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**THE CARRIER-BORNE AIRCRAFT ATTACKS ON OIL REFINERIES
 IN THE PALEMBANG (SUMATRA) AREA IN JANUARY, 1945**

Admiralty foreword :—

One of the objects of the activities of the East Indies Fleet, as defined by the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies in January, 1945, was the destruction of enemy war potential, especially oil. The refineries in Sumatra, particularly those at Pangkalan Brandan and Palembang, produced at least half the oil used by Japan, including about three-quarters of the aviation spirit. Further, their employment eliminated the wasteful transport of crude oil to Japan for refining.

This despatch by the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies deals with two attacks by carrier-borne aircraft of the Royal Navy on the oil refineries at Pladjoe and Songei Gerong in the Palembang area. The Pladjoe refinery was the largest and most important in the Far East. Information later obtained from Japanese sources revealed that by the end of May, 1945, four months after the attack, this refinery was only up to half production.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 14th March, 1945, by Admiral Sir Arthur J. Power, K.C.B., C.V.O., Commander-in-Chief, East Indies Station.

East Indies Station.

14th March, 1945.

OPERATION "MERIDIAN"

Be pleased to lay before Their Lordships the accompanying report received from the Flag Officer Commanding Aircraft Carriers, British Pacific Fleet covering Operation "Meridian", which was planned for the destruction of the two oil refineries at Songei

Gerong and Pladjoe in Sumatra. I am in general agreement with the report.

2. From the evidence now available, I consider "Meridian" achieved its object and dealt the Japanese oil industry in Sumatra a severe blow from which only a very partial recovery will be possible. In addition to the destruction of these oil plants, the Japanese were defeated decisively in the air fighting.

3. While in Ceylon before leaving for this operation, every opportunity of equipping and training the air squadrons was taken. Two small scale operations were carried out against oil targets in the north of Sumatra in December and January, whilst a full scale rehearsal for "Meridian" was carried out at sea off Ceylon in January. The passage to the scene of operations provided opportunities for exercising the fleet.

4. The results of the training before the force left Ceylon showed that it had reached a standard just acceptable for an operation of this magnitude.

5. Meteorological conditions in the operational area were as forecast and the inter-tropical front then moving south with the sun presented serious difficulties to flying. The scale of defence in the vicinity of the target was formidable.

6. Throughout the operation all difficulties were overcome and a notable success was achieved by very careful planning, the courageous conduct of our aircrews, and the distinguished leadership of Rear-Admiral Sir Philip L. Vian, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O.

(Signed) ARTHUR J. POWER,
Admiral,
Commander-in-Chief.