The FIFTH AIR FORCE
IN THE
CONQUEST OF THE
BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO

NOVEMBER 1943 TO MARCH 1944

The original of this monograph and the
documents from which it was written are in
the USAF Historical Division, Archives Branch.
Bldg. 914, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.
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Prepared by
AAF Historical Office
January 1946
FOREWORD

This study, prepared by Maj. Harris G. Warren of the Combat Operational History Division, AAF Historical Office, analyzes in considerable detail the air action carried out by AAF units in the Bismarck Archipelago area from November 1943 to March 1944, thus supplementing other narratives in the AAF Historical Series which deal with the operations of the Thirteenth Air Force in the Solomons and the Fifth Air Force in New Guinea. The campaign here described had in itself considerable strategic significance in that it covered the flank of important westward operations in New Guinea, helped to make possible the by-passing of Buna and Kavieng, and afforded positions in the Admiralty Islands which were used as major staging bases for the later invasion of the Philippines.

Like other AAF Historical Studies, the present narrative is subject to revision as additional materials become available. Readers are encouraged to submit information or corrections on the perforated sheets attached at the end of the study.

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The Fifth Air Force in the Conquest of the Bismarck Archipelago

November 1943 to March 1944
Chapter I

THE MILITARY SITUATION AND PLANS FOR OPERATION DECEITFUL

New Britain, forming the southern boundary of the Bismarck Sea, bridged the gap between two Allied drives in the fall of 1943. On the east, South Pacific forces were advancing through the Solomons toward Rabaul. On the west, Southwest Pacific forces were moving along the coast of New Guinea. Japanese strength in New Britain was concentrated on the Gazelle Peninsula and at Cape Gloucester. From Rabaul on the Gazelle Peninsula the enemy sent air, naval, and ground units to oppose our South Pacific advance; at Cape Gloucester, the enemy exercised partial control over straits connecting the Bismarck and Solomons seas. Operation DECEITFUL, begun in western New Britain in December 1943, ended Japanese control over these straits and forced the enemy back to the Gazelle Peninsula. The conquest of western New Britain, the neutralization of Rabaul, and the capture of the Admiralty Islands assured Allied domination of the Bismarck Archipelago.

The Bismarck Archipelago

A crescent-shaped group of islands, lying between northeastern New Guinea and the northern limit of the Solomons Islands, comprises the Bismarck Archipelago. New Britain and New Ireland, largest islands in the archipelago, form the main part of the crescent. New Hanover, separated from New Ireland by an island-studded channel, and Manus in the Admiralties are the other principal land areas. New
Britain alone has about 60% of the archipelago's 23,550 square miles.1

Governed as a part of the Australian New Guinea Mandate, the Bismarck Archipelago had little international political or economic significance before the outbreak of World War II; but Japanese military operations in the South and Southwest Pacific areas in the first three months of 1942 focused attention upon the archipelago's strategic importance. Its islands provided the enemy with bases, particularly at Eadual, for staging offensives through the Solomons toward New Zealand and across New Guinea toward Australia. Conversely, in Allied possession the Bismarcks would provide bases to protect those two dominions and to mount a counter-offensive against Japanese positions to the north and northwest.

New Britain, narrow and mountainous, is strategically the most important as well as the largest island in the archipelago.2 It is separated from New Guinea by straits 55 to 65 miles wide, in which lies Umbai, a volcanic island suitable for air warning installations and light defenses. Dampier Strait, between Umbai and New Britain, was a Japanese supply route to the eastern coast of Papua and islands of the Solomon Sea. A coast line of about 1,000 miles affords New Britain numerous anchorages for small vessels as well as several harbors. Simpson Harbor in Blanche Bay, at the northeastern end of the island, is uncoveted in the New Guinea-Bismarcks-Solomons area as a base for military operations. Panaiti lies on the north shore of Blanche Bay, in the shadow of volcanic cones which may erupt at any time.3
St. George's Channel, a strait 25 miles wide in which lie the
Duke of York Islands, forms a passage between New Britain and New
Ireland. Duke of York Island and the shore of New Ireland opposite
Faisal were sites of enemy airfields and thus were integral parts of
the Rabaul base. New Ireland, lying like a huge barrier reef north-
east of New Britain, possesses an excellent harbor at Lavang which
was an important staging point on the supply routes to Rabaul and
beyond.

Of the 160 islands in the Admiralty group, only Manus and Los
Negros have much military importance. The former is about 49 miles
in length and has a maximum width of 16 miles. Lorengau, on the north-
east coast of Manus, was its administrative center and the site of a
poor airfield. Los Negros Island is so broken up by bays and lagoons
that it is a series of peninsulas. Los Negros, indeed, is itself a
walled peninsula separated from Manus Island by a narrow passage and
projecting to the northwest to form the eastern limits of Seeadler
Harbor.

The Bismarck Archipelago contains several small groups of volcanic
islands and coral atolls. The Viti, or Viti, Islands 40 miles north-
west of the Willaume Peninsula of New Britain, provided anchorage for
naval and merchant vessels. Garove Island, largest of the group, is
a volcanic rim around John Albert Harbor, a flooded crater opening
on the south. Peter Harbor on the northeast coast of Garove Island
was the principal anchorage and barge-staging point for running
supplies to western New Britain.
Terrain and climate combine to produce conditions extremely
discouraging to extensive development of economic enterprises, as
well as military installations, throughout the Bismarck Archipelago.
All of the large islands and many of the small ones have mountainous
interiors bordered by lowlands of kunai grass and mangrove swamps,
although the only mountains of any considerable height are on New
Britain and southeastern New Ireland. Except for coconut plantations
and centers of population, land areas are generally covered by heavy
growth of kunai grass or tropical rain forest. Trees grow luxur-
antly, weaving a canopy overhead that shuts out the sunlight and con-
ceals ground movement and military installations from aerial observa-
tion. The climate, always warm or hot, is extremely humid. Rainfall
varies from about 60 inches annually at Rabaul to 250 inches at
Gasmata. In November the northwest monsoon strikes the northern is-
lands, then spreads over the entire archipelago by December. Heavy
rains are common until March when more moderate conditions prevail,
and even in the summer months clouds cover from one-third to four-
fifths of the sky most of the time. These climatic conditions, in
addition to being hazards to air operations, were the cause of many
incomplete missions and unsatisfactory bomb runs, especially since
the period of most intensive air operations coincided with the north-
west monsoon.

Progress of Military Operations

Allied forces had been advancing in roughly parallel lines through

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the Solomons and along the New Guinea coast since the fall of 1942. Together these two thrusts formed a pinching in on Japanese positions in the Bismarck Archipelago. Preliminary objectives in the Solomons and New Guinea were won by May 1943, and CHQ SWPA on 6 May issued warning instructions in order to outline general offensive plans for the Southwest and South Pacific areas, in accordance with a directive prepared by higher headquarters in February 1943. These plans included the ultimate capture of Rabaul and occupation of the Bismarck Archipelago. The general role of the Allied Air Forces was defined clearly. They were to gain air superiority over each objective set by the high command, neutralize supporting enemy air bases within reach of the objective, destroy enemy shipping and naval forces within range, prevent reinforcement or supply of objectives under attack, cover the advance of ground troops, displace forward to captured airfields, and aid in neutralizing intermediate installations which were not immediate objectives of ground operations.9

The general offensive was renewed in June 1943. South and Southwest Pacific forces attacked New Georgia on the 30th and occupied Kiriwina, Woodlark, and Fendova islands. Early in September the Japanese gave up the central Solomons.10 Southwest Pacific forces landed at Yassau Bay, south of Salamaua, on 20 June in an attack coordinated with the offensive against New Georgia. The Fifth Air Force struck heavy blows at Wewak and other enemy bases on the north New Guinea coast and by September the Japanese had been forced to withdraw.
to more distant fields. An amphibious landing near Lae on 4 September was followed by the dropping of parachute troops in the Markham Valley on the 5th. Salamaua fell on 12 September, Lae on the 16th, and Kiriwina on the 20th. An amphibious landing at Sinschafen on 22 September resulted in control of the Buna Gulf and provided the Allied Air Forces with an advanced fighter base opposite Cape Gloucester.\textsuperscript{11}

The next major advance came in the South Pacific area when Marines established a beachhead at Espiritu Santo, Bougainville Island, on 1 November 1943. The Torokina air strip, captured after bitter fighting, became operational for fighter planes on 11 December and two weeks later Finschafen was ready. The Thirteenth Air Force now had bases less than 260 miles from Bismarck.\textsuperscript{12} In the meantime, the Southwest Pacific forces were completing plans for the invasion of New Britain.

**Japanese Air Bases and Strength**

Japanese armed forces in New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago were strong in November 1943, although they had lost the initiative. The enemy, no longer able to choose the time and place of major engagements, lacked sufficient strength to garrison every threatened point; his supply service was strained by efforts to maintain widely separated units and his air force was committed to the defense of certain key bases. This defense was facilitated, however, by strategically located groups of airstrips.
The Rabaul group consisted of four operational drones on the Caselle Peninsula and a fifth on New Ireland across the St. Georges Channel. Another was under construction on Duke of York Island. In March 1944, after five months of heavy blows by the Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces, supplemented by carrier strikes and naval bombardment, Rabaul was reduced to impotence; but in the fall of 1943 it was a powerful base. Gasmata, near the center of the south shore of New Britain, was the site of an airfield and a seaplane anchorage. Fighters covering convoys to New Guinea used the field until Allied bombing made it untenable. The Japanese then constructed a drone at Cape Hoskins on the north coast in September and October 1943. A field at Talasea on the Villasen Peninsula was little more than an emergency landing ground. The Cape Gloucester strips, on the north-west corner of New Britain, were potentially important; but frequent visits by Allied bombers kept them inoperational most of the time.

Zavieng, at the northwest tip of New Ireland, covered the north and northwest approaches to Rabaul.13

In the Admiralty Islands, two fields were available for enemy planes: Lorengau on Manus and Namot on Los Negros. The Lorengau strip possessed little importance, but Namot became a well-developed airfield by December 1943. Its principal use was as a staging base on the routes to New Britain, New Ireland, and New Guinea.14

The Uliang group of bases, between Honsa Bay and Astrolabe Bay on the northern coast of New Guinea, included five airfields.
Madang, Alexishafen I and II, Kavieng, and Awar. The Madang field, operational from March to September 1943, was largely abandoned when the Alexishafen strips were completed. Likewise, Kavieng in the Hansa Bay area was practically abandoned in favor of Awar in November. This group was less important than the five New Guinea area bases: Newe, Boxon, But, Tagua, and Tadij. The last named, a satellite field 55 miles west of Newe, was built to provide dispersal and protection when Allied attacks on the Newe group became heavy in August 1943. The Hollandia base, with Sentani and Cyclops as satellites, was completed late in 1943. This group, linked to the northwestern Dutch New Guinea area by the Waide Island drone 115 miles west of Hollandia, escaped destruction until the Fifth Air Force completed its movements to Guadalcanal and New Georgia during February and March 1944. 15

New Britain and the north coast of New Guinea held the principal concentrations of Japanese air strength in the Bismarck Sea area (see Appendix No. 1). During the last quarter of 1943, the estimated number of enemy aircraft in New Britain, principally at Rabaul, fluctuated from 339 on 12 October to 167 on 23 November. The enemy strove to maintain a fighter strength of about 150 planes to protect that key base. Light and medium bombers varied from 146 on 12 October to 20 at the middle of November. When this low point was reached, single-engine bombers appeared to augment bomber strength to about 60 planes. These aircraft were carrier-based torpede and dive-bomber types which were stripped from carriers to reinforce Rabaul and the Solomons.

The decline in strength at Rabaul in the first quarter of 1944 was
offset to some extent by the arrival of substantial reinforcements in New Guinea. In this area the number of planes varied from 134 on 5 November to 205 by the end of the month. Attacks on Aleipatam in that month resulted in building up strength at Newak, a fact of considerable importance in the impending Bismarck campaign. On 7 December 1943, a week before the landing at Arawe, the enemy had an estimated total of 488 aircraft in the New Guinea-Bismarck area. Of this total, 254 were fighters and 189 were bombers. The enemy thus possessed sufficient air strength to attack our convoys and beachheads if he decided to commit his force for these purposes.

Devastating attacks by Allied air forces against the Rabaul and New Guinea fields had already resulted in heavy losses to the Japanese. Further losses had been incurred in enemy efforts to bomb our airfields, shipping, and beachheads. In October 1943, the Japanese were reported to have lost 236 planes destroyed, 217 probably destroyed, and 164 damaged in the South and Southwest Pacific areas. In the Southwest Pacific area alone, 643 Japanese planes were destroyed in October. In spite of these losses, the enemy succeeded in maintaining from 400 to 500 planes in New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago until March 1944. Considering the demands of other areas, especially the Central Pacific where the Gilberts and Marshalls were under attack, one can appreciate the enemy’s difficulties.

**Allied Air Forces, Strength and Positions**

The Allied Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area, combined
by Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney, was to provide the air cooperation for the Bismarck Archipelago campaign. General Kenney’s command was an international force which included American, Australian, and Netherlands East Indies units. Administrative control over the Allied AF remained in its respective components but General Kenney, with headquarters at Brisbane, had operational control over the entire organization. Air Vice Marshal W. Bostock commanded at Darwin and Maj. Gen. James G. Whitehead directed operations from an advanced headquarters at Port Moresby.  

In order to meet the many demands placed upon it for cooperation in the ground campaigns, and to solve problems of administration, supply, and service, the Fifth Air Force maintained, in addition to this Advanced Headquarters (Advon) at Port Moresby, three air task forces north of the Owen Stanley Mountains. Advon retained command of the fighter and bomber units, but operations of about three-fourths of the Allied AF squadrons were controlled by the air task forces. Squadrons retained by Advon could be assigned missions by that headquarters, and likewise formed an active tactical reserve from which special demands could be met. The First Air Task Force, commanded by Brig. Gen. F. W. Smith at Dobodura, contained about one-third of the squadrons in the theater in December 1943 and executed most of the tactical combat missions. This task force carried out fighter and bomber missions for all of the ground operations except those in the Fais Valley, which were aided by the Second Air Task Force at Nadzab and the Third Air Task Force at Gusm.  

Then the Fifth Air Force began an intensive bombardment of New
Britain in November 1943. It had six bombardment groups in New Guinea
and one, the 330th, in northern Australia near Darwin.21 The units
had an assigned aircraft strength of 370 bombers as of 30 October.
There were, in addition, 321 unassigned bombers in the theater. Of
the total assigned to bombardment groups, 118 were B-24's and 204 were
B-25's.22 The five fighter groups were stationed at Port Moresby,
Dobodura, and in the Karichan-Duma valleys.23 Their assigned aircraft
strength as of 30 October was 169 P-38's, 91 P-47's, 71 P-40's, and
47 P-39's—a total of 341 fighters. The Fifth Air Force had an addi-
tional 363 unassigned fighters on hand (see Appendix No. 2).24 Thus
the combined strength of Fifth Air Force fighters and bombers assigned
to tactical squadrons was 713 planes at the end of October, of which
approximately 80% were ready for combat. Two months later, on 3
January 1944, there were 432 fighters and 334 bombers assigned to
squadrons of the Fifth Air Force.25 Eighty-four bombers and 142
fighters in EAF units stationed in New Guinea, principally on Goodenough and Zirvidia Islands, increased the total Allied Air Forces
strength in New Guinea to about 1,000 fighters and bombers during the
first week of January 1944.26

The Allied Air clearly surpassed the Japanese in the Southwest
Pacific Area by November 1943. Its heavy and medium bombers, escorted
by P-38's, could cover the area from Fakaul to B Amelia. The crowded
fields clustering around Port Moresby and Dobodura provided facilities
for striking heavy blows at the enemy's air power, shipping, and
ground installations throughout the New Guinea-Bismarck Archipelago
area. Advanced bases were under construction at Gusap, Nadzab, and
Finschhafen. The latter were to be especially important in the
Admiralty Islands phase of the campaign.

Most of the bomber strength was concentrated at Port Moresby
until December. Two groups, the 3d and 23d, were at Dobodora in
November, as was the 65d Squadron of the 43d Group (H). The 65d
devoted its efforts almost entirely to armed reconnaissance of the
Bismarck Sea. Two squadrons of the 330th Group (H) moved to Dobodora
from Fenton to participate in the Arawa-Cape Gloucester bombardment,
and flew their first missions from Dobodora on 13 December. Two days
later the rest of the 43d Group was flying from Dobodora, and within
10 days the 90th Group (H) and the 345th Group (I) had moved across
the Owen Stanleys from Port Moresby. The 33d Group (H) remained at
Moresby until the end of February when it moved to Dobodora.\(^37\) This
concentration of aircraft at Dobodora in December made a lucrative
target for enemy bombers, but the Japanese were unable to take advan-
tage of their opportunity.

Fighter squadrons as of 6 November 1943 were stationed so as to
provide protection for aircrew, aid to ground troops in New Guinea,
and escort for bombers on missions to such strongly defended points
as Rabaul and Wewak. The 6th Fighter Group, at Hila and Ward's drones
near Port Moresby, had one squadron equipped with P-63C's, another

\[^{37}\text{This concentration of aircraft at Dobodora in December made a lucrative target for enemy bombers, but the Japanese were unable to take advantage of their opportunity.}\]
with P-39's and P-47D's, and a third with P-39's, G's, and H's.

The 39th Squadron, 35th Fighter Group, was at Salamaua Airfield near Port Lorech with its P-39's. The 40th and 41st Squadrons of the same group, flying P-39's, were at Madir to go on to Tissi Tissi to aid the ground campaign in New Guinea. The 49th
Fighter Group had one squadron of P-40's and one of P-39's in the Dobodura area, while its third squadron of P-40's was at Gusap. All of the 349th Fighter Group, equipped with P-47's, was near Port Lorech at Jackson, Durand and Harold's drones. The 475th Fighter
Group, flying K-39H's, was at Dobodura. 

Flight and Troops for Operation D-226RITY

The amphibious invasion of western New Britain and the landing at Saidor, New Guinea, were the ground phases of Operation D-226RITY. The principal purpose of D-226RITY, as revealed by various directives, was to establish airfield facilities at Cape Gloucester to accommodate two fighter and two medium bombardment groups. Planning was begun in July 1943 by representatives of the Seventh Fleet Amphibious Force, "even Fifth Air Force, and Alamo Force. The Alamo Force, which included the U. S. Sixth Army, was also known as INDIO FORCE--its secret code name--and New Britain Force.

Operations Instructions No. 35, issued by CPO JAPA on 22 September 1943, assigned the following missions to Alamo Force: (a) seize the Cape Gloucester area, neutralize Cassata by airborne and overwater operations, and establish control over 

portions of western New Britain as necessary; (b) operate of our air force from Cape Gloucester;" (c) establish airfield
facilities in the Cape Gloucester area; (c) arrange for overwater transportation to move air force units to Cape Gloucester; (d) establish emergency air operating base facilities in the vicinity of Lindenhafen Plantation as later specified by CIN C.T.A.; (e) assist the commander of Allied I.F. in establishing air warning and radio navigational facilities; and (f) prepare to participate in the capture of Kabaul. Two months later, on 22 November, Alamo Force was directed to seize the Arawe Peninsula instead of Casamata, since the enemy strength at Arawe was estimated as being much smaller than at Casamata and a smaller task force could accomplish the mission. Thus, the plan for an emergency airstrip at Lindenhafen Plantation was abandoned.

This change in plans met with General Hitehead's approval, and may have been caused in part by his objection to constructing an airstrip at either Casamata or Lindenhafen Plantation. He preferred Casamata as the lesser of two evils, but informed General Kenney that neither site could be used for anything except Spitfires and troop carriers. The Fifth Air Force needed an airstrip within 160 to 180 nautical miles of Kabaul, primarily to receive fighters after combat over that enemy base. "From our standpoint," General Hitehead stated, "any effort used up to capture any place on the south coast of New Britain, is wasted unless an airstrip suitable for combat airplanes can be constructed there."31

The strategy involved in the revised plan of 22 November was simple but effective. The small task force (DIORCOF Force) destined for Arawe would land on 15 December 1943, to focus the enemy's attention on that area and to cause him to move troops from the Cape
Gloucester area. Eleven days later, on 26 December, the main blow would fall with BACKHAUNDER Task Force landing at Borgen Bay east of Cape Gloucester.\textsuperscript{23} Quick success in New Britain was to be exploited by landing at Salidor on or after 2 January 1944, thus completing the third phase of Operation DEXTERITY.\textsuperscript{23}

Missions assigned to the Allied AF included preinvasion bombardment, interdiction of enemy seaborne reinforcements and supplies, 2-day strikes in cooperation with landing forces, neutralization of enemy air and naval operations along the south coast of New Britain, and providing anti-submarine escort and air protection of over-water troop and supply movements for ESCALATOR Force.\textsuperscript{34} This assignment, insofar as its pre-invasion activities were concerned, merely meant that the Allied AF would intensify attacks on Caraua, Arave, and the Cape Gloucester-Borgen Bay areas.

All of the American troops, exclusive of the Fifth Air Force, that were to participate in Operation DEXTERITY were under Alamo Task Force. Its major units were the U. S. Sixth Army, the USA Services of Supply, and the 16th Antiaircraft Command. Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger, commander of the Sixth Army, was also in command of Alamo Force. Headquarters of the latter at Goodenough Island, therefore, was in effect the forward echelon of Sixth Army Headquarters.\textsuperscript{35} The principal tactical components of the Sixth Army in September 1943 were the 1st Marine Division (Maj. Gen. V. H. Rupertus), the 37th Infantry Division (Maj. Gen. William E. Giff), the 63rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment.\textsuperscript{36} As finally constituted at the
end of November, the Arawe (DIRECTOR) Task Force was composed of the 113th Cavalry Regiment, the 148th Field Artillery En., and other units, under command of Brig. Gen. Julian H. Cunningham. The 1st Marine Division and its supporting garrison troops formed the Cape Gloucester (BACKHAUSEN) Task Force, while the 30th Infantry Division was in ASCALATOR reserve.26

**Enemy Ground Strength in New Britain**

Information about the location and strength of Japanese forces in New Britain was vital in the planning phase of Dexterity. Various sources, including air and ground reconnaissance, prisoners of war, and captured documents, indicated that the enemy expected an invasion. It is possible that the Japanese regarded the heavy Allied air attack of 12 October on Kolombangara as a prelude to "a large-scale attempt to gain a foothold on New Britain." At least the enemy retaliated with attacks on Allied shipping at Oro Bay on 16 and 17 October. These ventures cost the Japanese 70 planes.36 Their willingness to incur such risks was a measure of determination to cut off a possible invasion at its source. During the next few days enemy air strikes were concentrated in the Finean area, with two large-scale night attacks against shipping. These actions were interpreted as indicating Japanese fears that Finair would serve the Allies "as a springboard into New Britain."37

Frequent sightings of troop and supply movements proved conclusively that the Japanese were reinforcing western New Britain.
Troops were moved from Rabaul primarily at night on barges, small transport vessels, and destroyers. This activity, which seems to have reached a peak about 15 November, declined for a few days and then increased at the end of the month. Although they suffered serious shipping losses from Allied air attacks, the Japanese appeared determined "to turn the threat from the southwest well forward of Rabaul." By December there were fresh troops at Gasmata, Cape Merkus, Aisega, Cape Gloucester, and in the Rein Bay area.

Estimates of enemy ground strength in western New Britain varied widely. GHQ SWPA estimated the number of troops to be about 4,000; but the 1st Marine Division expected to find about 9,000 in the area, an estimate that proved to be approximately correct. There were, moreover, possibilities of reinforcement from about 5,000 troops in central New Britain and more than 80,000 at Rabaul. These estimates of enemy strength, while primarily of interest to ground troops, also influenced air action. Allied planes were sent out to strike at possible troop concentrations and defense installations. Interdiction of shipping in the Bismarck Sea and along the coasts of New Britain, attacks on supply areas at Rabaul, and the destruction of ships wherever they could be found could be a determining factor in the enemy's ability to resist the invasion.

**Photographic Reconnaissance of New Britain**

Photographic reconnaissance by the Fifth Air Force played a prominent role in the planning and execution of Operation DECEIVING. Throughout...
the planning period there was a steady flow of aerial photographs which yielded highly accurate and relatively complete information about not only terrain but also enemy installations. 

Aerial photographs enabled the Seventh Amphibious Force to make navigational charts of the waters off New Britain. Gridded maps were used by the artillery as firing charts, and gridded obliques served as charts in calling for air strikes to aid ground troops.

This important reconnaissance work was the principal function of the 8th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron, which flew daily missions over New Britain for several months before the Allied landings and extended its activities to New Guinea and New Ireland. Since facilities for photographic reconnaissance were not sufficient to meet the demand without calling upon bombardment squadrons, heavy and medium bombers took photographs whenever weather permitted, and some missions were primarily photographic. On 10 November, for example, a B-25 of the 40th Bombardment Squadron took 134 photographs from Grass Point to Bougainville, and on 19 November the 90th Bombardment Squadron...
sent nine B-25's to photograph the Cape Gloucester area and to search for targets.

The military situation in the South and Southwest Pacific theaters definitely favored an Allied invasion of the Bismarck Archipelago in the fall of 1943. Enemy strength, both air and ground, was disposed over a wide area. The invasion of Bougainville and Allied success in New Guinea forced the Japanese to concentrate their ground strength to meet those two offensives. Western New Britain left exposed to Allied air attacks, Rabaul was soon to come under intensive bombardment, and key Japanese airbases along the north coast of New Guinea were within reach of our Dobodura and Nadzab bases. Air and naval interdiction of Japanese supply lines had created a shortage of matériel and food which was to grow progressively worse.

Air power played a prominent role in the planning stages of Operation DEXTERITY. Reconnaissance of New Britain provided photographs and visual observation upon which detailed tactical plans were based. Preliminary neutralization of Rabaul, bombardment of invasion sites, and interdiction of enemy shipping were regarded as essential for success in the operation. The Allied AF was to execute these missions in a highly satisfactory manner.
Chapter II
PRE-INVASION EQUIPMENT AND THE ARAKE DIVERSION.

While plans were being completed for the invasion of New Britain, the Allied AF was attacking Rabaul with great success. Strikes against this base continued into November 1943, then turned to the north and south coasts of New Britain in considerable strength as South Pacific forces took over the principal responsibility for the continued reduction of Rabaul. Even during the series against Rabaul, Fifth Air Force bombers executed harassing attacks and some heavy strikes on important positions in western New Britain. The diversionary Arawe invasion of 15 December was preceded by intensive bombing and was adequately covered by fighter patrols. But since the DIRECTION Task Force did little more than to hold its positions while the BACKCURVE Task Force carried out the main attack at Arawe Bay, air operations at Arawe were on a small scale.

**Arawe attacks on Rabaul, 12 October-7 December 1943**

Attacks upon the great Rabaul base were of the utmost significance for Allied operations in the Solomons, New Guinea, and the Bismarck Archipelago. From Rabaul enemy naval task forces set out to challenge our surface units; to it merchant vessels brought supplies for reloading onto barges and other small craft serving Japanese units in a wide area; and the Japanese Naval Air Service concentrated fighters,
bombers, and reconnaissance craft on its airbases. Any successful attacks against this busy base therefore would weaken Japanese power to resist new Allied invasions in both the South and Southwest Pacific areas.

The Allied Air Forces began a series of strikes on 12 October that may be considered as extending to 11 November. Photographic reconnaissance on 11 October had disclosed an increase of nearly 100 fighters on Rabaul's airfields, an increase that raised the total estimated strength to 294 aircraft. On the following day the Allied AF carried out the heaviest strike of the war against Rabaul when 338 bombers and fighters reached the target. Medium bombers (114 B-25's) came over first in three groups to attack Espiritu and Yombo while 12 B-24's hit Tobara. Then 67 B-24's combed the dunes, shipping and defense installations. The whole force was covered by 125 P-38's. The Japanese lost an estimated 177 planes, most of them on the ground, 3 large merchant vessels, 3 destroyers, 43 small merchant vessels, and 70 harbor craft. Only five Allied planes were lost.\(^1\) Twelve RAAF bombers followed with an early morning attack on 13 October,\(^2\) and five days later more than 50 B-25's penetrated bad weather to destroy 81 enemy planes while claiming 39 as probably destroyed.\(^3\) The Japanese, who had continued to pour in reinforcements, lost more than 175 planes as the result of three later strikes from 23 to 25 October by 110 B-24's and 61 B-25's, of which only 6 failed to return. This persistent drain on the enemy's strength "will have left his air arm in a poor condition to face any future major operation."\(^4\) Throughout
this period South Pacific forces were striking steadily at enemy
fields in the Solomons and the Fifth Air Force was striking fields
in northern New Guinea.

The Allied Air Forces covered our Bougainville invasion with
heavy attacks on Rabaul from 2 to 11 November. In spite of losses
from the October strikes, the Japanese continued to pour reinforce-
ments into Rabaul. Reconnaissance on 1 November revealed seven des-
troyers and about 200,000 tons of other shipping in Blanche Bay. Air
strength had been rebuilt to an estimated 287 planes, 171 of them
being fighters. 5 Shipping was the main target of the 75 B-25's that
reached Rabaul with 90 escorting B-26's on 2 November. General Keney
and ordered a masked attack with 1,000-pound bombs. Results were
crimesently satisfactory. One observer reported that complete chaos
and wild pandemonium reigned over Rabaul as the medium swept in to
strike and bomb their targets. 6 Two destroyers, a destroyer leader,
6 merchant vessels, 2 freighters, and 4 tankers were reported sunk;
3 heavy cruisers, 2 destroyers, 7 medium merchant vessels, and 2 tankers
were damaged. Japanese plane losses were 74 fighters and 10 other airc-
craft destroyed, and 23 fighters probably destroyed. Our own losses,
primarily from intense antiaircraft fire, were 10 B-25's and 9 B-33's. 7

General George C. Marshall, congratulating the Fifth Air Force for
this achievement, called the strike a "magnificent performance." 8

This anti-shipping assault of 2 November was followed by other
heavy attacks on Rabaul. On the night of 2-3 November, 8 of 13 AAF
Seaforts reached Zorera to bomb runways. Carrier planes and Fifth Air Force B-34's cooperated in a midday attack on 5 November. Taking off from South Pacific carriers, 23 Avenger torpedo bombers and 22 Dauntless dive-bombers, covered by 52 Hellcats, attacked shipping. They scored hits on 9 enemy naval vessels, shot down 23 fighters and one bomber, and probably destroyed 21 fighters and one bomber at a cost of 7 planes. The naval aircraft had hardly cleared the area than 27 B-24's of the 43d Bombardment Group, with 23 P-38's covering, attacked Rabaul Township with 28 tons of 1,000-pound bombs. The P-38 escort pilots saw some 20 to 30 Zeke's in the air but the enemy refused to fight. 10 That night seven Seaforts bombed Wunakanau and scored a possible hit on a heavy cruiser in Simpson Harbor. 11 The 90th Bombardment Group hit Engoko airbase with 26 B-24's at midday on 7 November and dropped 167 x 1,000-lb. bombs from altitudes of 30,000 feet and above, while 60 P-38's provided high and low cover. Of more than 50 Zeke's and Oscars that intercepted, 20 were claimed as destroyed, 9 as probables, and 4 damaged. The B-24's, in addition to scoring more than half of these victories, claimed 9 bombers and 5 fighters destroyed on the ground. 12 On night attacks from 9 to 11 November, 16 Seaforts bombed Wunakanau airbase and 13 B-24's hit Laderai. 13 Still the Japanese continued to pour in planes and vessels. Photographs on 10 November showed 147 fighters and 41 bombers on Wunakanau and Laderai airbases, while 30 float planes, 2 light cruisers, 12 destroyers, 5 submarines, and 4 medium merchant vessels were in
Simpson Harbor. Coordinated attacks by the Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces and carrier planes endeavored to reduce this enemy strength on 11 November. The 43d and 90th Bombardment Groups were to bomb Lekunai airdrome early in the morning, but because of bad weather all but 13 B-24's were called back to Port Moresby. The 64th Bombardment Squadron's 12 planes, with one of the 65th Squadron, bombed Lekunai from 0330 to 0355, encountering only two to three night fighters. Before noon, 43 Thirteenth Air Force B-24's, and a naval force of 71 Avengers, 72 Dauntless dive-bombers, and 120 Hellcats struck at shipping 40 miles to the northeast. Thirty-one enemy fighters were shot down for a loss of 13 m of six planes from all causes. The Japns, moved into action, retaliated in the afternoon with a strong attack on our carriers lying off Bougainville. Allied land and carrier-based fighters intercepted and destroyed 35 fighters and bombers for the loss of five fighters. Allied bombing of Rabaul dropped off sharply after this blow and counterblow. Australian components of the Allied Air Forces bombed the Lekunai air-drome and Simpson Harbor with 32 Beauforts in night attacks on the 3d and 4th. On 7 December, 26 Beauforts bombed Zorop air-drome in New Ireland, but Rabaul escaped further destruction until the RAAF renewed its assaults a week later in preparation for the invasion of Aisa.

During this period of action from 13 October to 7 December 1943, the Japanese are reported to have lost at least 681 planes destroyed and 83 probably destroyed for the loss of 56 Allied fighters and
bombers. Destruction of enemy merchant and naval vessels, while by
no means sufficient to be considered disastrous, was at least tem-
porarily crippling. Damage, revetments, defense installations, and
supply dumps were badly damaged; wharves and jetties along the water-
front had been razed; damaged vessels and burned-out bulkers were
hazards to navigation in Blanche Bay. The comparatively light enemy
air raids against our New Britain beachheads in December and the
critical supply situation of the defending enemy troops may be attri-
buted in large measure to this partial neutralization of Salamau.

Air attacks on the South of New Britain,
1 November-12 December 1943

The south coast of New Britain had been under attack by Allied
forces since the spring of 1943 in order to disrupt supply movements
deciding the Cassata airfield inoperational.

These attacks increased as South Pacific forces moved northward through the Solomons,
and they became especially heavy toward the end of November. Cassata
airfield, located on a small peninsula, was the principal target on
the south coast. Some eight miles to the east lay King King Planta-
tion, and 10 miles further east was Lindenhalten Plantation. These
plantations contained bivouac areas and supply dumps for central New
Britain and were staging points on large supply routes. Elsewhere
along the coast, especially at Jonquiler Bay, Waterfall Bay and Hide
Bay, shipping offered lucrative targets from time to time. None of
these areas was strongly defended by antiaircraft weapons, nor did
our bombers encounter much opposition from intercepting fighters.

Allied air attacks on Camata were relatively light, while Rabaul was receiving so much attention. During the period from 12 October to 10 November, approximately 40 tons of bombs hit dump areas around the aerodrome. Except for occasional Fifth Air Force B-24's on reconnaissance, RAAF Boston, Bostons, and P-40's carried on these harassing strikes. Beaufighters, P-40's, and A-20's searched the coast more or less regularly for shipping and sometimes sank a few targets. On 15 November, the 90th Bombardment Squadron sent nine B-25's with an escort of 19 RAAF P-40's to bomb, strafe and photograph the area from Camata to Lindenfahen Plantation. RAAF P-40's hit the Camata dumps on 17 November, then the Fifth Air Force struck with the heaviest attack of the war on Camata and the two plantations. In four strikes from 20 to 24 November, 135 B-24's and 63 B-25's dropped more than 400 tons on these targets. Since the directive to abandon a landing at Camata in favor of Arawe was not issued until 23 November, the nature of targets attacked indicated that air power was preparing the way for an invasion. Supply dumps, personnel on the plantations, and the defenses at Camata and Agar islands off the coast were the principal targets, while the airstrip, unserviceable from previous bombardment, received only slight attention.

After these four B-24 strikes, the Camata area escaped heavy punishment until the middle of December. In the meantime, RAAF fighters and light bombers ranged almost daily along the coast to
strafe villages, barges, and other targets. B-24s and P-40's made three bombing attacks on the Casabat dumps. On 6 December, 18 B-25's of the 315th Bombardment Group attacked the Aruwe Islands 85 miles west of Casabat as an alternate target for Borgen Bay, and two days later six A-20's bomb Cape Zucks on Aruwe Peninsula.

Allied A2F attacks on the north coast of New Britain revealed a determination to cause maximum destruction to Japanese supply dumps, coastal installations, airfields, and shipping from Cape Zucks to the western end of the island. Airstrips at Cape Gloucester, Balusa, and Cape Zucks were practically the only targets of consequence that were not concealed by jungle growth or camouflage. Crews sometimes felt that their efforts were accomplishing little beyond punching holes in humu grasslands, shattering a few trees, or spraying machine-gun bullets through dense foliage in hope that a target might be found. Damage from strafing was difficult or impossible to assess, even when tracers were seen to hit among such targets as camouflaged targets; the results of bombing could be gauged at only, except when photographs offered more positive evidence.

Airdromes at Cape Gloucester and Cape Zucks, supply dumps on the west and northwest coasts, and barge hideouts along the north coast were attacked frequently in October. These strikes, rarely in squadron strength, generally were executed by one to eight planes. There was a flurry of activity on 13-14 October when more than 30 B-24's bombed the airstrodes and 75 B-25's bombed and strafed the west
coast. RAAF Beauforts also attacked Kokoda in October. 29

Since the Allied Air Force was primarily involved in attacking
Folaul and points in New Guinea early in November, central and western
New Britain enjoyed comparative immunity. When bombing missions were
renewed against these areas, supply dumps and defensive installations
in the Cape Gloucester-Borgen Bay area received most of the 1,341
tons dropped from 19 November to 15 December 1943 (see Appendix No. 3).
The emphasis upon destruction of supplies resulted from a belief that
the northwest coast was a principal staging point on the barge route
from Folaul to the Pal Coast of New Guinea. 30 One of the dump areas
was located among trees near the twin air strips at Cape Gloucester,
where there was also a concentration of antiaircraft defenses. The
airplane itself was inoperational most of the time, although the enemy
carried on repair work sufficient to permit a few fighters and bombers
to use the strips from time to time. 31

Bombardment and strafing of the northwest coast was likewise in-
tended to interfere with the arrival of reinforcements at Cape
Gloucester. The Japanese were reported to be sending merchant vessels
from Folaul to Coconut Island, 75 miles north of Borgen Bay, and then
running barges loaded with men and supplies from Coconut to Borgen
Bay at night. 32 This traffic was under attack frequently, with B-25
strafers (C-1's and B-1's) expending thousands of rounds of machine-
gun ammunition after bombing selected targets. The strike of 2
December, then the 38th and 345th Bombardment Groups sent out 60 B-25's,
may be taken as an example. The medium bomb and strafed suspected
supply dumps and barge hideouts from Cape Gloucester to a point well
east of Borgen Bay.33

Preparatory Air Bombardment for the Arawe Diversion

Preliminary air bombardment in preparation for the Arawe landing
was withheld until 13 December in order to obtain tactical surprise.34
Even then the first strike was against Lindenhalen and Ring Ring
Plantations, far to the east of Cape Merkus, and against islands
near Kasoita. Two squadrons of the 380th Bombardment Group (H), mak-
ing their first attack against New Britain, set out with the 43d
Group from Dobodura to bomb the Hochin airfield. The P-38 escort
shot down four of seven enemy fighters on coastal patrol as the forma-
tion approached the south coast of New Britain. Since the Hochin
airfield was closed in, the 34 2-21's dropped their 1,000-pound bombs
on Lindenhalen Plantation.35 Early in the afternoon 23 2-26's bombed
and strafed the same target at minimum altitude.36 At about the same
time, a group of heavy bombers and a group of mediums attacked Ring
Ring Plantation and Kasoita.37 Results, as usual, were undetermined.

Analu Plantation, Milelo Island, and Kasoita airstrip were
targets for the Fifth Air Force on 14 December. The seven bombard-
ment groups flew 273 sorties to drop more than 300 tons of bombs in
one of the heaviest attacks in the theater to that time. Kasoita was
assigned to the 23d Group which, on the whole, made a poor showing.
Bombing from altitudes of 8,000 to 10,800 feet, the 9 2-26's and 31 2-25's dropped 120 x 1,000-lb. bombs, of which about 30 hit the runway. Nevertheless, sufficient damage was done to guarantee that no enemy planes would take off from Goodenough to attack our troops at Arua on 2-day. Filele Island, from which Japanese coastal guns might fire on the invasion force, was hit by 25 2-24's and 26 2-25's with 134 tons of bombs. Analit Plantation, which covers most of Arua Peninsula, was the target for 305 tons dropped by 72 2-24's, 62 2-25's, and 71 A-20's. The 3d, 43d, and 300th Bombardment Groups flew two missions each from Dobodura to Analit Plantation during the day. When the last bombers cleared Arua in the afternoon, the Fifth Air Force had completed a remarkable series of strikes without losing a single plane.

These very heavy attacks against the south coast of New Britain must have been subjected to suspicious appraisement by the Japanese high command and cannot have failed to increase an apprehension already evidenced ugly in the recent expansion of troops in western New Britain. Nevertheless, Allied bombardment of western New Britain had been distributed in such a way that the enemy, while surely suspecting that an invasion was imminent, would be unable to forecast its exact location.

2-day at Arua, 15 December 1943.

The DIvision Task Force, commanded by Brig. Gen. Julian V. Cunningham, embarked at Goodenough Island while the Fifth Air Force
was preparing the way with its heavy attacks. The total strength of the 118th Cavalry Regiment (reinforced) was about 3,000 men, of which 1,700 were to make the initial landings. Troop A, 1st Squadron, was to land at 0630 (13 minutes 1 hour) at Utingulu, then advance westward toward Cape Helms at E-hour to cut off enemy troops who might be retreating from Aalut Plantation. Troop D was to land on Filelo Island, at the same time that Troop A reached Utingulu, to secure the island and to prevent interference with the landing from that point. The main landing was to be by the 2d Squadron (reinforced) at Young Woman Beach north of Cape Helms. 44

The air plan for 2-day at Aruro—which was so designated in order to avoid confusion with 3-day at Borgen Bay—provided for bombardment of Cape Gloucester, fighter cover for troops and the Aruro beachhead, and sweeps along the coast of New Britain, and an RJP strike at Leliki airstrip the night of 15-16 December, and also made eight squadrons available for the immediate aid of the DIRECTOR force. Of these eight squadrons, one squadron of L-35 attack bombers was to be on air alert from 0315 to 0330; two of A-20's were to be on ground alert at Torokina from 0300 to 1600; and five heavy squadrons of the 436 and 360th Bomb Groups were to be on ground alert at Bandon from 0300 to 1000 (see Appendix No. 4). More extensive air activity would depend upon enemy air and ground opposition at Aruro.

The convoy, escorted by destroyers, left Goodenough Island at midnight on 15 December and reached the invasion area before dawn on 16 December, apparently without having been detected by the enemy.
Troop A disembar from the U.S.S. Zaun (LSD No. 13) into 15 LCI's (landing craft, rubber) at 0530 and moved toward Utinjima. When the rubber boats were about 100 yards off shore, rifles, machine guns, and a dual-purpose antiaircraft gun opened up with disastrous results. All but three of the vulnerable boats were sunk with a loss of 13 killed, 4 missing, and 17 wounded. The enemy firing went on for 20 minutes; then a destroyer silenced it while the Navy rescued the survivors. This incident was significant to the Fifth Air Force only because it was called upon to rescue Troop A which had lost all of its equipment in the rubber-boat fiasco. Troop B met little opposition in accomplishing its mission on Pikeloa Island.

The main force, in the meantime, had departed from LSD No. 2 about 8 miles off Wawre Nuiva Beach at 0515. Reefs and misunderstanding of patrol fire support schedules delayed the landing for nearly an hour. Destroyers shelled the beach with about 1,600 3-inch shells and two Late Isla down a rocket barrage. Landing craft bearing the 24 Scouts were still organizing in the transport area when 9 T-26E-1's, of the 18th Bombardment Sq., took off from Dobosham at 0516 by the aid of Jeep lights. Arriving singly at the rendezvous point, some 150 miles away, shortly before 0600, the attack bombers formed V's of three and circled southwest of the convoy awaiting orders to attack. At 0712 the controller ordered one flight to attack a target just north of Cape Tiron. The order was misunderstood and five T-26E's, instead of three, dropped 10 x 500-1B's, 70 for and strafed with 2,000...
rounds of .50-caliber ammunition. Naval fire support schedules apparently were revised somewhat, for destroyers continued shelling the beaches during the air strike. 50

The 2d Squadron, 116th Cavalry, encountered little opposition in driving up the Arawe Peninsula to the final objective line, which was reached at 1430. 51 The Fifth Air Force, therefore, had no calls to aid the advance. Seven B-25's, 601st Bombardment Squadron, arrived from Dobodura at 0735 under orders to drop on alert for two hours. The landing force commander requested that the squadron fly over the beach to report on progress, then release the squadron to attack Dingo Village. 52

Although there were no calls for air strikes on 2-day, the Fifth Air Force was prepared to deliver them. The Air Liaison Party that landed with the 2d Squadron set up its radio and within 30 minutes had established contact with Allied Force Headquarters, the First Air Task Force, and Seventh Fifth Air Force. This was the only communication channel from the beachhead for 24 hours. 53

The Jaymore air force was not idle while this invasion of New Britain was progressing so favorably for the Allies. An enemy reconnaissance plane flew over Arawe at 0700 and engaged. 54 There were no Allied fighters in the area since the first patrol, consisting of 9 P-53's, had taken off from Dobodura at 0635 and could not have reached the convoy area much before 0715. A Japanese radio warning to Island could have been received in time to prepare a mission to
attack the Allied convoy lying off Arawe within two hours of the time when it was sighted. Apparently that is what happened. One flight out of 12 P-39's, 431st Fighter Sq., was attacked by 12 Zekes at about 0645 while on patrol west of Bishop Village. The P-39's took evasive action to avoid contact.\(^5\) Fifteen minutes later, at 0900, from 30 to 40 Zekes and Zekes strafed and bombèd shipping and the beachhead.\(^5\) Apparently the only opposition to this attack came from ground and naval fire which shot down two enemy planes. One LCV was destroyed.\(^5\) The attacking force had struck when there were 15 P-39's in the area; 16 F-47's were on their way from Einschheid at 0945, and 2 F-65's were scrambled at Dobolaza at 0910.\(^6\) The enemy escaped without encountering these planes. During the day there were 33 F-65's and 46 P-47's on patrol over Arawe. The Japanese sent out 70 or 80 fighters and dive-bombers, of which three were lost.\(^6\)

**Air-Ground Cooperation, 16 December 1943-February 1944**

Ground action at Arawe resolved itself, for the most part, into a series of patrol actions after 3-day. The few enemy attacks against the LFR were rarely carried out by more than 50 men.\(^6\) Although enemy reinforcements were expected to move into the area, especially as far as the Pulie River to prevent expansion of the beachhead, aerial reconnaissance by six A-20's on 16 December revealed no Japanese movements.\(^6\) Three days later 21 A-20's bombed and strafed the coastal track west of the Pulie River.\(^6\) That night, 19-20 December, the enemy was reported to have landed troops which were supposed to be between the
Sigal and Pulic Rivers. Acting on this report, the First Air Task Force sent 19 A-20C’s to attack. Concealing foliage was so thick that crews could see no results from their bombing and strafing on 20 December.\(^2^4\)

An enemy force of unknown strength was, nevertheless, working in toward Arava. Our advanced patrols were driven back on 21 December, and on the 23rd about 100 Japanese struck south from Dimaop, isolated the Allied CP at Arua on the coast, and forced two patrols to fall east to Utingalu. These enemy troops were thought to be the advance party of a larger unit at Caseta.\(^6^5\) In response to a request for aid, the 3d Bombardment Group sent 17 A-20C’s to attack Japanese troops who were reported to be on the trail between Dimaop and the mouth of the Pulic River. The Sigal River was designated as the bomb line.

When the 80th Squadron’s eight A-20’s arrived over Arava, the ground station sent a radio request to change the target. The enemy was now located on the track from Utingalu, where the Cavalry had two patrols holding a defensive line, east to Arave airstrip. The acting flight leader attacked accordingly at about 1400. In the midst of the bomb run the flight leader, who had been delayed in taking off at Doedura, arrived and frantically ordered the attack stopped since the target was well within the bomb line. Nine more A-20C’s arrived at 1415 and attacked the trail leading to Dimaop.\(^6^6\)

Apparently neither the air strikes nor the two concentrations of artillery fire on the trail east of Utingalu broke up the Japanese
threat. The patrols were ordered back from Utingalu to the main line at the east end of Arolut Plantation at 1600, and General Cunningham called for reinforcements. General Krueger sent Company G, 153rd Infantry, to Arawe by PT boats and the rest of the 3d Battalion in LCT's from Cape Gresin. Thus strengthened, the DIRECTOR Task Force was content to hold its positions. The enemy set up outposts in front of the LCR and resisted all efforts to dislodge them.

The Fifth Air Force struck a variety of targets in the Arawe area during the next three weeks, although its principal effort was made in cooperation with the BAG-RANGER Task Force at Borgen Bay. Enemy traffic along the coast and on the rivers suffered from attacks by Allied planes. Suspected enemy positions along the coast west of Arawe to Cape Dudingon, at Gilmit, and north on the Itni River were attacked by P-38's of the 32d Reconnaissance Sq. Garuina's inactive state was guaranteed by BML attacks with Beauforts, Venneances, and P-39's. Barges on the Pulic River, dumps and troops near Dianzy, and enemy defenses near Utingalu were attacked by SB bombing and strafing sorties from 27 December 1943 to 16 January 1944.

Enemy gun positions at the east end of Arolut Plantation were attacked by 15 A-20's on 7 January. Ground troops were to mark the target with smoke but failed to do so until after the bombing began. As the first flight started to peel off for its initial pass, two Allied naval vessels opened fire from a distance of about two miles. The A-20 pilots did not have the radio frequency of either ground or naval stations. Allied barges opened fire when the second flight of
The air strike occurred on 16 January when General Cunningham attacked to eliminate the Japanese block extending northwest from Utinga. At about 0630, 12 B-24's dropped 125 of 1,000-lb. bombs in the designated target, after which 20 P-38's came in to bomb and strafe at minimal altitude. Artillery and mortar barrages followed these air strikes, then a company of light tanks spearheaded an infantry attack that drove the enemy back nearly a mile from the main line of resistance. By this time the AILINGER Task Force had captured key positions east of Borgen Bay and the enemy was giving up western New Britain. Allied planes roamed at will over the jungle and mountain trails to attack targets of opportunity but rarely found an objective of any importance. Patrols from Arawe met only slight opposition in pushing west toward Milne where, early in February, they made contact with a Marine group from Cape Gloucester.

Practically no ground combat occurred in the Arawe sector after this meeting at Milne. The enemy withdrew or his fortune declined along the north coast. Patrols of the 106th Infantry occupied Saumata airfield on 17 March and on the following day reported Lindenbaum Plantation free of Japanese troops. These positions were held essentially unchanged until 3 June 1944, when the 106th Infantry
Regiment, 40th Division, relieved the original DIRECTOR Task Force.

**Fighter Cover and Enemy Air at Arzew**

The First Air Task Force provided fighter cover for the Arzew area from squadrons based at Babodura and Finschhafen. The number of sorties flown by these squadrons varied from 61 to 97 daily for the period 18-31 December, except on the 19th when bad weather canceled scheduled patrols. This period likewise coincided with the enemy's heaviest effort against the beachhead, although the Japanese put up less than one-half the number of sorties expected. This fighter protection was especially important at Arzew since no 50-mm. antiaircraft guns arrived until the end of January and searchlights were received even later. Automatic weapons were not effective during darkness without the searchlights, and during daylight raids the enemy planes remained out of range.

The Japanese were fortunate in their 5-day bombing attack which, while ineffective, succeeded in avoiding most of our patrolling fighters. Subsequent enemy daylight raids on Arzew met with such heavy losses that they were practically abandoned by the end of December. On 10 December the first enemy attack came early in the afternoon when 25 T-33's of the 43rd and 432d Squadrons were on patrol. The Arzew controller gave them a plot of enemy bombers over Arzew Island at about 1745, ten minutes later the T-33's intercepted 7 to 9 Betty's, escorted by 30 to 35 Silver Fish and Zeros, and destroyed
10 planes without loss to themselves. While this flight was in progress, 3 P-47's, 34th Fighter Sq., took off from March Field.

This flight was still patrolling when the controller called in another plot. At 16:15 the P-47 pilots sighted one kite and 12 to 15 Zeke's, started from sea level to 18,000 feet, headed for land. While the first flight of 6 P-47's destroyed 2 Zeke's and the kite, 7 more P-47's arrived and added 2 Zeke's to the total destroyed. The day's effort cost the enemy 10 aircraft destroyed and 4 probably destroyed.

Spandic but ineffective attacks continued through the night. During the morning of 17 December, 6 P-47's, 31st Fighter Sq., destroyed 1 Yaka and 2 Ocr's out of a total force of 40 planes.

In these early encounters, enemy fighter pilots displayed considerable skill and aggressiveness. This was especially true on 13 December when 16 P-52's, 436th Fighter Sq., jumped 10 to 15 Zeke's, caused and caused at daylight. The P-52's dove through the enemy fighters and were in turn jumped by about 10 fighter, which had been hiding in a cumulus cloud. Definitely on the defensive and outnumbered, the P-52's destroyed only three of the enemy while losing two P-52's. One of them in a collision.

The consistent appearance of Japanese planes over Arava, and their direction of flight, indicated that they were coming from land as well as Rabaul. Heavy Allied attacks on Cape Gloucester and the Aran invasion would be sufficient reasons for renewed use of the landing field. To stop this activity, the 33d Bombardment Sq.
dropped nearly 42 tons of 1,000-pound bombs on that target on 19 December. As Japanese efforts against Arave continued with little apparent change resulting from the heavy bombing. On 21 December, our fighters destroyed 19 and probably destroyed 6 of approximately 35 fighters and bombers attempting to attack Arave. The greatest activity occurred at about 1700 when an estimated 25 Zeke and 25 Vals were in the area. A patrol of 7 P-47’s, 3493 Fighter Sq., shot down 7 Vals and claimed 4 probably in spite of what may have been a clever Japanese trick: "The enemy assured the frequency, code name, and phrasing of the jamming controller (in flawless English) and gave false directions to our flight and caused considerable confusion even on the ground stations." Our loss for the day was one P-47 shot down by friendly antiaircraft fire. Arave was spared further heavy daylight raids until 27 December when the enemy made his last significant strike at the southwest coast. Some 2 to 10 Jap dive-bombed PT boats while 40 to 50 Zeke, Oscar and Mary covered. This force lost 9 Vals and 25 fighters destroyed by our patrolling P-47’s.

After this attack of 27 December, Japanese air activity at Arave fell off sharply. Thence from 15 to 31 December, there were 210 sorties in 9 dry and 27 night raids, only 95 sorties were reported from 1 January to 10 February in 19 dry and 22 night attacks. The night attacks were harassing, caused little damage, and were generally carried out by one to three medium bombers. Allied patrols likewise
fell off sharply after 3 January 1944 when 6 fighters were over Arawe during the day. Part of this activity was undertaken to cover shipping passage through to reinforce the Saipan landing.

Air Supply at Saipan

As part of the preparation for Operation LEATHERNECK, Alaco Force organized a Provisional Air Supply Company of 250 officers and men. This company included ordinance and medical personnel although most of the men were drawn from the 98th Field Artillery Battalion (Para), the 16th Quartermaster Squadron, and the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment. The company thus had a variety of skills represented which would insure proper packing and loading of supplies.

Troop A, 117th Cavalry Regiment, lost all of its equipment in the disastrous attempt to land at Utinapul on 2-day. Many of the survivors had nothing except incomplete clothing when they were rescued and landed at House Fireman Beach. The troop required complete outfitting with arms, ammunition, clothing, and equipment. General Cunningham sent a radio message at 0900 on 18 December to Alaco Force Headquarters requesting these items plus 15% overage. The Provisional Air Supply Company at Dobodura loaded the supplies, weighing nearly 10 tons, into 6 C-47's, then transferred them to 19 C-53's and one C-17 because of danger from Japanese planes. About two hours, from 1600 to 1800 on 16 December, were required to complete the drop at Asalut Plantation. Nearly all of the clothing and equipment and all of the ordnance were recovered. Troop A was ready for combat by 17 December, several days
Air supply service operated with remarkable speed. On 19 December a message was received at 2105 from General Cunningham requesting 300 anti-personnel mines. A C-17 sent by the First Air Task Force to the Cro Ray depot, arrived at 0630 on 20 December, was loaded at 0730, and completed its drop of 304 mines at 0930. All of the mines were serviceable. Three C-17's, one of which made two sorties, dropped 76,000 sand bags, 17,000 yards of barbed wire, and hundreds of pickets at Arapa on 23 and 29 December; then the DIKES Task Force was strengthening its main line of resistance. These examples illustrate the importance of air supply, not only in this specific campaign but also in any difficult combat conditions where normal surface methods are inadequate.

The mine operation was clearly one of the major steps in preparation for the Borgen Bay invasion. Neutralization of Rabaul, bombardment of the New Britain coasts, and heavy strikes at Gona and Arapa prepared the way. Then the DIKES Task Force went ashore on the Arapa Peninsula, the Allied Air Forces were prepared to deliver far greater aid than was required. Throughout the operation air and ground units worked together closely, although the nature of the terrain, lack of targets, and weakness of enemy air attacks relegated the Allied Air Forces to a minor role after 2-day.
Chapter III

CONQUEST OF NEW BRITAIN PEKH CAPE GLOUCESTER TO TALASEA

Immediately after EAGLE Task Force went ashore at Arua, members of the Fifth Air Force attacked the northwest coast in preparation for the major landing. This preparation went on for 11 days. Then the EAGLE/NEP Task Force landed at Borgen Bay, established a beachhead, and began the work of clearing Japanese troops from the western portion of New Britain. Operation DISARM may be considered as having been completed when patrols from the two task forces established contact on 10 February 1944. This somewhat arbitrary date is not entirely satisfactory, since the EAGLE/NEP Task Force already was engaged in Operation DEFEAT, a series of log-rolling attacks that carried the Marines to Talasea by 6 March. During this advance, the small force on the north coast, air operations over New Britain decreased almost to the vanishing point except for continued assaults upon Rabaul by South Pacific forces. The satisfactory progress of land operations on New Britain, together with a lack of suitable targets west of Rabaul, gradually during January and February released the Fifth Air Force for strikes against New Guinea and the Admiralty Islands.

Preparatory Air Bombardment for EAGLE/NEP

After the heavy attacks on the south coast on 13 and 14 December 1943 in preparation for the Arua invasion, Fifth Air Force bombers
returned to intensive attacks on northwestern New Britain. It is
surely an exaggeration to state that the coast and inland defenders
from Borgen Bay to Seg Cay were saturated with bombs and sprayed with
machine gun ammunition. Targets were essentially the same as those
that had been under almost daily attack since 29 November: the air-
strips, supply dumps, and defences of Cape Gloucester; defences and
dumps around the shores of Borgen Bay; possible defensive works at
Tamali; and villages, trails, and the No-Flying airframe.  

Three to seven bombardment groups, with adequate fighter cover,
participated in these attacks from 15 to 25 December. The lowest
number of sorties for the period occurred on the 16th and 17th when
53 bombers were on each day; the highest number was on 24 December
when seven groups flew 280 bomber sorties. In the 11-day period there
were 1,307 effective bomber sorties which dropped more than 2,234
tons of bombs without losing a plane (see Appendix No. 7). There was
no rest for the Japs. Daylight attacks were followed by nightly
airstrikes during which B-26's dinkled bombs, grenades, and beer
cottles over the bivouac areas to keep the enemy under continuous
blackout and mental strain.  

Accuracy of bombing was difficult to estimate. The heavy bombers
usually attacked at altitudes of 7,000 to 10,000 feet, while B-25's
and A-20's made most of their runs at minimum altitude. Cloud cover
often prevented observation, but even on clear days crews could see
little except bomb bursts. On 26 December, for example, the 433 Group
was held on alert at Eboreux until 1000, then was sent to attack the
Cape Gloucester dumps. The target was covered by haze and showers
which made an accurate statement of results impossible. The 90th
Group sent two squadrons to strike Kureg Hill with 2,000-pound bombs
from 10,000 feet; one squadron claimed 8 hits out of 24, the other
claimed 23 out of 24. Another squadron of the same group claimed
11 hits from 24 x 2,000-lb. bombs directed toward No. 2 strip at Cape
Gloucester, while the fourth squadron reported dropping its entire
load of 24 x 2,000-lb. bombs on the west end of the target.

Kureg Hill, a defensive position near Siland Point which domi-
nated the landing beaches at Borgin Bay, was a favored target. Covered
with land over which could not be seen, it stood out prominently in the relatively level mid-island area of the coast.

Gun positions near the Gloucester airstrips, while not easily seen
from the air, were much more satisfactory targets than dumps located
in the timbered area. On 17 December the 90th Group dropped 30 x
2,000-lb. bombs on the gun positions with fairly satisfactory results.

Many bombing on and near the Gloucester strips did not prevent the
enemy from attempting to use one of them. Two 3,000-mirror took
till fire: No. 2 strip on 17 December, so the next day the 90th Group
bombed the strip with 18 x 1,000-lb. bombs. The 22d Group dropped
66 tons of 500-lb. bombs on nearby Camp areas, and the 380th and 43d
Groups hit Cape Toccoa airstrip with 72 x 1,000-lb. bombs. Neither
field was reported as operational thereafter, although the Japanese
did not completely abandon Toccoa for several weeks.
The tempo of bombing in the Cape Gloucester area increased considerably on 19 December when the two squadrons of the 563rd Group and three of the 435th Group flew dual missions from Dobodura. The 435th Group flew double missions on the 21st, 22nd, 23rd, and 25th, a situation not at all pleasing to that unit: "In the midst of moving, constructing, new camp, and attempting to carry on maintenance of the planes for twice the number of missions flown previously," the 65th Squadron reported, "the strength of the ground men has been taxed beyond the breaking point. They must be replaced before the entire maintenance crumbles." 10 Ground crew were doing well in spite of this complaint, since 10 of the 65th Squadron's 13 B-24's were ready for combat on 19 December. 11 The 435th Squadron registered a similar complaint, protesting that with a shortage of 27 ground personnel, the men were being asked to exert themselves beyond the point where efficiency could be expected. Only seven of the squadron's 13 B-24's were ready for combat on 19 December. 12 These protests, which are typical of many that were registered, were fully justified; but from 19 to 25 December, the 65th, 65th, and 435th Squadrons flew a total of 191 effective sorties against New Britain.

This period of preparation reached its climax on 24 and 25 December when 563rd Bomber sorties struck every important target from Russell to Target Hill. In these two days alone, 672 tons of bombs and 221,160 rounds of machine-gun ammunition were expended (see Appendix No. 3). On 24 December the 345th Group, which was to
particulate in preparation at the beaches on D-day, sent its B-24's through an attack over the assigned targets to rehearse procedure and timing. The beaches at Eniwetok and Majuro Bay and their defenders were the principal targets for 150 sorties on 15 December, while three squadrons bombed Marshalls in Micronesia to make that enemy base inoperational on D-day.

Major interest in air preparation for D-day centered on the constant and heavy attacks against northwestern New Britain, but air-droppers at Rabaul and in New Ireland and New Guinea also were bombed. South and Southwest Pacific forces struck every field from which enemy planes might take off to oppose the Borgen Bay landings. Attacks on Rabaul were resumed on the night of 15 December, after nearly a week of respite, when 37 RAAF Beauforts of the Allied Air Forces dropped about 33 tons on Rabaul airfields. On the following night, 17 Beauforts bombed Tanahmerah airfield. South Pacific forces then took over, with 25 fighters engaging the enemy over Rabaul on 17 December.

Two days later, 16 South Pacific B-24's, with an escort of 50 fighters, were engaged by 65 to 80 interceptors over the harbor area. RAAF Beauforts from the Southwest Pacific attacked Tanahmerah again on 30 December with 18 bombers dropping 17 tons of bombs. In two strikes on 24 and 25 December, in preparation for the Borgen Bay landing, 36 South Pacific B-24's bombed Eniwetok and Warkon. The enemy lost 56 fighters destroyed and 11 probably destroyed in attempting to repel these attacks.
The 5th Air Force protected our troops in New Britain from air attacks originating in New Guinea by almost daily strikes on enemy airfields beginning on 10 December. Medium bombers bore the brunt of this effort. Reconnaissance planes maintained close surveillance over Kavieng, which, with its two airfields and harbor, was a staging base for enemy aircraft and shipping en route to Rabaul. Most of the Allied attacks on this New Ireland base in the last 10 days of December were made by RAF Catalinas, which dropped nearly 80 tons of demolition, incendiary, and fragmentation bombs on shipping and the airfields in night strikes.

The full effects of this preparation cannot be assessed accurately. At Rabaul and Kavieng, and over the enemy's New Guinea fields, there was opposition from antiaircraft fire and Japanese fighters. Photographs could confirm damage reported to have been caused to runways, shipping, docks, and other installations. At Cape Gloucester, on the other hand, there was never any fighter opposition and only an occasional shot from ground troops. Cratered runways proved that the airstrip were not serviceable; a few direct hits were claimed on gun positions; optimistic crews expressed the belief at times that they had damaged or destroyed barges. Enemy documents and prisoners captured after D-day put an end to doubts about the effectiveness of the air preparation. Our prisoners taken at Cape Gloucester stated that the bombing caused about 1,000 casualties in his sector and heavily damaged docks and bivouacs. The unspectacular strafing and bombing of barge routes from Rabaul caused such destruction that troops in
western New Britain were placed on half rations. 24

Beaches and Landing Plan

The northwestern tip of New Britain, which was selected as the
site of the principal effort in Operation DERERRY, is a rough and
broken area almost entirely of volcanic origin. Two extinct vol-
canoes and one that is semi-active dominate the region and send out
sours that reach nearly to the coast on three sides. A comparatively
low valley east of these mountains runs south from Bergen Bay to the
south of the Itmi River. 25

There are few suitable landing beaches along the rocky coral-
fringed coast. It is true that on the west, from Cape Gloucester
south to Cape Kingfish, there is no fringing reef, the beach is of black
sand, and good anchorage is available offshore. 26 But as this strip
of beach was the logical place for a landing, the enemy had concentrated
his defenses along this coast—a factor that influenced the selection
of Bergen Bay as the invasion point. Most of the coast between Cape
Crossfire and Cape Gloucester is occupied by Bergen Bay. The beach
selected for the Marine landing were located northwest of Silingati
Point, 27 and were designated as Yellow 1 and Yellow 2. Interpretation
of aerial photos revealed a swamp area behind the beaches; and "In
parts of the coastal flat W of Silingati Point, one report states,
"there are areas which are said to be wet during the W’ northwest
monsoon season owing to the storm waters from the mountains spilling
over the flat land." 28 This fact seems to have been overlooked or
ignored by Marines who later complained that the sweep was entirely unexpected.

The landing plan required Combat Team C (7th Marines, reinforced) to seize and consolidate the beachhead, followed by Combat Team D (1st Marines, reinforced) which would pass through and attack north-west toward the airstrip. Landing Team 31 (2d Battalion, 1st Marines, reinforced) was to go ashore at H-hour on Green Beach near Isenali, about nine miles south-west of Cape Gloucester, to prevent the withdrawal or reinforcement of enemy troops in the Gloucester area. Combat Team A (5th Marines, reinforced) in task force reserve was to move from Milne Bay to Oro Bay on D-Day, then move on to Hanshawen prepared to execute air-land as required.\(^\text{20}\) D-Day was set for 26 December in order to permit convoys to approach during the dirt of the moon. H-hour was 0745, sufficiently late in the morning to permit air bombing and strafing and to give the Navy time for "sweeping the approaches through the reef."\(^\text{20}\)

Air operations on D-Day were designed to provide maximum assistance for the invasion. From 0700 to 0729, five squadrons of B-26's were to near line, by high-level bombing, all hostile defense positions covering the landing points. Naval bombardment was to cease at 0727. Then, from 0728 to 0743, three squadrons of mediums were to bomb and strafe the beaches while one squadron strafed and smoked Target Hill to deny observation from that point. Squadrons of A-20's, on air alert from 0745 to 0815, would attack previously designated
targets if not otherwise used; four squadrons of heavy bombers were
to drop 1,000-pound bombs on enemy defenses at Target Fidc east of
the airstrip from 0400 to 0815; and 15 minutes later four squadrons
of mediums were to bomb enemy positions east of the beachhead. Nine
squadrons of heavy bombers were to attack specified targets from 1400
to 1630 while Comet class B was landing troops. Other squadrons were
placed on alert and fighter cover was to be available from 0430 to 1830
(see Appendix No. 5). This plan required careful execution because
there was so little leeway allowed in timing, a large number of planes
would congest the area, and enemy air attacks might easily disrupt the
schedule.

Landings at Borgen Bay and Fidc. 22 December 1943

The invasion of New Britain was another occasion in which air,
naval, and land forces cooperated to secure an objective. Naval units
played the major role in the initial stages of the operation on D-Day: they carried the assault troops, provided pre-invasion bombardment,
and landed the invaders and their equipment. The air forces provided
fighter cover for the convoys and added the weight of air bombardment
to naval bombardment. Until radio communications could be
established ashore, air strikes were controlled from aboard the head-
quarters ship. Fire control passed to ground stations operated by Air
Liaison Parties and the fighter control squadron as soon as the tactical
situation permitted these units to begin their functions on land.

Task Force 76 carrying the BANDIT WEST troops sailed out of Buna
Harbor at 0300 on 25 December, escorted by cruisers and destroyers.
Eighth Air Force fighters provided protective cover as the ships moved along the New Guinea coast. 102's from Henderson joined the convoy off Cape Croatan, vessels scheduled to land on the afternoon of Dec 9. 41 pulled away to join the second echelon, and the group headed for Green Beach sailed off toward New Guinea after darkers under destroyer escort. 81

The enemy knew that the convoy was underway but did not know its destination. An enemy patrol aircraft reported it on 25 December then it passed Cape Hedo that evening. A reconnaissance plane took another east of the convoy three hours later. The enemy's reconnaissance plane also saw the landing at Gloucester with a complete surprise. It was contradicted by these facts and other sources which state: "Recently captured documents indicate that a landing was expected on Kasi Bay in the Bismark Archipelago, and troops from other localities had been concentrated to meet this expected attack. 82

Naval and air beach preparation went off as scheduled with almost perfect coordination. Cruisers and destroyers laid down their fire on targets as far east as the airfield and east to Akira Village. 83 Many bombers were circling over Chita Island when flak-boat of naval gunfire began the pre-invasion bombardment. Ceiling and visibility were unlimited and a bombardment of the first of 25 B-24's moved over Target Hill and Sillan Point at 10,500 feet. Two squadrons dropped 67 tons of bombs on Target Hill, and three squadrons went on to drop 45 tons..."
on an area 2,000 feet south of the hill, ... target described as "jungle completely surrounded by jungle," which contained enemy defense positions. Naval fire ceased at 0720 and the 3-21's were leaving the area when 35 5-15's, 36th Bombardment Group, began the first of their three runs over Yellow Beach and Target Hill. A few ineffective shots were fired at the Mitchells as they flew over the naval vessels. The 300th Squadron blanketed Target Hill with 120 x 100-lb. white phosphorous bombs. A joint southeast breeze carried the smoke over the beachers 3,000 yards out to sea where it covered approach lanes used by landing craft. Strafing ceased at 0740 when the first wave of landing boats were a short distance off shore, then an 101 fired a barrage of 203 x .5-inch rockets. All accounts agree that this beach preparation was nearly perfect in timing and coordination, and that "the enemy occupying positions along the beaches did not have time to recover from the shock of the supporting fire and reorganize to repulse the assault troops."

Landing operations proceeded as scheduled. The 7th Marines (Combat Team C) began to go ashore at 0720 without opposition at the beach. While a beachhead was being organized, the last Marine (Combat Team B) landed before 0800 and started to advance west toward the airfield. The choice of beaches could not have been better, since they were "the only beaches on the north coast which were not defended in considerable strength by pillboxes and trenches...." Abandoned guns, rifles, and fragments testified to the effectiveness of naval and air preparation. The A-20's on alert 10 miles north of Jope
Gunsfire since 0745 received no call for aid from the Navy control ship. Upon completion of its 80-minute alert, each of the three squadrons bombèd and strafèd Target Ridge east of the airfields. The 90th Bombardment Group attacked Target Ridge with 28 B-24's a few minutes after the last squadron of A-20's left. There were no more bombing and strafing strikes in the beachhead area; but shortly before 1100, the 82nd Group strafèd and bombed the Ushunagat-Fujioka coast area southwest of Cape Gloucester (see Appendix No. 6).

The 7th Marines had planned to use one battalion to aid the 1st Marines in their advance toward the airfields; but, upon learning from captured documents that a force of 5,000 or more enemy troops was in the Zorogens area, General Rupertus ordered the entire combat team to remain in the beachhead. The 1st Marines therefore delayed their advance to the west and set up a defensive perimeter. In the meantime, aided materially by the early morning bombing, the 7th Marines captured Target Hill and a large supply dump. The Japanese still held Target Ridge southwest of the beachhead, and the strong positions at Hills 110 and 600 west of the beachhead. Hill 110 and other positions near Natoa Point were bombèd and strafèd by 24 B-25's.

The 330th Bombardment Group, in the afternoon while a strong enemy air raid was in progress, about 80 minutes later the 49th Bombardment Group dropped 63 tons of 1,000-pound bombs on Hill 600, and two squadrons of the 330th Bombardment Group hit Target Ridge with 67 tons (see Appendix No. 6). 2nd weather prevented the 50th Bombardment Group
from participating in the bombing, although six of its B-24's were over the target.

Landing Zone 21 at Green Beach north of Funafuti met with complete success on D-Day. List shrouded the beach and adjacent hills when the destroyers Lest and Smith began their bombardment at 0715. Twenty minutes later the Lest fired two star shells as a signal for the 15th Bombardment Squadron, which had arrived over the area at 0723, to attack. Eleven B-24's bombed and strafed at tree-top level in a manner that "left nothing to be desired." All troops and supplies were ashore by 0815, a perimeter defense was being organized, and patrols were advancing to contact the enemy. Some abandoned equipment was found in recently vacated defensive positions. The beach itself imposed no obstacles to landing but the heavier equipment, including radios of the 7th Air Liaison Party, which was attached to the landing team, remained exposed to attack from the air for two days while a road was being "chopped through the impenetrable jungle."

The cooperative effort with which the landings were carried out enabled air-ground communications to be set up with little difficulty. Control of all fighters and bombers was vested in the commanding general of the First Air Task Force at Dobelea. Air force representatives aboard the headquarters ship controlled all air effort while the landing was under way. The fighter controller was aboard a destroyer. Bombers on air alert were controlled by the 1st Air Liaison Party which remained with 1st Marine Division Headquarters and trans-
litted requests of the ground commander directly to the pilots. The 3d Air Liaison Party was attached to the 1st Marine Regiment, and the 2d Air Liaison Party came in with reinforcing troops on the afternoon of D-day. The 1st Air Liaison Party landed at 0600, set up its station 50 yards from the beach, then moved to the division command post at 1100. It established contact with the Finschhafen relay station on one net and with the 3d Air Liaison Party on the other. For the first 18 hours ashore, the 1st Air Liaison Party relayed Marine traffic to Allied Forces Headquarters through Finschhafen and the 1st Air Task Force at Rabaul because of failure of Marine communications. 47

FIGHTER FORCE AND ENEMY AIR ATTACKS, 26-27 December 1943

There were no enemy air attacks against the beachhead during the coming of D-day, although it seems certain that the Japanese knew of the landing by 0600. 48 The Japanese air force accepted the challenge in the afternoon and made a strong effort to disrupt the invasion. There were two waves of enemy bombers and fighters. In the first attack, which occurred approximately between 1430 and 1510, about 25 T4Y (single-engine, low-wing naval dive bombers) escorted by fighters attempted to change the convoy in the offshore. The number of escorting fighters is impossible to determine since estimates range from 50 Zekes and Osceas 49 to 60 Zekes, Osceas, and Kokos. 50 The composition of this force is fairly definite proof that it came from Rabaul where the enemy naval air strength was concentrated.
The Fifth Air Force was well prepared to meet the attack, since 19 P-38's, 16 P-37's and 16 P-20's were on patrol over the convoy area. The 41st Fighter Sq., with 16 P-38's from Nipon, had been on patrol since 1500. The controller radioed the squadron in two formations of two flights each at 6,000 and 10,000 feet. At 1430 a plot was given which reported boats 60 miles east of Cape Gloucester. The 86th Fighter Squadron, on patrol since 1500 with 17 P-20's, was sent out to intercept. Then at 1445 another plot was called in and the 31st Squadron, though poorly disposed for interception, was sent out. Both squadrons were called back when the controller lost the plot.

The first plot proved to be the RDF and the second was their escorting fighters. In going after the fighter, the 31st lost a chance to intercept our boats before they could get through to attack shipping. The escort therefore partially succeeded in lureing Allied fighters away from the slot and vulnerable Navy dive-bombers. Combat began at about 1445, by which time 13 P-38's of the 36th Fighter Squadron were returning from Nipon and 13 P-37's of the 86th Fighter Co. from Nipon had arrived. Our pilots were skillful, aggressive but poor shots. The P-38's concentrated on the P-40's, the P-37's attacked both bombers and fighters, while the P-40's devoted most of their attention to the fighters. When the battle ended at about 1510, the Japanese Naval Air Service had lost 22 T1's, 17 Zeros, 62 torp. and 3 Zeros destroyed. Our pilots also claimed 2 T1's, 2 Zeros, 2 Oscars and 1 Zero probably destroyed. Allied losses were 2 P-38's and 2 P-47's.
One destroyer was sunk, and 3 destroyers and 3 LST's were damaged.\(^{81}\)

This enemy attack, unfortunately, coincided with the appearance of 24 J-25's, 727 TBM's, 47 Hellcat's, which were to strike the Kula Point defenses. "The scene over the target was a mass of action," according to one report, "of airplanes chasing each other through the sky, some crashing in flames, dive bombers attacking naval vessels and every vessel in the area evading every attack they could muster."\(^{57}\) The TBM's flew through the J-25's which were coming in at a high altitude from the south.\(^{57}\) The 727th Bombardment Squadron opened fire on the TBM's, then "intense and accurate A/A fire of medium and light caliber succeeded immediately" from our own land positions which had been hit by the J-25. In the resulting confusion, "ten hell bombs and two mortar bombs" fired on the J-25's, the 727th Squadron lost two planes shot down and two so badly damaged that they were barely able to land at Espiritu Santo.\(^{57}\) There were, of course, extenuating circumstances; still one is justified in wondering why Japanese and Navy personnel were unable to recognize the J-25's, especially after having seen the same group attacking the beach before the landing.

... returning convoy of LST's was attacked by 16 torpedo-carrying Betty's from Rabaul at 1715. There were at the time 26 TBM's of the 727th and 754th Fighter Squadrons covering the area. The Betty's attacked in two waves, but not one bomber penetrated the fighter screen. Fourteen Betty's and two destroyers were destroyed and the remaining Betty's claimed as a probable.\(^{57}\) At the conclusion of this...
occurred, the 18th Fighter Squadron flew over the convoy to investigate a report that three torpedoes had been in the area. The report was unconfirmed but naval anti-aircraft guns shot down a Z-17 and killed the pilot. \textsuperscript{65} The total score for the day was 65 enemy planes destroyed and 9 probably destroyed. The Fifth Air Force lost 7 planes destroyed, of which 6 were victims of enemy fire or marine anti-aircraft fire.

These two air attacks on D-Day practically ended Japanese daylight efforts against the convoy. On 7th Dec., the enemy chose to attack 21 boats off Hinchin. Four days later, at about 1310, our patrolling P-47's and P-40's shot down 8 boats and 4 fighters and claimed 2 fighters probably destroyed when they were intercepted after a fruitless attack on shipping off Cape Gloucester. Having lost 103 planes destroyed and 72 probably destroyed in attacking boats and Cape Gloucester from 15 to 31 December, the Japanese turned almost exclusively to night harassing raids in small strength.

Air and Ground Action in the Drive on the Gloucester Area

On 17th, Gloucester Island, principal objective of Operation D-Day in New Britain, fell to the Allies four days after they went ashore at D-Day. After setting up a defensive perimeter, the victorious troops eliminated remaining enemy resistance, sent out strong patrols that covered western New Britain, and on 19 February, established contact with the Japanese 25th Force. Japanese troops defending the island retreated southward, their retreat helped by the stubborn
defense of the north coast. Marines in the beachhead expanded their
holdings in a drive climaxd by the capture of Hill 600 on 14 January
1942. This success secured the airfield from attack and made possible
a continued advance toward Cape Beddome. The Fifth Air Force, through
accurate bombing and strafing of enemy defenses, contributed materially
to these accomplishments.

General Hapner called for reinforcements when he realized that
capture of the airfield and expansion of the beachhead would be more
difficult than anticipated. General Trager approved his request for
Contract Raw A (5th Marines, reinforced) and Western 4, but sent the
infantry elements of one battalion in 39's 30th Inf Div. These troops
arrived on 32 December and two days later the rest of the regiment came
in an LST.52

Exposed to deep and torrential rains which continued with
little respite 1 day after day, the 1st Marine Regiment advanced toward
the airfield without waiting for Contract Raw A to arrive. On 37
December the 1st and 3d Battalions, supported by two platoons of
medium tanks, advanced about six miles west along the coast without
meeting opposition. On the next day the regiment attempted to resume
its progress.53 Japanese machine-gun positions on high ground west of
the airfield and along the coastal track had been located by patrols.
The Marines requested an air attack on these defenses. In response
to this request, 19 6-30's of the 32 Bombardment Group dropped 67 x
200-lb. bombs on the targets and strafed with more than 2,000 rounds.
of .50-caliber machine-gun fire at minimal altitude from 0917 to 0937. The Marines moved out at about 1000 but encountered strong opposition from units belonging to the enemy 553 Regiment, which was not overcome until about 1700.

The principal enemy defenses were located on and near Rainbow Hill, in an area of rain forest and brush grass about 1,000 yards east of the airfield, and in the woods and grass south of the east end of No. 3 strip. The Fifth Air Force was called on to soften these defenses on the morning of 26 December. The 23d Bombardment Group began the attack at 0930 with 10 B-24's, followed by 10 B-26's of the 369th Group and 17 B-24's of the 43d Group. By 0935, these B-26's had dropped 150 tons of 500-pound bombs with unusual accuracy from about 10,000 feet. Not one hole fell inside the temporary bomb line. Then 11 B-25's and 10 B-26's, 23d Bombardment Group, and 24 B-25's, 368th Bombardment Group, dropped 70 tons of 500 and 500-pound bombs and shifted 18th crewmen about 80,000 rounds of machine-gun fire. The 488th Bombardment Squadron fired flares at 0933 to signify the end of the attack, but the Marines, waiting for their reinforcements to move into position, were not ready for attack. When they did move out at 1615, with the 1st Marines on the right and the 5th Marines on the left, they encountered little opposition. Ten- to twenty-man units over the strips before nightfall, and by noon on 26 December both strips were occupied. The men in the center were largely devoted to organizing a tight defense of the airfield area, then patrols were
sent out to search for enemy troops. By this time nearly all of the
enemy had withdrawn east of the 1st River. The meeting at Sidon
between patrols of the 25th and 1st Marine Expeditionary Force
on 10
February marked the end of the campaign for the western tip of
Iraq. 68

The comparative ease with which the airfield was captured on 30
December was, to a great extent, the result of air attacks. A prisoner
of war from the Japanese 4th Regiment, 33rd Division, stated that his
unit on Esquer's Ridge had been badly wounded, their artillery knocked
cut by bombing, and "there was no effective AA left which might have
been used as dual purpose gun" against tanks. 69

An observer, Col.
J. R. Elri, reported prisoners as stating that "the air bombardment
was more than they could stand and as a consequence reinforcing troops
had been withdrawn into the hills overlooking the Cape Gloucester
area." 70

The long period of preparation, air strikes on 29th, and
attacks on 30th and 31 December had accomplished their purpose. These
last two attacks were facilitated by excellent work of the 21st Air
Liaison Party, commanded by Capt. E. G. Stalley. On 29 December
the
1st Marine Regiment's communications failed and Captain Stalley's
party handled the air traffic as well as the regular rail liaison
messages. 71
The 1st Air Liaison Party moved to the airfield with
Division Headquarters on 3 January 1944 and set up its station, which
was in important link in the air and ground communications system. 72
Expansion of the Beachhead to En Itoh Point, 24 January 1945

The principal mission of the 7th Marines in the beachhead was to expand southward along the west coast of Iwo-jima. To carry out this mission it was necessary to capture Asgiri Ridge, Hill 150, and Hill 600. With these positions in Allied possession, the enemy would be compelled to fall back along the coast.

While the 1st and 5th Marines were advancing upon the airdrome, the 7th Marines did little except to repel counterattacks against the beachhead perimeter. The Fifth Air Force reconnoitered the coastal track from the east, attacked newly built-up, and halted defensive positions. Night raids on 27 December practically grounded all planes, but the 39th Bombardment Squadron succeeded in bombing and strafing the coastal track. On 28 December, the 271st, escorted by B-24's, attacked trails and large hideouts east of Iwo-jima on 27 December to prevent reinforcements from reaching the Cape Gloucester area.

Reconnaissance revealed that the enemy was repairing the Marine airfield, so the First Air Task Force sent 17 B-24's to discourage this effort with 125 x 1,000-lb. bombs on 28 December.

On the following day, the 39th Bombardment Group attacked suspected enemy defenses from Futuna to Al Ito on the south and east shores of Iwo-jima.

Near the center of the beachhead, on the lower slopes of Asgiri Ridge, concentration of enemy troops could persistently be observed. These troops were attacked by B-24's on 28 December.

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with more than 0 tons of bombs and 2,550 rounds of 20-mm gun fire. 76

The attack hit the exact target assigned, but patrols went into the
area discovered but the enemy refused to be driven out. 77

The only coordinated air-ground attack by the Japanese against
the beachhead occurred at a fortunate time for the Marines, for on 30
January the 3rd Battalion of the 8th Marines (300 men) came in. 78

Although that night Japanese planes scored a
lucky hit on the 7th Marine Regiment's command post and caused
some casualties, the moderately strong ground attack that followed the bomb-
ing was repulsed with little difficulty. 79

In the morning of 31

January, 20 A-20's bombed and strafed the area from which this attack
originated; on 1 January 1944, the entire general area was attacked
by 10 A-20's and 12 B-24's. 80

Arrival of reinforcements enabled the Marines to launch an attack
for the purpose of expanding the beachhead. The first effort began
at 1000 on 8 January, but it was repulsed after very little progress
had been made. A Japanese counterattack struck the left of the beach-
head at 0530 on 8 January in an effort to recapture Tarawa Hill.

This attack, supported by artillery fire from Hill 650 and Momotaro
Hill, lasted until noon and cost the enemy 100 casualties. The
Marine attack from the beachhead center, under of since 0500, 81

managed to advance the position materially. 82

Hill A-20 fighters
and bombers could not be used to advantage in the jungle and beach
area due to infestation by both dust and mist. 83

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front line, with the west coast of Donga Bay as the bombardment, as
D-38's and A-38's bombed and strafed troops and supply from
Hill 600 to Michael Bay. 31

The Allied attack was mounted on January 9th with Hill 130 as the
first objective. Japanese artillery positions near Porta had been
indefatigable in their efforts to reduce this opposition,
A squadron of B-25's was to bomb and strafe while C-47's dropped
bombs on the immediate target area. The nine place;
was to join the second, dropping the 500-pound bombs on
right. The first run was made at 0610 by five B-25's, which attacked
and dropped 500-pound bombs on the target. The remaining
four B-25's bombed the second area. The next 20-20's dropped
500-pound bombs on the second area and nine B-25's eventually joined
and strafed these objectives.32 On 9 January, the Allied Air Force
sent in B-25's to strike troops near the southeast coast of Donga
Bay, and again the ground troops were late in hitting the target with
these. By nightfall the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, in possession
of Hill 150, was organizing the captured ground for defense. 33

The battle for control of New Britain was rapidly approaching a
climax. Japanese positions were especially strong in a central
area of Hill 130, on a high ridge southwest of Hill 120, and on Hill
600. The line was not of Hill 130 were too close to each other that it was
impossible to place artillery and mortars fire on the enemy without

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hitting our own troops. All striking in this area was impossible under such conditions, but Hill 600 could be attacked safely. On 7 January, while bloody hand-to-hand fighting was taking place west of Hill 100, 18 I-21's of the 455th Parachute Troop hit Hill 600 and nearby points with 112 x 500-lb. bombs. Hill 600 faced the 36th Battalion, 5th Marine, which pushed south-east around Hill 100 on 6 January and captured Hoeri Ridge the next day. Hoeri Ridge covered the enemy's supply road to headquarters of the Japanese 65th Brigade which was located at a village about four miles inland. As a result, therefor, on 8 January, I launched a strong counterattack before dawn on 10 January to recover this strategic position. In repeated charges up the ridge, the enemy-26 Battalion, 1st Infantry lost over 500 dead. Still the Marines were retreating and reorganizing on 10 January, 19 I-21's, dropped and strafed Hill 600 and 6 B-26's bombed North Point.27

The 36th Battalion, 7th Marine, launched the last attack against Hill 600 at 0600 on 10 January after heavy artillery preparation. Engaged in 2000 yards at the crest of the hill, which had survived recent bombing and artillery fire, held up the advance. Night brought up on 14 January were a decisive factor in capturing the hill before nightfall. The new relieved toward Japana village to the southwest which was bombed and strafed on 13 January. Meanwhile, after a costly early morning ground attack by two companies of 1st 1st Infantry, on 10 January, the Marines went up the hill. After capture of Hill 600 covered the security of Hoeri. The regiment...
were struggling toward Iwo Jima, having lost at least 1,000 killed in action and to contain the breakout. A major portion of the IWO JIMA
next enemy's mission was accomplished.

The Japs now covered their withdrawal along the north coast by a series of bluffs, many of which were located between the Inata
River and Cape Saffier. Marine patrols pushed steadily to locate the enemy and occasionally reported targets suitable for air attack.
A well-executed strike by 13 A-20's preceded the capture of Inata Point on 3 January. The entire 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, moved to Inata Point on the 26th, and patrols sent out to the Inata River encountered strong bluffs on the east bank. On 31 January, this position was attacked by 6 A-20's with 3 tons of bombs and 6,000 rounds of 50-caliber ammunition. Many troops on the east side of Borgen Bay were attacked by 13 A-20's and 16 P-38's on 25 January, and on the next day 9 A-20's with 7 P-38's and 300 rounds
strafed the Inata River bluffs.

**Operation BULLITT, 16 January-22 March 1944**

Progress of the 1st Marine Division in February was hindered by rain and the new jungle terrain than by enemy opposition. General Rupertus on 1 February ordered a rapid advance along the north coast to seize Point Flats, a staging area and terminus for the overland trail to Dillingham Airfield and also an attempt to cut off the enemy's retreat. This operation, together with the subsequent
reinforce of Bilel and the Borsing Peninsula, constituted Operation Apple.

Activities of the Allied Air Forces over northern New Britain during the first phase of this operation were confined largely to fighter patrols, reconnaissance, and attacks on communications and supply dumps in the enemy's rear areas. Itoli Plantation and targets in Bilel Bay were attacked by 12 P-38s and 16 B-25s on 29 January, 103 12 B-25s on reconnaissance with 20 P-38s on 2 February dropped more than 15 tons of bombs on Itoli Plantation and targets along the coast from Bilel Bay to Cape Milford. The heaviest strikes on Itoli were by 37 B-25s on 29 February and by 40 B-25s and 16 B-25s on 22 February in which a total of 50 tons of bombs were dropped. 100

The Marines, by this time, had reached Cape Milford. The 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, landed at Itoli Plantation on 25 February in an amphibious operation that was covered by 30 P-38s of the 550th and 310th Fighter Squadrons from New Georgia. No enemy planes appeared nor was there any ground opposition at Bilel Bay. 101 All units of the 5th Marines were established at Itoli by 27 February, having landed and transported 5,000 men with their equipment and supplies for a distance of 20 miles around and over some of the worst jungle terrain in the world. In this advance from Bilel Bay, 35 prisoners were captured and more than 200 enemy were killed. 102

While the Marines were advancing along the north coast toward Itoli Plantation, the Allied Air Forces were making attacks that would aid in the capture of Bilel and the Borsing Peninsula. The
most important target was an isolated farm about 1 mile south of the village of Lanark in the Lambeg area. Large forces, including Eighth Air Force, bombers, occupied with the New Chinese campaign, prepared for the Ballinlough, Loughor, and Glanamara area, carried out relatively few strikes in this area. On 5 February, 12 B-24s dropped about 1,400 tons of 1,000-pound bombs on or near the buildings and 150-pound bombs on various targets in Ballinlough with only fair results. This attack was an alternative for striking ships and shipping off north of the Solway Firth.104

Most of the RAF strikes on the north coast in January and February were directed against supply and enemy traffic. The day and night raids on Portrush, near Carrickfergus, were followed by 6 B-24s on 27 January and 8 B-24s on 29 January.105 The day raids on Portrush continued at frequent intervals, the night raids continued at night on the 1st and 2nd of February.106 Activities of the R.A.F. in January and February along the north coast included the air and sea transport of supplies and reinforcements from the Holyhead area to the ports in the north. A number of these raids were made by F.24s and B-24s on the Murlough and Portrush areas, and by F.24s on the Culloden area.107

In the strike of 18 February, 12 B-24s dropped 20 tons of bombs on the town of Portrush, and 3 B-24s dropped 20 tons of bombs on the southeastern shore of the town.
ofJacques T3. All men of these attacks achieved spectacular results. The cumulative effect on enemy strength and have been reduced. The principal sources of supply at Hingdon and Kukul were being neutralized by South African and South Pacific forces, and larger and supply bases on both coasts of New Britain were also destroyed.

Although the Jap advance is not only swift under conditions that retarded movement, most of the retreating Jap were outstripped. The Jap near Elgin quickly ordered its 17th Division Ltd in January to withdraw to Wau, Detachment to Ritidian, and then to Peleliu. Allied reconnaissance not only confirmed this movement but also reported large arrivals at Peleliu from Rabaul during the first fortnight in February. A battalion of the Japanese 31st Infantry Division, for instance, the nucleus of about 10,000 troops, was expected to defend Peleliu. Although not more than one-third of the defenders could be counted as artillery, the 32d Mindanao Division of about 7,000 men might not be committed to full defense, Zulu.160 The 3rd Division therefore expected considerable opposition when it ordered the 5th Marine to seize Elgin on the second phase of Operation Ashanti.

Except for fighter cover over D-Day (6 March) and after landing at Wewak Plantation, air preparations for the Elgin Invasion were

160. The equivalent of headquarters were to be built in place, typically from D plus 8 to D plus 11, one equivalent of headquarters each to
Until the latter half of April 1942, air raids during the early period (see chap. II, sec. 7). All air raids were carried out nearly as planned. Air-borne troops dropped 76 tons of bombs on the Central Airfields, Defenses, and Airfields. 19 Bombardos dropped 18 tons on ladders, and 27 bombardos bomb 1 and Primed 1 average 21 million tons on airfields. 119

Although airfields, under attack, did not come under air attack by South Pacific early in the war, they could not send out a force to interfere with the Island operation. The island's air force was in contact with only 1 raid before the landing of the atol. During the period from 5 to 7 March (D minus 7 to D plus 1), more than 200 aircraft were attacked by air, artillery, and gunfire at Basal. 117

The 6th Marine, arriving from New Zealand, landed into
Landing craft on the afternoon of 5 March and pulled out of New Zealand on 6 March under an escort of six PT boats. At 9 a.m. on 6 March, the first wave of the 6th Marine, three waves of 6th Marine PTLs, landed on the scheduled beach and took up the battle. The plane did not arrive because the weather was so bad north of
White Beach that Gen. W. Mitchell canceled the scheduled mission. 117

At 0000, the first wave of 6th Marine troops went in to land the 1st Battalion, 9th Marine, against light opposition. By 0800, 9th Marine had nearly cleared. 70 or more Japanese had been
killed, and the marines were 3,000 yards inland. 117 The 6th Marine
DOCUMENT EXCEPTION SHEET

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Iris Number O46 7634

Description OVERSIZE MAP

NEW BRITAIN

Plot Names & Andromes

AO/Feb 2001/Edition 2
Squadrons covered the landing with 71 P-43's from Langley on 8 March, and that night there were 470's, 26th FFS at Night on Squadron, and a couple over the area. 111

On 9 March, there was an over-run of the Yal-ee Con- 

FAC document added. The invasion occurred on 3 March. On 7 March, 

the enemy, over-run Yal-ee, and Column Elements, and 9th Night 

Marine covered the Hill on's Yal-ee, by their novel of 116 a patrol occupied Hill on Andrews. In the afternoon of 3 March, and 

four enemy tanks of the 8th Division were in the 

field. 116 Our advance was started by 72 P-43's and 470's, 

and by 470's of the 25th Division, which landed at night. 

Allies in C. Hills area from 7 to 9 March. 117 The enemy broke 

contact on 10 March, leaving lost 100 to 200 killed in the 

province. 10 P-43's, Marine, losses to 22 March, 134 killed and 103 

casualties. 118 On 10 March, one battalion moved south to Yal-ee Plantation, troops were sent to Nala River southeast of Yal-ee to line a 

line plantation on the Bury, P. y., and a patrol circled. 

Allies moved without contact with the enemy. 117

While the marines were consolidating and pulling, the 26th 

continued its attacks on the road coast. The 26th FFS, over- 

and after Allens, and Bridge Machine, in areas that are near the back 

of the field. 119 At the same time, the 26th FFS, moved to the 

left of the north coast, and left of the back turn, dropped 

on top. In the front line, there was a large body of Japanese.

SECURITY INFORMATION
The main campaign in Italy within two weeks was over. On 10 April, when the 40th Infantry Division was preparing to relieve the 1st Marine Division, our troops controlled the coast for an area along the entire length of the west coast. Elements of the 4th Marine Division were already on the southern tip of Italy. Elements of the 8th and 9th Marine Corps were already on the eastern side, protected by aircraft. The 30th Division began to arrive at Cape Gloucester on 23 April, and on the next day the 3rd Division of the 11th Marine Infantry left New Caledonia for Salerno. Maj. Gen. Page Bush then assumed command over the 11th Marine Division. A patrol of the 30th Infantry occupied the western airfield on 7 April. Paratroopers occupied the 30th Division until 27 November. When New Britin arrived, the Australian Fifth Division.

**Flak Air and Ground Air**

The 3rd and 5th Marine Air Groups at El Aghlab occupied an airfield on the island of El Aghlab on 7 January. The 5th Marine Air Group continued to provide air cover for the 11th Marine Division and for convoys moving through the strait between New Guinea and the Admiralty. The 3rd Marine Air Groups were at first on the southern tip of New Guinea, and then at Cape Gloucester. The 3rd Marine Air Group continued to support the 30th Division until 27 November. The 5th Marine Air Group then moved to El Aghlab and returned to Cape Gloucester on 7 January. Additional protection was provided by the 39th Night Fighter Squadron, which used the aircraft from :

**Bombard** to Gloucester and worked with two or three P-70s or P-47s.
Reconnaissance, both day and night, was closely related to fighter patrols. Single B-25's and B-26's continued to attack R-M or oil areas over the north and south coasts, especially at night. With such a large force to cover, squadrons of the 71st Reconnaissance Group were kept busy. The 501 Reconnaissance Squadron (5-7), for example, flew 102 offensive B-25's, ranging from 11 January to 15 January, of which were over New Britain and 115 over New Guinea. 127 This scale of activity was normal for the New Britain campaign. The 58th Fighter Squadron (P-40's) and the 59th Fighter Squadron (P-39's) were stationed at the 9th Gloucester field until 14 March, then went to Nadzab. 128 Their place was taken by the 77th Fighter Wing (P-40) and the 78th Group (P-47). 129

After December, enemy air activity over New Guinea, as has been noted, was confined almost entirely to night raids in small strength. These 'hict raids' were interrupted or in a state to delay construction of the air-tribe and to keep troops on the alert. Damage and casualties were light but the harassing war effective in causing loss of sleep. 130 Air defense of New Britain was the responsibility of the New Air Service at Rabaul, and the strength of enemy planes was surprised in the loss of a few and sometimes due to our efforts against New Britain and Madang.
enemy aircraft only over New Guinea. Even then, the Japanese pilots refused evasive action. There were occasional sightings over New Britain, of which three examples will suffice. On 7 February, 12 F4F's of the 925th Fighter Squadron, flying out of Port Moresby, encountered in the morning and destroyed a B-17 bomber, which was identified as a B-17D of the 17th Bombardment Group. On routine patrol, the 925th Fighter Squadron encountered a large formation of Japanese aircraft, possibly an raids, which was identified as B-17D and B-17E bombers. The B-17 is flying in formation over New Guinea and the B-17E is flying in formation over New Britain, and the B-17D is also flying in formation over both areas.

The enemy, however, did not let his forces to bring into the United States. On 7 February, there were an estimated 200 aircraft on New Guinea fields and 200 at Espiritu. By the end of February, the number of Japanese aircraft had declined to 250 aircraft. There were 200 fighters and bombers based in New Guinea. It is reported that the Japanese aircraft were flying over New Guinea, and the B-17D was flying over New Britain. The B-17E was also flying over New Guinea. Despite the frequent attacks, the Japanese aircraft were not able to drive the Allied forces out of New Guinea. The Allied forces suffered frequent attacks frequently at night, but despite these efforts, the Allied forces were able to continue their attacks on Japanese airfields. By the third week of February, the Allied forces were able to inflict severe damage on the Japanese airfields.
The entire air battle in General LeMay's mind centered on the diversity of Bombing and resulted in the crucial lack of coordination and cooperation between the services. Regardless of how well composed, how well formed, how well tested, and how well trained the B-29s enjoyed a high degree of reliability, from crew-air attack after D-day.

Air Supply for the Initial FEAF Air Power

Supply by air was used to supplement the regular surface method only in the invasion. The air attacks in these conditions cramped the unloading of barges and LSTs on the first two days. Then the time came for the craft to depart, they pulled out with 500 tons still unloaded, and as a result there were a shortage of some types of ammunition and supplies. Since the First Air Task Force was asked to deliver, the first request, on 20 December, for ammunition, two mortars, five miles of wire, and three bundles of make, was filled by a C-47 on the next day. Supply drops on a small scale continued to be made by B-17s, B-24s, and B-25s until the Iwo Jima airfield was ready for receive B-17s. None of these supplies was carried isolated. Submarine units had rendezvoused in the South in after the invasion, or to carry food to one of the forces close to it. In the second hour on 19 February, the 33rd Bomb Group made 16 B-17s load 240 tons of 200-lb. bundles of food, medicine, and ammunition to an Allied party in western New Britain. On that occasion, the 31st Group Barrier Squadron sent
a B-17 to drop 50 bags of food in a dry creek bed east of Open Bay where Allied air crew members were in hiding. An isolated Australian unit near Cape Hoskins was supplied by a B-17 on 18 March.

Air supply service by C-47's occurred almost daily after the Cape Gloucester strip became operational. The first C-47 landed on 31 January and was followed by a steadily increasing number of transports. By the middle of the month so many transports were coming in that the field's capacity was taxed to receive them. Before the end of February at least 9 of the 14 troop carrier squadrons in New Guinea had made several trips to Cape Gloucester. The 65th Troop Carrier Squadron made 39 trips from 15 to 25 February and carried about 66 tons of cargo which included portable huts, mail, and equipment of the 475th Fighter Squadron. Cots, meat, eggs, office equipment, medical supplies, jeeps, trailers, generators, tents, grease, bombs, and other freight as well as passengers were brought in by C-47's from Port Moresey, Dobodura, Nadzab, and other points.

Ground personnel and equipment of the 35th Fighter Squadron came in by air on 13 February, and on 22 February C-47's began to bring in the 80th Fighter Squadron. Then on 11 March, the 67th Troop Carrier Squadron and other units began to carry RAAF equipment to Gloucester and moved the 35th and 80th Fighter Squadrons to Nadzab. This exchange of units was completed by 17 March. During the month, six troop carrier squadrons made about 190 trips to Cape Gloucester, an average of more than six trips daily.
This service by the 54th Troop Carrier Wing was an important factor in the campaign. Needed supplies were delivered quickly, mail reached the troops with minimum delay, casualties were evacuated. Equally important, perhaps, was the added mobility of certain units made possible by efficient freighting operations of the troop carrier squadrons, with a resultant decreased demand for naval transport.

The Cape Gloucester Airdrome

Before the Pacific war began there were two emergency strips at Cape Gloucester. These strips were made unserviceable in January 1942, and it was not until the following December that the Japanese started work on the field. The red volcanic soil became a morass when wet but packed hard when the rains stopped. A supply of coral was available within two miles but the Japanese made no use of it. The No. 1 strip was 3,900 feet long by 400 feet in width. Starting at the beach, it extended south-southeast to a creek which barred extension in that direction. Equipped with 16 revetments, it had a hardstanding capacity of 15 bombers or 20 fighters. The No. 2 strip, running approximately east and west, was more than 4,000 feet long by 300 feet wide.152

Allied air and ground engineers, who began work on the airdrome soon after its capture, labored under severe handicap. Roads were non-existent under the Japanese occupancy and most of the tracks were unimproved. From 26 December 1943 to 1 February 1944, there were five clear days; on the others, from one-half to four inches of rain fell daily.153 Work continued with engineers sloshing through ankle-
deep mud while Japanese snipers were still being rounded up. The 17th Marine Regiment, composed of a pioneer battalion, an engineer battalion, and a construction battalion, supported the ground troops, unloaded vessels, prepared landing points, constructed a jetty, and built access and supply roads. The 1913th Engineer Aviation Battalion arrived on 1 January and started work on the west end of No. 2 strip three days later. On 13 January, the 864th Engineer Aviation Battalion began work on the east end, and on 20 January the 841st Engineer Aviation Battalion began to construct access roads. The first plane, a Beechcraft, landed on 30 January, by which time 4,300 feet of pierced plank landing mat was down. A C-47 transport landed on 31 January.

General Whitehead, at Advon Headquarters, watched construction progress anxiously. The Fifth Air Force had been directed to neutralize Kavieng to aid in the capture of Green Island. If emergency facilities were available at Cape Gloucester by 10 February, P-40's could be used to augment P-38's in day strikes against Kavieng, and many P-33's would be saved from forced landings because of fuel shortage. General Krueger, inspecting the airdrome on 9 January with Brig. Gen. F. R. Smith, Jr., had expressed the opinion that a 5,000-foot runway would be serviceable on 10 February, and that one group of fighters could be accommodated by the 15th. By the time weather conditions permitted heavy bombers to strike Kavieng, the
emergency facilities were ready, although still so limited that
P-38's of the 433d Fighter Squadron, assigned to escort B-24's to
Kavieng, refueled at Finschhafen on 5 February. The 59th Service
Group arrived at Cape Gloucester on 23 January and began to haul gas
to the airfield in 55-gallon drums. Roads were unfit for transport
and mud was five inches deep over the bivouac areas. The field,
still incomplete in parking areas and service installations, was
being used to the limit of its capacity by 15 February. Artillery
liason planes had been operating from No. 1 strip for some time; P-40's, P-38's, P-47's, and C-47's were using the No. 2 strip.

General Whitehead had planned to move the entire 8th Fighter
Group into Cape Gloucester about 10 March, but the strip was not
satisfactory for the operations of P-38's. Heavy rains caused the
volcanic soil to turn into mud that came up through the landing mat
and made it difficult for planes with the tricycle landing gear to land
safely. On 29 February, for example, pilots of two P-38's attempted
to land at Gloucester after a mission to Nomotu. Although they landed
on the east end of the runway, the P-38's ran off the landing mat
and were destroyed. P-40's, with their conventional landing gear, did
not experience this difficulty. The progress of operations also made
it advisable to move the 35th and 80th Fighter Squadrons of the 8th
Group to Nadzab. The change in the dividing line between the South
and Southwest Pacific areas removed Kavieng from the area over which
the Fifth Air Force would operate, thus ending the need for basing
P-38's at Cape Gloucester. Moreover, the P-38's were needed at Nadzab to provide long-range bomber escort for bombers on missions to Tadji and Hollandia. For these reasons the Fifth Air Force squadrons at Cape Gloucester were replaced by units of the RAAF on 14 March.\textsuperscript{161}

Fighter control and air warning facilities had been available at Cape Gloucester since early in January. An advance detachment of the 33d Fighter Control Squadron, consisting of two officers and 42 enlisted men, arrived at Cape Gloucester on 2 January and the rest of the squadron came in on 1 February. About three weeks later, on 23 February, the squadron took over full operation of the 20th Fighter Sector.\textsuperscript{162} Units of the 565th Signal Air Warning Battalion landed at Cape Gloucester on 5 January. These units were Headquarters, Company F; the 19th Reporting Platoon, Company F, operating a long-range radar (SCR 270) as Radar Station 414; the 4th Reporting Platoon, Company A, operating a medium-range radar (SCR 516) as Radar Station 473; and the Company F Flotting Platoon which, with the 33d Fighter Control Squadron, operated the 20th Fighter Sector.\textsuperscript{163} By the end of February, the Cape Gloucester airfield had taken its place as a minor but important link in the chain of Allied air bases in the South and Southwest Pacific areas.

A Summary View of Air Activities in Operation DEXTORTI

There were few opportunities during Operation DEXTORTI for the Allied Air Forces to perform spectacular deeds. The strikes against Rabaul, Kavieng, and New Guinea fields were notable achievements; but,
in relation to DENTERITI, they fall in the class of strategic rather than tactical operations. In the last half of December, fighters over Arawe and Borgen Bay succeeded in destroying nearly all of the Japanese planes that attacked convoys and the beachheads. For the most part, however, American and RAAF units engaged in routine, prosaic missions.

This very routine and lack of opposition to Allied bombing and strafing missions was discouraging to combat crews who could see few if any results from their activities. Bombers dropped their loads on patches of kunai grass and rain forest, strafed concealed jungle trails, and planted delayed action bombs along communications routes. The cumulative effect, however, justified the effort. Native bearers deserted the Japanese in mass and enemy troops were diverted to carrying supplies in order to alleviate the severe shortages that developed in forward areas. Though clever enemy use of jungle foliage as camouflage for supply dumps and clivouac areas made it necessary to supplement low obliques with information provided by natives, bombing and strafing of these targets was effective, however unsatisfying the work might be to air crews.

Terrain characteristics severely limited close air participation in ground battles. There were occasions, both at Arawe and in the Cape Gloucester area, when medium and heavy bombardment could be called upon to soften an enemy strongpoint. But these opportunities were few because front lines were rarely clearly defined. Check points generally did not exist, and targets could not be identified.
satisfactorily. Excepting such attacks as those on Razorback Ridge, Target Hill, and Hill 660, the Allied Air Forces were confined to small scale strikes against targets in the enemy's rear areas. Barges and other vessels skirting the coasts of New Britain never ceased to be objects of search. An accurate evaluation of these anti-shipping patrols is impossible, but it is known that the enemy's losses were sufficient to have a serious effect upon his supply and troop movements.

The campaign again demonstrated a need for more thorough training of air, ground and naval units in recognition and fire discipline.

One of the first three planes shot down by our antiaircraft fire at Arawe was a P-47 which was attacking an enemy plane! The irate pilot reported that he was low, his craft had a white tail and the Allied star, he waggled his wings—all to no avail. The antiaircraft gunners, he complained, "fired at anything that wasn't a P-38." 166 By January, one fighter group had lost six planes to our own fire and one to enemy action. At Cape Gloucester, one bomber squadron lost four planes to friendly fire on D-day, 167 and naval units, in spite of radio warnings, fired on P-47's called in to protect them from torpedo bombers. 168 The commander of the Seventh Fleet, after reports of this sort kept coming in, informed General Kenney that he had instituted intensive training in recognition and fire discipline. 169 Since surface vessels regard all airplanes as hostile until positively identified, the Fifth Air Force ordered its pilots to stay at least three miles away from them in friendly waters, except when providing cover or anti-submarine
protection, or when necessary to approach an airdrome. Allied pilots were by no means guiltless. Three B-25's strafed two LCM's en route to Iboki Plantation on 25 February, "despite the fact that a large 'U.S.' was painted in white on the top of the wheelhouse, and a large picture of President Roosevelt and a large American flag were painted on the side of it. A large flag was flying at the jackstaff, and a jeep and Marines were easily distinguishable as the planes flew low over the LCM's." The B-25's made three attacks on these easily recognized craft that were 16 miles inside the bomb line. Incidents of this sort could lead only to bitterness and mutual distrust.

The greatest contributions of the Allied Air Forces to Operation DEXTERITY were in pre-invasion bombardment, photographic reconnaissance, and neutralizing attacks on the enemy's airfields. "It is believed," one observer states, "that our constant bombing prior to D-Day had a disastrous effect on the defending troops and prevented reinforcements from being brought into the area." General MacArthur's compliment leaves nothing to be desired: "The Air Force here," he informed General Arnold, "has been magnificent and is the very hub of our success." That success was indeed significant. Western New Britain was in Allied possession, the Vitiaz Strait was dominated by Allied airfields on New Guinea and New Britain, and "Southwest Pacific forces were in an excellent position to conduct further operations to the north and northwest." These operations already were under way.
While Marines were advancing along the north coast of New Britain and remnants of Japanese units were fleeing from the Huon Peninsula of New Guinea, the Fifth Air Force had already undertaken the neutralization of the Admiralty Islands.
Chapter IV

CONQUEST OF THE ADMIRALTY ISLANDS

The invasion of western New Britain had given the Allies control over a large part of the Bismarck Archipelago. Conquest of the Admiralty Islands constituting the northwestern group of the Bismarcks, was regarded as necessary to complete that control, to isolate Rabaul and Kavieng, and to provide bases for attacks on the Caroline Islands and for further penetration of the Japanese empire. While Operation DECEPTION was under way, plans were being completed to invade the Admiralties, our reconnaissance planes were photographing Manus and Los Negros islands, and Allied bombers were pounding enemy installations in the principal islands of the group. Air interdiction of enemy shipping, inseparable from neutralizing attacks on Rabaul and Kavieng, continued as relentlessly as weather conditions permitted, and Japanese positions along the New Guinea coast were being subjected to intensified attacks. All of these operations were concurrent phases of the campaign against the Bismarck Archipelago.

The Admiralty Islands

Discovered in 1615 by Willem Cornelis Schouten, the Admiralty group was given its name by Rear Admiral Philip Carteret in 1767 in honor of the British Admiralty. European nations generally neglected the islands until 1884, when Germans established plantations there. An Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force occupied the
group in 1914, and in 1921 Australia received the islands as a mandate from the League of Nations. Two decades later, in January 1943, the small Australian garrison withdrew before the Japanese advance.  

Although the Japanese paid little attention to the Admiralties for more than a year after having captured them, they could not have been unaware of their potential military importance. In February, or possibly April, 1943, Lorengau airfield was repaired and a new airbase was begun at Momote Plantation south of Ryeane Harbor on Los Negros. Construction proceeded at such a leisurely pace that the Momote field was not completed until late in 1943; even then revetments were still being constructed. Aerial photographs of the field were taken by the Allies on 17 September 1943, and later reconnaissance indicated that Momote was in use as a staging base on the route to New Britain, New Ireland and New Guinea. Early in 1944, apparently, the Japanese rushed "an estimated 3,000 replacements into the Admiralty Islands, ... to start work on beach and inland defenses. This increased activity, probably caused by the invasion of New Britain, became known to the Allies in January. The threat to Rabaul increased the importance of the Admiralties. A study of Japanese shipping routes in the Southwest Pacific revealed a network of lanes among the captured islands which connected with routes leading to Japan. Traffic from Truk to Kavieng and Rabaul passed through or by the Admiralties."
Early Plans for Operation BREWER

The broad plan for coordinated offensives by the South and South-west Pacific forces was amplified on 23 November 1943. Instructions of that date directed the Commanding General of Alamo Force to seize the Seeadler Harbor area of Manus Island for the purpose of establishing an airstrip and light naval facilities to support "subsequent operations along the north coast of New Guinea." GHQ SWPA issued Operations Instructions No. 44 on 13 February 1944, in which it was announced that SOFAC and SWPA forces would gain control over the Bismarck Archipelago by simultaneous seizure and consolidation of the Admiralties and Kavieng. With 1 April as the target date, the Commanding General of Alamo Force was to coordinate plans of air and naval units assigned to Operation BREWER, the code name for the Admiralty Islands campaign.

Operations Instructions No. 44 contemplated a more elaborate plan than actually materialized. South Pacific forces, in addition to seizing Kavieng, were to neutralize enemy air and naval units in southern New Ireland and eastern New Britain; the New Guinea force would continue pressure on Bagasia from the Bamu River valley; Allied naval forces, SWPA, were to put on a preliminary bombardment and carrier-based air attack over the Admiralties; Central Pacific forces were to cover the operation by destroying or containing the Japanese fleet in their theater. The Fifth Air Force, in turn, was to support the Central Pacific forces by neutralizing hostile airfields on Truk.
the night following the initial Central Pacific attack on that base, which would occur about 26 March. About 1 March, the Fifth Air Force was to start continuous neutralizing attacks against enemy air forces and installations in northern New Ireland and the Admiralties.

Specific Allied AF assignments for Operation BREWER were to be:
(1) neutralization of enemy air forces in central New Britain and the northern coast of New Guinea; (2) provision of fighter cover for convoys and carriers; (3) air bombardment preceding the landing on Manus Island; and (4) continued air strikes as requested by the Commanding General, Alamo Force. 9

Although serious opposition from the Japanese air force was not expected to materialize, the intelligence annex to Operations Instructions No. 44 assumed a cautious tone. With some minor adjustments in enemy strength, this estimate of enemy air capabilities held good for Operation BREWER as it actually occurred. As of 1 April 1944, the contemplated target date, enemy air strength capable of interfering with BREWER was expected to be about 351 combat planes: 170 fighters and 181 bombers. Counting reinforcements that might be brought from Truk, the total strength expected on 1 April would be 340 fighters and 277 bombers. There was, of course, the possibility that all available enemy air strength in the Bismarcks, including the Admiralties, might be withdrawn to New Guinea in an effort to preserve it, since there were indications that "the enemy is already half resigned
to this denial (of Rabaul) and a maximum air effort, resulting in serious wastage of his air power in the New Britain, New Ireland area is improbable. The maximum effort in the Admiralties was not expected, for the following reasons: the Kavieng operation would engage most of the forces in New Britain and New Ireland; all bases in those areas were within reach of our fighter-escorted bombers; reserves at Truk were 600 nautical miles distant and already committed to the defense of the Carolines; the enemy supply of aviation materiel could not support sustained strikes; and any Japanese attempt at reinforcement of the New Guinea area would weaken the Malaya-Sumatra region. This line of reasoning produced the 351-plane estimate, with prospects of an initial daily sortie effort of about 260 which would decline steadily. Wewak, Boram, Dagua, But, Tadji, and Hollandia would be the enemy's bases for these sorties.

This 15 February estimate of Japanese air strength ignores Rabaul so consistently that further explanation is necessary. The enemy had lost heavily from attacks upon the Rabaul fields and from strikes originating there. Rabaul, threatened by our troops on western New Britain, had received fighter and bomber reinforcements in January; but the increased fighter strength fell quickly with renewed Thirteenth Air Force attacks. By the end of January, the Japanese air strength at Rabaul was committed, apparently, to defense of shipping in the harbor, cover for convoys, and limited night strikes against Torokina, Arawe, and Cape Gloucester. This defense was
disrupted further by continued heavy losses suffered in attempting to turn back attacks from the Solomons and New Guinea, and by the threat to Truk. Protection of that key position in the Japanese defensive system had been made more difficult by the demands of Rabaul for replacements. The low estimate which was made on 13 February of Rabaul's potentialities was further supported when reinforcement from Truk was temporarily put out of the question by the devastating carrier attacks on 17-18 February 1944 during which an estimated 301 Japanese planes were destroyed in the area of Truk. The effect on Rabaul was apparent at once. Fewer than 100 planes could be discovered in the area, the lowest number since January 1943. On the other hand, the enemy was developing a striking force in New Guinea which the planning staff for EMEAF expected to be used over the Admiralties.

The strength of the Allied Air Forces was sufficient to guarantee control of the skies over the Bismarck Archipelago. At the beginning of February 1944 the Fifth Air Force had tactical bases at Gusap, Kelaipit and Nadzab in the Markham and Ramu valleys of New Guinea. The fields at Finschafen and Salamaua on the Huon Peninsula coast were limited in capacity but served as advanced fighter bases, and the Cape Gloucester field became operational in February. Doboesura and Port Moreton, while still very active, were being displaced by Nadzab and Gusap as principal centers of operations. Planes based at Kelaipit, Gusap and Salamaua cooperated closely with ground troops operating down
the Bamu Valley and along the coast; fighters at Finisnafen and Cape Gloucestor directed their efforts largely to New Britain; bombers and fighters at Nadzab and Dobodura roamed over a wide area that included the Bismarck Archipelago and enemy-held New Guinea. Woodlark and Kirivina islands, off the coast of Papua, had fighter strips which were comparatively inactive by February.

The Fifth Air Force had 1,981 operational planes distributed among its New Guinea bases at the end of January 1944. Of this number, 745 were fighters, 738 were bombers, and 498 were transport, reconnaissance, and courier aircraft. The RAAF's 507 tactical planes and a score in Dutch hands raised the strength of the Allied Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific to more than 2,500 planes. The Thirteenth Air Force had about 260 fighters and 380 bombers in the Solomons. The Fifth Air Force had a total personnel strength of 77,149, which included 800 bomber crews and 750 fighter pilots. A month later, on 29 February, the total Fifth Air Force strength stood at 83,369 and the number of aircraft had risen to 2,084.

Allied air power in the South and Southwest Pacific at the start of Operation BREWER was decidedly superior to that of the Japanese, but the enemy enjoyed greater logistic maneuverability. The Japanese held numerous bases through which large numbers of planes could be sent to reinforce forward positions and to which they could retire in relative safety. In view of the number of tasks assigned to them, the superiority of our air forces was less real than statistics.
indicate. Close cooperation with ground operations, neutralization of enemy bases, reconnaissance, transport, shipping strikes, pre-invasion bombardment, convoy cover, and courier service combined to strain Allied resources to the limit.15

Neutralization of the Admiralties, 22 January–25 February 1944

Photographic coverage of the Admiralty Islands was still incomplete in January 1944. Bad weather ruined the first three efforts of the 8th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron to get pictures of Manus, and mechanical difficulties spoiled the fourth attempt. At last, on 22 January, when B-25's began the Fifth Air Force operations against the island group, two P-5's got through to take photographs of Lorengau and Momote.16 The photos revealed a decided increase in activity at and near Momote. Piles of crates were stacked on the fringes of Salam Plantation, tracks were parked west of the airfield, and tracks indicated considerable movement about the area.17

The first series of missions to the Admiralties began in the last part of January 1944. Medium bombers, escorted by P-38's, started the air assault on 22 January with bombing and strafing runs against shipping. This first strike was by 11 B-25's of the 499th and 501st Squadrons, 345th Bombardment Group, from Dobodura.18 All squadrons of the 345th Group participated in putting 38 B-25's over Lorengau on 24 January. The bombers took off from Dobodura, picked up two P-38 squadrons as escort at Finschhafen, and flew on to Ramsutyo...
Island, the designated IP. Here they turned west to cross Monote, Papitalai Harbor, Lorengau Village, and Bowat Bay. Reports of damage inflicted show a wide range of targets: a house destroyed on Salami Plantation; an ammunition dump blown up; a barge damaged in Papitalai Harbor; a barge and a jetty destroyed at Lorengau; two sailboats strafed; miscellaneous surface craft sunk. The B-25's and P-38's expended more than 153,000 rounds of ammunition in strafing and dropped 37 tons of 1,000-pound bombs. Perhaps even more significant was the destruction or severe damage to eight or nine variously identified fighters that were refueling on the south end of Monote airdrome. These fighters may have come in to protect shipping in Sesealder Harbor after the attack of 22 January gave warning of an impending air offensive; but, since interception never occurred during subsequent missions, it is likely that the Japanese decided against risking their fighters in defense of the Admiralties.

Three squadrons of the 35th Bombardment Group (H) from Durand staged through Dobodura to join the 345th Group in a strike against Lorengau, shipping, and the Monote airdrome on 25 January. All but five of the 64 B-25's reached the targets. Antiaircraft fire, although described generally as light and inaccurate, destroyed one B-25 over Salami Plantation, another over Lorengau, and crippled a third which made a water landing south of Manus. These losses may account for the sudden end to minimum altitude missions by the mediums. Seven squadrons of B-24's from the 43d and 90th Bombardment Groups at
Dobodura were assigned to the Admiralty run on 26 and 27 January. On each occasion the heavies were escorted by three squadrons of P-38’s which joined them over Tolokiwa Island. Momote, principal target on the 26th, was left unserviceable. Lorengau received similar treatment on the 27th (see Appendix No. 3). In this first series of strikes, 109 B-25’s and 83 B-24’s had dropped about 330 tons of bombs in addition to heavy strafing by the medium bombers and the fighters.

The second series of missions, from 1 to 14 February, got off to a bad start. Fifty B-24’s were forced back to base on 1 February by weather conditions. The 43d and 90th Bombardment Groups were scheduled to bomb Momote on 6 February. A heavy front, building up over the Bismarck Sea, caused the 90th Group to turn to Madang, the secondary target, but 24 B-24’s of the 43d Group, escorted by an equal number of P-38’s, flew through the front and found clear weather over Los Negros. The Momote drone, which had been repaired since 27 January, was again damaged severely. The Japanese, apparently to conserve ammunition and to conceal their strength, put up no opposition whatever. During the succeeding week bad weather limited operations somewhat and the demands of other areas absorbed the efforts of Fifth Air Force bombers. Two groups of mediums from Dobodura, totaling 82 B-25’s, concentrated their attack on the Momote area on 13 February. The 38th Group was especially pleased with having dropped 95% of its bombs in the target, "considering the fact that only the lead planes had bombsights and that those were only obsolete D-8a."
The 345th Group followed the 38th over the target. Within 15 minutes from 0945 to 1000, the two groups dropped 50 x 1,000-lb. and 276 x 500-lb. bombs. There was no interception and no antiaircraft fire. On 14 February, the same groups returned to Honotoe to drop 86.5 tons of 500- and 1,000-lb. bombs.

Persistently bad flying weather to the end of the month interfered with missions briefed for the Admiralties after 14 February. Reconnaissance planes, primarily B-25's, completed seven sorties by 23 February. On the 22d, two medium groups and two heavy groups were scheduled to strike Manus and Los Negros; but the mediums bombed Iboi Plantation at Bein Bay, New Britain and the heavies attacked Madang, New Guinea. Only three B-24's of a force that included 24 heavy and 27 medium bombers succeeded in penetrating the weather that guarded Honotoe on 24 February. On the next day, nine B-25's of the 405th Bombardment Squadron reached the target without incident to complete the month of neutralizing attacks. Since 23 January, 112 B-24's and 298 B-25's had dropped 650 tons of bombs on targets in the Admiralties (see Appendix No. 8).

The Admiralty Islands offered relatively few satisfactory targets to our bombers and their fighter escorts. Honotoe, the center of enemy activity, received the most attention. The runways, bivouac areas, dumps and miscellaneous installations were bombed and strafed heavily. Shipping, primarily in Selandia, Papitalai, and Eyane harbors, was nearly always sought out for attack; but the enemy tonnage making use
of these harbors was small and very few vessels larger than luggers or barges were discovered. The poorly developed Japanese defenses offered little opposition, a circumstance that gave foundation to an erroneous report about enemy ground strength in the islands. Considered in relation to the total effort of the Fifth Air Force, attacks on the Admiralties in January and February seem less important than they were. It is true that Newak, Nadeng, and Kavieng were struck more frequently and with greater bomb tonnage; but, although bad weather cancelled several scheduled missions and satisfactory targets were difficult to discover, the pre-invasion bombardment of Manus and Los Negros seems to have been more than adequate.

**Attacks on Kavieng and Rabaul and Interdiction of the Bismarck Sea**

This pre-invasion neutralization of the Admiralties was coordinated with the landing of South Pacific forces on Nissan Island. That operation on 15 February was undertaken to establish facilities for aircraft and PT boats close to Rabaul. The Fifth Air Force had been ordered to neutralize Kavieng from D minus 15 to D-day and to continue neutralizing the Admiralties. Daily missions were planned to strike both areas, but planes on the way to Kavieng encountered tropical fronts similar to those that caused so many sorties to the Admiralties to be abortive. Only one mission, that of 11 February by 46 escorted B-24's, got through to Kavieng in the period 5-12 February. During the next two days, 89 B-24's bombed targets in the Kavieng area.
The strike on 13 February, D-day for Nissan Island, was so heavy that enemy planes at the Kavieng dromes could not interfere with our troop movements. This highly important attack practically ended Fifth Air Force participation in the neutralization of Kavieng and Rabaul, as the dividing line between the South and the Southwest Pacific theaters was shifted west of the Gazelle Peninsula.

Thus, while Rabaul was left primarily to the Thirteenth Air Force, the Fifth struck at the two staging bases through which enemy reinforcements might move from Truk to oppose our landing on Nissan Island. From 10 to 15 Japanese Vals offered the only opposition encountered by our amphibious force at Nissan on 15 February. Eloquent testimony of the effective neutralization of enemy bases within range and of the weakness of the Japanese air power in the South Pacific.

After the Nissan Island invasion, heavy bombers of the Thirteenth Air Force, cooperating with naval, Marine, and New Zealand forces, concentrated their efforts against Rabaul and its satellite airstrips. By the middle of February the enemy had suffered such heavy losses that only one float plane challenged our destroyer task force on the 16th, when, for the first time in the war, surface vessels bombarded Kavieng and Rabaul. Return engagements by the destroyers on 22, 23, and 25 February added to the destruction. While the destroyers roamed at will, bombers of the Thirteenth Air Force enjoyed almost equal freedom. They met no interception during the last week of February and it was apparent that the formerly "impregnable" base

SECURITY
was no longer a serious threat to air or surface action in the Bismarck Archipelago. 36

The weakness of Japanese positions at Kavieng and Rabaul, and the immunity of our convoys from attack while en route to Eilene Harbor to invade Los Negros, was caused largely by a combination of counter-air force operations and anti-shipping strikes. Numerous attacks on fields along the New Guinea coast prevented interference from that area.

Allied lack of air superiority and adequate operating bases, which permitted the Japanese to control the air over much of the New Guinea-Solomons-Bismarck area, had delayed for many months an all-out offensive against Japanese shipping. Air attacks on Rabaul, Newak, and secondary harbors had been begun in 1942; but an intensive campaign against sea traffic started in the spring of 1943. The Japanese already were depending greatly on barge traffic along the coasts. Our air forces, still too weak to provide standing patrols over the northern Bismarck Sea, attacked shipping whenever it was found. The enemy's lines of communication were under attack but they were not severed.

Capture and development of new bases, arrival of planes equipped for long-range reconnaissance, and increases in the number of planes and personnel assigned, had enabled the Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces to establish a genuine air blockade by January 1944. The three terminal ports of Rabaul, Kavieng and Newak strictly limited traffic to easily observed routes, all of which entered the Bismarck Sea. Our search planes kept these routes under observation, while Allied
submarines operated in the area not covered by the air blockade.  

Convoys attempting to run the blockade rarely escaped severe
damage and were frequently annihilated. During the night of 15-16
February, for example, B-24's and PBY's discovered a convoy of 17
vessels near New Hanover. Two groups of mediums with fighter escort
 sank most of the ships; B-24's and PBY's finished off the survivors.  

Vessels of other convoys that did get through were by no means safe
in the harbors. From about 15 December 1943 to 22 January 1944, the
Japanese lost 297 fighters destroyed and 91 probably destroyed in
efforts to protect shipping at anchor. With the decline of Rabaul,
Kavieng and the Admiralties became more important as terminal points;
but Kavieng was no more immune than Rabaul, and the Admiralties were
soon to provide bases from which the Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces
could complete the blockade of the Bismarck Sea.

**Plans for the Reconnaissance in Force**

The various warnings and instructions relating to Operation BUNRE
apparently provided ample time for Alamo Force to complete its plans.
Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger, commander of the Sixth Army and of Alamo
Force, directed the planning at his Cape Cretin headquarters. The 1st
Cavalry Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Innis P. Swift, formed the
nucleus of the BUNRE Task Force. Representatives of Alamo Force,
BUNRE Task Force, Advon Fifth Air Force, and the Seventh Amphibious
Force met on 19 February to settle problems of coordinating action.
A second meeting was scheduled for 25 February, but the tempo of planning for繪ER changed radically on the 24th. General MacArthur sent urgent radio instructions to General Krueger which advanced D-day to 29 February at the latest. General Krueger was "to prepare plans for an immediate reconnaissance in force of Los Negros Island in the vicinity of Nomote airstrip, with the object of remaining in occupancy in case the area was found to be inadequately defended by the enemy; or in case of heavy resistance to withdraw after all possible recon-
naissance had been accomplished." If successful, the troops should prepare Nomote airstrip to receive transport planes which would come in at the earliest possible moment with airborne engineers to prepare the dome for fighters.

Several factors induced this sudden change in plans. The Central Pacific carrier attack on Truk on 17-18 February resulted in about 170 enemy planes being withdrawn from the Bismarcks. This blow at Truk, together with the attack on the Marianas on 23 February, cost the enemy about 375 planes, most of which were destroyed. Likewise, on 23 February the Japanese permitted three B-25's of the 17th Recon-naissance Squadron to loiter over Manus and Los Negros islands for 90 minutes without opposition. The pilots examined the coastal and inland areas at minimum altitude, observed grass growing on the Nomote and Lorengau airfields, and could see no signs of life. The mediums went over the cratered Nomote runway at 30 feet without receiving a single round of enemy fire. With this evidence before him, General
Kenney suggested that the Admiralties should be hit at once while the enemy was off balance. General MacArthur agreed and ordered a reconnaissance in force by an initial strength of 800 men. \(^{47}\) But the Fifth Air Force was taking no chances. After the failure of planes to reach Monotse on the 24th, nine S-55's again bombèd, strafèd and recon-noitered on 25 February. Again there was no opposition. \(^{48}\) Intelligence officers ventured the opinion that "This suggests that at the moment in the Admiralties enemy ground strength is not heavy, and that what there is it is being conserved. Air strength appears to be nonexistent." \(^{49}\) General MacArthur on 26 February confirmed his order for a reconnaissance in force, \(^{15}\) having decided to test the defenses of the Admiralties without simultaneous invasion of Kavieng.

The air plan for this reconnaissance made available the entire bomber strength in New Guinea, troop carrier squadrons as required, four B-41's for emergency air drops, and fighters according to demands arising from the tactical situation. General missions varied little from those outlined in Operations Instructions No. 44 on 18 February, especially for the bombers. Three fighter squadrons, with their service elements and the necessary air warning and navigational facilities, were to be installed at Monotse at the earliest practical date. A preliminary aerial bombardment for three days was to be followed by heavy bombing just before the landings on D-day. The 345th Bombardment Group (M) was to provide four squadrons for air alert over the invasion area, each squadron to be on alert for one hour; the 71st
Reconnaissance Group would have three B-25's on alert over Taku Island for three hours each to lay smoke if called for; heavies were to carry out neutralizing attacks on Kavieng if required, with New Guinea fields as alternate targets. Fighter squadrons were assigned to escort work and convoy cover. The air plan concludes with the significant qualification: "All air operations are dependent upon the weather." (See Appendices Nos. 9 and 10.)

Operation Bolo was to be a bold stroke, undertaken at a time when information about the enemy was far from satisfactory. There were reasons to believe that the enemy had evacuated most of his forces, but there was no definite evidence that he had done so. When the decision was made to advance the date to 29 February, commanders of the Bolo Task Force knew practically nothing about the enemy's defensive preparations if any had been made. General MacArthur seems to have been fully aware of the gamble involved, hence the initial phase was to be a reconnaissance in force with additional troops rushing in if the operation promised to be successful.

Preparation for D-Day

The plan for 26-28 February provided for Allied Air Forces bombers and fighters to attack the Admiralties, New Guinea, and New Britain. Enemy aircraft and airfields were the principal targets (see Appendix No. 9). In addition to these operations directly connected with Bolo, reconnaissance over the Bismarck Sea and its islands continued
whenever weather permitted. 52

An unusually heavy attack was scheduled for 26 February, when
seven squadrons of B-25's from Nadzab and three squadrons of B-24's
from Dobodura were briefed to strike Lorengau and Momote at half-hour
intervals. 53 Two B-24's were over Momote in the early morning hours,
dropping phosphorous bombs, frag clusters, and empty bottles. 54 None of the B-25's succeeded in penetrating the storms that swept
across the Bismarck Sea, but early in the afternoon two squadrons of
B-24's bombed Los Negros during a light rain. 55 This disappointing
day ended with one B-24 of the 65th Squadron on reconnaissance late in
the afternoon. 56 The strikes against New Guinea airfields enjoyed
much greater success, with 19 B-24's and 9 B-25's distributing 96 tons
of bombs over Dagua, But and Madang. 57

Japanese troops in the Admiralties were again treated to the weird
whistle of falling bottles combined with serious bombing by two B-24's
after dawn on 27 February. 58 Four squadrons of the 38th Group put
31 B-25's over Momote and Lorengau from 1000 to 1130 59 in a strike
apparently planned to cover a Catalina that landed a patrol of Alamo
scouts on the southwest coast of Los Negros. 60 As on the preceding
day, New Guinea airfields were hit more heavily than the Admiralties.
Three squadrons of B-24's hit Boram and Wewak, four squadrons of
B-24's bombed Tadjji, and one squadron of B-25's hit drones in the
Kansa Bay area. 61 The Catalina returned on 28 February to take off
the scouts it had landed the day before, 62 while a B-24 and two P-38's
bombed and strafed Papitalai. Shortly after noon, 27 B-25's of the
33rd and 345th Groups bombed and strafed Monote, Salami Plantation
and Lorengau.\textsuperscript{63} Crews of one squadron reported "no sign of enemy
activity in the area and stated that the majority of the buildings in
both Los Negros Island and the Lorengau area had been previously de-
stroyed."\textsuperscript{64} An hour after the B-25's cleared Los Negros, six B-24's
of the 65th Squadron came in to bomb Monote airstrip.\textsuperscript{65} In New
Guinea, three squadrons of B-24's and four of A-30's bombed the Hansa
Bay airstrips,\textsuperscript{66} while on the night of 28-29 February, seven B-24's
of the 7 Bomber Command succeeded in bombing at or near Hollandia.\textsuperscript{67}

This preliminary air program must be judged only moderately
successful because of prevailing bad weather. The damage inflicted
upon New Guinea airstrips, from which enemy planes might interfere with
the invasion, was probably much greater than that suffered by the
Admiralties. During the three days, 80 medium and heavy bombers
dropped about 500 tons on the Admiralties, but 127 bomber sorties
dropped 338 tons on New Guinea airstrips under the cover plan for
BRENNER. The principal purpose of these attacks on the Admiralties,
at least in the opinion of one group historian, was "to reconnoiter
and photograph in preparation for the speeded-up landing plan." This
historian makes an interesting observation:

Sightings for a week showed nil activity whatsoever, and our
reports added constantly to the growing belief that the main
strength of the enemy had evacuated. Only the day before the
projected landing were the crews, now thoroughly familiar with
the area and becoming more and more alert to small details which
had been previously unnoted, able to find signs of activity. But once the sightings started, they poured in. Extensive trench and earthwork systems in Lorengau, twenty pillboxes in Mokerang Plantation, coastal guns at various places, motor launches and luggers in temporary blocked-up frames on islands in the chain running north of Los Negros. All these sightings were... proven by the results of the actual fighting there. Nonetheless the convoy was already underway, and it was too late to change plans.68

Reports of inactivity do not seem to have caused an underestimate of enemy strength. The Intelligence Annex to Field Order No. 1, issued by Headquarters, ABATER Task Force on 27 February, accounted for some 4,300 Japanese troops on Manus and Los Negros islands. This estimate proved to be very close to the number of Japanese liquidated during the campaign.

D-Day at Arawe Harbor, 22 February 1944

Convoys from Oro Bay and Cape Grotin moved up the coast of New Guinea, through the Vitiaz Strait, and across the Bismarck Sea to Los Negros. Fighters from Finschhafen, Nadzab, Cape Gloucester and Dobodura patrolled whenever weather permitted. Severe tropical fronts caused many of the cover sorties to be abortive on D-day, but our pilots could take comfort in knowing that enemy planes likewise would be unable to get through the storms. As further precaution, the 90th Bombardment Group (H) made diversionary attacks on the northern New Guinea coast.69 The 348th Fighter Group sent 25 P-47's from Finschhafen to cover the preliminary naval bombardment but not one reached the convoy area.70 The 475th Fighter Group at Finschhafen covered the
landing operations with 57 P-38 sorties, but the 432d Squadron found the weather completely closed in over Los Negros and lost four P-38's on the return trip. 71

Only a part of the pre-landing air program was carried out. 72 Six B-24's of the 65th Squadron, with two of the 403d Squadron attached, took off from Dobodura at 0345. One returned to base but the remaining seven arrived over Morotai beginning at 0737 to make their bomb runs while three cruisers and nine destroyers were shelling installations around Moro Harbor. 73 Four squadrons of B-25's, 38th Bombardment Group, were scheduled to bomb and strafe the Morotai area when the B-24's cleared. Only three of the mediums completed the mission which was beset by difficulties from the start. Taking off before 0500 from the Morenda strip, the pilots flew by instruments for 2½ hours through darkness and heavy weather. Nearly all of the flights, becoming separated between Bomana and the Vitiaz Strait, missed the appointed rendezvous over Sakar Island in Tampier Strait. The group commander, Col. Clarence F. Tauber, led the 822d Squadron. After gathering three flights, he "cruised the area 40-50 miles south of the target and for 60 miles east and west for an hour and forty minutes in an effort to find a way over, under, around or through the storm front hanging over the Admiralties. 74 Two bombers of the 823d Squadron and one of the 71st arrived over Par Island, 12 miles east of Los Negros, at about 0745 where they circled for nearly 30 minutes waiting for orders to attack. At 0810, radio communications having failed,
star shells, the signal for the air attack, were observed above the bomber command ship. Letting down to 200 feet, the B-25’s bombed Jamandilai and Lobortutu points. As the planes started their runs they received intense but generally inaccurate machine-gun fire from five landing barges which were in the harbor.75

The 345th Bombardment Group (B) was to cover the landing with four squadrons of six B-25’s each. Orders were to proceed by squadrons at intervals of one hour from Nadzab to Pak Island, circle the island on call, and attack as directed by “Jumbo,” the bomber command ship station. If no targets were assigned, the squadrons were to bomb and strafe Loy Island on their return to base. The 498th Squadron led off from Nadzab at 0705, flew down the Markham Valley to Lae, then turned north to Umboi Island and on toward the Admiralties through soupy weather. Ten minutes later the 499th Squadron took off on a route that led up the Markham Valley to Bogadjim, then north to Admiralties. After flanking several thunder storms, the 499th flew through a 70-mile front which extended from 900 to 15,000 feet. The navigator’s perfect course brought the squadron through “a small hole in the weather at 0915/L at Pak Island, one minute later than the specified time.” The B-25’s circled for 23 minutes while rain squalls swept across Los Negros. Then “Jumbo” ordered the squadron to attack the native airfield area at the west side of Hyane Harbor. Visibility was becoming poorer as the rain increased. At 0942, when Higgins boats were entering the mouth of Hyane Harbor, the six B-25’s turned
in over Konote airdrome on their first bombing and strafing run. The
landing craft were about half way across the harbor upon completion
of the second run, and on the third pass the Higgins boats were too
close to permit still another run called for by "Jumbo." In the 9-
minute attack, the B-25's dropped 17 x 500-lb. bombs and expended over
12,000 rounds in strafing. As the planes turned back to base, pilots
saw 12 P-38's coming down through the overcast, heard the 12th Air
Liaison Party's station "Gangway" broadcasting from the beach, and
saw the 498th Squadron circling over Pak Island. 76

By this time (0258) the weather was so bad that an air attack
was impossible. Visibility and ceiling were zero. The 498th Squadron
continued circling over Pak Island until 1033 when the Navy ordered
it back to base. The 500th and 501st Squadrons arrived in turn over
Pak Island, circled while waiting for a break in the weather, then
went off to bomb and strafe targets on Lou Island. 77

This air cooperation in the landing at Hyane Harbor seems small
when one recalls that 4,000 or more Japanese soldiers were available
to oppose the invasion; but very little opposition developed and the
landings occurred with practically no casualties. 78 In view of this
lack of resistance, it is possible that the air strikes were a factor
in keeping the Japanese under cover. However, there is no indication
that our bombers and fighters played more than a minor role in the
proceedings on D-day. Air-ground communications began to function
early on D-day. Capt. George F. Frederick, the Air Liaison Officer, led the 12th ALP ashore with the assault wave, set up "Gangway" under fire, and was on the air at 0815. This station functioned admirably during the entire operation.

The Battle for Kofunbo, 1-6 March 1944

The "reconnaissance" had made such good progress that General MacArthur, who went ashore on D-day, ordered the troops to hold on. They dug in on the dispersal area of the airstrip and prepared to meet the Japanese counterattack. It came early in the morning of 1 March and was repulsed with a heavy expenditure of ammunition. Arrangements already had been made for air drops to replenish supplies. The first bombers over Kofunbo on 1 March were three B-25's, 39th Bombardment Group, which dropped supplies at 0830. Ten minutes later "Yankee Diddler," a B-17 of the 99th Troop Carrier Squadron from Finschhafen, began the first of three runs during which it dropped three tons of plasma, grenades, ammunition, and mortar shells. Upon completing each dropping run, the B-17 made a strafing pass along the west edge of the runway to cover troops retrieving the supplies. The same plane returned at 1500 to drop barbed wire, anti-personnel mines, grenades and ammunition. Again it strafed Japanese positions upon completing its drops at 1600. The strafing was so heavy that many of the enemy ran out into the open where ground machine-gun fire cut them down. Four B-17's of the 41st, 56th, and 89th Troop Carrier
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Description OVERSIZE MAP

[See ad In (Sea Eagle) Harbor]

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Squadrons also dropped wire, ammunition, plasma and weapons during
the day. The strafing passes executed by the supply planes were re-
ported to have "helped break the Jap hold as much or more than did
any attack weapon." Although such high praise appears somewhat exor-
bitant, there is no doubt that air supply "prevented a possible
emergency of real proportions." 83

Squadrons on bombing and strafing missions to the Admiralties
after D-day were briefed for both primary and secondary targets before
taking off. On occasion they were assigned secondary targets only,
which were to be attacked in case the Air Liaison Party failed to
assign a target designated by the ground troops. At other times,
squadrons of mediums were ordered to take station over Pak or some
other island on air alert to attack as directed. The 38th Bombardment
Group, for example, had six B-25's at a time over Lou Island starting
at 0845. The 823rd Squadron circled until 0945, then went on to bomb
and strafe Lombrain Point and Papitalai Mission. 84 The 823d Squadron's
six B-25's bombed and strafed Lombrain Point an hour later, 85 being
followed by the 405th Squadron over Lou Island. After failure to con-
tact "Gangway," the leader of the 405th Squadron ordered an attack
on Lorengau Township at 1132, 86 and the 71st Squadron took its turn
on air alert.

At this time the enemy was forming at Lorengau for a counterattack.
These preparations were discovered in time to permit our ground troops
to call for a group mission against the Japanese assembly area. In
response to this call, three squadrons of the 43d Bombardment Group at Dobodura loaded 16 B-24's with 96 x 1,000-lb. bombs and took off shortly after 0900. They arrived over the target about three hours later and dropped 93 of the bombs in the Lorengau area.

The 71st Squadron continued circling over Lou Island while the heavies were bombing Lorengau. At 1255 the mediums went off to bomb and strafe the same target. The last mission of the day fell to the 499th Bombardment Squadron (H) from Nadzab while the remaining squadrons of the 345th Group were attacking the Honsa Bay area. After circling on alert, the squadron received orders from "Gangway" to attack the plantation and wooded area 500 yards west of and parallel to Momota strip. Two destroyers that were shelling targets south of the strip ceased fire when the B-25's came over for their runs, an indication of how closely naval and air bombardment were coordinated. The six B-25's made two runs, the second 100 yards east of the first, dropped 23 x 500-lb. bombs and strafed with 14,000 rounds of machine-gun fire. Heavy foliage prevented observation but "Gangway" reported excellent results.

Air action on 2 March again began with a supply drop when the "Yankee Diddler" came over at 0830 to deliver wire, plasma, ammunition and grenades on the east edge of the strip. The supply plane made seven strafing runs west of the strip to cover troops retrieving the bundles. The 38th Bombardment Group (D) had arrived over Lou Island in the meantime with 23 B-25's on alert. Transmission
difficulties, shortage of gasoline, and misunderstanding marred the
group's effort. At 0935 "Gangway" relayed a request for an attack
against the west side of Iwo Jima strip. The 71st Squadron, having
heard no orders, bombed Iwomoto with three B-25's. Leaving the
target area, the squadron leader heard the call to bomb Iwojima. The
lead plane had two 500-pound bombs left, so the pilot made a run over
the west dispersal area, strafing on the way. The lead flight of
the 823d Squadron turned back to base because of fuel shortage, while
the rest of the squadron heard the call and responded by bombing and
strafing the northwest dispersal area and north along the skidway.

One flight of the 823d Squadron went home without attacking when no
call was received; two pilots of the other flight thought Iwomoto
was the target, while only one pilot interpreted the message correctly
and attacked accordingly. The 405th Squadron saved the mission from
being an almost total failure. Upon receipt of orders from "Gangway,"
its six B-25's separated into single elements and made excellent bomb-
ing and strafing runs through a light rain and under a 600-foot
clothing.

Supplies and reinforcements coming ashore in preparation for an
attack in mid-afternoon were augmented by another air drop at 1105.
Two B-17's, 89th Troop Carrier Squadron, brought in machine-gun
barrels, grenades, ammunition and rations. Upon leaving the target
the B-17's were jumped by four enemy fighters, one of which they shot
down.
The afternoon mission on 2 March, carried out by the 345th Bombardment Group (M) between 1352 and 1402 in preparation for the ground attack, also was poorly executed. Again the principal reason lay in faulty communications. At about 1225, when the four squadrons of B-25's were circling on air alert, some 15 Japanese Zekes, Bams and Tonsa jumped them. Unfortunately for the enemy, eight P-47's of the 341st Fighter Squadron on patrol over Manus Island saw the attack and rushed in. The enemy lost eight destroyed and four probably destroyed.\footnote{\textsuperscript{37}} Damage to the B-25's was slight, but the radio of one plane was put out of order. The pilots had left Nadzab with orders to attack 1,000 yards west of the Monato strip, but they were to contact "Sangway" before bombing. The 13th Air Liaison Party changed the target to both sides of Porhoremen Creek southeast of the strip. The 501st Squadron dropped its bombs on the new target, then heard "a voice on the radio . . . saying that bombs were falling among friendly troops and to cease attack and return to base." Apparently someone in the 501st was being a bit too suspicious, for its mission report states: "It is considered likely that this was an attempt by the enemy to upset the attack with false radio orders, as intelligence reports received from BLUE LANDING FORCE after the attack report bombing excellent."\footnote{\textsuperscript{38}} But, except for the 501st and 498th Squadrons, the bombing was far from excellent and the Japs were not again accused of playing games with the radio. The 498th dropped 22 x 500-lb. bombs on the proper target, then returned to base with the remaining eight bombs, when the above-
mentioned request that there be no more bombing was received. \(^9\) This request to cease bombing apparently was actually caused by the 590th Squadron whose bombs "were seen to burst east of the strip about halfway up the runway, across the strip and into the Northwest dispersal area, thus missing the target specified by 13th A&L." \(^{100}\) The order to cease bombing came in only 20 seconds before the 499th Squadron was ready to release its bombs. Two of the planes failed to receive the order, one because its radio had been shot out in the fight with enemy interceptors, the other because the pilot had turned on the interphone for final corrections. These two B-25's dropped 10 x 500-lb. bombs down the center of the west dispersal area. \(^{101}\) The generally unsatisfactory results of this mission may be attributed to poor radio communications, to the sudden change in targets, and to a bad error by one squadron.

The marshy area along Porharmeneo Creek was also the target for 16 A-20's of the 13th and 90th Bombardment Squadrons (L) from Nadzab. Radio calls from the 13th A&L were weak, but the A-20's picked up a relay by the fighter control station, "Saucepan." They made dry runs first to locate the target accurately, then dropped 76 x 500-lb. bombs between 1505 and 1515 and expended nearly 20,000 rounds in strafing. \(^{102}\) The day's air attacks were rounded out by eight P-47's, 340th Fighter Squadron, which strafed the coast northeast of Niihau strip at 1530, \(^{103}\) and by 16 P-38's of the 435d Fighter Squadron which attacked enemy gun positions on Hyane Harbor. \(^{104}\)
Bad weather interfered with the air program on 3 March. Three squadrons of B-24's from the 43d Group took off from Dobodura to bomb the road leading to Salami Plantation. Since individual planes were ordered not to leave the formation in an attempt to get through the front, the heavies turned off to bomb Alezashafen. At 1600, nine A-20's of the 13th Bombardment Squadron bombed and strafed the northern peninsula of Hyane Harbor with good results. One enemy fighter that came through the clouds was driven off by destroyer fire. Two minutes later, six B-25's of the 499th Squadron dropped 50 x 100-lb. white phosphorous bombs from 500 feet on enemy troop areas north of the harbor and strafed with more than 10,000 rounds.

A particularly vicious but rash Japanese counterattack during the night of 3-4 March failed to dislodge our troops holding the airfield. The enemy, however, still held areas west and north of Hyane Harbor which were bombed and strafed by 16 A-20's at noon on 4 March. Six B-25's came over at 1330 to strike north of Hyane Harbor at Loburamu Point; 16 minutes later six more B-25's attacked the same areas. Plans for a heavy air bombardment of Salami Plantation on 5 March were disrupted by bad weather. The target was so shrouded by clouds that 35 B-24's were unable to bomb. Some squadrons, after flying at 800 feet for 250 miles, found the weather clear enough over Los Negros to attack assigned targets. Seventeen B-25's and 23 B-24's dropped 96 tons on the plantation area between 1110 and 1223. The heavy fighting for Komote was over on 6 March, and at midday 16
E-25's bombed and strafed Papitalai, the point at the entrance to Papitalai Harbor, and Salami Plantation.\textsuperscript{115}

After the enemy had lost Momote, Porlaka and the native airstrip, he was able to offer little effective resistance on the rest of Los Negros. Papitalai, Lombrum and Yokorong plantations were overrun quickly after the 2d Cavalry Brigade had landed on Salami Beach on 9 March. The 8th Air Liaison Party came in with these reinforcements.\textsuperscript{114}

While this mopping up was in progress, the Momote air strip became operational. An LST landed 300 Seabees in the afternoon of 2 March and the work of repairing the damaged strip had been going on when Japanese units were still holding the west side of the field. Artillery spotters (L-4's) were using the field by 6 March,\textsuperscript{115} and on the 7th a B-25 landed at about noon.\textsuperscript{116} On 9 March, a B-25 of the 71st Bombardment Squadron escorted 12 RAAF F-40's of the 77th Fighter Squadron to Momote,\textsuperscript{117} and 12 more arrived the next day.\textsuperscript{118} The presence of these fighters at Momote simplified the problem of getting air strikes when they were needed, but F-26's and P-47's from New Guinea continued to fly patrol missions over the Admiralties until after the landing near Lorengau on Manus Island. Before the end of the month, some of these fighters were remaining over night.\textsuperscript{119}

During the first six days of March, the Fifth Air Force flew 304 effective bomber sorties over Los Negros, dropped more than 292 tons of bombs, and expended nearly 188,000 rounds of ammunition in strafing (see Appendix No. 8). Allied mastery of the air was complete, but bad
weather during much of the operation deprived ground troops of considerable assistance from the Allied Air Forces.

Preparation for the Manus Island Landing, 7-14 March 1944

The range of targets assigned to bombers from 7 to 14 March was broadened considerably in comparison with those attacked during the first week of the invasion. Fighters continued on patrol and P-38's occasionally executed strafing attacks; but there were indications that the principal tasks of the Fifth Air Force in the conquest of the Admiralties were drawing to a close.

Kdrilo and Hauwei islands at the north side of Seeaddler Harbor held a few guns that annoyed naval vessels bombarding targets on Los Negros. They provided, also, sites from which our own artillery could fire on enemy positions in the Lorengau area. These two islands, especially the east tip of Hauwei, were the assigned targets for 17 B-24's of the 453d Bombardment Group on 7 March. Bad weather plagued the planes from the time they left Dobodura and only seven of them completed the mission. Five of the 403d Squadron's heavies dropped 40 x 1,000-lb. bombs, only 9 of which were claimed as having hit the target; 22 of the others fell within 1,000 feet of the aiming point.120

Eleven B-25's, sent out to search for barges along the coast of Manus, were forced to turn back by storms.121 An improvement in the weather on 8 March brought five B-25's from Nadzab with supplies to drop over Salami Plantation,122 while 17 B-24's and 11 B-25's bombed and strafed
Hauwei and Kudilo islands as well as other targets. The presence of destroyers in the passage east of Hauwei Island kept five B-24's circling for an hour waiting for permission to bomb. They then went off to hit Bear Point. The one B-24 that did bomb Hauwei was reported to have destroyed the gun emplacements and killed 75 Japanese.\footnote{123}

Bomber missions during the next four days were directed primarily against Lorengau and trails leading to it. The 19th and 33d Squadrons, 22d Bombardment Group (c), re-entering combat after changing over from B-25's, attacked Lugos Mission and Lorengau airfield on 10 March with 9 out of 12 B-24's reaching the target.\footnote{124} On the same day, 12 B-25's ran along the coast to bomb and strafe targets of opportunity.\footnote{125}

A Japanese troop concentration at Lugos Mission was the target for seven B-24's on 11 March which claimed 198 hits in the target area with 100-pound phosphorous bombs. The heavies then dropped down to tree-top level and strafed the target heavily.\footnote{126} In an attack on Lorengau drome, six B-25's destroyed a bridge at the mouth of the Lorengau River, while another squadron bombed and strafed the No. 1 road leading from Lorengau to Tingo Village.\footnote{127} The roads to Tingo and Rossam and the coastal road were the targets for 24 B-25's on 12-13 March. In these attacks from 9 to 13 March, 26 B-24's and 55 B-25's dropped 145 tons of bombs and expended about 135,000 rounds in strafing (see Appendix No. 8).

Ground troops in the meantime were preparing for the Manus Island landing. Artillery was to be emplaced on Butjo Luo and Hauwei
islands which were reconnoitered on 11 March. The 302d Reconnaissance Troop's patrol to Hauwei encountered severe machine-gun and mortar fire when it landed on the west end of the island. The 2d Squadron, 7th Cavalry from Lombrum Point attacked Hauwei on 12 March in an amphibious operation. The 77th Fighter Squadron (RAAF) from Kowote combed and strafed with six P-40's before the landing occurred at 1345. Captain Frederick, 12th ALP, guided the P-40's to their targets by messages which were sent over an artillery set and were relayed by his assistant at the "Gangway" station. Japanese resistance on Hauwei Island ended on 13 March and our artillery units were able to take up ideal positions to support the landing on Manus Island which was scheduled for 15 March. While the artillery was getting into position on the 14th, destroyers shelled Pityulu Island and Lorengau.

Air Activity to the End of the Campaign

A combination of artillery, naval and air bombardment prepared the way for the 8th Cavalry Regiment to land on Manus Island at 0930 on 15 March. Captain Frederick, in conference with General Swift on 11 March, had prepared the air plan. Again the nature of the targets, hazardous defenses, and expected weakness of enemy opposition held air participation to a small effort. The 499th and 500th Bombardment Squadrons (L) attacked the landing beaches on either side of the Lelu River with 18 B-25's between 0907 and 0925 on the 15th. They cleared the target just as troops were coming ashore. The 12th ALP again was among the first troops to land, and at about 0930 had
an SCR 193, set up in a jeep, in contact with the 77th Fighter Squadron (RAAF) and the 501st Bombardment Squadron on air alert. The 12th ALF directed the P-40's in a coordinated tank-artillery-air attack to knock out enemy pillboxes near the beach. Nine B-25's of the 501st Squadron circled on alert north of Hauwei Island from 0957 to 1100, then were sent by the 12th ALF to bomb and strafe Tingo Village ahead of the 2d Squadron, 8th Cavalry. The 498th Squadron then took its turn on alert with nine B-25's until about 1200 and also attacked Tingo Village on the way back to Nadzab.

These strikes on D-day at Manus practically ended Fifth Air Force bomber activity over the Admiralties. On 16 March, a B-25 of the 323d Squadron, which had come in as a courier to Koloti, took off from that field at the request of General Chase to strafe a pocket of enemy troops on Los Negros. Two B-25's dropped a ton of bombs on Lomiu Passage on 20 March, and one B-25 strafed Pityulu Island on the 25th. Nine A-20's of the 8th Bombardment Squadron, led by a P-40, strafed and bombed troops south of Lorengau at 0905 on 26 March.

This last attack by Fifth Air Force bombers on Manus Island was directed against an enemy strongpoint near Warembu where the 7th Cavalry was meeting considerable opposition. On 24 March, Captain Frederick, the RAAF wing commander, the commanding general of the 2d Cavalry Brigade and the 7th Cavalry Regiment's commander worked out a plan for a coordinated air-ground assault at Warembu. The 7th Cavalry set out smoke pots on the morning of 25 March to mark their front.
line, then withdrew 500 yards. The first wave of 12 RAAF P-40's combed at 0800; an equal number came in at 0815 and again at 0920. Twenty-four P-40's rounded out the attack by strafing at 1005. The Cavalry, failing to take advantage of these attacks, moved cautiously back to their original positions. After the A-20 strike on 26 March, P-40's again attacked Warambu. 139

Fighter squadrons of the RAAF continued to be active while the SEPARER Task Force invaded and occupied lesser islands of the Admiralties and mopped up Los Negros and Manus. 140 By 18 March, the 76th and 77th Fighter Squadrons (RAAF) were at Nimito with 24 P-40's, all but two of which were ready for combat. The 79th Fighter Squadron (RAAF) with 24 Spitfires moved to Nimito from Hiriwina during the last week of March. 141 These squadrons provided air cooperation for the ground troops until the Admiralties campaign was declared completed on 18 May.

There was an amazing lack of enemy air opposition throughout Operation SEPARER, especially in view of the strength available in New Guinea. A few enemy planes were reported circling near Los Negros on 1 March, 142 and the only serious effort to put up a fight was that mentioned above which occurred on 3 March. Three Japanese planes that bombed and strafed Los Negros during the night of 7-8 March killed two men and wounded six. A lone fighter circled Los Negros for 90 minutes on the following night but no damage resulted from its single bomb run. Two attacks during the night of 12-13 March, probably by not more than a single plane each time, dropped a few
bombs harmlessly. This lack of air activity led to the conclusion that the enemy's failure "to make use of the substantial air strength held at Hollandia is a further indication that the decline in his overall air striking power has made him reluctant to risk heavy losses even for the sake of strategically valuable bases."

The BREA Task Force was prepared to cope with far greater enemy air opposition than actually developed. Air warning and other units assigned to the task force, including the 75th Fighter Wing (PAF), numbered 2,475 men. By far the larger part of this number belonged to the PAAF component of the Allied Air Forces. The U. S. 583d Signal Air Warning Battalion provided personnel from Company C, some of whom went ashore on D-day. One platoon operated intermittently for a few days, then began 24-hour operation on 4 March. Another platoon was functioning four days later and two more by 20 March. Ground observer detachments from Company C were landed by Catalina's on Bipi and Bat Islands on 3 March to provide long-range warning. The Bat Island detachment was replaced by an Australian radar station late in March, and in mid-April the Bipi Island group rejoined the company.

Air activity in Operation BREA was by no means entirely confined to bomber missions. Fighter squadrons covered shipping in the Bismarck Sea and flew numerous patrol missions over Los Negros and Manus, most of which were purely routine except for occasional strafing requested by ground troops. Nearly all of this work fell to three fighter groups based chiefly at Finschhafen: the 3th (P-40's, P-38's), 54th...
(P-47's), and the 475th (P-39's). The 35th Fighter Squadron (P-47's) devoted most of its efforts to patrols between Cape Gloucester and Einschhafen, over the Milne Bay Peninsula of New Britain, and over convoys to Los Negros. The 36th Fighter Squadron (P-39's) performed similar missions, with greater attention to covering shipping lying off the Admiralties. Activities of the 433d Fighter Squadron (P-38's) in March were typical of the 475th Fighter Group: 12 missions as shipping cover, 5 missions escorting B-17's to Nomote, and 4 patrol missions over the Admiralties.

Related Operations

A brief account, however incomplete, of other operations in the New Guinea-Bismarck Archipelago region is necessary in order to preserve a proper perspective in treating the Admiralties campaign. The Fifth Air Force, while participating in Operation BREWER to the extent required by the tactical situation, was primarily occupied with the New Guinea campaign. In comparison with the latter, Operation BREWER was something of a side issue because it offered few opportunities for the use of that striking power which at last had wrested air supremacy from the Japanese.

The principal achievement of the V Bomber Command during March was the neutralization of the Wewak group of airfields. Three squadrons of the 390th Bombardment Group (E) moved to Nadzab from Fenton, Australia, at the end of February to take part in the New

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Guinea and Admiralties campaigns, although they contributed very little to the latter. 151 In concentrating upon 'ewak, the purpose was "to neutralize the enemy ground and air strength by making the aerodromes untenable, the anti-aircraft useless, the supply line extinct and thus cut off the estimated 50,000 enemy troops in the 'ewak area from their source of dependency." 152 The case with which a small amphibious force landed at Yalau Plantation northwest of Saidor on 6 March testified to the effectiveness of this effort. By 15 March, the Japanese had lost an estimated 115 planes in attempting to defend the 'ewak area. 153

This concentration of attacks against the 'ewak group forced the enemy to fall back upon Radji and Hollandia. Intelligence estimates accounted for 274 combat planes at Hollandia on 21 March, of which 132 were fighters. This strength, growing to more than 300 fighters and light and medium bombers, constituted a serious threat to our bases north of the Owen Stanley Mountains and made advanced units at Cape Gloucester, Saidor and Manus highly vulnerable should the Japanese decide to attack. 154 This danger was eliminated on 30 and 31 March when 133 B-24's, escorted by 116 P-38's, destroyed at least 219 enemy planes on the ground and in the air. 155

The destruction of Japanese air power at Hollandia was one of the outstanding performances of the Pacific war. At the middle of March, when our troops were landing on Manus Island and were mopping up Los Negros, steps that meant the loss to the enemy of an extremely important position, the Japanese held well over 150 light and medium
bombers idle at Hollandia. One might, at least, expect their use
against Salador, or for raids on Madzab, Kaisvit, or Finschhafen.
Instead, the enemy lined up his planes "like potumias in a garden,"156
inviting disaster. Several explanations may be hazarded to account
for such behavior: the Japanese were not fully informed about events
in the Admiralties, they were conserving their strength for some
massive blow, they were preparing to withdraw to the Philippines or
to some other rear area, their planes were being used for other than
combat missions—but these are only guesses.

Reconnaissance of the Bismarck Sea and interdiction of the
Japanese supply lines continued unabated while Operation BOMBER was
under way. The 63d Bombardment Squadron (H) flew many sorties on
armed reconnaissance, anti-radar search, and weather reconnaissance.157
Squadrons of the 71st Reconnaissance Group, as well as planes from
other units, searched constantly for enemy shipping. The monotony of
relatively unproductive barge and lugger hunts was relieved on 19
March when B-24's on their way to Boraun sighted a convoy of five
vessels off Newak. The V Bomber Command sent out A-20's and B-25's
which sank the entire convoy.158 With the Newak dromes neutralized,
the Fifth Air Force practically eliminated the barge repair and
supply depot on Kairuru Island159 and made repeated attacks against
the small craft that were attempting, often successfully, to carry
supplies to beleaguered garrisons.
A comparison of the military situation on 1 December 1943 with that which prevailed at the end of March 1944 reveals the significance of Allied gains in the conquest of the Bismarck Archipelago. At the start of this period, the Allies held none of the Bismarck Archipelago. Rabaul was one of Japan's major naval and air bases, Japanese air strength in northern New Guinea was formidable, the Huon Peninsula was still unconquered, the straits between New Guinea and New Britain were hazardous for our shipping, and Japanese vessels were plying the Bismarck Sea in large numbers. Madzab, Kilaipit, Finschaafen, and Gusap in New Guinea were our most advanced airfields. At the close of the period all of western New Britain was in Allied possession, Rabaul was reduced to a minor base, Japan's airfields in northern New Guinea were practically neutralized, only isolated pockets of enemy troops remained on the Huon Peninsula, our ships could sail at will through the Vitiaz Strait and into the Bismarck Sea, and the Allied Air Forces had new bases at Cape Gloucester, Saicor and Momote while a fourth, at Hokarang on Leyte, was under construction. The only Japanese ground forces of any consequence in the Bismarck Archipelago were isolated in New Ireland and around Rabaul. Enemy barges might still attempt to break through air and surface patrols to supply and re-inforce troops on Bougainville, but the routes from Rabaul to New Guinea were severed.

The construction of major air and naval bases in the Admiralties completed the encirclement of Rabaul. Hokarang and Momote filled out...
the chain that included Nissan, Torokina, Kiriwina, Cape Gloucester, Finschhafen and Seidore. Not only were the enemy's supply lines to Rabaul virtually sealed off, but his internal communications became more open to Allied air attack. 160

The axis of Allied advance was turned from north to west, reliving supply lines of the constant threat of flank attack that had been present since the start of the Papuan campaign. 161 Leapfrogging operations along the New Guinea coast could now be undertaken with greater safety. Bases in the Admiralties not only provided flank protection for these operations in New Guinea but also became of utmost importance in staging for the Philippines campaign and in neutralizing the Caroline Islands.
GLOSSARY

A/D  Airdrone
ADVON  Advanced Headquarters
AFSHO  AAF Historical Office
AGF  Army Ground Forces
AGO  Office of The Adjutant General

CP  Command Post

C/S  Chief of Staff

F.O.  Field Order

ISU  Intelligence Summary

MID WDGS  Military Intelligence Division, War

HQR  Department General Staff

NCR  Main line of resistance

NMR  Narrative Combat Report

O.N.I.  Narrative Mission Report

CP  Office of Naval Intelligence

RAAF  Observation post

Royal Australian Air Force

RAAFC  Reconnaissance

SOPAC  South Pacific

SWPA  Southwest Pacific Area

SECRET INTELLIGENCE
Chapter I

1. The estimated areas and population of the Archipelago in 1940 were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Islands</th>
<th>Area in  sq. mi.</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Britain</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>77,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Ireland</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>19,417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hanover</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>5,188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admiralty &amp; Northwestern Is.</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>13,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All minor islands</td>
<td>5,250</td>
<td>24,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>23,350</td>
<td>149,753</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Archipelago extends from 0° 51' to 06° 20' S latitude and from 142° 30' to 155° E longitude. The islands reach from the Pagura group (east of New Ireland) west for 360 miles to Wuvulu, and from Manus south to Cape Ball on New Britain for 360 miles. AD AFS, "Survey of Bismarck Archipelago" (S 30-976), op. 1-2, in A-2 Lib.

2. The island has a width varying between 20 and 60 miles, an over-all length of 350 miles.

3. Ibid., p. 1, 10-11. Alamoa Bay "is a hill-encircled expanse of water some 5 miles north and south by 2 miles east and west which occupies the center of an immense volcano whose southeastern side has been blown away, admitting the waters of the sea." Ibid., p. 11.

4. New Ireland is 220 miles long, 5 to 30 miles wide. Ibid., pp. 12, 36.


6. "Survey of Bismarck Archipelago," pp. 29-30. Other islands of the group frequented by barges were Uron and Handoa. The St. Matthias group, 47 miles north of New Hanover, includes Haukau, Eireau and Zonch islands. A few islands lie in the straits between New Guinea and New Britain. Uboi, with an area of about 430 square miles, is the largest of these. Formed by volcanoes, Uboi is subject to almost daily earth tremors. The Sissi Islands south of Uboi are a small archipelago of wooded islets and reefs. Tolo-wa Island, 16 miles northwest of Uboi, is a volcanic cone about 5 miles in diameter. Sakar Island lies 6 miles northeast of Uboi and 16 miles northwest of Dorn Point, New Britain. Five miles south of Sakar Island, Ritter Island rises some 350 feet above sea level. None of these islands is of much importance, although many of them have limited anchorage for small schooners, luggers, and barges. Ibid., no. 27-28.

10 Feb. 44,"* in AGF Analysis Files, 91-33.4 (5959); *History
of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 5; Hq. Alamo Force, "Report of
Dexter Operation, 29 Feb.-18 May 44,"* in AGF Analysis Files,
91-33.4 (5529).


War in the Southwest Pacific," in *Air Force, Nov. 44, p. 35.*


13. CIN CINCPAC, General Summary No. 167, 4 March 44, pp. 15-16, in *History
of Fifth Air Force, Part III, 1 Feb. 44 to 15 June 44, App. III,
Doc. No. 9; Hq. and CINCPAC, Ism No. 145, 13 Oct. 43, p. 16, in A-2
Lib. All Intelligence Summaries (Ismas) hereafter cited were issued
by Hq. AAF CINCPAC unless other source is specified.


18. *Ism No. 155 (13 Nov. 43), p. 3.* In the CINCPAC alone, from 7 Dec. 41
to 31 Oct. 43, Japanese losses were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Plane</th>
<th>Destroyed</th>
<th>Probably destroyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fighters</td>
<td>1,711</td>
<td>607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombers</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconnaissance</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>2,682</td>
<td>823</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


20. Hq. AGF, *"Report on Air Support in Southwest Pacific Area During the
Period 1 November 1943 to 1 February 1944,"* [Dexter Report], by
Col. Henry F. Dexter, p. 6, in Army War College 3.9.1/102. All PAAF
squadrons, except the 4th Army Cooperation Squadron (ran), were in

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the 9th Operational Group whose primary task was "surveillance of the water areas, protection of own shipping and interruption of enemy shipping." The Air Task Forces were not "entirely semi-independent commands, planning and executing general mission-type orders. Each day Adven planned the employment of the Air for the next day. Specific assignments were given to the various task forces. These were issued as fragmentary orders, often by telephone, and later confirmed by a written 'Frag Order' [Fragmentary Field Order] for the record. The various Task Forces executed these missions with the means under their control. If the mission exceeded their capacity, Adven would perform the mission with its own squadrons, or would augment the Task Force. Such strength as might remain to the Air Task Forces beyond the specific assignments from Adven would be employed by the Task Force commanders in pursuance of the general plan including ground support missions. In a broad sense Adven retained control over all the Air and the Air Task Force Headquarters were sub-sections of Adven." Iid., op. 5-6.

21. Stations as of 6 Nov. 43 were as follows:

3d Bomb Gp. (L) — Dobodura
23d Bomb Gp. (H) — Dobodura
38th Bomb Gp. (L) — Port Moresby (Duran Airfield)
45d Bomb Gp. (H) — Port Moresby (Jackson Airfield), except the 63d Bomb Sq. at Dobodura
90th Bomb Gp. (H) — Port Moresby (Bard's Airfield)
346th Bomb Gp. (L) — Port Moresby (Jackson and Schweinor's airfields)
330th Bomb Gp. (H) — Fenton, Longstrin, Nanukuon airfields, all near Darwin

The 313th and 417th Bombardment Groups had not yet appeared in the theater. See Weekly Status and Operations Reports [Form 344's] for Period 31 Oct.—6 Nov. 43.

22. CT-IN-4566 (9-11-43), Kenney to CG AAF, OA-2167, 8 Nov. 43.

23. Stations as of 6 Nov. 43 were as follows:

8th Fighter Gp. — Port Moresby (Hila and Bard's airfields)
35th Fighter Gp. — 40th and 41st Sqs. at Hidatna, 39th Sq. at Port Moresby (Schwentner's Airfield)
49th Fighter Gp. — 7th and 9th Sqs. at Dobodura, 8th Sq. at Gusau
346th Fighter Gp. — Port Moresby (Jackson, Durand, and Bard's)
475th Fighter Gp. — Dobodura

See Form 344's, 31 Oct.—6 Nov. 43.

24. Of the 1,480 Fifth Air Force aircraft in the theater on 30 October 1943, there were 591 bombers, 511 fighters, 266 transports, and 12 reconnaissance planes (Status and Commitment of AAF Aircraft in
Theaters, 30 Oct. 43, Form S8-6, in Stat. Control Div.). This report is difficult to reconcile with the cable report which states that as of 8 November 1943, there were 1,181 tactical aircraft in the theater, of which 87 might not be repairable, and 559 non-tactical aircraft, giving a total of 1,770. CI-11-6916 (11-11-43), Kenney to QG AAF, No. A-2137, 11 Nov. 43. The principal discrepancy lies in the number of non-tactical aircraft reported, which are not included in Form S8-6.

25. The breakdown was 122 P-38's, 20 P-39's, 184 P-47's, 8 P-70's, 93 P-40's, 44 A-20's, 165 B-25's, 126 B-24's, 19 B-26's. The theater classified 4-20's, P-40's, and B-25's and B-26's as attack aviation. The total number of planes on hand, fit for combat or repairable within 30 days, was 1,657, which included 88 photo reconnaissance and 258 transport aircraft. Of this total, 1,096 were assigned to units. All but 23 of the transports were assigned. 5th Air Force 110 Reports, 1944, in Stat. Control Div.

26. Twenty-three B-24's of the 330th Bomb Gp. (H) were retained at Fenton. EAAF strength is shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sq. no.</th>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Type of plane</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vixen Camp</td>
<td>Beaufort</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (det)</td>
<td>Port Moresby</td>
<td>Beaufort</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Vixen Camp</td>
<td>Beaufort</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Kirivina</td>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Kirivina</td>
<td>Tempest</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Vixen Camp</td>
<td>Beaufort</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total no. of bombers</td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Kirivina</td>
<td>Beaufighter</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Vixen Camp &amp; Kirivina</td>
<td>Kittyhawk</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Kirivina</td>
<td>Kittyhawk</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Vixen Camp &amp; Kirivina</td>
<td>Kittyhawk</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Kirivina</td>
<td>Kittyhawk</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Kirivina</td>
<td>Spitfire</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total no. of fighters</td>
<td></td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Port Moresby &amp; Ladzeb</td>
<td>Wirraway</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casuei</td>
<td>Boomerang</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total no. of obvs. a/c</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total no. of bombers, fighters, a/c</td>
<td></td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The EAAF had about the same number of tactical aircraft in Australia, and a squadron of 16 Netherlands East Indies' 5-25's was stationed at Darwin. 5th Air Force 110 Reports, 1944.
27. Form 34's, 16-24 Dec. 43; History, 38th Bomb Grp., Feb. 44, p. 1. Two squadrons of the 475th Fighter Group apparently moved to Kirawina to make room for the bombers.

28. Form 34's, 31 Oct.-6 Nov. 43. Detachment A, 419th Night Fighter Squadron, was at Berry Dome, near Port Moresby, with two P-38's and four P-70's. The 67th Fighter Squadron, 347th Fighter Group of the Thirteenth Air Force was on Woodlark Island. One should also consider the RAAF units on Kirawina and Goodenough islands. See above, n. 21.


31. Ltr., Whitehead to Kenney, 11 Nov. 43.


34. Hq. Escalator, F. O. No. 5, 30 Nov. 43, in 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Annex E. General Whitehead apparently had some doubt as to the ability of the Allied Air Forces to fulfill this assignment, and believed that DEXTERITY should be postponed until after 15 January in order to permit completion of all-weather facilities at Rabaq for 75 fighters, 32 B-25's, 16 B-17's, or B-20's, and 78 troop carriers; there should be 75 fighters and 36 B-20's at Gurneva, and 75 fighters and 28 troop carriers at Tinian. The Sixth Army desired air supply for MARINA. Moreover, an all-weather road, capable of carrying 1,000 tons per day, must be completed between Ie Shima and Rabaq. Ltr., Whitehead to Kenney, 15 Nov. 43; memo, Whitehead to Kenney, 15 Nov. 43.

35. Dexterity Report, p. 4.


37. Hq. Escalator, F. O. No. 5, 30 Nov. 43, in 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Annex F. The 163d Parachute Infantry was deleted from the troop list because Mililopa lacked adequate facilities to stage transport planes for its movement, unless a heavy bombardment group were moved to Port Moresby. Uncertain weather over the Owen Stanley Range makes it doubtful if the mission set forth in the 30th is workable.
Mountains might cause bombers at Narash to be unavailable for aid on 2-day (Army) and D-day (Sorcoen day). Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 5.

38. Isun No. 148 (20 Oct. 43), p. 1. On 15 October 1943, the Japanese sent 52 Vals, Oscars, and Harps to Oro Bay. All but four were shot down, the 475th Fighter Group getting 34 out of the 48. History, 433d Fighter Sq., May 43-Jan. 44, p. 7.


40. Isun No. 150 (27 Oct. 43), p. 1a. For example, 3 destroyers, 5 unidentified vessels, and 15 barges were sighted in Reim Bay by two E-24's on the night of 24-25 Oct. 43. Ibid., p. 2a. Various incoming cables report attack by P2 boats against barges which were running supplies and troops to western New Britain.


43. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Annex A, p. 45. Defense of New Britain was a responsibility of the 8th Area Army with headquarters at Rabaul. The central area was entrusted to the 17th Division with headquarters at Cape Hoskins. The 65th Brigade, with headquarters at Cape Gloucester, had the area west of the line Kueck Bay-Pulee River mouth, as well as Vitu and Uphol Islands. Ibid., pp. 27-42. The 141st and 143d Regiments, 65th Brigade, were veterans of Bataan. The 53d Regiment, 17th Division, was also identified in the Gloucester area. (Hq. LT 21. Operation Order No. 3-43, 23 Dec. 43, in 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Annex A, App. 1. Off. Cl-13-3747 (11-15-43), Jackman to 0/S, 22-7833, 15 Nov. 43. A SOFAD prisoner of war located the 53d at Gazavap, the 81st in New Guinea, part of the 54th in Rabaul, and part of the 54th en route from China.


48. AGO Board Report No. 65 SOPA, pg. 1-2, in AGO Analysis Files 4-2-35/44 (2908).
49. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., May 42-April 44, p. 11; 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Annex A, p. 35. The coastline between Tawali and the east side of Borgen Bay was photographed on Kodacolor on 18 December 1943. Stereo pairs were set up at the 1st Marine Division OP for study by lower echelon commanders, intelligence officers, boat crews, and others. A photographic interpreter was on hand to explain the photos. Ibid., p. 7. Photographic reconnaissance was augmented by daring ground reconnaissance. A Marine patrol investigated the area around Alasea from 24 September to 10 October 1943. Two small parties landed near Tawali and Sillivat Point to get hydrographic data on the beaches. Another patrol landed at Lushan Harbor near Gamata on 6 October and remained in the area for three weeks. On the night of 9-10 October an officer and five natives were landed near 110 east of the Arawe Strip for a short reconnaissance. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 7.

50. History, 8th Photo Rec. Sq., activation to 1 Feb. 44, p. 4.

51. 8th Photo Rec. Sq., Form 34's, Nov. 43.

52. 408th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 7-13 Nov. 43.

53. 90th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 16-20 Nov. 43.
Chapter II


5. C-IN-1654 (11-11-43), MacArthur to G/SM, 1-7-43, 3 Nov. 43.

6. 431st Fighter Sq., Narrative Combat Report, 3 Nov. 43, in History, 431st Fighter Sq., 17 June 43-31 Jan. 44.

7. Incoming cables, MacArthur to G/SM, 1654 (3-11-43), 1-7-43, 3 Nov. 43: 2512 (8-11-43), 1-7-43, 3 Nov. 43. For further details, see Form 44's, 31 Oct.-6 Nov. 43; Isun No. 153 (6 Nov. 43), p. 2; and Lee Van Atta, "Strafe-Bombing Pays Off in the South Pacific: How It Blasts Jan Sakini," in Air Force, Feb. 44, pp. 15, 64.

8. C-IN-1299 (4-11-43), Marshall to MacArthur, p. 20, 4 Nov. 43.

9. C-IN-2512 (8-11-43), MacArthur to G/SM, 1-7-43, 5 Nov. 43.

10. C-IN-2718 (6-11-43), MacArthur to G/SM, 1-7-43, 6 Nov. 43: 475th Fighter Gp. and 43d Bomb Gp., Form 44's, 31 Oct.-6 Nov. 43. Photos taken before the carrier planes attacked revealed 8 heavy cruisers, 3 light cruisers, and 14 destroyers in Blanche Bay. C-IN-4744 (8-11-43), MacArthur to G/SM, 1-7-43, 3 Nov. 43.

11. C-IN-2763 (6-11-43), MacArthur to G/SM, 1-7-43, 6 Nov. 43.

12. C-IN-2744 (8-11-43), MacArthur to G/SM, 1-7-43, 8 Nov. 43: 90th Bomb Gp., 475th Fighter Gp., 9th Fighter Gp., and 9th Fighter Sq., Form 44's, 7-13 Nov. 43; 39th Fighter Sq., 1-7-43, 7 Nov. 43; 431st Fighter Sq., 1-7-43, 9 Nov. 43; 519th Bomb Sq., Narrative Mission Report /EMR/, No. 211-40, 9 Nov. 43; 400th Bomb Sq., EMR No. 310-9, 8 Nov. 43. Three P-38's were lost.

13. Incoming cables, MacArthur to G/SM, 6048 (10-11-43), 1-7-43, 10 Nov. 43; 7631 (11-11-43), 2-7-43, 11 Nov. 43; and 4747 (12-11-43), 1-7-43, 12 Nov. 43. Further data may be found in 65th and 403d Bomb Sq.s., Form 44's, 7-13 Nov. 43, and in 403d Bomb Sq., EMR No. 331-K, 10 Nov. 43. One B-24 was lost.
14. CH-IX-3731 (11–11–43), MacArthur to 0/S WD, 0C-7706, 11 Nov. 43.

15. 43d and 90th Bomb Gps., Form 34's, 7–15 Nov. 43; 64th Bomb Sq., NFR No. 314–9, 12 Nov. 43.

16. CH-IX-7823 (13–11–43), MacArthur to 0/S WD, 0C-7744, 13 Nov. 43. The enemy lost one cruiser and two destroyers sunk, one cruiser and one destroyer damaged. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Incoming cables, MacArthur to 0/S WD, 3179 (5–12–43), 0C-8546, 5 Dec. 43; 3709 (6–12–43), 0C-8676, 6 Dec. 43; and 5183 (8–12–43), 0C-8553, 8 Dec. 43.


21. Issues Nos. 150 (27 Oct. 43), 151 (30 Oct. 43), 152 (3 Nov. 43), and 153 (6 Nov. 43); incoming cables, MacArthur to 0/S WD, 194 (1–11–43), 0C-7339, 1 Nov. 43; 3353 (6–11–43), 0C-7607, 6 Nov. 43; 4045 (7–11–43), 0C-7554, 7 Nov. 43; 4744 (8–11–43), 0C-7606, 8 Nov. 43; 8731 (11–11–43), 0C-7705, 11 Nov. 43; 10413 (17–11–43), 0C-7901, 17 Nov. 43; and 11025 (18–11–43), 0C-7949, 18 Nov. 43.

22. Bad weather prevented photography. 90th Bomb Sq., NFR No. 316–60, 15 Nov. 43.

23. 11 P-40's dropped 12 x 500–lb. bombs. CH-IX-11025 (13–11–43), MacArthur to 0/S WD, 0C-7949, 18 Nov. 43.

24. NFR's as follows: 23d Bomb Gp., No. 326–25, 22 Nov. 43; 39th Bomb Gp., No. 326–1, 23 Nov. 43; 45th Bomb Gp., Nos. 326–9 (20 Nov. 43), 335–9 (22 Nov. 43), 327–2 (24 Nov. 43); 90th Bomb Gp., Nos. 323–0 (20 Nov. 43), 324–1 (21 Nov. 43), and 320–1 (26 Nov. 43). Data in these reports have been checked against the Form 34's for the periods 14–20 and 21–27 Nov. 43.

Summary of Fifth Air Force Strikes
Gasmata Area, Ring Ring Plantation, and Lindemansen Plantation
20–26 November 1943

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Op. No. &amp; type of a/c</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>No. &amp; weight of bombs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 Nov 43</td>
<td>25 B–24</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>Ring Ring Ptn</td>
<td>44x100; 65x1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Nov 43</td>
<td>24 B–24</td>
<td>Yard's</td>
<td>Ring Ring Village</td>
<td>480x100; 96x1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Grp. No. &amp; type of a/c</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>No. &amp; weight of bombs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 Nov 43</td>
<td>22 2-31</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>Gasmata &amp; Agar Is.</td>
<td>440x100; 96x1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Nov 43</td>
<td>21 2-26</td>
<td>Dobouda</td>
<td>Gasmata Airdrone</td>
<td>126x500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Nov 43</td>
<td>42 2-24</td>
<td>Durand</td>
<td>Lindenhafen Ptn &amp;</td>
<td>695x100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Agar Is.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Nov 43</td>
<td>24 2-24</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>Ring, Ring Ptn</td>
<td>840x100; 22x1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Nov 43</td>
<td>90 2-24</td>
<td>Ward's</td>
<td>Lindenhafen Ptn</td>
<td>515x100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Losses were slight from these attacks. On 22 November 1943, the 92nd Bombardment Squadron lost one B-24. The B-25's-1's and -1's were strafers, having eight forward-firing .50-cal. machine guns; the B-25's still had 75-mm. cannon and four forward-firing .50-cal. machine guns. On 23 November 1943, four RAF Beauforts dropped 8 x 500- and 8 x 250-lb. bombs on the Gasmata dumps. CI-III-14733 (24-11-43), MacArthur to G/S WD, 5-0-8164, 24 Nov. 43.

25. Incoming cables, MacArthur to G/S WD, Nos. 1081 (2-12-43), 3-0-8444, 2 Dec. 43; 1479 (5-12-43), 3-0-877, 3 Dec. 43; 3173 (5-12-43), 3-0-8546, 5 Dec. 43; 3700 (6-12-43), 3-0-8576, 6 Dec. 43; 4364 (7-12-43), 3-0-8510, 7 Dec. 43; 5333 (9-12-43), 3-0-8578, 9 Dec. 43; 7012 (11-12-43), 3-0-833, 11 Dec. 43; 8216 (13-12-43), 3-0-8A-77; and 6851 (14-12-43), 3-0-1682, 14 Dec. 43.


27. 6th Bomb Sq., 130, 8 Dec. 43.

30. Issus Nos. 146 (13 Oct. 43), 147 (16 Oct. 43), 149 (23 Oct. 43), 151 (30 Oct. 43), 152 (8 Nov. 43), and 153 (6 Nov. 43).

31. 19th Bomb Sq., LVR No. 332-33, 29 Nov. 43.

32. 406th Bomb Sq., LVR No. 334-44, 1 Dec. 43.
33. 38th and 345th Bomb Gps., 346-20, 3 Dec. 43. The 432d Fighter Squadron covered with 11 F-58s, Form 36, 28 Nov.-3 Dec. 43. The 2-25's dropped 421 x 500-1b. bombs, expended 15,335 rounds of .30-cal., 74,680 rounds of .50-cal., and 96 rounds of 75-mm. ammunition.


35. 45th and 380th Bomb Gps., 346-DD, 14 Dec. 43. The 529th and 530th Bombardment Squadrons of the 380th Bombardment Group stationed at Dobodura to participate in preparation for Operation INTRUDER. For details of this strike, see n. 41 below.

36. 36th Bomb Gp., 346-DD, 14 Dec. 43. The 71st Bombardment Squadron dropped 16 of its 500-1b. bombs on Rue Island and the 832d Bombardment Squadron hit Kalangau Island at the Lualua River mouth with 36 of 45 x 300-1b. bombs.


38. 22nd Bomb Gp., Form 346, 12-15 Dec. 43 and 347-DD, 14 Dec. 43. The 19th Bombardment Squadron, flying B-24s, dropped 23 of its 27 x 1,000-1b. bombs on the target; the 33d Bombardment Squadron claimed 6 to 12 hits out of 33 x 1,000-1b. bomber dropped the 2d Bombardment Squadron hit the north dispersal area and the lagoon; the 40th Bombardment Squadron reported 20 per cent in the dispersal areas.


41. The following table provides data on Fifth Air Force bomber strikes in the Gasmata and Artoe areas on 13 and 14 December 43. Data was compiled from Narrative Mission Reports and Form 34's for the period 12-16 December 1943. Strafing by escorting fighter planes is not included in this table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Gp Code</th>
<th>No. of Bombers</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>No. &amp; Wt. of bombs</th>
<th>Bds. of ammunition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 Dec</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17 2-26</td>
<td>Lindenauf Ptn.</td>
<td>250 300 500 1,000</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 Dec</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17 2-26</td>
<td>Lindenauf Ptn.</td>
<td>250 300 500 1,000</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 Dec</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17 2-26</td>
<td>Lindenauf Ptn.</td>
<td>250 300 500 1,000</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AAFS-45, Bates, Chap. II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. of</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>No. &amp; wt. of bombs</th>
<th>Rds. of ammunition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>B-25 Ring Rdtn.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>119</td>
<td>11,900 51,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>B-24 Analut Rdtn</td>
<td></td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>B-24 Pago Island</td>
<td></td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>360</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>B-24 Analut Rdtn</td>
<td></td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>B-25 Arawe Isld.</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>7,025 31,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>A-20 Analut Rdtn</td>
<td>115 51 87</td>
<td>b 12,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>345</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Analut Rdtn</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>18,050 58,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>A-20 Analut Rdtn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Analut Rdtn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>B-24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3341</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>B-25</td>
<td>116 766 87 1,178</td>
<td>43,500 183,181</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


44. 112th Cavalry Regt., Historical Report 24 Nov. 43 to 10 Feb. 44
     (112th Cavalry Report), pp. 1-5, in AGO Analysis Files, 91-71.1
     (1792). The 1st Squadron, less Troop A and B but plus engineers
     and service troops, was to come in at H plus 30 minutes; the artillery
     and antiaircraft units were due from Cape Cribin in LCT's and LCM's

45. 112th Cavalry Report, p. 5.

46. Ibid., p. 6. This source disagrees with Report of Dexterity Operation,
     p. 9, in minor points. The former has the U.S. Santa silencing the
     guns, one of which was said to be a 20-mm. AA piece; the latter has
     the boats getting to within 50 yards of shore, reports the Japanese
     AA piece as 37-mm., and credits a destroyer with silencing enemy fire.

47. 112th Cavalry Regt., S-3 Journal, Operations Diary, 24 Nov. 43-
     10 Feb. 44, p. 2, in AGO Analysis Files, 91-71.3 (1792-d); Report
     of Dexterity Operation, p. 8.

48. 112th Cavalry Regt., S-3 Journal, Operations Diary, p. 2. The men
     debarked into 14 Buffaloes and 24 Alligators. Report of Dexterity
     Operation, p. 8.


50. 13th Bomb Sq., 1st No. 540-AA, 16 Dec. 43, and Form 34, 12-18 Dec.
     43. The 112th Cavalry Regiment's S-3 Journal, Operations Diary,
     p. 2, states: "The beach was bombed and strafed by B-25 Mitchell
     bombers during the process of landing. There is no record whatever

SECURITY INFORMATION

THIS PAGE Declassified IAW EO12958
of such an attack in any RAR’s or the Taroa 34’s. The beach itself was neither bombed nor strafed.

51. 112th Cavalry Report, p. 7. Casualties for the day were: Allied, 18 killed, 25 wounded, and 23 missing; Japanese, 60 killed. C:S-II-10212 (16-12-43), MacArthur to G/S WD, GA-AE, 16 Dec. 43.

52. 501st Bomb Sc., RAR unnumbered, 16 Dec. 43. The squadron took off from Schuler in the afternoon of 14 December and staged at Dobodura for its Arawe mission. Ibid.

53. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., p. 40.

54. 112th Cavalry Report, p. 7.

55. 432d Fighter Sq., Form 34, 12-18 Dec. 43.

56. 431st Fighter Sq., Form 34, 12-18 Dec. 43.

57. 501st Bomb Sc., RAR unnumbered, 16 Dec. 43. This report states that no friendly fighters were seen at the time of the attacks.


59. 341st and 433d Fighter Sq’s., Form 34’s, 12-18 Dec. 43.

60. Four P-38’s of 433d Fighter Squadron destroyed one Zeke at 1116. Form 34, 12-18 Dec. 43. The following table, compiled from Form 34’s, 12-18 Dec. 43, shows details of fighter action on 2-day:

**Fighter Cover and Patrols, Arawe, 15 Dec. 43**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sq.</th>
<th>No. of a/c</th>
<th>Time of takeoff</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>432</td>
<td>4 P-38</td>
<td>0615</td>
<td>Dobodura</td>
<td>Flak to Arawe, Open Bay, Wide Bay, Rabaul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>432</td>
<td>9 P-33</td>
<td>0645</td>
<td>Dobodura</td>
<td>No sightings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>431</td>
<td>12 P-33</td>
<td>0705</td>
<td>Dobodura</td>
<td>Sighted 12 Zekes, 10 Bettys, 20 Oscars; at 0845, 1 flight of Didmoc attacked by about 12 Zekes; P-38’s avoided combat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>432</td>
<td>2 P-38</td>
<td>0741</td>
<td>Dobodura</td>
<td>Patrol north coast, Wide Bay, Open Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>341</td>
<td>16 P-47</td>
<td>0845</td>
<td>Einschnafen</td>
<td>Arawe patrol, no sightings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>433</td>
<td>3 P-38</td>
<td>0910</td>
<td>Dobodura</td>
<td>Scramble over convoy, no sightings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>433</td>
<td>4 P-38</td>
<td>0945</td>
<td>Dobodura</td>
<td>Destroyed 1 Zeke at 1116.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>15 P-38</td>
<td>0955</td>
<td>Dobodura</td>
<td>Arawe patrol, no sightings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A-43, Notes, Chap. II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sq.</th>
<th>No. of a/c</th>
<th>Time of takeoff</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>340</td>
<td>6 F-47</td>
<td>1010</td>
<td>Dobodura</td>
<td>Arawe patrol, no sightings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>452</td>
<td>4 P-33</td>
<td>1045</td>
<td>Dobodura</td>
<td>Patrol shipping, no sightings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>342</td>
<td>16 F-47</td>
<td>1115</td>
<td>Finschafen</td>
<td>Arawe patrol, no sightings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>340</td>
<td>8 P-47</td>
<td>1150</td>
<td>Dobodura</td>
<td>Arawe patrol to 1420, then cover for bombers over Cape Gloucester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>12 P-38</td>
<td>1135</td>
<td>Dobodura</td>
<td>Arawe patrol, no sightings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>432</td>
<td>4 P-32</td>
<td>1160</td>
<td>Dobodura</td>
<td>Patrol western New Britain, incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>432</td>
<td>10 P-38</td>
<td>1310</td>
<td>Dobodura</td>
<td>Arawe patrol, no sightings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>432</td>
<td>4 P-32</td>
<td>1445</td>
<td>Dobodura</td>
<td>Fight with 30 Zeke's, 12 Betlys and Sallys at 1600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

61. 112th Cavalry Regt., 3-3 Journal, Operations Diary, p. 11.

62. 89th Bomb Sq., AFR No. 29-6, 17 Dec. 43.

63. 8th and 90th Bomb Sqrs., AFR's No. 352-60, 29 Dec. 43.

64. 8th and 90th Bomb Sqrs., AFR's No. 358-11, 29 Dec. 43.


66. 89th and 90th Bomb Sqrs., AFR's No. 358-11, 29 Dec. 43.

67. 112th Cavalry Report, p. 11.


69. The following examples are illustrative: on 16 December 1943, two 4-34's, destroyed five barges off Cape Hoskins on the north coast while two FAF A-20's engaged two barges at Cape Diamier on the south coast (C.17-12-43/17-12-43/17-12-43, MacArthur to C/S 1D, C/A-29, 17 Dec. 43); on 23 December 1943, nine B-25D-1's, 13th Bomardment Squadron, searched the coast from Codi, near Arawe, west to Cape Worthing and probably destroyed two barges (13th Bomb Sq., AFR No. 351-60, 28 Dec. 43); on 15 January 1944, three B-25D-1's on a sweep along the south coast, strafed villages, bridges and gun positions from King King Plantation to Jucuina Bay but found no barges (500th Bomb Sq., AFR No. 16-1-1, 16 Jan. 44).

70. Form 34, 2-3 Jan. 44. Gilmit Village was hit by four 3-24's on 14 January 1944 with 48 x 500-lb. bombs when Warwon Village southwest of Dorgon Bay, was closed in. 320th Bomb Sq., AFR No. 14-I-1, 15 Jan. 44.

71. Incoming cables, MacArthur to C/S 1D, 12384 (20-12-43), C/A-104, 20 Dec. 43, and 15381 (24-12-43), C/A-123, 24 Dec. 43.
The following table, compiled from MR's and Form 34's, shows the principal Fifth Air Force bombing and strafing attacks in the Arawe area and along the south coast from 16 December 1943 to 25 January 1944:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Group No.</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>No. &amp; wt. of bombs</th>
<th>Rds. of Ammunition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 Dec</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>A-20 Barge sweep</td>
<td>100 250 300 500 1,000</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Dec</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21 A-20 Sigil-Pulia R. area</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>20,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Dec</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19 A-20 &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot;</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Dec</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16 A-20 &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot;</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>21,825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Dec</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9 A-20 Didim Village</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Dec</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 B-25 Barge sweep</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Jan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12 A-20 &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; end of Analut Ftn.</td>
<td>4 44</td>
<td>17,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Jan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6 A-20 &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; Didim Village</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Jan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 B-25 Didim Village</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Jan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 B-25 &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; Uningalu area</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Jan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10 A-20 Didim Village</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Jan</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>7 B-24 &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; Gilmit and Lagan</td>
<td>81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Jan</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>3 B-25 &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; Barge sweep</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6,550A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Jan</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10 B-24 &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; end of Analut Ftn.</td>
<td>136</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Jan</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>20 B-25 &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; Cape Sussex area</td>
<td>14 56</td>
<td>30,195B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Jan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>36 A-20 &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; Cape Sussex area</td>
<td>6 141</td>
<td>55,040</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a 700 rounds of .50-cal. ammunition also expended.
b 6,100 rounds of .30-cal. ammunition also expended.

73. 89th Bomb Sq., MR No. 7-1-1, 8 Jan. 44; Form 34, 2-8 Jan. 44. The crew of the A-20 was saved. Ten B-25's bombed the same target on 3 January 1944 with considerable success. 33d Bomb Sq., Form 34, 2-3 Jan. 44.

74. 65th, 66th, and 403d Bomb Sqs., MR's No. 15-A-1, 17 Jan. 44 and Form 34's, 16-22 Jan. 44.

75. 509th and 501st Bomb Sqs., Form 34's, 16-23 Jan. 44 and MR's No. 16-3-1, 16 and 17 Jan. 44. These two sources disagree on bomb loads.


77. 8th and 30th Bomb Sqs., MR's No. 20-A-1, 20 Jan. 44. Twenty-four A-20's bombed and strafed villages, plantations, trails, and bridges in a sweep across New Britain and back. A pocket of Japanese troops near Cape Sussex retreated to the northeast after 36 A-20's dropped 36 tons of bombs in the area. 3d Bomb Grp., Form 34's, 23-29 Jan. 44.

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79. Incoming cables, MacArthur to 0/3 WD, 12324 (13-5-44), 18 March 44; 12322 (18-3-44), 20 March 44; and 14349 (30-3-44), unnumbered, 20 March 44. The 40th Division in turn was relieved by the Australian Fifth Division on 27 November 1944. 40th Infantry Div., Deckhand Operation Report April 28 to November 27 1944, p. 9, 11, in 400 Analysis Files, 340-33,4 (10157).

80. Form 54's, 12-13 Dec. 43, 19-25 Dec. 43, and 36 Dec. 43-1 Jan. 44.

81. Iss. No. 187 (25 Dec. 43), p. 12. It was expected that the Japanese would average 125 to 123 sorties daily after 15 December. Actually, the number varied from 9 to 113, with an average of 65. Field night raids were the rule.


83. 451st Fighter Sq., Individual Combat Reports, Mission No. 1-189, 17 Dec. 43 and JR, 17 Dec. 43; 4336th Fighter Sq., Form 34, 12-14 Dec. 43. The 433d Fighter Sq., escorting bombers to Cape Gloucester, got one fighter of this total, and one probable. Individual Combat Reports, Mission No. 2-185, 15 Dec. 43.

84. 342d Fighter Sq., "CR's", 21-22 Dec. 43.

85. 0/G-11510 (18-12-43), MacArthur to 0/3 WD, 25-96, 18 Dec. 43.

86. 341st Fighter Sq., 0CR, 18 Dec. 43. This unit's Form 34, 12-13 Dec. 43, reports six Vals and two Oscars destroyed.

87. 433rd Fighter Sq., 0CR, 13 Dec. 43; Form 34, 12-16 Dec. 43.

88. 334th Bomb Sq., 0/2 No. 353-77, 19 Dec. 43.

89. 342d Fighter Sq., "CR, 23 Dec. 43, encl. -23 in History, 342d Fighter Sq., 1 July 43-31 Jan. 44. The present writer believes this report was meant to be a sarcastic sneer directed to the A rear controller who was by no means infallible. In the afternoon of 17 December 1943, for example, the Rear controller reported eight P-47's of 342d Fighter Squadron as torpedoes and caused American AA units at A rear to fire on them. 342d Fighter Sq., Form 34, 12-18 Dec. 43.

90. 342d Fighter Sq., "CR, 23 Dec. 43.


92. 113th Cavalry Engrt., 3-3 Journal.

93. 80th, 320th, and 341st Fighter Sq., Form 34's, 2-8 Jan. 44.
94. AGF Board Report, S.E.A. No. 6, "Micrones Supply during the Arewe and Cape Gloucester Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area," 7 Feb. 44 [AGF Report No. 6], p. 5, in AGO Analysis Files, 4-26/44 (1573); Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 16.

95. AGF Report No. 6, p. 1; 33d and 406th Bomb Sqs., Form 34's, 12-13 Dec. 43.

96. AGF Report No. 6, p. 7.

97. Ibid., pp. 3-3.

98. Ibid., pp. 3-4; Dexter Report, p. 34; History, 39th Troop Carrier Sq., Jan. 43-Jan. 44, p. LXXI. These drops were not very satisfactory. Inexperienced personnel and poorly designated drop areas were responsible.
Chapter III

3. 43d Bomb Gp., XI R's No. 348-BD, 16 Dec. 43.
4. 321st and 400th Bomb Sqs., XI R's No. 348-F, 16 Dec. 43.
5. 319th and 320th Bomb Sqs., XI R's No. 349-F, 16 Dec. 43.
8. 33rd Fighter Sq., NCR., 18 Dec. 43. One of the enemy fighters was shot down.
10. 65th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 12-13 Dec. 43.
11. Ibid.
12. 403d Bomb Sq., Form 34, 12-16 Dec. 43.
14. See App. 3 for statistics.
15. 24th, 8th, and 409th Bomb Sqs., Form 34's, 19-25 Dec. 43.
17. C.I.-I-10212 (19-12-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, 34-85, 16 Dec. 43.
    Seven Beaufighters strafed gun positions, revetments and dunes at Sornop, New Ireland on 15 December 1943. Ibid.
18. C.I.-I-12183 (19-12-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, 34-93, 19 Dec. 43.
20. C.I.-I-15238 (26-12-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, 34-137, 26 Dec. 43.
21. From 19 to 30 December 1943, the following attacks were carried out: Alexander: 89 B-25's, 9 B-26's, 10 P-47's; Madang: 119 B-25's, 24 B-26's, 27 B-34's; New Caledonia: 55 B-25's. Incoming cables, MacArthur to O/S WD, 12684 (23-12-43), 8CA-104, 20 Dec. 43; 13249 (21-12-43), 8CA-108, 21 Dec. 43; 14068 (23-12-43), 8CA-113, 22 Dec. 43; 145974 (25-12-43), 8CA-115, 22 Dec. 45; 16291 (26-12-43), 8CA-122, 26 Dec. 43; 16293 (26-12-43), 8CA-127, 26 Dec. 43; 16668 (27-12-43), 8CA-131, 27 Dec. 43; 17262 (28-12-43), 8CA-136, 28 Dec. 43; 17912 (29-12-43), 8CA-137, 29 Dec. 43; and 19283 (31-12-43), 8CA-143, 31 Dec. 43.

22. See incoming cables, MacArthur to O/S WD, as above and 15801 (25-12-43), 8CA-124, 26 Dec. 43, and 16543 (17-12-43), 8CA-139, 30 Dec. 43. On 25 Dec. 43, a 507th AF carrier force dropped 23 tons of bombs and nine torpedoes on shipping in Madang harbor and destroyed one destroyer, two large merchant vessels, and three barges. O.-21-16631 (27-12-43), MacArthur to O/S WD, 8CA-139, 27 Dec. 43.


27. Reefs offshore about 10,000 yards were a navigational hazard, but the beaches were finally selected at Borgen Bay because fixed shore defenses apparently were absent. Agress appeared satisfactory, surf was moderate, and they were beyond effective range of enemy artillery at Cape Gloucester. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, p. 3; Seventh Amphib. Force, Report, p. 1.


29. Lt. Backlander Task Force, Operations Order No. 245, 14 Nov. 43, in 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Annex C. The assault landing force consisted of 7,890 troops; 3,350 were to come in as Combat Team B; engineers, antiaircraft units, and others scheduled for D plus 1 day numbered 2,600; Landing Team 21 had about 1,500, making a total of about 15,000 troops to land by D plus 1. Report of Lextority Operation, p. 10.


33. Ibid., pp. 8-9. Two heavy cruisers outside the reef fired 760 x 8-in. shells on the airfield from 0600 to 0720; two light cruisers outside the reef fired 2,000 x 6-in. and 300 x 5-in. shells at Yellow Beaches and Taroff Hill from 0625 to 0727 while ABD's moved inside the reef toward the beaches. Inside the reef, two destroyers fired on Yellow Beaches, Taroff Hill, and Silumal Pt. from 0630 to 0700 and resumed from 0720 to 0727, firing altogether 575 x 5-in. shells. Ibid.; Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 11; 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, p. 3.


35. 500th Bomb Sq., LST No. 369-33, 27 Dec. 45.


37. The 49th Bomb Sq., LST No. 359-33, 26 Dec. 43, states that barges were 23-50 yards offshore when strafing ceased; but the 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, p. 3, disagrees. The medium bombers continued to strafe the coastal area until assault boats were within 500 yards of the beaches. The area was still covered with smoke at 0900. 89th Bomb Sq., LST No. 358-GG, 27 Dec. 45.

38. Seventh Amphib. Force, Report, p. 9. There were two rocket-firing LST's present, only one of which fired. Another source reports that "two vessels placed a rocket barrage on the landing beaches." Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 11.


40. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Escort, Phase II, p. 4.


42. 31 Bomb Gp., LST's No. 359-GG, 27 Dec. 43. The 89th Bomb Sq., scheduled for alert from 0945 to 0915, was ordered to leave at 0845 because Japanese aeroos and Vals were reported in the area.

43. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Escort, Phase II, p. 4; Lt. J. E. Sonham, Memorandum in Cushman Escort, Annex C, p. 1.Enemy casualties for the day were 80 killed, 2 captured. Marine losses were 31 killed, 23 wounded.
44. 400th Bomb Sq., Mix No. 259-44, 27 Dec. 43.

45. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, Part II, pp. 1-4; 13th Bomb Sq., Mix No. 259-37, 26 Dec. 43; Task Group 76.3, Bombardment and Landing Operation at Taupuli (Cape Gloucester), New Britain, 25 Dec. 43, U.S. Reid action Report, Serial 026/76, 76.3, Report, pp. 1-2, in 263 Aircraft Files, 6-6-2613/43 (776); Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 13. The only significant action at Taupuli occurred during the night of 28-29 December when the 85th Company, 35th Regiment made a desperate attack against the Marine's perimeter. The Japanese lost 83 killed while Marine casualties were 6 killed and 17 wounded (1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, Part II, pp. 3-4). At 1530 on 20 December 1943, 12 A-20's, 8th Bombardment Squadron, bombed artillery positions in a palm grove at Lagcon Pt. by dropping 32 x 250-lb. bombs off the water. 8th Bomb Sq., Mix No. 363-37, 31 Dec. 43. On 5 January 1944, Landing Team 21 rejoined its regiment in the airdrome sector (Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 13), and LCI's novel its equipment to Cape Gloucester during the period 7 to 11 January. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, Part II, p. 6. The date of the junction of the two forces is given as 10 Jan. 44 in History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., p. 57.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., pp. 49-52; Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 13; Dexter Report, p. 16; History, 334 Fighter Control Sq., 11 Dec. 41 to 31 March 44, p. 5. Air liaison varieties are described as follows in Adyson Fifth Air Force, Operations Memorandum Number 4, 8 Feb. 44, in History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, App. II, Doc. No. 24: "In order that requests for direct air support from all army forces can be properly evaluated, planned and executed; and in order to reduce signal communications lag to a minimum, the following system has been devised and is published for the guidance of all concerned.

  a. General: All requests for cooperative strike missions, reconnaissance flights or sorties, fighter cover, artillery adjustment observation, aerial photographs, emergency air supply, and the like, originating at allied ground force headquarters engaged in combat will be coordinated through Air Liaison Party channels, except where otherwise specifically directed by existing Operations Orders and Signal Operations Instructions.

  a. Headquarters, Advance echelon, Fifth Air Force will provide appropriate ground headquarters with an Air Liaison Party. The officer in charge of this party is an Assistant, 1-3, of this headquarters and will represent the Deputy Commander, Advance Echelon, Fifth Air Force. His duties will be, as is implied by official designation, liaison in its broadest sense.

  b. The Air Liaison Party is the communications link between all ground forces in the field and the Advance Echelon, Fifth Air Force. Also it is a communications link between the
Ground Forces and all Air Task Forces. It will also be available for the transmission of emergency traffic such as air raid information and flash intelligence.

"c. In the event of failure of ground communications, the Air Liaison Party may act as a relay station and handle urgent operational and information messages between the ground commands concerned. However, this procedure will be followed only when emergency dictates.

"2. Air Liaison Party: Normally an Air Liaison Party will consist of two officers and eight to ten enlisted men, all of whom are Air Corps personnel. The senior officer is known as the Air Liaison Party Officer (ALFO) and is responsible for proper liaison between Air Force Headquarters and the organization to which his Air Liaison Party is attached. He is also responsible for all matters pertaining to the administration of the party. The assistant party officer will assist in this respect and have other attendant duties. The enlisted personnel will consist of radio operators and mechanics, cryptographers and one or two bascule or drivers.

"b. Equipment: An Air Liaison Party is equipped with two or more radio sets mounted in vehicles. The nature of the operation that it is to participate in controls in this regard as a party is equipped to meet the exigencies of a particular situation. When necessary an Air Liaison Party can be completely airborne.

"c. Administration: An Air Liaison Party is self-contained in that its personnel, equipment, clothing, weapons, etc., are supplied by its parent Air Corps organization, (to wit: Air Support Control Squadron). However when an Air Liaison Party is attached to a ground force headquarters it is expected that the party will be quartered and messed with that ground organization."

48 Evidence in this matter is difficult to reconcile. One source states, "A large number of enemy aircraft approached Gloucester at 09:00/D out sunk south before encountering our fighters and carried out an attack at Arawe which apparently had been prearranged. If he had known of the Gloucester landing by 08:30/D, which seems certain, it appears that he was unable to divert the Arawe strike to the far more promising and urgent targets at Gloucester." Seventh Amphib. Force, Escort, p. 10. The communiqué states: "Over 100 enemy aircraft reported over area [Arawe] morning, December 26, left direction Cape Gloucester diverted by Allied fighters towards Faisaul. G-IX-15835 (37-11-23), MacArthur to C/S 53, TA-151, 37 Dec. 43. Thus, the Navy reports this force on route to Arawe; the cable reports the planes going toward Gloucester and Faisaul. The 321st Bomb Sq., in its NRR No. 269-II, 27 Dec. 43, reports having sighted four possible Yals starting to attack U.S. landing craft at Cape Gloucester at 09:04, 25 December 1943. There was no attack at Arawe, but on 27 December 1943, such a strike as reported by the Navy for 26 December actually
did occur. Moreover, a careful search of Form 34's reveals no reference to any such force at Borgen Bay in the morning of 26 December.

49. 431st Fighter Sq., MX, 27 Dec. 43.
50. 80th Fighter Sq., MX No. 278, 26 Dec. 43.
51. Ibid.; 431st Fighter Sq., MX No. 1-147, 27 Dec. 43; 36th Fighter Sq., MX No. 2, 26 Dec. 43; 35th Fighter Sq., MX No. 5-4, 26 Dec. 43; Seventh Amphib. Force, Report, p. 10. One of the Vals was shot down by naval AA fire, but this same fire prevented the 433d Fighter Squadron's 16 P-38's from attacking the Vals. Form 34, 26 Dec. 43-1 Jan. 44.

52. 500th Bomb Sq., MX No. 355-KK, 26 Dec. 43.
54. 500th Bomb Sq., MX No. 355-KK, 26 Dec. 43. LSE No. 465 is credited with one B-24 shot down, being in flames, dropped its bombs over one of the shore batteries and killed two officers and wounded two enlisted men. Maj. Harry A. Stella, memorandum, in Cushman Report, Annex II, p. 2.
55. 341st Fighter Sq., MX No. 2-29, 26 Dec. 43; Seventh Amphib. Force, Report, p. 10. This last source says that there were 18 torpedo bombers, all of which were shot down.
56. 342d Fighter Sq., MX No. 2-29, 26 Dec. 43.
57. 340th Fighter Sq., MX No. 3-25, 31 Dec. 43; 342d Fighter Sq., MX No. 2-41, 31 Dec. 43; 35th Fighter Sq., MX, 31 Dec. 43.
60. 38th and 504th Bomb Sqs., MX No. 261-AA, 28 Dec. 43. Eight A-47's started to attack the A-20's but broke off before doing any damage. Still, "our pilots did not appreciate the fact that our fighters could not immediately recognize an A-20."


64. 498th Bomb Sq., LMR No. 362-90, 29 Dec. 43.

65. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, 1, 7-11.

66. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 12. Long Island, which lies about 30 miles northeast of Saito, New Guinea, was captured by Company E, 570th Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, reinforced after being landed during the night of 25-26 December 1943. A radar station was installed south of Cape Fear, and later a larger station was installed near the southern tip of the island. Ibid., p. 13. On 13 February 1944, Company E, 1st Marine Regiment, landed on Saipan (Iwoj) Island from Cape Gloucester. There were no Japanese present. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase IV, 1, 11.


69. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., p. 59.

70. Ibid., p. 59.

71. During the night of 20-27 Dec. 43, the Japanese launched four vicious counterattacks against the center of the perimeter which was held by the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, and lost over 200 dead. Ibid., p. 3 in Report of Dexterity Operation.

72. 39th Bomb Sq., LMR No. 360-63, 23 Dec. 43. The squadron's A-30's dropped 46 x 100-lb. bomb and strafed with 15,070 r. .50-cal. ammunition. This strike might possibly have been west of the beachhead, but available evidence seems to indicate that it was in support of the beachhead.

73. 498th and 500th Bomb Sqs., LMR's No. 361-1E, 29 Dec. 43. The two squadrons dropped 66 x 300-lb. bombs and strafed with 34,865 rounds of .30- and .50-cal. ammunition.


75. 38th Bomb Gp., LMR's No. 362-0, 30 Dec. 43. In these attacks, 24 P-38's dropped 161 x 300-lb. bombs and fired 33,195 rounds of .30- and .50-cal., and 172 rounds of 75-mm. ammunition.
73. 65th and 50th Bomb Sq., 364th Hq., 30-31 Dec. 43.


78. Ibid.

79. In these two attacks the 3rd Bombardment Group dropped 166 x 250-lb. and 123 x 100-lb. bombs, and fired 51,050 rounds of .50-cal., 400 rounds of .30-cal., and 30 rounds of 20-mm. ammunition. 364th and 365th Bomb Sq., 364th Hq., 264-277, 1 Jan. 44; 12th, 58th, and 50th Bomb Sq., 365th Hq., 1-2-1 and 1-2-1, 1 Jan. 44.


81. 8th and 89th Bomb Sq., 364th Hq., 3-4-1, 4 Jan. 44; 363rd Hq. Sq., Form 34, 1-2 Jan. 44. In these attacks, 91 x 250-lb. bombs, 33,960 x .50-cal. ammunition, and 45 x 3.5-in. shells were expended.

82. 13th Bomb Sq., 364th Hq., 3-4-1, 4 Jan. 44.

83. 500th Bomb Sq., 364th Hq., 6-1-1, 7 Jan. 44; 406th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 1-3 Jan. 44.


85. Ibid., p. 8.

86. 43rd Bomb Sq., 364th Hq., 7-3-1, 7-3-1, 7-3-1, 8 Jan. 44.

87. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase III, p. 9; 64th Bomb Sq., 364th Hq., 7-3-1. In the morning of 8 January 1944, the 43rd Bombardment Group was scheduled to bomb Trinilhafen Plantation on New Guinea. The 64th Squadron of this group was diverted to attack defenses north of Hill 660. Cloud cover at the target prevented fire of the B-24's from bombing, and the sixth hit a reef just east of the target. 64th Bomb Sq., 364th Hq., 8-6-1, 9 Jan. 44.


89. 90th Bomb Sq., 364th Hq., 9-10-1, 10 Jan. 44 and Form 34, 9-15 Jan. 44; 321st Bomb Sq., 364th Hq., 9-10-1, 11 Jan. 44 and Form 34, 9-15 Jan. 44. The A-20's dropped 28 x 250-lb. bombs and fired 18,390 rounds of .50-cal., and 34 rounds of 20-mm. ammunition; the B-24's dropped 72 x 500-lb. bombs.

90. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase III, pp. 13-15; 8th Bomb Sq., 364th Hq., 14-17-1, 15 Jan. 44. The 71st Bomb Sq., with 6 B-25's, bombed and strafed villages from Rein Bay to Kokopo on 14 January after a large sweep revealed no targets. Form 34, 9-15 Jan. 44.
91. CIA-19537 (22-1-44), MacArthur to G/S ID, 30-1076, 29 Jan. 44.


93. Ibid.

94. CIA-17310 (28-1-44), MacArthur to G/S ID, 30-348, 30 Jan. 44.

95. 13th Btch. Sq., Form 34, 33-29 Jan. 44. Fifteen F-47's, 341st Fighter Squadron provided area cover.

96. 8th and 13th Btch. Sq., 30th and 432d Fighter Sq., Form 34's, 23-29 Jan. 44. In these two attacks the A-20's dropped 13 tons of bombs and fired 32,500 rounds of .50-cal. ammunition.


98. 432d and 433d Fighter Sq., and 89th Btch. Sq., Form 34's, 16-23 Jan. 44; CIA-15307 (23-1-44), MacArthur to G/S ID, 30-341, 23 Jan. 44.

99. 498th and 500th Bomb Sq., LTR's No. 32-J-1, 8 Feb. 44; 80th and 431st Fighter Sq., Form 34's, 30 Jan.-5 Feb. 44.

100. 90th Bomb Gp., LTR's No. 53-3-1, 25-26 Feb. 44; 43d Bomb Gp., LTR's No. 53-A-1, 22 Feb. 44 and To. 53-A-1, 23 Feb. 44; 34th Bomb Gp., LTR's No. 53-X-1, 23 Feb. 44; 632d Bomb Sq., LTR No. 53-L-1, 11 March 44. In these strikes, I-bomb was an alternate target for non敌 forces in the Bocos Bay.

101. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase IV, p. 10; 69th and 310th Fighter Sq., Form 34, 20-25 Feb. 44.


103. 43d Bomb Gp., LTR's No. 35-A-1, 7 Feb. 44; 90th Bomb Gp., LTR's No. 35-3-1, 6 Feb. 44; Form 34's, 50 Jan.-5 Feb. 44. On 13 February 1944, one B-24 dropped 6 x 1,000-10. bombs south of the airstrip. 34th Bomb Sq., LTR No. 44-A-1, 15 Feb. 44.

104. 43d Bomb Gp., LTR's No. 48-3-1, 16-21 Feb. 44; 90th Bomb Gp., LTR's No. 48-1-1, 19-21 Feb. 44 and Form 34's, 13-19 Feb. 44; 318th Bomb Sq., LTR No. 51-J-1, 23 Feb. 44. Eight B-24's bombed Linge Linge Plantation on the shores of Salcombe Harbor, Elecra Bay, on 21 February when a front interfered with their primary mission. 822d Bomb Sq., LTR No. 52-3-1, 11 March 44.
105. Incoming cables, MacArthur to O/S 'D', 16633 (35-1-44), 0-916, 25 Jan. 44; 8463 (12-2-44), 0-1820, 12 Feb. 44; 10205 (16-2-44), 0-1753, 16 Feb. 44; 11231 (16-2-44), 0-1764, 16 Feb. 44; 12177 (17-2-44), 0-1909, 17 Feb. 44; 13509 (19-2-44), 0-1935, 19 Feb. 44; 15446 (22-2-44), 0-2012, 22 Feb. 44; 16411 (23-2-44), 0-2059, 23 Feb. 44; 17449 (26-2-44), 0-2134, 26 Feb. 44; and 18211 (26-2-44), 0-2184, supplementary, 26 Feb. 44.


107. Incoming cables, MacArthur to O/S 'D', 1173 (18-1-44), 0-644, 18 Jan. 44; 14491 (22-1-44), 0-812, 23 Jan. 44; 19207 (23-1-44), 0-941, 23 Jan. 44; 2815 (4-2-44), 0-1264, 4 Feb. 44; 5376 (6-2-44), 0-1451, 6 Feb. 44; 6158 (6-2-44), 0-1497, 6 Feb. 44; and 8488 (13-2-44), 0-1752, 13 Feb. 44.

108. Incoming cables, MacArthur to O/S 'D', 11231 (16-2-44), 0-1764, 16 Feb. 44; 12177 (17-2-44), 0-1909, 17 Feb. 44.


110. Incoming cables, MacArthur to O/S 'D', 3385 (5-3-44), 0-2472, 5 March 44; 3945 (6-3-44), 0-2497, 6 March 44; 5093 (8-3-44), 8 March 44.

111. There were 191 Dauntless, 96 Avenger, 45 B-24, and 94 B-25 sorties plus strong fighter cover. Kavieng and Pennin were attacked by: 48 B-24's on 6-7 March 1944. Night harassing by B-24's over Rabaul continued to be a regular feature. Ibid.; and 5321 (8-3-44), 0-2095, 5 March 44; 6235 (8-3-44), 0-2337, 9 March 44.

112. Ltr., Whitehead to Zenney, 4 March 44.

113. 1st Marine Div., Amorax Report, op. 1-3. There were 37 Dauntless, 17 B-24's, 17 Dauntless, and 5 Dauntless in the convoy. Four medium tanks were carried on Dauntless.

114. History, 80th Fighter Sq., March 44, p. 1; 80th Fighter Sq. and 416th Night Fighter Sq., Form 34's, 5-11 March 44.

115. 1st Marine Div., Amorax Report, p. 5; C-10-1-6235 (9-3-44), MacArthur to O/S 'D', 0-2837, 9 March 44. As of 8 March, Marine losses were 13 killed, 80 wounded.

117. On 7 March 44, 11 Beauforts dropped 54 x 250-lb. bombs on Zalesca and Jara. CL-E-43235 (2-3-44), MacArthur to 0/8 W, 3-2537, 9 March 44. On 8 March, 6 B-24's dropped 18 x 100-lb. bombs on Jara Village. CL-E-47710 (10-3-44), MacArthur to 0/8 W, 3-2570, 10 March 44. On 7 March, only 6 of 23 P-40's, 35th Fighter Squadron, from Casa Gloucester could get through bad weather to patrol Zalesca; on 8 March, 15 P-40's, 35th Fighter Squadron, dropped 30 x 100-lb. bombs and strafed targets designated by the Marines; on 9 March, 20 P-40's, 35th Fighter Squadron, reached the area. Form 54, 8-11 March 44.

118. 1st Marine Div., Appendix Report, Annex D.

119. CL-E-19033 (27-3-44), MacArthur to 0/8 W, 3-2537, 28 March 44.

120. The following table has been compiled from incoming cables and is not based upon complete information. It is, therefore, indicative of EAP effort rather than an accurate statistical summary. Rounds of ammunition expended have been omitted, although the information is significant. For example, the 21 P-40's that strafed Pondo Point on 25 March expended 15,000 rounds of .50-cal. machine gun ammunition.

EAP Sorties, North Coast of New Britain, 4-22 March 1944

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<th>No. &amp; wt. of bombs of a/c</th>
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<td>16 Beauforts</td>
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SECURITY INFORMATION

THIS PAGE Declassified IAW EO12958
### RAF Sorties, South Coast of New Britain

**1-20 March 1944**

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**TOTALS**

| 1,298 | 24x40 | 525 | 252 |

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122. A typical day's patrol may be taken as an example:

**Fighter Patrols from Einschafen to Gloucester, 10 Jan. 44**

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<th>Squadron</th>
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Compiled from Form 34's, 9-15 Jan. 44.

124. Form 34, 6-12 Feb. 44.

125. Form 34, 20-26 Feb. 44.

126. Form 34's, 1-8 and 16-22 Jan. 44.

127. Form 34, 9-15 Jan. 44. The E3/A was staying through Einschafen from Lathund, but on 24 February 1944 began staying through Gloucester. Form 34, 23-27 Feb. 44.

128. Form 34's, 12-18 March 44; History, 30th Fighter Sq., March 44; History, 3rd Fighter Gp., March 44, p. 6.


130. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., p. 50.


132. 43rd Fighter Sq., 2/24, 2-13 Feb. 44.

133. 17th Bomb. Sq., U.P. No. 56-5-1, 27 Feb. 44.

134. 340th Fighter Sq., Individual Combat Report of Lt. Col. Robert F. Rowland, 5 May 44. Colonel Henry was credited with the victory.

135. Isvn No. 169 (1 Jan. 44).


141. History, 347th Troop Carrier Co., Feb. 44, p. 2; 64th and 500th Bomb Sqps., Form 34-3, 16-22 and 28-32 Jan. 44.

142. 404th Bomb Sq., JFR No. 41-1-1, 10 Feb. 44.

143. 41st Troop Carrier Sq., ITM on plane No. 75 (3-17), 21 Feb. 44, in History, 317th Troop Carrier Co., Feb. 44.


146. 65th Troop Carrier Sq., Daily Operations Reports, Feb. 44.

147. History, 67th Troop Carrier Sq., March 44; History, 40th Troop Carrier Sq., Feb. 44.

148. History, 67th Troop Carrier Sq., Feb. 44.


169. 433d Fighter Sq., Ftm. 34, 30 Jan.-6 Feb. 44.

169. History, 386th Service Sq., Jan. 44; history, 59th Service Co., 1 July 42-31 Jan. 44, pp. 18-19. Units in this group were Hq. & En. Sq., 109th C/1 Service Co. (Avn), 1093d Signal Co., 1506th C/1 Truck Co., 396th Service Sq., 1537th Ordnance Co. (Avn), 1638th Ordnance Co. (Avn), 59th Portable Hospital. The 393d Service Squadron and the 2021st C/1 Truck Company were in February.


161. Mrs. Whitehead to Kenney, 21 Feb. 44 and 4 March 44; memo, Whitehead to Kenney, 6 March 44.

162. History, 33d Fighter Control Sq., op. 4-1.

163. History, 53d Signal Air Warning Battalion, Jan. 44, p. 1. These units remained at Cape Gloucester until 21 July 44 when their functions passed to the Sixth Air Group.

164. Dexter Report, p. 11.


166. Statement by 1st Lt. Robert V. Martin, 22 Dec. 43, encl. #22 in History, 343d Fighter Sq., Chap. III.


173. G.-CI-15635 (34-12-43), MacArthur to O/S ID for Arnold and Lovett, OA-418, 33 Dec. 43.


5. Ibid., History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 5.


13. Ibid., p. 27.

14. Ibid., App. I, p. 1. The breakdown was: bombers—23 3-26's, 263 B-25's, 148 P-23's; fighters—223 A-38's, 433 P-47's, 11 P-70's, 131 P-40's; reconnaissance—75 P-205's, 36 P-41's and P-51's, 20 J-35's, 43 L-5's; transports—614 C-47's, 12 C-17's, 2 L-50's.

15. Losses resulting from enemy action were very low. The 310th Bomb Wing, in March lost 2 P-47's, 1 P-40, and 6 A-20's to enemy action but suffered 33 losses through accidents. History, 310th Bomb Wing, March 44, p. 2.
16. 8th Photo Rec. Sq., Form 34's, Jan. 44.
18. 45th and 501st Bomb Sq., Form 34's, 16-23 Jan. 44.
19. 345th Bomb Gp., 11th's No. 24-D-1, 26 Jan. 44.
21. 38th Bomb Gp., 15th's No. 25-0, 26 Jan. 44; 345th Bomb Gp., 11th's No. 25-C-1, 28 Jan. 44.
22. 451st Bomb Gp., 11th's No. 26-0-1, 27 Jan. 44; 30th Bomb Gp., 11th's Nos. 26-D-1, 28 Jan. 44, and 27-D-1, 29 Jan. 44. Reconnaissance by three 3-35's of the 17th Bom. Sq. on 29 January 1944 confirmed the report that both airfields were unserviceable. Form 34, 23-29 Jan. 44.
25. History, 8th Bomb Gp., Feb. 44, p. 3. This was the group's first medium-altitude mission since May 1943.
26. 345th Bomb Gp., 11th's No. 42-C-1, 12-14 Feb. 44. Sixteen B-38's failed to rendezvous with the bombers over Tokyo Island.
27. 38th and 345th Bomb Gps., Form 34's, 13-15 Feb. 44.
28. See App. No. 3.
31. Details of this attack are not pertinent to the present study. See histories of the 3d, 28th, and 345th Bomb Gps., Feb. 44.
34. Record of the Thirteenth Air Force During 1944, p. 1.
35. The C.I.A. Weekly, vol. III, no. 8, 23 Feb. 44, p. 542 and no. 9, 1 March 44, p. 622. It is interesting to note that Admiral Spruance attacked Truk on 17-18 February 1944 and the Seventh Air Force bombed Ponape on 15 February in a double squeeze against Japanese reinforcement bases. The Nansei Island invasion fell on 16 February 1944; landings on Enewetok began on the 18th; Saipan and Tinian were raided on the 23rd; and the Admiralty Islands invasion was to come on the 29th. This enemy, subjected to so many widely separated attacks, may have been somewhat confused.

36. Ibid., vol. III, no. 10, 8 March 44, pp. 702-03.


42. Ibid., p. 3. Not only the change in date, but also the point of landing was changed in this suddenly revised plan. General Kenney in a letter to General Whitcomb on 10 February 1944, stated: "The landing will be made in two places, one at Lorraineau and the other on the Seeadler Harbour side of the Saluan Plantation. The landing on the beach adjacent to Lomote Airfield was ruled out, as the operation is blocked by a continuous coral reef. The entrance to Efate Harbour is only wide enough for one boat at a time to slip through, so that also was ruled out. This decision was made by the General himself. Krueger, however, is quite confident that by landing on the comparatively broad front on the east side of Seeadler Harbour he can quickly gain control of the airfield with the support of artillery which will be landed with the assault wave, and assuming that we have done a fairly good job of taking out the radar defenses in the vicinity of Lomote strip."


47. Ltr., Kenney to Whitchurch, 31 Feb. 44; History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 15. General Whitchurch apparently had a hand in persuading Kenney to argue for the earlier date, since on 21 February 1944 Kenney had informed Whitchurch that "the Kydies/Kamu show will take place on April 1st, followed by the Kamu Bay operation on April 28th. . . ." Ltr., Kenney to Whitchurch, 21 Feb. 44.


51. Hq, Advon Fifth Air Force, "Plan of Air Operation in Support of \[\text{fac simile}\]," 22 Feb. 44, Doc. No. 13. In regard to stationing fighters on Mindoro, General Kenney explained that General Krueger was "figuring on having the Mindoro strip ready for fighters about D plus four. These fighters will come from Southwest Pacific. This decision was made by General MacArthur [signature]. No combat forces except those from the Southwest Pacific are to occupy Mindoro Island. In as much as by D day there should be no air threat from either New Ireland or New Britain, the need for air defense of the Mindoro/Kamu Bay area is pretty small, so that we can spare a Suit squadron and one or two P-40 [signature] squadrons from the R.A.A.F. to take care of the need for fighters at Kamu." Ltr., Kenney to Whitchurch, 10 Feb. 44.


55. 65th Bomb Sq., Issn No. 57-L-1, 25 Feb. 44.

56. 65th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 25-26 Feb. 44. The plane dropped 4 x 500-lb. bombs on Pavitala Village.

57. 90th Bomb Grp. and 501st Bomb Sq., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.


59. 38th Bomb Grp., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.

60. Brewer Report, p. 9. Lacking evidence as to the hour when the scouts landed, the writer assumes this to have been the covering strike referred to by the Brewer Report, but the two B-25's over Los Nervos from 0400 to 0700 may well have provided the cover.
61. 43d and 90th Bomb Gms. and 600th Bomb Gm., Form 54's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.


63. 49th and 50th Bomb Gms., MIR No. 68-3, 29 Feb.-1 March 44.

64. 501st Bomb Gm., MIR No. 69-3, 29 Feb. 44.

65. 65th Bomb Gm., Form 54, 27 Feb.-4 March 44 and History, Feb. 44, p. 3.

66. 5d and 29th Bomb Gms., Form 54's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.


69. 500th Bomb Gm., Form 54's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.

70. 348th Fighter Gm., Form 54's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.

71. 47th Fighter Gm., Form 54's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44; History, 47th Fighter Gm., Feb. 44, vo. 1, 3. Two pilots were saved.

72. The air program, as announced on 16 Feb. 44, called for the following bomber strikes:

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"Cirrusantile" was the code name for Manus Island, "Underdog" for Los Negros Island. Therefore, it would seem that this plan of air strikes was designed for the Manus invasion scheduled for about 1 April. However, the schedule was transferred in the original form to the Los Negros invasion.

73. 65th and 403d Bomb Sq's., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44; 65th Bomb Sq., N.R. No. 60-J-1, 1 March 44.

74. History, 33rd Bomb Grp., Feb. 44, p. 4. One B-25 was lost and another crashed on the takeoff.

75. 71st and 81st Bomb Sqs., N.R. No. 60-L-1, 10 March 44. One B-25 received 15 hits from 20-cm. machine-gun fire.

76. 345th Bomb Grp., N.R. No. 60-O, 1 March 44.

77. Laid.


79. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., p. 69.


81. 71st, 405th, and 823d Bomb Sqs., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.


84. 823d Bomb Sq., N.R. No. 61-I-1, 15 March 44.

85. 822d Bomb Grp., N.R. No. 61-I-1, 18 March 44. Here the time of attack is given as 10:15, but Form 34, 27 Feb.-4 March 44, has it at 10:45.

86. 405th Bomb Sq., N.R. No. 61-I-1, 3 March 44.

87. History, 403d Bomb Grp., March 44, p. 1; 64th and 403d Bomb Sqs., N.R. No. 61-A-1, 1, 4 March 44; Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.

88. 71st Bomb Grp., N.R. No. 61-I-1, 10 March 44.

89. 405th, 500th, and 801st Bomb Sqs., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.
90. 499th Bomb Sq., LRM No. 61-I, 2 March 44.
91. 39th Troop Carrier Sq., 198, 3 March 44.
92. 71st Bomb Sq., LRM No. 62-I-1, 12 March 44.
93. 332d Bomb Sq., LRM No. 62-I-1, 12 March 44.
94. 823d Bomb Sq., LRM No. 62-I-1, 16 March 44.
95. History, 405th Bomb Sq., March 44, p. 2 and LRM No. 62-I-1, 9 March 44.
96. 433d Troop Carrier Sq., LRM's No. 1, 6 March 44. One of the B-17's had left Einschafen for Corp Gloucester at 0700, but the field was closed in. Held to dispose of his cargo as he wished, the pilot decided to try Pomote. History, 433d Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, p. 38-39. A study of mission reports and histories of troop carrier units yields only incomplete information about air supply and evacuation during ZAP. During March, nine troop carrier squadrons made at least 37 trips to Pomote, about two-fifths of them with B-17's. These trips brought in food, medical and engineer supplies, ordnance, personnel, and miscellaneous equipment. On 16 March, for example, the 41st Troop Carrier Squadron flew in engineers to start work on the Loforop airfield. LRM, 16 March 44, in History, 41st Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, p. 37-38.
97. 341st Fighter Sq., LFR, 3 March 44. The B-25's got one of the Japanese planes.
98. 501st Bomb Sq., LRM No. 62-I, 3 March 44.
99. 498th Bomb Sq., LRM No. 32-I, 3 March 44.
100. 500th Bomb Sq., LRM No. 63-I, 3 March 44.
101. 498th Bomb Sq., LRM No. 63-I, 3 March 44.
102. 13th and 90th Bomb Sqs., LRM No. 63-J, 3 March 44.
103. 340th Fighter Sq., Form 34, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.
104. History, 433d Fighter Sq., March 44, and Form 34, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.
105. History, 403d Bomb Sq., March 44, p. 1; 65th Bomb Sq., LRM No. 63-I-1, 4 March 44.
106. 13th Bomb Sq., LRM No. 63-3, 3 March 44.
107. 499th Bomb Sq., LRM No. 63-D, 4 March 44.

109. 13th Bomb Sq., A.I.R. No. 64-K, 4 March 44; 80th Bomb Sq., Form 54, 27 Feb. 4–4 March 44.

110. 500th and 501st Bomb Sq.s., A.I.R. No. 64-G, 6 March 44. In these
strikes on 4 March, the A-20's and B-25's dropped 135 x 500-lb.
bombs and expended 41,325 rounds in strafing. General Hillshead
was anxious to strike Japanese concentrations north of Nukane Harbor
but could not get target data from Air Force. Ltr., Hillshead to
Kenney, 5 March 44.

111. 66th and 403d Bomb Sq.s., A.I.R. No. 65-J-1, 6 March 44.

112. See A.M. No. 8. Three B-25's, 17th Reconnaissance Squadron adjusted
artillery fire for 90 minutes.

113. 499th and 499th Bomb Sq.s., A.I.R. No. 65-I, 7 March 44.

114. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., p. 61.

115. History, 41st Fighter Sq., March 44, p. 2. 0-47 operations had to
be curtailed in order not to interfere with the fighters. Ltr.,
Hillshead to Kenney, 5 March 44.

116. No. Breuer Task Force, 0-1 Operations Report No. 9, 7 March 44, in
AGO Analysis File. The 7 Bomber Command History for March 1944,
p. 3, states that Col. Clinton True, commanding the 345th Bombard-
ment Group, landed the first B-25 at Niiote on 3 March, but the
diary of Capt. George W. Frederick states that on 7 March "at 1300,
Lt. Col. Vagett landed a B-25 on Niiote strip successfully."
History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., App. No. 40.

117. 71st Bomb Sq., Form 34, 5–11 March 44.

118. The number of B-40's arriving on 9 and 10 March varies in different
sources, but the History, 6th Tactical Air Communications Sq., App.
No. 40, has 12 coming in on each day. See also 499th Bomb Sq.,
Form 34, 5–11 March 44, and History, 40th Troop Carrier Sq., March
44, p. 6.

119. Cf. 36th Fighter Sq., Form 34, 20 March–1 April 44.

120. History, 403d Bomb Sq., March 44, p. 2; 64th Bomb Sq., A.I.R. No.
67-I-1, 9 March 44. The 403d Bombardment Squadron A.I.R. No. 67-I-1,
10 March 1944, indicates in a little bragging not justified by the
record. Except for one B-24 in each squadron, the 64th and 65th
returned because of weather; the 403d got through with five of six
B-24's by flying at very low altitude under the storm. The writer of
the report boasts that on 5 March the 43d Group flew under the
cloud cover to reach the Admiralties, while the 30th Group "skipped" over it. The 30th Group flew over a cloud cover at 4000 feet from 1130/L to 1230/L and finally returned to base without having dropped their bombs..." For the record, one should point out that on 6 February it was the 90th Group that defied the weather and the 43d Group that turned to the secondary target after having come within 100 miles of the Admiralties. 203d Bomb Sq., 3/M No. 37-2-1, 7 Feb 44. Certainly, results on 7 March could not have been a source of much satisfaction. A 1,000-ft, high does not change a gun position even though it may please the bombardier.

121. 493rd and 501st Bomb Sq.s., Form 34's, 5-11 March 44.

122. Ibid.

123. 66th Bomb Sq., 3/M No. 68-9-1, 13 March 44. Among other targets hit were: Pier time, Fituliu Island, Tubacu Pt., Lomu Village and Tomini Pt. The six 2-24's bombing Marille Island registered 12 hits on the target out of 33 x 1,000-15, bombs dropped. 493d Bomb Sq., Form 34, 5-11 March 44.


125. 496th and 500th Bomb Sq.s., Form 34's, 5-11 March 44.

126. History, 493d Bomb Sq., March 44, p. 3.

127. 501st Bomb Sq., 3/M No. 71-3, 13 March 44; 499th Bomb Sq., 3/M No. 71-3, 13 March 44.


129. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., App. 40.

130. History, 1st Cavalry Div. Artillery, p. 11, in 400 Analysis Files.

131. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., p. 61.


133. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., App. 40.


135. 501st Bomb Sq., 3/M No. 75-X, 16 March 44; History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., App. 40.

136. 499th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 12-18 March 44.
137.  822d Bom. Sq., Form 34, 18-18 March 44.


139.  Lidd., No. 28, 26 March 44; 8th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 26 March-1 April 44.

140.  Among the lesser Admirals, the following were occupied: Ituiliu, 20-21 March; Koror at Malo, 1 April; Balabag, 2-3 April; Pau, 9 April; and Tong, 12 April. G-3 Operations reports, 30 March-14 April 44.


142.  GSG 5124, General Summary No. 137, 4 March 44, p. 1.


145.  Brewer reporting, op. 5-6.


147.  History, 55th Fighter Sq., March 44, passim, and Form 34's, March 44.

148.  39th Fighter Sg., Form 34's, March 44.

149.  History, 433d Fighter Sg., March 44, p. 5. These missions varied in strength from 2 to 16 P-38's, the average being about 6.


151.  135th, 139th, and 531st Bomb Sqs., Form 34's, March 44.

152.  History, 310th Bomb Sg., March 44, p. 5.


157. 63rd Bomb Sq., Form 34's, March 44.


161. History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 17
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

This study, primarily a history of air combat in the Bismarck Archipelago area, is intended to bridge a gap between other AAF Historical Studies dealing with the Thirteenth Air Force in the Solomons and the Fifth Air Force in New Guinea. Therefore, no effort has been made to discuss such matters as development of materiel and ordnance, operations of service commands, administration, or details of planning at the higher echelons. This deliberate limitation is reflected in the sources that have been used.

Unit histories of fighter and bomber squadrons, groups, and commands have been drawn upon heavily. Parts I and II of the Fifth Air Force History were not available at the time of writing; but Part III covering the period 1 February to 15 June 1944, with its accompanying documents, was very useful. The Weekly Status and Operations Reports (Form 34) from October 1943 to March 1944 provided most of the statistical data. Statistics derived from this source were checked against the Incoming Cables originating at General MacArthur's headquarters. These cabled communiqués contain practically the only information available at present on the activities of the RAAF. The Narrative Mission Reports, which exist under various titles, provide bits of information which become exceedingly important when followed through for a period of several months. Unlike the Form 34, these reports vary considerably in quality, length, and scope. Statistics and information about enemy air strength are found primarily in the Intelligence Summaries issued by General Kenney's headquarters.

Narrative histories, journals, field orders, and other documents originating with the Army Ground Forces and Marine units involved in the campaigns are indispensable. This material is deposited in the ATO Analysis Files, which also contain copies of Naval Action Reports, observers' reports, and miscellaneous documents of interest. The 1st Marine Division's "Special Action Report, Cape Gloucester Operation" and the Alamo Force's "Report of the Dexterity Operation" are excellent accounts. Unless specifically noted, documents cited are in the Archives of the AAF Historical Office.
Appendix No. 1

Estimated Numbers of Japanese Aircraft in the Bismarck Archipelago and New Guinea, October 1943 through March 1944

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* Compiled from Hq. AAF CPA Intelligence Summaries.

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* Figures for 30 October 1943 and 4 December 1943 from Status and Commitment of AAF Aircraft in Theaters, Form 50-C (later Form AS-3), in Statistical Control Division, Foreign Statistics Branch; figures for 6 March 1944 from folder labeled "110 Reports 5th Air Force 1944," in Statistical Control Division, Combat Operations Branch.

a A - Ready for combat; B - Repairable in 10 days; C - Total assigned; D - Total in theater.

b B-25's are not listed on the Form 50-C for this period (20 Oct 43), but the 19th Bomb Sq. had 26 on hand (Form 34); on 1 Jan. 44, the 22d Bomb Gp., still lacked enough B-25's to equip all squadrons, so the 19th Bomb Sq. was still flying 16 B-25's. 110 Reports 5th Air Force 1944.

c Exclusive of training and staff planes.
Appendix No. 3

Fifth Air Force
Pre-Invasion Strikes on Cape Gloucester Area and Northern New Britain
19 Nov. - 25 Dec. 43*

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**SUMMARY**

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Total sorties 1345 Total tonnage 3925.0
Air Plan for 2 Jan, Arundel, 15 Dec. 43 *

Headquarters, Advance Echelon,
Fifth Air Force, APO 939
15 December, 1943.

1. Omitted.

2. Fifth Air Force attacks the enemy bivouacs and supply areas, CAPE GLOUCESTER; provides direct support to Amphibious Force in ARAWE Area; provides fighter protection for Naval Forces; prepares to support Ground Forces.

3. a. Commanding General, 7th Bomber Command will:

(1) Strike enemy bivouacs and supply areas at CAPE GLOUCESTER with one (1) group of heavy bombers, per strike order Commanding General, 7th Bomber Command, dated 14 December, 1943. Fighter cover provided para. 3 f (1).

(2) Photo MAP, XAVIANG.

(3) Provide normal reconnaissance.

b. Commanding General, First Air Task Force will:

(1) Maintain one (1) squadron attack bombers on air alert on call by Amphibious Forces in ARAWE Area from 0615Z to 0900Z.

(2) Maintain two (2) squadrons A-30's on ground alert 0600Z to 1530Z prepared to attack targets in ARAWE Area.

(3) Maintain five (5) squadrons heavy bombers on alert to strike targets in ARAWE Area 0600Z to 1000Z. Attack CAPE GLOUCESTER using this force if it is not called on by Ground Forces by 1000Z.

(4) Provide fighter protection for Amphibious Forces at ARAWE.

(5) Provide fighter protection for Naval Convoy as required.

(6) Maintain shuttle to NAZAE-GUSUP with available troop carriers as requested.

* Copy annexed to Headquarters Army Ground Forces, "Report on Air Support in Southwest Pacific Area During the Period 1 November 1943 to 1 February 1944."
(7) Conduct large sweeps along coast of E. and W. THAILAND starting at 800 Z time on 15-16 December, 1943, per plan Commanding General, First Air Task Force, using one (1) squadron B-24's.

c. Commanding Officer, Second Air Task Force will:

(1) Conduct maximum troop carrier operations LAB-WALAB-CUSAP Area.

(2) Provide area medium cover for all troop carrier operations to CUSAP.

d. Commanding Officer, Third Air Task Force will:

(1) Conduct early morning fighter sweep to THAAB-MAKAB-MAKAB Area, taking off as soon as first light and weather permit.

(2) Provide fighter cover for all troop carrier operations to CUSAP.

3. e. Commanding General, 54th Troop Carrier Wing will:

(1) Utilize six (6) troop carrier squadrons for moving units to air [and?] supplying forward bases as directed by this Headquarters.

f. Commanding General, V Fighter Command will:

(1) Cover operations para. 3, a. (1) with one (1) squadron P-40's.

(2) Dispatch one (1) group P-47's to TOCOUSA first light to cover under operational control Commanding General, First Air Task Force for the day.

g. Air Officer Commanding, 9 Operational Group will:

(1) Attack LABAB AIRPORT with maximum force Beauforts night of 15/16 December, 1943.

(2) Hold one (1) squadron Sotons on alert 1200/L to 1700/L prepared to strike enemy naval forces.

(3) Provide fighter cover along south coast THAILAND as per plan Air Officer Commanding, 9 Operational Group.

(4) Conduct late strafe sweep AILAB to GLADAB, arriving GLADAB at dusk.

(5) Continue to perform present plans of reconnaissance and to provide anti-submarine patrol as required.
(6) Provide fighter defense of advance island bases as well as MILNE BAY.

(7) Night of 15/16 December, 1943 dispatch Catalina to conduct barrier sweep south coast NEW BRITAIN as per plan Air Officer Commanding, 9 Operational Group.

4. Omitted.

5. Signal Communications - No Change.

By command of Major General WHITEHEAD:

HERMAN G. COOPER,
Colonel, Air Corps,
Chief of Staff
Appendix No. 5

Air Plan for BACKHANDER Operation

ANNEX "O" TO OPERATION ORDER NO. 2-43, BACKHANDER FORCE

AIR SUPPORT PLAN

00591
1930-5-90
160/233

Headquarters Backender Force
A.P.O. 320

November 14, 1943. 1000

SECRET

Excerpts from Fifth Air Force Operation Plan.

1. Fl Cover.
   (a) D-1 day.
      (1) Sufficient cover will be maintained to insure the safety of the convoy.
   (b) D-day.
      (1) One (1) Fl Sq Area cover from 0630 until 0700.
      (2) Three (3) Fl Sq Area cover from 0700 until 1400.
      (3) One (1) Fl Sq Convoy cover from 1400 until 1830.
   (c) D/3 days.
      (1) Area cover by at least one (1) flight of Fl will be maintained from 0700 until 1400 D/3 days.
      (2) After D/3 day Fl cover will be withdrawn unless friendly convoys are unloading.

2. Atk Avn.
   (a) D-day.
      (1) One (1) Atk Gp will neutralize by bombing and strafing BEACHES YELLOW 1 and 2 from H minus seventeen (17) minutes until H minus two (2) minutes, or until landing craft are 500 yards from beach. One (1) Atk Sq of this Gp using B/P bombs, will strafe and smoke TARGET HILL to prevent enemy observed fire from these defenses.

* 1st Marine Division, Special Action Report, Cape Gloucester Operation, Annex C.
(2) One (1) Attk Sq will neutralize by bombing and strafing landing beach GR-20K from H minus twelve (12) minutes until H minus two (2) minutes; if directed by the fighter director ship off GREEN BEACH, the time of ATT will be postponed up until 30 minutes and will cease at ATT time plus 10 minutes or when landing boats are 500 yards from beach.

(3) Four (4) Sq of Attk Avn will attack targets along the coast, from DOFF POINT N and E to the Adv Area. Approximate time of this attack will be H plus one (1) hour and forty-five (45) minutes.

(b) D+ days.

(1) Sufficient Attk Avn will be available for use as directed by Com Gen PFEFF, to enable the Backshander Force to expeditiously accomplish its mission.


(a) D-day.

(1) Two (2) Sq of H Bomb will bomb TARGET HILL from H minus forty-five (45) minutes to H minus twenty-five (25) minutes or TARGET RIDGE as an alternate target.

(2) Three (3) Sq of H Bomb will bomb GREYHOUND /Sorgen Bay/ area from H minus forty-five (45) minutes to H minus twenty-five (25) minutes to destroy enemy mortar and automatic weapons positions in this area, or HILL 660 as an alternate target.

(3) Four (4) Sq of H Bomb will bomb TARGET RIDGE at approximately H plus one (1) hour and fifteen (15) minutes or HILL 660 as an alternate target.

(b) D+ days.

(1) Sufficient Bomb Avn will be available for use as directed by Com Gen PFEFF, to enable the Backshander Force to expeditiously accomplish its mission.

4. Air Alert.

(a) D-day.

(1) One (1) Sq of Attk Avn will be on air alert from H Hour until H plus one (1) hour and thirty (30) minutes. Three (3) Sq of Attk Avn will be used with one (1) Sq over target for thirty (30) minutes. If no targets are called for by the Backshander Force alternate targets will be attacked as follows: 1st Sq - TARGET RIDGE, 2nd Sq - TARGET RIDGE, 3rd Sq - HILL 660.
(b) D-days.

1. Air alert will not be provided after H plus one (1) hour and thirty (30) minutes unless directed by Com Gen FATT.

5. Ground Alert and Repeat Missions.

(a) D-day.

1. Two (2) Sq of H Bomb will be on ground alert from H minus forty-five (45) minutes until H plus eight (8) hours and fifteen (15) minutes.

2. Four (4) Sq of Atk Avn will be prepared to go on Ground Alert status two (2) hours after return from strike missions.

3. Nine (9) Sq of H Bomb immediately upon landing will be refueled and re-armed and will conduct a second mission on D-day against targets selected, prior to D minus three (3) days, by the Backsander Force.

4. Four (4) Sq of Atk Avn immediately upon landing will refuel and rearm and will conduct a second mission on D-day against targets selected, prior to D minus three (3) days, by the Backsander Force.

5. Four (4) Sq of Atk Avn will be prepared to go on Ground Alert status two (2) hours after returning from strike missions against shipping targets of opportunity.

(b) D-days.

1. Sufficient Ground Alert will be available for use, as directed by Com Gen FATT, to enable the Backsander Force to expeditiously accomplish its mission.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL R. PERKUS:

AUG Le. SIMS,
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps,
Chief of Staff.

DISTRIBUTION: Same as Cpn O
No. 2-43.

ADO S:\
A. POOLOXM
Colonel, USMC
D-3.

SECURITY INFORMATION

THIS PAGE Declassified IAW EO12958
Fifth Air Force Operations over Cape Gloucester, 26 December 1945

A. Bomber Operations

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Totals 107 3-24 820 308 24 166 589 11,830 1,969,190
109 3-25
32 A-20
Total bomb tonnage: 422.6

*Compiled from Narrative Mission Reports and Weekly Status and Operations Reports (Form 34's).

**The 71st and 823d Squadrons fired 224 x 75mm shells in their attacks at 1047 and 1050.
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Flames  

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Allied antiaircraft fire also shot down one enemy fighter, the 499th
Bombardment Sq. claims 1 Val shot down, and the 501st Bombardment Sq.
claims 1 Val probable, raising the totals given above to 65 destroyed
and 9 probably destroyed. Comparison of personal losses is interesting:
the Japanese lost a minimum of 143 airmen, a maximum of 166. The Fifth
Air Force lost 2 pilots from enemy action.
Appendix No. 7

Plan for Air Cooperation, APPEASE Operation

Annex 6 to Opn 0 No 7-44

HEADQUARTERS BACKHAUSER FORCE
A.P.O. 280
March 1, 1944

SECRET

1. Air Force Bombing to be as follows going into effect D-2 days and remaining in effect until further notice: From the shore ROOKE (UNDOI) to a point five thousand (5000) yards E SAKAR ISLAND, then N 3 to point five thousand (5000) yards of GAPE HOLOMAM (N tip WILLIAMSON PENINSULA) then E to intercept a N-S line running through peak of 1175, KUNABOK. Strikes to be made only on pre-arranged targets after D-2 days.

2. Strikes requested on following targets prior to D-day:
   VULURAI PLANTATION
   WITOKAI
   HOSKINS AIRFIELD
   KAVUVI AREA
   MUNA DAVU
   TALASEA AIRFIELD
   OAI OE LANDING - ROAD MUNGO
   PLANTATION

3. (a) D-2 Day.
   (1) Photos of TALASEA Area.
   (2) Two (2) Sqrons of Beauforts bombing TALASEA Area and installations.
   (3) One (1) Sqn of Beauforts bombing HOSKINS and KAVUVI Area.
   (4) Intensive armed reconnaissance over entire area.

4. (a) D-3 Days.
   (1) Two (2) Sqrons of Beauforts bombing TALASEA Area and installations.
   (2) One (1) Sqn of Beauforts bombing HOSKINS and KAVUVI Area.
   (3) Intensive armed reconnaissance over entire area.
   (4) Heavy attacks by SOUPAG on RAUL AIRFIELD.

5. (a) D-1 Day.
   (1) Two (2) Sqrons of Beauforts bombing TALASEA Area and installations.

SECURITY IN TAN.
(2) One (1) Sqdrn of Beauforts Bombing HOSKINS and GAVUVU Area.
(3) Intensive armed reconnaissance over entire area.
(4) Heavy attacks by SOUPAC on RABAUL AIRDEKES.

6. D-Day -
(a) Air Cover:
   (1) One (1) Sqdrn over convoy at first light until time boats
       are unloaded.
   (2) Two (2) flights over Beach RED for interception and pro-
       tection.
   (3) Two (2) flights covering withdrawal of boats to IBOKI.
(b) Close in support for coordinated attack:
   (1) Bomb and strafe Beach RED.
   (2) Sacke VOLSAPAI POINT and N' point of Beach RED.
(c) Bombing of TALASIA Area from H-hour until 1/2 hours (LOCAL):
   (1) Strafe inland and coastal trail and road net.
   (2) Bomb TALASIA AIRDEKES and installations.
(d) Bomb HOSKINS - GAVUVU Area throughout the day.
(e) Heavy air attacks by SOUPAC on RABAUL AIRDEKES.
(f) Ground Alert:
    (1) Four (4) P-29's with 500 lb bombs each on ground alert
        at GLOUCESTER.

7. D1 Day -
(a) Air Cover:
   (1) One (1) Sqdrn over convoy at first light until time boats
       are unloaded.
   (2) Two (2) flights over Beach RED for interception and pro-
       tection.
   (3) Two (2) flights covering withdrawal of boats to IBOKI.
(b) Bombing Missions:
   (1) HOSKINS - GAVUVU Area throughout day.
   (2) Bombing of TALASIA Area as requested through ALP.
   (3) Heavy air attacks by SOUPAC on RABAUL AIRDEKES.
(c) Ground Alert:
    (1) Four (4) P-29's with 500 lb bombs each on ground alert at
        GLOUCESTER.

8. After D+1 Day -
(a) Cover, reconnaissance, bombardment and photographic missions
    as requested through ALP.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL RUPERTUS:

J. T. SLEDEN,
Colonel, U. S. Marine Corps,
Chief of Staff.

DISTRIBUTION: Same as Opn No. 7-44

M. F. Rockmore,
Major, UC&P, Aest., D-J.
### Fifth Air Force Bombardment of the Admiralty Islands

**January - March 1944**  
(Effective Sorties Only)

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Appendix No. 9

Plan of Air Operations in Support of SEIZER*

I. General:

1. Force which will be employed:
   b. Troop Carrier forces required by the tactical situation; supplemented by four (4) B-17s for emergency air dropping.
   c. Fighter Force as required by the tactical situation.
   d. Units of 9 Operational Group will be employed to:
      (1) Neutralize enemy air forces in central New Britain by night strikes as necessary against Gasmata and Cape Hoskins airfields.
      (2) Be prepared for the initial occupation of Manus Island to the extent of three (3) fighter squadrons.
      (3) Destroy hostile naval forces and shipping within range.
      (4) Provide, within area of responsibility, air defense necessary to maintain efficiency of forward bases.

2. Utilizing the above forces Fifth Air Force will:
   a. Support the operations of Southwest Pacific and South Pacific forces by neutralizing air attacks against hostile air forces and defense installations in northern New Ireland and the Admiralties.

3. Support the SEIZER operation by:
   a. Neutralizing enemy air forces and air fields in central New Britain and along the north coast of New Guinea to include Tadji.
   b. Providing fighter cover for the approach and retirement and the initial disembarkation of over water troop and supply movements.

* Issued by Headquarters, Advance Echelon Fifth Air Force, 20 February 1944, copy in Fifth Air Force History, Part III, Appendix II, Doc. No. 13. Details of fighter operations, providing convoy and shipping cover, are omitted from the present copy. Code names have been rendered in the clear.
c. Supporting the attack on MB by heavy bombardment on landings "D" Dry, and prior to the attack, heavily neutralize the objective area.

d. Thereafter provide close supporting action of landing forces as required by the Task Force commander.

e. Providing one (1) airborne caliber 50 antiaircraft battery on D minus 3 at staging area at Oro Bay to be released to Commanding General, 1st Cavalry Division.

f. Providing one (1) Air Engineer Officer and one (1) non-commissioned officer to go in with Reconnaissance Group—to be flown to Dobodura to report to Brigadier General Chase, D-3.

g. Providing one (1) Air Liaison Party, stripped down to report to Commanding General, 1st Cavalry Division at Oro Bay, D-5.

h. Being prepared to deliver supply by air dropping as required.

4. Install initially, at the earliest practical date, by arrangement with Commander, 1490 Force, three (3) fighter squadrons with associated service elements and the necessary air warning and radio navigational facilities to provide for local protection of installations and shipping.

5. Continue to:

a. Destroy hostile naval forces and shipping within reach.

b. In conjunction with Allied naval forces, isolate hostile navy by attacking coastal shipping along the north coast of New Guinea and western New Britain coast.

c. Support the operation of New Guinea Force.

d. Provide, within area of responsibility, air defense necessary to maintain efficiency of forward bases, including defense of Milne Bay-Dobodura shipping.

6. Provide close defensive aerial reconnaissance and general area reconnaissance as already committed and as may be required.

7. Assist Allied Intelligence Bureau in the supply and maintenance of observation posts and advanced points.
II. Bombardment Operations:

1. D Day minus 3.

   a. Deploying three (3) squadrons of heavy bombers, and seven (7) squadrons of attack bombers, strike enemy airplanes, antiaircraft positions, personnel, and supplies at Manus.

   b. Employing four (4) squadrons of heavy bombers, strike enemy anti-aircraft, personnel, and supplies at Sut and Dagua airdrones in the Buna area.

   c. Employing three (3) squadrons of RAAF dive bombers, strike enemy airplanes, supplies, and runway at Madang.


   b. Employing four (4) squadrons of heavy bombers, attack enemy airplanes, anti-aircraft, and personnel at Tadji.

   c. Employing six (6) squadrons of attack bombers, attack antiaircraft positions, personnel, and supplies at Manus.

   d. Employing two (2) squadrons of RAAF dive bombers, attack enemy airplanes, anti-aircraft, and personnel at Madang and Alexishafen.

3. D minus 1.

   a. Employing units of the Fifth Air Force as required by the tactical situation. Take out Hansa; or in the event that this does not appear to be a suitable target, hit airdromes on North New Guinea.


   a. Employing three (3) squadrons of heavy bombers, attack targets at Manus. This attack to be completed by H hour minus twenty (20) minutes.

   b. Employing four (4) squadrons of attack bombers, attack targets at Manus. These units will arrive in the target area, contact the headquarters ship, USS Medusa, call sign JU250, H hour minus 18. The Navy not being in position...
to effectively follow the air strike, the planes will circle over Pak Island on station for one (1) hour. At the end of that time, they will contact headquarters ship JULIO, and notify the Air Control Officer that they are commencing attack and returning to base upon completion. In the event that the Navy is prepared to follow in the air attack within the time limits, the attack will terminate upon first boat reaching shore, or as safety dictates. In the event that radio communications fail, the air attack will begin upon the firing of a star shell at fifteen hundred (1500) feet over the target area by the headquarters ship JULIO.

c. From H hour minus five (5) minutes, to H hour plus four (4) hours, the 345th Bomb Group will provide one (1) squadron on air alert over the objective area for one (1) hour, each to hit predetermined targets on call from Task Force Commanders.

d. Employing four (4) squadrons of heavy bombers, attack enemy airplanes, anti-aircraft personnel and supplies at Kavieng, if air situation on D-1 requires, otherwise hit New Guinean airfields.

e. From H hour minus one hour until H plus six (6) hours, 71st Peaco Group will provide three (3) B-25's on air alert over Pak Island for three (3) hours each to lay smoke on predetermined targets on call from the Task Force Commanders.

Note: Section III, which is omitted from this copy, provides for fighter operations from D minus 1 to D plus 3.

This plan apparently was prepared for invasion of Manus Island in the Seeadler Harbor area, since the code name UNIFOCO (Los Negros) does not appear. The pattern of air cooperation followed this plan so closely that it seems to have been put into effect almost in its entirety, substituting Los Negros for Manus wherever the latter appears as a designated target.
Appendix No. 10

Revised Plan of Air Operations in Support of BREWER

HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED AIR FORCES
SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA

OPERATIONS INSTRUCTIONS
APO 925
14 March 1944
NUMBER . . . . 44/1

REFERENCE OPERATIONS INSTRUCTIONS NUMBER 44/2, GENERAL HEADQUARTERS,
SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA, DATED 9 MARCH 1944. EFFECTIVE UPON RECEIPT OF
THESE OPERATIONS INSTRUCTIONS, OPERATIONS INSTRUCTIONS NUMBER 44, THIS
HEADQUARTERS, DATED 18 FEBRUARY 1944, IS REVOKED AND THE FOLLOWING SUB-
SITUATED THEREFORE, EXCEPT FOR ALIENED 3, 4 & 5 WHICH WILL REMAIN IN EFECT
AND WILL BE INCORPORATED AS ALIENED 6, 4 & 5 TO OPERATIONS INSTRUCTIONS
NUMBER 44/1:

1. a. Enemy Air Forces are divided, with a concentration of Naval
Air Units at RABAUL and LAVIANG while Army Air Units are concentrated from
WILK westward. For details of hostile dispositions see current Intelligence
Summaries.

b. Air reconnaissance at LOS WebGL and LORNGAU, 23 February
1944, failed to elicit any hostile reaction. Naval and Air bases have
been neutralized in the ARENAS, and are under heavy attack in the
LANDAKES. Fragmentary Orders issued for the seizure of LOS WebGL are
hereby confirmed:

(1) NEW BRITAIN FORCE will:

(a) Supported by the ALLIED AIR AND NAVAL Forces execute
a reconnaissance in force of LOS WebGL Airfield, HAYNE
HARBOR and LOS WebGL, and should the area be found
be virtually unoccupied, remain in occupation.

(b) Prepare airfields initially for immediate transport
operation and at earliest practicable date for
fighter operation.

(2) ALLIED NAVAL Forces will support the operation by:
Transporting and landing elements of the reconnaissance
force and supplies and furnishing the necessary naval
protection therefor.

* Copy in Fifth Air Force History, Part III, Appendix II, Document No. 121.
Code names have been rendered in the clear.
2. a. SOUTHWEST and SOUTH PACIFIC Forces will continue the seizure and occupation of the ADMIRALTY ISLANDS and isolate RABaul.

b. The ALLIED AIR FORCES will support the operations of the SOUTHWEST and SOUTH PACIFIC Forces by engaging hostile land, sea and air forces during the operation.

3. a. The Deputy Commander, FIFTH AIR FORCE, will:

(1) Continue to support the ADMIRALTY operation by:

(a) Supporting the further seizure and occupation of the ADMIRALTY as arranged with Commander NEW BRITAIN FORCE.

(b) Heavily neutralizing the objective area and enemy air forces in CENTRAL NEW BRITAIN and along the North Coast of NEW GUINEA, except the RABaul area.

(c) Providing anti-submarine escort and fighter protection for overwater troop, supply and naval movements.

(d) Transporting troops and supplies as requested by Commander NEW BRITAIN FORCE.

(2) Install initially, at the earliest practicable date, by arrangement with Commander NEW BRITAIN FORCE, three (3) fighter squadrons with associated service elements and the necessary air warning and radio navigational facilities to provide for local protection of installations and shipping. Units for initial garrison shown in Annex Number 1 (Troop List).

(3) Be prepared to assist the SOUTH PACIFIC Force in the neutralization of Northern NEW IRELAND and in the RABaul area upon further direction of this headquarters.

(4) Continue to:

(a) Destroy hostile naval forces and shipping within range.

(b) In conjunction with ALLIED NAVAL Forces, isolate hostile advanced forces by attacking coastal shipping along the coast of NEW GUINEA and NEW BRITAIN west of CAPE RAMAY and CAPE LAMBERT.

(c) Support the operations of NEW GUINEA FORCE and provide air defense of SOUTHWEST PACIFIC Area forward bases.
(5) Provide reconnaissance as follows:

(a) Close defensive aerial reconnaissance of the BISMARK SEA west of the line specified in Par. 3 x (2) below, and within the arc: NASSAU ISLAND (exclusive) - HINIGI ISLAND (inclusive) - MOLLANDIA (inclusive).

(b) Maintain regular reconnaissance over assembly of air and naval forces at WAKDE ISLAND.

(c) Provide general aerial reconnaissance west of the boundary between SOUTH and SOUTHWEST PACIFIC Forces and northward of close defensive aerial reconnaissance area (Par. 3 a. (5) (a) above) to 10°31' North latitude between the above specified boundary and 130° East longitude.

(6) Assist Allied Intelligence Bureau in the supply and maintenance of observation posts and advanced parties.

b. The Air Officer Commanding, A.A.I.F. Command, A.A.I.F. will:

(1) Deliver long range attacks on strategic objectives in the Northwest Area.

(3) Continue present anti-submarine escort and patrol.

(5) Maintain regular reconnaissance over assembly of enemy air and naval forces at NIKAN ISLAND, HANAMURA ISLAND, AEGO, Babo, LODDOOR ISLAND and NAKOMARI.

(4) Maintain current aerial reconnaissance of the approaches to the TOKUSI STRAITS area.

(5) Destroy hostile naval forces and shipping within range.

(6) Provide, within area of responsibility, air defense necessary to maintain the efficiency of forward bases.

c. The Commanding Officer, FIFTH AIR FORCE SERVICE COMMAND, take the necessary action to ensure that Air Force supplies and ammunition are made available as required by the Deputy Commander FIFTH AIR FORCE. In matters pertaining to this operation, direct communications with supply and transportation agencies is authorized.

x. (1) Target Date: 29 February 1944.

(2) Dividing line for the SOUTH and SOUTHWEST PACIFIC Air and Naval Forces, both for reconnaissance and offensive combat is designated as follows:
145° East longitude north from the LOUISIANE ARCHIPELAGO to point at (6° South Latitude - 150° East longitude) - CAPE ARCH to the south coast of NEW BRITAIN at (4°68' South Latitude - 152°15' East longitude - north and west around coast of NEW BRITAIN to CAPE LAMBERT at (4°19' South Latitude - 151°35' East longitude - point at (3° South Latitude - 149°30' East longitude) - due north.

(3) For coordination of planning and execution of the continuation of the operation against the ADMIRALTIES, the Deputy Commander, FIFTH AIR FORCE, will report to the Commander NEW BRITAIN FORCE at times and places designated by the latter, who is charged with the coordination of plans.

(4) The Deputy Commander, FIFTH AIR FORCE will, in conjunction with the Naval Forces, furnish three (3) Fighter Director Groups for employment on destroyers to coordinate land-based air action in the ADMIRALTIES operation. One (1) additional Fighter Director Group will be furnished by the Deputy Commander FIFTH AIR FORCE to the Commander NEW BRITAIN FORCE for employment with landing forces ashore.

(5) The KIRIVA-GOODENOUGTH Fighter Sector Area will remain active until on or after D day, when, upon direction of the Deputy Commander, FIFTH AIR FORCE, this Sector will revert to a passive defense status.

4. See Annex Number 4 - Logistics.

5. a. See Annex Number 5 - Communications.

b. COMMAND POSTS:

(1) CMC, SWPA
Adv Ech
- BESSANDE
- PORT FOREST

(2) SOUTH PACIFIC FORC.: - Nou-Va
Adv CP
- GUADALCANAL

(3) NEW BRITAIN FORCE - CAPE CREY

(4) NEW GUITRA FORCE - PORT LOICSBY

(5) ALLIED AIR FORCES - BESSANDE
Adv Ech
- MADZA

[Signature]
SECURITY INFORMATION
(6) ALLIED NAVAL FORCES - BRISBANE
               Adv Ech - PORT HOPESBY

(7) USASOS - BRISBANE
               Adv Ech - PORT HOPESBY

(8) 6th U. S. Inf. Div. - MILNE BAY

(9) R.A.A.F. COMMAND A.A.F. BRISBANE

By command of Lieutenant General KANE:

DONALD WILSON
   brigadier General
   Chief of Staff

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