



# War in the Pacific

## Defending Australia

### Campaigns in New Guinea and the Solomons 1943

#### 9 December 1942

# Situation - 9 December 1942

- In the Pacific the USN, at the cost of enormous losses in ships and men, has done just enough to strangle the Japanese November offensive on Guadalcanal but the Japanese are still trying to reinforce their position there.
- In New Guinea the Japanese, aided by the terrain and very effectively fortified, continue to resist tenaciously in their beachheads. Australian and American forces suffer from wretched logistics and are struggling to supply their forces let alone bring in reinforcements and heavy weapons. Battle losses, tropical diseases, malnutrition and exhaustion are rapidly wearing down the forces.
- General Eichelberger, fortified by an interview with General MacArthur, has taken command at Buna.
- All five Australian bren gun carriers, brought in to strengthen the attack at Buna, were destroyed with the loss of two thirds of their crews in a failed attack on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Eichelberger has now decided to wait for the tanks to arrive before renewing the attack.
- After seventeen days of heavy losses for no gain, on the 6<sup>th</sup> the second Battalion of the 126<sup>th</sup> Infantry had cut off Buna Village from the Government station and on the 8<sup>th</sup> the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion had fought their way to the edge of Gona Village. The 49<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup>/53<sup>rd</sup> Battalions had failed to make any progress at Sanananda.
- In Australia the furious debate within the ALP, about requiring the Militia to serve outside Australia and its territories, continues.
- In the Timor Sea on the 8<sup>th</sup> a Catalina had sighted two groups of survivors from the sinking of the Armidale. About twenty were sighted on rafts close to where she sank and the whale boat was sighted about 150 miles north west of Darwin.

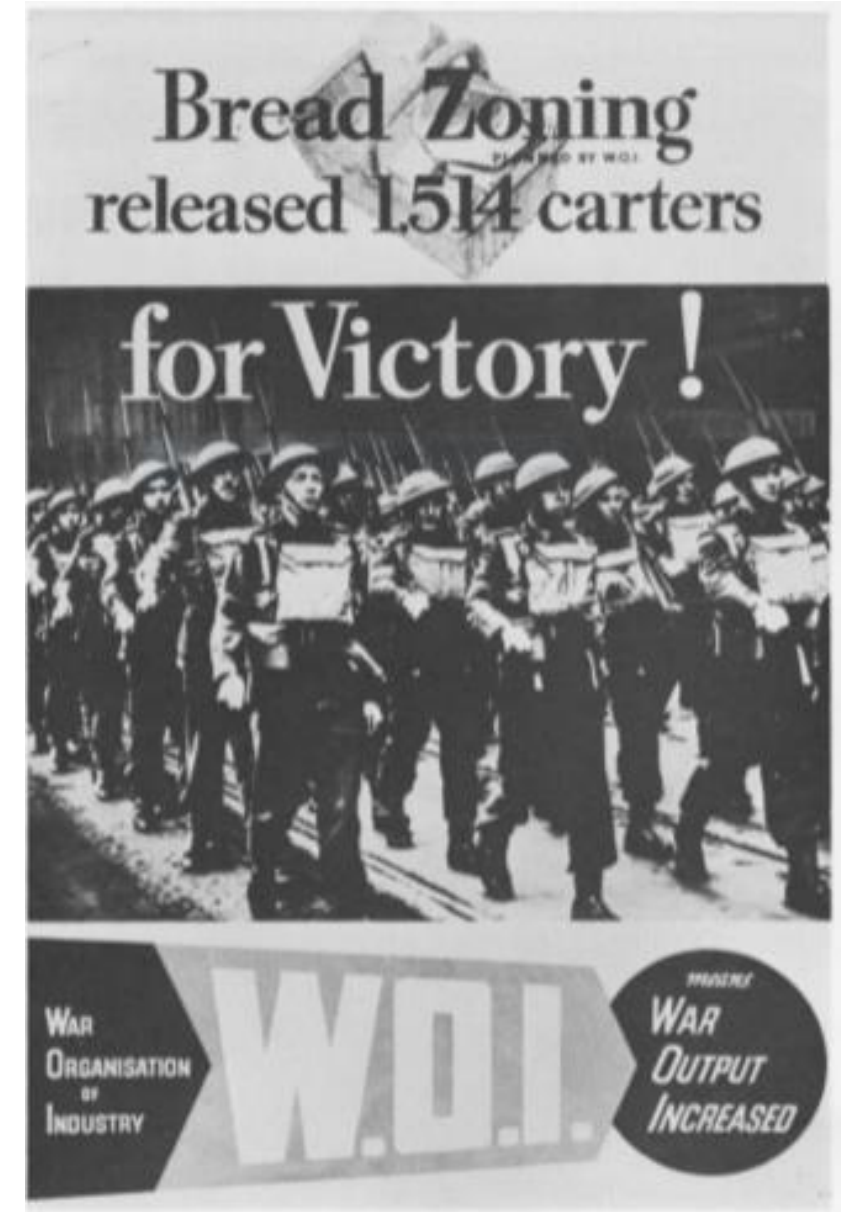


Allied advance on Buna, Sanananda and Gona, 16th-21st November  
War in the Pacific 1943 - ©Jerry McBrien - Wk 6



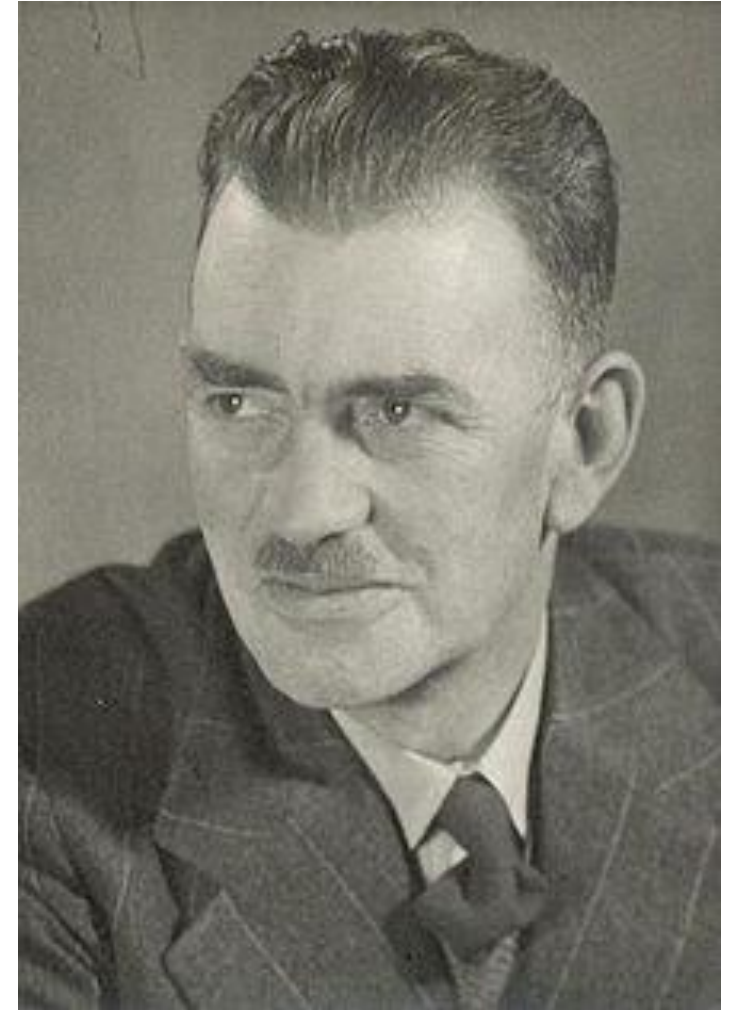
# 9 December - Government

- From time to time throughout the year the prohibition or restriction of the manufacture of various goods were introduced.
- Furniture, jewellery (except wedding rings), lawn mowers, fur coats, cosmetics and equipment for horse and dog racing were some early examples. Restrictions were also placed on the use of materials in short supply. Building for civil purposes and the starting of new manufacturing enterprises were all brought under more rigid control.
- Travel between States was also restricted under a system of priorities, and permits were also required for long journeys within a State.
- The rationalisation of the pastrycooking trade released from 300 to 400 men for other work.
- At the request of the Rationing Commission the use of icing was prohibited except for wedding and birthday cakes, for which only white icing should be used.



# 9 December - Government

- The Sydney Morning Herald on 9<sup>th</sup> December believed that:
- “Every man and woman in Australia is eager to promote national efficiency.
- They fail to see how that efficiency is being helped by official ukases solemnly prohibiting pink icing, waistcoats, domestic servants and Santa Claus. . . .
- Every week new orders issue from Canberra which satisfy a bureaucratic craving for regulation but cannot by any stretch of the imagination have any material effect upon the conduct of the war.”



John Dedman Minister for War  
Organisation of Industry

# 9 December - Government

- The final outcome of the conscription controversy within the Labour Party was still uncertain as Parliament was about to resume on 10th December.
- At a caucus meeting of the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party on 9th December, an attempt was made to raise the issue.
- Curtin ruled it out of order on the ground that the Special Federal Conference of the Australian Labour Party was dealing with the question.
- A motion of dissent moved by Calwell was rejected by 37 votes to 13.



# 9 December - Sea

- Kalgoorlie left Darwin in the morning of the 9th and sighted the whaler at 4.57 p.m. Within an hour she embarked the 29 survivors and set course for Darwin.
- American radio intelligence succeeded in decrypting the schedule for the next submarine supply delivery to Guadalcanal.
- In the early hours of 9 December PT 44 and 59 waited in ambush off Kamimbo.
- An I type submarine surfaced right between them and started unloading.
- A torpedo from PT 59, Lt Jack Searles, sank it 3 miles (4.8 km) north east of Kamimbo Bay (09°12'S 159°42'E).



A PT boat. PT 59 at this time was: Length 77 feet, beam 20 feet wooden hull, 3 supercharged V12 engines giving 4,500 horse power, 41 knots, 4 21inch torpedo tubes, 2 .5 machine guns, 2 .3 machine guns.

# 9 December - Sea

- Two days after the loss of HMAS Armidale, Pope, the NOIC Darwin, told both the Naval Board and Comsouwespacfor that it was urgently required to withdraw from Timor 51 sick and wounded, 295 2/2nd Independent Company, 176 Dutch and 326 Portuguese.
- "Urgently request destroyer be sent Darwin to run about three trips."
- Carpenter responded at once by directing Commander Task Force 51 (Rear-Admiral Lockwood) in Fremantle, to send a destroyer forthwith to Darwin.
- Tjerk Hiddes reached Darwin on 9th December.



**HNLMS *Tjerk Hiddes***



# 9 December - Guadalcanal

- On 9 December 1942, command of the troops ashore on Guadalcanal passed from General Vandegrift to Major General Alexander M. Patch, commanding general of the Americal Division and senior Army officer present.
- On the same day the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division began to embark for Australia. The 5th Marines sailed that day.
- Vandegrift marked the occasion with a letter paying generous tribute to the soldiers, sailors and airmen who had worked, fought and died side by side with his marines. The Coastwatchers, referred to for security reasons as “our small band of devoted allies” were recognised for contributing “so vastly in proportion to their numbers”.



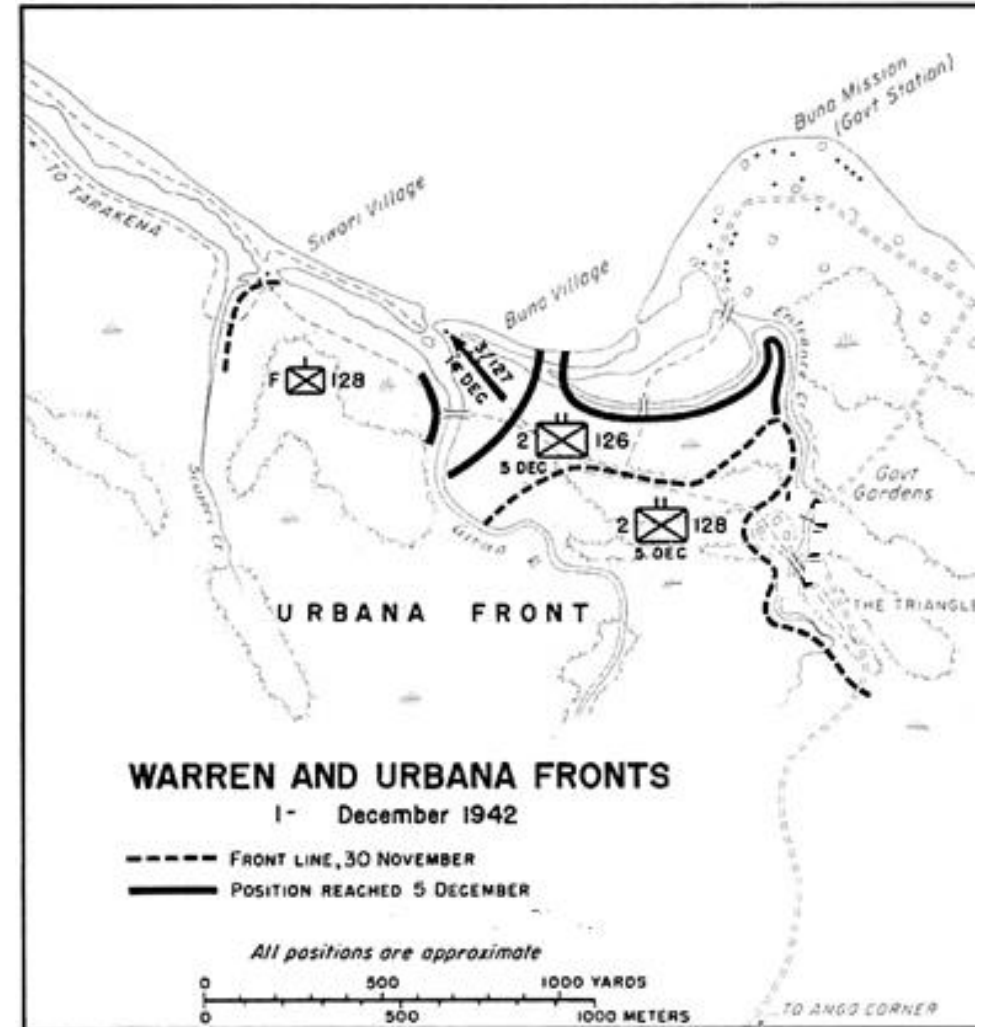
*SHOVING OFF as relieving troops arrive, weary men of the 1st Marine Division file on board landing craft and leave the Guadalcanal battle behind. (USMC 52978)*

# 9 December - Guadalcanal

- From the landing early in August 1942 until relief in December, the division lost 605 officers and men killed in action, 45 who died of wounds, 31 listed as missing and presumed dead, and 1,278 wounded in action.
- These figures refer to organic units only; such reinforcing attachments as the 3rd Defence Bn, 1<sup>st</sup> Raider Bn, and the 1st Parachute Bn are not included in these statistics. The raiders and parachutists had been involved in some of the fiercest fighting and suffered very high casualty rates.
- But unhealthy conditions in the jungle were, statistically, a greater hazard than the enemy. While 1,959 Marines of the division became casualties to enemy action, 8,580 fell prey at one time or another to malaria and other tropical diseases.
- On 7 and 8 December, men in one of the division's regiments had been examined by Navy doctors who sought to assess the physical condition of the division. The doctors concluded that 34 per cent of the regiment was unfit for any duty which might involve combat. This percentage would have been higher but for the recent drafting into the regiment of 400 replacements.

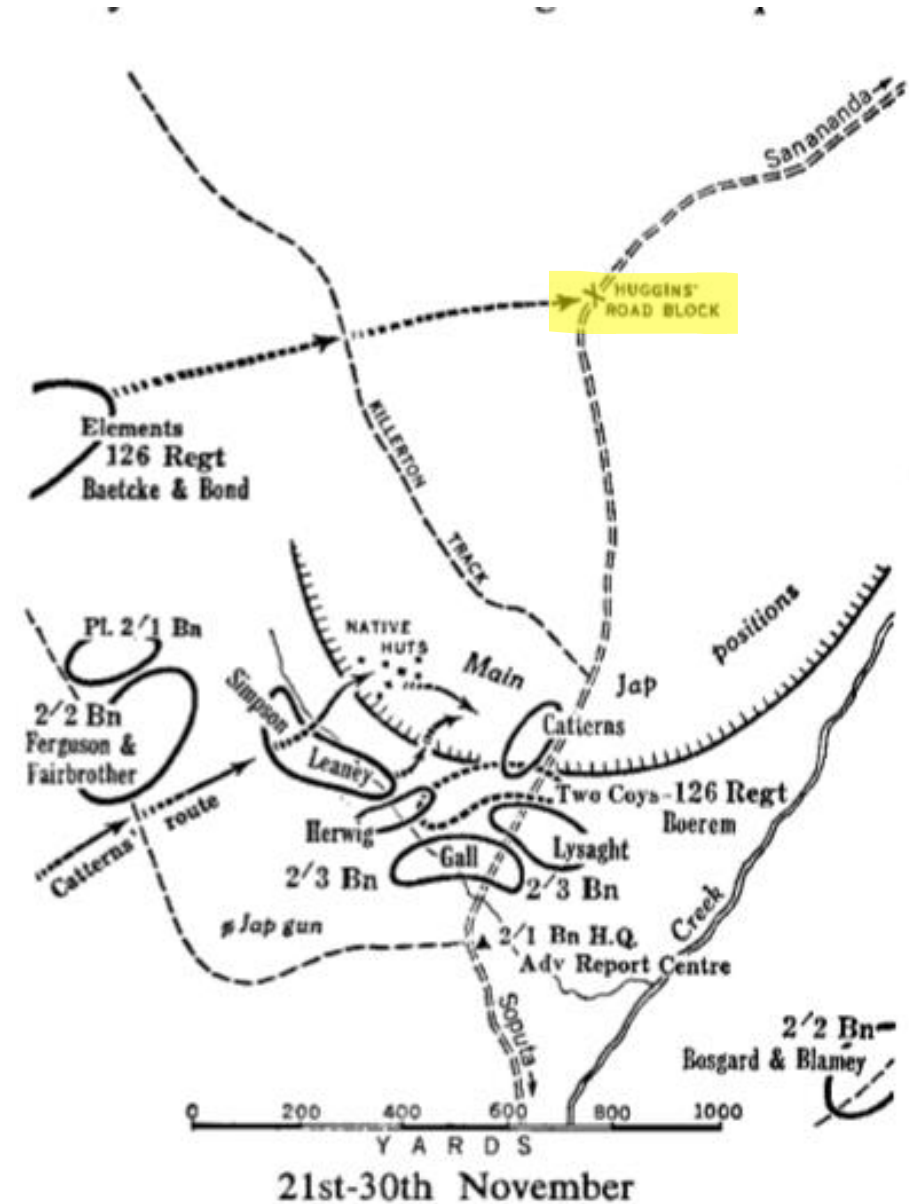
# 9 December – Buna W

- During the afternoon (9<sup>th</sup> December), 1st Lt. James G. Downer, now commanding Company E, led a patrol against the same bunker position that the flame throwers had failed to reduce the day before.
- Covered by fire from the rest of the patrol, Downer moved out against the enemy positions alone but was killed by a hidden sniper just before reaching it. Downer's body was recovered and the fight for the bunker went on.
- Enemy fire slackened by evening and the bunker finally fell after costing the attackers heavy casualties and several days of effort.
- By this time the 2d Battalion, 126th Infantry, had launched twelve unsuccessful attacks on the village. Companies E and F each had less than fifty effectives left, and the whole battalion totalled about 250 men. The task of delivering the final attack on the village went to the fresh 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, which had completed its movement to the forward area by air on 9 December.



# 9 Dec – Sanananda

- On the 9<sup>th</sup> an ambitious bombing program at Sanananda had to be called off after the first bombs had almost demolished the Salvation Army coffee stall nearly a mile behind the most forward Australian track positions.
- The difficulty in coordinating Allied air attacks with ground force movements was a continuing problem and occasional accidents occurred,
- such as the Salvation Army coffee stall incident or when advanced Australian units in the Gona area were strafed in error by an R.A.A.F. aircraft.





# 9 December - Gona

- Early on 9 December patrols of the 39 Battalion and the 2/16 - 2/27 composite Battalion moved into the mission area to mop up. It was a grim business with much hand-to-hand fighting, but the last enemy positions were overrun by 1630 that afternoon.
- In this work Lieutenant Sword, who had fought bravely and tirelessly since the very beginning of the Japanese invasion, was killed.
- Honner reported to Brigadier Dougherty: "Gona's gone!"
- The Australians found a little food and ammunition and took sixteen prisoners, ten of them stretcher cases.
- The Australians buried 638 Japanese dead at Gona, but they had lost more than 750 killed, wounded, and missing.
- On 9 December, the day that Gona fell, Brigadier Dougherty ordered the 39 Battalion westward to deal with the enemy on the east bank of the Amboga River, which Australian patrols had been clashing with since 4 December.

# Air – 9 December

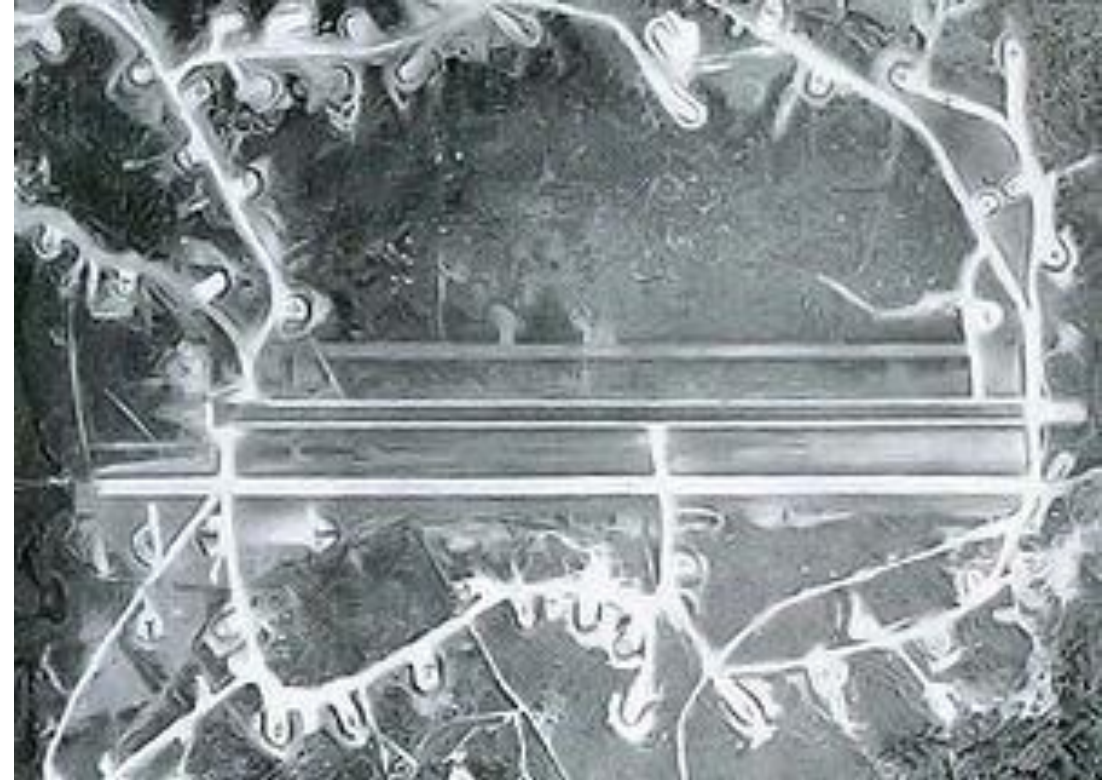
- Seven B-26's and 3 Bostons pound Buna area as ground forces prepare for final assault on the village.
- Twelve P-40's hit area along Sanananda-Soputa trail.
- US heavy bombers attacked the new enemy airfield at Munda Point. Anti aircraft fire was heavy. There was no aircraft opposition. All our aircraft returned.
- Queensland - An unidentified single-engined monoplane floatplane was sighted over Lethebrook (38 miles South of Bowen), and there were indications later in the evening of further enemy reconnaissance in this area. There have been no recent indications of an enemy submarine in the vicinity.
- The daily weather aircraft in the Aleutians cannot return to base due a sudden snow squall and crash-lands at Atka I.
- Attempted bombing mission to Kiska Harbor by 3 B-26's and 6 P-38's is forced back by weather.

# Air – 9 December



# 9 December - Air

- The work horse at Port Moresby since April had been the 8th Service Group. Its 50 officers and 1,000 enlisted men manned Jackson airdrome, one of the three principal fields in the Moresby area.
  - It operated the Arcadia Transient Camp for the housing and feeding of combat crews on the way through Port Moresby.
  - It operated an air depot for both the Port Moresby and Milne Bay areas.
  - It held responsibility for salvaging damaged aircraft on five airdromes, on near-by islands, and along the coast for eighty miles and
  - performed routine maintenance for fighters, light bombers, transports, and any other transient aircraft needing help.



Jackson Field, formerly 7 Mile.



## 9 December - Air

- The 27th Air Depot Group arrived in Port Moresby from Brisbane early in December 1942. This gave some hope of relief for the overburdened 8th. Relief was slow, however, because of the difficulties experienced by new units in adjusting to the conditions of an advanced tropical base.
- Upon disembarking from the ships at Port Moresby, the men of one of the 27<sup>th</sup>'s units were carried by truck for seven miles into a desolate area where "every inch of ground was covered by mosquito laden tough fibrous waste [*sic*] high Kunai grass."
  - At first the 900 or more men had only their barracks bags and field packs.
  - Other supplies and equipment had to be brought from the ships and uncrated before such essentials as field kitchens could be set up.
  - The only water immediately available was that contained in canteens and Lyster bags.
- The table of basic allowances had not been designed to meet such a situation. A depot repair squadron, for example, was allotted one carpenter's kit, and with that its personnel were expected to clear the area and build whatever buildings were necessary.

## 9 December - Air

- A party from No. 22 Squadron had flown to Kokoda in a Boston piloted by Flight Lieutenant Sladen, one of the unit's most experienced officers, to retrieve another Boston, piloted by Flying Officer Turner, which had been forced down on a small clearing near Wairopi after making an attack on Sanananda Point.
- Sladen, accompanied by Flying Officer Chester and Sergeants Williams and Kendell, walked from Kokoda to the scene of the forced landing carrying supplies and equipment .
- After stripping Turner's aircraft, which was undamaged, of its guns and all other movable equipment, and draining the surplus fuel, the two Boston crews worked for several days clearing trees and undergrowth to make space for take-off.
- Though delayed by bad weather, which made the ground boggy, Sladen succeeded in taking the aircraft off and flying it safely back to Port Moresby while the rest of his party and the original crew walked back to Kokoda and flew Sladen's aircraft back to base.

# 10 December - Government

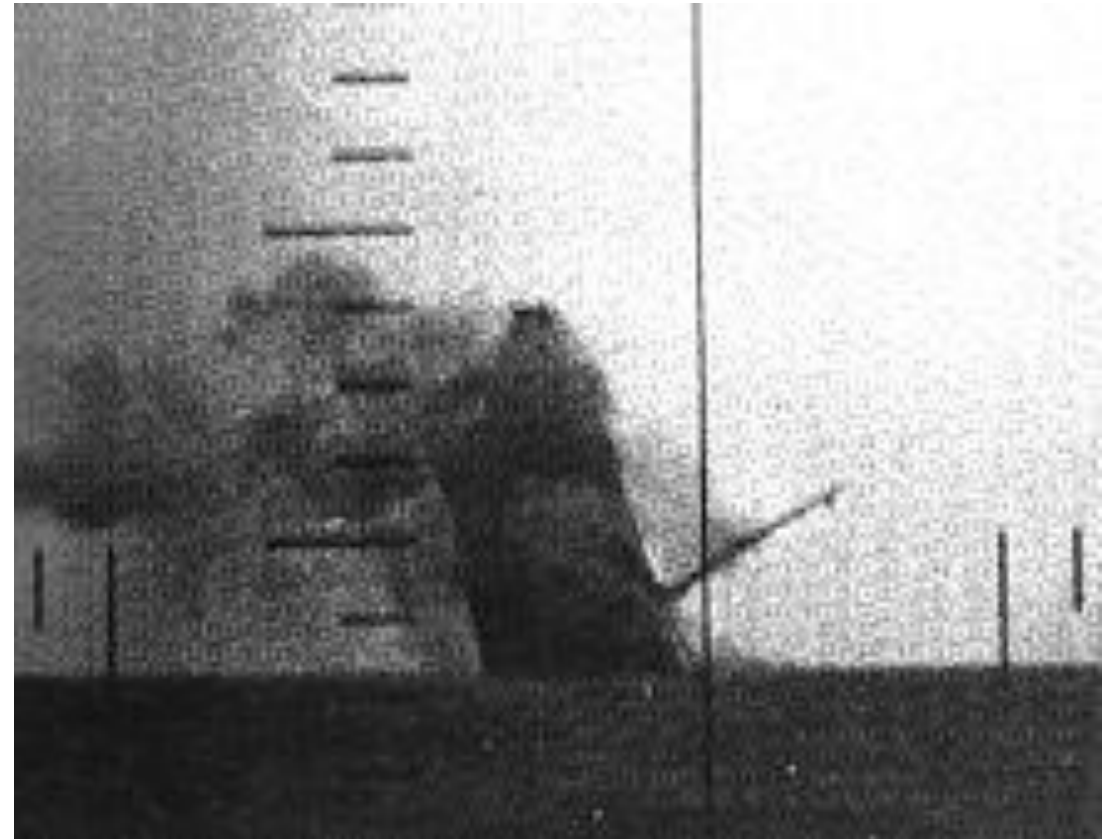
- Blackburn, an Independent supporter of Labour since his expulsion from the party, moved on 10th December an amendment which, if carried, would have read as a declaration by the House that it opposed "the imposition of any form of compulsory service outside Australia and the territories of the Commonwealth".
- Calwell seconded it and, with Brennan and Ward, spoke in favour of it.
- The debate took place on two successive days and during its currency a further special Caucus meeting was called and was reported to have ended, after a short but very stormy session, in an agreement that the Labour Party would move for the adjournment of the debate without a vote being taken.



**Arthur Calwell**

# 10 December - Sea

- A Japanese freighter Kamoi Maru was torpedoed and sunk in the Buka-Kilinailau Channel (4°56'S 154°58'E) by USS Wahoo on 10 December.
- Wahoo had got underway from Pearl for her second war patrol on 8 November. Wahoo was then detailed to reconnoitre Kieta Harbor and Buka Island on her way to Brisbane for a refit.
- Kalgoorlie delivered the Armidale survivors rescued from the whale boat at Darwin at 11.25 a.m. on the 10th.
- Tjerk Hiddes sailed next morning (10<sup>th</sup>) for Betano.

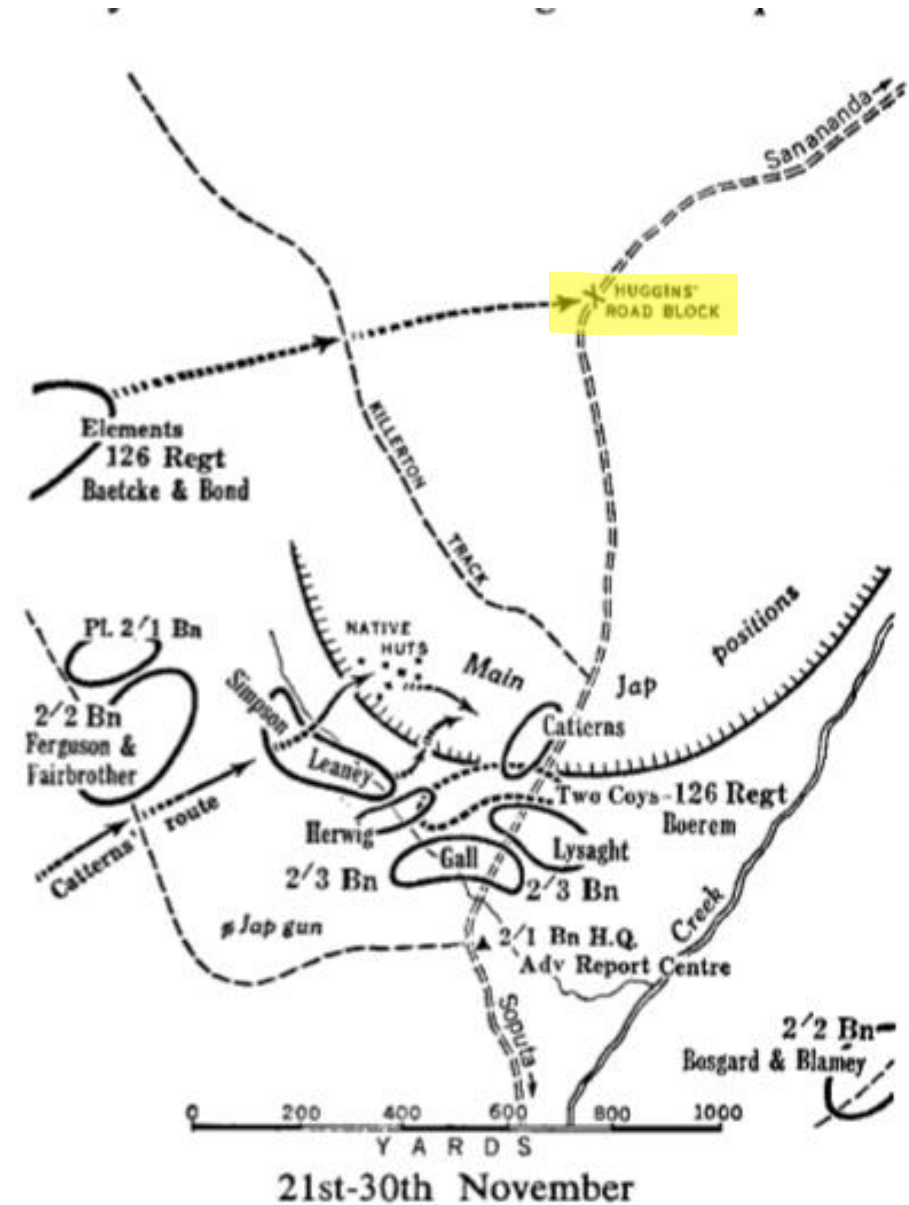


Periscope photo of a Japanese freighter sinking by the bow after being torpedoed by *Wahoo*.



# 10 Dec – Sanananda

- On 10 December, with communications again out, a second ration party led by 1st Lt. Zina Carter was able to get through to the roadblock.
- Lieutenant Carter brought back a message from Lieutenant Dal Ponte that fevers, foot ailments, and ringworm were increasing daily, and that while the spirit of the men was good they were worn out and desperately needed relief.
- Life at the roadblock was hard. Although the troops were hungry, feverish, and in need of sleep, they were on an almost perpetual alert. Crouched low in their muddy foxholes, their feet going bad, they repelled attack after attack.



# 10 December - West of Gona

- The 39th battalion moved westward on the 10th, parallel with the coast, through scrub and swamp.



# 10 December - Air

- In the beginning there was difficulty in handling the freight unloaded from the transports at Dobodura where the aircrews did their best with what labour happened to be available.
- But by 10th December an American quartermaster detachment had taken control and conditions were greatly improved.
- There was always a risk that enemy fighters might break through to attack the unarmed transports and Allied fighters had a special responsibility for their protection. As the distance between Port Moresby and the Buna front bases was comparatively short (just 100 miles) area cover was preferred to an attempt to maintain continuous escort.
- Full squadrons of fighters operated over the area in relays.
- The transports themselves, after passing through the "Gap", were flown low just above the jungle growth. On landing, the crews kept their motors running while the aircraft were unloaded so that there was a minimum of delay on the ground where they were particularly vulnerable to air attack.

# 10 December - Air

- Still the demand was for more transport aircraft and so a decision was made to send an R.A.A.F. Special Transport Flight from Australia.
- The composition demonstrated the urgency of the situation in New Guinea and the poverty of MacArthur's command in transport aircraft. It was made up of 15 Hudsons from No. 1 Operational Training Unit at Bairnsdale; a single Douglas DC-2 from the Paratroop Training Unit; and eleven aircraft from civil sources —two De Havilland-86s, two Lockheed 10s, two Stinsons, one Lockheed 14, one Douglas DC-2 and three Douglas DC-3s.
- Commanded by Squadron Leader Hall, it had an R.A.A.F. strength of 45 officers, 45 N.C.Os and 30 airmen, and a civil complement of 48 aircrew under the charge of Captain Burgess of the Department of Civil Aviation who, before the war, had been the department's district superintendent in New Guinea.
  - While presently a civilian Captain Burgess had extensive and varied military experience, having served with the Royal Flying corps and the RAF for six years, with the RAAF for five years and with the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles for two years.
- All crews then engaged in operational training at Bairnsdale were sent on leave, subject to recall at short notice, and instructors not included in the special unit were temporarily transferred to train Beaufort crews.
- Five days after formation the unit was reinforced by ten Dakota crews temporarily transferred from No. 36 Squadron.



# 10 December - Air



Lockheed Electra 10A in Royal Air Force service



A Royal Australian Air Force De Havilland DH.86A *Express* air ambulance (s/n A31-7) in flight

# 10 December - Air



Two Australian Lockheed Hudsons in 1940.



Stinson Voyager. This is one of two HW-75s imported to Australia in 1939.

# 10 December - Air

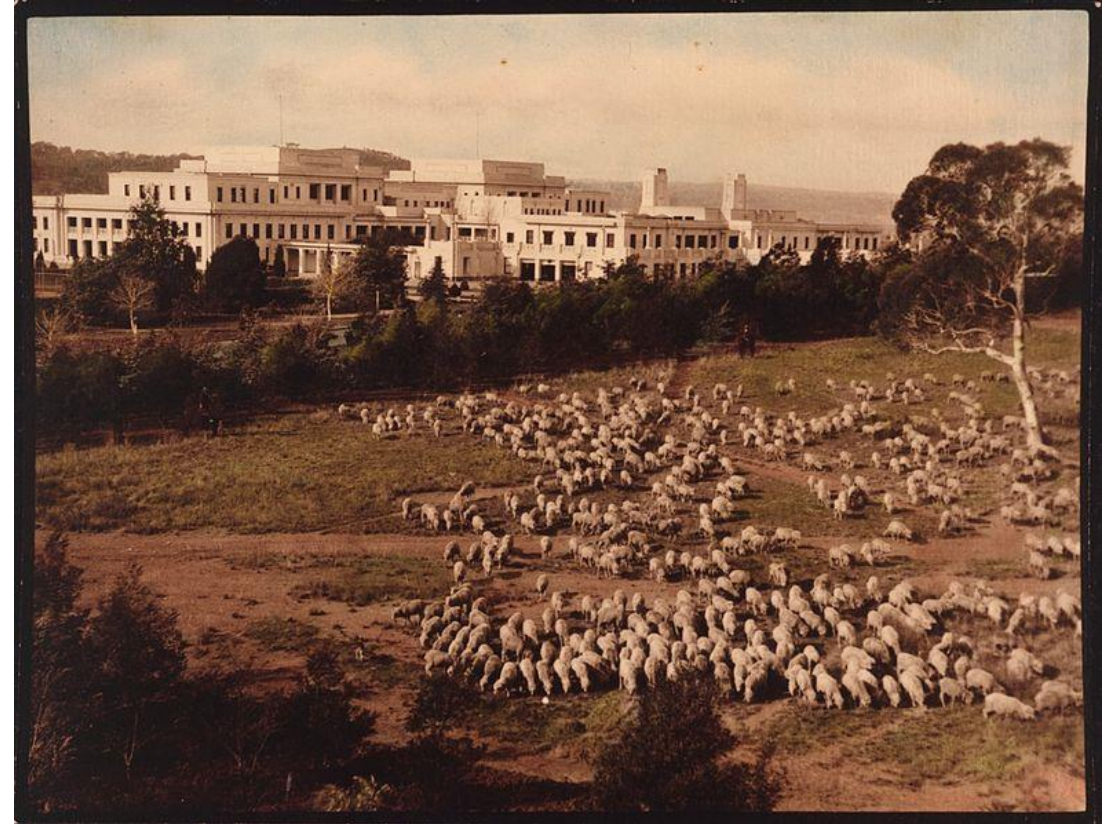
- Buna Force signalled New Guinea Force on 10th December: "Will you please clarify where our radio request for air support should be directed."
- Yesterday we sent our request to you ADV NGF. We sent photos and duplicate of msg to you via plane to NGF. None the less this A.M. we received a radio from you that our request was not received.
- In addition to all of the above, our Lt. Col. Howe spoke on the phone to your King (?) reference air support.
- We will send messages to you wherever you direct—if you will please tell us where!! Yesterday at 1130L we started our yell for today's support directly to your headquarters but alas! no avail! Thanks."

# 10 December - Air

- On 10 December twenty Japanese medium naval bombers dropped food and ammunition onto the Buna Old Strip.
- Six Bostons from No 22 squadron bombed and strafed enemy positions and trenches at the west end of the new strip at Buna, led by their new CO Wing Commander Hampshire.
- A US heavy bomber on reconnaissance over the southern end of New Georgia was attacked by fifteen enemy fighters, five of which are reported shot down.
- Eleven US heavy bombers escorted by eight fighters attacked two large ships in the Buin area. Three hits were claimed on one ship and two straddles on the second. Enemy fighters intercepted the attacking aircraft 6 Zeros claimed shot down. All our planes returned.
- US heavy bombers attacked the new enemy airfield at Munda Point. Anti aircraft fire was heavy. There was no aircraft opposition. All our aircraft returned.
- Chittagong was attacked by 24 Japanese bombers with fighter escort. Damage was slight. Three enemy planes were shot down.

# 11 December - Government

- On 11th December a Labour member did move the adjournment of the debate but, on a division, Blackburn and the Independent member, Coles, voted with the Opposition against this easy way out of the party's embarrassment, so that there were 34 votes for and 34 against. The Speaker gave his casting vote in favour of "obtaining a determination of the question during the present sittings of Parliament" and declared the motion lost.
- Blackburn's amendment was put immediately and lost on the voices, no division being called.





# Report to the White House – 11 Dec 42

2. In order to provide the greatest possible amount of supplies in the South and Southwest Pacific Areas the War Department is taking steps to negotiate contracts in Australia and New Zealand for rations, and other supplies of all types grown or manufactured locally, for a force of 400,000 men for 1 year. General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz will set up suitable procedures to keep the various force and Area commanders informed as to these contracts in order to avoid duplication in procurement, and shipment of identical items from US sources.

# 11/12 December - Sea

- **Solomons**

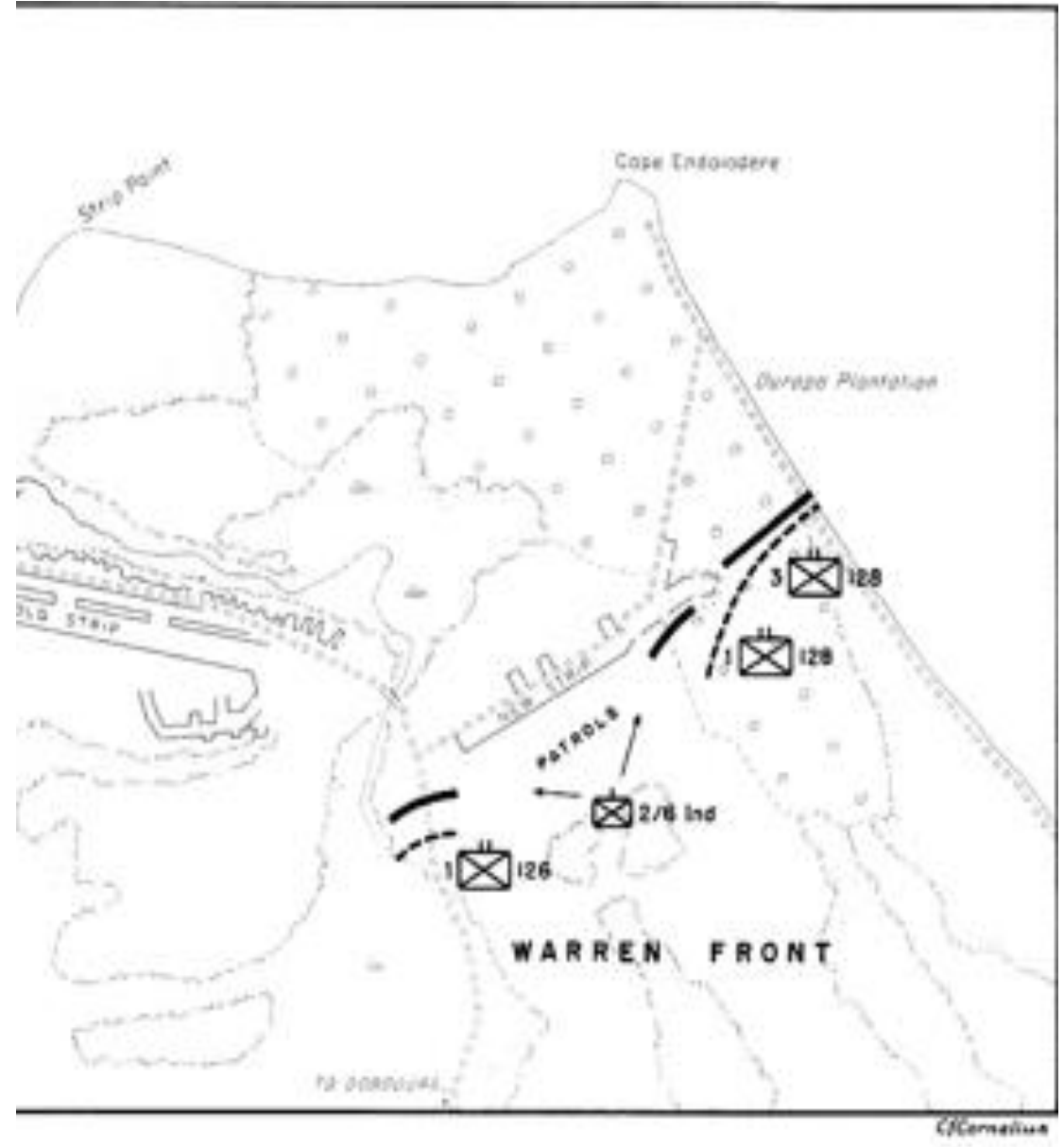
- On 11 December American radio intelligence was able to forecast the composition, timing and destination of a Tokyo Express run by eleven destroyers planned for that night.
- This information enabled 14 US. bombers to attack these ships at extreme range about sunset but they scored no hits. The destroyers managed to shoot down one of the bombers, and the Japanese steamed on south.
- The destroyers dropped 1,200 drums of supplies off Cape Esperance and then headed north again by 01.15.
- Three US PT boats, which had been lurking behind Savo stalked them and fired their torpedoes all together. They got one hit on a big destroyer igniting a brilliant fire and exploding a magazine.
- With PT boats still around and dawn and the bombers coming, the other Japanese destroyers did not wait to rescue survivors.
- PT 44, Lt. Frank Freeland, got too close to the burning destroyer, which illuminated it as a target for the other destroyers. The first hit crippled the engines and set it on fire, the second one completely demolished the boat. Only 2 of the crew of eleven survived.
- The moon was now entering a phase which made other such supply attempts even more risky.

- **Darwin**

- Tjerk Hiddes was back in Darwin in the afternoon of the 11th with 49 sick and wounded, 64 2/2nd Independent Company, 192 Dutch and 87 Portuguese.

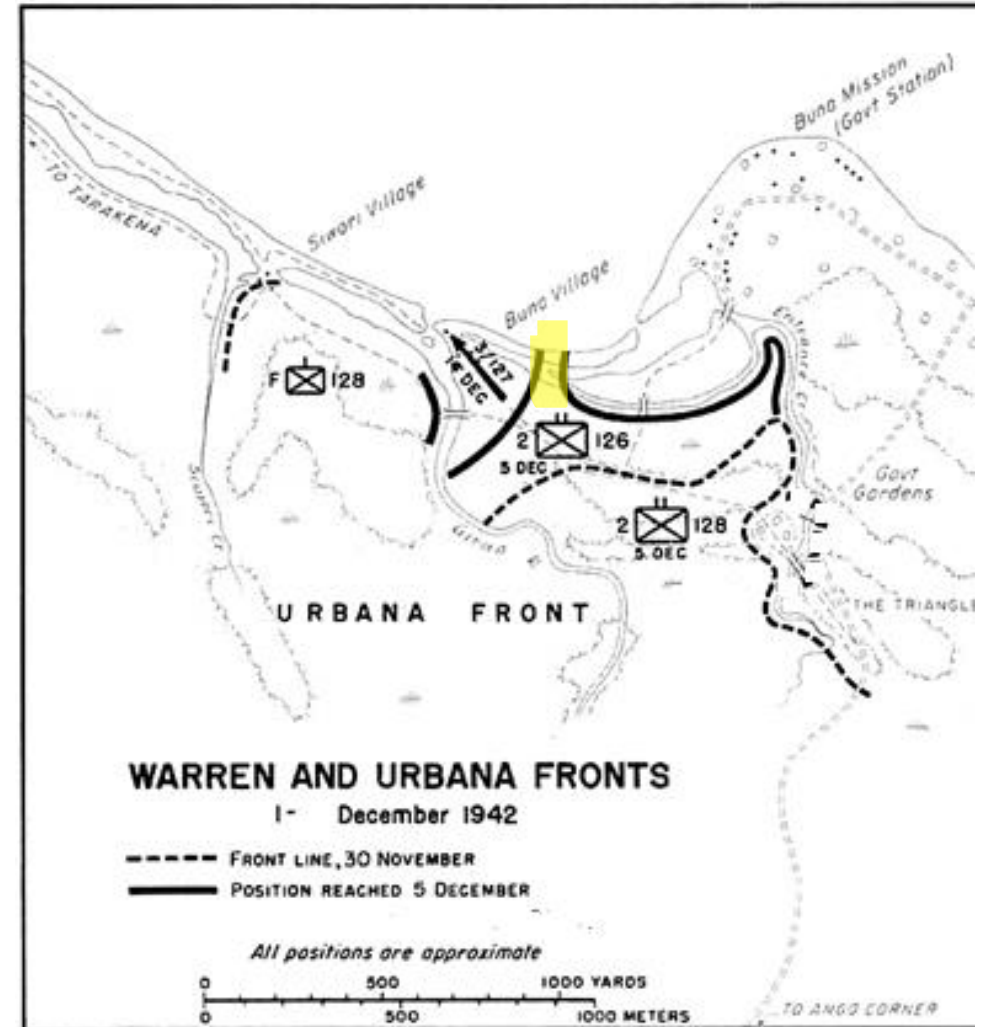
# 11 December – Buna E

- The *Karsik* arrived at Oro Bay on the night of 11-12 December bringing in its hold four American M3 light tanks (General Stuarts) belonging to the 2/6 Australian Armored Regiment.
- Maj. Moffatt, an American infantry officer supervised the unloading. He had just reached the area from Milne Bay with six Higgins boats (LCVP's) and two Australian barges, the first Allied landing craft to reach the combat zone.
- The actual unloading was done quickly, and the ship got away safely before daylight.
- The tanks were transferred to specially constructed barges (which had reached the area a few days before), towed to shore, unloaded, and hidden in the jungle.



# 11 December – Buna W

- On 11 December, Companies I and K, 127th Infantry, relieved Companies E and G, 126th Infantry.
- Company I took up a position at **Bottcher's Corner** between the village and the mission, and the 2d Battalion, 126th Infantry, moved into a reserve area along the supply trail.
- The Australian mountain battery completed its move on 11 December. Even though the howitzers at once began hitting Japanese positions behind both strips with greater effect than before, they were still able to make no apparent impression on the Japanese line, so well was the enemy entrenched.



# 11 December – Buna W



COCONUT LOG BUNKER WITH FIRE TRENCH  
ENTRANCE *in the Buna Village area.*



INTERIOR OF COCONUT LOG BUNKER *reinforced with  
sand-filled oil drums near Duropa Plantation.*



# 11 December - West of Gona

- Honner turned north towards the sea with Lieutenant French's company as advance-guard. In the early afternoon the leading scouts and Iskov killed a Japanese lieutenant-colonel and two other officers and documents were found on the bodies.
- Then the Australians, pressing forward into swamp, came hard against the southern defences of Japanese positions located in Haddy's village on the seashore.
- The battalion attacked off the line of march reaching the outskirts of the village but taking heavy casualties.
- The whole battalion then dug in for the night. Rain came with the night, flooding tracks, weapon pits, latrines, so that the Australians were held in swamp and water before opposition sited on higher and drier ground.
- In the darkness and rain a determined counterattack overran Seward's forward platoon from which a handful of wounded survivors struggled in next morning.



# 11 December - Air

- Nine B-26's bomb A/F and T/O in Buna area. Six B-25's and six B-26's hit A/F at Lae. 7 B.17s attacked the aerodrome afternoon 11/12. 2 fires started and several explosions observed.
- Three heavy bombers attacked the airfield at Salamaua.
- 6 Wirraways attacked enemy positions and installations morning 11/12. 2 huts demolished, and another badly damaged, 2 Wirraways missing. These were No 4 Squadron's first casualties.
- In the afternoon twenty nine enemy fighters strafed the Dobodura area.
- Two to three thousand troops with trucks and ten landing barges were observed moving eastward from Dilli.
- Photographs of the attack on shipping yesterday show one hit and two near misses on each of two medium sized oil tankers. One of these ships was observed still burning today.
- Seven US heavy bombers attacked the new enemy airfield at Munda Point. Anti aircraft fire was not as heavy as on previous days. There was no aircraft opposition. All our aircraft returned.
- Six B24s attacked Rangoon, claiming twenty hits on warehouses and one on a dock. Fires resulted.
- Six other B24s of IATF attack shipping at Port Blair, with negative results.

# 12 December – New Guinea

- **Buna W**

- Companies I and K began probing the Japanese line at once. They made small gains on the 12th and consolidated them.

- **Sanananda**

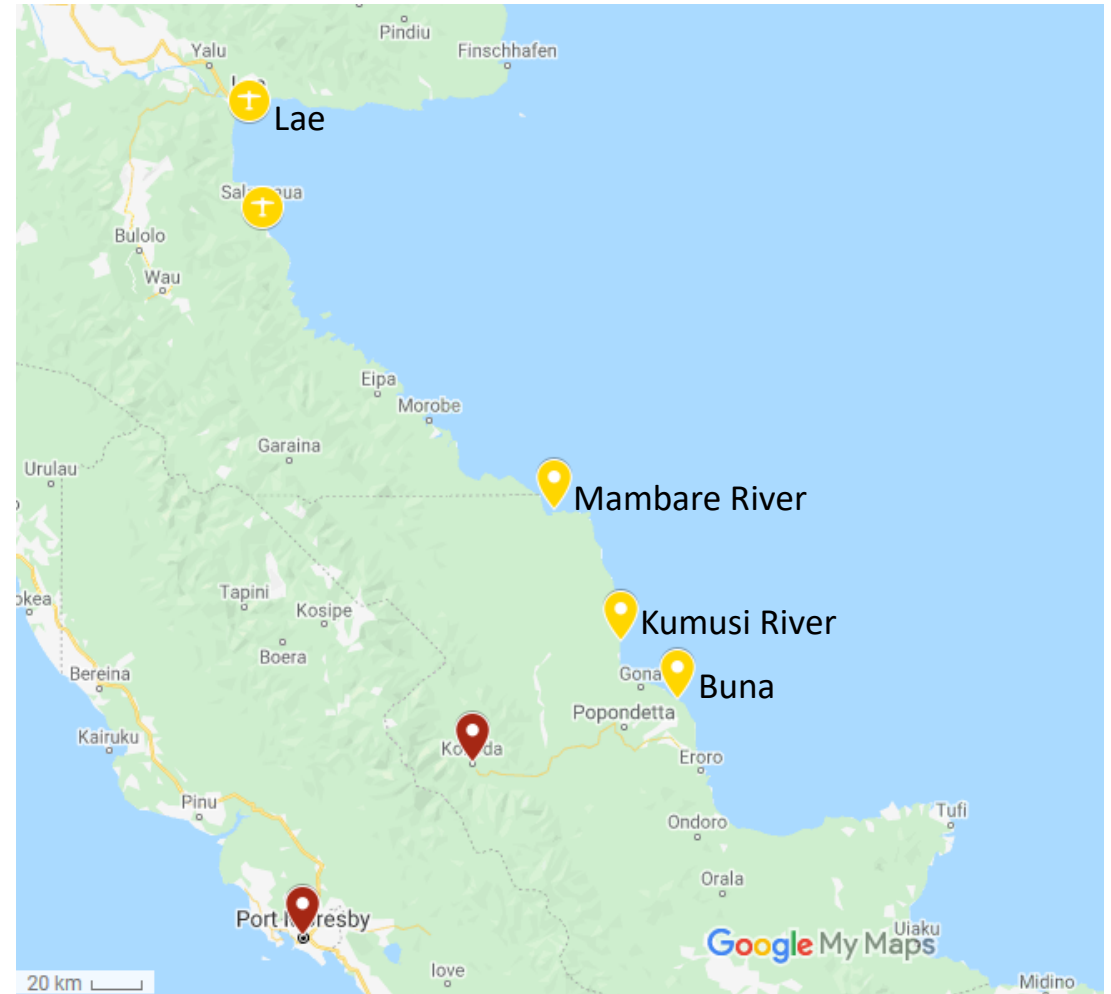
- On 10 December Boerem had had 635 men fit for duty. Two days later (on the 12<sup>th</sup>) he had only 551, and each day saw the effective strength of his command shrink still further.
- On 12 December, after several attempts the day before had failed to reach the roadblock, Major Boerem asked Brigadier Porter to relieve the garrison as well as Company K and the Cannon Company, but without success.

- **West of Gona**

- By the evening of the 12th Honner had lost 10 killed and 37 wounded in the new operations. Examination of the Japanese dead and their equipment suggested that his opponents were apparently part of a freshly-landed force, well fed and well found, approximately equal in numbers, he thought, to his own.

# 12 December Air

- by 12 December the engineers had completed three more strips at Dobodura, one with a 4,200-foot runway.
- At near-by Popondetta, other strips had been prepared to round out a group of advanced fields which would carry the burden of transport operations during the fighting for Buna.
- Close attention was now being given by the Allied forces to enemy endeavours to build up strength at the mouths of the Mambare and Kumusi Rivers. In this the efforts of Australian ground forces and Allied aircrews were greatly aided by two Coastwatchers, Lieutenant Noakes and Sergeant Carlson.
- Noakes would worm his way through filthy swamps and sneak close to the Japanese positions, note their exact dispositions, and pinpoint them in relation to a particular sandy beach that was clearly visible from the air. Carlson would transmit Noakes' coded messages and Allied aircrews would put their bombs accurately on the target.



# 12 December Air

- To prevent enemy infiltration southward from Salamaua light bombers and attack planes patrolled the coast west of Buna. Six A-20's strafe barges off Sanananda Pt successfully attacking about sixteen landing barges and a convoy of 12 - 15 local canoes.
- Five Beaufighters strafed the Government station 1025-1210/12. Results not observed. One large barge and several small craft also strafed.
- Eight US heavy bombers, nine dive bombers and eleven fighters attacked the new enemy airfield at Munda Point. There was no anti aircraft fire. There was no aircraft opposition. Two enemy float planes were shot down by our fighters. All our aircraft returned.
- A US heavy bomber on reconnaissance near Faisi was intercepted by seven enemy fighters, one of which was claimed probably shot down, another two probably damaged.
- Four B25s and eleven P40s attacked Tengchung (South west Yunnan) scoring a direct hit on a building believed to house a Japanese headquarters and starting fires including in an oil storage. The only opposition was one light machine gun which was silenced.
- Blenheims attacked railway installations in the Mandalay area claiming hits on tracks and rolling stock.



# 12/13 December - Sea

- In December, four P.T. boats were also based on Milne Bay.
- The noise of their engines as they manoeuvred in the bay on arrival on the night of 12th December brought the shore anti-aircraft batteries into action under the impression that there were low-flying aircraft in the vicinity, and for a few minutes the night was noisy and vivid with the thud and flash of gunfire.
- H.M.A. Ships Colac, Ballarat, and Broome with a total of 762 officers and men of the 2/9th Battalion, left Milne Bay at 3 a.m. on 13th December to land the troops as far forward as possible in the Buna area.



HMAS Broome

# 12/13 December – Buna E

- Traveling at best speed *Colac*, *Broome*, and *Ballarat* reached the rendezvous point off Cape Sudest late that night 13 December to find Major Moffatt and the eight landing craft waiting for them.
- Unloading began at once, but scarcely had the first seventy-five men stepped into the two leading LCVP's when the captain of the *Ballarat*, the senior officer in charge of the corvettes, learned that a "large" Japanese naval force, was moving on Buna from Rabaul. He immediately pulled the corvettes back to Porlock Harbor with the rest of the troops still aboard.
- The two loaded landing craft let the troops off at Boreo, and all eight craft made for the Oro Bay area, their hiding place during the day. Just before they reached it, they were bombed by patrolling Australian aircraft, which mistook them for Japanese--an understandable error since the pilots had not been told to look out for Allied landing craft, and the Allies had up to that time had no landing craft of any kind in the area.
- One LCVP was sunk, and another had to be beached, a total loss. Nine crew members were wounded, and one died before he could reach a hospital.

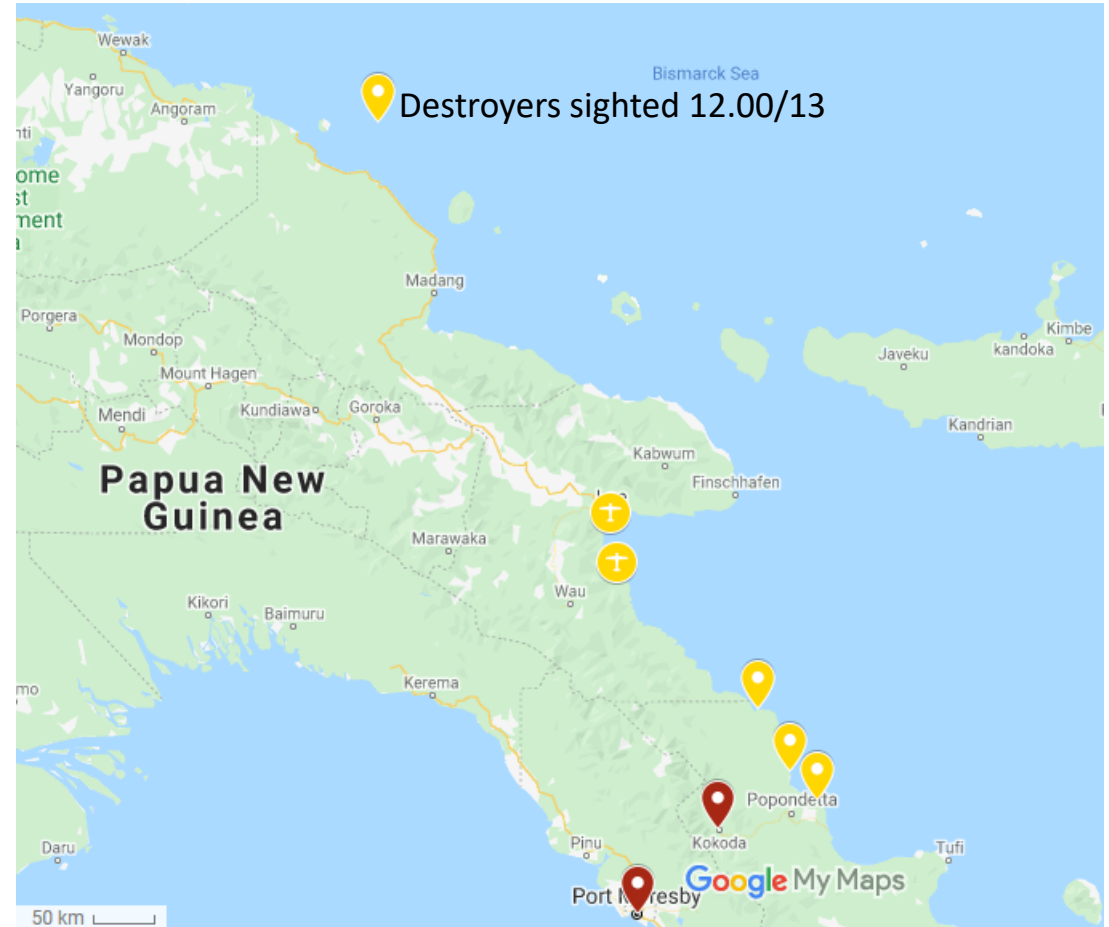
# 12/13 December – Buna E

- The tanks were reloaded on the barges the next night (12/13 December) and then towed by luggers to Boreo.
- There they were landed, run into the jungle, and hidden at a tank lying-up point a few hundred yards north of the village.



# 13 December - Sea

- Extensive and exhaustive air searches were carried out daily until 13th December, and surface runs through the area were made including one by the Dutch destroyer Tjerk Hiddes. Nothing more was seen of the rafts and their dwindling company of Armidale survivors.
- A convoy of five destroyers (or two cruisers and three destroyers) was sighted at noon on the 13th approximately 85 miles N.N.W. of Madang, and were shadowed by air reconnaissance, but bad weather precluded attacks on them and at this stage they were last sighted off Cape Ward Hunt at 3.20 a.m. on the 14th.

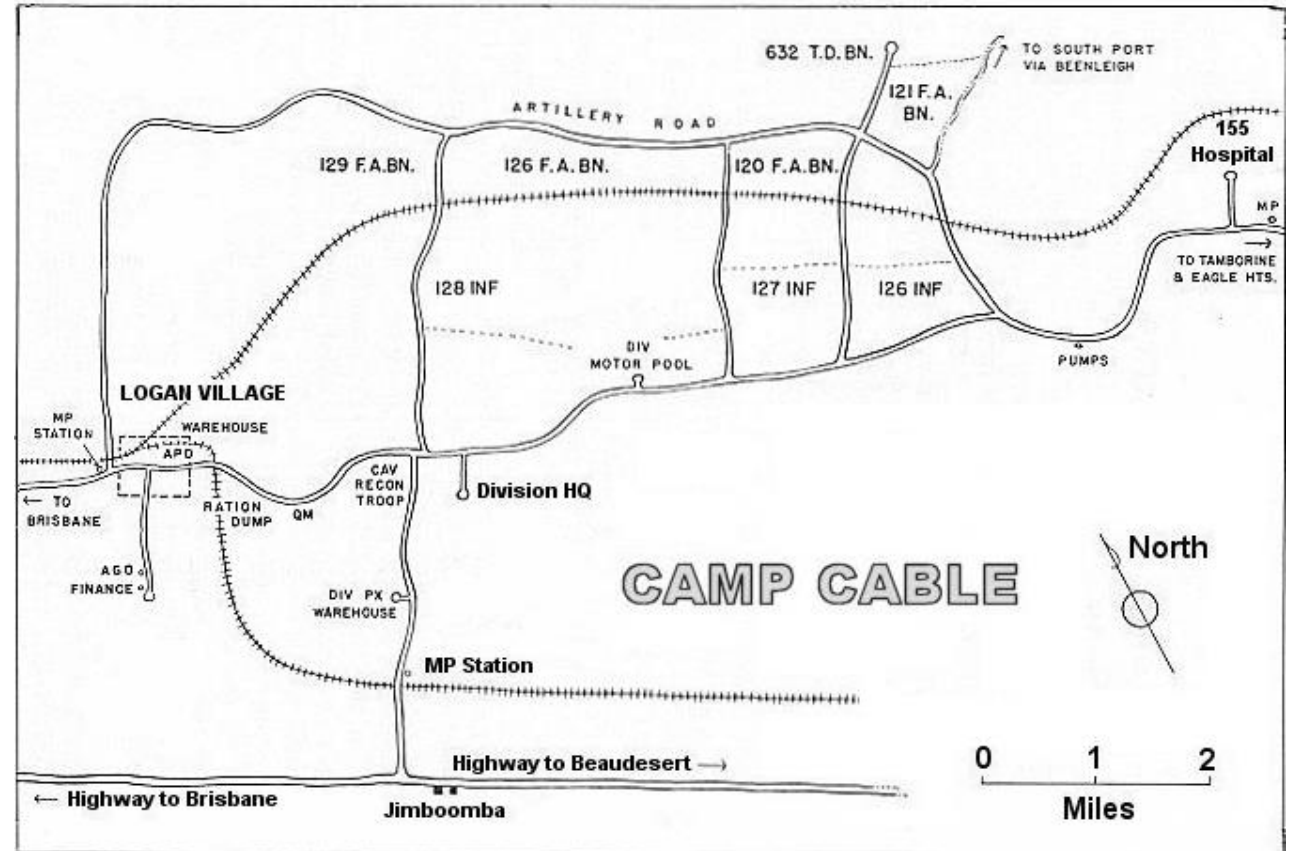


# 13 December – New Guinea

- **Buna W**
- On the 13th the village was subjected to heavy fire from the 25-pounders at Ango, and a heavy mortar concentration was laid down in preparation for a final assault the next day.
- **Sanananda**
- Heavy rain and fierce enemy opposition defeated all attempts to supply the roadblock on the 13th. All efforts to establish radio or telephone contact with the garrison that day also failed; even runners were unable to get through.
- **West of Gona**
- Analysis of the papers taken by Sergeant Iskov from the officers killed on the track on the 11th showed that possibly about 500 men of the III Battalion of the 170 Regiment, had landed between the Kumusi and Amboga at the beginning of December from four destroyers which Allied aircraft had attacked on the night 1st-2nd December.
- Well founded estimates suggested that, allowing for casualties which had been inflicted in the fighting up to that time, the newcomers, together with survivors from the mountain fighting who had escaped down the Kumusi and congregated near its mouth, totalled some 600 in the Kumusi-Amboga area on 13th December.

# 13 Dec - Australia

- The 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division had reached Brisbane and were assigned to Camp Cable 45 miles from Brisbane.
- Facilities were scant and of the most primitive sort. The surroundings were depressing.
- The area was infested with mosquitoes. Even new replacements were said to contract malaria during the few weeks they were there.
- They were soon moved to Melbourne.



The camp was named after 25 year old Sergeant Gerald Cable, Service Company, 126th Infantry. When part of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division was shipped from South Australia to Queensland one of the ships was torpedoed by a submarine off the NSW coast. The only death was that of Sergeant Cable. (from Oz@War)



# 13 December – Air

- Convoy of 5 destroyers is detected off Madang, as it attempts to bring in reinforcements for beachhead in Buna area. B-17's and B-24's attack as it moves South but fail to deter its progress. 11 sorties in three attacks, 1,9,1. One direct hit and five near misses claimed. 1 escort claimed shot down and two probables.
- A-20's bomb and strafe Cape Killerton area (and strafed small boats along the coast from the mouth of the Kumusi river to Salamaua)
- while B-17's bomb Salamaua area.
- Nine B-26's hit A/F at Gasmata.
- night of 12/13 a patrol bomber attacked the new airfield at Munda and a heavy bomber attacked the airfield at Buin.
- Munda airfield was bombed twice by eleven heavy bombers. AA fire was heavy. In one raid 58 100-pound bombs were dropped on the target area.

# 14 December- Government

- On 14 December Curtin holds press conference and announces that 'Churchill has agreed to the Australian Government's representations for the return of the 9th Division from the Middle East, ... [and that] Churchill's response to the request ... [was] "most gracious". ... He remarked that editors should act with great discretion about the 9th Division.'



# 14 December - COIC

## 4. ENEMY'S PROBABLE NEXT MOVE

- (i) Offensive against N. coast New Guinea.
- (ii) Continued infiltration on Guadalcanal.
- (iii) Reinforcements for Buna.
- (iv) Submarine and/or raider activity in the Indian Ocean.

## 4. ENEMY'S PROBABLE NEXT MOVE

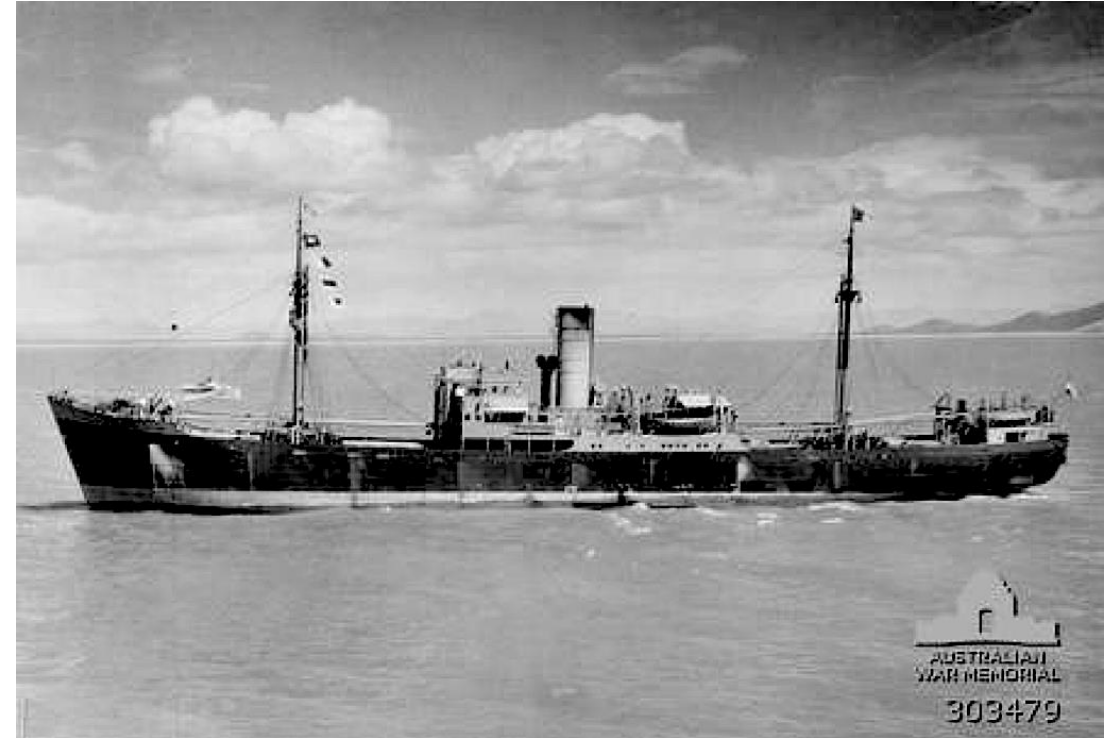
- (i) Renewed assault on Guadalcanal; meanwhile continued infiltration.
- (ii) Reinforcements for Buna.
- (iii) Further occupation in the Aleutians.
- (iv) Submarine and/or raider activity in the Indian Ocean.

*T. R. Riddle*  
For A/DIRECTOR, C O I C.  
13/12/42

*T. R. R.*  
For A/DIRECTOR C.O.I.C.  
14/12/42

# 14 December- Sea

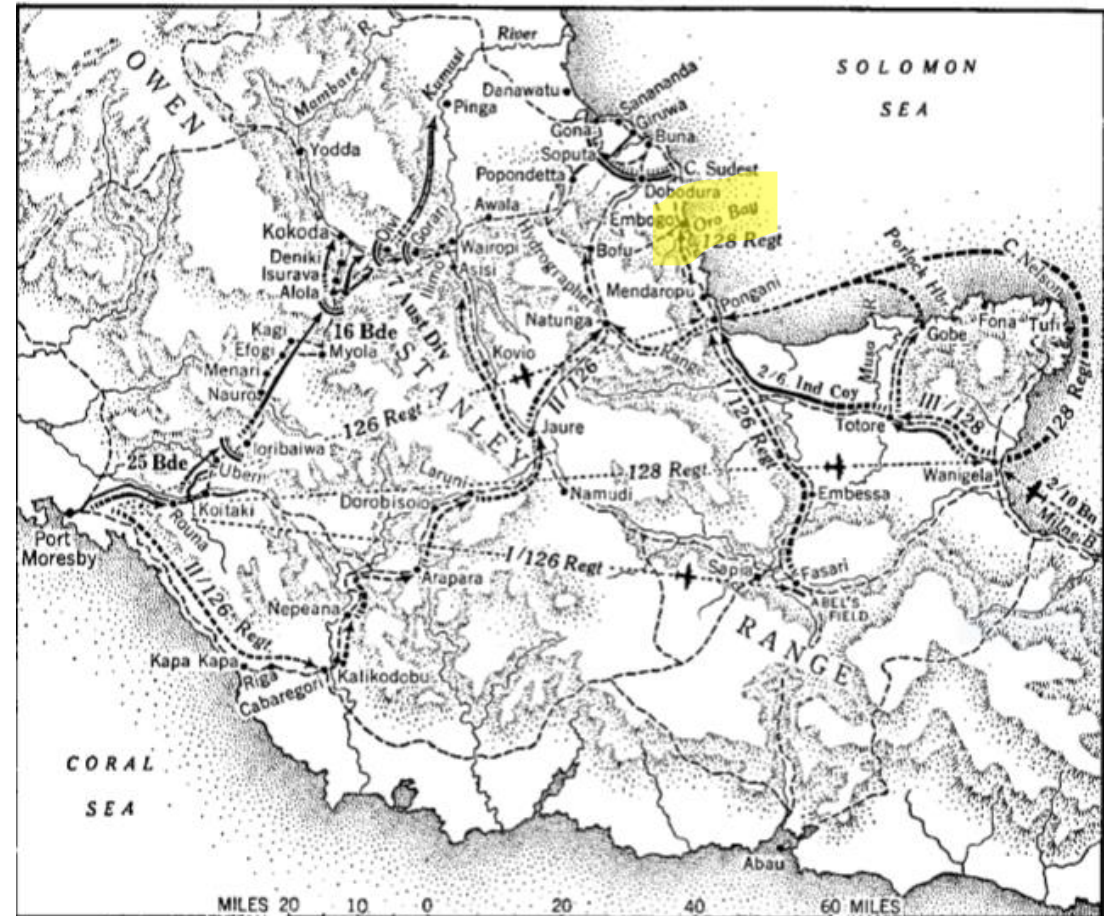
- Karsik and Lithgow, repeated the operation with another troop of tanks, and left Milne Bay in the early morning of the 14th.
- At 8 p.m. on the 14th, when about 30 miles east of Oro Bay heading for their destination across Dyke Acland Bay, Karsik and Lithgow overhauled and passed the three corvettes also returning to Oro Bay.
- The Corvettes followed Karsik into Oro Bay (Lithgow maintained anti-submarine patrol outside) just before midnight on 14/15 December.
- Disembarkation of the troops was carried out with Verdon's remaining three landing barges and the ships' boats.



Karsik, formerly the German *Soneck*, had been impounded in the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) when war began, in May 1940. The 2,191 ton steamer was used as a train ferry at Batavia until the Japanese invasion.

# 14 December – Buna E

- The three corvettes completed disembarkation and sailed by 5 a.m./15, with Lithgow and Karsik following a few minutes later, all to return to Milne Bay.
- Instead of rendezvousing with the landing craft off Cape Sudest as planned, the corvettes had landed the troops at Oro Bay, a full day's march away.
- The Japanese naval force was still in the area and unaccounted for, and the corvettes had no intention of running into it, especially with troops aboard.



Allied advance across Owen Stanley Range towards Buna,  
26th September-15th November

# 14 December- Sea

- The cargo ship Canberra Maru was sunk by American aircraft near Guadalcanal on 14 December.
- The new corvette Gawler built in Australia for the Admiralty account but Australian manned sailed to join the Eastern Fleet on 14<sup>th</sup> December.
- Aground in the west arm of Holtz Bay on the coast of Attu Island in the Aleutian Islands since 28 November, the 4,016-ton cargo ship Cheribon Maru capsized and sank in 100 feet (30 m) of water on 14 December.





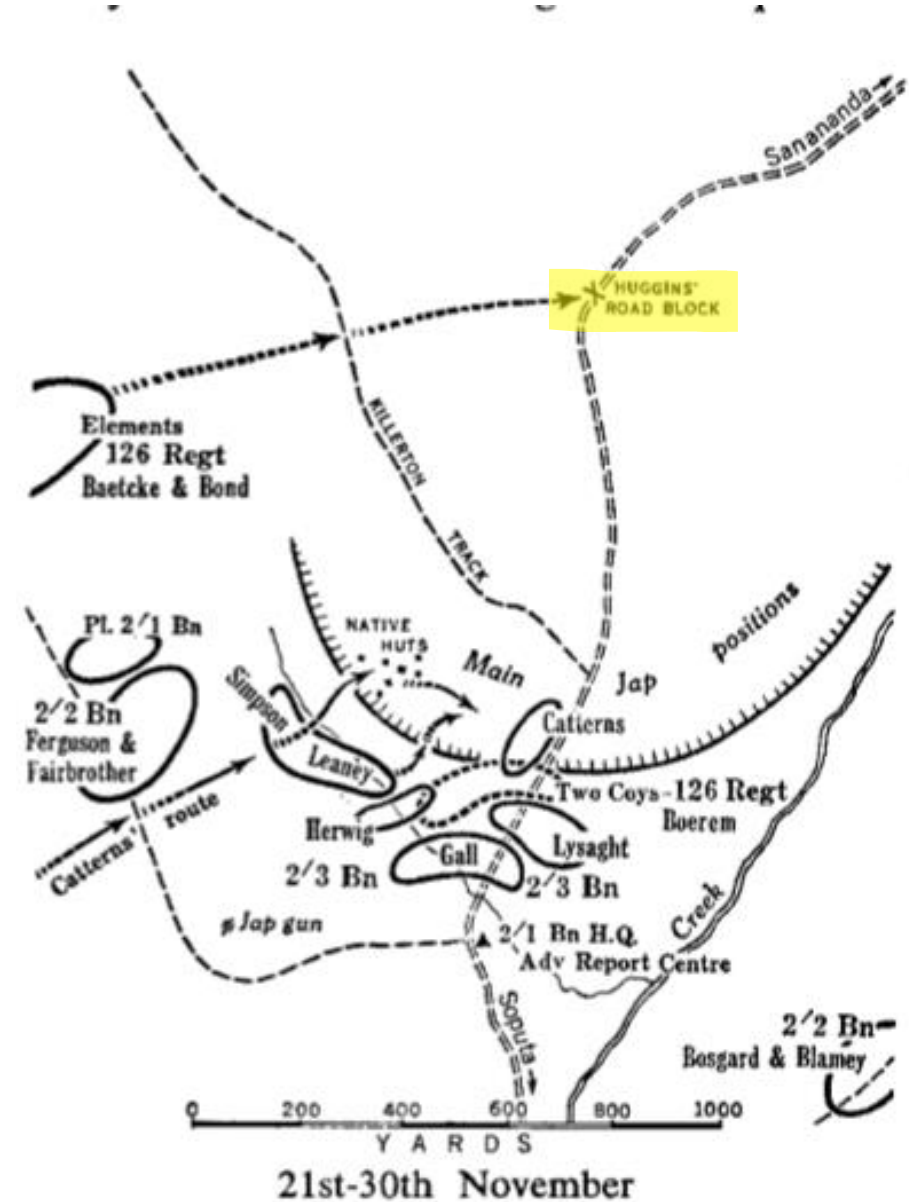
# 14 October – Buna W

- Early the next morning, 14 December, a thorough preparation by 25-pounders and mortars was put down on the village.
- Company K moved forward against the village at 0700. Company I was in support on Company K's left flank. The advance continued steadily and cautiously.
- There was no opposition.
- By 1000 the entire area was overrun. Moving slowly and warily because they feared a trap, the troops soon discovered that none existed.
- They found no Japanese anywhere in the village. After all the bitter fighting that had raged on the outskirts, the village had fallen without the firing of a single enemy shot.
- The village was a mass of wreckage. Its few huts had been blown to bits; the coconut palms were splintered and broken by shellfire; and there were craters and shell holes everywhere. But the bunkers still stood, despite evidence of numerous direct hits registered upon them by the artillery.



# 14 Dec – Sanananda

- Things went better on the 14th. A party of fifty-five men fought its way into the roadblock early that morning with rations, ammunition, and medical supplies. It broke through just in time, for the garrison was low on food and was about to run out of ammunition.
- Unable to get anywhere with Brigadier Porter in the matter of the relief of his troops, Major Boerem saw General Vasey early on the 14th. As the detachment journal notes: "No doubt the Major emerged a bit victorious, for there was a gleam of accomplishment in his eye upon his return to the C.P."
- That same afternoon, Company K and the Cannon Company packed up and moved to the rear. Their place was taken by Australian troops.



# 14 December – Air

- The R.A.A.F. Special Transport Flight began operations from Ward's aerodrome on 14th December with supply dropping at Soputa.
- On 14 December the air force in seventy-four sorties between Port Moresby and the airfields at Dobodura and Popondetta brought in 178 tons of high-priority matériel.



# 14 December – Air

- On Guadalcanal a new strip, Fighter 2, was constructed closer to the beach near Kukum.
- Fighter 1, always unusually slow to dry after tropical rains, was abandoned when this new strip became operational, about the middle of December.
- Both Henderson and Fighter 2 then were built up with coral for better drainage, and steel Marston mats, now becoming available, were laid on the runways.
- Equipment was still scarce, however, and the old Japanese road rollers continued to be used.



FIRST TEST LANDING ON STEEL MATTING, CAROLINA MANEUVERS, 1941

# 14 December – Air

- Troop-carrying destroyers, attacked by Fifth AF aircraft on 13 Dec, reach mouth of Mambare R and unload without being detected.
- However, Fifth AF MBs, LBs and ftrs, along with RAAF Beaufighters, subsequently deliver damaging blows against these troops and their supplies in a series of 75 bombing and strafing sorties which also hit forces along Kumusi R and Mambare R.
- The destroyers are attacked off Cape Ward Hunt by MRs and HBs during morning and afternoon 14/12, Three near misses were reported at 1224/14.
- A/Fs at Lae and Gasmata are each bombed by a single B24.
- The airfield at Kahili (Buin) was bombed by two heavy bombers, no air or AA opposition was encountered. –
- Seventeen dive bombers and fighters and seven B17s attacked Munda airfield. Effects of continuous bombing was observed, including severe damage to the runways.
- The RAF carried out extensive bombings in the Maungdaw area.
- Six B25s and fourteen P40s attacked Gialam airfield (near Hanoi) AA fire was heavy. Four fighters intercepted, two were shot down. Photographs confirm direct hits and a large fire in oil storage.
- u/i aircraft were reported over Broome aerodrome, Derby and the Forrest River Mission (27 miles N.W. Wyndham) between 0859-1200/14.

# 14 December - JIC



Russian Front. No appreciable change is apparent on the STALINGRAD front. Flights of twenty-six JU-52's flying at high altitude are supplying surrounded German forces. Unsuitable flying weather has kept other

air activity to a minimum since 18 November. Twenty-two German divisions are reported to be encircled on this front, but the surrounding army is some distance from railheads and is encountering great difficulty in supplying its southern pincers. The situation of the encircled force is reported to be far from hopeless.

On 13 December JIC had reported:



There is no appreciable change in the situation in TUNISIA or at EL AGHEILA.

On 11 December fighters from MALTA intercepted 32 escorted transport planes near LAMPIONE. Axis losses were five fighters and eight transports destroyed, another transport probably destroyed, and four transports damaged. One British plane was lost.

German air transport capacity is being stretched very thin.

Bundesarchiv, Bild 1011-020-0122-32A  
Foto: Feichtenberger | 1943/1944 ca.

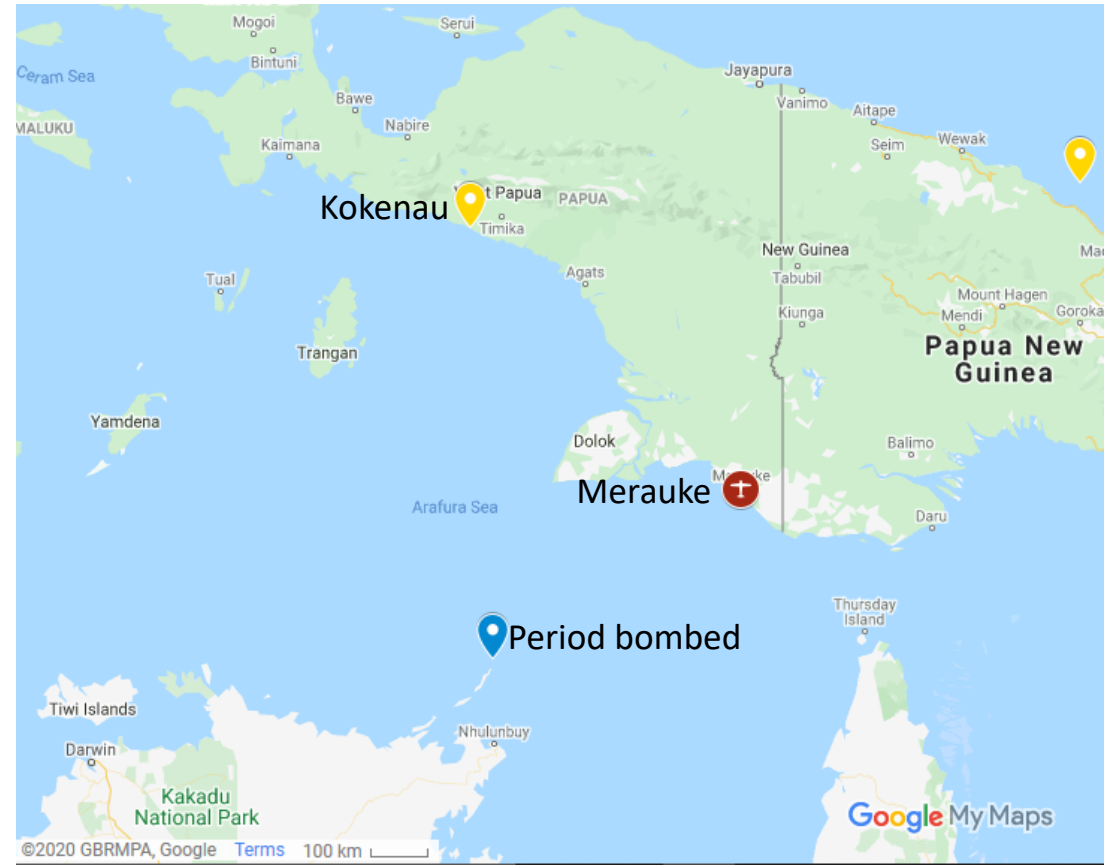


# 15 December – Government

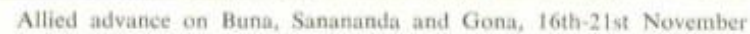
- Rationing of butter was designed explicitly to ensure exports to Britain.
- Plans developed in October 1942 contemplated rationing of butter from January 1943.
- Production for 1942-43 was estimated at 190,000 tons and it was proposed to allow an individual ration of eight ounces a week, with any surplus over this consumption being exported.
- (Margarine production, which was restricted by government policies designed to protect dairy farmers from competition, could not be enlarged because of material shortages.)
- However, Britain notified reduction of its needs by between 20,000 and 30,000 tons and as production prospects looked brighter rationing was deferred.

# 15 December – Sea

- On 15th December Castlemaine, escorting the merchant ships Period and James Cook (2,181 tons) from Thursday Island to Darwin, was 8 miles off Cape Wessel when,
  - just before 1 p.m., a Japanese floatplane attacked the convoy and secured a direct hit on Period. Four members of her crew were killed and nine injured.
  - The aircraft came, in for a second attack on Period but was deflected by Castlemaine's anti-aircraft fire, and dropped its bombs in the sea. It then flew off.
  - Soon after, friendly fighters appeared.
  - When they had gone the float-plane returned, but was repulsed by Castlemaine.
- In mid-December 1942 the Japanese landed about 270 officers and men at Kokenau on the south coast, 325 miles north-west of Merauke.



- The Australian 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion troops moved up to their permanent bivouac area about a mile north of Boreo and a quarter-mile inland on 15 December.

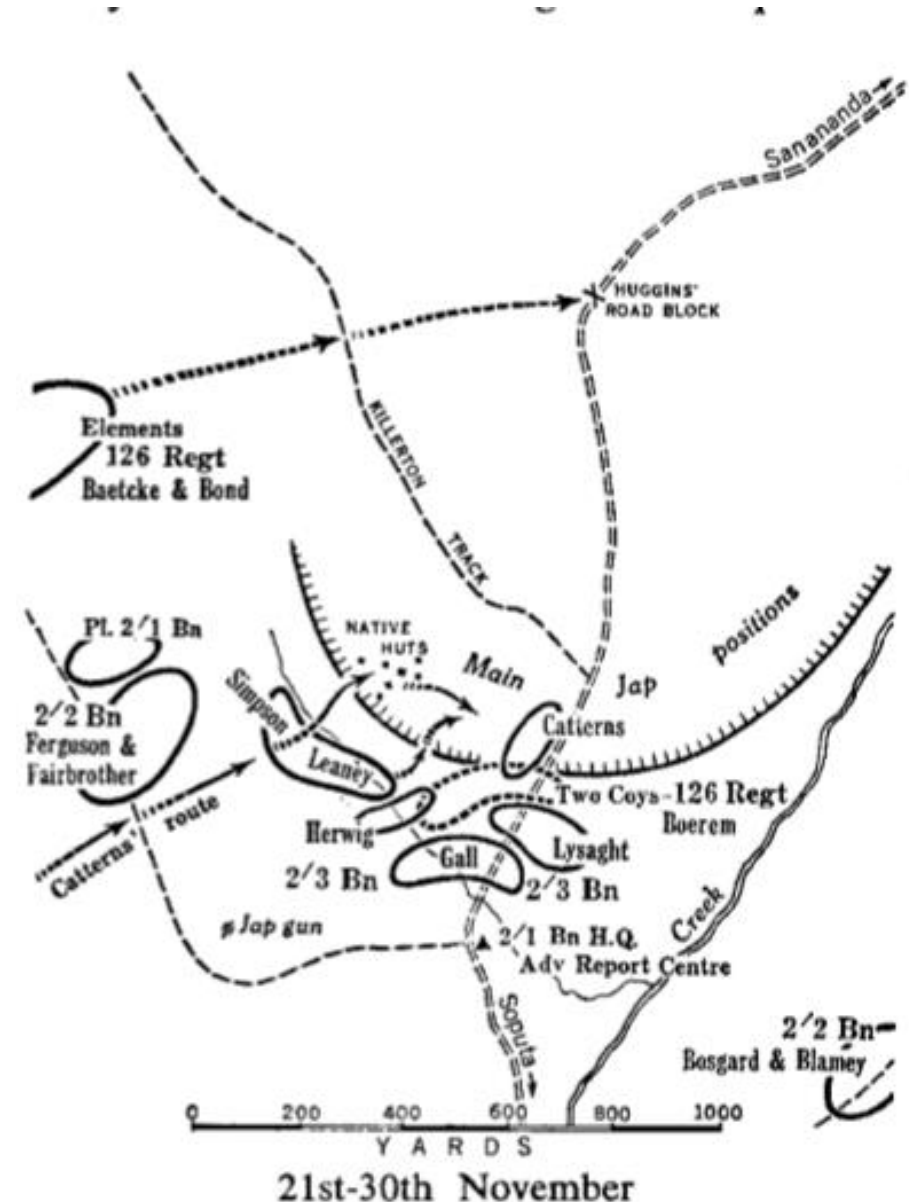


# 15 December – Buna W

- Lt. Col. Herbert A. Smith, commanding the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, was now ordered to take the Coconut Grove.
- At 1510 on 15<sup>th</sup> December, with the troops in position and ready to go, Colonel McCreary's mortars opened up on the grove.
- The mortar preparation, about 100 rounds in all, hit the target area but had little effect. As one who was there recalls, it merely "blew a little dirt from the Japanese emplacements." At 1520 the mortars ceased firing, and the troops moved out on right and left with the help of fire from the platoon of Company H.
- The Japanese had the approaches to the grove covered and laid down heavy fire on the attackers. Progress was slow, but Colonel Smith's forces were pressed up tight against their objective by nightfall.
- A heavy rain fell during the night, drenching the troops and filling their foxholes with water.

# 15 Dec – Sanananda

- On the 15th December, immediately before the concentration at Soputa of the 2/7 Cavalry and 36 Battalion, Brigadier Porter considered the situation existing along the Sanananda Track.
- Excluding service troops, mortarmen and signallers,
  - he had 22 officers and 505 men in the 49th and 55th/53rd Battalions;
  - 9 officers and 110 men of the 2/3rd Battalion;
  - 22 officers and 523 men of the 126th American Regiment.
- He noted, however, that the two last-named could be used only in a positional role,
- the 2/3rd because its men were sick and exhausted,
- the Americans "for various reasons" including sickness and fatigue.



# 15 December – Air

- Next day (15<sup>th</sup> December) in the same area (Soputa), the Special Transport Flight recorded its first casualties.
- The crew of one Hudson, making their fourth sortie for the day over the dropping area, were shot down by enemy anti-aircraft fire.
- The aircraft crashed and the captain, Squadron Leader Pedrina, his observer, Flying Officer Kerr, and wireless operator, Sergeant Itzerott, were all killed, only the rear gunner, Flight Sergeant Callaghan, surviving.
- Callaghan, who had a broken pelvis and forearm, was rescued by some troops.
- Their aircraft, in company with several other Hudsons, had made three sorties in the morning. By afternoon cloud had closed the Gap but a consignment of ammunition needed urgently by an A.I.F. unit was waiting to be delivered, and so three Hudsons piloted by Squadron Leader Gibbes, Flight Lieutenant Landrey and Pedrina took off to fulfil this mission.
- The Hudsons succeeded in getting through the Gap at 6,500 feet beneath the cloud. After making two circuits and dropping the stores from about 200 feet, Pedrina's aircraft was on its final run when, in Callaghan's words, "the machine shook violently and went into a steep climb" before crashing.



# 15 December – Air

- Flying Officer Mowbray on the 15<sup>th</sup> (December), despite steady fire from several anti-aircraft posts, dived his Wirraway to tree-top height to locate their exact positions and returned several hours later to direct artillery fire against them. Mowbray's aircraft had a large hole torn in its port wing by enemy shellfire, but he flew it safely back to base.
- Six A-20's hit forces along Mambare R while a B-24 bombs the wrecked ship at Gona.
- Reconnaissance revealed that the enemy has almost completed a new landing ground at Ballale island, east of Shortland island.
- 6 Hudsons attacked targets in Timor.
- Chittagong airfield was attacked by eighteen Japanese bombers with fighter escort. Damage was negligible.

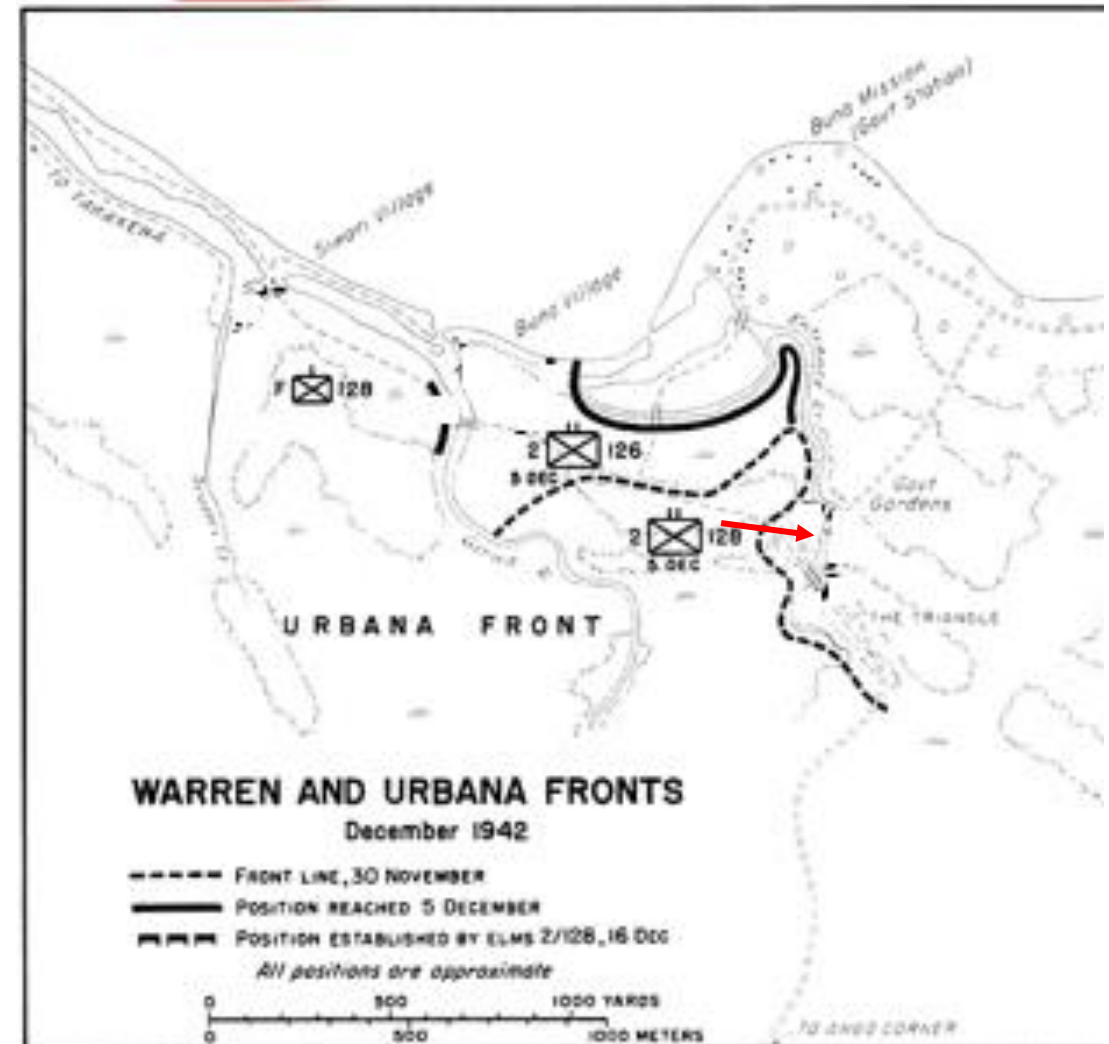
# 16 December - Sea

- Next morning (the 16<sup>th</sup>) a float-plane again tried to attack Period, but was again driven off by Castlemaine, and the ships reached Darwin without further incident.
- A cargo liner, Genzan Maru, 6,000 tons, and a cargo ship, Shingo Maru, 5,000 tons, were torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean off the north east coast of Japan by USS Halibut on 16 December.
- A submarine was sunk by Cactus aircraft 9-10S, 159-30E.
- The monthly total of Allied tonnage sunk by submarines reached a new high in November 1942—119 ships of 729,160 tons.



# 16 December – Buna W

- Zinser's force took the initiative next morning (16 December). They ran into a particularly troublesome bunker.
- After reducing this position with grenades and small arms fire, the troops on the left discovered a very large bunker which commanded the American approaches to the grove.
- Since the enemy strongpoint was accessible to both of them, the two forces began converging on it from right and left, clearing out intermediate obstacles as they went.

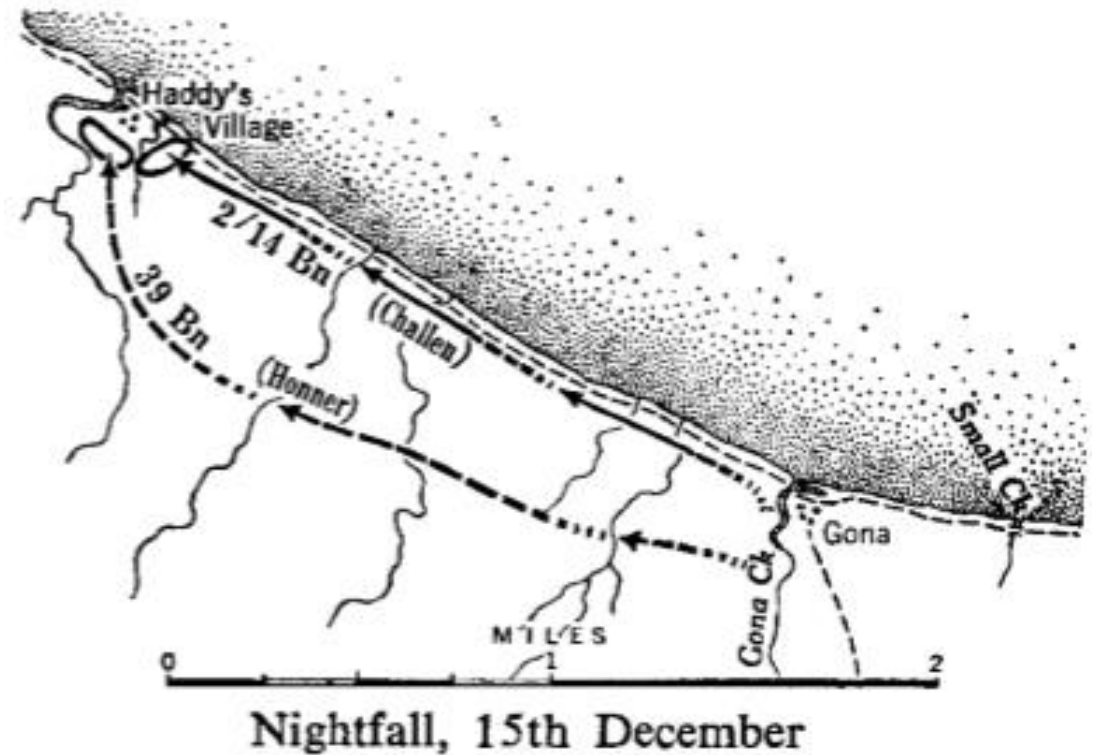


# 16 December – Buna W

- Two men of Company E on the right--Cpl. Daniel Rini and Pvt. Bernardino Estrada--cleared out the main position. Rini and Estrada, members of the same squad, had been in the forefront of the company's advance. The climax came when Rini, covered by Estrada's BAR, got close enough to the main bunker to jump on top and knock it out.
- Colonel Smith then ordered all-out attacks on the remaining enemy positions. Charging at the head of a squad, Smith cleared out a bunker in the center, and Capt. Joseph Stehling of Company E did the same in an attack on his right.
- The bunkers fell in quick succession, but Corporal Rini and Private Estrada were both killed in the mop-up. Rini was shot by a wounded Japanese to whom he was trying to administer first aid, and Estrada fell not long after while helping to clear the last enemy position in the grove.
- The fighting was over by noon. Thirty-seven Japanese were buried by the following day, and more were found and buried subsequently. The cost to the 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry, was four killed and thirteen wounded.
- As soon as the grove was captured, Colonel Smith sent patrols over a footbridge built by the Japanese across Entrance Creek and the Ango-Buna track bridge and two heavy machine guns were immediately emplaced covering the approaches to the bridges.

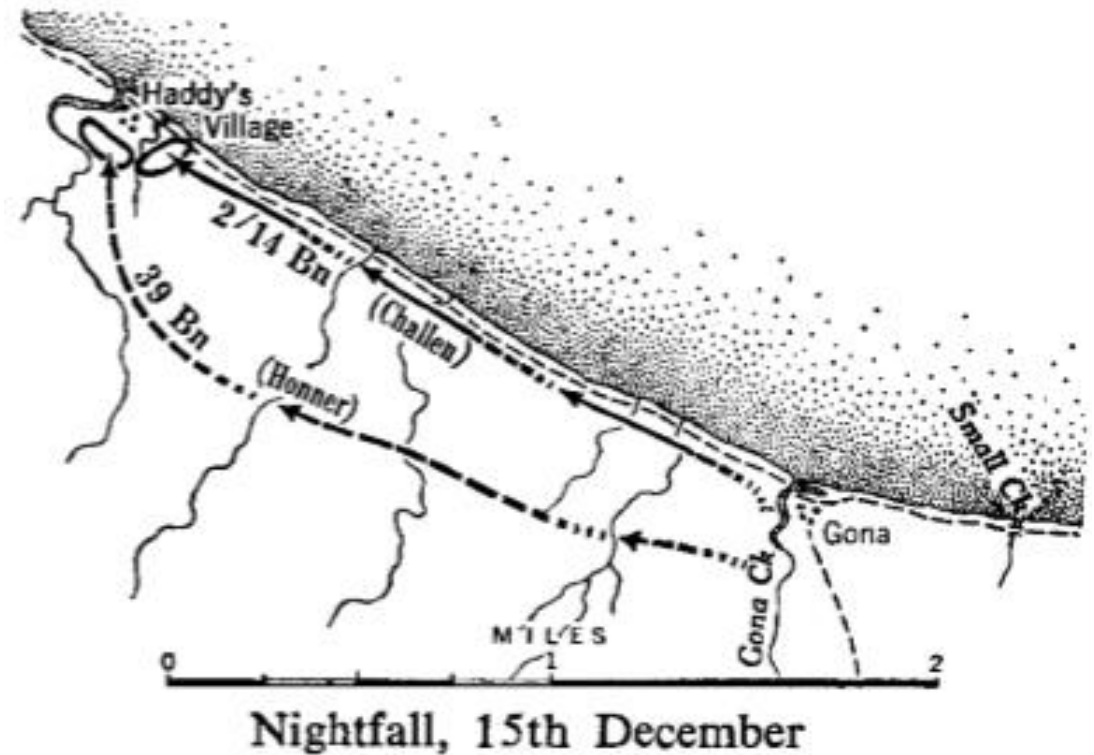
# 16 December - West of Gona

- For three days after the 12th Honner was striking for the sea west of Haddy's village to block off Japanese reinforcements from that direction.
- These were difficult days of small actions and skirmishes with the 39th edging slowly forward. By nightfall of the 15th, however, the battalion was not only pressing the defenders closely from the south but also closing in from the west where Captain Bidstrup's company, reinforced by the pioneer platoon, was then overlooking the beach.
- During this period the 2/14th men had moved along the shore in the wake of an opposition which had melted grudgingly back into the main defensive area of the village. (The intrepid Sergeant Truscott was killed in this slow advance.)



# 16 December - West of Gona

- On the 16th the trap began to spring. On the main track from the south Lieutenant Gartner with his platoon fought forward about 40 yards crawling through thick bush despite a wound in the hip. By 3 p.m. he could do no more and was carried from his post. Thirty-five Japanese bodies marked the space over which his platoon had painfully edged.
- On his right, Mortimore's men had similarly inched forward and, after dark, seized some huts in the south-east corner of the village. The same darkness brought a sally from the west by some thirty Japanese trying to reinforce the village. But they fell a prey to Bidstrup's waiting men.
- The daylight hours had been ones of reconnaissance and scattered small clashes for the men of the 2/14th, sitting right on a little stream which marked the eastern edge of the village and waiting to link with the 39th advance. In the early night they then got Sergeant Sheldon and Corporal Russell across the stream with small parties, though the move cost Russell his life.





# 16 December – Air

- Four Beaufighters and three B-26's bomb forces in Buna area and at mouth of Kumusi R, and strafe barge and lagoon shoreline S of the Kumusi's mouth.
- 5 B17s attacked Munda 1145/16. Results not observed. No AA encountered. 12 Zeros intercepted, 3 shot down. All B17s hit, one shot down.
- 3 Dive bombers and 8 fighters attacked Rekata Bay 18.30/16. 3 AA positions silenced.
- B-24's attack wreck off Gona, cargo vessel in Bismarck Sea, and a destroyer, 2 cargo ships, and 2 tankers in Solomon Sea, SE of Cape Orford.
- Nine dive bombers attacked Munda. A direct hit was scored on a destroyer, which was last sighted dead in the water. Other planes dropped six 500-pound bombs on and near the runway. Heavy AA was encountered. One plane failed to return.
- Chittagong was again attacked by twenty Japanese bombers. Slight damage was caused in the dock area.
- The RAF carried out extensive bombings in the Maungdaw area.
- Nine P40s dropped bombs at Kamaing and strafed and set fire to buildings just south of Maingkwan.

- Thanks for your attention.
- I will put the overheads up on my web site as usual.
- Please let me know if you have had any difficulties connecting, hearing, seeing or staying connected.
- If you have enjoyed the presentation please recommend it to your friends. There are a lot of people about with time on their hands. In the virtual world they don't need to be on the Sunshine Coast to participate.
- Any one wanting to join in can contact me on [jerrymcbrien@gmail.com](mailto:jerrymcbrien@gmail.com).