

**Volume**

**Number 108**

**The Battle of the Java Sea**

**Lead: Melancholy gripped the Allies in December, 1941. Japanese forces were everywhere victorious in Southeast Asia. It was time to take a stand.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Thailand, Malaya, Wake Island, Hong Kong, Manila, each were attacked by the Japanese and each fell just as quickly. On the 3rd of January, Churchill and Roosevelt formed a joint command with the Dutch and Australians, the purpose of which was**

**to slow down the Japanese assault. The aim was to stop the enemy at the so-called Malay Barrier, an imaginary line stretching from Singapore at the base of the Malayan Peninsula down along the archipelago that is today known as Indonesia to the west coast of New Guinea.**

**If the Japanese were going to be stopped, the Allies would have to hold the island of Java and therefore, it was in the Java Sea that they drew the proverbial line in the sand. All during February, the two navies danced around each other but avoided a pitched battle. The Japanese had virtual command of the skies, seasoned naval crews with experience working together, and use of the Long Lance**

**torpedo, the best in the world at the time. The Allies had thrown together a rag-tag collection of cruisers and destroyers from all four navies, their ships were manned by crews who had worked together only for a short time, and they were forced on occasion to leave their spotter aircraft behind.**

**As can be expected, on the night of February 25, 1942, the decisive encounter left the Allied ships at a great disadvantage. A running battle ensued and despite great heroism, only the US destroyers survived. Singapore had fallen on February 15th and with no naval protection, Java's poorly armed defenses were overwhelmed. The Malay barrier had failed and it would be three months before the**

**Japanese received their first major setback at the Battle of Coral Sea.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

**Copyright by Dan Roberts Enterprises, Inc.**

**Resources**

**Sweetman, Jack. "Great Sea Battles of World War II: The Battle of Java Sea," *Naval History*, 9 (3, May/June 1995).**