

**RESTRICTED**

AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

TRANSLATION NO.VII/16

THE FAR EASTERN WAR AND ITS  
BEARING ON ALLIED OPERATIONS  
IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND OTHER  
THEATRES OF WAR

A Study prepared by the Foreign Armies (Western)  
Intelligence Department of the General Staff of the German  
Army, and dated 22nd January, 1942.

TRANSLATED BY:

Air Ministry, A.H.B.6.  
3rd January, 1947.

R.A.F. STAFF COLLEGE
11 JAN 1957
No. <u>45</u>
BRACKNELL, BERKS.

SECRET  
**RESTRICTED**

I. THE FAR EAST.

The Allied High Command seems determined to hold the British and American possessions in the Far East and the Dutch East Indies, and to send the necessary reinforcements to all areas threatened by the Axis powers.

Apart from the British naval force in the Indian Ocean, which includes 3 battleships and 3 aircraft carriers, British and American army and air force units have apparently also been transferred to the Far East; reports on the presence of American naval forces in the Pacific are so far unconfirmed.

The events enumerated below indicate the Allies' intention to reinforce the Far Eastern theatre of war:

1) On 12.12., shortly after Japan's entry into the war, it was decided to send out between 9 and 11 British divisions from England. The actual embarkation of these troops is confirmed by radio traffic intercepted during this period, and also by the cut in sugar, cheese and fat rations in England, which came into force on 12.1., due to the conversion of supply vessels into troopships.

2) The reported transfer of the New Zealand Division at the beginning of January from Suez to the Far East is partly confirmed by the fact that several British convoys were at that time sighted at Djibuti coming from the direction of the Suez Canal and heading East.

3) Reports from various sources mention at least 2 Australian divisions embarking in Syria for the Dutch East Indies. One Australian division is reported to be leaving Basra, but this report is unconfirmed. The Australian Air Force detachments have already left the Middle East.

4) From a reliable source it is reported that English and native troops from Abyssinia and East Africa are being moved to Egypt. This can only be an emergency measure made necessary by the mass transfers out of the Middle East. Native troops (King's African Rifles) have never before operated in the Middle East.

5) General Wavell was given the command of the armies in Burma, Malaya, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies, and made his Headquarters on Java. He relinquished his command in India, an action which would have been unnecessary, if not altogether paradoxical, if the British had decided to give up Singapore and to confine themselves to defending the Burmese frontier. It is also reported that American army units embarked for New Zealand and Australia in January.

6) Finally, the premature Japanese landing on Celebes presumably represented the first counter blow to the British reinforcements and may therefore be regarded as a further confirmation of their existence.

To achieve a successful defensive strategy in the British and American spheres in the Far East, the combined commands will presumably endeavour to maintain the existing ring round Japan, consisting of Asiatic Russia, the Aleutians and the Pacific Islands, Australia, New Zealand, the Dutch East Indies, Burma and China. The arrival of the British battleships in the Indian Ocean was probably the first move in this strategical plan. Fighting against time and hampered by a shortage of ships, the British and American troop transports will try to forestall the Japanese advance.

Should, as is most probable, part of the reinforcements which left England in the middle of December be destined for the Far East, the first transports may be expected to reach Rangoon, Singapore or Port Darwin on approximately February 10th. The first units of the New Zealand Division

**RESTRICTED**  
**SECRET**

-2-

can reach Rangoon or Singapore at the end of January, and Java or Port Darwin at the beginning of February. These troops would therefore arrive before the fall of Singapore, which the Japanese originally expected to occur in the middle of March, but are now anticipating a month earlier.

The British are hoping to arrive in time to hold Singapore, and if not at least to hold Java and Australia and to consolidate the Burmese frontier positions. They will not however, for some time be strong enough to defend all four threatened areas simultaneously and effectively. It remains to be seen whether they will try to hold Singapore, or, influenced by the Japanese successes in the Philippines, Borneo and Malaya, confine themselves to safeguarding Sumatra, Java and Australia, and covering the Eastern frontier of India from their positions in Burma.

In the near future they will nowhere be in a position to reconquer any Japanese occupied territory, but the gradual reinforcement of Burma may be a preparation for an offensive against the rear of the Japanese positions in Malaya.

## II. Middle and Near East

The necessity of maintaining considerable British and American land forces in the Far East and the vast amount of shipping space required, influences not only all large scale operations in the Middle and Near East, but also those planned against the fortified coast of Europe, and North and West Africa.

This situation by no means forces the British to transfer the centre of their land operations from the Middle East, where their forces have been concentrated since the autumn of 1941 as a threat to Germany and Italy. The combined English and American fleets are capable of supplying and reinforcing the British Middle East forces without interrupting the flow of transports to the Far East.

Due to military developments in Russia and North Africa, the Middle and Near East is no longer threatened. The Allies can therefore afford to transfer several divisions to the Far East and leave only a small force of garrison troops in Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Persia. The forces remaining in the Middle East are sufficient to continue the attack against Tripolitania or to protect Egypt.

## III. Europe, French North and West Africa.

Operations against the coasts of Europe, French North and West Africa, and Spanish Morocco depend primarily on the availability of shipping space. A large scale naval offensive against the defended Atlantic coast of Europe is therefore unlikely, with the possible exception of Norway, where an attack would be in the interests of the British, and could be carried out with smaller forces; operations against Italy or against French North and West Africa are also improbable for the same reason.

Should the British however succeed in advancing through Tripolitania to the Tunisian frontier, they may attempt to persuade the population of French North Africa to revolt against Vichy, and they would then be in command of the whole of the South coast of the Mediterranean.

It is not impossible that, given favourable political conditions, the Allies will attempt to establish themselves on the Iberian peninsula or to expand the bridgehead of Gibraltar over Spanish and Moroccan territory.

Small scale local landings, such as that carried out in Norway recently, may be conducted by the British and American forces against the

/coasts

~~SECRET~~

**RESTRICTED**

-3-

coasts of Europe including Italy; it is also possible that the Allies will occupy the Portuguese and Spanish islands in the Atlantic, since all these operations only require small naval forces.

In the Eastern Mediterranean, isolated actions against Crete and Greece lie within the realm of possibility, especially in the event of the offensive in Libya being discontinued.

#### IV. Summary.

As regards the war situation as a whole, it is possible and even likely that in addition to reinforcing their positions in the Far East, the British and Americans will in 1942 continue to concentrate their efforts against Germany and Italy. At the same time they will carry out isolated attacks, as far as the shipping situation permits, in preparation for the large scale offensive which cannot possibly be launched before 1943.

#### Distribution

Same as Translation No. VII/14.