

Fortress was responsible for the administration of the Command Headquarters and Base units located in the Singapore Island area.

(c) *Malaya Command Reserve*.—The A.I.F. (8 Australian Division less two Infantry brigade groups) was in Command Reserve. It was located in the Malacca/Negri Sembilan area with Headquarters at Kuala Lumpur. It was to be prepared to operate anywhere in Malaya, and for this purpose officers of the A.I.F. were ordered to carry out reconnaissances of the areas where operations were most likely to take place.

(d) *Borneo*.—One Infantry Battalion (less one company at Miri), with some Local Forces and administrative units attached, was stationed at Kuching in the State of Sarawak. Its task was to protect the aerodrome under construction there for the use of our Air Force and to deny it to the enemy.

There was also a small infantry and engineer detachment at Miri, where two 6 in. guns had been installed. Its task was to destroy the oil fields and installations, if necessary to prevent them falling into the hands of the enemy.

(e) *Christmas Island*.—There was a small coast artillery detachment at Christmas Island, whose task was to protect the phosphate deposits there.

(f) *Indian State Forces Units*.—There were also in Malaya several State Forces units from the Indian States. They varied greatly in training, strength and efficiency. Being without transport and more suitable for a static role, they were employed principally on aerodrome defence, coming under the commanders of the areas in which they were situated.

The above dispositions were in accordance with the role of the land forces as laid down in the Chiefs of Staff Appreciation of August 1940 already referred to. The commanders of the various forces were given written instructions as to their role and the action to be taken in certain eventualities.

29. *The Advance into Thailand*.—Before leaving London I discussed on broad lines a proposal which was then under consideration to advance into South Thailand if a favourable opportunity presented itself. Immediately after taking over command I was instructed by the C.-in-C. Far East to give this matter my further detailed consideration. It was also discussed on several occasions at conferences. The operation was known as MATADOR. I was informed that it could not be carried out without reference to London since MATADOR could only be put into effect if and when it became clear beyond all reasonable doubt that an enemy expedition was approaching the shores of Thailand. As time would then be the essence of the problem it appeared almost certain that, by the time permission had been asked for and obtained, the favourable opportunity would have passed.

The military advantages of the occupation of South Thailand, or of part of it, were great. It would enable us to meet the enemy on the beaches instead of allowing him to land and establish himself unopposed, it would provide our Air Force with additional aerodromes and, by denying these aerodromes to the enemy, it

would make it far more difficult for his Air Force to interfere with our sea communications in the Malacca Straits. It was a question, however, whether it was a sound operation with the meagre resources available. No troops could be spared for the operation other than the 11 Indian Division, strengthened by some administrative units. The proposal to occupy the narrow neck of the Kra Isthmus was rejected as being too ambitious and the discussions centred round the occupation and denial to the enemy of the Port of Singora and the aerodromes at Singora and Patani.

The following factors, among others, had to be considered:

(a) The Thai Government had stated publicly that it would defend its territory against the invasion of any foreign troops. Therefore opposition, even if slight, was to be expected.

(b) All the main bridges on the road between the Thailand frontier and Haad 'yai Junction were in process of reconstruction. Therefore time and material might be required for their repair.

(c) Large quantities of M.T. would be required to mechanize the road parties of the force and to keep it supplied.

(d) The psychological effect of offensive action would be considerable, but this had to be weighed against the possibilities of an encounter battle and the loss of prepared ground.

(e) An enemy landing would certainly be supported by tanks, of which we had none. It was noted also that during the period of the North-East Monsoon, i.e. October-March, the country on the east coast is wet, and therefore, less suited to tank action, while on the west coast it is comparatively dry.

After careful examination of the problem, it was decided:

(a) That, provided a favourable opportunity presented itself, the operation MATADOR would be put into effect during the period October-March.

(b) That it would take the form of (i) an advance by road and rail to capture Singora and hold a defensive position north of Haad 'yai Junction, and (ii) an advance from Kroh to a defensive position, known as The Ledge position, on the Kroh-Patani road some 35-40 miles on the Thailand side of the frontier. The reason for this limited objective on the Kroh front was lack of resources, both operational and administrative.

(c) That at least 24 hours start was required before the anticipated time of a Japanese landing.

Detailed plans were worked out and preparations made for this operation. Maps were printed, money in Thai currency was made available and pamphlets for distribution to the Thais were drafted though, to preserve secrecy, the printing of them was deferred till the last minute.

By a special arrangement made by the C.-in-C. Far East, authority was obtained for a limited number of officers in plain clothes to carry out reconnaissances in South Thailand. In all 30 officers, including some of the most senior officers, were able to visit Thailand in this way. They frequently met Japanese officers who were presumably on a similar mission.