







MILITARY SYMBOLS ON MAPS

FUNCTION SYMBOLS

	headquarters
	infantry
	armour
	anti-tank artillery
	artillery
	defensive position

STRENGTH INDICATORS

.	section
...	platoon/troop
	company/squadron
	battalion
	regiment
x	brigade
xx	division
xxx	corps
(+)	reinforced
(-)	sub-unit(s) detached

xxx

MILITARY HISTORY AND 1943: A PERSPECTIVE 70 YEARS ON

Peter J. Dean

This book is a sibling of last year's production *Australia 1942: In the Shadow of War*. That book focused on Australia's first traumatic year of the Pacific War from the fall of Singapore until the victory in Papua in January 1943. It demonstrated that while a Japanese invasion of Australia may have been possible it was never probable and that ultimately the country was not under direct threat. Instead, stretched to their limits, the Japanese had decided in February 1942 to isolate Australia. This meant that the battles of 1942 were to be fought in the air and sea approaches to the Australian continent and in the islands of the archipelago to Australia's north. It is here that the security of Australia was achieved.

The events of 1942 had shown that Australia, with its small population and limited industrial base, needed to develop a close strategic partnership with a global power. When Great Britain failed to be able to meet this need in 1942 Australia was fortunate that the United States was both capable and willing to fill the void. In partnership with the United States, Australia's Army, Navy and Air Force had defeated the Japanese attempts to isolate Australia during 1942. At the dawn of a new year – 1943 – Australian and US forces in the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) would plan and launch offensive operations to push the Japanese far away from Australia's shores and to strike at the heart of Japanese military power in the South Pacific.

This book is about Australia's role in the SWPA during 1943. Throughout this important phase of the Pacific War Australia would

make major contributions to both her own security and to the defeat of the Japanese via the provision of key air, naval and ground forces to a US-led coalition. This coalition would decisively defeat the Japanese based at Rabaul during the year. Australia would be called upon to forward deploy her forces in offensive operations in the islands to our north; a proposition that had been almost impossible to conceive only 12 months earlier.

At the beginning of 1942 the bulk of the elite, all volunteer, Australian Imperial Force (AIF) was still serving in North Africa. The 8th Division AIF was staring at defeat in Singapore and the overall military situation for the Allies was grim. Back home the Australian Military Forces were still trying to recover from decades of austerity while at the same time providing men and resources to Europe, the Middle East and Malaya. By February 1942, with the collapse of resistance in Malaya and the Dutch East Indies and the bombing of Darwin, Australia had reached its most perilous point.

A year later the situation was radically different. The tide had turned in the Allies' favour. The 'Japanese spearhead . . . [was] blunted at [Coral Sea and] Midway and broken at Guadalcanal [and Papua].'¹ With the Japanese advance across the Pacific stopped, the bulk of the AIF, Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and Royal Australian Navy (RAN) returned to Australia from the Middle East and with the broad, sweeping reforms of 1942 in place, the nation's military forces were restructured to take the fight to the enemy. These moves along with the provision of large-scale US reinforcements to the SWPA meant that during 1943 the Allies were able to assemble substantial air and naval assets to project force across the vast distances of this theatre. This enabled Australia's military to fight major expeditionary operations against the Japanese in New Guinea and its surrounding islands. The role of this book is to investigate and understand the experience of Australia's military forces in this challenge.

In doing so it will endeavour to outline the strategic challenges that the Allies faced in 1943 while focusing on Australia's own unique state of affairs. It provides the context to Australia's experience by detailing the partnership with the United States and the role of the theatre's strategic commander, General Douglas MacArthur, as well as providing insights into Australian war strategy, Allied strategic objectives and intentions in the Pacific, Japanese strategy in the South Pacific, the role of the RAN and RAAF as well as the operations that encompassed the 1943 campaign in New Guinea.

WHY 'THE LIBERATION OF NEW GUINEA'?

The title of this book deserves some explanation. *Australia 1943: The Liberation of New Guinea* is about the 'long' history of Australia's 1943 campaign in the SWPA and the 'short' history of the liberation of New Guinea. It is long in that while the major operations for this campaign were conducted during 1943 it was well into 1944 before they drew to a close. It is short in that it details one of the three campaigns (the most decisive one) for the liberation of this territory from Japanese control. These long and short elements can be explained by the nature of the region's political geography and the vagrancies of time in military campaigns.

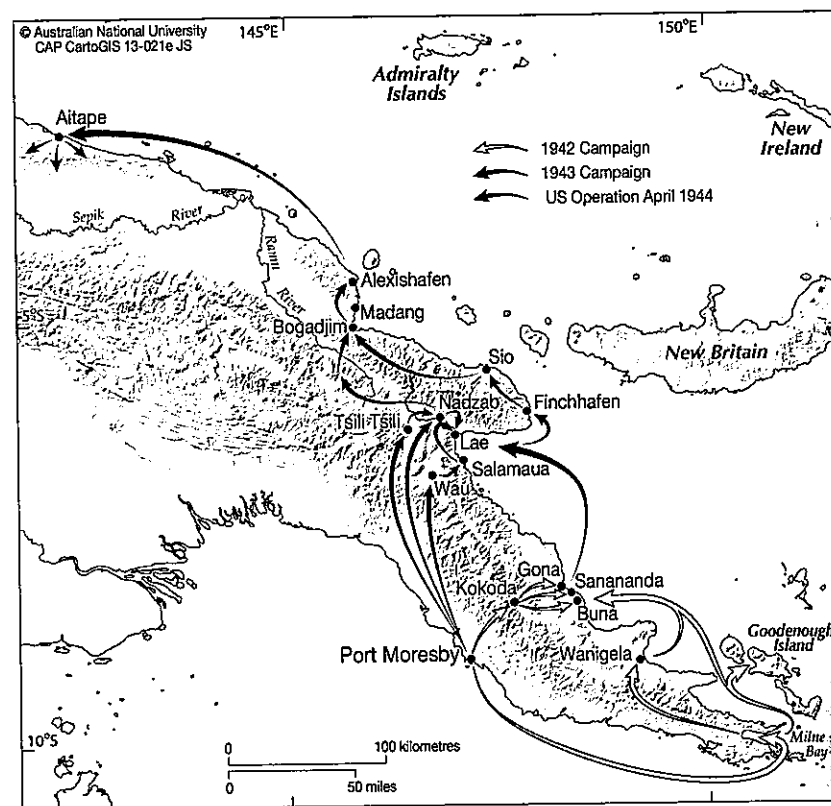
Political geography is critical to understanding the campaigns in the SWPA during the Second World War. The dominating land mass in Australia's operations during 1943 was, as the US naval historian Samuel Elliot Morison described it, that 'half bird and half reptile . . . prehistoric monster'² of an island to Australia's north known as New Guinea.

New Guinea is the second largest island in the world. Today the western half of the island is known as Irian Jiya Barat (or West Papua) and forms a critical province within the Republic of Indonesia. The eastern half of the island, with which most Australians are more familiar, constitutes the independent nation state of Papua New Guinea (PNG). While many Australians recognise this division few would be familiar with the political geography of the island during the Second World War.

At this time the western portion of the island (Irian Jiya) was part of the Dutch East Indies. The eastern half of the island (PNG) was further divided into two parts. The south and south-eastern portion was the territory of Papua where the major campaign of the SWPA was fought in 1942. This area includes Port Moresby, Milne Bay, the Kokoda Trail and Buna, Gona and Sanananda. To the north of Papua lay the territory known as New Guinea where the Australian operations in 1943 would be undertaken and that is the focus of this book.

As mentioned this is a long history of the 1943 campaign in New Guinea. For, while most of the operations took place during 1943, military campaigns do not tend to confine themselves to the niceties of the Gregorian calendar. The capture of Madang in New Guinea, which signifies the conclusion of the 1943 campaign in New Guinea and the SWPA, did not occur until 24 April 1944.

It is also a short history in that while the fall of Madang provides a clear culmination point for the end of the 1943 campaign it did not



Map I Australian operations in Papua, 1942, and mainland New Guinea, 1943

lead to the full liberation of the territory of New Guinea. The second and third campaigns would begin in late 1944 and would continue until the war ended in August 1945. The finer points of political geography and military strategy in this region provide an explanation to this anomaly.

The Australian mandated territory of New Guinea at this point in time was not restricted to a portion of the world's second biggest island. The New Guinea territory unified under administrative control of the Australian government at this time also included the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago – New Britain, New Ireland and the Admiralties – as well as those of the northern Solomon Islands of Buka and Bougainville; areas that remained largely under Japanese occupation at the time of the capture of Madang.

These areas had been the focus of operations by US military forces from both the US Navy's South Pacific Area Command (SOPAC) as well

as US forces in the SWPA during the 1943 campaign. Five months after the fall of Madang, US forces at Cape Gloucester in New Britain and in Bougainville would hand over their bases to Australia's military forces. From this point onwards the Australians would fight a holding action on New Britain and a long, slow campaign to eliminate the Japanese from Bougainville. They were to be boosted by the 6th Australian Division in 1945, which was tasked with the elimination of a pocket of Japanese isolated around Wewak on the mainland. These final campaigns, which lasted until the end of the war, is one of the reasons why the Australian Army battle honour The Liberation of New Guinea is awarded to units who fought across this region during 1943–45.

While the complexities of the geopolitics and military operations are enough to cause confusion to both the public and historians alike, the Australian Army has also managed to obscure the issue even more through its complicated and confusing organisational structure. During the war the major Australian Army headquarters that controlled operations in this area during 1942–44 was known as 'New Guinea Force' (later First Australian Army), irrespective of whether operations were being conducted in the territories of Papua or New Guinea. This is also reflective of the language of the diggers, who saw no need to distinguish one piece of jungle on the island from another via a seemingly arbitrary line on an outdated map.

After the war, in an endeavour that clouded matters further, the Army awarded the battle honour The Liberation of New Guinea to units that had served in the mandated territories only *after* 18 September 1943; effectively cutting out recognition to the units that served in the first nine months of the 1943 campaign. This is a bizarre and arbitrary distinction. As the Australian War Memorial's website states, this means that 'for no apparent reason, the [battle] honour does not encompass [two of the most decisive operations in the 1943 campaign] Wau–Salamaua or Nadzab–Lae... and there appears no consistency in the manner [in which this honour] was awarded to the units that participated in the[se]... operations'.³

In terms of military strategy there is little doubt that the decisive campaign occurred in New Guinea between January 1943 and April 1944. After the main battlefront of the war would skip past New Guinea.

The latter campaigns on both the mainland and the surrounding islands were fought principally to clear up Japanese outposts in order to free Australian troops for both participation in the planned invasion of Japan in 1945–46 and to release men from the military to support the war effort in that most horrible of military terms, and one that is often

completely at odds with the intensity and nature of the fighting, the Australian operations in New Guinea during 1944–45 are more often than not described as ‘mopping up’.

Geopolitical and campaign distinctions aside, the capture of Madang represents a critical moment in the history of Australia’s role in the Pacific War. It was both the culmination point of Australia’s largest and most successful military campaign and the last time that Australia would have a significant impact on the strategic direction of the war in the SWPA. It was at Madang that the Australian Army would forfeit to the Americans its predominant role in operations in the SWPA.

From this moment on General Douglas MacArthur’s US military forces would take full control of the drive to, and liberation of, the Philippines. The capture of Madang in many ways stands as a clear demarcation point between combined US–Australian operations that served to liberate Australian mandated territories from the Japanese and the US drive north to free their former colonial empire in the Pacific.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE: 1942–1943

This volume, with its focus on military operations in the SWPA during 1943, is designed specifically as a companion to the 2012 text *Australia 1942: In the Shadow of War*. Like its predecessor this book brings together a range of expert historians on the Second World War. It is focused on bridging the gap between readability and scholarly rigour. While designed to provide a coherent story of Australia’s 1943 campaign in New Guinea the chapters are also, where possible, self-contained to allow the reader to approach them in order of interest, if so desired. Such an approach entails some degree of overlap between chapters, but not so much as to remove the primary focus of the work. If read from start to finish the text provides a coherent and comprehensive story of this critical period in Australian military history.

Like *Australia 1942* the focus is mainly on the Australian experience of war, but in order to provide context and depth of understanding it includes perspectives from beyond Australia. While both are military histories *Australia 1942* has a much broader scope than this volume. It speaks of social, political and cultural interactions in Australia in order to contextualise the events of 1942 and to provide a broad overview of the changes during this time to Australian society. For *Australia 1943* the focus is much more centred on military operations and strategy. The broader context is provided by an examination of Allied and Japanese

strategy in the Pacific as well as the operations undertaken by US forces in the SOPAC and the SWPA. It is hoped that this context will provide a firm platform for understanding the role and importance of the Australian operations in New Guinea and the surrounding region. This close focus on military events does not seek to deny the critical importance of the home front. Rather it is an acknowledgement that many of the major policy and social reforms in Australia’s war effort occurred in 1942 and that 1943 was a year of execution and implementation. While major decisions in the realms of politics and Australian strategy are covered, the aim is not to provide a definitive account of all areas of Australia’s wartime experience. There is more than enough scope to write a dozen books on such aspects of Australia’s war effort and the editor hopes to cover a number of these critical topics in future projects.

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND AIM

While a number of offensive operations had taken place in 1942, the broad Allied strategic posture during this year had been defensive. In 1943 the major campaigns in the South and Southwest Pacific were both operationally and strategically offensive. They were the culmination of plans laid in 1942 that had been disrupted by the Japanese military.

For example, MacArthur planned to establish an airfield on the northern shore of Papua at Buna in mid-1942. His orders for Operation Providence were issued on 15 July 1942 with D-Day set for 3–5 August 1942. However, the Japanese had exactly the same idea and beat MacArthur to the punch by landing their forces at Giruwa, 4 kilometres from Buna, on 21 July 1942. This landing and the subsequent Japanese move across the Owen Stanley Range led to the Papuan Campaign and it was not until mid-January 1943 that the Australian and US forces were able to eliminate the Japanese in the area and secure the Buna airfield – some five months and thousands of casualties later than MacArthur intended.⁵

The 1943 Allied campaign against the Japanese stronghold at Rabaul is neither well-known nor understood in the historiography. In Australia the battles are overshadowed by the epic struggle along the Kokoda Trail in 1942 that, along with the fall of Singapore and the subsequent prisoner-of-war experience, dominates Australian memory of the Pacific War. In both the United States and Japan this campaign is generally overlooked by the titanic struggles for the Philippines, Okinawa and Iwo Jima that occurred in 1944–45.

This neglect was apparent soon after the end of war. When the first histories started to appear, the focus fell clearly onto the events of 1942 and 1944–45. It is a trend that has continued in the historiography of the Pacific War ever since. As Vincent O'Hara notes in the introduction to the 2010 edition of Samuel Eliot Morison's sixth volume of his history of US Naval Operations in the Second World War, *Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier: 22 July 1942 – 1 May 1944*, this time and place in the Pacific War:

is [the] history of a shadowy mid-period of the war fought in the distant southwest Pacific between the victories at Guadalcanal and Midway and the climactic actions in the Philippines Sea and off Leyte, a period that many historians skip or summarize, treating it as if nothing much had happened.⁶

This is an unfortunate occurrence, for, as O'Hara argues, 'perhaps this campaign receives so little notice precisely because so much actually did happen'.⁷

Morison's account of US naval operations during this period as well as those by the official historians of the Australian and US armies in the 1950s and 1960s provided the first detailed assessment of these actions. While these volumes are required reading for any serious scholar of the Pacific War they are exceptionally long, detailed and often dense accounts. They also often roam widely, detailing events at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war. In addition they are often not written in a style that is readily accessible to the public and at times their scholarship is dated.

For the Australian operations in 1943 the quantity of works is small and the quality is mixed. The best of these titles include Professor David Horner's ground-breaking accounts of Australian strategy and operations, most notably his works: *High Command: Australia and Allied Strategy, 1939–1945*, *Blamey: The Commander-in-Chief and Defence Supremo: Sir Frederick Shedden and the Making of Australian Defence Policy*. At the operational level John Coates's excellent *Bravery over Blunder* analyses the 9th Australian Division's operations during 1943, especially the amphibious landing at Finschhafen. Peter Dean's biography of Blamey's senior operations staff officer Lieutenant-General Sir Frank Horton Berryman, *The Architect of Victory*, provides a detailed appraisal of the planning of these operations and the conduct of the I (later III) Corps operations in the Huon Peninsula. While at the tactical level Phillip

Bradley's work has provided a window into life in combat at the section, platoon and company level, through his works *The Battle for Wau*, *To Salamaua* and *On Shaggy Ridge* and his sweeping overview of the New Guinea campaigns *Hell's Battlefield*. Many other works by journalists, ex-military officers, academics and enthusiasts have covered elements of Australia's operations, yet few have focused specifically on the operations in 1943. In the works listed here, and in most others, the events of 1943 are either a small part of a much wider study or focus exclusively on only one narrow action, battle or element of the campaign.

The most recent attempt to detail the events of the 1943 campaign in the SWPA in a single volume was in 2003 when the Australian Army History Unit published a volume of conference proceedings: *The Foundations of Victory 1943–44*. This work provides broad coverage of this period with some excellent papers on strategy, operations, tactics, memory and historiography. However, it does not consider the individual operations that constitute the 1943 campaign in New Guinea, nor does it provide detail on US operations in the SWPA or SOPAC. This volume, derived from a conference on land power, also lacks broader perspectives on the role of air and naval power. To be fair, it was never the intention of that volume of papers to provide a comprehensive coverage of the 1943 campaign in New Guinea. As the editors, Jeffery Grey and Peter Dennis, note, 'the volume provides a snapshot of the state of current knowledge about the war in New Guinea, and suggests at the same time the many areas that await further research and publication'.⁸

This volume is an attempt to take up these suggestions and fill in some of the gaps in the historiography by bringing together aspects of research on 1943 that have not generally been seen in one volume before and to provide a number of fresh perspectives on this period of Australia's war-time history. As such, this work aims to fill some of the cracks left in the historiography of this campaign. It does so while offering the first volume, operationally focused study of Australia's campaign in the SWPA in 1943 that encompasses a contextualised framework of strategy in the Pacific War;⁹ the roles of the major services and operations in the SOPAC and SWPA; and a consideration of Japanese plans and strategy.

CONTEMPORARY RESONANCE

It was never the intention of this work to have a single purpose, such as filling one of the shortfalls in the historiography of the Pacific War,

or to commemorate the 70th anniversary of these battles. While these issues, or the production of history itself, are enough of a rationale to justify writing this book, the significance of this work is also underscored by its relevance to the contemporary era.

Seventy years on from 1943 one could expect that these operations would have long been relegated to the dustbin of military irrelevance and that any lessons for the modern-day Australian Defence Force (ADF) would have long since passed. Yet this is not the case. While in the current strategic environment no one expects Australia to fight a major global conflict in the islands to the nation's north in the foreseeable future, the region remains exceptionally important to Australia. In addition, while the last 70 years have seen some dramatic changes in military technology they are not so significant as to render 1943 obsolete. In the end, current Australian defence policy and military strategy can apply many of the lessons from this conflict to current and future thinking.

Fundamentally the nature of war remains the same and in most cases the character of war is yet to change so dramatically as to make the events of the Pacific War redundant. The geographical relevance of the archipelago to Australia's north remains enduring and the adoption of a maritime strategy by the ADF further cements this campaign's relevance. It means many of the lessons from 1943 endure.

Furthermore, the basic tenets of ground, jungle, amphibious, air and naval warfare remain as relevant today as they did 70 years ago. While technology may have seen Super Hornets replace Kittyhawks the four fundamental roles of airpower – strike, interdiction, transport and supply, and control of the air – remain as relevant and applicable today as they were in the Second World War. In amphibious operations the idea of projecting force into distant operational areas was used extensively by the US and Australian Navies during the Pacific War and is one of the current focuses of the ADF. While helicopters may have added an extra dimension in terms of vertical assault, it should not be overlooked that such operations were exercised for the first time in the Pacific during 1943 through the use of airborne forces.

Technological innovations, such as the helicopter, have however led to changes in doctrine. In one critical area of amphibious operations the development of the helicopter has given rise to modern-day concepts, such as Ship-to-Objective Manoeuvre (STOM). STOM theoretically removes the notion of a build-up of military force on shore after an amphibious assault followed by a break-out to the objective. This notionally reduces or negates a period of 'operational pause' after the initial landing. However,

helicopters, while agile and versatile, are not all-encompassing platforms and they have some inherent weaknesses. They are vulnerable to ground fire and surface-to-air missiles and, most significantly, for an amphibious assault they cannot move bulk supplies and heavy equipment (such as tanks, trucks, ammunition and fuel) in quantities significant enough to keep a modern army manoeuvring on the battlefield. In any amphibious lodgement these essential items for military operations rely on maritime sustainment and as such they still have to cross a beach in much the same manner as they did in 1943.¹⁰

The necessity of amphibious landings also means that critical areas (such as reconnaissance, landing and beach-master skills) are still fundamental to even the simplest (and none are simple) or to the most elementary aspects of an amphibious operation. Furthermore the basic technology of landing craft are still so similar that a soldier in the Pacific campaigns would feel as familiar on a ride into the beach in 2013 as they would have done in 1943.¹¹

In addition, the contemporary concepts for amphibious operations in the US Marine Corps (USMC), and the new Australian amphibious capability,¹² owe more in heritage to the operations in SOPAC and the SWPA for their operational thinking than they do to the operations that occurred in the Central Pacific Area during the war. STOM and the nature of modern amphibious operations mean that the charging of the beaches as per USMC operations at islands such as Tawara and Iwo Jima in 1943–45 are confined to the distant past. Furthermore, such direct frontal assaults using overwhelming firepower represented an aberration in the history of amphibious thinking and operations. Modern amphibious warfare focuses on the traditional notion of an indirect assault. In addition, doctrines such as STOM draw their cultural heritage and influence from amphibious operations in regions such as the SWPA and SOPAC, rather than in Okinawa and Saipan. Similar arguments about the relevance of operations from 1943 to today can be easily extended to other types of maritime operations or jungle warfare. On a broader level the fundamental tenets of maritime strategy have not changed. Indeed, the need for joint and coalition operations, such as those practiced in the SWPA, have only increased in recent times. In the Pacific the ties between Australia and the United States, which formed the backbone of the US operations in 1943, have grown in significance over the past decades. While these two nations formed a loose coalition in the Pacific during the Second World War, today the relationship is built on the formal ANZUS alliance that has existed for over 60 years.

and has been tested through wars in Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan. Except for the need to incorporate and coordinate new developments in the areas of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance as well as cyber warfare most of the key elements of a maritime strategy in the South Pacific remain as relevant in 2013 as they were in 1943.

One area of immense change has been in the political make-up of the region. In the postwar era new states emerged where empires had once stood tall. In contrast to this radical change has been the continuity of geography. The landmasses and landforms have not changed nor will they for millions of years to come. The 1943 campaigns in SOPAC and the SWPA were undertaken in the islands to Australia's north and they remain the gateway to Australia for any major power. As noted, the chances of Australia and the United States fighting a major war in Australia's northern archipelago is remote but the conduct of any military operation in the region requires the same or similar types of capabilities.

One of the most interesting facets of Australia's strategic interests is the enduring relevance to Australian security of the area of the arch from Southeast Asia to the Solomon Islands. The 2009 Defence White Paper outlined Australia's 'Primary Operating Environment': an area that looks remarkably similar to the boundaries of the SWPA during the Pacific War. The designation of this region as an area of focus for potential military operations has been a recurring theme in Australian defence policy and strategy. That has often been known as Australia's 'Area of Direct Military Interest'.

This geographical link to Australia is permanent. The landscape over which the 1943 campaign was fought is referred to as Australia's Pacific Inner Arc. This area has been described at various times as an 'Arc of Instability', 'Arc of Responsibility' or 'Arc of Opportunity'.¹³ While interest in this area may have waxed and waned over the decades in terms of priorities for Australia's defence planners it has always been critical to Australia's security. As former Deputy Secretary of Defence and author of the 1986 *Review of Australian Defence Policy* Paul Dibb has noted, other than the direct defence of the continent Australia's 'most important strategic objective is to help foster the stability, integrity and cohesion of our immediate neighbourhood'. Dibb argues that engagement in any conflict in this region is a 'non-discretionary task' for Australia's defence forces. Such an approach has been demonstrated by Australia's commitment to regional stabilisation missions in East Timor in 1996 and 2006 and the Solomon Islands since 2003.¹⁴

HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE

Even without its contemporary relevance the impact of this period on Australia's military history remains profound. This campaign saw the greatest concentration of Australian military power in the country's history. Five Army divisions, the majority of the RAN's capability as well as the RAAF's No. 9 and No. 10 Operational Groups, plus all attendant logistic, base and support troops, participated in this campaign. This means that 1943 saw a concentration of Australian military power that has been unparalleled in history. These were major operations in coalition with the United States, who in the post-war period would emerge as Australia's strongest alliance partner and the cornerstone of Australian defence policy. An alliance that is strengthened as the focus of current international strategic competition shifts to the Asia-Pacific region.

The military outcomes of this campaign were also profound. By the time of the fall of Madang the isolation of the major Japanese base in the South Pacific – Rabaul – was complete and the Japanese Army's main line of defence for their Greater Co-Prosperity Region had been penetrated. It was a campaign in the classic mode of manoeuvre warfare and it was the platform for General MacArthur's leap to the Philippines where the largest land and naval battles of the Pacific War would be fought.

In order to establish just how important this year and campaign is to Australia's military history the authors of this book will cover a range of key and critical issues and events. One of the most significant matters was the establishment of Australia's war strategy. In chapter 1 Australia's leading historian of strategy, Professor David Horner, AM, outlines the struggle to set a national war strategy in the face of Australia's junior role in a grand alliance. The weight of these decisions would fall largely on the Prime Minister John Curtin. His key relationship would be with the US Army's General Douglas MacArthur, the Commander-in-Chief of the SWPA. Curtin would have to make critical decisions about the availability of Australian military power, the balance of Australia's war effort in 1943 and the future direction of Australian strategy.

David Horner's chapter provides a foundation for an understanding of the development of Australia's military strategy and operations in 1943. In 1943 there was a need to articulate a war strategy within a grand alliance. Australia's military operations had to fit within a framework of Allied operations in the SWPA. In chapter 2 Dr Peter J. Dean outlines the Allied military strategy that directed Australia's operations in New Guinea. Australia's military operations can only be understood

when they are placed in the context of their contribution to General MacArthur's plan in the SWPA as well as to the broader Allied effort in the Pacific War. As Dean outlines, while the decision-making process and chain of command may have been less than ideal at the highest levels, by the time the Australians were allocated a role in MacArthur's Cartwheel plan their mission, chain of command and support were sufficient for Australia's commander, General Sir Thomas Blamey, to plan and prepare for a daring series of manoeuvres to defeat the Japanese.

The plans of MacArthur and Blamey were not, however, developed in a vacuum. In chapter 3 Hiroyuki Shindo details the Japanese strategy for operations in the South Pacific region during 1943. This was premised on the 'Absolute National Pacific Defence Zone' concept that marked the Japanese move to the strategic defensive, a decision that was taken too late and proved too optimistic in the face of the Allied onslaught.

It is important to remember that the Australians formed but one element of the coalition of forces in the SWPA. While making a major contribution to the fight against the Japanese, in particular during 1942-43, Australia's ability to develop military power was always much reduced in comparison to the United States. In chapter 4 Dr Kevin C. Holzimer outlines US operations in SOPAC, under US Navy command, as well as the US operations within the SWPA. It must be remembered that of the five combat phases of MacArthur's Cartwheel plan for the reduction of Rabaul, four were undertaken by the United States, three in SOPAC and one in the SWPA. These were tough, hard-fought operations that are critical to understand if Australia's role within the coalition is to be fully appreciated.

Chapters 5 and 6 cover the air and naval aspects of the 1943 operations, focusing respectively on the RAAF and the RAN. As the SWPA was a maritime theatre of operations, air and naval power were critical to the Allied success. In chapter 5 Dr Mark Johnston outlines the critical role of the RAAF in New Guinea as well as its constant battle to remain relevant in the face of growing US air power that held both a qualitative and quantitative edge. In chapter 6 Dr Ian Pfennigwerth notes how the RAN never had to battle for its place against the US Navy. The sheer demands and limited supply of naval forces in the SWPA meant that the RAN was busier than ever. During 1943 the RAN would contribute critical capabilities to the Allied war effort in the areas of intelligence, amphibious warfare, convoy protection, shore bombardment, logistics, support to land forces ashore, anti-submarine warfare and naval task forces. All of these were critical elements that helped to ensure Allied sea control.

Chapters 7-11 detail the major operations that the Australians carried out in New Guinea during 1943 as part of the Cartwheel plan for the Reduction of Rabaul. In chapter 7 Dr Ross Mallett outlines the difficulties in undertaking modern military operations over long distances, in tropical conditions and across horrendous terrain. Complicating matters further was the fact that even basic infrastructure in New Guinea was lacking. The crux of Allied logistical problems centred on shipping, base development, terrain and the low priority given to the Allied effort in the SWPA in the global competition for resources. Logistics were to be one of the toughest fought battles in the 1943 campaign.

In chapter 8 Dr Karl James explores the operation for the capture of Salamaua. After defeating the Japanese offensive against Wau the Australians undertook the long and arduous jungle campaign in southern New Guinea. This was the magnet that would draw Japanese forces away from their main base at Lae and helped in grinding them down through relentless pressure. It was at Salamaua that the Australians came to perfect the jungle warfare skills that they had learnt in 1942. In chapter 9 Dr Peter J. Dean details the first phase of the major Australian offensive in New Guinea. Here I Australian Corps launched an air, land and sea operation to capture Lae and force open the Huon Peninsula and the Markham Valley. It was a stunning coordination of forces and an overwhelming victory, but not one without its faults. Thousands of Japanese soldiers were allowed to escape to fight on into 1944-45.

In chapter 10 Dr Lachlan Grant investigates the 7th Australian Division's fight up the Markham and Ramu Valleys towards Madang. This operation combined quick advances, dramatic operations deep inside Japanese territory, and slow, gruelling jungle warfare to reduce key Japanese defences in areas such as Shaggy Ridge. It was a masterful operation led by one of the Australian Army's most charismatic and effective division commanders utilising the most experienced division in jungle warfare that the Army possessed. In the final chapter Dr Garth Pratten reviews the 9th Australian Division's operations in the Huon Peninsula. Near Lae this was the main Australian effort and included the dramatic amphibious assault at Finschhafen, the climactic battle for the Sattleburg Heights and the pursuit along the coast towards Sio and Saidor. As Pratten outlines, one of the key features of the 9th Division's success was the recognition that the jungle terrain did not change the requirements for the combined arms warfare that the 9th Division had learnt in the desert of North Africa. Tanks, artillery, engineers and infantry working together were the keys to victory; the established principles of war were just as

relevant in the sand as they were on the jungle mountaintops or the coastal kunai grasslands.

The fall of Madang in April 1944 would draw to an end the Australian campaign of 1943 in New Guinea. The preceding 16 months had seen a dramatic change in the Allied fortunes in the SWPA. At the beginning of 1943 the Allies had only just defeated the Japanese at the Papuan beachheads and were fighting off a concerted Japanese attempt to take Wau. By the end of the campaign MacArthur's forces were poised to take full advantage of their military superiority and the detailed insights into Japanese intentions that were now being revealed through Ultra; the reading of the Japanese codes. The 1943 campaign had never been a foregone conclusion. The Japanese had retained considerable military capability in the South Pacific during 1943 and during the course of the year it had been the main battlefield in the Pacific War. These battles in both the SWPA and SOPAC had seen some of the most vicious fighting of the war to that time in the air, on land and at sea, and the Australians had made a major contribution to the Allied success. From November 1943 the Japanese would also have to contend with Admiral Chester Nimitz's US Central Pacific commands thrust into the heart of the Japanese Pacific Empire. For the Australians and the Americans, 1943 would be a year on the offensive, one that would challenge and test them, their coalition and the Japanese.

Notes

- 1 Samuel Eliot Morison, *Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier: 22 July 1942 – 1 May 1944*, vol. VI, Brown & Co., Boston, 1957, p. 3.
- 2 Ibid., p. 27.
- 3 'The Liberation of Australian New Guinea, 18 September 1943 – 8 August 1945', www.awm.gov.au/units/event_252.asp
- 4 See Karl James, *The Hard Slog: The Australians in Bougainville 1944–45*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2012; Peter J. Dean, *The Architects of Victory*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2012 and for details on the rationale for the Australian strategy in New Guinea during 1944–45 see David Horner, *Blamey: The Commander-in-Chief*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1998.
- 5 Providence Plan for the Occupation of Aerodromes in the Vicinity of Buna Bay, GHQ SWPA, 15 July 1942, D767.95 F16 1942a, United States Army Heritage and Education Centre, Carlisle, Pa, USA.
- 6 Vincent O'Hara, 'Introduction' in Samuel Eliot Morison, *Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier: 22 July 1942 – 1 May 1944*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 2010.
- 7 Ibid.

- 8 Peter Dennis and Jeffery Grey (eds), *The Foundations of Victory: The Pacific War 1943–44*, 2003 Chief of Army's History Conference, Army History Unit, Canberra, 2003, p. ix.
- 9 The term 'Pacific War' when used in this text refers specifically to the war between Japan, the United States, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the Dutch. This is to distinguish it from the ongoing Sino-Japanese War which was the major focus of the Japanese Army during the Second World War. See Hiroyuki Shindo, 'The Japanese Army's "Unplanned" South Pacific Campaign', in Peter J. Dean (ed.), *Australia 1942: In the Shadow of War*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2012, pp. 106–23.
- 10 STOM and its parent concept Operational-Manoeuvre-from-the-Sea (OMFTS) have been criticised for paying too little attention to areas such as the vulnerability of helicopters to ground fire, the impact of enemy resistance to amphibious operations or consideration of how dispersed ground forces will survive in a high-end combat environment. See Carter A. Malkasian, *Charting the Pathway to OMFTS: A Historical Assessment of Amphibious Operations from 1941 to the Present*, CNA, Alexandria Va., 2002.
- 11 The greatest development in this area is the invention of hovercraft for use in amphibious operations. These high-speed craft give much greater access to land than landing craft while their speed and manoeuvrability allow for amphibious assaults, raid or withdrawals to be launched from over the horizon as per the STOM doctrine.
- 12 See Peter J. Dean, 'Amphibious Warfare: Lessons from the Past for the ADF's Future', *Security Challenges*, vol. 8, no. 1, Autumn 2012, pp. 57–76. www.securitychallenges.org.au/ArticlePDFs/vol8no1Dean.pdf
- 13 For a recent discussion of the importance of this area to Australian security see the Special Issue of *Security Challenges*, vol. 8, no. 4, Summer 2012, edited by Dr Joanne Wallis. www.securitychallenges.org.au/TOCs/vol8no4.html
- 14 Paul Dibb, 'The Importance of the Inner Arc to Australian Defence Policy and Planning', *Security Challenges*, vol. 8, no. 4, Summer 2012, pp. 13–15.