

# IN MEMORIAM



## U.S. Asiatic Fleet

**F**rom the beginning of foreign contact with China, the status of foreigners residing in or doing business with China was a puzzle for the Chinese government in Peking as well as the foreign traders attempting to do business. The Chinese government wanted to keep the western barbarians outside of China and did not want to administer their own internal disagreements. Strong foreign commercial and political influence in China between 1842 and 1942, emanated from treaty ports. These were tiny enclaves of foreign influence and government located throughout much of coastal and eastern China.

The Asiatic Station of the U.S. Navy was the overall command of the U.S. Navy in the Far East during the 1880s. Vessels of the Asiatic Squadron, including South China & Yangtze River Patrol, on this station were primarily involved in matters relating to U.S. commerce with China and Japan.

27 April 1898, this squadron, composed of 3 cruisers, 2 gunboats and 1 cutter (Commodore Dewey in flagship Olympia), sailed from Mirs Bay, China, to the Philippines to participate in the Spanish-American War, destroyed the Spanish fleet guarding the Philippines, and effectively took control of Manila Bay.

In 1902, the Asiatic Squadron was upgraded to Asiatic Fleet.

In 1922, the Asiatic Fleet was charged with defending the Philippines and Guam, and with upholding the Open Door Policy in China.

In 1924-1937, the regularly assigned forces of the Asiatic Fleet were augmented because the political turmoil in the Philippines and China was such as to frequently require the presence of United States naval vessels to protect American lives and property where outbreaks occurred—Japanese Militarists “China war,” Rape of Nanking and many incidents and “accidents” involving American properties.

12 December 1937, Japanese bombed and sank Panay at Nanking in the Yangtze River.

28 February 1941, Asiatic Fleet was renamed U.S. Asiatic Fleet

In July 1941, American, British Commonwealth, Dutch, and Australian (ABDA) diplomatic and military planning determined that the principal military effort of the Associated Powers will be in the Atlantic and European Areas, and operations in other areas will be conducted to facilitate that effort. The U.S. Navy would not reinforce the Asiatic Fleet by the Pacific Fleet and assumed that war with Japan would see destruction of United States and allied air and naval forces in these regions. U.S. Pacific Fleet would defend the Malay Barrier, if the Japanese “made a direct act of war” against ABDA territory.

24 November 1941, Admiral Thomas C. Hart ordered Marines and others from China to the Philippines and Asiatic Fleet units to Philippine and Dutch East Indies ports.

2 December 1941, Rear Admiral William A. Glassford deactivated the historic Yangtze Patrol, departed for Manila aboard Luzon with, Mindanao and Oahu. Tutuila remained upriver at Chungking and Wake at Shanghai as State Department radio station.

8 December 1941, Rear Admiral William A. Glassford Commander Task Force 5 hoisted his flag aboard Houston at Iloilo. Japan commenced hostilities.

15 January 1942, a new ABDA command was formed under The Supreme Commander Southwest Pacific; Field Marshal Sir Archibald Wavell, responsible for all area forces. Admiral Hart Commander ABDA Afloat. Admiral Helfrich, Commander Dutch Naval Forces NEI; Vice Admiral Leary, U.S. Navy, Commander Anzac Forces.

24 January 1942, four old U.S. “4-piper” destroyers (Ford, Paul Jones, Parrot and Pope) attacked and sank Japanese vessels anchored in Balikpapan Bay. This was the first surface action of the Pacific War and the first since 1898.

30 January 1942, U.S. Asiatic Fleet units were organized into U.S. Naval Forces Southwest Pacific under Vice Admiral W. A. Glassford—the U. S. Asiatic Fleet, not formally abolished, ceased to exist.

4 February 1942, Flores Sea; USS Houston, USS Marblehead, HNMS De Ruyter and HNMS Tromp are damaged by bombing.

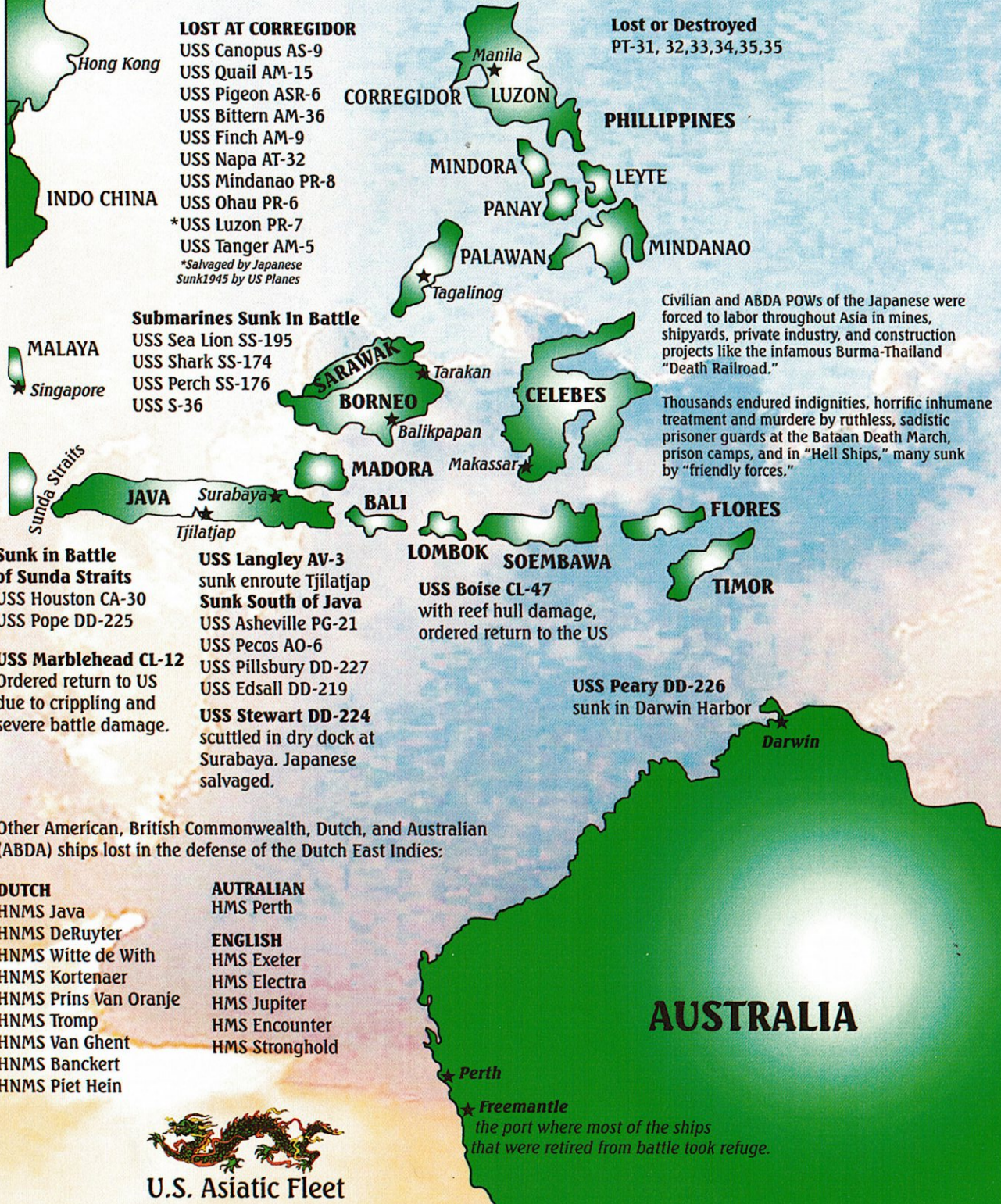
15 February 1942, Admiral Hart relinquished operational command to Admiral Helfrich RNN. General Wavell resigned and left.

17 February 1942, Battle of Badoeng Strait; USS Stewart, HNMS Java and HNMS Tromp damaged, and HNMS Piet Hien lost.

27 February-5 March 1942, Battle of the Java Sea and Battle of Sunda Strait. ABDA forces, nearly destroyed by superior Japanese forces, dissolved. United States, in agreement with Allied governments, assumes responsibility for the strategic defense of entire Pacific Ocean. U.S. Asiatic Fleet—recognized by many awards for Valor, Meritorious Service, and Achievement—relegated to history, remembered by those who served, and forgotten in contemporary history.



# Ships of the Asiatic Fleet lost in battle between December 7, 1941 and March 3, 1942



**LOST AT CORREGIDOR**

- USS Canopus AS-9
- USS Quail AM-15
- USS Pigeon ASR-6
- USS Bittern AM-36
- USS Finch AM-9
- USS Napa AT-32
- USS Mindanao PR-8
- USS Ohau PR-6
- \*USS Luzon PR-7
- USS Tanger AM-5
- \*Salvaged by Japanese  
Sunk 1945 by US Planes*

**Lost or Destroyed**  
PT-31, 32,33,34,35,35

**Submarines Sunk In Battle**

- USS Sea Lion SS-195
- USS Shark SS-174
- USS Perch SS-176
- USS S-36

Civilian and ABDA POWs of the Japanese were forced to labor throughout Asia in mines, shipyards, private industry, and construction projects like the infamous Burma-Thailand "Death Railroad."

Thousands endured indignities, horrific inhumane treatment and murders by ruthless, sadistic prisoner guards at the Bataan Death March, prison camps, and in "Hell Ships," many sunk by "friendly forces."

**Sunk in Battle of Sunda Straits**  
USS Houston CA-30  
USS Pope DD-225

**USS Marblehead CL-12**  
Ordered return to US due to crippling and severe battle damage.

**USS Langley AV-3**  
sunk enroute Tjilatjap

**Sunk South of Java**  
USS Asheville PG-21  
USS Pecos AO-6  
USS Pillsbury DD-227  
USS Edsall DD-219

**USS Stewart DD-224**  
scuttled in dry dock at Surabaya. Japanese salvaged.

**USS Boise CL-47**  
with reef hull damage, ordered return to the US

**USS Peary DD-226**  
sunk in Darwin Harbor

Other American, British Commonwealth, Dutch, and Australian (ABDA) ships lost in the defense of the Dutch East Indies:

- DUTCH**
- HNMS Java
  - HNMS DeRuyter
  - HNMS Witte de With
  - HNMS Kortenaer
  - HNMS Prins Van Oranje
  - HNMS Tromp
  - HNMS Van Ghent
  - HNMS Banckert
  - HNMS Piet Hein

- AUTRALIAN**
- HMS Perth
- ENGLISH**
- HMS Exeter
  - HMS Electra
  - HMS Jupiter
  - HMS Encounter
  - HMS Stronghold



**U.S. Asiatic Fleet**

Perth  
Freemantle  
the port where most of the ships that were retired from battle took refuge.