

EXHIBIT NO. 79

DESPATCHES
ON
DUTCH ALERT

Despatches on Dutch alert (1941)

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NOTE.—Despatch from Dutch Legation is in exhibit 21.

[1] Top Secret

21 November 1941

From: OPNAV

Action: CINC AF CINC PAC

Info:

211833

Have been informed by Dutch Legation that they have received a despatch as follows quote according to information received by the Governor General of The Netherlands East Indies a Japanese expeditionary force has arrived in the vicinity of Palau X should this force comma strong enough to form a threat for The Netherlands Indies or Portuguese Timor comma move beyond a line between the following points Davao Waigea Equator the Governor General will regard this as an act of aggression and will under those circumstances consider the hostilities opened and act accordingly unquote inform Army authorities of foregoing X request any information you may have concerning development of this Japanese threat against the Dutch East Indies and your evaluation of foregoing information

[2] Top Secret

22 November 1941

From: CINCPAC

Action: OPNAV

Info:

220315

Have no info which substantiates your 211833 other than your 211755. Indications are 4th Fleet may move Palao. Third Base force there increasing traffic evaluation Dutch report rating "B"

[3] Top Secret

22 November 1941

From: Spenavo London

Action: OPNAV

Info:

221122

By Vice Admiral Furstner, Minister for Marine in the Dutch Government in England and CINC of all Dutch naval forces. I have been asked informally to present the following to you and request your informal reply. Dutch Government has received reports to the effect that Japan is concentrating an expeditionary force in Palau. Dutch state it is difficult to ascertain veracity of this information but they consider that this point does not absolve them from considering

what should be done by the Dutch in case this reported concentration leads to an expedition crossing the Davao-Waigeo line or the Equator east of that line (see PARA 26ADB April 1941). Dutch Government are inclined to consider that any such expedition could only be regarded as a direct menace to Netherlands East Indies and thereby as a non direct threat to the territories and interest of the United States and Great Britain and that therefore it would have to be immediately countered by force. Dutch state that before definitely making up their minds in this respect, they would like to have the views of our C. N. O. The possibility of an individual Japanese commander acting against the intentions of the Japanese Government should be taken into account and also the fact that in case of that nature, the Japanese Government has the tendency to back up the commander in question considering that otherwise the Japanese would lose face. Dutch have received information that 4,000 laborers have left Japan for Palau.

I suggested the possibility of confusion between the movement of laborers with the reported movements of expeditionary force.

Biddle requests this be passed to State for information.

[4] Top Secret

23 November 1941

From: CNO

Action: SPENAVO

Info:

~~222040~~

Your 221122 introduces political questions upon which the CNO is not in a position to offer advice but you may express my views concerning the importance of the Pelews for the defense of the mandates and for offensive operations against either the Philippines or Nei. OPNAV questions accuracy of information concerning an expeditionary force near the Pelews but is aware that land and air forces and facilities there are in process of expansion. CINCPAC and CINCAF are checking on recent Japanese movements. Will advise you further.

[5] Top Secret

23 November 1941

From: CINCAF

Action: OPNAV

Info: CINCPAC

~~221150~~

No information here supporting Dutch report in your 211833. We have not detected presence in mandates of any men of war other than those normally assigned Fourth Fleet and although all units of latter have not been positively identified since 1 November it is probable that they are all in mandates but no concentration these units is apparent. There may have been an increase in number of transports and marus but this is hard to establish with certainty. The concentration of marus in Saipan area which has been apparent since about 20 October and numbers between 35 and 40 continues. CINCFOURTH is at Saipan and AIRON 24 may be. Traffic association between units combined fleet and mandates mentioned in COM 16 0916 of 27 October continues. One BATDIV and two carriers may be preparing to proceed mandates but no such movement has been detected. We continue to watch closely.

[6] Top Secret

24 November 1941

From: OPNAV

Action: SPENAVO London

Info:

~~250100~~

CNO advises as follows after studying special reports from CINCAF CINCPAC and Guam on the subject of my ~~222040~~:—you are at liberty to disclose the info to Vice Admiral Furstner and the British CNS. None of these special reports show any info supporting the Dutch report. Unquestionably activity in the mandates has increased both as regards warships and merchant types. A con-

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siderable number of garrisons are being strengthened. CINC Fourth Fleet is in Saipan and some units of fleet plus merchant types are fairly well distributed throughout the mandates. Air force submarine and patrol craft activity is increasing but as a general proposition Japanese emphasis is chiefly on the Truk and Jaluit areas. The CNO does not believe that any large Japanese aggressive force is now prepared for any immediate move from the region under discussion but he is concerned over southward troop movements from Shanghai and Japan to Formosa and also apparent preparations in China Formosa and Indo China for an early aggressive movement of some character. There are no clear indications at present as to the direction or strength of such a movement and the situation should be carefully watched.

[1] Top secret

25 NOVEMBER 1941
FROM: CINCAF
ACTION: OPNAV
INFO: CINCPAC
250623

Shipping Adviser Batavia informs that Dutch report concerning Palau originated with Army in Timor. Portuguese Timor was named as objective of the alleged expeditionary force. Info was classified as very doubtful and has had no confirmation.

[8] Top Secret

3 DECEMBER 1941
FROM: SPENAVO LONDON
ACTION: OPNAV
INFO:
031411

Part 1 of 2: I have kept Admty informed regarding my 221122 and your 222040 as Admty has discussed same subject with Dutch authorities. Further suggested to Admty that it might now be necessary for Dutch authorities to declare area south and west of Davao-Maigeo-Equator line to be dangerous to shipping in order that Dutch forces might be free to take prompt action against suspicious vessels crossing from north and east. Admty informed declaration from naval point of view would constitute useful defense measure. Essential for political reasons that one should be declared in as unprovocative form as possible and should further be represented as a defense one rather than dangerous one. Admty informed Furstner they also doubt accuracy of this info. In view Dutch proposal involved matters of high policy, it was recommended Dutch take question up with Foreign Office thru Dutch Foreign Minister. When Foreign Minister visited Eden, his proposal went beyond that of Furstner as it invited joint declaration of defense.

(See page two)

[9] Top Secret

3 DECEMBER 1941
FROM: SPENAVO LONDON
ACTION: OPNAV
INFO:
031411

(Page Two)

One by A or B Powers. After consulting Admty Eden replied to Dutch Foreign Minister as follows; A. That during the continuance of the present negotiations between Japan and the US in Washington, it was undesirable that any declaration should be made unless there was the plainest evidence that Japanese were preparing an expedition against Netherlands territory. The State Department would be particularly likely to be influenced by this consideration. Part Two follows.

[10] Top Secret

4 December 1941
From: SPENAVO LONDON
Action: OPNAV
Info:
ø31413

(Part Two Baker)

That it therefore seemed better to make no declaration at all until there was evidence more definite than was at present available of concentrations of Japanese forces constituting a threat to Netherlands territory. (C). His Majesty's Government recognise the military value that the declaration of a defense zone would have if definite evidence of such concentrations was obtained but that they consider the declaration would be less provocative to Japan and less prejudicial to the Washington negotiations if it were confined to a unilateral declaration by the Netherlands East Indies of a zone manifestly designed as a defense measure for their own shores. (D). That in similar circumstances His Majesty's Government had been compelled to make a unilateral declaration of a defense zone on the open seas off the coast of Johore when the Japanese concentrations on the northern border of Indochina began to constitute a threat to Malaya. The declaration of this zone in waters adjacent to British territory was plainly a measure only [11] of defense and was at the time accepted as such by Japan without serious criticism. (E). Mr. Eden therefore suggested that if a declaration proved necessary the Netherlands Government should declare that a certain military and naval defense measures have been taken in the area south and west of the Davao-Waigeo-Equator line and that accordingly all vessels intending to enter this zone must notify the Netherlands naval authorities of their intention and call at specified ports for routing instructions. Such a declaration would be analogous to that made by His Majesty's Government off Johore and would not be likely to increase existing tension. Winant and Biddle informed. Please inform State.

[12] Top Secret

5 December 1941
From: CNO
Action: Spenavo London
Info:
ø4223ø

While CNO agrees with you that November reports of a Japanese concentration in the Pelews were unfounded, the possibility of an attack by the Japanese from that region against the Philippines or Nei cannot be ruled out. This replies to your ø31411 and gives CNO views as to the military aspects of the Dutch project to declare areas south and west Davao dash Waigo dash equator line dangerous to shipping in order that Dutch forces might attack suspicious vessels entering from north and east. Were this area declared dangerous to shipping the prohibition would apply to all merchant shipping of whatever nationality and to naval vessels of the United States and United Kingdom as well as to those of Japan. Large amounts of shipping traverse this general area and it is questionable if Dutch could set up promptly a naval control system that would obviate excessive delays of shipping most important to the United States and particularly shipping carrying United States naval and army reinforcements to the Philippines as all United States shipping between west coast of United States and the far east area is now routed via Torres Strait. If NEI declares this large area closed it would be quite a different matter from the British closure of the Jahore area which is a very small one. Japan would be free to close Okhotsk Sea, the Sea of Japan, and all the western portion of the South China Sea and the Gulf of Siam. Were the United States to acquiesce in the Dutch declaration it would have few grounds for objecting to a Japanese declaration of the same character. At present United States defense aid is going to Russia via the Okhotsk Sea and the Sea of Japan, and the United States, United Kingdom, and Netherlands East Indies are executing extensive reconnaissance measures in all directions considered dangerous. Shipments to Siberia and reconnaissance measures ought to continue and CNO is convinced a declaration by the Dutch closing the area in question would be most prejudicial to naval and military interests of the three powers. If Dutch authorities consider some warning should be given Japan CNO believes it should take the form of a declaration to Japan that in view of the current situation Japanese naval vessels or expeditionary forces crossing the Davao Waigeo line would be considered hostile and would be attacked. Communicate these views to the admiralty and the Dutch naval command in London.