

Chapter I Outline of the Operation

(See Illustration No. 1)

As a result of World War I, Japan, the United States and Great Britain came to be referred to as the three great powers. The [former German] equatorial Pacific Islands lying between the U.S. territories of the Philippines and Guam and the U.S. mainland became mandated territories of Japan. From way back, Britain had acquired various rights and interests in China with Singapore and Hong Kong serving as its footholds. Seeking Anglo-American support, China subsequently tried to reduce Japan's vested rights in China. Intensification of the confrontation between Japan and the United States and Britain was inevitable. In 1922, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was annulled and in the same year Japan discontentedly signed the Washington Naval Treaty, followed by the London Naval Treaty of 1930. In 1931, the Manchurian Incident occurred, which led to Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933.

These developments were followed by the North China Incident in 1937 (later renamed the China Incident). In the meantime, the Soviet Union and Germany had been building up their national strength and, in November 1936, Japan concluded the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany. The China Incident steadily assumed more serious proportions, at first particularly through British interference. However, when Germany annexed Austria and occupied Czechoslovakia in 1938, tensions rose in Europe and it now became the United States rather than Britain, which gave active support to China. American anti-Japanese pressure first began with economic measures. In July 1939, the United States gave notice to Japan that it would abrogate the U.S.-Japan Treaty of Commerce and Navigation. Economic pressure dealt a heavy blow, as Japan, poor in resources, had to replenish its resources exhausted in the China Incident. Moreover, it was desperate about its military preparedness to cope with U.S. and Soviet threats. Especially with regard to oil, Japan was almost entirely dependent upon overseas supply. If the United States decided to put an embargo on oil exports, Japan's military preparedness, in particular its sea and air war potential, would simply end up sitting idly, waiting to be rendered powerless. So with the China Incident developing and diplomatic tensions with the Americans and the British rising, the idea of obtaining oil from the nearest and richest oil producing location, i.e. the Dutch East Indies, and securing Japan's national defense became all the more seriously considered. In September 1939, after having concluded the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact in the previous month, Germany started its invasion of Poland, which triggered both Britain and France to declare war on Germany, and thus World War II began. During this period, the Netherlands, which held possession of the Dutch East Indies, had become increasingly more on its guard against Japan, but did not display an adverse attitude. In 1934, Japan dispatched a delegation headed by Ambassador Nagaoka Harukazu to Batavia (Jakarta) to promote friendship between [Japan and] the Dutch East In-

dies. In November 1939, Japan expressed its earnest hope that the European war would not spread to the Netherlands. The Dutch replied that they would be able to avoid that.^(12, 13)

On 2 February 1940, Japan made requests to the Dutch government on matters concerning reciprocal trade, the relaxation or abolition of immigration restrictions, and the granting of facilities for business investment or their enlargement.^(12, 13) The amount of oil which Japan was importing from the Dutch East Indies at the time had been diminishing year by year from about 870,000 tons in 1937 to about 670,000 tons in 1938 and about 570,000 tons in 1939.⁽¹²⁾

On 10 April 1940, Germany started a Blitzkrieg operation against Denmark and Norway, and occupied them at a single stroke. Without delay this led to tensions at the Dutch-German border. On 15 April, Foreign Minister Arita proclaimed that it would not be desirable for the stability of East Asia should the war spread to the Dutch East Indies, expressing that Japan was quite concerned about the region.^(12, 13) In response, the United States immediately made an announcement to check Japan, and then, on 7 May, it announced that it would station its fleet in Honolulu for an indefinite period of time.⁽¹³⁾

On 10 May, the Germans launched a major offensive towards the west. The Netherlands immediately declared war on Germany, but were instantly defeated, and on 13 May, the Dutch Queen and her government fled to London.⁽¹³⁾ In the meantime, on 11 May, Japan once more formally requested all involved countries to ensure the status quo of the Dutch East Indies.^(12, 13) On the same day, the [Japanese] Navy unofficially informed the Fourth Fleet that it would be dispatched to Palau. The Dutch East Indies, on the other hand, notified Japan on 12 May of an import licensing system for chemical products, textile yarn, cotton fabrics, etc.⁽¹³⁾

Finally on 16 May, in reply to Japan's aforementioned requests of 2 February, the Dutch government-in-exile stated that it had no intention to restrict exports to Japan. [In return] on 20 May, Japan demanded a firm commitment to the export of 1,000,000 tons of oil, 200,000 tons of bauxite and other [items] to Japan.⁽¹²⁾ The Netherlands replied on 6 June, but its answer was rather equivocal.^(12, 13)

In June, Italy entered the war and in the same month France surrendered to Germany and Italy.

Along with its support of Britain, the United States adopted a posture of actively containing Japan, which had signed an Anti-Comintern Pact with both Germany and Italy. In June, the United States proclaimed an embargo on the export of machine tools to Japan.⁽¹³⁾ In July, it announced a plan to establish a fleet for the Atlantic as well as one for the Pacific.⁽¹³⁾ In the same month, the United States designated oil and scrap iron for export to Japan as items requiring an export license.⁽¹³⁾

Having forced the British retreat at Dunkirk on 29 May, Germany advanced its best troops to the English Channel and intensified air strikes on Britain, making the collapse of the British Empire seem imminent.⁽¹³⁾ Confronted with this sudden change of the [military] situation, on 27 July, the Liaison Conference between IGHQ and the Government decided upon an *Outline of the Main Principles for Coping with the Changing World Situation*. In this outline, it was decided to "facilitate the settlement of the China Incident and seize a favorable opportunity to settle the southern question," and "with respect to the Dutch East Indies, for the time being to strive to secure its essential resources by diplomatic means."⁽³⁾

At that time, the Dutch East Indies position was that it would agree to exporting bauxite, rubber and tin as requested, but concerning oil it wished to have the actual exports of the past three years serve as a basis. Moreover, it specifically wanted to let the oil companies,

most of which were American or British, handle the agreements. Also, if Japan would not agree to a package-deal import of materials besides the thirteen items Japan had asked for, an increase in oil export would be very difficult.⁽¹²⁾ Basing itself on the decisions in the *Outline of the Main Principles*, the government [of Japan] decided on 24 August to dispatch Minister of Commerce and Industry Kobayashi Ichizō to the Dutch East Indies.^(12, 13)

On 23 September, Japan's armed forces advanced into northern French Indochina, and on the 27th of the same month, Japan, Germany and Italy signed the Tripartite Pact.⁽¹³⁾ In reaction to these developments, the United States announced an embargo on [the export of] scrap iron to Japan on the 26th of this month.⁽¹³⁾

Fearing that an American oil embargo was not far away, Special Envoy Kobayashi, who had arrived in Java on 12 September, started negotiations and did his best to secure the import of the desired amount of oil, but nonetheless it was as if beating the air.⁽¹³⁾ As the China Incident developed, the Netherlands (the Dutch East Indies) had gradually increased its dependence on Britain, but about this time it came more and more to rely on the United States.⁽¹³⁾

In October, a meeting was held in Singapore by the United States, Great Britain and the Netherlands.⁽¹³⁾

Special Envoy Kobayashi negotiated with the aim of importing 3,150,000 tons or, if possible, 3,800,000 tons of oil.⁽¹²⁾ However, with the Netherlands (the Dutch East Indies) caught in a dilemma between the United States and Britain on one side and Japan on the other, an agreement to allow Japan to import its desired quantity remained far from likely. Thus on 17 October, Special Envoy Kobayashi was recalled home.⁽¹²⁾

On 11 December, a new ambassador, Yoshizawa Kenkichi, headed from Tokyo to Java.⁽¹³⁾ Ambassador Yoshizawa arrived in Batavia (Jakarta) on the 28th of the same month⁽¹³⁾ and began negotiations. But as these negotiations were not substantially different from those with the Americans and the British, no progress was made.⁽¹³⁾

In April 1941, Japan concluded the Russo-Japanese Neutrality Pact.⁽¹³⁾ The following month, the United States applied the Lend-lease Act to China.⁽¹³⁾

Following the outbreak of the Russo-German War in June, Japan began a large-scale mobilization, disguised as an exercise (KANTOKUEN or Special Grand Maneuvers of the Kwantung Army) in July, in order to secretly concentrate its military force in Manchuria and Korea. In addition, Japan advanced into southern French Indochina. On 26 July, the day after the convoy carrying the occupation units left the harbor of Sanya on Hainan Island, the United States announced a firm policy of freezing all Japanese assets in the United States.⁽¹³⁾ Britain and the Netherlands immediately followed suit.⁽¹³⁾ On 14 June, Ambassador Yoshizawa received an instruction from Tokyo to break off the negotiations and headed home on the 27th of the same month.⁽¹³⁾

Japan had already committed large forces to the prosecution of the China Incident and it had to cope with the newly developed Russo-German War. Since April of that year, it had been making every effort to negotiate with the United States in order to avoid war against the latter, but now it found itself at the mercy of a total oil embargo. While renewing its efforts to negotiate with America, it now had to prepare a plan to obtain oil resource areas should the negotiations fail. At that time, a general plan for the southern operation had not yet been drawn up.^(10, 17)

Despite Japan's efforts to steer clear of war with the United States, there was no prospect of successfully completing negotiations with the United States. Finally on 1 December, there

was no option left but to decide upon war.⁽¹⁰⁾ On 8 December, Japan's armed forces carried out a surprise attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet in Hawaii and at the same time sudden attacks on Malaya, the Philippines and other locations, thus launching the southern operation.⁽¹³⁾

The Southern Operation Plan

The number of divisions which the Army was able to commit to the southern operation was eleven out of a total of fifty-one divisions.⁽¹⁰⁾

The principal aim of the southern operation lay in getting hold of the Dutch East Indian oil resources.^(10, 17) The idea of the southern operation was, in short, to make a sudden attack against British Malaya and the U.S.-ruled Philippines in order to set up footholds for a quick conquest of the Dutch East Indies, and while occupying the latter and securing its resources, to establish a defense line along the Sunda Islands.

In Southeast Asia, oil was produced in Miri in British Borneo, Tarakan and Balikpapan in Dutch Borneo, northern and southern Sumatra and eastern Java, of which the largest oil fields were those of Palembang in southern Sumatra, and the nearer locations were the oil fields of Miri and Tarakan.⁽²¹⁾

In British Malaya, the British had maintained the stronghold of Singapore as the basis for their rule in East Asia for over a hundred years. Manila was the capital of the U.S.-ruled Philippines. Davao [in southern Mindanao] and Jolo [in the Sulu Islands] were strategic locations dividing the Dutch East Indies and the Philippines, and could serve to launch an attack on the Dutch East Indies. The strategic center of the Dutch East Indies was Java, with the Dutch East Indies Government-General located in Batavia (Jakarta). Kuching in British Borneo was a most suitable location for conducting air operations into southern Sumatra and western Java. In order to occupy the Palembang oil fields, it was preferable to have air support from Malaya and Kuching. Air support from southern Sumatra, Kuching, Banjarmasin (in the south-eastern part of Dutch Borneo), Makassar and Kendari (both on southern Celebes) was required for the conquest of Java. Ambon and Kupang (on Timor Island) in the eastern Dutch East Indies were key locations for covering the left wing of the advance towards Java, and for cutting off reinforcement from Australia. In order to set up air bases in southern Celebes and Banjarmasin, it was necessary to occupy those in Menado, Tarakan and Balikpapan, and get them ready for use as relay fields.

The [Imperial Japanese] Army formed the Southern Army to carry out the southern operation. The Southern Army's operations were planned to be executed roughly as follows:

The Southern Army

Twenty-fifth Army (consisting of the Imperial Guard Division, the 5th Division and the main force of the 18th and the 56th Divisions as its core): First, the 5th Division will land on the northeast coast of Malaya; then the Imperial Guard Division (under the command of the Fifteenth Army in the initial stage of the operation), starting from French Indochina will pass through Thailand and attack the British forces in Malaya. After breaking through the border, they will dash to Singapore via good roads along the west coast. The main force of the 18th Division (from southern China) will be transported to southern Thailand, and the main force of the 56th Division (from Kyūshū) will be transported to the southeast coast of Malaya to conduct a landing operation at an opportune moment.

Kawaguchi Detachment (an element of the 18th Division): Starting from French Indochina, it will occupy Miri and then Kuching in British Borneo.

Fourteenth Army (consisting of the 16th and the 48th Divisions, the 65th Brigade, and the 5th Air Force as its core): In the initial stage of the war, advance units will land at northern Luzon, Legaspi and Davao. By about day fifteen, the main force of the army (consisting of the 48th Division's main force as its core) will land at Lingayen Gulf and a part [of the army] (the main force of the 16th Division) will land at Lamon Bay and first will swiftly seize Manila. The 65th Brigade (standing-by in Taiwan) will be in the second transport. After the capture of Manila, the 48th Division will be diverted to the Java invasion, while the Fifth Air Force will be diverted to the Thailand (Burma) area.

Fifteenth Army (consisting of the 33d and the 55th Divisions as its core): It will stabilize Thailand and then head for Burma. In the initial stage, the army will command the Imperial Guard Division. The main force of the 55th Division (standing-by in northern French Indochina) and the 33d Division (from northern China) will be successively transported.

Sixteenth Army: After seizing Jolo Island and vital areas of the Dutch East Indies outside Java, it will capture Java.

One detachment (an element of the 38th Division or the 55th Division was envisioned) will occupy Ambon and then Kupang.

The Sakaguchi Detachment (an element of the 56th Division) will successively seize Jolo Island, Tarakan Island, Balikpapan, and Banjarmasin.

The 38th Division will operate, after the capture of Hong Kong, under the command of the Sixteenth Army, and will capture southern Sumatra with its main force.

The 2d Division will proceed from mainland Japan and land on western Java as the division constituting the army's main force.

The 48th Division, after capturing Manila, will operate under the command of the Sixteenth Army and land on eastern Java.

1st [Paratroop] Raiding Group: It will raid and occupy the oil refinery at Palembang. After the drop, it will operate under the command of the Sixteenth Army.

Third Air Force: It will give assistance mainly to the operation of the Twenty-fifth Army; this will be followed by assistance to the Sixteenth Army's operations in southern Sumatra and western Java.

As for the Navy, a Southern Task Force was formed for the southern operation. The Combined Fleet (mainly consisting of the First Fleet through the Sixth Fleet, the Southern Expeditionary Fleet, and the First and the Eleventh Air Fleets), deployed the First Air Fleet (a fleet mainly consisting of aircraft carriers) and the Sixth Fleet (a fleet mainly consisting of submarines) to Hawaii, the Fourth Fleet to the [Japanese] Pacific Islands, the Fifth to the east of mainland Japan and the First to the Inland Sea [of Japan]. Most of the remaining units formed the Southern Task Force. The strength of the Southern Task Force was composed of the Second and the Third Fleet, the Southern Expeditionary Fleet, and the Eleventh Air Fleet (land-based [naval] air units) as the core, while the commander of the Southern Task Force was the commander in chief of the Second Fleet. The Southern Task Force's operations were planned to be executed roughly as follows:

Main Force of the Southern Task Force (Second Fleet): Its main unit, in the initial stage deployed in the South China Sea, will support overall operations. Afterwards, it will be diverted to Palau, and support the conquest of the Dutch East Indies.

Malaya Unit (Southern Expeditionary Fleet, joined by an element of the Eleventh Air Fleet): It will support the Army operations in Malaya, British Borneo and Sumatra.

Philippines (Dutch East Indies) Unit (Third Fleet): As the unit for the Philippines in the initial stage, it will assist the Fourteenth Army in its operations. During this period, the main unit will operate with Magong as its base. When the Philippines operation is by and large over, it will become the Dutch East Indies Unit. The Navy will capture Menado, Kendari, and Makassar with its own naval forces, while assisting the Sixteenth Army in its operations (except for the Sumatra operation). The main unit, after proceeding from Magong toward Davao, will move south along Celebes.

Air Unit (main force of the Eleventh Air Fleet): After destroying the enemy air power from Taiwan to the Philippines, it will follow the route of the Dutch East Indies Unit, ready to destroy the air power [of the enemy] on Java from the east, while supporting the Sixteenth Army and the Dutch East Indies Unit in their operations.

Characteristics of the Dutch East Indies Operation

The operation to capture the Dutch East Indies had the following characteristics:

1. It depended on the success or failure of the surprise attack on Hawaii by the Carrier Task Force (the First Air Fleet as its core).
That is to say, the Malaya operation and the Philippines operation were to be pushed through regardless of the result of the Hawaii attack, but the execution of the Dutch East Indies operation largely depended on the success or failure of the Hawaii attack.
2. The operation was designed to strategically use the Philippines, British Borneo and Malaya as stepping stones. Therefore, the progress of operations in these areas, those of the Fourteenth and the Twenty-fifth Armies in particular, would be decisive.
3. As this was a big transoceanic operation over a wide area with long distances to be covered, coordination between different corps and detachments carrying out subdivided operations was imperative.
4. The entire operation required close cooperation between ground, sea and air units.
That is to say, it was necessary to conduct repeated offensive operations to destroy the enemy air power, followed by moving forward a convoy, escorted by navy war vessels under friendly air cover, after which ground units, upon landing ashore, immediately should occupy and equip air bases, then upon the air bases being made ready, the air force units should advance to these bases and engage in their [next] air operations.
Moreover, even though ships and war vessels had been allotted to the southern operation to the fullest extent possible, the ships and escort war vessels were required to be diverted back and forth (north and south), left and right (east and west), because the operation was planned to transport, in a short period of time, an extremely large force of military units, too large compared to the number of available vessels. Therefore the units concerned had to move as an elaborate clockwork of gears and cogwheels.

5. The Malaya operation and the Philippines operation were to be carried out by means of surprise attacks (or at least sudden attacks). However, the Dutch East Indies operation was to be carried out after a considerable number of days had elapsed. Therefore, the operation had to launch an assault on well-prepared allied forces. Furthermore, it was expected that during that period Java would be provided with U.S. and British reinforcements (from Australia and India), and also be reinforced with forces falling back from the Philippines and Malaya, whereas it was also expected that the Japanese forces would have sustained an accumulated loss of aircraft, ships, etc.
6. The operation would be executed depending on the progress of the Malaya and Philippines operations. Therefore it was an operation that followed the strategic guiding principle of enhancing war achievements, requiring a well-matched momentum of speed and strength.
7. Two out of the three divisions of the Sixteenth Army were divisions that were to join the operation only after the capture of the strongholds of Hong Kong and Manila. There were many other units which were used in two different operations.
8. Attached to the operation was the task of safely occupying oil fields and securing them before their destruction by the allied forces.

Scheduling Issues, the Defining Feature of the Execution of the Operation

The surprise attack on Hawaii had succeeded. The sudden attacks on Malaya and the Philippines had been successful as well. Great Britain had brought two of its largest battleships, *HMS Prince of Wales* and *HMS Repulse*, to Singapore right before the opening of hostilities. For the Southern Task Force, being equipped with only two outdated battleships, the *Kongō* and the *Haruna*, and cruisers and less powerful war vessels, these [battleships] meant a serious threat. However, on day three after the opening of hostilities, the Japanese forces succeeded in sinking these two British battleships by means of an air attack. The southern operation thus progressed with unexpected speed. The operation was carried out by and large as planned before the opening of hostilities. There had been minor changes of the plan, but they were due to the unexpectedly favorable development of the military situation. A comparison of the actual performance of the southern operation and the planned schedule would be as follows:

Forecast of IGHQ	Actual result
Capture of Manila	
around day 35 after the opening of hostilities	day 25 after the opening of hostilities
Capture of Singapore	
around day 100	day 69
Landing at Java	
around day 103	day 84
Surrender of the Dutch East Indies	
around day 120	day 92

If a specific remark were to be made on the execution of the operation, it would be about [the changes in] the invasion schedule. Prior to the opening of hostilities, the Southern Army

had proposed to the Navy's Southern Task Force to shorten the invasion schedule and made an agreement with it on 10 November. However, as the initial stages of the operation developed smoothly, the Army quickly proposed a further shortening of the invasion schedule. Upon obtaining approval from IGHQ, the Army made the Navy's Southern Task Force conform to this, and on 1 January 1942, they agreed on a new schedule, which afterwards the Army obstinately tried to fulfil. The outline of changes in the schedule of the landings on Java, including the initial plan and the actual consequences, was as follows (x represents the date of the opening of hostilities):

[1941]

5 November	IGHQ's plan around day x + 103
10 November	Internal agreement between the Southern Army and the Southern Task Force approx. around day x + 80
8 December	Opening of hostilities (surprise attack accomplished)
10 December	Sinking of two large British battleships

[1942]

1 January	Agreement between the Southern Army and the Southern Task Force (approved by IGHQ) approx. day x + 70
28 January	At the request of the Navy, a postponement with the smallest of margins was decided after consultation [between both forces] day x + 77 for eastern Java day x + 75 for western Java
4 February	The Navy requested the Southern Army for a two-day postponement of the day for the invasion of southern Sumatra
6 February	The Navy requested the Southern Army for a further four-day postponement of the invasion of southern Sumatra
8 February	The Southern Army unwillingly agreed to the request and postponed the date for the invasion of western Java, but advanced the date for the invasion of eastern Java day x + 76 for eastern Java day x + 81 for western Java
9 February	One-day advance of the invasion of southern Sumatra
10 February	Reaching a new agreement, setting the date for the invasion of both eastern and western Java at day x + 80
23 February	Two-day postponement of the date of the operation due to the appearance of an allied fleet under sail day x + 82
27 February	Another one-day postponement due to the appearance of an allied fleet under sail day x + 83

1 March

Simultaneous landing operations on both eastern and western Java
day x + 83

The original idea of IGHQ was to render Malaya, the Philippines and British Borneo powerless and to use these locations as bases for successive captures of air bases on territories outside Java, then to move air units forward, and focus their air attacks on Java from [the bases in] southeastern Sumatra, southern Borneo and southern Celebes. When the air attacks showed results, the troops were to cross the sea to Java and carry out the landings. The Southern Army, on the other hand, synchronized the departure time of the convoys with the time of air deployment, and on this basis directed the operation.

The details of each development will be explained one by one.

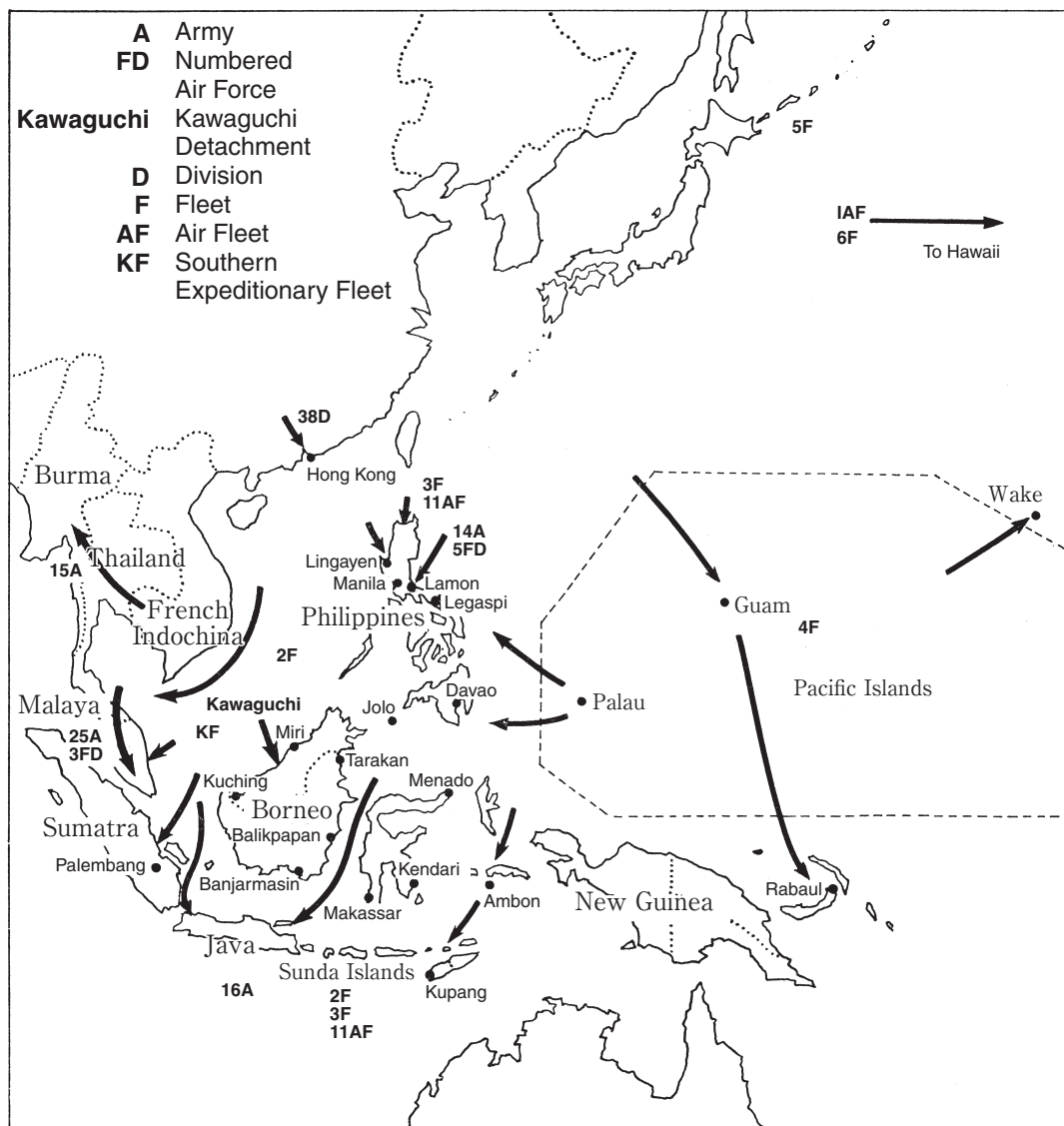


Illustration No. 1—Overview of the Operation Until March 1942