

(c) Our urgent and immediate need was for reinforcements, which must be on a scale not only to meet the present scale of attack, but also that likely to be put in the field against us;

(d) It was recommended that the United States convoy at present directed to Brisbane should proceed to Sourabaya, where aircraft would be assembled and flown on to destination;

(e) It was desirable that the Chinese should be asked to maintain the maximum pressure on the Japanese in order to contain as many divisions as possible, and subsequently to provide bases for long-distance bombing attacks on Japan.

Finally the conference considered that the situation, though serious, need not give rise to undue pessimism provided the necessary reinforcements were supplied in the available time, but time was the essential feature.

Reinforcements.

118. From the 8th December, 1941, onwards many requests for reinforcements had been made from General Headquarters, Far East. The time factor meant that reinforcements had to come from the Middle East, India and convoys already at sea rather than from the United Kingdom. Complicated quadrangular references between Malaya, India, the Middle East and London were hence entailed, but Commander-in-Chief, India, was most helpful in appreciating the need for diversion to Malaya of forces originally intended for his own command. A sub-committee of the Inter-Allied Conference, having considered all the previous requests for reinforcements, agreed on the following immediate requirements for Malaya to stabilise the situation:—

Air—

- 4 Fighter Squadrons;
- 4 Bomber Squadrons;
- 1 Photographic Flight;
- 1 Transport Flight; and

Reserves at 100 per cent. for fighters and 50 per cent. for bombers, plus aircraft to complete existing squadrons and their reserves.

Land—

- 1 Brigade Group;
- 1 Division;
- Reinforcements for 9th and 11th Divisions;
- 3 Light A.A. Regiments;
- 2 Heavy A.A. Regiments;
- 1 Anti-Tank Regiment;
- 50 Light tanks;
- 350 Anti-tank rifles;
- Bofors ammunition; and
- 500 Tommy guns and ammunition;

Further large forces would be required later in view of probable Japanese reinforcements.

By the 27th December the following had been definitely promised:—

Air—

- 51 Hurricanes. (One fighter squadron ex convoy W.S. 12.Z with 18 additional pilots);
- 24 Blenheims. (One squadron from Middle East);
- 52 Hudsons (from United Kingdom);

While measures were in hand aiming at the release of a further 3 fighter squadrons from the Middle East, and for 80 4-engined United States bombers.

Land—

- 2 Infantry Brigade Groups } ex India.
- Reinforcements for 9th- } 11th Divisions

- 85th Anti-Tank Regiment complete } ex Convoy W.S. 12.Z.
- 6th Heavy A.A. Regiment (16 guns) }
- 32nd Light A.A. Regiment (24 guns) }

Light tank squadron (17 Light tanks and reserves) ex India;

53rd Infantry Brigade (18th Division), guns and transport of which were to follow after arrival of personnel;

1 Machine Gun Battalion and reinforcements for the A.I.F. Brigades ex Australia;

Provision of further tanks was under discussion, while General Headquarters, Far East, was also pressing strongly for the complete 18th Division.

Five Blenheims from the Middle East and four Hudsons from Australia arrived in Singapore on the 23rd December, 1941.

19th-25th December.

119. In accordance with instructions from London, a scorched earth policy was ordered at this period instead of the denial scheme referred to in para. 65 above.

The general situation on land by the 19th-21st December was that our troops were trying to keep the enemy West of the River Perak, while at the same time preventing him advancing further South than the River Krian. To this end the 11th Indian Division, which it was considered essential to maintain as a fighting formation, was holding a line along the River Kuran with the 28th Indian Infantry Brigade, and also protecting Kuala Kangsar with the 12th Indian Infantry Brigade, a detachment of which was also further North along the Grik road. The Division as a whole was suffering from exhaustion, damaged feet and loss of equipment. The 6th and 15th Indian Infantry Brigades were now re-formed at Ipoh as the composite 15th Infantry Brigade, while a composite battalion of the 2nd/16th and 3rd/16th from these two Brigades was in Corps Reserve. The Kelantan forces, 8th Indian Infantry Brigade, 9th Indian Division, had suffered about a hundred casualties in each battalion, and were now along the railway at Manik Orai. Of elements not thus far engaged in the main operations, the 22nd Indian Infantry Brigade (9th Indian Division) was at Kuantan, while the Australian 22nd and 27th Brigades were responsible for Johore, and the 1st and 2nd Malay Infantry Brigades for Singapore Fortress. None of these last four Brigades could be despatched North to relieve the hard-pressed 11th Indian Division, for the reasons given below. (See para. 138 below.)

120. Heavy enemy air attack was now falling on Ipoh aerodrome, and our own fighters were driven further South to Kuala Lumpur (Selangor). Attacks on our road and rail communications were becoming an increasing feature of the Japanese air operations. Reconnaissance revealed that the enemy was now making use of Sungei Patani aerodrome, where thirty fighters were discovered. Our aircraft were making night and dawn attacks on enemy