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THE AAF IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC TO OCTOBER 1942

Prepared by
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The original of this monograph and the documents from which it was written are in the USAF Historical Division, Archives Branch, Bldg. 914, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

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F O R E W O R D

This is the first of a series of studies on the history of the AAF in the South Pacific. It is designed to illustrate some of the major problems involved in the establishment of air operations on primitive island bases in what was then a minor theater of war. It will be the aim of a second study to emphasize the air operations on Guadalcanal and Espiritu Santo, and to carry the story through to the termination of Japanese resistance on the former island in February 1943.

C O N T E N T S

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The AAF in the South Pacific to October 1942

Chapter I

DEFENSE OF THE ISLAND BASES

Lying south and east of the Hawaiian Group is an island chain whose final link is New Caledonia, facing the front door of Australia across the Coral Sea. This chain is the basis for the South Pacific ferry route, the slender and tenuous life line along which have passed the men, materiel, and aircraft for General MacArthur and his air commanders. The route which comes down through the Fijis and New Caledonia is not the shortest nor the most economical one to the Philippines, whose defense was the original goal of early plans for Pacific warfare. Midway, Wake, and Guam, lying far to the north, offered the most direct air highway across the Central Pacific, but the proximity of Guam to Japanese bases in the Marianas and Carolines restricted the value of this line. The same insecurity affected Wake, situated just north of the Marshalls.

The Air Corps was fully cognizant of the weaknesses of these northern bases and early in 1941, despite the declared opposition of the War Department, it made an effort to bend the line to the south.[1] Late in 1940 the War Department had expressed positive opposition to any program designed to develop Pacific bases other than on Wake and Midway.[2] General Arnold, Chief of the Air Corps, disagreed with this policy. He could foresee the possible necessity of sending heavy bombardment aircraft to the Orient, and inasmuch as

these aircraft must fly, they would require bases along the way. The Air Corps met War Department objections by suggesting that the Pacific bases could be mere refueling airdromes, staffed with small detachments of service personnel which would be sufficient to destroy all installations and thus prevent their capture by the enemy.[3]

Already the Air Corps had recommended to the Civil Aeronautics Authority that land plane facilities be developed on Canton, Jarvis, and Johnston Islands; such action would serve as a partial establishment of the desired long-range land plane route to Australia, and when additional facilities were prepared on Samoa, the Fijis, and possibly on New Caledonia, the route should be equally useful for future commercial requirements. In any case, if such facilities were not provided, the Assistant Chief of the Air Corps felt that the value to the United States of long-range land-based aviation in the scheme of national defense would be commensurably curtailed.[4]

On 21 February 1941 the War Department restated its opposition to plans for moving land-based bombardment aircraft across the Pacific. A strategic defensive was viewed as the proper role for the Pacific, in view of the European situation, and it was held that U. S. need for land-based aviation facilities in that area was only a remote possibility. The War Department had no plans to move heavy army bombardment aviation to the Orient, neither did the Navy, "nor can the need for such a plan now be foreseen."[5] Thus, the War Department clung to its original plan--to develop bases on Midway and Wake, but to move no further into the Pacific islands.

During the spring and summer of 1941 evidence accumulated indicating the advisability of carrying forward the proposal of the Air Corps. On 10 May 1941, Lt. Gen. Walter C. Short in Hawaii recommended that the Navy should install land plane facilities on Midway, Wake, Palmyra, and Canton Islands; he outlined the steps necessary to protect the bases, and suggested that studies be made of each island along the alternate routes.[6] Yet as late as September 1941, a Joint U. S. Army-Navy Board estimate of the Pacific situation gave no indication of the future necessity of falling back upon the thin line of islands leading down to Australia. The conclusion reached by the Joint Board was that, pending future developments, Japan should be held in check by the U. S. Navy, which was considered strong enough for this mission.[7] Despite the relative optimism expressed by this report, on 24 October 1941, the Chief of Staff sanctioned a project calling for the development of a ferry route through the South Pacific to the Philippines. It was now recognized that this was a matter of extreme urgency and its completion "must be thought of in terms of weeks and not years."[8]

Nevertheless, even after the Japanese attack upon Pearl Harbor some hesitancy persisted regarding the route. Shortly after the Japanese opened hostilities, the Chief of the Air Staff directed that all matters pertaining to the South Pacific ferry route be held in abeyance, pending final decision on continuance of the project or diversion to other projects. Evidently General Arnold felt that the decision would be in favor of the former procedure, inasmuch as he ordered that procurement should proceed and be reserved for the

undertaking. The final decision to continue was announced three days later, on 15 December 1941, and suspension of the development was removed, with the direction that the original plan could now be resumed.[9]

While the State Department cleared away the diplomatic obstacles, bulldozers spread and leveled the coral of the Pacific islands. By December it was possible to report that by 15 January 1942 both four-engine aircraft and medium bombers with an operating range of over 1,200 miles could be moved over the route.[10] And it was high time. Japanese capture of Wake on 23 December had cut the northern route to the Philippines. The experiment of sending B-17's around the world eastward across the South Atlantic and Africa, thence on to India and down through the Netherlands Indies, carried a prohibitive attrition rate. Furthermore, the fall of the Indies to the Japanese in February placed them astride this route and threatened air routes across the Indian Ocean. There was nothing left but the new and untried path down through the South Pacific Islands. On 28 December, Lt. Gen. Delos Emmons, Commanding General of the Hawaiian Department, could report that the route was open through Canton, Suva, and New Caledonia,[11] but the bins of the supply sergeants along the way were not well stocked. Despite lack of complete information on the routes three B-17's pioneered the way, leaving Hickam Field on 6 January 1942.[12] The fields were by no means complete in all respects, but they possessed runways upon which B-17's could land, provided their navigators could find the island. They had gasoline and oil, even

if pumps were lacking, and they had solid ground upon which the ferry crews could rest. Far down in Australia there was dire need for B-17's, and if ever they arrived it would be over this new incomplete ferry route through coral atolls where land planes had never flown before.[13]

Once the route was well under way, there arose the necessity for providing a defense for it. As already indicated, originally the Army and Navy Joint Board Estimate had ignored the possibility of such a contingency and had disposed all its air power--on paper--in the Hawaiian Islands and in the Philippines. Plans called for four groups of five squadrons each, for a total strength of 272 heavy bombers in the Philippines.[14] The corollary--that the U. S. Navy would restrain Japan elsewhere in Pacific waters--was now open to revision, since the bulk of the fleet's defensive power lay in the mud of Pearl Harbor. The island bases thus stood in greater need of local defense than was originally anticipated.

Despite loss of defensive weapons as a result of the Japanese attack on 7 December, there was some reluctance to send air units into the Pacific in the days immediately following Pearl Harbor. On 9 December the Air Staff informed the War Department that in view of the present international situation it could not consider favorably the project for basing units at Christmas and Canton Islands.[15] On 14 January 1942 the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved a plan to garrison New Caledonia with one pursuit squadron and one squadron of medium bombardment aircraft.[16] The recommendation failed to designate which one of the United Nations would provide the garrison, but it

had generally been assumed that the pursuit squadron would be provided by the United States. A-3 had already prepared a squadron, the 68th (later changed for the 67th), which was ready for embarking.

General Arnold, however, opposed the plan to place Army Air Force units on New Caledonia and directed that the British be requested to furnish the necessary air garrison, whereupon arrangements were made to move the 68th Pursuit Squadron to Australia.[17] The Commanding General of the AAF felt that the British should provide the necessary aircraft for the New Caledonia air garrison and Australia should furnish the pilots. Again there was a change of policy; on 28 January the Air Forces agreed to furnish the pursuit squadron for New Caledonia but clung to the original plan that the bombardment garrison be furnished by the British and/or the Australians.[18] A subsequent conference with the Royal Air Force representative on 15 February indicated it was improbable that the British would be able to furnish aircraft for New Caledonia, and the whole matter was passed on to the Combined Staff Planners for decision on 1 March 1942.[19]

Defense of New Caledonia alone was not enough. Clear across the Pacific back to Hawaii there were islands whose defense was vital to the ferry route. By 20 January 1942 plans had advanced to the point where some units already were en route to their island bases, while others stood under orders awaiting transfer from continental stations. So urgent was the Pacific situation that the task force being prepared for Australia assumed top priority, that

for the Pacific islands (Five Islands) ranked second in importance, while the forces being prepared for European theaters followed after.[20]

Task Force Five Islands carried the basic air units in the Pacific. These islands were: (1) Fiji, to which the 70th Pursuit Squadron was en route; (2) Canton, to which the 68th Pursuit Squadron was assigned; (3) Christmas, assigned the 12th Pursuit Squadron; (4) New Caledonia, whose 67th Pursuit Squadron had originally been directed to Australia; and (5) Palmyra, for which the 69th Pursuit Squadron had been earmarked. Necessary ground services were allotted for each of the units and in preparing them for shipment, General Arnold directed that they be afforded a high priority, both for personnel and equipment.[21]

By February sufficient air units had arrived at their stations across the Pacific to offer some opposition to a Japanese attack. None of the bases was in a position to offer stout resistance, but the ferry route was no longer defenseless. Fiji now had one pursuit squadron, the 70th, which had debarked at Suva on 29 January 1942, although the first plane of its 25 P-39's was not assembled until 9 February.

In addition to the P-39's of the 70th, the Royal New Zealand Air Force operated 18 Hudsons at Fiji in a squadron and a half of general reconnaissance light bombardment aircraft, as well as four Singapores and six ancient Vincents. The Fijis would receive additional air support with the arrival of U.S.S. Curtis, which was en route to Suva with six PBY's for temporary operations, although it was not assigned to the area. Down in New Zealand the Royal New

Zealand Air Force maintained a force of Hudsons similar to that in Fiji, and had as projected reinforcements the addition of 34 Hudsons, 14 Ansons and 18 Kittyhawks. One pursuit squadron equipped with 25 P-400's, the 67th, was en route to New Caledonia from Australia. Samoa's defense was in naval hands and the Navy had committed one-half a pursuit squadron and one-half a bombardment squadron to this area, although the date of arrival was not yet known. Christmas Island was strengthened by the presence of the 12th Pursuit Squadron, but orders to move the 69th Pursuit Squadron to Palmyra had not yet been issued. The air defense of this island rested with the Navy, which maintained two patrol bombers on station.[22]

New Caledonia was a keystone in the island chain and as such it received a larger share of the Pacific defense forces than any of the smaller islands. In January the United States-British Joint Planning Committee had recognized that while the defense of New Caledonia should be an Australian responsibility, the United States should, as a temporary measure, furnish forces as early as possible to protect the island. Furthermore, the Committee estimated that a desirable garrison for the French possession should consist of one infantry division reinforced, together with one pursuit squadron, one medium bombardment squadron, and the necessary service units.[23] As already indicated, General Arnold opposed the plan to supply equipment and aircraft to the Australian and New Zealand air units and originally had taken a stand against furnishing any Army Air Forces squadrons for the area. On 22 January 1942, Brig. Gen. Alexander M. Patch was designated commander of the New Caledonia Task Force, whose units later were to gain distinction as the Americal

Division* which relieved the Marines on Guadalcanal. General Patch's mission was clear: "In cooperation with the Military Forces of the United Nations, Hold New Caledonia Against Attack."[24] This force of division size, totaling 14,789 officers and men as originally projected, sailed from New York on 23 January and after transshipping in Melbourne, arrived at Noumea, New Caledonia on 12 March 1942.[25] General Patch was authorized to call upon General MacArthur for logistic support until such time as direct supply lines could be established with the United States, but he was advised that additional forces could not be made available in the initial plan of defense.

It was evident that General Patch's task force had arrived in time to avert a diplomatic conflict with the Free French over the provision of defense forces for the air bases on New Caledonia. The airfield at Plaines des Gaiacs was nearing completion; since its construction was a responsibility of the Commanding General of the Hawaiian Department, General Emmons' representatives had conducted negotiations for the base with the Free French through the Australian government. The French High Commissioner in Noumea, observing progress in the field, had become increasingly concerned over defense plans, apparently feeling that unless the area received more adequate protective measures, Plaines des Gaiacs would become an invitation to the Japanese rather than a weapon of resistance. He went so far as to inform the liaison officer of the Hawaiian Department that if weapons and troops failed to arrive

* This was an unnumbered American division whose official designation was derived from its location on New Caledonia.

before Plaines des Gaiacs became usable, he would withdraw authority for all further work. The State Department smoothed the way by assuring the Commissioner that assistance would be given, but it did not reveal the strength, nationality, composition, or projected movements of the Force.[26] The question was dropped with the arrival of General Patch's ground force on 12 March, followed on the fifteenth by the 67th Pursuit Squadron.[27]

As the ground, naval, and air forces moved to their stations along the island chain, it was apparent that there was no clear agreement in Washington as to the ultimate strength necessary to hold these bases. This confusion over the statistics of defense arose from a larger disagreement over the relative importance of war in the Pacific with respect to the global war which by then had developed in full bloom. Even prior to the Japanese attack which precipitated the war, the U. S. Navy had taken a stand against immediate and large scale preparations for an offensive against Germany. It considered that since the prime strength of the United Nations lay in naval and air categories, profitable strategy should contemplate effective employment of these forces; ground forces should be thrown against regions where Germany could not exert the full power of her armies. This policy, of course, pointed to the Pacific as the preferred area for operations. The Army, on the other hand, felt that such strategy might not accomplish the defeat of Germany and that it might be necessary to challenge German armies on the continent of Europe.[28]

At the same time, however, there was general agreement between the services that if Australia and New Zealand were to be supported, the sea and air communications which pass through the South Pacific must be made secure. Australia and New Zealand were vital as bases for further operations; loss of either or both would vastly increase the difficulties of any future offensive against Japan.[29] Samoa was recognized as occupying an important linking position; it must be held and so must the bases so rapidly developing on the smaller islands such as Canton, Palmyra, and Christmas. In their conclusion the Joint Chiefs of Staff squarely faced the problem which was to plague all future discussion of air power for the Pacific; due to the shortage of shipping and the current lack of large forces in various categories, any strengthening of the deployment against Japan would be at the expense of the effort which otherwise might be made against Germany. At the same time--and paradoxically straddling the question--it was concluded that the forces for offensive action in the United Kingdom and those for defensive action in the Pacific should be built up simultaneously.[30]

With this background, Army and Navy representatives made their initial over-all recommendations for all the island bases leading down to Australia. Some of the Joint Staff Planners held strong misgivings against the proposed strength for the Pacific, feeling that a far stronger effort than that recommended was necessary to prevent an early collapse of the entire situation in the Pacific area.[31] It was apparent that the line of islands was not yet

secured throughout but in those cases where air strength was lacking, it either was projected or en route. By 17 March 1942 Fiji, Christmas, and New Caledonia had one squadron each of 25 fighter aircraft, and 25 additional fighters were in Australia scheduled for movement to Tongatabu. Efate still lacked air strength, but 21 marine fighters in Hawaii were scheduled to arrive at that island as soon as the landing field became operable, estimated between June 1-15.[32] In addition, air units in Australia were to furnish a pursuit squadron with necessary ground services for Efate. Tongatabu was shortly to be bolstered by a task force, for which air units and attendant ground services were likewise available in Australia.[33]

By April construction of the bases was well along and some measure of protection had been provided for most of them, but it was questionable that any of them alone would be able to resist a determined and powerful Japanese attack. Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed that Joint U. S. Staff Planners should summarize and integrate all previous studies concerning defense of the South Pacific. Specifically, what was desired was an assessment of the number of bombers of all types required to provide a mobile defense for all the island bases along the line of communications, the time required for concentration of a bomber force, landing fields available, and the minimum fighter, ground, and antiaircraft facilities necessary for effective opposition.[34]

It was already apparent that two theories stood in conflict over the garrisoning of the islands. One theory, that of the Army Air Forces, emphasized the concept of mobility. Air Force spokesmen and General Arnold were fully cognizant of the strain which the European and Pacific theaters were throwing upon the resources of the Air Forces. Therefore, if available aircraft were to be employed to the fullest advantage, they should not be deprived of mobility, one of the greatest assets of air power. Binding air striking units to fixed assignments across the Pacific in an effort to maintain a point or limited defense would nullify the high strategic mobility of these units. Such air units would be deprived of the power of decisive action which otherwise they might make through concerted operations. Certainly, such a policy, if applied in the Pacific, would become prohibitively costly.[35] The position of the Air Forces was stated as follows: "Where air striking forces are assigned to the defense of an area which is linear in type and of limited depth, as is so strikingly characteristic of the line to be defended in the South Pacific, it is considered sound strategic procedure to base the major air striking elements at the extremities of that line and provide by suitable bases and logistical services for their rapid concentration against any threat that develops along the undefended line."[36]

The most complete canvass of all factors affecting the South Pacific was presented on 2 May 1942 by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Representatives from all services squarely met the fact that the South Pacific represented only a small segment of a global war, that there were many factors over which neither the Army nor Navy had any great degree of control and which might capsize the entire program. It was necessary constantly to give consideration not only to enemy activity in the Pacific but to obligations in the European theater. For example, the commitment to employ approximately 40,000 British troops from the British Isles to the Middle East retarded reinforcement of the Pacific line of communications. In addition, and of more significance, it was evident that Allied forces were unable to confine the Japanese fleet to the western Pacific.[37]

General Arnold approached these extensive discussions with the firm conviction that "no additional air units of any kind will be sent to Pacific or Indian bases in addition to those already allocated."[38] But there was agreement on the necessity for holding the Pacific line of islands. A directive to this effect had been drawn up for the two supreme commanders in the Pacific, Admiral Nimitz and General MacArthur. The former was directed explicitly to hold island possessions between the United States and the South Pacific necessary for security of the line of communications and for supporting naval, air, and amphibious operations against the Japanese. Further, he was directed to prepare for execution of major amphibious offensives against positions held by the Japanese, offensives to be launched initially from the South and Southwest Pacific. For his part General MacArthur was instructed to check the enemy advance towards Australia

and its essential lines of communications by destruction of enemy troops and supply ships, aircraft, and bases in eastern Malaysia, New Guinea, and the Bismarck-Solomon Islands region.[39]

The Joint Staff committee agreed on a number of procedures for defending the islands. It was recognized that effective defense of the line would depend upon mutual support and use of (a) direct naval and air escort of shipping en route; (b) direct ground and air defense of the positions in the area which were in use as naval and air bases, either for forces operating in the area or for refueling or staging purposes; (c) covering operations by naval and air forces, interposed between the enemy and important convoys or vulnerable positions, in readiness to accept combat with enemy striking forces; (d) denial to the enemy of positions which would permit his forces to disrupt our sea and air communications, which involved the use not only of sea and air forces to prevent enemy establishment in such positions, but also amphibious troops to dislodge enemy forces from positions in which they already were established.[40] This last point assumed new importance in view of the conclusion that "The seizure by amphibious forces of positions which in turn threaten Japanese control of vital sea and air communications is the method which gives the greatest promise of success in containing Japanese forces in the Pacific."[41] Some thought was given to the role of aircraft carriers in defensive weapons for the islands, but it was agreed that these naval units should not be relied upon, except in their proper role as essential components of naval task forces. To

fix major elements of the fleet in relation to particular shore positions was unsound practice--the fleet must be left free to operate in the theater as a whole.[42]

This recognition of the necessity for mobility, which the Navy sought for its surface craft, was precisely what was desired by the Air Forces. In a discussion of the proposed commitments for the South Pacific,[43] it was necessary to consider the possible types of attack which the enemy might throw against the islands. These ranged from isolated thrusts by surface raiders and enemy submarines to air attacks from carriers and, most dangerous, to sustained assaults by the enemy in an attempt to seize elements of the island chain. To meet these threats air force spokesmen believed that ". . . the most economical method of conducting air operations in opposition to such enemy threats is by maintaining air bases properly disposed to accommodate air striking forces, with local air defenses and facilities, and to maintain mobile air striking forces which can be concentrated where needed."[44] The element of risk would persist and must be accepted since it was not sound policy to establish a chain of fortresses clear across the Pacific in view of the strategic role of the Pacific. This was a theater calling for minimum rather than for large air forces.

The answer lay in providing mobile air forces based in Hawaii and Australia and it was the opinion of AAF spokesmen that these could be concentrated in the central portion of the islands in approximately one day.[45] Furthermore, it was estimated that this

central island chain could accommodate a total of 18 heavy bombardment squadrons, a force which represented three-fifths of the mobile bomber strength recommended for the entire area. In addition, the islands could support about 17 naval patrol squadrons. Fiji was cited as an example. Within the radius of action of Fiji lay airfields capable of basing approximately 12 squadrons. Two squadrons already were set up for New Caledonia, leaving a total of 10, which would be flown from Australia, New Zealand, or Hawaii. Some 26 squadrons were committed to these three areas, a concentration of 10 in the Fijis would entail a reduction of about 40 per cent in the defensive strength of Australia and Hawaii, and this was not considered a dangerous depletion. Nor could AAF men overlook the fact that powerful carrier air groups were available for concentration along the line.

With these factors in mind, Army Air Forces representatives submitted their proposal for the air garrisons,[46] and recommended that no additional medium or heavy bombardment groups be assigned to the central section of the island chain over and above the medium group set up for Fiji and New Caledonia in JCS 23 of 14 March 1942. Minor increases were in order. Tongatabu acquired two pursuit squadrons instead of one, in view of its increasing importance as a refueling base for naval and merchant craft. For Fiji it appeared desirable to form the entire garrison exclusively of New Zealand troops, inasmuch as the New Zealanders already comprised the ground forces and the Royal New Zealand Air Force was operating one squadron each of medium bombers and seaplanes from Fiji bases. Furthermore, the

permanent presence of medium bombers in Fiji and New Caledonia would insure the provision of adequate facilities for both heavy and medium bombers which might be moved in for a particular operation.

Such was the Army view and in presenting it the airmen included a summary of their recommendation which indicated a total of 2,379 Allied aircraft in the Pacific. This figure opposed approximately 1,200 Japanese aircraft of all types estimated to be in the Netherlands Indies, the Philippines, New Guinea, the Mandates, and in the Solomons. Allied forces were distributed as follows:[47]

UNITED STATES			RNZAF		RAAF
Navy seaplanes	276		Land planes	210	152
Marine land planes	399		Seaplanes	12	
Carrier land planes	300	(approx.)		222	
	975				
Army land planes	1,030				
	2,005				
Grand total -	2,379				

The crux of the Army's argument lay in mobility. It was clearly recognized that although mobile bomber forces could not be assembled with sufficient rapidity to operate effectively against a hostile raiding force, they could be concentrated in time to oppose a landing in force against any of the principal islands of the chain. Naval representatives opposed this theory and were unable to reach an agreement with the Army. Whereas the Air Forces placed reliance in local fighter squadrons along the line, supported by mobile striking forces at the ends, the Navy demanded heavier strength in the center. Fighter aircraft alone would not suffice. The air component of each island base should include fighters to oppose the enemy in the air, and light or medium bombers--or pursuit aircraft fitted to carry heavy

bombs--to attack enemy carriers or surface raiders. Pearl Harbor had left a bitter memory and the Navy desired no repetition, even in miniature. Although the Army agreed to the assignment of 120 patrol planes and 70 heavy bombers to Hawaii, the Navy felt that all these must be held in the Central Pacific area, including Canton, if fleet mobility were to be assured. And of this number, 72 patrol planes and 52 heavy bombers should be held continuously in the Hawaiian group to meet minimum requirements for long-range air reconnaissance and striking forces. Nor was the allotment for Australia adequate for the continuing needs of that area and for sudden emergencies in the South Pacific as well.

Even over the question of mobility the Navy parted company with the Army Air Forces. Navy spokesmen felt that there was a lack of aporeciation for the distances and logistic problems involved in movements from Hawaii to the South Pacific and that several days might elapse before large numbers of aircraft could be prepared, moved through the intervening bases, and be readied for effective operations. Nor could the Navy share the sanguine view held by the Army as to the effectiveness of aircraft: "Exclusive reliance on long range aircraft from Hawaii and Australia to meet needs for the defense of intervening communications will jeopardize the safety of these communications and of the forces overseas which depend on them."[48] Therefore, the Navy went beyond the AAF and requested the continuous availability in the South Pacific area of long-range aircraft suitable for sustained operations. Specifically it demanded

that one medium and one heavy bombardment group should be assigned to the South Pacific area as a whole.[49] To this request it added the statement that if these aircraft could not be provided by the Army, the necessary planes should be allocated to the Navy from current production and manned by naval personnel.[50]

General Arnold already had seen these proposals and had called for study of them, with the admonition that no additional forces above current allocations could be sent to Pacific bases.[51] The Air Forces planners reacted sharply against the proposed increase, stating that the AAF had been able to implement only about one-third of the fighter aircraft and none of the bomber forces prescribed for the area by JCS 23. Furthermore, this new plan did not conform to current policy in that if approved, it would authorize equipping the RNZAF with aircraft for one medium and one fighter group in New Zealand, and two fighter squadrons and one of medium bombardment in Fiji, including the necessary reserves for maintenance and attrition. As for the proposal to allocate aircraft to the Navy from current production, the planners reminded General Arnold that ". . . if the airplanes were available, we would man them ourselves."[52]

A substantial margin existed between the two proposals. The Navy called for an increase, above the Army's figure, of 35 heavy bombers, 83 medium bombers, and 55 fighter aircraft.[53] Navy members of the Joint Staff Planners stated unequivocally that anything less than this strength would cramp the fleet's operations and leave the islands inadequately covered in the absence of the surface divisions.

Army members could not follow this recommendation, for their attention was focussed upon the main effort, which was not in the Pacific theater. Any increase in the latter area would bring about not only a corresponding decrease in the European offensive but would delay its inception. The AAF did not feel that the air strength it had recommended for the Pacific could be established until relatively a distant future date, even though its proposals were on a more modest scale than those of the Navy; instead its figures had represented merely a desirable allotment of aviation for eventual dispatch across the Pacific.[54] On one point there was agreement; a review of status reports indicated the existence of a critical situation in the islands and defense of the bases should be considered a matter of urgency. Shore-based aircraft suitable and available for combat consisted only of the 50 fighters at Noumea and Suva, the 12 Hudsons at Suva, and the 36 marine dive bombers and fighters at Samoa, a total of 98. Supplementing these forces were 43 seaplanes of limited effectiveness in combat;[55] the extent of their effectiveness was a lesson only learned later in the Solomons.

While the secretaries of the staff planners in Washington exchanged proposals concerning the fate of the South Pacific islands, Japanese admirals were massing their strength at Palau and Truk in the Carolines. Their objective was not yet known, but it lay to the south, perhaps in the Lower Solomons, perhaps at Port Moresby. When the thrust came, air groups from Lexington and Saratoga met it in the Coral Sea in the series of engagements which is known as the Battle

of the Coral Sea, covering the period 4 May to 8 May 1942.[56] Japanese momentum was not quite strong enough, and although the battle cost the Navy its Lexington, the enemy steamed northward in temporary defeat.

This check to the Japanese ostensibly gave American forces a breathing spell in the South Pacific, yet Admiral King believed that it would at best only delay formidable aggressive action on the part of the enemy. Therefore, he sensibly suggested that it would be highly desirable to conduct a trial concentration of land-based aircraft on some of the island bases to determine how quickly this could be accomplished and what additional facilities were required for effective operations.[57]

Initial steps actually were taken to carry out Admiral King's suggestion. Almost immediately Operations Division ordered General Emmons in Hawaii to prepare the Fiji airfields for approximately 70 aircraft, and a similar order to prepare the bases in New Caledonia went to General Patch.[58] General Emmons was advised that there were present in the Fijis 25 fighters,40 in New Caledonia, and that anticipated reinforcements would number 26 medium bombers and 16 heavies, with strategic mobility enabling concentration of 82 aircraft in New Caledonia and 67 in the Fijis.[59] In New Caledonia General Patch responded at once and took steps to provide facilities for efficient dispersion and camouflage of a possible total of 80 planes simultaneously.[60]

Once again enemy movements interfered with plans for the South Pacific. After their rebuff in the Coral Sea, the Japanese shifted

their weight to the Central Pacific, a move known well in advance to naval intelligence at Pearl Harbor, where Admiral Nimitz predicted with amazing accuracy both the date and targets which the enemy had selected. By 16 May, Fleet Intelligence in Hawaii was certain of enemy preparation for an offensive against United States territory and was aware that an attempt would be made to occupy Midway and points in the Aleutians.[61] Receipt of this information in Washington naturally caused a revision of plans to send additional aircraft to the South Pacific. On 20 May the War Department ordered General Emmons to stop at once movement of certain bomber aircraft and bombardment units southward from Hawaii. The 69th and 70th Medium Bombardment Squadrons and the 1st Provisional Bombardment Squadron all were ordered held in Hawaii, and their training accelerated for combat in the immediate future. General Emmons was advised to draw upon Admiral Nimitz for assistance of naval personnel, equipment, and torpedoes as might be necessary for the training and operation of all medium bombardment units as effective torpedo bombing organizations at the earliest possible date.[62] Ground crews for these units not already dispatched were to be held in Hawaii. However, General Emmons was ordered to dispatch promptly to New Caledonia the balance of the 2d Provisional Bombardment Squadron (H) together with the squadron commander and such maintenance personnel as were scheduled for dispatch by air.[63]

Thus matters rested. No comprehensive plan agreeable to both Army and Navy for the air garrisons of the Pacific had yet been

devised. Army air and ground forces both were planning for a major effort in Europe, while the Navy was geared by training and indoctrination to a Pacific war. Substantial support from the Commander in Chief was available for the Army's viewpoint. On 6 May President Roosevelt assured the Chief of Staff that only enough heavy and medium bombers and pursuit aircraft should be sent to the Pacific to maintain the present objective in that area at a maximum, and as for sacrificing forces from the European theater he reminded General Marshall that "I do not want Bolero slowed down."[64] In view of the success of naval task forces in raiding operations, the President seemed confident that a large Japanese offensive against Australia or New Zealand could be prevented.

Inasmuch as there was no acceptable long-range program for the Pacific, General Arnold continued to work with those forces he felt he might reasonably spare. On the day following the Battle of the Coral Sea, 9 May 1942, he outlined his plans for Pacific air strength by 1 July 1942. It included 23 fighter aircraft for Christmas, 25 for Canton and Fiji, 40 each for Tongatabu and New Caledonia; Australia and Hawaii continued, as before, to serve as the repositories of the heavy bombers, 80 being indicated for each.[65] These seemed to be reasonable figures, and General Arnold agreed that if they could be attained without seriously interfering with BOLERO, they should be reached as quickly as possible.[66] A more comprehensive statement appeared a few days later in compliance with a request from the Joint Chiefs of Staff as to how the Army proposed to implement the

President's statement of 6 May, relative to deployment of forces in the Pacific. The Army Air Forces presented both an immediate and an ultimate objective, the latter merely restating the recommendations made on 2 May.[67] But even implementation of the ultimate goal would not close the gap between Navy and Army plans for Pacific air garrisons. The internecine struggle between the European and Pacific theaters was destined to continue for many months to come.

Chapter II

COMMAND IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

The AAF units which took station along the line of Pacific islands, and which were destined eventually to become part of the Thirteenth Air Force, were not subject to operational control of the Army. Effective 8 May 1942 the Pacific Ocean area became an area of United States strategic responsibility controlled by the Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet, under whom a naval officer was designated as Commander, South Pacific Area, or COMSOPAC.[1] The mission assigned to COMSOPAC was to: (a) hold island positions necessary for security of the line of communications between the United States and the Southwest Pacific Area and for supporting naval, air, and amphibious operations against the Japanese; (b) protect essential sea and air communications; (c) support operations of forces in the Southwest and Central Pacific; and (d) prepare to launch a major amphibious offensive against positions held by Japan. Canton Island was designated as belonging to the Central Pacific Area, and New Zealand was named as the headquarters for the entire South Pacific.[2]

In order to carry out his mission, Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley, as COMSOPAC, was given command of all base and local defense forces then assigned or to be assigned to bases in the South

Pacific area, except for the land defenses of New Zealand. It was logical to assign to him as well all New Zealand naval forces and all amphibious forces based in the South Pacific. But what alarmed the Air Forces was the instruction to Admiral Ghormley that ". . . the officer performing under you the duties of Commander Aircraft, South Pacific Force, will be responsible for the operational control, including training and indoctrination, of all aircraft in the South Pacific area."[3] Thus the task of initiating air operations in the South Pacific fell to a naval officer subordinate to COMSOPAC, Rear Admiral John S. McCain, who assumed command of all aircraft in the South Pacific as COMAIRSOPAC on 20 May 1942 from his headquarters aboard U.S.S. Tangier at Noumea, New Caledonia.[4] The naval administrative structure in the South Pacific was strengthened on 19 June 1942, when Vice Admiral Ghormley arrived to assume command of the area, thereby relieving the Hawaiian Department of control over Fiji and Bora Bora.[5] Furthermore his arrival ended a rather curious anomaly which had persisted for over a month; in the absence of COMSOPAC, Admiral McCain had operated directly under the control of Admiral Nimitz (CINCPAC) back in Pearl Harbor.

There could be no complaint from any source that Army cooperation was lacking, for subsequently all AAF units assigned to the South Pacific were made available for movement as directed by COMSOPAC.[6] Nevertheless, while they were willing to place the South Pacific air forces under naval control, Army commanders demurred at the prospect of entrusting responsibility for the training and indoctrination of

their air units to COMAIRSOPAC. Brig. Gen. Thomas T. Handy stated to General Marshall that such assumption of training responsibility by CINCPAC exceeded existing authority under the principle of unity of command, although he granted the possible necessity in this particular case, since it concerned only aircraft. Nevertheless, the action would establish a poor precedent.[7]

Air Force planners felt even more keenly that army air units operating in support of naval forces should not be integrated into and assigned to a subordinate naval commander. They maintained instead that army air forces, functioning under the operational control of the Navy, should be assigned appropriate missions by the Naval Commander in Chief of the supported naval force, and thereafter be permitted to conduct such operations under the command organization already established by the AAF for the conduct of these assigned missions. And as for committing training and indoctrination to the Navy, these remained the responsibility of the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces. "He is not free to delegate that responsibility to any other agency, nor is such a procedure considered sound during active combat operations."[8] Fundamentally, the Air Forces feared any development which would fracture the organizational entity of the supporting air force. The entire AAF was geared to unit control, unit morale, unit organization, and unit training. If the squadrons were to be broken up and fed into naval organizations, something less than satisfactory performance undoubtedly would result; therefore the air planners strongly recommended that naval jurisdiction should be

confined to operational control.[9]

The final solution of the discussion adopted the point of view of the AAF. On 27 July COMSOPAC informed all commanders of island bases in the South Pacific that responsibility for training of all units of army ground and air troops was the responsibility of Maj. Gen. Millard F. Harmon, who had been designated Commanding General of U. S. Army Forces in the South Pacific Area (COMGENSOPAC) on 7 July. To Rear Admiral McCain, as COMAIRSOPAC, went responsibility under COMSOPAC for direct operational control of all shore and tender-based aircraft in the South Pacific Area.[10] These preliminary instructions were amplified on 3 August when Admiral McCain surveyed his air establishment and concluded that due to its wide dispersion and dissimilar composition, the variation in available facilities, inherent difficulties in communications, and differences in defense problems confronting the commanders, it was entirely impracticable for him to exercise his command directly.[11] After consultation with General Harmon, it was agreed that COMAIRSOPAC should delineate the types of operations which he expected or might expect of the various air components, but training of army air units for these operations should remain the responsibility of COMGENSOPAC, exercised through the various defense commanders on the islands. COMAIRSOPAC would promulgate a general doctrine for employment of available air forces, or those which might be available, and this doctrine would cover the more probable tactical situations which might arise; normal and routine employment of army air units under the various island

defense commanders was to be subject to the supervision and guidance of the Commanding General, United States Army Forces in the South Pacific. Operational control would rest with COMAIRSOPAC who normally would issue orders and instructions direct to defense commanders, task groups, or operational units as dictated by circumstances.[12]

Admiral McCain prescribed a basic organization for the air force at each base in the South Pacific, and while he recognized that the bases might lack one or more of the prescribed or indicated components, each should be held flexible and prepared to absorb new units with a minimum loss of time. The plan included all U. S. and Allied air units in the area and called for four commands at each base: Air Patrol, Bomber, Fighter, and Base Command.[13] Control and coordination of these units was vested in the island defense commander operating under the principle of unity of command and he in turn exercised his command function through the air officer who controlled the local units. It was specified that this air commander should be an aviation officer of suitable rank, designated by the defense commander and subject in the case of forces under his jurisdiction to the approval of the COMGENSOPAC. Admiral McCain reserved for himself a measure of direct control by providing that when COMAIRSOPAC was present in an operating capacity in any of the defense areas, at his discretion he might assume command of the local air forces; however in such an event, the authority would be exercised with due cognizance for the responsibilities of the local force commander in the defense of his area.

The widely scattered bases and the great distances involved offered a particularly difficult problem in coordination of effort. To overcome this handicap it was provided that coordination of the operations of the air forces of any two adjacent bases, when and as required, would be effected by COMAIRSOPAC when that officer was present in the theater of operations; otherwise it would be the task of COMGENSOPAC, or in his absence, by the senior defense commander. A more complicated problem arose in connection with coordination of the air forces of any base, or of two adjacent bases with that of a task force at sea. Admiral McCain provided that normally this would be effected by the commander of the task force, recognizing however that several variables, such as the nature of the mission, the role and relative importance of the task force, and the limitation of the communications involved, might modify the original plan of control. As an example he cited a major combined operation involving amphibious forces, in which case the Commander, South Pacific either would coordinate the air operations himself or designate the officer responsible therefor. Mobility within the South Pacific was foreseen in the provision that base units must be organized and prepared to accommodate for a short period during an emergency a concentration of aircraft in any locality. Furthermore, all combat units were to be maintained in a mobile status, prepared to shift at short notice to any locality which might become the focus of a threatened attack. A clear indication of future employment of heavy bombers in the South Pacific appeared

in Admiral McCain's basic organization; heavy bombers and naval patrol bombers were carried both under the Air Patrol Command and the Bomber Command, with the qualification that this was to achieve a more effective off-shore patrol.[14] B-17's thus were destined to search, and during the early months of the Solomons Campaign they were to search far more often than they fought. But this result lay in the future; meanwhile the organization outlined by Admiral McCain was submitted to COMSOPAC and to General Harmon, and both commanders gave their approval on 4 August 1942.[15]

Maj. Gen. Millard F. Harmon, who now was charged with the responsibility for training all air and ground units in the South Pacific, had arrived at Noumea on 29 July 1942, only one week prior to the opening of the Guadalcanal offensive. The War Department had recognized the need for the presence of a general officer to command air and ground forces in the South Pacific and had discussed the proposal with representatives of the Navy. On 30 June, the Chief of Naval Operations forwarded the plan both to Admirals Nimitz and Ghormley; Admiral Nimitz not only agreed but felt that General Harmon was urgently needed in the South Pacific at the earliest possible date.[16]

On 7 July General Marshall informed General Harmon, then Chief of the Air Staff, of the latter's designation as "Commanding General, United States Army Forces in the South Pacific Area," and made it clear that his position would be subordinate to that of COMSOPAC.[17] He was charged with responsibility for the training and administration

of all U. S. Army ground and air troops within the area, excluding Canton, and was instructed to assist COMSOPAC in preparation and execution of plans for the employment of army forces in the South Pacific. In addition he was ordered to make a survey of his entire organization, to analyze the means at the disposal of each army command for the execution of its assigned mission, and based thereon, to submit for approval recommendations for the rearrangement, reduction or augmentation of the personnel and materiel allocated to each base command. He was informed further of the establishment of two mobile army air forces which were to be sent into the area, and for which he was to prepare advance plans for employment, protection, and supply, in cooperation with COMSOPAC. Perhaps most significant of all, the Chief of Staff warned General Harmon that for the present operations in the Pacific were to be restricted to those necessary to support the strategic defensive, and requirements for the area were to be held at a minimum consistent with that role.[18]

As a part of the new organization, responsibility for supply of all bases in the area for which the Army was responsible passed to COMGENSOPAC, and San Francisco was designated as the Port of Embarkation. Inasmuch as responsibility for Class III supplies of all categories at army bases remained with the Navy, it was incumbent upon General Harmon to keep COMSOPAC fully informed of the need for this category of supply. It was, therefore, necessary for him to remain in close contact with the army task force commanders as to the availability of supplies at each base, and to procure strength reports

from each base for relay to COMSOPAC and to the Commanding General of the San Francisco Port of Embarkation.[19] All these instructions went far toward eliminating much of the initial confusion which had prevailed in the area. As late as the end of May naval authorities had no information as to how the War Department intended to administer the forces in the South Pacific, nor what agencies were responsible for supplying them; Admiral Nimitz had received requests for supplies for army forces, but in the absence of information he had merely passed these on to the Navy Department.[20] Now with the creation of USAFISPA (U. S. Army Forces in the South Pacific Area), there was some prospect for a better basis of organization and maintenance of the numerous island bases scattered about in the South Pacific.

General Harmon immediately contacted army and navy agencies in order to familiarize himself with the assignment prior to departure from Washington. While Operations Division prepared tables of organization, a staff was selected and key officers were assigned for both the ground and air echelons; already the Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the force he was to lead out to Noumea had been organized as Force 9465 on 30 June 1942, at Fort Ord, California.[21] Little time was available for complete establishment of the organization, inasmuch as departure of the forward echelon was scheduled to occur on or about 20 July. Nevertheless, on 16 July, General Harmon left Washington by air, together with the key personnel of the forward echelon of USAFISPA. These were the men who were to direct the operations of the South Pacific air units and of the

original group of nine, at least seven were Air Corps officers. Brig. Gen. Nathan F. Twining was destined to lead the Thirteenth Air Force; another, Lt. Col. Dean C. Strother, was to command the fighters of the Thirteenth, and a third, Col. Frank Everest, eventually commanded the Thirteenth Bomber Command.[22] Headquarters personnel of the advance echelon clearly was weighted in favor of the Air Corps but to fill the remaining vacancies, a policy was established designed to draw half the personnel from the Air Corps and half from the Ground Forces.[23] In addition to the officer personnel, a total of 323 enlisted men was requested, and these too were to come half from the Air Corps and half from the Ground Forces.

General Harmon's small unit, comprising the forward echelon of USAFISPA, flew out from Hamilton Field on 21 July 1942, arriving at Noumea, New Caledonia, eight days later. The rear echelon of USAFISPA remained behind at Camp Stoneman, California, where it continued to absorb the personnel now reaching it but because the entire unit was deep in the throes of organization, the function of each new detachment which joined was not always clear. This was particularly true of the photo intelligence officers, who reported about 25 August. Neither Col. Samuel White, who functioned as G-1, or any other officer in authority seemed to have a clear concept of the proper function or location of photo intelligence in the command structure; moreover it was difficult to secure properly qualified personnel.[24] Despite the incomplete status of its organization, the echelon moved to San Francisco and on 1 September 1942 750 officers

and men went aboard the Army transport Noordam, bound for the South Pacific. Organization efforts did not slacken while at sea, although there never was a clear determination of the chain of command within the organization.[25]

Twenty-eight days out of San Francisco, Force 9465 debarked at Auckland, New Zealand, having come down by way of Noumea. Some organizational work followed at Auckland but no serious activity was undertaken until the unit was united with the forward echelon in Noumea which it accomplished on 29 November 1942. Consolidated headquarters were established at the Hotel du Command et Militaire, and the Headquarters Company was quartered at Camp Barnes, some three miles from Noumea.[26]

Meanwhile, tactical command of all U. S. Army forces in the South Pacific had been assumed by General Harmon on 26 July 1942, when he reported to COMSOPAC and established a provisional command post at Suva. On the following day Admiral Ghormley informed all South Pacific base commanders of the responsibilities of both General Harmon and Admiral McCain: COMAIRSOPAC would control training and indoctrination of naval aircraft only; over army aircraft he would confine his authority to operational control.[27] On the twenty-ninth the command post shifted to Noumea, henceforth the center of activity for USAFISPA, but it was not until 15 October that General Harmon was able finally to assume complete control over tactical, administrative, and supply matters. There was still much to accomplish in

improving the organization throughout the area but at least now there was a single army agency through which the War Department might maintain contact with the widely scattered units, and with which Admirals Ghormley and McCain might act in securing army cooperation in tactical matters. To be sure, each island had its defense commander, but his jurisdiction was limited. Instead of an atomistic structure, with army units falling under the Navy, the Marines, or the New Zealand forces on Fiji, there now at least was an army spokesman to defend their interests; better still from the point of view of the Air Corps, the new theater commander had stepped directly from his post as Chief of the Army Air Staff, and his own staff was dominated by officers from the Air Corps. Even though operational autonomy was lacking, it was reasonable to assume that Air Force interests would be defended as fully as the command structure would permit.

While on duty in Washington, General Harmon had been a member of those councils which determined the direction and flow of the Army's air units; now he was at the other end of the line--and it was by no means the main line. By the time he had arrived in Noumea at the end of July, already he had seen enough of the theater to convince him that it was in dire need of reinforcements; immediately he sent off the first of a long series of requests for equipment and personnel.

At the head of the list was air transport. General Harmon found that his theater involved immense distances between bases; he dis-

covered too a necessity for rapid movement of supplies and for construction and defense of advanced airfields, all of which created an imperative need for more rapid transportation facilities. Accordingly, to meet his requirements for interisland transport of materiel and personnel, he requested early dispatch to New Caledonia of one complete C-47 transport squadron, with immediate need existing for a minimum of three C-47's or C-53's. For the longer distances, particularly those between New Zealand and New Caledonia, he recommended three B-24 transports as soon as available, and for local command use on New Caledonia, New Zealand, and the Fijis he recommended that three BT-13 or PT models be sent to each base. Roads were very poor, distances ran 100 to 200 miles between points, and the sole available aircraft were limited to a few small New Zealand types in the Fijis.[28]

The request for transport was denied. All C-47 squadrons were allocated and OPD replied that nothing was available for the South Pacific, nor were any basic and primary trainers available, inasmuch as they were urgently needed in the training program. As for the B-24's, an "effort" would be made to fill the request.[29] An effort was made and General Marshall proposed that one B-24 be sent out from September production and two more from October production, basing the allotment upon Consolidated Aircraft's estimate of 10 cargo B-24's per month. This move met resistance, however, when the Air Staff (A-3) informed OPD that the entire production of B-24 cargo

planes already had been allocated to the Air Transport Command; moreover commitments to other theaters did not permit allocation of transport aircraft to the South Pacific at that time.[30] Thus the claims of the South Pacific for more air transport were not filled at once, but the needs of the area were not forgotten in Washington, despite pointed comments to the contrary on the part of men in the field.

Other problems faced the Commanding General upon his arrival in the theater. Invasion of Guadalcanal lay but a few days ahead on the calendar. Heavy bombardment units were arriving from Hawaii and fighter units were scattered over a large part of the South Pacific, yet no adequate control organization for these units existed. General Harmon was aware that special organizations for this purpose were being prepared for shipment; consequently, immediately upon arrival at Noumea he advised General Arnold of the pressing need for an island combat group--one each for New Caledonia and the Fiji Islands.[31] Both should have a minimum overstrength of 50 per cent to provide for control in advance island groups concurrent with forward movement of combat units. COMGENSOPAC soon had discovered that lack of such organizations had made it impossible for the air commanders on New Caledonia and in the Fijis to exercise control of their units. In fact the situation had become so acute the Navy was preparing to assume this responsibility, although not willingly since Admiral McCain himself realized the need for the control units. General Harmon requested that the organizations should include

personnel for full operational control, not only of fighter aircraft, but of all air units in the Island Combat Team.[32]

In Washington the problem was appreciated and early in August General Marshall was able to inform his South Pacific commander that action had been initiated to activate the Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron of an Island Air Command for New Caledonia and Fiji. Each unit was to consist of 20 officers, 3 warrant officers, and 99 enlisted men; cadres would be procured from units then in the South Pacific which then would be authorized to requisition filler replacements. It was the belief of OPD at the time that establishment of these units would obviate the need for air base squadrons already authorized for two areas.[33]

Authorization for activation of both commands was granted on 11 September but effective activation did not occur for the I Island Air Command (New Caledonia) until 17 October 1942, and for the II Island Command (Fiji) until 30 October.[34] Thus the first two of the control units were established. They were placed under the direct control of the Commanding General of the South Pacific and upon organization of the Thirteenth Air Force, the island air commands remained directly responsible to General Harmon. Commanders were chosen and for the organization on New Caledonia, General Arnold selected Col. Clyde K. Rich, who was then on duty with the Seventh Air Force. Colonel Rich was relieved from the Hawaiian Area on 20 October, assigned to USAFISPA, and on 19 November he assumed command of the I Island Air Command.[35] The Fiji Air Command went to Col.

George L. Usher, who left Hamilton Field on 8 October en route to his new station in the Fijis.[36]

General Harmon's vigor in uncovering the urgent requirements of his command was considerably in advance of the available supply of materiel and personnel. Even before leaving Washington, he had been informed of the slender resources to be placed at his disposal, but apparently he felt that this was no deterrent to requesting aid once he was in the field. Already his request for air transport had been refused. When submitting it he had pointed out the existing difficulty with radar stations in the area, where continuous island interference raised several problems not anticipated, and asked that radar personnel, understood to be in Hawaii, be sent out as rapidly as practicable.[37] The War Department's reply informed COMGENSOPAC that his radar personnel were in Alaska, not Hawaii, and in an attempt to forestall excessive and futile requests, OPD reminded him that ". . . prior to your departure from Washington you were informed that due to shortages in both airplanes and troop units, particularly service units, and commitments in other areas. . . . no additional personnel would be available for your area."[38] Furthermore OPD advised that no signal construction company was available, although one such unit, scheduled for activation in August, would be earmarked for New Caledonia. Lack of training, however, would prevent its dispatch prior to 1 December 1942, and the signal construction company (heavy aviation) which was requested probably would not be available before 1 January 1943. Nor was there any hope of securing

the general service engineering regiments or quartermaster truck battalions, which COMGENSOPAC had called for on the day following his arrival in Noumea. Engineering battalions (aviation) for Fiji and New Caledonia likewise were not available and OPD suggested activation of two colored battalions in New Caledonia, drawing upon the 810th and 811th Battalions as source units.[39]

Very early then, General Harmon received an object lesson in the relative stature of his command as compared with that of the European theater. He had made a beginningon the structure of the commands in the islands and he had placed on record an estimate of the immediate needs of the area, but for the present it was necessary to accept the decision that the South Pacific was badly outranked in the global hierarchy of priority. On the very day following the landings on Guadalcanal, General Marshall repeated once more what General Harmon already knew--that augmentation of air strength in the South Pacific Area was not possible in the near future due to non-availability of aircraft and commitments to other areas. As for occupational forces necessary for the Solomon Islands area, these could come up only by forward movement of troops from rear island bases.[40] Perhaps COMGENSOPAC derived some slight consolation from the knowledge that his recommendations ". . . have been noted and will be considered when conditions justify augmentation /of/ your area."[41]

Chapter III

THE 11TH GROUP ENTERS THE CAMPAIGN

When Admiral McCain arrived at Noumea on 18 May 1942, two days prior to his assumption of command, he immediately made a rapid survey of the available air resources at his disposal. In the forward area, that is, New Caledonia and Efate, he found 1 1/2 squadrons of PBY's at Noumea, and 1 squadron of army fighters and 1 of marines on New Caledonia. The latter was training in preparation for movement to Efate where the field was not yet completed, but was being covered by a half squadron of Navy VOS. Based in the rear area was 1 squadron of army fighter aircraft at Fiji (the 70th), another in the Tonga group, 1 marine squadron of fighters and 1 of SBC-4's at Samoa, and some miscellaneous scouting aircraft at Tonga, Samoa, and Bora Bora.[1]

Operational bases consisted of one field each at New Caledonia, Tonga, and Samoa. Another was then under construction on Efate, where since 4 May the 1st Seabee Battalion had continued the work originally begun by the marines and army engineers.[2] At the time of COMAIRSOPAC's arrival, this field approximated 2,000 feet in length. Trees had been cleared for an additional 3,000 feet and by 20 June the Chief of Staff was informed that Vila airfield on Efate would be available for test-landings by B-17's on the twenty-third.[3] Over on Fiji, two fields (Nausori and Nandi) had been in use since

January and February, respectively. To these, Narewa was added in May when P-39's of the 70th Fighter Squadron moved over from Nandi on the twenty-fifth.[4] On New Caledonia, where Tontouta was the major base, Plaines des Gaiacs was under construction and extension by the 810th Engineers Aviation Battalion. Furthermore, the 67th Fighter Squadron was operating from three very small and inadequate strips in southwest New Caledonia, plus one more on the east coast.[5]

The need for a base on Espiritu Santo in the event that operations in the Solomons were contemplated was immediately apparent to COMAIRSOPAC; recognition of the requirement prompted Admiral McCain to request that 500 troops be sent to the island to prevent the Japanese from moving in. Although the troops were sent, COMAIRSOPAC was not allowed to construct an air base. The best he could do was to run a survey of a site for the field, construct a road to it, and then sit back and await orders to complete the project, orders which he knew would come in due time.[6] In these labors Admiral McCain received complete cooperation from Brig. Gen. Harry D. Chamberlin, who commanded Efate, and from Brig. Gen. William H. Rose, who succeeded Chamberlin when the former was forced to return to Hawaii because of illness.

The air power available to the air commander of the South Pacific was at best limited to a defensive role. Excluding the patrol boats, it was of short range, was bound to its bases, and the vulnerability of the PBY's was to restrict sharply the offensive function of the only long-range aircraft in the theater. Nowhere was there a striking

force of bombardment aircraft capable of fending off thrusts at considerable distances from the island bases. As indicated elsewhere General Arnold felt the answer to the problem lay in a mobile force capable of moving along the line of islands to any threatened point. Admiral King had opposed the plan but eventually agreed to submit it to the commanders in the Pacific for comment. On 30 June he informed Admirals Nimitz and Ghormley of the War Department's proposal to constitute a Pacific Mobile Air Force, comprising one heavy bomber group then assigned to Hawaii. The group would base on Hawaii but would be available for support of operations other than in the Central Pacific on orders of the Chief of Staff.[7]

General Emmons reacted to the proposal precisely as had the Navy. His primary responsibility was defense of the Hawaiian Islands; any effort to remove heavy bombardment aircraft from Hawaiian waters without prior replacement would weaken his ability to defend the islands. Therefore he could not concur in the plan to create a mobile force out of his existing resources.[8] Nevertheless, plans proceeded unabated to move heavy bombers to the South Pacific for the need was urgent; Japanese intentions in the Solomons were too obvious. On 4 July 1942, the same day that Japanese troops and laborers were reported ashore on Guadalcanal to begin construction of an airfield, General Emmons received orders to designate one heavy bombardment group of the Seventh Air Force as the Hawaiian Mobile Air Force. The group was to base on Hawaii, and control of administration, supply, and training was to remain with the Seventh. Although it

would be available for operation under CINCPAC without reference to the War Department, only on orders of the Joint U. S. Chiefs of Staff could this mobile group be moved out of the Central Pacific Area.[9] Simultaneously with notice of the pending loss of his heavy group, General Emmons was informed that the War Department did not contemplate any increase in the authorized bomber strength for the Hawaiian Area.[10]

On the mainland the Air Service Command was instructed to prepare equipment, spare parts, and supplies to maintain 45 aircraft for 30 days and to send half the shipment to New Caledonia, half to Fiji.[11] While these preparations proceeded, General Emmons could report that CINCPAC had directed transfer of 26 B-17 aircraft from Hawaii, 16 to go to New Caledonia and 10 to Fiji, together with all necessary equipment and ground personnel. Advance personnel numbering 107 men left 10 July aboard the Argonne and the entire movement was to be completed by 28 July. The Hawaiian Department commander assumed the force would be gone at least for two months, and that it might not return at all.[12] In anticipation of the latter probability and in view of the fact that the movement would cut his heavy bomber strength 50 per cent, he immediately asked for replacements with the full concurrence of Admiral Nimitz.[13] Since operation of the proposed mobile force would require increased transportation facilities, he requested one transport squadron of C-54 type or equivalent, but for transport purposes he was informed that ATC facilities must suffice.[14]

General Arnold's plan to hold the bulk of his heavy bomber strength at each end of the Pacific line was now ready for its trial, one which Admiral King had suggested in May. By 15 July the 19th Bombardment Group (H) had been designated as a mobile force in the Southwest Pacific and was prepared for movement to any Pacific theater about 20 July.[15] At the Hawaiian end of the line the 11th Bombardment Group (H), whose units recently had served in the Battle of Midway, was designated as the Mobile Force, Central Pacific, on 16 July.[16] Within one day the first squadron, the 98th, was on its way to the South Pacific from Hickam Field, landing at Plaines des Gaiacs, New Caledonia, during a driving rain storm on 21 July.[17] Four days after receipt of the new designation, all four squadrons had left Hickam[18] under the command of Col. L. G. Saunders, to begin an odyssey which eventually led officers and men over all the major islands of the South Pacific, over Rabaul and Kavieng, back to Hawaii, and once again down into the Pacific for the offensive against the Gilberts.

Many of the aircrews of the group never returned--their battle was fought against the handicaps which plague most pioneers and before relief could be sent out, losses had become heavy. But despite all obstacles they delivered their missions; they lived and died on remote and unfamiliar islands or far out at sea, and they pioneered the employment of heavy bombers in the great stretches of the South Pacific. Errors were committed, training proved less than complete in some respects, and materiel was not always adequate, but the

experiences gained by the personnel of the 11th Group were written and built in the squadrons which came after; and the Japanese eventually saw a day when their fields and bases were left in continual ruin by the successors of the Pacific Mobile Force.

Colonel Saunders led his group down into an area whose defense remained the subject of continued debate in Washington. There was agreement that the line of islands must be held, but with what air resources the Army and Navy could not agree. As for enemy plans, there could no longer be any doubt.

Lying southeast of Rabaul and pointing straight at New Caledonia, the kingpin of the supply line to Australia, lay the Solomon Islands. Here was a string of potential air bases, stepping stones which could serve to place Japan astride that line; they must be occupied. As early as February the Navy had definite signs of an early Japanese offensive which might extend to New Caledonia or to Fiji, and throughout the following months enemy activity increased in the Solomons.[19] By May General Patch received reports of enemy shipping concentrating at Rabaul, and he anticipated an offensive southward some time later in the month.[20] Fortunately, his pessimism was not justified but the prediction might come to pass at any time.

In the days immediately following the Battle of Midway enemy intentions were not entirely clear, but Admiral King maintained strongly that further aggressive action might be expected in the South Pacific and that the enemy would not permit Allied forces

merely to maintain their present positions.[21] Certainly it was obvious that the Japanese were not inclined to "sit on their bayonets"; the stakes were too high and the prospects too inviting. By early May the Japanese had moved all the way down to Tulagi on Florida Island, and it was here at Tulagi that they were hit so hard by the Yorktown's aircraft on 4 May in the opening round of the Coral Sea battle. Directly across Sealark Channel from Tulagi lay Guadalcanal, whose northern coastal plain offered an area for development of an airfield, and the Jap was quick to take advantage of it. In June reports had reached Noumea that the enemy was burning off the grass from the level area on the Lunga plain, presumably in preparation for construction of an airdrome.[22] Shortly thereafter on or about 4 July a considerable force of troops and construction personnel was landed on Guadalcanal not far from Lunga Point and within two weeks intelligence sources reported the presence of strengthened enemy installations; coconut trees were being cut away and clouds of smoke indicated that a large area was being cleared.[23] By the end of July what was thought to be a concrete runway appeared on Guadalcanal,[24] although actually as the Marines learned, the strip was not concrete.

If the enemy were allowed to continue unmolested, his land-based bombers would be in a fair position to threaten the communications with Noumea. Behind Guadalcanal 675 miles distant stood Rabaul; between Guadalcanal and Rabaul the Japanese were laying out bases at Kieta and Buka Passage on Bougainville, and seaplanes already were basing at several points in the Solomons. If the Jap was to be

stopped short of a point where he could break the line to Australia, then Guadalcanal offered the last possible opportunity. One more jump and he would be in the New Hebrides, if not on New Caledonia itself.

The decision to launch an attack against Tulagi had been reached as far back as April, but the actual date of the assault upon the Solomons had not been determined. On 25 June Admiral Ghormley received orders to initiate the attack on the Solomons as soon as possible, and on the next day he passed on to Maj. Gen. A. A. Vandegrift, commanding the First Marine Division, the information that the landings on Guadalcanal were to occur on 1 August.[25] Throughout July forces for the operation gathered in the South Pacific. Surface craft assembled at Wellington, New Zealand, and the aircraft took station on their new fields in New Caledonia, the New Hebrides, and the Fijis.

Part of this concentration of striking force was the 11th Bombardment Group. Its planes and its air echelon were ready to join in the assault on Guadalcanal, but its maintenance crews were still somewhere at sea; Colonel Saunders had not received movement orders in time to send adequate ground personnel in advance of the air echelon.[26] Not till 11 August did additional service crews arrive, and then much of the equipment was lacking, but despite this handicap, the squadrons plunged immediately into a daily operational pattern which required combat crews to do their own maintenance work.

Originally the group was to base one squadron each at Nandi (Fiji Islands), Plaines des Gaiacs (New Caledonia), Koumac (New Caledonia), and Efate, but this plan was altered due to the rapid construction of the airfield on Espiritu Santo. Admiral McCain long before had asked that a field be readied on Espiritu, inasmuch as this was the nearest available base to the Solomons, but it was not until July that the order went out to construct the field. Construction was to be accomplished by a Navy Seabee unit but due to confusion of orders, construction equipment was routed elsewhere and other than personnel, the unit landed only its piano and refrigeration equipment.[27] Fortunately, the Army ground forces present on the island had three bulldozers; with these and the labor of all available ground troops, an airstrip 5,000 by 200 feet was hacked out of the coconut grove and jungle in the record time of 16 days after the orders were received.[28] By 30 July Maj. Allen J. Sewart of the 26th Squadron landed the first B-17 on the landing strip[29] and on the 31st Colonel Saunders estimated that he could operate six striking B-17's and two search planes from the new field. Lack of taxi ways and dispersal areas prevented employment of a larger number.

During the few days remaining prior to departure of the invasion forces for Guadalcanal, strenuous efforts were made to procure information on enemy activity and a more accurate knowledge of the terrain. Only a few photos were available to General Vandegrift and the Navy, and existing charts were badly out of date. In order to remedy this situation a number of reconnaissance missions were flown

over Tulagi and Guadalcanal from Port Moresby by the 435th Squadron of the 19th Bombardment Group in June and July,[30] but the 11th Group carried on with the work almost as soon as it had arrived in New Caledonia. On 23 and 25 July photographic missions were flown over the Tulagi-Guadalcanal-Gavutu area and on each day the B-17's were intercepted by enemy float Zeros, but no damage was incurred.[31] No Army photographic equipment was available for these missions, nor was there any trained personnel; here the Navy provided the cameras, the Marines furnished the photographers, and the 11th Group operated the B-17's. This procedure remained standard until AAF photo and mapping units arrived in 1943; regularly "Quackenbush's Gypsies," as the Naval photo personnel were known after their commander, flew with the heavy bombers to secure photographic coverage of the Solomons.[32]

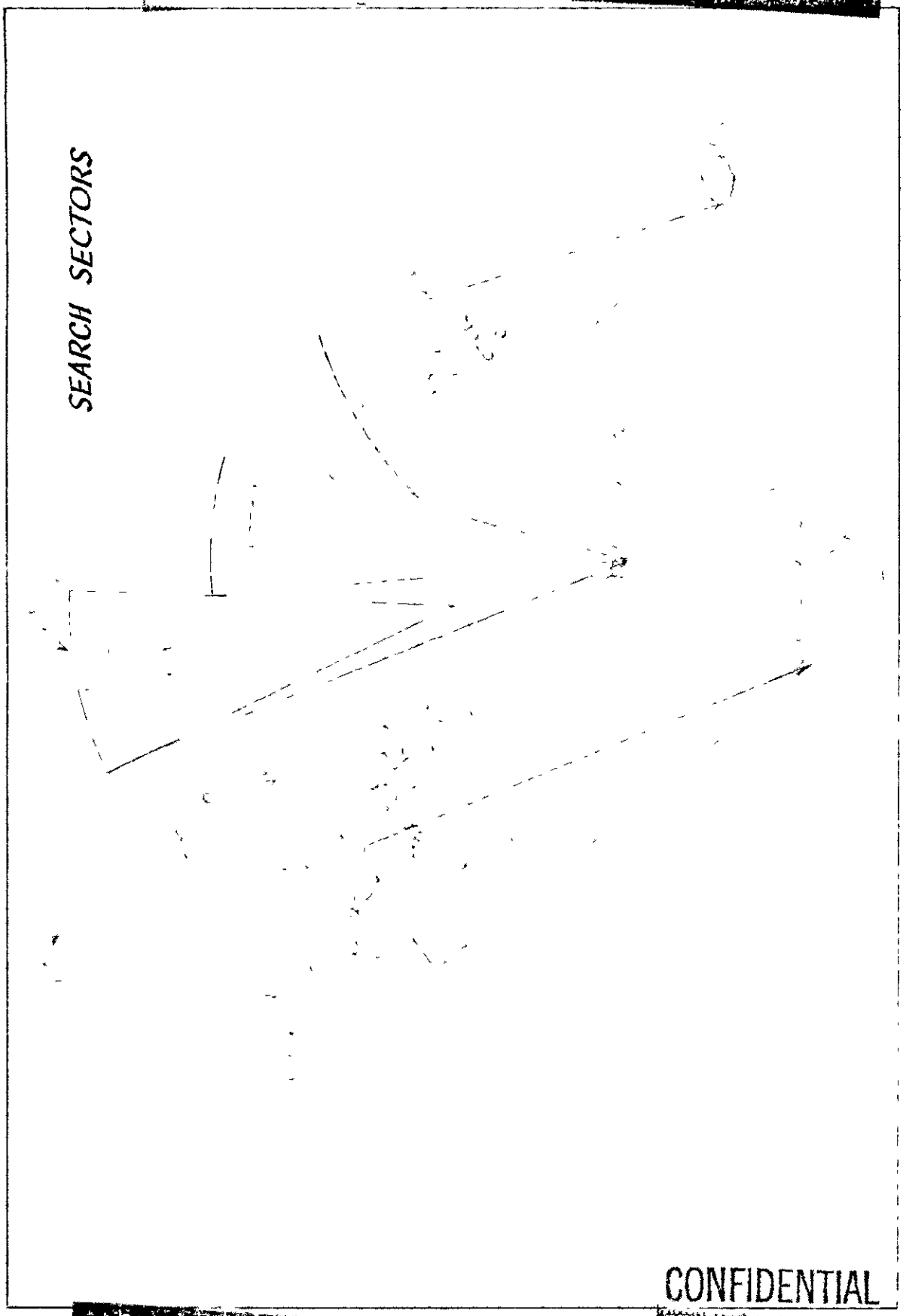
Admiral McCain issued his operations order for Army and Navy aircraft on 25 July.[33] To Task Group 63.1 under Col. Clyde Rich on New Caledonia he assigned search missions to be conducted in sectors northwest of Plaines des Gaiacs in central New Caledonia to a depth of 400 miles. This force was also charged with conducting anti-submarine patrols and was to provide close convoy cover for vessels as might be required. Forces at disposal of Colonel Rich included the 69th Bombardment Squadron (M) with 10 B-26 aircraft at Noumea, 6 New Zealand Hudsons at Noumea, with 12 more due in from New Zealand, the 67th Pursuit Squadron, with 38 P-39's, and 2 PBY's.[34]

Task Group 63.2 was the 11th Bombardment Group under Colonel Saunders and to it went the order to maintain a daily search of the

southern Solomons and their western waters, to track important enemy contacts and to execute all air attacks upon enemy objectives as directed. The group was to base one squadron at Plaines des Caiacs, two in the New Hebrides area, and one in reserve at Nandi; group headquarters were to be on the U.S.S. Curtiss. Curtiss served as the flagship for the entire invasion force and it was ordered to move to Segond Channel at the southern end of Espiritu Santo to arrive three days before the attack opened on 7 August.[35] Just prior to the invasion Colonel Saunders attended a conference held aboard the Saratoga where he had an opportunity to observe the magnitude of the force assembled, and on 28 July he returned to New Caledonia, flying to Efate on the next day.

Admiral McCain's subsequent request of the 11th Group was concise enough; he merely asked that it hit Guadalcanal and Tulagi with maximum strength from 31 July to 6 August inclusive.[36] In accordance with this directive Colonel Saunders and his units inaugurated heavy bombardment activity against the Japanese in the South Pacific. Although the advance field on Espiritu was reported operable, Colonel Saunders was uncertain of its service facilities and determined to open his attack from the field at Efate, even though it lay 710 nautical miles from the target on Guadalcanal. For this first mission he assembled every plane in the group which was equipped with a radio tank and on 31 July 1942 he led the first formation of nine bombers in the opening assault on Guadalcanal.[37]

SEARCH SECTORS



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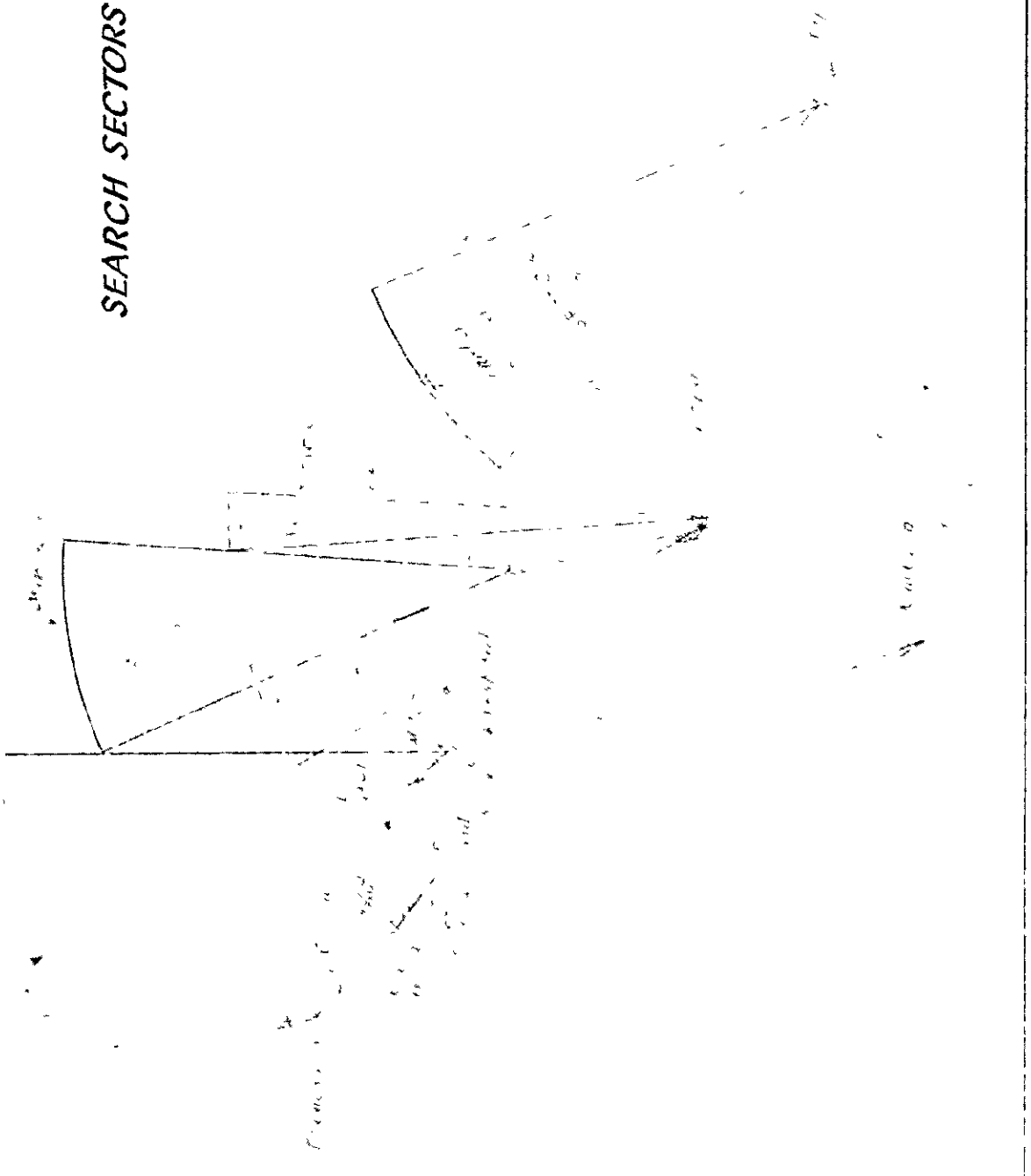

D+1 DAY TO END OF OPERATION

CONFIDENTIAL

[redacted] SECURITY INFORMATION

Each plane carried one bomb bay tank and one tank in the radio compartment; it was impossible to carry a full bomb load at this distance but despite the reduction of striking power, the initial attack was a success. The first flight of three B-17's carrying 500-lb. bombs was assigned the new landing strip while the remaining flights of six aircraft struck at the supply dumps in the Lunga Point area with 100-lb. bombs. Bad weather concealed the planes all the way to the target and they were able to deliver their attacks from 14,000 feet. Resistance was slight; the float Zeros never left the water in time for interception, which indicated the absence of a functioning radar, and AA fire was ineffective. The bombers suffered no damage on this first strike mission.[38]

On the following day an advantage was gained when the field at Espiritu Santo was placed in operation. At Efate the planes were given full bomb loads, radio tanks were filled, and the mission was then run over Guadalcanal, but on the return leg they stopped at Espiritu for fuel before continuing on to Efate. This was the pattern for operations during the pre-invasion period. In seven days the group flew 56 striking force missions and 22 search missions for an average of over 11 aircraft per day, and in view of the primitive conditions under which operations were conducted this was regarded as a very creditable performance.[39]

Despite the difficulties surrounding these early operations, Colonel Saunders was pleasantly surprised when Admiral McCain gave him unlimited control over the group, only asking that he hit the

target area for seven days. Furthermore, he had access to reasonably good intelligence at Efate. Australian residents of the islands had carried high frequency crystal sets back into the bush when the Japanese landed, and now these observers were able to send down accurate reports of the location of profitable targets. In response to this information the primary target became the area about Lunga Point, since it was here that the Japanese had established their principal concentrations of supply and personnel. The secondary target was the airfield which later under a new flag was known as Henderson Field; at the time of the invasion it was a solid rolled strip some 3,600 feet in length, and considerable damage was inflicted upon it. Tulagi received a daily visit likewise, although it was not so heavily hit as Guadalcanal.

Perhaps of equal importance with the bombs were the photographs. General Vandegrift had made a very urgent request for recent photographs of the north coast of the island he was about to assault and he asked for coverage up to D-3 day; none was received except for two taken by a B-17 of the 11th Group. These were dropped on a carrier by a light plane, developed, and forwarded by COMAIRSOPAC to the Marine Commander. One of these photos was of Tulagi, the other of the Lunga Point-Kukum area and they were the first photographs to reach the First Marine Division since 24 June.[40] It was indeed fortunate that the order to hit Guadalcanal had come when it did. By the first week of August the airfield was virtually completed and apparently had been used once by the Japanese.[41] Had the enemy been allowed sufficient time to base large numbers of Zero fighters

here, it is probable that losses of the 11th Group would have been more severe.

During these critical days the B-17's continued to drop their 500 pounders on the new airdrome, their 300 and 100 pounders in the supply area around Lunga Point. On 1 August two Zeros, first of many, fell victim to the bombers' gunners; and on the following day the B-17's, in addition to starting heavy fires in the Lunga and Tulagi storage areas, knocked down another Zero, but this time three of the bombers received minor damage from enemy fighters.[42] By 3 August there were signs of trouble ahead, with the report of six enemy land Zeros on the new field on Guadalcanal.[43] Next day the trouble came in the form of five enemy fighters which struck a three-plane flight over the target area. One of them, a float Zero, afire and pressing a close attack, continued on through the formation and struck a B-17 at approximately the number three engine. The resulting explosion destroyed plane and crew, and with the loss of Lt. R. E. McDonald and his men of the 26th Squadron, the South Pacific heavy bombers suffered the first of a series of destructions by enemy ramming. Whether deliberate or not could not be determined; Colonel Saunders assumed it was the result of a dead pilot or a Zero out of control but even if it were not intentional, the immediate result was the same. On 5 August Tulagi and the Kukum area of Guadalcanal were bombed and in this mission another B-17 was lost, although the crew was saved. D-day was 7 August and the group sent up two search missions to cover the Solomons sector to a depth of 700 miles from

Espiritu. Both planes left Espiritu at 0300 and were to arrive over Tulagi at sunrise with instructions to avoid the target area since the attack was scheduled for 0530. Maj. Marion M. Pharr's plane failed to return, destroyed perhaps by the force of 18 fighters which the Japanese had by now put into the area.

At 0910 in the morning of 7 August the First Marine Division began to move ashore off Lunga on the northwest coast of Guadalcanal; landings on Tulagi had begun an hour earlier.[44] The air invasion already had been in action for one week and now the ground forces moved in to take the airfield which the B-17's had been pounding. Invasion plans called for coverage of the task forces by aircraft from Efate, Noumea, and Espiritu Santo, but a cold front prevented any flying from the carriers and kept down most of the search planes. Fortunately the weather offered similar difficulties to the Japanese and they failed to pick up the amphibious task force with their own searches.[45]

What Colonel Saunders and his B-17's had contributed to the operation in their first week of effort could not immediately be evaluated. At the time the group commander believed that the ease of the landings at Guadalcanal and Tulagi was attributable to the pounding his planes hadinflicted upon these two areas, and conversely the heavy opposition encountered on Gavutu was due to the absence of air attacks.[46] However, in view of the small number of planes involved and the limited weight of bombs carried over the great distances, this estimate of the situation may appear somewhat

optimistic. General Vandegrift's engineers found the runway on Guadalcanal in a damaged condition but not badly hurt, and they captured an amazing supply of undamaged equipment useful for completing the field.[47] The fact that the Japanese offered no opposition was inexplicable. The defenders simply ran into the hills or retired to the west. One theory was that the defenders had been in the habit of deserting the area in face of air attacks and believed that this was merely another small raid. Insteadof the 5,010 troops estimated to be on the island, prisoners revealed that excluding construction personnel, there were less than 600 troops present at the time of the invasion.[48] Much remained to be learned about the enemy. Neither naval gun fire, bombs, or strafing were able to do him much damage in his caves and tunnels on Gavutu, and it is doubtful that the sporadic bombing of the B-17's could have achieved much more. San Juan alone had poured over 30 tons of 5-inch shell into the island on the morning of the invasion, aided by the destroyers Monnsen and Buchanan, and this bombardment was a supplement to the dawn aerial attack by carrier planes.[49]

Once the landings were made and the beachhead secured, the 11th Group settled back into a regular search routine. During the pre-invasion period the constant searches of the area north to New Georgia, in joint operation with those conducted by aircraft from the Southwest Pacific, had contributed materially to the complete success of the landings on Guadalcanal and Tulagi.[50] At no time during the critical period were enemy ships able to move down to

interfere with the landings.

On the days immediately following the landings, the bombers covered the Lower Solomons on sectors ranging from 286° over to 316° from Espiritu and to a depth of 700 to 800 miles. Normally the sole contact was with friendly surface forces but on 9 August reports indicated the presence of two enemy light cruisers, two destroyers, and an unknown number of seaplane tenders coming down toward Rekata Bay. Eight B-17's were dispatched on a search attack mission, but despite ideal visibility both the B-17's and PBY's failed to make any contact with the enemy, nor did other missions on the tenth and eleventh achieve any success. The same results occurred on daily searches through the fourteenth, except for the sighting of a handful of landing barges on Florida Island.

It is of more than passing interest to note that General Harmon was unable to submit any report to Washington covering the operations of the 11th Group during the landings in the Solomons. Existing communications were loaded with necessary operations messages, and it was impossible to establish channels. Not until 14 August, fully two weeks after Colonel Saunders had initiated B-17 operations, was General Harmon able to submit a detailed report on the 11th Group and this was due only to arrival of a courier from Espiritu Santo.[51]

By the fifteenth, the search planes began to contact enemy air and surface craft with more frequency. Destroyers, cargo vessels, and even light cruisers began to appear in the Central Solomons, and Gizo Island with Gizo Bay became a favorite target area of the search planes.

Pilots and crews of the B-17's looked forward to encounters with one type of enemy aircraft with particular pleasure. This was the great Japanese flying patrol boat, the four-engined Kawanishi 97, or its slightly smaller successors, which were slower and maneuvered less well than the Boeing planes and better yet, they carried less fire power; their 20-mm. cannon were outranged by the .50-cal. guns of the B-17 and invariably pilots attempted to close with these cumbersome craft. On 20 August, Colonel Saunders could report that Capt. W. Y. Lucas' crew had shot down one of these planes. After a 25-minute combat, damaged engines forced the Japanese craft down and as it was landing, Captain Lucas' tail gunner exploded the plane and it burned on the water. This was the first victim; by 30 September 21 of these flying boats had been met, of which 5 were destroyed and 7 damaged.[52]

On Guadalcanal the engineers were laboring with their captured equipment to prepare the airfield for fighters and bombers,[53] yet events rapidly indicated that lack of a flying field alone was not what prevented B-17's from operating at Henderson Field. Up in the northern Solomons the enemy was rushing his fields at Kieta and Buka and photographs taken on 20 August revealed that the Buka runway already was being resurfaced.[54] Once those were operable, the Guadalcanal airdrome would be brought within easy range and operations for the big bombers would become precarious. Japanese reaction to the landings might be expected. On 19 August Admiral Ghormley informed General Vandegrift of the growing concentration of surface

craft at Rabaul and in the Bougainville area, citing the presence of 7 or 8 cruisers, 10 or 12 destroyers, 1 seaplane tender, 3 converted cruisers, 8 transports, 6 cargo vessels, and about 40 smaller vessels of which 30 were combat craft. A week later these concentrations began to show in the Buna-Faisi area.[55] Air forces too were moving down into the area, although the carriers had not yet made their appearance.[56]

It was obvious that the enemy would not let Guadalcanal pass by default. By 20 August Admiral Ghormley had warned Colonel Saunders that the Japanese would attempt to retake Guadalcanal, that two task forces even then were moving down from Truk and Ponape for this purpose.[57] To prevent a surprise move south, the B-17's were sent on their daily search missions. Taking off from Espiritu Santo at 0300 each morning, they would arrive over Tulagi at sunrise and carry out their missions to the northwest; the result was a grinding routine which kept the bombers out over 1,600 miles of open water. In anticipation of the Jap thrust, Navy carrier task forces led by Enterprise, Saratoga, and Wasp were standing off to the south approximately 100 to 150 miles from Guadalcanal where they were beyond reach of the Japanese search planes.[58]

Amid this period of expectancy Colonel Saunders found time to analyze the problems which beset his men and planes as they lived and worked and flew on their island bases. During the period 31 July to 20 August the 11th Group had been in daily action and its losses had not been low. Eleven B-17's were lost during the period.

of which only 1 was destroyed in combat, while 8 were operational losses and 2 disappeared at sea and were never heard from again.[59]

Despite this record, valuable lessons had been learned. In general, crews and equipment stood up well against the Japanese encountered thus far. Enemy gunnery, both aerial and ground, had been poor and Japanese pilots had not demonstrated any desire to press close attacks against the B-17's. During the eight days' intensive operations preceding the invasion, enemy fighters were encountered on all but two missions over the Guadalcanal-Tulagi area, but other than the single case of ramming, no B-17 fell to a float fighter plane.[60] Actually very few hits were scored on the bombers and of these most were by 7.7-mm. fire and caused slight damage either to aircraft or crews. Only three crewmen were wounded and these but lightly. Something was learned of formation tactics, and it was found that the Jap always attacked singly; when the entire formation was turned toward the fighters the attack often was driven off merely by firing the turret guns.

These were halcyon days as far as the Zero threat was concerned, but the enemy learned fast. On 11 September off Lunga Point at least 20 Zeros attacked a B-17 returning from a photographic mission and for the first time they delivered the attack simultaneously from several directions.[61] Although the B-17 escaped damage and managed to shoot down four fighters, here was notice that in the future serious trouble might be expected from Japanese fighter pilots. What hurt the squadrons most was bad weather. Lack of homing

facilities and radio direction finding equipment caused the loss of more planes and men than did the pilots of Japanese Zeros.

When Colonel Saunders and his pilots of the 93th Squadron set their planes down on the field at Plaines des Gaiacs on 21 July and surveyed the red dust strip hacked out of a swamp, there was some doubt in the minds of officers and men about fighting a war under such conditions.[62] It was certainly not the luxury of Hickam, and was even worse than Schofield. The swirling clouds of red dust, containing a high content of iron oxide, passed through the filters on the engines and honed out the cylinders with the result that within a short time the B-17's were fortunate to fly six hours' time with a full load of oil. Many weeks passed before this problem of procuring a satisfactory air filter was taken in hand in Washington. On 12 November, the Materiel Command requested a small sample of the dust for testing purposes.[63]

The first problem which faced the group was lack of its service and ground personnel and equipment. Only a handful of service people accompanied the first squadrons; in the 26th, for example, only nine maintenance men had gone out with the nine aircraft and they alone served as ground crew for the following three-week period of intense activity.[64] The other squadrons were equally hard hit by lack of skilled ground crews; during the period 24 July to 11 August, when the ground personnel finally arrived, the 42d Squadron performed 10 search, 42 patrol, 1 photo reconnaissance, and 18 bombing sorties.[65] Planes producing operational statistics such as

these required maintenance and a large share of the burden fell upon the combat crews. On Efate the 26th owed a debt of gratitude to the 24th Infantry, Co. A, whose colored enlisted men not only helped to service the planes and load bombs but improvised with whatever equipment they had at hand when spare parts were not available. There were no messing facilities and it was the Artillery which kept hot food available for Colonel Saunders' men on Efate.[66] No tents had arrived with the air echelons and for some time the entire 98th Squadron, including Colonel Saunders, slept under trees, under the wings of the planes, or in the aircraft themselves.

Even had personnel been available the squadrons would have suffered from lack of supplies and spare parts. As it was, only extreme improvisation and ingenuity could keep the planes in the air. No water carts had been sent out and they were badly needed. So were the Cletracs; eight were allotted, but only two arrived--at Nandi--yet operations were from Espiritu Santo,[67] and lack of these items seriously hampered the group. Tow bars were absent but in this case the chops aboard Curtiss saved the day and produced a workable bar. Even more costly was the lack of homing devices and navigational aids which could not be improvised. Colonel Saunders was keenly aware of the need for such equipment and he requested shipment of portable direction-finding sets to be used in conjunction with SCR 197, together with an Adcock loop for effecting lost plane procedure.[68]

The group was completely dependent upon naval control of all water transport to move its ground personnel and heavy equipment up to forward bases, and frequently naval priorities prevented movement.

On one occasion the group supply officer, Maj. John T. Malloy, was able to engage in a bit of personal bargaining with the skipper of a copra boat temporarily idle and this individual was prevailed upon to move one squadron from Efate up to Espiritu.[69] At a later date when Guadalcanal finally was secure, two months were required to move the ground echelon of one squadron up to Henderson Field for staging work and five months elapsed before all squadrons could be moved forward.

Once the squadrons made their initial move to a new base such as Espiritu Santo supply difficulties multiplied endlessly. Here the field itself was merely a narrow strip cut in part from a coconut grove and partly from jungle. It was fitted with revetments, several of which were barely deep enough to keep a B-17's nose off the runway, and so narrow it was necessary to place a man at each wing tip to guide the pilot out on the short taxiway. There were no lights at Espiritu; to send off an early morning mission the ground crew set out bottles of oil with strips of paper for wicks and these flickering little flares were supported by headlights of jeeps parked at the end of the runway. Here there could be no living off the country. Every item of food, clothing, housing, all must be brought in, most of it from continental United States. "Robinson Crusoe should be required reading for anyone who is setting up an advanced base in the South Pacific," was the opinion of the Chief of Staff of COMAIRSOPAC.[70] Only the jungle was there when the first construction crews went ashore.

Writing from Espiritu Santo on 18 August, Colonel Saunders described unloading facilities as consisting of ". . . one barge, a sandy beach, and a prayer."[71] There were no docks, no roads, and no unloading facilities. Heavy equipment was slung over the side of a cargo vessel into a lighter, which then had no place to unload once it was ashore; there were no cranes. Small finger piers were constructed out of coconut logs, salted down with coral, but these washed out and disappeared after two or three weeks' use.[72] On shore there was mud, plenty of it on Espiritu, where a foot-thick cover of soft black dirt made a devil's brew in the heavy rains. Even when the boxes and crates were ashore, there was no certainty that the supply officers had received information of their arrival, with the result that thousands of crates were piled under the coconut trees awaiting identification.

More critical than any single item during the early operations from Espiritu was the supply of fuel. The B-17's could not draw upon a system of tank trucks, pipe lines, and bulk storage; there were not even gas trucks and trailers--all these came later.[73] The steel drums of fuel were merely dumped over the side of the cargo vessels at Espiritu and towed ashore in a net where they were manhandled up under the trees and stored in dispersal dumps of 20 to 30 drums each. Before the fuel reached a plane it had to be loaded into a truck, rolled up on a stand, poured out of the drums into tank wagons which then serviced the aircraft. Such was the sequence at

Espiritu and later at Guadalcanal, and it required thousands of man hours of labor. In view of the fact that one B-17 required 50 drums of aviation gasoline for each mission, these early operations taxed all personnel to the limit.

Fortunately the Navy had moved .50-cal. ammunition and 300,000 gallons of gasoline to Espiritu Santo in preparation for the 11th Group, most of which equipment had been taken from the base at Efate. Fuel consumption had been carefully estimated for two weeks' operations and a safety factor of 100 per cent had been added, but despite all this the supply ended within 10 days. Only the timely arrival of the Nira Luckenbach with 3,000 drums of fuel prevented the sudden halt of operations.[74] But gas in drums was not enough; it had to be moved into the planes by officers and men. Colonel Saunders, General Rose, and all available hands worked a bucket line 20 hours straight through a driving storm on 6 August to put 25,000 gallons aboard the bombers. Even with such prodigious efforts, strike missions were sometimes delayed due to lack of service facilities.[75]

Under these conditions the squadrons carried out their daily missions. The planes assumed personalities; the "bunker queens" were named and henceforth it was Typhoon McGoon or Goonie (which stood up under 30 consecutive days of missions) or Bucket of Bolts which went out over the Solomons. The 42d Squadron was at Plaines des Gaiacs on New Caledonia, the 98th at Espiritu, to which the 26th subsequently moved from Efate, while the 431st was at Nandi in the Fijis. Headquarters Squadron and home base of the 26th was Efate,

but Colonel Saunders maintained a command post on Espiritu and on 10 August the air echelon of Headquarters flew up to Espiritu. Nandi in the Fijis was too far to the rear to use as a tactical base in the operations against the Solomons, but it was clean and quiet; hence it served as a rest area for the combat crews and a convenient location for changing engines. As a rule, Colonel Saunders kept his units only one week in the forward area, moving them back to Nandi for rest,[76] and this shifting continued regularly.

By 18 August the supply problem of the group had reached a critical stage. Equipment had been pounded ceaselessly and metal was giving way more rapidly than the men. Six doors of ball turrets already had broken off and no spares could be found in the area. Turbo supercharger regulators were giving trouble, as were flight and engine instruments. Heavy dust conditions necessitated constant changing of engines; the 12 spares at Nandi already were in service and the next change at Plaines des Gaiacs would exhaust the supply in New Caledonia.[77]

Operational control furnished an additional major problem. Wide dispersal of the units and lack of reliable radio communications made it exceedingly difficult to maintain contact with all units and the 14 B-17's which were kept at Espiritu were the only ones over which the group commander was able to exercise direct control. Even this was complicated by the lack of field telephones and small motor transport.[78] Colonel Saunders was running 4 search missions daily from Espiritu, and holding 6 aircraft ready for a

striking force; in an emergency he might supplement these with the strike force of 6 B-17's at Efate, but he strongly doubted that the latter group could hit the target from such a distance, and therefore recommended that additional bomber fields be constructed on Espiritu.[79]

Despite all difficulties, the B-17's were prepared to take part in the action known as the Battle of the Eastern Solomons against the approaching Japanese task force. On 24 August at 1215 the group commander received report of a contact with an enemy carrier force 720 miles distant from Espiritu Santo. It was too late to send out the B-17's with expectation of bringing them back before dark, and since he was aware of the difficulties of night landings, Admiral McCain had left the decision to Colonel Saunders.[80] The risk was accepted; seven planes in two flights were dispatched separately, one of three aircraft under Maj. Ernest R. Manierre and another of four led by Maj. Allen J. Sewart. Search planes already were far out at sea on their daily runs northwest of Guadalcanal and striking groups from Enterprise and Saratoga even then were in contact with enemy forces.[81]

At 1745 the strike force of three B-17's attacked a large carrier which seemed to be dead in the water; on the second run the flight leader claimed four direct hits with 500-lb. bombs, and his claim was supported by other crew members.[82] Sixty miles to the east Major Sewart's second flight of four B-17's encountered another task force and obtained five hits with 300-pound bombs on a target whose identity was unknown. It was dusk, the hour was 1810, and

although the hits were clearly visible, the type of vessel was difficult to determine, but it was believed the craft was either a carrier or a heavy cruiser.[83] Five Zeros went down during this attack after inflicting only slight damage on the bombers, but the night landing at Espiritu took its toll. Colonel Saunders had never sanctioned night landings; but this was an emergency. Just as the planes were returning a sudden rainstorm arose, cutting down visibility and Lt. Robert E. Guenther of the 26th Squadron went into a hill at the edge of the field while attempting to land with one engine out; the accident cost the lives of the pilot and four of the crew. The flight of four had gone on down to Vila field on Efate and although very low on fuel, all four planes were landed safely.

Up at Guadalcanal on the night of 24 August four enemy warships, probably destroyers, bombarded the Marines and the field, and heavy attacks were expected at dawn. None came but an occupation force was moving down from the north, to be intercepted at 0835 by dive bombers only 125 miles from the island. The Marines inflicted heavy damage upon this force, and less than two hours later these vessels were again under attack, this time by eight B-17's from Espiritu Santo. The target was either a light cruiser or destroyer; it was hit directly by three 500-pound bombs and broke in two.[84]

By noon of the twenty-fifth the enemy had enough punishment and his ships were steaming northward at high speed. For the search planes it had been a day of "really good hunting as there were task forces all over going the other way . . ."[85] Land-based and carrier

aircraft had turned back the first major Japanese attempt to retake Guadalcanal and although the attack had failed, it was to be repeated. The Japanese had lost at least one carrier, Ryujo, and a destroyer to Saratoga's planes. The B-17's were credited with a light cruiser or a destroyer, while other vessels of the task force and marine pilots on Guadalcanal added two destroyers, two submarines, and a 14,000-ton transport to the list; moreover, the enemy could delete some 90 aircraft from his rosters. Several of his survivors were hurt in the action. In addition to the damage inflicted upon a possible carrier by the heavy bombers on the twenty-fourth, Saratoga's attack group had hit the Jap's big Mutsu, two heavy cruisers, and had torpedoed a light cruiser.[86]

Following this action, the squadrons dropped back to their routine of daily search. The operational history of the group was now adequate to permit its commander to reach certain conclusions regarding future planning. Colonel Saunders had found that his mobility was limited to that of bases and supplies, which was to be expected, but under the existing organization, the ground echelons were simply unable to keep up with the flying echelons. His solution was to establish a base squadron similar to the ground echelon and place it on the forward base in advance of the arrival of the planes. As he pointed out, "The Service of Supply may say it is a waste of base services, but the only way we can ever use services and supplies is to have them in advance and not in the rear. The whole group operated for one month on nothing but a shoe string and the fat of the land--its not in the books and we cannot fight a war in

that manner."[87] It was now quite obvious that an air force striking unit could not be bound down to supplies and ground units which lacked a reasonably comparable degree of mobility, at least without sacrificing some of its effectiveness. And when units were scattered over the South Pacific, duplicate S-2, S-3, and S-4 sections would be highly desirable for efficient control of group activity.

The first month of operations had not yet damaged morale, but a continuation of the primitive living conditions, complete absence of recreational facilities, and excessive work for all hands did create a morale problem in September. Although a few pilots had shown signs of staleness even in August, by the following month Colonel Saunders found it necessary to devote some effort to restore enthusiasm for the task at hand throughout the group.[88] Aircrews particularly regretted the necessity for the monotonous searches and much preferred strike missions; on the whole, however, it was now clear that the machines would break more rapidly than the men. This was the need of the moment--parts, engines, equipment, as well as bombardiers and navigators.[89]

Chapter IV

THE P-400'S ON GUADALCANAL*

When the Marines left their landing craft for the beach at Guadalcanal on the morning of 7 August 1942, their primary objective was the airfield, known to be nearing completion on the Lunga plain and later to be named Henderson Field.[1] Only 31 hours elapsed before they were in possession of the field and upon its capture a survey was made immediately to determine the exact state of completion. Marine engineers found that 2,600 feet of the runway with a width of 160 feet could be operable within two days but the remaining 1,178 feet would require approximately a week's work. Rear Adm. Richmond K. Turner, Task Force Commander, was so informed and upon receipt of the Division Engineer's report, he advised that aircraft would be flown in on 11 August.[2]

No heavy construction equipment had been put ashore on the seventh. Before any of it could be unloaded, Admiral Ghormley had agreed to withdrawal of the air support force on the night of 8 August, and this action meant of course that the amphibious force with its cargo ships would be left without protection.[3] Although a decision was reached to retire all ships from the area by 0630, departure was delayed, thus permitting the landing of some supplies on the ninth.[4] These however were limited to food and ammunition and when the last cargo ship cleared Lengo Channel for Noumea at

* The P-400 was an export version of the early P-39.

1530 on 9 August, the builders of the airstrip were left with bare hands, a keen sense of urgency, and whatever items of equipment the fleeing Jap had abandoned.

Providentially the enemy had brought in a surprising amount of construction equipment, with the result that on the morning after the capture of the field the 1st Marine Engineer Battalion was hard at work, using nine captured trucks, as well as dynamite, dump cars, shovels and rollers, and an "unbelievable number" of grass matting bags, all furnished by the enemy.[5] A gap measuring 196 feet in length had been left at the 2,600-foot point by the Japanese engineers and now to fill this space it was necessary to move approximately 100,000 cubic feet of earth using hand shovels, hand-operated dump cars, and trucks. All this was hand labor; no power shovels were captured and those belonging to the Marines were on the way back to Noumea. Nevertheless the gap was filled; by 18 August the entire 3,778 feet of runway were ready for use. Almost daily one of the B-17's on search from Espiritu Santo flew over the field, dragging it and inspecting progress of the work, for Colonel Saunders was most anxious to move his heavy bombers closer to enemy targets.[6] One of his planes, the first B-17 to touch Henderson Field, landed and remained overnight on 25 August but several months were to pass before the B-17's would base permanently at Henderson Field.[7]

The Japanese did what they could to interfere with construction. At one time their bombs had reduced the available rollers to one, which caused some delay. On the very day of completion, 18 August,

enemy bombers planted 17 bombs in the area and three of their heaviest landed directly on the runway, but as a result of feverish labor, these craters were filled and tamped by the following day, and the strip was ready to receive the planes which were expected at any time.[8]

In the late afternoon of 20 August, the stubby little carrier Long Island sent off two squadrons of marine aircraft from a point some 200 miles southeast of Guadalcanal to land on Henderson Field. One was VMF-223 (Maj. John L. Smith) with 19 F4F-4's; the other was VMSB-232 (Lt. Col. Richard C. Mangrum), flying 12 SBD-3's. With the arrival of these planes, General Vandegrift felt that a turning point had been reached.[9] Two days later at approximately 1030 this force was bolstered by the arrival of five P-400's which had flown up all the way from New Caledonia through the New Hebrides. These were the advance planes of the 67th Fighter Squadron, led by Capt. Dale D. Brannon, to which went the distinction of being the first Army Air Force unit to operate from Henderson Field.[10]

Originally the squadron had been part of Task Force 6814 which left New York for Australia on 20 January 1942. Not until 27 February was the 67th able to leave its troop transport for a small camp near Melbourne. For 38 uninterrupted days it had been aboard the crowded ship, where the water supply was limited to one quart per day per man and food was held down to two meals daily. Just prior to departure for New Caledonia from Australia, the squadron was augmented by 15 pilots whose experience for the most part consisted of some 50 hours' flying in P-40's, although three of this group of pilots, James R. Bruce, Thomas H. Hubbard, and Thomas J. J. Christian, Jr., were

captains who had served in bombardment and fighter units in the Philippines.[11]

When the squadron disembarked at Noumea on 15 March, it found that its aircraft were 45 P-400's and two P-39F's, all unassembled and in crates. Only two of the total of 43 pilots, Lts. Dale D. Brannon and John A. Thompson, ever had flown a P-39, not a single one of the mechanics had worked on one, and when the crates were pried open, the Handbook of Instructions for the P-400 type aircraft was missing. Despite these handicaps, the work of assembly was taken in hand immediately.

One of the epics of the AAF on New Caledonia was the race of the 67th to put its planes together. Pilots and ground crews worked around the clock to move the heavy crates over the 35 miles to Tontouta. As soon as the 5-ton boxes were unloaded, every available man was put on the assembly line. Working on a dawn-to-dusk schedule, the 67th, together with the 65th Materiel Squadron, fought rain, mud, swarms of mosquitos, and woeful lack of tools to put the unfamiliar planes into the air. Every fifth plane was set aside for parts. Vital fuel and pressure lines often were mysteriously plugged with scotch tape; one plane had been hooked up at the factory ". . . evidently by a maniac. Press the flap switch and wheels would retract. Press wheel switch and guns would fire."[12] But the planes were assembled and by 28 March, Lieutenant Brannon taxied out the first one for the initial flight. In 29 days 30 aircraft had been prepared for flight.

From this point on, the squadron flew and trained on New Caledonia. It was forced to separate into small detachments which moved to cow-pasture fields on both sides of the island. It operated from strips only 30 feet wide, violated nearly every known safety rule, and performed functions for which it possessed neither personnel nor training. For example, back at Tontouta, the burden of refueling and servicing the heavy bombers passing through New Caledonia fell to the men of the 67th, as did the task of providing food and shelter for the ferry crews. Aircraft and engines wore out but there were no spares, nor any instruction books. Each accident attracted a swarm of pilots gathering like so many vultures to salvage a usable instrument or some part badly needed for their own aircraft. One P-400 was such a complete mongrel it was dubbed "The Resurrection"; among other items of surgery, its propellor had been balanced in the field by pouring lead in holes bored in a salvaged blade.[13]

The squadron was preparing for combat, but it had no tow targets with which to practice aerial gunnery. Hence, an arrangement was made with VMF-212 up on Efate for an exchange of pilots. Twelve of the 67th's pilots flew across the 335 miles of water to Efate, while the Marines brought their F4F's down to New Caledonia. For three weeks the Grumman pilots taught their gunnery skills to the men of the 67th, and gave them training which was to serve well on Guadalcanal.

In view of the possible movement of the squadron to the Solomons, General Arnold had suggested to General Harmon that the P-400's be

fitted with belly tanks and follow the same ferrying procedure as that employed in the North Atlantic where bombers or transports accompanied the fighters on long flights over open ocean.[14] Not only wasGeneral Harmon aware of this technique, he could report that flights of P-400's already were in training for just such long distance operations with B-17 escort. And of the total of 27 available P-400's he had belly tanks for all with a 50 per cent reserve.[15]

In order to support the Marines on Guadalcanal, General Harmon planned to move forward three flights of P-400's, each of five planes. Since this would strip his New Caledonia defenses down to 12 P-400's, 2 P-39's, and 2 P-43's, he sent an urgent request for reinforcements of fighters and combat crews; it was obvious that these slender resources would permit fighter support for Guadalcanal only for a brief period.[16]

It was necessary to alter the original plan. Instead of 3 separate flights of 5 aircraft each, only 2 were sent up, the first of 5 and the second of 9 P-400's. On 21 August, at 1000, the initial flight took off from Plaines des Gaiacs, led by Capt. Dale Brannon and escorted by a B-17.[17] Two hours and 30 minutes later the planes were at Efate from which, after a short stop, they moved on up to Espiritu Santo on the afternoon of the same day, again accompanied by a heavy bomber. Early on the morning of the twenty-second they were on the way across the 640 miles of open water toward the field on Lunga plain, this time with a B-17 leading the way, and another following, prepared to toss out rubber boats to pilots who might be forced

down. This was the longest leg of the route, and one over which many an army fighter was destined to pass before the Jap was driven from the Lower Solomon Islands. After three hours and 15 minutes of flying, at 1030 five P-400's landed on Henderson Field. Next day Lt. Robert E. Chilson with 30 enlisted men of the ground echelon arrived off Lunga on the transport Fomalhaute and when the remaining nine planes under Captain Thompson came in on 27 August, the 67th Fighter Squadron was present and ready for daily contact with the enemy.[18]

Rarely have pilots and ground crews faced more primitive and difficult conditions than those under which the Marines and the men of the 67th operated on Guadalcanal. Here it was not a case of living in comfortable quarters at a reasonable distance behind the front lines, where there was opportunity for rest and recreation. This was the front line and there were no replacements for these pilots. Men and machines were to fly until either or both gave way under the strain. Facilities for servicing the incoming aircraft were almost completely lacking when the squadron arrived and personnel were left to shift for themselves.[19] Living conditions were hardly conducive to resting flying personnel; unfloored tents provided the sole cover against weather and these lacked screens to prevent infection from the mosquito. Food was prepared over open fires, washing and bathing were done in the Lunga River, and nearly all hands kept their clothes on continuously. Sites for living quarters had been selected arbitrarily and in opposition to the medical officers present, who

labored in vain to place the men in areas with better drainage.[20] A point of particular exasperation to the service personnel was the lack of opportunity to improve their own quarters. These ground crews labored long and hard and with primitive equipment in their effort to maintain the aircraft in flying condition; 14 hours per day was average and 16 not unusual. Under such conditions there was scant opportunity to improve living quarters, yet alongside the hard working ground crews were other men whose tasks were less exacting and who thus found time to improve their own living conditions.[21]

Air operations on the field were in a precarious state. Upon capturing the airfield on the day following the landings, General Vandegrift had thrown a perimeter defense around the area, expecting that the Japanese would recoil in an effort to prevent its use. He knew the enemy was in strength beyond the Matanikau River to the west and had established himself around the Matanikau village; furthermore a patrol clash near Koli Point indicated that enemy forces not on the island on 7 August were now landed or might be expected in the near future.[22] Although the Marines had effectively dispersed the last of the original garrison, sufficient reinforcements had been landed to permit the Jap to make a determined effort against the eastern rim of the perimeter defense. This he did on the night of 19-20 August; the resulting Battle of the Tenaru cost the enemy about 900 troops as he attempted to break across the sand bar at the mouth of the little Tenaru River. All these attacks along the Tenaru failed and General

Vandegrift next turned to prepare for an operation to the east, following the unsuccessful Kokumbona operation of 27 August.

When the army fighters arrived, Japanese troops lay across the Tenaru River on the east; they were in the edge of the hills inland from Henderson Field, and isolated snipers even moved onto the field itself. Because the Navy had withdrawn on the ninth, no air cover had been available for search or local reconnaissance and, even more serious, no supplies had come in except for a small converted destroyer which arrived off Kukum on the night of 18 August and discharged a small cargo of bombs and aviation gasoline.

In order to remedy the lack of air reconnaissance, the 12 SBD's of VMSP-232 were immediately sent out to conduct long single-plane searches over the enemy positions on Guadalcanal and out over the triangular area up to New Georgia and Santa Isabel Island. These missions included perimeter searches of Guadalcanal and nearby islands, a daily afternoon search over the Indispensable Straits area north of the Guadalcanal, and somewhat later, maintenance of antisubmarine patrols and close escort of friendly surface craft.[23] All this was Marine work, but General Vandegrift, as commander of all forces on the island, very soon placed a part of this burden on the pilots of the P-400's.

When Captain Brannon's flight of five planes landed on Henderson Field, Japanese bombers had not inflicted much damage on the area surrounding the strip. For the most part, they had confined their attention to dropping supplies to isolated troop units in the jungle,

although on 14 August three bombers had dropped a few bombs from 23,000 feet, which hit the edge of the field but caused no damage.[24] Air defense of the area was in the hands of the marine pilots of VMF-223, who had preceded the P-400's by two days, and these were supported by a single battery of 90-mm. antiaircraft guns and some 58 automatic weapons positions scattered about the field. There was no real warning system; the first radars did not function until 2 September and the lack of detection equipment meant of course that the enemy could execute surprise raids on the field, although the coast watchers materially lessened this danger by sending down advance reports of approaching enemy formations.[25]

The new army pilots were allowed one day to arrange their tents and personal equipment and then on the twenty-fourth their work began. First in the air were Captain Brannon and Lt. D. H. Fincher, who took off at 1430 only 30 seconds ahead of bombs dropping from nine enemy planes at 3,000 feet. Neither pilot made contact with the bombers since these were falling to the guns of the F4F-4's--eight out of the nine went down; however, one of the estimated 18 escorting Zeros was claimed by the two P-400 pilots in this opening action.[26] The next day Brannon's pilots were up again, this time on dawn to dusk patrols, flying three- and four-plane patrols over the field. On the twenty-sixth, two of the planes made a reconnaissance of the entire coastline of the island, but there was no contact with the enemy on either day.

When Capt. John A. Thompson with his nine P-400's arrived on the field at 1110 on 27 August, enemy bombers were reported on the way.[27] No rest then for the fresh pilots. Planes were refueled and immediately sent up on a patrol, but again no action developed. Two days later the bombers were back over Henderson, this time at 0430 in the morning; their 10 bombs caused no damage other than loss of sleep. At noon on the twenty-ninth, however, 18 enemy bombers were back again, flying at 17,000 feet and accompanied by an unknown number of Zeros. This time 12 P-400's went up in flights of four, but at 14,000 feet they could make no contact as they flew helplessly below the enemy. Once more the day's score went to the Marines in their F4F-4's; they were credited with four Zeros and four bombers with no loss to themselves, and the morale of the 67th sagged.[28]

These were critical times on Guadalcanal, but none were more crammed with activity than the last two days of August. Four friendly destroyers had come in during the night of the thirtieth and from dawn until 1130, two four-plane flights of P-400's provided a combat air patrol for these craft. The usual enemy raid was due in at 1200, with reports of 22 Zeros coming from Buka Passage, and when this information was received, the air defense consisted of no more than eight Grummans and 11 P-400's in flying condition. Four of the latter were sent over Tulagi to furnish low altitude cover for shipping in the harbor, and their departure left seven army planes and eight marine fighters to form a combat patrol over the center of the Sealark Channel which separates Tulagi from Guadalcanal. Major

Smith of the Marines held the planes at 15,500 feet, circling with his Grummans at cruising speed and with the P-400's on the outside, since they were unable to throttle back sufficiently to remain behind the Marines.

Shortly after noon the Jap appeared and attacked the low-flying planes over Tulagi. Immediately the seven P-400's over the channel went down after them; behind came the eight Grummans, with each man instructed not to change targets on the way down, and when this dive ended, eight Japanese fighters were gone.[29] The Zeros had been occupied with the P-400's and they were completely surprised. Each Marine shot down a Zero in the first dive and before the melee ended, Major Smith's Grummans had destroyed 14 fighters without loss while the P-400's had accounted for four more. This was good hunting but it was costly for the P-400's. Two pilots of the Tulagi flight, Lts. R. E. Wythes and R. E. Chilson, failed to return and two others of the air patrol had been forced to bail out when their motors quit under fire from the Zeros. These two, Lts. B. H. Dillon and P. M. Childress, later returned safely on foot but their planes were gone. In all, four planes were lost; five of the seven which returned were out of commission due to bullet holes, and in these planes pilots owed their lives to the armor plate and bullet-proof tanks which had resisted Japanese fire.[30]

The day's excitement had not yet ended. At 1500 2 B-17's, 17 F4F's, and 12 more SBD's arrived at Guadalcanal, and 30 minutes later, with 18 planes on Henderson Field, the Japanese bombers arrived. These were dive bombers which caught the destroyer Blue only a half

mile off shore from the field. Amid this commotion, the transport Burrows ran aground at Tulagi, at 1615 two earthquakes shook the island, and to round out the day, enemy cruisers and destroyers shelled the field shortly before midnight as the Jap attempted to land troops east of the area held by the Marines. By the following day no more than three planes remained in commission out of the original 14 P-400's after only four days' operation at full strength and squadron morale scraped bottom.[31]

Following the action which had cost the 67th Squadron so many of its aircraft, it was apparent to General Vandegrift that the P-400 was being called upon to perform a task beyond its ability.[32] The plane was an export version of the P-39, originally destined for the British, and its oxygen system was of the high pressure type. No supply of high pressure bottles was available on Guadalcanal and as a result, regardless of other shortcomings of the plane, pilots were forced to remain at low levels where use of oxygen was not mandatory. General Harmon was aware of this difficulty and suggested the possibility of carrying out oxygen tanks in B-17's but frowned on the necessity for relaying the tanks and felt that they should be kept on the island where they might be available for use.[33]

The other major deficiency in the plane was its lack of proper supercharging equipment and even had the oxygen been available to permit high altitude flying, the plane could not have competed with the Japanese weapons. It was General Arnold's belief that no army or marine aircraft types were entirely satisfactory against the Zero and he was cognizant of the fact that the P-400 would have to remain

below 17,000 feet.[34]

It was true that the defenders of Henderson Field enjoyed certain advantages. The Marines had discovered what to expect of the bombers after their first days. They knew, for example, that the enemy planes always would come over at some time between 1100 and 1430, that they would average about 26 in number, and that they would always fly the same formation and approach from the same direction.[35] In addition, and most comforting to the pilots, was the knowledge that if forced to bail out they stood a fair chance of being saved, since they were flying over their own field. But all this information did not bring the bombers down where the P-400's could reach them.

This was the primary problem for the fighters at Guadalcanal--how to intercept the Japanese aircraft before they reached the bomb-release line. There was no radar until early in September, although the coast watchers on the islands northwest of Guadalcanal managed to send down plain language reports of the bombers' approach. Japanese pilots knew this, bent their courses around the islands on the way down from Rabaul, and reached their altitude at approximately 150 miles from their target. They would hold their altitude well above 20,000 feet, then come in fast, often at 250 miles per hour. As soon as radar sets had been established and were functioning, fighters were granted from 29 to 33 minutes to attain an altitude of 30,000 feet, but even this was inadequate for F4F-4's. In the early stages of the defense of the field, most of the fighters operated

above 25,000 feet without benefit of radar.[36] Since the P-400's with their available equipment were not able to achieve an altitude much higher than 10,000-12,000 feet, they could not participate in the interceptions. In practice they were not requested to go to altitude and for the action on the thirtieth, the commander of the squadron had volunteered to go up with the Marines on the combat patrol ". . . because he was getting very sick of not having a plane that could get up to 28,000 feet with the bombers."[37]

In view of its handicaps, the squadron's record thus far had not been bad, although it did suffer by comparison with that of the Marines. Its lack of success certainly was not attributable to lack of skill on the part of its pilots. Of its work, Major Smith, who commanded the VMF-223 and flew with the P-400's, comments: "That first Army Air Forces squadron that came down there with P-400's had some of the finest pilots I've ever seen, even though they didn't have the best plane in the world. And they were certainly willing to do anything . . . and cooperated very well with the Marine officer who was running the show there. The fact that the P-400 didn't get up high enough didn't bother them a great deal; they always wanted to go up every time they had the chance."[38]

The inability of the P-400 to compete against the Zero and the Japanese bombers was known in Washington several months prior to the Guadalcanal campaign. In May Col. Boyd D. Wagner had submitted a report to General MacArthur covering both the P-39 and P-40, citing their low rate of climb, their excessive wing load which prevented dog-fighting with Zeros, and the vulnerability of the engines on the

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P-39 and P-400, where hits in the glycol cooling system would often cause loss of the aircraft.[39] Furthermore, the Director of Air Defense, in recognition of these shortcomings, had stated unequivocally that neither the P-39 nor P-40 could operate on even terms against the Japanese in the Southwest Pacific, had concluded that a more suitable fighter aircraft should be allocated to Australia, and stated that the sole American fighter capable of performing effectively was the P-38.[40]

The first real clash between Zeros and P-400's at Guadalcanal had caused General Vandegrift to reassess the value of the plane as an interceptor and at the same time General Arnold requested General Harmon's comments on the suitability of both the P-39 and P-400 for the Guadalcanal area.[41] In partial reply General Emmons relayed from Hawaii the decision received 3 September from the Marine Commander on Guadalcanal that "P-400's will not be employed further except in extreme emergencies; they are entirely unsuitable for Cactus operations."[42]

It is certain that General Harmon had some misgivings over the fighter aircraft in his theater even before he had assumed his command in July. Prior to his departure from the West Coast he had indicated his desire for P-38 aircraft, citing the characteristics which made the type desirable for employment in the Pacific Island area. Its great range, excellent maintenance record, and ability to carry two 1100-lb. bombs, all contributed to its extreme value. Therefore, he recommended that one full squadron be set up for New Caledonia, and that immediate measures be taken to increase production

capacity of this type. It was not possible to implement this recommendation at the time due to commitments to theaters of higher priority, but the request resulted in immediate steps toward increasing the production rate of this type of aircraft.[43]

If better planes were not available, perhaps the effectiveness of the P-39's and P-400's could be increased by improving their firepower. Japanese planes were disintegrating so beautifully under the fire of the Grummans' six .50-cal. guns, General Harmon felt that the 37-mm. cannon might well be replaced by a lighter weapon, thus affording a better rate of fire for his handicapped aircraft. Fifty caliber was sufficient and he requested a substitution of a .50-cal. machine gun for the 37-mm. cannon, provided that load factors, cooling, and control of muzzle blast would permit such a conversion. And if this could not be done, then at least a 20-mm. cannon could replace the 37-mm. nose gun.[44]

Despite these changes, discrepancy in performance of the Zero and of P-39's and P-400's was too great. General Harmon informed the Chief of Staff unequivocally that neither the P-39 nor the P-40 could operate against the Japanese in the Solomons. These types must be replaced by planes which could operate above 20,000 feet and he warned that "If we are to maintain the morale and elan of our fighter pilots, obtain /the/ desired effectiveness of our army fighter effort, and avoid losses out of proportion to results obtained, a reasonable proportion of army fighter units /in/ this area must be equipped with P-38 or P-47 types." And for a choice between the P-39

and the P-40, he was convinced that the P-40 series equipped with the Rolls-Royce Merlin would be better suited for the Solomons.[45]

The reluctance of the South Pacific commanders to accept the P-39 and P-400 created some concern in Washington and the Director of Air Defense requested further justification for condemnation of these types of fighter aircraft.[46] AFACT reported that 63 P-39's were en route to New Caledonia and in a further effort to persuade General Harmon to use the plane, it recommended stripping 1,500 pounds from the fighter and pointed to Australia where ". . . considerable success with P-39's against Zero's /is being/ achieved." Furthermore, General Marshall offered to secure Col. Paul B. Wurtsmith or an officer of similar caliber to assist temporarily in tactical employment of these planes.[47]

Stripping the Bell planes proved feasible; it could be accomplished in the field, and the heavy 37-mm. cannon was replaceable by a .50-cal. machine gun with approximately 280 rounds of ammunition for the nose gun. General Harmon considered this information, considered as well the available figures from Guadalcanal, and threw in the sponge on the P-400. Once again he reviewed the record of the 67th Fighter Squadron. Here were 13 experienced pilots well indoctrinated against the Zero, yet 4 of them had been shot down, and in a single engagement 8 planes were damaged, of which 6 were beyond repair. He submitted the same list of shortcomings as before: low optimum altitude and service ceiling, general poor performance at high altitude, slow rate of climb and wide radius of turn. If the

reports reaching him from Australia were followed, then the plane would be confined to surface strafing missions, for that was its value in the Southwest Pacific and it seemed to be well suited for such employment. But as an interceptor there was no hope for it: "It is not, and stripping will not make it a suitable fighter for employment against high altitude Jap bombers and zeros. This is my Swan Song."[48] General Harmon assured the War Department that he would utilize to the fullest extent the particular characteristics of the plane and welcomed any experienced officer who might be sent out to assist. He would strip the plane, too, and planned to remove 1,060 pounds, but to take away the recommended 1,500 pounds was inadvisable due to the character of the missions being flown.[49]

Apparently the War Department still was hopeful for the plane, or it merely wished a more complete report, for it requested an estimate of the damage to Japanese aircraft inflicted by the P-400's alone during the Guadalcanal operations. The reply was not too reassuring; although the number of Zeros shot down was estimated at five, this gave an incomplete picture inasmuch as the army pilots were supported by the F4F-4's flying above them, and all P-400 losses were attributable solely to enemy action.[50] General Harmon might have added that on 30 August, while the P-400's were scoring 4 or 5 kills, the Marines knocked down 14 Japanese fighters in the same action.

It was well that some use could be found for the P-39's; they were on the way to the South Pacific in considerable numbers. By

23 August the War Department had informed COMGENSOPAC that 20 P-39K-1's destined for Fiji were at sea, together with eight P-39D-2's destined for New Caledonia, and on another ship 16 P-39K-1's were moving toward Fiji. If he wished the 20 might be diverted to New Caledonia, which would increase his strength by 28.[51] This of course was acceptable to General Harmon and he submitted a brief report on the operations in his theater. He had just dispatched 10 P-400's to Guadalcanal, of which 3 arrived at the destination, but he felt that the 23 replacements would "keep the show going awhile." The new P-39 models confused him; were the P-39K's equipped with 37-mm. or 20-mm. cannon? and were belly tanks coming, since he was reduced to 15 spares?[52]

On Guadalcanal only 18 army and marine fighters were in action by 25 August, and though he had 15 army fighters available in New Caledonia, exclusive of the 28 new arrivals, he reminded the War Department that marine fighter aircraft based on Efate and Espiritu Santo could not fly to Henderson Field, as could the army fighters. Therefore immediate dispatch of an additional 50 fighters to New Caledonia was recommended. Over in the Fijis the additional shipment of 16 would raise the total to 30 aircraft but since the squadron at Fiji (the 70th) was furnishing pilot replacements for combat purposes, 30 pilots were immediately required in that area. To be sure, some help was forthcoming from the Seventh Air Force, which was requested to dispatch by air 30 fighter pilots for Noumea.[53]

The experiments with armament for the planes in New Caledonia indicated that replacement of the heavy 37-mm. cannon by a .50-cal.

machine gun produced only a negligible saving of weight, and the gain in cyclic rate of fire was not sufficient to warrant the engineering work required. Stripping of excess equipment proceeded, however, and by the end of September General Arnold, who was in New Caledonia at the time, reported that a P-39K, minus 600 pounds of its original equipment, had achieved a service ceiling of 27,000 feet, a figure which greatly pleased General Harmon since it exceeded his expectations for the plane. It was not intended, however, to lighten all the P-39's; about one third would be left with their original equipment for use in marauder missions.[54] The P-39 situation was gradually clarified after the arrival of the later models. When the 67th Fighter Squadron first operated from Henderson Field, the judgment of the marine and naval commanders was based upon observation of the performance of the export P-400, a plane definitely inferior to the P-39K which now became the principle weapon of the fighter squadrons.[55]

New Caledonia was the distribution center for the South Pacific fighter aircraft and inasmuch as it was the feeder for front line operations on Guadalcanal, its strength was under constant drain. In order to strengthen the air defenses of New Caledonia, Operations Division had established a priority for fighter distribution in the South Pacific which included 1 group headquarters and 2 squadrons for New Caledonia, 1 squadron for Fiji, and 1 for Tongatabu. If this minimum requirement were to be met, either a group headquarters could be sent out intact or it could be activated in the field and

fillers be dispatched subsequently to replace the drain upon existing units.[56]

Accordingly, as early as 25 August a proposal was sent out to General Harmon that he activate a fighter group headquarters and an additional fighter squadron, with cadres to be furnished from units already in the South Pacific, and he was assured that requisitions for fillers and replacements would be authorized. General Harmon agreed with the plan, citing units in New Caledonia as the source of the cadres, but he requested that TBA equipment for any new units be shipped without delay.[57] The request for fillers went into Washington on 14 September. In reply Harmon was advised to select a group commander from local personnel available; the remaining personnel requested would be sent out as rapidly as conditions of availability and transportation would permit, with October as the probable date of shipment.[58] By 24 September activation of the 347th Fighter Group and the 339th Fighter Squadron was authorized and in addition, the 67th, 68th, and 70th Fighter Squadrons were transferred from their current assignments to the new group.[59] Immediate activation of the units was ordered on 29 September and on 3 October they officially were in existence.[60]

Thus the 339th Fighter Squadron was born in the field, a squadron destined very shortly to give up the P-39's and fly its P-38's, the "forked-tail devils," the length and breadth of the Solomons. Although the place of activation was near Tontouta Air Base in New Caledonia, the squadron's combat strength was on Guadalcanal, for it

was the old 67th which provided 29 officers and 106 men as cadre. Already it was a veteran organization. The new commander was Maj. Dale D. Brannon* who had led in the original flight of P-400's on 22 August and with him, among others, came the same four lieutenants, W. H. Erwin, D. H. Fincher, B. E. Davis, and E. E. Brzuska, who had brought their P-400's up to Henderson Field on the pioneering flight. Other members of the squadron went over to the 347th Fighter Group, which now was commanded by Maj. George M. McNeese and whose new operations officer was Maj. Thomas J. J. Christian, Jr., a veteran of Australia and the Philippines. The leader of the second flight of P-400's to land at Guadalcanal was Capt. John A. Thompson and command of the 67th Fighter Squadron now passed to him, but it was a stripped unit which he inherited.[61]

While General Harmon struggled over the problem of improving the performance of the P-400's operating up on Guadalcanal, the Commanding General of the First Marine Division had found a task within the capability of the plane and for which it was ably fitted. If these aircraft could not join the Marines in high altitude interception of the Japanese bombers, let them stay down within their effective altitude and cooperate with the ground forces. This was useful work and if it was less spectacular than the brilliant performance of the marine fighter pilots, nevertheless it was a substantial contribution to the defense of the island.[62] Furthermore, there is reason to believe that the Marine Commander simply and wisely refused

* Major Brannon was promoted from captain to major on 3 September 1942.

to send up highly skilled and courageous army pilots to combat the Zeros in inadequate planes.[63]

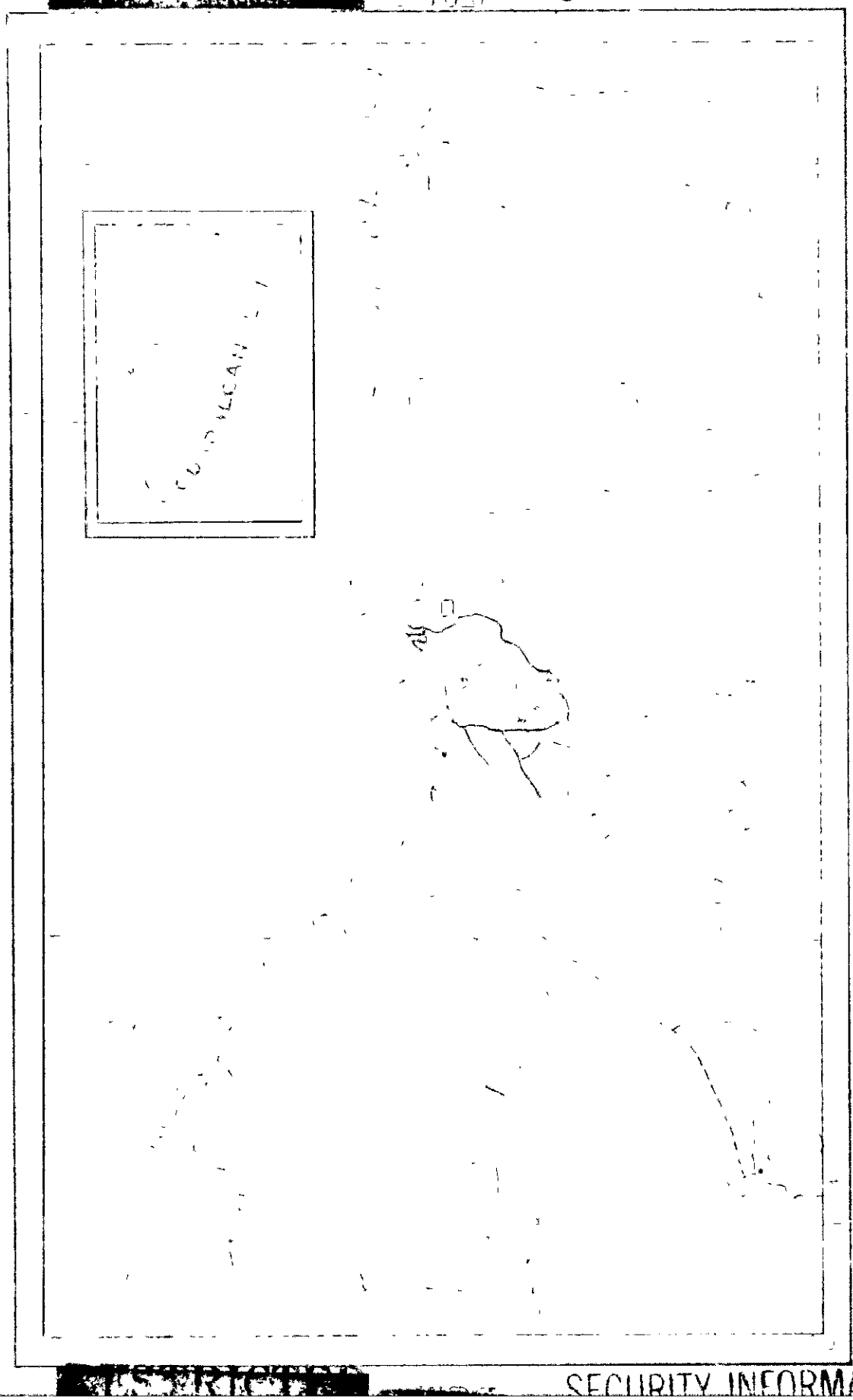
After the loss of so many of their planes on 30 August, daily operations by the army pilots were sharply limited. Only three of their aircraft remained in commission by 1 September, although valiant efforts of the ground crew soon restored some of the damaged aircraft to flying condition. But General Vandegrift, who controlled the operations of the P-400's, now discovered that he had available a highly valuable weapon for ground support.

The first employment of the 67th in attack operations occurred on 2 September in preparation for a thrust to the east at Tasimboko by the Marines. Native scouts had reported that the position was held by 200-300 well-armed troops. It was intended to bring over fresh forces from Tulagi, effect a landing east of Tasimboko, thus striking the position from the rear, and then retire immediately, with the entire move being completed on the same day.[64] It was known that the enemy had been sending in reinforcements, but no accurate estimate of his strength could be obtained.

On the night of 1 September, all flying personnel on Guadalcanal enjoyed the first quiet night since their arrival, but the rest was of short duration--very early on the following morning, at 0230, two Japanese transports and two destroyers lay off the island engaged in landing reinforcements east of the Marine positions. Darkness and bad weather combined to prevent the SBD's from bombing the vessels but at 0600 five P-400's led by Capt. Dale Brannon took off to attack

landing parties about 20 miles east of Henderson Field at Tasimboko. There was no sign of the enemy on this first mission, and at 0800 four others left Henderson to bomb and strafe Tasimboko village and five landing craft beached along the shore. This time the village was hit with 500-pound bombs and was strafed as well. Back on Henderson, the daily Jap raid was due in at noon, and rather than sit it out on the ground, Captain Brannon and four of his pilots were off again at 1130, once more for Tasimboko. While these pilots were dive-bombing and strafing the village, Jap bombers hit Henderson and hit it hard. Eighteen bombers escorted by 21 Zeros came over the field and although the F4F-4's reduced their number by 3 bombers and 4 fighters, they burned out 1 hangar, set afire 3 SBD's, hit an ammunition and gas dump, and left delayed action bombs scattered about the area. When Brannon's flight returned, bomb craters forced it to land half way down the runway and even then Lieutenant Childress taxied his plane into a gaping hole.

Daily then, General Vandegrift sent out the heavily armed P-400's to hit the Japanese at Tasimboko and almost nightly the enemy shelled or bombed the field. The strain was evident on both personnel and equipment and by 4 September only three aircraft were able to take the air, with 13 pilots to fly them, but these three planes made their first contact with Japanese troops massed in landing craft. Word was received that the enemy was putting men ashore with 30 landing barges in a small cove on Santa Isabel, some 75 miles north-west of Henderson Field. At 1440 the planes were on the way, led



NORTHWEST CORNER OF GUADALCANAL

by Maj. Robert E. Galer in his F4F-4, and the target was easily located. Two direct hits with 500-pound bombs destroyed six of the craft fully loaded with men and supplies, and boats and men still landing were thoroughly strafed. Pilots estimated they had destroyed 25 of the landing craft on this mission.[65]

The P-400's of the 67th "Jagstaffel" as the unit was locally known, excelled at this work and so long as they could fly they were up and over the Jap lines. But fatigue was having its effect on all personnel. Food remained scarce, meals were limited to two per day, and there was little rest at night. If there was no shelling, "Washing Machine Charlie" came over to drop two or three bombs and disturb the camp. Nevertheless, as long as the planes remained intact, they were flown. On the fifth, after undergoing a dismal night of enemy shelling, the pilots found a prime target. Not more than 500 yards off the northwest coast of Guadalcanal Major Brannon and Lt. Z. D. Fountain, together with six Grummans of VMF-224, caught 15 fully loaded landing barges which they strafeduntil not a round of ammunition remained. Two hours later two more of the "long-nosed devils" repeated this mission and destroyed most of the supplies in the landing craft which had grounded on a reef close inshore.[66]

In the wake of repeated air attacks on the sixth and seventh, the Marines made their landing at dawn on 8 September, successfully avoiding enemy detection. Prior to their attack upon Tarimboko village, four P-400's bombed and strafed the area for ten minutes,

driving the defenders into their holes while the Marines beached their Higgins boats, and in this action they were assisted by three SBD's. Resistance increased as the Marines approached the village, and in response to their call for additional air support four pilots repeated the mission at 0900 and again at noon.[67] Still the village held out, with the Jap offering unexpected and very stout opposition, which brought yet another call from the Marines at 1530 to cover their withdrawal from the area after they had driven out the defenders. Three more P-400's led by Major Brannon went down the runway of Henderson but the covering of mud six inches thick sent Lt. V. L. Head's plane into a crack-up. Although the aircraft caught fire, the pilot was extricated but he was badly burned. The other two planes carried out the mission and furnished the requested cover for the Marines' retirement to their landing craft. When they finally had driven in the attack upon the village they discovered large stores of supplies, including artillery, and estimated that the Jap had been present in considerable force, probably numbering between 3,000 and 4,000 men, which made his withdrawal from the position inexplicable.[68]

The action had indicated the potential utility of the P-400 in ground work, despite the handicap which prevented it from taking part in interception. Not only was its potent firepower of great value; it was the only plane which could operate from Henderson Field in the muddy conditions then prevailing. Throughout the previous day rain had drenched the area and as a result the heavy and thick coating of mud on the runway prevented the Grummans from moving and the SBD's

could take off only by leaving behind their bombs. P-400's on the other hand were able to perform their four missions with a full load of ammunition and in addition carried a 300-pound bomb.[69]

Following the operation around Tasimboko, Brannon's pilots returned to routine patrol and ground strafing missions which led them all along the coast up as far as Cape Esperance. But there was nothing routine about life at Henderson Field; enemy night activity continued to drain the energy of all pilots. The Jap was pounding hard at the new fighter strip under construction alongside Henderson Field, and in an effort to stop him the Marines were fast losing their planes. The heavy operational toll had reduced the Grummans to 11 by 9 September; on the previous day alone, 5 marine fighters were lost, 1 on take-off, 4 on landing, and not one Jap had been sighted.[70] The squadron of P-400's was losing strength as well; on 11 September it barely escaped a major disaster. Enemy bombers were over the field at 1205 and a 500 pounder struck only five feet from a shelter protecting Brannon and three of his pilots. All were temporarily hospitalized, with the result that the 67th Squadron now could furnish General Vandegrift only five planes and five pilots.[71] This was a dreary day of work for the men at Henderson. Arrival of 24 new Grummans provided welcome reinforcements for the marine fighter defenses of the island, but the 10 B-17's up from Espiritu Santo to be staged through Guadalcanal necessitated weary hours of labor for the ground personnel, who were always inadequate in number. And although the bombs from 26 enemy aircraft had caused numerous

casualties, worse dangers lay ahead.

By 12 September the Japanese were ready to launch a determined effort to recover their lost airfield by closing in simultaneously from east and west, and from the south as well. An estimated force of 6,000 enemy troops was distributed around the perimeter defense of the Marines and to assist them Japanese bombers hit the field by day, while cruisers and destroyers shelled it by night. On the night of the thirteenth, a particularly heavy shelling cost the lives of three marine pilots. Henderson's air defense had been bolstered by 24 additional F4F-4's which came in on the morning of the thirteenth and this squadron was followed by some TBF's and 20 more Grumman fighters in the afternoon of the same day. All this was fresh support for the air, but on the ground the Japanese were able to launch a series of powerful attacks. Most vicious of all was that directed against the ridge lying to the south of Henderson Field, held by Col. Merritt A. Edson's First Raider Battalion. All night long on 13 September the Jap threw his attacks against this ridge, driving Edson's men off the crest and down on the south side, until only the inner perimeter defense line stood between the airstrip and the enemy. Snipers actually broke through and the field was brought under heavy mortar and artillery fire, but the Marine line, although badly bent, did not break. Nevertheless, by dawn the Japanese held the crest and had moved down on the slopes of the ridge--the advantage of position was theirs.

This was a task for the P-400's and at 0730 on the fourteenth, Capt. J. A. Thompson with Lts. B. W. Brown and B. E. Davis swept along "Bloody Ridge" where they "just cleared those Japs right off, with practically no resistance at all."[72] Return fire from enemy machine guns and small arms was severe and it forced two of the aircraft to make dead-stick landings, but the Marines moved up the slopes, retook the crest, and counted over 600 enemy dead who had fallen to their guns and those of the fighter planes. Those who survived straggled back into the hills, moved west and joined the 124th Infantry Regiment which had landed near Kokumbona.[73] For the present the airfield was moderately secure, but the enemy would return again.

The maligned P-400 by this time had proved itself. With its 20-mm. cannon, two .50-cal. and four .30-cal. machine guns, it carried a tremendous firepower against enemy ground positions, supply points and troop concentrations. General Vandegrift consistently used the plane against any position which blocked his Marines and particularly against supply points. He considered the P-400 an invaluable weapon in this ground support work and asked for more, and Capt. Matt Gardner, Chief of Staff to Admiral McCain, regarded it as "tremendously effective" in strafing troops and landing barges.[74] SBD's were drafted for this type of operation to a lesser extent, since the Navy considered it uneconomical to employ dive bombers for ground support; while 500 enemy troops were being eliminated on the ground, transports would bring in 1,500 more . . . we found ourselves

1,000 Japs in the hole that way." The SBD's were therefore used to prevent the transports from reaching the island and the P-400's carried the burden of ground support.[75] To be sure, enemy transports had not yet appeared in any numbers. In late September and early October nearly all enemy reinforcements still were coming down in destroyers or light cruisers, with approximately 160 men as a standard load for the destroyers. Although this did provide the units on Guadalcanal with a steady increase, it was slow, and substantial strength could not be built up without the use of large troop transports. Not until October was this type of operation attempted.

General Arnold, who was visiting the area at the time, was gratified by the reports reaching him in Noumea concerning the performance of the P-400 and he informed the Chief of Staff that the planes had destroyed about 40 landing craft loaded with supplies and thereby had nipped in the bud a major Japanese attack.[76] The 67th Fighter Squadron had blazed the trail for army aircraft on Guadalcanal and even though basic equipment prevented its taking an active part in the air defense of the island, pilots had adapted themselves to the new technique made necessary by the shortcomings of their planes. They learned to use care in flying the P-400 close to the ground because of its tendency to stall, and they learned to handle it as a dive bomber. There were no dive brakes on these aircraft and terminal velocity was high, but the accuracy was good.

New pilots experienced considerable difficulty in locating enemy ground targets, for Japanese camouflage was superior, and in many cases the pilots did not even see enemy troops on the ground. Often they returned to Henderson with no visual evidence of the success of their missions and the naval intelligence officers who briefed and interrogated them were taxed to sustain their morale in the face of what apparently was wasted effort. But when advancing marine patrols discovered heavy loss of enemy life and equipment in the jungle where the P-400 had attacked, or when captured diaries indicated the Jap troopers' great fear of the "long-nosed American planes," the strafing missions assumed new significance.[77] For this reason pilots requested wider adoption of fragmentation bombs, believing that their work would be made more effective, particularly against personnel.

The pilots of P-400's on Guadalcanal reached the same conclusions as those of Colonel Wagner--when used against enemy aircraft the P-400 was unable to intercept the high level bombers and it could compete with the Zeros only by taking advantage of the faster dive of the heavier Bell plane.[78] They had discovered that its speed surpassed that of the Zero below 12,000 feet but in rate of climb and maneuverability it was "pathetically inferior."[79] In order to nullify the natural superiority of the Zero, General Harmon exerted every effort to indoctrinate his pilots in proper combat technique, but he could do nothing which would send the P-400's up to 25,000 feet in time to intercept the bombers. This burden fell to the

Marines, who turned in astonishing scores against the Japanese bombers and fighters, shooting down, for example, 23 out of 25 attacking bombers and one Zero on 28 September.[80] It was true that enemy fighters were forced to fly with belly tanks, since they lacked bases within normal operating range, but this did not detract from the Marines' performance.

The lessons learned from the initial operations were those common to all flying services in the area. Communications, both air-ground and those from Henderson Field to rear bases, were most inadequate and were particularly poor for the P-400's. Insufficient ground personnel had been sent in and the judgment was that in the future each aircraft should be accompanied by its own crew chief and armorer. Only seven armorers had accompanied the original 14 planes and this number had proved insufficient. Service facilities were primitive and it was therefore recommended that when gasoline trucks were not available each plane should be furnished with its own hand pump. No squadron equipment had gone up to Guadalcanal with the first flights other than combat materiel. Consequently officers and men messed with the Marines and this placed a heavy burden upon the latter. All these were difficulties which could be eliminated in the future.

By the end of September pilots of the first flight were back at Tontouta in New Caledonia, where shortly they moved into the 339th Fighter Squadron. New planes were coming, planes which would take them up where the Marines fought. Meanwhile the Army flew its

P-39's and General Harmon, observing the strain under which the men lived and flew, sent in a request for fresh fighter pilots. He wanted 30 for New Caledonia, 30 for Tongatabu, and 30 for Fiji. In New Caledonia he could muster 83 fighter aircraft and 56 pilots, and at Fiji he had 31 pilots and planes. Dispatch of additional pilots would permit rapid and periodic replacement of personnel at Guadalcanal, and utilization of the available equipment for training purposes.[81] The War Department replied within a week. No additional pilots were available; more would be sent "if and when possible but no immediate prospects exist."[82] This was global war and General Harmon was playing in a minor theater.

Chapter V

THE QUESTION OF PRIORITY

The Army Air Forces had entered the battle for the South Pacific with the arrival of the 11th Group in July. Two months now had passed during which time the heavy bombers had been in daily contact with the enemy, and since 22 August the fighters too had joined the action on Guadalcanal. It was to be expected that the naval, marine, and army air commanders who directly faced the enemy in the Pacific would state their case as forcibly as possible in frequent demands for more equipment. And it was to be expected as well that in Washington the debate would continue over the justice of the repeated requests coming up from the South Pacific; it was difficult for men facing the Jap to realize that their task was regarded as inferior in immediate importance to that of any other theater, but this point repeatedly had been made clear in staff meetings.[1]

At best it was a delicate balance which had to be maintained between the Atlantic and Pacific, but in July when the decision was made to abandon the project for an invasion of Continental Europe in 1942,[2] there was some promise that the pendulum might swing in favor of the war against Japan. Advocates of a higher priority for the Pacific theater were able to secure from the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 24 July a statement that over and above the U. S. forces required

from BOLERO* for operations in North and Northwest Africa, a total of 15 groups should be withdrawn from current commitments to BOLERO for the purpose of furthering offensive operations in the Pacific.[3] Had such a course of action been followed, it would have sent into the Pacific 3 groups of heavies, 2 each of medium bombers, light bombers, fighters, and observation aircraft, and 4 groups of transport planes. Such an increment would have been manna to the men in the South Pacific, but their good fortune was short lived. By the end of the month it was clear that the North African operation would absorb maximum production.[4]

In any event, General Arnold was unwilling to draw air power from England. His staff had made clear the probable course of action once an air offensive in the Pacific was initiated. It was pointed out that in the successive attack and occupation of island bases the force would be limited by radius of aircraft and capacity of the bases which could be established quickly, factors that would materially reduce the numbers of aircraft which could be used in the Pacific. Developing the point logically, it followed that if the major effort were to be swung away from Germany and toward Japan, there would arise a military requirement for air operations directed against Japan from the Asiatic mainland, and these in turn were dependent upon the Allied grip upon the Middle East. Failure in this critical area would jeopardize logistical support of India.[5] Moreover, Germany remained the primary objective, and the Air Forces in General Arnold's

* That is, from the build-up of American forces in the United Kingdom.

opinion were at the time the sole weapons able to exert pressure upon her. Only by continuous application of massed air power could air operations enjoy success against critical objectives; this could be done from no other bases than those located in the United Kingdom. Therefore he opposed drawing off strength for the Pacific prior to full implementation of BOLERO and the North African operation and clung to his original goal to carry direct action against Germany from the United Kingdom as soon as possible.[6]

Regardless of opinion in Washington regarding the South Pacific, it was General Harmon who faced the Japanese in the area and it is of interest to note the conclusions formed as a result of an inspection of his command made immediately upon arrival in the theater. In the Fijis he found the 37th Division, and 1 squadron each of fighters and medium bombers, and 1 squadron (the 431st) of the Pacific Mobile Force. This force he considered adequate for defense of the area, although he recommended that one heavy bombardment squadron be permanently assigned and he assumed throughout that all air units were maintained at full combat strength with 50 per cent reserve. New Caledonia he regarded as the key point south of Hawaii. Because of its geographical position, its suitability as an air base, its value as a base for naval operations, and its size, it should have a minimum garrison of 1 division plus 1 regiment of ground troops and an air defense of 2 fighter squadrons, 1 heavy bomb squadron permanently assigned, and 1 squadron each of medium and dive bombers. Inasmuch as the existing air strength included only one squadron each of

heavy and medium bombers and one of fighter aircraft, and since the heavy squadron was a part of the mobile force, the island was deficient 1 fighter squadron, 1 heavy squadron, and 1 of dive bombers.

Up at Efate and Espiritu Santo he found no army fighters whatsoever, and defense of these two areas called for two more fighter squadrons. All this indicated a need for additional dispatch to the South Pacific of 5 fighter squadrons, 2 of heavy bombardment, and 2 dive bomber squadrons. To bolster ground forces he recommended dispatch of 1 infantry division, 2 regiments of Coast Artillery (AA), and 1 battalion of Coast Artillery less 1 battery.

The figures submitted by General Harmon omitted units necessary for army garrisons on Guadalcanal and in the Santa Cruz group, but since he anticipated that determined attempts would be made to eject American forces from these areas as soon as they were captured,[8] his proposal carried the implication that even greater strength was required. He recognized that the combined forces could not remain indefinitely on the defense in the area, and recommended that once the operation was begun, the Marines should be relieved as promptly as possible. Further, he submitted an additional list of air units which he regarded as the minimum necessary to provide defense for the Southern Solomons and which would permit development of plans and operations for the reduction of Rabaul. For its fighter strength this force should comprise two squadrons, and he specified P-38's, citing their combat superiority and great flexibility in strategic

employment due to long range, enabling them to negotiate the great distances between island bases. The bomber strength requested included the entire Pacific Mobile Group (the 11th Group) and in addition, one squadron each of medium and dive bombers. These units raised the total requirements to the respectable figure of 6 fighter squadrons, 3 squadrons of dive bombers, 2 of heavy bombardment aircraft, and 1 squadron of medium bombers.[9]

In line with these conclusions, General Harmon prepared an outline of his observations for General Marshall, stressing the fact that he stood face to face with realities, and that in order to hold the key points in his theater reasonable defense forces should be available. His recommendations for immediate action, which are doubly interesting since they were submitted without any consideration for availability, were as follows:

(1) Immediate dispatch to New Caledonia of three fighter squadrons equipped with P-38 aircraft.

(2) Initiate immediate replacement for attrition of B-17's in the 11th Group.

(3) Dispatch of one medium bombardment squadron to New Caledonia as early as practicable for use in the Guadalcanal area.

(4) Prompt dispatch of replacement fighter and medium bombardment aircraft to New Caledonia and Fiji, and dispatch as early as practicable of 1 fighter squadron to Espiritu Santo, 1 to Efate, and 1 additional to New Caledonia.

(5) Dispatch as early as practicable of two squadrons of B-17's, each for permanent station at New Caledonia and Fiji.

(6) As available, dispatch of 3 dive bomber squadrons, 1 to Guadalcanal, 1 to New Caledonia, and 1 to Fiji, in that priority.

This program envisioned substantial reinforcements for the South Pacific and immediately it won strong concurrence from Admiral Ghormley, who recommended that it be submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[11] Admiral Nimitz likewise subscribed to it, regarding it as a "carefully estimated minimum, especially with regard to aircraft."[12]

It was evident that the Commander of the Pacific area was somewhat apprehensive over the situation in the Solomons. He regarded the question of defensive strength as one closely related to that of maintaining the offensive which had opened on 7 August. Granting that "we can rarely be fully ready for each offensive move," Admiral Nimitz felt it most necessary "that we be ready enough to have a reasonable chance of making the move successful. We must have in sight sufficient forces to keep the pressure on the enemy. This has been pointed out repeatedly . . . but there is no indication that sufficient forces, particularly aircraft and trained amphibious troops, will be available for the Pacific <u>in time</u>."[13] He contributed no additional requests, but pointed to the high attrition rates suffered by units in contact with the enemy and suggested that an upward revision of numbers of reinforcements was in order. Writing on 6 September, Nimitz already had behind him one month's experience of Solomons warfare and as a result he warned Admiral King that

attacking forces must hold their gains for a long period, during which time the enemy might counter attack with air, sea, and land forces. The mere supply of forces at advance positions within range of enemy shore-based aircraft entailed hazardous and costly operations, and large scale relief of forces in such positions was inexpedient at times.[14]

During these opening weeks of the Guadalcanal campaign the War Department was bombarded with requests from the Pacific. Admiral King had received Harmon's proposals and he urged the Chief of Staff to concur in them.[15] Even prior to this time, at the end of July, CINCPAC had explained to Admiral King that in his opinion army aircraft in the Pacific Ocean area were insufficient in number to permit a reserve after completion of the initial operations in the South Pacific. Furthermore bombers and flight crews in Oahu were too low in number to be regarded as a reservoir either for reinforcement of the South Pacific or for defense of Hawaii when the bulk of the fleet's power was in the South Pacific. Therefore, he requested a minimum of two heavy groups of 35 aircraft each to provide a reserve for the South Pacific operations "which must not reach /a/ stalemate stage or fail."[16] After the campaign had opened General Emmons had passed on another plea for help from Nimitz who felt that a favorable beginning had been made on the offensive, and that the moderate losses suffered could be accepted if replacements already requested were sent immediately. "Lets not let this offensive die on the vine," was CINCPAC'S warning and he urged that immediate replacements be

sent to Hawaii to replace corresponding equipment from the Hawaiian area which could be sent to the South Pacific.[17]

At the same time General Emmons informed the Chief of Staff that in Hawaii there were available 22 B-17's and 12 Navy PBY's ready to move south with their crews on short notice, and in addition he had 50 fighter pilots, less aircraft, who could go down to help out General Harmon's fighters. He believed an opportunity to inflict heavy losses upon the enemy had presented itself but means for the task were not available. Therefore, he too asked for a minimum of two heavy groups with combat and maintenance crews, since heavy bombardment was the urgent requirement above all other types. Furthermore, these groups should be followed as soon as possible by at least 50 per cent replacement of aircraft and crews to provide reinforcements for the new units and for the Hawaiian Mobile Group, "now suffering serious losses in combat."[18] Only three days prior to the opening of the Solomons' offensive the War Department informed Emmons that his demands conflicted with other commitments and immediate reinforcement of the Pacific was impossible. Perhaps to ease disappointment, it was pointed out that upon completion of current planned delivery, army bombardment aircraft in the South and Southwest Pacific would total over 400. Meanwhile the future must rest upon plans under study by War Department.[19]

If additional planes and crews for the South Pacific were not to be made available, perhaps the existing commitments could be shifted to the critical areas. Probably with this in mind General Marshall advised Harmon on 9 August that he should expedite through

his area the movement of aircraft destined for Australia, "unless by their diversion they can be more effectively used in your area."[20] Furthermore, he informed the Navy that all army air forces assigned to the South Pacific were available for movement as directed by COM SOPAC and ordered Harmon to cooperate with this plan. General Harmon for his part lacked information concerning the movement of B-17's and B-26's destined for the two Pacific areas. He did not know the departure dates for the numbers scheduled to move along the ferry route, and he suggested that such information would permit him to pass on to the Southwest Pacific aircraft which otherwise he might feel obligated to hold. This list was forthcoming immediately and COMGENSOPAC was informed he might expect a total of 20 B-17's, 12 B-26's, and 33 B-25's, with 12 additional B-25's at Sacramento, to move down to Australia in the immediate future.[22]

Two weeks of operations in Guadalcanal had passed when General Harmon submitted a review of air strength and capabilities. On 21 August he could report the presence of 34 serviceable or repairable B-26's and 33 B-17's, of which 2 B-26's and 4 B-17's had been diverted from Australia. He assumed that a flow of heavy bombers would be maintained to meet attrition of the 11th Group and he planned to bring up the strength of the 69th and 70th Medium Bombardment Squadrons to 20 aircraft each; even this figure was below requirements and he felt that there should be 24 aircraft for each medium squadron and 12 for the B-17 squadrons.[23]

The fighter situation was not entirely satisfactory. For Fiji the War Department commitment of one fighter group less one squadron was not even remotely approached; instead of the allotted 82 aircraft, there was but one squadron with 16 P-39's in the Fiji's. New Caledonia was even more slenderly furnished with fighter strength. Instead of the 40 which had been committed, Harmon could report only 27 P-400's, 2 P-39's, and 2 P-43's; with the dispatch of 15 P-400's to Guadalcanal, there would be virtually no defense remaining on the island other than the security afforded by marine fighters which could be moved over from Efate. Tongatabu alone appeared reasonably well equipped; 32 aircraft in one fighter squadron were on the island and it was recommended that this number not be allowed to drop below 20.[24] The battle of Guadalcanal was in its early stages, and other than the 15 P-400's on their way north to the island, the Marines were fending off the Japs with the remnants of the original squadron of 19 F4F's.

By 25 August General Harmon regarded the air situation in his command as critical. Already he had diverted four B-17's and two B-26's, and had so advised General MacArthur, but this was not enough. He asked for an immediate increase of the flow of bombers and set a total of 50 B-17's and 40 B-26's as the minimum, specifying that these should come out complete with combat crews and experienced personnel.[25] Temporarily it proved easier to obtain fighter planes and pilots than bombers. Thirty P-39's scheduled to arrive at Noumea in late September were diverted to New Caledonia from Australia, and the

Hawaiian Department was directed to send down by air 30 fighter pilots as rapidly as possible.[26] Fighters were available but not the bombers. On 26 August OPD summarized for General Emmons the status of South Pacific air strength as follows: (1) General MacArthur had been instructed to provide all possible support for COMSOPAC; (2) Admiral Ghormley had authority to shift at will all aircraft assigned to the South Pacific; (3) General Harmon had been authorized to divert temporarily bombardment aircraft and crews en route to Australia provided he could use them more effectively in the South Pacific; and (4) Admiral Nimitz had the approval for movement of any aircraft and crews, including fighter pilots of the Seventh Air Force, considered necessary to the success of the Solomons operation.[27] But no further reinforcements of heavy bombers was possible.

Little could be added to the liberality of this arrangement as far as control over aircraft was concerned. Army aircraft all the way from Hickam Field to Tontouta Air Base in New Caledonia were at the complete control of the responsible naval commanders, and Harmon already had been instructed to cooperate fully with the naval commander in his area. But for the present, no additional heavy bombers could be sent into the Pacific. Meanwhile, General Harmon's request of 4 August had been embodied in a memorandum by Admiral King, who presented it on 30 August. This statement from the Chief of Naval Operations paralleled Harmon's list of requirements. It asked for 3 squadrons of P-38's, 1 medium bombardment squadron of 16 aircraft for use on Guadalcanal, 3 fighter squadrons for defense of Espiritu

Santo, Efate, and New Caledonia, 2 B-17 squadrons for New Caledonia and Fiji and three 16-plane dive bomber squadrons, one each for Guadalcanal, New Caledonia, and Fiji.[28]

General Arnold's reaction to the plan was terse and in line with the position taken on previous occasions. Implementation of the memo would serve merely as an additional diversion of inconclusive force. If successful, it would make no material contribution toward winning the war. If unsuccessful, it would result in one more step toward defeat in detail. Under any circumstances, the additional units "must come from the theaters where the war can be won." The only available sources were the forces being prepared for North Africa and these already were insufficient to assure a success. Therefore he could not consider compliance unless the African operation were abandoned, and if it were, "these units will be more profitably employed against Germany than against the Jap's outlying island outposts."[29]

There still was heavy pressure to draw off 15 groups for employment in the Pacific theater. Army and Navy members of the Joint United States Strategic Committee were able to agree upon a deployment for the 15 groups, butthey differed widely on the time element of that deployment, and they continued to differ. The Army members stated that with the exception of the one heavy bombardment group already withdrawn from the United Kingdom force and ordered to the Pacific, there should be no diversion of the 15 groups to the Pacific until the forces for North Africa, the Middle East, and the United Kingdom

had been built up.[30] Navy's priority list was somewhat different; it placed the United Kingdom at the bottom of the list, and was as follows: (1) North Africa, (2) Middle East, (3) South Pacific, (4) Southwest Pacific, and (5) United Kingdom.[31] Deployment of these forces placed their bulk in the Southwest Pacific, none whatsoever in the North and Central Pacific.[32]

Early in September, Admiral King informed General Arnold that in view of the CCS statement on 24 July he felt there was a clear mandate to divert the groups from the European theater, particularly since the decision to divert had been reachedprior to the increased urgency created by the bombings on Guadalcanal. Therefore, he considered that the Combined Chiefs of Staff already had granted approval for the movement, and that the existing urgency "demands it."[33] General Arnold's reply was vigorous in defense of his strategical concept. In his opinion there was apparently "a lack of common understanding as to the accepted overall strategic policy of the United Nations." He cited a previous decision of the Combined Chiefs of Staff stating that a strategical offensive with maximum forces should be conducted in the western European theater at the earliest practicable date, while a strategic defensive with appropriate forces should be maintained in the other theaters. In General Arnold's view, nothing had been agreed to subsequently which in any way altered that fundamental concept.[34] Furthermore, he referred Admiral King to presidential support of the "special operation" which had been given highest

priority by Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill, adding that diversions would jeopardize the success of the operation and "are not to my mind consistent with that established priority."[35] Germany must not be allowed to divert aircraft to Africa; her fighters must be occupied by Allied planes operating from the United Kingdom and he foresaw the possibility of failure of the African operation should any of the 15 groups be withdrawn from the forces in England. The Commanding General of the Air Forces further informed Admiral King that on 2 September Admiral Nimitz had under his control a total of 472 army aircraft, of which 119 were heavy bombers either in the Pacific theater or on the way out, and these forces could be strengthened by October replacements which included 12 heavy bombers, 15 medium bombers, and 44 fighters.[36]

On previous occasions Admiral King had requested P-38 fighters for the South Pacific in response to appeals reaching him from that theater; COMAIRSOPAC had sent in such a request on 1 September and immediately it was passed on to the Air Forces.[37] Apparently General Arnold gave careful thought to his answer. He rejected one negative reply, then on the fifth he referred Admiral King to the record being achieved by P-40's in Australia and expressed failure to understand "The extreme reluctance to use P-40 type fighters and resultant requirement for P-38's as expressed in your requests to General MacArthur . . . in the light of the results being obtained by P-40 equipped fighter units in Australia."[38] If the South Pacific required

P-38's to cover the broad distances between bases, so did the Atlantic. The invasion of North Africa lay just ahead and every P-38 was needed for its success; only the P-38 could cross the Atlantic or move from the United Kingdom down to Oran or Casablanca. If the long-range fighters were to be withdrawn, then the North African venture must be abandoned and General Arnold recommended to Admiral King that such a drastic proposal should be considered by the Chiefs of Staff and the President before carrying it on to the Combined Chiefs of Staff.[39]

It was clear that at this late date either the basic global strategy had not yet received the full and complete sanction of all services, or if it had, then the implications of the decision were not fully recognized by the Navy. There was need for a sharper definition of the relative importance of operations in the Pacific, European, and African theaters. The Army Air Forces regarded the projected invasion of Northwest Africa as an extremely hazardous undertaking, with the greatest element of danger existing in the enemy's air strength; therefore it would be well to clear up the misunderstandings in advance of the undertaking. AAF spokesmen urged acceptance of General Arnold's recommendation to the effect that the invasion of North Africa should be regarded as the initiation of the major effort against the Axis and that there should be no diversion of air forces to other theaters except where required to secure American positions.[40]

Even if agreement upon basic strategy could be reached, the details remained troublesome. If, for example, a strategic defense

was to be the accepted doctrine for the Pacific, what were the appropriate forces for such a course of action? Again, if General Arnold felt that there should be no diversion from the European theater except to secure positions gained elsewhere, what then would be necessary to secure Guadalcanal? Actually no precise answer to these statements could be found in Washington. Instead, it had to be hammered out down in the South Pacific, where daily contact with Zeros and Bettys and with the Kumas and Hibikis gave a more precise picture of what was an appropriate force to retain the foothold in the Lower Solomons. It was obvious to the men in the South Pacific that Tulagi and Guadalcanal could be held only by continuous support of strong air and naval forces. The naval commanders immediately concerned were not in a position to request specific numbers of army aircraft, but they could and did repeat their demands in general terms. Rear Admiral Turner, Commander of Task Force 62, reported to Admiral Ghormley that Guadalcanal was an "unsinkable aircraft carrier which I believe may finally be multiplied into an invincible fleet adequate for a decisive move but this will require patience and the determined support by forces of a strength and character which you do not now have under your control."[41] Admiral Turner saw a golden military opportunity at hand in Guadalcanal, if the position could be consolidated and extended.

Owing to the lack of suitable army aircraft for use on Guadalcanal, Admiral Nimitz combined his available carrier air groups and transferred to COMSOPAC all the planes which could be spared from Enterprise and Saratoga, although he felt that such use of carrier

pilots was uneconomical from a military viewpoint and in view of the current shortage of trained carrier groups. Success in Guadalcanal would be ensured by a steady flow of suitable army aircraft and trained pilots, and such a flow must be initiated at once. As for suitable types, the Commander in Chief of the Pacific specified P-38's, A-24's, B-25's, and B-26's, and with these he could ". . . give CACTUS /Guadalcanal/ the wherewithal to live up to its name."[42] This request reached General Arnold and though he did not reply, he had prepared a review of all aircraft movements to the South, Southwest, and Central Pacific during the months of July and August. The total was impressive, numbering 1,304 aircraft of all types on hand, en route, and being repaired, of which 340 fighters and bombers were available or en route to the South Pacific on 1 September, and of these 111 had been sent since 1 July.[43]

Down in Noumea Admiral McCain as Commander of Aircraft in the South Pacific continued to press for more army air support in anticipation of intensive air activity for months to come. He was well aware of the great value of the high altitude performance of P-38's and P-47's and admitted that these were more suitable than any of the P-39 or P-40 series, but what really mattered was that support would be continuous. To him suitability was relative; he would "make maximum possible use of army fighters of whatever type available in this area." If P-40's were being sent his preference was for the P-40L with the V1650-1 engine, but other than a few P-40E-1's at Tongatabu, he neither had any in the area or en route to it.[44]

Admiral King passed this on to General Marshall and urged that a portion of replacement and reinforcement aircraft for the Solomons be of a high altitude fighter type. He cited Harmon's strong appeal for adequate fighters, submitted on 8 September, which stressed the inadequacy of the P-400 to meet Jap Zeros and bombers, and assumed that the War Department would maintain a continuous flow of replacement aircraft and personnel necessary to hold the positions.[45] On the same day General Harmon repeated criticism of the P-400, advising the Deputy Chief of Air Staff to "tell the gang to quit pestering me about the 'suitability' of the P-400 and P-39. They know as well as anyone that it is not a high altitude fighter--why kid ourselves?"[46]

During these early days of the offensive it was only natural that naval attention would remain focussed upon the Pacific. Army aircraft flew under naval control and they shifted about over the Pacific as naval commanders saw fit. The Navy had been forced to undertake an offensive operation against the Japanese many months ahead of schedule; it played on a narrow margin at best, perhaps even a long gamble, when the guns of the task forces opened on Guadalcanal and Tulagi on the morning of 7 August. Full recovery from the effects of Pearl Harbor lay far in the future, and the responsible commanders were forced to work with slender reserves, both in the air and on the surface.

General Arnold, on the other hand, refused to retreat from his original position that the European area would yield the most profitable return on investment of air power. The principle was

clear: German vitals could be reached, those of Japan as yet could not. In any event, German air strength must not be allowed to move to Africa unhindered. Furthermore, it was held by the airmen that G-2 estimates of of the Japanese order of battle refuted the contention that the Pacific lacked strength. By 1 April 1943, it was believed that the Japanese air forces would total about 4,000 combat planes, against which the Combined Chiefs of Staff had deployed approximately 5,000 allied planes, including carrier-based aircraft and those in China and India. Since many Japanese squadrons would be held in China and Manchuria, the margin of 1,000 would seem adequate without any further diversion from Europe.[47]

Admiral King had been willing to concede first place to the North African operation and to the Middle East, but he felt that, since the Middle East was now fairly well stabilized and the African operation still lay several weeks in the future, there was pressing need for strengthening the air forces in the South Pacific to the limit of operational facilities. General Arnold cited two factors in reply: one was the existence of 1,000 U. S. Army and Navy aircraft containing a maximum of less than 400 Japanese planes within the entire area--if aircraft were properly distributed, the existing number would suffice. The second factor was that of available facilities, which he considered insufficient to care for any greater numbers than those currently allotted.[48]

The Joint Staff Planners already were cognizant of lack of facilities; on 2 September they had been informed that General

Harmon was unable to employ any of his medium bombers in the Solomons operations. Therefore, the planners regarded it as unsound to make an early commitment of an additional group of medium bombers to the South Pacific since this area apparently lacked adequate bases from which to operate its present force effectively.[49] Admiral McCain observed the 11th Group operating out of Espiritu and saw an immediate need for increasing his heavy bomber strength. On 14 September he not only asked for 13 more heavy bombers from the Hawaiian Air Force, but he urgently recommended the reinforcement of his theater by all B-17F's in Hawaii.[50] Efate was the recommended destination and McCain felt that the ground echelon of the 11th Group could maintain the new squadron over a limited period.

This request brought immediate action, at least in part, and on the same day the Hawaiian Department was ordered to send a squadron of B-17's to the South Pacific without delay. Furthermore it was specified that General Emmons should select from those available the best trained unit, one fitted for immediate entry into combat and whose planes should be equipped with ball turrets.[51] Necessary maintenance personnel were to move by air, but the remainder of the ground echelon would follow by surface vessel. This was not all. After much debate over the merits of the P-400 and repeated requests for the P-38, on 17 September General Arnold was able to notify Harmon that 15 P-38's had been diverted from Australia to the South Pacific. The planes were in New Zealand, but would be sent to New Caledonia, together with six P-38 crews, a Firestone tank man, a Lockheed

maintenance man, and Maj. George McGeese, regarded as an outstanding P-38 pilot and squadron leader.[53] Replacement belly tanks for the planes were being flown by air to New Caledonia.

Apparently these reinforcements did not appear impressive to Admiral King. Only two days after the orders had gone out to Hawaii to move the B-17's to the South Pacific he submitted to the Chief of Staff a detailed analysis of the critical fighter situation in Guadalcanal.[53] He pointed to the arrival of 19 F4F-4's on 21 August, 19 more on 30 August, and 24 on 11 September. Yet by 14 September 27 Grumman fighters had been destroyed on Guadalcanal and the rate of loss based on the full 25-day period was 57 per cent per month. This rate Admiral King found prohibitive; he stated unequivocally that the Navy could not meet such attrition and continue to operate its carriers.[54] There was no doubt that the situation on Henderson Field was critical, and Admiral King pointed out that the number of Army, Navy, and Marine Corps aircraft there would soon be exhausted. While he was aware that some reinforcements were en route, no further movements could occur without an early decision in each case. Therefore he found it ". . . imperative that the future continuous flow of army fighters be planned at once, irrespective of, and in higher priority than, the commitments to any other theater."[55]

Thus the score of the fighter pilots on Guadalcanal drew from the Chief of Naval Operations a more powerful statement of the case for the Pacific than any he had yet presented. General Marshall could not concur. He referred once more to authority already granted to

Admiral Nimitz permitting him to shift aircraft throughout the Central and South Pacific, and reminded Admiral King that the War Department had not assigned to operations in the Solomons area a higher priority than that of any other area. Instead, "The priorities adhered to by this Headquarters conform to those prescribed by higher authority by whose decision the highest priority has been given to a special operation."[56] He assured King that a maximum possible flow of aircraft was being maintained but these reinforcements remained within the capabilities established by approved priority.

An examination of the schedule for fighter replacements which General Marshall submitted in his reply reveals the extent of the gap between army and navy thinking regarding Guadalcanal. Only 33 P-39's could be sent out by the end of February, a number scarcely larger than the number of marine fighters which had been lost in the first 28 days of combat,[57] although a considerably larger figure would be obtained if the forces at Canton and Christmas were included. It is of some interest to note that at the same time the Chief of Staff was phrasing his negative reply to Admiral King, his subordinate commander in the South Pacific was expressing considerable concern to Admiral Ghormley over the possibility of a major Japanese effort against the Fiji group. Such a move could be supported both from the Marshalls and the Ellice Islands, and thus it appeared as one potential course of enemy action. In light of this threat General Harmon submitted a request, or better--an analysis--of the needs of the area, basing his recommendations upon the premise that similar forces, both

marine and naval, would not be continuously available. For heavy bombardment he requested one group less two squadrons, and this was to be assigned permanently. There was need for a medium bombardment group, less two squadrons, and for a dive bomber group, similarly reduced. Five fighter squadrons were requested, one squadron of photo reconnaissance and one photo mapping squadron, while the number of dive bombers and fighters was contingent upon continued availability of land-based marine and naval units of the same type.[58]

There was no slackening in the debate over the South Pacific. In September General Arnold himself made a hurried visit to the Pacific theater and listened at first hand to the reports of the field commanders, but there was as yet no complete schedule of commitments to which army and navy planners could agree. The Commanding General in the South Pacific was keenly aware of the paucity of his equipment to meet the Jap threat; he was equally aware of the difficulty in securing adequate facilities to permit employment of the forces he had at hand. As early as 23 August 1942, Colonel Saunders had expressed impatience over his inability to move B-17's up to Henderson Field; on the last day of the Battle of Santa Cruz he wrote General Hale that if ". . . we could just follow this up now with hammering blows it would certainly put them back plenty."[59] And so it might, but Henderson Field was not yet ready, either for medium or heavy bombers, and General Harmon warned General Arnold on 28 August of his fear that airdrome construction on both Guadalcanal and Espiritu would be disappointingly slow.[60] He discovered that neither the Navy's Seabee units nor the Marines' aviation battalions possessed any heavy

equipment, but by pressing into service enemy equipment captured on Guadalcanal, Henderson Field should show progress soon. General Harmon continually stressed with COMSOPAC the necessity of operating his aircraft out of Guadalcanal, for he was convinced that "once we can get some B-17's and B-26's staging through CACTUS and later operating from there, we will have the whip hand."[61]

If there was one single factor which plagued air operations in the early days of the campaign, it was the lack of supply, and the dependence upon surface transport to bring in the fuel and heavy equipment for base construction. General Arnold already was aware of some of the difficulties of operations and he simply assumed that plans had been made in advance to provide follow-up organizations. He felt that no advance could be maintained in any theater without an engineering regiment or a similar organization to prepare airdromes and maintain facilities. Referring to the engineering regiment which was set up for each overseas air force he assumed that the Navy maintained a similar unit in their projects. "This is probably one reason the Navy is not prepared to operate from any land base. They do not appreciate the trouble which usually arises."[62] As it was, the B-26's could operate only if the Jap should approach New Caledonia, Fiji, Efate, or Espiritu. Fighters had to fly into Guadalcanal and even this operation was limited by the number of available belly tanks. Since the P-39's were arriving without belly tanks, despite Harmon's request for two for every plane, on 28 August only 15 more fighters could be flown over the water to Henderson, and those on the island could not be returned.[63]

There was no harbor at Guadalcanal proper. Cargo vessels lay off Lunga to discharge food and ammunition and then withdraw under threat of Japanese air attack, which thus far had prevented extensive unloading operations. By 11 September General Harmon was becoming increasingly apprehensive over the situation at Guadalcanal which had ". . . stirred up a hornets nest and the hornets are not going to subside until they are all killed."[64] He pointed to the growing concentrations of Japanese strength in New Georgia, in the Faisi-Buin-Tonolei area, at Kieta and Buka, and on Guadalcanal itself, as well as on New Guinea and on the Bismarcks. Here was a ripe opportunity for the heavy bombers, and he lamented strongly that because adequate personnel and equipment had not been landed on the heels of the Marines, there was as yet no operable base for heavy aircraft in the Lower Solomons.[65]

On 14 September COMAIRSOPAC submitted an extensive report on the entire supply situation within his area.[66] Guadalcanal had been occupied on 7 August but five weeks later the landing field was still unusable by medium or heavy bombers, while fighters and other smaller aircraft could operate only when the rolled earth surface was dry. P-400's had taken off in heavy mud at a time when other planes were unable to move, but the P-400's were not defending the field against Jap bombers; if the enemy attacked in Guadalcanal, even the F4F's were grounded. Marston mat was badly needed but instead of the 750 bundles required for a full cover, only 160 bundles had been put ashore by the middle of September.

SECRET CONFIDENTIAL SECURITY INFORMATION

Even more serious was the lack of aviation fuel. As of 13 September there were approximately 30,000 gallons of fuel ashore at Henderson. With a current consumption rate of some 8,000 gallons daily, this quantity would scarcely sustain operations for four days; nor was there any assurance that more would be brought in immediately. General Harmon obviously did not wish to appear as a carping critic since he was "not fully cognizant, nor perhaps appreciative, of all the factors that go to influence Navy decision." But he felt that the existing lack of air facilities was traceable to the lack of vigor in bringing up surface transport. As he reported to General Arnold, no naval surface forces had been in the Guadalcanal area since Admiral Turner had retired on 9 August, following the loss of the four heavy cruisers. As a result, Japanese forces roamed at will in the Northern Solomons and constantly harassed the ground forces and installations on Henderson Field. Even as the report was written, enemy surface forces in heavy strength were north of the Santa Cruz group and he viewed the situation on Guadalcanal as of the utmost gravity.

From the very outset of the Solomons operation Harmon and his fighter and bomber officers, Colonels Strother and Everest, then serving with Admiral McCain, had stressed with COMSOPAC the necessity of preparing the Guadalcanal airdrome, even at the risk of some serious losses. Had this been done in the initial stages of the operation, it would have been a much easier task and ". . . I am

beginning to wonder now if the Navy really and fully appreciated this necessity, in the beginning. They seemed to, as we talked to them but the positive action was not taken." He recognized the difficulties--improper loading, improper routing, mixing of loads. But "The point is that it was not the consuming thought in every Naval Commander's mind and the plan did not have as its first and immediate objectlve the seizure and development of Cactus as an air base. That was just something that could follow along."[67] General Harmon believed that airdrome construction personnel and equipment should have gone ashore in the third wave at Guadalcanal. But he wasn't ever certain that it had been made available to Admiral Ghormley in time to go in with the Marines. That it was not properly loaded, he was positive.

As General Harmon understood the situation, Ghormley's primary mission was to hold the line of communications to Australia, whereas the Guadalcanal-Tulagi operation was secondary and was to be conducted without jeopardizing the primary mission. It was a difficult directive and Ghormley had recommended against the invasion at the time, yet Harmon knew "from daily contact with him that no man could have more conscientiously endeavored to carry out a most difficult directive. Not being charged with the supreme command responsibility for the security of lines of communication, I find it difficult to charge lack of aggressiveness in follow through of the Cactus operation." In explaining the failure to establish air base facilities, Harmon deplored the loss of surface units, the

greater proportion of which he felt were sacrificed in other than offensive roles, with no compensatory damage having been inflicted upon the enemy. Thus, since "It is evident that we will suffer losses whatever we do . . . why not do something to the enemy while we are taking the losses? In other words, 'vigorous offensive action is the best defense' whether the strategic concept is defensive or offensive."

There was little optimism in General Harmon's analysis of the dangers threatening the South Pacific. He felt that had Henderson Field been prepared for full air operations, even within three weeks, the serious difficulties which he now faced would not exist. The bulk of enemy surface forces would have been pushed out of the Solomons and by air attacks on Buka, Kieta, and Rabaul the Jap air effort would have been crippled to a large extent. Moreover, such action would have achieved comparative freedom of movement for the Navy's surface forces, probably permitted occupation of Kdeni, and inflicted severe losses upon the Japanese naval units. But the Guadalcanal offensive was staged too quickly to permit proper planning, loading, and availability of necessary equipment at the proper time and place. "Under the circumstances I cannot state definitely that the field at Cactus could be prepared anymore rapidly than is being done."[68]

It is interesting to note the Army Commander's evaluation of his weapons at this critical period in his theater. The Pacific war, he believed, would not be won by ground and naval surface forces supported by air. "If it is to be won all concerned, high

command and rank and file must appreciate that it will be won by air action supported by Naval surface forces and Ground forces; that the major air effort must be land based and that the carrier occupies a supporting and not a major offensive role." Regardless of the Marines' initial success, and the subsequent outstanding air defense of Henderson by army, navy, and marine fighters, he felt that since 7 August American forces engaged in the Guadalcanal-Tulagi operation had suffered a constant and cumulative defeat. Writing on 19 September, he could point to a force of 4,500 Marines which Admiral Turner took into Guadalcanal on the previous day, but even though this increment raised the total ground forces to 14,000-15,000, the Marines could do little more than hold the general area around Henderson Field. The Jap could rest his forces; General Vandegrift could not. Moreover, to a force already estimated at 6,000, enemy destroyers were adding from 300 to 500 troops nightly. The flying field still could not sustain B-17 operations nor could anyone at CACTUS determine when it would be able to do so. Before all the array of heavy supplies and equipment could be brought in, it would be necessary to increase greatly the freedom of movement for surface craft, and it was Harmon's opinion that this could be accomplished only through intensive B-17 operations from Henderson Field.

A gloomy prospect faced the Commander of the South Pacific Army Forces, and he concluded that "If we can't get this thing going pretty soon, and it looks rather doubtful, I anticipate that it won't be long now before that position, and Ringbolt /Tulagi/ as well, won and so far held at such sacrifice of personnel and tremendous

sacrifice of materiel, will be lost." He even recommended that necessary measures be initiated at once to meet the loss of Guadalcanal. Thus the General had outlined the reasons for his pessimism; perhaps he had drawn the case too darkly for he felt obliged to assure General Arnold that he did not wish to "give the idea anyone is 'giving up' or wavering in determination to do everything possible to insure success--far from it; but on the other hand we cannot afford to stick our heads in the sand."[69]

The significance of the difficulties outlined in this report affected far more than the Guadalcanal operation, for General Harmon had focussed attention upon one cardinal feature of air operations in the Pacific island theater; despite all the mobility inherent in aircraft, here that mobility was bound down to a relatively narrow arc in front of the maximum advance of the line of supply. And that line of supply moved upon the surface. Where the ships could not move with some reasonable degree of safety, or where risk of their loss could not be accepted, air operations not only were hampered--they came perilously close to a full stop. General Harmon, as the ranking army commander in the South Pacific was keenly sensible of this, and even more so was Colonel Saunders up on Espiritu with the 11th Group. It was possible to report on 21 September that B-17's were now conducting limited operations from Guadalcanal.[70] But these were far from the full scale effort to which Harmon referred. And even when operations did attain a higher level in 1943, the time

required to beat down the Japanese in the Central and Northern Solomons was measured in months, rather than days or weeks, as Harmon had implied in his report. The tenacity of the Jap and his skill at clinging to a foothold, even under extraordinary pressure, was not yet widely appreciated.

Chapter VI

THE PROBLEM OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

In the South Pacific the situation rapidly grew too acute under enemy pressure to permit endless debate over the problem of reinforcements for Guadalcanal. For a time following their defeat in the Eastern Solomons on 23-25 August, the Japanese withheld all large-scale attempts to reinforce their positions in the Lower Solomons, but continued to send in troops and supplies with the early editions of the "Tokyo Express." Destroyers and cruisers moved down nightly from the Buin-Faisi area, delivered their loads, shelled the ground positions around Henderson, then retired under cover of night to avoid the Marines' torpedo and dive bombers. By the end of September they had put ashore practically a new division. They had suffered losses but so had U. S. surface forces. Wasp was gone and so were the destroyers O'Brien, Blue, Colhoun, Gregory, and Libilo, all lost in attempts to supply the Marines at Henderson.

Concentration of surface units in late September and early October had increased Japanese success at night reinforcement and to check this operation, whose continuance implied eventual loss of Guadalcanal, a naval task force moved north from Espiritu Santo. The resulting clash of surface forces on 11 October, known as the Battle of Cape Esperance, dealt the Japanese surface forces their heaviest losses since Midway. Two days later they returned to deliver a

tremendous shelling against Henderson Field, an attack which destroyed or damaged nearly every plane on Guadalcanal. Two battleships, a light cruiser, and eight destroyers poured shells into the area around Henderson, with the result that by morning only one dive bomber was able to resist Japanese efforts to land troops from six transports west of Kokumbona.[1] Approximately 10,000 troops poured ashore, according to General Vandegrift; with these reinforcements and strengthened by fresh supplies, the Japanese began to test out the defense lines along the Matanikau River.

There could be no doubt that the enemy was massing great strength for a drive against allied positions, either on Papua or in the Tulagi area. Troops and aircraft were streaming into the New Britain-Upper Solomons area from Netherlands Indies bases and the Philippines,[2] and large numbers of merchant and combat vessels were sighted lying at Rabaul and in the Buin-Faisi area. To ease their way, the Japanese were applying increased pressure on the slender supply lines into Guadalcanal, sinking the destroyer Meredith by carrier strike on the fifteenth and badly hurting Chester on 30 October with a torpedo from a submarine. Meanwhile, the Japanese continued to land troops and supplies, but not without serious losses of ships and men due to air attack from Henderson. Furthermore, General Vandegrift's position was somewhat improved. Shortly after the Battle of Cape Esperance (11 October), several thousand troops had come ashore with the Americal Division's 164th Infantry Combat Team, and the 6th Seabee Battalion had demonstrated remarkable ability

in maintaining Henderson in operable condition. But there was little margin of safety.

The major land assault against marine and army lines came on 23-26 October when the Japanese struck first along the Matanikau, then south of the air strip along the Lunga Ridge. The attack was supported in part by surface gunfire from destroyers and cruisers standing off shore and it succeeded to the extent that possession of Henderson Field hung in the balance on the twenty-sixth. Only by a vigorous counter attack was the enemy driven off, leaving over 3,000 dead on the field, and on the same day the serious damage inflicted upon the Jap carrier force in the Battle of Santa Cruz Islands eased the surface pressure. The effort represented the most serious threat Jap ground forces had yet thrown against Henderson Field. But Hornet was lost, so was Porter, and plane strength was low on Guadalcanal. Amid these critical events in the Solomons, General Arnold had returned from his inspection trip and submitted his observations to the Air Staff.

On the eve of the powerful enemy attempt to recover the Tulagi-Guadalcanal position, the Army and Navy were able to come to an agreement on the total air forces necessary to maintain the positions in the Lower Solomons. General Arnold continued in his belief that base facilities in the South Pacific already were furnished with the maximum number of aircraft which they could operate. Lack of proper distribution remained the primary problem; as soon as the various types could operate from advanced bases, the number in the theater,

plus those in reserve and en route, would meet all requirements. And behind the entire South Pacific stood Hawaii, serving as a reservoir of aircraft and personnel.[3] Admiral King pointed out that additional airdromes were then under construction, and that the situation demanded that the number of aircraft be held at saturation point at all times. He was supported by the President's Chief of Staff, Admiral Leahy, who urged more aircraft for the South Pacific rather than for the United Kingdom, where the need was not so urgent. To the theory that Hawaiian forces should serve as a ready storehouse for support of Guadalcanal, Admiral McCain, freshly in from the South Pacific, offered criticism, in view of the fact that he had found maintenance crews and spare parts arriving at the operating bases much later than the planes, and ground crews already at the forward bases often were not equipped to service the types of planes sent in as replenishments.[4]

On 17 October General Harmon sent off to his chief another of his periodic requests for help in the face of increasing pressure by the Japanese, and the list of his needs is of interest inasmuch as it was presented in a period of intense enemy activity and immediately prior to a definitive decision on the part of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. COMGENSOPAC reported 177 aircraft in his area, but he needed a total of 439 plus a complete group of dive bombers, and he specified that one of the fighter squadrons should be P-38's.[5] Only two days after this report was received, Plans credited General Harmon with a total strength considerably in advance of his own

estimate, and since it was based explicitly upon reports from New Caledonia, Fiji, and Tongatabu, the source of the discrepancy remains obscure.[6] Nevertheless, General Marshall was informed that by 19 October air strength in the South Pacific had more than doubled since 4 August, moving up to a total of 378 aircraft from the 117 available on the latter date. In addition, the 43d Division shortly would arrive in the theater and one regiment of Coast Artillery (AA) plus one battalion of 155-mm. Coast Artillery were then on the way.[7] All this was below General Harmon's recommendations but it was the maximum support available at the time.

By the third week of October discussion over South Pacific air strength turned on the estimated capacity of the airfields in the area. Joint Staff Planners had studied the problem, General Arnold had inspected the area, and Admiral McCain was only recently returned from his command as COMAIRSOPAC. Between the two air commanders there occurred rather a wide divergence of opinion as to the capacity of the airfields.[8] In nearly every category--fighters excepted--and for every base the Navy Commander reached a higher estimate than General Arnold. Perhaps he was influenced by carrier practice, where planes' wings necessarily dovetailed in ranks upon the deck or perhaps he was ignoring sound principles of dispersion and protection necessary in ground operations. In any case the difference indicated a broad variation in what each service regarded as a safe operational space. Equally interesting was the proposed strength for the Pacific bases presented by the two air commanders. On Canton,

Christmas, Tongatabu, Samoa--all across the Pacific--General Arnold would place 16 light bombers and 12 patrol bombers (flying boats) at each base. He would make no recommendations for Palmyra, but Admiral McCain could. At each of the above, including Palmyra, the Admiral proposed a total of 37 fighters, 18 scout bombers, 18 torpedo bombers, and 12 long-range patrol boats or B-17's, forces which if provided would give to each base a powerful defensive strength.[9]

During the discussion another difference of opinion arose between the two services. Representatives of the Army Air Forces expressed the view that the fighter units then on station along the line of communications--at Christmas, Canton, Fiji, and Tongatabu--were not being economically employed, and recommended that they be replaced by light or torpedo bombers.[10] Actually General Arnold had advanced this idea early in the month when he instructed Plans to arrange for medium and light bombardment aircraft to be located at Christmas, Canton, and other points along the ferry route.[11] Navy's view was quite the opposite. Its spokesman felt that fighters should be retained since fighter aircraft not only could ward off striking forces from enemy carriers, but by carrying bombs they could inflict material damage upon enemy surface craft.[12] What it desired was a small strike force, specifically at Canton, to resist a sudden thrust by a Japanese carrier; the Air Forces, on the other hand, felt that such a threat was remote. A less debatable argument against the plan to move light and dive bombers to the islands was

the poor production record of both army and navy light, dive, and torpedo bombers.[13]

Agreement was reached that Guadalcanal, Ndeni, and Espiritu Santo, all within striking distance of enemy objectives, should be provided with aircraft to the practical operating limit of each airfield, while those stations lying within supporting distance of the forward area, such as Efate, New Caledonia, and Fiji, should be provided with sufficient strength to furnish relief for 100 per cent of the units engaged in the combat areas. Of even greater importance was the proposed deployment of aircraft in the South Pacific, for under discussion was a plan to provide the South Pacific with a total of 70 heavy bombers, 80 mediums, and 130 fighters by 1 January 1943.[14]

Events in the Solomons by now had assumed larger significance than ever before, and Japanese pressure no longer permitted the area to be furnished with whatever could be spared from the European and African theaters. Certainly the Marines on Guadalcanal were keenly sensible of the task facing them and on 26 October their air commander stated that at least a 50 per cent reserve for all aircraft must be maintained in Espiritu Santo; past experience indicated replacement of S2D's and F4F's every 10 days. Specifically, if enemy pressure on Guadalcanal should continue, there would be need for 18 F4F's and 18 S2D's every 10 days, together with 100 per cent replacement of flight crews.[15] Such was the marine estimate. Maj. Gen.

George E. Stratemeyer, Chief of the Air Staff, found these figures so "extravagant," he believed no action was necessary, and Plans scaled them down to a 20 per cent monthly replacement for aircraft in the combat island zone, with a 5 per cent attrition rate for those air units not in danger of imminent combat, "if consistent with other highest priority allocations."[16]

There was powerful support for the naval and marine pleas for help. Mr. Roosevelt, who had been following closely the course of recent events in the South Pacific, addressed a note on 24 October to Admirals Leahy and King, Generals Marshall and Arnold, indicating his apprehension over the critical situation then prevailing. It is of considerable interest to note the President's reaction to the problem of equipping two great combat areas since his "anxiety about the Southwest Pacific is to make sure that every possible weapon gets into that area to hold Guadalcanal, and that having held it in this crisis that munitions and planes and crews are on the way to take advantage of our success. We will soon find ourselves engaged on two active fronts and we must have adequate air support in both places even though it means delay in our other commitments, particularly to England. Our long-range plans could be set back for months if we fail to throw our full strength in our immediate and impending conflicts." In view of the extreme urgency the President asked for an immediate and complete canvass of every possible temporary diversion of materiel for "our active fronts."[17]

General Marshall prepared his reply and indicated to Mr. Roosevelt

that the entire situation in the South Pacific was dependent upon the outcome of the current major Japanese assault upon the defense positions around Henderson Field. He credited the enemy with approximately 15,000 troops on Guadalcanal; opposing these were some 23,000 American troops, composed of a reinforced marine division, and about 3,500 army troops up from the Americal Division in New Caledonia. Available for immediate reinforcement of Guadalcanal was the remainder of the Americal Division and a part of the 43d Division, and behind these stood 72,000 additional ground troops in the South Pacific, including a full division of 13,000 New Zealanders; the 49,000 men necessarily remaining fixed to their bases as defense forces should not be regarded as support for Guadalcanal. As elsewhere in the global war, the primary problem was that of lack of shipping and escorts for the transports.[18]

The Chief of Staff reported the presence of 40 heavy bombers in the South Pacific, plus 27 medium bombers and 133 fighters, and to meet the existing emergency, 23 more heavies were being dispatched by air and 33 fighters by water. Furthermore, General MacArthur had been advised on 25 October that he should prepare to furnish on call to Admiral Halsey bombardment reinforcement and attrition replacements for P-38 fighters, 15 of which already were in the South Pacific theater.[19] There were additional forces prepared to move; the 25th Division in Hawaii would begin movement on 15 November but complete flexibility of all the South Pacific forces was prevented by a critical shortage of shipping, which by General Marshall's estimate

amounted to a deficiency of 25 standard cargo ships per month for the ensuing three months.[20]

After surveying the available aircraft in the continental stations, General Marshall concluded that Guadalcanal could not possibly draw upon the replacement training units in the United States, for this would fatally reduce the flow of trained personnel to the combat theaters. In any case, the Western Defense Command had only 25 heavy bombers and these were unsuited for operations in the Pacific. Only one source remained from which combat aircraft could be diverted to the South Pacific and this was the force of five heavy bombardment groups destined to carry out diversionary or supporting missions for the North African operation.[21] The squadrons already were either en route to or in England, ground echelons having preceded them, and this movement obviously would complicate any attempt to divert them. General Marshall indicated that since 10 September two squadrons had been diverted from England and he could have added that ever since July the Commanding General of the Air Forces had offered vigorous defense against all attempts to weaken the European theater in favor of the Pacific. Most significantly, General Marshall informed the President of the necessity for a further unification of command in the South Pacific, stating that "the present complications in the employment of air in the Pacific emphasize the necessity."[22]

The long debate was very nearly at an end. On 22 October a complete schedule of deployment for all army and naval aircraft in the South Pacific was discussed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and five days later it was accepted.[23] The schedule extended only to 1 January 1943, but undoubtedly it gave a certain stability to the plans of Army and Navy commanders in the field. If its provisions were fully met, the South Pacific heavy bomber strength never would drop below 70; medium bombers would number 52 and fighters 150--exclusive of the squadron at Canton, of that manned by the New Zealanders in Fiji, and of the forces at Palmyra, Christmas, Johnston, and Canning.[24] Admiral Leahy proposed that in committing these forces to the South Pacific, they should be at the complete disposal of the area commander (COMSOPAC), and General Arnold agreed, stating that these figures represented a total and the components could be distributed by the theater commander where most needed.[25]

Misinterpretation of this agreement arose immediately after acceptance. Navy felt that as written and interpreted by the Air Forces, it actually would reduce the total number of aircraft in the theater. It was Admiral King's belief that the advance bases would be filled to the saturation point, that 100 per cent replacements would stand immediately behind the forward units, and that other stations should include aircraft sufficient to meet attrition losses.[26] Implementation of this interpretation would raise the total aircraft to a point well above that considered feasible by the Air Forces; it implied a force of approximately 90 heavy and 72 medium bombers, and

226 fighters.[27] While he agreed to the principle of saturation of the forward bases, General Arnold regarded the reserve as a rotating one of 100 per cent replacements with an additional reserve of 50 per cent standing further to the rear.

The key to the disagreement lay in the misunderstanding over relief for the forward lines. General Arnold wanted plane-for-plane reinforcement for every aircraft at bases from which active combat was being conducted, but no more than that, whereas apparently the Navy assumed that the full allotted strength would be thrown into the forward areas and reserve strength should be computed accordingly.[23] By 10 November a satisfactory understanding was reached and the Navy gave its sanction to the Air Forces' program for replacements in the South Pacific.[29] In order to clear up existing confusion over the future interpretation of the agreement, General Arnold prepared a table of allocation and emphasized that it was his intention to maintain the agreed total of aircraft in the area at 70-52-150 for heavy bombers, medium bombers, and fighters, respectively. Furthermore, these planes were to be manned by Army Air Force personnel and there would be a constant flow of attrition planes to hold the strength at the agreed level.[30]

Quantitatively there was now a potential flow of aircraft to replace the losses at Guadalcanal and the other bases scattered so widely over the Pacific. But still there persisted the problem of control of these forces. Admiral Leahy had suggested and General Marshall had agreed that CINCPAC should have full authority to

distribute aircraft between his areas in accordance with his needs.[31] Seeking to implement this proposal, Admiral King proposed that Admiral Nimitz be informed accordingly to the effect that "Army and Navy aircraft including pilots and air service personnel assigned to the Pacific Ocean areas are subject to deployment and redistribution by CINCPAC at his discretion."[32] Further, Admiral King felt that CINCPAC should be informed of planned replacements and allocations of aircraft for the entire Pacific Ocean area, so that planes might be loaded or flown to the destination desired by CINCPAC when ready for delivery, and that the same procedure should be applicable to pilots and air service personnel.[33]

In part this suggestion was sensible enough; it certainly would expedite the flow of materiel direct to the critical points, and it restated the authority already granted to Nimitz to move aircraft within his area of responsibility. But in detail it went a trifle too far in extending the Navy's control over army aircraft and personnel. General Marshall read the draft and could not concur.[34] Operational control over army aircraft was one thing, but detailed administrative control was another. If carried out as stated, it not only would unduly extend naval control over army units--it would jeopardize the defense of Hawaii. The army was charged with the defense of Hawaii, yet under this proposal Admiral Nimitz would be authorized to take all aircraft from the Hawaiian Islands, which would leave the Army without aircraft to defend the point for which it bore responsibility. Hence the integrity of the army defense

forces must be preserved unless the Navy were to assume full responsibility for the defense of Hawaii. Until such time, allocation of army ground and air forces for the defense of Hawaii must remain a responsibility of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[35] What prompted General Marshall's objection was the possibility that Admiral Nimitz would be empowered to dispatch individual pilots and aircraft to the South Pacific and if this were done, it would be impossible to maintain the integrity of AAF units in the Pacific. If the instructions to CINCPAC were confined to authorization to deploy units, then the Chief of Staff could agree, although he made it clear that he did not intend the agreement to imply that the Army was prepared to fill any vacancies created by exercise of this authority.[36]

These principles were incorporated in the instructions and on 14 November CINCPAC was thereby granted complete freedom to deploy and distribute available air forces assigned to the South and Central Pacific. Admiral Nimitz was requested to inform both the War and Navy Departments of any redistribution of air units and they in turn agreed to inform him of all planned replacements and allocations of aircraft scheduled for movement to any point in the enormous area under his control. He could delegate similar authority to COMSOPAC if desired, and there was only one major restriction: his authority was "limited to the resources allotted by the War and Navy Departments and must not be so exercised as to create additional requirements in Air units for the Central and South Pacific areas." Furthermore, units--not pilots and planes--were to be sent out to COMSOPAC,

thereby leaving intact the squadrons of the Air Forces.[37] The Commander in Chief of the Pacific bore responsibility for the defense of an enormous area. He might deplore the lack of air strength at hand, but certainly he could hardly ask for any broader sanction for employment of the weapons he did have.

In the discussions just completed Ndeni had figured prominently. This island in the Santa Cruz group, which lay almost due north of Espiritu Santo, had been one of the original objectives of the invasion of Guadalcanal but due to the stubborn resistance of the Japanese in the Tulagi area, it had not been possible to move the 3d Marines over to Ndeni before the entire task force withdrew.[38] Lack of a base in the Santa Cruz area continued to trouble naval commanders, and late in August, at the time when General Harmon was repeatedly urging upon Admiral Ghormley the necessity for improving airdrome facilities on Guadalcanal, Rear Adm. R. K. Turner proposed to COMSOPAC that forces be prepared to take over Ndeni.[39] Already a general plan had been worked out by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on the theory that possession of Ndeni would defend the line of communications into Guadalcanal; a base here would extend the range of search planes nearly 700 nautical miles further north.

In view of the existing difficulty in moving army troops to Guadalcanal to reinforce marine forces, General Harmon could not agree with Admiral Turner's plan. Guadalcanal was in a precarious position; if any troops were brought in, they should properly go to Guadalcanal rather than for the purpose of seizing a fresh base.

Nevertheless, on the afternoon of 6 October Admiral Ghormley tentatively sanctioned the operation and this action immediately caused General Harmon to present his objections to COMSOPAC.[40] The entire move toward Ndeni, he felt, would represent a diversion from the main effort, and the situation at Guadalcanal was too critical to permit such a dispersion of forces. While admitting that a base at Ndeni would provide an intermediate point between Espiritu and Guadalcanal, he reminded COMSOPAC that practically all aircraft in the area now could make this flight direct from Espiritu to Henderson Field. It would extend searches and antisubmarine patrol, but its possession was not vital to the main task. Certainly he believed it improbable that the enemy would try to occupy it as long as intensive bomber operations were possible from Espiritu. Even if it were undertaken, no actual benefit could be derived for at least two and probably three months; meanwhile, Guadalcanal stood under the threat of steady enemy ground reinforcements, supported by heavy shelling from naval guns. And if a heavy night attack should be delivered, supported from the sea, the results would be disastrous since there ". . . is no effective defense against his support of such an attack by fire from warships."[41]

General Harmon was keenly affected by the possibility of loss of Guadalcanal; he personally was convinced that the Jap could recover it and would do so unless the Marines were adequately strengthened. And should Guadalcanal go, then the effort to take Santa Cruz (Ndeni) would be utterly wasted. The Jap would gain a jumping-off point

against American communication lines, he would deny one already gained by his enemy, and he would possess a shield for his operations against New Guinea. These were the objections to the Ndeni operation. What then did COMGEN:SOPAC regard as a more effective course of action?

The key to continued tenure of Guadalcanal lay at Henderson Field. Improve it so that all types of aircraft could operate regardless of weather, and rush ground forces to hold it. In its present state Henderson was still in no condition to support continuous use. Harmon expressed doubt over the ability of the Marston mat to withstand heavy bomber operation, even if the installation were completed; taxiways and hard standings were lacking, and in heavy weather rain very nearly brought all air operations to a halt. The enemy had not been reluctant to enlist weather on his side, and his recent tactics in employment of fighters and bombers might well indicate a calculated plan. Was there, Harmon asked, "the idea that on the right day, at the appropriate time, after having exhausted our Fighters and apparently withdrawn his bombers, he will return with them and strike heavily?" If the Jap commanders should so decide, they would find prime targets at Guadalcanal, for dispersion was poor and relatively no concealment or protection for the planes existed; such an attack would be a "stunning blow." If only a suitable runway and adequate facilities were provided to permit full operation of a B-17 squadron, a long step would be taken toward

securing the island; such a development would extend daylight reconnaissance and would permit a striking force to work against objectives as far north as Buka.[42]

All these were the deficiencies at Guadalcanal. To overcome them General Harmon offered three concrete suggestions to his theater commander. First, immediate reinforcement of Guadalcanal by not less than the equivalent of one infantry regimental combat team; second, the intensification of naval surface action in the waters off the Lower Solomons; and third, the prompt dispatch of all airdrome construction personnel, together with equipment and construction supplies.[43] His recommendations for Guadalcanal included the completion of two all-weather runways and dispersed standings, improvement of fueling systems and of camouflage, and augmentation of the available fuel supply to hold at least 250,000 gallons of gasoline as a minimum supply. When all these were ready, air commanders should initiate intensive air operations from Guadalcanal against Buin-Tonolei-Faisi and Buka. They should continue short-range air operations against air, land, and sea objectives, and interestingly in view of future invasions, he proposed that tactical localities in the New Georgia group should be occupied by infiltration. As for the operation planned for the South Cruz group, let it wait until a condition of reasonable security and stability might be achieved in the Lower Solomons.[44]

What General Harmon had offered was a rough outline of the future campaign in the Solomons. He sent his proposals immediately to

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Admiral Ghormley aboard Argonne and on the next morning COMSOPAC called a conference to discuss the situation.[45] Two of General Harmon's measures were adopted. The 164th Infantry Combat Team of the Americal Division was prepared for prompt dispatch to Guadalcanal, and measures were taken to improve the airdromes on the island. But Efeni would be occupied; on this point the naval commanders were insistent.[46]

On 70 October Vice Admiral W. F. Halsey relieved Admiral Ghormley as COMSOPAC and the change in command placed a new complexion upon the Santa Cruz venture. The assault force for Efeni was the 147th Infantry, then stationed at Tongatabu under Col. W. B. Tubble. The regiment was embarked and actually had departed for Santa Cruz, when Admiral Halsey decided to abandon any effort in that direction and rerouted the transports to Guadalcanal.

There was urgent need for an additional bomber field on the island. Japanese warships still were able to deliver fire of the heaviest caliber on Henderson Field and on the night of 13/14 October they supported the heavy ground attack with a violent bombardment.[47] It was felt that an airfield further to the southeast would serve as a deterrent to the enemy's surface forces moving down the "slot," as the area between Santa Isabel and New Georgia was known, and would prevent these devastating bombardments. Admiral Turner suggested Aola Bay, lying some 35 miles east of Henderson, as a site; thereupon it was determined to debark the 147th Infantry and the construction battalions at that point. Subsequently, Admiral Halsey abandoned

this location in favor of one near Koli Point: on 1 November the 14th Seabee Battalion landed at Koli, approximately 12 miles from Henderson, and construction on a second bomber strip was taken in hand immediately.[48]

There was ample reason for concern over the security of the air effort from Henderson Field in October. On the night of 13 October the naval shelling had damaged the dispersal area where the SBD's and TBF's stood adjacent to the field on the seaward side. The camp area and the runway had been hit as well, but even more serious was the fact that at dusk on the eve of the thirteenth enemy artillery began registering on one end of the runway. If this runway could be taken under artillery fire and held there, ". . . we wouldn't be able to move at all."[49] This was of extreme concern to the marine fighter squadrons; when the enemy field piece opened again on the next morning and fired several more rounds into the same area, the air defense was placed in a precarious state. Fortunately enemy observation was poor and he was firing at extreme range, but the Japanese gunnery had rendered Henderson inoperable by the fourteenth.[50]

The arrival of Admiral Halsey led General Harmon to hope for a more vigorous prosecution of the offensive. And there was need for vigor. As late as 20 October the Army Commander could report that Guadalcanal remained a most disturbing question and was ". . . right where it has been from the beginning."[51] The great need was for surface action to prevent Japanese naval shelling, particularly at night, and for B-17's operating from Guadalcanal. This implied a

reserve of fuel and bombs, but as yet these elements were lacking. Under prevailing conditions there could be little hope of accumulating a reserve of anything; there was trouble enough in maintaining on hand the daily minimum to get planes off the ground. On the nineteenth, for example, it was necessary to bring bombs in by air.[52] The Jap could never be beaten down with such a thin flow of supplies and Harmon knew it but he hoped for the best.

One step was taken immediately to secure a closer coordination of the Army and Navy air effort in the South Pacific. At the suggestion of Admiral King back in Washington, General Harmon was ordered to assign to Halsey's staff a capable and experienced air officer of suitable rank who should serve as the Army Air Officer with COMSOPAC.[53] Some confusion arose over the precise functions of the Air Officer, inasmuch as already there was close cooperation between the staffs of Harmon and Halsey, but the chiefs of the Army and Navy felt there was room for improvement and that ". . . constant availability to COMSOPAC of officers fully conversant with operational capabilities and limitations of Air and Ground Forces, and complete knowledge of requirements for their logistic support, will contribute materially to the sound concept and planning of operations."[54] Specifically, what they desired was the presence of Army officers in COMSOPAC's staff where they could participate actively in "pick and shovel" work in the early stages of planning and initiation of joint operations, where their knowledge of the limitations and advantages of land-based aircraft and of the logistic support required for air operations

could be brought to bear in the nascent stage of planning.[55] General Harmon tentatively selected Col. Frank Everest as the Air Officer, and this met approval of the Chief of Staff, who emphasized that by serving with Halsey, Colonel Everest was to be a working member of the staff and ". . . not in any sense a liaison officer."[56]

October may well have been a turning point in the campaign of the Lower Solomons. Despite prodigious efforts, on land the enemy had failed to break through the defenses around Henderson and at sea he had suffered heavily in the two actions known as the Battle of Cape Esperance (11 October) and the Battle of Santa Cruz Islands (26 October). In the very near future the Jap was to make yet another major effort to break through to his forces on Guadalcanal, but for the present he was hurt. After the second naval action of the month in which Hornet's planes, aided by those from Enterprise, had placed bomb after bomb on some of the latest and most powerful enemy cruisers and carriers, a tone of optimism appeared in General Harmon's headquarters. It was evident that COMSOPAC had brought new hope to the airmen impatiently waiting to move their weapons up to Guadalcanal. On the last day of the month COMGENSOPAC sent off to General Arnold his reaction to the new theater commander: "Halsey is fine . . . Ready to listen, reasonable in his attitude and above all has the drive, initiative and courage to 'get things done.' Believe our heads are up."[57]

Perhaps they were—certainly the pessimism of the earlier reports had disappeared within two weeks after Halsey's relief of

Ghormley. On 31 October General Harmon reported to the Chief of Staff and General Arnold that the combined airdrome facilities of Fiji, Efate, Guadalcanal, New Caledonia, and Espiritu Santo were now able to accommodate 3 heavy and 3 medium groups, 1 group of dive and 1 of torpedo bombers, and 4 fighter groups.[58] Furthermore, by 1 December four more squadrons could be added to this capacity. Espiritu Santo already was supporting from 24 to 30 B-17's, one squadron of Hudsons, and one of fighter aircraft, with a new bomber strip scheduled for completion by approximately 1 December. Efate based two squadrons of heavy bombers and two of fighters, but Guadalcanal supported continuously no more than about 40 aircraft, consisting of fighters, dive, and torpedo bombers. C-47's were operating in and out of Henderson,[59] but until the Army's heavy and medium bombers could move into Guadalcanal, offensive action in the Solomons would remain restricted to the short range of the marine aircraft based there, augmented by limited B-17 action from Espiritu Santo, and from Milne Bay, Townsville, and Port Moresby. Guadalcanal was the key to the entire situation, but General Harmon was most sanguine over the ". . . positive and aggressive action now being taken by COMSOPAC . . ." to prepare Guadalcanal for operation of heavy bombers.[60] So sharply had the situation altered, Harmon now hoped for continuous operations by the first of December; these would replace the current staging operations whose regularity was at the mercy both of the condition of the field and the vigor of enemy action. Such staging was now expected materially to decrease, due to the aggressive effort of COMSOPAC.

There was steady improvement, too, in the supply and logistics of the bases. In fact, COMGENSOPAC felt that arrival of squadron, group, base, service, and filler personnel currently en route and scheduled would permit effective deployment of all the air units recommended, with minor exceptions for some special units. Deployment of marine aircraft was at the moment not yet determined, but a probable distribution would place on Efate one squadron of fighters and two of dive bombers, and at Espiritu one squadron of fighters and one of observation aircraft. Guadalcanal would base two squadrons each of fighters and dive or torpedo bombers inasmuch as it was the combat zone.[61]

General Harmon again outlined the pattern for proper employment of the Army air units in the South Pacific; briefly it was "Utilization of all forces as far forward as practicable and exerting maximum pressure on /the/ enemy . . . consistent with adequate protection /of/ vital base installations." Heavy bombardment should move to Guadalcanal, where it could strike at enemy installations and activities in the Northern Solomons and in the Bismarck area, and at the same time be prepared to move against enemy surface forces from any base in the theater. For medium bombardment he recommended the same general employment, with due consideration for limited range, urging that full advantage be taken of low altitude performance and adaptability of the 4-second fuze, and of the naval torpedo. New Zealand Hudsons should provide medium-range reconnaissance from the forward bases and devote particular attention to antisubmarine patrol

around New Caledonia, Fiji, and Espiritu Santo. The New Zealand fighters should be distributed through the area with two squadrons basing at Guadalcanal, two in New Caledonia, and one at Espiritu. Both ground and combat crews of all units should follow a policy of frequent rotation in the forward area.

COMGENSOPAC reviewed his past efforts to persuade Ghormley to improve facilities for heavy bombardment and to conserve B-17's for striking forces rather than continuing their excessive use as search planes. And he paid tribute to the new commander of the South Pacific, with whom he had cooperated closely in initiating requests for aid from General MacArthur. Relations were on a sound basis for Halsey has not only accepted but requested advice and himself initiated the passing of B-17's to Kenney and concurred in the release of half the transports of the 374 Squadron although sorely needed here in support of our activities."[69]

October then was a climactic month in the development of the South Pacific land-based air effort. The new commander had brought to his task a bold and aggressive attitude which implied rapid action in the Lower Solomons. Better still, from the moment of his assumption of command, Admiral Halsey stressed the principle of a single force. He became the focal point of action for all the services in the area, and he emphasized to all senior commanders that the mission of the South Pacific Force was the defeat of Japanese forces, that no single arm or service had a preponderance of interest in this mission, and

that all arms and services must be welded into and fought as a single force.[63] Personally he subscribed to the principle of unity of command, and his orders and directives regularly emphasized the point. Writing over a year and a half after the events, General Harmon was able to state that "It is largely because of his belief in and insistence upon these doctrines and principles that his operations were conducted with such marked success." But beyond this, ". . . full credit must also be given to his fine leadership and his constant bold and aggressive action."[64]

This was the personality who directed the over-all operations of airmen in the South Pacific, through his subordinate COMAIRSOPAC. Admiral McCain was gone, replaced in September by Rear Admiral Aubrey W. Fitch, and his departure caused General Harmon some regrets, for the naval commander had been admired and liked by the army airmen, and ". . . we had him pretty well indoctrinated."[65] Colonels Everest, Strother, and Saunders had worked closely with Admiral McCain aboard Curtiss lying at Espiritu Santo, where they practically served on the staff of COMAIRSOPAC. Some differences in doctrine of operational employment of aircraft arose—inevitable perhaps, in light of the gulf in prior training of the two services—and COMAIRSOPAC tended at times to assume some functions which the Army normally would leave to the group commander, but on the whole relations were smooth.[66] Colonel Saunders, in addition to commanding his own 11th Group, served on Curtiss in an advisory capacity and on occasion Admiral McCain deferred completely to Saunders' judgment as to whether an air attack was possible.[67]

It was not always easy for the army commanders to accept their subordinate position; on 11 September General Harmon facetiously suggested that ". . . it won't be long now before I am wearing 'bell bottom trousers'" and less jocularly, he found it a bit difficult not to be operating his own bombers ". . . and to listen to a Navy chap talking about 'my B-17's,' but anything and everything goes as long as we lick the Jap."[68] But a sound apprenticeship in Army-Navy relations had been served and apparently General Harmon regretted the necessity of having to retrace this ground. He was, however, impressed at once with Admiral Fitch, though recognizing that the new South Pacific air commander would control large numbers of army aircraft and before he would understand their potentialities, the army airmen ". . . will have the indoctrination to go through with again."[69]

The pattern of control over army aircraft remained substantially the same for the balance of 1942. No formal air force existed until January 1943; meanwhile, Army Air Force activities in the South Pacific were directed by COMGENSOPAC through his Chief of Staff, Brig. Gen. Nathan F. Twining, who like his superior was an air force officer, and through the various sections of the staff. Most significant in this respect was the Operations Section, G-3, which was further divided to include a fighter section under Col. Ioan C. Strother and a bomber section, headed by Col. Marion F. McCormick. Col. Glenn O. Jamison who served as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, added additional weight to air operations for he too was an air officer.[70]

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A formidable task faced Admiral McCain and his successor, Admiral Fitch. The air components of the South Pacific air force were varied in type, in nationality, and rested on bases which in some cases were separated by more than 1,000 miles of open sea. In addition to the Army Air Force units there was shore-based marine and naval aviation, and elements of the Royal New Zealand Air Force; some integration of these components must occur before it would be possible to achieve anything like maximum utilization of the varied categories of aircraft available in the area. To achieve this end several conferences were held between Admiral McCain and General Harmon and his air officers. Originally the principles and practices resulting from these meetings rested upon oral agreement, but a directive was prepared embodying the results of the discussions and it had been issued by Admiral Ghormley on 3 August 1942.[71] Operational control of all land-based aircraft remained with COMAIRSOPAC, except for the squadrons confined to island defense, but General Harmon had insisted from the very outset of air operations that adherence be given to the principle of unity of command as enunciated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[72] In this respect Admiral Halsey's emphasis upon the same point afforded strong support for Harmon's effort to hold the growing air organization together as a single welded unit, and in the spring of 1943 he was to turn to COMSOPAC for reinforcement of the doctrine at a time when there was a tendency to drift away from the principles originally laid down.

By the end of October the outline of future operations was fairly clear. There was a new theater commander whose aggressive personality created an air of optimism for the future, and to support whatever operations lay ahead there was a new schedule of allocation of aircraft for the theater. The initial problems had been met, and although many solutions must wait, there was an awareness among higher commanders--if not among all personnel--that service loyalties were subordinate to the main task--defeat of the Jap.

GLOSSARY

ACFC	Air Corps Ferrying Command
Actg.	Acting
AFABI	Air Forces, Intelligence
AFACT	Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Training
AFAFC	Flight Control Command
AFAMC	Materiel Command
AFCAS	Chief of the Air Staff
AFPMP	Military Personnel
AFRBS	Base Services
AFROM	War Organization and Movement
AK	Navy symbol for cargo vessel
AP	Navy symbol for transport
APD	Converted destroyer - transport
ATC	Air Transport Command
BB	Battleship
CA	Heavy cruiser
CACTUS	New Caledonia
CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff
CGHD	Commanding General, Hawaiian Department
CL	Light cruiser
CINCPAC	Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet
COMAIRSOPAC	Commander, Aircraft, South Pacific Force
COMAIRSOPACFOR	Commander, Aircraft, South Pacific Force
COMGENSOPAC	Commanding General of U. S. Army Forces in the South Pacific Area.
COMSOPAC	Commander, South Pacific Area
COMTASKFORCE	Commander, Task Force
CV	Carrier
DB	Dive bomber
DD	Destroyer
D/F	Direction finder
F4F	Navy and Marine Grumman fighter
Ftr.	Army fighter
HB	Heavy bomber
J/CCS	Joint and Combined Chiefs of Staff
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JPS	Joint Staff Planners
LB	Light bomber
MB	Medium bomber
Necal	New Caledonia
Obsn.	Observation
OCAC	Office, Chief of Air Corps
ONI	Office of Naval Intelligence
PBY	Navy patrol bomber, "Catalina"

PTO	Pacific Theater of Operations
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
SBC	Scout bomber, Curtiss
SBD	Scout bomber, Douglas
TBA	Table of basic allowances
TBF	Navy torpedo bomber, Grumman
Transps.	Transports
USAFISPA	U. S. Army Forces in the South Pacific Area
VF	Navy fighter plane
VJ	Navy utility squadron
VMF	Marine fighter squadron
VMO	Marine observation squadron
VMSB	Marine scout bomber
VOS	Navy observation-scout plane
VPB	Navy patrol bomber
VSB	Navy scout bomber
VSO	Navy scout-observation plane
VTB	Navy torpedo bomber
WDCSA	War Department Chief of Staff, Army
WDGBI	War Department, Intelligence
WDOPD	War Department, Operations Division

N O T E S

Chapter I

1. 3d Ind. /AG 580 (10-5-39) M-WPD, 12 Dec. 1940/, OCAC to TAG, 3 Feb. 1941, in AAG 600 Misc., East Indies.

2. AGO 580 (10-5-39) M-WPD, 12 Dec. 1940, cited in memo for Chief of Staff by WPD, 21 Feb. 1941, in AAG 600 Misc., East Indies.

3. 3d Ind. /AG 580 (10-5-39) M-WPD, 12 Dec. 1940/, OCAC to TAG, 3 Feb. 1941.

4. Ibid.

5. Memo for Chief of Staff by WPD, 21 Feb. 1941, in AAG 600 Misc., East Indies.

6. 5th Ind. /AG 580 (10-5-39) M-WPD, 12 Dec. 1940/, Lt. Gen. Walter C. Short to TAG, 10 May 1941, in ibid. The two general routes at that time were: from Hawaii, Midway, Wake, and Guam to the Philippines; and from Hawaii via Palmyra, Canton and Samoa, with possible alternate bases in the Fijis and New Caledonia.

6. Army and Navy Estimate of United States Over-all Production Requirements, J. B. No. 355 (Serial 707), 11 Sep. 1941, Report, Sec. IV., in AAG 381, War Plans.

8. Memo for Surgeon General by Sec. of Air Staff, 1 Dec. 1941, in AAG 361 B, Air Routes.

9. R&R, Operations Div. to Communications Div., 12 Dec. 1941; R&R, Chief of Air Staff to OCAC, 15 Dec. 1941, in AAG 361 B, Air Routes.

10. R&R, OCAC, ACFC to Chief of Air Staff, 22 Dec. 1941, in ibid.

11. Msg., Emmons to TAG, #1434, 28 Dec. 1941.

12. Msg., Emmons to AGO, #1567, 6 Jan. 1942.

13. By the end of January a ferry pilot reported the following conditions at the island bases:

Palmyra Island: runway 5,000 x 300 ft.; clear approaches in all weather; three usable revetments; adequate 100-octane gasoline 120 aviation oil; inadequate night landing facilities, flare pots only; homing station and standard CAA and Navy communications; Navy meteorological station, excellent weather information, minor repair facilities; adequate food stores; accommodations for 150 men and 30 officers.
Canton Island: runway 5,000 x 150 ft.; clear approaches, all weather, revetments incomplete; adequate gasoline and oil, but slow servicing due to inadequate pumping facilities; Pan-American facilities include homing station; communication between points in the island lacking and no repair facilities available; messing and housing facilities exist for two officers and 25 men; adequate food stores. Night operations not recommended due to complete lack of lighting facilities.
Viti Levu Island (Fiji): runway 5,000 x 150 ft.; good in all weather and with clear approaches. Revetments under construction. Adequate gasoline and oil available. An auxiliary lighting system permits night take-offs but night landings not recommended due to narrow runway and construction in progress on field. Standard Navy communications, with D/F and homing station. Excellent weather information provided by telephone from RNZAF station at Suva; facilities for minor repairs only.
Noumea, New Caledonia: airdrome lies 25 miles northwest of Noumea; has a runway 5,000 x 150 ft. which is usable in all weather, though considered rolling and rough. No revetments on field. Stock of 100-octane gasoline and aviation oil is limited to Pan-American stores and servicing is slow, all fuel being pumped by hand. Night landing and take-off not recommended due to lack of lighting facilities. No repair facilities available at airdrome and only limited facilities available at Pan-American base at Noumea. Excellent weather information provided from RAAF station at Noumea.
Christmas Island: limited information available. Runway is 5,000 ft. and is considered satisfactory for B-17's and B-24's. Because of lack of homing devices at Christmas, Palmyra is considered preferable. All airdromes en route are suitable for B-24 and B-17 aircraft. Msg., Barnes to TAG, #126, 29 Jan. 1942.

14. Army and Navy Estimate of United States Over-all Production Requirements, J. B. No. 355 (Serial 707), 11 Sep. 1941, Section II, Part III, Appendix II (A-WPD/1, Tab 8).

15. Memo for WPD by Sec. of Air Staff, 9 Dec. 1941, in AAG 320.2-C, Strength of Organization.

16. Cited in ltr. to Joint Staff Planners from the Sec. of the Air Staff, undated, in Air AG 320.2, Hawaii-Philippines.

17. Memo for Col. Vanaman by AC/AS-AWPD, 20 Jan. 1942, in ibid.

18. Memo for Army Air Corps Member, JUSSC by Chief of Air Staff, 14 Feb. 1942, in WP-IV-H-7, New Caledonia, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

19. Directive memo for AC/AS-AWPD by Sec. of Air Staff, 23 Feb. 1942, in ibid.

20. Ltr., AGO to General Arnold, 20 Jan. 1942, in AAG 370.22-B, Expeditionary Forces--Campaigns.

21. Ibid.

22. CCS, 41, 16 Feb. 1941; R&R, OCAC, Operations to OCAC, Asst. Exec. for Technical Plans and Coordination, 6 Mar. 1941, in AAG 370.22-B. For a list of current and proposed air garrisons in the Pacific, see Appendix 1.

23. Cited in ltr., AG to Gen. Patch, AG 381 (1-22-42) MSC-E, 22 Jan. 1942, in WP-IV-H-7, New Caledonia, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

24. Ltr., AG to Gen. Patch, AG 381 (1-22-42) MSC-E, 22 Jan. 1942, in ibid. General Patch was designated on 14 January 1942, but his original instructions were rescinded and replaced by above letter.

25. "Narrative of Operations, Americal Division at Guadalcanal," 28 May 1943, in AGO, Operations Br., Analysis Files Subsection, 30 Amer. 11.4.

26. Ltr., AG to Gen. Patch, AG 381 (1-22-42) MSC-E, 22 Jan. 1942, in WP-IV-H-7, New Caledonia, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

27. History of the 67th Fighter Squadron.

28. Army and Navy Estimate of United States Over-all Production Requirements, J. B. No. 355, (Serial 707), 11 Sep. 1941, Report, Sec. IV.

29. JCS, 23, 14 Mar. 1942.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid. See Appendix 2, Table A, for summary of existing and projected air strength in the Pacific area.

32. Memo for Admiral King by Chief of Staff, 17 Mar. 1942, in Air AG 320.2, South Pacific 28. See Appendix 2, Table B, for summary of ground and air strength in the Pacific area. As late as May the defenses at Christmas and Canton failed to impress ferry pilots

stopping at these bases. Canton lacked fighter aircraft entirely and had only weak anti-aircraft equipment; the fighters at Christmas were regarded as inadequate in number. R&R, AFAFC to AFABI, 13 June 1942, in AAG 000-800 Misc., East Indies.

33. Memo for AWPD by Col. O. S. Ferson, AFROM, 11 Mar. 1942, in AAG Bulk file; memo for WPD by Col. O. S. Ferson, 11 Mar. 1942, in AAG 370.22-B, Expeditionary Forces--Campaigns. These two forces were very similar in strength, that planned for Efate being slightly larger. Each included a Signal Air Warning Reporting Company, with two SCR-270's, a platoon of an AC Interceptor Control Squadron, and the necessary armament and ordnance personnel.

34. JPS, 21/5/D, 7 Apr. 1942.

35. Memo (unsigned and undated), in JPS, 21/7, 18 Apr. 1942.

36. Ibid.

37. JCS, 48, 2 May 1942.

38. R&R, Gen. Arnold to AFAEP, 21 Apr. 1942, Comment #1, in J/CCS, 660.2 (4-7-42), AC/AS, Plans.

39. JCS, 48, 2 May 1942.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Memo for Gen. Smith, Sec., JCS, by Gen. Eisenhower, AC/S, "U.S. Army Objectives in the Pacific," 19 May 1942, in J/CSS 660.2 (4-7-42). The immediate objective of the AAF in the South Pacific was as follows (attainable by 31 Aug. 1942):

	Unit Equipment	Reserve	Total
MB	26	14	40
Ftr.	105	57	162

The ultimate objective was as follows (due to demands of BOLERO, not to be reached until 1943):

MB	26	14	40
LB	13	7	20
Ftr.	155	38	193

44. JCS, 48, 2 May 1942.

45. Ibid.

46. See below, Appendix 3, Recommendation "A".

47. JCS, 48, 2 May 1942.

48. Ibid.

49. See below, Appendix 3, Recommendation "B".

50. JCS, 48, 2 May 1942.

51. R&R, Gen. Arnold to AFAEP, 21 Apr. 1942, Comment #1 in J/CCS, 660.2 (4-7-42), AC/AS, Plans.

52. R&R, Gen. Arnold to AFAEP, 21 Apr. 1942 Comment #2, by AFAEP to Gen. Arnold, 4 May 1942, in ibid.

53. Incl., (JCS, 48, 2 May 1942), memo for Joint U. S. Chiefs of Staff by Joint U. S. Staff Planners, undated.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. "Battle of the Coral Sea," ONI Combat Narratives.

57. JCS, 14th Meeting, 11 May 1942.

58. CM-OUT-2532 (13 May 42), OPD to CG Hawaiian Dept., #3708, 12 May 42; CM-OUT-2531 (13 May 42), OPD to CG U. S. Army Forces in New Caledonia, #111, 13 May 42.

59. R&R, AFAEP to AFDAS, 15 May 1942, in WP-II-C-3, Hawaiian Islands-#2, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

60. CM-IN-105 (14 May 42), Patch to Marshall and CINCPAC, #101, 14 May 42.

61. "Pacific Fleet Intelligence Summary," 16 May 1942, cited in CM-IN-4577 (17 May 42), Emmons to CSA, #96, 16 May 42.

62. CM-OUT-4119 (20 May 42), Marshall to CGHD, #WD 3829, 20 May 42.

63. Ibid. The ground echelon of the 69th Bombardment Squadron of the 38th Bombardment Group (M) sailed from Brisbane for Noumea on 17 May with its attached 4th Platoon of the 445th Ordnance Company

(Aviation). In the same shipment was the ground echelon of the 70th Bombardment Squadron, 38th Group, with its attached Headquarters Section of the 445th Ordnance Company (Aviation), destined for Fiji. Msg., MacArthur to AGWAR, #NR 139, 27 Apr. 42; Msg., GHQ SWPA to AG, #AG 752, 16 May 42 (CM-IN-4299).

64. Memo for Gen. Marshal, C/S, by Franklin D. Roosevelt, 6 May 1942, in WP-III-E-1A, "Bolero," Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

65. Memo for Air Plans, "The Pacific Theater versus 'Bolero'," by Gen. Arnold, 9 May 1942, in WP-General-#2, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

66. Memo for Gen. Eisenhower by Gen. Arnold, 12 May 1942, in ibid.

67. Memo for Gen. Smith, Sec., Joint U. S. Chiefs of Staff, "U. S. Army Objectives in the Pacific," by Gen. Eisenhower, AC/S, 19 May 1942, in J/CCS, 660.2 (4-7-42), AC/AS, Plans. For recommendations of 2 May see JCS, 48.

Chapter II

1. Ltr., Gen. Marshall to Gen. Harmon, 7 July 1942, OPD 384 SPA (7 July 1942), in AAG 201, Harmon, M. R., Lt. Gen.

2. Incl. #1, /WDGS Disposition Form (24 June 1942) OPD 384 PTO (18 June 1942) for AC/AS, Plans by OPD/, "Instructions relative to duties as Commander, South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force," from Commander-in-Chief, United States Pacific Fleet," to Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley, USN, A16-3/P17, Serial 090W, undated, in WP-IV-H-23 South Pacific, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

3. Ibid.

4. CM-IN-5445 (20 May 42), Emmons to CGAAF, #161, 20 May 42. His short title was COMAIRSOPAC.

5. CM-OUT-1179 (4 July 42), Marshall to CGHD, #4700, 4 July 42.

6. CM-OUT-2792 (9 Aug. 42), OPD to Necal, #890, 9 Aug. 42.

7. Incl. #2 (Disposition Form, Hq. AAF for OPD by AC/AS, Plans, 23 June 1942), memo for Chief of Staff by Brig. Gen. T. T. Handy, "Directive to Commander Aircraft, South Pacific Area," 18 June, 1942, OPD 384 PTO (18 June 1942) in III-R Army-Navy Relations, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

8. Disposition Form, Hq. AAF for OPD by AC/AS, Plans, 23 June 1942, in ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. CM-IN-9710 (28 July 42) COMSOPAC to all COMGENS ISLAND BASES SOPAC, #270510 NCR 954, 27 July 42. Maj. Gen. Millard F. Harmon was designated Commanding General of United States Forces in the South Pacific Area on 7 July 1942. His short title was COMGENSOPAC and the organization was known as USAFISPA.

11. Ltr., Commander Aircraft, South Pacific Force, to Commander South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force via COMGENSOPAC, 3 Aug. 1942, A3-1/16-3, Serial 285, in WP-IV-H-23 South Pacific, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid. The prescribed basic organization for each island base follows:

1. Air Patrol Command
   a. Off-shore patrol: VPB and long or medium range bombardment a/c.
   b. In-shore patrol: VSO and such other a/c (VPB and/or Hudsons) as may be required for local antisubmarine patrol and coverage of shipping.

2. Bomber Command
   a. Long and medium range bombardment and torpedo a/c (including dive bombers and VPB).

3. Fighter Command
   a. Fighter a/c
   b. Air Warning system with control of operating personnel.

4. Base Command
   a. Base and service units at various airdromes and air bases.

It will be noted that heavy bombers are included in both the Air Patrol Command and the Bomber Command, as are VPB's.

14. Ibid.

15. 1st and 2d Ind. (ltr., COMAIRSOPACFOR to COMSOPAC and COMSOPACFOR, 3 Aug. 1942) by COMGENSOPAC and COMSOPACFOR, 4 Aug. 1942, in ibid.

16. CM-OUT-0221 (1 July 42) Marshall to Emmons, #4630, 1 July 42; CM-IN-3516 (10 July 42) Ft. Shafter to WDCSA, #14393, 10 July 42.

17. Ltr. Gen. Marshall to Gen. Harmon, 7 July 1942, OPD 384 SPA (7 July 1942) in AAG 201, Harmon, M. F., Lt. Gen. Actually General Harmon was relieved of his assignment as Chief of the Army Air Staff on 6 July.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20 CM-IN-8640 (30 May 42), CINCPAC to COMSOPACFOR, 292019CCRI404.

21. Memo for AC/S, OPD by General Harmon, 10 July 1942, in Air AG 320.2, South Pacific-#3; GO #39, VII Army Corps, San Jose, Calif., 30 July 1942; WD ltr., AG 320.2 (7-32-42) MR-M-GN, 24 July 1942, cited in History of Hqs. and Hqs. Co., USAFISPA, 1 July 1942 to 30 June 1943, in AGO, Operations Br., Analysis files Subsection, 98-11.4.

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22. The forward echelon of USAFISPA included the following officers:

Name	Rank and Orgn.	Position to be filled
Millard F. Harmon	Maj. Gen., AC	COMGENSOPAC
Nathan F. Twining	Brig. Gen., AC	Chief of Staff
Robert G. Breene	Col., AC	Commanding ASC
Glen C. Jamison	Col., AC	G-3
Frank F. Everest	Col., AC	Bomb. Officer
Joseph M. Glasgow	Lt. Col. AGD	AG
Laurence C. Sherman	Major, AC	G-2
Dean C. Strother	Lt. Col., AC	Fighter Officer
Dean B. Yount	W.O.	(not stated)

Colonel Everest and Lt. Col. D. C. Strother were designated bombardment and fighter officer respectively, on 20 July, while the unit was preparing to leave from Hamilton Field.

23. Memo for AC/S, OPD by General Harmon, 12 July 1942, in Air AG 320.2, South Pacific-#5.

24. Interview with Major S. W. Smith, 10 Mar. 1944, in AFIHI files; ltr., Colonel Bradley, Chief, AFPMP, to CO, Force 9465, 26 Aug. 1942, in AAG 210.31F. Major Smith was assigned to the 4th Photo Detachment and accompanied Force 9465 to the South Pacific. USAFISPA encountered difficulty in obtaining experienced engineers prior to departure from Camp Stoneman.

25. Interview with Major S. W. Smith, 10 Mar. 1944, in AFIHI files.

26. The Headquarters of the rear echelon closed at Auckland on 24 Nov. USAFISPA maintained its new quarters until 10 February 1943, when it relinquished the building to I Island Air Command and moved out to Camp Barnes. History of Hqs. and Hqs. Co., USAFISPA, 1 July 1942 to 30 June 1943.

27. CM-IN-9710 (28 July 42) COMSOPAC to COMTASKFORCE 62, 63, ALL COMGENS IS BASES SOPAC, 270510 NCR 954; CM-IN-9310 (27 July 42) COMGENSOPAC to WDCSA, #236, 26 July 42.

28. CM-IN-0058 (1 Aug. 42) Harmon to Marshall, #675, 30 July 42.

29. CM-OUT-0253 (1 Aug. 42) OPD to Harmon, #789, 31 July 42.

30. WDGS Disposition Form, General Handy, AC/S, to CGAAF, 3 Aug. 1942, OPD 452.1 PTO (30 July 1942) in AAG 000-800 Misc., East Indies; memo for OPD by Actg. AC/AS, A-3, 10 Aug. 1942, in ibid.

31. CM-IN-10700 (31 July 42) Harmon to Arnold, #677, 30 July 42.

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32. Ibid.

33. CM-OUT-2177 (7 Aug. 42) OPD to COMGENSOPAC, #866, 7 Aug. 42.

34. AG 320.2 (9-10-42) MR:M:AF, 11 Sep. 1942, cited in Unit Record Br., OC&R; I Island Air Command; GO #1, Hq. I Island Air Command, 17 Oct. 1942, cited in ibid.; II Island Air Command: GO #29, Hq. USAF in Fiji, 20 Oct. 1942, cited in ibid.

35. CM-OUT-06673 (21 Oct. 42) Officers Br. (SPXPO-A) to CG USAF, New Caledonia, #1761, 20 Oct. 42; CM-IN-8348 (20 Nov. 42) New Caledonia to WAR, #L-1, 19 Nov. 42.

36. CM-OUT-04526 (14 Oct. 42) AFPMP to CG Haw. Dept., #686, 13 Oct. 42.

37. CM-IN-0058 (1 Aug. 42) Harmon to Marshall, #675, 30 July 42.

38. CM-OUT-0253 (1 Aug. 42) OPD to CG New Caledonia, #789, 31 July 42. An exception was made for air base service units scheduled for Fiji and New Caledonia.

39. Ibid.

40. CM-OUT-2412 (8 Aug. 42) OPD for Harmon, #874, 8 Aug. 42.

41. Ibid.

Chapter III

1. Interview with Capt. M. B. Gardner, USN, 13 Jan. 1943, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

2. Lt. (jg) William Bradford Huie, Can Do! The Story of the Seabees, 90.

3. Interview with Capt. M. B. Gardner, USN, 13 Jan. 1943 in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans; CM-IN-6839 (21 June 42), Efate to Marshall, #134, 20 June 42.

4. History of the 70th Fighter Squadron, Jan. 12, 1942-Jan. 12, 1943.

5. AAF Form #63, Foreign Airport Description, November 1943, Supplementary, in Air Movements Br., AC/AS, Intelligence; History of the 67th Fighter Squadron. These strips on the west were known as Patsy, Dustbowl, and Dumbea, the last being only 2,900 feet long. Thio (Shoebox) on the eastern side of the island was only 30 feet wide and 3,100 feet in length.

6. Interview with Capt. M. B. Gardner, USN, 13 Jan. 1943, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

7. CM-OUT-0221 (1 July 42), OPD to CGHD, 1 July 42.

8. CM-IN-0741 (3 July 42), Emmons to WDCSA, #1229, 2 July 42.

9. CM-OUT-1100 (4 July 42), OPD to CGHD, #4695, 4 July 42.

10. Ibid.

11. Directive for Chief, Field Services, ASC, by Col. L. P. Whitten, AFRBS, 8 July 1942, in AAG 000-800 Misc., East Indies.

12. CM-IN-3817 (11 July 42), Emmons to WDCSA, #1463, 11 July 42.

13. Ibid.

14. CM-IN-4371 (13 July 42), Emmons to CGAAF, #1489, 12 July 42; CM-OUT-3707 (14 July 42), OPD to CGHD, #4875, 13 July 42.

15. CM-OUT-4129 (15 July 42), WDOPD to CGHD, #4905, 15 July 42.

16. CM-IN-5463 (16 July 42), Emmons to WDCSA, #1562, 16 July 42. The 11th Bombardment Group (H) consisted of the following squadrons: 26th, 42d, 98th, and 431st, all equipped with B-17's.

17. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 18 Aug. 1942, in AAF 321.9-3, 13 Groups; CM-IN-6187 (18 July 42), Emmons to WDCSA, #1598, 18 July 42; CM-IN-7573 (22 July 42), Gen. Patch to Gen. Arnold, #619, 22 July 42; History of 11th Bombardment Group (H). Best available information from group and squadron histories indicates the following movements of the air echelons of the 11th Group:

Left Hickam Field	Arrived
98th Squadron--17 July	Plaines des Gaiacs--21 July
42d Squadron--18 July (probably)	Plaines des Gaiacs--23 July
26th Squadron--19 July	Efate--25 July
431st Squadron--20 July	Nandi--24 July
Hq. Sq. (air echelon) with 42d and 98th Sqs.	Plaines des Gaiacs--21 and 23 July

18. CM-IN-9215 (26 July 42), Emmons to CGAAF, #1789, 26 July 42. The personnel of the 11th Group comprised the following:

AC--158 officers	Ordnance--2 officers
8 warrant officers	112 enlisted men
1,171 enlisted men	
Chemical Warfare--3 officers	Medical--6 officers
39 enlisted men	32 enlisted men

Signal--2 enlisted men

Of the total, 37 officers, 6 warrant officers, and 1,081 enlisted men went by water, the others by air. Prior to departure from Oahu, the 11th Group had been strengthened by two service units; GO #28, Hq. 7th Bomber Command, 8 Apr. 1942, assigned the 482d Ordnance Company, Aviation (Bomb), and GO #45, Hq. 7th Bomber Command, 15 June 1942, assigned the 887th Chemical Company, Air Bombardment, to the group. History of the 11th Bombardment Group (H).

19. Navy msg., F-35 Navy, CINCPAC Fleet, 19 Feb. 1942; CM-IN-5992 (22 May 42), G-2 Necal to AGWAR, #138, 20 May 42.

20. G-3 Journal File, May 1942, Americal Division, in AGO, Operations Br., Analysis File, Subsection, 30 Amer. 33.1.

21. JCS, 24th Meeting, 10 July 1942.

22. CM-IN-8416 (26 June 42), G-2 Poppy to WDGBI, #379, 21 June 42.

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23. A captured enemy diary stated that the force arrived off Guadalcanal on 4 July but did not begin disembarking until two days later. By 11 July unloading was completed and on the 17th the labor force began construction of the airfield. CM-IN-9177 (24 Aug. 42), G-2 Necal to AGWAR, #AGWAR 802, 17 Aug. 42.

24. CM-IN-5682 (17 July 42), G-2 Necal to WDGBI, #1566, 16 July 42; CM-IN-11038 (31 July 42), G-2 Necal to WDGBI, #685, 31 July 42.

25. "The Landing in the Solomons, 7-8 August, 1942," ONI Combat Narratives, 1-3.

26. Interview with Brig. Gen. L. G. Saunders, 14 Apr. 1943, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans; History of 11th Bombardment Group (H). The ground personnel left Hawaii on 21 July aboard the President Tyler, arriving at Espiritu Santo on 11 August.

27. Interview with Col. L. H. Rodieck, 14 Dec. 1942, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans. Estimates on the construction time vary from 12 to 16 days.

28. Interview with Capt. M. B. Gardner, USN, 13 Jan. 1943, in ibid.

29. History of the 26th Bombardment Squadron (H).

30. History of the 19th Bombardment Group (H), Appendix G.

31. History of the 98th Bombardment Squadron (H). Pilots of the three planes on the first mission were Maj. Philo O. Rasmussen, Maj. Karl T. Barthelmess, and Capt. Walter Y. Lucas. Colonel Saunders states that these two missions occurred on 24 and 25 July. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 18 Aug. 1942, in AAG 321.9-3, 13 Groups. The unit history gives the date as 23 July, which agrees with the statement of Comdr. R. F. Quackenbush, Jr., USNR.

32. Lt. Comdr. R. F. Quackenbush, Jr., USNR, commanded the South Pacific Photo Interpretation Unit, which furnished all personnel for the missions. Commander Quackenbush states that another mission was flown on 30/31 July, after which no more were undertaken until after the invasion of Guadalcanal on 7 August. In November the Marines of VMD-154 took over the task of providing photographers for the B-17's and continued to do so until February 1943. Interview with Comdr. R. F. Quackenbush, Jr., USNR, 3 Oct. 1944, in AFIHI files.

33. Operations Order No. 1-42, COMAIRSOPACFOR (Commander Aircraft South Pacific Force), 25 July 1942, in History of 98th Bombardment Squadron (H). The available air strength in the South Pacific, as

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listed by Admiral McCain's order, was as follows:

Efate	New Caledonia	
6 VSO	12 PBY-5	1 PBY-5A
18 VF	10 B-26	3 VSO
	16 F4F-3P	38 P-39
	27 B-17's (includes the New Hebrides)	
	6 Hudsons (RNZA)	

Fiji		Tongatabu
9 PBY-5	17 VF	6 VSO
3 Singapores (RNZAF)	12 B-26	24 VF
12 Hudsons (RNZAF)	8 B-17	
9 Vincents (RNZAF)		

34. Ibid. Admiral McCain failed to discriminate here between the P-39 and the P-400.

35. Ibid.

36. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 18 Aug. 1942.

37. Ibid.

38. History of the 98th Bombardment Squadron (H).

39. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 18 Aug. 1942. Apparently Colonel Saunders was referring to sorties rather than to missions.

40. Division Commander's Final Report on Guadalcanal Operation, Phase I, Hq. First Marine Division, 24 May 1943, Vandegrift Report, in Records Branch, AC/AS, Intelligence; Interview with Lt. Marvin Plake, USNR, 14 Dec. 1942, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans. Lt. Plake was an air combat intelligence officer aboard the carrier Wasp.

41. Interview with Comdr. L. J. Dow, USN, 29 Sep. 1942, in ibid. Commander Dow served as communications officer on the staff of Admiral Halsey and was aboard Enterprise.

42. CM-IN-5391 (15 Aug. 42), Necal to AGWAR, #AGWAR 63, 14 Aug. 42.

43. CM-IN-3200 (9 Aug. 42), Necal to WAR, #632, 4 Aug. 42.

44. Vandegrift Report, Phase II.

45. Interview with Comdr. L. J. Dow, USN, 29 Sep. 1942, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

46. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 18 Aug. 1942. Colonel Saunders states only four bombs were dropped on Gavutu. Elsewhere the craters from naval shell fire and bombs were indistinguishable from those caused by the B-17's.

47. Vandegrift Report, Phase III.

48. Ibid., Annex G. One theory was that the defenders had been in the habit of deserting the area in face of air attacks and believed that this was merely another small raid.

49. "Landing in the Solomons, 7-8 August, 1942" ONI Combat Narratives, 42.

50. Ibid., 15.

51. CM-IN-5391 (15 Aug. 42), Gen. Harmon to AGWAR, #AGWAR 63, 14 Aug. 42.

52. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 20 Aug. 1942 in AAF 321.9-3, 13 Groups; History of the 98th Bombardment Squadron (H); History of the 11th Bombardment Group (H), Section 2.

53. CM-IN-7210 (19 Aug. 42), Harmon to Marshall, unnumbered, 19 Aug. 42. The B-17 to make the first kill was "Typhoon McGoon" and it limped back to Espiritu from this engagement with a 20-mm. hit in the right wing, a 7.7 mm. in the nacelle of the No. 4 engine, and six more in the fuselage, but with no casualties.

54. CM-IN-9534 (25 Aug. 42), Necal to WAR, #126, 23 Aug. 42. Kieta, however, was reported as not yet occupied up to 20 August.

55. Ibid.

56. Vandegrift Report, Phase III, Annex F. Two weeks later this force had increased to include one or two BB's, three or four CV's, two of which were of the latest class, seven to 15 CA's and CL's, and from 10 to 20 DD's.

57. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 20 Aug. 1942.

58. "The Battle of the Eastern Solomons, 23-25 August 1942," ONI Combat Narratives, 44.

59. A-2 and A-3 Report of 11th Bombardment Group in South Pacific, 30 Sep. 1942, in Records Branch, AC/AS, Intelligence. The complete loss record for the period; including one loss on

24 August, is as follows:

(a) Aircraft losses: Combat--1 (rammed by Zero over Tulagi)
Operational--8 (lost in bad weather at night. One crashed at base, others went down at sea.)
Unknown--2 (no contact with base after takeoff.)

(b) Combat crew losses:
Combat--1 (shot down over Tulagi. Two men may have parachuted. A Japanese diary captured at Tulagi stated that two men were captured from a destroyed bomber about this time.)

Operational--4 (5 men killed, 4 injured in night crash at Espiritu during rainstorm, one crew lost at sea in bad weather, one crew down at sea, two men died, seven rescued, one crew down at sea, reported on Rennell Island. Rescue in progress.)

Unknown--2 (two crews on planes missing in action, one of these crews has been missing since 7 August. One crew missing since 8 September and believed on Rendova Island. Investigation in progress.)

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 18 Aug. 1942.

63. CM-OUT-4333 (13 Nov. 42), AFAMC to Necal, #2031, 12 Nov. 42.

64. History of the 26th Bombardment Squadron (H).

65. History of the 42d Bombardment Squadron (H).

66. History of the 26th Bombardment Squadron (H).

67. Memo for Gen. Harmon by Col. L. G. Saunders, 15 Aug. 1942, in History of the 11th Bombardment Group (H).

68. Ibid.

69. Interview with Brig. Gen. L. G. Saunders, 14 Apr. 1943, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans. Major Malloy's enterprise brought him the threat of severe censure from higher authority, but the squadron was moved regardless.

70. Interview with Capt. M. B. Gardner, USN, 13 Jan. 1943, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

71. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 18 Aug. 1942.

72. Interview with Comdr. Seldon B. Spangler, USN, 23 Apr. 1943, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Intelligence.

73. Memo for Gen. Harmon by Col. L. G. Saunders, 15 Aug. 1942. There was one truck outfit at Nandi, another at Plaines des Gaiacs, but both were badly needed at Espiritu.

74. Interview with Capt. M. B. Gardner, USN, 13 Jan. 1943, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

75. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 18 Aug. 1942.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

79. Memo for Gen. Harmon by Col. L. G. Saunders, 15 Aug. 1942.

80. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 26 Aug. 1942, in AAG 321.9-3, 13 Groups.

81. One of the B-17's on search landed on Henderson Field and remained overnight on 25 August; this was the first B-17 to touch Henderson.

82. CM-IN-11091 (27 Aug. 42), Harmon to Marshall, #144, 27 Aug. 42. This carrier, apparently Ryujo, had been under heavy attack by carrier planes and when sighted by the B-17's, she was under tow of a light cruiser or large destroyer.

83. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 26 Aug. 1942; History of the 26th Bombardment Squadron (H).

84. "Battle of the Eastern Solomons," ONI Combat Narratives, 65.

85. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 26 Aug. 1942.

86. "Battle of the Eastern Solomons," ONI Combat Narratives, 65-66.

87. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 18 Aug. 1942.

88. History of the 11th Bombardment Group (H).

89. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 26 Aug. 1942.

Chapter IV

1. Vandegrift Report, Phase III, in Records Br., AC/AS, Intelligence.

2. Ibid., Annex B.

3. Permission to withdraw the carriers was not received until 0330 on 9 August. "Battle of Savo Island," ONI Combat Narratives, 39.

4. Ibid., 40.

5. Vandegrift Report, Phase III, Annex B; COMAIRSOPAC Intelligence Bulletin, 18 Nov. 1942, in USMC Historical Division Files. A partial list of captured equipment is in Appendix 4.

6. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 26 Aug. 1942.

7. War Diary, Marine Aircraft Group 23, First Marine Aircraft Wing /War Diary, MAG-23/, 25 Aug. 1942, in USMC Historical Division Files. This plane had run too low on fuel to reach Espiritu Santo. After taking on 400 gallons of gasoline and four Marine pilots as passengers, it left Guadalcanal at 0630 on 26 August.

8. The Marine Engineers carried on until the arrival of the 6th Seabee Battalion, which then assumed responsibility for the completion and maintenance of Henderson Field. The Seabees soon learned the average size of the craters caused by enemy bombs; they loaded their dump trucks with measured amounts of sand and gravel, then placed these along the edge of the strip. Following an air raid, the trucks would rush out on the runway, followed by pneumatic tampers, and in little more than a half hour the craters would be invisible.
Lt. (jg) William Bradford Huie, Can Do! The Story of the Seabees, 40-41.

9. Vandegrift Report, Phase III. These were not the first aircraft to land. As early as 12 August a PBY-5A, piloted by Lt. W. S. Sampson, USN, landed on Henderson Field and removed two wounded men.

10. Operations Report, 67th Fighter Squadron, 20 August-24 September 1942, in AAG 370.2-A, Operations and Reports /Operations Report, 67th Fighter Squadron/.

11. History of the 67th Fighter Squadron; memo for Gen. Arnold by Gen. Fairchild, 27 Oct. 1942, in AAG 322.172 E, Squadrons.

12. Notes by M/Sgt. Robert Foye, cited in History of the 67th Fighter Squadron.

13. History of the 67th Fighter Squadron. This P-400 enjoyed a charmed life. It survived innumerable bombings and shelling on Guadalcanal and was still in operation long after its mates had gone to rest.

14. CM-OUT-3188 (11 Aug. 42), Arnold to Harmon, #911, 11 Aug. 42.

15. CM-IN-4158 (12 Aug. 42), Harmon to Arnold, #766, 12 Aug. 42.

16. CM-IN-6521 (18 Aug. 42), Harmon to Marshall, #AGWAR 82, 17 Aug. 42.

17. The other four planes were piloted by 2d Lts. D. H. Fincher, B. E. Davis, E. E. Brzuska, and 1st Lt. W. H. B. Erwin.

18. Operations Report, 67th Fighter Squadron. The second flight of 10, led by Capt. J. A. Thompson, included 1st Lts. R. B. Johnston, B. W. Brown, A. H. Dutton, R. E. Wythes, P. M. Childress, V. L. Head, and 2d Lts. B. H. Dillon, L. M. Glazier, and Z. D. Fountain.

19. Vandegrift Report, Phase III.

20. Ltr., W. W. Evans, Medical Officer, USMC, Unit #1060, to Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, 22 Dec. 1942, in WP-IV-H-23, South Pacific, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

21. Ibid.

22. Vandegrift Report, Phase III, Annex F.

23. "Scout Bombing at Guadalcanal," August-December 1942, in U.S. Pacific Fleet, South Pacific Force, Intelligence Division, 1-17, in Records Br., AC/AS, Intelligence.

24. Statement of Lt. Col. Kenneth W. Benner, USMC, at Noumea, New Caledonia, 6 Oct. 1942, in AAG 370.2 A, Operations and Reports.

25. Ibid.

26. Operations Report, 67th Fighter Squadron.

27. Ibid.; History of the 67th Fighter Squadron. One plane was left behind at Espiritu Santo.

28. Ibid.; Operations Report, 67th Fighter Squadron.

29. Interview with Maj. John Smith, USMC, 10 Nov. 1942, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans. Major Smith commanded the first fighter squadron to operate from Guadalcanal, VMF-223.

30. Ibid.; Operations Report, 67th Fighter Squadron.

31. Ibid.; History of the 67th Fighter Squadron. One additional loss occurred when engine failure forced 1st Lt. A. H. Dutton to bail out at 6,000 feet over Florida Island while in close patrol over the Burrows. Boats put out to pick him up; the rescue was made and in recognition of the experience, Lt. Dutton was granted a rare privilege--two ounces of medicinal brandy.

32. Vandegrift Report, Phase III.

33. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 28 Aug. 42, in AFIHI files. The P-400 was similar to the P-39D-1. Its armament consisted of one 20-mm. cannon, 2 synchronized .50-cal. machine guns, and four .30-cal. wing guns.

34. R&R, Gen. Arnold to A-3, 31 Aug. 42, in AAG 370.2 A.

35. Interview with Maj. John Smith, USMC, 10 Nov. 1942, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

36. Interview with Lt. Col. Charles L. Fike, USMC, 4 Dec. 1942, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans. Colonel Fike served at Guadalcanal as Executive Officer of Marine Aircraft Group 23.

37. Interview with Maj. John Smith, USMC, 10 Nov. 1942, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans; statement of Lt. Comdr. Roger Kent, USNR, to author, 19 Sep. 1944.

38. Interview with Maj. John Smith, USMC, 10 Nov. 1942, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans. Intelligence officers, on the other hand, have reported that Brannon's pilots were highly exasperated and frustrated by the failure of their equipment to permit them to engage the Japs in air combat.

39. Fighter Aircraft Report by Lt. Col. Boyd D. Wagner to CG USAFIA, 21 May 1942, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

40. Memo for Chief of Staff by Col. Gordon P. Saville, 27 May 1942, in AAG 400 Misc., East Indies.

41. CM-OUT-1493 (4 Sep. 42), CGAAF to Necal, #1231, 3 Sep. 42.

42. CM- IN-1874 (5 Sep. 42), Emmons to WDCSA, #2706, 4 Sep. 42.

43. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to AC/AS, A-3, 19 July 1942, in AAG 400-A, Australia-New Zealand; 1st Ind. (ltr., Gen. Harmon to AC/AS, A-3, 19 July 1942), Col. Robert W. Harper to Gen. Harmon, 4 Aug. 1942, in ibid.

44. CM-IN-3006 (8 Sep. 42), Harmon to Marshall, #218, 7 Sep. 42.

45. CM-IN-3697 (8 Sep. 42), Harmon to Marshall, #222, 8 Sep. 42.

46. CM-OUT-2926 (9 Sep. 42), AFRAD to Necal, #1286, 8 Sep. 42.

47. CM-OUT-3629 (11 Sep. 42), AFACT to Necal, #1309, 10 Sep. 42.

48. CM-IN-5418 (13 Sep. 42), Harmon to AFRAD, #249, 13 Sep. 42.

49. Ibid.; CM-IN-6326 (15 Sep. 42), New Caledonia to WAR, #255, 12 Sep. 42.

50. CM-OUT-4850 (14 Sep. 42), Marshall to COMGENSOPAC, #1355, 14 Sep. 42; CM-IN-6757 (16 Sep. 42), Harmon to Marshall, #293, 16 Sep. 42.

51. CM-OUT-7325 (23 Aug. 42), OPD to COMGENSOPAC, #1070, 23 Aug. 42. These planes were aboard the SS. William Whipple which sailed from San Francisco on 18 August.

52. Armament of the P-39D-2 consisted of one 20-mm. cannon, two .50-cal. synchronized machine guns and four .30-cal. wing guns. The P-39K-1's carried one 37-mm. cannon (30 rounds ammunition), two fixed machine guns of .50-cal. in the fuselage, with 300 rounds per gun, four fixed machine guns of .30-cal. in the wings, with 1,000 rounds per gun, and in addition was equipped to carry either a 500-lb. bomb or an auxiliary droppable belly tank.

53. CM-IN-9889 (26 Aug. 42), COMGENSOPAC to Marshall, #137, 25 Aug. 42; CM-OUT-8628 (27 Aug. 42), WDOPD to CGHD, #5743, 27 Aug. 42. The 28 P-39's arrived on 11 September and General Harmon expected to have them flying within a week.

54. CM-IN-8266 (19 Sep. 42), Harmon to Arnold, #326, 18 Sep. 42; CM-IN-9281 (21 Sep. 42), Harmon to Arnold, #353, 21 Sep. 42; CM-IN-12183 (28 Sep. 42), Arnold to Marshall, unnumbered, 28 Sep. 42.

55. CM-IN-10794 (25 Sep. 42), Arnold to Marshall, unnumbered, 24 Sep. 42.

56. Memo for AC/S by Col. G. P. Saville, AFRAD, "Fighter Strength in South Pacific," 11 Sep. 1942, in AAG 321.9 M, Organization of Air Corps.

57. CM-OUT-7844 (25 Aug. 42), AFRAD to Necal, #1102, 25 Aug. 42; CM-IN-4009 (10 Sep. 42), Harmon to AFRAD, #238, 10 Sep. 42.

58. CM-IN-6095 (15 Sep. 42), Harmon to AGWAR, #279, 14 Sep. 42; CM-OUT-8075 (24 Sep. 42), AFPMP to Necal, #1477, 23 Sep. 42.

59. Memo for the Adjutant General by CGAAF, "Constitution, Activation and Reassignment of Certain AAF Units," 24 Sep. 1942, in Air AG 320.2, South Pacific; CM-OUT-9711 (29 Sep. 42), TAG to Noumea, #1537, 29 Sep. 42. This action was in accordance with a directive by Chief of Staff in

letter CPD 320.2 PTO (11 Sep. 42), 16 Sep. 42. The group was to be activated under T/O 1-12, 1 July 1942 and the squadron under 1-27, 1 July 1942.

60. CM-OUT-9711 (29 Sep. 42), TAG to Noumea, #1537, 29 Sep. 42; GO #1, Hq. 347th Fighter Group, 3 Oct. 1942, in AFIHI files. This action followed instructions in letter, AG 320.2 (28 Sep. 42), "Constitution, Activation and Reassignment of Certain AAF Units," 29 Sep. 1942, cited in History of the 347th Fighter Group, in AFIHI files; GO #35, Hq., Americal Division, 2 Oct. 1942, cited in Unit Record Br., OC&R.

61. History of the 67th Fighter Squadron; SO #1, Hq. 347th Fighter Group, Tontouta Air Base, 3 Oct. 1942, in AGO, Operations Br., Analysis Files Subsection. Lists officers and men transferred.

62. Vandegrift Report, Phase III.

63. Interview with Col. Robert C. Kilmartin, Jr., USMC, 21 Oct. 1942.

64. Vandegrift Report, Phase IV.

65. War Diary, MAG-23, 4 Sep. 1942; Operations Report, 67th Fighter Squadron.

66. Ibid.; War Diary, MAG-23, 5 Sep. 1942. These two diaries disagree on minor details.

67. Ibid.

68. Vandegrift Report, Phase IV.

69. R&R, AFRAD to AFDMR, 8 Oct. 1942, in AAG 370.2 A, Operations and Reports.

70. Operations Report, 67th Fighter Squadron.

71. Ibid. Several pilots already had returned to New Caledonia; on 4 September Lieutenants Dutton and Dillon left via C-53; Lieutenant Head on 9 September, Captain Christian, Lieutenants Erwin and Brzuska on 11 September at 0800 prior to the raid.

72. Interview with Capt. M. B. Gardner, USN, 13 Jan. 1943, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans; War Diary, MAG-23, 14 Sep. 1942.

73. "A Brief Summary of the Battle for Guadalcanal," Combat Intelligence Center, HQ XIV Corps, G-2 Section, 12 Feb. 1943, in Records Br., AC/AS, Intelligence.

74. Interviews with Maj. Gen. A. A. Vandegrift, USMC, 3 Feb. 1943, in II-E, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans; Capt. M. B. Gardner, USN, 13 Jan. 1943, in ibid.

75. Ibid.

76. CM-IN-10794 (25 Sep. 42), Arnold to Marshall, unnumbered, 24 Sep. 42.

77. Pilots Combat Report, 1st Lt. L. H. Ramp, 67th Fighter Squadron, 30 Nov. 42, in Operational Intelligence file; statement of Lt. Comdr. Roger Kent to author, 19 Sep. 1944. Commander Kent was one of the naval intelligence officers, attached to the First Marine Aircraft Wing on Guadalcanal, who handled S-2 work for the 67th Squadron. He states that morale was substantially lifted when these Marine reports and captured diaries were read to the personnel of the squadron.

78. Operations Report, Hq. 67th Fighter Squadron.

79. Incl. #2 (R&R, AFCAS to AC/AS, A-2, A-3, A-4, Plans, AFDMR, AFDTS, 5 Oct. 1942), ltr., Col. Everest to Gen. Harmon, 10 Sep. 1942, in Air AG 320.2, South Pacific.

80. Ltr., Lt. Comdr. L. C. Simpler, CO Fighting Squadron Five to CINCUS, "Report of Air Operations against the Japanese, Guadalcanal area, September 11 to October 16, 1942," 11 Nov. 1942, in AAG 370.2-A, Operations and Reports; COMAIRSOPAC Intelligence Bulletin, 29 Sep. 1942, in USMC Historical Division files. Highly elated over this score, General Vandegrift reported "our losses no pilots, no planes, no damage. How's that for a record."

81. CM-IN-13275 (30 Sep. 42), Harmon to AGWAR, #441, 30 Sep. 42.

82. CM-OUT (7 Oct. 42), AFPMP to Noumea, #1614, 6 Oct. 42.

Chapter V

1. See Chapter II.

2. JPS, 22d Meeting, 10 July 1942.

3. CCS, 94, 24 July 1942.

4. CCS, 34th Meeting, 30 July 1942.

5. Memo for General Arnold, unsigned, "Transfer of Major Military Objective from Bolero," 14 July 1942, in files of Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

6. Memo for Chief of Staff by General Arnold, 29 July 1942 (Tab "A" of JPS 48, 28 Aug. 1942).

7. Incl. "A" (Ltr., COMSOPAC and COMSOPACFOR to CINCUS, A3-1/A16-3 (3) Serial 0048, 6 Aug. 1942) ltr., Harmon to COMSOPAC, 4 Aug. 1942, in WP-IV-H-23, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans. General Harmon indicated later in this letter his plan to base one squadron of dive bombers on Fiji.

8. Admiral Ghormley's original plan had included seizure of Ndeni in the Santa Cruz Islands but the stiff and unexpected opposition met by the 2d Marines in the Tulagi area prevented its execution. The amphibious force withdrew before the Ndeni operation could be effected.

9. See note 7 above.

10. Ibid.

11. Ltr., COMSOPAC to CINCUS, 6 Aug. 1942, A3-1/A16-3 (3) Serial 0048, in WP-IV-H-23, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

12. 1st Ind. (Ltr., COMSOPAC to CINCUS, 6 Aug. 1942), ltr., CINCPAC to CINCUS, 6 Sep. 1942, A16-3 (9) (86) Serial 0199W, in ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. 2d Ind. (Ltr., COMSOPAC to CINCUS, 6 Aug. 1942), ltr., CINCUS and CNOP to Chief of Staff, U.S.A., 25 Sep. 1942, FF1/A16-3 (1) Serial 001041, in ibid.

16. Cited in CM-IN-11005 (31 July 42), Emmons to WDCSA, #1904, 31 July 42.

17. Cited in CM-IN-9744, (26 Aug. 42), Emmons to WDCSA, #2504, 25 Aug. 42.

18. Ibid.

19. CM-OUT-1424 (5 Aug. 42), WDOPD to CG Hawaiian Dept., #5328, 4 Aug. 42.

20. CM-OUT-2792 (9 Aug. 42), Marshall to Necal, #890, 9 Aug. 42.

21. CM-IN-5004 (14 Aug. 42), New Caledonia to AGWAR, #769, 12 Aug. 42.

22. CM-OUT-4101 (13 Aug. 42), Marshall to COMGENSOPAC, WD #951, 13 Aug. 42; CM-OUT-4102 (12 Aug. 42), WDOPD to CG Hawaiian Dept., #5494, 13 Aug. 42. Ten of the scheduled 30 B-17's already were in Australia. Fourteen were enroute from Hawaii, 5 were in Hawaii, to leave soon and 1 was enroute to Hawaii. Of the B-25's, 31 were enroute to Hawaii, 1 was at Hamilton and 1 in Hawaii. Three more enroute to Hawaii were destined for the Netherlands Indies force as were 6 more at Hamilton Field. Departure dates of 12 B-25's at Sacramento and 18 at modification centers were unknown. Of the 18, half were scheduled for NEI, half for Australia. Two of the 12 B-26's were enroute from Hawaii, 6 were in Hawaii, probably to depart in one week, 1 was enroute to Hawaii, 2 at Hamilton and 1 at Middletown.

23. Cited in R&R, General Arnold to AC/AS, A-3, 31 Aug. 42, in AAG 370.2A. TBA No. 1, WD, 1 July 1942, established medium bomber strength at 16 per squadron. The 69th Bombardment Squadron was at New Caledonia, the 70th at Fiji.

24. Ibid.

25. CM-IN-9889 (26 Aug. 42), COMGENSOPAC to WAR, #137, 25 Aug. 42. The B-17's went to the 11th Group and the two B-26's with crews were assigned to the 69th Bombardment Squadron (M) on 3 Sep. 42. CM-IN-06908 (16 Oct. 42) Harmon to Marshall, #667, 16 Oct. 42.

26. CM-OUT-9008 (29 Aug. 42) OPD to COMGENSOPAC, #1158, 28 Aug. 42; CM-OUT-8628 (27 Aug. 42) WDOPD to CG Hawaiian Dept., #5743, 27 Aug. 42.

27. CM-OUT-8255 (26 Aug. 42) WDOPD to CG Hawaiian Dept., #5718, 26 Aug. 42.

28. Cited in memo for AC/AS, Plans by Brig. Gen. L. S. Kuter, 21 Aug. 1942, in AFIHI files.

29. Memo for AC/AS, Plans, by Brig. Gen. L. S. Kuter, DC/AS, 21 Aug. 1942, in WP-IV-H-23, South Pacific, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans. General Arnold added pencilled notations to this memo, after which it was forwarded to OPD.

30. JCS, 97, 5 Sep. 1942.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., Tab "A". Deployment of the 15 Groups was as follows:

	No. A/C	SOPAC	SWPA
3 Gps. H/B	105	35	70
2 Gps. M/B	114	57	57
2 Gps. L/B	114	13	101
2 Gps. VF	180	25	155
2 Gps. Obsn. A/C	168	13	155
5 Gps. Transports	208	0	208
Total	869	143	726

The total of all aircraft in the South Pacific, including New Zealand and Naval A/C = 1,080.

33. Incl. "A" (JCS, 97/2, 15 Sep. 1942), memo for General Arnold by Admiral King, 5 Sep. 1942.

34. Incl. "B" (JCS, 97/2, 15 Sep. 1942), memo for Commander in Chief, United States Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations by General Arnold, "Need for Army Aircraft in the Current Solomons Operation," 14 Sep. 1942.

35. Ibid.

36. Memo for Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, by General Arnold, "Air Reinforcements for the Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area," 5 Sep. 1942, in files of Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans. This figure was based on statistics as of 2 Sep. It includes losses reported from the South Pacific as of 24 Aug. 1942, and the breakdown was follows:

	On Hand	Enroute or being prepared	Total
H/B	75(1)	44(2)	119
M/B	24(3)	11	35
L/B	7	0	7
VF	270	202(4)	472

(1) Includes 1 enroute to Australia.
4 enroute to Australia and diverted to South Pacific.
(2) Includes 6 shown on report as being enroute to Australia.
(3) Includes 2 enroute to Australia and now diverted to South Pacific.
(4) Includes 30 being transferred from Australia.

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37. Incl. #4 (R&R, AFAEP to AFDAS, 7 Sep. 1942), memo for Commander in Chief, United States Fleet by Lt. Gen. H. H. Arnold, "Combat Performance of Army Air Forces Aircraft," 4 Sep. 1942, in ibid. This memo was not sent on General Arnold's request. The draft listed 180 fighter aircraft of P-39, P-40, and P-400 types in the South Pacific, including the units on Canton and Christmas Islands.

38. Memo for Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, by General Arnold, "Air Reinforcements for the Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area," 5 Sep. 1942, in ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. JCS, 33d Meeting, 15 Sep. 1942.

41. Naval msg., COMTASKFORCE 62 for COMSOPAC, #011237, 1 Sep. 42, in AAG 000-800 Misc., East Indies.

42. Naval msg., CINCPAC to COMINCH, #012331, 2 Sep. 42, in ibid.

43. Memo for the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet by General Arnold, 3 Sep. 1942, in ibid. This memo was not sent. See Appendix 5 for breakdown of shipments.

44. Naval msg., RDO Noumea to COMSOPAC, COMINCH, #101156, 11 Sep. 42, in ibid. General Arnold had indicated that there were 21 P-40E-1's at Tongatabu.

45. Memo for Chief of Staff, U. S. Army by Commander in Chief, United States Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations, "Aircraft Situation in Solomon Islands," 11 Sep. 1942, in ibid. General Harmon on 8 Sep. notified the War Department that only four P-400's were ready for combat on Guadalcanal.

46. Ltr., Harmon to Brig. Gen. L. S. Kuter, 11 Sep. 1942, in Air AG 320.2, South Pacific.

47. JCS, 32d Meeting, 8 Sep. 1942.

48. JCS, 33d Meeting, 15 Sep. 1942.

49. JPS Meeting, 2 Sep. 1942.

50. Cited in CM-IN-6674 (16 Sep. 42), COMINCH for CINCPAC, 152 NCR 5866, 15 Sep. 42.

51. CM-OUT-5191 (15 Sep. 42) WDOPD to CGHD, #155, 15 Sep. 42; CM-OUT-5574 (16 Sep. 42), #171, 16 Sep. 42. Harmon was informed of the assignment of the squadron on 15 September. This was the 72d Squadron of the 5th Bombardment Group (H).

52. CM-OUT-5232 (16 Sep. 42), Arnold for Harmon, #1806, 15 Sep. 42.

53. Memo for Chief of Staff, United States Army, by Commander in Chief, United States Navy and Chief of Naval Operations, "Fighter Plane Reinforcements to Guadalcanal," 17 Sep. 1942, COMINCH file 00994, in III-B-1, #3, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid. Appendix 6 is a detailed analysis of fighter losses during the period 21 August-14 September 1942.

56. Memo for Commander in Chief, United States Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations, by Gen. Marshall 30 Sep. 1942, in ibid.

57. Ibid. See Appendix 7 for a schedule of fighter replacements for the entire Pacific Area and status of aircraft in New Caledonia and Fiji as of 30 Sep. 1942.

58. Memo for Admiral Ghormley by General Harmon, 27 Sep. 1942, in WP-IV-4-23, South Pacific, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

59. Ltr., Col. Saunders to Gen. Hale, 26 Aug. 1942.

60. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 28 Aug. 1942, in AFIHI files.

61. Ibid.

62. Memo for AC/S by Gen. Arnold, 3 Sep. 1942, in AAG 000-800 Misc., East Indies.

63. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 28 Aug. 1942.

64. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Brig. Gen. L. S. Kuter, 11 Sep. 1942.

65. Ibid.

66. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 15 Sep. 1942, in Air AG 320.2 South Pacific. The following quotations, until otherwise indicated, are from this letter which was written during the period 14-19 September.

67. Ibid. It will be remembered that the original decision of the Navy was to take and hold Tulagi as a naval base.

68. Ibid. Admiral King subsequently admitted that planning for the Guadalcanal operation was "not up to the usual thorough standards." See "Our Navy at War," in United States Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 70, No. 496,(June 1944), 790.

69. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 15 Sep. 1942.

70. CM-IN-9281 (21 Sep. 42), Harmon to Arnold, #353, 21 Sep. 42.

Chapter VI

1. "Battle of Santa Cruz Islands, 26 Oct. 1942" ONI Combat Narratives, 27.

2. Ibid., 28; memo for Adm. Leahy and Gen. Marshall by Adm. King, in JCS, 112/1, 14 Oct. 1942.

3. JCS, 36th Meeting, 6 Oct. 1942. At this time only the fields at Espiritu and Guadalcanal were in daily combat operations; the others were too far to the rear. No B-26's were yet on Guadalcanal.

4. Ibid. Marine mechanics, for example, had no experience with liquid-cooled in-line engines. Their entire training had been with air-cooled radial engines, yet frequently they had to work on the Allisons in the P-38's and P-400's.

5. CM-IN-07302 (17 Oct. 42), Harmon to Arnold, #687, 17 Oct. 42. The specific requirements as against available strength were:

	On Hand	Needed
H/B	5 sqs., 52 a/c, 40 crews	6 sqs., 90 a/c, 64 crews
M/B	2 sqs., 28 a/c, 24 crews	1 gp., 80 a/c, 85 crews
D/B	none	1 gp.
VF	4 sqs., 97 a/c, 96 crews	7 sqs., 262 a/c, 200 crews

These figures are exclusive of the New Zealand squadron at Tongatabu, but include 12 B-17's en route from Hawaii and seven B-25's from the U. S. Final totals include a 25 per cent reserve for bombers, 50 per cent reserve for fighters. Number of combat crews to be increased to 1 1/2 crews per a/c as soon as practicable.

6. A partial explanation lies in the difficulty Colonel Saunders encountered in submitting status reports on his B-17's; lack of communications between his widely scattered bases prevented him from sending in accurate reports.

7. Inc. #2 (R&R, AFAEP to AFDAS, 22 Oct. 1942), Disposition Form to Chief of Staff by Gen. Arnold, undated, in III-R Army and Navy Relations, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans. The increases were as follows:

	4 Aug. 1942	19 Oct. 1942
H/B	24	51
M/B	22	21
L/B	0	0
VF	71	166
	117	238

8. JCS, 97/5, 22 Oct. 1942, Tab "A", "Remarks on Capacity of Certain Airfields in the South Pacific." See Appendix 8 for details of estimates.

9. JCS, 97/5, 22 Oct. 1942, Tab "B", "Recommended Strength of Certain Airfields in the South Pacific." For Guadalcanal General Arnold proposed 50 VF, 12 VSB, 15 MB, whereas Admiral McCain suggested 40 VF, 20 VSB, and 20 VTB.

10. JCS, 97/5, 22 Oct. 1942.

11. R&R, AFCAS to AC/AS, Plans, 3 Oct. 1942, in AFIHI files.

12. JCS, 97/5, 22 Oct. 1942.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Incl. (R&R, AFCAS to AC/AS, Plans, 24 Oct. 1942), msg. from COMAIRWING 1, 23 Oct. 1942, in III-R, Army and Navy Relations, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

16. R&R, AFAC to AC/AS, Plans, 24 Oct. 1942; R&R, AFAC to AC/AS, Plans, 24 Oct. 1942, comment #2, by AFAEP to AFACT, 26 Oct. 1942, in ibid.

17. Incl. (R&R, AFCAS to AC/AS, Plans, 24 Oct. 1942), memo for Adms. Leahy and King and Gens. Marshall and Arnold by Pres. Roosevelt, 24 Oct. 1942, in AFIHI files.

18. Memo for the President by Gen. Marshall, 26 Oct. 1942, in ibid.

19. Ibid. The P-38's were with the new 339th Fighter Squadron. Heavy bombers comprised three squadrons then under orders for Australia but now were to report to General Harmon in New Caledonia for temporary duty. The fighters included 25 P-40's released from Hawaii and one squadron of P-39's which the Navy was transferring from Christmas Island.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. JCS, 97/5, 22 Oct. 1942, Tab "C", Table II; JCS, 39th Meeting, 27 Oct. 1942. See Appendix 9, Tables I and II, for current strength and detailed deployment of forces.

24. Ibid.

25. JCS, 39th Meeting, 27 Oct. 1942.

26. Incl. "E" (JCS, 97/6, 10 Nov. 1942), memo for JCS by Adm. King, undated.

27. JCS, 41st Meeting, 10 Nov. 1942.

28. Ibid. It is interesting to note the reasoning by which the two services arrived at their divergent totals:

	Army			Navy		
Type	Unit Equip.	Reserve	Total	Unit Equip.	Reserve	Total
HB	1 gp & 2 sqs. (51)	19	70	2 gps. (70)	20 (?)	90 (approx)
MB	3 sqs. (44)	10	54	1 gp. (57)	15 (?)	72 "
VF	4 sqs. (100)	50	150	6 sqs. (150)	75 (?)	225 "
Transps.	1 sq. (13)	0	13	1 sq. (13)	0	13

General Arnold's rotation plan was as follows:

In front line--42 VF, 20 MB, 20 HB (approx.)
In rotating reserve--50 VF, 20 MB
In reserve--25 VF, 13 MB, 50 HB (in rotating reserve and reserve)

29. JCS, 41st Meeting, 10 Nov. 1942.

30. Memo for Gen. Stratemeyer by Gen. Arnold, 12 Nov. 1942, in AFIHI files. Location of the air units was planned as follows:

	HB	MB	VF
Guadalcanal			1 sq.
Ndeni (Santa Cruz)		1 sq.*	1 sq.
Espiritu Santo		1 sq.	1 sq.
Efate		1 sq.*	1 sq.
New Caledonia	2 gps.**	1 sq.	1 sq.

	HB	MB	VF
Fiji		1 sq.	1 sq.
Tongatabu			1 sq.***
Totals	2 gps. (8 sqs.)	5 sqs.	2 gps. (6 sqs.)

* The squadron of MB at Efate will move to Ndeni when that field is ready. The squadron at Fiji or New Caledonia will then move to Efate.

** These two groups of six squadrons to be located as desired by local commanders. Originally it was planned to operate two out of Espiritu Santo with four as rotating reserve.

*** This is a RNZAF unit which brings fighter total to two groups plus one squadron for a total of 175 a/c.

31. JCS, 39th Meeting, 27 Oct. 1942.

32. Incl. (memo for Adm. Leahy, Gens. Marshall and Arnold by Gen. Deane, 6 Nov. 1942), memo to Joint Chiefs of Staff by Adm. King, 6 Nov. 1942, in III-B-1 #3, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

33. Ibid.

34. Draft of memo for Gen. Deane, Sec. of JCS, by Chief of Staff, "Deployment of United States Air Forces in the Pacific Theater," undated, in ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Memo for Gen. Deane by Chief of Staff, "Deployment of U. S. Air Forces in the Pacific Theater," undated, OPD 320.2 PTO (10 Nov. 1942), in ibid.

37. Incl. #2 /memo for Gen. Deane by Chief of Staff, undated, OPD 320.2 PTO (10 Nov. 1942)/, draft of dispatch for CINCPAC from Chief of Staff, USA, and COMINCH, in ibid. The instructions were sent out on 14 November and reissued on 21 December, when the term "air units" was altered to "air organizations" and the authority to distribute aircraft was broadened to include all naval organizations assigned to the North Pacific. Memo for Gen. Arnold by E. J. King, 21 Dec. 1942, in III-R, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

38. "The Landing in the Solomons, 7-8 Aug. 1942," ONI Combat Narratives, 73.

39. Incl. #1 (ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 6 June 1944), "The Army in the South Pacific," in AFHRI files. This is a brief narrative history of the development and organization of Army forces in the South Pacific written by COMGENSOPAC in the spring of 1944 prior to his departure from the theater.

40. Ibid.

41. Incl. #2 (ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 6 June 1944) ltr., Gen. Harmon to COMSOPAC, 6 Oct. 1942, in ibid. The following views of General Harmon are drawn from this letter. A copy went to General Marshall dated 10 October 1942.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. This conference was held on the morning of 7 October

46. "The Army in the South Pacific," Lt. Gen. M. F. Harmon. The 164th Infantry departed 9 October and arrived at Guadalcanal on 13 October barely in time to join the Marines in turning back a Japanese penetration of the perimeter defense which occurred on the night of the fourteenth.

47. "Report on Activities in South Pacific Area," Maj. Frank O. Brown, 27 Jan. 1943, furnished by Maj. Brown. Major Brown was attached to A-2 of the Seventh Air Force and served as Liaison officer with the South and Southwest Pacific. His reports are accurate and valuable.

48. "The Army in the South Pacific," Lt. Gen. M. F. Harmon; Lt. (jg) William Bradford Huie, Can Do! The Story of the Seabees, 50.

49. Interview with Lt. Col. R. C. Mangrum, USMC, 11 Nov. 1942, in WP-IV-H-14, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans; War Diary, MAG-23, 16 Oct. 1942. Colonel Mangrum commanded Marine Fighter Squadron 232 at Guadalcanal. On 16 October tactical command of CACTUS aircraft passed from MAG-23 MAG-14. During the 16-day period, 1-16 October, 100 B-17's, 9 PBY's, and 35 C-47's arrived and departed from Henderson Field.

50. War Diary, MAG-23, 14 Oct. 1942.

51. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 20 Oct. 1942, in WP-IV-H-7, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

52. Ibid.

53. CM-OUT-07022 (21 Oct. 42), Marshall to Harmon, #1773, 21 Oct. 42.

54. CM-OUT-3859 (12 Nov. 42), Marshall to Harmon, #2015, 11 Nov. 42. Similar officers were being assigned to the staff of CINCPAC in Hawaii.

55. Ibid.

56. CM-OUT-09152 (27 Oct. 42), Marshall to Harmon, #1850, 27 Oct. 42.

57. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 31 Oct. 1942, in AAG 312.1-A, Operations Letters.

58. Msg., Harmon to Marshall, 31 Oct. 1942, in AAG 312.1-A. In addition to the strength committed for the Army Air Forces (70 HB, 52 MB, 150 VF), General Harmon's estimate of land-based air strength was as follows: Navy--5 squadrons of PBY-5A (20 aircraft); Marine--4 VF squadrons, 5 VTB and VDB squadrons, 1 VO squadron, and 1 VR squadron. Also 1 RNZAF VF squadron.

59. Thirty-five C-47's arrived and departed from Henderson Field in the period 1-16 October. War Diary MAG-23, 16 Oct. 1942.

60. Msg., Harmon to Marshall, 31 Oct. 1942. At the time the force already was en route to Aola Bay.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid. The 33d Troop Carrier Squadron had been diverted temporarily to the South Pacific.

63. "The Army in the South Pacific," Lt. Gen. M. F. Harmon.

64. Ibid. It should be noted that Admiral Halsey did not entirely follow the principle of unity of command as set forth eventually in JCS, 263/2/D, 20 Apr. 1943. He dispensed with a fleet commander, and instead issued directives and orders directly to naval surface task force commanders.

65. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 15 Sep. 1942, in Air AG 320.2, South Pacific. Admiral Fitch served as COMAIRSOPAC from 21 September 1942 to 15 April 1944.

66. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 28 Aug. 1942, in AFIHI files.

67. Ibid. As an example, on 24 August COMAIRSOPAC left with Colonel Saunders the decision to strike at the Jap carrier force north of Espiritu, realizing it would necessitate a night landing for returning B-17's. Admiral McCain did not order this attack. Colonel Saunders sent out seven planes and the landing cost one B-17 and five men.

68. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Brig. Gen. L. S. Kuter, 11 Sep. 1942, in Air AG 320.2, South Pacific.

69. Ltr., Gen. Harmon to Gen. Arnold, 15 Sep. 1942, in ibid.

70. "The Army in the South Pacific," Lt. Gen. M. F. Harmon. Appendix 10 indicates deployment of air units as of 2 November 1942.

71. This is COMSOPAC Serial #285, COMAIRSOPAC to COMSOPAC, dated 3 August 1942. General Harmon cites it as 4 August 1942, in "The Army in the South Pacific."

72. Ibid.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Material and records concerning AAF activities in the South Pacific in 1942 are widely dispersed. No official air force organization existed until 1943; consequently such operational records as were preserved were sent back and filed with those of the Fifth or Seventh Air Forces, or both. Fortunately, the interest of AAF Headquarters in the problems of the South Pacific was sufficient to have preserved in its files a major portion of the record. It is probable that materials available at headquarters for the early period are more adequate than those now extant in the theater. Since all AAF operations in the Guadalcanal campaign were under naval control, certain records of the period remain in Navy hands and have not yet been available at AAF Headquarters. In the current study, the notes will indicate the location of the documents--memos, interviews, cable and radio messages, correspondence, and other papers which were used. The various repositories are cited according to the following arrangement:

AAF Classified Files, cited AAG with decimals.

The Adjutant General, Classified Files, cited AG with decimals.
Operations Branch, AGO Secret and Confidential Section, Analysis Files Subsection. Materials in this office consist of operations reports, historical and miscellaneous records received in the Combat Analysis Section, Operations Division, War Department General Staff.

Secretary of Air Staff, Classified Files, cited Air AG with decimals.

AAF Message Center: The majority of cable and radio messages used in this study are in either the AAF Message Center or the files of the Historical Division, AC/AS, Intelligence. No effort was made to distinguish between the two repositories and neither is cited. A few messages were found in other collections and these are appropriately indicated.

Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Operations, Commitments, and Requirements, Unit Records Branch, Thirteenth Air Force Files.

Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Intelligence
Historical Division (AFIHI files): Unit histories in this collection are indicated by title only.

Intelligence Library (Records Branch, Collection Division, cited as Records Branch): During the early period, reports from the South Pacific were filed by this office with those of both the Fifth and Seventh Air Forces, and with the British Empire, Solomon Islands files. All interviews not otherwise indicated are found in the Records Branch.

Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Plans
Combined and Joint Staff Division: Papers of the CCS and JCS are cited by their respective numbers and titles without reference to their repository. Memos and correspondence found in this office are indicated by reference to J/CCS with decimals, according to the filing system used by this office.

Office Services Division: This office employs its own filing system and documents found here are cited accordingly. Most useful for this study were WP-IV-H-23; South Pacific, III-R; Army and Navy Relations; II-E, Intelligence.

U. S. Marine Corps, Historical Division Files.
Through the courtesy of the Chief, Historical Division, U.S.M.C., operational records of the Marine Corps were made available for preparation of this study. Since AAF units on Guadalcanal operated directly under Marine control, the War Diaries and Intelligence Journals of the Marine Air Groups and Squadrons, and of the First Marine Division, furnish the most complete and accurate source for fighter operations on Guadalcanal during this early period.

Combat Narratives, Publications Branch, Office of Naval Intelligence, U. S. Navy.
In the series of studies on naval operations in the South and Southwest Pacific, the following were useful:

"Battle of the Coral Sea."
"The Landing in the Solomons, 7-8 August 1942."
"The Battle of Savo Island, 9 August 1942."
"The Battle of the Eastern Solomons, 23-25 August 1942."
TBattle of Santa Cruz Islands, 26 October 1942."

Appendix 1

STRENGTH OF PACIFIC AIR GARRISONS AS OF 16 FEBRUARY 1942*

FIJI ISLAND

Present Garrison

70th Pursuit Squadron
Associated ground service units
698th Signal Reporting Company
Strength of Air Corps garrison - 608
Planes - 25 P-39's

Proposed Garrison

No augmentation in the way of personnel and equipment is proposed.

CANTON ISLAND

Present Garrison

697th Signal AW Company
Less plotting platoon
Weather and communications detachments
Strength of Air Corps garrison - 51

Proposed Garrison

No augmentation in the way of personnel and equipment is proposed.
Note: One pursuit squadron with associated ground service units, previously designated for Canton (68th), is en route to and included in the garrison for Australia. Equipment shipped consisted of 25 P-39 planes.

BORA BORA (Society Islands)

Present Garrison

695th Signal AW Company
Strength of Air Corps garrison - 129

Proposed Garrison

No augmentation in the way of personnel and equipment is proposed.

* Memo for Chief of AAF by AC/AS, A-3, 16 Feb. 1942, in AAG 320.2, Hawaii-Philippines.

CHRISTMAS ISLAND

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Present Garrison

12th Pursuit Squadron
Associated ground services
696th Signal AW Company
Strength of Air Corps garrison - 489
Planes - 25 P-39's

Proposed Garrison

No augmentation of personnel and equipment is proposed.

PALMYRA ISLAND

Nothing at present.
Nothing proposed.

NEW CALEDONIA

Nothing at present.

Proposed Garrison

One pursuit squadron
Associated ground services
One signal AW company
Strength of proposed Air Corps garrison - 812
Planes - 25 P-39's
Note: Units for this garrison were designated (67th Pursuit Squadron) and are included in the list with garrison for Australia.

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Appendix 2

PROPOSED AND AVAILABLE AIR AND GROUND STRENGTH IN PACIFIC
AS OF MARCH 1942*

Table A. Summary of Air Forces Required to Secure the Southwest Pacific

Place	Present		Joint US Strategic Committee Recommendation		To be Transported
	Army	Navy	Army	Navy	
Hawaii	11,000** 31 HB 21 MB 10 LB 192 Ftr. 34 Misc.	2,700 57 VPB 15 VSO 21 VSB 10 VTB	23,100 70 HB 240 Ftr. 13 LB	4,660 96 VPB 36 VSO 36 VF 36 VSB	39 HB 21 MB 3 LB 48 Ftr. 39 VPB 21 VSO 15 VSB
Midway		863 12 VF 15 VSB		1,888 36 VF 36 VSB 12 VPB	24 VF 21 VSB 12 VPB
Johnston		69		569 9 VF 9 VSB 6 VPB	9 VF 9 VSB 6 VPB
Palmyra		76		601 9 VF 9 VSB 6 VPB	9 VF 9 VSB 6 VPB
Christmas	489 25 Ftr.		1,650 25 Ftr.	120 6 VSO	6 VSO
Bora Bora		80 6 VSO		280 6 VPB 6 VSO	6 VPB
Canton		51	1,650 25 Ftr.	280 6 VPB 6 VSO	25 Ftr. 6 VPB 6 VSO

* JCS 23, 14 Mar. 1942, Annex "A".
** The first figure indicates personnel.

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Place	Present		Joint US Strategic Committee Recommendation		To be Transported
	Army	Navy	Army	Navy	
Tutuila (Samoa)		200 6 VSO		3,995 72 VF 72 VSB 39 VO-VJ 12 VSO 12 VPB (for Samoan Group)	72 VF 72 VSB 39 VO-VJ 12 VSO 6 VPB
Wallis				380 9 VF 6 VSO 9 VSB	9 VF 6 VSO 9 VSB
Viti Levu (Suva)	608 25 Ftr.		6,500 26 MB 55 Ftr.	375 12 VPB	30 Ftr. 26 MB 12 VPB
Tongatabu			1,650 25 Ftr.		25 Ftr.
New Caledonia	2,044 25 Ftr.		6,800 31 MB 80 Ftr.	375 12 VPB	55 Ftr. 31 MB 12 VPB
Efate			1,650 25 Ftr.	200 6 VPB	25 Ftr. 6 VPB
Australia	33,000 43 HB 70 LB 600 Ftr. 5 Transp. 10 Misc.		29,900 70 HB 57 MB 57 LB 240 Ftr.	1,500 48 VPB	27 HB 57 MB 13 LB(-) 360 Ftr.(-) 48 VPB

Table. B. Summary of Existing Ground and Air Strength in Pacific Area as of March 1942

NEW CALEDONIA

	Present	En route	To sail	Total
Ground:	15,463	3,449	2,133	21,045
Air:	1,813			1,813
Total	17,276	3,449	2,133	22,858

Principal Air Units Available

1 Pursuit Squadron
2 Engineering Battalions

EFATE

Army:	Ground	450*	None	5,250	5,700*
	Air	None	None	None	None
Navy:	Ground	None	900	1,100	2,000
	Air	None	150	150	300
Total		450*	1,050	6,500	8,000*

* 450 men from New Caledonia to be withdrawn when permanent garrison arrives.

TONGATABU

	Present	En route	Under orders*	Projected	Total
Ground:	None	None	6,533	None	6,533
Air:	None	None	664	None	664
Total	None	None	7,197	None	7,197

* Sail from New York April 6.

BORA BORA

Ground:	3,846	None	None	None	3,846
Air:	None	None	None	None	None
Total	3,846	None	None	None	3,846

Memo for Adm. King by Chief of Staff, 17 Mar. 1942, in Air AG 320.2, South Pacific.

CHRISTMAS

	Present	En route	Under orders	Projected	Total
Ground:	1,633	None	None	None	1,633
Air:	489	None	None	None	489
Total	2,122	None	None	None	2,122

Principal Air Units Available

12th Pursuit Squadron
1st Section, 50th Interceptor Control Squadron
Air Corps Services

CANTON

Ground:	1,092	None	None	None	1,092
Air:	51	None	None	None	51
Total	1,143	None	None	None	1,143

Principal Air Units Available

697th Signal AW Company
Weather Detachment
Airways Company Detachment

AIRCRAFT STATUS
(Army Combat Airplanes Only)

Type	Under Erection	In Commission	Under Repair	Desirable Level to be Maintained**	
Pursuit	117	172	68	320	
Bombardment:					
Heavy	0	14	18	80	
Medium	0	3	0	114	- Being
Light	3	35	9	57	prepared in U.S. and
Total	120	224	95	571	Hawaii plus 30% spares

* The above are exclusive of 75 P-40's loaned to RAAF.
**Replacements 20% per month all types.

NEW CALEDONIA

Pursuit: 25 arrived March 14.

TONGATABU

Pursuit: 25 to be transferred from Australia.

EFATE

Pursuit: 21 Marine Fighters.
Amphibian: 2 Marine.
Scout: 8 Navy.

FIJI

Pursuit: 25 arrived February 1942.

CHRISTMAS

Pursuit: 25 arrived February 1942.

Appendix 3

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR DEFENSE OF ISLAND BASES BETWEEN HAWAII AND AUSTRALIA*

Place	Present, En Route, Under Orders, and Projected	Committee Recommendations Recommendation "A" (Army)	Recommendation "B" (Navy)
Central Pacific (excluding Hawaiian Is.)			
No AAF forces provided for Midway, Johnston, Fanning, and Palmyra. Both services agree on Marines for these islands.			
Christmas	Army: 489(P)** 25 Ftr.(P)	Army: 490 25 Ftr. Navy: 120 6 VSO	Army: 490 25 Ftr. Navy: 120 6 VSO
South Pacific Mobile Forces		26 MB based on New Caledonia and 26 MB based on Viti Levu-Vanua Levu will be available for operations in the South Pacific Area. Navy: 1500 60 VPB (with Amphibious Forces-3750) 72 VMSB 72 VMF 39 VMO-VJ	Army: 35 HB 57 MB Navy: 1500 60 VPB Marines: 3750 (with Amphibious Forces) 72 VMSB 39 VMO-VJ 72 VMF

P - present
E - en route (approx. date of arrival indicated)
O - under orders (approx. date of arrival indicated)
Pr - projected

* JPS 21/7, in JCS 48, 2 May 1942.
** The first figure represents personnel.

Place	Present, En Route, Under Orders, and Projected	Committee Recommendations	
		Recommendation "A" (Army)	Recommendation "B" (Navy)
Local Defense Forces Bora Bora	Navy: 120(P) 8 VSO (P)	Navy: 120 6 VSO	Navy: 120 6 VSO
Canton	Army: 51 (P)	Army: 664 12 Ftr. 13 Ftr. (after additional runway is completed)	Army: 664 25 Ftr.
Tutuila	All Navy and Marine		
Upolu	All Navy and Marine		
Wallis	All Navy and Marine		
Viti Levu-Vanua Levu	RNZAF: 12 Hudson (P) 3 Singapore (P) 9 Vincent (P) Navy: 150 (P) 6 VPB (P) Army: 664 (P) 25 Ftr. (P)	RNZAF: 26 MB 50 Ftr. 1 squadron small seaplanes	Same as "A"
Tongatabu	Army: 664 (E) 25 Ftr. (E-15 May) Navy: 120 (E) 6 VSO (E-2 May)	Army: 1328 50 Ftr. Navy: 120 6 VSO	Army: 26 MB 80 Ftr. Navy: 120 6 VSO
New Caledonia	Army: 1813 (P) 25 Ftr. (P) Navy: 150 (P) 6 VPB (P)	Army: 6800 26 MB 13 LB 80 Ftr. 13 Obsn. Navy: 120 6 VSO	Same as "A"

Place	Present, En route, Under Orders, and Projected	Committee Recommendations	
		Recommendation "A" (Army)	Recommendation "B" (Navy)
Efate	Marine: 283 21 VMF (E-1 May) Navy: 120 6 VSO (E-May)	Marine: 283 18 VMF Navy: 120 6 VSO	Army: 600 25 Ftr. Navy: 120 6 VSO
New Zealand	All RNZAF 20 MB (P) 56 Misc. (P) Numerous trainers (P)	RNZAF: 54 MB 80 Ftr.	RNZAF: 57 MB 80 Ftr.

Appendix 4

PARTIAL LIST OF CONSTRUCTION MATERIEL
CAPTURED ON GUADALCANAL*

Construction Equipment

6 heavy gasoline rollers
1 rubber-tired gasoline tractor
2 heavy gasoline tractors
1 light gasoline tractor
1 welding unit
3 gasoline cement mixers

Vehicles

Total	Serviceable	
4	3	cars (5-passenger) in poor condition
60	34	trucks, 1 1/2-2 ton, 2 x 4
5	4	motorcycles, delivery-type

Tools

1 blacksmith set
2 mechanics tools
miscellaneous hand tools, saws, hammers, picks, shovels

Gasoline

150,000 gallons, about 66 octane (useful only in Jap trucks)

Building Supplies

600 tons cement
80 tons reinforcing bars
40 tons 20' steel trusses
20 tons steel girders and beams
miscellaneous lumber, pipe, steel cable

* Vandegrift Report, Phase III, Annex D.

[redacted]

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Appendix 5

AIR SITUATION IN THE PACIFIC AS OF 1 SEPTEMBER 1942*

	HB	MB	L and DB	Ftr.
Airplanes on Hand:				
Australia	68	82	53	297
Hawaii	40	0	7	182
Fiji Islands	6	12	0	16
Tongatabu	0	0	0	21
Canton	0	0	0	0
Christmas	0	0	0	20
New Caledonia	28	12	0	31
Total South Pacific (incld. Ferry Route Islands)	34	24	0	88
Total Pacific Areas	142	106	60	567
Airplanes En route:				
Australia	9	20	0	104
Hawaii	0	0	0	15
Fiji Islands	0	0	0	16
Tongatabu	0	0	0	2
Canton	0	0	0	18
Christmas	0	0	0	7
New Caledonia	2	0	0	49
Total South Pacific (incld. Ferry Route Islands)	2	0	0	92
Total Pacific Areas	11	20	0	211

* Incl. (memo for Adm. King by Gen. Arnold, "Need for Army Aircraft in the Current Solomon Operation," 3 Sep. 1942) Tab "A", "Action taken by the War Department and Army Air Forces to assist the Solomon Island action," in AAG 000-800 Misc., East Indies.

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[redacted] SECURITY INFORMATION

[redacted]

	HB	MB	L and DB	Ftr.	
Airplanes Being Prepared in United States					
Australia	12	14	0	39	
Hawaii	36	0	0	68	
Fiji Islands	0	0	0	0	
Tongatabu	0	0	0	0	
Canton	0	0	0	0	
Christmas	0	0	0	2	
New Caledonia	0	0	0	16	
Total South Pacific (incld. Ferry Route Islands)	0	0	0	18	
Total Pacific Areas	48	14	0	125	Total a/c
Total South Pacific (on hand, en route, and being prepared)	36	24	0	198	258
Total Pacific Areas (on hand, en route, and being prepared)	201	140	60	903	1304

[redacted] RESTRICTED CONFIDENTIAL

[redacted]

Appendix 6

GUADALCANAL FIGHTER STATISTICS

A. Fighter Plane Losses on Guadalcanal, 21 August-14 September 1942*

Date	VF flown in	Destroyed since last report	Per cent of remainder destroyed	Over-all monthly rate of destruction
21-30 Aug.	19 F4F-4 14 P-400			
30 Aug.		7 F4F-4	37%	110%
		4 P-400	28%	84%
30 Aug.	19 F4F-4			
10 Sep.		14 F4F-4	45%	82%
11 Sep.	24 F4F-4			
14 Sep.		6 F4F-4	15%	57%
		1 P-400	10%	43%
Totals	62 F4F-4	27 F4F-4	42%	57%
	14 P-400	5 P-400	36%	43%

B. Status Report as of 14 September 1942

Type	On hand - operating	On hand - damaged	Destroyed to date
F4F-4	30 (48% of receipts)	5 (8%)	27 (44%)
P-400	5 (36% of receipts)	4 (28%)	5 (36%)
	35 (46% of receipts)	9 (12%)	32 (42%)

* Incl. "A", (memo for Chief of Staff, U. S. Army by Commander in Chief, U. S. Navy and Chief of Naval Operations, "Fighter plane reinforcements to Guadalcanal," 17 Sep. 1942), "Fighter plane losses in Guadalcanal, August 21-September 14, 1942," 17 Sep. 1942, in III-B-1, #3, Army Air Forces, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

Appendix 7

SCHEDULE OF FIGHTER PLANE REPLACEMENTS TO THE PACIFIC AREA
AS OF 30 SEPTEMBER 1942*

	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.
Australia (P-38 and P-39)					
Attrition	10	50	45	50	50
Increase	0	0	0	0	40
South Pacific (P-39)					
Attrition	0	6	6	6	2
Increase	0	2	4	7	0
Canton and Christmas (P-39)					
Attrition	0	2	0	2	3
Increase	34	8	30	23	0
Hawaii (P-39 and P-40F)					
Attrition	0	9	0	9	10
Increase	0	11	0	16	51

* Tab "A" (memo for Adm. King by Gen. Marshall, 30 Sep. 1942), in III-B-1, #3, Army Air Forces, Off. Serv. Div., AC/AS, Plans.

Appendix 8

ESTIMATED CAPACITY OF CERTAIN SOUTH PACIFIC AIRFIELDS,
22 OCTOBER 1942*

	By General Arnold		By Admiral McCain	
	Now	15 Nov.	Now	15 Nov.
Guadalcanal	50 VF 13 VSB 13 MB 6 VSO	50 VF 13 VSB 13 MB 12 VSO	40 VF 20 VSB 20 VTB 6 VSO	40 VF 20 VSB 20 VTB 12 VSO
Espiritu Santo	about 20 HB 40 VF	about 20 HB 40 VF plus transports	22 HB 40 light types	44 HB 80 light types
Efate	18 HB 50 VF	no comment	22 HB 40 light types	44 HB 40 light types
New Caledonia	ample		ample	
Suva	ample		ample	

* JCS 97/5, 22 Oct. 1942, Tab "A".

Appendix 9

AIRCRAFT ON HAND AS OF 12 OCTOBER AND RECOMMENDED DEPLOYMENT AS OF 1 JANUARY 1943*

Table I. Planes on Hand (12 October 1942)

Place	AAF		Navy		RNZAF	
	Type	No.	Type	No.	Type	No.
Guadalcanal (incld. Tulagi)	VF	10	VF VOS VSB	41 2 39		
Ndeni (when ready)	0	0	0	0		
Espiritu Santo	VF	5	VOS VF	6 19		
Efate	0	0	VPB VOS VF	1 8 18 (19 spares)		
New Caledonia	HB MB VF Transp.	40** 11 70 13**	VPB VSB VR	45** 21 22**	Hudson	9
Fiji	MB VF	11 31	0 0	0 0	Hudson Singapore Vincent	11 4 9
New Zealand	0	0	0	0	Hudson Vincent Kittyhawk Hind (Hawker)	51 32 35 16
Tongatabu	VF	23	VOS	4		
Samoan Area (incld. Funafuti, Wallis, Tutuila, Upolu)	0	0	VOS VSB VF	15 19 15		

* JCS 97/5, 22 Oct. 1942, Tab "C".
** Operating throughout the New Caledonia, Guadalcanal, Ndeni, [illegible] Area.

Place	AAF		Navy		RNZAF	
	Type	No.	Type	No.	Type	No.
Bora Bora			VOS	8		
Canton	VF LB	18 6	0 0	0 0		

Table II. Recommended Deployment by 1 January 1943

Place	AAF		Navy		RNZAF	
	Type	No.	Type	No.	Type	No.
Guadalcanal (incld. Tulagi)	VF	25	VTB VOS VSB VT	12 8 18 18	Hudson	12
Ndeni	MB VF	7 17	VOS	8		
Espiritu Santo	MB VF	13 25	VOS VSB VF	8 18 18		
Efate	MB VF	6 25	VOS VSB VT	8 9 18		
New Caledonia	HB MB VF Transp.	70** 13 33 13**	VPB VOS VSB VF VR	60** 8** 18 18 36**	Hudson	12
Fiji	MB VF	13 25			Hudson Singapore Vincent	12 4 9
New Zealand	0	0	0	0	10 combat	squadrons
Tongatabu	VF	25***	VOS	8		
Samoan Area (incld. Funafuti, Wallis, Tutuila, Upolu	0	0	VOS VSB VF	24 18 27		
Bora Bora			VOS VPB	8 3		
Canton	VF MB or LB	25 13	VPB or VSB	12 18		

** Operating throughout the New Caledonia, Guadalcanal, Ndeni, Fiji Area.
*** To be manned by RNZAF personnel.

Appendix 10

DEPLOYMENT OF COMBAT UNITS CURRENTLY OPERATING OR SCHEDULED TO OPERATE IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC AS OF 2 NOVEMBER 1942*

Fighters

68th Fighter Squadron (347th Fighter Group)

Trained in P-40; no aircraft available.
Air and ground echelons en route from Tongatabu to New Caledonia.

67th Fighter Squadron (347th Fighter Group)

Equipped with P-400 and P-39.
Now at New Caledonia.

339th Fighter Squadron (347th Fighter Group)

Equipped with P-38.
Now at New Caledonia.

44th Fighter Squadron (318th Fighter Group)

Equipped with P-40F.
Ground and air echelons now en route from Hawaii.

70th Fighter Squadron

Equipped with P-39.
Now at Fiji.

12th Fighter Squadron (15th Fighter Group)

Medium Bombers

69th Squadron (38th Group)

Equipped with B-26. To be furnished B-25.
Now at New Caledonia.

70th Squadron (38th Group)

Equipped with B-26. To be equipped with B-25.
Now at Fiji.

* R&R, AFADS to AFAEP, 27 Oct. 1942, comment #2 by AFAEP, 2 Nov. 1942, in AAG 322-A, Groups.

[redacted]

Heavy Bombers

11th Group (26th, 42d, 98th, and 431st Squadrons)

Equipped with B-17E and F.
Entire group now in New Caledonia area.

72d Squadron (5th Group)

Equipped with B-17E and F.
Air echelon operating with 11th Group. Ground echelon en route from Hawaii.

31st Squadron (5th Group)

Equipped with B-17E and F.
Air echelon in New Caledonia. Gen. Emmons ordered to send ground echelon.

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