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The
FIFTH AIR FORCE
IN THE
CONQUEST OF THE
BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO

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NOVEMBER 1943 TO MARCH 1944

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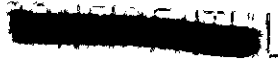
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THE FIFTH AIR FORCE
 IN THE
 CONQUEST OF THE BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO
 November 1943 to March 1944



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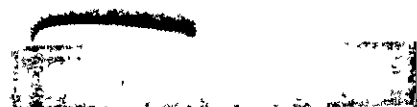
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FOREWORD

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

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

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The Fifth Air Force in the Conquest of the Bismarck Archipelago
November 1943 to March 1944

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Chapter I

THE MILITARY SITUATION AND PLANS FOR OPERATION DEXTERITY

New Britain, forming the southern boundary of the Bismarck Sea, bridged the gap between two Allied drives in the fall of 1942. On the east, South Pacific forces were advancing through the Solomons toward Rabaul. On the west, Southwest Pacific forces were moving along the east coast of New Guinea. Japanese strength in New Britain was concentrated on the Gazelle Peninsula and at Cape Gloucester. From Rabaul on the Gazelle Peninsula the enemy sent air, naval, and ground units to oppose our South Pacific advance; at Cape Gloucester, the enemy exercised partial control over straits connecting the Bismarck and Solomon seas. Operation DEXTERITY, begun in western New Britain in December 1943, ended Japanese control over these straits and forced the enemy back to the Gazelle Peninsula. The conquest of western New Britain, the neutralization of Rabaul, and the capture of the Admiralty Islands assured Allied domination of the Bismarck Archipelago.

The Bismarck Archipelago

A crescent-shaped group of islands, lying between northeastern New Guinea and the northern limit of the Solomon Islands, comprises the Bismarck Archipelago. New Britain and New Ireland, largest islands in the archipelago, form the main part of the crescent. New Hanover, separated from New Ireland by an island-studded channel, and Manus in the Admiralties are the other principal land areas. New

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Britain alone has about 60% of the archipelago's 23,550 square miles.¹

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

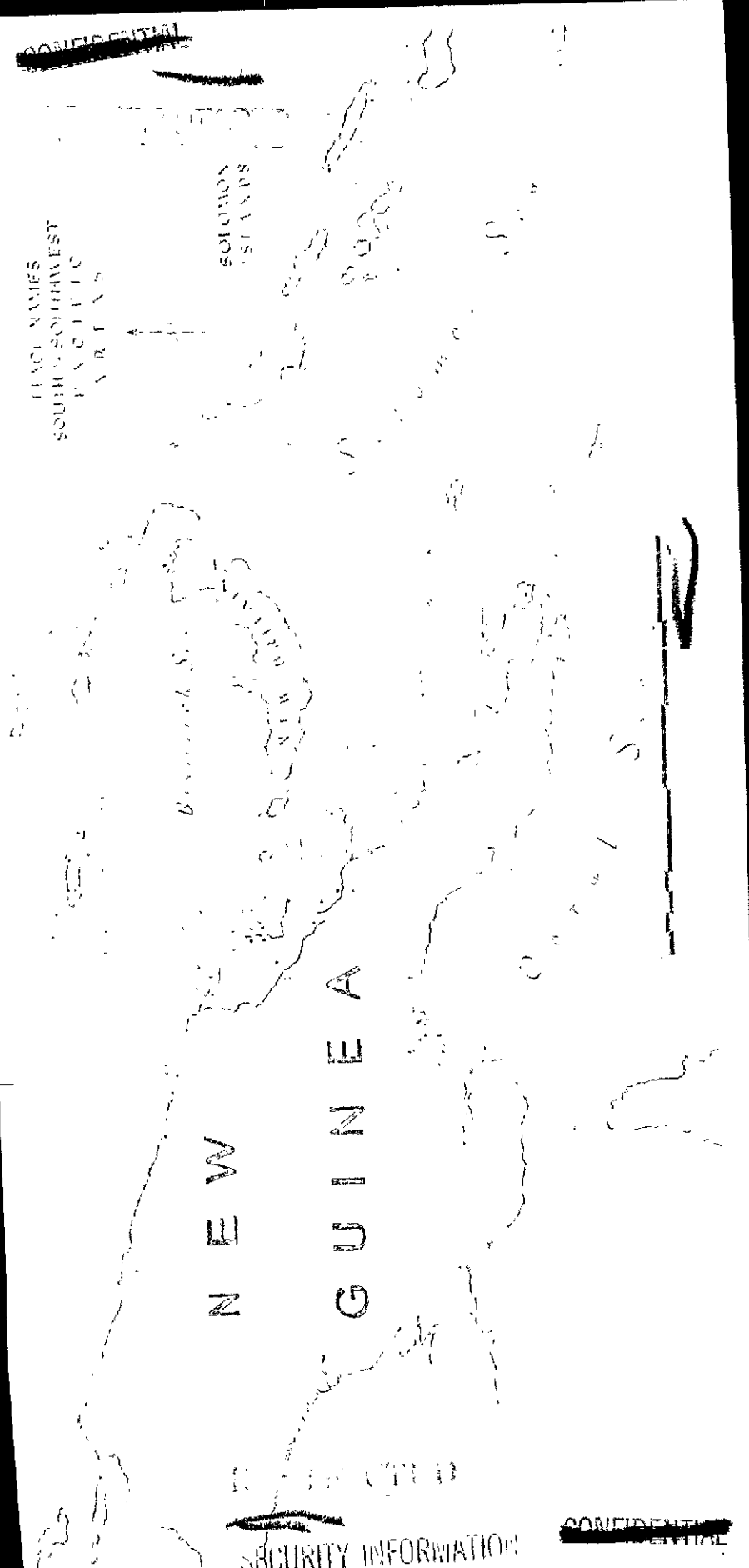
New Britain, narrow and mountainous, is strategically the most important as well as the largest island in the archipelago.² It is separated from New Guinea by straits 55 to 65 miles wide, in which lies Umboi, a volcanic island suitable for air warning installations and light defenses. Dampier Strait, between Umboi and New Britain, was a Japanese supply route to the eastern coast of Papua and islands of the Solomon Sea. A coast line of about 1,000 miles affords New Britain numerous anchorages for small vessels as well as several harbors. Simpson Harbor in Blanche Bay, at the northeastern end of the island, is unexcelled in the New Guinea-Bismarcks-Solomons area as a base for military operations. Rabaul lies on the north shore of Blanche Bay, in the shadow of volcanic cones which may erupt at any time.³

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LINE NAVIES
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St. Georges Channel, a strait 25 miles wide in which lie the Duke of York Islands, forms a passage between New Britain and New Ireland. Duke of York Island and the shore of New Ireland opposite Rabaul were sites of enemy airfields and thus were integral parts of the Rabaul base. New Ireland, lying like a huge barrier reef north-east of New Britain, possesses an excellent harbor at Lavieing which was an important staging point on the supply routes to Rabaul and beyond.⁴

Of the 160 islands in the Admiralty group, only Manus and Los Negros have much military importance. The former is about 49 miles in length and has a maximum width of 16 miles. Lorengau, on the north-east coast of Manus, was its administrative center and the site of a poor airfield. Los Negros Island is so broken up by bays and lagoons that it is a series of peninsulas. Los Negros, indeed, is itself a hooked peninsula separated from Manus Island by a narrow passage and projecting to the northwest to form the eastern limits of Seeadler Harbor.⁵

The Bismarck Archipelago contains several small groups of volcanic islands and coral atolls. The Vitu, or Mitu, Islands 40 miles north-west of the Willaumez Peninsula of New Britain, provided anchorage for naval and merchant vessels. Garove Island, largest of the group, is a volcanic rim around John Albert Harbor, a flooded crater opening on the south. Peter Harbor on the northeast coast of Garove Island was the principal anchorage and barge-staging point for running supplies to western New Britain.⁶

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Terrain and climate combine to produce conditions extremely discouraging to extensive development of economic enterprises, as well as military installations, throughout the Bismarck Archipelago. All of the large islands and many of the small ones have mountainous interiors bordered by lowlands of kumai grass and mangrove swamps, although the only mountains of any considerable height are on New Britain and southern New Ireland. Except for coconut plantations and centers of population, land areas are generally covered by heavy growths of kumai grass or tropical rain forest. Trees grow luxuriantly, weaving a canopy overhead that shuts out the sunlight and conceals ground movement and military installations from aerial observation. The climate, always warm or hot, is extremely humid. Rainfall varies from about 80 inches annually at Rabaul to 250 inches at Gasmata. In November the northwest monsoon strikes the northern islands, then spreads over the entire archipelago by December. Heavy rains are common until March when more moderate conditions prevail, and even in the summer months clouds cover from one-third to four-fifths of the sky most of the time.⁷ These climatic conditions, in addition to being hazards to air operations, were the cause of many incomplete missions and unsatisfactory bomb runs, especially since the period of most intensive air operations coincided with the northwest monsoon.

Progress of Military Operations

Allied forces had been advancing in roughly parallel lines through

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the Solomons and along the New Guinea coast since the fall of 1942. Together these two thrusts formed a pincers closing in on Japanese positions in the Bismarck Archipelago. Preliminary objectives in the Solomons and New Guinea were won by May 1943, and GHQ SWPA on 6 May

issued warning instructions in order to outline general offensive plans for the Southwest and South Pacific areas, in accordance with a directive prepared by higher headquarters in February 1943. These plans included the ultimate capture of Rabaul and occupation of the Bismarck Archipelago.

⁸ The general role of the Allied Air Forces was defined clearly. They were to gain air superiority over each objective set by the high command, neutralize supporting enemy air bases within reach of the objective, destroy enemy shipping and naval forces within range, prevent reinforcement or supply of objectives under attack, cover the advance of ground troops, displace forward to captured air-dromes, and aid in neutralizing intermediate installations which were not immediate objectives of ground operations.⁹

The general offensive was renewed in June 1943. South and Southwest Pacific forces attacked New Georgia on the 30th and occupied Milne Bay, Woodlark and Rendova islands. Early in September the Japanese gave up the central Solomons.¹⁰ Southwest Pacific forces landed at Nassau Bay, south of Salamua, on 30 June in an attack coordinated with the offensive against New Georgia. The Fifth Air Force struck heavy blows at Newak and other enemy bases on the north New Guinea coast and by September the Japanese had been forced to withdraw

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to more distant fields. An amphibious landing near Lae on 4 September was followed by the dropping of parachute troops in the Markham Valley on the 5th. Salamaua fell on 12 September, Lae on the 16th, and Kaiapit on the 20th. An amphibious landing at Finschhafen on 22 September resulted in control of the Huon Gulf and provided the Allied Air Forces with an advanced fighter base opposite Cape Gloucester.¹¹

The next major advance came in the South Pacific area when Marines established a beachhead at Emper Augustus Bay, Bougainville Island, on 1 November 1943. The Torokina air strip, captured after bitter fighting, became operational for fighter planes on 11 December and two weeks later Fiva Field was ready. The Thirteenth Air Force now had bases less than 250 miles from Rabaul.¹² In the meantime, the Southwest Pacific forces were completing plans for the invasion of New Britain.

Japanese Air Bases and Strength

Japanese armed forces in New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago were strong in November 1943, although they had lost the initiative. The enemy, no longer able to choose the time and place of major engagements, lacked sufficient strength to garrison every threatened point; his supply service was strained by efforts to maintain widely separated units and his air force was committed to the defense of certain key bases. This defense was facilitated, however, by strategically located groups of airdromes.

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The Rabaul group consisted of four operational dromes on the Gazelle Peninsula and a fifth on New Ireland across the St. Georges Channel. Another was under construction on Duke of York Island. In March 1944, after five months of heavy blows by the Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces, supplemented by carrier strikes and naval bombardment, Rabaul was reduced to impotence; but in the fall of 1943 it was a powerful base. Gasmata, near the center of the south shore of New Britain, was the site of an airfield and a seaplane anchorage. Fighters covering convoys to New Guinea used the field until Allied bombing made it untenable. The Japanese then constructed a drome at Cape Hoskins on the north coast in September and October 1943. A field at Talasea on the Milne Bay Peninsula was little more than an emergency landing ground. The Cape Gloucester strips, on the northwest corner of New Britain, were potentially important; but frequent visits by Allied bombers kept them inoperational most of the time. Zavieng, at the northwest tip of New Ireland, covered the north and northwest approaches to Rabaul.¹³

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

The Madang group of bases, between Hansa Bay and Astrolabe Bay on the northern coast of New Guinea, included five airdromes:

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Madang, Alexishafen I and II, Nubia, and Awar. The Madang field, operational from March to September 1943, was largely abandoned when the Alexishafen strips were completed. Likewise, Nubia in the Hansa Bay area was practically abandoned in favor of Awar in November. This group was less important than the five Newak-area dromes: Newak, Boram, But, Dagua, and Tadji. The last named, a satellite field 55 miles west of Newak, was built to provide dispersal and protection when Allied attacks on the Newak group became heavy in August 1943. The Hollandia base, with Sentani and Cyclops as satellites, was completed late in 1943. This group, linked to the northwestern Dutch New Guinea area by the Waide Island drone 115 miles west of Hollandia, escaped destruction until the Fifth Air Force completed its movements to Gusap and Nadzab during February and March 1944.¹⁵

New Britain and the north coast of New Guinea held the principal concentrations of Japanese air strength in the Bismarck Sea area (see Appendix No. 1). During the last quarter of 1943, the estimated number of enemy aircraft in New Britain, principally at Rabaul, fluctuated from 329 on 12 October to 167 on 23 November. The enemy strove to maintain a fighter strength of about 150 planes to protect that key base. Light and medium bombers varied from 146 on 12 October to 38 at the middle of November. When this low point was reached, single-engine bombers appeared to augment bomber strength to about 60 planes. These aircraft were carrier-based torpedo and dive-bomber types which were stripped from carriers to reinforce Rabaul and the Solomons.¹⁶ The decline in strength at Rabaul in the first quarter of 1944 was

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offset to some extent by the arrival of substantial reinforcements in New Guinea. In this area the number of planes varied from 134 on 5 November to 206 by the end of the month. Attacks on Alexishafen in that month resulted in building up strength at Newak,¹⁷ a fact of considerable importance in the impending Bismarcks campaign. On 7 December 1943, a week before the landing at Arawe, the enemy had an estimated total of 493 aircraft in the New Guinea-Bismarck area. Of this total, 254 were fighters and 189 were bombers. The enemy thus possessed sufficient air strength to attack our convoys and beachheads if he decided to commit his force for those purposes.

Devastating attacks by Allied air forces against the Rabaul and New Guinea fields had already resulted in heavy losses to the Japanese. Further losses had been incurred in enemy efforts to bomb our airfields, shipping, and beachheads. In October 1943, the Japanese were reported to have lost 836 planes destroyed, 217 probably destroyed, and 144 damaged in the South and Southwest Pacific areas. In the Southwest Pacific area alone, 643 Japanese planes were destroyed in October.¹⁸ In spite of these losses, the enemy succeeded in maintaining from 400 to 500 planes in New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago until March 1944. Considering the demands of other areas, especially the Central Pacific where the Gilberts and Marshalls were under attack, one can appreciate the enemy's difficulties.

Allied Air Forces, Strength and Positions

The Allied Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area, commanded

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by Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney, was to provide the air cooperation for the Bismarck Archipelago campaign. General Kenney's command was an international force which included American, Australian, and Netherlands East Indies units. Administrative control over the Allied AF remained in its respective components but General Kenney, with headquarters at Brisbane, had operational control over the entire organization. Air Vice Marshal W. Bostock commanded at Darwin and Maj. Gen. Dennis G. Whitehead directed operations from an advanced headquarters at Port Moresby.¹⁹

In order to meet the many demands placed upon it for cooperation in the ground campaigns, and to solve problems of administration, supply, and service, the Fifth Air Force maintained, in addition to this Advanced Headquarters (Advon) at Port Moresby, three air task forces north of the Owen Stanley Mountains. Advon retained command of the fighter and bomber units, but operations of about three-fourths of the Allied AF squadrons were controlled by the air task forces. Squadrons retained by Advon could be assigned missions by that headquarters, and likewise formed an active tactical reserve from which special demands could be met. The First Air Task Force, commanded by Brig. Gen. F. H. Smith at Dobodura, contained about one-third of the squadrons in the theater in December 1943 and executed most of the tactical combat missions. This task force carried out fighter and bomber missions for all of the ground operations except those in the Ramu Valley, which were aided by the Second Air Task Force at Nadzab and the Third Air Task Force at Gussap.²⁰

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When the Fifth Air Force began intensive bombardment of New Britain in November 1943, it had six bombardment groups in New Guinea and one, the 330th, in northern Australia near Darwin.²¹ These units had an assigned aircraft strength of 370 bombers as of 30 October. There were, in addition, 231 unassigned bombers in the theater. Of the total assigned to bombardment groups, 118 were B-24's and 204 were B-25's.²² The five fighter groups were stationed at Port Moresby, Dobodura, and in the Markham-Ramu valleys.²³ Their assigned aircraft strength as of 30 October was 139 P-38's, 91 P-47's, 71 P-40's, and 47 P-39's--a total of 348 fighters. The Fifth Air Force had an additional 263 unassigned fighters on hand (see Appendix No. 2).²⁴ Thus the combined strength of Fifth Air Force fighters and bombers assigned to tactical squadrons was 718 planes at the end of October, of which approximately 80% were ready for combat. Two months later, on 3 January 1944, there were 432 fighters and 354 bombers assigned to squadrons of the Fifth Air Force.²⁵ Eighty-four bombers and 142 fighters in EAAF units stationed in New Guinea, principally on Goodenough and Ziriwina Islands, increased the total Allied Air Forces strength in New Guinea to about 1,000 fighters and bombers during the first week of January 1944.²⁶

The Allied AF clearly surpassed the Japanese in the Southwest Pacific Area by November 1943. Its heavy and medium bombers, escorted by P-38's, could cover the area from Rabaul to Newak. The crowded fields clustering around Port Moresby and Dobodura provided facilities

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for striking heavy blows at the enemy's air power, shipping, and ground installations throughout the New Guinea-Bismarck Archipelago area. Advanced bases were under construction at Gusap, Madzab, and Finschhafen. The latter were to be especially important in the Admiralty Islands phase of the campaign.

Most of the bomber strength was concentrated at Port Moresby until December. Two groups, the 3d and 22d, were at Dobodura in November, as was the 63d Squadron of the 43d Group (H). The 63d devoted its efforts almost entirely to armed reconnaissance of the Bismarck Sea. Two squadrons of the 380th Group (E) moved to Dobodura from Fenton to participate in the Arawe-Cape Gloucester bombardment, and flew their first missions from Dobodura on 13 December. Two days later the rest of the 43d Group was flying from Dobodura, and within 10 days the 90th Group (H) and the 345th Group (N) had moved across the Owen Stanleys from Port Moresby. The 38th Group (M) remained at Moresby until the end of February when it moved to Dobodura.²⁷ This concentration of aircraft at Dobodura in December made a lucrative target for enemy bombers, but the Japanese were unable to take advantage of their opportunity.

Fighter squadrons as of 6 November 1943 were stationed so as to provide protection for airdromes, aid to ground troops in New Guinea, and escort for bombers on missions to such strongly defended points as Rabaul and Newak. The 8th Fighter Group, at Mila and Ward's dromes near Port Moresby, had one squadron equipped with P-40's, another

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with F-39's and P-47D's, and a third with P-39's, G's, and F's. The 39th Squadron, 35th Fighter Group, was at Schwimmer Airrome near Port Moresby with its P-38's. The 40th and 41st Squadrons of the same group, flying P-39's, were at Madreb preparing to go on to Tsili Tsili to aid the ground campaign in New Guinea. The 49th Fighter Group had one squadron of P-40's and one of P-38's in the Bobodura area, while its third squadron of P-40's was at Gusap. All of the 348th Fighter Group, equipped with P-47's, was near Port Moresby at Jackson, Durand and Ward's dromes. The 475th Fighter Group, flying the P-38's, was at Bobodura.³³

Plans and Troops for Operation DEXTERITY

The amphibious invasion of western New Britain and the landing at Saidor, New Guinea, were the ground phases of Operation DEXTERITY. The principal purpose of DEXTERITY, as revealed by various directives, was to establish airdrome facilities at Cape Gloucester to accommodate two fighter and two medium bombardment groups.³⁹ Planning was begun in July 1943 by representatives of the Seventh Fleet Amphibious Force, 4th Air Force, and Alamo Force. The Alamo Force, which included the U. S. Sixth Army, was also known as ESCALATOR Force--its secret code name--and New Britain Force.

Operations Instructions No. 38, issued by GEC JCPA on 22 September 1943, assigned the following missions to Alamo Force: (a) seize the Cape Gloucester area, neutralize Casmeta by airborne and overwater operations, and establish control over "such adjacent islands and portions of western New Britain as necessary to insure uninterrupted operation of our air force from Cape Gloucester;" (b) establish airdrome

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facilities in the Cape Gloucester area; (c) arrange for overwater transportation to move air force units to Cape Gloucester; (d) establish emergency air operating base facilities in the vicinity of Lindenhafen Plantation as later specified by GHI S.A.F.A.; (e) assist the commander of Allied AF in establishing air warning and radio navigational facilities; and (f) prepare to participate in the capture of Rabaul. Two months later, on 22 November, Alamo Force was directed to seize the Arawe Peninsula instead of Casmeta, since the enemy strength at Arawe was estimated as being much smaller than at Casmeta and a smaller task force could accomplish the mission.³⁰ Thus, the plan for an emergency airstrip at Lindenhafen Plantation was abandoned.

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

The strategy involved in the revised plan of 22 November was simple but effective. The small task force (DIAGONAL Force) destined for Arawe would land on 15 December 1943, to focus the enemy's attention on that area and to cause him to move troops from the Cape

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Gloucester area. Eleven days later, on 26 December, the main blow would fall with BACKLANDER Task Force landing at Borgen Bay east of Cape Gloucester.³³ Quick success in New Britain was to be exploited by landing at Saidor on or after 2 January 1944, thus completing the third phase of Operation DEKTERITY.³³

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

All of the American troops, exclusive of the Fifth Air Force, that were to participate in Operation DEKTERITY were under Alamo Task Force. Its major units were the U. S. Sixth Army, the USA Services of Supply, and the 14th Antiaircraft Command. Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger, commander of the Sixth Army, was also in command of Alamo Force. Headquarters of the latter at Goodenough Island, therefore, was in effect the forward echelon of Sixth Army Headquarters.³⁵ The principal tactical components of the Sixth Army in September 1943 were the 1st Marine Division (Maj. Gen. W. H. Rupertus), the 326 Infantry Division (Maj. Gen. William E. Gill), the 632d Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment.³⁶ As finally constituted at the

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end of November, the Arawe (DIRECTOR) Task Force was composed of the 112th Cavalry Regiment, the 148th Field Artillery Bn., and other units, under command of Brig. Gen. Julian W. Cunningham. The 1st Marine Division and its supporting garrison troops formed the Cape Gloucester (BACKHANDER) Task Force, while the 32d Infantry Division was in ASCALATOR reserve.³⁷

Enemy Ground Strength in New Britain

Information about the location and strength of Japanese forces in New Britain was vital in the planning phase of DEXTERITY. Various sources, including air and ground reconnaissance, prisoners of war, and captured documents, indicated that the enemy expected an invasion. It is possible that the Japanese regarded the heavy Allied air attack of 12 October on Rabaul as a prelude to "a large scale attempt to gain a foothold on New Britain." At least the enemy retaliated with attacks on Allied shipping at Oro Bay on 15 and 17 October. These ventures cost the Japanese 70 planes.³⁸ Their willingness to incur such risks was a measure of determination to cut off a possible invasion at its source. During the next few days enemy air strikes were concentrated in the Finschnafen area, with two large-scale night attacks against shipping. These actions were interpreted as indicating Japanese fears that Finschnafen would serve the Allies "as a springboard into New Britain."³⁹

Frequent sightings of troop and supply movements proved conclusively that the Japanese were reinforcing western New Britain.

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Troops were moved from Rabaul primarily at night on barges, small transport vessels, and destroyers.⁴⁰ This activity, which seems to have reached a peak about 15 November, declined for a few days and then increased at the end of the month. Although they suffered serious shipping losses from Allied air attacks, the Japanese appeared determined "to turn the threat from the southwest well forward of Rabaul."⁴¹ By December there were fresh troops at Gasmata, Cape Merkus, Aisega, Cape Gloucester, and in the Rein Bay area.⁴²

Estimates of enemy ground strength in western New Britain varied widely. GHQ SWPA estimated the number of troops to be about 4,000; but the 1st Marine Division expected to find about 9,000 in the area, an estimate that proved to be approximately correct.⁴³ There were, moreover, possibilities of reinforcement from about 5,000 troops in central New Britain and more than 80,000 at Rabaul.⁴⁴ These estimates of enemy strength, while primarily of interest to ground troops, also influenced air action. Allied planes were sent out to strike at possible troop concentrations and defense installations. Interdiction of shipping in the Bismarck Sea and along the coasts of New Britain, attacks on supply areas at Rabaul, and the destruction of ships wherever they could be found could be a determining factor in the enemy's ability to resist the invasion.

Photographic Reconnaissance of New Britain

Photographic reconnaissance by the Fifth Air Force played a prominent role in the planning and execution of Operation DEMPSEY. Throughout

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the planning period there was a steady flow of aerial photographs which yielded highly accurate and relatively complete information about not only terrain but also enemy installations.⁴⁵ Reports of new bridges over streams, clearings of kumai grass and jungle growth, gun positions, dumps, and trail improvements were brought back by crews and confirmed by photographs.⁴⁶ Aerial photographs enabled the Seventh Amphibious Force to make navigational charts of the waters off New Britain.⁴⁷ Landing beaches in New Britain, at Saidor, and in the Admiralties were selected after studying aerial photographs and information provided by Australians who had been on the ground. "Enemy intelligence gained through air photos was in each case the basis of the entire scheme of tactical operations." Gridded mosaics were used by the artillery as firing charts,⁴⁸ and gridded obliques served as charts in calling for air strikes to aid ground troops.⁴⁹

This important reconnaissance work was the principal function of the 8th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron, which flew daily missions over New Britain for several months before the Allied landings⁵⁰ and extended its activities to New Guinea and New Ireland.⁵¹ Since facilities for photographic reconnaissance were not sufficient to meet the demand without calling upon bombardment squadrons, heavy and medium bombers took photographs whenever weather permitted, and some missions were primarily photographic. On 10 November, for example, a B-25 of the 40th Bombardment Squadron took 134 photographs from Grass Point to Borgen Bay,⁵² and on 19 November the 90th Bombardment Squadron

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sent nine B-25's to photograph the Cape Gloucester area and to search for barges. ^{E3}

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

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

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Chapter II

PRE-INVASION BOMBARDMENT AND THE ARAWE DIVERSION

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

SIPA Attacks on Rabaul, 12 October-7 December 1943

Attacks upon the great Rabaul base were of the utmost significance for Allied operations in the Solomons, New Guinea, and the Bismarck Archipelago. From Rabaul enemy naval task forces set out to challenge our surface units; to it merchant vessels brought supplies for re-loading onto barges and other small craft serving Japanese units in a wide area; and the Japanese Naval Air Service concentrated fighters,



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bombers, and reconnaissance craft on its airdromes. Any successful attacks against this busy base therefore would weaken Japanese power to resist new Allied invasions in both the South and Southwest Pacific areas.

The Allied Air Forces began a series of strikes on 12 October that may be considered as extending to 11 November. Photographic reconnaissance on 11 October had disclosed an increase of nearly 100 fighters on Rabaul's airfields, an increase that raised the total estimated strength to 394 aircraft. On the following day the Allied AF carried out the heaviest strike of the war against Rabaul when 338 bombers and fighters reached the target. Medium bombers (114 B-25's) came over first in three groups to attack Kopopo and Yunakanau while 12 Beaufighters hit Tobera. Then 87 B-24's bombed the drones, shipping and defense installations. The whole force was covered by 125 P-38's. The Japanese lost an estimated 177 planes, most of them on the ground, 3 large merchant vessels, 3 destroyers, 43 small merchant vessels, and 70 harbor craft. Only five Allied planes were lost.¹ Twelve RAAF Beauforts followed with an early morning attack on 13 October,² and five days later more than 50 B-25's penetrated bad weather to destroy 81 enemy planes while claiming 29 as probably destroyed.³ The Japanese, who had continued to pour in reinforcements, lost more than 175 planes as the result of three later strikes from 23 to 25 October by 110 B-24's and 61 B-25's, of which only 6 failed to return. This persistent drain on the enemy's strength "must have left his air arm in a poor condition to face any future major operation."⁴ Throughout

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this period South Pacific forces were striking steadily at enemy fields in the Solomons and the Fifth Air Force was striking fields in northern New Guinea.

The Allied Air Forces covered our Bougainville invasion with heavy attacks on Rabaul from 2 to 11 November. In spite of losses from the October strikes, the Japanese continued to pour reinforcements into Rabaul. Reconnaissance on 1 November revealed seven destroyers and about 200,000 tons of other shipping in Blanche Bay. Air strength had been rebuilt to an estimated 257 planes, 171 of them being fighters.⁵ Shipping was the main target of the 75 B-25's that reached Rabaul with 80 escorting P-39's on 2 November. General Kenney had ordered a masthead attack with 1,000-pound bombs. Results were eminently satisfactory. One observer reported that complete chaos and wild pandemonium reigned over Rabaul as the mediums went in to strafe and bomb their targets.⁶ Two destroyers, a destroyer leader, 6 merchant vessels, 2 freighters, and 4 luggers were reported sunk; 2 heavy cruisers, 2 destroyers, 7 medium merchant vessels, and 2 tankers were damaged. Japanese plane losses were 74 fighters and 10 other aircraft destroyed, and 23 fighters probably destroyed. Our own losses, primarily from intense anti-aircraft fire, were 10 B-25's and 9 P-39's.⁷ General George C. Marshall, complimenting the Fifth Air Force for this achievement, called the strike a "magnificent performance."⁸

This anti-shipping assault of 2 November was followed by other heavy attacks on Rabaul. On the night of 2-3 November, 8 of 13 RAAF

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Beauforts reached Tobera to bomb runways.⁹ Carrier planes and Fifth Air Force B-24's cooperated in a midday attack on 5 November. Taking off from South Pacific carriers, 23 Avenger torpedo bombers and 22 Dauntless dive-bombers, covered by 52 Hellcats, attacked shipping. They scored hits on 9 enemy naval vessels, shot down 23 fighters and one bomber, and probably destroyed 21 fighters and one bomber at a cost of 7 planes. The naval aircraft had hardly cleared the area when 27 B-24's of the 43d Bombardment Group, with 23 P-38's covering, attacked Rabaul Township with 78 tons of 1,000-pound bombs. The P-38 escort pilots saw some 20 to 30 Zekes in the air but the enemy refused to fight.¹⁰ That night seven Beauforts bombed Vunakanau and scored a possible hit on a heavy cruiser in Simpson Harbor.¹¹ The 90th Bombardment Group hit Espopo airdrome with 26 B-24's at midday on 7 November and dropped 167 x 1,000-lb. bombs from altitudes of 20,000 feet and above, while 60 P-38's provided high and low cover. Of more than 50 Zekes and Oscars that intercepted, 20 were claimed as destroyed, 9 as probables, and 4 damaged. The B-24's, in addition to scoring more than half of these victories, claimed 9 bombers and 3 fighters destroyed on the ground.¹² On night attacks from 9 to 11 November, 16 Beauforts bombed Vunakanau airdrome and 12 B-24's hit Lakunai.¹³

Still the Japanese continued to pour in planes and vessels. Photographs on 10 November showed 147 fighters and 41 bombers on Vunakanau and Lakunai airdromes, while 32 float planes, 2 light cruisers, 12 destroyers, 5 submarines, and 4 medium merchant vessels were in

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Simpson Harbor.¹⁴ Coordinated attacks by the Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces and carrier planes endeavored to reduce this enemy strength on 11 November. The 43d and 90th Bombardment Groups were to bomb Lakunai airdrome early in the morning, but because of bad weather all out 13 B-24's were called back to Port Moresby. The 64th Bombardment Squadron's 12 planes, with one of the 65th Squadron, bombed Lakunai from 0230 to 0355, encountering only two to three night fighters.¹⁵ Before noon, 42 Thirteenth Air Force B-24's, and a naval force of 71 Avengers, 72 Dauntless dive-bombers, and 120 Hellcats struck at shipping. Thirty-one enemy fighters were shot down for a loss of 12 naval planes from all causes.¹⁶ The Japanese, goaded into action, retaliated in the afternoon with a strong attack on our carriers lying off Bougainville. Allied land and carrier-based fighters intercepted and destroyed 35 fighters and bombers for the loss of five fighters.¹⁷ Allied bombing of Rabaul dropped off sharply after this blow and counterblow. Australian components of the Allied Air Forces bombed the Lakunai airdrome and Simpson Harbor with 32 Beauforts in night attacks on the 3d and 4th. On 7 December, 25 Beauforts bombed Borpop airdrome in New Ireland,¹⁸ but Rabaul escaped further destruction until the RAAF renewed its assaults a week later in preparation for the invasion of Arua.

During this period of action from 12 October to 7 December 1943, the Japanese are reported to have lost at least 691 planes destroyed and 83 probably destroyed for the loss of 56 Allied fighters and

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bombers. Destruction of enemy merchant and naval vessels, while by no means sufficient to be considered disastrous, was at least temporarily crippling. Runways, revetments, defense installations, and supply dumps were badly damaged; wharves and jetties along the waterfront had been smashed; damaged vessels and burned-out hulks were hazards to navigation in Blanche Bay. The comparatively light enemy air raids against our New Britain beachheads in December and the critical supply situation of the defending enemy troops may be attributed in large measure to this partial neutralization of Rabaul.

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

The south coast of New Britain had been under attack by Allied bombers since the spring of 1943 in order to disrupt supply movements and to keep the Casrata airbase inoperational. ¹⁹ These attacks increased as South Pacific forces moved northward through the Solomons, and they became especially heavy toward the end of November. Casrata airbase, located on a small peninsula, was the principal target on the south coast. Some eight miles to the east lay Ring Ring Plantation, and 10 miles farther east was Lindenhafen Plantation. These plantations contained bivouac areas and supply dumps for central New Britain and were staging points on barge supply routes. Elsewhere along the coast, especially at Jacquinot Bay, Waterfall Bay and Wide Bay, shipping offered lucrative targets from time to time. None of these areas was strongly defended by antiaircraft weapons,²⁰ nor did

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our bombers encounter much opposition from intercepting fighters.

Allied air attacks on Casata were relatively light while Fabaul was receiving so much attention. During the period from 19 October to 10 November, approximately 40 tons of bombs hit dump areas around the airbase. Except for occasional Fifth Air Force B-24's on reconnaissance, RAAF Boston, Beauforts, and P-40's carried on these harassing strikes. Beaufighters, P-40's and A-20's searched the coast more or less regularly for shipping and sometimes sank a few barges.²¹ On 15 November, the 90th Bombardment Squadron sent nine B-25's with an escort of 18 RAAF P-40's to bomb, strafe and photograph the area from Casata to Lindenhafen Plantation.²² RAAF P-40's hit the Casata dumps on 17 November,²³ then the Fifth Air Force struck with the heaviest attack of the war on Casata and the two plantations. In four strikes from 20 to 24 November, 155 B-24's and 63 B-25's dropped more than 432 tons on these targets. Since the directive to abandon a landing at Casata in favor of Arca was not issued until 22 November, the nature of targets attacked indicated that air power was preparing the way for an invasion. Supply dumps, personnel on the plantations, and the defenses at Casata and Agur islands off the coast were the principal targets, while the airbase, unserviceable from previous bombardment, received only slight attention.²⁴

After these November strikes, the Casata area escaped heavy punishment until the middle of December. In the meantime, RAAF fighters and light bombers ranged almost daily along the coast to

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strafe villages, barges, and other targets. Beauforts and P-40's made three bombing attacks on the Gasmati dumps.²⁵ On 6 December, 18 B-25's of the 345th Bombardment Group attacked the Arawe Islands 85 miles west of Gasmati as an alternate target for Borgen Bay,²⁶ and two days later six A-30G's bombed Cape Markus on Arawe Peninsula.²⁷

Allied AF attacks on the north coast of New Britain revealed a determination to cause maximum destruction to Japanese supply dumps, coastal installations, airdromes, and shipping from Cape Hoskins to the western end of the island. Airstrips at Cape Gloucester, Lalessa and Cape Hoskins were practically the only targets of consequence that were not concealed by jungle growth or camouflage. Crews sometimes felt that their efforts were accomplishing little beyond punching holes in kunai grasslands, shattering a few trees, or spraying machine-gun bullets through dense foliage in hope that a target might be found. Damage from strafing was difficult or impossible to assess, even when tracers were seen to hit among such targets as camouflaged barges; the results of bombing could be guessed at only, except when photographs offered more positive evidence.²⁸

Airdromes at Cape Gloucester and Cape Hoskins, supply dumps on the west and northwest coasts, and barge hideouts along the north coast were attacked frequently in October. These strikes, rarely in squadron strength, generally were executed by one to eight planes. There was a flurry of activity on 13-14 October when more than 20 B-24's bombed the airdromes and 34 B-25's bombed and strafed the west

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coast, RAAF Beauforts also attacked Hoskins in October.²⁹

Since the Allied Air Forces was primarily involved in attacking Rabaul and points in New Guinea early in November, central and western New Britain enjoyed comparative immunity. When bombing missions were renewed against these areas, supply dumps and defensive installations in the Cape Gloucester-Borgen Bay area received most of the 1,341 tons dropped from 19 November to 13 December 1943 (see Appendix No. 3). The emphasis upon destruction of supplies resulted from a belief that the northwest coast was a principal staging point on the barge route from Rabaul to the Rai Coast of New Guinea.³⁰ One of the dump areas was located along trees near the twin air strips at Cape Gloucester, where there was also a concentration of anti-aircraft defenses. The airrome itself was inoperational most of the time, although the enemy carried on repair work sufficient to permit a few fighters and bombers to use the strips from time to time.³¹

Bombardment and strafing of the northwest coast was likewise intended to interfere with the arrival of reinforcements at Cape Gloucester. The Japanese were reported to be sending merchant vessels from Rabaul to Garove Island, 75 miles north of Borgen Bay, and then running barges loaded with men and supplies from Garove to Borgen Bay at night.³² This traffic came under attack frequently, with A-24 strafers (C-1's and D-1's) expending thousands of rounds of machine-gun ammunition after bombing selected targets. The strike of 2 December, when the 38th and 345th Bombardment Groups sent out 60 B-25's,

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may be taken as an example. The mediums bombed and strafed suspected supply dumps and barge hideouts from Cape Gloucester to a point well east of Borgen Bay.³³

Preparatory Air Bombardment for the Arawe Diversion

Preliminary air bombardment in preparation for the Arawe landing was withheld until 13 December in order to obtain tactical surprise.³⁴ Even then the first strike was against Lindenhafen and Ping Ring Plantations, far to the east of Cape Merkus, and against islands near Gasata. Two squadrons of the 380th Bombardment Group (H), making their first attack against New Britain, set out with the 43d Group from Dobodura to bomb the Hoskins airrome. The P-38 escort shot down four of seven enemy fighters on coastal patrol as the formation approached the south coast of New Britain. Since the Hoskins airrome was closed in, the 34 B-24's dropped their 1,000-pound bombs on Lindenhafen Plantation.³⁵ Early in the afternoon 26 B-24's bombed and strafed the same target at minimum altitude.³⁶ At about the same time, a group of heavy bombers and a group of mediums attacked Ping Ring Plantation and Gasata.³⁷ Results, as usual, were undetermined.

Amalut Plantation, Filelo Island, and Gasata airstrip were targets for the Fifth Air Force on 14 December. The seven bombardment groups flew 373 sorties to drop more than 500 tons of bombs in one of the heaviest attacks in the theater to that time. Gasata was assigned to the 23d Group which, on the whole, made a poor showing.

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Bombing from altitudes of 8,000 to 10,800 feet, the 9 B-26's and 31 B-25's dropped 120 x 1,000-lb. bombs, of which about 30% hit the runway.³⁸ Nevertheless, sufficient damage was done to guarantee that no enemy planes would take off from Caszata to attack our troops at Arawe on Z-day. Filelo Island, from which Japanese coastal guns might fire on the invasion force, was hit by 26 B-24's and 26 B-25's with 134 tons of bombs.³⁹ Amalut Plantation, which covers most of Arawe Peninsula, was the target for 305 tons dropped by 72 B-24's, 62 B-25's, and 71 A-20's. The 3d, 47d, and 530th Bombardment Groups flew two missions each from Dobodura to Amalut Plantation during the day.⁴⁰ When the last bombers cleared Arawe in the afternoon, the Fifth Air Force had completed a remarkable series of strikes without losing a single plane.⁴¹

These very heavy attacks against the south coast of New Britain "must have been subjected to suspicious appraisalment by the Japanese high command and cannot have failed to increase an apprehension already evidenced amply in the recent expansion of troops in western New Britain."⁴² Nevertheless, Allied bombardment of western New Britain had been distributed in such a way that the enemy, while surely suspecting that an invasion was imminent, would be unable to forecast its exact location.⁴³

Z-Day at Arawe, 15 December 1943

The DIRECTOR East Force, commanded by Brig. Gen. Julian V. Cunningham, embarked at Goodenough Island while the Fifth Air Force

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was preparing the way with its heavy attacks. The total strength of the 113th Cavalry Regiment (reinforced) was about 5,000 men, of which 1,700 were to make the initial landings. Troop A, 1st Squadron, was to land at 0530 (H minus 1 hour) at Untingalu, then advance westward toward Cape Merkus at H-hour to cut off enemy troops who might be retreating from Amlut Plantation. Troop B was to land on Filelo Island, at the same time that Troop A reached Untingalu, to secure the island and to prevent interference with the landing from that point. The main landing was to be by the 3d Squadron (reinforced) at House Firman Beach north of Cape Merkus.⁴⁴

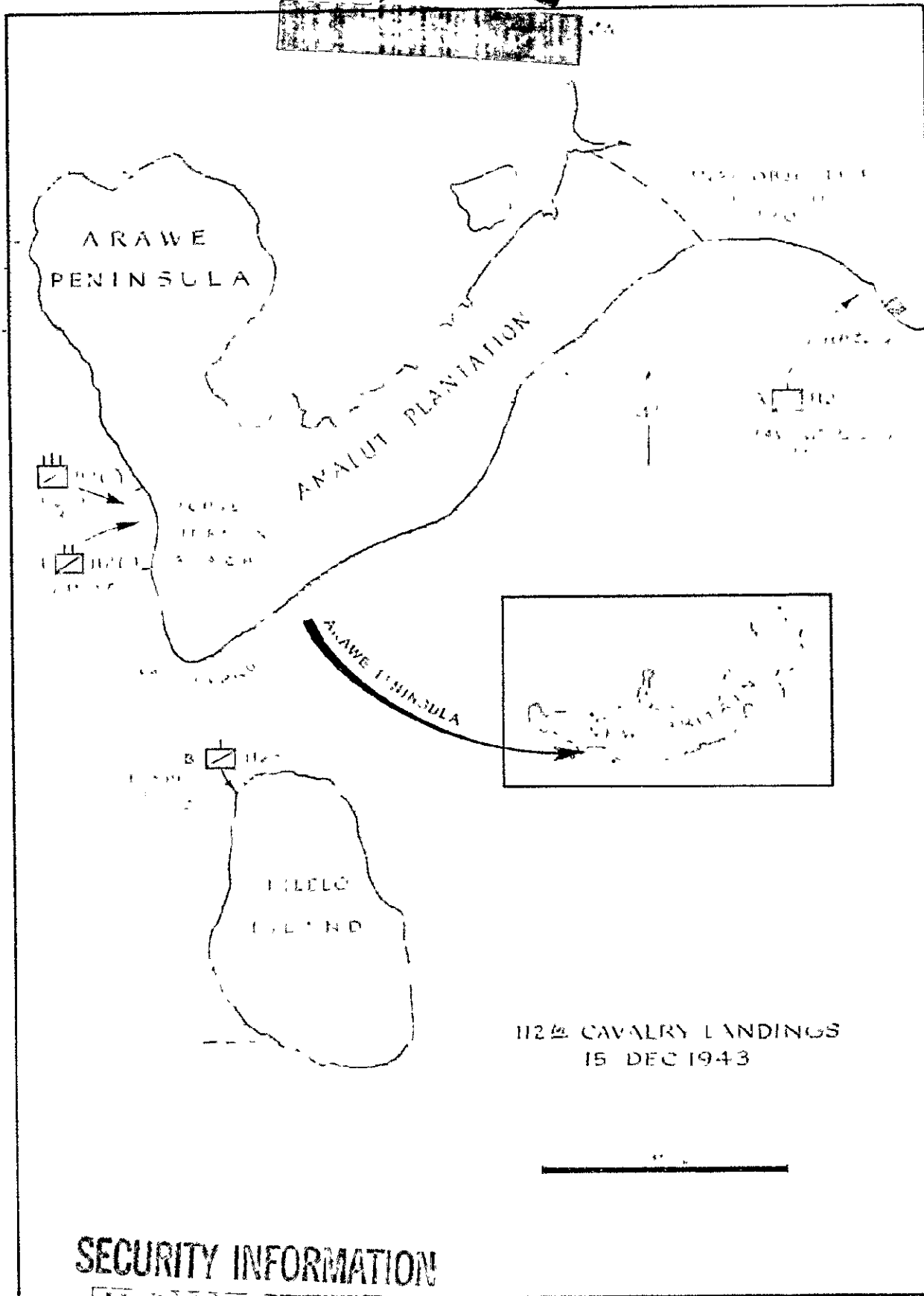
The air plan for E-day at Arawe--which was so designated in order to avoid confusion with D-day at Bergen Bay--provided for bombardment of Cape Gloucester, fighter cover for the Arawe beachhead, barge sweeps along the coast of New Britain, and an RAAF strike at Rabaul airbase the night of 15-16 December, and also made eight squadrons available for the immediate aid of the DIRECTOR force. Of these eight squadrons, one squadron of B-25 attack bombers was to be on air alert from 0315 to 0900; two of A-20's were to be on ground alert at Tobodura from 0800 to 1530; and five heavy squadrons of the 43d and 380th Bomb Groups were to be on ground alert at Doodura from 0900 to 1000 (see Appendix No. 4). More extensive air activity would depend upon enemy air and ground opposition at Arawe.

The convoy, escorted by destroyers, left Goodenough Island at midnight on 13 December⁴⁵ and reached the invasion area before dawn on 15 December, apparently without having been detected by the enemy.

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112th CAVALRY LANDINGS
15 DEC 1943

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Troop A departed from the U.S.S. Sands (ASD No. 13) into 15 LCZ's (landing craft, rubber) at 0530 and moved toward Utingalu. When the rubber boats were about 100 yards off shore, rifles, machine guns, and a dual-purpose anti-aircraft gun opened up with disastrous results. All but three of the vulnerable boats were sunk with a loss of 13 killed, 4 missing, and 17 wounded. The enemy firing went on for 20 minutes; then a destroyer silenced it while the Navy rescued the cavalry.⁴⁶ This incident was significant to the Fifth Air Force only because it was called upon to resupply Troop A which had lost all of its equipment in the rubber-boat fiasco. Troop B met little opposition in accomplishing its mission on Pilelo Island.⁴⁷

The main force, in the meantime, had departed from LSD No. 3 about 5 miles off House Fireman Beach at 0515.⁴⁸ Reef's and misunderstanding of naval fire support schedules delayed the landing for nearly an hour. Destroyers shelled the beach with about 1,600 x 5-inch shells and two Dubrov laid down a rocket barrage.⁴⁹ Landing craft bearing the 3d Squadron were still organizing in the transport area when 9 F-35B-1's, of the 13th Bombardment Sq., took off from Doboera at 0515 by the aid of Jeep lights. Arriving singly at the rendezvous point, some 190 miles away, shortly before 0600, the attack bombers formed V's of three and circled southwest of the convoy awaiting orders to attack. At 0712 the controller ordered one flight to bomb a target just north of Cape Watus. The order was misunderstood and five F-35's, instead of three, dropped 19 x 500-lb. bombs and strafed with 8,000

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rounds of .50-caliber ammunition. Naval fire support schedules apparently were revised somewhat, for destroyers continued shelling the beaches during the air strike.⁵⁰

The 2d Squadron, 110th Cavalry, encountered little opposition in driving up the Arave Peninsula to the final objective line, which was reached at 1430.⁵¹ The Fifth Air Force, therefore, had no calls to aid the advance. Seven B-25's, 501st Bombardment Squadron, arrived from Espadara at 0725 under orders to circle on alert for two hours. The landing force commander requested that the squadron fly over the beach to report on progress, then released the squadron to attack Didmog Village.⁵²

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

The Japanese air force was not idle while this invasion of New Britain was progressing so favorably for the Allies. An enemy reconnaissance plane flew over Arave at 0700 and escaped.⁵⁴ There were no Allied fighters in the area since the first patrol, consisting of 9 P-53's, had taken off from Espadara at 0643⁵⁵ and could not have reached the convoy area much before 0715. A Japanese radio warning to Rabaul could have been received in time to prepare a mission to

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attack the Allied convoy lying off Arawa within two hours of the time when it was sighted. Apparently that is what happened. One flight out of 12 P-38's, 431st Fighter Sq., was attacked by 12 Zekes at about 0645 while on patrol west of Didop Village. The P-38's took evasive action to avoid combat.⁵⁵ Fifteen minutes later, at 0900, from 30 to 40 Vals and Zekes strafed and bombed shipping and the beachhead.⁵⁷ Apparently the only opposition to this attack came from ground and naval fire which shot down two enemy planes. One LCV was destroyed.⁵⁸ The attacking force had struck when there were 12 P-38's in the area; 16 P-47's were on their way from Finschhafen at 0645, and 3 P-38's were scrambled at Doboara at 0910.⁵⁹ The enemy escaped without encountering these planes. During the day there were 82 P-38's and 46 P-47's on patrol over Arawa. The Japanese sent out 70 or 80 fighters and dive-bombers, of which three were lost.⁶⁰

Air-Ground Cooperation, 16 December 1943-February 1944

Ground action at Arawa resolved itself, for the most part, into a series of patrol actions after 2-day. The few enemy attacks against the MHR were rarely carried out by more than 50 men.⁶¹ Although enemy reinforcements were expected to move into the area, especially as far as the Pulie River to prevent expansion of the beachhead, armed reconnaissance by six A-20's on 16 December revealed no Japanese movements.⁶² Three days later 21 A-20's bombed and strafed the coastal track west of the Pulie River.⁶³ That night, 19-20 December, the enemy was reported to have landed troops which were supposed to be between the

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Signal and Pullie Rivers. Acting on this report, the First Air Task Force sent 19 A-20C's to attack. Concealing foliage was so thick that crews could see no results from their bombing and strafing on 20 December.⁶⁴

An enemy force of unknown strength was, nevertheless, working in toward Arawe. Our advanced patrols were driven back on 21 December, and on the 25th about 100 Japanese struck south from Didrop, isolated the Allied CP at Mio on the coast, and forced two patrols to fall back to Untingalu. These enemy troops were thought to be the advance party of a larger unit at Gasata.⁶⁵ In response to a request for aid, the 3d Bombardment Group sent 17 A-20C's to attack Japanese troops who were reported to be on the trail between Didrop and the mouth of the Pullie River. The Signal River was designated as the bomb line. When the 89th Squadron's eight A-20's arrived over Arawe, the ground station sent a radio request to change the target. The enemy was now located on the track from Untingalu, where the Cavalry had two patrols holding a defensive line, east to Arawe airstrip. The acting flight leader attacked accordingly at about 1400. In the midst of the bomb run the flight leader, who had been delayed in taking off at Douodura, arrived and frantically ordered the attack stopped since the target was well within the bomb line. Nine more A-20C's arrived at 1415 and attacked the trail leading to Didrop.⁶⁶

Apparently neither the air strikes nor the two concentrations of artillery fire on the trail east of Untingalu broke up the Japanese

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threat. The patrols were ordered back from Untingalu to the main line at the east end of Anlut Plantation at 1500,⁶⁷ and General Cunningham called for reinforcements. General Krueger sent Company G, 153th Infantry, to Arawe by PT boats and the rest of the 3d Battalion in LCP's from Cape Cretin. Thus strengthened, the DIRECTOR Task Force was content to hold its positions. The enemy set up outposts in front of the IER and resisted all efforts to dislodge them.⁶⁸

The Fifth Air Force struck a variety of targets in the Arawe area during the next three weeks, although its principal effort was made in cooperation with the BAGHANDER Task Force at Bergen Bay. Barge traffic along the coast and on the rivers suffered from attacks by Allied planes.⁶⁹ Suspected enemy positions along the coast west of Arawe to Cape Pushing, at Glnit, and north on the Itai River were attacked by P-39's of the 823 Reconnaissance Sq.⁷⁰ Gasnata's inactive state was guaranteed by BAEF attacks with Beauforts, Vengeances, and P-40's.⁷¹ Barges on the Pulie River, dumps and troops near Didapop, and enemy defenses near Untingalu were attacked by 58 bombing and strafing sorties from 27 December 1943 to 13 January 1944.⁷²

Enemy gun positions at the east end of Anlut Plantation were attacked by 12 A-20's on 7 January. Ground troops were to mark the target with smoke but failed to do so until after the bombing began. As the first flight started to peel off for its initial pass, two Allied naval vessels opened fire from a distance of about two miles. The A-20 pilots did not have the radio frequency of either ground or naval stations. Allied barges opened fire when the second flight of

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6 A-20's flew over Arave Harbor at an altitude of more than 1,000 feet. In spite of this interference, which destroyed one A-20 and damaged two more, the mission was successful.⁷³

The heaviest air strike since Z-day occurred on 16 January when General Cunningham attacked to eliminate the Japanese block extending northwest from Untingala. At about 0830, 18 B-24's dropped 135 of 135 x 1,000-lb. bombs in the designated target,⁷⁴ after which 20 B-25's came in to bomb and strafe at minimum altitude.⁷⁵ Artillery and mortar barrages followed these air strikes, then a company of light tanks spearheaded an infantry attack that drove the enemy back nearly a mile from the main line of resistance.⁷⁶ By this time the AIRBORNE Task Force had captured key positions east of Dorgen Bay and the enemy was giving up western New Britain. Allied planes roamed at will over the jungle and mountain trails to attack targets of opportunity but rarely found an objective of any importance.⁷⁷ Patrols from Arave met only slight opposition in pushing west toward Gilnit where, early in February, they made contact with a Marine group from Cape Gloucester.⁷⁸

Practically no ground combat occurred in the Arave sector after this meeting at Gilnit. The enemy withdrew as his fortunes declined along the north coast. Patrols of the 188th Infantry occupied Gasmata airbase on 17 March and on the following day reported Lindenhafen Plantation free of Japanese troops. These positions were held essentially unchanged until 8 June 1944, when the 109th Infantry

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Regiment, 40th Division, relieved the original DIRECTOR Task Force.⁷⁹

Fighter Cover and Heavy Air at Arava

The First Air Task Force provided fighter cover for the Arava area from squadrons based at Dobofura and Finschhafen. The number of sorties flown by these squadrons varied from 64 to 97 daily for the period 18-31 December, except on the 19th when bad weather canceled scheduled patrols.⁸⁰ This period likewise coincided with the enemy's heaviest effort against the beachhead, although the Japanese put up less than one-half the number of sorties expected.⁸¹ This fighter protection was especially important at Arava since no 90-mm. antiaircraft guns arrived until the end of January and searchlights were received even later. Automatic weapons were not effective during darkness without the searchlights, and during daylight raids the enemy planes remained out of range.⁸²

The Japanese were fortunate in their 2-day bombing attack which, while ineffective, succeeded in avoiding most of our patrolling fighters. Subsequent enemy daylight raids on Arava met with such heavy losses that they were practically abandoned by the end of December. On 16 December the first enemy attack came early in the afternoon when 25 F-33's of the 431st and 432d Squadrons were on patrol. The Arava controller gave them a plot of enemy bombers over Salam Island at about 1745; ten minutes later the F-33's intercepted 7 to 9 B-24's, escorted by 20 to 30 Silver Star and Zivys, and destroyed

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10 planes without loss to themselves.⁸³ While this fight was in progress, 8 P-47's, 342d Fighter Sq., took off from Tinsakhafer. This flight was still patrolling when the controller called in another plot. At 1645 the P-47 pilots sighted one Kate and 12 to 15 Zekes, stacked from sea level to 18,000 feet, headed for Arave. While the first flight of 8 P-47's destroyed 2 Zekes and the Kate, 7 more P-47's arrived and added 2 Zekes to the total destroyed.⁸⁴ The day's effort cost the enemy 16 aircraft destroyed and 4 probably destroyed. Sporadic but ineffective attacks continued through the night.⁸⁵ During the morning of 17 December, 6 P-47's, 341st Fighter Sq., destroyed 3 Vols and 2 Oscars out of a total force of 40 planes.⁸⁶

In these early encounters, enemy fighter pilots displayed considerable skill and aggressiveness. This was especially true on 18 December when 10 P-39's, 433d Fighter Sq., jumped 10 to 15 Zekes, Oscars and Bombs at midday. The P-39's dove through the enemy fighters and were in turn jumped by about 15 fighters, which had been hiding in a cumulus cloud. Definitely on the defensive and outmaneuvered, the P-39's destroyed only three of the enemy while losing two P-39's, one of them in a collision.³⁷

The consistent appearance of Japanese planes over Arave, and their direction of flight, indicated that they were coming from Madang as well as Rabaul. Heavy Allied attacks on Cape Gloucester and the Arave invasion would be sufficient reasons for renewed use of the landing field. To stop this activity, the 33d Bombardment Sq.

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dropped nearly 45 tons of 1,000-pound bombs on that target on 19 December.⁸⁸

Japanese efforts against Arava continued with little apparent change resulting from the Midway bombing. On 21 December, our fighters destroyed 19 and probably destroyed 6 of approximately 95 fighters and bombers attempting to attack Arava. The greatest activity occurred at about 1700 when an estimated 25 Zeros and 25 Vals were in the area. A patrol of 7 P-47's, 343d Fighter Sq., shot down 7 Vals and claimed 4 probables in spite of what may have been a clever Japanese trick: "The enemy assumed the frequency, code name, and phrasing of the Arava controller (in flawless English) and gave false directions to our flight and caused considerable confusion even on the ground stations."⁸⁹ Our loss for the day was one P-47 shot down by friendly antiaircraft fire.⁹⁰ Arava was spared further heavy daylight raids until 27 December when the enemy made his last significant strike at the southwest coast. Some 8 to 10 Vals dive-bombed EE boats while 40 to 50 Zeros, Oscars and Hays covered. This force lost 8 Vals and 23 fighters destroyed by our patrolling P-47's.⁹¹

After this attack of 27 December, Japanese air activity at Arava fell off sharply. Whereas from 15 to 31 December, there were 251 sorties in 9 day and 27 night raids, only 95 sorties were reported from 1 January to 10 February in 18 day and 29 night attacks.⁹² The night attacks were harassing, caused little damage, and were generally carried out by one to three medium bombers. Allied patrols likewise

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fell off sharply after 3 January 1944, when 65 fighters were over Arave during the day.⁹³ Part of this activity was undertaken to cover shipping passing through to reinforce the Saider landing.

Air Supply at Arave

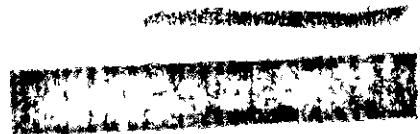
As part of the preparation for Operation LEXTERITY, Alamo Force organized a Provisional Air Supply Company of 249 officers and men. This company included ordnance and medical personnel, although most of the men were drawn from the 90th Field Artillery Battalion (Pack), the 16th Quartermaster Squadron, and the 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment. The company thus had a variety of skills represented which would insure proper packing and loading of supplies.⁹⁴

Troop A, 11th Cavalry Regiment, lost all of its equipment in the disastrous attempt to land at Uttingalu on Z-day. Many of the survivors had nothing except incomplete clothing when they were rescued and landed at House Fireman Beach. The troop required complete outfitting with arms, ammunition, clothing, and equipment. General Cunningham sent a radio message at 1000 on 18 December to Alamo Force Headquarters requesting these items plus 15% overage. The Provisional Air Supply Company at Dobodura loaded the supplies, weighing nearly 10 tons, into 6 C-47's, then transferred them to 19 B-25's and one B-17 because of danger from Japanese planes. About two hours, from 1300 to 1500 on 18 December, were required to complete the drop at Anulut Plantation. Nearly all of the clothing and equipment and all of the ordnance were recovered.⁹⁵ Troop A was ready for combat by 17 December, several days

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stronger than would have been possible had air supply not been available.⁹⁶

Air supply service operated with remarkable speed. On 19 December a message was received at 2105 from General Cunningham requesting 200 anti-personnel mines. A B-17 sent by the First Air Task Force to the Oro Bay depot, arrived at 0630 on 20 December, was loaded at 0730, and completed its drop of 304 mines at 0930. All of the mines were serviceable.⁹⁷ Three B-17's, one of which made two sorties, dropped 25,000 sand bags, 17,000 yards of barbed wire, and hundreds of pickets at Arawe on 28 and 29 December when DIRECTOR Task Force was strengthening its main line of resistance.⁹⁸ These examples illustrate the importance of air supply, not only in this specific campaign but also in any difficult combat conditions where normal surface methods are inadequate.

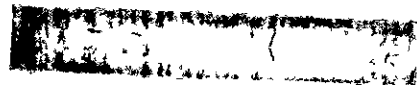
The Arawe operation was clearly one of the major steps in preparation for the Bergen Bay invasion. Neutralization of Sabau, bombardment of the New Britain coasts, and heavy strikes at Gasmeta and Arawe prepared the way. When DIRECTOR Task Force went ashore on the Arawe Peninsula, the Allied Air Forces were prepared to deliver far greater aid than was required. Throughout the operation air and ground units worked together closely, although the nature of the terrain, lack of targets, and weakness of enemy air attacks relegated the Allied Air Forces to a minor role after 3-day.

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Chapter III

CONQUEST OF NEW BRITAIN FROM CAPE GLOUCESTER TO TALASEA

Immediately after DIRECTOR Task Force went ashore at Arave, bombers of the Fifth Air Force attacked the northwest coast in preparation for the major landing. This preparation went on for 11 days. Then the BACKLANDER Task Force landed at Forgen Bay, established a beachhead, and began the work of clearing Japanese troops from the western portion of New Britain. Operation DEMERITY may be considered as having been completed when patrols from the two task forces established contact on 10 February 1944. This somewhat arbitrary date is not entirely satisfactory, since the BACKLANDER Task Force already was engaged in Operation APPAS, a series of hopping-up attacks that carried the Marines to Talasea by 8 March. During this advance eastward along the north coast, air operations over New Britain decreased almost to the vanishing point except for continued assaults upon Rabaul by South Pacific forces. The satisfactory progress of land operations on New Britain, together with a lack of suitable targets west of Rabaul, gradually during January and February released the Fifth Air Force for strikes against New Guinea and the Admiralty Islands.

Preparatory Air Bombardment for BACKLANDER

After the heavy attacks on the south coast on 13 and 14 December 1943 in preparation for the Arave invasion, Fifth Air Force bombers

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returned to intensive attacks on northwestern New Britain. It is hardly an exaggeration to state that the coast and inland defenses from Borgen Bay to Sag Cag were saturated with bombs and sprayed with machine-gun ammunition. Targets were essentially the same as those that had been under almost daily attack since 09 November: the airstrips, supply dumps, and defenses at Cape Gloucester; defenses and dumps around the shores of Borgen Bay; possible defensive works at Tawali; and villages, trails, and the Nocting airrome.¹

Three to seven bombardment groups, with adequate fighter cover, participated in these assaults from 15 to 21 December. The lowest number of sorties for the period occurred on the 16th and 17th when 33 bombers were out on each day; the highest number was on 21 December when seven groups flew 280 bomber sorties. In the 11-day period there were 1,007 effective bomber sorties which dropped more than 2,694 tons of bombs without losing a plane (see Appendix No. 3). There was no rest for the Japanese. Daylight attacks were followed by nightly harassing during which B-24's dripped bombs, grenades, and beer bottles over the bivouac areas to keep the enemy under continuous blackout and mental strain.²

Accuracy of bombing was difficult to estimate. The heavy bombers usually attacked at altitudes of 4,500 to 10,000 feet, while B-24's and A-20's made most of their runs at minimum altitude. Cloud cover often prevented observation, but even on clear days crews could see little except bomb bursts. On 15 December, for example, the 438 Group

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was held on alert at Bobodura until 1000, then was sent to attack the Cape Gloucester dumps. The target was covered by haze and snows which made an accurate statement of results impossible.³ The 90th Group sent two squadrons to strike Target Hill with 2,000-pound bombs from 10,000 feet: one squadron claimed 8 hits out of 24, the other claimed 23 out of 24.⁴ Another squadron of the same group claimed 11 hits from 24 x 2,000-lb. bombs directed toward No. 2 strip at Cape Gloucester, while the fourth squadron reported dropping its entire load of 20 x 2,000-lb. bombs on the west edge of the target.⁵

Target Hill, a defensive position near Siliuati Point which dominated the landing beaches at Dargen Bay, was a favored target. Covered with brush through which dark red earth could be seen, it stood out prominently in the relatively level rain-forest area of the coast.⁶ Gun positions near the Gloucester airstrips, while not easily seen from the air, were much more satisfactory targets than dumps located in the timbered areas. On 17 December the 90th Group dropped 50 x 2,000-lb. bombs on the gun positions with fairly satisfactory results.⁷ Heavy bombing on and near the Gloucester strips did not prevent the enemy from attempting to use one of them. Two Japanese fighters took off from No. 2 strip on 17 December,⁸ so the next day the 90th Group bombed the strip with 192 x 1,000-lb. bombs, the 200th Group dropped 60 tons of 500-lb. bombs on nearby dump areas, and the 380th and 45d Groups hit Cape Hocking airstrip with 332 x 1,000-lb. bombs.⁹ Neither field was reported as operational thereafter, although the Japanese did not completely abandon Hocking for several weeks.

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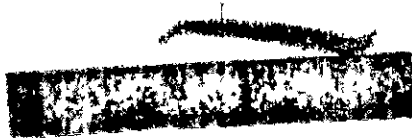
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The tempo of bombing in the Cape Gloucester area increased considerably on 19 December when the two squadrons of the 580th Group and three of the 47th Group flew dual missions from Dobodura. The 43d Group drew double missions on the 21st, 22d, 23d, and 25th, a situation not at all pleasing to that unit: "In the midst of moving, constructing a new camp, and attempting to carry on maintenance of the planes for twice the number of missions flown previously," the 65th Squadron reported, "the strength of the ground men has been taxed beyond the breaking point. They must be replaced before the entire maintenance crumbles."¹⁰ Ground crews were doing well in spite of this complaint, since 10 of the 65th Squadron's 13 B-24's were ready for combat on 13 December.¹¹ The 402d Squadron registered a similar complaint, protesting that with a shortage of 67 ground personnel, the men were being asked to exert themselves beyond the point where efficiency could be expected. Only seven of the squadron's 15 B-24's were ready for combat on 13 December.¹² These protests, which are typical of many that were registered, were fully justified; but from 19 to 25 December, the 64th, 65th, and 402d Squadrons flew a total of 191 effective sorties against New Britain.

This period of preparation reached its climax on 24 and 25 December when 583 bomber sorties struck every important target from Rumbell to Target Hill. In these two days alone, 672 tons of bombs and 231,100 rounds of machine-gun ammunition were expended (see Appendix No. 3). On 24 December the 347th Group, which was to

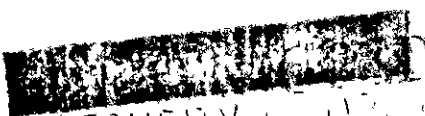
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participants in preparation at the beaches on D-day, sent its B-24's through an attack over the assigned targets to rehearse procedure and timing.¹³ The beaches at Ewuli and Bergen Bay and their defenses were the principal targets for 130 sorties on 25 December,¹⁴ while three squadrons bombed Alexishafen in New Guinea to make that enemy base inoperational on D-day.¹⁵

Major interest in air preparation for D-day centered on the constant and heavy attacks against northwestern New Britain; but airdromes at Rabaul and in New Ireland and New Guinea also were bombed. South and Southwest Pacific forces struck every field from which enemy planes might take off to oppose the Bergen Bay landings. Attacks on Rabaul were resumed on the night of 13 December, after nearly a week of respite, when 27 RAAF Beauforts of the Allied Air Forces dropped about 33 tons on Lakunai airdrome.¹⁶ On the following night, 12 Beauforts bombed Tunkanau airdrome.¹⁷ South Pacific forces took over, with 33 fighters engaging the enemy over Rabaul on 17 December.¹⁸ Two days later, 10 South Pacific B-24's, with an escort of 50 fighters, were engaged by 45 to 50 interceptors over the harbor area. RAAF Beauforts from the Southwest Pacific attacked Tunkanau again on 20 December with 18 bombers dropping 17 tons of bombs.¹⁹ In two strikes on 24 and 25 December, in preparation for the Bergen Bay landing, 36 South Pacific B-24's bombed Lakunai and Tunkanau. The enemy lost 56 fighters destroyed and 11 probably destroyed in attempting to repel these attacks.²⁰



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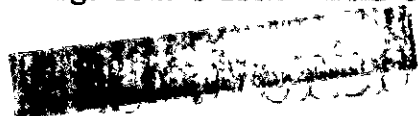


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The Fifth Air Force protected our troops in New Britain from air attacks originating in New Guinea by almost daily strikes on key airdromes beginning on 19 December. Medium bombers bore the brunt of this effort.²¹ Reconnaissance planes maintained close surveillance over Kavieng which, with its two airdromes and harbor, was a staging base for enemy aircraft and shipping en route to Rabaul. Most of the allied attacks on this New Ireland base in the last 10 days of December were made by EAAF Catalinas, which dropped nearly 80 tons of demolition, incendiary, and fragmentation bombs on shipping and the airdromes in night strikes.²²

The full effects of this preparation cannot be assessed accurately. At Rabaul and Kavieng, and over the enemy's New Guinea fields, there was opposition from antiaircraft fire and Japanese fighters. Photographs could confirm damage reported to have been caused to runways, shipping, docks, and other installations. At Cape Gloucester, on the other hand, there was never any fighter opposition and only an occasional shot from ground troops. Cratered runways proved that the airstrips were not serviceable; a few direct hits were claimed on gun positions; optimistic crews expressed the belief at times that they had damaged or destroyed barges. Enemy documents and prisoners captured after D-day put an end to doubts about the effectiveness of the air preparation. One prisoner taken at Cape Gloucester stated that the bombing caused about 1,000 casualties in his sector and heavily damaged dumps and bivouacs.²³ The unspectacular strafing and bombing of barge routes from Rabaul caused such destruction that troops in



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western New Britain were placed on half rations.²⁴

Beaches and Landing Plan

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

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

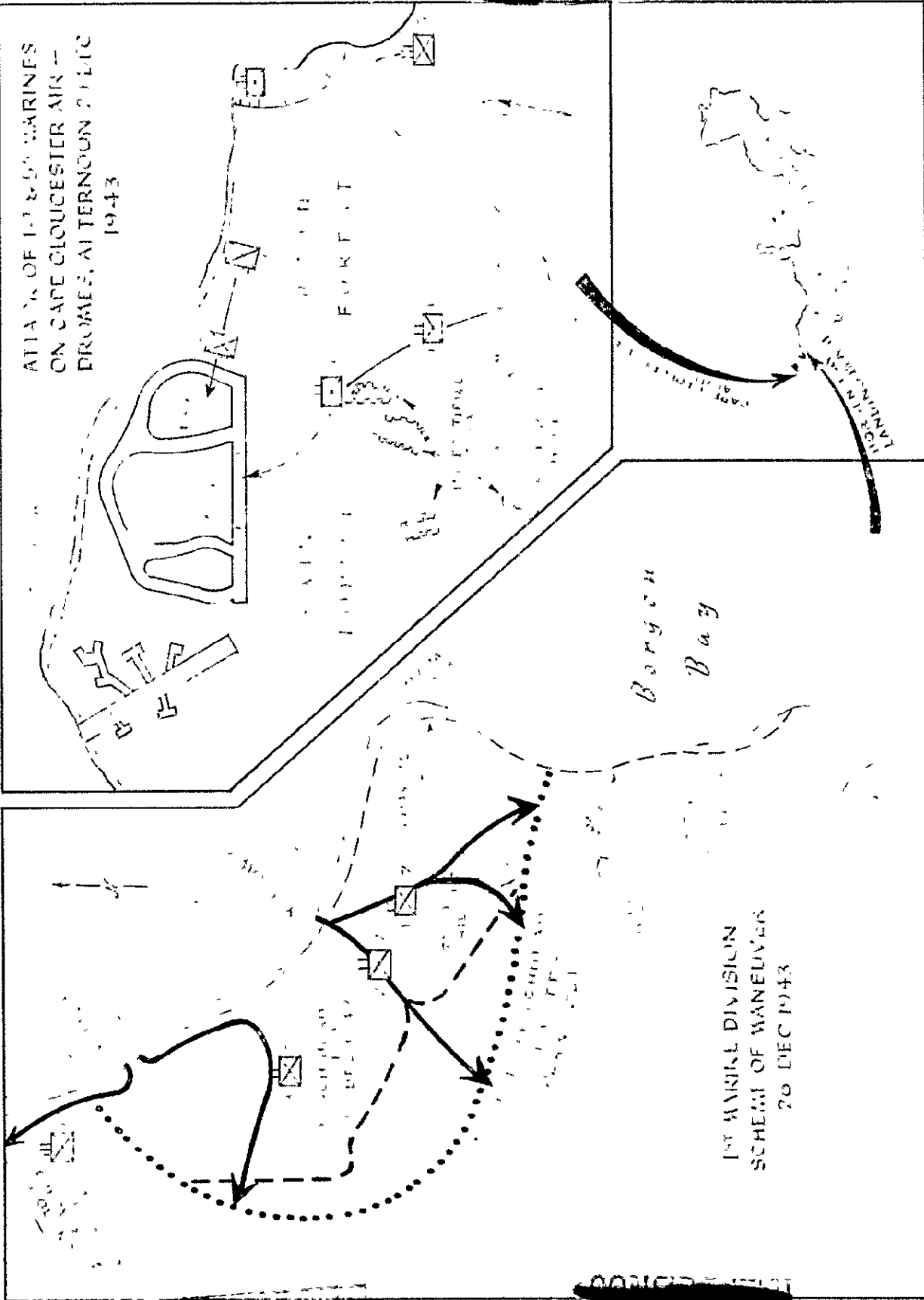
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ATTACK OF 1-1 & 5th MARINES
ON CAPE CLOUCESTER AIR -
PROMES, AFTERNOON 20 DEC
1943



1st MARINE DIVISION
SCHEME OF MANEUVER
20 DEC 1943

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ignored by Marines who later complained that the swamp was entirely unexpected.

The landing plan required Combat Team C (7th Marines, reinforced) to seize and consolidate the beachhead, followed by Combat Team B (1st Marines, reinforced) which would pass through and attack north-west toward the airrome. Landing Team 31 (2d Battalion, 1st Marines, reinforced) was to go ashore at H-hour on Green Beach near Iauuli, about nine miles southwest of Cape Gloucester, to prevent the withdrawal or reinforcement of enemy troops in the Gloucester area. Combat Team A (5th Marines, reinforced) in task force reserve was to move from Milne Bay to Oro Bay on D-day, then move on to Finschhafen prepared to execute missions as required.²⁹ D-day was set as 22 December in order to permit convoys to approach during the dark of the moon; H-hour was 0745, sufficiently late in the morning to permit air bombing and strafing and to give the Navy time for "sweeping the approaches through the reef."³⁰

Air operations on D-day were designed to provide maximum assistance for the invasion. From 0700 to 0730, five squadrons of B-24's were to neutralize, by high-level bombing, all hostile defense positions covering the landing points. Naval bombardment was to cease at 0737. Then, from 0738 to 0743, three squadrons of mediums were to bomb and strafe the beaches while one squadron strafed and smoked Target Hill to deny observation from that point. Squadrons of A-20's, on air alert from 0745 to 0915, would attack previously designated

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targets if not otherwise used; four squadrons of heavy bombers were to drop 1,000-pound bombs on enemy defenses at Target Ridge east of the airstrip from 0900 to 0915; and 15 minutes later four squadrons of mediums were to bomb enemy positions east of the beachhead. Nine squadrons of heavy bombers were to attack specified targets from 1400 to 1430 while Combat Team B was coming ashore. Other squadrons were placed on alert and fighter cover was to be available from 0630 to 1830 (see Appendix No. 5). This plan required careful execution because there was so little leeway allowed in timing, a large number of planes would congest the area, and enemy air attacks might easily disrupt the schedule.

Landings at Bergen day and Tuzuli, 25 December 1943

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

Task Force 76 carrying the SAGEHANDER troops sailed out of Buna Harbor at 0300 on 25 December, escorted by cruisers and destroyers.

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Fifth Air Force fighters provided protective cover as the ships moved along the New Guinea coast. LST's from Tinschhafen joined the convoy off Cape Grotin, vessels scheduled to land on the afternoon of D-day pulled away to form the second echelon, and the group destined for Green Beach sailed off toward Bouli after darkness under destroyer escort.⁵¹

The enemy knew that the convoy was underway but did not know its destination. An enemy coast watcher reported it at 1630 on 25 December when it passed Cape Lind Head; a Japanese reconnaissance plane was shot down east of the convoy three hours later. The Navy's suggestion that "as far as known, the landing at Gloucester was a complete surprise" is contradicted by these facts and by the same source which states: "Recently captured documents indicate that a landing was expected on Mass Bay in the Zorgen Bay area, and troops from other localities had been concentrated to meet this expected attack."⁵²

Naval and air beach preparation went off as scheduled with almost perfect coordination. Cruisers and destroyers laid down their fire on targets as far west as the infield and east to Alifan Village.⁵³ Heavy bombers were circling over Salam Island when flashes of naval gunfire heralded the pre-invasion bombardment. Ceiling and visibility were unlimited. Just at 0714 the first of 43 B-24's roared over Target Hill and Salam Point at 3,500 feet. Two squadrons dropped 67 tons of bombs on Target Hill, and three squadrons went on to drop 45 tons

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on an area 2,000 feet south of the hill, a target described as "jungle completely surrounded by jungle," which contained enemy defense positions.³⁴ Naval fire ceased at 0737 and the B-24's were leaving the area when 35 B-24's, 345th Bombardment Group, began the first of their three runs over Yellow Beach and Target Hill. A few ineffective shots were fired at the Mitchells as they flew over the naval vessels. The 500th Squadron blanketed Target Hill with 120 x 100-lb. white phosphorous bombs.³⁵ A faint southeast breeze carried the smoke over the beach and 3,000 yards out to sea where it covered approach lanes used by landing craft.³⁶ Strafing ceased at 0745 when the first wave of landing boats was a short distance off shore,³⁸ then an LCI fired a barrage of 263 x 4.5-inch rockets.³⁷ All accounts agree that this beach preparation was nearly perfect in timing and coordination, and that "the enemy occupying positions along the beaches did not have time to recover from the shock of the supporting fire and reorganize to repulse the assault troops."³⁹

Landing operations proceeded as scheduled. The 7th Marines (Combat Team C) began to go ashore at 0745 without opposition at the beach. While a beachhead was being organized, the 1st Marines (Combat Team B) landed before 0800 and started to advance west toward the airfield.⁴⁰ The choice of beaches could not have been better, since they were "the only beaches on the north coast which were not defended in considerable strength by pillboxes and trenches . . ." Abandoned guns, rifles, and documents testified to the effectiveness of naval and air preparation.⁴¹ The A-30's on alert 10 miles north of Cape

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Gauffre since 0745 received no call for aid from the Navy control ship. Upon completion of its 30-minute alert, each of the three squadrons bombed and strafed Target Ridge east of the airdrome.⁴³ The 90th Bombardment Group attacked Target Ridge with 24 B-24's a few minutes after the last squadron of A-20's left. There were no more morning bomb strikes in the beachhead area; but shortly before 1100, the 28th Group strafed and bombed the Ularangi-Fotal coast area southwest of Cape Gloucester (see Appendix No. 6).

The 7th Marines had planned to use one battalion to aid the 1st Marines in their advance toward the airdrome; but, upon learning from captured documents that a force of 5,000 or more enemy troops was in the Bergen Bay area, General Dupertus ordered the entire combat team to remain in the beachhead. The 1st Marines therefore delayed their advance to the west and set up a defensive perimeter. In the meantime, aided materially by the early morning bombing, the 7th Marines captured Target Hill and a large supply dump.⁴⁴ The Japanese still held Target Ridge southwest of the beachhead, and two strong positions at Hills 150 and 200 east of the beachhead. Hill 150 and other positions near Nataso Point were bombed and strafed by 24 B-24's. 345th Bombardment Group, in the afternoon while a strong enemy air raid was in progress. About 20 minutes later the 43d Bombardment Group dropped 23 tons of 1,000-pound bombs on Hill 200, and two squadrons of the 390th Bombardment Group hit Target Ridge with 67 tons (see Appendix No. 6). Bad weather prevented the 90th Bombardment Group

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from participating in the bombing, although six of its B-24's were over the target.⁴⁴

Landing Team 21 at Green Beach north of Fualu met with complete success on E-day. Mist shrouded the beach and adjacent hills when the destroyers Reid and Smith began their bombardment at 0716. Twenty minutes later the Reid fired two star shells as a signal for the 13th Bombardment Squadron, which had arrived over the area at 0723, to attack. Eleven B-24's bombed and strafed at tree-top level in a manner that "left nothing to be desired." All troops and supplies were ashore by 0815, a perimeter defense was being organized, and patrols were advancing to contact the enemy whose abandoned equipment was found in recently vacated defensive positions.⁴⁵ The beach itself imposed no obstacles to landing but the heavier equipment, including radios of the 7th Air Liaison Party which was attached to the landing team, remained exposed to attack from the air for two days while a road was being "chopped through the impenetrable jungle."⁴⁶

The comparative ease with which the landings were carried out enabled air-ground communications to be set up with little difficulty. Control of all fighters and bombers was vested in the commanding general of the First Air Task Force at Dobsona. Air force representatives aboard the headquarters ship controlled all air effort while the landing was under way. The fighter controller was aboard a destroyer. Bombers on air alert were controlled by the 1st Air Liaison Party which remained with 1st Marine Division Headquarters and trans-

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mitted requests of the ground commander directly to the pilots. The 2d Air Liaison Party was attached to the 1st Marine Regiment, and the 3d Air Liaison Party came in with reinforcing troops on the afternoon of D-day. The 1st Air Liaison Party landed at 0930, set up its station 50 yards from the beach, then moved to the division command post at 1100. It established contact with the Hinschhafen relay station on one net and with the 3d Air Liaison Party on the other. For the first 18 hours ashore, the 1st Air Liaison Party relayed Marine traffic to Afloat Force Headquarters through Hinschhafen and the First Air Task Force at Dobelux because of failure of Marine communications.⁴⁷

Enemy Counter and Enemy Air Attacks, 22-31 December 1943

There were no enemy air attacks against the beachhead during the morning of D-day, although it seems certain that the Japanese knew of the landing by 0800.⁴⁸ The Japanese air force accepted the challenge in the afternoon and made a strong effort to disrupt the invasion. There were two waves of enemy bombers and fighters. In the first attack, which occurred approximately between 1430 and 1510, about 25 Zeks (single-engine, low-wing naval dive bombers) escorted by fighters attempted to damage the convoy lying offshore. The number of escorting fighters is impossible to determine since estimates range from 30 Zeks and Oscars⁴⁹ to 60 Zeks, Oscars and Tojos.⁵⁰ The composition of this force is fairly definite proof that it came from Rabaul where the enemy's main air strength was concentrated.

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The Fifth Air Force was well prepared to meet the attack, since 49 P-38's, 16 P-47's and 16 P-40's were on patrol over the convoy area. The 431st Fighter Sq., with 16 P-38's from Fobodun, had been on patrol since 1300. The controller stacked the squadron in two formations of two flights each at 6,000 and 10,000 feet. At 1420 a plot was given which reported bogies 30 miles east of Cape Gloucester. The 80th Fighter Squadron, on patrol since 1300 with 17 P-38's, was sent out to intercept. Then at 1425 another plot was called in and the 431st Squadron, though poorly disposed for interception, was sent out. Both squadrons were called back when the controller lost the plot. The first plot proved to be the Vals and the second was their escorting fighters. In going after the fighters, the 431st lost a chance to intercept the Vals before they could get through to attack shipping. The escort therefore partially succeeded in luring Allied fighters away from the slow and vulnerable Navy divers-bombers. Combat began at about 1445, by which time 10 P-40's of the 35th Fighter Squadron from Finschhafen and 10 P-47's of the 36th Fighter Sq. from Madzab had arrived. Enemy pilots were skillful and aggressive but poor marksmen. The P-38's concentrated on the Vals, the P-47's attacked both bombers and fighters, while the P-40's devoted most of their attention to the fighters. When the battle ended at about 1510, the Japanese Naval Air Service had lost 22 Vals, 17 Zekes, 4 Oscars and 3 Tojos destroyed. Our pilots also claimed 2 Vals, 2 Zekes, 3 Oscars and 1 Tojo probably destroyed. Allied losses were 2 P-38's and 2 P-47's.

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One destroyer was sunk, and 3 destroyers and 3 LST's were damaged.⁵¹

This enemy attack, unfortunately, coincided with the appearance of 34 B-25's, 71st Bombardment Group, which were to strike the Matano Point defenses. "The scene over the target was a mass of action," according to one report, "of airplanes chasing each other through the sky, some crashing in flames, dive bombers attacking naval vessels and every vessel in the area speeding skyward all the port astern they could muster."⁵² The Tuls flew through the B-25's which were coming in astern of the beached LST's.⁵³ The 300th Bombardment Squadron opened fire on a T-1, then "intense and accurate A/A fire of medium and light caliber was received immediately" from our own land positions which may have been hit by the B-25 fire. In the resulting confusion, when both land and naval anti-aircraft batteries fired on the B-25's, the 300th Squadron lost two planes shot down and two so badly damaged that they were barely able to land at Finschhafen.⁵⁴ There were, of course, extenuating circumstances; still one is justified in wondering why Marine and Navy gunners were unable to recognize the B-25's, especially after having seen the same group attacking the beaches before the landing.

A returning convoy of LST's was attacked by 15 torpedo-carrying Bettye from Rabaul at 1715. There were at the time 33 P-47's of the 71st and 74th Fighter Squadrons covering the area. The Bettye attacked in two waves, but not one bomber penetrated the fighter screen. Fourteen Bettye and two Eoags were destroyed and the remaining Bettye was claimed as a probable.⁵⁵ At the conclusion of this

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combat, the 50th Fighter Squadron flew over the convoy to investigate a report that three torpedo bombers were in the area. The report was unfounded but naval anti-aircraft gunners shot down a P-51 and killed the pilot.⁵⁵ The total score for the day was 63 enemy planes destroyed and 9 probably destroyed. The 115th Air Force lost 7 planes destroyed, of which 5 were victims of American Navy or Marine anti-aircraft fire.

These two air attacks on D-day practically ended Japanese daylight efforts against the beachhead. On 27 December the enemy chose to attack P-51s over the beach. Four days later at about 1510, our patrolling P-51's and P-40's shot down 5 TB's and 4 fighters and claimed 2 fighters probably destroyed when they were intercepted after a fruitless attack on shipping off Cape Gloucester.⁵⁷ Having lost 163 planes destroyed and 23 probably destroyed in attacking Arawa and Cape Gloucester from 15 to 31 December, the Japanese turned almost exclusively to night harassing raids in small strength.

Air and Ground Action in the Drive on the Gloucester Airbase

The Cape Gloucester Airbase, principal objective of Operation DUKW LERNEY in New Britain, fell to the Marines four days after they went ashore at Dungen Bay. After setting up a defensive perimeter, the victorious troops eliminated remaining enemy resistance, sent out strong patrols that covered western New Britain, and on 10 February established contact with the DIRECTOR Task Force. Japanese troops defending the airbase retreated eastward, their withdrawal being covered by a stubborn

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defense of the north coast. Marines in the beachhead expanded their holdings in a drive climaxed by the capture of Hill 800 on 14 January 1941. This success secured the airrome from attack and made possible a continued advance toward Cape Hoshino. The Fifth Air Force, through accurate bombing and strafing of enemy defenses, contributed materially to these accomplishments.

General Rupertus called for reinforcements when he realized that capture of the airrome and expansion of the beachhead would be more difficult than anticipated. General Truogor approved his request for Combat Team A (5th Marines, reinforced) and immediately sent the infantry elements of one battalion in LST's from Oro Bay. These troops arrived on 23 December and two days later the rest of the regiment came in on LST's.⁵⁵

Hindered by deep mud and torrential rains which continued with little respite day after day, the 1st Marine Regiment advanced toward the airrome without waiting for Combat Team A to arrive. On 27 December the 1st and 3d Battalions, spearheaded by two platoons of medium tanks, advanced about six miles west along the coast without meeting opposition. On the next day the regiment attempted to resume its progress.⁵⁹ Japanese machine-gun positions on high ground east of the airrome and along the coastal track had been located by patrols. The Marines requested an air attack on these defenses. In response to this request, 19 A-20's of the 3d Bombardment Group dropped 67 x 350-lb. bombs on the targets and strafed with more than 24,000 rounds

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of .50-caliber machine-gun fire at minimum altitude from 0917 to 0937.⁶⁰ The Marines moved out at about 1000 but encountered strong opposition, from units belonging to the enemy's 53d Regiment, which was not overcome until about 1700.⁶¹

The principal enemy defenses were located on and near Razorback Hill, in an area of rain forest and brush grass about 1,000 yards east of the airfield, and in the woods and grass south of the east end of No. 3 strip. The Fifth Air Force was called on to soften these defenses on the morning of 29 December. The 90th Bombardment Group began the attack at 0839 with 10 B-24's, followed by 19 B-24's of the 350th Group and 17 B-24's of the 43d Group. By 0905, these 46 B-24's had dropped 150 tons of 500-pound bombs with unusual accuracy from about 10,000 feet. Not one bomb fell inside the temporary bomb line.⁶² Then 11 B-25's and 10 B-26's, 204 Bombardment Group, and 24 B-25's, 345th Bombardment Group, dropped 70 tons of 500 and 500-pound bombs and strafed with more than 80,000 rounds of machine-gun fire.⁶³ The 499th Bombardment Squadron fired flares at 0923 to signify the end of the attack;⁶⁴ but the Marines, waiting for their reinforcements to move into position, were not ready to attack. When they did move out at 1515, with the 1st Marines on the right and the 5th Marine on the left, they encountered little opposition. Tanks were running over the strips before nightfall, and by noon on 30 December both strips were occupied.⁶⁵ The next two weeks were largely devoted to organizing a tight defense of the airbase area, then patrols were

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sent out to search for enemy troops. By that time nearly all of the enemy had withdrawn east of the Itri River. The meeting at Gilnit between patrols of the BASTARDEN and DIVISION Red's Forces on 10 February marked the end of the campaign for the western tip of New Britain.⁶⁶

The comparative ease with which the airframe was captured on 30 December was, to a great extent, the result of air attacks. A prisoner of war from the Japanese 1st Battalion, 53d Regiment, stated that his unit on Escobedo's Ridge had been badly mauled, their artillery knocked out by bombing, and "there was no effective AA left which might have been used as dual purpose guns" against tanks.⁶⁷ An observer, Col. J. E. Bird, reported prisoners as stating that "the air bombardment was more than they could stand and as a consequence reinforcing troops had been withdrawn into the hills overlooking the Cape Gloucester area."⁶⁸ The long period of preparation, air strikes on E-day, and attacks on 28 and 29 December had accomplished their purpose. These last two attacks were facilitated by efficient work of the 3d Air Liaison Party, commanded by Capt. E. C. Galley. On 29 December the 1st Marine Regiment's communications failed and Captain Galley's party handled Marine traffic as well as the regular air liaison messages.⁶⁹ The 1st Air Liaison Party moved to the airfield with division headquarters on 3 January 1944 and set up its station, which was an important link in the air and ground communications systems.⁷⁰

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Expansion of the Beachhead to Entalo Point, 27-28 January 1944

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

While the 1st and 5th Marines were advancing upon the airdrome, the 7th Marines did little except to repel counterattacks against the beachhead perimeter.⁷¹ The Fifth Air Force reconnoitered the coastal track from the east, attacked barge hideouts, and bombed defensive positions. Heavy rains on 27 December practically grounded all planes,

but the 89th Bombardment Squadron succeeded in bombing and strafing the coastal track.⁷² Twelve B-25's, escorted by two squadrons of P-53's, attacked trails and barge hideouts east of Bergen Bay on 27 December to prevent reinforcements from reaching the Cape Gloucester area.⁷³

Reconnaissance revealed that the enemy was repairing the Madkins airdrome, so the First Air Task Force sent 17 B-24's to discourage this effort with 103 x 1,000-lb. bombs on 28 December.⁷⁴

On the following day, the 58th Bombardment Group attacked suspected enemy defenses from Entalo to Alido on the south and east shores of Bergen Bay.⁷⁵

Near the center of the beachhead, on the lower slopes of Agiri Ridge, concentration of enemy troops signed persistently at Marine positions. These troops were attacked by 28 A-26's on 30 December

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with more than 9 tons of bombs and 23,590 rounds of machine-gun fire.⁷⁶
The attack hit the exact target assigned, but patrols sent into the
area discovered that the enemy refused to be driven out.⁷⁷

The only coordinated air-ground attack by the Japanese against
the beachhead occurred at a fortunate time for the Marines, for on 30
December the 5d Battalion of the 5th Marine (less one rifle company)
came in from Oro Bay. Although that night Japanese planes scored a
lucky hit on the 7th Marine Regiment's command post and caused 11
casualties, the moderately strong ground attack that followed the bomb-
ing was repulsed with little difficulty.⁷⁸ In the morning of 31
December, 23 A-20's bombed and strafed the area from which this attack
originated; and on 1 January 1944, the same general area was attacked
by 19 A-20's and 12 B-25's.⁷⁹

Arrival of reinforcements enabled the Marines to launch an attack
for the purpose of expanding the beachhead. The first effort began
at 1000 on 3 January, but it was repulsed after very little progress
had been made. A Japanese counterattack struck the left of the beach-
head at 0545 on 5 January in an effort to recapture Target Hill.
This attack, supported by artillery fire from Hill 600 and Aguni
Hill, lasted until noon and cost the enemy 200 casualties. The
Marine attack from the beachhead center, under way since 0330, failed
to advance the gun line materially.⁸⁰ Fifth Air Force fighters
and bombers could not be used to advantage in the jungle and brush
growth. Where infiltration by both sides eliminated all chances of a

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front line. With the west coast of Bergen Bay as the bomb line, B-24's and A-24's bombed and strafed troops and supplies from Hill 600 to Sichek Bay.³¹

The Allied attack was resumed on 7 January with Hill 130 as the first objective. Japanese artillery positions near Notomo had been harassing the Marine in the beachhead. To reduce this opposition, a squadron of B-24's was to bomb and strafe while Marine units of the target area with shells at two-minute intervals. Each of the nine planes was to make two passes, dropping two 500-pound bombs on each pass. The first run was made at 0610 by five B-24's, which attacked by coordinated only as no smoke shells had been fired. Then a smoke shell exploded 200 yards southeast of the map target. The remaining four B-24's bombed the smoke area. The next smoke shell exploded 200 yards northwest of the map target and nine B-24's dutifully bombed and strafed this new location.³² On 8 January the Fifth Air Force sent 12 B-24's to strafe troops near the southwest coast of Bergen Bay, and again the ground troops were late in marking the target with smoke.³³ By nightfall the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, in possession of Hill 130, was organizing the captured ground for defense.³⁴

The battle for eastern New Britain was rapidly approaching a climax. Japanese positions were especially strong in a wooded belt west of Hill 130, on Agiri Ridge southeast of Hill 130, and on Hill 600. The lines west of Hill 130 were so close together that it was impossible to place artillery and mortar fire on the enemy without

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hitting our own troops."⁸⁵ Air strikes in this area were impossible under such conditions, but Hill 670 could be attacked safely. On 7 January, while bloody hand-to-hand fighting was taking place west of Hill 150, 18 B-24's of the 450 Bombardment Group hit Hill 680 and nearby points with 500 x 500-lb. bombs.⁸⁶ This attack aided the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, which pushed southeast around Hill 150 on 8 January and captured Aogiri Ridge the next day.⁸⁷ Aogiri Ridge covered the enemy's supply road to headquarters of the Japanese 68th Brigade which was located at a village about four miles inland. The navy, therefore, launched a strong counterattack before dawn on 10 January to recover this strategic position. In repeated charges up the ridge, the enemy's 2d Battalion, 141st Infantry lost over 300 dead.⁸⁸ While the Marines were resting and reorganizing on 10 January, 18 B-24's bombed and strafed Hill 680 and G-2's bombed Naha Point.⁸⁹

The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines launched the final attack against Hill 680 at 0800 on 13 January after heavy artillery preparation. Engineers in SO-24's went near the crest of the hill, which had survived repeated bombings and artillery fire, held up the advance. Tanks brought up on 14 January were a decisive factor in capturing the hill before nightfall. The navy withdrew toward Ijiragu village to the southwest which was bombed and strafed by 18 B-24's before noon. After a costly early morning Bansei attack by two companies of the 141st Infantry on 14 January, the Japanese gave up the area.⁹⁰ The capture of Hill 680 secured the security of Camp Cloverleaf. The g troops

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were struggling toward Taboul, having lost at least 1,000 killed in attempting to contain the beachhead. A major portion of the L. CHANDLER Eastwood's mission was accomplished.

The Japanese covered their withdrawal along the north coast by a series of blocks, many of which were located between the Notoyo River and Cape Gaffre.⁹¹ Marine patrols probed steadily to locate the enemy and occasionally reported targets suitable for air attack. A well-executed strike by 13 A-20G's preceded the capture of Notoyo Point on 23 January.⁹² The entire 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, moved to Notoyo Point on the 24th,⁹³ and patrols sent out to the Notoyo River encountered a strong block on the east bank.⁹⁴ On 25 January, this position was attacked by 8 A-20G's with 2 1/2 tons of bombs and 6,500 rounds of .50-caliber ammunition.⁹⁵ Enemy troops on the east side of Bongan Bay were attacked by 13 A-20G's and 10 P-39's on 26 January, and on the next day 9 A-20's with 7 P-39's as cover bombed and strafed the Notoyo River block.⁹⁶

Operation ~~SPRINT~~, 15 February-30 March 1944

Progress of the 1st Marine Division in February was hampered more by land to their rear and jungle terrain than by enemy opposition. General Rupertus on 1 February ordered a ~~20~~ advance along the north coast to seize Tadi Plantation, a staging area and terminus for the overland trail to Dilog and Araco, and to attempt to cut off the enemy's retreat.⁹⁷ This operation, together with the subsequent



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seizure of Enlase and the Hoskins Peninsula, constituted Operation APPALSA.

Activities of the Allied Air Forces over northern New Britain during the first phase of this operation were confined largely to fighter patrols, reconnaissance, and attacks on communications and supply dumps in the enemy's rear areas. Ibohi Plantation and barges in Pein Bay were attacked by 12 A-20's and 16 B-25's on 22 January;⁹⁸ 12 B-25's on reconnaissance with 30 B-24's on 2 February dropped more than 10 tons of bombs on Ibohi Plantation and strafed along the coast from Pein Bay to Cape Gaudfre.⁹⁹ The heaviest strikes on Ibohi were by 37 B-24's on 21 February and by 40 B-25's and 13 B-24's on 22 February in which a total of 315 tons of bombs were dropped.¹⁰⁰

The Marines, by this time, had reached Cape Toul. The 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, landed at Ibohi Plantation on 25 February in an amphibious operation that was covered by 37 P-47E's of the 68th and 310th Fighter Squadrons from Morotai. No enemy planes appeared, nor was there any ground opposition at Pein Bay.¹⁰¹ All units of the 5th Marines were established at Ibohi by 27 February, having marched and transported 3,000 men with their equipment and supplies "for a distance of 60 miles around and over some of the worst jungle terrain in the world." In this advance from Pein Bay, 30 prisoners were captured and more than 200 Japanese were killed.¹⁰²

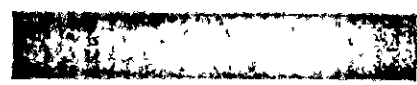
While the Marines were advancing along the north coast toward Ibohi Plantation, the Allied Air Forces were making attacks that would aid in the capture of Enlase and the Hoskins Peninsula. The

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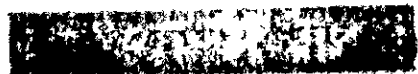
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Most important target area extended from Malacca on the east side of the Willamson Peninsula to Gavutu southeast of Cap. Jenkins. Fifth Air Force bombers, occupied with the New Guinea campaign, preparation for the Admiralty Islands invasion, and attacks on Hanoi, carried out relatively few strikes in this area. On 5 February, 40 B-24's dropped about 149 tons of 1,000-pound bombs on or near the coastline. Wind and weather turned them back from Hanoi.¹⁰³ From 15 to 20 February, 42 B-24's dropped 123 tons of 1,000-pound bombs on various targets at Malacca with only fair results. Malacca was an alternate for Hanoi and shipping off northern New Ireland.¹⁰⁴

Most of the PAF strikes on the north coast in January and February were directed against supplies and barge traffic. The dump and bivouac area at Port Pora near Cap. Postine was bombed by 6 B-24's and 81 B-26's between 22 January and 22 February, while 31 A-20's and 42 B-26's attacked the Jap base headquarters at Gavutu.¹⁰⁵ Activities of the PAF in January and February along the south coast likewise contributed to Japanese difficulties and lessened the enemy's ability to strike at the New Zealand Force or to send reinforcements into the Solomons-Philippines area. Regular day and night patrols by Catalinas, B-24's, A-20's and E-10's covered the coast from the tip to Hidi.¹⁰⁶ Dumps and bivouacs on the Ingen River east of Gavutu were bombed by more than 150 B-26's from 17 January to 10 February.¹⁰⁷ In two strikes on 15 and 16 February, 13 B-26's dropped 22 tons of bombs at Unung Plantation on the southwest shore

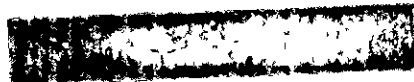


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of Jacquinot Bay.¹⁰⁸ While none of these attacks achieved spectacular results, the cumulative effect on enemy strength just have been serious. The principal sources of supply to Milne Bay and Rabaul were being neutralized by Southwest and South Pacific Forces, and barges and supply dumps on both coasts of New Britain were being destroyed steadily.

Although the Japanese advance was relatively swift under conditions that retarded movement, most of the retreating Japanese outriggered their pursuers. The Japanese High Command ordered its 17th Division late in January to withdraw the 11th and 12th Battalions to Ebu' and then to E1100. Allied reconnaissance not only confirmed this movement but also reported barges arriving at E1100 from Rabaul during the first fortnight in February. A battalion of the Japanese 61st Infantry Division, forming the nucleus of about 1,000 troops, was expected to defend E1100. Although not more than one-third of this number could be counted on as fit troops, the 61st's garrison of about 7,500 men might be committed to aid in defending E1100.¹⁰⁹ General Durgutian therefore expected considerable opposition when he ordered the 5th Marines to seize E1100 in the second phase of Operation APOLLO.

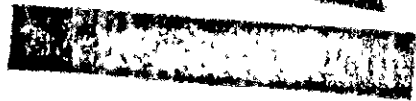
Support for fighter cover on D-day (6 March) and after the landing at Volupea Plantation, air protection for the Milne Bay invasion was assigned to the 11th MAW. Two squadrons of B-24s were to bomb E1100 daily from D minus 3 to D minus 1; one squadron of B-24s was to

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strike the Makin and Casuarina Villages areas during the same period (see App. III, Ch. 7). This schedule was carried out nearly as planned. Thirty-four B-24s dropped 80 tons of bombs on the Makin airbase, defenses, and Casuarina; 30 B-24s dropped 18 tons on Makin, and 2 B-24s dropped 2 tons each on Makin. 110

Makin's airfields, under direct air-strike attack by South Pacific Army and Navy aircraft for many weeks, could not send out a force to interfere with the Makin operation. The air plan called for heavy attacks by South Pacific units against Makin before and during the Tolaga landing. During the period from 3 to 7 March (D minus 7 to D plus 1), more than 100 aircraft were sent to attack shipping, airbases, and defenses at Makin. 111

The 5th Marines, coming from Ebori Plantation, loaded into landing craft on the afternoon of 5 March and sailed out of Twin Bay under an escort of six PT boats. At dawn on 6 March the first wave reached the beachhead area west of Tolaga Plantation and waited for 0600 (0630) and the scheduled bombing and landing of the beachhead. The planes did not arrive--because the weather was so bad north of Titi's Strait that General Mitchell cancelled the scheduled missions. 112 At 0900 the first wave of amphibian tractors went in to land the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, against light opposition. By 1000, Tolaga Plantation was nearly secure, 70 or more Japanese had been killed, and the Marines were 2,000 yards inland. 113 The 60th Light



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PLACE NAMES & AIRWAYS

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Squadron contacted the landing with 31 B-26's from Base Gloucester on 6 March, and that night three B-70's, 415th Night Fighter Squadron, made a sweep over the area.¹¹¹

On 8 May the Marines captured an encampment of the Viet Cong at Sonar. This document aided the invasion considerably. On 7 March the enemy's strongest defenses from Tamboi Plantation, and that night Marines crossed the Williams Peninsula to Bitchuan north of Haha.¹¹² A patrol occupied Haha, Andre in the afternoon of 8 March, and four B-1 bombers of the 33rd Liaison Squadron were in the field.¹¹³ This advance was aided by F-4E's and B-70's, and by B-70's of the 33rd Fighter Squadron, which bombed and strafed villages in the Haha area from 7 to 9 March.¹¹⁴ The enemy broke contact on 10 March, having lost from 250 to 300 killed in the preceding 10 days. Marine losses to 31 March were 13 killed and 100 wounded.¹¹⁵ On 11 March, one battalion moved north to Tamboi Plantation, troops were sent to Haha River southwest of Tamboi and to Lin a Ling Plantation on Tamboi Bay, and a patrol circled Williams Peninsula without contact with the enemy.¹¹⁶

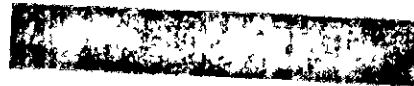
While the Marines were consolidating and retraining, the VC continued its attacks on the rear coast. The Russian Gung, Gung and other villages, and large hideouts in numerous large bore the bases of these strikers.¹¹⁷ At the same time the VC made a somewhat smaller effort along the south coast, with most of the heavy tonnage dropped on targets in the Sonar area and around the shores of Fouginet Bay.¹¹⁸

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The Marine campaign in New Britain was drawing to a close. On 10 April, when the 40th Infantry Division was preparing to relieve the 1st Marine Division, our troops controlled the coast as far as San Eno Plantation on the north shore of Stetson Bay. Remnants of the Japanese garrisons were struggling eastward in disorganized groups, protected by a light rearguard at Hoshier airdrome. The 40th Division began to arrive at Cape Gloucester on 23 April, and on the next day elements of the 135th Infantry left Bougain Bay for Colenso. Maj. Gen. Fugo Trush then assumed command over the ~~REINFORCED~~ Task Force. A patrol of the 135th Infantry occupied the Hoshier airdrome on 7 May. Retaining occupied the 40th Division until 27 November 1945 when New Britain passed to the Australian Fifth Division.¹³⁷

Lighter Cover and Rescue Air

The 56th and 438th Fighter Groups at Finschhafen continued to provide air cover for the ~~REINFORCED~~ Task Force and for convoys moving through the straits between New Guinea and New Britain. Most of these patrols were routine after the end of December.¹³⁵ Beginning on 2 February, the 438th Fighter Squadron kept a ground alert patrol at Cape Gloucester. The F-50's, usually eight in number, arrived at dawn and returned to Finschhafen at dusk.¹³⁶ The patrol began to stay overnight on 20 February, and the squadron moved to Cape Gloucester from Finschhafen on the 23rd.¹³⁵ Additional protection was provided by the 438th Night Fighter Squadron which made the circuit from Isobahn to Gloucester and back with two or three F-70's or F-23's.¹³⁶

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Reconnaissance, both day and night, was closely related to fighter patrols. Single P-39's and P-40's continued to complement F4U's activities over the north and south coasts, especially at night. With such a large area to cover, squadrons of the 71st Reconnaissance Group were kept busy. The 601 Reconnaissance Squadron (F), for example, flew 133 effective P-39 sorties from 9 to 15 January, 19 of which were over New Britain and 110 over New Guinea.¹⁵⁷ This scale of activity was normal for the New Britain campaign. The 58th Fighter Squadron (P-40's) and the 80th Fighter Squadron (P-39's) were stationed at the C. A. Gloucester field until 14 March when they went to Fudrab.¹⁵⁸ Their place was taken by the 77th Fighter Wing (F4U) and the 76th Group (P-39).¹⁵⁹

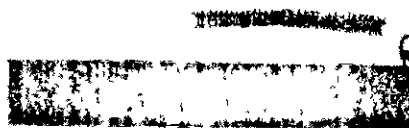
After December, enemy air activity over C. A. Gloucester, as has been noted, was confined almost entirely to night raids in small strength. These "snatch raids" were interpreted as an attempt to delay construction of the air-strip and to keep troops on the alert. Damage and casualties were light but the harassing was effective in causing loss of sleep.¹⁶⁰ Air defense of New Britain was the responsibility of the Naval Air Service at Isbaul, and the strength of enemy planes there suffered irreparable losses from attacks against New Britain and Bougainville. In fact Allied attacks on the Casselle Peninsula and at Savina. This strength was so reduced in February that our fighters had to go over field for combat. In that month, the 4301 Fighter Squadron, for example, flew 31 missions of 1102 combat hours and 17 htd

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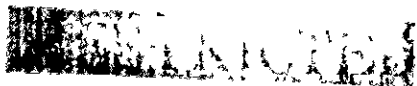
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enemy aircraft only over New Guinea. Even there the Japanese pilots refused combat.¹³¹ There were occasional sightings over New Britain, of which three examples will suffice. On 7 February, 14 P-47's of the 3491 Fighter Group were covering shipping off Cape Gloucester sighted and destroyed a plane which was probably an enemy reconnaissance plane;¹³² a P-51 of the 17th Reconnaissance Squadron on routine flight the same day sighted and destroyed a twin-engine bomber, possibly a Sully, which was flying toward Rabaul;¹³³ and two days later Col. Neal M. Hearby, flying one of two P-47's patrolling the northern area, shot down a Sully just before dusk.¹³⁴

The enemy, however, did not lack air power to bring into use against Cape Gloucester. On 4 January there were an estimated 305 aircraft on New Guinea fields and 230 at Rabaul; at the end of February, when Rabaul's indicated strength declined to 55 aircraft, there were 205 fighters and bombers based in New Guinea (see Appendix No. 1). Even though the Gloucester air strips put our fighters increasingly close to "the enemy's main holdings in the Bismarck Sea,"¹³⁵ the Japanese Army Air Service in New Guinea made no attempt to drive the Allies out of western New Britain. The Japs were attacked Finisshamua frequently at night, but even these efforts were small. From one to four raids bombed nightly for a week starting on 27 December, then stopped until 23 January when another series began.¹³⁶ By the Army Air Service made no greater effort has been regarded as one of the major mysteries of the Pacific War.¹³⁷ Perhaps

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the major line parties in General Yamashita's complaint that "the diversity of Japanese command resulted in the complete lack of cooperation and coordination between the services."¹³⁹ Regardless of the reason, 300 B-24's First Force enjoyed a high degree of immunity from enemy air attacks after D-day.

Air Supply for the 1st Air Task Force

Supply by air was used to supplement the regular surface methods early in the invasion. "The air attacks and the conditions delayed the unloading of barges and LST's on the first two days." When the time came for the craft to depart, they pulled out with 507 tons still unloaded, and as a result there was a shortage of some types of ammunition and supplies. Hence the First Air Task Force was asked to deliver.¹³⁹ The first request, on 29 December, for ammunition, two mortars, five miles of wire, and three bundles of stakes, was filled by a B-17 on the next day.¹⁴⁰ Supply drops on a small scale continued to be made by B-17's, B-24's, and B-29's until the 30th. Flewister strips were ready to receive B-17's.¹⁴¹ Some of these missions were to supply isolated construction units that had remained in New Britain after the Japanese invasion, or to carry food to areas of planks forced down over New Britain. On 10 January 1945, the 30th Bombardment Squadron carried a B-17 that dropped 25 x 500-lb. bundles of food, medicine, and ammunition to an allied party in eastern New Britain;¹⁴² on another occasion, the 11th Troop Carrier Squadron sent

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a B-17 to drop 50 bags of food in a dry creek bed east of Open Bay where Allied air crew members were in hiding.¹⁴³ An isolated Australian unit near Cape Hoskins was supplied by a B-17 on 18 March.¹⁴⁴

Air supply service by C-47's occurred almost daily after the Cape Gloucester strip became operational. The first C-47 landed on 31 January and was followed by a steadily increasing number of transports.¹⁴⁵ By the middle of the month so many transports were coming in that the field's capacity was taxed to receive them. Before the end of February at least 9 of the 14 troop carrier squadrons in New Guinea had made several trips to Cape Gloucester. The 65th Troop Carrier Squadron made 39 trips from 15 to 25 February and carried about 66 tons of cargo which included portable huts, mail, and equipment of the 475th Fighter Squadron.¹⁴⁶ Cots, meat, eggs, office equipment, medical supplies, jeeps, trailers, generators, tents, grease, bombs, and other freight as well as passengers were brought in by C-47's from Port Moresby, Dobodura, Nadzab, and other points.¹⁴⁷ Ground personnel and equipment of the 35th Fighter Squadron came in by air on 13 February,¹⁴⁸ and on 22 February C-47's began to bring in the 80th Fighter Squadron.¹⁴⁹ Then on 11 March, the 67th Troop Carrier Squadron and other units began to carry RAAF equipment to Gloucester and moved the 35th and 80th Fighter Squadrons to Nadzab. This exchange of units was completed by 17 March.¹⁵⁰ During the month, six troop carrier squadrons made about 190 trips to Cape Gloucester, an average of more than six trips daily.¹⁵¹

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This service by the 54th Troop Carrier Wing was an important factor in the campaign. Needed supplies were delivered quickly, mail reached the troops with minimum delay, casualties were evacuated. Equally important, perhaps, was the added mobility of certain units made possible by efficient freighting operations of the troop carrier squadrons, with a resultant decreased demand for naval transport.

The Cape Gloucester Airdrome

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

Allied air and ground engineers, who began work on the airdrome soon after its capture, labored under severe handicaps. Roads were non-existent under the Japanese occupancy and most of the tracks were unimproved. From 26 December 1943 to 1 February 1944, there were five clear days; on the others, from one-half to four inches of rain fell daily.¹⁵³ Work continued with engineers sloshing through ankle-

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deep mud while Japanese snipers were still being rounded up.¹⁵⁴ The 17th Marine Regiment, composed of a pioneer battalion, an engineer battalion, and a construction battalion, supported the ground troops, unloaded vessels, prepared landing points, constructed a jetty, and built access and supply roads. The 1913th Engineer Aviation Battalion arrived on 1 January and started work on the west end of No. 2 strip three days later. On 13 January, the 864th Engineer Aviation Battalion began work on the east end, and on 20 January the 841st Engineer Aviation Battalion began to construct access roads. The first plane, a Beechcraft, landed on 30 January, by which time 4,200 feet of pierced plank landing mat was down. A C-47 transport landed on 31 January.¹⁵⁵

General Whitehead, at Advon Headquarters, watched construction progress anxiously. The Fifth Air Force had been directed to neutralize Kavieng to aid in the capture of Green Island. If emergency facilities were available at Cape Gloucester by 10 February, P-40's could be used to augment P-38's in day strikes against Kavieng, and many P-38's would be saved from forced landings because of fuel shortage.¹⁵⁶ General Krueger, inspecting the airdrome on 9 January with Brig. Gen. F. H. Smith, Jr., had expressed the opinion that a 5,000-foot runway would be serviceable on 10 February, and that one group of fighters could be accommodated by the 15th.¹⁵⁷ By the time weather conditions permitted heavy bombers to strike Kavieng, the

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emergency facilities were ready, although still so limited that P-38's of the 433d Fighter Squadron, assigned to escort B-24's to Kavieng, refueled at Finschhafen on 5 February.¹⁵⁸ The 59th Service Group arrived at Cape Gloucester on 23 January and began to haul gas to the airfield in 55-gallon drums. Roads were unfit for transport and mud was five inches deep over the bivouac areas. The field, still incomplete in parking areas and service installations, was being used to the limit of its capacity by 15 February.¹⁵⁹ Artillery liaison planes had been operating from No. 1 strip for some time;¹⁶⁰ P-40's, P-38's, P-47's, and C-47's were using the No. 2 strip.

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

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P-38's at Cape Gloucester. Moreover, the P-38's were needed at Nadzab to provide long-range bomber escort for bombers on missions to Tadjil and Hollandia. For these reasons the Fifth Air Force squadrons at Cape Gloucester were replaced by units of the RAAF on 14 March.¹⁶¹

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

A Summary View of Air Activities in Operation DEXTERITY

There were few opportunities during Operation DEXTERITY for the Allied Air Forces to perform spectacular deeds. The strikes against Rabaul, Kavieng, and New Guinea fields were notable achievements; but,

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in relation to DEXTERITY, they fall in the class of strategic rather than tactical operations. In the last half of December, fighters over Arawe and Borgen Bay succeeded in destroying nearly all of the Japanese planes that attacked convoys and the beachheads. For the most part, however, American and RAAF units engaged in routine, prosaic missions.

This very routine and lack of opposition to Allied bombing and strafing missions was discouraging to combat crews who could see few if any results from their activities. Bombers dropped their loads on patches of kunai grass and rain forest, strafed concealed jungle trails, and planted delayed action bombs along communications routes. The cumulative effect, however, justified the effort. Native bearers deserted the Japanese in mass and enemy troops were diverted to carrying supplies in order to alleviate the severe shortages that developed in forward areas.¹⁶⁴ Though clever enemy use of jungle foliage as camouflage for supply dumps and bivouac areas made it necessary to supplement low obliques with information provided by natives,¹⁶⁵ bombing and strafing of these targets was effective, however unsatisfying the work might be to air crews.

Terrain characteristics severely limited close air participation in ground battles. There were occasions, both at Arawe and in the Cape Gloucester area, when medium and heavy bombardment could be called upon to soften an enemy strongpoint. But these opportunities were few because front lines were rarely clearly defined. Check points generally did not exist, and targets could not be identified

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satisfactorily. Excepting such attacks as those on Razorback Ridge, Target Hill, and Hill 660, the Allied Air Forces were confined to small scale strikes against targets in the enemy's rear areas. Barges and other vessels skirting the coasts of New Britain never ceased to be objects of search. An accurate evaluation of these anti-shipping patrols is impossible, but it is known that the enemy's losses were sufficient to have a serious effect upon his supply and troop movements.

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

One of the first three planes shot down by our antiaircraft fire at Arawe was a P-47 which was attacking an enemy plane! The irate pilot reported that he was low, his craft had a white tail and the Allied star, he wagged his wings--all to no avail. The antiaircraft gunners, he complained, "fired at anything that wasn't a P-38."¹⁶⁶ By January, one fighter group had lost six planes to our own fire and one to enemy action. At Cape Gloucester, one bomber squadron lost four planes to friendly fire on D-day,¹⁶⁷ and naval units, in spite of radio warnings, fired on P-47's called in to protect them from torpedo bombers.¹⁶⁸ The commander of the Seventh Fleet, after reports of this sort kept coming in, informed General Kenney that he had instituted intensive training in recognition and fire discipline.¹⁶⁹ Since surface vessels regard all airplanes as hostile until positively identified, the Fifth Air Force ordered its pilots to stay at least three miles away from them in friendly waters, except when providing cover or anti-submarine

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protection, or when necessary to approach an airdrome.¹⁶⁹ Allied pilots were by no means guiltless. Three B-25's strafed two LCM's enroute to Iboki Plantation on 25 February, "despite the fact that a large 'U.S.' was painted in white on the top of the wheelhouse, and a large picture of President Roosevelt and a large American flag were painted on the side of it. A large flag was flying at the jackstaff, and a jeep and Marines were easily distinguishable as the planes flew low over the LCM's." The B-25's made three attacks on these easily recognized craft that were 16 miles inside the bomb line.¹⁷¹ Incidents of this sort could lead only to bitterness and mutual distrust.

The greatest contributions of the Allied Air Forces to Operation DEXTERITY were in pre-invasion bombardment, photographic reconnaissance, and neutralizing attacks on the enemy's airfields. "It is believed," one observer states, "that our constant bombing prior to D-Day had a disastrous effect on the defending troops and prevented reinforcements from being brought into the area."¹⁷² General MacArthur's compliment leaves nothing to be desired: "The Air Force here," he informed General Arnold, "has been magnificent and is the very hub of our success."¹⁷³

That success was indeed significant. Western New Britain was in Allied possession, the Vitiaz Strait was dominated by Allied airfields on New Guinea and New Britain, and "Southwest Pacific forces were in an excellent position to conduct further operations to the north and northwest."¹⁷⁴ These operations already were under way.

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While Marines were advancing along the north coast of New Britain and remnants of Japanese units were fleeing from the Huon Peninsula of New Guinea, the Fifth Air Force had already undertaken the neutralization of the Admiralty Islands.

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Chapter IV

CONQUEST OF THE ADMIRALTY ISLANDS

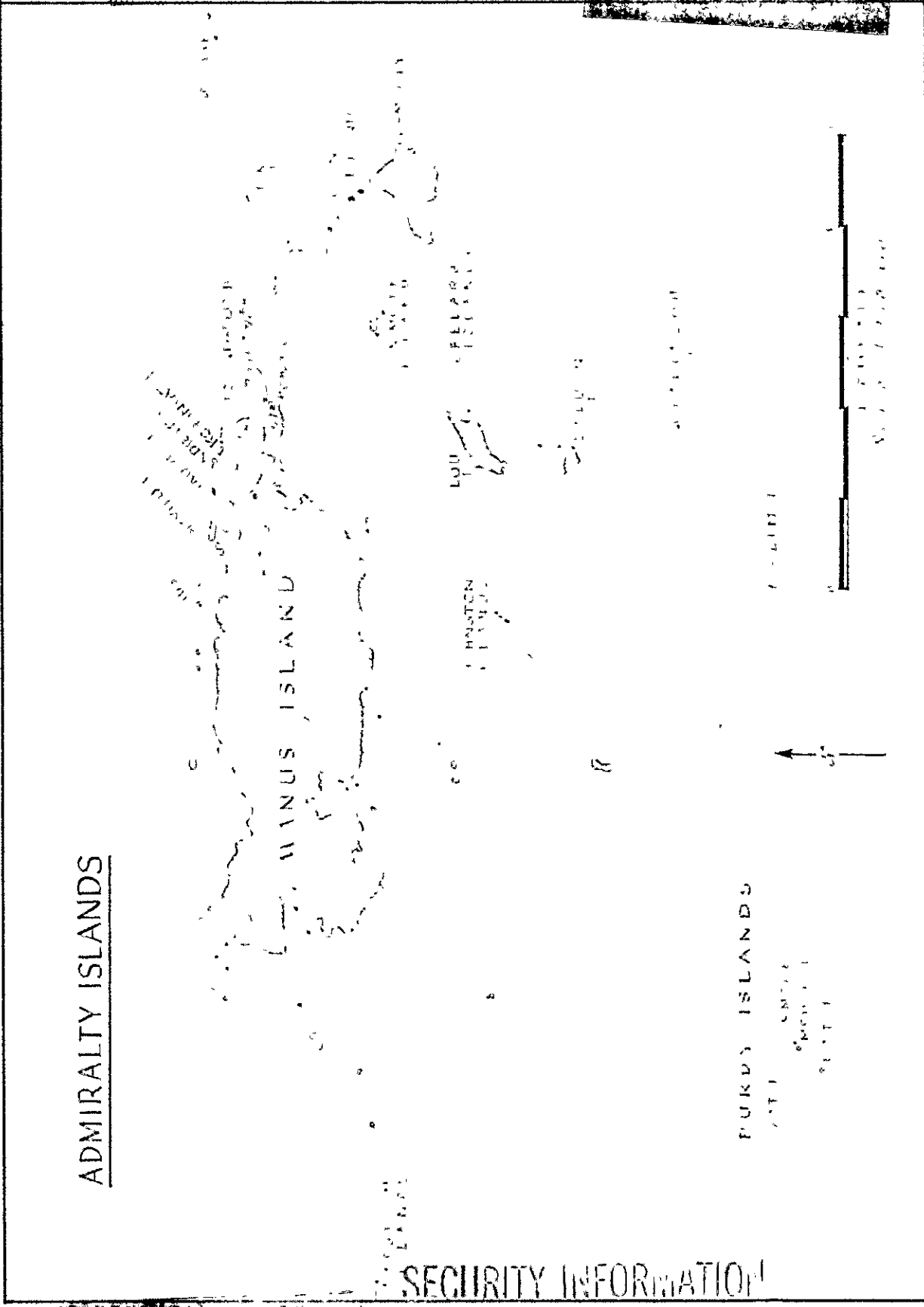
The invasion of western New Britain had given the Allies control over a large part of the Bismarck Archipelago. Conquest of the Admiralty Islands constituting the northwestern group of the Bismarcks, was regarded as necessary to complete that control, to isolate Rabaul and Kavieng, and to provide bases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

The Admiralty Islands

Discovered in 1615 by Willem Cornelis Schouten, the Admiralty group was given its name by Rear Admiral Philip Carteret in 1767 in honor of the British Admiralty. European nations generally neglected the islands until 1884, when Germans established plantations there. An Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force occupied the


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group in 1914, and in 1921 Australia received the islands as a mandate from the League of Nations. Two decades later, in January 1942, the small Australian garrison withdrew before the Japanese advance.¹

Although the Japanese paid little attention to the Admiralties for more than a year after having captured them, they could not have been unaware of their potential military importance. In February, or possibly April, 1943, Lorengau airfield was repaired and a new airdrome was begun at Momote Plantation south of Hyane Harbor on Los Negros.² Construction proceeded at such a leisurely pace that the Momote field was not completed until late in 1943; even then revetments were still being constructed. Aerial photographs of the field were taken by the Allies on 17 September 1943, and later reconnaissance indicated that Momote was in use as a staging base on the route to New Britain, New Ireland and New Guinea.³ Early in 1944, apparently, the Japanese rushed "an estimated 3,000 replacements into the Admiralty Islands, . . . to start work on beach and inland defenses."⁴ This increased activity, probably caused by the invasion of New Britain, became known to the Allies in January.⁵ The threat to Rabaul increased the importance of the Admiralties. A study of Japanese shipping routes in the Southwest Pacific revealed a network of lanes among the captured islands which connected with routes leading to Japan. Traffic from Truk to Kavieng and Rabaul passed through or by the Admiralties.⁶

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Early Plans for Operation BREWER

The broad plan for coordinated offensives by the South and Southwest Pacific forces was amplified on 23 November 1943. Instructions of that date directed the Commanding General of Alamo Force to seize the Seeadler Harbor area of Manus Island for the purpose of establishing an airdrome and light naval facilities to support "subsequent operations along the north coast of New Guinea." GHQ SWPA issued Operations Instructions No. 44 on 13 February 1944, in which it was announced that SOPAC and SWPA forces would gain control over the Bismarck Archipelago by simultaneous seizure and consolidation of the Admiralties and Kavieng. With 1 April as the target date, the Commanding General of Alamo Force was to coordinate plans of air and naval units assigned to Operation BREWER,⁷ the code name for the Admiralty Islands campaign.

Operations Instructions No. 44 contemplated a more elaborate plan than actually materialized. South Pacific forces, in addition to seizing Kavieng, were to neutralize enemy air and naval units in southern New Ireland and eastern New Britain; the New Guinea force would continue pressure on Bagasin from the Ramu River valley; Allied naval forces, SWPA, were to put on a preliminary bombardment and carrier-based air attack over the Admiralties; Central Pacific forces were to cover the operation by destroying or containing the Japanese fleet in their theater. The Fifth Air Force, in turn, was to support the Central Pacific forces by neutralizing hostile airfields on Truk

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the night following the initial Central Pacific attack on that base, which would occur about 26 March. About 1 March, the Fifth Air Force was to start continuous neutralizing attacks against enemy air forces and installations in northern New Ireland and the Admiralties.

Specific Allied AF assignments for Operation BREWER were to be:

(1) neutralization of enemy air forces in central New Britain and the northern coast of New Guinea; (2) provision of fighter cover for convoys and carriers; (3) air bombardment preceding the landing on Manus Island; and (4) continued air strikes as requested by the Commanding General, Alamo Force.⁸

Although serious opposition from the Japanese air force was not expected to materialize, the intelligence annex to Operations Instructions No. 44 assumed a cautious tone. With some minor adjustments in enemy strength, this estimate of enemy air capabilities held good for Operation BREWER as it actually occurred. As of 1 April 1944, the contemplated target date, enemy air strength capable of interfering with BREWER was expected to be about 351 combat planes: 170 fighters and 181 bombers. Counting reinforcements that might be brought from Truk, the total strength expected on 1 April would be 340 fighters and 277 bombers. There was, of course, the possibility that all available enemy air strength in the Bismarcks, including the Admiralties, might be withdrawn to New Guinea in an effort to preserve it, since there were indications that "the enemy is already half resigned

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to this denial [of Rabaul], and a maximum air effort, resulting in serious wastage of his air power in the New Britain, New Ireland area is improbable." The maximum effort in the Admiralties was not expected, for the following reasons: the Kavieng operation would engage most of the forces in New Britain and New Ireland; all bases in those areas were within reach of our fighter-escorted bombers; reserves at Truk were 600 nautical miles distant and already committed to the defense of the Carolines; the enemy supply of aviation materiel could not support sustained strikes; and any Japanese attempt at reinforcement of the New Guinea area would weaken the Malaya-Sumatra region. This line of reasoning produced the 351-plane estimate, with prospects of an initial daily sortie effort of about 250 which would decline steadily. Wewak, Boram, Dagua, But, Tadji and Hollandia would be the enemy's bases for these sorties.

This 13 February estimate of Japanese air strength ignores Rabaul so consistently that further explanation is necessary. The enemy had lost heavily from attacks upon the Rabaul fields and from strikes originating there. Rabaul, threatened by our troops on western New Britain, had received fighter and bomber reinforcements in January; but the increased fighter strength fell quickly with renewed Thirteenth Air Force attacks. By the end of January, the Japanese air strength at Rabaul was committed, apparently, to defense of shipping in the harbor, cover for convoys, and limited night strikes against Torokina, Arawe, and Cape Gloucester.¹⁰ This defense was

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disrupted further by continued heavy losses suffered in attempting to turn back attacks from the Solomons and New Guinea, and by the threat to Truk. Protection of that key position in the Japanese defensive system had been made more difficult by the demands of Rabaul for replacements. The low estimate which was made on 13 February of Rabaul's potentialities was further supported when reinforcement from Truk was temporarily put out of the question by the devastating carrier attacks on 17-18 February 1944 during which an estimated 301 Japanese planes were destroyed in the area of Truk. The effect on Rabaul was apparent at once. Fewer than 100 planes could be discovered in the area, the lowest number since January 1943.¹¹ On the other hand, the enemy was developing a striking force in New Guinea which the planning staff for BREWER expected to be used over the Admiralties.

The strength of the Allied Air Forces was sufficient to guarantee control of the skies over the Bismarck Archipelago. At the beginning of February 1944 the Fifth Air Force had tactical bases at Gusap, Kalapit and Nadzab in the Markham and Ramu valleys of New Guinea. The fields at Finschhafen and Saidor on the Huon Peninsula coast were limited in capacity but served as advanced fighter bases, and the Cape Gloucester field became operational in February. Dobooura and Port Moresuy, while still very active, were being displaced by Nadzab and Gusap as principal centers of operations. Planes based at Kalapit, Gusap and Saidor cooperated closely with ground troops operating down

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the Ramu Valley and along the coast; fighters at Finschhafen and Cape Gloucester directed their efforts largely to New Britain; bombers and fighters at Nadzab and Dobodura roamed over a wide area that included the Bismarck Archipelago and enemy-held New Guinea. Woodlark and Kiriwina islands, off the coast of Papua, had fighter strips which were comparatively inactive by February.

The Fifth Air Force had 1,981 operational planes distributed among its New Guinea bases at the end of January 1944. Of this number, 745 were fighters, 738 were bombers, and 498 were transport, reconnaissance, and courier aircraft. The RAAF's 507 tactical planes and a score in Dutch hands raised the strength of the Allied Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific to more than 2,500 planes. The Thirteenth Air Force had about 260 fighters and 380 bombers in the Solomons. The Fifth Air Force had a total personnel strength of 77,149, which included 800 bomber crews and 750 fighter pilots.¹² A month later, on 29 February, the total Fifth Air Force strength stood at 83,269¹³ and the number of aircraft had risen to 2,084.¹⁴

Allied air power in the South and Southwest Pacific at the start of Operation BREWER was decidedly superior to that of the Japanese, but the enemy enjoyed greater logistic maneuverability. The Japanese held numerous bases through which large numbers of planes could be sent to reinforce forward positions and to which they could retire in relative safety. In view of the number of tasks assigned to them, the superiority of our air forces was less real than statistics

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indicate. Close cooperation with ground operations, neutralization of enemy bases, reconnaissance, transport, shipping strikes, pre-invasion bombardment, convoy cover, and courier service combined to strain Allied resources to the limit.¹⁵

Neutralization of the Admiralties, 22 January-25 February 1944

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

The first series of missions to the Admiralties began in the last part of January 1944. Medium bombers, escorted by P-38's, started the air assault on 22 January with bombing and strafing runs against shipping. This first strike was by 11 B-25's of the 499th and 501st Squadrons, 345th Bombardment Group, from Dobodura.¹⁸ All squadrons of the 345th Group participated in putting 38 B-25's over Lorengau on 24 January. The bombers took off from Dobodura, picked up two P-38 squadrons as escort at Finschhafen, and flew on to Rambutyo

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Island, the designated IP. Here they turned west to cross Momote, Papitalai Harbor, Lorengau Village, and Bowat Bay. Reports of damage inflicted show a wide range of targets: a house destroyed on Salami Plantation; an ammunition dump blown up; a barge damaged in Papitalai Harbor; a barge and a jetty destroyed at Lorengau; two sailboats strafed; miscellaneous surface craft sunk. The B-25's and P-38's expended more than 152,000 rounds of ammunition in strafing and dropped 37 tons of 1,000-pound bombs. Perhaps even more significant was the destruction or severe damage to eight or nine variously identified fighters that were refueling on the south end of Momote airdrome.¹⁹ These fighters may have come in to protect shipping in Seeadler Harbor²⁰ after the attack of 22 January gave warning of an impending air offensive; but, since interception never occurred during subsequent missions, it is likely that the Japanese decided against risking their fighters in defense of the Admiralties.

Three squadrons of the 38th Bombardment Group (M) from Durand staged through Dobo-dura to join the 345th Group in a strike against Lorengau, shipping, and the Momote airdrome on 25 January. All but five of the 64 B-25's reached the targets. Antiaircraft fire, although described generally as light and inaccurate, destroyed one B-25 over Salami Plantation, another over Lorengau, and crippled a third which made a water landing south of Manus.²¹ These losses may account for the sudden end to minimum altitude missions by the mediums. Seven squadrons of B-24's from the 43d and 90th Bombardment Groups at

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Dobodura were assigned to the Admiralty run on 26 and 27 January. On each occasion the heavies were escorted by three squadrons of P-38's which joined them over Tolokiwa Island. Momote, principal target on the 26th, was left unserviceable. Lorengau received similar treatment on the 27th (see Appendix No. 8). In this first series of strikes, 109 B-35's and 83 B-24's had dropped about 239 tons of bombs in addition to heavy strafing by the medium bombers and the fighters.

The second series of missions, from 1 to 14 February, got off to a bad start. Fifty B-24's were forced back to base on 1 February by weather conditions. The 43d and 90th Bombardment Groups were scheduled to bomb Momote on 6 February. A heavy front, building up over the Bismarck Sea, caused the 90th Group to turn to Madang, the secondary target;²³ but 24 B-24's of the 43d Group, escorted by an equal number of P-38's, flew through the front and found clear weather over Los Negros. The Momote drome, which had been repaired since 27 January, was again damaged severely. The Japanese, apparently to conserve ammunition and to conceal their strength, put up no opposition whatever.²⁴ During the succeeding week bad weather limited operations somewhat and the demands of other areas absorbed the efforts of Fifth Air Force bombers. Two groups of mediums from Dobodura, totaling 82 B-35's, concentrated their attack on the Momote area on 13 February. The 38th Group was especially pleased with having dropped 95% of its bombs in the target, "considering the fact that only the lead planes had bombsights and that those were only obsolete D-8s."²⁵

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The 345th Group followed the 38th over the target. Within 15 minutes from 0945 to 1000, the two groups dropped 50 x 1,000-lb. and 276 x 500-lb. bombs. There was no interception and no antiaircraft fire.²⁶ On 14 February, the same groups returned to Momote to drop 88.5 tons of 500- and 1,000-lb. bombs.²⁷

Persistently bad flying weather to the end of the month interfered with missions briefed for the Admiralties after 14 February. Reconnaissance planes, primarily B-25's, completed seven sorties by 23 February.²⁸ On the 22d, two medium groups and two heavy groups were scheduled to strike Manus and Los Negros; but the mediums bombed Ibokl Plantation at Rein Bay, New Britain and the heavies attacked Madang, New Guinea.²⁹ Only three B-24's of a force that included 24 heavy and 27 medium bombers succeeded in penetrating the weather that guarded Momote on 24 February. On the next day, nine B-25's of the 405th Bombardment Squadron reached the target without incident to complete the month of neutralizing attacks. Since 23 January, 112 B-24's and 288 B-25's had dropped 650 tons of bombs on targets in the Admiralties (see Appendix No. 8).

The Admiralty Islands offered relatively few satisfactory targets to our bombers and their fighter escorts. Momote, the center of enemy activity, received the most attention. The runways, bivouac areas, dumps and miscellaneous installations were bombed and strafed heavily. Shipping, primarily in Seeadler, Papitalai, and Hyane harbors, was nearly always sought out for attack; but the enemy tonnage making use

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of these harbors was small and very few vessels larger than luggers or barges were discovered. The poorly developed Japanese defenses offered little opposition, a circumstance that gave foundation to an erroneous report about enemy ground strength in the islands. Considered in relation to the total effort of the Fifth Air Force, attacks on the Admiralties in January and February seem less important than they were. It is true that Wewak, Madang, and Kavieng were struck more frequently and with greater bomb tonnage; but, although bad weather cancelled several scheduled missions and satisfactory targets were difficult to discover, the pre-invasion bombardment of Manus and Los Negros seems to have been more than adequate.

Attacks on Kavieng and Rabaul and Interdiction
of the Bismarck Sea

This pre-invasion neutralization of the Admiralties was coordinated with the landing of South Pacific forces on Nissan Island. That operation on 15 February was undertaken to establish facilities for aircraft and PT boats close to Rabaul. The Fifth Air Force had been ordered to neutralize Kavieng from D minus 15 to D-day and to continue neutralizing the Admiralties. Daily missions were planned to strike both areas, but planes on the way to Kavieng encountered tropical fronts similar to those that caused so many sorties to the Admiralties to be abortive. Only one mission, that of 11 February by 46 escorted B-24's, got through to Kavieng in the period 5-12 February. During the next two days, 89 B-24's bombed targets in the Kavieng area.³⁰

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The strike on 15 February, D-day for Nissan Island, was so heavy that enemy planes at the Kavieng dromes could not interfere with our troop movements.³¹ This highly important attack practically ended Fifth Air Force participation in the neutralization of Kavieng and Rabaul, as the dividing line between the South and the Southwest Pacific theaters was shifted west of the Gazelle Peninsula.³²

Thus, while Rabaul was left primarily to the Thirteenth Air Force, the Fifth struck at the two staging bases through which enemy reinforcements might move from Truk to oppose our landing on Nissan Island. From 10 to 15 Japanese Vals offered the only opposition encountered by our amphibious force at Nissan on 15 February,³³ eloquent testimony of the effective neutralization of enemy bases within range and of the weakness of the Japanese air power in the South Pacific.

After the Nissan Island invasion, heavy bombers of the Thirteenth Air Force, cooperating with naval, Marine, and New Zealand forces, concentrated their efforts against Rabaul and its satellite airdromes.³⁴ By the middle of February the enemy had suffered such heavy losses that only one float plane challenged our destroyer task force on the 18th, when, for the first time in the war, surface vessels bombarded Kavieng and Rabaul. Return engagements by the destroyers on 22, 23, and 25 February added to the destruction.³⁵ While the destroyers roamed at will, bombers of the Thirteenth Air Force enjoyed almost equal freedom. They met no interception during the last week of February and it was apparent that the formerly "impregnable" base

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

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

Allied lack of air superiority and adequate operating bases, which permitted the Japanese to control the air over much of the New Guinea-Solomons-Bismarck area, had delayed for many months an all-out offensive against Japanese shipping. Air attacks on Rabaul, Wewak, and secondary harbors had been begun in 1942; but an intensive campaign against sea traffic started in the spring of 1943. The Japanese already were depending greatly on barge traffic along the coasts. Our air forces, still too weak to provide standing patrols over the northern Bismarck Sea, attacked shipping whenever it was found. The enemy's lines of communication were under attack but they were not severed. Capture and development of new bases, arrival of planes equipped for long-range reconnaissance, and increases in the number of planes and personnel assigned, had enabled the Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces to establish a genuine air blockade by January 1944. The three terminal ports of Rabaul, Kavieng and Wewak strictly limited traffic to easily observed routes, all of which entered the Bismarck Sea. Our search planes kept these routes under observation, while Allied

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submarines operated in the area not covered by the air blockade.³⁷

Convoys attempting to run the blockade rarely escaped severe damage and were frequently annihilated. During the night of 15-16 February, for example, B-24's and PB4Y's discovered a convoy of 17 vessels near New Hanover. Two groups of mediums with fighter escort sank most of the ships; B-24's and PB4Y's finished off the survivors.³⁸ Vessels of other convoys that did get through were by no means safe in the harbors. From about 15 December 1943 to 22 January 1944, the Japanese lost 297 fighters destroyed and 91 probably destroyed in efforts to protect shipping at anchor.³⁹ With the decline of Rabaul, Kavieng and the Admiralties became more important as terminal points;⁴⁰ but Kavieng was no more immune than Rabaul, and the Admiralties were soon to provide bases from which the Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces could complete the blockade of the Bismarck Sea.

Plans for the Reconnaissance in Force

The various warnings and instructions relating to Operation BREWER apparently provided ample time for Alamo Force to complete its plans. Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger, commander of the Sixth Army and of Alamo Force, directed the planning at his Cape Cretin headquarters. The 1st Cavalry Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Innis P. Swift, formed the nucleus of the BREWER Task Force. Representatives of Alamo Force, BREWER Task Force, Advon Fifth Air Force, and the Seventh Amphibious Force met on 19 February to settle problems of coordinating action.

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A second meeting was scheduled for 25 February,⁴¹ but the tempo of planning for BREWER changed radically on the 24th. General MacArthur sent urgent radio instructions to General Krueger which advanced D-day to 29 February at the latest. General Krueger was "to prepare plans for an immediate reconnaissance in force of Los Negros Island in the vicinity of Momote airstrip, with the object of remaining in occupancy in case the area was found to be inadequately defended by the enemy; or in case of heavy resistance to withdraw after all possible reconnaissance had been accomplished." If successful, the troops should prepare Momote airrome to receive transport planes which would come in at the earliest possible moment with airborne engineers to prepare the drome for fighters.⁴²

Several factors induced this sudden change in plans. The Central Pacific carrier attack on Truk on 17-18 February resulted in about 170 enemy planes being withdrawn from the Bismarcks.⁴³ This blow at Truk, together with the attack on the Marianas on 23 February,⁴⁴ cost the enemy about 375 planes, most of which were destroyed.⁴⁵ Likewise, on 23 February the Japanese permitted three B-25's of the 17th Reconnaissance Squadron to loiter over Manus and Los Negros islands for 90 minutes without opposition. The pilots examined the coastal and inland areas at minimum altitude, observed grass growing on the Momote and Lorengau airfields, and could see no signs of life. The mediums went over the cratered Momote runway at 20 feet without receiving a single round of enemy fire.⁴⁶ With this evidence before him, General

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Kenney suggested that the Admiralties should be hit at once while the enemy was off balance. General MacArthur agreed and ordered a reconnaissance in force by an initial strength of 800 men.⁴⁷ But the Fifth Air Force was taking no chances. After the failure of planes to reach Momote on the 24th, nine S-25's again bombed, strafed and reconnoitered on 25 February. Again there was no opposition.⁴⁸ Intelligence officers ventured the opinion that "This suggests that at the moment in the Admiralties enemy ground strength is not heavy and that what there is of it is being conserved. Air strength appears to be non-existent."⁴⁹ General MacArthur on 26 February confirmed his order for a reconnaissance in force,⁵⁰ having decided to test the defenses of the Admiralties without simultaneous invasion of Kavieng.

The air plan for this reconnaissance made available the entire bomber strength in New Guinea, troop carrier squadrons as required, four B-17's for emergency air drops, and fighters according to demands arising from the tactical situation. General missions varied little from those outlined in Operations Instructions No. 44 on 18 February, especially for the bombers. Three fighter squadrons, with their service elements and the necessary air warning and navigational facilities, were to be installed at Momote at the earliest practical date. A preliminary aerial bombardment for three days was to be followed by heavy bombing just before the landings on D-day. The 345th Bombardment Group (M) was to provide four squadrons for air alert over the invasion area, each squadron to be on alert for one hour; the 71st

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Reconnaissance Group would have three B-25's on alert over Pak island for three hours each to lay smoke if called for; heavies were to carry out neutralizing attacks on Kavieng if required, with New Guinea fields as alternate targets. Fighter squadrons were assigned to escort work and convoy cover. The air plan concludes with the significant qualification: "All air operations are dependent upon the weather."⁵¹ (See Appendices Nos. 9 and 10.)

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

Preparation for D-Day

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

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had been previously unnoted, able to find signs of activity. But once the sightings started, they poured in. Extensive trench and earthwork systems in Lorengau, twenty pillboxes in Mokerang Plantation, coastal guns at various places, motor launches and luggers in temporary blocked-up frames on islands in the chain running north of Los Negros. All these sightings were . . . proven by the results of the actual fighting there. Nonetheless the convoy was already underway, and it was too late to change plans.⁶⁸

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

D-Day at Hyane Harbor, 29 February 1944

Convoys from Oro Bay and Cape Cretin moved up the coast of New Guinea, through the Vitiaz Strait, and across the Bismarck Sea to Los Negros. Fighters from Finschhafen, Nadzab, Cape Gloucester and Dobodura patrolled whenever weather permitted. Severe tropical fronts caused many of the cover sorties to be abortive on D-day, but our pilots could take comfort in knowing that enemy planes likewise would be unable to get through the storms. As further precaution, the 90th Bombardment Group (H) made diversionary attacks on the northern New Guinea coast.⁶⁹ The 348th Fighter Group sent 26 P-47's from Finschhafen to cover the preliminary naval bombardment but not one reached the convoy area.⁷⁰ The 475th Fighter Group at Finschhafen covered the

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landing operations with 57 P-38 sorties, but the 432d Squadron found the weather completely closed in over Los Negros and lost four P-38's on the return trip.⁷¹

Only a part of the pre-landing air program was carried out.⁷²

Six B-24's of the 65th Squadron, with two of the 403d Squadron attached, took off from Dobodura at 0345. One returned to base but the remaining seven arrived over Momote beginning at 0737 to make their bomb runs while three cruisers and nine destroyers were shelling installations around Hyane Harbor.⁷³ Four squadrons of B-25's, 38th Bombardment Group, were scheduled to bomb and strafe the Momote area when the B-24's cleared. Only three of the mediums completed the mission which was beset by difficulties from the start. Taking off before 0500 from the Horanda strip, the pilots flew by instruments for 2¹/₂ hours through darkness and heavy weather. Nearly all of the flights, becoming separated between Buna and the Vitiaz Strait, missed the appointed rendezvous over Sakar Island in Dampier Strait. The group commander, Col. Clarence F. Tauberg, led the 822d Squadron. After gathering three flights, he "cruised the area 40-50 miles south of the target and for 60 miles east and west for an hour and forty minutes in an effort to find a way over, under, around or through the storm front hanging over the Admiraltys."⁷⁴ Two bombers of the 823d Squadron and one of the 71st arrived over Par Island, 12 miles east of Los Negros, at about 0745 where they circled for nearly 30 minutes waiting for orders to attack. At 0810, radio communications having failed,

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star shells, the signal for the air attack, were observed above the bomber command ship. Letting down to 200 feet, the B-25's bombed Jamandilai and Lobortutu points. As the planes started their runs they received intense but generally inaccurate machine-gun fire from five landing barges which were in the harbor.⁷⁵

The 345th Bombardment Group (M) was to cover the landing with four squadrons of six B-25's each. Orders were to proceed by squadrons at intervals of one hour from Nadzab to Pak Island, circle the island on call, and attack as directed by "Jumbo," the bomber command snip station. If no targets were assigned, the squadrons were to bomb and strafe Lou Island on their return to base. The 498th Squadron led off from Nadzab at 0705, flew down the Markham Valley to Lae, then turned north to Umboi Island and on toward the Admiralties through soupy weather. Ten minutes later the 499th Squadron took off on a route that led up the Markham Valley to Bogadjim, then north to Admiralties. After flanking several thunder storms, the 499th flew through a 70-mile front which extended from 900 to 15,000 feet. The navigator's perfect course brought the squadron through "a small hole in the weather at 0916/L at Pak Island, one minute later than the specified time." The B-25's circled for 23 minutes while rain squalls swept across Los Negros. Then "Jumbo" ordered the squadron to attack the native skidway area at the west side of Hyane Harbor. Visibility was becoming poorer as the rain increased. At 0942, when Higgins boats were entering the mouth of Hyane Harbor, the six B-25's turned

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in over Monote airdrome on their first bombing and strafing run. The landing craft were about half way across the harbor upon completion of the second run, and on the third pass the Higgins boats were too close to permit still another run called for by "Jumbo." In the 9-minute attack, the B-25's dropped 17 x 500-lb. bombs and expended over 12,000 rounds in strafing. As the planes turned back to base, pilots saw 12 P-38's coming down through the overcast, heard the 12th Air Liaison Party's station "Gangway" broadcasting from the beach, and saw the 498th Squadron circling over Pak Island.⁷⁶

By this time (0958) the weather was so bad that an air attack was impossible. Visibility and ceiling were zero. The 498th Squadron continued circling over Pak Island until 1023 when the Navy ordered it back to base. The 500th and 501st Squadrons arrived in turn over Pak Island, circled while waiting for a break in the weather, then went off to bomb and strafe targets on Lou Island.⁷⁷

This air cooperation in the landing at Hyane Harbor seems small when one recalls that 4,000 or more Japanese soldiers were available to oppose the invasion; but very little opposition developed and the landings occurred with practically no casualties.⁷⁸ In view of this lack of resistance, it is probable that the air strikes were a factor in keeping the Japanese under cover. However, there is no indication that our bombers and fighters played more than a minor role in the proceedings on D-day. Air-ground communications began to function

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early on D-day. Capt. George F. Frederick, the Air Liaison Officer, led the 12th AIF ashore with the assault wave, set up "Gangway" under fire, and was on the air at 0815.⁷⁹ This station functioned admirably during the entire operation.

The Battle for Momote, 1-6 March 1944

The "reconnaissance" had made such good progress that General MacArthur, who went ashore on D-day, ordered the troops to hold on.⁸⁰ They dug in on the dispersal area of the airdrome and prepared to meet the Japanese counterattack. It came early in the morning of 1 March and was repulsed with a heavy expenditure of ammunition. Arrangements already had been made for air drops to replenish supplies. The first bombers over Momote on 1 March were three B-25's, 38th Bombardment Group, which dropped supplies at 0820.⁸¹ Ten minutes later "Yankee Diddler," a B-17 of the 39th Troop Carrier Squadron from Finschhafen, began the first of three runs during which it dropped three tons of plasma, grenades, ammunition, and mortar shells. Upon completing each dropping run, the B-17 made a strafing pass along the west edge of the runway to cover troops retrieving the supplies. The same plane returned at 1500 to drop barbed wire, anti-personnel mines, grenades and ammunition. Again it strafed Japanese positions upon completing its drops at 1600. The strafing was so heavy that many of the enemy ran out into the open where ground machine-gun fire cut them down.⁸² Four B-17's of the 41st, 56th, and 69th Troop Carrier

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

Squadrons on bombing and strafing missions to the Admiralties after D-day were briefed for both primary and secondary targets before taking off. On occasion they were assigned secondary targets only, which were to be attacked in case the Air Liaison Party failed to assign a target designated by the ground troops. At other times, squadrons of mediums were ordered to take station over Pak or some other island on air alert to attack as directed. The 38th Bombardment Group, for example, had six B-25's at a time over Lou Island starting at 0845. The 823d Squadron circled until 0945, then went on to bomb and strafe Lombrum Point and Papitalai Mission.⁸⁴ The 823d Squadron's six B-25's bombed and strafed Lombrum Point an hour later,⁸⁵ being followed by the 405th Squadron over Lou Island. After failure to contact "Gangway," the leader of the 405th Squadron ordered an attack on Lorengau Township at 1133,⁸⁶ and the 71st Squadron took its turn on air alert.

At this time the enemy was forming at Lorengau for a counterattack. These preparations were discovered in time to permit our ground troops to call for a group mission against the Japanese assembly area. In

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response to this call, three squadrons of the 43d Bombardment Group at Dobodura loaded 16 B-24's with 96 x 1,000-lb. bombs and took off shortly after 0900. They arrived over the target about three hours later and dropped 93 of the bombs in the Lorengau area.⁸⁷

The 71st Squadron continued circling over Lou Island while the heavies were bombing Lorengau. At 1255 the mediums went off to bomb and strafe the same target.⁸⁸ The last mission of the day fell to the 499th Bombardment Squadron (II) from Nadzab while the remaining squadrons of the 345th Group were attacking the Hansa Bay area.⁸⁹ After circling on alert, the squadron received orders from "Gangway" to attack the plantation and wooded area 500 yards west of and parallel to Momote strip. Two destroyers that were shelling targets south of the strip ceased fire when the B-25's came over for their runs, an indication of how closely naval and air bombardment were coordinated. The six B-25's made two runs, the second 100 yards east of the first, dropped 33 x 500-lb. bombs and strafed with 14,000 rounds of machine-gun fire. Heavy foliage prevented observation but "Gangway" reported excellent results.⁹⁰

Air action on 2 March again began with a supply drop when the "Yankee Diddler" came over at 0830 to deliver wire, plasma, ammunition and grenades on the east edge of the strip. The supply plane made seven strafing runs west of the strip to cover troops retrieving the bundles.⁹¹ The 38th Bombardment Group (M) had arrived over Lou Island in the meantime with 23 B-25's on alert. Transmission

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difficulties, shortage of gasoline, and misunderstanding marred the group's effort. At 0935 "Gangway" relayed a request for an attack against the west side of Momote strip. The 71st Squadron, having heard no orders, bombed Lorengau with three B-25's. Leaving the target area, the squadron leader heard the call to bomb Momote. The lead plane had two 500-pound bombs left, so the pilot made a run over the west dispersal area, strafing on the way.⁹² The lead flight of the 822d Squadron turned back to base because of fuel shortage, while the rest of the squadron heard the call and responded by bombing and strafing the northwest dispersal area and north along the skidway.⁹³ One flight of the 823d Squadron went home without attacking when no call was received; two pilots of the other flight thought Lorengau was the target, while only one pilot interpreted the message correctly and attacked accordingly.⁹⁴ The 405th Squadron saved the mission from being an almost total failure. Upon receipt of orders from "Gangway," its six B-25's separated into single elements and made excellent bombing and strafing runs through a light rain and under a 600-foot ceiling.⁹⁵

Supplies and reinforcements coming ashore in preparation for an attack in mid-afternoon were augmented by another air drop at 1105. Two B-17's, 69th Troop Carrier Squadron, brought in machine-gun barrels, grenades, ammunition and rations. Upon leaving the target the B-17's were jumped by four enemy fighters, one of which they shot down.⁹⁶

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The afternoon mission on 2 March, carried out by the 345th Bombardment Group (M) between 1352 and 1402 in preparation for the ground attack, also was poorly executed. Again the principal reason lay in faulty communications. At about 1225, when the four squadrons of B-25's were circling on air alert, some 15 Japanese Zekes, Hamps and Tonys jumped them. Unfortunately for the enemy, eight P-47's of the 341st Fighter Squadron on patrol over Manus Island saw the attack and rushed in. The enemy lost eight destroyed and four probably destroyed.⁹⁷ Damage to the B-25's was slight, but the radio of one plane was put out of order. The pilots had left Nadzab with orders to attack 1,000 yards west of the Momote strip, but they were to contact "Gangway" before bombing. The 12th Air Liaison Party changed the target to both sides of Foxharmenemen Creek southwest of the strip. The 501st Squadron dropped its bombs on the new target, then heard "a voice on the radio . . . saying that bombs were falling among friendly troops and to cease attack and return to base." Apparently someone in the 501st was being a bit too suspicious, for its mission report states: "It is considered likely that this was an attempt by the enemy to upset the attack with false radio orders, as intelligence reports received from BLUE LANDING FORCE after the attack report bombing excellent."⁹⁸ But, except for the 501st and 498th Squadrons, the bombing was far from excellent and the Japs were not again accused of playing games with the radio. The 498th dropped 22 x 500-lb. bombs on the proper target, then returned to base with the remaining eight bombs when the above-

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mentioned request that there be no more bombing was received.⁹⁹ This request to cease bombing apparently was actually caused by the 500th Squadron whose bombs "were seen to burst East of the strip about half-way up the runway, across the strip and into the Northwest dispersal area, thus missing the target specified by 12th ALP."¹⁰⁰ The order to cease bombing came in only 20 seconds before the 499th Squadron was ready to release its bombs. Two of the planes failed to receive the order, one because its radio had been shot out in the fight with enemy interceptors, the other because the pilot had turned on the interphone for final corrections. These two B-25's dropped 10 x 500-lb. bombs down the center of the west dispersal area.¹⁰¹ The generally unsatisfactory results of this mission may be attributed to poor radio communications, to the sudden change in targets, and to a bad error by one squadron.

The marshy area along Porharmenemen Creek was also the target for 16 A-20's of the 13th and 90th Bombardment Squadrons (L) from Nadzab. Radio calls from the 12th ALP were weak, but the A-20's picked up a relay by the fighter control station, "Saucepan." They made dry runs first to locate the target accurately, then dropped 76 x 500-lb. bombs between 1505 and 1515 and expended nearly 20,000 rounds in strafing.¹⁰² The day's air attacks were rounded out by eight P-47's, 340th Fighter Squadron, which strafed the coast northeast of Momote strip at 1530,¹⁰³ and by 16 P-38's of the 435d Fighter Squadron which attacked enemy gun positions on Hyane Harbor.¹⁰⁴

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Bad weather interfered with the air program on 3 March. Three squadrons of B-24's from the 43d Group took off from Dobodura to bomb the road leading to Salami Plantation. Since individual planes were ordered not to leave the formation in an attempt to get through the front, the heavies turned off to bomb Alexishafen.¹⁰⁵ At 1600, nine A-20's of the 13th Bombardment Squadron bombed and strafed the north peninsula of Hyane Harbor with good results. One enemy fighter that came through the clouds was driven off by destroyer fire.¹⁰⁶ Two minutes later, six B-25's of the 499th Squadron dropped 56 x 100-lb. white phosphorous bombs from 500 feet on enemy troop areas north of the harbor and strafed with more than 10,000 rounds.¹⁰⁷

A particularly vicious but rash Japanese counterattack during the night of 3-4 March failed to dislodge our troops holding the airfield.¹⁰⁸ The enemy, however, still held areas west and north of Hyane Harbor which were bombed and strafed by 16 A-20's at noon on 4 March.¹⁰⁹ Six B-25's came over at 1230 to strike north of Hyane Harbor at Lobortutu Point; 15 minutes later six more B-25's attacked the same areas.¹¹⁰ Plans for a heavy air bombardment of Salami Plantation on 5 March were disrupted by bad weather. The target was so shrouded by clouds that 35 B-24's were unable to bomb. Some squadrons, after flying at 800 feet for 250 miles, found the weather clear enough over Los Negros to attack assigned targets.¹¹¹ Seventeen B-25's and 23 B-24's dropped 96 tons on the plantation area between 1110 and 1228.¹¹² The heavy fighting for Monote was over on 6 March, and at midday 16

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B-25's bombed and strafed Papitalai, the points at the entrance to Papitalai Harbor, and Salami Plantation.¹¹³

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

While this mopping up was in progress, the Momote air strip became operational. An LST landed 300 Seabees in the afternoon of 2 March and the work of repairing the damaged strip had been going on when Japanese units were still holding the west side of the field. Artillery spotters (L-4's) were using the field by 6 March,¹¹⁵ and on the 7th a B-25 landed at about noon.¹¹⁶ On 9 March, a B-25 of the 71st Bombardment Squadron escorted 12 RAAF P-40's of the 77th Fighter Squadron to Momote,¹¹⁷ and 12 more arrived the next day.¹¹⁸ The presence of these fighters at Momote simplified the problem of getting air strikes when they were needed, but P-38's and P-47's from New Guinea continued to fly patrol missions over the Admiralties until after the landing near Lorengau on Manus Island. Before the end of the month, some of these fighters were remaining over night.¹¹⁹

During the first six days of March, the Fifth Air Force flew 204 effective bomber sorties over Los Negros, dropped more than 291 tons of bombs, and expended nearly 198,000 rounds of ammunition in strafing (see Appendix No. 8). Allied mastery of the air was complete, but bad

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weather during much of the operation deprived ground troops of considerable assistance from the Allied Air Forces.

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

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

Ndrilo and Hauwei islands at the north side of Seeadler Harbor held a few guns that annoyed naval vessels bombarding targets on Los Negros. They provided, also, sites from which our own artillery could fire on enemy positions in the Lorengau area. These two islands, especially the east tip of Hauwei, were the assigned targets for 17 B-24's of the 43d Bombardment Group on 7 March. Bad weather plagued the planes from the time they left Dobodura and only seven of them completed the mission. Five of the 403d Squadron's heavies dropped 40 x 1,000-lb. bombs, only 9 of which were claimed as having hit the target; 22 of the others fell within 1,000 feet of the aiming point.¹²⁰ Eleven B-25's, sent out to search for barges along the coast of Manus, were forced to turn back by storms.¹²¹ An improvement in the weather on 8 March brought five B-25's from Madzab with supplies to drop over Salami Plantation,¹²² while 17 B-24's and 11 B-25's bombed and strafed

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Hauwei and Ndirilo islands as well as other targets. The presence of destroyers in the passage east of Hauwei Island kept five B-24's circling for an hour waiting for permission to bomb. They then went off to hit Bear Point. The one B-24 that did bomb Hauwei was reported to have destroyed the gun emplacements and killed 75 Japanese.¹²³

Bomber missions during the next four days were directed primarily against Lorengau and trails leading to it. The 19th and 33d Squadrons, 22d Bombardment Group (H), re-entering combat after changing over from B-25's, attacked Lugos Mission and Lorengau airdrome on 10 March with 9 out of 12 B-24's reaching the target.¹²⁴ On the same day, 12 B-25's ran along the coast to bomb and strafe targets of opportunity.¹²⁵ A Japanese troop concentration at Lugos Mission was the target for seven B-24's on 11 March which claimed 198 hits in the target area with 100-pound phosphorous bombs. The heavies then dropped down to tree-top level and strafed the target heavily.¹²⁶ In an attack on Lorengau drome, six B-25's destroyed a bridge at the mouth of the Lorengau River, while another squadron bombed and strafed the No. 1 road leading from Lorengau to Tingo Village.¹²⁷ The roads to Tingo and Rossum and the coastal road were the targets for 24 B-25's on 12-13 March. In these attacks from 9 to 13 March, 26 B-24's and 55 B-25's dropped 145 tons of bombs and expended about 135,000 rounds in strafing (see Appendix No. 8).

Ground troops in the meantime were preparing for the Manus Island landing. Artillery was to be emplaced on Butjo Luo and Hauwei

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islands which were reconnoitered on 11 March. The 302d Reconnaissance Troop's patrol to Hauwei encountered severe machine-gun and mortar fire when it landed on the west end of the island.¹²⁸ The 2d Squadron, 7th Cavalry from Lombrum Point attacked Hauwei on 12 March in an amphibious operation. The 77th Fighter Squadron (RAAF) from Momote bombed and strafed with six P-40's before the landing occurred at 1345. Captain Frederick, 12th ALP, guided the P-40's to their targets by messages which were sent over an artillery set and were relayed by his assistant at the "Gangway" station.¹²⁹ Japanese resistance on Hauwei Island ended on 13 March and our artillery units were able to take up ideal positions to support the landing on Manus Island which was scheduled for 15 March. While the artillery was getting into position on the 14th, destroyers shelled Pityilu Island and Lorengau.¹³⁰

Air Activity to the End of the Campaign

A combination of artillery, naval and air bombardment prepared the way for the 8th Cavalry Regiment to land on Manus Island at 0930 on 15 March. Captain Frederick, in conference with General Swift on 11 March, had prepared the air plan.¹³¹ Again the nature of the targets, haphazard defenses, and expected weakness of enemy opposition held air participation to a small effort. The 499th and 500th Bombardment Squadrons (B) attacked the landing beaches on either side of the Liel River with 18 B-25's between 0907 and 0925 on the 15th. They cleared the target just as troops were coming ashore.¹³² The 12th ALP again was among the first troops to land, and at about 0950 had

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an SCR 193, set up in a jeep, in contact with the 77th Fighter Squadron (RAAF) and the 501st Bombardment Squadron on air alert.¹³³ The 12th ALP directed the P-40's in a coordinated tank-artillery-air attack to knock out enemy pillboxes near the beach.¹³⁴ Nine B-25's of the 501st Squadron circled on alert north of Hauwei Island from 0957 to 1100, then were sent by the 12th ALP to bomb and strafe Tingo Village ahead of the 2d Squadron, 8th Cavalry.¹³⁵ The 498th Squadron then took its turn on alert with nine B-25's until about 1200 and also attacked Tingo Village on the way back to Nadzab.¹³⁶

These strikes on D-day at Manus practically ended Fifth Air Force bomber activity over the Admiralties. On 16 March, a B-25 of the 822d Squadron, which had come in as a courier to Momote, took off from that field at the request of General Chase to strafe a pocket of enemy troops on Los Negros.¹³⁷ Two B-25's dropped a ton of bombs on Loniu Passage on 20 March, and one B-25 strafed Pityilu Island on the 25th. Nine A-20's of the 8th Bombardment Squadron, led by a P-40, strafed and bombed troops south of Lorengau at 0905 on 26 March.¹³⁸

This last attack by Fifth Air Force bombers on Manus Island was directed against an enemy strongpoint near Warembu where the 7th Cavalry was meeting considerable opposition. On 24 March, Captain Frederick, the RAAF wing commander, the commanding general of the 2d Cavalry Brigade and the 7th Cavalry Regiment's commander worked out a plan for a coordinated air-ground assault at Warembu. The 7th Cavalry set out smoke pots on the morning of 25 March to mark their front

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line, then withdrew 500 yards. The first wave of 12 RAAF P-40's combed at 0800; an equal number came in at 0815 and again at 0930. Twenty-four P-40's rounded out the attack by strafing at 1005. The Cavalry, failing to take advantage of these attacks, moved cautiously back to their original positions. After the A-20 strike on 26 March, P-40's again attacked Warembo.¹³⁹

Fighter squadrons of the RAAF continued to be active while the BREWER Task Force invaded and occupied lesser islands of the Admiralties and mopped up Los Negros and Manus.¹⁴⁰ By 18 March, the 76th and 77th Fighter Squadrons (RAAF) were at Komote with 34 P-40's, all but two of which were ready for combat. The 79th Fighter Squadron (RAAF) with 24 Spitfires moved to Komote from Kiriwina during the last week of March.¹⁴¹ These squadrons provided air cooperation for the ground troops until the Admiralties campaign was declared completed on 18 May.

There was an amazing lack of enemy air opposition throughout Operation BREWER, especially in view of the strength available in New Guinea. A few enemy planes were reported circling near Los Negros on 1 March,¹⁴² and the only serious effort to put up a fight was that mentioned above which occurred on 2 March. Three Japanese planes that bombed and strafed Los Negros during the night of 7-8 March killed two men and wounded six. A lone fighter circled Los Negros for 90 minutes on the following night but no damage resulted from its single bomb run. Two attacks during the night of 12-13 March, probably by not more than a single plane each time, dropped a few

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bombs harmlessly.¹⁴³ This lack of air activity led to the conclusion that the enemy's failure "to make use of the substantial air strength held at Hollandia is a further indication that the decline in his overall air striking power has made him reluctant to risk heavy losses even for the sake of strategically valuable bases."¹⁴⁴

The BREWER Task Force was prepared to cope with far greater enemy air opposition than actually developed. Air warning and other units assigned to the task force, including the 73d Fighter Wing (RAAF), numbered 2,475 men. By far the larger part of this number belonged to the RAAF component of the Allied Air Forces.¹⁴⁵ The U. S. 583d Signal Air Warning Battalion provided personnel from Company C, some of whom went ashore on D-day. One platoon operated intermittently for a few days, then began 24-hour operation on 4 March. Another platoon was functioning four days later and two more by 20 March. Ground observer detachments from Company C were landed by Catalinas on Bipi and Bat islands on 3 March to provide long-range warning. The Bat Island detachment was replaced by an Australian radar station late in March, and in mid-April the Bipi Island group rejoined the company.¹⁴⁶

Air activity in Operation BREWER was by no means entirely confined to bomber missions. Fighter squadrons covered shipping in the Bismarck Sea and flew numerous patrol missions over Los Negros and Manus, most of which were purely routine except for occasional strafing requested by ground troops. Nearly all of this work fell to three fighter groups based chiefly at Finschhafen: the 8th (P-40's, P-38's), 348th

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(P-47's), and the 475th (P-38's). The 35th Fighter Squadron (P-47's) devoted most of its efforts to patrols between Cape Gloucester and Finschhafen, over the Willaumez Peninsula of New Britain, and over convoys to Los Negros.¹⁴⁷ The 36th Fighter Squadron (P-38's) performed similar missions, with greater attention to covering shipping lying off the Admiralties.¹⁴⁸ Activities of the 433d Fighter Squadron (P-38's) in March were typical of the 475th Fighter Group: 12 missions as shipping cover, 5 missions escorting C-47's to Momote, and 4 patrol missions over the Admiralties.¹⁴⁹

Related Operations

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

The principal achievement of the V Bomber Command during March was the neutralization of the Wewak group of airdromes.¹⁵⁰ Three squadrons of the 380th Bombardment Group (H) moved to Nadzab from Fenton, Australia at the end of February to take part in the New

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

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

The destruction of Japanese air power at Hollandia was one of the outstanding performances of the Pacific war. At the middle of March, when our troops were landing on Manus Island and were mopping up Los Negros, steps that meant the loss to the enemy of an extremely important position, the Japanese held well over 150 light and medium

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bombers idle at Hollandia. One might, at least, expect their use against Saidor, or for raids on Nadzab, Kaiapit, or Finschhafen. Instead, the enemy lined up his planes "like petunias in a garden,"¹⁵⁶ inviting disaster. Several explanations may be hazarded to account for such behavior: the Japanese were not fully informed about events in the Admiralties, they were conserving their strength for some massive blow, they were preparing to withdraw to the Philippines or to some other rear area, their planes were being used for other than combat missions--but these are only guesses.

Reconnaissance of the Bismarck Sea and interdiction of the Japanese supply lines continued unabated while Operation BREWER was under way. The 63d Bombardment Squadron (H) flew many sorties on armed reconnaissance, anti-radar search, and weather reconnaissance.¹⁵⁷ Squadrons of the 71st Reconnaissance Group, as well as planes from other units, searched constantly for enemy shipping. The monotony of relatively unproductive barge and lugger hunts was relieved on 19 March when B-24's on their way to Boran sighted a convoy of five vessels off Newak. The V Bomber Command sent out A-20's and B-25's which sank the entire convoy.¹⁵⁸ With the Newak dromes neutralized, the Fifth Air Force practically eliminated the barge repair and supply depot on Kairuru Island¹⁵⁹ and made repeated attacks against the small craft that were attempting, often successfully, to carry supplies to beleaguered garrisons.

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Gains of the Campaign

A comparison of the military situation on 1 December 1943 with that which prevailed at the end of March 1944 reveals the significance of Allied gains in the conquest of the Bismarck Archipelago. At the start of this period, the Allies held none of the Bismarck Archipelago. Rabaul was one of Japan's major naval and air bases, Japanese air strength in northern New Guinea was formidable, the Huon Peninsula was still unconquered, the straits between New Guinea and New Britain were hazardous for our shipping, and Japanese vessels were plying the Bismarck Sea in large numbers. Nadzab, Kaiapit, Finschnafen, and Gusap in New Guinea were our most advanced airfields. At the close of the period all of western New Britain was in Allied possession, Rabaul was reduced to a minor base, Japan's airfields in northern New Guinea were practically neutralized, only isolated pockets of enemy troops remained on the Huon Peninsula, our ships could sail at will through the Vitiaz Strait and into the Bismarck Sea, and the Allied Air Forces had new bases at Cape Gloucester, Saidor and Momote while a fourth, at Mokerang on Los Negros, was under construction. The only Japanese ground forces of any consequence in the Bismarck Archipelago were isolated in New Ireland and around Rabaul. Enemy barges might still attempt to break through air and surface patrols to supply and reinforce troops on Bougainville, but the routes from Rabaul to New Guinea were severed.

The construction of major air and naval bases in the Admiralties completed the encirclement of Rabaul. Mokerang and Momote filled out

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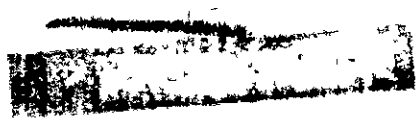
the chain that included Nissan, Torokina, Kiriwina, Cape Gloucester, Finschhafen and Seidor. Not only were the enemy's supply lines to Rabaul virtually sealed off, but his internal communications became more open to Allied air attack.¹⁶⁰

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

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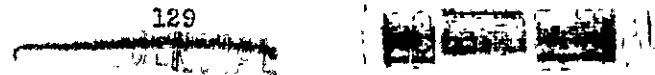


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G L O S S A R Y

A/D	Airdrome
Advon.	Advanced Headquarters
AFSHO	AAF Historical Office
AGF	Army Ground Forces
AGO	Office of The Adjutant General
GP	Command Post
C/S	Chief of Staff
F. O.	Field Order
ISum	Intelligence Summary
MID WDGS	Military Intelligence Division, War Department General Staff
MLR	Main line of resistance
NCR	Narrative Combat Report
NMR	Narrative Mission Report
O. N. I.	Office of Naval Intelligence
OP	Observation post
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
Recn	Reconnaissance
SOPAC	South Pacific
SWPA	Southwest Pacific Area

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NOTES

Chapter I

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

Islands	Area in sq. mi.	Population
New Britain	13,000	77,766
New Ireland	3,000	19,417
New Hanover	600	5,188
Admiralty & Northwestern Is.	1,000	13,450
All minor islands	<u>5,950</u>	<u>24,938</u>
Totals	23,550	140,759

The Archipelago extends from 0°51' to 06°20' S latitude and from 142°50' to 155° E longitude. The islands reach from the Nuguria group (east of New Ireland) west for 860 miles to Wuvulu, and from Mussau south to Cape Balli on New Britain for 360 miles. MID WDCS, "Survey of Bismarck Archipelago" (S 30-675), pp. 1-2, in A-2 Lib.

2. The island has a width varying between 20 and 60 miles, an over-all length of 350 miles.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 10-11. Blanche Bay "is a hill-encircled expanse of water some 6 miles north and south by 2½ miles east and west which occupies the center of an immense volcano whose southeastern side has been blown away, admitting the waters of the sea." *Ibid.*, p. 11.
4. New Ireland is 220 miles long, 5 to 30 miles wide. *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 36.
5. Allied Geographical Section SWPA, "Area Study of the Admiralty Islands," Terrain Study No. 67, 30 Nov. 43, pp. 1-26; Hq. AAF SWPA, "Lorengau," Objective Folder No. 8, Supplement No. 2, in A-2 Lib.
6. "Survey of Bismarck Archipelago," pp. 29-30. Other islands of the group frequented by barges were Unea and Mundua. The St. Matthias group, 47 miles north of New Hanover, includes Mussau, Emirau and Tench islands. A few islands lie in the straits between New Guinea and New Britain. Umboi, with an area of about 430 square miles, is the largest of these. Formed by volcanoes, Umboi is subject to almost daily earth tremors. The Siassi Islands south of Umboi are a small archipelago of wooded islets and reefs. Tolokiwa Island, 16 miles northwest of Umboi, is a volcanic cone about 5 miles in diameter. Sakar Island lies 8 miles northeast of Umboi and 16 miles northwest of Dork Point, New Britain. Five miles south of Sakar Island, Ritter Island rises some 350 feet above sea level. None of these islands is of much importance, although many of them have limited anchorage for small schooners, luggers, and barges. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

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7. Ibid., pp. 1-8.
8. Hq. Alamo Force, "Report of the Dexterity Operation, 15 Dec. 43-10 Feb. 44," pp. 2-3, in AGO Analysis Files, 91-33.4 (3089); History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 5; Hq. Alamo Force, "Report of Eraser Operation, 29 Feb.-18 May 44," p. 1, in AGO Analysis Files, 91-33.4 (5529).
9. History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 5.
10. Edgar McInnis, The War, Fourth Year (London, 1944), pp. 330-35; History of Headquarters, Thirteenth Air Force, Jan.-March 44, p. 2.
11. McInnis, The War, Fourth Year, pp. 234-36; Col. B. B. Cain, "The Air War in the Southwest Pacific," in Air Force, Nov. 44, p. 35.
12. History of Headquarters, Thirteenth Air Force, Jan.-March 44, p. 2; The O.F.I. Weekly, vol. III, no. 1 (5 Jan. 44), p. 7.
13. GHQ S&PA, General Summary No. 157, 4 March 44, pp. 15-16, in History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, 1 Feb. 44 to 15 June 44, App. III, Doc. No. 9; Hq. AAF S&PA, Isum No. 146, 13 Oct. 43, p. 16, in A-2 Lib. All Intelligence Summaries (Isums) hereafter cited were issued by Hq. AAF S&PA unless other source is specified.
14. Isum No. 173 (15 Jan. 44), p. 12.
15. General Summary No. 157, pp. 17-18.
16. Isum No. 155 (13 Nov. 43), p. 1.
17. Isum No. 156 (17 Nov. 43), p. 1.
18. Isum No. 155 (13 Nov. 43), p. 3. In the S&PA alone, from 7 Dec. 41 to 31 Oct. 43, Japanese losses were:

Type of Plane	Destroyed	Probably destroyed	Damaged
Fighters	1,711	607	462
Bombers	566	121	165
Reconnaissance	106	13	53
Unidentified	<u>299</u>	<u>82</u>	<u>108</u>
Totals	2,682	823	808

19. History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 4, n. 14.
20. Hq. AGF, "Report on Air Support in Southwest Pacific Area During the Period 1 November 1943 to 1 February 1944," [Dexter Report], by Col. Henry P. Dexter, p. 5, in Army War College 3.9.1/102. All PAAF squadrons, except the 4th Army Cooperation Squadron (rcn), were in

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

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

3d Bomb Gp. (L) -- Dobodura
 23d Bomb Gp. (M) -- Dobodura
 38th Bomb Gp. (I) -- Port Moresby (Durand Airrome)
 43d Bomb Gp. (H) -- Port Moresby (Jackson Airdrome), except the 63d Bomb Sq. at Dobodura
 90th Bomb Gp. (K) -- Port Moresby (Ward's Airdrome)
 345th Bomb Gp. (N) -- Port Moresby (Jackson and Schwimmer airdromes)
 350th Bomb Gp. (L) -- Fenton, Longstrip, Manbullon airfields, all near Darwin

The 312th and 417th Bombardment Groups had not yet appeared in the theater. See Weekly Status and Operations Reports /Form 34's/ for Period 31 Oct.-6 Nov. 43.

22. CM-IN-4656 (8-11-43), Kenney to CG AAF, SA-2107, 8 Nov. 43.

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

8th Fighter Gp. -- Port Moresby (Kila and Ward's airdromes)
 35th Fighter Gp. -- 40th and 41st Sqs. at Madzab, 39th Sq. at Port Moresby (Schwimmer's Airdrome)
 49th Fighter Gp. -- 7th and 9th Sqs. at Dobodura, 8th Sq. at Gusao
 348th Fighter Gp. -- Port Moresby (Jackson, Durand, and Ward's)
 475th Fighter Gp. -- Dobodura

See Form 34's, 31 Oct.-6 Nov. 43.

24. Of the 1,460 Fifth Air Force aircraft in the theater on 30 October 1943, there were 591 bombers, 611 fighters, 266 transports, and 12 reconnaissance planes (Status and Commitment of AAF Aircraft in

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Theaters, 30 Oct. 43, Form SC-6, in Stat. Control Div.). This report is difficult to reconcile with the cable report which states that as of 8 November 1943, there were 1,181 tactical aircraft in the theater, of which 67 might not be repairable, and 569 non-tactical aircraft, giving a total of 1,770. GH-III-6848 (11-11-43), Kenney to CG AAF, #A-2187, 11 Nov. 43. The principal discrepancy lies in the number of non-tactical aircraft reported, which are not included in Form SC-6.

25. The breakdown was 122 P-38's, 20 P-39's, 184 P-47's, 8 P-70's, 92 P-40's, 44 A-20's, 155 B-25's, 126 B-24's, 19 B-26's. The Theater classified A-20's, P-40's, and B-25's and D's as attack aviation. The total number of planes on hand, fit for combat or repairable within 30 days, was 1,657, which included 88 photo reconnaissance and 288 transport aircraft. Of this total, 1,096 were assigned to units. All but 23 of the transports were assigned. 5th Air Force 110 Reports, 1944, in Stat. Control Div.
26. Twenty-three B-24's of the 380th Bomb Gp. (H) were retained at Fenton. RAAF strength is shown in the following table:

Sq. no.	Station	Type of plane	No.
6	Vivigani	Beaufort	16
7 (det)	Port Moresby	Beaufort	3
8	Vivigani	Beaufort	23
22	Kiriwina	Boston	12
24	Kiriwina	Vengeance	15
100	Vivigani	Beaufort	15
Total no. of bombers			84
30	Kiriwina	Beaufighter	19
75	Vivigani & Kiriwina	Kittyhawk	25
		F-4	2
76	Kiriwina	Kittyhawk	24
77	Vivigani & Kiriwina	Kittyhawk	26
78	Kiriwina	Kittyhawk	22
79	Kiriwina	Spitfire	24
Total no. of fighters			142
4	Port Moresby & Ladzab	Wirraway	6
	Gusap	Boomerang	19
Total no. of obsn. a/c			25
Total no. of bombers, fighters, & obsn. a/c			251

The RAAF had about the same number of tactical aircraft in Australia, and a squadron of 16 Netherlands East Indies' B-25's was stationed at Darwin. 5th Air Force 110-Reports, 1944.

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27. Form 34's, 18-24 Dec. 43; History, 38th Bomb Co., Feb. 44, p. 1. Two squadrons of the 475th Fighter Group apparently moved to Kiriwina to make room for the bombers.
28. Form 34's, 31 Oct.-6 Nov. 43. Detachment A, 418th Night Fighter Squadron, was at Berry Drome, near Port Moresby, with two P-38's and four P-70's. The 67th Fighter Squadron, 347th Fighter Group of the Thirteenth Air Force was on Woodlark Island. One should also consider the RAAF units on Kiriwina and Goodenough islands. See above, n. 21.
29. Report of Dexterity Operation, pp. 1-6; Hq. Escalator, F. O. No. 5, 30 Nov. 43, in 1st Marine Div., Special Action Report, Case Gloucester Operation [1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report], Annex F, in AGO Analysis Files, 7613 a-g.
30. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 3.
31. Ltr., Whitehead to Kenney, 11 Nov. 43.
32. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 4.
33. Ibid., p. 6. GHQ S&PA issued its directive for the Sailor operation on 17 December 1943. Alamo Force, on 22 December 1943, issued F. O. No. 7 establishing the Michaelmas Task Force under Brig. Gen. Clarence A. Martin, with the 126th RCT (reinforced) as its principal component. Ibid.
34. Hq. Escalator, F. O. No. 5, 30 Nov. 43, in 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Annex F. General Whitehead apparently had some doubt as to the ability of the Allied Air Forces to fulfill this assignment, and believed that DEXTERITY should be postponed until after 15 January in order to permit completion of all-weather facilities at Nadzab for 75 fighters, 32 B-25's, 18 LB or A-20's, and 78 troop carriers; there should be 75 fighters and 36 A-20's at Gusap, and 75 fighters and 26 troop carriers at Finschnafen if the Sixth Army desired air supply for SACKLANDER. Moreover, an all-weather road, capable of carrying 1,000 tons per day, must be completed between Lae and Nadzab. Ltr., Whitehead to Kenney, 13 Nov. 43; memo, Whitehead to Kenney, 13 Nov. 43.
35. Dexter Report, p. 4.
36. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 3.
37. Hq. Escalator, F. O. No. 5, 30 Nov. 43, in 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Annex F. The 503d Parachute Infantry was deleted from the troop list because Lobodura lacked adequate facilities to stage transport planes for its movement, unless a heavy bombardment group were moved to Port Moresby. Uncertain weather over the Owen Stanley

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- Mountains might cause bombers at Moresby to be unavailable for aid on Z-day (Arawe) and D-day (Borgen Bay). Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 5.
38. Isum No. 148 (20 Oct. 43), p. 1. On 15 October 1943, the Japanese sent 52 Vals, Oscars, and Bombs to Oro Bay. All but four were shot down, the 475th Fighter Group getting 34 out of the 48. History, 433d Fighter Sq., May 43-Jan. 44, p. 7.
 39. Isum No. 149 (23 Oct. 43), p. 1.
 40. Isum No. 150 (27 Oct. 43), p. 1a. For example, 3 destroyers, 5 unidentified vessels, and 15 barges were sighted in Rein Bay by two B-24's on the night of 24-25 Oct. 43. Ibid., p. 2a. Various incoming cables report attacks by PT boats against barges which were running supplies and troops to western New Britain.
 41. Isum No. 160 (1 Dec. 43), p. 1.
 42. Isum No. 162 (8 Dec. 43), p. 1.
 43. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Annex A, p. 45. Defense of New Britain was a responsibility of the 8th Area Army with headquarters at Rabaul. The central area was entrusted to the 17th Division with headquarters at Cape Hoskins. The 65th Brigade, with headquarters at Cape Gloucester, had the area west of the line Tiedeck Bay-Pulie River mouth, as well as Vitu and Umboi islands. Ibid., pp. 47-48. The 141st and 143d Regiments, 65th Brigade, were veterans of Bataan. The 53d Regiment, 17th Division, was also identified in the Gloucester area. (Hq. MF 21, Operation Order No. 3-43, 23 Dec. 43, in 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Annex A, App. 1. Cf. CM-IN-3747 (11-16-43), MacArthur to G/S, CG-7883, 16 Nov. 43. A SOPAC prisoner of war located the 63d at Gaspara, the 81st in New Guinea, part of the 54th in Rabaul, and part of the 54th en route from China.
 44. Hq. Combat Team C, Operations Order No. 1-43, 20 Dec. 43, Annex A to 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase I, Annex A.
 45. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 7; 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Annex A, p. 8.
 46. Isum No. 164 (15 Dec. 43), p. 14.
 47. Commander Seventh Amphibious Force, Report on Cape Gloucester Operation [Seventh Amphib. Force, Report], 3 Feb. 44, Serial 00121, p. 15, in AGO Analysis Files 6-6.2612/44 (1260).
 48. AGF Board Report No. 65 SWPA, pp. 1-2, in AGO Analysis Files 4-2.65/44 (2603).

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- 49. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., May 42-April 44, p. 11; 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Annex A, p. 36. The coastline between Mauuli and the east side of Borgen Bay was photographed on Kodacolor on 18 December 1943. Stereo pairs were set up at the 1st Marine Division CP for study by lower echelon commanders, intelligence officers, boat crews, and others. A photographic interpreter was on hand to explain the photos. Ibid., p. 7. Photographic reconnaissance was augmented by daring ground reconnaissance. A Marine patrol investigated the area around Aisega from 24 September to 10 October 1943. Two small parties landed near Tauuli and Silimati Point to get hydrographical data on the beaches. Another patrol landed at Luschan Harbor near Gasmata on 6 October and remained in the area for three weeks. On the night of 9-10 October an officer and five natives were landed near Mio east of the Arawe strip for a short reconnaissance. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 7.
- 50. History, 8th Photo Recon. Sq., activation to 1 Feb. 44, n. 4.
- 51. 8th Photo Recon. Sq., Form 34's, Nov. 43.
- 52. 408th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 7-13 Nov. 43.
- 53. 90th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 14-20 Nov. 43.

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1. Isum No. 147 (16 Oct. 43), p. 1; History, 432d Fighter Sq., activation to 31 Jan. 44, p. 7; Col. Donald P. Hall, "Strafe-Bombing Pays Off in the South Pacific: How It Wrecks Enemy Airbases," in Air Force, Feb. 44, p. 16; Cain, "The Air War in the Southwest Pacific," in Air Force, Nov. 44, p. 35.
2. Isum No. 147 (16 Oct. 43), p. 1.
3. Isum No. 149 (23 Oct. 43), p. 2.
4. Isum No. 150 (27 Oct. 43), p. 1.
5. CM-IN-1634 (3-11-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, #C-7398, 3 Nov. 43.
6. 431st Fighter Sq., Narrative Combat Report [NCR], 3 Nov. 43, in History, 431st Fighter Sq., 17 June 43-31 Jan. 44.
7. Incoming cables, MacArthur to C/S WD, 1634 (3-11-43), #C-7398, 3 Nov. 43; 2512 (5-11-43), #C-7460, 5 Nov. 43. For further details, see Form 34's, 31 Oct.-6 Nov. 43; Isum No. 153 (6 Nov. 43), p. 2; and Lee Van Atta, "Strafe-Bombing Pays Off in the South Pacific: How It Blasts Jap Shipping," in Air Force, Feb. 44, pp. 13, 64.
8. CM-OPR-1298 (4-11-43), Marshall to MacArthur, #30, 4 Nov. 43.
9. CM-IN-2512 (5-11-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, #C-7460, 5 Nov. 43.
10. CM-IN-3786 (6-11-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, #C-7529, 6 Nov. 43; 475th Fighter Co. and 43d Bomb Co., Form 34's, 31 Oct.-6 Nov. 43. Photos taken before the carrier planes attacked revealed 8 heavy cruisers, 3 light cruisers, and 14 destroyers in Blanche Bay. CM-IN-4744 (8-11-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, #C-7600, 8 Nov. 43.
11. CM-IN-3786 (6-11-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, #C-7529, 6 Nov. 43.
12. CM-IN-4744 (8-11-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, #C-7600, 8 Nov. 43; 90th Bomb Co., 475th Fighter Co., 8th Fighter Co., and 9th Fighter Sq., Form 34's, 7-13 Nov. 43; 39th Fighter Sq., NCR, 7 Nov. 43; 431st Fighter Sq., NCR, 9 Nov. 43; 319th Bomb Sq., Narrative Mission Report [NMR], No. 211-CC, 9 Nov. 43; 400th Bomb Sq., NMR No. 310-G, 8 Nov. 43. Three P-38's were lost.
13. Incoming cables, MacArthur to C/S WD, 6048 (10-11-43), #C-7660, 10 Nov. 43; 6731 (11-11-43), #C-7706, 11 Nov. 43; and 7447 (12-11-43), #C-7737, 12 Nov. 43. Further data may be found in 65th and 403d Bomb Sqs., Form 34's, 7-13 Nov. 43, and in 403d Bomb Sq., NMR No. 331-K, 10 Nov. 43. One B-24 was lost.

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14. CM-IN-8731 (11-11-43), MacArthur to G/S WD, #C-7706, 11 Nov. 43.
15. 43d and 90th Bomb Gps., Form 34's, 7-13 Nov. 43; 64th Bomb Sq., MTR No. 314-G, 12 Nov. 43.
16. CM-IN-7823 (13-11-43), MacArthur to G/S WD, #C-7744, 13 Nov. 43. The enemy lost one cruiser and two destroyers sunk, one cruiser and one destroyer damaged. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Incoming cables, MacArthur to G/S WD, 3179 (5-12-43), #C-8546, 5 Dec. 43; 3700 (6-12-43), #J-8576, 6 Dec. 43; and 5152 (8-12-43), #G-8653, 8 Dec. 43.
19. The 3d Bomb Gp. (I) attacked Gasmata on 6 April 42. Army Air Forces in the War Against Japan, 1941-1942, p. 81.
20. Map, Japanese Antiaircraft Installations in New Britain, in History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, App. III, Doc. No. 19.
21. Isums Nos. 150 (27 Oct. 43), 151 (30 Oct. 43), 152 (3 Nov. 43), and 153 (6 Nov. 43); incoming cables, MacArthur to G/S WD, 194 (1-11-43), #C-7339, 1 Nov. 43; 3353 (6-11-43), #C-7507, 6 Nov. 43; 4245 (7-11-43), #C-7554, 7 Nov. 43; 4744 (8-11-43), #C-7600, 8 Nov. 43; 8731 (11-11-43), #C-7706, 11 Nov. 43; 10413 (17-11-43), #J-7901, 17 Nov. 43; and 11025 (18-11-43), #C-7949, 18 Nov. 43.
22. Bad weather prevented photography. 90th Bomb Sq., MTR No. 316-CC, 15 Nov. 43.
23. 11 P-40's dropped 12 x 500-lb. bombs. CM-IN-11025 (18-11-43), MacArthur to G/S WD, #C-7949, 18 Nov. 43.
24. MTR's as follows: 22d Bomb Gp., No. 325-BE, 22 Nov. 43; 38th Bomb Gp., No. 325-EH, 22 Nov. 43; 43d Bomb Gp., Nos. 323-G (20 Nov. 43), 325-G (22 Nov. 43), 327-Z (24 Nov. 43); 90th Bomb Gp., Nos. 323-G (20 Nov. 43), 324-I (21 Nov. 43), and 320-I (26 Nov. 43). Data in these reports have been checked against the Form 34's for the periods 14-20 and 21-27 Nov. 43.

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

Date	Gp. No. & type of a/c	Base	Target	No. & weight of bombs
20 Nov	43 25 B-24	Jackson	Ring Ring Ptn	44x100; 85x1,000
	90 25 B-24	Ward's	Ring Ring Ptn	280x100; 135x1,000
21 Nov	90 24 B-24	Ward's	Ring Ring Village	480x100; 96x1,000

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Date	Gp. No. & type of a/c	Base	Target	No. & weight of bombs
22 Nov	43 22 B-24	Jackson	Gasmata & Agur Is.	440x100; 96x1,000
	22 21 B-25	Dobodura	Gasmata Airrome	126x500
	38 42 B-25	Durand	Lindenhafen Ptn & Agur Is.	695x100
24 Nov	43 24 B-24	Jackson	Ring Ring Ptn	840x100; 22x1,000
26 Nov	90 13 B-24	Ward's	Lindenhafen Ptn	513x100

Losses were slight from these attacks. On 22 November 1943, the 823d Bombardment Squadron lost one B-24. The B-250-1's and B-1's were strafers, having eight forward-firing .50-cal. machine guns; the B-250's still had 75-mm. cannon and four forward-firing .50-cal. machine guns. On 23 November 1943, four RAAF Beauforts dropped 8 x 500- and 8 x 250-lb. bombs on the Gasmata dumps. CM-IN-14733 (24-11-43), MacArthur to C/S, WD, #C-8164, 24 Nov. 43.

25. Incoming cables, MacArthur to C/S WD, Nos. 1081 (2-12-43), #C-8442, 2 Dec. 43; 1479 (3-12-43), #C-477, 3 Dec. 43; 3179 (5-12-43), #C-8546, 5 Dec. 43; 3700 (6-12-43), #C-8576, 6 Dec. 43; 4364 (7-12-43), #C-3610, 7 Dec. 43; 5623 (9-12-43), #C-5678, 9 Dec. 43; 7012 (11-12-43), #C-5739, 11 Dec. 43; 8216 (13-12-43), #CA-77; and 8851 (14-12-43), #P-1682, 14 Dec. 43.
26. 499th Bomb Sq., MNR No. 339-L, 7 Dec. 43.
27. 8th Bomb Sq., MNR, 8 Dec. 43.
28. The narrative mission reports contain such statements as the following: "Bombing was excellent but no damage was believed caused." 498th Bomb Sq., No. 335-G, 3 Dec. 43. "Results other than bomb explosions could not be ascertained because of the thick nature of the undergrowth prevailing in the target, but it is estimated that much damage was inflicted on any dumps or stores that might have been in the area." 19th Bomb Sq., No. 351-BB, 18 Dec. 43. "The exact significance of this target was not given to us, but it could be assumed from the track traversing it that the 'supplies' were located there. Our bombs, bursting throughout the area, started no fires and it seems doubtful that anything of value was destroyed. For sheer tree-splitting, however, the mission was magnificent." 403d Bomb Sq., No. 353-GG, 22 Dec. 43.
29. Isuns Nos. 146 (13 Oct. 43), 147 (16 Oct. 43), 149 (23 Oct. 43), 151 (30 Oct. 43), 152 (3 Nov. 43), and 153 (6 Nov. 43).
30. 33d Bomb Sq., MNR No. 332-BB, 29 Nov. 43.
31. 19th Bomb Sq., MNR No. 332-BB, 29 Nov. 43.
32. 408th Bomb Sq., MNR No. 334-AA, 1 Dec. 43.

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- 33. 38th and 345th Bomb Gps., MMR's No. 335-G, 3 Dec. 43. The 432d Fighter Squadron covered with 11 P-38's, Form 34, 28 Nov.-4Dec. 43. The B-25's dropped 421 x 300-lb. bombs, expended 15,835 rounds of .30-cal., 74,680 rounds of .50-cal., and 96 rounds of 75-mm. ammunition.
- 34. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 8.
- 35. 43d and 380th Bomb Gps., MMR's No. 346-DD, 14 Dec. 43. The 529th and 530th Bombardment Squadrons of the 380th Bombardment Group were stationed at Lobodura to participate in preparation for Operation DEXTERITY. For details of this strike, see n. 41 below.
- 36. 38th Bomb Gp., MMR No. 346-EE, 14 Dec. 43. The 71st Bombardment Squadron dropped 15 of its 300-lb. bombs on Lue Island and the 822d Bombardment Squadron hit Malanguo Island at the Lulua River mouth with 36 of 42 x 300-lb. bombs.
- 37. 38th Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 346-EJ, 14 Dec. 43; 90th Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 346-D, 14 Dec. 43.
- 38. 22d Bomb Gp., Form 34's, 12-18 Dec. 43 and MMR's No. 347-GG, 14 Dec. 43. The 19th Bombardment Squadron, flying B-26's, dropped 33 of its 27 x 1,000-lb. bombs on the target; the 33d Bombardment Squadron claimed 6 to 15 hits out of 33 x 1,000-lb. bombs dropped; the 2d Bombardment Squadron hit the north dispersal area and the lagoon; the 408th Bombardment Squadron reported 20 per cent in the dispersal areas.
- 39. 38th Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 347-H, 15 Dec. 43; 90th Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 347-J, 15 Dec. 43.
- 40. 43d Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 347-DD, 15 Dec. 43; 380th Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 347-GG, 14 Dec. 43; 3d Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 347-BH, 14 Dec. 43; 345th Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 347-I, 15 Dec. 43. During the night of 14-15 December 1943, 12 RAAF Beauforts bombed Vunakanau. CM-12-10212 (16-12-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, #CA-85, 16 Dec. 43.
- 41. The following table provides data on Fifth Air Force bomber strikes in the Gasmata and Arwe areas on 13 and 14 December 43. Data was compiled from Narrative Mission Reports and Form 34's for the period 12-16 December 1943. Strafing by escorting fighter planes is not included in this table.

Date	Group	No. of a/c	Target	No. & Wt. of bombs			Rds. of ammunition	
				250	300	500 1,000	.30	.50
13	43	17 B-24	Lindenhafen Ptn.			102		
Dec	90	26 B-24	Ring Fing Ptn.			156		
	380	17 B-24	Lindenhafen Ptn.			136		
	38	26 B-25	Lindenhafen Ptn.	154			6,625	29,565

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Date	Group	No. of a/c	Target	No. & wt. of bombs				Rds. of ammunition	
				250	300	500	1,000	.20	.50
13 Dec	345	24	B-25 Ring Ring Ptn., etc.		189			11,900 ^a	51,140
14 Dec	43	35	B-24 Anulut Ptn.				204		
	90	28	B-24 Pilelo Island				208		
	380	37	B-24 Anulut Ptn.				252		
	38	26	B-25 Arawe Islands	168				7,025	31,890
	3	71	A-20 Anulut Ptn.	116	51	87		b	12,116
	345	36	B-25 Anulut Ptn.		234			18,050	58,440
	22	9	B-26 Gasmata Airdrome				120		
		31	B-25						
TOTALS		100	B-24	116	766	87	1,178	43,600	183,151
		9	B-26						
		93	B-25						
		71	A-20						

a Also expended 72 x 75-mm. shells.
b Also expended 168 x 20-mm. shells.

42. Isum No. 164 (15 Dec. 43), p. 1.
43. Isum No. 165 (18 Dec. 43), p. 1.
44. 112th Cavalry Regt., Historical Report 24 Nov. 43 to 10 Feb. 44 [112th Cavalry Report], pp. 1-5, in AGO Analysis Files, 91-71.1 (1792). The 1st Squadron, less Troops A and B but plus engineers and service troops, was to come in at H plus 30 minutes; the artillery and antiaircraft units were due from Cape Cretin in LCE's and LCM's at H plus 2 hours. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 9.
45. 112th Cavalry Report, p. 5.
46. Ibid., p. 6. This source disagrees with Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 8, in minor points. The former has the U.S.S. Sands silencing the guns, one of which was said to be a 25-mm. AA piece; the latter has the boats getting to within 50 yards of shore, reports the Japanese AA piece as 37-mm., and credits a destroyer with silencing enemy fire.
47. 112th Cavalry Regt., S-3 Journal, Operations Diary, 24 Nov. 43-10 Feb. 44, v. 2, in AGO Analysis Files, 91-71.3 (1792-d); Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 8.
48. 112th Cavalry Regt., S-3 Journal, Operations Diary, v. 2. The men debarked into 14 Buffaloes and 24 Alligators. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 8.
49. 112th Cavalry Report, p. 6; Report of Dexterity Operation, v. 8.
50. 13th Bomb Sq., MCR No. 348-AA, 15 Dec. 43, and Form 34, 12-18 Dec. 43. The 112th Cavalry Regiment's S-3 Journal, Operations Diary, p. 2, states: "The beach was bombed and strafed by B-25 Mitchell bombers during the process of landing. There is no record whatever

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of such an attack in any NMR's or the Form 34's. The beach itself was neither bombed nor strafed.

51. 112th Cavalry Report, p. 7. Casualties for the day were: Allied, 13 killed, 25 wounded, and 29 missing; Japanese, 60 killed. CM-IN-10212 (10-11-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, #CA-85, 16 Dec. 43.
52. 501st Bomb Sq., NMR unnumbered, 16 Dec. 43. The squadron took off from Schwimmer in the afternoon of 14 December and staged at Dobodura for its Arawe mission. *Ibid.*
53. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., p. 40.
54. 112th Cavalry Report, p. 7.
55. 432d Fighter Sq., Form 34, 12-18 Dec. 43.
56. 431st Fighter Sq., Form 34, 12-18 Dec. 43.
57. 501st Bomb Sq., NMR unnumbered, 16 Dec. 43. This report states that no friendly fighters were seen at the time of the attacks.
58. 112th S-3 Journal, Operations Diary, p. 3. The communique reports no shipping losses. CM-IN-10212 (16-12-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, #CA-85, 16 Dec. 43.
59. 341st and 433d Fighter Sqs., Form 34's, 12-18 Dec. 43.
60. Four P-38's of 433d Fighter Squadron destroyed one Zeke at 1115. Form 34, 12-18 Dec. 43. The following table, compiled from Form 34's, 12-18 Dec. 43, shows details of fighter action on Z-day:

Fighter Cover and Patrols, Arawe, 15 Dec. 43
(Effective sorties only)

Sq.	No. of a/c	Time of takeoff	Base	Incidents
432	4 P-38	0615	Dobodura	Rcn to Arawe, Open Bay, Wide Bay, Rabaul
432	9 P-38	0645	Dobodura	No sightings
431	12 P-38	0705	Dobodura	Sighted 12 Zekes, 10 Bettys, 20 Oscars. At 0845, 1 flight W of Didmon attacked by about 12 Zekes; P-38's avoided combat.
432	2 P-38	0741	Dobodura	Patrol north coast, Wide Bay, Open Bay
341	16 P-47	0845	Finschnafen	Arawe patrol, no sightings
433	3 P-38	0910	Dobodura	Scramble over convoy, no sightings
433	4 P-38	0945	Dobodura	Destroyed 1 Zeke at 1115.
80	15 P-38	0955	Dobodura	Arawe patrol, no sightings

Sq.	No. of a/c	Time of takeoff	Base	Incidents
340	6 P-47	1010	Dobodura	Arawe patrol, no sightings
432	4 P-38	1045	Dobodura	Patrol shipping, no sightings
342	16 P-47	1115	Finschhafen	Arawe patrol, no sightings
340	8 P-47	1130	Dobodura	Arawe patrol to 1420, then cover for bombers over Cape Gloucester
80	12 P-38	1135	Dobodura	Arawe patrol, no sightings
433	4 P-38	1150	Dobodura	Patrol western New Britain, incomplete
431	10 P-38	1310	Dobodura	Arawe patrol, no sightings
432	4 P-38	1445	Dobodura	Fight with 30 Zekes, 12 Bettys and Sallys at 1800

61. 112th Cavalry Regt., S-3 Journal, Operations Diary, p. 11.
62. 89th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 349-GG, 17 Dec. 43.
63. 8th and 90th Bomb Sqs., MMR's No. 352-LL, 20 Dec. 43.
64. 8th and 89th Bomb Sqs., MMR's No. 353-KK, 21 Dec. 43.
65. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 9.
66. 89th and 90th Bomb Sqs., MMR's No. 358-ll, 26 Dec. 43.
67. 112th Cavalry Report, p. 11.
68. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 9.
69. The following examples are illustrative: on 16 December 1943, two Seafighters, destroyed five barges off Cape Hoskins on the north coast while two PAF A-20's damaged two barges at Cape Dampier on the south coast (CM-III-10326 /17-12-43/, MacArthur to C/S WD, #CA-89, 17 Dec. 43); on 28 December 1943, nine B-25D-1's, 13th Bombardment Squadron, searched the coast from Omol, near Arawe, west to Cape Dushing and probably destroyed two barges (13th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 361-EE, 28 Dec. 43); on 15 January 1944, three B-25D-1's on a sweep along the south coast, strafed villages, bridges and gun positions from King Ring Plantation to Jacquinet Bay but found no barges (500th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 15-D-1, 16 Jan. 44).
70. Form 34, 2-8 Jan. 44. Gilnit Village was hit by four B-24's on 14 January 1944 with 48 x 500-lb. bombs when Nakaroo Village south-west of Borgen Bay, was closed in. 320th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 14-I-1, 15 Jan. 44.
71. Incoming cables, MacArthur to C/S WD, 12684 (20-12-43), #CA-104, 20 Dec. 43, and 15381 (24-12-43), #CA-122, 24 Dec. 43.

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72. The following table, compiled from MMR's and Form 34's, shows the principal Fifth Air Force bombing and strafing attacks in the Arawe area and along the south coast from 16 December 1943 to 29 January 1944:

Date	Group	No. of a/c	Target	No. & Wt. of bombs					Rds. of Ammunition .50
				100	250	300	500	1,000	
16 Dec	3	6 A-20	Barge sweep						
19 Dec	3	21 A-20	Sigul-Pulie R. area	71					20,150
20 Dec	3	19 A-20	" " " "	24		42			21,160
25 Dec	3	18 A-20	" " " "	52	31				21,825
27 Dec	3	9 A-20	Didmop Village				31		16,350
28 Dec	3	9 B-25	Barge sweep				2		2,500
<u>44</u>									
7 Jan	3	12 A-20	E end of Amalut Ptn.	4	44				17,840
8 Jan	3	6 A-20	Didmop Village	23					10,000
8 Jan	22	8 B-26	Didmop Village				48		
8 Jan	22	10 B-25	Untingalu area				54		
13 Jan	3	10 A-20	Didmop Village	42					12,350
14 Jan	90	7 B-24	Gilnit and Lagan				81		
15 Jan	345	3 B-25	Barge sweep				12		6,550 ^a
16 Jan	43	18 B-24	E end of Amalut Ptn.				136		
16 Jan	345	20 B-25	" " " "	14	56	50			30,195 ^b
29 Jan	3	36 A-20	Cape Busing area	6	1	141			55,040

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

- 73. 89th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 7-I-1, 8 Jan. 44; Form 34, 2-8 Jan. 44. The crew of the A-20 was saved. Ten B-25's bombed the same target on 8 January 1944 with considerable success. 33d Bomb Sq., Form 34, 2-8 Jan. 44.
- 74. 64th, 65th, and 403d Bomb Sqs., MMR's No. 16-A-1, 17 Jan. 44 and Form 34's, 16-22 Jan. 44.
- 75. 500th and 501st Bomb Sqs., Form 34's, 16-22 Jan. 44 and MMR's No. 16-B-1, 16 and 17 Jan. 44. These two sources disagree on bomb loads.
- 76. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 10.
- 77. 8th and 20th Bomb Sqs., MMR's No. 20-D-1, 20 Jan. 44. Twenty-four A-20's bombed and strafed villages, plantations, trails, and bridges in a sweep across New Britain and back. A pocket of Japanese troops near Cape Busing retreated to the northeast after 36 A-20's dropped 36 tons of bombs in the area. 3d Bomb Gp., Form 34's, 23-29 Jan. 44.
- 78. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 10.

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79. Incoming cables, MacArthur to G/S WD, 12824 (13-3-44), #C-3045, 18 March 44; 13622 (19-3-44), #C-3082, 19 March 44; and 14349 (30-3-44), unnumbered, 20 March 44. The 40th Division in turn was relieved by the Australian Fifth Division on 27 November 1944. 40th Infantry Div., Backhander Operation Report April 28 to November 27 1944, pp. 9, 11, in AGO Analysis Files, 340-33.4 (10157).
 80. Form 34's, 12-18 Dec. 43, 19-25 Dec. 43, and 26 Dec. 43-1 Jan. 44.
 81. Issue No. 167 (25 Dec. 43), p. 19. It was expected that the Japanese would average 125 to 134 sorties daily after 15 December. Actually, the number varied from 9 to 111, with an average of 58. Ibid. Night raids were the rule.
 82. Report of Dexterity Operation, "Lessons Learned," p. 7.
 83. 431st Fighter Sq., Individual Combat Reports, Mission No. 1-139, 17 Dec. 43 and ACR, 17 Dec. 43; 433d Fighter Sq., Form 34, 12-18 Dec. 43. The 432d Fighter Sq., escorting bombers to Cape Gloucester, got one fighter of this total, and one probable. Individual Combat Reports, Mission No. 2-135, 16 Dec. 43.
 84. 342d Fighter Sq., ACR's, 21-22 Dec. 43.
 85. CM-IX-11510 (18-12-43), MacArthur to G/S WD, #CA-96, 18 Dec. 43.
 86. 341st Fighter Sq., ACR, 18 Dec. 43. This unit's Form 34, 12-18 Dec. 43, reports six Vals and two Oscars destroyed.
 87. 433d Fighter Sq., ACR, 18 Dec. 43; Form 34, 12-18 Dec. 43.
 88. 33d Bomb Sq., ACR No. 352-FF, 19 Dec. 43.
 89. 342d Fighter Sq., ACR, 23 Dec. 43, encl. -23 in History, 342d Fighter Sq., 1 July 43-31 Jan. 44. The present writer believes this comment was meant to be a sarcastic snarl directed to the Arawe controller who was by no means infallible. In the afternoon of 17 December 1943, for example, the Arawe controller reported eight P-47's of 342d Fighter Squadron as Zeros and caused American AA units at Arawe to fire on them. 342d Fighter Sq., Form 34, 12-18 Dec. 43.
 90. 342d Fighter Sq., ACR, 23 Dec. 43.
 91. 341st Fighter Sq., ACR, Mission No. 1-40, 27 Dec. 43; 340th Fighter Sq., ACR, Mission No. 0-15, 27 Dec. 43; Form 34's, 19-25 Dec. 43.
 92. 112th Cavalry Regt., S-3 Journal.
 93. 80th, 340th, and 341st Fighter Sqs., Form 34's, 2-8 Jan. 44.
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- 94. AGF Board Report, SERA No. 6, "Airborne Supply during the Arawe and Gane Gloucester Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area," 7 Feb. 44
[AGF Report No. 6], v. 5, in AGO Analysis Files, 4-2.6/44 (1573);
Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 16.
- 95. AGF Report No. 6, v. 1; 33d and 408th Bomb Sqs., Form 34's, 12-13
Dec. 43.
- 96. AGF Report No. 6, v. 7.
- 97. Ibid., pp. 2-3.
- 98. Ibid., pp. 3-4; Dexter Report, p. 34; History, 39th Troop Carrier Sq.,
Jan. 43-Jan. 44, p. LXXI. These drops were not very satisfactory.
Inexperienced personnel and poorly designated drop areas were
responsible.

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Chapter III

1. Dexter Report, p. 12; Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 10.
2. Dexter Report, p. 12.
3. 43d Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 348-DD, 16 Dec. 43.
4. 321st and 400th Bomb Sqs., MMR's No. 348-F, 16 Dec. 43.
5. 319th and 380th Bomb Sqs., MMR's No. 348-F, 16 Dec. 43.
6. 13 Bomb Sq., MMR No. 350-AA, 18 Dec. 43.
7. 90th Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 350-F, 18 Dec. 43.
8. 80th Fighter Sq., HCR., 18 Dec. 43. One of the enemy fighters was shot down.
9. 90th Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 351-M, 18-24 Dec. 43; 23d Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 351-BB, 18 Dec. 43; 380th Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 351-DD, 19 Dec. 43; 43d Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 351-EE, 19-20 Dec. 43.
10. 65th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 12-13 Dec. 43.
11. Ibid.
12. 403d Bomb Sq., Form 34, 12-18 Dec. 43.
13. 345th Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 357-LL, 24-25 Dec. 43.
14. See App. 3 for statistics.
15. 2d, 8th, and 408th Bomb Sqs., Form 34's, 19-25 Dec. 43.
16. GM-IN-9523 (15-12-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, #CA-82, 15 Dec. 43.
17. GM-IN-10212 (16-12-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, #CA-85, 16 Dec. 43.
Seven Beaufighters strafed gun positions, revetments and dumps at Borpon, New Ireland on 15 December 1943. Ibid.
18. GM-IN-12183 (19-12-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, #CA-99, 19 Dec. 43.
19. GM-IN-13249 (21-12-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, #CA-108, 21 Dec. 43.
20. GM-IN-16233 (26-12-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, #CA-137, 26 Dec. 43.

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21. From 19 to 30 December 1943, the following attacks were carried out. Alexishafen: 89 B-25's, 9 B-26's, 10 P-47's; Madang: 119 B-25's, 24 B-26's, 27 B-24's; Newak: 56 B-25's. Incoming cables, MacArthur to C/S WD, 12684 (20-12-43), #CA-104, 20 Dec. 43; 13249 (21-12-43), #CA-108, 21 Dec. 43; 14066 (22-12-43), #CA-113, 22 Dec. 43; 14578 (23-12-43), #CA-115, 23 Dec. 43; 15281 (24-12-43), #CA-122, 24 Dec. 43; 16293 (26-12-43), #CA-127, 26 Dec. 43; 16685 (27-12-43), #CA-131, 27 Dec. 43; 17267 (28-12-43), #CA-136, 28 Dec. 43; 17912 (29-12-43), #CA-137, 29 Dec. 43; and 19283 (31-12-43), #CA-146, 31 Dec. 43.
22. See incoming cables, MacArthur to C/S WD, as above and 15801 (25-12-43), #CA-124, 25 Dec. 43, and 18545 (30-12-43), #CA-139, 30 Dec. 43. On 25 Dec. 43, a SOPAC carrier force dropped 32 tons of bombs and nine torpedoes on shipping in Kavieng harbor and destroyed one destroyer, two large merchant vessels, and three barges. C.-IX-16431 (27-12-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, #CA-129, 27 Dec. 43.
23. Isum No. 171 (3 Jan. 44), p. 1.
24. Isum No. 170 (5 Jan. 44), p. 1.
25. Allied Geographical Section SWPA, "Locality Study of Cape Gloucester," Terrain Study No. 63 (Revised), 26 Aug. 43, p. 1, in A-2 Lib., K-34532, #922.3.
26. Survey of Bismarck Archipelago, p. 19.
27. Reefs offshore about 10,000 yards were a navigational hazard, but the beaches were finally selected at Borgen Bay because fixed shore defenses apparently were absent, egress appeared satisfactory, surf was moderate, and they were beyond effective range of enemy artillery at Cape Gloucester. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, p. 3; Seventh Amphib. Force, Report, p. 1.
28. "Locality Study of Cape Gloucester," p. 11.
29. Hq. Backhander Task Force, Operations Order No. 2-43, 14 Nov. 43, in 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Annex G. The assault landing force consisted of 7,690 troops; 3,350 were to come in as Combat Team B; engineers, antiaircraft units and others scheduled for D plus 1 day numbered 2,400; Landing Team 21 had about 1,500, making a total of about 15,000 troops to land by D plus 1. Report of Lexterity Operation, p. 10.
30. Seventh Amphib. Force, Report, p. 2.
31. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, p. 2; Seventh Amphib. Force, Report, p. 7. Rear Adm. Daniel E. Barbey commanded Task Force 76.

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- 32. Seventh Amphib. Force, Report, p. 6.
- 33. Ibid., pp. 8-9. Two heavy cruisers outside the reef fired 730 x 8-in. shells on the airfield from 0600 to 0720; two light cruisers outside the reef fired 2,000 x 6-in. and 300 x 5-in. shells at Yellow Beaches and Target Hill from 0635 to 0727 while APD's moved inside the reefs toward the beaches. Inside the reef, two destroyers fired on Yellow Beaches, Target Hill, and Silinati Pt. from 0655 to 0700 and resumed from 0720 to 0727, firing altogether 575 x 5-in. shells. Ibid.; Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 11; 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, p. 3.
- 34. 43d Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 359-JJ, 28-29 Dec. 43; 380th Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 359-HH, 26-27 Dec. 43.
- 35. 500th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 359-BE, 27 Dec. 43.
- 36. Seventh Amphib. Force, Report, p. 9; 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, p. 3.
- 37. The 49th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 359-LL, 28 Dec. 43, states that barges were 25-50 yards offshore when strafing ceased; but the 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, p. 3, disagrees. "The medium bombers continued to strafe the coastal area until assault boats were within 500 yards of the beaches." The area was still covered with smoke at 0900. 89th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 359-GG, 27 Dec. 43.
- 38. Seventh Amphib. Force, Report, p. 9. There were two rocket-firing LCI's present, only one of which fired. Another source reports that "two Dukws placed a rocket barrage on the landing beaches." Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 11.
- 39. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, p. 3; Report of Liaison Officer, Col. Horace O. Cushman, Inf., with 1st Marine Div.--26 Dec. 43 to 1 Jan. 44 [Cushman Report], p. 5, in AGO Analysis Files, 12-1.2612/43 (990).
- 40. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, p. 4.
- 41. Seventh Amphib. Force, Report, p. 7.
- 42. 3d Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 359-GG, 27 Dec. 43. The 89th Bomb Sq., scheduled for alert from 0845 to 0915, was ordered to leave at 0856 because Japanese Zeros and Vals were reported in the area.
- 43. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, p. 4; Maj. J. B. Bonham, Memorandum in Cushman Report, Annex C, p. 1. Enemy casualties for the day were 50 killed, 2 captured. Marine losses were 21 killed, 23 wounded.

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44. 400th Bomb Sq., AMR No. 359-LN, 27 Dec. 43.
45. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, Part II, pp. 1-4; 13th Bomb Sq., AMR No. 259-FF, 26 Dec. 43; Task Group 76.3, Bombardment and Landing Operation at Tauali (Cape Gloucester), New Britain, 26 Dec. 43, U.S.S. Reid Action Report, Serial 025 /TG 76.3, Report/, pp. 1-2, in AGO Analysts Files, 6-6.2612/43 (776); Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 13. The only significant action at Tauali occurred during the night of 29-30 December when the 3d Company, 53d Regiment made a desperate attack against the Marine's perimeter. The Japanese lost 83 killed while Marine casualties were 6 killed and 17 wounded (1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, Part II, pp. 3-4). At 1650 on 30 December 1943, 12 A-20's, 8th Bombardment Squadron, bombed artillery positions in a palm grove at Lagoon Pt. by skimming 33 x 350-lb. bombs off the water. 8th Bomb Sq., AMR No. 363-JJ, 31 Dec. 43. On 5 January 1944, Landing Team 21 rejoined its regiment in the airdrome sector (Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 13), and ICM's moved its equipment to Cape Gloucester during the period 7 to 11 January. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, Part II, p. 6. The date of the junction of the two forces is given as 10 Jan. 44 in History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., p. 57.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., pp. 49-50; Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 13; Dexter Report, p. 16; History, 33d Fighter Control Sq., 11 Dec. 41 to 31 March 44, p. 5. Air Liaison parties are described as follows in Advon Fifth Air Force, Operations Memorandum Number 4, 8 Feb. 44, in History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, App. II, Doc. No. 24: "In order that requests for direct air support from all army forces can be properly evaluated, planned and executed; and in order to reduce signal communications lag to a minimum, the following system has been devised and is published for the guidance of all concerned.
- "1. General: All requests for cooperative strike missions, reconnaissance flights or sorties, fighter cover, artillery adjustment observation, aerial photographs, emergency air supply, and the like, originating at allied ground force headquarters engaged in combat will be coordinated through Air Liaison Party channels, except where otherwise specifically directed by existing Operations Orders and Signal Operations Instructions.
- "a. Headquarters, Advance Echelon, Fifth Air Force will provide appropriate ground headquarters with an Air Liaison Party. The officer in charge of this party is an Assistant, A-3, of this Headquarters and will represent the Deputy Commander, Advance Echelon, Fifth Air Force. His duties will be, as is implied by official designation, liaison in its broadest sense.
- "b. The Air Liaison Party Net is the communications link between all ground forces in the field and the Advance Echelon, Fifth Air Force. Also it is a communications link between the

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Ground Forces and all Air Task Forces. It will also be available for the transmission of emergency traffic such as air raid information and flash intelligence.

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

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

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

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

48. Evidence in this matter is difficult to reconcile. One source states, "A large number of enemy aircraft approached Gloucester at 0900/D out swung south before encountering our fighters and carried out an attack at Arawe which apparently had been prearranged. If he had known of the Gloucester landing by 0830/D, which seems certain, it appears that he was unable to divert the Arawe strike to the far more promising and urgent targets at Gloucester." Seventh Amphib. Force. Report, p. 10. The communique states: "Over 100 enemy aircraft reported over area Arawe morning December 26, left direction Cape Gloucester diverted by Allied fighters towards Rabaul." C.I-IX-16685 (27-12-43), MacArthur to C/S WD, SA-131, 27 Dec. 43. Thus, the Navy reports this force en route to Arawe; the cable reports the planes going toward Gloucester and Rabaul. The 321st Bomb Sq., in its MMR No. 359-II, 27 Dec. 43, reports having sighted four possible Vals starting to attack U. S. landing craft at Cape Gloucester at 0904, 26 December 1943. There was no attack at Arawe, but on 27 December 1943, such a strike as reported by the Navy for 26 December actually

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did occur. Moreover, a careful search of Form 34's reveals no reference to any such force at Borgen Bay in the morning of 26 December.

49. 431st Fighter Sq., NOR, 27 Dec. 43.
50. 80th Fighter Sq., NOR No. 278, 26 Dec. 43.
51. Ibid.; 431st Fighter Sq., NOR No. 1-147, 27 Dec. 43; 36th Fighter Sq., NOR No. 2, 26 Dec. 43; 35th Fighter Sq., NOR No. 5-4, 26 Dec. 43; Seventh Amphib. Force, Report, p. 10. One of the Vals was shot down by naval AA fire, but this same fire prevented the 433d Fighter Squadron's 16 P-38's from attacking the Vals. Form 34, 26 Dec. 43-1 Jan. 44.
52. 500th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 359-KK, 26 Dec. 43.
53. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, p. 5.
54. 500th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 359-KK, 26 Dec. 43. LST No. 465 is credited with one B-25 which, upon being in flames, dropped its bombs over one of the shore batteries and killed two officers and wounded two enlisted men. Maj. Harry A. Stella, memorandum, in Cushman Report, Annex B, p. 2.
55. 341st Fighter Sq., NOR No. 2-29, 26 Dec. 43; Seventh Amphib. Force, Report, p. 10. This last source says that there were 18 torpedo bombers, all of which were shot down.
56. 342d Fighter Sq., NOR No. 2-29, 26 Dec. 43.
57. 340th Fighter Sq., NOR No. 0-25, 31 Dec. 43; 342d Fighter Sq., NOR No. 2-41, 31 Dec. 43; 35th Fighter Sq., NOR, 31 Dec. 43.
58. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 11. Another source states that the 5th Marines, less one-half of the 3d Battalion, arrived on 29 December. Cushman Report, p. 3. Still another source has two battalions arriving on 29 December. Maj. J. B. Bonham, Memorandum in Cushman Report, Annex C, p. 2. The Report of Dexterity Operation is the best authority in this case.
59. Maj. J. B. Bonham, memorandum, in Cushman Report, Annex C, pp. 1-2.
60. 8th and 90th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 361-AA, 29 Dec. 43. Eight P-47's started to attack the A-20's but broke off before doing any damage. Still, "our pilots did not appreciate the fact that our fighters could not immediately recognize an A-20."
61. Maj. J. B. Bonham, Memorandum in Cushman Report, Annex C, p. 2.

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62. 90th Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 362-CC, 30 Dec. 43; 380th Bomb Gp., MMR's no. 362-DD, 29 Dec. 43; 43d Bomb Gp., MMR No. 362-EE, 30 Dec. 43-2 Jan. 44. Two squadrons of P-47's provided area cover.
63. 19th and 33d Bomb Sqs., MMR's No. 362-FF, 29 Dec. 43; 345th Bomb Gp., MMR No. 362-GG, 29-30 Dec. 43.
64. 498th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 362-GG, 29 Dec. 43.
65. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase II, pp. 7-11.
66. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 12. Long Island, which lies about 50 miles northeast of Saïdor, New Guinea, was captured by Company E, 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment (reinforced) without opposition after landings during the night of 25-26 December 1943. A radar station was installed south of Cape Fearur, and later a larger station was installed near the northern tip of the island. *Ibid.*, p. 13. On 12 February 1944, Company B, 1st Marine Regiment, landed on Rooke (Umboi) Island from Cape Gloucester. There were no Japanese present. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase IV, p. 11.
67. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Annex A, p. 17.
68. Col. J. E. Bird, "Report on Backhander Operation from 1 January 1944 to 7 January 1944," in Gushman Report, Annex D, p. 2.
69. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., p. 52.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
71. During the night of 26-27 Dec. 43, the Japanese launched four vicious counterattacks against the center of the perimeter which was held by the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, and lost over 200 dead. Map, encl. no. 3 in Report of Dexterity Operation.
72. 89th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 360-GG, 23 Dec. 43. The squadron's A-20's dropped 46 x 500-lb. bombs and strafed with 15,370 x .50-cal. ammunition. This strike might possibly have been west of the beachhead, but available evidence seems to indicate that it was in support of the beachhead.
73. 498th and 500th Bomb Sqs., MMR's No. 361-HH, 29 Dec. 43. The two squadrons dropped 68 x 300-lb. and 16 x 250-lb. bombs and strafed with 34,685 rounds of .30- and .50-cal. ammunition.
74. 43d Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 361-II, 29-30 Dec. 43.
75. 38th Bomb Gp., MMR's No. 362-C, 30 Dec. 43. In these attacks, 24 B-25's dropped 161 x 300-lb. bombs and fired 38,195 rounds of .30- and .50-cal., and 172 rounds of 75-mm. ammunition.

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76. 89th and 90th Bomb Sqs., MMR's No. 363-H, 30-31 Dec. 43.
77. Cushman Report, p. 5; 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase III, p. 2.
78. Ibid.
79. In these two attacks the 3d Bombardment Group dropped 106 x 250-lb. and 129 x 100-lb. bombs, and fired 51,050 rounds of .50-cal., 400 rounds of .30-cal., and 30 rounds of 20-mm. ammunition. 89th and 90th Bomb Sqs., MMR's No. 364-JJ, 1 Jan. 44; 13th, 89th, and 90th Bomb Sqs., MMR's Nos. 1-L-1 and 1-L-1, 1 Jan. 44.
80. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase III, pp. 3-4.
81. 8th and 89th Bomb Sqs., MMR's No. 3-A-1, 4 Jan. 44; 82d Recon Sq., Form 34, 1-8 Jan. 44. In these attacks, 91 x 250-lb. bombs, 33,960 x .50-cal. ammunition, and 45 x 37-mm. shells were expended.
82. 13th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 4-J-1, 4 Jan. 44.
83. 509th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 6-I-1, 7 Jan. 44; 498th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 1-8 Jan. 44.
84. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase III, pp. 6-8.
85. Ibid., p. 8.
86. 43d Bomb Sq., MMR's No. 7-A-1, 7-B-1, 7-H-1, 8 Jan. 44.
87. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase III, p. 9; 64th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 7-B-1. In the morning of 8 January 1944, the 43d Bombardment Group was scheduled to bomb Erimahafen Plantation on New Guinea. The 64th Squadron of this group was diverted to attack defenses north of Hill 660. Cloud cover at the target prevented five of the B-24's from bombing and the sixth hit a reef just east of the target. 64th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 8-G-1, 9 Jan. 44.
88. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase III, pp. 10-11.
89. 90th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 10-D-1, 10 Jan. 44 and Form 34, 9-15 Jan. 44; 321st Bomb Sq., MMR No. 10-E-1, 11 Jan. 44 and Form 34, 9-15 Jan. 44. The A-20's dropped 55 x 250-lb. bombs and fired 18,390 rounds of .50-cal. and 84 rounds of 20-mm. ammunition; the B-24's dropped 72 x 500-lb. bombs.
90. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase III, pp. 13-15; 8th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 14-J-1, 15 Jan. 44. The 71st Bomb Sq., with 6 B-25's, bombed and strafed villages from Rein Bay to Kokopo on 14 January after a barge sweep revealed no targets. Form 34, 9-15 Jan. 44.

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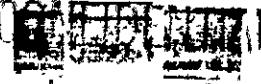
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91. CM-IX-19537 (29-1-44), MacArthur to C/S WD, #C-1076, 29 Jan. 44.
92. 89th Bomb Sq., MFR No. 23-L-1, 24 Jan. 44. A reinforced rifle company of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines crossed Borgen Bay in LCM's to capture the Point. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase IV, p. 5.
93. Ibid.
94. CM-IX-17310 (26-1-44), MacArthur to C/S WD, #C-948, 26 Jan. 44.
95. 13th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 23-29 Jan. 44. Fifteen P-47's, 341st Fighter Squadron provided area cover.
96. 8th and 13th Bomb Sqs., 89th and 432d Fighter Sqs., Form 34's, 23-29 Jan. 44. In these two attacks the A-20's dropped 19 tons of bombs and fired 32,500 rounds of .50-cal. ammunition.
97. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase IV, p. 9.
98. 432d and 433d Fighter Sqs., and 89th Bomb Sq., Form 34's, 16-23 Jan. 44; CM-IX-15207 (23-1-44), MacArthur to C/S WD, #C-841, 23 Jan. 44.
99. 498th and 500th Bomb Sqs., MFR's No. 33-J-1, 3 Feb. 44; 80th and 431st Fighter Sqs., Form 34's, 30 Jan.-5 Feb. 44.
100. 90th Bomb Co., MFR's No. 52-B-1, 25-26 Feb. 44; 43d Bomb Co., MFR's No. 52-A-1, 23 Feb. 44 and No. 53-Y-1, 23 Feb. 44; 345th Bomb Co., MFR's No. 53-X-1, 23 Feb. 44; 823d Bomb Sq., MFR No. 53-L-1, 11 March 44. In these strikes, Iooki was an alternate target for Komote and Hense Bay.
101. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase IV, p. 10; 69th and 310th Fighter Sqs., Form 34, 20-26 Feb. 44.
102. 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Phase IV, p. 10.
103. 43d Bomb Co., MFR's No. 36-A-1, 7 Feb. 44; 90th Bomb Co., MFR's No. 36-B-1, 6 Feb. 44; Form 34's, 30 Jan.-5 Feb. 44. On 13 February 1944, one B-24 dropped 6 x 1,000-lb. bombs south of the airdrome. 64th Bomb Sq., MFR No. 44-A-1, 15 Feb. 44.
104. 43d Bomb Co., MFR's No. 48-E-1, 18-21 Feb. 44; 90th Bomb Co., MFR's No. 48-F-1, 19-21 Feb. 44 and Form 34's, 13-19 Feb. 44; 319th Bomb Sq., MFR No. 51-N-1, 26 Feb. 44. Eight B-25's bombed Linga Linga Plantation on the shores of Salasea Harbor, Eleonora Bay, on 21 February when a front interfered with their primary mission. 823d Bomb Sq., MFR No. 52-Q-1, 11 March 44.

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- 105. Incoming cables, MacArthur to C/S WD, 16493 (25-1-44), #C-916, 25 Jan. 44; 8438 (12-2-44), #C-1622, 12 Feb. 44; 10505 (15-2-44), #C-1732, 15 Feb. 44; 11221 (16-2-44), #C-1764, 16 Feb. 44; 12177 (17-2-44), #C-1809, 17 Feb. 44; 13509 (19-2-44), #C-1823, 19 Feb. 44; 15346 (23-2-44), #C-2012, 23 Feb. 44; 16449 (23-2-44), #C-2059, 23 Feb. 44; 17546 (25-2-44), #C-2124, 25 Feb. 44; and 18211 (26-2-44), #C-2124, supplementary, 26 Feb. 44.
- 106. Incoming cables, MacArthur to C/S WD, Jan.-Feb., 44, passim.
- 107. Incoming cables, MacArthur to C/S WD, 11737 (18-1-44), #C-644, 18 Jan. 44; 14491 (22-1-44), #C-812, 23 Jan. 44; 15207 (23-1-44), #C-841, 23 Jan. 44; 2915 (4-2-44), #C-1276, 4 Feb. 44; 5376 (8-2-44), #C-1431, 8 Feb. 44; 6158 (9-2-44), #C-1457, 9 Feb. 44; and 8438 (12-2-44), #C-1622, 12 Feb. 44.
- 108. Incoming cables, MacArthur to C/S WD, 11221 (16-2-44), #C-1764, 16 Feb. 44; 12177 (17-2-44), #C-1809, 17 Feb. 44.
- 109. Hq. Backhander Force, Operation Order No. 7-44, 1 March 44, Annex A, in 1st Marine Div., Ampease Operation, Special Action Report /1st Marine Div., Ampease Report/, Annex B, in AGO Analysis Files, 12-1.1602/44 (7313-F).
- 110. Incoming cables, MacArthur to C/S WD, 3385 (5-3-44), #C-2472, 5 March 44; 3943 (6-3-44), #C-2497, 6 March 44; 5093 (8-3-44), 8 March 44.
- 111. There were 101 Dauntless, 96 Avenger, 45 B-24, and 94 B-25 sorties plus strong fighter cover. Kavieng and Panawai were attacked by 48 B-24's on 6-7 March 1944. Night harassing by B-24's over Tabaul continued to be a regular feature. Ibid.; and 5321 (8-3-44), #C-2596, 8 March 44; 6235 (9-3-44), #C-2637, 9 March 44.
- 112. Ltr., Whitehead to Zenney, 4 March 44.
- 113. 1st Marine Div., Ampease Report, pp. 1-3. There were 37 LOM's, 17 LOVF's, and 5 LOI's in the convoy. Four medium tanks were carried on LOM's.
- 114. History, 80th Fighter Sq., March 44, v. 1; 80th Fighter Sq. and 418th Night Fighter Sq., Form 34's, 5-11 March 44.
- 115. 1st Marine Div., Ampease Report, v. 5; CM-IN-6235 (9-3-44), MacArthur to C/S WD, #C-2637, 9 March 44. As of 8 March, Marine losses were 13 killed, 30 wounded.
- 116. 1st Marine Div., Ampease Report, p. 4; History, 25th Liaison Sq., April 44, p. 3.


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117. On 7 March 44, 11 Beauforts dropped 54 x 250-lb. bombs on Talasea and Maru. CM-IN-6235 (9-3-44), MacArthur to G/S WD, #C-2637, 9 March 44. On 8 March, 8 F4F P-40's dropped 16 x 100-lb. bombs on Maru Village. CM-IN-7110 (10-3-44), MacArthur to G/S WD, #C-2670, 10 March 44. On 7 March, only 6 of 23 P-40's, 35th Fighter Squadron, from Cape Gloucester could get through bad weather to patrol Talasea; on 8 March, 15 P-40's, 35th Fighter Squadron, dropped 30 x 100-lb. bombs and strafed targets designated by the Marines; on 9 March, 20 P-40's, 35th Fighter Squadron, reached the area. Form 34, 8-11 March 44.

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

119. CM-IN-19053 (27-3-44), MacArthur to G/S WD, #CX-10097, 26 March 44.

120. The following table has been compiled from incoming cables and is not based upon complete information. It is, therefore, indicative of F4F effort rather than an accurate statistical summary. Rounds of ammunition expended have been omitted, although the information is significant. For example, the 21 P-40's that strafed Pondo Point on 23 March expended 15,000 rounds of .50-cal. machine-gun ammunition.

F4F Sorties, North Coast of New Britain, 4-29 March 1944

Date	No. and type of a/c	Target	No. & wt. of bombs			
			20	100	250	500
4	2 Beaufighters	Murundo Ptn.			2	
	10 Beauforts	Hoskins A/D			36	14
	16 Beauforts	Talasea area			51	14
5	9 Beauforts	Hoskins dumps			34	18
	7 Beauforts	Gavuvu Village			28	14
6	9 Beauforts	Talasea area			42	12
	8 Beauforts	Hoskins A/D			32	10
7	11 Beauforts	Talasea and Maru Villages			54	?
8	8 P-40	Maru Village		16		
9	8 Beauforts	Hoskins dumps	132		34	
10	17 Beauforts	Gavuvu Village	215		54	6
	8 Beaufighters)					
	2 A-20	Barges, N of U. Mollman			9	
11	5 Beaufighters	S shore Stettin Bay			0	
16	17 Beauforts	Ulamona-Ubili area	144		20	10
17	2 Beaufighters	Ulamona-Ubili, strafing				
18	7 P-40	Hoskins area, strafing				
19	3 Beaufighters)					4
	9 Beauforts	Pondo Pt. sawmill			36	18
22	2 A-20	Barges, Pondo Pt.			4	
23	2 Beaufighters	Pondo Pt., strafing				
	5 P-40	Bangula Bay, strafing				
	24 P-40	Bangula Bay		2		24
24	6 A-20	Gogosi Village; Biialla Ptn.			18	6
	2 Beaufighters	Gogosi Village, strafing				

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Date	No. and type of a/c	Target	No. & wt. of bombs			
			20	100	250	500
25	2 Beaufighters	Open Bay, strafing				
	7 A-20	Gogosi Village; Biella	16		6	6
	10 P-40	Hoskins area				10
	25 P-40	Hoskins area				25
26	2 A-20	Bangula Bay	80			
	21 P-40	Fondo Pt., strafing				
	8 P-40	Tracks, N Bangula Bay strafing				
27	2 Beaufighters)	Open Bay	40			11
	2 A-20					
28	8 P-40	Fondo Pt.	96	52		26
	15 Beauforts					
29	2 A-20	Fondo Pt.	80			
	8 P-40	Fondo Pt., strafing				
TOTALS			803	18	518	234

121. The following table has been compiled from incoming cables and is not based upon complete information. Rounds of ammunition expended in strafing have been omitted.

RAAF Sorties, South Coast of New Britain
1-29 March 1944*

Date	No. and type of a/c	Target	No. & wt. of bombs			
			20	Misc.	250	500
1	6 P-40	Gasmata A/D				6
2	18 Beauforts	Gasmata area			96	18
4	10 Beauforts	Gasmata area			26	18
9	14 Beauforts	Gasmata dumps	298		54	4
	2 Beaufighters	Sawmill, Wide Bay, strafing				
10	9 Beauforts	Gasmata dumps	96	24x40	20	12
11	2 A-20	Rano Ptn., Cape Beechey			4	4
	25 Beauforts	Munung Ptn., Jacquinet Bay	242		80	22
13	26 Beauforts	Kamalagan anchorage, "	328		61	24
17	24 Beauforts	Kalai Ptn., Wide Bay	190		74	90
21	24 Beauforts	Falmalnal Ptn., Jacquinet Bay	720x4		80	44
26	2 Beaufighters	Awul Village, Cape Darnier				
27	1 A-20	Gasmata area			4	
28	8 Beauforts	Falmalnal Ptn.	144		26	10
29	6 Beaufighters	Waterfall Bay, strafing				
	2 Beaufighters	Wide Bay, strafing				
TOTALS			1,298	24x40 720x4	525	252

122. 1st Marine Div., Appense Report, pp. 5-11.

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

Fighter Patrols from Finschhafen to Cape Gloucester, 10 Jan. 44

Squadron	No. of a/c	Time of takeoff
36	13 P-40	0710
340	14 P-47	0850
342	16 P-47	1040
35	15 P-40	1230
340	15 P-47	1445
342	11 P-47	1630

Compiled from Form 34's, 9-15 Jan. 44.

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

125. Form 34, 20-25 Feb. 44.

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

127. Form 34, 9-15 Jan. 44. The 83d was staying through Finschhafen from Lobodura, but on 24 February 1944 began staying through Cape Gloucester. Form 34, 20-27 Feb. 44.

128. Form 34's, 12-18 March 44; History, 50th Fighter Sq., March 44; History, 3th Fighter Co., March 44, p. 6.

129. History, 67th Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, p. 2.

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

131. History, 432d Fighter Sq., Feb. 44, pp. 2-3.

132. 342d Fighter Sq., LOR no. 2-148, 10 Feb. 44.

133. 17th Recon. Sq., LOR No. 56-J-1, 27 Feb. 44.

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

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

136. History, 36th Fighter Sq., Jan. 43-Jan. 44, pp. 11-12; History, 341st Fighter Sq., pp. 2-9.

137. Isum No. 169 (1 Jan. 44), p. 1.

138. "Text of Statement by MacArthur," in New York Times, 16 Oct. 45, p. 2, c. 3.

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- 139. Dexter Report, p. 34; 1st Marine Div., Gloucester Report, Annex C, p. 3.
- 140. History, 39th Troop Carrier Sq., Jan. 43-Jan. 44; AGR Report No. 6, p. 4.
- 141. History, 347th Troop Carrier Co., Feb. 44, p. 2; 64th and 500th Bomb Sqs., Form 34's, 16-22 and 23-29 Jan. 44.
- 142. 403d Bomb Sq., LMR No. 41-11-1, 10 Feb. 44.
- 143. 41st Troop Carrier Sq., LMR on plane No. 75 (B-17), 21 Feb. 44, in History, 317th Troop Carrier Co., Feb. 44.
- 144. History, 39th Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, pp. 25-26.
- 145. Report of Dexterity Operation, pp. 12-13.
- 146. 65th Troop Carrier Sq., Daily Operations Reports, Feb. 44.
- 147. History, 67th Troop Carrier Sq., March 44; History, 40th Troop Carrier Sq., Feb. 44.
- 148. History, 67th Troop Carrier Sq., Feb. 44.
- 149. History, 40th Troop Carrier Sq., Feb. 44, App.
- 150. History, 67th Troop Carrier Sq., Feb. 44, pp. 46-47.
- 151. History, 39th Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, pp. XLII-L; History, 40th Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, pp. 34-78; History, 41st Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, p. 60; History, 57th Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, App. J; History, 65th Troop Carrier Sq., March 44; History, 67th Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, pp. 46-47.
- 152. "Locality Study of Cape Gloucester," pp. 12-14.
- 153. Report of Dexterity Operation, pp. 13, 18.
- 154. Col. J. F. Bird, "Report on Backhander Operation from 1 January 1944 to 7 January 1944," in Cushman Report, Annex D, p. 3; History, 388th Service Sq., Jan. 44.
- 155. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 18.
- 156. Ltr., Whitehead to CG Alamo Force, 23 Jan. 44, in History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, App. II, Doc. No. 67.
- 157. Radiogram, Krueger to GHQ S.P.A., 9 Jan. 44, *ibid.*, Doc. No. 119.

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- 158. 433d Fighter Sq., Form 34, 30 Jan.-5 Feb. 44.
- 159. History, 388th Service Sq., Jan. 44; History, 59th Service Co., 1 July 42-31 Jan. 44, pp. 18-19. Units in this group were Hq. & Hq. Sq., 1059th QM Service Co. (Avn), 1093d Signal Co., 1906th QM Truck Co., 388th Service Sq., 1837th Ordnance Co. (Avn), 1838th Ordnance Co. (Avn), 29th Portable Hospital. The 392d Service Squadron and the 2021st QM Truck Company came in February.
- 160. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 13. Detailed specifications for the Gloucester airrome may be found in "Revised Specifications for Airrome Facilities at BACKHANDLER," in BACKHANDLER Operation, Allied Air Forces Operations Instructions 39, Advon Plan, in AFSHO AF-5-SU-3, No. 7227-17.
- 161. Ltrs., Whitehead to Kenney, 21 Feb. 44 and 4 March 44; memo, Whitehead to Kenney, 6 March 44.
- 162. History, 33d Fighter Control Sq., pp. 4-5.
- 163. History, 505th Signal Air Warning Battalion, Jan. 44, p. 1. These units remained at Cape Gloucester until 21 July 44 when their functions passed to the Sixth AAA Group.
- 164. Dexter Report, p. 11.
- 165. Hq. Advon Fifth Air Force, Isum No. 10, 10 Feb. 44, in History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, App. II, Doc. No. 29.
- 166. Statement by 1st Lt. Robert W. Martin, 22 Dec. 43, encl. #22 in History, 343d Fighter Sq., Chap. III.
- 167. Dexter Report, pp. 31-32.
- 168. History, 342d Fighter Sq., Chap. III, pp. 24-25.
- 169. History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, App. II, Doc. No. 27.
- 170. Hq. Advon Fifth Air Force, Operations Memorandum No. 8, 25 Feb. 44, ibid., Doc. No. 28.
- 171. Ibid., Doc. No. 25.
- 172. Col. J. P. Bird, "Report on Backlander Operation From 1 January 1944 to 7 January 1944," in Cushman Report, Annex D, p. 3.
- 173. GA-118-15035 (34-12-43), MacArthur to C/S WD for Arnold and Lovett, GA-118, 23 Dec. 43.
- 174. Report of Dexterity Operation, p. 21.

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Chapter I

1. "Area Study of the Admiralty Islands," pp. 1-26; Hq. AAF S&PA, "Lorengau," Objective Folder No. 6, Supplement No. 2.
2. Sources disagree on the date. One source states that construction work began in February 1942. Hq. Alamo Force, Report of Brewer Operation, 27 Feb.-18 May 44/Brewer Report/, n. 8, in AGO Analysis Files, 91-33.4, 5529. April is the date given in Hq. S&PA, General Summary No. 167, 4 March 44, p. 18.
3. Isum No. 170 (5 Jan. 44), p. 17; Intelligence Division, Office of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Intelligence Report Serial 9-44 "Admiralty Islands," n. 5, in A-2 Lib.
4. Brewer Report, p. 8.
5. Ibid.; History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 5.
6. Ibid., App. III, Doc. No. 16.
7. Brewer Report, n. 2.
8. Hq. AAF S&PA, Operations Instructions No. 44, 18 Feb. 44, in History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, App. II, Doc. No. 11.
9. Ibid., Annex 3.
10. Isum No. 174 (19 Jan. 44), n. 1-A. During January 1944, S&PA forces alone destroyed 148 enemy planes of all types. Isum No. 180 (9 Feb. 44), Table A following n. 19.
11. Isum No. 184 (23 Feb. 44), p. 1.
12. History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 3.
13. Ibid., p. 27.
14. Ibid., App. I, p. 1. The breakdown was: bombers--267 B-24's, 268 B-25's, 245 A-20's; fighters--223 P-39's, 433 P-47's, 11 P-70's, 131 P-40's; reconnaissance--75 P-39's, 35 F-4's and F-5's, 20 B-25's, 43 L-5's; transports--314 C-47's, 12 B-17's, 2 L-30's.
15. Losses resulting from enemy action were very low. The 310th Bomb Wing in March lost 2 P-47's, 1 P-40, and 6 A-20's to enemy action but suffered 33 losses through accidents. History, 310th Bomb Wing, March 44, n. 2.

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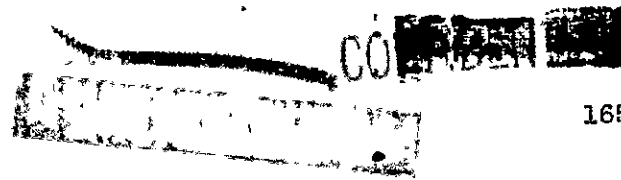
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16. 8th Photo Recon. Sq., Form 34's, Jan. 44.
17. Isum No. 176 (26 Jan. 44), p. 18.
18. 488th and 501st Bomb Sqs., Form 34's, 16-22 Jan. 44.
19. 345th Bomb Gp., IIR's No. 24-D-1, 25 Jan. 44.
20. Isum No. 176 (26 Jan. 44), p. 1.
21. 38th Bomb Gp., IIR's No. 25-G, 26 Jan. 44; 345th Bomb Gp., IIR's No. 25-G-1, 26 Jan. 44.
22. 43d Bomb Gp., IIR's No. 26-G-1, 27 Jan. 44; 90th Bomb Gp., IIR's Nos. 26-D-1, 28 Jan. 44, and 27-D-1, 29 Jan. 44. Reconnaissance by three B-25's of the 17th Recon. Sq. on 29 January 1944 confirmed the report that both airframes were unserviceable. Form 34, 23-29 Jan. 44.
23. 64th Bomb Sq., IIR No. 37-A-1, 8 Feb. 44.
24. 90th Bomb Gp., IIR's No. 37-A-1, 8-9 Feb. 44.
25. History, 38th Bomb Gp., Feb. 44, p. 3. This was the group's first medium-altitude mission since May 1943.
26. 345th Bomb Gp., IIR's No. 44-G-1, 13-14 Feb. 44. Sixteen P-38's failed to rendezvous with the bombers over Tolokiwa Island.
27. 38th and 345th Bomb Gps., Form 34's, 13-19 Feb. 44.
28. See App. No. 8.
29. 498th Bomb Sq., IIR No. 53-M-1, 23 Feb. 44; 519th Bomb Sq., IIR No. 53-M-1, 26 Feb. 44; 822d Bomb Sq., IIR No. 53-L-1, 1 March 44.
30. History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 8.
31. Details of this attack are not pertinent to the present study. See histories of the 3d, 38th, and 345th Bomb Gps., Feb. 44.
32. Ho. AAF SUSA, Operations Instructions No. 44/1, 14 March 44, in History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, App. II, Doc. No. 121; History, 475th Fighter Gp., Feb. 44, v. 3.
33. History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, v. 3.
34. Record of the Thirteenth Air Force During 1944, p. 1.

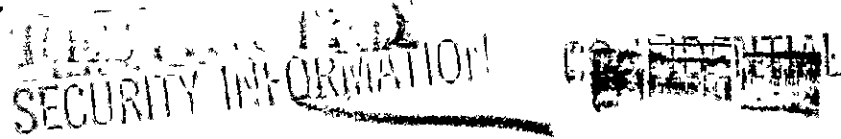
REF ID: A66666
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35. The O.I. Weekly, vol. III, no. 8, 23 Feb. 44, p. 542 and no. 9, 1 March 44, p. 622. It is interesting to note that Admiral Spruance attacked Truk on 17-18 February 1944 and the Seventh Air Force bombed Ponape on 15 February in a double squeeze against Japanese reinforcement bases. The Nissan Island invasion fell on 15 February 1944; landings on Eniwetok began on the 18th; Saipan and Tinian were raided on the 23d; and the Admiralty Islands invasion was to come on the 29th. The enemy, subjected to so many widely separated attacks, may have been somewhat confused.
36. Ibid., vol. III, no. 10, 8 March 44, pp. 702-03.
37. Fifth Air Force ADVOL Weekly Intelligence Review No. 12, 28 Feb. 44, in History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, App. II, Doc. No. 10.
38. History, 38th Bomb Gr., Feb. 44, p. 3.
39. Isum No. 175 (23 Jan. 44), p. 1.
40. Isum No. 180 (9 Feb. 44), p. 1. In February the Fifth Air Force destroyed 53,260 tons of shipping and more than 100 barges and tugfers. History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 20.
41. Brewer Report, pp. 2-4.
42. Ibid., p. 3. Not only the change in date, but also the point of landing was changed in this suddenly revised plan. General Kenney in a letter to General Whitehead on 10 February 1944, stated: "The landing will be made in two places, one at Lorengau and the other on the Seeadler Harbour side of the Salami Plantation. The landing on the beach adjacent to Komote Airdrome was ruled out, as the operation is blocked by a continuous coral reef. The entrance to Hyane Harbour is only wide enough for one boat at a time to slip through, so that also was ruled out. This decision was made by the General himself. Krueger, however, is quite confident that by landing on the comparatively broad front on the east side of Seeadler Harbour he can quickly gain control of the airdrome with the support of artillery which will be landed with the assault wave, and assuming that we have done a fairly good job of taking out the gun defences in the vicinity of Komote strip."
43. History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 15.
44. The O.I. Weekly, vol. III, no. 9, 1 March 44, pp. 624-25.
45. See MS. "Army Air Forces in the Marianas Campaign, Operation IOPACER, March-August 1944," pp. 7, 79.
46. History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 15; Isum No. 185 (26 Feb. 44), p. 1-A.

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- 47. Ltr., Kenney to Whitehead, 24 Feb. 44; History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 15. General Whitehead apparently had a hand in persuading Kenney to argue for the earlier date, since on 21 February 1944 Kenney had informed Whitehead that "the A-19s/Manus show will take place on April 1st, followed by the Hansa Bay operation on April 23th. . . ." Ltr., Kenney to Whitehead, 21 Feb. 44.
- 48. History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 15; 405th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 20-26 Feb. 44.
- 49. Isum No. 135 (23 Feb. 44), p. 1-A.
- 50. Hsg., MacArthur to Commander Alamo Force, 26 Feb. 44, in History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, App. II, Doc. No. 14.
- 51. Hq. Advon Fifth Air Force, "Plan of Air Operation in Support of BREWER," 26 Feb. 44, ibid., Doc. No. 13. In regard to stationing fighters on Komote, General Kenney explained that General Krueger was "figuring on having the Komote strip ready for fighters about D plus four. These fighters will come from Southwest Pacific. This decision was made by General MacArthur [sic]. No combat forces except those from the Southwest Pacific are to occupy Manus Island. In as much as by D day there should be no Jap air threat from either New Ireland or New Britain, the need for air defence of the Milne Bay area is pretty small, so that we can spare a Spit squadron and one or two P.40 [sic] squadrons from the RAAF to take care of the need for fighters at Manus." Ltr., Kenney to Whitehead, 10 Feb. 44.
- 52. 63d Bomb Sq., 17th Recon. Sq., 25th Photo Recon. Sq., 26th Photo Recon. Sq., and 82d Recon. Sq., Form 34's, 20 Feb.-4 March 44.
- 53. 64th Bomb Sq., WAR No. 57-L-1, 28 Feb. 44.
- 54. History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 16.
- 55. 64th Bomb Sq., WAR No. 57-L-1, 23 Feb. 44.
- 56. 65th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 20-26 Feb. 44. The plane dropped 4 x 500-lb. bombs on Pavitalai Village.
- 57. 90th Bomb Gr. and 501st Bomb Sq., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.
- 58. History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 16.
- 59. 38th Bomb Gr., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.
- 60. Brewer Report, p. 9. Lacking evidence as to the hour when the scouts landed, the writer assumes this to have been the covering strike referred to by the Brewer Report, but the two B-24's over Los Ne-ros from 0620 to 0700 may well have provided the cover.



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61. 43d and 90th Bomb Gps. and 500th Bomb Sq., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.
62. Brewer Report, p. 16.
63. 499th and 500th Bomb Gps., MMR No. 59-E, 29 Feb.-1 March 44.
64. 501st Bomb Sq., MMR No. 59-E, 29 Feb. 44.
65. 65th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 27 Feb.-4 March 44 and History, Feb. 44, p. 3.
66. 3d and 90th Bomb Gps., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.
67. History, 319th Bomb Sq., Feb. 44, pp. 1-2; 64th, 319th, and 320th Bomb Gps., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44; History, V Bomber Command, Feb. 44, p. 5.
68. History, 38th Bomb Gp., Feb. 44, p. 4.
69. 90th Bomb Gp., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.
70. 348th Fighter Gp., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.
71. 476th Fighter Gp., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44; History, 476th Fighter Gp., Feb. 44, pp. 1, 3. Two pilots were saved.
72. The air program, as announced on 26 Feb. 44, called for the following bomber strikes:

Squadron	Time over target	Time quit target
63	0735	0755
64	0735	0755
65	0735	0755
403	0735	0755
71	0757	(as soon
405	0757	(as first
822	0757	(boat
823	0757	(beaches
498	0815	0915
499	0915	1015
500	1015	1115
501	1115	1215

See "Detail Signal Plan for Mercantile," encl. No. 4 in Hq. Advon Fifth Air Force, "Signal Plan for Mercantile," 26 Feb. 44, copy in History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, App. II, Loc. No. 13.

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

73. 68th and 403d Bomb Sq., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44; 65th Bomb Sq., MTR No. 60-J-1, 1 March 44.
74. History, 33th Bomb Gp., Feb. 44, p. 4. One B-25 was lost and another crashed on the takeoff.
75. 71st and 823d Bomb Sq., MTR's No. 60-L-1, 10 March 44. One B-25 received 15 hits from .50-cal. machine-gun fire.
76. 345th Bomb Gp., MTR's No. 60-G, 1 March 44.
77. Id.
78. G-2 Periodic Report, 1 March 44, in History of 1st Brigade, Brewer Task Force, vol. II, in AGO Analysis Files.
79. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., p. 59.
80. 1st Cavalry Div., Report of the Brewer Task Force, p. 17, in AGO Analysis Files.
81. 71st, 405th, and 823d Bomb Sq., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.
82. 39th Troop Carrier Sq., MTR, 3 March 44 and History, March 44, pp. 21-22; History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., App. No. 40, p. 1.
83. History, 69th Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, p. 1; History, 41st Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, p. 33; History, 375th Troop Carrier Gp., March 44, App., Doc. No. 2.
84. 823d Bomb Sq., MTR No. 61-I-1, 15 March 44.
85. 823d Bomb Sq., MTR No. 61-I-1, 15 March 44. Here the time of attack is given as 1015, but Form 34, 27 Feb.-4 March 44, has it at 1045.
86. 405th Bomb Sq., MTR No. 61-I-1, 9 March 44.
87. History, 403d Bomb Sq., March 44, p. 1; 64th and 403d Bomb Sq., MTR's No. 61-A-1, 1, 4 March 44; Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.
88. 71st Bomb Sq., MTR No. 61-I-1, 10 March 44.
89. 498th, 500th, and 501st Bomb Sq., Form 34's, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.

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90. 499th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 61-I, 2 March 44.
91. 39th Troop Carrier Sq., MMR, 3 March 44.
92. 71st Bomb Sq., MMR No. 62-I-1, 12 March 44.
93. 833d Bomb Sq., MMR No. 62-I-1, 12 March 44.
94. 833d Bomb Sq., MMR No. 62-I-1, 16 March 44.
95. History, 405th Bomb Sq., March 44, p. 2 and MMR No. 62-I-1, 9 March 44.
96. 433d Troop Carrier Gp., MMR's No. 1, 6 March 44. One of the B-17's had left Finschhafen for Cape Gloucester at 0700, but the field was closed in. Told to dispose of his cargo as he wished, the pilot decided to try Momote. History, 433d Troop Carrier Gp., March 44, App., pp. 38-39. A study of mission reports and histories of troop carrier units yields only incomplete information about air supply and evacuation during BRANER. During March, nine troop carrier squadrons made at least 37 trips to Momote, about two-fifths of them with B-17's. These trips brought in food, medical and engineer supplies, ordnance, personnel, and miscellaneous equipment. On 16 March, for example, the 41st Troop Carrier Squadron flew in engineers to start work on the Lokerang airfield. MMR, 18 March 44, in History, 41st Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, pp. 37-38.
97. 341st Fighter Gp., MMR, 3 March 44. The B-25's got one of the Japanese planes.
98. 501st Bomb Sq., MMR No. 62-I, 3 March 44.
99. 498th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 62-I, 3 March 44.
100. 500th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 62-I, 3 March 44.
101. 499th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 62-I, 3 March 44.
102. 13th and 90th Bomb Sqs., MMR's No. 62-J, 3 March 44.
103. 340th Fighter Sq., Form 34, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.
104. History, 433d Fighter Sq., March 44, and Form 34, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.
105. History, 403d Bomb Sq., March 44, v. 1; 65th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 63-I-1, 4 March 44.
106. 13th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 63-B, 3 March 44.
107. 499th Bomb Sq., MMR No. 63-D, 4 March 44.

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108. Air Ministry Weekly Intelligence Summary No. 237, v. 7, in A-2 Lib.
109. 13th Bomb Sq., MRR No. 64-E, 4 March 44; 90th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 27 Feb.-4 March 44.
110. 500th and 501st Bomb Sqs., MRR's No. 64-G, 5 March 44. In these strikes on 4 March, the A-20's and B-25's dropped 125 x 500-lb. bombs and expended 41,325 rounds in strafing. General Whitehead was anxious to strike Japanese concentrations north of Ryane Haroor but could not get target data from Alamo Force. Ltr., Whitehead to Kenney, 5 March 44.
111. 66th and 403d Bomb Sqs., MRR's No. 65-J-1, 6 March 44.
112. See App. No. 8. Three B-25's, 17th Reconnaissance Squadron adjusted artillery fire for 90 minutes.
113. 495th and 499th Bomb Sqs., MRR's No. 66-I, 7 March 44.
114. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., v. 61.
115. History, 41st Fighter Sq., March 44, v. 3. B-47 operations had to be curtailed in order not to interfere with the fighters. Ltr., Whitehead to Kenney, 5 March 44.
116. Hq. Brewer Task Force, G-3 Operations Report No. 9, 7 March 44, in AGO Analysis Files. The V Bomber Command History for March 1944, p. 3, states that Col. Clinton True, commanding the 345th Bombardment Group, landed the first B-25 at Momote on 3 March, but the diary of Capt. George F. Frederick states that on 7 March "at 1200, Lt. Col. Ulagett landed a B-25 on Momote strip successfully." History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., App. No. 40.
117. 71st Bomb Sq., Form 34, 5-11 March 44.
118. The number of P-40's arriving on 9 and 10 March varies in different sources, but the History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., App. No. 40, has 12 coming in on each day. See also 499th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 5-11 March 44, and history, 40th Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, v. 6.
119. Cf. 36th Fighter Sq., Form 34, 26 March-1 April 44.
120. History, 403d Bomb Sq., March 44, v. 2; 64th Bomb Sq., MRR No. 67-I-1, 9 March 44. The 403d Bombardment Squadron MRR No. 67-I-1, 10 March 1944, indulges in a little bragging not justified by the record. Except for one B-24 in each squadron, the 64th and 65th returned because of weather; the 403d got through with five of six B-24's by flying at very low altitude under the storms. The writer of the report boasts that on 5 March the 43d Group flew under the

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cloud cover to reach the Admiralties, while the 90th Group "milled over a cloud cover at 4000 feet from 1130/L to 1234/L and finally returned to base without having dropped their bombs. . . ." For the record, one should point out that on 6 February it was the 90th Group that defied the weather and the 43d Group that turned to the secondary target after having come within 100 miles of the Admiralties. 403d Bomb Sq., MTR No. 37-P-1, 7 Feb. 44. Certainly, results on 7 March could not have been a source of much satisfaction. A 1,000-ft. miss does not damage a gun position even though it may please the bombardier.

- 121. 498th and 501st Bomb Sqs., Form 34's, 5-11 March 44.
- 122. Ibid.
- 123. 64th Bomb Sq., MTR No. 68-C-1, 13 March 44. Among other targets hit were Lorengau, Fityilu Island, Idurbiu Pt., Loniu Village and Lombrum Pt. The six B-24's bombing Marilo Island registered 12 hits on the target out of 38 x 1,000-lb. bombs dropped. 403d Bomb Sq., Form 34, 5-11 March 44.
- 124. History, 19th Bomb Sq., March 44, p. 4; History, 33d Bomb Sq., March 44, p. 1.
- 125. 499th and 500th Bomb Sqs., Form 34's, 5-11 March 44.
- 126. History, 403d Bomb Sq., March 44, p. 2.
- 127. 501st Bomb Sq., MTR No. 71-J, 12 March 44; 499th Bomb Sq., MTR No. 71-K, 12 March 44.
- 128. Hq. Brewer Task Force, G-3 Operations Report No. 13, 11 March 44.
- 129. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., App. 40.
- 130. History, 1st Cavalry Div. Artillery, p. 11, in AGO Analysis Files.
- 131. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., p. 61.
- 132. 499th and 500th Bomb Sqs., MTR's No. 75-J, 15-16 March 44; The U.S.I. Weekly, vol. III, no. 12, 22 March 44, p. 840.
- 133. History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., App. 40.
- 134. Hq. Brewer Task Force, G-3 Operations Report No. 17, 15 March 44.
- 135. 501st Bomb Sq., MTR No. 75-K, 16 March 44; History, 5th Tactical Air Communications Sq., App. 40.
- 136. 498th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 12-18 March 44.

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- 137. 822d Bomb Sq., Form 34, 12-18 March 44.
- 138. See Hq. Brewer Task Force, G-3 Operations Reports, 19-26 March 44.
- 139. Ibid., No. 28, 26 March 44; 8th Bomb Sq., Form 34, 26 March-1 April 44.
- 140. Among the lesser admiralties, the following were occupied: Lityilu, 30-31 March; Koruniat and Mdrilo, 1 April; Bambuty, 2-3 April; Pak, 9 April; and Tong, 12 April. G-3 Operations Reports, 30 March-14 April 44.
- 141. 110 Reports, Fifth Air Force, 1944. The 317th Troop Carrier Group moved RAAF personnel and equipment. History, 40th Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, pp. 6-8; History, 41st Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, p. 35; History, 39th Troop Carrier Sq., March 44, pp. 23-24.
- 142. GEP SARA, General Summary No. 187, 4 March 44, p. 1.
- 143. Isums Nos. 189 (11 March 44), p. 2-3 and 191 (18 March 44), p. 2; History, 583d Signal Air Warning Bn., Activation to 30 April 44, p. 30.
- 144. Isum No. 188 (8 March 44), p. 1.
- 145. Brewer Report, pp. 5-6.
- 146. History, 583d Signal Air Warning Bn., pp. 28-32.
- 147. History, 35th Fighter Sq., March 44, passim, and Form 34's, March 44.
- 148. 36th Fighter sq., Form 34's, March 44.
- 149. History, 433d Fighter Sq., March 44, p. 3. These missions varied in strength from 2 to 16 P-38's, the average being about 8.
- 150. History, Hq. Sq., V Bomber Command, March 44, p. 5.
- 151. 525th, 530th, and 531st Bomb Sqs., Form 34's, March 44.
- 152. History, 310th Bomb Wing, March 44, p. 5.
- 153. History, Hq. & Hq. Sq., V Bomber Command, March 44, pp. 5-6.
- 154. History, V Bomber Command, March 44, p. 10.
- 155. Ibid., pp. 8-9; History, Hq. & Hq. Sq., V Bomber Command, March 44, p. 6.
- 156. History, V Bomber Command, March 44, p. 9.

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157. 63d Bomb Sq., Form 34's, March 44.
158. History, V Bomber Command, March 44, v. 5; history, 312th Bomb Gr., March 44, v. 6; History, 8th Bomb Sq., March 44, pp. 1-2.
159. History, V Bomber Command, March 44, v. 6.
160. Isma No. 186 (1 March 44), v. 1.
161. History of Fifth Air Force, Part III, p. 17

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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

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

Narrative histories, journals, field orders, and other documents originating with the Army Ground Forces and Marine units involved in the campaigns are indispensable. This material is deposited in the AGO Analysis Files, which also contain copies of Naval Action Reports, observers' reports, and miscellaneous documents of interest. The 1st Marine Division's "Special Action Report, Cape Gloucester Operation" and the Alamo Force's "Report of the Dexterity Operation" are excellent accounts. Unless specifically noted, documents cited are in the Archives of the AAF Historical Office.

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Appendix No. 1

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

Date	S/E SSF		2/E SSF		Ls & MB		S/E B		F/B		F/P		Obsn & Trans		Total Bismarck's & New Guinea
	Ns	NI	NI	NG	NI	NG	NI	NG	NI	NG	NI	NG	NI	NG	
12 Oct	149	5	59	9	6	146	4	90	24	4	12	9	9	7	536
22 Oct	117	5	32	18	6	77	4	113	16	4	18	9	11	6	439
26 Oct	80	5	52	9	6	51	4	106	16	4	17	9	11	6	376
5 Nov	150	18	46	15	6	49	4	70	17	2	12	12	8	6	421
9 Nov	100	36	67	15	6	40	4	72	25	2	12	12	8	6	411
12 Nov	175	21	73	14	5	39	15	60	21	2	24	12	8	6	471
16 Nov	90	27	87	14	5	28	15	71	27	2	24	12	8	6	443
19 Nov	78	27	91	14	5	28	15	71	23	2	24	12	8	6	431
23 Nov	71	26	90	14	5	28	15	99	20	2	24	12	8	6	447
26 Nov	110	26	90	14	5	40	15	99	20	2	24	12	8	6	498
30 Nov	125	26	82	14	5	40	15	96	20	2	24	12	8	5	401
3 Dec	125	26	72	14	5	40	15	85	27	2	24	12	8	5	487
7 Dec	123	35	82	9	5	40	14	88	45	2	24	12	8	5	498
4 Jan	135	18	90	6	2	47	0	99	18	2	24	12	4	3	489
14 Jan	105	27	100	6	2	42	9	135	28	2	24	12	4	6	522
28 Jan	115	20	96	6	9	42	4	99	37	2	24	12	9	3	498
15 Feb	110	20	120	4	9	27	4	156	30	2	24	12	9	6	554
29 Feb	27		135		5	7	4	125	5	1	12	4	3	19	355
14 Mar	18	4	87		18	7		115	2	1	10		3	17	288
31 Mar	7	4	145		14	2		108	2	1	5		2	17	313

* Compiled from Hq. AAF S/PA Intelligence Summaries.

LEGEND

- NI - New Britain
- NI - New Ireland and Admiralty Islands
- NG - New Guinea
- S/E SSF - Single engine, single seated fighters
- 2/E SSF - Twin engine, single seated fighters
- LB & MB - Light bombers and medium bombers
- S/E B - Single engine bomber
- F/B - Flying boats
- F/P - Float planes
- Obsn & Trans - Observation and Transport aircraft

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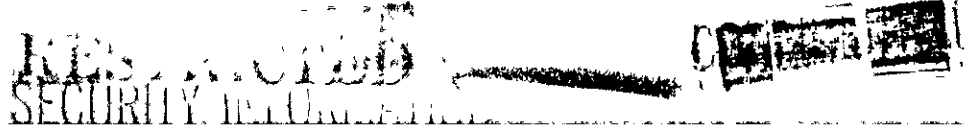
Appendix No. 2

Fifth Air Force Aircraft Status, October 1943-March 1944*

Date of Report	COMBAT	FIGHTERS				TRANSPORTS	RECONNAISSANCE				
		1-78 F-39 P-40 P-47 P-70	1-78 P-39 P-40 P-47 P-70	1-78 P-39 P-40 P-47 P-70	1-78 P-39 P-40 P-47 P-70						
30 Oct 1943	A 53 B 25 C 116 D 334	174 50 204 256	17 9 26 267	21 1 22 75	97 42 139 181	40 7 47 100	60 11 71 143	76 15 91 175	2 2 4 12	3 3 3	9 2 11 12
4 Dec 1943	A 116 B 26 C 141 D 239	145 32 177 245	267 267	33 10 43 95	73 27 100 190	29 4 33 61	71 27 98 135	77 18 95 316	3 0 3 13	3 3	8 4 12 12
6 Mar 1944	A 87 B 97 C 184 D 365	104 57 161 273	78 48 126 245	83 43 126 222	66 12 78 130	198 59 257 442	3 7 10 11	215 53 368 314	3 3 10 11	3 3	14 13 31 39
		Total in Theater ^c									
		30 Oct 43		4 Dec 43		6 Mar 44					
		Bombers		591		595		783			
		Fighters		611		615		805			
		Transport		266		312		327			
		Reconnaissance		12		94		175			
		Totals		1480		1616		2090			

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

a A - Ready for combat; B - Repairable in 10 days; C - Total assigned; D - Total in theater.
 b B-26's are not listed on the Form SO-6 for this period (30 Oct. 43), but the 19th Bomb Sq. had 26 on hand (Form 34); on 1 Jan. 44, the 22d Bomb Gp., still lacked enough B-25's to equip all squadrons, so the 19th Bomb Sq. was still flying 18 B-26's. 110 Reports 5th Air Force 1944.
 c Exclusive of training and staff planes.

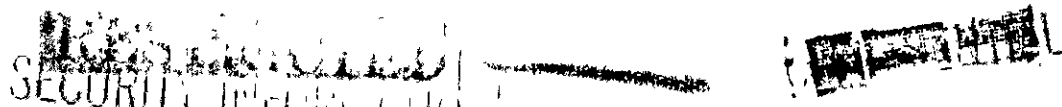


Appendix No. 3

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

DATE	GP	NO. & TYPE OF A/C A-20 B-25 B-26 B-24	TARGET	NO. & WT. OF BOMBS 100 250 300 500 1000 2000	AMMUNITION .50 75mm 20mm
19 Nov	3	9	Barge sweep	59	
22 Nov	90	22	Gloucester dumps	456	64
24 Nov	437	1	Cape Raoult, A/A posns	2	2
29 Nov	22 43	28 9	Gloucester dumps Gloucester dumps	242 72	2 2
30 Nov	3 43	8	Barge sweep Gloucester dumps	26 600	12500
1 Dec	22 3	29 14	Borgen Bay area Borgen Bay, barge sweep	216 46	10375
2 Dec	38 345	25 35	Borgen Bay area Borgen Bay area	164 257	5735 26330 9500 48350
3 Dec	22 43 90	29 7	Gloucester dumps Gloucester dumps & A/A Gloucester dumps & A/A	156 130 177	
4 Dec	3 38 345 43	7 6 24	Kokopo; barge sweep Rein Bay to Iboki Ptn Rein Bay to Iboki Ptn Gloucester A/D & Rein Bay	16 41 170 66	5150 12525 17750 52405

* Compiled from Form 34's and Incoming cables, MacArthur to G/S WD.



DATE	GP	NO. & TYPE OF A/C	TARGET	NO. & WT. OF BULLETS				ACCUMULATION			
				100	250	500	1000		3000	.30	.50
5 Dec	43 90	15 27	Gloucester A/A posns Gloucester dumps			118 216					
6 Dec	43 90 38 345	20 24 24 6	Dorf Ft. area Ulamaingi Village Borjen Bay area Borjen Bay area	143 36		146 191	400	4660 800	35758 11900	121	
7 Dec	43 90 38 345	18 26 27 24	Gloucester A/A posns Gloucester A/A posns Kokopo area Borjen Bay area	240 312 176 144		62 96		6555 8350	27410 38300	234	
9 Dec	345 38 43	23 27 1	Cape Faault-Pein Bay Borjen Bay area Gloucester A/D	152 189		2		14125 8120	43850 29645	143	
10 Dec	90	14	Gloucester dumps			106					
11 Dec	38		Borjen Bay area	165				6590	30635	111	
12 Dec	345 43	1 1	Gloucester bivouacs Gloucester bivouacs		12	2		408	2000		
13 Dec	345 43	1 2	Gloucester bivouacs Gloucester bivouacs			4		722	2000		
15 Dec	43 90 380	13 23 19	Gloucester dumps Gloucester A/D, etc. Gloucester A/D, etc.			78 23 144				68	
16 Dec	43 380	18 20	Ulamaingi area Ulamaingi area			101 136			1315		

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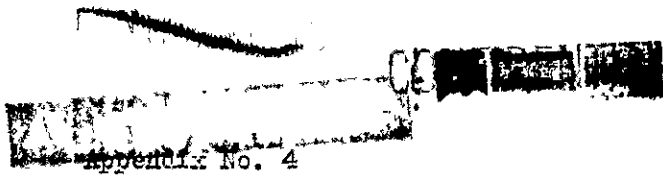
DATE	GP	NO. & TYPE OF A/C	TARGET	NO. & WT. OF BOMBS				AMMUNITION			
				100	250	500	1000		2000	.50	75mm
17 Dec	3	10	Target Hill		45				6500		
	43	6	Dorf Pt. area				36		815		
	90	22	Gloucester A/A posns					80			
18 Dec	90	25	Gloucester A/D				198				
	22	33	Gloucester dumps			264					
	345	24	Borgen Bay area			162					
	380	20	Cape Hoskins A/D				160				10800
	43	17	Cape Hoskins A/D				102				36910
19 Dec	380	39	Gloucester A/D				274				
	43	36	Gloucester A/D, dumps				216				
	22	9	Gloucester dumps			174					
	345	22	Dorf Pt. area			172					10200
	90	24	Target Hill				192				42625
20 Dec	3	8	Sag Sag								
	3	12	Aisega			41					19000
	90	23	Silimati Pt.				176				16200
	380	18	Silimati Pt.				93				
	43	16	Gloucester A/D				90				
	345	24	Borgen Bay area			176					10300
21 Dec	3	25	Sag Sag								
	3	10	Ulamangi			42					17085
	43	35	Gloucester A/D			60					22500
	380	19	Gloucester A/D				378				18
	345	24	Target Hill				192				24
							80				8050
22 Dec	43	32	Gloucester dumps				584				
	3	9	Borgen Bay area				122				71900
	380	46	Gloucester dumps			82					
	90	26	Gloucester dumps				216				

DATE	GP	NO. & TYPE OF A/C	TARGET	NO. & WT. OF BOMBS				AMMUNITION			
				100	250	500	1000		3000	.50	.75mm
23 Dec	380	18	Borgen Bay area			216					
	90	24	Borgen Bay area			288					
	43	18	Borgen Bay area			216					
24 Dec	38	12	Barge sweep			77			1925	11335	227
	3	9	Tauall area	92	107	31			200	68600	
	43		Borgen Bay area			427					
	22	7	Sag Sag area			109					
	345	26	Borgen Bay area			101			6100	35985	
	90		Borgen Bay area			576					
	580		Borgen Bay area			216					
25 Dec	3	38	Tauall area	66	104					57175	
	43	18	Borgen Bay area			216					
	38		Gloucester, Borgen Bay			246			4180	44530	331
	380	20	Borgen Bay area			229					
	22	8	Borgen Bay area			77					
	345	24	Borgen Bay area			157			5300	26130	
	90		Borgen Bay area			276					

SUMMARY

NO. OF SORTIES	BOMBS DROPPED		POUNDS OF AMMUNITION	
	Type	No.	Tons	
A-30	100 lb.	1308	65.4	.50 cal. 142,660
B-25	250 lb.	396	49.5	.50 cal. 952,828
B-26	300 lb.	3614	542.1	75mm 1,353
B-24	500 lb.	5594	1398.5	20mm 75
	1000 lb.	3445	1722.5	
	2000 lb.	148	148.0	
Total sorties	Total tonnage		3926.0	

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Appendix No. 4

Air Plan for Z Day, Arawe, 15 Dec. 43 *

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

FRAGMENTARY FIELD ORDER)
NUMBER 173)

1. Omitted.
2. Fifth Air Force attacks the enemy bivouacs and supply areas, CAPE GLOUCESTER; provides direct support to Amphibious Force in ARAWA Area; provides fighter protection for Naval Forces; prepares to support Ground Forces.
3. a. Commanding General, V Bomber Command will:
 - (1) Strike enemy bivouacs and supply areas at CAPE GLOUCESTER with one (1) group of heavy bombers, per strike order Commanding General, V Bomber Command, dated 14 December, 1943. Fighter cover provided para. 3. f. (1).
 - (2) Photo WENAK, KAVLING.
 - (3) Provide normal reconnaissance.
- b. Commanding General, First Air Task Force will:
 - (1) Maintain one (1) squadron attack bombers on air alert on call by Amphibious Forces in ARAWA Area from 0615L to 0900L.
 - (2) Maintain two (2) squadrons A-20's on ground alert 0800L to 1530L prepared to attack targets in ARAWA Area.
 - (3) Maintain five (5) squadrons heavy bombers on alert to strike targets in ARAWA Area 0800L to 1000L. Attack CAPE GLOUCESTER using this force if it is not called on by Ground Forces by 1000L.
 - (4) Provide fighter protection for Amphibious Force at ARAWA.
 - (5) Provide fighter protection for Naval Convoy as required.
 - (6) Maintain shuttle to NADEAB-GUSAP with available troop carriers as requested.

* Copy annexed to Headquarters Army Ground Forces, "Report on Air Support in Southwest Pacific Area During the Period 1 November 1943 to 1 February 1944."



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(7) Conduct barge sweep along coast of MAL BRITAIN starting at A.M. night of 15-16 December, 1943, per plan Commanding General, First Air Task Force, using one (1) squadron B-24D-1's.

c. Commanding Officer, Second Air Task Force will:

- (1) Conduct maximum troop carrier operations MAL-MALZAB-GUSAF Area.
- (2) Provide area medium cover for all troop carrier operations to GUSAF.

d. Commanding Officer, Third Air Task Force will:

- (1) Conduct early morning fighter sweep to MALANG-ALEXISHELEN Area, taking off as soon as first light and weather permit.
- (2) Provide fighter cover for all troop carrier operations to GUSAF.

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

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

f. Commanding General, V Fighter Command will:

- (1) Cover operations para. 3. a. (1) with one (1) squadron P-40's.
- (2) Dispatch one (1) group P-47's to BOGOCURA first light to come under operational control Commanding General, First Air Task Force for the day.

g. Air Officer Commanding, 9 Operational Group will:

- (1) Attack LINDINI AIRFIELD with maximum force Beauforts night of 15/16 December, 1943.
- (2) Hold one (1) squadron Bostons on alert 1200/L to 1700/L prepared to attack enemy naval forces.
- (3) Provide fighter cover along south coast MAL BRITAIN as per plan Air Officer Commanding, 9 Operational Group.
- (4) Conduct late strafe sweep A.M. to GLOTTI, arriving GLOTTI at dusk.
- (5) Continue to perform present plans of reconnaissance and to provide anti-submarine patrol as required.

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- (6) Provide fighter defense of advance island bases as well as MILNE BAY.
- (7) Night of 15/16 December, 1943 dispatch Catalina to conduct barge sweep south coast NEW BRITAIN as per plan Air Officer Commanding, 9 Operational Group.

- 4. Omitted.
- 5. Signal Communications - No Change.

By command of Major General WHITEHEAD:

MERIAN C. COOPER,
Colonel, Air Corps,
Chief of Staff

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 This page contains
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Appendix No. 5

Air Plan for BACKHANDER Operation

ANNEX "C" TO OPERATIONAL ORDER NO. 2-43, BACKHANDER FORCE*

AIR SUPPORT PLAN

00591
1990-5-30
160/283

Headquarters Backhander Force
A.P.O. 320

November 14, 1943. 1000

SECRET

Excerpts from Fifth Air Force Operation Plan.

1. Fl. Cover.-

(a) D-1 day.

(1) Sufficient cover will be maintained to insure the safety of the convoy.

(b) D-day.

- (1) One (1) Fl Sq Area cover from 0630 until 0700.
- (2) Three (3) Fl Sq Area cover from 0700 until 1400.
- (3) One (1) Fl Sq Convoy cover from 1400 until 1830.

(c) D+days.

- (1) Area cover by at least one (1) flight of Fl will be maintained from 0700 until 1400 D+3 days.
- (2) After D+3 day Fl cover will be withdrawn unless friendly convoys are unloading.

2. Atk Avn.-

(a) D-day.

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

* 1st Marine Division, Special Action Report, Cape Gloucester Operation, Annex G.

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- (2) One (1) Atk Sq will neutralize by bombing and strafing landing beach GREEN from H minus twelve (12) minutes until H minus two (2) minutes; if directed by the fighter director ship off GREEN BEACH, the time of ATK will be postponed up until 30 minutes and will cease at ATK time plus 10 minutes or when landing boats are 500 yards from beach.
- (3) Four (4) Sq of Atk Avn will Atk targets along the coast, from DORF POINT N and E to the Adrm Area. Approximate time of this attack will be H plus one (1) hour and forty-five (45) minutes.

(b) D+ days.

- (1) Sufficient Atk Avn will be available for use as directed by Com Gen FATEF, to enable the Backhander Force to expeditiously accomplish its mission.

3. Bomb Avn.-

(a) D-day.

- (1) Two (2) Sq of H Bomb will bomb TARGET HILL from H minus forty-five (45) minutes to H minus twenty-five (25) minutes or TARGET RIDGE as an alternate target.
- (2) Three (3) Sq of H Bomb will bomb GREYHOUND [Borgon Bay] Area from H minus forty-five (45) minutes to H minus twenty-five (25) minutes to destroy enemy mortar and automatic weapons positions in this Area, or HILL 660 as an alternate target.
- (3) Four (4) Sq of H Bomb will bomb TARGET RIDGE at approximately H plus one (1) hour and fifteen (15) minutes or NATALIO POINT area as an alternate target.

(b) D+ days.

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

4. Air Alert.-

(a) D-day.

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

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(b) D/days.

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

5. Ground Alert and Repeat Missions. -

(a) D-day.

- (1) Two (2) Sq of H Bomb will be on ground alert from H minus forty-five (45) minutes until H plus eight (8) hours and fifteen (15) minutes.
- (2) Four (4) Sq of Atk Avn will be prepared to go on Ground Alert status two (2) hours after return from strike missions.
- (3) Nine (9) Sq of H Bomb immediately upon landing will be refueled and re-armed and will conduct a second mission on D-day against targets selected, prior to D minus three (3) days, by the Backhander Force.
- (4) Four (4) Sq of Atk Avn immediately upon landing will refuel and rearm and will conduct a second mission on D-day against targets selected, prior to D minus three (3) days, by the Backhander Force.
- (5) Four (4) Sq of Atk Avn will be prepared to go on Ground Alert status two (2) hours after returning from strike missions against shipping targets of opportunity.

(b) D/days.

- (1) Sufficient Ground Alert will be available for use, as directed by Com Gen FATEF, to enable the Backhander Force to expeditiously accomplish its mission.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL RUPERTUS:

ANOR LER. SIMS,
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps,
Chief of Staff.

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

O F F I C I A L:

W. A. POLLOCK,
Colonel, USMC,
D-3.

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Appendix No. 6

Fifth Air Force Operations over Cape Gloucester, 26 December 1943*

A. Bomber Operations

Sq.	No. of Planes	Time Over Target	Target	Number and Weight of Bombs					Ammunition**	
				100	250	300	500	1000	.30	.50
529	9	B-24 0714	Target Hill				12	56		
530	10	B-24 0714	Target Hill					64		
64	9	B-24 0718	Silimati Pt. defenses	108						
65	8	B-24 0718	Silimati Pt. defenses				84			
403	7	B-24 0718	Silimati Pt. defenses	84						
498	10	B-25 0726	Yellow Beaches	204					18,100	
500	10	B-25 0727	Target Hill	100					5,300	14,885
499	8	B-25 0728	Yellow Beaches	176						13,780
501	10	B-25 0728	Yellow Beaches	220					2,700	22,315
13	11	B-25 0737	Green Beach, Tanali	120						22,500
90	8	A-20 0810	Target Ridge		30					12,400
8	12	A-20 0840	Target Ridge		41					10,650
89	12	A-20 0900	Target Ridge		45					8,745
321	6	B-24 0907	Target Ridge					36		
400	6	B-24 0907	Target Ridge					36		
319	6	B-24 0908	Target Ridge					36		
320	6	B-24 0908	Target Ridge					36		
823	9	B-25 1047	Ulamaingi Village Area					14	400	4,400
823	9	B-25 1047	Ulamaingi Village Area					17	450	4,900
71	9	B-25 1050	Potni Village Area					18	850	12,275
405	9	B-25 1050	Potni Village Area					16	1,030	12,670
498	6	B-25 1442	Natamo Point defenses				24			5,250
500	6	B-25 1443	Natamo Point defenses				16		1,100	5,775
499	6	B-25 1445	Natamo Point defenses				30			4,800
501	6	B-25 1445	Natamo Point defenses			24				5,645
403	6	B-24 1518	Hill 600					36		
65	6	B-24 1615	Hill 600					36		
64	9	B-24 1619	Hill 600					54		
529	9	B-24 1619	Target Ridge					62		
530	10	B-24 1621	Target Ridge					72		
Totals	107	B-24		820	308	24	166	589	11,830	1,969,190
	109	B-25								
	32	A-20								
				Total bomb tonnage: 422.6						

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

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

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B. Fighter Cover

Squadron	No. of Planes		Time of Takeoff	Victories Destroyed	Probables	U.S. Losses Destroyed & Missing
340	16	P-47	Finschhafen	0634		
80	16	P-38	Dobodura	0650		
431	16	P-38	Dobodura	0700		
36	16	P-47	Nadzab	0715		
341	14	P-47	Finschhafen	0844		
39	14	P-47	Nadzab	0845		
341	2	P-47	Finschhafen	0905		
342	1	P-47	Finschhafen	0905		
433	16	P-38	Dobodura	0950		
432	15	P-38	Dobodura	1000		
35	15	P-40	Finschhafen	1030		
80	17	P-38	Dobodura	1140	9	2
40	15	P-39	Nadzab	1145		
431	16	P-38	Dobodura	1145	13	
36	16	P-47	Nadzab	1315	7	4
35	16	P-40	Finschhafen	1330	18	1
433	16	P-38	Dobodura	1355		
342	18	P-47	Finschhafen	1445	15	1
341	8	P-47	Finschhafen	1545	1	1 (By Allied A/A)
341	8	P-47	Finschhafen	1630		
340	4	P-47	Finschhafen	1630		
40	11	P-39	Nadzab	1645		
Totals	112	P-38			63	8
	26	P-39				5
	31	P-40				
	117	P-47				
	286					

Allied antiaircraft fire also shot down one enemy fighter, the 499th Bombardment Sq. claims 1 Val shot down, and the 501st Bombardment Sq. claims 1 Val probable, raising the totals given above to 65 destroyed and 9 probably destroyed. Comparison of personnel losses is interesting: the Japanese lost a minimum of 142 airmen, a maximum of 188. The Fifth Air Force lost 2 pilots from enemy action.

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Appendix No. 7

Plan for Air Cooperation, APPEASE Operation

Annex C to Cpn O No 7-44

AEO0154
1990-5-80
434/332

Headquarters Backhander Force
A.P.O. 320
March 1, 1944. 1600

SECRET

1. Air Force Bomblines to be as follows going into effect D-2 days and remaining in force until further notice: From W shore ROOKE (UISO) ISLAND NE to a point five thousand (5000) yards E SAKAR ISLAND, then NE to point five thousand (5000) yards W of CAPE HOLLAND (N tip WILLAUMEZ PENINSULA) sic then E to intercept a N - S line running through peak of MT. MARALLOCH. Strikes to be made only on pre-arranged targets after D-2 days.
2. Strikes requested on following targets prior to D-day:

VULUPAI PLANTATION	NORTH - SOUTH BRANCH KULU RIVER
VITOKARA	KULINGAI
HOSKINS AIRDROME	SAN RENIO PLANTATION
GAVUVU AREA	WALITDI
BULU DABU	MAEU
TALASEA	GARUA ISLAND
TALASEA AIRDROME	SANEA MONICA PLANTATION
CANOE LANDING - ROAD NUNUNO PLANTATION	
3. (a) D-3 Day.-
 - (1) Photos of TALASEA Area.
 - (2) Two (2) Sqdrns of Beauforts bombing TALASEA Area and installations.
 - (3) One (1) Sqdrn of Beauforts bombing HOSKINS and GAVUVU Area.
 - (4) Intensive armed reconnaissance over entire area.
4. (a) D-2 Days.-
 - (1) Two (2) Sqdrns of Beauforts bombing TALASEA Area and installations.
 - (2) One (1) Sqdrn of Beauforts bombing HOSKINS and GAVUVU Area.
 - (3) Intensive armed reconnaissance over entire area.
 - (4) Heavy attacks by SOUPAC on RAUBAUL AIRDROMES.
5. (a) D-1 Day.-
 - (1) Two (2) Sqdrns of Beauforts bombing TALASEA Area and installations.

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

6. D-Day.-

(a) Air Cover:

- (1) One (1) Sqdrn over convoy at first light until time boats are unloaded.
- (2) Two (2) flights over Beach RED for interception and protection.
- (3) Two (2) flights covering withdrawal of boats to IBOKI.

(b) Close in support for coordinated attack:

- (1) Bomb and strafe Beach RED.
- (2) Smoke VOLUPAI POINT and NW point of Beach RED.

(c) Bombing of TALASIA Area from H-hour until H+2 hours (1000L):

- (1) Strafe inland and coastal trail and road net.
- (2) Bomb TALASIA AIRDROME and installations.

(d) Bomb HOSKINS - GAVUVU Area throughout the day.

(e) Heavy air attacks by SOUPAC on RABAUL AIRDROMES.

(f) Ground Alert:-

- (1) Four (4) P-39's with 500 lb bombs each on ground alert at GLOUCESTER.

7. D+1 Day.-

(a) Air Cover:

- (1) One (1) Sqdrn over convoy at first light until time boats are unloaded.
- (2) Two (2) flights over Beach RED for interception and protection.
- (3) Two (2) flights covering withdrawal of boats to IBOKI.

(b) Bombing Missions:

- (1) HOSKINS - GAVUVU Area throughout day.
- (2) Bombing of TALASIA Area as requested through ALP.
- (3) Heavy air attacks by SOUPAC on RABAUL AIRDROMES.

(c) Ground Alert:

- (1) Four (4) P-39's with 500 lb bombs each on ground alert at GLOUCESTER.

8. After D+1 Day.-

- (a) Cover, reconnaissance, bombardment and photographic missions as requested through ALP.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL RUPERTUS:

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

DISTRIBUTION: Same as Opn
O No. 7-44

O-F-F-I-C-I-A-L:
M. F. Rockmore,
Major, USMC, Asst., D-3.

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SECURITY INFORMATION

Appendix No. 8

Fifth Air Force Bombardment of the Admiralty Islands*
 January - March 1944
 (Effective Sorties Only)

Date	Sqn	No. of Planes	Target	Time of Attack	No. of Bombs			Ammunition	Losses
					Misc	100	500 1000		
22 Jan	501	8	B-25 Lorengau Harbor	1039	15	1300	17050		
	499	3	B-25 Papitalai Harbor	1044	6	3000	7950		
24 Jan	500	10	B-25 Lorengau shipping, etc.	1235	20	13800	28175		
	498	10	B-25 Lorengau shipping, etc.	1237	20	10500	24100		
	499	8	B-25 Lorengau shipping, etc.	1230	16	3600	30275		
	501	10	B-25 Lorengau shipping, etc.	1233	18	5600	24520		
	319	1	B-24 Lorengau A/A positions	1345	2				
25 Jan	500	9	B-25 Lorengau gun positions	1125	40	7900	17790	1 B-35	
	501	9	B-25 Manus Is. shipping	1147	43	8100	16765	1 B-35	
	498	9	B-25 Lorengau shipping, etc.	1148	45	4800	15300		
	71	9	B-25 Komote airdrome	1155	36	2950	24600		
	823	6	B-25 Komote airdrome	1155	24	1000	8750		
	405	8	B-25 Komote, Salami Ptn.	1156	31	300	7225		
	499	9	B-35 Manus Is. shipping	1305	41	7100	32140	1 B-35	
26 Jan	65	6	B-24 Papitalai Village	1115	47				
	403	5	B-24 Salami Ptn.	1118	60				
	64	6	B-24 Komote dumps, bivouacs	1119	72				
	321	6	B-24 Komote dumps, jetty	1128	72				
	320	6	B-24 Komote dumps, bivouacs	1129	72				
	319	6	B-24 Komote airdrome	1132	36				
	400	5	B-24 Komote dumps, bivouacs	1138	60				
	319	1	B-24 Komote Village	1241	2				

* Compiled from Fifth Air Force Weekly Status and Operations Reports (Form 24) and Narrative Reports of Missions.

SECURITY INFORMATION

Date	Sqn	No. of Planes	Target	Time of Attack	No. of Bombs			Ammunition	Losses	
					Misc	100	500			1000
27 Jan	400	5 B-24	Lorengau stores, bivouacs	1150		60				
	319	6 B-24	Lorengau Township	1245		72				
	320	6 B-24	Lorengau gun positions	1246			36			
	321	6 B-24	Lorengau airdrome	1249			36		300	
	65	6 B-24	Lorengau airdrome	1255		72				
	64	6 B-24	Lorengau airdrome	1359		73				
	403	6 B-24	Lorengau stores	1302		67				
6 Feb	320	6 B-24	Memote airdrome	1216			42			
	319	5 B-24	Memote airdrome	1217			35			
	321	6 B-24	Memote airdrome	1218			42			
	400	7 B-24	Memote gun positions	1229			49			
13 Feb	405	12 B-25	Memote airdrome	0945			24			
	71	13 B-25	Memote airdrome	0950			26			
	822	2 B-25	Memote airdrome	0950		10				
	825	10 B-25	Memote airdrome	0950		48				
	499	11 B-25	Capitalad Harbor area	0953		55				
	500	12 B-25	Memote airdrome	0954		55				
	501	10 B-25	Memote airdrome	0955		50				
	498	12 B-25	Memote airdrome, stores	1000		58				
	319	1 B-24	Memote airdrome	1231		6				
	14 Feb	501	11 B-25	Memote airdrome	1032		50			
499		12 B-25	Memote airdrome	1031			21			
500		12 B-25	Memote airdrome	1033		60				
822		2 B-25	Memote airdrome	1035		10				
825		10 B-25	Memote airdrome	1035		50				
498		12 B-25	Memote airdrome	1040			24		2900	
71		12 B-25	Memote airdrome; Pak Is.	1040			24		8150	
405		12 B-25	Memote airdrome; Pak Is.	1044			24	1000		
18 Feb	403	1 B-24	Salaml Ptn	1658			2			

SECURITY INFORMATION

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Date	Sqdn	No. of Planes	Target	Time of Attack	Misc	No. of Bombs	Ammunition	Losses
23 Feb	17	1 B-25	Momote airdrome			4	1500	
23 Feb	17	1 B-25	Lorengau, rcn			4		
	17	1 B-25	Momote, rcn			4		
	17	3 B-25	Lorengau, rcn			12		
24 Feb	64	3 B-24	Momote	1150		24		
25 Feb	405	9 B-25	Momote airdrome	1345		18	4025	18569
26 Feb	64	1 B-24	Momote airdrome, rcn	0420		40		
	65	1 B-24	Momote, harassing	0650-0830	7x120	30		
	64	6 B-24	Momote area, stores	1312		72		
	65	5 B-24	Momote area, stores	1335		60		
	65	1 B-24	Papitalai Village	1617		4		
27 Feb	65	1 B-24	Los Negros (Momote?)	0630	40x20	40	500	
	403	1 B-24	Los Negros (Momote?)			40	1400	
	71	8 B-25	Momote airdrome	1000		40	4600	20850
	405	6 B-25	Momote; Lorengau	1033		28	2050	14432
	823	8 B-25	Lorengau area	1100		38	1660	12680
	822	9 B-25	Lorengau	1130		45	4005	13455
28 Feb	64	1 B-24	Los Negros; Papitalai	0700	2x120	40	400	1000
	500	7 B-25	Selami Ftn; Papitalai	1235		35	1700	14400
	501	6 B-25	Lorengau area	1244		30	400	13245
	499	7 B-25	Lorengau village & drome	1248		31		18286
	823	6 B-25	Los Negros (Porlaka?)	1345		30	275	9500
	65	6 B-24	Momote airdrome; Faubutyo	1455		72	450	4100
29 Feb	65	5 B-24	Momote, landing preparation	0737		30		
	403	2 B-24	Momote, landing preparation	0742		6		
	823	3 B-25	Momote airdrome	0812		10		(Only 2 B-25's over Momote)
	71	1 B-25	Jamandilai Pt.	0815		5		800
	499	6 B-25	Momote, landing preparation	0942		17	1000	11395

Date	Sqn	No. of Planes	Target	Time of			No. of Bombs			Ammunition	Losses
				Attack	Misc	100	500	1000	Misc		
29 Feb (contd)	488 ^a	6 B-25	Lou Island	1039		24			3700		
	500 ^a	5 B-25	Lou Island	1120		25			4225	500	
	501 ^a	6 B-25	Lou Island	1158		29			1200	.50	
	823	6 B-25	Peipitalai Mission	0945		30			9450		
	822	6 B-25	Lombrum Pt.	1046		30			8900		
	405	6 B-25	Lorengau Township	1125		30			8325	500	
	403	5 B-24	Lorengau airdrome	1229			27				
	65	5 B-24	Lorengau airdrome	1225			30				
	64	6 B-24	Lorengau Township	1231			36				
	71	6 B-25	Lorengau Township	1259		30			5600		
	499	6 B-25	Momote, ground aid	1754		23			12000	2000	
	71	5 B-25	Momote drome; Lorengau	0937		15			5900		
	833	6 B-25	Lorengau, Momote dromes	0945		15			4400	75	
	405	6 B-25	Momote airdrome	0950		30			7275	150	
	822	6 B-25	Momote airdrome	0955		10			5900	75	
	500	6 B-25	Momote, ground aid	1352		25			350		
	501	6 B-25	Momote, ground aid	1353		25			1250		
	498	6 B-25	Momote, ground aid	1355		22			848		
	499	6 B-25	Momote, ground aid	1402		10			10300	400	
	90	8 A-20	Los Negros, Jap troops	1505		48			9200		
	13	8 A-20	Los Negros, ground aid	1515		28			3600		
	13	9 A-20	Troops N of Hyane Harbor	1600	9x300 15x250	56					
3 Mar	499	6 B-25	Troops N of Hyane Harbor	1602							
	13	10 A-20	W shore of Hyane Harbor	1200		36			12500		
	90	6 A-20	W shore of Hyane Harbor	1210		32			9000	500	
	500	6 B-25	N shore of Hyane Harbor	1230		27			9955	500	
	501	6 B-25	N shore of Hyane Harbor	1245		30			9860	530	

a These squadrons, scheduled to cover the landing, were compelled by weather to bomb the secondary target.

29 Feb
(contd)

SECURITY INFORMATION

Date	Sqdn	No. of Planes	Target	Time of Attack	No. of Bombs			Ammunition	Losses
					11sc	100	500		
5 Mar	498	6 B-25	Salami Ptn.	1110	29		2800	11100	
	500	5 B-25	Salami Ptn.	1110	25		1200	10390	1 B-25
	501	6 B-25	Salami Ptn.	1112	30			8575	
	403	6 B-24	Momote area	1155		43		1915	
	64	6 B-24	Momote area	1155		43			
	65	6 B-24	EJ, W of Hyane Harbor	1155		48	150	1835	
	528	1 B-24	Los Negros	1228		7			
6 Mar	499	6 B-25	Sabaleo Pt.; Salami Ptn	1204	30			11175	
	501	6 B-25	Nahuchel Pt; Papitalai	1205	29		400	9000	
	498	4 B-25	Papitalai	1237	19		700	1900	
	7 Mar	403	5 B-24	NE coast Mirilo Is.	1230		40		1000
65		1 B-24	Hauwei Is.	1245		8			
64		1 B-24	E end, Hauwei Is.	1255		8			
64		1 B-24	E tip, Hauwei Is.	1546		4			
8 Mar		64	6 B-24	E end, Hauwei Is.; Rear Pt	1310		30		
	499	4 B-25	Lorengau	1230	18		700	7685	
	403	6 B-24	SE end of Mirilo Is.	1230		38	200	5750	
	500	6 B-25	N coast of Manus	1230	25		2500	18990	
	65	5 B-24	Pityilu Is.	1231		30	325	3450	
	498	1 B-25	Rear Pt., Ndrubiu Pt., etc	1450				1200	
9 Mar	499	5 B-25	Lorengau & Iugos Mission	0940	25		4500	12100	
	501	6 B-25	Shore batteries, Rear Pt.	0945	30			10800	
10 Mar	65	2 B-24	Bowat Mission	1130		16			
	499	6 B-25	Barge sweep, N coast Manus	1145	30		1700	11730	
	500	6 B-25	Imrim Ptn to Bowat Bay	1143	28		1400	10100	
	321	4 B-24	Lorengau Mission	1410-1508		24	300		
	53	5 B-24	Iugos Mission Ptn	1530		36			
	19	4 B-24	Iugos Mission, Lorengau drone	1531		24			
	330	4 B-24	Lorengau airdrome	1548		24			

Date	Sqdn	No. of Planes	Target	Time of Attack	No. of Bombs			Ammunition	Losses
					Misc	100	500		
11 Mar	501	6 B-25	Lorengau airdrome	1010		30	700	11530	
	499	6 B-25	No. 1 Rd Lorengau to Liel R.	1021		15		1830	
	406	7 B-24	Lugs Mission, Jap troops	1200	280		1500	11450	
12 Mar	499	6 B-25	No. 2 Rd S of Lorengau	1003		22		8219	
	500	6 B-25	Lorengau to Tingo Village	1010		30	1100	8550	
13 Mar	71	1 B-25	Manus Is. (Lorengau?)	1015			600	2800	
	498	6 B-25	V coastal Rd. Manus Is.	1215		27	4400	18000	
	501	6 B-25	No. 1 Rd. Tingo to Lorengau	1215		30	1500	9395	
15 Mar	499	9 B-25	Liel River mouth	0904		39	3500	20755	
	500	9 B-25	Beaches W of Lorengau	0909		42	1400	19950	
	501	9 B-25	Tingo Village	1102		33		4230	
	498	9 B-25	Tingo Villare	1210		44	1400	11600	
16 Mar	822	1 B-25	Troops, Los Negros	1600				1000	
20 Mar	405	1 B-25	Loniu Passage	1025		2			
	405	1 B-25	Loniu Passage	1130		2			
25 Mar	822	1 B-25	Pityilu Island	1500 (?)				2500	
26 Mar	8	9 A-20	Troops S of Lorengau	0905		47		13600	

SUMMARY		
Type of Bomber	No. of Effective Sorties	Tons of Bombs Dropped
A-20	50	50.9
B-25	611	655.5
B-24	228	685.1
Totals	889	1391.5

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Appendix No. 9

Plan of Air Operations in Support of BREWER*

I. General:

1. Force which will be employed:

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

2. Utilizing the above forces Fifth Air Force will:

- a. Support the operations of Southwest Pacific and South Pacific forces by neutralizing air attacks against hostile air forces and defense installations in northern New Ireland and the Admiralties.

3. Support the BREWER operation by:

- a. Neutralizing enemy air forces and air fields in central New Britain and along the north coast of New Guinea to include Tadjl.
- b. Providing fighter cover for the approach and retirement and the initial disembarkation of over water troop and supply movements.

* Issued by Headquarters, Advance Echelon Fifth Air Force, 26 February 1944, copy in Fifth Air Force History, Part III, Appendix II, Doc. No. 13. Details of fighter operations, providing convoy and shipping cover, are omitted from the present copy. Code names have been rendered in the clear.

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- c. Supporting the attack on BRUNER by heavy bombardment on landings "D" Day, and prior to the attack, heavily neutralize the objective area.
 - d. Thereafter provide close supporting action of landing forces as required by the Task Force commander.
 - e. Providing one (1) airborne caliber 50 antiaircraft battery on D minus 3 at staging area at Oro Bay to be released to Commanding General, 1st Cavalry Division.
 - f. Providing one (1) Air Engineer Officer and one (1) non-commissioned officer to go in with Reconnaissance Group-- to be flown to Iobodura to report to Brigadier General Chase, D-3.
 - g. Providing one (1) Air Liaison Party, stripped down to report to Commanding General, 1st Cavalry Division at Oro Bay, D-3.
 - h. Being prepared to deliver supply by air dropping as required.
4. Install initially, at the earliest practical date, by arrangement with Commander, ALAMO Force, three (3) fighter squadrons with associated service elements and the necessary air warning and radio navigational facilities to provide for local protection of installations and shipping.
 5. Continue to:
 - a. Destroy hostile naval forces and shipping within reach.
 - b. In conjunction with Allied naval forces, isolate hostile navy by attacking coastal shipping along the north coast of New Guinea and western New Britain coast.
 - c. Support the operation of New Guinea Force.
 - d. Provide, within area of responsibility, air defense necessary to maintain efficiency of forward bases, including defense of Milne Bay-Doodura shipping.
 6. Provide close defensive aerial reconnaissance and general area reconnaissance as already committed and as may be required.
 7. Assist Allied Intelligence Bureau in the supply and maintenance of observation posts and advanced points.

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II. Bombardment Operations:

1. D Day minus 3.
 - a. Employing three (3) squadrons of heavy bombers, and seven (7) squadrons of attack bombers, strike enemy airplanes, anti-aircraft positions, personnel, and supplies at Manus.
 - b. Employing four (4) squadrons of heavy bombers, strike enemy anti-aircraft, personnel, and supplies at But and Dagua airdromes in the Newak area.
 - c. Employing three (3) squadrons of RAAF dive bombers, strike enemy airplanes, supplies, and runway at Madang.
2. D Day minus 2.
 - a. Employing three (3) squadrons of heavy bombers, attack enemy airplanes, anti-aircraft, and personnel in the Newak area. Secondary target - Hansa Bay. Tertiary target - Madang.
 - b. Employing four (4) squadrons of heavy bombers, attack enemy airplanes, anti-aircraft, and personnel at Tadjj.
 - c. Employing six (6) squadrons of attack bombers, attack anti-aircraft positions, personnel, and supplies at Manus.
 - d. Employing two (2) squadrons of RAAF dive bombers, attack enemy airplanes, anti-aircraft, and personnel at Madang and Alexishafen.
3. D minus 1.
 - a. Employing units of the Fifth Air Force as required by the tactical situation. Take out Kavieng; or in the event that this does not appear to be a suitable target, his airdromes on North New Guinea.
4. D Day.
 - a. Employing three (3) squadrons of Heavy bombers, attack targets at Manus. This attack to be completed by H hour minus twenty (20) minutes.
 - b. Employing four (4) squadrons of attack bombers, attack targets at Manus. These units will arrive in the target area, contact the headquarters ship, USS ROAD, call sign JUMBO, H hour minus 18. The Navy not being in position

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to effectively follow the air strike, the planes will circle over Pak Island on station for one (1) hour. At the end of that time, they will contact headquarters ship JUMBO, and notify the Air Control Officer that they are commencing attack and returning to base upon completion. In the event that the Navy is prepared to follow in the air attack within the time limits, the attack will terminate upon first boat reaching shore, or as safety dictates. In the event that radio communications fail, the air attack will begin upon the firing of a star shell at fifteen hundred (1500) feet over the target area by the headquarters ship JUMBO. . . .

- c. From H hour minus five (5) minutes, to H hour plus four (4) hours, the 345th Bomb Group will provide one (1) squadron on air alert over the objective area for one (1) hour, each to hit predesignated targets on call from Task Force Commanders.
- d. Employing four (4) squadrons of heavy bombers, attack enemy airplanes, anti-aircraft, personnel and supplies at Kavieng, if air situation on D-1 requires, otherwise hit New Guinea airdromes.
- e. From H hour until H plus six (6) hours, 71st Becco Group will provide three (3) B-35's on air alert over Pak Island for three (3) hours each to lay smoke on predetermined targets on call from the Task Force Commanders. . . .

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

This plan apparently was prepared for invasion of Manus Island in the Seeadler Harbor area, since the code name UNDERDOG (Los Negros) does not appear. The pattern of air cooperation followed this plan so closely that it seems to have been put into effect almost in its entirety, substituting Los Negros for Manus wherever the latter appears as a designated target.

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Appendix No. 10

Revised Plan of Air Operations in Support of BREWER*

HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED AIR FORCES
SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA

OPERATIONS INSTRUCTIONS)

AFPO 925

14 March 1944

NUMBER 44/1)

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

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

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

- (1) NEW BRITAIN FORCE will:
 - (a) Supported by the ALLIED AIR AND NAVAL Forces execute a reconnaissance in force of MOMOTEN Airfield, HYANE HARBOR and LOS NEGROS, and should the area be found to be virtually unoccupied, remain in occupation.
 - (b) Prepare airfields initially for immediate transport operation and at earliest practicable date for fighter operation.
- (2) ALLIED NAVAL Forces will support the operation by: Transporting and landing elements of the reconnaissance force and supplies and furnishing the necessary naval protection therefor.

* Copy in Fifth Air Force History, Part III, Appendix II, Document No. 121. Code names have been rendered in the clear.

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2. a. SOUTHWEST and SOUTH PACIFIC Forces will continue the seizure and occupation of the ADMIRALTY ISLANDS and isolate RABAU.

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

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

- (1) Continue to support the ADMIRALTY operation by:
 - (a) Supporting the further seizure and occupation of the ADMIRALTY as arranged with Commander NEW BRITAIN FORCE.
 - (b) Heavily neutralizing the objective area and enemy air forces in CENTRAL NEW BRITAIN and along the North Coast of NEW GUINEA, except the RABAU area.
 - (c) Providing anti-submarine escort and fighter protection for overwater troop, supply and naval movements.
 - (d) Transporting troops and supplies as requested by Commander NEW BRITAIN FORCE.
- (2) Install initially, at the earliest practicable date, by arrangement with Commander NEW BRITAIN FORCE, three (3) fighter squadrons with associated service elements and the necessary air warning and radio navigational facilities to provide for local protection of installations and shipping. Units for initial garrison shown in Annex Number 1 (Troop List).
- (3) Be prepared to assist the SOUTH PACIFIC Force in the neutralization of Northern NEW IRELAND and in the RABAU area upon further direction of this headquarters.
- (4) Continue to:
 - (a) Destroy hostile naval forces and shipping within range.
 - (b) In conjunction with ALLIED NAVAL Forces, isolate hostile advanced forces by attacking coastal shipping along the coast of NEW GUINEA and NEW BRITAIN west of CAPE LEONARD and CAPE LAMBERT.
 - (c) Support the operations of NEW GUINEA FORCE and provide air defense of SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA forward bases.

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- (5) Provide reconnaissance as follows:
- (a) Close defensive aerial reconnaissance of the BISMARCK SEA West of the line specified in Par. 3 x (2) below, and within the arc: MASSAU ISLAND (exclusive) - NINIGO ISLAND (inclusive) - HOLLANDIA (inclusive).
 - (b) Maintain regular reconnaissance over assembly of air and naval forces at WAKDE ISLAND.
 - (c) Provide general aerial reconnaissance West of the boundary between SOUTH and SOUTHWEST PACIFIC Forces and northward of close defensive aerial reconnaissance area (Par. 3 a. (5) (a) above) to 1°31' North latitude between the above specified boundary and 139° East longitude.
- (6) Assist Allied Intelligence Bureau in the supply and maintenance of observation posts and advanced parties.
- b. The Air Officer Commanding, R.A.A.F. Command, A.A.F. will:
- (1) Deliver long range attacks on strategic objectives in the Northwest Area.
 - (2) Continue present anti-submarine escort and patrol.
 - (3) Maintain regular reconnaissance over assembly of enemy air and naval forces at ENILAN ISLAND, HAINAHERA ISLAND, ALBON, BABO, KOEIFOOR ISLAND and MANOXWARI.
 - (4) Maintain current aerial reconnaissance of the approaches to the TORRES STRAITS area.
 - (5) Destroy hostile naval forces and shipping within range.
 - (6) Provide, within area of responsibility, air defense necessary to maintain the efficiency of forward bases.
- c. The Commanding Officer, FIFTH AIR FORCE SERVICE COMMAND, take the necessary action to ensure that Air Force supplies and ammunition are made available as required by the Deputy Commander FIFTH AIR FORCE. In matters pertaining to this operation, direct communications with supply and transportation agencies is authorized.
- x. (1) Target Date: 29 February 1944.
- (2) Dividing line for the SOUTH and SOUTHWEST PACIFIC Air and Naval Forces, both for reconnaissance and offensive combat is designated as follows:

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153° East longitude north from the LOUISIADÉ ARCHIPELAGO to point at (6° South latitude - 153° East longitude) - CAPE ARCHWAY on the south coast of NEW BRITAIN at (4°58' South latitude - 152°15' East longitude - north and west around coast of NEW BRITAIN to CAPE LAMBERT at (4°12' South latitude - 151°33' East longitude - point at (3° South latitude - 149°30' East longitude) - due north.

- (3) For coordination of planning and execution of the continuation of the operation against the ADMIRALTIES, the Deputy Commander, FIFTH AIR FORCE, will report to the Commander NEW BRITAIN FORCE at times and places designated by the latter, who is charged with the coordination of plans.
- (4) The Deputy Commander, FIFTH AIR FORCE will, in conjunction with the Naval Forces, furnish three (3) Fighter Director Groups for employment on destroyers to coordinate land-based air action in the ADMIRALTIES operation. One (1) additional Fighter Director Group will be furnished by the Deputy Commander FIFTH AIR FORCE to the Commander NEW BRITAIN FORCE for employment with landing forces ashore.
- (5) The KIRINIMA-COODENOUGH Fighter Sector Area will remain active until on or after D day, when, upon direction of the Deputy Commander, FIFTH AIR FORCE this Sector will revert to a passive defense status.

4. See Annex Number 4 - Logistics.

5. a. See Annex Number 5 - Communications.

b. COMBAND POSTS:

- (1) CnQ, SWPA - BRISBANE
Adv Ech - PORT MORESBY
- (2) SOUTH PACIFIC FORCE - HONOLULU
Adv CP - GUADALCANAL
- (3) NEW BRITAIN FORCE - CAPE GREENE
- (4) NEW GUINIA FORCE - PORT MORESBY
- (5) ALLIED AIR FORCES - BRISBANE
Adv Ech - MADRAS

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- (6) ALLIED NAVAL FORCES - BRISBANE
Adv Ech - PORT MORESBY
- (7) USASCS - BRISBANE
Adv Ech - PORT MORESBY
- (8) 6th U. S. Inf. Div. - MILNE BAY
- (9) R.A.A.F. COMMAND A.A.F. BRISBANE

By command of Lieutenant General KENNEDY;

DONALD WILSON
brigadier General
Chief of Staff

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