

Navy personnel and damage being caused at the last named.

By the end of the day more than half of the pill boxes along North shore from Lyemun to Bowrington had been knocked out. Moves to alternative positions were carried out during the night (sixteen were now prepared but were not yet on the telephone system). The maintenance of communications to the North shore pill boxes, and on other subsidiary routes there, was proving extremely difficult on account of repeated breaks from hostile fire.

55. One enemy plane was seen at 0930 hours 16th December to crash into the sea (three sources confirmed) near Tatong, hit by the 3.7-in section at Wong Nei Chong.

At 1030 hours a fighter-bomber was hit by the Brick Hill 3.7-in. gun and crashed in a gulley (two sources corroborated).

56. Civilian morale improved somewhat.

The arrest this day of a prominent Chinese merchant for defeatist talk was expected to have a salutary effect—which in fact it did.

Fifth columnists were still active. Their methods consisted of shining lights to bring shell fire to bear on concentrations of transport, etc., sniping, spreading false rumours, inducing desertion from "essential services" and inciting to riot. They also again attacked the isolated A.A. searchlight position at Shaukiwan.

57. During the hours of darkness and early hours of 17th December mortar fire from Kowloon Peninsula continued on to the North shore pillboxes.

A force of 14 Army light bombers made two separate attacks at about 0930 hours 17th December—the first on Shaukiwan and Wanchai, and the second on the Peak Wireless Station, Garden Road, and Central District in Victoria. These were followed by a short but relatively severe artillery and mortar bombardment on Central District.

Shortly afterwards two Japanese launches flying a white flag crossed the harbour. The delegation brought written proposals for surrender, similar to those of 13th December. It was thought that the Japanese supposed our morale to be shaken. The proposals were signed by Lt.-General Sakai and the Naval C.-in-C Vice-Admiral Niimi. The envoys appeared genuinely surprised and disconcerted when the proposals were again summarily rejected. They left with the hint that future bombardments might not be so discriminate.

This second delegation coming within four days of the first suggested that either (a) they disliked the prospect of attacking across the water or (b) that the Chinese threat in their rear was taking effect, or (c) that it was an attempt to undermine our morale by thoughts of peace and quiet. The Japanese delegation announced on arrival that there would be no hostilities until 1600 hours by which time they expected a reply. Advantage was taken of this very welcome lull to repair communications, etc.

Considerable activity seawards was reported during the afternoon of the 17th December, including a 2,000 ton freighter operating in the shelter, westward of Lamma. On the mainland there was activity round Kai Tak aerodrome, both launch and motor transport and at

Bailey's yard the following were seen—three ferry vessels, three barges, one large water boat, one steam tug, one motor boat.

During the 17th December our artillery suffered no damage or casualties for the first time for many days. Our counter battery fire silenced hostile artillery on Devil's Peak, Gun Club Mill, and also three mortars on the Kowloon waterfront.

58. Aircraft identified to date were of the following types; Navy Reconnaissance Flying Boat, type 94—Heavy Navy Bomber, type 96—Army light Bomber, type 98—Army Fighter, type 97, unidentified fighter, now known to be the Navy O. Heaviest bomb dropped, identified, 250 lbs.—but from deduction (fuze caps, size of crater, etc.) it was considered that some of 500 lbs. were also dropped.

59. Morale of civilian population continued to improve and the rice distribution was getting better.

60. At 2100 hours 17th December hostile artillery fire started a severe fire at the large paint works at Braemar, causing a heavy smoke pall. Owing to its proximity the ammunition of the 18-pounder Beach Defence section nearby had to be moved to an alternative position, and at about midnight the guns themselves were forced to follow to the same position behind the Police station in that vicinity.

The shelling of the North East sector was particularly heavy and lines were being constantly cut and repaired. At 2000 hours many pill boxes were still out of touch and field cable had to be substituted for the buried system that night.

At about 0100 hours Aberdeen came under shell fire from seawards and the Industrial School (HQ of the Aberdeen portion of the R.N. Dockyard) was hit.

61. (a) At first light 18th December a Japanese destroyer was sighted sixteen miles South of Aberdeen.

(b) A considerable movement of small craft between the Kowloon wharves and piers was observed.

(c) In the early hours a 60-pounder gun which had been brought up into the North Point under cover of darkness (Lt. J. S. Vintner commanding) attempted to sink three freighters in Kowloon Bay suspected of being used as observation posts or being prepared as "jumping off places" for an attack. Only shrapnel was available but by obtaining hits on the water line one 4000 ton ship was holed and settled down.

62. At 1000 hours an air raid of considerable intensity developed on the Central District, Victoria. The Anglo-Persian Company's petrol and oil storage tanks at North Point were set on fire and subsequently shelled at intervals throughout the day. The attack seemed to be directed particularly against the Government Offices, where the Secrétariat was hit, and many casualties were caused in the neighbourhood. During the early afternoon Causeway Bay area was very heavily shelled, the water front from that place to Lyemun now becoming a tangle of fallen tramwires and standards and almost impassable for vehicles and despatch riders.