



Situation - 25 December 1942

- 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 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.
- Since the 18th two troops of tanks and two fresh battalions of infantry have renewed the attack and have broken through the eastern end of the Buna enclave and are advancing, 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.
- 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 contesting Japanese resupply missions
- Intelligence is now forecasting a consolidation of Japanese new rear and existing advanced bases particularly Timor, the North Coast of New Guinea and Solomons preparatory to further offensive in SWPA.
- 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.

26 December - Sea

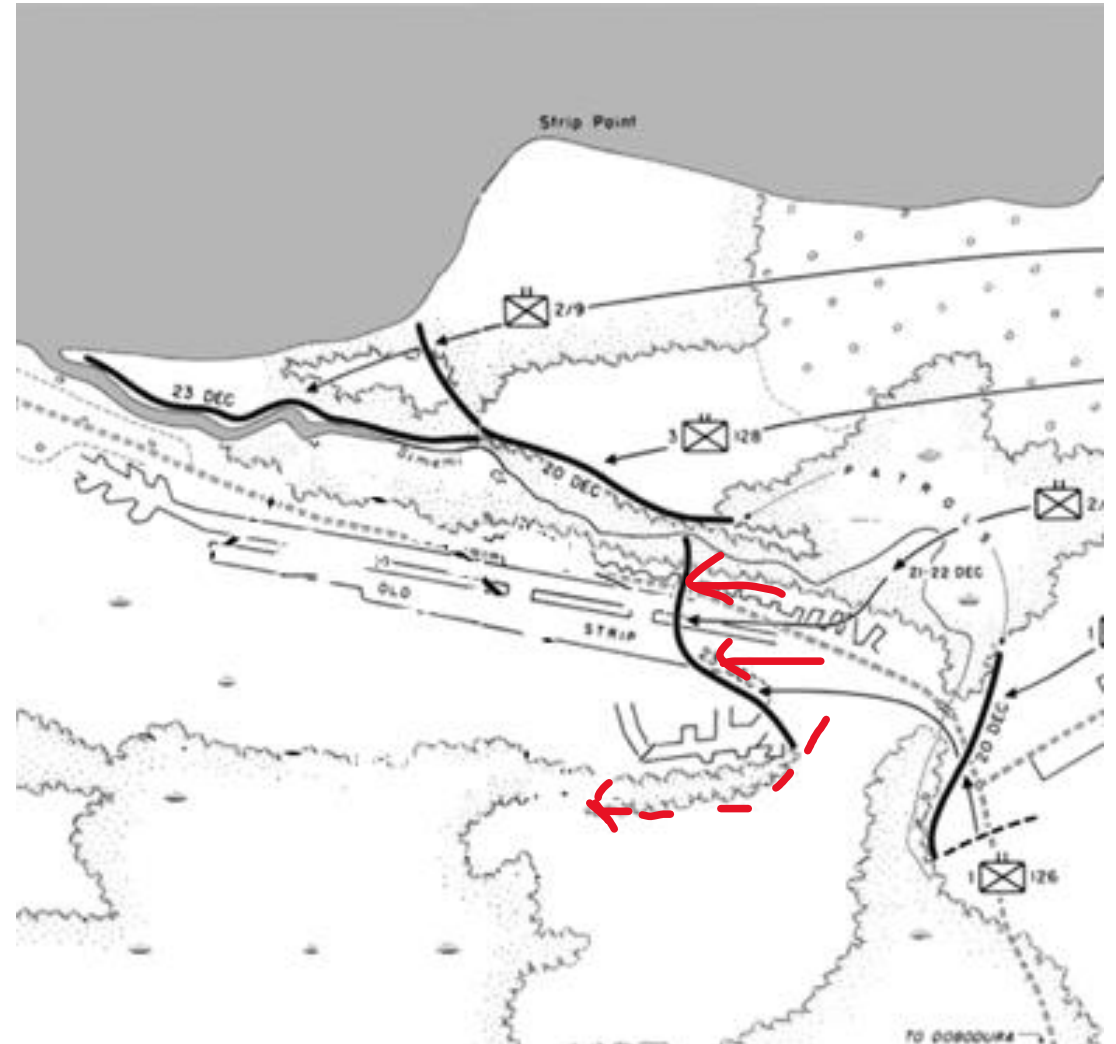
- On the 26th of the month (December) the Dutch Van Heemskerk was bombed at Merauke by a float-plane. The ship was hit, and three natives were killed and four wounded.
- Colac reported being attacked by enemy aircraft off Oro Bay 11.10/26.
- An enemy convoy of 7 vessels was attacked 10 miles off Cape Gazelle at 10.08/26. Several hits were scored on the larger transport, which stopped. Several boats were observed leaving the burning vessel.



SS Van Heemskerk at Taliwang in 1920. *Van Heemskerk* was one of twenty-one KPM vessels that took refuge in Australian ports after the fall of Java that Dutch officials requested be put into service for the war effort. The ships, were chartered by U.S. Army Forces in Australia (USAFIA).

26 December – Buna E

- Because the left-flank operations gave more promise of success than frontal assault up the strip, Brigadier Wootten decided to reinforce his left. Company A, 2/10 Battalion, crossed the runway and took up a position in the left center of the line on Major Beaver's right, leaving Companies D and B to deal with the opposition to the right of the strip.
- By the morning of 26 December, after a very difficult march through the swamp, Company C, 2/10 Battalion, was in position on Lieutenant Foss's left.
- After a ten-minute artillery preparation, the two companies attacked the enemy from the flank at 0702, in concert with the troops attacking from the front. After close-in fighting, one of the Japanese guns was taken by the American company.
- Company C, 2/10 Battalion, thereupon flanked farther to the left to deal with an especially formidable concentration of bunkers on up the strip.

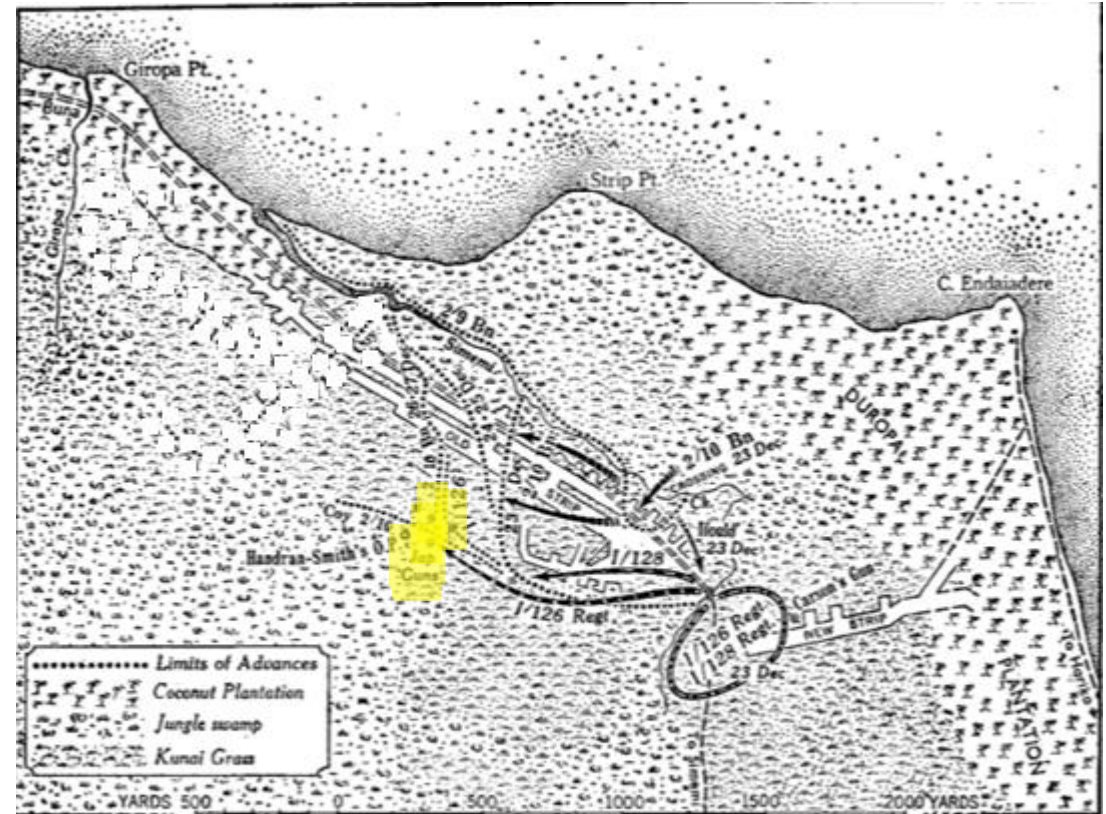


26 December – Buna E

- Towards noon Wooten grew impatient. He told Dobbs that it was absolutely necessary that Sanderson and Matheson should drive on with all their vigour in an attack which the battalion commander now proposed for them at 3 p.m.; that Sanderson should then take out the medium machine-gun position which was holding him up; that Matheson, who was not moving quickly enough, should clear the remaining anti-aircraft gun position which was now holding up both Australians and Americans.
- Smoke covered the beginnings of this movement. On the right of the strip Trevivian inched a little farther ahead but Sanderson's attempted advance again lost its outlines in a savage flurry, with Lieutenant Gray and his platoon pushing frontally into the muzzles of the weapons on the company's left front. Gray was wounded there with most of his men (only three of the platoon emerging unscathed). And still the defending post held out.
- At the same time Matheson was conducting a spirited encounter with the main gun position to the west. He had planned to smother the big gun with a sudden assault by two platoons under cover of 2-inch mortar smoke. But the thick smoke he had visualised became only wisps clinging about his men instead of hiding them, when Lieutenants Maclean and McDougall led them against the defenders. These, not to be stampeded, released a torrent of fire on the Australians, the core of it coming from a captured Lewis gun.
- Maclean and McDougall and a number of their men were hit when the issue was only just joined, though McDougall, who had previously been wounded on the 2/9th Battalion front and was concealing the fact, doggedly held on to remain with his platoon until they were dealing systematically with the enemy position.

26 December – Buna E

- Some withdrew about 40 yards to engage the positions from the long grass while others, Sergeant Spencer directing them, stayed close about the posts. Something very like a particularly murderous brawl then developed. The Australians pounded grenades into the posts but several times Japanese hurled them back before they could explode within the defences.
- Wild-eyed but purposeful, one Japanese was firing blank rounds from the anti-aircraft gun as he tried to set fire to the grass and add flames to the confusion. Japanese riflemen kept popping up from the depths of the defences and sinking back into them again.
- The Australians called for petrol bombs but could get only one—which they splashed against the barriers. And then, almost suddenly, it was ended. The defenders were dead, with many dead and wounded Australians out of the 50 or 60 who had made the assault lying near them; Corporal Heron, who had led his section bravely, was lifeless right upon the enemy post.



Advance of the 2/10th Battalion and supporting American units along Old Strip, 23rd-29th December

Jap guns

26 December – Buna E

- The guns, installed on concrete bases, were sited so that they could command all approaches from south and east. Each was surrounded by a 4½-foot-high circular earth embankment, so overgrown with grass that it was impossible to distinguish it from the surrounding kunai grass except at very close range. Bunkers and flanking trenches connected with it, but the enemy guns had run out of ammunition.
- Company A, 2/10 Battalion, and the two American battalions with it, were left to overcome the strong enemy positions south of the strip.
- Except for this movement on the left flank, little change occurred on the front. The center of the line was still about 650 yards up the strip.



*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)*

26 December – Buna E

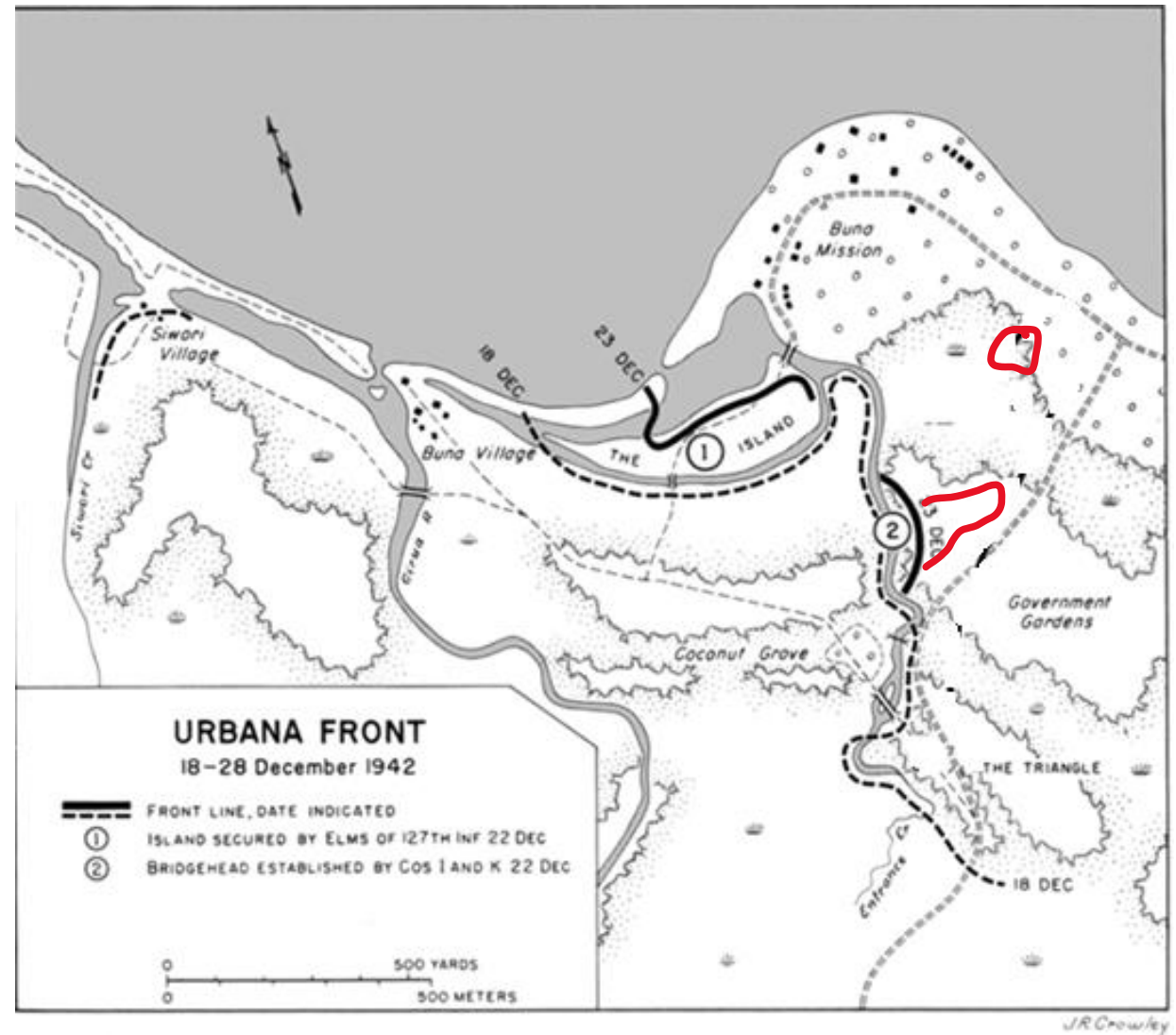
- In the last of the light, the Japanese fell upon Trevivian's leading platoon on the right of the strip so savagely that the platoon had to give up the ground it had won and emerged with only four of its number left.
- The 3.7-inch howitzers of the O'Hare Troop below the bridge ran out of ammunition on 26 December and could take no further part in the fighting.
- Late that night the *Japara* came into Oro Bay for the second time. It brought in another troop of M3 tanks, the remainder of the men who were to operate the port, and the rest of the engineer troops who were to build the Oro Bay-Dobodura road. Unloading proceeded rapidly, and the ship left before daylight.



AUSTRALIAN 3.7 INCH PACK HOWITZER *is dismantled before being loaded on a Japanese motor-driven barge which was captured at Milne Bay.*

26 December – Buna W

- Company C's instructions for 26 December were to break through to the companies near the coast and link up with them to form a corridor from Entrance Creek to the sea. Maj. Schroeder, commander of the 1st Battalion, would take personal charge of the attack.
- Assisted by Company I, Company G knocked out several bunkers on the right along the trail during the morning and began working on those that remained.
- On the far left, however, the enemy was still resisting stubbornly, and Company C made no progress all morning.

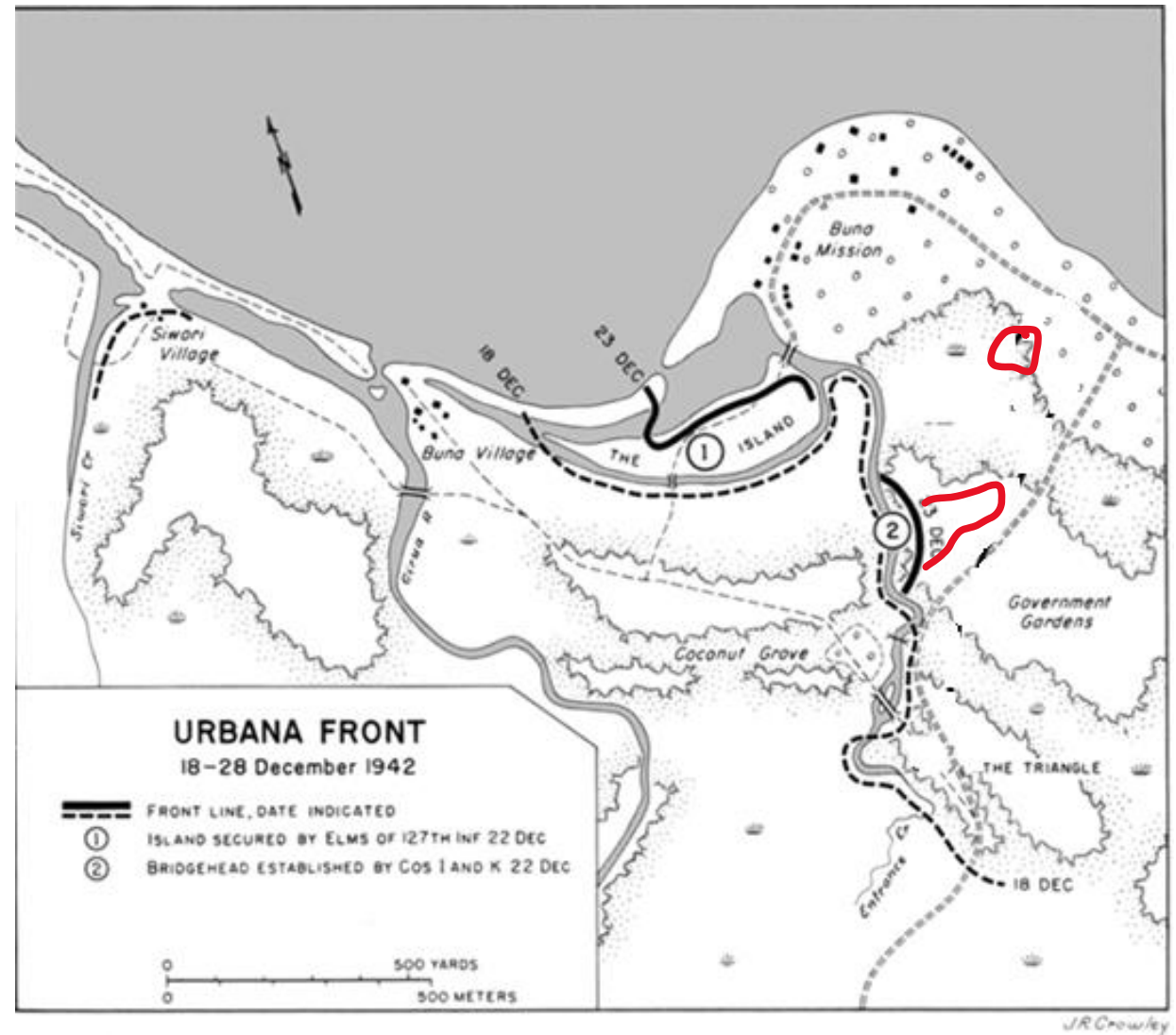


26 December – Buna W

- The Japanese were obviously reinforcing their positions north of the gardens from the mission. To discourage this activity, the artillery put down a ten-minute concentration on the southwest corner of the mission at noon that day.
- Major Schroeder ordered an element of Company C, split into patrols, into the swamp north of the gardens to deal with the Japanese there.
- The rest of the company, joined during the afternoon by Company B, commanded by 1st Lt. Lewis, continued to attack frontally. The attack made little progress, and it became apparent during the early afternoon that Company C was not going to break through.
- Colonel Grose ordered Colonel Bradley, now chief of staff of the 32d Division, to go to the beleaguered companies and bring back a report on their condition.
- Bradley was accompanied by Major Schroeder, 1st Lt. McCampbell, S-2 of the 2d Battalion, and a platoon of Company C, led by 1st Lt. Johnson. The patrol set out at once, carrying with it wire, ammunition, and food. After some sharp skirmishing with the enemy the patrol reached its destination at 1745 that afternoon.

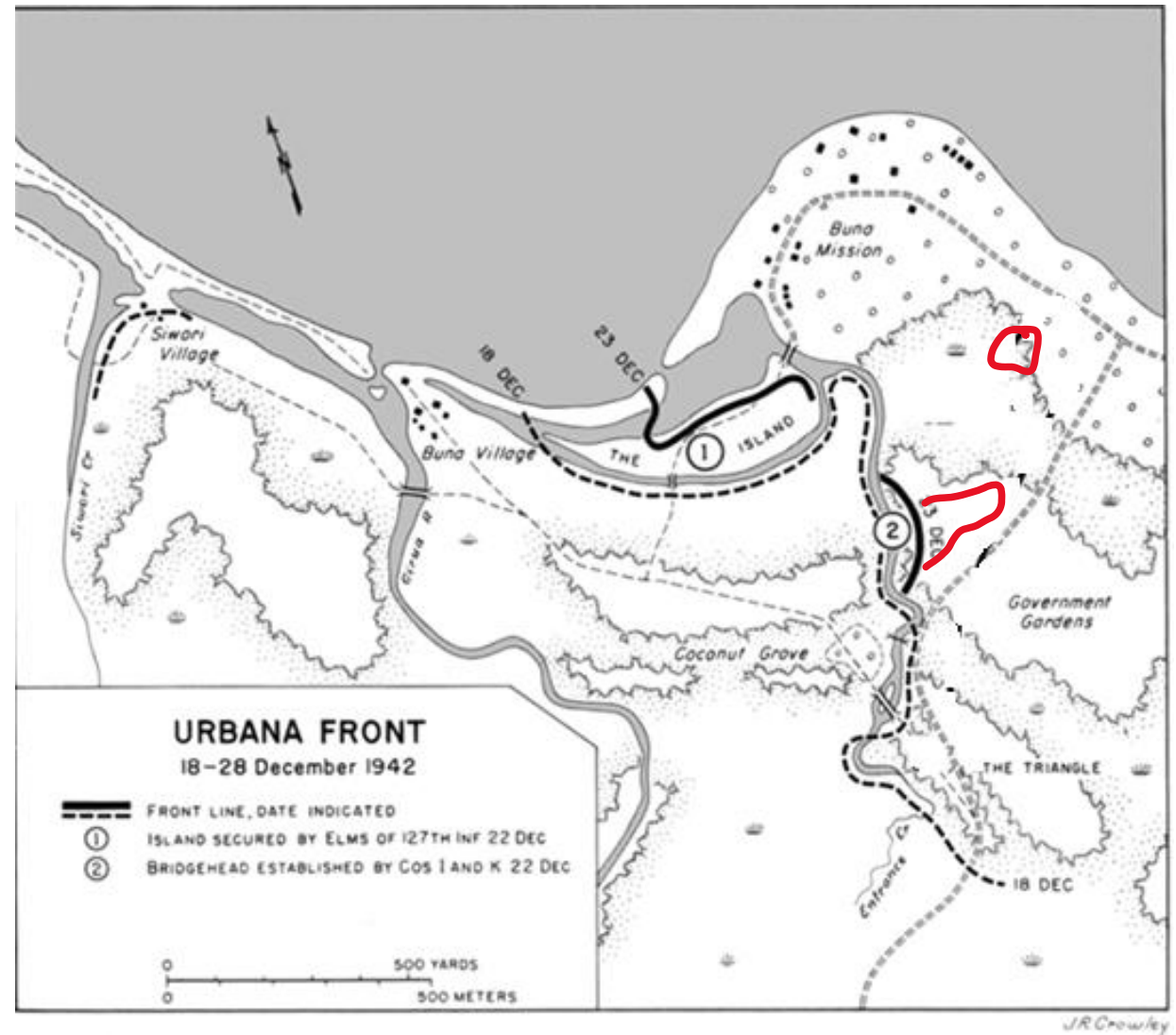
26 December – Buna W

- The two companies were in very bad condition when the patrol reached them. Lieutenant McCampbell reported:
- The condition of the companies on our arrival was deplorable.
- The dead had not been buried.
- Wounded, bunched together, had been given only a modicum of care, and the troops were demoralized.
- Major Schroeder reorganized the position and [they were] placed in a strong defensive position. . .
- the wounded were helped and the dead were covered with earth . . .



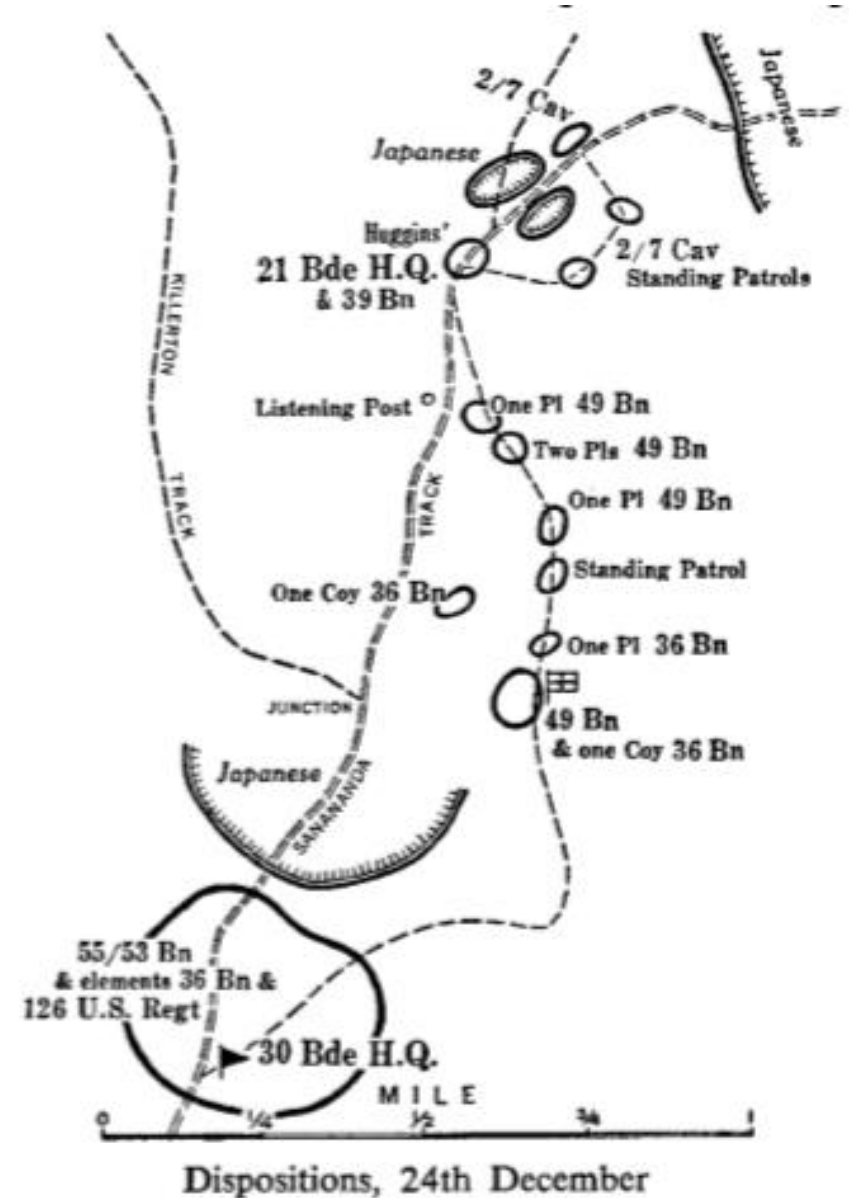
26 December – Buna W

- That evening Colonel Bradley, accompanied by a small patrol, returned from the perimeter with a complete report.
- Major Schroeder and Lieutenant McCampbell remained behind to continue with the reorganization of the troops.
- The six men of Matz' platoon got back safely to their own lines 26 December after two days of difficult march, most of it through hip-deep swamp.



26 December – Sanananda

- Haydon's few men had all this time remained precariously alive in the ditch beside the track forward of Huggins'.
- The captain, seeing no other way of getting his wounded out of the hornet's nest in which a number had already been killed, had set his men painfully to work, some days before, at digging a narrow crawl trench back to Huggins' under the noses of the enemy.
- The soldiers went on with this work, steadily growing weaker from lack of food and their exertions, but they finally got back to Huggins' on the evening of the 26th after almost eight days of danger and privation.



26 December – Air

- Single aircraft nuisance raids were made on Cape Gloucester, Madang and Finschaven and an 8,000 ton cargo ship was hit and left burning.
- Two light bombers conducted a bombing and strafing attack along the coast from the Amboga river to Salamaua.
- The new Japanese airfield at Ballale is now 3,500 feet long and work is still continuing.
- Gen Mulcahy, USMC, arrives on Guadalcanal with the Second Marine Aircraft Wing and assumes operational control of all aircraft on the island, including those of the AAF.
- Nine heavy bombers conducted separate nuisance raids on Rekata, Buka, Ballale, the Shortland area, Buin and Munda. Six bomb hits were scored on the runway at Munda.
- 6 B-24's and 9 P-38's attack Holtz Bay but do not find the 8 float Zeros seen there the previous day. The P-38's strafe Attu installations at minimum altitude. The B-24's bomb Sarana Bay. AA fire downs one P-38 and damages another.
- 12 IATF B-24's bomb railroad station, dock area, arsenal, and power plant at Bangkok. Fires were started in all target areas. Five CATF B-25's and eleven P40s hit Lashio. The airfield there was covered by fog but the warehouse area was bombed causing two large fires.
- In the afternoon The Japanese again attacked Yunannnyi with nine bombers and nine fighters. Four P40s intercepted over the Mekong River and thirteen over Yunnanyi. The Japanese lost three bombers and five fighters, against two P40s lost. The Yunnanyi airfield remained undamaged.

26 December – Air

- In the morning of 26th 6 Hudsons and 13 Beaufighters attacked barges, stores and troops at Lavai and Laga. Buildings were demolished and fires started.



26 December – Air

- On 26th December, in an effort to interrupt the Allied air supply train, enemy aircraft bombed and strafed the new aerodrome, in their first raid on Dobodura.
- Three Hudsons took off, flew low and fought off the attackers.



Dobodura February 1943

26 December – Air

- Another Hudson, flown by Squadron Leader Hemsworth, was attacked by several Zeros just after take-off. Hemsworth could have refrained from taking off, or, having taken off, could have gained sufficient height for the whole crew to bale out. Because he had wounded Australian soldiers as passengers he chose to get his Hudson airborne and fly low to evade his attackers, while his gunner, Flight Sergeant Stephens, kept firing at the Zeros.
- The Hudson turned out over the coast near Hariko in the hope of gaining protection from the guns of a friendly corvette, but the gunners of an American anti-aircraft battery, recently put ashore, mistook the Hudson, which was flying at only 400 feet, for an enemy aircraft and fired on it.
- An incendiary bullet hit the oil reservoir of the aircraft's automatic pilot and set it on fire. Hemsworth promptly ditched the Hudson in the sea and so extinguished the fire, but two of the wounded soldiers were drowned.
- The remaining four wounded soldiers, Hemsworth himself, his observer, Pilot Officer Rodd, his wireless operator, Flight Sergeant Bamber, and Stephens, were all brought ashore in small boats.
- Stephens had received five severe wounds from which he later died. Hemsworth had been severely burned on the face and arms and Bamber had also been burned and lacerated when the aircraft hit the sea.

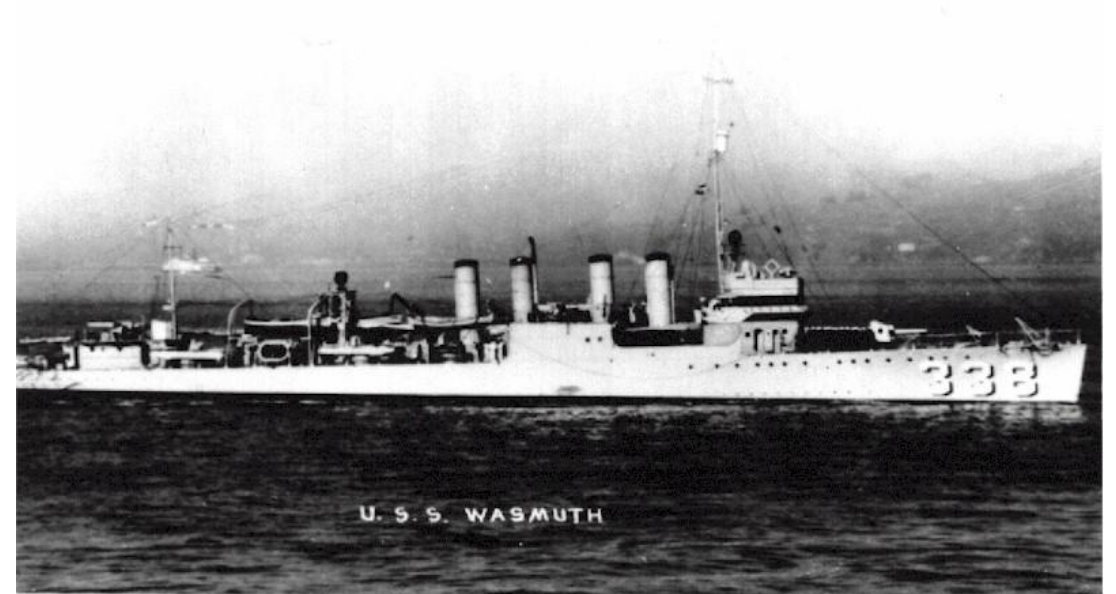
26 December – Air

- On 26th December Flying Officer Archer (pilot) and Sergeant Coulston (observer) were on tactical reconnaissance over Gona in a Wirraway when Archer sighted a Zero about 1,000 feet below.
- He took the advantage offered by his position, put the nose of his aircraft down and fired a five-seconds burst with his Browning .303 gun.
- The Zero plunged into the sea.
- Charlton at squadron headquarters received a signal from Dobodura: "Archer has shot down one Zeke, repeat one Zeke. Send six bottles beer."
- The victory was unique; the beer was sent.



27 December - Sea

- The high-speed minesweeper, USS Wamuth, a former Clemson-class destroyer, was sunk in the Pacific Ocean off Alaska when a storm dislodged two of her depth charges, which exploded and damaged the stern of the ship. All on board were rescued by USS Ramapo before she sank two days later.
- The Van Heemskerck at Merauke (Dutch New Guinea) was again bombed by an enemy float plane, causing some damage and casualties.



27 December – Buna E

- A 25-pounder of the Hall Troop, emplaced early on 27 December at the southeast end of the strip, more than made up for the loss of the mountain guns.
- Using armor-piercing projectiles with supercharge at about a 1,000-yard range, the 25-pounder not only knocked out one of the remaining enemy pompoms but,
- with the 4.5 howitzers of the Stokes Troop, in action from the 24th, forced enemy troops out of their bunkers by fire alone--a feat that only the 105-mm howitzer had previously been able to accomplish.



(Australian War Memorial)

Strengthening a 25-pounder gun emplacement of the 2/5th Field Regiment at Buna. Known as "Carson's Gun" it was sited between the two strips and west of the bridge across Simemi Creek. Left to right: Gunner Mick Williams (on loan from the 2/1st Field Regiment); Gunners J. Webster, A. S. Meecham, Sergeant R. G. Carson, and WO2 J. Puxty (with binoculars) of the 2/5th.

27 December – Buna E

- The gun had excellent observation of the enemy positions on the strip, bringing observed direct fire upon them.



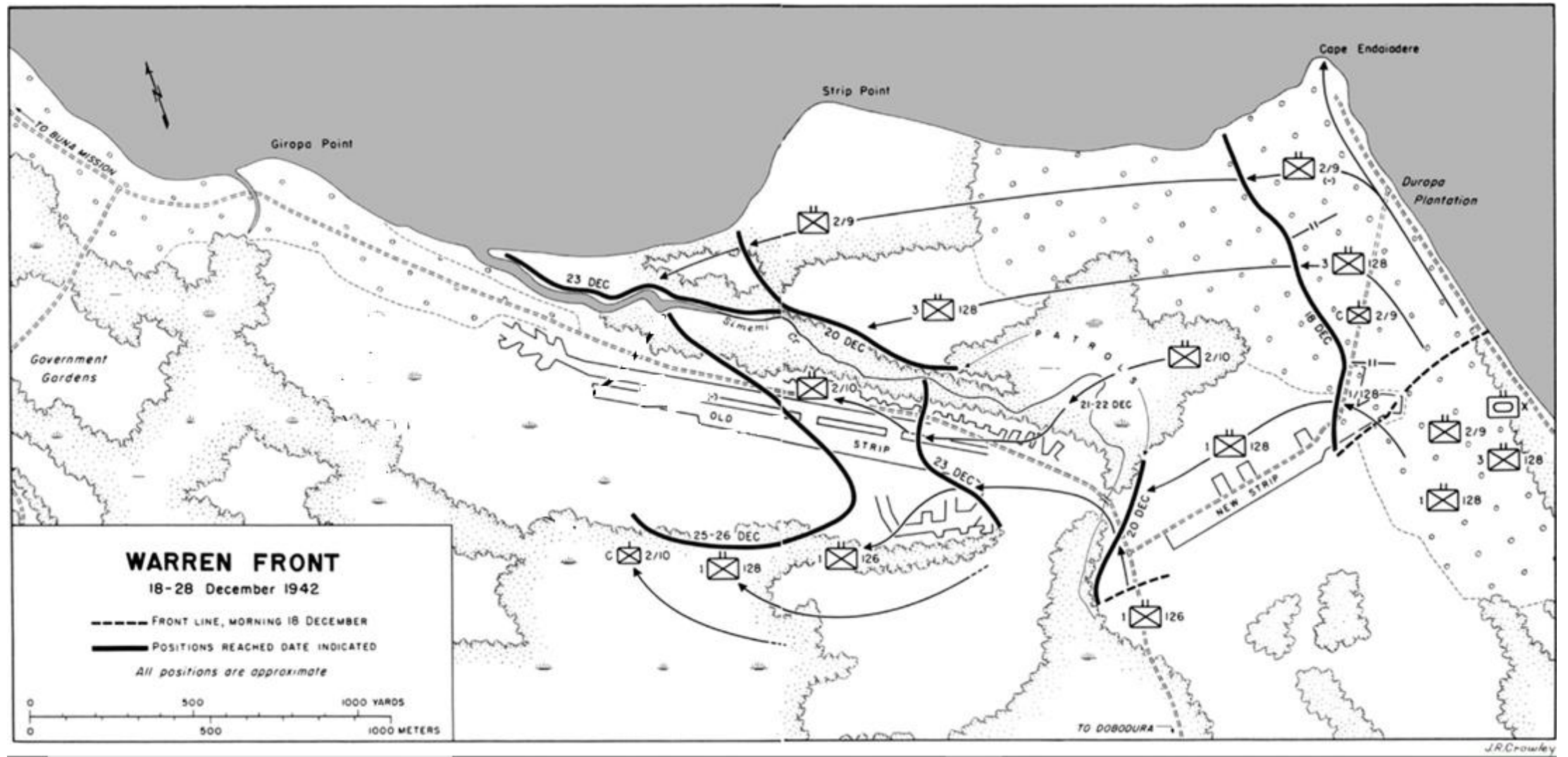
(Australian War Memorial)

Major W. H. Hall, the commander of the 2/5th Field Regiment battery at Buna, observing from Captain T. J. Handran-Smith's O.P. in a 70-foot banyan tree sited about 1,300 yards forward of "Carson's Gun" and in the bush off the southern side of Old Strip.

27 December – Buna E

- The guns fired in support of attacks and each night mounted continuous harassing tasks against the enemy.
- Harassing fire exhausted the gunners; but it did much more to the enemy and cheered up the infantry.
- From dusk to dawn the guns would fire irregular bursts at targets previously registered. At Buna, a shift at the gun on harassing fire meant leaving a sodden "bed" on sodden ground to become even more sodden in the tropical nightly downpour.
- The command, "Fire". Four rounds are on their way in a beautifully timed salvo. Before the smoke clears, the breeches have clicked shut and another round is in the bore; the layers are again peering through their sights.
- Again and again the same performance is repeated. There is a respite for perhaps an hour or less, and the gunners dash back to their crude shelters to snatch a little rest.
- This is harassing fire; not just once in one night, but many times each night for many nights.

27 December – Buna E

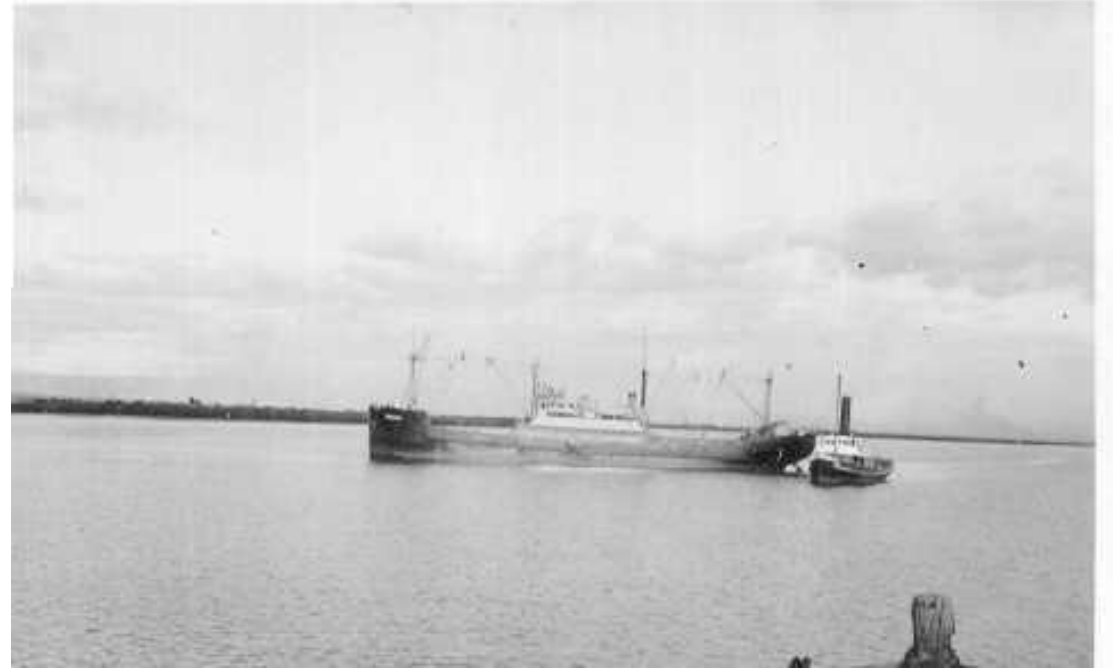


27 December – Buna E

- On 27 December the fight for the strip was in its last stages. Allied artillery fire and pressure on their right flank forced the Japanese to begin withdrawing to the plantation area around Giropa Point.
- The Australian and American troops who, up to this time, had been meeting the most fanatical Japanese opposition noted a weakening of resistance.
- The advance went slowly during the morning of the 27th but accelerated during the afternoon as the 25-pounder took its toll of enemy positions.
- At 1615 Colonel Martin reported that the enemy was on the run. Progress thereafter was rapid. Companies A and D, 2/10 Battalion, and Major Clarkson's battalion, aided by elements of Company C, 2/10 Battalion, had things their own way that afternoon.
- They squeezed the Japanese out of the last line of trenches across the strip and cleaned out a large bunker as well as an even larger dispersal bay to the rear of the trenches. At nightfall the troops in the center--Company A, 2/10 Battalion, and Company A, 128th Infantry--were working on a main enemy bunker behind the dispersal bay--the last organized enemy position on the runway.
- The troops were now advancing on an 850-yard front that extended from the edge of the swamp on the left to Simemi Creek on the right.

27 December – Buna E

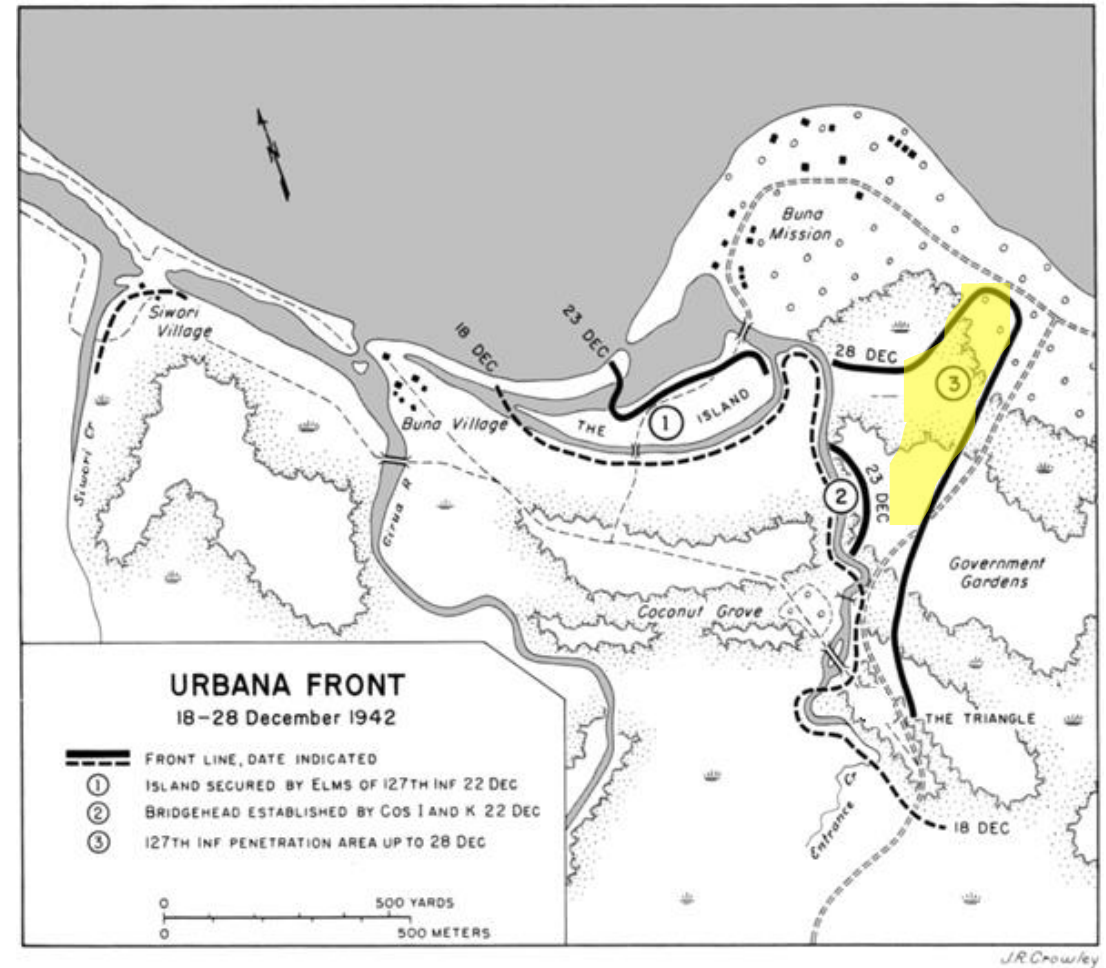
- That night the Australian freighter *Mulcra* came in to Oro Bay with a troop of M3 tanks and 400 tons of cargo.
- The Japanese in the dispersal bays at the head of the strip again counterattacked Company D, 2/10 Battalion, on the far right.
- Trevivian at once hurried Lieutenant Brown and his men towards the threatened point.
- Brown found the right front staggering in some confusion, gathered them and drove the marauders off in a sharp clash.
- Although he was wounded himself (of all the officers and N.C.O.s of what had been Ifould's company, only Sergeant Harrington was now on his feet) his crisp counter-blow took the Japanese before they had mounted machine-guns, otherwise the position could not have been restored that night.



SS Mulcra of the Adelaide Steam Ship Company

27 December – Buna W

- The attack was resumed early on 27 December, with Colonel Bradley in command of Companies B and C and the detachment of Company A.
- Company C and the detachment of Captain Harger's company were held up by the bunkers north of the gardens, but Company B on their right made good progress all day.
- A grass fire set in the gardens by the enemy during the afternoon caused only slight interruption in its advance.
- By 1700 Lieutenant Lewis had moved through to Schroeder's position with his entire company.



27 December – Air

- Night of 26/27 nineteen heavy bombers attack shipping at Rabaul. Subsequent reconnaissance showed one large cargo ship on its side and two other medium sized ships burning.
- Three B26s attacked Buna and Amboga River.
- Six beaufighters and six Hudsons made harrassing attacks on Japanese installations and motor transport in north east Timor. The main attack (six Hudsons) was at Laivai, where three fighters intercepted. One of them was shot down; one bomber failed to return.
- Night 27/28 enemy planes unsuccessfully attacked Merauke.
- Five new anti aircraft positions were sighted near Kavieng airfield.

27 December – Air

- On 27 December twelve P38s intercepted a Japanese formation of more than twenty fighters and seven dive bombers in the neighborhood of Cape Endaiadere.
- Dividing into three flights, they dived on the enemy and claimed nine fighters and two dive bombers shot down.
- One P-38 was forced down at Dobodura, little damage was done to the airfield.

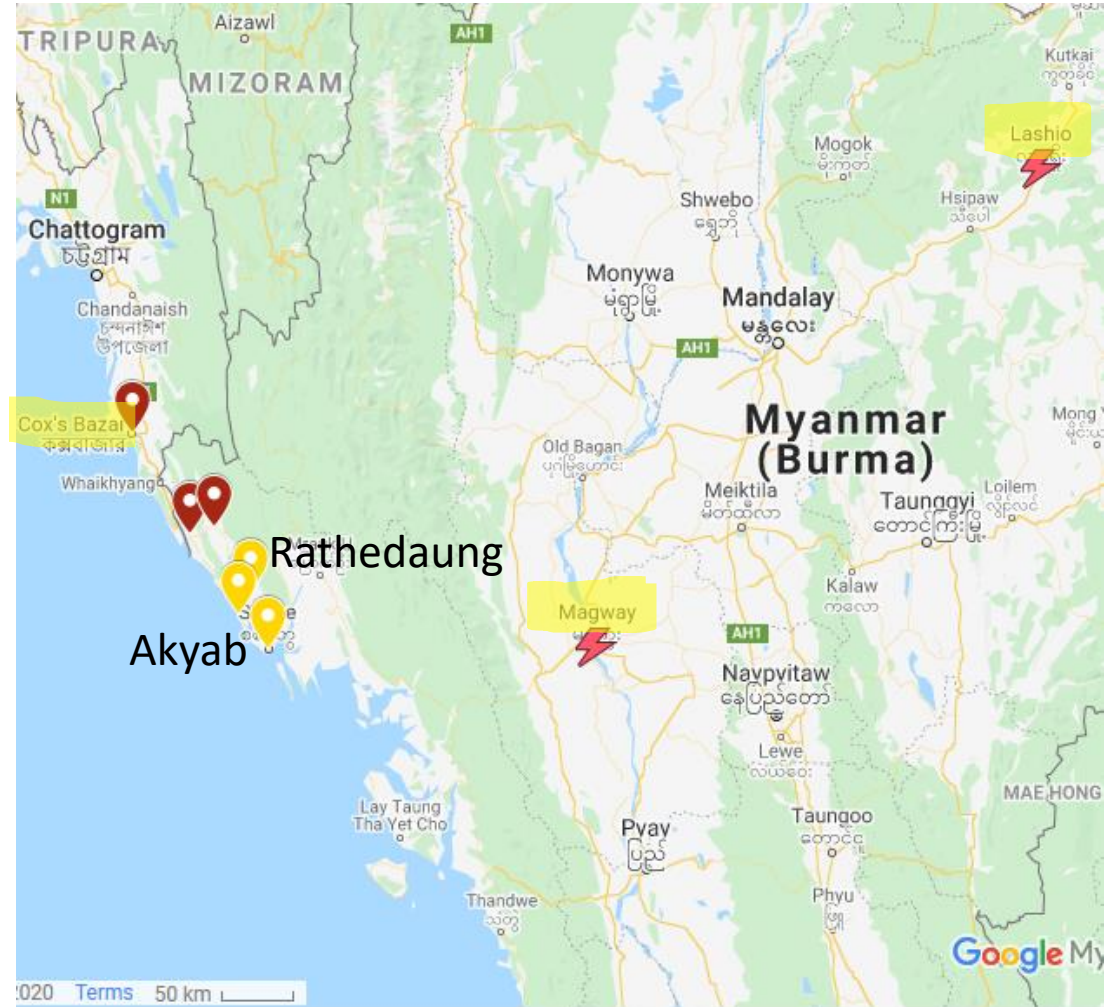


27 December – Air

- On Santa Isabel Island a native patrol ambushed 24 Japanese, killing all but three.
- In the morning our fighters observed thirty parachutes with cargo that had been dropped during the night at Tassafaronga. The area was bombed and strafed,
- 3 SBDs, 4 P39s and 8 Wildcats bombed and strafed the airfield at Munda. Two fires were started one in possible fuel dump. One aircraft destroyed on the ground, three airborne fighters shot down.
- photo reconnaissance showed 84 Japanese aircraft on eight Burmese airfields.
- Three B25s and three P40s attacked a truck concentration near Lungling. Despite intense anti aircraft machine gun fire, they caused major damage and started several fires.

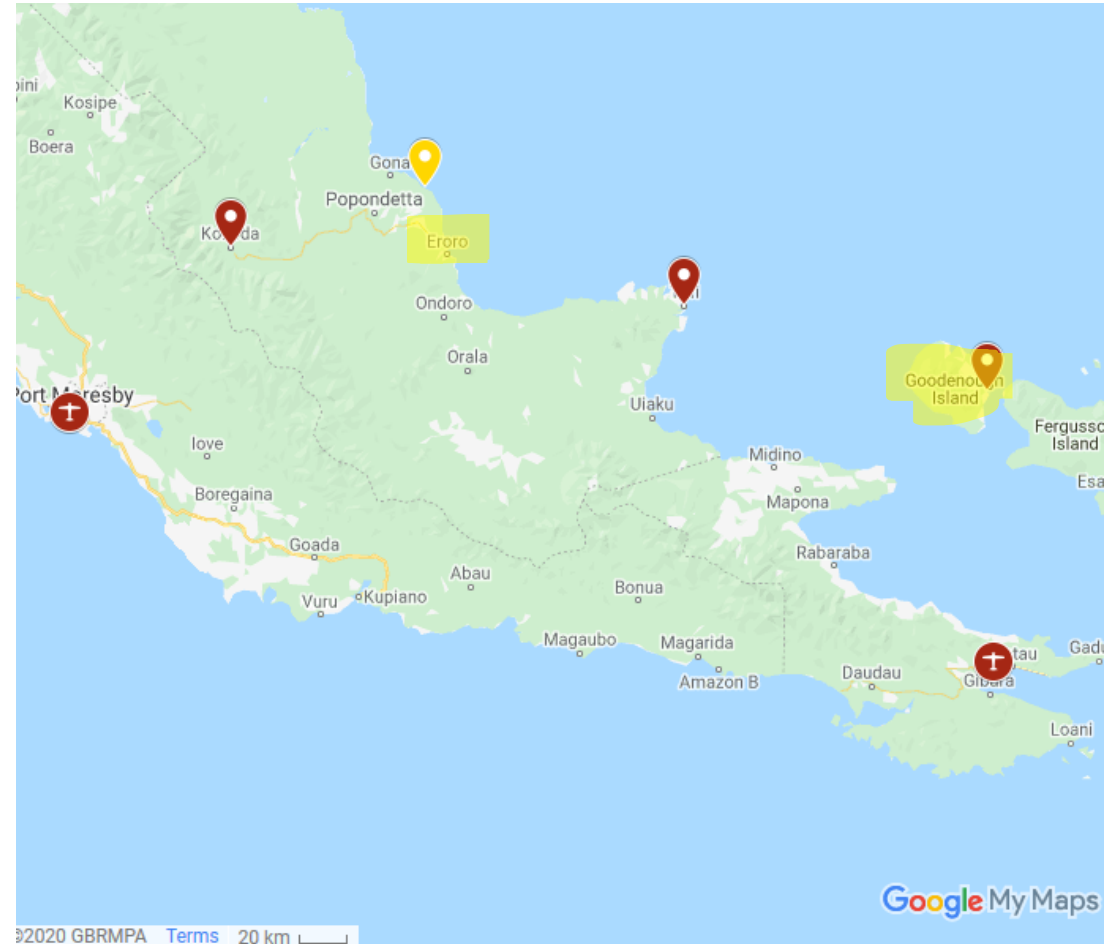
27 December – Air

- British forces advancing down both sides of the Mayu river reached Rathedaung without contact with the enemy.
- Ten B25s and eleven P40s attacked Lashio airfield. Three enemy aircraft were destroyed, two probably damaged and the dispersal area strafed with unknown results.
- Twelve Blenheims attacked Magwe.



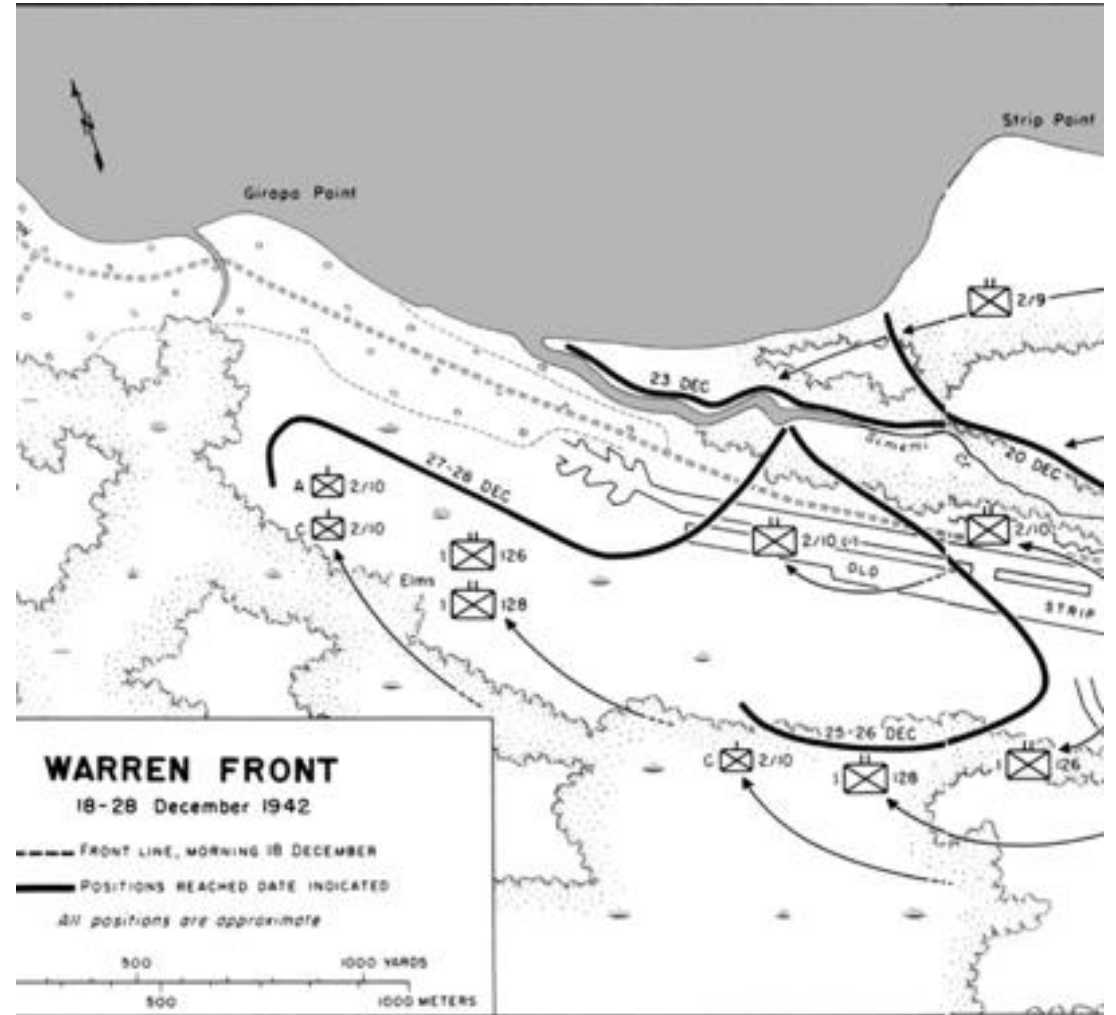
28 December – Sea

- Colac, Broome and Whyalla had embarked 615 officers and men of the 2/12th Battalion under Lt. Col. Arnold from Beli Beli anchorage, Goodenough Island, and carried them to Oro Bay, which they reached just before midnight of 28th December.
- A cargo ship, Choyo Maru, was torpedoed and sunk in the South China Sea by USS Kingfish.
- A cargo liner, Omi Maru, was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean midway between Wake Island and Truk at 6°24'N 160°18'E by USS Triton.



28 December – Buna E

- Although Brigadier Wootten still had four tanks on hand, and seven more were on their way from Oro Bay, he no longer needed tanks for the reduction of the Old Strip.
- Heavy fire of all kinds was still coming from the dispersal bays at the head of the strip, and still heavier fire from the enemy positions in the Government Plantation immediately to the rear,
- but in the area through which the Old Strip ran and on the strip itself, there was little but sporadic rifle fire.
- Organized resistance in the area collapsed by noon of 28 December and the troops began mopping up.

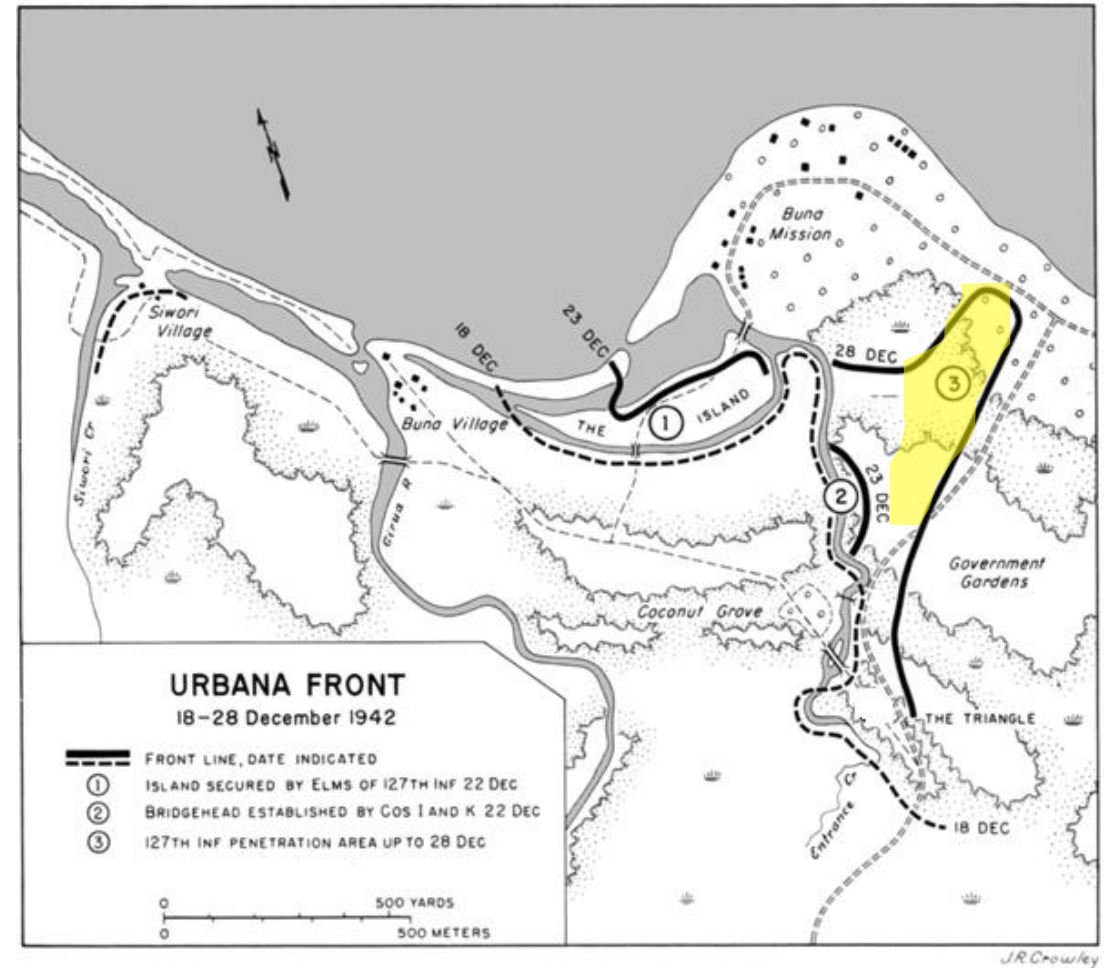


28 December – Buna E

- It was a bloody business. The remaining Japanese fought to the end. Hand grenades tossed into their holes would be tossed back, and the Allied troops always had to be on the alert for frenzied suicide rushes with sword or bayonet.
- Some of the bypassed enemy troops had taken refuge in trees. In at least one instance, three Japanese were shot out of a single tree. In another case half a dozen Japanese troops were cut down carrying M1s and wearing American helmets and fatigues. A few Japanese on the far left tried to escape by taking to the swamp; they were picked off one by one by troops ordered by Major Clarkson into the swamp for that purpose.
- The Allied troops stabilized their line by noon, 28 December, with Company C, 2/10 Battalion, on the far left, within 200 or 300 yards of the belt of coconut palms forward of the point. The other companies made only slight gains as they came under extremely heavy fire from the dispersal bays and enemy emplacements among the trees of the plantation. A further attack late in the afternoon by Company C, 2/10 Battalion, though supported by artillery, failed.
- As evening fell, the Japanese began counterattacking. They struck against the center of the line at 19.40, while Company C, 128th Infantry, was in the process of relieving Company A, 2/10 Battalion. Joint action by both companies repulsed the attack, and the Australian company took up a new position on the left.
- At 2300 the Japanese in the dispersal bays at the head of the strip unleashed their third blow in three nights at Company D, 2/10 Battalion, on the far right. Once again they were repulsed.

28 December – Buna W

- Just before noon on 28 December Company C on the left and Company G on the right broke through to the position held by Companies F and B and the detachment of Company A.
- The rest of Company A moved in soon after and the result was a broad corridor from Entrance Creek to the Coconut Plantation.
- Matz and the enlisted man, who would have died had the lieutenant not stayed with him, remained hidden behind the enemy lines until Urbana Force overran the area on the 28th.



28 December – Buna W

- At 1330, 28 December, while Urbana Force was preparing to move forward to the sea, General Eichelberger, accompanied by General Sutherland, arrived at Colonel Grose's CP from Buna Force headquarters.
- Grose gave Eichelberger a situation report. Among other things, Grose told Eichelberger that he had just taken the 3d Battalion out of the line for a much-needed rest.
- At 1428, without discussing the matter further with Grose, Eichelberger ordered that the 3d Battalion launch an immediate attack on Buna Mission.



(Australian War Memorial)

Lieut-General Robert L. Eichelberger,
Commanding General I U.S. Corps.

28 December – Buna W

- One element was to advance on the mission from the island over the north bridge; the other element, starting from the southern side of the island, was to move upon it in five Australian assault boats which had reached the front the day before.
- The troops were weary.
- The enemy had a line of bunkers just off the northern end of the bridge.
- The bridge, a narrow, makeshift structure forty feet long and a couple of feet wide, had a fifteen-foot gap at its northern end--the result of a recent Allied artillery hit.



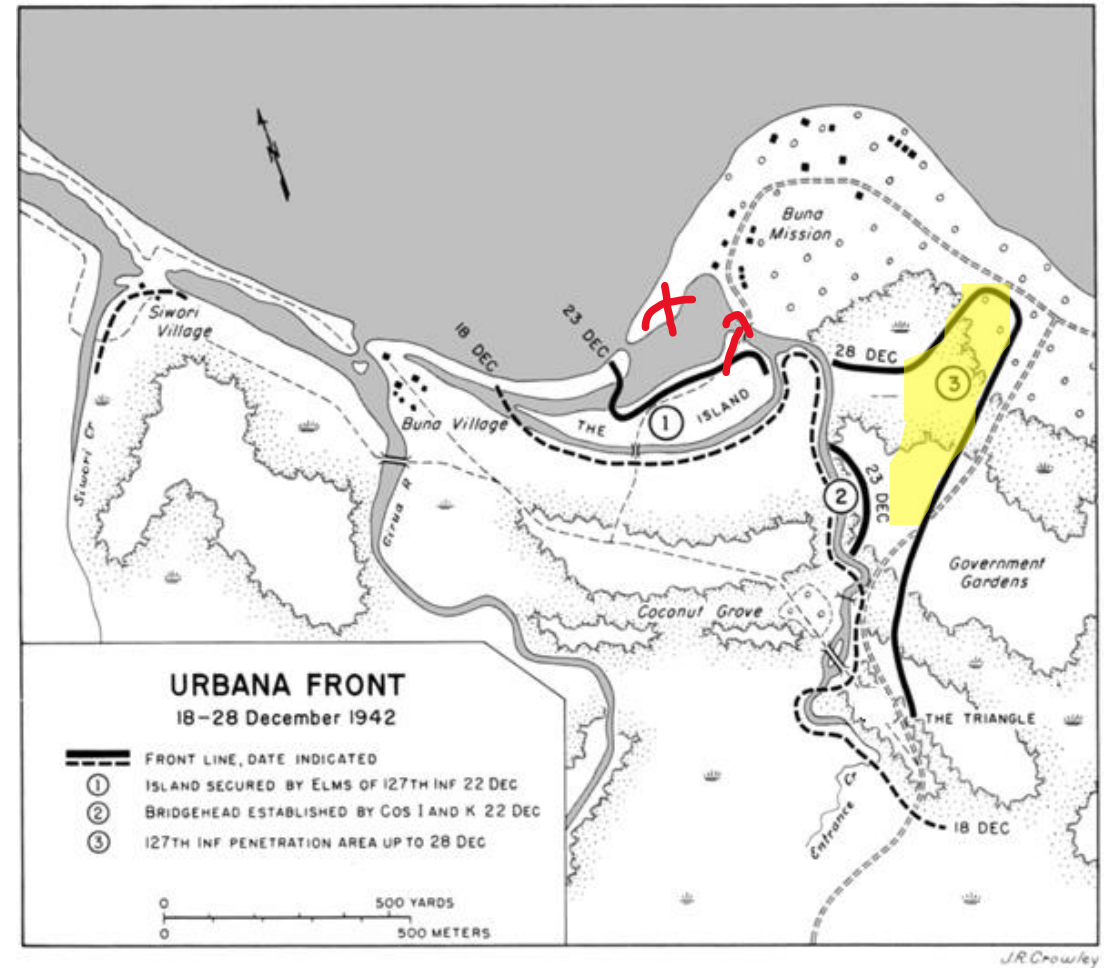
FOOTBRIDGE OVER ENTRANCE CREEK to *Musita Island*.

28 December – Buna W

- Six enlisted men volunteered to lay in place the three heavy timbers that would span the gap at the northern end of the bridge.
- The rest of the 3d Battalion, guided by Colonel Rogers, began moving forward to the bridge area from the center of the island. Having been told only a little while before that they were to be given a rest, the troops of the battalion were slow in moving forward, and Colonel Rogers was unable to get them into position south of the bridge until the first salvo of the artillery preparation hit the mission.
- At 1720 as the first artillery salvo went down.
- At the bridge, the six volunteers had advanced across the bridge, two men to a timber. Amid heavy fire from the opposite shore, they dropped the three timbers in place, and all except Pvt Earl Mittelberger, who was killed on the bridge, lived to tell the tale.
- As soon as the timbers were in place, Company K started crossing. Scarcely had the first two men reached the northern end of the bridge, when the newly laid planks fell into the stream because of the weakness of the pilings at the other end of the bridge.
- The two men, one of them wounded and neither able to swim, hid under the bank on the other side of the stream, only their heads showing. They were rescued the following night by 1st Lt. Bragg, commanding officer of the mortar platoon of Company H, and three enlisted men of the company, who swam across the creek to save them.

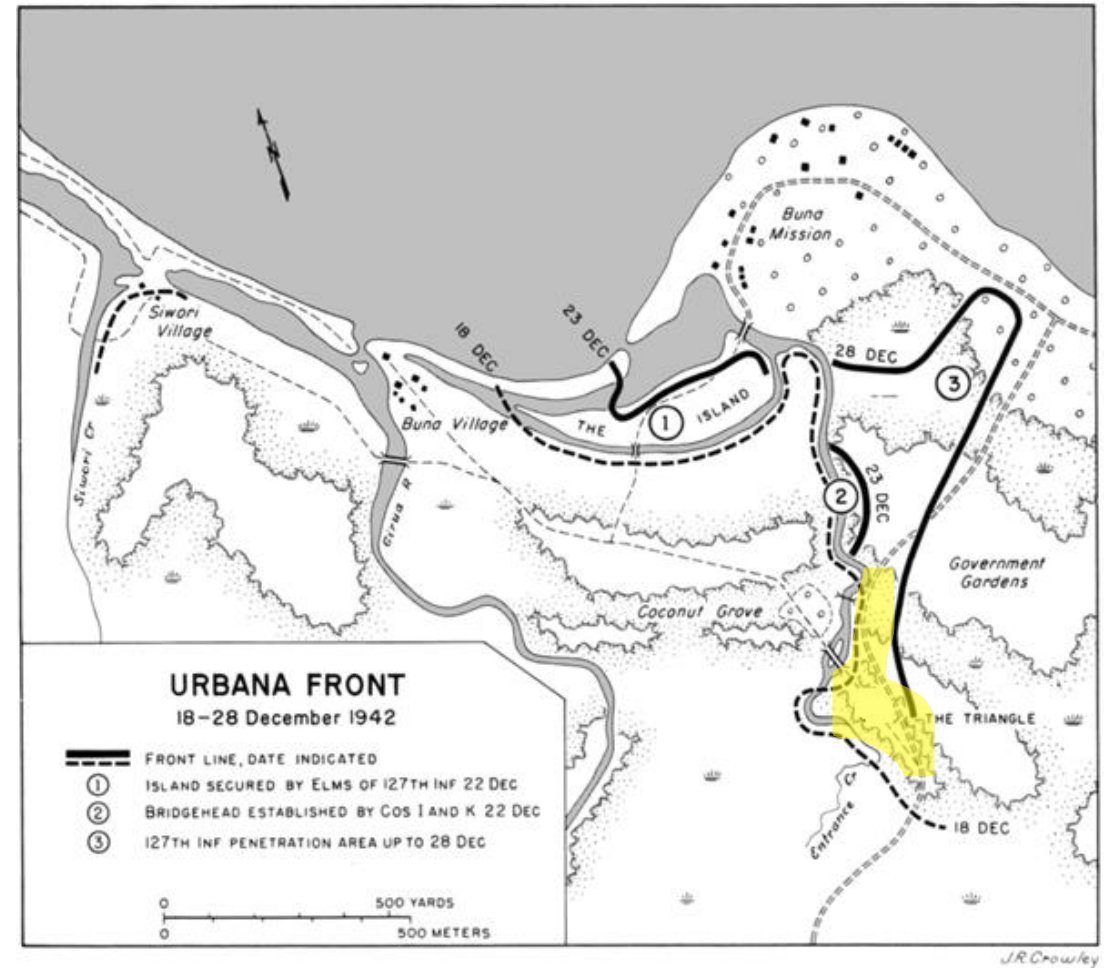
28 December – Buna W

- Commanding the assault boats, 1st Lt. Riggs of the 3d Battalion's Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon quickly moved them into position in some heavy foliage off the southern side of the island.
- At 1720 as the first artillery salvo went down, the boats pushed off from their hidden position.
- The troops had been misdirected by Captain Hewitt, however. Instead of going around the island and landing on the east side of Entrance Creek, they tried to land on the mission finger.
- The platoon of Company E on the village finger mistook them for the enemy and opened fire on them, as did the Japanese.
- Lieutenant Riggs' boat, in the lead, swamped and sank. Although Riggs could not swim, he somehow reached shore and managed to stop the firing from the village finger.
- Most of the boats had already been sunk in the shallows. Fortunately no one was killed or drowned.



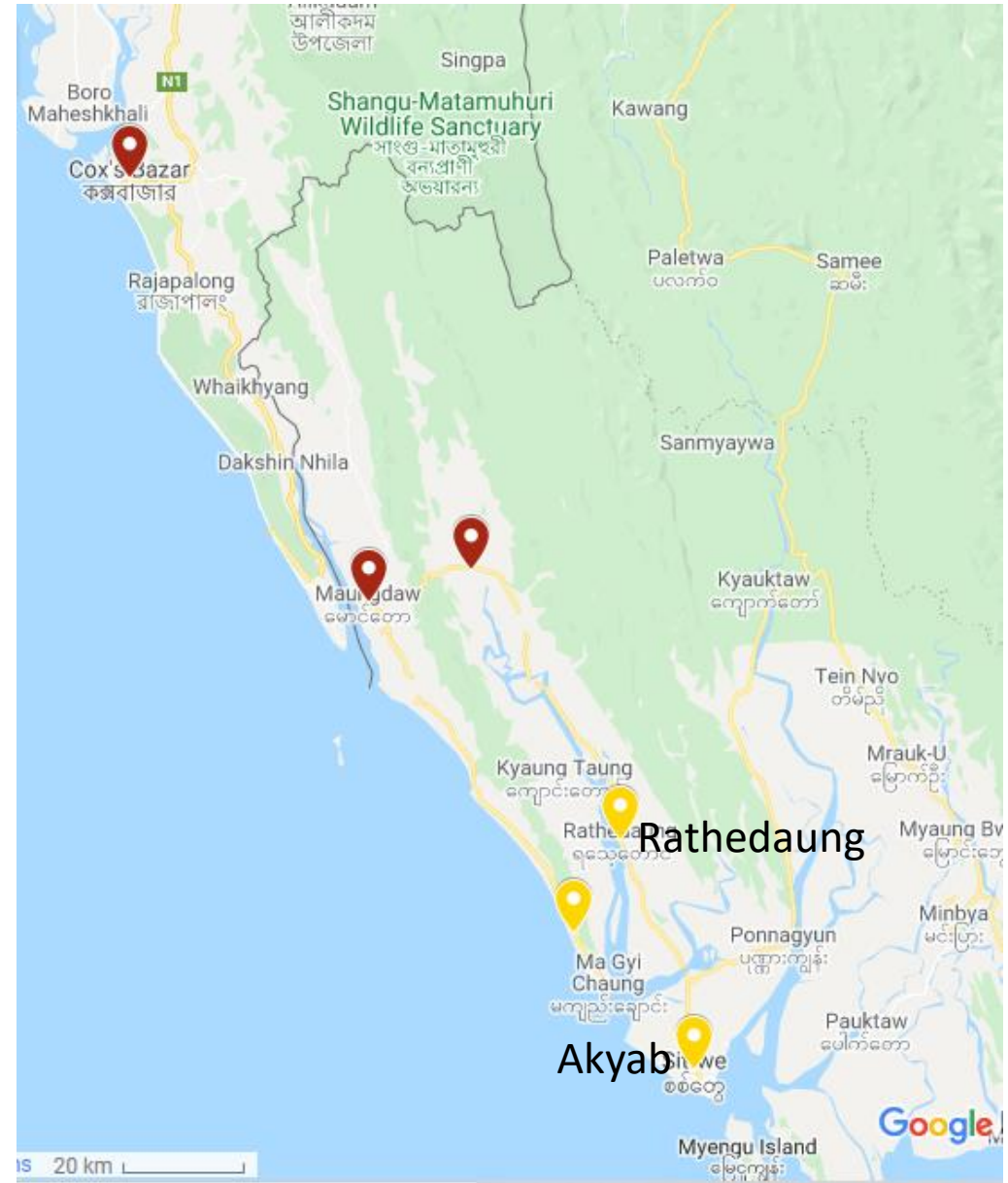
28 December – Buna W

- When a volunteer party of Company E, 127th Infantry, led by Sgt. Wagner, pushed its way cautiously into the Triangle that evening, it found that the Japanese had pulled out of the area and that the fourteen bunkers and innumerable trenches making up the position were empty.
- There was every indication that the Japanese had left their positions in the Triangle in a great hurry.
- Pieces of equipment and quantities of small arms ammunition were strewn about in the bunkers and fire trenches,
- and two 20-mm., gas operated, cart-mounted anti-aircraft guns, together with large quantities of anti-aircraft ammunition, had been left behind.



28 December

- Sanananda
- On the night of 28-29 December forty Japanese, armed with light machine guns, rifles, and explosive charges, infiltrated the Allied rear and blew up a 25-pounder. Thirteen Japanese were killed and one was taken prisoner, but the enemy had traded blow for blow
- Burma
- On 28 December, the Japanese occupied Rathedaung forestalling the attempt by the 123rd Indian Infantry Brigade to capture the town.



28 December - Air

- Ten B-24's bomb (9) Rabaul and Gasmata and (1) Lae. Three direct hits were seen on a large ship near Rabaul producing a great column of black smoke. Large fires were also started at Rabaul.
- Four Catalinas attacked Kavieng airfield on the night of 27/28 December. Direct hits on runway and several fires started.
- 3 Beaufighters strafed the west bank of the Amboga River and a barge off the mouth of the Kumusi River.
- 7 P39s, 7 Wildcats and 6 P38s attacked Munda airfield. Three fighters in revetments were set on fire, one AA gun and crew destroyed.
- Six CATF B-25's, with seven fighters, hit Magwe, scoring hits on a runway and dispersal pens. There was no opposition.
- Calcutta was bombed again early by three Japanese planes. These small scale raids have resulted in a significant exodus. The majority of the dock labour force has gone and some desertions have occurred from the fire, police and other essential civil services.
- A Japanese air raid on Chittagong night of 28th caused slight damage.

Within the city of STALINGRAD and to the northwest there appears to be no substantial change in positions. The Russian General Staff reports that German forces in the DON-VOLGA corridor are short of food and ammunition, but that transport aircraft are still getting through.

Tripolitania. On 27 December British patrols were in contact with Axis rear positions extending southwestward along the WADI BEI EL CHEBIR from the coast to BIR EL ZIDEN (25 miles SSW of BUERAT). The enemy's present supply of motor transport can accommodate only piecemeal withdrawal from positions at BUERAT.

Axis prisoners taken from the beginning of the withdrawal from EL AGHEILA to 1000/27 December numbered 198 Germans and 80 Italians (6 officers, 272 enlisted men).

29 December - Sea

- A cargo ship, Haichan Maru, was shelled and damaged in the Java Sea off Surabaya, Dutch East Indies by USS Thresher.
- A cargo ship, Teifuku Maru, was damaged by a mine 4 miles from the Inubozaki Lighthouse, Chiba Prefecture. She was beached 800 yds north of the Choshi Harbor flood marker.

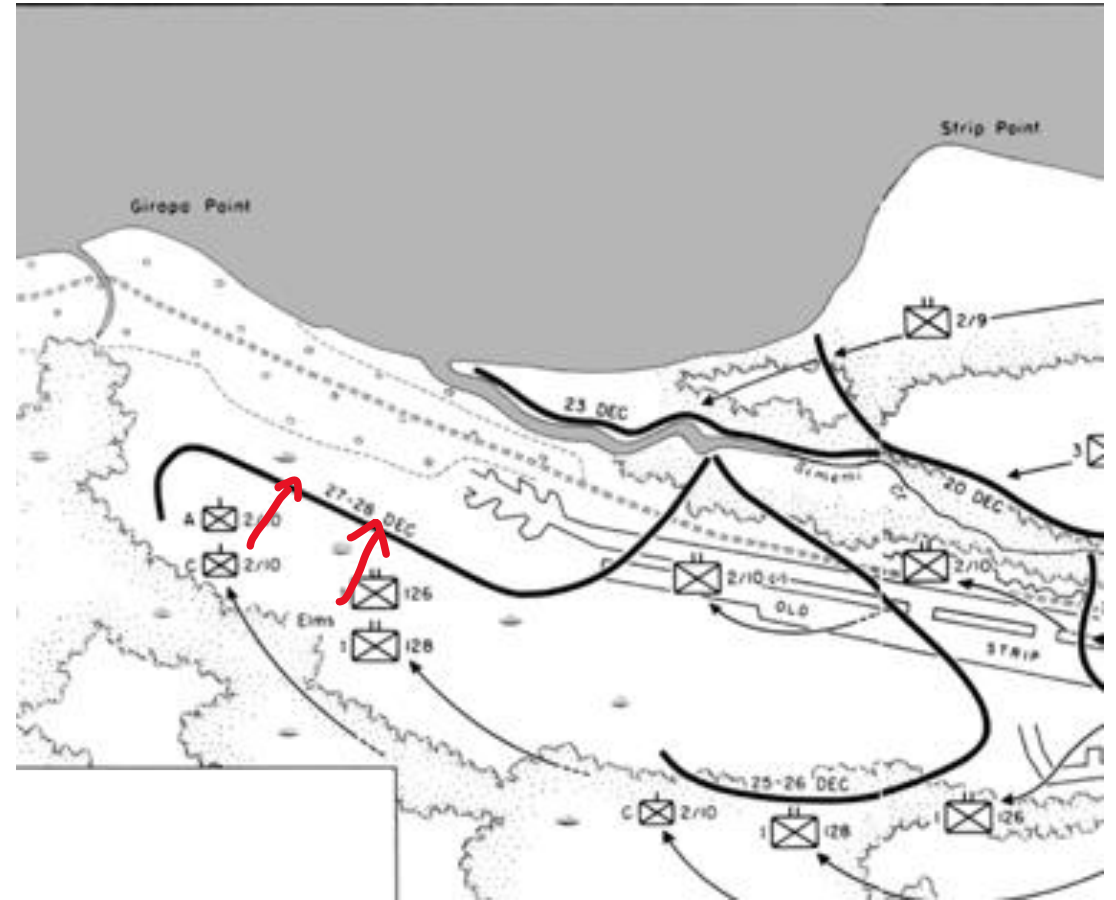


29 December – Buna E

- About twenty Japanese, who had apparently been caught inside the Allied lines, managed to reach the command post of Company C, 128th Infantry, at 0400 the next morning (29 December) without being detected.
- They attacked in the dark with grenades and bayonets, some yelling, "Medic, Medic," the call used by American wounded.
- Several men who were asleep in the command post area were bayoneted by the enemy, and other Americans and Australians, some of them wounded and mostly without weapons, were killed in hand-to-hand encounters.
- By the time the Japanese were driven off they had killed fifteen men and wounded twelve, including Lieutenant Foss, Company C's fifth commander in the five weeks since the fighting began.
- Only five of the raiding Japanese were killed.

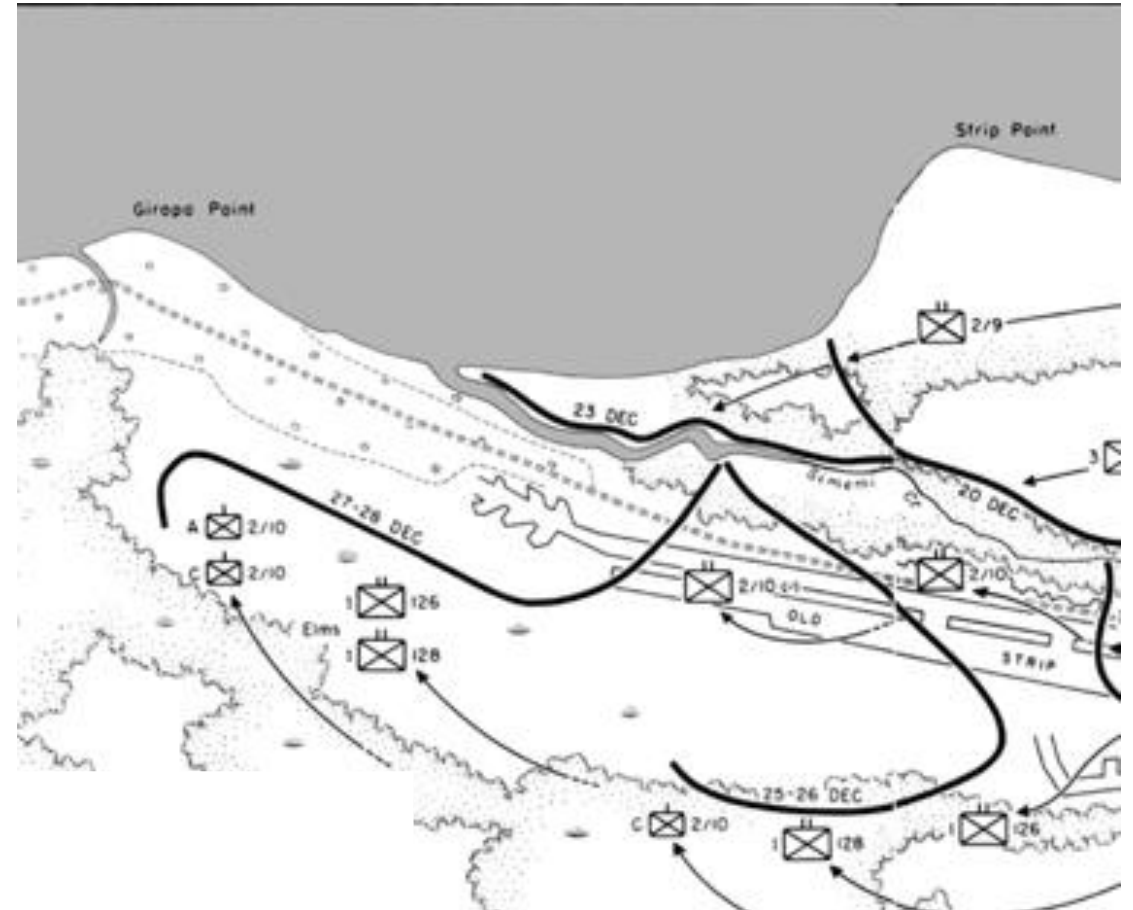
29 December – Buna E

- At 1235 (on the 29th) Wootten gave orders for an attack on the area between Giropa Point and the mouth of Simemi Creek.
- The attack, which was to be in a northeasterly direction toward the coast, was to be mounted after 1400 with the four available tanks.
- Company C, 2/10 Battalion, was to follow the tanks and in general make the main effort, but the company on its right was also to advance provided they did not unnecessarily expose their flanks.



29 December – Buna E

- The tanks were delayed, and the attack did not get under way until 1715, following an artillery preparation with smoke.
- In an effort apparently to make up for lost time, the tanks moved at high speed and came in obliquely across the line of departure. Without waiting for the slower-moving infantry to close in behind them, they moved north without moderating their speed.
- The two companies of infantry, each 46 strong, as a result had to attack independently of the tanks, and the tanks, far in front of the infantry, had to move on the enemy bunkers without infantry support.



29 December – Buna E

- On the Left advancing against weaker opposition, Matheson's company kept on. Sergeant Mitchell's platoon, then actually struck right through to the coast with Sergeant Fee's platoon, covering his right rear and Sergeant Spencer's platoon similarly placed on his left.
- But just as success seemed in sight, with Mitchell on his objective; with Fee backing him strongly; with Spencer's platoon warmly engaging a probable threat to Mitchell's left and Spencer himself deluging converging Japanese with 2-inch mortar fire—confused tanks turned their guns on the foremost infantry.
- Matheson asserted that they gunned Mitchell's men off the objective and "practically wiped them out", striking down also some of Fee's platoon; that Private "Snowy" Evans from the latter platoon raced across to one of the tanks and, leaping on top of it with fire bursting all round him, hammered on the armour to attract the attention of the crew. But apparently they did not hear him and went on firing.
- In any case it was clear that the day was lost and, about 6.35, Matheson shot green Very lights (the agreed signal for withdrawal) into the darkening sky and brought what remained of his company back to their original positions, with only 3 men left of the 13 who had started off with Mitchell and about 22 all ranks left out of his original 46. His second-in-command, Captain Mackie, was among the killed, and Emson of the 2/9th, eager to be in the fight, though it was not properly his, had been shot dead.

29 December – Buna E

- It was clear that the tanks' confusion went back to the very beginning of their movement when one or more of the first tanks to start out from the bridge area bogged almost immediately.
- Then worse followed so quickly that, as 4 o'clock approached, no one appeared able to say with certainty just what the detailed position was in respect of the eleven "B" Squadron tanks which then seemed to be churning round the whole area of both strips.
- The two lieutenants, McCrohon and Heap, neither of whom were to have participated in the action, were conspicuous in trying to resolve the confusion.



Lt. Vic McCrohon standing on the first tank

29 December – Buna E

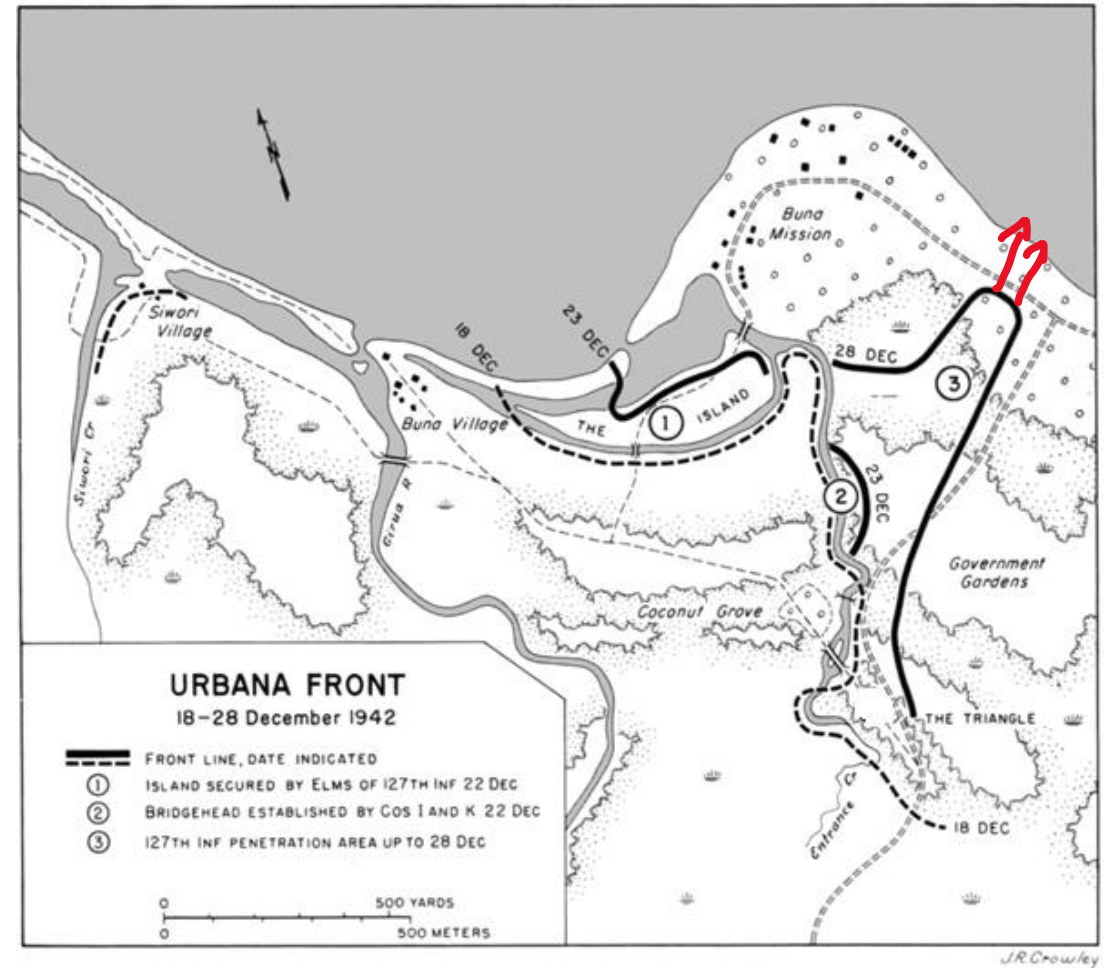
- Through the darkness the Japanese again sallied against the Australians' right flank.
- But Trevivian's men, adept now at meeting such dangers, shot 2-inch mortar flares high into the night which bathed the battlefield in a soft revealing glow. This flooded the raiders when they were only some 20 yards from the Australian positions.
- Four Vickers guns sited to the left of this front (near the Americans) to counter just such attempts then blew them into a twisting heap.
- The defenders pitched grenades into the mass of dead and dying men, while the aloof flares fell slowly to earth.
- When daylight came Trevivian's men counted 42 dead in the grisly pile.



Trevivian third from right on troopship to middle east May 1940.

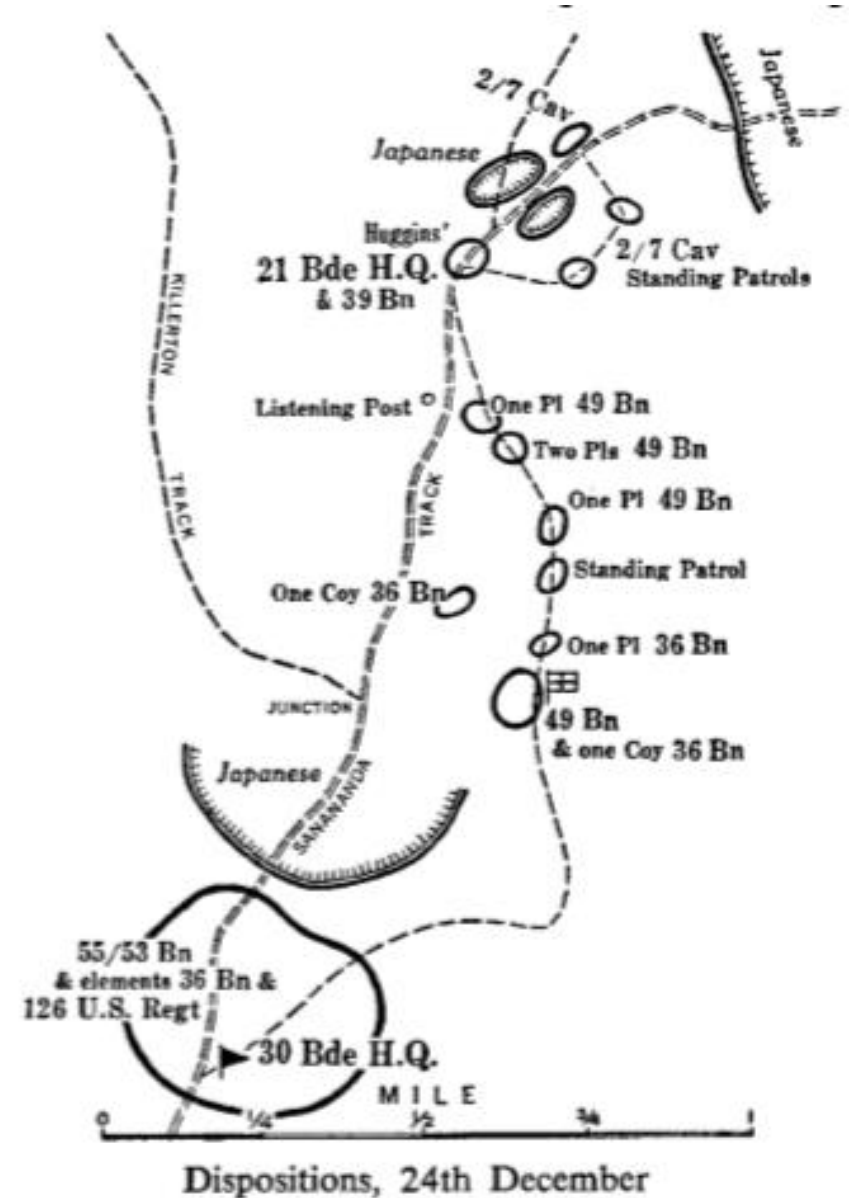
29 December – Buna W

- On the morning of the 29 December Company B, 127th Infantry, from its position along the coast southeast of the mission, pushed forward to the sea and established a 200-foot frontage along the shore.



29 December – Sanananda

- At first light on the 29th Lieutenant Capp, with a reinforced troop, sallied against a Japanese post sited in the deep bush east of the track, roughly midway between Huggins' and Kano, and offering a constant threat to the supply-line.
- Capp's men went in with great dash, cleared trip wires, and took the two outer lines of earthworks in the face of well-directed fire.
- The Japanese opposed them so effectively that they had to withdraw—losing 5 killed and 4 wounded.
- Capp reported that he thought he could have taken the position with more men.



29 December – Air

- Two small camouflaged ships were sighted at Wickham Anchorage morning of 29/12. Ships attacked at 0950/29 by 13 SBDs and 14 fighters and left burning and again at 1305/29 by 12 SBDs and 13 fighters. Direct hits were scored and both ships were left blazing and exploding.
- Two aircraft attacked Munda am 29/12. Fires started.
- Single B24s attacked the airfields at Lae and Gasmata morning 29/12.
- 3 A20s carried out a strafing attack at Amboga River.
- A P39 intercepted and shot down a Japanese recce aircraft over Goodenough Island 29/12.
- 3 Beaufighters strafed huts at Betano 29/12.
- There were indications of an unidentified aircraft over the Perth area 1315 – 1450/29. An unidentified aircraft was sighted 65 miles from Fremantle 1425/29.
- 12 B-24's attack shipping in Rangoon vicinity. Disabling a 6,000 ton oil tanker in the river at Rangoon and setting afire a 5,000 ton freighter Rangoon bound in the gulf of Martaban.

54

JIC No 385

30 Dec 42

LOSSES FROM ALL CAUSES AND NEW CONSTRUCTION OF UNITED
NATIONS AND NEUTRAL TANKERS AND OTHER TYPES OF CAR-
GO (AND PASSENGER) VESSELS.

FIRST ELEVEN MONTHS OF 1942

	Gross Tonnage in 1,000's of Register Tons						
	Losses from All Causes			New Tonnage Completed		Net Gain (G) or Loss (L)	
	All Types	Tankers	Others	Tankers	Others	Tankers	Others
January	518	140	378	95	130	45 L	248 L
February	682	258	424	48	209	210 L	215 L
March	836	280	556	39	275	241 L	281 L
April	711	247	464	67	360	180 L	104 L
May	754	232	522	78	497	154 L	25 L
June	842	208	634	69	565	139 L	69 L
July	683	87	596	84	593	3 L	3 L
August	678	148	530	57	623	91 L	93 G
September	580	81	499	160	693	79 G	194 G
October	575	119	456	52	711	67 L	255 G
November	755	76	679	80	689	4 G	10 G
Totals	7,614	1,876	5,738	829	5,345	1,047 L	393 L

ANNEX

J.I.C. Summary No. 385

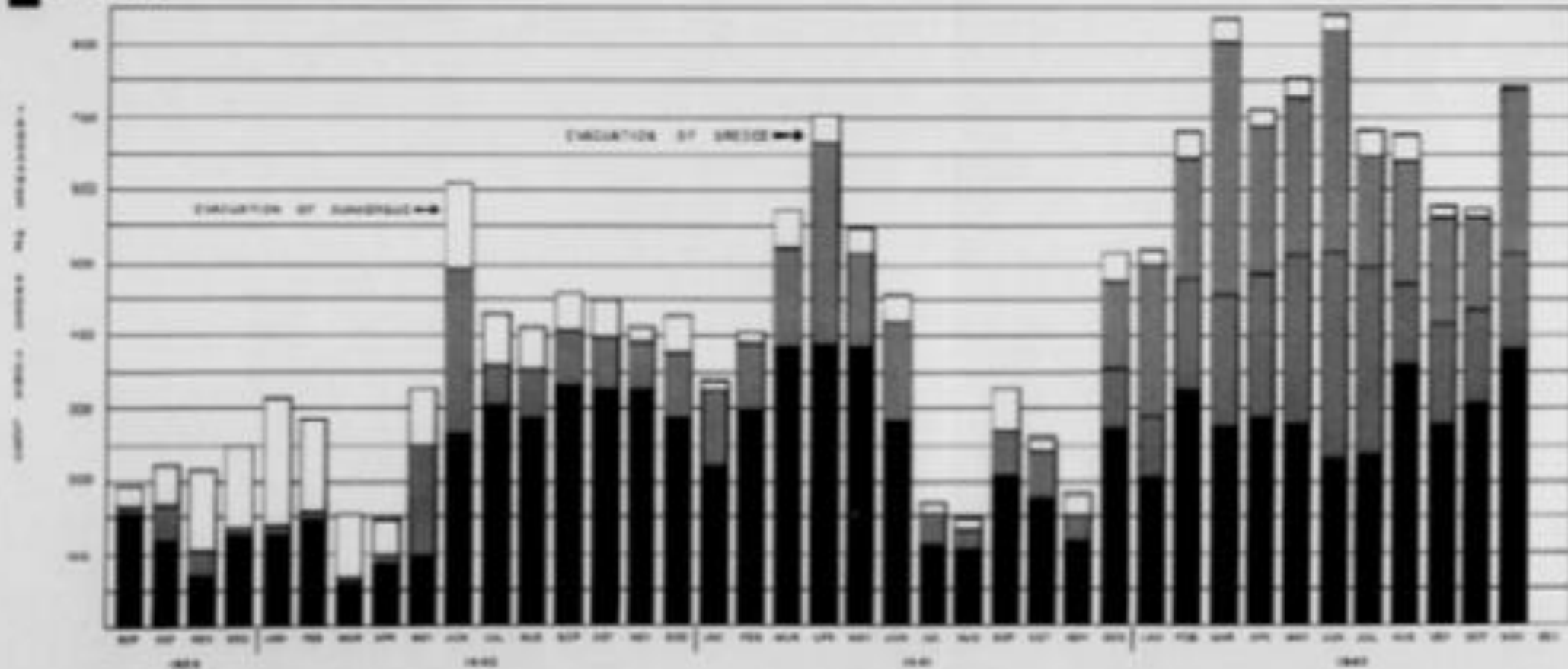
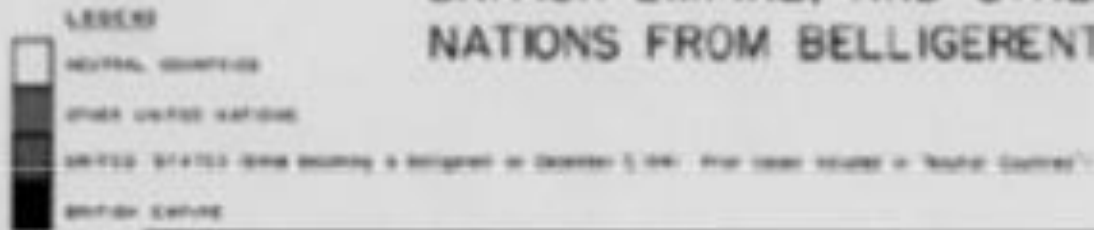
THE BATTLE OF THE SEA LANES
(Information furnished chiefly by O.N.I.)

	Gross Tonnage in 1,000's of Register Tons
Tankers -	
Owned or controlled 1/1/42 by present United Nations	9,000 *
Other tonnage owned 1/1/42 by nations now neutral	500
Total	<u>9,500</u>
Other cargo or cargo and passenger vessels -	
Owned or controlled 1/1/42 by present United Nations	30,000 *
Other tonnage owned 1/1/42 by nations now neutral	2,500
Total	<u>32,500</u>

* The vessels owned or controlled by the United Nations include vessels taken over by their armed forces.

MERCHANT MARINE LOSSES OF THE UNITED STATES, BRITISH EMPIRE, AND OTHER UNITED AND NEUTRAL NATIONS FROM BELLIGERENT AND MARINE CAUSES

DIVISION OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE
SEP-12-47-12



DECLASSIFIED
SIS Letter, 8-3-78

JIC No 385

30 Dec 42

- The JIC also reported that “Captured enemy equipment in the Sanananda area included British and American small arms.”

Report to the White House 30 Dec 42

1. In his operations summary for December 29, General MacArthur reports that US and Australian troops, consolidating their gains near Buna Mission, have confined the enemy to the vicinity of the Buna Government Station and into a V-shaped area to the east. Lone heavy bomber raids were carried out against Lae and Gasmata; three light bombers harassed the enemy on a coastal sweep between Amboga and Salamaua. 2 mi W. of Gona

2. The War Department informed General MacArthur that the Australian 9th Division and other remaining Australian troops in the Middle East, except the air personnel, will be returned to Australia, departing the latter part of January.

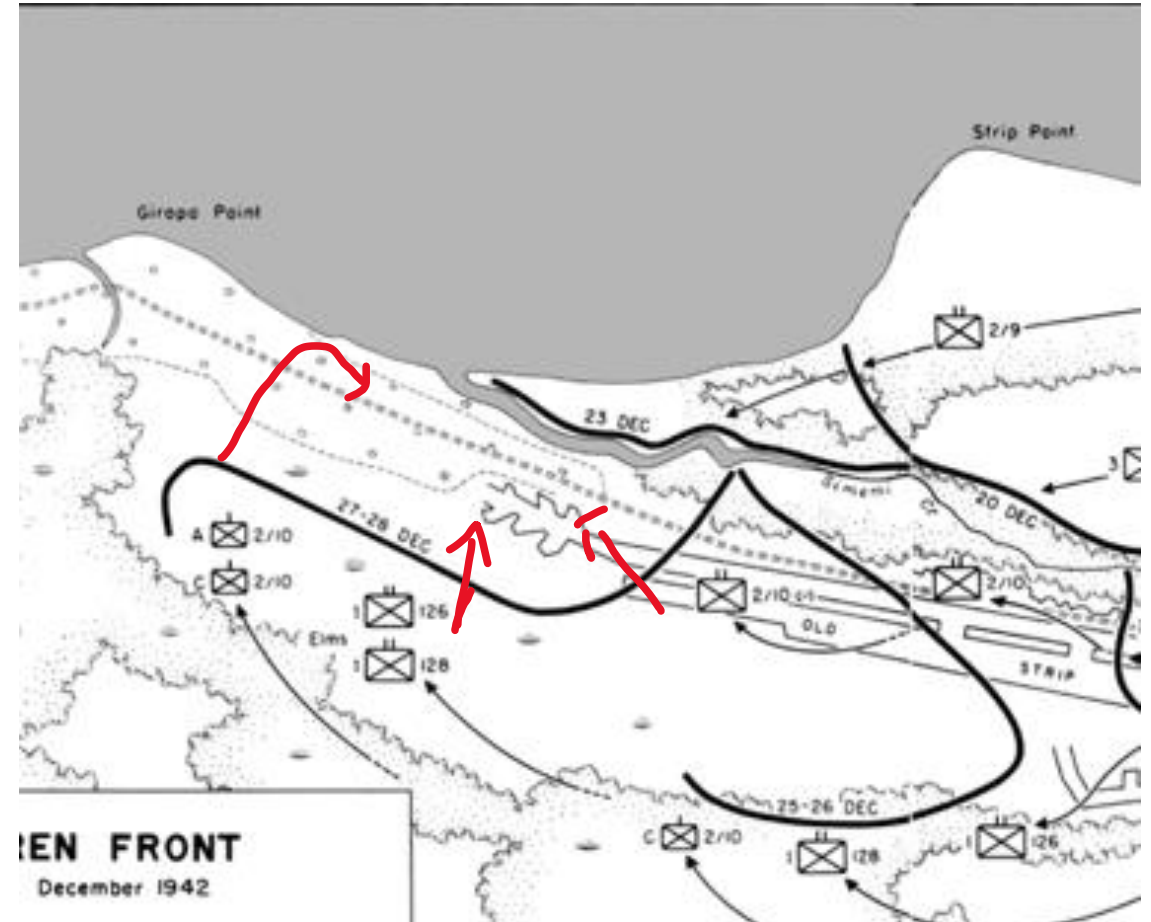
30 December - Sea

- A transport ship, Hiteru Maru, and a cargo ship, Nissho Maru, were torpedoed and sunk in Bougainville Strait by USS Greenling.



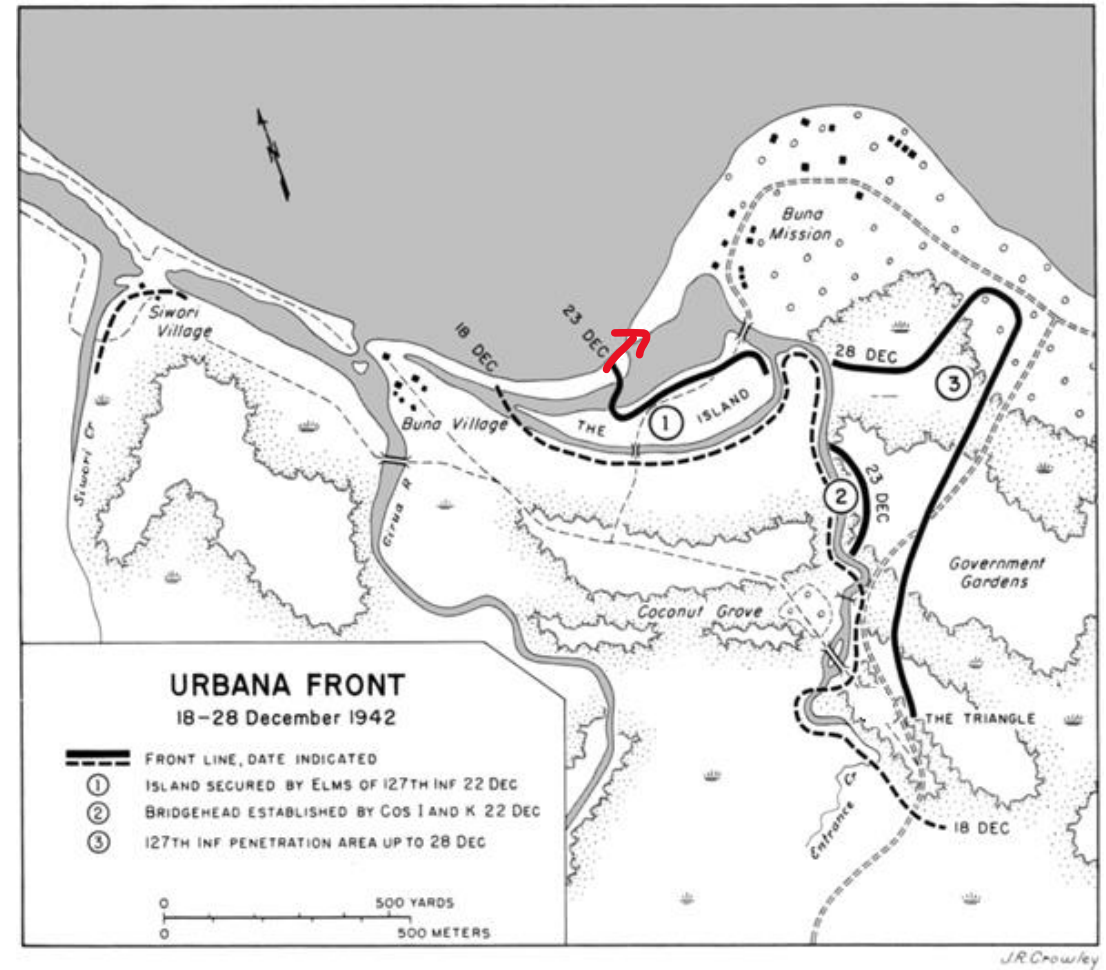
30 December – Buna E

- At 1535 Brigadier Wooten issued a plan for the reduction the next day of Giropa Point and the area between it and the Old Strip.
- The attack would be supported by the mortars of the 2/10 Battalion, the 25-pounders of the Manning and Hall Troops, and the 4.5-inch howitzers of the Stokes Troop.
- Of the eleven tanks of X Squadron, six would be committed immediately, and the remaining three as they were needed.
- In Phase One the 2/12 Battalion and the tanks, with the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, as left-flank guard, were to attack in a northeasterly direction, break through to the coast, and turn southeast to encircle the enemy.
- In Phase Two, the 2/12 Battalion was to herd the encircled enemy toward the companies advancing on the right and, with their help, destroy them.



30 December – Buna W

- Major Schroeder had been attacking toward the mission on 30 December. The Japanese were still holding strongly along the coast, and he made little progress. There was no cause for concern, however, for Schroeder's position was secure.
- Preparations for attacks from the village spit the following day were completed in good time on the 30th.
- Company E, low in morale after its heavy losses in the Triangle, was under the command of Lieutenant Bragg of Company H, who had volunteered to lead it in the attack across the shallows.



30 December – Sanananda

- When Capp reported that he thought he could have taken the position with more men, Lt-Col Moses, a former officer of the 8th Division who had shared General Gordon Bennett's escape from Singapore earlier in the year, and had arrived on the 27th to take temporary command of the cavalry regiment, told Hordern to take his squadron against the post.
- Dougherty arranged artillery and mortar support and the start-time was set for 10 a.m. on the 30th.
- Although the shells fell as planned, the mortar fire was both late and inaccurate.
- After a revised mortar program Hordern took his men forward at 11. The Japanese were ready. They shot 16 of the attackers, all three troop commanders among them, and Hordern knew it would be folly to press the attack further.
- The Japanese struck again on the night of 30-31 December. A Japanese raiding party succeeded in infiltrating the headquarters perimeter of the Australian company on the American right. Surprise was complete. The company commander and several others were killed, but only a few of the Japanese were accounted for. The rest got away safely in the dark.

30 December – Air

- Seven B-17's bomb shipping (a concentration of 75 large and medium ships) at Rabaul 0520-0557/30. Explosions and fires were caused on two large unidentified ships and a direct hit was scored on one large transport and a near miss on another. Photos 30/12 showed two ships (6,000 and 4,000 tons) on fire, one was beached.
- A new runway and twenty medium bombers and thirteen fighters were observed at Vunakanau airfield.
- A-20's strafe forces in Duvira Creek area.
- B-24's carry out single-bmr attacks on A/Fs at Lae, Madang Village, and troops and vehicles at Wewak. At Lae fires were started and four planes were destroyed on the runway.
- A B-17 strafes a schooner in Jacquinot Bay.
- 22 enemy bombers destroyed half the village of Merauke, but caused no military casualties.

30 December – Air

- P40s and P43s on reconnaissance attacked six zeros as they were taking off from Lashio, probably destroying one and damaging another.
- B25s raided the airfield at Shwebo, scoring hits on hangars and dispersal areas and starting a fire on the edge of a runway.
- B25s escorted by P40s attacked enemy troops and supplies six miles east of Lungling. Enemy personnel and barracks were strafed by the P40s.
- Twelve Blenheims bombed the airfields at Shwebo.



A Republic P-43 *Lancer* in flight over Esler Field, Louisiana (USA), on 9 March 1942.

The P-43A had very good high-altitude performance and an effective oxygen system. Fast and with excellent range the P-43 flew many long-range, high-altitude photo recon missions.

Eight P-43s were loaned to the RAAF in 1942 and served with No. 1 Photo Reconnaissance Unit. The RAAF flew many long range, high-altitude photo reconnaissance missions before the six survivors were returned to the USAAF in 1943.

30 December – Air

- Three B-25's and 14 P-38's approach Kiska Harbor at minimum altitude for a bombing and strafing attack. 2 ships and 3 submarines, newly arrived, are covered by Zeros. 4 of them engage the approaching P38's in a dogfight. 2 P-38's are shot down and 4 Zeros are scored as probable. The B-25's meanwhile attack the ships with unobserved results.
- One B-25 is shot down off Little Kiska. A PBY picks up survivors, but fails to return.
- Kiska Harbor is then attacked once more by 5 B-24's, 4 B-25's, and 4 B26's. They claim 2 hits on both vessels observing explosions on the smaller ship.
- Aerial rcn observes for first time Japanese use of smoke screen at Kiska Harbor.

31 December

British Progress In Burma Drive

NEW YORK, Dec. 30.—Press dispatches from Delhi report that the British are within 20 miles of Akyab.

Advanced elements made contact with the Japanese at Rathe-daung, seven miles inland from the Bay of Bengal, but the enemy withdrew after firing a few shots.

A New Delhi communique says that R.A.F. Blenheims, escorted by fighters, yesterday afternoon bombed the aerodrome at Monywa, on the Chindwin River.

DUTCH HONOUR 2 AUSTRALIANS

Queen Wilhelmina, of the Netherlands, has made both Captain J. A. Collins, R.A.N., and Commander V. E. Kennedy, R.A.N., Knight Commanders in the Order of Oranje Nassau.

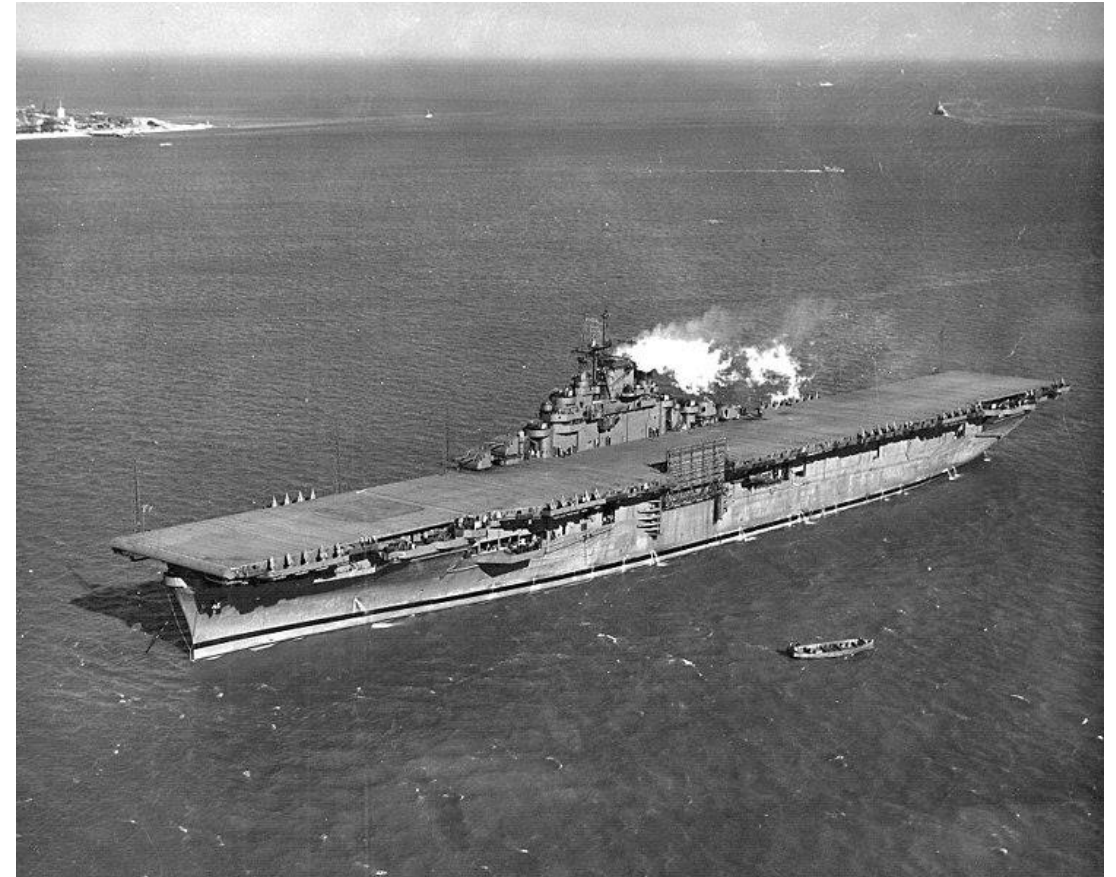
Captain Collins commanded H.M.A.S. Sydney when she was in the Mediterranean, and was commanding officer of the British naval forces in Netherlands East Indies waters during the Japanese attack last February.

Commander Kennedy, who is now serving in Australia, was Australian liaison officer with Admiral Helfrich in Java.

PAGE 1—

31 December – Sea

- The night of 30/31 the K.P.M. ship *Bath* and the Australian freighter *Comara* came into Oro Bay with 350 and 500 tons of cargo, respectively, unloaded, and departed before daybreak.
- It was decided to retain Merauke as an advanced naval small boat refuelling base, and on 31st December G.H.Q. directed its reinforcement by two companies of Australian infantry and one Australian Bren carrier platoon.
- USS *Essex* (CV9) was commissioned on 31 December 1942. It was the first new fleet carrier to join the fleet since *Wasp* in April 1940.

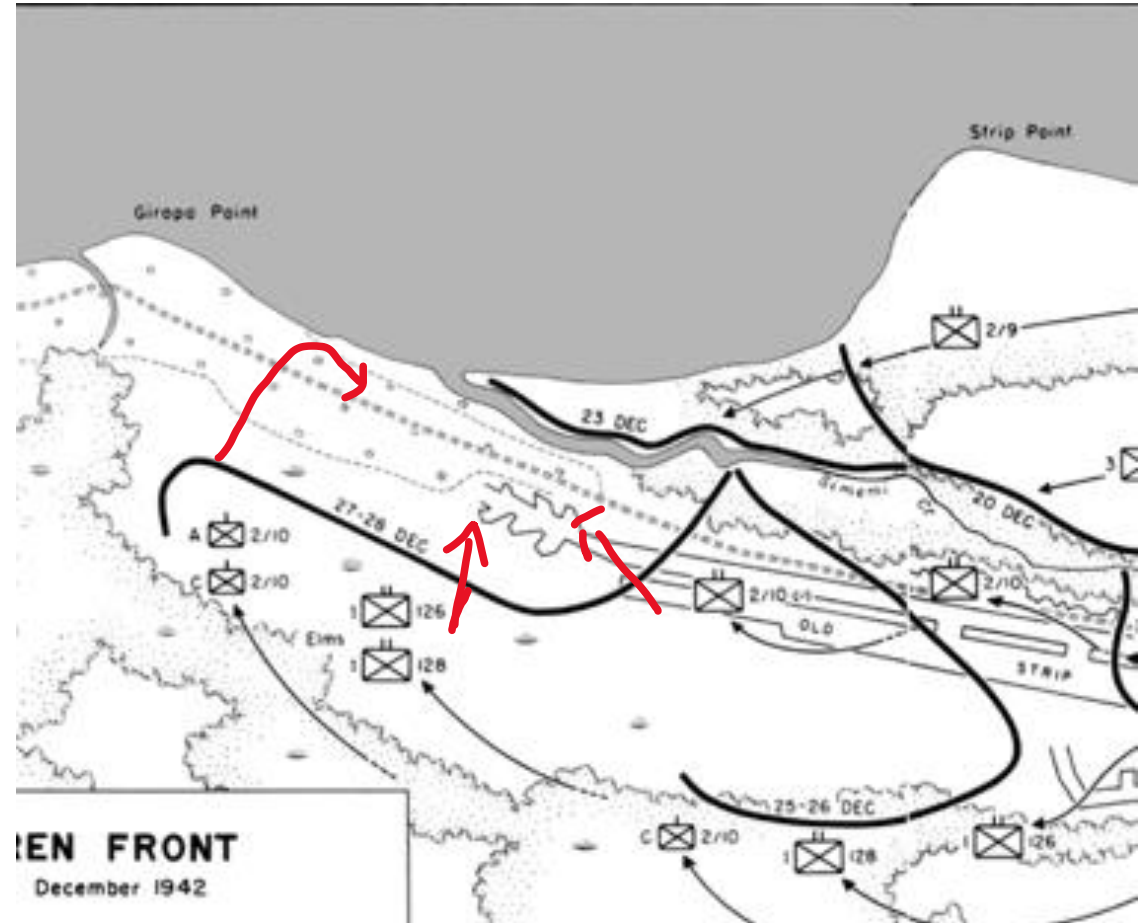


USS *Essex* (CV-9) at Hampton Roads, Virginia (USA), 1 February 1943.

33 knots, 100 aircraft, 12 5 inch dual purpose guns 8 40mm quad mounts and 46 single 20mm AA guns.

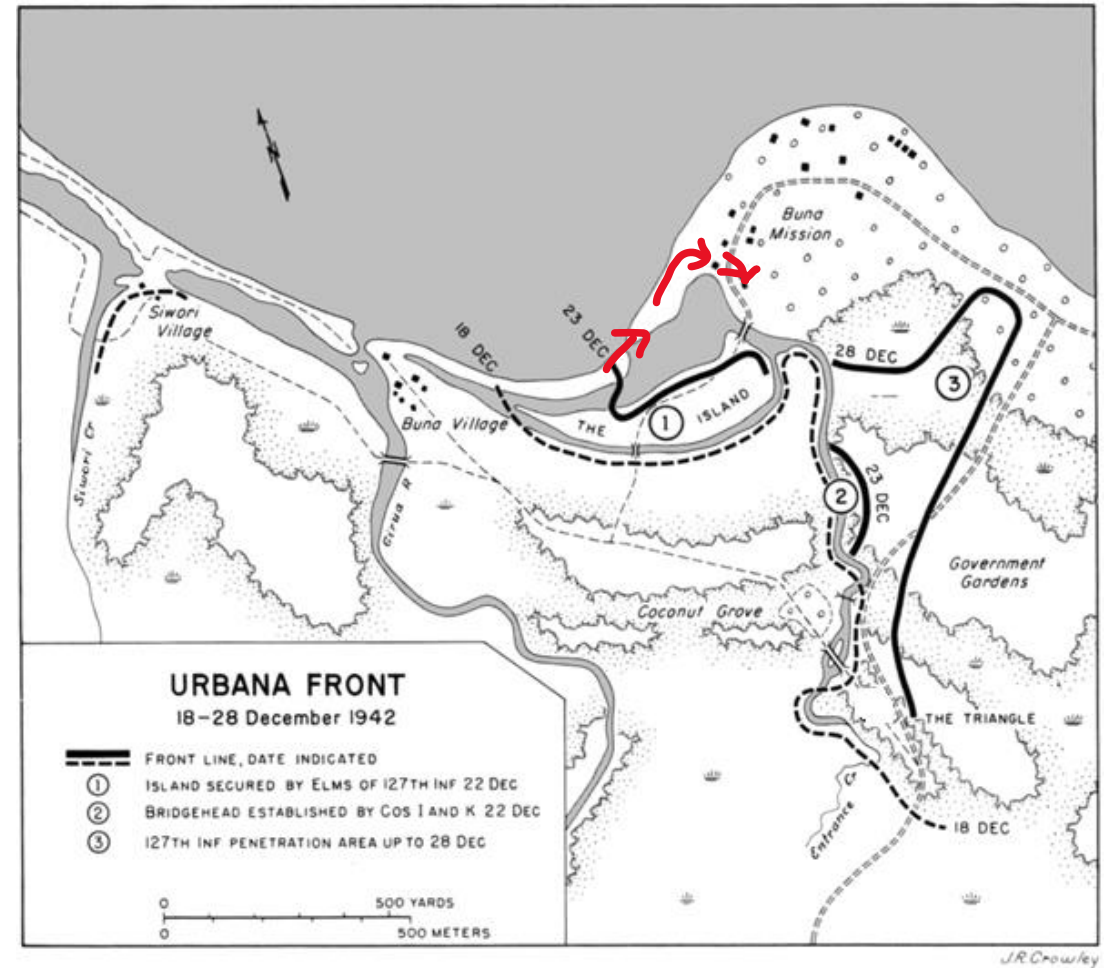
31 December – Buna E

- After two days of reorganisation by the evening of 31 December the battalions were in place: the newly arrived 2/12 Battalion on the left, the 3d Battalion, 128th Infantry in the center, and the 2/10 Battalion on the right.
- The 2/12 and 3/128 were on an 1,100-yard east-west front and faced the coast.
- The 2/10, with a holding mission, was drawn up across the head of the strip on a 500-yard front at right angles to them, its left tied in on 3/128 and its right on Simemi Creek.
- Major Clarkson's 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, was on the 2/12 Battalion's left rear; Company A, 2/9 Battalion, was in reserve.



31 December – Buna W

- At 0430 31 December, while it was still dark, Company E, 127th Infantry, and Company F, 128th Infantry, started moving in single file across the shallows between the finger and the mission. Company E was in the lead, with Lieutenant Bragg at the head of the column.
- The plan was to launch a surprise attack on the enemy positions opposite the bridge at daybreak. The men were under orders to make as little noise as possible and had been warned not to fire their weapons until told to do so.



31 December – Buna W

- Company E gained the spit on the mission side without alerting the enemy, turned right, and began to move inland. Just as the leading elements of the company reached the spit, some of the men to the rear, unable to resist the temptation, threw grenades into a couple of landing barges that were stranded on the beach.
- At once the whole area broke into an uproar, the beach lit up with flares, and the troops were assailed with hand grenades, rifle grenades, and automatic weapons.
- The Japanese reaction threw the troops into a panic. Their plight became even worse when Lieutenant Bragg, who in General Eichelberger's words was to have been "the spark plug of the whole affair," was shot in the legs during the first few moments of the firing and, in the confusion of the moment, was reported missing.
- Colonel Grose waited on the village spit to hear news of the attack. He had a man with sound-powered telephone and a roll of wire following the action and reporting on its progress.

31 December – Buna W

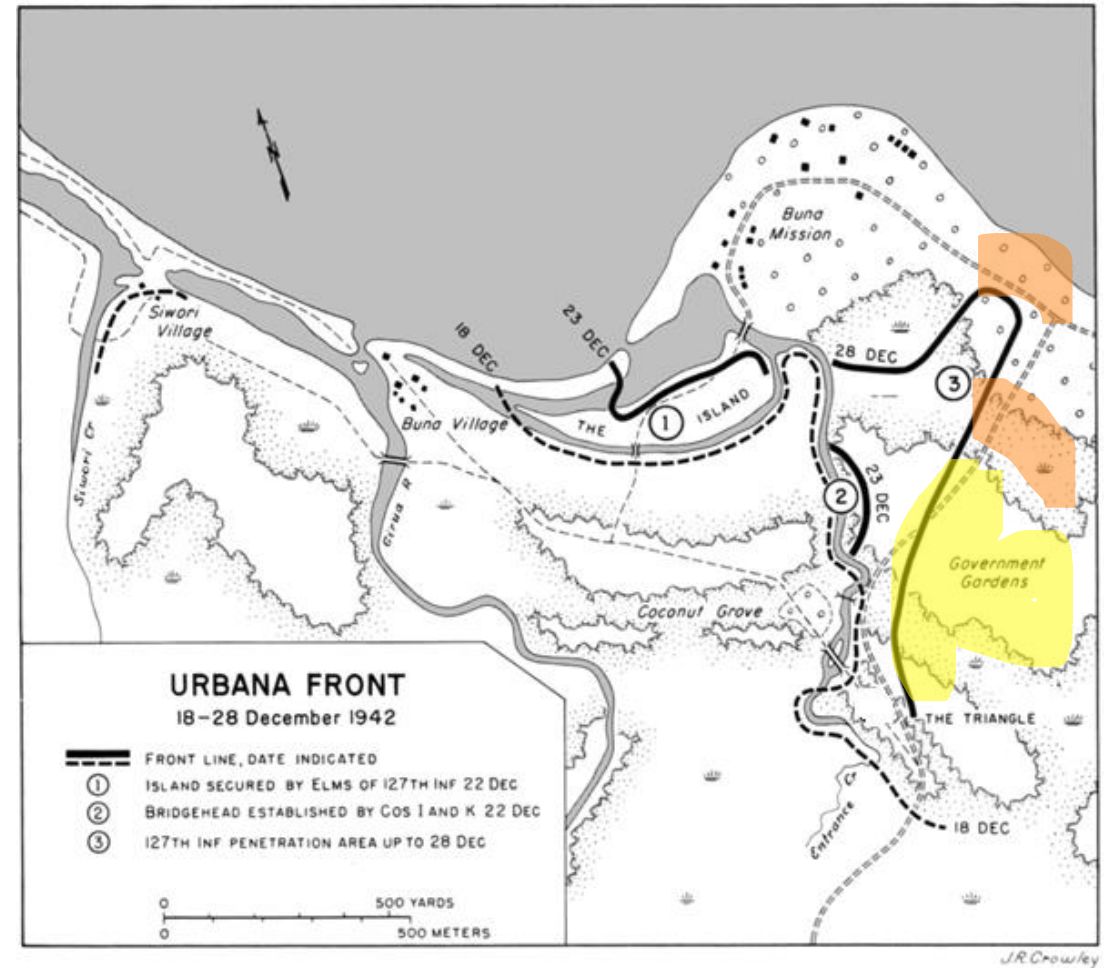
- The first information Grose heard on the phone was that the lieutenant who had taken command when Bragg fell was "running to the rear," and that there were others with him.
- I told the man [Colonel Grose recalls] to stop them and send them back. He replied that he couldn't because they were already past him. Then the man said, 'The whole company is following them.'
- So I placed myself on the trail over which I knew they would have to come, and, pistol in hand, I stopped the lieutenant and all those following him. I directed the lieutenant to return and he said he couldn't.
- I then asked him if he knew what that meant and he said he did.
- The first sergeant was wounded, and I therefore let him proceed to the dressing station.
- I designated a sergeant nearby to take the men back and he did so. I then sent the lieutenant to the rear in arrest and under guard.

31 December – Buna W

- Although Company E, in its flight, passed through Company F, 128th Infantry, which had been moving forward immediately to its rear, Captain Cronk's company was not affected by Company E's disorganization.
- Cronk himself, Colonel Grose recalls, was as calm and collected as if he were on the drill field. The 128th Infantry troops moved forward steadily and, by the time they were finally joined by Company E, had established a strong position on the spit and were holding their own.
- Captain Cronk took command of Company E, and the two companies began attacking toward the bunkers in the area north of the bridge. They met stiff resistance, and, in a full day's fighting, Cronk could report only a small advance, though he hoped to do better the next day.

31 December – Buna W

- The fighting along the coast southeast of the mission and in the swamp north of the gardens was particularly bitter, where elements of Company C were still busy cleaning out pockets of enemy resistance.
- Although Companies E, F, and H, 126th Infantry, under Captain Sullivan, advanced 300 yards in the area east of the right fork of the Triangle, thus completing the capture of the gardens, the day's gains along the coast and in the swamp north of the gardens were disappointing.



31 December – Air

- Three A-20's strafe forces in Sanananda and Giruwa area and along Amboga R.
- Twelve B-26's pound forces on N shore of Markham R near its mouth, while six A-20's strafe parked aircraft at Lae. The bombers were escorted by eleven P38s. Twelve enemy fighters intercepted, eight, probably nine, of these were shot down and others damaged. All our aircraft returned. Photographs of Lae showed five medium bombers, one of which was on fire and forty two fighters, thirty six of which were definitely destroyed or damaged.
- B-24's operating singly, bomb A/F at Gasmata and attack shipping in Wide Bay and Saint George Channel.
- Merauke was again bombed by eighteen twin engine army bombers. There was some damage but the docks were not hit. This raid and yesterdays are the first time that army type aircraft have been seen in this theatre. It is probable that these planes were based at either Bobo or Boemi, on the West and North coasts of Dutch New Guinea.
- Reconnaissance at Kavieng revealed extensive construction activity, twenty three fighters and thirty medium bombers.

31 December – Air

- The B-26's of 69th Bomb Sq arrive on Guadalcanal. During December the Army sent the 12th, 68th, and 70th Fighter Squadrons as well as the 69th Bombardment up to Guadalcanal. The Navy sent up the night patrolling PBYs of VP-12.
- 6 B-24's, covered by 9 P-38's, attack Kiska Harbor, hitting 2 cargo vessels. 1 of 6 intercepting ftrs is probably shot down.
- P-40's on armed rcn hit railroad T/Os from Naba to Pinbaw.
- Seven Wellingtons attacked Akyab town and airfield.

31 December – Air

- By the end of December the Japanese were strongly entrenched in the central Solomons.
- To the north Buka showed increased activity;
- in the Buin area the 2,200-foot strip on Ballale Island appeared to be surfaced, and
- Kahili airstrip was enlarged and strengthened, to accommodate two-engine bombers.
- But it was Munda which caused Guadalcanal air commanders their chief concern.
- Its coral construction indicated rapid repair, and lying only 196 miles from Henderson, it was close to the extreme range of SBD's operating from Guadalcanal.
- If it could be developed, Zero fighters could cover the movement of surface craft down to the lower Solomons and hold off the devastating air attacks on the Tokyo Express.



31 December – Air

- When late in December the enemy had given up efforts to reinforce his troops around Buna, it had been anticipated that he would attempt the build-up of his garrisons at Lae and Salamaua.
- Consequently, the isolation of that area had become a primary and continuing responsibility of the Allied Air Forces.
- On 30 December, shipping concentrations at Rabaul were the largest ever seen, ninety one vessels, including twenty-one warships and an estimated 300,000 tons of merchant shipping were counted.
- Float planes sighted in the vicinity of Lae, usually an indication of antisubmarine patrol in advance of ship movements, offered a clue as to the direction a new convoy might take, as also did the activity on Japanese airfields.”



31 December – Industry

- With great effort a record Australian wartime production of 14,903,489 tons of black coal had been achieved in 1942, but this was still below the target and the most rigid economy in its use had been necessary, with curtailment of some services.
- In 1942, the first four American plants produced 2,241 tons of synthetic rubber, a tiny fraction of the 400,000 tonnes a year required to keep the war effort on the road.
- The Japanese had seized all the natural rubber production areas and stocks were expected to run out by June 1943.



The first U.S. government synthetic rubber plant to go into production, Akron, OH, April, 1942.

- 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.