

EXHIBIT NO. 65

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JULY 3, 1941.

From: The Chief of Naval Operations, and The Chief of Staff, U. S. Army.
To: The Special Naval Observer, London. The Special Army Observer, London.
Subject: Comment on the report of the American-Dutch-British Conversations, Singapore, April, 1941. (Short title "A. D. B.")

References: (a) United States--British Staff Conversations, ABC-1.

1. You are directed to advise the British Chiefs of Staff that the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Staff regret that they are unable to approve the subject report, because in several major, as well as numerous minor, particulars, it is at variance with reference (a).

2. The major differences between the two reports may be summarized as follows:

(a) The Singapore report contains political matters which must be omitted from this military agreement. The Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Staff are unable to recommend approval, as being beyond the scope of their authority, such political proposals as are contained in paragraphs 6, 8, 25, 26, 27, and 78. These should be taken up by the political departments of the governments, should these departments deem it possible to arrive at definite agreements.

(b) The scope of the naval strategic matters discussed is too broad. The Singapore report aims to set up a new intermediate command not envisaged by ABC-1. The "Eastern Theater," and the "Commander in Chief, Far Eastern Fleet," though not mentioned in ABC-1, form the basis for the naval strategic concept in the ADB Report [2] Under ABC-1, the United States proposed to commit its Naval forces in the Far Eastern Area, except such forces as were operating in the defense of the Philippines, to British naval strategic direction only for employment in the Far Eastern Area. The United States has not agreed, and does not at this time propose to agree, to enter into any commitment for the employment of the naval forces of the U. S. Asiatic Fleet in areas outside of the Far Eastern Area, except as to limited operations having a direct relation to those in the Far Eastern Area. Should it become necessary in the future to retire from that area, further plans may then be concerted. This subject is discussed in detail in a subsequent paragraph.

(c) There is apparent a failure by the Delegates to appreciate the great strategic importance of holding the Netherlands East Indies, and particularly Sumatra and Java, and preventing enemy use of ----- and Loubok Straits. It will be impossible to hold Singapore if these Dutch Islands are captured by Japan.

(d) At British insistence during the ABC conversations the following was inserted in paragraph 11 (b) of the Report:

"A permanent feature of British strategic Policy is the retention of a position in the Far East such as will insure the cohesion and security of the British Commonwealth and the maintenance of its war effort."

In other exchanges during the ABC conversations the British Delegates emphasized repeatedly their view that the retention of the general line of the Malay Barrier was vital to the continued security of the United Kingdom itself. Nevertheless, the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Staff note in Appendix 1 of the ADB Report that, of forty-eight British naval vessels available in the "Eastern Theater," only three British vessels are to operate in the vicinity of the Malay Barrier. No British vessels whatsoever are committed to the naval defense of the Barrier against Japanese naval forces advancing southward, nor to offensive operations designed to close the passages of the Barrier to the passage of Japanese raiders. All British naval forces are assigned to escort and patrol work, most of them at great distances from the position which the British Chiefs of Staff have asserted to be "vital." It may be pointed out that the naval defense of this position is entrusted, by the ADB Report, solely to United States

and [3] Dutch forces. Even the British Force II would not be placed in a position to operate offensively. It would only be during Phase II, which contemplates sending a strong British Fleet to the Far East, that British naval forces would be employed in a manner which might support the defense of the Malay Barrier. Since the eventual despatch of a strong British Fleet to the Far East is considered problematical, the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Staff advise you that, until such time as a plan is evolved whereby British naval forces take a predominant part in the defense of the British position in the Far East Area, they will be constrained to withdraw their agreement to permit the United States Asiatic Fleet to operate under British strategic direction in that Area.

(e) The ABD Report contravenes the agreement set forth in paragraph 14 (f) of the reference. The Chief of Naval Operations cannot agree to permit aviation forces of the United States Navy to operate for other than naval purposes, or to be placed under other than naval command. It is particularly important, in the case of a naval force of inferior strength, to have available naval aviation units which are well trained in naval operations.

(f) After conclusion of the ABC conversations the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Staff advised the British Chiefs of Staff of their desire that, as soon as practicable, delegates be assembled in Singapore for the purpose of drawing up a practical operating plan for the Far East Area in accordance with the ABC agreements. Their view was that a plan should be gotten ready for immediate use in case of eventualities. The report of ADB conversations cannot be considered as a practical operating plan. In it, proposed United States operations in the Philippines are clearly outlined. Dutch plans are fairly definite. British plans may be approximately deduced only from the deployment proposed in Appendix 1. There is no strategic operating plan set forth for operations in common by the three Powers involved. The ADB Report cannot take the place of such a plan, and the opinion is entertained that, until such a plan is drawn up, the cooperative effort of the Associated Powers in the Far East Area will be largely ineffective.

[4] 3. The Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Staff can see no particular advantage in establishing the "Eastern Theater," and appointing a new British Commander termed the "Commander in Chief, FAR EASTERN FLEET." It is suggested that the same purposes could be served by giving appropriate authority to the British Commander in Chief, China, and have that officer, familiar with the general situation, continue to exercise direction even after the arrival on that station of additional British naval forces. It is agreed that there is no objection to giving this officer general strategic control of the various British naval stations in the Indian Ocean and the China Sea, but the establishment of an officer in a superior echelon, in command of all is considered of questionable value. The Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Staff are disposed to discuss this matter further, if so requested by the British Chiefs of Staff, but question the present utility of such discussion, in view of the length of time before it would be practicable to establish such an office.

4. Details of the subject report which either vary from ABC-1, or appear to be unacceptable for other reasons, are indicated below. The numbers referred to are the paragraph numbers of the report.

3 (a): The operating plan should be confined to the plan for the Far East Area, rather than for the "Eastern Theater."

4: This paragraph does not give sufficient emphasis to the security of the Dutch position, nor to the necessity for the greatest possible degree of offensive operations. Attention in this connection is invited to the naval tasks set forth in paragraph 35, Annex 3, ABC-1. It is not agreed that Japanese expeditions against the Netherlands East Indies can be outflanked from Luzon if such expeditions go south via the protected line of the Pelews. This latter remark applies also to paragraph 13.

13: As indicated in previous correspondence, the usefulness of Hong Kong depends on its ability to contain Japanese blockade forces, as that base is unlikely to be usable for naval base purposes.

17: The opinion is held that, if the Pelews line of southward movement is taken by the Japanese, the early capture of Borneo and the northern line of the Dutch Islands is essential to a serious Japanese attempt against Java.

[5] 29: With respect to strengthening the defenses of Luzon, the conference apparently failed to give appropriate importance to paragraph 13 (d) of reference (a). Because of the greater needs of other strategic areas, the United States is not now able to provide any considerable additional reinforcement to the Philippines. Under present world conditions it is not considered possible to hope

to launch a strong offensive from the Philippines. The United States is taking steps to strengthen the defenses of the Philippines through improving the quality of native troops, and by providing additional modern material.

32: This subject was discussed during the ABC conversations, and decision reached to forego inclusion of it in the report, as the right is sovereign. Reference to it should be omitted from the ADB Report.

35: (last subparagraph)—The establishment of a combined staff, (presumably for all Services and all Powers), in Singapore is not considered advisable, there being no agreement, nor possibility of agreement, for a single commander of all of the military forces of the Associated Powers. Appropriate liaison should, of course, be established. Existing liaison for the purposes indicated is considered adequate, so far as the United States is concerned.

38 and 39: These paragraphs cannot be accepted as to United States naval aircraft, for the reason given previously.

41: This paragraph should be omitted as it has already been covered by reference (a). It differs in certain respects from that reference. The United States does not agree that the United States Pacific Fleet must under all circumstances be equal in strength to the Japanese Fleet.

42: The matter of cooperation in the Tasman Sea between the United States Pacific Fleet and the British Naval Forces has been clarified in other correspondence.

45 and 46: This is not in accord with ABC-1, which requires that the Associated Powers, except in an emergency, will exercise command over their own forces. United States Naval Forces would not be "released" to British operation, in the sense in which paragraph 46 is construed, but would be assigned appropriate strategic tasks, derived from those listed in ABC-1, under the strategic direction of the British Commander in Chief, China.

47: As previously indicated, the small part which is proposed for British Naval Forces in the Far East Area is not acceptable. This and succeeding paragraphs should be clarified.

[6] 53, 54 and 55: Since this plan should apply particularly to the Far East Area, the details listed in these three paragraphs cover too wide a scope.

57: This paragraph seems rather indefinite.

61, 62, 63, and 64: It is suggested that reference to Phase II might be omitted from the present consideration, since plans as to operations in that Phase must necessarily be highly speculative at this time.

Appendix II: United States naval aircraft should be listed under the United States Asiatic Fleet. Subparagraph (d) is not acceptable as regards United States naval aviation.

5. If further conferences are to be held in Singapore for drawing up an operating plan for the Associated Powers, it is suggested that the conference would have its work simplified were its deliberations to be guided by an agenda which had been agreed upon in advance between the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Government of the Netherlands East Indies. Therefore, you will inform the British Chiefs of Staff that, after they have had sufficient opportunity to give further study to this matter, the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Staff will be pleased to entertain suggestions which they may have to offer with respect to such an agenda.

(Sgd.) H. R. STARK,
Chief of Naval Operations.

(Sgd.) G. C. MARSHALL,
Chief of Staff, U. S. Army.

JUL 25 1941.
Out OCS

Copy to:

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Comdg. Gen., Philippine Dept. Reg. No. 900051, 7-26-41
British Jt. Staff Mission in Washington

2 Copies to C. N. O.—Rm. 2055

1 Carbn cy accompanied original to S. P. O. B. (checked him)
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