

The War in the Pacific 3

From Lae to Tokyo Bay

19

Mindoro, Luzon and the Precision Bombing Attack on Japan

December 44 & January 45



11 November 1945 – B29s

- At Arnold's request the Committee of Operations Analysts had prepared another report in two parts, based on alternate assumptions: that the war could be won by aerial and naval blockade alone or by those means plus an invasion of the home islands.
- This report was submitted on 10 October.
- Under the first assumption, the COA recommended attacks against Japanese shipping (including a VLR mining campaign), the aircraft industry, and Japanese urban industrial areas. Mining was to be a continuing program.
- Recommendations under the second assumption were similar, though the order and emphasis were changed:
- " an attack on the aircraft industry and on urban industrial areas and an intensification of the attack on shipping by all available means, including mining by VLR aircraft where operationally feasible."
- Although first priority was given to the aircraft industry, the COA believed that, if possible, mining operations should be conducted concurrently.
- For the area attacks, six cities were named--Tokyo, Yokohama, Kawasaki, Nagoya, Kobe, and Osaka--but the attacks were to be delivered only when they could be done in force and within a short time.



11 November 1945 – B29s

- Because the JCS believed that an invasion of Japan would be necessary, it was the latter set of recommendations which was to guide the Twentieth Air Force in its choice of targets.
- The aircraft industry, merely listed as one of six targets in the report of 11 November 1943, was now given first priority.
- The Joint Target Group (JTG) at Washington approved in general the recommendations of the COA and emphatically endorsed the priority given the aircraft industry and the delay in urban area attacks (save for one test incendiary mission against a small city district). The JTG believed, however, that the VLR mining campaign should also be delayed, except in tactical support of other operations, until "Japanese airpower is destroyed, or until it is calculated that a blockade of Japan can be imposed, which will more decisively affect the enemy war capability than attacks on other target systems." With this modification in timing, the COA report was to guide the initial campaign of XXI Bomber Command.
- Hansell and O'Donnell had called the shots on the training missions; under the peculiar command system of the Twentieth Air Force, the JCS, through Arnold and Norstad (photo), now took over. The first target directive, sent to Hansell on 11 November, set the primary mission of the Twentieth Air Force as the destruction of Japanese aircraft engine and assembly plants and major overhaul and repair facilities



27 November 1944 – B29s

- Hansell sent his planes back to Musashino in a second major effort (SAN ANTONIO II) on the 27th, the operational plan substantially the same as on the first strike, except for a change in the method of withdrawal.
- This called for daylight, visual bombing from 30,000 feet by 8 to 10 squadrons of 9 to 11 planes, each carrying 5,000 pounds of bombs (30 per cent M76 incendiaries and 70 per cent 500-pound GP's) and 8,070 gallons of gas.
- Intelligence officers, consolidating crew reports from the first strike, figured that about 125 Jap fighters had been up--a mixture of Tojos, Zekes, Tonys, Nicks, Irvings, and some unidentified planes--of which the B-29 gunners claimed 7 destroyed, 18 probables, and 9 damaged. As usual in Japanese interceptions, there seemed to be no coordinated plan of attack, and pilots varied in skill, aggressiveness, and tactics used.
- Analysis of photos had revealed at least 150 heavy AA guns between Tokyo and Funabashi, so that intense and accurate fire was predicted for the Tokyo and Tokyo Bay areas, on the Chiba peninsula, and along Sagami Bay.
- Information concerning the enemy's radar remained vague. XXI Bomber Command would send out a diversion to Nagoya by "window"-dropping F-13's; jamming by RCM transmitters on the B-29's was to be deferred until radar operators were better trained.
- Air-sea rescue precautions were elaborate: 5 lifeguard submarines, assigned by ComSubPac and under operational control of Task Group 17.7, were stationed between Honshu and Iwo Jima; one destroyer was to patrol south of Iwo and another was to be dispatched for duty in the area 100 to 150 miles north of Saipan.
- 1 PBM search plane was to be on station just south of Iwo, while 3 PBM's and 6 PB2Y's were held on alert at Saipan.



27 November 1944 – B29s

- The 73d Wing had by now 119 Superforts but only 87 were scheduled for the mission.
- Actually, eighty-one were airborne on the 27th; nineteen of these aborted and the others found the target completely hidden by 10/10 cloud.
- As briefed, they dropped by radar on the secondary targets, dock and urban areas at Tokyo, and on Hamamatsu, Shizuoka, Numazu, and Osaka.
- Flak was meager to moderate, and generally inaccurate.
- The planes came back in formation, as planned, to a point opposite Iwo Jima and thence on home individually.
- One B-29 was lost with its entire crew, when it ditched on the return trip.
- Although the F-13's were unable to take strike photos, it was later realized that Musashino was intact in spite of the 192 sorties sent against it, and there was little hope that any important damage had been done.



After the island was secured, Aslito Airfield was turned into Isley Field a vast B-29 base.

29 November 1944 – B29s

- Hansell informed Washington of his intentions: maximum strikes against a top-priority target when weather would permit visual bombing and he had sixty planes ready to go;
- raids against secondary targets with thirty or more planes when weather prevented precision bombing; and nightly weather-strike missions.
- He wanted to improve on SAN ANTONIO II with a big daylight show within the next two days, but the weather forecasts were pessimistic and there were not enough B-29's in commission to meet his minimum standard.
- To keep up the pressure on the enemy--and in part to relieve congestion at Isley, which on the record was a more dangerous location for a B-29 than the sky over Honshu--he ran a night radar mission of some thirty planes on **29 November**. The target was the dock and industrial areas in Tokyo and again the results were negligible.



Isley Field on Saipan mid 1945

3 December 1944 – B29s

- For 3 December the command scheduled a maximum daylight mission against the Nakajima Aircraft Plant at Ota, forty miles northwest of Tokyo. By D minus 1 weather reports were forbidding: at bombing altitudes over Ota, winds were reaching velocities of 180 miles per hour or more.
- At 0130 on the 3d it was decided that the only hope for the day was to go back to Musashino where visible bombing might be possible. Crews had already been briefed twice for the target; the 73d Wing hurriedly cut field orders and by 0945 eighty-six bombers were heading for Tokyo. Seventy-six got over the city to find clear weather but high winds; 59 planes bombed visually from a mean altitude of 28,700 feet with poor results.
- Musashi's records indicate that twenty-six bombs fell in the plant area with some small damage to buildings and equipment and almost none to machinery; Japanese casualties were moderately high.
- Strike photos, the command's only source of information, seemed to show even less damage, and for these slight results the command had paid dearly, with six B-29's lost and six damaged.⁷³



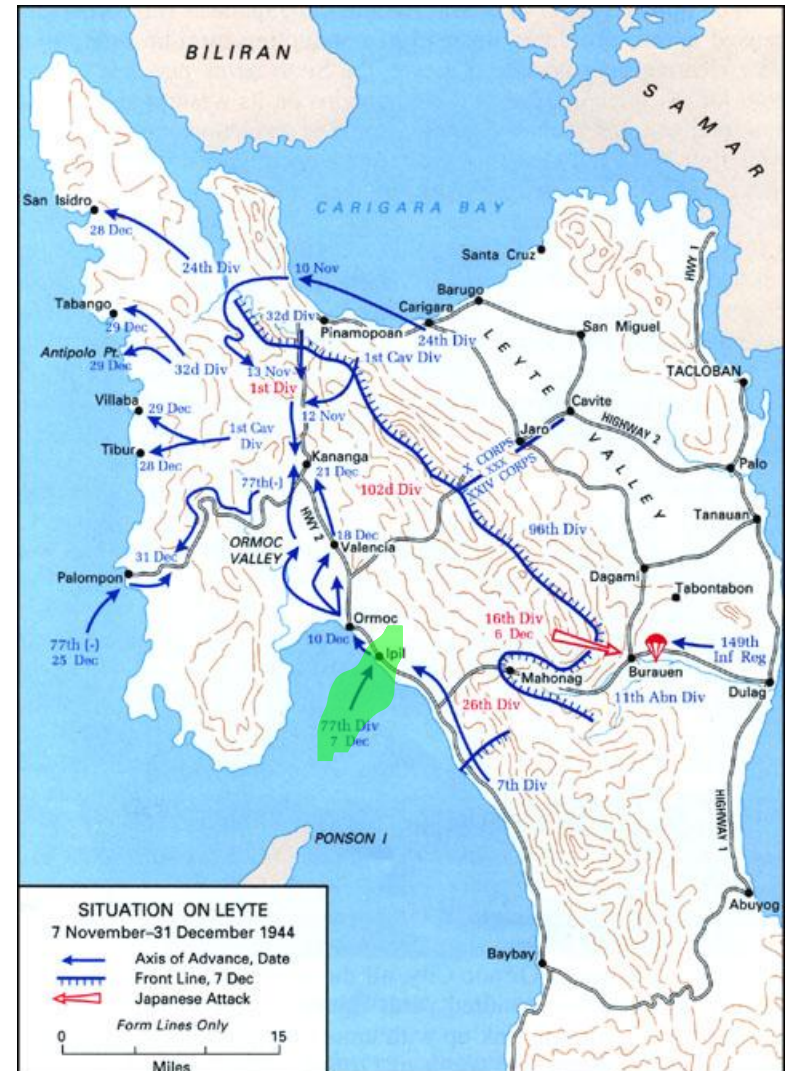
8 December 1944 – B29s

- After the first Japanese attack on Saipan Nimitz informed Hoover that Iwo's installations would become immediately the primary target for all of Task Force 94's aircraft, thus putting an end to the antishipping strikes.
- By the end of the month the heavies had run thirty missions against the island.
- In spite of them, however, the first Tokyo missions provoked more serious raids from the enemy.
- Therefore, Nimitz sent Harmon to Saipan to try an all-out attack on Iwo's installations by air and surface forces;
- Harmon arrived at Saipan on 5 December with plans for using Cruiser Division 5 and all available P-38's, B-24's, and B-29's in a daylight attack.
- After a hurried conference with Hoover, Hansell, and others, Harmon scheduled the bombardment for noon on the 7th. Postponed because of weather, the attack was delivered on the 8th although the skies had not cleared.
- At 0945 twenty-eight P-38's swept over the island, followed at 1100 by the B-29's and at noon by the Liberators. Hoover's cruisers began seventy minutes of shelling at 1347.
- The bomb load carried by the planes forcefully illustrated the difference in performance between the heavy and very heavy bomber at 725 miles tactical radius: the 62 B-29's dropped 620 tons, 102 B-24's only 194 tons.
- Photo: Admiral John H. Hoover, Commander, Central Pacific Forward Area.



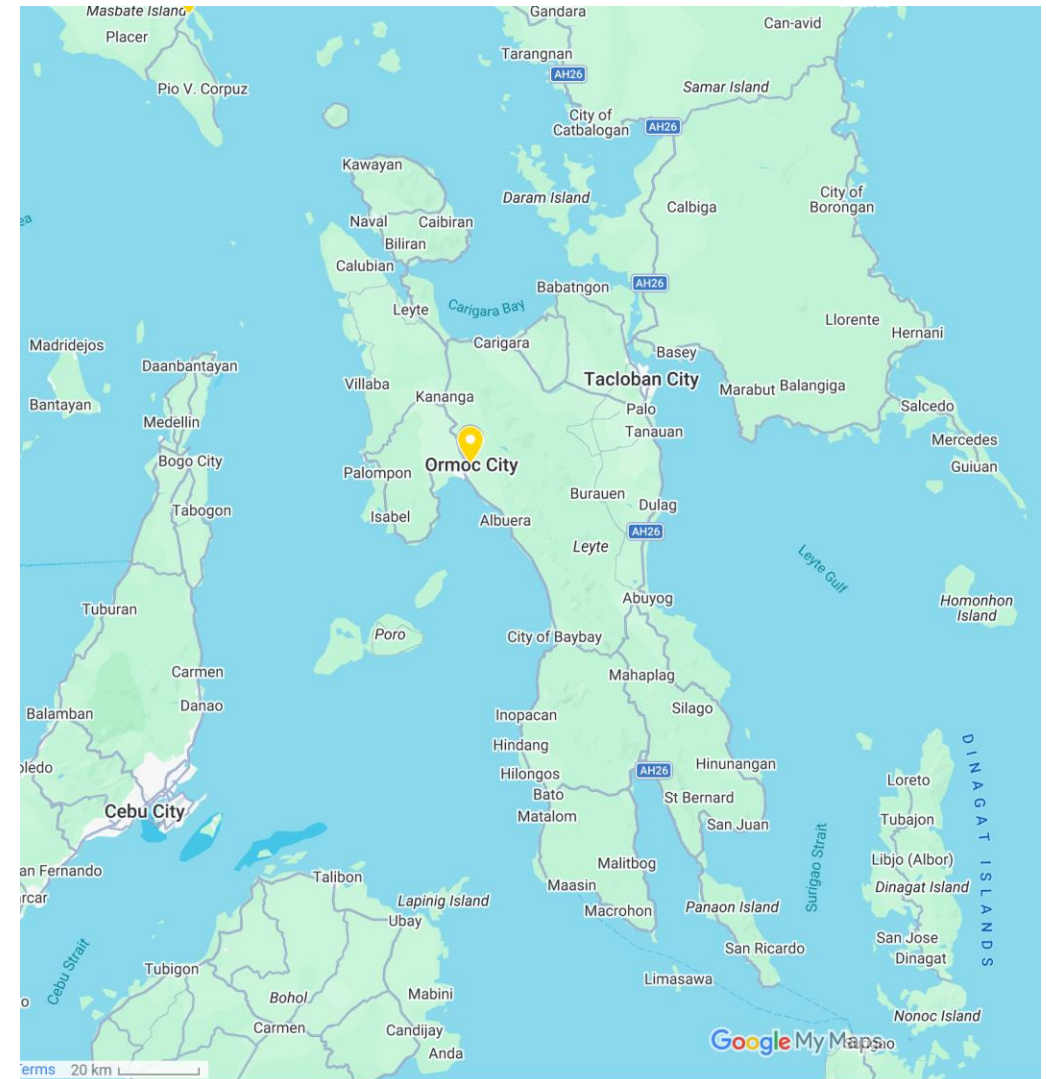
7 - 10 December 1944 - Leyte

- On the western side of Leyte, the US XXIV Corps received reinforcements on 7 December with the landing of the 77th Infantry Division under Maj. Gen. Andrew D. Bruce south of Ormoc City.
- The 77th Division's 305th and 307th Infantry Regiments came ashore at 0700 unopposed, supported by a company from the 776th Amphibian Tank Battalion.
- However, Admiral Storable's naval convoy was subjected to kamikaze air attacks, fifty-five aircraft making sixteen raids.
- The arrival of the 77th Division proved decisive. This enabled the 7th Division to resume its march north, and Japanese defenders were quickly squeezed between them.
- Moving north, the 77th Division faced strong opposition at Camp Downes, a prewar Philippine constabulary post.
- Supported by the newly arrived 306th Infantry Regiment, plus the 902nd and 305th Field Artillery Battalions, Gen. Bruce's troops pushed through and beyond Camp Downes and entered Ormoc City on 10 December.



7 December 1944 - Leyte

- The Japanese convoy TA-8 carried 4,000 troops destined for Ormoc Bay, which were unloaded at San Isidro, 30 miles north of Ormoc, after receiving news of the U.S. troop landings near Ormoc.
- All five transports, Akagisan Maru, Hakuba Maru, Shinsei Maru No. 5, Nichiyo Maru and T-7 were sunk on 7 December by air attack, and the escorting destroyers Ume and Sugi were damaged.
- Some 350 sailors were killed.



11 December 1944 – Philippines

- USS Reid had been the fighter control ship during the landings at Lae and Finschafen.
- In two weeks in the waters around Leyte, Reid's crew was able to sleep only an hour or two at a time. They were called to battle stations an average of 10 times a day. It was a period of near constant combat.
- While escorting reinforcements for Ormoc Bay near Surigao Straits, Reid had destroyed seven Japanese planes.
- At about 1700, twelve enemy planes approached the convoy. Reid was the nearest ship to the oncoming planes.



USS Reid (DD-369) off the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, California (USA), on 11 July 1943. She was in overhaul at Mare Island from 27 May to 16 July 1943.

11 December 1944 – Philippines

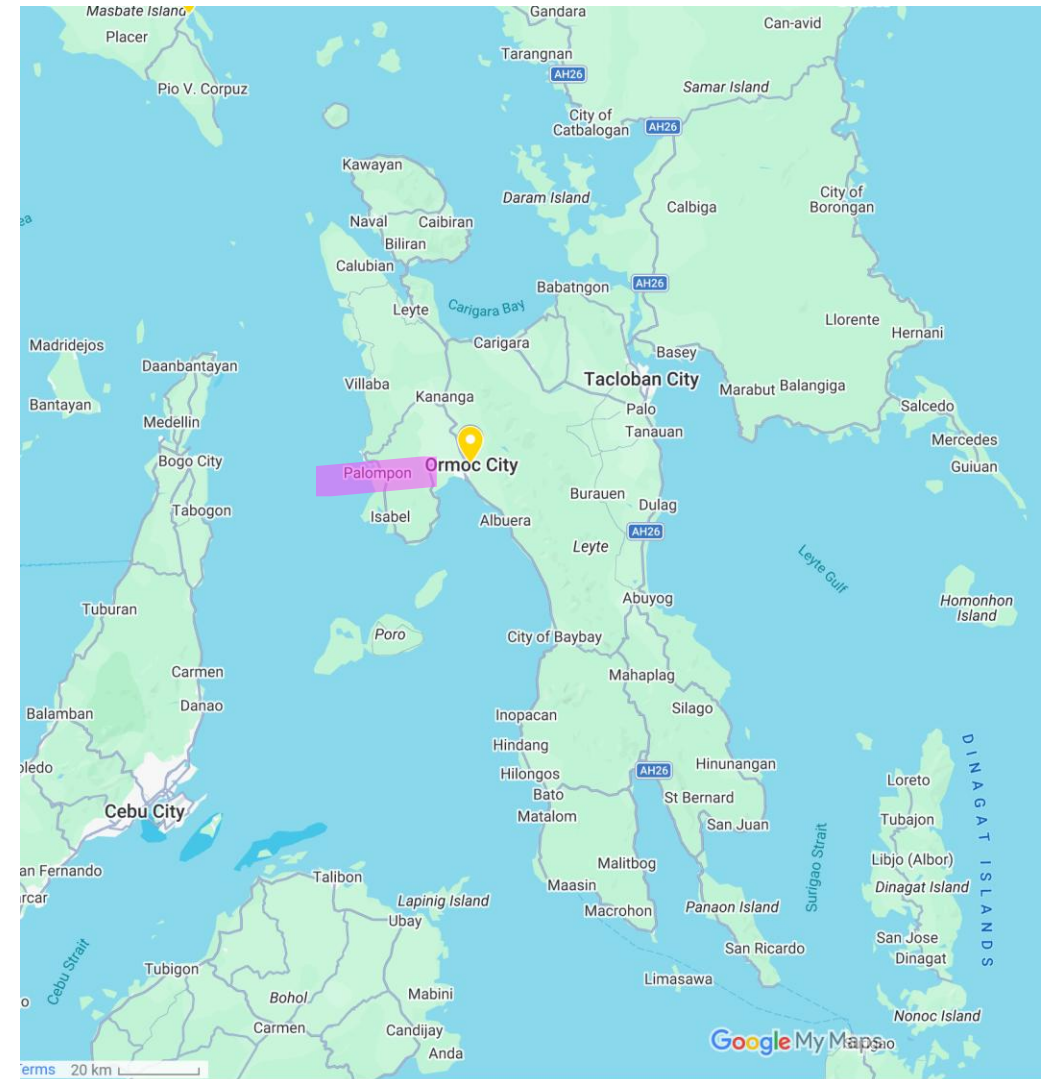
- Planes 1 and 2 were shot down by the 5-inch battery, and Plane 3 exploded about 500 yards (460 m) off the starboard beam. Plane 4 hooked a wing on the starboard rigging, crashing at the waterline. Its bomb exploded, causing considerable damage forward. Plane 5 strafed the starboard side and crashed on the port bow. Plane 6 strafed the bridge from the port side and crashed off the starboard bow. Plane 7 came in from astern, strafed Reid and crashed into the port quarter. Its bomb exploded in the after magazine, blowing the ship apart. All this action took less than a minute.
- The ship was mortally wounded but still doing 20 knots. As the stern opened up, she rolled violently, lay over on her starboard side and dove to the bottom. It was over in less than two minutes 103 crewmen went down with the ship.
- The survivors were strafed in the water by Japanese planes before rescue.



USS Reid (DD-369) off the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, California (USA), on 11 July 1943. She was in overhaul at Mare Island from 27 May to 16 July 1943.

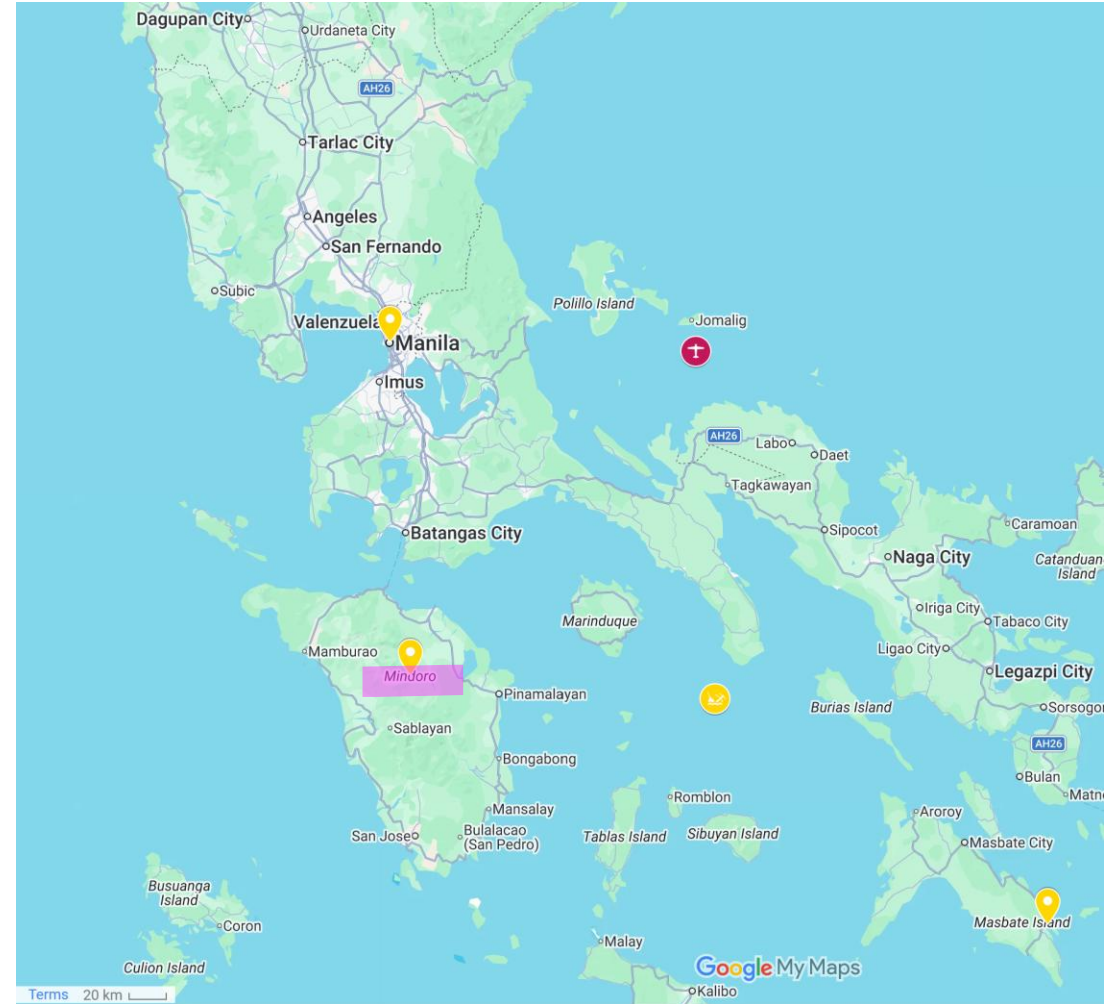
11 December 1944 - Leyte

- Convoy TA-9 landed some 4,000 troops at **Palompon**, but escorting destroyers entered the bay on 11 December where two, Yūzuki (by air attacks) and Uzuki (by PT boats), were sunk and the third, Kiri, was damaged.
- The movement of troops to Leyte had cost the Japanese heavily in transports and naval vessels sunk by air attack, and after bringing in part of their 8th Division from Manila early in December they ceased trying to reinforce.
- By fighting this series of engagements in Ormoc Bay, the U.S. Navy and the 5th Airforce were eventually able to prevent the Japanese from further resupplying and reinforcing their troops on Leyte, contributing significantly to the victory in the land battle.



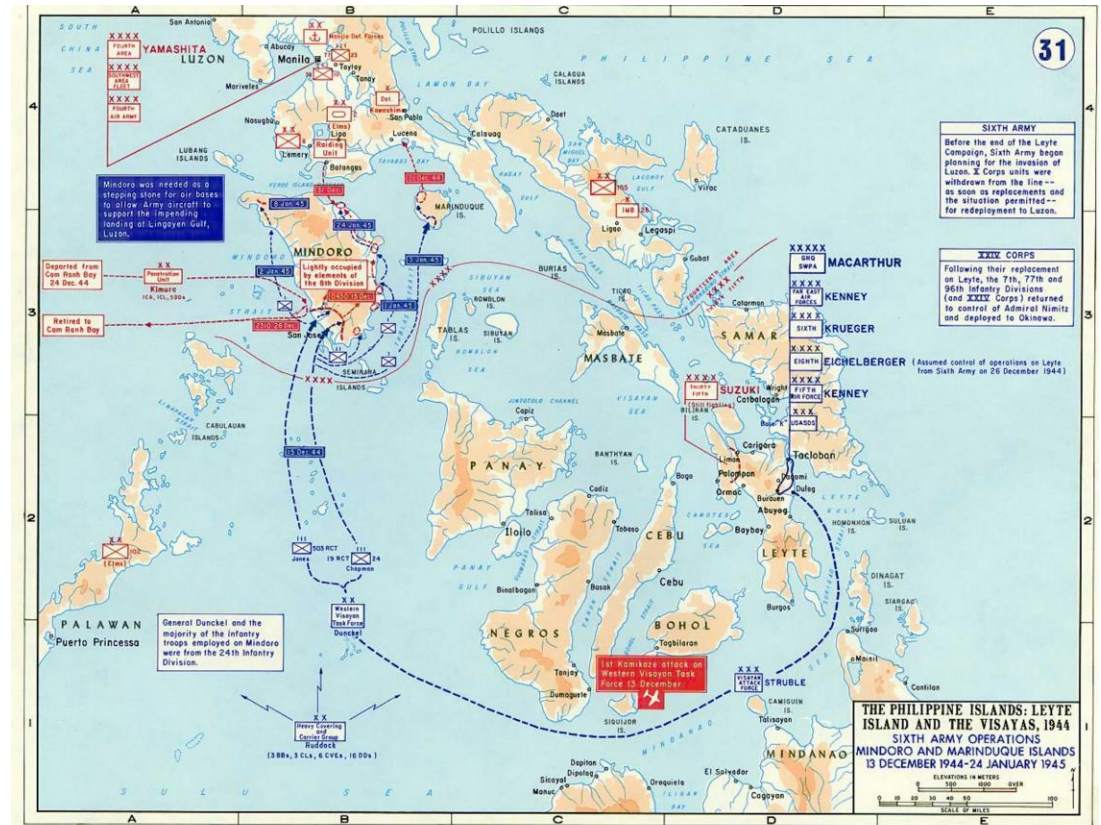
11 December 1944 - Mindoro

- The airfield situation in the Philippines was causing anxiety. Tacloban could not handle more than about 100 aircraft and other airfields because of the muddy conditions, were developing only slowly.
- As a preliminary to the Luzon landing, to provide land-based air cover for the ground operations on Luzon, a smaller landing was to be made on **Mindoro** just south of Luzon.
- There was an acute shortage of engineer and airfield construction strength in the South West Pacific Area. So despite the general policy of not using Australian units in the Philippines No. 3 Airfield Construction Squadron R.A.A.F. was assigned to the Mindoro operation.
- The original Mindoro plan was for a landing on 5th December. But the stubborn resistance of the Japanese on Leyte and the slowness in the development of airfields there had forced a postponement until 15th December.
- Slow development of the Leyte fields also meant that the Mindoro fields would need to be bomber capable instead of the original plan of fighters only.



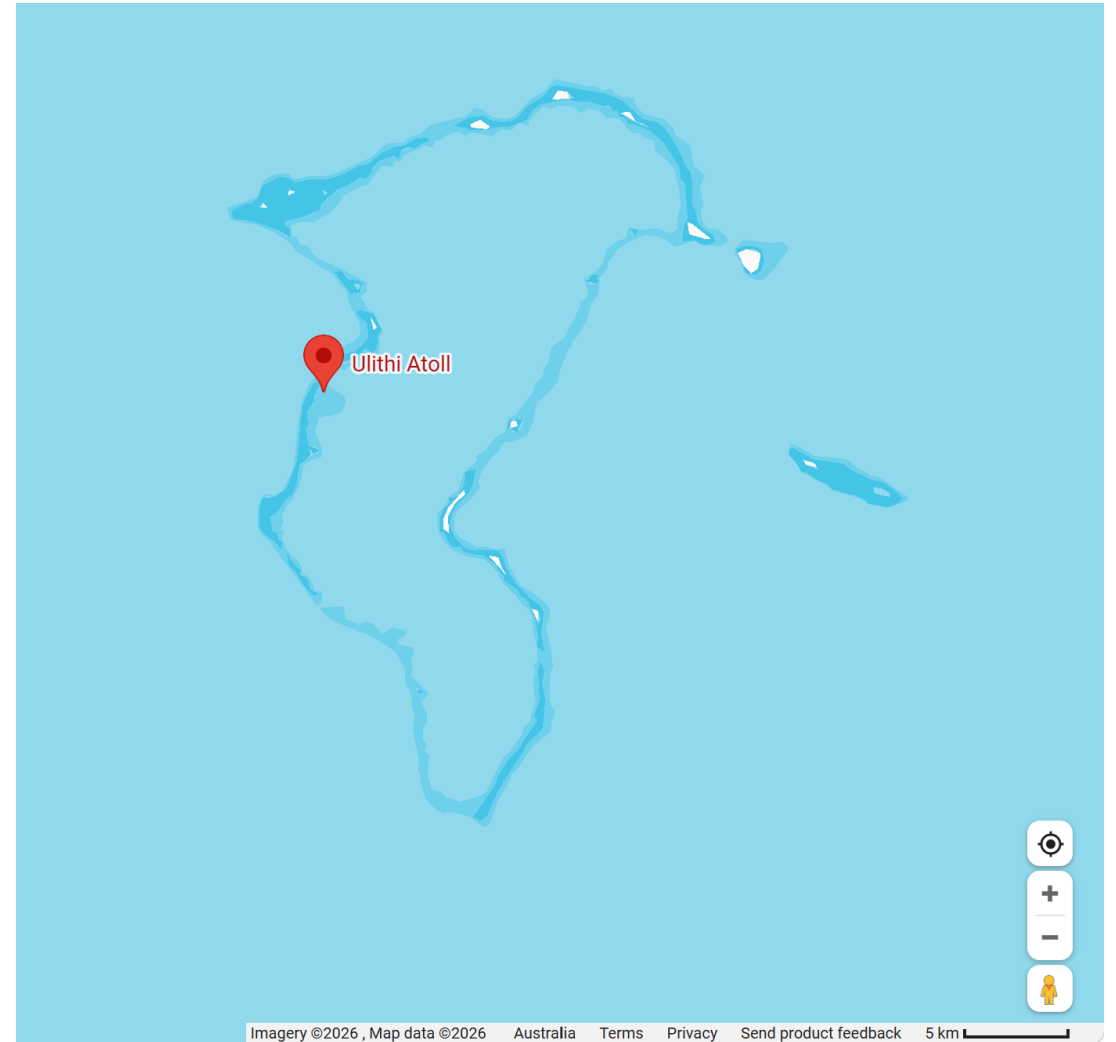
11 December 1944 - Mindoro

- No. 3 Construction Squadron left Morotai on 16th November for Biak where it joined the main convoy for Leyte.
- Although attacked on the way by enemy torpedo bombers the convoy suffered no damage or casualties and arrived on 24th November at Leyte where it was to await onward movement to Mindoro.
- On 11th December, No. 3 A.C.S. left Leyte with the Mindoro Task Force. The loading of the convoy could not be kept secret; much of the population of Leyte was aware of the impending move and on the radio "Tokyo Rose" reported, during the evening of 10th December, that the assault force was two days late and that 600 Australians were included in the operation!



13 December 1944 - Marianas LORAN B29

- A survey party was sent to the Ulithi Atoll to find a site for another Loran station. Potangeras having been suggested as the most likely island.
- The siting party felt that while a station could be built here, the additional time which would be required in clearing the ground was a drawback. Other islands in the group were visited but were found to be either inaccessible or already crowded with military installations. The objection to the Potangeras site, however, was largely removed when Commodore Kessing, Island Commander of the Ulithi Atoll, offered to have the ground cleared by a Navy Construction Battalion.
- The MENKAR, was ordered to pick up the group which had just completed the station on Saipan and its construction equipment and to land them at Ulithi.
- The MENKAR left Saipan on 9 December and reached Ulithi on 13 December.



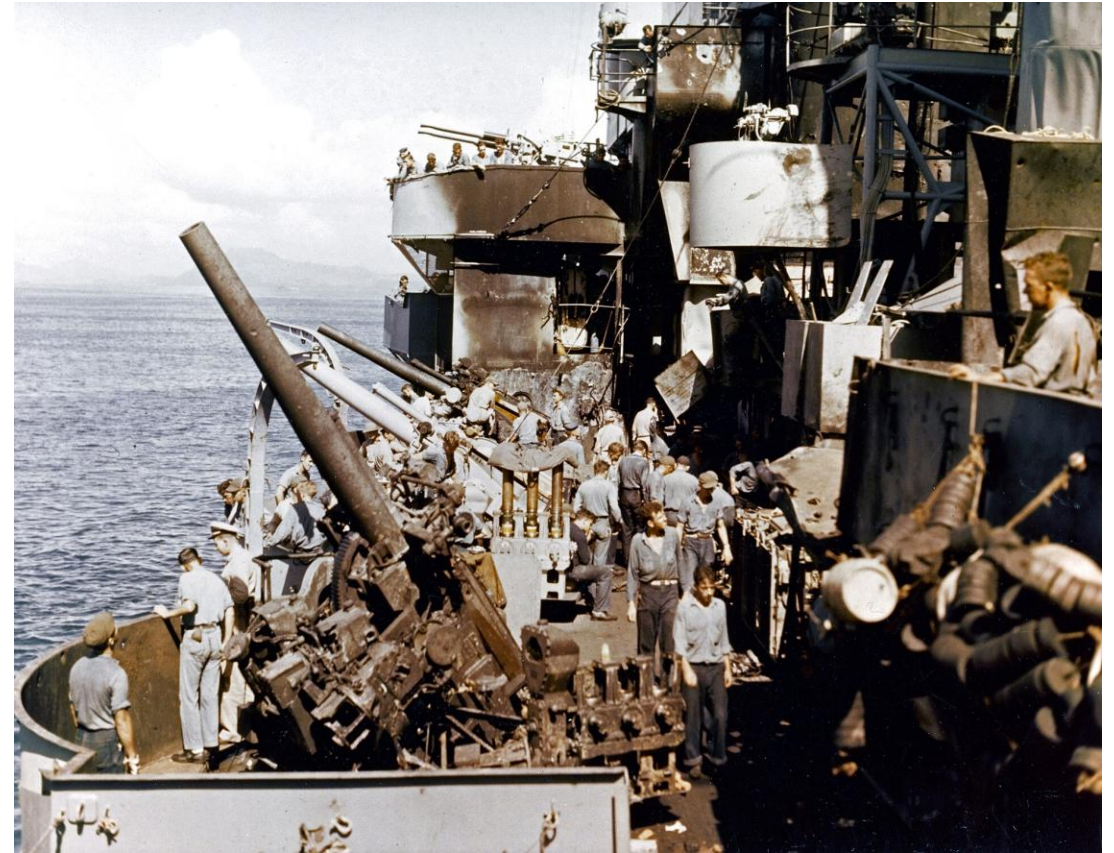
13 December 1944 – B29s

- the Twentieth was obligated to support Pacific operations—specifically, Third Fleet operations in advance of the Mindoro invasion set for 15 December.
- According to accepted AAF doctrine, this could best be done by attacking an important industrial objective. The choice for primary visual target was the Mitsubishi Aircraft Engine Works at Nagoya, and the same company's aircraft works was named as radar target (rather than secondary, as Norstad had suggested); strays, it was hoped, would spill into crowded Nagoya, Japan's second city and an industrial center of great importance.
- The engine works lay in the northeast section of Nagoya, about two and a half miles from Nagoya Castle.
- The plant, between 1939 and 1945 manufactured 44,004 engines.
- On the 13th, the 73d Wing was able to get ninety bombers up, most of them carrying ten 500-pound GP's but one squadron from each group loaded with incendiary clusters.
- Sixteen B-29's aborted and three bombed targets of opportunity. Japanese resistance was lively and, in all, four B-29's were lost and thirty-one damaged.
- The bombing, if of less than pickle-barrel precision, showed improvement. Strike photos indicated that 16 per cent of the bombs dropped had fallen within 1,000 feet of the aiming point and that 17.8 per cent of the roofed area had been destroyed.
- For the first time XXI Bomber Command had made an appreciable dent in the aircraft industry.



13/14 December 1944 - Mindoro

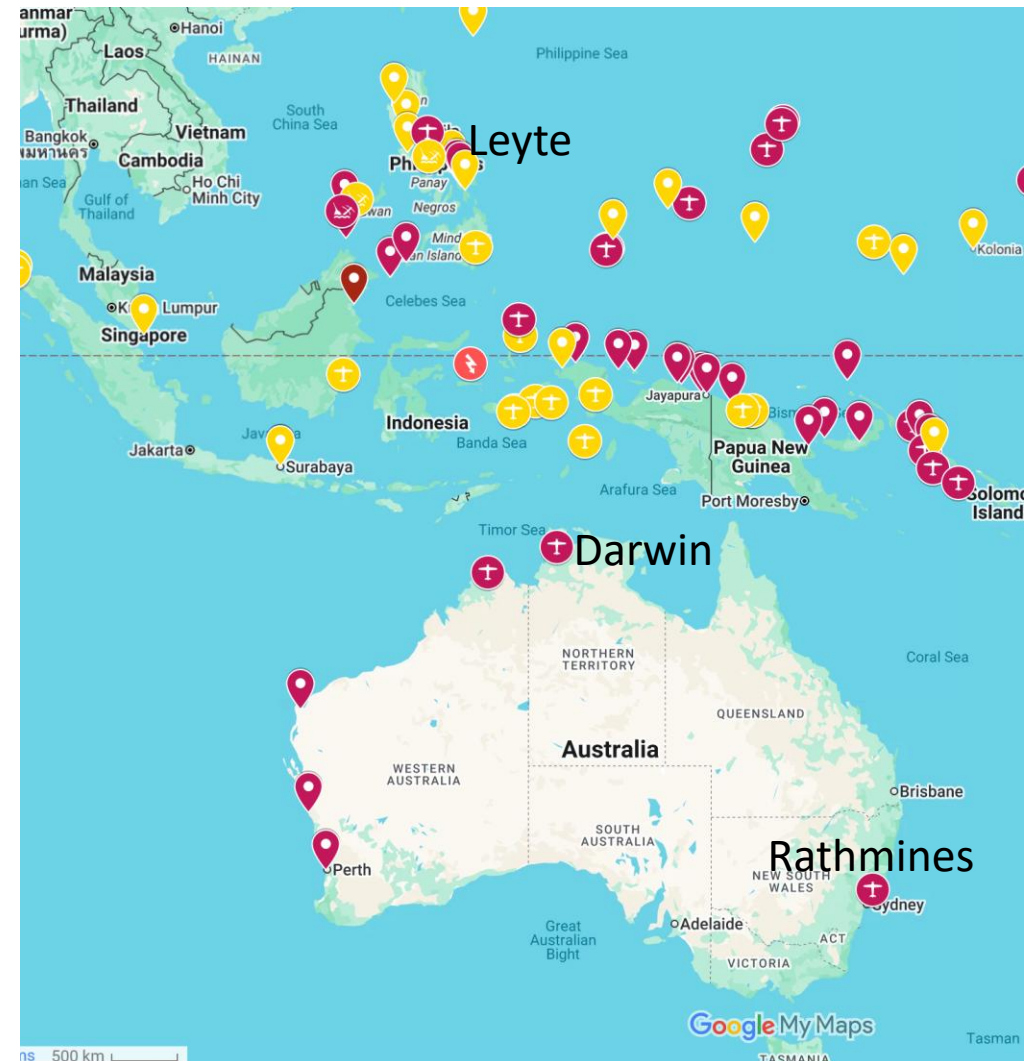
- The first enemy air raid on the convoy occurred on 13th December, when the command cruiser Nashville was hit by a suicide dive bomber causing heavy casualties some 200 were killed, including the chief of staff of the force.
- A twin-engined Betty bomber was shot down by escorting Lightning aircraft, while another fell to a Corsair.
- Orders were received late on the 14th for 3 Airfield Construction Squadron to go in on the first wave.



Crew of the light cruiser USS Nashville (CL-43) cleaning up the port side 5"/25 gun battery, after the ship was hit in that area by a Kamikaze on 13 December 1944. Note the fire damage to the guns and nearby structure.

14 December 1944 - Mindoro

- Minelaying Catalinas of No. 76 Wing from Darwin were called on to aid the Mindoro landing by laying mines in Manila Bay where it was hoped that enemy shipping would be bottled up.
- Halsey's carrier planes had struck heavily at Japanese surface activity in Manila Bay, but mining was considered necessary to protect the Mindoro landing.
- The whole of the sixty mines had to be dropped in one night.
- No. 76 Wing could provide only 18 Catalinas so another six had to be brought up from No. 11 Squadron at Rathmines.
- The Catalinas were to set out from Leyte on the 14th December to lay the mines.
- The American naval tender Heron was available to refuel and service the aircraft.
- To protect the Catalinas from night fighters, American Liberator bombers were to carry out diversionary raids and an American Catalina would drop "window" to blanket enemy radar defences.
- Catalina cruising speed was 109 knots (201 kph)



14 December 1944 - Mindoro

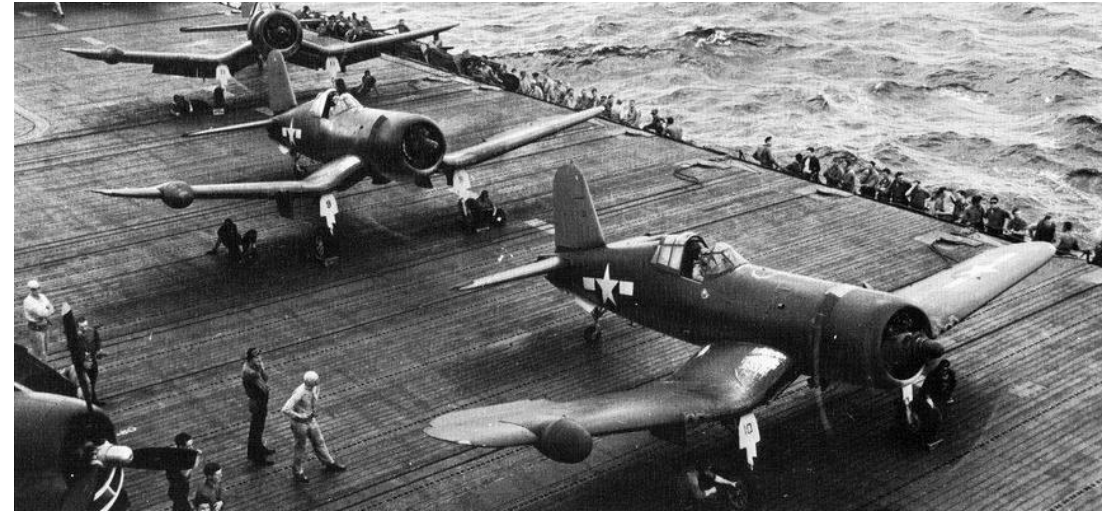
- The Catalinas began taking off at 4.30 p.m. on 14th December.
- They circled near Leyte until all planes were in the air and on signal from the radar-jamming plane, all Catalinas flew singly to Manila Bay.
- All of them found the target and made their runs with only minor difficulties. Some of the Catalinas experienced some machine gun and small arms fire.
- The crews saw heavy anti-aircraft guns open fire round Manila and Corregidor but it was not directed at the Catalinas.
- There was little opposition and the Japanese had evidently had little warning of the approach of the Catalinas. This was attributed to the work of the radar-jamming aircraft and the tactics employed.
- One of the Australian aircraft (captained by Flight Lieutenant Roberts) failed to return.



A restored Catalina in RAAF "Black Cat" livery. The black served to camouflage the Catalina during night operations.

14 December 1944

- By late 1944, the USN night fighter pilots, and their equipment, were getting better.
- In the first six months of the year the average distance at which a night fighter first made bogey contact was 1.7 miles, whereas in the last six months the average increased to 2.8.
- As another example, on the night of 14 December 1944, as a fast USN carrier task force stole in for an air attack on Luzon in the Philippines, a Japanese patrol plane was detected on Enterprise's radar. A night fighter was launched and the snooper was in the water within seventeen minutes of detection.
- It was apparently jumped even before it could get off a contact message, allowing the task force to reach launch point undetected.



F4U-2s aboard USS Intrepid. The radome on the right outer wing is just visible.

14 December 1944 – S. W. Pacific



Mountbatten
Commander South East
Asia Command

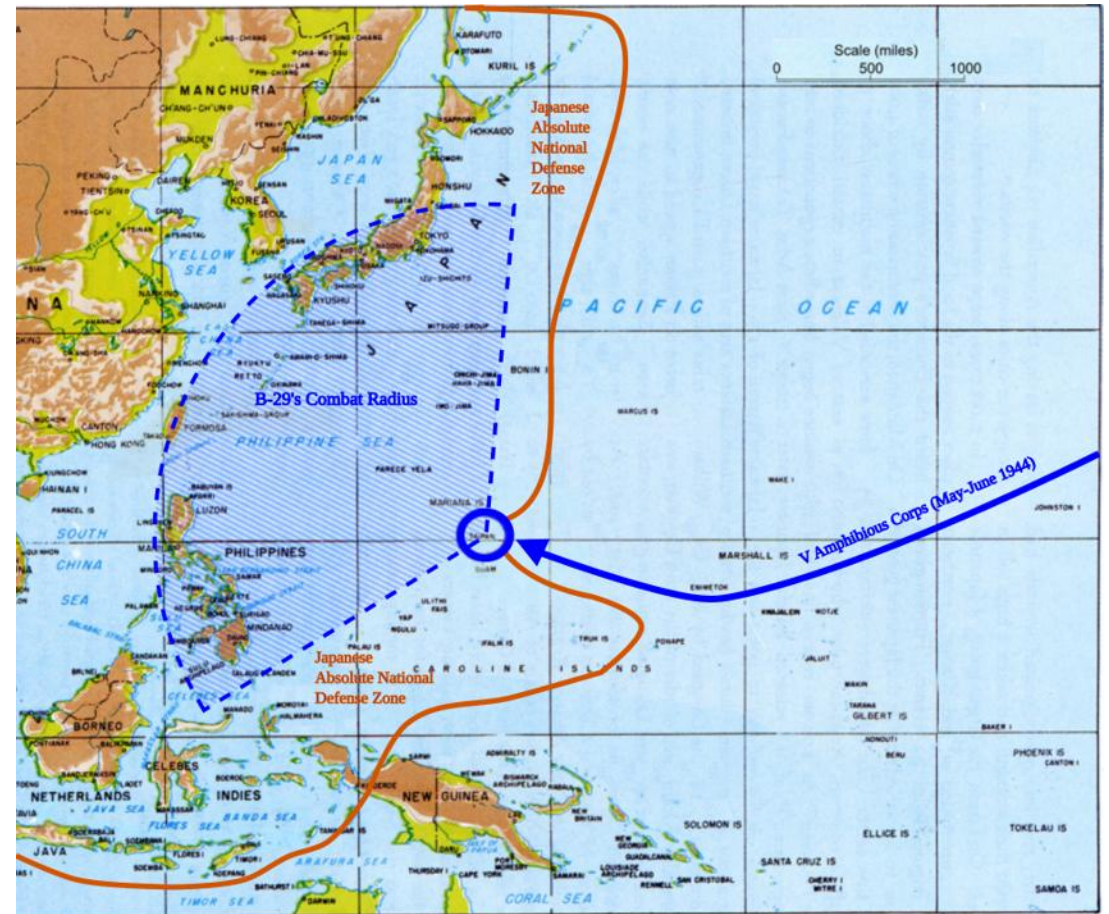
- On 14th December MacArthur received a telegram from General Marshall in Washington stating that Mountbatten had raised the question of an Australian division being made available to him.
- MacArthur said that none of his divisions could be removed unless additional troops were sent from the United States.
- He advised that the matter be "dropped as quietly as possible" since, if it reached the Australian public it would arouse a degree of heated controversy that could only have an adverse effect.
- MacArthur evidently did not mention the suggestion to the Australian Government.



MacArthur Commander
South West Pacific
Command

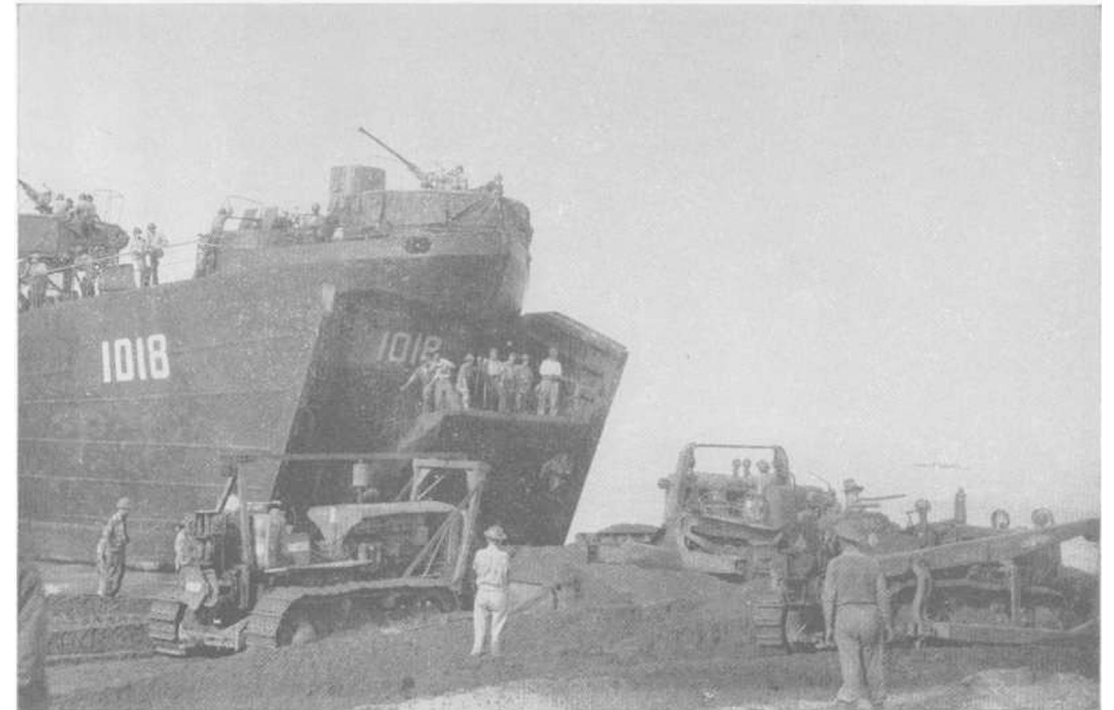
15 December 1944 - Marianas LORAN B29

- The second runway on Saipan was complete by 15 December.
- Until then there was a risk that a landing accident after a raid would leave the rest of the B29s with nowhere to land.



15 December 1944 - Philippines

- diary of Squadron Leader Overend, a staff officer of No. 61 Airfield Construction Wing.
- “Up at 0400 [4 a.m.] to general quarters. Coffee and roll for breakfast. Naval guns are in action as an enemy transport is picked up by escort. It is hit within three minutes and large fire starts, lasting some hours. Then there is dead silence.
- Mindoro is dead ahead and naval bombardment commences. Ships are forming into beach lines and into waves. Enemy aircraft appear low down and are held off by anti-aircraft fire. Beach markers are visible.
- On the last lap as we go in, six aircraft appear directly overhead. Five are shot down by anti-aircraft fire but a sixth successfully suicide-dived into the rear LST. A second LST is also hit. Even after being shot down while in a suicide dive, the pilot attempts to complete his mission. We make a dry landing on a good beach. Survivors from damaged LST's are being brought ashore. The R.A.A.F. is being unloaded first.



No. 3 Airfield Construction Squadron at the Mindoro landing on 15th December 1944. Men of the unit are using three bulldozers to build a ramp from the beach to the open bows of an LST.

15/19 December 1944 - Philippines

- All day in the hot sun the men of the squadron toiled to get equipment and supplies off as quickly as possible and dispersed inland so that the LST's could withdraw from the beach-head which was under constant air attack. Leading Aircraftman Barham, who was helping to unload stores at Red Beach was killed and several men badly burned when an enemy aircraft attempted to crash-dive into the open door of an LST.
- By nightfall No. 3 A.C.S. had established a temporary camp in a bivouac area half a mile from their planned camp site and its equipment was spread out en route, some of it bogged down in sodden canefields. Enemy paratroop landings were expected and the squadron was given the additional task of manning 2,500 yards of perimeter .
- By the 19th American engineers and No. 3 Airfield Construction Squadron of the R.A.A.F. had the first airfield ready.



Men of No. 3 Airfield Construction Squadron and two United States infantrymen at Mindoro. The Australians are left to right: L.A.C's F. Watts and J. Webster, and Sgt J. Smith.

17 December 1944 - Manhattan Project

- The 509th Composite Group was activated on 17 December 1944 at Wendover Army Air Field, Utah, under the command of Colonel Paul W. Tibbets.
- Its 393rd Bombardment Squadron, equipped with Silverplate B-29s, practiced long-distance flights over water and dropped pumpkin bombs.
- Tibbets had been assigned in March 1944 as director of operations of the 17th Bombardment Operational Training Wing (Very Heavy), a B-29 training unit. Its role was to transition pilots to the B-29. Crews were reluctant to embrace the troublesome B-29, and to shame the male crews, Tibbets taught and certified two Women Airforce Service Pilots, Dora Dougherty and Dorothea (Didi) Johnson Moorman, to fly the B-29 as demonstration pilots.



Tibbets with WASP pilots Dorothea Johnson Moorman and Dora Dougherty pose before their B-29 "Ladybird"

17 December 1944 - Manhattan Project

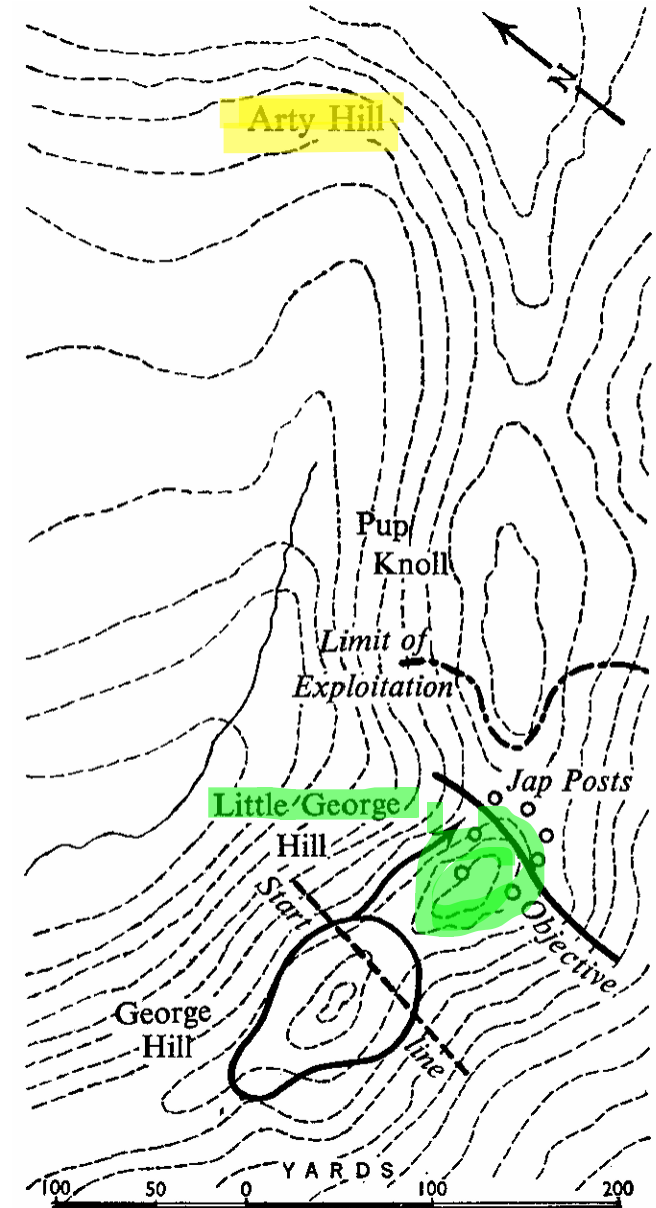
- Reactor D was started on 17 December 1944.



Hanford workers collect their paychecks at the Western Union office.

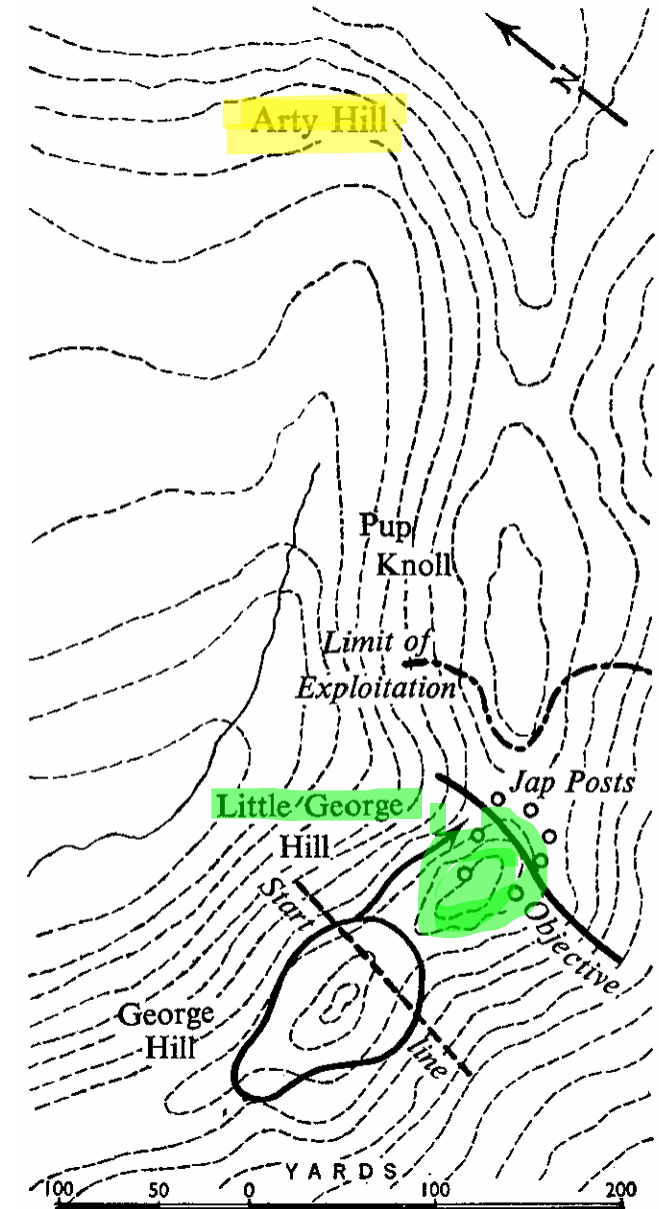
18 December 1944 - Bougainville

- Patrolling continued. Brigadier Field suggested to Colonel Matthews that he should occupy Sisivie.
- On 3 December a Platoon attack failed with two killed and one wounded.
- On the 13th under cover of a bombardment by ten aircraft with depth-charges and a battery of artillery a patrol of ten men went forward to Arty Hill to observe, were fired on and lost one man killed and two wounded.
- At 7 a.m. on 18th December Major Blanch's company formed up on the sheltered side of George and Little George.
- After twelve New Zealand Corsairs and the battery of the 4th Field Regiment bombarded the Japanese positions for thirteen minutes, with medium machine-guns firing from each flank—on to the reverse slope of Arty Hill at ranges up to 1,000 yards, the attackers advanced through the smoke along the razor-back ridge which was the only means of approach to the bare hill.



18 December 1944 - Bougainville

- Months of bombardment had so loosened the soil on the steep slopes that the men had difficulty in scrambling up them. By 8.10 the leading troops were near the crest of Banyan Knoll and were meeting sharp small arms fire from Japanese in covered weapon-pits. Grenades were hurled down on them.
- They pressed on. Sergeant Allan, commanding the right platoon, led the way to the top of Banyan Knoll, shot a Japanese machine-gunner and himself fell dead. His men carried on up the slopes of Arty Hill.
- The attackers worked in pairs, one man covering an enemy post with fire while the other attacked from a flank with grenades.
- After more than an hour of close fighting the position was won and the defenders were digging in and setting up wire in preparation for the probable counter-attack. There was none: a prisoner said that there were not enough men left to attack.
- Five Australians were killed and 12 wounded of whom 4 remained on duty. Twenty-five Japanese dead were counted, 2 Japanese were taken prisoner, and from 10 to 20 recently-buried bodies were found).



18 December 1944 – B29s

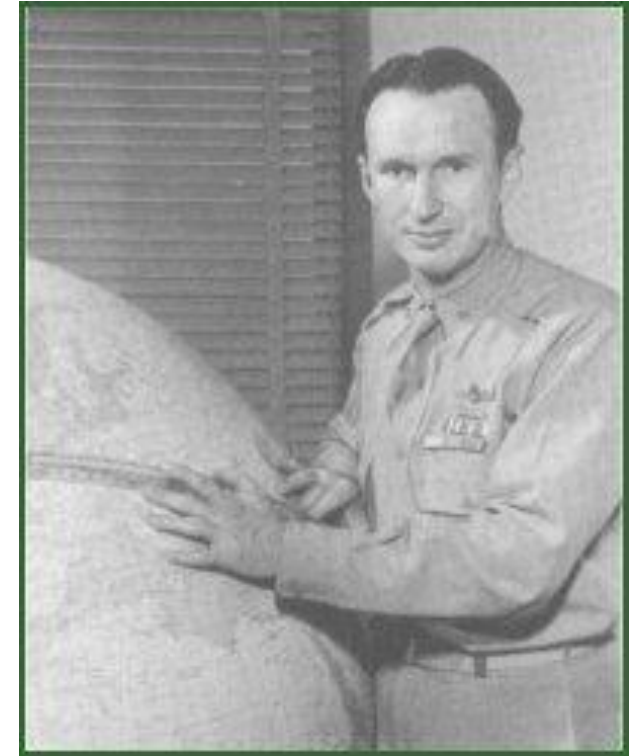
- On **18 December** Hansell dispatched eighty-nine bombers against the Mitsubishi Aircraft Works, the giant assembly plant which used most of the engines produced in the No. 4 Engine Works.
- Located on reclaimed land at the northeast corner of Nagoya harbor.
- Large, compact, and conspicuous, this complex offered an excellent visual target, and the proximity of the harbor's shore line made it suitable for radar strikes as well. All of this was fortunate-or should have been.
- On this 18 December attack many planes, as usual, failed to follow the flight plan so that only sixty-three planes bombed the primary target.
- Cloud cover was heavy and forty-four of these dropped by radar, to add considerably to the damage caused by an earthquake on 7 December.
- Though few bombs were plotted in the area, 17.8 per cent of the roofed area appeared to have been destroyed.



18 December 1944 – B29s



- On 18 December, just after LeMay's XX Bomber Command had burned the heart out of Hankow's military storage area with fire bombs.
- Norstad requested a full-scale incendiary attack on Nagoya as soon as 100 B-29's were ready to go--this as an "urgent requirement" for planning purposes.
- Hansell protested strongly: he had "with great difficulty implanted the principle that our mission is the destruction of primary targets by sustained and determined attacks using precision bombing methods both visual and radar"; now as this doctrine was "beginning to get results" on the aircraft industry, pressure to divert his force to area bombing threatened to undermine the progress made.
- Hansell would, however, consider the message as an order modifying his original directive.
- Norstad replied immediately in a conciliatory message: the aircraft industry continued to carry an "overriding priority" and the test fire raid, he reiterated, was simply a "special requirement resulting from the necessity of future planning."
- Mollified, Hansell promised to run the desired mission as soon as possible after completing missions already scheduled.



Jerry McBrien 2026

18 December 1944- Pacific

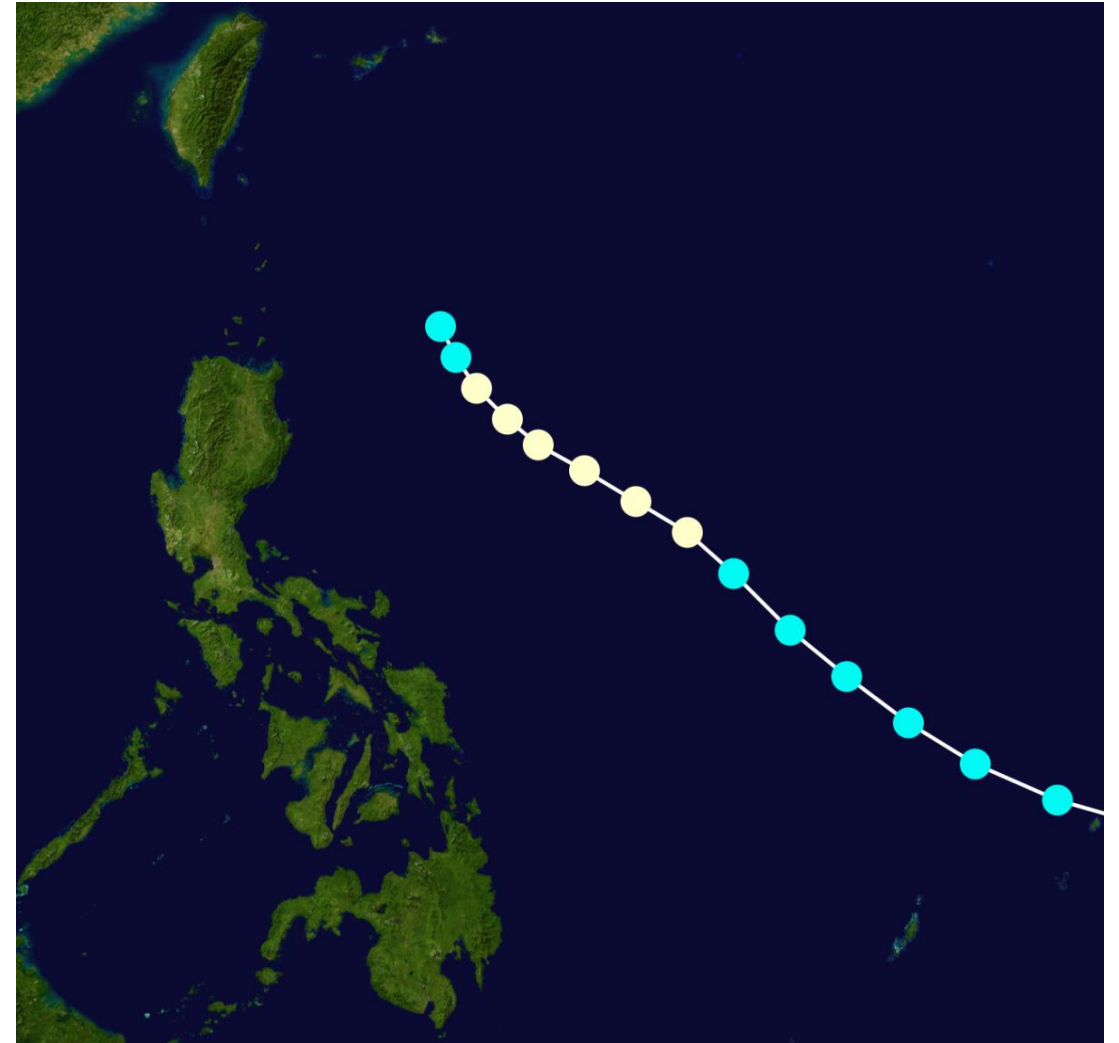
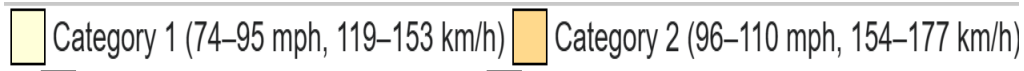
- Task Force 38 had been operating about 300 miles east of Luzon in the Philippine Sea, conducting air raids against Japanese airfields in the Philippines and trying to refuel the ships on December 17.
- When the weather worsened, Halsey moved the rendezvous point 180 miles further south. This took the fleet further into the path of “Typhoon Cobra”, though neither Halsey nor his meteorologists knew where the worst of the weather would be.
- While conducting the refuelling operations, the Third Fleet remained on station rather than breaking up and seeking shelter from the storm.
- Destroyers, Spence, Hull, and Monaghan either capsized or were sunk after water flooded down their smokestacks and disabled their engines. Without power, they were at the mercy of the wind and seas.
- Many other ships of TF 38 suffered various degrees of damage, especially to radar and radio equipment, which crippled communications within the fleet.
- Several carriers suffered fires in their hangars, and 146 aircraft were wrecked or blown overboard. Nine ships—including one light cruiser, three light carriers, and two escort carriers—suffered enough damage to be sent for repairs.
- 790 sailors were killed.



USS Cowpens during Typhoon Cobra, 18
December 1944

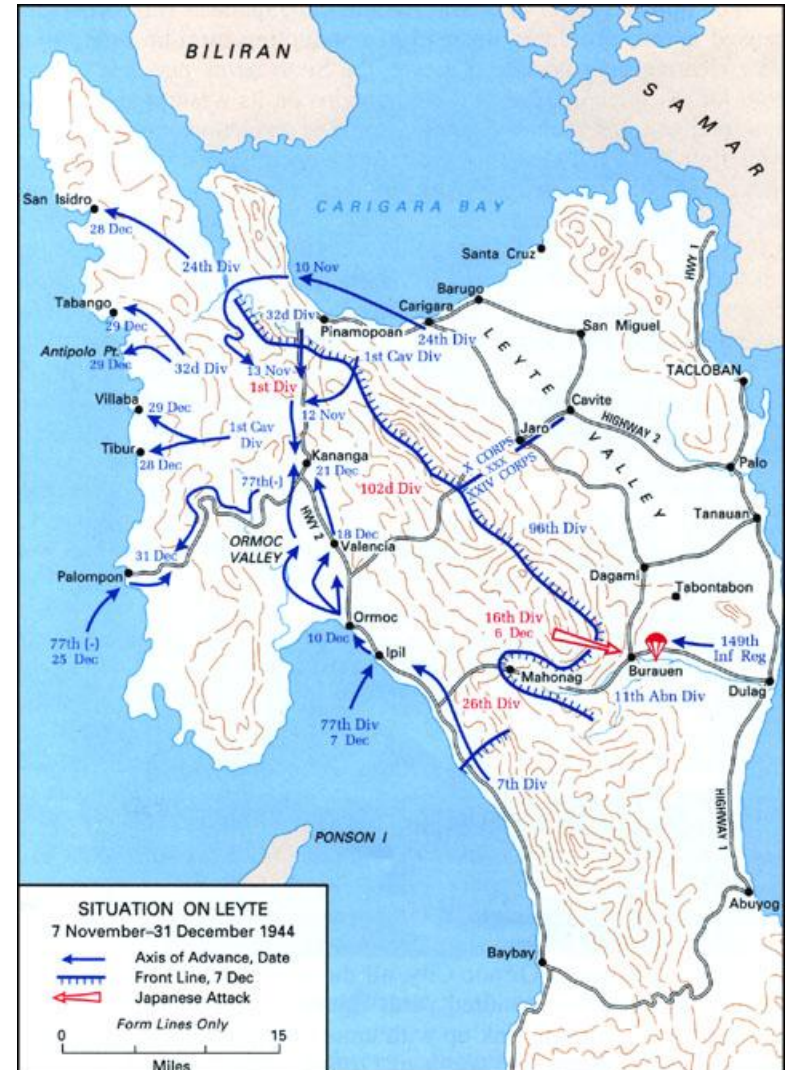
18 December 1944- Pacific

- A Court of Inquiry was convened at the naval base at Ulithi, with Admiral Nimitz, CINCPAC, in attendance at the court
- Although the court found that Halsey had committed an "error of judgement" in sailing the Third Fleet into the heart of the typhoon, it stopped short of unambiguously recommending sanction.
- In January 1945, Halsey passed command of the Third Fleet to Admiral Spruance, a move that had been arranged before the typhoon.
- Halsey regained command over the fleet in May.
- Map plotting the storm's track and intensity, according to the Saffir–Simpson scale Map key Saffir–Simpson scale



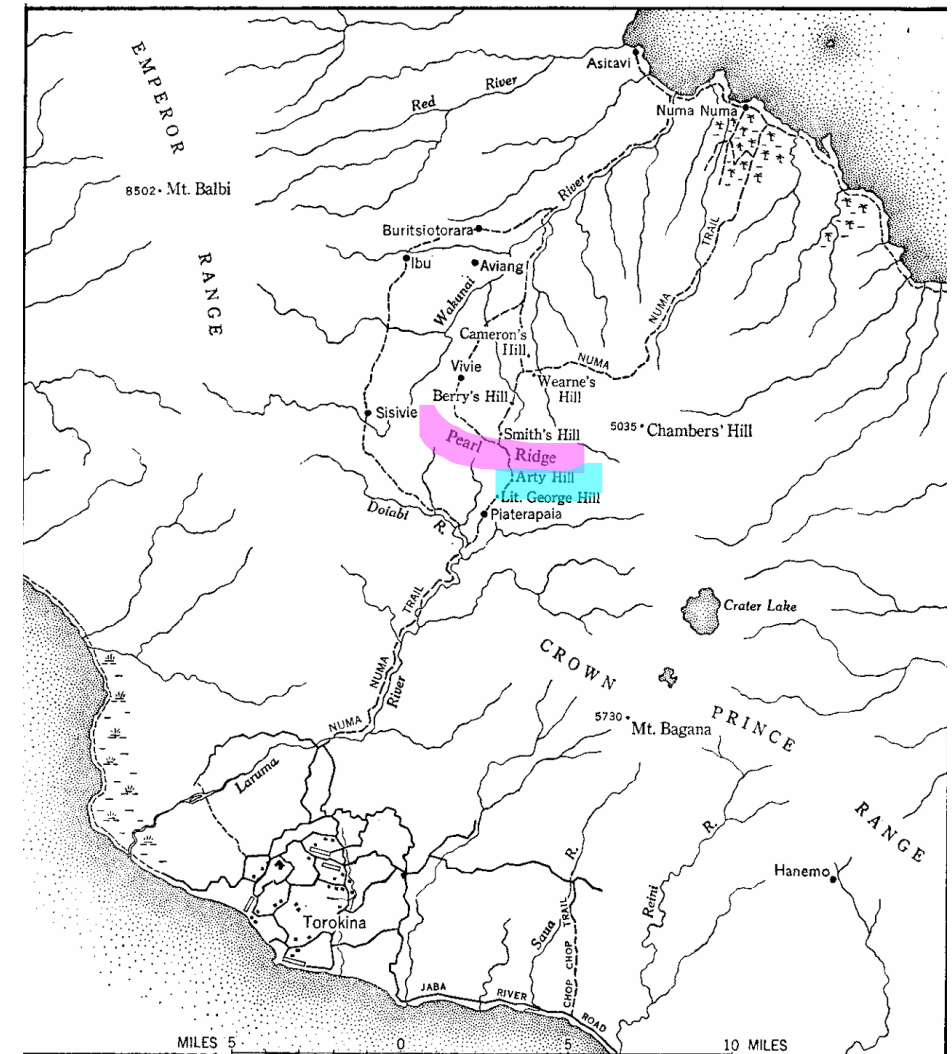
21 December 1944 - Leyte

- North of Ormoc Valley, the 32nd Division had met determined opposition from the defending Japanese 1st Division along Highway 2, after moving south past Kilay Ridge and entering a heavy rain forest, which limited visibility and concealed the enemy.
- Using flamethrowers, hand grenades, rifles, and bayonets, troops scratched out daily advances measured in yards, and in five days of hard fighting, the 126th and 127th Infantry Regiments advanced less than 1 mile.
- Contact between patrols of the 12th Cavalry and the 77th Division's 306th Infantry on **21 December** marked the juncture of the US X and XXIV Corps and the closing of the Sixth Army's pincer maneuver against the Ormoc Valley.



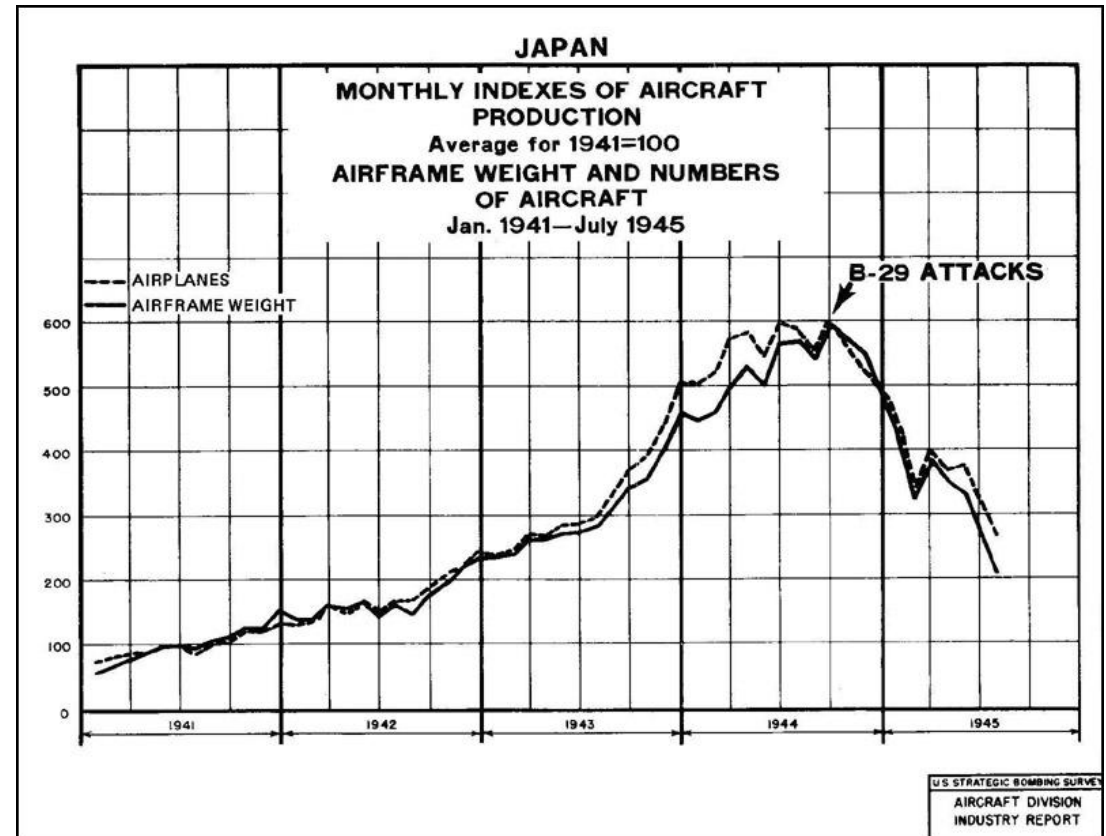
22 December 1944 - Bougainville

- On the 20th the 25th Battalion relieved the 9th and was given the task of gaining information in preparation for an attack on the next feature, Pearl Ridge.
- On the 22nd, after an ineffective air attack, one platoon of the 25th made a probing thrust towards Pearl Ridge, losing one man killed and three wounded.
- It was estimated that from 80 to 90 Japanese were entrenched on Pearl. Next day a patrol was ambushed beyond Arty Hill and its leader, Lieutenant Smith, was killed.



22 December 1944 – B29

- Four of XXI Bomber Command's next five raids were made against targets in Nagoya.
- The third raid was a daylight incendiary attack which was conducted after the Twentieth Air Force directed that 100 B-29s armed with M-69 bombs be dispatched against Nagoya to test the effectiveness of these weapons on a Japanese city.
- Despite the change in armament, the **22 December** raid was planned as a precision attack on an aircraft factory using only 78 bombers.
- The weather turned bad, however, and before the last formations were over Nagoya the target was covered by 10/10 cloud. Only forty-eight planes bombed the Mitsubishi plant and they had to drop by radar.
- Strike photos were few and revealed little.



23 December 1944 - Bougainville

On the 23rd Savige issued an instruction. Paragraph 8 read:

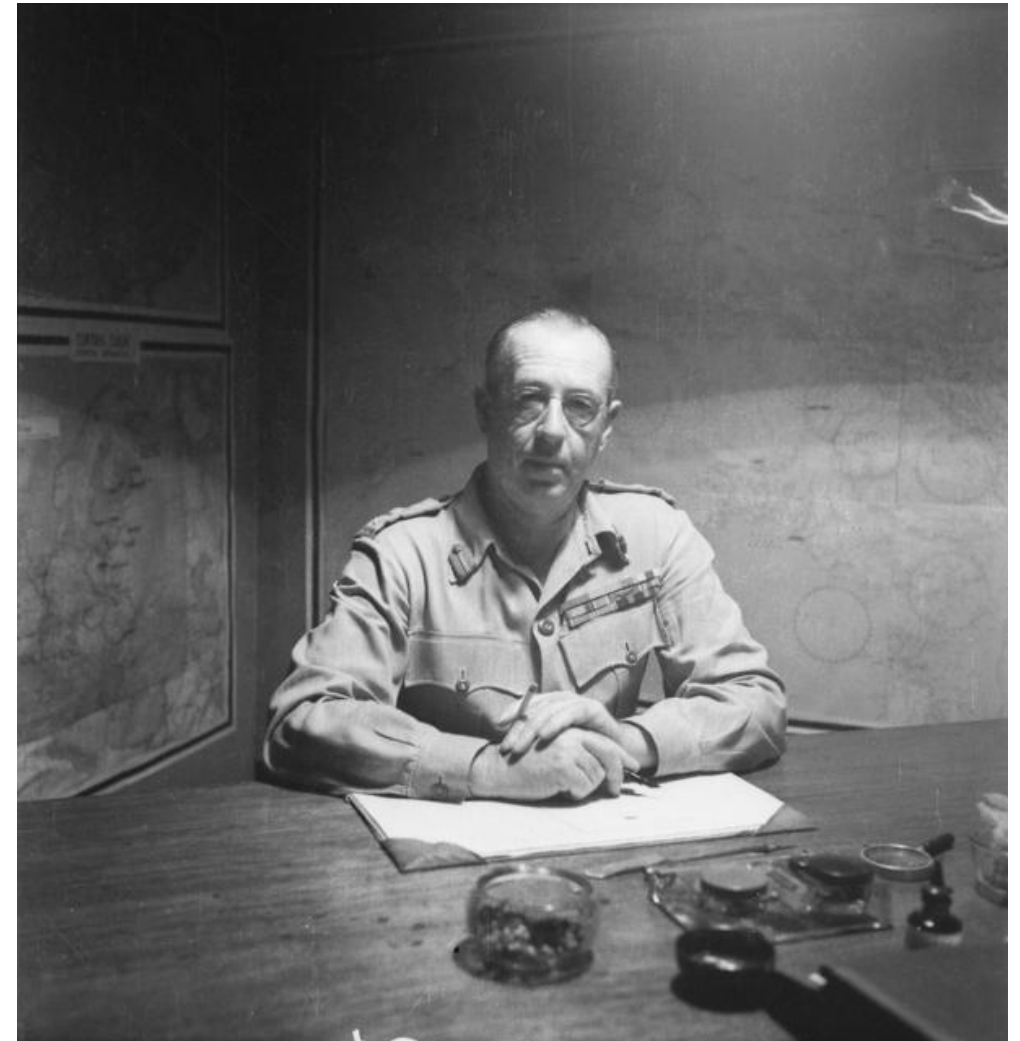
ROLES

8. 3 Aust Div

Ultimate To destroy Japanese forces in Southern Bougainville.

Immediate

- (a) To conduct operations to clear the enemy from, and to establish control of , the area south from the Jaba River to the Puriata River.
- (b) To push forward patrols south of the Puriata River to gain information of and establish contact with Japanese main areas of concentration, in preparation for the next southward move.
- (c) To secure and control tracks leading from the east coast on the flank of the line of advance.
- (d) To construct necessary tracks in the area of operations to give freedom of movement inland from the coast and parallel to the coast if necessary.
- (e) Employment of Forces In carrying out the immediate role, a force exceeding one infantry battalion will not be committed to an attack role without prior approval of 2 Aust Corps.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

LAE, NEW GUINEA. 1944-09-18. LIEUTENANT GENERAL S.G. SAVIGE, GOC NEW GUINEA FORCE AT WORK IN HIS OFFICE.

076155

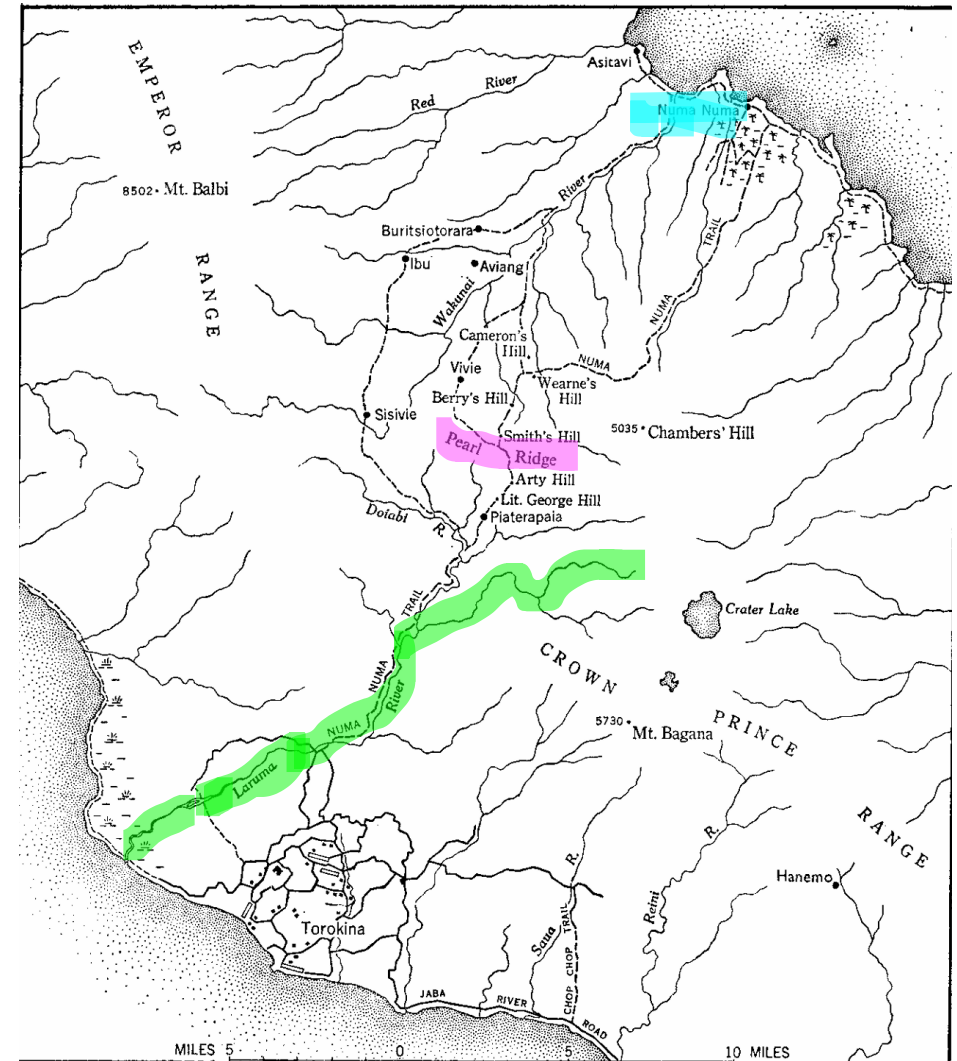
23 December 1944 - Bougainville

Paragraph 9 continued:

ROLES

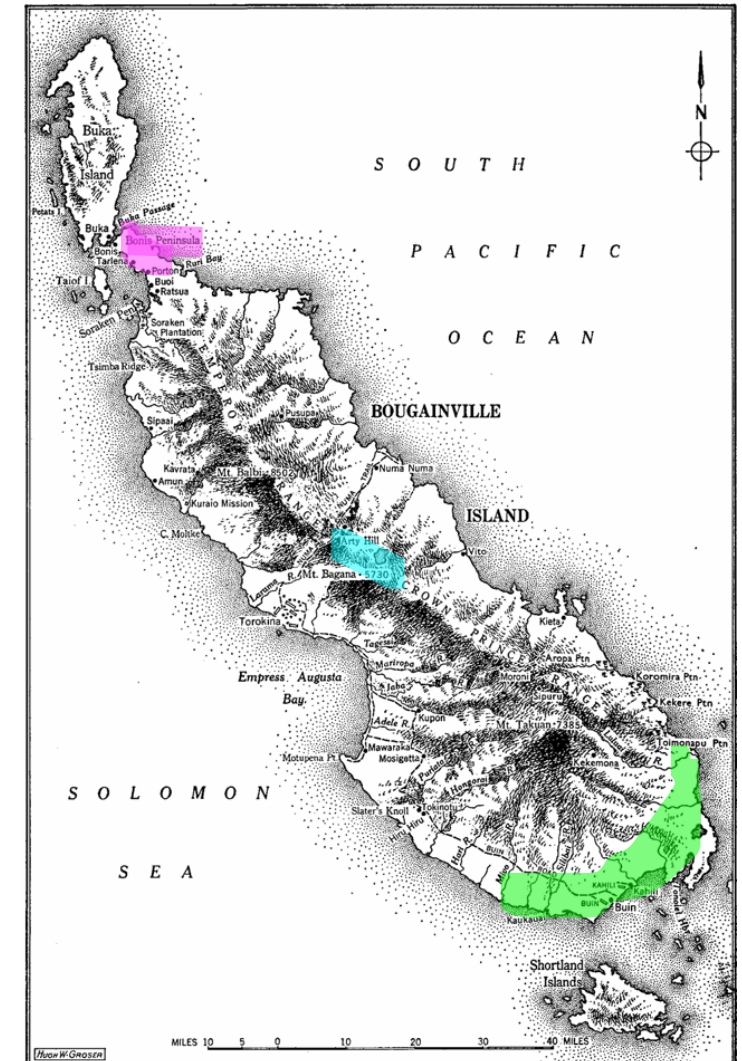
9. 11 Aust Inf Bde Gp

- (a) To prevent enemy penetration into the Laruma River Valley from the direction of Numa Numa.
- (b) To secure the feature known as Pearl Ridge and establish on it firm bases from which to operate patrols towards Numa Numa.
- (c) To make no advance beyond Pearl Ridge except by reconnaissance and fighting patrols.
- (d) To establish in the Cape Moltke area a firm base for one infantry company and to patrol from there with the object of establishing control in the area Kavrata-Cape Moltke-Amun.
- (e) To maintain regular patrols from the perimeter to a minimum depth of 4,000 yards on all lines of approach within the Brigade sector.



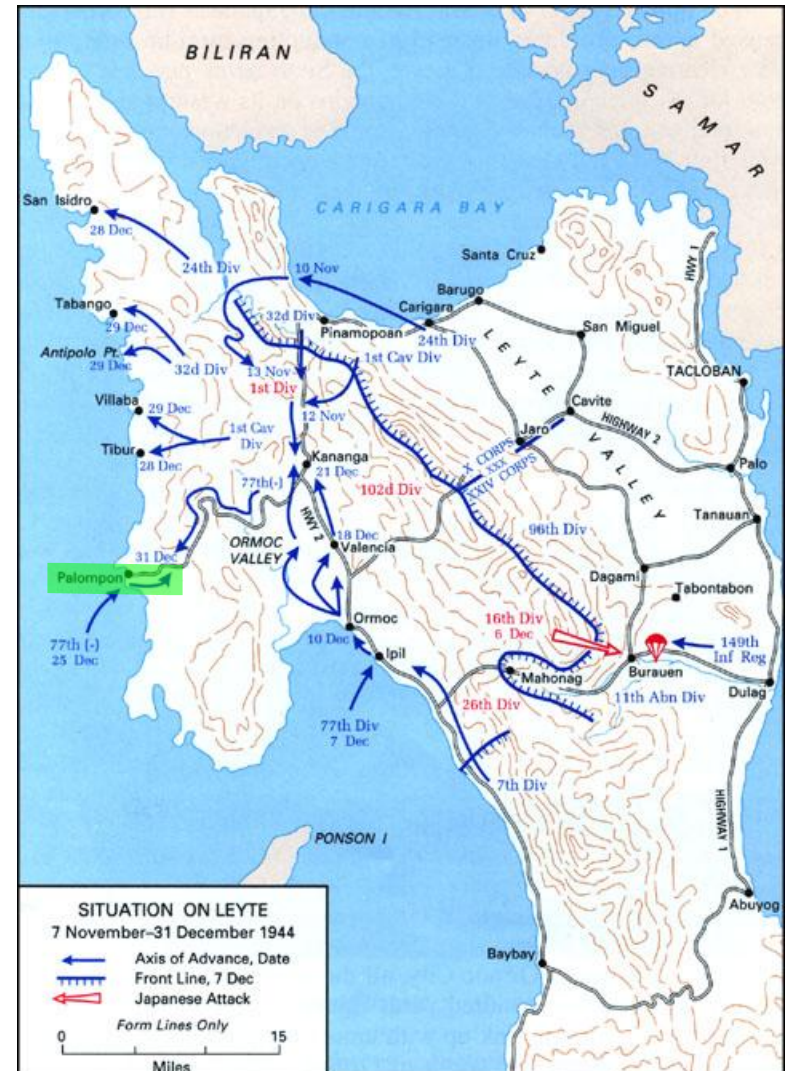
23 December 1944 - Bougainville

- So the fight to destroy the Japanese on Bougainville resolved into three simultaneous offensives.
- In the north to force the enemy into the narrow **Bonis Peninsula** and there destroy him.
- In the centre to clear the enemy from the high ground near **Pearl Ridge** and then by aggressive patrolling to threaten the important enemy line of communication along the east coast.
- The main enemy concentration was in the **garden area in southern Bougainville** and here the decisive battle of the campaign must eventually be fought.



25 December 1944 - Leyte

- Gen. Bruce put the 1st Battalion, 305th Infantry, on Navy landing craft and dispatched it from the port of Ormoc to **Palompon**.
- Supported by fire from mortar boats of the 2nd Engineer Special Brigade and from the 155 mm guns of the 531st Field Artillery Battalion, the infantrymen landed at 07:20 on **25 December** and secured the small coastal town within four hours.
- Learning of the seizure of the last port open to the Japanese, Gen. MacArthur announced the end of organized resistance on Leyte.
- He transferred control of operations on Leyte and Samar to the Eighth Army on 26 December.



25/6 December 1944 – B29s

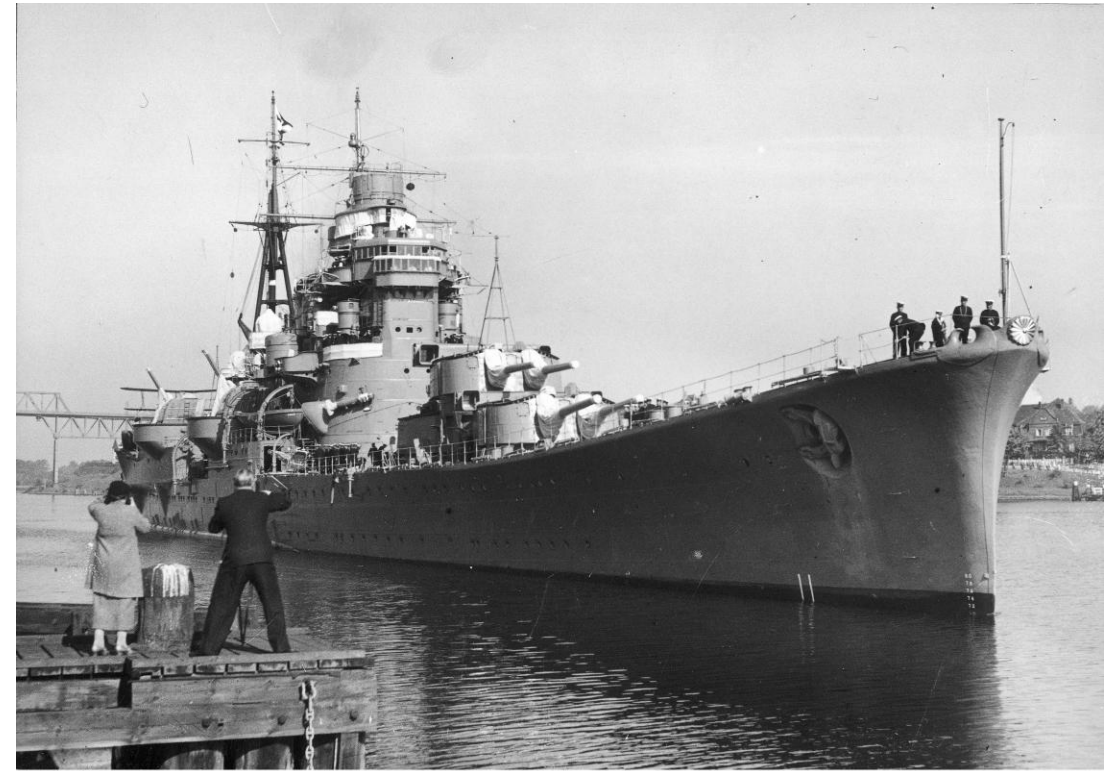
- The largest attack on Saipan occurred on the night of December 25/26 when 25 Japanese aircraft again attacked from high and low altitudes and destroyed one B-29, damaged three beyond repair and caused minor damage to a further eleven.
- The raid on Christmas night was the last major Japanese attack on the Marianas.
- On January 2, a single Japanese aircraft destroyed one B-29 and damaged another three.
- A further two small raids were attempted in January and one on February 2, but none of five aircraft dispatched reached the islands and four were shot down.
- Raids on Saipan resulted in the destruction of eleven Superfortresses and damage to another 43 for the loss of probably 37 Japanese aircraft.



A B-29 undergoing maintenance on Saipan

26 December 1944 - Philippines

- Late in the afternoon of the 26th December, an enemy force consisting of two cruisers and six destroyers was sighted nearing the coast of Mindoro.
- The force was part of the Fifth Fleet which had sortied across the South China Sea from Camranh Bay.
- On December 26, as they neared Mindoro, they were spotted and heavily attacked by U.S. Army Air Forces B-25 Mitchell bombers and fighter-bombers.
- The light cruiser Ōyodo took hits from two 500-lb bombs (though one was a dud), and the destroyer Asashimo suffered near-miss damage.
- American bombers, fighters and torpedo boats attacked as the enemy fleet began shelling the beach, while enemy aircraft bombed and strafed at low altitude.
- During the chaotic air and surface nighttime actions on December 26, the destroyer Kiyoshimo was crippled by American bombers and subsequently finished off and sunk by U.S. Navy PT boats.
- Between 11:00 PM on December 26 and 1:00 AM on December 27, the remaining Japanese warships carried out their shore bombardment of the San Jose beachhead. They succeeded in damaging and sinking one U.S. merchant transport ship (James H. Breasted) but overall caused minimal damage to the primary Allied airstrips and base infrastructure.

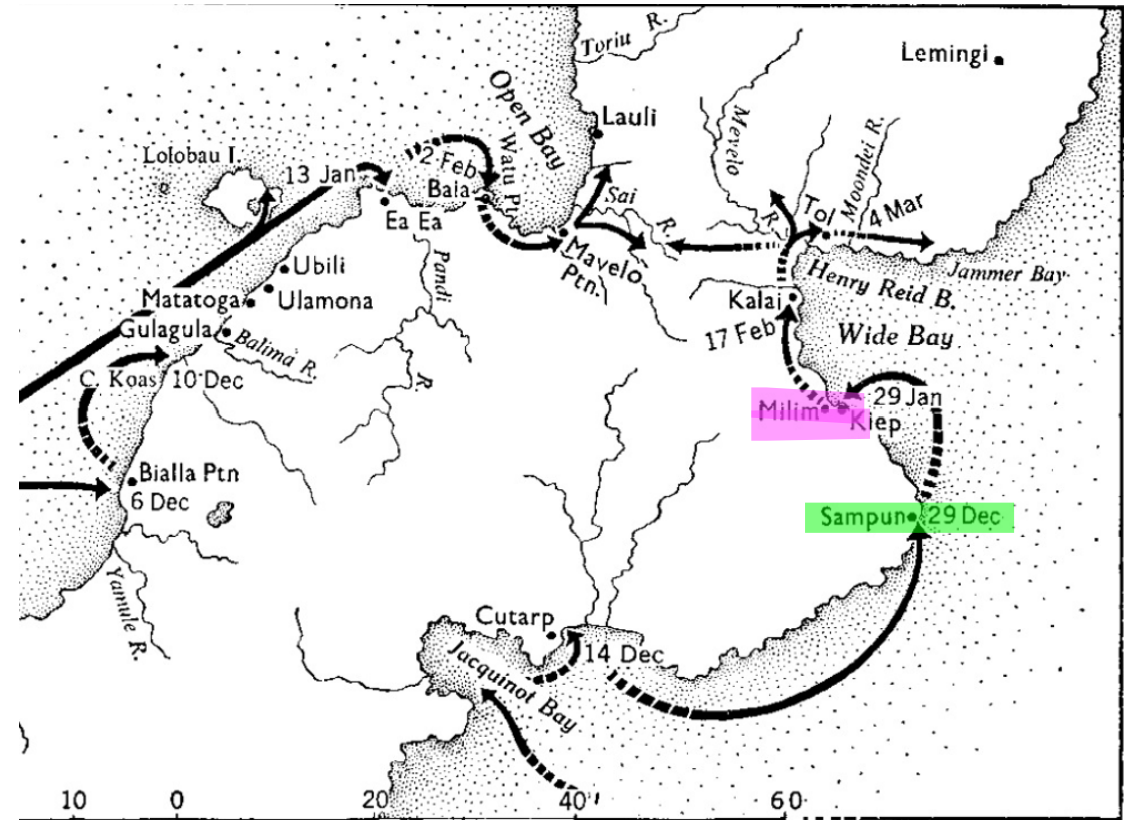


Heavy cruiser Ashigara, the flagship of the raid on Mindoro, photographed visiting a port in Germany, 1937

- The last mission Hansell had on his December schedule was a return trip to the first homeland target, Nakajima-Musashino near Tokyo, on 27 December.
- Only 54 per cent of the B-29's participating--thirty-nine out of seventy-two--bombed Musashino, and the twenty-six bombs in the area plotted by Japanese observers did little damage other than setting fire to a hospital.

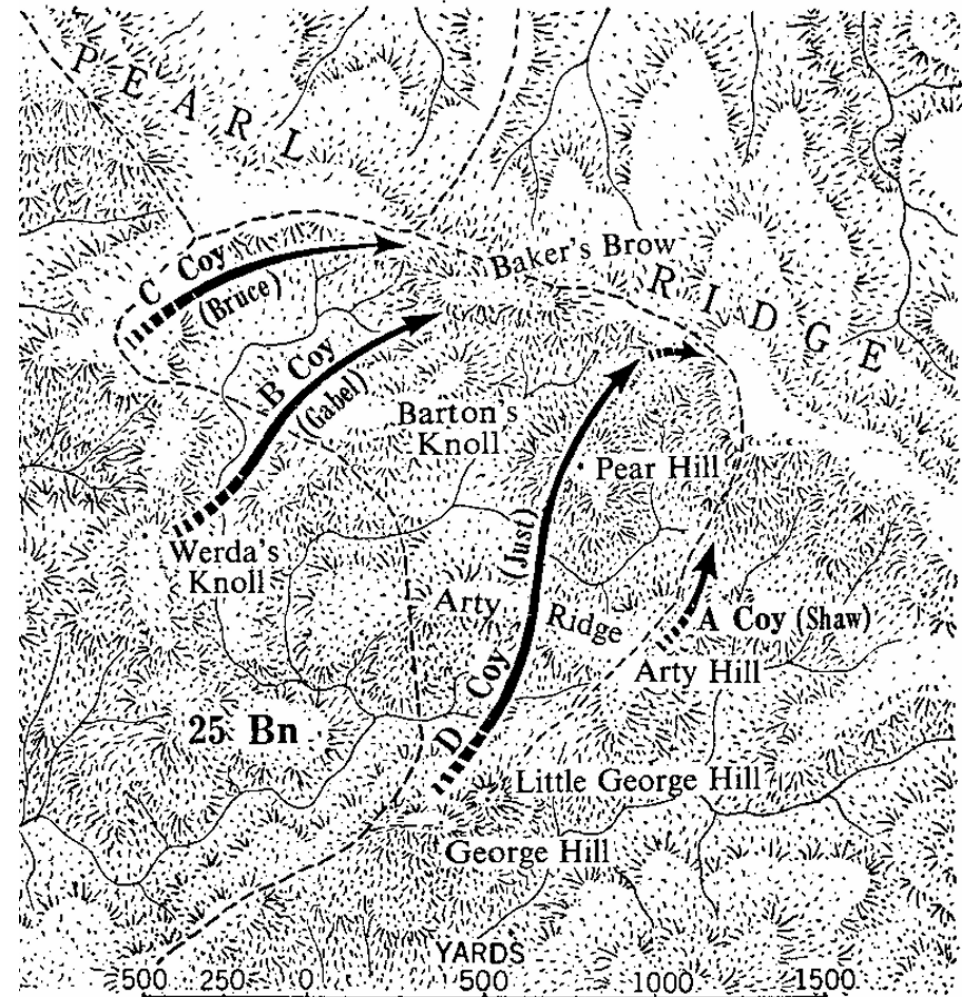
29 December 1944 – New Britain

- On the southern coast, the main advance towards Wide Bay had begun in late December.
- This involved establishing a forward base around **Milim** in mid-February 1945 by the 14th/32nd Infantry Battalion, which was moved by barge via **Sampun**.
- On 15 February, Kamandran was captured following a brief fight during which a patrol from the 1st New Guinea Infantry Battalion carried out a successful ambush.



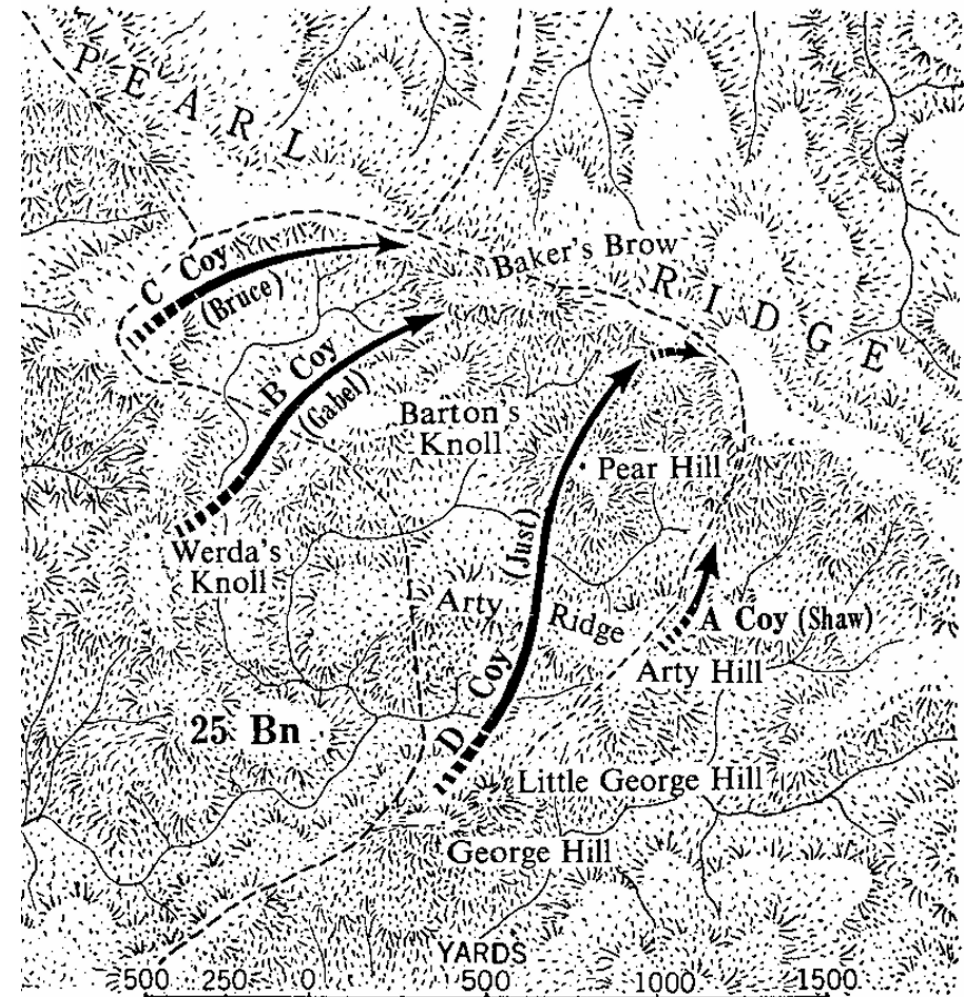
30 December 1944 - Bougainville

- The 25th Battalion patrolled forward against the new Japanese position on Pearl Ridge, where the enemy force was estimated to number from 80 to 90.
- An attack was planned for the morning of the 30th, and all four rifle companies were to be used.
- Lieutenant Shaw's was to advance from Arty Hill and take the north-eastern spur of Pearl.
- Captain Just's to pass through and take the eastern part of the main ridge, Captain Bruce's to cut the enemy's track to the west and
- Captain Gabel's to advance from Werda's Knoll to Baker's Brow.



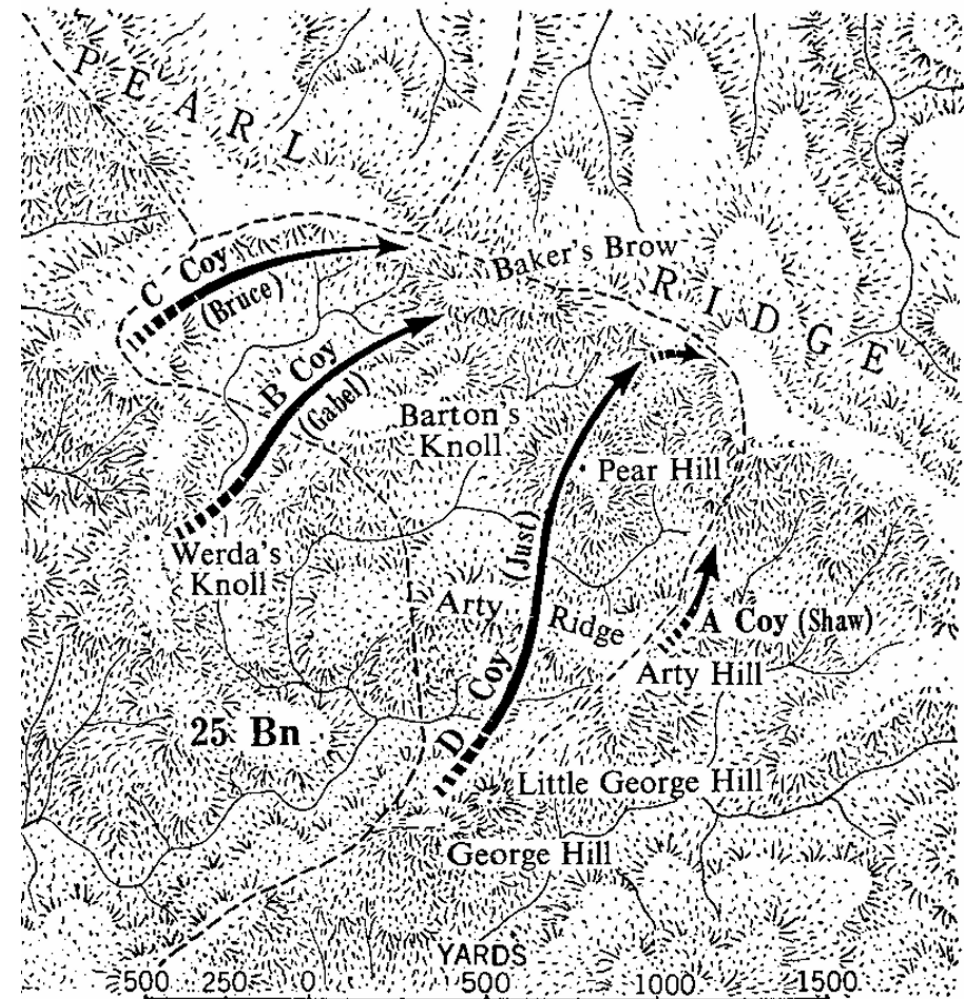
30 December 1944 - Bougainville

- Early in the morning of 30th December aircraft attacked the Japanese positions for about forty minutes, and at 8 a.m. the infantry advanced behind artillery and medium machine-gun fire.
- On the right Shaw's company moved along a razor-back only twelve feet in width, with precipitous sides, and broken at a point about 300 yards from the start-line by a bomb crater twelve feet across and ten feet deep.
- The Japanese were strongly established on the far side of this crater and swept it with fire. Corporal Carter and his section tried to rush across but he was killed, others were wounded, and the attack was halted.
- The Japanese position was bombarded. Efforts were made to outflank it by sending one platoon to the right and another to the left but these failed because of the heavy fire and the difficulty of moving along the sides of the razor-back ridge, down which the Japanese rolled grenades.
- After three men had been killed and six wounded the company was ordered, at 4 p.m., to dig in and reorganise.



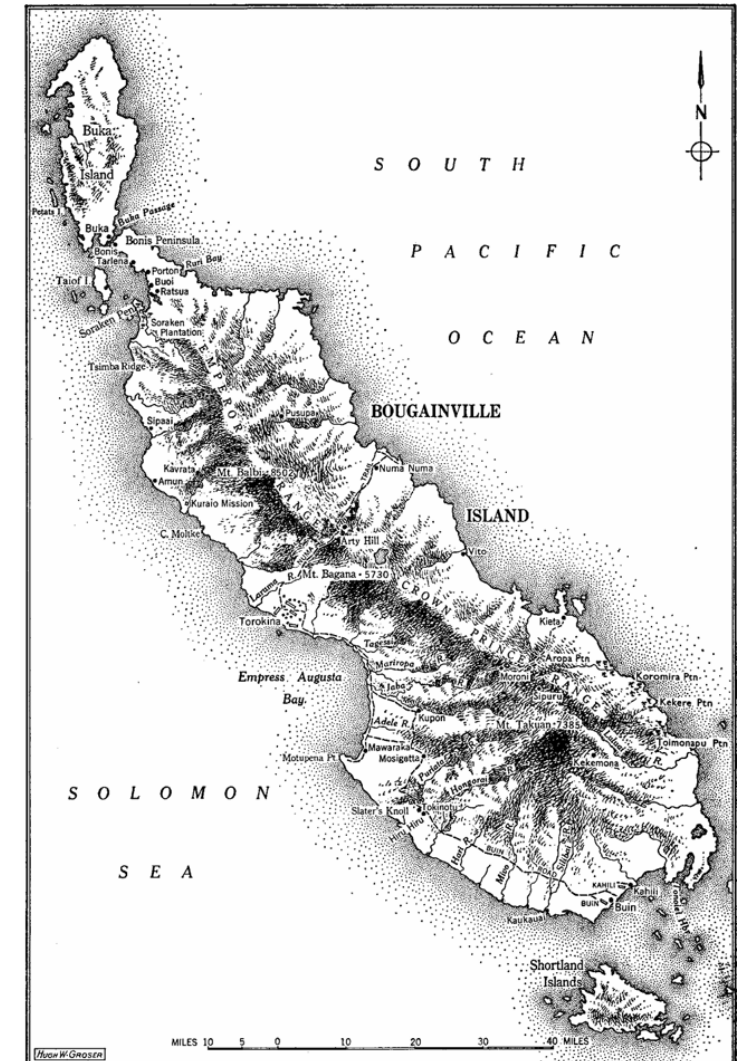
31 December 1944 - Bougainville

- Bruce's company made slow progress in thick bush, including bamboo, but reached its objective across the Japanese track at 2.45, having killed six Japanese and lost only one man wounded.
- After the setback on the right Lt-Col McKinna changed the plan, ordered Just's company to dig in for the present, and approach Pearl Ridge next day by a long and difficult climb along Pear Hill instead of along the narrow spur where the attack had failed.
- During the night the leading companies beat off strong counter-attacks.
- Next day Just's company reached the objective by 4.15 p.m. without loss, Gabel's took Baker's Brow at 4.25 p.m., after having killed 13 Japanese, 10 of them having fallen to Lieutenant Chesterton's platoon.
- 10 Australians had been killed, and 25 wounded; 34 Japanese dead were found and others lay unrecovered on the steep sides of the razor-back; one was taken prisoner.



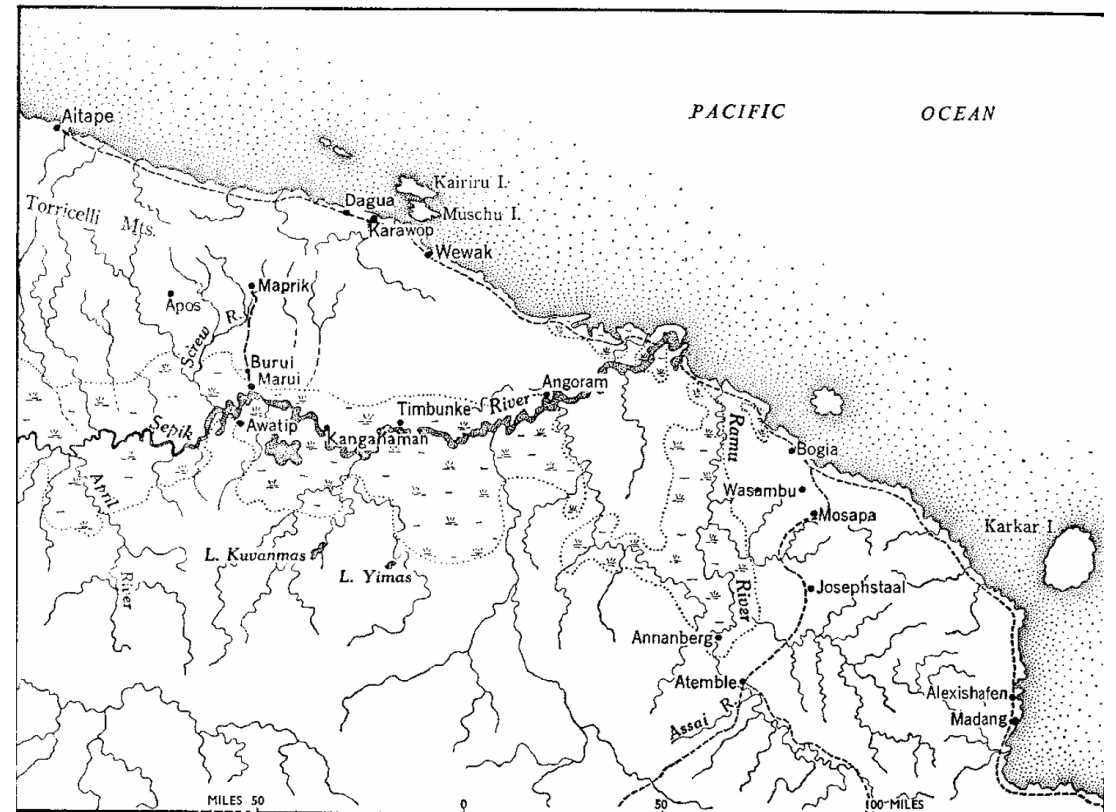
31 December 1944 - Bougainville

- From the newly-captured heights the Australians could see the sea on both sides of the 30-mile-wide island.
- We know now that the attack on Pearl Ridge was launched not against a Japanese company, as was then believed, but against a battalion of fresh troops strongly dug in.
- Soon after the capture of Pearl Ridge the 11th Brigade took over the central as well as the northern sector.
- It was ordered not to advance beyond Pearl Ridge, where it was taking about 300 native carriers and five jeeps to supply a battalion group, and that there should be deep patrolling to gain topographical and tactical information, prevent transfer of Japanese reinforcements to the south, and inflict casualties.



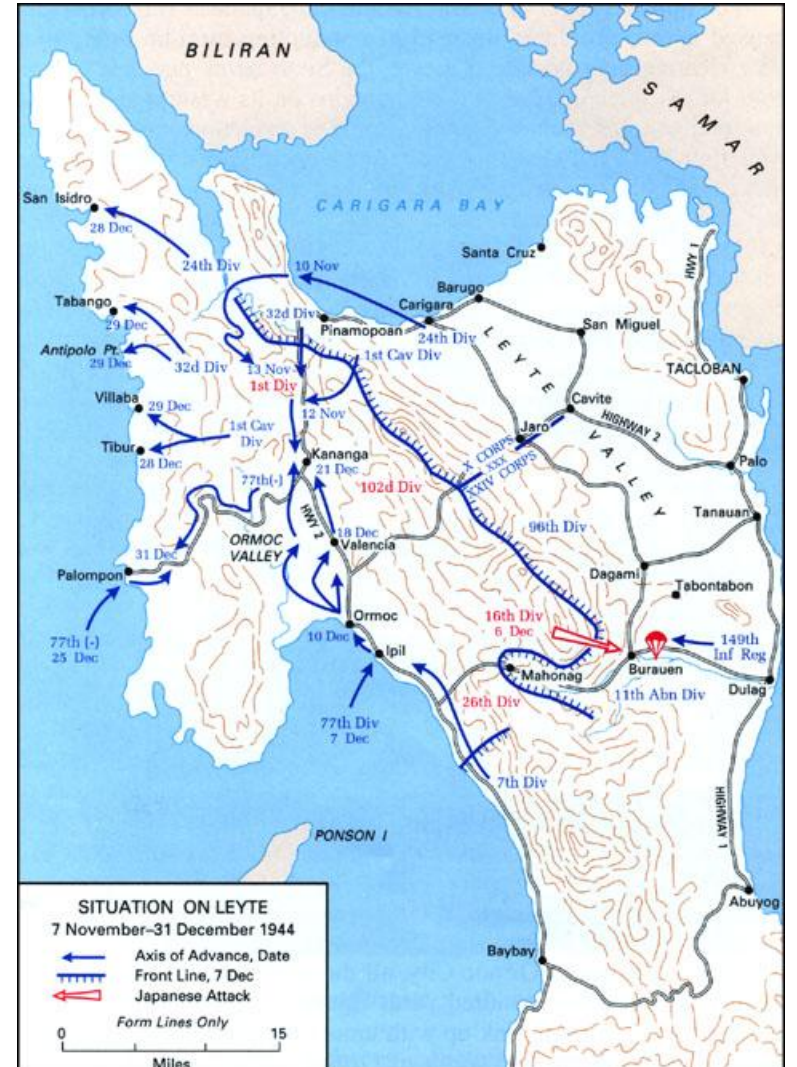
31 December 1944 - Aitape

- Because of the shortage of ships and the means of unloading them— a shortage that would hamper the operations for months—the 6th division could only be trickled into Aitape.
- G.H.Q. allocated ships piecemeal to the task.
- The first was the Gorgon, which left Brisbane with base troops of the 3rd Base Sub-Area on 4th October.
- By the 12th November the 19th Brigade and a good part of the divisional troops had arrived. The whole 19th Brigade had arrived by 19th November, the 17th Brigade by 7th December and the 16th by 31st December.
- The 3rd Base Sub-Area at this stage included 36 units and detachments ranging in size from the 17th Works Company, 484 strong, to a Field Security Detachment of three men. Among the units were: the 2/11th General Hospital, 3rd/14th Field Ambulance, 19th Ordnance Depot, 15th Mobile Laundry, Docks Operating Company, 127th Brigade Workshops, 126th General Transport Company.



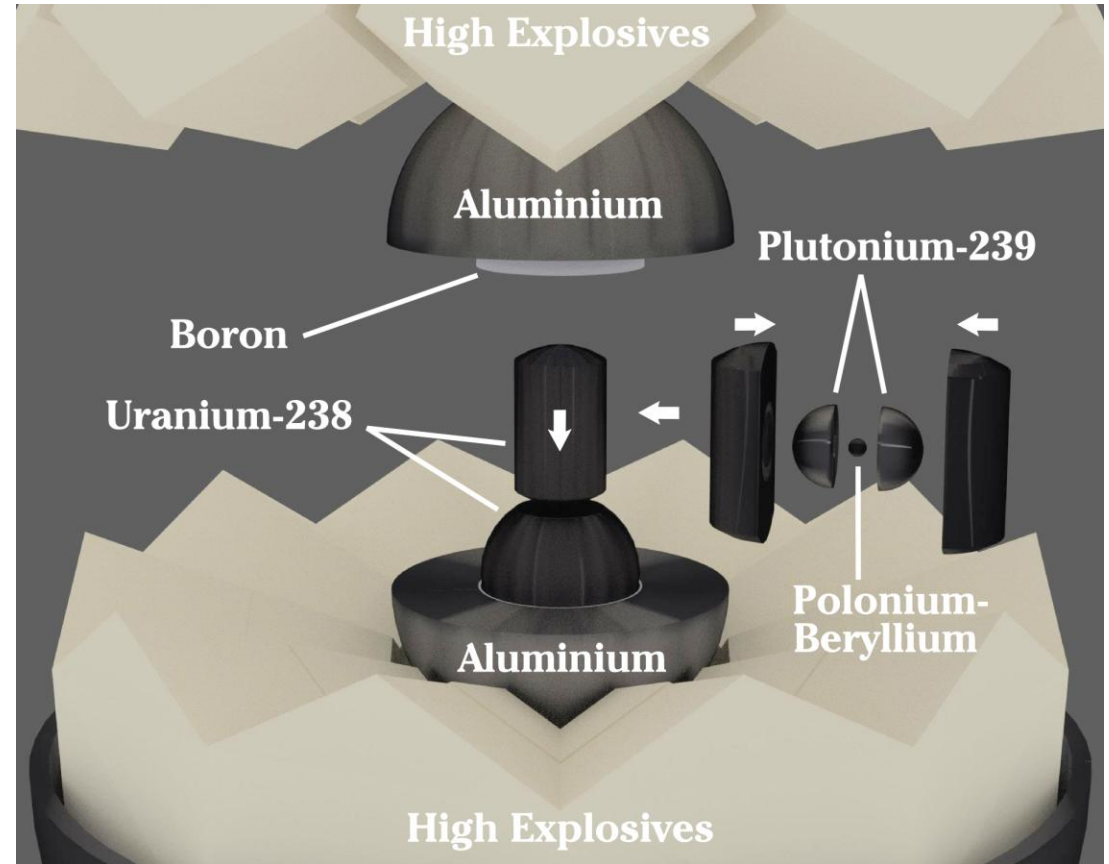
December 1944 - Leyte

- By the fourth week of December the Japanese army on Leyte was disintegrating.
- At that stage the Japanese losses were estimated at 56,000 killed; the Americans had lost 3,049 killed or missing.



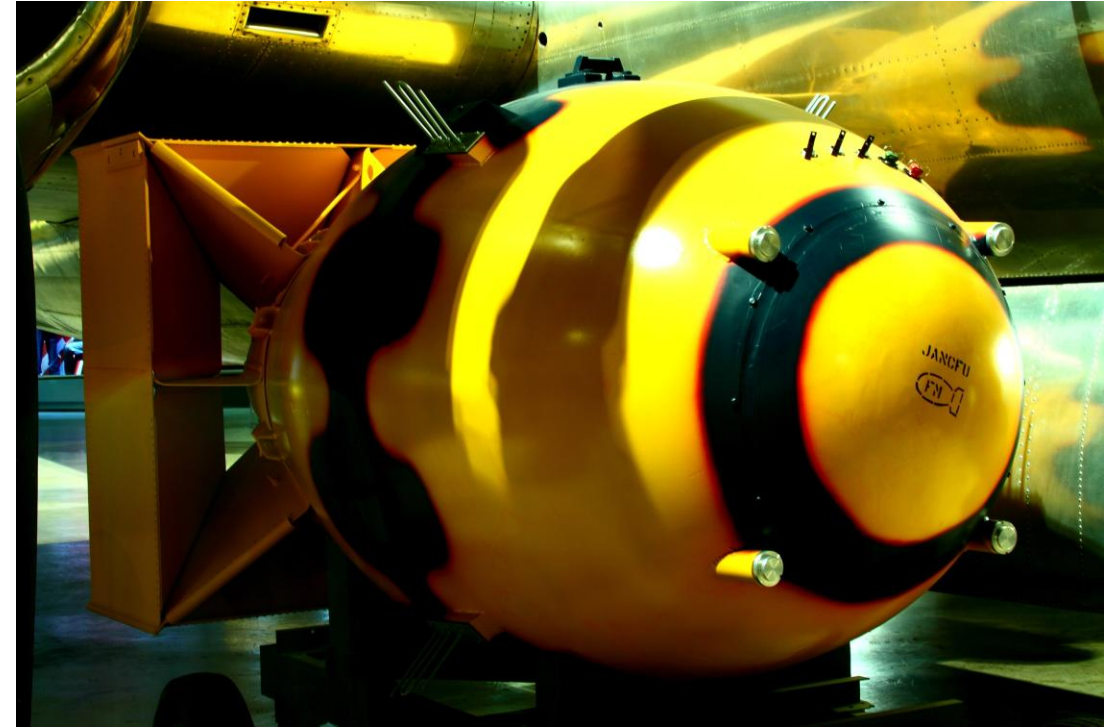
December 1944 - Manhattan Project

- Within the explosives was an aluminum pusher, which provided a smooth transition from the relatively low-density explosive to the next layer, the tamper of natural uranium.
- Its main job was to hold the critical mass together as long as possible, but it would also reflect neutrons into the core and some of its uranium would fission.
- To prevent predetonation by an external neutron, the tamper was coated in a thin layer of neutron-absorbing boron.
- A polonium-beryllium modulated neutron initiator, known as an "urchin", was developed to start the chain reaction at precisely the right moment.
- Work on the chemistry and metallurgy of radioactive polonium was directed by Charles Allen Thomas of the Monsanto Company. Testing required up to 500 curies per month of polonium, which Monsanto was able to deliver.
- The whole assembly was encased in a duralumin bomb casing to protect it from bullets and flak.



December 1944 - Manhattan Project

- The next problem was how to cast plutonium into a sphere. The difficulties became apparent when attempts to measure the density of plutonium gave inconsistent results. At first contamination was suspected, but it was soon determined that there were multiple allotropes of plutonium.
- The brittle α phase that exists at room temperature changes to the plastic β phase at higher temperatures and then to the even more malleable δ phase in the 300 °C to 450 °C range.
- It was found that this was stable at room temperature when alloyed with aluminum, but aluminum emits neutrons when bombarded with alpha particles, which would exacerbate the pre-ignition problem. The metallurgists then hit upon using a plutonium-gallium alloy, which stabilized the δ phase and could be hot pressed into the desired spherical shape.
- As plutonium was found to corrode readily, the sphere was coated with nickel.
- The early Y-1222 model Fat Man was superseded by the Y-1291 design in December 1944. This redesign work was substantial, and only the Y-1222 tail design was retained.



Replica mockup of a Fat Man displayed in the National Museum of the United States Air Force. Black liquid asphalt sealant was sprayed over the original bomb casing's seams, simulated on the mockup. Photo shows detail of the tail design.

December 1944 – B29

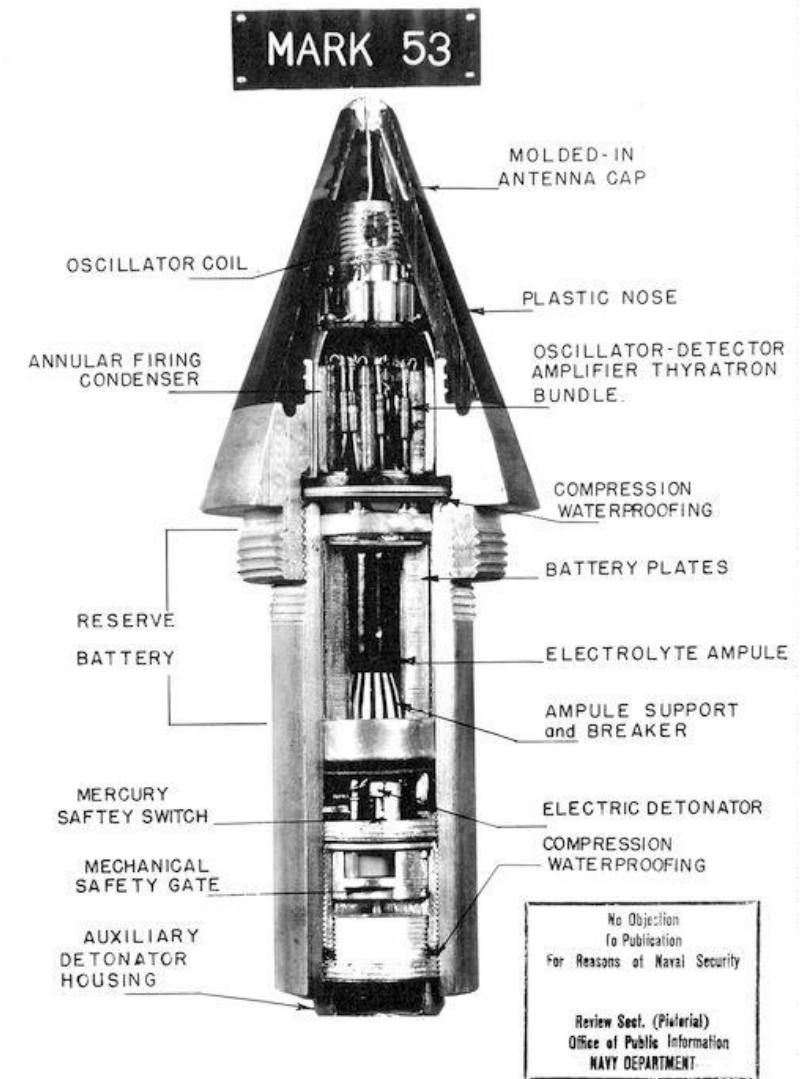
- By late 1944, it was becoming apparent that B-29 operations against Japan staged out of bases in China and India were far too expensive in men and materials and would have to be stopped.
- In December 1944, the Joint Chiefs of Staff made the decision that Operation Matterhorn would be phased out, and the 58th Bombardment Wing's B-29s would be moved to newly captured bases in the Marianas in the central Pacific.



The U.S. Chiefs of Staff listening and learning in Normandy. From right Adm. Ernest King, unknown ? Omar Bradley, Gen. George Marshall, unknown ? Harry Crerar, and Gen. Henry Arnold. Adm. William Leahy not present.

December 1944 – VT Fuze

- After Eisenhower demanded he be allowed to use the fuzes to combat the German counterattack in the Ardennes, 200,000 shells with VT fuzes were used in the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944.
- They made the Allied heavy artillery far more devastating, as all the shells now exploded just before hitting the ground.



Proximity fuze MK53 removed from shell. Circa 1950s.

December 1944 – RAAF

- The first Tactical Airforce had no transport squadrons of its own which was hampering its ability to concentrate at Morotai, let alone move forward.
- In addition to the deficiencies in air transport, there was a grave shortage of shipping space to move R.A.A.F. units.
- In December 1944, a total of 7,465 members of the R.A.A.F. and 56,000 tons of R.A.A.F. equipment were awaiting shipment to forward areas.
- The War Cabinet considered the problem at a meeting in December and again in January and, although it made recommendations to MacArthur which, if adopted, might ease the situation, nothing concrete could be done because the shipping position throughout the Pacific was critical, and priority was being given to the operations in the Philippines.



War Cabinet meeting in Melbourne in 1943. Left to right: John Curtin, Sir Frederick Sheddon, Ben Chifley, Norm Makin, Arthur Drakeford and John Dedman.

End 1944 - Manhattan Project

- Three plants were built at Hanford to separate the Plutonium from Uranium and other fission products.
- Each plant consisted of four buildings: a process cell building or "canyon" (known as 221), a concentration building (224), a purification building (231) and a magazine store (213).
- The canyons were each 800 feet long and 65 feet wide. Each consisted of forty 17.7-by-13-by-20-foot cells.
- Work began on 221-T and 221-U in January 1944, with the former completed in September and the latter in December. The 221-B building followed in March 1945.
- The purification methods that were eventually used in 231-W were still unknown when construction commenced on 8 April 1944, but the plant was complete and the methods were selected by the end of the year.



The 224-T plant under construction, showing the transfer pipes

End 1944 - Manhattan Project

- Once they began processing irradiated slugs, the machinery became so radioactive that it would be unsafe for humans ever to come in contact with it, so the engineers devised methods to allow for the replacement of components via remote control.
- Periscopes and closed-circuit television gave the operator a view of the process.
- They had assembled the equipment by remote control as if the area was already radioactive.
- To receive the radioactive wastes from the chemical process, there were "tank farms" consisting of 64 single-shell underground waste tanks.



Hanford storage tanks in 2014

1944 – B29

- Napalm, used by the Americans for flamethrowers and incendiary bombs, was increased in production from 500,000 lb in 1943 to 8 million lb in 1944.
- Much of the napalm went from nine US factories to bomb-assembly plants making the M-69 incendiary and packing 38 of them into the E-46 cluster bomb; these were shipped across the Pacific and stored for future use.
- Arnold and the Air Staff wanted to wait to use the incendiaries until a large-scale program of firebombing could be mounted, to overwhelm the Japanese city defenses.
- Photo: A 1945 photograph showing a US serviceman checking clusters of incendiary bombs destined to be dropped on Japan by Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers.



1944 – New Guinea

- From October 1944 onwards without benefit of any decision of the Combined Chiefs of Staff or Joint Chiefs of Staff MacArthur's insistence that the First Australian Army was directly under his command was not followed up by any effort to influence its operations except in a negative way.
- In practice it was, after the end of 1944, a rather more independent command than Admiral Halsey's South Pacific Area had been in the period when General MacArthur had "coordinated" its operations with his own.
- However, although the strategy and tactics in the New Guinea-Solomons area were now directed solely by the Australian command, it depended for shipping almost entirely on remote and uninterested authorities.

1 January 1945 - Australia

- There were two objectives in rationing meat.
- First was that of reducing overall consumption so that exports, to the United Kingdom, could be maintained, and second that of equitable distribution.
- The first purpose was not achieved during the first year of rationing. For the period preceding coupon rationing, when consumption was subject to quotas, consumption was estimated at 3.94 pounds per week per head; under coupon rationing it was 4 pounds.
- The marked contrast between 4 pounds of actual consumption and a rationing target of an average 2 pounds 4 ounces revealed that restrictions would have to be tightened.

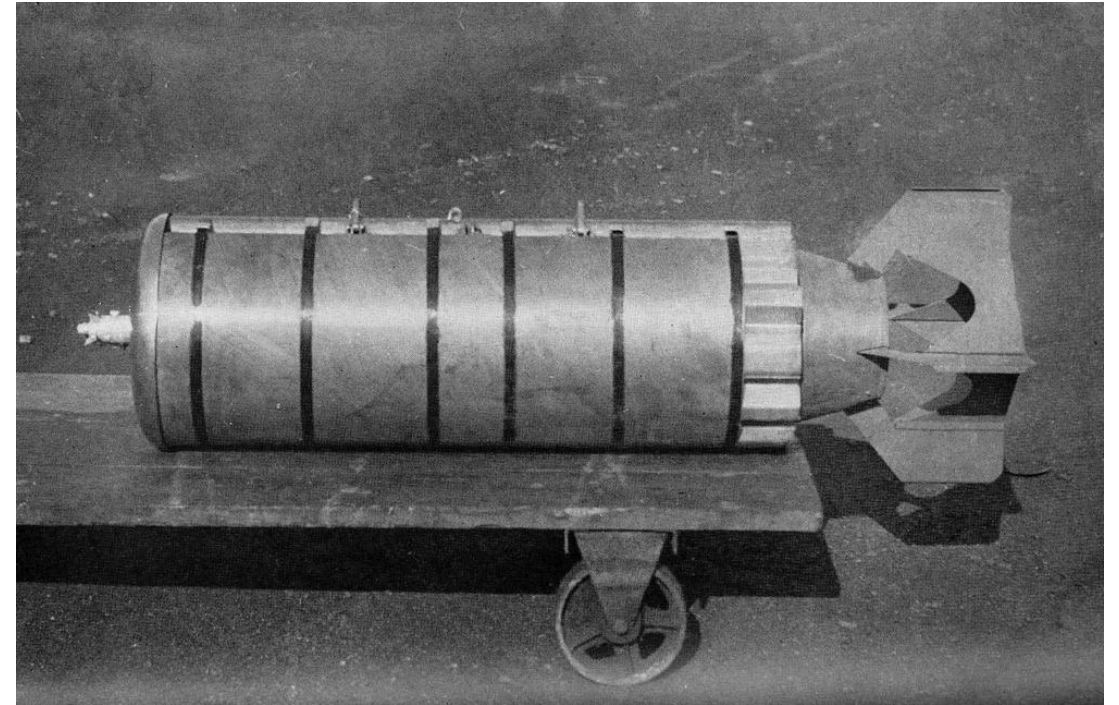


A crowd of people at a city butcher shop, Melbourne, 1944.

Along with rationing of tobacco and petrol, meat rationing was the most unpopular with the Australian public.

3 January 1945 – B29

- Norstad's test mission was run on 3 January, when ninety-seven B-29's got off for Nagoya.
- Each plane carried a mixed load of bombs--14 x 350-pound M18 IB clusters fuzed to open at 8,000 feet and one 420-pound fragmentation cluster fuzed to open 1,000 feet below releasing altitude.
- What with aborts and planes straying from course, only fifty-seven bombed the urban area designated as primary target, most of them releasing visually though cloud cover was rated as 6/10.
- Some fires were started but there was no holocaust. Smoke rising to 20,000 feet combined with cloud to make observation of results impossible for the attackers.
- As a test, then, the mission was inconclusive.



incendiary cluster bomb.

• 5 January 1945 - Morotai

- In a letter dated 5th January to the commanders of all air forces , General Kenney (photo) outlined probable operations and dispositions for the first three months of 1945.
- Continuous support would be given from Morotai to defend flanks to the westward and to prepare for expected operations in the Netherlands East Indies.
- Support would be given to ground forces engaged in the occupation of New Britain and the Solomons.
- R.A.A.F. forces would establish at Morotai, and the R.N.Z.A.F. in the Solomon Islands.
- Kenney stressed that the movement of all forces into position would be hindered by the limited means of transport and airfield capacity.
- Because of the shipping shortage, many units could not be expected to move until just before the start of operations to which they would be assigned.
- First T.A.F., left far to the rear, was still maintaining a constant day-by-day air assault against by-passed enemy targets.
- While admitting that by-passed enemy forces had to be kept under surveillance, numbers of Australian pilots, including commanders of squadrons, began to question whether some of the targets they were sent to attack were worthwhile and to assert that the R.A.A.F. as a whole had now been assigned an unimportant role in the war.



5 January 1945 – Subic Bay

- Commencing at 4.15 p.m., about 90 miles west of Subic Bay, over two and a half hours, between 50 and 60 aircraft made runs on TG.77.2 at altitudes varying from 20,000 feet to low over the water.
- Despite a strong CAP with as many as 58 fighters in the air one time, the Japanese Kamikazes were able to penetrate the defences.
- At 5.35 p.m. HMAS Arunta, on the screen of the leading group, sighted two Japanese aircraft on the port bow, heading straight towards her. Speed was increased to 25 knots and fire was opened with a barrage set to 3,000 yards.
- “One of the enemy planes veered to the right. The other headed straight for our bridge. The wheel was put hard a'starboard and, thanks to the extreme manoeuvrability of the Tribal class, the plane missed by feet.
- It plunged into the sea alongside the Gear room on the port side. The plane, a Zero, carried a bomb, estimated at 250 lbs. The subsequent explosion holed the ship's side in several places and severed the electrical leads to both steering motors. The ship continued to circle with the wheel hard a'starboard for about five minutes, as while enemy planes were still attacking I was anxious to keep moving.
- Arunta's casualties included two killed.



HMAS Arunta in July 1943

5 January 1945 – Subic Bay

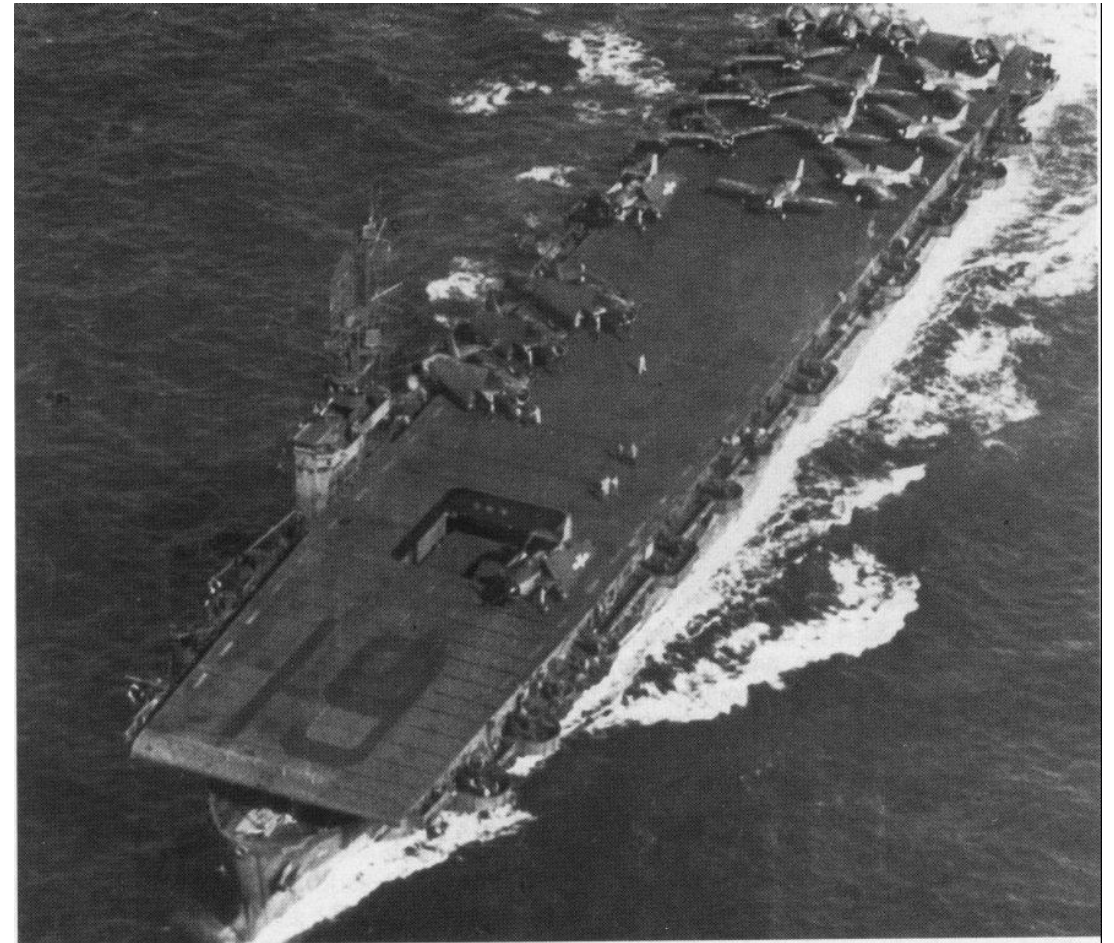
- The rear division was subject to a determined attack by at least six aircraft, which flew in low, just above the water, and were taken under fire by all ships.
- One was splashed abreast the destroyer screen and one altered course to pass astern. The remainder came in weaving low and fast despite intense anti-aircraft fire.
- They crossed ahead of HMAS Australia, two within a hundred yards.
- One went on to score a hit on the escort carrier Manila Bay.
- Another executed a very steep turn to the right, and ending in a vertical dive hit Australia on the port side of the upper deck amidships at 5.35.
- This plane carried a bomb which was responsible for a number of casualties.
- The resulting fire was quickly subdued.
- Material damage was slight, and guns put out of action were soon effective again.
- The major loss of fighting efficiency was due to casualties. There were 25 killed and 30 wounded mainly among gun crews and deck ammunition supply parties.

HMAS AUSTRALIA. 1943-02. A 4 INCH QF MARK XVI TWIN ANTI AIRCRAFT GUN ON 4 INCH TWIN MARK XIX MOUNTING.



5 January 1945 – Subic Bay

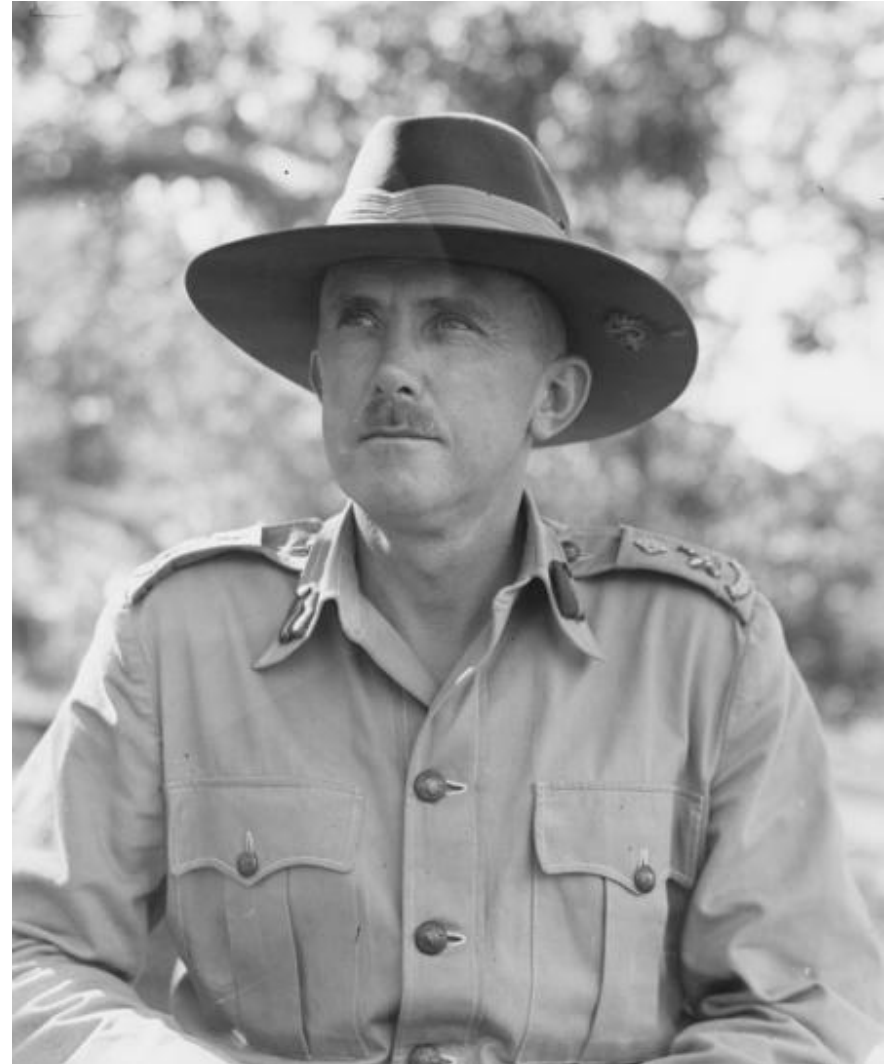
- At 5.42 Arunta had to stop to repair damage caused by the explosion.
- The American destroyer Ingraham stood by, circling slowly until repairs were completed at 10.55 p.m., when both ships proceeded at 25 knots for Lingayen Gulf.
- As Commander Buchanan remarked in Arunta's Action Report, "We were fortunate perhaps that darkness covered most of this period of involuntary immobility."
- Five American ships were damaged in TG.77.2 that day. Louisville and destroyer escort Stafford seriously damaged; escort carrier Manila Bay, moderate damage; and escort carrier Savo Island and destroyer Helm, minor damage. The American ships suffered 99 casualties.



USS Manila Bay (CVE-61) underway whilst operating as an attack carrier in the Pacific, circa 1944.

5 January 1945 - Philippines

- The hope that the I Australia Corps would be included in the Philippines was finally dashed on 5 January 1945, when Berryman (photo) was told that ten American divisions were sufficient to recapture Luzon, and Australian forces would instead concentrate on Borneo and the Netherlands East Indies.



6 January 1945 – Lingayen Gulf

- All day there were sporadic air attacks, mainly by kamikazis, and a number of ships were damaged.
- New Mexico was in column ahead of Shropshire when, at 12.3 p.m., she was hit by a suicide aircraft. It seemed to observers in Shropshire that the aircraft was diving on Australia, who was astern of Shropshire. But it increased height, passed down Shropshire's starboard side at mast head height. Shropshire scored several hits on this aircraft and shot away its tail as it passed.
- But the plane crashed into the port side of New Mexico's bridge in which Lieut-General Lumsden (photo), UK representative at G.H.Q., was killed.
- At 12.11 Shropshire was near missed by an aircraft "which dived from the sun. It was hit by A.A. fire and, narrowly missing the top of B' turret, crashed into the sea alongside the bridge."
- At 12.19 p.m., two fast, low-flying aircraft— "obviously suiciders"—appeared out of a gap in the hills to the westward.
- The nearer one was taken under fire by HMAS Warramunga, crossed the destroyer's bow at about 800 yards, and crashed into the American destroyer-transport Brooks, which was lying stopped half a mile away.
- Warramunga closed with Brooks, evacuated its wounded, assisted in suppressing two fires and then towed Brooks out to a safe anchorage.



6 January 1945 – Lingayen Gulf

- At 5.34 p.m. Australia was astern of Shropshire, and Midshipman Francis in that ship recorded how
- "the plane, a Navy type dive-bomber, came in with one wheel down on our starboard quarter.
- In my opinion this plane was coming for us, but after flying through a Bofors and eight-inch barrage he turned away in favour of crashing into Australia amidships."
- Australia recorded how At 5.34 a "Val" dived on the ship from the starboard quarter, and flattening out, hit the ship on the upper deck between S.2 and S.1.
- This plane also carried a bomb which, from fragments found, appeared to have been converted from a large calibre shell.
- The resulting fire was quickly subdued, though "A" boiler room had to be shut down temporarily.
- Material damage affecting the fighting efficiency was confined mainly to S.2 mounting. Both guns were put out of action and all form of control destroyed. . . .
- Again the major damage to fighting efficiency was through casualties. There were 14 killed and 26 wounded. (The whole of S.2 gun's crew and most of S.1. the two 4in twins on starboard)
- Subsequently, except for a special bombardment firing, there were only sufficient crews to man one 4-inch mounting each side, a large proportion being casualty replacements).



8 January 1945 – Lingayen Gulf

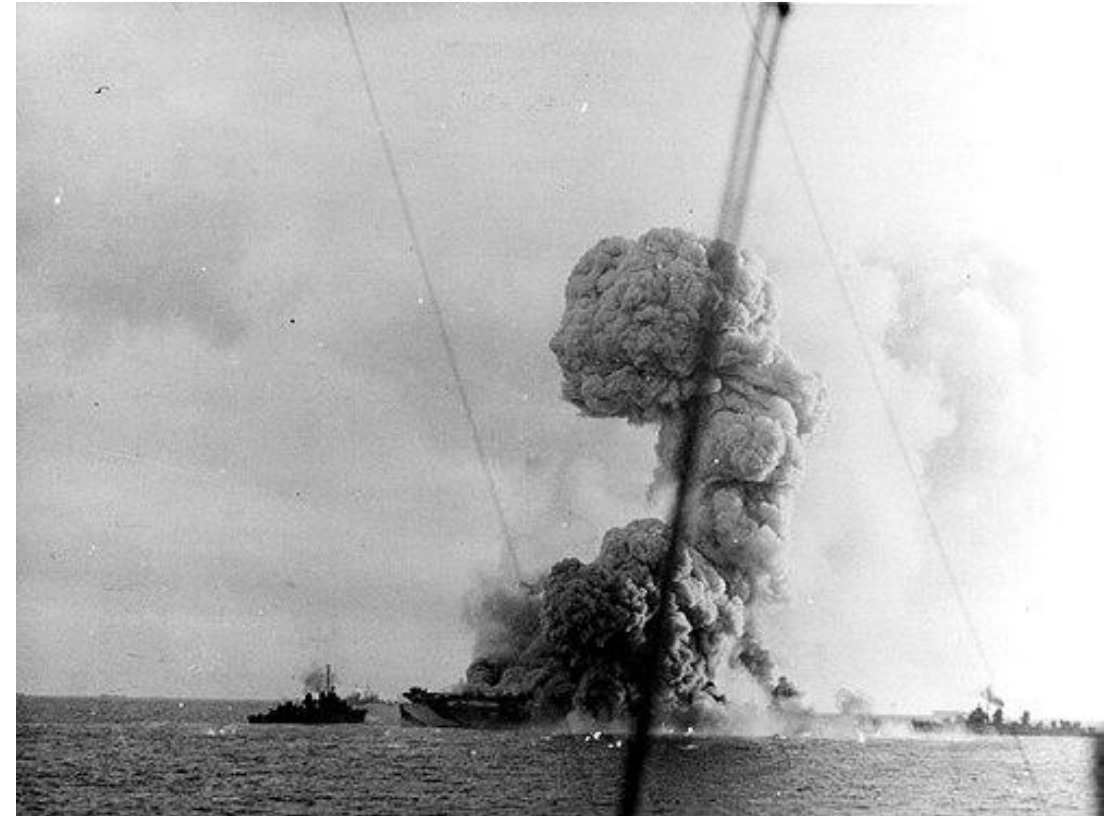
- On 8th January Australia was last in line of the Bombardment Force as it moved into the Gulf after having stood off shore during the night.
- At 7.20 a.m. a Japanese two-engined plane was sighted coming in low on the port quarter it was splashed twenty yards from the ship and skidded into the ship's side doing little damage.
- At 7.39 a second aircraft attacked from the same quarter and was put down just short of the ship but hit the ship on the waterline below the bridge.
- It carried a bomb which exploded short of or against the ship's side and blew a hole 14 feet by eight feet, opening a provision room and one oil tank to the sea and flooding bilges.
- The ship took a list of five degrees to port and adjacent compartments commenced to flood slowly. The list was corrected and flooding brought under control, and shoring up of bulkheads carried out.
- The casualties in these two attacks were minor, "mostly shock". Australia reported that the light casualties "were remarkable, since a lot of shrapnel, one engine and a propeller came inboard and landed in various parts of the ship".
- Despite her damage, Australia met her scheduled bombardment engagements, though the blast effect of firing her forward 8-inch guns on the port side was straining the inner bulkheads, so it was decided not to fire them on that side except in an emergency.



A view of the port side of HMAS Australia showing the hull damage inflicted by a Japanese Kamikaze attack on 8 January 1945.

9 January 1945 - Philippines

- The huge Luzon invasion fleet faced strong opposition from Japanese kamikaze aircraft.
- A total of around 47 ships were damaged, and four sunk, between January 3 and 13, primarily by kamikazes.
- The escort carrier Ommaney Bay was destroyed by a kamikaze attack on the 4th.
- Admiral Kinkaid, reviewing the action report, wrote:
- “The failure of the OMMANEY BAY's air search radar to pick up the approaching plane after losing contact at forty-five miles indicates that the enemy climbed to high altitude at long range and approached along a node in the radar antenna pattern. At certain angles of elevation and with constant head-on aspect of the aircraft the present air search radar is very insensitive. It is believed that the Japanese are aware of this and are taking advantage of it. Strengthening of the visual lookouts is the best countermeasure until improved radar reaches the fleet.”



The explosion onboard Ommaney Bay (CVE-79), 4 January 1945. Destroyers surround the carrier.

