

Letter from **Francisco Xavier do Amaral** (1937-2012), first President of Timor-Leste to Jack Carey, President, 2/2 Commando Association of Australia, 2008.

Dear Jack Carey,

It gives me great pleasure to write to you and through you to communicate with the surviving commandos of No. 2 Australian Independent Company.

In 1942 I was just six years old yet my boyhood memories of Funu Segundu Mundial coming to Timor, remain vivid.

Indeed there are Timorese people alive today who also remember the coming of Australian soldiers and remember their courage and defiance in fighting the Japanese enemy.

On behalf of my people, I salute the men of Second Independent Company who lived amongst us then and fought the enemy in the mountains of Timor.

Alas history has not bestowed favours upon the land of Timor, however our two peoples are truly bound together through the experience of comradeship in war and today in peace.

So I welcome this opportunity to now open dialogue with you—it is my sincere wish that our enduring bond continues into the future. I hope too, that our shared history will become known and be celebrated by new generations of Australians and Timorese.

Already some Timorese youth have together with a group of Australians walked across the island of Timor.

Perhaps even the grandchildren , or your sons and daughters one day will follow in your footsteps in Timor Leste? To be walking the hills together seeing those places where as young commandos with your Timorese companheiros you fought the enemy, will be a grand tribute to honour our wartime generations.



Edward Willis

WWII IN EAST TIMOR AN AUSTRALIAN ARMY SITE AND TRAVEL GUIDE

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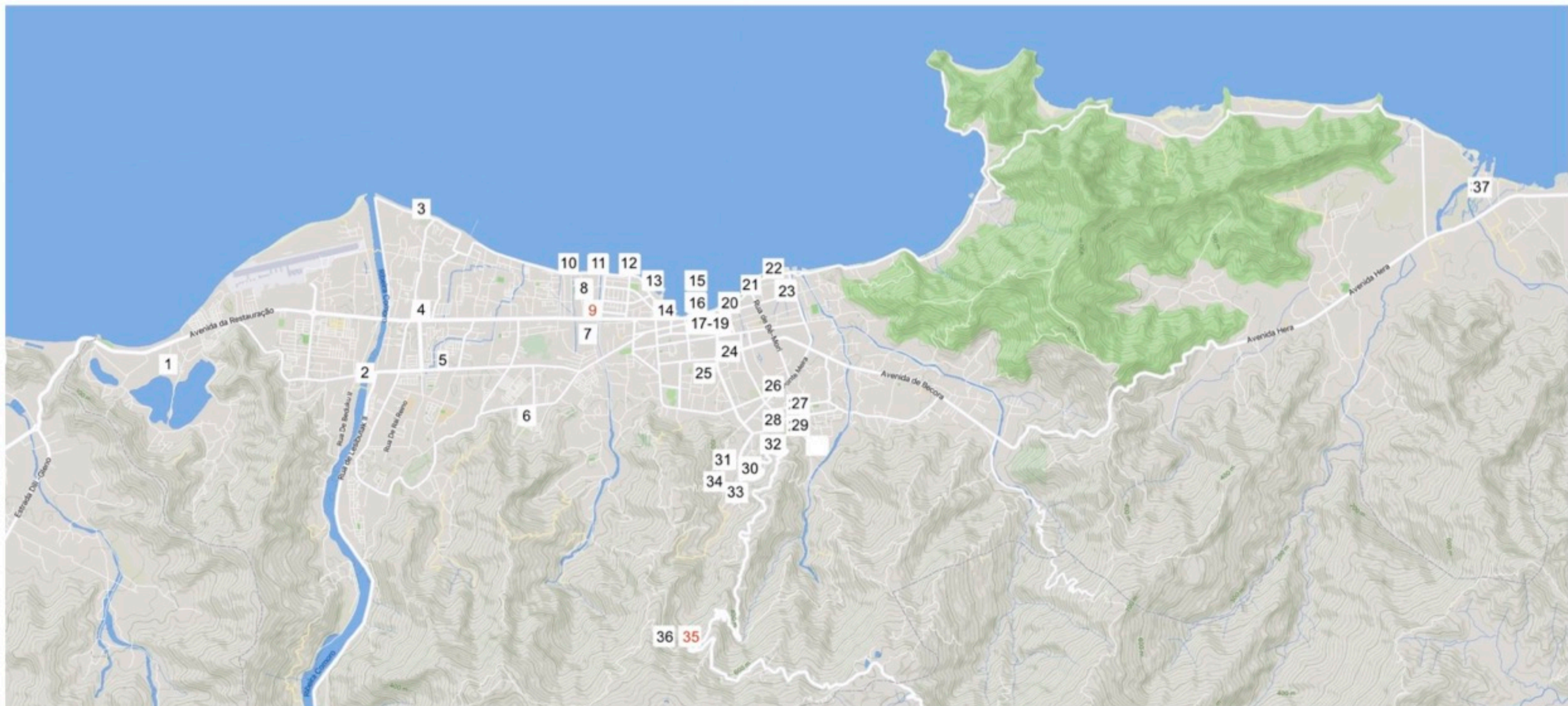
Edward Willis

3. DILI



The **Dili District** lies on the north coast of the island. It borders the districts of Manatuto to the east, Aileu to the south, Liquiça to the west and the Savu Sea to the north; it comprises also Atauro Island to the north. It has a population of 324,269 inhabitants (Census 2022) and an area of 372 km². It is the country's smallest district. Its capital is the city of Dili which is also the

national capital. The district is identical to that of the same in Portuguese Timor, with the only difference that it used to comprise the municipality (today district) of Aileu. Dili comprises the subdistricts of Atauro, Cristo-Rei, Dom Aleixo, Nain Feto, Metinaro and Vera Cruz. [1]



WWII Sites in Dili

	SITE	GPS
	WESTERN SITES	
1	Cactus Flats Camp	8°33'38.6"S, 125°30'24.1"E
2	Comoro River Crossing	8°33'12.2"S, 125°32'10.7"E
3	Japanese landing	8°32'22.7"S, 125°32'20.8"E
4	Ration truck massacre	8°33'15.2"S, 125°32'28.8"E
5	Japanese artillery pieces	8°33'35.7"S, 125°32'45.0"E
6	Ceramics Factory (Brickworks)	8°33'58.032"S, 125°33'11.958"E
7	Japanese airfield extension	8°33'22"S, 125°33'45"E
8	Dili airfield	8°33'01.9"S, 125°33'26.5"E
9	Sparrow Force House	8°33'13.968"S, 125°33'29.508"E
10	2 AIC landing	8°33'13.968"S, 125°33'29.508"E
11	Canto Resende monument	8° 32' 55.2"S, 125° 34' 02.3"E
12	Farol lighthouse	8°32'54"S, 125°34'08"E
13	Motael Church	8°33'02.9"S, 125°34'14.3"E
14	Monument to Lieutenant Manuel Jésus Pires	8°33'14.1"S, 125°34'26.8"E

he had seen me coming, and knew that the Jap would shoot me once I entered the arched entrance. His firm voice of command, and definite bearing convinced me that he would shoot if necessary. How he remembered me after five years, and under such instant conditions has always intrigued me. I was not all together surprised that he was engaged in this sort of work, and often wondered what happened to him eventually. When I returned to our truck the others were gathering, and Cpt. Callinan remarked that it was a false alarm, and no questions were asked. We heard later that the last Jap had been rounded up.

After the war I traced Smith's wife to Victoria Park, and she told me that he never came home again. He had been posted missing, presumed killed in action. He must have been some secret agent or undercover man, living alone gathering vital information, but did have friends somewhere in that town. He certainly looked the part as he faded into the darkness of that brick kiln. These civilian Japanese had been in Dilli negotiating with the Portuguese authorities to instigate an air service between Tokyo and Dilli when Japan entered the war. Their interest in this 'drome, only four hundred and fifty miles from Darwin, had not really fooled anyone, hence our presence". [3]

References

- [1] *Património arquitetónico de origem Portuguesa de Díli*: 197-200.
- [2] James Palliser Smailes WX12381.
- [3] Smailes, *Memoirs*: 90.

7. Japanese Airfield Extension

8°33'22"S, 125°33'45"E

The Dili Heliport occupies the site of an airfield built by the Japanese occupation force between March-July 1942. It lies just south of the Av. President Nicolau Lobato, bounded on the eastern side by the Presidential Palace and on the western side by the Ministry of Defence. The Australian Embassy and Sparrow Force House reside on the opposite side of the Av. President Nicolau Lobato to the north.

The current Dili Heliport occupies the same area and has the same alignment as the Japanese built extension to the old Portuguese airfield described here.

During December 1942, an "Appreciation for the capture of the Island of Timor" was produced. The preliminary plan, "Madrigal", envisaged an operation in two phases, the capture of Koepang and its development as an advanced base, and operations to secure the remainder of the island, the operation to be carried out between April and October 1943. On 25th January 1943 General MacArthur ruled "Madrigal" out of place in the period proposed for it, by defining any plans for the taking of Timor as a "long-distance project", which was, in the event, never embarked upon. [1]

However, it was this context in which the *Area Study of Portuguese Timor* [ASPT] was prepared by former 2AIC Section Commander, Captain David Dexter. The *Terrain study*, as it is subtitled, was released on 27 February 1943 and provides the following detailed description of the airfield in Dili that was such a critical focus of WWII in East Timor. It will be noticed in the text that particular attention is given to landing places and how to approach it in order to mount an effective attack.

3. Airdromes:

This airdrome is located on a level stretch of land on the north coast of Portuguese Timor, 1 1/2 miles (2 km.) west of the town of Dilli, and now consists of two prepared strips, one N/S [North/South], 1,290 yards (1,180 m.) and the other E/W [East/West], 1,250 yards (1,140 m.). This latter runway and the southern portion of the former are situated on ground to the south of the main coast road which formed the south boundary of the old Portuguese airdrome area and constitute an extension by the enemy. Further extension of the N/S runway to the South appears possible.

It may also be possible to extend the E/W runway to the East by removing trees and houses. Extension to the West appears impracticable, as this would run out into the paddy fields, which are periodically flooded by the Comoro River. Coral and limestone surfacing material are available and have been used for repairing the runways.

The airdrome is between one and two miles (1 1/2 km. and 3 km.) to the north of the foothills of a mountain range which rises to 6,000 feet (1,840 m.) approx. 5 miles (8 km.) from the site. There is open sea to the North and northeast. On all other sides the only obstructions are trees and native houses near the boundaries of the landing area. The topography of the foothills is such that a rather sharp turn is necessary in approaching from the southeast.

In the wet season, December to March, clouds with a base of 1,000 feet are common on the foothills of the mountain range.

Dispersal facilities are limited. The enemy appears to make use of a clump of trees along the eastern edge of the N/S runway and just south of the E/W runway and in the coconut plantations to the west of the old airdrome area. This latter area was used to disperse fighter aircraft seen on the field in March and April, 1942.

The prevailing wind in the dry season (April to November) is from the northeast, and in the wet season (December to March) is from the northwest.

Communication with Dilli town is by the main coast highway and by the old Dilli-Aileu road, each of which, in this area, is a good M.T. road.

Beach landings can be made about 3/4 mile (1 km.) to the west of the airdrome, which is then approached through coconut and banana plantations between the coast and the main road. A.F.V.'s [Armoured Fighting Vehicles] may approach through this area with fair cover.

Both Australian and Japanese troops have already landed on the beach and made the above approach to the airdrome. In view of this, there might be certain advantages in landing further to the West between the Comoro River and Tibar. The approach from here by A.F.V.'s must be made along the coast road until the Comoro River is reached or tropical undergrowth and cactus make the area most difficult for A.F.V.'s. This area is enclosed by the mountains to the South and spurs running to the coast at Tibar and to the west of the Comoro River.

The Dilli coastal area from Hera to the west of the Comoro River is also enclosed by a ridge of mountains running parallel to the coast south of Dilli, with spurs running to the coast at Cape Fatu Cama and to the west of Comoro River. A good foot and pony track runs along the top of the range from Remexio to Lau-Lora and overlooks the whole of the Dilli area. Spurs of the range run as close as 1,000 yards to the airdrome, O.P.'s were established by

Australian troops in these spurs. Lau-Lora is reached by a good track leading up the mountain from the Comoro Valley just south of Comoro village. [3]

Control of the Dili airfield by the Allies and the denial of its use by the Japanese was the main justification for the landing of the 2AIC and Dutch troops in Dili on 17-20 December 1941 without the approval of the neutral Portuguese colonial administration. The airfield was in flying range of north-western Australia and enemy aircraft based there would also threaten vital shipping routes serving that region. [4]

If deterrence by the Australian-Dutch presence did not dissuade the Japanese from attacking the airfield, then it was decided to defend it for as long as was practicable against what were anticipated to be overwhelming odds and then blow up the runways with pre-laid demolition charges. This was what actually happened when the Japanese landed in Dili on 20-21 February 1942. [5]

The destruction of the runways was a temporary inconvenience for the Japanese who through pre-invasion reconnaissance and intelligence reports were well aware of the airfield's deficiencies – it was a low-lying, boggy and subject to flooding. Immediately after taking control of Dili they put into effect plans to extend the airfield on dryer land further to the south on the other side of the Dili-Tibar road as described in the ASPT. [6]

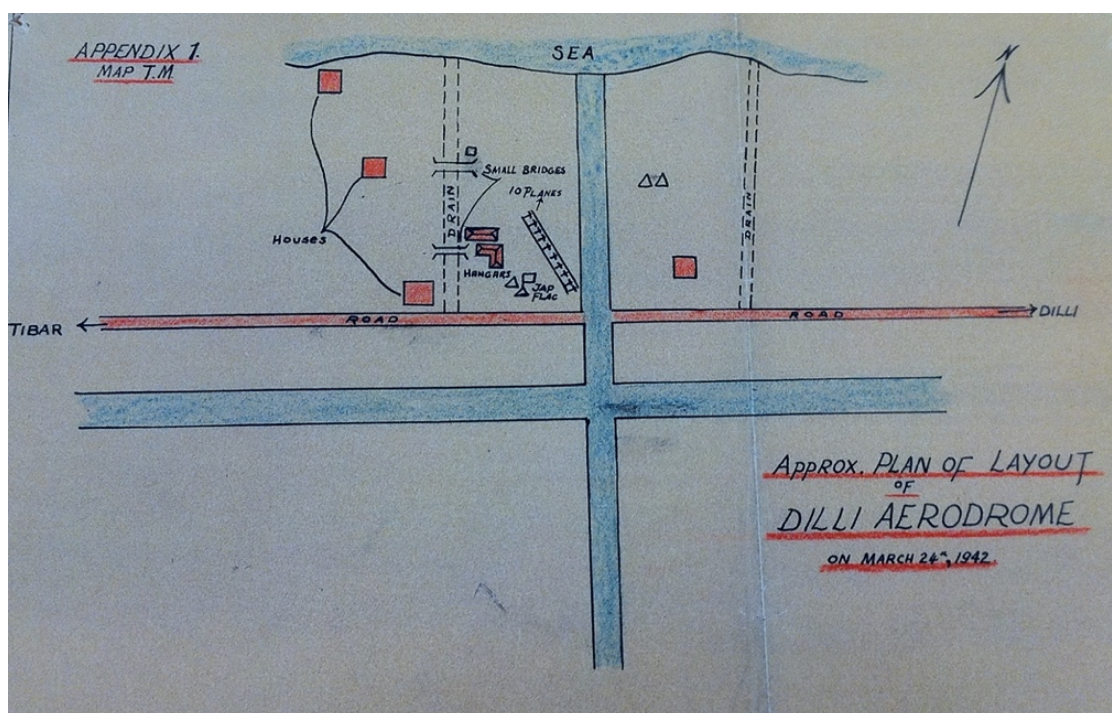


Looking towards the Beduku observation post from the heliport – May 5 2019

For the remainder of the Timor campaign Japanese activity and operations at the airfield were recorded and reported on by 2AIC and 4AIC soldiers from observation posts located on the eastern and western outskirts of Dili. These reports often resulted in Allied bombing raids on the airfield.

“After Ross set off on his return to Dili, having given the Independent Company officers details of the Japanese defences at the aerodrome and around Dili, Captain Callinan's thoughts turned to a raid on the Japanese positions around the aerodrome. Callinan, who was a bold leader as well as an excellent tactician, decided the best way to concoct a plan was by personally going to Dili to carry out observations of the Japanese positions and

movements. Accompanied by the company's engineer officer, Lieutenant D.K. Turton, Callinan set off from Hatu-Lia a few days after Ross. After stopping overnight at Railaco, where they salvaged some explosives left behind in the company withdrawal, they arrived late the next day at a small village [Beduku] on a ridge above the Comoro River, a short distance from the aerodrome. Moving the following day to a nearby village Callinan and Turton were fed and assisted by friendly Timorese who were caring for a Dutch native soldier who had escaped from Dili. This soldier and a friendly Chinese trader were questioned at length by Callinan. Neither was able to speak English, but with his slight knowledge of Malay and frequent recourse to an English-Malay dictionary, Callinan was able to obtain, by painstaking questioning and use of a sketch map, detailed information of the Japanese dispositions around Dili and at the aerodrome.



Airfield plan prepared for Callinan and Turton's report on their reconnaissance [8]

Callinan and Turton then moved to a carefully selected observation post from which they could watch the aerodrome. For several days they noted the Japanese defences and made plans for a raid on the airfield, awaiting the arrival of Lieutenant Dexter whose section was to carry out the attack which had been fixed for the last night of March. After Dexter's arrival Turton returned to Railaco to collect his sappers in order to rehearse the attack. However, before the arrangements could be completed orders arrived from Company Headquarters that the raid had been called off. Callinan's disappointment was intense. At first he contemplated turning a Nelsonian blind eye to the orders and carrying out a small raid at once, but then decided that it would be better to pull out as ordered and to return later to carry out a properly planned, large-scale raid. However, the opportunity was lost, and no raid on the aerodrome ever eventuated". [7]

References

- [1] On 25th January 1943 the following observations of General MacArthur were conveyed to the Advisory War Council. "General MacArthur said that he viewed the

increase in Japanese strength in Timor as purely defensive to secure themselves against any attack from Australia and to suppress continuation of the successful commando tactics which had been pursued by the Australian and Dutch forces. The C-in-C added that he definitely did not possess the resources to retake Timor. Furthermore, the Japanese have control of the seas in this region and MacArthur could not land by air from Australia and keep supplied by air the force that would be necessary for the recapture of this island. Any plans for the taking of Timor were a long-distance project." National Archives of Australia, AWC Minute No. 1121, Strategic Importance of Timor, 25 Jan 1943.

- [2] ASPT: Map 4 detail.
- [3] ASPT: 1-2.
- [4] Willis "75 years on: The Australian and Dutch Landings at Dili 17-20 December 1941".
- [5] AWM "Enemy occupation Of Dili: report on events 20-21 Feb. by Lt. McKenzie".
- [6] The Australians were also aware of the airfield's deficiencies but a different solution to them was recommended in a report by Johnston, Bradfield and Ross who stated "The aerodrome is quite satisfactory for use in dry weather for Lockheed 10 or D.H. 86 aircraft, though certain improvements at relatively small cost should be made. It is too small for Lockheed 14 aircraft. During the wet season, December to March, however, the ground would be soft and boggy, and to make it available for wet weather use an expenditure of £7,000 on the provision of a gravel runway would be necessary". NAA: A816, 19/301/778 - *Report on a visit to Portuguese Timor by Captain Johnston, Dr. Bradfield and Mr. Ross.*
- [7] Wray, *Timor 1942*: 90-91.
- [8] AWM PR00249 - Reconnaissance report contained in David Dexter papers.

8. Dili Airfield

8°33'01.9"S, 125°33'26.5"E

The previous entry 5 regarding the "Japanese Airfield Extension" includes maps and location information the original airfield constructed by the Portuguese.

Lieutenant Gerry McKenzie [1] was in command of No. 2 Section, A Platoon 2AIC and responsible for the defense of the airfield when the Japanese landed. He prepared the following report on this dramatic event:

"At 2200 hrs on night 20-21 Feb, Pte Hasson on sentry duty at the aerodrome reported hearing movements at sea. The thump of heavy engines winches and small craft was plainly audible.

Cpl Delbridge and two men were sent out to investigate and brought back reports that two ships were close in to shore and were apparently landing troops in small motor launches. The talking of the landing party proved it to be a foreign force.

DOTO [Callinan] was informed immediately and action stations were manned by No 2 Section with RAE attached.

At about 2359 hours Dutch artillery opened up with two shells across the bay. The enemy replied immediately with light naval guns and heavy machine gun fire across the bay towards Dilli.

The naval vessel which was closest in then retired West to about the mouth of the Comoro River and there proceeded to land further troops using motor launches and searchlights.



Lt. Gerry McKenzie [2]

Awarded a Commander in Chief's Commendation Card, and the Netherlands Bronze Cross for services on Timor

At 0020 hrs Cpl Curran and four men went on patrol west of the drome down through the thick bush for half a mile and back to drome along the road. This patrol reported no enemy movement close to drome but movement west along the shore to a presumed concentration at the mouth of the Comoro.

At 0040 hrs I was ordered to cover the road west from Dili with Bren fire. Cpl Delbridge, Pte Ryan No 1 Gunner and Pte Smith F.C. No 2 gunner were immediately sent out to do this job. Pte Doyle (runner) went out with this party to bring back a report on the area and gun position.

At 0110 hrs my Bren opened fire along the road and was immediately replied to with grenades and heavy H.E. (Moral effect) bombs.

Quietness reigned for about half an hour and then much movement was evident out around gun position. At 0140 hrs crawled back to H.Q. suffering from shock and reported that both Pte Ryan (leg) and Smith F.C. (shoulder) had been wounded and that the Bren had been captured. Pte Doyle (runner) who had been hiding, listening, arrived back almost with Cpl Delbridge and collaborated [sic] this report. From then on until 0340 hrs much movement and talking all around us signifying that we were outnumbered. A large number of Japanese had been engaged on the S.W. corner of the drome, presumably burying their dead and questioning Pte Ryan (in perfect English).

As communication with the Dutch had been cut off for some time I appreciated the position, and decided to no longer act according to my previous or earlier orders. My decision after appreciation was to close my own troops closer in to the Hangar buildings so we could develop a sort of village fight, prepare to destroy all gear and blow the drome before evacuating (my plan of evacuation was also altered in as much as my route would be through the town instead of practically straight south into the hills). Pte Doyle was at this juncture despatched to contact Capt Callinan and make known my decision.



"Dili airstrip" – Charles Bush – AWM ART26323 – Painting, oil on canvas

Description: In ruins from the Allied bombing during the Japanese occupation. It was here that the section of 2/2nd Australian Independent Company under Lieutenant C.E.G. McKenzie fought a brilliant action when the Japanese landed 1942. [3]

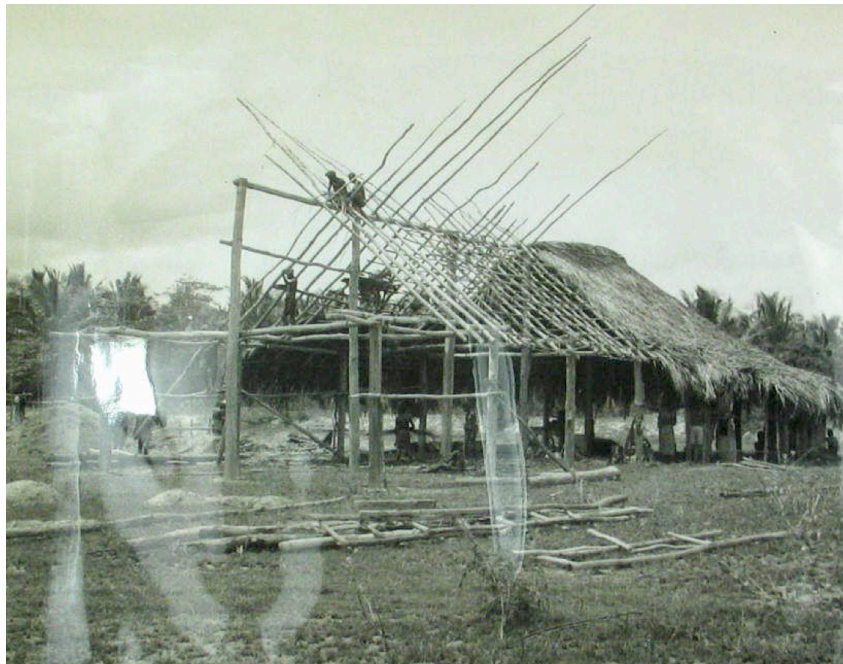
Setting up petrol to burn the gear was in progress when a small Jap patrol of about a dozen appeared at a little bridge over drain west of the hangar interrupted our work but it was soon wiped out by Ptes Poynton and Thomas (T.S.M.G.s), Hudson (rifle) and Cpl Curran (grenades).

Pressure from enemy prevented me from any further action regarding the destruction of gear. (It was plainly visible by this time that we were being surrounded and I thought that a fire would betray our line of retreat). I sent orders to prepare for a dawn attack. Ptes Poynton and Thomas (T.S.M.G.s) Hudson and Hasson (rifles and grenades) were to cover our retreat momentarily. All was quiet for a while and then a single shot rang out from the centre of the drome. (One of the R.A.E. had shot a Jap or fifth columnist who was obviously trying to destroy the connections to the charges laid on drome).

Cpl Curran was given command of blowing the drome and the evacuating of all men excepting the four men mentioned and myself. They were to retire to the S.E. corner of the drome (after blowing it) and cover us as we came out.

It was now just on dawn and another Jap thrust succeeded in getting about four men across the small bridge. Cpl Curran was cut off over the drain just then and used his bayonet to effect (five Japs) presumably one officer, to get back. He also noticed a small party of Japs

who had crawled over and into a small room near drain. These he grenaded in passing. Two of the party of four had now forced Pte Hasson out of position and pursued him back to where I was able to use the rifle (Pte Doyle's) instead of my pistol.



Workshop under construction at aerodrome [4]

Meanwhile the remaining three who were with Pte Poynton were now attacking fiercely and were causing much havoc amongst streams of Japs who were trying to force their way across the little bridge. I had just got close enough to Poynton to tell him to come when the drome went up and Signaller Gannon was found wounded. Poynton and Thomas continued to fight until Hudson had removed Poynton's water bottle and given it to Gannon. Our party of four was now ready to leave (myself leading) when a light automatic opened up on us. Having no cover, I momentarily decided to surround him and use grenade but just then got nicked by a bullet of his second burst, so quickly replied with three lucky shots from the hip. Our line of was now clear except for mortar fire, presumably Dutch, which made us keep our heads down as it seemed to be directed on no set target. During our race across the drome we were engaged from all around with machine gun fire (a type, from noise, etc., which suggests a heavier gun than had been hitherto encountered).

During the exit I made it my business to quickly inspect the craters and found the one I saw closely to be 12-15 ft deep and 15-20 ft wide". [5]

References

- [1] Charles Francis Gerald McKenzie WX5369.
- [2] <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C33188>. Accessed 13 March 2024.
- [3] <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C174957>. Accessed 13 March 2024.
- [4] NAA: A816, 19/301/778 - *Report on visit to Portuguese Timor by Captain Johnston, Dr. Bradfield and Mr. Ross.*
- [5] AWM52 25/3/2/5 - *Enemy occupation of Dili: report on events 20-21 Feb. by Lt. McKenzie.*

a month later, on a day of a Japanese feast, the Japanese announced that the chief had been killed because he was not a friend of the Japanese. The Japanese told another chief all this as a threat as to what would happen if they did not assist them. [4]

References

- [1] Fonseca, *Monumentos portugueses em Timor-Leste*: 66-67.
- [2] Doig, *A history of the 2nd Independent Company and 2/2 Commando Squadron*: 147, 149.
- [3] Brandão, *Funo (guerra em Timor*: 120, 125, 126, 128, 134, 150-151.
- [4] War crimes – Timor Asia (general) : TIMOR 4 – War crimes – Timor Asia (general)
[component 1 of 7] NAA: MP742/1, 336/1/1724 PART 1.

15. LAUTEM



The **Lautem District** lies on the eastern end of Timor Island; it also includes Jaco island. It has a population of 69,836 inhabitants (Census 2022) and an area of 1.702 km². The capital of Lautem is Lospalos, 248 km east of Dili, the national capital. The district is identical to that of the same in Portuguese Timor. At that time, many areas had Portuguese names, such as Vila Nova de Malacca (today Lautem), Nova Nazaré (Com), Nova Sagres (Tutuala), Nova Âncora (Laivai) and Silvícola (Loré), among others. Lautem comprises the subdistricts of Iliomar, Lautem Moro, Lospalos, Luro and Tutuala. In addition to the official languages of the country (Tetun and Portuguese), the population speaks Fataluku, a Papuan language spoken in the islands of New Guinea.



WWII sites – Lautem District

Overview

Portuguese rule was interrupted when the Japanese invaded Lautem in 1942. One can see along the road from Lautem to Com several bunkers used to guard against any invasion by

the Australians. The Old Portuguese establishment at Lautem also bears some remnants of the Japanese. The Japanese also built a prison located in Trisula that was later used by the Portuguese. Many East Timorese who fought the Japanese invasion lost their lives. [1]

Chamberlain:

“Australian commandos fighting the Japanese operated briefly in Lautem, but almost all the Australian military activity in Portuguese Timor occurred further west.

In late December 1942, the Japanese Army’s 2nd Formosan/Taiwanese Infantry Regiment (FIR) arrived in Lautém – having disembarked in Dili on 7 December. 2 FIR’s 750-strong 1st Battalion did not deploy to Lautém but was located in Koepang. East District Corps (Lautém) was under the command of Colonel Tanaka Toru with a HQ 48 Infantry Group element at Lautém.

The 2 FIR headquarters was located in Lautém (Vila Nova Malaca), its 2nd Battalion in Vila Aviz (Fuiloro) and its 3rd Battalion at Com – totalling about 2,200 troops. Support units included a tank battalion, artillery, logistic units and the 1,800-strong 7th Air Division (an Army formation). Army aircraft from the 7th Air Division participated in attacks on northern Australia in June 1943.

In Lautém, the Japanese established a major airfield on the northern coast at Lautém (7,000 feet) to east of Lautém town and another a few kilometres along the coast to the east at Cape Chater (6,200 feet, 5,000 feet) with a capacity also for flying boats.

Inland from Lautém on the plateau at Fuiloro, near the then Portuguese Posto, the Japanese also constructed a main airfield (5,000 feet – dry weather only) i.e., the present-day airstrip near Raça (Rasa), north of Los Palos town.

An emergency landing strip was also constructed on the southern coast west of Loré at Daename/Saenamo, and a radar station was also established on a hill behind Loré. Allied aircraft regularly attacked the Japanese airstrips and installations in Lautém District.

Total Japanese troops in East District (Lautém) as at February 1944 reportedly numbered 6,955. By August 1945, total Japanese military strength on the island of Timor was about 8,000 – with 5,000 planned for withdrawal to Sumbawa due to food shortages in Timor”. [2]

e. Lautem Plateau:

Terrain between Fuiloro and Los Pala along the western boundary of the Lautem Plateau is suitable for airdrome construction. The Fuiloro airdrome is located in an area 3 miles (5 km.) by 1 1/2 miles (3 km.). which was surveyed by Dutch Shell Co. and considered by it suitable for airdrome construction. The terrain south of this area is less level, there being a considerable number of grass hummocks which would increase the work necessary for clearing. The best labour in Portuguese Timor is available in the Lautem area. [3]

....

The extreme eastern end of the island, in which is the Lautem Plateau or Fuiloro Plain and the straits between Timor proper and the small island of Jaco, are also of military importance. The Lautem Plateau, according to many reports, offers the best site in the eastern part of Portuguese Timor for an extensive operational airdrome which has now been developed by the Japanese. It is not more than 5 miles (8 km.) from a small but good

harbour called Com. The straits of Jaco provide shelter in all weather for vessels of 5,000 tons or possibly larger. [4]



Lautem Plain, Portuguese Timor. 1946-01-04. Lieutenant Bush, Official War Artist attached to the Military History Field Team, examining anti-paratroop stakes. The Japanese placed the sharpened bamboo poles on all plains and open spaces they thought suitable for Allied parachute landings. (Photographer Sgt K. B. Davis) [5]

References

- [1] *Profile of Lautem District – March 2002*: 5.
- [2] Chamberlain, *The Struggle in Iliomar*: 37-38.
- [3] *ASPT*: 3.
- [4] *ASPT*: 7.
- [5] <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C221044;>
<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C221045?image=1>. Accessed 29 March 2024.

1. Elomar

8°44'46.5"S 126°46'19.4"E [1]

[**Elomar** is] On the shore of a small bay 3 miles (5 km.) west of Cape Oca Ona. There is an anchorage in about 4-5 fathoms (8 to 10 m.). A drying reef extends from the eastern shore of this bay, but off the village is a broad sandy beach affording good landing. Two pillars in line bearing 026° lead to the anchorage. [2]

Chamberlain:

“According to Iliomar elders, later in early 1943, a Japanese force – including vehicles, and with a large number of levies from Los Palos, Loré and Tutuala, entered Iliomar from Loré and again occupied southern Iliomar. All local youth were mobilised as paid labour, and the motorable coastal road was extended westwards into Uato-Carabau. The Japanese declared that they were not attacking Iliomar, but rather only seeking out Australian and Portuguese soldiers. The Japanese force established an encampment on the southern coast at Elomar – Elomar was about 8 kilometres west of present-day Iliomar II village.

All five Iliomar village chiefs were arrested by the Japanese and tortured for information at Alfani/Samaliu (i.e., Elomar) – including João Hornay. João Hornay [193] and Augusto Seixas Miranda were also put on trial but released after four days following the surrender to the Japanese of the ten rifles.

Vai-Lai-Vai is a collection of residences of the two local Portuguese (neither a Chefe de Poste), the governors Palace, and several storage sheds and native huts. It is about 2 km from the sea, and disconnected with Dia-Name and Lore by good dry weather roads. THE Portuguese, houses are of timber and small.

The Governor's residence is a palatial building of stone and timber, with an iron roof. There is a large basement underneath.

It is placed on the side of the hill approximately 50 feet above sea level and has an excellent view of the bay. At present it is unoccupied.

The Portuguese are friendly and willing to help, in particular the deportado, Jose Filipe, [3] from Remexio, he has a wife and innumerable small children at his home.

The other Portuguese, lives by himself, and has no apparent job, apart from keeping an eye on the local post office.

Communication: There is a telephone which connects with the posto at LORE (approximately five or 6 km away) and thence LAUTEM. [4]

References

- [1] ASPT: 85.
- [2] ASPT: 33-34.
- [3] José Filipe; i.e., Arsénio José Filipe – one of the most notable *deportados*; see Chamberlain, *Forgotten men*: 15-17.
- [4] The notes on Vai-Lai-Vai and the sketch map were derived from, S. Jones, "Recce – Ilomar – Vai-Lai-Vai – Dai Name, 12 September 1942" - AWM 54, 571/4/19.

4. Loré

8°38'43.5"S, 127°00'49.8"E [1]

Loré is 21 miles (33 1/2 km.) at a bearing of 158° from Lautem. It is built on the southern foothills about 3 miles (5 km.) north of Cape Loré and is served by the anchorage of Saenamo. The country is hilly and covered with fairly dense forest.

It is a posto town with a very small population. The posto consists of a residence, kitchen and storeroom. It is surrounded by a coconut plantation, and west of this a maize plantation. South of the posto is a rest house, stable and store shed. There are several native houses along the Saenamo road, and, along a track running southeast, some Chinese shops and a native village. North of the posto is a small stream from which water is brought in a bamboo pipe to a concrete water tank next to the posto. [2]

LORÉ – a small posto under the command of the commandant of FUILORO. Has no resident commandant, but has a native woman of the higher caste who seems to be the local "queen". She provided food and seemed very friendly. LORÉ is inland about three kilometres from the sea. The posto itself comprises one small two story building and two houses of the ordinary bungalow type. LORÉ was not bombed or machine gunned during the August disturbances. [4]



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

125205

Loré, Portuguese Timor. 1946-01-04. The stone walls of the Portuguese posto (Fort).
(Photographer Sgt K.B. Davis) [3]

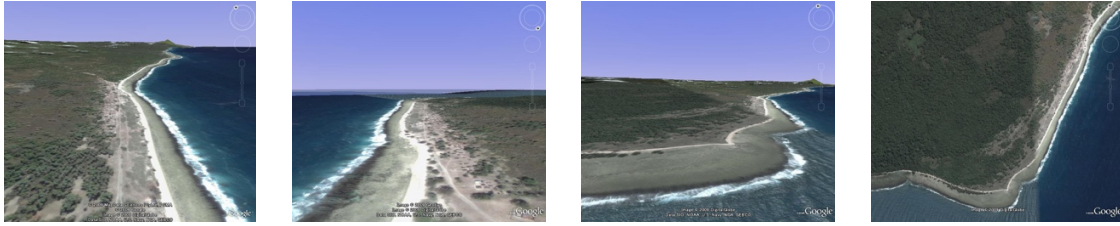


Loré posto – 12 August 2022

Japanese Airfield At Cape Loré

8° 41' S 127° 01' E [5]

Before 1942 was over the Japanese had occupied the Cape Loré area and started building an airfield.



Aerial images of probable site of the Cape Loré airfield

“The Japanese set up an airfield near Cape Loré on the south coast (Sae Namo: [Note] the Japanese called it Sinamo). Traces of the airfield cannot be found from the satellite image, inferring from the topography and the straight space, it may be the area of the houses that are currently lined up”. [6]



Cape Loré airfield site - - 12 August 2022

Hudson Aircraft A16-166 Shot Down Over Cape Loré - 24 December 1942

An Australian No. 2 Squadron Hudson aircraft was the first victim of the increased Japanese defensive presence on the south east corner of Portuguese Timor:

“Next morning [24 December 1942] Japanese shipping, four transports and an escorting destroyer, were reported off Lavai on the eastern end of Timor's northern coast and a joint 2 and 13 Squadron strike ordered against them. Four Hudsons of No. 2 Squadron were to attack first, followed by three from No. 13 Squadron. Aircraft captains were Flt Lt Austin and FOs Cambridge, James and Johns of 2 Squadron and Flt Lt Rehfish and FOs Thomson and Warlow-Davies of 13 Squadron.



Hudson aircraft A16-166 engine component displayed at Loré posto - 12 August 2022

All aircraft approached from the east, the initial attack being made by two flights of two. No direct hits were reported. Meanwhile, No. 13 Squadron's three had almost overtaken the second flight from No. 2 Squadron and the leader was in the process of making a turn to port when Thomson was seen, instead, to fly straight ahead or of on a tangent, as Doug Osborne, Warlow-Davies' observer, later expressed it. Almost immediately Rehfisch and Warlow-Davies, who had stayed with the leader, dived to attack, the only other sighting of what was considered to be Thomson's aircraft, A16-166, being after the attack, passing underneath Rehfisch's Hudson.

After the return of the two 13 Squadron crews to Hughes, where one direct hit on the bow of one of the largest merchant vessels was claimed, enquiries as to the missing Hudson were made of No. 2 Squadron but none of their crews in the attack saw A16-166 at any stage. No explosions or crashes had been seen either, though, and it was hoped that a forced landing had been made and that the crew had survived.

This was not to be, however, the Hudson had, in fact, been shot down, perhaps by a mixture of anti-aircraft gunfire and Japanese fighters. One of the largest vessels present, the 7,005 ton *Maebasi Maru*, claimed two Hudsons shot down with her deck guns that day, but with only one Hudson missing, clearly there was an error in this claim.

Post-war it was reported by a former Japanese intelligence officer that at around 1700 hours on 24th December a Hudson had been "chased" by two Zeros. Only one engine was functioning and black smoke was coming from the aircraft which subsequently crashed about one and a half miles south of Cape Loré on the south coast. The wreckage of a Lockheed, type unknown, was subsequently found near the position indicated, local witnesses confirming that it had been shot down by Japanese fighters, but it is possible that the initial damage had been caused by shipboard gunfire.

Under the circumstances it was considered likely that the wreckage was of A16-166 and the scattered, unburied remains of those aboard were gathered and later buried in the Koepang War Cemetery. Thomson's crew had only been in the area since 3rd October, their original

navigator, Bobbie Nicholls, being sent south in November due to a spinal infection. Nicholls was replaced by Sgt Reg West, a former navigation instructor from Evans Head. In addition, Keith Chote, one of "Jock" Whyte's WAGs, was flying with Thomson that day filling in as an extra gunner". [7]

RAAF Searcher Team Investigation Post War

16 May 1946
Mrs E. Chote
Mie Gunyah
5 Kirk Street
TOOWOOMBA Qld

Dear Madam,

I deeply regret to inform you that your Son, Sergeant Keith Gilbert Chote, who was previously reported missing on air operations is now known to have lost his life on air operations near Cape Loré in Timor on 24th December, 1942.

This change of classification is based on a report received from the Royal Australian Air Force Search Organisation which has located the wreckage of the aircraft in the scrub near Cape Loré.

The bodies of the five members of the crew were found near the aircraft unfortunately, individual identification, as not possible, and the crew will be buried in a comrade's grave in an Australian War Cemetery. The Directorate of War Graves Services will communicate to you particulars of the burial.

Interrogation of Japanese prisoners discloses that on the afternoon of the 24th of December 1942, the aircraft was shot down by Japanese fighter aircraft. It was seen being attacked by two Zero fighters and crashed near the coast, about one and a half miles south of Cape Loré. A native who witnessed the crash stated that all five members of the crew were killed instantaneously.

The Minister for Air and members of the Air Board desire me to extend to you their profound sympathy. It is hoped that the accompanying enclosures will be of assistance to you.

Yours faithfully

M.C. Langslow
Secretary
Casualty Section
Albert Park Barracks SC3 [8]

Formal Confirmation of the Deaths of A16-166 Crew Members

CREW:

NAME AND RANK	SERVICE NUMBER	ROLE
Flying Officer G.P. Thomson	405889	Pilot
Sgt J. McA. Dunbar	416661	Air gunner
Sgt K.G. Chote	405542	Wireless operator
Sgt R.M. Clark	416653	Air gunner

P.6 (N)

Investigations conducted in Timor by F/Lt Hamer have established that this aircraft was shot down Japanese fighters and crashed on the afternoon of 24th December 1942 near Cape Loré in Timor.

2. F/Lt Hamer inspected the wreckage of an aircraft which appeared to have been a Hudson or Ventura. His informant stated that it had been shot down by Japanese fighters pursuing it from the direction of Lautem (8° 22' south, 126° 55' east) in February or March 1943.
3. Informant stated that five or six crew members were killed instantly. F/Lt Hamer collected the unburied remains of the crew which were still lying scattered in the scrub, and it was established that the remains were of five persons. It has been impossible to identify the aircraft from the markings and plates removed from the wreckage. (See extract of report dated 13/1/46 herein).
4. As there was no record of an R.A.A.F. Hudson or Ventura missing in this area in February or March 1943 further enquiries were made by F/Lt Hamer who obtained from Captain Goto, former Japanese intelligence officer in Portuguese Timor, the following account:

At about 1700 hours (Japanese time, Timor) on 24th December 1942, one Hudson being chased by two Zeros, approached SAENAMO from direction west of CAPE LORÉ. Only one engine was working. The plane emitted black smoke and crashed about 1 1/2 miles south of Cape Loré near the coast.
5. From experience in other cases it is considered that Captain Goto's information is reliable and can be accepted. Since, however, it was not clear from reports whether the wreckage inspected by F/Lt Hamer could have been the aircraft referred to by Captain Goto, F/Lt Hamer was interrogated on this point and stated that the position of the wreckage was quite consistent with it being the Hudson referred to by Captain Goto.
6. Accordingly, it is considered that although the individuals have not been identified, since the remains of five have been recovered and there is no doubt that the aircraft is A16-166, this crew should be reclassified 'killed in air operations'. [9]

Japanese Radar Station At Loré

08°34'S, 126°59'E

SECRET

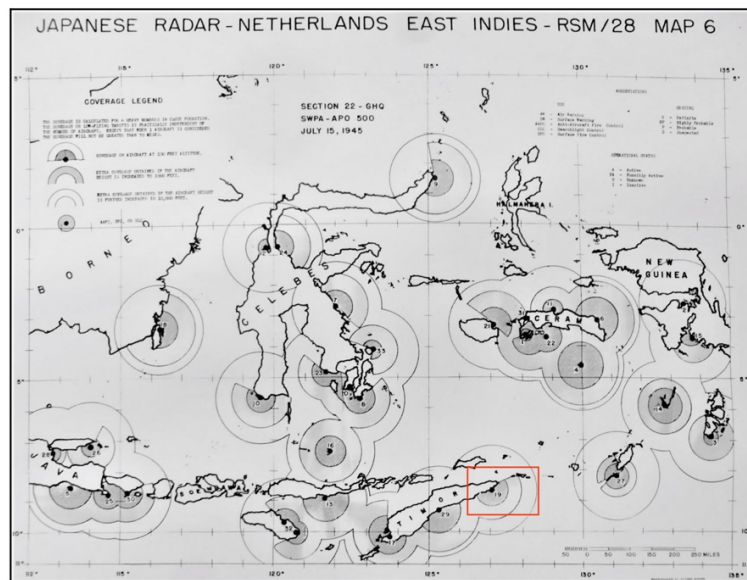
JAPANESE RADAR - LORÉ PORTUGUESE TIMOR:

1. On 16 Dec a Radar station (reported as two steel lattice towers about 20 yards apart protruding 20 feet above trees and with standard rotating screen on top) was observed 6 miles N by E of Loré in Portuguese Timor.

Source: Situation Report No, 186 page 7

COMMENTS:

- a. Twelve intercept missions to this area have been made during the past year. Seven have been negative and five have resulted in the interception of signals considered most probably to have originated from enemy shipping in the area. The last mission was run on 4th October 1943.
- b. Although there is no direct evidence of a Radar in this area, circumstantial evidence indicating that the installation of one might well be expected.
- c. Unfortunately there is no photographic coverage of the area.
- d. The Japanese are thought to have developed a chain of Radars extending from Soemba, thru Timor, Tanimbar and Aroe to New Guinea. The weak link in the chain appears to be in the absence of a Radar at the eastern end of Timor.



Japanese radar – Netherlands East Indies – July 15, 1945 – Loré location highlighted [10]

- e. An installation at Loré would complete the chain and would give coverage in the direction of interest from the Japanese viewpoint, the south and southeast, and would be well situated with respect to the airstrips at Lautem.
- f. The presence of a Radar in this locality may be regarded as a probability until further evidence is received.

JOEL H. MACE

Lieut Commander RANVR

Assist Director [11]

‘Longest Spitfire Raid Of WWII’ - Loré Radar Station – 27 November 1944

On the 27th of Nov 1944, five Spitfires from No. 549 sqn RAF and two Spitfires from No.1 Fighter Wing, RAAF in conjunction with four B-25's from No. 2 sqn RAAF plus an ASR Catalina, attacked and destroyed a Japanese radar station at **Cape Loré** on Portuguese Timor. The raid was a round trip of some 850 miles taking 4.5 hours. The Spitfires were first to attack carrying out strafing runs on the installations resulting in the radar tower being

destroyed. The B-25's then destroyed the remaining buildings once the Spitfires were clear. [12]

The Cape Loré, Timor raid of November 27 1944, was known as the longest Spitfire raid of the war and is reported here in detail:



Cape Loré – site location map

“One day as the American B-25s were returning to their station at Darwin after a raid, one of the crewmen was testing a camera as they flew over Cape Loré on the SE coast of Portuguese Timor. When the film was developed someone noticed, completely by accident, four little radar aerials sticking up out of the bush. (The actual position of the radar Installation was 08°34'S, 126°59'E). The find was reported to Colonel McClusky, Commander of the USAAC Bomber Wing, who sent a couple of spotter aircraft to find these aerials. They were unsuccessful, so McClusky approached W/Cdr R.C. Wilkie - 'Wilkie', joint Wing Leader and Wing Commander OPs 1 Fighter Wing to request the RAF Spitfires (to) escort a flight of B-25 Mitchells to the target. He wanted them to fly in low and hit the target with cannon and machine gun fire and get some smoke going, so the B-25s could come in and bomb the installation.

Wilkie conferred with joint Wing Leader, G/Capt B.R. 'Blackjack' Walker. Although Walker was the Senior Ranking Officer on the Station, any operations undertaken were under Wilkie's command. The raid was set for 27 November 1944. The original force was to be four B-25s, ten Spitfires from 549 Squadron, a Catalina flying boat, two Spitfires from 1 Fighter Wing, being Wilkie and Walker and two spare Spitfires.

In the RAF, once an officer attains the rank of Wing Commander he can have his own initials painted on the aircraft as opposed to squadron letters. As Wilkie was back on OPs, he had his initials RCW painted on his personal aircraft - this was the only time Wilkie was to fly 'personalized'.

They flew to the Austin Strip (at Snake Bay, Melville Island) where they refuelled for the long flight. The Spitfires were equipped with standard 97-gallon tanks, plus two 25-gallon wing tanks, a 30-gallon belly tank and an additional 90-gallon belly tank!!

The last two mentioned would have to be dropped before they made their attack. But out of the 14 Spitfires, only seven were able to take off, the others suffering various fuel line problems! (Les Bushell was one of them). Using every inch of the runway the escort staggered into the air for the rendezvous with the Mitchells and headed for Timor Island.

Incidentally, it should be noted that on other occasions the wing tanks could be removed and in their place two 30-gallon barrels of beer could be affixed. This alteration didn't help the aircraft to fly any further but it was definitely good for morale.

The Spitfires made a low pass over the island and were welcomed by two bursts of light machine gun fire from a tree about seventy yards north of the installations. Wilkie led the Spitfires in for the attack and beat the area up with cannon and machine gun fire and started a bit of smoke going, they then pulled out and let the B-25s come in and do their stuff. The bombers scored direct hits and flattened the station.

There was no interception and there were no casualties, all aircraft returning safely to base. The entire raid took four hours and fifty minutes. This was the longest Spitfire raid ever flown.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

NWA0929

A group portrait of Supermarine Spitfire pilots of 549 Squadron RAF which formed part of No 1 Fighter Wing, RAAF, who are operating from a base in North Western Australia. Left to right: Back row: Flight Lieutenant (Flt Lt) J.R. Williams of Cardiff, Wales; [Flt Lt W.B. Van N. Wedd](#) of Paris, France; [Squadron Leader E.P.W. Bocock DFC](#) of Gazeley, near Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, Commanding Officer of 549 Squadron RAF; [Flt Lt L.F. Webster](#) of Barking, Essex; Flt Lt W.H. Walker of Sheffield, England. Front row: [Warrant Officer \(WO\) A.N. Franks](#) of Wolverhampton; [WO Jock Beaton](#) of Isle of Skye, Scotland and Flt Lt G.W. Turner of Que Que, Southern Rhodesia. [13]

At a press briefing in Adelaide 'Record Flight by Darwin Spitfires', they reported that this flight was led by an Australian. Wilkie shrugged this off as bad press. A/Cdr Richard Grice stated, "The longest operational flight ever made by Spitfires, stands to the credit of a Royal Air Force squadron at Darwin, which smashed the installations on Timor recently". He said the round trip flight was more than eight hundred and fifty miles and there was no loss or damage to the squadron. He conveniently forgot the Americans' part in the raid.

Grice, who was the Senior Officer of the United Kingdom Army and RAF Liaison Staff in Australia, made a trip to Darwin to congratulate personally the Officers and Airmen on their achievement and brought with him sixty dozen eggs and other Christmas cheer. It was reported these items were well received by the men.

This extract from Colin Storey's diary, provides some interesting background detail:

Early in November our Commanding Officer, S/Ldr Bocock DFC (he won the award in the Battle of Britain where he shot down five German aircraft) called all four of us Fitter Armourers to his tent. Hardly surprisingly, we wondered what we had done to deserve it!

He asked us if we would fit two bomb carriers to a Spitfire. He had made rough drawings of how he thought it could be done and after we examined them, we told him we would give it a go. The reason behind this request (he said) was that a secret mission was shortly to take place and it would be of great help if the Spitfires could carry two 250-pound bombs.

It took us several days to do the job and the CO then tested them out over the sea. The test proved that the carriers worked 100% and he was very pleased with us.

The mission turned out to be a raid on Japanese radar installations on Timor Island and would be a round trip of more than 850 miles. It was then realised that with the extra weight of the bombs, even using belly tanks, the long distance over water would not be safe, so the idea of the Spitfires carrying bombs was shelved.

On 27 November 1944, 12 aircraft in all, including four of ours, made the raid on the base. The Spitfires went in first. One of our pilots (F/Lt Wedd) was credited with destroying the radar tower and W/Off Beaton set the main buildings on fire. The Mitchell bombers (from 2 RAAF Squadron) followed and dropped bombs in the middle of the camp killing most of the Japanese". [14]

SECRET BLUE DCV/B1/27 NOV (.) (A) DCV/27 NOV 12 X-RAYS (B) RADAR INSTALLATIONS CAPE LORÉ (C)

270055Z TO 270120Z TO 200 FEET (D) SEVEN DUTIES REACHED TARGET FOUR DUTIES MADE THREE STRAFING ATTACKS ON RADAR INSTALLATIONS CLAIMING 90% STRIKES THREE DUTIES MADE TWO ATTACKS ON RADAR AND TWO ATTACKS ON CAMP AREA APPROXIMATELY 100 YARDS NNE OF ANTENNAE ONE FIRE AND TWO OTHER THIN COLUMNS GREYISH SMOKE SEEN AFTER ATTACK MANY STRIKES SEEN ON HUTS AND INSTALLATIONS FIVE DUTIES WENT U/S AT AUSTIN DUE TO AIRLOCKS (E)

SLIGHT LIGHT INACCURATE FROM MG POST IN TREE 70 YARDS NORTH OF RADAR (F) THRU (H) NIL (I)

CINE-CAMERA OF ATTACKS AND COAST AREA NEAR CAPE LORÉ (J) FOUR DUTIES SAW BOMBS FROM FIRST BOMBER FALL IN TARGET AREA TWO SAW REMAINING BOMBERS ALSO HIT TARGET AREA ONE EUROPEAN TYPE HOUSE AND SMALL PLANTATION APPROXIMATELY 3 ½ MILES NNW CAPE LORÉ NIL ENEMY ACTIVITY AT CAPE LORÉ AND ELG (K) 1-2/10 THS CU

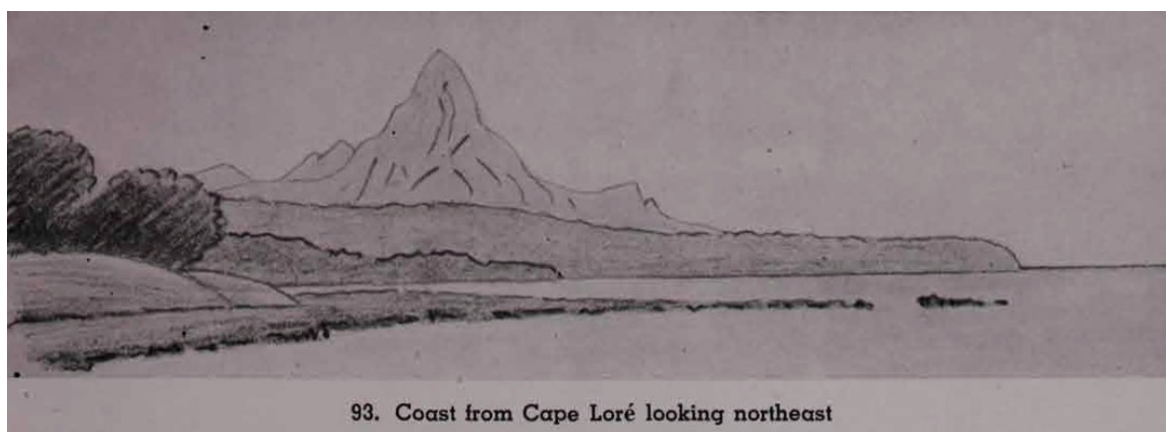
BASE 4000 FEET VISIBILITY CLEAR OVER TARGET EN ROUTE 5/10 S/CU AND CU BASE 3000 FEET TOPS TO 20,000 FEET VISIBILITY 15 TO 20 MILES (L) CAMP AREA NEAR RADAR INSTALLATIONS COMPOSED OF APPROXIMATELY 7 WOODEN OR BARK COVERED HUTS AND ONE MORE SUBSTANTIAL BUILDING TWENTY FEET SQUARE (M) 703 ROUNDS EACH SAPI AND HEI 20MM 6681 ROUNDS 60/40 .303 API

[TOO: 0720Z] [15]

The Military History Section Team's Visit To Loré - 3 January 1946

Sergeant George Milsom of the Military History Section Team diarised on 3 January 1946 when visiting Loré:

We were shown a crashed HUDSON bomber in which six Australians had lost their lives; the wreckage was fenced in by the natives. The most peculiar thing we saw was some Jap defences on the beach below LORÉ; the Japs had put small sharp bamboo stakes up in the sand, thousands of them inclined towards the sea and they evidently anticipated a landing. [16]



[17]

Charles Bush, the war artist with the Team prepared two paintings while they were in Loré.



Charles Bush – “Mt. Paicnau from Cape Loré” - A scene in the Lautem Province of Portuguese Timor [18]



Mt. Paicnau from Cape Loré - - 12 August 2022



Charles Bush – “Port Lookout, Loré (Sae)” – In the Lautem Province of Portuguese Timor, the district in which “H” Detachment of “Lancer Force”, under Lieutenant C.D Doig of 2/2nd Australian Independent Company, passed through here on the way from Fuiloro. The roof was removed by the Japanese to provide building materials for other constructions [19]



Loré posto gateway - 12 August 2022

‘Moth’ Eaton’s Visit To Loré – 4 December 1946

“At Saenamo there is good general anchorage with some shelter from Cape Lore, and also a small sheltered area between two reefs running seawards for about 1/4 mile (1/2 km.) and some hundred yards or so apart. Small vessels can shelter here in almost any weather, and it fronts a stretch of good landing beach with deep water close in. There are several buildings on shore and ample cover from the air, with vegetation right on to the beach in places. There is also some small amount of shelter on the beaches between Saenamo and the Mamaluto River, given by the reefs which separate the beaches.

The reef continues for 2 miles (3 km.) southeast to Cape Lore, a well-marked low promontory with a sandy patch on the point and dense vegetation further back”. [20]

The Australian Consul Charles ‘Moth’ Eaton visited Loré in early December 1946:

“During my last visit to the interior I was particularly interested to see the Japanese defences of Lautem-Cape Loré areas. I do not know if the full facts are known to our military authorities but at one time some 25,000 Japanese soldiers occupied these areas. The Japanese camps and defence works along the road between Lautem and Fuiloro were considerable and the camouflage almost perfect. The Cape Loré beach-head was the best defence work I have seen in Timor; the earth and wire works were extensive.

I also visited the Japanese Cape Loré radar station. This station is actually on the top of a mountain at the rear of Cape Loré. I was very interested in this station as I personally took part in an attack on this work in December 1944. The attack was an interesting one as it was the first time that diaphragm bomb-heads were used in Timor. The Radar Station had been hit but the extent of the bomb damage was difficult to ascertain as after the attack the Japanese dismantled the remains. Without doubt the main building was severely damaged by the diaphragm bombs”. [21]



Sign post on the Cape Loré beach-head - 12 August 2022

References

- [1] ASPT: 83.
- [2] ASPT: 34
- [3] <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C221043>. Accessed 29 March 2024.
- [4] "Road reconnaissance – Fuiloro to Via-Lai-Via – 16 September 42" in *[Timor (1941-1942) - (Sparrow Force and Lancer Force) - Operations:] Sparrow Force. Reconnaissance report of South Coast of Port Timor and Intelligence reports ...* - AWM 54 571/4/19
- [5] Northern Territory Force war diary June-July 1943.
- [6] https://grahabudayaindonesia.at.webry.info/200902/article_8.html. Accessed 29 March 2024.
- [7] Vincent, *The RAAF Hudson*: 90-91.
- [8] CHOTE Keith Gilbert - (Sergeant); Service Number - 405542; File type - Casualty - Repatriation; Aircraft - Hudson A16-166; Place - Nova Ancora, Australia; Date - 24 December 1942 NAA: A705, 163/96/208: 13.
- [9] CHOTE Keith Gilbert - (Sergeant); Service Number - 405542; File type - Casualty - Repatriation; Aircraft - Hudson A16-166; Place - Nova Ancora, Australia; Date - 24 December 1942 NAA: A705, 163/96/208: 14.
- [10] Bellamy, *Radar countermeasures development in Australia*: 219.
- [11] *General Headquarters Southwest Pacific Area, Office of the Chief Signal Officer, Section 22 - Current Statements No. CS/No. 0075 - Date 19 Dec43* - NAA: A11093, 676/4A11 PART 2
- [12] Birkett "The November 1944 raid".
- [13] AWM collection item NWA0929.
<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C279452?image=1>. Accessed 29 March 2024.
- [14] Possé, *Together up there*: 62-63.
- [15] Shepherdson "How to read RAAF historical records: coloured signal forms": 109.

- [16] Willis "The Military History Section Team's patrol to the eastern end of Portuguese Timor, 29 December 1945 – 9 January 1946".
- [17] ASPT: Photograph 93.
- [18] Note on painting – "Identifiable with panorama sketch in Terrain Study (presumably made by Lt Doig's party?" <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/ART26156>
- [19] <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C168680>. Accessed 29 March 2024.
- [20] ASPT: 24.
- [21] C. Eaton, 'Despatch No. 18, Australian Consulate, Dili, 31 December 1946' in NAA: A1838, 377/1/3 *Portuguese Timor Part I*. As Commanding Officer of 79 Wing, Eaton flown in one of the B-25's from No. 2 Squadron in the attack on the Cape Loré radar station.

5. Saenamo (Dai-Name)

8° 40' S, 127° 01' 14" E [1]

8. Saenamo Road—Dai-Name (8°41'S., 126°59'E.):

Is situated 10 miles (16 km.) northeast of Cape Batu Puti (Batoe Poetih on chart) close westward of the low Cape Lore.

Anchorage can be obtained everywhere; see chart and plan on N.E.I. Chart No. 329.

Small craft can anchor inside the channel.

A channel about half a mile (1 km.) wide leads through the broad coastal reef to the landing place, which is sheltered in both monsoons.

Two pillars near the beach in line bearing 350° lead through the middle of this channel; the western edge of the channel is indicated by the alignment of two white posts standing westward of the pillars and the eastern edge by the alignment of two white posts eastward of the pillars.

..... [2]



Saenamo (7/10/42) [3]

[5] *Carta Militar de Timor.*

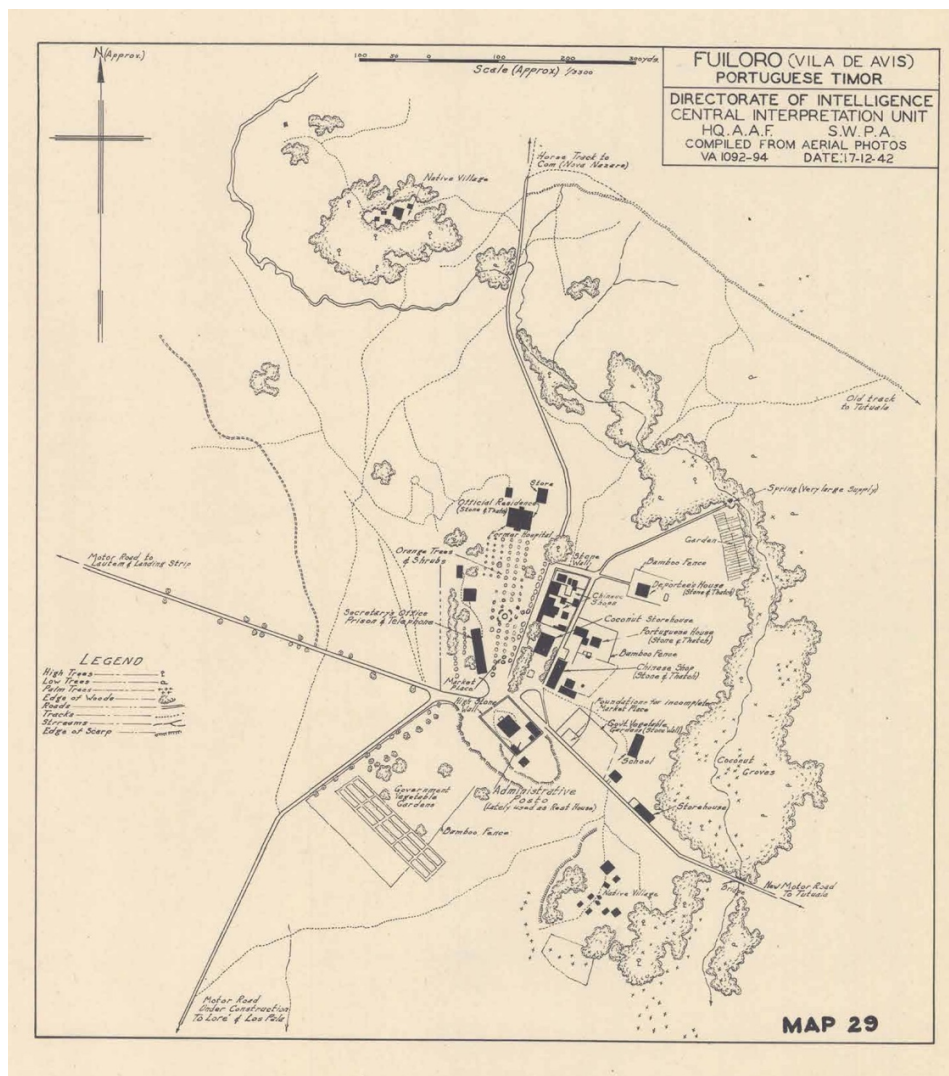
9. Fuiloro (Vila De Avis)

8°27'S, 127°00'10"E [1]

Fuiloro (Vila de Avis - see Photo No.3) is situated 9 miles (14 1/2 km.) at a bearing of 117° from Lautem. It is in the northwest corner of the Lautem Plateau which extends 8 miles (13 km.) south and 12 miles (19 km.) east at 1,400 feet (425 m.) above sea level.

It is a posto town of 200 inhabitants with a large market. North of, the market square is a large building used formerly for a hospital, but now as the *Chefe de Posto's* residence. South of the square is the typical old-fashioned posto. The secretary's office, telephone and prison are west of the square. The Japanese airdrome is immediately west of the town.

There is a very good spring northeast of the town in the bed of a stream; it can be reached by a short road. There is no reticulation system and all water has to be carried. The region is dry and dusty in the dry season, but has plenty of rain in the wet seasons. The vegetation is limited to short or long grass, and air cover is very poor except for a few large trees about the square. [2]



.....

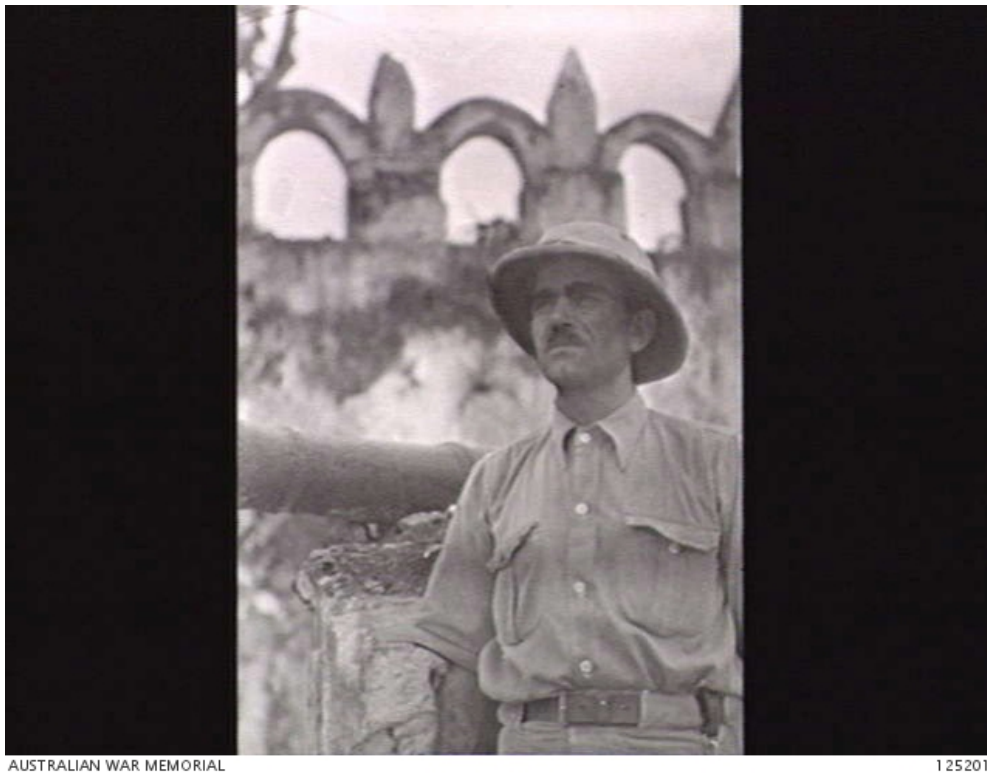
(i) **FUILORO**: Situated 9 miles east south east of LAUTEM in the northwest corner of the LAUTEM plain which extends 8 miles south and 12 miles east at 1400 feet above sea level. It is a posto town of 200 inhabitants with a large market. North of the market square there is a large building used formally as a hospital, now the Chefe de Posto's residence. The Secretary's office, telephone and prison are west of the square. The Jap aerodrome is immediately west of the town.

There is a very good spring north east of the town in the bed of a stream which can be reached by a short road. There is no reticulation system and all water has to be carried. The region is dry and dusty in the dry system but has plenty of rain in the wet seasons. [4]

H Detachment and Fuiloro

In early October [1942], H Detachment contacted a Japanese force which down from the coast to recce the area about Fuiloro. The Australians had previously established the fact that there was a good potential aerodrome site here. The Japanese also saw this and informed the natives that they would be returning to build a strip.

The Australian and Dutch forces harassed this enemy party all the way down the cross island road, picking at them to such an extent that the Japanese, tiring of being ambushed and fired on by troops who could never be seen, eventually returned to Dilli. Right along, this H Detachment had been doing invaluable work, patrolling and recceing and at the same time supplying a great deal of food to the west end of the island. [5]



Fuiloro, Portuguese Timor. 1946-01-03. Portrait of Senhor Francisco Alberto, *Chefe Do Posto* (Fort Commander), who Assisted the Australians of Sparrow Force. He had to escape to the hills when the Japanese sent natives to kill him. (Photographer Sgt K. B. Davis) [6]

Senhor Francisco Alberto, *Chefe de Posto*, Fuiloro

On the 17th of November [1942], coming from Lautem, they arrived at the Fuiloro post, whose head was the 1st Corporal Francisco Alegria Alberto, two trucks with Japanese soldiers and armed natives. The head of the post was talking to several chiefs of *suco* and East Timorese when the gang entered and immediately threw themselves at him tying him up. The Japanese then began to question the population about the contacts that **Francisco Alberto** would have had with the Australians, in order to find reasons to kill him. But, as the responses were favourable to the head of the post, the Japanese addressed the chiefs of *suco* to decide on the prisoner's fate. Everyone declared that he had always been good and fair, so he should not suffer any punishment. He was untied and the Japanese took him to Lautem and then to Dili and Liquiçá. The indigenous people of Fuiloro took care of the corporal's children and the woman he lived with, all later going to Liquiçá. The Timorese also handed over about 200 *patacas* for the last revenue collected and which had been religiously guarded. The populations knew how to be fair to those who treated them well [7].



Japanese caves at Fuiloro – 12 August 2022

Japanese caves

08° 26' 56.63" S, 127° 01' 13.30" E

An extensive Japanese built cave complex is located behind the chicken house at Colegio Dom Bosco SPP Fuiloro – local guidance is required to find them.

Japanese Airfield At Fuiloro

8°26'52", 126°59'15"

The Japanese referred to the airfield location as Abisu (also Abis or Abys) and this name is still applied in current maps and reference sources; e.g., Wikimapia [8] and airportguide.com [9]

The ASPT set the scene for the establishment of the airfield at Fuiloro:

e. Lautem Plateau

Terrain between Fuiloro and Los Pala along the western boundary of the Lautem Plateau is suitable for airdrome construction. The Fuiloro airdrome is located in an area 3 miles (5 km.) by 1 ½ miles (3 km.) which was surveyed by Dutch Shell Co. and considered by it suitable for airdrome construction. The terrain south of this area is less level, there being a considerable number of grass hummocks which would increase the work necessary for clearing. The best labour in Portuguese Timor is available in the Lautem area. [10]

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SECTION III-AIRDROMES

b. General:

At present (February, 1943) the Japanese have three operational airdromes in the Island of Timor, viz., Koepang (Penfoei), in Dutch Timor, and Dilli and Fuiloro in Portuguese Timor. Although the Penfoei airdrome is by far the most developed of the three, the operational significance of Dilli and Fuiloro in relation to Australia is greater when it is realised that Dilli and Fuiloro are, respectively, 55 and 120 nautical miles nearer to Darwin than Penfoei. Dilli and Fuiloro are the only known airdromes in Portuguese Timor. Dilli is operational for fighters and bombers and Fuiloro for fighters. It will, no doubt, shortly be fit for use by bombers.

2. Table of Distances:

Direct distances are as follows:-

	Nautical Miles	Statute Miles	Kilometres
Fuiloro to Darwin	320	375	610

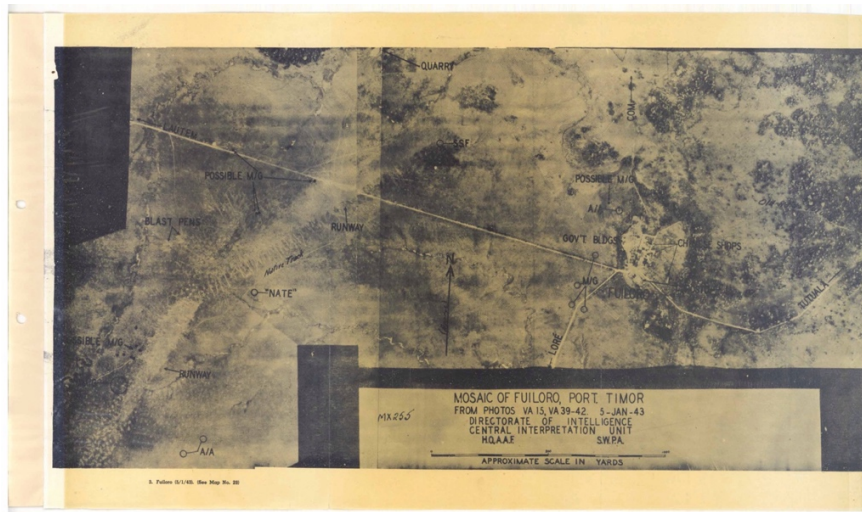
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b. *Fuiloro* (8°26'S., 12°2'E.) – See Photo No.3:

Construction of this airdrome which runs across the main road from Lautem about 1 mile (1½ km.) west of Fuiloro (Vila de Avis) was commenced by the Japanese in November, 1942, and is continuing. It lies on the extreme northwest portion of Lautem Plateau and consists of two runways, one ENE/WSW, 1,300 x 100 yards (1,190 x 90 m.), and the other approximately N/S, 1,400 yards (1,280 m.) long. Both runways are capable of further extension.

The airdrome lies in open country 1,300 feet (400 m.) above sea level and is free from obstructions on all sides. Ten or 12 miles (16 or 19 km.) to the South the mountain range rises to 2,000 feet (600 m.) and 15 miles (24 km.) to the southeast it rises to 3,000 feet (900 m.).

There are good M.T. roads running from the site northwest to Lautem on the north coast, south to Loré near the south coast, and to the eastern extremity of the island at Tutuala. The surrounding country is suitable for A.F.V.'s and the airdrome could be approached by them from any direction. [11]



Mosaic of Fuiloro – 5 January 1943 [12]



Fuiloro – Apple Maps – showing approximate location and alignment of Japanese airfield

The enemy was now bringing more aircraft forward to the Timor airfields. Whereas in November [1942] reconnaissance showed 62 aircraft in Celebes and 29 in Timor, in December [1942] there appeared to be 42 in Celebes but 62 in Timor; and there were signs that the Japanese were making a new airfield at Fuiloro 60 air miles closer to Darwin than Dili was. Henceforth Fuiloro became a main target for the Hudsons and Beaufighters.

The Beaufighters of No. 31 were now most active. On the 18th two of them sank a sailing vessel 25 miles north-east of Portuguese Timor. They opened a heavier offensive against Fuiloro and the Lavai-Laga area on 23rd December, and shot down one Japanese fighter. [13]

No. 18 (Netherlands East Indies) Squadron, with Mitchells , was now arriving at McDonald, and would undertake its first sorties on 19th January [1943].

Throughout January [1943] the bombers and the Beaufighters continued their attacks on Fuiloro. Three aircraft of No. 18 (Lieut-Colonel B.J. Fiedeldij) probably shot down two out of five interceptors over Fuiloro on the 20th, and another flight probably shot down a Dave over Dobo that day. [14]

Throughout March [1943] the Hudsons, Mitchells and Beaufighters continued their attacks on Fuiloro, Dobo and other bases, and on ships. [15]

Japanese Ace Victim of Beaufighter Strafing Attack on Fuiloro Airfield

1st Lieutenant Katsutaro Takahashi was born in Okayama Prefecture in 1916, he was considered to be a genius during his childhood. He enlisted in the 2nd Juvenile Flying Soldier programme, and when passing out in July 1936, received an award from the Educational Superintendent. Posted initially to the 1st Rentai, he moved to the new 59th Sentai in May 1938, serving in China. In September 1939 the unit moved to Manchuria, as a late reinforcement in the Nomonhan fighting. Here on 15th of the month, he saw his first action and was able to claim two victories. In December 1940 he attended the Army Flying Military Academy, graduating in July 1941 and rejoining the 59th. He took part in the actions over Malaya, Sumatra and Java as a section leader, claiming seven victories – one of the best totals of the campaign for the Sentai. **On 14 December 1942** he was on readiness at **Abis, Timor**, when warning was received of hostile aircraft approaching. He ran to his aircraft, but as he did so, he was killed by strafing fighters. His gravestone in his home town carries an inscription: “His commanding officer stated that with his natural talent, his abilities became superhuman, and [...]” [16]



Fuiloro (Abisu) airfield – 12 August 2022

Beaufighter Strike 29 September 1944

The squadron's first operational use of their new rockets would not take place until 29 September [1944]. In the meantime, Wilbur Wackett and Keith Noble were in action again on 17 September, flying this time in Beaufighter A19-189. Together with five other No 31 Squadron crews, they were briefed to carry out a search and strafing attack on a Japanese motor transport convoy sighted the previous day on the Fuiloro to Lautem road in East Timor.

Led by Flight Lieutenant David Doughton, 223 the six Beaufighters took off from Coomallie Creek around 5.20 am. After forming and crossing the Australian coast, the strike force crossed the Timor Sea in a loose gaggle just below the cloud base at a height of 1000 feet. After two hours, landfall was made at Bauleu from where the formation tracked along the coast to Cape Lore before turning north to follow the road towards Fuiloro (see Map 13.1). Hampered by heavy cloud and thick scrub on both sides of the road, the crews strained to pick up enemy movement.



[WWII] recruitment; recruiting poster depicting Beaufighters in action over an island, appealing for men to enlist as air crew [17]

Before long their search bore fruit when a group of 3 to 4-ton motor transports was sighted sheltering among large palm trees by the side of the road. Diving to zero feet, the Beaufighters strafed the vehicles with cannon and machine-gun fire. The trucks, which were loaded with drums, burst into flames and, burning furiously, were completely destroyed. A further burst of cannon fire into a group of Japanese observed running from the scene was believed to have killed two of the enemy troops. Soon after, a Japanese armoured

motorcycle unit was sighted and given a similar pasting; two strafing runs left the vehicles ablaze.

The formation continued at low level along the road as far as Fuiloro, where it circled and strafed the airfield, scoring numerous strikes on buildings. On leaving the target, the Beaufighters came under accurate light and medium ack- ack fire, with shells bursting around the aircraft at 300 feet. Flight Lieutenant David Strachan spotted the two guns responsible, protected in a sandbag emplacement in which the crews could be clearly seen. Turning hard to port, he made a low-level attack on the position, raking it with a long accurate burst. Smoke and debris erupted, causing 'consternation and evasive action by the gun crews'. During his head-on attack, Strachan's aircraft received two ack-ack strikes in the belly, cutting the air line to the cannons and rendering them unserviceable. A cannon shell also struck his windscreen but fortunately did not penetrate, demonstrating once again the vital, protective role of the Beaufighter's thick bulletproof windscreen during such dangerous low-level attacks.

Intense but ineffectual small arms fire was also met from a hillside south-east of Fuiloro, with crews observing flashes from all over the hillside. No damage was inflicted on any of the aircraft and the formation proceeded westwards as far as Pedra Branca searching for a suspected enemy camp area. No sightings were made and, with the Beaufighters nearing the limit of their endurance, the leader signalled it was time to return home.

Flying at 3000 feet and battling headwinds and a shortage of fuel, Wilbur Wackett and two other crews had to stage through Truscott airfield on the north-west Australian coast, where they landed at 9.45 am after a four and a half hour sortie. [18]

Portuguese *Posto*, Fuiloro



Charles Bush - Lautem province - The entrance gate to a Portuguese *Posto* [Fuiloro] in Lautem Province in which troops of 2/2nd Australian Independent Company engaged in guerilla activities against the Japanese in Portuguese Timor [19]



Fuiloro, Portuguese Timor. 1946-01-03. The stone gateway to the *Posto* (Fort). (Photographer Sgt K.B. Davis) [20]



Entrance gate to Fuloro posto – 12 August 2022

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- [4] [Timor (1945) - General:] Timor - Information resume for "Tofo" Operation prepared by GS Intelligence, HQ NT Force, Aug 1945. Part 2 - detailed description of terrain etc. - AWM54 571A/1/2 467411. <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C2620867>. Accessed 5 May 2024.
- [5] Robinson, *The campaign in Portuguese Timor*: 120.
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10. Com (Nova Nazare)



Com – Posto – 12 August 2022

“From then on, I will more or less skip through my journey on Timor. We went to Tilomar, then to Maucatar, Bobonaro and at Bobonaro there were only two of us left, Sgt. Freeman and me. Our next stop was Mape and then to Alas. On that trip we met Pte. Larney and Pte. Webb. At Alas. Sgt. van Ligton joined our band again and we then proceeded through Fatu Berliu, Beaco [Beasso], Viqueque, Vatahudo [?], Baguia to Laga. Here we stayed a few days and learnt that a *prahu* from Kisar was at **Com**, a small bay at the end of Timor. We obtained a car and boarded the *prahu* at night, and at dawn we landed on Kisar. Sgt. van Ligton stayed behind on Kisar when we left”. [5]

References

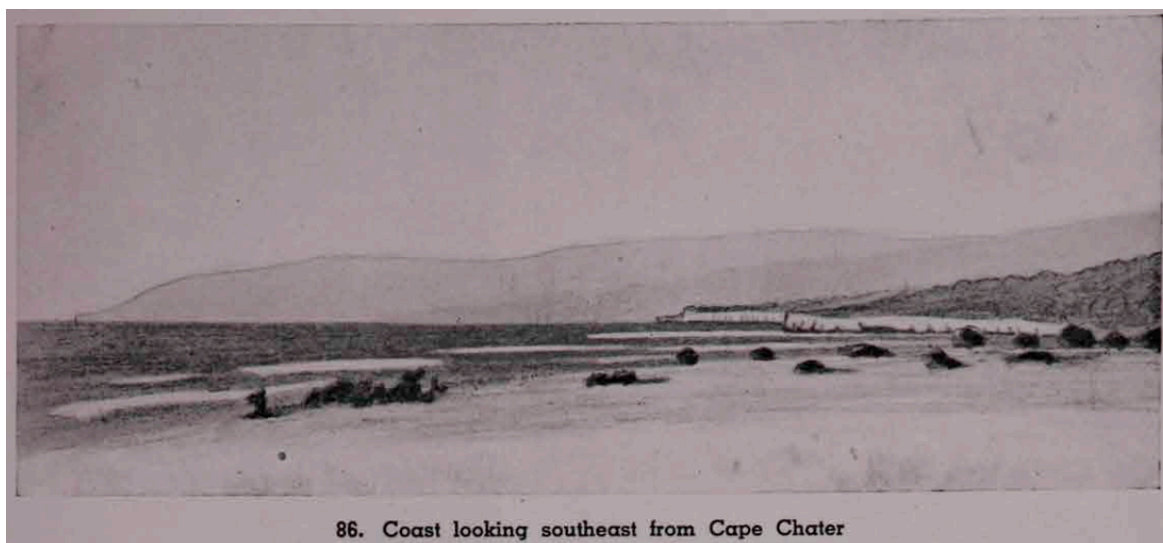
- [1] ASPT: 81
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11. Cape Chater (Saiquiti)

8° 20' 14" S, 126° 58' 30" E [1]

East from Lautem, for ten miles (16 km.) to **Cape Chater**, the coast is sand beach interspersed with coral reefs, through which passage could be found for small boats with difficulty. The coastal road lies about 1 mile (1 1/2 km.) inland along this area with good air cover in patches.

From Cape Chater the coast swings southeast, and is reef-bound for about 8 miles (13 km.). The reef has been uplifted and in places forms a definite reef shelf 60 to 80 feet (18 to 25 m.) high, with a sheer drop into deep water. It is broken occasionally by small patches of beach. Landings would be difficult along this length. The main road comes close to the coast towards Com. The country inland is undulating to steep. Water is available. [2]



86. Coast looking southeast from Cape Chater

86. Coast looking southeast from Cape Chater [3]



View from close to the same location – 11 August 2022

RAAF Liberator A72-70 Shot Down Over Cape Chater

“Shortly afterwards, on 23 January, the fledgling RAAF Liberator force lost its first crew and aircraft in combat. Pilot Officer Ken Richards and crew were killed after their 24 Squadron aircraft, A72-70, was hit by the notoriously accurate anti-aircraft fire at Cape Chater, Timor. The circumstances were particularly unfortunate, as Tom Fitzgerald of 24 Squadron* (and a former Armoured Division soldier) relates:

At the end of December 1944 or early January 1945 Ken was informed that he had been promoted to Pilot Officer, so that he could be awarded the DFC instead of the DFM. He could fly south on leave for one week prior to the investiture or spend the week at 24 Squadron and fly south just for the investiture. Ken decided to stay the extra week with his crew. We were a tight-knit, loyal group

between individual crewmen and our five crews together. Ken would not have his boys go out with a stand-in skipper. He had to do one armed shipping sweep before the investiture. Each day four Libs went out on individual shipping sweeps west, north-west, north-north-west and north of Darwin, a thousand miles (1600 km) out, a thousand miles back, on your own. He copped a direct hit over Cape Chater on the way out. He was loaded with two auxiliary fuel tanks in the forward bomb bay, plus bombs and incendiaries. It was taboo to go near Cape Chater as it was always clear weather over that point. If the weather was dirty we were offered to always take the long way around and avoid the clear patch over Cape Chater.

Flying Officer S. L. McDonald's crew left Fenton minutes after Richards on a separate patrol, and soon after take-off encountered a storm. They changed to a course that took them out of the storm and into the general area of Cape Chater, where they saw in the distance several anti-aircraft bursts at 6000 feet. Shortly afterwards, a black mushroom cloud rising from the ground was seen; McDonald later assumed this to mark the point where A72-70 had impacted. However, a post-war search-party was informed by local witnesses that the Liberator disintegrated on being hit by anti-aircraft fire and fell into the sea off nearby Lautem; no wreckage was ever reported discovered.

Cape Chater aerodrome would become a prime target for the Liberators. On 2 June 1945, for example, a flight of 23 Squadron Libs came in low on strafing runs, destroying four Japanese aircraft on the ground in camouflaged revetments, including a 'Peggy' suicide bomber. They were followed in by RAAF Spitfires. The keeper of the Squadron diary called it a 'great day for 23 Squadron'. [4]

A72-70 killed in this action were: [5]

NAME AND RANK	SERVICE NUMBER	ROLE
Pilot Officer Kenwyn Howard RICHARDS	407253	Pilot
Flight Lieutenant Thomas Guy EVANS	401186	Navigator (B)
Flight Lieutenant Kenneth William EDWARDS	400053	Air Gunner
Warrant Officer Evelyn Bruce BAILE	415603	Second Pilot
Pilot Officer Leonard King TEITZEL	405430	Navigator (B)
Flight Sergeant Graham Neil HEAD	431625	Wireless Operator Air Gunner
Warrant Officer Jack HOLT	412142	Wireless Operator Air Gunner
Flight Sergeant William James CORNES	435651	Air Gunner
Flight Sergeant Noel Patrick MARTIN	433734	Air Gunner
Flight Sergeant Joseph Arthur William STEVENSON	425068	Air Gunner
Sergeant David Knox KYLE-LITTLE	6584	Air Gunner

References

- [1] ASPT: 84.
- [2] ASPT: 19.
- [3] ASPT: Map 86.
- [4] Nelmes, *Tocumwal to Tarakan*: 90.
- [5] KYLE-LITTLE, David Knox - (Sergeant); Service Number - 6584; File type - Casualty - Repatriation; Aircraft - Liberator A72-70; Place - Cape Chater, Portuguese Timor; Date - 23 January 1945. - NAA: A705, 166/23/98.

12. Lautem (Vila Nova Malaca)

8°22'14"S, 126°54'30"E [1]

Lautem (see Photo No. 85 and Map No. 31) is 93 miles (149 km.) at a bearing of 82° E. from Dilli and is the capital and chief posto town of Lautem Province. It is built on the alluvial flats at the entrance to the narrow valley in the foothills which come steeply down to the sea. The rocky limestone hills come almost to the water's edge; they are fairly well covered with scrub.

Lautem is a fair-sized town with a population of about 500, including Portuguese, Chinese and natives. It is an important commercial and market centre and a useful anchorage; the export trade is with copra, oil, rice, and maize.

On the flat-topped hills west of the town there are three groups of old fort-like buildings. The most south-westerly group is the administrative posto and subsidiary buildings; a few yards northeast is the telephone hut and a long building containing the secretary's office and armoury. The second fort-like enclosure is north of the posto overlooking the town; the house is used for a school. The third group is north of the school and just above the beach; it contains a hospital and prison. The bulk of the town proper consists of about 10 Chinese shops and about 20 native houses. East of the shops there are a number of stone houses for Portuguese civil servants, and further east a stone customs house and cemetery. There are extensive vegetable gardens on the flats in the valley and maize and sweet potatoes were plentiful. There is a spring half a mile (1 km.) southeast of the town and another half a mile (1 km.) south of the town. A pipe leads from the latter to a reservoir near the school, a branch line going to the posto. [2]

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SECTION IV-ANCHORAGES

A- THE NORTH COAST

17. Lautem (Vila Nova Malaca) - Lautaim on chart (126' 54' E.):

Is the headquarters of a military officer, and is a place of some importance. Exports were hides, copra and timber.

There is good anchorage in 11 fathoms (20 m.). The water shoals rapidly further inshore because the little bight is shallow but free of coral rocks. There are coral rocks at both corners of the bight. K.P.M. vessels used to anchor here. For small ships anchorage 200 to 300 yards (175 to 275 m.) offshore.

Only good anchorage in the east monsoon.

Easy to approach. A white fort built on a rocky point is very conspicuous.

Just eastward of the rocky point the coast bends in a little, and there are four stone pillars (probably intended as a foundation of a light structure) on the beach. With these bearing 150°, there is good anchorage in about 11 fathoms (20 m.). Inshore and along the beach are coral reefs. [3]

Lautem is a good landing place, important from a military point of view because of the road running through to the south coast.

Anchorage is about 300 yards (275 m.) offshore in about 11 fathoms (20 m.), the depths decreasing rapidly towards the shore. There are coral reefs off the beach. The beach itself is about (1 1/4 miles (2 km.) long, and of flat hard sand. West from Lautem village to the Malai-Lada River there is a stretch of sand about 18 yards (17 m.) wide, which is level and hard and said to be possible for landing of aircraft. The north coast road passes inland close to the beach. Air cover is good in this vicinity, but it is poor farther west. Buildings in Lautem include 12 stone houses, the largest of which is the customs house. The Japanese landed troops here from flat-bottomed barges. [4]

The Japanese Occupy Lautem

“When the Japanese arrived in Lautem, on November 15 [1942], the administrator and his wife remained at the headquarters, as did the *deportados* who were there, with nothing unusual happening to the troops, who maintained a very correct attitude.

According to what was possible to ascertain from the narration of indigenous people, on the night of the 15th to the 16th, the head of a *suco* in the headquarters area, bordering the Luro post area, sought out the administrator and informed him that they were on their way to Lautem elements of the «black columns» who would finish off all the Portuguese they found, as they had already done in other places, advising the administrator and his wife to flee immediately to their *posto*, where they would be safe and from where they would then move on to a better location, if that were necessary. The administrator was convinced that he was in danger and followed the advice given to him, especially since he seemed to place some trust in this chief, and followed everyone to that village, about 15 kilometers from Lautem. Upon arriving there, the two poor Europeans were immediately surrounded by a crowd of indigenous people, who tied them up and mistreated them, ending up killing them savagely.

Neither the Japanese nor elements foreign to the people of the circumscription had, as far as it was possible to ascertain, interfered in these two deaths, which can only be attributed to the ill will that existed between the indigenous people towards this administrator and his own wife who they considered responsible for many injustices of which they were often victims. Once again, the poor performance of the local authorities and the poor application of justice to the indigenous people were responsible for acts of indiscipline and crimes that the difficult circumstances in which they lived made possible, with the discontented taking advantage of them to take revenge on those who had lacked due justice”. [5]

In addition to the administrator and his wife, three *deportados* Antonio Teixeira, Mário Gonçalves and Raul Monteiro were also killed. [6]

The Japanese Forces Operating In The Lautem Area

“The units of the 48 Division that replaced the 228 Regiment (the unit involved with the invasion) began to arrive in Portuguese Timor in early September 1942. They then spread to all areas of the Portuguese territory. Some units arrived in Lautem on 15 November 1942.

The Japanese forces in the area (the eastern part of the Laga-Baguaia-Allambata) was named the East Area Force and was made up of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 2nd Formosan Infantry Regiment and the 4th Battalion of the 48th (Zeni) Engineering Regiment.

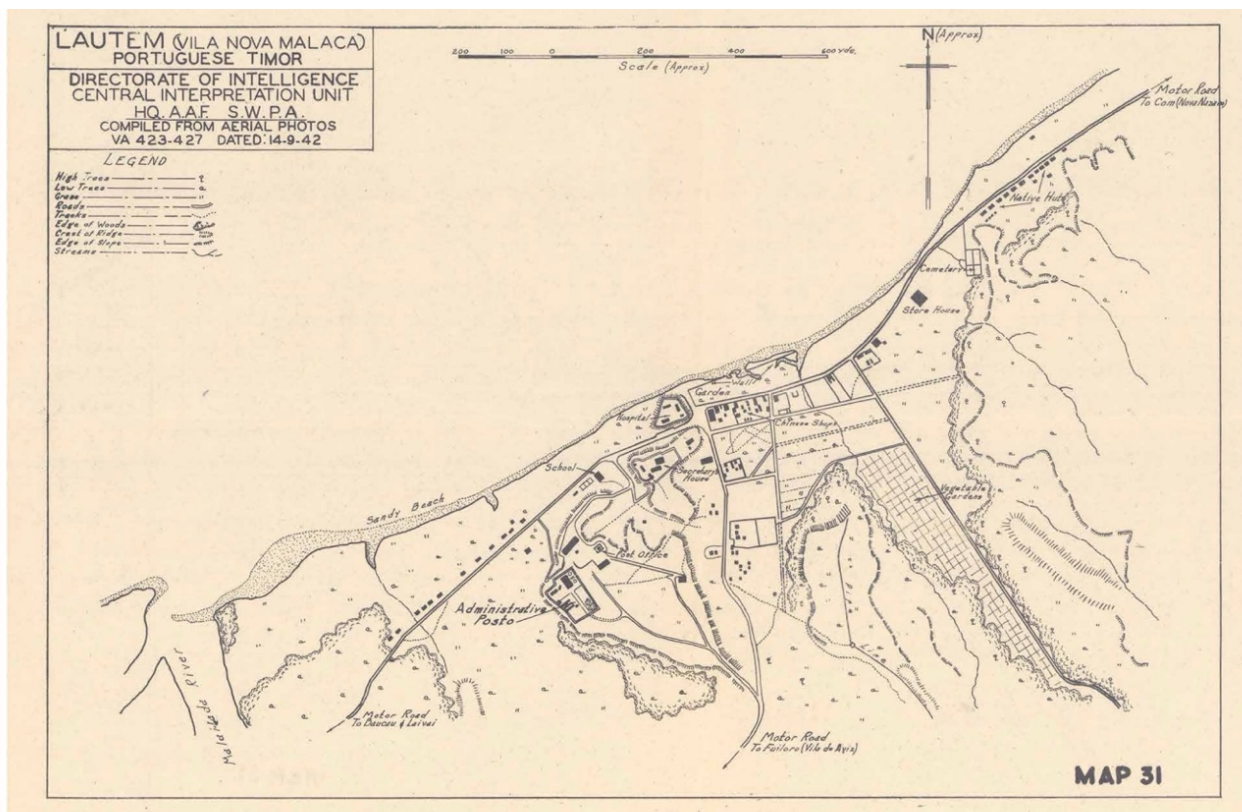
According to the map of the distribution of Japanese forces on the island of Timor in the period of the summer season (around April to November) 1943, the East Area Force headquarters was in Lautem with Colonel Toru Tanaka as commander, the 2nd Battalion was in Abis (the top of the mountain near Fuiloro), 3rd Battalion in Com, meanwhile, the 1st Battalion was in Koepang (Dutch Timor). The Commander at Abis was Major Shichijuro Takizawa, and Commander at Com Lieutenant Colonel Zenkichi Sugano.

The task of the Japanese forces in Lautem was to neutralise anti-Japanese actions carried out by Timorese, use the Lautem military base to attack Australia, build a new military base in Abis, and defend the eastern part of the island”. [7]

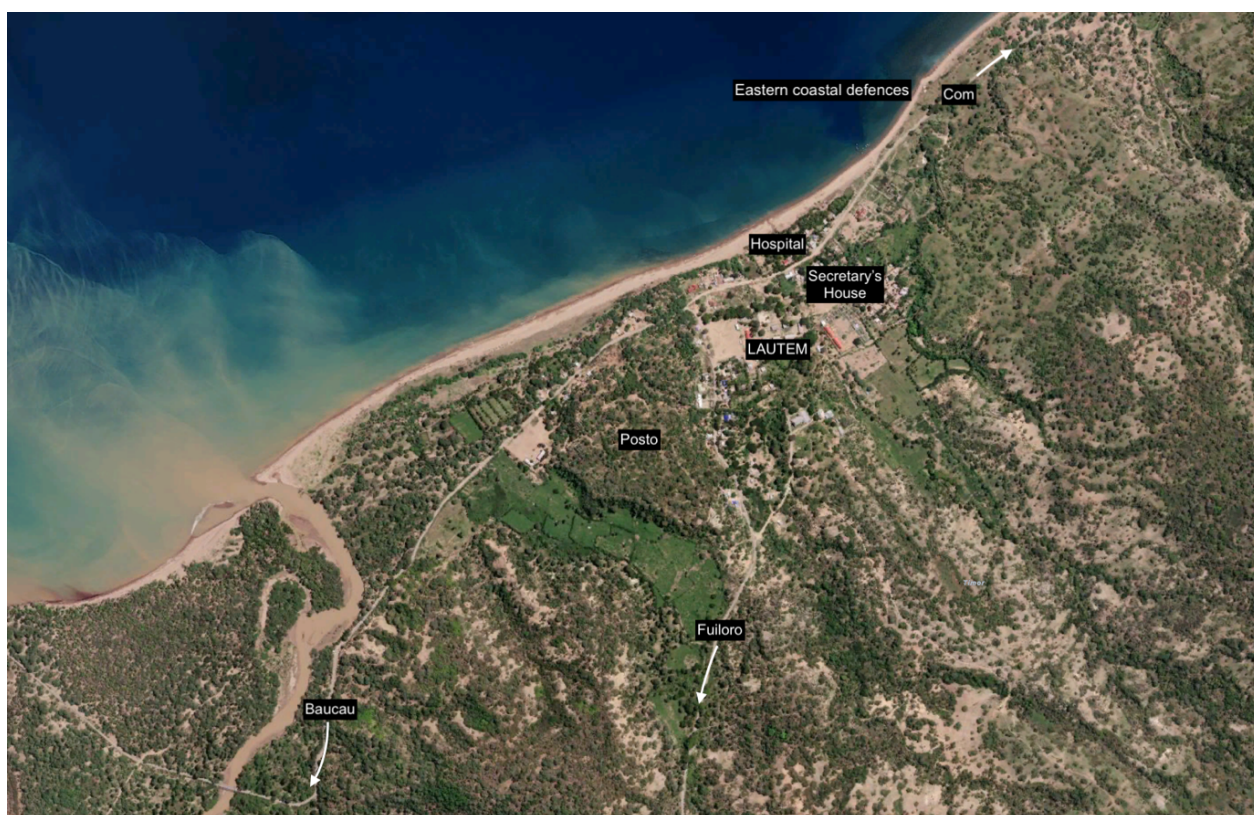


85. Lautem—vertical (14/9/42). (See Map No. 36)

85. Lautem – vertical (14/9/42) [8]



Lautem (Vila Nova Malaca) Portuguese Timor [9]



Lautem township map – Apple Maps



Ruins of Lautem fort high above the town, not accessible now, fort walls line the entrance to Lautem Vila and warehouses [10]



Lautem Fort in Mahlira village, on a strategic hill, contains the coat of arms of the Portuguese state with inscription "For the sake of the country". [11]

Japanese Military Infrastructure In The Lautem Area



Map showing Japanese military infrastructure in the Lautem area

“SECTION 5 – HISTORY OF OCCUPATION OF VILLAGES BY ENEMY

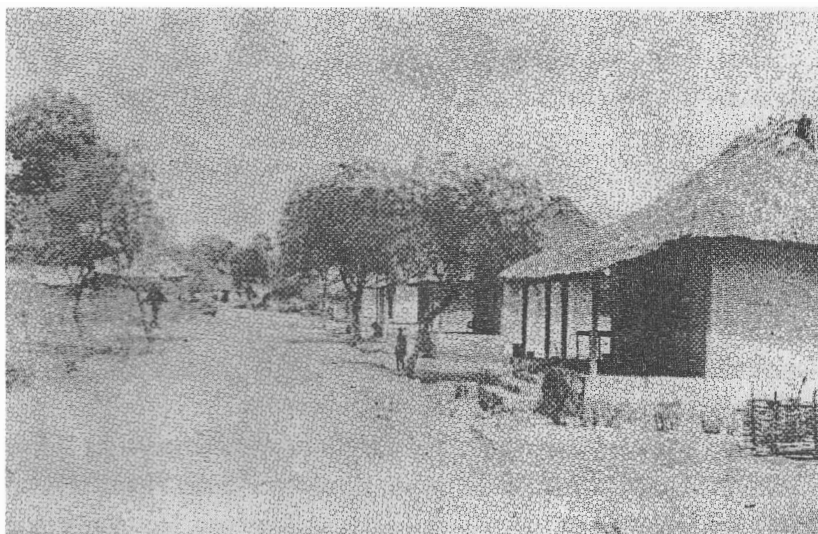
17. LAUTEM (VILA NOVA MALACA)

The enemy built up considerable base area here and at LAUTEM WEST the airfield was continually maintained until recently when (since July 16th 1944) denial ditches have been dug across the runway. This abandonment of this area probably confirms native reports that the present enemy strength in the LAUTEM area is no more than 100 Japanese and that the main forces have been withdrawn.

The enemy HQ (commanded by Col TANAKA) was situated at PISA in the hills approximately 5 km behind LAUTEM. The enemy had large barracks on each side of the road inland from LAUTEM to FUILORO. It is reported that the enemy were using small tracked vehicles which may have been carriers captured from Australian forces. In this area the enemy employed up to 500 natives conscripted from the islands of MOA, LOKAR, LETI and KISAR. These worked in the gardens at LAUTEM and the main food production was maize. In Jan 1945 it was reported that the only food being used was maize 3 times per day”. [12]

In November 1946, the Australian Consul Charles “Moth” Eaton observed:

“During my last visit to the interior, I was particularly interested to see the Japanese defences of Lautem-Cape Lore areas. I do not know if the full facts are known to our military authorities but at one time some 25,000 Japanese soldiers occupied these areas. The Japanese camps and defence works along the road between Lautem and Fuiloro were considerable and the camouflage almost perfect”. [13]



Lautem. Foto: hasai husi Taiwan Hohei Dai-2 Rentai, Dai-9 Chutai Kai (Asosiasaun Kompahia 9, Rezimentu Infanteria Formosa 2), Senyu no Hi (Monumentu ba Kolega sira iha Funu) [14]

Comfort Women In Lautem

“One of the Japanese soldiers who had previously worked in Lautem wrote in a brief collection of Japanese war veterans, "In Lautem there was also the opening of a busy *ianjo*." Idelfonso Januario, who lives in Lautem, told about women who were brought from abroad. The following is his account:

The women were brought from Kisar or Java. They stayed separate from the soldiers. There was a guard, and when the Japanese came, they gave them money to enter.

João Moniz of Boruari Village, Moro, said that women were also brought from the Celebes (Sulawesi) and Java. According to João, a woman named Pualau from Daudere, Macalotah, had a child named Hanako fathered by a Japanese soldier. Hanako was born after the Japanese left Timor.

The Japanese army positions in Lautem were always under attack by aircraft from Australia. Two Japanese ships from Java were sunk near the port of Lautem on 15 December 1943. The two military vessels were *Wakatsu-Maru* and *Genmei-Maru*, who were bringing stores and 700 women who were to become *ianfu* in Timor. At that time, the air and sea of the island of Timor were dominated by the Allied forces”. [15]

On 7 December 1943, submarine chaser *CH-2* departed Surabaya, Java for Lautem, East Timor, escorting convoy *KAI-13* consisting of *Genmei Maru* and *Wakatsu Maru*. By 15th, the convoy arrived at Timor, but was attacked by Dutch B-25s bombers, who hit *Genmei Maru* with six bombs. *Genmei Maru* caught fire and on 16th, still burning, *Genmei Maru* was scuttled by shore artillery. On 17th, *Wakatsu Maru* was attacked by RAAF Beaufighter bombers. At 0750, she blew up and sank. [16]

LAUTEM WEST AIRFIELD

On 21 July 1943 “Reconnaissance by Lightnings of No. 1 Photographic Reconnaissance Unit found further evidence of continued Japanese airfield construction. On Timor two new airstrips were discovered, one of 5,000 feet running parallel to the coast at Cape Chater and

another at Lautem, and a total of thirty-six enemy aircraft were counted on Timor airfields". [17]

AIRFIELD	RUNWAYS	USE	DEFENCES	REMARKS
LAUTEM WEST	4000' probably longer	F & B [fighters and bombers]	Possibly 9 Lt [Light] guns 1400 ' SE of the strip	A new airfield probably completed. level ground and is 5 miles WEST of LAUTEM. [18]

The 31 Squadron website gives the coordinates of the Lautem West airfield as [S 8.395178, E 126.859484](#) [[8.39518° S, 126.85948° E](#)] and this appears to be the most likely location. This locations needs to be verified by on-site inspection. [19]

Establishment of the Lautem West Airfield

A Japanese source describes the establishment of the airfield:

"The airfield built by the Japanese military in Lautem was a so-called "secret airfield". This was done from around September 1942 under the direction of the 3rd Air Wing Commander (Major General Rikitomo Tsukada). Aerial reconnaissance identified a suitable site on a flat plateau area near Lautem. The Army's 9th Field Airfield Establishment Corps (Major Toru Kawabata) had established the "secret airfield" by around February 1943 with the cooperation of the 4th Aviation Area Ground Service Corps. "Using the grassland that was part of the wide plateau, it was possible to take off and land planes with a little leveling and clearing, and the scattered forest (some of which was planted) could be used for parked aircraft and other purposes.

There were two Lautem airfields, east [Cape Chater] and west. In addition to the Lautem airfield, the Kawabata unit also established the Abis (Vila de Avis, Fuiloro) airfield, and Sae Namo near Cape Lore on the south coast.

.....

The Australian continent is just south of Timor Island. Eventually, Imperial Headquarters delineated an "absolute defense zone", intended to secure the resources of Dutch Indonesia; the plan was to stop the Allied Forces advancing westward and northward from Western New Guinea and Northern Australia. While geopolitically understandable, however, the loss of air and sea supremacy made the Japanese soldiers in the area strongly feel that Japan's defeat was not far away, although they could not express it. The Allied Forces marched west along the northern coast of New Guinea with a stepping stone strategy, annihilating all the bases of the Japanese army. On the other hand, although the troops deployed in the Banda Sea received airstrikes, they were not confronted in land battles.

.....

Lautem airfield was described as the ideal "secret airfield", being constructed on a vast meadow dotted with trees in a ranch style. It was the ultimate camouflaged airfield, where even Japanese first-time pilots could not determine the landing site. Planes were parked in a grove of trees and were difficult to spot from above. The lower branches of large trees that were dozens of meters high were removed, and many aircraft could easily be concealed

under the canopies. Also, near the entrance of the forest, there was a large cactus with crimson flowers that could hide a small aircraft. They grew in clumps and hid the parked aircraft. Also, they tried to erase the traces of the runway tracks of the planes. Of course, this kind of thing cannot be continued forever, and about half a year later, the airfield was discovered by the enemy". [20]

Japanese Air Operations Against Australia From Lautem West

Lautem West was "used by the Japanese Army Air Force (JAAF) as a base for bombers and reconnaissance aircraft for missions over Darwin, the Northern Territory and north-west Western Australia. Also used by the Japanese Navy". [21]

"Compared with these naval air forces, the Japanese Army air forces played a relatively minor role in Japanese operations against Australia. Bombers and fighters of the 3rd Air Brigade (Dai 3 Hikôdan), 7th Air Division (Dai 7 Kôkû Shidan) and 3rd Air Army (Dai 3 Kôkûgun) participated in the only air raids by Army planes on Australia, which occurred on 20 and 22 June 1943 from Lautem in the East Indies. The bombers were from the 61st and 75th Air Regiments (Hikô Dai 61 Sentai and Hikô Dai 75 Sentai, respectively), while the fighters were from the 59th Air Regiment (Hikô Dai 59 Sentai). Reconnaissance aircraft of the 70th Independent Air Company (Dokuritsu Hikô Dai 70 Chûtai; also under the 3rd Air Brigade), however, did fly numerous scouting missions over Australia before and after these air raids". [22]

"[A] Japanese raid [on Strauss Airstrip approximately 60 kilometres south of Darwin] of 20 June 1943 followed a reconnaissance flight two days earlier by a Mitsubishi Ki-100 'Dinah' of the Japanese Army Air Force's 70th DCS based at Lautem on Timor, when equipment bound for the newly arrived 380th Bombardment Group (Heavy) of the USAAF was photographed stockpiling at Winnellie". [23]

"... on 28 June [1943] Lt Cdr Suzuki led 27 Zeros from Lautem, Timor, to escort G4M *Rikkos* [bombers] to Darwin. Following the bombing 12 Zeros of the 3rd and 4th *chutais* claimed one and two probables. Three Zeros of the element at the tail end of the formation were hit and one pilot was badly wounded, but all managed to return home after a flight of four hours and 45 minutes.

Two days later 27 Zeros were again led by Suzuki to escort *Rikkos*, this time the target being Brooks Creek airfield which was believed to be the base of the B-24s. On this occasion defending Spitfires attacked before the bombing. The Japanese pilots claimed 12 destroyed and three probables, gunners aboard the *Rikkos* claiming one more shot down (five Spitfires were actually lost). One bomber was lost but all the rest of the formation returned after a flight which this time took five and a half hours. 27 Zeros were again involved in escorting *Rikkos* to Brooks Creek on 6 July, this time led by Lt Shiozuru, but on this occasion three G4Ms were lost and two Zeros were damaged". [24]

Cooper notes in relation to an earlier air raid on Darwin (2 March 1943) that:

"The incoming formation of Zeros had proceeded independently and from a more northerly bearing than the bombers. Lautem airfield in Portuguese Timor was only 650 kilometres away and was therefore the preferable take-off point for the fighters, while the long-legged G4M bombers could easily operate from Penfui, 850 kilometres distant from Darwin". [25]

The presence of the Zeros in these raids must have alerted Australian intelligence to the fact that if they were land-based they must have flown from a location closer to Darwin than Penfui or Dili and prompted the reconnaissance flights that discovered Lautem airfield in late June 1943.

Allied Air Forces Operations Against Lautem West

Once discovered, the airfield was subjected to almost continuous bombing and strafing by American, Australian and Dutch aircraft. The units involved included 380 Bombardment Group (528, 529, 530 and 531 Squadrons) of the USAAF Fifth Air Force, 79 Wing RAAF (No 2 Squadron), 18 (NEI) Squadron, which was manned by both Australian and Dutch airmen, and 31 Squadron RAAF Beaufighters. [25a] By the middle of 1944, Allied bombing had rendered the airfield unusable and most of the remaining serviceable aircraft were moved to Kendari airfield and other locations. Following the official surrender of Japanese forces on Timor, they destroyed most stores at the airfield and disabled their surviving aircraft before the arrival of Australian forces. [26]

The following is one example of a strafing mission conducted by a Beaufighter from 31 Squadron:

“In all, five sweeps and one strike were flown over Central and Eastern Timor. On one mission by two Beaufighters, captained by Flight Lieutenants Strachan and Sippe on the 13th [1944] near Lautem strip, some 200 Japanese were seen crossing a river bridge. The aircraft could not line them up because at the time they were in a tight turn, but the Japanese were observed jumping off the bridge in great confusion. Continuing on they destroyed two well-camouflaged “Dinahs” parked in disperse bays. This attack was carried out in spite of an intense barrage of ack-ack, heavy, medium and light”. [27]

George Milsom’s Account Of The Military History Team’s Visit To Lautem, January 1946

At the end of WWII, ex No. 2 Independent Company soldier George Milsom (TX4141) was promoted to Sergeant and became a member of a three-man team Military History Team that was sent to both Dutch and Portuguese Timor to record significant campaign sites. George was the guide of this team; Lieutenant Charles Bush was the official war artist and sometimes used George as a model and Sergeant Keith Davis the photographer. In Dili they received help from two new criados Fernando and Akiu.

George Milsom was an avid letter writer and his parents kept all of his letters. This post features a letter dated 14 January 1946 that he wrote after the Military History Team had completed its patrol to campaign sites at the eastern end of Portuguese Timor.

The twelve day patrol travelled through the following locations: Dili, Manatuto, Vemasse, Baucau, Lautem, Lore, Fuiloro and Ossu then back to Dili. Milsom’s narrative of the patrol is complemented by photographer Keith Davis’s photographs of some of the locations visited by the Team. The adventures and social activities of the men and their reliance on the hard working jeep as their mode of transport makes for interesting and entertaining reading.

“We stayed a right there and went on to LAUTEM next day (Sunday) [1 January 1946]. There we found the Administrator Senhor GONSALVES sitting on the verandah of a house that the Japs had built and used for their HQ. He is a big chap, big-hearted, and welcomed us with VINHO DA PORTO.

He has gathered round him all the Japanese junk from the area, broken down bombers and small motor cars; I have never seen such a collection before. We slept in Japanese beds with sheets and mosquito nets and had hot bathe in the concrete bath the Japs had built. Then we went to the airfield and you should see the wrecked planes, all in the most fantastic angles and positions, you will have to see the photo to believe it.

We did not run short of petrol there because there is a dump of 56,000 44 gallon drums there. The Administrator has trucks, cars and hundreds of bicycles. One shed he has is full of gear, one wall was covered with chiming clocks. He gave us some souvenirs. The junk heap was even able to supply us with two wheels for the jeep". [28]



Lautem, Portuguese Timor. Senhor Gonsales seated on the veranda of a mud house built by the Japanese. VX128043 Charles William Bush (in shorts) Military History Section (MHS), an Official War Artist, is working at an easel. Also identified (far right, back to camera) is TX4141 George James Beedham Milsom, MHS. [29]



Lautem, Portuguese Timor. 1946-01-02. This Japanese twin engine aircraft was probably destroyed by them at the end of the war. (Photographer Sgt K.B. Davis) [30]



Lautem, Portuguese Timor. 1946-01-02. Damaged bicycles in the Lautem area where the Japanese maintained their largest dumps of petrol, equipment and stores. They destroyed much of this material and many aircraft at the nearby airfield at



Lautem, Portuguese Timor. 1946-01-02. A wooden Japanese signpost with empty petrol drums and mobile anti-aircraft guns in the background. [32]

the end of the war. (Photographer Sgt K.B. Davis)
[31]



Lautem, Portuguese Timor. 1946-01-02. Equipment and stores deliberately damaged by the Japanese at the end of the war. (Photographer Sgt K.B. Davis) [33]



Lautem, Portuguese Timor. 1946-01-02. A native weaving a fish net. (Photographer Sgt K.B. Davis) [34]



Lautem, Portuguese Timor. 1945-12-29. A wrecked Japanese twin engine aircraft. It bears the identification number 911 on its tailplane. (Photographer Sgt K.B. Davis) [35]



Lautem, Portuguese Timor. 1946-01-02. Remains of a damaged Japanese Zero fighter aircraft and a line of hand carts. The Japanese maintained their largest dumps of petrol, equipment and stores in the Lautem area and destroyed much of it at the end of the war. (Photographer Sgt K.B. Davis) [36]



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

125197

Lautem, Portuguese Timor. 1946-01-02. This Japanese twin engine aircraft was probably destroyed by them at the end of the war. (Photographer Sgt K.B. Davis) [37]



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

125196

Lautem, Portuguese Timor. 1946-01-02. A burnt-out Japanese twin engine fighter aircraft at the Lautem airfield. (Photographer Sgt K.B. Davis) [38]

Coastal Defences – Lautem Area

“B. DEFENCES

Little information is available of coast defence artillery on TIMOR but at various points such as LAUTEM, DILI, ATAPOEPOE and particularly in the KOEPANG area there are AA weapons which may be sited in a ground or coast defence role”. [39]

Background: Japanese island defense doctrine

“Every Japanese manual from 1909 focused on the importance of offensive action to achieve victory. What the Japanese lacked in firepower and matériel was to be made up for by spiritual power, superior martial values, and total dedication to fulfilling one's duty, even if it meant attacking a superior force with bayonets or defending a position to the death. An officer corps evolved which loathed defense and fixed fortifications. However, the Pacific War became nothing more than a series of defensive battles for the Japanese, a war of attrition that they did not have the resources to win, nor even to achieve a stalemate.

The US Army's 1944 *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces* describes the Japanese attitude toward defense. "The defensive form of combat generally has been distasteful to the Japanese, and they have been reluctant to admit that the Imperial Army would ever be forced to engage in this form of combat. So pronounced has been their dislike for the defensive that tactical problems illustrating this type of combat is extremely rare."

The 1938 Combat Regulations (*Sakusen Yomurei*), still in effect at the beginning of the Pacific War, called for passive defense in the face of overwhelming enemy superiority (unyielding resistance until additional forces arrived to resume the offensive): prior to this the Japanese had adhered only to the concept of active defense. Active defense was only to be adopted when the enemy gained local superiority and continued until operational initiative could be regained and the offense resumed. In reality, because of the previous schooling and aggressive nature of Japanese officers, the conduct of the defense on Pacific islands was essentially active defense. Their goal was to halt the enemy at the water's edge, and if unable to decisively defeat him there they sought to reduce his strength, and conduct

Except for a patch of reef-bound coast about 3 miles (5 km.) east from Laivai, the foreshore for 8 miles (13 km.) is beach interspersed with coral reef. There is then 3 miles (5 km.) of reef-bound coast to the Malai-Lada River. The main road lies about a mile (1 ½ km.) inland from the coast. There is good air cover, particularly for the westerly eight miles (13 km.). Water is available right along the coast". [44]

The Japanese must have assessed this bay as the most suitable for an Allied landing along this section of coast and therefore to be defended in order to protect the nearby Lautem West airfield from capture. The pillboxes probably housed machine guns that could have poured lethal defilade fire on any landing craft attempting an assault.

The surrounding area warrants more thorough investigation to locate and document the associated Japanese defensive infrastructure.

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13. Laivai (Nova Ancora)

8°24'46.8"S, 126°44'22.2"E [1]