as infantry with "Blackforce" in the Buitenzorg area.
- (f) About 1,900 unarmed personnel awaiting evacuation near Tjilitjap, and a further 600 at Djocjacarta; many other personnel now surplus to squadron requirements were under orders to move to the area as accommodation became available.

570. The Army situation on 4th March was:-

Eastern Java: The enemy had made a successful landing on 1st March west of Sourabaya and was pressing the Dutch forces in two directions - those originally in the Sourabaya district towards the S.E. extremity of the island and those in central Java westwards towards Poerwokerto.

Western Java: The enemy after landing at Eritanwetan, had captured Kalidjati aerodrome, on which strong Japanese fighter forces were by now well established. The enemy had repulsed Dutch attempts on 2nd March to recapture Soebang (from the direction of which the enemy was by now pressing towards Bandoeng) and on 3rd March to recapture Kalidjati aerodrome.

The enemy force, which had landed in the Sunda Straits, had forced the evacuation of Batavia, and the Dutch garrison of extreme western Java was in the Buitenzorg - Soekaboemi vicinity, falling back on the final Bandoeng "stronghold."

571. No. 36 (T.B.) Squadron based at Tjikamber attacked Kalidjati aerodrome, now full of enemy aircraft, on the nights of 2nd/3rd and 3rd/4th March. On 4th March it was moved to Tasik Malaja because of reports (subsequently proved to be false) of threats to the aerodrome from reported landings in S.W. Java, and because of the rapid advance of the enemy towards Soekaboemi, which threatened to cut the only road available for withdrawal.

572. From Tasik Malaja the squadron continued attacks on Kalidjati during the nights of 4th/5th and 5th/6th March, doing two sorties per aircraft on the former night. Large fires were caused and considerable damage was done.

573. On 6th March two aircraft only remained serviceable and orders were given for these to be flown north in an endeavour to reach Burma. They left on the 7th March but unfortunately both aircraft crashed in Sumatra and the crews were either killed or captured.

574. No. 1 (G.R.) Squadron, R.A.A.F. was ordered to fly its three remaining flyable Hudsons to Australia carrying operational records and as many spare aircrews as possible. The first left on the night 4th/5th, the others on the nights of 5th/6th and 6th/7th - all reaching Australia.

575. No. 232 (F) Squadron, now at Andir, was given the role of carrying out periodic offensive sweeps against Kalidjati aerodrome. It was instructed also to take advantage of any particularly favourable targets presented by the Japanese Army attacking Bandoeng from the north. For the latter purpose, the squadron established a liaison officer at the Dutch H.Q. responsible for defences on that front.

576. Most of its remaining operations, however, were for the defence of Andir aerodrome. By this time, no warning of impending attack could be obtained and the aerodrome was subjected to almost continuous attack throughout each day. The squadron was repeatedly in action and considerable success was achieved.

577. By the 7th March, the squadron was reduced to 5 aircraft. On this day, it was transferred to Tasik Malaja, and by the evening only two aircraft remained. These two carried out a tactical road reconnaissance on the morning of the 8th March and on completion of this they were destroyed under orders from Britain.

Operations of No. 266 (F) Wing

578. Whilst No. 266 (F) Wing was in action in Sumatra and Java it inflicted the following losses on the enemy:-

Sumatra
2nd-16th Feb. About 8 enemy aircraft were shot down. In co-operation with the bombers of No. 225 (B) Group very heavy casualties were inflicted on troops in boats and barges moving up the Palembang river on 15th February.

Java
17th Feb. - 8th March. About 32 enemy aircraft were shot down (8 by No. 605 Squadron and 24 by No. 232 Squadron) of which about 15 were destroyed during the closing days in Java, 2nd to 8th March. Heavy casualties were also inflicted on enemy troops which landed on Java at Britanwetan and Merak, particularly the former.

During the combined periods about 60 Hurricanes were lost, chiefly on the ground by enemy attacks on our inadequately defended aerodromes.

PROGRESS OF EVACUATION

579. Throughout the period under review evacuation of R.A.F. personnel proceeded as fast as shipping permitted. Units were concentrated for evacuation as they became surplus to requirements. They were kept together as units as far as possible and as shipping accommodation allowed. Towards the end, when accommodation became extremely limited, priority was

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given to aircrews and technical personnel.

580. On the 23rd February, owing to enemy action, Batavia was closed as a port and the R.A.F. Base, Batavia, with its ancillary transit camps, was progressively transferred to Poerwokerto, adjacent to Tjilitjap in south Java, the sole port still open. Tjilitjap was also subjected to air bombardment, and ships leaving it to attack by Japanese light naval forces. On the 27th February, S.S. "City of Manchester" was torpedoed off Tjilitjap whilst approaching the port to assist in the evacuation.

581. From the 1st March onwards, little movement from the port took place. It was finally closed on the 5th March leaving on the island about 2,500 R.A.F. personnel whom it had been intended to evacuate, but for whom no shipping was made available.

582. On 5th and 6th March about 8 seats were allotted to the R.A.F. in Dutch Lodestars; the Dutch had been using these aircraft to evacuate personnel to Australia. The Lodestar service ceased on the 6th March, thus closing the last evacuation channel from Java.

583. A handicap experienced throughout the evacuation of surplus R.A.F. personnel was the difficulty which many of the Dutch had in understanding the necessity for sending out of the island, at a time when it was about to be invaded, personnel who appeared to them to be soldiers: they could not realise that our airmen were untrained as such and were of great value in their real role as airmen for prosecution of the war elsewhere. Informed Dutch authorities appreciated the matter, but many failed to grasp its truth. This is said in no critical spirit; the Dutch outlook is easily understood. But it must be stated in part explanation of the loss in Java of a number of surplus airmen.

584. During the period 18th February onwards, nearly 7,000 R.A.F. personnel were evacuated, leaving a total of about 5,000 in Java. Appendix "I" attached gives a complete list of the R.A.F. Units which were in the Far East, including Java, together with details of their disposal.

EVENTS LEADING UP TO SURRENDER OF JAVA

585. Conference at Dutch Headquarters. At 1800 hours on the 5th March the Dutch Commander-in-Chief, Lieut. Gen. ter Poorten, convened a conference at his H.Q., A.H.K. in Bandoeng. The Air Officer Commanding, Britair, and the General Officer Commanding British Military Forces in Java, Major-General H.D.W. Sitwell, and representatives of their staffs, were summoned to this conference. It was also attended by senior officers of the Dutch C.-in-C's staff.

586. At this conference the Dutch Commander-in-Chief stated:-

- (a) That the situation was grave: the enemy had practically overcome the northern defences of Bandoeng and was also rapidly closing in from the west.
- (b) That morale was at a low ebb and that it was possible Bandoeng might fall very soon. When the enemy penetrated the outer defences, the C.-in-C. did not propose to defend that town, which would be declared an open city. It was full of refugees and could not in any case hold out for long.
- (c) That no guerilla warfare was possible or would be attempted by the Dutch. There was great hostility amongst the native population towards the whites, and without the help of the natives guerilla warfare could not possibly be successful. All his staff were emphatically agreed that such warfare was out of the question.

- (d) That owing to difficulties of communication, Dutch G.H.Q. could operate only from Bandoeng. They could not exercise control from elsewhere and so would not move from Bandoeng.
- (e) That resistance was to be carried on elsewhere under the direction of local commanders if possible and in accordance with an order issued by Queen Wilhelmina of Holland that there should be no surrender to the Japanese. He then added an unexpected rider - that he had instructed his troops to disregard any order that he might subsequently issue to them to cease fighting: they were to disobey it and to go on fighting.

587. In subsequent discussion the Commander-in-Chief was informed by General Sitwell that the British would certainly continue to fight on as long as the Dutch. When Dutch resistance ceased then he must reserve to himself the right to decide his actions in accordance with the circumstances at the time. The Commander-in-Chief also informed the A.O.C. that A.H.Q. and Andir aerodrome in Bandoeng must not be defended in the event of the Japanese entering the town. The Commander-in-Chief was then asked to allot an area in the mountains in which the British Forces could concentrate and continue resistance. After some discussion, he allotted an area north of Santosa and south of Bandoeng. Its choice appeared to be influenced more as a means of escape to the south coast than as a stronghold; emphasis had to be laid by the A.O.C. on the fact that it was wanted for the latter purpose.

British move into the Hills

588. In consequence the A.O.C. and G.O.C. British Forces went to Santosa at first light on the 6th March to reconnoitre the area. The remainder of A.H.Q. and other personnel in the area, Army and R.A.F., except the ground party at Andir, were moved to Tasik Malaja the same day.

589. The distribution of Air Force personnel on the 6th March (p.m.) was:-

(a) Tasik Malaja area, preparing for defence, with Army Units also ordered there	... ..	900
(b) Contingent with "Blackforce"	... ..	450
(c) Andir area, aerodrome staff and units	...	850
(d) Poerwokerto area	... ..	2,500
(e) Detached from units, stragglers, escape parties, etc. in south central Java	... ..	400
	TOTAL	<u>5,100</u>

590. The orders issued to the various contingents on the 6th March were:-

- (a) The Andir contingent was to surrender as Bandoeng was being declared an "open" town and on that day there was no transport to move them.
- (b) The Poerwokerto contingent, was to place itself under the orders of the local Dutch Commander, stand fast and surrender. There was no alternative as the men were entirely unarmed and had very slender rations and other resources.

/They

They would have been an embarrassment to any final stand, yet would have had to share its hardships and any retribution which might be meted out. They were therefore less likely to come to harm if they were not associated with further resistance.

- (c) The Tasik Malaja contingent was to defend to the last the aerodrome area, where the A.O.C. and G.O.C. would rejoin them if a better place for continuing the fight was not found.

591. Reconnaissance of the Santosa area on 6th March drew a blank. Not only was the terrain unsuited for defence by a small force, but the local Dutch had no defence plan, obviously did not want fighting to occur there and were only too ready to assist the British to the coast.

592. As the result of a suggestion from General Schilling, who was most helpful to the British in their wish to continue resistance, the area south of Tjikadjang was reconnoitred on 7th March. It was found more suitable for protracted defence. It was therefore decided to concentrate all army units and all armed R.A.F. personnel in the defence of that area.

593. In conformity with this decision orders were issued to the following to move to the area on 8th March:-

- (a) The Andir contingent, for whom transport was now available:
and
(b) The Tasik Malaja contingent.

Both of these contingents were armed. In addition, "Blackforce" and all other British Army Units in Java were also ordered to the area. The total combined force was about 8,000 strong.

594. At the same time it was confirmed that the remainder of the personnel, who were unarmed, were to stand fast and surrender. The Dutch G.O.C. of the Poerwokerto area, under whose direction Air Commodore Silly had placed the Poerwokerto contingent in accordance with his instructions, ordered their evacuation further west because unarmed forces were an embarrassment in a locality where he intended to resist the Japanese advance. This was done under his arrangements and the contingent arrived at Tasik Malaja on 8th March (p.m.). It had suffered severe casualties owing to its rail convoy having been ambushed en route.

595. On 7th March (p.m.) A.H.K. declared Bandoeng, Tasik Malaja and Garoet "open" towns. This action had been anticipated for Bandoeng but in respect of the other two it came as a complete surprise. It was a great embarrassment to the concentration of the British Forces in the hills now in progress. This was made still more difficult by obstruction which British columns met in more than one place from Dutch forces and officials, but which was overcome.

596. Early on 8th March moves to the concentration area in the hills began: a combined Army/Air H.Q. with W/T station alongside to communicate with the Air Ministry etc. was established at Tjikadjang.

Order to Surrender from Dutch H.Q.

597. At approximately 0900 hours a rough translation of a broadcast by the Dutch C.-in-C. was received at H.Q. About 1030 hours it was telephoned through in English by Col. Gulik, the Dutch Air Staff Officer at A.H.K., who had come for the purpose to Garoet at the foot of the hills. It was to the effect that "all organised resistance" in Java

* In the AOC's recollection this broadcast was promulgated in the name of the Allied forces in the NEI, as well as in that of the Dutch - despite the fact that the Dutch C-in-C must have been aware of the intention of the British to continue resistance. /had

had ceased and that troops were to offer no further resistance to the Japanese. Col. Gulik said that the Dutch C.-in-C. had cancelled his instructions disregarding surrender orders and that he intended this order to be obeyed.

598. The A.O.C. received this message and, in the absence of the G.O.C., who was reconnoitring the area and allocating defence positions, he first sent a despatch rider to inform the G.O.C., and then, being sceptical about the whole matter, went himself to Garoet to make further enquiries.

599. At Garoet the Dutch Resident, Heer Koffman, (the District Civil Administrator) was not markedly sympathetic to the British plans. On the previous day he had strongly emphasised the difficulties of local supplies and accommodation, and had been apprehensive about the prospects of a "massacre of whites" if guerilla warfare was attempted, particularly amongst the difficult natives of the Garoet district. On 8th March he re-emphasised his belief in the dangers of a native rising if fighting in the hills was attempted. He called in other authorities to support his opinion - amongst them the District Regent (Native District Administrator).

600. The A.O.C. rang up A.H.K. and spoke (it is believed) to Col. Gulik who confirmed that the Dutch C.-in-C. had cancelled his order and that he intended his latest instruction, namely, for fighting to stop, to be obeyed. He said that all Dutch troops were complying. The A.O.C. then put several calls through to other Dutch centres and found this to be so in each instance.

601. Whilst he was so engaged, A.H.K. again rang him up at the Resident's House. The Staff Officer doing so, identity uncertain, was agitated. He specifically enquired whether the British were going to fight, whether General Sitwell had full control of "Blackforce" and whether they could be persuaded to stop fighting. To these questions he was given non-committal answers except an assurance that "Blackforce" would definitely obey any orders Gen. Sitwell might issue. The A.O.C. was given a further urgent message from the Dutch C.-in-C., which it is understood, was telephoned through from Kalidjati, where, at that time, the Dutch C.-in-C. was negotiating terms with the Japanese C.-in-C. The message pressed for action to be taken to stop "Blackforce" blowing up any more bridges to cover their withdrawal to the hills, as this action was handicapping the negotiations. It is not known how the information about blowing the bridges S.E. of Bandoeng reached the Japanese at Kalidjati many miles to the north.

602. The A.O.C. then returned to Tjikadjang and met the G.O.C. there about 1330 hours on 8th March.

The situation at that moment was as follows:-

- (a) The concentration in the hills was making good progress.
- (b) Although personnel of both Army and R.A.F. were tired and many were poorly clad and kitted, morale appeared on the whole good.
- (c) Troops had plenty of small arms and ammunition, but were without aircraft and artillery, and had only a few light (Bofors) A.A. guns.

- On the other hand -

- (d) Time was short and much had still to be done in re-organising and preparing positions for defence.

/(e)

- (e) Only 3½ days' rations for the whole force were held. The Army dump near Bandoeng was reputed to have been destroyed (news later to prove false), and considerable difficulty in collecting rations had been experienced by Army convoys. There might, however, still be time to collect a few more. Petrol was limited to what vehicles had in their tanks.
- (f) Water was plentiful but everywhere polluted, water carts were very scarce and effective sterilisation was impracticable.
- (g) Medical supplies were nil except for those carried in Units. Hospitalisation was nil and none was practicable. The Australian Field Hospital in Bandoeng had been unable to move to the hills because it was already overloaded with patients.

603. The duty of the British forces in Java was to fight in order to contain the Japanese as long as possible, every day being of value. Everything depended upon what the Dutch were likely to do. It was evident that:-

- (a) The Dutch had ceased fighting everywhere and no assistance from them could be expected.
- (b) The natives might, or might not, turn against the whites. It was unlikely that much help would come from them. They were more likely to turn against the British, particularly when the latter were reaching the end of their resistance.

604. Moreover, a broadcast from the Dutch C.-in-C, ^{promulgated in the name of the British forces,} had contained the phrase "All organised resistance having now ceased." So far as could be remembered this wording made all the difference in international law between a soldier entitled to treatment as a P.O.W. in accordance with international agreement, and a bandit subject to summary execution on capture. In fairness to our subordinates, we could not order them to continue to fight as bandits. Further resistance could only be carried out with volunteers. This would have entailed a still further move to, and re-organisation in, a new defence area well clear of those in the concentration area who did not volunteer and of the 2,900 unarmed R.A.F. personnel who had been left in the plains. As the Japanese were free to follow up any attempt very quickly, particularly as they had complete mastery of the air and clearly knew where our forces were located, and as there was nothing to stop them on the ground, insufficient time remained to organise anything effective.

605. In these circumstances the A.O.C. and G.O.C. regretfully decided that they must comply with the order to surrender. The order as received from A.H.K. was accordingly issued to units about 1430 hours.

Orders were also issued:-

- (a) To destroy arms and warlike stores likely to be of value to the enemy, except a limited amount of transport.
- (b) For all ranks to observe absolute reticence if questioned for military information by the enemy.

A signal was sent to the R.A.F. H.Q. Signal Section for transmission to the Air Ministry to the effect that the orders to surrender were being complied with. The reasons why this signal did not get through are contained in paras. 620-2.

Escape Organisation

606. Col. van der Post, a British officer believed to be of South African Dutch descent, had remained in Java in order to organise a means of escape after the foreseen occupation of the island by the Japanese had become a fact. He initiated plans for assembly points in the mountains to the southward of Batavia and tried to organise shipping and boats for surreptitious evacuation later from the mountainous S.W. coast line. Lack of time prevented his plans maturing. Great credit is due to this officer for his activities, attended as they were by considerable personal risk at the hands of the enemy, a fact of which he was well aware. In anticipation of Col. van der Post's plans succeeding, authority was given by the A.O.C. for the issue from public funds of 2,000 guilders to each of twenty individuals to finance the attempt; action was to be taken by Air Commodore Stator to select them.

607. Despite the necessity for abandoning the organised escape scheme, individual personnel still wished to make an attempt to leave Java. The hazards involved by the doubtful attitude of the natives and the malarial nature of the highlands were pointed out; if nevertheless they wished to persevere in their attempts, they were assisted by advice and the advance of money from the funds already drawn for the organised escape scheme.

POST-CAPITULATION PERIOD, 8TH - 30TH MARCH, 1942.

8th-10th March

608. By 2200 hours 8th March concentration, as ordered, was complete. Distribution of Royal Air Force personnel was:-

In Tjikadjang area, in the hills, armed	- 2,200 (approx.)
Tasik Malaja and other areas, in the plains, unarmed	- 2,500 (")
Stragglers, detached and in hospital in Bandoeng	- <u>400</u> (")
	<u>5,100</u> (")

609. On 9th March a second order was received from A.H.K., containing instructions to collect arms, to display white flags and to make surrender arrangements with the nearest Japanese General. The A.O.C. accordingly went to Bandoeng on 9th March and on 10th March contacted Lieut. General Maruyama, the Japanese Commander in the Bandoeng district. From him were received instructions about collecting arms and troops and handing them over to Japanese representatives. Accommodation and promises to help with supplies were also obtained. He forbade communication with outside countries, but implied when pressed, without committing himself fully, that prisoners would be treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention of 1929.

11th-12th March

610. On 11th March, 4 Senior Officers (British A.O.C. and G.O.C.: Australian - Brigadier Blackburn; American - Col. Searle) were summoned to Garoet. They were conducted during the night from there to Bandoeng. The true reason was not told them. After being kept waiting all night, they were assembled at 0730 hours 12th March for the formal signing of the surrender terms before General Maruyama.

611. In front of a number of Japanese witnesses, General Maruyama undertook that prisoners would be treated in accordance with the terms of the Geneva Convention of 1929. A copy of the Instrument of Surrender is attached as Appendix "J".

612. The undertaking to obey all orders of the Japanese was also included. An attempt by the A.O.C. to introduce the word "lawful" before the word "orders" was refused by Gen. Maruyama who stated that it was unnecessary since he was giving P.O.W.'s the protection of the Geneva Convention, under which no unlawful orders by the Japanese Army would be possible. It was evident that further insistence on the inclusion of the word "lawful" might lose the grant of the terms of the Geneva Convention. It was, therefore, erased from the original Instrument of Surrender, which was retained by General Maruyama.

13th-20th March

613. Arms and equipment were subsequently surrendered at Garoet, all equipment and weapons in possession of the R.A.F. except some M.T., a number of rifles and bayonets, some field glasses and minor equipment, having been destroyed. Some difficulty arose about this, but an explanation that it was a point of honour with the British not to let arms fall undamaged into the enemy's hands was accepted.

614. On 17th March, all senior officers were summoned to Garoet for the first cross-examination by the Japanese Intelligence Staff: a few other officers who happened to be nearby also became involved. So far as the G.O.C. and A.O.C. were concerned, it was conducted entirely correctly. Refusals to answer questions, based on the Geneva Convention of 1929, were generally accepted.

615. Brigadier S.R. Pearson was, however, faced by a firing party but, on still refusing to speak, was pardoned. Pilot Officer R.L. Cicurel was threatened with mutilation but, still refusing, was also pardoned.

616. About 14th March orders were received to assemble all troops at Tjibarto in the plains. A warning was received that they would have to march to Batavia - a distance of 150 miles. The march was to be completed in 8 days. As the troops, notably the R.A.F., were ill-equipped with boots etc. and many were sick, it was obvious that such a march would result in many deaths. The senior officers, British, Australian and American, collectively refused to give the orders. They were subsequently summoned to Bandoeng H.Q. where they pressed for their appeal to be submitted to Gen. Maruyama. The Geneva Convention, forbidding such a march, was quoted. A definite decision was not given at the time but a few days later the order to march was cancelled and troops were subsequently conveyed by train to their various prison camps. There is reason to think that the appeal to General Maruyama, when it was made in Bandoeng, was accepted by that officer.

617. On 20th March occurred a further deliberate and flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention. General H.D.W. Sitwell, Air Commodore W.E. Staton, Brigadier S.R. Pearson, Group Captain A.G. Bishop and Colonel A.E. Searle, U.S. Army, went to Bandoeng ostensibly to attend a conference. They were, instead, subjected to interrogation for military information by Major Saitu, an Intelligence Staff Officer. The first four were subjected to a month's rigorous imprisonment for refusing to answer questions, after which they were released. Whether or not representations made by the Dutch Representative of the International Red Cross in Bandoeng and by Col. E.E. Dunlop, C.O. of the Australian Hospital in Bandoeng, to General Maruyama's H.Q. had any effect in bringing about their release will never be known, but there is reason to believe that this may have been the case.

618. The Japanese subsequently endeavoured to extract information from aircrews of Nos. 232 (P) Squadron and No. 1 (G.R.) Squadron, R.A.A.F., and from other individual officers and airmen, with almost complete lack of success, in spite of protracted brutal treatment in many cases. They then gave up all attempts to obtain it. More than once, their

Intelligence Officers afterwards stated that the British had proved obstinate and stupid about the matter and had suffered accordingly. Credit is due to the above named individuals who were the first to set an example of compliance with orders to observe complete reticence in spite of brutal treatment, as it is due to those who subsequently followed their lead.

619. The later treatment of P.O.W's, with little regard to the terms of the Geneva Convention of 1929 which had been accorded to them on surrendering, is too well known to need further elaboration in this report.

Breakdown of Signals Communication with Air Ministry

620. The original site chosen on 7th March (p.m.) for the Signals Station near Tjikadjang proved unsuitable for communication with the outside countries, screened as it was by the surrounding mountains. It was, therefore, moved about noon 8th March towards the coast in an attempt to find a suitable position.

621. A technical breakdown, caused by suspected sabotage of the Diesel fuel of the T.1087 high power transmitter, followed by a road accident which damaged the transmitter itself, prevented this set being used again.

622. Attempts made that evening to come into action with another set were at first forbidden by the Commander of the Dutch troops, into whose area the station had by now moved, and who, by this time, was strictly obeying orders to surrender: these orders forbade further communication with the outside world. Despite then a T.1082/R.1083 Vanette set was brought into action but it failed to establish communication with Melbourne, Ambala or Air Ministry. Several signals were broadcast for three hours on the morning of 9th March by this means in the hope that they would be picked up. Amongst them was the signal which informed the Air Ministry that the orders to surrender were being complied with (para.605).

It subsequently transpired that these signals were not picked up although at the time the operator believed otherwise.

623. Subsequent attempts by the Signal Station to contact H.Q. and reciprocal attempts by H.Q. to find the new position of the station, failed to establish touch before the staff of this station had to destroy their equipment because:-

- (a) It was believed that the last signals for despatch had been sent:
- (b) Current reports of the imminent arrival of Japanese troops (subsequently proved to be false) made it necessary to destroy compromising documents and the set itself to avoid capture in accordance with strict instructions which the A.O.C. had issued a few days previously on the subject of preventing the capture of cyphers and secret equipment.

These were the circumstances in which the report of the final surrender of the British troops in Java was not received by their respective Governments.

SECTION V

REFLECTIONS ON THE FAR EASTERN CAMPAIGN,

DECEMBER 1941 TO MARCH 1942.

SCOPE OF REPORT.

624. This paper reports on only one aspect of the campaign of 1941/42 in the Far East - the air aspect. Weaknesses are admitted where they are believed to have existed. The air aspect was, however, only one of several. An account which discloses its weaknesses, but not those of the other aspects, is liable to leave an impression that the air was primarily responsible for the downfall of Malaya. This was not the case.

625. In order to counteract this tendency it is necessary, therefore, to refer to weaknesses elsewhere which played their part. This is done hereunder in no carping spirit but in recognition of their causes and of the efforts made by those who endeavoured to overcome them. It is done for one reason only - to counterbalance a one-sided examination and to throw the whole into perspective. Weaknesses lay in many places: failure in Malaya was a combined failure brought about firstly by the unpreparedness of the Empire as a whole for war, and then when war came by the needs of far more vital theatres on the other side of the world and in the seas which served them.

626. In Malaya the old policy of restricting the defence of Singapore to the immediate vicinity of the Island had been replaced by one of defending the whole of Malaya. In conformity with this policy, the Chiefs of Staff had authorised large army and air force increases. In the absence of the Fleet, defence of the Far East was to depend primarily on a mobile air defence. Pending provision of the increased air strength the army needed additional interim strength, over and above its ultimate total, to ensure security in the meantime.

627. The Japanese attacked whilst this policy was being implemented. The air force and the army had by then received only a part of the modern equipment and reinforcements which had been estimated to be necessary. The vital and pressing needs of the war in Europe and the Middle East, which had passed through a long and very critical period, had proved of overriding importance. The result was that the forces in the Far East were attacked in positions which could only have been defended if the full strength planned by the Chiefs of Staff had been available.

WEAKNESSES IN THE FIGHTING SERVICES.

Mutual Naval and R.A.F. Support.

628. The Air Force in Malaya was not in a position to deny the waters off Malaya to a seaborne invasion. It possessed neither the necessary aircraft nor secure aerodromes and the enemy proved altogether too strong in the air once he had obtained a footing in S. Siam and N. Malaya.

629. The "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse" were lost in a gallant attempt to help the army and air force in their predicament in N. Malaya; the attempt was made in the face of a strong shore-based Japanese Air Force but without the corresponding air support, either carrier-borne or shore-based. In the absence of such support it was progressively impracticable for the Navy, other than the lightest units, to remain in Malayan waters.

630. The freedom of the seas which the enemy gained by his use of air power both at Pearl Harbour and off the coast of Malaya, was such that he was virtually free thereafter to hit when and where he liked. The consequences to the army and air force dispositions and operations in Malaya were profound. No criticism is levelled; the war against Germany and Italy had stretched our resources as never before. The small forces which were available in the Far East were faced with

/overwhelming

overwhelming circumstances and were too weak to overcome the advantages which the enemy gained in the first and most vital days of the campaign. In short, neither the Air Force or the Navy was in a position to support each other.

Mutual Army/Air Support.

631. The enemy army proved to be more effective than had been expected: our army had a number of shortcomings. It is not for this paper to say what they were or to expand upon them: it is appropriate only to say that they existed and that the army, in consequence, was unable to play its part adequately in the provision of secure air bases for our air forces. The root cause was the same, namely the overriding calls of the war in Europe and the Middle East.

632. When war came the construction of aerodromes in Malaya had outstripped the provision of air forces to occupy them. But the aerodromes had to be defended - a factor, amongst others considerably more important, which led to the army adopting a forward policy. The army had inadequate troops for the purpose, particularly in the absence of the additional interim strength it required pending full Air Force expansion. It became widely scattered in trying to meet all its commitments and was defeated in detail.

633. In accordance with G.H.Q. policy, the R.A.F. although inadequate for the task, had to occupy these forward and ineffectively defended aerodromes. There it suffered severe losses which could not be replaced and it was driven out.

634. Thereafter the army had to fight in northern and central Malaya without any air support, and to face an enemy whose air support was constant and strong. It was not until the Japanese advance brought the land battle within effective range of aerodromes on Singapore that our army could be supported from the air. Even then this support fell far short of the scale demanded by the situation although it was the maximum available. The enemy's air support remained undiminished. Neither service was in a position to support the other or to fulfil its commitments: both suffered severely in attempting to do so.

Mutual Support between Japanese Forces.

635. The Japanese, on the other hand, had adequate forces to support one another. Their naval and air forces were sufficient to cover the initial landings of their army, and to give its subsequent expeditions virtual freedom of action to strike where and when it liked. Their army had adequate strength to hold the countryside as it was overrun, and in particular to defend the aerodromes it captured. Their air forces were able to fill with aircraft our aerodromes as they were captured, maintain them there at full strength, and from them gain and fully exploit the advantages of air superiority in the land, sea and air battles.

They possessed what we had not - balanced harmony by land, sea and air, the forces in which were adequate to play their respective parts and to support one another fully.

Joint Navy/Army/Air Co-operation.

636. Two lessons emerge from the foregoing factors:-

Firstly, that only by full co-ordination of the fighting services - in strength, organisation and methods of operating - can success be achieved.

/Secondly,

Secondly, that the issue of a modern war largely depends on the struggle for secure air bases, which all three fighting services have a joint responsibility for obtaining, defending and maintaining. That side which is successful, and which denies its opponent the advantage of secure air bases, dominates the whole theatre of war within air striking range. It has every prospect of success, while its opponent has but little.

THE CIVIL COMMUNITY.

Shortages of Labour and Material.

637. Civil interests and the fighting services competed keenly for labour, M.T., constructional material and equipment, all of which were in short supply. It was difficult to obtain access to land for construction of defence works where its acquisition conflicted with civil interests.

638. The complicated administrative machinery in Malaya, which comprised numerous states with varying constitutions, was slow to produce results. Speed was further handicapped by the multiplicity of nationalities - Chinese, Malay, Indian and European - who populated Malaya and whose interests and outlook varied widely.

Native Labour.

639. Experience confirmed the unreliability of unenlisted natives employed as domestics, as M.T. drivers and for construction and repairing damage to aerodromes. They disappeared en bloc, as did many native employees of the railways, whenever bombing started or the siren sounded. At critical moments dislocation occurred to the domestic life of R.A.F. Stations, and to road and rail movements.

640. It is imperative in these days of air warfare, to enlist all native personnel on whom dependence is to be placed in war. If enlisted, and officered by trained leaders, the natives proved to be most reliable. This was demonstrated by the R.A.F. Special Technical Corps of Chinese, Malays and Indians, whose service in Malaya and Java during the war was exemplary.

Outlook in Malaya Towards War.

641. A word on this subject is necessary. It constituted a major handicap to rapid preparations for war in Malaya. It is not for this paper to examine the reasons, and the responsibility for it; the difficulties which faced those who had to deal with the matter, and their efforts, are fully appreciated. But the matter must be mentioned because of its reaction on the services. Malaya as a whole did not devote sufficient energetic and timely attention to preparations for war. Its attitude was supported by a belief that Singapore's defences were in reasonably good order and that war was not imminent in any case. More than one official pronouncement on the subject had the unintentional effect of fostering a sense of false security and of supporting those who were not anxious to disturb the established tenor of business and life in Malaya. Again, this statement is made in no critical spirit; the pronouncements were necessary for very good reasons. But they must be mentioned because of their effect on civilians and also on the services. The general atmosphere inevitably affected the latter who had to live in it from day to day: only the more informed and the more imaginative of them could be expected to foresee the future with accuracy and to remain unaffected. Nevertheless there were many, amongst the civil community as well as in the services, who foresaw the danger and who strove to accelerate preparations for war: to them the greatest credit is due. But

/despite

despite their efforts the general attitude militated against the progress at which they aimed, and it had a grave effect upon preparation for war and upon its prosecution when it came.

642. Two lessons were learned. Firstly, the most drastic and comprehensive measures are necessary to shake up a community which has long lived in peace into a realisation of the dangers of war and of the need to take timely action to prepare for it. This is particularly true if the community is of such a complex political and economic structure as that which existed in Malaya. Secondly, the success of the fighting services is largely dependent upon the wholehearted and organised support of the civil community.

UNITY OF COMMAND.

643. In the Far East the Higher Direction of War, and of preparation for it was not unified until the formation, in January 1942, more than a month after war had broken out, of H.Q. Supreme Command, S.W. Pacific, under General Sir Archibald Wavell.

644. Before this date many and complicated channels of control had existed between Ministries and the Chiefs of Staff in the United Kingdom on the one hand, and, on the other, the Civil Government and Service Commanders in Malaya. They varied in degree. G.H.Q. had operational but not administrative responsibility for the army and the air forces; while in the case of the navy its responsibility was limited to co-operation with the naval C.-in-C. in the Far East. G.H.Q. had no administrative staff, which handicapped its operational staff in appreciating the true state of affairs in the subordinate commands. The situation was further involved by additional channels of communication with the Australian and Dutch Governments and by varying control of the forces which they contributed to the defence of Malaya.

645. Such complicated machinery is unlikely to work efficiently during times of emergency when speed in preparing for war is paramount. It has even less chance of success in war itself.

646. From this emerges the lesson that responsibility for the defence of any region which is exposed to attack must be centralised in a Higher Command both during the preparatory period before war and during the war. This High Command should have full operational and administrative authority over the three fighting services and also strong representation in all matters affecting the civil population. If it has anything less, its mere presence, interposed between the authorities at home and its subordinate formations, prevents in considerable measure the latter bringing home to the former the full implications of their problems and difficulties.

647. In short, control must be comprehensive, and, in particular, administrative responsibility should not be divorced from operational responsibility. The outcome of a war is likely to be in proportion to the observance of this lesson. Unity of Command enhances the prospect of success; lack of it invites failure.

POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE OUTBREAK OF WAR.

Handicap imposed on Air Striking Force.

648. Political circumstances at the outbreak of war prevented the small air striking force that was available in Malaya being used in the role for which it had been primarily trained - to hit the enemy convoy at sea as far away and as often as possible. The consequence was that the enemy was able to establish himself firmly ashore in a neutral

country before action could be taken against his convoys.

Operation Matador.

649. The political factor also prevented the initiation of the planned British advance into Siam. The consequences were far reaching: those affecting the Air Force were immediate. The enemy was able to establish his squadrons in strength in Siam within easy striking distance of our virtually defenceless aerodromes in northern Malaya. Many of our aircraft were thus destroyed with little accomplished, and our squadrons had to be evacuated. Thereafter they were unable to give air support to the army in its battles in northern and central Malaya.

650. In passing, it is legitimate to reflect that had the reconnaissance into the Gulf of Siam on December 6th and 7th been greater (paras. 165-184) and had the object of the Japanese expedition been disclosed thereby, it might well have had an influence on the decision to initiate operation "Matador", or brought about its cancellation earlier than was the case.

Japanese Action.

651. The Japanese, on the other hand, chose the moment for attack that was most opportune for themselves. In doing so they discounted all political considerations - as indeed they had done whenever it suited them during their successive encroachments into the South-Western Pacific.

Political Lesson.

652. The lesson is that when the initiative lies in the hands of the prospective enemy, as it did in the Far East, it is highly dangerous to depend upon a plan of defence which may be frustrated by political considerations.

Underestimation of Japanese Strength.

653. There is reason to believe, from the experience of those who underwent military interrogation as prisoners-of-war in Japanese hands, that the enemy took deliberate steps in peace-time to mislead her potential enemies into underestimating her fighting forces. They themselves, on the other hand, were not deluded about our true value: they were too well informed by a long-established organisation of agents.

654. In short the enemy's true value was grossly underestimated. He was considered to be a third-rate enemy when in actual fact he was, in the conditions of the time, at least a good second-rater. There is reason to believe that he employed in Malaya some of the best of his resources.

WEAKNESS OF ALLIED INTELLIGENCE.

Japanese Air Forces.

655. The qualities of the Japanese Air Force came as a complete surprise - in numbers, performance and quality of equipment, training and experience of its personnel, and in its mobility. Its fighters displayed unexpected all round qualities. They and the Japanese medium bombers had ranges of 1,500 to 1,600 miles which enabled them to operate from bases out of our reach. Their normal operational height was 20,000 - 24,000 feet where they were immune from many of our A.A. gun defences. Japanese torpedo-bombers proved to be unexpectedly effective.

656. It is difficult to assess the precise air strength the enemy deployed against Malaya. At the time it was thought that he had 700 first line aircraft based in South Indo-China, with adequate immediate reserves, as against our 158 obsolete and obsolescent types with practically no reserves.

Japanese Army and Naval Forces.

657. It is not for this paper to explain the extent to which these were underestimated except to say that his army proved to be more effective than it was believed to be, and that the Japanese ability to strike so strongly and simultaneously in several directions in the Pacific had not been anticipated.

Need for an Intelligence Corps.

658. It is perhaps opportune to suggest here that our mistakes can only be attributed to the lack of an adequate Intelligence organisation. In the East an Intelligence system of any real value takes years to build up and requires considerable funds at its disposal. That it should be a combined organisation to serve the needs of all the Defence Services goes without saying. It is suggested that an Intelligence Corps will be essential in the future: that only by this means can continuity of knowledge, experience and contact be maintained: and that the appointment of individuals, as an incident of their service careers, can no longer be relied upon to fulfil requirements.

WEAKNESS OF JOINT ARMY/AIR FORCE INTEREST.

Army/Air Force relations.

659. There has been much exaggerated talk about the poor relations which existed between the Army and R.A.F. in Malaya. That there was foundation for it in limited quarters is unfortunately true during the time immediately before the arrival of the late Air Vice-Marshal Pulford and Lieut. Gen. A.E. Percival, who quickly took steps to put matters right. Unfortunately, honestly held differences of opinion about defence matters between their predecessors had led to weaknesses which had not been fully rectified by the time war came. The two chief matters are hereunder (paras. 660 and 661).

Siting of Aerodromes in N. Malaya.

660. Unfortunately, the selection of several aerodromes in Malaya had been made with insufficient regard to the needs of their tactical defence. Until the middle of 1941, sites had been chosen without sufficient consultation between the army and air force authorities concerned. Sited as they were, in positions tactically difficult to defend, they imposed an unnecessary strain on the army in the ultimate event. It is only fair to point out, however, that these aerodromes were strategically necessary if the R.A.F. was to fulfil its allotted role in the defence of Malaya.

Army/Air Support.

661. Organisation of, and training in, air support for the Army was in a primitive stage of development in both services. The result was that when war came, neither service was in a position to co-operate adequately with the other. There was, in particular, no modern signals equipment; but, above all, there were not the numbers of aircraft to permit an effective scale of support for the army.

Insecurity of Aerodromes.

662. Our aerodromes, particularly in N. Malaya, were far from being secure air bases which could properly be occupied in the face of a strong enemy. There were neither the fighter aircraft, nor sufficient A.A. defences, nor an effective warning system to ensure their defence against air attack. The enemy could, and did, destroy our aircraft on the ground in N. Malaya almost at will, and our aerodromes there were evacuated within a matter of days. In these circumstances, the best dispersal arrangements will not save the situation.

663. These same aerodromes were invaluable to the enemy. He had the necessary air forces to occupy them as they were captured and the means of defending them from all forms of attack.

664. From this emerges the lesson that aerodromes are a liability rather than an asset unless there are sufficient forces, both air and ground, available for their defence.

WEAKNESSES IN AIR FORCE MATTERS.

Over-centralisation in A.H.Q.

665. A.H.Q. dealt directly with eight superior and collateral authorities. The area it controlled stretched from Durban to Hong Kong. The majority of units were located in Malaya, where there were no intermediate bomber, coastal or maintenance groups to which to decentralise.

666. When war came in 1941, the formations in Burma and the Indian Ocean were transferred to another Command. Nevertheless, A.H.Q. still had to handle simultaneously air action in a land battle, in seaward operations and in air defence. It had to administer direct the operational units engaged in them as well as a large number of administrative units, many of which were unexpectedly involved in mobile operations for which they were not fully prepared. It had no intervening bomber, coastal or administrative groups to which to decentralise.

667. Even if the staff had contained an adequate number of experienced staff officers, such a high degree of centralisation would have been difficult to exercise efficiently. But most of the staff were inexperienced, although they were willing and many were able men. The load had consequently to be carried by a few able and experienced officers whose numbers were quite inadequate to cope with the situation both before war broke out and after.

668. These faults demonstrated the weakness of an over-centralised organisation and a Command which lacks a sufficient percentage of trained staff officers: a H.Q. which suffers from either fault cannot withstand the strain of war.

Allied Air Forces.

669. The British air striking force available, in the Far East, was in numbers far below that which the Chiefs of Staff considered necessary to ensure a reasonable degree of security, even against the calculated Japanese strength which, as already shown, was underestimated.

670. In quality, our aircraft were obsolescent or obsolete. Squadrons had not been modernised. Their signals and navigational aids were primitive or out of date. Radar warning was limited to the immediate vicinity of Singapore.

671. Several fighter squadrons had formed shortly before the war broke out and were not adequately trained. Others had recently re-armed and were still unfamiliar with their aircraft. A high proportion of fighter pilots had joined their squadrons straight from F.T.S.'s without O.T.U. training.

Reserves.

672. Reserves of aircrews and aircraft were inadequate; even the first casualties could not be fully replaced. Spare parts, for engines, airframes, armament, and M.T. in particular, were equally short. Squadron strengths consequently became abnormally low at the outset and remained so.

The need for adequate reserves in a theatre of war cannot be over-emphasised.

Change of Personnel.

673. A sweeping change of personnel by posting and drafting occurred during the summer and autumn of 1941. Those who were relieved had been over-long in the Far East and it was time they went. A high proportion of those who replaced them came straight from training establishments without having had unit experience. No criticism of those responsible is intended; it was assumed that there would be time for them to settle down before war broke out. When war unexpectedly came the Command contained a high percentage of personnel who had much to learn about the application of what they had been taught or about their new duties in strange surroundings. Much credit is due to them for the manner in which they strove to play their part. It is unfortunate that unavoidable circumstances had prevented the change being spread over a longer period by being started sooner.

Inadequate Training.

674. Personnel were willing but the means for training them were inadequate. Many courses of instruction were improvised locally, during the summer and autumn preceding the war, to make good shortcomings in training of aircrews, administrative and other personnel of all ranks, but they were too late to produce fully the results required.

675. In particular there were weaknesses in the training of fighter squadrons which had been based on the assumption that the enemy was of poor quality.

676. The imperative necessity for personnel to be trained in their duties before they have to face a trained enemy needs no further emphasis, nor the vital importance of a correct appreciation of the calibre of the enemy that has to be faced.

R. A. A. F. Units.

677. A word must be said about the Australian personnel in Malaya. They had left Australia in the belief that they would find in Malaya - the key of the defence of the Far East on which Australia chiefly relied - an effective organisation and a quality of forces at least approaching those in England and North Africa about which they had heard so much. They knew that Australia had made very large contributions to the war in Europe trusting in the strength of Singapore, and had depleted her own strength accordingly.

678. When early reverses indicated the possibility of events occurring as in fact they did, their faith in the ability of Singapore

to hold out was shaken. The conviction thereupon arose amongst some of them that they were being thrown away in Malaya to the detriment of Australia's safety and that they would be better placed to defend Australia if they returned there. Only a small number were affected by events in this way; and of these the majority continued to do their duty despite their anxieties and convictions.

Morale and Discipline.

679. As perhaps is inevitable when a force is unexpectedly confronted by a very superior enemy, there was a loss of morale and discipline by a section of the Command in the early days of the war. Lack of sufficient experienced officers undoubtedly contributed towards loss of control. Trials had been severe, but nevertheless, too many had been affected although they formed a minority. Arms were few and many personnel were newly arrived and inexperienced.

680. These shortcomings serve to enhance the credit of those who maintained their morale and who carried out their duty so far as their means allowed, and these comprised the great bulk of the force.

681. It is suggested that had all ranks been armed and trained to use their arms effectively, and had they been taught that in the ultimate event it was the duty of every one of them to defend his own aerodrome as a fully responsible fighting man on the ground, as opposed to an armed non-combatant, it is probable that many of those who failed would have stood up better to the campaign.

Mobility.

682. No unit was properly organised for mobile warfare. M.T. was very scarce and there were no transport aircraft. Each move involved appreciable interruption in operations, caused loss of valuable equipment and subsequent reduction of efficiency. The lack of transport aircraft was particularly felt when squadrons had to be transferred from Malaya to Sumatra, and thence, later, to Java: they suffered considerable loss and disorganisation during the enforced sea passage in the face of the enemy and without naval cover, the provision of which was quite impossible at the time.

683. The lesson was demonstrated that ability to take part in mobile operations, without loss of operational efficiency, is dependent on correct organisation and provision of suitable transport. A liberal scale of air transport is essential in those cases where long distances, sea crossings or other natural obstacles are involved.

INCIDENTS DURING THE CAMPAIGN.

Air Reconnaissance of approaching Japanese Convoy, 7th/8th December.

684. Contact with the Japanese expedition at sea was lost on 6th December and was not regained, except for a few ships sighted on the afternoon of 7th December. Admittedly weather conditions were bad in the Gulf of Siam during this vital period but nevertheless only a small air reconnaissance effort was made for re-establishing contact. No. 8 (GR) Squadron at Kuantan continued in its initial role of searching for a further possible expedition against Malaya, admittedly a contingency but one that appears of less importance considering the size of the enemy convoys already sighted and considering the view then held that the Japanese were not strong enough to strike several simultaneous blows. It is impossible to resist the inference that reconnaissance dispositions were strongly influenced by a conviction at the time that the Japanese expedition was directed against Siam. It is easy to be wise after the event, but the reconnaissance effort which G.H.Q. directed into the Gulf of Siam appears to have been small, bearing in mind its area and the possible courses open to the Japanese.

/Initial

Initial Action at Kota Bahru.

685. It is easy to criticise the station commander at Kota Bahru for not having launched his aircraft to the attack on receipt of the news, at 0030 hours on 8th December 1941, that ships were lying off the coast. It is equally easy to criticise the A.O.C. for ordering away only a reconnaissance to clear up the situation. But that both were correct in doing as they did, in the circumstances which existed at that particular moment, is beyond doubt. War had not broken out: Pearl Harbour had not been attacked and the U.S.A. was still neutral: there was grave risk that the Japanese might stage a bait in order to induce us to strike the first blow and by doing so reinforce that section of the American public which was then strongly opposed to America entering the war, a danger against which all in Malaya had been warned emphatically by G.H.Q. Admittedly 45 minutes were lost before the first air action was taken, but it is merely academic to conjecture what might have happened if it had been taken at once.

Main Japanese Landing at Singora not attacked.

686. It may fairly be asked why the initial Japanese landing at Singora was not attacked on 8th December, as this was the best target for our air striking force. The answer is that it was not realised, until too late, that it was in fact the enemy's main effort, although Singora had long been recognised as the area in which a Japanese expedition against Malaya was likely to be landed. The enemy, however, achieved a tactical surprise owing to the failure to maintain contact with the main Japanese convoy which was not found again until landings at Singora were well under way. By the time that the situation had been fully realised all available aircraft had been committed against the Kota Bahru attack. Before the objective could be changed our aerodromes in Northern Malaya were subjected to so heavy a scale of air attack that they could not provide an effective force for an attack against the Singora landing.

Attempt to Neutralise Enemy Air Bases.

687. As soon as the Air Forces had been driven out of the aerodromes in Northern Malaya the army was subjected to heavy air attack. Its A.A. protection was quite inadequate and it had no fighter cover. Our own aircraft were therefore employed in the early stages of the campaign against enemy aerodromes in an effort to give immediate relief to our troops. This was not successful: the enemy's reserves were sufficient to replace at once the small casualties which our attenuated squadrons could inflict and he had the means to repair rapidly the damage to aerodrome surfaces.

688. The lesson was again learnt that little relief can be obtained by attacking the aerodromes of an enemy who has the means for replacing or repairing damage, particularly if such attacks are of little weight.

Reinforcements.

689. The reinforcements which the R.A.F. received arrived too late to save the situation. By the middle of January when the first few came on the scene, the aerodromes which they had to use in Singapore were already under constant and heavy bombing. Those which came later had to use aerodromes in Sumatra which were little more than clearances in the jungle, for by this time, namely late January and early February, the enemy was in possession of the whole of the mainland of Malaya and three out of the four aerodromes on the Island of Singapore were under observed artillery fire.

690. Hurricane reinforcements arrived in batches at intervals and had to be thrown into the battle against greatly superior numbers

/and

and at tactical disadvantages caused by the lack of effective warning or efficient R/T control. The great majority of the fighter pilots had never been in action before and some had been at sea for as long as three months.

691. About half the bomber reinforcements that were despatched reached Malaya. They arrived in dribbles of two and three aircraft at a time - the result of circumstances along a lengthy and insufficiently developed air reinforcement route. They had to be used piece-meal, without their own ground crews, and not as complete units. No time could be allowed for acclimatising and training them in local conditions. Extremes of weather caused navigational difficulties to which crews were strange; adequate ground and radio aids, to which many were accustomed, were lacking.

692. It is difficult to esteem too highly the spirit with which the reinforcing crews faced their handicaps and threw themselves into the fight against odds.

693. The very important lessons were demonstrated that reinforcements must, in order to be effective, arrive as complete units, with aircraft, aircrews, specialised equipment, servicing crews and sufficient stocks and reserves. They are merely frittered rapidly away if they arrive piece-meal. They must have adequate bases from which to work and they gain much if they are given time to obtain experience of local conditions before being engaged in battle. In short the more orderly and methodical their arrival and their preparation for battle the greater their chances of success - and vice versa.

POSTSCRIPT.

The Army in Malaya.

694. I wish to pay a tribute to the help which the R.A.F. received from the army in Malaya. Despite its own acute needs and great shortages it gave ungrudging help - in defence of aerodromes at cost to its vulnerable points; in working parties and native labour to repair aerodromes at cost to the construction of military defences; in maintaining signals communications and in many other ways. In particular, thanks are due to Lieut. Gen. A.E. Percival, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C. for all that he did, in conjunction with the late Air Vice-Marshal Pulford, during the months immediately before war broke out, to re-establish good relations between the two services. Had the latter officer survived I know how strongly he would have expressed these views.

The Royal Navy in Malaya.

695. The R.A.F. owes much to the Royal Navy also. Nothing that was requested was refused if it was available; frequently it was given at cost to itself - working parties for aerodrome repair, for replacing stevedores and labour which had deserted the docks under bombing; facilities in the dockyard workshops and in many other ways. Thanks are particularly due to the late Rear Admiral Spooner, R.N., who lost his life in attempting to escape with the late Air Vice-Marshal Pulford and whom the latter would wish to commend to your notice for all that he and his subordinates did for the R.A.F. in Malaya.

/Civilians

Civilians in Malaya.

696. A tribute is also due to the civilians, men and women, who put their all at the disposal of the R.A.F. Of them there were many - nurses, business men, clerical staffs, tradesmen, welfare workers, contributors of material and money, and others. Their assistance and good-will were invaluable at a most difficult time. To them, the R.A.F. owes a real debt of gratitude.

The Dutch in the N.E.I.

697. Section IV contains considerable criticism of the Dutch in the latter stages. It must, however, be remembered that the Dutch pinned their faith to collective Allied resistance in the Far East, and that they lost the best part of their Air Force and much of their Navy to the common cause before the Japanese reached Java at all. When their hopes of successful resistance disappeared, and only a token British force remained to replace the forces the Dutch themselves had sacrificed, their isolated position came home forcibly to them.

698. Moreover, everything that the Dutch community possessed was in the N.E.I. Towards the end it was obvious to them that the whole of it including their families must inevitably fall into the hands of the Japanese. They had already experienced incidents of Japanese savagery in Borneo. They were consequently reluctant to continue gusrilla resistance in Java in the circumstances in which they finally found themselves. It was only then, when the British wanted to go on fighting after the general capitulation in Java, that differences arose.

699. Nevertheless I want to express my sincere thanks to the Dutch. Their wish to help was unbounded. They fulfilled their planned undertakings to the full. Special recognition is due to those of them who, as a result, lost their lives in Malaya's defence. When arrangements had to be made to transfer the R.A.F. to the N.E.I. their Army, Air Force and Civil Administration placed everything at our disposal. As a community the Dutch refused the British nothing - labour, materials, money and help of every kind were ungrudgingly given - frequently at considerable sacrifice. The devotion of their doctors and nurses to our sick and wounded was outstanding. The Royal Air Force owes a very deep debt of gratitude to these people.

Recommendations.

700. I have already reported to the appropriate branch of the Air Ministry the names of those whose services were particularly meritorious and whom I recommend for honours, awards and mention in despatches. But I want to bring to your notice here the following units and also to name a few individuals who rendered particularly meritorious service but who, I regret to report, are no longer alive.

Air Vice-Marshal C.W. Pulford, C.B., O.B.E., A.F.C.

This officer, despite ill health, worked unceasingly and uncomplainingly to overcome the many difficulties with which he was faced when preparing his Command for war and after hostilities had broken out. He never flinched from meeting an overwhelming situation with very inadequate means. He refused to leave Singapore himself until all his men had been evacuated. He lost his life in a last minute attempt to get away. His selfless devotion to duty and his loyalty to all those around him, both senior and junior, were an inspiration to everyone.

R.A.F. Station, Kallang.

The steadiness of the personnel of this fighter station under attack is worthy of special mention: particularly that of the ground crews of No. 488 (F) Squadron, manned by New Zealand personnel, who remained to service the last fighters which operated in Singapore.

Much credit is due to the inspiring example set by the late Wing Commander R.A. Chignell, staff officer to the late Group Captain E.B. Rice, the Fighter Defence Commander of Singapore. Both these officers were outstanding in their selfless and spirited devotion to duty. They were primarily responsible for the good morale which the small fighter force at Kallang maintained throughout the campaign in the face of a numerous and better-armed enemy.

No. 4 Photographic Reconnaissance Unit.

This flight, flying unarmed and unarmoured Buffaloes, unfailingly carried out numerous photographic flights deep into enemy territory dominated by a very superior fighter force. Its service throughout the Malaya campaign was particularly meritorious.

No. 232 (F) Squadron.

This unit, under the inspiring leadership of the late Squadron Leader R.E.P. Brooker, D.S.O., D.F.C., who volunteered to take command at a crucial period, was in constant action from the time of its arrival in Singapore in mid-January 1942, until fighting ceased in Java. It inflicted very severe casualties on the enemy in the air, in landing craft and on the ground. Finally it volunteered to remain as the last fighter squadron in Java knowing that captivity was inevitable. Its contribution to the campaign was outstanding. The greatest credit is due to all ranks of a magnificent squadron, drawn as they were from the ranks of several different fighter units.

M.V.A.F.

At a critical time of the fighting in Southern Malaya a number of successful reconnaissances were carried out by this unit to locate bodies of our troops who had been cut off by the enemy and to locate the enemy's infiltrating forces. These reconnaissances were performed in unarmed Moth aircraft (originally the property of Malaya's flying clubs) at tree top height over a battle field dominated by Japanese Zero fighters. Their value was great to the Army, then closely engaged with the enemy. Pre-eminent in this work was the late Flight Lieutenant Henry Dane, M.V.A.F., whose qualities as a leader and a man were a byword amongst those who knew him. His example was largely responsible for the excellent work done throughout by the M.V.A.F.

No. 84 (B) Squadron.

This unit arrived as a reinforcement much strung out after a long flight from the Middle East. Its crews set a fine example by throwing themselves into the fight without hesitation under many handicaps. Particular credit is due to the Commanding Officer, the late Wing Commander J.R. Jeurwine, D.S.O., O.B.E., D.F.C.

/R.A.F.

R.A.F. Station, Seletar.

The personnel of this station showed steadiness under sustained bombing: in particular, No. 151 M.U. maintained technical and supply services which were vital to the whole Command. The excellent example set by the European units was followed by the Special Technical Corps whose members again demonstrated the reliability under bombing of enlisted Asiatic personnel when they are suitably organised and led.

Personnel of the Far East Command.

701. It is perhaps inevitable when fighting forces are overtaken by reverses on the scale of those which occurred in the Far East in 1941-2 that some of them should fall short of what is expected of them.

702. I am glad to be able to report, however, that the very great majority of all ranks of the R.A.F., R.A.A.F. and M.V.A.F. fulfilled their respective duties to the utmost of their ability. I am deeply indebted to them for the manner in which they did so despite hardship, danger and great handicaps.

703. Those who landed in Java in unavoidable disorganisation were required to form into a fighting force within a fortnight in a foreign land and without the assistance of an already established higher R.A.F. Command. Credit is due to those who in these trying circumstances gave of their best, in particular the squadrons who had to face an enemy well-organised and in overwhelming numbers.

704. Above all, I am indebted to those who were willing, despite lack of arms, lack of training and lack of most essentials to fight in the hills in a form of warfare about which they knew nothing against an enemy whom they knew to be well equipped and well trained. I find it difficult to express my gratitude for their loyal response to the call made upon them. That they were unable to put it to the proof was no fault of theirs. Such behaviour is particularly creditable occurring as it did in an atmosphere of repeated reverses.

705. Finally I wish to express my appreciation for the great fortitude of those who became prisoners-of-war in Japanese hands. There were many who at great risk to themselves consistently minimised the assistance they were forced to give to their captors. Others refused to divulge information in spite of brutal treatment. There were also those who constantly worked for the welfare of their comrades, often at considerable sacrifice to themselves. The credit due to them for the services they rendered during $3\frac{1}{2}$ years of captivity, often in extreme circumstances, is very great indeed.

P.C. Maltby,

Air Vice-Marshal,
Late Air Officer Commanding R.A.F. in Java.

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STATION SITUATION - MALAYA - 8TH DECEMBER, 1941.

LOCATION	(a) PEACE SCALE OF ACCOMMODATION. (b) CONCENTRATION SCALE OF ACCOMMODATION	RUNWAYS	STATE OF ACCOMMODATION	DEFENCES (a) Pens. (b) A.A. Guns. (c) Troops.	BOMBS (Approx. weight)
<u>NORTH-WEST MALAYA</u>					
ALOR STAR	(a) 1 B Squadron	Hard 1400 yds.	1 Squadron	(a) Yes (b) 4 - 3" (c) 1 Coy. Infantry (Bahawalpur)	Yes 250 tons
BUTTERWORTH	(a) 1 GR Squadron	Hard 1 - 1600 yds. being extended to 2000 yds. 2nd in hand.	Hutted. 2 Squadrons. occupied.	(a) Yes. Incomplete. (b) None until 10.12.41. 8 Bofors. (c) Bahawalpur Inf. Btn. (less 2 Coys.)	Yes 250 tons
JABI	(b) 1 B Squadron	Hard 1400 yds. Graded but not surfaced.	1 Squadron only just commenced.	(a) - (b) - (c) -	NIL
KUALA KETIL	Satellite for SUNGAI PATANI	Tarmac 1400 yds.	Guard Room; P.O.L. and bomb stores.	(a) Nil. (b) Nil. (c) 1 Coy. Bahawalpur Inf.	NIL
LUBOK KIAP	(a) 1 B Squadron	Hard : 1 - 1600 yds 1 - 1200 yds. partly graded.	Hutted - 2 Squadrons nearing completion; partly occupied.	(a) - (b) Nil. (c) Nil.	NIL
MALAKOFF	Satellite for LUBOK KIAP	1600 yds. Grading not complete.	No buildings completed.	Nil	Nil
PENANG	Civil Airfield	Limited grass airfield.	Nil	Nil	Nil
SUNGAI BAKAP	Satellite for BUTTERWORTH	2000 yds. (1400 yds. scled but not surfaced)	No buildings completed.	Nil	Nil
SUNGAI PATANI	(a) 2 F Squadrons.	Grass : 1 - 1400 yds. 1 - 1200 yds.	Hutted : 2 Squadrons. Partly occupied.	(a) Not quite finished. (b) 7 - 3.7" (c) Btn. HQ. and 1 Coy. Indian State Troops.	Yes 250 tons.
<u>NORTH-EAST MALAYA</u>					
GONG KEDAH	(b) 1 B Squadron	Hard : 1 - 2000 yds.	Hutted : 1 Squadron. Ready and partly occupied.	(a) Yes: nearly 100%. (b) 2 - 3" (left 10.12.41.) (c) 1 Pltn. Mysore Inf.	Yes 250 tons.
KOTA BAHRU	(a) 1 B Squadron	Grass : 1 - 1600 yds. Being extended.	Hutted : 2 Squadrons. Being extended.	(a) Yes: Nearly 100%. (b) 4 - 3". (c) 1 Btn. Inf (less 1 Coy)	Yes. 300/500 tons.
MACHANG	(b) 1 F Squadron	Hard : 1 - 1600 yds. 1 - 1200 yds. in hand.	Hutted : 2 Squadrons partly completed.	(a) Just started. (b) Nil. (c) 2 Coys Mysore Inf.	Yes. 50 tons.
<u>EAST MALAYA</u>					
KUANTAN	(b) 1 B Squadron 1 GR Squadron	Grass : 1 - 1500 yds. 1 - 1200 yds.	Hutted : 2 Squadrons. Complete.	(a) In hand (b) - (c) 3 Coys. 5th Sikhs.	Yes 100 tons.

LOCATION	(a) PEACE SCALE OF ACCOMMODATION. (b) CONCENTRATION SCALE OF ACCOMMODATION	RUNWAYS	STATE OF ACCOMMODATION	DEFENCES (a) Pens. (b) A.A. Guns. (c) Troops.	BOMBS (Approx. weight)
			<u>CENTRAL MALAYA</u>		
IPOH	(b) 2 B Squadrons	Grass plus tarmac. 1 - 1400 yds.	Hutted : 2 Squadrons Nearly completed. Partly occupied.	(a) Nil. (b) - (c) 1 Coy Indian State Troops. 1 M.G. Platoon.	Nil
SITIAWAN	Civil Airfield	Grass : 1 - 1000 yds. 1 - 800 yds.	Guard Room only.	(a) Nil. (b) Nil. (c) 1 Coy (less 1 Pltn.) Indian State Troops.	Yes. Nil
TAIPING	Satellite for IPOH	Grass plus tarmac. 1 - 1400 yds.	Requisitioned cottages. Hutments in hand.	(a) Yes (b) Nil. (c) 1 Coy and 1 MG Pltn. Indian State Troops.	Nil
			<u>SOUTH MALAYA</u>		
BATU PAHAT	Civil Airfield. Satellite for KLUANG.	Grass : 1 - 1400 yds.	P.O.L. Stores only.	(a) Nil. (b) - (c) 1 Pltn. AIF. Infantry.	Yes. 50 tons
BEKOK (LABIS)	(a) 1 Squadron	2000 yds) 1400 yds) surveyed only.	Nil	Nil	Nil.
KUALA LUMPUR	Civil Airfield	Grass : 1315 yds.	Completed. Occupied by 153 M.U.	(a) Nil. (b) - (c) 1 Coy Indian State Troops. 1 MG. Pltn.	Yes. 50 tons.
KLUANG	(a) 2 F Squadrons 1 F Squadron (Dutch)	Grass : 1 - 1200 yds. 1 - 1600 yds. Hard runway commenced.	Hutted : 2 Squadrons. Nearing completion. Mostly occupied.	(a) In hand. (b) - (c) 1 Btn. (less 1 Coy and 1 Pltn.) and Johore Military Forces Details.	Yes 50 tons.
KAHANG	(b) 1 GR Squadron	Grass : 1 - 1400 yds. 1 - 1300 yds.	Hutted : 2 Squadrons. In hand.	(a) In hand. (b) - (c) 1 Coy. A.I.F. and Johore Military Forces Details.	Yes. 50 tons.
FORT SWETTENHAM	Civil Airfield.	Grass (tarmac in centre). 1 - 1000 yds.	Nil	(a) Nil. (b) Nil. (c) 1 Coy and 1 MG. Pltn. Indian State Troops.	Yes 10 tons
TEBRAU		Hard : 1 - 1200 yds. 1 - 2000 yds. in hand.	1 Squadron only. 2nd Squadron in hand.	(a) In hand. (b) Nil. (c) A.I.F. Infantry in vicinity.	Nil
			<u>SINGAPORE ISLAND</u>		
KALLANG	(a) 1 B Squadron	Complete (Civil Airfield). Grass : 1400 yds.	2 Squadrons.	(a) Yes. (b) Nil. Under cover of A.A. defences Singapore Town. (c) 1 Coy. Jind. Inf.	Yes 10 tons (plus ammunition).
SELETAR	(a) 2 TB Squadrons 1 FB Squadron	Complete. Grass. 1400 yds.	3 Squadrons and M.U. Dispersed hutted accommodation partly completed.	(a) Yes. (b) 8 Bofors. Within defended zone of Naval Base A.A. cover. (c) 1 Btn. (less 1 Coy) Kapurtala Inf.	Yes 500 tons.

LOCATION	(a) PEACE SCALE OF ACCOMMODATION. (b) CONCENTRATION SCALE OF ACCOMMODATION	RUNWAYS	STATE OF ACCOMMODATION	DEFENCES (a) Pens. (b) A.A. Guns. (c) Troops.	BOMBS (Approx. weight)
SEMBAWANG	(a) 2 B Squadrons	Grass : 1380 yds. Construction of 2 hard runways deferred.	2 Squadrons. F.A.A. adjacent.	(a) Yes. (b) Nil. Within defended zone of Naval Base A.A. cover. (c) 1 Coy. Kapurtala Inf.	Yes 1000 tons.
TENGAH	(a) 3 B Squadrons 2 GR Squadrons (for Borner)	Grass L.G. 1 - 1400 yds. concrete runway.	2 Squadrons	(a) Partly finished. (b) Nil. Under extended A.A. cover of Island defences. (c) 1 Btn. Jind. Infantry.	Yes. 750 tons.

- NOTE : 1. Aerodrome Operational Equipment - serious shortages existed at Stations in North and Central Malaya, other than Alor Star and Kota Bahru, despite local manufacture and purchase.
2. Adequate stocks of P.O.L. were in position at the Stations where required.

RADAR UNITS - FAR EAST COMMAND - 8th DECEMBER, 1941.

LOCATION	UNIT NO.	TYPE	DEGREE OF COMPLETION ON 8TH DECEMBER, 1941
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<u>MALAYA EAST COAST</u>			
KOTA BAHRU		C.O.L.	Not technically complete.
KOTA BAHRU		T.R.U.	Some construction done.
KUANTEAN			Under construction.
ENDAU			Under construction.
MERSING	243	M.R.U.	Operational.
BUKIT CHUNANG	511	C.O.L.	Operational
AYER BESAR		T.R.U.	Under construction.
<u>MALAYA : WEST COAST</u>			
PENANG			Three stations. One partly complete.
BATU PAHAT		C.O.L.	Partly completed.
TANJONG KUPANG	512	C.O.L.	Operational
<u>MALAYA : JOHORE</u>			
KOTA TINGGI	518	C.O.L.	Operational late December, 1941.
BUKIT DINDING			Crews on site. Not quite complete.
SUNGEI KAHANG			Work nearing completion.

Did not function.
Over-run by enemy.

LOCATION (1)	UNIT NO. (2)	TYPE (3)	DEGREE OF COMPLETION ON 8TH DECEMBER, 1941 (4)
<u>SINGAPORE ISLAND</u>			
SELETAR		R.I.M.U.	Operational
TUAS	243	T.R.U.	Operational 15.1.42.
TANAH MERAH BESAR	250	M.R.U.	Operational
SERANGOON	308	T.R.U.	Operational Dec. 1941.
CHANGI JAIL		LD/CHE	Operational Dec. 1941.
<u>JAVA : WEST</u>			
BATAVIA (EAST)		T.R.U.	Operational Feb. 1942.
BATAVIA (WEST)		T.R.U.	Operational Feb. 1942.
ANGELOR		Army G.L.	Operational Feb. 1942.
LEBUAN		Army G.L.	Operational Feb. 1942.
TANARA		Army G.L.	Operational Feb. 1942.
<u>JAVA : EAST</u>			
MCDONG		American G.L.	Operational 22.2.42.
PARMAKASSEN		American G.L.	Operational 24.2.42.
SITOEBOENDO		American G.L.	Operational 24.2.42.

APPENDIX "B"

To Report on R.A.F. Operations
in Malaya and N.E.I. 1941 - 2

SENIOR STAFF OFFICERS - AIR HEADQUARTERS, FAR EAST - 8th DECEMBER, 1941

Air Officer Commanding

Air Vice Marshal C.W.H. PULFORD, CB., OBE., AFC.

Senior Air Staff Officer

Air Commodore B.J. SILLY, MC., DFC.

Operations : G/Capt. A.G. BISHOP, OBE., AFC.
W/Cdr. D.S.E. VINES, OBE.

Intelligence : W/Cdr. S.J. MARCHBANK.

Training : W/Cdr. W.R. WILLS-SANDFORD.

Plans : W/Cdr. F.G. FROW.

Services

Signals : W/Cdr. T.F. MOLONEY.

Armament : W/Cdr. R.A.R. RAE.

Navigation : W/Cdr. W.P. WELCH.

Radio : W/Cdr. N. CAVE.

Chemical

Warfare : W/Cdr. F.E. LE FEVRE, MC.

Air Officer i/c Administration

Air Commodore C.O.F. MODIN, CBE., DSC.

Organisation : W/Cdr. G.F. WHLSTONDALE.

Personnel : S/Ldr. W.H. FRANKLIN.

Accounts : G/Capt. C.G. MURRAY, CBE.
W/Cdr. S.C. GEORGE.

Engineering : W/Cdr. E.B. STEEDMAN.

Medical : G/Capt. D.G. BODDIE.
W/Cdr. C.W. COFFEY.
W/Cdr. C. CROWLEY.

Equipment : G/Capt. H.E. TANSLEY, MC.
W/Cdr. E.H. WALKER.

Works : G/Capt. A.E.G. COLLINS, MC.

C.A. & F.A. : G/Capt. W.J.W. BANGS.

Air Liaison,
N.E.I. : W/Cdr. W.H. FARROW, DFC.

APPENDIX "C"

To Report on R.A.F. Operations
in Malaya and N.E.I. 1941 - 2.

R.A.F. ORDER OF BATTLE IN MALAYA

22nd NOVEMBER, 1941.

AIR HEADQUARTERS, SINGAPORE.

A. OPERATIONAL UNITS.

SINGAPORE ISLAND

1. SELETAR Station Commander - Group Captain H.M.K. BROWN.
 - (a) No. 36 (TB) Squadron - Commander - W/Cdr. R.N. McKERN.
12 Vildebeestes.
 - (b) No. 100 (TB) Squadron - Commander - W/Cdr. A.W.D. MILLER.
15 Vildebeestes.
 - (c) No. 205 (GR) Squadron - Commander - W/Cdr. L.W. BURGESS.
3 Catalinas.
 - (d) P.R. Flight - Commander - S/Ldr. C.G.R. LEWIS.
2 Buffaloes.
2. SEMBAWANG Station Commander - Group Captain J.P.J. McCauley (RAAF)
 - (a) No. 8 (GR) Squadron, RAAF - Commander - W/Cdr. F.N. WRIGHT.
8 Hudson II.
 - (b) No. 21 (F) Squadron, RAAF - Commander - S/Ldr. W.F. ALSHORN.
10 Buffaloes.
 - (c) No. 453 (F) Squadron, - Commander - S/Ldr. W.J. HARPER.
12 Buffaloes.
3. TENGAH Station Commander - Group Captain F.E. WATTS.
 - (a) No. 34 (B) Squadron - Commander - W/Cdr. G.P. LONGFIELD.
17 Blenheim IV.
 - (b) No. 4 A.A.C.U. - Commander - S/Ldr. N.W. WRIGHT.
5 Sharks,
5 Swordfish.
2 Blenheim I.
4. KALLANG Station Commander - Wing Commander R.E. CHIGNELL.
 - (a) No. 243 (F) Squadron - Commander - W/Cdr. G.B.M. BELL.
12 Buffaloes.
 - (b) No. 488 (F) Squadron - Commander - S/Ldr. W.G. CLOUSTON.
9 Buffaloes.

MAINLAND OF MALAYA

5. KOTA BAHRU Station Commander - Wing Commander C.H. NOBLE.
No. 1 (GR) Squadron, RAAF - Commander - W/Cdr. R.H. DAVIS.
7 Hudson II.

/contd.....

6. KUANTAN Station Commander - Wing Commander R.B. COUNCELL.
No. 60 (B) Squadron - Commander - W/Cdr. R.L. VIVIAN.
(From Rangoon for training at Armament Practice Camp)
7 Blenheim I.
7. ALOR STAR Station Commander - Wing Commander R.G. FORBES.
No. 62 (B) Squadron - Commander - W/Cdr. J. DUNCAN.
10 Blenheim I.
8. SUNGEI PATANI Station Commander - Squadron Leader F.R.C. FOWLE.
No. 27 (NF) Squadron - Commander - S/Ldr. F.R.C. FOWLE.
10 Blenheim I.
9. BUTTERWORTH - Care and Maintenance.
i/c - Flight Lieutenant R.D.I. SCOTT.
10. KLUANG Station Commander - Wing Commander W.R. WILLS-SANDFORD.
Improved O.T.U.

NOTES :

- a. Aircraft shown are those serviceable as at 22nd November, 1941.
- b. A further 40 Buffaloes were repairable within 14 days.
- c. For other Squadrons, there was an average of 2 or 3 aircraft per Squadron repairable within 14 days.

B. MAINTENANCE UNITS.

- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 11. No. 151 M.U. | SELETAR | Group Captain C.T. WALKINGTON |
| 12. No. 152 M.U. | BUKIT PANJANG,
SINGAPORE. | Squadron Leader S.G. AYLWIN. |
| 13. No. 153 M.U. | KUALA LUMPUR | Group Captain M.W.C. RIDGWAY |
| 14. No. 81 R.&.S.U. | KLUANG | Wing Commander H. STANTON. |
| 15. "Z" M.U. | BATAK QUARRY,
SINGAPORE. | Flight Lieutenant J.H. COCKS. |
| 16. R.I.M.U. | SELETAR. | Squadron Leader T.C. CARTER. |

C. MISCELLANEOUS UNITS

17. Radar Units (Four operational) Wing Commander N. CAVE.
18. R.N.Z.A.F. Aerodrome Construction Unit. Squadron Leader SMART.
19. Transit Camp, Singapore. Squadron Leader O.G. GREGSON.
20. S.S. "Tung Song" Pilot Officer G.T. BROADHURST.
21. S.S. "Shenking" Pilot Officer C.E. JACKSON.

APPENDIX "D"

To Report on R.A.F. Operations
in Malaya and N.E.I. 1941/42

REPORT BY AIR VICE-MARSHAL P.C. MALTBY ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES
WHICH LED TO HIS SUCCEEDING AIR VICE-MARSHAL C.W. PULFORD
AS A.O.C. FAR EAST COMMAND

I landed in Singapore on 4th January 1942 as Chief of Staff designate to the C.-in-C. Far East in succession to Maj. Gen. Playfair. On 7th January Gen. Sir Archibald Wavell arrived and formed Abdacom. I was then appointed Deputy Intendant-General. I did not take up this appointment for the following reasons.

2. On 4th January the C.-in-C., Gen. Sir Henry Pownall, expressed to me his concern about the general air situation. He told me to investigate and make recommendations.

3. A rapid survey made it apparent that:-

- (a) The A.O.C., A.V.M. Pulford, was a very tired man. He appeared to be handling his Squadrons ably, but he was overwhelmed personally with work.
- (b) The work of his H.Q. was very highly centralised indeed - as explained in the body of my report (paras.101-106).

4. Unfortunately Air Vice-Marshal Pulford had centralised still further in his own person. Firstly, his S.A.S.O., Air Commodore Silly, was installed in the Operations Room where he was in charge of one of three watches; two other Staff Officers, appointed as Deputy S.A.S.O's, were in charge of the other two. This arrangement had been forced upon the A.O.C. by the variety, importance and speed of the land, sea and fighter operations which had to be watched continually: the more junior officers of his staff had neither the training nor the experience necessary for the purpose. The consequence was that continuity of Air Staff policy and co-ordination of Air Staff work with Administration had largely passed out of the hands of the S.A.S.O. The A.O.C. was attempting to handle both himself and, in particular, to direct the Senior Officers of Air Staff Services. Secondly, he had acquired the practice of dealing direct with the Senior Officers of several Administrative Branches, in particular C.T.O., S.P.S.O., and Chief Engineer, instead of doing so through his A.O.A., Air Commodore Modin.

5. The staff itself had insufficient suitable officers to meet its needs. The burden was being carried by a few capable individuals, in particular, by the A.O.C. himself.

6. The campaign had not gone well; morale was not what it might have been, and I found, after a hasty visit to several Stations on the Island, that much at them needed the personal attention of the A.O.C.: this had been lacking because of his pre-occupation at H.Q.

7. It appeared essential to reform the Air Staff, replace several officers in the Combined Operations Room and devote more personal attention to Stations. Unfortunately, suitable replacements were not immediately available. An interim solution had to be found until the arrival of reinforcements would place them at our disposal.

8. It must be remembered that at that time - early January - we were confidently looking forward to an early stabilisation of the land battle somewhere in Central Malaya and, with the arrival of Army and Air

/ reinforcements

reinforcements known to be en route, to a protracted and successful defence of Southern Malaya and Singapore. It appeared reasonable to expect that we should be in a position, in the near future, to replace key individuals and to carry out the necessary re-organisation of the Staff.

9. It was evident both to A.V.M. Pulford and to myself that the A.O.C.'s work had become, and would remain, too much for one man: the appointment of a Deputy A.O.C. had become an imperative need.

10. My first inclination was to take over from him because of his exhaustion and to carry on single-handed until assistance should arrive. This, however, did not appear to us to be a correct solution because:-

- (a) Pulford was handling the then operational situation well.
- (b) Two men on a 2-man job were better than one, and this could be achieved if we could run in double harness.
- (c) I was due to take up the post at Abadan to which I had been appointed.

11. The P.M.O. medically examined A.V.M. Pulford and reported that he would be fit to carry on for some time after a complete rest of 48 hours in medical hands. This he was given.

12. I was the senior and would normally have taken command and relegated Pulford to the position of Assistant A.O.C. This would have entailed my directing operational work, the primary duty of the A.O.C., which Pulford was then doing satisfactorily. His main need was relief in respect of his other duties and it was in this capacity, as his assistant, that I could best help the situation. Moreover, I was confident, and still am, that Pulford would not have stood up to being reduced to a subordinate position after having been A.O.C. himself. He would have felt that everyone would take it as an indication of his failure, and he would have broken up. The only hope of running successfully in double harness was for me to subordinate myself to him as his assistant.

13. It was the only chance I could see at the time of achieving our main object, namely of successfully carrying on until the arrival of reinforcements placed us in a position to re-organise. Personal considerations on both our parts had to go by the board.

14. Pulford willingly accepted this arrangement. I suggested it to Gen. Pownall who agreed. After obtaining Air Ministry approval, I left Gen. Wavell's H.Q. when it moved to Java on 11th January, and remained in Singapore to become temporarily Pulford's Assistant A.O.C. on 12th January. In having done so, I accept, as the senior of the two, ultimate responsibility for everything that happened afterwards in the Far East Command as I told Pulford at the time I would do.

15. Although Pulford benefited by his rest, it soon became evident that he would not last long. He continued to overload himself: in particular to deal direct with several Administrative Staff Officers. I blame myself for not having realised how set he was in this practice, and why. I have reason to think now that it was the result of his having acquired the habit during a hiatus which occurred after the departure of the late A.O.A. towards the end of May 1941, and the arrival of the new one on June 10th 1941.

16. Within a few days of my transfer to Pulford's Staff, namely by 22nd January, all hopes of protracted resistance in Central Malaya had passed and with them our hopes of using the expected reliefs in the way we had originally intended. A rapid transfer of squadrons and administrative units to the N.E.I. was then forced upon us. Preliminary arrangements were already in hand: senior officers who were beginning to arrive were, by this time, needed in the N.E.I.

There now remained no question of my taking up my appointment with Abdacon although three enquiries were received on the subject - a signal about 24th January, another signal on 30th January and a personal inquiry about 3rd February from General Pownall, all indicating that I should return to Abdacon when I could be spared from Singapore. It had become obvious that I must take over from Pulford in the near future and this was settled with Air Chief Marshal Peirse when he visited Singapore about 3rd February.

17. During the last days of January, three new Air Commodores arrived. One was retained as S.A.S.O. and the other two were sent to Palembang to expand the Bomber Group already there, and to form a new Fighter Group. At the same time Air Commodore Silly was sent, on 30th January, to reconnoitre Southern Sumatra for a suitable site for a rear Air H.Q. and to make preliminary arrangements for it. It subsequently transpired that he was unable to find a suitable one, but unfortunately he did not keep us informed in Singapore and touch with him was lost. Meanwhile plans were put in hand early in February for the transfer in expectation of hearing from Silly.

18. General Wavell visited Singapore on 30th January and approved the withdrawal to Sumatra of all fighters except for a token force of 8 Hurricanes and the remaining Buffaloes. He also approved the transfer of A.H.Q. to the N.E.I., a liaison staff under a Wing Commander to remain in Singapore with H.Q.M.C.

19. On 5th February no word having been received from Air Commodore Silly, a signal was sent to Abdair saying that we were on the point of transferring our H.Q. to Batavia, and that Pulford and S.A.S.O. would shortly be proceeding by air to Palembang to grasp the situation there, and then fly on to Batavia, leaving sufficient staff for liaison in Singapore. Incidentally, I was to supervise the further evacuation and then follow the A.O.C. to N.E.I.

20. This signal crossed one from Abdair saying "As soon as convenient Pulford is to report to Abdair handing over command West Group temporarily to Maltby". Pulford was then on the point of complying, agreeing with me that the convenient moment for handing over would arrive when we had completed the transfer of A.H.Q. to Batavia, which we expected to do in the immediate future, and when I had finished the further evacuation and had followed him to the N.E.I.

21. Then came an exchange of signals with Abdair on the same day which completely changed the situation.

22. To the signal mentioned in para.19, we received a reply from Abdair querying the wisdom of moving our H.Q. from Singapore and indicating Abdair's inclination to leave it alongside the Army Commander in Singapore, but asking for our further views.

23. We then signalled our further views which were to the effect that,

/ (a)

- (a) Fighters in Singapore had been reduced to a token force.
- (b) All our bombers and the rest of our fighters were in Sumatra.
- (c) Sumatra seemed to be in danger of being jumped by the Japanese (here we quoted Abdacom's warnings on the subject) which would involve a further move back of our squadrons to Java.

Therefore, we went on, the value of A.H.Q. in assisting in the defence of Singapore would be small; whereas if it was moved to Batavia it could organise the striking force and get it into operation again.

24. To this signal a personal reply was received on 6th February from Air Chief Marshal Peirse which ran thus:- "I do not take so gloomy a view of possibilities. But should attack on Sumatra develop your forces must be used in most energetic way to repel it. Please impress on everybody that we intend to stop the enemy." This reply was repeated to our Groups in Sumatra.

25. This last signal had a profound effect on A.V.M. Pulford, I now believe, although I did not realise it at the time, that he took it as a personal and public rebuke, administered for suggesting that he and his H.Q. should abandon Army H.Q. in Singapore, and for suggesting that his squadrons would have to withdraw from Southern Sumatra because of the risk of their being "jumped" there. I am sure that it was not intended, but I have little doubt that it was thus that Pulford took it. At any rate, thereafter nothing would move him from his determination to remain in Singapore until the end. This determination was, in my opinion, supported by his personal friendship for General Percival and by his early training as a naval officer in that he believed he ought to be the last to leave the "sinking ship".

18a 26. On 6th February, Abdair was informed by us that "Squadrons in Sumatra will of course act in most energetic way to repel attack. Have cancelled move of this H.Q., or what is left of it (with references to exchange of signals on the subject). Am instructing Silly ... to proceed to Batavia to take charge there and sort out situation created by arrival of reinforcements and of units transferred there from here (Singapore)".

27. But, on 8th February, the enemy attacked Singapore and succeeded in obtaining a foothold on the N.W. side of the island. A protracted siege was now out of the question, and it became imperative for the A.O.C. and a nucleus staff to go by air to Palembang and to take charge in the N.E.I.

28. The S.A.S.O. (Air Commodore Staton) left early on 10th February, under the A.O.C.'s orders, expecting Pulford to follow by another aeroplane which was arranged for him at midday. I intended to remain myself to complete the transfer and then to follow to Sumatra and take over. Pulford, however, declined to go.

29. That same morning, 10th February, General Wavell paid another visit to Singapore. He expressed concern that I had not yet taken over. I explained our interpretation of the latitude that had been given us in the signal on the subject (para. 20). He accepted it but emphasised the importance of my taking control in the N.E.I. as soon as possible. Consequently, being unable to persuade Pulford to leave in the aeroplane arranged for him, I went myself in it to Palembang (at midday 10th February) and assumed command as A.O.C. W stgroup there on 11th February.

30. General Wavell, on the same visit, ordered the evacuation of the remainder of the R.A.F. in Singapore. Air Commodore Modin, the A.O.A., tried to persuade Pulford to leave this to him - without success. By 12th February, the majority had been embarked, and Pulford ordered away most of his remaining staff, including the A.O.A. and Group Captain Rice.

31. On 13th February he left himself, at the instigation of General Percival, the G.O.C. Malaya Command, in company with Rear Admiral Spooner, R.A. Malaya.

32. When they sailed they were unaware that the Japanese fleet had interposed itself between Singapore and their destination in Sumatra - the Palembang river. They risked travelling by day in the interests of an injured officer. They were detected and attacked by seaplanes. Their boat was stranded and lost on one of the islands of the Seven Brethren Group about 100 miles north of Banka Island. There the whole party - some 40 in number - lived as best they could, the fishermen inhabitants having deserted the island. It was malarial, unhealthy and contained little food. The party had few stores, practically no medical stocks and no doctor. After evading capture for two months, the survivors contacted the Japanese and surrendered. By that time, 18 had died, including A.V.M. Pulford and Rear Admiral Spooner; the remainder were in a very bad way.

33. The above narrative is not intended to be critical of A.V.M. Pulford: very much the reverse. No man could have striven more wholeheartedly to carry a burden which was far beyond one man's capacity. All his decisions were reached with complete disregard for his personal interest, welfare or safety, and entirely in the interests of what he felt to be his duty according to the situation and to his instructions.

34. I sometimes feel, in the light of after events, that it might have been better if I had taken over command from him in the first instance - on 12th January. But on reflection I am certain that it was correct to decide upon the unusual course of subordinating myself to him as his assistant. The situation was acute: the overload at the A.O.C.'s level was far more than one man could handle: the staff needed drastic reorganisation, which was not practicable at the moment but which apparently would be possible shortly when suitable replacements, already on the way, had arrived. Had I attempted the task single-handed I am sure that I would not have achieved as much as we did together: in particular when, shortly afterwards, the situation deteriorated rapidly and forced on us a complete reorganisation of the Command and its rapid withdrawal to the N.E.I. over and above what we already had on hand.

35. It is unfortunate that our arrangement to transfer our H.Q. to the N.E.I. early in February on the heels of our squadrons was altered and that our H.Q. was retained in Singapore. In the latter place its ability to help its squadrons was very limited indeed. In the N.E.I. its ability to do so would have been greater and, in consequence, its squadrons might have been better able to assist Singapore during its last days and to deal with the Japanese attack on Sumatra.

36. Furthermore, if our H.Q. had been established in good time in the N.E.I., instead of being transferred in a scramble later when things were getting out of hand, it would have been better placed to alleviate the difficulties of reorganisation in Java and of evacuating from Java those officers and airmen who were surplus to requirements.

37. There were undoubtedly weighty reasons for our H.Q. having to be retained in Singapore so long, but the disadvantages to the Command as a whole in the N.E.I. were considerable.

38. So far as Pulford was personally concerned at the end I blame myself entirely. I ought to have realised, on 6th February, the effect upon him of the exchange of signals with Abdair. But I did not. My preoccupation with very urgent matters outside A.H.Q. itself is no excuse. I ought to have realised it, to have taken command then and there, and to have taken effective measures to relieve him of his responsibilities so that he could go.

APPENDIX "E"

To Report on R.A.F. Operations
in Malaya and N.E.I. 1941 - 2.

DESCRIPTION OF JAPANESE PARACHUTE ATTACK ON P.1.
AERODROME AT PALEMBANG ON 14TH FEBRUARY, 1942.

(Sketch Map of P.1. Aerodrome attached)

1. The following defences were at the aerodrome:-
 - (a) One heavy A.A. battery - 8 x 3.7 guns.
 - (b) One light A.A. battery - 6 Bofors.
 - (c) Dutch ground defence troops consisting of about 150 native soldiers and 2 armoured cars.
 - (d) Some 60 personnel of the R.A.F. ground defence forces belonging to Nos. 258 and 605 (F) Squadrons.
2. The Dutch native ground defence troops were not steady. When the air raid alarm sounded in Palembang town, it was their practice to disperse. This practice was brought to the notice of the Dutch local commander but it was too late to train them in other methods.
3. Ammunition for both heavy and light A.A. defences was limited.
4. At about 0900 hours on the 14th February, after all operationally serviceable Hurricanes had taken off to escort a bomber force operating over the Banka Straits, two formations of Japanese transport aircraft were seen approaching the aerodrome. They were preceded by a formation of bombers and the whole was escorted by a large number of fighters. A light bombing attack, followed by a machine-gun attack by the fighters, was carried out against the aerodrome defences. Then paratroops were dropped 400 - 800 yards south and west of the aerodrome in two groups of about 150 - 200 each. Simultaneously a third group of about 300 was dropped over the oil refinery area at Pladjoe a few miles away.
5. The paratroops cut the road south and west of the aerodrome and advanced to attack the 4 x 3.7 guns located on the western side of the aerodrome, using small arms and hand grenades. Wing Commander Maguire, who was on the aerodrome, immediately collected 20 R.A.F. troops to counter this action. All A.A. guns, both heavy and light, were in action against paratroops on the ground: the heavies using a special fuze for this purpose. Shortly afterwards, both batteries were ordered to evacuate the aerodrome area and this was effected with the ground defences covering their movement. Some of the Bofors guns were destroyed on the site. Wing Commander Maguire then organised the evacuation of the wounded and unarmed personnel.
6. The sole defence now left on the aerodrome was the R.A.F. ground defence party (60) and a handful of native troops all of whom operated under the command of Wing Commander Maguire - a total of about 70 all told.
7. An attempt was made to divert returning aircraft to P.II, with partial success only. Squadron Leader Brooker, D.F.C., Commander No.232 (F) Squadron, who landed with a few others, was ordered to refuel and despatch all serviceable aircraft to P.II, about 40 miles away. All pilots and surplus aircrews were also evacuated when it was apparent that no further aircraft were going to land at the aerodrome.

8. Although many paratroops had been killed, one party remained on the aerodrome perimeter held up by the defence organised by Wing Commander Maguire in the Control Tower area. The remainder, by noon, had consolidated and were holding the road about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile south of the aerodrome and just north of a road block made of Dutch and R.A.F. overturned lorries, ambushed on their way from the aerodrome to Palembang Town.

9. About 50 R.A.F. personnel, the total for whom arms were available, had been despatched about 1100 hours from the town to the aerodrome as a reinforcement, but were held up by the road block. Eventually they worked forward and assisted the evacuation of the wounded and unarmed personnel, with whom they withdrew. This party worked under the orders of Flight Lieutenant Jackson and Pilot Officer Umphelby.

10. Meanwhile, the paratroop landing on Pladjoe had given rise to many reports and rumours that Palembang was cut off from the south. In consequence strong points were established by 226(F) Group ground defence parties at all approaches to the town. H.Q., 226(F) Group destroyed their secret documents and operations room and assembled at H.Q. 225(B) Group. Close liaison with the Dutch Territorial Commander was established by the A.O.C.'s of both Groups and from the information available it appeared that penetration of the town by the Japanese might take place at any moment. A.O.C. 225 Group issued instructions, therefore, for the destruction of cyphers, Type X, and secret documents, retaining however the operations room communications. Learning later that the road to the south was clear, A.O.C. 225 Group sent the majority of his staff to P.II. and evacuated sick, wounded and surplus personnel to the south. A.O.C. 226 Group and staff also proceeded to P.II.

11. By 1400 hours the position at P.1. was:-

- (a) All communications from the aerodrome were cut. The aerodrome itself was denied to the enemy from the control tower area and was still operational although there was risk from snipers. There was practically a stalemate in the surrounding aerodrome area: R.A.F. defence troops under Wing Commander Maguire were established with automatic weapons in a few strong points.
- (b) The defence had no food or water and ammunition was running short. Supplies sent to them had been stopped by the road block.
- (c) There was also a condition of stalemate at the road block: R.A.F. troops trying to advance in this area were held up and could not establish contact with the aerodrome.

12. About 1630 hours, a company of Dutch native troops armed with mortars and machine guns arrived at the road block from the town and attempted to advance on either flank of the road.

13. This advance was resisted and the Dutch C.C. Troops later reported to Wing Commander Maguire that it would be impossible to make further attempts to clear up the area until the following morning. Just before dusk, therefore, the latter decided to withdraw his troops from the aerodrome denying beforehand all material, including unserviceable aircraft, likely to be of any use to the Japanese. Whilst so doing, Wing Commander Maguire encountered a Japanese officer and attempted to bluff the Japanese, unsuccessfully, to surrender. However this encounter confirmed Wing Commander Maguire in his decision to withdraw as it disclosed the Japanese strength and the danger of exposing his personnel to the hazards of

/night

night attacks. This withdrawal was executed successfully and the personnel involved were eventually evacuated from Sunatra, from a port on the West coast which was reached after 7 days arduous trek. During the trek many stocks of petrol and oil and rubber factories were destroyed.

14. In the meantime, on the evening of the 14th, A.O.C. 226 Group returned to Palembang from P.II. Both he and A.O.C. 225 Group were informed by the local Dutch Territorial Commander that the situation was well under control and that he had every hope of eliminating the paratroops. He gave the impression that a drive was to take place that night to clear the area. Contrary orders evidently were received later because a start was made during the night in burning oil and rubber stocks in the town and in the destruction of the oil refinery area.

15. When A.O.C.'s Nos. 225 and 226 Groups saw the Dutch Territorial Commander early on the morning of the 15th, they found that the Dutch H.Q. had closed and that the Territorial Commander himself considered it too late to restore the situation. He was himself about to leave for Lahat in the South.

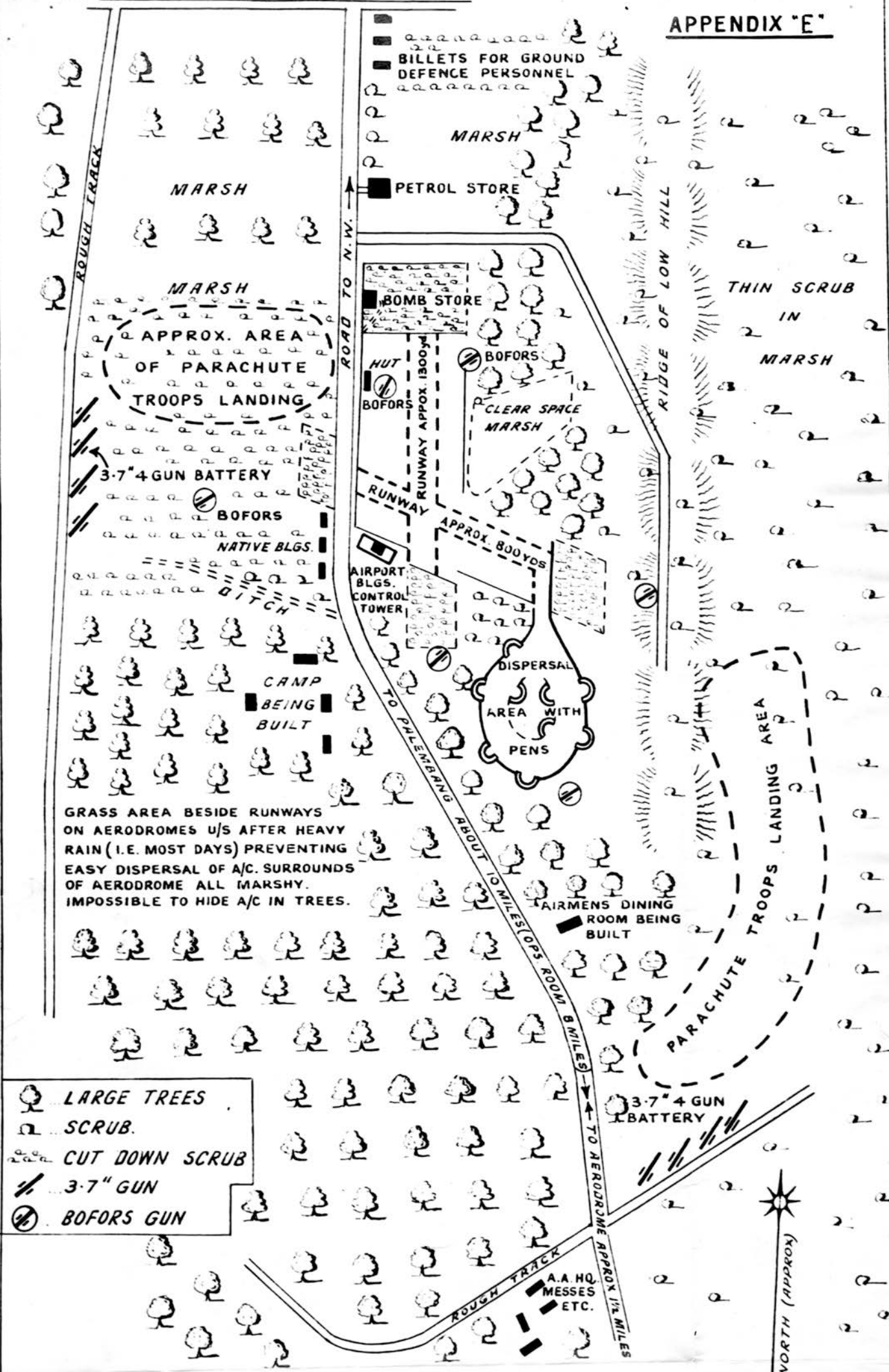
16. The Dutch Territorial Commander also stated that the ferries across the river and the railhead facilities would be blown in one hour's time with the object of embarrassing the Japanese advance towards the South. In consequence, A.O.C.No. 225 Group ordered the immediate evacuation of the town by all remaining R.A.F. personnel. This was effected by road and rail to Oesthaven. Later on during the morning of the 15th, further paratroops were dropped on P.1.

17. A.O.C. and H.Q. 225 Group reached P.II. about 1000 hours in company with A.O.C. No. 226 Group. After discussing the situation A.O.C. No. 226 Group decided that as P.II. was a bomber aerodrome control of operations from it, by both bombers and fighters, should be exercised by A.O.C. 225 Group.

18. During both the 14th and 15th February a detachment of R.A.F. Service Police under Flying Officer Hope-Faulkner, who personally inspired and directed them, did excellent work in organising traffic control and ensuring that all R.A.F. personnel were successfully cleared from the area.

SKETCH MAP OF P.I. AERODROME (PALEMBANG) TO ACCOMPANY THE REPORT OF THE CAPTURE BY JAPANESE PARATROOPS ON THE 14TH FEB. 1942.

APPENDIX "E"



NOTE. Sketch has not been drawn to scale.

APPENDIX "F"

To Report on R.A.F. Operations
in Malaya and N.E.I. 1941 - 2.

GIST OF DIRECTIVE GIVEN TO A.V.M. P.C. MALTBY
A.O.C. BRITAIR, BY GENERAL SIR ARCHIBALD WAVELL,
ALLIED SUPREME COMMANDER, S.W. PACIFIC IN BANDOENG,
JAVA, ON 23RD FEBRUARY, 1942.

1. To command all R.A.F. Units left in Java.
2. To exercise command under the orders of General van Oyen, Dutch A.O.C. in Java who, in turn, was under Command of the Dutch C-in-C., General ter Poorten.
3. That the British Army troops left in Java were under command of General H.D.W. Sitwell, who would receive orders from General ter Poorten.
4. To co-operate with the Dutch and to go on fighting as long as they continued effective resistance.
5. Thereafter to do the utmost to evacuate the remaining personnel.
6. To ensure that no undamaged equipment fell into enemy hands.
7. As Senior British Officer in Java to act as signals link between all British forces in that island and their service departments in London, Delhi, Washington and Melbourne.
8. That no help from outside could be expected for a long time.

APPENDIX "G"

To Report on R.A.F. Operations
in Malaya and N.E.I. 1941 - 2.

SENIOR STAFF OFFICERS, HEADQUARTERS WESTGROUP, LATER BRITAIR, JAVA - 15th FEBRUARY, 1942.

Air Officer Commanding

Air Vice Marshal P.C. MALTBY, CB., DSO., AFC.

Deputy A.O.C.

Air Commodore W.E. STATON, DSO., MC., DFC.

Senior Air Staff Officer

Group Captain A.G. BISHOP, OBE., AFC.

Operations : W/Cdr. D.S.E. VINES, OBE.

Intelligence : W/Cdr. F.G. FROW.

Plans : G/Capt. G.E. NICHOLETT, AFC.

Services

Signals : W/Cdr. W.T.H. NICHOLS.

Armament : W/Cdr. R.A.R. RAE.

Navigation : W/Cdr. W.P. WELCH.

Radio : W/Cdr. N. CAVE.

Senior Officer Administration

Group Captain C.K.J. COGGLE.

Organisation : W/Cdr. G.D.H. ROSS.

Personnel : W/Cdr. W.H. FRANKLIN.

Equipment : W/Cdr. E.H. WALKER.

Engineering : W/Cdr. E.B. STEEDMAN.

Works : W/Cdr. H.D. WIGHWICK.

Accounts : S/Ldr. E.A. JAMES.

CAPTURE OF KALIDJATI AERODROME - 1st MARCH 1942

1. The following aerodrome defences were located at Kalidjati:-
 - (a) One light battery - 8 Bofors
 - (b) British Forces consisting of about 250 personnel from a Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment armed with rifles, under the command of Major Coulson, recently converted to an infantry role in which they had had sketchy training only.
 - (c) A Dutch Contingent of about 200 personnel and two armoured cars.

The advance party of the British Aerodrome Defence Contingent arrived at Kalidjati on 27th February and the remainder on 28th February, when they took over responsibility for aerodrome defences from the Dutch, completing the change during the night 28th February/1st March.

The aerodrome was occupied jointly by Dutch and British Squadrons. Colonel Zomer was the Dutch Station Commander: Group Captain Whistondale, R.A.F., the British Station Commander. The latter was the senior and should have been the official Allied Station Commander. There is reason to think that he may not have understood this clearly.

2. No. 1 (G.R.) Squadron, R.A.A.F. and No. 84 (B) Squadron were based on this aerodrome and throughout the night 28th February/1st March, both squadrons attacked Japanese landings which took place at Eritanwetan about 40 miles to the N.E. of the aerodrome. It is believed that the Dutch squadrons were simultaneously attacking a landing at Merak about 110 miles to the west.

3. The landing at Eritanwetan seemed to the A.O.C., who was at the time directing operations with Gen. van Oyen in the combined air operations room in Bandoeng, to offer a considerable threat to Kalidjati aerodrome. It is only about 40 miles away and the intervening country is served by good roads. Gen. van Oyen was consulted about 0200 hours on 1st March about the advisability of withdrawing squadrons to aerodromes further back.

4. After some discussion Gen. van Oyen advised against a withdrawal because:-

- (a) If squadrons withdrew to aerodromes south of the hills they would be severely handicapped in opposing the landings.
- (b) The river crossings between the enemy landing and Kalidjati were guarded by Dutch detachments, though admittedly weak; and Soebang, which straddled the approach to Kalidjati, was held by a detachment of 1,000 men and about a dozen armoured cars.
- (c) A Dutch battalion at Cheribon was being ordered to stage a counter attack against the landing.

His advice was accepted.

5. On completion of the night's operations the R.A.F. Station Commander, Kalidjati, was instructed about 0700 hours on the 1st March, to disperse and conceal aircraft and to prepare for further operations later in the day.

6. Directly after receiving this message, he learned that the Dutch Air Force was evacuating the aerodrome and destroying the petrol dumps and that the Dutch defence troops, which had been finally relieved by the British aerodrome defence party during the night, were also withdrawing.

7. He rang up the air operations room in Bandoeng from which the A.O.C. told him :-

- (a) That the reasons for the Dutch withdrawal were not known.
- (b) To carry on with his orders to disperse aircraft and to prepare for operations later.
- (c) To make preparations for evacuating the aerodrome but to do so quietly so as not to cause alarm.
- (d) That he would be given warning if evacuation became necessary, but in the event of his being unable to communicate with Bandoeng he was to use his discretion and evacuate the aerodrome if things became critical.
- (e) To keep in touch with the Dutch Military Commander in Soebang.

8. The A.O.C. was unable to contact Gen. van Oyen but his staff, immediately after the above conversation, confirmed that the Dutch squadrons had been ordered by Gen. van Oyen to move back to Andir. Further inquiries made by the A.O.C. at about 0715 hours (they were made either from Gen. van Oyen's staff or by telephone from A.H.K., now uncertain which) about the Dutch defences between the point of landing and the aerodrome, indicated that the situation was satisfactory.

9. The Station Commander issued orders for aircraft to be dispersed and for crews to take some rest preparatory for operations later in the day. After receiving these orders, O.C. No. 84(B) Squadron drove to Soebang about 8 miles away, where aircrews were billeted, but on arrival was informed that all Dutch troops were evacuating the area and in the process of withdrawing to the hills. He immediately returned and reported this to his Station Commander. Apparently the Station Commander, or alternatively O.C. No. 84 Squadron (Wing Commander Jeudwine), ordered the despatch of spare aircrews to Bandoeng and the rest to stand by, detailed a demolition party and re-inforced the aerodrome by R.A.F. personnel armed with light automatics and rifles. Group Captain Whistondale then left for Soebang about 0830 hours and was never seen again. It is believed that his car met a Japanese patrol and that he was killed.

10. About 1030 hours, O.C. No. 84 Squadron returned to Station H.Q., which was on the road a few hundred yards from the aerodrome, to find out the situation. He found that a signal had been received from H.Q. R.A.F. confirming the orders for dispersal of aircraft but adding that if communications were interrupted or the situation became serious, the Station Commander might evacuate at his discretion. At that moment an R.A. officer arrived and reported that the Japanese had been sighted three miles up the road towards Soebang. Immediately afterwards, Station H.Q. was fired on by machine guns from a Japanese motorised column proceeding towards the aerodrome. This column consisted of three tanks and two armoured cars supported by about 150 troops in lorries armed with tommy guns. The Japanese penetrated the aerodrome, making it impossible for No. 84 Squadron to approach their widely dispersed aircraft, and the signal was given for squadron personnel to evacuate the area. 21 Blenheims were captured of which 8 were serviceable. Meanwhile, 4 serviceable Hudsons, which were close to the landing strip, were taken off under fire and flown to Andir aerodrome near Bandoeng. One of these Hudsons was taken off by a pilot without any crew and another was manhandled into position by its crew for take-off under heavy fire.

11. From the reports of personnel who got safely back it is quite clear that, although a few of the Bofors guns were hurriedly evacuated, the remainder remained at their posts and acted in an anti-tank role; further, that the ground defence party, both Army and R.A.F., remained in the area endeavouring to repulse the attack. It is believed that there were no British survivors from these parties. Later the Japanese testified to the gallant and protracted defence put up, and this was supported by the number of bodies, both British and Japanese, which were found near the aerodrome and in the woods around it by British salvage parties employed by the Japanese after the capitulation of Java. Dutch bodies were also found on the sides of the roads leading to the aerodrome along which the Japanese attack came. The Dutch aerodrome defence contingent, although it had been relieved during the night, remained to assist in the defence: it located posts on the roads leading to the aerodrome on the E.N. and W., the two former of which were over-run by the enemy's armoured vehicles against which there were no anti-tank weapons.

12. On the 2nd March (p.m.) it was understood that the Dutch A.H.K. was arranging for a counter-attack to recapture the aerodrome, but apparently circumstances at the time prevented it being staged.

13. In view of the unsatisfactory accounts about the incident which were current at the time, the A.O.C., in co-operation with the G.O.C. British Forces, arranged for a joint Army/R.A.F. Court of Inquiry to be held: the S.A.S.O., A.H.Q., presided and a Dutch Air Force Officer and an R.A. Officer formed the Court.

14. From the Inquiry it became evident that :-

- (a) The Japanese landing in the Eritanwetan area had been unopposed on the beaches.
- (b) Dutch troops (approximately 1 Bn.) which counter-attacked from the direction of Cheribon during the early morning of 1st March had been repulsed.
- (c) Although strong points at river crossings on the roads leading to Soebang from the Cheribon area had been prepared the Dutch troops guarding them had withdrawn, no demolitions took place and no opposition was offered to the advance of the Japanese column.
- (d) The British aerodrome defence party at the aerodrome had established road pickets near the aerodrome but these had been overrun and, in any case, had not been able to give warning to the aerodrome.
- (e) No warning of the fact that the Dutch defences between the beaches and Kalidjati aerodrome were not resisting was given to H.Q. R.A.F. by Gen. van Oyen, Commanding Air Forces, under whose orders the R.A.F. were operating, or by his staff. The Dutch squadrons at Kalidjati had been withdrawn and apparently the R.A.F. Station Commander, Kalidjati, was informed by the Dutch Colonel Commanding that this withdrawal was taking place.
- (f) When last seen Major Coulson and the combined military and R.A.F. defence forces were actively engaged in opposing the Japanese attack.

15. Gen. van Oyen maintained subsequently to the A.O.C. that no one could have foreseen such a rapid advance over so long a distance as 50 kilometres after a landing on open beaches and past even the weak Dutch intervening detachments.

16. There was an unfortunate sequel to this disaster. The Dutch Intelligence at G.H.Q. stated, in reporting the loss of Kalidjati in their next Army Bulletin (published in English), "The British deserted the aerodrome". The accusation was repeated in a telegram sent by a member of the Governor-General N.E.I.'s Staff to Washington. In consequence Field-Marshal Lord Dill sent a telegram to the G.O.C., received on the 5th March, from Washington ordering an inquiry into the accusation. The A.O.C. and the G.O.C. commanding the British Forces immediately demanded and obtained an interview with the Commander-in-Chief. The Commander-in-Chief stated that he knew nothing whatsoever of the report to Washington and regretted that it had been made. He promised to send a telegram to Washington to put things right, and at the Conference held at G.H.Q. on the 5th March a telegram in English was read out in which it was stated that :-

- (a) The accusation of "deserting the aerodrome" was entirely due to a mistranslation of Dutch into English.
- (b) The Commander-in-Chief wished to contradict emphatically any implication there might be that British troops had, at any time, behaved improperly. On the contrary, all British troops under his command had fought throughout with the greatest bravery and daring and he was entirely satisfied with them.

17. It has been impracticable in the time available to obtain a clearer picture of what exactly happened at Kalidjati. Surviving British witnesses of consequence are few and Dutch views have not been sought. Much still remains unsatisfactorily explained: it is hoped that time will reveal the full truth.

LIST OF FORMATIONS ADMINISTERED BY AIR HEADQUARTERS, FAR EAST - 8TH DECEMBER, 1941.

UNIT	LOCATION	DATE IF FORMED AFTER 8.12.41.	SUBSEQUENT MOVES						FINAL DISPOSAL
			TO	DATE	TO	DATE	TO	DATE	
AIR HEADQUARTERS	BUKIT TIMAH		<u>MALAYA AND SINGAPORE ISLAND</u>						
			Two-thirds PALEMBANG	30.1.42.	H.Q. West Group SOEKABOEMI	15.2.42.	H.Q. Britair BANDOENG	23.2.42.	Captured in Java (Two thirds of officers at Base awaiting embarkation.)
			Remainder to BATAVIA	11.2.42.					
No. 223 Group (NORGROUP)	KUALA LUMPUR		BUKIT MERTAJAM	8.12.41.	IPOH	12.41.	Disbanded	22.12.41.	Note "A"
No. 224 (F) Group.	KALLANG	1.1.42. from staff Fighter Coordinator	JAVA	12.2.42.					Captured en route to Java.
R.A.F. STATION	ALOR STAR								Note "A"
C.&M. PARTY	BATU PAHAT	Jan. 1942.							Note "A"
C.&M. PARTY	BUTTERWORTH								Note "A"
C.&M. PARTY	GONG KEDAH								Note "A"
C.&M. PARTY	IPOH								Note "A"
RAF. STATION	KALLANG		Transit Base Java	11.2.42.					Captured in Java.
RAF. STATION	KLUANG								Note "A"
RAF. STATION	KOTA BAHRU								Note "A"
RAF. STATION	KUALA LUMPUR	20.12.41.							Note "A"
RAF. STATION	KUANAN								Note "A"
C.&M. PARTY	PORT SWETTENHAM	Jan. 1942							Note "A"
RAF. STATION	SELETAR		Transit Base Java	11.2.42.	SEMELAK	13.2.42.	Transit Base.	28.2.42.	Captured in Java. C.O. and Armaments Officer evacuated 27.2.42.
RAF. STATION	SEMBAWANG		PALEMBANG	25.1.42.	BATAVIA	17.2.42.			R.A.A.F. evacuated Java 19.2.42.
C.&M. PARTY	SEMBAWANG	25.1.42.	Transit Base Java.	11.2.42.					Captured in Java.
RAF. STATION	SUNGEI PATANI								Note "A"

UNIT	LOCATION	DATE IF FORMED AFTER 8.12.41.	SUBSEQUENT MOVES						FINAL DISPOSAL
			TO	DATE	TO	DATE	TO	DATE	
C.&M. PARTY	TAIPING								Note "A"
RAF. STATION	TENGAH		Evacuated to Transit Camp SELETAR	8.2.42.	Transit Base Java	11.2.42.	KALIDJATI Transit Base.	18.2.42. 1.3.42.	Captured in Java.
No. 1 (GR) Sqn. RAAF.	KOTA BAHRU		SEMBAWANG	12.41.	PALEMBANG	30.1.42.	SEMPLAK JAVA.	2.42.	Some ground crews evacuated Java.25.2.42 Remainder captured in Java. Aircrews at base awaiting evacuation.
No. 8 (GR) Sqn. RAAF.	SEMBAWANG		PALEMBANG	24.1.42.	SEMPLAK JAVA	17.2.42.			Evacuated Java 19 and 21 Feb. 1942.
No. 21 (F) Sqn. RAAF.	SUNGEI PATANI		BUTTERWORTH	9.12.41.	IPOH	10.12.41.	KUALA LUMPUR	18.12.41.	Evacuated Java 19.2.42.
					SEMBAWANG	21.12.41.	BATAVIA via PALEMBANG	30.1.42.	Note "B"
No. 27 (NF) Sqn. RAAF.	SUNGEI PATANI		BUTTERWORTH	12.12.41.	KALLANG	15.12.42.	BATAVIA via PALEMBANG	28.1.42.	Evacuated Java 21.2.42. Note "B"
No. 34 (B) Sqn. RAAF.	TENGAH		PALEMBANG	24.1.42.	LAHAT	4.2.42.	BATAVIA	17.2.42.	Evacuated Java 27.2.42.
No. 36 (TB) Sqn. RAAF.	SELETAR		BATAVIA	27.1.42.					Surplus 36/100 Sqn. personnel evacuated Java 23.2.42.
No. 60 (B) Sqn. RAAF.	KUANTAN		RANGOON	19.12.41.					Absorbed into India Command December, 1941
No. 62 (B) Sqn. RAAF.	ALOR STAR		PALEMBANG	21.1.42.	BATAVIA	16.2.42.	SEMPLAK	2.42.	Evacuated Java 27.2.42.
No. 100 (TB) Sqn. RAAF.	SELETAR		BATAVIA	27.1.42.					Surplus 36/100 Sqn. personnel evacuated Java 23.2.42.
No. 205 (FB) Sqn. RAAF.	SELETAR		COOTHAVEN	22.1.42.	BATAVIA	30.1.42.	TJILITJAP	2.42.	Evacuated Java 27.2.42.
No. 232 (F) Sqn. RAAF.	SELETAR	15.1.42.	PALEMBANG	28.1.42.	BATAVIA	16.2.42.	ANDIR and TASIK MALAYA	2.42.	Ground crews evacuated Java 27.2.42.
No. 243 (F) Sqn. RAAF.	KALLANG		BATAVIA	4.2.42.					Evacuated Java 21.2.42. Note "B"
No. 453 (F) Sqn. RAAF.	SEMBAWANG		BUTTERWORTH	12.12.41.	KUALA LUMPUR	21.12.41.	SEMBAWANG BATAVIA via PALEMBANG	24.12.41. 24.1.42.	Evacuated Java 19.2.42. Note "B"

UNIT	LOCATION	DATE IF FORMED AFTER 8.12.41.	SUBSEQUENT MOVES						FINAL DISPOSAL
			TO	DATE	TO	DATE	TO	DATE	
No. 488 (F) Sqdn. RAF.	KALLANG		BATAVIA (aircrew) via PALEMBANG	4.2.42.	BATAVIA (ground crews)	11.2.42.			Evacuated Java 19.2.42. Note "B"
No. 4 PRU. RAF.	SELETAR		BATAVIA	11.2.42.					Evacuated Java 21.2.42.
No. 4 AACU. RAF.	TENGAH		BATAVIA	11.2.42.					Evacuated Java 21.2.42.
Wirraway Flight.	KLUANG		SELETAR	? ? ?	BATAVIA	11.2.42.			Evacuated Java 21.2.42.
M.V.A.F.	KALLANG PENANG IPOH KUALA LUMPUR		PAKAN BAROE (part) BATAVIA (remainder)	21.12.41. 10.2.42.	PALEMBANG	28.1.42.	BATAVIA	16.2.42.)	Some evacuated Java 19-27.2.42.
Air/Sea Rescue. RAF.	SELETAR		PALEMBANG	10.2.42.					Captured en route to Sumatra.
Aerodrome Construction Unit, RNZAF.	TEBRAU		BATAVIA	31.1.42.					Evacuated Java 18.2.42.
No. 151 M.U.	SELETAR		BATAVIA via PALEMBANG	30.1.42.					Evacuated Java 21.2.42. Note "B"
No. 152 M.U.	BUKIT PANJANG		BATAVIA	11.2.42.	POERBALINGGA	2.42.			Captured in Java
No. 153 M.U.	KUALA LUMPUR		DJOCJACARTA	9.1.42.					Captured in Java At base awaiting opportunity to embark.
"Z" M.U.	SELETAR		BATAK QUARRY	12.41.	50% COSTHAVEN	15.1.42.	BATAVIA	17.2.42.	Captured in Java.
A.S.P.	SELETAR		BATAVIA	3.2.42.	MIDDLE JAVA	18.2.42.			Captured in Java.
No. 81 R.S.U.	KLUANG		SEMBAWANG	1.42.	BATAVIA	11.2.42.	GAROET	3.3.42.	Captured in Java.
R.I.M.U.	SELETAR		PONGOL	1.42.	BATAVIA	6.2.42.			Captured in Java.
No. 243 TRU.	MERSING		SINGAPORE	15.1.42.					} Captured in Java.
No. 250 MRU.	TANAH MERAH BESAR				Absorbed into other Radar Units.				
No. 308 TRU	SERANGOON	1.42.				2.42.			
No. 511 COL.	CHUNANG	1.42.	SINGAPORE	1.42.)					
No. 512 COL.	KUPANG		SINGAPORE	1.42.	BATAVIA	6.2.42.			

UNIT	LOCATION	DATE IF FORMED AFTER 8.12.41.	SUBSEQUENT MOVES						FINAL DISPOSAL
			TO	DATE	TO	DATE	TO	DATE	
No. 518 COL.	KOTA TINGGI	12.41.	SINGAPORE	1.42.	BATAVIA	6.2.42.			Captured in Java.
C.D./C.H.L.	CHANGI JAIL	1.42.	BATAVIA	6.2.42.					Captured in Java.
OBSERVER CORPS.	SINGAPORE		PALEMBANG	5.2.42.	BATAVIA	15.2.42.			Evacuated Java 23.2.42.
S.S. "SHENKING"	SINGAPORE		COLOMBO	1.11.41.					Eventually absorbed into India Command
S.S. "TUNG SONG".	SINGAPORE		OOSTHAVEN	6.2.42.	BATAVIA	16.2.42.			Left TJILITJAP 2.3.42.
				<u>BURMA</u>					
No. 221 Group	RANGOON								Absorbed into India Command December, 1941
RAF STATION	AKYAB								
RAF STATION	HEHO								
RAF STATION	LASHIO								
RAF STATION	MAGWE								
RAF STATION	MEIKTILA								
RAF STATION	MERGUI								
RAF STATION	MINGALADON								
RAF STATION	MOULMEIN								
RAF STATION	NAMSANG								
RAF STATION	TAVOY								
RAF STATION	TOUNGOO								
RAF STATION	VICTORIA POINT								
No. 67 (F) Sqdn. RAF.	MINGALDON								
				<u>CEYLON</u>					
No. 222 Group	COLOMBO								Absorbed into India Command December 1941
RAF STATION	CHINA BAY								
RAF STATION	KOGGALA								

UNIT	LOCATION	DATE IF FORMED AFTER 8.12.41.	SUBSEQUENT MOVES						FINAL DISPOSAL
			TO	DATE	TO	DATE	TO	DATE	
RAF STATION	RATMALANA								) Absorbed into India Command December 1941
No. 273 Sqdn RAF. (One Flight only).	CHINA BAY								
RAF STATION	KAI TAK			<u>HONG KONG</u>					Captured 25.12.41.
				<u>INDIAN OCEAN BASES</u>					) ) Absorbed into India Command December 1941
Refuelling Base.	PORT BLAIR ANDAMANS								
Refuelling Base.	DIEGO GARCIA CHAGOS								
Refuelling Base.	COCOS ISLANDS.								
Refuelling Base.	MALDIVES								
Refuelling Base.	FORT LOUIS MAURITIUS								
Refuelling Base.	NANCOWRY NICOBARS								
Refuelling Base.	SEYCHELLES								
				<u>NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES</u>					
				<u>SUMATRA</u>					
No. 225 (B) Group. HQ.	PALEMBANG	17.1.42.	BATAVIA	16.2.42.	Disbanded	18.2.42.			
No. 226 (F) Group. HQ.	PALEMBANG	4.2.42.	BATAVIA	15.2.42.	Disbanded	18.2.42.			Small Fighter Control H.Q. retained BATAVIA 28.2.42.
No. 266 (F) Wing. HQ.	PALEMBANG	4.2.42.	BATAVIA	15.2.42.					Evacuated Java (except Sqdns and A.S.P.) 18.2.42.
C.&M. PARTY	LAHAT	28.1.42.	BATAVIA	16.2.42.					Captured in Java.
C.&M. PARTY	LHO'NGA	20.12.41.							Evacuated from SABANG 2.42.
C.&M. PARTY	MEDAN	20.12.41.							Evacuated from SABANG 2.42.

UNIT	LOCATION	DATE IF FORMED AFTER 8.12.41.	SUBSEQUENT MOVES						FINAL DISPOSAL
			TO	DATE	TO	DATE	TO	DATE	
RAF STATION	SEMPLAK	17.2.42.	Disbanded	28.2.42.					Note "A"
RAF STATION	TJILILITAN	2.42.	Disbanded	28.2.42.					Note "A"
BASE H.Q. & TRANSIT CAMPS	BATAVIA	1.42.	POERBALINGGA	24.2.42.					At base awaiting embarkation. Captured in Java.
No. 575 RADAR UNIT	BATAVIA	4.2.42.							Captured in Java.

Note "A" - Staffs disbanded and personnel used against Command requirements through Transit Camps.

Note "B" - Intended for transfer from SINGAPORE to JAVA, had to be diverted via PALEMBANG, SUMATRA, owing to shipping difficulties.

APPENDIX "J"

To Report on R.A.F. Operations
in Malaya and N.E.I. 1941 - 2.

TERMS OF SURRENDER IN JAVA, 12TH MARCH, 1942.

1. All British troops, Australian troops, and personnel of the Royal Air Force, and all American troops, which now exist in Java surrender to the Japanese troops unconditionally.
2. All troops will obey absolutely to any orders of the Japanese troops, subject to their rights as prisoners of war, vide the Geneva Convention of 1929.

Signed at

Bandoeng

March 12th 1942.

P.C. MALTBY, Air Vice Marshal.
A.O.C. Royal Air Force.

H.D.W. SITWELL, Major General
Comdg. British troops in Java.

ARTHUR S. BLACKBURN, Brigadier.
Commanding Australian troops in Java.

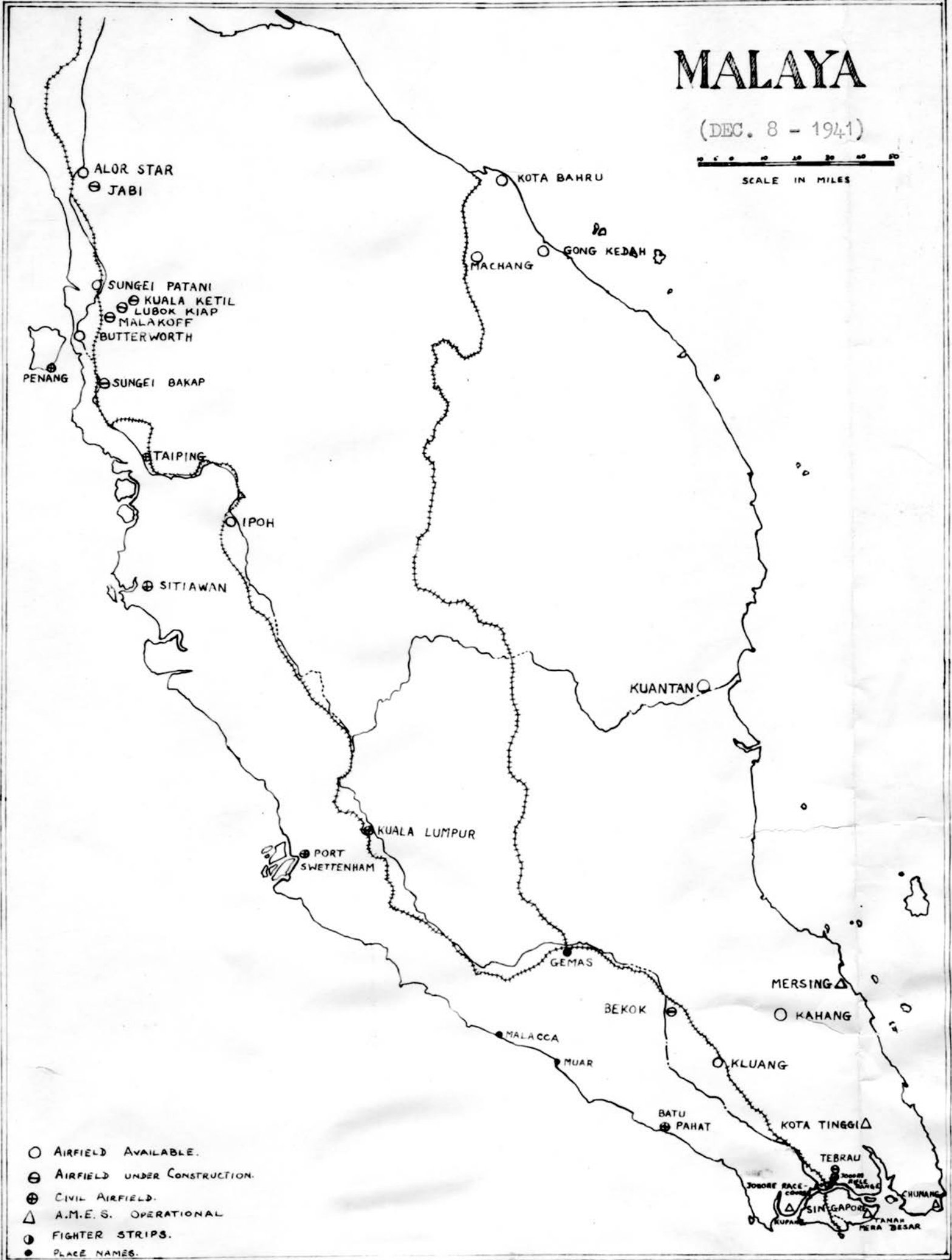
ALBERT E. SEARLE, Colonel U.S. Army.

MALAYA

(DEC. 8 - 1941)

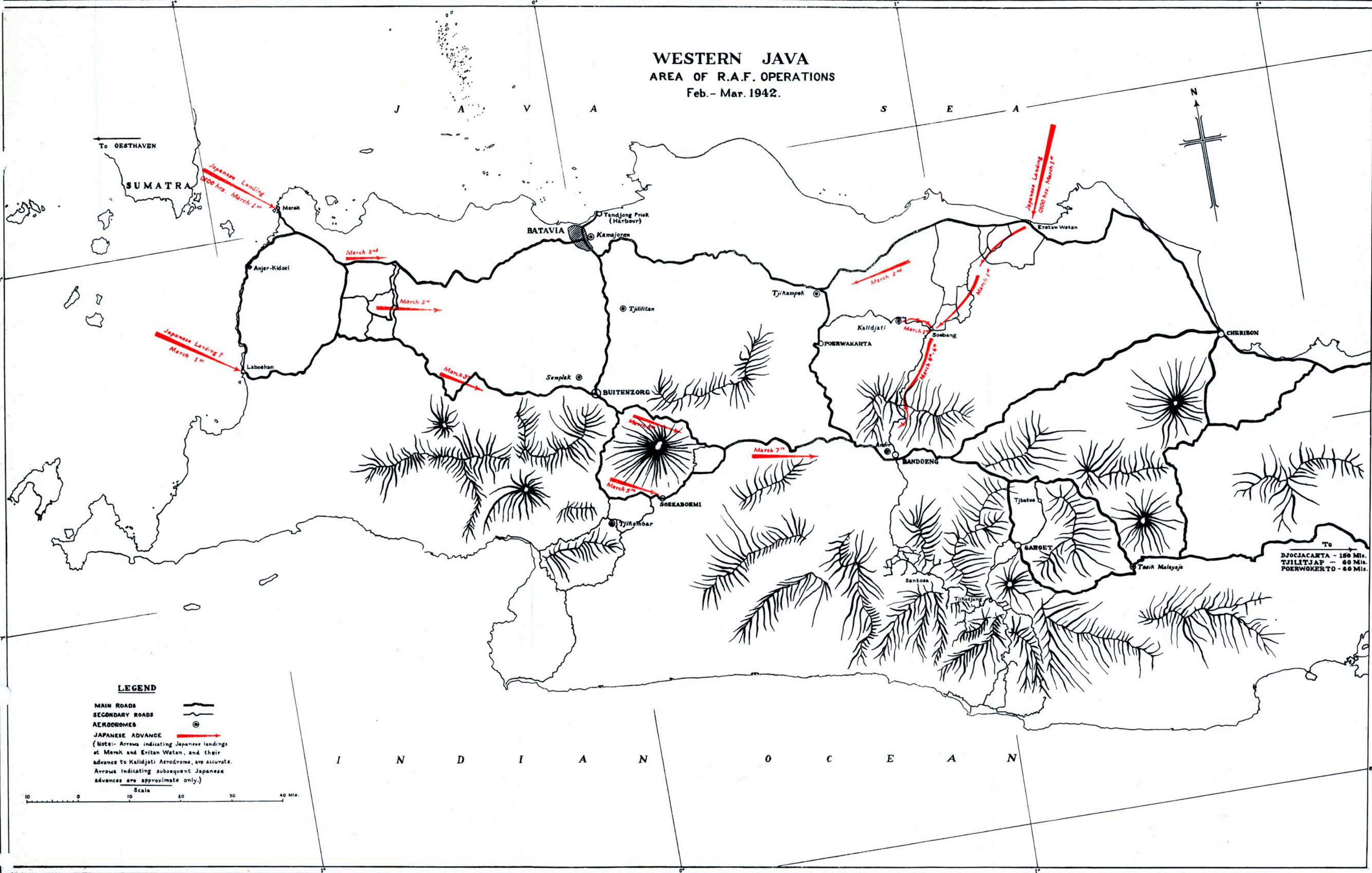


SCALE IN MILES



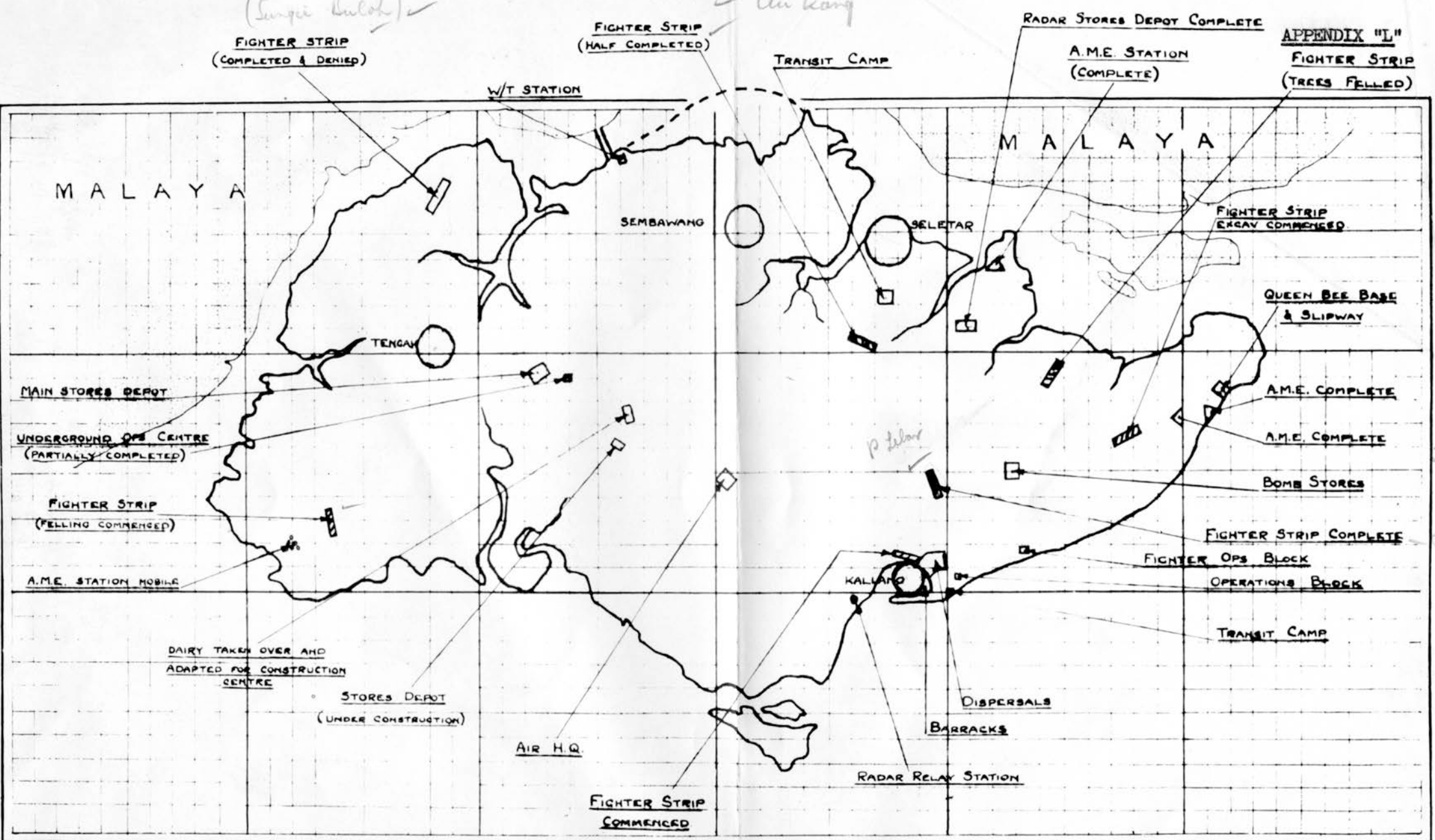
- AIRFIELD AVAILABLE.
- ⊕ AIRFIELD UNDER CONSTRUCTION.
- ⊙ CIVIL AIRFIELD.
- △ A.M.E.S. OPERATIONAL
- FIGHTER STRIPS.
- PLACE NAMES.

WESTERN JAVA
 AREA OF R.A.F. OPERATIONS
 Feb. - Mar. 1942.



(Sungai Buloh)

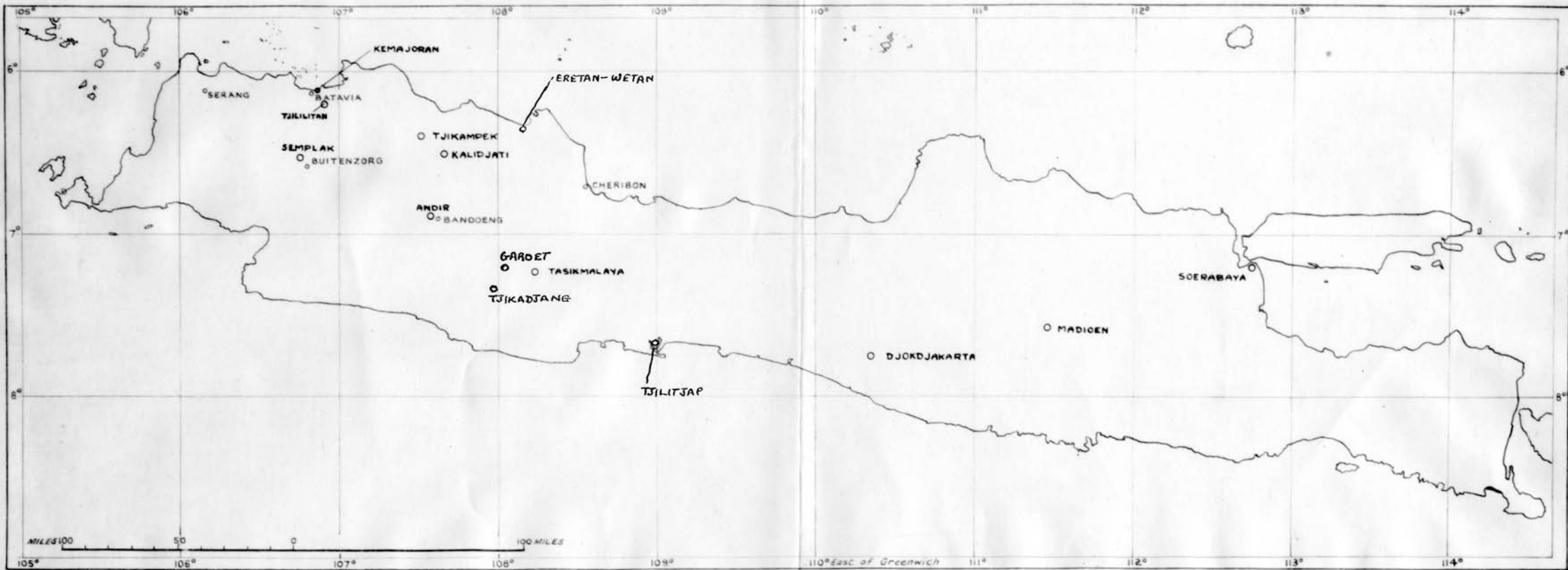
Alu Kang



SCALE : 1 in. = 3 miles.

- SINGAPORE ISLAND - (DEC. 8 - 1941)

JAVA. (FEB. 14--1942).



OUTLINE MAP OF INDIAN OCEAN SHOWING AREA OF FAR EAST COMMAND IN 1941 (DEC. 8 - 1941)

APPENDIX "O"

