

The War in the Pacific 3 From Lae to Tokyo Bay

10

Saidor & Shaggy Ridge



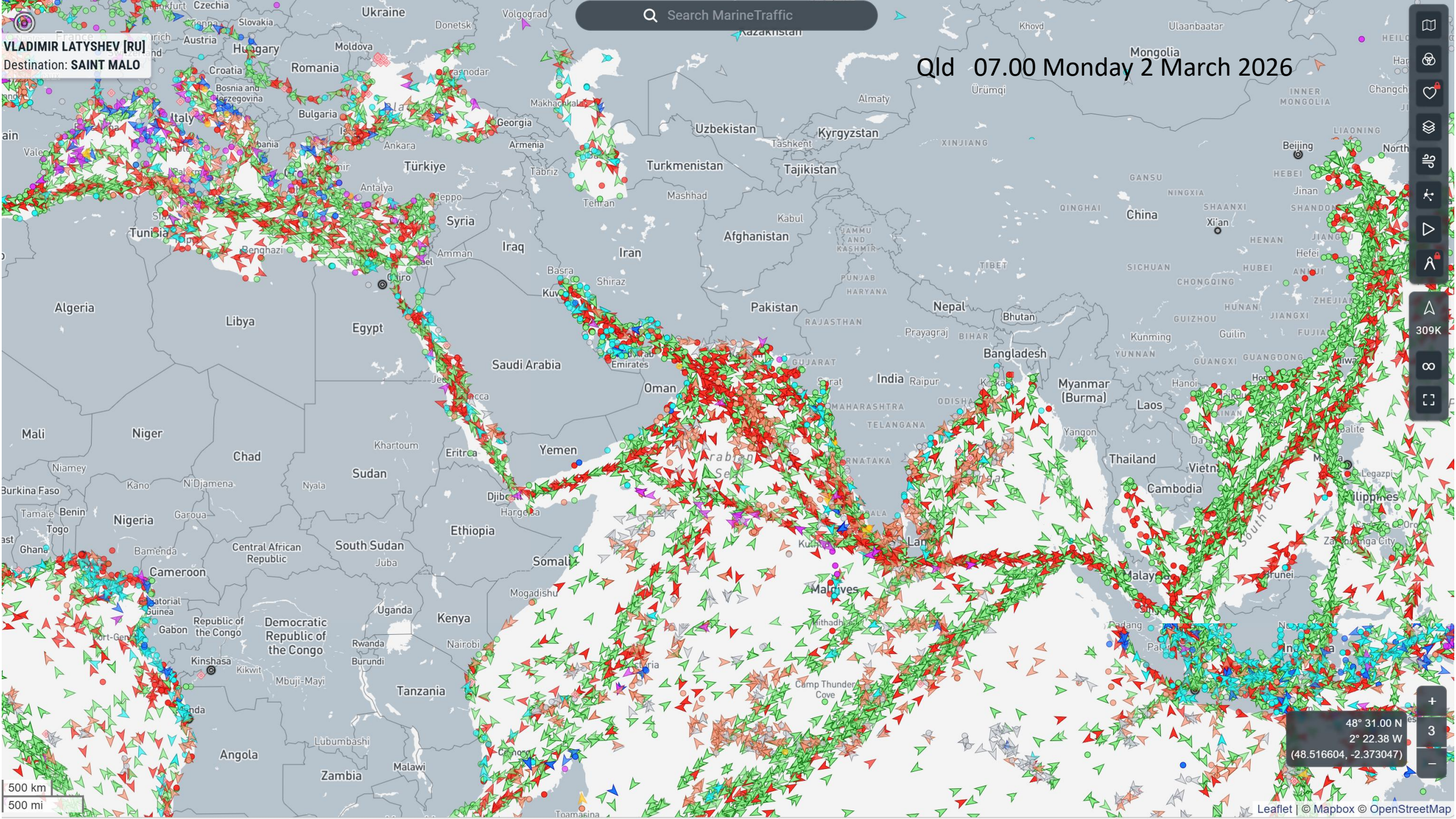


Jerry McBrien 2026

VLADIMIR LATYSHEV [RU]
Destination: SAINT MALO

Search MarineTraffic

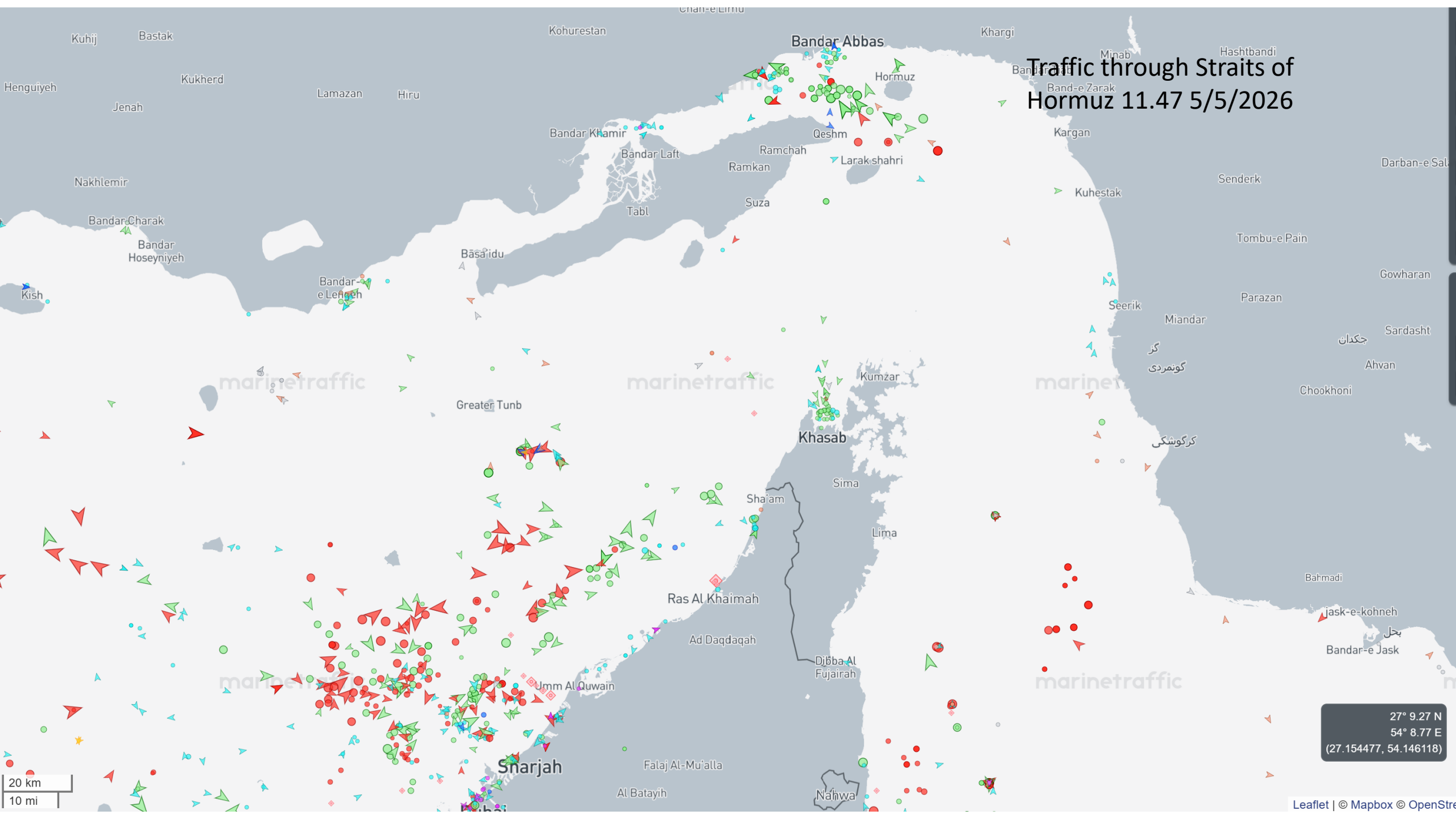
Qld 07.00 Monday 2 March 2026



500 km
500 mi

48° 31.00 N
2° 22.38 W
(48.516604, -2.373047)

Traffic through Straits of Hormuz 11.47 5/5/2026



27° 9.27 N
54° 8.77 E
(27.154477, 54.146118)

Effect of Current War on Oil Prices



Effect of War on Wheat Prices



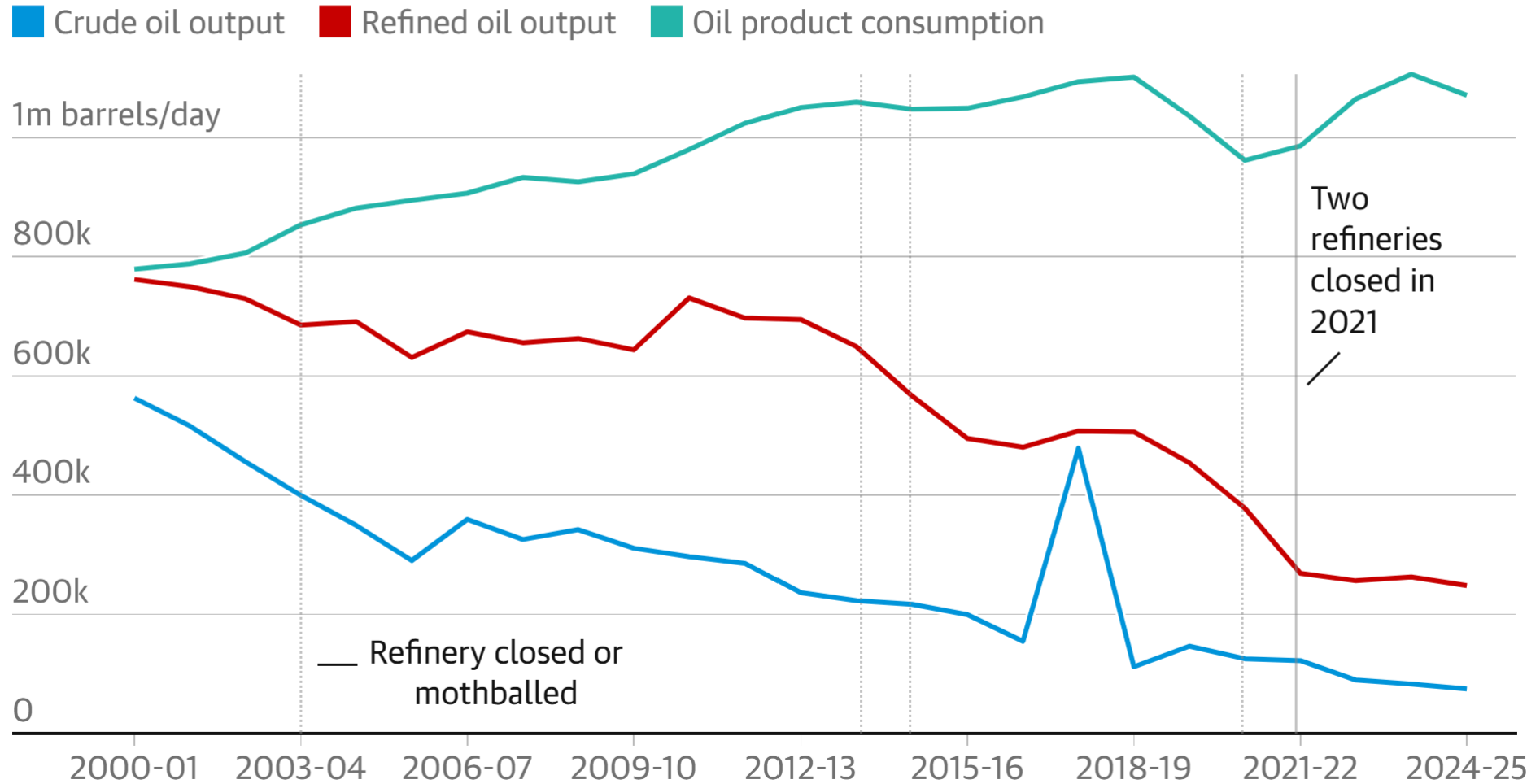
- “Project Freedom” is an effort to support “merchant vessels seeking to freely transit” the passage, though it does not involve formal military escorts. It includes guided-missile destroyers, over 100 land and sea-based aircraft, multi-domain unmanned platforms, and 15,000 service members, according to a statement from US Central Command.
- US Central Command announced that two ships transited the strait on Monday.
- “We’ve shot down seven small Boats or, as they like to call them, ‘fast’ Boats. It’s all they have left,” Trump said.
- “the Maersk owned American registered vessel Alliance Fairfax exited the Persian Gulf accompanied by US military assets” on Monday.
- an explosion and fire occurred Monday on a South Korean-linked vessel at the Strait the Hormuz
- UAE air defenses engaged 19 missiles and drones on Monday 4 May 2026 and a drone attack caused a fire at an oil port in the Fujairah region.
- “Project Freedom” appears to have backfired and shipping executives remain extremely wary about crossing the Strait of Hormuz.

- Trump's blockade of Iran has further reduced the flow of fuel & other products out of the gulf.
- As a result fuel prices continue close to the highest they have been since the start of the war.
- Trump has elections coming in November. He needs to get gas prices down quickly.
- Trump has to achieve a result from his war which is better than the result Obama achieved by negotiation.
- The Israelis are complicating Trump's negotiations with their ongoing invasion and occupation of Lebanon.
- Trump could reduce the price of gas in the States by banning the export of oil and oil products but his oil industry donors would not like it.
- The fact that America is now a net exporter of Oil has removed a significant long term restriction on America's foreign policy.

- Iran demands the U.S. remove all operational blockades on ports as a condition for continuing talks.
- Iran is demanding substantial concessions, including guarantees against future military action, compensation for wartime losses, and full, formal control over the Strait of Hormuz.
- Iran is demanding substantial concessions, including guarantees against future military action, compensation for wartime losses, and full, formal control over the Strait of Hormuz.
- Iran thinks they can out suffer the Trump administration.

Over-exposed

Australia's oil and fuel production has dwindled

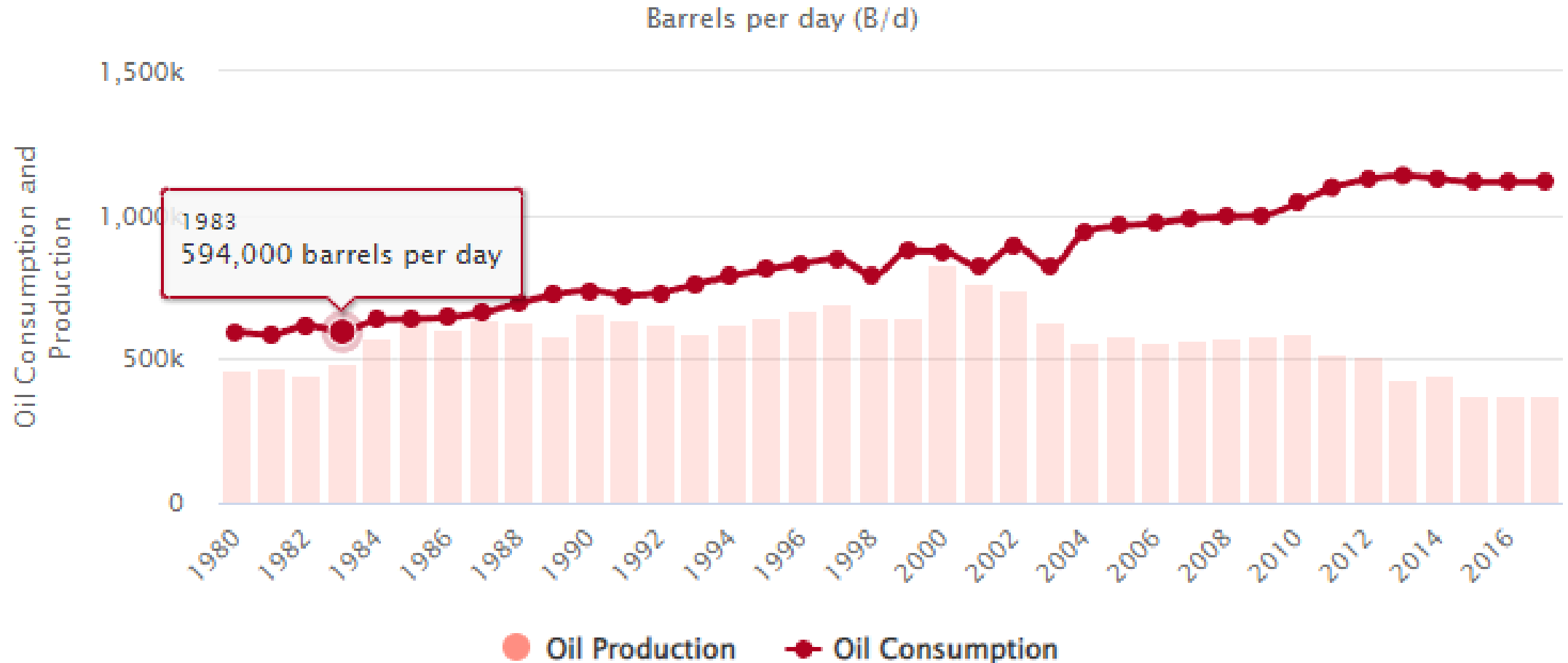


Guardian graphic. Source: Ieefa, Guardian Australia

Jerry McBrien 2026

Contrast Australia's position.

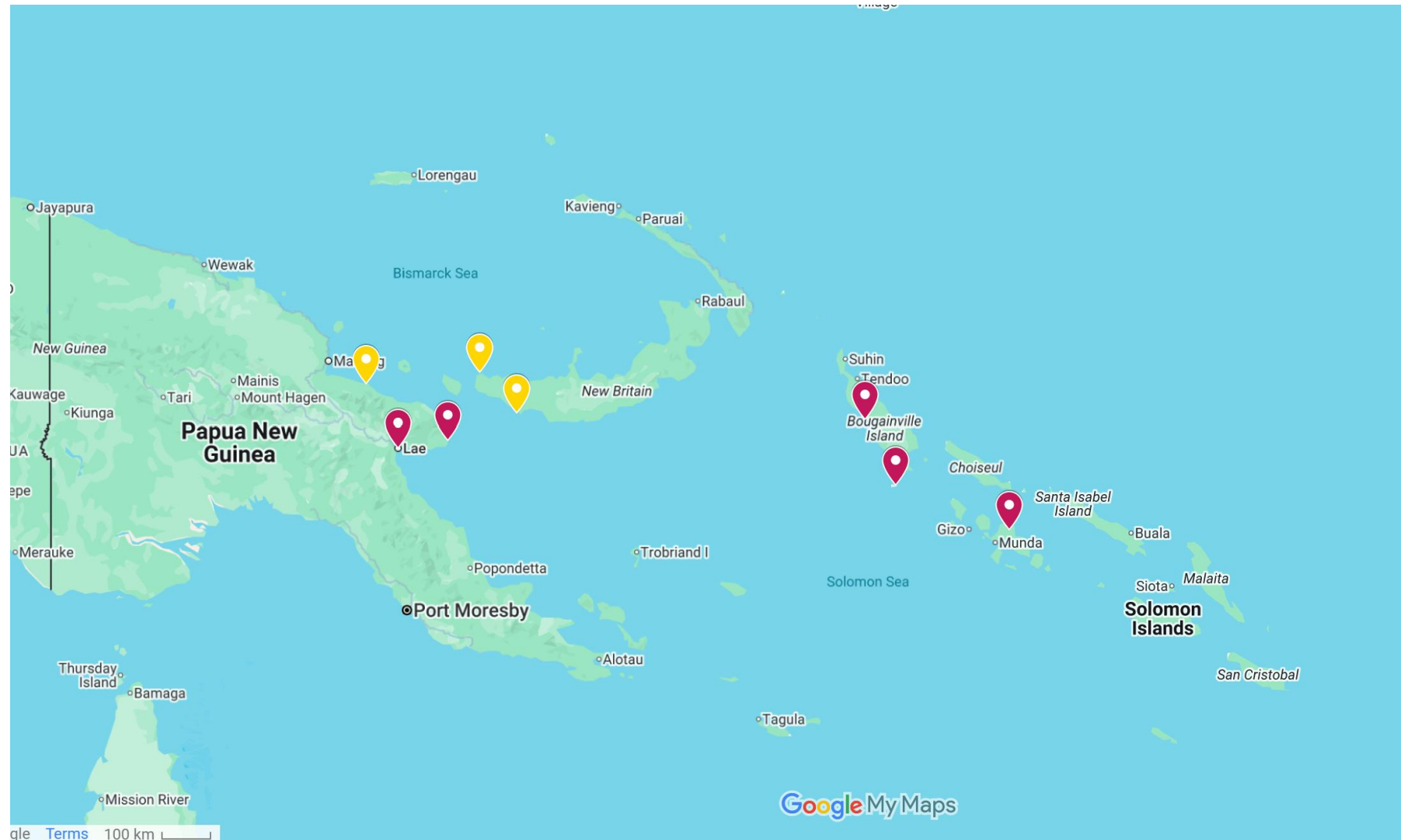
Australia Oil Consumption and Production (barrels per day)





To Return to History

Situation Nov 43 – SW Pacific



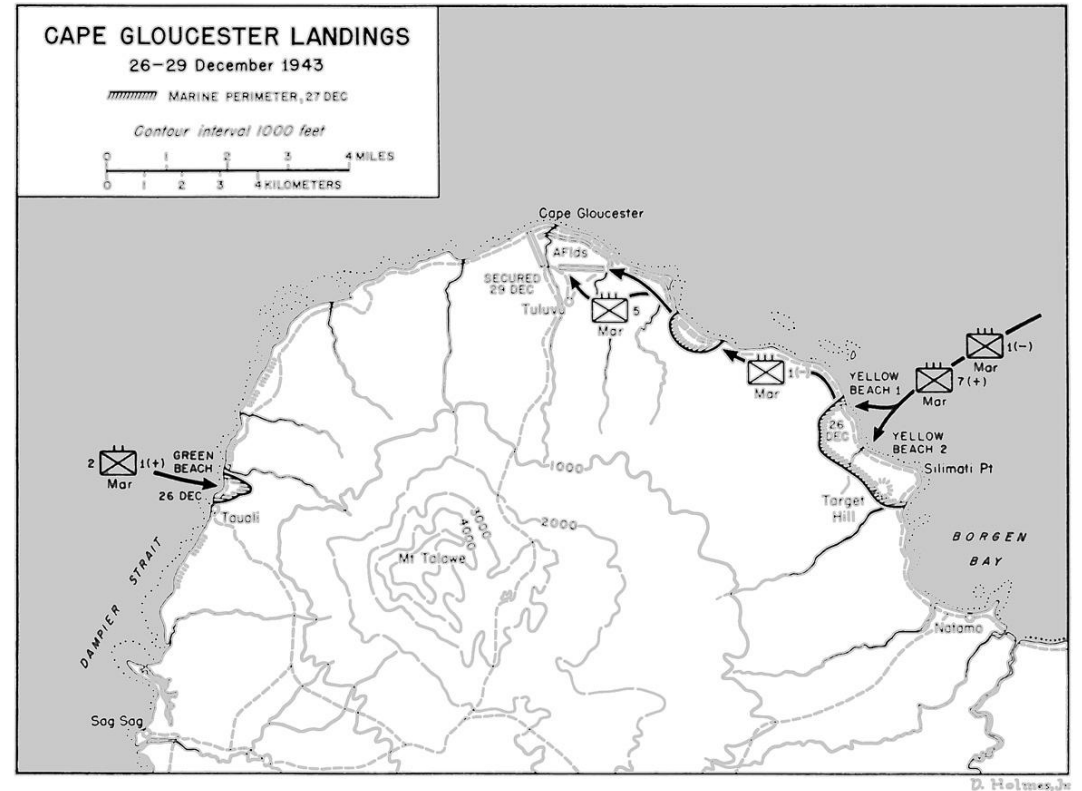
Situation Nov 43 – Pacific





28 December 1943 – New Britain

- Next day the 1st made deliberate preparations before attacking the block. The absence of Japanese resistance the day before had led to the conclusion that the enemy was concentrating his forces inside the block.
- The 1st Marines waited for more tanks to make their way up the trail, which by now was a veritable morass, and for artillery and aircraft to shell and bomb the block.
- The infantry and the tanks moved to the attack about noon and shortly ran into the block. This was a strong point which originally had faced the sea but which served alternately as a trail block. It consisted of camouflaged bunkers with many antitank and 75-mm. weapons. There was scarcely room for tanks and infantry to maneuver, but by the end of the afternoon the 1st Marines had reduced the block.



MAP 18

30?/31? December 1943

- General Rupertus (photo) had been asking for his reserve, the 5th Marines and on the 28th Krueger released them.
- Rupertus then held up the advance on the airfield until the 5th arrived. It came on 29 December, but confusion over orders caused part of the 5th to land just behind the 1st, the rest at the D-Day beaches.
- When the 5th had been reassembled the drive began again.
- The 1st Marines continued the coastal advance and, because the swampland on the left had given way to jungle, the 5th was able to make a wide southwesterly sweep. There was almost no resistance.
- By the day's end most of the airdrome was in Allied hands.



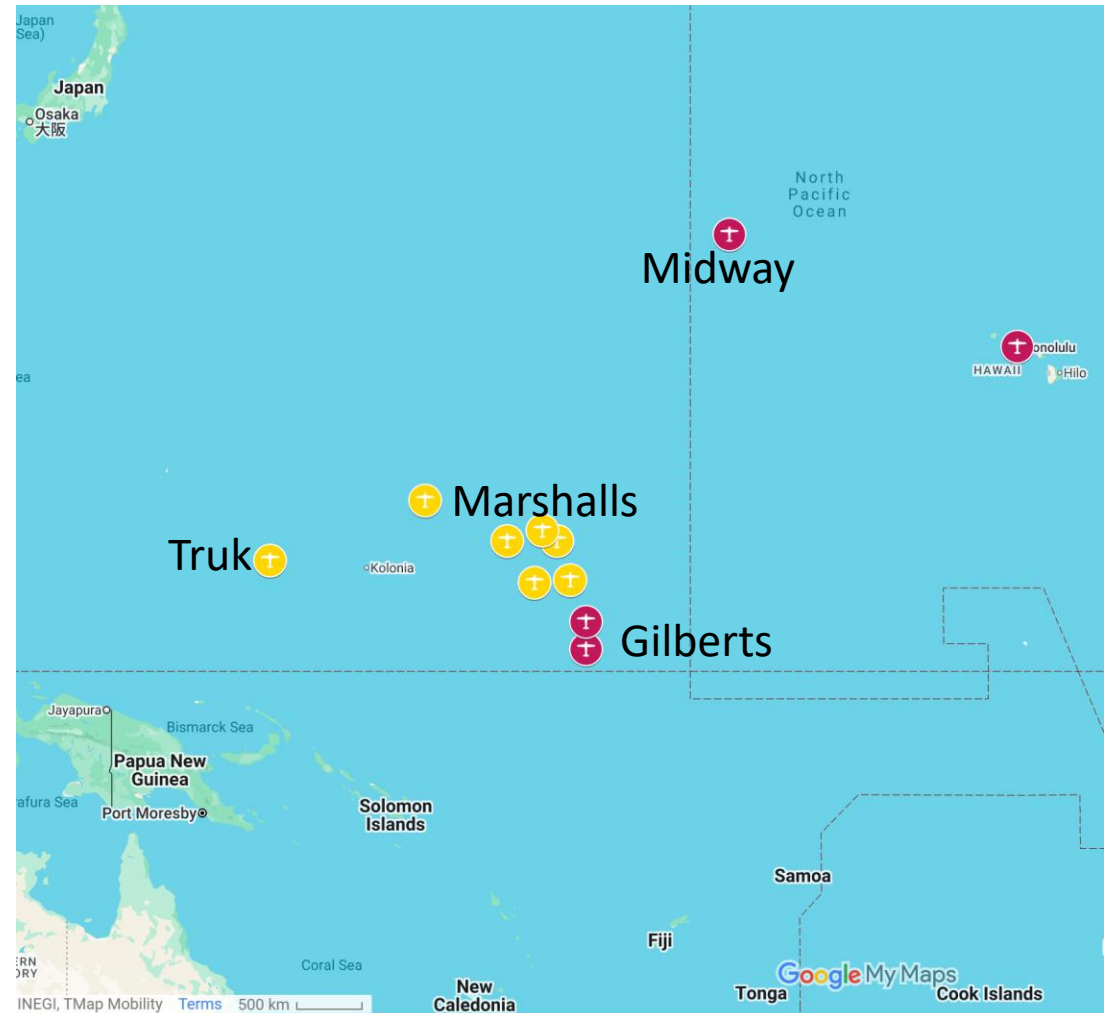
30 December 1943 - Finisterres

- The year ended with Vasey's troops having gained a foothold on the dominating Shaggy Ridge leading to the main Japanese positions on Kankiryō Saddle.
- If the Americans landed at Sidor the Japanese in the Finisterres would undoubtedly be uneasy about their rear and might even have to detach troops from their mountain defences to take care of Sidor, thus facilitating an Australian advance across the Finisterres.
- It was decided that the 18th and 15th Brigades would relieve the 21st and 25th. Brigadier Chilton received orders from Vasey on 30 December at 7 p.m. that the 18th Brigade, using 36 aircraft a day, would relieve the 21st Brigade, starting from New Year's Day.



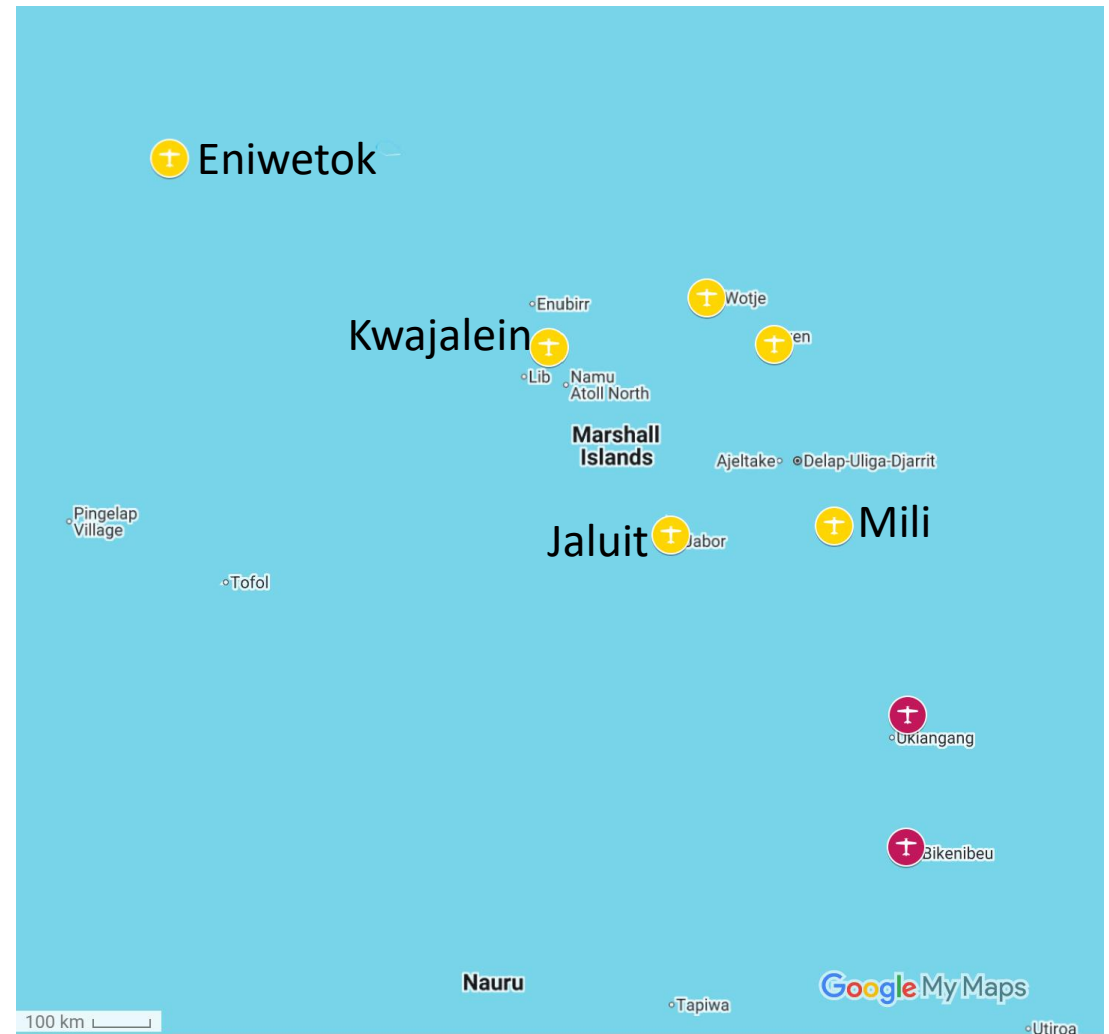
December 1943 - Marshalls

- After the Gilberts came the Marshalls.
- The CINCPAC plan (dated 14 December 1943) for the Marshalls was just about to be issued. This plan called for the simultaneous capture of an advanced Fleet anchorage and two enemy air bases; specific objectives to be designated by a separate directive.
- Rear Admiral Turner argued against the general thesis of this second draft of the CINCPAC plan, saying that there were not enough amphibious troops and immediate logistic support means available in the Pacific Fleet to conduct three simultaneous and full-blown amphibious assaults.
- Vice Admiral Spruance supported this point of view, as did Major General Holland Smith.
- The decision not to try to conduct three simultaneous large-scale amphibious assaults was then made by Admiral Nimitz.



December 1943 - Marshalls

- Once this decision was taken, then the question was, against which objectives should the two amphibious assaults in the Marshalls be directed.
- Admiral Nimitz recalled this .. decision-making conference as follows:
- “My only difference of opinion with Kelly Turner was in connection with the operation for seizing the Marshall Islands. By that time my War Plans Officer was Forrest Sherman.
- I listened to the tentative ideas of various officers. Kelly's plan was to start at the fringes and work in.
- The other plan was to go right in and grab Kwajalein and then pay attention to other fringe islands.



December 1943 - Marshalls

- Kwajalein had the most facilities.

	Air Base	Seaplane Base	Naval Base
Eniwetok Atoll	Engebi		
Jaluit Atoll	Emidj		Jaluit
Kwajalein Atoll (Lagoon--800 square miles)	Roi-Namur Kwajalein	Ebeye	Kwajalein Bigej Gugegwe
Maloelap Atoll (Lagoon--24 square miles)	Taroa		
Mille Atoll	Mille		
Wotje Atoll (Lagoon--190 square miles)	Otdia	Wotje	Wotje

December 1943 - Marshalls

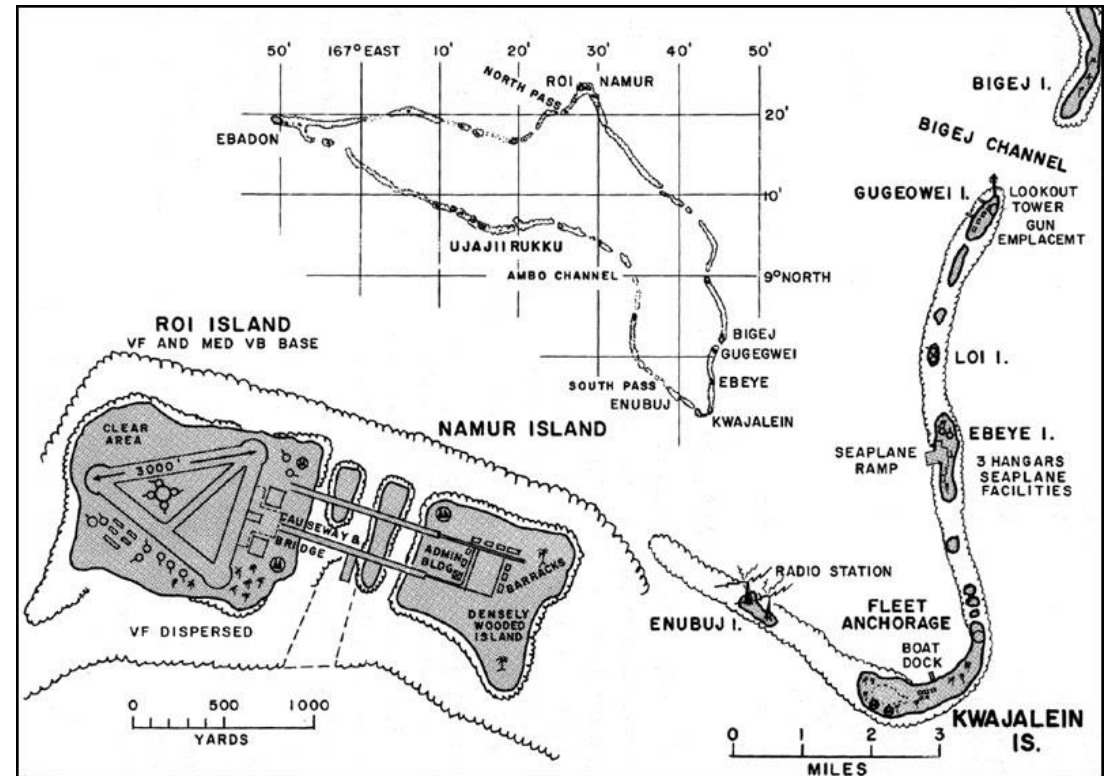
- When I made the decision we would take Kwajalein first, I was told by Kelly that it was dangerous and reckless. He argued and argued and became very determined. He even got Spruance to support this point of view.
- I finally told Kelly: 'This is it. If you don't want to do it, the Department will find someone else to do it. Do you want to do it, or not?' He smiled and said: 'Sure I want to do it.' And he did it to a T. That was the only real difference of opinion between Kelly Turner and me."
- Just for the record of who recommended what at this conference, Admiral Nimitz wrote:
- "While I have no minutes of that conference, I am confident that Vice Admiral Harry Hill's recollections are quite accurate. Those present were unanimously opposed to going into Kwajalein with the exception of myself, Admiral McMorris and Admiral Sherman.



Vice Admiral R. Kelly Turner, USN with Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, USN

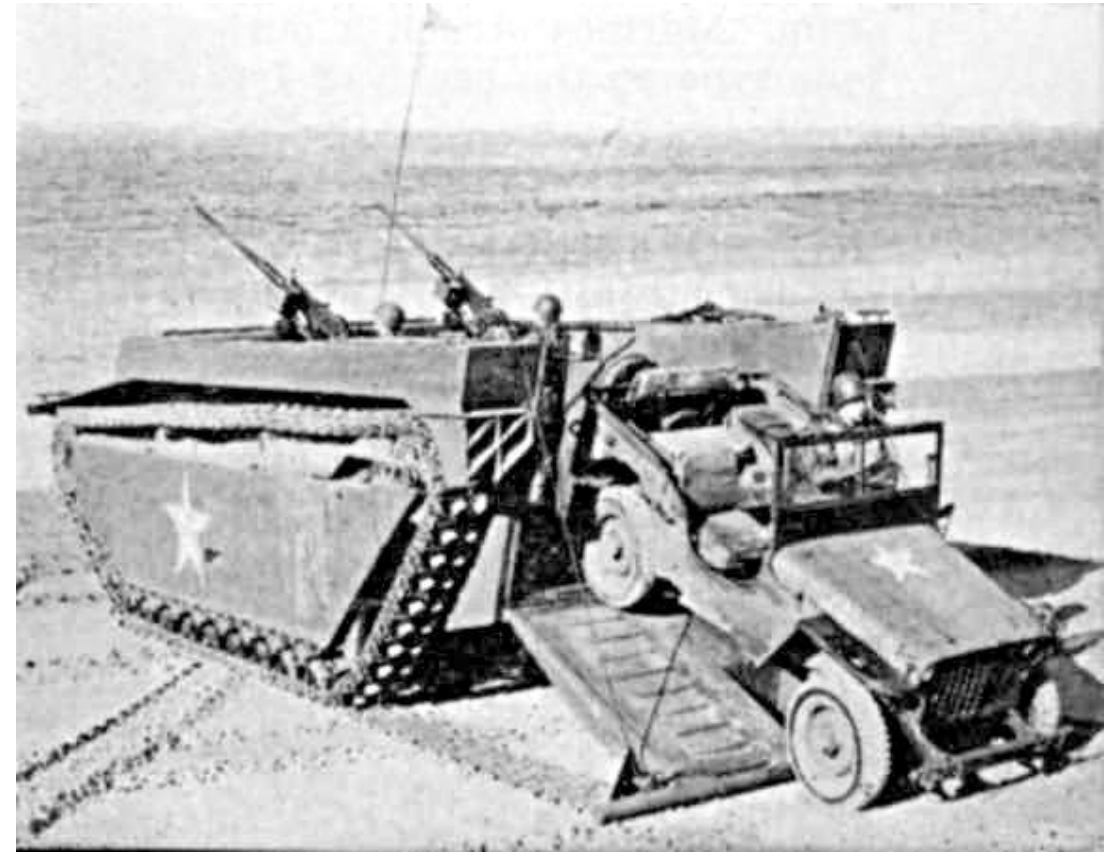
December 1943 - Marshalls

- Kwajalein Atoll is 66 miles long and has a greatest width of 18 miles. It is the largest of the atolls in the Marshalls.
- Within its 800 square miles of lagoon, reached by six good passages through the reefs, there is a spacious Fleet anchorage with depths from 60 to 140 feet.
- Roi Island had on it three paved runways between 3,600 and 4,300 feet long. Namur had extensive air base buildings.
- Forty four miles away at the southern end of the atoll, there was the principal Japanese military headquarters in the Marshalls on cucumber shaped Kwajalein Island.



December 1943 - Marshalls

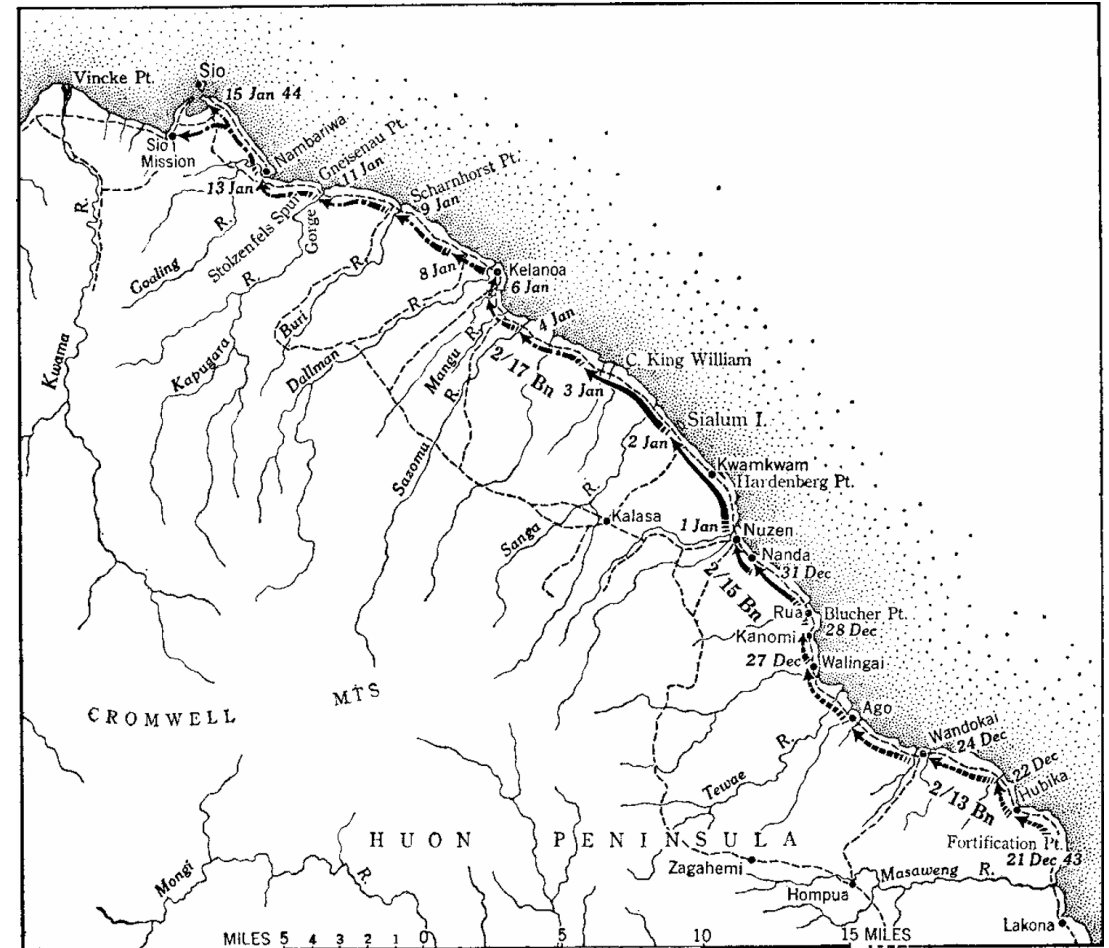
- Between GALVANIC and FLINTLOCK, marked progress was made in six areas of amphibious operations:
- Hydrography and underwater defenses of enemy-held beaches.
 - Underwater Demolition Teams.
- Loading and unloading of shipping.
 - determining priorities of support material carried to the objective.
- Beach organization.
 - Beachmasters of sufficient rank and experience.
- Follow-up shipping.
 - More naval support for civilian transports.
- Availability of larger numbers and better LVT's.
- Gunfire support on the run in
 - 24 LCI(FS) with rockets and lots of guns.



USMC Landing Vehicle, Tracked (4) (LVT-4 or AMTRAC)

December 1943 – New Guinea

- The Ninth division's 20th Brigade continued the advance along the coast, ordered to avoid unnecessary casualties by using artillery and tanks.
- They would continue to have air and P.T. boat support. Aircraft helped to cause material damage and moral confusion among the enemy by bombing and strafing supply and retreat trails and barge hideouts. No less disastrous for the enemy were the raids of the P.T. boats. For instance, from the 9th to the 13th the boats sank 23 barges along the coast, mostly south from Sio, and damaged many more.
- Of the 2/17th Battalion's total casualties of 298 in December, 291 were evacuated sick.



The 20th Brigade pursuit to Sio, 21st December 1943 to 15th January 1944

End of December 1943 – New Britain

- During December Kenney's planes attacked Gasmata or Gloucester, or both, nearly every day and sometimes twice a day.
- They flew 1,845 sorties over Gloucester, dropped 3,926 tons of bombs, and fired 2,095,488 rounds of machine gun ammunition.



End of December 1943 – New Guinea

- Behind the lines engineers set to work building a truck highway from Lae to Nadzab along the prewar road, but rain fell during forty-six of the final sixty days of the project and it was December before the task was finally finished and large amounts of supplies could be sent to Nadzab.
- Nadzab and the other sites in the Markham and Ramu Valleys received all their supplies and equipment by airlift during the period the road was under construction.
- By the end of December Allied Air Forces possessed three first-class air bases in full-scale operation in the Markham and Ramu Valleys: one at Nadzab, one at Lae, and one at the juncture of the Gusap and Ramu Rivers. The last site was selected in preference to Kaiapit, which proved too swampy and malarious for extensive development. Dumpu served as a staging field for fighter planes.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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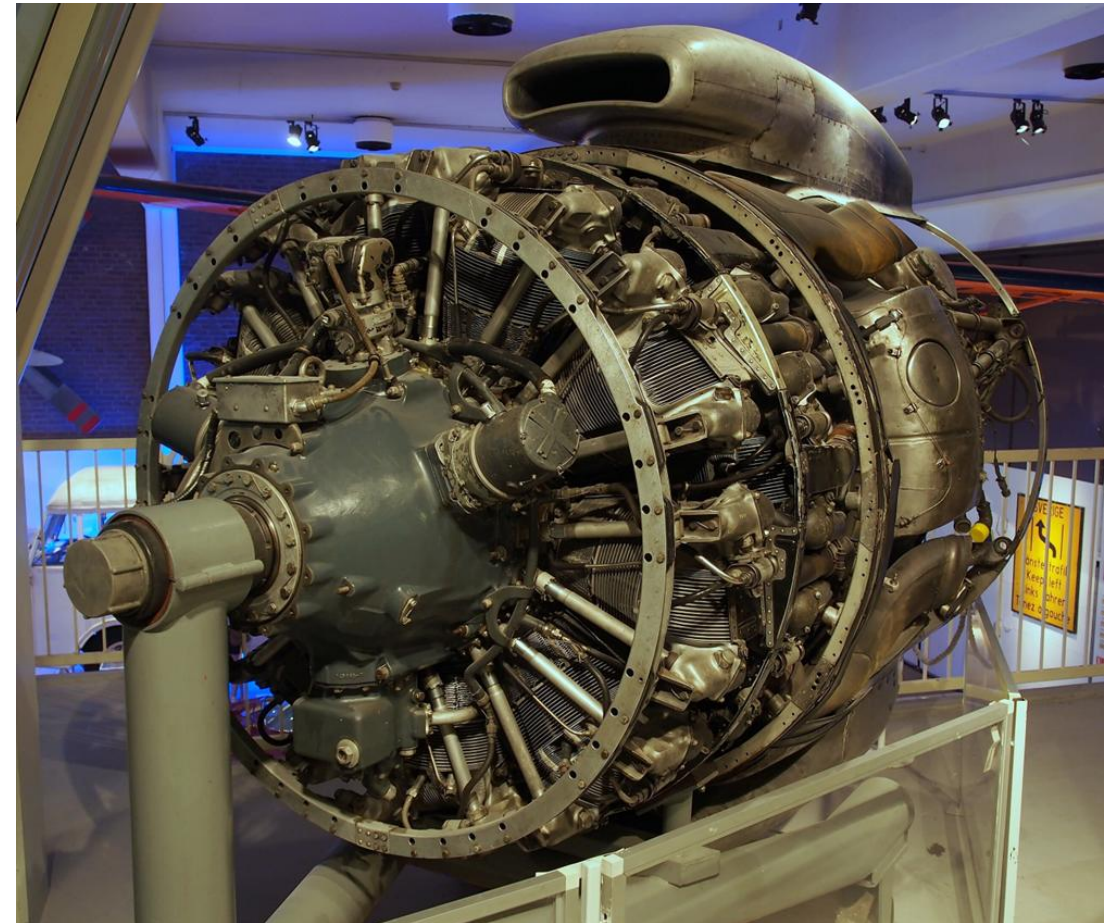
NADZAB, NEW GUINEA. 1944-02-15. AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF PARALLEL RUNWAYS

End 1943

- By the end of 1943 the Fifth Air Force had already grown to 78 squadrons, compared with 36 on 31st March 1943.
- In the same period the R.A.A.F. in the South-West Pacific had only grown from 34 squadrons to 45.
- During this period the Empire Air Training Scheme continued to send aircrews and ground personnel to serve with the RAF in other theatres.

End 1943 – B29

- By the end of 1943, although almost 100 B29s had been delivered, only 15 were airworthy.
- The most common cause of maintenance headaches and catastrophic failures was the Wright R-3350 Duplex-Cyclone radial engines which were beset with dangerous reliability problems.
- Because of a high magnesium content in the crankcase, engine fires could burn with a core temperature approaching 5,600 °F which could burn through the main spar in seconds, causing a catastrophic failure. A number of changes were introduced to improve cooling, and the aircraft was rushed into service.
- Interim measures included cuffs placed on propeller blades to divert a greater flow of cooling air into the intakes, which had baffles installed to direct a stream of air onto the exhaust valves. Oil flow to the valves was also increased, asbestos baffles were installed around rubber push rod fittings to prevent oil loss, thorough pre-flight inspections were made to detect unseated valves, and mechanics frequently replaced the uppermost five cylinders (every 25 hours of engine time) and the entire engines (every 75 hours).
- Pilots describe flight after takeoff as being an urgent struggle for airspeed (generally, flight after takeoff should consist of striving for altitude). Radial engines need airflow to keep them cool, and failure to get up to speed as soon as possible in a B29 could result in an engine failure and risk of fire.



The Wright R-3350 Duplex-Cyclone

1943 – B29

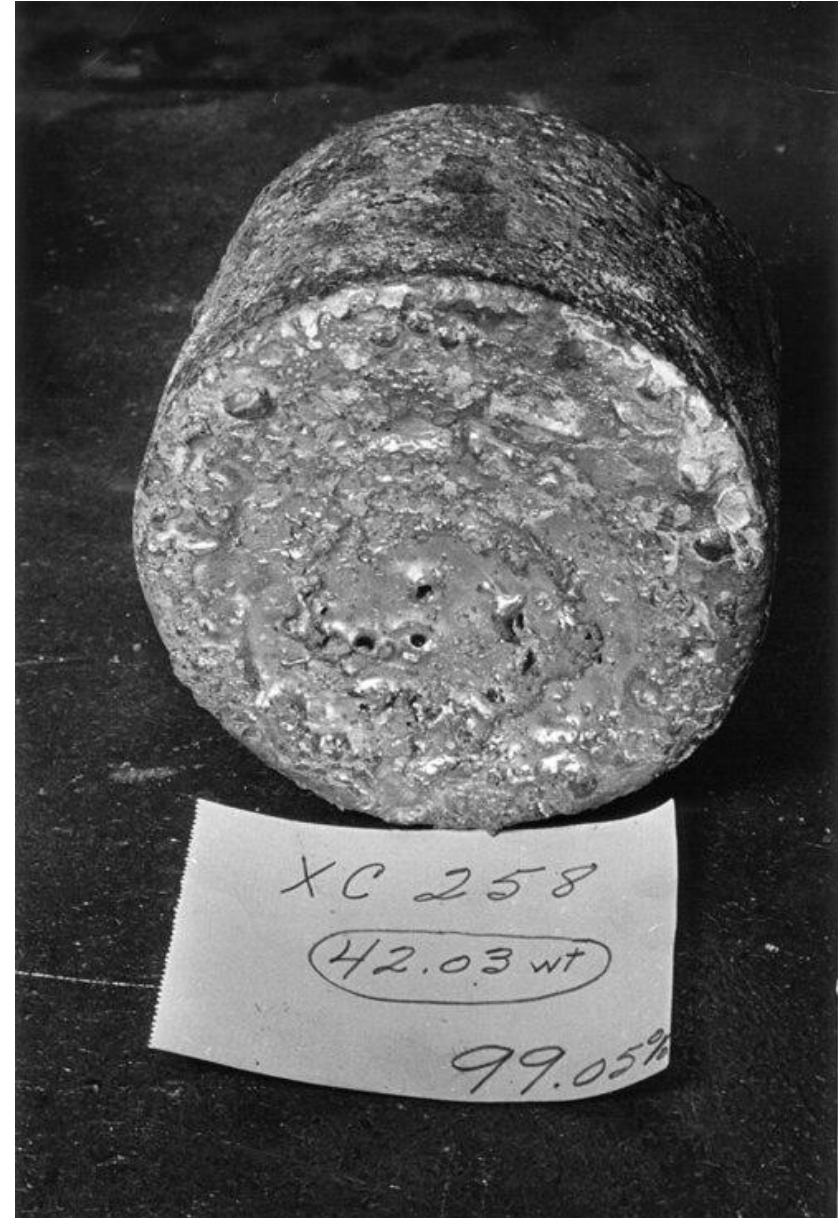
- In 1943, USAAF planners began assessing the feasibility of a firebombing campaign against Japanese cities.
- Japan's main industrial facilities were vulnerable to such attacks as they were concentrated in several large cities and a high proportion of production took place in homes and small factories in urban areas.
- The planners estimated that incendiary bomb attacks on Japan's six largest cities could cause physical damage to almost 40 percent of industrial facilities and result in the loss of 7.6 million man-months of labor.
- It was also estimated that these attacks would kill over 500,000 people, render about 7.75 million homeless and force almost 3.5 million to be evacuated.
- The USAAF tested the effectiveness of incendiary bombs on Japanese-style buildings at Eglin Field and the "Japanese Village" at Dugway Proving Ground.



German (upper left) and Japanese (lower right) villages at Dugway Proving Ground, aerial view, 1943.

1943 - Manhattan Project

- The Ames process to produce Uranium metal became available in 1943.
- Photo: A uranium metal "biscuit" created from the reduction reaction of the Ames process



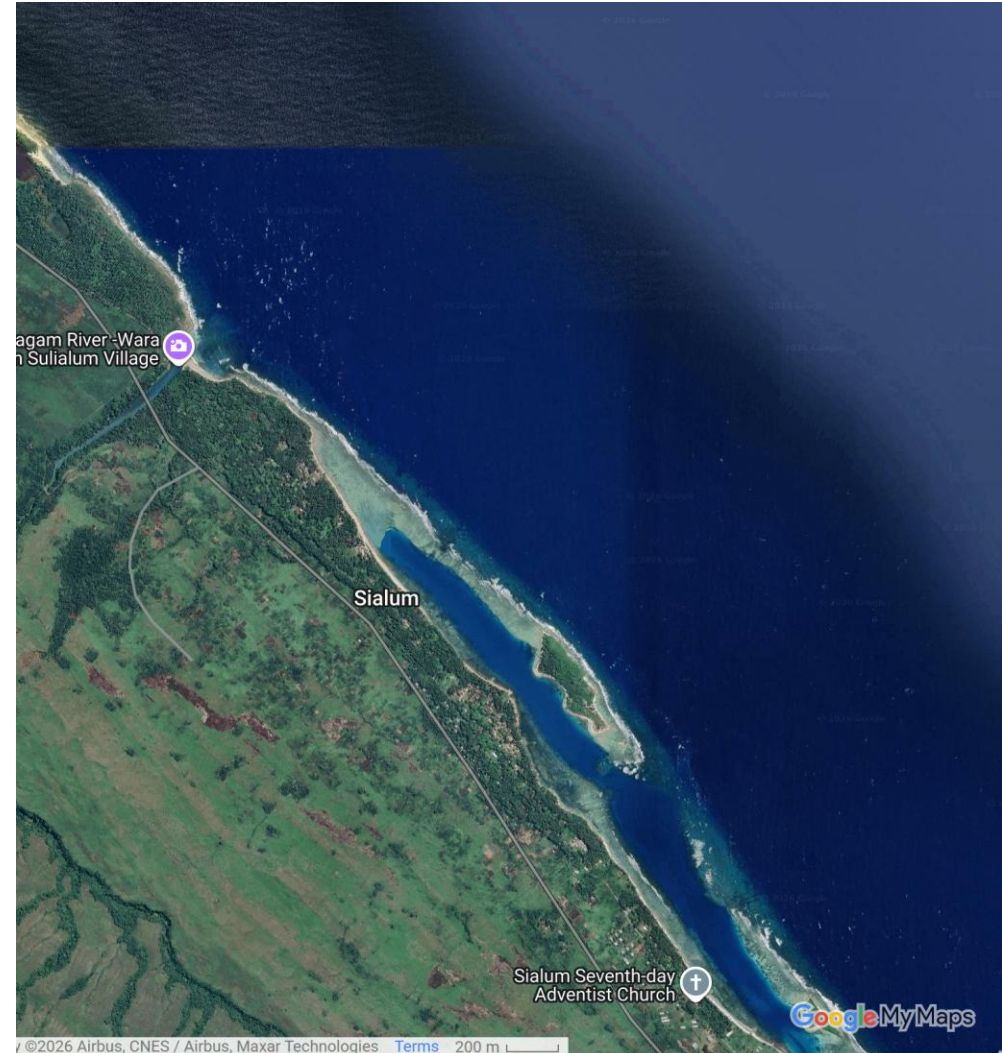
1 January 1944 - RAAF

- In spite of great efforts the departure of No. 10 Group from Australia had to be postponed until 1st January 1944. This delay resulted in confusion in shipping arrangements.
- The difficulties caused by the rapid concentration of the units near Brisbane is illustrated by the experience of No. 11 Repair and Salvage Unit.
- “Arrangements for receiving and storage of the unit equipment at Meeandah were totally inadequate. This equipment, approximately 2,000 ship tons, was dumped in an open paddock sodden with recent rainfall and without any cover whatsoever. The camping facilities for our off loading party were a disgrace, filthy beyond description.”
- One of the last persons to be appointed to the group was the commander himself, Group Captain Scherger (photo). Mr Curtin, in his capacity as Minister for Defence, approved of Scherger's appointment on 24th November.



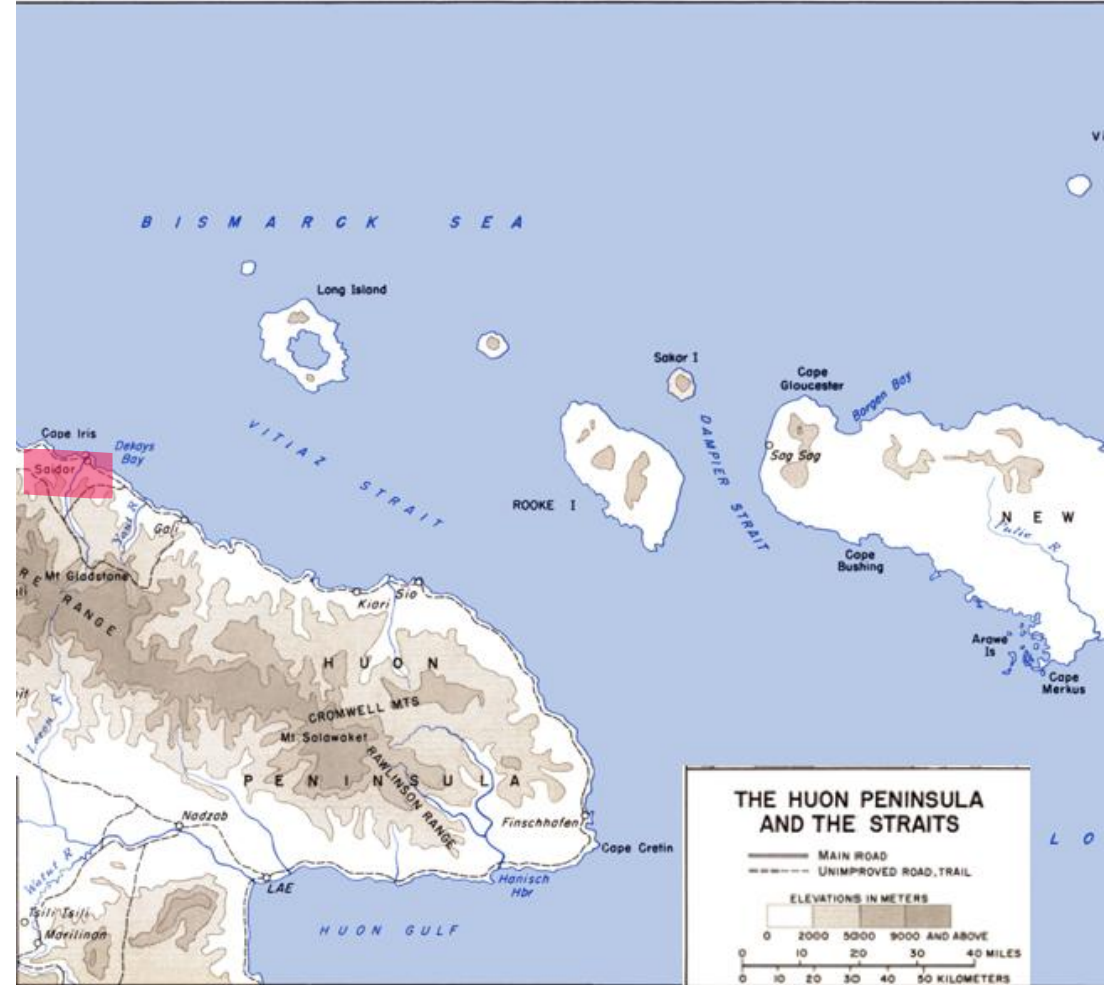
2 January 1944 – New Guinea

- The 2/15th kept up the momentum on 2nd January: it passed Kwamkwam early in the afternoon and at 4 p.m. reached Sialum Island.
- The capture of Sialum, about half way between Fortification Point and Sio, was an important event.
- It had a sheltered beach and all-weather anchorage, and there a big supply dump could be built up.
- The Japanese were in flight round the coast of the Huon Peninsula.
- Relentlessly pursued by the 9th Division they were hammered almost nightly at sea by the P.T. boats and often were attacked during the day by American and Australian aircraft.



2 January 1944 – New Guinea

- When the ships and landing craft hove to in Dekays Bay near Sador before sunrise of 2 January, heavy overcast and rain obscured the shore.
- Admiral Barbey postponed H Hour from 0650 to 0705 to provide more light for naval gunfire, loading and assembly of boats, and identification of beaches.
- The destroyers and rocket LCI's fired the scheduled 1,725 5-inch shells and 624 4.5-inch rockets at the beaches and inland areas. Troops aboard ship, one thousand yards offshore, felt the concussion of the explosives.
- First craft touched down at 0725, and during the next seventeen minutes the four waves of thirty-six LCP(R)'s landed 1,440 troops of the 126th Infantry Regiment.
- There was no opposition from the enemy. The sixteen LCI's, organized in three waves, grounded and put ashore more than 3,000 troops.



2 January 1944 – New Guinea

- Each LST had towed an LCM of the 2d Engineer Special Brigade. The LST's cast loose their tows on arrival offshore, and three LCM's sailed to the beaches with the last wave of small craft.
- Thirty minutes before the LST's were scheduled to beach, an angledozer clanked out of each LCM and at once set to work grading landing points and beach exits to use in unloading the LST's.
- When the six LST's beached at about 0800, landing points and beach exits made of gravel and wire mesh were ready.
- This performance, plus the efficiency of the shore party, which Admiral Barbey praised highly, enabled cargo to come ashore in record time.
- Each LST rapidly unloaded three hundred tons of bulk supplies and two hundred tons of vehicles and equipment.
- By 1140 all LST's had unloaded and retracted.
- The bad weather delayed the scheduled air bombing, but later in the morning B-24's, B-25's, and A-20's bombed the Saidor airstrip and the high ground inland.



M 10 MOTOR CARRIAGE MOUNTING 3-INCH GUN on a rough and stony beach near Saidor, 2 January 1944.

2 January 1944 – New Guinea

- When they reached shore the rifle battalions began to push inland while the artillery established itself and the shore party moved supplies off the beach.
- Japanese resistance was limited to a few rifle shots. General Martin reported that only 15 enemy soldiers had been near the beaches at the time of the landing, and 11 of these were killed by the bombardments and by soldiers of the 126th.



(Australian War Memorial)
The landing of the 126th U.S. Regimental Combat Team at Saidor, 2nd January 1944.

2 January 1944 – New Guinea

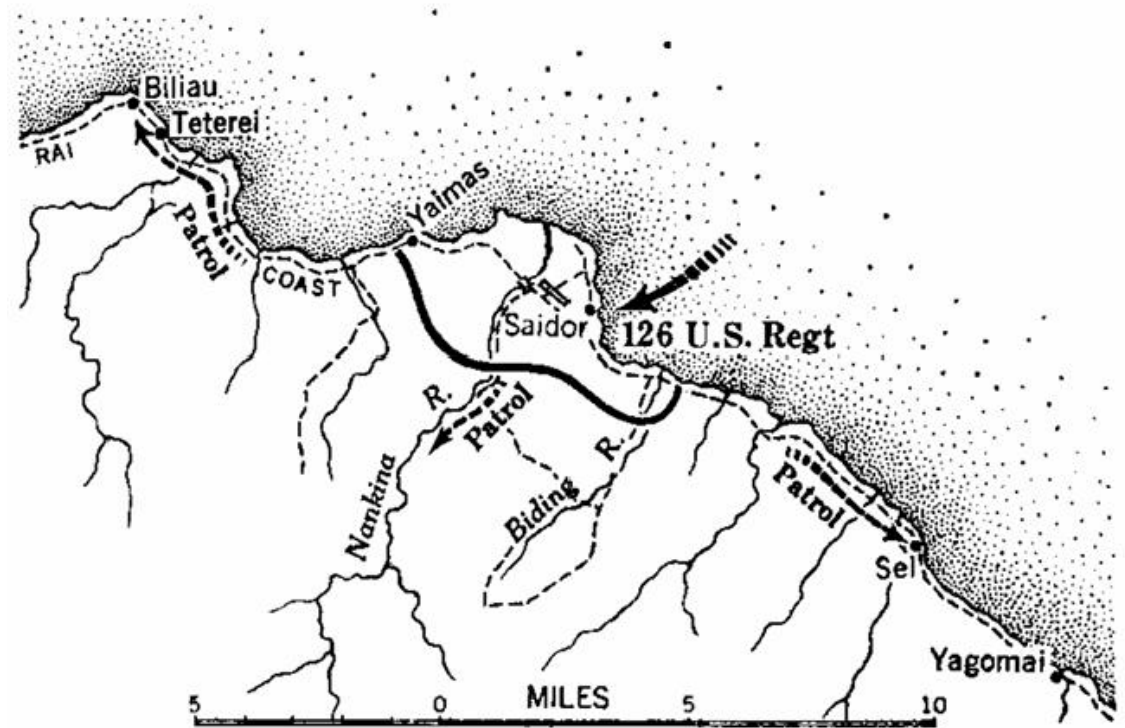
- Saidor had a normal garrison of about 50, and on 2 January some 120-150 transients were present. All these promptly took to the hills. American casualties on D Day numbered 1 soldier killed and 5 wounded and 2 sailors drowned at BLUE Beach.
- Forces ashore numbered 6,779.
- Admiral Crutchley's task force had performed its usual mission of covering the invasion against Japanese warships from Rabaul, but none appeared.
- Thirty-nine fighters and twenty-four bombers of the Japanese 4th Air Army were based at Wewak but were unable to launch an attack until 1600. By then Barbey's ships were well out to sea, Martin's soldiers had dispersed their supplies, and little damage was done.



REAR ADM. DANIEL E. BARBEY, left, and Brig. Gen. Clarence A. Martin, center, observing landing operations at Saidor, 2 January 1944.

3 January 1944 – New Guinea

- Among the troops landed at Saidor were an Australian officer, an Angau detachment and 11 native police boys.
- By 3rd January the I/126th Battalion was patrolling the tracks to the south, the II Battalion was dug in along the Biding River and the III Battalion was dug in on Yaimas Ridge.



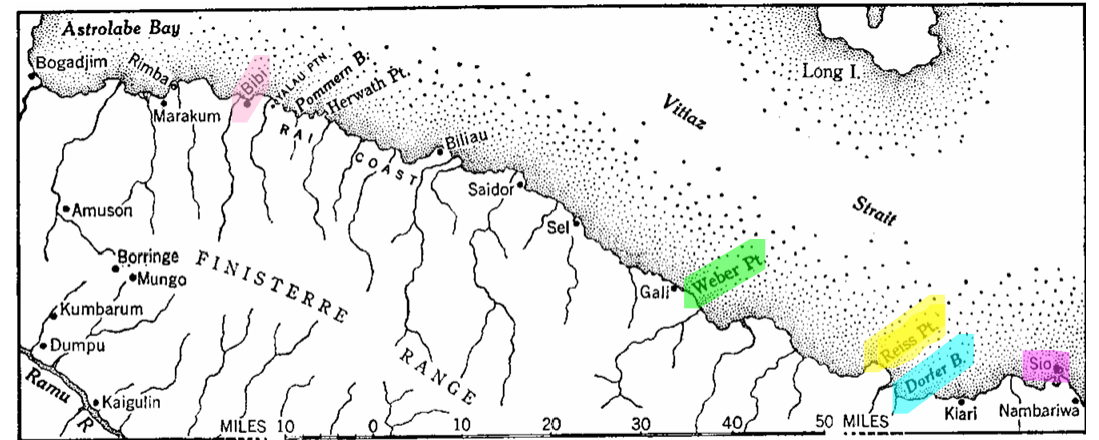
7 – 11 January 1944 – New Guinea

- On the 7th-8th five 70-foot barges were attacked a few miles north of Pommern Bay, two food rafts were sunk off Nambariwa and a submarine was attacked a few miles from there. In this submarine was General Adachi who had been trying for some days to reach Sio from Madang in order to superintend the retreat. The submarine survived and entered Sio on the 8th.
- Next night the P.T. boats destroyed an enemy barge and engaged enemy troops on the Nambariwa beach, sank three barges—one loaded with about 100 troops—near Herwath Point, sank three loaded barges off Rimba, and destroyed three barges on the beach at Marakum.
- Photo: Admiral Morton C. Mumma, USN was the South West Pacific PT-boat squadron commander.



10 January 1944 - New Guinea

- On the night 9th-10th January the P .T. boats attacked six barges laden with troops off **Dorfer Bay**.
- The Japanese barges were armed with 13-mm guns and put up a stiff fight, but one was sunk and the others damaged.
- That night two out of 8 barges laden with troops going north-west were sunk off **Weber Point** and the remaining six damaged.
- Six more barges were destroyed on the beach at **Bibi**.
- On 10/11 three P.T. boats prowling north of **Reiss Point** sank three enemy barges each containing about 30 troops and took one prisoner.
- North of **Sio** two barges and a large lifeboat were destroyed.



Sio to Bogadjim

11 January 1944 - RAAF

- On 11th January two Kittyhawks landed on one runway at Nadzab No. 4 Field, and on the following day Wing Commander Walker, commander of No. 78 Squadron, led twenty aircraft of his squadron from Kiriwina to Nadzab.
- Four days later, fifteen Vengeance dive bombers of No. 24 Squadron led by Squadron Leader Honey (photo) followed the Kittyhawks from Kiriwina to Nadzab. No. 10 Group was now ready to begin action with two squadrons.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

OG0115

TSILI TSILI, NEW GUINEA. C. 1943-09. THE C.O. OF NO. 24 (VENGEANCE) SQUADRON, SQUADRON LEADER B. HONEY (WITH FUR FELT HAT), BACK FROM A RAID, TALKING TO OTHER AIRCREW MEMBERS OF THE SQUADRON.

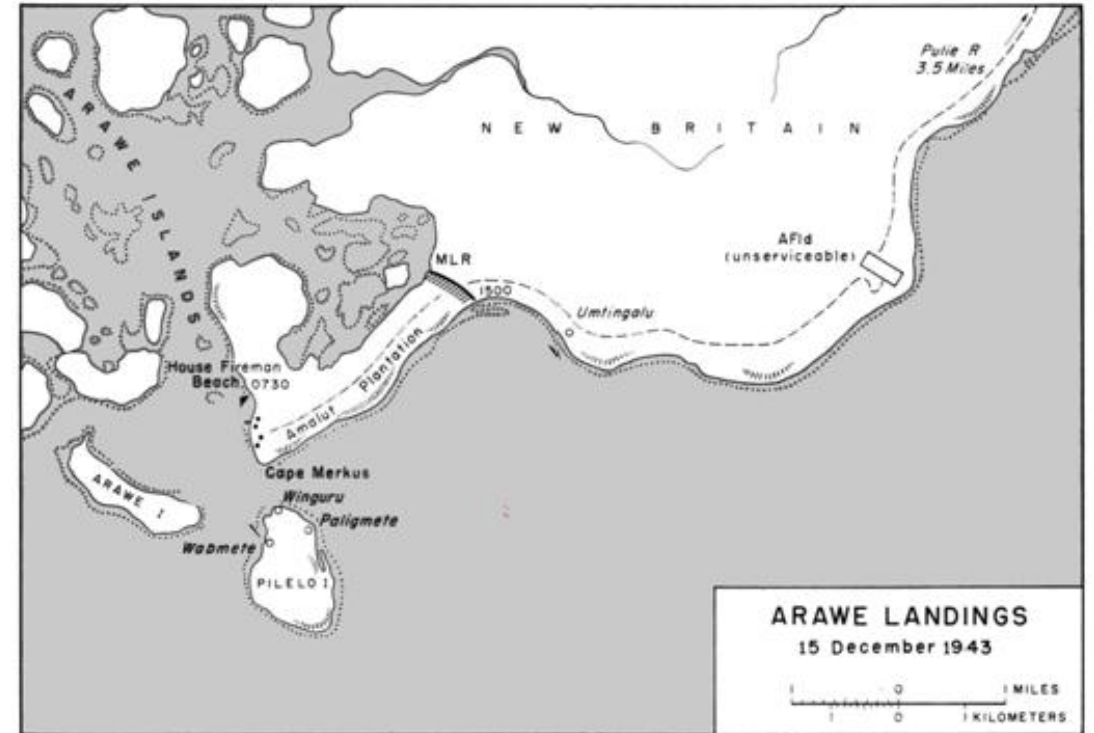
11 January 1944 - Manhattan Project

- January 11: A special group of the Theoretical Division is created at Los Alamos under Edward Teller (badge) to study implosion.



12 January 1944 – New Britain

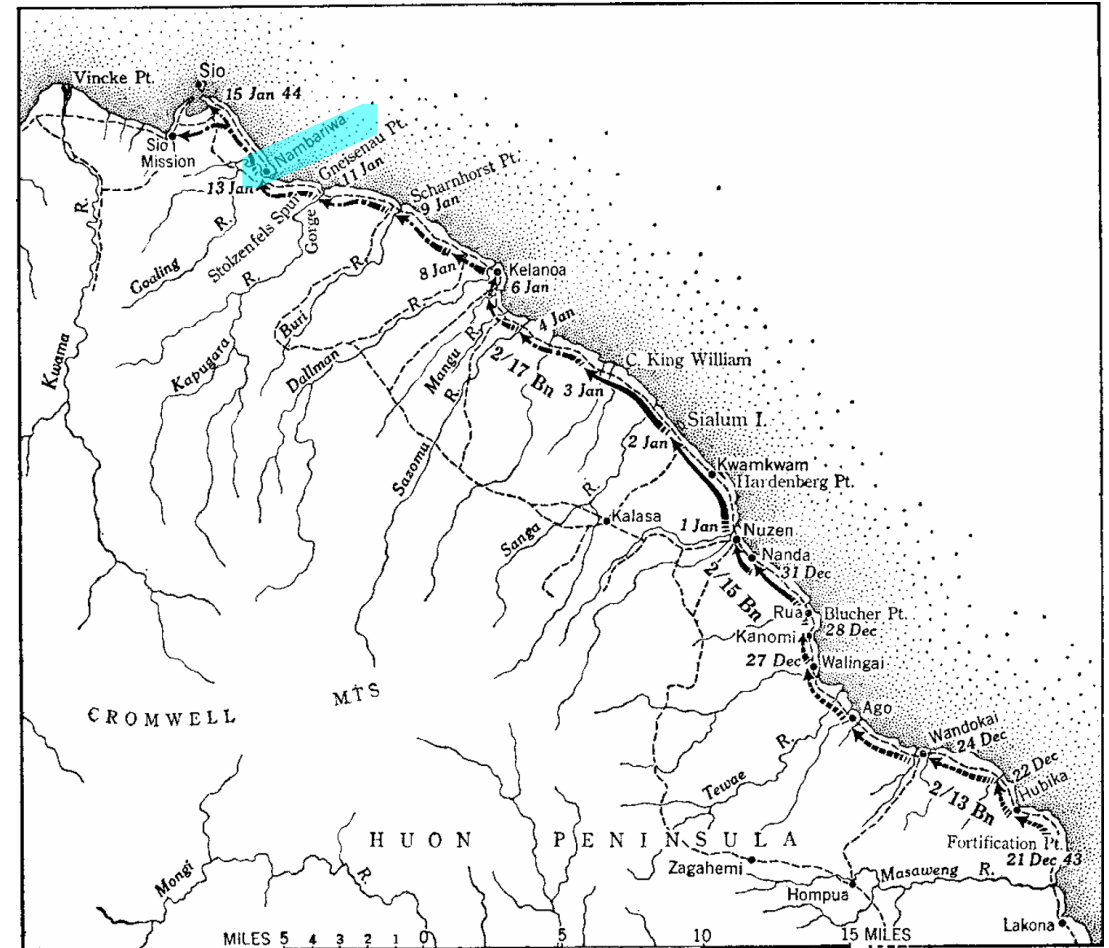
- On 6 January Cunningham reported to Krueger the existence of the Japanese positions. Cunningham's forces now totaled almost 4,750 men and his short front line--seven hundred yards--was a strong position with fields of fire cut, barbed wire emplaced, and artillery and mortar data computed.
- The enemy positions he faced consisted largely of shallow trenches and foxholes and were practically invisible in the dense underbrush.
- An assault would be further complicated by the fact that in the area there were no clearly defined terrain features which could serve to guide an attack and help it maintain its direction.
- Cunningham asked for tanks and more troops and repeated his request for 90-mm. anti-aircraft guns.
- Krueger agreed that attacks by riflemen alone would result in a waste of lives and agreed to send tanks as well as more troops.
- F Company, 158th Infantry, and B Company, 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division, reached Arawe from Cape Cretin on 10 and 12 January.



MAP 17

13 January 1944 – New Guinea

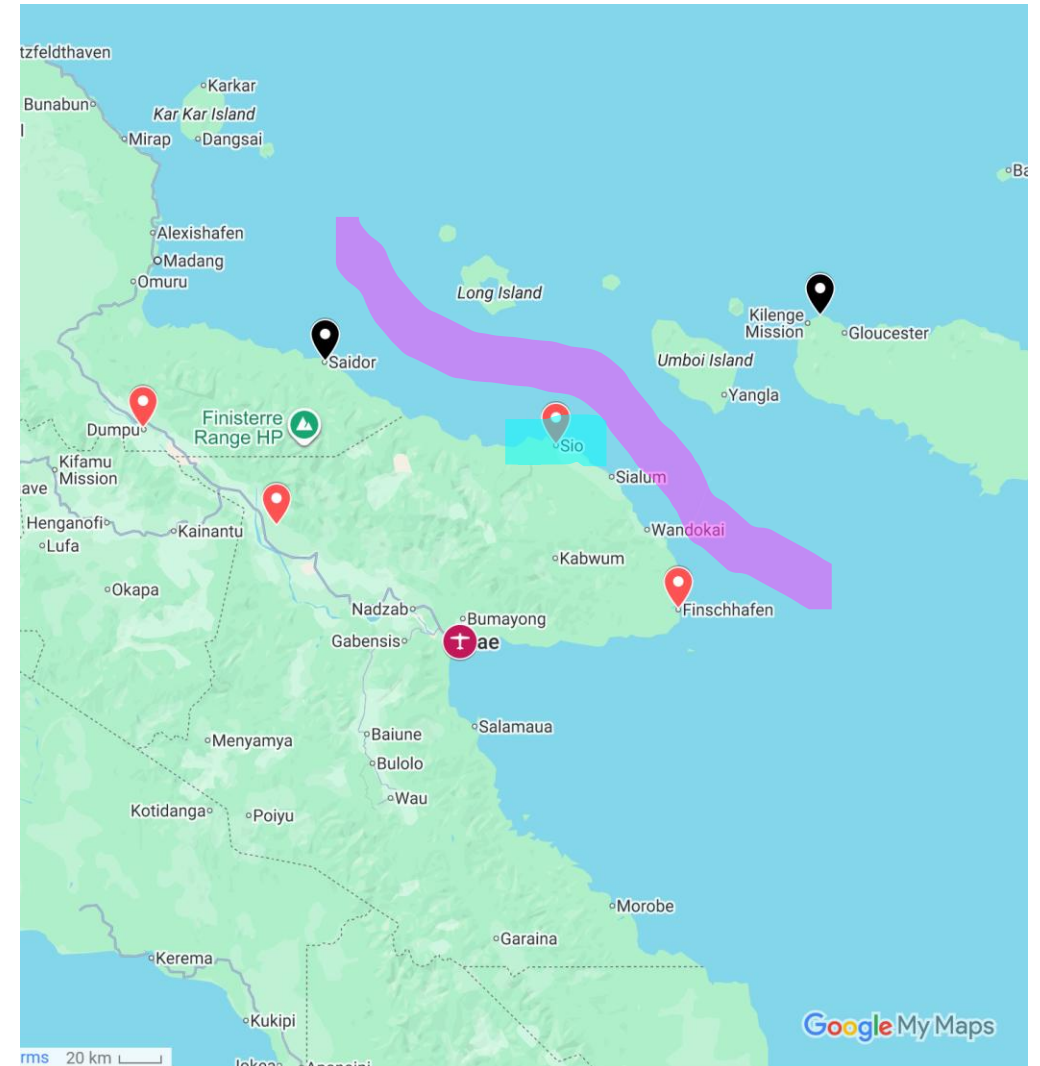
- After the landing of the Americans across their escape route at Saidor on 2nd January the Japanese were retreating as fast as they could.
- The 9th Division had now completed its task. On 13th January Berryman ordered the commander of the 5th Division to take over the forward area as soon as Brigadier Cameron's 8th Brigade could relieve the 20th.
- Cameron arrived in **Nambariwa** on 15th January .



The 20th Brigade pursuit to Sio, 21st December 1943 to 15th January 1944

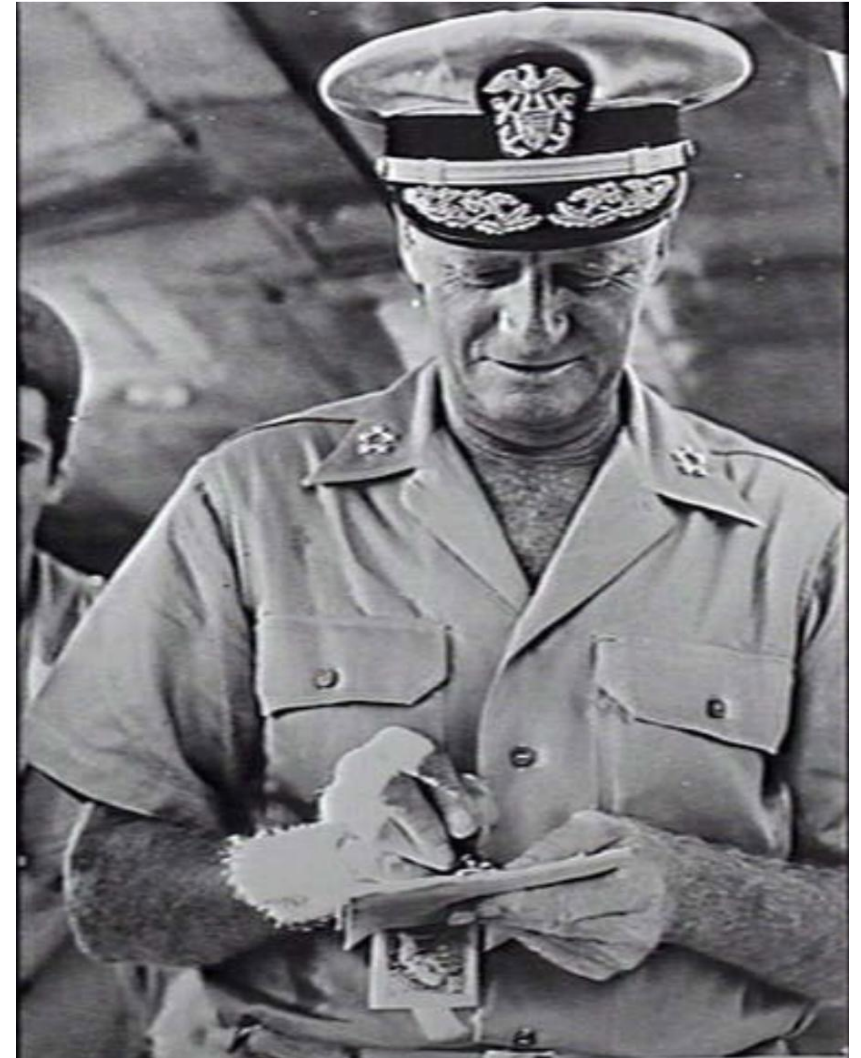
15 January 1944 – New Guinea

- Wooten's men advanced slowly but steadily against the retreating enemy, supported all the while by the 2d Engineer Special Brigade craft.
- The Australians found many sick, wounded, and dead Japanese who had fallen by the way as they laboriously marched along.
- On 15 January 1944 the 9th Division entered **Sio**, on the north coast of the Huon Peninsula.
- Fighting on the peninsula was not yet over, but the main strategic objectives--the airfield sites and the coast of **Vitiaz Strait**--were now in Allied hands.
- When the Lae-Nadzab road and the airfields were completed, the Allies could control the air over the straits and bring a heavier weight of metal to bear on Japanese bases, to the north and to the west.



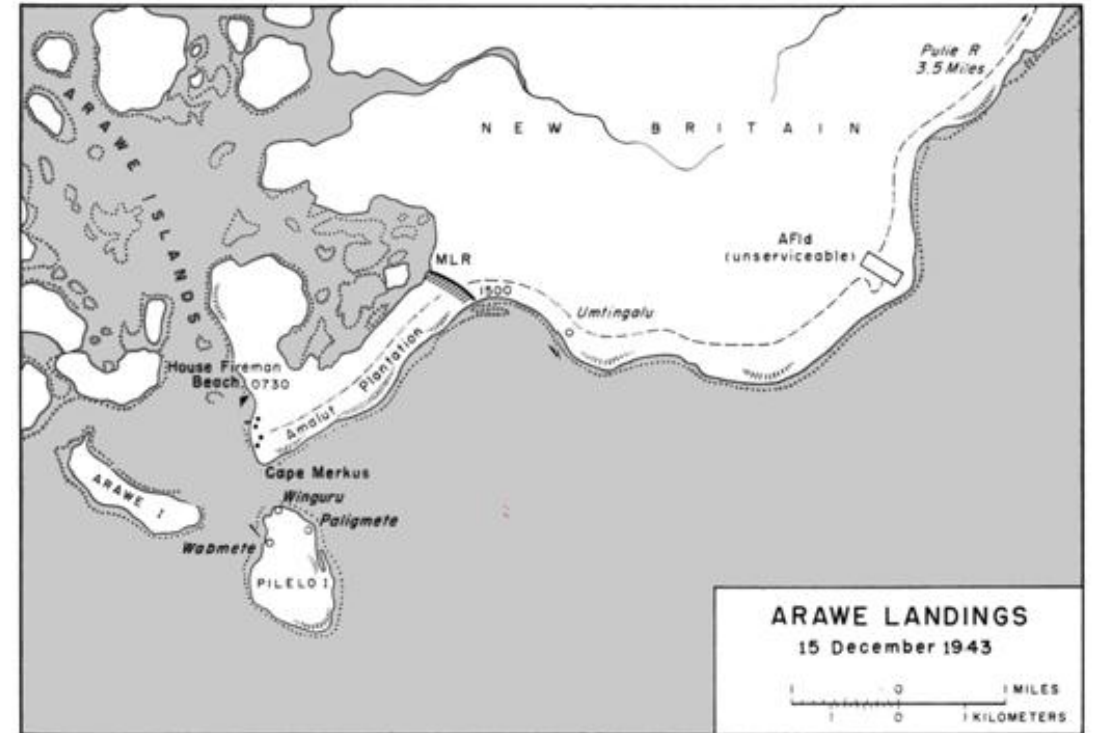
15 January 1944 - Pacific

- Admiral Nimitz (photo) wrapped up a rather formal restatement of the doctrine of Unity of Command addressed to all Flag and Marine General Officers as follows:
- “Numerous instances have been brought to my notice where Naval commanders of Joint forces have prescribed the 'How' as well as the 'what' for detachments (large and small) of other Services. Where this has occurred, it has been done in violation of sound principles of command, Joint agreement and, I may add, at variance with the well known convictions of CominCh.
- I require Naval commanders of all Joint forces to see to it that not only detachments (large and small) of other Services whether Army or Marine Corps, but Navy as well, are left free to accomplish assigned tasks by the use of their own technique as developed by precept and experience, that is, prescribe the 'what,' 'where,' and 'when' unhampered by the 'how.’”

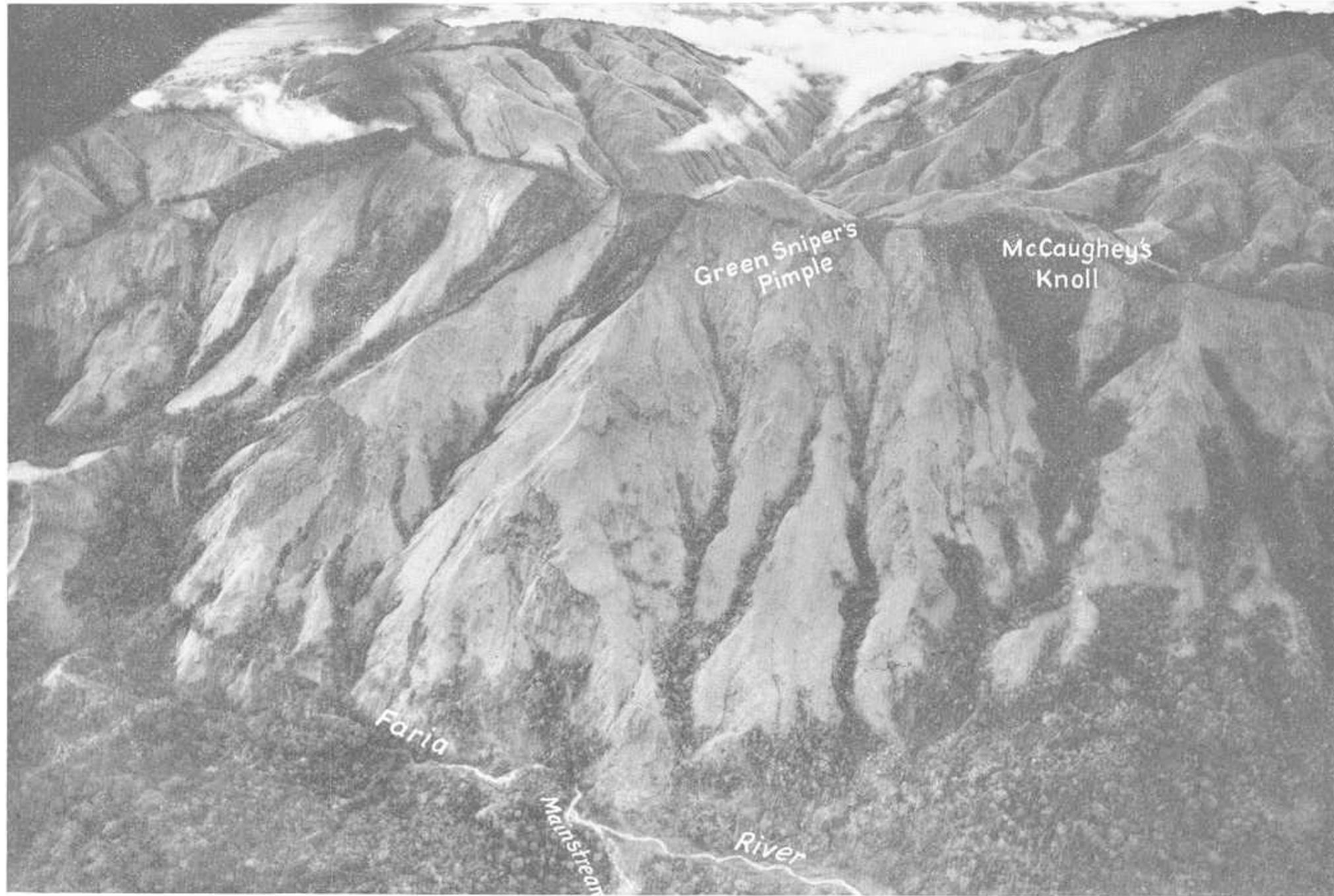


16 January 1944 – New Britain

- On the morning of 16 January attack and medium bombers struck at the Japanese positions, artillery and mortars shelled them, and the Marine light tanks, two companies of the 158th Infantry, and C Troop of the 112th Cavalry attacked.
- The tanks led, with infantrymen and cavalymen following each tank. Direct communication between tanks and foot troops was successfully attained by a device which the tank company improvised; it installed an EE8 field telephone at the rear of each machine.
- The attack went well and carried forward for fifteen hundred yards. Next day B Troop and one tank platoon mopped up remaining pockets of resistance.
- Thereafter Arawe was quiet. Casualties for all units in the DIRECTOR Task Force totalled 118 dead, 352 wounded, and 4 missing. The Japanese had actually withdrawn to defend the airstrip and remained there until ordered to retreat to the east in February.



MAP 17

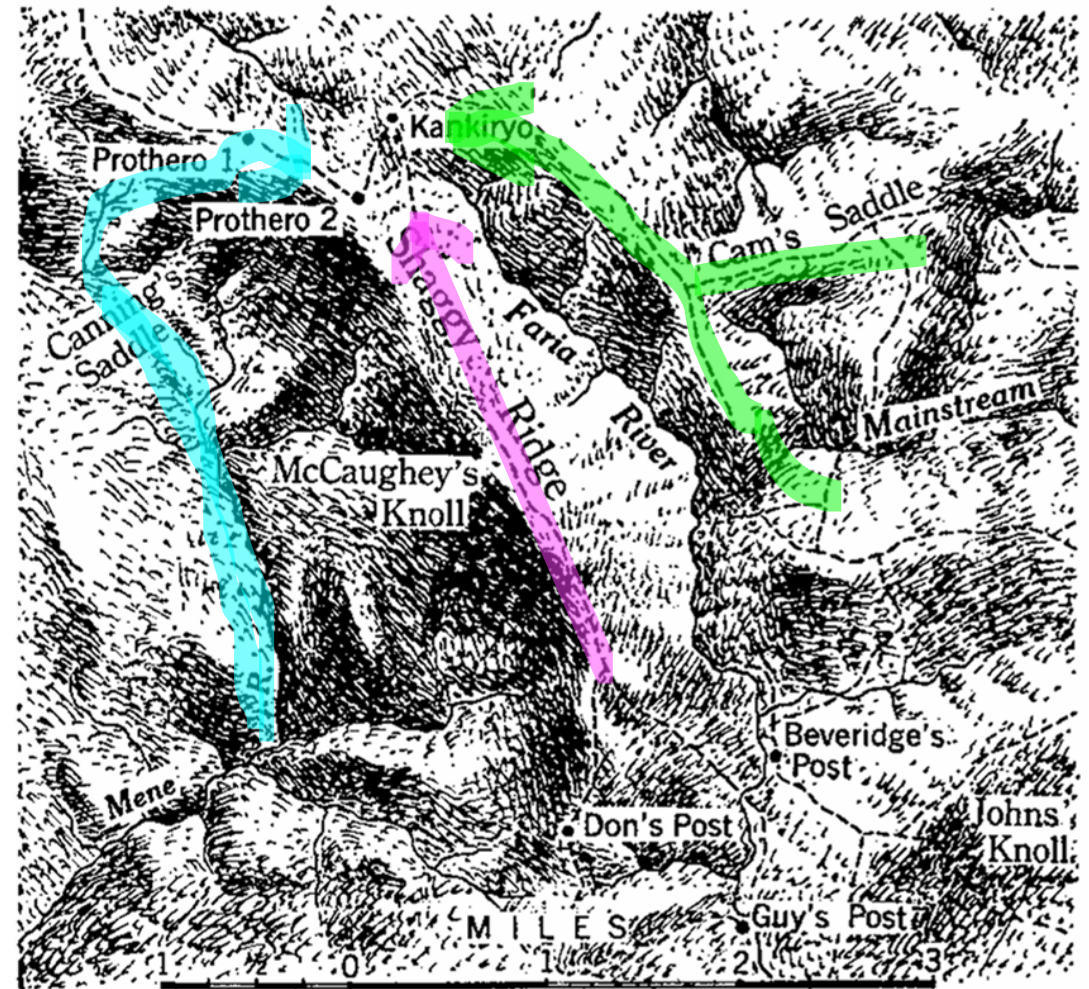


Shaggy Ridge, looking south-west to the Ramu Valley.

(R.A.A.F.)

19–20 January 1944 - Finisterres

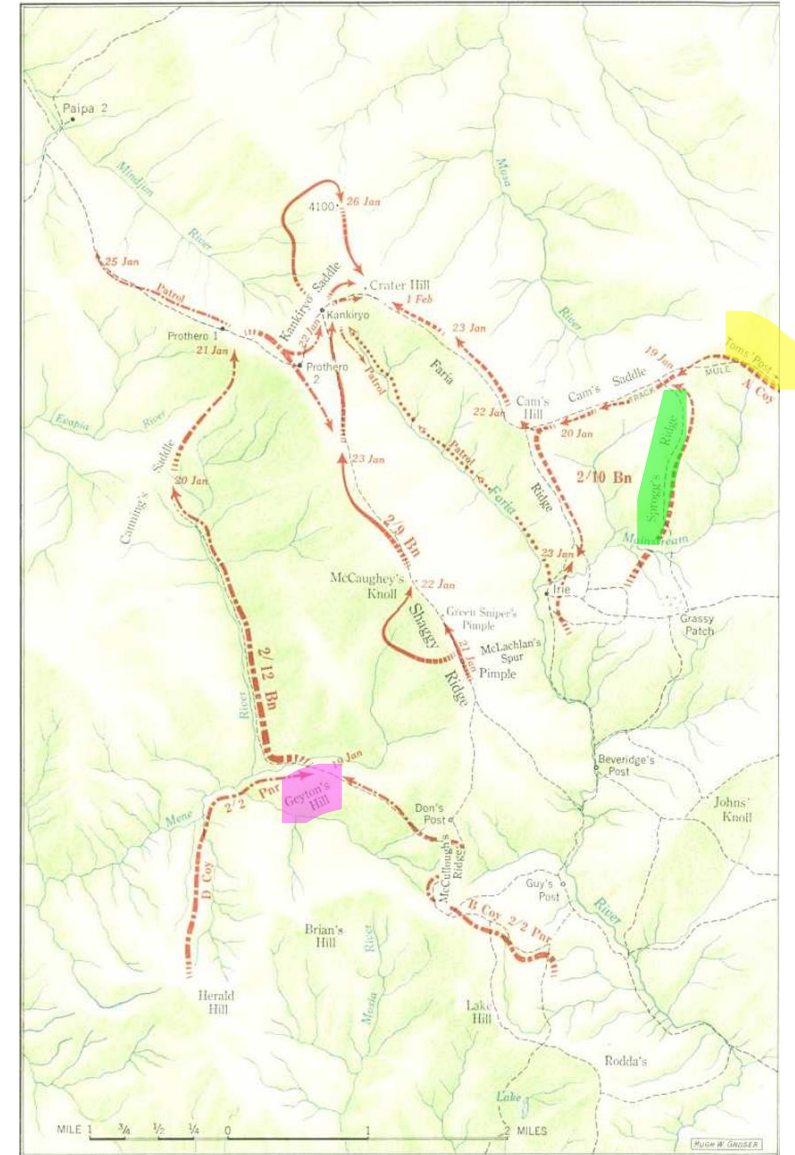
- Early in the new year, the 15th and 18th Brigades relieved the 21st and 25th Brigades around Shaggy Ridge, and planning for a new offensive began.
- The major Australian attack on Shaggy Ridge – codenamed Operation Cutthroat – was launched by the 18th Brigade on 19–20 January.
- Nine long and two short 25-pounders of the 2/4th Field Regiment were in support and about 7,000 shells were available. The guns had been dragged forward and were now concentrated in the Lakes-Guy's Post area.
- The brigade's three battalions were to converge on the Kankiryo Saddle from three different directions:
- the 2/12th Infantry Battalion was to advance from Canning's Saddle, east of Shaggy Ridge, and attack two well-defended knolls on the northern end of Shaggy Ridge, known as Prothero I and II;
- the 2/9th Infantry Battalion would attack northwards along Shaggy Ridge itself, to take McCaughey's Knoll, by way of Green Sniper's Pimple; and
- the 2/10th Infantry Battalion would advance along Faria Ridge, which lay to the east of Shaggy Ridge and joined it at Kankiryo Saddle.



Shaggy Ridge area

19 January 1944 - Finisterres

- Preliminary moves were completed on the 19th when Captain Gunn's company of the 2/10th moved out from **Toms' Post** for **Sprogg's Ridge** via the Japanese mule track and was followed later by Captain Kumnick's 5 company.
- On the left the 2/12th Battalion, with a company of the 2/2nd Pioneers attached, moved out along the new line of communication to **Geyton's**.



Capture of Kankiry Saddle by the 18th Brigade,
19th January-1st February 1944

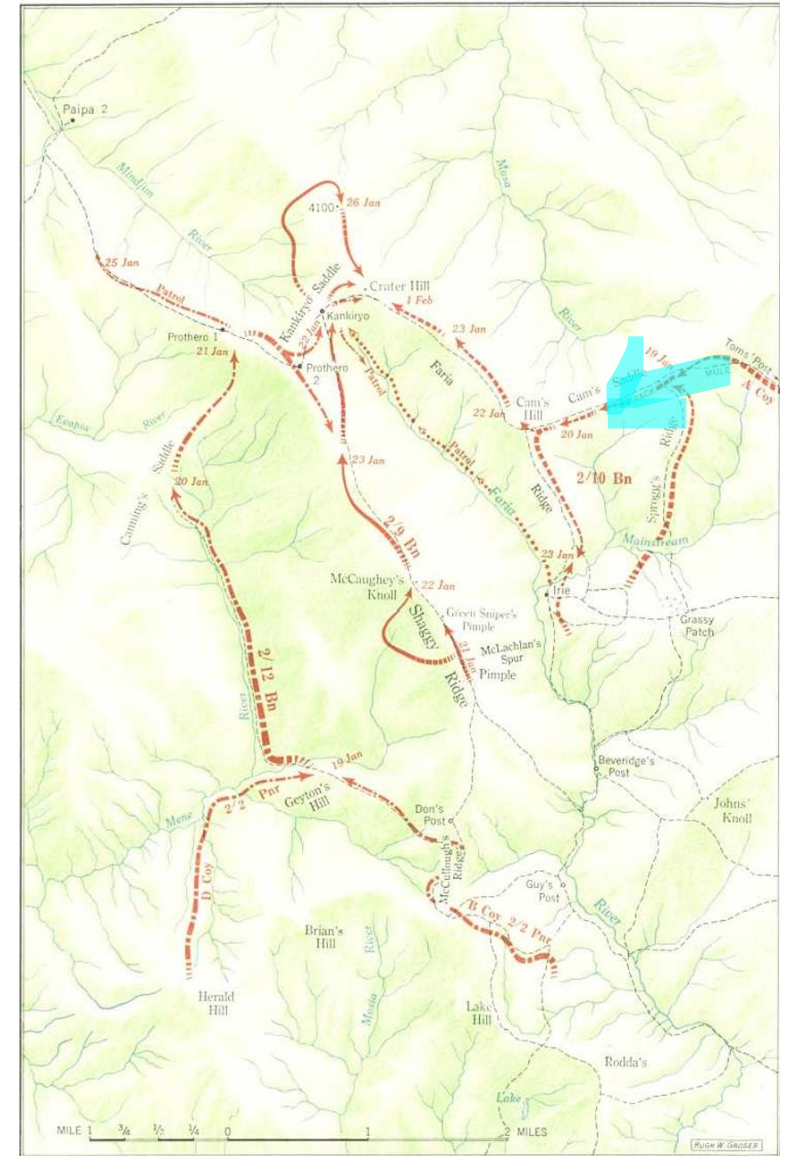
20 January 1944 - New Guinea

- Heavy rain fell on the night of 19th-20th January, the eve of the assault, increasing the difficulties of the 18th Brigade.
- No. 10 Group had been assigned the task of hitting the first objective, Cam's Saddle, where an estimated 200 Japanese had been seen.
- Twelve Vengeances led by Honey took off at 10 a.m. accompanied by Kittyhawks. The weather was still bad and Honey had difficulty in finding the target, which was hidden behind clouds and rain squalls. The Vengeances circled the target waiting for the ground troops to fire their smoke shells, under fire from the ground.
- Twenty minutes passed before the pilots saw the smoke shells and immediately began the attack, diving 1,000 feet through clouds to ensure accuracy. They dropped 22 bombs, 14 of which fell directly on the target.
- Photo: No. 21 Squadron Vengeance dive bombers at Nadzab during February 1944



20 January 1944 – Finisterres

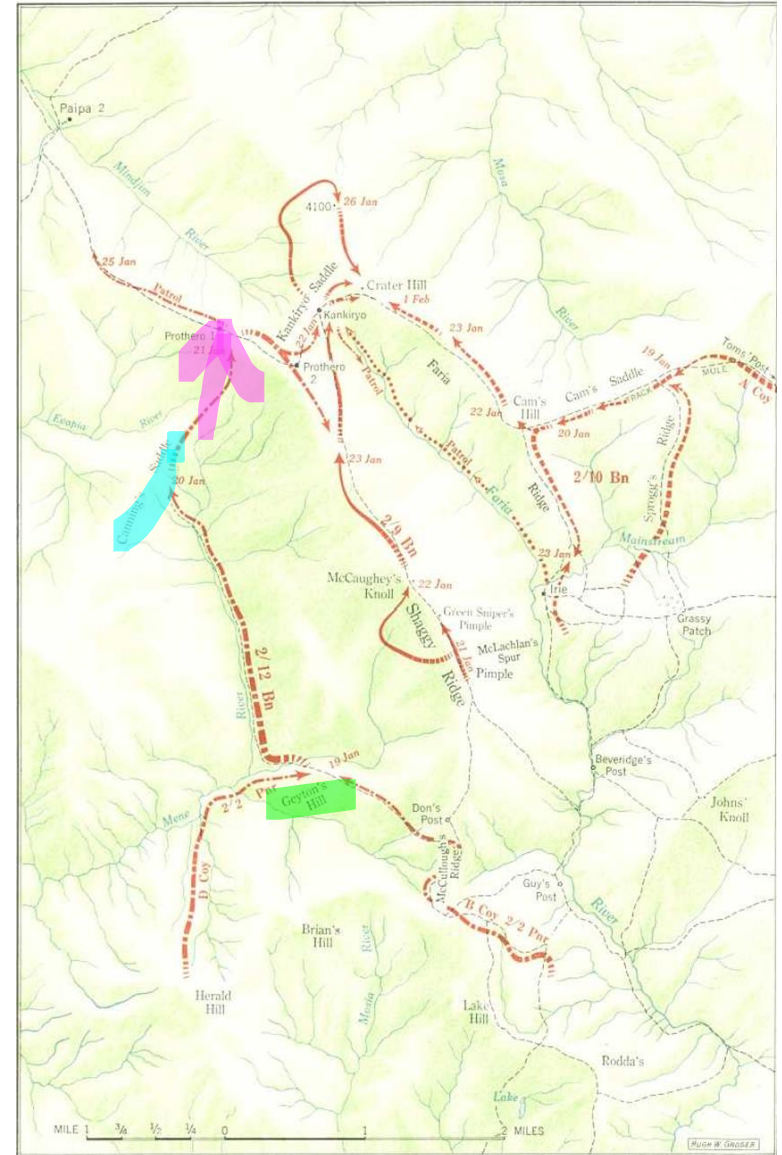
- D-day for CUTTHROAT, the 20th January, had arrived.
- The 2/10th Battalion was the first to move, when, at 8.45 a.m., Captain Gunn's company moved from Sprogg's Ridge to attack Cam's Saddle.
- Half an hour later Captain Kumnick's company followed.
- At 9.30 a group of Mitchells attacked the Protheros and Kankiryo Saddle with 1,000-lb bombs while another group of Mitchells strafed the area and a squadron of Vengeances dive-bombed Shaggy Ridge and the Protheros.
- By 11 a.m. Gunn was 300 yards from an enemy position on Cam's Saddle. The artillery shelled this position and at 12.30 p.m. the Australians found that the enemy had withdrawn.
- Farther on the company was pinned down by fire from a Japanese position at the western end of the Saddle.
- After trying to outflank the enemy position Gunn withdrew 200 yards and dug in for the night astride the mule track which zig-zagged up the feature held by the enemy.



Capture of Kankiryo Saddle by the 18th Brigade, 19th January-1st February 1944

20/21 January 1944 - Finisterres

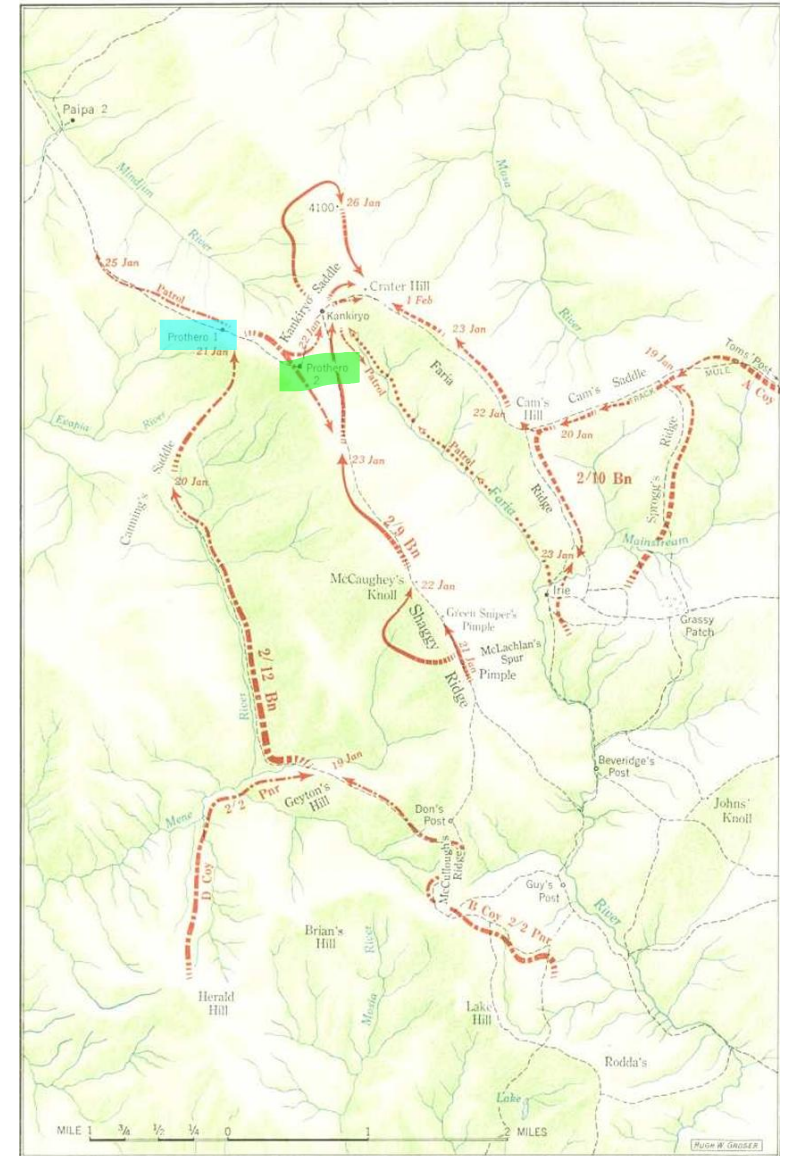
- On the 20th the 2/12th set out from **Geyton's Hill** but after seven hours of hard going the battalion reached **Canning's Saddle** at 3.30 p.m.
- For the night Major Cameron's company, which was to lead the assault next day, was just below the Saddle with the rest of the battalion behind.
- At 8.30 a.m. on the 21st the 2/12th moved forward to the start-line which was at the false crest below Prothero 1. The approach was so steep that ladders had to be used to enable the men to cross the start line by 9.20 a.m.
- The plan provided for a silent attack, with one company forward, along the steep razor-back ridge which was the only possible way to Prothero 1.
- The advance up the steep and rugged ridge was very quiet and surprise was almost achieved. About 100 yards below the summit of Prothero 1 the leading men met a small enemy party who had prepared a large demolition charge on the razor back approach; the Japanese had no time to blow the charge but were able to warn others on the summit.
- Cameron's men, however, raced towards **Prothero 1** and captured it at 1.20 p.m.



Capture of Kankiryō Saddle by the 18th Brigade,
19th January-1st February 1944

21 January 1944 - Finisterres

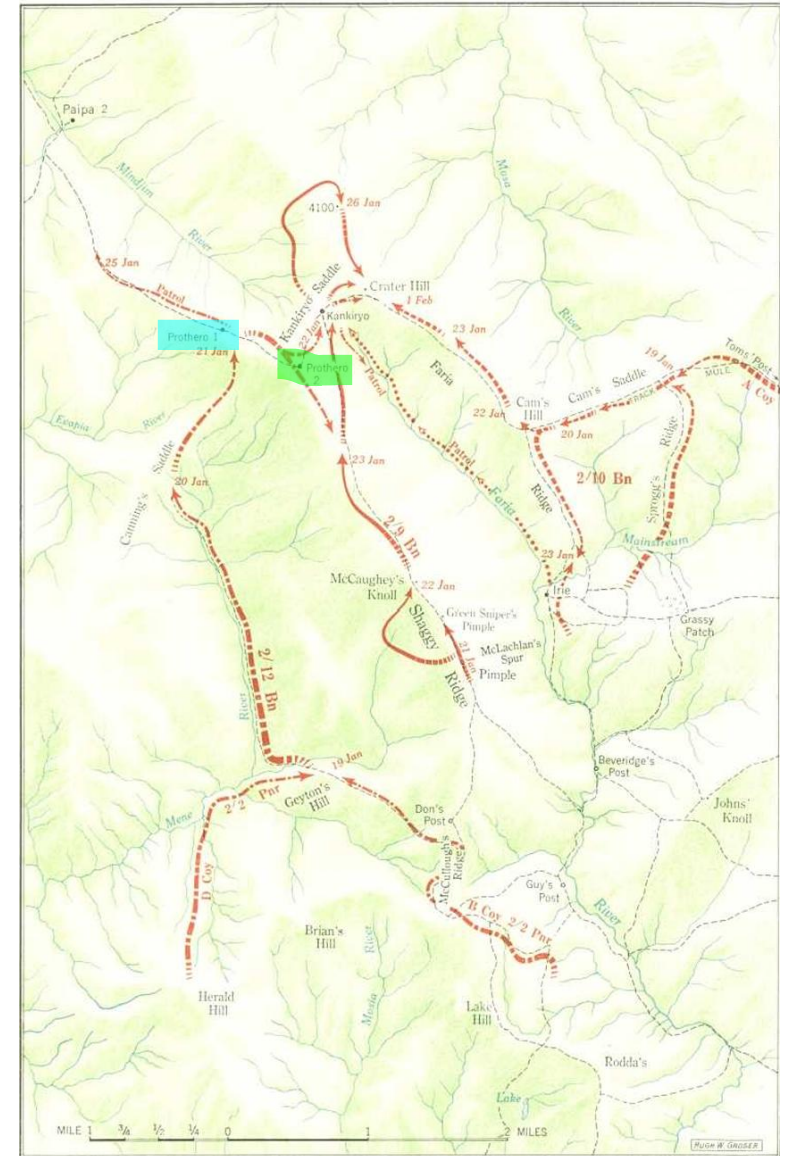
- After reaching the summit the companies fanned out and prepared to attack towards **Prothero 2**.
- At 3 p.m. a Japanese 75-mm gun which had been shelling the 2/9th Battalion switched to the 2/12th from less than 100 yards, inflicting serious casualties, including Bourne badly wounded.
- Major Fraser now took command and called up a platoon under Lieutenant Braithwaite from one of the reserve companies to destroy the gun.
- It was 4 p.m. when Braithwaite set out. Twenty minutes later the guns of the 2/4th Regiment, directed by Captain Stirling, shelled the Japanese gun area on **Prothero 1**. At the same time Braithwaite reported that he was within grenade-throwing range of the gun, but that heavy machine gun fire from supporting positions prevented any nearer approach.



Capture of Kankiryo Saddle by the 18th Brigade,
19th January-1st February 1944

21 January 1944 - Finisterres

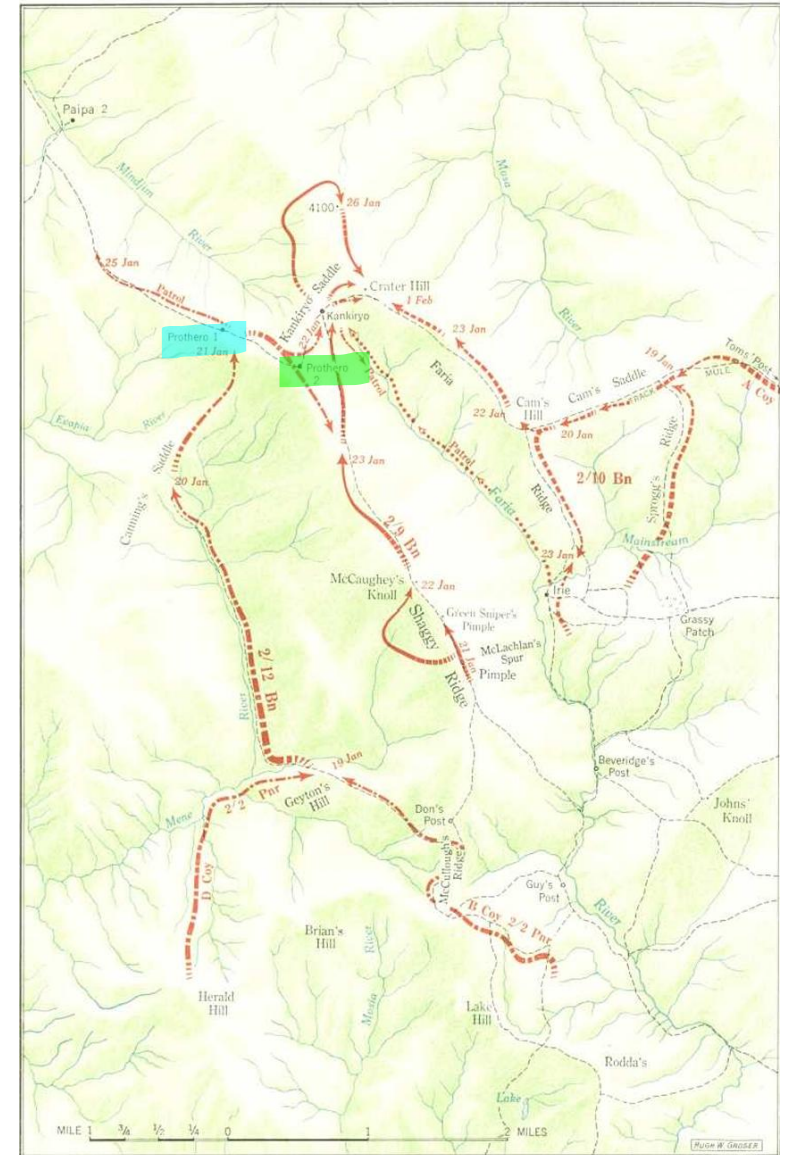
- The platoon was forced back and at 4.40 p.m. the artillery again hammered the area. Stirling was with the forward troops during the fierce exchanges of artillery fire.
- His success in directing his own guns on to such a small target was to a great extent due to the efforts of Signaller Green who laid the telephone line under fire, three times went forward to repair breaks and stuck to his tasks although wounded.
- The enemy shells, bursting among the tree tops scattered shrapnel over a wide area and the casualties mounted as Braithwaite, now reinforced by a second platoon, approached the gun position on a narrow, two-man front.
- With frontal assault impossible, the enemy gun position was gradually surrounded although an almost sheer ridge had to be scaled to do so.



Capture of Kankiry Saddle by the 18th Brigade,
19th January-1st February 1944

21 January 1944 - Finisterres

- At 5.30 p.m. Braithwaite rushed the gun.
- Foremost in the rush was Private Lugge, a Bren-gunner. Leaping from an embankment overlooking the gun and falling flat on his stomach within six feet of the entrance, Lugge opened fire on the enemy gunners.
- Then, rolling on his side, he fired at a Japanese pill-box where a Woodpecker on the flank was giving supporting fire to the gun.
- The occupants of the pill-box were killed and wounded and the cessation of their covering fire enabled the rest of Braithwaite's men to rush up and finish off the Japanese gun crew with grenades.
- The gun crew of 16 men fired defiantly until they were all killed.
- The gun was captured intact and with it, in an excellently constructed gun-pit, were about 50 rounds of ammunition.



Capture of Kankiryō Saddle by the 18th Brigade,
19th January-1st February 1944

21 January 1944 - Finisterres

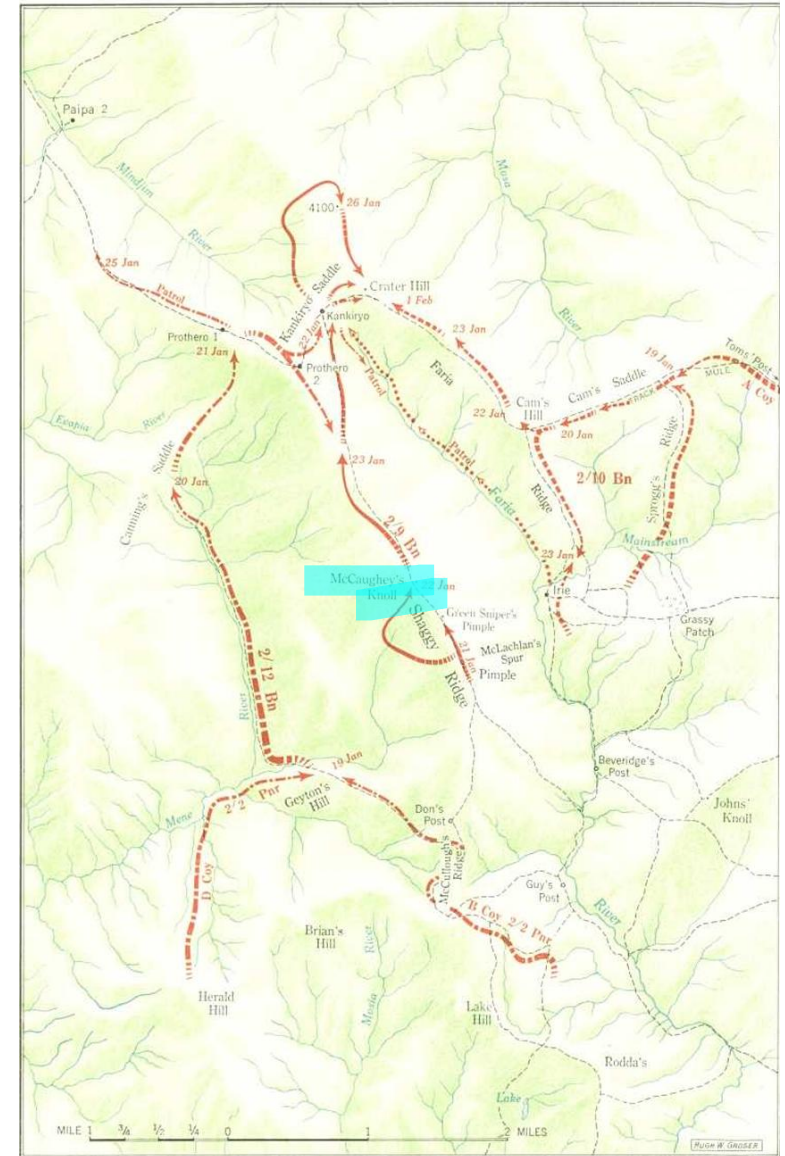
- This completed the capture of Prothero 1, and the 2/12th Battalion dug in round it for the night.
- For the loss of 11 killed and 44 wounded the 2/12th had captured the key point in the Japanese defences of Shaggy Ridge.
- Fraser expected the Japanese to counter-attack because Prothero 1 was such vital ground.
- During the night there was much firing and the Japanese attacked Captain Thomas' 4 company south-east of Prothero 1 but were repulsed leaving 9 killed.



Members of "B" Company, 2/12th Battalion, who helped silence a Japanese mountain gun on one of the hills known as Prothero I & II, 22 January 22, 1944.

21 January 1944 - Finisterres

- The dominating feature confronting the 2/9th on Shaggy Ridge was **McCaughey's Knoll**.
- The battalion's objective on the 21st was Green Sniper's Pimple, a small but commanding eminence on the south-east end of the knoll only about 80 yards from the forward posts of the 2/9th. Lt Col Cummings' plan was to attack the knoll from his left up the very steep but wooded slopes, using one company.
- He planned a frontal diversion to distract the enemy's attention from the flank and drown the noise.
- About 10.30 a.m. the forward platoon was led out by Sergeant Mc Dowell who had already taken part in three night patrols to Green Sniper's Pimple.
- The leading section got right among the Japanese pits before the Japanese had recovered from the air strike preceding the attack.
- As soon as the Australians were established on the pimple about 2 p.m., the Japanese began firing into them with a field gun and mortars, and a counter-attack began to develop.



Capture of Kankiryō Saddle by the 18th Brigade,
19th January-1st February 1944

21 January 1944 - Finisterres

- Major Loxton made his way forward under this heavy fire and, by walkie-talkie, ordered McDowell to hold the position at any cost.
- While speaking from a very exposed position Loxton was killed by a shell.
- The Australians held on, and when the gun ceased fire a second platoon joined McDowell's.
- The only satisfactory mortar observation post for the 2/9th was in an exposed position under heavy fire from the enemy. Despite this, Sergeant Henricksen remained there for five hours directing his mortar fire on to the Japanese. Soon after midday he was knocked unconscious by the explosion of a shell but he recovered five minutes later and continued to direct his mortars. About 2 p.m. a shell hit Henricksen's observation post burying his companion. Henricksen continued with his vital job but managed to dig out his companion.
- Photo: Members of the 2/9th Infantry Battalion digging in on "Green Sniper's Pimple"



21 January 1944 - Finisterres

- Lieutenant Stephenson was sent to take command of the forward company. During the night the enemy worried the two forward platoons with grenades and mortars but there were no casualties.
- For the loss of 7 men killed, including the company commander, and 17 wounded, the company had captured a vital position; it had advanced only 100 yards, but possession of the pimple gave the Australians a toehold on Mc Caughey's Knoll, the position commanding the whole of the Shaggy Ridge area.
- Photo: Troops from the 2/9th resting prior to joining the fighting around Shaggy Ridge, January 1944



21 January 1944 - Finisterres

- On the right flank the artillery had fired a heavy concentration early on the 21st on the position which had held up the 2/10th Battalion on the previous evening.
- In the morning patrols investigated this position and one returned at 2.30 p.m. to report that there had been no reply when they had thrown two grenades.
- Gunn moved his company through the enemy position and went north along Faria Ridge until just on dusk he saw the enemy digging in ahead.
- The 2/10th then dug in for the night.
- By the end of 21st January the main enemy force on Shaggy Ridge was between the 2/9th on the south and the 2/12th on the north. The Japanese still held two miles of Shaggy Ridge between the Australians on Green Sniper's Pimple to the south and Prothero 1 to the north, but they were in a serious position and could not overlook the threat on the east where the 2/10th was now established about a mile from the main Japanese defences on Kankiryō Saddle.



Shaggy Ridge area

22 January 1944 – RAAF

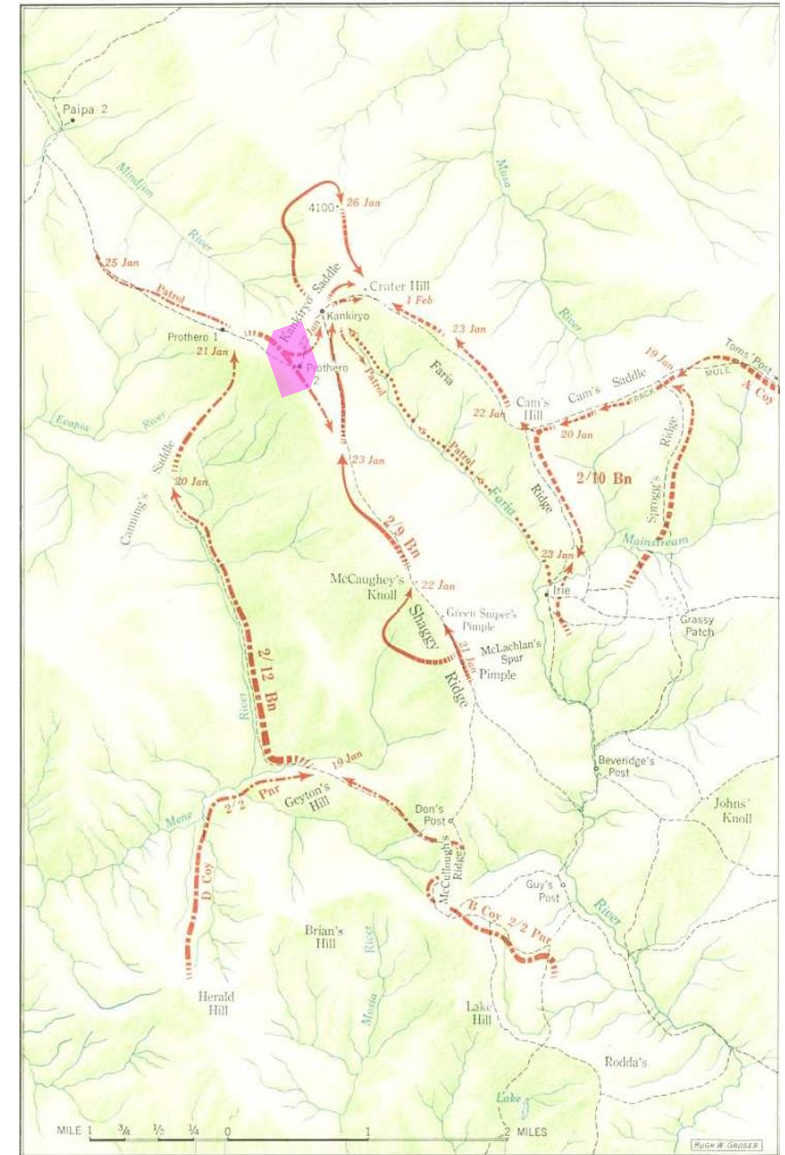
- Twenty-three Kittyhawks of No. 75 Squadron had arrived at Nadzab from Dobodura on 19th January and the next day this squadron began operating with No. 10 Group.
- Vengeances escorted by Kittyhawks attacked "Prothero 2" before the assault on 22nd January.
- Honey took off at 9.50 in the morning followed by ten other Vengeances and eleven Kittyhawks.
- They dropped 11 tons of bombs on the target, again with great accuracy.
- AITAPE, NEW GUINEA. FLYING OFFICER R. C. WEHL OF BARCALDINE, QLD, OF NO. 75 SQUADRON RAAF PREPARES TO TAKE OFF IN HIS KITTYHAWK 'E' AIRCRAFT WHILE LEADING AIRCRAFTMAN J. A. LIDDLE (IN COCKPIT) MAKES A FINAL CHECK-UP.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

22 January 1944 - Finisterres

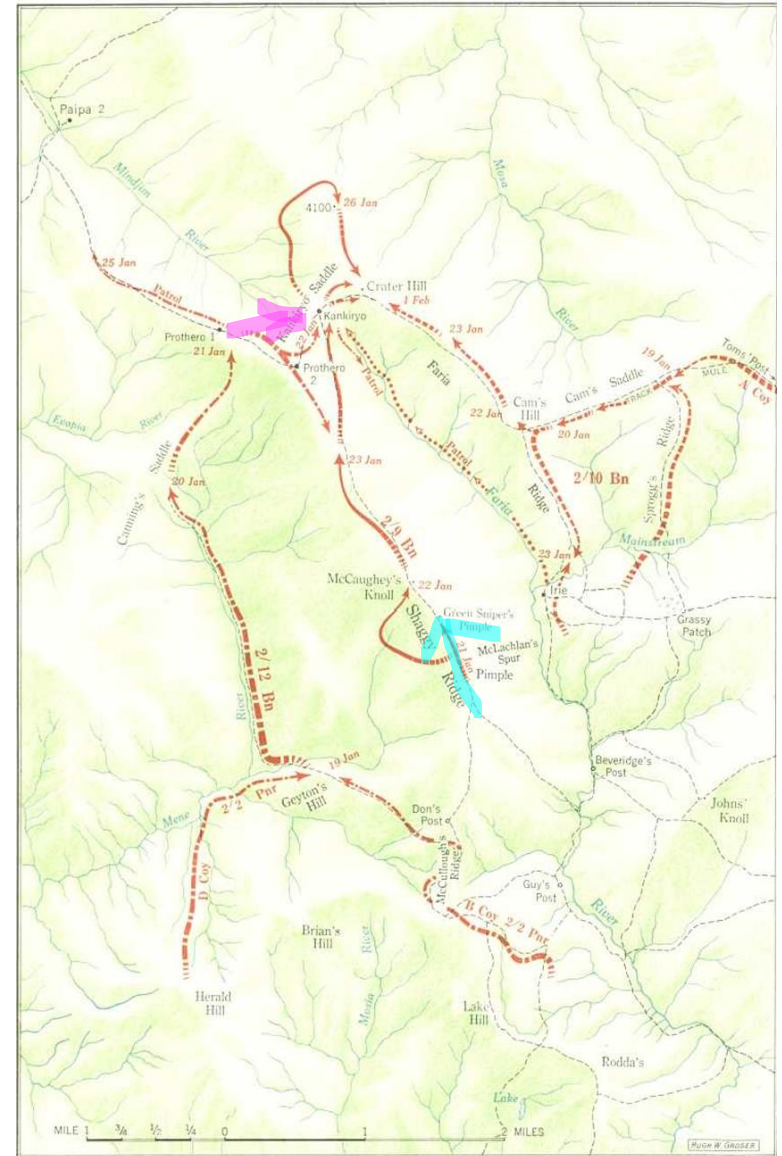
- On the 22nd Captain Thomas' company of the 2/12th set off at 8.30 a.m. to capture Prothero 2.
- An hour later, after a watchful advance against snipers in trees, the company occupied the saddle between Prothero 1 and Prothero 2.
- At 10.40 the artillery shelled Prothero 2 and at 11.15 a.m. Thomas' forward platoon advanced but was held up by sniper and machine-gun fire.
- A Bren gunner, Private Bugg, immediately dashed forward and fired on the Japanese positions from a distance of 30 yards. Bugg's Bren gun magazines were set on fire by enemy bullets but he threw off the webbing and kept on firing.
- Sending his section round to a flank under his covering fire, he killed the Japanese machine-gun crew, and his section then rushed Prothero 2 and captured it.



Capture of Kankiryo Saddle by the 18th Brigade,
19th January-1st February 1944

22 January 1944 - Finisterres

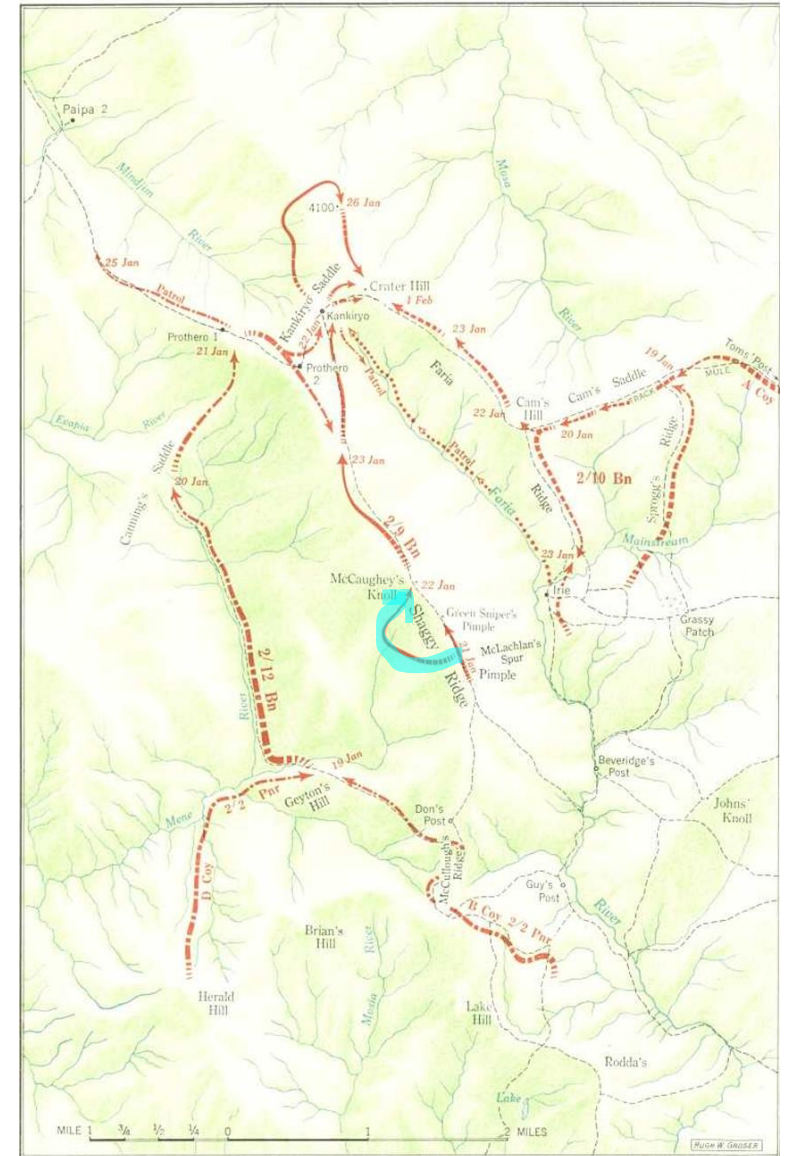
- Captain Geason's company now passed through Thomas' and continued south along Shaggy Ridge until, at 3.30 p.m., after an advance of about three-quarters of a mile, they were held up by machine-gun fire.
- From this position Geason reported that he could see the 2/9th Battalion through binoculars.
- Both battalions were then ordered to remain where they were in readiness for the 2/9th to attack with artillery support next day.
- Later in the afternoon Lieutenant Coles led a small patrol from the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion along the track from Prothero 1 to Kankiry, brushed aside light opposition from an enemy patrol, and established himself almost on Kankiry Saddle.
- The 2/12th counted 40 dead Japanese on the way from Prothero 1 to Prothero 2. Despite the fact that the Japanese were being attacked from both sides, they were still fighting doggedly and on the 22nd inflicted 21 casualties on the 2/12th Battalion.



Capture of Kankiry Saddle by the 18th Brigade, 19th January-1st February 1944

22 January 1944 - Finisterres

- During the afternoon Taylor's company of the 2/9th moved to a forming-up place down the precipitous western side of Shaggy Ridge, ready to try a flanking attack on McCaughey's Knoll.
- Zero hour was set for 6 p.m., and for half an hour before that time artillery and mortars pounded the knoll.
- Taylor's company was only about 40 yards from the top of McCaughey's Knoll at 6.25 when the enemy discovered them.
- Despite a heavy and sudden storm of fire the Queenslanders assaulted and captured McCaughey's Knoll, cleaning up one pill-box after another. The battalion's diarist noted on this day: "This flanking move by 'D' up heavily timbered and precipitous western slopes must have been a complete surprise to the enemy who had begun to withdraw in panic".
- After advancing to a position about 600 yards from Green Sniper's Pimple the advance of the 2/9th was held up by two enemy machine-guns about 30 yards ahead. It had lost 8 men wounded.
- By dark the forward elements of the 2/9th and 2/12th Battalions were only about 900 yards apart, both being held up by sporadic machine-gun and artillery fire from the area ahead of the 2/10th Battalion .



Capture of Kankiryo Saddle by the 18th Brigade, 19th January-1st February 1944

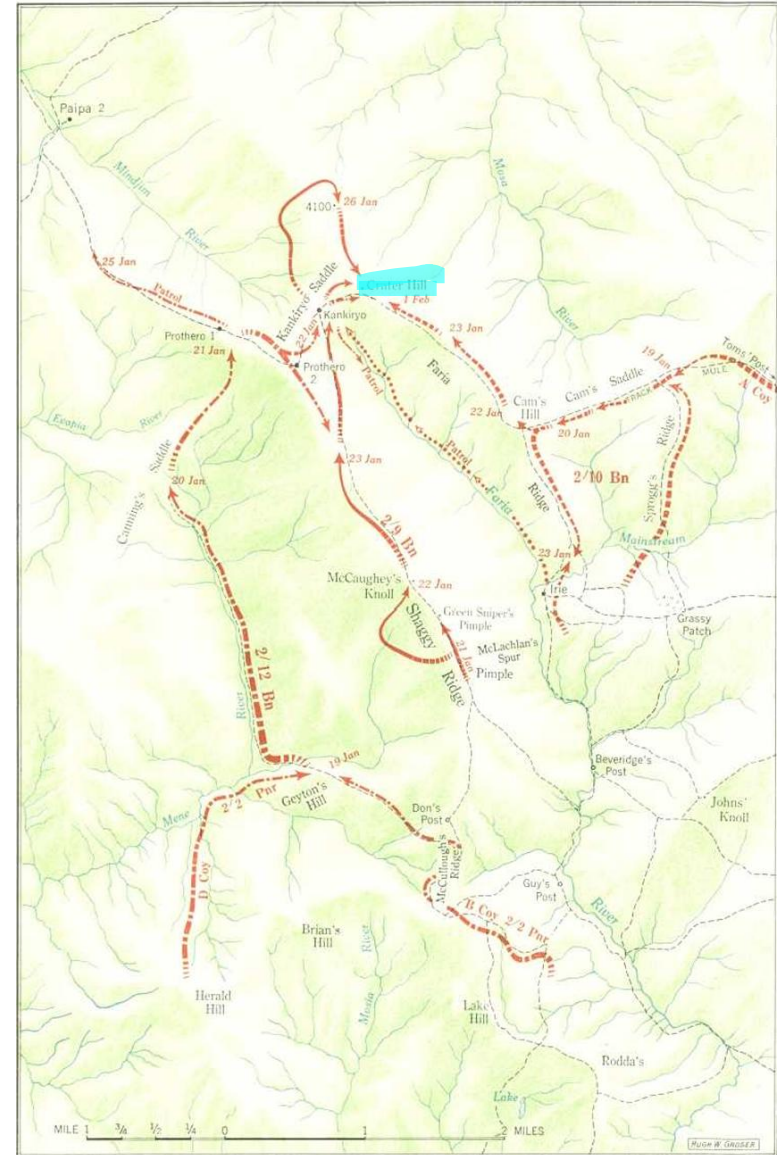
23 January 1944 - Finisterres

- Early in the morning of the 23rd two mild counter-attacks were repulsed by the 2/12th.
- Early on the 23rd also patrols from the 2/12th and the 2/9th were converging. There was only slight opposition and after midday the forward patrols of both battalions joined up.
- The whole of Shaggy Ridge was thus in Australian hands and the way was open to Kankiryō Saddle.
- Photo: Shaggy Ridge, New Guinea. 1944-01-23. Troops of "C" company, 2/9th infantry battalion digging into a newly occupied feature on Shaggy Ridge.



25 January 1944 - Finisterres

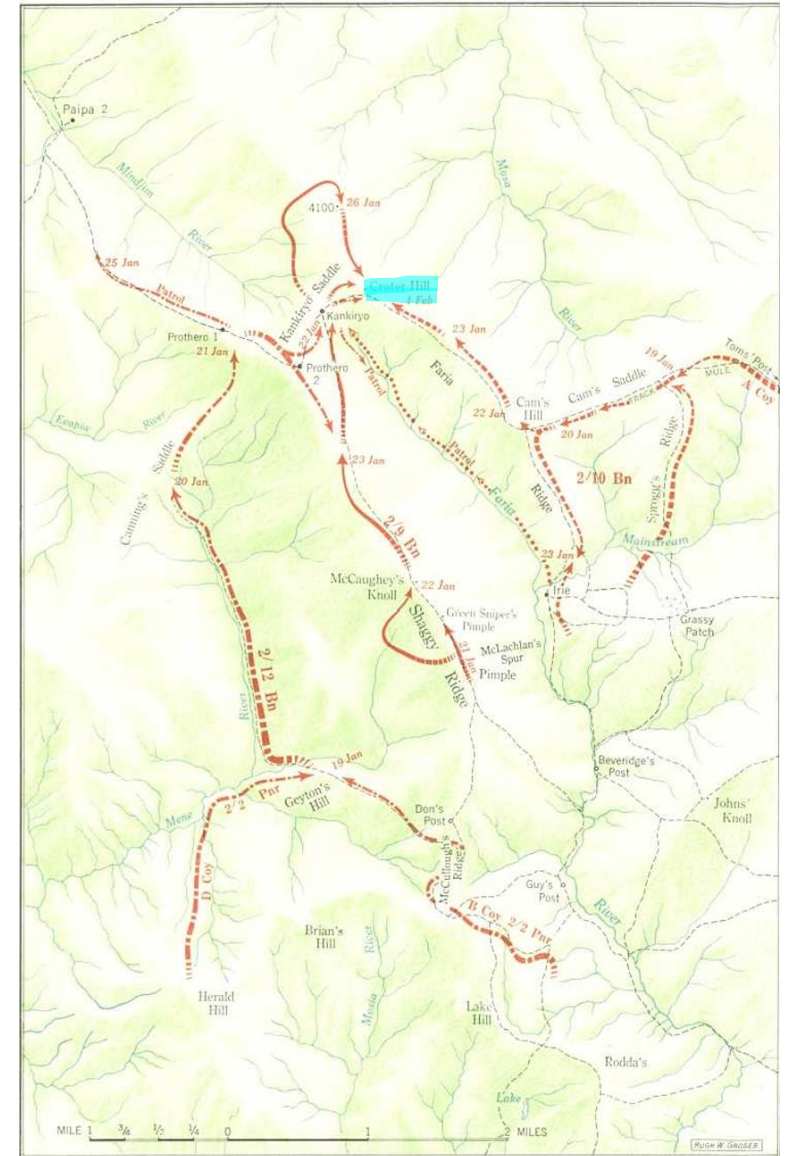
- Despite the enemy's loss of Kankiryo Saddle and Shaggy Ridge, it seemed obvious by the 25th that he intended to put up a last ditch fight for Crater Hill.
- Chilton reported later:
- It was apparent at this stage that the existing 1/25,000 map was very inaccurate, and considerable difficulty was experienced in determining the relative positions of the fwd elements of the three bns and the nature of the ground.
- In particular, great difficulty was experienced in controlling the arty; when an FOO attempted to register targets to his immediate front, fire would be stopped by FOOs with other bns.
- It became obvious therefore that we had closed in on the enemy along three very narrow ridges, which all met at a "pimple" . . . called Crater Hill.
- The relative positions of our tps were later established by Contact R, fwd tps firing 2-inch mortar flares. The enemy was holding along these three ridges radiating from the pimple. The sides of each ridge were extremely steep.



Capture of Kankiryo Saddle by the 18th Brigade,
19th January-1st February 1944

27/8 January 1944 - Finisterres

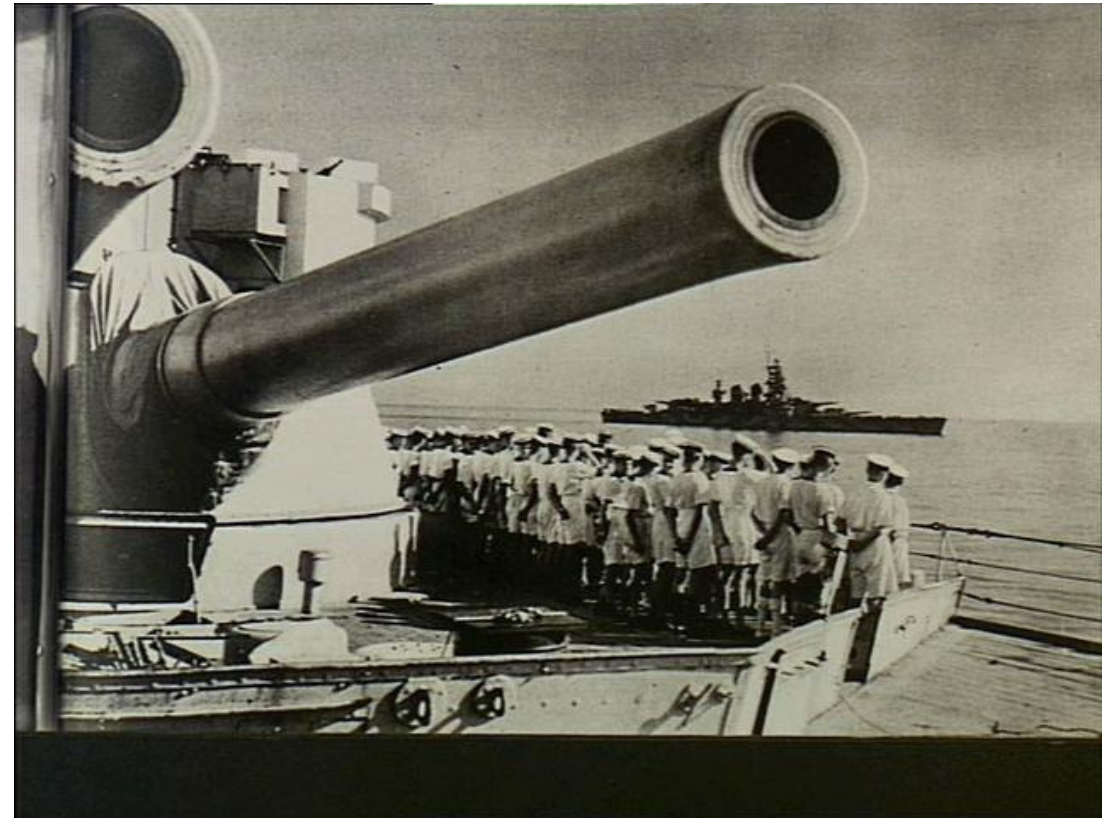
- Chilton was convinced that, although his battalions were now occupying the three ridges leading towards Crater Hill and although they had really captured their objective—the vital ground of the Mindjim-Faria divide—the Japanese would try to hold on to Crater Hill.
- The ground was very difficult and the defences were exceedingly well prepared with a large number of automatic weapons deployed.
- Chilton decided to use siege tactics. His brigade would sit close round the Japanese, harass them and make sure that they did not withdraw undetected. By heavy artillery bombardments, mortar fire and dive-bombing, Chilton hoped to destroy the Japanese defences, inflict crippling casualties and "generally soften up the position for a final assault".
- On the 27th and 28th Captain Whyte of the 2/4th Field Regiment used 2,000 shells in the bombardment, shattering the trees. Unfortunately the mass of fallen timber added yet another obstacle to the approach.



Capture of Kankiryō Saddle by the 18th Brigade,
19th January-1st February 1944

30 January 1944 - SEAC

- With the surrender of Italy on 3 September 1943 there was no longer any need for a battle squadron in the Mediterranean, and on 8th November the Admiralty directed that a battle squadron was to be formed in the Eastern Fleet.
- Before the end of the year units of the Battle Squadron were on their way to the Indian Ocean: Renown, Queen Elizabeth, Valiant, and four destroyers left Scapa Flow on 30th December and were joined by the aircraft carriers Illustrious and Unicorn, and three destroyers, from the Clyde.
- After an uneventful passage via the Mediterranean, the ships reached Colombo on 30th January 1944.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P02018.240

Malta. 1943-08. One of the surrendering Italian warships arriving at Malta, seen under the 15-inch guns of HMS Warspite.

30 January 1944 - SEAC



- Renown
- Commissioned a few months after the Battle of Jutland in 1916. Renown, and her sister HMS Repulse, were the world's fastest capital ships upon completion.
- *Renown* did not see action during WW1 and was reconstructed twice between the wars; the 1920s reconstruction increased her armour protection and made other more minor improvements; the 1930s reconstruction was much more thorough.
- Renown returned to Britain to refit from February to June 1943; She received a total of 72 Oerlikon 20 mm light AA guns in 23 twin mounts and 26 single mounts fitted between July 1942 and August 1943.
- Repulse, Renown's sistership had been sunk in an hour and ten minutes by Japanese aircraft on 10 December 1941 when it attempted to intercept Japanese landings in British Malaya together with the Flagship, Prince of Wales, which was also sunk.

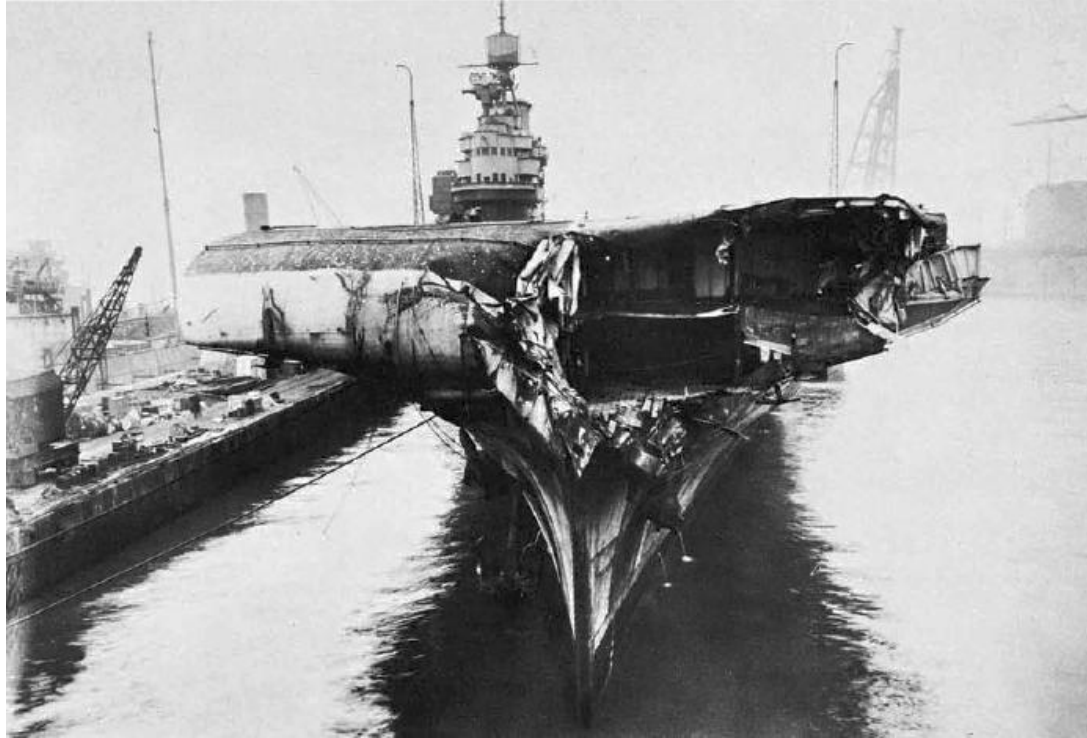
30 January 1944 - SEAC



View of forward guns and bridge of HMS Queen Elizabeth. at Gallipoli, 1915

- Queen Elizabeth, Valiant
- HMS Queen Elizabeth and Valiant were sisterships built in the early 1910s and were the leading battleships of their day.
- They suffered no significant damage in WW1 and were significantly modernised in the 30s.
- On 19 December 1941, Queen Elizabeth and Valiant were seriously damaged by limpet mines placed by Italian combat swimmers who entered the Allied military port of Alexandria with SLC type "manned torpedoes".
- Valiant was out of service for many months and Queen Elizabeth for more than a year and a half.

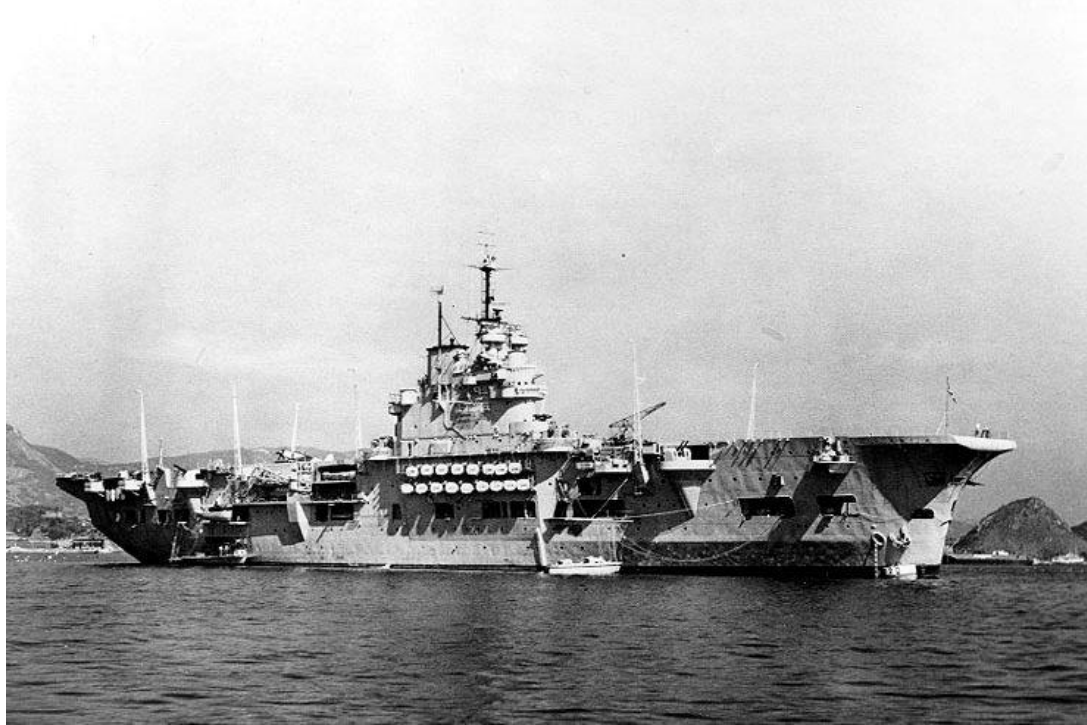
30 January 1944 - SEAC



Intrepid's bow after colliding with Formidable, 16 December 1941

- Intrepid
- Intrepid was commissioned in May 1940.
- Repairs to bomb damage from Greece in 1941 were completed in November and Intrepid departed on 25 October, for trials off Jamaica. She returned to Norfolk, Virginia on 9 December, to rendezvous with Formidable, which had also been repaired there, and the two carriers sailed for home three days later.
- On the night of 15/16 December, Intrepid collided with Formidable in a moderate storm.
- Neither ship was seriously damaged, but Intrepid had to reduce speed to shore up sprung bulkheads in the bow and conduct temporary repairs to the forward flight deck.
- She arrived at Greenock on 21 December and permanent repairs were made from 30 December to late February 1942.

30 January 1944 - SEAC



- Unicorn
- HMS Unicorn was an aircraft repair ship and light aircraft carrier built for the Royal Navy in the late 1930s. She was completed during World War II and provided air cover over the amphibious landing at Salerno, Italy, in September 1943.
- She could carry an air group of thirty aircraft.

30 January 1944 - SEAC

- Despite being labelled the first Battle Squadron these reinforcements for the Eastern Fleet excluded any of the British modern battleships and had only one modern aircraft carrier.
- This squadron would still have to avoid Japanese carriers and any major airbases.
- If the Australian Government had known about the loss of the QE and Valiant and the damage to Furious within 2 weeks of the loss of PoW and Repulse and Pearl Harbor in December 1941 they would have been even more terrified.
- Fortunately the UK never mentioned QE & V & F and the US never admitted their Pearl Harbor losses until after Midway.

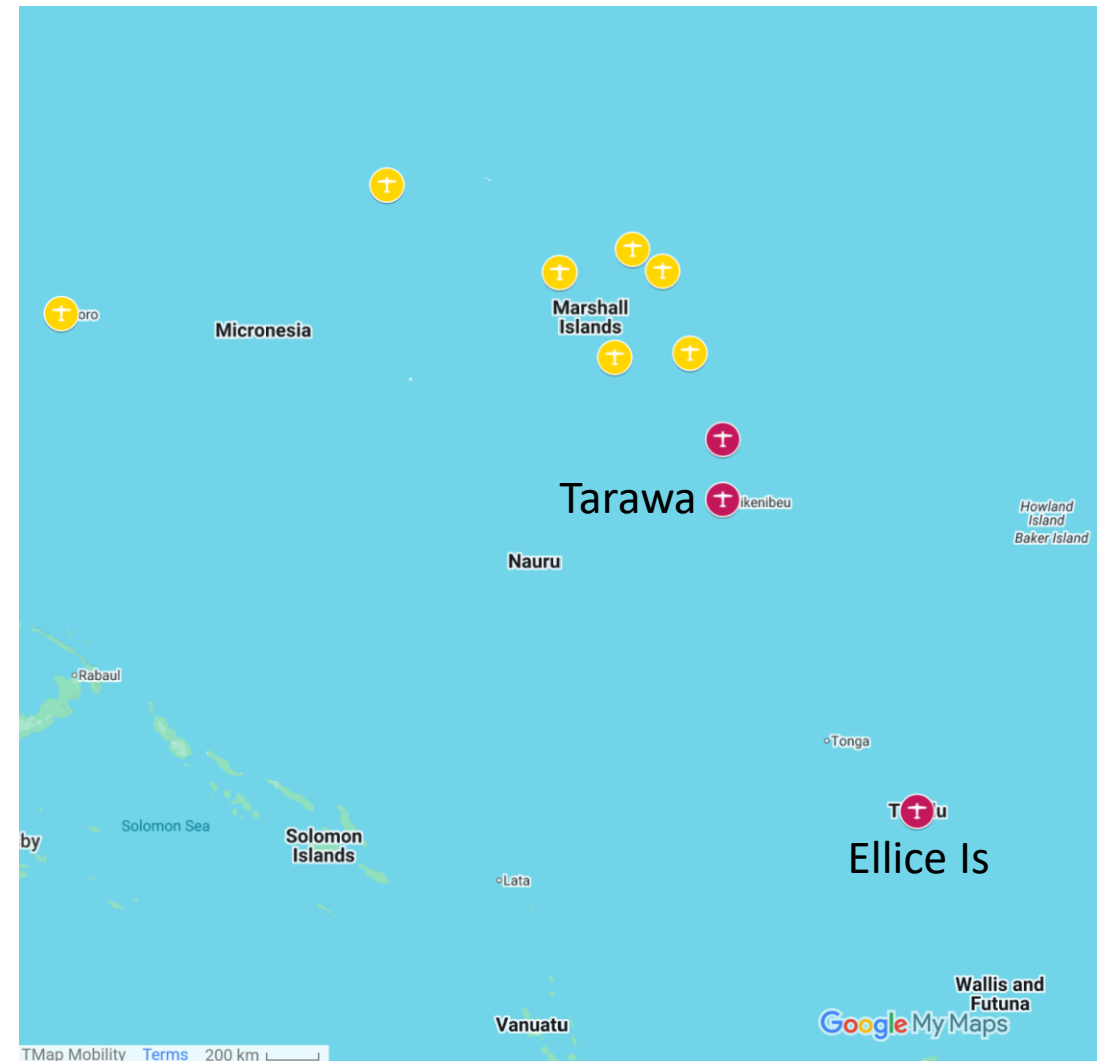
27 - 30 January 1944 - Marshalls

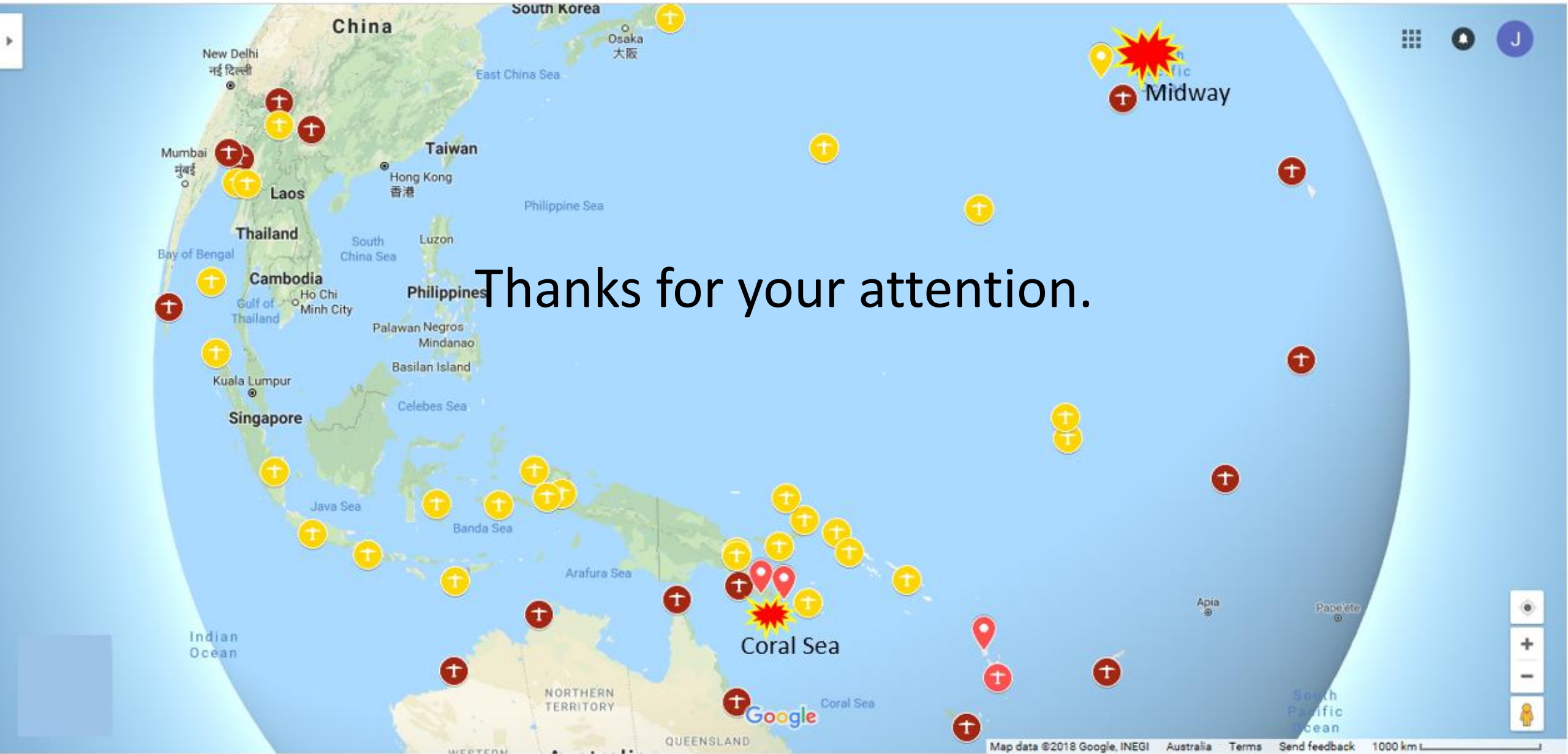
- Between 27 and 30 January 1944, the fast carrier task forces, Task Force 58, divided into four groups and carrying nearly 700 aircraft, not only worked over Roi and Kwajalein Islands, but finished off Japanese air strength on Wotje and Maloelap Atolls and started Eniwetok Atoll on the downhill path.
- The heavy pre-D Day air strikes of the carrier and land based air wiped out the Japanese defensive air resources in the eastern Marshalls, zero Japanese aircraft remained.



31 January 1944 – The Marshals

- The B-24s based in the Ellice Islands were flying over 2700 miles to reach their Marshall Island targets. In the last ten days of November 1943, they mounted 59 B-24 sorties over the Marshals.
- In the last ten days of December 1943, when the Ellice Island aircraft could stage through Tarawa and the shorter range A-25s and B-25s could be based on Tarawa, the Seventh Air Force mustered 210 sorties over not only Jaluit, Mille and Maloelap, but over the more distant Wotje and Kwajalein.
- By the last ten days of January 1944 with the newly built airfield on Apamama in the Gilberts now available for use, the number of bomber sorties by Task Force 57 again more than doubled rising to 444.
- Bombers used a combination of dead reckoning (calculating position based on airspeed, time, and wind direction), pilotage (using visible landmarks like atolls), and occasionally celestial navigation to locate Japanese bases thousands of miles from their home base.





Thanks for your attention.