

Former military chief and WWII spy dies
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The former head of Malaysia's armed forces, who worked as an agent for British intelligence during World War II, died on Thursday, military officials said.

Ibrahim Ismail, 88, who was Malaysia's military chief from 1970 to 1977, died in hospital following a long illness, according to a defence ministry official.

As an agent with Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE) during World War II, Ibrahim was involved in a daring 10-month bluff after being captured by Japanese forces.

"General Ibrahim died at the armed forces hospital at about 4:40am and his body was buried following afternoon prayers in accordance with Islamic rites," the official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Following the outbreak of the World War II, Ibrahim, then aged 20 and studying in India, joined Force 136, part of the SOE, which encouraged and facilitated espionage and sabotage behind enemy lines.

In an interview last year, Ibrahim said that as part of "Operation Oatmeal-Violin", his spy group secretly entered Japanese-occupied Malaya by flying boat in October 1944.

"But we were spotted by informers for the Japanese secret police, the Kempeitai," he told the New Straits Times newspaper.

"After our capture and torture began a 10-month charade that convinced our Japanese captors that we had defected and were working with them for the 'greater benefit' of Malaya and Asia."

"In full view of our captors, we sent a cryptic pre-arranged radio signal back to our home station in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) which indicated that we were being held prisoners as a reply to the message 'Have You Met Mariam?'".

Written two books

Ibrahim said that his home station understood the operatives had been compromised and played along with the numerous messages sent, with the Japanese thinking all the while they were feeding misinformation to the British.

Ibrahim, who was knighted after the war, joined the Royal Malay Regiment in 1951 and rose through the ranks, serving in various capacities and involved in key operations against communist insurgents.

He was also involved in helping to quell race riots in 1969 and was made a full general in 1970 before heading the armed forces for the next seven years.

In retirement, he wrote two books on his exploits during and after the war but had been in

declining health in recent years.

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