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THE THIRTEENTH AIR FORCE

MARCH-OCTOBER 1943

(Short Title: AAFRH-20)

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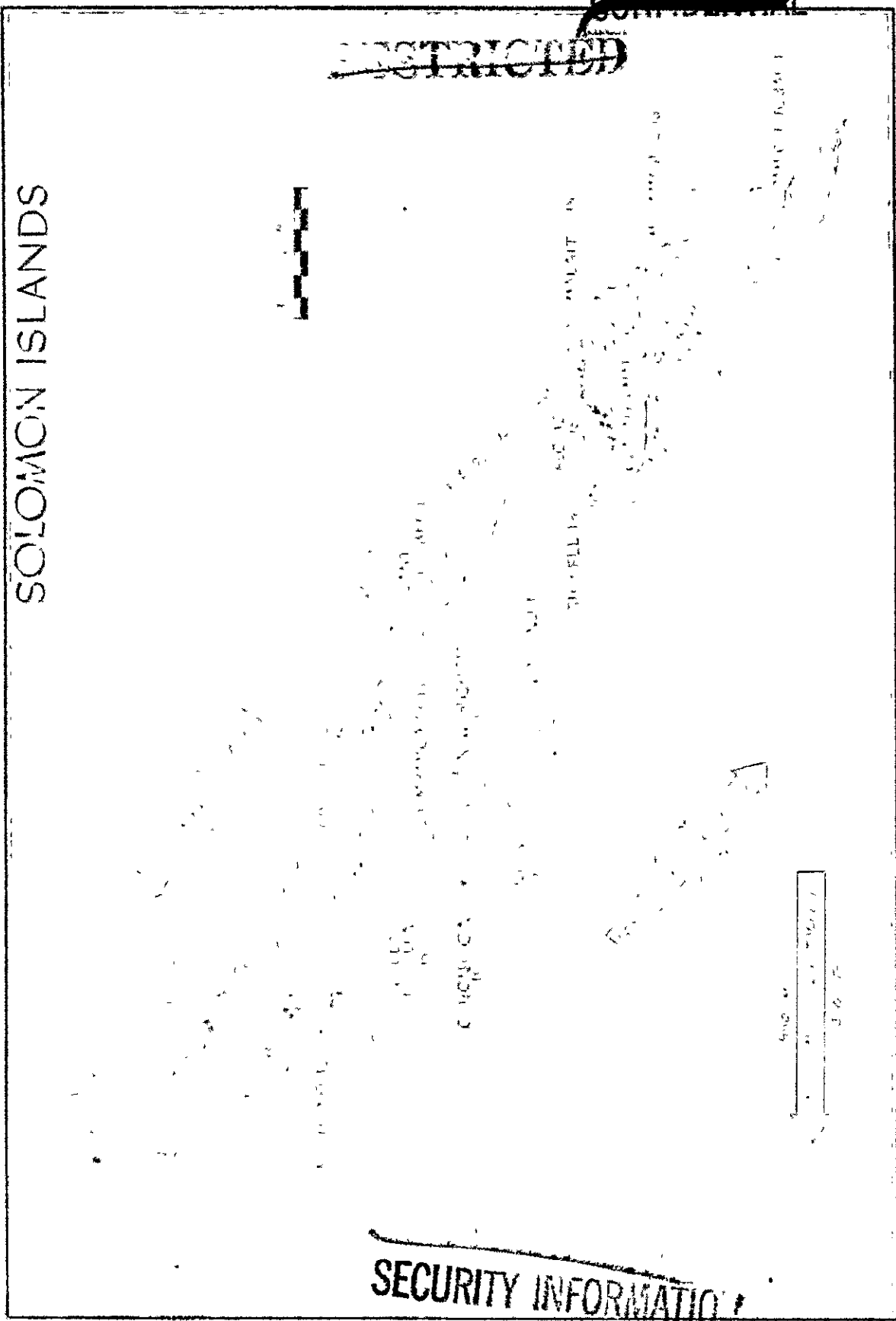
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SOLOMON ISLANDS



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FOREWORD

This study is the third in a series prepared by Maj. Kramer J. Rohfleisch on the role of the AAF in the South Pacific. It begins with the period immediately following the expulsion of the Japanese from Guadalcanal early in February 1943, and it projects the narrative of operations forward to 15 October 1943, at which time the Thirteenth Air Force already was engaged in preparing the way for the invasion of Bougainville. The center of its interest lies in the New Georgia campaign, together with the subsidiary operations in the Central Solomons which followed the fall of Munda early in August. Unlike its two predecessors, this third study is able to describe the operations and difficulties of an actual air force, rather than those of an aggregation of units under Navy and Marine command, for the AAF by mid-summer of 1943 had in the South Pacific equipment and planes sufficient to perform its task in a manner far more effective than was the case in 1942. Its commanders no longer appeal to Washington for help and reinforcements in tones at times indicating traces of desperation; instead their correspondence displays increasing optimism. But, as is common to so many human institutions with the passing of the pioneer period, the original zest and spontaneous participation slacken as the founders tire and weaken. So it was late in 1943 in the Thirteenth Air Force, where tropical warfare left a heavy imprint upon the mass of AAF personnel committed to the Solomons. Some of these problems are indicated in the following chapters.

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The Thirteenth Air Force, March-October 1943

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INTRODUCTION

Six months after the Marines first set foot on Guadalcanal the campaign for that island ended with the Japanese evacuating their surviving forces on the night of 7/8 February 1943. The enemy succeeded in this withdrawal by maneuvering the American naval forces into positions to protect Guadalcanal from the possibility of another all-out Japanese assault. For more than three months the Marines had clung precariously to Henderson Field and slowly enlarged their beach-head. Following a period of relatively little activity, the First Marine Division was withdrawn in December; two Army divisions then moved into position to undertake a final offensive, one which attained its objective on 9 February.¹

For the ground units combat had ceased, except for the tedious task of rounding up the sick and wounded Japanese scattered about on Guadalcanal singly and in small groups. But for the air units there was little rest; the enemy still held many airfields within range of bombers of all types. Nearly 400 miles northwest was the strong base in the Buin area at the southern tip of Bougainville, where vessels lying in Tonolei Harbor were under the protection of near-by Kahili Field, which the Jap had been using since September 1942, and of Ballale Island, whose runway had permitted air operations since late December 1942.² In front of Buin lay Shortland Island with several smaller satellites, which provided not only strategic AA emplacements but also protected moorings for enemy seaplanes; while adjoining the north end of Bougainville was the excellent base on Buka Island which the Jap used as a handy

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 repair base for his bombers. Closer at hand was Tunda on New Georgia Island. Army engineers had very slowly completed the early stages of construction of this field, but immediately after its discovery in December, every type of combat plane on Guadalcanal began the long process of holding it in an inoperative condition. Over on near-by Kolombangara Island the Jap had another strip at Vila; work proceeded very slowly here but by early March 4 the field was reported as nearly completed. The seaplane base on Santa Isabel was a frequent target for the planes from Guadalcanal, eventually too frequent to permit the Jap any freedom for operations; but as the Guadalcanal campaign ended the heavy bombers increasingly turned their attention to the main area. Rabaul and Newiens, two key points in the enemy's South Pacific defense line, were beyond reach of the heavy bombers based on Guadalcanal for anything like a sustained effort; in fact the sole mission against Rabaul had been sent up 5 on Christmas Eve of 1942.

The air forces engaged in all the Solomon operations formed a unique organization, in some respects quite unlike any other existing air organization. The South Pacific was Army-controlled. Admiral Halsey, Commander of the South Pacific (COMSOPAC), had been the theater commander since 20 October 1942, and had as his over-all air commander (COMAIRSOPAC) Rear Adm. Aubrey Gray Fitch, who had assumed his position on 13 September 1942. It was Admiral Fitch who exercised operational control of all aircraft in the South Pacific, and thus it was that all squadrons of bombers and fighters, Marine F4U's, F6F's, P40's, and P48's, Army Wildcats and Hellcats, P40's, search planes of all types, and all New Zealand P-40's and Lisons, were thrown together in one comprehensive air organization. The end product of the experiment

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in command on Guadalcanal was the creation on 16 February 1943 of the entity known as Air Command, Solomon, which soon acquired the abbreviated title of COMSOLS. On that date Rear Adm. Charles P. Mason assumed command of all aircraft on Guadalcanal. ⁶ By 1 February Lt. Col. Luther A. Moore, USMC, the Commanding Officer of Marine Aircraft Group 12 (MAG-12) had been named Flight Commander on Guadalcanal, a command function which carried with it operational control of all USNavy, Marine Corps, and New Zealand fighter squadrons on the island, and later on the Russell Islands. ⁷ MAG-12 retained control over all fighter aircraft until 25 July.

This peculiar command structure clearly affected all air operations in the South Pacific. Though Lt. Gen. William H. Tunney, the theater's senior Army commander (CG AFMORPAC), had succeeded in creating the Thirteenth Air Force on 13 January 1943, and he placed it under Brig. Gen. Nathan F. Twining, he had not emancipated his theater's fighter units from Navy control. Now his new air force possessed administrative autonomy but its operations were to be directed in the first instance by whoever was the current incumbent of COMSOLS. It was only natural that this initial step toward a single unified air force would raise many problems, for planes, pilots, and ground crews came from widely diverse services and training schools. Their doctrines were divergent, their equipment varied, and even their nationality differed, for the New Zealanders took on the job with their P-40 fighter squadrons and with their P-38 search planes. ⁸ For many months the successive staffs of COMSOLS faced, and to a large extent overcame, problems of supply, administration, and differences in combat techniques. But the net result was an air organization with an amazing variety of aircraft which effectiveness surpassed

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anything the Jap could put into the air against it. COMBATS' Strike Command could send out TBF-1D missions whose escort consisted of Corsairs and Wildcats, P-40's, P-39's, P-38's, and occasionally F6F's. Or again, B-17's and B-24's could strike Buin with an escort of P4U's, P-38's, and New Zealand P-40's. All this was not believed easily, but the point is that it was done, and no small amount of credit must go to Lt. William F. Halsey. Halsey from the very beginning placed heavy emphasis upon the principle of unity of command, insisting that each commander of a task force have full authority over all the components of his force, regardless of service or nationality. He sought to create what he called a "South Pacific fighting team," and he succeeded,⁹ although there is reason to believe that from time to time this principle did violence to proper employment of AAF units. It was improbable that all echelons and all personnel of either Army or Navy could share in the enthusiasm of Halsey and Harmon for this procedure. It was not ideal. Service loyalties loomed large in the minds of many lesser men, but so did the spirit of cooperation in many others.

For the historian the record of the Thirteenth Air Force in the South Pacific in 1943 presents a special problem. A very substantial number of Jap missions were flown in conjunction with other components of COMBATS, and this was very frequently the case with the fighters. Heavy bombers may have struck their targets almost simultaneously with the dive and torpedo bombers of the Marines; and in nearly every major interception of Japanese bombers, fighters of all services were heavily committed. Thus to relate the story of the Thirteenth alone would commit an injustice to the

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story of air warfare in the South Pacific; furthermore, quite apart from any ethical or professional objections, it is quite improbable that the history of the Thirteenth could be extracted from the records left by the Marines and the Army. The successive expansions of the South Pacific are examples of the history of air warfare, rather than AF history; thus while this study focuses its attention primarily upon the activities of the Thirteenth Air Force, it cannot avoid the necessity for devoting substantial space to the contributions of other services in the area. To recount the efforts of the Thirteenth alone would serve only to write a partial history of the Solomon campaign.

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Chapter I

SEIZURE OF THE RUSSELLS AND ADOPTION OF THE ILKTON PLAN

The enemy had been driven from Guadalcanal, but a long and painful road lay ahead before he could be evicted from all the Solomons and from Rabaul, which was the logical objective towards whose seizure or neutralization the South Pacific forces were moving early in 1943. It was immediately apparent to both Halsey and MacArthur that additional airfield sites were necessary to support operations against the next major objective, New Georgia. ¹

The Russell Islands group offered the necessary intermediate step, even though these islands lay only 70 miles northwest of Guadalcanal. As early as 3 February COMSOPAC directed that the 43d Division become a part of Task Force 62, then forming in Noumea for the invasion of the Russells; and to these were added the 3d Marine Raider Battalion, Marine Aircraft Group 21, and the 35th Naval Construction Battalion. Although it was understood that no enemy forces remained on the Russells, the 43d ² Division, less the 172d Combat Team, was prepared for a tactical landing. As additional preparation for the advance, COMSOPAC strengthened the air units on Guadalcanal, sending up Saratoga's air group for two weeks' temporary duty and ordering a continuation of the air attacks by heavy bombers against enemy shipping and combatant surface vessels in the Buin area. Punda and Vila were named as targets for repeated air attacks, while the Southwest Pacific forces were requested to furnish air support from 18/19 February through the night of 22/23 February by a nightly B-24 strike against Buin's shipping, plus nightly harassment of Kihili and Ballale

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fields by Catalinas.³ The CACTUS (Guadalcanal) air units were to provide all necessary fighter cover for the operation as well as all local searches. Admiral Fitch in his order stressed the point that any daylight strikes against Buin must have sufficient fighter escort to prevent disproportionate losses; he had not forgotten the two daylight strikes by the new B-24 units on 13 and 14 February, efforts which had taken a heavy toll of the over-all bomber strength. No less than five B-24's of a total of 15 in the two missions had gone down over the Shortland area or on the way home, an experience which brought a halt to all daylight bombing attacks upon this area until more adequate fighter cover could be provided.⁴

At 0600 on 21 February the first waves of troops headed for shore in the Russells to begin the long advance up the chain of the Solomons toward the eventual goal of Rabaul. The primary objective was Banika Island, with secondary landings aimed at Pavuvu. No opposition was met at any point by the three landing forces which reached shore at Pepesala Bay on the north coast of Pavuvu, at Renard Sound on the east side of Banika, and at Wernham Cove on the southwest coast of the same island. Landings continued on the nights of the 21st, 22d, and 23d, as planned, and at no time did the enemy interfere. A total of three hostile aircraft was sighted during the operations, but the Japanese failed to indicate by offensive action that they possessed advance knowledge of the invasion.⁵ Fighter cover from CACTUS was continuous and under local control of the Russells; it would continue accordingly until a fighter control unit could be placed in commission on one of the newly captured islands.

It was known that on the islands there were Japanese coastwatchers who could report on all movements, but for some inexplicable reason the enemy delayed his air attacks. In order to guard against aerial surprise, on

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Pavuvu the 579th Signal Company installed its radar on 26 February, while overhead during the landing period Fighter Command of COMAIRSOLS provided a strong fighter cover; but as soon as the troops were safely ashore this was reduced to a normal strength of four planes from dawn to dusk.

Not until 6 March was radio silence lifted in the Russells, permitting operation of the air warning system and of the radar. Even then full warning was not available until the 19th when a Navy SCR 270 was installed on Lingata Peninsula on Banika Island. This unit then joined the 579th Signal Company in the island warning net, and the combined facilities provided coverage over an arc of nearly 360° for a distance of 80 to 90 miles; plots frequently were made on planes 140 to 150 miles distant from the islands.

The primary reason for seizure of the Russells was to acquire advance airbases. Accordingly, construction work was taken in hand immediately by the 33d Seabee Battalion, assisted by specialized personnel from the 118th Engineering Battalion. Work was begun on Fighter No. 1 (Sunlight) only two days after the initial landings; by 13 April landings and take-offs had been made and on 15 April the fighter strip was ready for sustained operations. Surfaced with rolled coral and equipped with taxiways and dispersal areas, the strip was designed eventually to accommodate 60 aircraft.

On the very day that radio silence was lifted in the Russells, 6 March, the Jap opened his air offensive against the U. S. positions in the small group of islands. At 1350 he struck with eight dive bombers and eight fighters at the supply areas, then followed the bombing with a strafing attack. There was some damage, but the effort cost the Jap four dive bombers, shot down by the fighter cover sent up from Guadalcanal.

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Four days later the enemy tried again, once more in broad daylight. This time radar gave a warning while the enemy planes were 50 miles out, with the result that when the 10 Vals and 12 Nagoya Zeros attacked, they inflicted very minor damage. Immediately upon picking up the bogey, eight P-38's were scrambled from CACTUS to augment the local Russell patrol of four planes, but the patrol did well on its own account; with no help from the AA it shot down three of the Vals and one of the Zeros, without loss to itself.

These two efforts had accomplished little for the Japanese; at a wastage of eight planes they had destroyed some equipment, but they scarcely interfered with the progress of construction on the Russells. It was apparent that for some reason the enemy was not yet ready to move down in force, for toward the end of the month he resorted to a series of night attacks, striking on 23, 24, and 26 March but never with any success.

On the whole March was a quiet month in the Solomons. The Jap faced serious problems in his attempt to maintain his position in the island chain; either he must abandon the islands or he must take immediate steps to strengthen what he yet held and to regain what he had lost. For Allied air operations worked in such a way that each fresh base became a successive cancer in the structure of the enemy's defense line, sending out its tentacles and relentlessly destroying the equipment and personnel opposing it. No equilibrium could be reached between the two forces, let alone maintained, for one would consume the other. Already constant air attacks against Munda and Vila had made these bases unsafe for operations, and the whole problem of supplying the New Georgia garrison was

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rapidly worsening for the Japanese. The same situation prevailed in New Guinea where the destruction of the convoy in the Bismarck Sea action had temporarily cut off the forces in the Lae-Salamau area.

By surveying all available information it was concluded that "evidence is overwhelming" that the Jap had no intention of abandonment, and that every indication pointed toward a strong Japanese offensive action in the near future. In the New Britain-New Ireland-Solomons area was the largest enemy air force ever assembled in the Southwest Pacific, and there was evidence that large-scale reinforcement was under way.¹⁴ Temporarily enemy air activity was confined to reconnaissance, strongly indicating that aircraft and crews were being stored up for major operations. Ever since the turn of the year, photographs had revealed intense construction activity in the Solomons, particularly in the appearance of fresh blast pens and dispersal lanes. The growth was regarded as "phenomenal"; by 15 February there was shelter for 245 aircraft as compared to 72 on 15 December 1942.¹⁵ Kavieng and Rabaul both showed the results of intense effort by the Japanese construction crews, evidence which led the photographic interpreters to conclude that from Munda to Kavieng the Japanese by mid-February could shelter no less than 461 aircraft. Furthermore, it was no longer necessary for the enemy to hold his Bettys and Sallys back in Rabaul and Kavieng; now there were at least 72 blast pens available for medium bombers in the Solomons, 44 at Munda and Ballale, 18 at Buka, and at least 10 at Kahili. Everywhere there were increased installations, searchlights, and most dangerous of all, many more fighters.¹⁶

Amid these speculations as to Japanese intentions, the commanders of all services, both in the field and in Washington, were taking stock

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of their resources and how these should be applied in the South and Southwest Pacific. For the first six months of the Solomons campaign the problem had been to press the Jap back from a position where he might severely damage, or at least maintain a threat against, the line of communications to Australia. By February this task was completed. Concurrently, in New Guinea a similar danger was eliminated in January 1943 when the Japanese were defeated in Papua; their victory here would have threatened Australia directly. By the end of February both Papua and the Lower Solomons were secure. Now it was time to look ahead to more distant goals.

The first major objective would be Rabaul. Until that great focal point of Japanese activity was seized, or at least until air and naval control of the New Britain area was established, the planned advance of the Southwest Pacific forces westward along the New Guinea coast was scarcely possible. ¹⁷ To outline this problem, General MacArthur had prepared an over-all strategic plan for the reduction of Rabaul, the "Elkton" Plan, which was based upon the utilization of the forces in both the South and Southwest Pacific. His scheme had the great merit of not attempting more than was feasible; it had been formulated after the experiences of the Papuan campaign, and hence its authors were somewhat more realistic in their appraisal of Japanese resistance than earlier ¹⁸ planners had been.

Rabaul was regarded as the apex of a triangle, one leg of which extended southeastward through the Solomons, the other westward along New Britain. The advance would be made in relatively short steps along each

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leg of the triangle. Elkton involved three distinct tasks, the first of which--seizure and occupation of the Santa Cruz Islands, Tulagi, and adjacent positions--already had been completed with the defeat of the Japanese on Guadalcanal. Ahead lay the second major assignment involving the seizure and occupation of Lae, Salamau, the remainder of the Solomons, together with the east coast of New Guinea; and the third, which involved the seizure and occupation of Rabaul and adjacent positions in the New Britain-New Ireland area.
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A survey of the plan indicated that MacArthur was not interested in the capture of land areas as such; his goal in every case was to establish one more rung in the ladder of airbases so that land-based aircraft could provide direct cover and support for the next step. Thus the capture of airdromes in the Huon Gulf area would provide the basis for direct support of the contemplated landings across the Vitiaz Strait on New Britain; similarly New Georgia's airstrip would provide air cover for subsequent landings on Bougainville; while the installation of Allied land-based aircraft on New Britain and Bougainville would permit the aerial assault upon and isolation of Rabaul and Kavieng. The final goal was the capture of Rabaul, but whether this should occur before or after the fall of Kavieng would be determined by circumstances prevailing at the time.
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The initial operations in MacArthur's strategy were designed to capture airdromes in the Huon Peninsula area preliminary to subsequent advances eastward in New Britain. MacArthur regarded as secure the line between Buna and Guadalcanal; north and south of this line, which extended on to the Fijis, each side had concentrated its strength in the

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around airfields, leaving the remainder of the adjacent land areas for the most part unoccupied. In the Solomons the immediate goal north of the line was New Georgia, where the Japs had their air installations on Munda Point, but the Southwest Pacific commander expressly stated that the drive along the New Guinea coast must precede the attack through the Solomons; then both attacks should converge upon Rabaul as a single mutually supporting operation. Throughout the parallel campaigns employment of aviation of both forces would be coordinated by the Commander in Chief of the Southwest Pacific Area, who could shift his air efforts in support of either force requiring the maximum assistance at the moment. ²²

The Elktion Plan was submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in March 1943 after MacArthur's chief of staff, Maj. Gen. R. K. Sutherland, attended the Pacific Theater Conference held at Washington. Immediately it precipitated a lively debate, not so much over the strategic implications, with which there was general agreement, but because it revived the old question of priority of the Pacific theater and because it left open the question of command of Army-Navy joint operations. During 1942, it had been determined that the primary effort should be made against Germany and that these operations should not be weakened by diversion to the Pacific. Forces for the Pacific should be allocated with a view toward maintaining pressure upon Japan, retaining the initiative and attaining a position of readiness for the final full-scale offensive as soon as Germany was laid low. ²³

For support of his plan MacArthur had requested air strength "greatly in excess" of the forces that could be moved to the area, call-

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ing for no less than 10 groups of aircraft to be employed by Halsey in
the contemplated New Georgia operation. ²⁴ Army planners particularly
were reluctant to accede to this, believing as they did the previous
year, that attainment of the maximum possible bomber offensive against
Germany must not be jeopardized by diversions of combat aircraft to theaters
of lesser strategic importance. ²⁵ Nevertheless, some increase in air
strength was forthcoming, for on 20 March the Joint Chiefs informed the
Pacific Theater Conference delegates of a projected increase in heavy and
medium bombers, in troop carriers and photo planes, although fighter strength
would be reduced except for night fighters. ²⁶ Three days later the Joint
Chiefs advised MacArthur and Halsey of the changes which would increase
each of the two South Pacific heavy bomber groups to four squadrons, with
a plane strength of 12 aircraft per squadron, for a total of 96. The medium
bomber group would be augmented from 46 to 57 planes and troop carrier
strength would be brought up to two full squadrons of 13 planes each. ²⁷
At the same time the Joint Chiefs informed MacArthur that they desired
early development of bases on Kiriwina and Woodlark islands, that the air-
fields on Woodlark should be accomplished by construction battalions from
the South Pacific, and that the aircraft complement for this island should
be furnished from Halsey's command. ²⁸

After examining the revised schedule of commitments for the two
Pacific areas the representatives of the Pacific commanders agreed that
with the fresh forces allotted them they could extend their advance along
New Guinea to Madang, including Cape Gloucester, Kiriwina, and Woodlark,
and they could gain a foothold on southeast Bougainville. ²⁹

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Final Decision on the plan is not yet made; details of the command structure require some further work. Ever since the summer of 1942 the South Pacific Area had been a best tube of Army-Navy cooperation and now that a new crisis of strategic importance has begun, it was necessary to clarify the positions which each service should occupy in the general scheme. Equally important was the fact that the South Pacific was a crossroads and a point of contact between the areas Southwest Pacific Area under Army direction and the West Pacific Central Area under Admiral Nimitz. For the Navy the main concern is how to serve as the partner to which the U. S. Army had committed the bulk of its combat strength; not it was to become one-half of a joint operation with the MacArthur-controlled theater. This would begin to the naval forces as far as to the sole one operation in the execution of the ultimate operation (as the Alaska plan was no longer) and the disturbed island line, to be under the command of the U. S. Fleet.

There is no doubt that the Navy will be in a position of playing all the crucial operations under Admiral Nimitz's command; the Navy will control directly all the sole operations under Admiral Nimitz's direct command. But the Navy's job is not done. It is necessary to give the over-all direction to Admiral Nimitz to retain complete control over all naval forces assigned to the South Pacific. Admiral Nimitz will have the advantage of unified control, but could be it is possible to coordinate operations in the Solomon Islands and other key forces of the Southwest Pacific Area and other areas under Army direction in the Pacific. The first step is to get the Army and Navy to establish division control as was done in the Central and North Pacific in the general, and the South Pacific on the other. It is expected that all

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forces--ground, sea, air, and subsurface--should be deployed to maintain the security of the entire Pacific area, including the South Pacific, and that those forces committed to the Solomons operations must remain at all times available to meet situations anywhere in the Pacific Ocean Area. ³²

The Navy commander feared the "serious complications" which might arise if certain forces were "frozen" in the South or Southwest Pacific. He was particularly concerned over the exposed position of Samoa, citing the recent enemy bombings of Canton; he did not know where the Jap would strike next, and consequently strongly felt that the fleet must be kept fluid to meet any threat. ³³

General Marshall agreed, explaining that in planning the directive to MacArthur he had attempted to avoid a situation in which a large naval force would be controlled by an Army officer; he recognized too the fact that Halsey commanded an extensive area containing certain troop commands and air units other than those committed to the Elktion operations and that these should not be drawn under control of General MacArthur. ³⁴ It was

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would be unable to operate successfully in the New Georgia area under the threat of the enemy's air bases on Bougainville and New Britain, and at Kavieng, he maintained that these first must be neutralized. Since their neutralization by air could be effected only from the Vitiaz Strait area, he recommended that the assaults on the Jap bases in the Huon Gulf precede those directed against New Georgia.³⁶

In Washington there was some additional support for this arrangement, but Admiral King raised very strong objections. In establishing this sequence of tasks COMINCH considered that MacArthur "was motivated by the immediate problem in hand and not by the Pacific as a whole."³⁷ He was apprehensive over the suggestion that Halsey's forces would remain idle in the South Pacific while positions were being consolidated on the northeast coast of New Guinea.³⁸ There was of course a reason for the sequence as proposed by the Southwest Pacific commander; he feared that large-scale operations in the South Pacific during the period of consolidation on the coast of New Guinea would necessitate sending forces, particularly air, to support Halsey just at a time when they could not well be spared. On the other hand, as Marshall pointed out, the field commanders must of necessity take advantage of every opportunity to push ahead in areas where resistance was weak. And there was some reason to believe that the Japanese could not remain strong in both areas at once. If they should concentrate their forces in the New Guinea battle, then Halsey's men immediately could push ahead; while conversely if the Japs should resist the Solomons operations, then MacArthur's forces could advance.³⁹

In any case, Admiral Halsey had no intention of remaining idle; he

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would continue to exert pressure upon the Japanese, employing his land-based aviation, and would be prepared to move into New Georgia and southern Bougainville if this could be accomplished without bringing on a

⁴⁰ major operation. The final solution to the debate on precedence was reached in the adoption of a proposal by Admiral King: the Supreme Commander of the Southwest Pacific Area would submit to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for approval his general plans, including the composition of ⁴¹ task forces and the sequence and timing of major offensive operations.

By the end of March debate had ended. The tasks were clearly defined; ahead lay the objectives. Whether in New Guinea, on Bougainville, or in New Britain, they were much the same. Each assault would involve the isolation, neutralization, and final capture or by-passing of a small island of Japanese air strength clustered around the air strip which had been carved out of the jungle. Experience already gained warned that the defense would be fanatical, and if the assault were made frontally without adequate air preparation, it could prove costly. But whereas the enemy's ground forces might absorb losses, his merchant marine and naval service could not, not without seriously weakening the entire Japanese strategic plan. MacArthur's staff reasoned that as soon as the Jap reached a point where exploitation of the conquered territories had become seriously affected by lack of shipping, and maintenance of the outposts had become costly, the enemy would abandon the Bismarck-Solomon line and fall back ⁴² upon the Mandates as the main line of resistance. Thus if the assaults were to be conducted at minimum cost, the first step must involve a continuation of the effort to isolate each successive objective, and for this task the greater burden would fall upon the Fifth Air Force in the New Guinea area, and upon Halsey's land-based aviation, including the Thirteenth Air Force, in the South Pacific.

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The Jap would resist in the air; at the end of February it was estimated that he could sustain a loss of 700 aircraft in the Newk-Exvident-Island-Lee area, and that he could lose in some 240 planes per month. Hence, in order to keep pace with this increment, it would be necessary for all Allied forces to claim monthly totals of 250 destroyed, 25 probably destroyed, and 30 damaged.

How best to employ their own units in the approaching campaigns was a problem which plagued the senior US commanders in the South Pacific. General Harmon had been successful in achieving activation of the Thirteenth Air Force, yet this did not alter the fact that operational control of all land-based aircraft in the South Pacific was vested in COMUSMACV. Harmon did what he could to maintain a reasonable amount of autonomy for his young air force; from the outset he had insisted that in the exercise of operational control, Admiral Halsey adhere to the principles of unity of command as enunciated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and he continued to emphasize this point. He stressed the fact that the Thirteenth Air Force was "distinctly a part of my command," and that "I must retain direct responsibility for and control of all matters affecting administration, supply, movement and training; that I must retain the right to insist on the observance of sound principles and doctrines and techniques of employment."

As the spring of 1946 approached it became apparent to COMUSMACV that observance of these precepts was less than satisfactory, due "most probably" to a lack of understanding upon the part of subordinate commanders and staff officers. Accordingly, Harmon immediately reported the situation to Admiral Halsey, who in turn directed that Harmon meet

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with Admiral Fitch (COMAIRSOPAC) and in direct conference reach an agreement as to proper control of the AAF units working under the Navy.

COMSOPAC stated that for his part he would abide by whatever decision was achieved, unless his two subordinate commanders were unable to agree. ⁴⁵

For the better part of two days, 2 and 3 March 1943, Fitch and Harmon met in conference. At its conclusion COMGENSOPAC presented to the naval air commander an outline of his own recommendations for the proper employment of AAF aircraft in the South Pacific. ⁴⁶ The key proposals are contained in the statements that the highest degree of effectiveness would be achieved by vesting combat command of the various air forces in their respective services; secondly, that any necessary disruption of normal command channels should be held to a minimum; and thirdly, that the air forces should be employed in the purpose for which they had been organized, equipped, and trained. Short of over-all operational control, Harmon desired the closest possible participation by his own air commanders in planning the details of missions, and he wanted a clear recognition of the right of the AAF leaders to advise the local air commander (in this case primarily COMAIRSOLS) as to proper formations, bomb loadings, escort, and combat techniques. ⁴⁷ His final request was a restatement of a policy which he had strongly advocated since the earliest days of the Guadalcanal campaign: that Army bombardment aircraft should be used primarily on bombardment missions, and their employment for purposes of search and patrol should be limited. ⁴⁸

Admiral Fitch received the recommendations and offered his full concurrence, advising COMGENSOPAC that in the future his direction of

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activities affecting the Thirteenth Air Force would be in accordance with the principles suggested by the Army commander. ⁴⁹

COMGENSOPAG spoke of course only for the AAF since the Thirteenth Air Force was only one component of the South Pacific air organization.

In order to clarify the function of all the services in the area, on 11 March COMAIRSOPAC issued a new Air Operation Plan for the Solomons

air units. ⁵⁰ Its basic assumptions were that the enemy now was in a defensive position in the Solomons-New Britain-New Guinea area and that his operations would be designed to inflict the maximum possible attrition upon Allied forces. The Jap would continue his air raids upon Guadalcanal, Tulagi, and upon Allied surface forces; he would try night bombardment of Allied airfields, and he might even attempt "Commando" ⁵¹

raids against exposed positions. To check him three tasks were given to the air forces. First, it was assumed that the destruction of enemy shipping was the most effective employment of aircraft, for this could deny the enemy his logistic support and his Solomons bases would shrivel from want of support. Next, the Thirteenth Air Force, the Marines, naval units, and the New Zealanders should strike at enemy shore installations within range to reduce Japanese air strength; and finally, these units should support the operations of Allied surface forces in the Solomons. ⁵²

To the Bomber Command (of COMAIRSOLS) went the responsibility for conducting long-range day and night attacks against surface forces, air-dromes, and ground installations as ordered, and when necessary to provide heavy bombers to the Search and Patrol Command for use in search

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missions. This involved primarily AAF heavy bombers, as well as the mediums, but no AAF units were directly concerned with the instructions to the Strike Command. The function of this command was to carry out repeated dive, glide, or low-level bombing attacks upon Japanese surface units and airfields, and to assist the Search and Patrol Command when necessary.

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COMAIRSOLS' Fighter Command was the most diverse of all the Solomons air organizations and its duties were manifold. Its units were to defend Allied bases against Japanese air attacks and to provide escort for air striking groups, as well as cover for Allied naval forces; the fighters were to strafe enemy surface forces and shore installations as ordered, and to conduct fighter sweeps over enemy positions. In addition to these functions, Fighter Command was assigned the operation of all air warning service units, fighter director units, and all units concerned with the interception of enemy aircraft.

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The tempo of all operations would be controlled by general directives issued by COMAIRSOPAC and the local unit commanders were reminded that all Solomons aircraft would operate at all times under the operational control of COMAIRSOLS, who himself was a task group commander under COMAIRSOPAC. It was the responsibility of Admiral Fitch as COMAIRSOPAC to effect coordination of the interlocking or overlapping operations of the squadrons based at various South Pacific air-

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dromes.

An additional step toward clarification of the confusing command structure prevailing in the South Pacific was taken by the Joint Chiefs

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of Staff in April when they attempted to define the position of the services involved in joint operations. Perhaps no other theater offered such a complete case history of continuing joint Army-Navy operations as did the South Pacific and, as Harmon had discovered, the responsibilities and prerogatives of both services not always had been understood or observed. The Guadalcanal campaign was not yet a month old when it was realized that the old line of cleavage between Army and Navy action was disappearing; that the air arm which operated equally well over land and water had injected fresh need for clarification of responsibilities.

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Discussion on the question dragged slowly; in fact the Navy had adopted something like a pocket veto, declining to offer its comments for several months, even after the adoption of a principle regulating combined unified command at the Casablanca Conference. Admiral Bierl, speaking for the Navy, stated that he "saw no reason why the Services should bind themselves to unity of Command on the basis of a rigid rule; that the determining factor involved was the readiness of commanders to cooperate and that necessary cooperation could not be obtained by formal directives." Despite such objections, the Navy was ready to consider the problem in the following month, for it was recognized that all U. S. military operations now had "joint implications" or were joint in character, thus making mandatory a clear definition of the functions of a joint commander. On 20 April, nearly eight months after the question first had been introduced, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued their directive covering the problem of unified command for joint operations. The

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JCS principles embodied in the paper were as follows:

- (1) A single commander to be designated by JCS on the basis of the task to be performed.
- (2) Command prerogatives over the joint force to be the same as if the forces were all Army or Navy.
- (3) Participation by the joint force commander in administrative matters to be held to a minimum.
- (4) Disciplinary matters normally to be handled through commanders of the services concerned.
- (5) Major directives relating to components of the force to be sent by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the joint force commander.
- (6) Joint force commander normally not to function in a dual capacity as force commander and as commander of a component of his force.
- (7) Joint force commander to be assisted by a joint staff representing the components of his force.
- (8) Any subsidiary joint force to be organized on the same principles as those regulating the larger unit.

It was under these guiding principles that the Thirteenth Air Force operated in the Solomons and continued to do so until the entire organization was relieved from Halsey's command and assigned to the Far East Air Force on 15 June 1944. Meanwhile the immediate problem at hand was to prepare the way for the assault on the enemy's positions in the Central Solomons.

The month of March furnished something like a breathing spell for

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both the opposing forces in the Solomons. After the enemy's initial raids against the Russells on 6 and 10 March, there was little contact with him for the balance of the month. Fighters continued to cover the new positions on the Russells while heavy bombers, now unable to hit Buin in daylight because of inadequate fighter escort, harassed that area by night. The photo planes maintained a close daily check on air and shipping movements in and out of the Buin fields and anchorages, as well as on Buka at the other end of Bougainville. B-24's and B-17's struck generally in light strength of two to four planes and their targets were Ballale, Kahili, and Shortland Island; often they saved a portion of their load for the return trip, when they would drop their bombs on the Munda strip or at Vila on Kolombangara.

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The fighters had work other than interception of enemy air attacks. Almost daily escorts were provided for SBD's and TBF's engaged in striking at the Jap field on Munda Point or over at Vila, and whenever profitable targets appeared, fighters were sent out on sweeps. Daily photos by the 17th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron indicated that the Shortland-Poporang area off southern Bougainville was the principal Japanese sea-plane base in the Solomons. On 28 March the prints showed 27 float planes in the area, a tempting target for an aggressive fighter sweep; accordingly Fighter Command ordered one immediately, a dawn attack scheduled for the following morning. The order called for eight P-38's and an equal number of Corsairs to make one run over the target at 0620, 20 minutes before sunrise, then to return home on a direct course. The

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Corsairs were to lead, since they were better equipped for night navigation, but shortly after taking off, the leading Corsair developed trouble and Capt. Thomas G. Lanphier, Jr., of the 70th Fighter Squadron assumed command. Before the halfway point was reached, three F4U's developed engine trouble, and three more left the formation as the flight passed through heavy weather in the Treasury area. Three P-38's fell out before reaching Shortland, which left Lanphier a total force of only five P-38's and one F4U. At 50-foot altitude, four P-38's swept over the Shortland side at 0630, destroying six moored aircraft in a single run, while the two remaining strafers caught two more float planes over on the Poporang side. Just as the first plane completed its run, the Japanese AA gunners opened, and although their fire was intense, not a plane was hit.⁶³ Thus far the mission was a clear success, but it was not yet over; six miles east of Shortland the flight spotted a large enemy destroyer which immediately began desperate evasive maneuvers. Again attacking at 50 feet, two P-38's swept over the ship to silence most of the AA, after which the rest of the flight followed through until each man had made four passes. Ten minutes later when the planes left, the destroyer was lying dead in the water, aflame from stem to stern, and with a 15-degree list. The only partial casualty was the P-38 of Lt. Rex T. Barber of the 339th Fighter Squadron who made one pass a bit too low, shearing off the top of the warship's foremast with his wing tip; but the resultant loss of three feet of his wing seemed to cause no trouble and the P-38 was landed normally.⁶⁴

When the month ended, the score of enemy planes destroyed had

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reached an all-time low of approximately 16; not until May of 1944, at the conclusion of the Rabaul campaign, was the number of enemy aircraft destroyed to sink to a comparable figure. ⁶⁵ COMAIRSOLS' Fighter Command could report that its P-39's had shot down eight of the total, ⁶⁶ and not a loss was incurred for the entire month by any of its planes.

April provided a different story. Admiral Halsey was losing no time in preparing for a fresh offensive thrust and the Japs knew it. Down on Guadalcanal large stock piles of fuel, ammunition, supplies, and equipment were being stored in dumps, despite the serious unloading ⁶⁷ difficulties. Lying off the Lunga shore were the cargo vessels and transports; across the channel at Tulagi were the warships of the task forces which moved in and out of that growing naval base. All these were fat targets for the enemy's Vals and Bettys if only they could break through the fighter defenses. And if they could not reach Guadalcanal, they might strike at the advanced air installations rapidly nearing completion on the Russells.

Japanese pilots struck on the opening day of the month. At 1023 the radars on the Russells indicated a large number of aircraft at a point 125 miles west of the island. Thus warned, Fighter Command put an air combat patrol over the task force lying at Tulagi and over the CACTUS fields, alerted reserve crews, and sent up 28 Wildcats, 8 F4U's, and 6 P-38's to intercept. Shortly before 1100 the first group of 30 to 40 Zekes and Hamps was engaged over the Russells at altitudes ranging from 22,000 down to 12,000 feet. The Jap tried two raids, one following the other, with the result that for nearly three

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hours there was continuous action. Perhaps the aim was to exhaust Allied fighter strength in the initial assault, thereby enabling the second wave to drive home a successful strafing or bombing attack on the Russell installation.⁶⁸ Whatever the intention of the enemy, his effort failed. The final score showed 20 of his Zeros down, for a loss to Fighter Command of six planes in combat, one of which was a P-38; three of the pilots were rescued immediately.⁶⁹ Radio Tokyo reported the day's action as a great success; it claimed that 34 Grummans, 10 P-38's, and 3 Corsairs had been shot down; "U. S. mass production has turned into mass destruction. Some day the U. S. public will learn the truth."⁷⁰

The Jap would have to try harder if he seriously hoped to break through the defenses. He was having trouble enough in supplying his own bases on New Georgia and at Vila, where his small cargo vessels were often the target for fighter sweeps up from CACTUS. On 2 April seven P-38's and six Corsairs swept over a small well-camouflaged AK hiding in Kokolopi Bay at Vella Lavella. Three P-38's were over first, attacking at mast-head height and dropping their partially loaded belly tanks to drench the vessel with gasoline, which then was set afire by incendiaries. When the planes left for home the ship was afire and heavily damaged; a later report confirmed its sinking.⁷¹

For approximately one week after his rebuff on the first day of the month the enemy conducted sporadic night bombing against the new base; then on the 7th he tried another daylight assault. A photo report received that morning showed a total of 246 fighters in the Solomons in addition to 12 or more bombers,⁷² indicating the enemy was

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in a position to make a powerful strike, supplemented by his bombers brought down from Rabaul. Coastwatchers on New Georgia gave the first warning of the approaching enemy planes; no less than 160 of them were reported coming down the Slot between New Georgia and Santa Isabel. There were dive bombers and fighters, and their target was the shipping at Koli Point, a convoy near Rua Sura off the east coast of Guadalcanal, and a task force lying at Tulagi. Every available fighter on Guadalcanal was put into the air to intercept; 76 planes went up, including 36 Wildcats, 9 Corsairs, 6 P-40's, 12 P-38's, and 13 P-39's, but of this number 6 returned for operational reasons and 14 others made no contact.⁷³ All bombers were sent off to the south-east tip of Guadalcanal to avoid damage in the event the attack should be directed against the airfields.

As the enemy approached Guadalcanal, his planes separated into smaller flights, so that fighting occurred off the Russells, between Cape Esperance and Savo Island, near Tulagi, and over the convoy east of Guadalcanal. P-38's had an excellent opportunity to test their effectiveness at high altitude. Captain Lenphier with three other pilots scrambled to 31,000 feet over Cape Esperance in 22 minutes, and by using to full advantage their planes' superior speed both on level flight and in shallow climb, these four pilots alone accounted for seven Zeros.⁷⁴ Total losses to the Jap were heavy; 39 of his fighters and dive bombers were shot down, 27 of them being credited to the Wildcats, 1 to the Corsairs, and 13 to the AAF planes.⁷⁵

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The cost in U. S. planes and pilots was remarkably light. Six P4F's were shot down and one P-39 piloted by Major Walden Williams of the 70th Fighter Squadron was last seen in a vertical dive at 6,000 feet; but every one of the other six pilots was recovered. In the day's exchange, the Japanese had sacrificed at least 51 air personnel but had accomplished very little. They would lick their wounds and try again.

Two weeks after the Jap aerial defeat over Guadalcanal there occurred one of the most extraordinary interceptions of the entire Pacific campaign. Special information reached COMNAVADM advising him that on the morning of 13 April an important Jap naval leader would proceed from Rabaul down to Lae. Formerly such information would cause no concern; bombers carrying staff officers are usually moved up and down Bougainville. But this was a different case, for naval intelligence sources had revealed that none other than Adm. Yamamoto himself, the naval officer who had planned the peace conference in the White House, was scheduled to fly down to the Lae area during his inspection trip of the South Pacific. Naval decoders had precise information on Yamamoto's itinerary; they knew that he would be at Lae at 0945, and what he planned to do thereafter. On the 17th the message reached COMNAVADM, who immediately informed COMUSMACV; the signature was that of Navy Secretary Knox; the order was to get Yamamoto. But how and where?

It was at once apparent that only the long-range fighters, the P-38's, could reach up far enough to intercept him, but any attempt upon the admiral in the Lae area would be extremely hazardous, for

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Field
 Kahili/swarmed with fighters ready to cover Yamamoto's movements. After lively debate the decision was reached. Eighteen P-38's were ordered to be made ready. To fly them Fighter Command selected eight of the best pilots from each of the 12th and 339th Squadrons, plus two from the 70th Squadron, a process which created considerable rivalry among the P-38 personnel, who greatly outnumbered the number of planes available. ⁷⁸ Of the 18, 4 were designated as the attack section under Capt. Thomas G. Lanphier, Jr., of the 70th, while the other 14 under Maj. John W. Mitchell were to provide cover during the interception. ⁷⁹ Major Mitchell was named leader of the entire flight.

Briefing was done meticulously. It was reasoned that Yamamoto would be flying down Bougainville in one of his fastest bombers, that he might come down on the west side of the island over Torokina, or east over Kieta, but that by staggering the times of interception it would be possible to try for him regardless of which route the admiral might choose. If he failed to arrive at the selected western interception point, there would be time to streak across the island and catch him east of Kahili. In any case, on the eve of the attempted interception every detail was reviewed, for the nature of the mission was such that the slightest error in timing would bring failure. The plan called for an overwater flight of 435 miles by a circuitous route which would avoid all land with its danger of detection by enemy coast-watchers, and which would be flown at a height of 10 to 30 feet above

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the sea. If Yamamoto followed his schedule punctually--and he was known to have a passion for punctuality--then at 0935 he should be over a point some 35 miles up the coast from Kahili unless he had come by way of Kieta, in which case there still might be time to intercept him.

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Seventeen planes left CACTUS at 0725 on their long flight. One P-38 piloted by 1st Lt. James D. McLanahan blew a tire on the take-off, and a few minutes later Lt. Joseph F. Moore was forced to turn back when his belly tanks failed to feed properly; but the remaining 16 continued. Two hours and nine minutes later as the P-38's flew in toward land barely clearing the water, there ahead appeared the enemy flying down the coast in a "V" about three miles distant, "almost as if the affair had been pre-arranged with the mutual consent of friend and foe." Two Bettys were at 4,500 feet, covered by two sections of three Zeros each, flying 1,500 feet above and to the rear. As Mitchell led his force up to covering altitude, originally scheduled for 20,000 feet, Lanphier's four fighters converged on the bombers pulling up steadily at 200 mph in a 35-degree climb. Belly tanks were dropped when they were yet two miles distant, although Lieutenant Holmes had difficulty in freeing his and Lieutenant Hine remained with him until the tank fell clear.

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Then the bombers saw their attackers. One made a turning dive, the other headed out for the shore line, and the Zeros peeled down in a string to head off the P-38's. At first Lanphier could not reach his Betty, but nosed up and exploded one Zeke; then from 6,000 feet

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he dove to treetop level to catch the fleeing bomber. He caught it broadside. With his burst a wing flew off and the Betty fell flaming into the jungle. Now to get away. The Zeros had all the advantage of altitude, and Lanphier made desperate efforts to escape them; he side-slipped, skidded, and hedge-hopped the trees, with such success that only two 7.7-mm. holes were found in his plane. Meanwhile Lieutenant Barber had attacked the other Betty, and though chased by the Zeros, he was able to catch the bomber. As he fired, its tail section broke off and, rolling over on its back, the plane went down, disintegrating as it fell.

By this time the flight was on its way out of the Kahili-Shortland area when Lieutenant Holmes sighted a stray Betty flying low over the water near Moila Point. He dove on it; Hine smoked the left engine; and Barber finished it off, when it exploded directly in front of him, sending a piece through his left wing and knocking out his left inter-cooler. Now the Zeros were attacking from all directions, and over on Kahili the pilots could see a huge cloud of dust fanning out from the wash of a swarm of fighters taking off. Under heavy attack, the P-38's withdrew. Lt. Raymond K. Hine's plane was hit in the left engine, and he was last seen losing altitude south of Shortland Island, but all the others returned. Holmes ran out of gas, making a successful emergency landing at the Russells, and Barber brought his damaged plane

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back to Guadalcanal.

The mission was remarkably successful. Each one of the three surviving attack pilots was credited with one Betty and one Zero fighter,

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and among their victims was the belligerent chief of the Japanese Imperial Navy.⁸³ But it was difficult to determine which pilot had been the immediate cause of Yamamoto's death, though available evidence⁸⁴ indicates that the credit probably should go to Captain Lanphier. A major share of the credit belongs to Maj. John Mitchell, who maintained flawless air discipline throughout the approach over the 435 miles, navigating under complete radio silence, using only a simple compass and air speed indicator, and enabling the attackers to meet their victims almost on the scheduled minute. Admiral Mitscher was so pleased at the results of the mission that he requested permission to grant the Navy Medal of Honor to Mitchell and to the members of the attack section and the Navy Cross to all other participants, but the awards were scaled down. Mitchell, Lanphier, Barber, Holmes, and Hine all received the Navy Cross, while the others were granted the Navy Air⁸⁵ Medal.

For the balance of the month the work of the Fighter Command was more routine. By 30 April a total of 14 strafing missions had been carried out against barges, AA positions, and bivouac areas at Vila, Munda, and over at Rekata Bay. The month's score showed that 73 enemy planes had been destroyed, 69 of them by fighters, for a loss of⁸⁶ 20 planes and 8 pilots. The Jap was paying a heavy price in his attacks upon the Solomons positions. He would pay even more heavily in the future.

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Chapter II

ENEMY AIR ATTACKS UPON GUADALCANAL

By May there was evidence that the Thirteenth Air Force was beginning to operate somewhat as its commanders desired; fresh units had reached it and there was a better understanding of command relationships and employment of air power in the area.¹ During March, 23 B-25's with 10 combat crews had arrived in the theater, together with 6 B-24's; in the following month General Twining was informed that by the end of April the current shortage of 11 medium bombers and one heavy bomber would be eliminated.² Additional fighter pilots had arrived and on 22 May the remaining two squadrons of the 307th Bombardment Group (H), the 371st and 372d, left Hawaii for Espiritu Santo, together with the 886th Chemical Company, Air Operations.³ The 42d Bombardment Group (M) with 105 officers and 568 enlisted men had come into Noumea Harbor on the Maui on 15 April, having sailed from San Francisco on 28 March. It immediately moved its 75th Squadron with new B-25C's to Plaines des Gaiacs for training, and the 390th Squadron to Fiji, where Col. Harry E. Wilson assumed command of the group.⁴

There was a note of optimism in General Harmon's report of 1 May to General Arnold; he found that the organization of the Thirteenth Air Force under an air general who was able to devote his full time to air operations had "helped tremendously."⁵ The Thirteenth's commander, General Twining, could also point to significant strides. He was optimistic over the effect upon supply and maintenance resulting from

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the recent authorization of the XIII Air Force Air Service Command, which had been activated on 14 April. He could report substantial improvements in living conditions at all stations and he doubted that there would be any repetition of the serious sickness rate which had laid low so many personnel of the 11th Bombardment Group. Nevertheless, the malaria rate was still extremely high and would remain so until the month of June.

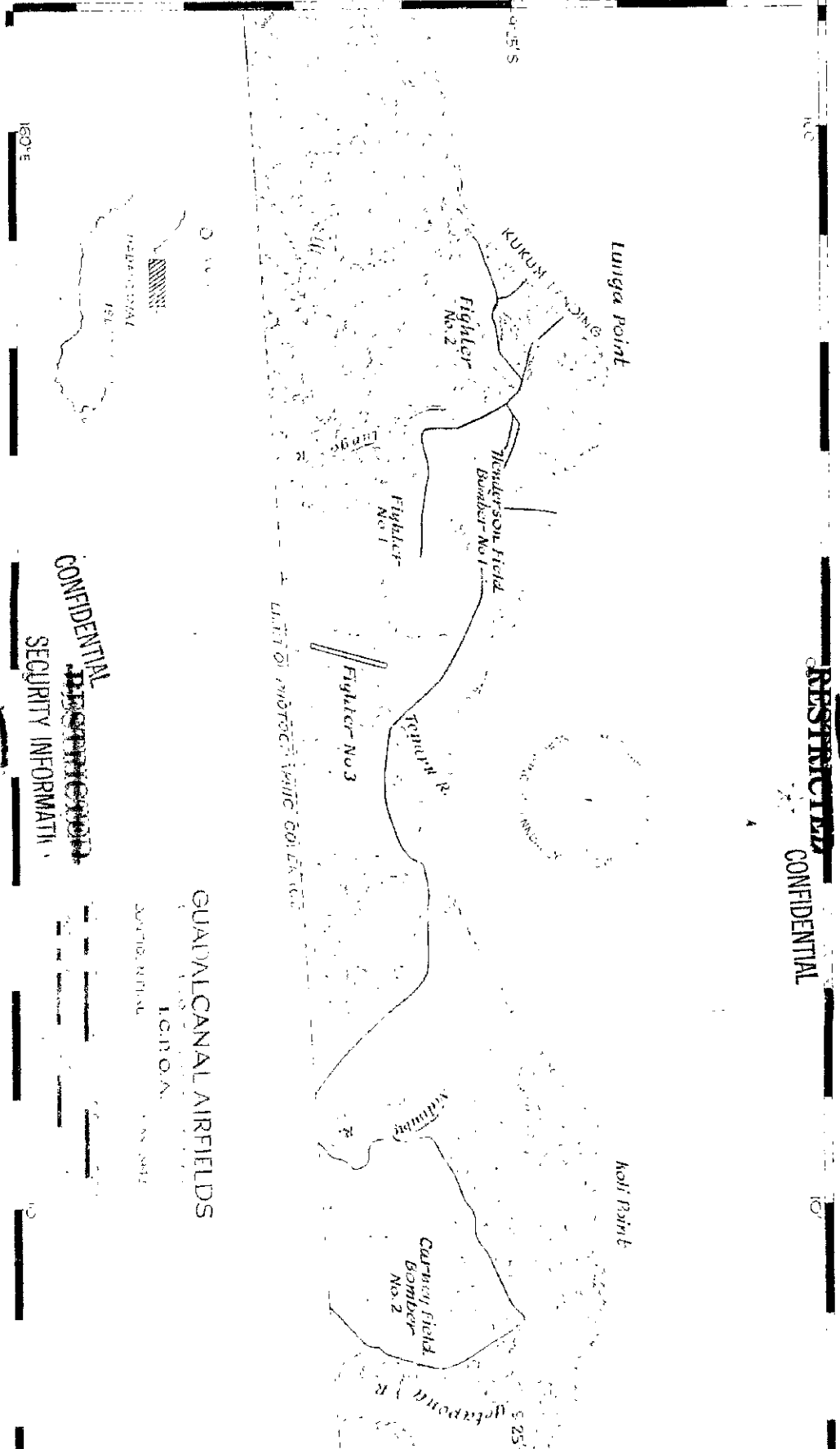
Air force headquarters were at Espiritu Santo where Twining could remain in close proximity to COMAIRSOPAC, but the operating sections of the Bomber and Fighter Commands were up on Guadalcanal. Bomber Command by the end of April was establishing itself on the new field at Koli Point known as Carney Field, and Fighter Command was located at Fighter No. 2 (Kukum) near Henderson. Airdrome facilities on Guadalcanal were improving rapidly. During the first three months of 1943 the 6th and 14th Naval Construction Battalions had constructed Carney Field, near Koli Point just east of the Nalimbu River, and on 15 June the 810th Engineer Aviation Battalion assumed the responsibility for operation and maintenance of this field.

General Twining now could count on operating in the near future two heavy groups at full strength, plus one complete medium group and two reduced fighter groups. To General Arnold he sent the following plan of assignment for these tactical organizations:

Guadalcanal:

- Hq. 5th Bombardment Group (H)
2 tactical squadrons
- Hq. 307th Bombardment Group (H)
2 tactical squadrons
- Hq. 42d Bombardment Group (M)
2 tactical squadrons
- Hq. 18th Fighter Group
3 tactical squadrons (The P-38 squadron was divided between Guadalcanal and New Caledonia in order to carry on training.)

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Espiritu Santo:

Two tactical squadrons from each of the 5th and 307th Bombardment Groups (H)
Hq. 4th Photographic Group
18th Photographic Squadron

Efate:

One fighter squadron

New Caledonia:

Hq. 347th Fighter Group
1 plus fighter squadron
1 bombardment squadron (M)

Fiji:

One fighter squadron
One bombardment squadron (M)

All these units were rotated through Guadalcanal. The air force commander admitted that his squadrons were spread rather thinly over a great area, but believed that the advantages made this arrangement desirable. Rotation of the flying personnel helped to maintain the crews in better physical condition and the rear area units, in addition to their assignment to the local defense forces, were used for the training and indoctrination of new crews and for reorganizing units returning from combat. An additional reason for holding aircraft back from Guadalcanal was the limited number of fields then operable on that forward base. AAF planes were using three fields, each having but one strip, and Twining felt that the facilities did not justify assigning any additional aircraft, preferring instead to fly in reinforcements when necessary.

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The whole question of proper dispersion of planes in the forward area had plagued the AAF commanders ever since the early weeks of the Guadalcanal campaign. As late as 8 March, a representative from

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Washington inspected the Guadalcanal area and reported that Navy control of Army operations was unsound. There was evidence that General Harmon was handicapped as compared with Kenney over in the Southwest Pacific, that Navy's needs took precedence over those of the AAF, resulting in the construction of roads and naval installations, and the neglect of air power. The condition of the air installations at Guadalcanal was termed nothing less than a "national disgrace."¹¹ Another observer, seeing planes packed all over the original bomber strip, reported that the dispersal experts back in the United States "would have snow white hair" if ever they could see Henderson Field, and that the situation on the entire island was extremely confusing--so much so that "we were trying to make the watchword of Guadalcanal 'Semper-Snafu!'"¹²

Planning for air base construction in the area was a function of Halsey's Base Planning Board, upon which General Harmon's engineer, Col. F. L. Beadle, served as the representative of COMGENSOPAC.¹³ Presumably this body would coordinate the needs and views of all services, but it was necessary to learn some sharp lessons in the need for proper dispersion before much could be accomplished. Twining, admitting his troubles, had to report that "the Navy has never been interested in dispersal and still, after the bitter lesson learned, continue to line their own planes for the slaughter."¹⁴ The bitter experience referred to had been delivered by the Japs on the night of 24 March when two or three enemy bombers had come over Henderson, dropping their bombs from 25,000 feet. The first plane hit a B-24 under repair, which burst into

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flames and set fire to a B-17. The second did better; its bombs struck a loaded B-17, which exploded and caused extensive damage to several other planes.¹⁵

General Arnold was keenly disturbed over the incident. Immediately he requested all information on the chain of responsibility; he wanted full explanations as to why such great damage had resulted from such a weak enemy effort, and when the accident was ascribed primarily to a chance hit, the commanding general still was at a loss to understand why "all these planes [were] jammed in together in a war zone."¹⁶ It was apparent that AAF Headquarters had not fully realized the limited extent of dispersal facilities on Guadalcanal; General Arnold wondered whether such dense concentrations were habitual and what steps were being taken to avoid repetition. Harmon informed him in reply that at the time of the raid approximately 300 planes, predominantly fighters, were on Guadalcanal; normally 10 to 12 B-24's were based there as a search-strike force, but at any time operations demanded, the number could be augmented by planes from Espiritu Santo. This heavy concentration simply had outdistanced the pace of construction. Twining reported that even the Japanese aircrews had refused to believe their eyes at the sight of the long rows of fighter planes packed on Fighter No. 2.¹⁷

Despite the difficulties and the severe criticism by outside observers, General Twining believed that his air force was making genuine progress. He reminded General Arnold that in the formulation of plans

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and assignment of missions, COMAIRSOLS dealt directly with the two operating commands--Bomber and Fighter--on Guadalcanal, adding that "we do not always have our way in the employment of our aircraft, but will say that after months of indoctrination, I believe that the Comairs are beginning to realize that the Air Force knows something about the employment of air and operations and have improved accordingly." ¹⁸

All this was good to hear in Washington, where Arnold found it "most encouraging" that the local naval air commanders were beginning to recognize the fact that AAF commanders knew something about the employment of aircraft; he approved too of the deployment plan which Twining had sketched for him. But this dispersal problem was galling, and the Commander of the AAF advised the Thirteenth's general that "it would be a real tragedy for the brilliant victories your crews are winning in the air to be neutralized by the loss of aircraft on the ground." He felt that the Jap had "overestimated our intelligence. Let's not underestimate his. I am depending on you to show the Navy 'the light' before the Jap does so in a most convincing manner." ¹⁹

Out in the South Pacific, the concern shown by headquarters brought results; Arnold's complaints were shown to Halsey, who passed them on to his own air commander, Admiral Fitch, and the effect "really had them scurrying." Immediately additional areas were assigned to the AAF ²⁰ planes.

The answer to the problem lay in providing more dispersal areas for all services. By 1 April Carney Field was sufficiently ready to permit the basing of the majority of the heavy bombers and the early completion

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of the Russell field would further relieve congestion, but no blast pens were yet available for medium or heavy bombers. General Mining still feared that in a large-scale strafing or bombing attack should break through the defenses, serious losses might again be incurred, since planes still were concentrated on the open plain. The second strip at Moli Point would take the burden off Henderson and Carney, but the original plans for the dispersal layout had not satisfied the Air Commanders. On 21 April 5 sent his airborne engineer, Col. A. L. Gable, up to Aspirita Point to discuss the new field at Moli Point with Admiral Mitch. Mitch and Gable accepted Gable's recommendations; the airborne dispersal arrangements were revised accordingly, and when construction began it followed the new plan, though Gable still felt it necessary to petition the Joint Chiefs for a re-consideration of the low priority position of blast pens in the construction program. By 21 April 1945 construction of the dispersal was reasonably adequate; 20 heavy bombers had been moved over to Carney field and dispersal points for B-24s were being increased as rapidly as possible, as there was much room for improvement to accommodate easily the large number of planes on the island.

Completion of Carney field held up dispersion, but its quality was not comparable to that of Henderson. The latter field had a gravel base and had stood up well under heavy bombing, but Carney was laid down upon a poor foundation; its nine-inch base of coarse river gravel covered by pier and plank mat was unable to stand the weight of heavy bomber operations

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and within two weeks the field was in poor shape. ²⁴ Koli was a far better base for the heavies, and its construction, which did not begin until June, was an excellent example of cooperative effort. Work was initiated by the 14th Seabee Battalion, which soon was joined by the 1st and 2d Marine Engineer Aviation Battalions, then by the 810th Engineer Aviation Battalion, and finally by the 873d Airborne Engineers Aviation Battalion. When the strip finally was completed during the Central Solomons campaign, responsibility for its maintenance passed to the 810th Engineer Aviation Battalion, ²⁵ which performed this task from October 1943 until July 1944.

The problems now were nothing like so acute as those which faced the 67th Fighter Squadron and the heavy bombardment squadrons of the 11th and 5th Groups back in September of 1942, yet many remained to be solved. One of them was prevention of the night harassments by small flights of enemy bombers. The Japs had carried on intermittent night raids against Guadalcanal ever since August 1942; from Rekata Bay their small float planes could easily reach all the airfields and the medium bombers could come down from Bougainville. "Washing Machine Charlie," as the night raiders were known, was very much a part of the Guadalcanal scene; there was no question but that the damage inflicted in loss of rest alone was greatly in excess of the effort expended. Pilots rapidly felt the effects of loss of sleep and excessive fatigue, which not only caused a deterioration of efficiency but had a very depressing effect upon the morale of all personnel, and to this factor must be added the serious increase in exposure to malaria during the darkness in the foxholes and the bomb shelters. ²⁶ The enemy's bombing was not particularly accurate

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and some of the missiles were bottles, but now and again a chance hit would strike home amid parked aircraft and the losses would be substantial.

Back in December 1942 General Patch, in an attempt to initiate preventive measures, had recommended to Admiral Halsey that six night fighters be assigned to the South Pacific. General Harmon in turn had passed on the request to Washington, asking for one flight of night fighters with Ground Control Interception (GCI) equipment.²⁷ Nothing could be done until 18 February 1943 when six P-70's of the 6th Night Fighter Squadron's Detachment "B", 18th Fighter Group, departed from Hawaii bound for Guadalcanal where they arrived on the last day of the month. One plane was lost over the ferry route; the remaining five took their station to prevent the Jap from continuing his nightly harassment.²⁸

The entire problem of night fighters was critical at the time. After sending off the flight to the South Pacific, Emmons had left in the Seventh Air Force only eight P-70's, a number he believed inadequate, but because availability of night fighters in the AAF was at an extremely low point, it was impossible to meet his request for three P-70's per month. In fact, it was impossible to establish any monthly replacement rate and Emmons was advised to use extreme care in order to prolong the life of equipment on hand.²⁹ Already one plane had been lost in transit. Ten days after the others had arrived at Guadalcanal they still were parked in an exposed position on Henderson Field, but they were scheduled to move to Carney as soon as that strip was ready and presumably would be in a safer position.³⁰

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The problem was to use these planes. The Jap normally came over the island in good weather and bright moonlight; he flew in small flights at altitudes ranging from 21,000 to 28,000 feet, making two or three runs over the target at 15-minute intervals, and delivering the attacks either singly or in pairs. Warnings from coastwatchers or SCR 270's could come as much as 45 minutes in advance of the attack, whereas the audiodetectors or the SCR 268's afforded only a 5 or 10-minute advance notice.³¹ In the period preceding the arrival of the night fighters, the Director of Air Defense had recommended that the night defense of Guadalcanal be conducted by searchlights, antiaircraft, and fighter-searchlight teams; and so far as possible this was done. An F4F went up one night in an effort to prevent the bombing, but friendly AA fire forced the Marine pilot down. On another occasion a P-38 tried it, but the Jap merely waited until the plane had returned to base, then struck at the field with his bombs.³² P-38 pilots repeatedly had requested permission to try their hand at the night interception, and on 29 January Capt. John W. Mitchell, who had taken off before dawn, caught a Jap twin-engine bomber just after it had dropped its bombs. With an appreciative ground audience watching the performance, Mitchell sent the Jap flaming into the sea.³³ But such success was infrequent and the enemy continued his raids.

It was hoped that the P-70's could put a halt to the enemy's night activity over Guadalcanal. The planes were heavily armed, carrying four 20-mm. cannon, two .50-cal. forward-firing machine guns, two .30-cal. guns above and aft, and one .50-cal. below and aft. Their AI radar (aircraft interception plane radar) had a horizontal range almost

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exactly equal to the absolute altitude of the aircraft, with a vertical range of 3,000 feet above, and the plane was reasonably fast, making 300 miles per hour at 20,000 feet. When the GCI (Ground Control Interception) radar became available on 1 April, and went into operation shortly thereafter, the P-70's were given their opportunity to stop the

³⁴ Jap. Most of the local air commanders held strong doubts as to the ability of the P-70's to perform effectively, but Brig. Gen. Dean Strother persevered in his faith in the plane.³⁵ On a basis of performance, he was disappointed.

The technique adopted required the P-70 to attempt its interception from within a range of approximately 50 miles down to 10 miles of the gun-defended Lunga area. If the night fighter with its AI had not shot down the Jap by the time the latter had come within range of the AA defenses, it was directed by GCI back to its original orbit point, for it was not allowed to enter the gun area; in these cases it was assumed that the enemy plane was too high or too fast for the P-70 with its limited rate of climb and low service ceiling. Hence the Jap became a proper target for the P-38's which were operating with the searchlights.³⁶ In fact the deficiencies of the P-70 made it "absolutely worthless for interception"; in two months of operation on Guadalcanal, these aircraft succeeded in making only one interception and this was against a plane which already had been in the searchlights for several minutes.³⁷

General Twining listed the shortcomings of his night fighters:

(1) The service ceiling of 22,000 feet was too low. Enemy bombers seldom attacked so low.

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(2) The rate of climb was inadequate. The average time required to make the 22,000 feet was 45 minutes.

(3) Maximum speed of the plane at altitude had proved insufficient. For example, on the night of 15/16 May, a Japanese Type I Betty had outrun the P-70 by using a shallow dive.

(4) There was frequent failure of the electrical system due to overloading.

(5) The radar failed to function at high altitude.

The single successful interception by a P-70 occurred on 19 April when Capt. Earl C. Bennett took off from Carney at 0321 for his second attempt of the night. Already a seven-hour Condition Red had been in effect, and a two-hour sortie by Bennett had failed to make any contact when finally at 0418 the searchlights caught a Betty directly over Henderson. Bennett, who was orbiting over a point east of Savo Island at 22,000 feet, instantly turned toward Henderson. Before he arrived over the area, the searchlights had lost the Jap, but within 30 seconds the P-70's AI radar had the enemy on the screen. Exhaust flames indicated the target; within a few seconds the four 20-mm. cannon had ripped into the fuselage, causing the plane to explode. For the first time on record Washing Machine Charlie had fallen before an AAF night fighter in the Solomons.

Like all the units on Guadalcanal, the night fighters operated under severe handicaps, for their small unit was operating far out in front of its organizational equipment, and there was extreme difficulty in securing supplies. In fact, it was necessary for both air and maintenance

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personnel to perform heavy manual labor in order to produce the bare
operating essentials. When there were problems arising in the ground
rear sections, the use of radar by personnel whose proficiency was
not put at its peak. Several times they reported claims, calling for
scraps of caring, especially poor weather conditions, including solid
overcast, rain showers, and to err on the safe side. Ground radar screens
could receive a list of 50 to 60 aircraft, but in nearly every case
it was found that these were obscured by heavy cloud cover dis-
covered from the clouds. Nevertheless, the F-70's were ordered up
under such hazardous conditions.

By the end of April, the improved dispersal facilities for the
detachment were nearly completed, as well as more adequate quarters for
personnel. But with the arrival of replacements, it was apparent that
additional personnel had to be given as a priority of pilots, some of whom had
never previously flown on a primary course. It should be noted the strain
of normal operations was caused by various difficulties to increase
"five-fold," but the detachment anticipated greater success in the
near future when the plan for cooperation with F-4's would be tested
in combat.

If the record of the F-70's was less than satisfactory, that of
the F-4's was good, despite the fact that these fighters were in no
way equipped for night interception other than by the installation of
a forward collimator filter in the cockpit. These fighters worked
in close cooperation with the searchlights, which were directed by GCI

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268's. P-38 pilots would orbit a red light of low intensity placed on the outer edge of the defended area about a mile southwest of Fighter No. 2, and their interceptions depended entirely upon visual contact. Thus their field of operation lay directly within the gun-defended area, where both they and the searchlights were under fighter control. Although no hard and fast rules had been laid down to regulate AA fire in the area, it was understood as a guiding principle that the P-38 had first priority on the target if it appeared that the fighter might be able to intercept the Jap when and if illuminated. ⁴²

The P-38's did intercept the Jap far more successfully than the night-fighting P-70's. On the night of 13 May after a full day of intense air activity, at least four enemy bombers put 11 bombs on Guadalcanal, firing a munitions dump. Lt. William E. Smith of the 12th Fighter Squadron was up after them, catching one in the lights. It went down, and a second was probably destroyed. ⁴³ The following week was a period of bright full moonlight which brought out bombers and interceptors on both sides.

On the night of 18 May six Jap bombers gave the Russells and Guadalcanal more than a three-hour alert when they bombed the former and the area east of Fighter No. 1. No damage or casualties were suffered this time, but the following night enemy planes were back again, perhaps eight or nine of them. This time they struck home in four separate raids, killing 14 men and wounding 20, but the P-38's stopped two of them. Seven fighters were sent up in relays so that always one

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was on station, and three of the raiders were intercepted. Shortly before midnight, Maj. Louis R. Kittel of the 70th Fighter Squadron destroyed one, aided by the searchlights, exhaust flames, and Jap tracer streams; then within the space of seconds he was able to send a second Betty flaming down to crash between Henderson and Cape Esperance.⁴⁴

It was obvious that if the high-flying enemy night raiders were to be stopped, the P-38's would have to do it. Not only were P-70's inherently unable to fulfill the need, but they had arrived with only a small number of maintenance parts and no spare engines; because of its low rate of climb, the plane required full power from the ground up, which led to the necessity for frequent engine changes.⁴⁵ Already Harmon had requested that the ground echelon and organizational equipment for the P-70 detachment be sent out, but lack of shipping prevented dispatch of the equipment, though it was possible to send the ground echelon by air.⁴⁶ There was some hope for improvement in the promise of OPD to send out a complete night-fighter squadron early in September, one which would absorb the small detachment already on Carney Field.⁴⁷ But Harmon hoped that something better than the P-70 might be given him.

After two months of experience with the P-70, he found himself in much the same position he occupied with the obsolete P-400's back in August and September of 1942. Submitting a report on 15 June, he informed General Arnold of his troubles,⁴⁸ which Twining had reported from Guadalcanal. Practically everything necessary for an effective

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night fighter was lacking, except for the well trained and "eager" crews. The plane was too slow, it could not go high enough, and above 15,000 feet its radar equipment arced and emitted corona discharges, making it useless. Furthermore, the generators were overloaded, it was not possible to carry an adequate supply of ammunition, and the frequencies used for air-ground communication were intercepted and jammed by the enemy. Urgently he requested six planes of higher performance to replace the P-70's. With these, and the combination of P-38's and searchlights, "we can clean the night."⁴⁹ The answer was negative. There were no night fighters available as replacements, but Harmon was informed that the P-61 would be in production by the end of the year, at which time his theater would be considered for a small number of the new Black Widows.⁵⁰ Thus the matter rested for the present.

The small detachment of the 6th Night Fighter Squadron continued to struggle along under more than its share of handicaps; lack of spare parts continually plagued it, causing unnecessary attrition.⁵¹ For the pilots of the P-70's, the situation was exasperating. Their planes simply could not reach the enemy, while their small unit, lacking squadron integrity, was a most awkward administrative orphan, one which keenly felt its inferiority in the matter of obtaining parts and repair equipment. During the second week in May it had been obliged to move to Henderson for two days due to the deterioration of Carney Field, but by the 23d it was back at Carney using its new alert quarters and communication facilities.⁵²

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COMAIRSOLS was well aware of the deficiencies of the P-70's. On 20 May the last night mission attempting long-range interception was flown; henceforth Maj. Sidney F. Wharton's pilots would train in P-38's, for the twin-engine fighters had proved they could stop the Japs at night.⁵³ The detachment did not easily retrain its flying personnel. While it continued to use the P-70's as low-level interceptors working with GCI, the unit was dependent upon other fighter squadrons for a loan of P-38's since it possessed none of its own. And this presented difficulties. Pilots were checked out from training after they had received approximately four hours' familiarization on the P-38; there simply were not enough P-38's to supply the needs of all units. Major Wharton hoped for a minimum of six hours' training, including two hours of gunnery, but always he had to contend with the fact that the tactical situation might require all available P-38's to be held for the fighter squadrons. And since the fighters were extremely busy in June, the net result was a general curtailment of the training program.⁵⁴ If Jap night raiders were to be driven off, the P-38's would have to do it, because many months would pass before a real night fighter could reach the South Pacific. The problem of the night fighter remained acute⁵⁵ throughout the Solomons campaign.

Gradually during the spring months COMAIRSOLS was able to increase the tempo of operations against the Japanese positions on Bougainville and in the Central Solomons, despite the absence of sufficient numbers of fighters to provide escorts for heavy bomber operations during the

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daylight hours. Throughout March and April the heavies continued for the most part to hit the Kahili and Shortland areas in light strength and always at night. Sometimes the strikes were in relays of one or two planes bombing at intervals, thereby serving as partial retaliation for the nightly disturbance of Guadalcanal by the Japanese. Often the results of these attacks were unobserved; again a chance hit would be made on aircraft or on a fuel or munitions dump setting off large fires. Sometimes, too, the Jap would attempt to encourage bombing errors by starting sizeable fires in areas around Kahili where there were no vital installations.

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On the nights of 20 and 21 March, Strike Command of COMAIRSOLS staged something new--a mine-laying operation against the Buin area. Originally planned for the 18th and 19th, the mission had been delayed by bad weather, but on the 20th 42 TBF's (18 Marine and 24 Navy), each loaded with one Model 1 Mark XII 1,600-lb. magnetic mine, took off between 1814 and 1835. Their assignment was to sow the mines within the 20-fathom curve along the Bougainville coast from Tonolei Harbor to Buin.

While the mine-laden Avengers went in low, B-17's and B-24's were to harass searchlights and AA over Kahili Field and along the southeast coast of Bougainville from Moila Point to East Point in the hope of pulling inshore AA and lights. Nine B-17's of the 31st Squadron (H) and nine B-24's of the 307th Group, each loaded with 20 clusters of fragmentation bombs, took off early in the evening on the first of a series of diversionary missions.

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This initial attempt was highly successful. The time schedule was adhered to precisely, bombs were dropped on both AA and searchlight installations, and the haphazard nature of the AA fire indicated confusion on the ground.⁵⁸ Not one TBF was lost on the mission and the Navy's compliments went to the heavy bomber crews for their diversionary efforts, but the 31st lost one of its B-17's. Colonel Unruh's plane, which had dropped out of formation at the Initial Point for observation of the results of the attack, went down in the sea, but the entire crew was rescued off the Russell Islands almost immediately.⁵⁹

Next night the same mission was repeated, this time with the use of 40 TBF's supported by 9 B-17's of the 31st Squadron and 12 of the 307th's B-24's. Orders required the heavies to attract fire and lights for nine minutes while the TBF's sowed their mines; then they were to retire northward. The bombers had a fairly easy time; AA fire was wild and erratic, but the diversionary action was not so effective. The Japs held most of their fire and lights down at low altitude against the torpedo planes. For the future, the recommendation was to employ demolition bombs rather than fragmentation clusters. Despite the failure to turn the Japs away from the TBF's on the second night, no planes were lost and the two missions were regarded as highly successful.⁶⁰

Early in May it was apparent that the Japanese were no less disturbed by the constant nightly harassment than were the Allied personnel on Guadalcanal. As the B-17's and B-24's returned from their missions over Kahili or Ballale, their reports indicated that the Jap was putting

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increasing effort into night flying in an attempt to prevent the raids
⁶¹
 by the heavy bombers. As yet there was no evidence that the enemy
 planes carried radar, for they seemed to depend upon searchlight illu-
 mination or chance encounter. Whatever system they used, it gained
 them scant success; they seldom fired on the bombers (though one did
 so on 27 April), and their contacts were very brief. The B-24's
 regularly shook them off by employing evasive action and rarely re-
 turned fire, for this would have revealed their own position.
⁶²

Meanwhile the tempo of air operations gradually increased.
 Strike Command sent the light bombers against Vila or Munda with greater
 frequency, drawing upon Fighter Command for escort. On the morning of
 8 May no less than 77 planes struck Munda with such force that five
 hours later fires were still blazing. Next day weather turned back an
 even larger number of planes; more than 100 had taken off from Guadal-
⁶³
 canal. For a few days during the second week of May the Jap air force
 lay low. SED's flying over Vila at 3,000 feet on the afternoon of the
 10th received no AA fire whatsoever and pilots observed grass growing
 on a runway which was in evident disuse; few enemy planes were sighted
 anywhere. Then on the 13th action began.

The harassing Liberators led off at 0200 over Kahili and Ballale.
 An hour and a half later six B-17's hit the same targets, putting two
 500-pounders on each strip and meeting three new-type night fighters
 which unsuccessfully attempted an interception with the aid of their
⁶⁴
 own searchlights. At 1100 the coastwatcher on Choiseul reported

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planes on the way south, enough to cause Fighter Command to send up 101 fighters, which was the largest fighter scramble yet seen on Guadalcanal and the Russell⁶⁵. At a point 25 miles northwest of Cape Esperance 8 Corsairs, 4 P-40's, and 2 P-38's met approximately 26 Japs; 8 Zeros promptly went down, one destroyed by a P-38, the rest by the Marines. A few moments later 8 more Zeros fell before the Corsairs, making a total loss to the Jap of 16 fighters, at a cost to Fighter Command of 4 Marine planes and 1 P-38 with 2 pilots recovered.⁶⁶ The day's action was not yet over. After nightfall five B-17's returned to the Kahili-Ballale area, where their incendiaries caused the enemy air commanders additional grief. Strike Command added its own contribution by sending four TBF's with two flare planes to strike at the shipping on Fuin, and these pilots returned to report at least two hits on an AK, which suffered an explosion. The Jap was stung. That night he retaliated by sending down at least four bombers to raid Guadalcanal, but the P-38's, teamed with the searchlights, killed off one Betty and probably got another. By 2155 all clear was sounded to end a lively⁶⁷ day of intense air activity.

No sooner had the enemy's air effort flared up than it subsided. During the third week of May there was evidence that the Jap was withdrawing his fighters from the Solomons, though he continued to maintain a strong fighter concentration at Rabaul. The withdrawal coincided with a growth of strength in New Guinea; early in April virtually no planes had been in that area, yet now over 100 were reported concentrated

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chiefly at Wewak. It was possible that the predictions of the planners of the campaign were being fulfilled; perhaps the Jap could not stand the strain of heavy simultaneous commitment in both the Solomons and New Guinea.

In the hope of accelerating the process of attrition of the enemy's surface supply line, on 9 May COMSOPAC ordered a second series of mine-laying missions; these would reinforce the Kahili mine fields and establish a fresh field in the Shortland-Faisi area. As before, Strike Command requested maximum aircraft for diversion purposes, this time adding a PBO (Hudson) to act as a flare plane.

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On 19 May a force of 30 TBF's went up to the Buin area to lay their 1,600-lb. parachute mines between Molla Point and Erventa Island and between Erventa and Pupukuna. To afford the mine carriers a clear field, four B-17's and two B-24's (424th Squadron) dropped their 100-lb. GP bombs in 10 runs on Kahili, but this time the Jap was not misled; his gunners ignored the bombers to concentrate on the TBF's. Searchlights were active, accurate, and so was the AA, with the result that two TBF's failed to return.

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The moon was full and bright that week in May as 30 more TBF's were readied for their second mission on the 20th. Once again the diversion was executed by the heavies, this time by four B-17's, four B-24's, plus a PBO to aid the flight of TBF's in navigation. Results improved; the mines were laid over a small area from a point on the east shore of Shortland to another point north of Faisi Island, where the TBF's met much less AA fire. This time the heavy bombers had carried 300-lb. GP bombs rather than the smaller 100-pounders of the earlier

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mission, and the effectiveness of the attack. Crew or pilots reported that the diversionary attack was "excellent," and that the searchlights and AA fire either diverted or silenced; only a small amount of light AA fire came from the shores of Shortland and the tip of Aisai. Despite the fact that two of the P-24's had not a round-wire-tip Zero on all three runs over the target, none of the heavy guns hurt. Nevertheless, even though the diversion has been more successful than previous ones, some of the US personnel felt that the bomber force employed was still inadequate.

Much careful planning and elaborate briefing went into preparations for the third and final mission of the mine-laying program, and the plea for more accurate diversion forces was echoed. While the 20 EF's, loaded with mines, were to close the main entrance to the harbor, 4 others were to strike at AA and lights, 2 more were ordered out to search for shipping, and overhead 14 B-17's with 5 B-24's were scheduled to continue their attacks as before.

The interrupted attack went well. In a rare calm laid on course, during which time the bombers received very little interference from the Japanese, AA fire and searchlights were highly erratic. Wind-aided excellent visibility over the target area, four of the EF's had struck at positions on Arvenda and Aisai islands; the heavies, bombing singly, placed hits on the center of the Whill runway and along the shore line between Whill and Laruoi. Not a plane was lost, though one enemy aircraft was an ineffectual pass at a P-24. The

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mission was labeled an "unqualified success" in the opinion of all who took part, and "the diversionary attack of the B-17's, which dropped their bombs at the right place at the right time, contributed enormously to and in a most essential manner to this success."⁷⁴ Meanwhile, the Jap was improving his defenses against these night attacks. Four torpedo planes had been lost in the three missions, with a possibility that two had fallen before night fighters. In any case it was known that at Buka and Buin the enemy was practicing night flying, and the local coastwatcher reported that all night patrols were being maintained there by at least two planes equipped with "running lights."⁷⁵

In the days following the mining operations, COMAIRSOLS steadily increased pressure upon the Bougainville bases and on the Central Solomons. Despite the frequency of attacks,⁴ and sighting of an unusual number of aircraft over the northern Solomons, enemy air activity reached a low ebb by the end of the month of May.⁷⁶ Daylight strikes met no air opposition whatsoever and the Jap's offensive efforts were likewise weak. Early in June photos taken of the Bougainville fields indicated the lowest aircraft count since the start of the Solomons campaign, while simultaneously enemy air strength increased in New Guinea and the Celebes, both of which were of greater economic interest to the Jap than were the Solomons.⁷⁷

Japanese thrusts sent down the island chain were sporadic and weak. Six Bettys attacked a convoy about 200 miles southeast of Henderson Field on 23 May, putting a bomb on the bow of the PT tender Niagara; approximately

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three more raided Guadalcanal that same night, and one bomber even went as far as Espiritu Santo where its bombs fell harmlessly in Second Channel.⁷⁸ But all these efforts were small in comparison with the air weight now being mounted against the Bougainville bases, from which the Jap apparently had drawn back his fighters to Rabaul.

Statistics for the month's operations reflected the extent of the recent lull. Fighter Command reported only 21 enemy aircraft shot down, 15 of them by Corsairs, 4 by P-38's, and 1 Betty by a P-39; but the cost in Allied fighters was rather heavier than normal, 6 F4U's and 2 P-38's, with 5 pilots, having been lost either in combat or in operational

accidents.⁷⁹ The month ended with three B-24's responding to a coast-watcher's request for an attack on Tinputs and Numa Numa over on the northeast coast of Bougainville where enemy strength had been growing steadily. At dusk on 31 May the planes hit both villages, leaving them in flames; then near Tinputs two small 125-foot coastal steamers were discovered. Several runs failed to produce anything better than near misses with the 500-lb. GP bombs, but the crews discovered the virtue of the newly installed nose turrets; if the bombardier complained about the turret greatly impairing his vision, he had to admit that for strafing, the installation was excellent. One vessel was set afire as a result of several strafing runs and was seen aground off Tinputs.⁸⁰

The general lull in the Solomons aerial activity ended with the coming of June. Now the Pussellstrip was ready for operations and on the night of 25/26 May it was used for the first time, except in an emergency, when eight F4U's and eight P-40's remained overnight for a

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predawn strafing attack on the Shortland-Faisi seaplane base. From Guadalcanal the B-24's of the 370th Squadron again were prowling north-east of Bougainville on the evening of 3 June when they caught two more small coastal vessels, one off Tiniputs, the other at near-by Teop. Two direct hits with 500-lb. GP bombs were reported as demolishing the Tiniputs AK, but it was necessary to strafe the other until it was afire, after which the Jap crew abandoned it.

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These seven-hour prowling missions by the B-24's produced a steady drain upon the enemy line of communications around Bougainville, but the most profitable targets remained as always in the Buin area. There at noon on 5 June Strike Command staged the first strong daylight raid since the B-24's had suffered their heavy losses in mid-February. Twelve TBF's and 18 Dauntless dive bombers (SBD's), the latter fitted for the first time with 50-gallon auxiliary tanks which made possible their initial appearance over Buin from Solomons bases, rendezvoused at the Russells, where they picked up 21 Russells-based Corsairs. The whole flight then moved northwest up the Slot, where they were passed over Vella Lavella by 26 P-40's and 6 P-38's whose mission was to precede the attack planes to the target, clearing the air of fighters.

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Some 20 to 25 Zekes, Daves, and Rufes attempted to save the vessels lying in the harbor but could not bring it off; 4 or 5 met the P-40's, losing 2, and downing 1 AAF plane, while the main effort was thrown against the attacking bombers. Corsairs killed 10 more enemy fighters as they bored in on the TBF-SBD flights, and the total loss to the Japanese was 15 planes. Simultaneously the dive bombers and Avengers were putting

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their bombs on a destroyer, subsequently listed as probably sunk, and on a corvette and a cargo vessel, both of which were left burning. Before they reached their bases, however, two TBF's and two SBD's had been lost, one each in the target area, the others crash-landing on the way home.⁸⁴ The action was not easily broken off as the Japs pressed hard after some of the retiring planes. At the close of the engagement, Lt. Jack Bade in a riddled P-40 saw four unescorted bombers retiring below Shortland Island under heavy attack by 10 enemy fighters. With jammed guns, a riddled plane, and a gashed head, Lieutenant Bade dove to aid the light bombers; by making several head-on passes and wide "S's" under cover of the bombers' guns, the enemy was finally driven off in a running battle which lasted until the flight had reached a point just short of Vella Lavella. Lieutenant Bade's only comment was that "the bombers must have thought me the poorest pilot ever to fly an airplane." But the bomber crews knew he could not fire and praised him the more for his efforts.⁸⁵

The 5th of June marked the use of new air bases in the Solomons. Once again the Jap had to face the prospect of daylight attacks against his Buin shipping, attacks which now could include the use of the deadly SBD's. For the first time the Russells strip had been used in coordinating an attack, because all the F4U's had remained there to pick up the bombers on their way north. And for the first time, too, Fighter Command was able to send in a sweep prior to the arrival of the main attacking force.⁸⁶

The Jap was aroused. He shifted more of his air strength back into the Solomons and on 7 June began to use it, for he could hardly be unaware

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of the preparations for a forward movement then under way on Guadalcanal. On the Rabaul airdromes air strength again was high, showing 225 aircraft, including 90 medium bombers and 89 fighters. In the Rabaul harbor area lay 40 to 50 ships, and the enemy's medium bomber searchers were very active, increasing in number and range.

In the first of a series of three strong attempts to push through the Allied fighter defenses, the Japanese sent down 40 to 50 Zekes and Hamps, together with some 10 Kates, the latter apparently destined to attack the shipping off Guadalcanal. To counter the threat, Fighter Command sent up over the Russells and the CACTUS area approximately 100 fighters, among them 12 P-40's of No. 15 Squadron of the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF), then in its first large-scale action. The engagement opened when four Marine pilots were attacked over Vangunu by 24 Zeros; then as the Japanese approached the Russells they met 44 more fighters, while 52 more were airborne over the Guadalcanal shipping. AAF participation was opened by the P-40's and P-38's of the Russells patrol, whose pilots sighted 15 Zekes engaging three F4U's between Buraku Island and the Russells. For the ensuing half hour it was a wild melee. Before they could be driven back, a few of the Japs pressed on to a point within eight miles of Henderson Field, but they paid heavily; no less than 23 Zeros went down before the defending fighters. P-40's carried off honors for the day, shooting down 12 planes; 4 were downed by RNZAF pilots and 8 by AAF planes. P-38's killed 2, Corsairs accounted for 7, and F4F's added 2 more.

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The sole AAF casualty was 1st Lt. Henry E. Matson of the 44th Fighter Squadron. Lieutenant Matson had taken off with the original Russell patrol; he had selected his Zero, made two passes, then exploded it on the third try. Another Zero approached, this time head-on and firing steadily. Matson's guns set him afire, and within seconds the P-40's propeller had chewed right through the flaming Zeke's right wing root, after which the AAF pilot reported "there was a marked rise in the temperature of my cockpit." Bailing out at 18,000 feet, Matson found himself with badly burned arms and hands, a mouth full of powdered plexiglass, cuts on his head and neck, and more ominous than any wounds, he was surrounded by three Zeros in a Luffberry. But instead of strafing him, the enemy pilots apparently were misled by his friendly gestures and made no effort to attack. Before hitting the water the P-40 pilot administered a morphine injection, then upon landing he inflated his rubber boat, covered his face with part of the parachute, and went to sleep. Two hours later he was picked up by a crash boat. ⁹⁰ Although the day's work had cost Fighter Command a total of nine planes--the other eight were F4U's--every single pilot was recovered, which left ⁹¹ a favorable personnel score of 23 to 0 for 7 June.

Three days later a fresh trick was attempted by Fighter Command in an attempt to check the Japanese bombers which had been harassing the shipping lanes between Espiritu Santo and Guadalcanal. On the 10th, five transports screened by six destroyers were moving up to Guadalcanal and the Jap knew it. Down from Choiseul came a report that Bettys were ⁹² on the way, headed southeast to intercept the convoy. Laying out the

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anticipated course of the bombers, Fighter Command sent four P-38's up to orbit Ndai Island, approximately 28 miles north of Malaita, while an equal number of Corsairs were ordered to orbit between Malaita and Santa Isabel. Fortune favored the Marines; they sighted three Bettys moving down the northeast coast of Malaita and promptly shot them all down, though not without a hard, stern chase. The Bettys were very fast and the Corsairs showed 280 knots to overtake them. Over at Ndai the P-38's caught the single remaining bomber and it too went down,⁹³ thus ending a day-long threat to the convoy.

The Jap achieved less success in his shipping strikes than the B-24's working along the east coast of Bougainville. By 12 June, 10 of these low-level missions had been run off since the first one on 29 May, and not a single plane had yet been lost. Three small cargo vessels had been destroyed, one set afire, one damaged, and one Betty had been shot down when a pair of these bombers attempted to intercept two B-24's west of Buka.⁹⁴ But the enemy was prepared to try again at the Guadalcanal targets.

On the forenoon of the 12th a large bogey was reported heading in the direction of the Russells; it was another fighter sweep, numbering between 40 and 50 Zekes, and to meet it, Fighter Command scrambled 91 planes.⁹⁵ At 1048 contact was made in the Russells area by the leading planes of the defenders; the seven New Zealand P-40's, one P-39, and two P-40F's in the first flight were outnumbered two to one, but despite this handicap, they promptly shot down nine Zekes and one probable with the loss of only one pilot.⁹⁶ Total results for the Jap were even more disastrous than the score of 7 June. Allied pilots sighted no bombers,

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though a coastwatcher on Vella Lavella reported two flying northwest after the battle began; 41 pilots made contact with the Zekes, shooting down a total of 31. Again the cost was light; other than the RNZAF Kittyhawk with Flight Officer Marpeth, five Marine planes were lost, but four of the pilots were recovered.⁹⁷ In personnel the Jap had paid with a ratio of more than 15 to one.

For three days there was a lull, except for a brief and fruitless harassing raid on the night of the 13th by an enemy bomber which dropped three bombs aimlessly near Kokumbona, and another on the 15th when three more planes bombed the Koli Point area. But the Jap was preparing for yet another air effort; despite the loss of more than 50 fighters within one week, his air strength in the Solomons now rose to the highest level since March.⁹⁸ By the 16th the enemy was ready; photos taken that morning over Kahili showed 49 fighters and 5 dive bombers on that field alone, while up at Rabaul 254 planes were counted on the same day, and a reconnaissance plane covering Buka on the 16th reported that field⁹⁹ "loaded with aircraft."

First reports of the approach of enemy planes came at 1232 from Vella Lavella where the coastwatcher sighted 38 Zeros passing south; 12 minutes later Kolombangara reported a very large formation of probably 80 aircraft also headed southeast, after which report the original group was picked up on the radar screens.¹⁰⁰ It was clear that this was developing into something more than a normal fighter sweep. The presence of a number of ships in the Tulagi area and off Guadalcanal made the enemy's intentions obvious and every defense on the island

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was immediately placed on the alert. Normally Japanese planes had been coming down the Slot by a route which took them north of the Russells, but this time it was apparent that they were passing some 40 miles south of these islands, and the F4U's in the Russells were sent down to intercept them. These planes failed to make any contact. At 1310 Fighter Command scrambled 16 aircraft to cover shipping in the Tulagi, Lunga Point, and Koli Point areas; at 1345 Condition Red was set, and the number of fighters was increased until a total of 104 aircraft was airborne.¹⁰¹

It was well that the defenders were ready. Up from the south over Beaufort Bay at 15,000 feet and headed straight for Lunga and Koli Point came an estimated 30 dive bombers flanked by Zeros in two columns; probably 75 planes were in the flights. At 1407 the battle began, one which within a few minutes was to develop into the greatest single Allied aerial victory of the South Pacific campaign. Over the mountains P-38's went after the fighter escort, which then turned north, drawing the AAF fighters with them, while the F4F's of Navy fighter squadron VF-11 tore into the dive bombers driving in to attack four cargo vessels and their destroyer escort off Guadalcanal. Almost simultaneously another large group of enemy planes came down the Slot from the north, and immediately the air over Savo Island, Tulagi, Cape Esperance, and Koli Point became the scene of a "gigantic aerial circus."¹⁰²

There was action everywhere, no less than 74 of the 104 defending fighters reporting contact with the enemy. Wildcats of Navy Fighting Eleven knocked down many of the dive bombers before they could reach the ships, P-39's fought off Zeros and dive bombers over the shipping, P-40's tangled with the Vals and Kates and their fighter escort between

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Savo and Cape Esperance at altitudes of 8,000 to 15,000 feet, while some of the Corsairs met Zeros at 29,000 feet near Tulagi as the latter were coming in. Everywhere Allied and enemy planes milled about in dogfights, many of them amid the flak of ground and ship gunners; at times a Zero would flash by with two or three Grummans, a pair of P-40's, and a P-39 on its tail; often in the combat a pilot would have his sights trained on a Jap aircraft only to have the target blow up before a shot could be fired. Part of the huge melee was fought out barely above the sea between Savo and Cape Esperance, where the F4F's pursued the dive bombers retiring at 100 feet or less.

By 1430 the Japs were in full retreat, leaving behind so many of their number that Adm. Marc Mitscher (COMAIRSOLS) could only exclaim that it was "hard to believe, but this was a Roman holiday on Jap planes."¹⁰⁴ It was just that. In fact, the problem was to determine just how many Japs had been shot down, since much of the combat had taken place amid the flak of AA guns, with the attendant possibility of duplicating reports of kills. Fighter Command listed no less than 49 Zeros and 32 dive bombers as having fallen to the various fighters on the island, and only the F4F's had surpassed the performance of the P-40's. RNZAF pilots had taken up 8 P-40's, all of which contacted the enemy, and together these destroyed 5 Zeros; 16 AAF Warhawks were airborne, 14 of them destroying 10 Zeros plus 10 bombers, but the 28 F4F's carried off high honors for the day with 30 Jap planes to their credit.¹⁰⁵ In addition to the successes of the fighters, the ship-borne AA gunners claimed 16 planes, the ground gunners 1 more, which raised to 94 the total losses for the

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day; or, if the Fighter Command record is more exact, the final score
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was 98 planes destroyed out of a total force estimated at 120.

The Jap had escaped with no more than a handful of his original attacking force, but he had left behind a reminder of his visit. In the air the score was amazingly lopsided; only six defending fighter planes were lost (one in an operational accident) and the sole AAF loss was 1st Lt. J. Q. Tedder with a P-40 of the 44th Squadron. Three of the Navy's VF-11 Grumman pilots went down, as did an F4U with Marine T/Sgt. T. Efsthathiou of VMF-122, but these were all. 107 The real damage occurred on the ground and on three of the vessels off Guadalcanal. Even though nearly all the ships were underway and maneuvering during the attack, three of them were damaged, two rather badly, forcing them to be beached off Lunga. Altogether losses afloat and ashore reached 108 25 killed, 29 wounded, and 22 missing, but they could have been very much worse.

The action was by all odds the greatest interception of the theater, and General Arnold was delighted, terming it a "magnificent action" in his commendation to Harmon and Halsey. 109 There was no question but that the Jap was sensitive to the exceedingly heavy drain forced upon him by the pilots of Fighter Command. His losses had mounted rapidly; by the afternoon of the 16th, the June total had reached 146, while the score of kills by all planes since 31 July 1942 now stood at 1,414. On the very next morning the photos indicated a reduction in the enemy's 110 fighter strength in the Solomons.

During the first two weeks of June attention had been focussed

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upon the spectacular work of Fighter Command, but after the resumption of daylight raids against Buin on 5 June the enemy began to feel the increased pressure of the light and heavy bombers; and, beginning with the 15th, the B-25's of the 42d Bombardment Group (M) had joined the battle, thereby freeing additional heavies for the strikes at Kahili. Two medium squadrons, the 69th and 70th, had long been in the theater. Assigned originally to the 38th Group over in Australia, they later were attached to the South Pacific and subsequently assigned to the Thirteenth Air Force. Not until the arrival of the 42d Group with two of its squadrons on 15 April was there an opportunity to develop a full four-squadron medium group. Then, on 17 April, the newly arrived 75th Squadron moved its B-25's to Plaines des Gaiacs for training, while the air echelon of the Headquarters, 42d Bombardment Group (M) and of the fresh 390th Bombardment Squadron (M) went on up to Fiji. ¹¹¹ Here Col. Harry E. Wilson assumed command of the 42d Group and the two veteran medium squadrons were assigned to the group. Now the problem was to train the squadrons in masthead bombing. Even though the 75th and 390th already had accomplished intensive training in this work back at Hammer Field, Colonel Wilson immediately proceeded to push the program in preparation for low-level bombing attacks and for the installation of eight forward-firing .50-cal. machine guns in the planes of two of the ¹¹² squadrons.

On 6 June the air echelon of the 69th Squadron, together with the Headquarters, 42d Bombardment Group (M), all under the command of Maj. S. B. Hardwick, moved up to Carney Field to operate under Bomber Command.

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Within two weeks the 330th Squadron was also on the way northwest after having been delayed while awaiting completion of the modification of its aircraft, and on 14 June the 39th sawed its first mission in the forward area in nearby airfields. ¹¹³ Employing its full strength of 18 planes and escorted by 16 P4U's, the 330th struck at Vila field from 10,500 feet, concentrating on the air strip and run positions lying to the east of the field. ¹¹⁴ Henceforth the A-1-25's would be out almost daily and were now ready to participate in the rapidly approaching battle for Buna. The Japs soon learned to feel their guns directed against the areas supplying the outposts, and the crash of their bombs dropped from great height at the cargo vessels in the slot.

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Chapter III

NEW GEORGIA: THE AIR PHASE

The second major step in the advance up the Solomons involved the invasion of New Georgia and the capture of the airfield on Munda Point whose construction the enemy's engineers had so cleverly concealed back in December 1942, and whose seizure had been indicated in MacArthur's original Elkton Plan. In March the Joint Chiefs of Staff had accepted with minor changes MacArthur's outline for the reduction of the New Bismarck area, which was so closely integrated with the advance up the Solomons.¹ Less than two months later the requirements of the Solomons campaign were fitted into the global pattern of the war, and more specifically to the broad strategic outline for the entire Pacific advance. This was the work of the Combined Chiefs of Staff at the Trident Conference held in May at Washington.²

The CCS recognized the necessity for seizure of the Lae-Salamaua-Finschhafen-Madang area and the occupation of western New Britain; they ordered seizure and occupation of the Solomons including the southern portion of Bougainville and the establishment of airfields on Kiriwina and Woodlark islands.³ These were the immediate objectives; the ultimate one was the capture of Kavieng with subsequent slashing of the seaborne communications of Rabaul, and finally a double-pronged amphibious assault upon the great Jap stronghold on New Britain. These tasks accomplished, the Admiralties could be taken under air attack and invaded by another amphibious force.⁴ The time estimate placed Allied

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forces on western New Britain and southern Bougainville by 1 December 1943, followed by two months for preparation of the bases for the final assault upon Rabaul and an additional two months for operations subsequent to the invasion. Thus 1 April 1944 became the terminal date for the Bismarck operation.⁵

Obviously the Solomons represented only one phase of the operations in the vast Pacific area. At Trident the CCS agreed upon the necessity of ejecting the Japs from the Aleutians; they would mount a drive across the Central Pacific, seizing the Marshalls and the Carolines, including Ponape, Truk, and then additional bases in the western Carolines on Nomoi, Gaferut, and Wolei. Truk would become the site of an operating base for^a major fleet and an important factor in opening the desired line of communications across to the Celebes Sea.⁶ Far ahead lay an immense task; recapture of the Philippines, Hongkong,⁷ and the consequent isolation of Japan from her Netherlands Indies bases. No decision had yet been reached as to whether the main Pacific drive would proceed westward along New Guinea or through the islands of the Central Pacific, though it was recognized that capture of all of New Guinea would facilitate opening the line of communications to the Celebes Sea, and would contribute to the defense of Australia.⁸

In all the planning for future Pacific operations, nothing succeeded in upsetting the Casablanca decision to the effect that unconditional surrender of forces in Europe was the primary aim. However, it was agreed that simultaneously with the major European effort, unremitting pressure

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should be maintained against Japan with the purpose^{of}/constantly reducing her military power and attaining positions from which her ultimate surrender could be forced. ⁹ As a matter of fact, Admiral King stressed the idea that the yardstick of any operation against the Japanese should be the extent to which it would: (a) further threaten or cut the enemy's lines of communications; and (b) contribute to the attainment of positions of readiness from which large-scale operations could be ¹⁰ launched against Japan. New Georgia and Bougainville lay a long way from Japan, but they were way points which must be reduced, and in Allied hands they would permit the accomplishment of the directives of the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

In the opening meeting of the Trident Conference, President Roosevelt had expressed his belief in attrition as an effective weapon and he felt that against the Japanese the operations in the Solomons ¹¹ and in New Guinea were achieving attrition. They were, unquestionably, as the air scores already indicated and as they were to indicate even more decisively in the following two months. With the opening of the New Georgia campaign, the rate of attrition was destined to run higher than anything then achieved.

In his planning, General MacArthur had set 15 June as a target date for initiating the dual set of operations designed to continue in the Southwest Pacific as far west as Madang and up to the western end of New Britain, and in the Solomons up to the southern end of Bougainville.

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It was assumed that completion of these operations would consume the balance of 1943.¹² Requisition of a base on Bougainville was dependent upon the presence of adequate air cover. So long as the nearest major air base was on Guadalcanal, this cover could not be provided; the jump was too long, the Allies lacked a preponderance of air superiority, and COMSOPAC did not have a decisive superiority in naval surface forces, including the all-important carriers. The obvious intermediate step¹³ was Munda.

Here in the Central Solomons the Japanese had expended considerable effort since they were first reported in the area in August of 1942. Originally they had used the island coves and anchorages as staging points in their efforts to supply the troops on Guadalcanal, but after their decisive defeat in November of 1942 they began the construction of an airdrome near Munda Point on the southwest coast of New Georgia Island, a location which made the field almost immune to an invasion from the sea. Only two approaches permitted entry to Munda: one from the north ran through Diamond Narrows, a deep and narrow channel; the other crossed the shallow Munda Bar whose 12-foot depth blocked passage in heavy weather.¹⁴

At Munda the Jap engineers had begun their construction under the concealment of coco palms, the tips of which were held in normal position by heavy wire cables; but after discovery of the runway on 3 December the strip became the most frequented target in the Solomons. All types of aircraft hit it almost daily, and from time to time the air attacks were supplemented with ostensibly destructive bombardments by surface craft, but neither the bombs nor 5- and 6-inch shells could knock out Munda for

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longer than a day or two at best. The strip had been easily constructed and the presence of excellent coral in the immediate vicinity permitted very rapid repairs. But even though it was impossible to disable the field permanently, the Jap was never able to conduct major operations from his New Georgia base. He did even less well with the strip which he had laid down late in December 1942 over at Vila Field on near-by Kolombangara where swampy ground made the runway all but inoperable for land-based planes, though some float planes operated

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from adjacent waters.

On Guadalcanal preparations for the next advance were pushed ahead; by July two fighter and two bomber fields were ready. Henderson was the base for all light and some heavy bombers, plus most of the short-range search planes; Carney, up by Koli Point, was the base for heavy and medium bombers as well as for the long-range search planes, while the fighters were stationed on the two Lunga fields. Fighter No. 1 was the main fighter base and here were the Marine and Navy units. Fighter No. 2 carried the RNZAF's P-40's and the AAF fighters. Equally important was the further improvement of facilities for bulk gasoline storage, including the construction of a submarine fill line which brought aviation gasoline direct from tankers moored off Koli Point to a tank farm. By July Koli Point alone had 35 1,000-barrel tanks and one 10,000-barrel tank in seven groupings and there were similar though somewhat smaller installations at Lunga. The CACTUS fields were supported by the two fields up in the Russells. North Field,

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a 4,200-foot strip, served as a base for light bombers and fighters, and was ready for active use on 30 June; the 3,100-foot South Field
18
was a fighter base. It was obvious that even with the deficiencies of Carney and certain operational difficulties, this New Georgia operation was to be supplied and supported substantially better than was the
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original landing on Guadalcanal.

Admiral Halsey issued the basic operation plan for the New Georgia assault on 3 June 1943 and on the following day Rear Adm. Richmond K. Turner, Commander of Task Force 31, assigned objectives to the elements
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of the amphibious force which he commanded. Maj. Gen. John J. Hester was named commander of the New Georgia Occupation Force with its major unit the reinforced 43d Infantry Division; in general reserve was the 37th Infantry Division held back on Guadalcanal but ready to move forward at five days' notice on order from Admiral Halsey. In addition
21
to these divisions, Hester had two Marine raider battalions, the 1st and 4th; it was believed that these forces together would be strong enough to wrest the entire island group from the enemy within a 30-day period. Both divisions were green, but on Guadalcanal there was the veteran 25th Division, which with the Americal had ejected the Japs from that island and since March had been actively engaged in a training program designed to rectify the errors committed in its first
22
campaign.

The means at hand did not appear to Halsey as sufficient to justify a frontal assault on the Vila-Munda area, a fact which led to a

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decision to capture Rendova Island first. This task would be conducted by the Western Landing Force which would make its landings on Rendova, then at the first opportunity would cross over to New Georgia in LCI's and landing boats. In any case forces were ordered to be prepared to initiate the movement against Munda by D-day plus 4. Simultaneously the Eastern Landing Force under Col. Daniel H. Hundley would land at Viru Harbor, Wickham Anchorage, and Segi Point. Segi was selected as the site of a new fighter strip whose construction was ordered, while Wickham and Viru were scheduled to become protected staging refuges for small craft.²³

A subsidiary operation had as its objective the cutting of communication lines between Kolombangara and Munda to prevent the Japanese from reinforcing the Munda garrison. To achieve this a task force under the command of Col. H. B. Liversedge, USMC, composed of two Army infantry battalions and one Marine raider battalion, was to land at Rice Anchorage, then to move westward and secure Enogai Inlet, breaking enemy communications through Bairoko Harbor.²⁴ Subsequent to the ejection of the enemy from New Georgia, the forces were directed by Halsey to capture at the first favorable opportunity the remaining enemy positions in the New Georgia group.²⁵ These were the goals for the amphibious forces, whose units were to be covered by a powerful task force of surface units under the direct command of Admiral Halsey and by an air force whose strength was now greater than at any previous period in the Solomons campaign.

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On 18 June COMAIRSOPAC assigned to all his air units the under-
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 takings for the New Georgia operation. The searches on Guadalcanal
 were to cover an arc from 270 to 310 degrees to prevent the undetected
 approach of hostile surface forces, and the bombers were to be prepared
 to intensify their strikes against the enemy bases on New Georgia and
 southern Bougainville. Admiral Turner had requested Admiral Fitch to
 attack Munda, Ballale, Kahili, Kieta, and Vila, and surface vessels in
 the Bougainville and Munda areas beginning about D-day minus 5.
 27
 All forces were to destroy enemy shipping at every opportunity, and the photo
 planes were directed to maintain a close watch on aircraft and shipping
 concentrations at Buka and around the southern end of Bougainville. The
 fighters would be hard pressed to carry out their assignment; they were
 expected to provide cover for all the forces in the Guadalcanal area,
 all the units in the New Georgia area, and the shipping bound to and
 from these two points. Fitch warned them to guard particularly the
 attack transports and the AKA's moving in the Slot, and the fighters
 were requested as well to maintain an air cover over those surface
 combatant groups directly involved in the New Georgia operation. In
 addition, COMAIRSOLS was advised to be prepared on six hours' notice to
 provide aircraft for dropping supplies and equipment into the New Georgia
 28
 area.

In the preparations for an advance beyond the immediate area of
 Guadalcanal, it was necessary to devise a fresh method for controlling
 aircraft in the forward area. Admiral Fitch retained direct responsibility
 for strategic operation of aircraft while on Guadalcanal, to which he

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planned to move from Espiritu Santo about five days before D-day, but this control was not adequate for the New Georgia area. Accordingly a new command unit was established. It was known as the Headquarters, New Georgia Air Force (COMAIR New Georgia), and was composed of personnel of the Forward Echelon, Second Marine Aircraft Wing, which was under the command of Brig. Gen. Francis P. Mulcahy, USMC, and attached to the New Georgia Occupation Force. COMAIRSOPAC directed that all aircraft assigned to tasks in the immediate vicinity of New Georgia would pass upon take-off to the operational control of COMAIR New Georgia, which meant of course that this unit would control all direct air support of the ground operations in the Central Solomons.

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In order to maintain a close link with the ground forces four air liaison parties were made available and assigned, one to Segi, one to Wickham, two to Rendova. Each consisted of two radio men and one air liaison officer whose task was to advise the local ground unit commander as to the suitability of the target and the proper force required for an air attack. Final approval of all such requests from the unit rested with COMAIR New Georgia who would then sanction them, disapprove, or modify the plans. Fighter control in the forward area would be executed by two fighter director groups under COMAIR New Georgia; initially Group No. 2 from Navy's Argus 11 would control from a destroyer until relieved by Group No. 1, when it would then go ashore on Rendova to establish itself as a stand-by fighter director group.

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The operation was to be coordinated with the Southwest Pacific. MacArthur's forces were to seize Trobriand and Woodlark on 30 June,

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which was D-day for the landings on Rendova, and General Kenney's Fifth Air Force was to strike at targets in the Northern Solomons, New Ireland, and eastern New Britain areas.³² Already the 67th Fighter Squadron had gone over to the Southwest Pacific to take part in the Woodlark operation. The air echelon of the squadron left New Caledonia on 20 May, flying up to Espiritu Santo, then to Guadalcanal, and then on over to Milne Bay and Port Moresby, although one of the original 25 P-39's went down in the sea on the way up from Espiritu Santo. At noon on 30 May, 25 P-39D's and P-39K's landed at Milne Bay, moving down to Woodlark on 23 July after suffering a large number of operational accidents.³³

The air and ground forces facing Halsey's task forces were considerable. It was estimated that of the 40,000 Japanese in the Solomons, some 8,000 to 10,000 were on New Georgia, and of these probably one third guarded the Munda area.³⁴ If the Allied forces on Guadalcanal now were closer to their objective, there were advantages for the Jap as well. He operated shorter lines of supply to Munda and Vila than he had down to the CACTUS beaches; his powerful Bougainville bases were closer and his troops had been granted time to construct coconut log pill-boxes, blockhouses of coral rock, and strong defensive positions. COMSOPAC's estimates of the enemy's air strength in the area indicated that on 26 June the Japanese had brigaded approximately 380 aircraft in New Britain and the Solomons; 190 were fighters, 121 medium bombers, 23 dive bombers, 41 seaplanes, and 5 float biplanes. Most of these were at Rabaul (190 fighter and medium bombers), but Ballale showed 50 fighters and 25 medium bombers; moreover, it was believed that the Jap could supplement this by drawing upon New Guinea strength of 98 aircraft.³⁵

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To meet this threat, on the morning of 30 June COMAIRSOPAC had available and ready to fly in the forward area a total of 455 combat aircraft out of an assigned total of 533.³⁶ As D-day approached, the bombers increased the weight of bombs dropped upon the enemy's Solomons bases. The B-17's and B-24's concentrated upon Ballale, Poporang, Kahili, and the Buin area; the Avengers and SBD's struck at Munda, Vila, and Rekata Bay; and the B-25's and TBF's carried out daily low-altitude armed shipping searches up and down the Slot.³⁷ For the moment the Jap was quiet, but he was gathering strength in the Solomons. Search planes from the Southwest Pacific reported on 26 June that a heavy cruiser with four destroyers was sighted southwest of Buna on a course for Buin, and at the same time a ferry CV lay in Simpson Harbor, probably to discharge fresh fighters. There was some evidence of Japanese Army aircraft at Rabaul which gave rise to the possibility that the Army was preparing to enter the Solomons campaign.³⁸ Japanese aircraft and submarines did what they could to interfere with the flow of supplies into Guadalcanal; on the 23d a submarine sank an AK off San Cristobal and two days later four bombers attacked the AVD Thornton.³⁹

It was Halsey's intention to effect all the New Georgia-Rendova landings simultaneously but when the enemy threatened to occupy Segi Point in advance of the scheduled D-day, it became necessary to commit forces prematurely in order to secure the area for the planned construction of a fighter strip. Accordingly on 21 and 22 June, a mixed

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force of Marines and Army infantry was put ashore on Segi where actual construction of the strip began on 30 June. Eleven days later, the field was ready for emergency landings.⁴⁰

At 0642 on the morning of 30 June six transports lay off Rendova Harbor on the north side of Rendova Island, separated from New Georgia by the narrow Blanche Channel. As the landing craft carrying the main occupation force moved ashore from the ships, escorting destroyers staged a lively gun duel with shore batteries on Munda, while overhead a low overcast sky and intermittent rains aided in concealing all movement and hampered both enemy air observation and activity. Enemy opposition was determined but disorganized, and lacking fixed fortifications, it was too light to delay the landings.⁴¹ The ground forces had been committed; now it was the task of Fighter Command to defend them from the reaction sure to come.

Actually the fighters had begun their work on the previous evening by providing close cover for the convoy when it sailed from Koli Point at 1630 on the 29th. As darkness fell the vessels entered an area of heavy rain clouds where visibility was so limited it appeared that enemy air observation would be impossible; hence air cover was withdrawn to Guadalcanal. But at 0648 on the 30th air cover of 16 planes was reported overhead at Rendova, ready for operation by the local fighter commander who was aboard one of the DD's.⁴² The control unit was Argus No. 11, first of the Navy's radar fighter director units; it had been ordered to use ship radar to cover the Rendova landings for

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the initial two days of the operation. Its personnel were in their first operation of this kind; no manual of tactics was available, necessitating improvisation on the spot. The controllers hoped to make their interceptions five miles out from the destroyer screen because at a lesser distance it would be possible for enemy planes to come in behind the mountains in the area and thus escape detection on the radars. There was no advance information on the enemy's altitude; accordingly, with three to five cloud layers hampering visibility, the 32 defending fighters were stacked half at 10,000 feet, a quarter at 15,000 to 20,000, and another quarter down at 5,000 feet.⁴³ With this arrangement, the fighters were set to begin the most active four-day period in the history of the Solomons campaign.

Japanese pilots first spotted the task force in the New Georgia area at approximately 0709 on the 30th.⁴⁴ Before 1000 the Rendova fighter cover scored its first kill, a Betty apparently on a snoop mission, and twice during the forenoon--at 0857 and again at 1105--there was the threat of an air attack against the ships, which caused unloading operations to be broken off temporarily.⁴⁵ Nothing came of the first warning but at 1100 the Jap sent over his first fighter sweep of the new campaign, a flight of 30 or more Zeros. Fighter Command scrambled 28 additional fighters to meet this danger but the 16 Corsairs and 16 F4F's stopped the Jap, shooting down 16 of his attacking force.⁴⁶

The ensuing four hours were relatively quiet; by 1500 unloading of the transports had been completed and the various units were standing out in the Blanche Channel headed southeastward toward Guadalcanal, when a

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mixed force of some 50 Vals, torpedo-carrying Bettys, and Zero fighters was sighted coming in over the northwest corner of New Georgia Island. The Bettys circled the task group, concealing themselves against the land background, then swept in at minimum altitude and high speed to drop their torpedoes at 500-yard ranges. Bombers and escort were met by 32 Corsairs and 16 F4F's, plus a heavy concentration of AA fire from the surface units. One by one the Bettys went down, many jettisoning their torpedoes; before they could get away all but two were destroyed and those were soon shot down by the defending fighters. But they had scored a hit. McCawley took a torpedo amidships and the destroyer Farenholt was struck, though apparently by a dud.⁴⁷

The Jap was not yet done. At 1715 he was back again, this time with a motley collection of some 30 Vals, Rufes, and Daves, plane types which indicated that the enemy air commanders were dipping low in the barrel to continue the assaults. Eighteen planes of this force were shot down, raising the day's total to at least 101 Jap aircraft destroyed by defending fighters, exclusive of those destroyed by the AA gunners, and carrying the monthly total to 254 kills.⁴⁸ Of the total of 254, AAF planes had destroyed 71; P-38's claimed 17, P-39's 13, and P-40's 41, to which the RNZAF P-40's added another 15. Corsairs were high, scoring 90 kills, and not far behind stood the F4F's with 78 enemy planes to their credit. Once again the scales of attrition tipped heavily against the Jap; he had lost many multiplace planes with his fighters against a total Allied loss of 36 planes and 13 pilots for the month's operations.⁴⁹

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The first day's operations had a curious aspect. Four hours had elapsed between the initial sighting of the task force and the arrival of the first wave of attacking Japanese aircraft, which could mean only that the Jap was running his planes down from Rabaul. But as the campaign went into its second and third day it was evident that Japanese air commanders were prepared to pay this price in the attempt to save their Munda base.

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Meanwhile it rained, making the bivouac areas on Rendova a sea of thigh-deep mud; nevertheless it was essential that the air controllers establish themselves ashore as rapidly as possible. COMAIR New Georgia had brought ashore a radio truck equipped with SCR 299, enabling communications with Guadalcanal to be established about 1500, and the stand-by fighter director station emplaced its SCR 602 radar on a near-by hill. Presumably responsibility for the detection of enemy raids soon would pass to the shore station, but for the present the air was quiet. Late in the afternoon of the 30th six enemy planes came over Rendova, but they made no attempt to bomb or strafe nor were they intercepted by the fighter cover, which remained on station until 1820.

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By the morning of 1 July there was no doubt that the Jap was filling up Rabaul and his Solomons fields with fresh planes for strikes at the Rendova-New Georgia beaches. At 1015 the Zero-Val combination was back again for another try at the shipping, this time with an escort which included shiny new Hamps bearing strange squadron insignia indicating possible Army participation, but their pilots were described by the New

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Zealanders as poor. The effort cost the Jap 15 fighters and 9 dive bombers; but 9 Allied planes were lost that day, 3 of them P-40's of the 44th Fighter Squadron, although 4 of the pilots were recovered. The enemy had now paid out 125 planes in his attempts to check the landing operations; apparently he had underestimated the Allied ability to maintain such a continuous fighter cover 170 miles from CACTUS and 100 miles from the nearest base on the Russells. But his Bettys were "sitting ducks" in their torpedo attacks, no better than they were in the assaults against the ships at Tulagi in August and mid-November of 1942.

On the third day of the Rendova landings the Jap scored again. At 1201 COMAIRSOLS ordered Rendova's fighters to return to Guadalcanal where weather was closing in the strips. Ground commanders heard the order and protested vigorously to Fighter Command over their radios, since they realized the danger of their exposed position in the forward area; unfortunately the Japanese heard the debate too, and because they had in the air a bombing strike, the stage was set. They needed to wait only until the fighter cover was withdrawn.

Twenty-five minutes later it was necessary to shut down the portable SCR 602 radar, located on a near-by hill, which had afforded reasonably good detection over a range of 25 miles. The required oil change for the generator motor was only a routine task; within 10 minutes the set again would be scanning the air. But at 1330, the Jap came in. Hidden by a hill and a cloud bank, his 18 bombers were not even detected

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by the visual observation posts until they were directly overhead. Bombs splashed along the beaches where men were unloading LST's, making no attempt to protect themselves, and the casualties were heavy. Fires broke out in fuel and ration dumps, some tractors and guns were destroyed, while personnel losses ran to 30 killed and over 200 wounded. ⁵⁵

It was a sneak raid, and the attackers escaped scot free. But when they attempted to repeat it in the afternoon with a force of approximately 50 Zeros, they ran into the fighter cover which had come on station with eight planes at 1420. Seven Corsairs intercepted, downed 6 Zeros, and lost 3 of their number but recovered 2 pilots. ⁵⁶ There were no more such easy successes for the Jap. When he tried to break through the next day with a fighter sweep of 40 to 50 Zeros, 3 P-38's broke up the formation, shooting down 5 of the enemy, but 3 P-38's failed to return. ⁵⁷

This was the pattern of the air defense of Rendova, in which the fighters bore a very heavy burden. Normally the daily schedule sent 32 planes over Rendova at 0700; this strength was maintained until 1630, at which time 16 planes remained for the final half hour of the patrol. During the day some overlapping of patrols would occur, since each succeeding patrol relieved the one already on station by visual contact. Once on station, the fighters orbited the Rendova radar station (Vega) in a 10-mile circle, stacked up at various levels and shifting their altitudes to conserve oxygen. Later when they were called upon to cover strikes against Munda, the patrol shifted its orbiting area in order to be in a position to shield the strike force from enemy attacks. ⁵⁸

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To maintain this patrol with any margin 96 aircraft were necessary. This employment left only some 80 to 100 fighters to meet all other requirements. The Rendova patrol could and did furnish cover for most of the light bomber attacks on Munda and Vila, but it was inadequate to cover heavy strikes on these targets. ⁵⁹ The problem was complicated by the fact that from Blanche Channel to the nearest Russell strip was approximately 120 miles, and the distance down to the Lunga strips on Guadalcanal was another 60 miles. Although the saving of 60 miles was not great, it was Harmon's belief that the fighters' "tremendous burden" could not have ⁶⁰ been borne without the aid of the two strips on the Russells.

Weather, too, added to the difficulty of maintaining the Rendova patrol. One phase of the original plan called for neutralization of the enemy's Bougainville bases starting 30 June, but this was abandoned in the face of the "god-awful" weather which prevailed over Bougainville during the first few days of the landings. Up at Rabaul it was only slightly better, making it almost impossible to secure any photo coverage during the critical days immediately preceding D-day and on into the first week of July, but from New Guinea General Kenney was able to make a few strikes against the air installations around Rabaul town. On 26 June three B-17's put bombs on the Vunakanau runway, and on D-day 11 heavies hit the same strip. Other strikes followed during the first three days of July, but all this was more than could be done from the ⁶¹ South Pacific, where the weather insulated the Bougainville fields. On the 30th the scheduled daylight attacks on Kahili, Munda, and Vila, as well as the nightly harassments of Kahili by B-24's and the TBF

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antishipping patrols were nearly all canceled because of weather. Only one strike actually took place--that with 5 B-25's, 18 T30's, and 18 T30's against the ground AF positions and bivouac areas east of the strip late in the afternoon of 5-July. Up to 4 July it had been impossible to send so much as a single heavy-bomber strike up to Bourville, and even then when the weather cleared no fighters were available for escort. Ceiling over New Guinea remained consistently low to broken during the first five days, permitting the Jap to slip down unannounced and come in close before he could be detected. Had the Bourville bases been heavily damaged, it is highly probable that enemy reaction to the landings could have been greatly reduced. Even under the prevailing handicaps, General K. Iain found the results very encouraging, citing a loss by D plus 3 of 170 enemy aircraft to an Allied loss of 32. Yet he considered that the continuous air operations had put his fighters in a "bad way-- not from losses but from exhaustion."

Despite the heavy losses incurred on nearly every raid, bombers and fighters continued to come down from Bourville, necessitating constant vigilance during the daylight hours. On the 4th the fighter patrol received highly effective assistance from the ground AF elements on Newovi. At 1410 18 Hellcats escorted bombers from the east, while their 20 escorting Zeros turned south to engage 24 fighters on patrol some 10 miles south of the island. On close the bombers in close formation; one by one they fell to the 30-mm. guns of the AF batteries until 14 were down. Five more were destroyed by the air patrol and only one was able to escape,

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although three Zeros succeeded in strafing the beach. ⁶⁴

Ashore on Rendova heavy rains had turned all trails and bivouac areas into quagmires, but despite all difficulties by 7 July the SCR 270 radar went into operation for the first time, supplemented by additional sets at Segi Point and at Viru Harbor. The SCR 270 greatly increased the range of the local air warning system, although there still were blank sectors caused by the presence of adjacent mountainous islands, making it necessary on several occasions to employ fighter planes as "human radars"; these were spotted out on an orbit point for purposes of visual observation in areas where the radar was blanked out. ⁶⁵ The

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adequate number of fighters over troops and ships committed to the New Georgia operation. As the enemy forces eased up their attacks it was possible to reduce the fighter patrol from 32 to 24 planes, but even the latter figure completely tied up 96 aircraft and it still was necessary to hold back some fighters for the defense of the Russells and CACTUS. Then there were the pleas from the surface craft, for "every skipper who comes into the waters within reach of Guadalcanal immediately starts yelling for air protection," which he could not always have. If an offensive sweep to Kahili were in the offing, if the Rendova patrol and local defenses all were maintained, then there would be no fighters for the skippers and very often their requests were ignored because it was felt that the enemy was well occupied by the air units operating further up the Solomons.

General Twining already had indicated the nature of his problem, stressing the exhaustion of his fighters, and at the same time he had put in a plea for P-38 replacements. The goal was a full P-38 group. This was what Harmon asked for a few days later when he formally requested a P-38 group of 75 aircraft plus a 50 per cent reserve not later than 1 September. He outlined for General Arnold the nature of amphibious landings in the Solomons where it was necessary to maintain fighter cover as much as 200 miles ahead of existing bases. Then if the Jap bases were to be neutralized--and they were not for the Rendova landings--daylight counter-air-force missions would be mandatory, yet these could not be executed with minimum loss to the heavies unless

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adequate fighters were sent along. The situation called for more P-38's; Harmon had on hand 29 of them as of 9 July but he urged "maximum effort" be given to comply with the request for 75.⁷¹

There could be little questioning of the need, for the fighter loss rate had jumped sharply with the initiation of the New Georgia operation. In the period covering 1 to 28 June, an average strength of 58 AAF fighters on Guadalcanal had flown 2,994 hours with a loss (combat and operational) of 9 planes, during which time they had destroyed 60 enemy aircraft. Harmon contrasted with this record the score for the eight days extending over 29 June to 6 July, when an average of 76 fighters was assigned to Guadalcanal. Fifteen planes were lost in 1,512 flying hours, and over the week AAF pilots were credited with the destruction of 27.5 enemy aircraft. He admitted this figure of 27.5 was only a small portion of the total of approximately 172, but explained to General Arnold that the P-38's were used almost entirely for high cover and escort missions, which for the most part kept them out of combat. Similarly the P-39's seldom made contact with the enemy, since they were retained in large measure for local defense of the CACTUS and Russells areas.⁷² All these factors contributed to the inability to isolate the selected battlefields.

As in all similar instances, General Arnold had to weigh the request against the needs of other theaters. In this case the sole source of P-38's lay in the commitment to North Africa; accordingly he informed Harmon that the increasing requirements for P-38's and F-5's in all

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theaters would preclude diversion of any additional Lockheed fighters for the present, and reminded COMGENSOPAC that arrival of 17 then being prepared for shipment, plus 30 more on the July shipment,⁷³ should bring the total up to the desired level by 1 September. General Harmon often had been obliged to carry on with less than he felt necessary; now he would do it again.

Meanwhile the continuing enemy raids were unable to smash through the highly effective fighter defense. Over on Segi Point the new fighter field was being rushed to completion by Acorn 7, an experienced and well indoctrinated Seabee unit whose advance survey party had come ashore on 22 June with two companies of the 103d Infantry Regiment.⁷⁴ On D-day additional personnel were landed, together with adequate equipment, and immediately construction was pushed hard. Five days later G-2 reported that progress was excellent; within a short time the landing strip had been cleared and graded, two taxiways and several dispersal points were available, and areas were cleared for gun defense. So rapidly had this unit worked that by D plus 10 it was possible to report that the 3,300-foot strip was available for limited operations, and on the same day a fighter plane made a successful forced landing on the field. Harmon regarded the construction as a "splendid performance"; he felt that it illustrated a concept and appreciation of air operations radically different from that encountered upon his initial arrival in the theater in July of 1942.⁷⁵

The field at Segi was only 40 miles from Munda and presumably would go far toward relieving the heavy load placed upon the fighters. Unfortunately, the only land available lay across a small peninsula

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which limited the length of the strip; it was too short for safe use by P-39's, it was slippery when wet--it often was wet--and its approaches were blocked by wooded hills. To add to these handicaps, just at the time when the field was in most active use, stumps and logs were piled up at each end to a height of six or seven feet, thereby creating a physical and mental hazard for the P-39 pilots. The accident rate for Segi was high, and later in the campaign it became necessary to replace the P-39's based there with carrier-type planes; but the mistakes made in the initial construction were not repeated elsewhere, and despite the numerous accidents on the field, it is probable that Segi saved many a damaged plane which might not have been able to hold out for another 80 miles down to the Russells.

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COMGENSOPAC was pleased over the vigor and appreciation of air operations being demonstrated in the New Georgia campaign where Segi offered a refreshing contrast with the original pace of construction at Henderson Field. Now Harmon noted additional signs of progress. He took increasing satisfaction from the manner in which the Thirteenth Air Force was being integrated and employed as a unit in the scheme of operational control exercised by Admiral Fitch. Very soon in the future General Twining would replace Admiral Mitscher as COMAIRSOLS, "a most exacting and trying assignment," but one which for the first time would place an AAF commander in direct operational control of all the air units in the Solomons. The change was scheduled for approximately 25 July, and to meet it Harmon was attempting to bolster Twining's

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staff so that the rear echelon operating from Espiritu Santo would be able to carry on without distracting the Thirteenth Air Force commander from his new responsibilities as COMAIRSOLS.

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All this represented a decisive advance over the critical months of 1942. Whereas in the early days of the struggle for Guadalcanal the Jap had commanded the sea approaches to the island and all of the air except a small area around Henderson Field, now he was unable to achieve mastery of either element. Thus far in the New Georgia operation he had gained only slight success in his attempts to crush the fighter defenses. Now on the night of 5/6 July his Tokyo Express on its nightly run down from Bougainville was intercepted by a task force composed of light cruisers and destroyers under Rear Adm. Walden L. Ainsworth. In the Kula Gulf between Kolombangara and New Georgia Ainsworth's ships contacted the Express and in another one of those wild night actions which had come to characterize Solomons naval battles, American naval gunfire was traded with Japanese torpedoes.

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First reports were extremely optimistic; Halsey reported that at least eight enemy destroyers had been sunk. A later and more conservative assessment lowered this figure to two DD's definitely and one possibly sunk, but among the missing U. S. ships was

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the veteran Helena. One week later on the night of 12/13 July the same commander led another task group up the Slot where a few miles north-west of Kolombangara once again he drove off the Tokyo Express. Ainsworth's losses were the DD Gwin and heavy damage to St. Louis, Honolulu, and Leander; only the radar could indicate the Japanese losses, though it

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was reported on this basis that the action had cost the enemy a light
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cruiser and a destroyer.

The major point is that these clashes represented the surface counterpart of the air cover provided by Fighter Command; they were costly to Halsey but they achieved their purpose, which was to remove the threat to the Allied landings on the north coast of New Georgia. At the same time they prevented the enemy from continuing his use of the Kula Gulf route in supplying and reinforcing the garrisons at Vila and Munda. Henceforth, he would have to send his ships and barges clear around Vella Lavella to the west side of Kolombangara, concealing
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them in anchorages along the south coast of the latter island.

For a few days in the second week of July, the enemy reduced the scale of his daylight air assaults. On the 12th, 20 Zeros struck at
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Rendova, losing five plus a Sally. Next day they tried again, but over Visu Visu Point on New Georgia the 18 dive bombers and 10 Zeros were intercepted by 8 F4F's and 7 P-38's. The bombers jettisoned their
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bombs and ran; the Zeros fought and lost four of their number. Finally on the 15th the Jap made his major effort; not since 16 June had the enemy sent down such a powerful force. This time there were 27 bombers, mostly Bettys, covered by 40 to 50 Zekes and Hamps, among them a twin-engine fighter; but the 44 defending fighters were more than a match for the superior enemy force. No less than 15 of the medium bombers went down in the combat which raged northwest over Vella Lavella, and they were accompanied by 30 Zeros, or more than half the escort, at

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a total cost of 3 COMAIRSOLS fighters and pilots. This was a ratio of 15 to 1 in plane losses and nearly 40 to 1 in terms of personnel, a rate of attrition which must have been difficult for the Jap to sustain. Nevertheless, although Japanese air commanders seemed unable to learn not to bunch up their planes in combat, they showed no signs of inability to fill up the fighter pens at Kahili, Buka, and Rabaul. The scale of effort continued at 40 to 50 planes per attack, a strength made possible only by maintaining heavy forces at Rabaul. This procedure led to the belief that the onset of the monsoon season in Burma had caused the Jap to shift some of his air forces across the island steppingstones to the Solomons. He was to suffer heavy losses two days later, and more on the 18th, yet on the 19th photos indicated 70 fighters at Kahili. Perhaps the enemy was withdrawing his fighters from Hewak for reinforcement of Rabaul and the Solomons.

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Nevertheless, there was a suggestion that the Japanese were feeling the pressure of their lavish expenditure, for after the 15th, attempts to attack the New Georgia positions in frontal assault during daylight hours were virtually abandoned. That is not to say that the beaches and ships were left alone, for they were not. But it did signify that henceforth the enemy would use his fighters with less abandon, avoiding reckless destruction, and he would do all possible damage during the hours of darkness. Regularly and almost monotonously the ever-reliable coastwatcher up on Vella Lavella passed along his laconic report: "Hear plane bearing NE, course SE," which preceded so many air raids.

Thus there was no lack of Red Alerts on Rendova and New Georgia

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after 15 July. On the 16th for the second successive night the enemy maintained an air patrol of three to five aircraft between eastern Choiseul and Visu Visu Point, where it shuttled back and forth all night long. Other and larger flights showed on the radar screens, but often they would retire without attacking; even so they kept the area on the alert, as on 19 July when seven Conditions Red were set during the hours of darkness, or on 21/22 July when during the period from 0118 to 0455 there were only two brief intervals totaling 34 minutes when Condition Red was not in effect. ⁸⁹ And because of increased night bombing activity by Japanese float planes, it became necessary to stop the movement of small craft in the Rendova area. ⁹⁰ Guadalcanal too had its share of night alerts and attacks, but the sporadic bombings caused little or no material damage. ⁹¹

During the opening days of the campaign, weather had been on the side of the enemy. It had insulated his airfields from the heavy strikes planned against them, and it had helped to save some of his shipping from the attacks of prowling B-25's and TBF's. Fortunately the fighter defenses had shielded the beachheads from serious damage during the period when the Jap was left more or less free to operate at will, and the "magnificent fighter cover" was fully appreciated. ⁹² But the enemy's respite was short-lived.

Counter-air-force operations were most easily undertaken against the near-by installations of Vila and Munda and the seaplane haven over at Rekata Bay. For the most part this was the task of Strike Command,

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whose BF's and Dauntless dive bombers were able to fly against Vila on 1 July, as well as against Viru, Lambeti, and other points designated by the ground forces. Often these planes were joined by the B-25's, which hammered at the Munda installations.

93

Not until the 5th were the heavies able to reach the Buin area, and even then the nine B-24's dispatched against shipping found no targets, dropping their bombs on Ballale and Munda instead. Next day the airfields on Bougainville began to feel the weight of the heavy bombers. Seven B-24's hit the runway and revetments at Buka, 13 more (out of a flight of 19) struck at the Kahili strips and dispersal areas, 9 B-17's bombed Ballale, and henceforth the B-17's and B-24's were over the Bougainville air installations with growing strength and frequency, both by day and by night. Japanese engineers now would have to contend with long-delayed-action bombs imbedded in their runways, as well as with the fragmentation clusters which shattered Zeros and Bettys parked in unprotected areas.

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B-25's now had entered the battle, and the training which their crews had received in minimum-altitude tactics began to pay substantial dividends. In the week prior to the invasion, half of the so-called armed searches up to the Shortland area and off the coasts of Choiseul had been turned back due to weather, but by the 2d the planes were out and up the Slot. On that day four B-25C's of the 390th Squadron caught a small 220-foot AK at Beaugard Point near Biaroko Harbor on New Georgia; from 75-foot altitude they put eight 500-lb. bombs on the

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vessel, promptly sinking it. Three days later they caught a DD near the beach off the Kokovi River, Kolombangara, and put three more 500-lb. GP bombs in it. ⁹⁵ All this was gratifying to General Harmon. The veteran 69th and 70th Squadrons he found to be "doing great, eager, and well-trained"; and the B-25's in general were "doing fine," but there was considerable interference with the employment of these planes on the part of the Navy, which had "given us a headache over the B-25's--the same old story you know so well." ⁹⁶ Other than the problem of operational control, there was the perennial one of adequate supply. Units of the 42d Group reported that several of the B-25's which otherwise would be fit for immediate combat were grounded for long periods of time for lack of spare tires and tubes to replace those damaged by stray enemy shots. ⁹⁷ Thus there was an appeal for self-sealing tubes for the main landing gear.

But despite these handicaps the B-25's continued to perform well. On the 14th a search in the Kolombangara and Vella Lavella areas by seven B-25G's of the 390th Squadron with 18 P-40's discovered a 1,500-ton AK at Baga Island off Kolombangara and a heavy strafing left it afire; a second small vessel was sunk by strafing. Later in the day four more planes put four 500-lb. GP bombs on two more small cargo vessels from 100 feet, sinking them both. Next day the Mitchells were out again, four of them covered by 12 F4U's, and off the west tip of Baga Island a small AK was bombed from 100 feet. It sank. Another located a few minutes later ⁹⁸ off the north tip of the same island was left burning with its bow on a reef.

It was apparent that the long hours of training which Colonel Wilson had ordered down at Fiji now were yielding good harvest. The B-25's did

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much more than execute shipping strikes; in fact, the majority of their missions were bombing and strafing attacks on ground targets on New Georgia or Kolombangara, with an occasional mission up to Ballale or over to Rekata Bay. But when surface targets offered themselves, the 42d Group was ready not only to hit them, but to strike with such accuracy that the vessels either sank immediately, or were left badly damaged and afire.

Most of the attacks were against small cargo vessels and barges; infrequently an enemy task force came within range. One did on the night of 19/20 July. A Black Cat picked it up at 0030 off the Vella Gulf and it was a powerful force; three light cruisers, five DD's, and three transports were reported.⁹⁹ Here was a rich target if the planes could get at it, and during the night and early morning hours B-17's, B-25's, TBF's, and SBD's all were set to strike. From 150 feet six TBF's put a 2,000-lb. bomb on a DD which blew up and sank; they damaged another DD and a light cruiser, losing two of their own number. A Black Cat scored two damaging hits on two of the transports. Between 0330 and 0445 in successive attacks eight B-25's of the 69th swept over the formation at 50 feet, strafing as they attacked, and scoring five direct hits on their targets with 500-lb. GP bombs. Two more destroyers were hit, one of them sinking. At 0720 eight more B-25's of the 390th Squadron made their attack, and four more direct hits were counted. The B-25's together claimed a CL and a destroyer, plus another DD hit and probably sunk; and the Jap could count as damaged at least three of his surviving DD's and one transport.¹⁰⁰

This was an impressive air victory over the Jap. When TBF and B-25

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records were added together, the result fell only slightly below the achievements of Admiral Ainsworth's task forces in the two recent night naval actions, and the losses were far less. Only two B-25's and two TBF's failed to return.
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Destruction of one of the 69th Squadron's B-25's could be charged to the AA fire of three Japanese destroyers, though the entire crew was rescued,
102 but the other plane's loss was a less happy incident. At 0710 four of the 390th's planes were returning from the Vella Gulf when they sighted three U. S. Navy PT boats near the southwest tip of Wana Wana. The PT's were moving slowly, steering straight courses and their crews were waving their arms, but because of a lamentable failure by the surface craft to answer the planes' challenges, or by the aircrews to recognize friendly PT's, a small-scale air-naval action developed. B-25's attacked with bombs and guns, sinking one boat, damaging the other two, and wounding 10 men. For their part the surface craft shot down the lead plane, with the loss of pilot, co-pilot, and navigator. The incident was the cause for appointment of a Board of Investigation and the Navy requested that immediate steps be taken to intensify instruction in recognition of all friendly surface craft.
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While medium and light bombers continued to hold a threat over the enemy's shipping and the Tokyo Express during ^{the} enemy's attempts to keep alive the garrisons at Vila and on New Georgia, Strike Command was now able to throw far heavier forces against the harbor areas at the south end of Bougainville. In July two major efforts were carried out, one on the 17th and one on the 18th, of which the first was the more successful.

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For several days prior to the 17th the heavy bombers had been hitting the Kahili, Ballale, and Buks areas; 36 were up on the night of the 13th and three nights later 31 dropped 40 tons of frag clusters on Kahili, where the enemy's night fighters were becoming troublesome. ¹⁰⁴ Then at 0925 on the morning of the 17th, Strike Command sent a carefully planned and coordinated strike against the shipping off Buin. It was a powerful force for the Solomons air units: 36 SED's, 35 TBF's, and 7 B-24's were airborne, all escorted by 114 fighters. The B-24's struck first, 7 of them from 21,000 feet, below them off Buin lay 6 or 8 AK's and approximately 10 destroyers, while over in Tonolei Harbor was a task force of 6 more ¹⁰⁵ ships. The bomber's aircrews saw two of their 500-lb. bombs score direct hits on two AK's, and they saw the Jap taken by surprise as his Zeros struggled to take off from Kahili to protect the ships from the assault of the dive and torpedo bombers.

The defenders were too late. If they possessed radar, it was not sufficiently accurate to estimate the number of the attacking planes and they were unable to get their maximum force into the air. ¹⁰⁶ At altitudes ranging from 300 to 7,000 feet the Marine Corsairs picked off many of the Zeros as they struggled up from Kahili. Out over the harbor SBD's and Avengers selected their targets and made their runs, and when the action ended the Jap had taken a heavy loss. In the air, the 10-minute engagement had cost the enemy at least 44 Zeros and four float planes; in the harbor the light bombers had sunk a CL or DL, two destroyers, a PC, two cargo vessels, and an oiler, and in addition one AK had been beached. It was

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a big haul, whose cost was five Allied planes, two of them P-38's of
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the 339th Fighter Squadron.

Next day the bombers were back again to hit the ships; 18 TBF's
with 17 EBD's came over Kahili at 0930, accompanied by 21 B-24's and
the most powerful escort yet sent north. No less than 134 fighters
were dispatched, an operation which necessitated removing some from
108
the Rendova patrol. Visibility was limited above Kahili, but out
over the harbor it was somewhat better and the bombardiers could see
their shipping targets. Despite the poor visibility at the airfield,
bombs from 15 planes struck the Kahili runway and points among the
revetments; six other planes then swung south to Ballale where they
scored hits on a large AK, estimated at 8,000 to 10,000 tons, leaving
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it afire and abandoned by its crew. Meanwhile the low-level bombers
went in after their ships; they sank 1 cargo vessel, scored hits on 2
DD's and another AK, and accomplished all this while their fighter
escort was knocking down 21 of the intercepting Zeros. That day the
cost was higher; one TBF, six F4F's, and three F4U's failed to return,
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although one pilot was rescued, but since these engagements occurred
over the enemy's home fields nearly 340 miles from Guadalcanal, they
were the more remarkable.

Buin was not yet untenable for the Jap surface units, but it had
become highly dangerous, and it was the task of COMAIRSOLS to keep it
so. Thus far there was no indication of exhaustion of the enemy's
supply of planes; despite the very considerable losses in defending
the ships in the two day assaults of the 17th and 18th, 70 planes rested
on Kahili the next day, while photos taken on the 24th indicated 163

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aircraft on the enemy's Solomons fields, 109 of them at Kahili alone. ¹¹¹

The photos showed something else. Under construction at Bonis Plantation on the south side of Buka Passage was a possible landing strip; another one could be detected at Tenekow Plantation below Numa Numa over on the east coast of Bougainville. ¹¹² These afforded good evidence of determination to resist, and over at Kahili there was more, for now the night fighters were becoming aggressive and troublesome. Early on the morning of the 17th, Zero night fighters shot down a Navy Liberator; on the night of 19/20 July seven B-24's exchanged fire with enemy fighters, one twin-engine aircraft shot down a bomber, and one fighter followed the heavies all the way down to the Russells. ¹¹³

As in the early days of the campaign, shipping remained a most difficult target for the heavy bombers to hit. Often they missed but at times they scored. On the 22d there were ships at the south end of Bougainville and the bombers tried to get them. A strong force of 18 TBF's, 16 SBD's, and 7 B-24's covered by 120 fighters attacked an enemy task group in Bougainville Strait east of Cape Friendship; from 20,000 feet the heavies put one 500-lb. bomb directly amidships on a destroyer, and from lower altitudes the light bombers sank a seaplane tender. ¹¹⁴ To add to the enemy's discomfort, five of his Zeros were shot down, but three of the Navy's F4F's (VF-21) were lost. Subsequent B-24 strikes that day on the warships at Buin failed to hit, though ¹¹⁵ there were some very close misses scored later in the afternoon.

All this meant that the Buin area had about reached its end as a safe haven for any of the enemy's surface units. Three times in one

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week striking forces involving over 150 planes had been sent against the shipping off Buin and the lesson could hardly be overlooked by the Japanese commanders. ¹¹⁶ By the end of the month the amount of shipping here was substantially lower than the average of previous months. Nevertheless, the Jap continued to send down his ships, smaller ones now, and COMAIRSOLS continued to sink them. Unfortunately, the weather interfered from time to time, as it did on the 29th when it caused cancellation of a coordinated strike of 220 planes, but from mid-July forward the local commanders at Buin could expect a heavy assault at any time favorable weather conditions and the presence of surface targets happened to coincide.

The scale had tipped sharply against the enemy. His daylight retaliation against Rendova was now almost negligible. On the 21st, 40 to 50 Zeros covered 15 dive bombers in the first attempt by this type of plane to break through to the Rendova shipping; they succeeded in putting a bomb into an LST, but lost 2 of their escort. The raid had come at 1710, planned apparently to take advantage of the daily departure at 1700 of the Rendova fighter patrol. To meet this danger a squadron of fighters was moved over to Segi, where it could prevent ¹¹⁷ these twilight attacks which had been repeated on several occasions. Four days later on the 25th the Jap tried one more daylight strike, sending down 30 to 40 Vals with 30 Zeros to strafe the beaches, but the Rendova fighters intercepted, knocking down 8 of the escort and forcing ¹¹⁸ the Vals to jettison their bombs. Then the enemy subsided for the balance of the month except for night harassments.

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In their attempts to intercept the formations of B-17's and B-24's, Zeros continued to operate from Kahili despite almost daily attacks upon the area; and on the last day of the month 30 Hamps came down to Munda to jump the RNZAF fighter escort of an SBD-TBF strike on Munda. ¹¹⁹ But the old aggressiveness was missing. The Jap no longer came down to drive his Bettys and Vals against the ships feeding the New Georgia offensive. However, the Kahili night fighters showed steady improvement, having adopted a system very similar to that employed by the night-flying P-38's on Guadalcanal, and the searchlight operators were also more skilled. Early on the 27th the Japanese night fighters damaged one B-17 out of a formation of six, then exploded another which apparently had revealed its position by the glow of the superchargers. This marked their third kill of the month. PT crews were being heckled increasingly by float planes which attacked with flares, bombs, and strafing runs, and on the night of 26 July the ships unloading at Rekata Bay were provided with air cover. ¹²⁰ Then too the new fields were showing progress, particularly at Bonis, while up at Rabaul 125 fighters were available to shift down to Kahili when needed. ¹²¹ The enemy, despite his losses, was evidently preparing to make a stout resistance on Bougainville..

The command of COMAIRSOLS at Guadalcanal passed from Adm. Marc Mitscher to General Twining on 25 July, ¹²² a day which marked a milestone in the record of the Solomons campaign. COMAIRSOLS had come a long way since the early days in the Solomons when each of the services was anxious to maintain its own prerogative, when the AAF commanders struggled to

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attain some measure of operational control over their own aircraft, and when the file of cabled requests for additional AAF planes bulked very large at the end of each month. The Thirteenth Air Force still was a training and administrative air force which had to forego all operational control over its own aircraft in the forward area where the cutting edge of the South Pacific air units was in daily contact with the enemy. But Air Command, Solomons, into which the Thirteenth fed its men and its planes, had done well. Since 2 April the air strength at the disposal of COMAIRSOLS had more than doubled, moving up from 235 to 539 planes; and the daily average of fighter planes assigned had risen from 108 during the month of February to 281 during July.¹²³ In the 26-day period beginning with the invasion of Rendova on 30 June, Fighter Command alone claimed 316 enemy planes at a cost of 71 aircraft and 40 Allied pilots.¹²⁴ By pressing his attacks the enemy had suffered keenly from the weakness of his equipment, particularly the lack of armor and self-sealing fuel tanks; repeatedly Allied pilots reported both Zeros and Bettys as "exploding" and "disintegrating" when hit by .50-cal. machine-gun fire. And Japanese pilot skill continued to vary widely. Some pilots were capable, some were not, but for the most part their gunnery was poor.¹²⁵

Now for the first time in the year of Solomons operations, the air units were to be commanded by an AAF general. Twining brought with him his own staff--70 officers and 200 men from all branches of the service--and behind him at Espiritu Santo he left Brig. Gen. Ray L. Owens as Deputy Air Force Commander of the Thirteenth. His chief of staff was

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Capt. Charles F. Coe, USN, and his Strike Command was led by Col. David F. O'Neill, USMC; but both Fighter Command and Bomber Command of COMAIRSOLS went to AF officers. The former was now under Brig. Gen. Dean C. Strother, the latter under Col. William A. Matheny, both of whom retained their respective commands within the Thirteenth Air Force. Twining's new command, while not exhausted, was "pretty well shot," particularly with respect to its fighters. The operations of the past 26 days had placed a very heavy drain upon the fighter squadrons and detachments, though the new COMAIRSOLS expected this situation to improve within a month.

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Immediately he began to move the P-38's back to a training area, retaining only a few as night fighters and planning to build up a fresh P-38 organization in the rear before assigning it to combat, for the P-38, while the "best of fighters, is just another airplane if not properly handled." The unit would return to the forward area by 1 September. Meanwhile he found the performance of the heavies and the mediums gratifying, although there remained the problem of congestion in the forward area. Recommended improvements had not yet been made; the airfields on Guadalcanal left "much to be desired"; the second bomber strip at Carney was still under construction and would not be ready for several weeks. Nevertheless, the air units now engaged in the struggle for New Georgia faced the Jap with greater strength than ever before. By the last day of July they had been in combat with the enemy for one year, during which time they had destroyed 1,802 aircraft, or an average of approximately 150 per month. The July record alone had reached 207.

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For the balance of the year the average of 150 would be exceeded, but COMBATS would need all his strength; the enemy as yet showed few signs of abandoning the field without a bitter struggle.

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Chapter IV

DEVELOPMENT OF MUNDA AND BARAKOMA

During the month of July the primary function of the fighters was to shield ground and surface forces in their assault upon the Munda air strip, while the bombers attempted to isolate the Central Solomons from the Bougainville supply points. The campaign had begun auspiciously; landings on Rendova had gone reasonably smoothly, encountering only weak resistance on the beaches, and in the air the enemy had been unable to check the operation. Simultaneously other landings were accomplished at Oloana Bay, in the Wickham Anchorage area, but some resistance developed here after the troops were ashore, and it was not until 3 July that the major objectives were secured.¹ The landing at Viru was delayed one day beyond the time originally planned due to the inability of the advance unit to make its way overland from Segi Point as scheduled, but by 1 July the force arrived and additional troops went ashore.² On the night of 4/5 July, after some delay, the landing at Rice Anchorage was accomplished under cover of a naval bombardment by CL's and destroyers, and by the 5th this force under Col. Henry B. Liversedge was ready to advance south on the Bairoko-Enogai area. Seizure of this point would prevent the enemy garrison from receiving reinforcements from near-by Kolombangara.³

These forces represented the flanking movements. In the planning stage it had been determined that if the enemy did not react too strongly

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to these minor landings, it would be possible to push ahead with the assault upon Munda. The enemy had not reacted; accordingly, authorization was given to Admiral Turner and General Hester to proceed against Munda.⁴ On 2 July the 43d Division had received its orders to proceed; during the hours of darkness on the next morning, landing craft from the Rendova boat pool carried leading elements of the 43d Infantry Division across the channel from Rendova to the Larana Beach, which lay behind Baralou and Sasavele islands some six miles east of Munda on New Georgia. No opposition was met although some difficulties slowed the landings. Combat patrols quickly took up their positions ashore, but made no contact with the enemy until 6 July when they reached the Barike River, which became the line of departure for the advance.⁵ By the 8th all Rendova artillery was in position ready for the attack, as were the 172d and 169th Regiments over on New Georgia. Viru Harbor defenses were established and 90-mm. AA was in position; now the task was to drive west and south to Munda Point.⁶

At dawn on the 9th of July the 43d Division opened its attack on a 1,300-yard front along the Barike River, accompanied by a heavy naval bombardment of the Munda Point area. The advance on the airfield had begun. At Munda the estimated 4,000 enemy troops now faced a large force to their east along the Barike, another on Rendova, and a third under Colonel Liversedge consisting of three battalions coming down from the north to cut the line of retreat over the trail leading from Munda Point to Bairoko. Already by the 9th Colonel Liversedge could report that the Enogai Inlet area had been secured.⁷ Thus far it was

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reasonable to assume that the schedule could be maintained; the original plan had anticipated that the entire New Georgia group could be wrested from the enemy within a 30-day period.

Unfortunately neither the Jap nor the terrain permitted realization of these sanguine hopes. Here on Munda the enemy enjoyed shorter lines of supply than he had on Guadalcanal; his strong Bougainville bases were closer, his naval forces were at hand, and he had wasted no time in preparing the ground defense. He had organized an ingenious and thorough defense system based upon numerous mutually supporting pill-boxes and log dugouts, all well concealed and well constructed. These he had scattered along the coast from Bibolo Hill, immediately north of the air strip, down to Laiana and inland for a distance of approximately 1,800 to 2,000 yards, spacing many of them at 10-yard intervals. Then as the campaign progressed it became apparent that the military tactics of the Jap had improved over that met on Guadalcanal. The enemy was making extensive and intelligent use of his defensive weapons-- flame throwers, automatic weapons, and antitank guns--leading General Harmon to conclude that the Jap was conducting "a much smarter, determined and aggressive defense than he did on Guadalcanal." The defenders were physically fit, well fed, and well equipped, and they seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of ammunition. They even appeared to be able to push through some reinforcements during the early days of the battle; the Tokyo Express made a few shipments and there was evidence that reinforcements had been landed on the night the Helena

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was sunk in the Kula Gulf. If there was a weakness it appeared to lie in artillery; the Jap was deficient in this arm and made rather poor use of what he did have, but he lacked nothing in stubbornness and willingness to die rather than surrender.

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The terrain of New Georgia over which operations were being conducted was a powerful ally of the enemy. It was characterized by dense jungle with thick, almost impenetrable undergrowth and low ridge lines, and it possessed no well-defined ridges or landmarks, nor any open country such as exists on the north coast of Guadalcanal. The net result for the ground forces was jungle warfare of a type even more vicious than that encountered on Guadalcanal; here freedom to maneuver was severely restricted, inhibiting mutual support in the attacks, and it was difficult to derive full advantage from the artillery where visibility often was limited to a few feet. All these factors hampered the air forces in their attempts to operate closely with the painful advance of the ground forces.

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The original air plan for the operation had anticipated the need for direct air support, placing operational control of all support missions with COMAIR New Georgia, and establishing air liaison parties with the various forces, but as the battle progressed, it was discovered that consistent close support of ground troops was impracticable.

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The jungle simply did not permit it; denseness of growth made the location of suitable targets impossible until friendly troops were too close to the prospective target for safety. This was not the open warfare of the flat lands of western Europe where in good weather the

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pilots of the tactical air forces could view miles of enemy armor snaking along below them. This was New Georgia where the regiments painfully inched their way forward through the jungle, frequently under extremely heavy mortar and machine-gun fire coming from positions they could not detect, and where pilots overhead could see neither friend
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nor enemy.

The result was quite different from the experience on Guadalcanal, where the P-39's had been so successfully employed with the ground units. Here when the day's advance--a good day's advance--might total 200 or 300 yards, it was not practical to withdraw sufficiently to use close air attacks. It was difficult for the air liaison parties on the ground to designate targets, just as it was almost impossible for the air observers in their spotter planes to locate the enemy's positions; for example, over the dense jungle and the covered trails there was not a single instance during the operation when movement of enemy troops was
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reported by the aerial observers.

Part of the difficulty arose from the scarcity of reliable ground maps. The standard for the operation was a gridded aerial mosaic, which included no detail other than the coastline, and in reading it frequently the troops were unable to locate their own position on the map--much less that of the enemy. Target designation by the use of smoke shells was tried and it worked quite well, but success of this method was dependent upon close timing and upon the maintenance of reliable radio communications between air and ground units, which was lacking. In face of these

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problems it was necessary to employ the bombers primarily against those points which were too large to permit concealment, such as bivouac areas and supply dumps, or against known artillery positions. These represented targets which were well clear of friendly troops and which were, whenever possible, selected a day in advance to allow time for proper briefing of the air units involved. ¹⁷ For the attacks upon the New Georgia targets, Strike Command furnished TBF's and SBD's, the former carrying 2,000-lb. "daisy cutters" and the latter a similar type of 1,000-lb. bomb, both equipped with instantaneous fuzes, but frequently ¹⁸ these light bombers were joined by the heavies and by the B-25's.

As the twin drives pushed toward Munda strip, it was found that their progress was slow and enemy resistance more stubborn than had been expected. To the north Colonel Liversedge's battalions on the 9th had taken Enogai with the help of the SBD's and TBF's on the 6th and the SBD's three days later. ¹⁹ But thereafter this force was unable to interrupt completely the Jap's line of communications, neither denying him reinforcements nor preventing his withdrawal. At the same time the forces advancing westward were making slow progress in the face of heavy resistance, constant nightly infiltration, and harassment; by the 12th the 169th Infantry was unable to advance further and the 172d, which had disengaged from the main attack, turning south through the mangroves to establish another beachhead at Laiana, was without food or water or ²⁰ means of evacuation.

The operation was slow, too slow to please Halsey, and on 13 July he orally directed General Harmon to assume full charge of and respon-

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sibility for ground operations, and to take whatever steps were deemed necessary to facilitate capture of the airfield. Harmon at once proceeded to New Georgia, where on the 15th he relieved General Hester from command of ground forces and gave to Maj. Gen. O. W. Griswold, Commanding General, XIV Corps, command of all forces on New Georgia. From this point forward, the operation progressed more favorably, though it continued at a slow pace.

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With the help of the light bombers, the ground units slowly forged ahead toward the strip. General Harmon had found it necessary to call upon elements of the 37th Division and of the 25th, waiting in reserve back on Guadalcanal. The former he committed on the 18th, the latter on the 22d, and from this point forward the attack was pressed vigorously. Already on the 16th the 169th had pushed to a point where it could see the coveted strip, but the advance at no time was rapid. Whenever possible the ground units were supported by air attacks, most of them delivered by the Marines' light bombers, though the B-25's participated frequently. Many of these missions were called for by Colonel Liversedge advancing on Bairoko; when this force was obliged to fall back after attacking superior forces in the Bairoko area, the Marine colonel called for help from the air. In response six waves of light and medium bombers, among them 22 B-25's, put 133 tons of bombs in the area and thoroughly strafed surface craft and land positions. This type of activity continued on almost a daily schedule with the immediate Munda area absorbing increasingly heavy bomb loads as the ground units slowly

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closed in on the field.

Finally, on 25 July came the jump-off for the final push on the Munda strip. It was carefully coordinated with a naval bombardment by seven destroyers which opened fire at 0609 and continued until 0644,²⁵ and with the heaviest air bombardment yet used in the South Pacific. The principal targets were Bibolo Hill, just north of the strip, and other points north of Lambeti Plantation. Three target areas were designated, covering less than one-half square mile, and in the period of little over a half hour a force of 171 light, medium, and heavy bombers dropped more than 145 tons of bombs into the area. Later in the afternoon 10 more B-24's hit Bibolo from 7,500 to 8,000 feet to²⁶ add to the morning's destruction.

On the ground the day's advance netted from 200 to 500 yards all along the line, but progress was slow everywhere; the Jap apparently was determined to exact the highest possible price as he faced the 43d Division approaching from the east and the 37th driving in toward the coast north of the field. By 1 August the 43d had reached the outer taxiways of Munda Field and stood at the eastern peak of Bibolo Hill on the right, yet even with this success, General Harmon advised COMSOPAC that it was too early to anticipate when Munda would fall or²⁷ how long it would take to evict the Jap from all of New Georgia. The capture of Bibolo Hill on 2/3 August left only Kokengolo Hill in the center of the airfield area in enemy hands by the evening of the 4th.

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Finally on the 5th, less than nine months after the Japanese construction force had landed on 21 November 1942, Munda Field was taken and by 1500 all organized resistance around the strip had ceased. Now the task was to rush the field into a condition suitable for operation by the planes and crews which had aided in its capture, for possession of Munda brought all the Solomons bases except Rabaul within range of the light bombers and fighters. It was a sharp portent of the growing air strength of COMAIRSOLS; the Jap had been overcome only 120 nautical miles from his strong bases at Kahili and Ballale, whereas Allied aircraft had worked from their major bases at CACTUS, 180 miles southwest, or from the strips in the Russells, 120 miles distant.

There still remained a pocket of enemy resistance at Bairoko Harbor, and two battalions of the 25th Division moved on the area from the south and southeast. On 25 August they occupied the east bank of the harbor without meeting any opposition; the Jap had evacuated to Arundel and Kolombangara.

The air phase of the operation had been of greater magnitude than ever was possible in the Guadalcanal operation. In the 37-day campaign, air units reported the destruction of a total of 358 enemy aircraft, incurring a loss to themselves of 71 fighters and 22 bombers of all types. Fighter cover had been excellent and at no time had the Jap been able to assist his own troops with daylight air strikes, although he did continue to employ his planes at night in annoying harassment. During the period COMAIR New Georgia had requested 44 strikes, 27 of them directed at the Munda area, of which 5 were not executed; the air liaison parties had called for 7 more, of which 6 were approved and passed

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by COMAIF New Georgia but 3 of these were not executed.³² No less than 1,833 bomber sorties had been flown by planes of all services in executing the requests of COMAIF New Georgia, the great majority of them (1,649) by the light bombers of the Marines, and this figure was exclusive of the missions ordered directly by COMAIF-SOLS against similar targets.³³

The heavies continued to hit at Kahili throughout the campaign; on 1 August, 21 B-24's in a coordinated strike with 18 TBF's, 11 SBD's, and 87 fighters placed their bombs on the Kahili strip, destroying 5 or 6 planes and starting large fires, while the light bombers were sinking an AK and 8 barges.³⁴ During the final week of the offensive, enemy fighters and dive bombers continued in their attempts to damage the ships off Rendova, or to intercept the bombers striking at Munda positions. But all their efforts were ineffectual, although on the afternoon of the 1st one dive bomber crashed directly into a group of moored PT boats.³⁵ On three occasions fighters came down over New Georgia hoping to intercept a retiring Allied force: on 31 July, 30 Hamps succeeded in getting 2 RNZAF P-40's without loss to themselves; the next day AAF P-40's traded 1 plane for a Zero; then on the 4th a series of running fights with Zekes cost the Jap 3 aircraft lost to Corsairs, and 8 more shot down by 10 AAF P-40's, with Lt. L. B. Shuler personally accounting for 4.³⁶

Throughout the New Georgia phase air reinforcements continued to stream into Rabaul. By 2 August the first photos taken of the Rabaul fields since 25 June showed a full complement of 260 planes; two days

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later 79 fighters and 14 bombers were on Kahili, indicating that thus far the enemy had been able to absorb his very heavy losses. But his forces could be caught on the ground or water, as the Marines demonstrated; seven float planes were burned on the morning of 4 August when 16 F4U's heavily strafed the Shortland-Poporang area.³⁷

Opinion as to the effectiveness of the air effort was divided. Even before Munda was taken, General Harmon reported that the air forces had contributed "in large measure" to the operation's success, and he recognized the splendid contribution of the fighter cover.³⁸ But the terrain itself had worked against close employment of the air weapon, and the Jap once more had demonstrated his ability to absorb tremendous punishment. Adequate aerial photos had not been made available, several days had elapsed before any aerial coverage could be obtained, and when the negatives finally arrived, in many instances the area desired had not been covered. Colonel Liversedge had requested coverage of the area from Bairoko Harbor east to Enogai Inlet but the prints delivered to him were of another section. After the enemy had evacuated Bairoko, an examination of the ground clearly indicated that bombing had been concentrated on too small an area, and it was believed that had stereo pairs been made of both sides of the harbor from a 1,000-foot altitude, much enemy activity and many installations might have been located. The 25th Division had learned the value of stereo pairs in the Guadalcanal campaign, where they were regarded as of "extreme importance to the units commanders," but these were not available on New Georgia.³⁹

Those responsible for the provision of close support for the ground

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troops were not entirely content with the results achieved, despite the handicap furnished by the terrain. The operations officer of Strike Command felt that the commander of the ground troops lacked "sufficient appreciation of what the air could do for him," and since the task force orders were written up in such a way that missions could not be dispatched unless specifically called for, on "many days a lot of good sound air power sat idle." And when the requests finally came through, the targets were from 1,000 to 2,000 yards from the lines.⁴⁰

It was apparent also that the heavy attack on the enemy positions at Bairoko prior to the assault by the Liversedge force had failed either to dislodge them or disrupt the Japanese sufficiently to make the attack successful.⁴¹ Without the enemy's records it was difficult to measure accurately the effect of the air effort at Munda, particularly the effect upon his ground units. But it was possible to gain a reasonably close check on Zeros and Bettys which fell burning into the sea, and upon the ships and barges which the B-25's and light bombers sank at Webster Cove, at Hamberi, out in the Kula Gulf, or up at Kahili.⁴² It proved impossible to cut off New Georgia completely from the enemy's adjacent bases, and the Jap was able to evacuate a number of his troops from Bairoko. Nor were the invaders ever able to stop the nightly harassing by light bombers, an activity which constituted what possibly was the most effective Japanese air operation, and it was particularly troublesome in the Enogai area where almost nightly the float planes from Faisi or Vila dropped light antipersonnel bombs, inflicting a number of casualties.⁴³

For the first time in the Solomons campaign the air transports took an active part in the battle. A few drops had been made in the latter

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stages of the Guadalcanal offensive, but they had been improvised on the spot; this time the necessity for providing air drops had been foreseen and was indicated in the air operations plan. ⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the ground forces were informed that air transport should be used sparingly, and should be regarded only as an emergency supply method in the absence of all other channels of communication, since it was believed during the early stages of the campaign that some routes for air supply had been made due to its convenience and reliability, rather than necessity. ⁴⁵

Real need for air supply quickly arose as the 130th and 172d Infantry Regiments dug up along the Marike River area, where deep swamps and very heavy jungle made progress extremely slow; men were exhausted as a result of hand-carrying supplies for distances of 1,000 to 2,000 yards through the jungle and in one battalion more than one-half of the effective strength was assigned for excavation and supply. The 172d Infantry Regiment had dispersed itself from its main objective on the 12th and had turned south through the swampy woods to secure the beachhead near Loiana, and here for two days it subsisted without food or water or means of evacuation. Air drops were made to both the 130th and 172d, but pilots of the C-7's reported that on the second drop of the 16th they were unable to see the ground units.

The major problem was to secure an adequate supply of parachutes and containers and to drop them within reach of friendly troops. Some of the materials went to the Japs, some hung beyond recovery in the tall trees, and on 20 July it became necessary to notify the ground units to recover all possible parachutes and containers after the air drops, so scarce was

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the supply of these items. By the 16th more than 60 tons of supplies, including ammunition and water, had been dropped, about 50 per cent going to the Northern force, the rest to the battalions east of Munda. ⁴⁷

The South Pacific Combat Air Transport (SCAT) organization provided the planes for the air drops. On 24 July two C-47's of the 13th Troop Carrier Squadron were assigned for detached service at Guadalcanal, where their mission was to fly vital supplies up to the Pussells and to Segi, as well as to make air drops to isolated troop units where needed. ⁴⁸

During the battle for the Munda strip it was not possible for the SCAT planes to carry out air evacuation. SCAT's transports began their operations from Munda 10 days after the strip was taken, but during the campaign it was necessary to carry casualties down to Guadalcanal on LST's or PBX's. ⁴⁹ Over on the north side of Munda the wounded of Colonel Liversedge's force were picked up by PBX's, although the first time this was done it was necessary to use rubber boats to carry the men out to the planes. Before this slow and awkward method of loading could be completed, the protective fighter cover had exhausted its gas supply, and its departure left the PBX's sitting on the water loaded with patients. Jap fighters immediately came in to strafe, but fortunately they achieved no success. ⁵⁰

Supply of the ground troops during the Bairoko phase was even more difficult than during the Munda fighting. Lack of roads and the impassable mud made it extremely difficult to supply the 161st Regimental Combat Team of the 25th Division which relied upon hand carry and air transport for a period of 10 days while it was moving toward Bairoko. ⁵¹ Eight drops were

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made to the three battalions, which regarded them as "very effective." Chief obstacles were the tall 100-to 150-foot trees which made difficult the discovery of the chutes and even more difficult their recovery. An additional problem arose "due to air corps inability to drop on the day scheduled," but despite all handicaps, an average recovery of 50 per cent was accomplished. The supply of parachutes was limited, necessitating dropping of some supplies with nothing to break the fall; because particular pains had not been taken to pack all medical supplies in parachute containers, a large portion of such equipment was lost, resulting in some suffering by the sick and wounded.

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With Munda strip in Allied hands, the immediate tasks were to defend it and to reconstruct it. Early examination of the field indicated that damage to the runways and taxi lanes had been lighter than originally anticipated and that a minimum expenditure of labor would be required to make the strip operational at an early date. But, other than a useful collection of 30 enemy planes, the Jap had left scarcely any construction items, not even as much as he had on Guadalcanal. There were no bulldozers, road graders, power shovels, or dump trucks. Only two old broken-down road rollers were recovered, but the Jap had no roads to be rolled, and it was difficult to understand how his forces had moved around on New Georgia.

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Reconstruction of Munda Field began at once under the protection of the fighter cover, and although the area was but a short distance to Kahili, and despite the fact that the Jap had nearly 500 aircraft in the

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Rahaul-Kavieng-Bougainville area, the enemy was unable to make a single effective attack against the men and equipment--in fact, he scarcely even attempted it. One effort occurred on the 10th when an estimated 50 enemy fighters came down to make a low-level attack but were prevented from reaching the field by 11 P-40's and 3 P-39's.⁵⁴ Another came on the 13th, but it too was unable to break through the defenses. Thus protected, Munda's reconstruction moved rapidly ahead.

The 73d Navy Seabees had inherited the task of widening, resurfacing, and regrading the original 4,000-foot runway and the two taxiways which the Japs had soded. On 9 August, ACOM 8 joined the 73d and as rapidly as equipment arrived it was put to work. Power shovels bit into Kokengolo Hill to make the dugouts, bulldozers pushed out the roads, and rollers and dozers spread out the coral on the strip which was dry but soft. Taxiways, which had been neglected for months, were little better than jeep tracks, but they permitted rapid reconstruction and expansion; in fact, the Commander of ACOM 8 believed that the field could be placed in usable condition by 15 August.⁵⁵ On the afternoon of 14 August two AAF P-40's of the 44th Fighter Squadron landed at Munda to remain overnight, thus becoming the first operational aircraft to use the newly captured field.⁵⁶ Henceforth Munda was operational for an increasingly large number of planes.

In September the naval construction force was augmented by the 828th Engineer Aviation Battalion which began its work at the field on the 6th. The battalion's initial assignment with a deadline of 15 October was to extend the runway an additional 2,000 feet to the east, with a 500-

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foot overrun, and to clear the approach zone so as to allow a 1:40 glide angle. The deadline was met; 54,000 cubic yards of earth and coral were moved, and by 5 October planes were able to use the entire 6,000 feet of the runway, although one hill remained above the allowable glide angle and was not cut down at that time. ⁵⁷ Neither pipe nor timber was available for constructing culverts, but this problem was met by using empty 55-gallon drums in double layers, splitting the outside layer and staggering the joints. The end of each day's labor brought rain, and each night brought down the Jap raiders who did their utmost to disrupt the work. Because the radar was out of order during part of the construction period, it was necessary to discontinue the use of lights on the field, and the attempt to carry on in the moonlight was not very effective. ⁵⁸ As a result, nearly all the work was accomplished between dawn and dusk.

At Munda the 73d Seabees continued to work alongside the 828th Engineers, although the tasks were allocated in such a way that the two units did not work on the same assignment other than to lend each other any equipment that could be spared. Nearly all the supplies were furnished from the Navy Supply Dump, and Navy's MORN 8 controlled the operation of the entire field. As rapidly as possible refinements were added to the Munda installations; on the field itself new wide taxiways were pushed around along lines laid down by the Seabee unit or run parallel to the main strip, and parking aprons were constructed. To all of this the 828th made a major contribution, though it was aided on some projects by the 131st ⁵⁹ Engineer Regiment and cooperated on others with the 73d Seabees.

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Munda very quickly became a key installation in the Solomons chain. Its excellent coral easily available in quantity permitted construction of a runway capable of withstanding very heavy operational loads and it was well that this strip was not another Carney. ⁶⁰ Before many weeks had passed, traffic at Munda exceeded that of any other field in the South Pacific; during the month of October the average daily departures and arrivals approximated 400, while the low number in any one day after the field reached full operation was 181, with a high of 564 aircraft of every ⁶¹ type. The major handicap at Munda was the existence of the hill between 200 and 300 feet high, which tended to interfere with a take-off to the east-northeast. Despite the unfavorable direction of prevailing winds, heavy bombers with maximum loads occasionally took off away from the hill ⁶² over the water to avoid the hazard.

While the engineers tackled the coral of Munda with their scrapers and bulldozers, the troops of the XIV Corps faced the task of evicting the enemy from the Bairoko area on New Georgia and from the other islands of the Central Solomons. Halsey and Harmon faced the problem of whether they should send the XIV Corps directly against the enemy's base at Vila on Kolombangara. The area was of no great importance to the air plans, since all photographic reconnaissance missions and other sources of intelligence had indicated that it would not be possible to develop Vila adequately for use by COMINTASOLS' planes. Quickly the decision was reached: the assault troops would by-pass Vila entirely and seize Vella ⁶³ Lavella instead.

Accordingly an amphibious force under Rear Adm. T. B. Wilkinson, which consisted primarily of the 35th Infantry Combat Team, by-passed

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Vila, Lanlino at Boroona on the southeast coast of Vella Lavella at 0000 on the morning of 13 August. ⁶⁴ Other units landed on Beang, where a parently the enemy was located at least two five-inch naval guns with which he had been shelling the Vila field. Brundel Island, adjacent to Kolombangara, was indicated as an artillery emplacement for neutralization of Vila, and from 25 August to 23 September units of the XIV Corps were engaged in clearing Brundel and the near-by smaller islands. No land force occupation of Kolombangara was contemplated; instead a plan was developed whereby air and artillery bombardment alone would reduce the Vila area. In accordance with this scheme, a battery of the 3th Defense Battalion opened its bombardment with 155-mm. guns from the vicinity of Vila on 21 August, to be joined on 16 September by Battery "B," and thereafter continued to pound the enemy until 5 October.

By 23 August all organized resistance had ceased on New Georgia; Beang, Brundel (after stiff fighting), and Vila were all secured by 31 September. By 3 October all patrols sent over to Kolombangara had returned negative reports; it was apparent that the enemy had abandoned Kolombangara with its strip of Vila. On the 6th Battalion of the 27th Infantry Regiment landed on Kolombangara, immediately setting up perimeter defense around the strip. ⁶⁵ The policy of by-passing and paid handsome dividends; in attempting to evacuate his troops from Kolombangara the Jap clashed with surface craft patrolling north of Vella Lavella and lost heavily in barges and personnel. But more important perhaps was the saving of Allied lives, for had the enemy so chosen he could have made the seizure of Vila an extremely costly operation. There was ample ammunition and,

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in anticipation of a frontal assault, the entire coast from Parapatu Point west to Kuli Kuli Point had been studded with pillboxes, trenches, small gun emplacements, and coastal guns. Instead of facing the triple line of pillboxes on Kolombangara, the troops went ashore on Vella Lavella against minor opposition, gaining the site at Barakoma for an additional fighter strip, and forcing the Jap to abandon all his Central Solomons positions except that over on Rekata Bay. By 9 October the Vella Lavella phase had ended, followed three days later by Allied occupation of Gizo.⁶⁷

All this ground activity was accompanied as always by a heavy drain upon the air forces. Whatever success the Jap had gained was for the most part the result of night operations, a type of activity at which the enemy was very capable, surpassing Allied flyers according to the commander of Strike Command.⁶⁸ Enemy float planes regularly heckled the PT boats operating in the Central Solomons, apparently acting under instructions to carry out vigorous attacks on these light surface craft as they approached important junctions for barge traffic, for the planes seemed to remain above these points. At the same time the Jap bombed the Russells and Guadalcanal positions at every opportunity and not always without damage. One raid on the night of 13/14 August was executed just as a flight of B-24's was returning from a mission to Kahili. Two Jap bombers switched on their running lights and joined the B-24's as the latter came in toward Henderson; then one enemy plane dived down to put a torpedo into the AP John Penn, sinking the ship, and in the resulting heavy AA barrage, Bettys and B-24's alike were caught. The two Japs went down, almost followed by the heavy bomber piloted by Lt. Col. Marion D. Unruh. With one engine gone,

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a special hydraulic system, and a shot-up plane, Colonel Unruh managed to reach Orney Field where he made a skillful one-wheel landing.

But none of these raids could equal the effectiveness of the attacks which General Ekiner could throw against the Japanese from his bases on Guadalcanal, Buna, and eventually Buna. The B-24's distinguished themselves on the 12th in their strike on Lahili where photos taken that morning indicated the presence of 31 fighters, 3 mediums, and 11 dive bombers.

At 1215, 25 B-24's patterned the south third of the Lahili runway with 520 x 100-lb. bombs, dropping from 22,000 feet; single photo coverage of the area immediately before, during, and after the raid showed 20 planes afire, with 3 others in the burning area, and heavy fires all around. Nor was this all the enemy's loss. Approximately 50 Zeros pounced on the heavies as they withdrew over Bellale, where the enemy planes tangled with the bombers and the 50-plane fighter escort. In a running battle, the B-24's knocked down four and perhaps six more Zeros, the 4L's got four, and the eight P-40's one, to give the enemy a decisive defeat in the air. The cost was one P-40 lost, a B-24 radiator loss, and one P2U demolished in crash-landing on Serri.

The second phase of air operations in the New Georgia campaign opened as soon as it became possible to operate planes from the newly captured Buna strip. When Brig. Gen. Francis L. Mulock, USAF flew over from Rendova and landed on Buna at 1000 on 14 August, the command post of USMC in New Georgia was officially opened on Buna Point. An advance detail already had set up a series of offices for Fighter Control, Operations, Intelligence, and Communications in a tunnel driven into Kokengolo

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Hill by the departed enemy. Seabees only recently had removed the debris and bodies from the hot tunnel, where without blower ventilation the odor was less than pleasant, but it afforded a protected location, conveniently located on the side of the strip within one of the taxi loops, and command personnel living in their tents near-by could use the tunnel as an air raid shelter. The task assigned to this force included: (1) assistance in providing escorts for bombing missions sent out by COMAIRSOLS; (2) provision of fighter escort for friendly shipping; (3) location and destruction of enemy barges; (4) strafing of the Bougainville airfields; (5) artillery spotting and reconnaissance missions; and (6) defense of the forward bases.

COMAIR New Georgia conducted its first full day of operations from the Munda strip on 15 August when 22 Corsairs were scrambled locally and 8 P-39's together with New Zealand P-40's and 4 AAF P-40's went up from Segi.

These planes were in response to an urgent dispatch for all available aircraft from the task force covering the landings on Vella Lavella, which lay dangerously close to Kahili; and by 0800 the Jap had sent down its first attack. It was Rendova all over again. Contact with an unknown number of Vals plus 30 to 40 Zeros occurred over Wilson Strait and the Vella Gulf, and the results of two attacks were similar to those achieved by the enemy over Rendova. Thirteen Zekes and seven Vals went down, followed by another four or five Zekes and two Vals destroyed in an afternoon attack. One of the fighters was credited to Capt. Cyril E. Nichols who lost two feet of his P-39's wing tip when he rammed a Zeke which blew up. Total losses for the day were five Corsairs (four operational), and

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one FNZAF P-40.⁷⁵~~RESTRICTED~~

To embarrass the enemy further, eight Corsairs on a sweep arrived over Kahili just as some 20 planes were returning from their initial attack on Vella Lavella, and they caught the Jap completely by surprise. Three Japs were shot out of their landing circles, five Zekes, a Betty, and a Val were destroyed on the ground, and trucks and personnel were strafed. It had been a lively day for the fighters; they had prevented major damage to the shipping, but enemy bombs had killed 12 and wounded 40 men on Vella Lavella.⁷⁶

The New Georgia air command planned normally to base 24 fighters at both Munda and Segi, but this number had been doubled for the missions of the 15th, and subsequently this arrangement was repeated when necessary; in each case the additional planes were returned to Guadalcanal and the Russells before dark, avoiding the necessity of remaining overnight in the new forward area. During the landings at Barakoma it was planned to maintain a 32-plane patrol over the amphibious force. So far as possible this schedule was observed, although whenever additional planes were scrambled for contact, the next relief for the patrol would necessarily fall below 32 until it could be built up to the required number. In actual practice, on the second day it was possible to hold a continuous patrol of no more than 12 planes over the Vella Lavella beachhead. But the Barakoma area was open for attack by night and the Jap hit it regularly, nearly every night, and no less than 10 times with float planes and dive bombers on the 17th.⁷⁷

Operations from Munda were still hazardous. Enemy raiders were over nightly, two of them falling to AA fire on the 14th, and beginning two

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days later the entire area, including the 73d Seabee camp, was subjected to intermittent artillery shelling during the daylight hours. To detect the location of these pieces, believed to be in the southwest tip of Baanga Island, a single-plane "Pistol Pete" patrol was maintained over adjacent islands and suspected positions were bombed, but upon occupation of Baanga
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by ground forces the shelling ceased on the 19th.

However, the night attacks continued both at Munda and up at Barakoma, and general operating conditions at Munda were far from satisfactory, notably communications and transportation. Plane servicing and maintenance crews were inexperienced, spare parts were extremely scarce, and the incomplete taxiways were cramped and in poor condition. All these deficiencies rapidly were overcome, certainly far more rapidly than had been the case down on Guadalcanal, where for so many weeks the enemy
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dominated the sea lanes.

COMAIR New Georgia experienced considerable difficulty in securing the coordination and proper operation of the fighter direction centers during the earlier phases of the Vella Lavella operation, ascribing this to the unreliable communication facilities which in turn were directly attributed to lack of properly trained and indoctrinated personnel. additional factors were the failure initially to provide the necessary adequate equipment, including spare parts, and the absence of adequate radar cover. The Barakoma air warning unit had been flung together with great haste, having had only 36-hours' notice, and for one piece of its equipment there was neither an experienced operator nor time to check the

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item. Then during the landing on the 17th one of the most essential sets suffered a direct hit during the bombing attack, which further hampered operations.
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Radar had long given trouble in the South Pacific where the sets were unsupported by an adequate flow of spare parts, with the result that frequently many of them were out of commission.
81 On New Georgia their operation continued to be less than satisfactory for the same reason as well as because of the natural disadvantages of the terrain. A further deficiency discovered by COMAIR New Georgia was poor training or lack of experience on the part of some of the fighter directors; and the lack of communications together with poor initial radar coverage hamstrung the work of the good ones. It was at this time too that the enemy first began to make use of phantom targets for the purpose of confusing the radar operators. The precise nature of these targets was not known, though it was suspected that they consisted of resonant wire suspended from balloons, but on several instances a relatively stationary pip appeared to emerge from the moving plane and remain on the screen of the SCR 268 while the plane would turn and approach from another direction. Initially these tactics were highly effective in confusing AA fire control, but the radar operators quickly learned to detect the phantoms and thereafter they did not cause too much trouble.
82

After the 15th, bad weather hampered General Twining's air offensive, but the Jap continued to strike hard at the LST's drawn up along the beach at Barakoma disgorging men and supplies for the air installation under way

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on Vella Lavella. From the 19th through the 21st there were 11 raids; on the 22th there were 6 more and by the end of the second week of the Barakoma operations, 101 Conditions Red had been called, and 62 enemy attacks were recorded. Much of the air raid warning had to come from observation posts and the warnings varied from none at all up to 15 minutes, though normally from 4 to 8 minutes were given, which was usually sufficient to permit most personnel to reach their foxholes. For the first two weeks the work was complicated by the lack of information regarding friendly missions, though after 1 September advance notice was available and there were fewer false alarms caused by friendly flights. It was no problem for the Jap to strike at Barakoma and strike it he did--⁸³ 108 times in the first month, using an estimated 319 planes.

For the most part the burden of defense of the area fell upon the F4U's; 24 intercepted a powerful force of 60 Zekes and 30 Vals in the second attack on the 21st, the first having been made unopposed because⁸⁴ of fighter cover arrived too late to intercept. Twice again on the same day the Zekes and Vals punched at Barakoma, taking a total reported⁸⁵ loss of seven Zekes and three Vals at a cost of one F4U. Significantly the Corsair pilots reported meeting new Jap fighters, faster than any met before, planes with in-line engines, brindle brown in color, and with wings resembling P-40's. This was the Jap Army's Tony, and on the 23d another new fighter was encountered. It was painted olive drab, had⁸⁶ square wings, and was able to perform with the Corsairs at high altitude.

The enemy continued his raids upon Barakoma, never inflicting serious damage and casualties but paying heavily. In one week ending on the 26th he had lost 43 fighters, 5 Vals, and 1 float plane, either over Barakoma or in

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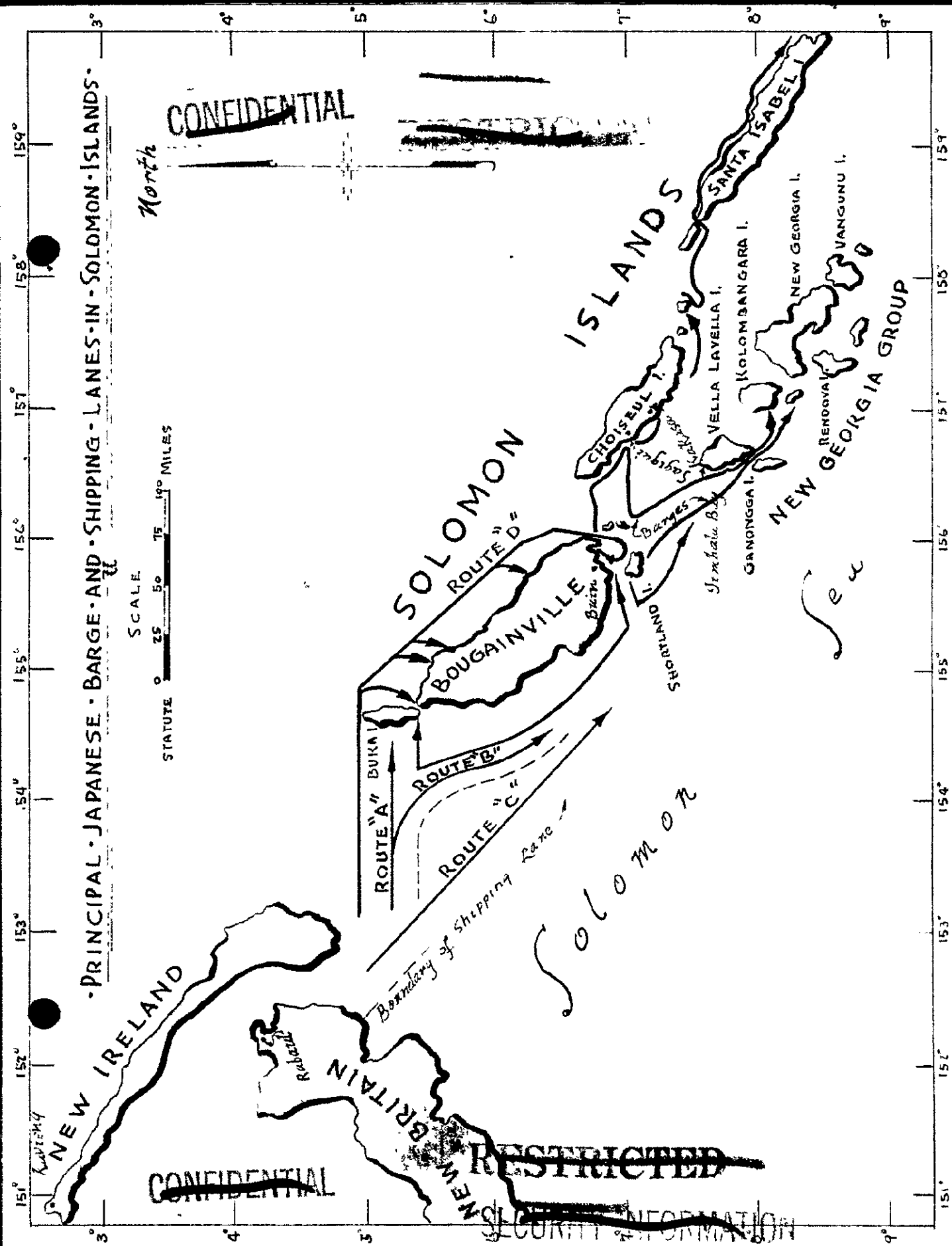
defending Kahili, and the cost to COMAIRSOLS had been one F4U in combat. It proved impossible to prevent all attacks from reaching Barakoma. The radar warning at 95 miles was "as good as can be expected," scrambles were prompt, and planes were off the ground in excellent time; but lacking a continuous air cover, or adequate radar facilities at Vella Lavella to furnish Fighter Command with earlier warning, Allied planes could not prevent attacks. The best that could be achieved by using existing facilities and maintaining ground alert at Munda was an interception after the Jap had reached his objective at Vella Lavella.⁸⁸ Consequently the 4th Marine Defense Battalion had ample employment for its 90-mm., 40-mm., and 20-mm. guns, all of which were in action almost daily.

Over 300 aircraft were engaged in the first two months, of which the AA shot down more than 40, and the heaviest assaults regularly coincided with the arrival of additional echelons of the invasion force off Empress Augusta Bay. On 25 September the Japs wrecked one LST of the 8th Echelon unloading at Narowai and Euravai, beyond the range of the AA defenses; on 10 October the 9th Echelon was the recipient of an attack which destroyed another LST and inflicted 95 casualties, including 52 killed or missing.⁸⁹ Despite all attacks on the Barakoma site, construction moved ahead, and even before the strip was ready for operations many fighter pilots returning from Bougainville with crippled planes had made landings on the field or in the sea nearby. It was estimated that prior to initiation of full operation, Barakoma had been directly or indirectly responsible for the saving of 22 pilots and aircrewmembers.⁹⁰

While fighters defended Vella Lavella, the medium and light bombers

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and their escorts were out barge hunting. By August it was increasingly apparent that widespread employment of barges had become vital to maintenance of the enemy's outposts; he could move his heavier vessels from Rabaul over to Buka, then down the east or west coast of Bougainville to Buin, or even directly to Buin from Simpson Harbor in Rabaul, although this last route was used primarily by warships. But it was risky business to send heavy vessels down the Slot; the attempts in July had resulted in disaster in the Kula Gulf and thereafter the enemy relied very heavily upon barges. These were of varying sizes, of shallow draft and a fair turn of speed. They moved in groups, coming down from Buin southeast to Timbala Bay on the north coast of Vella Lavella carrying men and supplies to the forces on Vella; then, skirting the west coast of the island, they passed through Wilson and Gizo straits to Kolombangara.⁹¹ When attacked, the groups broke up to scatter, hiding in small bays and creeks where they covered themselves with branches, and under this excellent camouflage pilots found some difficulty in spotting them.

COMAIRSOLS could report that "the Nips are masters in their barge operations and the pilots love to work them over." So they did when they found them, and they sighted barges at every plantation on the west coast of Vella Lavella, while Choiseul, Kakasa, and Sagigai served the Jap as very active barge staging points.⁹² Every opportunity was taken to strafe these barges whenever the availability of aircraft permitted. For the B-25's they were a primary target, and day after day Colonel Wilson's B-25's ranged up and down the barge lanes, usually in pairs, though occasionally in larger flights with fighter escort, seeking out the hidden craft and often guided by the advice of local coastwatchers who would radio the

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shifting locations of the barges. At night the PT's battled them, sometimes in more pitched battles, for the Jap had armored some of his craft, and he had mounted 20-mm. and even 40-mm. guns as a defense against the PT's and the strafers. ⁹³ Fighters were instructed to strafe them as they returned to their base after completion of a patrol, although when heavy fighter cover was essential, it was sometimes necessary to let targets pass untouched due to contact with enemy aircraft. The B-25's had fewer diversions, and they searched either alone or teamed with the SED's and TB's as on the 24th, 25th, and 26th ⁹⁴ when they struck at the Kolombangara barge centers at Ebster and Kingi coves. By the end of August, the monthly total of missions for the two forward squadrons of the 42d Bombardment Group had reached 27, of which nine had been scheduled to hunt down and strafe barges. On six of these, targets were located and ⁹⁵ 17 barges were either sunk or damaged beyond repair.

The antibarge campaign went well; toward the end of August the Wakasa steaming area was hit repeatedly by B-25's and the Marines' light bombers, while pilots of P-39's found their heavy nose cannon particularly useful in anti-barge attacks. ⁹⁶ B-24's prowled against the small craft at night and fighters strafed them at every opportunity. On 11 September CDR SOPAC congratulated General Twining on the progress of the barge activity, remarking characteristically that "your anti-barge warfare is warming the seats of the Jap britches. Keep 'em blazing." ⁹⁷

There was reasonable evidence to support Halsey's optimism, for during the second week of September barge traffic was light and--more significant-- definite confirmation was made of enemy air drops by night to the beleaguered ⁹⁸ Japs on northern Belle Levell. There was no slackening in the pace of the antibarge warfare through September. On 4 October, 4 P-39's and 4

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Corsairs carried out a remarkably successful mission along western Choiseul, destroying 16 large barges between Foro Island off Sambi Head, and West Cape at the northwest tip of the island, followed by a second mission to the east coast of the island which enabled the P-39's to destroy yet another.
99

By late August General Twining was able to step up the attacks upon the remaining enemy positions in the Central Solomons. At the end of the month the coastwatcher observing the Rekata area reported that the enemy was abandoning his advanced seaplane base at Rekata, after more than a year of desultory attempt to establish a base here too close to the fields on Guadalcanal.
100

In the antibarge campaign--in fact, throughout the advance up the Solomons--a peculiar problem was presented to the intelligence officers and pilots alike by the presence of numerous friendly natives scattered all through the islands. The native scouts actively working for the Allied coastwatchers were invaluable: they spotted barges concealed under the trees, and they tracked enemy patrols; they knew where pilots should make emergency landings, and whenever a profitable target was located the scouts clung to it until after the raid in order to report the results. The watchers and their scouts on Kolombangara, Segi, Rendova, Choiseul, Vella Lavella, Wickham, and Santa Isabel all had done yeoman's service in saving downed pilots.
101

But all too frequently friendly natives were subjected to strafings or bombings. It was natural that pilots would commit errors; small Japanese detachments frequently moved into native huts and villeges or seized native canoes, which then became potential targets for air attacks. Whenever possible, the

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coastwatcher would move all natives out of a target area, thus avoiding
 102
 needless loss, but it was not always possible to clear the target areas. Miscellaneous strafing of shore positions invariably did more harm than good; it killed natives, damaged their property, and badly strained their friendship to the Allies. On 29 July the watcher on Kolombangara protested against repeated indiscriminate strafing of the coast in his area, reporting that as a result, henceforth he would probably find very few natives prepared to act as coastal sentries. Two days later the watcher on Vella Lavella strongly protested a similar incident of the 26th in which 15 planes had shot up the villages of Tapuri and Iraguru on Simbo Island, plus additional villages on Nusa Simbo Island. He was "at a complete loss" to understand the attack, for the natives were most loyal, his patrol unit having rescued 193 U. S. personnel during the past year. To save the unit the watcher insisted upon immediate compensation in the form of tobacco, rice, and calico, and requested that air commanders seek his advice prior to any
 103
 future attacks upon any area under his control.

Apparently the situation worsened. On 23 August General Twining informed Strike Command that native villages were not to be attacked unless specifically ordered, prohibited the indiscriminate strafing of beach lines, and ordered that under no circumstances would native canoes be
 104
 attacked, even if they contained Japanese. Even attacks upon barges and land targets on Gizo and Vella Lavella were proscribed unless specifically ordered, and to eliminate any further errors, the District Supervising Intelligence Officer arranged to keep all natives clear of the beaches or
 105
 abandoned barges during the daylight hours. Some of the errors were

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unavoidable; for example, in the first mission of the 69th Bombardment Squadron, 10 B-25's mistook Hunda for their scheduled target at Dulo Cove, dropping their load of 120-lb. frag clusters on the former location where some of them fell in the hiding place of native scouts in the bush behind Hunda Village.

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The natives were caught between two fires; on Kolombangara their villages were strafed by Japanese barges and bombed by Allied planes. But by exercising additional care in briefing, it was possible to avoid some of the more needless Allied attacks. It was fair evidence of the complete air dominance of the area when the XIV Corps announced on 4 September that on New Georgia the natives were returning to their gardens and would burn trash only on Tuesdays and Fridays during daylight hours.

107

After the fall of Hunda there still remained the enemy pocket at Vila on Kolombangara, whose reduction in accordance with the original plan had been turned over to the 155-mm. guns and the air attacks. It was hit daily as often as weather would permit by all types of strafers and bombers, and on 31 August a Black Cat dropped pamphlets which sought to undermine morale of the defenders by stressing their helplessness. But the real effort of the heavies was directed toward the Kahili area, where the Jap continued to maintain substantial fighter strength and where he now had decided to install an additional airfield. On 30 August Corsair pilots reported observing what appeared to be a new strip west and north of Kahili; photos taken four days later confirmed the visual observation, showing a 5,040 x 250-foot clearing about 7 miles

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northwest of Kahili and 2.5 miles of Kara, from which village the field
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took its name.

During the month of August eight missions involving B-24's had been sent to southern Bougainville, of which one was against Ballale, and of the remaining seven against Kahili, one failed to bomb because of weather. 110
On the 24th B-24's over the target were jumped early in the bomb run by 25 to 35 Zekes and Tonys and the fighter escort reported another flight of 20 to 30 over the Shortland area, in addition to a third group of 15 to 20 between Kahili and Tonolei. The Japs pressed their attacks closely, following the bombers down the Slot almost to kendova, but before they broke off the assaults they had lost 36 or 38 fighters to the escort and bombers, 111
the B-24's claiming at least 19 Zekes and 1 Tony. Unfortunately one B-24 had fallen in flames, probably to AA fire, together with five of the fighter escort, including two P-39's.

With the coming of September, General Twining trebled the pace of operations against the four Bougainville fields, sending no less than 24 bomber strikes against them. Five were against the Ballale strip, two were directed at Kara and Kahili together, though one of these was turned back by weather, and two were made against Buka. Of the total number, 14 were by B-24's in numbers ranging from 3 to 27, and 4 were executed by B-25's, while the light bombers and PVI's (Venturas) carried out 7 112
missions, 1 in cooperation with the AAF heavies. On 3 September, three heavy raids were made with an increased fighter escort which apparently intimidated the Japs, for even though they maintained a large force in the area, they made only weak efforts to press home the attack. Perhaps the

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enemy was feeling his losses. August had cost him a total of 235 planes--
55 of them went to the B-24's alone--and in the last three months no less
than 781 planes had been destroyed by all forces in the Solomons. ¹¹³

Now Kahili lay within easy range of the fighters on Munda and the
enemy might expect sudden surprise strafing raids, primarily by the F4U's,
though also by the P-39's. Twining sent these up as often as possible,
where they attacked the parked planes at treetop level. Eight were
destroyed by one F4U covered by two others on the morning of 27 August
1943; this mission cost the loss of Lt. Charles C. Lanphier, brother of
the destroyer of Yamamoto. ¹¹⁴ A week later seven more F4U's hit Kahili
twice on the early morning of 2 September, this time definitely destroy-
ing four planes and strafing a line of fighters packed wing to wing on
the strip. Apparently the Jap was sensitive to all this; in the second
week of September his aircraft strength declined in number and he made
only a single daylight attack upon Allied positions, while over Kahili
his intercepting fighters grew weaker and less determined in their attacks, ¹¹⁵

COMAIRSOLS' planes dominated the air, making southern Bougainville
anything but a secure haven for Japanese fighters and bombers. On 14
September six separate missions were sent up and, although bad weather
saved Kara-Kahili from an attack by 12 B-25's, the B-24's hit Kahili with
the heaviest pounding that base had yet received in the war. Several pilots
on that day reported contact with what seemed to be a fresh fighter group;
its aircraft were freshly painted as if they were new, and their pilots
displayed better tactics and gunnery than those recently met in the air

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over southern Bougainville. ¹¹⁶ Within three days (14 to 16 September) a total of 97 tons was dropped on Kahili, 122.5 tons on Ballale, 18 on Buka, and 3.5 on Kara; and 50 enemy aircraft had been destroyed ¹¹⁷ over the period.

But not all the effort of the heavy bombers was directed against the airfields. Very frequently one or two B-24's were out on shipping prowls, moving during the night along the east coast of Bougainville or up to the shipping lanes leading down from Rabaul, where their pilots would search for the tell-tale white wakes of vessels taking evasive action. These were usually low-level attacks; from 2,000 feet a B-24 put a bomb directly ¹¹⁸ on a large 500-foot AK on the night on 8/9 September.

By late September because the number of ground support missions had dwindled while counter-air-force operations against enemy air bases had become predominant, COMAIRSOPAC recommended that Commander Aircraft New Georgia be removed from the operational control of the New Georgia Occupation Force and become instead a task unit commander of COMAIRSOLS. Admiral Halsey approved the shift, which became effective on 23 September.

On the same day the first successful landings occurred on the new Barakoma strip on Vella Lavella when one utility plane and four Corsairs came in to land on the field built by the 58th Seabee Battalion, but because of the lack of dispersal areas and ground service crews, aircraft ¹¹⁹ were not based here until 17 October. A further indication of the northward march of the air installations had come two days earlier when for the first time a four-engined bomber landed at Munda; Capt. Richard

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N. Azar of the 370th Squadron came in from a Buka mission at 1345 on the 21st with the damage of five fighter attacks and the propeller of his No. 2 engine shot up.

The accelerated offensive against Kahili must have stung the Jap, who could not accomplish much during daylight hours, but whose night flyers were highly skilled. By the third week of September both offensively and defensively the Jap reached a new high level. On the night of the 14th, following the day's heavy Allied attacks upon Kahili, repeated Japanese raids were made upon Guadalcanal, Munda, and Barakoma. COMAIR New Georgia reported 79 bogies on the one night, all raiders coming over in flights of two or three. Searchlights probed for them, AA fired 2,900 rounds, but no planes fell that night. ¹²⁰ Increasingly the harassers made use of turned dipoles suspended from parachutes and dropped approximately 30 miles from the target. These would cause saturation echoes on the height range radar screen, causing the bogey to appear to be orbiting, and until a valid plot could be established, the fighter controller could not vector the defending night fighters. In the interval of uncertainty, sometimes as long as two minutes, the Jap would have closed eight miles or more, and contact with him would ¹²¹ be lost. As a consequence the raids continued almost nightly and not much could be done to halt them. Occasionally a plane fell to AA fire as over Munda on 15/16 September, but this was rare.

The Japanese used all their tricks. In addition to the dipoles, they would feint at Munda from one direction, then attack from another,

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and at a much lower altitude; or again, they would use Allied radio channels. For example, one Corsair on the night of the 18th attempted interception only to discover the Jap using the Grimes' voice fighter frequency. ¹⁸² There was as yet no adequate night fighter defense available in the area. F-70's had proved useless for high-altitude interception and now in order to make some use of them, they were put to work with the P1's, which long had been heckled by the night-flying float planes. The F-70's would rendezvous with the P1's, which then would make a "logey bait" run up the slot, sometimes firing their machine guns at the Kolontancara coast in an attempt to attract the float planes and draw them out for striking by the F-70's. When the scheme was initially tried on the 16th, one Jap quickly took the bait; as he moved into position for the attack, he himself was attacked by the F-70 from a range of 150 feet but only one gun fired and results were negative. ¹⁸³

Generally, it proved impossible to prevent the Jap from inflicting some damage on the planes parked on Marikona, Uifa, or Suedalcanal, or against the carrier fleet in the area. The P-38's and the P4U's enjoyed a few successes; Corsairs shot down a bomber over Uifa on the night of the 11th and one night later Lt. Henry Hays, II, flying a P-38, broke all local records by shooting down two bombers within 60 seconds over Uifa on Suedalcanal. Sometime around 0400 the searchlights had picked up a bomber coming in at 10,000 to 20,000 feet. Ground observers saw the bomber close to the Jap plane, then saw several short bursts of tracer going into it as it caught fire and dove to the earth. Just before this plane had hit the ground a second enemy plane

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had been caught in the lights and set afire by Meigs' guns.

The night-mowling B-24's were now being hampered by relatively large flights of enemy night fighters. On the night of 5 September, 10 or 12 attacked a B-24 off Kieta, and pursued it for 25 minutes.

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And during the night hours the C-47's of SCAT were meeting Lettys which tried to shoot down the unarmed transports; this occurred three times in mid-September, forcing the C-47's to run or hide in the clouds in order to shake off the pursuer.

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On the 18th a Letty attacked a C-47 between Rennell and San Cristobel islands; next day the navigator of the early morning plane up from Espiritu Santo sighted one or two planes at 0345 just north of this island. By using successive cloud cover and remaining concealed until dawn, the transport was able to complete its trip. This type of attack was repeated on the 26th when at 0410 once again a C-47 was almost caught by a bomber while flying north about 75 miles from Espiritu Santo. As before, the transport dove for cover from 9,000 feet, reaching the security of the cloud, and for the next 90 minutes the two planes played tag in the clouds. Each time the C-47 emerged, the Japs could be close by, leading the SCAT pilot to believe that radar was being used; and when he attempted to call Espiritu Santo for fighter support, he found his radio frequency jammed. Finally at 0545 with the coming of daylight, the enemy plane lost contact, enabling the transport to return to its base.

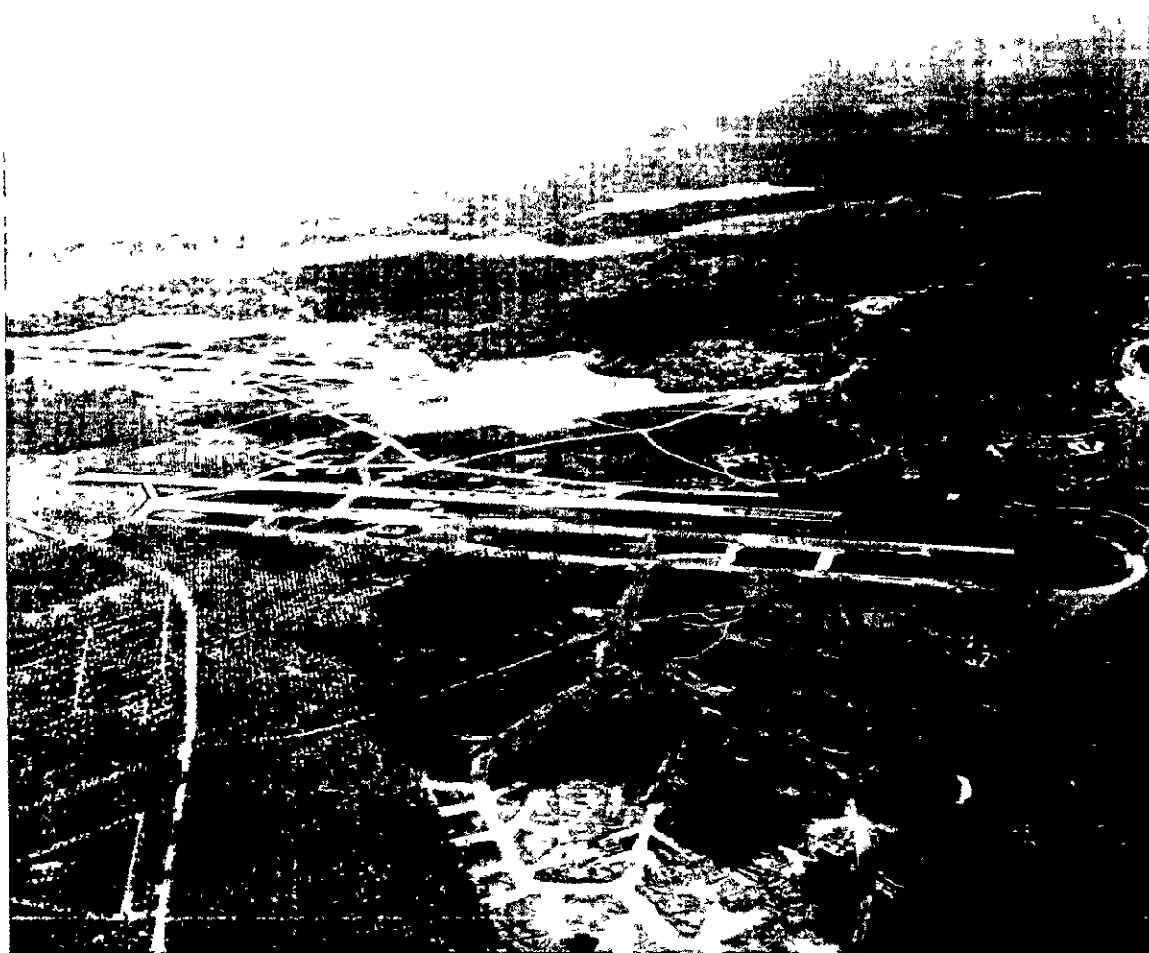
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But none of these enemy efforts could equal the damage caused by the night raiders over the Japanese bases, or the successes of the SB-24's,*

* B-24's equipped with LAF (low-altitude bombardment) were designated as SB-24's.

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Henderson Field, Guadalcanal,
18 October 1943, facing south

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Henderson Field, Guadalcanal,
18 October 1943, facing north

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the Black Cats, and the Navy's AB4Y's on their searches around Bougainville. When finally the Japs began to evacuate his forces from Kolombangara, the surface craft were hit hard. U. S. destroyers operated nightily off the coast and out to sea, attempting to cut off the retreating enemy, and on the nights of the 27th and 28th at least 10 barges moving over to Kolombangara from Choiseul were intercepted and destroyed. On the night of the 28th P-51's of the newly arrived night project attacked a convoy of 8 or 10 vessels north of Cape Alexander, sinking a DD and ¹²⁸ damaging a second, plus 2 LST's. In the week ending 1 October barges had suffered heavily, 10 being destroyed by the DD's and 15 by aircraft, but this loss mounted even higher the following week when the enemy finally attempted to retrieve his troops from Kolombangara.

The evacuation occurred primarily on the nights of the 6th, 7th, and 8th, when destroyers sank at least 31 craft, and the air forces added ¹²⁹ another 25 during the daylight hours. In fact, everywhere in the Solomons the tack was a bad one for the enemy. On four successive days P-51's shot down searching Lottys, with another killing south of Guadalcanal to two P-30's; on the 6th, 24 P-51's introduced the skilled defenders to tree-level attacks with fragmentation clusters, dropping 215 clusters in the retreat area just at dusk, then strafing the area. In the attempted evacuation on 6/7 October a large Lottyo Express was met by three U. S. destroyers which sank three of the enemy and turned back the ¹³⁰ remainder. This was a fast piece, and momentarily it seemed to slow the enemy's air operations; photos on 9 October showed only a handful

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of planes on the Bougainville fields, and there was a sharp drop at
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Tabaul as well. The question was now: could the Jap maintain a
pace at which he paid with an average of five planes for every Allied
loss? He could and did. By the 11th Tabaul showed 294 planes; by
the next day the Suka-Kahili-Ballale fields had jumped up to 60
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fighters, 4 medium bombers, and 7 dive bombers. And he was push-
ing hard at improving the Buka-Bonis fields, as well as Kara. A long
fight lay ahead.

General Arnold watched all this and by the end of September found
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the situation "somewhat confusing." He knew that steadily the
strength of the Thirteenth Air Force had increased and he believed that
Twining had available markedly superior forces in the air supported by
ample reserves in the rear bases. Furthermore, the combat scores indica-
ted that for some time the enemy had been losing planes at a varying rate
of two to one to five to one. Yet he noted that recently Japanese air
operations seemed to be increasing, the favorable Allied ratio was falling
off, and in some engagements COMINFOLS was trading plane for plane. Why?
To General Harmon he expressed his concern. Why were these losses being
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incurred? What was preventing more vigorous offensive operations?

General Twining reported within a few days, and behind him lay 10
weeks' experience as COMINFOLS. The planes were available to him--that
he readily admitted; he had bombers in numbers and types sufficient to
neutralize enemy bases, if only these aircraft could be employed to their
full capacity, but so great was the shortage of fighters that "we are

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not getting anywhere near the full use of these bombers." ¹³⁵ COMAIRSOLS reported that he controlled 200 fighters in the forward area, a number adequate to furnish escort for all his bomber strikes in addition to the sundry other air tasks such as barge attacks and strafing, if it were not for the air cover required for the protection of shipping into Sorakoma and for the destroyer task forces during daylight hours. The additional tasks, Twining believed, left a "woeful inadequacy" of fighters for combat missions; for example, coverage of one convoy of ships to the Vella Lavella area required ^{for} two full days the services of every fighter assigned, a drain which had occurred on an average of once each week, and held each participating pilot in the air approximately seven hours on each of the two days. An additional requirement was the provision of fighter cover for the destroyers working nightly around Vella Lavella, for these needed air protection from daylight to noon as they fell back down the Slot. These two factors, COMAIRSOLS explained to General Arnold, prevented the consistent heavy daylight strikes by the bombers which he believed were essential to fulfillment of the air mission, for now the Jap had begun to refuse combat in the air, unless present in greatly superior numbers. Therefore Twining felt that the enemy would have to be destroyed on the ground. Furthermore because of the uncertainty of employment of his fighters, COMAIRSOLS learned that he was unable to carry out any systematic ¹³⁶ planning of operations.

The answer lay in the dispatch of more fighters and Twining was at a loss to understand "why the Navy does not provide additional planes for these operations." It was his belief that "the Army is more than carrying

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its load," having in the forward combat area three of the five fighter squadrons currently assigned to the South Pacific. This force involved 75 to 85 fighters in combat whose pilots were flying 75 to 80 combat hours per month. Contrasted with this, he cited the Navy's average of only one carrier-based squadron in the Solomons during August and September, and even this was not a "consistent contribution" since each of these units remained for only a short time.

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By October two of the three squadrons in combat were equipped with P-39's, one with P-38's, while the P-40's were filling in and "doing a fine job," but in insufficient number to operate as a squadron. Soon another P-38 squadron would move up to the combat area, but always it was necessary to leave two squadrons in the rear area, one in Fiji and one in New Caledonia, where they were used for rest, training, and rehabilitation.

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Thus the fighter problem was one of General Twining's major concerns during his tenure of COMAIRSOLS post on Guadalcanal. He found satisfaction in some phases of the campaign, especially the outcome of the friendly rivalry between air and surface forces for top honors in the anti-barge warfare in which the air forces were "way out in front," and he praised the record of P-39's with their cannon in this type of work. But behind all the successes lay the feeling that there were not enough planes to do the job. Demands upon the air forces had increased beyond any previous period because of the additional dispersed bases and the variety of missions called for, and now Twining held a new directive ordering him to reduce the airfields in southern Bougainville by 1 November. He wanted more planes; lacking them, he would "of course plug along and do it somehow."

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The explanation was fully appreciated in Washington. General Arnold admitted his own "serious concern" over the Allied air offensive in recent months, believing that the total fighter strength in the South Pacific had justified the expectation of heavier pressure against the Jap on Bougainville. But he also understood Twining's problems; the Navy's contribution of only one fighter squadron during August and September "led to the conclusion that your 'unsinkable carrier' had been planned by the Navy for more comfortable surroundings."¹⁴⁰

In any case he reassured Twining that despite the bombardment of messages from ACP Headquarters, no criticism of the local AAF command was implied. Twining had earned a "Well Done," but he would have to proceed with the squadrons currently available, for every fresh unit which the US could equip and train "must be thrown against the Japmen until he is beaten."¹⁴¹ Thus the requirements of local war bore down hard on the Navy in the South Pacific.

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Chapter V

THE ISLANDS OF SOERABAYA

The records achieved in the Solomons by fighters and bombers during 1943 tend to obscure the herculean efforts produced by ground crews of the tactical units and by the service personnel of the air service and depot groups. The nature of war in the South Pacific threw an inordinately heavy burden upon service personnel, particularly upon the units within the service areas and upon the airframe squadrons employed on the advanced base, for they were the chief victims of a logistical paradox. Island warfare for the tactical units was mobile warfare of a peculiar type; the move was from Espiritu Santo to Guadalcanal to Russell to Buna and beyond, yet on the other hand the completely insular nature of the theater cut ground mobility to a minimum. Heavy equipment of an engineer battalion could move only by surface or air; trucks of a quartermaster unit could not drive on the runways, nor could any heavy non-airborne equipment. This led to an exasperating situation in which it was nearly impossible to concentrate the right amount of trucking at the time and place where it was needed. Yet, in face of an acute shortage in the forward areas, on rear-by islands trucks would stand partially idle, and the same situation prevailed for other types of heavy equipment. Above all, the insular nature of the theater affected the flow of spare and replacement parts to the forward areas.

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In assessment of the performance of the service people must include the factor of physiography, for the bases which supported the tactical air squadrons of the unit both Air Force and Army are located in every instance on islands--both large and small, but usually the latter in the former area. To fly planes and to rest men and machines it was necessary to hack air strips out of virgin jungle or coconut groves, to carve living sites, cantonment areas, supply sheds, and fuel and ammunition dumps out of the roughest kind of tropical terrain which white men never before had challenged nature on such a grandiose scale. Here there was no heritage left by decades of civilized life: no railroads, no highways, no communications, nothing. What was needed must for the most part be imported or else be sea landed or constructed on the spot by unaccustomed hand labor was available.

When service units first arrived at their new stations they did not settle down to work on motors and planes in great numbers, or on broad concrete aprons, or in spacious repair shops with 100-foot warehouses stocked with parts standing near-by.² Instead they labored in improvised coral bunkers amid debilitating heat and humidity, in tents, or in huts floored with coco logs and covered with a canvas tarpaulin which leaked water into vital parts under repair, and they labored without much recognition. For in almost every instance the service unit was destined to live and work side by side with the tactical unit; its functions were as essential as those of the tactical unit, yet it received little credit when squadron or group fought its way through to a critical target amidst

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heavy opposition.³ It was easy to forget that bombs and guns functioned because ordnance personnel had labored to maintain them, or that the planes' radio and radar permitted safe return because radio technicians had spent many extra hours in perfecting operation of the equipment.⁴

During the early months of the Solomons campaign it had been extremely difficult for General Harmon to maintain the flow of spare and replacement parts, service units, and personnel. Shortage of shipping both between New Caledonia and Hawaii and within the South Pacific, together with the relatively low priorities given to air force materiel, had all contributed to the delay. Because no formal air organization existed prior to 13 January 1943, COMGENSOPAC's Service of Supply, in order to meet the problem, had assumed all responsibility for supply of the air units in the theater; in fact, its air section carried on this work after the activation of the Thirteenth Air Force until such time as its functions were absorbed by the XIII Air Force Service Command.⁵ With the arrival in November and December 1942 of the 6th and 29th Service Groups and the 13th Air Depot Group, it was possible to tackle the heavy task of repair, overhaul, and maintenance of air frames, motors, motor transport, and ordnance materiel. The 13th Air Depot Group and the 6th Air Service Group had established themselves at Tontouta, Dumba, and Plaines des Galacs; the 29th Service Group at Espiritu Santo. Very early, however, this latter group made arrangements to send a part of its strength forward to Guadalcanal, where the 82d Service Squadron, the 1653d Ordnance Supply and Maintenance Company,

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and approximately two-thirds of the personnel and equipment of the
1932d Quartermaster Truck Company (Avn) all arrived on 1 March 1943. ⁶

Immediately upon disembarking at Espiritu Santo, the 29th's squadrons ran squarely into the handicaps which faced nearly all organizations charged with keeping wheels and planes in motion. When the unit sailed from San Francisco, most of its equipment still lay on the docks at Stockton or San Francisco, a fact which did little to ease the way into smooth operations on Espiritu. A case in point was the incident experienced by the first ordnance and air materiel units to reach that island. Some 350 crated vehicles had arrived with the 29th Group on 9 December 1942; they were needed at once, but equipment and automotive parts were not shipped until approximately 45 days later. Consequently the ordnance units were required to assemble the vehicles with little more than the tools in the kits contained in the crates themselves. The Diamond-T wrecker was not available, but tall trees were; these provided the support for a block and tackle rig on which to sling heavy truck chassis while wheels, bodies, and cabs were fitted together. ⁷ The improvisation was effective but slow; hampered by heavy rains, mud, and lack of equipment and adequate shelter, the process required six weeks. And when the supplies were examined, no battery acid ⁸ was present, nor had any provision been made for its supply.

The 29th quickly learned a fundamental of island operations: parts did not follow the units with quite the same promptness as on a continental base. In fact, some three months separated the arrival of the initial units and a supply of parts for their equipment, an interval in which the

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sole source of supply was a small quantity which the ordnance units had brought along illegally without official permission.⁹ Automatic issue of spare parts did not begin until eight months after arrival; meanwhile a combination of improvisation and trading or downright filching from Marine and naval organizations kept the wheels rolling. Intermittent mud worked its way into brake shoes and wheel bearings, axles cracked, hydraulic brake fluid often was unobtainable, and above all else,¹⁰ hydraulic wheel cylinders lacked parts. Brake lining could not be obtained from any source, but wooden linings were improvised and fitted, axles were arc-welded, and by such measures some of the vehicles were held in operation.¹¹ Up on Guadalcanal the same situation prevailed, although it was temporarily made easier as a result of the XIV's Corps' salvaging spare parts from the vehicles wrecked in the ground campaign; when this supply was exhausted in April and May, the shortage again became acute¹² until the arrival in June of large shipments of parts.

Another discovery of the service units upon arrival was the problem of retaining their personnel for the job at hand, inasmuch as island command headquarters and nature combined to strip down the effective number of skilled personnel available. Many times during the first four or five months on Espiritu Santo as much as 15 per cent of the 29th Service Group were out on IV Island Command orders performing tasks which did not require skilled men. Group personnel felt that IV Island Command Headquarters had confused the term "service group" with "labor battalion," with the result that skilled service units were called upon to accomplish tasks for which they

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were neither equipped nor designed. Many times the group would receive calls for details of 35 to 50 men to operate C-2 wreckers, cranes, trucks, spray guns--all to be used in constructing the IV Island Command Headquarters buildings, officers' quarters, and general installations. A long process of tactful education on the part of the group commander was necessary to explain the real mission and purpose of the group.¹³ Sickness was another problem, and a serious one; during January and February 1943 approximately one-third of the 40th Service Squadron lay sick in hospital or quarters with dengue fever, despite the employment of available mosquito control measures.¹⁴ These were problems hardly foreseeable back on the mainland, yet they were grim realities to the men charged with the maintenance and repair of AAF equipment.

Down at Tontouta the 15th Air Depot Group, which was responsible for all fourth echelon supply and maintenance, was pushing ahead with its engine-overhaul program, though here too its Engineering Department was forced to operate under the handicap of lack of equipment.¹⁵ The depot was short several critical items of its organizational equipment in March, four months after its arrival, but the program was well under way. The air depot was charged with all major airplane overhaul; parts for 300 aircraft had been projected by early March, some of which already had been shipped, with the remainder scheduled to reach San Francisco on the 10th. It would overhaul engines for the B-25 (R-2600-13) and for the B-24 (R-1830-43).

In order to lighten the burden on the Tontouta depot Harmon

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planned to utilize the surplus facilities of the RNZAF in New Zealand, where in March the overhaul of 75 B-17 engines (R-1820-65) was nearing completion, but in the future all B-17 engines could be handled within the theater itself. Yet these facilities were available, and to make full use of them Harmon expected to continue to call upon the New Zealanders to overhaul the newer B-24 engines. For its contribution, New Zealand initially agreed to overhaul 50 engines per month, provided necessary parts and tools were furnished by the United States, but in April General Breene had to report that New Zealand would be unable to carry out its original plan.

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It was still impossible by March to restore to operation the worn Packard-Merlin engines (V-165001) of the P-40F's, due to lack of facilities. These engines would have to be sent all the way back to the United States for repairs, but a plan was under consideration whereby the South Pacific might draw upon the surplus repair facilities in South Australia, where it was estimated that available General Motors installations would overhaul all of the South Pacific's Allison engines.

18

General Breene, Commanding General of SOS, had planned on a rate of 150 engines per month, but initially both personnel and equipment were inadequate to permit attainment of anything like this number. Absence of critical items in the Engineering Department, caused in part by the sinking of the SS Thomas A. Edison four months earlier, had severely handicapped the overhaul program, since as late as April none of the equipment had been replaced; but despite this shortage, some

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finished engines were coming from the test blocks in May. ¹⁹ However, lack of proper repair equipment continued to hurt the program, for many of the engines overhauled in the theater were found to be unserviceable upon receipt in the forward area. ²⁰ And occasionally engines arriving from the United States caused trouble; several shipments of R-2600-13/29 engines from the Oklahoma Air Depot gave faulty performance, while other shipments showed rust in the cylinders for want of rust preventive and proper handling of pliofilm bags. ²¹

Not long after the activation of the Thirteenth Air Force it became apparent to General Harmon that effective deployment and tactical use of the service units could not be made until their administration was coordinated under a single headquarters charged with full responsibility for air service and base functions for AAF units. He planned to establish a service command which would follow closely the standard pattern, with a service commander having jurisdiction over the two main functions of repair and maintenance, and supply-salvage. Initially he would hold the organization under General Breene's direct supervision, believing that it was inadvisable to place the service command under General Twining. It was clear that the Thirteenth's commander was fully occupied in his efforts to exercise as much influence as possible on tactical operations, employment, and distribution of his combat forces. Furthermore Twining was on Espiritu Santo, too far removed from the focal point of service activity, which was on New Caledonia. ²² The key to all supply in the area was shipping; Harmon reported that "every thing revolves about and is dependent upon shipping." Breene was deeply involved in it, and daily

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was becoming more so as the Navy transferred additional functions to SOS; all these factors indicated that a very close relationship should be maintained between the new service command and SOS.²³

Accordingly, on 1 April General Harmon was informed of the constitution of the Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron of the XIII Air Force Service Command and was authorized to activate the command at the earliest practicable date.²⁴ Two weeks later on 14 April, the command was activated in the field, to be placed under the direction of Col. George McCoy, Jr., who was Harmon's choice for the post and who had been assigned to the Thirteenth Air Force on 4 May.²⁵ The new command did not become a going concern at once; in fact, in responding to a questionnaire from General McNarney in Washington, Breene pointed to the vast distances involved, the poor communications, and lack of air transport, all of which made for "extreme difficulty" in establishing the command. He questioned seriously whether such a command could be made to function as visualized by AAF Regulation 65-1.²⁶

There were ample reasons for his skepticism. The combat units in the South Pacific operated at the end of an exceedingly long supply line whose tenuous nature offered numerous opportunities for delay, as for example, the loss of the vessel carrying engineering supplies for the air depot. In theory, the 13th Air Depot Group, which bore responsibility for fourth echelon supply, was to carry on hand a 180-days' supply for all AAF aircraft in the theater, as well as parts for the New Zealand units which were treated on the same basis as the U. S. forces.²⁷

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Requisitions for stock for the 13th Air Depot were submitted to the Hawaiian Air Department, which then filled the requests so far as its stocks permitted, extracting the remainder from the Sacramento Air Depot. Should Sacramento lack the necessary items, the requisitions were then forwarded to the Air Service Command at Patterson Field, where arrangements could be made with factories to furnish the necessary items.

This was a complicated line for the fourth echelon, one which might easily permit delay, and it did. Much water lay between San Francisco and New Caledonia.

Below Tontouta third echelon supply and maintenance was the responsibility of the service groups which the 13th Air Depot in theory stocked with a 30-day level of parts and supplies for direct issue to tactical or air base squadrons. It had been impossible to hold the two service groups intact, with the result that by March the units were widely scattered as follows:

- Guepalecanal--one-half of the 29th Service Group (82d Service Sq.)
- Espiritu Santo--one-half of the 29th Service Group (40th Service Sq.)
- New Caledonia--one-half of the 6th Service Group (71st Service Sq.)
- Nandi--one-half of the 6th Service Group (38th Service Sq.)

In addition to the above, two air base squadrons were in the theater, the 375th at Nandi, and the 361st based at Tontouta. Both were charged with maintenance of their respective airports and were responsible for the repair of A/C and other transient aircraft, although the 361st bore the additional responsibility of maintaining the airfields at Plaines des Galacs and Oua Tom. Down at Magenta near Noumea, the 65th Service Squadron, attached to the I Island Air Command, was assembling fighter aircraft at the rate of five per day, although this rate could be doubled when necessary.

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It was a loose-jointed, badly undermanned service organization which Breene controlled. Already an appeal had gone in to Washington for two additional service groups in order to station a complete group on each of the four major islands, but even more pressing was the need for an organization designed to operate the airbases and take care of the local house-keeping chores, thereby relieving the service groups from such work.

31

General Harmon, foreseeing the need for this type of unit in late 1942, had placed a request for six of the new airbase squadrons as early as November. In December it had been anticipated that the six would be ready by 1 April 1943, but they had not arrived, and toward the end of the month COMSOPAC hoped that within the next 60 days his airbase squadrons would come in to ease the load on his technicians.

32

Combat operations had indicated a number of materiel shortages which had not been foreseen. Battle damage and operational accidents had created a requirement for an exceptionally large amount of sheet metal work; hence Harmon asked for a 50 per cent increase in shipments of aluminum alloy sheet, aluminum sheet metal, and rivets of all types. The old problem of lack of sulphuric acid persisted and he asked for a supply, since only the P-38's came with battery acid. And the supply of wing tips should be doubled. He could cite a surplus in only one item: too many fighter engines were reaching the theater and he recommended a cut of 25 per cent in delivery, but at the same time he called for an equal increase in the flow of bomber engines.

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Slowly the service organization "grew up like Topsy," according to COMSOPAC. A fresh service group added its technicians to those

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already in the South Pacific when the 321st Air Service Group reached Pallikulo Bay, Espiritu Santo on 25 June 1943. Here the 321st set up and operated an Air Service Center for the maintenance and supply of all Thirteenth / ^{Air} Force units on Espiritu Santo, and it provided personnel and equipment for the operation of Pekoia Field, but not before it had suffered through the same handicaps which had affected the 29th Group six months earlier.

Arrival of the 321st Group was not expected, and the result was considerable excitement on Espiritu Santo. Once again the service units were put ashore from their transport without most of their equipment; they lacked proper working tools and their recent movements had been of such a nature that at the time they arrived at the island they could not even determine where their stocks were located. ³⁵ Apparently a part of the equipment was carried back to the United States in the hold of the Brazil; but whatever the cause of the shortage, the group was forced to operate for three months with whatever tools the personnel had been able to carry ashore, beg from the 40th Service Squadron, or gain by barter with the Naval Aviation Supply Annex at Pallikulo Bay. And once again it was necessary for the trained technicians to construct their living quarters from dunnage, salvaged materials, and whatever items could be begged or borrowed. The result was inevitable. The group was unable to accomplish effectively its first mission, which was to provide relief for the 29th Air Service Group as the latter moved on up to Guadalcanal. ³⁶ But despite all difficulties, by 1 July the XIII Air Force Service Command was ready for operations at its headquarters on Espiritu Santo. Henceforth all

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matters formerly handled by SOS would now pass directly to Colonel
38
McGoy's organization.

From the beginning it was evident that in the South Pacific area the mission of the XIII Service Command would be much broader than was normal for similar organizations in a forward area because of the close operational relationships with other services. In addition to the usual requirement that it procure all classes of AAF supplies, including aircraft from the mainland, and that it establish supply depots on all the South Pacific bases, there were the demands of the New Zealand squadrons in the Solomons, and those of Marine and naval units. Accordingly, the command was to: (1) procure and issue in accordance with lend-lease provisions all classes of AAF supplies to the RNZAF in the South Pacific; and (2) procure and distribute bombs and ammunition for all land-based aircraft in the South Pacific, including Marine, Navy, and RNZAF. Furthermore, it was to provide facilities for maintenance, repair, and modification, including a depot for fourth echelon work on New Caledonia, to operate airbases, provide commanders for the bases, construct and maintain airstrips and installations, and maintain air transport operations including medical air evacuation in the South Pacific in conjunction with
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Marine air transport units. All this was a large order, and it placed upon the service units a very heavy burden, but creation of the new command slowly made possible an improved integration of the effort of the widely scattered groups and squadrons. On 6 June General Harmon issued a directive in an attempt to clarify the responsibilities of the local island base commanders with respect to administrative and operational

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control over the scattered units of the Thirteenth Air Force, a directive which tended to free the service command units from administrative control of the local island air commands.⁴⁰ Henceforth all AAF units and Associated Arms and Services operating under the XIII Air Force Service Command would be directly under the control of that command, submitting all administrative matters directly to Colonel McCoy's office.⁴¹

Under the former system it had been difficult for a service group to maintain close contact even with its own squadrons. For example, at each of the four major air bases on New Caledonia it was necessary for units of the 6th Air Service Group to maintain small air force supply installations. The 65th Service Squadron was at Magenta; personnel from the 65th, 71st, and 38th Service Squadrons were at the Tontouta Air Base; the 38th Service Squadron was at Oua Tom; the 71st Service Squadron was at Flaines des Gaiacs; and additional personnel were scattered over the length of the island. At each base it was necessary to route all correspondence from squadron or company through the base to the group, a situation which improved after activation of the XIII Service Command even though it was not entirely eliminated on all islands.⁴² To complicate this problem of administration, the command channels on New Caledonia were confusing, consisting of six different commands: I Island Air Command, United States Army Forces in the South Pacific Area (USAFISPA), South Pacific Force, and the Air Center Commander for allocation of areas for air; SOS units, and Base Service Commands for supply.⁴³ Fortunately there was some diminution in the widespread practice of diverting the service units from their primary function to secondary tasks requiring less skilled manpower.⁴⁴

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But the major problems remained; the six airdrome squadrons had not yet arrived, all along the line the cry of the using units was for more parts, and the service organizations of the new command were well aware of the heavy load they carried.⁴⁵

The requirements of combat often created a need for items which were not available to keep planes in the air. For example, in June the 390th Bombardment Squadron (M) at Carney Field on Guadalcanal reported a shortage of B-25 parts, with no new tires available. Stray shots due to comparatively mild enemy action would deflate the tires, resulting in the grounding of the medium bombers for long periods of time when otherwise they were in perfect operational status and ready for immediate combat.⁴⁶ Heavy bombers wanted engines, instruments, and various parts; fighters were without special tools, and special items were needed at all levels.⁴⁷

The fact that an analysis of the records left by the using units within the Thirteenth Air Force would indicate a consistent complaint over the lack of supply does not mean that no machinery existed to keep the lines open to the forward areas. The theater was the Navy's, with numerous subordinate units of several services under Halsey's control; in recognition of the need for bringing together the services in the various theaters, in March 1943 Admiral King issued a basic logistical plan governing the supply of areas involving joint Army and Navy operations.⁴⁸ The core of the plan was simple: it was to insure coordinated logistical effort in each area where unity of command had been established, and to achieve effective utilization of supplies and shipping. Two months later, in accordance with Admiral King's directive, Halsey

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announced the establishment of a Joint Logistical Board. His goal was efficient utilization of personnel, equipment, supplies, facilities, shipping, and other services of the Army and Navy, including fleet requirements and civilian shipping space. To accomplish these goals he appointed a board consisting of the following: Commander Service Squadron, South Pacific Force (chairman); Commanding General, Services of Supply, South Pacific (representing CC GRSOPAC); Commander Fleet Air, Noumea (representing CC AIRSOPAC); and the Commanding General, Supply Service, First Marine Amphibious Corps (representing the Commanding General, First Marine Amphibious Corps). This was the organization which theoretically resolved differences between the services, allocated the shipping space within the island theater, and expedited the movement of essential items northward into the forward areas. But at some point along the line between the producing centers in the United States and the coco-log bunkers of Funafu, there were obstacles which impeded the maintenance of a flow of parts regarded as satisfactory by the using units.

When the 82d Service Squadron under Capt. John T. McKinney moved up to Guadalcanal on 1 March, it entered an area even more primitive than the one it had left on Espiritu. Once again it had to construct a camp without a supply of nails or screen wire for screening its tents, or without an adequate supply of water pipes, electrical fixtures, or shower heads. Yet four days after the units arrived, a primitive camp area and shops were ready; and with hand tools only, mechanics began work on the backlog of damaged and grounded planes which had accumulated during the months of December, January, and February when no service squadron was on the island, and on the freshly damaged planes coming in

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from their missions. No proper area was available, making it necessary to perform maintenance on the strip itself, although the Seabees were persuaded to haul in a few loads of gravel so that several small shops could be erected. From March through June, when two additional service squadrons arrived on Guadalcanal, the engineering section of the 82d patched and repaired, always under the handicap of enemy night bombing which not only cut deeply into the opportunity for sleep and rest, but on occasion added to the number of aircraft to be repaired. After the disastrous attack of 23 March, no less than 14 planes were turned over to the squadron for third and fourth echelon repairs, yet by nightfall four B-24's had been restored to flying condition.⁵³

In the beginning, supply activities on Guadalcanal were limited, in fact the incoming flow of parts was nearly nonexistent and the main source of supply was the salvage of wrecked aircraft. Prior to the arrival of the 82d, the using organizations had followed the practice of submitting their own requisitions to the depot, a policy which in some cases caused confusion down at Tontouta due to the incomplete manner of making out the requests. Now from two trailers and three pyramidal tents, the 82d Service Squadron introduced the first evidence of organized supply to Henderson Field, taking steps to establish the supply section as the sole requisitioning agency for the 13th Air Depot and drawing upon the Navy and Marine stocks in order to avoid the long delays of proper channels.⁵⁴ For even after the supply problem was well in hand on the island there was still a long delay in contacting New Caledonia. Because of inadequate communication facilities, requisitions sometimes required two weeks to reach the 13th Air Depot at

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Tontouta, and another month might pass before action copies returned, with the result that in many cases supplies were received ahead of the action copies of the requisitions.
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Shortly after the activation of the service command it became apparent that a more substantial supply unit was needed in the forward area; actually two air depots would be necessary for the efficient operation of the Thirteenth Air Force. Because of lack of storage facilities, at first all requisitions on the depot were for immediate requirements only, but in preparation for the Munda campaign, in May a survey was initiated by the 29th Air Service Group to establish a 30 days' requirement for combat units on Guadalcanal.
56 As soon as possible a small advance depot with personnel and equipment drawn from the 13th Depot Group was sent forward to Guadalcanal, where it was combined with the 25th Depot Supply Squadron. Originally this advance depot drew the major portion of its supplies from the Tontouta depot but after 1 January 1944 it began to submit its requisitions directly to the Pacific Overseas Air Service Command, becoming for practical purposes an operating unit responsible for the requisitioning, storage, and issue of all classes of AAF technical supplies.
57 But even this system had its hazards; the United States would often send out the wrong part, owing to the lack of^a complete and current set of Technical Orders and Stock Lists on Guadalcanal.
58

When the 38th Air Engineering Squadron moved to Guadalcanal early in August, it quickly established a supply section at Fighter No. 2. Here it ordered directly from the 13th Air Depot, which filled all requisitions promptly and by air shipment. The section was concerned solely

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with fighter aircraft, providing parts not only for those based on Guadalcanal but also for the planes operating from advance bases farther up the Solomons. ⁵⁹

Everywhere it was a case of adapting new techniques to the conditions in the area. Down on Espiritu Santo the 40th Service Squadron had remained behind to service the heavy bombers based on that island. There the mechanics faced a different problem from that presented in the training phase at Morris Field. ⁶⁰ Regularly the B-17's were returning badly shot up from their strikes, but there could be no thought of clearing an area in the jungles and groves where the planes might be repaired. If they could not be brought to the mechanics, then mechanics and equipment must go to the bunkers where the damaged aircraft were parked. The solution lay in mobility--and ingenuity. Four 2 1/2-ton trucks with power take-off winches each were equipped with an air compressor, a C-1B electric power plant, and 11 mechanic's tool kits. No C-2 wrecker was available, so a fifth 2 1/2-tonner was converted into a hoisting truck capable of lifting 4,000 pounds to a height of 17 feet. In addition three 1/4-ton trailers were fitted with power plants and compressors, and with all this equipment the squadron achieved mobility.

Repair trucks carrying entire repair crew moved to the bunkers, where with the aid of floodlights they labored as long as 16 hours daily, halting only for meals, and at one time the squadron had 13 B-17's under simultaneous repair. Over a period of six months, the 40th Service Squadron performed third echelon maintenance on 116 aircraft, most of which were bombers, without benefit of a hangar or any similar shelter. And it was the machinists of this squadron who, with no more equipment than that

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in
 carried/their machine-shop trailer, performed the initial B-24 bomb-
 rack modification, doubling the number of bomb stations from 20 to 40.
 Every fifth day this small crew turned out a B-24 with the new racks com-
 pletely installed. When "Madame-X," a B-17 with a fine combat record and
 the squadron's first repair job, went down over Bougainville the men who
 had repaired her felt as if they had lost a part of their own unit. ⁶¹

Improvisation and something which for lack of a better term might
 be labeled native engineering skill helped mightily to overcome the handi-
 cap of lack of parts. Tools which were authorized and not supplied were
 made on the spot from strange sources; a brake-drum lathe was designed
 and produced locally, 90-mm. cartridge cases became mufflers, mechanical
 refrigerators were manufactured, and power hoists were produced for bomb-
 service trucks. ⁶² Even down in New Caledonia at Tontouta, close to the
 source of supply, where the B-250's and D's were being modified as low-
 level strafers, improvisation was the normal procedure. On 22 January
 1943, 50 men and three mobile repair units of the 71st Service Squadron,
 6th Service Group had gone to Tontouta to work on B-24's, and to modify
 the 42d Group's B-25's for strafing, by the installation of eight forward-
 firing .50-cal. machine guns; and in February the Engineering Department
 of the 13th Air Depot Group initiated this large-scale program. ⁶³

It was a most ambitious and long-term project, but in its earlier
 stages the work was, in the judgment of a North American Aircraft Company
 field representative, "more or less savage." Lacking materials, the sheet
 metal workers went to any possible source. With a torch they cut up truck

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beds to obtain sheet steel for gun mounts, welding them together and beating or fastening them on with bailing wire. Bomb-bay controls had to be improvised since the strafing modification required removal of all original cable controls, leading them instead to the pilot's compartment where they were to be operated by the co-pilot. The solution was a series of rods and bell cranks running aft through the navigator's compartment into the bomb bay, an arrangement which was mechanically imperfect and caused much trouble both to install and to maintain. But it was the quickest method to get the planes into the air, and by 10 July, 36 B-25's had been modified to carry a total of 14 guns.

By 1 July the XIII Service Command was a functioning unit, yet on the very next day General Marshall proposed to COMGENSOPAC a plan by which all Thirteenth Air Force fourth echelon supply and maintenance would be transferred to a base depot at Townsville in Australia as soon as the depot could be made ready. As justification for the move he cited the shipping situation, lack of suitable harbor facilities, proximity of eventual lines of communication of the two Pacific theaters, and perhaps most cogent, the economy of effort, although he explained to Harmon that 13th Depot personnel would not be moved.

Harmon's reaction was negative and explicit. Categorically he listed the reasons that such a move should not be made. The current tactical situation was critical, too critical to shift from "an adequate and rapidly improving air service organization to one whose service to this area is questionable." And past experience in dealing with service activities outside his command had not been entirely satisfactory. Existing shipping facilities were now "reasonably satisfactory"; he understood that the Navy was obtaining additional water transportation to facilitate the forward movement of aviation supplies, and the arrival

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of the two fresh troop carrier squadrons currently en route would insure rapid distribution to combat units. Harbor facilities in the rear areas were approaching adequacy and he pointed to the Navy's elaborate supply bases which would tend to hold shipping in the area as long as air operations continued. His major fear was that the carefully nurtured supply system would be upset prior to the Bougainville and Rabaul operations; the 13th Air Depot was now a going concern--let it continue. Thirty engines had come off the overhaul line, a large stock of parts was on hand, and the 36 B-25's had been modified with practically all non-standard parts fabricated locally. And in any case COMGENSOPAC felt that the plan violated the principle of command control of the means available.

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General Arnold read the objections, then persisted in his efforts to overcome them. He assured Harmon that there was no intention of transferring out of the Thirteenth Air Force any facilities or personnel for engine overhaul until such time as tactical operations permitted and Australian facilities were ready. But at the same time he cautioned that in order to permit expansion of the 5th Air Force Base Depot in accordance with the plan, Harmon should not enlarge his rear base fourth echelon overhaul and supply installations beyond current requirements. From Washington, General Arnold saw a merging of the lines of communication to the two southern Pacific air forces, while the line northward was greatly extended; therefore he ordered Harmon to cooperate with the Fifth Air Force to inaugurate the plan as soon "as practicable."

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Here then was a threat to one of the basic components in the supply structure which Harmon, Breene, and McCoy had constructed, one which would throw them even more upon the mercy of surface transport. But

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as directed, Colonel McCoy went over to Australia to sound out the V Air Force Service Command officers. On one point both sides agreed--it was not practicable presently to carry out the plan because of the lack of transportation facilities, the distances involved, and the resultant loss of time in completing each transaction. Therefore instead of following the original concept directed by Washington, the two air forces would continue their existing "close cooperation," in which the Fifth would aid the Thirteenth in every way possible by furnishing the latter's requirements from stock or with parts manufactured locally. The conference recommended that a liaison officer from the South Pacific be placed on duty with the Fifth, but that was all; no further action would be taken until the tactical situation permitted the proposed change.

In vigorously defending his supply system, General Harmon had committed himself to no extravagant claims. Things were going reasonably well; he saw good prospects for improvement. But a major share of responsibility for attainment of prompt movement within the theater rested in the availability of surface shipping, both to the theater and within it. When queried as to the average lapse of time between the dispatch of emergency radio requisitions and receipt of supplies or parts from Hawaii and from the mainland, General Twining reported 12 days by air from Hawaii if space were available, otherwise no estimate could be suggested inasmuch as there was no regular water service between Hawaii and the South Pacific. From the mainland the total air delivery time would average 20 days when space was available, but often it was not, which meant that the parts

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would go by water, costing an average elapsed time of 60 days from the date of the initial request.⁷⁰ This of course was unsatisfactory to the Thirteenth Air Force commander, who ascribed it to unnecessary delay caused by the backlog of work at the Hawaiian Air Depot, and to the lack of direct shipment, thus necessitating delay in transshipment of supplies from the rear port of entry to the forward areas. But in general, Twining felt that the flow of supplies to the theater satisfied his requirements within authorized allowances when the ordered items were available in the United States.⁷¹

However satisfactory the commanding general might consider the situation to be, using organizations on the line found continuous gaps in their supply bins. In many units it frequently required not 60 days but six months to complete the shipment of a requisitioned part, even after the item had reached the theater; and when much later in the campaign it became necessary to fly squadrons to a new point, leaving behind their organizational equipment until replacement could be provided at the new base, they were forced to operate without their basic tools.⁷² The supply of parts for AAF special purpose vehicles such as Cletracs, Autocar truck tractors and fuel servicing trailers never was adequate; neither was their first echelon maintenance, for seldom were they even lubricated.⁷³ In fact it was later charged from the field that those responsible for providing parts for Air Corps, Ordnance, Engineering, Signal, and Chemical Warfare special purpose vehicles and equipment "had either an unbounded faith in the ruggedness and durability of their equipment, extreme confidence in Ordnance maintenance, or perhaps just a

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profound belief in Santa Claus."⁷⁴

But the combat units--above all, those squadrons still carrying on with the old B-17's--felt the shortages most keenly during the first half of 1943. In April the 394th Bombardment Squadron (H), reporting on the critical shortage of replacement engines, stated that 20 per cent of its total strength was grounded for this cause, while for those planes still flying the inadequate supply of instruments created a definite hazard.⁷⁵ The 72d Bombardment Squadron indicated similar parts shortages, as did the 23d and 31st Bombardment Squadrons. In the 23d no parts were available for automatic flight control equipment, a shortage which had rendered inoperative most of the sets in the squadron's planes. Spark plugs recommended for use in the R-1820-65 engines were not always available, making it necessary to install other types unsuited for the engines then operating at low altitudes, with less than satisfactory and sometimes dangerous results.⁷⁶ Obsolete radar equipment in the 31st Squadron's planes caused failure of some missions; gun sights were needed, as were turret parts, maintenance tools, tail-wheel assemblies, cylinder heads and pistons, and improved flares for night attacks on shipping.⁷⁷

The critical problem lay in the shortage of engines. The 23d Squadron was operating with a supply of engines which only recently had been overhauled in Brisbane, but whose performance was highly unsatisfactory. In one plane on Espiritu Santo the No. 3 engine was replaced four times in two weeks, while the squadron's forward echelon up on Guadalcanal found that several of its Australian engines froze up during their ground test run prior to the test flight; they had "absolutely failed to stand up, even for normal flight conditions."⁷⁸

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However, when the members of the 5th Bombardment Group finally were able to complete the exchange of their worn B-17's for new B-24's, one major source of supply troubles was removed.

Fighter aircraft caused somewhat less trouble than the bombers, though there was in the major theaters to maintain an adequate flow of engines. P-40's in particular were a sore spot. Their engines could not be overhauled at the 15th Air Depot, and the 66 P-40's of the 52AF required frequent change of the P-1710-73 engines, as did the P-1710-01's of the P-40's. Since a period of three months occurred between the time of placing an order and actual arrival of the engine, it was necessary--but difficult--to keep on hand an adequate supply of

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spares. Nevertheless, in October Colonel McCoy could report that the maximum engine overhaul capacity of the 15th Air Depot was adjusted to the production of 70 in-line engines per month, provided no change of location was required. The Navy too would assist the depot by overhauling a number of 1300-43's and 1500-92's for the B-24's and of the 2600 type for the B-25's, for a total output from all sources of approximately 80 65 radial engines per month.

Engines, then, remained a critical item, so scarce that throughout the campaign aircraft were forced to fly with their power plants over the "100 engine time" limit. Yet this shortage was hardly more acute than that of a list of other critical items which included acetylene, carbon dioxide, general components such as pumps, carburetors, propeller governors, instruments, internal power plants, hydraulic fluid, ethylene glycol,

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paint, lucite, and plexiglass.

Another serious difficulty arose in connection with the failure of the mainland depots to forward an adequate and timely supply of Technical Orders. New model aircraft invariably were fitted with numerous parts and accessories which were not interchangeable with similar items on the older type of planes. Invariably, too, these new types arrived well ahead of the parts supply required to sustain them or Technical Orders to explain how to operate and maintain them. The result was delayed repairs and inability on the part of the supply sections to order the correct parts, a factor very troublesome in connection with radar equipment, where technical advance proceeded at a rapid rate.

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An important factor contributing to the general shortage of supply was the type of shipping containers and crating used by the depots in the United States. Cardboard was satisfactory for use in a temperate climate, but in the tropics it caused many items to arrive damaged, potentially in a repairable condition but so corroded by moisture as to be beyond economical repair; and because of exposure a significant percentage of supplies was unserviceable upon arrival. Self-sealing fuel tanks, shipped in small crates, often arrived badly dented, and it was necessary to send out a factory representative to instruct personnel in the technique of repairing them. When these tanks next were shipped in cardboard boxes, the containers would become wet and the tanks would bend. When finally plywood boxes lined with tar paper were adopted, the trouble was mended. But the difficulty in shipping belly tanks for the fighters, which originally were sent out packed in frame crates in-

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stead of solid boxes, was not solved. Often these tanks would be received "pretty well creased" or with holes punched in them, necessitating spot welding.⁸⁴

Engines were a problem, since the ever-present humidity could not be excluded from the containers. Some of them came in seal-tight cellophane wrappers, but even these permitted rust to develop in cylinder walls, which meant that the service personnel had to tear down the engines, then clean and pickle them all over again. At advance bases much time was lost due to lack of boxes suitable for the return of repairable items, particularly for aircraft engines; neither crates nor lumber were available, with the result that during peak operations it was frequently necessary to ship engines on surface vessels while

⁸⁵ mounted on cradles. A request to Patterson Field to remedy this situation by the shipment of engine boxes and crates had gone in late in August, but it was impossible to schedule shipment before 1 October.⁸⁶

A peculiar difficulty was presented by the activity of the Thirteenth Air Force engineer units, whose supply was judged to be less satisfactory than that of any service unit involved in the Solomons campaign. All six of the engineer aviation battalions arrived at their stations without their equipment, thereby placing themselves under handicap, but thereafter they were plagued by a continuing shortage of construction materials. For supply they drew upon the base engineer depots, normally operated by ground forces, and these "seemed unwilling to accept responsibility for adequately providing AAF units with essential supplies."⁸⁷ Controlled by ground infantry divisions, these depots often were frozen

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when the division, or a part thereof, was alerted for a new forward movement, a period which might coincide with the arrival of an AAF unit coming in to set up new installations for air organizations and hence in urgent need of construction materials.⁸⁸

The air service groups suffered from the lack of all types of engineer support. At Espiritu Santo engineer supplies were controlled by the Island Command in such a restrictive manner as to make procurement practically impossible. As a direct consequence, the 321st Service Group was forced to take down trees along the taxiways by using inexperienced personnel and equipment which properly belonged in the third echelon shops. Naval Seabee units often lent or donated equipment not obtainable from the engineer battalion, and if the service groups procured lumber in the forward areas, it was either from the Navy or by various unorthodox and private deals.⁸⁹ And so it was with the 29th Air Service Group on Espiritu Santo. Basic items for construction such as lumber, nails, cement, electric wire, light bulbs, pipe, and many other essentials were "practically non-existent" for Air Corps units. There was lumber on the island, but the service groups were not considered when priorities were assigned for its use; they could not procure any from Army sources. On Espiritu Santo the 29th secured its supplies from the Navy,⁹⁰ and later on Munda, and without difficulty on either island.

On Guadalcanal there never were sufficient Class IV engineer supplies to carry on the construction required, despite the fact that

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the Navy had issued considerable quantities of materials to Army units and sizeable amounts were flown in from New Caledonie. Whatever the cause, the shortage quickly compounded and made itself felt all along the line. For example, when the 6th Air Service Group moved up to Guadalcanal on 3 July, Army engineers had failed to furnish equipment; hence it was necessary to clear the jungle from the selected campsites by hand. Because of the denseness of growth, the task required more than 30 days, during which time many men were hospitalized as a result of skin poisoning from contact with the trees.

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A growing need for intransit depots developed as the forces of operations swung northwestward. As early as August the 13th Air Depot recognized the problem, requesting Tables of Organization and information on the establishment of an intransit depot, but little formal authorization for such units existed. An AAF intransit depot was needed at each base as soon as the first AAF units arrived. One was established at Guadalcanal but because its personnel, who lacked training for the task, and its equipment were drawn from the already overburdened air depots and service groups, efficiency of the depot was less than satisfactory. Even on Espiritu Santo supplies suffered damage for lack of adequate storage installations. No provision had been made for equipment essential for construction of the necessary buildings and shops, thus costing the 321st Service Group valuable time which it might otherwise have given to servicing tactical units.

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Because of inadequate storage facilities and the lengthy process necessary to unload ships in the forward areas, huge stocks of equipment and supplies were ruined. Materials lay corroding along the

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water front or beach areas; half-opened cases were an invitation to passers-by who could read the stenciled description of the contents on the outside of each box, and the result was a high rate of pilferage.
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Even where service units had established proper Air Corps supply installations, they were rarely permitted to operate them without interference. Technically trained personnel were pulled away to clear areas, erect warehouses, construct ^{houses;} facilities, and to join whatever construction and drainage details were believed necessary by local area commanders. The result was haphazard installations due to inexperience of the personnel, and overcrowding of property classes in Air Corps supply. Service groups and their subordinate units never had enough men to maintain a supply section properly. From 25 to 40 men would be assigned to supply work, but rarely was a full complement available; KP, guard duty, or the vagaries of local commanders kept the skilled technical
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enlisted men insulated from their primary function.

Not all of the shortcomings could be charged to lack of transport; in part they could be laid to inherent inflexibility in the entire Army organization and, in the case of personnel, to the fact that the United States did not have available a sufficient body of trained personnel to meet the needs of every theater in the global war. Not every contingency could be foreseen. Tables of Organization and Equipment (T/O's and T/E's) often failed to meet the requirements of South Pacific operations where conditions could change very rapidly, and where the original basic

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authorizations either fell short of need or included items useless in the tropics. ⁹⁶ To the supply men "throughout the entire campaign established regulations and procedures made it so involved and difficult to authorize equipment needed over basic allowances that some operations were hampered." They found it "an utter waste of time" to submit proposed T/O's and T/E's to the War Department because by the time the request had been approved and returned to the theater, an entirely ⁹⁷ different problem was being encountered.

For many functions the tables fell short: they did not provide for adequate refueling equipment or for sufficient personnel to operate the aviation gas tank farms and drum stocks. Men detailed to this work from other organizations were not inclined to assume too much responsibility because they felt they were working on an off-color task offering slight opportunity for promotion. Then there was the difficulty caused by location of the tank farms and drum dumps. Invariably these were located in inaccessible areas with poor feeder roads so that some of the refueling equipment was unable to reach the dump, particularly during the rainy season. The allotted 200-gallon A-24 gasoline trailer only rarely could be used as originally intended; its low road clearance ⁹⁸ made it impossible to tow the unit into the supply point.

Or again, throughout the campaign field lighting equipment was extremely critical and inadequate, and much trouble was encountered in securing adequate electric power for the service groups. Basic tables allowed to the groups a number of small capacity gasoline-driven generators; the 13th Air Depot had in use six high-speed 50-kw. sets,

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all air cooled, and hence they ran too hot in the heat of the tropics. Breakdowns were "continual," seriously delaying work, and fluctuations of current from the C-12 generators were so common that instrument repair shops could not be operated satisfactorily. The answer lay in heavier, Diesel-driven equipment.

On 30 July the 13th Air Depot, reporting that its own six machines would not last more than 60 days, requested two 500-kw. or four 250-kw. Diesel-powered generator sets. ⁹⁹ But the 250-kw. Diesel outfits were not available "in any reasonable time." The smaller 100-kw. machines would not be available in less than three months and even they could be requisitioned only by the theater engineer through normal channels drawing upon the Corps of Engineers. Only the 50-kw. gasoline generators ¹⁰⁰ were on hand in AAF stocks and available for immediate replacement. Fortunately these could be sent; the 13th Air Depot promptly ordered eight of them plus three for Guadalcanal, where they were badly needed for night illumination of the airfields. In fact field lighting was regularly "extremely critical and inadequate," due once again to the low output of the small generators and the frequent breakdowns. Since ¹⁰¹ no parts were available, complete replacement was the sole solution.

The inadequacy of the original allotments continued to make itself felt in many ways. Tables of Organization and Equipment had given the airdrome squadrons six A-3 trailers (each of 600-gallon capacity) for use in refueling P-39's, but new fighters had larger tanks, making the trailers too small for the task. Equipment normally authorized for

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both the old service squadrons and the newer air engineering squadrons was inadequate to provide for the local manufacture of items which were needed to hold aircraft operational and which could not be obtained from the local supply centers.

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Alteration of the basic tables was cumbersome and so was the problem of securing an adequate supply of trained personnel for the service command. Originally either the service units were well trained or they learned of necessity, but as the campaign progressed up the Solomons it was noted that filler and replacement personnel fell below the earlier standard, many individuals arriving untrained, unqualified, and often incorrectly assigned to a specialty. Former meat cutters were assigned to ordnance units which had no such tasks; service station attendants arrived as auto mechanics.

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And to the skilled veterans in the field there seemed to be no adequate program in the United States for training supply personnel. So far as possible job training was given, and General Twining advised General Arnold that for all but key personnel he could overcome the initial deficiency in the field, provided the personnel were potentially capable of assuming responsibilities commensurate with the assignment. But often six months of training were necessary before a warehouseman or a stock record clerk could be classified as skilled.

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The personnel problem was by no means confined to procurement of able enlisted men; not all the officers fully understood the functions of the service groups, and this was especially true of the ground officers or those whose prior experience had been confined to ground infantry

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troops. The 321st Air Service Group in particular suffered from this factor, and there is evidence to indicate that its initial unhappy reputation was the product in no small part of the attitude of its older officers. Men whose sole contact had been with infantry units were not altogether able to grasp the function of a service group; upon arrival overseas they "still were of the belief that our organization would march to positions within small arms fire of the infantry front lines."¹⁰⁵

All these factors contributed to the shortage of parts and equipment, and in the view of officers who lived through the campaign, there could be added to the list the lack of adequate planning by supply personnel at unit, depot, and command level. "In practically every instance the cause for an item's becoming critical can be laid to mechanical weakness encountered under field conditions, and the failure to notify the proper supply agencies far enough in advance of needs caused item after item to go on to the critical list."¹⁰⁶

Fortunately, during the summer of 1943 the general supply situation and the number of personnel slowly improved. The six airdrome squadrons all had reached the theater in July and, though they were not always employed to their own satisfaction, they provided a pool of skilled technicians when the need arose.¹⁰⁷ By October, the 6th Service Group had leapfrogged over Guadalcanal from New Caledonia, going ashore on the Russells on the 30th, where its primary task was to service the B-25's of the 42d Bombardment Group (M) and the P-39's, and later the P-38's, of the 347th Fighter Group.¹⁰⁸ Here in the Russells the supply section of the 71st Air Service Squadron drew upon the advanced depot at Guadalcanal,

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and its report was entirely different from the earlier months. Transportation facilities by air and water were excellent, permitting a one-day service from Guadalcanal's depot, and since the supply section was located just off the taxiway of the air strip approximately one mile from the harbor, handling of supplies was reduced to a minimum. 109

Even while the Vella Lavella operation was under way, the South Pacific commanders were considering moving the focal point of service activities northward from New Caledonia. By October, the gradual forward movement of the 13th Air Depot supply activities had been planned, and action had been taken to divert the major portion of aviation supplies up to Guadalcanal, where considerable warehousing was available at Koli Point. Advance aircraft repair activities of the 13th Air Depot were planned for Guadalcanal, and equipment and machine tools for this purpose were awaiting shipment from the United States. 110 Transfer of engine overhaul facilities from Tontouta to the Solomons was a more awkward matter; in fact, planning for this action was held in abeyance in recognition of the estimated loss of output during the move. Even under the most favorable conditions with duplicate housing and shop buildings provided prior to the movement of heavy equipment, a minimum delay in production of 15 days might be anticipated, and Harmon regarded the tactical situation as too critical to permit this. However, since the bulk of aviation supplies, repairs, and services of the 13th Air Depot were destined for the heavy bombers, and because it was expected that the major portion of the heavy-bomber strength would continue to base on

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Guadalcanal, Harmon proposed that the depot activities be located
on Guadalcanal rather than the Russells as proposed by the Navy. ¹¹¹

The depot finally went in at Carney Field after "tremendous debate
and argument" and over the Navy's objections. ¹¹²

Wherever possible, all service functions were pushed ahead in
the Solomons; as the service command units moved forward, an effort
was made to have new aircraft shipped as far forward as possible,
although only New Caledonia and Espiritu Santo had floating cranes
available. Guadalcanal and the Russells were dependent upon ship
or carrier gear for hoisting the planes to docks or barges, from
whence the disassembled aircraft could be towed to assembling points.
Fortunately there was unlimited road clearance at both the forward
bases. ¹¹³

As the Japanese fell back to the north, the service units moved
in behind them. Headquarters of the XIII Air Force ^{Service} Command had been
established on Espiritu Santo in the first half of June; in December
the units were moving to Guadalcanal where new headquarters were open-
ed on 13 January 1944. Already on 30 October 1943, the 6th Air Service
Group had advanced to the Russells and in December, January, and Febru-
ary the 321st Air Service Group moved in ahead to Munda. ¹¹⁴

One of the most encouraging and satisfactory of all supply opera-
tions in the Solomons was the establishment of the Unified Ammunition
Supply System, developed by Lt. Col. W. F. Tinsley. Originally bombs
were piled in upon Guadalcanal's single bomb dump as the result of the

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requisitions sent in by each service's own supply representative, thereby making it virtually impossible to segregate bombs procured by the Army, Navy, and the Marines. Yet so long as each service ordered independently through its own supply channels, there was constant danger of omission or duplication; some items were ordered in triplicate, others not at all. ¹¹⁵ To eliminate this confusion, Colonel Tinsley drew up a plan for coordination of all orders, submitting it to the Navy and Marine Corps air commanders on Guadalcanal after he had discussed the problem with the ordnance officers of these two services. He proposed that his own office act as a central clearinghouse for aircraft ammunition requisitions from all services on Guadalcanal; he would maintain complete records to indicate the amounts on hand, expended, and on order by all services. By local consent the proposal was accepted and it went into operation by mid-March 1943.

The plan worked well on Guadalcanal. Marine and Navy tactical units submitted weekly expenditure reports as did the officer in charge of the combined ordnance dumps, thus enabling Tinsley to watch closely the status of the ammunition supply. When certain items needed replenishment, it was possible to contact the ordnance officers of the other two services, whereupon each of the three would order his proportionate share through his respective supply organization. ¹¹⁶

Early in July Colonel McCoy directed Tinsley, who became Thirteenth Air Force Ordnance Officer on 1 July, to prepare to take over all aviation ordnance supply as of the 15th. ¹¹⁷ Immediately Tinsley saw the value of extending the Guadalcanal joint system throughout the combat

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area. Through several weeks of careful and lengthy negotiations, first with McCoy and Twining, then with the senior Navy and Marine commanders in the South Pacific, the plan was discussed and finally accepted by all services. On 29 September 1943, by COMSOPAC directive COMGENSOPAC was given complete responsibility for determining the requirements necessary to meet supply levels, and for procurement, distribution, supply, and maintenance of all aircraft ammunition used by U. S. and Allied air forces in the South Pacific. ¹¹⁸

A few days later this authority was passed on to the Thirteenth Air Force, and on 12 October was back with the XIII Air Force Service Command where it had originated with Colonel Tinsley. ¹¹⁹

Thus the joint system was spread over the South Pacific where it functioned effectively throughout the rest of 1943. Guadalcanal became the theater's principal aircraft ammunition depot, directly receiving all shipments for storage or subsequent transshipment as needed or for diversion to other island bases. ¹²⁰

In actual practice it was somewhat easier to procure bombs than to store them, for the tropical climate was the enemy of ordnance just as it was of most other materiel and of personnel. The damp moist air thoroughly penetrated nearly all types of explosives; thin cases of some types of bombs offered scanty protection against the rust, and rapid deterioration was the inevitable result. Unless consumed within a reasonable time, bombs would be stacked in the Grade III pile. Yet service groups lacked ordnance ammunition companies to provide the trained personnel necessary for efficient operation of the dumps, and they could not carry out the very frequent inspections necessary. ¹²¹ Constant rains

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played havoc with the roads leading to the bomb dumps, and "it invariably rains at the height of air activities"; because of the chronic lack of engineering troops to maintain the roads, much additional work was heaped upon the ordnance personnel who attempted to keep the bomb dump roads passable at all times.

More or less typical was the experience of the Ordnance Supply and Maintenance Companies (Aviation) which moved up to Guadalcanal in March, July, and August. Manned and equipped only to maintain and supply two small ready dumps, these units faced the task of handling "tremendous amounts" of ammunition and bombs required in the accelerated air activities; instead of minor dumps, they now were required to operate two large bomb dumps servicing one entire airfield at Koli. Out of the two companies only 36 ammunition men and 2 officers were available to perform the work normally assigned to an ammunition company of 180 men and 6 officers. Hence it became necessary to draw upon outside help to maintain the steady flow of ammunition from the incoming ships to the bomb boys and gunners of bombers and fighters. It was done under the bombs of the enemy's night raiders, in heavy rains, without adequate equipment, and often on a 24-hour daily schedule, but it was done and the men in the bomb dumps received nothing but high praise for their achievement.

As the shipping situation improved, so did the flow of supplies, though not to the satisfaction of all the tactical and service units. Many specialized items were delayed or completely failed to reach the theater, but always there were enough parts to keep most of the planes in the air. Though there were not so many as under ideal conditions,

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aerial warfare conducted from tropical jungle islands of the South Pacific did not permit ideal conditions. It was a reasonable assumption that the enemy was laboring under similar handicaps.

Inevitably, the question must arise: how was supply and maintenance accomplished at all in the lean months of the Pacific war? The answer lay in a combination of ingenuity, skill, the application of brute strength and sweat, a talent for improvisation on the part of men who themselves were the products of an industrial, mechanically-minded society, and in the endurance of a heavy drain upon the health of these men. Many times in emergencies AAF units received help from the Navy, always more richly furnished with equipment than the Army, and to a lesser extent there was help from the Marines. Had it not been for local contacts with Navy personnel, many units would have been without refrigerators, ice units, dump trucks, bomb-service trucks, pontoons for hauling water, plywood lumber, paint, plus a long list of additional items not obtainable from Army sources.

As to the reasons behind the shortages in the supply bins, the record is not yet complete. Many of the causative factors have been indicated; certainly a part of the fault lay in the impossibility of foreseeing in advance under existing military organization all the exigencies of air warfare on remote island bases in a tropical climate. Items whose lack raised serious handicaps to operations simply were not produced or procured in time to be available when needed. But fundamentally it is highly probable that the source of much of the trouble lay deep within the country's basic military organization.

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Chapter VI

THE PROBLEM OF PERSONNEL; ARRIVAL OF THE B-24 "SNOOPERS"

Because of the diversity of services committed to the South Pacific, it was necessary for COMSOPAC to delineate the authority and responsibilities of Army, Navy, and Marine forces at each base. Accordingly for the benefit of all subordinate base commanders, early in 1943 Halsey restated the conditions governing command within his theater. Under the principle of unity of command, the commanding general or officer of each island base controlled all troops, all military and naval installations, and all activities located at the base, though Halsey made it clear that this did not authorize a base commander to control the administration and discipline of the forces of another service. ¹ It did, however, permit each island commander to employ whenever necessary all personnel, equipment, and materiel under his command in order to develop local installations, and it was this provision which drew the service units away from their primary tasks. ²

The control of airfields and their operation was another matter, and in order to clarify the responsibility for their operation, early in March Halsey outlined the chain of command. ³ To COMGENSOPAC went responsibility for supervising the planning and development of airfields and seaplane bases on New Caledonia and in the Fiji Islands, which meant that the island commanders directly in charge of local construction were under Harmon's general supervision. To COMAIRSOPAC Halsey assigned a

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similar responsibility, but it applied to Guadalcanal, Espiritu Santo, Efate, and the Samoan group including Funafuti. At each base Army, Navy, and Marines would pool personnel and construction facilities, although no construction of new bases or fields could be undertaken without the prior approval of COMSOPAC.⁴ To eliminate duplication of effort and insure efficient administration of the various airfields, both during construction and after completion, COMSOPAC ordered the establishment at each island base of an Air Center Command, the primary function of which was coordination of all activities at the base.* Under the Air Center Commander, each field was placed under the command of an officer to whom was assigned the following responsibilities: (1) administration, assignment, and employment of all aviation service units permanently based on the field; (2) rendition of service to itinerant aircraft and their crews; (3) supervision of field communications, maintenance, and security; (4) establishment of air traffic rules and the maintenance of air discipline; and (5) establishment and operation of emergency rescue facilities.⁵

The commanding officer of each field or seaplane base was designated from the military service having cognizance over that field or seaplane base, and his tasks were manifold. He provided bombs, torpedoes, fuels, and lubricants; he furnished storage and shop spaces required by the base and tactical units; he provided housing and messing for all transients and tactical units not having these facilities; he salvaged government property, and he assigned dispersal areas.⁶ Furthermore operational control over all service units in the base area rested with the Air Center Commander, and

* See chart, appendix 8.

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this included the various Navy units as well as the Army's. Ground echelons of all aviation tactical units were ordered, subject to the orders of their immediate unit commanders, to comply with the instructions of Air Center and airfield commanders in all matters pertaining to operations of the respective fields.
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Such was the outline of the command structure in the South Pacific, an organization which altered from time to time as fresh islands were seized from the Jap, making it possible to shift to all control of the bases from one service to another. Early in September Halsey further added to the theater's command arrangement by designating three major areas along functional lines, and outlining in some detail the line of responsibility within the Forward area.
8
Three areas were cited: the Combat Area, wherein actual contact with the enemy occurred; the Forward Area, a zone which was not the immediate scene of major combat operations, but which was liable to attack; and the Rear Area. The Forward Area COMSOPAC placed under the over-all command of the Commanding General of the Forward Area, designated by himself. This area in turn was divided into island commands, again designated by Halsey, and composed of assigned ground, naval, and aviation elements under command of the island commander in accordance with the principles of unity of command. Naval elements located within the boundaries of an island command were commanded by a Naval Base Commander. Air Centers were established on certain of the island commands, and these centers were designated as elements of the Naval Base, with the Air Center Commander reporting to the Naval Base Commander.
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Cognizance over airfields was transferred from one service to the

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other as the campaign advanced northward. By 20 October all the New Caledonia fields except seaplane bases had passed to Army control, as had most of the Fiji bases. Larakoma was now under the Navy, both Russell's fields (Sunlight and Renard) were Army, and on Guadalcanal the AAF operated Lunga and Kukum (formerly fighters No. 1 and No. 2, respectively), and Carney and Koli fields. On Espiritu Santo only Pekoa (Bomber No. 2) remained under Army operation.

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All these arrangements represented an attempt to coordinate the effort of the three U. S. services involved, in addition to the RNEAF. How well did it work? On the basis of available evidence, the judgment is that airfield operation in many cases fell far short of ideal. It was improbable that the participating services, each with its own type of training, doctrine, and independent experience, could enter such an arrangement without some friction arising, and without perhaps some loss of equipment and personnel. Accident rates were revealing. During July, August, and September, out of 131 aircraft losses suffered by the Thirteenth Air Force, no less than 93, or 71 per cent, occurred in operational flights, and of these 93, a majority were the result of accidents during landings, take-offs, taxiing, and parking operations. Further analysis indicated that error by personnel constituted the primary cause of such accidents, followed by mechanical failure and failure of facilities and services.

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Proper operation of airfields was of vital importance if accidents were to be held to a minimum, yet a survey of all the major Solomons fields, including Pallikulo and Pekoa on Espiritu Santo, indicated a

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number of deficiencies. One was the confusion as to management. The local airfield commander, designated by the island's Air Service Commander, was a poor substitute for his counterpart in the United States; although his responsibilities were broad, he was given no T/O or T/E with which to meet them. Instead, he drew upon whatever resources lay at hand; at some bases naval personnel of the CASU (Combat Aircraft Service Unit) were used, at others personnel of airdrome squadrons kept the base alive, while at still others the field was operated by a service group. Consequently it was only by chance that an airfield commander ever had available personnel who were trained and experienced in the operation of an airfield. In fact, the evidence is that for the most part inexperienced men operated the fields; aircraft mechanics, clerks, typists, cooks, all joined in the work, and even when the airdrome squadrons arrived they either lacked the necessary equipment or were put to various labor assignments that prevented them from performing the work for which they had been trained.

A second cause of accidents was the heavy overloading of the Munda Field, where the daily average of take-offs and arrivals in October was 400, and where the presence of a hill placed a hazard to planes taking off. Despite this disadvantage, operating personnel at Munda were highly competent and operational accidents were held to a low point. Further causes were the poor condition of the steel mat at Carney and the peculiarly unstable air conditions at the Renard strip in the Russells. Carved out of a coconut plantation, this Renard strip was not level and its air was unstable when disturbed by several aircraft landing in rapid

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succession. Then the proximity of several fields afforded dangers; Navy's Pallikulo Field on Espiritu Santo was regarded as too close to Army's Pekoa Field, and on Guadalcanal Lunga and Kukum were too close to Henderson.¹⁴ All these conditions together, plus the factor of fatigue on the part of personnel, complicated smooth operations of the airfields in the South Pacific.¹⁵ But despite these handicaps, strikes were mounted, missions were flown, and the Jap was shot out of the air at a steady rate of approximately five to one.

One type of operation in the Thirteenth Air Force enjoyed immediate and outstanding success, for the South Pacific area had the distinction of becoming the first combat laboratory for the application of blind bombing techniques against enemy surface craft. Research in air-to-surface-vessels (ASV) radar equipment had received keen attention in Britain and the United States even prior to the opening of the war with Japan; the logical result was the union of ASV search radar with devices transforming it into a bomb-release mechanism which could operate irrespective of visual sighting of the target below.¹⁶ In the United States the development of low-altitude bombardment (LAB) attachments was begun in 1942 by the Radiation Laboratory of the National Defense Research Council in close collaboration with Col. Stuart P. Wright, AAF liaison officer at the laboratory. The device finally adopted, known as the AN/APQ-5, consisted of a special radar scope for the bombardier, and a computer unit to translate the information on the radar scope to the bomb release controls. In addition it included three standard radar components, the SCR 717B search equipment (ASV); the SCR 729 interrogator responder, and the radio altimeter AN/AN-1 designed for

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precise measurement of altitudes between ground level and 400 feet.

Flight tests of this equipment were conducted by the Sea Search Attack Group at Eglin Field in early 1943; by late April General Arnold informed General Harmon that these tests had indicated accuracies at low altitudes comparable with those obtained by the Norden M-7 sight. Explaining to COMGENSOPAC that early in August, 10 B-24's carrying the new equipment would be sent out to the South Pacific under the command of Colonel Wright, there to remain permanently in the theater, General Arnold "strongly urged" Harmon to accept the new planes on a permanent basis because of the importance of the project and the minimum delay involved in the delivery of the aircraft. COMGENSOPAC of course had to consider the effect upon his net bombardment effort, since these planes were accepted in lieu of normal B-24's already committed to the area, but both he and General Twining concurred and the plan proceeded accordingly, to schedule. ¹⁸ The problem of special maintenance of the radar equipment was anticipated; General Arnold suggested that steps be taken immediately to provide depot or subdepot facilities for the project inasmuch as it was to become a permanent adjunct of the bombardment force. ¹⁹

The original schedule of movement was closely followed; 10 B-24D's, laden with their special radar equipment, left San Francisco on 10 August, reaching Carney Field on the 22d at a time when it was convenient to place them as a complete unit in the 394th Bombardment Squadron (H) of the 5th Group. All of the specialists, both civilian and military, who accompanied the project were placed together in the same organization. Two Quonset huts were erected and equipped for radar and shop service,

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and within five days after arrival the unit was ready to go.

The 10 crews were a bit apprehensive, not about the Jap but over the reception they would receive, for they all were tyros in combat and their planes were loaded with electronic gadgets, but the worst they met was a certain amount of skepticism. If General Harmon harbored any misgivings over the practicability of the novel equipment, he did not express them. He was open-minded, "very glad" to have the unit, and believed that it might prove a valuable force with which to counter the night operations of the Tokyo Express then operating between Buin and the Central Solomons, as well as the enemy's barge traffic, which was "a most difficult thing to stop." These two could be the initial objectives. Let the radar crews try their hand.

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They did at once, opening their night campaign on 27 August when three snoopers, as the new planes were locally known, made a search up the Slot to Bougainville. One SB-24 found a ship, made two runs, and put a 500-lb. GP bomb squarely on the target. A second plane mistook a coral island for an enemy vessel--a rather common error in the first few weeks--but at least it hit the island. The third snoopers found nothing. Next night three more planes were out; one of them located what its crew believed was a CI, but its bombs struck no closer than 40 feet from the stern.

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Such was the pattern. Almost nightly the snoopers were out, loaded with six 500-lb. bombs fitted with 1/10-second-delay nose and tail fuzes. Taking off from Carney Field at varying times between 1700 and 2200, their flights would average 11 hours each as they ranged up the Slot to cover the shipping lanes leading into the Buin-Faisi area and to harass the

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convoys or single ships moving down the east and west coasts of Bougainville.²³ Their attacks normally were delivered from 1,200 to 1,500 feet and with surprising accuracy. Occasionally they were tracked by enemy night fighters seeking to protect their shipping, but contact with these planes generally could be avoided by dropping down low over the water; in fact, it was very necessary that no contact occur, so poorly defended²⁴ were the SB-24's with neither nose guns nor belly turrets.

Each succeeding week's operations served further to substantiate the claims made by Colonel Wright for his planes, which rapidly gained an outstanding reputation throughout the South Pacific. There was some failure of the equipment, but not enough to hamper operations, and bombardiers mistook more than one tiny coral islet for a surface vessel as they read the shifting lines on their radar scopes. From the screens land could be identified at 75 to 100 miles, barges at 12 miles, DD's²⁵ at 26, and large cargo vessels or a light cruiser at 35 miles. It was necessary for bombs to land within 30 feet of the target, for beyond that radius no damage could be reported; but practice sharpened the²⁶ technique and the list of hits mounted steadily.

On 12 September a snooper caught a surfaced submarine off Bougainville, made one run, secured a direct hit and two near misses, then reported the sinking of the craft.²⁷ But the greatest achievement was made on the night of 23 September when no less than eight of the planes were dispatched up the Slot. Six of them made contact though only five attacked, and the express was hard hit that night. An 11-ship convoy apparently headed for Vella Lavella was caught some 15 miles north of Cape Alexander, where an

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SB-24 put two direct hits on the stern of a large vessel, leaving it blazing. Almost simultaneously a second plane attacking the same convoy found a square-sterned ship thought to be an aircraft carrier, and put two of its three bombs squarely on the target. An hour later it repeated the attack, this time placing all of its remaining three 500-lb. bombs on the vessel, which was observed to roll over and sink. Still later a third plane attacked a ship east of Kieta, again spotting three or four bombs of its load on the target and silencing the heavy AA fire. This was an excellent score, although it cost one SB-24 which failed to return to Carney; but the convoy had been turned around.

Both Harmon and his Bomber Commander, Colonel Patheny, were highly pleased with the performance of the unit whose advance claims now had been proved "absolutely justified," and whose equipment thus far had stood up remarkably well under the rigors of nightly operation. But certain problems had arisen in connection with the radar planes. Very quickly it was recognized that because of its special equipment and the technicians and spare radar parts necessary to operate and maintain it, this unit was one which did not fit the normal pattern. Its presence in the theater meant that the 5th Bombardment Group was reduced to three strike squadrons, since the weak armament of the snoopers together with the necessity for preserving secrecy prohibited brigading them alongside the B-24D's in daylight missions. Yet the unit had come out without any regular ground echelon, with the result that now there was no squadron integrity; and in order to provide proper maintenance, it would be necessary to assign some of the planes to each of the existing strike

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squadrons. There was no question then that it was a hybrid organization; unless operated at night under special conditions it was relatively useless, and unless it was provided with the proper number of highly skilled radar men, its equipment soon would become ineffective.

The answer seemed obvious: create a separate squadron organization for IAF-equipped B-24's. Such was Harmon's request to General Arnold less than one month after the initial mission had been flown. The reply--from Generals Arnold and Marshall--was negative; it was "absolutely impossible" to activate an additional bomber squadron in the theater in face of the fact that the AAF program was unable to sustain any additional units.³¹ Nevertheless, Harmon persisted in his requests and gained his point. On 30 November he was granted authority to activate on 1 January 1944, a new heavy bombardment squadron, the 86th.³² General Arnold even complied with Harmon's request for dual crews for each plane; Colonel Matheny had noted that the operational strain resulting from this type of night flying was "immense" and Harmon, in arranging for the activation of the squadron, stressed the necessity for relieving the crews.³³ Finally on 1 January the 86th was activated, carrying on henceforth as a separate squadron directly under the XIII Bomber Command.³⁴

Meanwhile, the orphan unit had continued to operate with success. Its SB-24's had sunk or damaged numerous enemy war and merchant vessels--a precise assessment was difficult. They had forced the Jap to place a night fighter cover over his shipping movements, and they had furnished "an almost infallible means" of locating night convoys and task forces. During the 10-week period of operations ending 5 November, 111 strike missions had been flown by the planes. A total of 94 runs had produced

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no less than 3 direct hits with the blind bombing equipment, and 9 more trains of bombs were placed near enough to cause material damage; and of all the runs made, results were observed on 93, which yielded the remarkable figure of 23.6 per cent direct hits.³⁵

Colonel Matheny paid high tribute to the night bombers, although he warned that the training of crews for this type of bombardment involved arduous practice in night landings and take-offs with heavy loads, and in radar pilotage. Night instrument flying could not be overdone, and all crews must be prepared mentally to face very intense light flak from the surface targets.³⁶

But as the weeks passed it was evident that the supply of parts and proper maintenance of the radars provided the major problems; in fact, for the XIII Service Command the SB-24's "spawned the biggest headaches in supply and maintenance."³⁷ Because the radar men in the squadron were the only ones accustomed to the equipment, they alone possessed the necessary experience, with the result that regular service personnel were not considered for maintenance of the snoopers. Furthermore, the few spare parts available were shipped directly from Patterson Field and a hands-off policy was established for the service command. Supply channels to the United States operated on a very informal basis and were difficult to maintain.³⁸ But without question the LAB project had proved the faith of the men who had developed it, for records indicated that, plane for plane, its SB-24's sank and damaged more surface craft at night from low altitude than did the heavy bombers attacking in daylight. By March 1944 the rapid retreat of the Japanese and their unwillingness to send shipping into the Solomons had resulted in technological unemployment for the snoopers, and at this time they were authorized to serve as pathfinders for the high-

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altitude bombers.³⁹~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

The successes achieved by all the air echelons exacted a price, not only upon those who went down with their planes, but upon the men who remained tied to their bases. Warfare for the average citizen soldier is an unpleasant business even when conducted under the most favorable circumstances. In the South Pacific, AAF units were committed to a theater which was exceedingly unkind to men from temperate zones who entered it to live, fight, and die. The Jap was a deadly enemy, but never, after the first few weeks of the 1942 campaign, could he inflict upon air and ground crews or service elements anything like the damage caused by dengue- and malaria-bearing mosquitoes, by bacteria-laden flies swarming into unscreened mess tents and living quarters, or by the pure physical exhaustion and boredom of men emplaced for endless months on islands lying 1,000 to 2,000 miles from the nearest civilized urban center.⁴⁰

The first units to reach the South Pacific in 1942 had hacked out their own primitive living quarters on Efate and Espiritu Santo; they flew their missions, ate their C rations, contracted malaria or dengue, and for the most part, patiently awaited relief or improvement of supply. On New Caledonia conditions of living were somewhat better; it was a rear area, the center of supply, and inhabited by a permanent, if sparse, white population. The more or less permanent service units stationed at Oua Tom, Plaines des Gaiacs, and Tontouta were able to install themselves in reasonably adequate quarters, but it was different on Espiritu Santo, later on Guadalcanal, and on all the forward bases as the campaign drove up through the Solomons.

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Squadron commanders and medical officers of tactical and service units alike very early faced a serious problem in their efforts to sustain morale, and morale was by no means held at a satisfactory level, particularly among the service units and ground crews. So very many factors worked against them. Malaria was one, and in many respects the most serious drain upon the human resources of all Army units in the theater, affecting the phenomenal number of 733 men per 1,000 per annum in June 1943.⁴¹ The early dearth of antimalarial supplies and the lack of complete knowledge concerning the prevention of malaria together contribute to the very high incidence of the disease; when trained personnel and adequate supplies reached the theater,⁴² the rate declined. But before it dropped, the disease was able to eat into the total strength of the air force more heavily than did Japanese weapons.

During the peak month of incidence in the Thirteenth Air Force--March 1943--no less than 72.18 days per 100 flying officers were lost to malaria alone, and it was not until August that the loss of time due to malarial infection fell behind that attributable directly to combat activity.⁴³ Men lived for many months without a supply of screen wire for their tents and mess halls; by November 1943, approximately 80 per cent of all messes and latrines were screened, but by that time the mosquitoes had wrought great havoc.⁴⁴ The shortage of screen wire had far-reaching effects.

One of the major factors which served to depress Army morale was the "huge difference" between the living conditions of Army and those of Navy personnel living and working on the same base. From practically every base and every unit came the same report; naval personnel received better treatment. Regularly they arrived with material to floor and screen their tents, or with enough Quonset huts to house all their personnel.

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Their kitchens and mess halls were equipped with adequate refrigeration, cooling facilities, ice-cream machines, and sanitary conveniences.

Their cooks regularly were furnished fresh meats and vegetables, flour, coffee, sugar, and their post exchanges were well stocked. ⁴⁵ AAF units, on the other hand, reached their stations without refrigeration units, or with inadequate ones, without screen wire, lumber, pipe, nails, shower heads--without all the dozens of items necessary to maintain a reasonably comfortable standard, or even health and full combat efficiency. They lived on the ground or they rustled lumber from various private sources--usually the Navy--to put floors under their tents, and often their medium of exchange with the Navy was their own slender issue of beer.

AAF units in the forward areas suffered as badly in comparison with the Navy's food standards as they did in the matter of housing. Lack of fresh meat was a main point. It could be obtained only at irregular intervals, even then only for the combat crews, and unless issued immediately it would spoil due to lack of refrigeration space, ⁴⁶ yet the Navy always had it. Despite all the efforts on the part of dietary personnel to aid them, the AAF cooks could achieve only so much with the dehydrated eggs, Spam, Vienna sausages, meat and vegetable stew, and C rations which mess halls had in abundance. When the 307th Bombardment Group reported Spam on the tables for 31 consecutive days, morale was not raised; when the 36th Air Engineering Squadron was issued no flour and very little bread for more than 20 days, while near-by naval personnel had flour and bread in excess of their own needs, it was not surprising to hear expressions of lack of confidence in the Army. ⁴⁷

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There was no doubt that the vitamins and calories were in the food--
 men's health may be maintained for months by C rations alone--but the
 same diet did not help their morale, at any rate not when, as on Espiritu
 Santo, men of the 321st Service Group could step across the road and see
 Navy personnel living in quarters built up off the ground, sleeping in
 hospital-type spring beds, and furnished with plentiful supplies of ice
 cream and beer. ⁴³ It was not uncommon at Espiritu Santo for men to enter
 the mess halls, take one look at the food, and walk out. In the tactical
 units, the mess sergeants labored to prepare satisfactory foods for the
 heavy-bomber crews on their long flights, but they had a slender choice,
 and the crews suffered "materially" from their diet of fatty foods, as
 did the high-altitude pilots. To relieve the monotony, on Guadalcanal
 and Espiritu Santo units with services or equipment to offer often traded
 either or both for fresh foods or different varieties. At times less
 honest methods were used; food ships destined for advanced combat bases
 were pilfered by personnel in rear areas when these ships halted en route. ⁴⁹

As each unit settled down at a new base, it did everything possible
 to improve its living quarters. Up on Guadalcanal the 307th Bombardment
 Group by May had moved into tents provided with wooden floors and screen-
 ing, its refrigeration unit was functioning well enough to provide each
 man with two bottles of cold beer daily, it had a laundry unit, and its
 morale had improved accordingly. ⁵⁰ Everywhere there was the struggle to
 maintain some semblance of comfort with equipment which suffered keenly
 in comparison with the Navy's, and even that little was jeopardized dur-
 ing the summer of 1943 when General Arnold passed on to Hermon a proposal

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that heavy tents, e, such as pyramidals, be withdrawn from AAF units. In place of pyramidals, shelter halves would be substituted for housing air personnel, a proposal based on the idea that it was detrimental to the morale of ground force troops to be housed in shelter halves while AAF troops in the same locality were quartered in larger tents.⁵¹

General Hannon rejected the plan as "undesirable and unnecessary" from a morale standpoint. He pointed out that normal procedure in the theater was to house all air and ground troops, other than ground forces in direct contact with the enemy, under heavy tentage, prefabricated barracks, or shelter built of native materials, and that when pyramidal tents were used in the forward areas, in no way had the morale of ground troops been affected.⁵² He might have added that nowhere were AAF units quartered in the immediate vicinity of ground troops who were in direct contact with the enemy--not on Espiritu Santo, not on Guadalcanal or the Russells, not on Rendova, and perhaps only on New Georgia, where small fighter detachments were held at Segi while infantry units battled their way north from Munda Field, at least 45 miles distant. In actual practice wherever ground and air troops were quartered on the same island, such as Guadalcanal, Russells, or Espiritu Santo, only the aircrews were in daily contact with the enemy, not the ground forces. Furthermore, to have reduced these units to the pup-tent level while leaving them alongside the relative luxury of the Navy, would certainly have had a serious effect upon morale.⁵³

Throughout 1943 the scramble of officers and men for better conditions continued. No definite policy was ever officially established

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by COMSOPAC, but it is apparent that no ceiling was ever placed upon convenience and luxury; in fact, "the general attitude of the Navy--and this has permeated all ranks and services--is to make ourselves as comfortable as possible."⁵⁴ Each headquarters remained static in location over long periods of time; each base was developed to a degree which one observer considered "highly extravagant under the circumstances." When Maj. Gen. H. R. Harmon expressed this thought to admirals Fitch and Halsey, both countered with statements that in the terrain and climate of the South Pacific, "we must get our men up off the ground and make them comfortable."⁵⁵ and the Navy did get its men off the ground; it fed them well and made them comfortable; it controlled the shipping and it had a generous supply of luxury items which were not available to the Army's units. But in Maj. Gen. H. R. Harmon's opinion, the stress upon comfort had led to unwarranted diversion of shipping for the movement of materials for housing and utilities, to the continual wasteful employment of large numbers of men in construction and maintenance, and perhaps most serious of all, to the fostering of an idea of "slow-moving complacency" about the war.⁵⁶ This was a sharp assessment, but it was made as the result of observation of a theater in which air units had been operating for approximately a year and a half, and it is doubtful that the ground crews and service units which lacked out living quarters for themselves during the spring and summer of 1943 were aware of any undue emphasis upon luxury--at any rate, not in the AAF.

The disparity in living standards between the two services was not confined to the items used in normal daily living; it was apparent in

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the hospitals as well, creating one more source of envy for the men of the AAF. ⁵⁷ On Espiritu Santo the Navy hospital consisted of prefabricated buildings with connecting corridors, equipped with linoleum-covered floors, white enameled hospital beds, white blankets, adequate supplies of linen, unit laundries, and many items of professional equipment which had been eliminated from Army hospital equipment lists to conserve critical material and shipping space. In fact the Navy was so well equipped that it was able to assist the Army's medical officers in solving their housing problems. In July the Army's 25th Evacuation Hospital on Espiritu Santo was using 20 Quonset huts lent by the Navy, but the great gap between the two services made it difficult for Army patients and medical personnel to understand "why the Army must put up with equipment and housing ⁵⁸ vastly inferior to that provided by a sister service."

Hospitals were not an intimate concern of the AAF, but rotation and rest for its own personnel were, and it is probable that the greatest single factor affecting morale within the South Pacific air units was the duration of time spent in isolation on the islands. For the men of tactical and service units were for the most part utterly cut off from personal contact with men and women of their own kind; their bases lay on islands where there was no opportunity to visit the local village pub with its beer and dart games, or to be welcomed at a dance where there was opportunity for feminine companionship. In fact they were fortunate to have beer. From Guadalcanal it was nearly 2,000 miles to Auckland; it was approximately the same distance to Brisbane over the prevailing air routes; hence there could be no Saturday nights in the village.

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Actually the problem was two-fold: relief for the combat crews, and relief for their supporting ground services. Very early in the campaign COMCENSOPAC had observed the steady drain upon the bombardment crews of the 5th and 11th Groups and had made every effort to send them down to Auckland for a rest leave. By 2 November 1942, nine crews had been dispatched to the rest camp or "aviatorium," and Harmon hoped to keep his combat crews in action in the forward area no more than six or seven weeks at a time.⁵⁹ The key to the problem was provision of adequate air transport. C-47's were regarded as inadequate to cover the long haul between Tokouta and Auckland, and Harmon repeatedly had requested C-37's in which he could send down three crews per trip.⁶⁰ Establishment of C-37 service to Auckland was long delayed, so scarce were the planes, but in February General Harmon was informed that a C-37 had been set up for assignment to the South Pacific and, further, that the Air Transport Command had been directed to aid in moving the crews down to New Zealand.⁶¹

The need was urgent for by April 1943 the flight surgeons were faced with a growing number of cases of acro-neuroses among their aircrews. The strain of constant overwater flying, weighed particularly heavily upon the navigators, but it was severe for all, and so long as no definite goal short of physical collapse yet existed, there was a general reduction in morale and combat efficiency.⁶² In April General Twining was able to report that the first of the C-37's had been assigned for the Auckland run and that it constituted a "planned contribution," both to help and to morale.⁶³ But he wanted to do more. At the time his policy was based upon return of crews to the Zone of the Interior after approximately one

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year in the area inclusive of five to six months in combat. And because of the high incidence of malaria and dengue, he requested that, in addition to the 15 per cent monthly replacement for the air echelons proposed by the War Department, all his air organizations be authorized and furnished a minimum of 25 per cent overstrength in crews.⁶⁴

Harmon's efforts to obtain by 1 September two additional C-87's for the Espiritu Santo-Auckland run failed--not because General Arnold was not fully aware of the critical need for them in the South Pacific but because of the withdrawal of the transports for other theaters. Hence the backlog of load continued to accumulate. Harmon needed the planes "very badly," and suggested that in case none were available he be permitted to retain two additional B-17's above the number currently authorized for retention in the theater. At least these would serve as a stop-gap until ATC could furnish the two C-87's or their equivalents.⁶⁵

As air transport became available, it was possible to send the air echelon of the combat units to the rest area at "fairly reasonable" intervals, and by November it had become necessary to expand existing New Zealand facilities for the accommodation of these crews.⁶⁶ On the average, aircrews were rested every three months, going down to Auckland for nine days immediately after a six-week combat tour, then returning to the rear echelons of their squadrons for six weeks of additional training. Six weeks of combat missions (one every other day) proved to be the average for the onset of mild operational fatigue, depending more upon the condition of the plane than upon the character of the mission. Long night searches produced extreme eye

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strain, with a rapid development of fatigue, and crews of more than 16 months of service in the theater were beyond restoration when held in combat longer than the average six-week period. But for the others, the nine-day rest brought full rehabilitation. The leave was of "inestimable value," for it brought men into a temperate climate in a civilized area, and the only regret was that the lack of available air transportation precluded the extension of the benefits to all personnel of the AAF. ⁶⁷

The combat crews needed rest and the high priority was rightfully theirs, but this did not lessen the drain upon the men who serviced the planes, built the roads to the strip, stored the bombs, changed the engines, and made it possible to keep the planes in the air. For them work went on month after month in a torrid, humid climate which rotted materiel and sapped their strength to the point where lowered efficiency was inevitable. Many units had worked seven days a week over long periods, large numbers of their personnel had contracted one or more tropical diseases, and nearly all of them had been affected by the deadly monotony of island life without contact with civilization. ⁶⁸ The result was mental and physical stagnation, evidenced in a lethargic attitude toward work. As the months passed, unit commanders repeatedly called attention to the ever-increasing period during which it had been impossible to rest their ground personnel; no longer could they overlook the state of chronic fatigue. Morale and efficiency sank, while that of the air echelons improved as the regular opportunities for rest in New Zealand were made available. ⁶⁹

General Larron was fully aware of the problem and in June he had

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outlined the situation to General Arnold. But other than the rotation permitted by the monthly dispatch of 1.5 per cent filler replacements, not much could be done,⁷⁰ and the months of unbroken island service for the ground personnel stretched on and on. Those officers and men whose duties required that they move about the theater frequently were less afflicted by the boredom; yet few could gain such a relief, and a survey of the Thirteenth Air Force at the close of 1943 led to the conclusion that the military effectiveness of the organization was "seriously handicapped" by lack of a definite policy of rest leaves and rotation of services for the ground personnel.⁷¹ Certainly the total number of man-days lost had reached a high level by December; more alarming was the fact that of the 24,232 man-days lost in that month, no more than 219 could be attributed to enemy action. It was obvious that the attrition of tropical life and work was infinitely more serious than any effort the Jap had made thus far.⁷² And at the current rates of rotation it would be a matter of years before AAF ground personnel could hope for relief.⁷³

The weight of fatigue was evident in nearly every activity. Various officers reported that by the end of 1943 it required twice as long for men to accomplish a given unit of work as it had earlier in the year; in the shops there was a "striking increase" in the number of minor accidents to personnel, and in the air or on the runways the last six months of 1943 showed a total of 151 operational and 69 combat accidents. Obviously the ground echelons of the Thirteenth Air Force were tired, but throughout 1943 there was slight prospect of relief for them. The

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air echelons likewise tired quickly, but operation of their weapons required such a high degree of mental and physical efficiency that it was hardly profitable to permit pilots or crews to extend their time in the forward areas. Fighter pilots quickly demonstrated the effects of prolonged combat service. When a squadron was assigned to an advanced base its replacements were sent in by detaching two or three flights from another squadron based in the rear area. The relieved pilots were rested, then attached to the rear squadron for training. ⁷⁴ A survey of 231 pilots operating under this system from 1 June through 30 November indicated an average loss rate of 2.7 per 1,000 flying hours, exclusive of accidents due to mechanical failures and training activities, but it indicated also a sharp rise as the number of weeks in combat increased. ⁷⁵ It was less easy to demonstrate the drag of fatigue upon the ground personnel, whose accidents were less spectacular, but unit commanders possessed a ready index of fatigue when they measured the output of work.

The task of overcoming the ravages of island life fell in part upon chaplains and special service officers, but their efforts, as did most other activities, suffered throughout 1943 from the common lack of supplies and equipment. Movies very often were an "especially poor type of 'B' picture," so poor that in some cases men were unable to sit through them, although visits by entertainers were highly appreciated. ⁷⁶ But over the long run the faithful diversions remained--as in most wars--card games, dice, "bull sessions," and letters from home. These required neither equipment nor external assistance. Unfortunately little could be done by anyone to combat a very serious depressant of morale--the infidelity

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of wives at home.⁷⁷

Thus the Thirteenth's ground men worked through the successive Solomons campaigns, receiving scant recognition but making possible by the sacrifice of their health and morale the performance of the air echelons in daily contact with the enemy. Air warfare inevitably centers around the men who fire the guns in combat, men who incur the risk of death on every mission. To them goes the major share of the acclaim both in the field and at home; normally whatever comforts are available pass first to those who man the planes, and this is as it should be. But in the South Pacific the gap between air and ground men of the AAF was broad, so very broad that eventually it left a deep imprint upon the mental and physical fiber of thousands of citizens.

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GLOSSARY

AAB	Army Air Base
AAFPSAT	AAF School of Applied Tactics
AC/AS	Assistant Chief of Air Staff
ACIR	Air Combat Intelligence Report
AFACE	AC/AS-5
AFAPF	AC/AS, Plans
AFCAS	Chief of Air Staff
AFESP	Strategy & Policy Div., AC/AS-5
AFOIS	Office of Information Services
AFRBS	Directorate of Base Services
AFSC	Air Force Service Command
AGWAR	Adjutant General, War Department
AI	aircraft interception
AIRSERCOM	Air Force Service Command
AK	cargo vessel
AKA	cargo vessel (attack)
AO	oiler
AP	transport
ASCPFO	Air Service Command, Patterson Field, Ohio
ASV	air-to-surface-vessel equipment
ATC	Air Transport Command
AVD	seaplane tender
CASU	Combat Aircraft Service Unit
CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff
CINCPAC	Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet
CINCSOMESPAC	Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific
CINCSIPA	Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area
CL	light cruiser
COMAIR New Georgia	Commander, New Georgia
COMAIRSOLS	Air Command Solomons; or Commander, Air Command Solomons
COMAIRSOPAC	Commander, Aircraft South Pacific Area
COMAIRSOPACFOR	Commander, Aircraft South Pacific Force
COMGENSOPAC	Commanding General, South Pacific Area
COMINCH	Commander in Chief, U. S. Navy
COMSERONSOPAC	Commander Service Squadron, South Pacific
COMSOPAC	Commander, South Pacific Area
C/S	Chief of Staff
CTF	Commander, Task Force
CV	aircraft carrier

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DB	dive bomber
DC/AS	Deputy Chief of Air Staff
DCNO	Deputy Chief of Naval Operations
DD	destroyer
DL	destroyer leader
F/Lt	Flight Lieutenant
F/O	Flight Officer
GCI	ground control interception
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JPS	Joint Staff Planners
LAB	low-altitude bombardment equipment
LST	landing ship
MAG	Marine Aircraft Group
MAW	Marine Aircraft Wing
MC	Medical Corps
MID	Military Intelligence Div., WDGS
Necal	New Caledonia
ONI	Office of Naval Intelligence
OPD	Operations Division, WDGS
PC	submarine chaser
PIU	Photo Interpretation Unit
PT	motor torpedo boat
R.C.T.	Regimental Combat Team
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
SB-24	planes with LAB
SBD	Douglas dive bomber
SCAT	South Pacific Combat Air Transport
SE	single engine
S/L	squadron leader
SOPACFOR	South Pacific Force
SOS	Services of Supply
SS	submarine
TAG	The Adjutant General
TB	torpedo bomber
TC	troop carrier
TE	twin engine
USAFINZ	U. S. Army Forces in New Zealand
USAFISPA	U. S. Army Forces in the South Pacific Area
USAT	U. S. Army transport
USMC	U. S. Marine Corps
VB	bomber
VF	Navy Fighter Squadron
VMF	Marine Fighter Squadron
VMSB	Marine Dive Bomber Squadron
VT	Torpedo Bomber Squadron

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NOTES

Introduction

1. Incl. (ltr., Commander, Third Fleet to Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet, "South Pacific Campaign--Narrative Account," 3 Sep. 1944), "The South Pacific Area, 20 April 1942 to 15 June 1944" [cited as Halsey Report], in USMC Hist. Div. files. This document is a brief narrative of the command problems in the South Pacific prepared by Admiral Halsey prior to his departure from the theater.
2. Periodic Report, Airdromes and Seaplane Anchorages, May 1943, PIU, USAFISPA, in A-2 Lib., K-26431.
3. The Buka field, directly alongside the narrow strip of water separating Bougainville from Buka, had been constructed by the British and was placed in full operation by the Japanese in August 1942. Periodic Report, Airfields and Seaplane Anchorages, Dec. 1943, Jan. 1944, 12th PI Detachment, in A-2 Lib., K-46822; COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intelligence Summary, 3-9 March 1943, in AFSHO files.
4. Ibid.
5. CM-IN-11511 (27 Dec. 42), Harmon to Marshall, #485, 26 Dec. 42, in AFSHO files. Only six of the 11 B-17's dispatched reached the target.
6. War Diary, Marine Aircraft Wing-2 [cited as War Diary, MAW-2], 16 Feb. 1943, in USMC Hist. Div. files.
7. Incl. (War Diary, MAG-12) [cited as War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal], Record of Events, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, February 1, 1943 to July 25, 1943, in USMC Hist. Div. files. In the period from February to July, MAG-12 was commanded by Lt. Col. Luther S. Moore, USMC, and Lt. Col. Edward L. Pugh, USMC. Information from Muster Roll Sec., USMC.
8. The RNZAF No. 15 Squadron was the first New Zealand fighter unit to reach the combat zone, moving up to Guadalcanal from Espiritu Santo at the end of April 1943. In October 1942 this unit had taken over 23 P-40's from the AAF's 68th Fighter Squadron based on Tongatabu. However, it had been preceded on Guadalcanal by No. 3 Squadron, a bomber-reconnaissance unit which had the distinction of being the first RNZAF bomber squadron to engage in operations in the Pacific combat area. With 12 PBO's (Hudsons) it had opened operations at Guadalcanal on 24 November 1942. R. N. Z. A. F. in the Pacific, Historical Summary, Aug. 1944, pp. 3-4, in AFSHO files, 7452-4.
9. Halsey Report.

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1. Halsey Report; incl. (ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 6 June 1944), "The Army in the South Pacific" [cited as "The Army in the South Pacific"], in AFSHO files. This is a brief narrative of the development and organization of army forces in the South Pacific, prepared by COMGENSOPAC in the spring of 1944 prior to his final departure from the theater. At Casablanca the Combined Chiefs of Staff had directed the seizure of Rabaul. "Discussion of Availability of Forces for Implementation of Elkton Plan," statement of General Wedemeyer, undated, in AFSHO files, 7307-5K.
2. Report of Occupation of the Russell Islands, Hq., 43d Inf. Div., 8 June 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-40006.
3. Operation Plan No. 2-43, Commander Aircraft, South Pacific, 15 Feb. 1943, A16-3/Wy (Serial 00185), in USC Hist. Div. files.
4. Ibid.; "Guadalcanal Escorted Missions during December, 1942 and January, 1943 through February 24, 1943," in A-2 Lib., F-21563; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal.
5. Ibid.; A-2 Periodic Report, 13th AF, 31 Jan.-28 Feb. 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-18569. The 3d Marine Raider Battalion found evidence of the recent evacuation by a sizeable force, estimated at 1,000 men. (Report of Occupation of the Russell Islands, Hq., 43d Infantry Div., 8 June 1943.) Natives had reported the Japanese strength at approximately 500. G-2 Periodic Report No. 5, Hq., USAFISPA, 13-20 Feb. 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-14605.
6. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal; Report of Occupation of the Russell Islands, Hq., 43d Inf. Div., 8 June 1943.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal; CM-OUT-2781 (8 Mar. 43), Strong to S-2, Bora Bora, 18A, 8 Mar. 43; Report of Occupation of the Russell Islands, Hq., 43d Infantry Div., 8 June 1943.
10. Ibid.; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal; CM-IN-5545 (11 Mar. 43), COMGENSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #6121, 11 Mar. 43.
11. Report of Occupation of the Russell Islands, Hq., 43d Infantry Div., 8 June 1943.

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12. Intel. Sum., No. 92, Southwest Pacific Area, Directorate of Intel., 7 April 1943, in AFAGE, Off. Serv., II-E, 1 April-31 Dec. 1943.
13. Nevertheless, early in April the Munda strip was reported in good condition. COMAHSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 31 March-6 April 1943.
14. Intel. Sum. No. 92, Southwest Pacific Area, Directorate of Intel., 7 April 1943; COMAHSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 7-13 April 1943. On 7 April approximately 150 fighters were ferried into the Solomons area. Ibid.
15. Development of Jap Fields in Solomons area, 15 Dec. 1942-15 Feb. 1943, cited in Air Combat Intel., SOPACFOR, U. S. Pacific Fleet, 21-27 Feb. 1943, in AFAGE, Off. Serv., II-E, Bk. V.
16. Ibid. General Harmon reported 82 fighters on Buka, Kahili, Ballale, and Munda as of 21 February, while other reports placed 75 fighters on Kahili and Ballale alone. G-2 Periodic Report No. 5, Hq., USAFISPA, 13-20 Feb. 1943; GM-IN-12514 (25 Feb. 43), Harmon to Marshall, 4998, 24 Feb. 43.
17. Halsey Report.
18. See, for example, the Rabaul Plan submitted on 25 June 1942 to the Chief of the Air Staff, in which Col. Frank F. Everest allotted a total of five days elapsed time from the opening of the initial bombardment of Lae to the capture of Rabaul by airborne troops. Memo for Gen. Twining by Col. Everest, 23 June 1942, in AFACOL, Off. Serv., Col. William's file. Also Comment No. 1, (RFR, AFOS to AFAPF, 15 June 1942), AFAPF to AFAS, 25 June 1942, in ibid.
19. "'Elkton Plan' for the Seizure and Occupation of the New Britain-New Ireland-New Guinea Areas," 28 Feb. 1943 [cited as The "Elkton" Plan], in AFESP, 385 Elkton. This was Elkton II. Its successor, Elkton III (26 April 1943), was adopted at a later conference held in Hawaii. Elkton III was the plan actually followed, but it differed very slightly from Elkton II.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., Annex B.
23. CGS 155/1, 19 Jan. 1943.
24. The "Elkton" Plan; JCS 238/1, 18 March 1943. Two divisions of troops were requested in addition to the aircraft.

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47. Ibid. It will be noted that Harmon requested that the position of the Commanding General of the Thirteenth Air Force be reaffirmed, that Fitch issue to General Twining all directives pertaining to training and administration of AAF units. Although no direct evidence is available, it is probable from the tone of this memorandum and from Harmon's own statement regarding the partial breakdown of the principle of unity of command, that there was a tendency on the part of Fitch's staff occasionally to deal directly with subordinate AAF units rather than through the AAF commander.
48. Ibid. When the Guadalcanal campaign opened in 1942, the B-17's of the 5th and 11th Groups were the only planes capable of making long-range searches over the Solomons, and the greater part of their effort was expended on search. Because of their vulnerability, PBV's were sent out over areas where no Jap air opposition was expected.
49. "The Army in the South Pacific." General Harmon comments that Admiral Fitch, throughout his tenure as COMAIRSOPAC, adhered strictly to these principles "and could not, while prosecuting the war effort, have treated the Army component of his force with greater consideration and justice-- than he did." Ibid.
50. Operation Plan No. 4-43, Commander Task Force 63, 11 March 1943, A16/38y (Serial 00213), in USMC Hist. Div. files. Until 16 March COMAIRSOPAC was known as Task force 63; on that date the new designation of Task Force 33 became effective. War Diary, COMAIRSOPACNOF, 1 March-30 April 1943, Navy Register No. 3693, microfilm number 50122, in DDCG-(AIR), microfilm files.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. JFS 34th Meeting, 3 Sep. 1942. Here the Joint Planners were discussing JFS 54, introduced by the Army.
57. JFS 66th Meeting, 24 March 1943. This was CCS 75/3. The Navy made a subsequent effort to modify it but was unsuccessful. See JCS 215 and JCS 215/1.
58. JFS 67th Meeting, 31 March 1943, Extract from Minutes.
59. JCS 75th Meeting, 20 April 1943.

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60. Ibid.; JCS 263/2/D, 20 April 1943.
61. CM-IN-4883 (10 Mar. 43), COMSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #6044, 10 Mar. 43; CM-IN-7130 (14 Mar. 43), COMSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #6314, 14 Mar. 43; CM-IN-11160 (21 Mar. 43), COMSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #6849, 21 Mar. 43.
62. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal.
63. CM-IN-8213 (14 Apr. 43), COMSOPAC to AGWAR, #779, 14 Apr. 43; Mission Report, Hq., USFISPA, 12 April 1943, in #2 Lib., K-24374; Form 34, 70th Fighter Sq., 29 March-4 April 1943. The Marine was Lt. Benjamin E. Dale of VMF-124.
64. Ibid.
65. "Enemy Aircraft Destroyed by SOPAC Forces and Shipping Attacked by SOPAC Planes," Office of Naval Air Combat Intel., SOPACFOR, U. S. Pacific Fleet, May 1944, in USF Hist. Div. files.
66. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, Apps. II and IV, "Enemy Planes Shot Down by Fighters from Guadalcanal Area" and "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal."
67. Falsey Report.
68. Incl. (War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal), "Interception of Enemy Fighters over the Russell Islands, April 1, 1943."
69. Ibid.; Report of Occupation of the Russell Islands, Hq., 43d Infantry Div., 8 June 1943; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal." Three other planes were so badly damaged that they crashed on the field as they landed and were a total loss. In this action the Wildcats were credited with 13 Zeros, the Corsairs with three. CM-IN-979 (2 Apr. 43), COMSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #7627, 2 Apr. 43.
70. Quoted in incl. (War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal), "Interception of Enemy Fighters over the Russell Islands, April 1, 1943."
71. CM-IN-2302 (4 Apr. 43), COMSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #7941, 4 Apr. 43; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal; CM-IN-5114 (9 Apr. 43), COMSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #8369, 7 Apr. 43.
72. CM-IN-5022 (9 Apr. 43), COMSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #8453, 8 Apr. 43.
73. Incl. (War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal), "Interception of Enemy Dive Bombing Attack Against Shipping, Tulagi Harbor and Vicinity, April 7, 1943."

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74. Tactical Intelligence Questionnaire of Lt. Joseph F. Moore, 21 Sep. 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-33574; incl. (War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal), "Interception of Enemy Dive Bombing Attack Against Shipping, Tulagi Harbor and Vicinity, April 7, 1943."
75. Ibid. The P-38's led by Capt. Thomas Lanphier, Jr., and Maj. Dechtel shot down eight of which Lanphier accounted for three and the P-39's destroyed two.
76. Ibid.; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal"; CM-IN-5022 (9 Apr. 43), COMGENSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, 48453, 8 Apr. 43. Major Williams had taken off late and made no contact with the enemy. As is so frequently the case in air warfare, the exact number of enemy aircraft destroyed was difficult to fix accurately. Reports vary from 27 fighters and 12 dive bombers to 28 fighters and 12 dive bombers.
77. Interview with Lt. Col. Thomas G. Lanphier, Jr., by author, 10 Sep. 1945; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal; Fighter Interception Report, Hq., USAFISPA, 21 April 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-23137.
78. Interview with Lt. Col. Thomas G. Lanphier, Jr., by author, 10 Sep. 1945; Form 34, 70th Fighter Sq., 12-18 April 1943; Form 34, 339th Fighter Sq., 12-18 April 1943.
79. Fighter Interception Report, Hq., USAFISPA, 21 April 1943. Several of these pilots had flown with the 67th Fighter Squadron back in September and October of 1942; among them were Major Mitchell, 1st Lts. Julius Jacobsen and Dalton C. Goerke. The other three members of the attack section were 1st Lts. Lex T. Barber, Besby T. Holmes, and Raymond K. Hine, all of the 339th Squadron. Major Mitchell later became Deputy Group Commander of the 15th Fighter Group based on Iwo Jima and led his P-51's over Japan in strafing missions and escorts for the B-29's.
80. Fighter Interception Report, Hq., USAFISPA, 21 April 1943; interview with Lt. Col. Thomas G. Lanphier, Jr., 10 Sep. 1945.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.; CM-IN-11334 (19 Apr. 43), COMGENSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, 51033, 19 Apr. 43.
83. Enemy Aircraft Destroyed by Army Fighter Pilots in the Solomon Area Covering Period from August 22, 1942 to June 30, 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-29003. Not one of the original intelligence reports examined ever gave any indication that Yamamoto was involved.

- 84. It is improbable that the Admiral was in the aircraft shot down by Holmes over Voila Point, for that plane exploded and fell in the water. Both Lanphier and Barber had destroyed a Betty which the Zeros tried desperately to protect, but Barber's Betty disintegrated at 5,000 to 6,000 feet. A subsequent report by the Japanese states that Yanamoto was found dead in the wrecked plane, which would indicate that he was a victim of Lanphier. The Japs claimed likewise that he was shot down by 30 or 40 fighters. Interview with Lt. Col. Thomas G. Lanphier, Jr., 10 Sep. 1945.
- 85. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 1 May 1943, in AAG 312.1-C, Operations Letters; Decorations and Awards Made for Service during the Current War as Indicated by the Records of the Navy Department Board of Decorations and Medals, January 1, 1944, in AFOSI, Biographical Br.
- 86. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal. P-38's were credited with the destruction of 14, F4U's with 10, while the Wildcats shot down 39. "Enemy Aircraft Destroyed by SOPAC Forces and Shipping Attacked by SOPAC Forces," Office of Naval Air Combat Intel., SOPACFOR, U. S. Pacific Fleet /cited as Enemy Aircraft Destroyed by SOPAC Forces/, in USMC Hist. Div. files. Four of the lost pilots were from AAF units, as were six of the planes. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal."

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Chapter II

1. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 1 May 1943, in AAG 312.1-G, Operations Letters.
2. GM-OUT-4363 (10 Apr. 43), Arnold to Twining, Plane 4306, 9 Apr. 43.
3. Ibid.; GM-IN-15946 (24 May 43), Emmons to CG, LAF, #3341, 24 May 43.
4. History of 42d Bombardment Group (I), 15 Jan. 1941 to 30 June 1943.
5. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 1 May 1943.
6. GM-IN-8513 (15 Apr. 43), COMGENSCFAC to AGMAM, #561, 15 Apr. 43; ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Arnold, 27 April 1943, in AAG 312.1-G, Operations Letters.
7. Report of Inspection of the Medical activities of the Thirteenth Air Force, Col. George F. Eaker, III, M.C., 11 Dec. 1943 /cited as the Eaker Report/, Exhibit 2, "Days lost per 100 flying officers per month," in AAG bulk files, Air Surgeon's material.
8. "The Operations of Aviation Engineers in the South Pacific, January 1942-August 1944," 15 July 1945. /cited as Operations of Aviation Engineers/, in AFPO files, 6842-36. This useful report was prepared by the Command Historian of the XIII Air Force Service Command, Capt. Austin Fife.
9. Ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Arnold, 27 April 1943.
10. Ibid.
11. GM-IN-4047 (8 Mar. 43), Lindsay and MacArthur to Marshall, #34412, in "Super-Duper" file, 11/14 to 6/14/43, in Office of the Cable Secretary. This same report (apparently by Colonel Lindsay) recommended that General Kenney be appointed commanding general for all air forces in the Pacific under MacArthur, who would become Commander in Chief of the Pacific.
12. Ltr., 1st Lt. Angus Hopkins, Jr., to Brig. Gen. P. W. Douglass, CG, VII Fighter Comd., 10 March 1943, in AFPO files, 5298-36.
13. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 1 May 1943; Operations of Aviation Engineers.
14. Ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Arnold, 27 April 1943.

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15. CM-IA-902 (2 Apr. 43), COMGENSOPAC to Arnold, #7518, 1 Apr. 43.
16. CM-CUT-9769 (26 Mar. 43), Arnold to Harmon, Banc 3953, 25 Mar. 43; CM-IN-15058 (26 Mar. 43), Thompson to Arnold, #7319, 28 Mar. 43. (See comment by Gen. Arnold in Daily Log.) The very firm tone of the messages sent out concerning this incident indicates more than normal concern on the part of the MAF commander.
17. CM-CUT-11089 (29 Mar. 43), Arnold to Harmon, Banc 4006, 29 Mar. 43; CM-IN-902 (2 Apr. 43), COMGENSOPAC to Arnold, #7518, 1 Apr. 43; ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Arnold, 27 April 1943. When asked why he had not attacked Fighter No. 2, where 130 fighters were parked on the one strip, an enemy airman replied that his people knew these planes were for the most part dummies, since the "Americans would not be so dumb as to put that many planes in the open." Ibid.
18. Ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Arnold, 27 April 1943.
19. Ltr., Gen. Arnold to Gen. Twining, 13 June 1943, in MAF 312.1-C, Operations Letters.
20. CM-IN-902 (2 Apr. 43), COMGENSOPAC to Arnold, #7518, 1 Apr. 43; ltr., Twining to Arnold, 27 April 1943.
21. Ibid.
22. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 1 May 1943.
23. CM-IN-13079 (22 Apr. 43), Harmon to Arnold, #1289, 21 Apr. 43; CM-IN-14006 (23 Apr. 43), Harmon to Arnold, 1550, 23 Apr. 43. On 21 April aircraft on Guadalcanal totaled 236 distributed as follows: Henderson, Army-23, Navy-109; Carney, Army-24, Navy-0; Fighter No. 1, Army-9, Navy-54; Fighter No. 2, Army-58, Navy-18. Ibid.
24. Interview with Col. F. L. Deadle, 23 Nov. 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-41406. On 14 March 1944, it was necessary to close Carney for reconstruction. The pierced plank surface was removed and the 6,500-foot runway was re-stabilized with 3 inches of coral, 20,000 cubic yards being moved in from the pits 16 miles distant. Reopening originally was planned for 1 May 1944, but rains and breakdown of equipment delayed completion for another month. Operations of Aviation Engineers.
25. Ibid.
26. MID Report No. 1839, Morale of the Army Air Forces on Guadalcanal, 21 June 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-26368; History of the 339th Fighter Squadron, activation to 31 Dec. 1943; Special A-2 Report to CG, VII Fighter Comd., by Capt. Charles A. Hedges, 26 Jan. 1943, in AFSHO files, 5298-36.

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- 27. G-3 Journal File, Americal Div., 17-24 Dec. 1942, in AGO Combat Analysis; ltr., Col. Penworth Goss, DC/S, 7th AF, to Gen. Arnold, 10 Jan. 1943, in MAG 400, Misc., East Indies.
- 28. History of Detachment "D" Night Fighter Squadron, 18 Feb.-30 Sep. 1943. The lost pilot was 1st Lt. John E. Meyer, with Sgt. George D. Pratt as his crew. (CM-TR-17861 (23 May 43), Lmons to CG, AAF, 3/26, 28 May 43.) Lmons states that six planes were dispatched; the unit history claims seven left Hawaii. Form 34 shows five present. Form 34, 6th Night Fighter Sq., 11-17 April 1943.
- 29. CM-TR-2218 (5 Mar. 43), Lmons to CG, AAF, 1500, 4 Mar. 43; CM-CUT-2208 (6 Mar. 43), 3185, 6 Mar. 43.
- 30. Ltr., Lt. Angus Hopkins to Brig. Gen. E. W. Douglass, 10 March 1943,
- 31. "Report of Night Fighter Operations at Henderson Field, Solomon Islands, 1 April 1943 to 1 June 1943," Maj. Gen. H. F. Paving, 15 June 43 [cited as "Report of Night Fighter Operations at Henderson Field"], in A-2 Lib., K-27512.
- 32. Memo for Gen. Stratemeier by Gen. Caville, Director of Air Defense, 5 Feb. 1943, in MAG 400, Misc., East Indies; Special A-2 report to CG, VII Fighter Com., by Capt. Charles W. Hedger, 26 Jan. 1943.
- 33. History of the 359th Fighter Squadron (TF); G-2 Periodic Report No. 2, Hq., USAFISPA, 24-31 Jun. 1943.
- 34. "Report of Night Fighter Operations at Henderson Field."
- 35. Ltr., Col. Wm. Ball to Col. E. P. Sorenson, AC/AS, Intelligence, 25 April 1943, in MAG 312.1-D, Operations Letters. Colonel Ball was Deputy Chief of Staff for Air on the staff of General Harmon. He was lost in the Pacific with Harmon in 1945.
- 36. Ibid.; "Night Fighter Technique on Guadalcanal," by Lt. Col. A. W. Tyer, n. d., in AFPHO files, 5298-36. On or about 20 April 1943, COMAFSPAC placed Colonel Tyer in charge of night interception on Guadalcanal.
- 37. Ibid.; "Report of Night Fighter Operations at Henderson Field."
- 38. Fifth AF Tactical Bulletin No. 11, 9 July 1943, "U. S. Night Fighters Score over Guadalcanal," in A-2 Lib., K-28503; CM-TR-11944 (20 Apr. 43), COMAFSPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, 1164, 20 Apr. 43; History of Detachment "D" Night Fighter Squadron, 18 Feb.-30 Sep. 43.

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39. Form 34's, 6th Night Fighter Det., 29 March-4 April 1943, 11-17 April 1943. During April all training flights were held to a minimum.
40. Ibid., 11-17 April 1943.
41. Ibid., 25 April-1 May 1943.
42. "Night Fighter Technique on Guadalcanal," Lt. Col. A. W. Tyler; "Report of Night Fighter Operations at Henderson Field."
43. Ibid.; CM-IN-9631 (15 May 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, 110661 GR 208, 15 May 43, SCR No. 10.
44. CM-IN-13077 (21 May 43), COMAFSOLS to COMAIRSOPAC, 192309 GR 40 BT, SCR NR 32; Air Combat Intel. Report, 16-22 May 1943 [cited as ACIF with appropriate dates], in A-2 Lib., K-24457; "Report of Night Fighter Operations at Henderson Field"; "q.", USAFISPA, Air Information Bulletin No. 10, 2 June 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-24303; COMAFSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 15-21 May 1943. The cable indicates that eight planes were sent up but other reports state only seven.
45. Ibid.; CM-E-17505 (29 Apr. 43), New Cal. to COMVP70, 2229, 28 Apr. 43.
46. CM-IN-17861 (28 May 43), Emmons to CG, AAF, 3426, 28 May 43.
47. CM-CUT-3183 (8 June 43), Marshall to Harmon, 5531, 8 June 43.
48. CM-IN-9137 (15 June 43), Harmon to Arnold, 822, 15 June 43.
49. Ibid.
50. CM-CUT-6187 (15 June 43), Arnold to Farnon, Plane 5696, 15 June 43; CM-CUT-9790 (23 June 43), Arnold to COMCENOPAC, 5398, 23 June 43.
51. Form 34, 6th Night Fighter Det., 10-16 May 1943. In May one plane was lost when an engine failed on take-off because of lack of a sufficient supply of replacement cylinders.
52. Form 34's, 6th Night Fighter Det., 10-16 May, 17-23 May 1943.
53. Ibid., 17-23 May 1943.
54. Ibid., 7-13 June, 14-20 June, 21-27 June, 28 June-4 July 1943.

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55. The 419th Night Fighter Squadron reached Fighter No. 2 on Guadalcanal on 15 November 1943, and immediately began to retrain its pilots in P-38's, but it was a costly process. By the end of the month it had wrecked one P-70, three P-38's, and had lost its commanding officer, Capt. John J. McCloskey on the 22d. (History of the 419th Night Fighter Squadron, Activation through 31 December 1943.) In late November Admiral McCain was concerned over the "critical weakness" of night fighters in the Pacific; he suggested that an attempt be made to assign some AAF night fighter squadrons equipped with Mosquito aircraft to the Pacific area. CM-OUT-10610 (27 Nov. 43), Giles to Arnold, #1101, 26 Nov. 43, in Record file, 1200-1399, Office of Cable Secretary.
56. CM-IN-3795 (8 Mar. 43), Harmon to Marshall, #5866, 7 Mar. 43; CM-IN-4883 (10 Mar. 43), New Cal. to AF, #6044, 10 Mar. 43.
57. "Mine Laying Operations by Aircraft in the Buin-Tonolei Area," 20-21 March 1943, in USMC Hist. Div. files.
58. Ibid.; Strike Mission Report, 31st Bomb Sq. (F), 21 March 1943, in USMC Hist. Div. files; Consolidated Mission Report, Hq., 307th Bomb. Gp. (H), 20 March 1943, in ibid.
59. Strike Mission Report, 31st Bomb Sq. (H), 21 March 43; CM-IN-11680 (22 Mar. 43), CGO GENSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #6931, 22 Mar. 43.
60. "Mine Laying Operations by Aircraft in the Buin-Tonolei Area," 20-21 March 1943; Consolidated Mission Report, Hq., 307th Bomb. Gp. (H), 21 March 1943; Strike Mission Report, 31st Bomb Sq. (H), 22 March 1943; CM-IN-12186 (23 Mar. 43), COMGENSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #7005, 23 Mar. 43.
61. ACOM, 2-8 May 1943.
62. Ibid.; CM-IN-10366 (16 May 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, #150543 GR 71 AT, 15 May 43.
63. CM-IN-4938 (8 May 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, #070552, LOR #1501, 8 May 43; CM-IN-5705 (9 May 43), COMINSOLS to COMGENSOPAC, #081105 NCR 2319, 9 May 43.
64. CM-IN-9631 (15 May 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, #140661 GR 208, 15 May 43, SOB NR 10; ACIR, 9-15 May 1943.
65. Ibid.; Air Combat Intel. Log, Feb. 10-July 10, 1943, Fighter Comd., FMG-12 [cited as Fighter Command Log, 10 Feb.-10 July 1943], in USMC Hist. Div. files. It is interesting to note the multiplicity of types of aircraft then available to Fighter Command. For this interception 30 F4U's, 32 AAF's, 11 P-38's, 12 P-39's, 11 P-40's (AAF), and 6 P-40's (F4U) were sent up. These two reports differ by one plane. The Marines list only 16 P-40's. To fly the AAF fighters, detachments of the 67th, 68th, 44th, 6th, and 339th Fighter Squadrons, and headquarters 347th Fighter Group were attached to the 70th Fighter Squadron on 7 April 1943. Form 3/ 70th Fighter Sq., 5-11 April 1943.

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- 66. ACIR, 9-15 May 1943; Fighter Command Log, 10 Feb.-10 July 1943; GM-IR-9631 (15 May 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, 140661 GR 208, 15 May 43, SCR NR 10; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal." The P-38 pilot lost here was Lt. G. H. Gill of the 12th Fighter Squadron. The reports disagree on the total number of Zeros encountered; either 25 or 26 were met. During this engagement several P-40's were jumped by F4U's and two narrowly escaped destruction. Hq., USAFISPA, Air Information Bulletin No. 12, 26 May 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-24807.
- 67. GM-IR-9631 (15 May 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, 140661 GR 208, 15 May 43, SCR NR 10.
- 68. ACIR, 16-22 May 1943.
- 69. "Report of Mine Laying in Kahili and Shortland Island Areas, May 19, 20, 23, 1943," in USMC Hist. Div. files; War Diary, Strike Command, COMAIRSOLS, 2 April-25 July 1943, in USMC Hist. Div. files.
- 70. Ibid.; Form 34, 424 Bomb Sq. (H), 17-23 May 1943; incl. ("Report of Mine Laying in Kahili and Shortland Island areas, May 19, 20, 23, 1943"), Consolidated Mission Report, 307th Bomb. Gp. (H), 19 May 1943.
- 71. TEF Intel., VT-11, 20 May 1943, in "Report of Mine Laying in Kahili and Shortland Island Areas, May 19, 20, 23, 1943"; War Diary, Strike Command, COMAIRSOLS, 2 April-25 July 1943, in USMC Hist. Div. files.
- 72. Form 34, 424th Bomb. Sq. (H), 17-23 May 1943; Intel. Report, 307th Bomb. Gp. (H), 20 May 1943, in ibid.; Intel. Report, TSB, 20 May 1943, in ibid.
- 73. War Diary, Strike Command, COMAIRSOLS, 2 April-25 July 1943; "Report of Mine Laying in Kahili and Shortland Island Areas, May 19, 20, 23, 1943"; TEF Intel., VT-11, 23 May 1943; Intel. Report, V. 53, 23 May 1943; Consolidated Mission Report, 5th Bomb. Gp. (H), 23 May 1943; Intel. Report, 307th Bomb. Gp. (H), 23 May 1943, all in USMC Hist. Div. files. Six of the B-17's were from the 1st Bombardment Squadron (H), and eight from the 394th. The e planes were over the target area from 0250 to 0330. Bombs from one B-24 would not release.
- 74. TEF Intel., VT-11, 23 May 1943.
- 75. ACIR, 16-22 May 1943; GM-IR-14104 (22 May 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, 1210601 GR 118 BT, 21 May 43; COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 15-21 May 1943.
- 76. ACIR, 23-29 May 1943; COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 29 May 1943.

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77. COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 4 June 1943.
78. ACIR, 23-29 May 1943; CM-IN-16081 (25 May 43), COM, 3d Fleet to RALCSOWLSPAC, AR #240531 SCR 14, 24 May 43; COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 22-29 May 1943. Niagara, formerly Hi Esmaro, had to be abandoned and sunk by PT torpedoes on 26 May.
79. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. II, "Enemy Planes Shot Down by Fighters from Guadalcanal Area," in USMC Hist. Div. files. All four of the month's bag of Bettys were destroyed by AAF planes.
80. ACIR, 30 May-5 June 1943; War Diary, Strike Command, COMAIRSOLS, 2 April-25 July 1943; CM-IN-1015 (2 June 43), COMGENSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #559, 2 June 43; Form 34, 370th Bomb. Sq. (H), 30 May-5 June 1943; COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 30 May-4 June 1943.
81. ACIR, 23-29 May 1943.
82. Form 34, 370th Bomb. Sq. (H), 30 May-5 June 1943; CM-IN-3056 (5 June 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, SCR #16, 040522 GR 104, 4 June 43.
83. ACIR, 6-12 June 1943; CM-IN-3675 (6 June 43), COMAIRSOLS to COMAIRSOPAC, SCR #14, 0509432.
84. Ibid.; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal." The AAF pilot lost with the P-40 was 1st Lt. R. J. Sooter of the 44th Fighter Squadron. One SBD crew was recovered off Santa Isabel. COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 11 June 1943.
85. ACIR, 6-12 June 1943. Two days later Lieutenant Bade returned to combat to shoot down one sure and one probable kill over the Russells.
86. ACIR, 6-12 June 1943.
87. COMAIRSCLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 11 June 1943.
88. CM-IN-4857 (8 June 43), COMAIRSOLS to COMAIRSOPAC, SCR #9, 071946 GR 43, 7 June 43; ACIR, 6-12 June 1943; CM-IN-7447 (12 June 43), COMGENSOPAC, G-2 to COMGENAAF, #749, 12 June 43.
89. Ibid.; Fighter Interception Report, Hq., 18th Fighter Gp., 17 June 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-26397. The AA gunners on the Russells claimed one additional enemy plane. RNZAF pilots credited with kills were S/L M. Herrick, F/Lt. Grieg, F/Lt. Duncan, and Sgt. Martin. R.N.Z.A.F. in the Pacific, Historical Summary, Aug. 1944, p. 10, in AFSHO files, 7452-4.

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90. Fighter Interception Report, Hq., 18th Fighter Gp., 17 June 1943.
91. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal." While parachuting to safety, one Marine pilot was badly injured by the propeller of an enemy plane whose pilot attempted to strafe. CM-IN-7447 (12 June 43), COMGENSOPAC, G-2 to COMGENMACF, #749, 12 June 43.
92. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal.
93. CM-IN-6677 (11 June 43), COMAIRSOLS to COMAIRSOPAC, #101014 SCR #11, 10 June 43; ACRN, 6-12 June 1943; Form 34, 12th Fighter Sq., 7-13 June 1943. Two of the P-38's were from the 12th Fighter Squadron, two from the 339th, but the 12th claimed the Betty. (Ibid.; CM-IN-7590 (12 June 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, #110535Z SCR #6.) Two more Bettys were turned back.
94. ACRN, 6-12 June 1943; CM-IN-3546 (14 June 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, SCR #12, #120529Z GR 121, 13 June 43.
95. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal.
96. Fighter Interception Report, Hq., 18th Fighter Gp., 12 June 1943, in A-2 Lib., E-26323. The New Zealand pilot in the P-40 lost here was F/O E.T.C. Karpeth. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal."
97. Ibid.; Fighter Interception Report, Hq., 18th Fighter Gp., 12 June 1943. USF forces consisted of 11 P-40's, 8 P-39NO's, 4 P-39K's and P-38D's, and 6 P-35G's. The RWZAF provided 13 P-40's. In this action Capt. Robert E. Westbrook of the 44th Fighter Squadron scored his fifth kill. The missing Marine pilot was Capt. U. N. Schmitt of VFP-121.
98. ACRN, 13-19 June 1943. According to Fighter Command the total was 54 fighters, in addition to the four Bettys destroyed on the 10th. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal."
99. CM-IN-10632 (17 June 43), COMGENSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #869, 17 June 43; CM-IN-9837 (16 June 43), COM, 3d Fleet to CINCSOWESPAC, SCR #10 #150600Z GR 133, 15 June 43; COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 18 June 1943.
100. ACRN, 13-19 June 1943; incl. (War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal), "Action Report, Fighting Squadron Eleven, 16 June 1943."

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- 101. Ibid.; ACIF, 13-19 June 1943. Fighter Command scrambled 25 F4U's, 26 F4F-4's, 12 P-38's, 15 P-39's, and 24 P-40's, of which 8 were RNZAF. CM-IN-11857 (19 June 43), COMSOPAC to COMINCH, 190114 SCR 9, 19 June 43.
- 102. Incl. (War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal), "Action Report, Fighting Squadron Eleven, 16 June 1943"; ACIF, 13-19 June 1943; CM-IN-11857 (19 June 43), COMSOPAC to COMINCH, 190114 SCR 9, 19 June 43.
- 103. Incl. (War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal), "Action Report, Fighting Squadron Eleven, June 16 1943"; ACIF, 13-19 June 1943.
- 104. CM-IN-10961 (17 June 43), COMSOPAC, G-2 to AGWAR, 4856, 17 June 43.
- 105. Ibid.; Form 34, 339th Fighter Sq., 14-20 June 1943; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal." The most complete breakdown of the scores of the various types of planes is as follows:

Type	Airborne	In contact	Enemy a/c dest.	Allied losses
			Zeros DB or TB	
F4U	25	4	2	1
F4F-4	28	26	14	16
P-38G (339th)	12	9	8	-
P-39NO	15	13	6	5
P-40F and M	16	14	10	10
P-40 (RNZAF)	8	8	5	-
	104	74	45	32

(ACIF, 13-19 June 1943.) The 41 planes claimed by Fighter Command include four additional Zeros and are a higher figure than that represented above, but because Fighter Command's figure was compiled at a later date, it probably is based upon a more complete over-all analysis of the action. Form 34 of the 44th Fighter Squadron indicates that 13 P-38's took off instead of the 16 listed in the cables. (Form 34, 44th Fighter Sq., 14-20 June 1943.) The P-38G's were flown by the 339th Fighter Squadron Detachment, the P-39NO's by the 347th Fighter Group Detachment. Form 34, 347th Fighter Gp. Det., 14-20 June 1943.

- 106. CM-IN-11857 (19 June 43), COMSOPAC to COMINCH, 190114 SCR 9, 19 June 43; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal."
- 107. Ibid.
- 108. CM-IN-11857 (19 June 43), COMSOPAC to COMINCH, 190114 SCR 9, 19 June 43. The AK Celano and LPT 340 both sustained direct hits; the latter was carrying the 12th PIU up to CMCUS and in the bombing all unit and personal equipment was destroyed. Both craft were subsequently returned to service.

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- 109. CM-OUT-7063 (17 June 43), Arnold to Harmon for Halsey, #Rane 5754, 17 June 43.
- 110. CM-IV-11225 (18 June 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, #170529 SCR 8026, 18 June 43; LCI, 13-19 June 1943. Recent estimates had placed enemy air strength in the Solomons-New Britain-New Ireland area at approximately 350; thus on the 16th more than one quarter of this force was destroyed. COMINRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 18 June 1943.
- 111. History of the 42d Bombardment Group (H), 15 Jan. 1941 to 30 June 1943.
- 112. Ibid.; ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Arnold, 27 April 1943, in AAG 312.1-C, Operations Letters.
- 113. Ibid.; History of the 42d Bombardment Group (H), 15 Jan. 1941 to 30 June 1943. The ground echelons of the 390th Squadron and of Headquarters, 42d Bombardment Group (H) had gone up to Carney on 5 May to establish bivouac areas for the housing and accommodation of the remainder of the group. The 70th remained at Fiji, flying search missions for the II Island Air Command and awaiting assignment of B-25's to replace its worn B-26's.
- 114. Form 34, 69th Bomb. Sq. (H), 14-20 June 1943; CM-IV-9337 (16 June 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COMSOWESPAC, SCR 10, #150600Z GR 133, 15 June 43.

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NOTES

Chapter III

1. JCS 238/5/D, 28 March 1943.
2. The conference held its first White House meeting on 12 May 1943.
3. CCS 239/1, 23 May 1943. This is a report by the U. S. Joint Staff Planners as amended and approved by the CCS in their 92d meeting, 21 May 1943.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. CCS 239/1, 23 May 1943; CCS 242/6, 25 May 1943.
7. CCS 220, 14 May 1943. It was agreed that the U. S. would assist in the recapture of Hongkong.
8. CCS 239/1, 23 May 1943.
9. CCS 242/6, 25 May 1943.
10. CCS 92d Meeting, 21 May 1943.
11. CCS 1st White House meeting, 12 May 1943, in Trident Conference.
12. CCS 239/1, 23 May 1943.
13. "The Army in the South Pacific."
14. ONI Combat Narratives, "Operations in the New Georgia Area, 21 June-5 August 1943," [cited as "Operations in the New Georgia Area"], in AMSHO files.
15. Ibid., p. 2. Munda was bombarded on the night of 4-5 January, Vila on 23-24 January, Munda and Vila on 5-6 March and 12-13 May.
16. Ibid., p. 2; "The Army in the South Pacific"; COMAHSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 17-23 March 1943. Occasionally there were reports of a few land planes here, but not much improvement in the strip was ever observed.
17. "Operations in the New Georgia Area," p. 3.

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18. "The Air Aspect of the Munda Campaign," SOPACFOR, U. S. Pacific Fleet, 15 August 1943 [cited as "The Air Aspect of the Munda Campaign"/], in A-2 Lib., K-32480. These two were later known as Sunlight and Renard, respectively.
19. In the period 14 to 20 June, Carney was out of commission for three days due to flood conditions. Heavy rains and floods had put soft spots in the runway and over a four-day period roads from the camp area down to the flight line were washed out. Form 34's, 424th Bomb. Sq. (H), 9-16 June 1943, and 424th Bomb. Sq. (H), 14-20 June 1943.
20. Halsey Report; "Operations in the New Georgia Area," p. 5; Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force, 29 June-13 Aug. 1943, Annex A, in USMC Hist. Div. files; Operation Plan No. A8-43, Task Force Thirty One, FE 25/A16-3 (1), Serial 00274, 4 June 1943 [cited as Operation Plan No. A8-43, TF 31/.
21. Ibid.
22. Operations of the 25th Infantry Division in the Central Solomons, 14 June 1944, in AGO, Combat Analysis Sec., 325-33.4.
23. Operation Plan No. 7-43, Task Force 33, A16-3/Mj., Serial 00557, 18 June 1943 [cited as Operation Plan No. 7-43, TF 33/], in USMC Hist. Div. files; Halsey Report; "The Army in the South Pacific"; Operation Plan No. A8-43, TF 31.
24. "The Army in the South Pacific."
25. Operation Plan No. A8-43, TF 31.
26. Operation Plan No. 7-43, TF 33.
27. Operation Plan No. A8-43, TF 31, Annex D, "Air Support Plan, Toenails Operation."
28. Ibid.
29. Operation Plan No. 7-43, TF 33; Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force, 29 June-13 Aug. 1943. This would be done initially from aboard the transport McCawley until shore facilities were ready.
30. Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force, 29 June-13 Aug. 43, Annex C, "Plans for Air Support Missions for Ground Operations and for Fighter Direction in the New Georgia Area, 24 June 1943."
31. Operation Plan No. A8-43, TF 31, Annex D, "Air Support Plan, Toenails Operation"; Operation Plan No. 7-43, TF 33.

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- 32. Ibid.
- 33. History of the 67th Fighter Squadron, activation to 31 December 1943. Lt. Jean F. Doar, who bailed out on the way up to Guadalcanal, was picked up by the Navy--at the cost of 26 cases of beer, according to the unit's historian. By 13 July the squadron had left only 17 planes as a result of its many accidents.
- 34. "Operations in the New Georgia Area," p. 4.
- 35. "The Air Aspect of the Buna Campaign."
- 36. Ibid. These were available as follows:

	<u>available</u>	<u>assigned</u>
Fighters	213	258
Light bombers	170	193
Heavy bombers (incl. PB4Y's for search missions)	<u>72</u>	<u>82</u>
	455	533

By types:

<u>Fighters</u>		<u>Light bombers</u>		<u>Heavy bombers</u>	
P43-4	72	B3D	77	B-17	9
P4U	65	TBF	72	B-24	33
P-40	47	B-25	21	PB4Y-1	30
P-38	17			(Primary mission-	
P-39	<u>12</u>			search)	<u>72</u>
	213		<u>170</u>		

In addition, of the non-combat types (including search and utility planes), 45 were available out of the 60 assigned. COMLRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 9 July 1943.

- 37. History of the 12d Bomb. Gp. (M), 15 Jan. 1941 to 30 June 1943; CM-IN-17927 (28 June 43), COMLRSOLS to COMLRSOPAC SGT 11 262336, 26 June 43; COMLRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 25 June 1943.
- 38. Photos of Rabaul taken late in May indicated 53 VF, half of them a new twin-engine fighter type. COMLRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 29 May 1943.
- 39. CM-IN-17726 (28 June 43), COM 3d Fleet to COMSO.ESPAC, SGT 5 270452Z, 27 June 43; AGR, 20-26 June 1943.

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40. "Operations in the New Georgia Area," p. 9; Report of Operations of the 43d Division during the Munda Campaign, Hq., 43d Infantry Div., n. 6. [cited as Report of Operations of the 43d Division], in AGO Combat Analysis Sec., 343-33.4 (12281). The Segi landing force consisted of Companies "C" and "F", 4th Marine Raider Battalion, and Companies "L" and "D", 103d Infantry Regiment. Segi was held jointly by the Army and Marines until 29 June, when the latter were withdrawn.
41. Ibid.; "Operations in the New Georgia Area," p. 10; Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force. The DD Gwin took a shell in the engine room in this action. During the landings on Rendova, 65 Japs were killed. CM-IX-1773 (3 July 43), CTF 31 to COMSOPAC, #021047 SCR 9, 2 July 43.
42. Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force, Annex E, "Daily Intelligence Summaries" [cited as New Georgia Air Force, Daily Intel. Sum.], in ISMC Hist. Div. files; "Navy Fighter Control in the Solomons," Lt. Burton Atkinson, USNR, in AAFSAT Intel. Reports, March 1944, in A-2 Lib., K-52089. The Fighter Command officer was a Marine lieutenant colonel; the Fighter Director was a Navy lieutenant, assisted by Navy, Army, and New Zealand personnel.
43. Ibid.; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal.
44. COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 2 July 1943.
45. "Operations in the New Georgia Area," p. 11; ACIF, 27 June-3 July 1943.
46. Ibid.; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal; COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 2 July 1943.
47. ACIF, 27 June-3 July 1943; "Operations in the New Georgia Area," pp. 11-13. McGarley finally sank at 2003 after receiving three torpedo hits from friendly PT craft which mistook her for an enemy ship.
48. CM-IX-314 (1 July 43), COMAIRSOLS to COMAIRSOPAC, #SCR 10 301252, 30 June 43; ACIF, 27 June-3 July 1943; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal." A breakdown of this figure is as follows:

162 Zeros	32 Dive bombers (Vals)
6 Float Zeros (Infer)	34 Cottys
18 F1/GR	2 Sallys

This was the highest score yet achieved in a single day.

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49. Ibid. Plane losses by type were as follows: 16 F4F's, 16 F4U's, and 4 P-40's. Six of the total were operational losses. A rough estimate of enemy personnel losses indicates an expenditure of more than 500 pilots and aircrews. These Allied losses exclude the figures for heavy and medium bombers.
50. "The Air Aspect of the Buna Campaign."
51. Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force; New Georgia Air Force, Daily Intel. Sum.
52. Ibid.
53. COMUSMACV Weekly Intel. Sum., 9 July 1943; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal"; ACIR, 27 June-3 July 1943. One USF pilot, 1st Lt. C. E. Newlander, was not recovered. Other losses were three F4F's, one F4U, and two USAAF P-40's. Over half of the enemy planes destroyed were dive bombers, float planes, and medium bombers, all relatively easy targets.
54. "Navy Fighter Control in the Solomons," Lt. Burton Atkinson, USNR, in AFRE-20 Intel. Reports, March 1944.
55. Ltr., Gen. Harnon to Gen. Arnold, 13 July 1943, in LMG 312.1-D, Operations Letters; Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force; New Georgia Air Force, Daily Intel. Sum.; LGM, 27 June-3 July 1943.
56. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal"; New Georgia Air Force, Daily Intel. Sum. At 1606 eight more fighters were on station, followed by another eight at 1627.
57. Form 34, 339th Fighter Sq. Det., 27 June-1 July 1943. There were three USF pilots, Richard H. Baker, A. H. Sylvester, and Edward B. Stivers, all believed lost due to fuel shortage while returning from their mission.
58. "The Air Aspect of the Buna Campaign."
59. Ibid.
60. Ltr., Gen. Harnon to Gen. Arnold, 13 July 1943, in LMG 312.1-D, Operations Letters.
61. Form 34, 6th Photo Sq., 26 June-5 July 1943; Hq., Allied Air Forces, SWPA, Intel. Sum. No. 117 (3 July), No. 118 (7 July), No. 119 (10 July 1943), in AFRE-20 files.

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62. Ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Laverne Saunders, DC/AS, 8 July 1943, in AAG 312.1-D, Operations Letters; War Diary, Strike Command, COMAIRSOLS, 2 April-25 July 1943; CM-IN-315 (1 July 43), COMAIRSOLS to COMSOPAC, AGR 9 301211, 30 June 43. On the 1st a flight of nine B-24's dispatched against Kahili was unable to reach the target due to weather, and one plane was lost because of engine failure. Its crew was located the next day by a special search of three B-24's and rescued by Dunbo. Form 34, 370th Bomb. Sq. (F), 27 June-4 July 1943.
63. Ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Laverne Saunders, 8 July 1943. Fighter Command lists 169 planes by 8 July, with an Allied combat loss of 27, exclusive of 9 operational losses.
64. New Georgia Air Force, Daily Intel. Sum.; CM-IN-7005 (10 July 43), CTF to COMSOPAC, #1001232 AGR 12, 10 July 43; Special Action Report, Fq., New Georgia Air Force. The five knocked down by the fighters were listed as Sallys; in addition, the day's score included six Zeros. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal."
65. "Navy Fighter Control in the Solomons," Lt. Burton Atkinson, USNR, in AFSAI Intelligence Reports, March 1944.
66. Special Action Report, Fq., New Georgia Air Force.
67. AGR, 3-10 July 1943; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal."
68. AGR, 3-10 July 1943; New Georgia Air Force, Daily Intel. Sum.
69. Interview with Capt. S. C. Ring, USN, 5 Oct. 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-45097. Captain Ring was operations officer for COMAIRSOLS.
70. Ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Laverne Saunders, 8 July 1943.
71. CM-IN-7550 (11 July 43), COMSOPAC to COMNAAF, #1372, 11 July 43; Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 13 July 1943. In addition to the 20 reported on hand, 10 were due in by boat on 13 July; 30 more were scheduled for July shipment.
72. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 13 July 1943.
73. CM-CUT-5178 (13 July 43), Arnold to Harmon, #Panc 6321, 12 July 43; memo for Col. Berquist by Lt. Col. Roger L. Shearer, 11 July 1943, in Cable Messages, New Caledonia, In and Out, July 1943, in AFSAI files.
74. "Operations in the New Georgia Area," p. 9.

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75. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 13 July 1943; CM-IN-7005 (10 July 43), CTF 31 to COMSOPAC #100123Z NOR 12, 10 July 43; New Georgia Air Force, Daily Intel. Sum.
76. Operations Analysis Sec., 13th AF, "Losses, Accidents and Injuries of Fighter Planes and Pilots in Relation to Flying Time, Solomon Islands, June through November 1943," 15 April 1944, in A-2 Lib., K-57520. The P-39's were withdrawn in September.
77. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 13 July 1943.
78. Ibid.
79. "Operations in the New Georgia Area," pp. 23-30.
80. Ibid., pp. 30-31; CM-IN-5302 (8 July 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, #070626 NOR 1406, 8 July 43.
81. "Operations in the New Georgia Area," pp. 34-35.
82. Ibid., p. 45.
83. ACIR, 11-17 July 1943; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal."
84. Ibid.; ACIR, 11-17 July 1943; CM-IN-9625 (17 July 43), COMCOMSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #1423, 14 July 43. One P-40 was lost here, but the pilot was recovered.
85. COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 16 July 1943. The Japanese Army air force possibly was involved here for some of the aircraft were painted a mottled green-brown. (CM-IN-11174 (16 July 43), COMAIRSOLS to COMCOMSOPAC, #151245 NOR NR 9, 15 July 43; ACIR, 11-17 July 1943; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal.") Losses were 1 P-40 of VF-21, 1 Corsair from VF-213, and one P-40 piloted by F/O A. E. Murray of Capt. Robert Westbrook's 44th Fighter Squadron. The 11 AF P-40's claimed 12.5 planes destroyed in this action, in which they sighted 31 bombers. Form 34, 44th Fighter Sq. Det., 12-13 July 1943.
86. ACIR, 18-24 July 1943.
87. "The Air Aspect of the Buna Campaign."
88. New Georgia Air Force, Daily Intel. Sum.
89. Ibid.

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90. CM-IN-5920 (9 July 43), CTF 31 to COMSOPAC, #090202 SCR 17, n. d.
91. CM-IN-8287 (12 July 43), COMAIRSOLS to COMAIRSOPAC, #1201362 SCR 7, 12 July 43; CM-IN-9633 (14 July 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, #1210002 SCR 7, 12 July 43.
92. CM-IN-5311 (8 July 43), CINCPAC to Ship Unit at Sea, #082011, NCR 1303, 8 July 43. On 10 July operational control of all AA and searchlights was given to the Commanding General, New Georgia Air Command. With this authority, in addition to control of airborne aircraft and the air warning system, which he already possessed, the Commanding General, New Georgia Air Command was now better able to coordinate fighters and A. Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force.
93. CM-IN-973 (2 July 43), COMAIRSOLS to COMAIRSOPAC, #0109512 SCR 14, 1 July 43; CM-IN-2473 (4 July 43), COMGENSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #1219, 4 July 43.
94. COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 9 July 1943; Form 34, 72d Bomb. Sq. (H), 5-11 July 1943. On the 6th one aircraft did not reach Ballale; another was hit by 20-mm. fire and was totally wrecked on landing. Form 34's, 72d Bomb. Sq. (H), 394th Bomb. Sq. (H), 370th Bomb. Sq. (H), 5-11 July 1943; War Diary, Strike Command, COMAIRSOLS, 2 April-25 July 1943.
95. Form 34's, 69th Bomb. Sq. (H) (21-27 June 1943), 390th Bomb. Sq. (H) (28 June-4 July 1943), 69th Bomb. Sq. (H) (5-11 July 1943); CM-IN-1770 (3 July 43), COMAIRSOLS to COMAIRSOPAC, #021103 SCR 8, 2 July 43.
96. Ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Lorraine Saunders, 5 July 1943. Twining pointed out at the same time that the Navy now was interfering very little with heavy-bomber employment.
97. Form 34, 390th Bomb. Sq. (H), 12-18 July 1943.
98. Ibid.; CM-IN-10524 (15 July 43), COMAIRSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #1446, 15 July 43; CM-IN-11320 (16 July 43), COMAIRSOLS to COMAIRSOPAC, #152137 SCR 1R 10, 15 July 43.
99. War Diary, Strike Command, COMAIRSOLS, 2 April-25 July 1943; CM-IN-15319 (21 July 43), COMAIRSOLS to COMAIRSOPAC, #200538 OR 79 BT SCR 17. Two AF's and 3 DD's separated from the formation and headed for Vila via Blackett Strait; the other ships remained in the Gulf as a covering force.
100. Ibid.; War Diary, Strike Command, COMAIRSOLS, 2 April-25 July 1943; Form 34, 69th Bomb. Sq. (H), 19-25 July 1943; Form 34, 390th Bomb. Sq. (H), 19-25 July 1943; COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 23 July 1943.

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101. CM-CUT-5319 (21 July 43), COMAIRSOLS to COMINSCOPAC, #200538 GR 79 ET SCF MR 17. In the two naval battles it was estimated that the enemy force lost one CL, three DD's definitely sunk, two DD's possibly sunk, and six DD's damaged, though it should be noted that in the second action, that of 12-13 July, the light cruiser and destroyer assessed as sunk, and the two DD's listed as possibly sunk or damaged (one each) were all assessed solely on the basis of radar evidence. Balanced against this, U. S. naval losses were Helena in the first action, with seven officers and 106 men dead or missing. In the second engagement very serious damage was incurred in the torpedoing of Leander, St. Louis, and Honolulu, all light cruisers, and in the loss of the destroyer Gwin, with 61 officers and men killed or missing. ("Operations in the New Georgia Area," pp. 23-31 and 34-45.) Japanese reports contain the loss of at least two destroyers and the damaging of one heavy cruiser in the area of this action on the night of 19/20 July. USSES Memo No. Nav. 11, 16 Oct. 1945.
102. Form 34, 69th Bomb. Sq. (H), 19-25 July 1943.
103. New Georgia Air Force, Daily Intel. Sum.; Form 34, 390th Bomb. Sq. (H), 19-25 July 1943.
104. CM-IN-12874 (15 July 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, #150547 CGR 13, 15 July 43; CM-IN-12917 COMAIRSOLS to COMINSCOPAC, #170013Z CGR MR 17, 17 July 43; COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 16 July 1943.
105. Form 34, 370th Bomb. Sq. (H), 12-18 July 1943; War Diary, Strike Command, COMAIRSOLS, 2 April-25 July 1943; COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 23 July 1943. The escort consisted of 23 P-40's, 12 P-38's, 35 F4F's, and 44 F4U's.
106. COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 23 July 1943.
107. CM-IN-13454 (19 July 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, #180540 SCR 6, 18 July 43; ACIR, 11-17 July 1943; War Diary, Strike Command, COMAIRSOLS, 2 April-25 July 1943; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal. Twelve P-38G's of the 339th escorted the B-24's, shooting down five of the 30 Zeros they encountered, but they lost 1st Lt. J. W. Hoyle and 2d Lt. B. H. King. (Form 34, 339th Fighter Sq., 11-18 July 1943; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal.") The other planes lost were one F4U, a TBF, and an LED. A later estimate placed enemy loss at 46 Zeros. COMAIRSOLS Intel. Sum., 23 July 1943.

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108. COMINTSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 23 July 1943; "The air aspect of the Guadalcanal Campaign"; CI-IN-13540 (19 July 43), COMINTSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, n. d., 19 July 43. The cover consisted of 64 F4U's, 11 F4U's, 20 P-40's, and 6 P-38's; 29 P-21's had been scheduled, but one blew a tire on take-off, 5 returned early due to mechanical difficulties, and one because of a sick pilot. (Form 31's, 72d Bomb. Sq. (H), 370th Bomb. Sq. (H), 424th Bomb. Sq. (H), 12-13 July 1943.) The Rendova patrol was frequently called upon to furnish fighters for escort purposes.
109. War Diary, Strike Command, COMINTSOLS, 2 April-25 July 1943; Form 31, 424th Bomb. Sq. (H), 12-13 July 1943.
110. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal; *ibid.*, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal"; CI-IN-14231 (20 July 43), COMINTSOLS to CINCPACWESTPAC, SCR 12, 190552 OR 171 37, 19 July 43; CI-IN-14454 (20 July 43), COMINTSOLS to COMINTSOPAC, SCR 8 131927Z, n. d.
111. CI-IN-13696 (26 July 43), COMINTSOLS to COMINTSOPAC, 1st Fleet, SCR 13 250637, 25 July 43; ACIR, 13-24 July 1943. At Kahili were 94 VF, 10 FB, and 5 bombers. It was believed that the enemy's fresh planes were coming from Newak.
112. CI-IN-13696 (26 July 43), COMINTSOLS to COMINTSOPAC, 1st Fleet, SCR 13 250637, 25 July 43. In February it was reported that the Japs were clearing a strip at Nuna Nuna, but this was later disproved, then later the report was renewed. COMINTSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 17-23 Feb., 3-9 March, 31 March-6 April 1943.
113. CI-IN-12917 (18 July 43), COMINTSOLS to COMINTSOPAC, "1700132 SCR 19, 17 July 43; CI-IN-14890 (21 July 43), COMINTSOLS to COMINTSOPAC, SCR 12 200251, 20 July 43; ACIR, 18-24 July 1943. There was also some additional evidence that the Japanese Army Air Force had entered, or was preparing to enter, the Solomons campaign. On 11 July an F4U shot down what was believed to be an Army two-engine fighter, and an Army pilot was captured on the 16th. *ibid.*
114. Form 31, 424th Bomb. Sq., 19-25 July 1943; CI-IN-14416 (23 July 43), COMINTSOLS to COMINTSOPAC, SCR 15 221224, 22 July 43; COMINTSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 30 July 1943.
115. Form 31's, 72d Bomb. Sq. (H) and 370th Bomb. Sq. (H), 19-25 July 1943; COMINTSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 30 July 1943.

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116. CM-IN-21689 (30 July 43), COMINVSOLS to COMINVSOPAC, SCR 3 290951, 29 July 43. Both TBD's and F7F's were now equipped with wing tanks which increased their range, although some difficulty was encountered in releasing these tanks. COMINVSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 23 July 43.
117. Ibid.; ACIR, 13-24 July 1943; CM-IN-16782 (23 July 43), CTF 31 to COMINVSOPAC, SCR NR 20 220316Z GR 190 FT, 22 July 43. LST 343 lost 10 dead and 10 wounded in this attack. F-39's and P-40's based at Segi would take off late in the afternoon to cover the Rendova area at dusk. Form 34's, 70th, 12th, 339th Fighter Sq., July 1943.
118. COMINVSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 30 July 1943; CM-IN-18667 (26 July 43), COMINVSOLS to COMINVSOPAC, SCR 9 251103Z, 25 July 43; ACIR, 25-31 July 1943. Four Wildcats and two P-39's were lost, but three pilots were rescued.
119. CM-IN-344 (1 Aug. 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, SCR NR 7 310636Z; CM-IN-996 (2 Aug. 43), COMINVSOLS to COMINVSOPAC, SCR 8 311413. The Ferros shot down two P-40's here with no loss to themselves. COMINVSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 6 Aug. 1943.
120. CM-IN-26794 (29 July 43), COMINVSOLS to COMINVSOPAC, SCR 10 270440Z; ACIR, 25-31 July 1943; ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Arnold, 29 July 1943; COMINVSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 30 July 1943. Photos taken on the 27th indicated 30 float planes at Enfil.
121. Ibid.; CM-IN-344 (1 Aug. 44), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, SCR NR 7 310636Z.
122. Ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Arnold, 29 July 1943.
123. War Diary, Strike Command, COMINVSOLS, 2 April-25 July 1943; War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal. Appendix 2 includes statistics on the monthly availability of all fighter aircraft by type.
124. War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, "Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal." The record was as follows: 222 Ferros, 1 twin-engine fighter, 23 float biplanes, 55 Bettys, 6 Sallys, and 9 dive bombers. During the same period U. S. fighter losses were 14 in combat and 13 in operational accidents; in this latter category were 2 Corsairs, 6 F4F's, and 5 P-39's. In terms of personnel losses, assuming a crew of five for the Sallys and six for the larger Bettys, the above figures would indicate that it had cost the lives of 40 allied pilots of all services to destroy approximately 648 enemy airmen. See App. 3.

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- 125. COMIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 9 July 1943.
- 126. Air Command Solomon Islands, Maj. Victor Dykes, n. d., in AFSHO files, 5666-1; ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Arnold, 29 July 1943, in LAG 312.1-C, Operations Letters. Strother had commanded the XIII Fighter Command since its activation. Matheny took over the XIII Fighter Command on 1 July 1943.
- 127. Ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Arnold, 29 July 1943.
- 128. Ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Leverne Saunders, 8 July 1943.
- 129. ACH, 25-31 July 1943; Enemy Aircraft Destroyed by SOPAC Forces. F4U's had the highest score in June and July, destroying 85 and 112.5 planes, respectively. AAF P-40's made the best Army record-- 43 and 31.5. See App. 4 for detailed breakdown by type.

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NOTES

Chapter IV

1. Report of Operations of the 43d Division; "Operations in the New Georgia area," pp. 16-17. This was the 2d Battalion, 103d Infantry Regiment, Companies "W" and "Q".
2. Ibid., p. 19.
3. Ibid., pp. 19-20. The landing force consisted of the 3d Battalion, 145th Infantry, 3d Battalion, 148th Infantry, both of the 37th Division, and the 1st Paratrooper Battalion. In covering this landing the DD Strong was torpedoed and sunk. CM-IN-1864 (3 July 43), CTF 31 to COMSOPAC, 020556, in Record file, Office of Cable Secretary, 1-199.
4. "The Army in the South Pacific."
5. Report of Operations of the 43d Division; "Operations in the New Georgia area," pp. 15-16; CM-IN-1864 (3 July 43), CTF 31 to COMSOPAC, 020556.
6. CM-IN-5366 (8 July 43), COMSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #1202, 8 July 43; CM-IN-6041 (9 July 43), COMSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, #1321, 9 July 43.
7. CM-IN-7005 (10 July 43), CTF 31 to COMSOPAC, #100123Z SCR 12, 10 July 43; COMSOLS weekly Intel. Sum., 9 July 1943; "Operations in the New Georgia area," p. 31.
8. Operations of the 25th Infantry Division in the Central Solomons, 14 June 1944 [cited as Operations of the 25th Infantry Division], in AGO Combat Analysis Sec., 325-33.4.
9. Photo Intel. Report, New Georgia Operations, XIV Corps, n. d., in AGO Combat Analysis Sec., 214-23.2; "Summary Munda Operation," Lt. Gen. F. F. Harmon, 1 Aug. 1943, in AGO 370.2-B. This report was submitted by Harmon to Halsey. Report of Operations of the 43d Division.
10. "Summary Munda Operation," Lt. Gen. F. F. Harmon.
11. Ibid.; COMSOLS weekly Intel. Sum., 9 July 1943.
12. "Summary Munda Operation," Lt. Gen. F. F. Harmon.

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13. Report of Operations of the 43d Division; "Summary Munda Operation," Lt. Gen. F. F. Harmon.
14. Operation Plan No. 48-73, TF 31, Annexes C and D, in USMC Hist. Div. files; Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force.
15. Ibid.
16. "Informal Report on Combat Operations in the New Georgia Campaign, British Solomon Islands," CG, XIV Corps [cited as Informal Report on Combat Operations in New Georgia]; Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force, in ACO Combat Analysis Sec., 213-11.5 (12303).
17. Ibid.
18. "The Air Aspect of the Munda Campaign."
19. GI-III-7005 (10 July 43), CTF 31 to COMSOPAC, AGR 12 1001237, 10 July 43; COMSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 9 July 1943.
20. Report of Operations of the 73d Division.
21. "The Army in the South Pacific"; Halsey Report.
22. "The Army in the South Pacific."
23. Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force.
24. GI-IN-15700 (22 July 43), COMSOLS to COMSOPAC, AGR NR 13 2111222, 21 July 43; COMSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 23 July 1943.
25. COMSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 30 July 1943; "Operations in the New Georgia Area," pp. 52-53. The DD's fired 4,000 rounds of 5"/33 shells.
26. COMSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 30 July 1943; GI-III-12696 (26 July 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, AGR 13 250637, 25 July 43; War Diary, Strike Command, COMSOLS. This force which struck at 0630 was composed of 23 E1D's, 52 E4F's, 32 B-24's, 24 B-25's, and 10 B-17's, escorted by 79 fighters of all types. One B-24 and one E1D were lost. General Harmon went on this mission to drop a "personal bomb." GI-IN-12671 (26 July 43), AGRIN FLD 1 to COMSOPAC, AGR 11 2501587, 25 July 43.
27. "Summary Munda Operation," Lt. Gen. F. F. Harmon.
28. GI-IN-3986 (6 Aug. 43), Gen. Griswold to COMSOPAC, AGR NR 11 050545, n. 3.; Report of Operations of the 43d Division; "Operations in the New Georgia Area," p. 59.

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29. ACII, 1-7 Aug. 1943. The distances in nautical miles from Munda to the enemy fields were as follows: Kieta, 160; Benekow, 180; Euka, 234; Labaul, 394. Enemy planes had landed on Munda beginning 23 December 1942, but by 2 January 1943, 37 were had been shot down over the strip, and by early March the strip was totally inoperative. Thereafter Japanese aircraft landed only rarely and Munda never was placed in active operation.
30. Operations of the 25th Infantry Division.
31. "The Air Aspect of the Munda Campaign." Of these 259 were fighters, 60 twin-engine bombers, 23 dive bombers, and 16 float planes.
32. Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force, Annex D, "Air Support Requests--New Georgia Campaign, June 30-August 5, 1943." The strikes were as follows:

Munda Area	27 (5 not executed)
Erogai-Lairoko	10
Water Cove	4 (1 not executed)
Lickhan	2 (1 not executed)
Viru	1
	<u>44</u>

33. ibid. Total sorties by CCM.II. New Georgia were distributed in the following manner:

SBD	886
T F	763
B-25	102
B-24	66
B-17	16
	<u>1,833</u>

The 130 bombing attacks ordered by CCM.II. New Georgia and CCM.II.SOLS were sent against the following targets:

Munda	20
Mahili, Ballale, Suka,	
Vila, Rekata Bay	45
Shipping	35
Air-ground support	20

"The Air Aspect of the Munda Campaign."

34. CCM.II.SOLS Weekly Intel. Sur., 6 Aug. 1943.

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34. COMAERSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 6 Aug. 1943.
35. Ibid.; CM-IN-1740 (3 Aug. 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, #SCE NR 12 020557, 2 Aug. 43.
36. Ibid.; COMAERSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 6 Aug. 1943.
37. CM-IN-4914 (7 Aug. 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, #SCE NR 17 050615, 5 Aug. 1943.
38. "Summary Munda Operation," Lt. Gen. F. F. Harmon.
39. Operation of the 25th Infantry Division; Informal Report on Combat Operations in New Georgia.
40. Interview with Lt. Comdr. H. B. Larsen, USN, 18 Jan. 1944, in A-2 Lib., E-50042. Larsen served as Operations Officer of Strike Command for five months, beginning 25 July 1943. His criticism over the failure of the ground commanders to call for close support may be attributed to a pride often demonstrated by the TBF-SEB men in the accuracy of their bombing.
41. "The Air Aspect of the Munda Campaign."
42. Ibid. This Navy report credits the air forces with the destruction of one seaplane carrier, one AO, four DD's, six AK's, nine barges, plus damage to seven DD's, nine AK's, and three PG's during the campaign.
43. COMAERSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 16 July 1943.
44. Operation Plan 7-43, TF 33.
45. General Staff Journals, 43d Div., Munda Campaign, G-4 Journal, 22 June-22 Aug. 1943 [cited as G-4 Journal, 43d Division], in AGO Combat Analysis Sec., 343-11.3.
46. Report of Operations of the 43d Division.
47. G-4 Journal, 43d Division; Hq., 145th Infantry, "The First Battalion Journal for New Georgia and Vella Lavella Campaigns," in AGO Combat Analysis Sec., 343-11.3; COMAERSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 16 July 1943.
48. History of the 13th Troop Carrier Squadron, 10 Oct. 1942 to 31 July 1943.

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58. Ibid.
 59. Ibid. Maintenance of the field was by the 73d Seabees.
 60. From the center line of the strip to 100 feet on each side, Punda was surfaced with 18 inches of rolled coral.
 61. Report on Study of Non-Combat Accidents, Operations Analysis Sec., 13th AF, 15 Nov. 1943, in A-3, Operations Analysis Div.
 62. Ibid.
 63. "The Army in the South Pacific"; Halsey Report. Apparently Halsey made his decision to by-pass Vella on 12 July. "History of Occupation of Vella Lavella," Hq., 3d M.A. Div., in A-2 Lib., K-47143.
 64. "The Army in the South Pacific"; Narrative Account of the Campaigns in the New Georgia Group, S.S.I., Hq., New Georgia Occupation Force, in IGO Combat Analysis Sec.; G-2 Periodic Report, Hq., USAFISPA, 1A-21 Aug. 43. The 35th was followed by the 4th Defense Battalion, USMC, the 58th Seabees, and the Reconnaissance Troop of the 25th Division.
 65. Narrative Account of the Campaigns in the New Georgia Group, S.S.I., Hq., New Georgia Occupation Force; Report of the 73d Division during the Campaign to Secure Brunel Island and Diamond Narrows, Hq., 456 Div., in IGO Combat Analysis Sec., 343-33.4 (A-1222).
 66. Operations of the 25th Infantry Division; Narrative Account of the Campaigns in the New Georgia Group, S.S.I., Hq., New Georgia Occupation Force.
 67. Ibid. Total Allied ground casualties in the Central Solomons were 972 killed, 3,373 wounded, 23 missing in action, and 142 additional died as a result of wounds. Enemy casualties could only be estimated, although 2,483 enemy were counted and approximately 200 to 250 were believed killed on Vella Lavella.
 68. Interview with Lt. Comdr. H. H. Larsen, USN, 18 Jan. 1944, in A-2 Lib., K-50042.
 69. COMAIRSOLS weekly Intel. Sum., 13 Aug. 1943; C-11-11200 (15 Aug. 43), COMAIRSOLS to COMAIRSOPAC, 140012 SEP 13, 14 Aug. 43; Hq., 7th AF, Intel. Bulletin no. 100, 29 Aug. 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-32051. Colonel Unruh was commander of the 5th Forwardment Group (H) at the time.

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49. "Report of Medical Department Activities in New Georgia and Guadalcanal," Lt. Col. Hobart Mikosell, MC, 7 Dec. 1943, in AAG bulk files, Air Surgeon Materials. Most of the evacuees were taken by LCT's and landing barges to Co-corana, where they were transferred to larger LST's for the trip down to Guadalcanal.

50. Informal Report on Combat Operations in New Georgia.

51. Operations of the 25th Inf. Division.

52. Ibid.

53. Interview with Col. F. L. Beadle, 23 Nov. 1943, in A-2 lib., F-41406; New Georgia Air Force, Daily Intelligence Summaries. The following planes were captured on Vunda, all in poor condition.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 9 Zekes (Mark 1 Zero) | 6 Sullys (Mitsubishi Type 97 two-engine bomber) |
| 6 Hamps (Mark 2 Zero) | 1 Betty (Mitsubishi Type 1 two-engine bomber) |
| 3 Oscars | 5 Vals (Aichi Type 99 dive bomber) |

54. AGR, 8-14 Aug. 1943; COMINTSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 13 Aug. 1943; COMINTSOLS to COMAIRSOPAC, SCR EP 14 101000, 10 Aug. 43. Four of the P-40's were AAF; two Zeros were shot down and one P-39 was lost, but the pilot, Lieutenant Davis, was recovered. Lieutenant Skuler, who had downed four enemy planes on the 6th, shot down his fifth plane in this action. COMINTSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 11 Aug. 1943.

Incl. 5

55. Ibid.; (Operations of Aviation Engineers), History of the 828th Engineer Aviation Bn., November 1942-July 1944. [Cited as History of the 828th Engineer Aviation Bn.] in AFGHO files, 6342-50. When the Navy moved to an advance position requiring establishment and maintenance of an airfield, it ordered an Acorn and a Combat Aircraft Service Unit (CASU). CASU personnel serviced and repaired the planes. Seabees attached to the Acorn built the air strip, buildings, and installations, and maintained them. Each Acorn was so equipped that when joined with a CASU, it could service, rearm, and perform minor repairs and routine upkeep for planes of a carrier group or a patrol plane squadron. The standard Acorn complement, including Seabees, was 67 officers and 1,590 men, although this number varied in practice. Naval Aviation News, 1 June 1945, p. 18.

56. Form 34, 14th Fighter Sq., 3-14 Aug. 1943.

57. History of the 828th Engineer Aviation Bn.

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70. COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 13 Aug. 1943. On the same day (the 12th) the COMAIRSOLS Availability report indicated Allied strength as follows:

N.	LB	HB	C. St. & PHOTO	MISC.
6 P-38	65 B3D	13 B-17	9 PEO	1 F4F-7
24 P-39	17 T5F	29 B-24	4 C&N-3	2 P-70
35 P-40	24 B-25	23 PB4Y-1	6 C&U-4	
58 F4U			5 F5A	
			3 PBX-5A	
			10 PBX-5	
<u>123</u>	<u>106</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>3</u>

COMAIRSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 12 Aug. 1943.

- 71. Ibid. COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 13 Aug. 1943. Gunners of the 31st Squadron shot down four Zekes. During the action one Zeke attacked while upside down, when crewmen saw something resembling the pilot drop out, after which the plane went down out of control. No parachute was seen to open. COMAIRSOLS Daily Digest, 17 Aug. 1943, in Daily Intel. Sum. files, August 1943.
- 72. Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force, Second Phase, 14 Aug.-20 Oct. 1943, in USMC Hist. Div. files.
- 73. Ibid.
- 74. Apparently the eight P-39's went over to Nekata; all reports mention only F4U's, Kittyhawks (FNZAR), and Warhawks (AAF) in the morning interception. COMAIRSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 16 Aug. 1943.
- 75. Ibid., 19 Aug. 1943; Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force, Second Phase; Annex A (ibid.); Air Command, New Georgia, Daily Intel. Sum., 14 Aug.-20 Oct. 1943 (cited as Air Command, New Georgia, Daily Intel. Sum.); COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 20 Aug. 1943; COMAIRSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 16 Aug. 1943. AAF P-40's destroyed two Zekes and two Vals in the morning interception.
- 76. COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 20 Aug. 1943; COMAIRSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 16-17 Aug. 1943. Approximately 4,600 troops, including 700 naval personnel, were put ashore on the 15th.
- 77. Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force, Second Phase; Air Command, New Georgia, Daily Intel. Sum.; COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 20 Aug. 1943.
- 78. Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force, Second Phase; Air Command, New Georgia, Daily Intel. Sum. On the 16th one shell burst in the acorn dispensary, killing two men and seriously injuring six. On the 17th an estimated 50 shells fell around the field.

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79. Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force, Second Phase.
80. COMAIRSOLS Daily Digest, 28 Sep. 1943, in Daily Intel. Sum. files.
81. CM-IR-96 (1 Mar. 43), Harmon to CFSIG, #5278, 28 Feb. 43. At this time Harmon reported that five out of eight sets on Espiritu Santo were inoperative due to lack of spare parts.
82. Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force, Second Phase; CM-IR-14412 (19 Sep. 43), COMGENSOPAC to CG, IAF, #2856, 18 Sep. 43.
83. COMAIRSOLS Daily Digest, 28 Sep. 1943.
84. COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 27 Aug. 1943; Air Command, New Georgia, Daily Intel. Sum., 14 Aug.-20 Oct. 1943.
85. Ibid.; COMAIRSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 22 Aug. 1943.
86. Ibid., 22-28 Aug. 1943; Air Command, New Georgia, Daily Intel. Sum.; COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 27 Aug. 1943.
87. COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 27 Aug. 1943.
88. Air Command, New Georgia, Daily Intel. Sum.
89. "History of Occupation of Vella Lavella," Hq., 3 N.F. Division, in A-2 Lib., K-47143.
90. Ibid. The first squadron of F4U's was stationed on Barakoma on 18 October, followed within a few days by two additional Corsair squadrons.
91. Hq., USAFISPA, Air Information Bulletin No. 24, 18 Aug. 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-31370; Hq., 7th AF, Intel. Bulletin No. 100, 29 Aug. 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-32051. See Chart, "Principal Japanese Barge and Shipping Lanes in Solomon Islands," following p. 137.
92. Hq., 7th AF, Intel. Bulletin No. 100, 29 Aug. 1943; Hq., USAFISPA, Air Information Bulletin No. 24, 18 Aug. 1943. It was estimated that a 50-foot barge could carry 22,400 pounds (360 cases) of rations. At 3.6 pounds per day per man, this one barge could supply 6,200 men, while three of them could carry rations for a triangular division of 18,000 men.
93. COMAIRSOPAC Daily Intel. Sum., 21, 22, 23 Aug. 1943.

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94. COMAIRSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 25, 26, 27 Aug. 1943. These attacks were of the following strengths: 24th--12 B-25's, 26 SBD's, 21 TBF's; 25th--13 B-25's, 25 SBD's, and 24 TBF's; and 26th--11 B-25's, 29 SBD's, and 26 TBF's.
95. Narrative Report of August Activities, Hq., 42d Bomb. Gp. (1), 9 Sep. 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-34239. Often the barges were run up on the beach by their crews where they were burned out.
96. CM-II-20/17 (27 Aug. 43), COMSOPAC to CINCPAC, #260601Z SEP 43; ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Arnold, 7 Oct. 1943.
97. War Diary, Strike Command, COMAIRSOLS, 26 July-19 Nov. 1943.
98. COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 17 Sep. 1943.
99. COMAIRSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 5 Oct. 1943.
100. ACIR, 29 Aug.-1 Sep. 1943; CM-II-3009 (1 Sep. 43), CCM, 3d Fleet to CCM, 1st Fleet, #310000 NCR 6617, 2 Sep. 43.
101. Air Command, New Georgia, Daily Intel. Sum., First Phase, 29 June-13 Aug. 1943; Hq., 7th AF, Intel. Bulletin No. 100, 29 Aug. 1943.
102. COMAIRSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 26 Aug. 1943.
103. New Georgia Air Force, Daily Intel. Sum.
104. War Diary, Strike Command, COMAIRSOLS, 26 July-19 Nov. 1943.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid.
107. Air Command, New Georgia, Daily Intel. Sum., 14 Aug.-20 Oct. 43.
108. ACIR, 29 Aug.-4 Sep. 1943. The leaflets dropped on 30 August read: "While you are engaged in a painful struggle the Japanese Navy which is living in comfort and plenty outside of the battle zone is absolutely helpless to aid you." COMAIRSOLS Daily Digest, 2 Sep. 1943, in Daily Intel. Sum. files.
109. COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 3 Sep. 1943.
110. See app. 5. One mission was in conjunction with the light bombers.

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111. COMINTSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 31 Aug. 1943; COMINTSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 3 Sep. 1943. F4U's knocked down 13 Mekes; P-39's were credited with 5, though later reports indicated 3. COMINTSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 2 Sep. 1943.
112. See App. 5.
113. Enemy Aircraft Destroyed by SOPAC Forces; ACIR, 5-11 Sep. 1943. This was the second highest monthly total of kills achieved by the P-24's in the entire Solomons campaign.
114. COMINTSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 29 Aug. 1943. Lieutenant Lanphier was a member of WF-214.
115. ACIR, 5-11 Sep. 1943; COMINTSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 29 Aug. 1943.
116. Air Command, New Georgia, Daily Intel. Sum.; COMINTSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 15 Sep. 1943. Returning from the third mission one of the P-40 pilots crash-landed at Segi, slipping off the strip into the water. The pilot was seen getting out, but could not be located by the crash boat and was lost.
117. COMINTSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 17 Sep. 1943. Allied combat losses for the period were 21 planes, of which 11 were lost in combat, 6 in operation, and 4 by enemy bombs. Combat losses were: 1 B-25, 1 P-51, 2 TBF's, 4 P-40's, 2 P-40's (U.S.), and 1 F4U. In one mission on the 15th, an AA shell apparently exploded on a ball turret, knocking it out of the plane and carrying the gunner with it. Form 94, 371st Bomb. Sq. (B), 13-19 Sep. 1943.
118. COMINTSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 9 Sep. 1943.
119. Special Action Report, Hq., New Georgia Air Force, Second Phase: The first plane to land on Barakoma was a J2F-5 (Grumman "Duck") piloted by Maj. Wilfred H. Stiles, USMC, of Strike Command who went up to retrieve two pilots. Barakoma placed the air forces only 85 miles from Kahili and brought Duka and Bonis within fighter range. ACIR, 19-25 Sep. 1943.
120. Ibid.
121. "The F4U-2 (K) in the Solomons," SOPAC/OP, U. S. Pacific Fleet, Intel. Sec., 1 March 1944, in USMC Hist. Div. files.
122. COMINTSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 18 Sep. 1943; ACIR, 19-25 Sep. 1943.
123. COMINTSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 17 Sep. 1943.

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124. Ibid., 21 Sep. 1943. The first plane fell south of Fighter No. 1 and the second hit with full throttle and bomb load just south of Fighter No. 2. Both were Bettys. On the night of 28 September, Lieutenant Weigs was forced to land at 1935 due to failure of his electrical system. He buzzed the lunda strip but the field lights failed to come on, forcing him to land without any lights. His own plane ran off the runway, suffering some damage, but Weigs was unharmed. Air Command, New Georgia, Daily Intel. Sum., 14 Aug.-20 Oct. 43.
125. AGIR, 5-11 Sep. 1943.
126. Ibid., 19-25 Sep. 1943.
127. COMINTSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 20, 21, 27 Sep. 1943.
128. COMINTSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 1 Oct. 1943; CI-IN-1629 (3 Oct 43), COM, 3d Fleet to COM, 1st Fleet, 0103022, 1 Oct. 43. See Chap. VI for the Bright Project.
129. COMINTSOLS Weekly Intel. Sum., 1, 8 October 1943.
130. Ibid., 8 Oct. 1943; AGIR, 3-9 Oct. 1943; CI-IN-1900 (8 Oct. 43), COMINTSOPAC to Chief of Staff, USA, 3305, 8 Oct. 43. During this week the Jap lost 26 planes, COMINTSOLS 5, including 2 B-25's and 2 P-38's. The searching Betty shot down on the 8th was caught just off the water by two P-38's.
131. AGIR, 3-9 Oct. 1943.
132. COMINTSOLS Daily Intel. Sum., 13 Oct. 1943.
133. Cable message, Arnold to Harmon, Pane 6212, 29 Sep. 43, in ISHO files, 7452-13.
134. Ibid. It is an interesting commentary upon the American concept of aerial warfare that the Commanding General of the AAF was concerned when his flyers seemed temporarily unable to continue their destruction of five enemy planes for each loss of their own.
135. Ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Arnold, 7 Oct. 1943.
136. Ibid.
137. Ibid. Twining revealed to local "higher authority," presumably Fitch or Lalacy, and found an appreciation of the situation, but he learned that no additional Navy fighters could be obtained at the time.

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- 138. Ibid. In August P-38 strength in the forward area had fallen so low that Harmon found it advisable to withdraw from the forward area all P-38's except a few retained for night-fighter use. He had planned to have a reorganized and retrained complete P-38 Squadron back in the forward area by October. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 23 Aug. 1943, in AFPO files, 7452-13.
- 139. Ltr., Gen. Training to Gen. Arnold, 7 Oct. 1943.
- 140. Ltr., Gen. Arnold to Gen. Training, 16 Oct. 1943, in AFMCE, Off. Ser., AF-IV-B-7, New Caledonia.
- 141. Ibid.

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NOTES

Chapter V

1. XIII AFSC, War Critique Study, p. 83 [cited as War Critique], in AFSHO files, 7307-3A.
2. Ltr., incl. 1 (Operational History, 29th Service Gp.), Lt. Col. Franklin K. Reyher to CG, XIII AFSC, 13 Oct. 1943, in AFSHO files, 6173-3.
3. Ltr., Maj. William L. Chapel, Jr., to CG, XIII AFSC, 6 Sep. 1945, in AFSHO files, 7425-3A; ltr., Maj. Max Hampton, AG, XIII AFSC to President, XIII AFSC War Critique Committee, 9 Sep. 1945, in *ibid.*; incl. 1 (ltr., Maj. Wayne S. Boydston, 38th Air Eng. Sq. to CG, XIII AFSC, 14 Sep. 1945), Air Service Operation, in *ibid.* 7425-3B.
4. In some instances an airdrome squadron performed all the work for a tactical unit whose own ground personnel did relatively little, yet when credit was announced the airdrome squadron was neglected. War Critique, p. 108.
5. "The Army in the South Pacific." Major Richard W. Dyer and Lt. Col. Frank E. Bomar had served as the Air Supply Officers on the staff of SOS-SPA, the former from 13 June to 9 December 1942, the latter from 9 November to 25 January 1943. Research note in AFSHO files, 7414-7.
6. History of the 13th Depot Supply Squadron, Activation to 31 Dec. 1943; History of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, 6th Service Group, Activation through 21 Dec. 1943; History of the 29th Service Group, 15 Jan. 1941 to 31 Mar. 1943; Operational History of the 29th Service Group. An advance detail had gone up to CACTUS in December to prepare a campsite but part of it was put to other work. For example, the 15-man detail of the 1932d Quartermaster Truck Co. (Avn.) had been doing transportation work for the 31st Bombardment Sq. (H); in some instances without any prior training whatsoever, it had at night fuzed and loaded bombs for the bomber squadron. Incl. #28 (History of the 29th Service Group), "Performance of Truck Company in the South Pacific," 10 Oct. 1943.
7. History of the 1637th Ordnance Supply and Maintenance Co. (Avn.), Activation to 1 Jan. 1944; ltr., Maj. Roy D. Andre to CO, XIII AFSC, 11 Sep. 1945, in AFSHO files, 7425-3A; ltr., Capt. Alton J. Weigley to CG, XIII AFSC, 8 Sep. 1945, in *ibid.* Heavy equipment for the assembly of vehicles arrived two weeks after the last vehicle had been assembled.

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8. War Critique, p. 51. In this case the Navy finally furnished the sulphuric acid necessary before the trucks could be placed in operation.
9. Ibid., p. 52.
10. Ltr., Lt. Col. Fred T. Taylor, 572d Air Service Group, to CG, VIII AFSC, 14 Sep. 45, in AFMO files, 7425-3L.
11. Incl. 4 (History of the 29th Service Group), Functions of the Group Transportation Section; ltr., Capt. John C. Machovec, 29th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, VIII AFSC, 9 Sep. 1945, in AFMO files, 7425-3A.
12. Ltr., Maj. Foy D. Andre to CG, XIII AFSC, 11 Sep. 1945, in ibid.; ltr., Capt. Alton J. Seigley, 1034th Air Materiel Sq. to CG, VIII AFSC, 8 Sep. 1945, in ibid. Operations on Guadalcanal in the first six months of 1943 were extremely rough and primitive. Wear and tear on brake parts during this period was extraordinarily heavy; many wheel and axle-bearing failures resulted from washing vehicles in streams. Trucks were driven into streams and allowed to stand hub-deep while the driver washed the vehicle and enjoyed a swim. Despite such treatment, there was widespread praise for the GMC 2 1/2-ton truck, a "magnificent vehicle, considering all the jobs it is called upon to do. It takes its place in this war alongside the C-47 aircraft and the jeep." Incl. (ltr., Capt. Dickson S. Stauffer, Jr., 570th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 14 Sep. 1945), War Critique Studies, p. 26, in AFMO files, 7425-3B.
13. Ltr., Lt. Col. Lewis L. Holladay, 321st Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 11 Sep. 1945, in ibid., 7425-3B. A technical sergeant, an instrument specialist in charge of a crew of sheet metal workers and welders, was assigned the task of setting up ^{the} first four buildings used by the Thirteenth Air Force on Espiritu Santo, and this occurred despite the presence of an aviation engineer battalion on the island. Incl. (ltr., Capt. Dickson S. Stauffer, Jr., 570th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 14 Sep. 1945), War Critique Studies, p. 2.
14. Ltr., Incl. 1 (Operational History, 29th Service Gp.), Lt. Col. Franklin A. Peyher to CG, XIII AFSC, 13 Oct. 1943; incl. 22 (History of 29th Service Group), Operational History of the 40th Service Squadron from Date of Arrival in South Pacific Area, 10 Oct. 1943 [cited as Operational History, 40th Service Squadron].
15. Incl. 13 (History of 15th Air Depot Group, activation to 30 June 1943), Information concerning Thirteenth Air Depot Engineering Department, 2 July 1943. Fourth echelon maintenance included repairs necessary to restore worn or damaged aircraft to tactical serviceability.

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16. Ltr., Brig. Gen. A. J. Barnett, C/S, USAFISPA to COMSOPAC, 10 March 1943, in AFHQ files, SoFACoCom, 7307-5L.
17. Ibid.; memo for COMGENSOPAC by Brig. Gen. R. G. Breene, 27 April 1943, in AFHQ files, SoFACoCom, 7307-5L. At Patterson Field the Air Service Com and had scheduled shipment in March of parts for 300 B-24 engines.
18. Ibid.
19. CM-IN-4127 (8 Mar. 43), New Cal to ASCFHO, #5596, 8 Mar. 43; incl. 13 (History of 13th Air Depot Group, Activation to 30 June 1943), Information concerning Thirteenth Air Depot Engineering Department, 2 July 1943. As late as October the total overhaul capacity of the 13th Air Depot was reported as 50 in-line engines per month, exclusive of approximately an additional 50 of the radial type. WD-PF-2061 (14 Oct. 43), AIRSICOM 13 to ASCFHO, #F1036, 13 Oct. 43. The Thomas A. Edison was lost on Turtle Island Reef in the Fijis on 3 December 1942.
20. Eventually after adequate shipping was made available, it was learned that more rapid service could be had by sending all repairable engines back to the United States where better facilities were available. Incl. (ltr., Capt. Dickson S. Stauffer, Hq., 570th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSS, 14 Sep. 45), War Critique Studies, p. 11.
21. Ibid.
22. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Maj. Gen. George E. Strateneyer, 27 Feb. 1943, in AFHQ files, 7452-45.
23. Ibid.
24. CM-CUT-459 (1 Apr. 43), TAG to CG, SFA, #Fane 4099, 1 Apr. 43. Personnel were to be selected from sources under control of COMGENSOPAC.
25. CM-CUT-2623 (7 Apr. 43), Arnold to Harmon, #Fane 4219, 6 Apr. 43; CM-IN-5657 (10 Apr. 43), Harmon to Marshall and Arnold, #8482, 10 Apr. 43; CM-IN-8318 (15 Apr. 43), COMGENSOPAC to AGAF, #561, 15 Apr. 43. The activation was by GO No. 87, Hq., USAFISPA, 14 April 1943. Colonel McCoy was designated CO of the Service Command on 8 May. SO No. 95, Hq., 13th AF, 5 May 1943, in AFHQ files, 7414-7.
26. Memo for COMGENSOPAC by Brig. Gen. R. G. Breene, 27 April 1943, in AFHQ files, SoFACoCom, 7307-5L.
27. Ibid.; ltr., Brig. Gen. A. J. Barnett to COMSOPAC, 10 March 1943.

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28. Ibid.
29. Ibid. Third echelon maintenance included repairs and replacements requiring mobile machinery operated by specialized mechanics, field repair and salvage, the removal and replacement of major unit assemblies, and the fabrication of minor parts which could be completed within a limited period of time.
30. Ibid. There were no first, second, third, or fourth echelon facilities at Efate, Norfolk, Tongatabu, Tongareva, or Kitutaki Island.
31. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Strateneyer, 27 Feb. 1943, in AFSHO files, 7452-43.
32. CI-OUT-03747 (26 Oct. 42), AFRRS to Harmon, #1327, 26 Oct. 42; CI-IN-10011 (23 Nov. 42), Harmon to Arnold, #1112, 23 Nov. 42; CI-IN-2386 (6 Jan. 43), Harmon to Marshall, #841, 4 Jan. 43; ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. McNarney, LC/S, 29 April 1943, in AFSHO files, SoPacLaCom, 7307-5L; ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Harmon, 24 April 1943, in ibid. These airframe squadrons were designed to carry 12 officers and 270 enlisted men, whose duties were to be essentially those of the ground echelon of the combat squadrons.
33. W5 B, Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. McNarney, 29 April 1943, in ibid. Twining had asked for a 25 per cent increase in the number of sheet metal workers authorized to service squadrons. Heavy demand for their services and the tropical climate placed a disproportionate burden upon them. Ltr., Gen. Twining to Gen. Harmon, 24 April 1943.
34. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. McNarney, 29 April 1943.
35. History of the 321st Service Group (Air), Activation to 31 Dec. 1943.
36. Ibid.; ltr., incl. 1 (Operational History of 294th Service Group), Lt. Col. Franklin K. Feyher to CG, VIII AFSC, 13 Oct. 1943, in AFSHO files, 6173-3. The 321st had sailed from New York on 15 May aboard the USAT Brazil. It reached Noumea on 15 June, then went on up to Espiritu Santo, arriving on the 25th. Meanwhile its equipment had been sent from Topeka AAB to the port of embarkation.
37. Ltr., Maj. William F. Lloyd, CO, 9th Air Eng. Sq. to CG, XIII AFSC, 18 Sep. 1945, in AFSHO files, 7425-30. As a result of the "disorganized and erratic" relief provided, the 321st in the beginning created an unfortunate reputation for itself, and some ill feeling developed between personnel of the two air service groups.

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38. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. McMerney, DC/S, 29 April 1943, in AAG 312.1-B, Operations Letters; CM-IN-1301 (2 July 43), COMGEN SCS SPA to COMGEN AAF, 1177, 2 July 43. See App. 6 for assignment of units to the XIII Air Force Service Command.
39. War Critique, pp. 6-8. The XIII AF had three fighter squadrons and three medium bombardment squadrons in the area, all of which drew on the service command. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. McMerney, 29 April 1943.
40. Hq. USAFISPA, Memo No. 77, 6 June 1943, in AFSHO files, 7417-7.
41. Ibid.
42. Ltr., Col. Harry A. Kendall, Hq., XIII AFSC to CG, XIII AFSC, 21 Sep. 1945, in AFSHO, 7425-30; incl. (ltr., Capt. Dickson S. Stauffer, Jr., 570th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 14 Sep. 1945), War Critique Studies, p. 9, in AFSHO files, 7425-3B. One ordnance IM company was sent to Cua Tom to operate an airfield, though none of the personnel was in any way qualified for this work.
43. Ltr., Col. Harry A. Kendall, Hq., XIII AFSC to CG, XIII AFSC, 21 Sep. 1945, in AFSHO files, 7425-3A.
44. "War Critique Study of Air Service Operations at New Caledonia, Russells, Sansapor and Palawan," by Maj. Edwin B. Lancaster, 572d Air Service Gp., 14 Sep. 1945, in AFSHO files, 7425-3B; ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. McMerney, 29 April 1943; ltr., Maj. Henry J. Geiger to CG, XIII AFSC, 8 Sep. 1945, in AFSHO files, 7425-3A. The 6th Group was assigned to the I Island Air Command. No copies of AAF Regulation 65-1 had been received; hence no ground commanders knew precisely the service group's capabilities in performing specific missions. When three of its units were assigned in January to the II Island Air Command in the Fijis under Brig. Gen. George L. Usher, the parent group lost all administrative control, even though the transferred units were still assigned to the 6th Group. At Nandi the absence of AAF Regulation 65-1 again created many problems, but the Supply section tackled the task of organizing seven warehouses of jumbled, unbinned, and assorted aircraft parts which had been in storage. Parts for P-39's, B-26's, and B-17's lay untagged and in common bins. Planes were grounded for lack of parts which lay in the depths of the warehouses but which could not be located. From two to three months' work as required before this situation was rectified. Incl. 2 (ltr., Maj. Wayne S. Boydston, 38th Air Eng. Sq. to CG, XIII AFSC, 9 Sep. 1945), "Operations while at Fiji," in AFSHO files, 7425-3A.
45. CM-IN-1620 (3 Apr. 43), COMGENSOPAC to CG, AAF, 17841, 3 Apr. 43.

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46. Form 31's, 390th Bomb. Sq. (H), 21-27 June, 12-18 July 1943.
47. Form 34's, 394th Bomb. Sq. (H) (11-17 April 1943), 726 Bomb. Sq. (H) (25 April-1 May 1943), 44th Fighter Sq. (26 July-1 Aug. 1943).
48. Ltr., COMCICA to CINCPAC, 8 March 1943, PFI/P17-1, Serial 1423, "Basic Logistical Plan for Command Areas Involving Joint Army and Navy Operations," in AF50 files, SoFaeCom, 7307-5J.
49. Ltr., COMSOPAC to South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force, 20 May 1943, COMSOPAC File L/(COA) Serial 1644, "Basic Logistical Plan for South Pacific," in AF50 files, SoFaeCom, 7307-5J.
50. Ibid. A Joint Working Board assisted the Joint Logistical Board, and was empowered to act on behalf of the latter when no conflict of service interest existed. In cases of conflict, it was necessary to secure approval of action from the entire Joint Logistical Board.
51. CG-IN-7770 (15 Mar. 43), COMCIN SOS SFA to COMCIN SOS AF, "C405, 15 Mar. 43.
52. Incl. 23 (History of 29th Service Group), Report of Squadron Activities, 82d Service Sq., 10 Oct. 1943.
53. Ibid.; incl. 19 (History of the 29th Service Group), "Activities of the 82d Service Squadron in the Field," 10 Oct. 1943. A few days later a PBO landing with depth charges caught fire and exploded, damaging several of the recently repaired planes.
54. Ibid.; incl. 21 (History of the 29th Service Group), "Air Force Supply Activity, APO 709," 12 Oct. 1943.
55. Incl. 1 (ltr., Capt. Dickson S. Stauffer, Jr., 570th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 14 Sep. 1945), War Critique Studies, p. 4.
56. War Critique, p. 23; incl. 1 (ltr., Capt. Dickson S. Stauffer, Jr., Lt. Col., 570th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 14 Sep. 1945), War Critique Studies, p. 4, in AF50 files, 7425-3B. The direct result of this effort was the claim that not a single bomber was grounded for lack of spare parts during the Bunda campaign.
57. AD-PA-2509 (28 Sep. 43), Air Ser Con 13th to COMCIN AFOPFO, 2402, 27 Sep. 43; ltr., Lt. Col. T. L. Spradling, CO, 6th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 13 Sep. 1945, in AF50 files, 7425-33; ltr., Capt. Harris F. Underwood, 6th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 5 Aug. 1945, in AF50 files, 7425-3A. Lack of engineering equipment necessary for surveying, drainage, and road construction of supply areas continued to plague the supply personnel.

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58. Incl. 1 (ltr., Capt. Dickson S. Stauffer, Hq., 570th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 12 Sep. 1945), War Critique Studies, p. 4, in AFSC files, 7125-3B.
59. Incl. C (ltr., Maj. Wayne S. Boydston, 38th Air Eng. Sq. to CG, XIII AFSC, 9 Sep. 1945), "Operations at Guadalcanal," in AFSC files, 7125-3A; incl. 1 (ltr., Maj. Wayne S. Boydston, 38th Air Eng. Sq. to CG, XIII AFSC, 12 Sep. 1945), "Air Service Operation," in AFSC files, 7125-3B.
60. Incl. 18 (History of the 29th Service Group), "Activities of the 40th Service Squadron Engineering Section in the South Pacific Area," 9 Oct. 1945. Capt. Thomas L. Spradling commanded this organization during this period.
61. Ibid.
62. War Critique, p. 3.
63. History of the 71st Service Squadron, 1 Dec. through 31 Dec. 1943; History of the 42d Commandment Group (C), 15 Jan. 1941 to 30 June 1943; incl. 13 (History of the 13th Air Depot Group, activation to 30 June 1943), "Information concerning Thirteenth Depot Engineering Department," 2 July 1942. The engineering officer of the group was Maj. Herman J. Ladd.
64. Interview with Mr. Roland H. Bliss, 22 April 1944, in A-2 Lib., W-58113; CM-IN-6854 (10 July 43), Harmon to Marshall, 1356, 10 July 43. The mobile units of the 71st Service Squadron remained at Tontouta until 19 July when they returned to the parent unit at Plaines des Coques, where they continued to service B-25's. On 24 October the entire squadron sailed with the 6th Group for the Russells, arriving at Tanika Island on the 30th. Here they inherited the shop area of Marine Aircraft Group 21 and continued to service the 42d Group's B-25's, as well as P-38's of the 309th and P-39's of the 67th Fighter Squadron. History of the 71st Service Squadron, 1 Dec. through 31 Dec. 1943.
65. CM-OUT-995 (3 July 43), Marshall to CG, SPA, Tanc 6110, 2 July 43.
66. CM-IN-6854 (10 July 43), Harmon to Marshall, 1356, 10 July 43.
67. Ibid.
68. CM-OUT-10551 (27 July 43), Arnold to Harmon, Tanc 6623, 26 July 43.
69. Memo by Col. Ralph C. Brownfield, 31 Aug. 1943, in AFSC files, SoPacSaCom, 7307-5L. Colonel Brownfield had recently replaced Brig. Gen. Carl Connell as Commanding Officer of the War Force Service Command.

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70. GM-IN-20639 (27 Aug. 43), COMINF 13 to COLGEN AAF, #F684, 27 Aug. 43.
71. Ibid.
72. War Critique, p. 30.
73. Ibid., pp. 49-50.
74. Ltr., Maj. Ray D. André, Ord. Dept. to CG, XIII AFSC, 11 Sep. 1945. In one case two crash trucks were out of service for eight months because of lack of pump clutch parts. In another, an ordnance and maintenance company needed a head gasket for a Ford motor, an unprocurable item. In disgust an enlisted mechanic personally ordered a gasket from a mail order firm in the United States, and received the item in a short time. Ltr., Col. D. E. Knight, Ord. Officer, XIII AFSC to War Critique Committee, XIII AFSC, 15 Sep. 1945, in AFHQ files, 7125-33.
75. Form 34's, 394th Bomb. Sq. (H), 11-17 April 1943, 10-16 May 1943.
76. Form 34's, 72d Bomb. Sq. (H) (25 April-1 May 1943); 23d Bomb. Sq. (H) (23-29 May 1943).
77. Form 34's, 31st Bomb. Sq. (H), (5-12 June 1943), 72d Bomb. Sq. (H) (6-12 June 1943). The B-17's based on Espiritu Santo were conducting daily searches averaging 700 miles out from the island.
78. Form 34's, 23d Bomb. Sq. (H), 26 July-1 Aug. 1943, 16-22 Aug. 1943 (Fear Echelon), 16-22 Aug. 1943, AFO 709 (Forward Echelon).
79. GM-IN-877 (2 May 43), New Cal to ASCPFO, #2589, 1 May 43; Form 34, 44th Fighter Sq., 15-19 Aug. 1943. This squadron reported that the age of its aircraft made it impossible to hold in commission more than 60 or 70 per cent of its planes, and only then by performance of much third and fourth echelon work, yet only two weeks later it could report that the arrival of supplies and equipment had greatly improved. Ibid., 30 Aug.-5 Sep. 1943.
80. B-PF-2061 (14 Oct. 43), AIRSEPCOM 13 to SC-FC, #F1036, 13 Oct. 43. The current average engine life to first overhaul was as follows: radial-500 hours; in-line-150 hours. It was estimated that transports would operate 150 hours per month, combat types 50 hours per month.
81. War Critique, p. 31.

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82. "Air Critique Study of Air Service Operations at New Caledonia, Noussells, Sansapor, and Palawan," by Maj. Edwin B. Lancaster, 572d Air Serv. Gp., 14 Sep. 1945, in AFHQ files, 7425-33; ltr., Lt. Col. Lewis L. Holladay, 321st Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 11 Sep. 1945, in ibid.
83. Incl. 1 (ltr., Capt. Dickson S. Stauffer, Jr., 570th Air Serv. Sq. to CG, XIII AFSC, 14 Sep. 1945), Air Critique Studies, p. 7.
84. Interview with 1st Lt. John W. Bresnahan, 22 Feb. 1944, in A-2 Lib., K-51145. Lieutenant Bresnahan spent 12 months in AAF supply work in the South Pacific, returning to the States in December 1943. Ltr., Lt. Col. T. L. Spradling, CG, 6th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 15 Sep. 1945.
85. Ibid.; Air Critique, p. 30. Wooden boxes covered with tar or water-proofed paper were recommended, inasmuch as the more desirable hermetically sealed containers were not available.
86. GH-IN-23361 (31 Aug. 45), Frank to Harmon, 0167, 31 Aug. 43. No evidence is presently available to indicate what additional delay occurred before these items reached the advanced bases. Later it was found necessary to enclose engines lying in supply storage within cellophane bags to prevent cylinder walls from rusting. Ltr., Lt. Col. Fred T. Taylor, 572d Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 14 Sep. 1945, in AFHQ files, 7425-33.
87. Air Critique, p. 68; ltr., Capt. Edgar L. Hoover, hq., 29th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 6 Sep. 1945, in AFHQ files, 7425-30.
88. Ibid. Lumber was particularly difficult to secure from the Engineers and many units suffered from lack of it. "The Employment of Airdrome Squadrons in Insular and Tropical Warfare," by Maj. Orlando F. Loretto, CG, 12th Airdrome Sq., 3 Sep. 1945, in AFHQ files, 7425-3A; ltr., Lt. Col. T. L. Spradling, CG, 6th Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 5 Sep. 1945, in AFHQ files, 7425-35.
89. Ltr., Lt. Col. Lewis L. Holladay, 321st Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 11 Sep. 1945, in AFHQ files, 7425-33; ltr., Maj. Paul H. Melrtens to CG, XIII AFSC, 10 Sep. 1945, in AFHQ files, 7425-3A.
90. Ltr., Lt. Col. Lewis L. Holladay, 321st Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 11 Sep. 1945.
91. "Historical Record and Critique of the Activities of the Engineer Section, XIII Air Force Service Command during World War II," by Maj. Stephan F. Feenan, 16 Sep. 1945, in AFHQ files, 7425-3B; ltr., Lt. Col. T. L. Spradling, CG, 6th Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 5 Sep. 1945.

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92. CM-TH-1005 (2 Aug. 43), Fair Depot 13 to ASCPFO, 13037, 2 Aug. 43; CM-TH-2392 (4 Aug. 43), Frank to CG, SA, #3416, 4 Aug. 43.
93. Ltr., Maj. Milton H. Fass, 1034th Air Materiel Sq. to CG, VIII AFSC, 5 Sep. 1945, in AFMO files, 7/25-34.
94. War Critique, p. 24. Nevertheless, in December General Harmon reported that the per cent of total quantity of organizational equipment lost per month due to misdirection, abandonment, capture, nilfrage, and enemy action was estimated at 1.5 per cent. D-FF-1096 (7 Dec. 43), AIRSERVIC 13 to SCFPO, #1728, 7 Dec. 43.
95. War Critique, p. 25. One interesting case of this type occurred at Tontouta where there was an aviation engineer battalion available and operating under the Island Service Command Engineer. Despite its presence on the base, it was impossible to secure the services of the engineer unit to construct the control tower; instead the tower was built by aircraft mechanics, cooks, and other service personnel--and the engineers warned that it would collapse in a high wind. Ltr., Col. Harry M. Kendall, Hq., VIII AFSC to CG, VIII AFSC, 21 Sep. 1945, in AFMO files, 7/25-36.
96. Incl. 6 (History of the 29th Service Group), "Function of Group Headquarters, 29th Service Group (Air)," n. d.
97. War Critique, p. 26.
98. Ibid., pp. 27, 36.
99. CM-TH-21979 (30 July 43), CG, 15th D to COMGEN AFSCFO, #3248, 30 July 43; War Critique, p. 27.
100. CM-TH-16052 (21 Aug. 43), Frank to Harmon, #0102, 21 Aug. 43. Ltr., Lt. Col. T. L. Spradling, CG, 3th Serv. Gp. to CG, VIII AFSC, 5 Sep. 1945, in AFMO files, 7/25-35. Spradling reports that "had it not been for a loan from the Navy of a 50 K.V.A. Diesel generator, we would have been without power in six months. The 6.3 K.V.A. sets, driven by air-cooled Wisconsin motors, and used in machine and instrument shops, broke down regularly after short service." Ltr., Lt. Col. Lewis L. Holliday, 31st Air Serv. Gp. to CG, VIII AFSC, 11 Sep. 1945, in AFMO files, 7/25-37.
101. CM-TH-19417 (26 Aug. 43), CG, 13th Air Depot to COMGEN AFSCFO, unnumbered, 26 Aug. 43; CM-TH-21916 (26 Aug. 43), Frank to Harmon, #0154, 26 Aug. 43; War Critique, p. 27. The airframe suppliers ordered two 60-inch searchlights for use in night landings. These are set at the end of the strip and aimed vertically so that the pilot could guide on them in night landings and take-offs.

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- 102. War Critique, pp. 27-28.
- 103. War Critique, p. 40; ltr., Administrative Operations of 29th Air Service Group, Guadalcanal and Ambounga, 10JG Otis C. Turner, 5 Sep. 1945, in AMNH files, 7425-31.
- 104. CM-EM-20009 (27 Aug. 43), COMM 13 to COMGEN AF, 108A, 27 Aug. 43; War Critique, p. 23; ltr., C O Leon Wehner to CG, VIII AFSC, 6 Sep. 1945, in AMNH files, 7425-31. Mr. Wehner was Assistant Air Force Supply Officer.
- 105. Ltr., Maj. William F. Lloyd, CO, 9th Air Eng. Sq. to CG, VIII AFSC, 12 Sep. 1945, in AMNH files, 7425-30. As a case in point, the 374th Service Squadron was frequently called upon to provide labor details for 521st Group Headquarters, with the result that its own technical work was hampered.
- 106. War Critique, p. 31. The tropical climate was a major cause for underestimating needs of the service units. A case in point was the experience of the 7026 Ordnance Company, which was allotted not more than one-fifth the amount of cleaning and preserving materials actually needed. Ltr., Capt. Jerome S. Tsch, 571st Air Serv. Gp. to Hq., VIII AFSC, 5 Sep. 1945, in AMNH files, 7425-31.
- 107. Ltr., Capt. Murray Gordon, VIII AFSC to CG, VIII AFSC, 9 Sep. 1945, in AMNH files, 7425-31. These units sent reports as follows:

7th Airborne Squadron	arrived Guadalcanal	13 July 1943
11th "	" "	Guadalcanal 13 July 1943
12th "	" "	New Caledonia 8 July 1943
13th "	" "	Seji 5 July 1943
14th "	" "	Epale 20 July 1943
15th "	" "	Depiritu Santo 21 July 1943
- 108. Ibid.; incl. 1 (ltr., Capt. Dickson S. Clauffer, Jr., 570th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, VIII AFSC, 17 Sep. 1945), War Critique Studies, p. 10, in AMNH files, 7425-31.
- 109. Ibid. Maj. Stanford Busby operated the Supply Section on the Russell's.
- 110. Ltr., Gen. Byron to COMMISGOFAC, 21 Oct. 1943, in AMNH files, SecFac2aGen, 7307-51.

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111. Ibid. Harmon recommended that the essential fixed facilities be maintained at Tentota, including engine overhaul and a small rear echelon supply section; also that Guu Toa be retained in commission as a training base for fighter units and pilots.
112. Ltr., Gen. F. R. Harmon to Col. Hall, 14 Feb. 1944, in ibid.
113. D-11-2239 (30 Nov. 43), AFCSHO 13 to AFCSHO, AF1047, 30 Nov. 1943.
114. Hq., XIII AFSC, "Unit Movement Data (through 31 August 1945)," in AFCSHO files, 7412-2. See App. 7 for station list of service units.
115. "History of the United Aircraft Ammunition Supply System," by Lt. Col. William N. Tinsley, 23 May 1944, in AFCSHO files, 7356-1.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid.; Hq., USAFISPA, Memo No. 91, "Responsibility for Supply of Aviation Ordnance," 10 July 1943, in AFCSHO files, 7356-1.
118. Ltr., COMSOPAC to South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force, "Supply of Aircraft Ammunition," 29 Sep. 1943, AI/(16), Serial 001984, in ibid. Tinsley received substantial support from Col. Gard, Marine Ordnance Supply Officer; Commander Austin, Gunnery Officer of COMSOPAC; and Col. Murphy, Ordnance Officer of SOS. "History of the United Aircraft Ammunition Supply System," 23 May 1944.
119. Hq., XIII AFSC, Memo No. 10, "Standard Operating Procedure for Supply of Aircraft Ammunition in the South Pacific Area," 23 Oct. 1943, in AFCSHO files, 7356-1.
120. "History of the United Aircraft Ammunition Supply System," 23 May 1944. At one point in the campaign the Guadalcanal depot was called upon to fill a request from the Seventh Fleet at Brisbane for several hundred special fuzes, which were shipped by air. Later checking revealed that the Seventh Fleet had exhausted its supply of this type of fuze, and had drawn upon the Navy's sources in the nearest adjoining theater (SOPAC) which had passed on the request to the Thirteenth Air Force. Meanwhile many thousands of these fuzes were in the hands of the Fifth Air Force at Brisbane. However, a weakness in the system developed early in 1944 when too many 1,000-lb. bombs were used. Memo to COMSOPAC by Gen. F. R. Harmon, 26 March 1944, in AFCSHO files, SoFadaCom, 7307-51.
121. CG-11-11283 (13 June 43), COMSOPAC, 8/7, 18 June 43; ltr., Lt. Col. T. L. Spradling, CG, 6th Air Service Co. to CG, XIII AFSC, 13 Sep. 1945, in AFCSHO files, 7425-35.

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123. These units were the 1637th and 1653d Ordnance Supply and Maintenance Companies (Avn.). (History of the 1653d Ordnance Supply and Maintenance Co. (Avn.); History of the 1637th Ordnance Supply and Maintenance Co. (Avn.); ltr., Maj. Gen. P. Webster, HQ., 6th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 8 Sep. 1945, in AFM-20 files, 7425-3A.) The entire 1637th arrived on 6 July 1943.

124. Ibid.; History of the 1637th Ordnance Supply and Maintenance Co. (Avn.). On 16 October, 26 men of the 1655th Ordnance Supply and Maintenance Company were attached, and on 2 November 32 men joined from the 15th Airborne Squadron. An interesting comparison might be made with the tactical units. A heavy bombardment group had five ordnance officers and 116 men to haul bombs from the dump to the strip and to perform a minimum of aircraft armament maintenance. Yet an ordnance supply and maintenance company of four officers and 76 men was obliged to administer, ration, and quarter itself, receive, store, maintain, account for, and issue 5,000 tons or more of aircraft ammunition, and perform third or often fourth echelon repairs on 500 to 1,000 vehicles, in addition to other heavy duties. Their job was "giant-size." War Critique, p. 41.

125. The photo units suffered keenly from the lack of parts and equipment to maintain their special equipment. Interview with 1st Lt. W. F. Jones, 4 May 1944, in A-2 Lib., E-53414. Para 34's, 18th Photo. Sq. (H) (14-20 March 1943), 17th Photo. Sq. (I) (29 March-4 April 1943).

126. Incl. 1 (ltr., Capt. Dickson S. Stauffer, HQ., 370th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 14 Sep. 1945), War Critique Studies; War Critique, p. 4.

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NOTES

Chapter VI

1. Ltr., Commander, South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force to the South Pacific Area, "Island Bases--South Pacific Area," 23 Feb. 1943, A3-1(16), Serial 00453, in LSHO files, 7307-5J. Control of air units remained as approved by COMAIRSOPAC on 1 August 1942.
2. Ibid. Certain Headquarters, among them COMGENSOPAC, COMSOPAC, COMGENSOS, COMAIRSOPAC, and additional naval and Marine organizations were exempt from control of island commanders.
3. Ltr., Commander, South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force to South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force, "Air Field and Seaplane Base Construction and Administration--South Pacific Area," 5 March 1943, NL-9(95), Serial 00477, in LSHO files, 7307-5J.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Directive, Commander, Air Center Solomon Islands to All Aviation Units Solomon Islands, "Organization and Functions of Air Center Solomon Islands," 25 June 1943, A3-ASF 411, Serial 0099, in CG/AS-3, Operations Analysis. The service having cognizance of the field and to which the field commander belonged was charged, upon request by Commander Air Center, with providing such personnel, facilities, and materials as might be required over and above those available in the base as a whole, to enable the field commander to fulfill his responsibilities. Ibid. see app. 8 for Organization Chart Air Center (Solomons).
7. Ibid.
8. Ltr., Commander, South Pacific to South Pacific Force and South Pacific Area, "Military Organization of the Moreroé Area," 2 Sep. 1943, A3-1 (COL), Serial 001905, in LSHO files, 7307-5J.
9. Ibid.
10. Ltr., Commander, South Pacific to South Pacific Area, "Cognizance of Airfields and Seaplane Bases," 20 Oct. 1943, NL-9/3-1/(17), Serial 002213, in ibid. See app. 9 for list of fields.

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11. "Report on Study of Non-Combat Accidents" (Preliminary Report No. 7), Operations Analysis Sec., 13th AF, 15 Nov. 1943, in CG/5-3, Operations Analysis.
12. Ibid.
13. Ltr., Maj. Fred W. Mupperle to CG, VIII AFSC, 12 Sep. 1943, in AFSCO files, 7425-20; War Critique, pp. 35-36; Ltr., Maj. Paul H. Wehrens, Lt., 29th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, VIII AFSC, 10 Sep. 1945, in AFSCO files, 7425-3A; Ltr., Maj. Joseph C. Casey, 13th Airborne G., "The Employment of Airborne Squadrons in Insular and Tropical Warfare," 8 Sep. 1945, in ibid.; Ltr., Capt. Murray Borden, VIII AFSC to CG, VIII AFSC, 9 Sep. 1945, in ibid.
14. "Report on Study of Non-Combat Accidents" (Preliminary Report No. 7), Operations Analysis Sec., 13th AF, 15 Nov. 1943.
15. Some accidents occurred in connection with air base defense facilities; coordination between the local LA commander and the airfield commander was not always harmonious. War Critique, p. 35.
16. Draft, AF Historical Study, "Development of Radio and Radar Equipment for Air Operations, 1939-1944."
17. Ibid.
18. CM-CUT-12466 (30 Apr. 43), Arnold to CG, SPA, Case 4624, 27 Apr. 43; CM-III-2186 (4 May 43), COMUSOPAC to CG, AAF, 12699, 4 May 43.
19. CM-CUT-6963 (17 July 43), Arnold to Twining, Case 6425, 16 July 43. It was believed in Washington that the "right Project," as it was known, would be self-sufficient for several months.
20. Ltr., Col. W. A. Nathan to CG, 13th AF, 21 Sep. 1943, in AFSCO files, 7307-50; "Some Factors Affecting Snooder Performance," 1 May 1944, Operations Analysis Sec., 13th AF, in A-2 Lib., E-57561.
21. Preparation for the Use of B-29-717-3 in the VIII Bomber Command, App. 1, Interview with 1st Lt. L. L. Sylvester by 1st Lt. Earl D. Lyon, 26 July 1977, in AFSCO files, 5363-2. Lieutenant Sylvester went to the South Pacific with the initial flight as a navigator. Ltr., Gen. Harrison to Brig. Gen. H. W. McClelland, 20 Aug. 1943, in AFSCO files, 7307-53.
22. Form 24, 394th Bomb. Sq. (H), 23-20 Nov. 1943.

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- 23. Ibid., 30 Aug.-5 Sep. 1943.
- 24. Ibid.; Ltr., Col. Nathan to CG, 13th AF, 21 Sep. 1943; "Some Factors Affecting Cooper Performance." The radar altimeter permitted pilots to fly blindly at 100-foot altitude without tension.
- 25. Ibid.
- 26. Ibid.; Form 34, 394th Bomb. Sq. (H), 13-19 Sep. 1943.
- 27. Ibid.
- 28. Form 34, 394th Bomb. Sq. (H), 27 Sep.-3 Oct. 1943; COMAFSOLA Daily Intel. Sum., 29 Sep. 1943; Ltr., Gen. Hermon to Gen. Arnold, 7 Oct. 1943, in A G 312.1-E, Operations Letters.
- 29. Ibid. In the 67 missions flown from 27 August through 1 October, the radar equipment gave the following percentages of satisfactory performance:

SCR 7173	92.9%	SCR 729	97%
LC 217	92.2%	TC 24	97%

Only the Commander of the 5th Bombardment Group (H), Col. Vernon D. Unruh, failed to develop much enthusiasm for the project, but his reaction was in direct contrast to the S-2 of the 5th Group, who quickly was convinced as the result of personal observation. Interview with 1st Lt. F. L. Sylvester; interview with Col. Stuart P. Wright, by author, 3 Jun. 1946.

- 30. Ltr., Col. Nathan to CG, 13th AF, 21 Sep. 1943; CI-IT-18528 (26 Sep. 43), CG COMOPAC to COMIN AF, 3000, 26 Sep. 43.
- 31. CI-COM-12979 (26 Sep. 43), Arnold Sq. Marshall to COMINOPAC, (Lane 3179, 28 Sep. 43).
- 32. Ltr., Gen. Hermon to Gen. Arnold, 7 Oct. 1943; CI-IT-17283 (23 Dec. 43), COMAF 13 to COMIN AF, 11986, 23 Dec. 43. Hermon's letter was carried back to Washington by Colonel Wright, who had been recalled from the South Pacific as soon as his project was well established. Colonel Wright hints if presented the case for a separate squadron. Hermon desired Wright's return in a command status. CI-IT-2468 (6 Oct. 43), COMINOPAC to CG AF, 3261, 6 Oct. 43.

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33. Ltr., Col. Matheny to CG, 13th AF, 21 Sep. 1943; CM-IN-17283, COMAF 13 to COMGEN AAF, #F1986, 28 Dec. 43; CM-OUT-11040 (30 Dec. 43), Arnold to COMAF 13, #392, 29 Dec. 43. The squadron was to reach a strength of 12 planes in January 1944.
34. Periodic Activities Summary, 868th Bomb. Sq. (H), 1-31 Jan. 1944, in A-2 Lib., K-48834.
35. "Some Factors Affecting Snooper Performance," 1 May 1944; ltr., Col. Matheny to CG, 13th AF, 21 Sep. 1943.
36. Ibid. The plane lost on the night of 28 September was the first to fail to return from a mission. One other had crashed on its return to Carney on 30 August, killing its entire crew. (Form 34, 394th Bomb. Sq. (H), 30 Aug.-5 Sep. 1943.) Although originally known as the "Wright Project," the squadron gradually became known as the "Snooper Squadron." "Preparation for the Use of SGR-717-B as a Pathfinder in the XIII Bomber Command," by Capt. Ernest R. Barriere and 1st Lt. Sol. L. Reiches, 3 Sep. 1943, p. 2.
37. War Critique, p. 57.
38. Ibid., p. 57.
39. "Preparation for the Use of SGR-717-B as a Pathfinder in the XIII Bomber Command," p. 2. Direct hits were claimed on five DD's, two CL's, one SS, and one CV. The Navy proved very cooperative and went to considerable effort to confirm sinkings. "Some Factors Affecting Snooper Performance," 1 May 1944; interview with 1st Lt. F. L. Sylvester, 26 July 1944.
40. See App. 10 for relative cause of loss of flying time among flying officers.
41. "The Army in the South Pacific." General Harmon designated this disease "the scourge of this command."
42. Ibid. In an effort to mobilize all resources, the Joint Army-Navy Malaria Control Board was established and placed directly under Admiral Halsey. This board had complete jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to the control, prevention, and therapy of malaria. Under direct supervision of the board were a number of Malaria Control Units, composed of both Army and Navy personnel, which were assigned to each occupied island. Report of Inspection of the Medical Activities of the Thirteenth Air Force, by Col. George F. Baier, III, M.C., 11 Dec. 1943 [cited as the Baier Report], in AAG bulk files, Air Surgeon's material. This report covers observations made during the periods 2 to 3 October, inclusive and 24 October to 4 November 1943, inclusive.

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43. Under Report, Exhibit 2, "Days lost per 100 flying officers per month." See App. 10 for breakdown of causes of loss of flying time.
44. Under Report. When the 29th Air Service Group first went ashore on Espiritu Santo, approximately 75 per cent of the command contracted diarrhea of a mild to severe nature before screened messes could be established. Under Report, Exhibit 15, "Medical Report of 29th Air Service Group," 30 Nov. 1943.
45. Incl. 1 (ltr., Maj. Payne S. Boydston, 38th Air Eng. Sq. to CG, VIII AFSC, 17 Sep. 1945), "Air Service Operation," in AFHQ files, 7425-33; incl. 1 (ltr., Capt. Dickson S. Stauffer, Jr., 570th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, VIII AFSC, 17 Sep. 1945), War Critique Studies, p. 20, in *ibid.*; ltr., C. O. Jerome G. Peppers, Jr., 9th Air Eng. Sq. to CG, VIII AFSC, 31 Aug. 1945, in *ibid.*
46. Ltr., Lt. Col. Lewis L. Holladay, 321st Air Serv. Gp. to CG, VIII AFSC, 11 Sep. 1945, in AFHQ files, 7425-3B; Form 34, 370th Bomb. Sq. (H), 13-19 Sep. 1943.
47. Incl. 1 (Capt. Dickson S. Stauffer, Jr., 570th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, VIII AFSC, 17 Sep. 1945), War Critique Studies, p. 20; ID Report No. 1839, "Morale of the Army Air Force on Guadalcanal," 21 June 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-26868. This report is from O. L. Clements, AF correspondent.
48. Ltr., Maj. Thomas H. Edwards, 6th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, VIII AFSC, 5 Sep. 1945, in AFHQ files, 7425-3C; ltr., Lt. Col. Lewis L. Holladay, 321st Air Serv. Gp. to CG, VIII AFSC, 11 Sep. 1945, in AFHQ files, 7425-3B.
49. Incl. 1 (ltr., Capt. Dickson S. Stauffer, Jr., 570th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, VIII AFSC, 14 Sep. 1945), War Critique Studies, pp. 20-21. Lack of fresh foods, at least on Guadalcanal, was overcome in the spring of 1944 by the establishment of extensive gardens on that island.
50. ID Report No. 1839, "Morale of the Army Air Force on Guadalcanal," 21 June 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-26868. Morale often followed the beer supply. Ltr., Maj. Thomas H. Edwards, 6th Air Serv. Gp. to CG, VIII AFSC, 5 Sep. 1945, in AFHQ files, 7425-3C.
51. CM-OUT-11912 (28 Aug. 43), Arnold to CG 36A (Lk. msg.), (Rane 7422, 28 Aug. 43. The origin of this proposal is not clear; it apparently did not come from General Arnold.

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52. CP-IN-227 (1 Sep. 43), Harmon to Arnold, 2240, 1 Sep. 43.
53. There is evidence to indicate that this factor of daily contact with the enemy by air units was overlooked by ground commanders on Guadalcanal. In June it was necessary to defend the 107th Group from the criticisms of the XIV Corps Medical Inspector, who had censured the policing of the "Hotel Le Gink," by the 307th. The Thirteenth Air Force (apparently General Twining) informed USAFISPA of the controversy as follows: "that Fourteenth Corps has a high-power staff that has little to do, and most of that has been directed to sharp-shooting at these air force units. I am sure this is not General Griswold's idea at all, but indications are that much of it is going on. The Air Corps units are under-strength, under-equipped and operating twenty-four hours a day, and there are many things that can be and should be improved." (Ltr., 13th AF, unsigned, to Brig. Gen. A. J. Barnett, C/S, USAFISPA, 18 June 1943, in AFMCO files, 7307-51.) The letter seems to be Twining's.
54. Memo for Col. Dall by Maj. Gen. H. J. Harmon, "Some Notes on Housing," 16 May 1944, in AFMCO files, 7307-51. Gen. H. J. Harmon joined Halsey's staff in November as Deputy Commander, South Pacific Area. He believed that this policy was due "in large measure" to the slow movement of the war in the early days and the acceptance of the idea that every step would be a long one.
55. Quoted in ibid.
56. Ibid. An additional disadvantage was that since initial plans for each base contemplated a minimum amount of installation as soon as the combat phase ended, "everyone surreptitiously starts fixing himself up--building to the maximum." General Harmon pointed to the race for comfort, and in the absence of planning for the later phase, the result was "waste, duplication, and competitive bargaining without end."
57. Heier Report, exhibit 15, "Medical Report of 39th Air Service Group," 30 Nov. 1943.
58. "Report of Observations of Medical Service in Southwest Pacific and South Pacific Areas," Brig. Gen. G. G. Hillman, 12 July 1943, in AFMCO bulk files, Air Surgeon's material.
59. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 2 Nov. 1942, in AAG 312.1-2, Operations Letters.
60. Memo for Gen. Hanley, DC/AS, by Gen. Harmon, 8 Dec. 1942, in ibid.

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- 61. Ltr., Gen. Vanley to Gen. Hannon, 18 Feb. 1943, in AAG 320.2, South Pacific; Adl, AG/As-OPD to A-3, "C-87 for South Pacific," 29 Jan. 1943, in AFAGL, Off. Serv., WS-IV-H-23, South Pacific. On 3 January General George informed Hannon that instructions were issued to send one C-87 with necessary personnel to New Caledonia to initiate the service to Auckland and that additional service would be provided when production made it feasible. CM-CUT-5777 (8 Jan. 43), George to Hannon, AAG 2731, 8 Jan. 43.
- 62. Status Report on Medical Department Officers in Thirteenth Air Force and in Other AAF Units in SFA as of April 9, 1943, Lt. Col. Frederick J. Freese, Jr., M.C. (cited as Freese Report), in AAF bulk files, Air Surgeon's material. Colonel Freese was Assistant Air Surgeon of USAFIAA, then Air Surgeon of the Thirteenth Air Force. The most successful means devised to break the tension and effect relaxation upon completion of a strike was to give each crew member two ounces of liquor under the supervision of the flight surgeon.
- 63. Ltr., Gen. Ewing to Gen. Arnold, 27 April 1943, in AAG 312.1-6, Operations Letters.
- 64. CM-CUT-10321 (27 Apr. 43), GFD to Macal, AAG 4600, 25 Apr. 43; CM-III-6128 (10 May 43), Hannon to Arnold, AAG 36, 10 May 43.
- 65. Ltr., Gen. Arnold to Gen. Hannon, 20 July 1943, in AFSSO files, 7307-5K; CM-III-16656 (23 Sep. 43), COMCELSOPAC to COMCIN AAF, #2971, 23 Sep. 43.
- 66. Baier Report. Work was begun on two additional rest camps, one designed to accommodate 200 enlisted men, another for 100 officers. Like the existing facilities, these were to be operated by the American Red Cross. Ibid.
- 67. Ibid. Because of the long distances involved, in May it was found advisable to increase the seven-day period recommended by AAF Memo 25-4 to nine days. (Ibid.; History of A-2 Section, 13 Jan. 1943 to 14 June 1944, 23 Aug. 1944, in AFSSO, 6173-4.) In determining the rest intervals for air crews the following limits of effort were established:

Pilots, photographic units, light	30 missions or 90 hours
Crews, photographic units, heavy	20 missions or 200 hours
Transport (troop carrier) crews	300 hours
Other flying personnel	2 months

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- 67. The normal operational tour for bomber crews was six weeks, and a similar period held for the fighter pilots. ("An Analysis of Fatigue in the Ground Echelons of the 13th Air Force," Dr. Ross A. McFarland and H.S. Shryock, 5 Jan. 1944 [cited as McFarland and Shryock report], in A-3, Operations Analysis; Baier Report, Exhibit 10, "Rest and Rehabilitation Policy for AAF Combat Crews"; "Losses, Accidents, and Injuries of Fighter Planes and Pilots in Relation to Flying Time; Solomon Islands, June through November 1943," 15 April 1944 [cited as Accidents and Injuries of Fighter Planes and Pilots], in A-2 Lib., K-57520. These figures varied somewhat in practice. The 5th Group set 120 combat hours or 20 missions as the limit of effort. Baier Report, Exhibit 10, "Medical Report of 5th Bombardment Group (L)."
- 68. More than one-third of the 29th Air Service Group had suffered dengue fever, and approximately 20 per cent had contracted malaria. Baier Report, Exhibit 15, "Medical Report of 29th Air Service Group," 30 Nov. 1943.
- 69. Form 34's, 12th Fighter Sq., 31 May-6 June, 11-18 July, 26 July-1 Aug., 7-14 Aug. 1943, Det. B., Night Fighter Sq., 1-7 Nov. 1943. In this night-fighter unit the enlisted men averaged four years overseas. Common complaints were loss of sleep, poor appetite, and loss of fatigue. Form 34, 424th Bomb. Sq. (L), 26 July-1 Aug. 1943.
- 70. Ltr., Gen. Arnold to Gen. Harmon, 20 July 1943, in AFHQ files, 7307-5..
- 71. Baier Report; McFarland and Shryock Report. During the last four months of 1943 less than 500 ground men were sent to Auckland.
- 72. Id. While the number of men in the AAF increased 12 per cent from July to December, the number of man days lost jumped 44 per cent. Total number of man days lost per month during the second half of 1943 was as follows:

Month	Total Strength	Total man days lost
July	28,260	16,761
August	29,396	17,498
September	30,174	23,199
October	30,716	22,973
November	32,635	23,987
December	32,990	24,232

These figures do not include the days lost by men who were evacuated from the island upon which the unit was located; they cover only those cases within the organization due to injury, confinement, AWOL, and similar cases.

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73. In September, of 700 officers and men evacuated to the United States from the South Pacific, 69 were mental cases, 331 physical; in October the number was 535, of which 77 were mental and 458 physical. Maharlan and Shryock Report.

74. Accidents and Injuries of Fighter Planes and Pilots.

75. Ibid. Based on the records of 231 fighter pilots flying 21,650 hours of combat time, the increase was as follows:

Weeks in combat zone	0-1.9	2-3.9	4-5.9	6 and over
Combat loss rate per 1,000 flying hours	2.6	4.0	4.9	6.8
Operational loss rate per 1,000 flying hours	1.6	2.4	2.9	3.1

76. History of the 29th Service Group (Air), Activation to 31 Dec. 1943; Ltr., Lt. Col. Lewis L. Holladay, 321st Air Serv. Gp. to CG, XIII AFSC, 11 Sep. 1945, in AFSDO files, 7425-3E; MID Report No. 1839, " morale of the Army Air force on Guadalcanal," 21 June 1943, in A-2 Lib., K-2686B. The comedian Joe E. Brown was a particular favorite in the South Pacific.

77. History of the 29th Service Group (Air), Activation to 31 Dec. 1943; Ltr., Capt. Robert J. Madigan, Staff Judge Advocate, XIII AFSC, to CG, XIII AFSC, 15 Sep. 1945, in AFSDO files, 7425-3C. The Staff Judge Advocate modestly recognized his limitations in this field, stating that "he is neither equipped nor does he desire to meddle in an attempt to improve the virtue of women." Ibid.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Materials for a study of the AAF in the South Pacific are far more voluminous for 1943 than for 1942. Under the impact of the AAF's historical program, many of the units prepared and submitted histories which were not available at the time the earlier studies on Guadalcanal were written. Equally useful and important are the monographs, histories, and special collection of documents prepared or written by the historical officers of the Thirteenth Air Force and its commands, some of which could not be made available to AAF Headquarters until the termination of the Pacific war. Fortunately several of these arrived in time to contribute to the current study.

Because all air operations in the Solomons campaign were ultimately under naval control, some of the basic records remain in Navy hands and have not been made available to the AAF Historical Office, although a part of this gap was filled by drawing upon materials in the files of the U. S. Marine Corps Historical Division. In the study, the notes will indicate the location of the documents, histories, memos, correspondence, and all other papers. The major repositories, whose location and official designations frequently change, are cited according to the following arrangement:

The Adjutant General

Classified Files, cited AG with decimals.

Historical Division, WD Records Branch, Operations Report Section, cited as AGO Combat Analysis Section. Materials in this office consist of operations reports, and historical and miscellaneous records, primarily from the ground forces.

Air Adjutant General

AAF Classified Files, cited AAG with decimals. This office is now known as the Classified Records Section, Records Branch, Mail and Records Division.

Message and Cable Division. The majority of cable and radio messages used in this study are in either this division or in the Archives of the AAF Historical Office, although no effort is made to distinguish between the two repositories in the notes, except for those in the office of the Chief of the Message and Cable Division. These are cited as being in the Record File, Office of the Cable Secretary. A small number of messages were found in other collections and these are appropriately indicated in the notes.

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AAF Historical Office

AAF Historical Office files, cited as AFSHO files. Unit histories unless otherwise indicated are to be found in the Archives of this office.

Assistant Chief of Air Staff-2

Collection Branch, cited as A-2 Library. All interviews not otherwise indicated are filed in this branch. For convenience the local filing number is included with the first citation of all documents in the A-2 Library.

Assistant Chief of Air Staff-5

These files have been of unusual value in the preparation of this study.
Office Services. This office employs its own filing system, and it is cited as AFAGE, Office Services.

Secretary of Air Staff

Classified Files, cited Air AG with decimals.

U. S. Marine Corps, Historical Division

Through the courtesy of the Chief, Historical Division, USMC, operational records of the Marine Corps were made available for preparation of this study. Because AAF units in the Solomons operated very closely with the Marines, the War Diaries and Intelligence Journals of the Marine Aircraft groups, squadrons, and wings, and of the Marine ground units, are invaluable.

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PROJECTED SCHEDULE OF ARMY AND NAVY
AIRCRAFT STRENGTH IN SOUTH PACIFIC, 1943#

A. ARMY*

Type of Unit	Present and En Route 8 Mar 43		Planned Initial Equipment Strength					
	Units	A/C	30 Jun 43		30 Sep 43		31 Dec 43	
			Units	A/C	Units	A/C	Units	A/C
Bomb gp (H) (4 sq of 12)	2	70	2	96	2	96	2	96
Bomb gp (M) (4 sq)	1/2	46	1	57	1	57	1	57
Ftr gp (day) (3 sq)	2	234	2	150	2	150	2(4 sq)	200
Ftr sq (night)			1/3	4	1	12	1	12
TC (4 sq)	1/4	18	3/4	39	3/4	39	3/4	39
Obsn gp (4 sq)	1/4	25	1/4	21	1/2	42	1/2	42
Photo gp (4 sq)	1/4	11	1/4	13	1/4	13	1/2	26
TOTAL		404		380		409		472

* Depot reserve planned at 25% of initial equipment strength, with replacement a/c at 20% per month, except transports, which were to be on basis of plane for plane.

Memo for Pacific Conference Conference by JCS, 20 Mar. 1943, in 385 Elkton.

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Appendix 1 (contd.)

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B. NAVY AND U. S. MARINE CORPS, SHORE-BASED

Type of Unit	Present and En Route		Planned Initial Equipment Strength					
	5 May 43		30 Jun 43		30 Sep 43		31 Dec 43	
	Gps	A/C	Gps	A/C	Gps	A/C	Gps	A/C
Bomb (H)			1/2	24	1-1/2	72	3-1/4	156
Bomb (L)*	1-1/2	72	2-1/4	108	6	288	6-3/4	324
VF	1-2/3	125	2(+)	162	3-1/3	252	5(-)	360
TC	1/2	24	3/4	36	1	48	1	48
Recn. VP-VB (H)	1-1/2	72	2	96	2-3/4	132	3-1/4	156
Photo	1/4	6	3/4	18	3/4	18	3-1/4	18
TOTAL		299		444		810		1062

C. NAVY AND U. S. MARINE CORPS, CARRIER-BASED

VF	2	150	3-2/3	275	5-1/3	400	6	460
Bomb (L)	4	192	7	366	10	480	12	579
TOTAL		342		611		880		1039

* No depot reserve included in these figures.

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AVERAGE AVAILABILITY OF FIGHTER PLAINS
ON GUADALCANAL, 1 MARCH TO 25 JULY 1943#

Month	Total	F4U	F4F	P-38	P-39	P-40
<u>MARCH</u>						
Avg a/c assgd	125	13	59	21	16	16
Avg a/c in commission	85	6	46	13	11	9
% a/c in commission	68	46	78	62	69	56
Avg pilots assgd	266	24	76	41	88	37
Avg pilots available	140	21	69	14	22	14
% of pilots available	53	88	91	34	25	38
<u>APRIL</u>						
Avg a/c assgd	153	19	74	15	24	21
Avg a/c in commission	110	14	56	11	17	12
% a/c in commission	72	74	76	73	71	57
Avg pilots assgd	233	27	96	31	45	34
Avg pilots available	178	25	88	14	26	25
% pilots available	76	92	92	45	58	73
<u>MAY</u>						
Avg a/c assgd	181	40	63	15	21	42
Avg a/c in commission	131	31	52	10	14	24
% a/c in commission	72	78	83	67	67	57
Avg pilots assgd	202	49	66	27	17	43
Avg pilots available	173	43	62	18	17	38
% of pilots available	88	88	94	67	100	88
<u>JUNE</u>						
Avg a/c assgd	195	58	58	18	16	45
Avg a/c in commission	139	42	51	11	11	24
% a/c in commission	71	72	88	60	70	53
Avg pilots assgd	279	77	65	47	25	65
Avg pilots available	211	69	57	18	19	48
% pilots available	73	90	88	38	76	74
<u>JULY</u>						
Avg a/c assgd	281	104	75	18	34	50
Avg a/c in commission	195	82	44	11	26	32
% a/c in commission	70	79	59	61	76	64
Avg pilots assgd	370	120	101	54	38	57
Avg pilots available	296	105	81	25	36	49
% pilots available	80	88	80	46	95	86

War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. 1, in USMC Hist. Div. files.

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Appendix 3

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FIGHTER ACTIVITY IN THE PERIOD 30 JUNE TO 25 JULY 1943#

<u>Enemy Losses</u>		<u>U. S. and Allied Losses</u>			
		<u>Operational</u>		<u>Combat</u>	
Zeros	222	F4F	7	F4F	20
Twin-engine fighter	1	F4U	4	F4U	21
Float biplanes (Pete)	23	P-39	5	P-39	1
Betcoys	55			F-38	5
Sallys	6			P-40 (AAF)	6
Dive bombers	9			P-40 (MIZ)	2
TOTAL	316		16		55

<u>Enemy Personnel Losses</u>		<u>Allied Personnel Losses</u>	
		AAF	11
		USMC	10
		Navy	18
		RCAF	1
Approximate TOTAL	648	TOTAL	40

War Diary, Fighter Command, Guadalcanal, App. IV, Results of Fighter Action on Guadalcanal, in USMC Hist. Div. files.

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ENEMY AIRCRAFT DESTROYED BY TYPES OF
ALLIED PLANES AND AA, JUNE TO DECEMBER 1943#

JAP AIRCRAFT DESTROYED BY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
F4F-1	74	59	1				
F4U	85	112-1/2	122	75-1/2	78	16	74
F6F				27	6	8	16
P-38	15	12	4	3	31	9	14
P-39	13	3	4	3	2	4	
F-40 (US)	43	31-1/2	22	11-1/3	1*	12	19 *
P-40 (IZ)	13	11	8	1	17		
B-17							
B-24	1	3	55	13	25	9	21
B-25					2	1	
FB4Y		3	1	6	5	6	
SED-TEF	5	4		2	3		
TF c/c-Ships						71	5
AA (land)	2	28	18	4	1		1
AA (ships)	24			3	1	46	4
F4U (LF)							3
FV (LF)							2
FV							4
Barrage Balloon						1	
P-38 (IF)						4	
P-70						1	
U/1 VF						116	
U/1 IE					1		

* Naval sources credit F-40's with 18 planes in October, without differentiating between AAF and RNZAF. However, of these 18, the AAF claims only one. "Diary of Operational Statistics, Part III A, Claims Against Enemy 1943 Monthly," in Combat Operations Branch, Statistical Control.

"Enemy Aircraft Destroyed by SOPAC Forces and Shipping Attacked by SCPAC Planes," South Pacific Force of the U. S. Pacific Fleet, Office of Naval Air Combat Intelligence.

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Appendix 5

MAJOR MISSIONS FLOWN BY FORCES OF COMAIRSOLS AGAINST BOUGAINVILLE, 1 AUGUST TO 15 OCTOBER 1943**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Bombers</u>	<u>Fighter Escort</u>	<u>Bombs Dropped</u>	<u>Results Claimed</u>
Aug 1	21 B-24, 11 SBD, 18 THF	8 P-40 (NZ), 12 P-40 (AAF), 8 P-38, 31 F4F, 28 F4U	520x100# GP from 22000/ 24000'. 18x2000# 1/10- sec delay from 1500'. 11x1000# 1/10-sec delay from 1500/2000'	B-24's dest'd 5 or 6 a/c on ground. 1B sank 1# AK & 8 barges. 1 ø* shot down. 1 P-40 lost
5	19 B-24	12 P-40 (US), 16 F4U		Turned back by weather at Hendova
13	25 B-24	8 P-40 (US), 22 F4U	520x100# inst from 22000'	11 ø dest'd, 6 by B-24's. 20 a/c burning on field
13	13 B-24	None--night attack	300x100# GP from 19500/ 23000'	Bombs hit alongside run- way
15	8 B-24 (Ballale)	None--night attack	160x100# GP from 20000'	Bombs hit SW corner of island
15	6 B-24	11 F4U, 4 P-40 (NZ)	140x100# from 23700'	120 hits along runway. 4 VF dest'd
26	15 B-24	12 F4U, 12 P-40 (NZ), 3 P-39	300x100# from 22000/ 23000'	Hits along runway. 14 VF dest'd

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* Zero fighter, land- or carrier-based.
** Compiled from COMAIRSOLS Weekly Intelligence Summaries.

Appendix 5 (contd.)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Bombers</u>	<u>Fighter Escort</u>	<u>Bombs Dropped</u>	<u>Results Claimed</u>
AUG 30	24 B-24	24 F4U, 12 P-39, 4 P-40 (NZ), 4 P-40 (US)	660x120# frag clusters from 19500'	Hits along runway. 38 VF dest'd
Sep 2	18 B-24, 9 PB4Y	36 F4U, 14 F6F, 5 P-40 (US), 8 P-40 (NZ), 11 P-39	700x100# inst from 22900/24000'	Hits along runway, in dispersal & repair areas. 5 Zero's dest'd
3	17 B-24	15 F4U, 17 F6F, 6 P-40 (US), 8 P-40 (NZ), 24 P-39	440x100# GP from 23000'	Hits along & on runway. Several a/c seen burning. 2 ø shot down
4	9 B-24 (Ballale)	19 F6F, 7 F4U, 8 P-40 (NZ), 5 P-40 (US), 3 P-39	240x100# GP inst from 22700'	Hits along & on runway
9	18 B-24	27 F4U, 8 P-40 (NZ), 4 P-40 (US), 2 P-39, 16 F6F	427x100# frag clusters. 20 x 500# delay of 6, 12, and 24 hr from 24000'	Hits along sides of strip & shore installations. Enemy VF avoided combat
11	25 B-24	16 F6F, 8 P-40 (NZ), 8 P-39, 7 P-40 (US), 14 F4U	620x120# frag clusters. 6x500- 1/10-sec delay. 20x100# inst from 22300'	Hits along W side of runway & revetments. 7 VF shot down
14	12 B-25 (Kara)	None---night attack		Turned back by weather

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Appendix 5 (contd)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Bombers</u>	<u>Fighter Escort</u>	<u>Bombs Dropped</u>	<u>Results Claimed</u>
Sep 14	10 B-24	17 F4U	220x120# frag clusters from 22000'	Results obscured by clouds. 7 VF dest'd
14	12 B-24	23 F4U	300x120# frag clusters from 21000'	Hits along SW side of strip
14	10 B-24	8 P-40 (US), 16 P-40 (NZ)	370x120# frag clusters from 21500'	Hits on strip. 1 ϕ shot down
14	24 TBF, 34 SBD (Ballale)	15 P-39, 26 F6F	12x2000# inst, 12x2000# 1/10-sec from 2000'. 34x1000# inst from 1500/2500'	10 hits on runway. 8 VF shot down
9 PB4Y		10 F4U	180x120# frag clusters from 23000'	Hits along and on runway. No interception
11 B-25 (Karahilli)		None--dawn attack (0455)	132x100# from treetop level	Shot out 2 searchlights
24 TBF, 31 SBD (Ballale)		42 F6F, 12 P-39, 7 F4U	12x2000# inst, 12x2000# 1/10-sec, 31x1000# inst	Direct hits amid parked a/c and trucks. 13 Zekes, 1 Hamp dest'd
16 B-24		16 P-40 (NZ), 4 P-40 (US), 6 F4U	320x120# frag clusters from 21000'	Hits across runway
8 B-24 (Buka)		None--night attack (1144)	300x120# frag clusters from 19600'	Runway & revetments covered
9 B-25		None--night attack (2334)	108x100# GP from treetop level	Darkness obscured results

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Appendix 5 (contd.)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Bombers</u>	<u>Fighter Escort</u>	<u>Bombs Dropped</u>	<u>Results Claimed</u>
15	5 PVI (Ballale)	None--night attack (2335)	13x500# 8/11 sec delay from 500'	Hits along both sides of strip
16	7 B-25	None--night attack (0155)	84x100# GP from 1000'	Results unobserved
16	30 SBD, 24 TBF (Ballale)	24 F4U, 33 F6F, 9 P-40 (US), 8 P-40 (NZ)	29x1000# inst from 2000/ 2500', 13x2000# inst, 40x500# inst from 1500/2000'	AA positions & runway hit, 10 Zekes & 4 Hamps dest
21	23 B-24 (Buksa)		640x120# frag clusters, 40x100# GP from 18000'	Bombs straddled runway, 2 Zekes shot down
22	SBD, 12 TBF	16 P-38, 27 F4U, 16 P-40 (NZ), 16 P-39	22x1000# 1/10-sec from 2000/2500', 5x2000# & 19x500# 1/10-sec delay from 1000/2500'	50/60 Zekes & Hamps inter- cepted, 9 shot down, 23 B-24 found clouds over Kahili and 21 dropped on Vila
24	21 B-24, 24 SBD, 12 TBF	14 P-38, 20 F6F, 15 F4U, 16 P-40 (NZ), 14 P-39	575x100# GP inst from 21500', 24x1000# inst from 1500/2000', 5x2000#, 24x500# 1/10- sec from 2500'	Fires in supply & bivouac area, 2 Zekes shot down
27	27 B-24	13 F4U, 15 P-40 (NZ), 8 P-39	740x100# GP inst from 18600/19600'	Bombs in excellent pattern over dispersal & supply area, B-24's shot down 5 Zekes--F4U's 7 Zekes
30	16 B-24	8 P-40 (NZ), 5 F4U, 14 P-38	360x100# GP inst from 21500/23500'	Clouds obscured results, 4 Zekes shot down

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Appendix 5 (contd)

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Bombers</u>	<u>Fighter Escort</u>	<u>Bombs Dropped</u>	<u>Results Claimed</u>
Oct 4	23 B-24	16 P-38, 6 F4U	650x120# frag clusters from 21000/22700'	Bombs across strip. 11 Zekes, 1 Hamp shot down. All a/c returned
6	24 B-25	14 P-38	215x75# parachute clusters from 150'. Also strafed	Revetment area bombed. 2 B-25 & 1 P-38 lost
10	24 B-24, 18 SBD, 12 TBF	16 P-38, 21 F4U, 16 P-39, 24 P-40 (NZ)	740x100# inst from 17000/20500'. 18x1000# inst from 800/1500'. 6x2000# inst, 22x500# inst from 2000/2500'	Entire strip covered, supply areas & AA positions hit. 16 Zekes & 1 Tony shot down. 2 B-24' lost
15	22 B-24, 15 SBD, 18 TBF	18 F4U, 7 P-38, 15 P-39, 24 P-40 (NZ), 8 P-40 (US)	660x100# inst from 22000'. 8x2000# inst, 26x500# inst from 2000/3000'. 15x 1000# inst from 2000'	Supply & personnel areas hit. 11 Zekes and 1 Kate shot down. No combat losses
16	21 B-24	16 F4U, 12 P-38	580x100# inst from 21000'	Personnel & supply areas near Jakohina hit. 6 Zekes shot down. No combat losses
16	5 B-25 (Buika)	None--night attack (2212)	60x75# parachute frag clusters from treetop level. Strafed.	7 fires in revetment area

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UNITS ASSIGNED TO XIII AIR FORCE SERVICE COMMAND

WITH STATIONS AS INDICATED, EFFECTIVE 1 JULY 1943#

Nav Galedonia

- Hq & Hq Sq, 13th Air Depot Gp
- 28th Depot Repair Sq
- 13th Depot Repair Sq
- 13th Depot Supply Sq
- 413th C. Platoon Air Depot Gp
- 2484th C. Trk Co (Avn)
- 1700th Ord III Co (Avn)
- 905th Sig Depot Co (Avn)
- Hq & Hq Sq, 6th Service Gp
- 65th Serv Sq
- 71st Serv Sq
- 1034th Sig Co S/G
- 1040th Ord Co (AB)
- 1655th Ord III Co (Avn)
- 1117th C. Co S/G (Avn)
- 1943d C. Trk Co (Avn)
- 1913th A. Trk Co (Avn)
- 1154th C. Co S/G (Avn)
- 1619th Ord III Co (Avn)
- 1620th Ord III Co (Avn)
- 13th Troop Carrier Sq
- 801st Med Air Evac Transport Sq
- 811th Eng Avn Bn
- 905th Eng AF Hq Co

Guadalcanal

- 62d Serv Sq (29th Serv Gp)
- 1633d Ord III Co (Avn) (Q)
- (29th Serv Gp)
- 1932d C. Trk Co (Avn) (Detachment)
- (29th Serv Gp)
- 1069th Sig Co S/G
- 429th Sig Constr Bn Avn

Fiji

- 38th Serv Sq (6th Serv Gp)
- 2013th C. Trk Co (Avn) (6th Serv Gp)
- 1625th Ord III Co (Avn) (Q)
- 1008th Sig Co S/G
- Med Detachment
- 821st Eng Avn Bn

Ftate

- 1027th Sig Co S/G
- 828th Eng Avn Bn

Espiritu Santo

- Hq & Hq Sq, 29th Serv Gp
- 1637th Ord III Co (Avn)
- 1021st Ord Co (AB)
- 1137th C. Co S/G (Avn)
- 2000th C. Trk Co (Avn)
- 40th Serv Sq
- 1003d Sig Co S/G
- 1932d C. Trk Co (Avn)
- 822d Eng Avn Bn

Tongareva

- 891st Eng Avn Co

Aitutaki

- 890th Eng Avn Co

Hq, 13th AF, CO No. 9, 6 June 1943, in AFSHO files, 7414-7.

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STATION LIST OF AAF AND ASSOCIATED

SERVICE UNITS IN SOUTH PACIFIC AS OF 20 MARCH 1943*

a. New Caledonia

(1) I ISLAND AIR COMMAND

(a) Assigned Units:

Hq & Hq Sq - I Island Air Command
6th Service Group - (Units not shown below are atcd
II Island Air Command)

Hq & Hq Sq
71st Serv Sq
65th Serv Sq
1943rd QM Co (Trk) (Avn)
164th QM Co Serv Gp (Avn)
1655th Ord Co MM Avn (Q) 1040th Ord Co, Avn (AB)(-)
34th Signal Co, Serv Gp
Det 17th Weather Sq
201st QM Co, Serv Gp, Avn (RS)
361st Base Hq & AB Sq
1619th Ord Co, MM, Avn (Q)
1620th Ord Co, MM, Avn (Q)
579th Sig AW Bn

(b) Attached Units:

347th Fighter Gp (Assigned Thirteenth AF by GO #26
Hq USAFISPA)
Hq 347th Fighter Gp
Det "C", Fighter Control Sq
67th Fighter Sq
339th Fighter Sq (TE)
I Island Air Command Det (Part of 410th Sig Co)(Avn)
66th Ferrying Sq

(2) SOS SPA

(a) Assigned Units:

13th Air Depot Group
Hq & Hq Sq
13th Supply Sq
13th Air Repair Sq
1700th Ord Co, MM, Avn (Q)

* Ltr., Col. J. N. Glasgow, AG, USAFISPA to CG's, I & II Island Commands, "Status of Army Air Force and Associated Service Units, SPA," 20 March 1943, in AFSHO files, 7414-7.

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413th QM Plat, Air Depot Gp
 2484th Q. Erk Co Avn
 905th Sig Co Depot, Avn
 28th Depot Repair Sq (enroute)
 13th Troop Carrier Sq
 801st Med Sq (Air Evac Trans)

(3) SERVICE COMMAND - New Caledonia

- (a) Assigned Units:
 810th Engr Bn, Avn
 811th Engr Bn, Avn
 901st AB Sec Bn
 902nd AB Sec Bn

(4) I ISLAND COMMAND

- (a) Attached Units:
 I Island Command Radio Intell Det (Part of 410th Sig Co)(Avn)

(5) USAFISPA

- (a) Assigned Units:
 Regional Control Hq and Det #1, 20th Airways Communication Sq
 905th Engr Hq Co AF
 Regional Control Hq, 17th Weather Sq
 Flight Section (3 Dets: 1 - Foutouta, 1 - NZ, 1 - Magenta)

b. Fiji

(1) II ISLAND AIR COMMAND

- (a) Assigned Units:
 Hq & Hq Sq
 Det Med Dept
 375th AB Sq
 attached to above unit is:
 Det 17th Weather Sq (Class "A" Station)
 8th Sig Plat AB
 1066th Ord Co Avn, Air Base
 578th Sig AW Bn (Less one Plat)
 903rd AB Sec Bn
- (b) Attached Units:
 394th Bomb Sq (M) - 5th Bomb Group
 70th Bomb Sq (M) (Assigned to 42nd Bomb Gp, GO #60 Hq USAFISPA)
 70th Fighter Sq (SE) (Assigned to 347th Fighter Sq)
 Detachment No. 2, 20th Airways Comm Sq
 38th Service Sq - 6th Service Group

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2013th CM Co, Mkr, Avn - 6th Service Group
 1625th Ord Co, MM, Avn (Q) - " " "
 Det 1040th Ord Co, Avn (AB) - " " "
 Communication Section, 35th Fighter Control Sq
 (Assigned Thirteenth AF by GO #51, Hq USAFISPA)
 65th Ferrying Sq
 75th Bomb Sq (H) (Flight Echelon only)

(2) SERVICE COMMAND - Fiji

(a) Assigned Unit:
821st Engr Bn (Avn)

c. Guadalcanal

(1) XIV CORPS

(a) Assigned Unit:
670th Sig AW Co

(2) COMGEM Guadalcanal

(a) Attached Operational Control:
 68th Fighter Sq (SE) (347th Fighter Gp)
 12th Fi Sq (SE) (Sep) (Assigned 13th AF by GO #26 Hq USAFISPA)
 69th Bomb Sq (M) (Assigned 42nd Bomb Gp by GO #60 Hq USAFISPA)
 31st Bomb Sq (M) (Assigned 5th Bomb Gp, 13th AF)
 17th Photo Recon Sq (4th Photo Gp - 13th AF)
 18th Photo Mapping Sq (Air Echelon) (4th Photo Gp, 13th AF)
 Det 6th Fighter Sq (Atchd 13th AF by SO #71, Hq USAFISPA)
 42nd Bomb Gp (M) (enroute) (Assigned 13th AF by GO #60 Hq USAFISPA)
 Hq & Hq Sq
 390th Bomb Sq (H)
 307th Bomb Gp (H) (Atchd 13th AF by SO #77 Hq USAFISPA)
 Hq & Hq Sq
 370th Bomb Sq (H)
 424th Bomb Sq (H)

(b) Attached:
 Det 17th Weather Sq
 Det 5, 20th Airways Comm Sq
 69th Sig Co, Serv Gp (Assigned 13th AF by GO #51 Hq USAFISPA)
 ASC Det (Part of 410th Sig Co) (Avn)

d. Espiritu Santo

(1) 13TH AIR FORCE

(a) Assigned Units:

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Hq & Hq Sq, 13th AF
 13th Bomber Command
 5th Bomb Group (H)
 Hq & Hq Sq
 23rd Bomb Sq (H)
 72nd Bomb Sq (H)
 13th Fighter Command
 Interceptor Control Det 12, enroute (See GO #51 Hq
 USAFISPA)
 410th Sig Co (Avn) (less Dets - see Letter, Hq
 USAFISPA 370.5, 2-15-43)

Hq 4th Photo Group
 18th Photo Sq (less Air Echelon, APO 709)
 955th Engr Co Top, Avn (Atchd 18th Photo Sq)
 29th Service Group
 Hq & Hq Sq
 3rd Sig Co, Service Group
 40th Serv Sq
 82nd Serv Sq
 184th QM Co Serv Gp (Avn)
 1932nd QM Co, Trk (Avn)
 2020 QM Co, Trk (Avn)
 1021 Ord Co, Avn (AB)
 1637 Ord Co, MI, Avn (Q)
 1653 Ord Co, MI, Avn (Q)

(b) Attached Units:
 Det No. 4, 20th Airways Communication Sq
 Det 17th Weather Sq
 Hq & Hq Sq 18th Fighter Group

(2) BASE COMMAND - Espiritu Santo

(a) Assigned Unit:
 674th Sig AW Co (Sp)

(3) BASE AIR COMMAND (PROV) - Espiritu Santo

(a) Assigned Units:
 Prov Hq
 822nd Engr Bn (Avn)
 (b) Attached Units:
 Co B, 810th Engr Bn (Avn)

e. Tongareva

(1) BASE COMMAND

(a) Assigned Units:
 891st Engr Co (Avn)
 9th Airways Det
 701st Sig AW Co

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f. Efate

(1) BASE COMMAND

- (a) Assigned Units:
828th Engr Bn (Avn)
Platoon, 578th Sig AW Bn
- (b) Attached Units:
1st Reporting Plat, 674th Sig AW Co
27th Signal Co, Serv Gp (Assigned 13th AF)
44th Fighter Sq (Sep)(Assigned 13th AF)
Det No. 3, 20th Airways Comm Sq
Det 17th Weather Sq

g. Aitutaki

(1) BASE COMMAND

- (a) Assigned Units:
702nd Sig AW Co
890th Engr Co (Avn)
10th Airways Det

h. Bora Bora

(1) BASE COMMAND

- (a) Assigned Unit:
695th Sig AW Co

i. Tongatabu

(1) ATTACHED BASE COMMAND

Det 6, 20th Airways Comm Sq

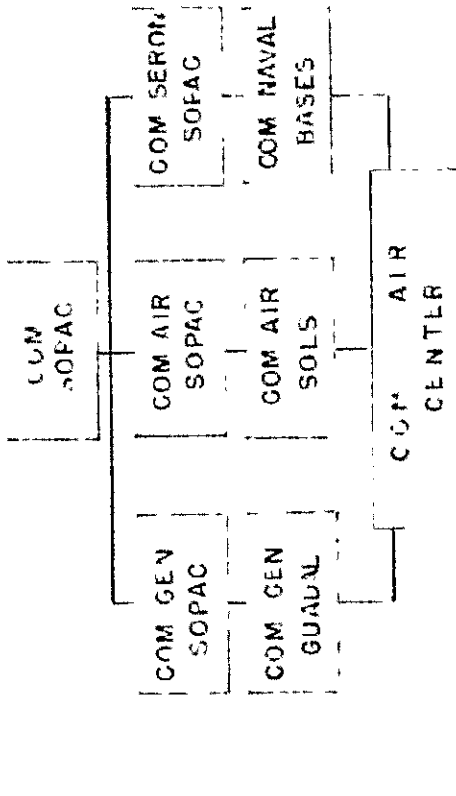
j. USAFIZ

(1) ATTACHED USAFIZ

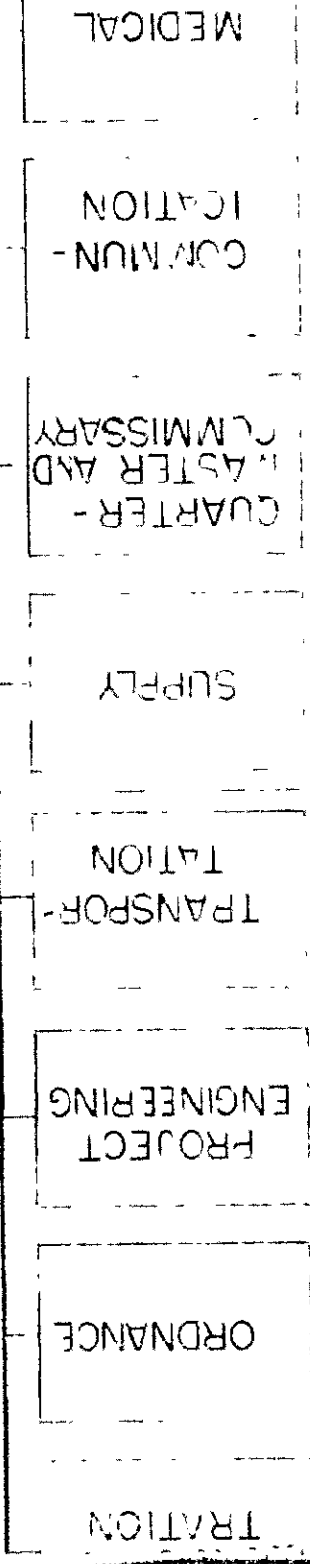
Det 7, 20th Airways Comm Sq
Det, Flight Sec, USAFISPA

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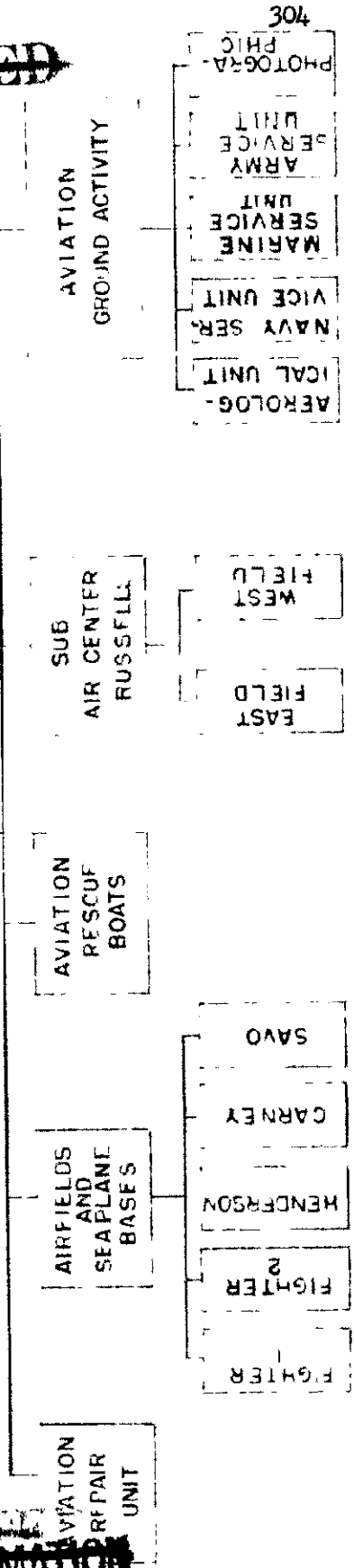
ORGANIZATION CHART
AIR CENTER
(Solomons)



AIR CENTER DEPARTMENTS



AVIATION ACTIVITIES



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Appendix 8

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Appendix 10

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NUMBER OF DAYS LOST PER 100 FLYING OFFICERS
PER MONTH, INCLUDING CAUSES OF LOSSES#

	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Jun</u>	<u>Jul</u>	<u>Aug</u>
No. of officers	780	915	982	1,041	2,062	
Wounds and injuries	19.10	13.77	27.90	19.2	14.8	14.5
All other causes	50.59	86.42	84.21	38.4	27.6	14.0
Flying fatigue	11.84	16.61	29.63	32.3	4.6	3.9
Dengue fever	49.10	18.91	12.32	14.4	3.2	1.1
Diarrhoeal diseases	10.13	13.44	3.26	2.2	7.1	5.5
Malaria	72.18	51.03	51.73	25.0	22.6	13.8
Ear diseases				5.7	10.7	9.3
Jaundice				5.3		
Nervous diseases					14.9	4.7
Respiratory diseases					22.9	23.8

Baier Report, Exhibit 2.

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DESIGNATION OF PRINCIPAL AIRFIELDS

USED BY THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE IN THE FORWARD AREAS.*

<u>ISLAND</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>FORMER NAME</u>
Vella Lavella	Barakoma	VF & VB (L)	
New Georgia	Munda	VB (H)	Munda #1
New Georgia	Ondonga	Double VF & VB (L)	Munda #2 and #3
New Georgia	Segi	VF	
Banika	Renerd (South Fld)	VB (M)	Russells #1
Banika	Sunlight (North Fld)	VF & VB (L)	Russells #2
Guadalcanal	Henderson	VB (4)	
Guadalcanal	Lunga	VF & VB (L)	Fighter #1 Lunga #1
Guadalcanal	Kukum	VF & VB (L)	Fighter #2 Lunga #2
Guadalcanal	Carney	VB (H)	Koli #1
Guadalcanal	Koli	VB (H)	Carney #2
Espiritu Santo	Turtle Bay	VF & VB (L)	Fighter #1
Espiritu Santo	Pallikulo	VB (H)	Bomber #1
Espiritu Santo	Pekoa	VB (H)	Bomber #2
Espiritu Santo	Luganville	VB (H)	Bomber #3
Efate	Quoin Hill	VF & VB (L)	

* Ltr., Commander South Pacific to South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force, 26 Oct. 1943, AF3EO files, 7307-5K.

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Appendix 11

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COMPARISON OF AVAILABILITY OF AIRCRAFT BY TYPE AT GUADALCANAL
(INCLUDING RUSSELL ISLANDS) ON 2 APRIL 1943 AND 25 JULY 1943#

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>2 April</u>	<u>25 July</u>
SBD	50	99
TEF	42	75
FBO	7	12
OS2H	4	2
SOC	1	
PBY5A	5	7
PBY	2	
OS2U	8	
J2F	2	2
F5A	4	5
B-24	5	37
B-17	9	12
F4F	65	97
F-38	9	16
F-39	11	20
P-40	10	39
P-70	3	3
F4F-7	1	
P4U	7	68
F4Y		30
B-25		25
TOTAL	235	539

War Diary, Strike Command, COMAIRSOLS, 2 Apr-25 Jul 1943.

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Appendix 12

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SUMMARY OF ENEMY PLANES DESTROYED BY ALL
SOUTH PACIFIC FORCES, 31 JULY 1942 TO 31 DECEMBER 1943#

1942	
August	229
September	119
October	370
November	138
December	87
1943	
January	111
February	104
March	16
April	73
May	21
June	279
July	267
August	235
September	170
October	173
November	304
December	163

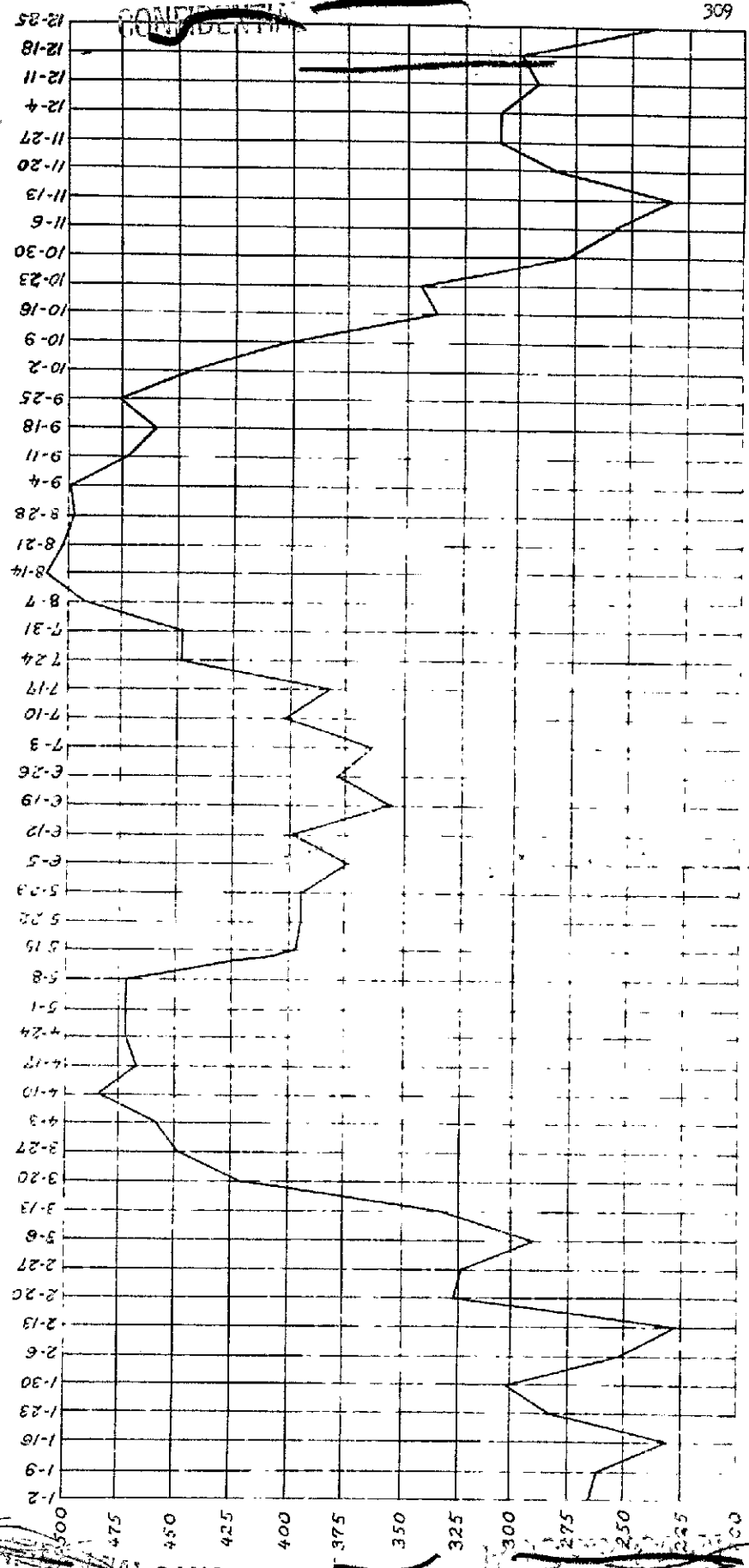
"Enemy Aircraft Destroyed by SOPAC Forces and Shipping Attacked by SOPAC Planes," South Pacific Force of the U. S. Pacific Fleet, Office of Naval Air Combat Intelligence.

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ESTIMATED JAPANESE AIRCRAFT STRENGTH
In Bismarck-Solomons Area
By Weeks—1942



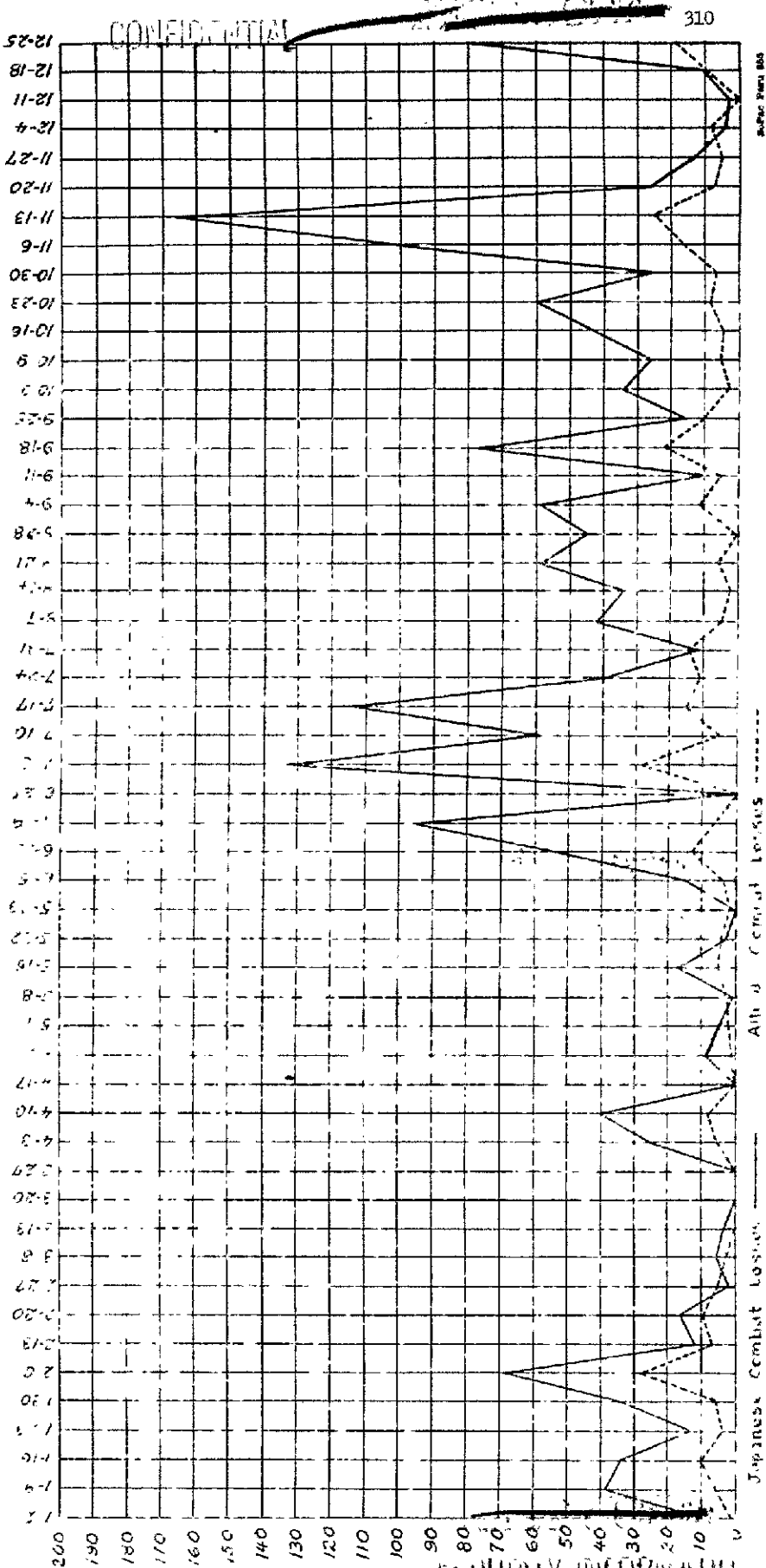
Appendix 13
SECRET

Appendix 2

11116-2

JAPANESE AND ALLIED COMBAT PLANE LOSSES

In Solomons Area
By Weeks—1943



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Appendix 16

A/C AND CREWS WITH UNITS IN SOUTH PACIFIC, MARCH TO DECEMBER 1943*

A. Aircraft Ready for Combat

Date	HEAVY BOMBER		MEDIUM BOMBER		FIGHTERS				Total
	B-17	B-24 Total	B-25	B-26 Total	P-38	P-39	P-40	P-43 P-70	
1943									
Mar	6	6		6	9	45	14		68
Apr	9	9		8	17	44	14	4	79
May	20	37	21	27	16	40	23		79
Jun	22	46	34	40	14	33	20	3	70
Jul	23	40	47	47	11	57	29	2	96
Aug	16	48	53	53	15	66	20	2	103
Sep		53	46	46	42	64	16	2	124
Oct	1	64	48	48	42	68	15	1	126
Nov		92	45	45	47	80	4	1	132
Dec		90	40	40	50	55	2		107

B. Crews with Units

Date	HEAVY BOMBER		MEDIUM BOMBER		FIGHTERS				Total
	B-17	B-24 Total	B-25	B-26 Total	P-38	P-39	P-40	P-43 P-70	
1943									
Mar	7	7		10	17	58	26		101
Apr	13	13		9	39	70	34	7	150
May	34	70	53	64	39	86	52	8	184
Jun	33	88	60	70	34	69	62	8	173
Jul	24	56	70	72	39	158	48	8	253
Aug	13	66	70	70	64	178	19	9	270
Sep	10	65	62	62	119	181	18	8	326
Oct	1	100	69	69	143	173	23	4	344
Nov		95	73	73	69	174	60	18	321
Dec		104	78	78	133	147	21	27	328

* Ledger for 1943 Combat Operations* (based on Form 34's), in Stat. Control, Combat Operations.

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Appendix 16

AAF AIRCRAFT LOSSES IN SOUTH PACIFIC, 1943*

Date	HEAVY BOMBER			MEDIUM BOMBER			FIGHTERS						OTHER*	
	B-17 CM NC	B-24 CM NC	Total	B-25 CM NC	B-26 CM NC	Total	P-38 CM NC	P-39 CM NC	P-40 CM NC	P-70 CM NC	Total	OK	NC	
TOTAL (1942)	15	12	27	6	6	6	1	25	49	9	84	5	5	
1943														
Jan	2	3	5	2	4	6	3	2	14	1	33	1	1	
Feb	3	1	8	1	1	1	7	1	2	3	28	1	1	
Mar	2	(22)	7	-1				6	1	5	12			
Apr	2	1	4	1	1	2	6	3	1	1	8			
May	1	1	4	1	1	2	3	3	1	1	9	2	1	
Jun	1	1	2	1	1	2	3	5	2	6	12	3	1	
Jul	2	14	16			3	9	11	2	6	33	1	2	
Aug	1	2	2	-2		1	1	4	7	6	20	1	1	
Sep	1	5	6	-1		3	3	7	3	3	30	1	1	
Oct		5	6			4	4	5	7	3	19		4	
Nov	4	-1	3			6	5	2	15	4	29		(1) 4	
Dec	4	-1	3			2	10	3	5	1	22	1	4	
TOTAL (1943)	13	(2) 6	35	19	5	1	54	46	74	33	262	9	30	

* Explanation of Symbols:

- CM Combat Mission
- NC Non-combat
- (3) Destroyed on ground
- (-1) Recovered from salvage

* Other - Recon., Troop Carrier, 2d Line.
 # From "Directory of Operational Statistics," Part II, AAF Losses, 1943, 1944, in Stat. Control, Combat Operations Branch.

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Appendix 17

SORTIES BY THIRTEENTH AIR FORCE IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC, 1943*

Date	HEAVY BOMBER		MEDIUM BOMBER		P-38	FIGHTERS			Total
	B-17	B-24	B-25	B-26		P-39	P-40	P-70	
Prior to 1943	307*	39*	346*	19*	269*	400*	153*		1323*
1943									
Jan	53*	17*	70*	47*	50*	26*	26*		274*
Feb	17	57*	74*	56*	57*	26*	26*		285*
Mar	72	9*	81	18	63*	86	71	18	488
Apr	62	34	96	19	108	609	496	44	2068
May	143	67	210	54	122	410	416	15	2151
Jun	106	201	307	165	234	494	474	10	2171
Jul	194	499	693	369	378	445	843	9	3400
Aug	72	442	514	404	404	106	610	8	2661
Sep	46	440	486	272	272	370	389	26	2400
Oct	4	582	586	248	248	615	218	2	2504
Nov		735	735	498	498	869	169	17	3927
Dec		652	652	748	748	481	1431	12	3324
TOTAL 1943	769	3735	4504	2898	3182	4537	3916	161	25653
				284		9353			17967

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* Estimate
 # From "Diary of Operational Statistics, Part I, Tons of Bombs Dropped--Sorties," in Stat. Control, Combat Operations Branch.

Appendix 18

TONS OF BOMBS DROPPED BY TYPE OF AIRCRAFT IN SOUTH PACIFIC, 1943*

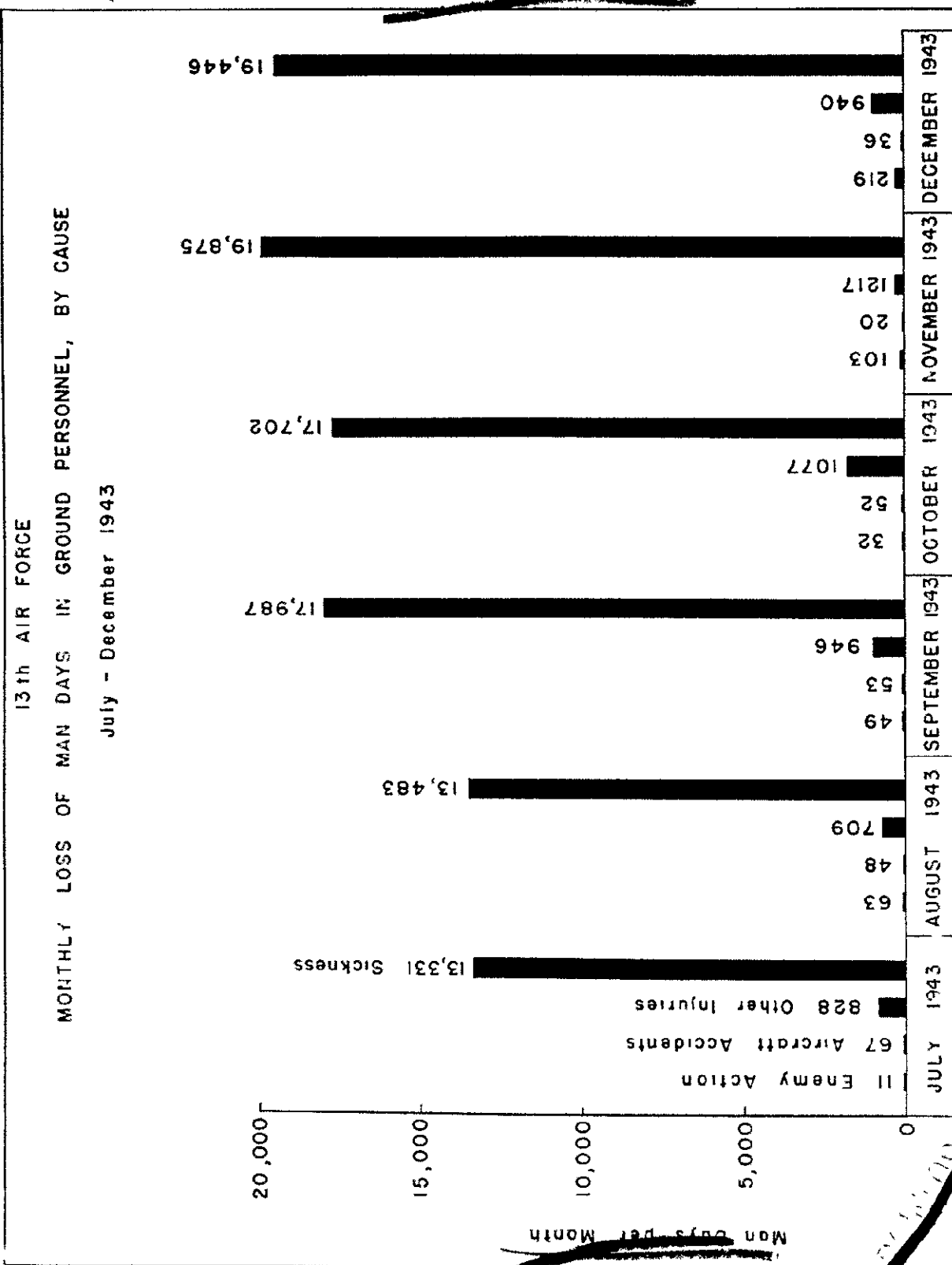
Date	HEAVY BOMBER		MEDIUM BOMBER		FIGHTERS			TOTAL
	B-17	B-24	B-25	Total	P-38	P-39	P-70	
Prior to 1943	309*	39*		348*				348*
1943								
Jan	53*	17*		70*				70*
Feb	17*	57*		74*				74*
Mar	72*	10*		82*				82*
Apr	62*	34*		96*				96*
May	105	57		162				162
Jun	29	206	26	235				261
Jul	149	643	128	792				920
Aug	60	280	203	340				543
Sep		502	123	502				625
Oct		1134	194	1134				1328
Nov		1349	446	1349	1		3	1799
Dec		999	673	999		10	2	1684
1943 TOTAL	547	5288	1793	5835	1	10	5	7644

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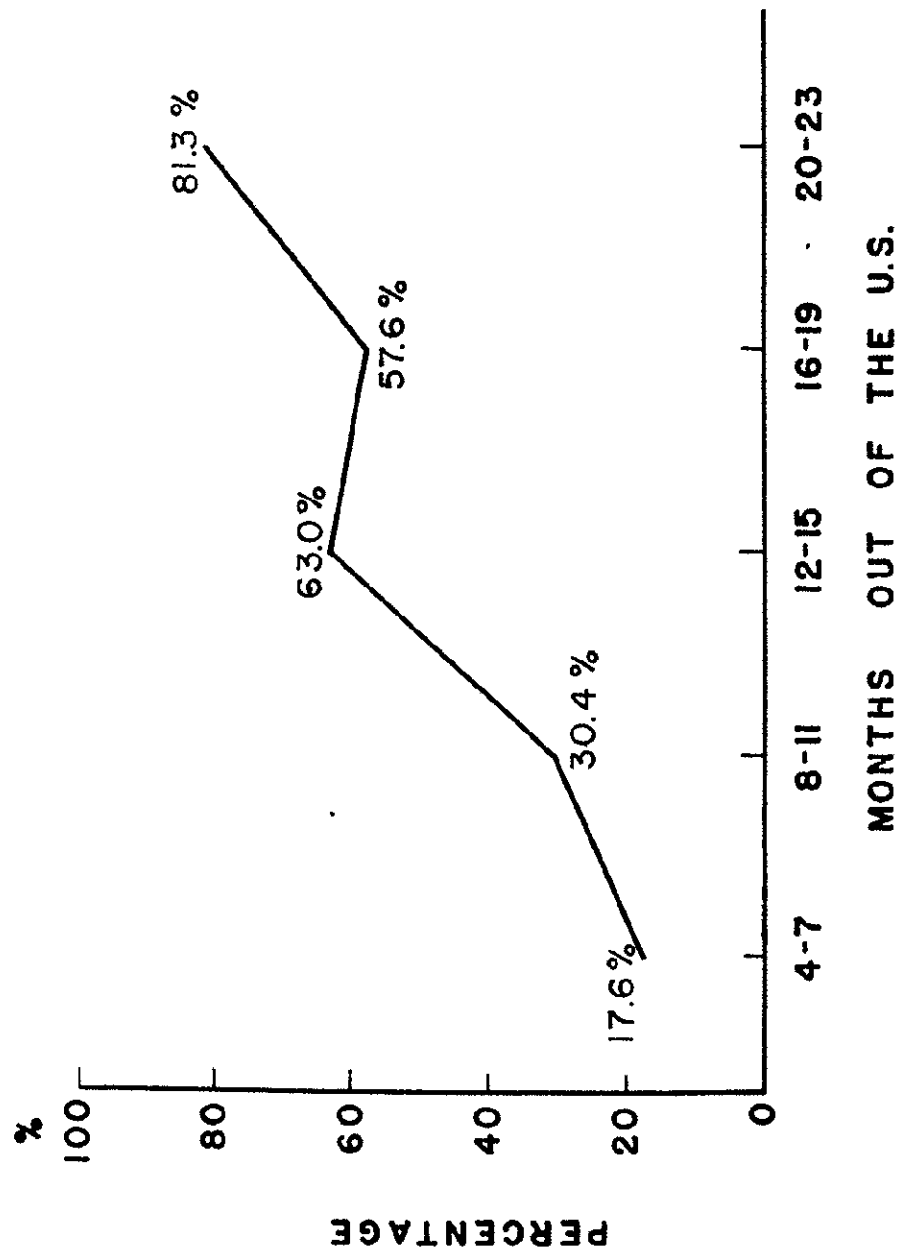
* Estimate
 # From "Diary of Operational Statistics, Part I, Tons of Bombs Dropped--Sorties," in Stat. Control, Combat Operations Branch.

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Source: "An Analysis of Fatigue in the Ground Operations of the Thirteenth Air Force" (Revised), 6 Jan. 1944, in AC/AS-3, Operations Analysis.

13th AIR FORCE
PERCENTAGE OF GROUND PERSONNEL HAVING HAD ONE OR MORE
TROPICAL DISEASES OR SEVERE ACCIDENTS



Appendix 20

Source: An Analysis of Fatigue in the Ground Echelons of the Thirteenth Air Force (Revised), 6 Jan. 1944, in AG/AS-3, Operations Analysis

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TOTAL STRENGTH OF THE 13TH AIR FORCE
IN RELATION TO LENGTH OF SERVICE IN THIS THEATER SINCE
LAST REST LEAVE, JULY TO DECEMBER 1943#

1943 Month	Total Strength of 13th Air Force	Number of Personnel in Theater				
		0-3 Mo.	3-6 Mo.	6-12 Mo.	12-18 Mo.	Over 18 Mo.
Jul	28,260	11,400	4,389	8,492	2,623	1,356
Aug	29,396	10,878	5,024	9,384	1,838	2,272
Sep	30,174	7,130	7,954	10,436	1,513	3,141
Oct	30,716	5,999	8,959	10,120	2,433	3,205
Nov	32,835	5,246	10,552	8,129	5,553	3,355
Dec	32,990	5,397	5,965	11,583	6,643	3,402

McFarland and Shryock Report.

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LENGTH OF TIME IN COMBAT OPERATIONAL AREA SINCE LAST REST LEAVE,
THIRTEENTH AIR FORCE PERSONNEL, JULY TO DECEMBER 1943#

1943 Month	3-6 Months		6-12 Months		12-18 Months		Over 18 Months	
	Flying Pers	Grd Pers	Flying Pers	Grd Pers	Flying Pers	Grd Pers	Flying Pers	Grd Pers
Jul	749	3,640	258	8,234	11	2,612		1,356
Aug	828	4,198	176	9,208	14	1,824	4	2,268
Sep	890	7,064	104	10,332	15	1,498	4	3,137
Oct	561	8,396	84	10,038	11	2,422	1	3,204
Nov	747	9,805	80	8,049	15	5,538		3,355
Dec	748	5,217	66	11,517	6	6,637		3,402

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MONTHLY LOSS OF MAN-DAYS AMONG
GROUND PERSONNEL OF THIRTEENTH AIR FORCE*

1943 Month	Total Air Force Strength	Total Man-Days Lost
Jul	28,260	16,761
Aug	29,396	17,498
Sep	30,174	23,199
Oct	30,716	22,973
Nov	32,835	23,987
Dec	32,990	24,232

* McFarland and Shryock Report.

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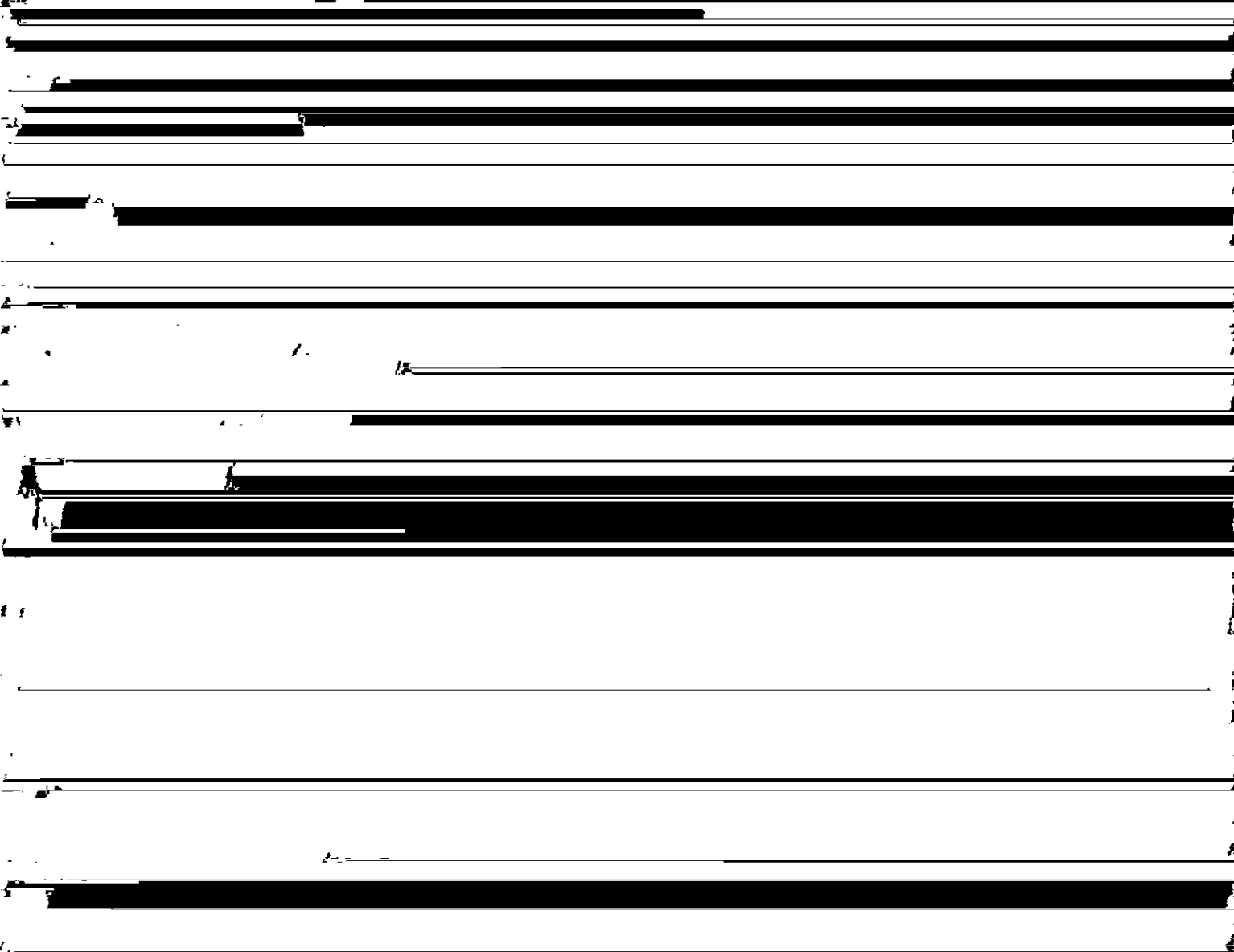
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