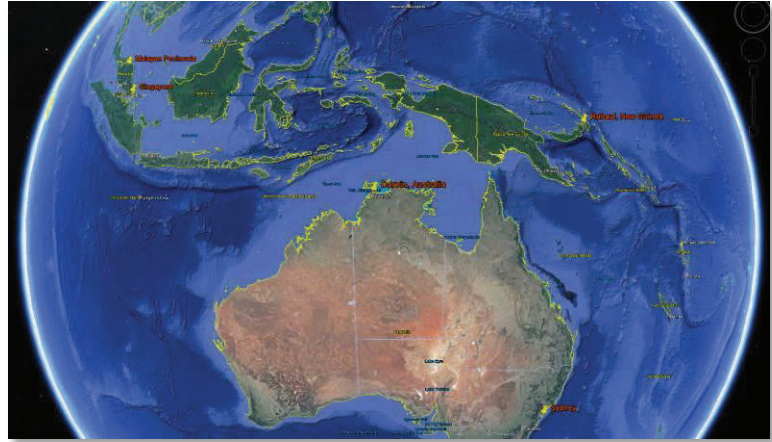


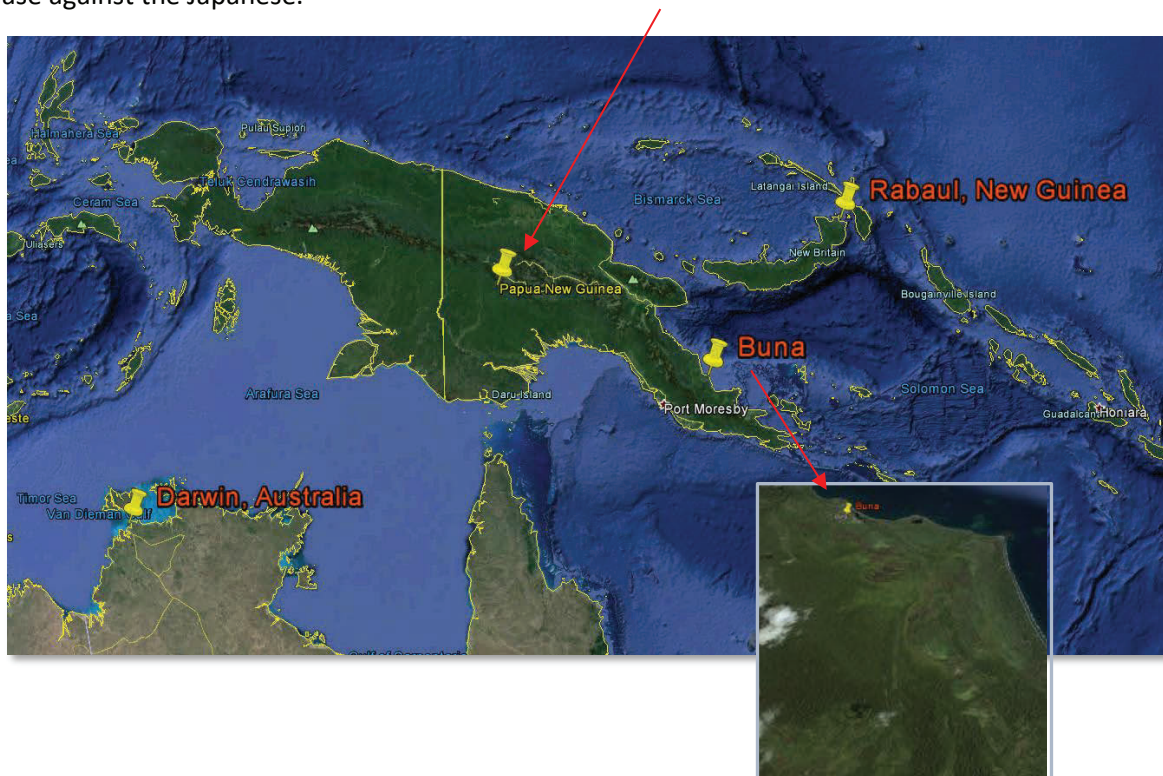
THE ROAD TO DESTINY

Although 2nd Lt. Anthony J. Goode would not arrive in the Western South-Pacific Theater until early 1944, it is important to understand the overall context of his last mission.

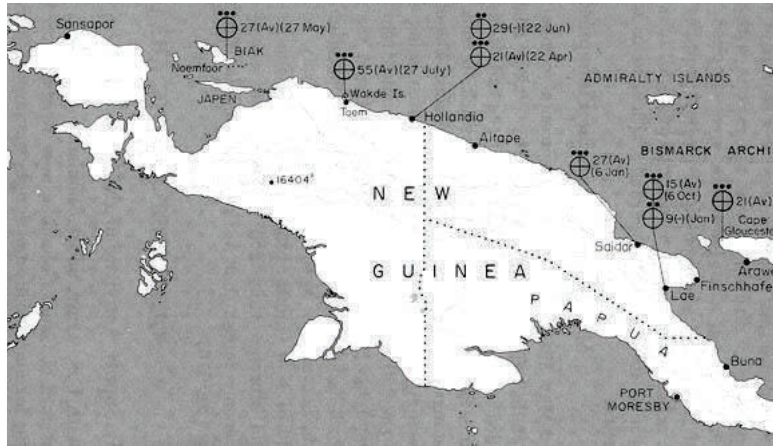
Following the 7 December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor and into the late spring of 1942, Japanese forces conquered one objective after another. Rabaul, New Guinea, was captured from Australian troops on 23 January. British Commonwealth units could not hold the Malayan Peninsula, falling back to the island fortress of Singapore. On 15 February Singapore was overrun with more than 130,000 Allied servicemen taken as POWs. On 19 February, Darwin, Australia was bombed by Japanese air forces, and in May, Sydney was attacked by Japanese submarines. An invasion of Australia seemed imminent.



By January 1943, the Americans and Australians had ejected the Japanese from Papua, New Guinea. General Douglas MacArthur, the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) commander, had secured an airstrip and staging base at Buna on the New Guinea north coast. (The land is still scarred and there is still not much there today.) But heavy U.S. casualties left the unprepared American divisions too dissipated for battle, requiring about six months to recuperate. The Australians, despite their own losses, took on the next phase against the Japanese.



Despite the Japanese defeat at Buna and the heavy losses in the continuing struggle for Guadalcanal, in January 1943 Japan still held the preponderant air, naval, and ground strength in the Southwest Pacific and retained the strategic initiative in New Guinea. With these advantages, they planned to strike again for Port Moresby, their target on the south coast of Papua.

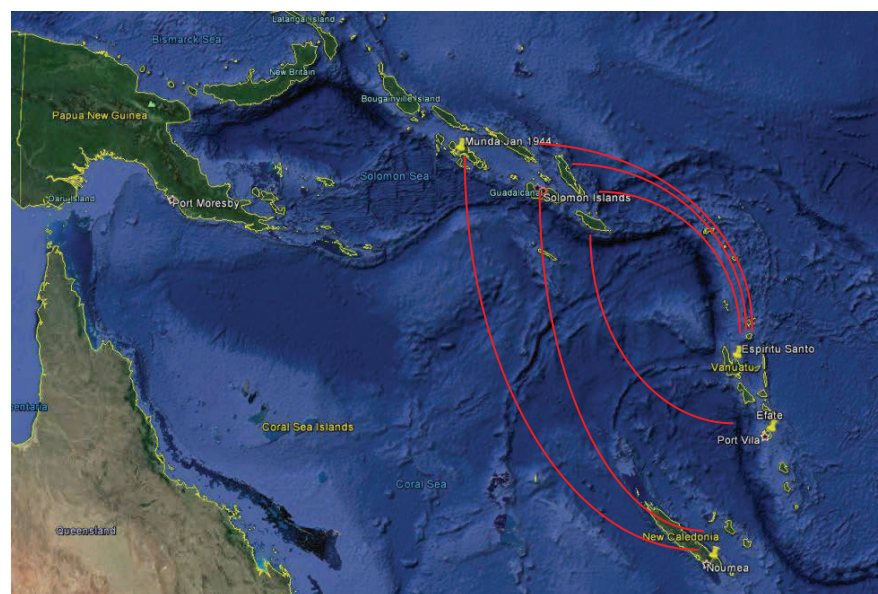


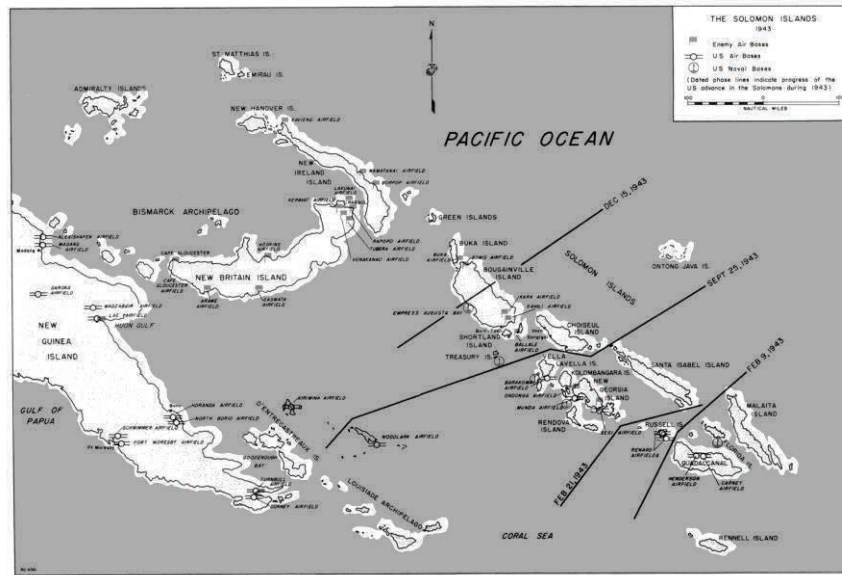
Expanding from a major air base and anchorage on the Huon Gulf at **Lae** (NE New Guinea) the next Japanese objective was to secure a forward air base at **Wau**, weakly held by the Australians, located about 150 miles west-northwest of Buna. The ability of U.S. Navy cryptanalysts to provide MacArthur with solid intelligence made it impossible for the Japanese to evade Allied countermeasures to their plans. Japanese reinforcements were

sent to Lae for the Wau operation, but Allied air attacks sank most the troop ships. Without reinforcements, the under strength attack on Wau was repulsed by the Australians, who were reinforced themselves using American air transports. A second Japanese attempt to reinforce Lae was again attacked and destroyed during the Battle of the Bismarck Sea (2-5 March 1943), when the U.S. Fifth Air Force and Royal Australian Air Force together with U.S. Navy small craft sank eight transports and four destroyers.

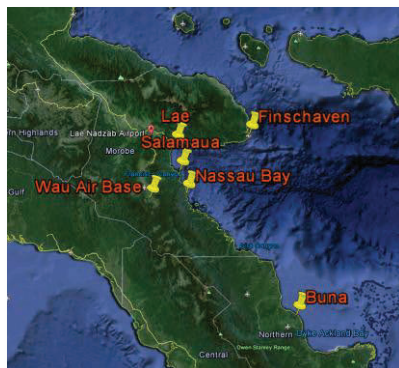
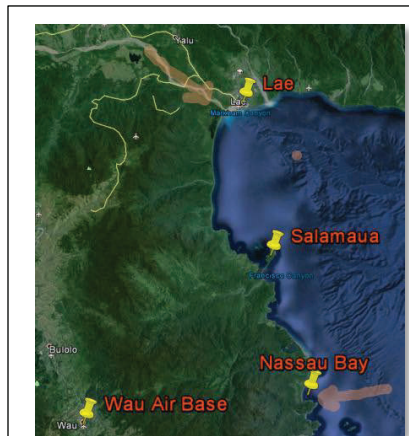
From February to June 1943 the eastern New Guinea battle zone lapsed into a stalemate as the Allies and the Japanese reinforced and replaced earlier losses. Shipping shortages created logistics and transportation bottlenecks for both sides. Neither side had the resources in early 1943 to force a decisive victory, and both expected a war of attrition to continue.

Throughout this period the 72nd Bomb Squadron which had deployed to the South Pacific, engaged in long-range bombing of enemy targets in the Solomon Islands, Guadalcanal and Central Pacific using Very Long-Range B-24 Liberators. This continued pounding allowed the Americans to secure Guadalcanal and advance control to the central Solomons. As the front advanced so did the forward airbases and the ability to locate fighters and bombers closer to the front lines.





Amphibious Operations Accelerate the Pace in New Guinea - In June 1943, SWPA conducted an amphibious operation, landing at **Nassau Bay**, about forty miles south of Lae, to threaten Japanese defenders at **Salamaua**, north of Nassau Bay on the approaches to Lae. As a pincer movement, while the Americans pushed along the coast, Australian troops advanced on a western axis from **Wau** through the Markham Valley. Although the Japanese defenders were few in number, the jungle terrain made progress extremely slow and costly. The Allies were helped by strikes on 17-18 August 1943 against the Japanese airfield at Wewak that damaged or destroyed 128 planes, 75% of the Japanese aircraft. American losses from the end of June until 12 September, when **Salamaua** fell, were 81 killed and 396 wounded while the Australians suffered 112 killed, 346 wounded, and 12 missing. Many others were sick or psychologically damaged from the appalling conditions. The Japanese lost more than 1,000 men.



Amphibious landings 4-6 September put Australian troops on a beachhead eighteen miles east of **Lae**. On 5 September American airborne troops established a new position at Nadzab Airport, about twenty miles west of Lae. The dual operations forced the Japanese to withdraw to **Finschhafen** fifty miles east of Lae, which was occupied on 16 September. The Japanese evaded the Australians by a detour into the mountains, but at a terrible cost in Japanese lives.

Finschhafen was the strong point that guarded the western side of the sixty-mile-wide straits separating New Guinea and New Britain. From fortified Sattelberg Ridge, high ground overlooking the entire coastline, about 3,000 Japanese waited for the Allies, ready to block any further push toward Sio.

Strategic Changes in the New Guinea Campaign - At the Quebec Conference in August 1943 it was Roosevelt and Churchill decided operations against Japan would be intensified in order to exhaust Japanese resources, cut their communications lines and secure forward bases from which the Japanese mainland could be attacked. Thus, the decision was made to bypass **Rabaul** and concentrate MacArthur's forces on the neutralization of the Japanese on New Guinea as far west as **Wewak**. In the same period, the Japanese loss of the Central Solomons and the Aleutians convinced Tokyo to convert New Guinea into a delaying action to keep as many of MacArthur's troops tied down as possible. Under these new strategic guidelines, the campaign continued.



Mackenzie King, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and the Earl of Athlone

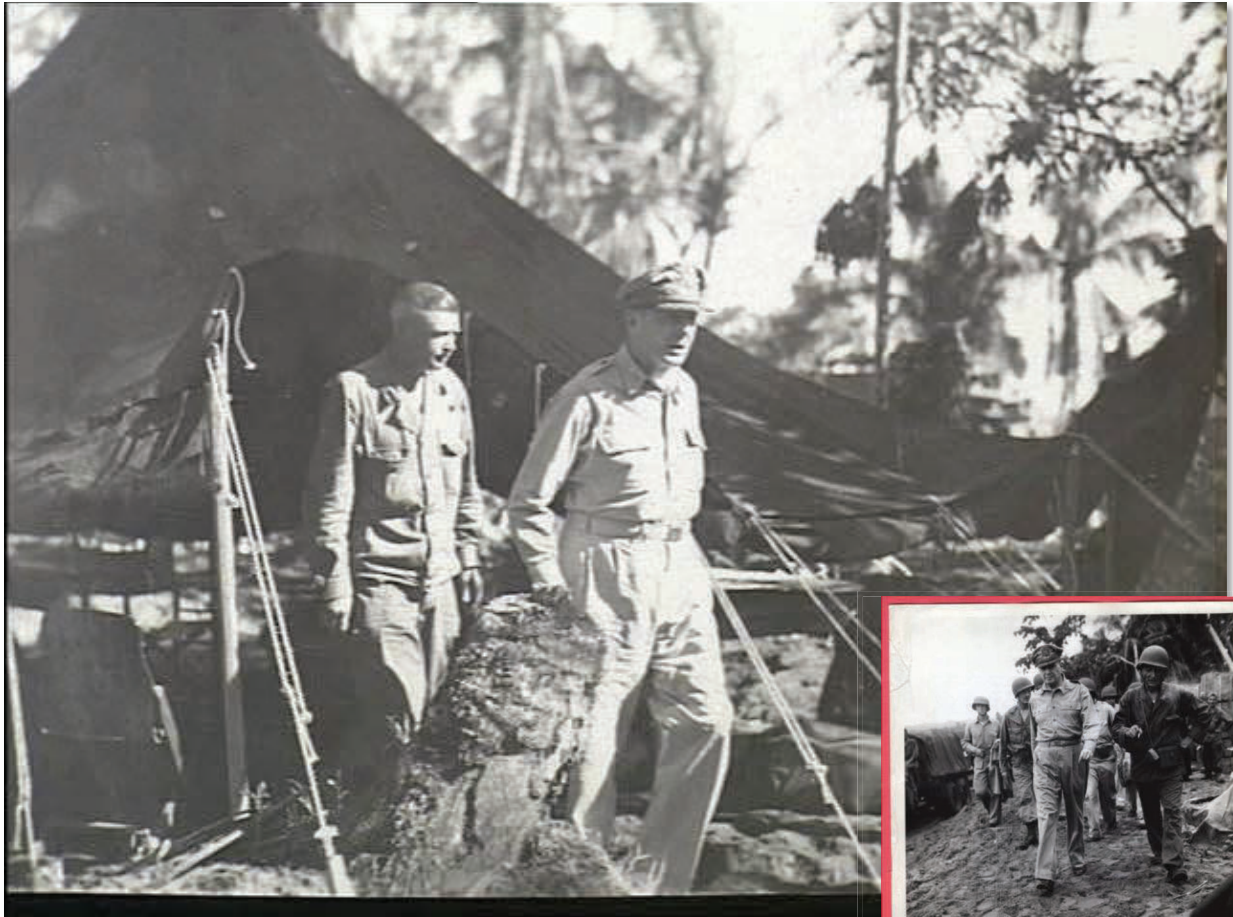
Australian troops arrived at **Finschhafen** on 22 September, quickly cleared the port, and then started up the Satelberg ridge line where they took heavy casualties against the entrenched defenders. Two weeks later the Japanese retaliated with a ground attack, easily repulsed by the Australians, and an amphibious landing that was much harder to repel. The Japanese counterattack was eventually broken, and **Finschhafen** was occupied on 2 October, but the Japanese fought on until late November 1943, with a loss of at least 5,500 soldiers.

MacArthur's next New Guinea objective was **Madang**, about halfway between **Finschhafen** and **Wewak**. To strike **Madang**, Allied amphibious forces were protected on the flank from Japanese based on New Britain by the seizure of bases there. On 15 December, three Army landings were made in the **Arawe** area followed on 26 December by a larger landing of U.S. Marines which captured the important air base at **Cape Gloucester**.



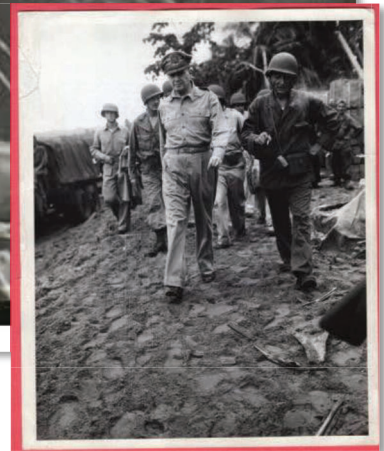
During December 1943, Australian troops moved both from **Finschhafen** along the coast on the north side of Finisterre Mountain Range as well as through the Ramu Valley on the south side of the range. Saidor, 175 miles west of **Finschhafen**, was taken with an unopposed landing of U.S. Sixth Army troops on 2 January 1944 to cut off the Japanese retreat, trapping a division at **Sio**. The Japanese sidestepped inland around **Saidor**, abandoning equipment and valuable cryptographic intelligence materials retrieved by the Allies. Continuing air attacks against Japanese supply lines and airfields by Army and Naval forces contributed materially to the success of ground operations.

Allied Forces Gain the Advantage in New Guinea - By 31 January 1944, MacArthur's SWPA forces had three regimental combat teams, three engineer special brigades, and five Australian infantry divisions, with three more U.S. infantry divisions on the way. Combat effectiveness was much higher as the lessons of jungle fighting were applied in training and support disciplines. As important, the Allies had achieved overwhelming numerical superiority in air and naval strength. The Japanese, in contrast, could not replace their losses in aircraft, shipping, and skilled manpower. However, they were helped by the New Guinea jungle that sheltered them from Allied planes and made large scale offensive maneuvers against them difficult or impossible.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

General Douglas MacArthur in New Guinea - 1944



MacArthur used Allied air and naval superiority to land troops where the Japanese were weakest, to confine the stronger Japanese forces to pockets from which they could not break out due to natural terrain obstacles and the Allied control of air and sea. The next nine months of 1944 were devoted to this strategy. 72nd Bomb Squadron deployed to the South Pacific, engaged in long-range bombing of enemy targets in the Solomon Islands and Central Pacific using Very Long-Range B-24 Liberators. Participating in MacArthur's island-hopping campaign in New Guinea and the Dutch East Indies, B-24J Navigator, [2nd Lt. Anthony J Goode](#) of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, would be in the thick of it.

