

RANGOON CHRISTMAS DAY ATTACK 1941

CHRISTMAS DAY 1941 DAWNED HOT AND MUGGY IN RANGOON, BURMA. IT WOULD BE ANOTHER 115-DEGREE DAY. CHARLES H.OLDER WAS ONE OF THIRTEEN PILOTS OF THE AMERICAN VOLUNTEER GROUP'S THIRD PURSUIT SQUADRON STANDING ALERT NEAR THEIR SHARK-MOUTHED TOMAHAWKS ON MINGALADON AIRDROME, NORTH OF RANGOON. IN HIS FIRST COMBAT TWO DAYS EARLIER HE HAD BEEN CREDITED WITH TWO JAPANESE BOMBERS.

AT 11:30 THE AIR RAID SOUNDED, AND MINUTES LATER 13 TOMAHAWKS, JOINED BY 16 RAF BREWSTER BUFFALOES, ROSE TO MEET THE ENEMY. AT 12:10 THE JAPANESE FORMATION WAS SIGHTED -



THREE WAVES OF BOMBERS [90 IN ALL] AND APPROXIMATELY 60 ESCORTING FIGHTERS.

TWENTY-FOUR JAPANESE PLANES FELL TO THE AVG THAT DAY.

JAPAN HAD INVADDED CHINA IN 1937, ISOLATING IT FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD EXCEPT FOR TWO SUPPLY LINES: A NARROW-GAUGE RAILWAY ORIGINATING IN HAIPHONG, FRENCH INDOCHINA; AND THE BURMA ROAD, AN IMPROVED GRAVEL HIGHWAY LINKING LASHIO IN BRITISH BURMA TO KUNMING IN CHINA. THESE ROUTES MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR CHIANG

KAI-SHEK'S NATIONALIST CHINESE GOVERNMENT TO RESIST THE JAPANESE OFFENSIVES INTO THE INTERIOR.

IN 1940 JAPAN TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE GERMAN INVASION OF FRANCE TO CUT BOTH SUPPLY LINES TO CHINA. IN JUNE, WITH FRANCE FOCUSED ON THE WAR IN EUROPE, JAPANESE WARSHIPS MOVED INTO FRENCH INDOCHINA AND CLOSED THE RAILROAD FROM HAIPHONG. A MONTH LATER, THREATENING WAR IF ITS DEMANDS WERE NOT MET, JAPAN SECURED AN AGREEMENT FROM THE HARD-PRESSED BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO CLOSE THE BURMA ROAD.

THE BURMA ROAD REOPENED IN OCTOBER 1940, THE SOLE LIFELINE TO CHINA. BY LATE 1941 THE UNITED STATES WAS SHIPPING LEND-LEASE MATERIAL BY SEA TO RANGOON, WHERE IT WAS TRANSFERRED TO RAILROAD CARS FOR THE TRIP TO LASHIO, AND FINALLY, CARRIED BY TRUCK OVER THE

712-MILE-LONG BURMA ROAD TO KUNMING.



THE MATERIAL MOVING OVER THIS NARROW MOUNTAIN ROAD HELPED THE CHINESE FORCE THE JAPANESE TO KEEP LARGE NUMBERS OF GROUND FORCES STATIONED IN CHINA.

CONSEQUENTLY, JAPANESE STRATEGISTS DECIDED TO CUT THE BURMA LIFELINE, GAIN COMPLETE CONTROL OF CHINA, AND FREE THEIR FORCES FOR USE ELSEWHERE IN THE PACIFIC.

THE RAF WAS VERY WEAK IN BURMA. ONLY THE 67 (FIGHTER) SQUADRON EXISTED WITH 16 BUFFALO AIRCRAFT. THE RAF WAS SUPPORTED BY ONE SQUADRON OF AVG (AMERICAN VOLUNTEER GROUP) WHO FLEW TOMAHAWK P-40'S.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE AIR BASES WAS POOR. THERE

WAS ONLY ONE RADIO-DIRECTION FINDING SET THAT COULD BE USED AND THE BURMA OBSERVATION CORPS HAD NO WIRELESS.

IN RESPONSE TO A BRITISH REQUEST FOR SUPPORT ON 12 DECEMBER, ONE SQUADRON OF THE AVG MOVED FROM THE TRAINING BASE IN TOUNGOO TO MINGALADON, NEAR RANGOON, TO HELP PROTECT THE CAPITAL CITY.



RANGOON WAS FIRST BOMBED ON 23 DECEMBER 1941. THE DOCKS WERE BADLY DAMAGED AND THE AUTHORITIES HAD GREAT DIFFICULTY IN GETTING THE PORT TO FUNCTION.

“THEN CAME THE MOST MISERABLE CHRISTMAS DAY I HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED. IN THE MORNING I DECIDED TO GO INTO RANGOON TO BUY CHRISTMAS CAKE, MINCE PIES, ETC FOR OUR BOYS ON THE AIRPORT. WHILST IN THE SHOP MAKING MY PURCHASES THE WRETCHED SIRENS SOUNDED AGAIN. I STAYED IN THE SHOP AND WAS CROUCHING BEHIND THE FRIGIDAIRE WHEN THE BOMBS BEGAN TO FALL. ONCE AGAIN IT WAS A DOUBLE RAID — RANGOON AND MINGALADON. I WAS DETERMINED, HOWEVER, THAT THE BLOODY JAPS WERE NOT GOING TO DEPRIVE OUR BOYS OF THEIR CHRISTMAS TREAT SO AS SOON AS THE BOMBS STOPPED FALLING I WAS ON MY WAY TO THE AIRPORT WHERE I ARRIVED SOON AFTER THE “ALL CLEAR”. OUR CAMP WAS AN AMAZING SIGHT. IT HAD BEEN THE SUBJECT OF SPECIAL ATTENTION BY THE JAPS. OUR MESS TENT WAS DANGLING PRETTILY ON THE VERY TOP OF A TREE, THREE OF OUR FOUR CARS HAD BEEN PIERCED BY SHRAPNEL AND ONE WAS ENTIRELY OUT OF ACTION. IT WAS AMAZING HOW THE SHRAPNEL WENT CLEAN THROUGH THE ARMOR PLATING. MIRACULOUSLY, NONE OF OUR MEN WERE HURT ALTHOUGH SOME WERE RATHER SHAKEN. THEY WERE ALL IN TRENCHES WHEN BOMBS STARTED FALLING IN THE CAMP SO THEY WERE ALL ABLE TO ENJOY MY PURCHASES. AND THAT WAS TO BE MY

***HOME IN A FEW DAYS. I RETURNED TO BOMB SCARRED RANGOON AND GOT DRUNK!"* CORPORAL FRED MILLEM**



ON CHRISTMAS, THE JAPANESE RETURNED. SIXTY BOMBERS ESCORTED BY TWENTY FIGHTERS SHOWED UP IN SUCCESSIVE WAVES. AN A.V.G. PATROL HAD ALERTED THE SQUADRON ABOUT THEIR APPROACH. THIS TIME, A FORMATION OF TWELVE P-40S WAITED FOR THE ARRIVAL OF THE KI-21 SALLIES AND THEIR ESCORTS. SIXTEEN RAF BREWSTER BUFFALOS WOULD JOIN THEM IMMINENTLY.

IT WAS GOING TO BE A GREAT DAY FOR ROBERT "DUKE" HEDMAN. THIS QUIET PILOT TEAMED UP WITH CHARLES OLDER AND THOMAS HAYWOOD. ORDERED TO INTERCEPT THE FIRST BOMBER WAVE, THE THREE MEN DOWNED ONE PLANE EACH. JOINING THE FIGHT, THE "FLYING TIGERS" REDUCED FIVE MORE OPPONENTS TO NOTHING. THEN HEDMAN ASSAULTED THE SECOND WAVE AND DOWNED A KI-27 FIGHTER, TWO BOMBERS AND ANOTHER FIGHTER, AWARDING HIMSELF WITH FIVE VICTORIES IN A SINGLE SORTIE. FROM TWENTY NAKAJIMA FIGHTERS AND SIXTY BOMBERS EMPLOYED THAT DAY, THE JAPANESE LOST NINE AND FIFTEEN MACHINES RESPECTIVELY. AT THE OTHER SIDE, NINE BREWSTER BUFFALOS AND ONLY 2 P-40 WERE DESTROYED.



AFTER CHRISTMAS RANGOON CONTINUED TO COME UNDER DAILY BOMBARDMENT. THE JAPANESE INFANTRY WIPED OUT THE BRITISH FORCES ON THE BANKS OF THE SITTANG AND NOW PREPARED FOR INVADING THE BURMESE CAPITAL. AERIAL ATTACKS ON THE TOWN FOLLOWED ONE UPON THE OTHER. THE A.V.G. FOUGHT ON DURING JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, ASSISTED BY THE REMNANTS OF THE R.A.F. BUT THE JAPANESE HAD DEVELOPED TACTICS FOR COUNTERING THE FLYING TIGERS.

RANGOON BRIEFING

RANGOON, BURMA

25 DECEMBER, 1941 NOON LOCAL TIME

WEATHER; CLEAR AND HOT

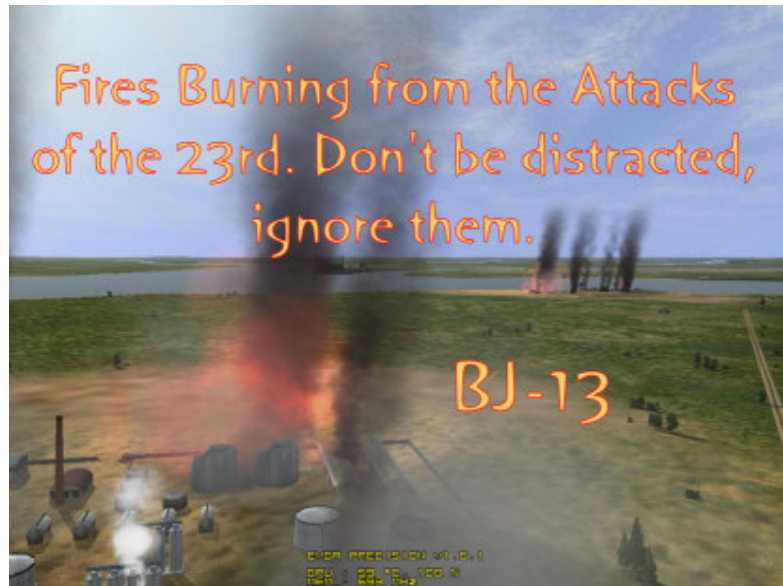
BURMA IS THE NEXT TARGET OF JAPANESE EXPANSION, AND THE BRITISH ARMY IS NOT CLOSE TO READY TO DEFEND THE COLONY. FROM BASES IN OCCUPIED THAILAND, IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY TROOPS HAVE BEGUN INFILTRATING ACROSS THE BORDER.

JAPANESE PLANES HAVE BEEN BOMBING THE BURMESE CAPITAL FOR THE LAST WEEK, FLYING AGAINST STIFF RESISTANCE FROM THE ALLIES.

JAPANESE (BLUE)

PILOTS OF THE EMPIRE, TODAY WE STRIKE ANOTHER BLOW FOR THE EMPEROR AND ASIAN CO-PROSPERITY, AS WE CONTINUE TO ERADICATE THE WESTERN COLONIALISTS FROM THE EAST.

AS YOU APPROACH RANGOON YOU WILL SEE THE REFINERIES IN BJ-13, BURNING FROM EARLIER ATTACKS, IGNORE THEM.

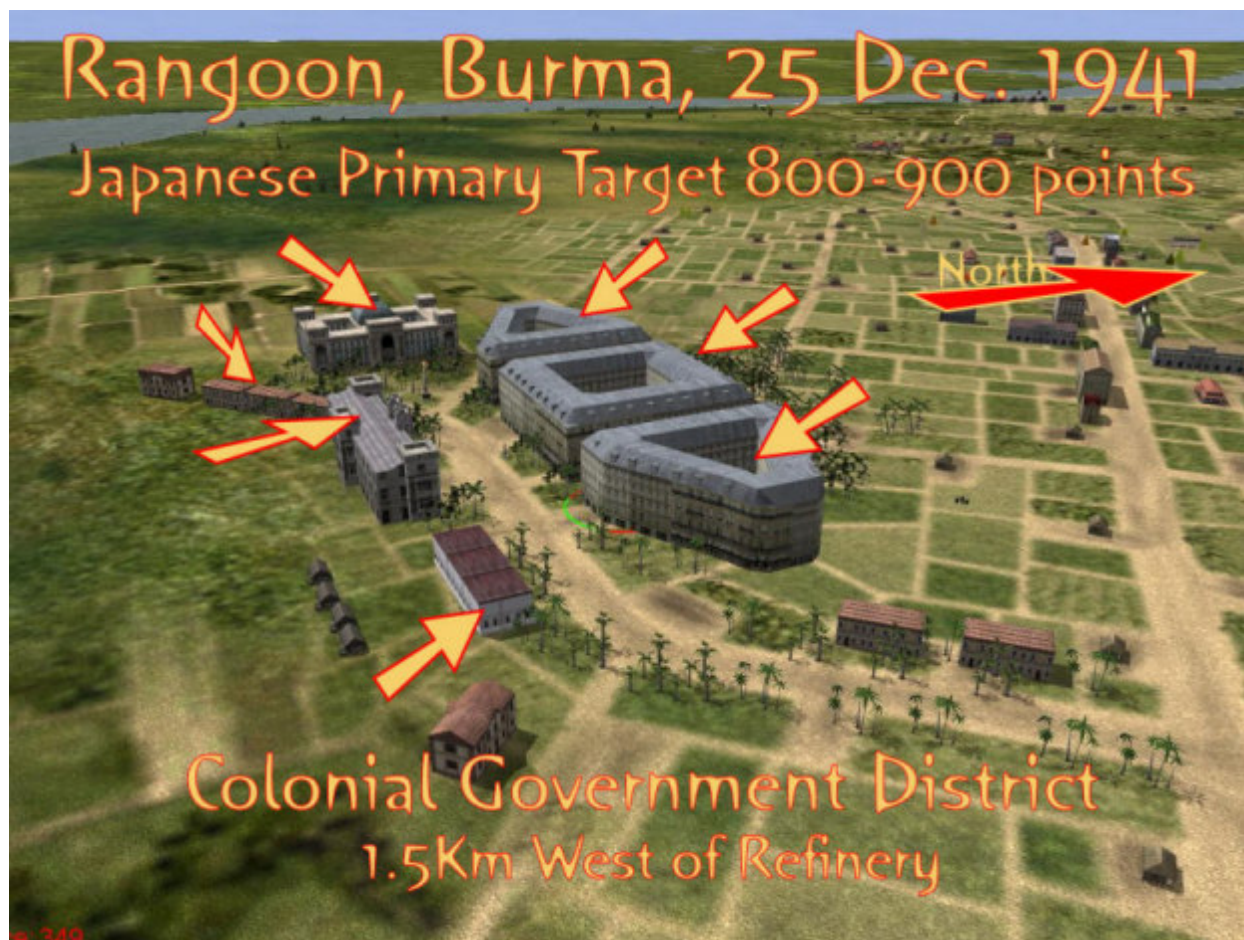


OUR PRIMARY TARGETS TODAY ARE THE INDUSTRIAL AND PORT AREAS OF THE CAPITAL, RANGOON, IN BI-13/9.



KI-43 OSCAR

ALSO ON THE PRIMARY TARGET LIST FOR TODAY, THE GOVERNMENT OFFICES, 1.5KM WEST OF THE PORT.



TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY.

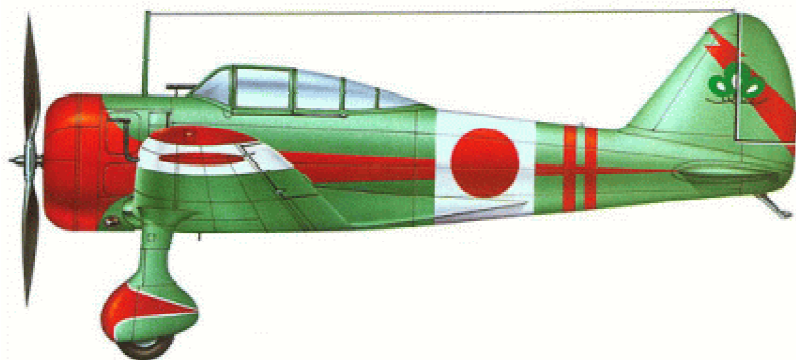
THE ALLIES ARE ALREADY RETREATING IN THE FACE OF THE EMPEROR'S FORCES. TWO TRAINS THAT JUST ESCAPED PEGU AHEAD OF JAPANESE FORCES ARE RACING TO RANGOON. SEVERAL OTHER TRAINS HAVE JUST LEFT RANGOON CARRYING MEN AND MATERIAL TO AIRFIELDS IN THE NORTH. KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED MEN, TRUCK CONVOYS HEADING NORTH.

SECONDARY TARGET, MINGALADON AIRFIELD, JUST NORTH OF RANGOON. HQ FOR RAF AND AVG IN BURMA.



**ALL TARGETS ARE DEFENDED BY AAA.
RENDEVOUS OVER TARGET, 1400HRS.**

**PILOTS OF THE EMPIRE, USE STEALTH, USE FORCE, USE
THE CODE OF THE SAMURAI! BANZAI, BANZAI, BANZAI!**



KI-27 NATE

ALLIED (RED)

MERRY CHRISTMAS MATES, YOU TOO YANKS. CHRISTMAS DAY FORECAST IS FOR TEMPS OVER 100*F, GET USED TO IT GENTLEMEN.

SO, IT'S BEEN A COUPLE DAYS SINCE THE JAPOS HAVE KNOCKED THE HELL OUT OF RANGOON, SO THAT'S GOOD. WE EXPECT THEM TO TRY AND MAKE A MESS OUT OF OUR HOLIDAY, SO KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR SALLIES.

IF THE BOMBERS DON'T SHOW, WE HAVE REPORTS OF A COUPLE RECONS IN FORCE BY IMPERIAL TROOPS AND ARMOR. THEY ARE APPARENTLY TRAVELING ON BOTH HIGHWAYS SOUTHWEST FROM PEGU, BK-17 AND BL-14.



GENTLEMEN, WE JUST GOT WORD FROM PANDA SQUADRON, ENEMY SIGHTED, NE, HEADING RANGOON, VICINITY OF PEGU.

ALSO POSSIBLE SIGHTINGS OF ENEMY BOMBERS NEARING COAST FROM SE, NO INFORMATION ON HEADING OR SPECIFIC LOCATION. WE'LL TRY AND CLEAR THAT UP FOR YOU, GENTLEMEN.

THAT'S IT! TO YOUR PLANES, GENTLEMEN, THEY'RE COMING FOR RANGOON, AND MINGALADON, AGAIN. LET'S MAKE 'EM PAY FOR IT!

GOOD HUNTING, GENTLEMEN, AND GODSPEED!



BREWSTER BUFFALO MKI RAAF SINGAPORE



BRIEFING BY = {TTU} = MC SLASH