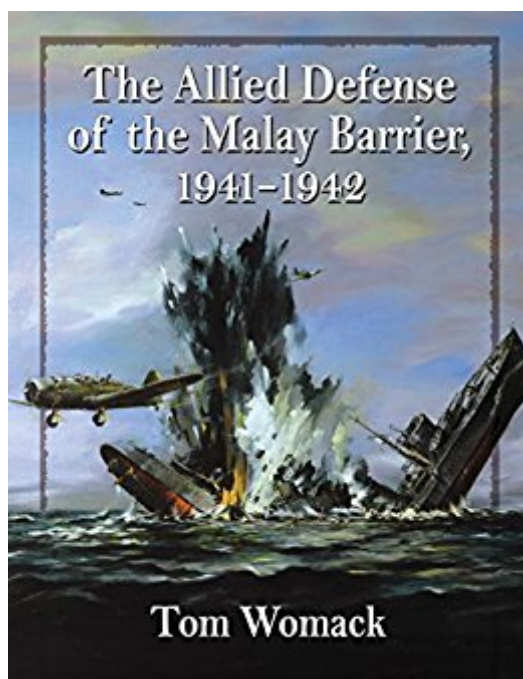


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# The Allied Defense Of The Malay Barrier, 1941-1942



## Synopsis

Though few realize it, the Netherlands East Indies were the object of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Likewise, their invasions of Guam, Wake Island and the Philippines were mainly diversionary operations to safeguard their main assault on Dutch and British colonies. Since the end of World War I, Japan had coveted the vast East Indies oil reserves, and the colony had feared invasion since Germany overran Holland in May 1940. Isolated politically the weakly defended archipelago was a tempting prize. The East Indies government initially maintained a strict policy of neutrality while desperately working to build up its military strength. As Japanese actions pushed the region toward war, the Dutch reluctantly embraced closer ties with America and Britain. For a brief period, the East Indies were key players in Pacific War strategy. This book details for the first time in English the Dutch prewar strategy, their efforts to counter Japanese espionage and their sizable though largely forgotten military contribution in the early months of the Pacific War.

## Book Information

File Size: 39706 KB

Print Length: 367 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 1476662932

Publisher: McFarland (December 1, 2015)

Publication Date: December 1, 2015

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01CIM8ZFY

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #873,658 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #240

in Books > History > Europe > Netherlands #2257 in Books > History > Asia > Japan #4373

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Military > World War II

## Customer Reviews

Historian and author Tom Womack's new "The Allied Defense of the Malay Barrier, 1941-1942" immediately raises the question for many "what and where is the Malay Barrier?" Womack explains

that prior to 1940-41, the term could not be found on any map as a physical location. It generally referred to the long string of islands that formed the southern edge of Western colonial territories in the Southwest Pacific. Initially, it included the British Malay Peninsula, the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) (now Indonesia), Sumatra, Java and the Lesser Sunda Islands, but could include territories such as Borneo, Celebes, and Netherland New Guinea. The Dutch, of course, considered the NEI the crown jewel of their Empire, which in the 1930s was the third largest in the world, behind only those of Britain and France. The well-written introductory chapters concisely trace Dutch influence in the East Indies back to the age of wooden ships and sail. In 1596, spice traders from Holland moved into the region, and over the next 300 years, the Dutch colonized the vast island chain. The Industrial Revolution of the 1800s saw transition of the world's shipping move to steel hulls and steam propulsion. Holland's relatively small industrial base could not effectively compete with other world powers, and the Netherlands was soon eclipsed at sea, both commercially and militarily. Elsewhere in Asia in the early 1900s, Japan began to quickly modernize its military forces along Western lines and began its own brand of colonization of its neighbors. Japan, with no natural resources of her own, had long coveted the vast East Indies oil fields. Beginning in the 1930s, the Japanese Empire became mired in a protracted, undeclared war with China.

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