

# War in the Pacific

## Defending Australia

### The First Six Months

Chapter 11

## Australia Day 1942

### The Retreat to Singapore

# Situation report 26th January 1942

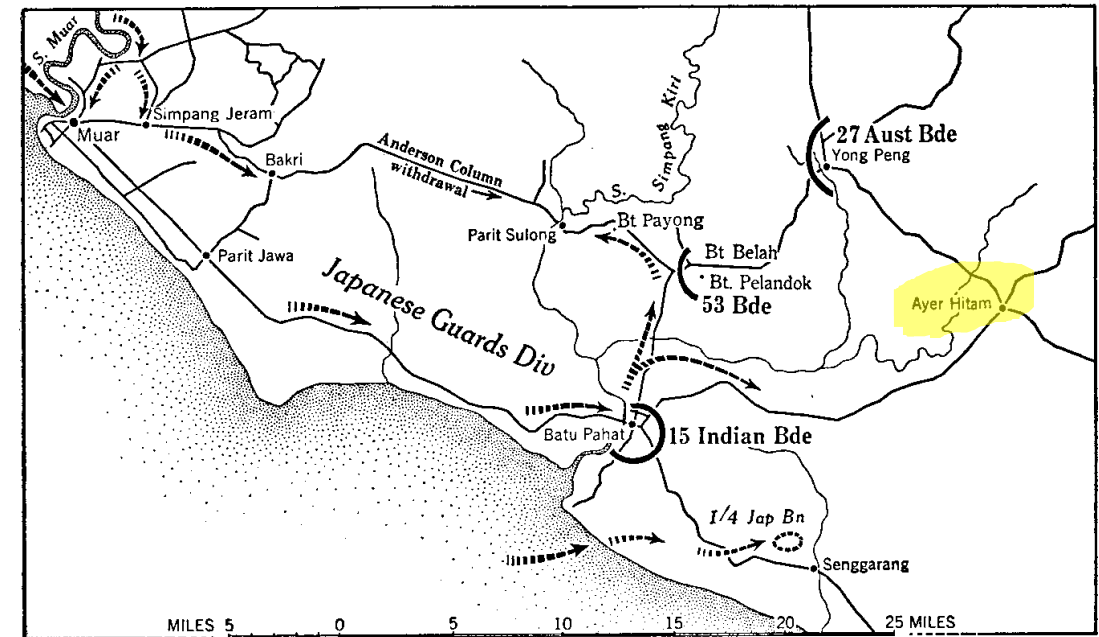
## Malaya

- The 8th Division AIF have inflicted heavy losses on the Japanese but have been unable to stop their advance. Two of the six infantry battalions have suffered very severe losses in the fighting at Muar.
- Despite destruction of bridges and boats during the withdrawal, the Japanese have been able to follow up quickly not only with infantry but with tanks and artillery as well and have been outflanking the allies by moving troops by sea down the west coast.
- The defenders have withdrawn to Ayer Hitam.
- Reinforcements are coming in, but slowly and many are not well trained.
- The airforce has started withdrawing to Sumatra.

## NEI

- The Japanese are advancing to the south and west. Balikpapan and Kendari have been taken and Ambon is under threat.
- 1 Australian Corps is going to move to reinforce NEI.

**General Wavell**, appointed Supreme Commander of ABDA, is trying to solve "the time problem between the rate of Japanese advance and the arrival of reinforcements".



The withdrawal from Bakri

## Churchill

Is alternately giving fire breathing instructions to hold Singapore and musing about withdrawing to concentrate on defending Burma.

# Situation report 26th January 1942

## **New Guinea**

- Rabaul and Kavieng have been invaded by the Japanese supported by aircraft carriers. Defenders who have not surrendered are fugitives in the jungle.
- The government left civilians and defenders in the lurch without assistance or guidance.
- Japanese aircraft are raiding further and further south.

## **An Anzac naval command** is being created.

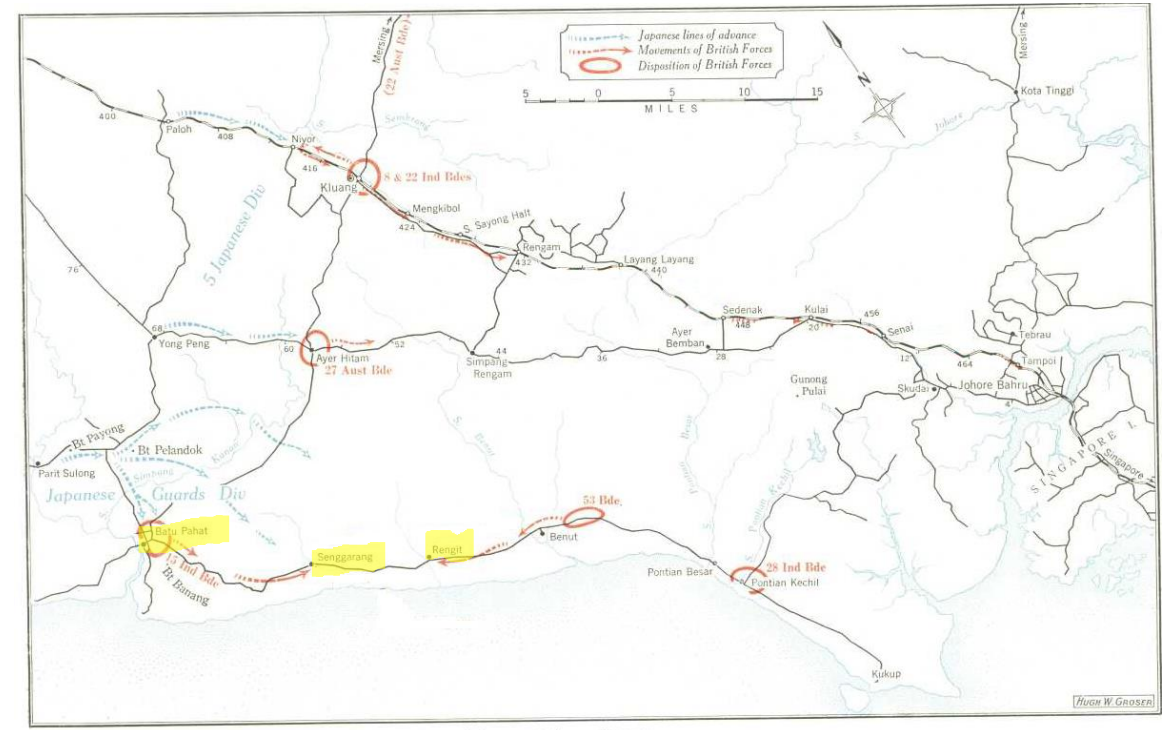
- US Navy carriers have been ordered to start attacking Japanese bases in the Pacific.

## **Government**

- Curtin is recuperating at home in Perth.
- Australia has not achieved any acceptable role in the direction of the war.

# 26<sup>th</sup> January - Malaya

- The 22nd Indian Brigade withdrew at night (25th-26th) to Rengam and the 8th Brigade was withdrawn to Sungei Sayong Halt.
- 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade succeeded, with the aid of a bombardment by the river gunboat *Dragonfly*, in withdrawing during the night of 25th-26th January from Batu Pahat. But at Senggarang on the morning of the 26th the enemy had occupied the bridge and near-by buildings. Under attack also from the air, successive attempts to force a way south failed.
- 53rd Brigade was again called upon to conduct a relieving operation.
- In the afternoon (26<sup>th</sup>) General Heath issued a definite program for a withdrawal to Singapore Island on the night of 31st January-1st February.
- That night, (26<sup>th</sup>) the Japanese captured Rengit.



Western Johore, 26th January

# 26<sup>th</sup> January - Malaya

- On the 26<sup>th</sup> at 12.30 p.m. 53<sup>rd</sup> Brigade sent a column under Major Banham, of artillery, armoured cars, carriers and a detachment of infantry up the coast road towards Senggarang.
  - The column was in close formation when it ran into a road-block a little north of Rengit, and was almost wiped out.
  - Only Banham's carrier broke through and continued on its way.
  - After negotiating a succession of Japanese road blocks, it dramatically toppled over the last one and reached Senggarang at 2 p.m. just as Brigadier Challen was about to launch a full-scale attempt to break through to the south.
- On Banham's report of the obstructions he had encountered, Challen decided that it would be useless to attempt to get his guns and vehicles to Benut.
- He therefore ordered them destroyed, the wounded to be left under the protection of the Red Cross, and the remaining troops to make their way across country past the enemy.

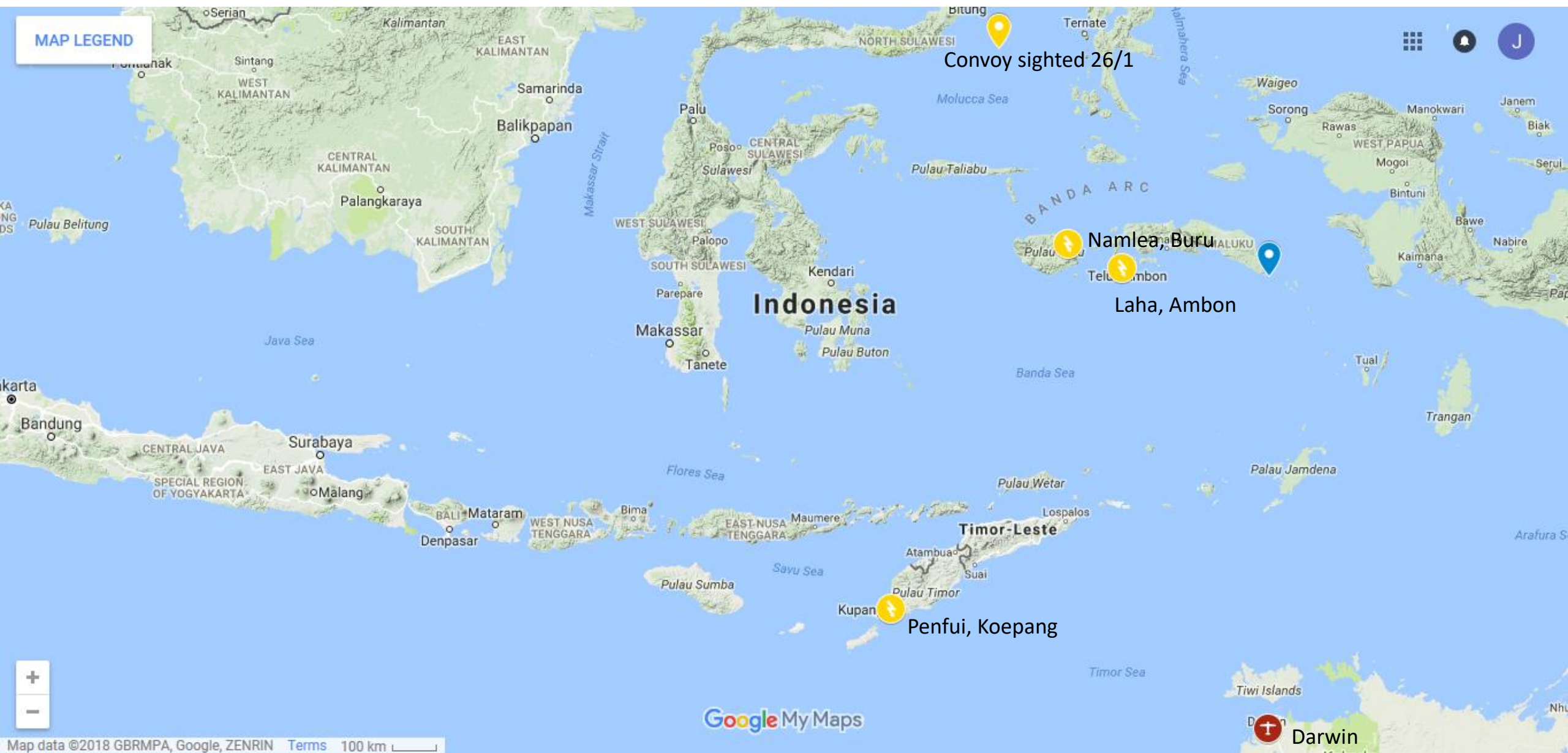


Universal Carrier

# 26<sup>th</sup> January - Air

- **New Guinea**
- Next day (26<sup>th</sup>) Wewak was raided.
- On the night of the 26th, 3 Catalinas returned to the attack on Rabaul. Higgins reported a possible hit on an aircraft carrier and Duigan, who was over the target an hour later than the others, reported a ship blazing fiercely on the north-west side and another burning near the centre of the harbour.
- **NEI**
- On the 26th a strong force of Zeros came marauding over Laha and Namlea. The warning was too short for the Hudson crews to get their aircraft into the air and the result was costly—three destroyed on the ground at Laha and one at Namlea.
- On the 26th January Koepang was attacked by seven enemy fighter aircraft, they made a low-level attack on Penfui aerodrome. Two local civilian aircraft were shot down, an American Kittyhawk was wrecked on the ground and the station hangar, operations room and barracks were strafed. The raiders also intercepted an R.A.A.F. Dakota, which was returning to Penfui after having flown a radio party to Surabaya, and shot it down over Sumba Strait. The crew of four, after 30 hours in the water during which they had to beat off shark attacks, managed to reach Sumba Island, 25 miles away.
- About 3.30 p.m. on the 26th a Hudson crew sighted 22 ships—transports in convoy with a naval escort—in a position just north of the equator and to the east of Menado, moving on a south-easterly course. It seemed certain that Ambon was to be invaded.
- ABDA Command signalled A.C.H. Darwin: "Can you make available Empire flying-boats to evacuate from Laha and or Namlea? If so request you dispatch boats as soon as possible to these bases."
- While some Hudson crews shadowed the approaching force and reported its progress through the Molucca Sea, others prepared their aircraft for the evacuation, stripping them of all unessential equipment.
- Ground crew laboured to repair one Hudson that had been damaged in landing and needed a new tail plane. They worked all night with only a shaded torch for light but by dawn the aircraft was ready for take-off.
- Flight Sergeant McEgan, one of 23 men crammed into a Hudson piloted by Flight Lieutenant Cornfoot, described the flight to Darwin:
  - It took the whole length of the runway to get off. There was no flare path and only a pale moon to guide the pilot. All passengers stood the whole way, packed between the pilot and the second main spar of the aircraft. The flight took four and a half hours and we were so crushed that we couldn't lift our arms.





# 26<sup>th</sup> January - Air

- **Malaya**
- Next morning (26<sup>th</sup>) two Hudsons on reconnaissance up the east coast found two cruisers, 12 destroyers, two 10,000-ton transports and three barges about 10 miles from, and steaming towards, Endau.
  - They were unable to transmit the news, possibly due to enemy radio jamming.
  - Using cloud cover, the Hudsons evaded combat and returned to report that the enemy was about to land at Endau.
- Only thirty-six aircraft were available as a striking force.
  - It was thought that the Japanese ships would be in shallow water by the time they could be attacked so the Vildebeestes were rearmed with bombs instead of torpedoes.
  - The bomber group in Java was ordered to send all available bombers to Endau, and
  - ABDA Command was asked for American bombers to help out.
- The first wave of the local force (9 Hudsons and 12 Vildebeestes) took off in the early afternoon, escorted by 23 fighters. They encountered opposition from at least 50 fighters in the target area, about 3 p.m., but the attackers were able to use cloud cover to approach the target. Direct hits were made on two transports and a cruiser, and bombs were dropped among troops in barges and on the beaches, for a loss of 5 Vildebeestes.
- About 5 p.m., when the second attack was made, by 9 Vildebeestes and 3 Albacores, with 12 fighters, the clouds had disappeared. Even so, one pilot put a stick of bombs accurately across one of the transports which later was reported to be listing. 5 more Vildebeestes, 2 Albacores and a fighter were lost.



Vickers Vildebeest Mark III torpedo bombers

- Five Hudsons from No. 62 squadron based in Sumatra also bombed troops and landing-craft in the Sungei Endau during the evening escorted by four Buffaloes and eight Hurricanes. On returning to Tengah at dusk two of the Hudsons crashed.
- From all three attacks the attacking bombers and their fighter escorts claimed 13 enemy aircraft destroyed and 5 probably destroyed.



# 26<sup>th</sup> January – Endau Convoy



# 27<sup>th</sup> January

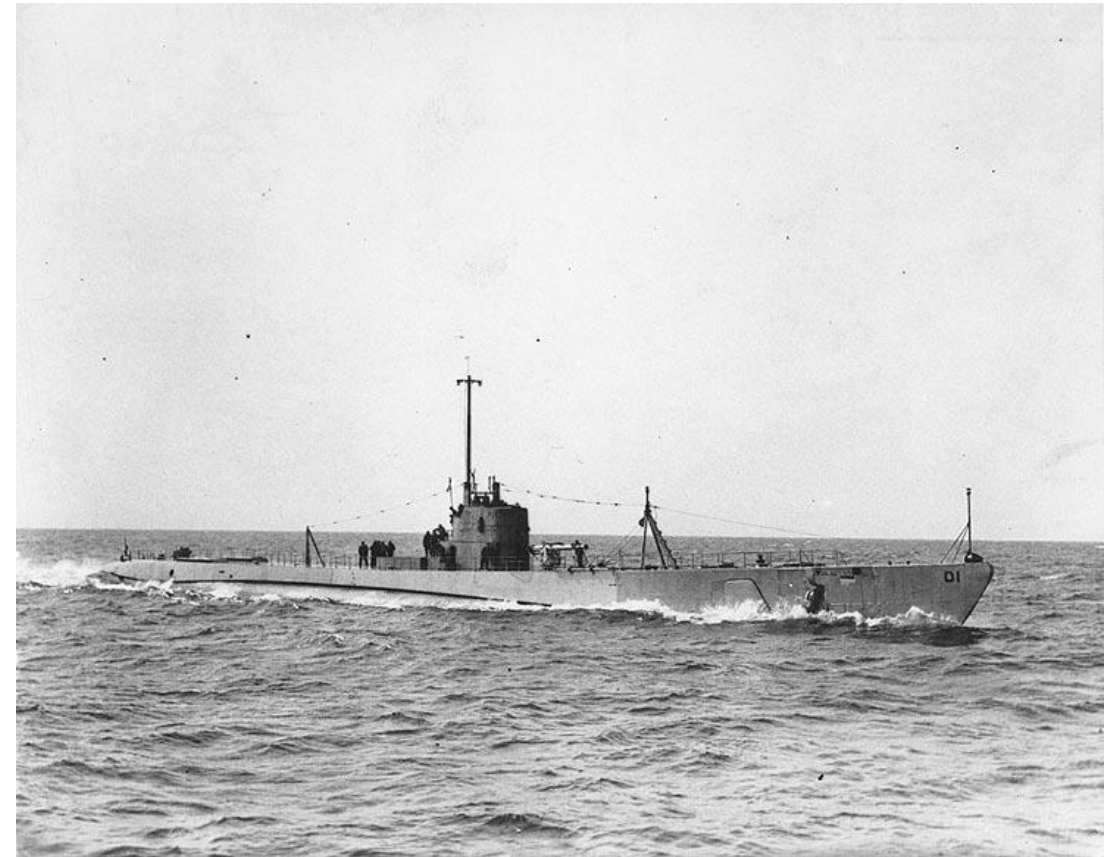
- **Government**
- On the 27th Curtin again approached both Churchill and Roosevelt pressing for the allotment of additional aircraft to Australia. (Curtin was actually still in WA)
- **Strategy**
- On the 27th January Lavarack met Wavell, who told him of his general plans: to hold Burma, south Sumatra, Java, Timor and Darwin, with an advanced position in Malaya.
- Wavell said that Lavarack's role would be to hold south Sumatra with one division and central Java with another, Dutch troops being deployed in between in western Java.
- Lavarack, objected to the division of the Corps, but Wavell insisted that it was necessary, and at length the proposal was submitted to and approved by the Australian Government.
- Lavarack and his staff then reconnoitred south Sumatra and central Java and prepared appreciations of the situation the Corps faced in both areas.



General Sir John Lavarack  
Commander 1 Australia Corps

# 27<sup>th</sup> January - Sea

- **Pacific**
- Japanese submarines had adopted the routine of shelling Midway Island, under cover of darkness, on their outward and homeward passages. On 27<sup>th</sup> January US Submarine Gudgeon caught one and sank it.
- US Submarine Dolphin made a reconnaissance of the Marshall Islands, to support the carrier strike, and reported on 27<sup>th</sup> January that the entire group was very lightly defended, and that the greatest concentration of planes and shipping was at Kwajalein Atoll.
- Nimitz then modified Halsey's mission. He wanted the attacks "driven home" with repeated air strikes and ship bombardments.
- **Indian Ocean**
- On 27th and 28th January, from a position south of Java, *Indomitable* flew off some of the Hurricanes.



USS Dolphin, SS-169, underway on the surface

# 27<sup>th</sup> January



HMAS Vampire  
1,200 tons, 4 \* 4-inch guns, 34 knots,  
120 crew, launched 1916.

- **Malaya**
- The destroyers H.M.A.S. *Vampire* and H.M.S. *Thanet* were ordered to attack the Japanese concentration at Endau, and left Singapore at 4.30 p.m. on the 26th. They steamed northwards, adjusting speed to arrive off Endau after moonset;
- shortly before 2 a.m. on the 27th Moran, *Vampire's* commanding officer led in at 15 knots towards Endau with the dark bulk of Pulau Tioman (an off shore island) as a concealing background.
- At 2.37 a.m. *Vampire* sighted a vessel, believed a destroyer, on the starboard bow. *Vampire* was apparently not sighted, and accordingly left this ship in the hope of finding a concentration farther in;
- three minutes later she sighted what seemed to be a second destroyer "right ahead and close". Moran altered to port, passed about 600 yards off, and fired two of his three torpedoes. Both missed.
- Meanwhile *Vampire* and *Thanet* lost the two Japanese ships in the darkness and continued in some seven or eight miles towards Endau until 3.13 a.m. when, having failed to sight any concentration, Moran altered course to S.E.by E. and increased to full speed.
- At 3.18 *Vampire* sighted a destroyer on the port bow. Moran told *Thanet* to fire her torpedoes. *Vampire* herself fired her one remaining torpedo, and again missed.
- There followed a brief, confused melee, with *Vampire* and *Thanet* retiring S.E. by E. at full speed and both sides engaging with gun fire.
- At about 4 a.m. *Thanet* was hit. "Great clouds of black smoke issued from her," recorded Moran, who tried to cover her withdrawal with a smoke screen. But the British ship was disabled and stopped, and was last seen by *Vampire*, her guns silent, with a pronounced list to starboard and smoking heavily.
- Moran believed he scored two shell hits on a destroyer; and that the Japanese ships engaged and damaged each other in the confusion.
- *Thanet* sank at about 4.20 a.m. on the 27th January 1942.
- *Vampire* suffered no damage or casualties, made good her escape, and reached the Singapore naval base at 10 o'clock that morning.



# 26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> January – Vampire at Endau



# 27<sup>th</sup> January - Land

- **New Guinea**

- A party of 59, including Captain Field reached Keravat where they heard that Keravat farm was occupied by the Japanese. Field called them together. He told them that he himself had no intention of surrendering; that those who wished to continue with him could do so. He gave them half an hour to make their decisions. Six elected to go on, the remainder to return to Keravat and surrender. They would remain in their present position until the afternoon, they said, to allow Field and his men to get clear. It was then 27<sup>th</sup> January.
- Wilson learnt that the *Induna Star* was lying on a mudbank in Kaut Harbour but it was believed that she could be made seaworthy. The men were now suffering from malaria and diarrhoea, and some of the civilians were complaining that the soldiers' presence was endangering them.

- **Malaya**

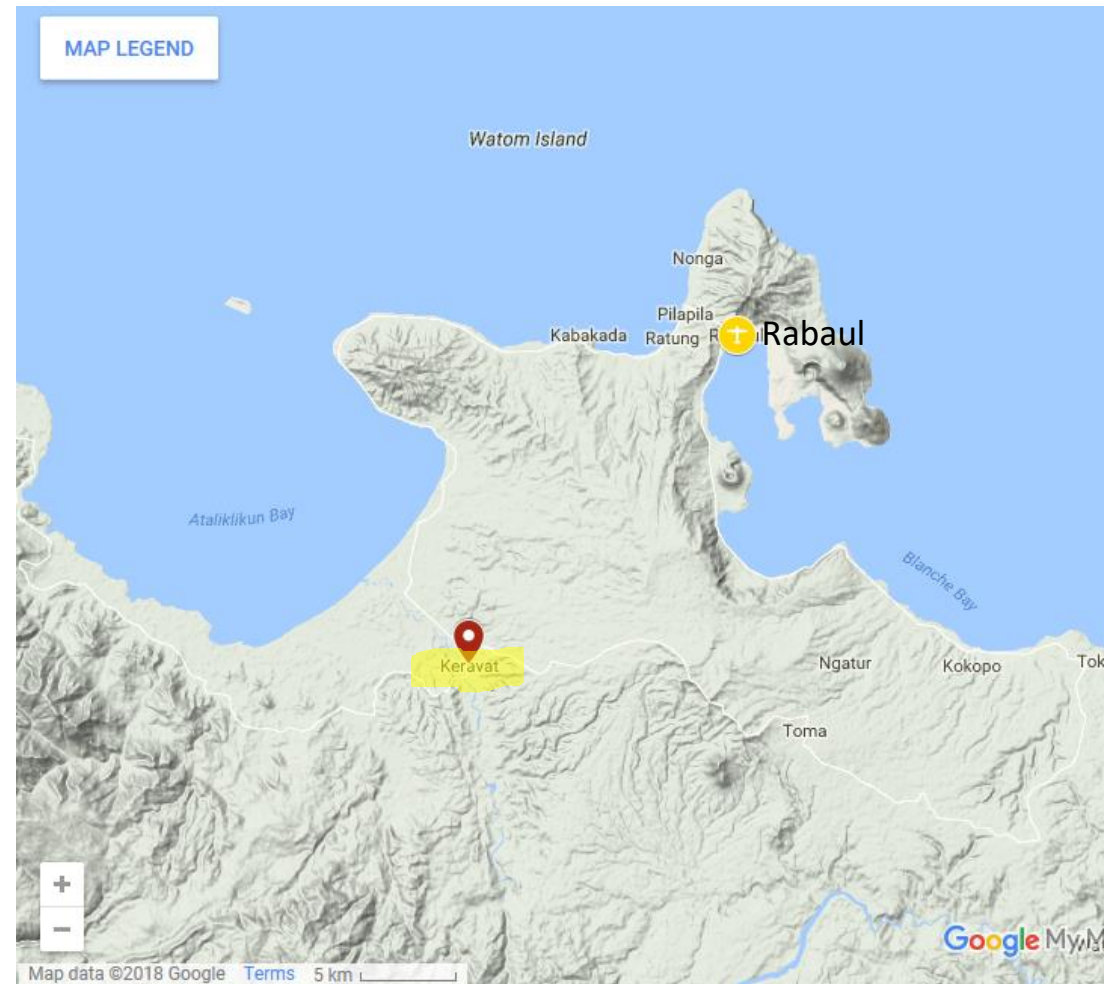
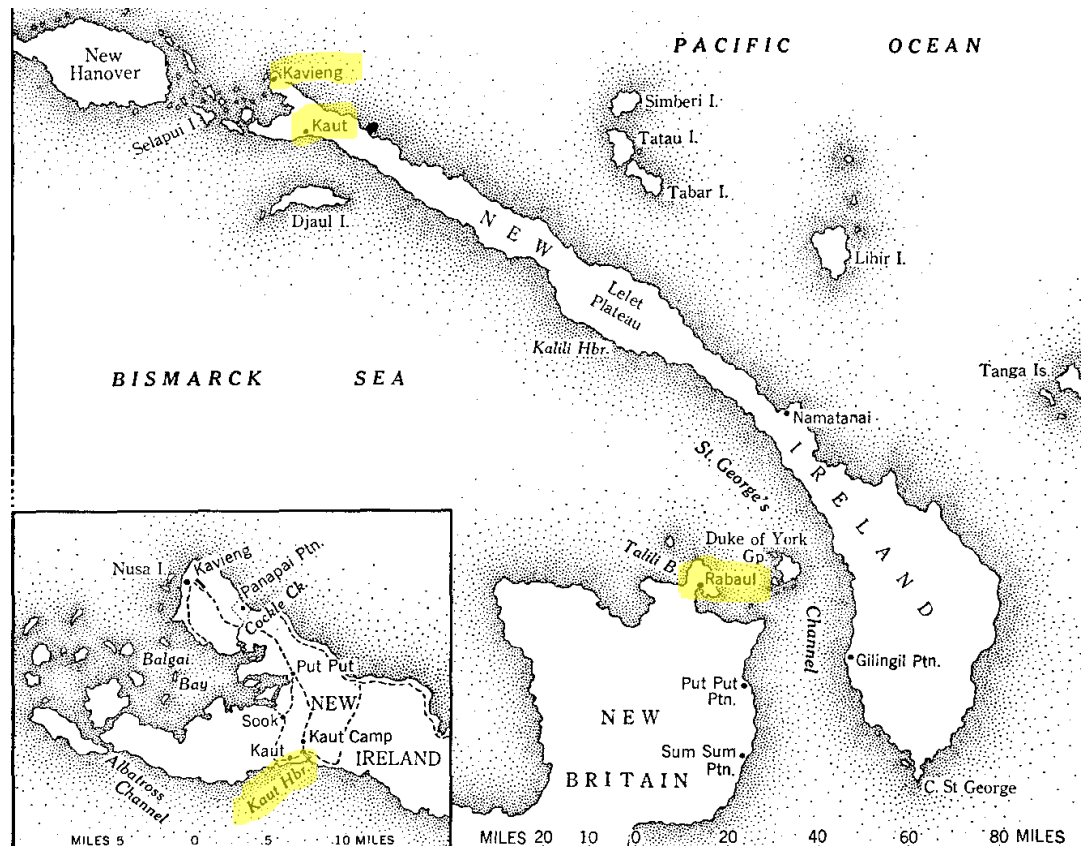
- Bennett at 12 .20 a.m. on the 27<sup>th</sup> issued orders to:
  - Night 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> January—hold present positions.
  - Night 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> January—withdraw to line rail mile 440, road mile 44.
  - Night 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> January—withdraw to line Sedenak road mile 32.
  - Night 30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> January—withdraw to line rail mile 450, road mile 25.
  - Night 31<sup>st</sup> January-1<sup>st</sup> February—On to island.

- **West Coast**

- On the trunk road, the 27<sup>th</sup> Brigade's positions were strafed from low altitudes during the 27<sup>th</sup> and concentrated shelling of the 2/26<sup>th</sup> Battalion's area broke out in mid-afternoon. Front and flank attacks on the Australians followed, and they became heavily engaged. The battalion had difficulty in breaking off the engagement for the scheduled withdrawal after dark, but eventually got back by midnight to its milestone 42 position.
- About 1,200 of Challen's men, guided by an officer of the Malayan police force, moved east of the road from Senggarang and reached Benut next afternoon (27<sup>th</sup>).

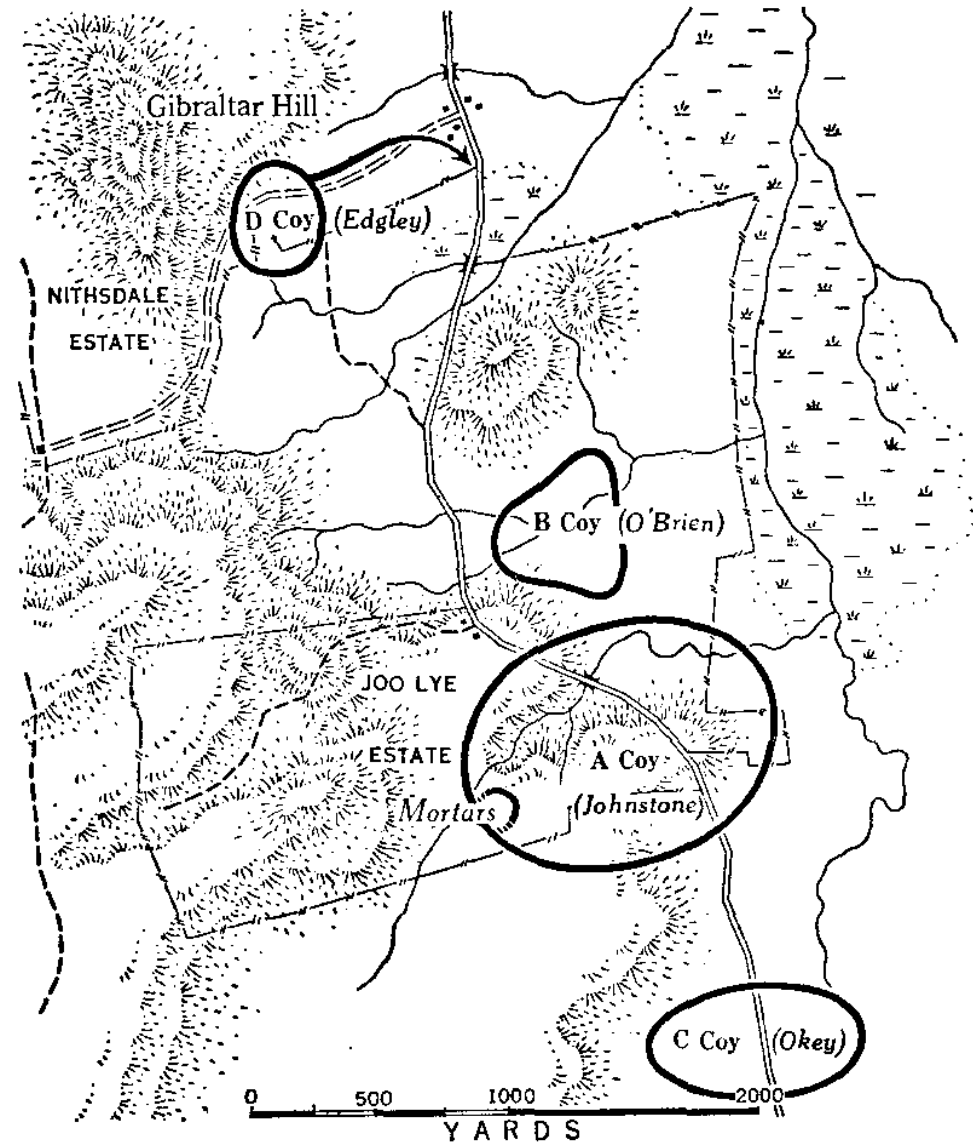


# 27<sup>th</sup> January



# 27<sup>th</sup> January - Malaya

- **East Coast**
- The 2/18th Battalion then planned a large-scale ambush.
- When the convoy was sighted on the 26th, it appeared that the 22nd Australian Brigade could expect to be attacked on a large scale. Arrangements were completed for the 2/18<sup>th</sup>'s ambush, but with the stipulation, that the troops employed in it must withdraw through the 2/20th Battalion at Jemaluang immediately the ambush had been sprung.
- It was planned to let about a battalion of Japanese pass the two forward companies and come up on a block established by Johnstone's company. Guns of the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment, the battalion mortars and machine-guns, would pound the trapped enemy, and an artillery barrage would creep forward, as Edgley's men moved in behind it.



Nithsdale Estate, 26th-27th January

2/18<sup>th</sup> Battalion's ambush positions

# 27<sup>th</sup> January - Land

- **East Coast**
- Patrols had exchanged shots with a Japanese patrol in the ambush area late in the afternoon of the 26th.
  - After dark increasing numbers of Japanese, finally estimated at battalion strength, were observed but allowed to pass into the area as arranged, despite the ideal target presented by enemy troops marching along the road in column of route.
  - Indiscriminate enemy fire, and the noise of crackers, broke out soon after midnight, apparently intended to make the Australians disclose their positions; but orders to hold fire were strictly observed.
  - Lieutenant Warden's platoon of Johnstone's company was attacked at 2 a.m on 27th., and retaliated with bayonets. Although the encounter was expensive for the Japanese, it resulted also in the death of the platoon commander, and two others.
- An hour later, when the pressure indicated that a large body of Japanese was engaged, the mortar and artillery fire was ordered.
  - Varley, who for some while had been vainly trying to get through to the forward companies by telephone, succeeded at this critical stage and ordered them to carry out the agreed plan.
  - Johnstone's company heard a stream of shells rushing over them into the defile, which became a shambles.
  - After about 20 minutes the barrage had moved far enough up the road to allow the forward companies to go into action.
  - Edgley's company's leading section attacked Japanese who were repairing a bridge; thereupon the Japanese fled to positions which had been hastily taken up by their force on high ground astride the road at the southern end of the defile. A two-platoon attack failed to dislodge them, and a platoon sent to their left flank was repulsed.
  - In savage encounters, the Australians discovered that the position was strongly held, and came under an increasing volume of mortar and machine-gun fire, accompanied by grenades. Because of this, and communication difficulties, the fight was still raging when daylight came.
- O'Brien's company was also engaged, though with smaller numbers of the enemy, with whom it dealt successfully. It therefore moved towards the Japanese stronghold encountered by Edgley and itself encountered severe resistance.
- Varley then ordered Johnstone to assemble a counter-attack .

# 27<sup>th</sup> January - Land

- **East Coast**

- They were about to move off, and the move by O'Brien's company to assist Edgley's was afoot, when a message was received from Brigadier Taylor in consequence of detailed orders he had received from Heath.
- It was to the effect that as the brigade (less its 2/19th Battalion) was responsible for holding the whole of the road back to Johore Bahru, no further troops must be committed to the action, and the companies engaged must be withdrawn to Jemaluang.
- The order was reluctantly obeyed leaving Edgley's and O'Brien's companies to fight their way out.
- The battalion's losses in the ambush action were six officers and 92 others killed or missing; but the Japanese losses appeared to have been far heavier.

- **Strategy**

- In the evening (27<sup>th</sup>) he (Percival) sent a message to Wavell:
  - "A very critical situation has developed. The enemy has cut off and overrun the majority of the forces on the west coast . . . . Unless we can stop him it will be difficult to get our own columns on other roads back in time, especially as they are both being pressed. In any case it looks as if we should not be able to hold Johore for more than another three or four days. We are going to be a bit thin on the island unless we can get the remaining troops back."
- General Wavell, in Java, decided on 27th January that Timor was threatened. Its airfield was essential, since short-range aircraft could not reach Java from Australia without refuelling after the flight over the Timor Sea.
  - He reluctantly departed from the principle he had laid down that we could not afford to reinforce these small garrisons and asked the Australian Government for permission to move a battalion from Darwin to Koepang, while
  - the Americans agreed to send an artillery regiment from Darwin.
  - Wavell also sent a battery of light AA artillery from Java.

# 27<sup>th</sup> January – Air, Malaya

- 488 squadron was re-equipped with 9 Hurricanes, but 2 of these were destroyed and 6 damaged when two successive raids were made on the airfield on the 27th. In these attacks
  - No. 243 Squadron lost most of its Buffaloes,
  - 2 Blenheim bombers were burned,
  - 3 fuel tankers were set on fire, motor transport was seriously damaged and
  - the airfield made temporarily unserviceable by many bomb craters. The airfield's surface was simply marl laid on a salt marsh which made the problem of effectively filling these craters particularly difficult.
  - This was particularly serious as Kallang was the only airfield on Singapore island which was out of range of artillery located in Johore.
- On 27th January, the day that Wavell gave authority for the army to withdraw to Singapore Island, No. 8 Squadron's aircrews were flown to Sumatra in Dutch Lodestar transports. No. 1 Squadron was to take over the 14 Hudsons that No. 8 had left at Sembawang, but only 5 of these were airworthy. No. 1 Squadron now had 16 serviceable aircraft. With these reconnaissance flights were continued.
- No. 1 Aerodrome Construction Squadron RNZAF moved from the mainland on 27th January—the last air force unit to leave. Next day the mines at Tebrau and Rifle Range were exploded, leaving craters about 30 feet across by 10 feet deep. The squadron then went on working on new strips at Sungei Buloh and Yeo Chu Kang on Singapore Island.



Hurricane IID showing Vokes tropical filter and RAF desert camouflage in 1942.

# 27th January - Air

- **New Guinea**
- On 27th January three enemy flying-boats bombed Gasmata
- On 27th January Cohen piloted a Catalina on a reconnaissance and attack mission to Kavieng.
  - As the flying-boat approached the target three enemy fighters attacked. The lesson from the loss of the two Catalinas on the 21st could not be ignored.
  - Cohen promptly jettisoned his bombs, turned steeply into a cloud bank and, evading the Japanese fighters, returned safely to Samarai.
- **Burma**
- Bangkok was raided again on the night of the 27th



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

009451

RAAF Consolidated Catalinas



DAILY APPRECIATION - PACIFIC NAVAL ACTIVITY

WEDNESDAY 26/1

1. DISPOSITIONS ALLIED & ENEMY NAVAL FORCES.

A.B.D.A. Area.

A. British and Allied Forces - Convoy MS2 (Ex "Aquitania") arrived Singapore January 24th from Australia without incident.

B. Enemy Forces -

- (1) General movement from South China Sea to Southern Philippines Northern N.E.I. waters.
- (11) Total enemy strength Celebes Sea - Makassar Strait - Halmahera area includes 2 aircraft carriers and approximately 10 Cruisers, including possibly 4-8".
- (111) One aircraft carrier operating in Flores Sea consider responsible for raids on Timor 26/1

NORTH-WEST PACIFIC

Combined Fleet probably in Bonins.

ANZAC AREA

A. British and Allied Forces -

- (1) U.S. Cruiser "PHOENIX" with convoy three ships was due to rendezvous with "ACHILLES" yesterday 27/1 south of Suva. "ACHILLES" to escort one ship to Suva. "PHOENIX" to proceed Melbourne due February 1 with other 2 ships. "ADELAIDE" will join escort en route Melbourne.
- (11) Convoy MS1 with "HOBART" due Singapore 30/1.

B. Enemy Forces -

- (1) Bismarck Archipelago - "KAGA" and "AKAGI" (27,000 tons) are 2 carriers operating in area. "ZUIKAKU" and "SHOKAKU" (15,000 tons) also operating south of Truk.
- (11) At least one military transport at Rabaul. Suggest consolidation and possible future large scale operations.
- (111) Two enemy submarines off Anir Island 26/1 (off Eastern tip New Ireland).

MANDATED ISLANDS

Naval concentration including additional transports in Truk area.

MID-PACIFIC and EAST PACIFIC

Enemy Enemy submarines operating off Hawaiian Islands.

British and Allied Forces - "WARSPITE" was due to sail from Esquimaux on January 20th after working up practice.

2. NAVAL INCIDENTS

1. MALAYA - EAST COAST - ENDAU

A.M. 26/1 following force sighted: 2 "KAKO" class cruisers (8")  
12 destroyers or gunboats  
2 10,000 ton motor vessels  
small craft

Twice attacked by our aircraft.

1st Attack - 2 hits on 1st transport; 1 on 2nd transport;  
1 on cruiser

2nd Attack - 8 hits on 1 transport, damage to barges etc,  
wreckage around transports. Two transports,  
1 cruiser, 2 destroyers all stationary and  
high out of water.

2. N.W. of ANAMBAS ISLANDS (Between Malaya and Borneo)

A.M. 26/1 - 1 "NATORI" class (5.5") and 2 "NACHI" class (8")  
cruisers and 2 destroyers being shadowed by our  
aircraft.

3. MAKASSAR STRAIT

Dutch submarine K.18 reports successful attack on a cruiser and  
destroyer. Submarine damaged but proceeding to base.

28<sup>th</sup> January

- 2 -

4. RABAU

Night attack by 5 Catalinas 26/27.

In addition to two merchant ships reported burning furiously in Rabaul Harbour it is also reported that one possible hit was scored on a large ship (like a Carrier) approx 10 miles N.E. of Tawui (N.W. tip Gazelle Peninsula).

3. ENEMY'S PROBABLE NEXT MOVE

- (i) Consolidation of position in New Britain, New Ireland as prelude to attack on Port Moresby, with view to control Torres Strait.
- (ii) Possible move from Truk to New Caledonia.
- (iii) Consolidation of position in Kendari (S.E. Celebes) and Halmahera (Ternate) as prelude to an attack on Amboina and possibly Timor with view to cutting Australia - Java air route.

4. SUGGESTED COUNTER MOVES

Appendix attached "Detailed Dispositions Allied and Enemy Naval Forces".

# 28<sup>th</sup> January

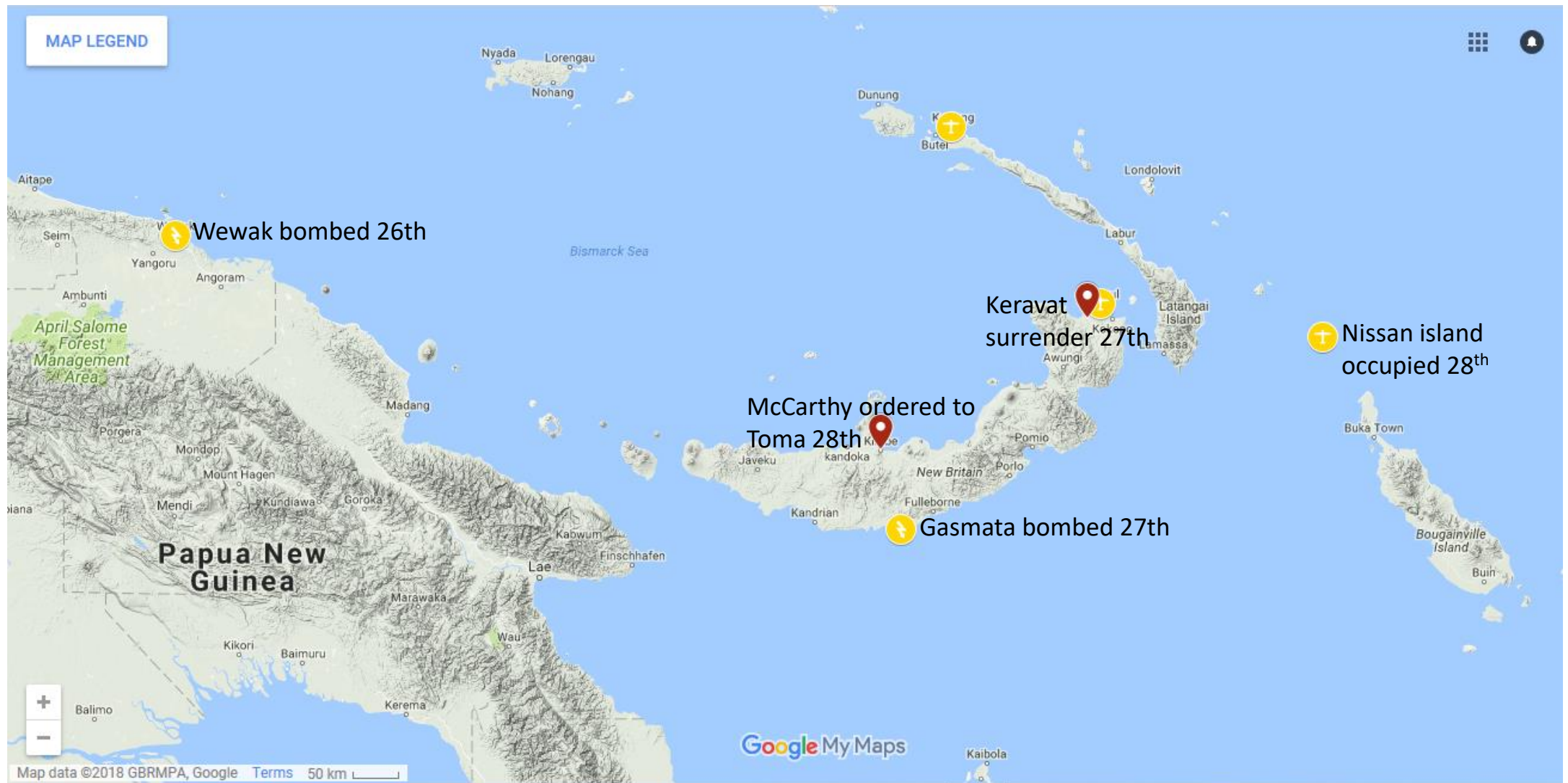
- **Sea**

- On the 28th the enemy occupied Anir and Nissan Islands north of the Solomons.
- The convoy (MS1, carrying transport and equipment for Australian troops transported in MS2) arrived off the entrance to Sunda Strait on 28<sup>th</sup> January. There *Tenedos* and *Stronghold* joined the escort, and *Kanimbla* detached and returned to Fremantle.
- On 28th January, from a position south of Java, *Indomitable* flew off the last of the Hurricanes and set course for Trincomalee.

- **Land**

- On the 28th, after destroying all equipment too heavy to carry, and leaving the wireless set with the civilians with instructions not to destroy it until three days had passed, Wilson moved his men to Kaut, and set them to work repairing the *Induna Star*.
- On the 28th, McCarthy, the Assistant District Officer at Talasea and a Coastwatcher, received a message from Lieutenant Commander Feldt, at Moresby, ordering him to take his wireless to Toma, in the vicinity of Rabaul, and send news of Colonel Scanlan's force, of which nothing had been heard since the invasion.
  - A further message ordered him to take possession of the *Lakatoi* (179 tons), believed then to be at Kapepa Island, east of the Willaumez Peninsula, and use it to evacuate civilians.

# 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> January

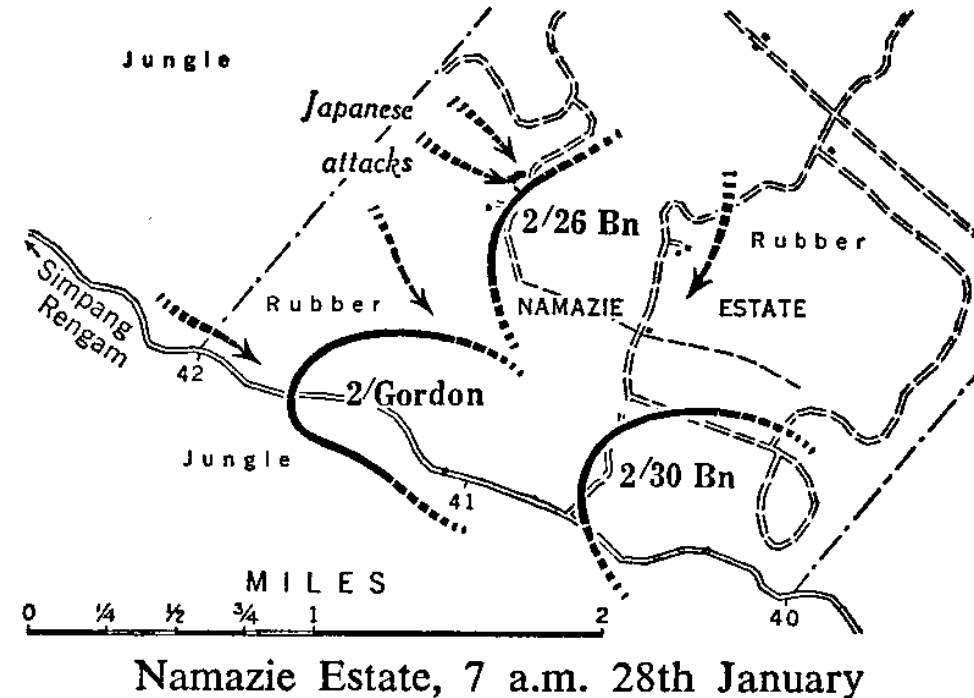


# 28<sup>th</sup> January - Malaya

- At a conference early on 28th January between Percival, Heath and Bennett, it was agreed the mainland would be evacuated on the night of 30th-31st January—a day earlier than previously planned.
- In the railway sector another disaster was brewing. The railway bridge over a creek near the 439 mile position on the railway line was prematurely blown, with the 22<sup>nd</sup> Indian brigade still north of the bridge. Preventing rations and ammunition being sent forward by rail and disrupting the railway telegraph line—the only means of communication between the two brigades.
- In the early hours of the 28th the 22<sup>nd</sup> Brigade heard transport moving on the estate roads on its right flank, and at dawn Brigadier Painter found that enemy troops were between him and the 8th Brigade. He thereupon decided that immediate withdrawal was essential to regain contact.
- Meanwhile the division commander General Barstow had gone forward to investigate the position caused by demolition of the bridge and had been killed in an encounter with a Japanese patrol.
- Moving back along the railway, the 22nd Brigade at midday on 28th January found Japanese troops in possession of Layang Layang station and suffered about fifty casualties in an unsuccessful attempt to eject them. Lacking fire support, means of evacuating his wounded other than on hand-borne stretchers, and communication with the 8th Brigade, Painter decided to move his brigade across country west of the railway, hoping to reach the 8th Brigade's left flank. A track shown on his only map of the area came to an end in dense jungle, through which his men hacked a way on a compass bearing until the moon went down and they were halted.

# 28<sup>th</sup> January - Malaya

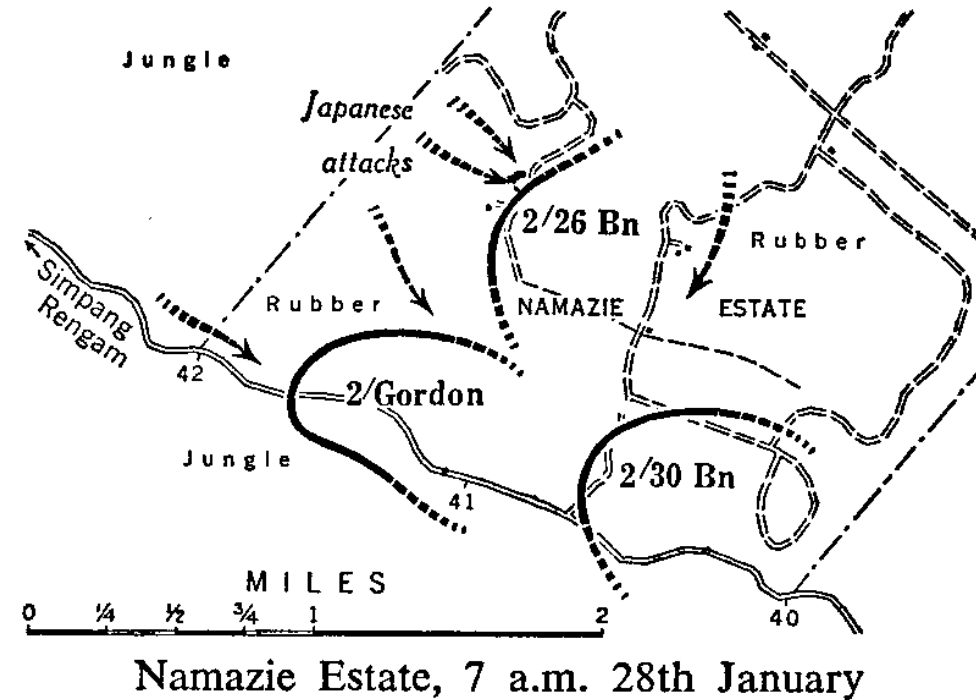
- On the trunk road the Japanese had begun 28th January with probing patrol movements. The Gordons, in the foremost position, were engaged in skirmishes, and fire was soon concentrated on the 2/26th Battalion.
- A series of fire attacks on the Gordons and on the flanks of the 2/26<sup>th</sup> Battalion, with constant air support, lasted throughout the morning.
- The return fire was so effective that the attackers were held in check, but other enemy troops meanwhile worked round through the rubber to the right of the 2/30th Battalion.
- Galleghan concluded that the Japanese were trying to get to the jungle defile at the rear of the brigade's positions, and sent two platoons to the area to meet the threat. The platoons were heavily outnumbered, but quickly inflicted forty to fifty casualties with steady fire and the Japanese were repulsed.
- The two platoons took up a position covering the approach to the battalion's rear at a point where the rubber and the jungle met. However, "D" Company's headquarters and the battalion headquarters came under fire, and it was evident that the threat was increasingly serious.
- Three more platoons, two armoured cars and a section of mortars were moved to the area and three platoons, covered by two others, were ordered to attack the high ground occupied by the Japanese, and a strong outflanking attack was to be made.





# 28<sup>th</sup> January - Malaya

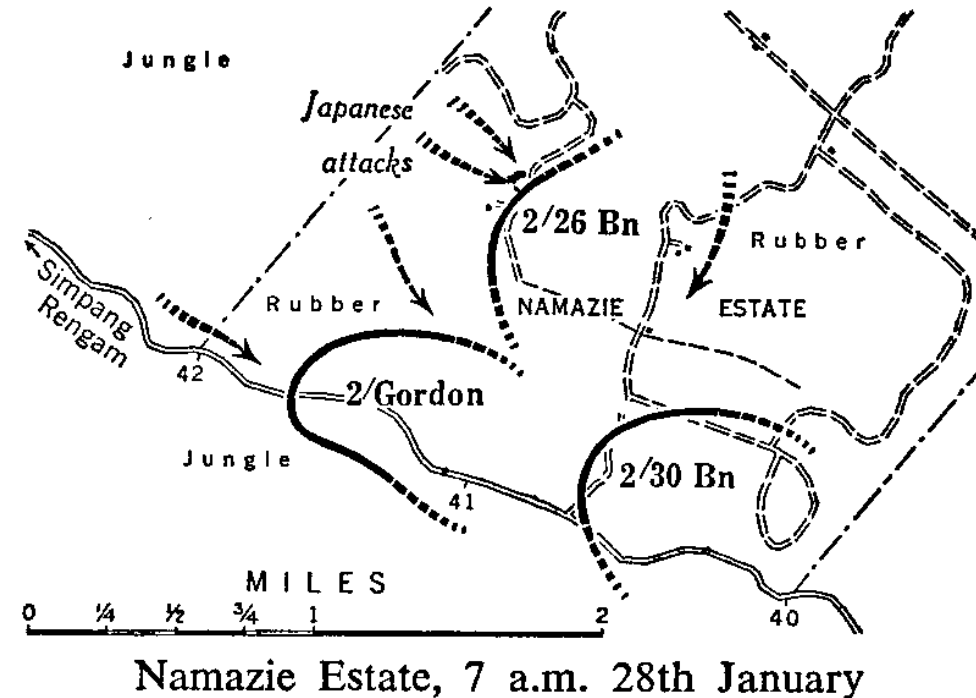
- The frontal attack was launched at 4.40 p.m., under a storm of covering fire. The Australians got in among the foremost Japanese with bayonets, the armoured cars blasted machine-gun posts and other targets, and under this fierce assault the enemy fell back.
- the Japanese now produced containers which exploded into clouds of yellow fumes. At first it seemed that they had resorted to the use of poison gas. With no respirators the Australians were robbed of their advantage by fits of coughing and by their eyes watering so profusely that they could scarcely see.
- To cope with the effect which the fumes produced, the forward troops in the vicinity were withdrawn, and the intended outflanking attack was withheld. it was soon discovered that the fumes were merely an irritant and that those who had encountered them soon recovered. However, the enemy had gained further freedom of movement.
- Orders were issued from 27th Brigade for withdrawal at nightfall, Westforce in due course ordered the 9th Indian Division to conform by withdrawing during the night to Sedenak. This order was passed on to the 8th Indian Brigade; but communication with the 22nd Indian Brigade had now failed.





# 28<sup>th</sup> January - Malaya

- The 2/26th Battalion, last in the order of withdrawal, had difficulty in breaking contact, but the move was successfully made. Lack of troop-carrying transport at the forward positions imposed a twelve-mile march on top of the day's fighting and all that had gone before it.
- Boyes set aside standing orders and used some of his "A" Echelon vehicles to shuttle men over parts of the route. Even a water cart managed to make several trips with up to twenty five men and many weapons, filling the bottles of the marching troops as it returned.



# 28<sup>th</sup> January

- **Air**
- Rabaul was again attacked by four Catalinas on the night of 28<sup>th</sup> January. The results were not observed.
- The first American air transport unit in Australia was activated on 28 January.
  - None of its original complement of fourteen officers and nineteen enlisted men had been trained for transport operations-they were just the men who happened to be most readily available.
  - Equally miscellaneous were the aircraft assigned to the unit: two old B-18's and one C-39 which had been flown down from the Philippines and five new C-53's recently arrived from the United States.



Douglas C53

# 29<sup>th</sup> January

- **Government**
- On 29th January Admiral Royle told the War Cabinet that the Chiefs of Staff in Washington had asked that *Perth* should be allotted to the ABDA Area as soon as possible.
- The Naval Board had intended to retain *Perth* in the Anzac Area until *Canberra* (allotted to that area) had completed her refit;
- but in view of the Washington request Royle now recommended that she be sent to the ABDA Area at once.
- This was approved by the War Cabinet.



HMAS Perth arriving in Sydney for the first time 31<sup>st</sup> March 1940

# 29<sup>th</sup> January

- **Strategy**
- On 29th January 1942, the Australian Chiefs of Staff prepared a further appreciation, at the direction of the War Cabinet, on the defence of Australia.
- The land forces available for the defence of the mainland totalled five divisions, two cavalry divisions and one armoured division but, except for units at Darwin and in the islands adjacent to Australia, troops were not completely trained or equipped.
- With the present rate of production, most of the major items of field army equipment could be completed by the middle of 1942.
- The army still had only 10 American light tanks but a total of 70 mixed infantry and light tanks from British production had either been shipped or promised for early delivery. Local production would not begin until May, and deliveries would then only be slow.
- Anti-aircraft guns and radio direction - finding apparatus were still far short of requirements.
- The first-line strength of aircraft was 65 Hudsons, 14 Catalinas and 98 Wirraways, including 36 Hudsons employed in the Indonesia-Darwin area but not including the R.A.A.F. squadrons in Malaya.
  - Owing to lack of modern aircraft, crews could not be trained to operational standards, although the number of partly-trained crews was more than enough.

# 29<sup>th</sup> January

- **NEI**

- Australian airmen reported a Japanese convoy, estimated at five warships and seventeen transports, approaching Ambon on 29<sup>th</sup> January. On Dutch orders, the Australian engineers destroyed naval oil reserves and bomb dumps, hangars, and equipment at Laha. They sought to make the surface of the airfield unserviceable.

- **Malaya**

- On the morning of 29th January the 8th Brigade was instructed to withdraw during the night to rail mile 450, about two miles north of Kulai.
- The 27th Australian Brigade, was in more rubber and jungle country at milestone 31 on the 29th. After a sharp early clash had brought Australian artillery fire on to the Japanese, a party of thirty of them dressed in European, Indian and native clothing was allowed to reach a position between the two forward companies of the 2/26th, and there was wiped out. Others were found to be massing behind a rise, and were attacked with grenades and bayonets. By mid-morning all four Australian companies were being fiercely and persistently attacked.
- The Japanese tried to set up mortars and machine-guns in full view of the Australians, and were mown down in most instances before the weapons could be fired. Their casualties mounted rapidly, but so did their reinforcements, and in mid-afternoon, when it was estimated that three Japanese battalions had been brought forward, one battalion with infantry guns was seen forming up on the road.
- The Australian artillery quickly took advantage of the new target and the battalion's mortars thickened the fire. A sharp counter-attack with bayonets by the 2/26th Battalion's "D" company finally disposed of this threat. The battalion was bombed and shelled in addition to the infantry attacks, and more fumes of the kind experienced the day before were released in the area. The battalion nevertheless stood its ground, and, as night set in, the Japanese gave up their costly and unusually protracted assault.
- the splendid performance of the 29th and 30th Field Batteries had done much to offset the lack of air support or protection; and the battalion's casualties were only six killed and twenty-five wounded, as against the evident slaughter of a large number of Japanese.
- Orders to withdraw to the 21mile post, forward of Kulai, were carried out on foot for the first six miles, but were completed before midnight. Japanese shelling hampered the movement, but caused only two more casualties.
- The 2/30th Battalion took up a covering position, and the Gordons were withdrawn to Singapore Island.
- The main body of the 18th British Division reached Singapore by sea on 29<sup>th</sup> January, and, with its 53rd Brigade, was taken into command reserve.

# 29<sup>th</sup> January - Air

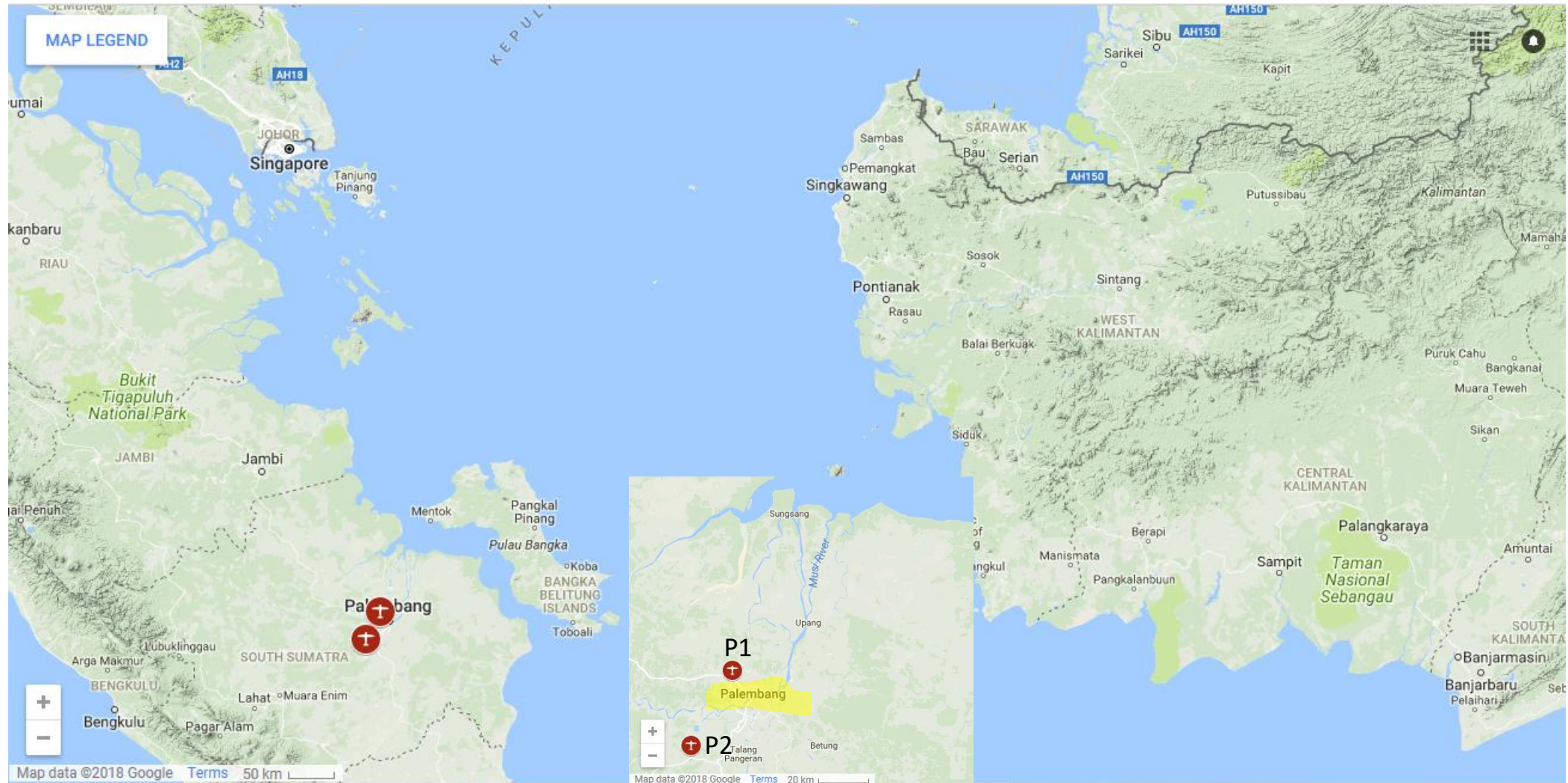
- **Singapore/Sumatra**
- That evening (28<sup>th</sup>) No 1 squadron was ordered to transfer all its aircraft to Palembang, taking off at first light next day.
  - They left as ordered (on 29<sup>th</sup>).
  - A strong party of ground staff remained to try and restore to serviceability the Hudsons that had to be left behind.
- On the same morning (29<sup>th</sup>) Group Captain McCauley, who had been posted to command the R.A.F. station P.2, left Sembawang in a Hudson that was airworthy but not fit for combat.
- **Ambon**
- By the 29th an Empire flying-boat with Flight Lieutenant Hampshire in command, had made two sorties to Laha. This aircraft and what Hudsons were available for the task were the only means of evacuating the R.A.A.F. from Ambon and Buru.
- **Burma**
- In the last week of January the Japanese carried out their second major air offensive against Rangoon including raids on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>.
  - There were day and night attacks, the day attacks by formations usually of 16 bombers with fighter cover, and the night attacks by one or two bombers.
  - The Tomahawks and Hurricanes, avoiding dog fighting and using superior diving speed, claimed 50 Japanese aircraft shot down in this phase.



Group Captain McCauley RAAF



# 29<sup>th</sup> January - Air



# 30<sup>th</sup> January

- **Strategy**

- Wavell conveyed the decision (to withdraw to Singapore on 30/31) to Australia in a cable dated 29th January which General Sturdee read to the Advisory War Council next day (30<sup>th</sup>).
  - He said the Japanese were making three main thrusts, in one of which warships with large convoys were proceeding by the Moluccas probably against Ambon, but Koepang might be threatened.
  - The Australians in Malaya had greatly distinguished themselves, he continued. Percival should have the equivalent of approximately three divisions to hold Singapore Island, about half of whom would be fresh.
  - No more formations of land troops would be available for about three weeks, when the Australian Corps would begin to arrive. It had been intended to use this Corps to relieve Indian troops in Malaya and carry out a counter-offensive, but in view of the changed situation the Corps must be used in the first instance to secure vital areas in Sumatra and Java.
  - All I can do in the immediate future (said Wavell) is to check enemy by such offensive action by sea and air as limited resources allow and to secure most important objectives which I conceive to be Singapore, air bases in central and southern Sumatra, naval base at Surabaya, aerodrome at Koepang.
- The Advisory War Council discussed Wavell's omission of Ambon from the key points to be held. The Chiefs of Staff held that withdrawal from Ambon would be a very difficult operation and in any event it was important to deny it to the Japanese as long as possible.
- **Sea**
  - Endeavours were made to get as many oil cargoes out (from NEI) as possible, and on the 30th January convoy "MS.3, of seven tankers for Palembang and four cargo ships for Batavia, sailed from Fremantle escorted by *Canberra*.
  - Melbourne was told, by signal from the Australian detachment on Ambon at 2.30 p.m. on that day (30<sup>th</sup> January), that two Japanese convoys of transports escorted by warships were approaching the island. As with Rabaul, there was nothing that Australia could do but wait on events, with the knowledge that the small Australian-Dutch garrison on the island could do little more without outside help; and of that none was forthcoming.
  - On the 30th the Singapore naval dockyard closed down, and the base area was handed over to the military authorities for defence.
  - From the 30th January onwards 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Corps set out in a series of convoys for the Far East.

# 30<sup>th</sup> January - Land

- **New Guinea**

- On the evening of the 30<sup>th</sup> the Induna Star was pumped free of water, her hull patched and the main engine functioning satisfactorily. That morning Wilson had sent Lieutenant Sleeman to Sook with dispatches for Moresby; in the afternoon Sleeman returned with the news that the wireless had been destroyed, but bringing a message from Army Headquarters, Melbourne, ordering Wilson to remain and report, also to do as much damage as possible to the enemy. After conferring with his medical officer, Captain Bristow, Wilson decided that the condition of his men precluded any such role.
- That night (30<sup>th</sup>) Wilson embarked his men, intending to sail down the coast in the darkness and lie up during the day in the hope of reaching the east coast of New Britain.

- **Ambon**

- Shortly before dusk on the 30<sup>th</sup>, Australians on Mt Nona sighted ships off the coast of the Laitimor Peninsula (Ambon). During the night the Japanese landed at Hitulama and on the southern coast of the Laitimor Peninsula. There were no defenders on the beaches in these locations.
- The defence of Ambon was commanded by the Dutch. The Netherlands Indies forces on the island numbered about 2,600 men and some Dutch coast artillery. The main Dutch forces occupied positions around Paso, which was believed to be the most likely landing site.
- The Australians were defending the south-western portion of the Laitimor Peninsula, south of the town of Ambon, and also Laha airfield. The Australian positions on the Laitimor Peninsula, were designed to cover the main approaches to the town of Ambon.
- The Paso defences had been designed principally against attack from the north and the west. They were now being attacked from the south. Japanese troops arrived within 100 yards of the Paso southern flank without having been detected. The gap had been left owing to failure of the telephone line to staff headquarters. Dutch forces were not equipped with radio, and their telephone system had been quickly affected by the efficiency of the Japanese in cutting the lines.

# 30<sup>th</sup> January - Singapore

- General Wavell flew to Singapore again on 30th January, he ordered all but the equivalent of one squadron of fighters to be withdrawn to Sumatra, saying "Crete showed that it is impossible to maintain a weak air force within close range of a stronger enemy one."
- This last day before the defenders abandoned the mainland (30<sup>th</sup>) produced curiously little interference by the enemy.
  - The final stages of the withdrawal from the east and west coasts were completed.
  - Westforce completed its crossing of the Causeway just before daylight.
  - Bennett watched the last of the force coming in.
  - The Australians and the Gordons manning the outer bridgehead crossed next, and
  - the Argyles, the inner bridgehead, followed.
- The Argylls, only ninety strong when withdrawn from the fighting, marched with the pipes playing "A Hundred Pipers" and "Hielan' Laddie". Brigadier Stewart was the last to make the crossing.
- The massive Causeway, 70 feet wide at the water line and wider at its base, now had to be demolished as fully as possible. Soon after 8 a.m. the charges were fired. When the deluge of spray and debris had fallen, water was seen racing through a seventy-foot gap.



*(Australian War Memorial)*

After the rearguard of the defending British forces in Malaya withdrew to Singapore Island the Causeway was blown. The 70-foot gap in the Causeway can be seen below the Johore Administration building.

# 30<sup>th</sup> January - Air

- **New Guinea**
- On the 30th the Madang garrison signalled to Port Moresby: "Have destroyed runway Madang and prepared stores for firing."
- On the 30th, 5 Catalinas made the squadron's fourth attack on Rabaul. A direct hit was scored on one ship causing, as Higgins reported, "a red glow which quickly increased in intensity". The other crews reported that they had been unable to see the results of their bombing because they had been blinded by the glare of the searchlights. The anti-aircraft fire was heavier and more accurate than on the earlier raids.
- **Burma**
- Apart from Rangoon, Moulmein had been the chief Japanese target from the air. Between 3rd and 22nd of January it was attacked seven times. The reason for these raids became apparent when Japanese ground forces made a direct attack on the town on the 30th.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

009451

RAAF Consolidated Catalinas

# 30<sup>th</sup> January – Air, Singapore

- Four fighter strips that had been constructed on the island to relieve the pressure on the main airfields had been recognised for some time as a danger in themselves; they offered the Japanese landing areas for airborne troops which then would be behind the island's frontal defences.
  - Because of this all these strips had been blown up by 30th January and
  - action had been taken to place obstruction on other open areas that might serve as landing grounds.
- On 30th January Wavell approved a plan that only 8 Hurricanes and the remaining 6 Buffaloes should be maintained at Singapore. The Hurricanes flown off from H.M.S. *Indomitable* would be based in Sumatra from where they would maintain the strength of the unit at Singapore and reinforce it as opportunity permitted.
- All remaining Buffaloes, were to be concentrated in No. 453 Squadron.
- No. 21 was originally a Wirraway squadron so it had numerous air observers and newly-arrived pilots trained on Wirraways only, who could not be employed on fighters.
  - There was no object, in No. 21 Squadron remaining without aircraft, and therefore it was to be shipped out at once to Australia to rearm.
  - Administrative arrangements for this move were made and all No. 21 Squadron's aircraft spares and equipment were handed over to No. 453, which had been reconstituted as a separate unit.
  - Several experienced pilots from No. 21 were also transferred to supplement No. 453's depleted strength.
  - On 30th January the remainder of No. 21 embarked at Singapore in the steamer Takliwa, but in the meantime their movement order had been changed; they were instructed to move to Palembang to assist in the maintenance of R.A.F. Blenheim bombers until relieved by members of the R.A.F., then on their way from Great Britain.



# 30<sup>th</sup> January – Air, Timor

- On 30th January forty two enemy fighters raided Penfui (Koepang),
  - destroying a Hudson that was taxiing to a revetment and wounding the pilot.
  - Off the coast they intercepted and shot down the Qantas Empire flying-boat *Corio* which was on a flight to Surabaya to evacuate women and children refugees.
  - The aircraft was coming in to land at Koepang, and was attacked at 400 feet by enemy fighters, and shot down three miles from shore
  - The flying-boat plunged into the sea with two of its engines on fire.
  - Fifteen of the passengers and crew were killed. The remaining five managed to swim ashore.
  - Two RAN officers Lieutenants McCulloch and Westbrook, were passengers, on the way from Darwin to Batavia to take up appointments at Collins' headquarters. McCulloch was killed Westbrook survived.



Short S.23 Flying Boat (VH-ABF) *Cooee*, similar to *Corio*, Qantas Empire Airways.

Koepang and Dili were now eliminated as stopping points for the regular Qantas flying-boat service to Singapore.

# 30<sup>th</sup> January – Air, NEI

- **Namlea**

- On the 30th McFarlane at Namlea received a signal from Scott advising him that three aircraft were being sent to remove the R.A.A.F. base staff except for a demolition and maintenance party. That night three Hudsons arrived. One aircraft was damaged on landing when it hit the wreckage of a Hudson that had been smashed by a bomb hit. Every available man worked with the aircraft riggers to repair the damaged aircraft and to strip all three for their evacuation task.
  - McFarlane called for volunteers to stay behind with him to carry out demolition work. Every man responded, so a selection was made of 7 men with no dependents, who with the base commander and Flight Lieutenant Handbury, kept the base open for last-minute reconnaissance operations and then carried out demolitions. The remainder then took off—15 in the damaged aircraft, 22 and 23 in the other two. All reached Darwin safely.
  - McFarlane and his small party then went to work on the final stage of the demolition plan. Having destroyed everything of value to the enemy they then "went bush" and began the arduous trek of 60 miles across wild hilly country to Tifu on the south coast.

- **Ambon**

- On the evening of the 30th two Hudsons remained at Laha, detained by Wing Commander Scott so that he would have "last minute" reconnaissance reports of the enemy invasion force, but the time had come for the last act of evacuation, and the Hudsons were being refuelled for the flight to Darwin, when a stream of petrol was seen coming from the main fuel line of White's aircraft; the line had been shattered by an enemy bullet and the fuel was running from the tank side of the main fuel cock, which meant that all tanks would be drained.
  - Twenty-eight officers and other ranks were waiting on the airfield to fly to Darwin. Scott ordered 17 of them on board the serviceable Hudson.
  - That left eight besides the pilot, co-pilot—Flying Officer Meyer—and himself.
  - Haythorn took his aircraft off about midnight and Scott's party went to work on the damaged aircraft.
  - The task was beyond them with the equipment they had. Scott sent a radio message to Hampshire asking him whether he could return and take his party out. But the flying-boat was half-way to Darwin, and lacked the fuel to cover the additional distance. Earlier it had been arranged that if a R.A.A.F. party should be left behind they would endeavour to go by native boat across Piru Bay from the north side of Ambon, to Geser Island off the south-east tip of Ceram.

# 31<sup>st</sup> January

- On 31st January the Australian Government was informed (by the UK) that, in response to their urgent requests, it was proposed to provide additional equipment, above anything previously planned, including
  - 125 Kittyhawks, diverted from the quantity earmarked for the Middle East,
  - 72 Bofors guns from the February production of the United Kingdom, together with
  - 12 howitzers,
  - 48 25-pounders and
  - 48 2-pounder anti-tank guns; and
  - a total of 335 tanks from February and March production.
  - The United States had also been asked to divert a further 125 Kittyhawks from the reserves which they were shipping for their own squadrons going into the A.B.D.A. Area.



Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawks

# 31<sup>st</sup> January - Government

- Comparison of new allocations with numbers on hand and production rates

Weapon	New allocation from the UK	On hand in Australia end Jan	Monthly production rate in Australia end Jan
Fighters	125	0	0
Tanks	335	10	0
Bofors Guns	72	16	1
Anti-tank guns	48	413	80
Field Guns	60	484	60

Regulations issued on 31st January 1942 established the Directorate of Manpower.

The administration of the List of Reserved Occupations would pass over to the new Directorate, which also would

establish a register of "protected" establishments,

have power to control exemption from military service, and

be the sole channel for engagement of labour by all employers.

## Strategy

Volunteers for the AIF reached 12,543 in January despite the rule introduced at the end of December that members of the militia were debarred from volunteering.

# 31<sup>st</sup> January - Sea

- **Australia**

- At 9.45 p.m. on 31st January, Darwin read a wireless message from Laha, Ambon, reporting that the Japanese had landed at Leahari and Hukurila—places about three miles apart on the east coast of Ambon, and five miles from the town of Ambon. The enemy had also reached Laha, on the west side of Ambon Bay, opposite the town of Ambon, from overland.
- On 31st January *Perth* left Sydney for Fremantle, thence to escort convoy "MS.4" to the ABDA Area.
- *Australia*(flag), with *Leander*, left Sydney on 31st January, for Wellington and the formation of the Anzac Squadron. Vice Admiral Herbert Leary USN assumed command of Anzac Force, reporting to Cominch, Admiral King, and assisted by a flag officer of the R.A.N.

- **Indian Ocean**

- Four ships, *Nord*, *Chak Sang*, *Jalatarang* and *Jalapalaka*, were sunk in the Bay of Bengal and south of the Malay barrier by submarines in January.

- **Global**

- Total losses of allied and neutral merchant ships in January amounted to 521,000 tons. 14 ships amounting to 95,000 tons were sunk by U boats off the American east coast, where reallocation of the U boat fleet to the new war zone outpaced the introduction of anti-submarine defences.

- **New Guinea**

- By daylight on the 31st *Induna Star* had reached Kalili Harbour without incident. There Wilson learnt that fighting on New Britain had ceased, that the natives on New Ireland were becoming increasingly hostile; and that the Namatanai detachment of the Independent Company was believed to be in the mountainous country south-east of Namatanai, with representatives of the civilian administration equipped with a teleradio set "and therefore in a reasonable position".
- Wilson then decided to attempt to reach Port Moresby. That night the journey down the coast continued.



Vice Admiral Herbert Leary USN

# 31<sup>st</sup> January - Air

- On the 31<sup>st</sup> the Japanese bombed Gizo.
- One of these (No. 1 squadron unserviceable Hudsons) was flown out on 31st January. Flight Lieutenant Marshall, who had been flown from Palembang for the purpose, succeeded in flying out another, with a badly crushed fuselage and warped ailerons—the only other aircraft to be retrieved.
- No. 1 Squadron, which had 16 airworthy planes, resumed operations on 31st January with an attack by five aircraft on Alor Star in northern Malaya. Refuelling at Medan, they flew through violent storms, had the satisfaction of seeing their bombs find the target, and returned safely next day.
- Wing Commander Scott's last signal, sent on the 31st, read: All cyphers burned. Demolition completed. Known Japanese landing at Leahari and Hukurila. Japanese have reached Laha from overland and engagement proceeding. Will call whenever possible."
- Moulmein was lost to the Japanese on the 31st. The air warning system was thus broken and the threat to Rangoon became more dangerous.
- Between 23rd and 27th January three RAF squadrons—Nos. 27 (Night Fighter), and 34 and 62 (Bomber)—had also been transferred to Sumatra, leaving behind them only small aircraft-handling parties. On the 28th No. 205 (Catalina) Squadron had moved to Java, leaving one flying-boat detached for long distance convoy patrol work. By the end of January the whole bomber force had withdrawn to Sumatra.
- Only 16 of the 52 Hudsons expected were able to reach Singapore before the enemy cut the air ferry route leading from India. These were divided between Nos. 62 and 8 Squadrons. The movement of the two Blenheim squadrons was also far from complete when the route was cut.
- The two reconnaissance flying boat squadrons statistics for January were: No. 11 Sqn—115 sorties (37 in attack), 1,113 flying hours (559 on attack missions); No. 20 Sqn—86 sorties (31 in attack), 890 flying hours (493 on attack missions).
- 3 B-17's piloted by Maj. Hobson and Lts. Hughes and McPherson completed the first flight from Hawaii to Australia by the as yet unfinished South Pacific route by 12 January.
- The total number of P40s reaching Australia from the United States had been raised by 25 January to 112, and 160 more arrived within the next ten days.



# 31<sup>st</sup> January - Air

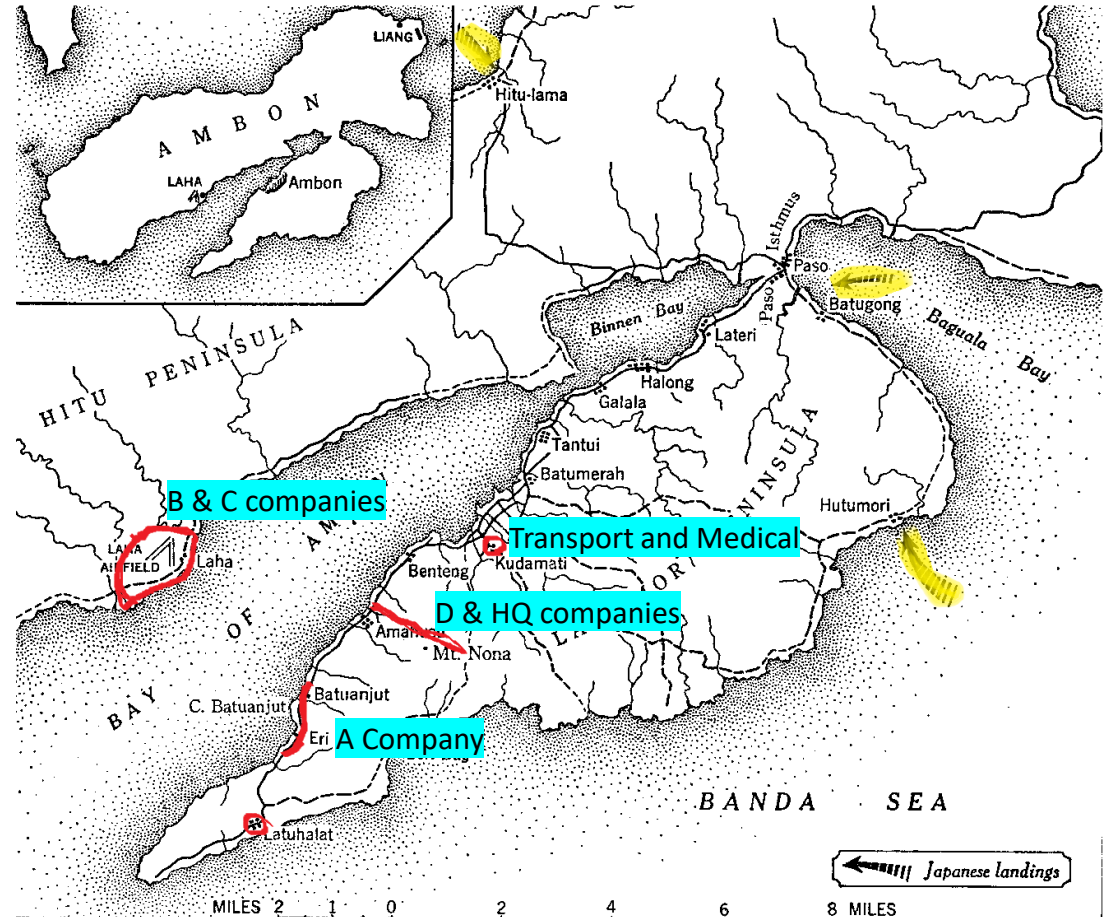
- The enemy was now taking every opportunity to batter Singapore's defences and was concentrating his bombing particularly on the dock area where the congestion of men, materials and ships was increasing daily.
  - Some vessels had to be loaded at their moorings from lighters and those that docked did so at considerable peril.
  - Dock labour, dispersed by the raids, had to be replaced by the troops themselves.
  - Units became separated from each other and from their equipment, ships under heavy attack put to sea only partly laden, and much equipment, needed urgently by the Bomber Group in Sumatra, could not be loaded at all.
  - Shipping losses on the route from Singapore south increased alarmingly and many lives and quantities of equipment, including 200 motor vehicles, were lost.
- In Singapore six hundred civilians were killed during January, and 1,512 injured in air raids.
  - Two and sometimes three raids were made daily during the latter half of January by formations of twenty-seven to fifty-four bombers escorted by fighters, with the island's four airfields as their main targets.
  - Despite the way anti-aircraft guns spattered the sky with metal, the planes maintained perfect formation, and bombed from heights of more than 20,000 feet with considerable accuracy.



Firemen tackle burning buildings and machinery after the bombing of the Naval Yards.

# 31<sup>st</sup> January - Ambon

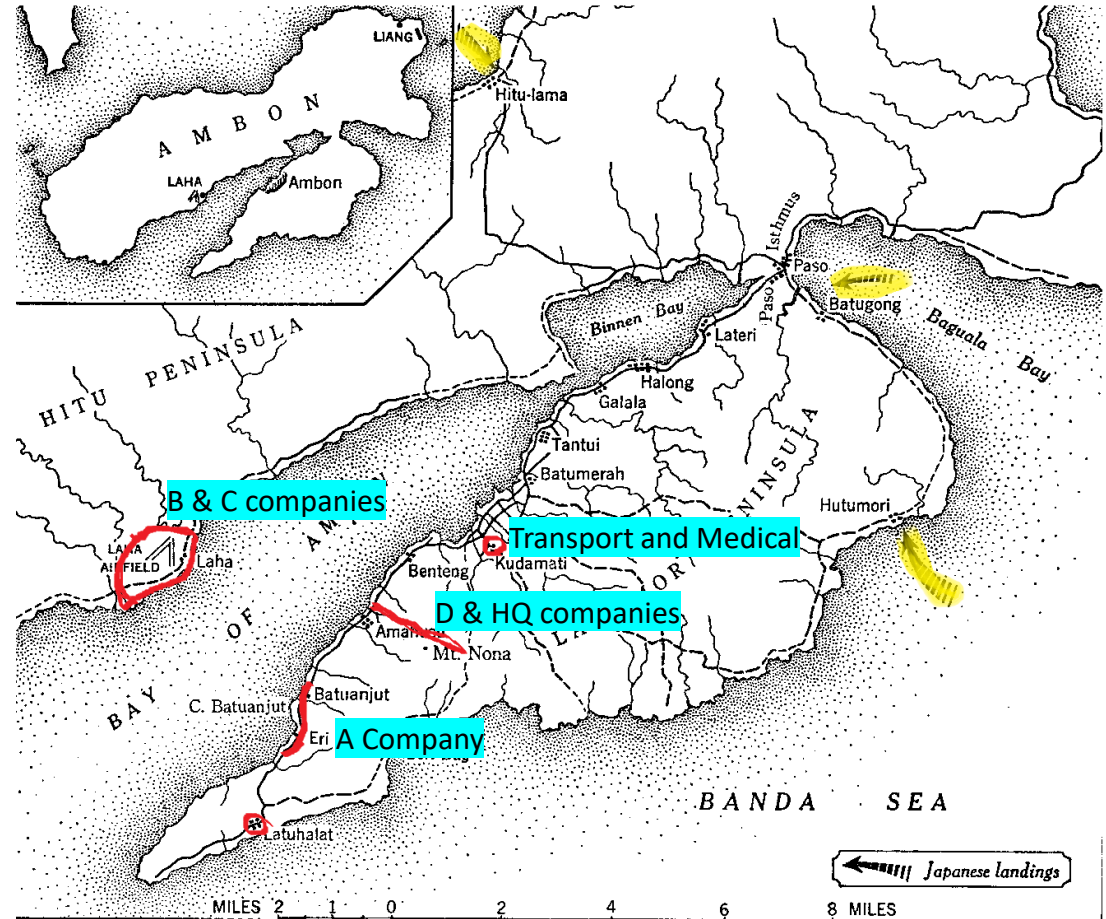
- The Australians had received from Dutch headquarters before 3 a.m. on the 31<sup>st</sup> a report that the enemy had landed on the south coast of the Laitimor Peninsula.
- Jinkins reported from Mount Nona at daylight that ships were apparently anchored off the coast, and warships were patrolling the coast and across the mouth of the Bay of Ambon. Thus the threat was from the east, whereas the southern dispositions on the peninsula had been designed to meet one from the bay.
- At noon (31<sup>st</sup>) the Dutch transferred their headquarters from near Halong to Paso. While the thrusts from the south were developing, an attack from the east on the Paso defences by portion of the force which had landed at Hitulama set in.
  - Confusion caused by failure of communications, and by surprisingly swift attack from unexpected quarters, had a demoralising effect.
  - Resistance at some points was slight or not sustained, and such counter-attack as was attempted failed to stave off encirclement of the Paso defences.
- A perimeter defence by units which remained in action was ordered, but towards the end of the afternoon the commanders of the units found that communication with the Paso headquarters had failed.





# 31<sup>st</sup> January - Ambon

- At 6 p.m. a motor-cycle with sidecar was seen on the road to the west of the Paso position showing white flags and travelling towards the Japanese. Firing on the Paso perimeter was suspended on the orders of the Dutch company commanders.
- Lieutenant Russell, liaison officer at Dutch headquarters, reached the Australians during the morning of the 31st with a report that the headquarters staff had left the town of Ambon. He said they had left intact maps and telephones, which he then destroyed.
- Japanese troops were seen occupying the hospital, less than half a mile north of the Australian Kudamati position, about 4 p.m. on the 31st. They were fired upon, but with poor results as they were too far away.
- The first land attack on the Australian Laha position came late in the afternoon of 31st January. The Japanese encountered a platoon of Captain Perry's company north-east of the airfield, but though the platoon was heavily outnumbered, the attack was repulsed.



# 31<sup>st</sup> January

- At the end of January the Censor reported:
  - "Since the entry of Japan into the war innumerable letters from Australia contain criticism of British leaders and their policy.
  - "Examples quoted in the summaries show complaints that Churchill is only an orator or an old fogey, that England has neglected Australia,
  - that England has sent Australians overseas to fight and is now telling Australia to wait until Germany is beaten,
  - that there are plenty of troops idle in England, that Britain was responsible for all the bungling in Malaya,
  - which was run by "incompetent social fools" or wearers of the "old school tie",
  - that the British had not fought in the war but had left it to the Australians and the Indians.



Smoke from the naval base overshadows Singapore.

(Australian War Memorial)

## JAPANESE 15 MILES FROM SINGAPORE ISLAND



Arrows on this map show directions of Japan's three main drives toward Singapore. In the central sector the Japanese have reached Kuala Lumpur and are only 15 miles from the Strait of Johore, which separates the island of Singapore from the mainland of Malaya.

## RAPID ADVANCE; SIEGE FACES DEFENCE

*Courier-Mail Special Service and Australian Associated Press*

**THE Japanese in Malaya are rapidly closing in on Singapore. They are only 15 miles from Singapore Island. The island fortress is preparing for a siege, and a curfew has been imposed.**

The Australian War Cabinet yesterday made important decisions about Malaya.

Yesterday's Singapore communique revealed that the Japanese in central Johore had advanced 30 miles in 48 hours to Kulai, 15 miles from the narrow Strait of Johore.

## PACIFIC WAR COUNCIL BASIS APPROVED

**MELBOURNE, Friday.**—Developments at long meetings of the War Advisory Council and the War Cabinet to-day foreshadow the early announcement of basic arrangements for the establishment of a Pacific War Council and for Australian participation in the discussions by the British War Cabinet in London.

A basis for both arrangements embodied in cable messages between the Commonwealth and British Governments was approved by the War Council to-day, but many details have still to be agreed upon.

It was stated officially to-night that announcements can be expected soon after the return of Mr. Curtin from Perth on Sunday.

The War Cabinet will meet in Melbourne on Sunday afternoon to enable senior Ministers to discuss the negotiations with Mr. Curtin. It is now clearly emerging that the negotiations, so far as they relate to collaboration of a purely Empire character will not vary in any material way the present machinery for the exchange of views.

On the west coast, too, the invaders had made a swift advance, reaching Pontian Besar, also 15 miles from Johore Strait.

On the east coast, where on Thursday the Japanese had advanced 20 miles from Jemaluang to the Sedili River, a further Allied retreat was expected to straighten the front.

There has been contact with the enemy about Kuala Lumpur fighting occurred on Thursday in the Sedemak area. "Enemy air activity has been considerable against our forward positions and communications."

"Some fighting occurred in the western sector in the Pontian Besar area."

"A further thousand of our troops cut off in the Batu Pahang area have now rejoined our main bodies."

"There have been increased enemy air raids in the last 24 hours in the Singapore area, with some damage."

There has been increasing air raids on Singapore with damage in the last 24 hours. Two enemy aircraft were shot down on Thursday night and one was destroyed yesterday.

Berlin radio quotes a Japanese claim that bombers destroyed the Singapore naval base, including the arsenal and docks.

Australian troops fighting in the central and eastern sectors have won local successes.

Conditions were worst at Liverpool, Birmingham, and West Lancashire, where workers spent hours trying to reach factories through drifts several feet high in the Cotswolds, which were isolated for days.

Invasion food dumps were used where supplies ran out. Trains between Scotland and the south were hours late. At some Scottish stations the snow was the heaviest for 12 years.

In the Thames Valley, troops were called out in clear main force. Weight of snow at Windsor collapsed on a policeman. Aaval of relief saved him from suffocation.

## Late City: War News

## Britain's Worst Snow For Years

*Australian Associated Press*  
**LONDON, January 30.**—It is now revealed that Britain, on January 19, had its worst snowstorm for years. Its effects threatened maintenance of production and transport throughout Britain.

Reports presented to the Advisory War Council yesterday decided that, although the A.P. in Malaya were being compelled to fight manfully, they were not yet in a position to fight manfully.

British commanders in the Far East have informed the Australian Government that, as fighting



## 13 Japanese Planes Down In Burma Raid

*Courier-Mail Special Service and Australian Associated Press*  
**NEW YORK, January 30.**—The Japanese suffered a heavy defeat in the air on Thursday, when 13 of 40 bombers which attempted to raid Rangoon, Burma, were shot down. The destruction of five others is considered probable.

Tough American volunteer pilots, collaborated with the R.A.F. in this spectacular "kill." The Allied force suffered no loss.

It brought the American volunteers' bag since the Pacific war began to 111.

Tomahawks bagged the major share, but two Hurricanes also performed the victory roll above the aerodrome. One Texan, nicknamed "Sandy," bagged three, making his total for two days five.

The most dramatic incident occurred when a Japanese bomber wobbled from the clouds and dived towards the aerodrome. The pilot, supposedly trying to crash into fighters drawn up on the ground. He missed his target by five feet. Attendants subsequently lifted his shattered body from the wreckage.

These places in the news emphasize the widespread nature of Japanese attacks.—(1) Emmahaven (Sumatra) bombed by Japs; (2) Singapore endangered; (3) Penang (western Borneo)—Japs land; (4) Pontianak (south of Penang) and Banjarmasin (southern Borneo)—Immediately threatened by Japs; (5) Balikpapan (south-eastern Borneo)—Dutch still resisting invaders; (7) Morassor Strait—more Jap transport bombed; (8) Kendari (south-eastern Celebes)—more Japs land.

## PHILIPPINES TO FIGHT ON

*Australian Associated Press*  
**NEW YORK, January 30.**—Determination to continue the fight till victory is won was expressed by President Quezon of the Philippines in a message to President Roosevelt.

"The determination of the people of the Philippines to continue fighting side by side with the United States until victory is won," said the message, "is in no way weakened by the temporary reverses suffered by our arms."

"We are convinced that our sacrifices will be crowned with victory in the end. In that conviction we will continue to resist the enemy with all our might."

## GRIP ON BORNEO TIGHTER

From GEOFFREY TEBBUTT, The Courier-Mail's Special Correspondent in the East Indies

**THE Japanese are taking Borneo piecemeal.**

They already hold British Borneo, and successive landings at Tarakan and Balikpapan on the east coast and the threat to Pontianak on the west coast, suggest that the Japanese are trying to make a circuit of the island.

The Japanese may have designs also on Borneo, in the south-west corner of Borneo, and only 300 miles from Sourabaya.

Sourabaya is the chief Dutch and Allied naval base for the whole of the active zone of the Adak war. It is an important munitions and shipbuilding centre.

Otherwise it would be hard to understand why the Japanese are sending such big convoys through the Strait of Macassar. These convoys are suffering heavy punishment from the sustained Allied sea and air action.

**Sourabaya's Value**

If the Allies did not properly appreciate the importance of Sourabaya before, they understand it now.

It is surprising to find the extent of the highly-skilled precision work, including optical instruments, done there by Indonesian labour, with a minimum of European supervision.

The Dutch had to improvise when overseas supplies failed.

The Dutch had planned to build three battle cruisers in island just before the war for service in the East Indies. These ships were never built, but Sourabaya was to have been their base and their preparations made to handle them may yet prove vital to the Allied battle fleets.

**Dutch Troops Resist**

*Australian Associated Press*  
A Dutch communique says: "Japanese troops landed at Pontianak, on the west coast of Borneo, south of Kuching (Sarawak)."

"On land heavy pressure was exerted on our troops operating in these regions. In spite of fierce resistance the Japanese obtained local successes while Pontianak is being threatened by enemy troops. We have destroyed all important objectives on the spot."

"Naval aircraft carried out actions against Japanese units in the sea."



**My Jimmy Got a Raise**

Johnny's mother is Jeanie. Johnny is just an smart as Jimmy. But Johnny didn't get a raise. Johnny didn't have a detective spirit. Jimmy did. The result, Jimmy did more and better work. Remember, it costs no more to consult—

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## WITHDRAWAL FROM MALAYA WITHOUT LOSS

### Queensland Men And Scots Share Rearguard Actions

IMPERIAL forces who had been defending the Malayan mainland withdrew to the island of Singapore on Saturday without the loss of troops or equipment.

Queensland and New South Wales battalions and two Highland regiments took part in the rearguard action to cover the withdrawal.

After the last unit crossed the Johore causeway, which connects Singapore with Johore Bahru, the causeway was blown up with a roar that could be heard in Singapore, nearly 20 miles away.

Already Japanese troops are gathering along the northern shore of the narrow 30-mile long Johore Strait to attack or besiege the island.

The British military authorities have declared evacuation on the north and east coasts of the island; and some of the fortress guns which pointed seaward have been turned towards the mainland.

The Domei (Japanese) news agency claims that naval planes attacked a large enemy convoy going to Singapore, protected by warships, and fought between Sumatra and Banka Island. They claim that they sank a 1000-ton transport and damaged two other ships.

### Troops March Back

On Friday night and early on Saturday morning thousands of British troops marched in columns across the Johore causeway by the light of the full moon—without interference from the enemy.

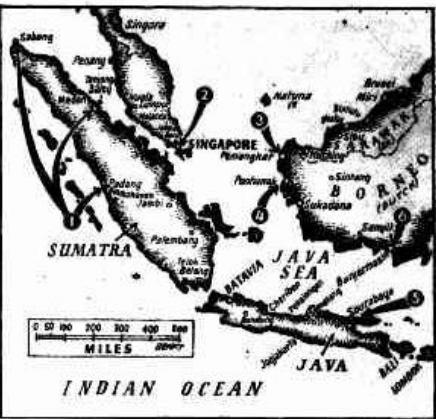
Some troops were ferried across the strait by British warships. It was the climax of a brilliant disengagement and withdrawal which outwitted the Japanese.

While the battle-wary troops tramped southwards for hours along the causeway, two-thirds of a mile long, a swarm of Japanese bombers flew over to seek out military targets in Singapore City area.

The A.I.F. Commander in Malaya (Major-General Gordon Bennett) expressed surprise at the ease with which the withdrawal from the mainland was carried out. The official communique which announced the withdrawal said: "In accordance with a pre-arranged plan our forces, which had been operating in South Johore, were withdrawn to Singapore Island. The enemy made little effort to interfere with the operation."

The G.O.C. commanding in Malaya (General Sir Henry Dornall) said: "The battle for Malaya has come to an end and the battle for Singapore has started. For nearly two months our troops have fought on the mainland an enemy who had the advantage of great air superiority and considerable freedom of movement by sea."

"Our task has been both to impose losses on the enemy and to gain time to enable the forces of the Allies to be concentrated for the final battle."



The map shows: 1.—Sumatran ports bombed and machine-gunned by Japanese planes at the week-end. 2.—Singapore, to which the Imperial troops have withdrawn from Malaya. 3 and 4.—Pomankat and Pontianak, which the Japanese claim to have occupied. 5.—Sourabaya, the Allies second Naval base in the South-west Pacific. 6.—Banjarmasin, which Japanese planes have raided.



Dutch and R.A.A.F. officers are shown in conference on a Malayan airfield before the withdrawal.—Dept. of Information photo.

### British Leave Moulmein

BRITISH forces in Burma have now withdrawn from Moulmein to the west of the River Salween after inflicting heavy losses on advancing Japanese columns.

All stores and equipment were removed.

This was announced by a combined Army and Air Force communique issued in Rangoon yesterday.

Moulmein is on the eastern shore of the Salween estuary and is about 100 miles east of Rangoon.

The Rangoon communique said: "Moulmein was heavily attacked from all directions on Friday morning, but the Japanese were beaten off."

After further Japanese attacks in the afternoon a counter-attack was necessary to restore the position.

A small force beat off all-night attacks until dawn. The enemy suffered heavy casualties in this close-range fighting.

"The Japanese fought six air battles with our fighters."

"Our troops have now withdrawn across the Salween River after removing all stores and equipment from Moulmein."

### HITCH-HIKING WITH QUEEN

QUEBEC, February 1. —The wife of Gunner Archie McOwen, now serving in England, received a letter from her husband relating an interesting experience while hitch-hiking to London from the camp.

"I missed the bus and started walking in hopes of getting a lift from a truck when a car stopped and a lady's voice invited me to enter," he wrote. "Imagine my shock when I recognised it as the Queen's car."

"She was giving me a lift, and she soon put me at ease and said she frequently hails for boys on the road. She is

### BOMBS ON 3 TOWNS IN NEW GUINEA

JAPANESE air attacks on the New Guinea mainland have flared up, after the lull in which the invaders were apparently consolidating their hold on the Rabaul area of New Britain.

Salamaua, on the north-east coast—400 miles from Rabaul—Bulolo and Wau, inland from Salamaua, have been bombed.

All three towns were raided on Saturday, and Wau again yesterday morning.

At Wau one person was killed and one was injured yesterday, but little damage was done to property.

No information has been received about casualties or damage on Saturday.

This was revealed in Melbourne last night by the Air Minister (Mr. Drakeford).

The raids are on a substantial scale. The Federal Government has been informed that 11 enemy bombers were used in Saturday's raid on Bulolo.

An Air Force report received in

### Foodless Day For Mr. Curtin

MELBOURNE, Sunday. —The Prime Minister (Mr. Curtin) and members of his staff on the train from Perth spent the whole of today almost without food.

Mr. Curtin had brought a case of fruit with him, and he distributed it among a number of Far East evacuee children on the train.

The train had been delayed by bad weather before it reached Adelaide yesterday. Although it was known that the train would be late, no supplies of food were arranged on board by the railway authorities, and no action was taken to open refreshment rooms at stations at which the train stopped—nearly 11 hours late. Passengers pocketed their resources of food, and most of them managed to obtain a few mouthfuls. When the train arrived at Spencer Street Station, Melbourne, the refreshment rooms were closed, and there was a rush to city cafes.

### New Plans On Defence Of Australia

MELBOURNE, Sunday. —Meeting again for more than three hours this afternoon the War Cabinet made a series of important decisions on the defence of Australia to meet the changing position created by the Japanese progress in Malaya and the East Indies.

The Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Forde) announced after the meeting that these decisions had been taken in consultation with the chiefs of the defence services who were summoned to the meeting.

They reported to the Government on the implications of the Japanese advances in the week-end.

Mr. Forde said that for security reasons it was impossible at this stage to disclose new measures decided on.

Ministers do not conceal their deep anxiety for the fate of Singapore.

It is accepted that in attacking Singapore the Japanese face an immeasurably more formidable task than that of their attack on Hong Kong.

Mr. Forde said to-night that apart from its very powerful defences, and the fact that its ordinary water supply was drawn from the Malayan mainland, Singapore would not face the water

### AMBOINA ATTACK NEARS 'DROME

JAPANESE forces which landed on the island of Amboina (Dutch East Indies) on Saturday have now reached the outskirts of the aerodrome. This is revealed in an R.A.A.F. communique issued by the Air Minister (Mr. Drakeford) last night.

Before Japanese troops landed on Saturday morning warships and planes shelled and bombed the island.

In announcing this a Batavia communique says: "The battle is raging everywhere."

"The action began early on Friday morning with attacks from the air, which lasted from 7.45 a.m. until 9.45 a.m."

Bombers, protected by fighters, bombed and machine-gunned the island. They destroyed a church and a school building, and slightly damaged the radio station. No casualties were reported.

The enemy transport fleet was sighted at 1 p.m., and preparations for destruction at vital points were carried out.

"In the evening the enemy began the real attack at several points

### Late City: War News

### SINGAPORE FOOD SUPPLIES

Australian Associated Press. The Singapore correspondent of the American Associated Press says that the food authorities began the accumulation of

### RUSSIANS DRIVE ON IN UKRAINE BATTLE

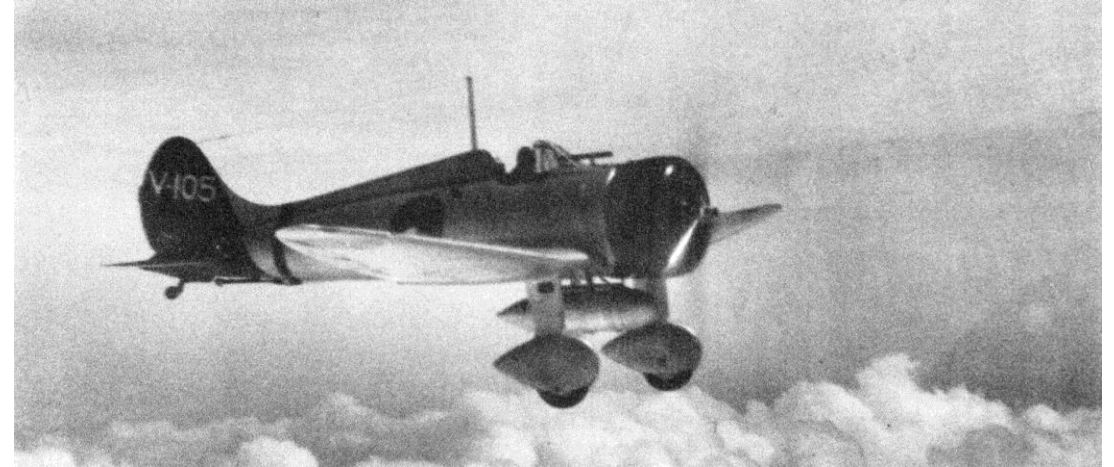


# 1<sup>st</sup> February

- **Air**
- Japanese ships at Rabaul were attacked by four Catalinas on the night of 1st February.
- **Sea**
- **Singapore**
- The convoy MS1, carrying transport and equipment for Australian troops transported in MS2 arrived safely at Singapore on the 1st February.
- **Pacific**
- The *Enterprise* and *Yorktown* taskforces, on 1st February, carried out air attacks and bombardments against the Marshalls, and Gilbert Islands.
- The Enterprise task force attacked
  - Kwajalein, with 37 SBD dive bombers and 9 TBD torpedo bombers armed with bombs for horizontal attack,
  - Wotje with bombardment by two cruisers and strafing by 6 Wildcat fighters, and
  - Taroa on Maloelap by bombardment by the cruiser Chester and strafing by 6 fighters.
  - Aircraft were launched pre dawn, from a position 40 miles north of Wotje, for simultaneous sunrise attacks.
- Yorktown attacked Jaluit, Mili and Makin with unescorted bombers, retaining all her eighteen fighters to defend the carrier.

# 1<sup>st</sup> February

- **Kwajalein**
- The dive bombers could not find the airfield initially because of fog. By the time they did find it the defences were alerted.
  - The bombers were attacked by 10 Claude fighters and 4 were shot down.
  - The bombers roughed up the airfield and claimed two fighters shot down.
  - The second squadron of dive bombers was diverted to attack ships after an incorrect report that there were two aircraft carriers in the Lagoon.
- The torpedo bombers attacked a rich crop of warships and auxiliaries and a second strike of another 9 TBDs was also dispatched from Enterprise.
- The bombers damaged a cruiser, a submarine and seven other ships.



Mitsubishi A5M, allied reporting name Claude

# 1<sup>st</sup> February

- **Wotje**
- The attack on Wotje went to plan. No aircraft were seen in the air or on the ground.
- **Taroa**
- The Wildcats attacking Taroa also had trouble finding the target and two bombed the wrong island before realising the mistake.
- This alerted the defences before the airfield was attacked, it was surprisingly extensive and well equipped, with numerous aircraft including twin engine bombers.
- The wildcats attacked with their remaining bombs, then dived to machine gun the parked bombers.
  - Results were modest because no incendiary ammunition was available, only one bomber caught fire.
- Eight Claude fighters took off. They were initially distracted by the bombarding cruiser but then engaged the Wildcats.
- Lieut Rawie shot down one Claude and collided with another, though his Wildcat got him back to the ship.
- All the Wildcats had trouble with guns jamming, which limited the effectiveness against the enemies in the air and on the ground.
- The Chester shelled Taroa for twenty five minutes, then withdrew in the face of attacks by eight bombers and a number of fighters. In the absence of fighter protection Chester was hit by one small bomb, which caused superficial damage.
- Halsey sent in two follow up strikes, each by nine unescorted dive bombers. One SBD failed to return.

# 1<sup>st</sup> February

- Weather proved more hazardous to the Yorktown aviators than the enemy.
  - The Jaluit attack group of 17 SBDs and 11 TBDs encountered no air opposition but lost 2 SBDs and 4 TBDs, presumably mostly from weather. They could only claim damage to a few auxiliary vessels in the harbour.
  - At Makin 9 SPDs found two flying boats in the lagoon and burned them both and bombed a supporting auxiliary vessel without loss.
  - Nothing was found at Mili
- The operation claimed two ships sunk and half a dozen damaged and twenty aircraft destroyed on the ground or shot down at the cost of ten aircraft lost and one bomb hit on the cruiser Chester.



USS Yorktown

# 1<sup>st</sup> February

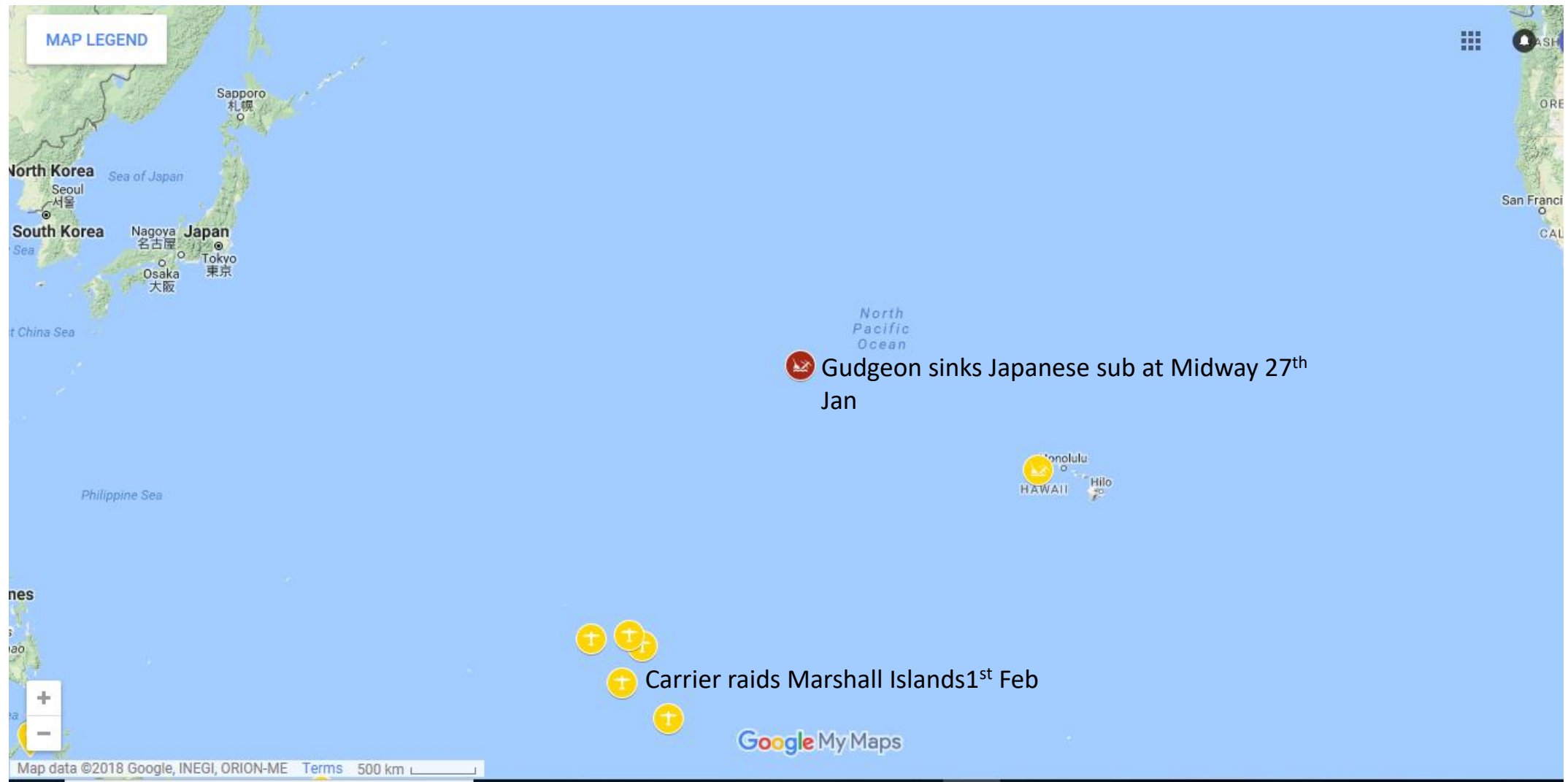
- **Enterprise Taskforce**
- Just before 13.30 five Japanese Nell bombers found the taskforce, as it withdrew, and launched a glide bombing attack.
- Fighter interception was complicated by the lack of IFF sets in the US aircraft and the speed generated by the bombers' glide bombing approach.
- Only two defending fighters scored any hits, damaging one Nell.
- All five Nells bombed simultaneously.
- Radical manoeuvring of the ship caused most of the bombs to miss to starboard but one bomb exploded only 30 yards to port. Fragments ignited a small blaze on the Enterprise.
- As the bombers headed away at low altitude one dropped out of formation and swung back towards Enterprise.
  - The Nell was on fire. In a flaming mockery of a landing approach, it overhauled the carrier.
  - At the last moment the carrier heeled sharply to starboard and the Nell didn't match the turn.
  - Its right wingtip scraped the port edge of the flight deck, opposite the island, and tore off the tail of an SPD parked forward.
  - The wing ripped off at the fuselage and clattered onto the deck, spraying the area with gasoline.
  - The rest of the shattered Nell slid into the sea.



Two Mitsubishi G3M2 bombers, allied reporting name Nell

- At 15.57 two more Nells attacked the Enterprise. Once again the fighters were unable to prevent them reaching the ship. The bombers scored near misses. As they withdrew the Wildcats shot one down but could only claim the other as a probable.
- After the threat to the Enterprise and the losses of unescorted bombers the US Navy carrier air groups joined the long list of forces calling for more fighters.

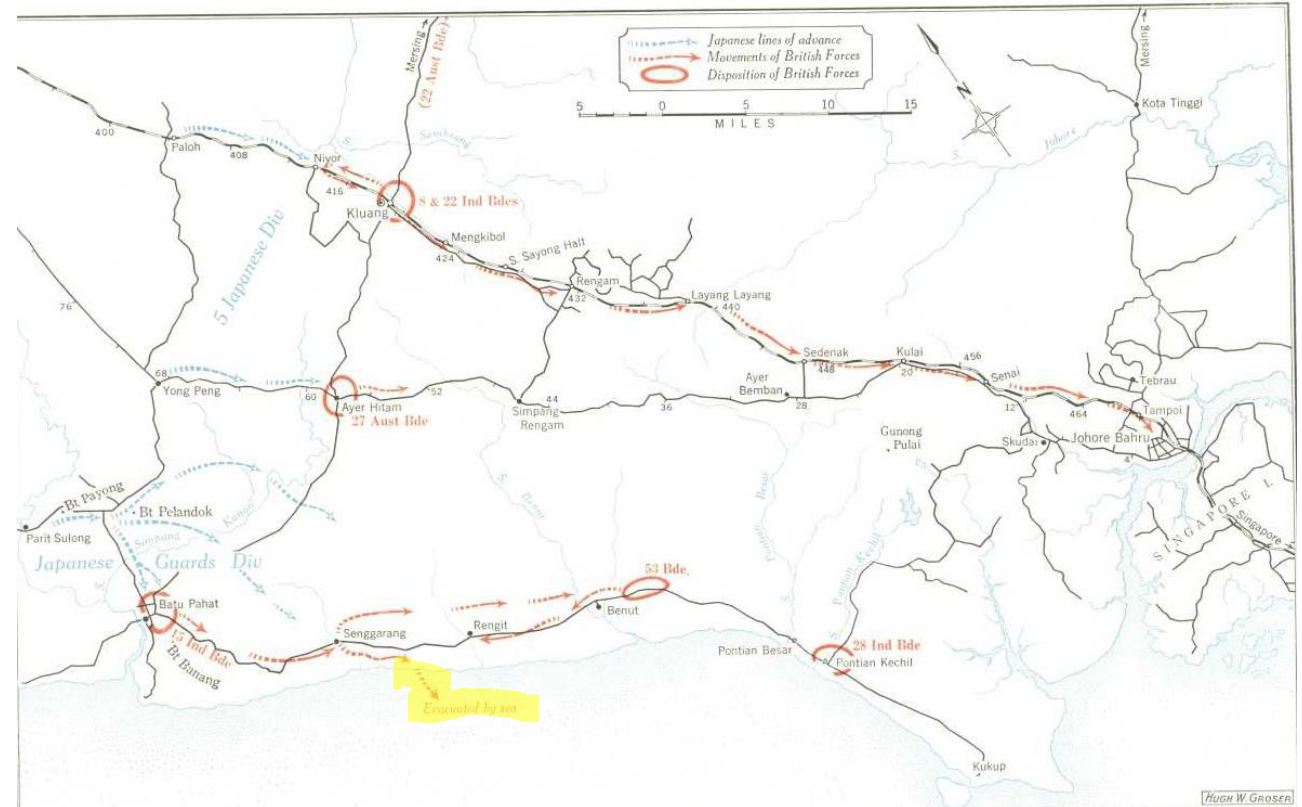
# 1<sup>st</sup> February





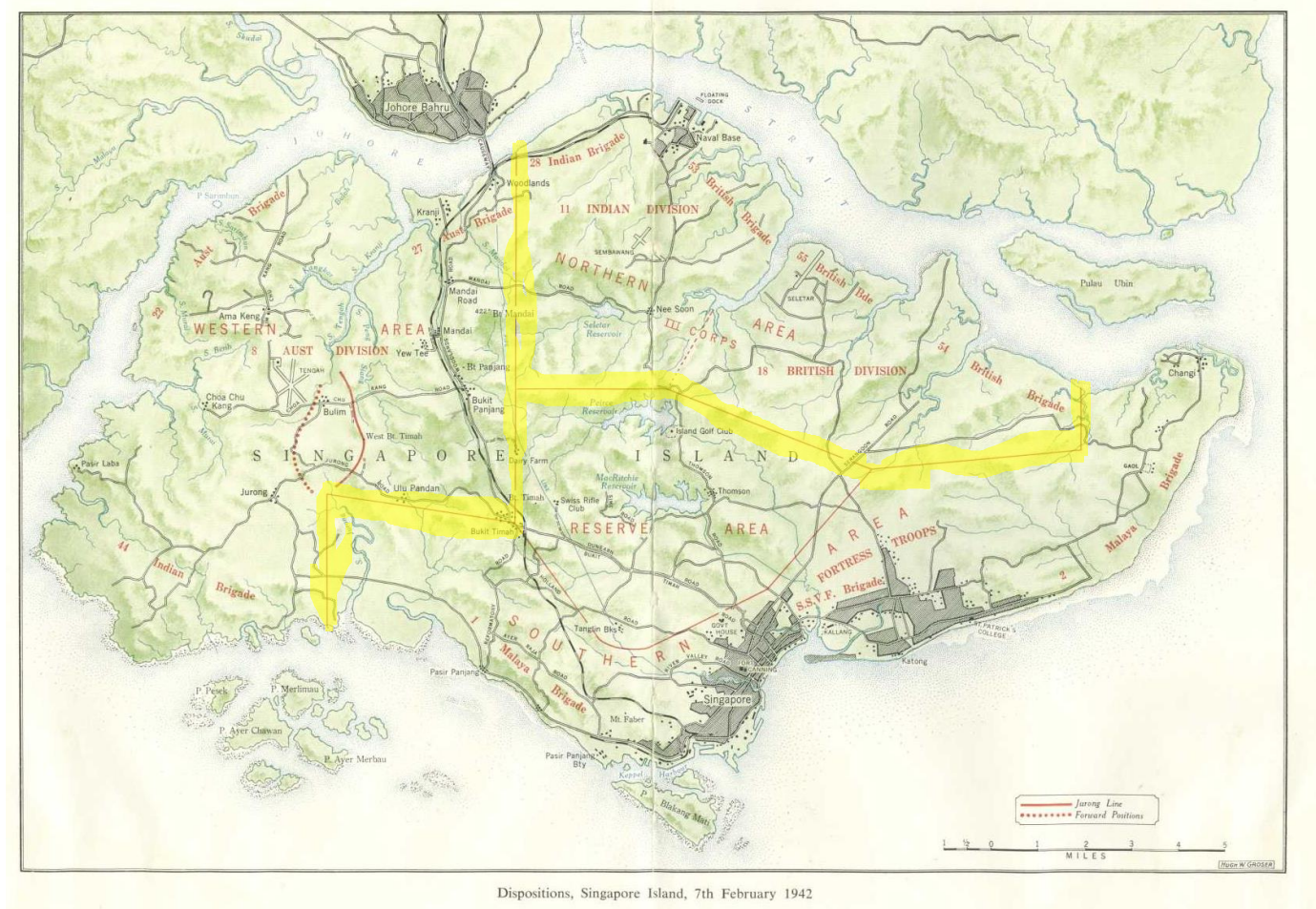
# 1<sup>st</sup> February

- **Kavieng force**
- All that day (1<sup>st</sup>) the Induna Star lay hidden in a harbour near Gilingil Plantation.
- The night was overcast and Wilson decided to run straight for Woodlark Island with a favourable wind and a heavy following sea.
- **Singapore**
- A group from 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade moved west of the road and reached the coast west of Rengit from where they were evacuated by sea, using two gunboats (*Dragonfly* and *Scorpion*) and a number of small craft from Singapore, during successive nights, finishing on 1st February.



# 1<sup>st</sup> February - Singapore

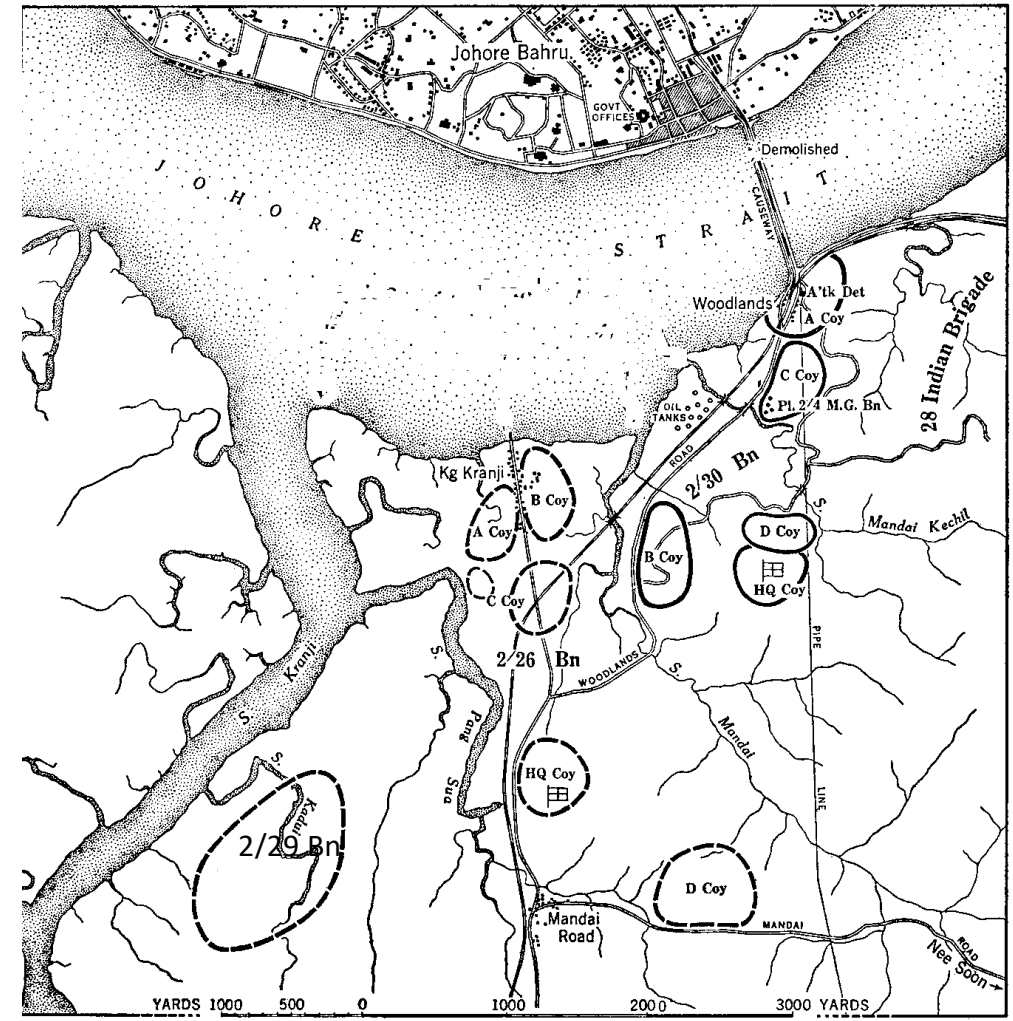
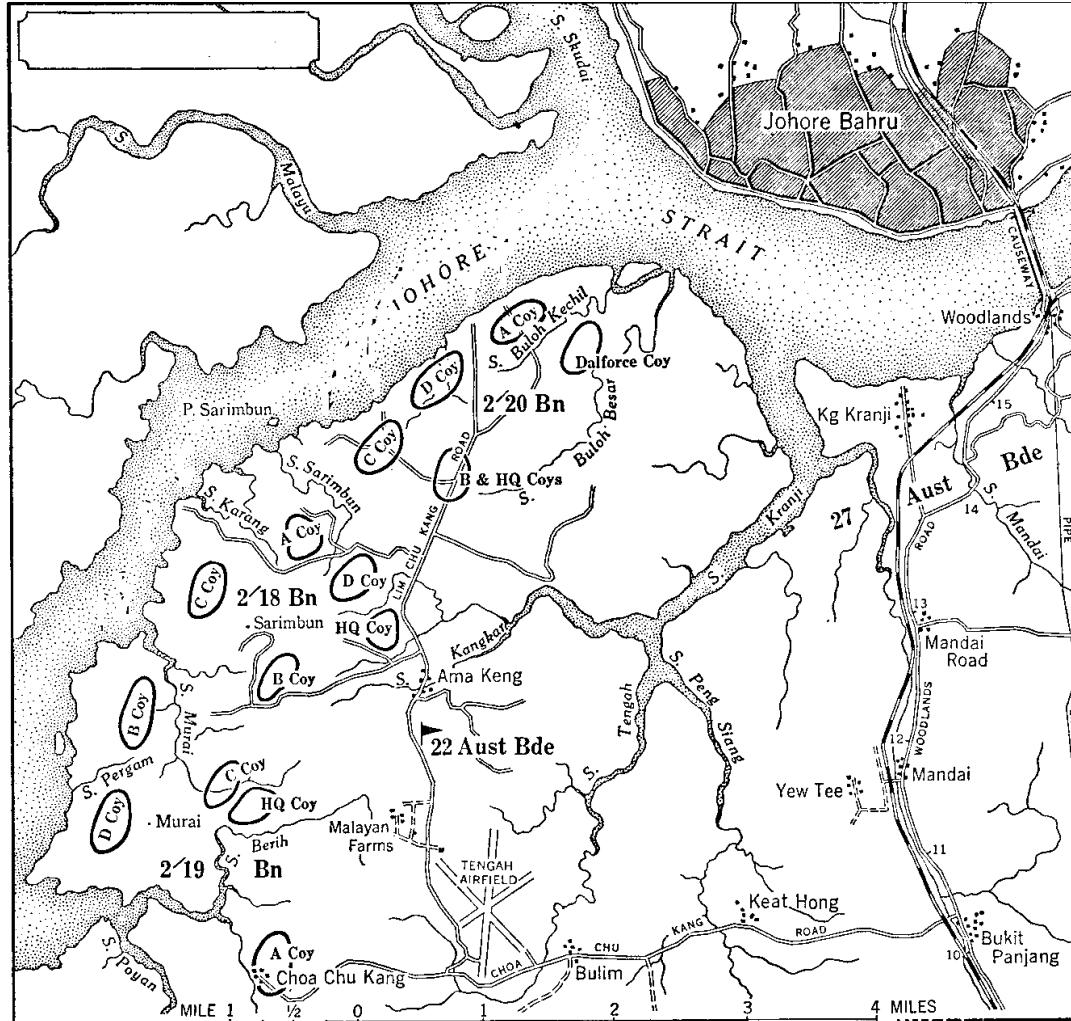
- The defences of Singapore were organised in three areas:
  - Northern Area: From Changi to the Pipeline—III Indian Corps, comprising 11th Indian and 18th British Divisions. Commander, General Heath.
  - Western Area: From the Pipeline to the Sungei Jurong—8th Australian Division and 44th Indian Brigade. Commander, General Bennett.
  - Southern Area: From the Sungei Jurong to Changi—Fixed Defences, 1st and 2nd Malaya Infantry Brigades, Straits Settlement Volunteer Force and Fortress Troops. Commander, General Simmons.
- Artillery allotments were:
  - Northern Area: five field artillery regiments, two anti-tank regiments, and one mountain regiment in addition to its three fixed batteries.
  - Western Area: three field artillery regiments and three anti-tank batteries, additional to one fixed battery.
  - Southern Area: one field regiment.



# 1<sup>st</sup> February - Singapore

- Extensive reinforcement and reorganisation was undertaken to repair as far as possible the effects of the losses suffered on the mainland.
- The two Australian battalions which had fought at Muar had been so depleted that the 2/29th took in 500 reinforcements, and 370 went into the 2/19th.
- The 2/18th received ninety men to replace its losses on the east coast.
- Only one of the 2/29th Battalion's company commanders had survived the Muar action, and nineteen new officers, mostly from reinforcements, had been appointed to the battalion.
- The great majority of the reinforcements had arrived from Australia on the 24th of January . . . . Some had sailed within a fortnight of enlistment. A large proportion had not qualified at a small arms course, nor been taught bayonet fighting. There were some who had never handled a rifle.
- The Indian Divisions that had fought on the mainland were in a similar or worse condition.
- The loss of the 22nd Indian Brigade shortly before the withdrawal across the Causeway had left the 9th Indian Division with only one undermanned brigade (the 8th), which was now incorporated into the 11th Indian Division.
- The Sungei Kranji, 1,200 yards wide where it reached Johore Strait west of the Causeway, offered a natural boundary in the northern part of the Western Area.
  - The 27th Brigade was placed east of it, in what became known as the Causeway sector, and
  - the 22nd Brigade west of it, on a front extending to the Sungei Berih, about half way down the west coast.
- This gave the 22nd a frontage to the Strait of about 16,000 yards, compared with the 27<sup>th</sup>'s 4,000 yards, despite the fact that the 22<sup>nd</sup> Brigade's frontage was closer to the mainland. However, the 2/29th Battalion, to be retained in the Causeway sector, was to be regarded as a divisional reserve.

# 1<sup>st</sup> February - Singapore



The troops set to work wiring, digging, and otherwise preparing to give battle as best they could in the absence of previously prepared defences. In many instances the swampy nature of the ground made it impossible to dig trenches, and breastworks had to be thrown up.