

29. Dispersal areas and splinter-proof pens at aerodromes in Malaya were arranged on what was then thought to be an adequate scale based on:—

(a) The scale of attack in accordance with the information then available about the Japanese Air Services.

(b) The ultimate scale of A.A. defences to be provided at each aerodrome.

(c) The development of a fighter defensive system.

By the 1st December, 1941, however, neither time nor resources had permitted satisfactory development of the fighter system, and few anti-aircraft weapons were available. The Commander-in-Chief, Far East, had laid down that each aerodrome was to be protected by eight heavy and eight light A.A. guns. At no aerodrome in Malaya was this scale approached; on the outbreak of war, some aerodromes had no A.A. guns at all (for details see Appendix A, Column 5 (b)).

30. Each base was provided with a supply of road metalling and labour for the repair of aerodrome surfaces in the event of damage by enemy attack. The reason for mentioning this apparently trivial point will become clear later.

Ancillary Construction

31. In addition to aerodromes the following important works were either completed or in hand on the 1st December, 1941:—

(a) Combined Army/Air Operations Room: This was completed and occupied by H.Q. R.A.F. Far East Command (A.H.Q.) and H.Q. Malaya Command (H.Q.M.C.) at Sime Road, Singapore.

(b) Alternative Combined Army/Air Operations Room: Provided because of the above-ground vulnerable position of the main Combined Operations Room.

(c) Fighter Control H.Q. in Singapore: This was ready for occupation. It had an operations room, a filter room, a W.T. station, etc.

(d) A.M.E. Stations: The ultimate intention was to have 20 Radar Stations throughout Malaya. Six stations only, all in the vicinity of Singapore Island, were completed by the 1st December, 1941.

(e) Radio Installation and Maintenance Unit: This was partially completed at Ponggol, Singapore.

(f) Ammunition Park: Construction at Batak Quarry, Singapore; it was occupied although extensions were in progress.

(g) Storage of Petrol:

(i) Reserve storage accommodation for 6,500 tons of aviation petrol was under construction at Woodlands North, Singapore.

(ii) Reserve storage accommodation for 7,500 tons of aviation petrol at Port Dickson was more than 50 per cent. complete.

(iii) Reserve storage accommodation for 930 tons at Kuantan was completed.

(h) Universal Holding Unit: This was completed and was occupied by 152 M.U. at Bukit Panjang, Singapore; extensions were in progress. This reduced the congestion and concentration of stores held at Seletar.

(i) Engine Repair Depot and Universal Holding Unit: This depot was completed at Kuala Lumpur, provided with its own railway siding and occupied by No. 153 M.U. It was designed to service squadrons based in North Malaya and so to reduce further the congestion and concentration which had hitherto persisted at Seletar.

Allied Reinforcement Arrangements

U.S.A. Reinforcements from the Philippines

32. The actual number of aircraft that might be expected in Malaya, should the evacuation of the Philippines occur, was of necessity indefinite; so was the amount of equipment peculiar to the U.S. Naval and Army Air Services which might accompany them.

33. Reconnaissances were carried out and dispersed moorings planned for a total of 20 reinforcing Catalinas of the United States Naval Air Service. A provisional plan for maintaining them was also prepared.

34. The Commander-in-Chief ruled, in September, 1941, that four bases were to be prepared for accommodating B.17's of the United States Army Air Corps; two in the North and two in the South of Malaya. Gong Kedah and Butterworth in the North, Tebrau and Yong Peng in the South, were selected. Extensions of the runways to 2,000 yards at each were put in hand but only those at Gong Kedah were completed by the time war came.

Dutch Reinforcements from N.E.I.

35. In the mutual reinforcement programme arranged with the Dutch Army Air Service, it was assumed that:—

(a) Three Bomber Squadrons (27 Glenn Martins) would be based at Sembawang:

(b) One Dutch Fighter Squadron (9 Buffaloes) would be based at Kallong: and plans were made accordingly.

36. The Dutch Squadron and Flight Commanders concerned visited these stations, toured Malaya and were given a short course in R.A.F. operational methods. Appropriate stocks of Dutch bombs were procured.

37. The Dutch Naval Air Service had been allotted, in the initial seaward reconnaissance plan, responsibility for the area Kuantan-Great Natunas-Kuching (B. Borneo). To execute this task, it had to base a Group (3 Catalinas) of Flying Boats at Seletar. Provision was made for this; and stocks of petrol and moorings were also laid down at Kuantan. The Group remained under Dutch operational command.

38. Liaison Officers of the Dutch Army Air Service and the Royal Air Force were interchanged and were attached to A.H.Q. in Singapore and at Dutch Army Air H.Q. in Java respectively.

Preparations within R.A.F., Far East Command.

Role of Squadrons in War.

39. In July, 1941, a memorandum was circulated outlining the rôle of squadrons in war, and training syllabi were issued. Strict supervision was imposed to ensure that the fullest training value was obtained in all exercises and that the maximum number of practices of different kinds was arranged whenever a training flight was undertaken.