

The story of the Douglas DB-7B Bostons of the Dutch Naval Air Service (and the Army Aviation Corps of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army)

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Introduction

After the outbreak of the war in the Pacific the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) government made an urgent appeal upon the US government for Defense Aid in a number of areas. Among others, there was a pressing need in the Netherlands East Indies for military aircraft, such as fighters, medium bombers and attack aircraft. Although large orders had already been placed with the US aircraft industry, it was feared that the delivery would be (much) too tardy. The US government approved many of the requests and in December 1941 and January 1942, in the context of US Defense Aid, allocated a large number of aircraft which were currently under production for or had recently been delivered to the American armed forces to be (re)delivered to the Netherlands East Indies. One such emergency allocation was for Douglas DB-7B Bostons.

The origin of the aircraft

On 24 December 1941 the Netherlands East Indies was allocated 32 Douglas DB-7B Bostons as US Defense Aid. These particular aircraft, delivered in a light bomber/attack version and partly built in license by Boeing, were destined for the MLD (Marine Luchtvaart Dienst- Dutch Naval Air Service). They were not equipped for dropping torpedoes. The equipment and armament were according to Royal Air Force (RAF) standard, for instance with British Mark II low/medium level bombsights. The aircraft were directed from a depot in Ogden, Utah, to Douglas to be prepared for delivery to the Netherlands East Indies. Douglas made the aircraft fully combat-ready (which required scraping together from all over the place the original British equipment, such as the bomb sights, “universal bomb carrier”, signal pistol, camera, drift indicator, etcetera), and disassembled, crated and boxed them for shipment. This also provided Douglas with the opportunity to replace a number of instruments by the (originally) metric ones, coming from a French contract. Douglas also replaced the fuel lines by “self-sealing” rubber hoses, which would not cause any trouble when the Indian aromatic aircraft fuel was used.

The above explains the somewhat peculiar origin of the aircraft, which originally formed a part of French orders that had been taken over by Great Britain after the fall of France, only to be partially commandeered by the American government immediately after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor for the accelerated build-up of the United States Army Air Force (USAAF). Initially, the 32 Bostons had been allocated as emergency aid to China, which destination was changed on 24 December for

the Netherlands East Indies. The Americans made much haste with the delivery and allowed Douglas to begin preparations for shipment to the Netherlands East Indies even before the official contracts had been drawn up and the Commander-in-Chief of the US Air Corps had received formal permission from the Under Secretary of War for the transfer of the 32 aircraft. He did not get it until 26 January 1942, whereas Air Corps Ferrying Command had received orders as early as 27 December 1941 to begin airlifting the DB-7Bs to Douglas at Long Beach municipal airport, California. The formal transfer (“acceptance”) of the aircraft was done at the Douglas factory by a representative of the Netherlands Purchasing Commission (NPC) in New York. The aircraft had to be paid for in cash after delivery. [1]



Picture 1: The wreck of the ex MLD Boston AL907/A28-8, recovered in Goodenough Island in 1987. On the nose the number 240, the 240th and last aircraft of the original French order, applied for publicity reasons by Douglas, is still visible (RAAF Museum, through Charles Kranenburg).

Douglas also adapted the painting of the aircraft to some extent, though the RAF camouflage was retained. Apart from orange triangles surrounded by a black edge on the fuselage and on the lower surface of the wings (the NEI national markings) and a D serial on the spot of the RAF serial number, Douglas applied several letterings in Dutch in the cockpits. Both sides of the nose bore the words KON.MARINE (Royal Netherlands Navy) in small black blocked letters. [2] Only the first six aircraft to be disassembled and crated by Douglas were shipped without NEI markings and the text KON.MARINE having been applied on the nose. The British national markings and the RAF serial numbers had, however, been removed already by painting them over with camouflage paint and the

D serial number of the MLD had been applied. It is not known whether these aircraft were already fitted out with the metric instruments mentioned above. [3]



Picture 2: In 1942 there were still many DB-7Bs flying in 22 Squadron RAAF with the lettering KON.MARINE on the nose (collection J. W. Smith, through J. L. Horsthuis).

The plan

The DB-7B aircraft were to be making up the flying equipment of several MLD aircraft groups, which for the time being were to be stationed on bases of the ML/KNIL (Wapen der Militaire Luchtvaart/Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger- Army Aviation Corps of the Royal NEI Army). Assembly was to take place at Magoewo, the Djocjakarta airfield, where an assembly hall had been constructed for combined use by the ML/KNIL and the MLD. However, the hall, which had been surrendered only shortly before, was damaged in a severe Japanese air raid on 22 February 1942. Magoewo itself sustained considerable damage and the afdelingen (squadrons) of ML/KNIL on the airfield were transferred elsewhere and a small group of billet masters of the MLD that had arrived on 13 February returned to Soerabaja. On 25 February, however, Djocjakarta became the main branch of the American V Bomber Command of the allied East Group of Java Air Command (Boeing B-17 and Consolidated LB-30 heavy bombers) coming from Malang. The latter place, just like the naval

air station Morokrebangang at Soerabaja, was repeatedly subjected to air raids and the situation there was much more dangerous than at Djocjakarta, where the damage of the raid of 22 February was being repaired in the meantime. [4]

On 28 February 1942 the MLD once returned to Djocjakarta with a detachment of about 60 men led by Oppervliegtuigmaker (Chief Petty Officer Aircraft Mechanic) A. van Meenen (who had been among the earlier group of billet makers). [5] The complete group of personnel was detached to the TD (Technische Dienst-Technical Service) workshop of the ML/KNIL, led by Reserve 1st Lieutenant F. Blokbergen, which was located on the airfield. Although Blokbergen's workshop was fully equipped for aircraft, engine and propeller maintenance, it was in fact still in its build-up phase and rather short of personnel. The workshop carried out repairs on a modest scale for the main workshops of the TD of the ML/KNIL at Andir airbase near Bandoeng and was to assemble new aircraft coming from the United States and Canada for the ML. [6] For this latter task it was to cooperate with the MLD, which was to form its own Technical Service at Magoewo, and the workshops were to be used by personnel of both the ML and the MLD. [7]

However, on 1 and 2 March 1942 Djocjakarta was once more attacked from the air by the Japanese and was evacuated on 2 March 1942 due to the Japanese landings on Java in the night of 28 February and 1 March 1942 and the subsequent Japanese advance in Central Java. The personnel of the MLD detachment left for various destinations on 2 March 1942, with Van Meenen himself, along with a small number of his aircraft mechanics, receiving orders to go to Tjilatjap. [8] This was at a moment when the first six Bostons had just arrived in Java, destined to be stationed at Andir. These were also the only Bostons to be still offloaded in Java.

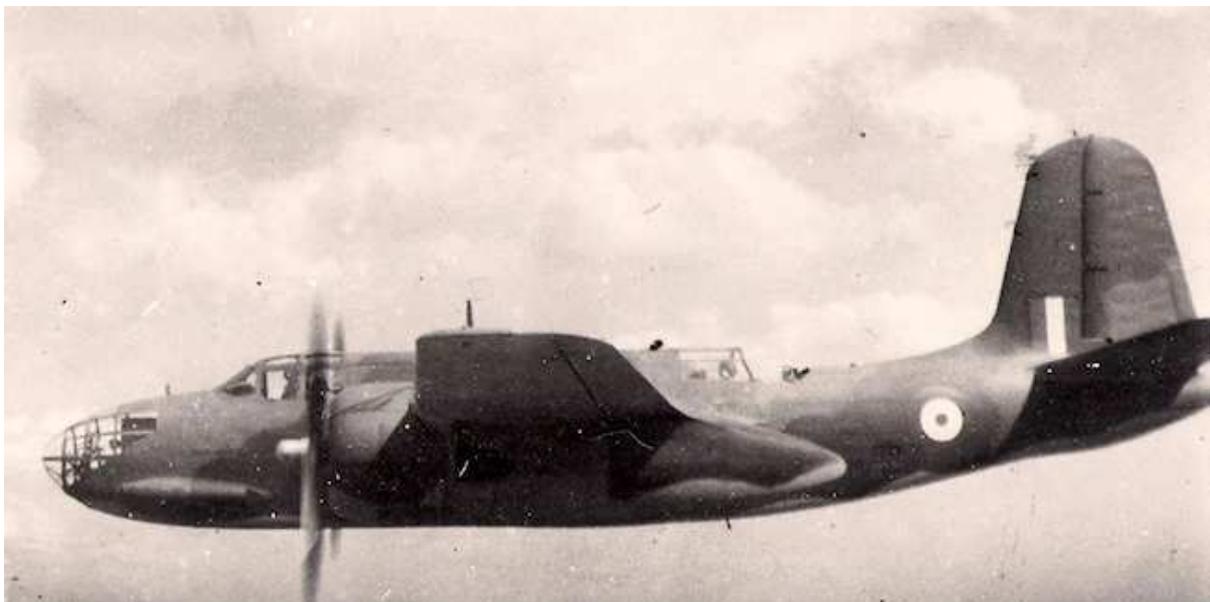
Apart from the U.S. auxiliary transport *Sea Witch*, which offloaded 27 Curtiss P-40E fighters of the USAAF on 1 March, the following ships carrying aircraft in their cargo were at Tjilatjap on the same day:

- a. *Kota Baroe* (six DB-7B Bostons, four Lockheed 12A light transport aircraft and four Curtiss-Wright CW-22B *Falcon* trainers),
- b. *Sloterdijk* (ten Brewster 339-23 fighters and seven CW-22Bs),
- c. *Tjibesar* (four Brewster 339-23 fighters and 14 CW-22Bs).

On top of that, the *Tabian* (three Brewster 339-23 fighters and seven Vought-Sikorski VS-310 *Kingfisher* reconnaissance float planes) was on her way and a few days of sailing from Tjilatjap. In spite of her urgently-needed cargo of fighter aircraft, among other munitions, the Master of this ship

was ordered to change course and head for an Australian port once again. The coded message could not be deciphered on board this ship, but on 3 March a telegram was received intended for another ship to the effect that Tjilatjap was to be avoided, upon which the crew changed course immediately. [9]

The ships at Tjilatjap left port again on the evening of 2 March (among them was the *Sloterdijk*, which offloaded urgently-required ammunition in Java, but not its cargo of aircraft), or on the evening of 3 March 1942 (amongst others, the *Kota Baroe*, which had offloaded part of its cargo, with only two L12As still on board). The situation in the small harbour was chaotic and the possibilities for offloading the ships that were anchored there were extremely limited. The *Sloterdijk*, along with the *Tjibesar*, which had not been offloaded at all, and the *Tabian* fled to Australia and arrived safely one after the other at Albany (south of Perth) or Fremantle (Perth) from 4 March onwards. The *Kota Baroe* arrived at Ceylon on 11 March 1942. [10] With the possible exception of the *Kingfishers*, all the aircraft on board these ships had originally been destined for Magoewo airfield, and they were to have been transported by train from Tjilatjap to Djocjakarta to be assembled there. Apparently, the MLD played it safe and also sent an assembly team to Tjilatjap on 28 February to assemble a number of aircraft on the spot (see below). [11]



Picture 3: One of the first three MLD Bostons to arrive and be assembled in Australia, photographed during a test flight. On the nose there is still the text KON. MARINE and underneath the horizontal tail plane (not visible) the D serial of the MLD (collection J. W. Smith, through J. L. Horsthuis).

There were more Dutch ships with a cargo of aircraft on their way. On 6 March 1942 the *ms Tosari*, carrying three Bostons, arrived at Hobart (Tasmania), where she awaited the developments around the capitulation of the KNIL (which came on 8 March effective the next day), until she finally

offloaded the Bostons in Melbourne. More Dutch ships followed suit and in the end twenty-two Bostons, which had been shipped from New York or San Francisco in January and February 1942, were offloaded in Melbourne or Sydney after the capitulation of the KNIL. In the first instance, all these aircraft went to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), while the remaining four aircraft in the allocated *Defense Aid* batch stayed in the U.S., going back to the USAAF, three of which were already allocated to Russia on 26 March 1942. [12]

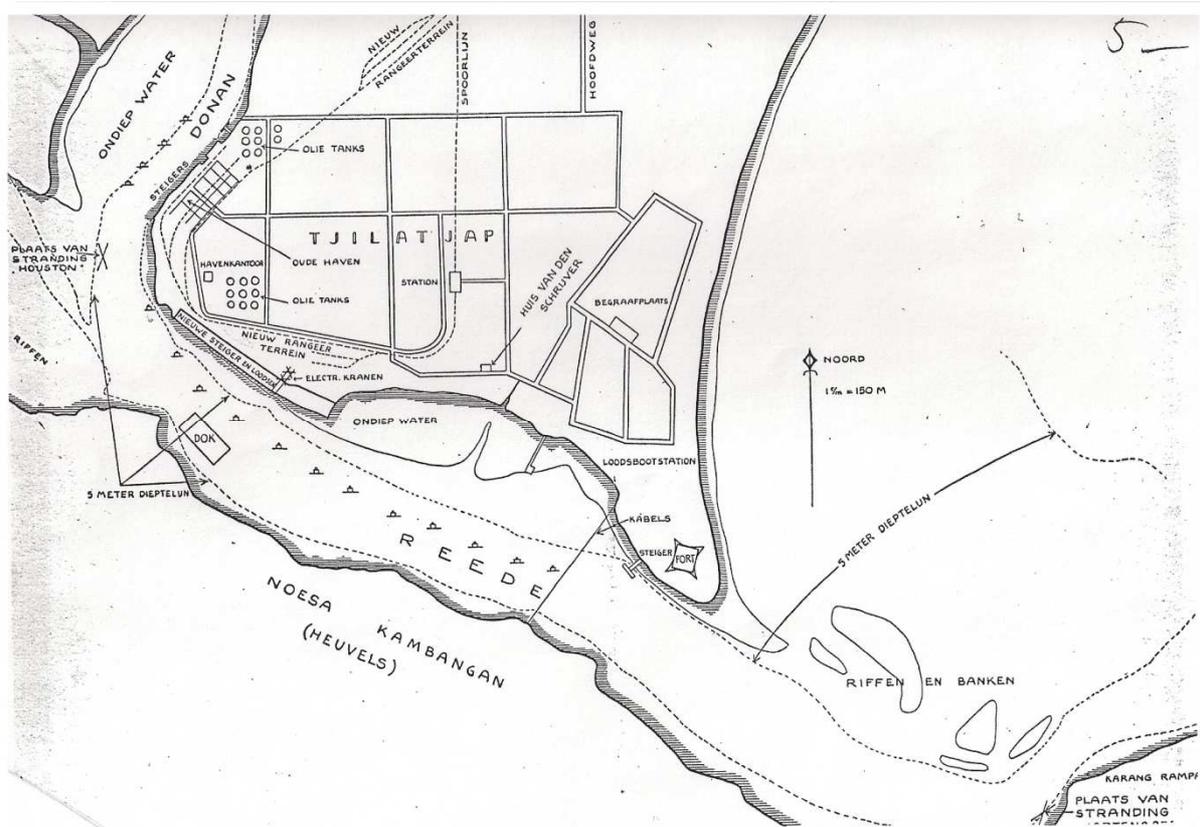
The Bostons at Tjilatjap

The first six shipped aircraft arrived “boxed and crated” at Tjilatjap on 27 February 1942 on board the *ms Kota Baroe*. Along with other cargo this ship had taken the six Bostons on board in San Francisco in January 1942. [13] Of each DB-7B aircraft the two centre sections of the wings with the engines attached were in separate crates. Also the vertical and both the horizontal tail planes, the tail cone, the outer wings and the propellers were in separate crates, just like a number of smaller parts, such as the bomb sight and the generators. The armament, including the blisters containing a .303inch machine gun to be mounted on the sides of the nose, was also crated separately and still had to be built in. [14]

On 1 March 1942 the personnel of the assembly team (about 60 men) coming from Soerabaja arrived at Tjilatjap, to which the above-mentioned group of personnel from Djocjakarta and some other MLD personnel that happened to be available at Tjilatjap (about thirty men in total) were added on or around 3 March. On 2 March the crates containing the Bostons were lifted from lighters by dockside cranes and deposited on the quays. Subsequently, the crates containing the fuselages of three aircraft were dispersed along roads and positioned on the edge of the city of Tjilatjap under cover of trees. For the time being, the crates and boxes belonging to these fuselages remained standing on the quays, due to a lack of transport means. Harbour personnel deposited the fuselages of the three other aircraft in the southern part of the so-called new harbour terrain. [15] From 2 March onwards, the MLD team assembled two of these aircraft, in improvised workshops. The third one was left in the crates for the time being. [16]

The assembly at Tjilatjap was done entirely by MLD personnel and was led by technical officer Lieutenant (senior grade) H. V. van der Houwen. From the middle of 1941 until October 1941 this officer had been involved in the talks with officials of the Technische Dienst (TD-Technical Service) of the ML/KNIL about the setting up and combined use of the planned “assembling plant” at Djocjakarta. He was to become Head of TD of the MLD at Magoewo, but was instead sent to Tjilatjap to see to it that the six Bostons were offloaded, and with the assignment to assemble them on the spot. [17] There were also two technical officers of the ML/KNIL at Tjilatjap, Reserve Captain L.W.

Walraven and Ensign H. A. Monerie of the TD at Andir, but these officers had been dispatched to Tjilatjap to receive Curtiss P-40 fighter aircraft of the USAAF, and they played no part in the assembly of the Bostons. [18] There was supposed to be an ML test pilot, though, to ferry the Bostons, 1Lt T. G. J. van der Schroeff, but he never turned up. [19] Incidentally, there was also an experienced American technical representative from Douglas available at Tjilatjap to assist the MLD with the assembly, David J. Hicks, who had sailed in the *Kota Baroe*. A Douglas factory pilot, J. G. Haizlip (the original test pilot of the DB-7 program), was to give the initial flying instruction on the DB-7 and for this purpose was to fly along as passenger in a new NAA B-25C of the ML/KNIL from California to Java. This, however, was cancelled. [20]



Picture 4: A sketch of the harbour terrain. The runway that had been constructed for the American P-40 fighter aircraft, lay behind the new jetty and sheds. In the tip of the terrain, underneath the word “electr.” were the workshops of the assembly teams of the MLD (source: Chr. B. Droste, “Tot betere dagen...”, Amsterdam, 1946).

On 3 March six *Navy O* fighter aircraft of the Japanese Navy air force coming from Bali carried out an armed reconnaissance of the harbour and a day later, at about 10:00 a.m., 23 Japanese bombers of the Takao Kokutai (Takao aircraft group), escorted by Navy Os of the 3rd Kokutai and the Tainan Kokutai bombed the harbour terrain. The damage of the high-altitude bombing was not so bad, though a number of bombs struck the town, killing approximately 60 people. [21] The southernmost tip of the new harbour terrain, where the three Bostons had been parked at a distance of about 100

metres between them to reduce the risk of being hit, was spared and the three aircraft came through the attack completely unscathed. Some infantrymen of the KNIL, however, had to push the two aircraft in the workshops, which were all but ready at that moment, away from several fires that had broken out nearby. [22]

Bostons to Andir and Tasikmalaja

The three concealed Bostons with all the boxed paraphernalia belonging to them, along with two Lockheed 12A light transport planes for the ML/KNIL, were already sent by rail via Tasikmalaja (the destination for the Lockheeds) to Bandoeng for assembly at Andir airbase on 3 March. Ensign Monterie of the ML was responsible for ensuring that this aircraft transport went well. [23] Fortunately, there were no steep stretches, difficult bends or tunnels on the railway route via Tasikmalaja to Bandoeng, so that the huge crates with a length of more than ten metres (a sort of enormous pallet with a wooden cage construction mounted on it), into which the DB-7B fuselages had been fixed, could be transported without too many difficulties on flatbeds. [24] Of the three DB-7Bs that stayed behind in Tjilatjap, two were completely assembled before the evacuation of the harbour, the first of which was ready on the evening of 4 March. [25]

In the morning of 5 March, at sunrise, officer pilot Lieutenant (senior grade) H. V. Burgerhout, the commanding officer of Groep Vliegtuigen 5 (GVT 5-aircraft group 5) of the MLD (*Catalina* flying boats) took off from an improvised runway on a stretch of road behind the “new jetty”, lined with harbour sheds on one side and a railway track on the other, which had been widened and lengthened for the purpose. On his own, he flew the plane, which had a minimum of fuel on board to keep it as light as possible (though it had been fitted out with armament) to the ML base at Tasikmalaja, where it was to be topped up with fuel for the further flight to Andir. This was quite an achievement, as Burgerhout had only a dim idea of the aircraft’s flight performance, while his only preparation for the venture consisted of receiving a briefing from Hicks and taxiing the plane some distance (the Boston getting off the runway, on top of that). Moreover, the strip, though lengthened somewhat for the Bostons, had been constructed for the smaller and lighter Curtiss P40E fighters of the USAAF. The distance between the sheds that were closest to the runway and the wingtip of the Boston taking off was a mere four metres or thereabouts. As it was, the ML test pilot had not shown up and the ML was unable to provide another pilot, upon which Captain G. G. Bozuwa, the commanding officer of the allied *Reconnaissance Group* (RecGroup) of Java Air Command, also acting MLD commander, at Bandoeng, had chosen Burgerhout for the job. [26]

The second Japanese bombing raid on Tjilatjap

The second Boston was almost ready when later on the morning of 5 March, from around 10:30 hrs onwards, several formations of Japanese single-engine bombers and dive bombers, escorted by Navy Os, attacked Tjilatjap. [27] These aircraft were came from the Japanese 1st Carrier fleet, a Task Force consisting of aircraft carriers and other warships that was operating to the south of Java. For a period of about two hours the aircraft carried out attacks on Tjilatjap and its surroundings, while they also raided ships that had already taken to the sea and were en route to Australia. The damage to the harbour complex, including the railway yard as well as the railway station, and a large part of the town of Tjilatjap was very severe. There were 350 to 400 victims, mostly civilians, but also several British servicemen who had been manning a heavy anti-aircraft position. The ships that had still been in the harbour were sunk or sustained damage. Almost all harbour sheds were destroyed or set fire to; some, where explosives or mines had been stored, blew up, while burning oil leaking from storage tanks that had been hit caused even more fires. [28] Miraculously, the two Bostons that had been left behind in Tjilatjap were again undamaged, though British anti-aircraft gunners had to push the one aircraft that had been almost ready for flight away from a fire. [29] When the air raid took place on 5 March, the uncrating of the other remaining plane had barely begun.

KNIL service personnel, British anti-aircraft gunners, navy personnel and the few remaining harbour staff that had not fled were occupied the entire afternoon extinguishing the worst fires and clearing up parts of the harbour terrain, but even with the help from the inmates of the nearby Noesa Kambangan prison, this was in fact a hopeless task. Resuming the assembly of the DB-7B aircraft had become pointless, too, as the runway had also been destroyed and was littered with debris from a shed that had been blown up. In the afternoon a message came down from the commanding officer of the Tjilatjap KNIL detachment to the effect that all service personnel not belonging to the detachment (to which also the British anti-aircraft artillery units at Tjilatjap were reckoned to belong) or the naval command had to leave Tjilatjap. [30]

After consultation with the Commandant Maritieme Middelen (Commanding Officer of Maritime Resources) Tjilatjap, Van der Houwen left for Tasikmalaja in the evening with a large part of the assembly team. Probably the plan was to finish work on the Boston that had landed in Tasikmalaja and to make it operational, but British anti-aircraft gunners who were taking care of the airfield defence, did not admit the MLD personnel to the base, upon which Van der Houwen decided to drive on to Bandoeng. [31] Hicks went along with Van der Houwen and subsequently assisted the Koninklijke Nederlands-Indische Luchtvaart Maatschappij (KNILM-Royal Netherlands-Indies Airline) at

Andir with the repair work on a Douglas DC-5 transport aircraft and with the assembly of the Bostons that had been transported to Bandoeng by train. [32] Hicks and several of the navy personnel at Bandoeng were to be evacuated to Australia in the DC-5, but the aircraft could not be readied in time. [33]

After an inspection by the divisional commander of the KNIL on 6 March around noon, the harbour was closed at around 14:00 hrs that day, and Tjilatjap was subsequently evacuated by the troops. [34] The role of the harbour was over and the majority of the KNIL troops, along with the British anti-aircraft artillery units, left in the late afternoon and evening. This was in part due to the rapid Japanese advance through Central Java in the direction of Tjilatjap. Materiel that could not be taken along had to be destroyed on the spot. [35] In accordance with the orders of the divisional commander, the Commandant Maritieme Middelen also ordered part of his personnel (including a number of service personnel coming from the assembly team) to leave Tjilatjap in the afternoon of 6 March. [36]



Picture 5: The Boston AL904, still in crates at Tjilatjap, fell into Japanese hands and was later flown over to Japan. This picture was taken in late 1942 at Yokusuka, the site of the test centre of the Japanese Navy air force (collection author).

The MLD personnel were given about an hour to load up and to destroy the DB-7B aircraft and the materiel in the workshops that could not be taken along. The Boston that was all but fully assembled was destroyed by making holes through the wing centre sections with iron bars, destroying the self-sealing wing tanks. The engines were destroyed by cutting off the carburetors. The Boston that was still largely in the crates was harder to destroy. The majority of the crates had not been unpacked

yet, and there was too little time to do it in the nick of time. As a consequence, the large crates containing the centre sections of the wings with the engines attached to them, were left standing on the quays and also the enormous crate holding the fuselage was given up. A few smaller crates standing on the quays, though, were thrown into the water. The only thing that was taken along was the armament of the Bostons. In the meantime, the British anti-aircraft gunners of the heavy anti-aircraft artillery destroyed their guns with demolition charges. [37]

The fate of the Bostons

The aircraft at Tasikmalaja could not depart, as up to that moment only very little 100 octane fuel had arrived at the airfield, and some of this fuel, which had been transported from Tjilatjap by lorry, had been used for topping up an allied aircraft, probably a British RAF Hurricane fighter, which had diverted there. [38] So there was no possibility to refuel. (Like all other modern American aircraft, the DB-7B used 100 octane fuel; the ML used 80 octane for its bombers and 91 octane fuel for the fighter aircraft). Subsequently, Burgerhout phoned Captain Bozuwa at Bandoeng, who ordered him to hand the aircraft over to the air field commander of the ML (Captain P. Valk), and to return to his unit in Tjilatjap. The Boston was parked in a dispersal area under cover of trees and remained undamaged in a Japanese air attack that took place at 16:00 hrs (on 5 March) and another attack at dawn the following day. [39]

In the early morning of 8 March 1942, however, Captain Valk received orders from Colonel E.T. Kengen, the commanding officer of ML Command (the command comprising the operational units of the ML) to render unserviceable all the aircraft on Tasikmalaja. At first, this was done by puncturing the tyres and destroying the rudder and aileron fabric and sometimes by firing with dismounted machine guns at the engines of the aircraft on top of that. Later that morning ML and RAF personnel destroyed many aircraft much more thoroughly. Thus, before retreating from Tasikmalaja, RAF personnel not only set fire to the RAF aircraft on the airfield, but also the Boston, which may possibly have been taken for an RAF aircraft with its RAF camouflage and absence of Dutch markings. The entire center section of the fuselage went up in flames. [40]

The three DB-7B aircraft at Bandoeng were assembled from 4 March onwards by MLD personnel coming from the naval air station Tandjong Priok at Batavia (present day Jakarta) in locations along the access road from Bandoeng to Andir. One aircraft was completed before the capitulation and was transported to Andir on the evening of 6 March or in the early morning 7 March for some final finishing work at the TD of the ML/KNIL. At the time of the capitulation the (still unarmed) aircraft

was all but ready for its first test flight and fell into Japanese completely intact. [41] The other Bostons at Bandoeng were approaching completion and were thoroughly destroyed in the afternoon of 7 March 1942 by the MLD assembly team in view of the capitulation of the KNIL which was expected to come at any moment now. For good measure, a hand grenade was thrown into the cockpits [42] and these aircraft were later classified as wrecks by the Japanese. [43]



Picture 6: The flight-ready DB-7B the Japanese captured completely intact at Andir, photographed at Tachikawa, the test centre of the Japanese Army air force in the middle of 1942 (collection Edward Rogers).

In the mean time, the aircraft groups and almost all the flying personnel of the MLD had been evacuated to Ceylon and Australia. This was done with a view to the evacuation of the MLD Vliedschool (MLD Flying School) to Australia in February 1942, the disbanding of ABDA-FLOAT (the allied naval organization) on 1 March 1942, and the subsequent de-activation of RecGroup on the termination of the last reconnaissance tasks (GVT 5 at Tjilatjap was the last remaining operational aircraft group) on 5 March 1942. On the latter day Captain Bozuwa, in his capacity as acting commander of MLD, made the suggestion to Major General L. H. van Oyen, the commanding general of the allied Java Air Command, to make the Bostons available for use by the ML. Van Oyen decided accordingly, upon which ML Command allocated the aircraft for supplementation of the Glenn Martin bomber units of the ML. [44]

The MLD could no longer form any crews, but the ML afdelingen still had plenty of personnel, though hardly any aircraft. Retraining of crews was deemed to be fairly simple, as the DB-7B (in spite of its nose wheel) was a relatively easy plane to fly. Besides, the ML/KNIL had already prepared the

introduction of attack aircraft in its organization, and the equipment of the type was suitable for the ML (thus, the ML bombs with American casings fitted in the bomb bay, the .303inch caliber of the armament was the same as that which was used in the Glenn Martin bombers and the bomb sight consisted of a periscopic sighting system which was relatively easy to operate). All six planes were transferred to the ML. [45]

Bostons in Japan

As aircraft at Andir were rendered unserviceable in the afternoon of 7 March 1942 the Boston that had been with the TD at Andir (just like some other aircraft at the TD) was forgotten. [46] The aircraft (RAF serial number AL906/MLD serial D52) fell into Japanese hands intact and in good condition, and in the latter half of March 1942 was ready to be test flown after an extensive technical inspection by Japanese technicians. After a number of test flights from Andir it was flown across to the test centre of the Japanese Army air force in Japan, the army aero technical research institute at Tachikawa in May 1942. On 18 October it flew along in a fly past of six captured aircraft from Haneda, Tokyo. [47] Allied servicemen discovered the disassembled aircraft in 1945 at Ota, behind an aircraft factory of Nakajima's, apparently having been used as an object for study and for ground instructions. [48]

When after the occupation of Tjilatjap Japanese service personnel carried out an inventory there in the latter half of March 1942, they found a reasonably complete and still unassembled Boston and a damaged second aircraft, which had been all but assembled. [49] The still unassembled plane was later assembled by MLD personnel under the supervision of the Japanese, to which end crates containing parts that had been dumped into the harbour were recovered. The virtually complete but damaged Boston had been robbed of some of its equipment, parts and instruments by souvenir-hunting Japanese service personnel, and subsequently by KNIL PoWs who were tasked to clear up the harbour terrain. In a later inspection by personnel of the Japanese Navy air force the aircraft was classified as a write-off. Some parts of the aircraft were probably used to complete the other Boston, from whose fuselage also some items were missing. [50]

In the beginning of May 1942 the aircraft that had been assembled by PoWs of the MLD, RAF serial number AL904/MLD serial D51, was ferried from Tjilatjap to Andir by KNILM pilot Karl Rupplin von Keffikon, accompanied by two flight engineers of the KNILM and a Japanese soldier as guard, and was subsequently the first to be flown to Japan for a testing program with the Japanese Navy air force. [51] Major Takeshita Fukuju of the aero technical research institute of the Japanese Army air force, however, flew the plane to Japan, as the "own" Boston of his institute had a defective fuel tank. The

Boston went to the aero technical arsenal of the Navy air force at Yokusuka for evaluation. Its registration was Ko-DA-1. [52] The fuselage of the aircraft ended its existence as a technical instruction airframe at Atsugi, a Japanese Navy air force base. [53]



Picture 7: The Boston AL897/A28-6 "G" of 22 Squadron RAAF flying off the south-west coast of New Guinea, on its way back from a mission in 1942 (collection J. W. Smith, through J. L. Horsthuis).

DB-7Bs to 18 Squadron NEI of the ML

As was mentioned above, a total of 22 Bostons of the MLD arrived in Australia after the capitulation of the KNIL. From April 1942 onwards 22 Squadron RAAF was gradually equipped with twelve of these DB-7Bs, to begin with. [54] On 4 April 1942, however, 18 Squadron NEI had been established in Canberra; a squadron that was manned with evacuated ML/KNIL personnel, supplemented with RAAF personnel. It was equipped with six North American B-25C Mitchell bombers (one of which was with the USAAF for major repairs) and was awaiting the arrival of a further twelve promised B-25Cs to supplement its strength. [55] In May 1942 the allied air force Headquarters in Australia decided, however, to equip both 22 Squadron RAAF and 18 Squadron NEI with Douglas DB-7Bs and A-20As (the latter being the American version of the DB-7B, different in its American armament calibers and American bomb sight).[56]



Picture 8: One of the Douglas A-20A aircraft of 18 Squadron NEI at Canberra in June 1942 (J. Schellekens).

In the first instance, No 18 Squadron NEI was to receive eight DB-7Bs from the reserve for 22 Squadron and seven A-20As from the USAAF, and later a further three A-20As. [57] In spite of the objections put forward (also on the political level), the 15 Bostons did arrive, the DB-7Bs on 7 and 8 June and the A-20As on 12 and 13 June 1942, while the B-25Cs were to be handed in. However, on 14 June 1942 the exchange was cancelled. The Bostons were still used for a few days for training purposes, the last time on 22 June 1942. [58] The final ten aircraft, among which were the eight former MLD Bostons, were handed over to the commanding officer 22 Squadron RAAF, who subsequently flew the planes over to Melbourne with several of the pilots of his squadron. [59] The A-20As went to 8 Squadron of the 3rd Bomb. Group (Light) of the USAAF, the DB-7Bs were once again destined to go to 22 Squadron RAAF or stayed at Melbourne as reserves for this squadron. [60] The story of the Douglas DB-7B aircraft in the Netherlands East Indies military service had come to an end.

Endnotes

[1] Data from the U.S. National Archives (Munitions Assignment Board files, documents and record card with regard to PNR N-102 New Series, via G.J. Casius) in particular: Memo Under secretary of War to Chief of Air Corps 26 January 1942, Letter Air Corps Executive to Technical Executive Wright Field, 30 December 1941 and Memo Air Corps Executive to Assistant Secretary of War for Air 6 January 1942; see also the Letter to the Editor from Gerard J. Casius in *Journal American Aviation Historical society*, Summer 1979, pp. 158-59; contract details Douglas and Boeing (via J.L. Horsthuis); Stewart Wilson, *Boston, Mitchell & Liberator in Australian service* (Weston Creek, Australia: Aerospace Publications Pty Ltd, 1992), p. 24.

[2] Stewart Wilson, *Boston, Mitchell & Liberator in Australian service*, p. 24.

[3] Analysis of the painting visible on Japanese pictures of the two Bostons that had fallen into Japanese hands; telephone interview with L.F. de Groot, LLM (19 March 1988), at the time Reserve Captain and company commander in the Detachment Tjilatjap of the KNIL, and telephone interview with J. Gerverdinck (19 March 1988), at the time one of De Groot's section commanders. They both stated that the Bostons at Tjilatjap had been fully camouflaged, but were completely without markings; see also Letter to the Editor by H.C. Kavelaars in *Avia*, April 1975, p. 134 (he writes, "...without a single marking, not even an orange triangle").

[4] Military History Department of the National Institute for Defence Studies, *Senshi Soshō*, Volume 26 (Tokyo: Asaguma Shinbunsha, 1969; henceforth *Senshi Soshō*, vol. 26), p. 660; Rapport technische werkzaamheden te Tjilatjap en Bandoeng (Report technical work at Tjilatjap and Bandoeng), OMSD2 H.V. van der Houwen, 1945 (henceforth Report H.V. van der Houwen, dossier Commissie Onderzoek Gedragingen, via N. Geldhof, NIMH); interview with A. van Meenen (c. 1966); report Majoor Vliegtuigmaker W.A. de Bruijn (dossier Commissie Onderzoek Gedragingen, via N. Geldhof, NIMH), in this post-war report 21 February 1942 is erroneously mentioned as the date of departure; interview with P. Valk (1969, confirms the departure of the MLD personnel on 22 February; Valk had already been transferred to Tasikmalaja when the MLD returned to Magoewo); P.C. Boer et al, *De luchtstrijd om Indië: Operaties van de Militaire Luchtvaart KNIL in de periode December 1941-Maart 1942* (Houten: Unieboek, 1990; henceforth P.C. Boer et al, *Indië*), pp. 173, 184. Also at Malang an "erection hall" had been built for common use, which was, however, already damaged on 3 February 1942 in a Japanese air raid.

[5] Interview with A. van Meenen (c. 1966); report Militie Matroos Vliegtuigmaker C.F.H. Hanser (dossier Commissie Onderzoek Gedragingen, via N. Geldhof, NIMH).

[6] Interviews with A. van Meenen (c. 1966) and P. Valk (1969).

[7] Report H.V. van der Houwen; interview with P. Valk (1969).

[8] *Senshi Soshō*, vol. 26, p. 710; P.C. Boer et al, *Indië*, p. 221; interview with A. van Meenen (c. 1966).

[9] Data received from L. von Münching (Afdeling Maritieme Historie, 1986). All Dutch ships containing aircraft at Tjilatjap had probably arrived on 27 February 1942; e-mail correspondence author with Jan Visser, May 2011.

[10] Chr. B. Droste, *Tot betere dagen...* (Amsterdam: C.V. Allert de Lange, 1946), pp. 185-186; H.J.E. van der Kop, *“Neem het over”* Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1975), pp. 32-52; data received from L. von Münching (Afdeling Maritieme Historie, 1986).

[11] Interview with P.Valk (1969, apart from the Bostons for the MLD he makes mention of the ML types mentioned); letter OMSD2 H.V. van der Houwen to Chairman Commissie Onderzoek Gedragingen Marinepersoneel, subcommissie Nederland 29 June 1946 (dossier Commissie Onderzoek Gedragingen, via N. Geldhof, NIMH) mentions the assembly of torpedo aircraft at Djocjakarta; interview with A. van Meenen (c. 1966), mentions the assembly of a large number of Boston aircraft at Djocjakarta; report H.V. van der Houwen; verslag (report) OMSD3KMR C.J. Aandewiel (dossier Commissie Onderzoek Gedragingen, via N. Geldhof, NIMH).

[12] Data received from L. von Münching (Afdeling Maritieme Historie, 1986); USAAF individual aircraft record cards DB-7Bs (Smithsonian/NASM, via Coen van den Heuvel and Gordon Birkett); RAAF aircraft record cards Bostons (ANA, location Canberra); data received from G.J. Casius from the U.S. National Archives, see [1]; letter Bureau Maritieme Historie (Commandeur J.L. van Dulm), nr. 1114-70/VL/MLD/3/vD, 3 December 1970; Aircraft Delivery Unit, Statistical Control Office, Report WS-378 “Airplane and Glider Acceptances, Factory Deliveries and Departures from U.S. by Type, Model and Country”, 6 January 1942 (Note: the report mentions an erroneous date of publication).

[13] Letter to the Editor from G.J. Casius, see [1]; data received from L. von Münching (Afdeling Maritieme Historie, 1986).

[14] Data from the Douglas archive received from René J. Francillon (c. 1978) and data received from J.L. Horsthuis.

[15] Report H.V. van der Houwen; interview with A. van Meenen (c. 1966).

[16] Report H.V. van der Houwen; telephone interviews with L.F. de Groot, LLM and J. Gerverdinck (19 March 1988).

[17] Report H.V. van der Houwen; interview with P. Valk (1969).

[18] Interview with J.C. Benschop (April 1976, mentions as one of his colleagues at Tjilatjap Ensign H. Monterie) and telephone interview with J. Gerverdinck (19 March 1988, mentions Ensign H. Montero as colleague of Walraven at Tjilatjap, in this article I have used the spelling Monterie). The ML officers belonged to the “reception party” of the U.S. Navy aircraft tender *Langley*, which was transporting two Curtiss P-40 fighter squadrons of the USAAF with pilots and ground personnel to Tjilatjap, but which sank south of Java after Japanese air raids on 27 February 1942, and the U.S. Navy auxiliary *Sea Witch* with a further 27 crated P-40s without personnel, which did reach Tjilatjap safely on 28 February.

[19] Interview with J.C. Benschop (April 1976); Boer, *Indië*, pp. 245- 246 (does not give a fully correct picture).

[20] E-mail Bill Bartsch to author 13 April 2010; letter HOLPURCOM to CZM 15 February 1942 (via N. Geldhof, NIMH). Both the dispatching by Douglas of a “service engineer” and a flying instructor was part of a contract with Douglas.

[21] *Senshi Sosho*, vol. 26, p. 711; telephone interviews with L.F. de Groot, LLM and J. Gerverdinck (19 March 1988); see also C. van den Hoogenband and L. Schotborgh (editors), *Nederlands-Indië contra Japan*, deel VII ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsdrukkerij en uitgeverij, 1961; henceforth *NicJ*, vol. VII), p. 116 and map no 7 (showing the main damage of the air raid carried out on 4 March); J.J. Nortier, P. Kuijt and P.M.H. Groen, *De Japanse aanval op Java* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1994; henceforth J.J. Nortier et al, *Java*), p. 178 (in part mixes up the air raids of 4 and 5 March).

[22] Report H.V. van der Houwen; telephone interviews with L.F. de Groot, LLM and J. Gerverdinck (19 March 1988).

[23] *Ibid.* (in his report Van der Houwen does mention the Lockheed 12A's but not the CW-22Bs and apparently did not remember in 1946 that the three Bostons had been put on a train. De Groot and Gerverdinck confirm that the train left with the DB-7Bs a day before the first air raid. The four CW-22B trainers already left on 1 March 1942 on the same train that transported the 27 crated P-40 fighters of the *Sea Witch* (interview with J.C. Benschop, April 1976).

[24] Description by H.E. Niemeijer.

[25] Report H.V. van der Houwen.

[26] Interview with H.V. Burgerhout (c. 1976); P.C. Boer et al, *Indië*, pp. 245-246. Originally, Bozuwa was the commanding officer of the MLD and on the formation of the Reconnaissance Group became also its commanding officer. The two positions, however, proved to be impossible to combine and Bozuwa transferred his position of CO-MLD, to become acting commander of the MLD in early March 1942.

[27] *Senshi Sosho*, vol. 26, pp. 704-705.

[28] *Ibid.*; telephone interview with L.F. de Groot, LLM (19 March 1988); report of Lieutenant Colonel M.D.S. Saunders (dossier *NicJ* 12/55, NIMH); description of damage in *NicJ*, vol. VII, p. 116 and J.J. Nortier et al, *Java*, p. 178 (here the air raids of 4 and 5 March are in part mixed up).

[29] Report Lieutenant Colonel M.D.S. Saunders (dossier *NicJ* 12/55, NIMH); telephone interview with J. Gerverdinck (19 March 1988).

[30] Telephone interviews with L.F. de Groot, LLM and J. Gerverdinck (19 March 1988).

[31] Report H.V. van der Houwen.

[32] E-mail Bill Bartsch to author 13 April 2010; interview with J.C. Benschop (April 1976, erroneously mentions the American factory mechanic Hogs).

[33] *Ibid.*; data received from J. Hagens with regard to the DC-5.

[34] *NicJ*, vol. VII, pp. 117-118; telephone interviews with L.F. de Groot, LLM en J. Gerverdinck (19 March 1988); J.J. Nortier et al, *Java*, p. 178.

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] Telephone interview with L.F. de Groot, LLM (19 March 1988).

- [37] Interview with unknown MLD serviceman (c. 1966, via G.J. Casius).
- [38] Boer et al, *Indië*, pp. 245-246; statement Kpl Vliegtuigmaker G. Kraan (dossier Commissie Onderzoek Gedragingen, via N. Geldhof, NIMH; as a driver Corporal aircraft mechanic Kraan transported the first small store of 100 octane fuel in drums from Tjilatjap to Tjilatjap on 2 March) .
- [39] Boer et al, *Indië*, pp. 245-246.
- [40] *Ibid.*, p. 255.
- [41] Interviews with J.C. Benschop (April 1976) and M.F. Noorman van der Dussen (6 May 1984); see also P.C. Boer et al, *Indië*, p. 253 (erroneously mentions a number of four Bostons).
- [42] Description by M.F. Noorman van der Dussen (1984, was stopped by Navy personnel when he wanted to drive by car from Andir to Bandoeng and was requested to wait at a safe distance for a while).
- [43] Data received from the Military History Department NIDS, Tokyo (1996) as a response to questions of the author with regard to the reporting on numbers of captured aircraft in *Senshi Soshō*, volumes 26 and 34.
- [45] Interview with H. Creutzberg, LLM (February 1975; Creutzberg at the time was lieutenant adjutant of Van Oyen); the reports of H.V. van der Houwen and LTZ2KMR W. de Vries (Commissie Onderzoek Gedragingen, via N. Geldhof, NIMH) show that Bozuwa's staff kept trying to get MLD crews together up to and including 5 March 1942.
- [46] Interview with J.C. Benschop (April 1976); George Eleftheriou: "Captured on camera: Douglas DB-7B Boston" in *Arawasi International*, Summer 2009, issue 11, pp. 12-13; Osu Kazuhiko and Nohara Shigeru, *Nihongun Hokakuki Hiroku* (s.p.: Kojinsha Publications, 2002), p. 66.
- [47] *Ibid.*
- [48] Correspondence from Holmes G. Anderson, 1954 (via Dick Seeley and Bill Bartsch, with thanks to G.J. Casius).
- [49] Data received from the Military History Department NIDS, Tokyo (1996) with regard to aircraft and aviation equipment and supplies captured in Java.
- [50] *Ibid.*; Letter to the Editor from L. Buis "The elusive DB-7C" in *RAF Flying Review*, April 1966, p. 501; Dick Schaap, "Getuige van bloedbad in Balikpapan" in *Checkpoint*, nr. 7/September 2004, p. 32.
- [51] Data received from the Military History Department NIDS, Tokyo (1996); tape recorded interview with K.J. Rupplin von Keffikon 12 March 1969 (with thanks to the NIOD); Dick Schaap: "Getuige van bloedbad in Balikpapan" in *Checkpoint*, nr. 7/September 2004, p. 32; George Eleftheriou: "Captured on camera: Douglas DB-7B Boston" in *Arawasi International*, Summer 2009, issue 11, pp. 12-13.
- [52] George Eleftheriou: "Captured on camera: Douglas DB-7B Boston" in *Arawasi International*, Summer 2009, issue 11, pp. 12-14.

[53] James P. Callagher, *Meat Balls and Dead Birds: a photo gallery of destroyed Japanese aircraft in World War II* (Mechanicsburg, PA, U.S.A.: Stockpole Books, 2004, first edition), p. 44; Osu Kazuhiko and Nohara Shigeru, *Nihongun Hokakuki Hiroku* (s.p.: Kojinsha Publications, 2002), p. 93.

[54] RAAF Aircraft record cards DB-7Bs (ANA, location Canberra).

[55] P.C. Boer, "Early NAA B-25C's of the ML/KNIL February 1942-June 1942", www.cortsfoundation.org (see Scientific papers).

[56] Letter Chief of Staff Brett to GHQ SWPA 15 May 1942 (ANA, location Canberra, File 11093), p. 104 (confirms that the plan to temporarily equip 18 Sq with A-20s was unacceptable for the NEI authorities); Memo RAAF Command filing date 22 June 1942 (ANA, location Canberra, File 151/2/324), p. 5 (confirms the delivery of 15 aircraft to 18 Sq before the deliveries were terminated).

[57] Operations Record Books 18 and 22 Squadron (ANA, location Canberra); logbooks/notes on hours flown various 18 Sq. pilots and aviation radio operators.

[58] *Ibid.*; see also [55].

[59] Operations Record Book 18 Squadron NEI (ANA, location Canberra).

[60] Cf [54]; History of airplanes: list of A-20A airplanes [of 8 BS, 3 BG(L)] Ruegg File, AHRA, Maxwell AFB (via Edward Rogers).

Note: the spelling of the place names in this article is the 1941-1942 spelling.

Abbreviations used:

ABDA-FLOAT: the allied Navy Headquarters (ABDA=American, British, Dutch, Australian)

AFB: Air Force Base

AHRA: Air Force Historical Research Agency

ANA: Australian National Archives

CZM: Commandant Zeemacht (Commanding Admiral of the Navy)

GVT: aircraft group (of the MLD)

HOLPURCOM: Holland (Netherlands) Purchasing Commission

MLD: (Dutch) Naval Air Service

ML/KNIL: Army Aviation Corps of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army

NASM: National Air and Space Museum

NEI: Netherlands East Indies

NIDS: National Institute for Defense Studies

NIOD: Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (Netherlands Institute for War Documentation)

NIMH: Netherlands Institute for Military History

NPC: Netherlands Purchasing Commission

RAAF: Royal Australian Air Force

RAF: Royal Air Force

RecGroup: Reconnaissance Group (of Java Air Command)

TD: Technical Service

USAAF: United States Army Air Force

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Appendix

Shipments of Defense Aid Douglas and Boeing built DB-7B Bostons allocated NEI on 24 December 1941 (all dates day/month/year)

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(Sailing dates of mentioned ships received from BMH/Rear Adm ret. J.F. van Dulm, letter 3 December 1970, apart from one; date for *Kota Baroe* is derived from memo's and telegrams from NPC about shipments)

Data is given in following order: original RAF serial, serial Dutch naval air service, date left named port and destination, (ships name with port of arrival and arrival date) and details of capture or RAAF history

The first seven aircraft were taken over at Ogden Air Depot, Hill Field, Utah, by the Air Corps representative at Douglas on behalf of the NPC on 27.12.41. Delivery of the first seven aircraft was speeded up as much as possible and the first planes left Ogden for Long Beach, CA next day or the day after. Operational fitting out plus disassembling and crating/boxing at Douglas was done with high priority and with the intention to ship six aircraft at the earliest possible time from SF. Loading was completed 06.01.42. [1] The seventh aircraft may have been a spare. One of the seven probably crashed on the ferry flight from Hill Field to Long Beach Municipal Airport and was returned to the USAAF. [2]

ALxxx D47 c 15.01.42 SF to Tjilatjap (*Kota Baroe*, Tjilatjap 27.02.42) [3]

ALxxx D48 Ibid. [3]

ALxxx D49 Ibid. [3]

ALxxx D50 Ibid. [3]

AL904 D51 c 15.01.42 SF to Tjilatjap (*Kota Baroe*, Tjilatjap 27.02.42), to Japanese naval air force after capture at Tjilatjap. [3] [4]

AL906 D52 c 15.01.42 SF to Tjilatjap (*Kota Baroe*, Tjilatjap 27.02.42), to Japanese army air force after capture at Andir airbase. [3] [4]

Xxx AL889, AL896, AL900, AL901 or AL903. One of these ac was returned to the USAAF probably after a crash in December 1941, the other four were all loaded on *Kota Baroe*. [11]

Of the following 22 aircraft 17 were flown from Long Beach Mun. Airport, CA to Floyd Bennett Air Depot (FAD), Floyd Bennett Field, NY by AC Ferrying Command 01.42-02.42 for disassembling and crating/ boxing at FAD, preceding shipping from NY. (5) The second batch of six is known to have been a separate Defense Aid transfer to the NEI (c 27.12.41). The first batch of five aircraft was taken over by the USAAF at Ogden on behalf of the NPC c 29.12.41 (but accepted NPC at Long Beach, CA). [6]

Five of the 22 aircraft were shipped from SF on the SS Tarakan. These aircraft were ferried with priority from Ogden, Utah to Long Beach Mun. Airport, CA by AC Ferrying Command for operational fitting out plus disassembling and crating/boxing by Douglas preceding shipment from SF. [7]

AL347 D53? 03.02.42 NY to Tjilatjap (*Tosari*, Melbourne 03.42); D serial given on ship manifest

(D47) probably a mistake and taken from AL serial; arr. 1 AD 29.03.42, became RAAF

A28-2.

AL358 D54? 09.02.42 SF to Tjilatjap (*Tarakan*, Sydney 21.03.42); arr. 2 AD 03.04.42, became RAAF A28-10. [8]

AL364 D55? Ibid. became RAAF A28-11. [8]

AL365 D56? Ibid. became RAAF A28-12. [8]

AL366 D57? 10.02.42 NY to Tjilatjap (*Tabinta*, Sydney 01.04.42); unloaded 05.04.42 and to 2 AD; became RAAF A28-18.

AL361 D58? 19.02.42 NY to Tjilatjap (*Weltevreden*, Sydney 02.04.42); unloaded 03.04.42 and to 2 AD, became RAAF A28-15.

AL362 D59? Ibid. became RAAF A28-16.

AL363 D60? Ibid. became RAAF A28-17.

AL367 D61? 09.02.42 SF to Tjilatjap (*Tarakan*, Sydney 21.03.42); arr. 2 AD 03.04.42, became RAAF A28-13. [8]

AL368 D62? 19.02.42 NY to Tjilatjap (*Weltevreden*, Sydney 02.04.42); unloaded 03.04.42 and to 2 AD, became RAAF A28-19.

AL369 D63? Ibid. became RAAF A28-20.

AL887 D64 03.02.42 NY to Tjilatjap (*Tosari*, Melbourne 03.42); arr. 1 AD 29.03.42, became RAAF A28-3. [9]

AL890 D65 Ibid. became RAAF A28-1. [9]

AL891 D66 30.01.42 NY to Tjilatjap (*Mapia*, Melbourne 03.42); arr. 1 AD 29.03.42 (assembled Geelong), became RAAF A28-9. [10]

AL892 D67? 09.02.42 SF to Tjilatjap (*Tarakan*, Sydney 21.03.42), unloaded 05.04.42 and to 2 AD, became RAAF A28-14. [8]

AL893 D68? 30.01.42 NY to Tjilatjap (*Mapia*, Melbourne 03.42); arr. 1 AD 29.03.42 (assembled Geelong), became RAAF A28-4.

AL894 D69? 10.02.42 NY to Tjilatjap (*Tabinta*, Sydney 01.04.42); unloaded 05.04.42 and to 2 AD,
became RAAF A28-21.

AL895 D70 30.01.42 NY to Tjilatjap (*Mapia*, Melbourne 03.42); arr. 1 AD 29.03.42 (assembled
Geelong), became RAAF A28-5. [10]

AL897 D71? Ibid. became RAAF A28-6.

AL898 D72? 10.02.42 NY to Tjilatjap (*Tabinta*, Sydney 01.04.42); unloaded 05.04.42 and to 2 AD,
became RAAF A28-22.

AL899 D73? 30.01.42 NY to Tjilatjap (*Mapia*, Melbourne 03.42); arr. 1 AD 29.03.42 (assembled
Geelong), became RAAF A28-7.

AL907 D74? Ibid. became RAAF A28-8.

The final delivery batch consisted of four aircraft which were flown to Floyd Bennett Field, NY by AC Ferrying Command; none was actually shipped to the NEI (but two were already crated and ready to sail)

AL401 D75? Returned to USAAF 03.42; allocated Russia 26.03.42. [12]

AL413 D76? Returned to USAAF 03.42; allocated Russia 26.03.42. [12]

AL415 D77? Returned to USAAF 03.42; allocated Russia 26.03.42. [12]

AL442 D78? 01.42 delivered NEI as final DB-7B to replace the aircraft returned to USAAF 12.41
(28.01.42 received Long Beach; 11.03.42 received at FAD); returned to USAAF 03.42. [13]

General remarks

a. The U.S. Defense Aid assignment of 32 DB-7Bs to the NEI is administratively covered by PNR 102 New Series (Munitions Assignment Board/Committee documents and card notations PNR102 NS file from period 5 Jan 1942-11 May 1942, U.S. National Archives, Munitions Assignment Board files, via G.J. Casius, letter 7 Dec 1973). Final two Dutch action records in PNR file: 22.01.42 request for three spare engines and 11.05.42 final four ac cancelled.

b. Statistical information on U.S. aircraft deliveries to the NEI (Office of the Secretary of the Treasury, Division of Research and Statistics, via General Accounting Office) states 18 ac transferred December 1941 to NEI were Douglas built and 14 were Boeing built, with one additional airplane delivered January 1942; exported were 17 Douglas built ac plus 11 Boeing built ac. USAAF information on airplane and glider acceptances, deliveries and departures from U.S. by type, model and country (Report WS-378 US AAC) says accepted: 11 Boeing ac and 18 Douglas ac, delivered ex factory: 11 Boeing ac and 18 Douglas ac and shipped (=departed continental US): 11 Boeing ac and 17 Douglas ac. The U.S. information has proven to be correct as an analysis of the USAAF individual aircraft

record cards (see endnotes 3 and 11) yielded exactly 15 Boeing built aircraft (of which four returned to the USAAF) plus 18 Douglas built aircraft. It should be noted that WS-378 puts acceptance and delivery dates of the 29 ac in 11.41—the original RAF dates of acceptance and delivery ex factory for most of the NEI ac but not all. Part of the Boeing built ac were delivered October 1941. Reader is advised that normally unlisted in WS-378 are: DA/LL aircraft that were lost in the U.S. before delivery (in case of the DB-7B's before reaching the harbor depot in San Francisco or New York) and not to be charged to the customer, and DA/LL aircraft that were returned to the USAAF after acceptance/delivery and the use of which was not to be charged to the customer. One of the NEI ac was, however, accepted by and delivered to the RAF but not so by the NPC and was replaced in January 1942 (see also endnote 2) which is not correctly mentioned in WS-378.

c. All aircraft were allocated NEI in small batches of 4-6 aircraft. Aircraft within these batches probably received D serials following the order of the AL serials (or c/n's) of the aircraft in the batches, as NPC assigned N5 serials did within early NAA B-25C delivery batches assigned to the ML/KNIL. (NEI serials following the c/n order was the standard policy of the NPC but this policy could not be followed when aircraft were allocated in batches).

Endnotes

[1] Information from NPC documents received from BMH/AMH (J.F. van Dulm, 1970/G.J.A. Raven, 1984); G.J. Casius, "Royal Netherlands Navy DB-7s" in *Journal American Aviation Historical Society*, Summer 1979, p 158-59.

[2] Undated (but of late March 1942) document titled "Explanation of DB-7B repossessions and Arnold-Portal Allocations in January" from a document series of the Munitions Assignment Committee (U.S. National Archives, Munitions Assignment Board files, via G.J. Casius), states that one airplane earmarked for the NEI in December 1941 was returned to the U.S. and was replaced by an aircraft from January 1942 deliveries earmarked for Britain. This normally means that the aircraft had a crash or was wrecked beyond repair. This is possibly the Douglas built aircraft listed in Report WS-378 (see general remark b) as accepted and delivered to NEI but not shipped. See also endnote [11].

[3] Only AL904 directly identified, see James P. Callagher, *Meatballs and Dead Birds*, Stackpole Books, 2004, p 44. Other aircraft of this batch were indirectly identified: according to USAAF individual aircraft record card data (NASM reel ACR-11, via Gordon Birkett and Coen van den Heuvel) and RAAF individual aircraft record data (RAAF Forms E/E88, ANA, location Canberra, concerning 22 NEI "refugee cargo" aircraft that ended up with the RAAF) only aircraft AL871, AL880, AL882, AL889, AL896, AL900, AL901, AL903, AL904, AL905 and AL906 have no USAAF history (only ones within the AL833-907 incl. batch). Of these 11 aircraft AL905 crashed in USAAF hands on 10.12.41 (accident report, Maxwell AFB via Aviation Archaeological Investigation and Research) and AL871, AL880 and AL882 were delivered RAF or crashed before collection while in RAF hands in the US (James J. Halley, compiler, *Royal Air Force Aircraft AA100-AZ999*, second edition, Air-Britain (historians) Limited, 2000, p 88; "USAAC Bostons" in (Air Britain) *Aero Militaria*, 3/90, p 82) leaving precisely seven Douglas built aircraft which could have been allocated as DA to the NEI next to the 22 (11 Douglas and 11 Boeing built) planes which ended up with the RAAF.

[4] Photo of AL904 see [3](shows digits of original D serial, once over painted but this paint already weathered away in 1945). Email corr. author-Military History Dept NIDS/Takahashi, Tokyo (digits of original serial visible on photo of captured DB-7B at Tachikawa, Japan).

[5] Conform [1]. Originally 26 aircraft were to be flown to Floyd Bennett Field.

[6] Transfer sheet noting the AL serials (U.S. National Archives, via G.J. Casius, letter 7 Dec 1973).

[7] Information from NPC documents received from BMH/AMH (J.F. van Dulm, 1970/G.J.A. Raven, 1984).

[8] RAAF Operations Record Books No 2 Air Depot (see 3 April 1942) and RAAF Movements and Shipping Office, Sydney (see 1 April 1942) (ANA, location Canberra, via Gordon Birkett).

[9] Serial links confirmed by ship manifest (via BMH/J.F. van Dulm, 1970 and AMH/G.J.A. Raven, 1984).

[10] Serial links confirmed by RAAF Form A.93 (Boston accidents, via Gordon Birkett).

[11] For the Douglas built aircraft AL889, AL896, AL900, AL901 and AL903 there is neither an accident report nor an individual aircraft record card available in U.S. archives. As only four of these aircraft left the US and were delivered at Tjilatjap, NEI, the fifth (unknown) aircraft must have been crashed and probably written off, as Report WS-378 (see general remark b) suggests that it was not actually taken on charge by the USAAF. However, this ac was returned USAAF according to the Munitions Assignment Committee doc. "Explanation of DB7B repossessions and Arnold Portal Allocation in January" (undated but of late March 1942, see endnote [2]). This aircraft was accepted at Ogden, Utah by the AC representative at Douglas on behalf of the NPC and is believed to have crashed in December 1941 on the ferry flight from Hill Field, Ogden to Long Beach with a AC Ferrying Command crew. It should be noted that of DA/LL types usually no accident reports were made up by the USAAF up to and including the early months of 1942, although the aircraft concerned usually were in the hands of AC Ferrying Command at the time of the crash. Also no USAAF individual aircraft record cards were made up on DA-NEI aircraft until circa February 1942.

[12] Letter June 3, 1942 of Army Air Forces Materiel Center, Office of the Commanding General (U.S. National Archives, Munitions Assignment Board files, via G.J. Casius) states that three NEI DB-7B's that were delivered from factory prior to January [1942] which never left this country were reassigned Russia to make up for a shortfall in A-20C deliveries (changes in effect per April 1, 1942). A survey of the individual aircraft record cards (NASM, reel ACR-11, via Coen van den Heuvel) delivered precisely three aircraft without a previous USAAF history apart from administrative dates and dates of ferry flights that were allocated Russia on 26 March 1942 (AL401, AL413 and AL415). All other DB-7B allocations to Russia in 1942 were dated January/February 1942 (which is before the capitulation of Java). There were three more DB-7B's found without actual U.S. service in the months directly following delivery but of these two (AL405 and AL423) crashed January/February 1942 and were written off, while one (AL397) was a so called "Wildflower" aircraft allocated to the USAAF in Britain, as was AL442, but without Long Beach and FAD arrival dates on its card (see also [13]).

[13] Undated (but of late March 1942) document titled "Explanation of DB-7B repossessions and Arnold-Portal Allocations in January" from a document series of the Munitions Assignment Committee (U.S. National Archives, Munitions Assignment Board files, via G.J. Casius), states that one airplane earmarked for the NEI in December 1941 was returned to the U.S. and was replaced by an aircraft from January 1942 deliveries earmarked for Britain. The replacement aircraft can be no other than AL442 as according to the individual aircraft record cards this is the only January 1942 delivered plane without a USAAF history apart from administrative dates and dates of ferry flights (until reassignment U.S. in March 1942) which shows both a Long Beach date and a FAD date on its record card (only one of all the Boeing DB-7B's).

Abbreviations

Ac Aircraft

AC Air Corps (=USAAF)

AD Air Depot

AMH Afdeling Maritieme Historie (Naval History Department, Dutch Naval Staff)

BMH Bureau Maritieme Historie (Naval History Bureau, Dutch Naval Staff)

FAD Floyd Bennett Air Depot

FC Ferrying Command (USAAF)

ML/KNIL Wapen der Militaire Luchtvaart of the Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger (Army
Aviation Corps of the Royal NEI Army)

NEI Netherlands East Indies

NPC Netherlands Purchasing Commission

NY New York

PNR Purchase Negotiation Request

SF San Francisco

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