

War in the Pacific

Defending Australia

The First Six Months

Chapter 12

1st February 1942..

Fortress Singapore

Situation report 1st February 1942

- **New Guinea**

- Rabaul and Kavieng have been invaded by the Japanese. Defenders who have not surrendered are fugitives in the jungle.
- The government left civilians and defenders in the lurch without assistance or guidance.
- Japanese are occupying other locations in New Guinea and their aircraft are raiding further and further south.
- The RAAF are attacking shipping at Rabaul but their means are inadequate for the task.

- **An Anzac naval command** has been formed.

- US Navy carriers have attacked Japanese bases in the Pacific but the Japanese fleet was in action in the Indies.

- **Philippines**

- The US/Philippino forces in the Philippines are bottled up in the Bataan peninsula and the Island fortress of Corregidor and are being starved by the Japanese blockade.

Situation report 1st February 1942

- **Government**
- Curtin is recuperating at home in Perth.
- Australia has not achieved any acceptable role in the direction of the war.
- Australian Intelligence is predicting attacks on Port Moresby or New Caledonia.
- Britain has agreed to allocate some fighters, tanks and light anti aircraft guns to Australia, to begin to remedy the most glaring weaknesses in Australian defence capability, but the numbers of fighters are small and the other items are allocations out of future production.

Situation report 1st February 1942

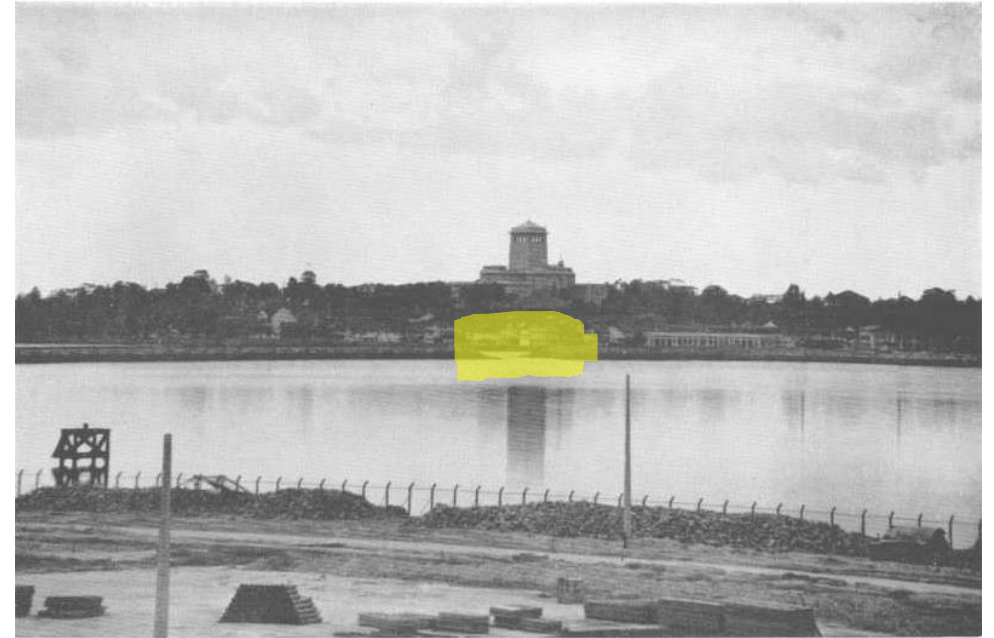
- **Malaya**

- The 8th Division AIF have inflicted heavy losses on the Japanese but were unable to stop their advance. Two of the six infantry battalions have suffered very severe losses in the fighting at Muar.
- The Indian divisions have suffered even worse losses
- 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 outflanked the allies by moving troops by sea down the west coast.
- The defenders have withdrawn onto Singapore Island and blown up the causeway.
- Reinforcements are coming in, but slowly and many are not well trained.
- The airforce has withdrawn to Sumatra and the navy to Java.

- **NEI**

- The Japanese are advancing to the south and west. Balikpapan and Kendari have been taken, Ambon has been invaded and Timor is under threat.
- 1 Australian Corps is going to move to reinforce NEI but Wavell is planning to split the force up and mix it in with Dutch forces.

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



(Australian War Memorial)

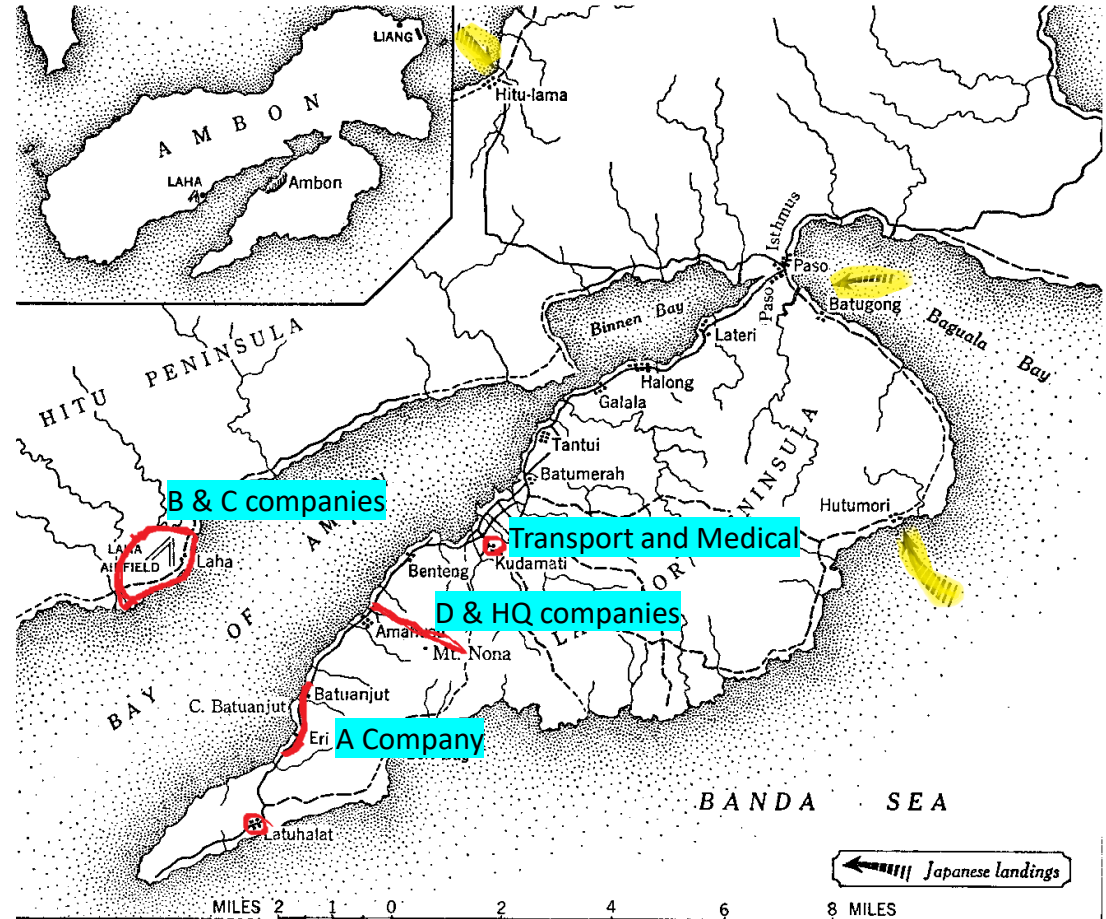
The 70-foot gap in the Causeway can be seen below the Johore Administration building.

Churchill

- Is alternately giving firebreathing instructions to hold Singapore to the death and musing about withdrawing to concentrate on defending Burma.

1st February - Ambon

- **Kudamati**
- Japanese advancing from the town towards Kudamati were hotly engaged by transport men under Lieutenant Smith early on Sunday morning (1st February), and withdrew.
- The Japanese then commenced an outflanking movement in the same direction which threatened to drive a wedge between the Kudamati position and the Dutch Benteng Battery to the west.
- The telephone lines to Australian head - quarters had been cut, it was assumed by artillery fire.
- A request was made to the Dutch commander for aid in dealing with the threat but his company had lost heavily as a result of Japanese shelling, and most of his troops had disappeared
- Benteng Battery, which since daylight had been under fire from mountain guns on near-by heights, ceased fire about 9 a.m., and it became apparent that the guns were being disabled. The enemy then concentrated the full power of their artillery upon the Kudamati position.
- With the battery out of action Japanese vessels entered the bay. A mine-sweeper struck a mine, broke in half and sank swiftly.



1st February - Ambon

- **Laitimor Peninsula**

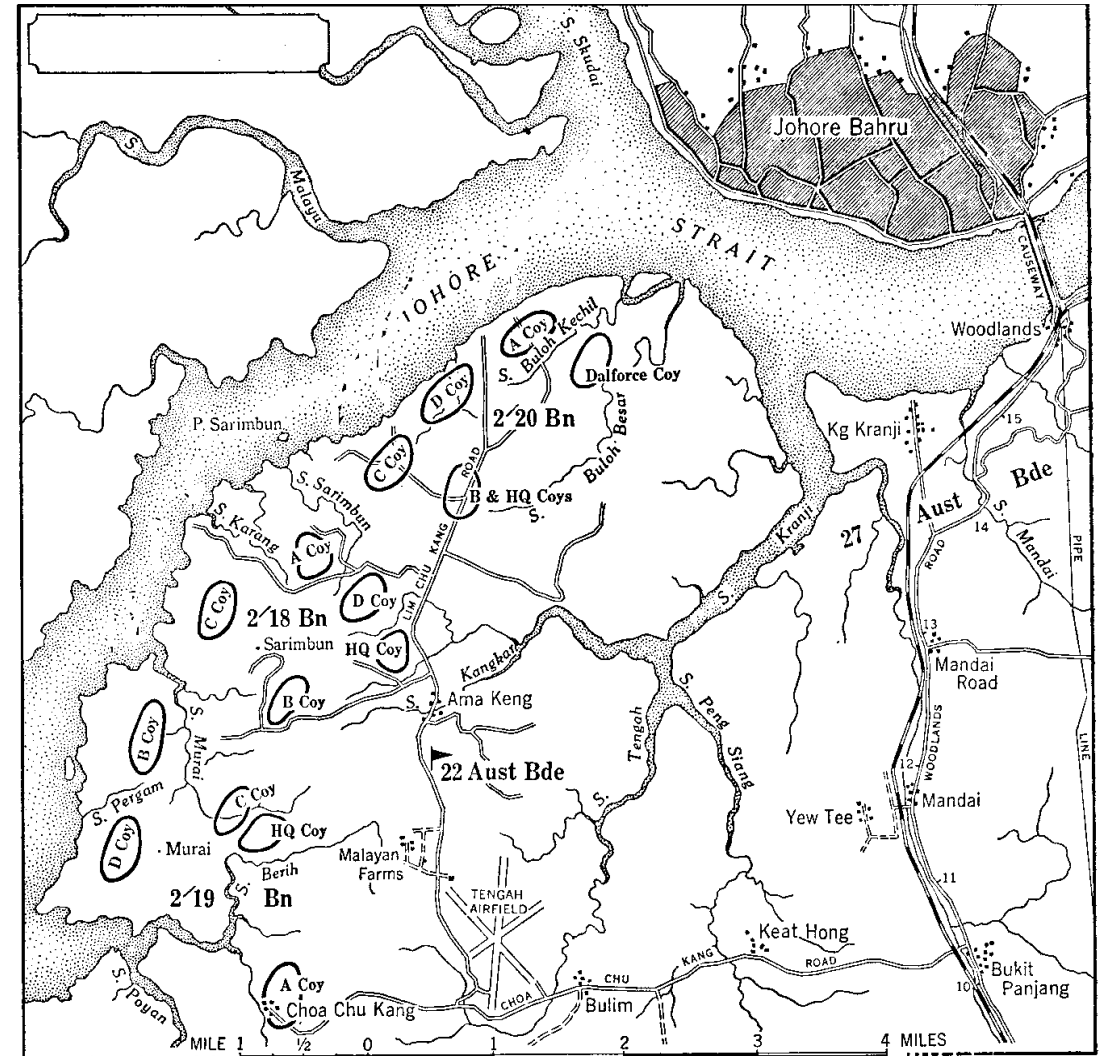
- The Kudamati position, inclusive of "B" Echelon with much of the battalion's ammunition, stores, and transport, had in fact been by-passed by the night of 31st January. The Amahusu line had been readjusted when it became apparent that its rear was to become its front. A patrol was dispatched on Sunday morning (1st) along the road towards Kudamati when a report was received that that position had been cut off. The patrol became engaged with the enemy, and fell back to a position where it could make a stand.
- An attempt was made to get the wounded men of the patrol by ambulance to Ambon hospital, but the driver was halted by the Japanese, and returned with a letter from a Japanese commander stating that no wounded would be allowed through until after the Australians had surrendered, also that the Dutch had surrendered, and the Australians were hopelessly outnumbered.
- Attacks on the left flank of the Amahusu position continued throughout the day. A party comprising cooks and headquarters mess details, placed under Sergeant Martin in a position covering the road approach from Ambon, held up the enemy advance for a while. Mortar fire and rifle grenades dispersed the Japanese.
- In the early afternoon Captain Newnham's (D company) headquarters and Sergeant Smith's mortars were under small arms fire. Soon after 4 p.m. the platoon from Batuanjut was sent forward to the Amahusu position and relieved Sergeant Martin's hard-pressed detachment.
- On Mt Nona Jenkins' platoon had been attacked by Japanese who got to within 30 yards before being challenged. They tried to deceive the Australians by replying that they were Ambonese but without success; a Japanese bullet killed Sergeant Kay. The rush of enemy troops was stopped with grenades and fire from sub-machine-guns, and they were driven back yelling loudly. Thrusts at the platoon's flanks were defeated, despite heavy mortar fire directed at the Australian position.
- A platoon under Lieutenant Anderson, was sent to aid Jenkins' platoon. On the plateau, Anderson and a corporal were moving ahead of the others when they were attacked by Japanese with hand grenades, and Anderson fell, hit in the legs. He told the senior N.C.O., a corporal, that he was done for and that the corporal should do the best he could for the platoon. The corporal returned to the men and led them back to the line.

- **Laha**

- At the Australian Laha position mortar and machine-gun fire was exchanged next day(1st), and it was evident that the Japanese were being heavily reinforced.

1st February - Singapore

- As Captain Gaven of the 2/20th looked at A company's position on the edge of a mangrove swamp he realised that forward defence in this situation was an impossible task.
 - There were no defences or fortifications and
 - no field of view of an enemy approach.
 - It was a situation that would not offer the troops any glimmer of hope.
- The small amount of barbed wire issued for waterfront positions was soon used up, and when the 2/20th's Quartermaster took trucks to the huge Nee Soon Ordnance Base, where hundreds of tons of wire were stored he was told it was reserved for other sectors.
- On 2nd February Bennett visited the 2/20th Battalion. He wrote in his diary "The men are cheerful but the posts are lonely. The gaps between the posts are wide. The position is extremely weak."
- The oil storage tanks at the naval base had been destroyed and the oil was burning. A great pall of black smoke soared skyward and filthy soot rained down on troops all along the north shore. Percival noted that they looked more like miners than troops.



2nd February - Government

- The War Cabinet decided on 2nd February 1942 to place an order for 105 Boomerangs, although not even a prototype had been built.
 - It had been decided to cease making Wirraways for the time being and the C.A.C. had no other alternative project to replace it with.
 - The Boomerang, a low-wing monoplane, was an adaptation of the Wirraway with Wirraway parts constituting about 65 per cent of the aircraft.
 - The C.S.I.R. Division of Aeronautics advised that the project was an excellent method of building, in a reasonable time, a substantial number of high-performance aircraft. There seemed every prospect of attaining a maximum speed of 300 miles an hour at 15,000 feet, with a rate of climb of 2,560 feet per minute.
 - At the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour the first Beaufort bombers were coming off the production line; the Wirraway and Tiger Moth and Wackett trainers were being made in substantial numbers but no attempt had been made to manufacture fighter aircraft of any kind.
 - The Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Air Vice Marshal Bostock) made it clear that fighter aircraft capable of intercepting bombers launched from Japanese aircraft carriers that might attack Australian capital cities, were urgently needed.
 - He strongly advocated that every effort should be made to procure P-40 (Kittyhawk) fighters from the United States and that at the same time an attempt should be made to manufacture a fighter locally as an insurance against the non arrival of the Kittyhawks.
- Curtin reached Canberra on his return from his recuperative break in Western Australia and returned to work.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

NEA0408

CAC Boomerang

2nd February – New Guinea

- At 9.30 a.m. on the 2nd, 90 miles south-east of Rabaul, Induna Star was attacked by an enemy plane. One bomb struck amidships, destroying the lifeboat and causing a number of casualties.
- Since the ship was now taking a dangerous amount of water, Wilson considered further resistance useless, and ordered the ship to heave to.
- "We then received instructions from the enemy to proceed towards Rabaul, which
- we did slowly, accompanied by enemy planes, all available hands taking shifts on the pumps".
- "In the evening an enemy destroyer came up to within 500 yards, then sent a boat which took the wounded and officers aboard the destroyer.
- The Induna Star was towed and we proceeded to Rabaul and captivity."
- Three men had been killed and twenty four wounded during the action.



MV Induna Star

2nd February - Sea

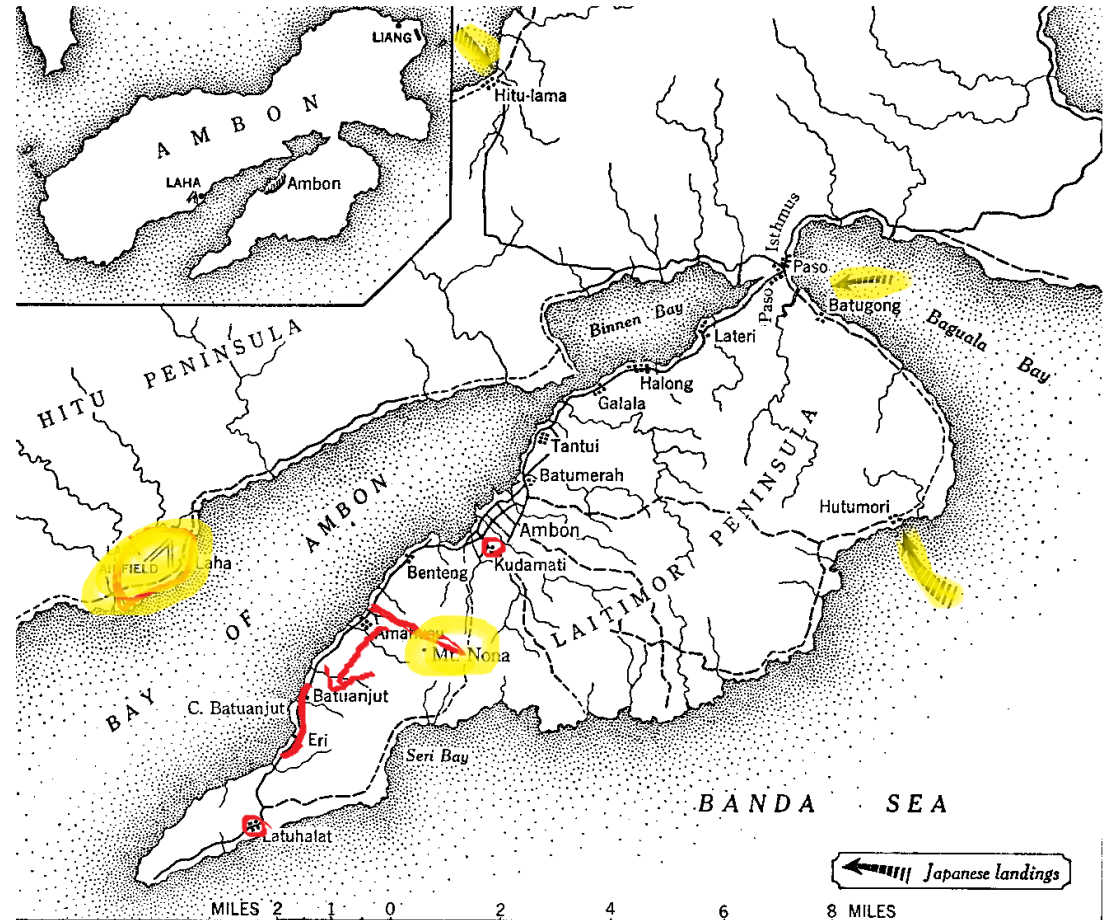
- **Sea**
- Two Japanese minesweepers were damaged, during minesweeping operations in Ambon Bay on 2nd February by mines laid by the Dutch at the end of December.
- Japanese aircraft were ranging farther afield into Banka Strait and the more southerly approaches to Singapore; and convoy "BM.12", then approaching Sunda Strait, was to be the last convoy into Singapore.
 - This change in defence plans released for offensive operations a number of British and Dutch ships hitherto engaged on convoy escort work; and
 - at a conference with Admiral Helfrich and Commodore Collins at his headquarters at Lembang on 2nd February, Hart arranged for the immediate formation of a Combined Striking Force of American and Dutch ships, to be commanded by the Dutch Rear-Admiral Doorman.
 - Additions would be made to it as British ships—including Perth—became available.
- On the 2nd February H.M.A.S. *Maryborough* left Singapore escorting H.M. Ships *Circe*, *Medusa* and motor minesweeper No. 515 to Batavia.
- H.M.A.S. *Vendetta* (which was immobilised, having been in dockyard hands for a major refit) also left on the 2nd in tow of *Stronghold*, and
- in the evening of that day *Hobart* and *Tenedos* also sailed for Batavia.
- **Air**
- On 2nd February, 6,859 United States Army personnel, mostly Air Corps, disembarked at Melbourne.



HMAS Vendetta under tow

2nd February - Ambon

- **Laha**
- About 0100 hours (Monday, 2nd February) heavy machine-gun and mortar fire was directed at the Australian positions at Laha and small parties of the enemy infiltrated between the platoons holding the area. The infiltration was dealt with by hand-to-hand fighting.
- A concentrated attack on the position, by troops, dive bombers, fighter planes, naval bombardment and artillery, commenced at dawn on 2nd February and about 10 a.m. resistance ceased.
- **Laitimor Peninsula**
- It was decided, in view of the enemy's possession of Nona, that Newnham's company should fall back to Eri "where the unit could make a stand for two or three days". At midnight 1st-2nd February, the movement began.
- Scott hoped that air or naval support from Australia might arrive next day, in consequence of the message which he understood had been sent from Laha to Army Headquarters.
- Enemy seaplanes had strafed the Eri positions, and Japanese warships shelled them constantly. These attacks, and a grass fire started by the shelling, caused some withdrawals.



2nd February - NEI

- **1 Corps**
- Lavarack's senior Intelligence officer, Lieut-Colonel Wills, prepared on 2nd February a paper in which he predicted that the next Japanese objectives would be
 - (a) Timor to cut air communications between Java and Australia and
 - (b) the Sumatra airfields and refineries; and
 - that the enemy could attain these objectives by 2nd March.
- Java would then be isolated and the small Dutch garrison, "split into penny packets throughout the island" and of problematical fighting value, would not hold out for long.
- On the information available, the leading Australian division could not be ready for action in the Indies before 15th March at the earliest.
- Wills concluded
 - that adequate Australian troops could not arrive in time;
 - that if part of the Corps arrived before the Japanese attacked it would be lost; and
 - that **by attempting to bring 1 Aust Corps to southern Sumatra and Java ... the defence and safety of Australia itself is being jeopardised.**
- The information then available at Wavell's and Lavarack's headquarters about the movements of 1 Australian Corps was that
 - the first convoy, carrying one brigade group and some other units, would sail from the Middle East on 2 February and arrive in the Indies on 1 March;
 - the remainder of the 7 Division would sail about 19 February and arrive on 15 March;
 - the 6 Division would sail between the 19 and 29 March.

3rd February - Sea

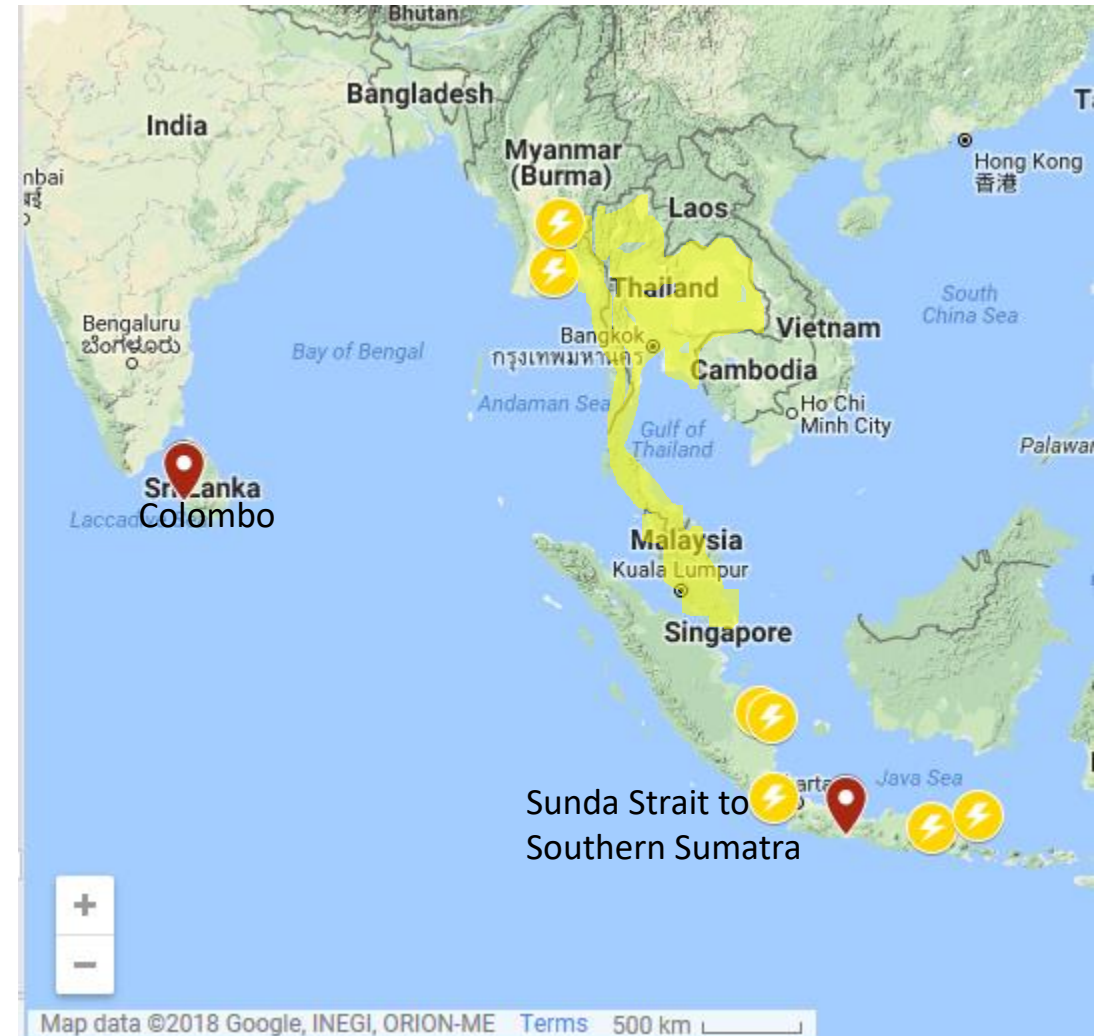
- The Americans had concluded that Darwin was unsuitable as a base, and had ordered a number of auxiliaries from there to Tjilatjap.
 - The destroyer tender *Black Hawk*,
 - the submarine tenders *Holland*
 - and *Otus* and
 - the oiler *Trinity*,
 - escorted by *Alden* and *Edsall*,
- sailed from Darwin on 3rd February.



Submarine tender USS Holland with 7 submarines.
Prewar picture in San Diego.

3rd February

- On the 3rd February, convoy "BM12", carrying reinforcements to Singapore, was passing through Sunda Strait north bound.
 - By this time the imminence of a Japanese attack on southern Sumatra was clear.
 - Enemy aircraft were making daily reconnaissance flights over Banka Island and Palembang;
 - air attacks on Allied convoys in Banka Strait and on airfields in Sumatra increased.
- The first of the convoys carrying 7th division, "JS.1", reached Colombo at the end of January.
 - It was of eight ships and carried troops and equipment of the 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion and the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion.
 - "JS.1" left Colombo for the ABDA Area on the 3rd February with H.M.S. *Cornwall* as ocean escort.
- General Wavell decided that the first Australian division to arrive should be used in Sumatra, and the second division in Java.

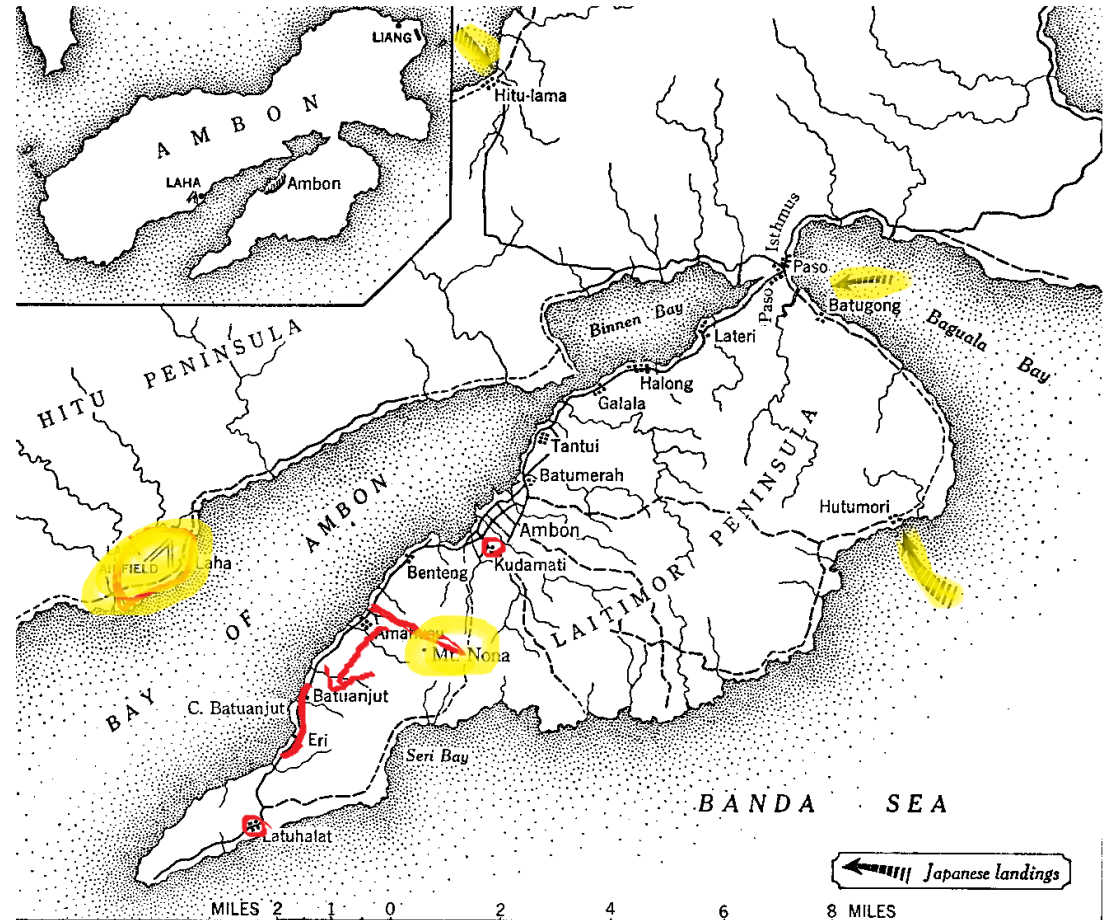


3rd February - Sea

- A striking force was hastily assembled off Madura. It consisted of *De Ruyter* (flag of Rear- Admiral Doorman), *Houston*, *Marblehead*, and *Tromp*; the American destroyers *Stewart*, *John D. Edwards*, *Barker* and *Bulmer*; and the Dutch *Van Ghent*, *Piet Hein*, and *Banckert*.
 - Allied air reconnaissance reported an enemy concentration of three cruisers, ten destroyers and twenty transports at Balikpapan, presumably preparing for an advance on Bandjermasin or Macassar. Doorman was to try to smash this concentration.
 - On 3rd February the Japanese made their first air raid on Surabaya with twenty-six bombers escorted by fighters, and did considerable damage to the town. They also raided the inland towns of Malang and Madiun, damaging the airfields and destroying grounded aircraft.
 - The Japanese aircraft bound for Surabaya passed over the Allied striking force on the afternoon of 3rd February. Doorman thus knew that he was sighted, and that any element of surprise attaching to his mission was probably lost.
- Shortly after noon on the 3rd, in the northern leg of Banka Strait, *Hobart* saw three aircraft bombing the merchant ship *Norah Moller*.
 - She and *Tenedos* turned towards and the aircraft, after a fruitless attack on *Hobart*, flew off.
 - *Norah Moller*, hit amidships, was on fire, with her engines out of action.
 - *Hobart* took off her wounded and passengers—a total of 57 including women and children. The remaining 13 of *Norah Moller's* company were picked up by *Tenedos*, and
 - the ship herself, anchored, abandoned and on fire, was left.
 - Of those rescued by *Hobart*, 28 were wounded, and six died on passage to Tanjong Priok, which was reached on the 4th.

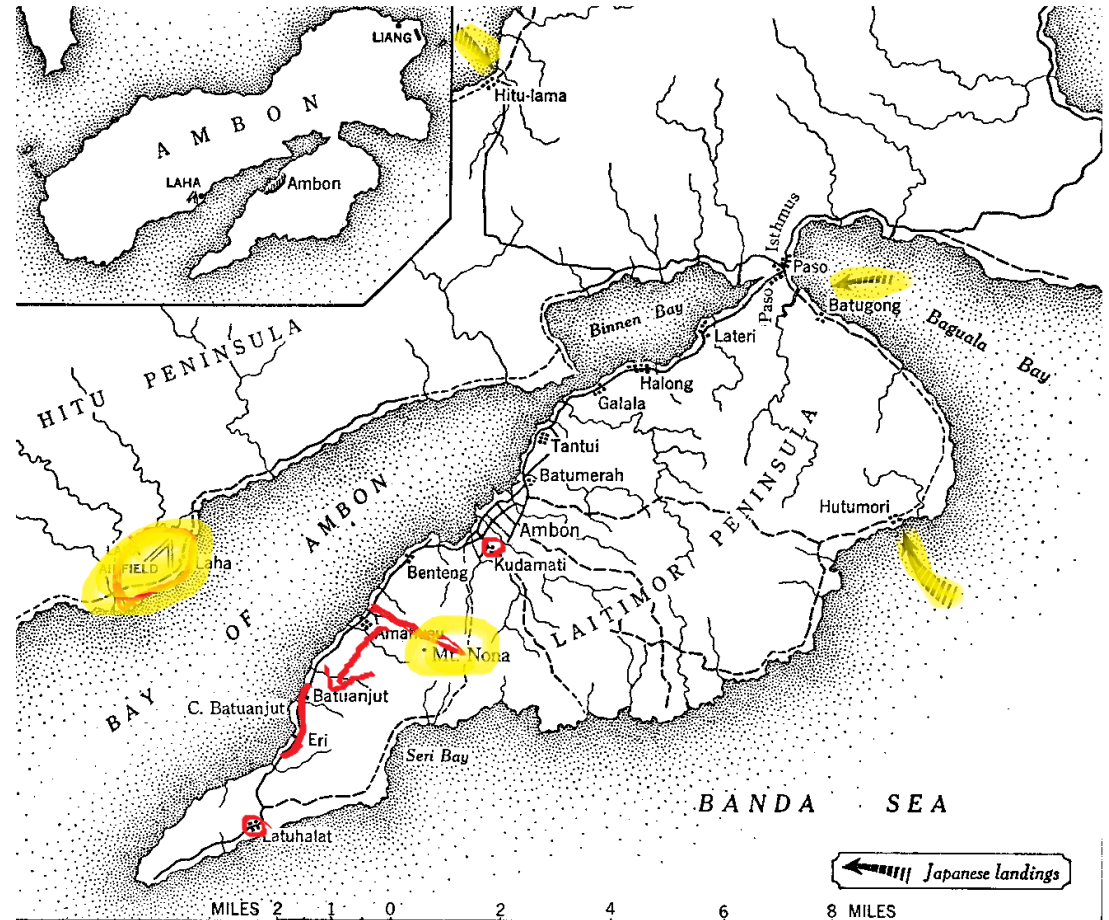
3rd February - Ambon

- On the early morning of 3rd February Scott concluded that if the troops remained in the position they would be bombed and shelled with no prospect of retaliation.
 - The supply position was critical.
 - The Japanese flag was seen flying over the Laha position.
 - Scott therefore dispatched the battalion's medical officer, Captain Aitken, to the enemy lines to obtain the terms of surrender.
- With supplies of food and ammunition exhausted, and their position cut off, Turner and his men at Kudamati surrendered at noon.
- In the defence of Ambon, the main part of Gull Force, on the Laitimor peninsula lost 15 killed.



3rd February - Ambon

- On Mount Nona, it appeared impossible to get Anderson in his wounded condition down the steep cliff which the platoon must descend in withdrawing.
 - Two men—Privates Buchanan and Wakeling—volunteered to carry him by a more practicable route leading to the Japanese lines.
 - 500 Japanese whom they encountered marched back by compass-bearing to the Benteng barracks with the stretcher in front.
 - Two Japanese carried it towards the end of the trip.
- Next day (3rd February), at the advanced dressing station in the jungle behind Laha airfield, Lieutenant McBride found that the Japanese had occupied the airfield. Despite his weak condition (he had been shot in both arms) he began to organise an escape party.
 - Captain White, of the 2/12th Field Ambulance, and all his men, decided to stay with the wounded.
 - McBride collected about 20 patients who were able to walk and led them northward.

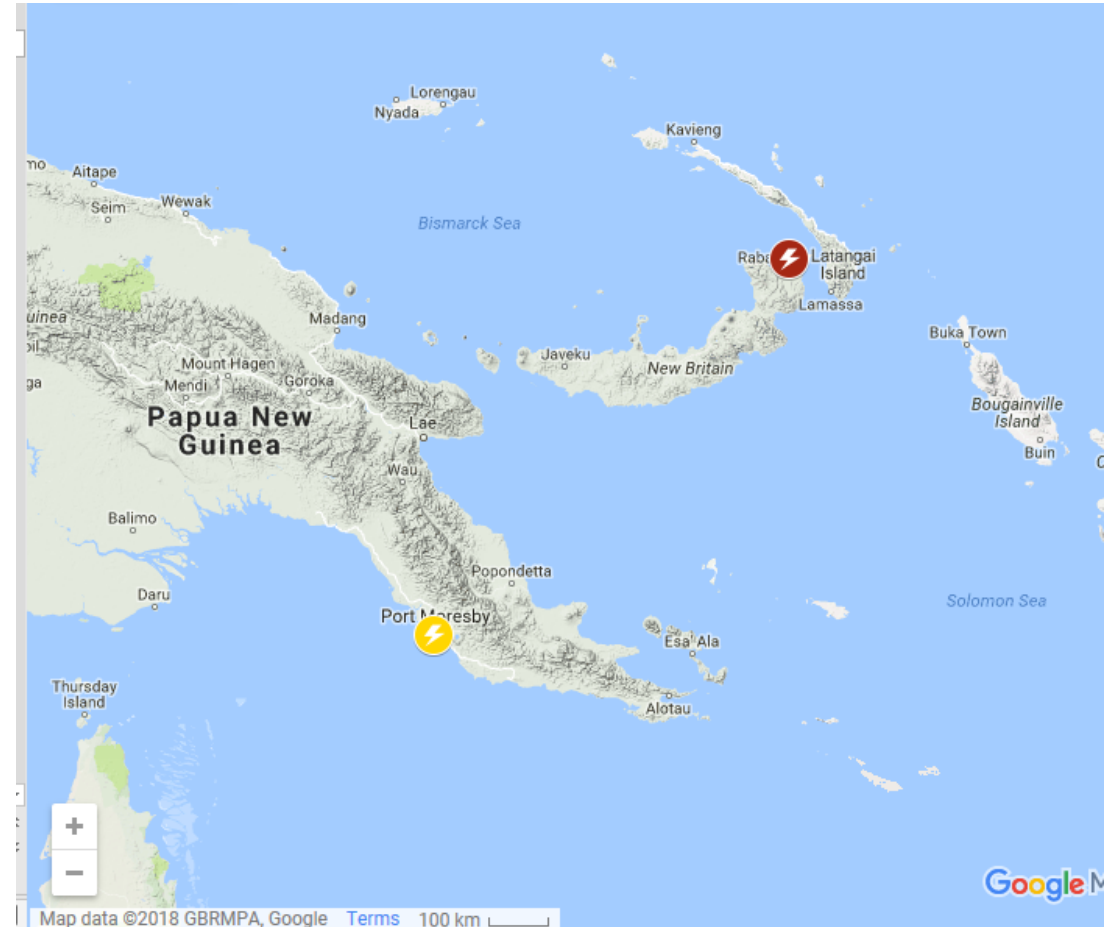


3rd February - Air

- The enemy raided the aerodrome at Penfui so consistently that, even for combat aircraft, it was safe only under cover of night. Yet the Hudsons of both Nos. 2 and 13 Squadrons maintained their regular reconnaissance patrols to within 50 miles of Kendari twice a day. One crew would take off from Penfui at dawn, complete their patrol and land at Darwin; another crew, reversing the procedure, would fly from Darwin, cover the patrol route and land at Penfui at dusk.
- No. 226 Fighter Group was based on P.1 at Palembang, where lack of communication facilities caused delays in taking off for interception of enemy aircraft.
 - The Group included Hurricanes and a few Buffaloes from Singapore but
 - most of its total of about 50 Hurricanes had been flown off H.M.S. *Indomitable*.
 - Their guns were still protected by anti-corrosive grease. The task of cleaning these guns and making them ready for combat without the usual facilities delayed operations.
 - Except for the commanding officers and flight commanders, the pilots of these aircraft had come direct from operational training units.
 - To improve the climb and manoeuvrability of the Hurricanes the four outside guns were removed; it was considered that the remaining eight guns would be adequate against the unarmoured Japanese fighter aircraft.

3rd February – New Guinea

- **Air**
- At 3 am on the same day (3 February) enemy bombers raided Port Moresby in Papua for the first time. Six aircraft dropped twenty bombs on the airfield. No military damage was done. One soldier was killed.
- Four Catalinas from Port Moresby attacked Japanese ships at Rabaul on the night of the 3rd-4th.
- **Rabaul force**
- On the 3rd there remained at the Tol Plantation, on the south coast of New Britain, and at Waitavalo, about a mile north, some seventy men.
- At 7 a.m. five enemy landing craft, heavily laden with troops, appeared heading for Tol Plantation. As they neared the beach the Japanese began to shell and machine-gun the area.
- Twenty-two men elected to surrender and, carrying white flags to the Japanese on the beach, were taken prisoner.
- Others attempted to escape through the plantation areas into the bush but many were captured.
- The Japanese systematically combed the areas adjacent to Henry Reid Bay, and parties of soldiers unable to cross the rivers were captured and brought to the concentration point at the Tol native labour quarters.
- When night fell the men were imprisoned in a large hut.



4th February

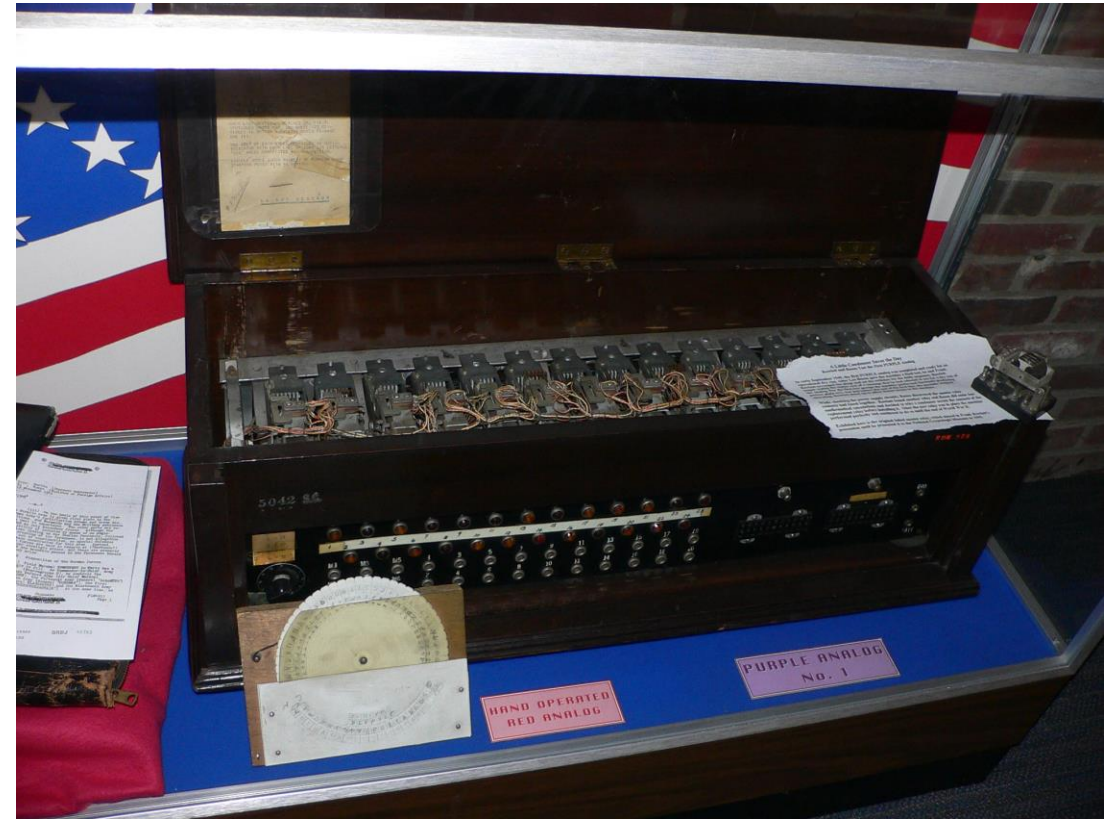
- **Strategy**
- The GOC Home Forces, Lieut-General Sir Iven Mackay, who had been appointed to that post in September 1941, submitted to the Minister for the Army on 4th February 1942 a memorandum on the defence of Australia in which
 - he asked for recognition of the principle of concentration of effort and for the concurrence of the Government in the view that
 - certain areas were vital and that, in the event of an attempted invasion by the Japanese, efforts must be concentrated on holding them.
 - Other places must be looked upon as "isolated localities".
- Mackay wrote that the Melbourne-Brisbane region, 1,000 miles from north to south, had scarcely five divisions to defend it. He did not propose, therefore, while the main areas remained equally threatened, to attempt to defend either Tasmania or Townsville with more troops than were in those areas then. The troops then in north Queensland—a few battalions—should remain there for reasons of "morale and psychology".
- He asked that the Government should either confirm his proposal not to reinforce Townsville or Tasmania or else give "some further direction regarding the degree of such defence".
- The Chief of the General Staff concurred generally with Mackay's views.



The GOC Home Forces, Lieut-General Sir Iven Mackay

4th February - Coregidor

- The US Navy operated a signals facility at Fort Mills, Coregidor, which maintained a PURPLE machine to decrypt Japanese diplomatic code and intercepted and decrypted messages in the Japanese JN 25 naval book code.
- The PURPLE machine was one of eight in existence. There were four in Washington, three in London and the one in Coregidor.
- The Navy had first achieved some penetration of JN 25 in September 1940 but the amount of intercepted traffic increased enormously when war broke out.
- The US Navy started the evacuation of the 60 men of the Coregidor signals group and their PURPLE machine by submarine on 4th February.



An equivalent analog to the Purple machine reconstructed by the US Signals Intelligence Service. (Mark Pellegrini) (Creative Commons CC-BY-SA-2.5)

4th February - Sea

- **Striking Force**
- Doorman sailed at midnight and led his force eastwards before turning north for Macassar Strait. This course was on the direct air line between Kendari and Surabaya.
- Daylight on the 4th found the striking force zigzagging under scattered clouds but good visibility. At 9.49 a.m. four formations, of nine Japanese bombers, appeared from the east. From then until around midday the ships were the targets for successive attacks by the aircraft.
- Marblehead was hit by two bombs and a near miss close aboard the port bow caused severe underwater damage. She left the action with a jammed rudder, on fire and down by the bow.
- Houston lost her after turret with its three 8-inch guns, as the result of an explosion following a bomb hit, but she remained effective. She suffered sixty killed, and the Marblehead fifteen, and both ships had many wounded, some seriously.
- **Singapore Convoy**
- During the forenoon of the 4th the Singapore portion of BM12, escorted by Danae, Sutlej and Yarra, was bombed in Banka Strait, but suffered only minor damage from near-misses.



USS Marblehead in February 1942 showing bomb damage received in Makassar Strait

2nd 3rd & 4th February



4th February - Air

- **Rabaul**
- Enemy night fighters made their first interception over Rabaul on the night of 3rd-4th February while five Catalinas were attacking. They intercepted two of the flying-boats.
- One of these, captained by Flying Officer Higgins, evaded by diving to 1,000 feet and flying through a smoke screen conveniently provided by an active volcano.
- The other aircraft, piloted by Flight Lieutenant Hemsworth, was attacked while held in the beams of the searchlights.
 - Sergeant Dick, armourer-air gunner, who was making his first operational flight, used two Lewis guns in the port blister to such good effect that he saw the enemy aircraft go into a spin and from reports by other crews it appeared to have crashed into the water, it was claimed as a probable.
 - The Catalina had been hit in one propeller, the tail unit, along both wings, the port and starboard fuel tanks (which were not self-sealing), the oil tank, and the oil feed line.
 - Hemsworth put the aircraft into an evasive dive but had to feather the damaged propeller.
 - The bombs were jettisoned and, when only 200 feet above the water, the crew threw out all loose gear that was not essential for flight.
 - With petrol pouring into the interior of the aircraft from a damaged fuel tank, and flying on one engine, Hemsworth kept the Catalina airborne for more than five hours until, on one engine, in darkness with no flare path, and with petrol flooding up to the catwalks, he made a perfect let down on to the sea at Salamaua.
 - After temporary repairs which allowed him to take off with two engines. Hemsworth set off back to Port Moresby.
 - Once airborne, he had to feather the damaged propeller again.
 - It was impossible to climb over the mountains so he flew round the coast at an altitude of 50 feet.
 - When the Catalina alighted safely on Port Moresby Harbour at 5 p.m. on the 4th it had spent 25 and a half hours on the single operation and for 14 and a half hours Hemsworth had flown it on one engine.
 - Maintenance crew counted more than 100 bullet holes in the aircraft.

4th February - Air

- **Transports**

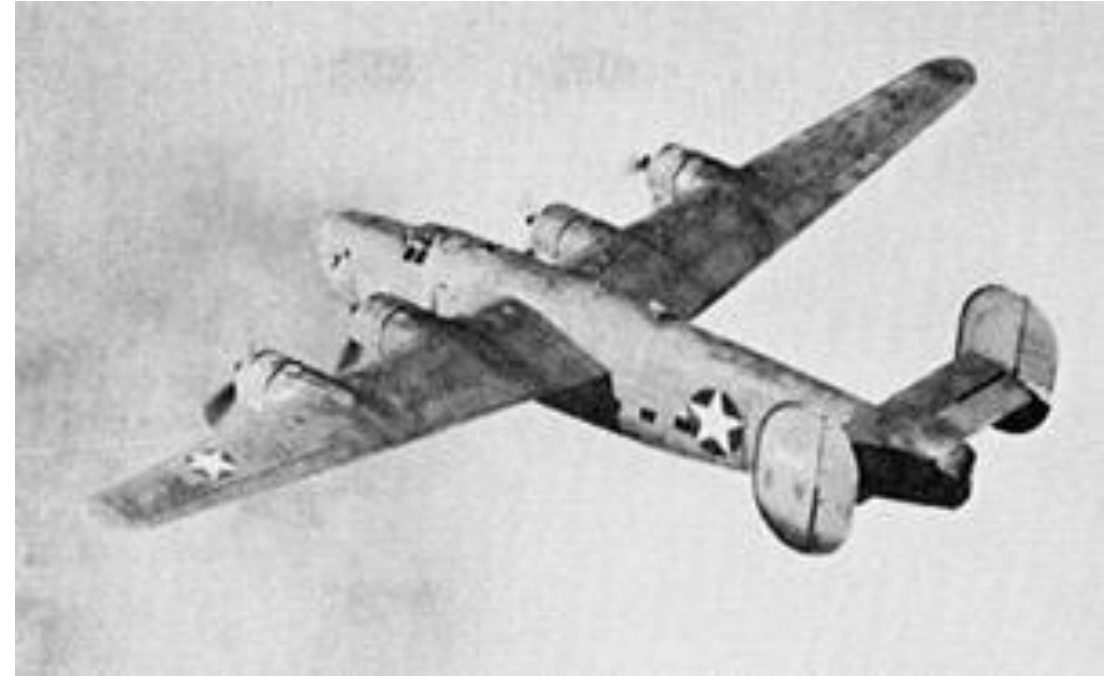
- On 4 February, Capt. Paul Gunn, formerly manager of Philippine Airlines and as “Pappy” Gunn already a legendary figure in the Southwest Pacific, was placed in command of the first American air transport unit in Australia.
- Four days later the organization, now based at Archerfield near Brisbane, was strengthened by the addition of ten officers and ten enlisted men, all of whom had been trained for transport operations
- To Gunn's command there were also added three B-24's sent from the United States for service as transports.

- **Fighter Reinforcements**

- The U.S.A.A.F 's No. 20 Pursuit Squadron (provisional), one of five fighter units hurriedly formed in Australia, staged through Penfui on their way to Java on 4th and 5th February.
- The total number of P40s reaching Australia from the United States had reached 272 by 4 February.

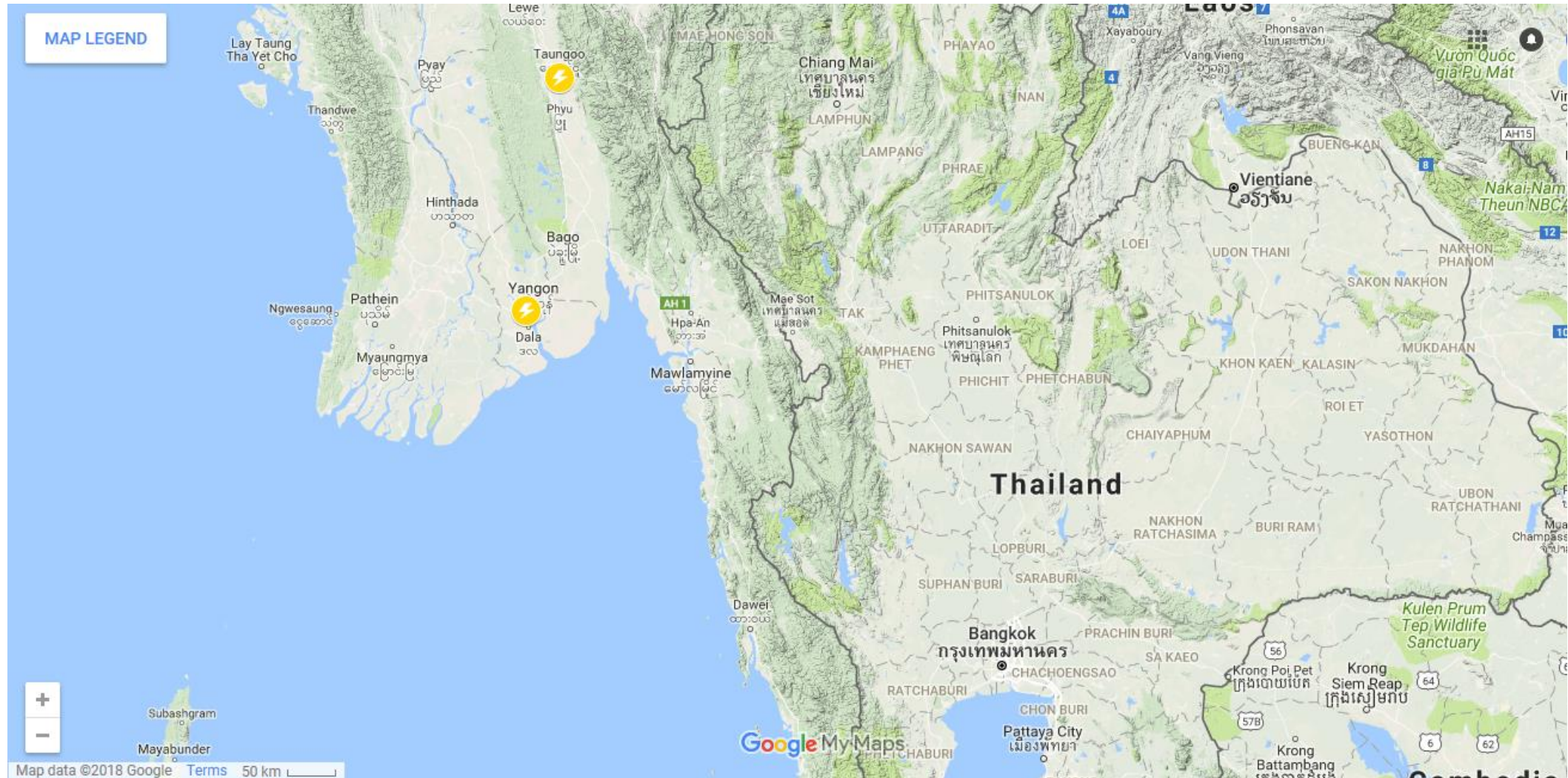
- **Burma**

- Mingaladon was now under such constant bombing that No. 113 Squadron (Blenheims) had moved to Toungoo, 150 miles to the north, but the enemy raided Toungoo so heavily that on 4th February the unit moved back to Zayatkwun in the Rangoon area.



B24 Transport

4th February – Bombing attacks on Burma Airfields



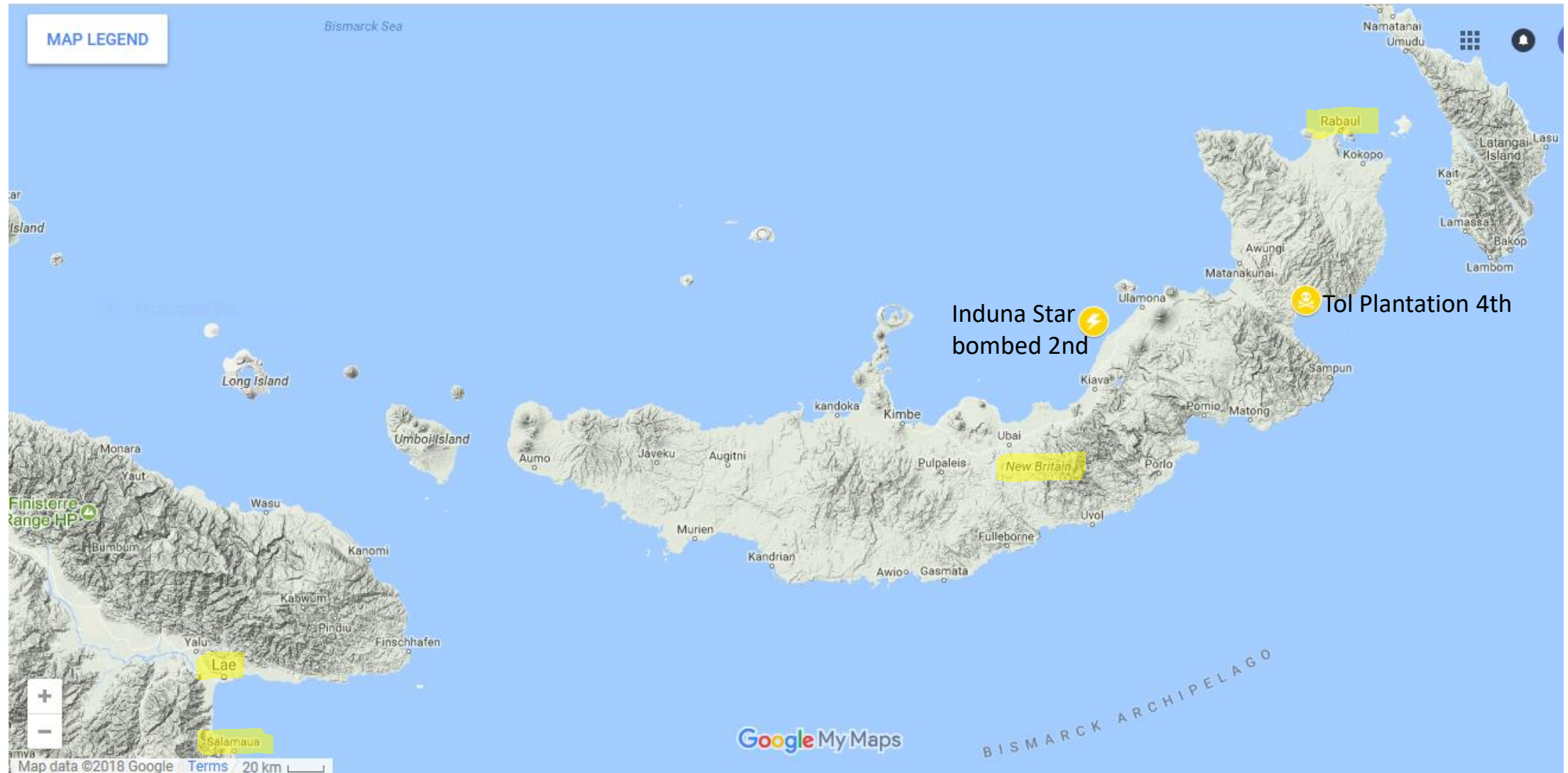
4th February – New Guinea

- **Tol Plantation**
- Other parties moving west along the south coast arrived at Tol during the 3rd and 4th and some of those were also captured.
- Early next morning (4th) the prisoners were assembled outside the hut and marched to Tol Plantation house. There an attempt was made to separate the men who had surrendered from the rest. Of about forty men who claimed this distinction twenty were separated and marched away.
- When they had gone the remainder were lined up, and their names, ranks and army numbers were recorded. The hands of the prisoners were tied behind their backs and they were linked together in groups of nine or ten.
- Then, led by three Japanese and with each group separated from the other by soldiers carrying spades and fixed bayonets, the men moved off through the plantation. The parties soon divided, going in different directions into the long undergrowth.
- Private Collins, was in a group of men linked together by cord. When his party halted in the plantation an officer drew his sword, cut the rope joining the first man to the others, and motioned him into the bush. A Japanese soldier followed with a fixed bayonet. Collins, last in the line, heard a man cry out, and saw the Japanese return wiping his bayonet. Others were cut away from the group and led into the bush.
- One man broke loose and tried to escape, but the officer hit him with his sword and then shot him.
- Clissold of the 2/10th Field Ambulance, who was wearing a Red Cross brassard, had it torn from his arm. When he asked if he could be shot, the officer, in Collins' presence, complied.
- Finally, only Collins and the officer remained. The latter took up a rifle and motioned Collins to walk. After a few paces he fired, hitting Collins in the shoulder and knocking him to the ground. Another shot hit him in the wrists and back.
- The Japanese departed. Collins lay still on the ground for a time, then finding that the last shot had severed the cord round his wrists and that his hands were free, got up and walked away, passing the bodies of about six of his comrades lying still on the ground.

4th February – New Guinea

- Four others, Ptes Webster and Cook, Gunner Hazelgrove and Lance Corporal Marshall survived being shot or bayoneted and feigned death or fainted until the killers moved on.
- Private Cook was bayoneted five times and was feigning death and holding his breath when the soldier lying next to him groaned. A Japanese came back and stabbed him again. Cook could not hold his breath any longer, and when he breathed the Japanese heard it and stabbed him another six times.
- Pte Robinson of the NGVR was second in a line which was not roped together and managed to nip into the scrub without being detected, after rounding a bend in the track.
- There were at least four separate massacres of prisoners on the morning of 4th February, the first of about 100, the second of 6, the third of 24 and the fourth of about 11.

New Guinea 2nd & 4th February



4th February – Singapore

- At the beginning of February Singapore's airfields were being constantly attacked by Japanese bombers, making it difficult to operate even the few remaining aircraft from them.
 - On 4th and 5th February Seletar, Sembawang and Tengah came under artillery fire.
 - Kallang then became the defenders' only operational airfield and therefore received concentrated attention from attacking aircraft.
- From the air, and from observation posts at Johore Bahru, the enemy had an almost unimpeded view of activity on the island during the day, unless it was under cover. It became necessary to work by night in constructing defensive positions in cleared areas, and to camouflage them before dawn.
- The Japanese used all sorts of artillery against the Australians working on the defences, but these caused surprisingly few casualties among the Australian infantry.
- The Australians, were at a loss to understand why their own guns refrained from fire against the Japanese.
 - Restriction of artillery fire was the result of a policy to plan for a three months' siege.
 - The plan provided that, except during attack or defence, 25-pounder guns should be restricted to twelve rounds a day,
 - 18-pounders to 25 rounds, and
 - 4.5-inch howitzers to 29 rounds.
 - On 4th February Malaya Command ruled that allocations of ammunition were not transferable from gun to gun, and not accumulative from day to day.



(Australian War Memorial)

A.R.P. volunteers fighting fires in the Singapore docks area. The bearded citizen on the right claimed to have been fighting such fires from Ipoh in Northern Malaya, southwards along the peninsula until Singapore was reached.

5th February

- **Government**
- It was decided, on 5th Feb, on the recommendation of the Advisory War Council that, in view of the urgency of the position in the Pacific, the Government should accept the proposed arrangements for a Pacific War Council in London, though adhering to its view regarding a Pacific War Council at Washington.
- The Australian War Cabinet at first would not agree to Wavell's request for another battalion (for Timor), on the ground that Australia had only two trained battalions at Darwin, but
- on 5th February, on the advice of the Chiefs of Staff, decided that the 2/4th Pioneer Battalion should go to Timor.
- Ships would not be available until 15th February.

5th February - Sea

- After the action the force steamed southwards through Lombok Strait, and the American ships and *Tromp* went to Tjilatjap, where *Houston* and the Dutch cruiser arrived on 5th February, and *Marblehead* on the next day; while Doorman, having seen them clear of the danger area, continued with *De Ruyter* and the Dutch destroyers westwards, south about Java to Batavia.
- On the 5th February she (HMAS Vampire) sailed from Batavia, escorting the merchant ships *Melchior Treub* (3,242 tons), and *Ophir* (4,115 tons) to Colombo, which was reached on the 11th February. *Vampire* now joined the East Indies Station.
- Wavell asked ter Poorten to send two Netherlands East Indies battalions from Java to strengthen the garrison of southern Sumatra. They left Tanjong Priok in two transports, escorted by *Java*, on the 5th February. One battalion went to Palembang and the other reinforced Banka and Billiton islands.

5th February - Sea

- Since Japan started the war, no convoy had entered Singapore during daylight hours; but "BM.12", in two groups, arrived in the forenoon of 5th February.
- The three transports of the second group, escorted by *Yarra* and *Danae*, were turning in to the western end of Selat Sinki when Japanese aircraft struck in a series of dive-bombing and machine-gunning attacks.
- *Felix Roussel* and *Empress of Asia* were both hit and set on fire.
- *Felix Roussel* extinguished her fire promptly, but *Empress of Asia* was soon blazing fiercely amidships, and anchored off Sultan Shoal with her people crowded at either end of the ship.



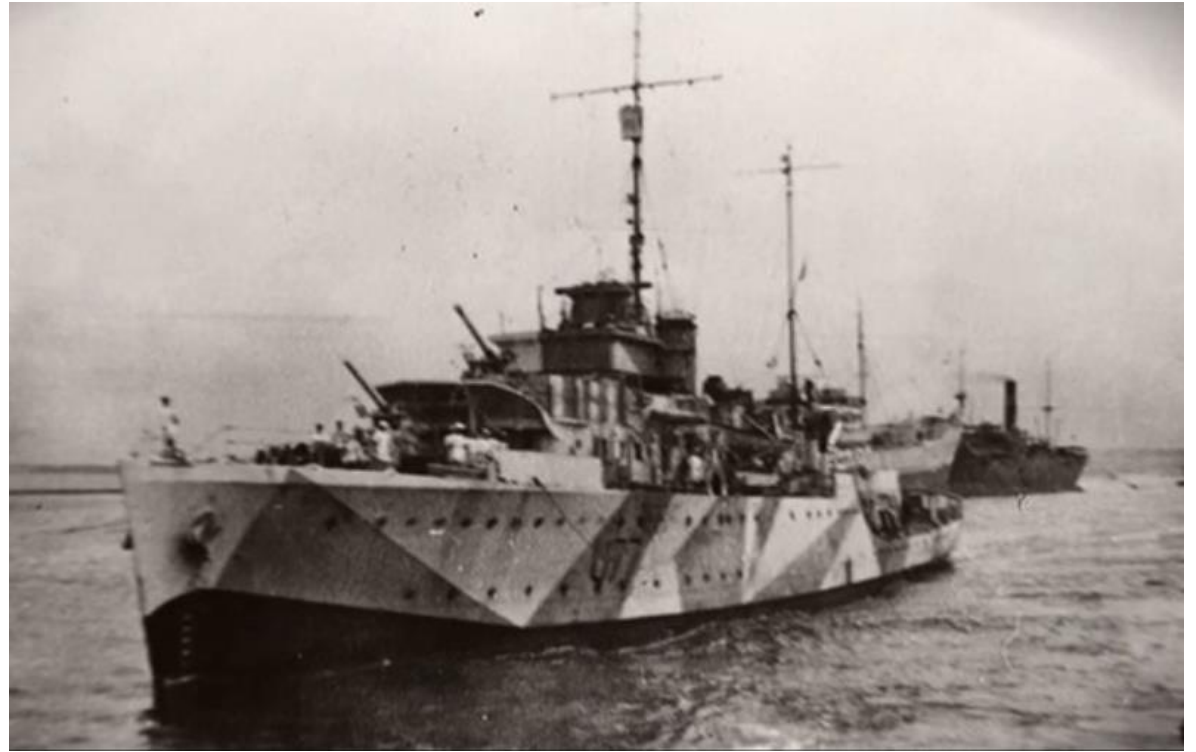
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Empress of Asia on fire and sinking after being attacked by Japanese aircraft approaching Singapore.

5th February - Sea

- *Yarra*, only superficially damaged, though dive-bombed and machine-gunned, shot down one aircraft for certain with two probables; and
- while the attack was still in progress, Harrington laid her bow alongside *Empress of Asia's* stern and took off 1,334 people directly from the liner and picked up 470 from boats and floats.
- Harrington didn't cast off until no one remained in the after part of *Empress of Asia* (which was completely isolated from the fore part by the midships fire).
- By then, though as many as possible of those rescued had been sent below and all stores, cabins, and lower deck compartments were filled to capacity, he was becoming a little dubious about *Yarra's* stability and on getting clear gave orders for all hands to sit”.



HMAS Yarra

5th February - Sea

- *Bendigo* and *Wollongong* also took a hand. *Bendigo* rescued seventy-eight, while *Wollongong* "went alongside the *Empress of Asia* and took off the last survivors, the Master and Chief Engineer, from the bow"
- Harrington singled out Acting Leading Seaman Taylor, the captain of No. 2 gun. "On this occasion, as on many others, he controlled his gun with judgment and determination. This rating's keenness and courage are a good example to all those in his vicinity."



*HMAS Yarra's commanding officer
CDR W.H. Harrington on his bridge*

5th February - Singapore

- On 5th February the Japanese heavily bombarded the 18th Division's part of the Northern Area and carried out movements on the mainland opposite it. They caused surprise by using a gun with such range that it shelled Government House close to the hub of the city;
- Its (18th Div's) machine-gun and reconnaissance battalions arrived (in Singapore) on 5th February on the Empress of Asia. Most of the troops were rescued but nearly all the weapons and equipment were lost.
- From 5th February onward sounds from the mainland of sawing, hammering, and other activities were heard by the Australians.

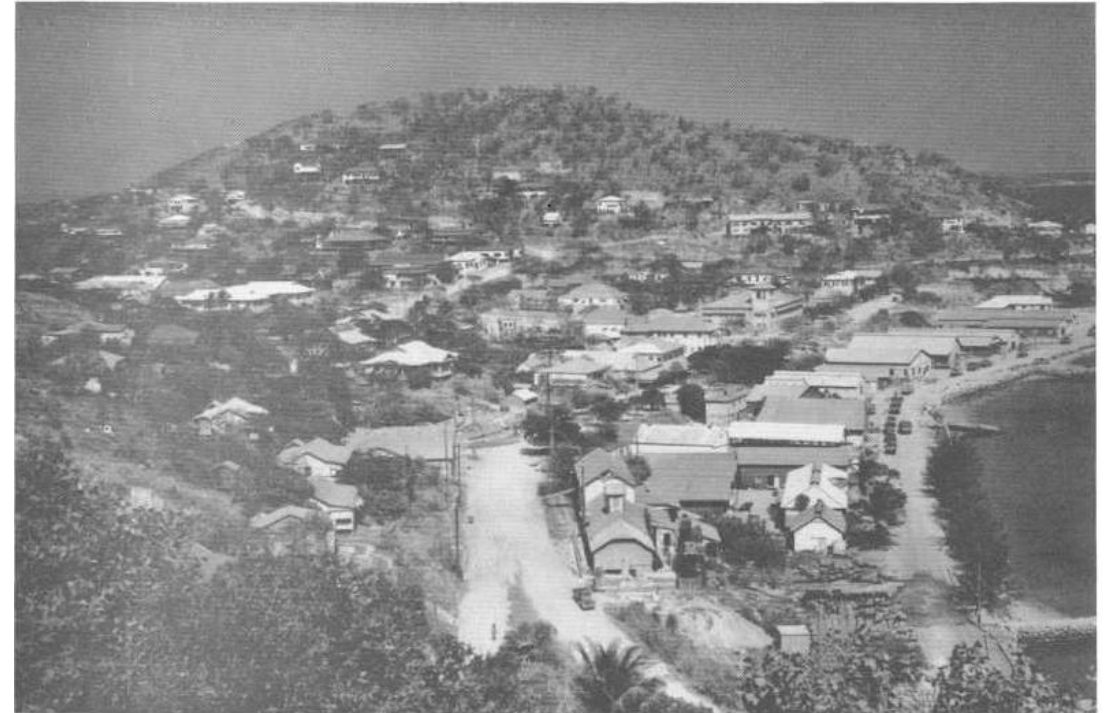


Smoke from the naval base overshadows Singapore. February 1942.

(Australian War Memorial)

5th February - Air

- **Port Moresby**
- About the same time (3 am) on the 5th nine flying-boats bombed the town (Port Moresby) destroying two stores and a house.
- In Port Moresby the early February air raids had been followed by widespread disorder and looting and General Morris found it difficult to prevent his unseasoned soldiers from taking a leading part. He had insufficient provost troops and, of those he had, some were themselves unreliable.
- **Bali**
- The first flight of 13 aircraft of the 20th pursuit squadron (provisional) was refuelling at Denpasar while in transit to Java when they were attacked by enemy fighters, which outnumbered them by two to one, and the airfield was bombed.
 - Eight of their fighters were lost either in the air or on the ground.
 - They claimed four enemy fighters shot down.



Port Moresby, 1942.

(Australian War Memorial)

6th February - Sea

- On the 6th, Allied reconnaissance aircraft from Palembang sighted one enemy cruiser, four destroyers and four transports at the Anambas Islands. General Wavell concluded that southern Sumatra was the probable objective of this force.
- Dutch submarines were disposed to counter the anticipated move, *K 11* and *K 12* in the vicinity of Klabat Bay; *K 14* to patrol the line Anambas -Banka; and *K 15* to the southern entrance of Karimata Strait, between Billiton and Borneo.
- On the 6th February *Danae*, *Sutlej* and *Yarra* left Singapore escorting convoy E.M.U. consisting of *Devonshire* and *Felix Roussel* for India, and *City of Canterbury* for Batavia. These ships had arrived only the previous day in convoy "BM12A". *Devonshire* and *Felix Roussel* now carried large numbers of women and children refugees for Bombay.
- Forty more (hurricanes) had been loaded at Takoradi in January, in H.M.S. *Athene* (4,681 tons), which reached Batavia via the Cape on 6th February;
- On the 3rd February *Ballarat* and *Toowoomba*—detailed for mine sweeping Banka Strait—had left Singapore for Palembang. On passage they were diverted to help the merchant ship *Loch Ranza* (4,958 tons) which,
 - carrying important radar sets, radio transmitters, and anti-aircraft guns for the defence of Palembang airfields,
 - had been bombed and was aground and on fire on Abang Island, in Rhio Strait.
 - *Toowoomba* rescued the crew and recovered some of the gear.
 - On their passage south through Berhala Strait the two corvettes were bombed heavily by five Japanese aircraft, but the ships escaped with slight damage suffered by *Toowoomba*, and reached Palembang on the 6th.
- Rear-Admiral Malaya ordered *Wollongong* and *Bendigo* to search for *Loch Ranza's* crew and take every step completely to destroy the radar sets and radio transmitters. They sailed at midnight on the 6th, closed Abang Island at daylight that day, to find *Loch Ranza*, with her bow on a reef, submerged up to the foremast and completely burnt out.

6th February - Sea

- The Lexington taskforce had been covering reinforcement convoys for Christmas (Pacific Ocean) and Canton Islands.
- In response to concerns in America and Australia about the Japanese threat in the Coral Sea (Australia perceived a threat to Port Moresby, America to the New Hebrides and New Caledonia)
- Admiral King ordered Cincpac to send the Lexington taskforce and all the patrol planes and bombers that could be spared to operate under the direction of Admiral Leary of the ANZAC force.
- Admiral Brown on Lexington received these orders on 6th February.



USS *Lexington* (CV-2) leaving San Diego, 14 October 1941.
Planes parked on her flight deck include Brewster F2A-1 fighters (parked forward), Douglas SBD scout-bombers (amidships) and Douglas TBD-1 torpedo planes

6th February - Air

- **New Guinea**
- Early in February the air officer commanding North-Eastern Area, Air Commodore Lukis, warned the Air Board of the unsatisfactory state of the defences at Port Moresby. One of the most disturbing aspects, he noted, was the poor morale of the army troops.
 - "This does not mean that the troops will not fight, but they cannot overlook the lack of naval, air and political support. An impression is growing rapidly that the policy of the Government is to let the garrisons at Moresby and Thursday Island go, in the same way as that at Rabaul and that no serious assistance will be given"
- Lukis enumerated other problems.
 - When the R.A.A.F. required the aid of the army for the construction of aircraft dispersal bays and taxiways, the garrison commander, General Morris declined to lend his limited labour capacity without first receiving an assurance that aircraft would be sent to use them and, that, when aircraft were sent, they would not be "knocked out" in the first few raids for want of protection.
 - The need for reinforcements to relieve the Catalina crews was urgent. Some had flown as much as 200 hours in three weeks, and obviously this could not continue.
 - The fortress guns at Port Moresby had no overhead protection from dive-bombing and machine-gunning and could be knocked out before they had fired a shot in combat, as they had been at Rabaul.
 - The anti-aircraft batteries were also very vulnerable because they were not armed against low-flying attacks.
- The frequently-appearing word in the report was "more" —
 - more labour strength,
 - more works equipment,
 - more Catalina crews,
 - more Empire flying-boats *and*
 - more evidence of active interest by the Government.
- "A visit by one or more senior Commonwealth ministers would be beneficial," Lukis added.
- There was, too, the obvious though modestly stated request for "a small number of fighter aircraft".

6th February - Air

- **New Guinea**
- Flight Lieutenant Campbell, attached to Port Moresby station headquarters, piloted one of the Hudsons on a daylight photographic reconnaissance flight to New Britain, on 6th February, to provide some relief for the squadron's pilots.
- Over Rabaul the Hudson crew saw an enemy fighter take off from Lakunai airfield. Four minutes later this aircraft was attacking them at 10,000 feet. It made two attacks, breaking off the fight after having riddled the Hudson with bullet holes.
 - An explosive bullet had shattered Campbell's left wrist and severed the little finger;
 - the second pilot, was seriously wounded, his left arm and leg being fractured and his right hand injured;
 - the turret gunner, who had fired 100 rounds at the enemy aircraft at a range of about 100 yards, was severely wounded in the left leg.
 - The fourth member of the crew, Sergeant Thomson, who was not wounded, gave first aid to the others and then assisted Campbell in flying the aircraft.
 - The altimeter and airspeed indicator, had been smashed and the gunfire had hit the sea markers carried in the Hudson, exploding them and filling the aircraft with a dense cloud of fine aluminium powder.
- Enduring the pain from his wounds and loss of blood, Campbell piloted the Hudson on the 500 miles flight back to base in bad weather.
- Close to Port Moresby one of the self-sealing fuel tanks, which had been damaged by gunfire, opened up as Campbell began the approach to the airfield and both engines failed.
- Thomson, with great presence of mind, operated the auxiliary fuel or "wobble" pump in time to revive them and allow Campbell to put the Hudson down safely on the runway.
- **Singapore/NEI**
- By the 6th the 2,250-foot runway (at Kallang) was so damaged by bomb bursts that pilots had great difficulty in taking off and landing safely.
- A formation of enemy bombers with fighter escort delivered a heavy attack on P.1 on 6th February, the defending fighters had short warning and lost four of their own aircraft while only one Zero was claimed in return.

6th February - Air

- **Java**
- The second flight of the 20th Pursuit Squadron (P), of 10 fighters, took off from Timor for Bali with navigation escort by a Beechcraft.
 - En route the Beechcraft was attacked by a Japanese Nell twin engine bomber.
 - The fighters shot the Nell down but
 - Two of the fighters had dropped their auxiliary fuel tanks before attacking, so did not have enough fuel to reach Denpasar and crash landed on Lombok.
 - The other eight aircraft reached Surabaya that night.
 - Thirteen out of the squadron's twenty four aircraft had now reached Surabaya.
 - They claimed five enemy aircraft shot down in en route combats.



Nell twin engine bombers

7th February

- **Government**
- After a ministerial visit to Darwin by Ward to confer with the union,
 - some additional wharf labour was flown into Darwin.
 - The management of the port was also considered defective so, on 7th February, the Prime Minister appointed a Port Superintendent as the sole authority to direct the activities of the Darwin waterfront for the discharge and distribution of cargo.
- **Sea**
- Admiral Leary, took up his appointment on 7th February at Wellington, New Zealand.



"Eddie" Ward, Minister for Labour and National Service. A left wing labour MP, in the 1936 budget debate, he had argued that any funding earmarked for defence would be better spent on welfare and unemployment relief.

7th February

- **Singapore**

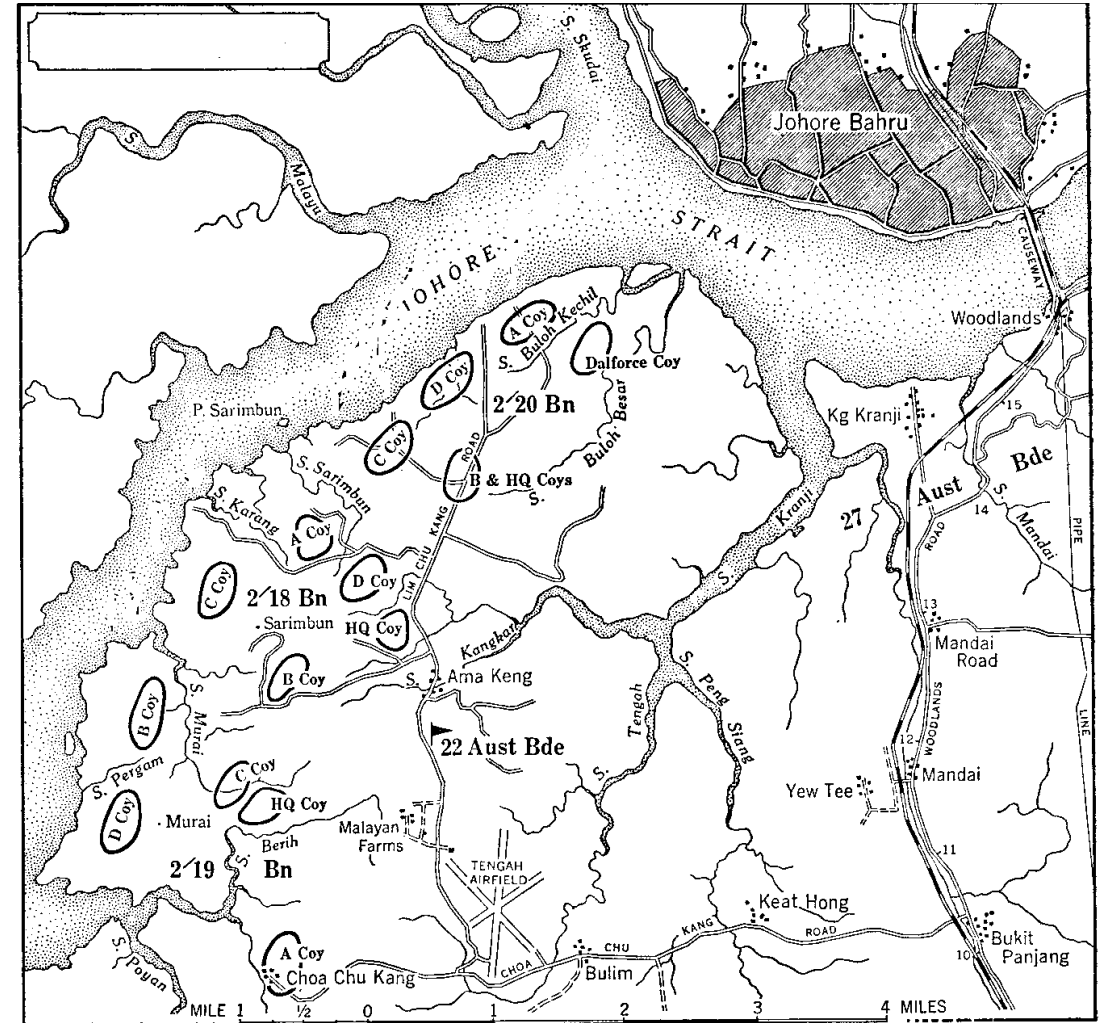
- On 7th February the Japanese artillery increased its fire on the 18th Division's area and extended its range to the outer suburbs of the city. Bombing of targets in the city was on a larger scale than hitherto, and Japanese troops were found to have landed during the night on Ubin Island.

- Patrols led by Lieutenant Homer, of the 2/20th Battalion, and Lieutenant Ottley, of the 2/19th, had explored the mainland opposite their battalion sectors. Their reports, received during the night of 7th-8th February, indicated large concentrations of Japanese troops in the area.

- **Air**

- Next day (7th) the enemy combined a high-level bombing attack (on P1) with a low-level attack by fighters.

- On the ground three Hurricanes were destroyed and eleven damaged;
- three more were shot down in combat;
- four unserviceable Blenheims on the ground and one Hudson which landed while the raid was in progress were also destroyed.
- The defenders claimed only one Zero.



8th February

- **Sea**
- On the 8th February the steamer *Morinda* (2,025 tons), went to Tulagi and embarked civilians withdrawing from the islands. She was bombed as she entered the harbour but completed her mission unharmed.
- As the Japanese force entered the anchorage at Macassar shortly before midnight on the 8th, a destroyer was torpedoed and sunk by the U.S. submarine S 37.
 - S 37 closed to 800 yards on the surface (at night) before launching torpedoes.
 - She dived after the attack and was depth charged for an hour and a half before the other destroyers moved away.
 - The S boats were older, smaller and slower than the named submarines. S37 was launched in 1919.
- On the 8th February *Yarra*, detached from convoy E.M.U., arrived in the Palembang River, and left the same day for Batavia in company with *Stronghold* towing *Vendetta*. These two ships, having been repeatedly bombed on their passage south, had put into the mouth of the Palembang River on the 4th.
- **Air**
- Japanese aircraft raided P1 again on the 8th but the defenders prevented serious damage.
- Air attacks were made on the enemy concentration at the Anambas Islands on the night of the 8th-9th by nine Blenheims but they failed because of low cloud over the target.



USS S37

February 6th, 7th & 8th



8th February

- The Daily Naval Appreciation on the 8th was the first time that air attacks on Australia were predicted.
- This appreciation is not inconsistent with Col Wills' appreciation for 1 Corps, but contains no time line.
- By this time the suggested counter moves section has been dropped from the standard format of this report, presumably because it was too embarrassing.
- With the examples of Greece and Crete it seems strange that after Rabaul and Ambon there is no evidence that some form of emergency evacuation from Timor was considered.

