

War in the Pacific

Defending Australia

The First Six Months

Chapter 7
1942, the New Year

29th December

- **NEI**
- 200 miles north of Ambon the small US seaplane tender Heron was attacked by ten four engine flying boats and five twin engine bombers over an eight hour period. Although the tender suffered a direct hit which killed two of the crew and wounded many others, her gunners managed to shoot down one of the flying boats which was forced to ditch near by. Heron's captain immediately closed to sink it with gunfire.
- **Ambon**
- There was a plea from the R.A.A.F. at Laha to Northern Area Headquarters for adequate fighter strength for the protection of the base, justified on the basis that Japanese successes had demonstrated that attack against aircraft on the ground must succeed if not opposed by fighters and, conversely, that Allied attacks on targets defended by fighters could not succeed when made by a small number of relatively slow aircraft.
- "Two, repeat two, Brewsters at present stationed Laha utterly inadequate for defence. Consider imperative that fighter aircraft be dispatched to Laha and Namlea immediately, preferably within four days.
- The reply was, "No fighters available."

29th December



30th December

- **Government**

- The War Cabinet considered Churchill's cable at its meeting on the 30th December, and decided:
 - to assent to the text of the agreement, and
 - to inform Churchill that it was expected that Australia would be included in the composition of the "appropriate joint body" referred to in sub - paragraph (e); and also
 - to seek information as to the strength of forces it was intended to make available.

- **Philippines**

- Japanese bombers attacked targets in the Bataan Peninsular, while fighters attacked Cebu, Iloilo and targets on Mindanao.

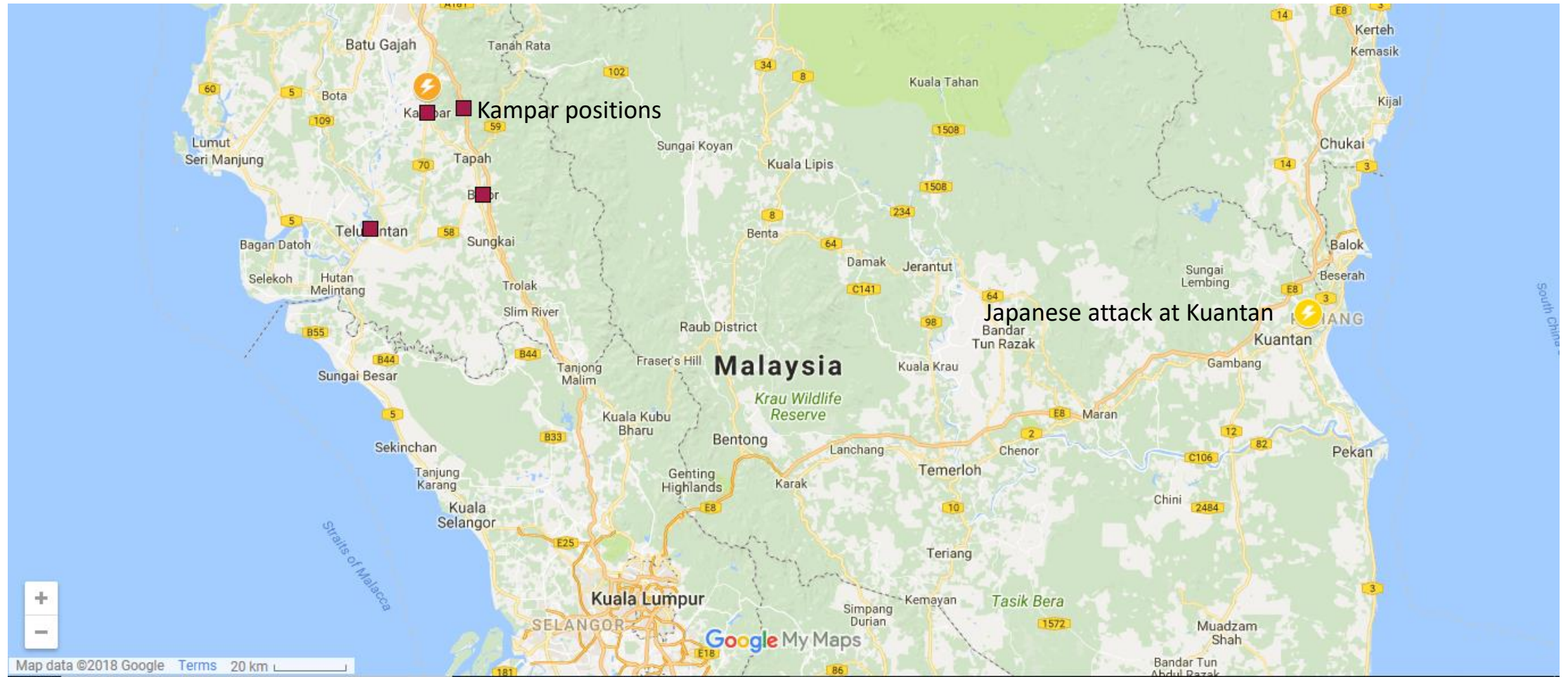
- **Malaya**

- Enemy advances along the main road were discouraged by artillery fire, but patrols were encountered south-west of Kampar.

30th December

- **East Malaya**
- By the 30th a significant Japanese force had reached the Kuantan area.
- Under orders from Heath, who was anxious lest part of the force and its equipment be cut off east of the Kuantan river, 22nd Indian Brigade, on 30th December set afoot a withdrawal which would leave only the 2/18th Royal Garhwal covering the river east of the ferry crossing near the coast.
- However, a Japanese force made a forestalling attack, with air support, seriously hampering the movement;
- but guns and transport were successfully withdrawn during the night.
- The Japanese quickly entered Kuantan, attacked the covering troops, and bombarded the ferry head.
- **PNG**
- On 30th December three replacement Hudsons reached Lakunai airfield at Rabaul and the Hudson section of the squadron changed its primary role from reconnaissance to that of a striking force.
- **NEI**
- On the 30th Babo in Dutch New Guinea was raided. Immediately the news of the raid on Babo was received, three Hudsons were sent there from Laha to do temporary duty as "fighters".

30th December



31st December

- **Philippines**

- 17 fighter pilots, for whom there were no planes left, mostly from 17th pursuit squadron, were evacuated in two Beechcraft 18s of Philippine airlines, both of which were in poor shape and one had suffered strafing damage. Both groups eventually got through to Darwin.

- **Malaya**

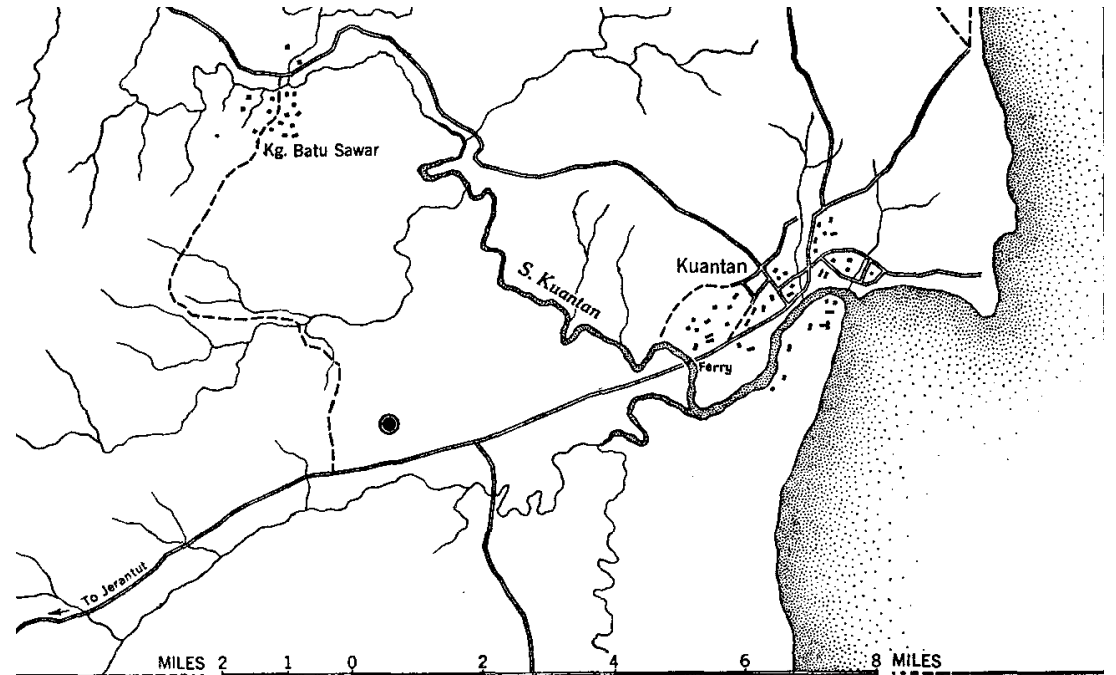
- On the 31st three Blenheim bombers from Singapore flew over Singkawang II airfield and dropped 900 pounds of urgently needed supplies to the Indian troops from Kuching.

- **Timor**

- On 31st December it was agreed that the Dutch force withdraw from Portuguese Timor to be replaced by more Australians from Koepang.

- **NEI**

- By 31st December 10 Fortresses had landed on Singasari airfield, six miles from Malang. This was now the full strength of No. 19 Group, which began to prepare for a new phase of combat still with their war worn aircraft but in high hopes that new aircraft would arrive soon.



East Malaya

On 31st December 22 Indian Brigade was instructed to resist as long as possible, but not to jeopardise their withdrawal. Painter disposed the 2/12th Frontier Force Regiment to hold the airfield and ordered that the 2/18th Royal Garhwal should retreat across the river that night. Two companies were cut off, but the rest made the crossing, and the ferry was sunk.

31st December

- **Reinforcements**
- HMS Indomitable was the newest British aircraft carrier, commissioned on 10th October 1941.
- It was to have formed part of the Eastern Fleet, but had run aground in the Caribbean during its shake down cruise.
- After being repaired Indomitable reached Durban on the 31st December.
- She was then ordered to Port Sudan to embark fighter aircraft reinforcements for Singapore.



31st December

- **Strategy**
- At Arcadia the restatement of the basic Anglo-American strategy from ABC-1 was approved on 31 December.
 - Germany was declared the chief enemy, the Atlantic and Europe the areas in which the principal efforts should be applied.
 - The contemplated efforts were
 - defense of production areas in North America and the United Kingdom to insure realization of the Victory Program of munitions;
 - maintenance of designated lines of communication, both sea lanes and air routes;
 - forging and tightening a ring around Germany;
 - weakening the Reich by indirect methods and by a concentrated bomber attack; and preparation for the eventual invasion of Germany.
 - Meanwhile, in the Pacific only such positions should be defended as would “safeguard vital interests and deny Japan access to needed raw materials.”
- These conclusions were never communicated to the Australian Government.
- **Command**
- Nimitz assumed command as CincPac, and King relieved Stark as Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet (Cominch) on 31st December 1941.

Strategy at end of 1941

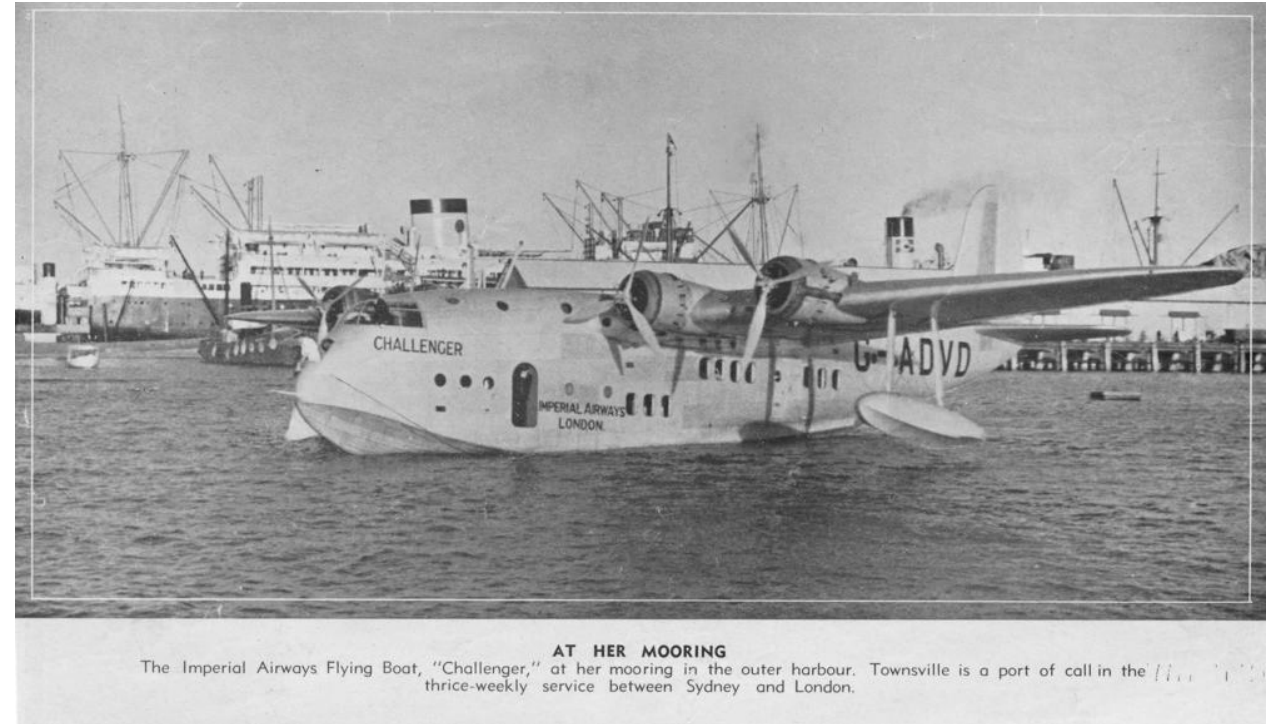
- Admiral Layton had instructed that battleships even if available were not to come east of Ceylon because they could not be protected from Japanese sea and air power in the Singapore area.
- Curtin, informed by Bowden and Bennett, had identified that “Reinforcements earmarked by United Kingdom Government for Singapore seem to us to be utterly inadequate in relation to aircraft particularly fighters. . . .”
- Casey in Washington, reported that **Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff just did not know where they could obtain air reinforcements for Malaya in reasonable time.**
- Despite previous experience in Greece and Crete, Australia continued to send reinforcements of troops and aircraft into Malaya, where the enemy had air superiority and there was no realistic prospect of wresting it back, despite the fact that the strategic rationale for defending Singapore had disappeared.
- Australia’s major allies and arms suppliers had decided that the Far East and Australia were a secondary theatre where only vital interests should be defended.

31st December

- **Australia**
- After the arrival in Australia of the Pensacola convoy, other ships, carrying aircraft, aviation spirit, and vehicles reached Australia from the US. By the end of the year, Hawaiian Planter, President Polk, James Lykes, Paul M. Gregg, Mormacsun, and Portmar had come in. Malama had set out for Australia but had been sunk en route by Japanese surface raiders in the vicinity of the Tuamotu Archipelago.
- Recruiting for the A.I.F. jumped as it always had done when the need could be seen more clearly. The number of new volunteers, which had fallen to 4,016 in October 1941 rose to 10,669 in December.

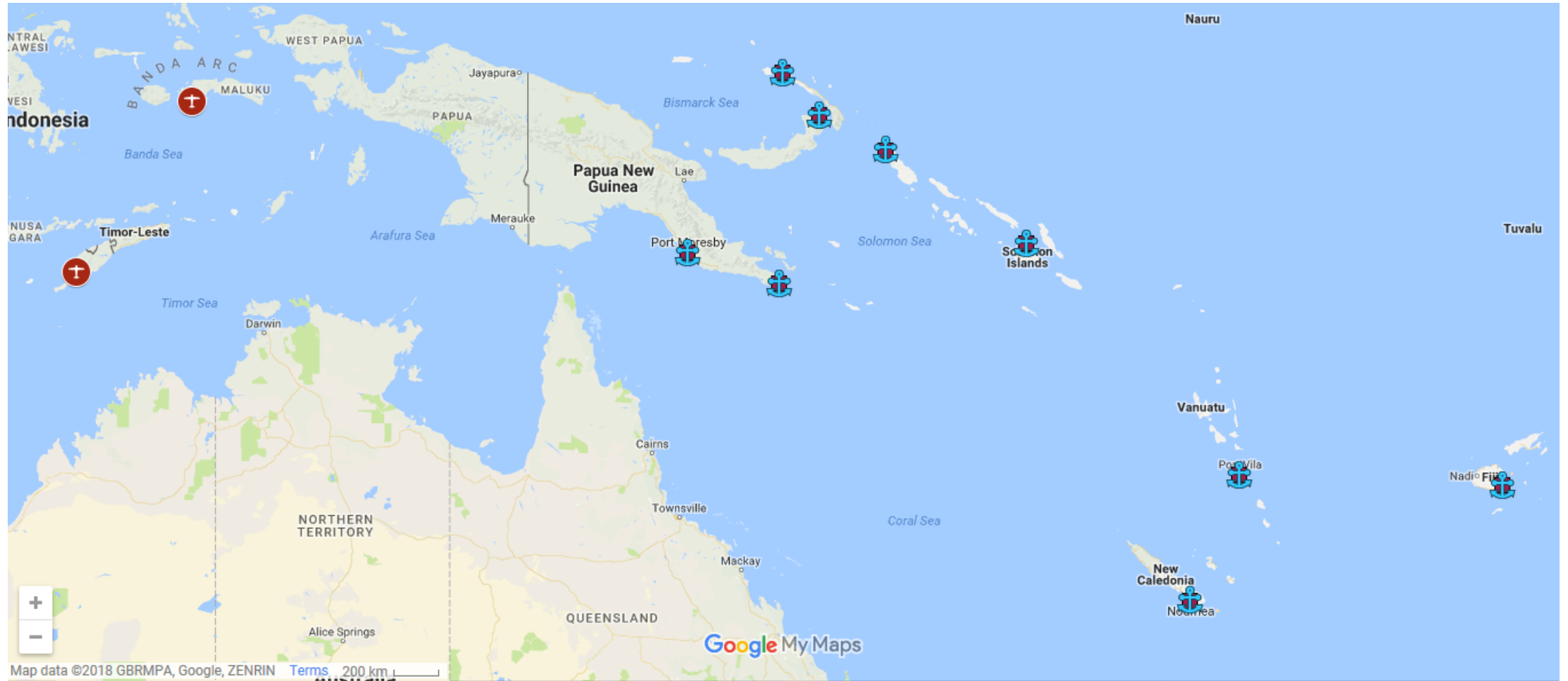
31st December

- **PNG**
- In December the flying-boats of Nos. 11 and 20 squadrons made more than 100 search and reconnaissance flights from Port Moresby, Rabaul, Tulagi, Soraken, Samarai, Kavieng, Noumea, Vila and Suva.
- All the approach areas were patrolled on a front from north of the Admiralty Islands to the south of New Caledonia and east beyond Fiji.
- The Squadrons were equipped with Catalinas and four Shorts Empire class flying boats taken over from Qantas and Imperial Airways.



Pre war picture of an Empire class flying boat

The Outpost line



31st December

- **Malaya**
- The Australian corvettes, Burnie, Goulburn, Bendigo and Maryborough, of the 21st Minesweeping Flotilla, spent the month of December minesweeping, patrolling and escorting in the Singapore vicinity.
- **Pacific**
- During December three merchant ships were sunk by Japanese submarines near or east of Hawaii; and two were sunk and one damaged by submarines off the Californian coast.
- On 31st Dec Enterprise and its task force returned to Pearl.
- H.M.N.Z.S. Leander spent most of December escorting New Zealand troop reinforcements to Suva.



HMAS Bendigo

Situation Report at the end of the year

- Many Allied Battleships have been destroyed:
- The American aircraft carriers were not at Pearl Harbour during the attack and remain at sea.
- Allied air-forces in Hawaii, the Philippines and Malaya have been substantially destroyed. The performance of Japanese aircraft and the skill of their pilots has been a great and unpleasant surprise everywhere.
- Allied aircraft and American submarines, even in the most favourable tactical situations, have been ineffective.
- The Japanese army has landed in Malaya, the Philippines, Thailand and North Borneo and has invaded Hong Kong. Thailand has come to terms with Japan, Hong Kong has surrendered and resistance has ceased in Borneo. The Japanese air-force is establishing itself in all the areas seized by the army.
- The land and air battles continue in Malaya and the Philippines, where the US forces have declared Manila an open city and withdrawn into the Bataan Peninsular.
- After an initial defeat at Wake Island the Japanese brought up more forces including aircraft carriers and crushed the resistance. The American effort to strengthen Wake lacked clarity of purpose and resolution and became an embarrassing failure.
- The US Navy and the Pacific Fleet are now under new management. Ships and aircraft have been transferred from the Atlantic but the losses at Pearl Harbour forced the Navy to adopt a temporary defensive role,
 - to retain what America held in the Pacific as a base for future offensives and
 - to secure communications along the lines Panama-Samoa-Fiji-New Zealand; and West Coast-Pearl Harbour-Fiji-New Caledonia-Australia.

Situation Report at the end of the year

- All the allies are scraping the bottom of the barrel for forces and transport, with which to quickly reinforce the Far East. Enormous losses of equipment in two years of fighting against the Germans, the clamant needs for the battles in Russia and the Middle East and huge losses of shipping to the U boats have left the cupboard pretty bare.
- Reinforcements for the Philippines, which were at sea when the war broke out, in the Pensacola convoy and in individual ships, have arrived in Australia. Substantial technical and tactical barriers are emerging to forwarding them to the Philippines.
- Reinforcements for Malaya and Burma are starting to come in but the distances involved and the shipping required means that the build up will take months not weeks.
- Australia has established a line of reconnaissance posts through the islands to its north with which to detect approaching enemy forces, but has no effective naval or air-forces to resist a Japanese attack if detected. Australian troops have been sent to Ambon and Timor. Port Moresby is being reinforced with ground troops and an independent company has been sent to garrison New Caledonia. New Zealand has installed a strong garrison in Fiji. None of these garrisons except possibly Port Moresby, could be supplied, reinforced or withdrawn if attacked by a Japanese taskforce.
- Australia is working to build up its home defence army, while continuing to reinforce its army and air-force units in Malaya and maintaining three AIF divisions in the Middle East.
- Australian forces in New Guinea, the East Indies and Malaya, Commanders in Malaya and the Philippines and the Australian Government are all calling loudly for reinforcements, particularly of fighter aircraft.
- In Washington the new allies, USA and Britain, meeting to establish joint machinery for directing the war effort approved the basic Anglo-American strategy.
 - Germany was declared the chief enemy, the Atlantic and Europe the areas in which the principal efforts should be applied.
 - In the Pacific positions should only be defended to “safeguard vital interests and deny Japan access to needed raw materials.”

31 December 1941



1st January 1942

- **Australia**
- By the beginning of January 1942, there were 205,431 men of the Australian Military Forces in camp or on full-time duty, comprising
 - 4,461 in the Permanent Forces,
 - 184,821 in the Citizen Forces and
 - 16,149 in the garrison battalions.
 - There were another 14,717 men not on full-time duty.
- Of the A.I.F.
 - 120,945 were serving overseas and
 - 37,543 serving in Australia.

1st January 1942

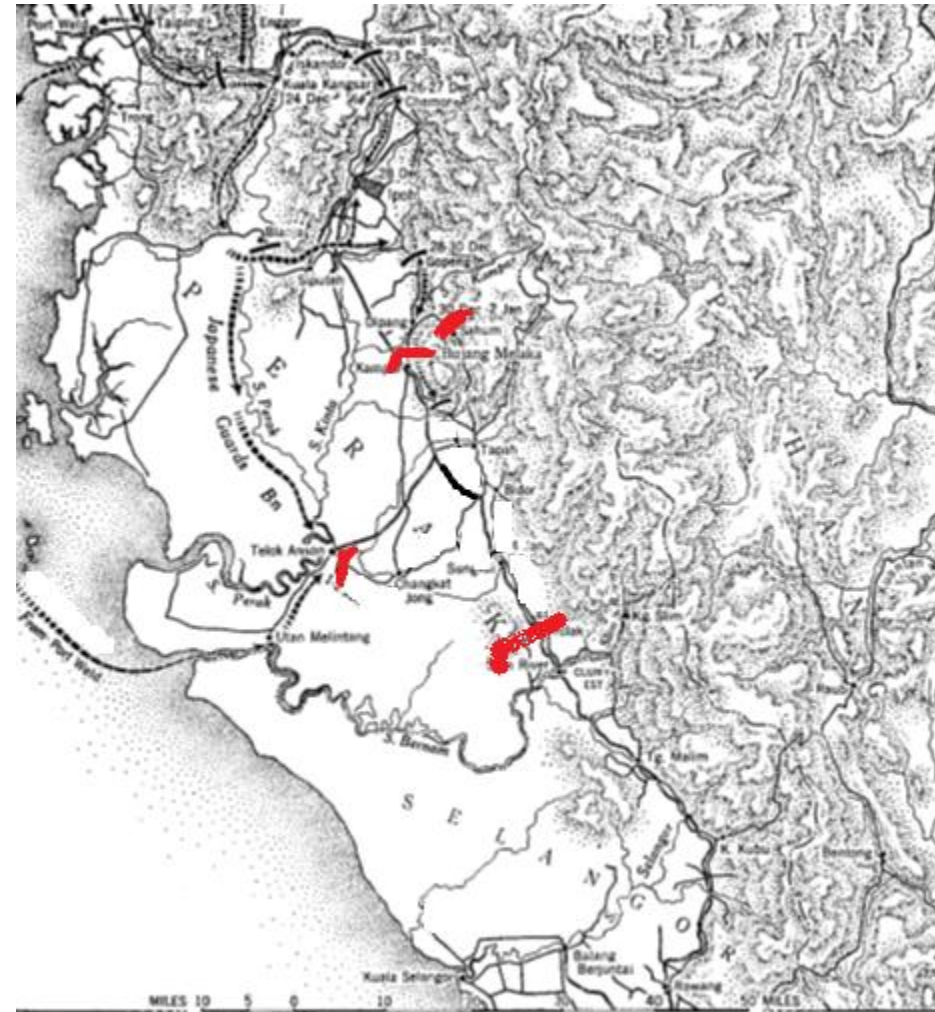
- **Australia**
- General Brett, who on 31 December had arrived in Australia to assume command of United States Army Forces in Australia (USAFIA), sent a radio message to General Marshall telling him that it would be impossible to undertake much in the way of tactical operations until he had developed an American "establishment" in Australia, including a large air base at Darwin and a supply and repair base at Townsville.
- **New Guinea**
- On New Year's Day Lerew led the four Hudsons he then had available in an attack on Kapingamarangi Island. The crews observed five direct bomb hits and, as they left the target, a column of thick black smoke was rising to about 10,000 feet suggesting that a fuel store had been hit. The four aircraft returned safely to Rabaul.
- **Philippines**
- On 1 January 1942, MacArthur accepted \$500,000 from President Quezon of the Philippines as payment for his pre-war service. MacArthur's staff members also received payments: \$75,000 for Sutherland, \$45,000 for Richard Marshall, and \$20,000 for Huff.



General George Brett

1st January 1942

- **Malaya**
- On New Year's Day a heavy assault, preceded by a bombardment, was made on the main position at Kampar where it was held by the Combined Surreys and Leicesters, now known as "the British Battalion". The fighting lasted throughout the day, and, although the position was held, the Japanese gained a foothold on its extreme right, at Thompson's Ridge.
- As pressure failed to develop at Sahum, Paris withdrew from that position all but a battalion and supporting artillery, and ordered the 28th Brigade's 2/2nd Gurkha Rifles to the Slim River area—another prospective strongpoint in the British line of withdrawal—as a further precaution against attack from Telok Anson and thereabouts.
- Also on 1st January, a tug towing barges was seen at the mouth of the Sungei Perak, and a large group of sea craft appeared at the mouth of the Sungei Bernam, the next large river to the south. A landing occurred during the night at the Bernam. Instead, therefore, of enjoying a respite at Bidor the 12th Brigade was sent to the area between Telok Anson and Changkat Jong.



The Japanese advance to Slim River

1st January 1942

- **Malaya**
- Reconnaissance on New Year's Eve had found an enemy force in small steamers and towed barges moving down the Perak coast.
- With the first reinforcement convoy now approaching Singapore, Air Vice-Marshal Pulford dared not divert aircraft in any strength from the task of protecting it.
- A task that demanded shepherding operations by fighters, and reconnaissance sorties by 12 aircraft daily for three days, while all other available combat aircraft remained on alert ready to strike should enemy air or naval forces, or both, attack the convoy.
- The aircraft that were sent to the Perak arrived too late to strike. The tide had risen and the "target" had refloated and disappeared under the dense jungle overhanging the river.



Air Vice Marshall Pulford

1st January 1942

- **Ambon**
- in a letter to Scott on 1st January, Roach wrote:
- I find it difficult to overcome a feeling of disgust, and more than a little concern at the way in which we have seemingly been 'dumped' at this outpost position . . . without any instructions whatever . . . and . . . with (so far) a flat refusal to consider any increase in fire-power and the number of troops, whilst the cooperation and assistance from the other two arms of the Service must be of very limited value indeed.

1st January 1942

- **London**
- The United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff decided that although defeat of Germany must continue to be the primary aim, the security of Singapore and maintenance of Indian Ocean communications were second in importance only to the security of the United Kingdom and its sea communications.
- Despite the prize which appeared within grasp in Libya, where a successful offensive was in progress, development of the campaign in that theatre was made subject to the proviso that it must not prevent reinforcement of the Far East on a scale sufficient to hold the Japanese.
- The reinforcements for this purpose were to comprise (it was hoped) two divisions and an armoured brigade for Malaya, two divisions for the Netherlands East Indies, and two divisions and a light tank squadron for Burma.
- Endeavours were to be made to send to Malaya also eight light bomber squadrons, eight fighter squadrons, and two torpedo bomber squadrons; and to Burma six light bomber squadrons and six fighter squadrons.
- In fulfilment of this policy, the main body of the 18th Division, then at Bombay, was ordered at once to Malaya.

1st January 1942

- **Washington**
- Roosevelt sent Curtin a reply. He assured him that urgent consideration had been given to dispatching reinforcements as soon as possible. The most definite passage in the message was
 - "the necessary steps are already under way for flight to Australia of effective air assistance which I hope will arrive in the very near future".
- It was proposed to build up AAF strength in the western Pacific to four pursuit groups in addition to one light, two medium, and two heavy bombardment groups.
 - It was anticipated that 55 pursuit planes, with crews, would reach Australia by 8 January and
 - an additional 125 within ten days thereafter;
 - a complete pursuit group with 80 planes was scheduled to leave San Diego on or about 10 January.

1st January 1942

- **Washington**
- A document was signed which gave birth to the United Nations, pledged to the principles embodied in the Atlantic Charter and to united action against the Axis Powers. The signatories were:
 - United States of America,
 - United Kingdom,
 - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,
 - China,
 - Australia,
 - Belgium,
 - Canada,
 - Costa Rica,
 - Cuba,
 - Czechoslovakia,
 - the Dominican Republic,
 - El Salvador,
 - Greece,
 - Guatemala,
 - Haiti,



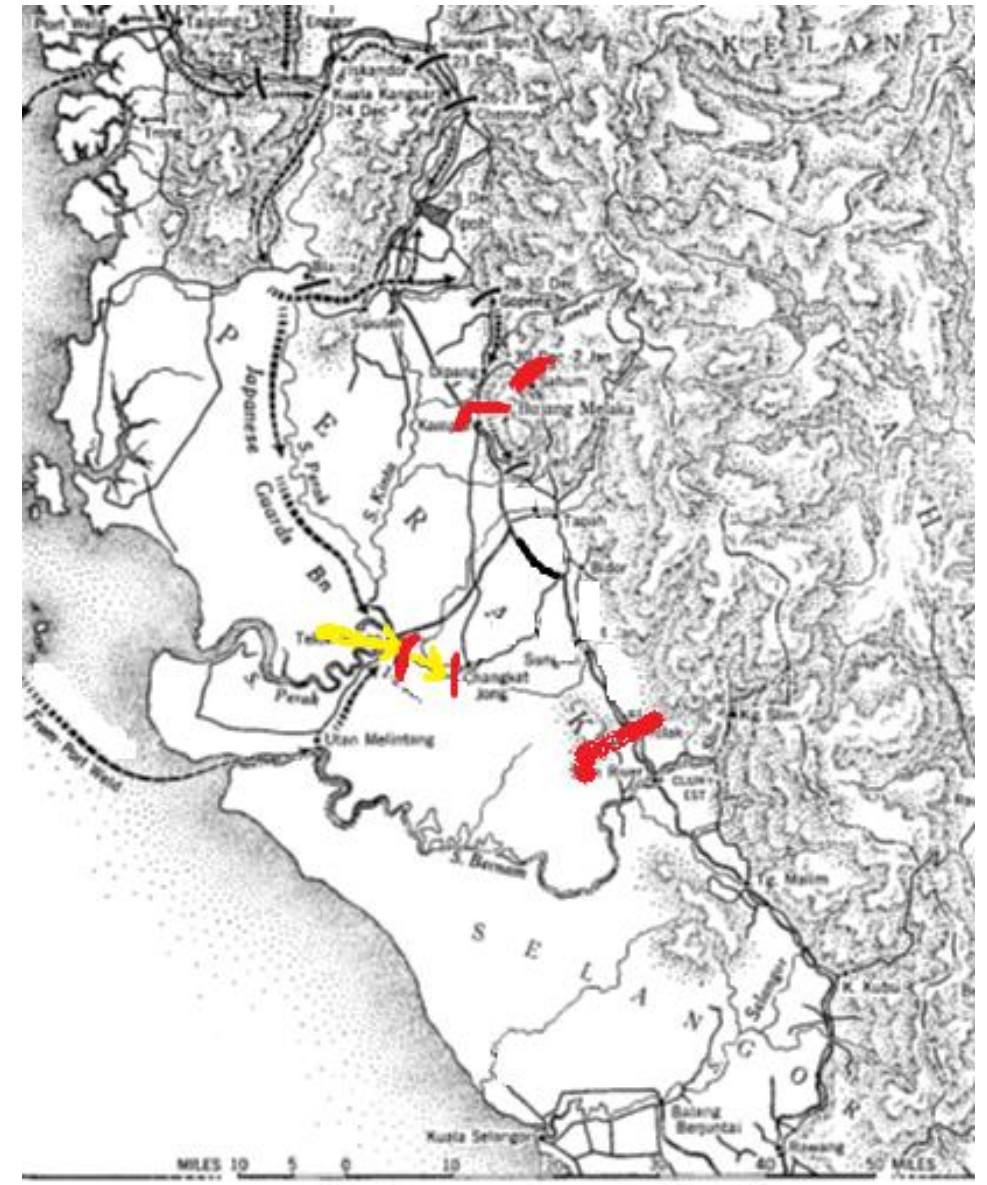
- Honduras,
- India,
- Luxemburg,
- Netherlands,
- New Zealand,
- Nicaragua,
- Norway,
- Panama,
- Poland,
- South Africa, and
- Yugoslavia.

2nd January

- **Australia**
- Brisbane continued to be the port of entry for shipments from the United States and it was the headquarters of USAFIA, whose responsibility in January became chiefly that of preparing air units for combat.
- The facilities made available by the Australians at Amberley and Archerfield were not adequate for the extent of the expected reinforcements;
- An Allied planning committee early in January authorized the establishment of a depot for the erection of planes at Eagle Farm. Construction of a runway and hangar facilities there was soon under way, as were also surveys for extensive construction at Darwin and Townsville.”

2nd January

- **Malaya**
- The Japanese again attacked the Kampar position on 2nd January and pressed heavily upon the defenders but the position was still being held by the British battalion at the end of the day despite the Japanese attack supported by tanks and artillery.
- Street fighting had occurred in Telok Anson; the 1st Independent Company was withdrawn from the township through the Argylls; and by nightfall the 12th Brigade had been forced back to a position two miles west of Changkat Jong.
- As this thrust now endangered the rear of the troops at Kampar, Paris decided that Kampar must be abandoned. In the ensuing moves the 28th and 12th Brigades withdrew to the Slim River area.
- Attempts to land in the Kuala Selangor area on 2nd and 3rd January were repelled by artillery fire from Brigadier Moir's lines of communications force, which General Heath then reinforced.
- On 2nd January Blenheim crews attacked and damaged enemy barges off Port Swettenham. No definite sinkings were reported.



The Japanese advance to Slim River

3rd January

- **Strategy**
- London advised (on 3rd) that Arcadia had decided that the main reinforcements necessary, including those en route to Malaya, were:
 - two divisions and one armoured brigade to Malaya, and
 - two divisions to the Netherlands East Indies.
 - Additional measures were also being taken for the reinforcement of Burma.
- The rate of reinforcement would depend on shipping and naval escorts but it was hoped that the programme could be completed within four months.
- In the same telegram London said that two of the infantry divisions must come from the Middle East. The UK asked Australia if it would agree to sending two of the Australian divisions from the Middle East to the Netherlands East Indies.
 - At that time the 6th and 7th divisions AIF together with 1st Australian Corps headquarters and corps troops were in Syria digging defences around Aleppo ([check location?](#)) and preparing to defend the Middle East against a German attack either out of Bulgaria through Turkey or from Russia down through the Caucasus into Iraq and Iran.
 - In addition to the 65,000 AIF troops the corps also had under command in Syria an Indian brigade a British cavalry brigade and a small Free French division.
 - Other forces preparing to resist this potential threat included two Indian divisions and two armoured brigades in Iraq and Iran and a British division with a cavalry regiment on the island of Cyprus.

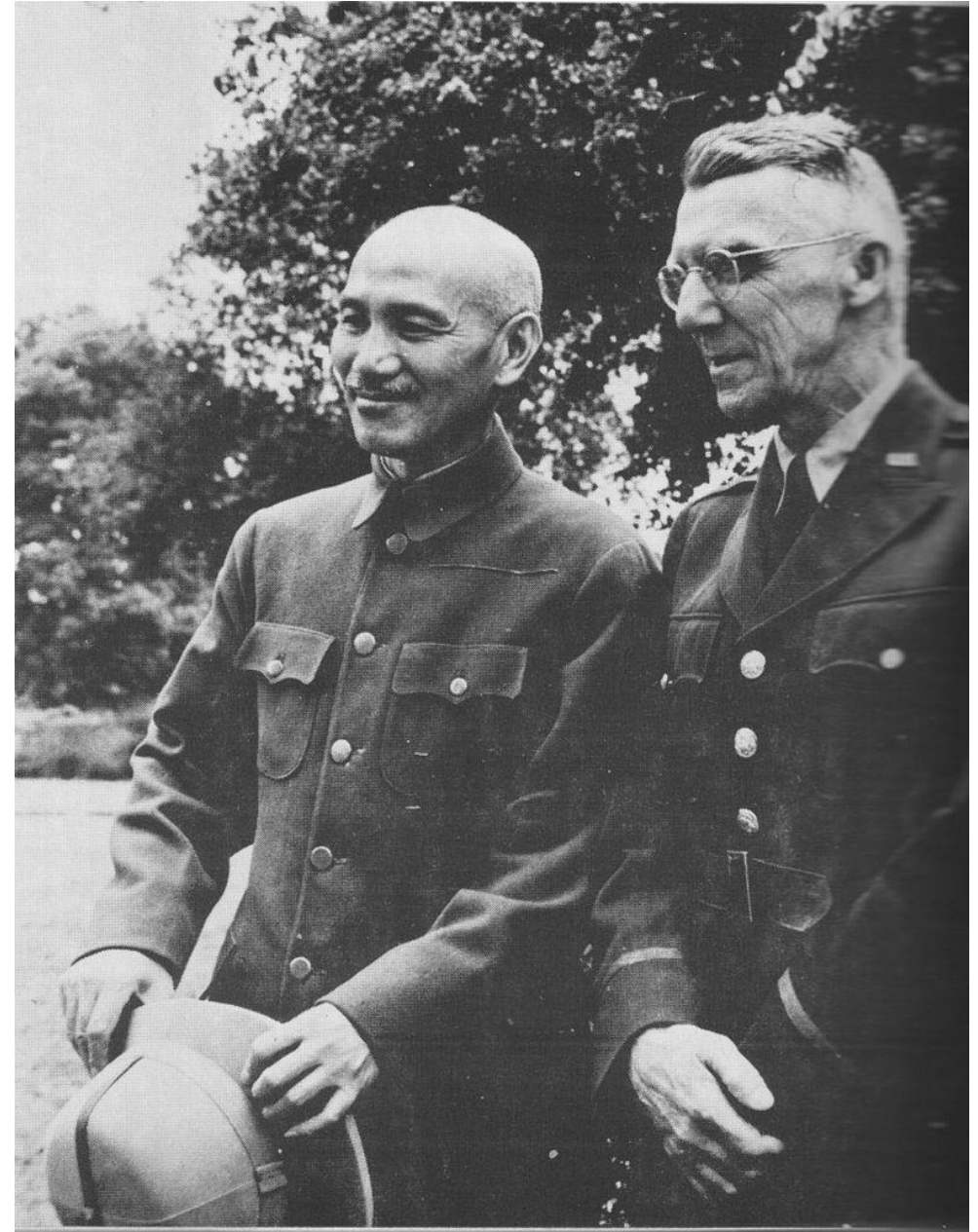
3rd January

- On 3rd January General Wavell was appointed Supreme Commander of the A.B.D.A. (American, British, Dutch and Australian) Area.
- A.B.D.A. Command in the South-West Pacific was established excluding Australia, but having the northern coast of Australia as its southern boundary.
- The first directive stated strategic policy as:
 - (a) to hold Malaya barrier defined as line Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java, North Australia ... and to operate sea, land and air forces in as great depth as possible forward of barrier in order to oppose Japanese southward advance;
 - (b) to hold Burma and Australia as essential support positions for the area and Burma as essential to support of China and to defence of India;
 - (c) to re-establish communications ... with Luzon to support Philippines garrison;
 - (d) to maintain essential communications within the area.



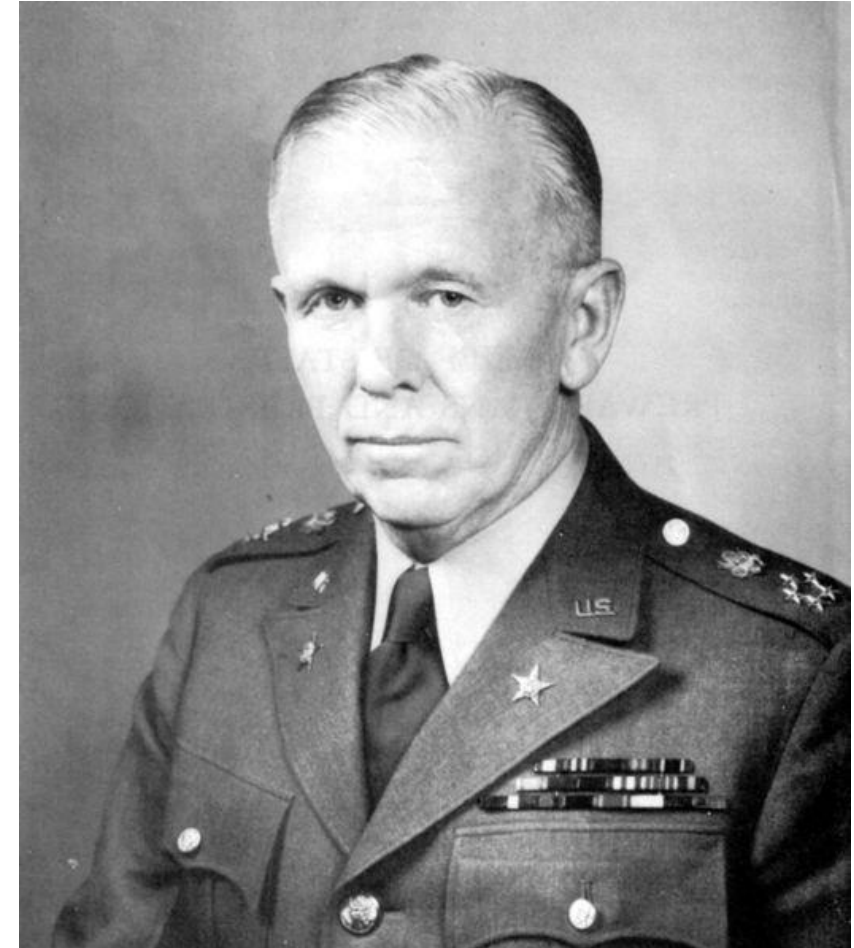
3rd January

- General Chiang Kai-shek was appointed Supreme Commander of Allied Land and Air Forces in the China theatre at the same time.
- General Chiang Kai-shek with US General Stilwell, commander of US forces in China and chief of staff to Chiang Kai-shek.



3rd January

- **Philippines**
- On 3rd January General Marshall received a memorandum from his Assistant Chief of Staff, outlining the operations necessary for the restoration of American control in the Philippines, and concluding that:
- "the forces required for the relief of the Philippines cannot be placed in the Far East Area within the time available". He recommended that "for the present" Allied efforts in the Far East be limited to holding the Malay Barrier, Burma and Australia.
- Pre-war plans had provided that six months' supplies for 43,000 men should be stored in the Bataan peninsula at the outbreak of war but
- MacArthur's order to fight it out on the beaches had invalidated this plan, and
- when war came supplies and equipment were moved forward to advance depots to support the troops on the front lines.
- On 3rd January there were only 30 days' field rations for 100,000 and soon rations were reduced to a dangerously low level.



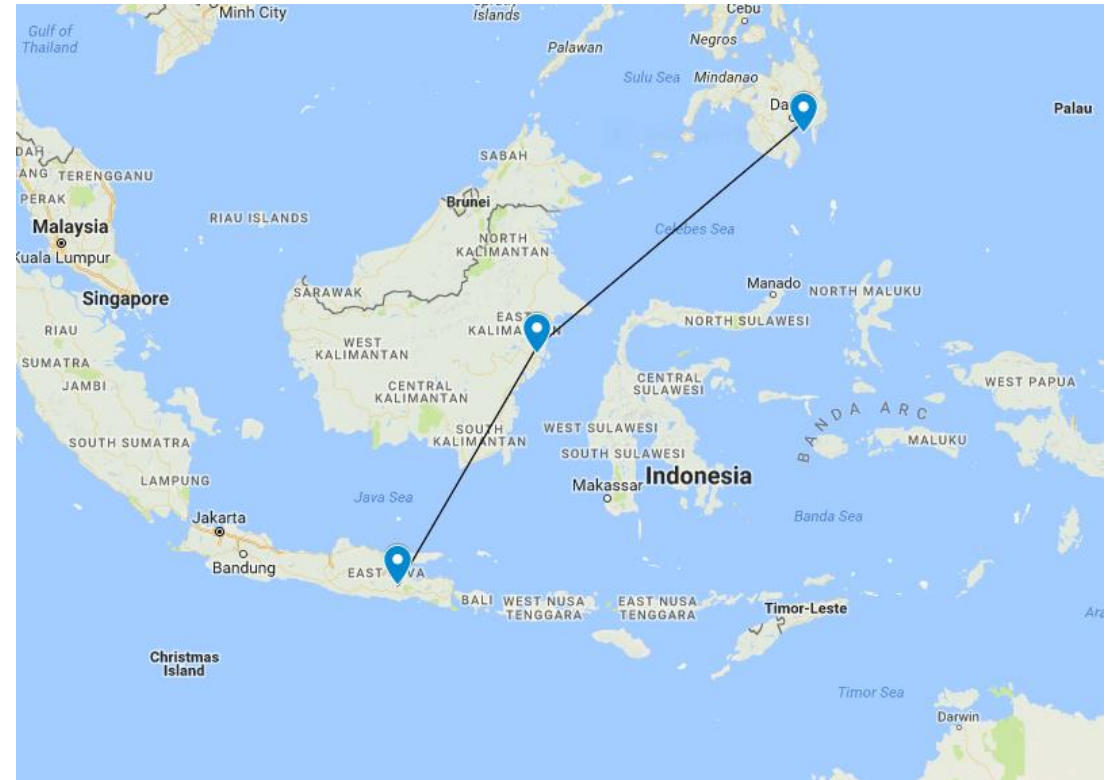
General George Marshall
Chief of Staff US Army

3rd January

- **Air**
- Blenheim crews again attacked and damaged enemy barges off Port Swettenham. No definite sinkings were reported.
- Two Australian Buffalo pilots flew to Kuala Lumpur with orders to make a tactical reconnaissance to the south of Ipoh.
 - They found a force of Japanese troops with motor transport moving south and, attacking with low-level gunfire, they caused substantial casualties and damage.
 - Just as they were circling to land at Kuala Lumpur for refuelling "the whole runway seemed to erupt" as several sticks of bombs burst on it. The Buffaloes were caught in the turbulence caused by the explosions and, when their aircraft had levelled out again, the pilots saw a formation of 27 enemy bombers sweeping westward at 20,000 feet.
 - Since the runway at Kuala Lumpur was now unserviceable, they flew back to Sembawang, landing there after dark with their fuel tanks practically empty.
- Three Hudsons led by Lerew, again attacked Kapingamarangi island.
 - They took off from Rabaul at 1.35 a.m. and the Hudsons were over the target at 4.30.
 - Two of them made low-level runs over slipways and waterside installations, starting four separate fires.
 - The third Hudson bombed the centre of the island, increasing the intensity of a large fire that had been started in a stores dump during the earlier attack.

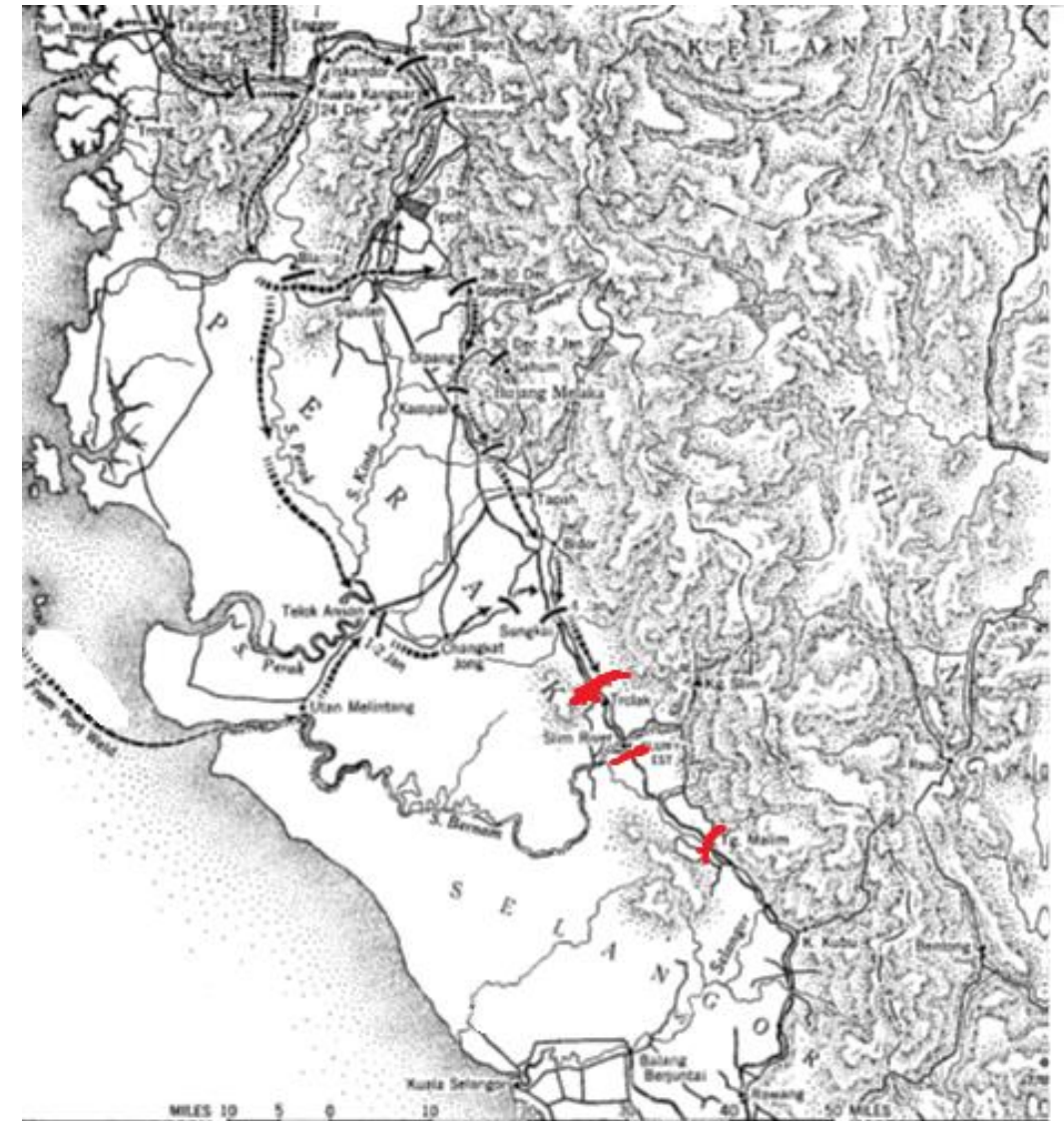
3rd January

- On 3 January nine B-17's reached Samarinda from Malang. Maintenance personnel, who had flown up with the aircrews, then serviced the planes, loaded each with fuel and bombs, and in the early morning of the following day Maj. Combs led eight of the big planes to Davao Gulf, which harboured twelve enemy transports and perhaps twenty-four warships.
- As the bombers approached the objective after five hours of flight, they climbed to 25,000 feet and scored hits which possibly sank a destroyer and severely damaged a cruiser. Opposition was slight, and four hours later the B17s landed unharmed at Samarinda.
- The planes returned to Malang 5 January.



3rd January - Malaya

- **East**
- The Japanese succeeded in infiltrating towards the Kuantan airfield, and the decision to withdraw the 11th Division from Kampar on the 2nd-3rd made it essential to withdraw the 9th from the Kuantan area.
- Therefore on the 3rd orders were received to withdraw the brigade to Jerantut, where part of the 8th Indian Brigade was stationed.
- A further Japanese attack succeeded in isolating the rearguard of the 2/12th Frontier Force Regiment as it was leaving the airfield and the greater part of two companies were lost.
- **West**
- General Percival had urged upon General Heath that the airfields at Kuala Lumpur and Port Swettenham be denied to the enemy at least until 14th January. Realising that unless provision were made to cope with further Japanese landings southward along the west coast he might be unable to fulfil this requirement, he sent units to Brigadier Moir commanding the Lines of Communications, with orders to prevent landings at Kuala Selangor.
- To delay the enemy on the trunk road he ordered dispositions in depth, headed by the 12th and 28th Brigades in the Trolak-Slim River area to cover crossings of the river, and with the main position some ten miles south of it, near Tanjong Malim.
- **Reinforcements**
- The convoy berthed safely on 3rd January, bringing the 45th Indian Brigade, semitrained though it was, and with no experience of jungle warfare, to Singapore.



The Japanese advance to Slim River

4th January

- **Command**
- The Australian area, including New Guinea, the Solomons, New Hebrides and Fiji would be excluded both from the A.B.D.A. Area and from the area in the Pacific for which the United States fleet would be responsible.
- The advice of the Australian Chiefs of Staff to Cabinet was that the adoption of these proposals would result in Australia and New Zealand being isolated and left to defend the Australian area without Allied assistance and with entirely inadequate naval, military and air resources.



4th January

- **Command**
- Details of the "appropriate joint body" was communicated to Australia on 4th January by Churchill.
- It was to be a Chiefs of Staff Committee in Washington, composed of the three American Chiefs of Staff and representatives of the three United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff, who would channel any matters for final decision to Roosevelt and Churchill.
- It was added that "since London has machinery for consulting Dominion Governments and since the Dutch Government is in London, the British Government will be responsible for obtaining their views and agreement. . ."
- This machinery was to be used to reach decisions on such questions as provision of reinforcements, major changes in policy and changes to the directive to the Supreme Commander.

4th January

- **New Guinea**

- On 4th January 22 Japanese twin engined bombers swept over Lakunai airfield at Rabaul. Two Wirraways took off but were unable to gain sufficient height and speed for interception. Flying in three V formations, the enemy "pattern" bombed the airfield from 12,000 feet, dropping more than fifty bombs. Three bombs fell on the runway and 17 in the native compound and Rapindik Hospital area. The rest fell harmlessly in the sea. About 15 natives were killed and the same number wounded.
- About 7 p.m. on the same day (4th Jan) 11 flying-boats bombed Vunakanau, dropping between 30 and 40 bombs which fell harmlessly some distance from the runway.

- **Australia**

- On 4th January Brett ordered the two ships of the Pensacola convoy, then on their way to the Philippines, the Holbrook and the Bloemfontein, to go to Darwin and discharge all cargo and troops there.

- **Malaya**

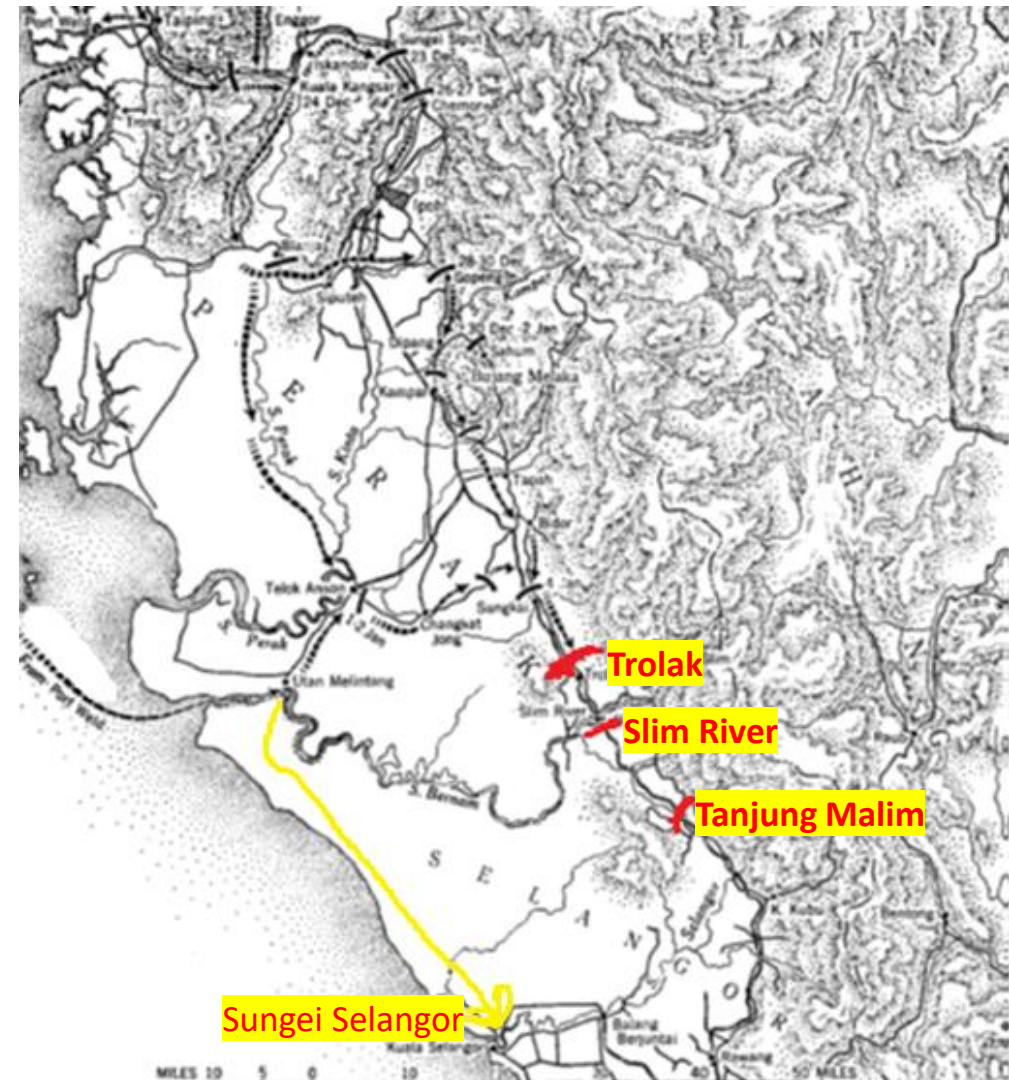
- Blenheim crews again attacked and damaged enemy barges off Port Swettenham. No definite sinkings were reported.

Rabaul Operations



4th January

- **Malaya**
- On 4th January the 12th and 28th brigades were covered (in their positions at the Slim River) by the battered 15th Brigade at Sungkai.
- That night the 15th Brigade was withdrawn from its covering position at Sungkai to occupy the main Tanjong Malim position.
- The 12th Brigade had moved into the Trolak position early on 4th January, and set to work preparing defences. Constant attack by Japanese aircraft necessitated much of the 12th Brigade's work being done at night. The brigade was dead tired. It had withdrawn 176 miles in three weeks and had only three days' rest. It had suffered many casualties of which a high proportion had been killed. The spirit of the men was low.
- The forward part of the position comprised dense jungle through which the trunk road and railway ran roughly parallel, a few hundred yards apart. The 4/19th Hyderabad was forward; the 5/2nd Punjab was in the centre; and the Argylls were at the exits from the jungle at Trolak village and on an estate road branching from the trunk road. The 5/14th Punjab, from corps reserve, was at Kampong Slim under short notice to come forward to a check position about a mile south of Trolak.
- The 28th Brigade were allocated positions with the 2/2nd Gurkhas in the Slim River station area; the 2/9th Gurkhas astride the road at Kampong Slim; and the 2/1st Gurkhas in reserve at Cluny Estate—two miles and a half eastward.
 - For the time being, however, the brigade was being rested in the Kampong Slim area.
- On 4th January, Japanese troops using a track north of Kuala Selangor drove back forward patrols, and reached the north bank of the Sungei Selangor.



5th January

- **Government**

- On 5 January 1942, Curtin confided to Elsie, who had left Canberra for Perth the day after Pearl Harbor, the 'war goes very badly and I have a cable fight with Churchill almost daily'.

- **Strategy**

- Admiral Layton now decided to shift the base of British naval forces engaged on escort duty and his headquarters from Singapore to Java, the better to organise convoy escort. On 5th January he hoisted his flag in *Dragon*, and sailed with his staff to Batavia. He took with him Admiral Palliser, whom he appointed Senior Naval Officer, Batavia, for convoy direction. Thereafter the convoy cruisers and destroyers were based on Tanjong Priok, the port of Batavia.

- **Reinforcements**

- The 49th American Artillery Battalion was one of two which landed at Darwin on 5th January from the transport *Holbrook*. The *Holbrook* had been part of the "*Pensacola* Convoy" carrying reinforcements to the Philippines but diverted to Australia when the war broke out.
- The 4,600 United States troops who had arrived in Brisbane had been quickly dispersed. 1,300 in the artillery battalions landed in Darwin, 1,500 went to Townsville and 700 to the Netherlands East Indies, leaving 1,100 in Brisbane.

5th January

- Next morning (5th) the Japanese at Sungai Selangor, were in contact with the 1st Independent Company covering bridges over the river in the Batang Berjuntai area. Brigadier Moorhead, commanding the 15th Indian Brigade, was now made responsible for the coastal sector.
- Instead of occupying the position at Tanjong Malim, the 15th Brigade was sent on 5th January to reinforce Moorhead's coastal force.
- Japanese bombers pounded the 12th Brigade positions on the morning of the 5th, and Japanese infantry then advanced along the railway. Waiting until they came within close range, the Hyderabad's repelled the attack with concentrated fire.

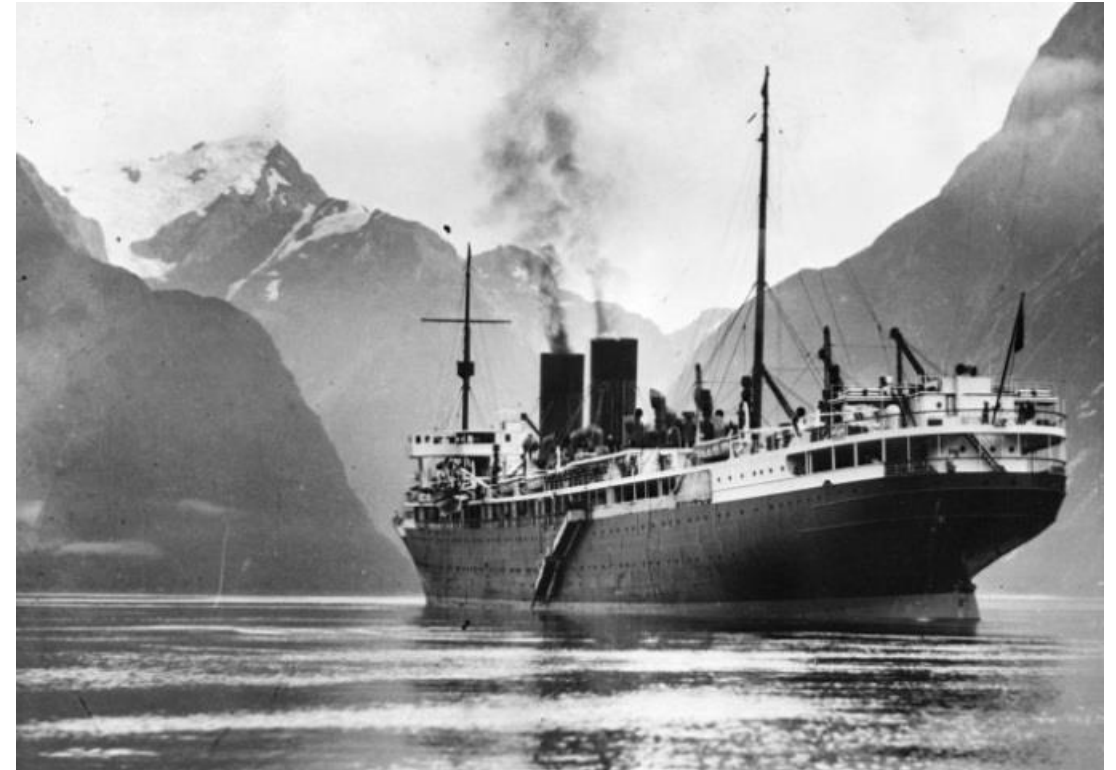


6th January

- On the 6th, following a decision made by the war cabinet the previous day, the Australian Government informed the British Government that it agreed to sending the 6th and 7th Divisions, with the corps headquarters, corps troops and base units to the East.
- The Corps totalled 64,151 men.
 - The 6th Division was 18,465 strong,
 - the 7th 18,620;
 - there were 17,866 corps troops and
 - 9,200 base and lines of communication troops.
- This movement, which would make big demands on shipping, could not begin until the first week in February.

6th January

- **Pacific lines of Communication**
- **Samoa**
- The 7th Regiment of the US Marine Corps departed San Diego on 6th January, in four transports and a fleet cargo vessel, to garrison Samoa. Yorktown and its taskforce, which had just come through the canal, met and escorted them on the ocean passage.
- **Fiji**
- Three New Zealand battalions—the 35th, 36th, and 37th formed at Burnham Camp from the 8th Reinforcements for the Middle East, were formed, organised as 14 Brigade and despatched to Fiji; and in Fiji itself 2 Territorial Battalion was called up for full-time service.
- The new units made the voyage in a convoy of four ships—the *Matua* and the *Rangatira*, which went to Lautoka, and the *Wahine* and the *Monowai* to Suva, escorted by the cruisers *Australia*, *Perth*, and *Achilles*. The ships reached their destinations on 6 January and returned to New Zealand for the second flight.
- The men dug, excavated, and erected belts of barbed wire through days and weeks of unremitting toil. Like the earlier arrivals they suffered all the discomforts of mosquitoes, dhobie's itch, prickly heat, septic sores, and tinea which were to harass them throughout the Pacific war.



Pre war picture of SS *Monowai* in Milford Sound, she was converted to an armed merchant cruiser and commissioned HMNZS Monowai in August 1940.

6th January

- **Malaya**
- On 6th January he (Moorhead, 15th Brigade) withdrew across the river his forces at Batang Berjuntai, and destroyed the bridges.
- The maintenance party from No. 21/453 Squadron, which had remained at Kuala Lumpur was ordered to withdraw, undertaking demolition work at Port Swettenham on their way back. They reached Sembawang on 6th January.
- Before dawn on the same day (6th January) two other Buffalo pilots left Sembawang to investigate a report of further enemy barge movements along the Bernam River. After searching for some time they sighted nine barges full of Japanese troops.
- The pilots climbed to 2,000 feet and dived to blast the troops in the barges with gunfire. They repeated these tactics until they had spent most of their ammunition. The pilots claimed a lot of Japs killed.

6th January

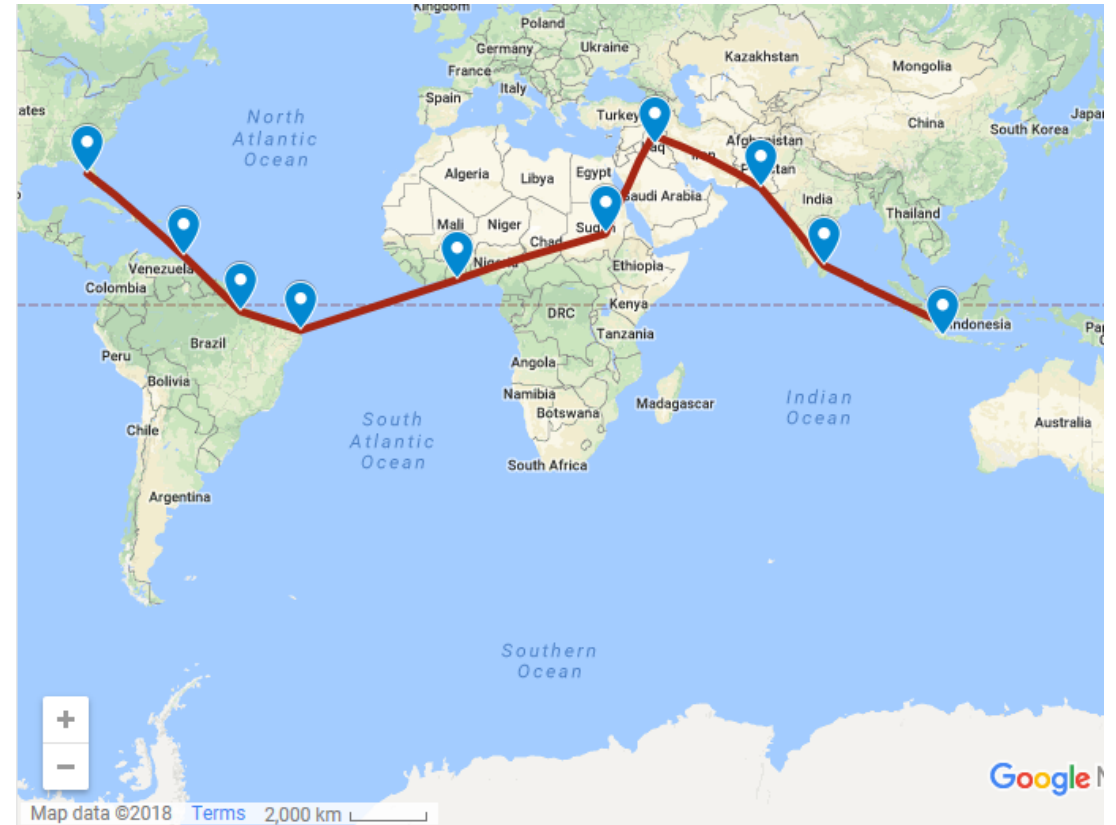
- **New Guinea**
- Two days later (6th Jan) 9 flying-boats again bombed Vunakanau from 12,000 feet.
 - The raid came at 6 p.m. and this time there was practically no warning.
 - The enemy scored a direct hit on the new direction - finding station, construction of which was almost complete, wrecking it and the adjacent aerial system and control hut beyond repair.
 - A grounded Wirraway was destroyed, a Hudson damaged and the runway made temporarily unserviceable for other than Wirraways.
- Four Wirraways took off and despite the lack of warning one of them, flown by Flight Lieutenant Anderson, succeeded in engaging one of the flying-boats. He closed to within 300 yards. In determined though vain pursuit he fired all his ammunition without apparent damage to the enemy aircraft, which returned his fire from the dorsal gun.
- Cloud cover for the enemy and failing light prevented any combat by the other Wirraways and the enemy got safely away.
- In a report F-Lt Brookes wrote: "From present experience it would appear that the fire power of the Wirraway aircraft is inadequate to do serious damage to enemy flying-boats which, so far, are the only type of enemy aircraft that can be overtaken by a Wirraway."
- on 6th January, two Hudsons lead by Lerew made another strike on the island (Kapingamarangi), the observed result being the destruction of a seaplane on a slipway.



Kawanishi H8K allied reporting name Emily

6th January

- **Reinforcements**
- Following decisions at the Arcadia conference 20 Fortresses and 6 Liberators were on their way to SWP by 6th January,
- 45 Fortresses and 9 Liberators were being made ready for take-off and
- 160 of the same heavy-bomber types were to be sent as rapidly as they came from the factories.
- Hurried efforts were made to develop an alternative delivery route for B17s across the Atlantic, Africa and India. The route was from Tampa (Florida)
- through Trinidad,
- Belem and Natal (Brazil),
- across the Atlantic to Accra (Gold Coast)
- and on to Khartoum, Cairo, Habbaniya, Karachi
- and thence through India and Ceylon
- to Bandung, Java.



6th January - Washington

- **In his State of the Union Address to Congress President Roosevelt said:**
- Japan's scheme of conquest goes back half a century, ... marked by the war against China in 1894; the subsequent occupation of Korea; the war against Russia in 1904; the illegal fortification of the mandated Pacific islands following 1920; the seizure of Manchuria in 1931; and the invasion of China in 1937.
- The mood here is stronger than any mere desire for revenge. It expresses the will of the American people to make very certain that the world will never so suffer again.
- The militarists of Berlin and Tokyo started this war. But the massed, angered forces of common humanity will finish it.
- We shall not stop short of these objectives—nor shall we be satisfied merely to gain them and then call it a day. I know that I speak for the American people when I say that this time we are determined not only to win the war, but also to maintain the security of the peace that will follow.
- We know that modern methods of warfare make it a task, not only of shooting and fighting, but an even more urgent one of working and producing.
- Victory requires the actual weapons of war and the means of transporting them to a dozen points of combat.
- Production in the United States must be raised far above present levels, even though it will mean the dislocation of the lives and occupations of millions of our own people.

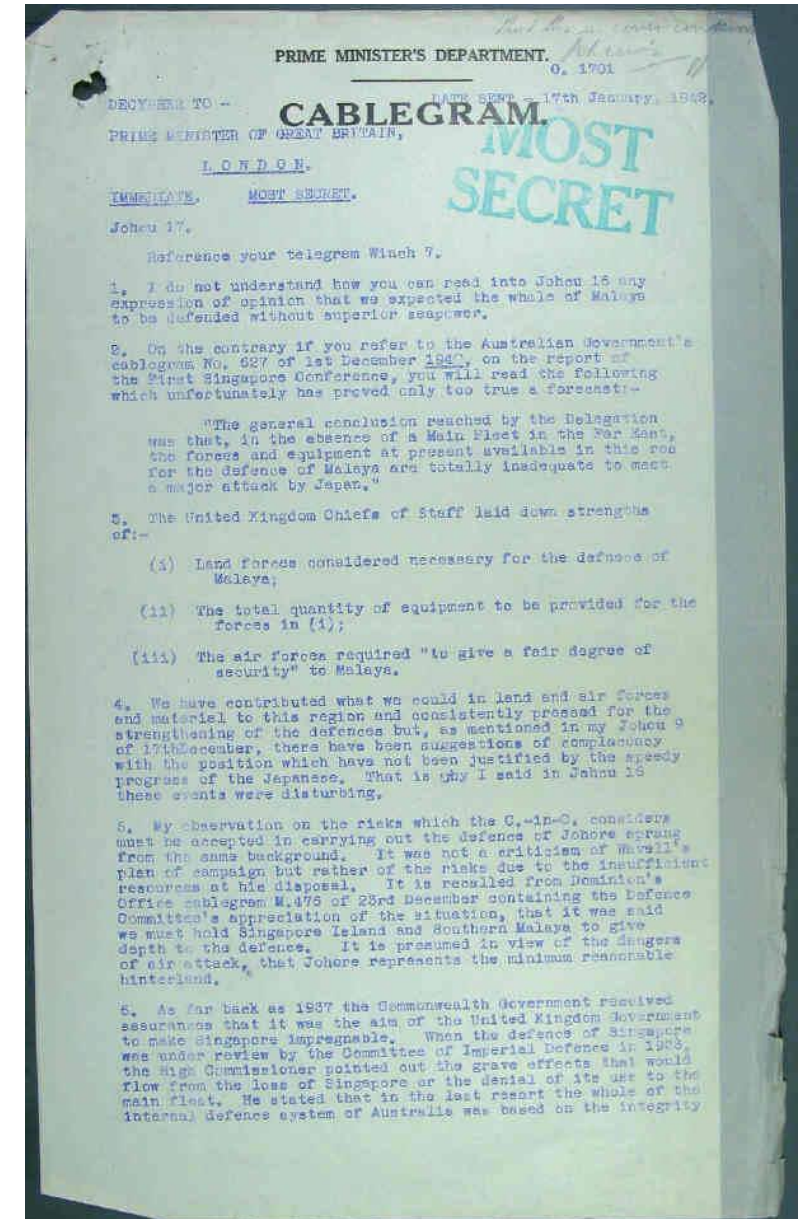
6th January - Washington

- **The President Roosevelt continued:**

- I have just sent a directive to the ... agencies of our Government, ordering that immediate steps be taken to increase our production so that:
 - In this year, 1942, we shall produce 60,000 planes and next year, 1943, 125,000.
 - In this year, 1942, we shall produce 45,000 tanks; and next year, 1943, 75,000.
 - In this year, 1942, we shall produce 20,000 anti-aircraft guns; and next year, 1943, 35,000 of them.
 - In this year, 1942, we shall build 6,000,000 deadweight tons of merchant shipping as compared with a 1941 production of 1,100,000. And next year, 1943, we shall build 10,000,000 tons of shipping.
- Production for war is based on metals and raw materials. Greater and greater quantities of them will have to be diverted to war purposes. Civilian use of them will have to be cut further and still further—and, in many cases, completely eliminated.
- War costs money. So far, we have hardly even begun to pay for it. We have devoted only 15 percent of our national income to national defence. Our war program for the coming fiscal year will cost more than half of the estimated annual national income. That means taxes and bonds and bonds and taxes. It means cutting luxuries and other non-essentials. In a word, it means an "all-out" war by individual effort and family effort in a united country.
- We must face the fact of a hard war, a long war, a bloody war, a costly war.
- But we of the United Nations are not making all this sacrifice of human effort and human lives to return to the kind of world we had after the last world war.
- We are fighting today for security, for progress, and for peace, not only for ourselves but for all men, not only for one generation but for all generations. We are fighting to cleanse the world of ancient evils, ancient ills.

7th January

- On 7th January 1942 Curtin told Churchill that "the failure to set up any joint body for operations in the Pacific and to provide for more direct consultation with the Commonwealth . . . is a situation we are quite unable to accept".
- The Netherlands and New Zealand Governments were equally dissatisfied.



7th January

- **New Guinea**
- On 7th January Rabaul received its fourth raid.
 - Between 18 and 20 Nells in two V formations dropped between 40 and 60 bombs;
 - on the ground a Hudson and two Wirraways were destroyed and two Hudsons were damaged.
 - The barracks at station headquarters, temporary repair hangars, and some stores were also damaged.
 - Three Wirraways took off but they were unequal to the enemy's speed.
- **Ambon**
- seven enemy flying boats were over Halong and Laha before dawn on 7th January.
 - Both bases were bombed and the enemy then flew low and subjected them to gunfire.
 - There was no warning of the raid so the three Dutch Buffaloes, the only fighters available, had not time to take off.
 - Two Hudsons and one Dutch Buffalo were damaged on the ground.



Mitsubishi G3M – Allied reporting name Nell

7th January

- **Malaya**
- The airfield at Gong Kedah was attacked by the two remaining Catalinas of No. 205 Squadron R.A.F., reinforced on 7th January by three more.
 - The Catalinas were so vulnerable to enemy fighter attacks that they had been withdrawn from daylight reconnaissance and were being used instead for long-range night bombing;
 - they were the only aircraft available with sufficient range for attacks on such targets as Singora on which they made two strikes and Gong Kedah.
 - The strike was made but there is no record of any particular success.
- Wavell left Delhi by air on 5th January and reached Singapore early on the 7th.
- The rest of the brigade (22nd Indian) reached Jerantut (from Kuantan) without being further engaged, and by 7th January was disposed in the vicinity of Fraser's Hill.
- **Burma**
- On 7th January No. 113 (Blenheim IV) Squadron R.A.F., from Egypt, landed at Mingaladon with 16 aircraft. Each crew brought with them a ground crew member.



Consolidated PBY Catalina

7th January - Malaya

- A further infantry attack occurred soon after midnight on the 6th-7th along both the road and the railway; then,
 - after a heavy barrage of mortar and artillery fire, and in clear moonlight, tanks suddenly appeared on the road. These were part of a mechanised column with infantry interspersed between the armour.
 - Under covering fire, the infantry soon disposed of the first road-block in its path; the forward company of Hyderabad's was overrun; and with guns blazing the column charged on.
 - Other Japanese troops renewed the pressure along the railway, and some of the tanks used an abandoned and overgrown section of old road in a flanking manoeuvre, with the result that rapid progress was made in this thrust also.
 - The column was checked only when the leading tank entered a mined section of the road in front of the forward company of the 5/2nd Punjab near Milestone 61. Fierce fighting ensued, but here the first of two more disused deviations, which it had been intended to use for transport when the time came for the battalion to withdraw, enabled the enemy to move to the flank and rear.
 - Again overrunning the position, the Japanese column advanced until it came upon more mines, in front of the reserve company of the 5/2nd Punjab. Furious fighting at this point lasted for an hour, but by exploiting the third loop section the Japanese achieved the same result as before.
 - The suddenness of the penetration so disorganised communications that it was not until 6.30 a.m., when the position had been lost, that a dispatch rider delivered to General Paris' headquarters at Tanjong Malim his first message from the 12th Brigade.
 - Even this contained only a vague reference to "some sort of break-through", for the information received by Stewart had lagged behind the night's swiftly-moving events.
- About this time (06.30) four enemy medium tanks reached the first of two road-blocks hurriedly erected by the Argylls. The blocks, and such resistance as the battalion, lacking anti-tank guns, was able to offer to the tanks, were also overcome, and an attempt to destroy the bridge at Trolak failed.

7th January - Malaya

- The Argyll companies on the railway and the estate road held out until they were surrounded, and then tried to fight their way out, all but about a hundred of them being lost.
- At 7.30 a.m. the tanks reached the 5/14th Punjab moving up in column of companies to occupy their check position. Caught by surprise, the Punjabis were dispersed and a troop of anti-tank guns sent from the 28th Brigade to assist them in the position they were to occupy was overrun before it could fire a shot.
- Paris had ordered Selby to deploy the 28th Brigade in the positions assigned to it, and Selby had issued his orders at 7 a.m.
 - The 2/9th Gurkhas were occupying positions near Kampong Slim when, about 8 a.m., the leading Japanese tanks roared past, and
 - caught the 2/1st Gurkha Rifles moving in column of route to Cluny Estate. Thrown into confusion, the battalion dispersed.
 - The tanks next paused briefly to fire on two batteries of the 137th Field Regiment parked beside the road, and reached the Slim River bridge about 8.30 a.m.
 - An anti-aircraft battery brought two Bofors guns to bear on them at 100 yards' range, but the shells bounced off the tanks, while they poured fire into the gun crews.
 - Before the bridge could be destroyed, the tanks crossed it and continued their triumphant course.
- Two miles south of the bridge they met the 155th Field Regiment moving up to support the 28th Brigade. There, after the regiment's headquarters had been overrun, and six hours after the column had commenced its thrust, they were stopped. Although under heavy fire, a howitzer detachment got a 4.5-inch howitzer into action. With their leading tank disabled, the Japanese thereafter confined themselves to tank patrols, and during the afternoon withdrew to the bridge.

8th January

- Next day—8th January—
 - the strength of the 12th Brigade was fourteen officers and 409 men and
 - the 28th Brigade was reduced to only 750 men.
 - The guns and equipment of two field batteries and two troops of antitank guns, and
 - all the transport of the two brigades, had been lost.
- When Wavell visited the III Corps on 8th January, and assessed its condition after the Battle of Slim River, he promptly decided that it must be withdrawn to Johore for rest and reorganisation before again facing any major encounter with the enemy.
- He told Heath of this decision, and said that, though he should cover Kuala Lumpur as long as possible, he should not await a full-scale enemy attack.



General Wavell inspecting Indian troops in Singapore
8th January 1942

8th January

- **Air**

- At 2 a.m. on the 8th, nine Blenheims began taking off from Mingaladon for Bangkok, only a few hours after their arrival.
 - The target was the dock area and
 - the bombload, as for most of the Blenheim's strike missions in this campaign, was four 250-lb general purpose and four 25-lb incendiary bombs.
 - Bombing singly through intense anti-aircraft fire and many searchlight beams,
 - the crews all returned to report explosions and fires which could be seen from a distance of 50 miles from the target.
- On 8th January nine Glenn Martins and four Hudsons attacked an enemy ship anchored in the South China Sea. It was suspected that the vessel was being used as a navigation base for Japanese aircraft flying from Indo-China to Malaya. Direct hits were observed by the attacking crews.

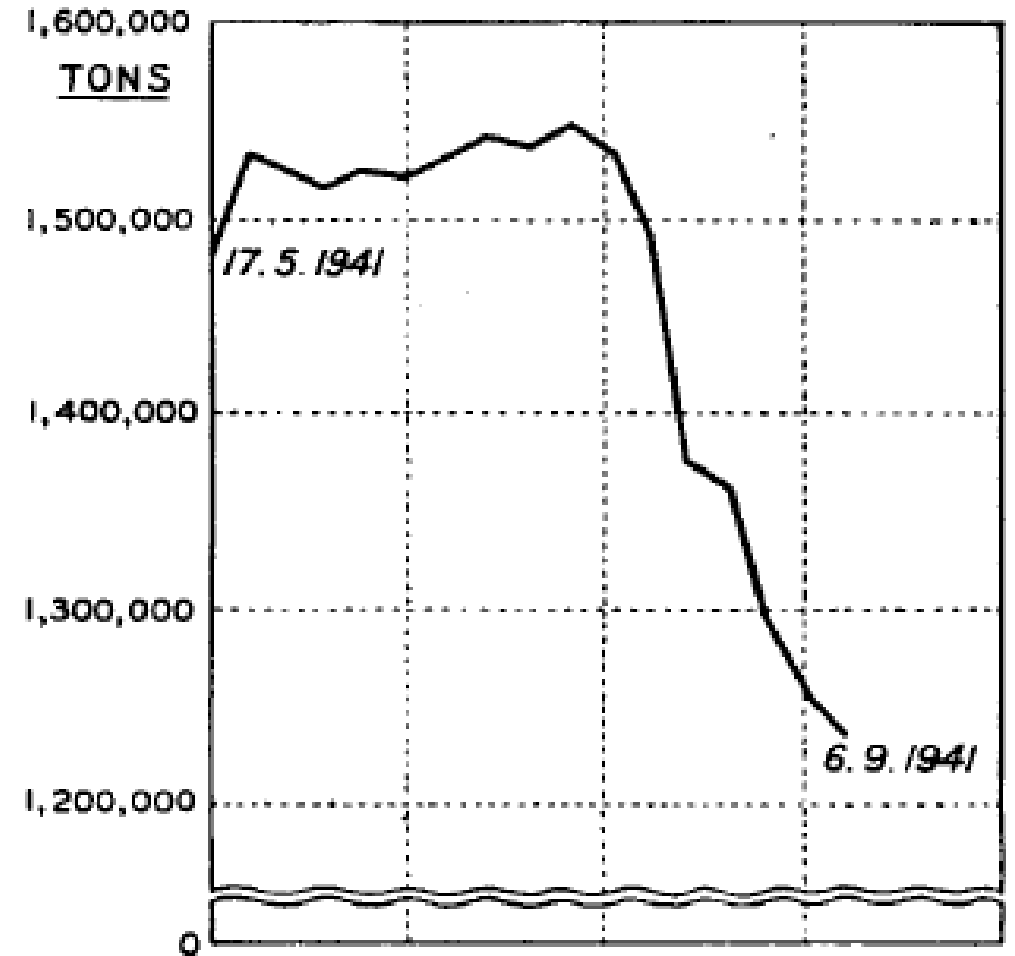


Bristol Blenheim Mark IV

9th January

- **War Economy**

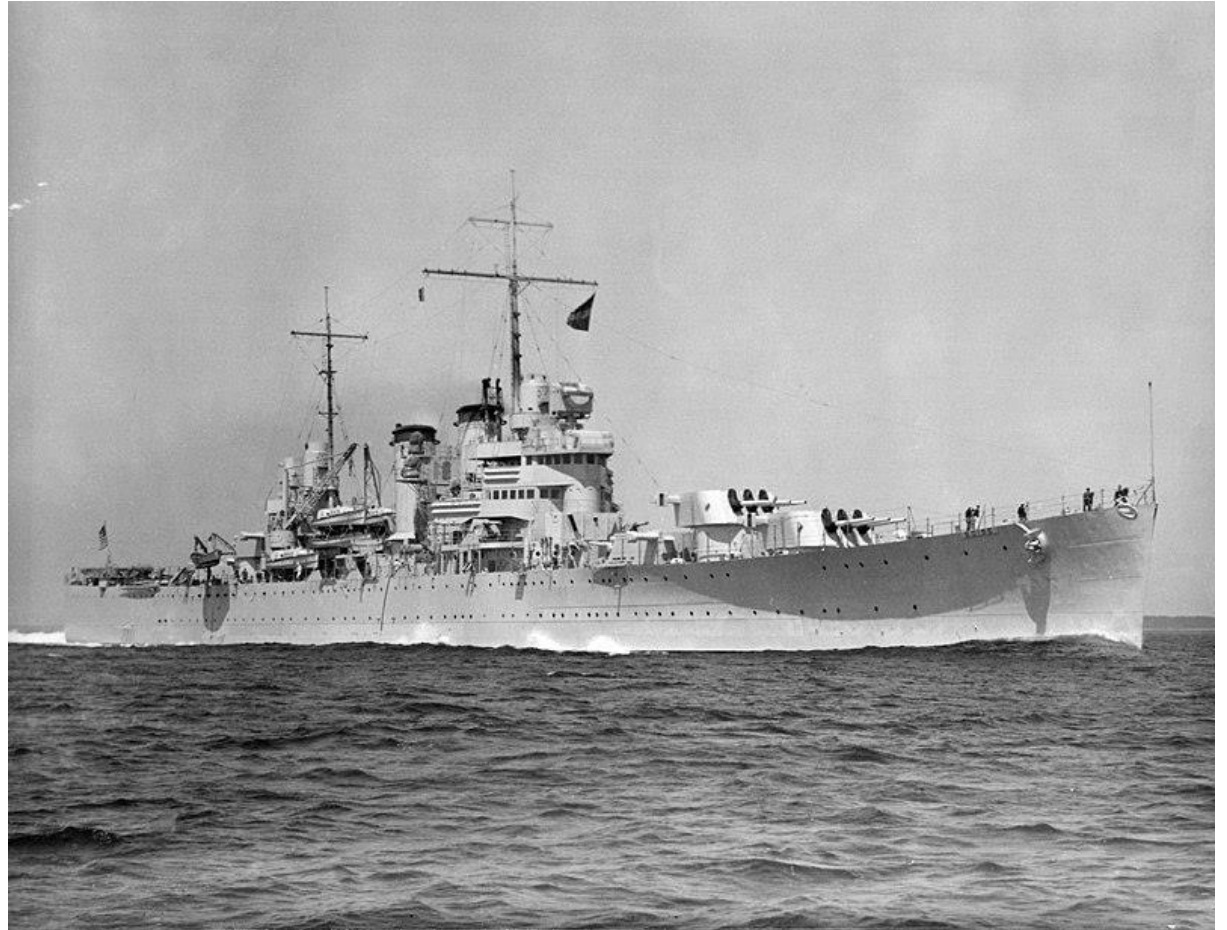
- After the outbreak of war with Japan, a Coal Commission was created and was given powers to acquire all coal stocks in New South Wales and fix prices throughout Australia.
- The workers were shown that the owners were being bound to direction and a limit on earnings just as rigidly as any miner. The coalfields seemed happy.
- Early in 1942 the Central Council of the Miners' Federation passed what it called a New Year's resolution to give every possible support to the Government ... and to consider favourably all suggestions to ensure maximum coal production.
- The miners worked throughout the holiday period, as desired by the Government.
- In the first week of January more than 7,000 miners went out on strike and the advantage of the extra effort was lost.
- The Prime Minister intervened with appeals and with warnings and then, on 9th January, with new regulations which imposed penalties on any miner who refused to work when the committee of management of his union said he should work.



Coal stocks were a continuing anxiety for the government.

9th January

- **Australia**
- on 9th January two US cruisers *Boise* (flag of Rear-Admiral Glassford) and *Marblehead*, with the five destroyers *Stewart*, *Bulmer*, *Pope*, *Parrott*, and *Barker*, left Darwin escorting the transport *Bloemfontein* (10,081 tons) to Surabaya.
- **Philippines**
- On 9th January, the Japanese, launched an attack against the Bataan line.



USS *Boise* (CL-47)

9th January

- **New Guinea**
- A reconnaissance of Truk was flown on 9th January 1942, by FLt Yeowart and crew in a specially fitted Hudson Mk IV of No. 6 Squadron. The operation, involving a return flight of 1,405 statute miles.
- The concentration of enemy shipping and aircraft seen at Truk was interpreted as an indication of a Japanese thrust to the south.
- As there were no photographic facilities at RAAF station, Garbutt, the 280 films brought back by Yeowart had to be processed under a security watch at a commercial studio in Townsville.
- **Malaya**
- Next day (9th January) nine Glenn Martins bombed enemy ships unloading at Kuantan with "some success".
- Air Headquarters had ordered all the available strength of No. 21/453 Squadron to attack Kuantan airfield.
 - On 8th January 8 Buffaloes flew to Kluang.
 - Landing in the dusk two aircraft ran into unmarked bomb craters and were damaged.
 - The attack was planned for dawn.
 - There was a final briefing by torchlight and all six serviceable Buffaloes were airborne before daylight on the 9th.
 - They picked up formation and set course for Kuantan as dawn came, only to be recalled by the ground controller because the target had been shut off by torrential rain.
 - The attack was then abandoned and the pilots flew back to Sembawang.



One of the photos brought back from
Truk Lagoon.

9th January

- **Malaya**
- (Wavell) laid down next day (9th) the plan for the defence of what remained of Malaya:
 - (a) III Indian Corps, after delaying the enemy north of Kuala Lumpur for as long as possible [Wavell did not expect it to be longer than 11th January] to withdraw into Johore, implementing the demolition scheme as they went.
 - (b) The 8th Australian Division, leaving its 22nd Brigade Group in Mersing, to move to the north-west frontier of Johore and to fight a decisive battle on the line Segamat-Mount Ophir-mouth of Muar River. The 22nd Brigade Group to join the remainder of the division as soon as it could be relieved by troops from Singapore Island. [Wavell considered that this could not be completed before the arrival of the 53rd Brigade.]
 - (c) The 9th Indian Division, to be reinforced from the freshest troops of the III Indian Corps and the 45th Indian Brigade, to be placed under General Bennett for use in the southern portion of the position allotted to the Australian division.
 - (e) III Indian Corps on withdrawal to take over responsibility for the east and west coasts of Johore south of the road Mersing-Kluang-Batu Pahat, leaving Bennett free to fight the battle in north-west Johore.
 - III Indian Corps to rest and to refit the 11th Indian Division and to organise a general reserve from reinforcements as they arrived.
- Percival's orders provided that troops in Johore be divided into two forces.
- The force under Bennett, to be known as Westforce, would comprise :
 - 9th Indian Division;
 - A.I.F. less 22nd Brigade;
 - 45th Indian Brigade Group;
 - 2/Loyal Regiment (from Singapore Fortress);
- Westforce was to hold north-west Johore, principally along the line Batu Anam-Muar.
- The composition of the other main force—III Indian Corps—would be:
 - 11th Indian Division;
 - 22nd Australian Brigade Group and attached troops, including 2/17th Dogra Battalion from Singapore Fortress, under Brigadier Taylor (to be known as Eastforce);
- The III Indian Corps was to defend the remainder of Johore up to and including the line Endau (on the east coast) through Kluang to Batu Pahat on the west coast.
- On 9 January 1942, while still at Mersing, the 2/10th Field Regiment was re-equipped with 25-pounders, replacing the old 18-pounders.

The Wavell Plan

