



Australia's Department of Civil Aviation in Portuguese Timor, 1941-42: Part 2

FROM FLYING TO SPYING

In the concluding half of his series on one of the more bizarre episodes in the history of Australia's Department of Civil Aviation, **PHIL VABRE** explains how a single rather reluctant DCA officer facilitated the bloodless occupation of a neighbouring country — Portuguese Timor — in the days leading up to Pearl Harbor, only for the tables to turn somewhat . . .

AS 1941 DREW on and tensions with Japan amplified daily, the Australian government became increasingly concerned about the possibility of a Japanese occupation of Portuguese Timor. This, it was felt, could arise in one of three ways: "(a) German occupation of Portugal, encouraging Japan to take Portuguese Timor under 'protective custody'; (b) the possibility at any time in existing circumstances of a Japanese landing in Timor with little or no warning; (c) in the event of war with Japan."¹ On September 8, Arthur Fadden, briefly Australian Prime Minister following the resignation of Robert Menzies,² cabled the British Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs proposing that at the earliest opportunity the governments of the UK, the Netherlands and the Commonwealth should discuss the possibility of a pre-emptive occupation of Portuguese Timor.³

In addition to reporting extensively on trade

and political issues, on September 30 David Ross, the Australian Department of Civil Aviation's representative in Dili, the capital of Portuguese Timor, reported the contents of an intercepted telegram addressed to Mr Kawabuti, the senior *Dai Nippon Kōkū KK* (Imperial Japanese Airways) official in Dili.⁴ The telegram stated that another proving flight by the Japanese flying-boat would be made from Palau to Dili on October 11. This time the aircraft would bring 16 passengers, in addition to the normal crew of seven. The purpose of this delegation, unknown to Ross at the time, was negotiation directly with the colony's government regarding an agreement to begin scheduled air services, as Japanese requests had been stalled for some time in Lisbon.⁵

Ross also reported that the Portuguese government in Lisbon had agreed to the appointment of a Japanese Consul in Dili. This development, Ross felt, left him in a difficult position, as he explained:

With the tropical-rainforested mountains rising in the background, Kawanishi H6K2-L J-BFOY, named Sazanami, of Dai Nippon Kōkū KK (Imperial Japanese Airways), bobs in Dili harbour during the third Japanese proving flight to Portuguese Timor in January 1941. At right in the distance is the tender Neishi Maru, sent from Palau in support. CAHS / IVAN HODDER COLLECTION



RIGHT *David Ross visited Portuguese Timor in 1939 as the Superintendent of Flying Operations for the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) and again in late 1940, and by 1941 was the DCA's full-time representative in Dili, the capital. It was far from a glamorous assignment, however.* CAHS COLLECTION

“Against this influence, exerted through no less [sic] than 12 permanent residents, the consul, and the bunch of officials expected in the flying-boat already mentioned, we have myself — a technical aviation expert masquerading as a general government representative — and Whittaker, a naval intelligence officer, masquerading as a civil aviation officer.”

Ross went on, in a rather despairing tone:

“The position as now existing is impossible so far as opposition to Japanese penetration is concerned, and the underhand system of gleaned news and intelligence by unauthorised perusal of radiograms leaves very much to be desired. We must accept the fact that Japanese penetration in Timor cannot be satisfactorily prevented with the means now available. I am thoroughly disgusted with the existing situation; I receive no advice of any political or trade developments concerning Portugal and her colonies, and merely act here as a flying-boat control officer, and an unofficial and very minor representative of the Government of the Commonwealth.

“I am now convinced that there is nothing more which I can do to minimise effectively the progress being made by the Japanese in the extension of their southern penetration policy, and I ask that I be relieved at the expiration of the term which I volunteered to serve here . . . I would appreciate advice by signal of the date when a relief may be expected.”

Unfortunately for him, David Ross was to be in for a disappointment.



Like it or lump it

On October 17, 1941, the UK Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, Viscount Cranborne, cabled the Australian government with a recommendation that, in view of the appointment of a Japanese Consul, the status of Ross should be elevated to British Consul, at least for a few months. In a rather condescending manner, Cranborne stated that the UK was having trouble finding a diplomat to post to Dili because: “(a) there is not enough work to occupy the full time of a career Consular Officer with the consequent risk of deterioration of the Officer, as the place lacks any amenities for alternative occupations; (b)





ABOVE In the late 1930s and early 1940s Portuguese Timor was far from wealthy and largely undeveloped. This Dili street scene was taken by DCA Radio Inspector Ivan Hodder in early 1941 during the establishment of the Qantas service. Just visible in the middle of the road are Qantas Traffic Officers Doug Laurie and Bill Neilson.

climatic and other conditions of the post make it undesirable for an Officer to remain long in Dili. Temporary appointment of Ross would thus for the time being solve the difficulties of reliefs; (c) such work as there is is largely concerned with aviation, for which Ross has obvious advantages over a Career Consular Officer; (d) the Governor of Portuguese Timor is understood to be specially favourably disposed towards Commonwealth citizens and Ross himself is *persona grata*; (e) the difficulty of finding suitable accommodation for a Consular Officer would be avoided if Ross were to be appointed since he could remain in the house he now uses".⁶ While points (c) and (d) are fair enough, the others show scant regard for Ross who was, at that time, a senior DCA officer.

Despite Ross's wish to return home, the Commonwealth government agreed with the British proposal and Ross was officially appointed Consul for Great Britain and Representative for the Commonwealth in Dili on November 5.⁷

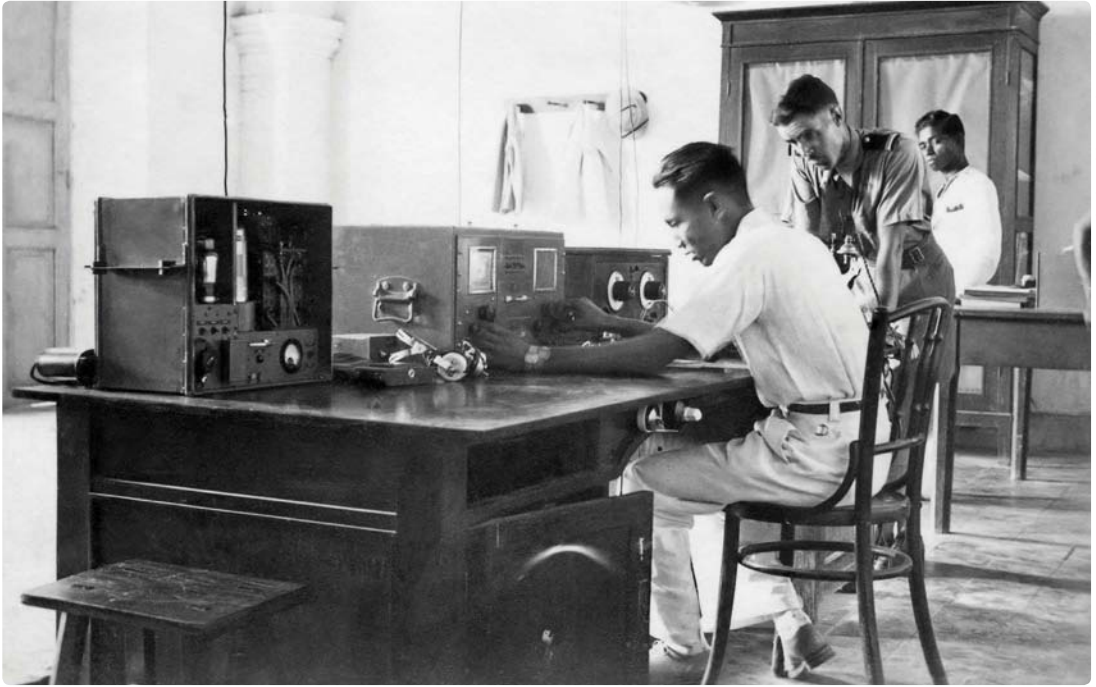
By mid-October 1941, Dai Nippon Kōkū KK had completed its six proving flights to Dili, with the final aircraft due to depart Dili for return to Japan on November 9.⁸ After 15 months of negotiations the Japanese government also succeeded in coercing the Portuguese government into agreeing to a regular service between Yokohama and Dili via Palau. When the news was announced at the beginning of November, the basis for the Japanese service was denounced by Qantas's Hudson Fysh, who described Dili as

Japan's new listening post in the South Pacific and said that "beyond giving [Japan] a bird's-eye view of what is going on in the South Seas, this post has no great commercial value . . . therefore trade cannot be the reason for the new service".⁹ However, Qantas Empire Airways Chairman Fergus McMaster was equally frank the same day in stating that the Qantas "fortnightly deviation from Koepang to Dili was made for political rather than economic reasons".¹⁰

A Dai Nippon Kōkū KK aircraft was scheduled to depart Palau on the inaugural scheduled service on November 15,¹¹ but in the event it did not operate until November 25.¹² The fare was £26 sterling, roughly equivalent to AU\$2,750 in 2018,¹³ and it was reported that, perhaps unsurprisingly, "there appears to be little interest in the booking".¹⁴ In the meantime, the Governor of Portuguese Timor was forced to deny that Japanese infiltration of the colony was occurring, stating that there were only 15 Japanese in Dili, including Consulate staff. There were, however, reports of local unrest, with 17 Chinese being detained after throwing stones at a club in which the Japanese Consul was giving an address.¹⁵

Sequel in Portuguese Timor

Such was the state of affairs, briefly, with both Qantas and Dai Nippon Kōkū KK operating scheduled if infrequent services, until December 8, 1941,¹⁶ when everything changed following Japan's attack on the US Navy fleet at Pearl Harbor,



ABOVE Local radio operator Patricio “Pat” Luz, seen here at the Aeradio station in the Dili Post Office, was a key asset in Australian espionage efforts. Controlling the only means of rapid communication with the outside world, Luz’s co-operation enabled the Australians to exchange messages freely and also intercept Japanese messages.

Hawaii, and simultaneous assaults on the British colonies of Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaya.

In the immediate aftermath of the commencement of hostilities with Japan, the strategic threat to Australia posed by the perceived Japanese encroachment in Portuguese Timor was of considerable concern to the Dutch, Australian and British governments. On December 10 Cranborne cabled the new Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin, to express the view that “it seems very important to make some immediate provision against the possibility of Japanese attack on Portuguese Timor”. Cranborne indicated that the Portuguese, officially neutral in the war, fearful for their vulnerable colony of Macao and not wanting to antagonise Japan, would not agree to Allied troops entering Portuguese Timor unless there was evidence of a threat of occupation by Japan. However, they would probably agree to authorise the Governor to request Allied assistance in the event of a threat, without reference to Lisbon.¹⁷ That same day the battleship *HMS Prince of Wales* and the battle cruiser *HMS Repulse* were sunk by Japanese aircraft off the east coast of Malaya, shattering preconceptions about the ability of British naval power to protect Australia and its strategic interests.

The following day another cable arrived from Britain informing the Australian government that the British government had received information that “the Governor General of the Netherlands East Indies [NEI]¹⁸ has authority from his

government to take necessary action for the liquidating of Japanese in Portuguese Timor and that all naval and military plans are complete”.¹⁹

By this time a small force of Australian troops known as “Sparrow Force”, consisting largely of the 8th Division’s 2/40th Battalion and a commando unit, the 2/2nd Independent Company, had been despatched to Dutch western Timor and were expected to arrive on December 12. The Australian government replied that it was “in accord with the proposal to send a combined Australian and Dutch force into Portuguese Timor to liquidate the Japanese” and that it was instructing the commander of Sparrow Force, Lt-Col William Leggatt, to send a detachment of Australians with the Dutch troops. The Commonwealth Government’s view was that Portuguese Timor should be occupied without delay, and the 2/2nd Independent Company had in fact been earmarked for that role.²⁰

On December 15 David Ross flew to Koepang for a conference with the Dutch Resident in Koepang, Mr Niebouer, and the commanders of the Australian and Dutch forces in western Timor. The conference was informed that as a result of negotiations between the British, Dutch, Australian and Portuguese governments it had been agreed that the Governor of Portuguese Timor would ask for assistance in the event of Japanese aggression against Portuguese territory. However, it seems that the Governor-General of the NEI had already decided to take



MAP BY MAGGIE NELSON

action without delay to “provide assistance” to Portuguese Timor, and events were set in motion that would create an intense diplomatic storm.²¹

The following day Ross, a key facilitator because of his relationship with the Governor of Portuguese Timor, flew back to Dili to arrange an interview with the Governor for the commanders of the Dutch and Australian troops in Timor, Lt-Col W.E.C. Detiger and Leggatt respectively, for December 17 at 0700hr. Detiger and Leggatt arrived in Dili by ship on the morning of the 17th, followed later by the bulk of the Allied troops.

Faced with the Allied occupation forces *in situ*, and with no wish to start hostilities, the Governor had little choice but to acquiesce to the Allied occupation of Portuguese Timor. This did not, however, prevent the Portuguese government protesting in strong terms to the British Ambassador in Lisbon. As a result of furious negotiations, within a month Australia’s Department of External Affairs cabled Ross to advise him that it had been agreed that the Allied troops would be withdrawn once some 800 Portuguese troop reinforcements, despatched from the Portuguese colony of Mozambique in Africa, had arrived.²²

Owing to the military situation, the Qantas

Empire Airways service through Dili was suspended on January 24.²³ Ross, justifiably alarmed at the prospect of being left alone in Dili as the sole British/Australian representative, cabled External Affairs the following day, setting out a case for his withdrawal. Minister Evatt replied the next day saying that he understood the position Ross would be in, but nevertheless felt it important that Ross remained in Dili.

The occupation of Portuguese Timor by the Australian Commandos and NEI troops of Sparrow Force lasted for two months as, meanwhile, the Japanese swept inexorably through the western Pacific and south-east Asia. On January 30, 1942, Short Empire Flying Boat G-AEUEH *Corio* was shot down off western Timor by Japanese fighters, leading to the suspension of operations through Koepong and a move westward to operations between Tjilatjap, on Java’s southern coast, and Broome, in north-western Australia. On February 14, Japanese paratroopers landed on Sumatra, and on the 15th the once-impregnable fortress of Singapore surrendered, cutting off all communications from the NEI to the west.

While the Japanese had not yet landed on Java, the political and economic centre of the NEI, they acted to cut Java off from supply lines to the east,

When Qantas-operated Short S.23 Empire Flying Boat G-AEUEH *Corio*, formerly VH-ABD (as seen here at Karumba, Queensland), was shot down by Japanese fighters off the southern coast of Dutch Timor on January 30, 1942, DCA ordered Qantas to cease operating through Timor and move operations westward (see the author’s *Lost Without Trace* in TAH 9).

CAHS / JOHN G. WALKER COLLECTION





ABOVE *In the 1940s Dili was a small and rather down-at-heel town. The largest building was the cathedral, visible in the centre of the picture directly below the “step” of the flying-boat’s float. DCA airport engineer Bill Bradfield took this photo as Empire Flying Boat Castor arrived over Dili harbour on December 29, 1940.*

through Australia to the USA, by invading Bali on February 19. The same day, Japanese carrier- and land-based aircraft mounted the first major air raid on Australian soil with a devastating attack designed to neutralise Darwin as a base for offensive military operations.

With this increasingly desperate situation for the Allies as a backdrop, during the night of February 19–20, 1942, Japanese landings took place simultaneously at Koepang and Dili. For two hours the Australian Commandos and Dutch troops fought off the Japanese at Dili, before being forced to take to the mountains of the interior, from where they would wage a year-long guerrilla war. David Ross himself was captured by the Japanese invasion force, as he recalled:

“Suddenly I heard a ‘roomp’. I looked out to sea — the house was right on the beach — and I could see a flash of light and hear the ‘roomp’ and I was trying to work out the speed of sound . . . I suddenly realised they were shellbursts, and here I was with a couple of Jap destroyers shelling me, the few buildings along the beach, one of which was my house . . . I said ‘shut up the house, I’m going up in the hills and I’m not stopping’, and I left my house and walked three or four streets.”²⁴

After lying “doggo” for a while in a nearby house, Ross gave himself up to the Japanese. As Consul, he enjoyed diplomatic status and was confined to his house but otherwise unharmed. The biggest problem was a lack of food, and Ross existed for a while on rice and unripe oranges from his garden, supplemented by peanuts and the occasional chicken bought from locals.

No uncertain terms

After about a fortnight the Japanese Consul in Dili came to see Ross. The Japanese knew that there were Australian Commandos hiding in the hills

near Ermera: “He said because the East Indies have surrendered, Singapore has surrendered, therefore these soldiers . . . they must surrender. If they don’t surrender they will be treated as bandits and executed”. Ross agreed to travel up into the hills to find the Aussies and pass on the Japanese demand for their surrender. He was taken to Liquica, on the coast: “I went along and went inland on a Timor pony with a woman’s saddle and hæmorrhoids — and you can’t beat that on a wet Sunday and an empty stomach”.²⁵

After a day’s walk Ross met up with a party of Australians. At a conference in the village of Hatu-Lia on March 16 Ross put the Japanese surrender proposition to the Commanding Officer of Sparrow Force, Maj Alexander Spence, and his officers. Accounts vary, but responses are said to have included, in typically Australian fashion, “Surrender be f***ed!” and “Tell the Japs to stick it up their arse!”²⁶ With these formalities out of the way, Ross was able to give out letters of credit, underwritten by the British government, which proved invaluable in enabling the Australians to purchase food and goods from the locals.

Having given his parole to the Japanese, Ross reluctantly headed back to the coast. He recalled that he “walked the last ten miles, I think; couldn’t stand the sore backside on the pony”.²⁷

The Aussie Commandos maintained a guerrilla campaign against the Japanese. Ross recalled:

“For the next four months if any Japs put their nose outside Dili they’d get one in the eye. An occasional ambush, about every fortnight. And



LEFT After returning from Timor, David Ross rejoined the RAAF as controller of all Allied non-operational air transport in Australia. After the war he rejoined DCA as Superintendent of Air Navigation, going on to be appointed Regional Director of Civil Aviation Western Australia in 1948. By his own admission, he virtually “retired” at that time, formally retiring in 1964.


awful rude letter for which I since think that if they had caught me they’d have chopped me; the Japanese were very upset. I had about 900 quid on my hands. They said here was this man and we give him this and we sent him off on a mission and he does this to us. If the Japs had won the war I don’t know whether I would be a war criminal, but I’d insulted the Japanese 18th Army”.³¹

Home at last

After 18 months in total on Timor, Ross was evacuated to Darwin aboard the patrol vessel *HMAS Kuru*, arriving in Darwin on July 10, 1942.³² On arrival back in Australia, Ross reported to the War Cabinet on conditions in Portuguese Timor, and then rejoined the RAAF for the duration, where he was placed in charge of all non-combat air transport operations. It is clear, though, that the experience of having been thrust into the unanticipated and unwanted roles of spy and diplomat, and then having been, as he saw it, abandoned by the Australian government in Dili, left Ross somewhat embittered.

As a civilian and Portuguese national, Pat Luz, who had been a vital part of DCA’s work on the island (see Part 1), also remained in Dili, where he continued to work in the Post Office. However, his sympathies lay with the Allies and he was able to provide information to the Australian Commandos, which led to the latter, with Luz’s assistance, removing the AS9 transmitter that Ivan Hodder had installed from under the noses of the Japanese. This supplemented an earlier transmitter that the Australians had cobbled together to regain contact with Australia. Pat Luz also eventually escaped to Australia, where he was taken on by DCA as a radio operator.³³

Thus ends the strangest episode in the Empire flying-boat story, in which the aircraft first became a tool in their own right of Australia’s (and by extension Britain’s) foreign policy, diverted on to a commercially dubious service for political reasons, and then providing a cover for espionage leading to the occupation of a neutral territory.

Although Australia was worried about the military consequences of Japanese occupation of Portuguese Timor, there is evidence that, until the Allies precipitately occupied Portuguese Timor, Japan would have been content merely to neutralise the colony and dominate it economically. The occupation of Portuguese Timor, first by the Allies and consequently by the Japanese, had merely led directly to great hardship for the East Timorese population. 

next door to my house . . . was a house occupied by Japanese officers. There must have been seven or eight of them. There was a piano there, I could see shoes and socks and eyeshades, white boxes appearing on the piano. They were the blokes who had been killed in these Australian ambushes . . . and a hospital ship came one day and took all these Japs in boxes. Our blokes killed a lot of them.”²⁸

Unknown to Ross, moves were afoot on the diplomatic front to include him in an exchange of diplomatic and civilian internees between the British and Japanese governments. The Australian government refused to hand over Japanese diplomats interned in Australia at the beginning of hostilities unless the Japanese agreed to include Ross and V.G. Bowden, Australian official representative in Singapore, in the deal.

Before this exchange could take place, in June 1942 Ross was again approached by the Japanese to travel into the interior to seek the surrender of the Australian Commandos. This time, Ross determined not to return. Making contact once again, Ross “. . . found out that the troops in the mountains had made this radio set and were in contact with Darwin. [The latter] was told that I was out and they said oh well, we’d better consider whether he should go back right now.²⁹ I said I’m out, I’m staying out.³⁰ And I wrote a letter, I told the Japs I would write a letter . . . an

- 1 A.W. Fadden, Prime Minister, to Viscount Cranborne, UK Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, Cablegram 588 CANBERRA, September 8, 1941. Australian Archives (AA) ref A981 TIMOR (PORTUGUESE) 3, i
- 2 During 1941 Menzies spent some months in Britain discussing war strategy with Churchill and other leaders. While there, his political support declined to the point that when he returned home he was forced to resign as Prime Minister. Country Party leader Arthur Fadden then took over briefly on August 29 until he, too, lost support. John Curtin, as the new Labor Prime Minister, succeeded Fadden on October 7
- 3 Fadden to Cranborne, Cablegram 588, op cit
- 4 David Ross to Lt-Col W.R. Hodgson, Secretary of Department of External Affairs, Letter DILI, September 30, 1941. AA ref A981 AUSTRALIA 248
- 5 Lord Cranborne to Commonwealth Government, Cablegram 707 LONDON, October 17, 1941, 2145hr; AA ref A981 AUSTRALIA 248. The formal Japanese request for an air-service agreement was made on June 15, 1940, according to report "No Japanese Base": *Dili Governor Says No Need For Concern in The Advertiser* (Adelaide), November 4, 1941, p8
- 6 Cranborne to Commonwealth Government, Cablegram 707 LONDON, op cit
- 7 Although Ross was officially UK Consul, he continued to receive salary and instructions from the Commonwealth
- 8 *Japanese Air Service to Timor in The Argus* (Melbourne), November 3, 1941, p1
- 9 Fysh is quoted in *Qantas Official's Comment in the Cairns Post*, October 17, 1941, p5
- 10 McMaster in *Qantas Beat Japan to Australia—Dili Link in The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), October 17, 1941, p3
- 11 *Japan Timor Air Service to Open: Trouble at Dili in The Argus* (Melbourne), November 4, 1941, p5
- 12 *Japanese Timor Air Service Launched in The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), November 26, 1941, p1
- 13 Reserve Bank of Australia Pre-Decimal Inflation Calculator, latest available calculation date (2018)
- 14 *The Argus*, November 4, 1941, op cit
- 15 *The Argus*, November 3, 1941, op cit
- 16 The war with Japan commenced on December 8, 1941, in Australia and the south-west Pacific, as they are located on the other side of the International Date Line to Hawaii
- 17 Cranborne to Curtin, Cablegram 812 LONDON, December 10, 1941, 2012hr, AA ref A981 TIMOR (PORTUGUESE) 3, i. The Australian government replied the following day agreeing that this should be put to the Portuguese government in Lisbon. On December 13 Cranborne cabled back that the Portuguese had accepted the proposal that assistance should be provided by Australian and Dutch troops in the event of a Japanese attack, and that the Governor of Portuguese Timor would be empowered to request such assistance if necessary
- 18 Jonkheer Dr A.W.L. Tjarda van Starckenborgh Stachouwer
- 19 Cranborne to Curtin, Cablegram 819 LONDON, December 11, 1941, 1824hr, AA ref A981 TIMOR (PORTUGUESE) 3, i. This use of the term "liquidate" may seem somewhat sinister; in this context it was used merely to mean "neutralise"
- 20 Commonwealth Government to Cranborne, Cablegram 797 [1] CANBERRA, December 12, 1941, AA ref A981 TIMOR (PORTUGUESE) 3, i
- 21 A report back to the UK states that the Australian government learned of the NEI Governor-General's decision through "Service channels" — undoubtedly Leggatt's report following the Koepang conference of December 15. The Australian government agreed with the Dutch action and also agreed to provide air cover for the movement of the Dutch and Australian troops from Koepang to Dili by sea. Commonwealth Government to Cranborne, Cablegram 798 [1] CANBERRA, December 16, 1941, AA ref A3196 1941, 0.21697
- 22 Department of External Affairs to David Ross, UK Consul in Dili, Radio message 2 CANBERRA, January 20, 1942, AA ref A981 TIMOR (PORTUGUESE) 3, i
- 23 Department of Civil Aviation, Report on Civil Aviation in Australia and New Guinea 1941–42: Author, Melbourne, Australia, Civil Aviation Historical Society (CAHS) collection
- 24 Interview with David Ross, First Director of Western Australia Region of DCA, transcript of interview for the Department of Aviation Historical Society by Bill Tilly and Bill Scott, 1982, CAHS collection
- 25 *Ibid*
- 26 Ayris, Cyril, *All the Bull's Men: 2/2nd Commando Association*, 2006, p198. See also Callinan, Bernard, *Independent Company: The Australian Army in Portuguese Timor 1941–1943*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1954
- 27 Interview with David Ross, op cit
- 28 *Ibid*
- 29 Lt-Col Hodgson, Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, advised that Ross should return to Dili. He reported that efforts were being made to include Ross in an exchange of prisoners. Meanwhile, the Minister, Dr H.V. Evatt, considered that Ross "can still render best service to Australia while he is in Timor, by remaining at Dili and acquiring all information he can about Japanese". Lt-Col W.R. Hodgson to Lt-Gen V.A.H. Sturdee, Chief of the General Staff, Teleprinter message CS 2684 CANBERRA, June 23, 1942, AA ref A981 WAR 72
- 30 Ross's signal to Australia was as follows: "*Since occupation Dili have been close prisoner in house which has been looted by Japanese soldiers. For three months have been half starved owing lack of food for sale Dili and refusal Japanese allow servants search for food in surrounding country. Japanese suggest I might convey to Australian Company guarantee of proper treatment. I agreed to convey this suggestion. I did not give any indication that I would return Dili, but merely said that I would write and give the reply of the Australian Company. I do not intend returning for imprisonment in Dili and am writing to Japanese to give reply that Australians will not surrender. Do you want me to return to Australia if possible, or shall I become a fugitive and remain in this territory in hope that Japanese might evacuate Dili? Cipher books have been destroyed*". Text quoted in F.G. Shedden, Secretary of the Defence Department, to Lt-Col W.R. Hodgson, Teleprinter message D2736 MELBOURNE, June 28, 1942, 0955hr, AA ref A981 WAR 72. Faced with a *fait accompli*, the Minister had no alternative but to agree to Ross being evacuated from Timor
- 31 Interview with David Ross, op cit
- 32 An interesting postscript occurred in relation to the prisoner exchange when the Japanese were forced to admit that Ross was no longer in their control. By this time Australia was aware of his whereabouts. The Japanese also could not produce Bowden, who was last heard of leaving Singapore for the NEI just before the surrender. The Australian government agreed to go ahead with the exchange, which occurred at Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), Mozambique, on August 27, 1942. After the war, it was revealed that Bowden had been captured at sea and murdered on Bangka Island, east of Sumatra
- 33 By 1943 the Australian Commandos had been evacuated from Timor and a reconnaissance force was sent back to keep an eye on the Japanese. Pat Luz subsequently returned to East Timor by submarine as radio operator to a party of Portuguese Timorese enlisted in the Australian Army as part of the Service Reconnaissance Division. This party was ambushed shortly after arriving and took to the hills where, several days later, it was surrounded and attacked. Pat Luz was the only member of the party to escape and spent the remainder of the war organising an East Timorese resistance group. Post-war Pat Luz returned to Dili, to become Aeradio Operator at the aerodrome. He later emigrated to Australia where he rejoined DCA as an Aeradio Operator. He settled in Darwin and was appointed Honorary Consul for Portuguese Timor. Pat Luz later moved to Sydney as full-time Consul