

air-raid shortly after 0400 hours on the 8th December. Radar detected the approaching raid at a distance of 130-140 miles from Singapore (giving more than 30 minutes warning). Its approach was promulgated from the Fighter Control Operations Room. Unfortunately the staff of this room was unable to obtain any response from the H.Qs. of the Civil A.R.P. organisation, with the result that the civil population received no effective warning, nor was the Civil Air Defence Scheme put into effective action until it was too late. Some 17 aircraft took part in this raid, the majority of the bombs falling at Seletar and Tengah. At the latter place 3 Blenheims of No. 34 (B) Squadron were damaged and the aerodrome was cratered.

Japanese attacks on Northern Airfields.

182. Between 0730 and 0800 hours, Kota Bahru, Gong Kedah and Machang aerodromes were attacked by bombers and low-flying fighters; except for dummy aircraft, the latter two were unoccupied at the time. These attacks were repeated throughout the day mainly by low-flying fighters, with little effect save in delaying the refuelling and re-armament of aircraft at Kota Bahru.

183. Sungei Patani, Penang and Butterworth in N.W. Malaya were also attacked throughout 8th December by formations of from 27 to 60 bomber aircraft, with serious results. The Japanese used light bombs only, directed against aircraft and personnel; they studiously avoided damaging aerodrome surfaces. Personnel on the spot noted that for the next few days Japanese attacks in this area frequently synchronised with aircraft landing or getting ready to take off. This indicated a leakage of information to the Japanese, but it was never definitely proved that such a leakage actually occurred.

184. There was a particularly serious attack against Alor Star, delivered immediately after No. 62 (B) Squadron had landed after its attack at Patani (para. 180). The aerodrome was first bombed by 27 Japanese aircraft, which then came down low and machine-gunned aircraft on the ground. As a result No. 62 (B) Squadron had only two serviceable aircraft left.

185. Nos. 21 (F) R.A.A.F. and 27 (NF) Squadrons at Sungei Patani also suffered badly and were each reduced to 4 serviceable aircraft; and in consequence of the repeated low attacks on this airfield both squadrons, with their personnel, were withdrawn to Butterworth. It was later learnt that the guns in the Buffaloes had given trouble and were all unserviceable from lack of solenoids. The serviceable Blenheim fighters of No. 27 Squadron had carried out periodic patrols over N.W. Malaya without result. No 34 (B) Squadron at Butterworth was also seriously reduced.

Ground Situation in N.W. Malaya.

186. Aircraft losses from enemy attack thus gravely weakened the air forces available in N.W. Malaya for supporting the army, where the main enemy advance on land was expected to develop. On the 8th there was little enemy air activity against our own ground forces, owing to the enemy's concentration on the bombing of our aerodromes.

187. "Matador" had been cancelled during the morning, and the Army was taking up positions forward of a partially prepared line at Jitra. Covering forces were advancing north and north-east from Kedah province: one to make contact along the line of advance from the Singora area, the other (Krohkol) to occupy what was known as the Ledge, an important tactical feature across the Siamese frontier on the Kroh-Patani road, which protected the communications of the force in North Kedah.

The first of these covering forces made contact with the enemy at 2130 hours on the 8th, at Ban Sadao, ten miles inside Siam. The other (Krohkol) reported some opposition from Siamese forces, but continued its advance.

Enemy landings in Singora and Patani area.

188. At 0915 hours on the 8th December the P.R. Beaufort returned from its reconnaissance of the Lakon Roads (para. 174). En route, it had been heavily attacked by fighters and landed in a badly shot up condition, subsequently having to be destroyed. The pilot reported verbally that a large concentration of vessels was landing troops in the Singora-Patani area. His photographs were flown back to Singapore by the remaining Buffalo fighter. Shortly afterwards, Norgroup, under orders from IIIrd Corps, despatched 3 Buffaloes of No. 21 (F) Squadron R.A.A.F. on a tactical reconnaissance to Singora. This reconnaissance confirmed the presence of the main convoy in the Singora area and also revealed a force of about 60 Japanese aircraft, mainly fighters, on Singora aerodrome.

Squadrons driven out of aerodromes in N.E. Malaya on 8th December.

189. It is now necessary to return to the Kota Bahru area. Heavy fighting had been going on on the beaches all day, and reserves had been put in to try and regain the beaches by counter attack. At 1245 news was received at A.H.Q. of the landing of further troops from one transport covered by a cruiser and several destroyers. The Station Commander at Kota Bahru had at 1200 hours despatched 4 Hudsons and 3 Vildebeestes to deal with this threat. It transpired later that the report of this further landing was false, but aircraft continued mopping up barges and machine gunning beaches. At 1530 a Hudson from Kota Bahru bombed the railway bridge across the South Golok River west of Kota Bahru, but with doubtful success; the crew, however, observed that the line itself had been partially destroyed already at a point further eastward.

190. Towards 1600 hours reports received at A.H.Q. indicated that the situation on the ground had become serious. The Station Commander reported that penetration had been made up to the aerodrome boundary, and that aircraft and personnel had come under sporadic fire. On his representation A.H.Q. approved the evacuation of the aerodrome. All aircraft were ordered to Kuantan, personnel and stores to proceed by train, whilst the denial scheme was to be put in operation. This was successfully achieved, and 5 Hudsons and 7 Vildebeestes arrived at Kuantan. This withdrawal as far south as Kuantan was unavoidable because Gong Kedah, the only aerodrome in the Kota Bahru