

covered by the fortress A.A. umbrella. Sabotage was regarded as the main threat, particularly during the initial stages of war.

116. The defence of aerodromes on the mainland was a more difficult problem. There were three areas of major importance:—

- (i) *N.E. Malaya*—Kelantan aerodromes.
- (ii) *E. Coast Malaya*—Kuantan.
- (iii) *N.W. Malaya*—Kedah aerodromes.

It was some of these aerodromes which had been sited in tactically weak positions for the reasons given in para 114. Some were even in exposed positions close to favourable landing beaches. The desirability, from an administrative view-point, of selecting sites close to existing communications and sources of labour had contributed to this dangerous situation.

It meant that the Field army on the west coast, down which the main enemy thrust on land was expected to develop, had to make large detachments to protect aerodromes on the east coast.

117. On the east coast, the direct defence of aerodromes was the prime function of the Army. Accordingly, the Brigadiers at Kota Bahru and Kuantan were, by agreement between the A.O.C. and G.O.C., appointed Aerodrome Defence Commanders in their respective areas. The arrangement, with certain safeguards, worked well and resulted in good co-ordination of the resources available for defence.

118. The training, experience, quality and numbers of the forces manning the defences of the aerodromes other than those at Kota Bahru and Kuantan were much under requirements. They were mostly Indian State troops, who had had little opportunity for training in this specialised work. A further handicap was a general paucity of weapons of all kinds, particularly A.A. guns and their equipment.

119. Every effort was made to improve the defences of aerodromes against ground attack. Old tanks, armoured cars and any form of weapons were sought from other Commands and from the U.S.A. H.Q.M.C. did its best, but the men and weapons required could not be made available. Assistance was also given by the Naval Base and later by the Dutch. Financial authority was given by the A.O.C. in the autumn to put in hand urgent work on defence schemes of mainland aerodromes without the necessity for prior reference to A.H.Q.

120. Joint Army and R.A.F. Aerodrome Defence Boards were set up about July, 1941, throughout Malaya to co-ordinate defence schemes; and thereafter care was taken to ensure that the defence aspect was considered at the outset when new aerodrome construction was put in hand.

121. Full instructions were prepared and issued to guide local Commanders in preparing denial and destruction schemes, and arrangements were made for obstructing airfields not in use.

122. The first two major aerodrome defence exercises were held in the late summer in the presence of large numbers of Army spectators for instructional purposes: one was held at Tengah with the co-operation of Fortress troops, and one at Kluang in Johore with the Australian Division.

123. Finally, in conjunction with A.H.Q. and H.Q.M.C., G.H.Q. produced about this time a handbook on aerodrome defence which detailed the probable scale of attack to which each would be subject, the minimum defences required, and the priority of their provision.

Co-operation with A.A. Defences.

124. During the latter half of 1941, A.A. equipments rapidly increased in number, in Singapore especially, and demands for air co-operation for the training of A.A. crews multiplied accordingly. Special aircraft for the purpose were few, so A.A. defence exercises were combined with other forms of training in order to make full use of flying hours. Nevertheless, this resulted in many flying hours of operational units, which were all too precious for their own training, being expended on this work; yet the A.A. Defence Commander's requirements were never approached.

Photographic Survey.

125. Photographic survey of large areas in Malaya for both the Army and the Civil Government was another commitment which had to be met. It necessitated the allotment and training of a special flight.

Joint Army/Air Planning: Operation "Matador".

126. During July, 1941, a staff conference was held at H.Q. Malaya Command which was attended, it is believed, by representatives of G.H.Q., H.Q.M.C., III (Indian) Corps and A.H.Q. It was called to consider a War Office project for the occupation of the Kra Isthmus by a joint Army/R.A.F. force from Malaya, the object of which was to deny to the Japanese the port and aerodrome facilities in it (which, if exploited, constituted the main threat to Malaya) by meeting and defeating him on the beaches.

127. It was evident that the development of the aerodromes there by the Siamese could only be linked up with the spread of the Japanese over Indo-China and their increasing influence in Bangkok. It appeared obvious that they would soon contain all the facilities required by Japanese aircraft, particularly fighters, which would then be able to support effectively landings in Southern Siam and Northern Malaya. The A.H.Q. representative was consequently in favour, at the least, of a raid to destroy these facilities.

128. The conference finally adopted a plan for seizing and holding the Singora area and "The Ledge" position on the Patani Road, but only if:—

(a) a minimum of 24 hours' start of the enemy was available;

(b) the opportunity occurred during the North-East Monsoon (October/March), i.e., when the Japanese would not be able to employ tanks off the roads.

This plan was known as "Operation Matador". The A.H.Q. representative was strongly pressed to state definitely what squadrons would be available to take part in it, with particular reference to breaking the railway running south from Bangkok, along which it was presumed a Japanese advance would come concurrently with any attack from seaward. An offer was made of a Singapore III flying boat to