

EXHIBIT NO. 17

NOVEMBER 27, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Far Eastern Situation.

If the current negotiations end without agreement, Japan may attack: the Burma Road; Thailand; Malaya; the Netherlands East Indies; the Philippines; the Russian Maritime Provinces.

There is little probability of an immediate Japanese attack on the Maritime Provinces because of the strength of the Russian forces. Recent Japanese troop movements all seem to have been southward.

The magnitude of the effort required will militate against direct attack against Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies until the threat exercised by United States forces in Luzon is removed.

Attack on the Burma Road or Thailand offers Japanese objectives involving less risk of major conflict than the others named, and clearly within the means available, if unopposed by major powers. Attack on the Burma Road would, however, be difficult and might fail. If successful, the Chinese Nationalist Government might collapse. Occupation of Thailand gains a limited strategic advantage as a preliminary to operations against Malaya or the Netherlands East Indies, might relieve internal political pressure, and to a lesser extent, external economic pressure. Whether the offensive will be made against the Burma Road, Thailand, or the Philippines can not now be forecast.

The most essential thing now, from the United States viewpoint, is to gain time. Considerable Navy and Army reinforcements have been rushed to the Philippines but the desirable strength has not yet been reached. The process of reinforcement is being continued. Of great and immediate concern is the safety of the Army convoy now near Guam, and the Marine Corps' convoy just leaving Shanghai. Ground forces to a total of 21,000 are due to sail from the United States by December 8, 1941, and it is important that this troop reinforcement reach the Philippines before hostilities commence. Precipitance of military action on our part should be avoided so long as consistent with national policy. The longer the delay, the more positive becomes the assurance of retention of these Islands as a naval and air base. Japanese action to the south of Formosa will be hindered and perhaps seriously blocked as long as we hold the Philippine Islands. War with Japan certainly will interrupt our transport of supplies to Siberia, and probably will interrupt the process of aiding China.

After consultation with each other, United States, British, and Dutch military authorities in the Far East agreed that joint military counteraction against Japan should be undertaken only in case Japan attacks or directly threatens the territory or mandated territory of the United States, the British Commonwealth, or the Netherlands East Indies, or should the Japanese move forces into Thailand west of 100° East or south of 10° North, Portuguese Timor, New Caledonia, or the Loyalty Islands.

Japanese involvement in Yunnan or Thailand up to a certain extent is advantageous, since it leads to further dispersion, longer lines of communication, and an additional burden on communications. However, a Japanese advance to the west of 100° East or south of 10° North, immediately becomes a threat to Burma and Singapore. Until it is patent that Japan intends to advance beyond these lines, no action which might lead to immediate hostilities should be taken.

It is recommended that:

prior to the completion of the Philippine reinforcement, military, counteraction be considered only if Japan attacks or directly threatens United States, British, or Dutch territory as above outlined;

in case of a Japanese advance into Thailand, Japan be warned by the United States, the British, and the Dutch governments that advance beyond the lines indicated may lead to war; prior to such warning no joint military opposition be undertaken;

steps be taken at once to consummate agreements with the British and Dutch for the issuance of such warning.

/S/ G. C. MARSHALL

/S/ H. R. STARK

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