A map of the Pacific region showing military campaigns in 1943. Red pins with a cross indicate Japanese positions, and yellow pins with a cross indicate Allied positions. A red starburst marks the Battle of Midway in the Pacific Ocean. Another red starburst is located in the Coral Sea. The map includes labels for various countries and regions such as China, South Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Indonesia, and Australia. It also shows major bodies of water like the Indian Ocean, South China Sea, and Coral Sea. The text "War in the Pacific" is prominently displayed in the center, followed by "Defending Australia" and "Campaigns in New Guinea and the Solomons 1943". The date "21 December 1942" is also present.

War in the Pacific

Defending Australia

Campaigns in New Guinea and the Solomons 1943

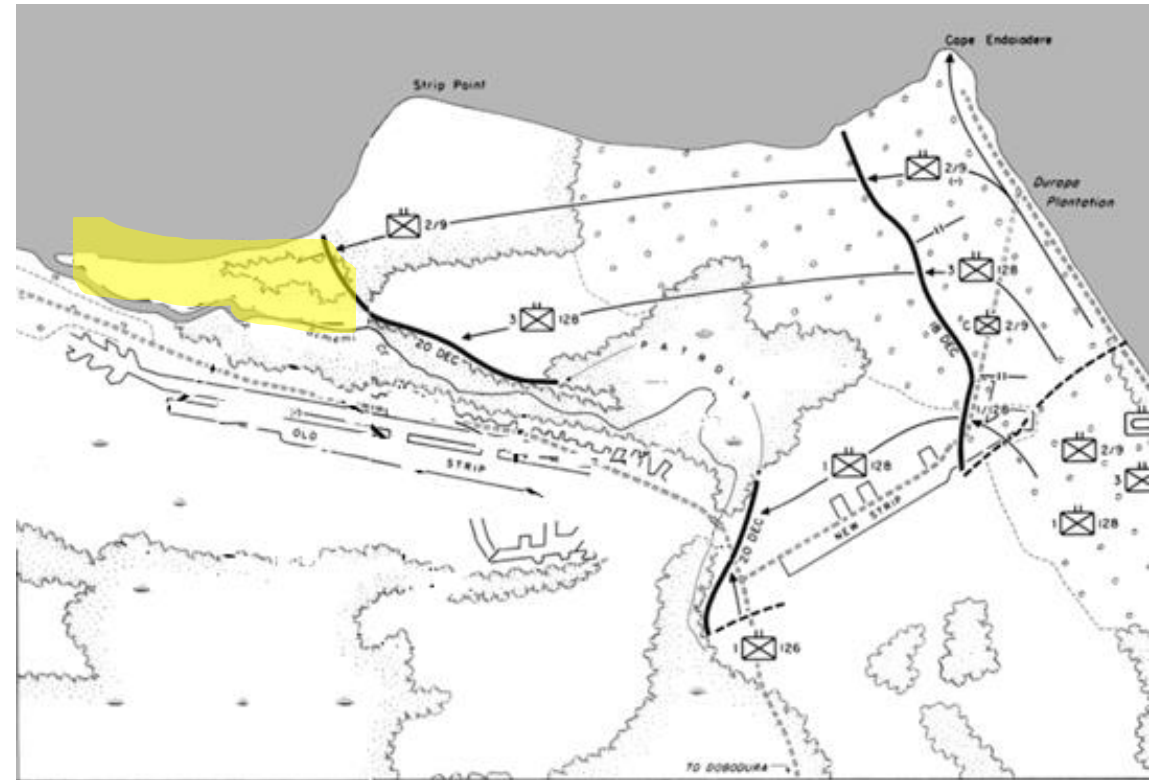
21 December 1942

Situation - 21 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. The 1st Marine Division has now been relieved and the US Army have taken command on the ground. At sea only the PT Boats are left to contest Japanese resupply missions
- In New Guinea the Japanese, aided by the terrain and very effectively fortified, continue to resist tenaciously in their beachheads. Australian and American forces have improved their logistics and supplies and more and heavier weapons are reaching the battlefield. Still the demand for transport is such that a special transport flight created by scouring training bases and the civil industry in Australia has been sent to New Guinea.
- After twenty days of heavy losses for no gain, on the 9th the 39th Battalion with the 2/16-2/17 composite Battalion had captured Gona. On the 14th two companies of the 127th Infantry captured Buna village after a thorough artillery bombardment the previous day and that morning.
- On the 18th two troops of tanks and a fresh battalion of infantry renewed the attack at the eastern end of the Buna enclave and broke into the defences, though at the cost of heavy infantry losses.
- At Sanananda the Japanese continue to resist all the allied attacks without yielding any ground at all.
- Battle losses, tropical diseases, malnutrition and exhaustion continue to wear down the forces.
- Intelligence is now forecasting a Japanese offensive against the north coast of New Guinea. Only continued Japanese infiltration is expected on Guadalcanal.
- In Australia the furious debate within the ALP, about requiring the Militia to serve outside Australia and its territories, continues.
- There are signs emerging that Australia's role is to be a supplier to armies as well as a provider of armies.

21 December – Buna E

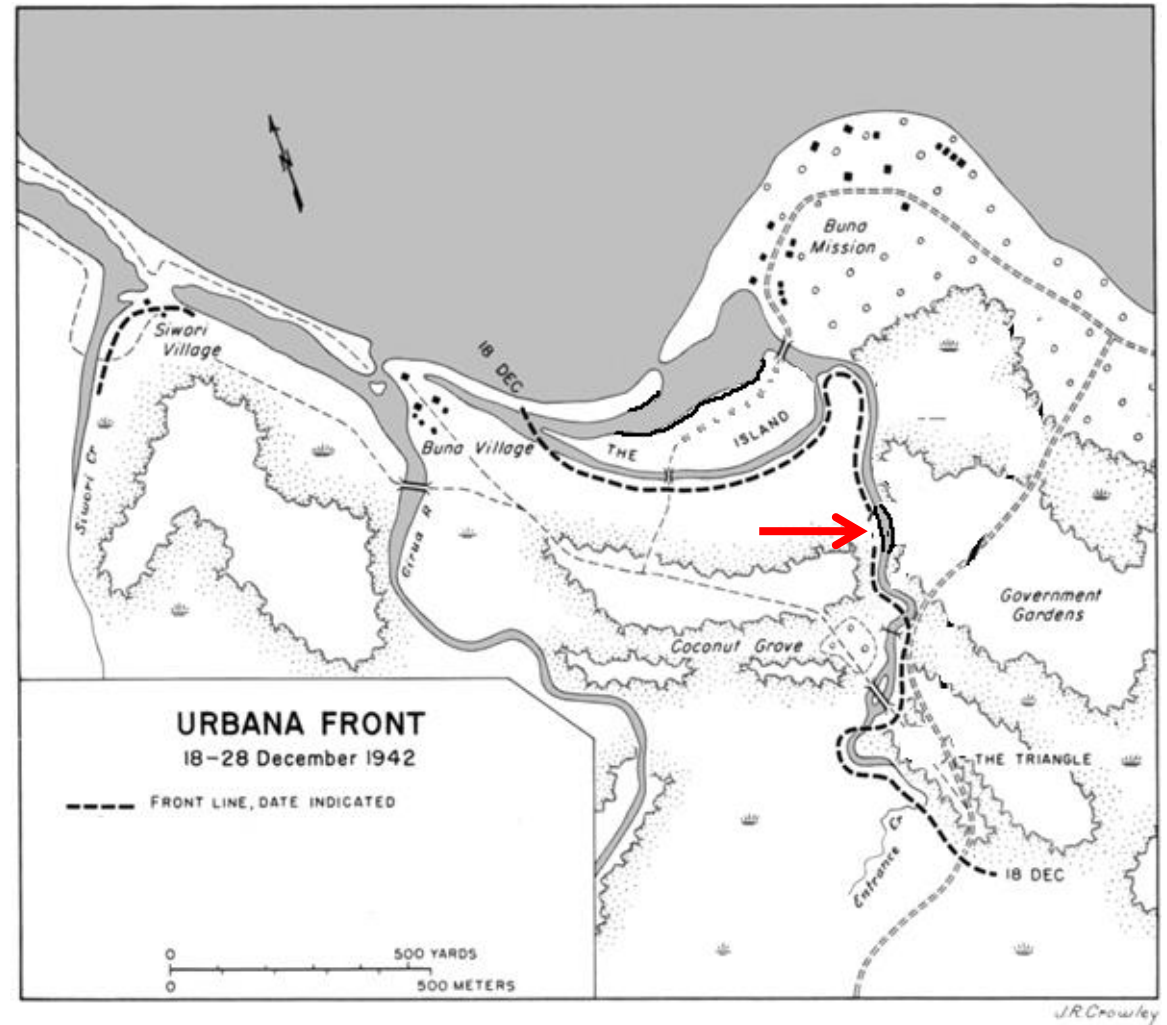
- On the 21st the 2/9th had been ordered to complete the capture of the tongue of land between the coast and Simemi Creek. Cummings tried to rest and reorganise on the 21st but the inevitable patrols had to be carried out and the last Japanese rooted out of the area already been taken.
- Warrant-Officer Donnelly, patrolling west along the creek, ran into almost point-blank fire from concealed positions. Donnelly racing towards the fire, revolver in hand, was struck down by a bullet which penetrated his steel helmet.
- MacIntosh's platoon then tried to assist and found that the problem was a group of five Japanese with two machine-guns holed up under the spreading roots of a big tree. But so determined were these five, and so well planned their position, that MacIntosh could do no more than cover Donnelly's platoon out and help the wounded back.
- Getting out one of the wounded, lying well forward and helpless, was made possible only by the bravery of MacIntosh and Private Christensen, and the extraordinary coolness of Corporal Thorne who stood quite exposed to give them covering fire during their drawn-out task



The day with no planned actions still cost the 2/9th 4 killed and 6 wounded.

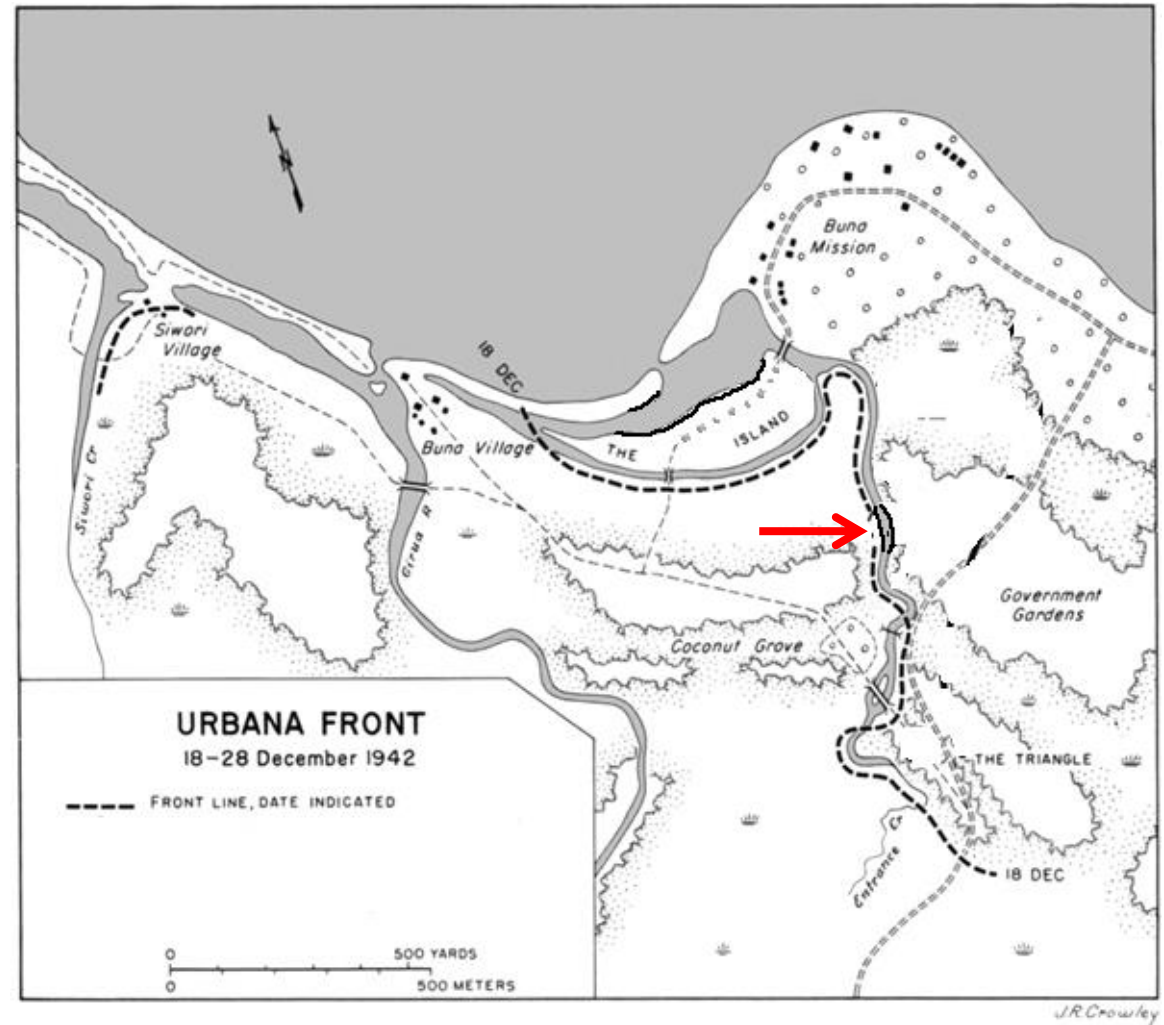
21 December – Buna W

- When the attempt on the 20th failed, General Eichelberger began immediately to plan for a new axis of attack across the gardens. Where to establish the initial bridgehead on the other side of the creek was the problem.
- He concluded that the best place for it lay in a fringe of woods just off the northwest end of the gardens where there seemed to be better cover and less enemy fire than elsewhere.
- He issued orders late on the night of 20-21 December that a bridgehead be established there the next day.



21 December – Buna W

- The swift tidal stream that had to be crossed was less than twenty-five yards wide in Company I's sector, and the engineers had only that morning finished building a small footbridge there improvised from a few saplings and a captured enemy boat anchored in the center of the stream.
- In Company K's sector, on the other hand, the creek was at least fifty yards wide at the point of crossing and seven or eight feet deep.
- Colonel Grose went down to Company K's sector to look things over and did not like what he saw. Thinking that there was a possibility that Company K, crossing in Company I's sector, might be able to work its way under the bank to the bridgehead area and establish itself there he telephoned General Eichelberger and asked for more time.
- He apparently failed to make clear to the general the reason for his request. He refused to give him more time, and Grose at once called in Capt. Alfred Meyer, the Company K commander, and ordered him to proceed with the crossing.



21 December – Buna W

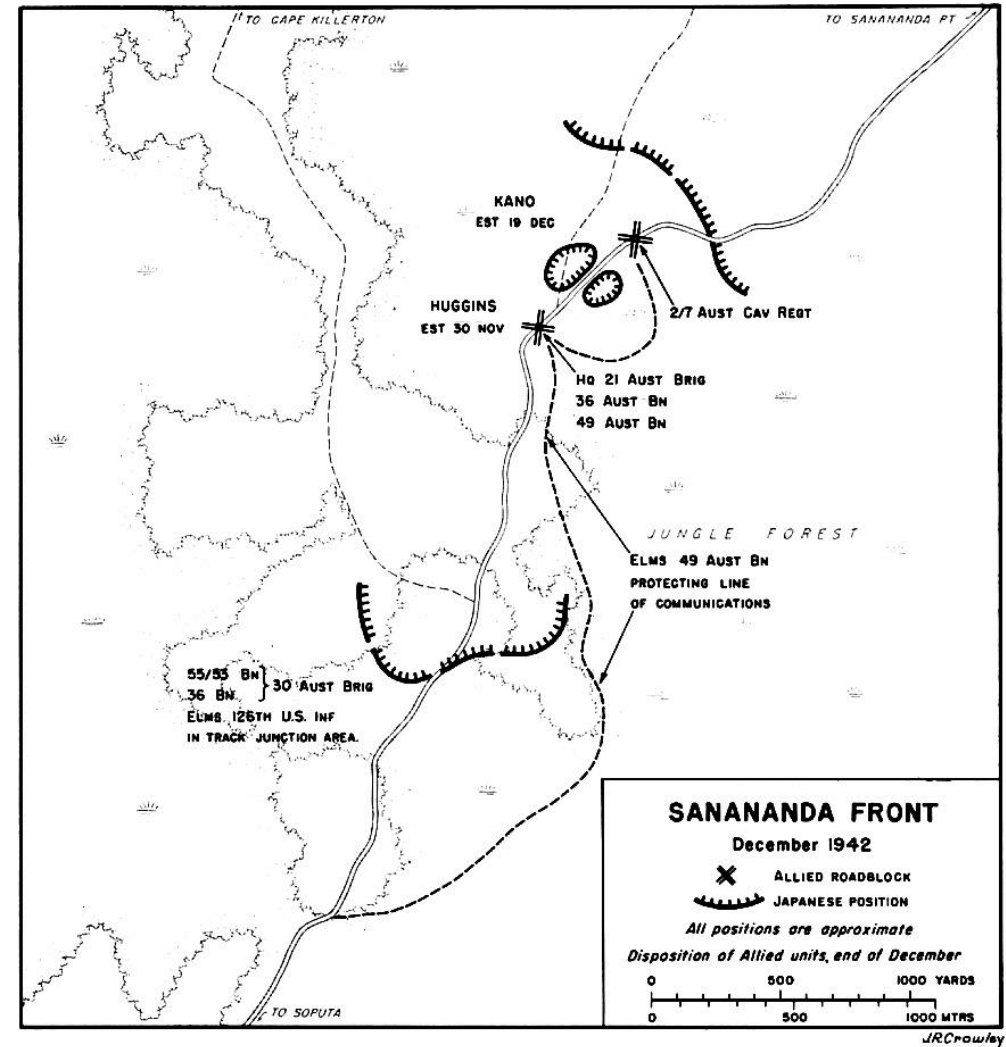
- At 1600 Meyer sent troops into the creek to see if it could be forded. Not only could they find no crossing, they were nearly "blown out of the water" by enemy fire from the other side of the stream. Greatly perturbed at being ordered to make what he considered a suicidal crossing, Meyer pleaded with Grose to let him cross over the bridge in Company I's area. If that permission was impossible to grant, Meyer requested that he be allowed to cross at night with the aid of ropes, pontoons, or whatever equipment was available.
- Colonel Grose, who had already asked for more time without being able to get it, told Meyer that he was to start crossing immediately even if the men had to swim across.
- Captain Meyer went back to his company and made several attempts to get men across in daylight, but the enemy fire from the other side of the creek proved too heavy. By nightfall the company finally located a heavy rope, and the attempts to cross were renewed.
- Unbidden, 1st Lt. Edward Greene, picked up one end of the rope, and with several enlisted men started swimming for the opposite shore. Greene was killed almost instantly by enemy fire, and his body was swept away by the current. A few minutes later one of the enlisted men lost his hold on the rope and was swept away. One of the swimmers finally got the rope across the river, and the rest of the night was spent in getting the heavily weighted troops over in the face of the continuing enemy fire.

21 December - Sanananda

- On the 21st the whole of the 36th Battalion were ordered to fall upon the Japanese from the north. They led off at 3 p.m. behind artillery and mortar fire.
- On the right they got forward about 250 yards in the teeth of mounting fire but, for a time, no news came from the left. The rattle of heavy machine-gun fire was heard from that flank. One platoon had lost direction and become separated from the company and the remainder were held under a most resistant fire, and the company commander was missing and was probably dead. Soon the company withdrew.
- The right found it necessary to conform; and night found the battalion dug in with little to show for the loss of 55 killed, wounded or missing.
- By this time Brigadier Porter had become bitterly critical of both the 36th and 55th/53rd Battalions. He said that any success they had was "due to a percentage of personnel who are brave in the extreme"; and "the result of unskilful aggression". He was caustic in referring to their deficiencies of training and spirit.

21 December - Sanananda

- The 2/7 Cavalry consolidated at Kano.
- Cobb with one of his troops, was pinned down between Huggins and Kano. Cobb attempted to reach the forward garrison. He and his men had begun a wary movement forwards along a drain which bordered the road.
- The Japanese had this covered, however, shot four of the men, split the little group and pinned all motionless under a merciless sun for the rest of the day.
- When darkness came Cobb got his wounded back along the drain.
- He himself remained alone at the most forward point and his companions never again saw him alive.
- The 49 Battalion, which by this time had fought its way into Huggins, began policing a supply route to it from the southeast.



21 December - Air

- Reconnaissance over Rabaul showed, Lakunae 3 bombers and 20 fighters and new dispersal bays and buildings; Vunakanau 25 medium bombers and new dispersal bays and runways under construction.
- US planes again carried out nuisance raids over the Buka, Kihili and Munda airfields, each by one heavy bomber. One of these planes also bombed the new airfield at Ballale island. It was observed that this new airfield is now ready for use.
- Four B-17's attack vessels in Finschhafen harbor. Damaging direct hits were scored on two small ships and two near misses on a 2,000 ton transport. while B-24's carry out single-bmr strikes on cargo ship N of Finschhafen and barges at mouth of the Mambare R and off Cape Ward Hunt.
- Two heavy bombers attacked two cargo ships east of Buin. Near misses were claimed and one of the ships was last seen sinking by the stern.
- An Admiralty communique states that during the night of 20/21 a naval force operating in the Bay of Bengal made a heavy air attack on military targets at Sabang (Sumatra). Large explosions followed by fires were observed. All aircraft returned safely.
- The RAF carried out heavy attacks on Akyab, damaging the airfield and a small ship.

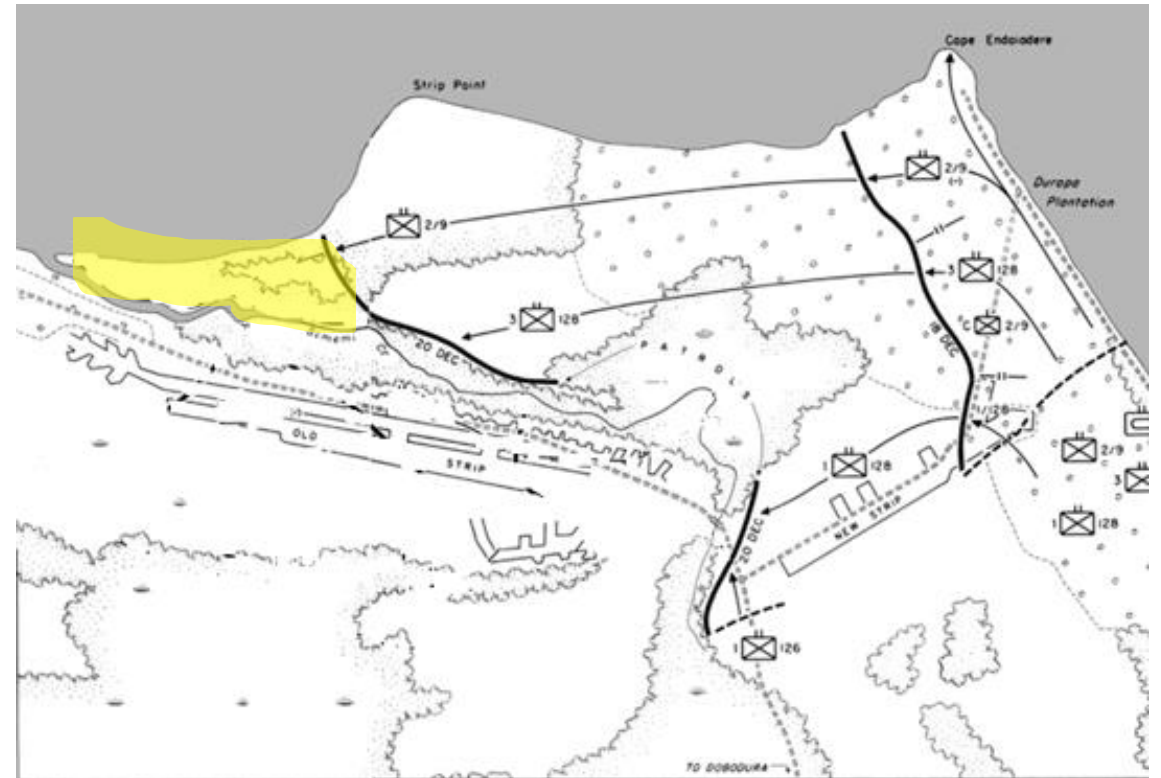
22 December - Sea

- A Patrol Boat was torpedoed and sunk by USS Greenling 5-05S, 156-04E.
- USS Trigger torpedoed a freighter, just outside Tokyo Bay. The ship was last seen down by the bow.



22 December – Buna E

- At 7.50 on the morning of the 22nd shells began to fall ahead of Cummings' battered battalion as they waited on a start-line running south from the coast spanning the wedge of swamp and bush, which, narrowed to a point at the creek mouth.
- Ten minutes after the barrage opened the companies crossed the line, Griffin's composite company on the right, "A" on the left (Lieutenant Thomas now commanding) and Benson's in reserve slightly to the rear. Vickers machine-gun fire from their flanks whipped through the leaves of the trees and flailed through the long grass ahead of their wary and measured movement.
- They moved slowly, searching the long grass which closed them in and could hide any number of their enemies. But at first only sporadic small arms fire met the attackers until, shortly after 9, machine-gun fire caught Thomas' company in enfilade from the right.



This checked the advance while the dangerous and cold-blooded business of winking out the opposition got under way.

22 December – Buna E

- Barely half an hour later, shells from a Japanese anti-aircraft gun turned to a ground defence role, began to fall with in the vicinity of the Australian start-line. They caught the headquarters elements sited there and, within a very short time, 20 of these, mostly mortarmen and Vickers gunners, were struck down.
- Soon afterward the attacking companies solidified along a line that was still considerably less than halfway to their objective with two tanks engaging the strong posts on the right which were crossing the front with fire. By midday, however, the tanks had had to return to the refuelling point and the infantry, still behind the barrier thrown out by the searching machine-guns and with the grass ahead of them on fire, withdrew to the shelter of scrub. All the while the well-placed Japanese shells continued to fall in their rear areas.
- By 1.30 the tanks were again on the move and Griffin was reported to be progressing on the right.
- Less than half an hour after resuming the advance the composite company had lost all its officers. MacIntosh was badly wounded by a shell burst, Griffin, a fine leader and athlete, hurrying to the spot, was killed, and his second-in-command, Captain Roberts, had an eye blown out by a shell fragment.

22 December – Buna E

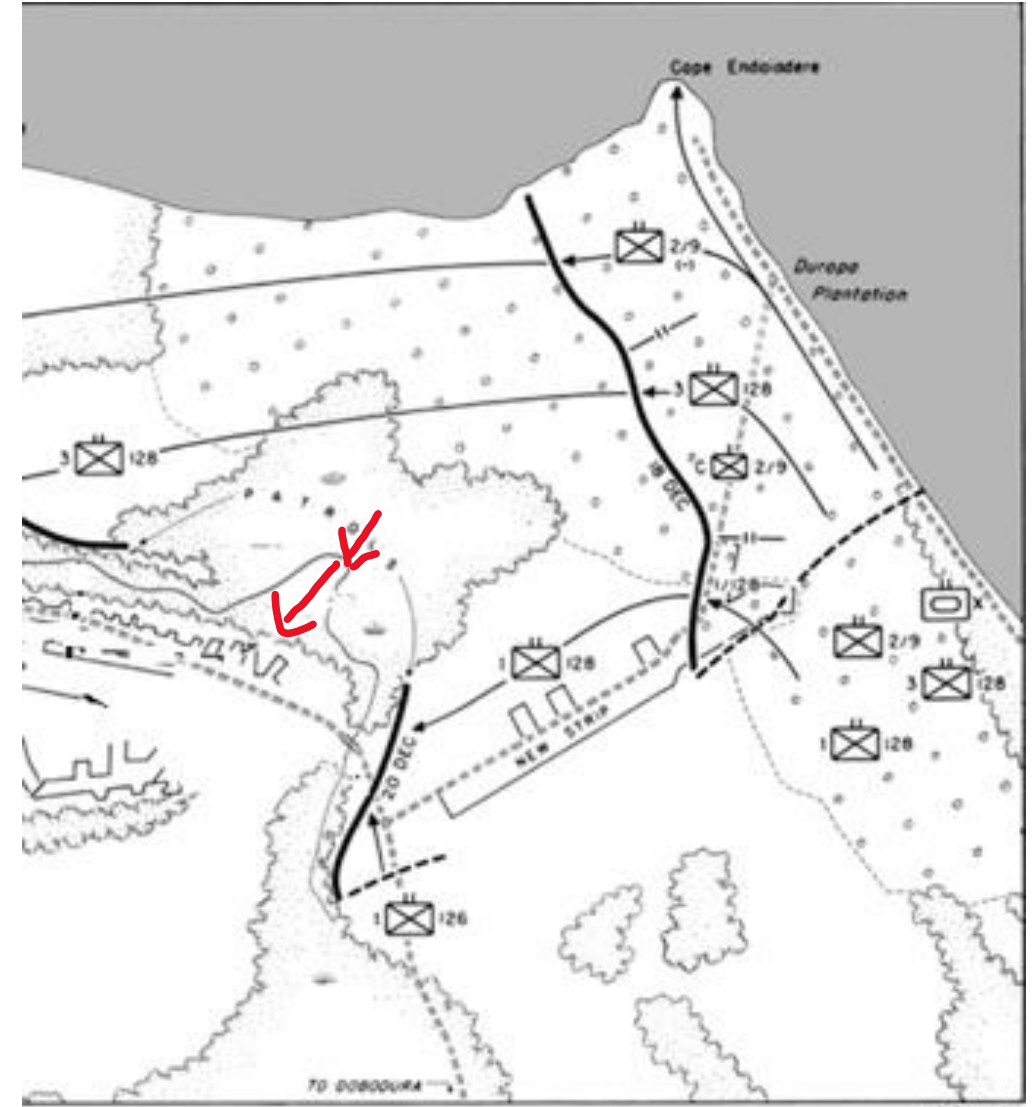
- Later in the afternoon Major Parry Okeden (who took over when Cummings was wounded) gathered shreds of the three attacking companies into one and, with one tank remaining to assist him (the other was temporarily bogged), drove at the pill-boxes which were still holding out.
- By 5 p.m., Parry-Okeden was able to report that the point up to the mouth of the creek was in his hands although one strong position remained unsubdued on an island in the centre of the creek mouth. The 2/9th then settled to hold the ground they had won. The day had cost them 8 officers and 50 men.



*A Stuart of 5 Troop bogged at Buna. Two soldiers wear sweat bands around their foreheads as they discuss possible recovery methods. Head 'bandannas' were quite common amongst the tank crews.
(RAAC Museum)*

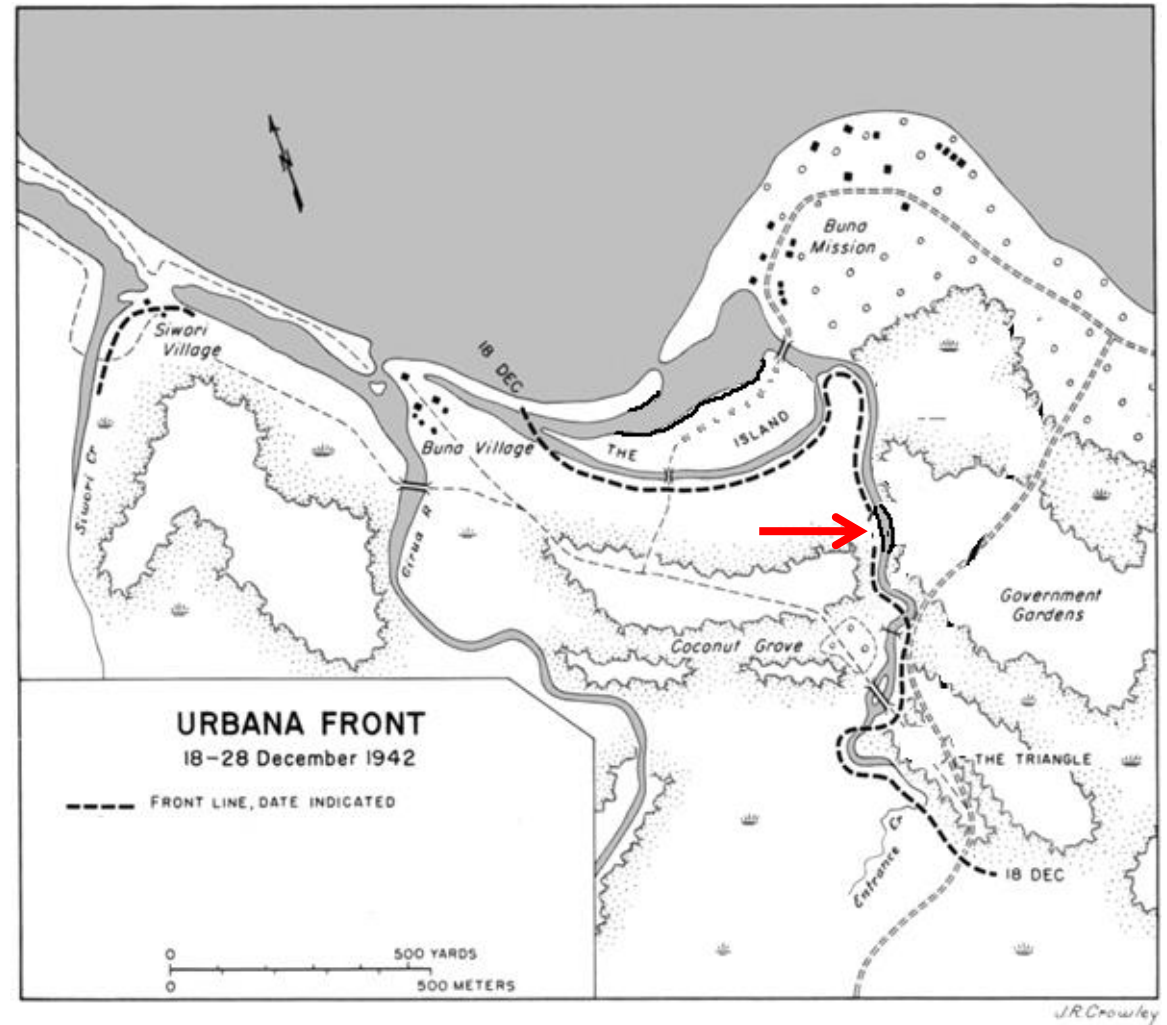
22 December – Buna E

- By 1500 on the 22nd December, after the most difficult kind of reconnoitering during which the men were sometimes forced to move in water up to their necks, a patrol of Company A, 2/10 Battalion, found a practicable crossing at a stream bend about 400 yards north of the bridge.
- Moving cautiously through the creek and the treacherous swamp beyond, the troops emerged on the other side at a point just below the lower (or eastern) end of the Old Strip, and there they consolidated.
- Except for a few strands of barbed wire, no signs of the Japanese were found in the area.
- The rest of the battalion began crossing at once.



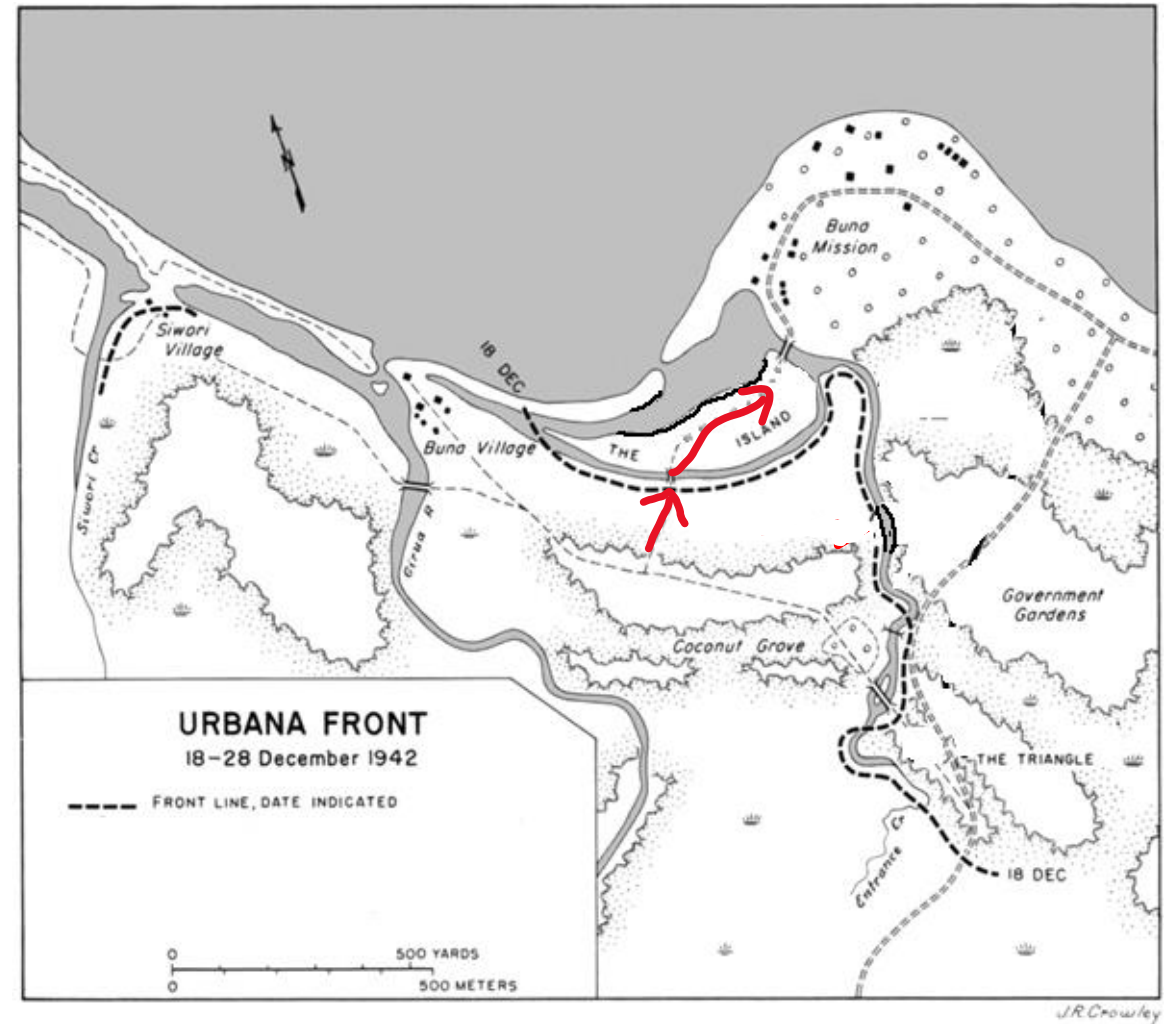
22 December – Buna W

- By about 0200 forty-seven men were on the other side of the creek, and when daylight came the total was seventy-five.
- Company K suffered fifty-four casualties that night--six killed or drowned in the crossing, and eight killed and forty wounded in the fighting at the bridgehead area.
- Early on the morning of 22 December, while Company K engaged the enemy frontally in the bridgehead area and Company M's heavy weapons covered it with fire from the west bank, Company I, under Capt. Michael Ustruck, crossed on the footbridge.
- Finding, as Colonel Grose had surmised, that there was a safe and easy approach to the bridgehead under the bank, the company went into position on Company K's right by 1235 without losing a man.



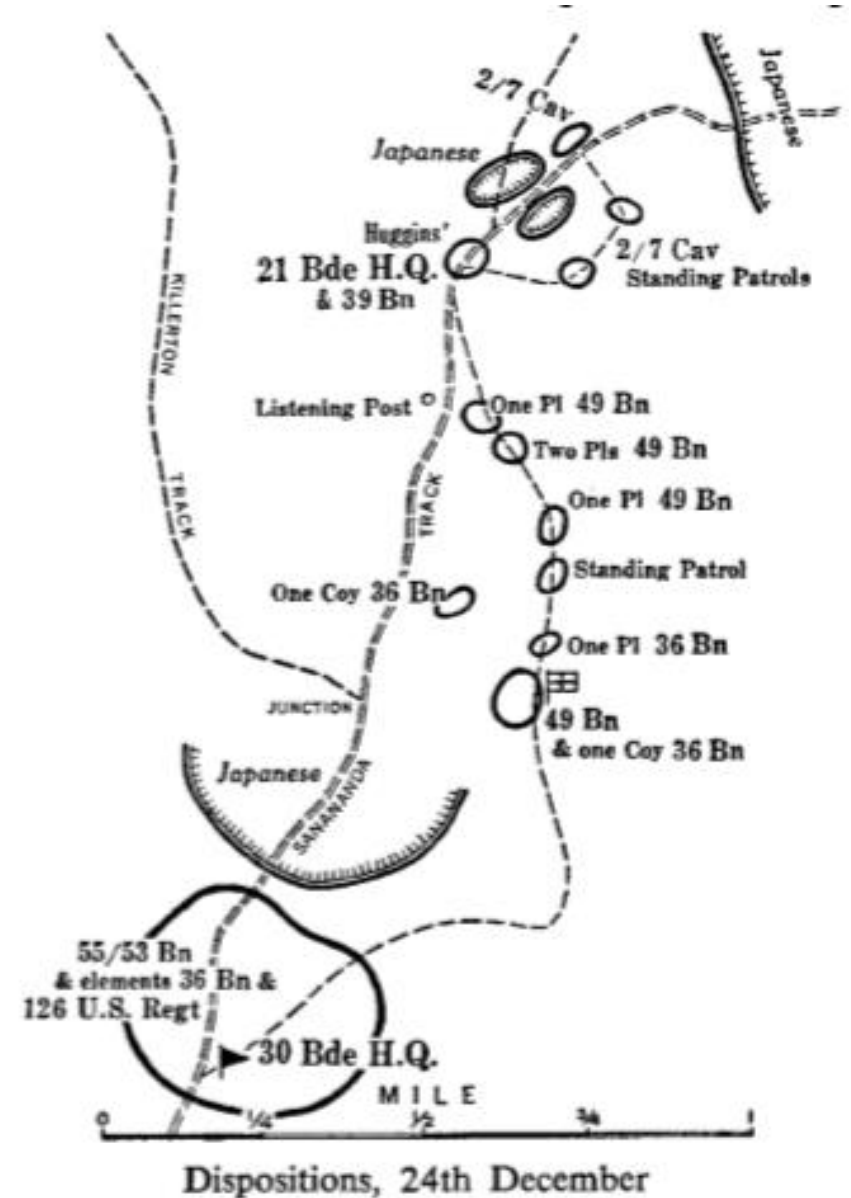
22 December – Buna W

- Bodies of troops of Company K who had been drowned in the crossing on the night of 21-22 December were to be seen the next day bobbing in the stream.
- By 22 December the engineers, meeting no enemy interference, had repaired the south bridge between the mainland and the island.
- That afternoon, as soon as the bridge was down, a patrol of Company L, 127th Infantry, moved over it and crossed the island without opposition. As the men approached the north bridge between the island and the mission, they began receiving heavy fire.
- Two platoons of Company F and a machine gun section of Company M moved in to meet the situation.



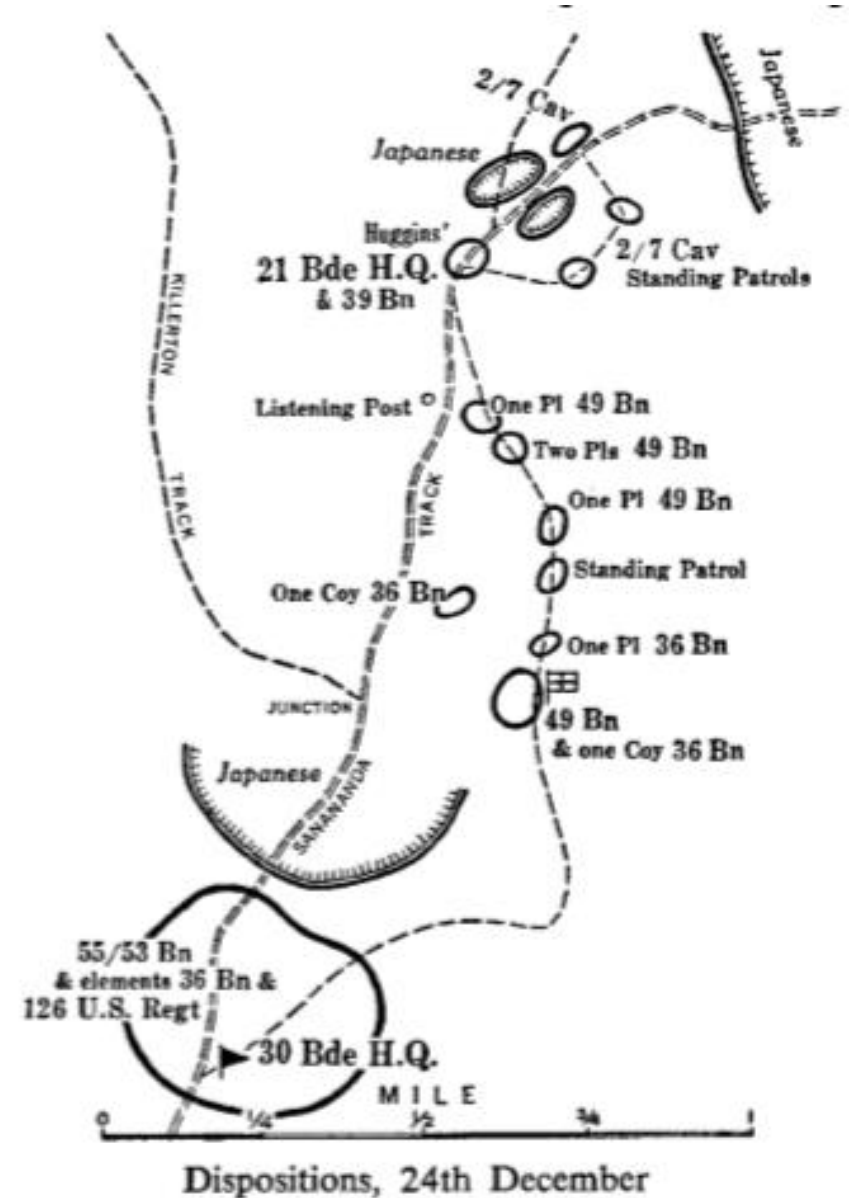
22 December - Sanananda

- On 22 December Brigadier Dougherty, 21st Brigade Headquarters, and the 39 Battalion reached Soputa from Gona. They moved directly to the roadblock, where Brigadier Dougherty set up his headquarters.
- Dougherty took over command of the 49 Battalion, of the 2/7 Cavalry, and of the American troops in the roadblock the same day.
- Brigadier Porter, who was to mop up the remaining enemy pockets in the track junction area, was left in command of the 36 Battalion, the 55/53 Battalion, and the remaining elements of Major Boerem's command.



22 December - Sanananda

- At 1500 that day Brigadier Dougherty assigned the 49 Battalion the role of protecting the line of communications from the southeast (which was over better terrain than that from the southwest).
- He ordered the 2/7 Cavalry to continue its attacks northward, and the
- 39 Battalion (temporarily commanded now by Major Anderson while Lt-Col Honner was ill with malaria) to relieve the garrison and hold the roadblock.

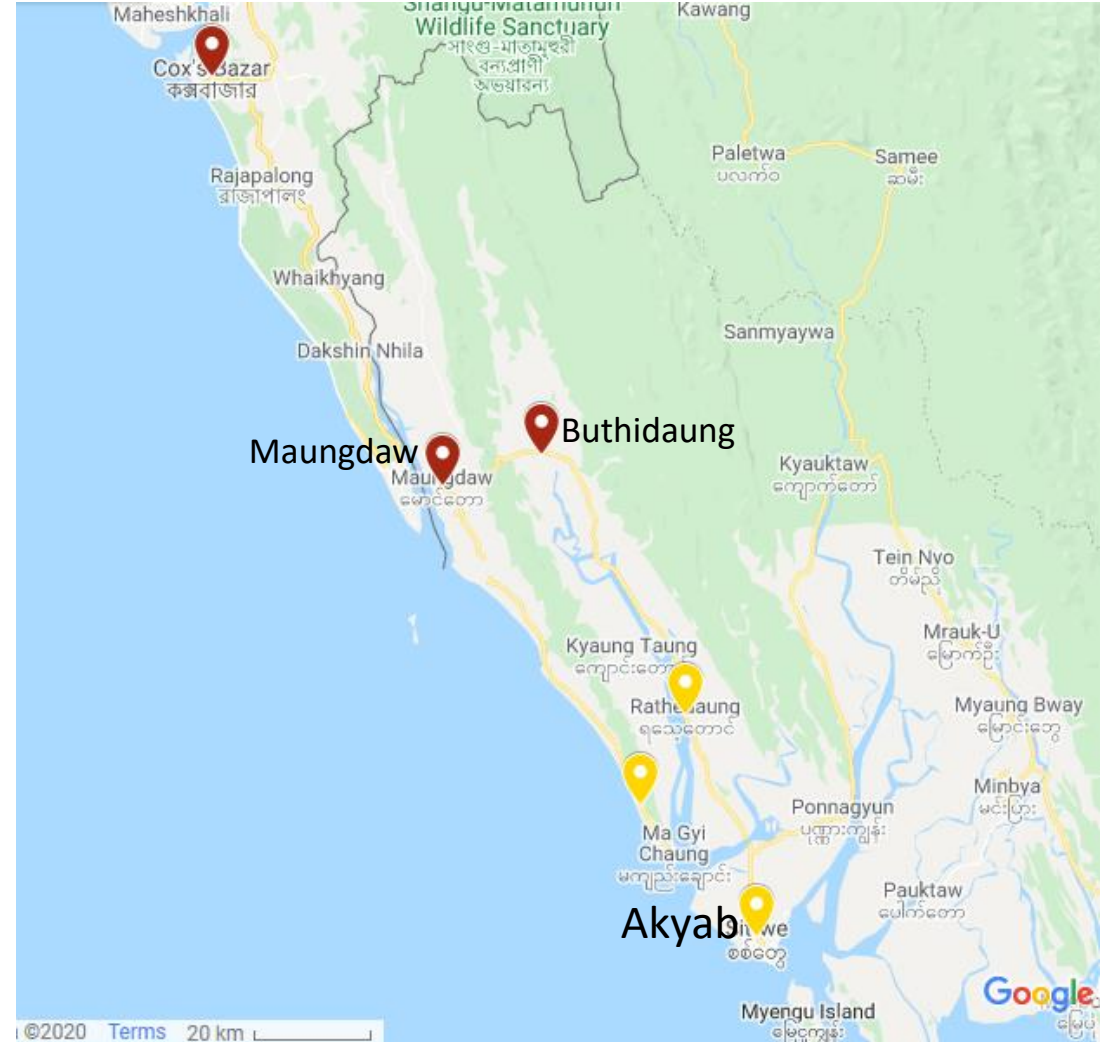


22 December - Sanananda

- At 1750, Lieutenant Dal Ponte assembled his command and marched it out of the roadblock. After twenty-two days of continuous fighting against heavy odds, the 126th Infantry troops in the roadblock had finally been relieved. They were dazed, sick, and exhausted, and their feet were in such bad shape that they could scarcely walk.
- The men of the 39th were weary and reduced in numbers and could not be expected to do more than garrison Huggins.
- The 49th, reduced to a skeleton, were still in the bush a few hundred yards south-east of the road-block, astride the new supply line.
- The cavalry, although still fresh and eager, had not been much more than half the strength of a battalion when they first arrived, had taken a hard knock and had yet to be concentrated again.
- The role given to Dougherty was, therefore, a limited one: to maintain the two road-blocks, build up supplies, and patrol aggressively; he was not to attempt any large-scale operations.

22 December - Burma

- The 14th Indian Division in its advance on Akyab captured the Maungdaw-Buthidaung road on 22 December.
- The Japanese continued to pull back towards the tip of the Mayu peninsula. The JIC reported that: There is still no contact with the enemy in the Arakan area.



22 December - Air

- Four A20s attacked enemy positions and supply dumps at the mouth of the Amboga river, destroying huts and starting fires.
- Four B-25's pound Maimba mission and village near Buna.
- Three B-17's hit a 1,000 ton ship in harbor at Arawe scoring a direct hit, setting it on fire amidships. This was confirmed by photographs.
- A single B-24 attacked a 3,000 ton transport off Gasmata.
- A US heavy bomber on reconnaissance near Namatanai (New Ireland) was intercepted by three fighters. One fighter was claimed shot down and the other two damaged.
- Two US heavy bombers attacked the airfield at Buin.

22 December - Air

- A small enemy detachment has occupied Cape Gloucester at the northwest end of New Britain.
- It is reported that 450 Japanese troops have landed at Kaukenau (South west coast of Dutch New Guinea).
- Merauke experienced its first air raid on 22nd December 1942,
- CATF aircraft bomb Lashio.
- The RAF carried out heavy attacks on Akyab, damaging the airfield and a radio station.
- Five B24s attacked Rangoon warehouses and docks scoring a number of hits on the target area.

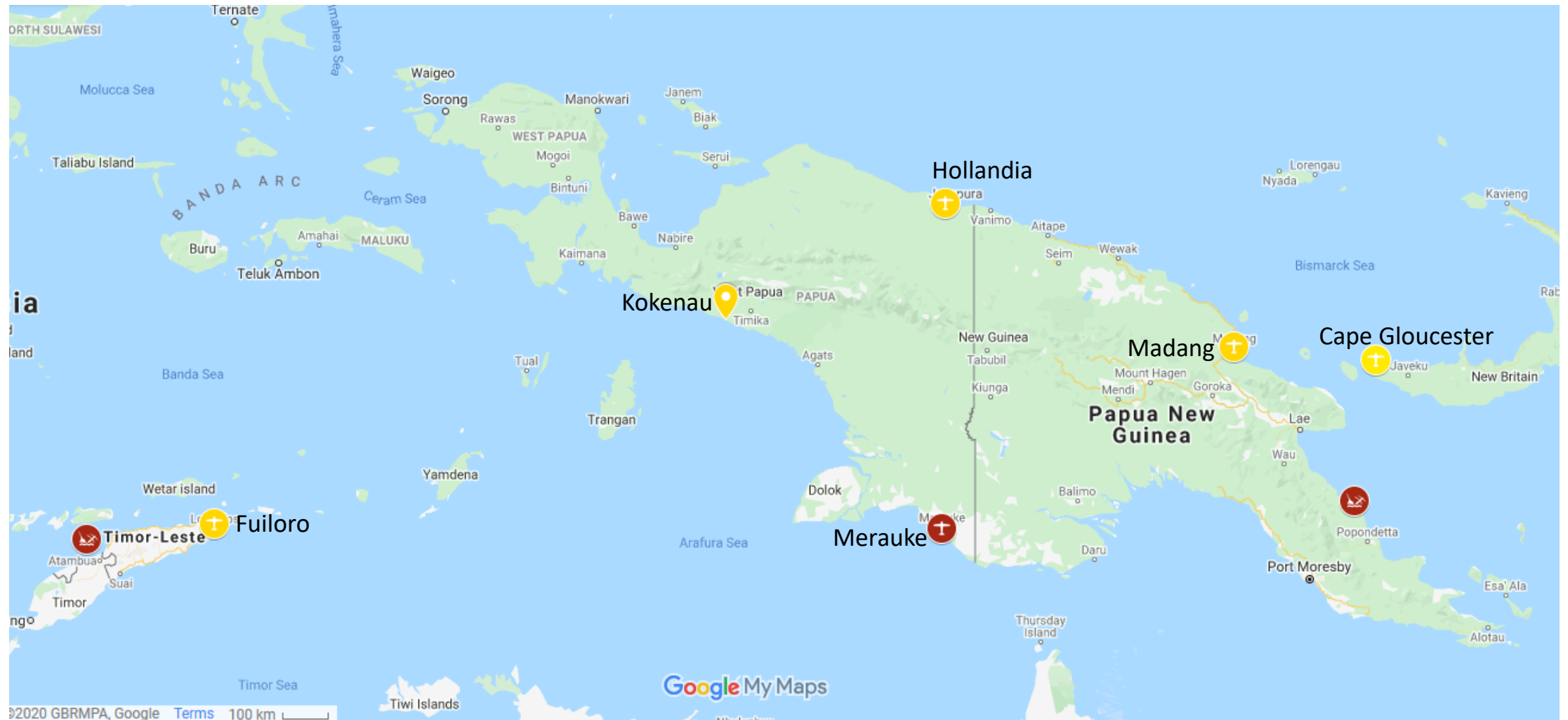
22 December - Air

- In December there were signs that the Japanese were making a new airfield at Fuiloro 60 air miles closer to Darwin than Dili was.
- Henceforth Fuiloro became a main target for the Hudsons and Beaufighters.
- Four Beaufighters of No. 31 squadron machine gunned personnel and installations at the airfield being constructed at Fuiloro (northeast Timor) on 22nd December and shot down one Japanese fighter.

22 December - Air

- On 22nd December a Wirraway, in which Flying Officer Hockings was flying Major O'Hara of the 2nd Australian Air Liaison Section on a survey flight over the battle area, was shot down by enemy anti-aircraft fire. Hockings and O'Hara were both killed and the Wirraway destroyed.
- The gun which was responsible for their death, a naval weapon of the "pom-pom" type, was pinpointed by one of the Wirraway crews.
- Under their direction A.I.F. gunners destroyed both the gun and its crew with direct hits.

22 December - Air



23 December - Australia

- Housewives with their prams attended at the butcher's as early in the morning as they could get there and asked, "What can I have?"
- The reason for bringing the pram" was not simply an airing for the children but to carry home the day's shopping, for retail deliveries had been restricted.
- This restriction was admitted by authority to have caused considerable hardship, falling mostly on the housewife, but the saving in transport facilities, fuel and manpower was considerable.



"Look, Bert; and no Yanks about!"

Norm Rice in Bulletin (Sydney) 23 Dec 1942

22 December - COIC

4. SECRET'S PROGRAMS UNIT NOTE

- (i) Continued offensive against north coast New Guinea.
- (ii) Continued infiltration on Guadalcanal.
- (iii) Reinforcements for Buna.

(1) Continued offensive against north coast New Guinea

For A/DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
22/12/43

On 23 December Allied Intelligence changed its view of current Japanese objectives.

23 December - COIC

4. REAR'S PROBABLE NEXT MOVE

- (1) Consolidation of new rear bases and of existing advanced bases particularly Timor, N Coast New Guinea and Solomons preparatory to further offensive in S.W.P.A.
- (11) Infiltration - Guadalcanal.
- (111) Infiltration - Buna area.

- (1) Consolidation of new rear bases and of existing advanced bases particularly Timor, N Coast New Guinea and Solomons preparatory to further offensive in SWPA.

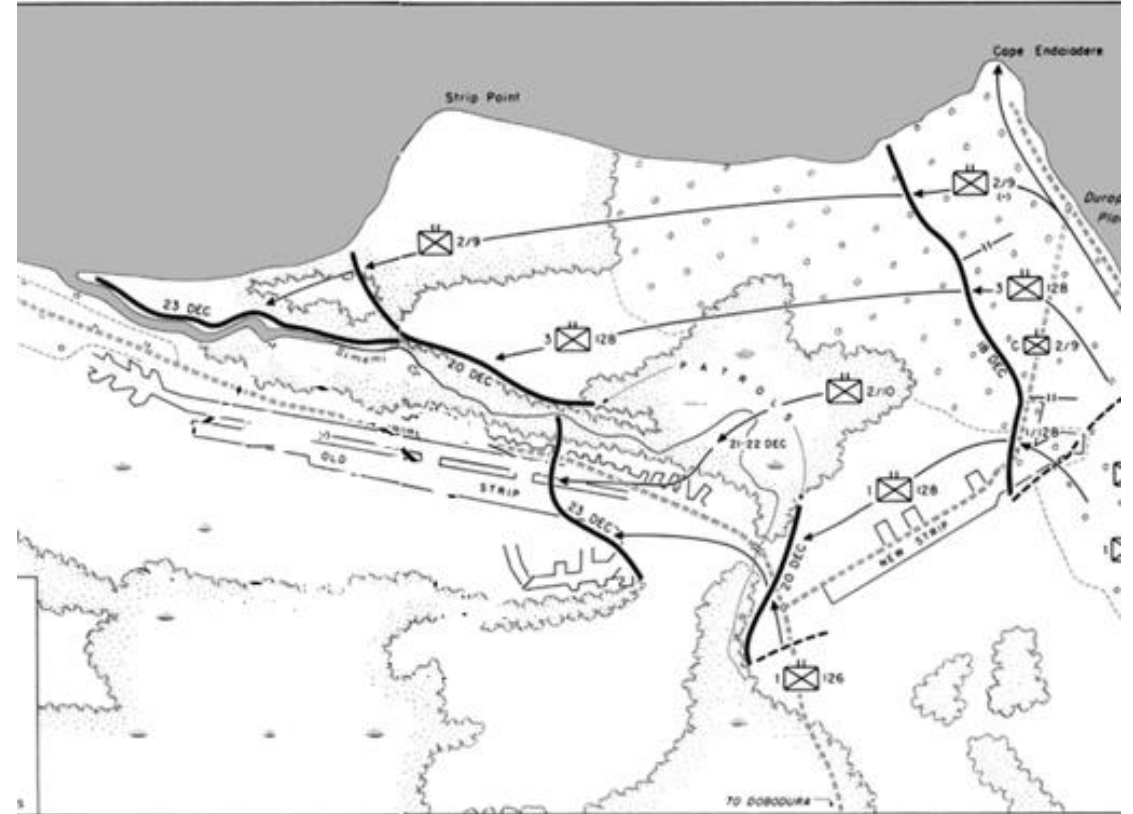
For ADMINISTRATIVE S.W.P.A.
12/23/43

Bismarcks. Photographic reconnaissance of RABAUl on 21 December revealed the presence of one heavy cruiser, twenty destroyers, two patrol craft, one torpedo boat, two submarines, one minelayer, two seaplane tenders (one CHIYODA class), three tankers, and forty-four merchant vessels totaling approximately 242,000 tons and consisting of ten of 8000-10,000 tons, twenty-one of 5000-7000 tons, and thirteen 1000-4000 tons. In addition there were numerous harbor craft and nine seaplanes or patrol planes. This is the largest concentration of light naval vessels and merchant shipping ever observed at RABAUl.

At LAKUNAI airdrome three bombers and twenty fighters were observed, as were new dispersal bays, lanes, and buildings. Intense activity was apparent. At VUNAKANAU airdrome twenty-five medium bombers were observed and new dispersal bays and runways were under construction.

23 December – Buna E

- By first light the next morning, 23 December, the 2/10 Battalion was across the creek.
- Colonel Dobbs, whose troops were now to the rear of the Japanese in the bridge area, at once sent two companies southward to clear them out.
- Most of the Japanese pulled out of their bunkers before the Australians arrived.
- By noon the few that were found had been killed, and the Australians were able to report "the bridge and 300 yards north neutralized."
- The bridge was still under fire from emplacements on the southwest side of the Old Strip, but these could be dealt with later when the repairs to the bridge were completed, and the Americans and the tanks crossed.



23 December – Buna E

- The platoon of the 114th Engineer Battalion had begun working on the bridge as soon as it turned light.
- Despite heavy enemy fire, first from the bunkers at the other end of the bridge and then from the Old Strip when the Australians cleared the enemy out of the bridge area, the work proceeded speedily under the direction of 2d Lt. James Doughtie.
- By 12.30 the leading platoon of Company B, 126th Infantry was on the other side of the creek. It was quickly joined by the rest of the battalion.
- The 1st Battalion 128th Infantry, was to cross later in the afternoon; the four tanks, as soon as the bridge was completed and found capable of bearing their weight.



*American engineers strengthen the bridge over Simemi Creek, ready for the Stuarts to cross for the attack.
(US Army)*

23 December – Buna E

- As soon as they crossed the bridge, Major Beaver's troops began moving toward the strip.
- Enemy fire from flat-trajectory weapons and mortars was heavy, and progress was slow.
- They tied in on Colonel Dobbs' left at 1745 and took up a position along the southern edge of the strip.
- The last drift pin was driven into the bridge an hour later, and Major Clarkson's battalion was across the creek and had moved up on Major Beaver's left by 1920.



*Sergeant John Church inspecting the 37-mm gun of his Stuart during maintenance on 23 December 1942.
(Department of Information Photo 13976)*

23 December – Buna E

- The plan now was to have the tanks cross the bridge and join the infantry early the next morning.
- Upon their arrival, the 2/10 Battalion, with the two American battalions in support would attack straight up the strip. The force would jump off from a line drawn perpendicularly across the strip.



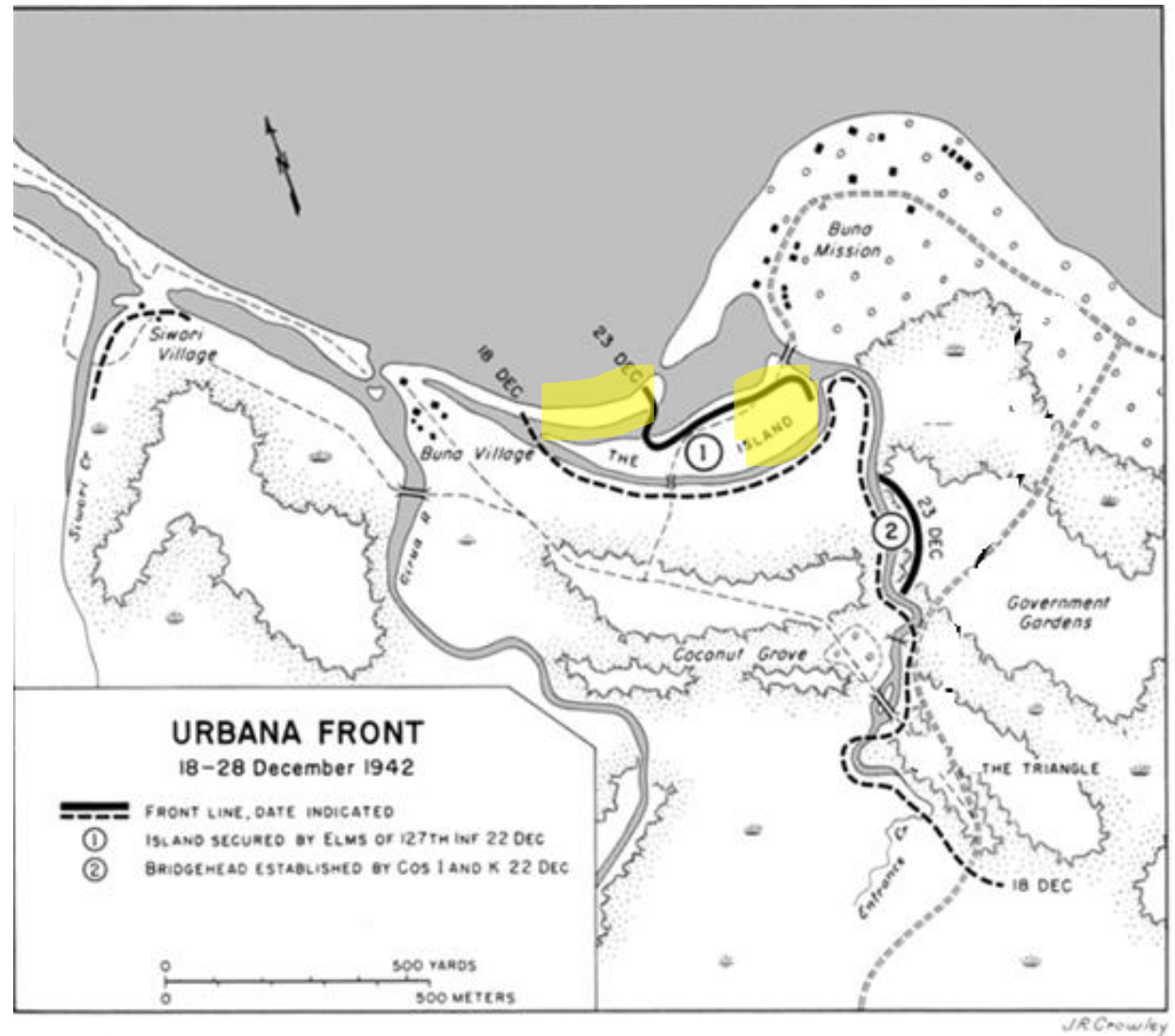
The Stuarts move up from Cape Endaiadere to take up their positions for the advance down the old strip. Standing on the first tank is Lt, Vic McCrohon, Trooper John Wilson is sitting by the gun. Corporal Evan Barnet is kneeling on the second tank.

23 December – Buna E

- It had been known for some time that the Japanese had 3-inch guns on the strip, but the artillery believed that they had been knocked out. The fact that the air force had not received any anti-aircraft fire from the strip for several days seemed to confirm this belief. To be on the safe side, it was decided to commit only three of the four tanks. The fourth tank would be kept in reserve until the situation clarified itself.
- At dusk of the same night, 23 December, two armed Japanese motor-torpedo-type boats rounded Cape Endaiadere and sank the *Eva*, an ammunition-laden barge at Hariko, as it was being unloaded by the troops of the Service Company, 128th Infantry. The two Japanese boats then machine-gunned the beach at 2250 with .50-caliber tracer ammunition. The Service Company answered with small arms fire from positions just off the beach, but the boats got away before heavier weapons could be brought to bear upon them.
- While the Japanese were shooting up Hariko, further down the coast at Oro Bay the *Bantam*, a K.P.M. ship of the same class as the *Karsik* and the *Japara*, came in with two more M3 tanks, and 420 tons of supplies. The ship was quickly unloaded and returned safely to Porlock Harbor before daybreak.

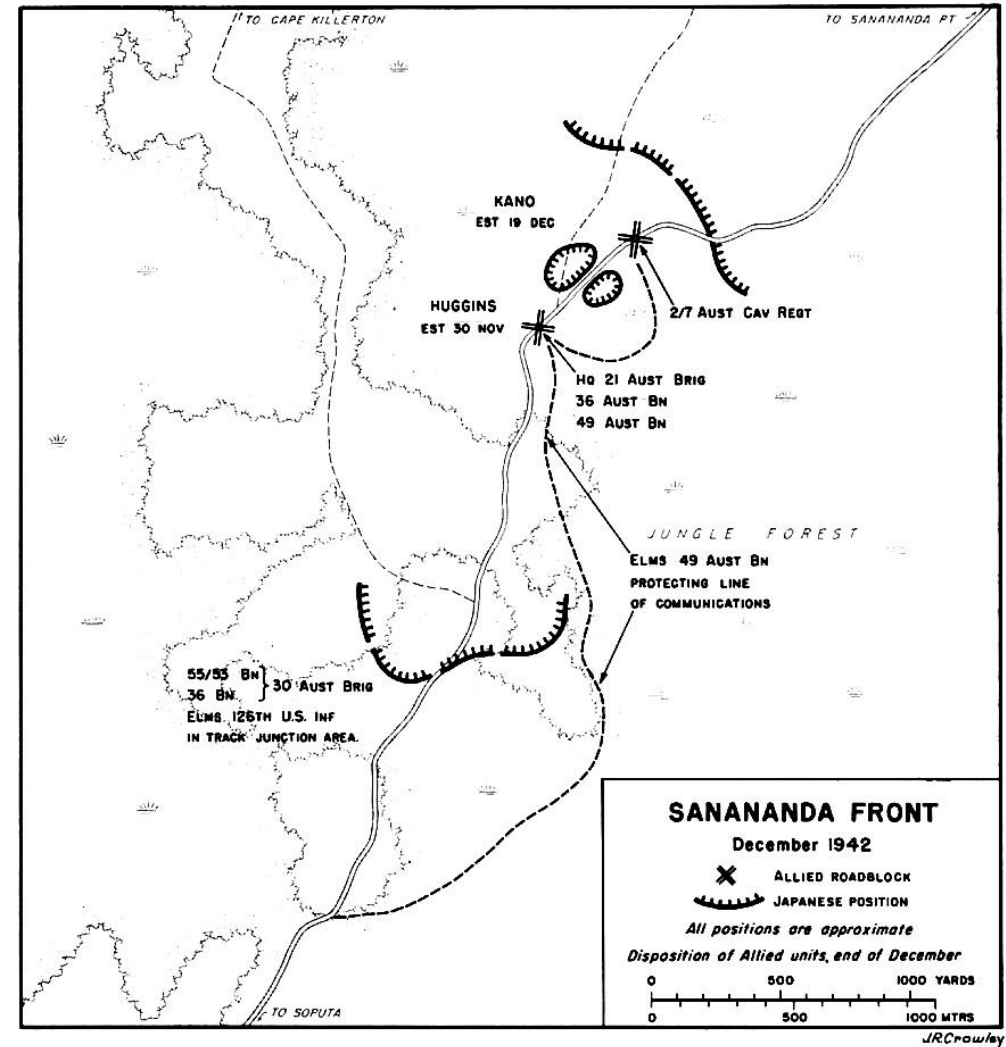
23 December – Buna W

- By 1115 the next morning (23 December), the last Japanese to be found on the island had been overcome.
- Company H then moved onto the island, bringing with it a 37-mm gun "with plenty of canister."
- A platoon of Company E, 127th Infantry, on the village spit (the small peninsula east of Buna Village) also had a 37-mm. gun firing canister.
- From their separate points of vantage the two units began bringing down close-in harassing fire on the mission and continued to do so day and night.



23 December – Sanananda

- Lieutenant Hordern completed his preparations for a strong sortie to Kano with "C" Squadron and the two troops which had become separated from Captain Cobb on the 19th.
- Early on the 23rd these set out to extend the line of approach laid down by the 49th Battalion by swinging wide to the right after they left Huggins' and later chopping westward across the track into Kano.
- Hordern entered Kano perimeter without any enemy contact. He found the garrison in excellent heart although they were down to half a tin of emergency rations a day.



23 December – Air

- Six A-20's strafe troops near Gona and at Woiba Is.
- Three B-25's bomb Cape Gloucester A/F (photographs indicate that a new runway is under construction.
- B-24's carry out single-bmr attacks on transport WSW of Cape Orford, a vessel NW of Lorengau, a cargo ship at Arawe, and the Cape Gloucester A/F.
- A heavy bomber on reconnaissance at Kavieng was attacked by enemy fighters, one fighter claimed shot down and two damaged.
- Natives report night landings by the enemy in the area between the Amboga and Kumusi rivers.
- It is now confirmed that the Japanese landed at Madang on the night of 18/19 December and have occupied positions around the town.

23 December – Air

- Three Australian Hudsons bombed Dobo (Aru Island) in the early afternoon starting fires near the wharf. Enemy planes intercepted and one of the enemy planes was shot down.
- 3 Beaufighters attacked the a/f at Fuiloro morning of 23/12. One vehicle destroyed and one building set on fire. One intercepting aircraft possibly destroyed. One Beaufighter is missing.
- 18 SBDs, 8 Grummans, 8 B17s, 6 P39s and 4 P38s attacked Munda airfield in two raids. 15 Zeros intercepted, 2 were claimed destroyed and one probable. 2 Grummans and 1 P39 lost.
- The airfield at Fenny (north of Chittagong) was attacked by 15 enemy bombers with fighter escort - night of 23/24 two enemy bombers attacked Chittagong. Damage in each attack was slight.
- 26 B-24's staging through Midway from Hawaii bomb Wake I during 22/23 Dec. 90% of the bombs struck the target area, starting fires that were visible for 75 miles, all our planes returned. (Japanese communique claims that damage was light and four of the bombers were shot down.)

24 December – Sea

- On 24th December one of the Tufi-based boats—PT 122—sank a Japanese submarine just off the mouth of the Mambare river. The submarine was seen to break in half and sink.
- Torpedo boats destroyed an enemy schooner of 100 tons off Buna night of 23/24 December.
- Throughout November and December Tancred continued survey work in the Cape Nelson area, with H.M.A. Ships Stella and Polaris.



HMAS Stella, formerly and subsequently Wareen.

24 December – Buna E

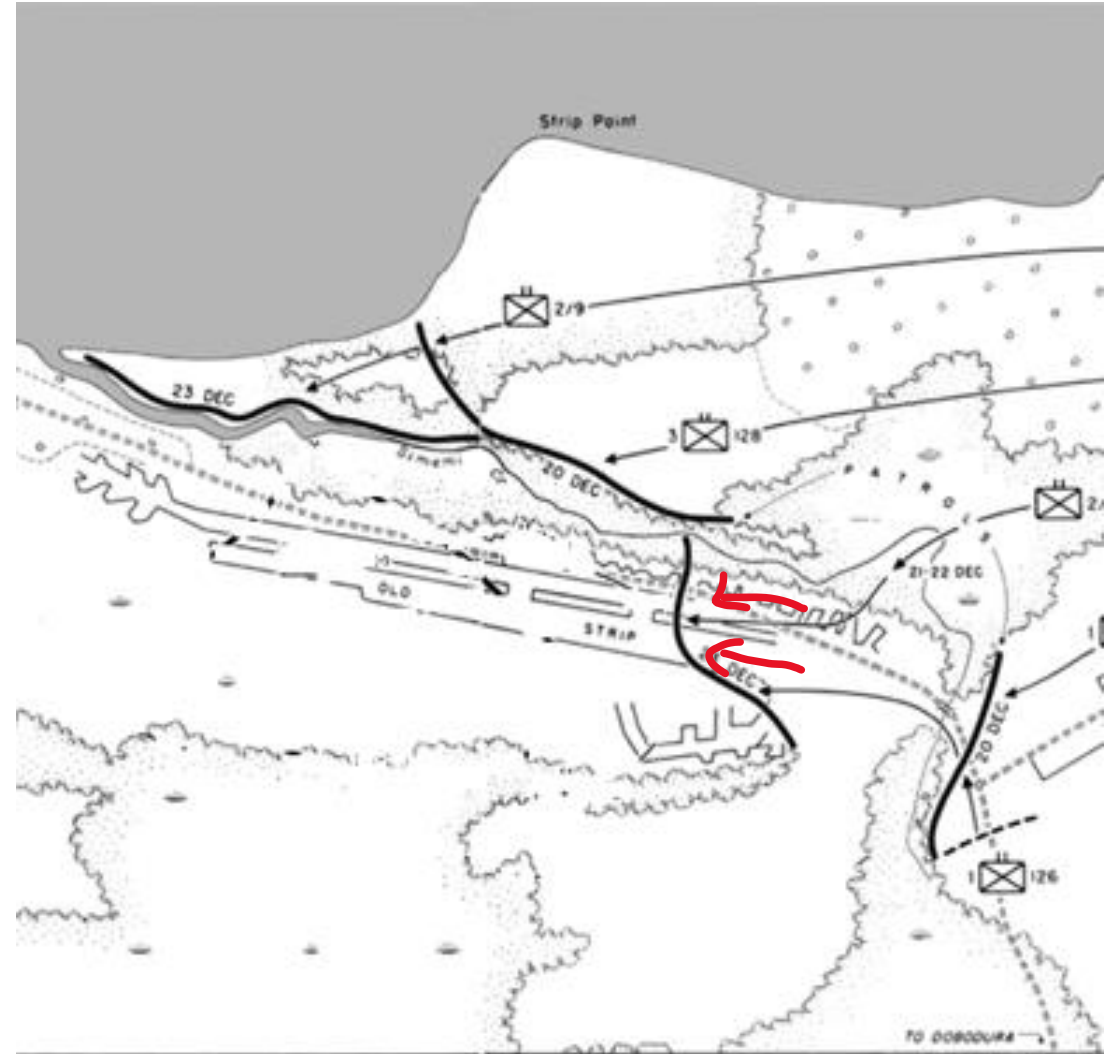
- Early on 24 December the tanks crossed the bridge and moved up to the Australian area on the northern side of the strip from which the main attack was to be launched.
- At 9.30 a.m., after a ten-minute barrage, the tanks went up the strip in line, 50 yards apart, with Church on the right, Lattimore on his left, Barnet on Lattimore's left and McCrohon himself on the extreme left of the line.



*Tanks spaced out ready to move along Old Strip, still with the turret hatches open.
(Department of Information Photo 13984)*

24 December – Buna E

- The infantry were hard behind them with Trevivian's company on the right of the strip, Ifould's moving up the strip and to its left, Americans, and Sanderson in reserve.
- A sniper was worrying Ifould's company. Right at the start the captain stood upright and engaged the marksman himself. But he lost the exchange, and his men, Lieutenant Brown leading them, left him dead as they crossed the start line as part of a steady general advance which continued for half an hour with tanks and infantry combining to sweep the defenders from their path.

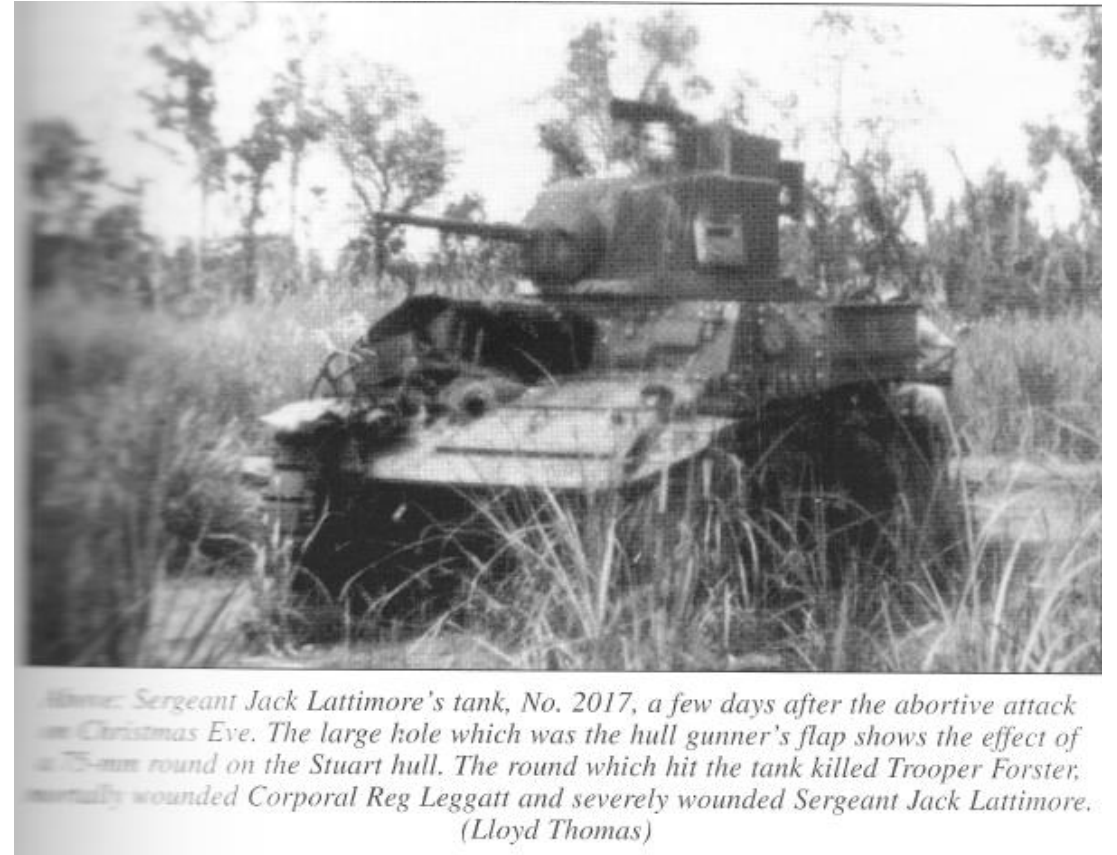


24 December – Buna E

- McCrohon's tanks were concentrating on their front, searching for the pom-pom gun which was known to be sited off the end of the strip and which, they had been told, was the only gun they had to fear.
- Suddenly McCrohon saw a flash to his left front and then another; a hit followed, and the whole of the left side of the tank seemed to split.
- He told his wireless operator to warn the other tanks: "Get out! The ack-ack gun's operating." But the wireless was not working.
- The driver swung the tank round. McCrohon said "You're headed straight for a crater!" The driver replied "There's nothing you can do about it! I can't steer!" And then the tank fell into the crater.
- The Japanese gunner took Barnett's tank next. His shot crashed through the turret killing Corporal Jones and mangling Barnett's arm.
- Then it was Lattimore's turn. The shot found the hull gunner's flap killing Trooper Forster, mortally wounding Corporal Leggatt, and blowing Lattimore's leg off.
- Lastly Church's tank was knocked out.

24 December – Buna E24 December – Buna E

- With the tanks out of the way, the enemy guns and pompoms began firing down the center of the strip.
- Company A, 2/10 Battalion, was forced to move from its position on the strip in the center of the Allied line to the Australian side of the runway.
- For the next two days no Allied troops could use the strip itself.



24 December – Buna E

- Forward observers located one of the enemy's 3-inch guns on the left shortly after it had fired on the tanks, and the artillery promptly knocked it out.
- Because the observers were unable to locate the remaining guns, Brigadier Wootten decided to commit no more M3's to the attack until he knew definitely that all the enemy's 3-inch guns were out of action.
- Without tanks the attack moved slowly against enemy machine gun, mortar, and pompom fire.



*Above: A Japanese 3-inch (75-mm) Model 10 naval gun is inspected by Australian and US soldiers after its capture at Buna.
(Department of Information Photo 14042)*

24 December – Buna E

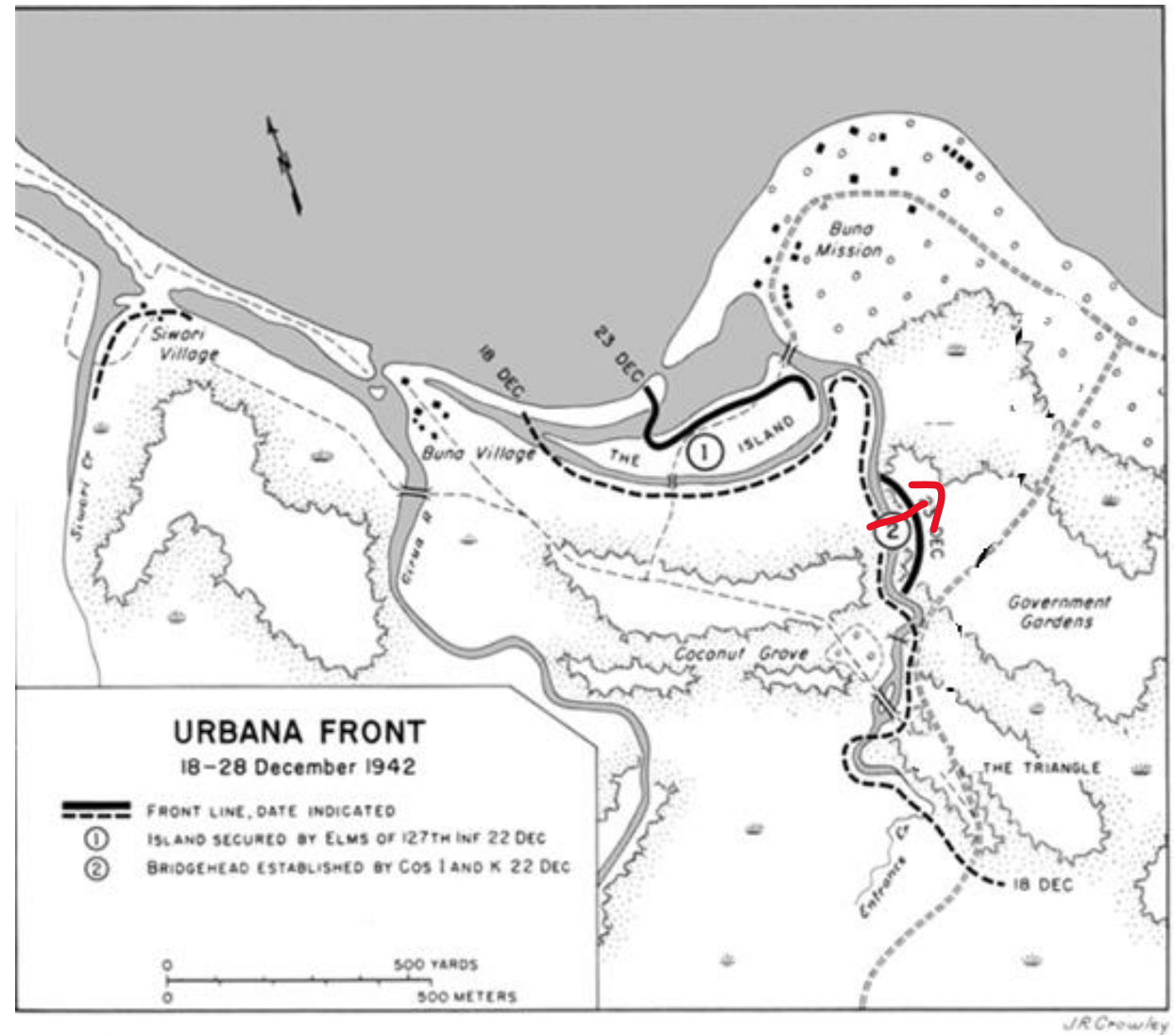
- A light rain during the afternoon further retarded the fighting.
- Urged on by Colonel Martin and Major Beaver the latter's troops pulled abreast of Colonel Dobb's force by nightfall.
- The Allies had gained about 450 yards in the day's operations and were about 650 yards up the strip on either side of it.
- On the far left Major Clarkson's troops had met no Japanese, but heavy swamp crippled their movement.



Another view of troopers carrying Corporal Barnett, 'Darkie' Adams (left) and Ken Pulling with a cigarette, who wears an AFV thigh holster and his .38-inch revolver. The wet conditions of the area are emphasised in this view.

24 December – Buna W

- At 0600 the artillery and mortars began firing their preparation, and Company H on the island opened up on the mission with all its weapons.
- Covered by the rolling barrage, the troops jumped off fifteen minutes later on a 400-yard front.
- The drive across the gardens to the sea had about 800 yards to go.
- Neglected and overgrown with thick clumps of shoulder-high kunai grass, the gardens extended for some 400 yards to a swamp about 100 yards wide.
- On the other side of the swamp, looking out on the sea, was a coconut plantation, about 300 yards across, through which ran the coastal track between Buna Mission and Giropa Point.

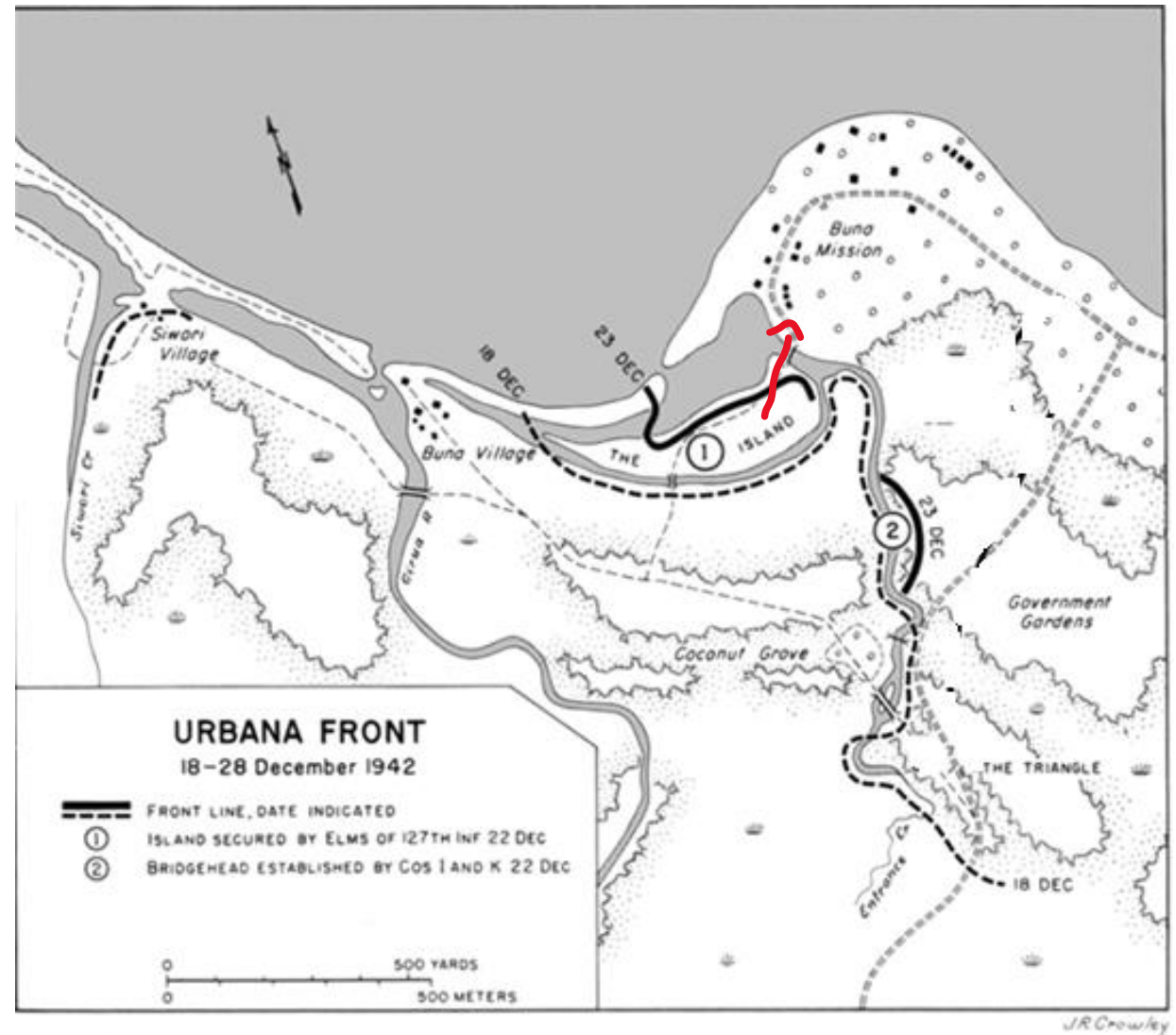


24 December – Buna W

- As the two companies left the line of departure and began moving through the kunai grass they were met by heavy fire and both were held up. The fire was particularly heavy on Company I's front.
- The company cleaned out an isolated enemy bunker just forward of the line of departure, but its attempts to infiltrate and knock out a main Japanese strong point immediately to the rear met with no success whatever. Making full use of the many hidden positions at their disposal, the Japanese successfully countered the unit's every attempt to move forward.
- Company I had suffered heavy casualties and become disorganized. Colonel Grose went out to the company himself and ordered the unit to the rear to reorganize and, at 0950, sent in Company G in its place.
- Within the hour, Company G reported that the enemy had been cleared out of a three-bunker strongpoint which had previously held up the advance. Despite this promising start, Company G did not get much farther that day.
- On the far left Company L under 1st Lt. Fahres, Captain Wentland's successor was given all the aid that was available. The automatic weapons of Company M along Entrance Creek fired heavily in its support, as did the massed 81-mm. mortars south of the island, first under Colonel McCreary, and when McCreary was wounded, under Col. Harding, General Eichelberger's artillery officer who was acting as division artillery commander. Nevertheless, the company, after making small initial gains, did not move forward.

24 December – Buna W

- Colonel Grose at 1028 ordered a platoon of twenty men from Company A to cross over to the mission from the island by way of the north bridge and hold there as long as possible.
- The Japanese were so busy in the gardens that the troops actually got across the bridge, which though rickety was still standing.
- Unopposed at first, the platoon was soon set upon by the Japanese, who killed eight of its members and forced the rest back across the bridge.

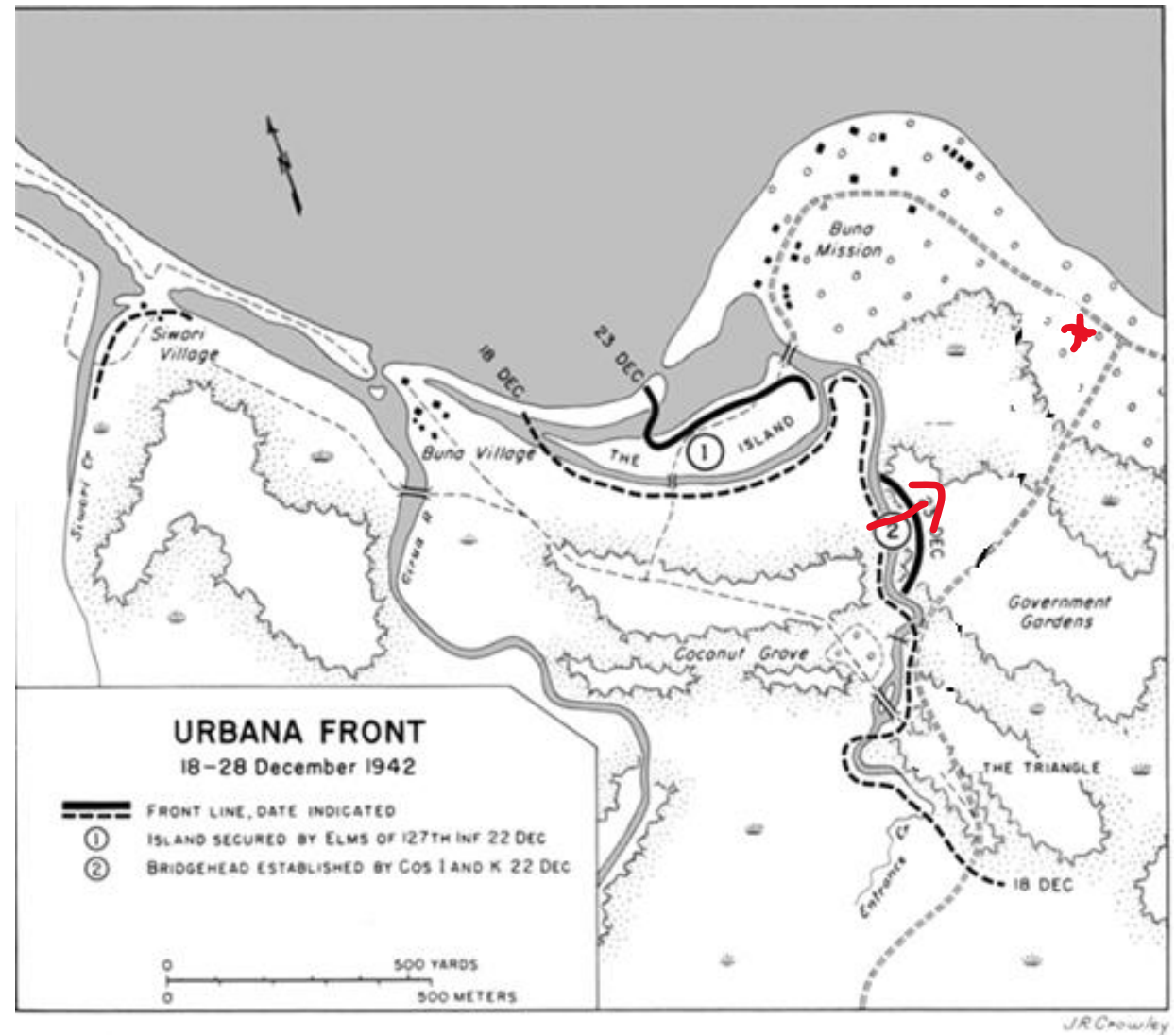


24 December – Buna W

- Feeling the pressure upon it ease, Company L's left platoon, under 2d Lts. Fred Matz and Charles Middendorf, began pushing ahead. Meeting little opposition, the platoon started racing forward alone through the tall grass, unnoticed by the rest of the company. The company commander did not see the men go and did not miss them until some time later.
- Within a short while, the platoon was through the gardens and on the outskirts of the Coconut Plantation. There the men ran into two well-manned enemy bunkers which stood directly in the way of their advance.
- Sgt. Kenneth Gruennert, in the lead, undertook to knock them out. Covered by fire from the rest of the platoon, he crawled forward alone against the first bunker and killed everyone in it by throwing grenades through one of its firing slits.
- Although severely wounded in the shoulder while doing so, Gruennert refused to return to the rear. He bandaged the wound himself and moved out against the second bunker. Hurling his grenades with great precision despite his bad shoulder, Gruennert forced the enemy out of the second bunker as well but was himself shot down by an enemy sniper.

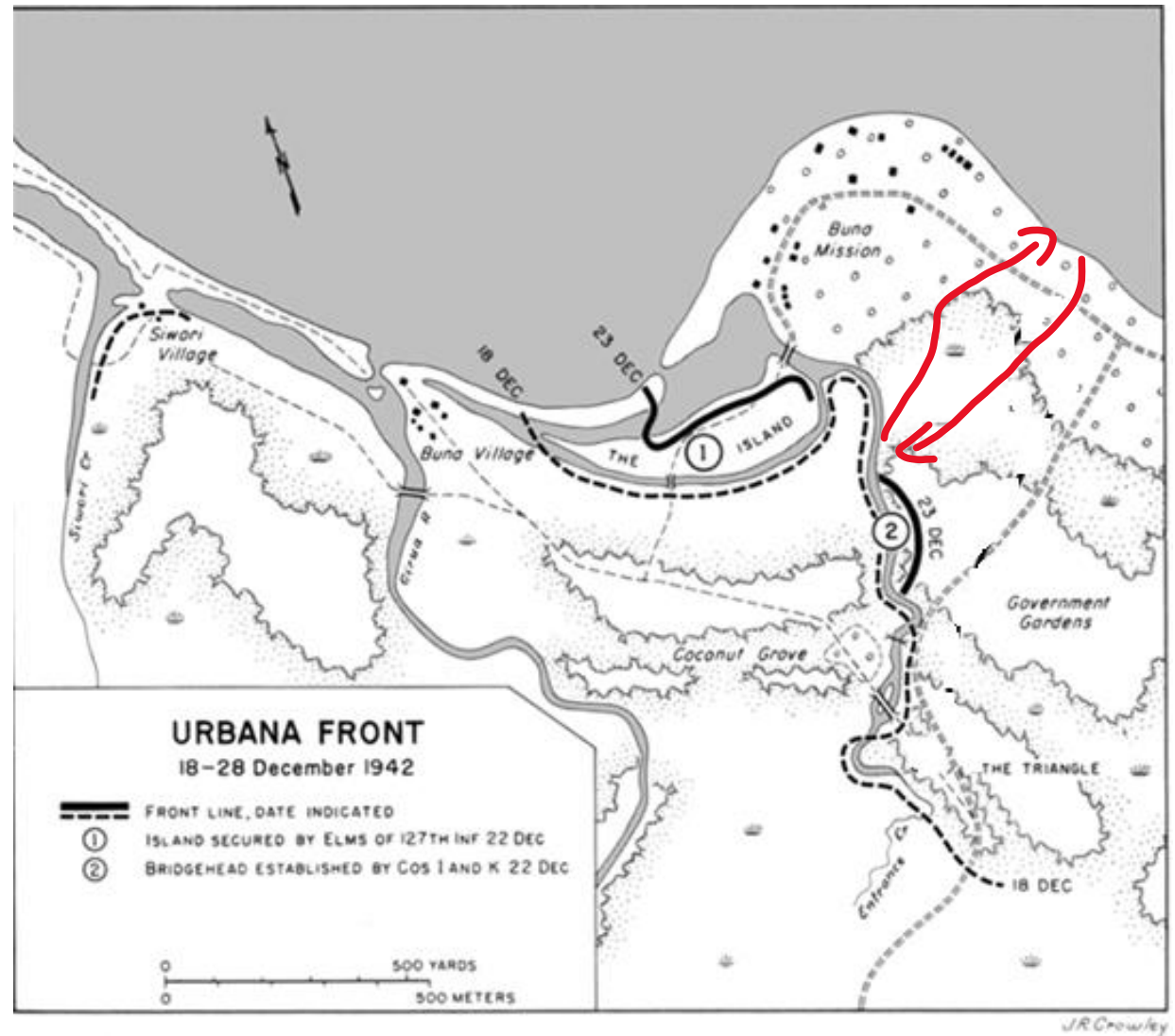
24 December – Buna W

- Completely out of touch with its company the platoon consolidated and pushed on. By noon it was within sight of the sea.
- The Japanese then started closing in, and the artillery at Ango, unaware that friendly troops were so far forward, shelled the area with great thoroughness, killing Lieutenant Middendorf and wounding Lieutenant Matz slightly.
- One of the eight men left with Matz was badly wounded and unable to march. The lieutenant decided to stay with him and ordered the rest of the troops to withdraw



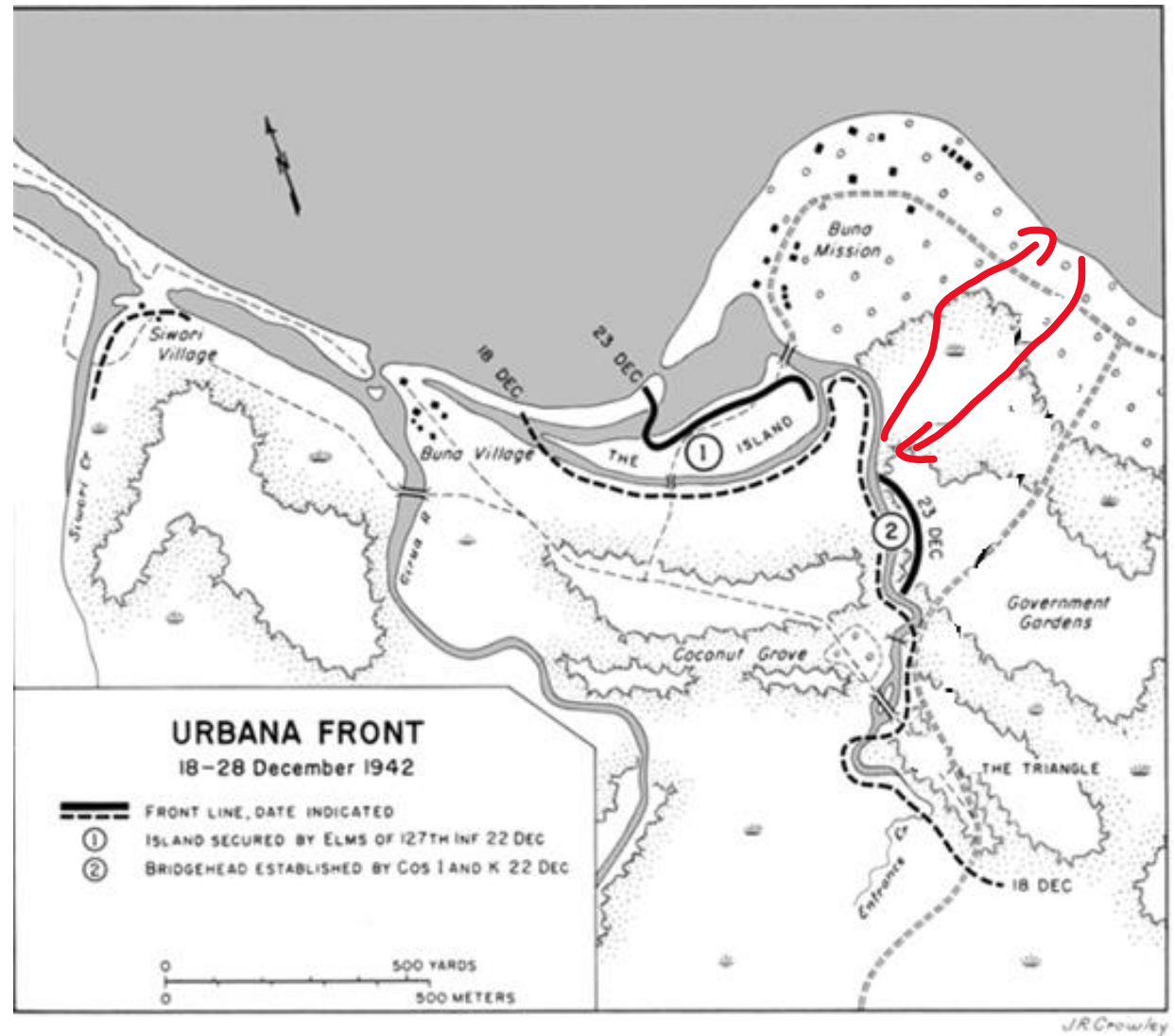
24 December – Buna W

- Colonel Grose did not learn of the platoon's break-through until just before noon when a runner got back with the news.
- He at once ordered Company I back into the line and sent Company K to the far left with orders to go to the platoon's assistance.
- The company attacked in the direction it was believed the platoon had followed.
- The Japanese had meanwhile plugged the hole in their defenses, and it was only after heavy fighting that 1st Lt. Paul Krasne and eight men of the company finally broke through.



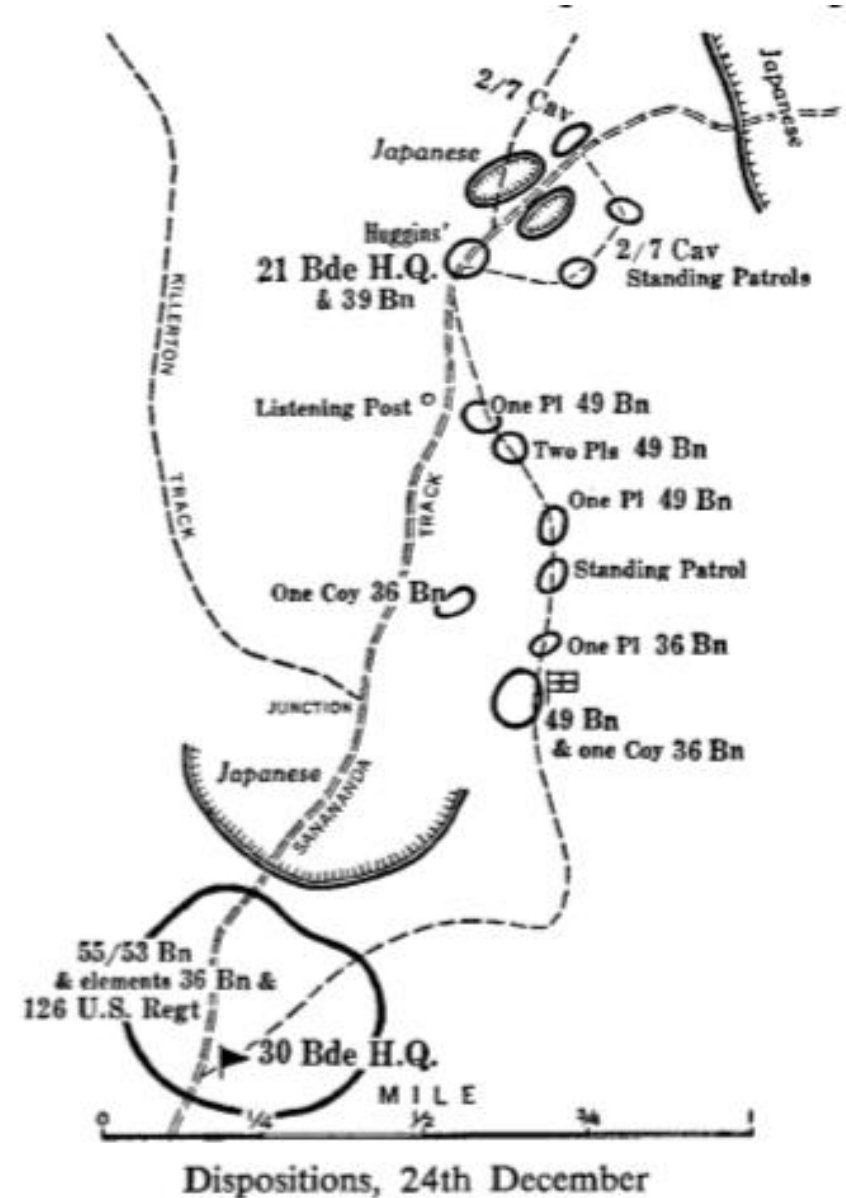
24 December – Buna W

- They raced to the beach, found no trace of the Matz patrol, and promptly withdrew lest they be cut off.
- Seeing that the line did not move, Colonel Grose ordered Company F to attack on Company L's right at 1511.
- The result was the same. The line remained where it was and by evening was no more than 150 yards from the line of departure.



24 December – Sanananda

- On the 24th Hordern returned to Huggins' and it was then decided that the balance of the regiment should move forward to Kano, leaving at Huggins' the mortar detachment and the medical post.
- This they did without incident that afternoon, although the passage of the new route was still a nerve-racking experience.
- The cavalrymen were now concentrated once more, with 19 officers and 205 men at Kano.
- After six days of hard fighting they had advanced only some 400 yards and lost 7 officers and 33 men killed with about as many more wounded.



24 December - Air

- 9 P-39's and 4 USMC Wildcats and 9 SBD's raid Munda, claiming 24 fighters destroyed, 14 in the air and 10 on the ground. Allied losses Nil.
- 5 B24s attacked the airfield at Gasmata 18.40/24.
- Three A-20's strafe troops near Kel and along N Amboga R and trail.
- Other B-24's, operating singly, bomb Lae, a schooner in Vitiaz Strait, and the harbor at Arawe. (A 6,000 ton ship at Gasmata and an 1,800 ton transport at Arawe were reported sunk.
- Japanese planes bombed allied positions in the Gona and Dobodura area but caused no damage.
- Four enemy transports escorted by a destroyer were attacked during a landing operation at Laivai (north west coast of Timor) by seven Australian Hudsons. One direct hit and several near misses were observed. It is estimated that 1,500 to 2,500 troops were landed with trucks, guns and supplies. one Hudson of No. 13 Squadron, captained by Flying Officer Thomson, was shot down.
- Six Beaufighters attacked the landing strip at Fuiloro, destroying one enemy plane and damaging another.
- One of our heavy bombers carried out a nuisance raid on Buka.
- Night of 24/25 about nine enemy bombers attacked Calcutta. One of the attacking planes was claimed damaged.

24 December - Air

- No 12 Squadron at Batchelor, formerly equipped with Wirraways had now been equipped with Vultee Vengeance dive bombers.
- No. 18 (Netherlands East Indies) Squadron, with Mitchells, was now arriving at McDonald, and would undertake its first sorties on 19th January.
- B24 Liberators of No. 319 Bombardment Squadron U.S.A.A.F. were soon to take up permanent residence at Fenton. Where they would greatly extend reconnaissance and strike power to the North West.



Squadron dispositions, December 1942

24 December - Air



Wirraway

Max speed 220 mph, service ceiling
23,000 ft.



Vultee Vengeance

Max speed 275 mph, service ceiling
22,500 ft

24 December - Air



Working on the Vengeance bomber at the Vultee plant in Nashville, Tennessee (1943)



JIC 23, 24 & 25 December

New Guinea. It is now confirmed that Japanese landed at MADANG during the night of 18/19 December and occupied three positions within a radius of 10 miles of the city. No enemy vessel was observed there on 21 December, except two small sailing vessels.

Bismarcks. A small enemy detachment has occupied CAPE GLOUCESTER, at the northwest end of NEW BRITAIN.

New Guinea. It is reported that four hundred and fifty Japanese landed at KAUKENAU, (southwest coast of Dutch NEW GUINEA) on 22 December.

And on Christmas Day the Japanese occupied Hollandia on the north coast of Dutch New Guinea.

On 24 December Admiral Darlan is assassinated in Algiers. Gen Giraud becomes acting French ruler of African colonies.

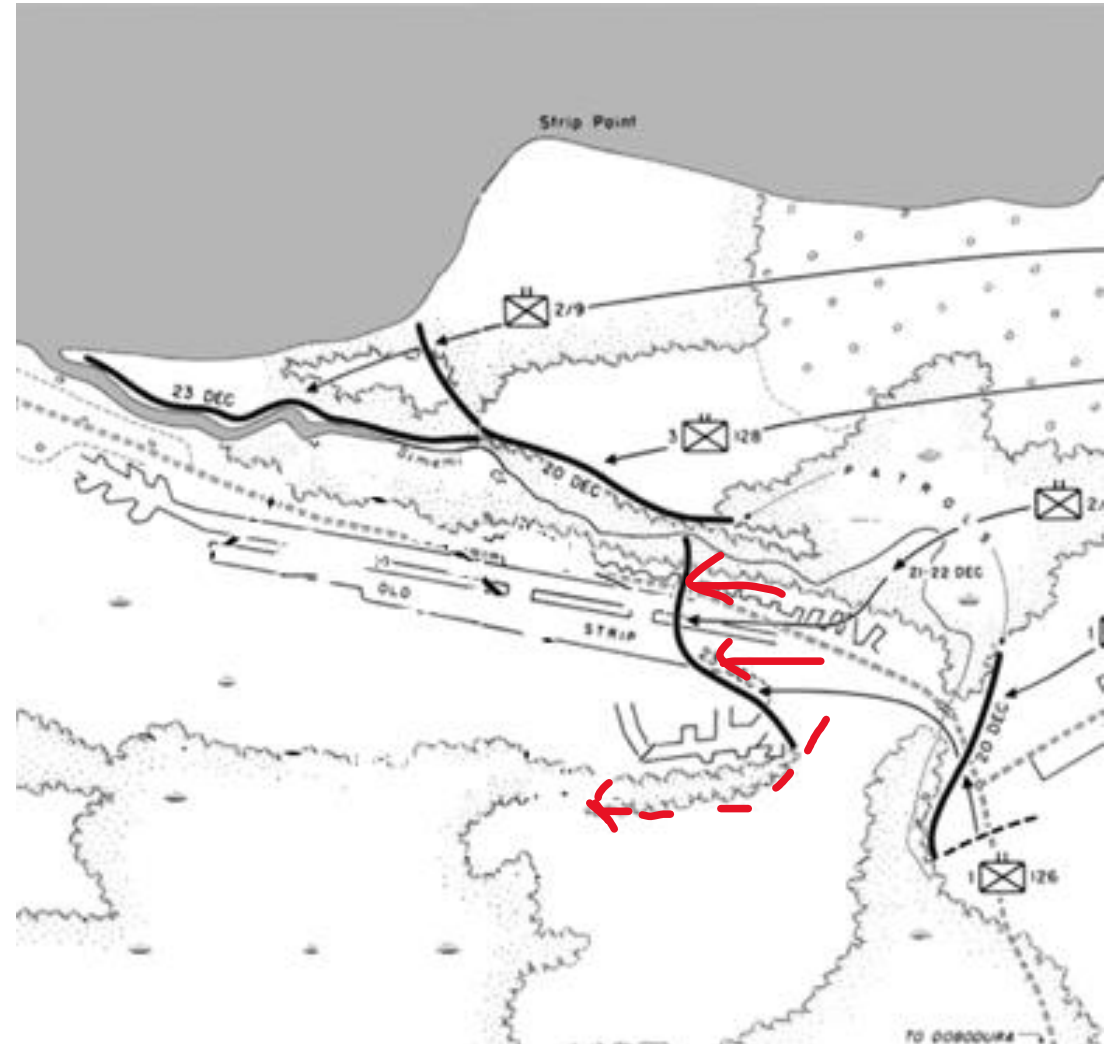
25 December - Sea

- The cargo ship, Banshu Maru No 2, was torpedoed and sunk in the Ombai Strait by USS Tautog.
- The ship, Tokiwa Maru No 1, was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean off the Bismark Archipelago by USS Thresher.
- The minesweeper, Y-38, was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean by USS Grayback.



25 December – Buna E

- At 0515, Christmas morning, Company C, 2/10 Battalion, reverted to Colonel Dobbs' command and, on Brigadier Wootten's order, was sent to the far left of the Allied line.
- Its instructions were to move through the swamp and threaten the enemy's right flank while the Americans and the rest of the 2/10 Battalion continued their efforts to push forward frontally.
- The Allies attacked at 0700 after a ten minute artillery smoke barrage. Throughout the day Company C, 2/10 Battalion, made very slow progress in the swamp, and the American and Australian companies farther to the right had little success against the well-manned enemy bunker and trench positions.
- Company C, 126th Infantry, Major Beaver's leading unit, had scarcely left the line of departure when it was stopped by a hidden enemy strongpoint somewhere to its front, and Major Clarkson's battalion on Beaver's left had the same experience.

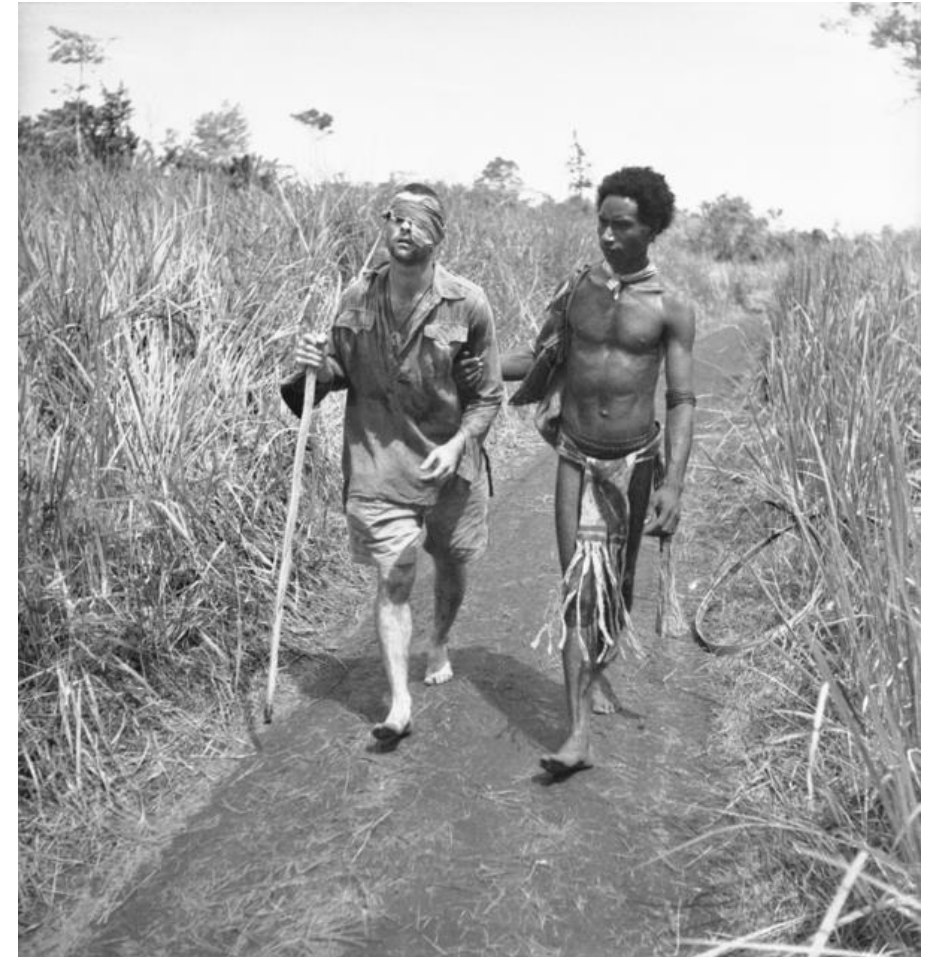


25 December – Buna E

- Heavy fighting developed all along the front, but there was little change in dispositions.
- The Australians had certainly gained a few yards but had then been stopped.
- After one failed attempt to get through the swamp on the left 2d Lt. George Hess of Company A 1st Battalion 128th Infantry was picked for the task. Hess left the battalion CP about 0900 with fifteen men. Swinging to the left, he and his men worked their way through the swamp, sometimes sinking waist deep in mud. By early afternoon, the patrol had cut its way around the Japanese right flank and established itself on dry ground on the Japanese left rear without being observed by the enemy.
- The Japanese had meanwhile discovered that there were American troops in the dense undergrowth on their right rear. They started sending mortar and small arms fire in that direction but were slow in organizing a force to drive them out.
- Company C, 128th Infantry, under 1st Lt. Donald Foss reached Hess' position before nightfall. Except for intermittent area fire, the unit met no opposition from the enemy. Colonel Martin ordered Foss to launch an attack the next morning on the nearest enemy emplacement about 100 yards to the northeast.

25 December – Buna E

- George Whittington was born Oct 18, 1919 in Kilcoy, QLD. He married Constance Greensill on 20 Jan 1940 and they had one daughter, Pamela.
- George enlisted as QX23902 on Sept 27, 1941 in the Australian Army at Brisbane aged 21 years 10 months.
- After training at Redbank, he was assigned to coastal defence. He was promoted to A/Cpl in Feb 1942 and was transferred to 42 Bn, then at Townsville, on 10 Sep 1942.
- He and five others wanted to fight the Japanese rather than serve in Australia, so they deserted from Townsville on 07 Nov 1942, stowed away on the "Taroon" which was taking reinforcements to New Guinea, and re-enlisted at Milne Bay.
- He was demoted to Private and taken on strength by the 2/10th Australian Infantry Battalion on 15 Nov 1942.
- He was wounded in action on 24 Dec 1942.
- George died of scrub typhus and dysentery on 12 Feb 1943.



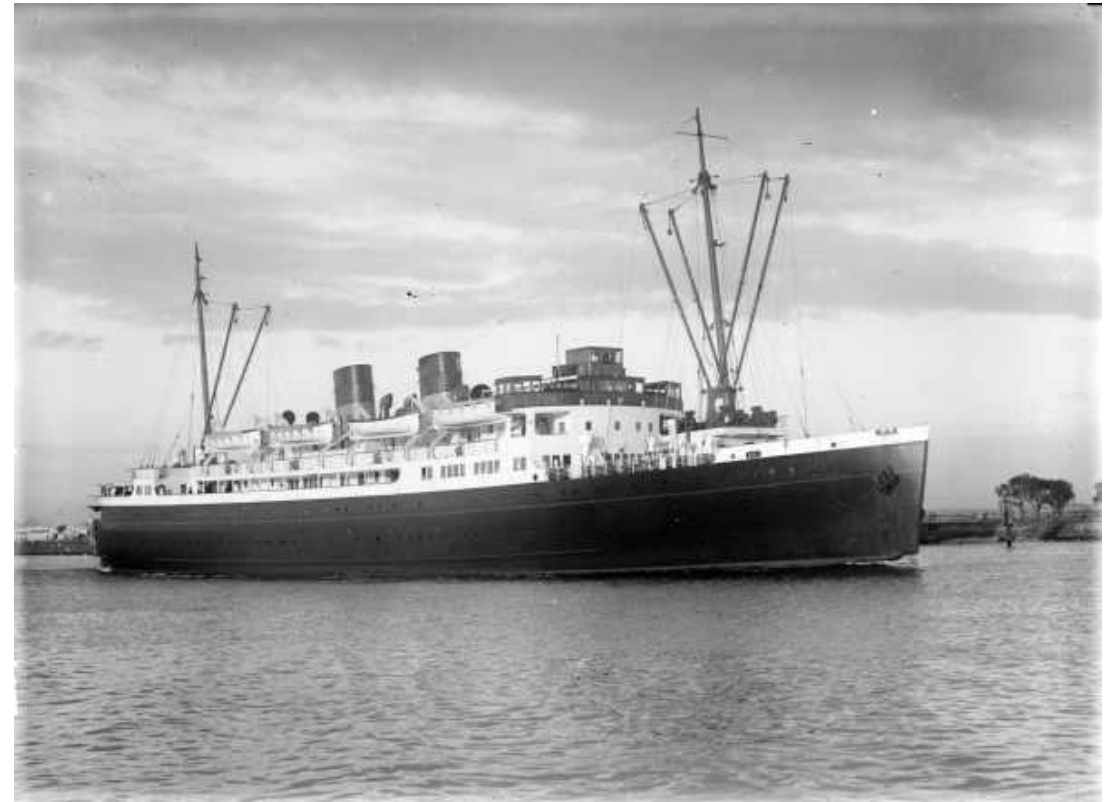
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

014028

George, eyes covered by dressing, in photograph (by George Silk) led by a Papuan native orderly, Raphael Oimbari near Buna on 25 December 1942.

December 1942 - Troop Transport

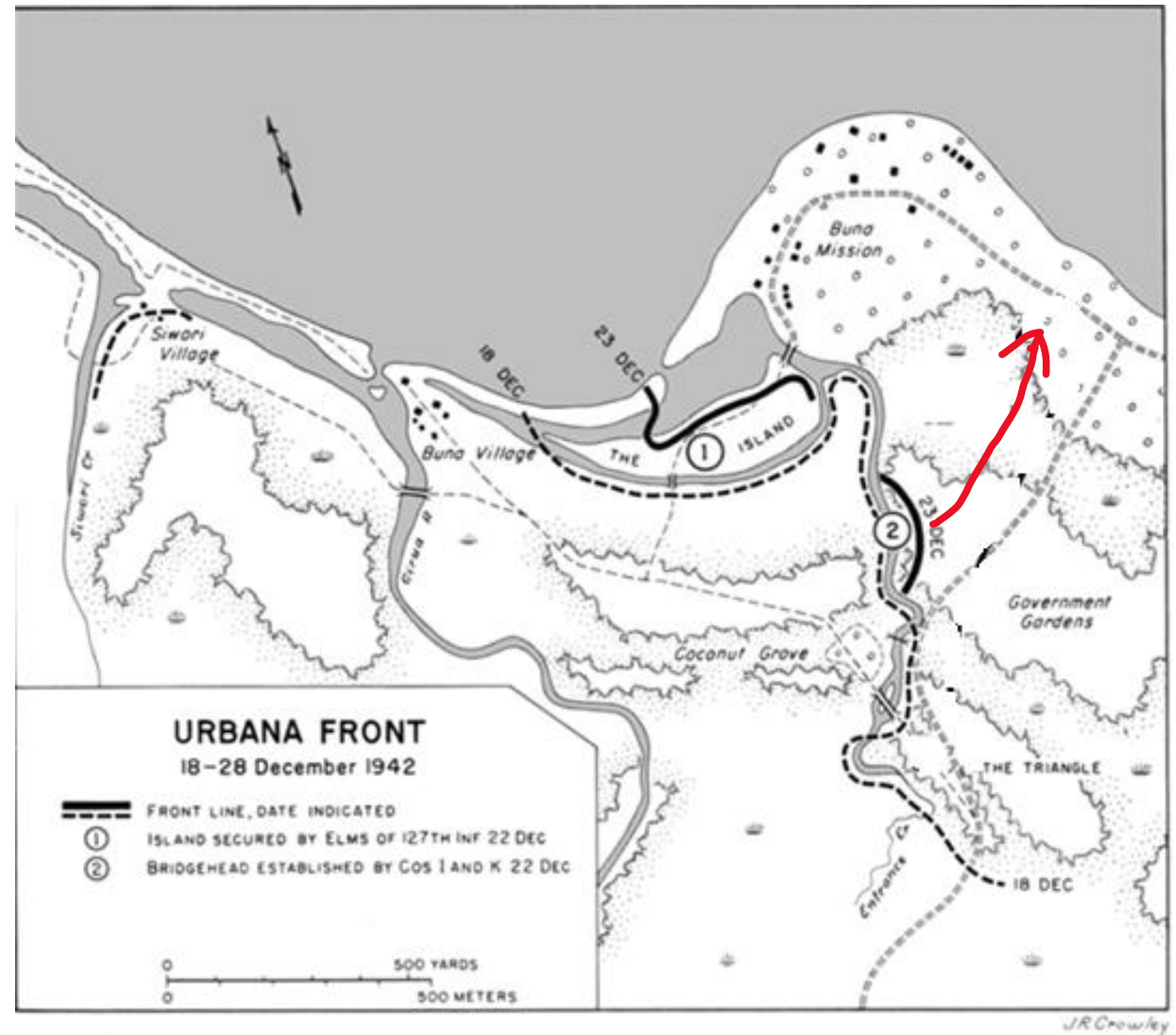
- SS Taroona which took George Whittington and many others to New Guinea.



SS Taroona, c. 1951 back in the hands of Tasmania
Steamers Pty Ltd

25 December – Buna W

- On Christmas morning, the mortars and artillery in a thunderous barrage gave the mission a thorough working over, and Company H, on the island, made a great show of being about to attack the mission across the north bridge, a makeshift structure that miraculously still stood.
- At 1135, while the commotion on the island was at its height, Companies A and F attacked across the gardens without preparation of any kind.
- The ruse worked. Company A (less two platoons which had not yet arrived) was held up, but Company F, which had found it impossible to move forward the day before, found the going relatively easy.
- Led by Capt. Byron Bradford, the company cut its way through the gardens and the swamp and reached the Coconut Plantation by 1345.

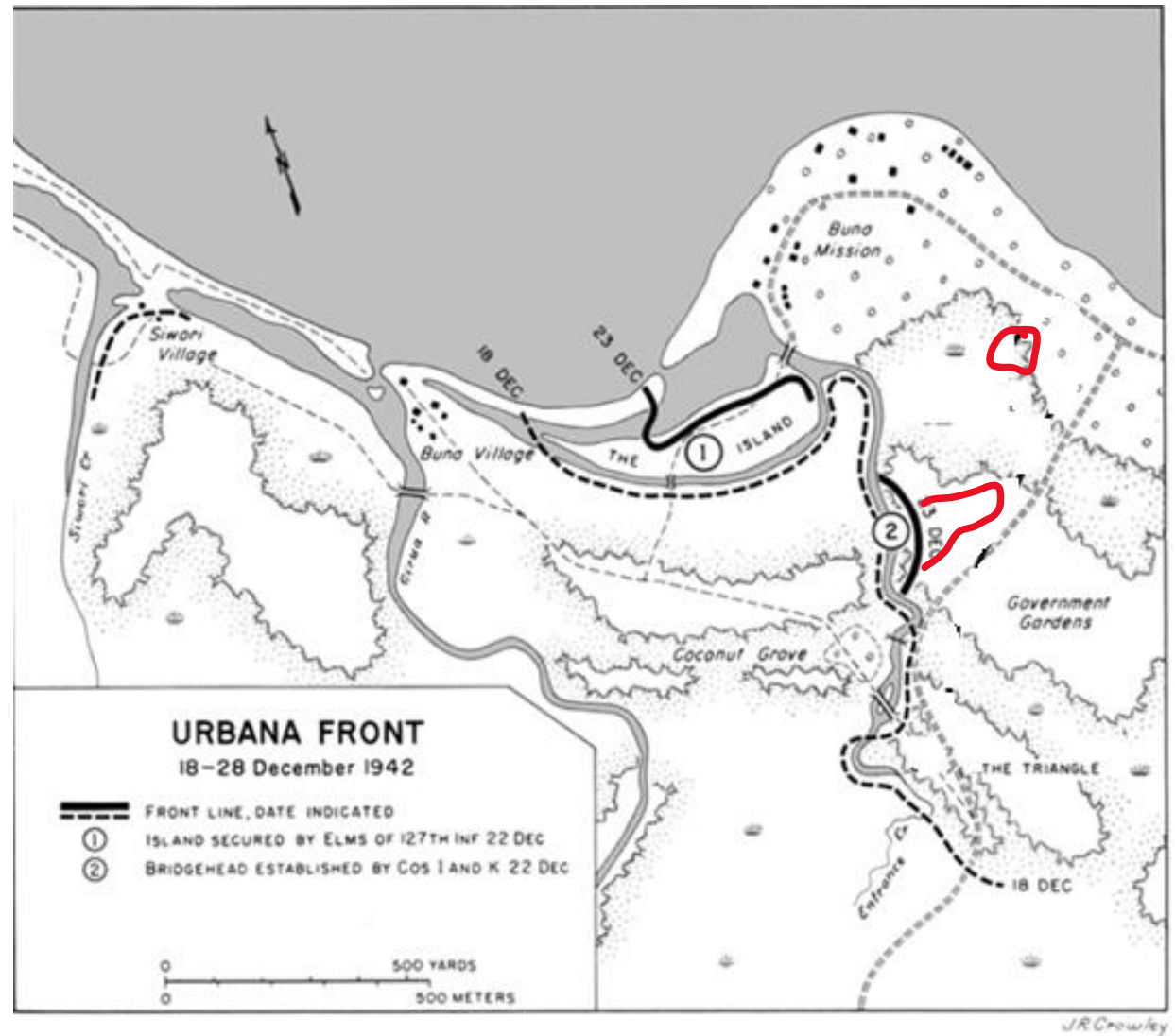


25 December – Buna W

- The Japanese then rallied, surrounded the company, and began a counterattack.
- After beating off the attack with very heavy losses to itself, the company established an all-around perimeter in a triangular cluster of shell holes just outside the plantation about 200 yards west of the track junction, about 250 from the sea, and 600 from the mission.
- An advance detachment of Company A, under its commanding officer, Capt. Horace Harger, broke through to F's position at 1620, but its weapons platoon was ambushed and destroyed by the enemy just as it was on the point of going through.
- The rest of Company A reached the front late in the afternoon but was unable to get through. As night fell, its leading elements and those of Companies K and L were at least 350 yards from the beleaguered companies near the coast.

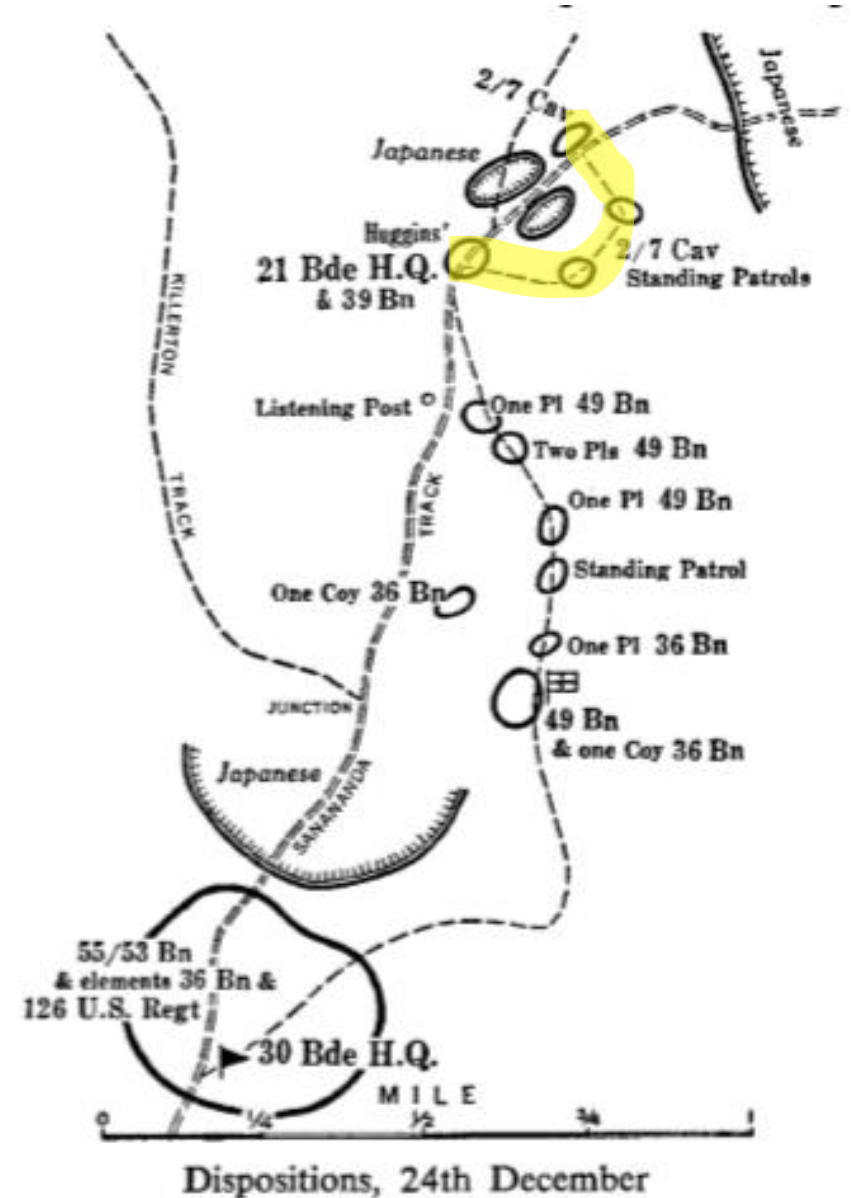
25 December – Buna W

- A diversionary attack on the enemy bunker positions in the Triangle to help Companies G and I on the right was mounted late in the afternoon.
- Although the attack, led by Capt. James Workman, commanding officer of Company C, was carefully planned and prepared, it failed, as had all previous efforts to take this position.
- The attack was finally called off toward evening after Captain Workman was killed while charging an enemy bunker at the head of his troops.
- On the right after fighting hard all day Companies G and I had made only slight gains.



25 December – Sanananda

- The Cavalrymen's first job on Christmas Day was to get the wounded out. There were thirteen of these at Kano, eight of them lying cases for whom rough stretchers had to be made on the spot.
- Chaplain Hartley wrote: "It was a slow, tedious and nerve-racking journey. The patients were heavy. Four men were required for each stretcher. These bearers had to carry their arms in their free hands. . . . There were times when, to our strained hearing, the noise along the track sounded like a herd of elephants crashing through the undergrowth"
- After this party had delivered their wounded at Huggins' they returned to the forward perimeter carrying with them Christmas cheer and mail. The small comforts (including sweets for men who were hungry for sugar) gave the soldiers new strength, and letters from home gave them new heart.



25 December – Air

- South Pacific aircraft made their first attack on Rabaul. Six B17s targeted shipping in the harbor 03.30/25. Three direct hits claimed on a large merchant vessel.
- Three Beaufighters strafe huts at the mouth of the Amboga River morning 25/12.
- One Beaufighter strafed stores and barges filled with troops near Laivai (n.e. Timor)
- Single heavy bombers made nuisance attacks on Buka, Munda and Cape Gloucester airfields.
- A B24 takes photos of Kiska and Attu and unsuccessfully bombs 6 barges between Gertrude Cove and Kiska Harbor. The B-24 then sights 8 float Zeros. 3 unsuccessfully attempt to attack the HB.
- The Yunnanyi airfield was attacked by eight Japanese medium bombers and nine fighters. No damage resulted.
- Civilian evacuation of Calcutta is proceeding at a rate of 42,500 per day. The situation is satisfactory, except at the docks where all labour is reported to have departed.

- Thanks for your attention.
- If you have enjoyed this presentation recommend it to your friends.
- I will put the overheads up on the website at jerrymcbrien.com
- My ebook “War in the Pacific The First Six months” is available at all good ebook stores.