

AIR HOSTILITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES

8 December 1941

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THE PURPOSE of the historian," stated Professor Homer Carey Hockett, "is to ascertain *facts*, which become the basis of all generalizations or conclusions (these being also facts of a higher order, serving to give history its meaning and value). But the raw materials with which the historian works are *statements*, and the first lesson which he must learn is that statements must not be mistaken for facts. . . . His task is, if possible, to make such a use of statements that he will through them arrive at facts."¹ Who fired the first shots of the American Revolution at Lexington, the reasons for Pickett's charge at Gettysburg, the purpose of President Lincoln in deciding to begin battle at Fort Sumter are problems in historiography that have long defied a determination of precise historical fact.

Much closer at hand and still within the memory of living witnesses, the story of the initiation of air hostilities in the Philippines on 8 December 1941 and of the handling of the U.S. Far East Air Force on this first day of Japanese attack there provides another case study in the difficulty of determining precise historical truth. With the publication of the late General of the Army Douglas MacArthur's *Reminiscences*,² these events are once again described, but, unfortunately, the questions

surrounding them remain unanswered. Now that the case has been reopened there is ample justification for a new attempt to place these events in their historical setting and to seek to settle at least a part of the misunderstanding that has surrounded them.

With the emergence of Japan as a major world power, defense of the Philippines became an increasingly difficult task for the military planners of the United States. Separated from the coast of California by 6000 miles of Pacific waters, studded in their central reaches by Japanese bases in the Caroline and Marshall Islands, the Philippine Islands were a badly exposed American possession. From 1928 to 1938 the basic U.S. war plan for the defeat of Japan—the ORANGE Plan—visualized a long and costly war in which a Philippine garrison of Army troops would attempt to deny Manila and other key defenses to the enemy until the U.S. Fleet could force through the Japanese mandates and establish a secure line of communications to the Far East. As such, the Philippines were no longer an element of American strength but rather a liability. In 1935, the Chief of the Army War Plans Division suggested the desirability of undertaking some negotiation by which the Philippines would remain neutral in case of a war with Japan, thus freeing American

forces to fight along the line Alaska-Hawaii-Panama.³ The immediate prewar RAINBOW 5 plan, approved by the Joint Board on 14 May 1941, did not appreciably change the mission of U.S. forces in the Far East: the Army was assigned the mission of protecting the territory of the associated powers, preventing the extension of Axis influence, and supporting naval forces. The U.S. Navy would advance through the Carolines and Marshalls to the western Pacific.⁴

Although the Army mission in the Philippines remained defensive, the German attack against Russia in June 1941 and the mounting evidences of Japan's warlike intentions demanded a strengthening of American forces in the Philippines. General Douglas MacArthur was recalled to active duty on 26 July 1941 and given command of the United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE). The Philippine Department Air Force gave way to an enlarged Far East Air Force (FEAF) on 16 November 1941 under the command of Maj. Gen. Lewis H. Brereton, who had arrived in Manila thirteen days earlier. Modern planes were dispatched as they became available: P-40B's and P-40E's were allocated to the pursuit force, the latter being shipped directly from the factories. Given priority in the assignment of the few B-17 Flying Fortresses available in the Army Air Corps, the 19th Bombardment Group managed a pioneer Pacific flight to Luzon's Clark Field in October and November. As soon as they could be equipped from current production, four heavy bomber groups were projected for the Philippines. The second of the scheduled groups—the 7th Bombardment—began leaving California on 6 December 1941. The men of an A-24 dive bomber group—the 27th Bombardment—reached the Philippines on 20 November, but the group's planes were following in a slow convoy. Of modern combat aircraft the FEAF possessed on 1 December 1941 a total of 35 B-17's and about 105 P-40B's and -E's.⁵

Arrival of modern heavy bombers in the Philippines gave the Army forces an ability to participate in strategic offensive operations.⁶ On 14 October 1941, General Henry H. Arnold, Chief of the Army Air Forces, emphasized to

General MacArthur that an offensive employment was to be expected from the new B-17's. "By utilizing Singapore, Darwin, Rockhampton, Rabaul, Davao, and Aparri for operating bases for B-17 types of airplanes," Arnold wrote, "it is our opinion that the sea routes between Japan and Singapore, and Japan and the Dutch East Indies can be very well covered. . . . Furthermore, B-24's operating out of Aparri can cover the south section of the Japanese Islands as far north as Nagasaki."⁷ In Washington, Army and Navy planners undertook the necessary revision of RAINBOW 5, and General Brereton carried a copy of the new tasks assigned to USAFFE to MacArthur. Changes in the revision of the basic war plan were officially mailed to MacArthur on 21 November 1941, with an additional word of advice from U.S. Chief of Staff George C. Marshall. "Heretofore," Marshall wrote, "contemplated Army action in the Far East Area has been purely of a defensive nature. The augmentation of the Army Air Forces in the Philippines has modified that conception of Army action in this area to include offensive air operations in the furtherance of the strategic defensive, combined with the defense of the Philippine Islands as an air and naval base." In the event of hostilities, MacArthur was now directed by RAINBOW 5 to execute "air raids against Japanese forces and installations within tactical operating radius of available bases."

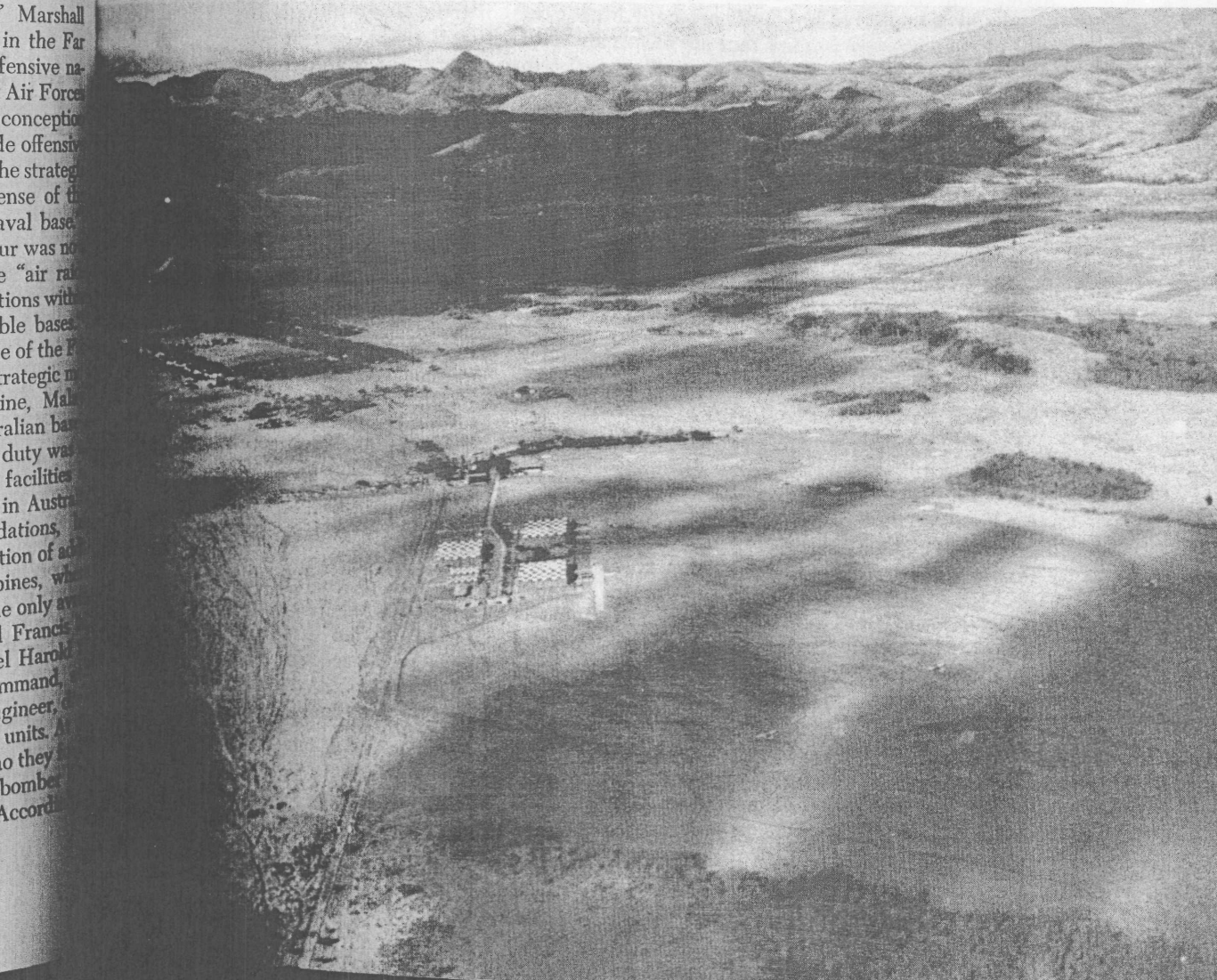
The new concept of the defense of the Far East involved exploitation of the strategic mobility of air power from Philippine, Malay, Netherlands East Indies, and Australian bases, and General Brereton's immediate duty was to coordinate the preparation of air facilities at these places. While Brereton was in Australia negotiating for base accommodations, his staff busied itself with the preparation of additional air facilities in the Philippines, where until then Clark Field had been the only available heavy bomber base. Colonel Francis M. Brady, FEAF chief of staff, Colonel Harold H. George of the V Interceptor Command, and Captain Harold Eads, the FEAF engineer, drew up a plan for the relocation of air units. At the Del Monte plantation on Mindanao they found a site where a temporary heavy bomber base could be speedily prepared.¹⁰ According

General Brereton, the USAFFE staff met these plans for a Mindanao base with some reluctance: Brig. Gen. Richard K. Sutherland, MacArthur's chief of staff, pointed out that the war plan for the Philippines included no American ground troops for the defense of Mindanao.¹¹ On 29 November, MacArthur reiterated this same thinking in a letter to Marshall: "The definitive location of the Bomber Command base in Mindanao is not acceptable because that island is strategically a salient and its defense a difficult problem with the force now in contemplation." MacArthur favored the build-

ing of a bomber base in the Visayan Islands, at the center of the archipelago, which would be well protected by coast artillery guns and troops. But to provide immediate relief for the congested air facilities on Luzon, MacArthur permitted the construction of a bomber strip at Del Monte.¹²

While the scheduled defenses of the Philippines were marching toward a readiness date in the spring of 1942, worsening relations with Japan necessitated intensified war preparations for the force at hand. On 10 November 1941, Brereton ordered all air units on the alert, re-

On 8 December 1941, Clark Field—the major air base in the Philippines—looked much as it appears in this photograph taken in December 1937. The field was still turf-surfaced, the ground around it too wet to permit any extensive dispersal of aircraft.



quiring the 19th Bombardment Group to maintain one squadron at all times on two-hour readiness for reconnaissance and bombing missions.¹³ On 27 November, General Marshall warned MacArthur that hostile action might occur at any moment, but cautioned "If it is impossible to avoid hostilities, the United States desires that Japan commit the first overt act." This policy, however, was not to be interpreted so as to jeopardize a successful defense of the Philippines, and MacArthur was specifically authorized to take such reconnaissance and other measures as might seem necessary prior to Japanese hostilities. In case of war, General MacArthur was directed to carry out the tasks assigned in the revised RAINBOW 5 plan, which had been delivered to him by Brereton.¹⁴ MacArthur immediately replied that air reconnaissance had been extended and intensified and that within the limitations of deployment in the theater everything was in readiness for a successful defense.¹⁵ In reply to a message from Arnold cautioning against sabotage, MacArthur on 6 December replied that all Air Corps stations were alerted, airplanes dispersed and each under guard, airdrome defense stations manned, and counter-subversive measures had started functioning.¹⁶

In order to obtain greater dispersal, General Brereton sent two squadrons of B-17's to Del Monte airfield on the evening of 5 December 1941. Under command of Major Emmett O'Donnell, Jr., the 16 Fortresses of the 93d and 14th Squadrons departed Clark Field after dark in a secret movement. Here begins the first of the controversies regarding the handling of the Far East Air Force in the initial days of hostilities. "To the best of my memory," O'Donnell wrote in February 1946, "it was never intended to send more than two squadrons of heavy bombers from Clark Field to Del Monte prior to 7 December 1941."¹⁷ In *The Brereton Diaries*, published in 1946, General Brereton recorded that he was able to send no more than two squadrons southward because the B-17's of the 7th Bombardment Group were leaving the United States early in December with orders to push through as rapidly as possible and they would need to use the field at Del Monte. Brereton further stated that permission

to move the 16 Fortresses to Del Monte "was obtained from General Sutherland only with the understanding that they would be returned to the airfields to be constructed on Cebu and Luzon as soon as the necessary operating facilities could be prepared."¹⁸ According to Colonel Eugene L. Eubank, commander of the 19th Group, when interrogated on 2 July 1942: "We were planning to keep six squadrons on Del Monte and two in Luzon."¹⁹

The USAFFE version of these events was first published in 1944 when Mr. Frazier Hunt, a press correspondent who had visited MacArthur's headquarters to gather material for a popular biography, asserted that General Sutherland on three occasions before 8 December had ordered Brereton to send all B-17's to Mindanao and that only after a last and peremptory order had Brereton finally dispatched two of the squadrons. When it was published, Hunt's biography of MacArthur carried an introduction by Brig. Gen. C. A. Willoughby, Chief of Military Intelligence, CHQ Southwest Pacific Area.²⁰ In an interview with Mr. Walter D. Edmonds on 4 June 1945, General Sutherland repeated the same account:

Gen. Sutherland began by saying all the B-17's had been ordered to Del Monte some days before [8 December 1941]. On a check it was found that only half had been sent. CHQ wanted the planes in Del Monte because they would there have been safe from initial Jap attacks—they could not have been reached at all—and they could themselves have staged out of Clark Field to bomb Formosa. This direct order had *not been obeyed*. And it must be remembered that CHQ gave out general orders and that the AFHQ were supposed to execute them.²¹

In September 1946, after *The Brereton Diaries* appeared in print, General MacArthur broke his silence: "I had given orders several days before to withdraw the heavy bombers from Clark Field to Mindanao . . . to get them out of range of enemy land-based air."²² In his *Reminiscences*, General MacArthur spoke more kindly of General Brereton:

A number of statements have been made criticizing General Brereton, the implication being that through neglect or faulty judgment he failed to take proper security measures, result-

ing in the destruction of part of his air force on the ground. While it is true that the tactical handling of his command, including all necessities for its protection against air attack of his planes on the ground, was entirely in his own hands, such statements do an injustice to this officer.²³

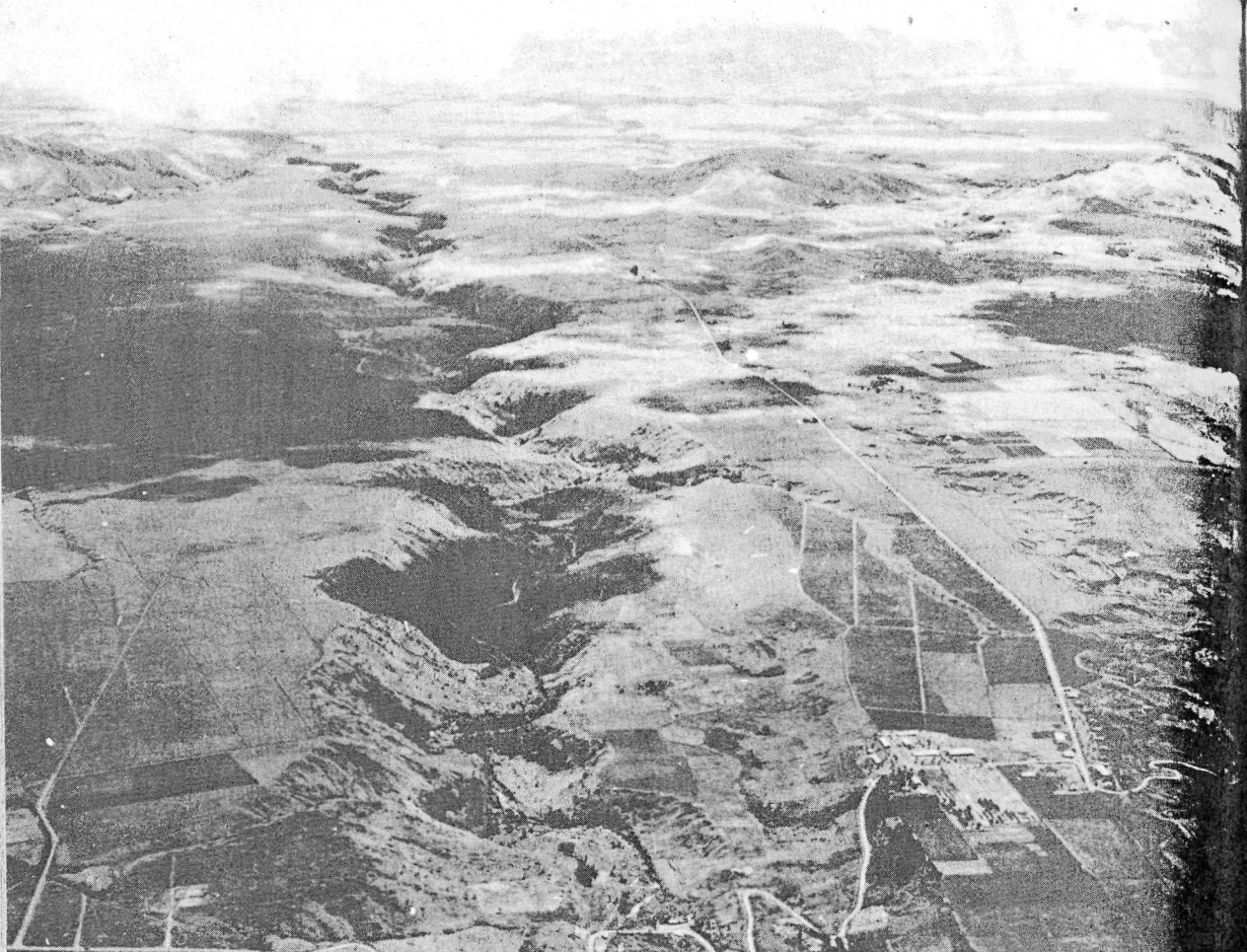
Examination of related contemporary written evidence permits some evaluation of these recollections. Brereton's account of Sutherland's reluctance to permit the movement of B-17's to Del Monte is partially reinforced by MacArthur's statement on 29 November 1941 that the Mindanao base "will give immediate relief from the congested conditions on Luzon ... [but] is not acceptable because that island is strategically a salient. . . ." In another letter on 1 December, MacArthur requested anti-aircraft artillery to protect Del Monte, presumably against carrier-based air attack.²⁴ In neither letter did MacArthur mention any immediate intention to move all B-17's to Del Monte, and in his message of 6 December he merely noted that all airplanes were dispersed and each under guard.

There are also some inconsistencies in the recollection of the air officers. In his book, *They Fought With What They Had*, Edmonds does not find Brereton's explanation of why he sent only half of the B-17's southward to be "too convincing." Edmonds reasoned that the arrival of the new group of Fortresses from the United States would be stretched out over several days.²⁵ As a matter of fact, back in Washington on 1 December, General Arnold planned that a total of 48 heavy bombers would have departed for the Philippines between 3 and 10 December and that the first 19 of these planes would arrive at Del Monte on 12-13 December.²⁶ The initial movement would actually be delayed, and the first flights would not begin to depart for Hawaii until 6 December. It is similarly difficult to reconcile Sutherland's supposed reluctance to allow two squadrons to move to Del Monte with the inevitability that the whole 7th Group would soon have to be based there. And while MacArthur was not satisfied with the Del Monte base, he apparently visualized it as the main bomber base—at least until a new Visayan airfield could be built

—with Clark Field to be used as a staging base for combat missions. It is possible that Sutherland's reluctance as described by Brereton was merely designed to establish the point that Del Monte was not to become the permanent bomber base. Brereton noted that Sutherland exacted the provision that the planes would be returned either to Clark Field or to a base constructed on Cebu in the Visayas.

While none of the Air Force officers have emphasized the fact, establishment of the entire B-17 force at Del Monte would have been hazardous. At Clark the bombers could be defended by aircraft warning radar, fighters, and anti-aircraft artillery. Del Monte was completely lacking in airdrome defense, and the bombers had to be protected by dispersal and camouflage. The new airfield at Del Monte was supposedly a secret base and was believed to be outside the range of Japanese land-based bombers, but neither of these possibilities could be guaranteed, for there was a large settlement of dissident Japanese on Mindanao and the enemy was expected to use carrier aircraft in his initial assault against the Philippines. In retrospect, it would appear that Brereton's disposition of his heavy bombers was sound: two squadrons at Clark under protection of fighters and artillery and two squadrons camouflaged and dispersed at Del Monte. A historian finds here, however, two opposing statements, and he must accept or reject one or the other of them in the light of his own best judgment. The Army historian Professor Louis Morton found it impossible to determine where "the responsibility lies for failing to move all the B-17's south." Morton thereby assumes that an order to move the Fortresses had been issued.²⁷ In the absence of definitive contemporary evidence, the best judgment on the matter appears to be the statement of Colonel Eubank, made in July 1942 before the events became controversial, when he said: "We were planning to keep six squadrons on Del Monte and two in Luzon."

The beginning of hostilities in the Pacific found the Philippine garrison alerted and, within limits, ready for a successful defense. The timing of the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor, shortly after dawn on 7 December 1941, fa-



Del Monte airfield was hurriedly laid out in flat meadowland at the left of this prewar photograph of the Del Monte plantations. The Agusán River flows through the ravine.

vored the American defenses in the Philippines, since H-hour in Hawaii coincided with the very early morning hours of 8 December in the Far East. Japanese aircraft on Formosa, moreover, would be weathered in during the morning and would not be able to manage an assault against Clark Field until shortly after noon. The Far East Air Force was thus permitted an opportunity to strike a first blow. Why it did not do so is the subject of the second and major controversy regarding the employment of the U.S. heavy bomber force in the Philippines on the first day of the war.

General Brereton has written that a telephone call awakened him early on the morning of 8 December, and he recalled that Lt. Col. Charles H. Caldwell, FEAF operations offi-

cer, answered and received the news from General Sutherland that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. Sutherland then told Brereton that the Japanese had attacked Hawaii at 2:35 A.M. Manila time and that a state of war existed.²⁸ Caldwell's later recollection of what then transpired is as follows: "I . . . was standing right beside the General when he told General Sutherland to tell General MacArthur that the 19th Group would be ready to bomb Formosa at daylight; Sutherland said that he would have to contact General MacArthur before such a mission could be authorized. He later called back and said that the mission would not be flown."²⁹ After completing his telephone conversation with Sutherland, Brereton immediately ordered all air units notified of the Jap-

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anese attack and directed Colonel Eubank to come down to FEF Headquarters. He recalled that it was then around 4 A.M. and still dark.³⁰

Brereton recorded that at about 5 A.M. he reported to USAFFE Headquarters in Manila, where he found that General MacArthur was in conference. Sutherland briefed him on all available information, and Brereton told Sutherland that he wished to mount all the B-17's at Clark for missions to Formosa and to prepare the Fortresses at Del Monte for similar missions to be staged through Clark Field. He requested permission to begin offensive action immediately after daylight. According to Brereton, Sutherland agreed with the plans, authorized preparations, and said he would obtain General MacArthur's authority for the attacks.³¹ At this point begins a series of entries in a typescript document, titled "Office of Commanding General, FEF, Summary of Activities," the authenticity of which as a historical source will be subsequently examined. The first entry at 7:15 A.M. in this document records that General Brereton visited No. 1 Victoria (USAFFE Headquarters) where he was "informed that for the time being our role was defensive but to stand by for orders."³²

In the meanwhile the FEF staff had been gathering in General Brereton's office at Nielson Field on the southern outskirts of Manila, and the staff had been joined by Colonel Eubank and his operations officer from Clark. Captain Allison Ind, FEF intelligence officer, was assembling target folders on Formosa. As to the state of the target information he would observe: "We were as ready as we would be for a long time to come."³³ According to the recollection of Captain Harold Eads, all those present were of the opinion that the Air Force should "strike at the Japs in Formosa with everything we had without delay." The FEF staff was preparing to proceed on that basis.³⁴

When he arrived at Nielson Field, Brereton brought the news (as Eads expressed it) that "we couldn't attack until we were attacked."³⁵ While war planning continued, Sutherland was again contacted at 9 A.M., and, according to the FEF Summary, he again advised "planes not authorized to carry bombs at this time."³⁶ Colonel Francis M. Brady, the

FEF chief of staff, who may well have made this call (although he remembered it as having been put through at about 9:30 A.M.), later stated that Sutherland told him that FEF would be properly informed of any new decision and that he was not to call again.³⁷ At 10 A.M. Brereton again telephoned Sutherland who repeated that "all aircraft would be held in reserve and that the present attitude is strictly defensive." Brereton said that he remonstrated that if Clark Field were "taken out" by the enemy the Air Force could not operate offensively.³⁸

Apparently at about this time Sutherland did authorize a reconnaissance mission to Formosa, and at 10:10 A.M. Colonel Eubank left for Clark Field to send out these planes. According to the FEF Summary, Brereton received a telephone call from General MacArthur at 10:14 A.M. authorizing him to take offensive action (in his diaries Brereton records this call as having been received at "about 11 A.M." and as having been from Sutherland). By this time, Brereton had changed his plans. Since no attack had been made against Clark, he wished to hold the B-17's there in readiness until the reconnaissance missions could return, but, with or without photographic reconnaissance, the B-17's would attack Formosa late that afternoon.³⁹ To follow the plan of operation outlined in the FEF Summary, General Brereton had by 10:45 A.M. matured the following schedule: two squadrons of B-17's would attack known airdromes in southern Formosa at the latest daylight hour permitting visibility; the two squadrons at Del Monte would move to a dry-weather strip at San Marcelino at dusk and then to Clark after dark, where they would prepare for raids against Formosa at dawn the next day. At 11:56 A.M. this plan was communicated to General Sutherland.⁴⁰

The recollections of the Air Force officers—while differing as to exact details—are remarkably consistent in regard to the events on the morning of 8 December. Even Colonel Eubank, who said that he did not wish to discuss the matter when interrogated in July 1942, commented that it was General Brereton's plan to bomb Formosa and that such had been firmly recommended by him.⁴¹ But the delay had been

too long, and as the result of a series of unfortunate circumstances a Japanese air attack at Clark Field shortly after noon destroyed most of the two squadrons of B-17's based there. Half of the B-17's in the Far East having been eliminated, offensive action against Formosa was no longer practicable.

The recollections of General MacArthur and General Sutherland as to the events on the morning of 8 December 1941 are at sharp variance with those of the air officers. In June 1945, Sutherland told Edmonds that "there was some plan to bomb Formosa but Brereton said that he had to have photos first. That there was no sense in going up there to bomb without knowing what they were going after. There were some 25 fields on Formosa." Sutherland closed the subject with a positive assertion: "Holding the bombers at Clark Field that first day was entirely due to Brereton."⁴² In an official release issued after the publication of *The Brereton Diaries*, General MacArthur stated that he knew nothing of a Brereton recommendation to bomb Formosa:

I wish to state that General Brereton never recommended an attack on Formosa to me and I know nothing of such a recommendation having been made; that my first knowledge of it was contained in yesterday's press statement.

That it must have been of a most nebulous and superficial character, as no official record exists of it in headquarters.

That such a proposal, if intended seriously, should have been made to me in person by him; that he never has spoken of the matter to me either before or after the Clark Field attack.

That an attack on Formosa with its heavy air concentrations by his small bomber force without fighter support, which, because of the great distance involved, was impossible, would have had no chance of success.⁴³

MacArthur concluded this September 1946 release with the observation: "The over-all strategic mission of the Philippines command was to defend the Philippines, not to initiate outside attack." In his *Reminiscences*, General MacArthur wrote:

Sometime in the morning of December 8th, before the Clark Field attack, General

Brereton suggested to General Sutherland a foray against Formosa. I know nothing of any interview with Sutherland, and Brereton never at any time recommended or suggested an attack on Formosa to me. My first knowledge of it was in a newspaper dispatch months later. Such a suggestion to the Chief of Staff must have been of a most nebulous and superficial character, as there was no record of it at headquarters. The proposal, if intended seriously, should certainly have been made to me in person. He has never spoken of the matter to me either before or after the Clark Field attack.⁴⁴

These categorical statements made by Generals MacArthur and Sutherland necessarily give the historian some pause, especially those parts of General MacArthur's statements that refer to official records in his headquarters. It appears, however, that both MacArthur and Sutherland must have been speaking from memory rather than from recourse to records. In May 1944, the Fifth Air Force chief of staff originated a letter to MacArthur's headquarters asking for information regarding the employment of the FFAF bomber force on 8 December 1941 and received this reply: "There is no official information in this headquarters bearing upon the questions propounded in basic communication."⁴⁵ It is entirely possible that General MacArthur may not have been informed of General Brereton's early-morning requests for authority to attack Formosa; the recollections of the air officers and the FFAF Summary attest that these requests were directed to General Sutherland.

MacArthur's reasoning that unescorted B-17 attacks against Formosa would have been "impossible" does not coincide with then-current thinking or with other events that happened on 8 December. In the prewar period, the B-17 Flying Fortresses were believed to have great defensive capabilities. General Arnold envisioned that long-range B-17 missions would be conducted without fighter escort. This was further borne out by the fact that the radius of action of the P-40's sent to the Philippines was only 285 miles.⁴⁶ MacArthur, moreover, apparently authorized the B-17 attack that was supposed to have been sent to Formosa late on the afternoon of 8 December. At any rate, on 9 December he signaled the War Department

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that "the intended attack on Formosa had to be canceled in view of damage reported at Clark Field."⁴⁷ MacArthur's statement that the strategic mission of the Philippine command was "to defend . . . not to initiate outside attack," was at variance with the amended RAINBOW 5 plan which directed "air raids against Japanese forces and installations within tactical operating radius of available bases."

When he published his *Diaries* in 1946, General Brereton surmised that he might have been unable to get authority for the early-morning attacks against Formosa because MacArthur had been instructed not to attack unless attacked first and that the Pearl Harbor attack "might not have been construed as an overt act against the Philippines."⁴⁸ Although MacArthur had been officially directed to implement the revised RAINBOW 5 plan by the Chief of Staff's letter of 21 November 1941, the month or less permitted to change from defense to offense was a short time in which to reorient planning and thinking, especially since MacArthur (as he wrote Marshall on 29 November) had not previously planned to include heavy bombers in the Philippine Army because of their cost.⁴⁹ Hard on the heels of the revised RAINBOW 5 came the 27 November directive that "the United States desires that Japan commit the first overt act." Literal interpretation of this order led USAFFE to refuse Brereton's request for a few high-level reconnaissance flights over southern Formosa on 1 December,⁵⁰ and Sutherland later cited this order when he explained the exceedingly circumscribed authority granted the commander of the V Interceptor Command against Japanese planes reconnoitering Luzon: "We told him he could effect it," Sutherland recollected, "but that he must act defensively; but if the Japs came in near enough he could go to it."⁵¹

Based upon personal interviews with General Sutherland in November 1946 and June 1951, Professor Morton concludes that Brereton's surmise that the Pearl Harbor attack was not considered an overt act against the Philippines "must be dismissed." In support of this position, Morton further cites the fact that MacArthur received a message from Washington at 5:30 A.M. on 8 December informing him that

hostilities had begun, and that he was to execute RAINBOW 5.⁵² In drawing his conclusion, Morton ignored MacArthur's statement that his mission had been "to defend . . . not to initiate outside attack." MacArthur's *Reminiscences* now reveal that USAFFE was thinking defensively. MacArthur states that initial reports of the Pearl Harbor attack left him with the impression that the Japanese had suffered a setback and that the failure of the Japanese to close against Luzon during the morning of 8 December supported this erroneous belief. "I therefore contemplated," MacArthur wrote, "an air reconnaissance to the north, using bombers with fighter protection, to ascertain a true estimate of the situation and to exploit any possible weaknesses that might develop on the enemy's front."⁵³ This statement adds weight to the conclusion that the incubus of a long period of defensive thinking, unfamiliarity with strategic air capabilities, and the hesitation arising from the directive that the Japanese should attack first may well have contributed to the fatal delay in launching the heavy bomber attack against Formosa, although more than one Air Force officer has since observed that "the bombing of Pearl Harbor was a first-class overt act."⁵⁴

Under normal circumstances the existence of contemporary documentary evidence enables a historian to evaluate the statements of interested participants in the events they describe. Unfortunately, only a limited amount of documentary evidence bearing upon the employment of the FEAFF bomber force in the Philippines can be found. With surrender imminent, Lt. Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright, commanding on Corregidor, used two small aircraft on the night of 12 April 1942 to transport some 150 pounds of what he described as "General Staff Section Journals, documents, and my diaries" to Mindanao, whence they were taken by special courier to General Sutherland in Australia. "These papers when they arrive," Sutherland directed, "are to be delivered to me—not to staff sections." Another notation on Wainwright's message stated that the documents described were received on 19 April 1942 and placed in a vault in the Chief of Staff's office.⁵⁵ In September 1942, General Marshall

sent a message to Brisbane stating that it was understood that the staff journals of the Headquarters Forces in the Philippines from the beginning of the war to 1 April were in GHQ, Southwest Pacific Area, and that they should be forwarded to the War Department without delay. The Brisbane headquarters replied that complete staff journals from the Philippines were "not available."⁵⁶ Although virtually complete G-4 records ultimately arrived in Washington, the location of USAFFE-USFIP G-2 and G-3 journals was never discovered by Professor Morton, who wrote: "A careful search . . . has failed to produce them, and the principals, Generals Wainwright and Sutherland, assert they have no knowledge of their whereabouts."⁵⁷

Very few Far East Air Force records survived the retreat from the Philippines. Generals Brereton and Brady have pointed out that two official reports were made to General Arnold, one before FFAF Headquarters left the Philippines and the other shortly after the evacuation of Java. Diligent search of official records collections failed to disclose the original of either report. General Arnold, moreover, made no apparent use of the reports when he wrote his *Global Mission*, but instead remarked that he had never been able to get "the real story of what happened in the Philippines."⁵⁸

That the two FFAF reports were made is nevertheless fairly certain. General Brady recalled that the first report was carried out of the Philippines by Brig. Gen. Henry B. Clagett, the commander of the V Interceptor Command, who was ordered to Australia to establish a rear base.⁵⁹ The FFAF Summary of Activities notes that a memorandum was prepared for General Arnold on 18 December 1941, giving a chronological statement of events between 3 November and 8 December 1941.⁶⁰ General Clagett departed the Philippines on the following day, and it is to be assumed that he later forwarded the report to General Arnold from Australia. If it could be located, this document might well clear up the dispute about the basing of the B-17's at Del Monte. General Clagett died before replying to a request for information regarding his knowledge of this historical source.

The second report must have covered FFAF activities from 8 December 1941 through 24 February 1942. While the original of this report has never been located, the USAF Historical Division Archives contains a typescript document which is either a carbon copy of the report or the working data from which the report was prepared. This document—entitled "Office of Commanding General, FFAF, Summary of Activities"—was discovered in the retired files of the Tenth Air Force (Brereton's next command after leaving Java) in India, and it was routinely transmitted to the Archives in October 1945.⁶¹ Buried in a bulk shipment of documents, this FFAF Summary of Activities was not noticed until the first volume of *The Army Air Forces in World War II* was nearing publication. The summary was of such importance that the editors of the Air Force historical series immediately undertook to incorporate its information wherever possible.⁶²

In its form, this FFAF Summary of Activities appears to be a detailed daily diary of FFAF Headquarters, with time entries for the events of each day between 8 December 1941 and 24 February 1942. General Brereton has recalled that he instituted the practice of keeping a detailed daily diary at FFAF: "It was my invariable habit," he stated, "to report for the record the substance of personal conferences outside headquarters immediately upon my return."⁶³ Lt. Col. Keith P. Siegfried, who as a warrant officer joined FFAF Headquarters in Java, recalled that the format of the Summary was that generally employed in the Headquarters diary. "At that time," Siegfried recollected, "the minute-by-minute recording of incidents, conversations, phone calls, and the receipt or dispatch of messages as they occurred was an established sop."⁶⁴ Internal evidence points to Major Norman J. Lewellyn (Brereton's aide who was killed in India in 1943) as the keeper of the portion of the Summary through 29 January 1942, and General Brady remembers that Lewellyn went about FFAF Headquarters each day collecting information. General Brereton has also stated that Lewellyn was the custodian of the FFAF War Diary.

While the FFAF Summary appears to be a

day-by-day report of events, internal evidence makes it apparent that it was transcribed in its present form somewhat later than the events it describes. The most certain evidence of this is the erroneous dating of many of the earlier entries as "1942" rather than "1941." One rarely if ever makes an advance error in setting down a date, and it is likely that these misdated entries were transcribed early in 1942, when the harassed typist was overly conscious that a new year was at hand. Misspelled place names scattered throughout the Summary (not an unusual feature in military records) indicate that the typist was transcribing unfamiliar material. Additional internal analysis also indicates that the FEAF Summary is a compilation of several different diaries: (1) General Brereton is "positive that the entries from 8 December to 23 December are accurate transcriptions taken from . . . the Headquarters War Diary." (2) From 24 December 1941 through 29 January 1942, the Summary's entries follow the travels of Brereton's headquarters to Australia and Java, and this portion of the document unquestionably represents the work of Major Lewellyn. (3) The portion of the Summary for 30 January through 22 February 1942 is a carbon copy identical to a similar portion of the FEAF Headquarters diary in the Kansas City Records Center. (4) The last page of the Summary covers events on 24 February 1942, the date that General Brereton gave up command of FEAF, and does not appear in the Kansas City file copy of the FEAF Headquarters diary.

Two significant questions emerge from this internal criticism: When was the FEAF Summary transcribed in its existing form? Were the sources edited before their transcription? Watermarks of a Javanese bank on a portion of the paper used in the Summary point to the time and place of the assembly of the information as late January or early February 1942 in Java. When asked about the matter, Generals Brereton and Caldwell were certain that the Summary was carried by Lewellyn when they departed from Java for India on 25 February 1942. After what appears to have been a cursory examination of the Summary, Walter D. Edmonds commented that he felt "fairly sure that

it has been re-edited." Reports of pursuit activity, Edmonds claimed, coincided more closely with statements in the 24th Pursuit Group's history than did the recollections of the various personnel he interviewed.⁶⁵ As a matter of record, however, the 24th Group's history was written in Australia during October 1942, and by this time the FEAF Summary was already resting in the files of the Tenth Air Force in India. It may be noted, moreover, that the details in the FEAF Summary coincide generally but not exactly with the recollections of the Air Force officers regarding the happenings of December 1941. The Summary thus possesses the precision and definition which usually characterize the difference between a contemporary document and the memories of participants in events. Finally, both Generals Brereton and Caldwell accepted the authenticity of the Summary after they had examined it in 1952. "There is no doubt in my mind of the authenticity of the diary," General Caldwell stated,⁶⁶ while General Brereton wrote: "I am absolutely certain that the Diary is an authentic record of the facts as they were recorded at that time."⁶⁷ Additional criticism thus buttressed the initial conclusion of the Air Force historical editors that the FEAF Summary "represents a valuable record compiled closer to the events described than any other known source of comparable scope."⁶⁸

It is not really within the province of proper historical reporting to speculate on what might have been the result of a heavy bomber attack against Japanese bases on Formosa in the opening hours of American participation in World War II. "As a matter of fact," General MacArthur suggested, "an attack on Formosa, with its heavy air concentrations, by our small bomber force without fighter cover, which because of the great distance involved and the limited range of the fighters was impossible, would have been suicidal."⁶⁹ On the other hand, Japanese officers interrogated after World War II were less certain as to what the effect of such an attack might have been. With 150 Army and 300 Navy aircraft crowded into Formosa's limited air facilities, depending on overhead fighter cover for protection, Japanese

commanders knew many anxious moments during the morning of 8 December. Only the Navy planes had range enough to reach Manila, and the delicately adjusted attack plan called for the launching of a strike from Formosa at sunrise. When ground fog delayed the take-off, the Japanese greatly feared that American aircraft would initiate the first strike. This fear was increased at 8 A.M. when an American radio message was intercepted indicating that an attack was being considered and that the B-17's would arrive over Formosa at 10:10. At this hour, a Japanese Army plane falsely reported the approach of the B-17's, and, expecting the worst, the Japanese donned gas masks and otherwise prepared for the American attack that never came.⁷⁰

Actually, however, the facts that must be gathered about the initial phase of American

air operations in the Philippines involve not what might have been but what actually happened. Acceptance of the FEAF Summary of Activities as a nearly contemporary and almost certainly authentic source permits little doubt to remain that General Brereton did request and was denied authority to send a B-17 strike against Formosa early in the morning of 8 December. Complete resolution of the question as to whether Brereton had been ordered to move all the B-17's back to Mindanao well before the war's beginning must await the location of additional documentary evidence. One may hope that as the passing of time diminishes the keenness of the controversy the appearance of additional source material will allow historians to tear away the "conspiracy of silence" that has so long surrounded the beginning of the war in the Philippines.

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Notes

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