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Implementation of the Total War Strategy (SISHANTA) in Efforts to Defend the South Sumatra Region

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ABSTRACT

South Sumatra's coastal area is highly vulnerable to external attacks due to its sloping terrain, which makes it easier for enemies to land large numbers of troops. The proximity of Bangka Island, which acts as a natural barrier, further increases the risk of invasion from two directions. This research aims to analyze strategic measures for defending the region against potential invasions through the application of the Total Defense Strategy (SISHANTA). Utilizing a qualitative methodology, this study is based on a comprehensive literature review to examine defense strategies. The findings of this research highlight the formulation of a Total Defense Concept for South Sumatra, which is an integrated approach that involves all national components, including military, civilian, and government sectors, to establish a comprehensive defense system. The study emphasizes the importance of community involvement, strong local governance, and strategic geographical management in ensuring the effectiveness of the total defense strategy. This comprehensive framework offers practical recommendations for future defense policies, focusing on strengthening resilience, enhancing military readiness, and fostering collaboration across sectors. The results provide valuable insights into how regional defense strategies can be applied in coastal areas with similar vulnerabilities.

KEYWORDS

Total Defense Strategy; South Sumatra; Coastal Defense; SISHANTA; National Security



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INTRODUCTION

Sumatra is a large island entirely within the territorial boundaries of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), similar to Java and Sulawesi. Unlike Kalimantan and Papua, which share land borders with other countries, Sumatra does not. This signifies that any entity intending to invade Sumatra would not be able to do so by land routes. One of the key assets located in Sumatra, which may potentially attract the interest of invaders, is the oil refinery situated in Plaju, Palembang, South Sumatra. The Plaju Oil Refinery is the oldest in Indonesia, established in 1904 by the Dutch company Shell. Historically, this refinery became a primary target of the Japanese invasion in 1942.¹ Having already secured control over the Malayan Peninsula, Japan targeted the oil-rich city of Palembang. The invasion was carried out via the sea, utilizing the Bangka Strait and Musi River, alongside an aerial assault, which involved deploying paratroopers directly into Palembang. As a result, the Plaju Oil Refinery was ultimately captured by Japanese forces.²

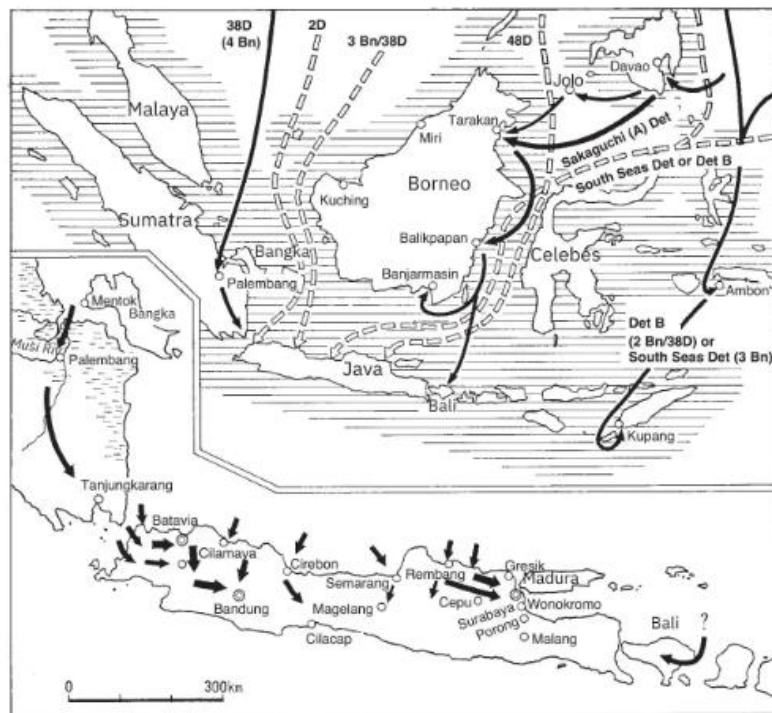


Figure 1. Map of the Japanese Invasion of Indonesia

The island of Sumatra, specifically the city of Palembang, was also a primary target of the Pamalayu Expedition launched by King Kertanegara of the Singhasari Kingdom in 1275. Suwarnabhumi (Sumatra) was successfully conquered in 1286, and in 1289, King Kertanegara issued the Amoghapasa Inscription, which was

¹ Rian Apridhani, "Mengenal Kilang Pertamina Plaju, Kilang Minyak Tertua di Indonesia", (2023), online: *LPP RRI* <<https://rri.co.id/lain-lain/393999/mengenal-kilang-pertamina-plaju-kilang-minyak-tertua-di-indonesia>>.

² Perjanjian Kalijati, "Awal Penguasaan Jepang di Indonesia", (2024), online: <<https://tamansiswa.id/blog/2024/07/05/perjanjian-kalijati-1942-awal-penguasaan-jepang-di-indonesia/>>.



discovered in the Dharmasraya region (Jambi). This expedition had two objectives: to expand Singhasari's influence beyond Java and to counter the Yuan Dynasty's (Mongol) hegemony in the archipelago.³ The expedition was conducted via sea routes (as the Sunda Strait separates the islands of Java and Sumatra) with the aim not only of conquering the Malay land (Sumatra) and halting the Yuan Dynasty's influence, but also of establishing diplomatic relations with Dharmasraya (Jambi), as recorded in the Padang Roco Inscription.⁴ There are no records of the exact number of troops sent to Malay land, but the Pararaton Chronicle notes that the Singhasari royal court was almost empty due to the majority of its forces being deployed to Malay land.⁵ This is reminiscent of the D-Day event, where Allied forces invaded the beaches of Normandy in 1944. It is plausible that the eastern coast of Sumatra was preferred over the southern coast (closer to Java) due to its more gradual terrain, which would facilitate the landing of a larger number of troops.



Figure 2. Map of the Pamalayu Expedition

Both historical events mentioned above demonstrate that the South Sumatra region is particularly vulnerable to external attacks (invasions) due to its flat terrain, which allows for the landing of large numbers of troops, and the presence of the Plaju Oil Refinery. Nevertheless, any potential attack would necessarily originate from the sea or air, as the island of Sumatra does not share a land border with any other country. Therefore, this study will examine the efforts that can be made to defend the region from external threats through the implementation of the Total Defense System (Sishanta).

³ Sobri, Tontowi Amsia & Wakidi, "Sri Kertanegara dalam Usaha Mewujudkan Wawasan Dwipantara Tahun 1275-1292" (2014) 2:1 PESAGI (Jurnal Pendidik dan Penelit Sejarah) 1–12.

⁴ Iswara N Raditya, "Sejarah Ekspedisi Pamalayu dan 3 Versi Tujuan Misi Raja Singasari", (2021), online: *Tirto Id* <<https://tirto.id/sejarah-ekspedisi-pamalayu-dan-3-versi-tujuan-misi-raja-singasari-gig1>>.

⁵ Diansasi Proborini, "Analisis Aspek Diplomasi Kultural dalam Ekspedisi Pamalayu, 1275 – 1294 M" (2017) 6:2 J Anal Hub Int 72–82, online: <<https://docslib.org/doc/4796648/analisis-aspek-diplomasi-kultural-dalam-ekspedisi-pamalayu-1275-1294-m>>.



METHOD

This research is a qualitative study, which is a method used to explore and understand the meanings (perceived) to arise from social or human problems.⁶ The issue addressed in this study is the effort to defend the South Sumatra region against external attacks. Data collection was conducted through a literature review, and these data serve as the foundation for formulating the concept of implementing the Total Defense System in defending South Sumatra from external threats.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

I. Coastal Region of South Sumatra

Historical evidence shows that the coastal region of South Sumatra is vulnerable to external attacks. This area is indeed very flat, allowing for the landing of large-scale invading forces. This is reflected in the elevation of the city of Palembang, which is only 8 meters above sea level,⁷ Despite Palembang being located approximately 110 km from the coastline. This indicates that the terrain from the coastline to the city of Palembang is remarkably flat, meaning that troop movements from the coast to Palembang would face minimal obstacles. The South Sumatra coastline is adjacent to Bangka Island, which serves as a natural barrier. However, in reality, this has made Palembang vulnerable to attacks from two directions. Additionally, the Musi River serves as a natural entry route from the sea to the city of Palembang. Historical records also show that during the Japanese invasion of Palembang, in addition to airborne forces, troops were transported via ships along the Musi River.



Figure 3. View of the Coastal Region of South Sumatra

⁶ John W Creswell, *Research Design: Pendekatan Metode Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan Campuran*, 4th ed (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2016).

⁷ BPS, "Ketinggian Wilayah (mdpl), 2020-2022", (2024), online: *Badan Pus Stat Provinsi Sumatera Selatan* <<https://sumsel.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/2/ODIjMg==/ketinggian-wilayah-.html>>.



II. Total Defense System

The Total Defense System (Sishanta) is stipulated in the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia, Chapter XII on National Defense and Security, Article 30, Paragraph 2, which states: "National defense and security efforts shall be conducted through a total people's defense and security system..."

The comprehensive nature of Sishanta involves the participation of all citizens, territories, and national resources, including national infrastructure, which are prepared early by the government and executed in a comprehensive, integrated, systematic, and continuous manner. This is done to build a strong national defense capability with deterrence against various threats.⁸ This comprehensiveness implies that the national defense system is 'unrestricted,' meaning it cannot be left solely to the Indonesian Army (TNI AD), the TNI as a whole, or even just humans alone. Interoperability is required, both between different branches of the TNI, between the TNI and other national components, and even between humans and nature. Total defense means that all components of the nation must be empowered in building a national defense system without exception.

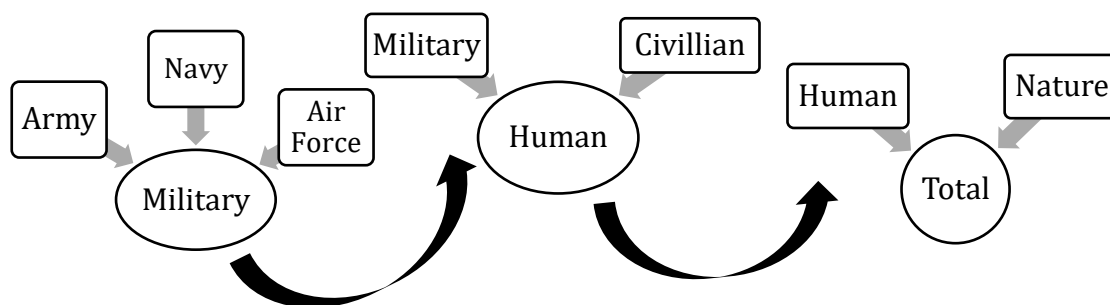


Figure 4. The Complexity of the Total Defense System

III. Analysis

To develop a defense strategy for the South Sumatra region, the strategic approach concept, which consists of ends, means, and ways, can be employed. Ends represent the objectives to be achieved, while means describe how to achieve those objectives, and ways refer to the practical steps and methods for implementing the means.⁹ In this case, the end goal is clear—preventing the landing of invading forces in South Sumatra. The means are also evident: preventing entry points for invading forces from the north, south, and the Musi River estuary (see Figure 3). The ways, therefore, involve devising practical measures to block these entry points by implementing the Total Defense System (Sishanta).

To the north, there is the Mangrove Forest, which is part of Sembilang National Park. Mangroves generally have dense and thick foliage, limiting the maneuverability of military vehicles. This natural barrier would likely cause congestion among landing forces at the beachhead, preventing further ground operations or occupying

⁸ Yudi Rusfiana, "Aktualisasi Sistem Pertahanan Rakyat Semesta (Sishanta) dan Dinamika Potensi Ancaman" (2021) 7:3 Moderat J Ilm Ilmu Pemerintah 483–492.

⁹ Herry Setianegara, *Strategi Maritim Pada Perang Laut Nusantara dan Poros Maritim Dunia* (Yogyakarta: LeutikaPrio, 2014).



strategic amphibious landing objectives within the designated timeframe.¹⁰ To the south, there are extensive peatlands, prone to forest and land fires during the dry season, as witnessed in late 2023.¹¹ These fires produce thick smoke, hindering visibility and flight operations. Although forest fires are considered disasters in peacetime, they could serve as a defense mechanism in wartime by obstructing enemy aircraft and troop movements.

Thus, the only accessible entry point for enemy forces would be through the Musi River estuary. Along both sides of this estuary, guerrilla forces could be stationed to ambush enemy convoys, placing the invaders in a vulnerable position, susceptible to attacks from both sides. According to General A.H. Nasution, guerrilla warfare involves small, dispersed forces engaging the enemy across its operational zone, slowing their advance and gradually weakening their strength, eventually forcing them to retreat or surrender.¹² Guerrilla warfare is also characterized as a total people's war, involving not just the military but the entire civilian population, known as 'trained civilians.' These trained civilians contribute not only as reserve forces but also by preventing internal sabotage, such as through media and electronic channels that could incite conflict and weaken national unity.¹³

Moreover, inter-service interoperability within the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) is crucial for countering an enemy invasion. Historical records indicate that past invasions of South Sumatra were conducted via sea and air routes, meaning that relying solely on the Indonesian Army would be insufficient to repel enemy forces. The northern region of South Sumatra falls within the radar coverage of Satrad 213 Tanjung Pinang, while the southern region is monitored by Satrad 211 Tanjung Kait, Tangerang.¹⁴ These radars, operational 24 hours a day, will detect any airborne threats. Additionally, Air Squadron 16, based at Roesmin Nurjadin Airbase in Pekanbaru, is equipped with five F-16 Fighter Jets capable of executing air-to-ground strikes, air defense, and other support operations, including mid-air refueling.¹⁵ South Sumatra is also under the operational jurisdiction of the Indonesian Navy's Fleet Command I,¹⁶ based in Tanjung Pinang, with assets including Corvette-class ships equipped with anti-aircraft, anti-ship missiles, and anti-submarine torpedoes, as well as missile fast attack craft capable of operating at speeds of up to 30 knots (approximately 56 km/h), armed with anti-ship missiles

¹⁰ Irawan Prasetyo et al, "Analisis Mangrove dari Citra Satelit sebagai Pertahanan Pantai dengan Menggunakan Pendekatan Cloud Computing" (2021) 7:1 J Chart Datum 47–62, online: <<https://jurnal.sttalhidros.ac.id/index.php/chartdatum/article/view/112>>.

¹¹ KLHK, "Menteri LHK: Karhutla di Sumsel Diharapkan Segera Berakhir", (2023), online: <<https://ppid.menlhk.go.id/berita/siaran-pers/7502/menteri-lhk-karhutla-di-sumsel-diharapkan-segera-berakhir>>.

¹² Abdul Haris Nasution, *Pokok-Pokok Gerilya dan Pertahanan Republik Indonesia di Masa Lalu dan yang Akan Datang* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit NARASI, 2012).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ NurW, "Sistem Radar Nasional Dapat Beroperasi 24 Jam pada 2017", (2015), online: <<https://defensestudies.blogspot.com/2015/12/sistem-radar-nasional-dapat-beroperasi.html>>.

¹⁵ Budi Prasetyo, "Kasau Resmikan Pengoperasian Skuadron F 16 di Lanud Roesmin Nurjadin", (2014), online: <<https://www.tribunnews.com/regional/2014/12/04/kasau-resmikan-pengoperasian-skuadron-f-16-di-lanud-roesmin-nurjadin>>.

¹⁶ Wikipedia, "Komando Armada I", (2024), online: <[wikipedia.org: https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Komando_Armada_I](https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Komando_Armada_I)>.



(Fleet Command I, 2024). On land, South Sumatra falls within the jurisdiction of the Regional Military Command II/Sriwijaya, which is equipped with the following units (Military Command II/Sriwijaya, 2024):

- a. Infantry Battalion (Yonif) 141/Aneka Yudha Jala Prakosa-Muaraenim
- b. Yonif 200/Bhakti Negara/Raider-Palembang
- c. Air Defense Artillery Battalion (Yon Arhanud) 12/Satria Bhuana Perkasa-Banyuasin
- d. Field Artillery Battalion (Yon Armed) 15/105 Tarik /Cailendra-Ogan Komering Ulu Timur
- e. Combat Engineer Battalion (Yon Zipur) 2/Samara Grawira-Prabumulih
- f. Cavalry Battalion (Yon Kav) 5/Dwipangga Ceta-Muaraenim
- g. Cavalry Company (Kikav) 5/Graha Ceta Cakti-Palembang

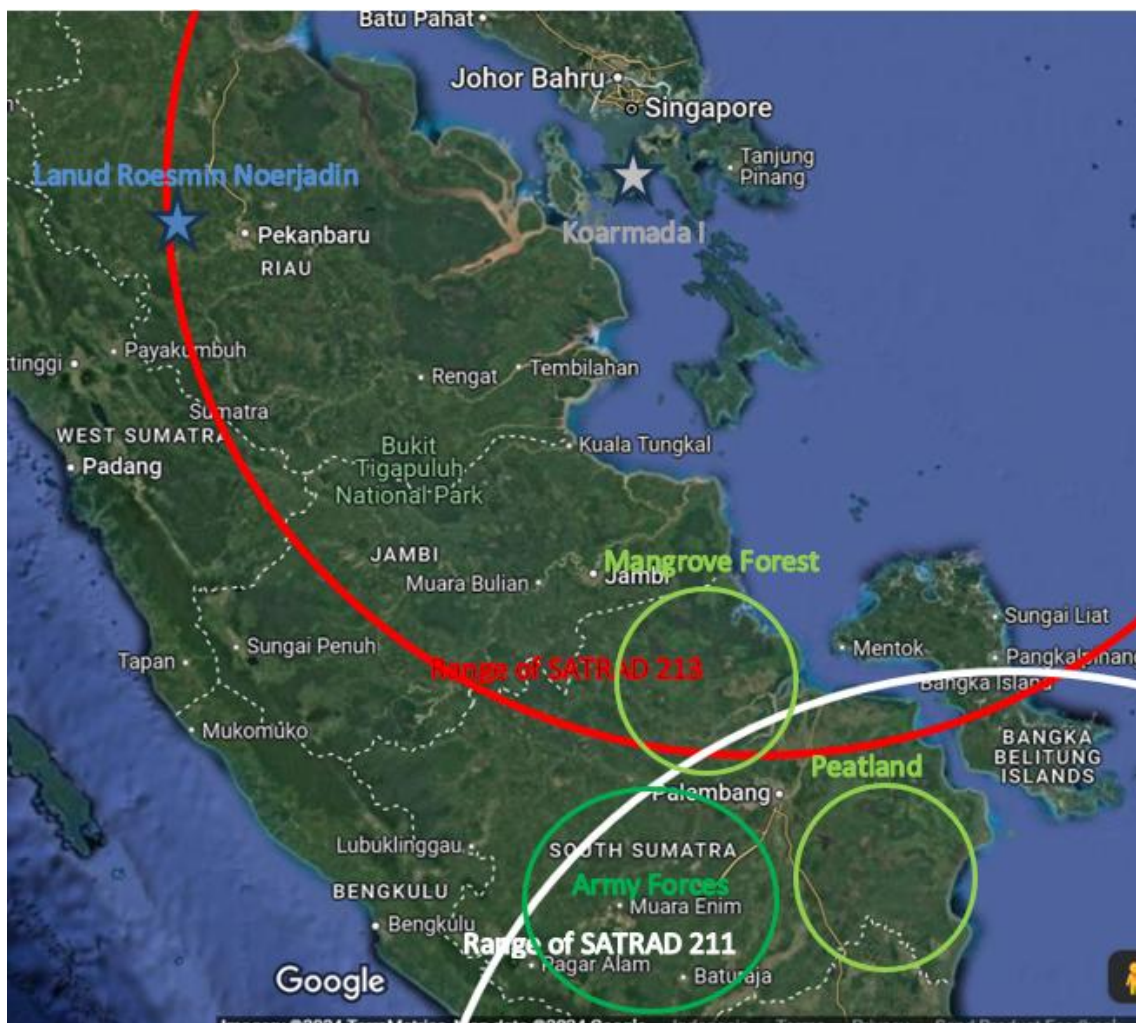


Figure 5. Illustration of the Total Defense Strategy in the South Sumatra Region

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the coastal region of South Sumatra is relatively flat, making it vulnerable to the landing of large-scale invading forces. The presence of Bangka Island as a natural barrier increases the risk of the region being attacked



from two directions simultaneously (north and south). To defend South Sumatra from invading forces, the Total Defense System (Sishanta) is implemented, which is a defense system that integrates all national components without exception. This system unifies both humans and nature, the military (TNI) with civilians, as well as inter-service cooperation within the TNI itself.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest in the publication of this article.

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