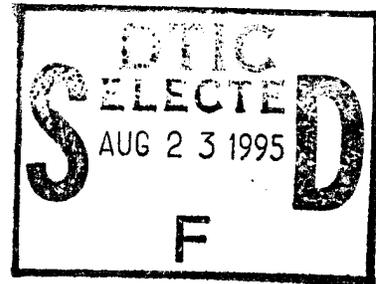


NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, R.I.



**OPERATIONAL ART:  
LESSONS FROM JAPAN'S MALAYA CAMPAIGN  
AND CAPTURE OF SINGAPORE**

by

Susan M. Chiaravalle  
Commander, USN

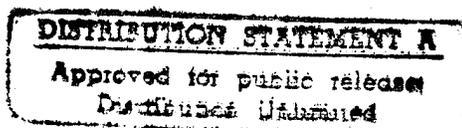
A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: *Susan M. Chiaravalle*

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ABSTRACT of

OPERATIONAL ART: LESSONS FROM JAPAN'S MALAYA CAMPAIGN  
AND CAPTURE OF SINGAPORE

The Japanese Malaya Campaign and capture of Singapore is a classic illustration of the mastery of Operational Art. On 8 December 1941 Japan launched the invasion of Thailand and Malaya with the intent of capturing Singapore. Nearly the entire world watched, shocked, as the considerably outnumbered Japanese forces advanced over 700 miles through the "impassible" Malayan jungles, capturing the "impregnable" Fortress Singapore in only 70 days. This paper attempts to evaluate the source of Japan's tremendous success by focusing the analysis on some elements of the Japanese concept of the Operational Idea in Campaign Planning as well as their application of the Principles of War in the hope of developing lessons of value for future practitioners of the Operational Art.

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## PREFACE

This Japanese attack is just a flash in the pan. They won't cause us serious trouble.

-- A British divisional commander, Cairo,  
c. December 10, 1941

It shouldn't have happened.

-- General Sir Archibald Wavell,  
February 10, 1942

...we were frankly out-generalled, outwitted and outfought.

-- Lieutenant General Sir Henry Pownall,  
February 13, 1942

...the fall of Singapore...was...the worst disaster and largest capitulation of British history.

-- Churchill, 1950

Singapore was hopeless from the beginning of the campaign.

-- Lieutenant General Sir Ian Jacob,  
1971<sup>1</sup>

The majority of studies regarding the "Fall of Singapore" are written from the British perspective. And, as suggested from the tone of the above listed quotations, nearly all of these works concentrate solely on the mistakes--and there were many--made by the British government concerning strategic choices during the interwar years as well as the execution of the war by both the generals and individual defenders. However, focusing exclusively on British mistakes, significantly overshadows the brilliant planning and execution of the Malaya Campaign by the Japanese. While there is much to learn from failure, this paper attempts to develop lessons for the future practitioner of Operational Art by evaluating a few of the sources responsible for the tremendous success achieved by the Japanese in their December 1941 to February 1942 Malaya Campaign.

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## INTRODUCTION

On 8 December 1941<sup>2</sup>--"a date which will live in infamy"-- Japan stunned the world by launching near-simultaneous, surprise attacks against territories of the United States and Great Britain throughout the Pacific. The Japanese Malaya Campaign and capture of Singapore, while considerably less well known than the attack on Pearl Harbor, was a classic illustration of the mastery of Operational Art.

The Japanese, outnumbered by more than two to one throughout the campaign, advanced over 700 miles through the impenetrable Malayan jungles to capture the impregnable Fortress Singapore and its British forces in only 70 days. Remarkably, "Japan's greatest victory, Britain's greatest defeat"<sup>3</sup> was planned in only 10 months, and was fought in a completely new environment against an unfamiliar enemy who had not been considered the primary threat until mid 1941.<sup>4</sup> This paper will evaluate the Malaya Campaign by examining some elements of Japan's concept of the Operational Idea as well as their application of the Principles of War to develop lessons for future practitioners of the Operational Art.

## STRATEGIC SETTING

Following the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japan (and the Japanese Army in particular) continued to view Russia as the principal threat.<sup>5</sup> The Marco Polo Bridge Incident in 1937, which led to war in China, further strained Japanese relations with both the United States and Great Britain.<sup>6</sup> Despite these deteriorating relationships, Japan's primary focus remained north--towards Russia--until 1940.

In August of that year, Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka and Prime Minister (Prince) Fumimaro Konoe ended official disregard of Southeast Asia with their Proclamation of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.<sup>7</sup> Partially as a result of this increasing interest in the south, the Doro Nawa,<sup>8</sup> or Taiwan Army Research Department, was established in January 1941 to collect data for military operations in the tropics. The unit's intelligence efforts concluded:

- The Singapore Fortress was strong and solid on its sea front but virtually defenseless from the rear.
- Press reports of the Royal Air Force strength were exaggerated.
- Coastal defense in Mersing was strong and travel in/out of the area was restricted. Kelah Province had been recently reinforced with land and air forces.
- The British Army in Malaya numbered five to six divisions with a total strength of approximately 80,000 (European forces were estimated at less than 50% of the total).<sup>9</sup>

These findings were instrumental in reorienting the Japanese view to the south. Pressure from the Germans during Matsuoka's European trip in March-April to take Singapore and the signing of the Japan-USSR Neutrality Pact later that month also served to direct the Japanese outlook to the south. (See Appendix A).

The abrogation of the Japanese-American Commercial Treaty in January 1940, the increasing of trade restrictions by America between July 1940 and January 1941, and the freezing of Japanese overseas assets and imposition of, in effect, a total trade embargo in July 1941, forced resource-dependent Japan to strongly suspect that war might be the only method to reach a negotiated settlement.<sup>10</sup> On 6 September, Japan determined to simultaneously prepare for war while continuing negotiations.<sup>11</sup> The selection

of Lieutenant General Hideki Tojo as Prime Minister, in October 1941, virtually guaranteed the futility of a compromise agreement and, in fact, on 26 November, the Imperial Conference decided to go to war on 8 December 1941, unless war could be avoided.<sup>12</sup> Only three months after the decision to prepare for war, Japan launched its attacks.

One hour and twenty minutes before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the first Japanese troops of the 25th Army began landing in Malaya and Thailand. 70 days later--15 February 1942-- Lieutenant General Arthur E. Percival, General Officer Commanding Malaya, surrendered unconditionally to Lieutenant General Tomoyuki Yamashita, Commander-in-Chief, 25th Army. Fortress Singapore had fallen. The overwhelming success of this campaign was due to Japan's exceptional proficiency in Operational Art, in particular, their outstanding planning and development of the Operational Idea as well as their expert application of the Principles of War.

**"YA CAN'T GET THAR FROM HEAH:"<sup>13</sup>**  
**JAPANESE INNOVATIONS IN OPERATIONAL IDEA**

**Problems.** The Japanese, in developing their war plans, had to overcome a number of difficulties to be successful. This was particularly true in the Malayan Theater of Operations. For nearly 40 years the Army had both fought, and trained to fight, the Russians in the cold weather climates of Siberia and Manchukuo.<sup>14</sup> Their ongoing war against the Chinese, considered a "lesser foe" by the Western powers, was expected to last an additional four years. Now, the Japanese were preparing to

embark on a campaign nearly 4,000 miles away in the hot, humid weather of the tropics against the formidable British Empire. Issues of strategic lift, forced entry, sequencing of assets, jungle warfare--including tactics, mobility, clothing, heat, disease,--Malayan terrain, logistics and sustainment, inadequate intelligence, and siege of an impregnable fortress needed to be resolved within just a few months.

**Solutions.** The resulting Operational Idea was both innovative and flexible. It created a number of options, developed tactics optimized for Malaya's geography, and capitalized on Japanese strengths while exploiting British weaknesses.

To address a number of their concerns, the Japanese, through the Doro Nawa unit, conducted extensive Operational Reconnaissance and Intelligence to verify assumptions prior to the war. For example, Colonel Masanobu Tsuji<sup>15</sup> ordered Major Terundo Kunitake of the Singapore Consulate to conduct detailed reconnaissance of the Singora (proposed landing site in Thailand) to Singapore road. The effort revealed that the Kroh-Grik track was passible by infantry (contrary to British conclusions) and that there were over 250 bridges--more than twice the estimate of the Doro Nawa unit--between the two locations.<sup>16</sup> This knowledge impacted the planning process directly--they prepared for the likely destruction of bridges by adding an exceptionally well-equipped sapper regiment to each division (with one in reserve).<sup>17</sup> Additionally, based on Kunitake's information, the

Japanese decided to use jungle tracks such as the Kroh-Grik. Once again, thorough and accurate intelligence allowed the Japanese to consistently do the unexpected and "impossible."

The small-scale maps initially available to the Japanese were totally inadequate for military operations. Reconnaissance was the key to effectively closing existing intelligence gaps regarding the Malayan terrain.<sup>18</sup> Ultimately, this information determined the type (heavier than normal on engineering regiments), number (three vice five divisions), equipment (infantrymen were outfitted with the lightest weight equipment available), and method of mobility (the bicycle became the primary means of transportation).<sup>19</sup> (See Appendix B).

Another major shortfall was the lack of transport ships. To maximize combat power, the Japanese elected to give priority to additional troops over logistics. Force sustainment was based on the calculated risk of depending upon "Churchill stores"<sup>20</sup> and strictly restricting the expenditure of their own resources.

To reduce the impact of training deficiencies and ensure that the individual soldier understood the significance of the effort upon which the nation was embarking, the Doro Nawa unit developed and distributed a pamphlet to each soldier involved in the campaign. Called Read This Alone--And the War Can Be Won, it provided the officers and men with the purpose and characteristics of the upcoming campaign. Topics ranged from "The Campaign Area in South Asia--What is it Like?" to "What are You to Do on the Ship?" to "Marching Through the Tropics" and included basic, important information. The thoroughness of

Japanese planning, accurate calculations regarding their own and enemy forces, and the skillful use of innovation significantly contributed to their success in enhancing their critical strengths, while minimizing their critical vulnerabilities.

#### PRINCIPLES OF WAR

**Objective.** Direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective.<sup>21</sup>

The Malaya campaign demonstrated the critical importance of selecting the appropriate objective and ensuring it was well defined, understood, and obtainable. The Japanese accurately identified Singapore--Britain's pivotal point in the domination of Asia<sup>22</sup>--as the strategic objective. Singapore, straddling the axis of shipping routes from the Orient to Europe, served as the crossroads between east and west. It was viewed, particularly by the Australians, as critical to the defense of both Australia and India. Fortress Singapore symbolized the prestige and might of the British Empire; its fall brought the whole of British credibility, power, and will into question.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, the capture of Singapore was critical to the overall Japanese war effort--it was essential to secure the sea lines of communication which would assure the safe transit of oil and other raw materials from the Southern Resource Area to the Japanese Home Islands.

The Japanese also correctly identified the airfields, key defensive sites, principal commercial and communication centers, and potential reinforcement sites as operational objectives. There was clear linkage between the operational and the strategic

objectives; successful attainment of each operational objective contributed to accomplishment of the ultimate objective--the capture of Singapore. For example, the airfields at Kota Bharu and Alor Star were identified as critical operational objectives that must be seized as soon as practical after landing.

Possession of these airfields permitted the Japanese to:

(1) establish their beachheads in relative security; (2) protect their transports and troops from British air attack; (3) relocate assets of the 3rd Air Group from bases in French Indo-China to northern Malaya; (4) significantly reduce flight time per mission; (5) decrease their vulnerability to British sea power and air defense networks; and, (6) improve their capability to carry out attacks against enemy forces and defenses. The linkage between attainment of these operational objectives to the accomplishment of the strategic objective was both apparent and decisive.

Additionally, the Japanese clearly and correctly identified both the British troops<sup>24</sup> and Force Z<sup>25</sup> as the operational center of gravity. Yamashita reportedly raged when enemy forces withdrew,<sup>26</sup> eliminating the Japanese troops' opportunity to annihilate the adversary. He undoubtedly recognized that every enemy soldier killed or captured on the drive to Singapore would be unavailable to assist in its defense. The continued existence of Force Z was also a critical source of strength for the British. Force Z was an important symbol of this powerful, maritime nation. Additionally, its very existence prevented the Japanese from gaining local sea control in the Gulf of Siam,

making the disembarkation of Japanese troops and supplies exceedingly dangerous.<sup>27</sup>

That the Japanese soldier, sailor and airman clearly understood the objective is evidenced by the following vignette:

Shortly after the initial landings in Thailand, a two-hundred man detachment had been sent ahead to stop at the frontier to investigate the enemy's positions. Finding the bridges destroyed, the commander abandoned his vehicles and led his troops on foot across the poorly guarded frontier. When asked why he had not waited at the frontier, the commander replied, "...as the enemy was not there, I could not investigate him."<sup>28</sup>

Clearly, he understood the objective and proceeded on his own initiative to attain it.

**Offensive.** Seize, retain, and exploit the initiative.<sup>29</sup>

The Japanese immediately seized the initiative with the surprise landings in Thailand and Malaya during the early morning hours of 8 December 1941 and never lost it. Throughout the campaign, they dictated the tempo, speed, and place of battle. Their aggressiveness kept the British defenders continually off-balance, forcing them "to react rather than act."<sup>30</sup> According to Tsuji,

On an average our troops had fought two battles, repaired four or five bridges, and advanced twenty kilometers every day. Our small boats, without armaments, had maneuvered and carried out landings up to six hundred and fifty kilometers behind the enemy's lines on the western coast, and had even surpassed the achievements of troops on land.<sup>31</sup> (See Appendix C).

Again, the clear understanding by the individual Japanese soldier, to capture Singapore before the British could send reinforcements contributed significantly to their motivation to apply unrelenting pressure against the enemy. The following

example illustrates the offensive-mindedness of the Japanese as compared to the British (who never demonstrated an offensive mind set). Following the 6 December sighting of the Japanese convoys, the British army was ordered to assume the "first degree of readiness"--placing forces along the Thai border. When the initial landings were detected at Kota Bharu, the British were ordered to cross the border and take the Ledge, a position critically important to the defense of Malaya. Initially meeting light resistance from Thai border police, the British troops stopped after a mere 3-mile advance. They reached Betong the following day, but never reached the Ledge. In contrast, the Japanese covered the 75 miles from their landing site at Patani to the Ledge by the 10th.<sup>32</sup> In example after example throughout the campaign, the offensive spirit of the Japanese was supreme--they approached each operation as critical to accomplishing the mission, pressed the attack, and refused to provide the British any opportunity to regroup, resupply, or reorganize.

**Mass.** Mass the effects of overwhelming combat power at the decisive place and time.<sup>33</sup>

Unquestionably, the Japanese understood the principle of mass. Numerically inferior Japanese forces throughout the campaign achieved success after success. Analyzing the unique aspects of the Malayan terrain, the Japanese realized that the British would be unable to bring all their combat power to bear at any given time. Narrow roads bordered by dense jungle or rubber plantations dictated the use of a narrow front. As a result, the Japanese were able to concentrate their forces to

achieve clear local superiority as opposed to the widely dispersed British defenders. (See Appendix D).

**Economy of Force.** Employ all combat power available in the most effective way possible; allocate minimum essential combat power to secondary efforts.<sup>34</sup>

The principle of economy of force was evident in all aspects of the Japanese campaign. In fact, their judicious use of forces contributed to the Japanese ability to achieve the principle of mass. Specifically, from the Navy's perspective, the Malaya Campaign was the economy of force theater--all carriers were dedicated to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa's Southern Squadron ships and submarines were required to cover the landing forces for the Japanese operations at Borneo and the Philippines, in addition to Malaya. Knowing he was outgunned by Force Z, Ozawa could not risk the transports by leaving them uncovered to deliberately seek battle with the British battleships. Thus, as a counterweight to Force Z, the Navy provided Ozawa with the specially reinforced land-based 22nd Air Flotilla.<sup>35</sup> Simply put, each part of the naval force had a purpose--the ships covered the landings, and air assets and submarines provided reconnaissance and intelligence, while augmenting the combat power of Ozawa's forces. (See Appendix E).

Similarly, the 25th Army practiced the principle of economy of force. For example, during the planning phase, Yamashita declined two additional divisions, insisting he required only three versus five. Based on intelligence assessments of the unique geographic features of Malaya, the General felt confident

that three divisions, appropriately employed, could accomplish the mission. He recognized that any additional troops would merely strain his logistics support and contribute little added combat power.

**Maneuver.** Place the enemy in a position of disadvantage through the flexible application of combat power.<sup>36</sup>

The Malaya campaign was a superb example of the contribution of maneuver to mission success. Since "all roads lead to Singapore," a less resourceful adversary might have viewed the Malayan terrain--dense jungles and rubber plantations bordered the few paved roads, mountains traversed the center of the country, hundreds of rivers, marshy coastal areas, and monsoon rains--as limiting their ability to use maneuver. Not so the Japanese. Their skillful use of maneuver kept the British defenders off balance. They did the unpredictable. They travelled the "impenetrable." They made "allies" of torrential rain squalls and of the night. The skillful use of maneuver by the Japanese confounded the enemy. In the words of one defender,

For what reason did you attack only on the front where we had not prepared to meet you? When we defend the coast, you come from the dense jungle. When we defend the land, you come from the sea. Is it not war for enemies to face each other? This is not war. There will be no other way than retreat, I assure you.<sup>37</sup> (See Appendix F).

**Unity of Command.** For every objective, seek unity of command and unity of effort.<sup>38</sup>

This campaign proved the necessity of achieving unity of effort particularly when there can be no unity of command. The intense interservice rivalry which existed in the Japanese Armed Forces prior to the war precluded the ability to conduct the

Malaya Campaign with unity of command.<sup>39</sup> In fact, the rivalry as so acute (even within the same service) that their ability to achieve the level of unity of effort across service lines that they did was both remarkable and unprecedented.<sup>40</sup> Japanese leadership within the Malaya theater resolved to work together toward their common objective--the capture of Singapore. The sinking of the Prince of Wales and the Repulse best illustrated their success at achieving unity of effort, within and across the services.<sup>41</sup> Force Z represented a significant threat to the Japanese forces, which needed to maintain local sea control well after the initial landings were completed.<sup>42</sup> Exceptionally limited in the number of available transport ships, the Southern Squadron was tasked to cover the transports' transit to Malaya (and return) to bring the 25th Army to its full three divisions. All naval assets--surface, subsurface, and air--in addition to air force assets were involved in attempting to detect, and eliminate, Force Z. Their success effectively passed sea control to the Japanese and virtually guaranteed Japan's ability to safely convoy the remaining troops and sustain existing forces.

**Security.** Never permit the enemy to acquire an unexpected advantage.<sup>43</sup>

The Japanese planners emphasized the need for security to each and every military man. Believing that success depended upon surprise, the troops were reminded to be cautious in their letters, "bar talk" and when disposing of rubbish, once at sea, so as to deny any advance warning to potential enemy spies.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, the Japanese opted to violate Thai sovereignty with

armed landings on 8 December 1941, rather than risk providing the British any indications of their intentions through "leaks" of Thai-Japanese negotiations.

**Surprise.** Strike the enemy at a time or place or in a manner for which he is unprepared.<sup>45</sup>

The Malaya Campaign demonstrated the ability of surprise to influence the outcome of military operations. Without a doubt, the British were surprised by Japan's invasion of Malaya on 8 December 1941. Surprised, despite Major General W.G.S. Dobbie's conclusions in 1937 that landings on the east coast during the northeast monsoon season were possible,<sup>46</sup> despite detecting the Japanese convoys two days prior to the landings and, despite their awareness that newly acquired Japanese air bases in French Indo-China provided advance bases from which air attacks could be mounted. The Japanese were well aware of British assumptions and perceptions and used that information to their advantage throughout the campaign by appearing to operate according to British expectations.

**Simplicity.** Prepare clear, uncomplicated plans and concise orders to ensure thorough understanding.<sup>47</sup>

The Malaya Campaign was anything but simple. It was only one part of the Japanese war plan that required near simultaneous attacks across the Pacific from Pearl Harbor to Thailand, a distance of over 7000 miles and nine time zones. The Malaya Campaign alone required coordinated efforts between the 25th Army, the 3rd Air Group, the Southern Squadron, the 22nd Air Flotilla, and the 4th and 5th Submarine Squadrons. (See Appendix G).

Differing levels of combat experience and limited training opportunities also imposed a requirement to keep the plan as simple as possible. For example, only the 5th Division was experienced in landing operations, yet, even the 5th had never conducted an opposed landing. The 5th and 18th Divisions, had significant cold weather combat experience against the Chinese, but few of their soldiers had ever seen a jungle, much less been knowledgeable in the unique aspects of tropical warfare. The Imperial Guards Division had not seen combat since 1905!

The Japanese attempted to minimize the complexity of the campaign through their pamphlet, Read Only This--And the War Can Be Won. By providing an understanding of the mission, the conditions and the plan, in very basic terms, the Japanese simplified, as much as was feasible, a very complex campaign.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Outnumbered throughout the campaign, the Japanese, with no prior experience in jungle warfare, decisively defeated nearly 140,000 British in only 10 weeks and at a cost of only 9,824 casualties. The thoroughness of their prewar planning, the exceptionally comprehensive and accurate analysis of expected enemy courses of action, and innovative solutions to potential obstacles, set the stage for success. The expert application of the Principles of War throughout the execution of that plan ensured the Malaya Campaign would be recognized as "...one of the most brilliant feats of arms in the war, perhaps in modern military history."<sup>48</sup>

## OPERATIONAL LESSONS LEARNED

**Operational Art.** The understanding and practice of Operational Art is critical to military success.

**Operational Reconnaissance and Intelligence.** Accurate, detailed knowledge of the enemy, to include the terrain, is essential to victory.

**Operational Idea.** Thorough understanding of the commander's vision is key to success.

**Campaign Planning.** Comprehensive planning is a must. Accurate assessment of all possible enemy courses of action and development of own best course of action is required. Plans must include branches that anticipate the "unexpected."

**Principles of War.** Thorough understanding, as well as the ability to translate that understanding into action, of the Principles of War is fundamental to successful operations at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war.

**Strategic and Operational Initiative.** Obtaining and maintaining the initiative preserves own freedom of action while denying it to the enemy.

**Ways and Ends and Means.** Selection of innovative Ways is one method to ensure Ends and Means are in complete accord. Overwhelming force is not always a prerequisite to success.

**Jointness.** Jointness is indispensable to multi-service operations. It must begin at the planning phase and continue through all training evolutions to be effective, during execution of a major operation or campaign.

## NOTES

1. As quoted in Raymond Callahan, The Worst Disaster: The Fall of Singapore (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1977), p. 6.
2. "The Japanese attacks on Kota Bharu, Malaya, Pearl Harbor, the Philippines, Guam, Hong Kong, and Wake Island were launched in that order and within a period of seven hours. Since Pearl Harbor lies to the east of the International Date Line, the attack there occurred on the morning of 7 December, local time, whereas the attacks on the other places occurred on the morning of 8 December, local times. The landing at Kota Bharu was made one hour and twenty minutes before the air attack on Pearl Harbor." Quoted from a footnote in Masanobu Tsuji, Japan's Greatest Victory, Britain's Worst Defeat (New York: Sarpedon, 1993), p. 56.
3. Ibid. Phrase taken from title of Tsuji's book.
4. See U.S. Army Forces Far East, Political Strategy Prior to Outbreak of War (Part IV), Japanese Monograph No. 150 (Tokyo: Military History Section, 1952), pp. 3-6. The Japanese interviewed in preparation of Monograph No. 150 stated that in early 1941, they did not envision the possibility of all-out war with both the United States and Great Britain. Approximately mid-1941, influenced by the Germans as well as the urgent need for oil from the Dutch East Indies, Japan began to regard Great Britain, rather than the United States, as the primary enemy.
5. Ibid., pp. 1-7. The Imperial Doctrine for National Security of 1909 concluded that Russia and the United States were the most likely enemies of Japan. Japan's National Security Strategy assumed that, if it came to war, Japan would only fight one nation at a time.
6. See S. Woodburn Kirby. History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military Series. The War Against Japan. Volume I. The Loss of Singapore (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1957), pp. 1-5 for a thorough discussion of the changing relationship between Great Britain and Japan from that of an ally in 1902 with the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance to an enemy with the Japanese invasion of Malaya and Hong Kong on 8 December 1941.
7. Joyce C. Lebra, ed., Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in World War II, Selected Readings and Documents (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. xii-xvii. In the Proclamation of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity

Sphere, Matsuoka and Konoe called on all Asians to "break the shackles of Western imperialist control." Japan's vision was one of an "Asia for Asians" and announced the policy to help liberate the rest of Asia from oppressive Western control.

8. Tsuji, p. 3. Apparently, a literal translation of the phrase "Doro Nawa" is not possible. The translator explains "Doro" means robber and "Nawa" means rope--to catch a robber and begin to make a rope afterwards. In other words, it means to make preparations too late. She further states, "An English equivalent might be the 'Barn Door Brigade'--after the expression of closing the barn door after the horse has gone." The selection of the nickname "Doro Nawa" for the Research Department underscores the Japanese perception that their recognition of the importance of Southeast Asia to their future came too late. Most Japanese sources indicated they had spent the 35 years preceding World War II preparing to fight the Russians and, as a result, entered the war against the United States and Great Britain without preparation.

9. Ibid., p. 6.

10. Nobutaka Ike, trans., ed., Japan's Decision for War, Records of the 1941 Policy Conferences (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), pp. 36, 77, 108, 112. Also, H.P. Willmott, Empires in the Balance, Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies February to June 1942 (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982), pp. 56-64.

11. Ike, pp. 129-133.

12. Ibid., pp. 184-85. Prime Minister Konoe stepped down 16 October 1941 since he was unwilling to lead the nation to war.

13. New England old timer's sometime (less than helpful!) response to a request for directions.

14. Japan renamed Manchuria, Manchukuo, in February 1932.

15. Directed Malayan collection in the Doro Nawa unit and was later assigned as Chief of Operations and Planning Staff, 25th Army, Malaya.

16. Willmott, Empires in the Balance, p. 242.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., See pp. 226-227. Willmott explains Malaya is about 49,000 square miles. A high mountain ridge runs down the length of the peninsula, reaching over 7,000 feet in several places. The ridge acts as a shield between itself and the Strait of Malacca, protecting the western part of the peninsula from the

northeast monsoon season (November to March) while the mountains of Sumatra shelter the western area from the full effects of the southwest monsoon (May to September). The western area receives at least 50 inches of rain annually as compared to over 250 inches in many parts of eastern Malaya. Countless rivers make their way to the South China Sea to drain the eastern area. Despite the number of rivers, the ground in the east is frequently waterlogged, making communication inland from the coast, as well as among the coastal settlements, extremely difficult. Thus, the majority of settlements and the major road and rail networks were concentrated in the western part of the country. 80% of the country was tropical jungle, confining military operations to the narrow roads and cleared areas, particularly along the western coast.

19. Tsuji, pp. 149-151. Divisions were equipped with approximately 500 motor vehicles and 6,000 bicycles. Bicycles eliminated delays that might have been experienced due to the demolition of bridges. The infantry continued their advance by wading through the rivers carrying the bicycles on their shoulders or crossing log bridges supported on the shoulders of the engineers standing in the river. As a result, the Japanese were able to maintain a relentless pursuit of the retreating British troops, allowing them no time to rest or reorganize. Following the repair of the bridges, the tanks and motor vehicles would follow.

20. "Churchill stores" were those items abandoned by (or captured from) the British troops. Every effort was made by the Japanese to limit damage to the British equipment so as to augment their own supplies, minimizing a potentially critical Japanese weakness. While the totals differ according to the source, the final numbers in all categories--equipment, ammunition, weapons, vehicles, fuel oil--is simply staggering. The fact that Yamashita, at the time of the British surrender, was virtually out of ammunition is dramatic evidence of the difficulty experienced by the Japanese in sustaining the force. They had very nearly exceeded their culminating point and very likely would have, were it not for the "Churchill stores."

21. U.S. Army Department, Operations, Field Manual 100-5 (Washington: 1993), p. 2-4.

22. Tsuji, p. 177.

23. Willmott, Empires in the Balance, p. 165. The importance to the British Empire of the symbol of Singapore cannot be overemphasized. The decision to commit approximately 50,000 reinforcements--the last units arriving only 10 days before the surrender--despite knowing the battle would ultimately be lost, speaks volumes. As a result, 138,708 British were lost --over 130,000 taken prisoner--vice the 80,000 which were in

Malaya on 8 December 1941.

24. For the purpose of this paper, the term "British troops" is used to describe all British forces--Indian, Australian, Malayan, and Volunteers as well as British.

25. Fall 1941, the British decided to send a reinforcement force to the Far East. At that time, the only available source for reinforcements was the Royal Navy. As a result, the battleship Prince of Wales departed England 25 October, arriving in Singapore 4 December. The Prince of Wales was joined by the battle cruiser Repulse and four destroyers which had been assigned to the Indian Ocean. The carrier Indomitable was scheduled to join the Prince of Wales, but it was damaged in the West Indies. The British force was known as Force Z.

26. Arthur Swinson, Four Samurai, A Quartet of Japanese Army Commanders in the Second World War (London: Hutchinson & Company (Publishers) LTD, 1968), p. 107.

27. The last Japanese forces did not arrive in Malaya until 26 January 1942.

28. Tsuji, p. 89.

29. U.S. Army Department, Operations, p. 2-4.

30. Ibid.

31. Tsuji, p. 174.

32. Willmott, Empires in the Balance, pp. 169-170.

33. U.S. Army Department, Operations, p. 2-4.

34. Ibid., p. 2-5.

35. The 22nd Air Flotilla added 158 aircraft to Japanese forces in the Malaya Campaign.

36. U.S. Army Department, Operations, p. 2-5.

37. Tsuji, p. 136.

38. U.S. Army Department, Operations, p. 2-5.

39. U.S. Army Forces Far East, Japanese Monograph No. 150, p. 1 graphically illustrates the intense rivalry between the two services. All attempts to revise the 1909 "Imperial Doctrine for National Security" failed due to the inability of the two General Staffs to agree on the defense priorities (Russia or the United States first). Unable to compromise on issues of the highest

nature--national security--makes it inconceivable that one service would have placed their forces under the command of another.

40. Swinson, Four Samurai, pp. 92-114. In retrospect, it's amazing that there was any unity of effort since rivalry and suspicions existed not only between the services, but within the services themselves. For example, Swinson states that Prime Minister Tojo and Yamashita despised one another. In fact, Yamashita suspected he would be assassinated on capturing Singapore due to Tojo's jealousy (apparently the Japanese papers were full of ecstatic news of the Malaya campaign, making Yamashita a hero). His suspicions were not totally unfounded as he was later reassigned to the obscure post of 1st Area Command Manchukuo. Colonel Masanobu Tsuji was reportedly assigned as Chief of Operations and Planning Staff, 25th Army to "spy" on Yamashita for Tojo. Additionally, General Takuma Nishimura, Imperial Guards Division, deeply resented serving under Yamashita. Nishimura was an ally of Yamashita's boss, General Count Hisaichi Terauchi, Commander, Southern Army placing Yamashita in the position of having enemies above and below him.

41. U.S. Army Forces Far East and the Eighth U.S. Army (Rear) Malaya Invasion Naval Operations, Japanese Monograph No. 107 (Tokyo: 1958), pp. 27-28 contain a detailed description of the sinking of the Prince of Wales and the Repulse. To summarize, the ships had been located by submarine assets on 9 and 10 December. Submarine I-58 launched five torpedoes at the ships, but all five missed. The submarine could not maintain contact. Based on its sighting report, however, air assets of the 22nd Air Flotilla were launched to locate and destroy the British ships. On the return leg, one aircraft located the two ships--400 miles from home base (a range well beyond the capability of Allied naval aircraft at that time). Both ships were sunk that afternoon with the loss of three Japanese aircraft and damage to 28 of the 88 bombers and torpedo bombers. The British were given a jolting "wake-up" call as the Repulse entered the history books as the first capital ship sunk on the open sea by air attack. (See Appendix E).

42. To best appreciate the unity of effort achieved, the Navy's willingness to conduct "covering" missions over "seeking the decisive battle" must be put in the context of just how the Navy viewed this type duty. U.S. Army Forces Far East, Historical Review of Landing Operations of the Japanese Landing Forces, Japanese Monograph No. 156 (Tokyo: Military History Section, 1952), p. 4 states the Navy attached primary importance to brilliant naval actions and relegated combined operations to secondary place. Thus, in supporting the Malayan Campaign, the Navy put accomplishment of the objective over potential glory for the naval service.

43. U.S. Army Department, Operations, p. 2-5.
44. Read This Alone--And the War Can Be Won, as quoted in Tsuji, p. 246.
45. U.S. Army Department, Operations, p. 2-5.
46. Kirby, The War Against Japan, p. 14.
47. U.S. Army Department, Operations, p. 2-6.
48. Willmott, Empires in the Balance, p. 334.

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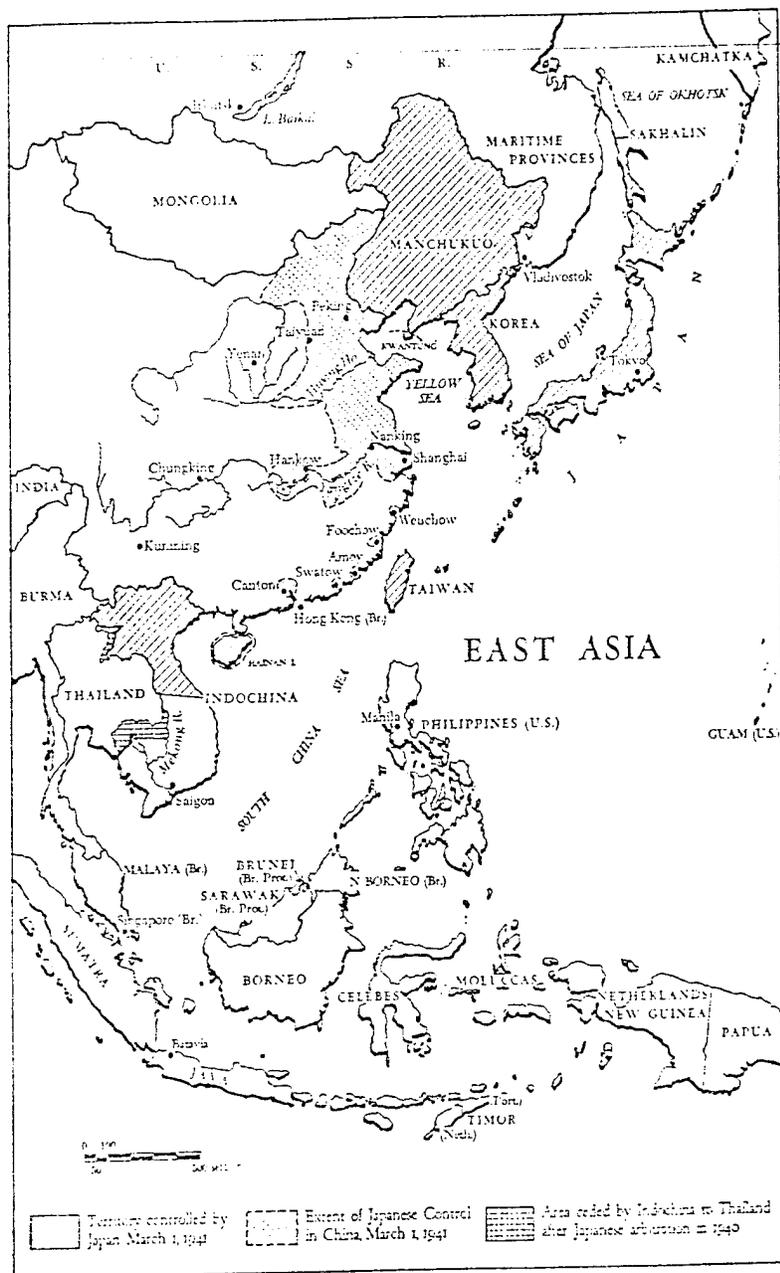
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# EXTENT OF JAPANESE CONTROL IN MARCH 1941



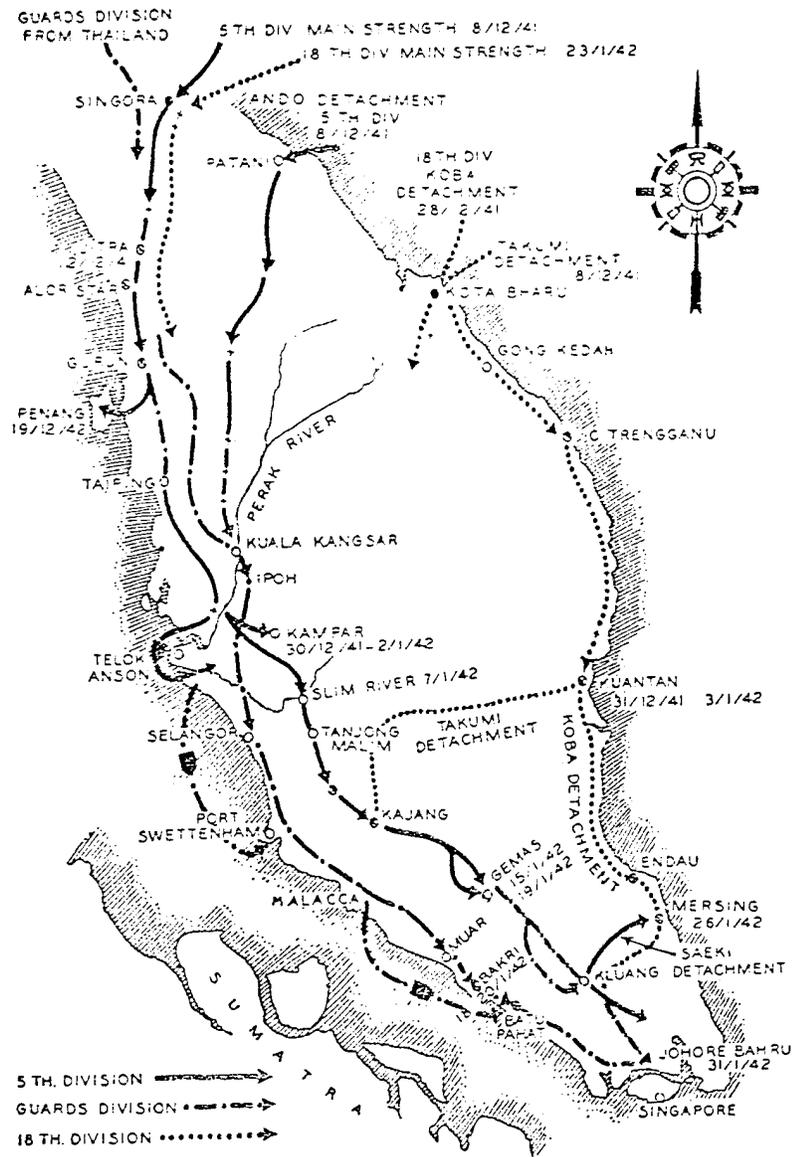
Source: Nobutaka Ike, Japan's Decision for War, Records of the 1941 Policy Conferences (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), p. xii.

# GEOGRAPHY OF THE MALAY PENINSULA



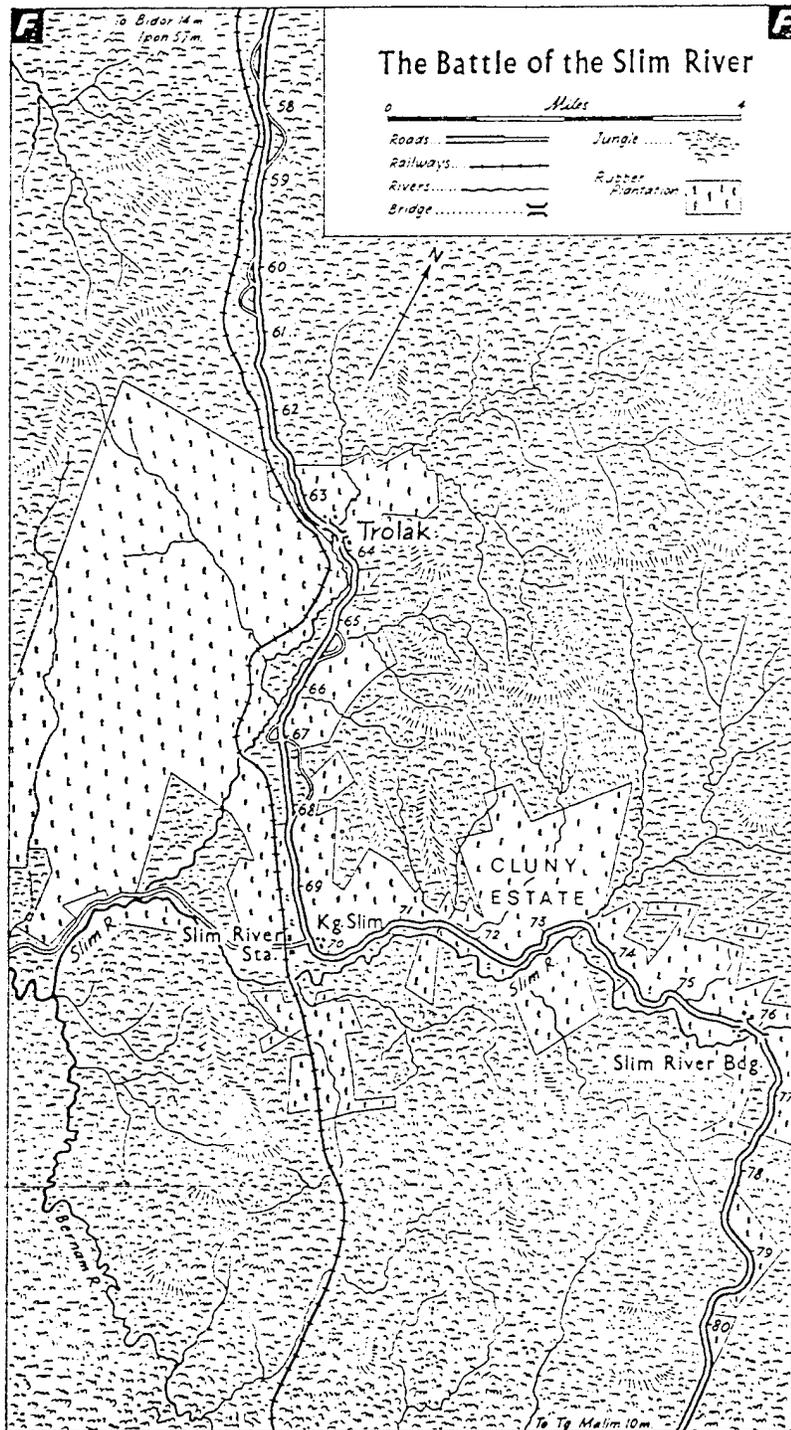
Source: S. Woodburn Kirby, *Singapore: The Chain of Disaster* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1971), p. 12.

# THE MALAYA CAMPAIGN OF THE 25TH ARMY



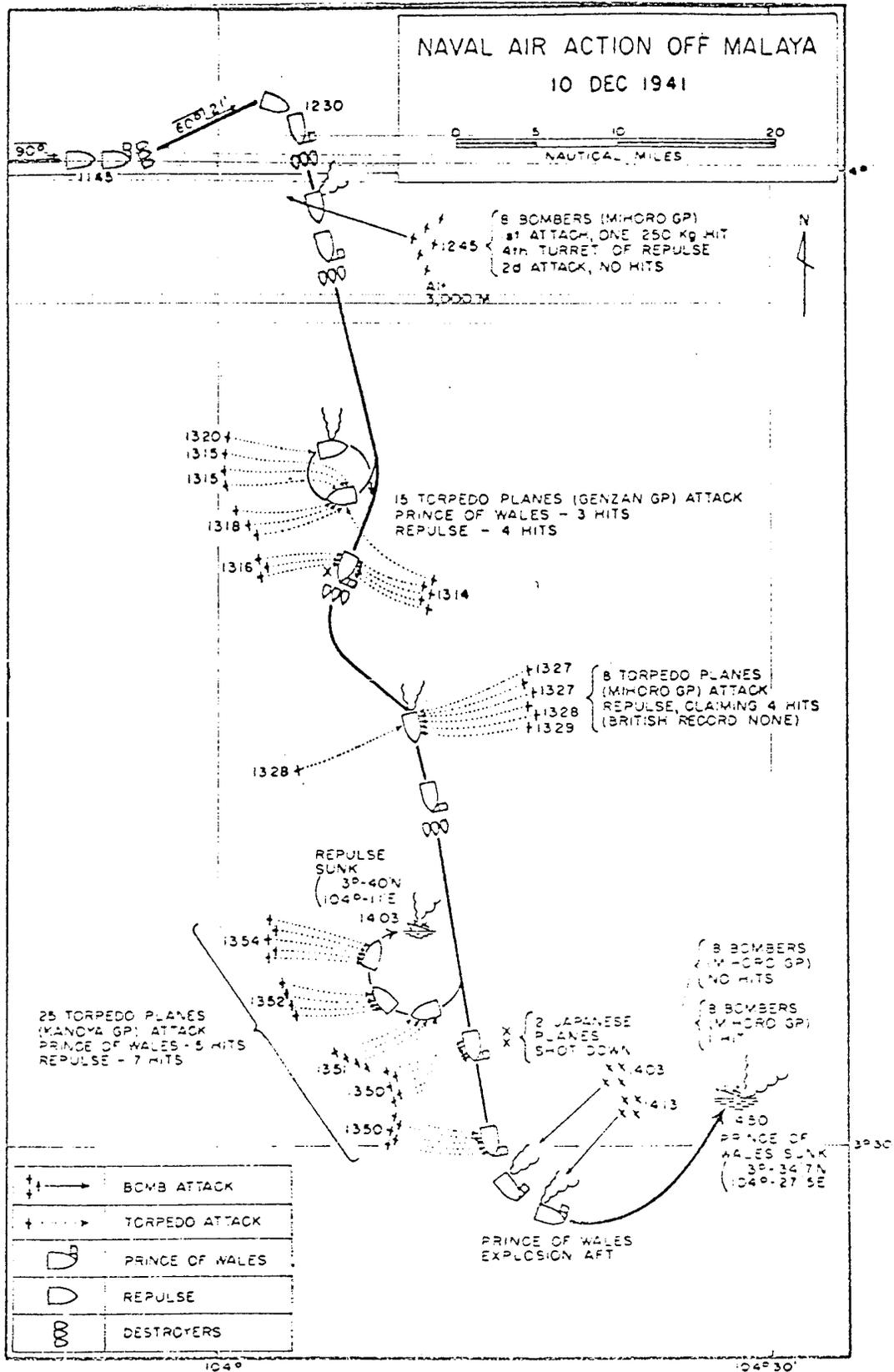
Source: Masanobu Tsuji, Japan's Greatest Victory, Britain's Worst Defeat (New York: Sarpedon, 1993), p. 173.

# GEOGRAPHY DICTATING USE OF NARROW FRONT



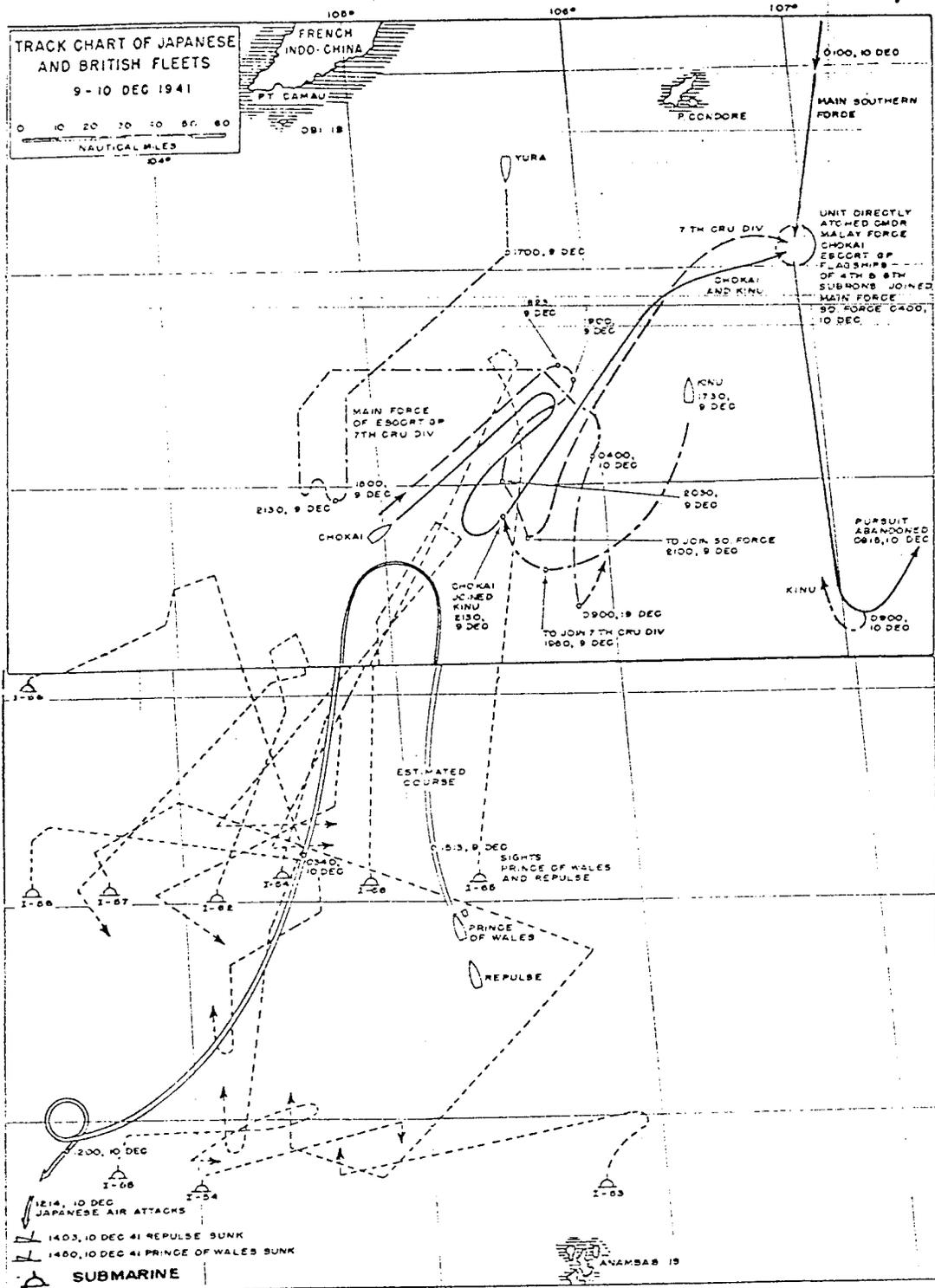
Source: S. Woodburn Kirby, Singapore: The Chain of Disaster  
(New York: The MacMillan Company, 1971), p. 174.

# DESTRUCTION OF FORCE Z--NAVAL ACTION



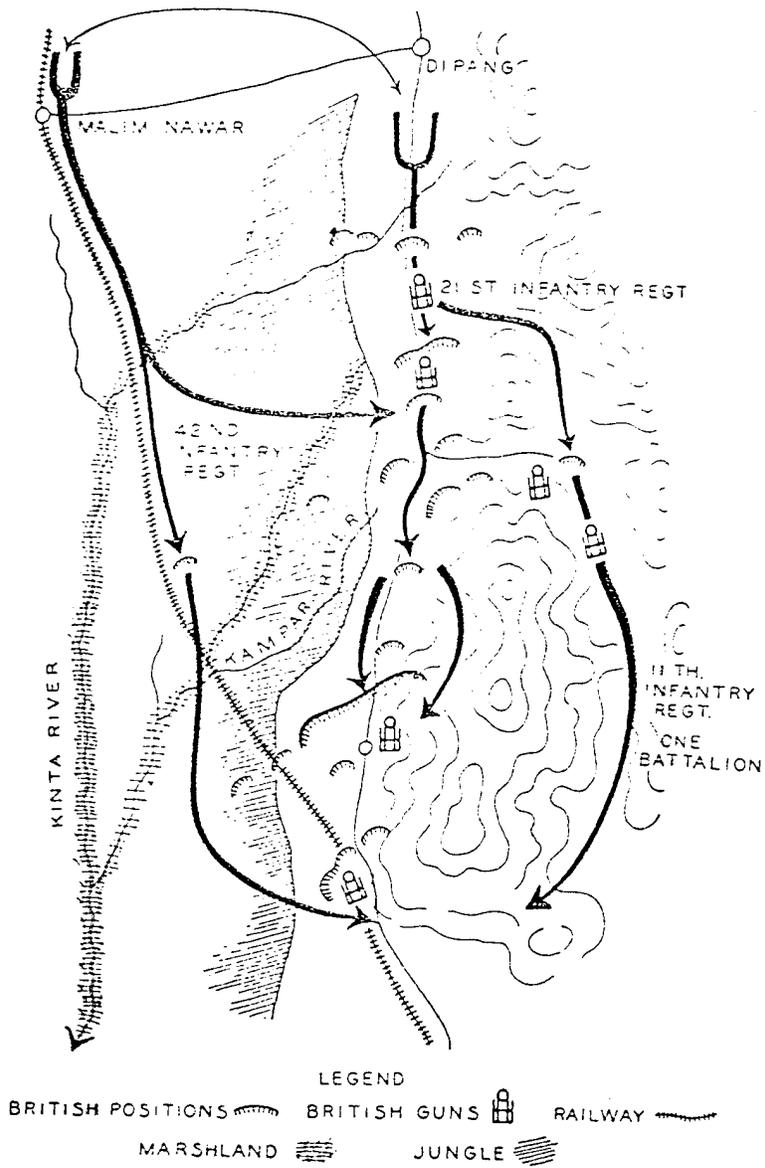
Source: U.S. Army Forces Far East and Eighth U.S. Army (Rear), Malaya Invasion Naval Operations, Japanese Monograph No. 107 (Tokyo: 1958), p. 26.

# DESTRUCTION OF FORCE Z--NAVAL ACTION



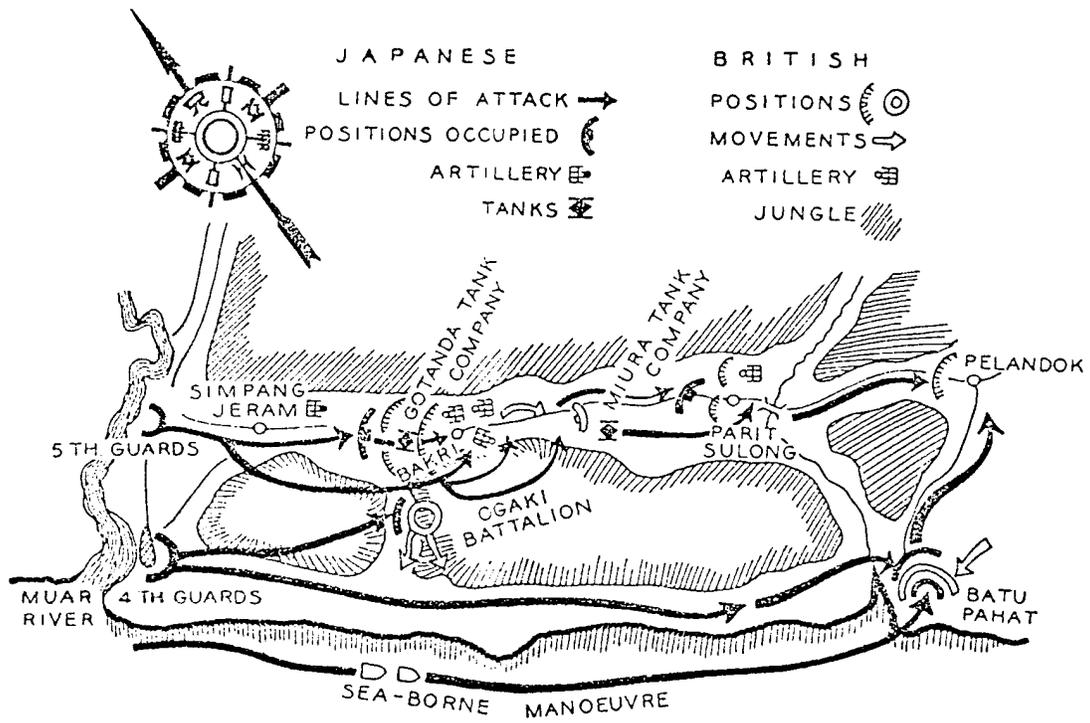
Source: U.S. Army Forces Far East and Eighth U.S. Army (Rear), Malaya Invasion Naval Operations, Japanese Monograph No. 107 (Tokyo: 1958), pp. 24-25.

# USE OF MANEUVER--BY LAND



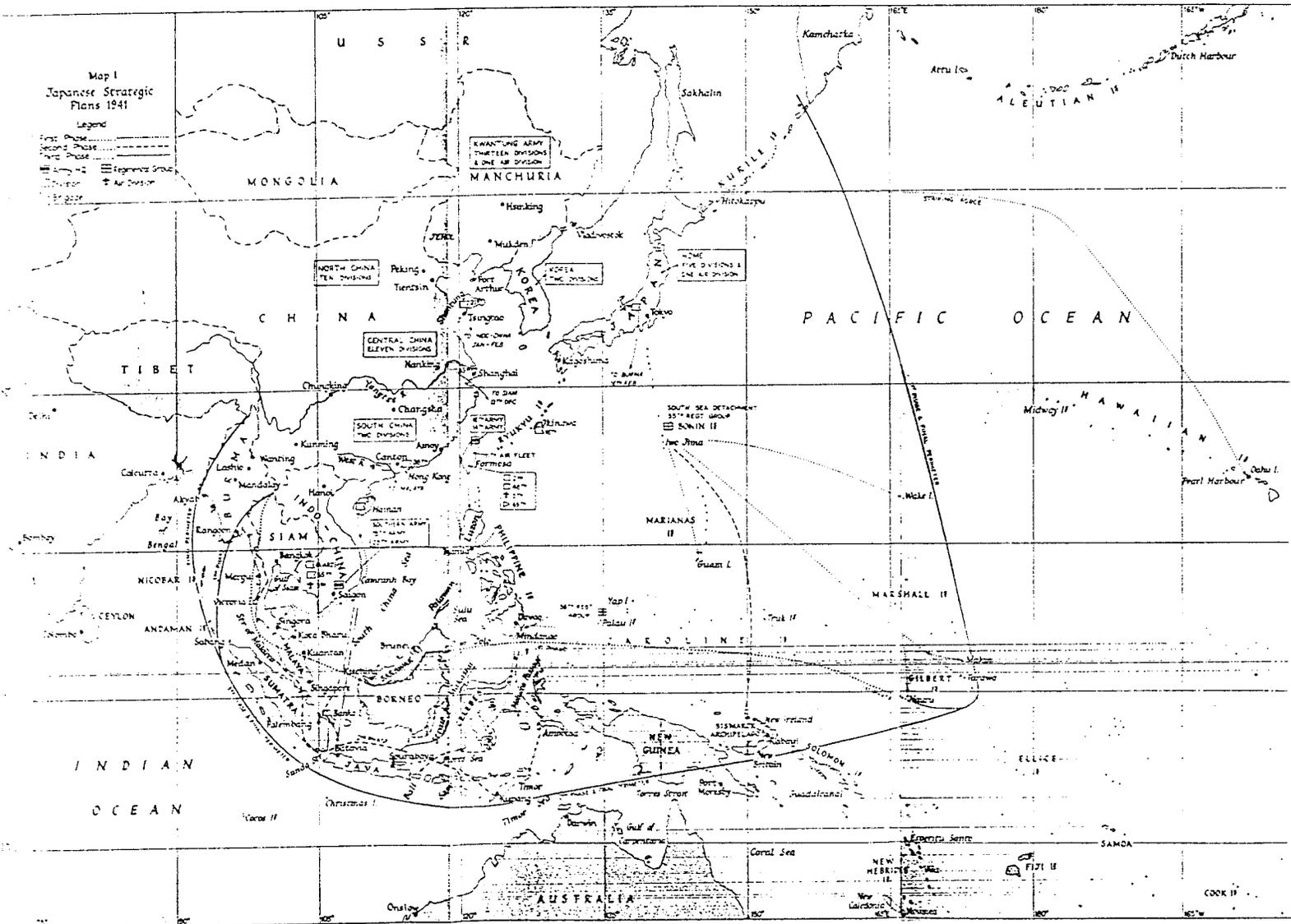
Source: Masanobu Tsuji, Japan's Greatest Victory, Britain's Worst Defeat (New York: Sarpedon, 1993), p. 129.

# USE OF MANEUVER--BY SEA



Source: Masanobu Tsuji, Japan's Greatest Victory, Britain's Worst Defeat (New York: Sarpedon, 1993), p. 166.

# "NOT SO SIMPLE" PLAN--THEATER OF WAR



Source: S. Woodburn Kirby, History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military Series. The War Against Japan. Volume I. The Loss of Singapore (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1957), p. 96.



# DISPOSITION OF THE BRITISH 8 DECEMBER 1941



Source: S. Woodburn Kirby, History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military Series. The War Against Japan. Volume I. The Loss of Singapore (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1957), p. 172.

## ORDER OF BATTLE--JAPANESE

### Army

Note: Rounded numbers are approximate.

Commander-in-Chief of Southern Armies: Field Marshall Count Terauchi

Commander-in-Chief, 25th Army: Lieutenant General Yamashita

Imperial Guards Division: Lieutenant General Nishimura

Strength: 13,000

5th Division: Lieutenant General Matsui

Strength: 16,000

18th Division: Lieutenant General Mutaguchi

Strength: 13,000

3rd Tank Brigade: 80 tanks

Artillery:

Independent Quick Firing Guns: 44 guns

Independent Mountain Gun Regiment: 24 guns

Two regiments heavy field guns: 48 15-cm howitzers

16 10-cm guns

Anti-aircraft gun detachments: 68 guns

Three regiments independent engineers (9 companies)

Army Communication Corps (4 telegraph and telephone  
companies/8 wireless platoons)

Railway Detachment (4 regiments)

Close-quarter attack troops--trench mortars (24 types),  
mine throwers, bomb-guns (2 battalions)

Bridging train (3 companies/3 companies river-crossing  
troops)

Supply troops

### Totals

Officers and men: 60,000

All types guns (including mortars): 400

Tanks (including armored cars): 120

### Navy

Southern Squadron

Cruisers: 1

Destroyers: 10

Submarines: 5

### Air Force

3rd Air Group: 459 planes

22nd Air Flotilla: 158 planes

Source: Masanobu Tsuji, Japan's Greatest Victory, Britain's Worst Defeat  
(New York: Sarpedon, 1993), pp. 29-31.

## ORDER OF BATTLE--BRITISH

### Army

Malaya Command: Lieutenant General Percival  
Singapore Fortress: Major General Simmons  
1st Malaya Infantry Brigade  
2nd Malaya Infantry Brigade  
Coast and Anti-Air Defences

12th Indian Infantry Brigade: Brigadier Paris  
III Indian Corps: Lieutenant General Sir Heath  
11th Indian Division  
Corps Reserve  
Penang Fortress  
9th Indian Division  
Airfield Defense Troops  
8th Australian Division: Major General Bennett  
22nd Australian Infantry Brigade  
27th Australian Infantry Brigade

### Navy

Battleship:	1
Battlecruiser:	1
Cruisers:	3
Destroyers:	6 (2 dedicated to local defense)
Gunboats:	3 (all dedicated to local defense)
Armed Merchant Cruisers:	2

### Air Force

Aircraft:	158
Aircraft (Reserve):	88

Source: S. Woodburn Kirby, History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military Series. The War Against Japan. Volume I. The Loss of Singapore (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1957), pp. 501-518.