

length to attack by landings on the northern coast. An outstanding feature of the island is its mountainous southern coast, parallel to which run a series of mountainous massifs along the centre of the island. During the season under consideration, S.W. winds pile up tropical thunderstorms on them from midday until far into the night. Whilst these are raging, aircraft based on aerodromes in the southern (mountainous) half of the island are, for the most part, seriously handicapped by them.

Squadrons based on aerodromes along the northern coastal strip are, on the other hand, not so severely handicapped: although heavy cloud and rain occur throughout the afternoon and night, aircraft can effectively operate at all hours. Mornings are usually bright and cloudless. Aerodromes in the northern coastal strip are, however, sited not far from exposed landing beaches. Their occupation was, therefore, not unattended by risk.

Naval, Army and Air Resources.

High Command.

518. Bandoeng, in central western Java, was the wartime seat of the Dutch Government, and of Naval and Military Headquarters. The latter was known as A.H.K. (The Dutch have no separate air force—their navy and army having their own air contingents.)

The High Dutch Commanders were —

Governor-General of N.E.I.—Jonkheer Dr. A. W. L. Tjardo van Starkenborgh Stachouwer.

C.-in-C. Royal N.E.I. Navy—Admiral Helfrich.

C.-in-C. Royal N.E.I. Army—Lt.-Gen. ter Poorten.

Navy

519. A Combined Allied Fleet was based on Sourabaya, with a subsidiary base at Batavia. It consisted of 8 cruisers (3 British, 2 Australian, 1 American, 2 Dutch), 11 destroyers (5 British, 4 American and 2 Dutch) some Dutch submarines and other auxiliary craft, and was commanded by Vice Admiral C. E. L. Helfrich, Royal Netherlands Navy, as Commander of Naval Forces. He had assumed command on the 11th February.

Army.

520. (a) The Dutch had approximately 25,000 regular troops, made up of four regiments of infantry (native) with artillery, garrison and ancillary units. They had a few obsolete A.F.V.'s, having been unable to obtain modern tanks from the Allies. Units had been heavily depleted of white personnel for various reasons, from a proportion of one white to five native to a proportion of one to about forty. An attempt to re-arm and to re-organise on modern lines had failed because modern armaments were unobtainable for the new units which had been formed for handling them.

(b) In addition there was a Home Guard of about 40,000. They were static in role, and necessarily poorly armed and trained. Those in west Java were reported to be the best, particularly those in the vicinity of Soebang near Kalidjati aerodrome (eventually to be occupied by British bombers) where there were about 1,000 men with twelve armoured cars.

(c) To the Dutch Army was added a small British force under the direction of Major-General H. D. W. Sitwell. It consisted of a squadron of light tanks, two Australian infantry battalions (one a machine-gun unit without its machine guns) and a number of small administrative units. The whole was organised hastily into a mobile striking force for operation in western Java, and was under the command of Brigadier A. S. Blackburn, V.C. (Australian Imperial Forces). To it were added later an American Field Battalion much under strength, and a contingent of 450 R.A.F. airmen hastily armed and trained as infantry under Wing Commander Alexander. It was called "Blackforce". It co-operated closely with the Dutch troops (under the command of General Schilling) located in western Java for the defence of the Batavia area.

(d) Certain British A.A. batteries were concentrated on aerodrome defence in Western Java as follows:—

Tjilikitan—12 Bofors guns soon after 15th February. Also one battalion Australian Infantry relieved on 25th February by 15th Heavy A.A. Battery armed as infantry. The former were relieved from aerodrome defence duties because they were required as part of "Blackforce".

Kalidjati—10 Bofors guns soon after 15th February. Also some Dutch Infantry relieved on night 28th February/1st March by 12th Heavy A.A. Battery hastily armed as infantry. The former were wanted for service with the Dutch field army.

Thus there were no Heavy A.A. guns for the defence of these aerodromes. The few available on the island were wanted at more vulnerable places, including the Naval base at Sourabaya.

Air Forces.

521. (a) The Dutch had about 5 Bomber, 3 Fighter and 2 Observation Squadrons in Java, most of which were much depleted as the result of protracted operations in the north. Serviceability of aircraft was low. They and their administrative units operated under Dutch control decentralised from Bandoeng.

(b) There were 12 to 15 American heavy bombers (believed to be B.17's) and a few fighters (P.40's). Whole serviceability was low. These were located under American control in east and central Java.

(c) There was also a mixed Dutch, American and British Reconnaissance Group based in Java for seaward reconnaissance, which operated under a Dutch Commander. No. 205 (F.B.) Squadron formed part of it.

(d) To this force was to be added the British Air Contingent under Westgroup, alias Britair, whose re-organisation has already been described.

During the time that Abdair remained in Java, all the above air formations acted under its direction, control of the first two being exercised through the Dutch A.O.C., General van Oyen. When Abdair left Java, the latter took command of them all.

Strategy.

522. An invasion of Java was considered most likely to approach down the east or west sides of Borneo, or both. The Dutch High Command feared simultaneous landings at both