



SUPPLEMENT

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LOSS OF H.M. SHIPS PRINCE OF WALES AND REPULSE

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 17th December, 1941, by Vice-Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton, K.C.B., D.S.O., Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet.

*Office of the British Naval
Commander-in-Chief,
Eastern Fleet,
17th December, 1941.*

Be pleased to lay before the Board the accompanying reports on the operations resulting in the loss of H.M. Ships PRINCE OF WALES and REPULSE on 10th December, 1941.

2. These reports comprise a narrative of the operations drawn up by my direction and the original reports from the Commanding and surviving Officers of H.M. Ships concerned.*

3. The press of time and circumstances have prevented a more thorough analysis of the operations being made so far and I consider it preferable to despatch forthwith the available evidence, as many of the officers concerned are now returning to the United Kingdom.

4. In the circumstances, I feel unable, as I would wish to have done, to bring to the special notice of Their Lordships cases of individual good service, of which there were many. I will submit my further observations at a later stage, but in the meantime I would ask Their Lordships to obtain from Captain W. G. Tennant, R.N., and Lieutenant-Commander A. G. Skipwith, R.N., their recommendations for the recognition of those who were specially deserving.

5. All accounts agree that in coolness, determination, and cheerfulness in adverse circumstances, the ships' companies of these two ships

Admiralty footnote :—

* Only the reports by the Captain of H.M.S. REPULSE and senior surviving officer of H.M.S. PRINCE OF WALES, named in paragraph 4, are here reproduced

lived up to the best traditions of His Majesty's Service.

(Signed) G. LAYTON,*
Vice-Admiral,
Commander-in-Chief.

NARRATIVE OF OPERATIONS OF FORCE Z.

(All times are Zone GH ($-7\frac{1}{2}$ hours) unless otherwise indicated).

Intentions of the Commander-in-Chief.

It was the intention of the Commander-in-Chief to attack Japanese transports and warships which had been reported early on 8th December to be landing troops on the east coast of the Kra Isthmus and at Kota Bharu.

2. It was known by noon on that day that our Air Force and aerodromes in the north were being heavily attacked and that large Japanese forces were landing at Kota Bharu in Malaya and between Singgora and Pattani in Thailand. It appeared likely that our Army and Air Force would both be hard pressed and it seemed to the Commander-in-Chief unacceptable to retain a powerful naval force at Singapore in a state of inaction.

3. The Commander-in-Chief hoped that, with fighter protection if possible, or failing that, by surprise, he might attack the Japanese forces off Singgora and Kota Bharu at dawn on the 10th.

Admiralty footnote —

* Vice-Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton, K C B , D S O , relinquished command of the China Station to Admiral Sir Tom S V Phillips, K C B , at 0800GH on the 8th December, 1941, it having been decided by the Admiralty to merge the command of the China Station with the Eastern Fleet. Admiral Layton assumed command of the Eastern Fleet at about 1500GH on the 10th December, 1941. He had therefore no responsibility for the operations of Force Z nor for any other operations during this period.