

#47-A - ARDA "W" Series (Wavell Personal)

DECLASSIFIED

MR Box 38

SECRET

To: JOINT STAFF MISSION.

From: CHIEFS OF STAFF.

Date: 25.2.42

SECRET

IMMEDIATE.

No. (W) 82.

Following are salient features of Pacific War Council meeting held this evening attended by representatives of all Abda powers including for the first time Doctor Wellington Koo.

2. After full review by Prime Minister of War Situation discussion centred on defence of Java. Dutch thought situation by no means hopeless and felt British and Americans were too pessimistic about prospect of giving Japanese hard knocks and fighting prolonged delaying action. Report from Dutch C. in C. to Dutch Government in London in above sense is contained in immediately following telegram.

3. Dutch pressed strongly for despatch of maximum possible air reinforcements to Java and suggest American aircraft with personnel from Australia offer best and quickest source of supply.

4. Council agrees that resistance in Java should be sustained in accordance with agreed policy subject to proviso that no repetition no additional landing forces should be sent to Java and that security of other vital points particularly Ceylon should not be jeopardized.

5. Sir Earle Page undertook to ask Australian Government to facilitate movement of aircraft from Australia to Java.

PAGE TWO.

6. Council were informed that decision about destination of aircraft carried in H.M.S. INDOMITABLE need not repetition not be taken until 3rd. March.

7. There was general agreement on the vital importance of securing Australia, India and Ceylon as bases for eventual resumption of offensive against Japan.

8. First Sea Lord asked if and when it became impossible for Naval forces to remain in Java, Dutch Naval forces should concentrate on Ceylon and co-operation with our Eastern Fleet.

9. Council agreed on dissolution of Abda Headquarters, Senior Dutch Commander would assume control in Java area. Postponement for the present of public announcement about General Wavell's departure was endorsed.

10. Council were informed Free French National Committee had asked to have representative on Pacific War Council in London. It was agreed to reply that Free French territory in Pacific was in American sphere, but that if matters affecting this territory were to be discussed by Council in London, Free French Committee would be informed and invited to send a representative to meeting.

T.O.O. 0126A/25

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PS

COPY No. 24

To: BRITMAN WASHINGTON.  
Reputed: TROOPERS  
From: ABDACOM 00309 24/1.

IMPORTANT.

Following for Combined Chiefs of Staff.

Reference telegram unnumbered dated 22/1  
from Field Marshal Dill.

Series of cables prefixed W will be drawn  
up personally by General Wavell to keep you informed  
of general situation and intentions. Please regard  
them as specially secret.

W.1.

1. Japanese obviously making intense efforts on  
whole front with object obtaining quick successes.  
We can only use our limited resources to check enemy  
as far forward as possible by hard fighting taking  
offensive action whenever possible. We shall incur  
heavy losses on sea, land and air during this period.  
Any further efforts will depend on their being made  
good rapidly.
2. Enemy attack on Burma has developed suddenly  
in south with immediate objective Moulmein and  
eventual objective probably Rangoon. India sending  
reinforcements and part of Indian and Burmese troops  
in north after being replaced by Chinese will move  
south. Am flying Rangoon to-day and will report  
further on Burmese situation on return.
3. Troops in Johore are being very hard pressed  
by fresh Japanese divisions and have had heavy losses  
but Japanese losses also undoubtedly very heavy.  
We shall hold line Mersing - Kluang - Ayer Hitam -  
Bitujpahat as long as possible but may be forced back  
into Singapore Island itself. Enemy numerical  
superiority in air and our lack of suitable small  
craft make it difficult to stop enemy infiltration  
along coast. Reinforcements of Australian machine-gun  
battalion and Indian brigade due in Singapore to-day  
and to-morrow two brigade groups 18 Div. due three  
days later. If all these arrive safely situation  
should be much easier. Enemy's air offensive has  
been intense and air losses on both sides considerable.  
Unconfirmed report that Hurricanes shot down 20 enemy  
bombers yesterday without loss.
4. Enemy has been reconnoitring and bombing  
aerodromes in Sumatra to increasing extent. Anti-  
aircraft defences being sent as they become available.
5. Assume Philippines situation fully known to  
you. Am doing what we can to send ammunition and  
supplies by submarine blockade runner or air.
6. Enemy pushing air bases south on Borneo and  
Celebes presumably with view eventual attack Java.

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JCS MEMO. 1-17-73  
BY RT. DATE NOV 7 1973

We are now engaging large enemy convoy in Macassar Strait and destroyers and Air Force have already sunk or damaged number of enemy ships. Enemy has landed Balikpapan. Java is at present very inadequately defended especially vital Naval base at Surabaya; defence will be improved as resources become available.

7. East of Celebes things comparatively quiet at present which is just as well as we have very little there.

8. Naval situation is known to you from my telegrams 00200 of 21/1 and 00235 of 22/1. Air situation improving as reinforcements arrive but our effort is necessarily reduced by lack of ground organisation spares etc. Land defence of Java and Southern Sumatra should be comparatively secure after arrival Australian divisions.

9. Generally we will keep on holding and hitting enemy as hard as our resources allow till time comes to strike back. With adequate air we should be able to take considerable toll of his shipping. Enemy should not be able to replace his air losses as we can and we should be able to build up gradually air superiority and drive back his bases and re-establish those we have lost. Next few months will be anxious and difficult but have every hope of getting through them successfully.

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U.S. CHIEFS OF STAFF.

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JCS MEMO, 1-17-78  
BY RT. DATE NOV 7 1973



To: JOINT STAFF MISSION.

Copy No .28..

From: Chiefs of Staff.

Date: 24.2.42

IMMEDIATE.

No. (W) 83.

Following is text of telegram Netherlands Government in London have received from Dutch C. in C. Java referred to in my Chiefs of Staff (W) 82.

Begins:

"I cannot help feeling British and American view is much too gloomy. Sunda Strait and Strait of Bali still open. In harbour of Priok and Surabaya notwithstanding repeated air bombardments only one repeat one merchant vessel hit whilst Tjilatjop has not yet been attacked. It is true fighters can no longer be flown from Australia to Java but U.S. Aircraft tender LANDLEY arrived 27th of this month in Australia and fighters should proceed immediately to Java essential H.M.S. INDOMITABLE should arrive and Boeings B.25 from U.S.A. fly immediately across Pacific. There are 18 crews for these aircraft in Australia. I am convinced that when Anzac Force west of Torres Strait and available Force for Eastern Fleet now at Colombo poke their noses into Java Sea Japan will get an unpleasant surprise and pressure on Java will be very much relieved.

2. Japanese proceeding systematically and are occupying Bali and East Harbour to infiltrate East and West Java. Occupation of aerodrome at Bali dangerous for Surabaya where damage still small.

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BY RT. DATE

NOV

7 1973

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PAGE TWO.

3. Main landing in Western Java now being prepared with necessary protection near Anamba Islands.

4. I am concentrating everything in Java Sea and vicinity and am trying to imbue American submarines with greatest offensive spirit. It is still not too late but great speed, grim determination and taking all risks is necessary."

T.O.O. 0127A/25

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JCS MEMO, 1-17-73  
BY RT, DATE NOV 7 1973

26  
MESSAGE.

IN.

IMMEDIATE.

~~TOP SECRET~~  
To : ALL CONCERNED

Time 2145 EWT

From : G.H.C. JAVA.

Date 23 Feb 42

No. OPX 02190 of 23 Feb 42. Information No. 30  
to 1200z/23.

C I P H E R.

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1. TIMOR. Position on 21st, Enemy reinforcements landed SOUTH of KOEPANG. Aerodrome OESOE (100 kilometers N.E. of KOEPANG) captured by parachute troops. Enemy also landed in Portuguese TIMOR, S.W. of DILLI.
  2. Our air activity. Yesterday Hudson set fire by direct hits to large transport in BANKA STRAITS. Today Blenheim dropped bombs among enemy aircraft parked on PALMBANG I and several believed destroyed. Tanker observed sunk across PALMBANG River with 4 transports apparently shut in above it. Bl7's despatched to attack enemy BALI but cloud obscured target.
  3. Enemy air activity. Today MALANG attacked by 9 bombers and 13 fighters. Enemy losses one bomber and one fighter. Ours NIL. In yesterdays air attack reported para two Information 29, believed at least three enemy aircraft shot down by A.A. . In EAST JAVA attack 1 LB30, 3 Bl7's, 1 P40 set fire on ground: other aircraft damaged.

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JCS MEMO. 1-17-73  
BY RT. DATE NOV 7 1973

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~~TOP SECRET~~

U.S. Chiefs of Staff.



MESSAGE

IN

MOST IMMEDIATE

Received

From: General WAVELL, ABDACOM  
To: Britman for Combined Chiefs of Staffs  
War Office for C O S.

Time: 1032 hrs  
Date: 22 Feb  
Cipher

No: 02076 of 22 Feb CCOS 19.

1. BRETT and myself saw Governor General this evening and discussed your DBA 20 with him as regards Command JAVA time of withdrawal ABDA HQ and effect on public morale. Also communicated to him your DBA 22.
2. NO difficulty future Command JAVA. Organization already in existence before ABDA HQ arrived and Commanders of Naval Land and Air forces in Island are already Dutch.
3. Dutch NOT likely to wish any of their representatives on ABDA HQ withdrawn.
4. Recommend that ABDA HQ should NOT be ordered to be withdrawn but should be dissolved. Reason given should be that return of BURMA to INDIA leaves ABDA Area practically without command except local defence JAVA which can be better exercised under original Dutch organisation. PHILIPPINES should revert to American control NW AUSTRALIA to Australian command. Announcement in this form would be much less damaging to public morale in JAVA than withdrawal of HQ elsewhere. DARWIN only possible alternative location and obvious that it would be quite ineffective there.
5. It should be made quite clear to Dutch that withdrawal of ABDA (HQ will NOT repeat) NOT mean stoppage of warlike supplies to JAVA and public announcement to this effect should be made. N.E.I. Govt request that they should be consulted as to form and time of any announcement of decision re ABDA Command and I consider it essential that they should be.
6. As regards time Governor General says and I agree that effect of withdrawal after invasion of Island or heavy bombing attacks had begun would be deplorable and that it should take place as soon as possible.

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BY RT. DATE

NOV 7 1973 50

SHEET TWO.  
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7. I propose therefore to make preparations but to take NO active steps for withdrawal and to keep intention strictly secret till I receive reply to this telegram. Withdrawal of majority of HQ will be by ship to COLOMBO. Propose leave/<sup>any</sup>Liaison Officers required by Dutch. Consider also that senior officer for British and Australian troops left in Island should remain.

8. BRETT leaves by plane to AUSTRALIA early tomorrow to hasten despatch of air reinforcements from AUSTRALIA ( see my CCOS 17 and A W 12).

T.O.O. 0155/22

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~~Secret~~

U.S. Chiefs of Staffs

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JCS MEMO, 1-17-73  
BY RT. DATE

NOV 7 1973

To: Combined Chiefs of Staff,  
Washington, and  
Chiefs of Staff, London

From: AEDACOM, Batavia OPX 01987

Dated: 19th February, 1942.

MOST IMMEDIATE

C.C.O.S. 15.

Reference paragraphs A.B.E. of  
War Office C.O.S.(W) 58.

1. I have discussed with PEIRSE, BRETT and BRERETON to-day the length of time of our fighter defence is likely to last as this will probably be ruling factor in defence of JAVA. Once it breaks down we cannot protect our bombers or our harbours and shipping and invasion becomes simple matter for enemy. Land forces in Island could not resist invasion for long.
2. We have at present 35 Hurricanes, 25 P.40's and 25 Brewsters less casualties in air fighting to-day which was severe. PEIRSE estimates wastage at 20 per week. Experience shows increasing rate of wastage as force diminishes.
3. Reinforcements in airt are few. There are 10 P.40's at DARWIN which may arrive and possibly another 10 by end of month, but with BALI in enemy hands wastage likely to be high in transit even if KOEPANG NOT attacked. Supply by INDOMITABLE seems doubtful and late. Supply by LANGLEY hazardous. Taking everything into consideration PEIRSE estimates that at present scale of fighting our fighter force will NOT remain effective beyond next two weeks.

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JCS MEMO. 1-17-73  
BY RT. DATE

NOV 7 1973

(Note by Signals Office. This message apparently was delayed in transit. It is a repetition of original 01673 19/2 which was cleared by W/T to SAN FRANCISCO at 2200 GMT 19/2)

20

MESSAGE.

From: ABDACOM.

IN  
Received:  
Time: 2230  
Date: 14/2

To : British Army Staff Washington,  
for Combined C.O.S.  
War Office for C.O.S.

Cipher.

NO : 01213. 14/2.

From General Wavell, AW 8.

I was in Singapore during February ten and had accident while leaving which has partially incapacitated me for past three days. Latest report from Percival is that Watermains are out and that resistance may be brought to end by lack of water. Situation caused by fall of Singapore and attack on Southern Sumatra has been represented in C C O S 7. Enemy made heavy attack on Pasembang aerodrome and refinery with parachutists today fighting proceeding refinery and aerodrome believed still in our hands.

Two. All available bombers sent against enemy convoy approaching Sumatra this morning. Results not yet known. All available Naval forces assembled to attack convoy tonight or early tomorrow.

Three. Things look dark at moment but hope Japanese parachutists at Palembang may be destroyed and operations in para two get fight break. Ends.

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COPY NO. 22

RECEIVED

Time: 1115 hours  
Date: 14 February

From: ABDACOM, Batavia

To: British Army Staff, Washington, for  
C.C.O.S., rptd. War Office, London,  
for C.O.S.

No. 01164 of 14th February, 1942.


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From General Wavell,

I am most grateful for your kind message.

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MESSAGE

From: ASDACOM: IN  
Received.  
Time: 1411  
Date: 7/2  
To : British Army Staff Washington.  
for Combined Chiefs of Staff. Cipher.  
Troopers for Chiefs of Staff  
from Abdacomm.

Re: 00884 of 7/2.

From General Wavell A.W.7 .

One. We have had run of misfortunes lately. Damage to Marblehead and Houston loss of 16 badly needed A.A. guns by sinking of ship from Singapore, attack on Bali during refuelling of fighters from Darwin. Train accident which lost valuable A.A. personnel.

Two. I missed seeing Generalissimo for which purpose I flew Rangoon. Since he went straight on to India. Hutton had satisfactory interview with him at Lashio and found him most cordial. I had two valuable days discussing Burmese problems and visiting Salween front. I saw Divisional and all Brigade Commanders on southern front and many troops. All in good spirits and much heartened by recent air support. Visit impressed on me necessity for armoured troops at this season when rice fields all dry and am endeavouring to divert to Rangoon all or part of 7th Armoured Brigade now on way to Java.

Three. Our air forces in Burma remain well on top and enemy day and night raids during night February 5/6 and February 6th were ineffective and cost enemy severe loss. Have left American staff officer in Burma to go into questions of operation heavy bombers from Burma and China.

Four/.....

47-a

Cable 00884 7/2 continued.

Four. I still think enemy must be having considerable difficulty in maintaining his air effort and that if all our reinforcements come to hand without delay we shall get on top before long.

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MESSAGE.

From: ABDACOM.

To : British Army Staff Washington  
for Combined C.C.S;  
Troopers for C.O.S.

IN  
Received  
Time: 2021  
Date: 3/2

CIPHER.

NO: 00717 3/2.

From General Havell. A.W. 6.

Today Japanese air attack on Surabaya and Padang which came few days too soon. A.A. Guns being landed today at Batavia were intended for defence these two places as were some fighter aircraft now on way from Australia. It looks as if enemy were repeating tactics of attack on Manila and trying to destroy our aircraft before attacking Naval base. Not yet clear whether attack came from Balikpapan Pindari or Carrier.

2. Our bomber force in Java is continuing to attack Balikpapan convoy and has sunk some more transports. Bombers in Sumatra are attacking enemy air bases in Malaya.

3. We are collecting Naval striking force at Southern end Macassar Strait.

4. My impression is Jap air force very stretched and if once we can get upper hand they will go downhill fairly fast. meanwhile we continue to be pressed on four fronts.

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47-3

*Cmdr. McDowell*

MESSAGE

*21*

FROM: AEDACOM	IN RECEIVED
TO: WAR OFFICE FOR C.O.S. B.A.S. WASHINGTON FOR COMBINED C.O.S.	TIME 1426 DATE 31/1
NO.: 005 86	31/1

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From Gen. WAVELL A.W.5.

1. Visited SINGAPORE and JOHORE yesterday with Air Marshal Peirse and saw Percival Heath Gordon Bennett and Governor. Comparatively quiet day by land and air one Indian Inf. Bde. cut off LAYANG Area but endeavouring rejoin. Divisional Commander Barstow missing. Have not yet heard result withdrawal last night.
2. Considerable number troops previously cut off have rejoined Garrison of Island should be 18 Div. almost intact, 8 Australian Div. of two Bdes. well up to strength. Equivalent four strong Indian Inf. Bdes. from 9 and 11 Ind. Divs. and reinforcing Bdes., and approximate equivalent two Bdes. Indian State Troops and Malaya Bns. Will confirm strength and dispositions when they have settled down.
3. See my 00576\* 31/1 as regards AMBON KOEPANG DARWIN. No news yet of result Japanese attack AMBON.
4. Enemy again advancing against MOULMEIN which appears threatened.

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PLUS U.S. CHIEFS OF STAFF.

\* Not yet received.

*47-2*

MOST IMMEDIATE MESSAGE

IN

22

From ABDACOM

Received  
Time: 1135

To: War Office for C.O.S.  
Washington for C.C.O.S.

Date: 29/1

No. 00488 of Jan 29.

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From General Wavell W.4.

Percival telegraphed last night that after consulting Commanders in JOHORE he had decided to withdraw to SINGAPORE ISLAND by night Jan 30 Jan 31. I have approved decision. In view Japanese superiority on ground and in air and landing fresh troops ENDAU early withdrawal inevitable and desirable: to do so with as little loss and disorganisation as possible.

2. Percival should after withdrawal have equivalent of approximately three divisions in Island of which about half will be fresh troops. Do NOT <sup>know</sup> what losses of men and material troops on mainland have suffered in recent fighting or in what state they will reach the Island. Losses have been heavy but they have inflicted heavy loss on enemy.

3. For prolonged defence of Island much will depend on our ability to operate fighters from SINGAPORE and to reduce scale of enemy air attack. Propose visiting SINGAPORE with Peirce tomorrow if possible.

4. Bomber aircraft have already been removed from island and all personnel and material NOT essential for defence being removed as far as possible.

5. We have rather anxious period ahead. Apart from North Australia and Burma we are faced with three main enemy advances. Considerable enemy Naval force presumably escorting transports located at Northern entrance Molucca Straits may be directed on Ambon possibly even Koe pang. Force at Balikpapan still some 20 ships in spite of losses and also reported moving South probably on MACASSAR/

47-3



LACASSAR or BANDJERBASIN. Third advance directed on SINGAPORE and perhaps on SUMATRA before long.

6. To meet above we have for moment NO naval striking force. Large proportion cruisers and destroyers undergoing repair or refit, remainder on escort duty to East or West. NO further formations land forces in sight for several weeks. Air striking force comprises little more than average of 6 to 8 heavy U.S.A. bombers.

7. With these very limited resources can do NO more than try to defend most essential objectives which I conceive to be SINGAPORE ISLAND, air bases in Southern and Central SUMATRA, naval base at SUMABAYA, aerodrome at KOLPAING. We will do our best to keep these intact and hit enemy as hard as possible. Considerable pressure being exerted by Australia for diversion reinforcements ABDA area to defence Australia. You will realise that with above picture essential at present to assemble maximum strength this area to resist Japanese advance.

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U.S. CHIEFS OF STAFF.

MESSAGE.

COPY NO. 21

From: ABDACOM.

IN.  
Received.  
Time. 0117 hrs.  
Date. 28 Jan.

To: British Army Staff, WASHINGTON  
for Combined C.O.S.  
War Office for C.O.S.

CIPHER.

No. 00424 of 27 Jan.

From General WAVELL. W3.

Para. 1. Heavy fighting continues in Malaya and it looks as if our troops would be forced into Island by weight of numbers on ground and in air. Convoys with Australian reinforcements and Indian Brigade Group have arrived safely. Heavy losses inflicted by air attack on Japanese landing at ENDAU. 2 transports, 1 cruiser and 1 destroyer hit.

Para. 2. 2 more transports sunk or damaged near BALIKPAPAN today. This Japanese convoy down MACASSAR Strait has been roughly handled.

Para. 3. Japanese occupation of KENDARI in southeast of CELEBES constitutes threat to ALBON and TIMOR. It will be attacked by heavy bombers as soon as possible. We may have to meet further Japanese advance East of CELEBES before long.

Para. 4. Targets for our heavy bombers in immediate future:-

(a) Enemy aerodromes in Malaya to reduce threat to SINGAPORE and protect passage of important convoy.

(b) KENDARI.

(c) BALIKPAPAN where there is still large concentration of shipping.

Para. 5. Proposed general air policy being sent in separate cable.

Para. 6. Decision about responsibility for PORT DARWIN and Northern Australia noted. Will submit proposal about command of this area shortly.

Para. 7. Decision about control of A.V.G. noted. Squadron is doing great work in Burma and it is hoped it will NOT be moved.

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U.S. Chiefs of Staff

47-2

GO  
MOST IMMEDIATE

MESSAGE

IN

RECEIVED

FROM: ABDACOM/ from Gen. WAVELL.  
TO: WAR OFFICE for C.O.S.  
British Army Staff WASHINGTON  
for combined C.O.S.

TIME: 0948

DATE: 26/1.

NO: W200357 26/1.

*Gen. Wavell*

Returned this morning from Rangoon.

Do not consider situation immediately serious provided certain steps outlined below are taken as early as possible. Japanese advance in TENASSERIM probably made by comparatively small force.

Our main force South has been withdrawn across SALWEEN and Japanese occupation of MOULMEIN is probable but have instructed HUTTON to take offensive action as soon as he has organised sufficient force.

2.

Following steps for Defence of BURMA essential.

Naval. Anti submarine flotilla base on RANGOON to keep approaches clear. Should eventually consist of two small destroyers, four sloops or corvettes and six trawlers or similar craft at least half of above required at once. None available from present ABDACOM resources.

Land. Reinforcements in sight from INDIA and AFRICA with Chinese assistance should suffice if convoys continue to arrive safely.

Air. Reinforcements promised should suffice for present provide they arrive speedily especially Hurricanes from Middle East. It is essential that A.V.G. Squadron which Chennault is endeavouring to withdraw should remain at RANGOON at least until further fighter squadrons are available. This Squadron has been doing invaluable work. Can I please be informed under whose orders it is to be regarded. Some Hudson aircraft for coastal reconnaissance required immediately.

3.

Internal situation reasonably satisfactory. RANGOON

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JCS MEMO, 1-17-73  
BY RT, DATE NOV

7 1973

47-2

MESSAGE

Cable No. W.200357 of 26/1 Contd.

Docks have been cleared and sufficient labour available for immediate purposes but liable to disappear under bombing attacks. Railways working well.

4. Squadron long range bombers operating from BURMA would have excellent targets and propose to send one as soon as possible.

J.S.M. (30)

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U.S. CHIEFS OF STAFF.

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JCS MEMO, 1-17-73  
EX RT. DATE NOV 7 1973