

(e) The remainder of the squadrons were under A.H.Q. control as follows:—

(i) Reconnaissance:—

No. 8 (R.A.A.F.) Squadron at Kuantan.

No. 205 (F.B.) Squadron at Seletar.
Dutch (F.B.) Group at Seletar.

(ii) Bombers:—

No. 60 (B) Squadron at Kuantan (N. Malaya).

No. 62 (B) Squadron at Alor Star (N. Malaya).

No. 34 (B) Squadron at Tengah (Singapore).

No. 100 (T.B.) Squadron at Seletar (Singapore).

(iii) Fighters:—(decentralised to 224(F) Group for the direct defence of Singapore).

No. 453 (F) Squadron at Sembawang.

No. 243 (F) Squadron at Kallang.

No. 488 (F) Squadron at Kallang.

The Command was at the fullest degree of readiness, but there was no undue alarm owing to G.H.Q.'s view that the Japanese expedition was directed against Siam.

169. A.H.Q. decided to send at first light on the 8th December a coastal reconnaissance to the Lakon Roads, north of Singora, to identify whether or not the Japanese had landed in S.E. Siam as forecast in the G.H.Q. appreciation (para. 140).

OPERATIONS FROM 8TH TO 23RD DECEMBER, 1941.

Japanese landing at Kota Bahru.

170. At midnight 7th-8th December, the weather at Kota Bahru cleared, but the aerodrome surface was extremely boggy owing to heavy rains. About 0030 hours on the 8th, O.C. Kota Bahru rang up A.H.Q. and stated that three ships had been seen by the beach defences. This message was followed by another at 0100 hours confirming the presence of these ships, stating that shelling was taking place and that Brigade H.Q. were being asked to clarify the situation. On this, A.H.Q. ordered the despatch of a single Hudson with flares to see what was happening. Before this could be done, at 0115 hours definite information came through from Kota Bahru that landing on the beaches by the Japanese had started from 3-5 ships lying three miles off shore.

Orders issued by A.H.Q.

171. O.C. Kota Bahru was immediately ordered to take offensive action with all available Hudsons, and to order the Vildebeestes at Gong Kedah to deliver a torpedo attack at first light. It must be remembered that the orders issued to O.C. Kota Bahru as a result of G.H.Q. instructions (para. 144) specifically stated that no offensive action would be taken against the convoy when sighted. He could not, therefore, initiate the first offensive action of the campaign without further orders.

172. A.H.Q. also issued orders to Nos. 8 (GR), 27 (NF), 34 (B), 60 (B) and 62 (B) Squadrons to take off at first light and attack shipping in the Kota Bahru area whilst No. 100 (TB) Squadron was ordered to proceed to Kuantan on the following morning and stand by for orders.

173. Norgroup was informed that No. 27 (NF) was also to revert to A.H.Q. control, leaving only No. 21 (F) Squadron (R.A.A.F.), for co-operation with IIIrd Corps.

174. The Beaufort at Kota Bahru was instructed to carry out the photographic reconnaissance at first light to Lakon Roads (para. 169).

First Operations against enemy landings at Kota Bahru.

175. At Kota Bahru the first seven Hudson sorties of No. 1 (GR) Squadron R.A.A.F. had taken off to oppose the landing, and by 0300 hours the two available Buffaloes had been despatched against landing barges entering the river which flows into the sea within the frontage of the beach defences guarding the aerodrome.

176. At 0730 hours on 8th December, the O.C. Kota Bahru gave a résumé of the night's operations. 17 Hudson sorties had been carried out, one transport had been destroyed and two others damaged and perhaps sunk. Landing barges en route to the beaches had been attacked and casualties had been inflicted amongst the troops in them. Intensive A.A. fire had been experienced, particularly accurate from a cruiser covering the landing. Two Hudsons had been shot down and a third badly damaged, leaving him still six. One Buffalo had also been hit. The Vildebeestes from Gong Kedah were in the air.

177. Apparently some 8 transports covered by one cruiser and several destroyers had been involved, and O.C. Kota Bahru thought all vessels had now retired to the north. He intended to carry on using the Hudsons for mopping up small craft and beach parties still visible. At 0800 hours, he confirmed that all vessels had retired to the north and that he was mopping up the few small craft left with bomb and machine-gun fire. He added that there had been some infiltration into the Brigade area.

178. Meanwhile the Vildebeestes of No. 36 (TB) Squadron from Gong Kedah, in heavy rain, found the cruiser, delivered an attack with torpedoes which it evaded, and landed at Kota Bahru on their return.

179. Nos. 8 (GR) R.A.A.F., 27 (NF), 34 (B) and 60 (B) Squadrons also arrived on the scene and found little to attack in the area; a signal sent them whilst they were airborne to search further north was not received by all units. One flight of No. 8 (GR) Squadron at least received it but was unable to find the enemy owing to a very heavy rainstorm. Nos. 8 and 60 Squadrons returned to Kuantan, No. 27 to Sungei Patani, whilst No. 34 Squadron landed at Butterworth. All squadrons were ordered to refuel and re-arm.

180. No. 62 (B) Squadron which had also been ordered to attack, not finding any target, proceeded north to Patani to bomb transports there. This squadron (11 Blenheim I's) encountered fighter opposition and fairly intensive A.A. fire. It carried out its attack from 8,000 ft. but the results obtained were not seen.

First Air Attack on Singapore.

181. Whilst the first landings had been taking place at Kota Bahru, Singapore had its first