

INTRODUCTION: WHEN TIGERS FLY

Welcome to another great campaign study. This time, we dig deep into the early months of the Japanese invasion of East Asia and the South Pacific, and how the various allied powers confronted them in a tactical extravaganza by the creator of the Fighting Wings series, the amazing J.D. Webster. Chinese, American, Dutch, British and Australian pilots stalk and tear at each other across the various terrain features of the early 1941-42 period. This series takes you there in ways no other tactical simulation of air combat can, until you feel you are actually in the cockpit. Hear the roar of engines and feel the shudder of bullets hitting your fuselage. We have lots of other surprises in this package as well. Just remember, if you are as happy with this game as we are, think about pledging to our upcoming regular and special Annual issues. Thanks, and don't forget to check your six!

Andy
Andy Nunez
Editor

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TIGER WINGS

The Air War over Malaya, the Philippines, Java and Burma 1941-1942

Aircraft Illustrations by Ian Wedge

A Campaign Study: PART I

J.D. Webster

In early 1940 Imperial Japan had already attained full military control of Korea, most of Manchuria and significant parts of China when a strategic decision was made in favor of dramatic further territorial expansion. Punitive embargoes imposed by Western powers in response to the Japanese invasion of China in the late 1930s were having their effect. Driven by an urgent need for oil, steel and other vital war making materials, Japan's military created plans to conquer the resource rich territories of the Far East, many of which were European colonies. In preparation, both the Japanese Army and Navy invested heavily in building modern long-range air fleets. When the Far East offensive was launched in December 1941, superior Japanese air power proved instrumental to Japan's subsequent successes. On the first day of the Pacific War Japanese carrier planes neutralized the American fleet at Pearl Harbor while land-based air units flying from Formosa successfully destroyed the bulk of American aircraft in the Philippines. Over the next six months Japanese troops and their naval transport, under an umbrella of protective land based or carrier-based aircraft, invaded and captured Hong Kong, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, dozens of Pacific Islands and the Philippines. The Japanese also occupied New Britain, set up bases in the Solomon Islands and drove the British out of Burma, thereby cutting a vital supply line to China known as the Burma Road. It would require close to a full year, during which the Allies would suffer many setbacks, before regrouping to a point where an aerial and naval counter offensive could become effective. The air war in the Far East as fought from December 1941 through most of 1942, was largely a debacle for the Allies. Except for one bright spot, that of the *American Volunteer Group (AVG)* popularly known as the *Flying Tigers* (fighting in Burma and China), Allied air power was consistently and brutally shoved aside. Over Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies and Burma, Japanese aviation dominated the skies. This article explores why.