

Strategy, Operational Art and MacArthur in the Southwest Pacific 1944

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Strategy, Operational Art and MacArthur in the Southwest Pacific 1944, by Major James N Putnam III, 51 pages.

General Douglas MacArthur's campaign along the northwest New Guinea coast in 1944 was a model of close cooperation between land, air and sea forces which substantially contributed to Allied success in the Pacific. The purpose of this study is to examine whether the modern doctrinal elements of operational art are embedded within this campaign and to determine whether MacArthur used operational art to serve strategy or to enable his own preferred strategy. *Unified Land Operations* defines operational art as linking tactical actions in time, space and purpose in order to achieve strategic objectives and presents ten elements inherent to this art. The Allied strategic objective was the surrender of Japan. MacArthur had a personal strategic objective of liberating the Philippines. The study concludes that all the elements of operational art are evident throughout the tactical actions of the campaign and that MacArthur used these actions to successfully argue that his personal objective should be included in the Allied strategy. MacArthur's campaign demonstrates a historical example that can aid the modern student of operational art.

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Acronyms

AAF	Army Air Force
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
POA	Pacific Ocean Area of Operations
SWPA	Southwest Pacific Area of Operations

Introduction

Military planners understand that tactics should support the overall strategic goals of a campaign or war. Arranging tactical actions in time, space and purpose in pursuit of these strategic objectives constitutes the modern doctrinal definition of operational art.¹ Is it possible for these two commonly held axioms to be reversed? What if tactics and operational art attempted to drive strategy rather than purely support it? The New Guinea campaign of General Douglas MacArthur conducted from February 1944 through October 1944 in the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) provides an example of such a campaign. Of even greater value to a modern military planner, the New Guinea campaign represents a historical example of a joint campaign.

Current U.S. Joint and Service doctrine emphasizes the need to operate as part of a joint force and often as a combined joint force. Combined joint tactical operations are normal in recent conflicts. However, usually, only one or two services are required to use operational art in order to plan and execute a campaign. The campaign executed in and around New Guinea by the Southwest Pacific Area Command in 1944 incorporated the U.S. Army, U.S. Army Air Force, U.S. Navy and Australian forces. The question is how did General Douglas MacArthur use operational art to integrate the land, air and maritime components of Southwest Pacific Area Command in order to reach campaign objectives in support of strategic goals.

Literature Review

There are few monographs dedicated to the study of MacArthur's actions in the New Guinea campaign. Most of the writing on the topic is included in general histories of World War II in the Pacific. MacArthur and his subordinate's skill in executing the campaign and the lack of large casualty producing actions may have diminished its interest to historians. It generally lacks any signature battles like many of the other major campaigns of the war like Guadalcanal, Tarawa, or Saipan. Perhaps the most telling is the

¹ Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), 9.

final action of the campaign at Morotai is virtually unknown in comparison to the Peleliu campaign which began the same day in the Pacific Area of Operations.

As is the case with all of World War II, some of the earliest historical works are the official histories generated by the individual services. The organization of each of these works generally supports the view of a campaign bounded by the seizure of the Admiralty Islands and the landing at Morotai. The Army Air Force was chronologically the first to publish in 1950 with *The Army Air Forces in World War II: The Pacific, vol. 4: Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942-July 1944*.² The title indicates the scope of the study, but it also reflects the imperfect understanding of what constituted a campaign. The authors omit the Morotai landings which occurred in September even though they were part of MacArthur's design to establish the conditions for a return to the Philippines.

The U. S. Navy chose a similar approach with *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, vol 8: New Guinea and the Marianas, March 1944-August 1944*.³ Samuel Eliot Morison's more limited scope contrasts with the AAF official history although it shares with the AAF its omission of the Morotai landings. Morison's narrative also ties in the complexity of the command relationships in the Pacific where assets belonging to the Pacific Area of Operations could support Southwest Pacific Area. Additionally, Morison discusses the semi-independent operations of submarines within the Pacific. *Silent Victory: The U.S. Submarine War against Japan* expands the details of submarine operations and includes the role of signals intelligence.⁴

Although air and navy actions were integral to the campaign, land operations were the focus. Consistent with this focus, the U.S. Army history centers on the operations from the Admiralty Islands

² Wesley Frank Craven, and James Lea Cate, eds. *The Army Air Forces in World War II: The Pacific, vol. 4: Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942 to July 1944* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950)

³ Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, vol 8: New Guinea and the Marianas, March 1944-August 1944* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953)

⁴ Clair Blair, Jr., *Silent Victory: The U.S. Submarine War Against Japan* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippencott Company, 1975)

through Morotai in *Approach to the Philippines*.⁵ Robert Ross Smith covers each of the ground tactical actions in detail as well as the planning primacy of MacArthur's army staff. Smith does not address the debate over whether or not to return to the Philippines, but it is the opening chapter of next campaign history *Triumph in the Philippines*.⁶ Smith carefully describes each action as well as including how Japanese land forces resisted and reacted to MacArthur's moves.

Mixed throughout the historiography of the campaign are the personnel memoirs of the key leaders. Some authors released their work before any of the official histories and in other cases long after the war was over. First out of the gate was the Fifth Air Force Commander George C Kenney who wrote *General Kenney Reports: A Personal History of the Pacific War* in 1949.⁷ Next in the series would be the principal army commanders. Corps and later Army Commander Robert L. Eichelberger published *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo* in 1950.⁸ 6th Army Commander Walter Krueger submitted *From Down Under to Nippon* in 1953 and finally Douglas MacArthur released *Reminiscences* in 1964.⁹ The navy commanders added their works in 1961 and 1969 with 7th Fleet Commander Thomas Kinkaid's *The Reminiscences of Thomas Cassin Kinkaid* and 7th Amphibious Force Commander Daniel Barbey's *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy: Seventh Amphibious Force Operations, 1943-1945*.¹⁰ All of these works provide

⁵ Robert Ross Smith, *Approach to the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1953)

⁶ Robert Ross Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History United States Army, 1993)

⁷ George C Kenney, *General Kenney Reports: A Personal History of the Pacific War* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1987)

⁸ Robert L. Eichelberger, *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo* (New York: Viking Press, 1950)

⁹ Walter Krueger, *From Down Under to Nippon* (Washington, D.C.: Combat Forces Press, 1953); Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York: De Capo Press, 1964)

¹⁰ Thomas Kinkaid, *The Reminiscences of Thomas Cassin Kinkaid* (New York: Columbia University, Oral History Research Office, 1961); Daniel Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy: Seventh Amphibious Force Operations, 1943-1945* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1969)

insight into what the commanders were thinking even if they have the obvious advantage of hindsight and their own bias.

The best monograph on the New Guinea Campaign is Stephen R. Taaffe's *MacArthur's Jungle War: The 1944 New Guinea Campaign*.¹¹ It studies the campaign exclusively from the February 1944 through October 1944. The choice in dates argues that the campaign represented a new phase in the Pacific that began after the isolation of Rabaul was generally complete and ends before the invasion of the Philippines. Published in 1998, *MacArthur's Jungle War* draws on a range of archival, primary and secondary sources. Taaffe, a historian at Stephen F. Austin State University, delivers an overall narrative of the campaign by discussing each major tactical operation sequentially. He introduces the idea that MacArthur sought to achieve his personal strategic objectives through the timing and tactics of the campaign. Taaffe rightfully focuses on the land component of the campaign, but he addresses the air and sea components as well as providing the Japanese point of view.

Harry A. Gailey's *MacArthur's Victory: The War in New Guinea, 1943-1944* is another monograph on the New Guinea Campaign.¹² Published in 2004, *MacArthur's Victory* chooses to examine MacArthur's actions over a two year span from the beginning of 1943 through the end of 1944. Gailey chooses this period based on the idea MacArthur seized the initiative from the Japanese in 1943. This is interesting because the narrative commences after MacArthur has gone over to the offense in late 1942. At the same time, the book concludes without covering the Morotai landing. This suggests the author choose rely on geography rather than distinct campaign objectives when choosing his frame. Gailey is the author of multiple books on World War II Pacific battles and campaigns. He uses the range of archival, primary and secondary sources common to this topic.

¹¹ Stephen R. Taaffe, *MacArthur's Jungle War: The 1944 New Guinea Campaign* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998)

¹² Harry A Gailey, *MacArthur's Victory: The War in New Guinea, 1943-1944* (New York: Presidio Press, 2004)

James P. Duffy's *War at the End of the World* is the most recent and perhaps most comprehensive monograph on the New Guinea Campaign.¹³ Published in 2016, Duffy unifies the entire campaign from beginning to end in one book. It fills in the missing pieces of Taafe's and Gailey's work, while lacking some of the detail of books that focus on a shorter span of time. There is no obvious new scholarship on the subject it simply represents an attempt to consolidate the entire campaign. The author argues that the campaign played a significant role throughout the war in the Pacific by forcing the Japanese to dilute their resources. Duffy is the author of a diverse collection of military history.

This study will use a historical narrative. It will describe the strategic context of the war against Japan including the geographic environment. It will identify the forces and leaders available to MacArthur (means) then it will analyze how the tactical actions of the campaign were arranged in time in space. It will begin with the seizure of the Admiralty Islands and end with the operations on Morotai. These actions will be evaluated by their planned and actual contributions to the campaign end state.

The individual campaigns of the land, air and sea components will be analyzed in relation to their contribution to the overall design of General MacArthur. The campaign will be evaluated in relation to the strategic objectives and how it supported or detracted from them and allowed MacArthur to possibly shape strategy to his own goals. Finally, the campaign will be view through the lens of ADP 3-0 *Unified Land Operations* and where appropriate other service doctrine to find the relevance to the 21st century planner. The planning and execution of the New Guinea campaign demonstrates an example of how tactics can influence strategy and provides a historical foundation for the elements of operational art defined in ADP 3-0 *Unified Land Operations*.

Historical Background

The starting point of MacArthur's campaign in 1944 was the result by two years of operations in the Pacific. The Allies had been on the defensive from the attack against Pearl Harbor until late in 1942.

¹³ James P Duffy, *War at the End of the World* (New York: Nal Caliber, 2106)

The Allies slowed the Japanese advance in the South Pacific at the Battle of Coral Sea in May of 1942 by preventing the capture of Port Moresby.¹⁴ The Battle of Midway in June 1942 finally convinced the Japanese to revert to the defense and ceded the initiative to the United States.¹⁵ The United States would begin the long road to Tokyo in the South Pacific.

Admiral William Halsey launched the first U.S. offensive operation with the landings on Guadalcanal and neighboring islands in August of 1942 and by February defeated Japanese forces on the island.¹⁶ On March 28, 1943 the Joint Chiefs issued new guidance directing Halsey and MacArthur to conduct parallel attacks up the Solomons and New Guinea in order isolate the Japanese strongpoint at Rabaul on New Britain.¹⁷ This two-pronged advance would be known as Operation Cartwheel. Halsey would reach his objectives by February of 1944.

The Battle of Coral Sea had not ended the Japanese attempts to take Port Moresby. The Japanese launched attacks over the Owen Stanley Mountain range and then from the vicinity of Milne Bay, but Australian forces repulsed both attacks.¹⁸ These defense successes enabled MacArthur to go on the offensive. U.S. and Australian forces moved steadily along the New Guinea coast with attacks at Lae, Salamauu and Finschhafen.¹⁹ These assaults were followed up by landings at Arawe and Cape Gloucester (New Britain). MacArthur attempted to cut off the Japanese retreat with a surprise landing at

¹⁴ Ronald H. Spector, *The Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York: The Free Press, 1985) 161-163.

¹⁵ Spector, 177-178.

¹⁶ Ian W Toll, *The Conquering Tide: War in the Pacific Islands, 1942-1944* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2015) 223.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 224.

¹⁸ Gailey, 3.

¹⁹ Spector, 240-241

Saidor.²⁰ The Saidor operation marked the end of the MacArthur's part in Operation Cartwheel and signaled the end of major employment of Australian forces.²¹

The combined offensives of Halsey and MacArthur planned to conclude with the seizing of Rabaul. Rabaul was a major Japanese base and excellent anchorage. However, the Combined Chiefs of Staff decided at the QUADRANT conference in late 1943 that Rabaul would be neutralized rather than captured.²² The Combined Chiefs had concluded that a direct attack would be costly and that anchorages and potential air bases existed at other locations, particularly the Admiralty Islands.²³

In addition to MacArthur and Halsey, Admiral Chester Nimitz directed operations in the Pacific Ocean Area of Operations (POA). Just as the Joint Chiefs directed MacArthur and Halsey in the South Pacific, they tasked Nimitz in the Pacific Area of Operations. The Gilbert Islands would be the first objective and it the Joint chiefs would emphasize the primacy of the central Pacific approach in the overall war aims.²⁴ By early 1944 the central Pacific drive had captured both the Gilbert and Marshall Islands.

This was the situation that MacArthur faced in early 1944. The isolation of Rabaul had effectively terminated Halsey's operations in the South Pacific. He would subsequently operate under Nimitz's command in the Pacific Area of Operations.

The environment of New Guinea and the much of the rest of the South Pacific was almost unique in relation to Europe or other major theaters of operations. No terrain in New Guinea had any inherent value. There were no cities, no raw materials, no foodstuffs, nothing else that could have been of direct

²⁰ Ibid, 242.

²¹ Gailey, 147.

²² Toll, 235.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Spector, 253.

profit to the war effort of either side.²⁵ The military value of this area lay entirely in its geographic relationship to other areas.²⁶ It served as a line of defense for the Japanese to defend the areas that were of considerable importance to supplying their war effort and as well as their larger political goals of establishing regional hegemony. The Japanese referred to the nearby East Indies, with its substantial natural resources as the “Southern Resource Zone.”²⁷ Conversely, if the Allies could capture this area it would threaten those resources and allow access to deeper objectives like the Philippines.

Lack of intrinsic value was only part of the equation. The terrain itself was formidable. The lack of resources and inhospitable jungles, swamps and mountain ranges meant there was very little development by European colonists or the indigenous population. Everything needed to wage modern war had to come from outside and the lack of true roads made distribution a serious problem.²⁸ Armies relied on human power, either native or their own, to carry supplies which limited speed of movement and mobility of firepower.²⁹ The result was that land forces had very little organic operational reach.

The dearth of traditional military objectives and the environment dictated the operational approach of both sides. Land forces maneuvered on the sea and firepower came from the air. Lieutenant General George Kenney, Commander of the U.S. Fifth Air Force in Australia described the nature of the theater as such:

The artillery in this theater flies...In the Pacific we have a number of islands garrisoned by small forces. These islands are nothing more or less than aerodromes or aerodrome areas from which modern fire-power is launched. Sometimes they are true islands like Wake or Midway, sometimes they are localities on large land masses. Port Moresby, Lae and Buna are all on the island of New Guinea, but the only practical way to get from one to the other is by air or by water; they are all islands as far as warfare is concerned. Each

²⁵ Eric M. Begerud, *Fire in the Sky: The Air War in the South Pacific* (New York: Basic Books, 2009) 5.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Eric M. Begerud, *Touched by Fire: The Land War in the South Pacific* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009) 3.

²⁸ Ibid, 61.

²⁹ Begerud, *Touched by Fire*, 61.

is garrisoned by a small force and each can be taken by a small force once local air control is secured. Every time one of these islands is taken, the rear is better secured and the emplacements for the flying artillery are advanced closer and closer to Japan itself.³⁰

Thus, airfields or places where an airfield could be built became key objectives.

Air power was important, but not the only source of power for the Allies. Land, sea, and air forces acting in concert were the key. Land forces were required to seize ground for airfields. Sea power moved the land forces and sustained them and the air forces. Without air cover, warships were in deadly peril, merchant ships could not operate and armies could not survive.³¹ The lack of information about the geography and geology meant, in the absence of an existing airfield, selecting an objective could often be a guess. In practice this meant that planners had to rely on the one thing they did know; the combat radius of the aircraft available.

By this point in the war experience taught that bombers could generally not operate beyond the range of fighter support. Thus, the range of fighters became the key variable in identifying objectives. For the Allies this meant between 150-250 miles and for the Japanese it was 250-350 miles.³² Bombers had their own requirements. Their heavier weight required the longest runways and the best fields.³³ Newly created airfields supported fighters until the next move forward. Once engineers built or improved the facilities bombers moved forward to what was now a second or third echelon base.

The overall commander in the Southwest Pacific Area was General Douglas MacArthur. MacArthur's Army Air Force and Navy commanders were assigned to him, but he was able to select General Walter Krueger to be the 6th Army commander. Technically, Australian General Sir Thomas Blamey was the commander of Allied Ground Forces, but MacArthur bypassed him by having 6th Army

³⁰ Bergerud, *Touched by Fire*, 11.

³¹ Bergerud, *Fire in the Sky*, 7.

³² *Ibid*, 9.

³³ *Ibid*, 10.

Headquarters answer directly to Southwest Pacific Area Headquarters.³⁴ Furthermore he assigned all the American ground forces to 6th Army leaving Blamey in charge of Australian and New Zealand forces only. Another unique organizational decision in a era before unified combat commands was that MacArthur tasked Lieutenant General Walter Krueger, the commander of 6th Army, with coordinating the plans of ground forces and supporting air and naval forces for all operations which 6th Army participated in.³⁵ Formally, Krueger was the equivalent of a modern Joint Force Land Component Commander(JFLCC), but informally MacArthur gave him some level of authority over his counterparts from the Navy and Army Air Force. MacArthur would settle any arguments among the services, but in practice this was never required which Krueger attributes to a spirit of cooperation and the fact that they were always victorious.³⁶

Krueger was a statistical anomaly within the US Army. He was born in Germany, did not attend West Point or even have a college degree and had extensive enlisted experience.³⁷ At 63 years old in 1944, Krueger was also one of the oldest generals in the Army at the time MacArthur requested him. Krueger had served with MacArthur previously on several occasions, but his selection as 6th Army commander was somewhat of a surprise. The most likely explanation for Krueger's selection was a concern over Lieutenant General Robert L. Eichenberger's personality and performance at Buna, and on Krueger's military expertise.³⁸

Krueger has been in theater a little over a year in early 1944. At that point his 6th Army consisted of I Corps and its 32d and 41st Infantry Divisions, 1st Cavalry Division, 24th Infantry Division, the 2d

³⁴ Kevin C. Holzimmer, *General Walter Krueger: Unsung Hero of the Pacific War* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2007) 104.

³⁵ Walter Krueger, *From Down Under to Nippon* (Washington DC: Combat Forces Press, 1953) 9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Holzimmer, 9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 103. Eichenberger may have been viewed as a "publicity hound" by MacArthur whereas Krueger had a reputation for shunning the spotlight.

Engineer Special Brigade, the 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment, the 158th Infantry Regiment, the 98th Field Artillery(Pack) Battalion and the 40th and 41st Antiaircraft Brigades.³⁹ Krueger had planned and executed several battles during the end of Operation Cartwheel and had adapted to the unique environment that the SWPA presented to an army designed to fight battles based on mobility and firepower.⁴⁰ 6th Army Headquarters was operating at Cape Cretin near Finshhafen which was about 700 miles from the forward element of the SWPA HQ.⁴¹ Distance was one of the challenges of a theater where sea and air mobility replaced road and rail as the key modes of movement.

Vice Admiral Thomas Kinkaid took command of 7th Fleet in late 1943. He was transferred from a command in the northern Pacific in response to MacArthur's request to Admiral Ernest King, Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations, for a new commander to support his operations in SWPA.⁴² Adding to the complex command relationships in SWPA, Kinkaid wore two hats and served two masters. Kincaid was required to support MacArthur, but reported directly to King rather than MacArthur or even Nimitz. King wrote Kincaid's fitness reports, assigned personnel, and allocated equipment to 7th Fleet.⁴³ Considering MacArthur's dependence on the Navy for mobility, King maintained substantial influence over MacArthur's ability to conduct operations through the resourcing of 7th Fleet.

Kincaid's second hat was as MacArthur's naval commander, formally Commander Allied Naval Forces, Southwest Pacific Area. As such, he commanded all US naval forces plus those of Australia, New Zealand, and the Netherlands operating in the area.⁴⁴ The commanders of the Royal Australian Navy and

³⁹ Krueger, 9.

⁴⁰ Holzzimmer, 104.

⁴¹ Krueger, 15.

⁴² Gerald E. Wheeler, *Kincaid of the Seventh Fleet* (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 1995) 343.

⁴³ Wheeler, 348-349

⁴⁴ Wheeler, 346.

the Dutch East Indies Navy were technically senior to Kincaid, but by agreement their forces served under him rather than their national commanders. 7th Fleet consisted of two wings of patrol aircraft, a submarine force, a small cruiser force, four squadrons of destroyers, ten motor torpedo boat squadrons as well as diverse array of amphibious shipping.⁴⁵ Noticeably missing from 7th Fleet were any aircraft carriers or battleships. The absence of aircraft carriers represented several realities. The most obvious is that the Navy did not consider SWPA and 7th Fleet the main effort in the Pacific. Geography also influenced the resources provided 7th Fleet. The relatively constrained waters near New Guinea were not the best place for carriers to operate. Finally, no major Imperial Japanese Navy fleets operated in the area which meant no major fleet on fleet actions was anticipated. MacArthur still lamented the lack of carrier support and believed it seriously increased the cost and duration of his campaign.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, 7th Fleet was a key element of MacArthur's force. It may have lacked the striking power of the fleets in the central Pacific, but its amphibious element was crucial to provided MacArthur with the mobility to conduct his campaign.

Rear Admiral Daniel "Uncle Dan" Barbey commanded the amphibious army of 7th Fleet. He too was under-resourced. The Army's Engineering Special Boat Brigade provided most of the amphibious lift for MacArthur. Barbey had correctly presumed that he would not get the newest types of amphibious transports being produced in the United States. Other theaters made extensive use of small Higgins boats or amphibious tractors (Alligators and Buffalos) to land personnel and equipment, but those types of craft or the larger ones that carried them were generally not available. It required to him to reframe his views of how the ships he had could best support MacArthur. Barbey would have to rely on beaching type ships, like Landing Ship, Tank (LSTs) and Landing Ship Infantry (LCIs), not only for the reinforcement

⁴⁵ Wheeler, 348.

⁴⁶ Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York, De Capo Press, 1964), 166-169. MacArthur's key point was aircraft carriers would eliminate the predictable objectives based on aircraft range. As we will see in the Hollandia action this is not an insignificant argument. Despite King's enmity toward MacArthur and the Army the main naval effort still seems like the right place for the carriers.

echelons, but for the assault landings as well.⁴⁷ These ships were large, slow and vulnerable once they had beached themselves. They also required careful selection of landing sites and surf conditions.

As the name implies, LCIs carried infantry. They could carry 188 troops which could be delivered to the beach by two ramps that lowered on each side of the bow.⁴⁸ They were meant to operate within 100-200 miles of a base even though they had bunks for the troops, but in the Southwest Pacific they often operated from adequate shore or repair bases.⁴⁹ The larger LST was the real workhorse of Seventh Amphibious Force. It was slower than an LCI, but it made up for that in range and capacity. It could carry up to twenty medium tanks or about 1000 men and land them on the beach via its bow ramp.⁵⁰ These boring ships would allow MacArthur to use the sea both to maneuver his forces and sustain them.

Lieutenant General George Kenney commanded Fifth Air Force and was also the Commander, Allied Air Forces South Pacific. Like many of MacArthur's key subordinates, he came to the south Pacific because MacArthur was dissatisfied with his predecessor. His forces would be critical throughout the campaign. They defended U.S. forces as they moved by sea and established new lodgments. Perhaps even more importantly they attacked the Japanese in depth by attacking airfields and any attempt to move forces by sea. He has served under MacArthur since late 1942 and often represented MacArthur's interests at planning sessions.

In addition to Fifth Air Force, Kenney had proposed that Thirteenth Air Force fall under his command now that Admiral Halsey's South Pacific theater was being dissolved.⁵¹ General Henry "Hap" Arnold, the commander of the Army Air Force, had accepted Kenney's recommendation and directed that

⁴⁷ Barbey, 43.

⁴⁸ Barbey, 19.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Barbey, 19.

⁵¹ George C. Kenney, *General Kenney Reports: A Personal History of the Pacific War* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1987) 30.

Thirteenth Air Force would also support MacArthur. Fifth Air Force was a mix of many of the common Army Air Force airframes used in World War II. B-24s provided the main long range striking power. B-25s and A-20s filled the medium and light attack roles. P-38s served as the main fighter aircraft. Unlike the European theater, there were no significant strategic targets in SWPA that could be targeted by aircraft. Kenney argued that if he were provided B-29s he could target oil refineries in the Netherlands East Indies and cripple the Japanese war effort.⁵² Arnold promised nothing, but Kenney prepared airfields in Australia just in case. Fifth Air Forces primarily supported MacArthur, but just as naval assets were occasionally shifted to 7th Fleet, Fifth Air Force units often struck targets in the central Pacific in support of Nimitz's operations. MacArthur believed the complete integration of land, air and sea forces represented a new type of campaign he named the triphibious concept.⁵³ These were the means available to him in early 1944.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) had supported the dual campaigns of MacArthur and Nimitz throughout 1943, but no consensus on the long term direction of these separate, but complimentary campaigns had been reached. Continuing the campaign in New Guinea presented many drawbacks. The terrain and infrastructure would be logistically challenging. The Japanese could mass large forces in depth against any offensive. Even a successful campaign would still leave American forces far from Japan, although it would cut off Japanese oil resources in the Netherlands East Indies.⁵⁴ A limited offensive remained of value because it would tie down Japanese forces and shipping. New Guinea was also not considered a viable springboard for an invasion of the Philippines.⁵⁵ Conversely, the central Pacific appeared to offer many advantages.

⁵² Kenney, 42.

⁵³ MacArthur, 166.

⁵⁴ Taaffe, 14.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

The JCS planners believed and increasingly powerful American Navy would easily isolate and penetrate small Japanese island garrisons of the central Pacific. An attack on this axis would also cut the Japanese off from the Netherlands East Indies, but unlike a SWPA campaign it would place American forces within easy striking distance of Japan.⁵⁶ A final consideration was a POA offensive would draw out the Japanese fleet for destruction while a SWPA offensive would not. JCS planners understood both avenues would require huge logistical effort, but they believe a central Pacific offensive provided the fastest most cost-effective way to win the war.⁵⁷ The idea that tempo would be delivered by a POA advance was not limited to the planners.

Admirals King and Leahy (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs) had serious concerns about the viability of a continued advance in New Guinea. The original purpose of SWPA's operations had been to protect Australia's lines of communication not be the main effort of the war in the Pacific. They agreed that the central Pacific offered a quicker path the Japan. Arnold also came to support this view to serve his goal of getting bases for the new B-29 bomber to conduct operations against Japan. The three of them convinced a reluctant General George C Marshall to agree at the SEXTANT conference in November of 1943. The guidance they issued at the end of 1943 was "Due weight should be accorded to the fact that operations in central Pacific promise at this time a more rapid advance toward Japan and her vital communications; the earlier acquisition of strategic airbases closer to the Japanese homeland; and, of greatest importance, are more likely to precipitate a decisive engagement with the Japanese fleet."⁵⁸ MacArthur was not at the SEXTANT conference to argue his own case, but his chief of staff Major General Richard K. Sutherland represented SWPA kept MacArthur informed of its deliberations.

⁵⁶ Taafe, 15

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Taafe, 16.

For the man who declared “I shall return,” this was the first serious evidence that he might not be able to fulfill that promise.⁵⁹ MacArthur is a rare military leader who suffered a serious defeat, but was allowed to stay in command and eventually regain the territory that he lost. Beginning in 1942, MacArthur’s goal of returning to the Philippines had frequently reached the level of obsession.⁶⁰ He had once remarked that he intended to free the islands even if he was “down to one canoe paddled by Douglas MacArthur and supported by one Taylor cub [plane].”⁶¹ Now the Navy and the JCS seemed to conspire against him to prevent his goal. For MacArthur, the Pacific War was not just about winning; it was also about personal honor.⁶² MacArthur’s desire to personally be responsible for the liberation of the Philippines created a unique lens for viewing the war in the Pacific.

MacArthur believed that he should be the main effort. He had argued for an advance along the north coast of New Guinea to the Vogelkop Peninsula. From there he would jump to the advance toward the southern Philippine island of Mindanao. Fortunately, for MacArthur, while the JCS were not certain the Philippines were a necessary objective there were benefits to a continued advance through New Guinea. For one, the task of moving the forces in SWPA to the central Pacific was simply not logistically feasible. If they were to remain in theater their continued advance could prevent the Japanese from knowing where the next blow was to fall.⁶³ It was also believed the Australian government would react unfavorably to redirection of all Allied effort to the central Pacific and it might even encourage the Australians to reduce their support to the war effort.⁶⁴ Although he would be under resourced, this gave MacArthur the opportunity to continue to make the case that his strategic vision was viable.

⁵⁹ Carol Morriss Petillo, *Douglas MacArthur: The Philippine Years* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981) 215.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 216.

⁶¹ Craven and Cates, 615.

⁶² Taaffe, 16.

⁶³ Ross, 5.

⁶⁴ Ross, 5.

MacArthur's direction was to move his forces up the north coast of New Guinea and then onto the islands between the Vogelkop and Mindanao. Nimitz's forces would move through the eastern Marshalls in early 1944. In May they would move on to the western Marshalls. The Navy would assault Truk or the Palau Islands in August, followed by the Marianas in November. In order to be synchronized with the Navy, SWPA would seize the Admiralty Islands on 1 April and Hansa Bay by 26 April. This would be followed by attacks at Hollandia in June. MacArthur planned to be at the Vogelkop by October which should allow a Mindanao landing in February of 1945.⁶⁵

In both POA and SWPA leaders and planners always looked for ways to speed up the tempo of operations. The Army and Navy staffs of the Pacific commands did not agree with some of the goals established by the Combined and Joint Chiefs of Staff, but the decision had been made. The primacy of the central Pacific was so important that the Joint Chiefs were willing to delay MacArthur's 1 April landing in the Admiralty Islands if it would speed up Nimitz's timetable in the Pacific.⁶⁶ Any delay would obviously ripple through MacArthur's entire timeline and reduce the likelihood he would ever return to the Philippines.

This is the environment that MacArthur faced in early 1944. He knew what he wanted and he knew what the JCS wanted him to do. There was still a window where his goal to return the Philippines could still be achieved. Any early success on his part or failure in the central Pacific could offer the opportunity to switch the main effort back to his forces in SWPA. It was this environment and MacArthur's desired end state that shaped his operational approach for the 1944 campaign. MacArthur needed to get time on his side, he was also ready to continue to use both military and political arguments to influence the JCS and American political leadership.

⁶⁵ Ross, 6-7.

⁶⁶ Ross, 8.

The Japanese that faced MacArthur in early 1944 had already seen their strategy seriously disrupted. The Japanese army high command estimated that any serious Allied counterattack would not begin until late in 1943.⁶⁷ They had also counted on a German defeat of the Soviet Union which would have allowed them to redistribute their forces to strengthen their defenses against the Allies. Throughout the war there would also be considerable tension between the Imperial Army and Navy over the best strategy for preserving their early gains. The Japanese did not make much effort to understand their enemies. The Japanese believed the American doctrine that relied on firepower and material superiority would be overcome by Japanese spirit.⁶⁸ Despite numerous setbacks, the Japanese continued to dismiss the American Army or made excuses like they lacked documents to study or that it was more important to study the Red Army.⁶⁹

The Japanese Army was also overly focused on the tactical level of war meant their generals were not prepared for the scale of the campaigns they would fight. Japanese overemphasis on infantry tactics led to a deficiency in the performance of their high command.⁷⁰ Battles drills and other low level methods of preparing and executing tactics do not translate to the command of larger formations. The Japanese War College emphasized tactics and rote memorization of facts.⁷¹ The Japanese combination of tough training and fanatical devotion to victory made them a difficult foe at the small unit level. However, it made them vulnerable to the flexibility and fire power of American forces.

The Japanese were on the strategic defensive in 1944. New Guinea represented one link in a chain of defenses which the Japanese optimistically believed could not be penetrated without inflicting

⁶⁷ Edward Drea, *In the Service of the Emperor: Essays on the Imperial Japanese Army* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998) 34.

⁶⁸ Drea, 69.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Drea, 69.

⁷¹ Drea, 71.

unacceptable costs on Allied forces. Lieutenant General Hatazo Adachi's 18th Army was lurking in the Hansa Bay-Wewak area without three divisions totaling 55,000 men.⁷² The 4th Air Army and 6th Air Division supported the army and close to 250,000 spread throughout the rest of MacArthur's line of advance.⁷³ Their Navy was generally being withheld until it could deliver a decisive blow. If that opportunity presented itself there was no doubt the Japanese could still deliver a powerful blow.

The practical application of MacArthur's triphibious warfare sought to avoid frontal attacks and instead by-pass Japanese strong points and neutralize them by cutting their lines of supply or "hit 'em where they ain't and let 'em die on the vine."⁷⁴ MacArthur termed this "leapfrogging" and contrasted it with the "island-hopping" of the central Pacific campaign whose direct pressure, high losses, and slow progress did not suit him.⁷⁵ The lack of resources and need to keep up with Nimitz in the central Pacific may have assisted MacArthur in developing the approach. He had generally followed this idea through 1943. Yet, he had only advanced about 280 miles up the New Guinea coast during that time. That rate of advance would not support his aim of getting to the Philippines. MacArthur grimly noted he was still 1,600 miles from the Philippines and 2,100 miles from Manila, but he felt he finally had the resources to operate with the speed he had always envisioned.⁷⁶

MacArthur planned to advance through western New Guinea because that route offered the best opportunity for the complete utilization of the Allied ground-air-navy team. Such a drive, penetrating Japan's defensive perimeter along the New Guinea line, would permit the by-passing of heavily defended areas. The land-based bomber line would again be moved by the successive occupation of new air sites; ground forces would be rapidly deployed forward by air transport and amphibious movement; additional

⁷² Taafe, 53.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ MacArthur, 169.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ MacArthur, 185.

plane and ship bases would be established as each objective was taken. Enemy naval forces and shipping would be eliminated along the line of advance to prevent reinforcement; then the same pattern would be repeated, neutralizing and pocketing hostile concentrations until the Allied forces were in a position to make a direct attack against the Japanese in the Philippines.⁷⁷ Despite being relegated to a supporting effort, MacArthur still had his eye on the Philippines. The only question that remained was what the exact route and objectives would be. Hollandia and Mindanao were the only objectives mentioned by name from the JCS. MacArthur, as the operational artist, had the freedom to arrange tactical actions to support those objectives.

Tools of Analysis

Before moving to the tactical actions it is necessary to define the modern elements of operational art identified in *Unified Land Operations*. There are ten elements: End State and conditions, Center of Gravity, Decisive Points, Lines of Operation and Lines of Effort, Operational Reach, Basing, Tempo, Phasing and Transitions, Culmination, and Risk. End State is a set of desired future conditions the commander wants to exist when an operation ends. A center of gravity is the source of power that provides moral and physical strength, freedom of action or will to act. A decisive point is a geographic place, specific key event, critical factor, or function that, when acted upon, allows commanders to gain a marked advantage or contribute materially to achieving success. Lines of operation and lines of effort link objectives to the end state. A line of operation is a line that defines the directional orientation of the force in time and space in the relation to the enemy that links the force with its base of operations and objectives. A line of effort is a line that links multiple tasks using the logic of purpose rather than geographic reference to focus efforts toward establishing operational and strategic conditions.

Operational reach is the distance and duration across which a joint force can successfully employ military capabilities. A base is locality from which operations are projected or supported. Tempo is the relative speed and rhythm of military operations over time with respect to the enemy. A phase is a

⁷⁷ MacArthur, 187.

planning and execution tool used to divide an operation in duration or activity. Transition marks a change in focus between phases or between the ongoing operation and execution of a branch or sequel. The culminating point is that point in time or space at which a force no longer possesses the capability to continue its current form of operations. Risk, uncertainty, and chance are inherent to all military operations. Commanders accept risk to create opportunities to seize, retain and exploit the initiative and achieve decisive results.⁷⁸

These elements of operational art will be the tools that make MacArthur's campaign relevant to the modern planner. Each tactical action will be evaluated against these elements as well as MacArthur's overall approach. It should be clear already that MacArthur's desired end state was the liberation of the Philippines. However, in MacArthur's mind that end state lost considerable value if he were not involved in its realization. Generally maintaining tempo and avoiding culmination were the keys to MacArthur's campaign. He was willing to accept a considerable amount of risk on occasion to maintain tempo. The environment, strategic guidance, operational approach and tools of the campaign have been explained. Now it is time to examine how MacArthur applied operational art.

Arrangement of Tactical Actions

MacArthur felt that in order to set the conditions for the coming campaign he needed an additional base. The base needed to be close enough to support future operations, accommodate a large amphibious striking force and protect his right flank. The Admiralty Islands were the obvious choice. The Admiralties are eighteen islands at the northern reaches of the Bismarck Sea and situated 360 miles northwest of Rabaul and 200 miles from the New Guinea coast.⁷⁹ These islands had always been considered a possible objective. With the decision that Rabaul would be isolated rather than assaulted the

⁷⁸Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), Chapter 4 provides expanded definitions of all the elements of operational art.

⁷⁹ Duffy, 281.

prime value of the Admiralties was as a substitute for the basing that Rabaul would have provided.⁸⁰ Manus, the largest island of the group, 49 miles long and 16 wide had ample space for military installations and already had a Japanese airfield.⁸¹ Nearby Los Negros island was the site of another airfield and with Manus formed Seeadler Harbor which at 15 miles long and four miles wide met the requirements for navy basing.⁸²

MacArthur issued orders to seized Manus in conjunction with the Halsey seizing an objective in his area by 1 April to complete the isolation of Rabaul. MacArthur tasked Krueger with seizing Manus, Seeadler Harbor and Hansa Bay on the New Guinea coast in addition to warning him to make ready for the drive west along the New Guinea coast.⁸³ In February 1944, MacArthur perceived a lack of opposition by Japanese forces to indicate weakness and confusion that might be exploited.⁸⁴ At the time there was some dispute over the composition and strength of the Japanese in the Admiralties. On 23 February 1944, three bombers from Fifth Air Force were conducting a reconnaissance of Manus and Los Negros and were surprised to find an absence of Japanese activity even when they flew low over the airfields.⁸⁵ A mission the following day appeared to confirm the Japanese had abandoned their positions. This report reached Kenney and understanding the value of the bases and MacArthur's desire to increase tempo he recommended a reconnaissance in force be dispatched in Kinkaid's transports covered by his aircraft to exploit the situation.⁸⁶ If the Japanese were still there the force could always be withdrawn.

⁸⁰ Samuel Eliot Morison, *Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier: 22 July 1942-1 May 1944* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1984), 432.

⁸¹ Morison, *Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier*, 432.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ John Miller, Jr, *Cartwheel: The Reduction of Rabaul* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 2006), 316.

⁸⁴ MacArthur, 188.

⁸⁵ Taafe, 56.

⁸⁶ Taafe, 57.

MacArthur concurred the following day and ordered his forces to speed up the timeline for Operation Brewer and land on 29 February. The new date was a full month earlier than the original timeline. However, there were risks involved. The original operations was considered important enough and close enough to major Japanese bases that the JCS had ordered Nimitz to provide carrier support. Accelerating the timeline would certainly forfeit that support. Despite Kenney's optimism, MacArthur's intelligence chief estimated there were 4,000 Japanese on the island and Krueger also was not convinced the reconnaissance was a good idea.⁸⁷ MacArthur is often associated with the dramatic so going ahead with the operation was consistent with his persona. It is likely he was also considering the advantage speeding up the timeline would provide his overall goal. His chief of staff was in Washington, D.C. still arguing the merits of making SWPA the main effort.⁸⁸

Kinkaid and Barbey were also caught off guard by MacArthur's new plan. Both had to rush forces into the area to support what was still a complex amphibious operation no matter what it was called. Adding to the risk, the landing force was the untested 1st Cavalry. MacArthur remained confident and remarked that "It is a gamble in which I have everything to win, little to lose. I bet ten to win a million, if I hit the jackpot."⁸⁹ Fortunately for MacArthur his subordinates were solid professionals who sought to mitigate the risks MacArthur was so willing to accept. Krueger increased the size of the landing force and had Barbey prepared to deliver reinforcements. Kinkaid made the critical decision. Rather than land in the large Seeadler Harbor, Kinkaid's staff chose a small unlikely landing site at Hyane Harbor on Los Negros's east coast. They chose it not only because it was only 200 yards from an airfield, but because they believed the Japanese were unlikely to suspect an invasion from that quarter and since the whole operation was a gamble, one might as well be consistent.⁹⁰ MacArthur may have been a gambler,

⁸⁷ Taafe, 58. A small reconnaissance force and ULTRA intercepts further supported the idea the Japanese were still occupying the islands.

⁸⁸ Taafe, 57.

⁸⁹ Taafe, 59.

⁹⁰ Morison, *Breaking the Bismarck Barrier*, 436.

but he was not a micro-manager and his subordinates' professionalism and competence would serve him well.

Elements of the 1st Cavalry Division, commanded by Brigadier General William Chase, landed the morning of 29 February and initially met little resistance. By now further reconnaissance had indicated there were a considerable number of Japanese on the island, but they were not oriented in the proper direction. 1st Cavalry rapidly seized the airstrip and MacArthur and Kincaid came ashore around 1600 and ordered Chase to "remain here and hold the airstrip at all costs."⁹¹ Despite his orders, Chase made the assessment that his limited force could not hold such a large frontage and he shrank his perimeter. The local Japanese commander ordered an immediate counterattack, but only tasked a battalion which was repulsed. By failing to mass their considerable forces the Japanese were not able to overwhelm 1st Cavalry defenses in the critical first twenty four hours.

On 1 March Chase's men continued to improve their position. They received several tons of supplies dropped from AAF B-25s and B-17s which replaced their losses from the initial landing and the following day an additional 1,500 troop and 428 Seabees arrived in a second wave to expand the beachhead and beginning improving the facilities.⁹² Fire support from the Navy was crucial to defeating early Japanese attacks.⁹³ Over the next couple weeks 1st Cavalry continued its slow and steady reduction of the Japanese defenses in the Admiralties. Krueger would not declare the operation over until 18 May, but the key territory had all been seized in March.⁹⁴

The last drama in the Admiralties was between the services not against the Japanese. Nimitz had proposed to turn over control of the islands to Halsey and by extension the POA. MacArthur objected so

⁹¹ Miller, Jr. 328.

⁹² Miller, Jr. 331-332.

⁹³ Morison, *Breaking the Bismarck Barrier*, 446.

⁹⁴ Miller, Jr. 348.

furiously he ordered his men to stop working on any facilities that did not support 7th Fleet.⁹⁵ The JCS did not agree with Nimitz and ultimately the base would serve 3rd, 5th, and 7th Fleets as well as Fifth Air Force aircraft. Seeadler Harbor became one of the largest naval bases in the Pacific with repair facilities for all types of warships and transports.⁹⁶ MacArthur's gamble had paid off and now he could turn his attention to the next action.

Several elements of operational art are evident in the Admiralties action. The most significant element is tempo. MacArthur advanced his timeline by over a month by launching the action early. Seizing the Admiralties completed a line of operation intended to isolate the Japanese strongpoint at Rabaul while at the same time enabling a new line of operation along the New Guinea coast. The isolation of Rabaul also represented a transition from one strategic goal to another (moving toward the Philippines). The Admiralties value in regards to basing has already been addressed, but this basing allowed MacArthur to continue his campaign with an extended operational reach for his naval and air forces which reduced the likelihood he would culminate before reaching his final goal.

The final element intrinsic to this action was risk. MacArthur saw an opportunity to seize the initiative over the Japanese (and arguably Nimitz as well). The risk was considerable. MacArthur risked disrupting the timetable in the Pacific. If Chase's men had been wiped out it might have set the war in the Pacific back by several months and the cancellation of the very offensive MacArthur was trying to speed up.⁹⁷ He allowed his commanders the flexibility to mitigate the risk. MacArthur was able to generate surprise through risk and tempo. He may have benefitted from some poor tactical decisions by the Japanese, but by taking the initiative he forced them to react rather than execute their original plans. The element of risk would be significant in the next action as well, but the Admiralties action forced a reframing of the strategy in the Pacific.

⁹⁵ Miller, Jr. 349.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 350.

⁹⁷ Taafe, 76.

MacArthur and his staff were still completely committed to the idea of being the main effort in the Pacific. King continued to maintain that MacArthur's line of operation in SWPA, toward the Philippines to the exclusion of the central Pacific, was absurd.⁹⁸ The JCS met in March 1944 to try to settle the issue of Pacific strategy once and for all. Sutherland was MacArthur's representative at the meeting. He argued that although the JCS planners believed it might be feasible to move from Hollandia directly to Mindanao, MacArthur would need intermediate bases in New Guinea and the Nimitz's role should be to support their drive which aimed for Luzon.⁹⁹ The Navy made equally impassioned arguments that they should be the main effort.

The JCS met on 12 March 1944, but once again compromised on the Pacific. The JCS declared the "most feasible route to the China-Formosa-Luzon area is by way of the Marianas-Carolines-Palaus-Mindanao area."¹⁰⁰ MacArthur would continue to support Nimitz by clearing New Guinea and assaulting Mindanao. However, the purpose of the Mindanao operation, scheduled for November, was not liberation of the Philippines, but "the establishment of air forces to reduce and contain Japanese forces in the Philippines preparatory to any further advance toward Formosa either directly or via Luzon."¹⁰¹ The last word was all MacArthur needed. Although not a victory, it confirmed that his desire to return to the Philippines was still ultimately based on his ability to rapidly move along that line of operation and place his forces in a position ahead of the POA forces in order to make his case. Hollandia and Mindanao were the only objectives specifically given SWPA. The rest was up to MacArthur, as the operational artist, to identify.

⁹⁸ Walter R. Borneman, *The Admirals: Nimitz, Halsey, Leahy, and King- The Five-Star Admirals Who Won the War at Sea* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2012) 361.

⁹⁹ Taafe, 26.

¹⁰⁰ Taafe, 27.

¹⁰¹ Taafe, 28.

The JCS scheduled the Hollandia and Mindanao landings for April and November 1944. In the POA, the JCS agreed to bypass Truk, and tasked Nimitz to seize the Marianas in June and the Palaus in September. The JCS also directed Nimitz to support the Hollandia operation with fast carrier and other fleet cover and support.¹⁰² These additional resources meant MacArthur had an opportunity to consider a tactical action that represented a leap forward rather than just a step. Tempo was still important both in relation to the Japanese and the overall war in the Pacific. The Admiralty Islands operation had also caught the Japanese off guard and they were in the process of adjusting their forces to meet the next attack.

The Japanese concluded the next logical strike, based on the limit of Allied air coverage, would come in the Hansa Bay area. They moved 40,000 combat tested troops who were experienced in preparing and fighting from well-fortified defenses. Additional intelligence discussed strengthening Hollandia. General Adachi, the Japanese 18th Army commander, was concerned that with Australian forces advancing toward Madang and the Americans in the Admiralties his forces in Madang could soon be outflanked. In response he ordered them to march the 150 miles to Wewak.¹⁰³ American control of the sea prevented Adachi from using the sea as maneuver space and a lack of roads meant this would be a slow movement. It was becoming apparent that MacArthur had an opportunity to seize the initiative in a way the Japanese might never regain it.

The success in the Admiralties undoubtedly filled the SWPA staff with confidence initially. However, the next step still remained Hansa Bay which would only advance the Allies about 120 miles further along the New Guinea coast. Once again MacArthur's emphasis on tempo inspired his staff to make bold recommendations. Brigadier General Bonner Fellers believed assaulting Hansa Bay could sacrifice the advantage in tempo seized in the Admiralties. He argued the Allies should bypass Hansa Bay and instead target Hollandia which was 550 miles further up the coast and he took his case straight to

¹⁰² Morison, *New Guinea and the Marianas*, 9.

¹⁰³ Duffy, 295-296.

MacArthur.¹⁰⁴ MacArthur liked the idea of bypassing over 40,000 Japanese troops and placing his air forces in a position to dominate the Vogelkop.¹⁰⁵ Such a bold leap would still require careful planning to overcome several challenges.

The Japanese had strong air assets based in Hollandia that could threaten any naval force. Allied fighters were unable to range Hollandia from existing bases; hence the Japanese confidence the next blow would fall in Hansa Bay. Nimitz's carrier support would mitigate this, but only for a couple days, not enough time to take control of the Hollandia airfields and make them operational. It was decided that one way to mitigate this risk was to capture a closer airfield located at Aitape, about 150 miles east of Hollandia.¹⁰⁶ The nature of the terrain at Hollandia and Aitape required a three-pronged invasion which exceeded anything previously attempted in SWPA. Nearly 220 ships would transport or escort eighty thousand men and their supplies along an enemy-occupied coast.¹⁰⁷ A successful operation would require close cooperation between all the services as well as the additional challenge of coordinating with elements of Nimitz's forces from POA.

The landings at Hollandia, code-named Reckless and Aitape code-named Persecution were scheduled for 22 April. Air Force and Navy units carried out a variety of shaping and deception operations were in order to limit the Japanese's ability to interfere with the landings as well as keep them confused about the next Allied move. The first target was the Japanese forces near Wewak and Hansa Bay. By the end of March 1944, Fifth Air Force had eliminated Japanese air units near Wewak and so limited their mobility by sea that the survivors were forced to attempt to walk to Hollandia.¹⁰⁸ Navy units

¹⁰⁴ Duffy, 296. This act cost Fellers his job on the planning staff, but MacArthur kept him on as his military secretary.

¹⁰⁵ MacArthur, 189.

¹⁰⁶ Duffy, 297.

¹⁰⁷ Duffy, 298.

¹⁰⁸ Craven and Cate, 589.

conducted shore bombardment to reinforce the Japanese belief that the next attack would be targeting the Hansa Bay area. The next target would be Hollandia.

Kenney had promised that he would wipe out Japanese air units in Hollandia by 5 April. Reconnaissance flights in 30 March identified over 300 aircraft in Hollandia and ironically many of them had been moved there to because the Japanese were hoping to stage them outside the coming battle in Hansa Bay.¹⁰⁹ Later that day Fifth Air Force struck and over the next three days would destroy almost every aircraft the Japanese had in Hollandia either on the ground or in the air. Fifth Air Force employed a clever combination of technology and deception to support this endeavor. The Japanese believed that Hollandia was beyond the range of land-based fighters necessary to escort bombers and defend any landing. In the months before Fifth Air Force's massive attack, new larger drop tanks had arrived which allowed Kenney's P-38 fighters to extend their range to Hollandia. To preserve this surprise he ordered that no aircraft could operate beyond Aitape or remain there for longer than fifteen minutes.¹¹⁰ By the time Task Force 58's carrier aircraft arrived to support the landings on 21 April there was no significant resistance from the air to the landings.

Barbey also practiced some deception regarding Reckless and Persecution. Despite Allied air and naval superiority, Barbey took no chances with his large slow convoy. Naval shipping departed the Admiralties on 20 April. Barbey headed west to deceive any lurking Japanese into thinking the American objective was the Palaus or Truk—or any place but Hollandia—before turning hard south after dusk for the true targets.¹¹¹ His ships were carrying the 24th and 41st Infantry divisions. The 24th would land at Tanahmerah Bay west of Hollandia and the 41st would land at Humboldt Bay to west as well as at Aitape. The overall commander was Lieutenant General Eichelberger whose I Corps headquarters controlled the

¹⁰⁹ Duffy, 300.

¹¹⁰ Taafe, 85.

¹¹¹ Taafe, 86.

separate task forces. Due to their miscalculations few Japanese combat forces were in position to resist them.

The three landings on 22 April achieved complete surprise. The majority of the Japanese in the area were support troops. They along with the combat troops were quickly defeated or fled into the jungle at all three landing sites. The terrain leading from the beaches to the airfields of Hollandia proved to be a bigger challenge than the enemy. The assault met with such success that MacArthur proposed that SWPA could divert its reserves for the Hollandia operation to land in three days at Wadke in order to continue to maintain tempo. Barbey was in support and Krueger was non-committal, but Eichelberger was opposed. Eichelberger argued that the follow up ships were not combat-loaded for an assault so they would only succeed if there was no resistance. He was also not convinced there were not additional Japanese lurking inland prepared to counterattack.¹¹² MacArthur agreed to continue with the current schedule, but once again his bias for tempo is evident.

Eichelberger's forces were able to secure the Hollandia airfields within four days of the landings, but seizing them was only part of the operation. Hollandia was meant to serve as a major staging area for that could support five airfields and 200,000 men.¹¹³ The facilities needed to be developed quickly to support MacArthur's operations as well as support Nimitz in the POA. Unfortunately, the terrain resisted engineering with the same effectiveness it resisted Eichelberger's landing. As had been feared by Kenney's staff, the ground available for airfields was not suitable for to hold the weight of loaded bombers. The size of the logistics base was also hampered by swampy ground, lack of roads and inadequate anchorages. MacArthur's staff recommended the plans for Hollandia be scaled back and ultimately on three airfields were built and facilities for about 140,000 men finished.¹¹⁴ Success at Hollandia still yielded many tangible benefits even if it proved to be underwhelming as base.

¹¹² Taafe, 88.

¹¹³ Ibid, 97.

¹¹⁴ Taafe, 99.

The movement to Hollandia advanced MacArthur's forces further in one operation than they had moved in 1943. It placed him ahead of Nimitz who was still planning for the Marianas operation in June. MacArthur estimated it saved him two months over his old plan.¹¹⁵ Success at Hollandia improved the chances he would be allowed to continue on to the Philippines as he wished. The low cost of the operation in men and material meant that those savings could be applied to future operations. He also avoided fighting the considerable Japanese forces in the Hansa Bay-Wewak area while at the same time isolating them. MacArthur's boldness had paid off again. The victory was not perfect, but it was adequate.

Hollandia represents many of the same elements of operational art as the Admiralties, but includes new ones as well. Perhaps first among these is the center of gravity. The Japanese forces in the Hansa Bay-Wewak area represented strongest most experienced forces still available on New Guinea. They represented a center of gravity. Rather than attack this strength directly, MacArthur chose an indirect approach and bypassed it. The limited land mobility New Guinea afforded meant MacArthur could be confident these bypassed Japanese forces would not be able to influence his future operations. Understanding the Japanese center of gravity allowed MacArthur to identify a decisive point that would weaken it.

Hollandia represented the decisive point for MacArthur's 1944 actions in New Guinea. The combination of destroying Japanese aviation units based there and then following that up with its physical occupation, delivered twin blows the Japanese never recovered from. The Japanese aviation units were a key source of firepower for the Japanese in the Hansa Bay-Wewak area. Their destruction exposed Hollandia to capture which in turn isolated those same Japanese units and limited their ability to withdraw or interfere in the future.

Hollandia moved the Philippines line of operations much closer to its goal. It used the operational reach of Fifth Air Force to deceive the Japanese and strike in depth to prepare for the landings. Likewise the reach of the navy allowed for mobility the Japanese could not impede or compete with. This resulted

¹¹⁵ Taafe, 101.

in maintaining or even accelerating the tempo of operations. The saving in men and material reduced the likelihood that MacArthur's forces would culminate before reaching his goal. There was some risk, but it was addressed more deliberately than the Admiralties operation. Consideration was given to the limits of Fifth Air Force. Naval and air forces practiced deception and there was a clearer understanding of what the ground forces would encounter on the objective. The size of the landing force was more than adequate to address even the highest estimates for enemy troops in the area. Finally, the theme of tempo is maintained. Operation Reckless built on the momentum generated by Brewer and it allowed for MacArthur to continue this tempo almost without friction through the rest of his campaign. MacArthur deferred his desire to leap again to Wadke, but it remained his next target.

Kenney once described MacArthur as a leader who "believed in moving fast when he was winning."¹¹⁶ Wadke and Sarmi, 140 miles from Hollandia, was identified as a potential target before Operation Reckless began. Fifth Air Force planners were concerned Hollandia would be inadequate for bombers and viewed this area as an alternative. Wadke Island was really two islands. The larger one, Insoemoar, was about three miles off the coast and home an excellent coral-surfaced runway built by the Japanese.¹¹⁷ Across from the Wadkes lay the village of Toem. Approximately 18 miles further west and northwest along the coast lay the village of Sarmi. Sarmi was the site of another airfield and there was a third airfield in between Sarmi and Toem as well as small bay. The Japanese 36th Division was headquartered at Sarmi and had 11,000 men guarding the three airfields.¹¹⁸ This force threatened the buildup in Hollandia and could menace further Allied operations. Dealing with this force and two other discoveries made Wadke-Sarmi a necessary objective.

In addition to the terrain near Hollandia being inadequate for large bomber bases, reconnaissance had found no other suitable locations short of the island of Biak. Wadke could offer a steppingstone to

¹¹⁶ Kenney, 395.

¹¹⁷ Morison, *New Guinea and the Marianas*, 92.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 94.

Biak. Speed was still important because MacArthur was expected to provide air support against the Palaus in support of Nimitz's operations. Had aircraft carriers been available MacArthur might have moved straight to Biak, but Nimitz was hoarding them for the Marianas operation. MacArthur still sought tempo and he ambitiously planned to follow the Wadke-Sarmi landing on 17 May to followed by landing on Biak a short ten days later.

This was troubling to Barbey's temporary replacement Rear Admiral Fechteler, who felt there was not enough information about Biak. Fechteler agreed to the plan with the disclaimer that "certain hazards and expediencies" had to be accepted "solely because of the strategic urgency of the situation."¹¹⁹ MacArthur might have moved even faster, but shipping was still at a premium in SWPA. There would not be enough ships available until 12 May for the Wadke landings and ten days was the minimum to reposition ships to support a Biak landing.¹²⁰ The SWPA staff still had to contend with these mundane. Ships were not the only shortage MacArthur faced as he juggled units to meet his timeline.

The SWPA staff concluded a single regimental combat team was adequate to capture the Wadke-Sarmi objectives. It would be the 163 RCT from the 41st Division who had just completed the Aitape operation. Their decision was driven in part to keep the rest of the 41st available for Biak and also a rare underestimation of the Japanese in the area. Krueger prohibited ground reconnaissance to maintain the element of surprise and the air reconnaissance could not firmly establish troop strength.¹²¹ ULTRA intelligence was temporarily unavailable and radio intercepts and prisoner interrogation yielded the estimate of 6000 combat troops in the area.¹²² The SWPA staff estimate was about half the true number and misinterpreting the enemy intentions would also cause problems over time. SWPA believed the forces in Wadke-Sarmi would delay and withdraw, but they chose to defend.

¹¹⁹ Morison, *New Guinea and the Marianas*, 96.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Taafe, 122.

¹²² *Ibid.*

Fifth Air Force conducted there well practiced isolation of the objective by attacking the Japanese in depth throughout New Guinea and beyond. The Navy provided mobility and pre-landing bombardment. The 163rd's initial 17 May landing was on New Guinea in order to create a large enough lodgment to mass supplies and establish artillery positions to support the landing on Wadke. The initial landing was followed up on the 18th by the assault on Wadke. The Japanese put up a stubborn defense, but by 20 May the island was in American hands. MacArthur had seized the airstrip he needed to support the Biak operation that was less than a week away and Fifth Air Force was able to move its bombers forward and extend their reach. Although in MacArthur's mind the operation was over, the poor intelligence estimate would prove costly over time.

In the interest of maintaining tempo the 163rd RCT was relieved by the 158th RCT just four days after the original landing. The 158th was meant to secure the lodgment and drive off the remaining Japanese in the Sarmi area. However, the 158th met stiff resistance and failed to push the Japanese back battling over a place called One Tree Hill that cost the Allies 75 killed and 275 wounded against claims of 920 Japanese killed.¹²³ The 158th would be relieved by the 6th Division as units were continually rotated forward. The 31st and 33rd Divisions would also move into the area, but none would be successful in eliminating the Japanese forces on the mainland. The vital base on Wadke was defended until it became irrelevant.

SWPA had achieved complete success in the Admiralties and Hollandia. The capture of Wadke certainly qualifies as success, but Sarmi was costly. A total of 632 men would be killed and 1742 wounded fighting over the two objectives.¹²⁴ The emphasis on speed aided by poor intelligence forced Krueger to commit minimal forces to the operation. The benefit was that Fifth Air Force was able to support operations in the POA, and the use of the airfield, beach, and bay eased the logistics burden that threatened to slow MacArthur's advance. Finally, it provided a chance for several units to be tested in

¹²³ Taafe, 136.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 142.

combat before moving on to larger operations in the Pacific. Military success always had some price and this would not be the last time MacArthur would have to pay for it.

Wadke-Sarmi demonstrates the trade-offs inherent in operational art. It extended operational reach through its airfield and logistics staging areas. This in turn reduced the chance of culmination and maintained tempo. However, this was achieved by accepting the risk of employing a smaller force. The Japanese inability to reach Wadke meant that true disaster was unlikely, but fighting on the mainland did drain manpower that may have been necessary to support future operations. A less aggressive approach on the main land would probably been the better course of action, but ultimately Wadke-Sarmi advanced MacArthur toward his end state.

Despite the trouble at Wadke-Sarmi, the 27 May Biak landing commenced on schedule. Biak was part of the Schouten Islands that cover the approach to Geelvink Bay, the island is roughly forty-five miles long and twenty-five miles wide.¹²⁵ Biak lies 180 miles west of Wadke making it a supportable yet predictable next step for MacArthur. The composition of the island offered both value and danger. It was a coral island with a coral reef which made finding landing beaches more challenging. It boasted some considerable hills and much of the island was covered in thick tropical rainforest which provided advantages for the Japanese defenders. Its value to both sides was the three airfields located along the southern shore. Built on top of rock hard coral, these airfields could support the heavy bombers that MacArthur and Kenney needed to range the Philippines and the central Pacific.

The tempo MacArthur had generated in the previous attacks disrupted the Japanese plans. Biak had always been considered important to both the Japanese Army and the Navy, but the speed of MacArthur's advance had caused friction between the two services. Japanese commanders had no doubt that Biak would be assaulted and they concentrated their defenses around the airfields, however they believed they had until June to prepare.¹²⁶ As late as the Wadke operation, Japanese army was still

¹²⁵ Duffy, 328.

¹²⁶ Morison, 107-108.

vacillating over whether to reinforce Biak or the abandon its garrison in the hope they could delay the Allies while a new defensive belt was established further west.¹²⁷ The Japanese navy believed that holding Biak was crucial to providing air support to the still anticipated decisive battle with the American navy somewhere near the Palaus or the Philippines.¹²⁸ These conflicting priorities meant that while the Japanese army reduced Biak to an outpost the navy was marshalling ships in the area in anticipation of sailing out to face Allied naval forces for the first time since Midway in 1942.

The lack of a unified plan for Biak's defense did not signal the Japanese had failed to prepare for the Allies inevitable arrival. ULTRA intercepts had confirmed the Japanese planned on strengthening their defenses in the Biak area with air, sea and land forces prepared to react to MacArthur's next move.¹²⁹ MacArthur's emphasis on tempo disrupted the ability of the Japanese to react. Unfortunately, his intelligence section poorly forecast the Japanese forces on the island. The lack of ground reconnaissance and the apparent mistrust of an intercept that listed the garrison at 10,800 resulted in a prediction of 5,550 troops on the island when the reality on 27 May was closer to 12,000.¹³⁰ Based on the prediction, Krueger assigned a single division, the 41st Infantry Division, for Operation Hurricane. Allied naval commanders were also concerned about the possibility of encountering Japanese fleet elements. MacArthur was concerned about his promise to support Nimitz. He also believed that Biak represented the last significant military obstacle between SWPA and the Philippines and its seizure would strengthen his argument that Luzon should be his goal.¹³¹ The landings on 27 May seemed to confirm MacArthur's hope that the Japanese were caught off guard and through the following day that appeared to be true.

¹²⁷ Marc D. Bernstein, *Hurricane at Biak: MacArthur Against the Japanese, May-Aug 1944* (Xlibris, 2000) 49.

¹²⁸ Taafe, 146.

¹²⁹ Bernstein, 39.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 43.

¹³¹ Taafe, 147.

MacArthur and the 41st Division would soon discover that Biak supported a shift in Japanese tactical doctrine. Recognizing that winning the war was unlikely, the Japanese Army had given up using attacks to dislodge the invaders and now employed a defensive mindset meant to cause the most casualties and slow the war.¹³² Initial success soon met fierce Japanese resistance in the hills surrounding the airfields. The Japanese commanders saw an opportunity to exploit success and they requested the commitment of additional forces; contrary to the plan to fight a battle of attrition.¹³³ The Japanese Navy unsuccessfully attempted to deliver troops over the first few weeks of the contest.

On land, Allied forces were equally unsuccessful in capturing the key airfields. MacArthur was putting increasing pressure on Krueger and he was in turn pressuring the Major General Horace Fuller, commander of the 41st. Fuller had been battering the Japanese for weeks and was losing Krueger's confidence. It was also becoming clear that Japanese forces were larger than predicted and additional forces were necessary. By 14 June MacArthur's patience had run out and he warned Krueger "the situation on Biak was unsatisfactory" and was threatening the entire purpose of the attack.¹³⁴ Krueger responded immediately by introducing Eichelberger's I Corps headquarters and additional troops. Under Eichelberger's leadership the offensive finally gained the airfields although not in time to support the Marianas operation. Perhaps unbeknownst to SWPA the Marianas operation had indirectly supported them. On 12 June a massive naval task force, including both Japan's super-battleships *Yamato* and *Musashi*, was dispatched to escort troops to reinforce Biak, but the upon learning of the imminent invasion of Saipan they were diverted in the hope that the decisive naval battle was finally at hand.¹³⁵ The

¹³² Duffy, 331.

¹³³ Ibid, 337

¹³⁴ Taafe, 166.

¹³⁵ Duffy, 337.

Biak operation cost SWPA over 400 killed and 2000 wounded as well as numerous non-combat injuries from disease.¹³⁶

For MacArthur, of course, the main concern was the time it had cost. The Japanese had successfully delayed SWPA for a month. They bought time to strengthen their next defensive belt and, by denying the bases on Biak to SWPA, prevented the AAF from hindering their fleet action in the Philippine Sea. Fortunately, the US Navy could take care of itself by this point of the war so on that point the Japanese had not really gained anything. Furthermore, MacArthur had time to spare due to his aggressiveness in the Admiralties and at Hollandia. The consensus was that the Japanese in New Guinea were effectively neutralized, the landings on Biak “put the cork in the bottle...and Fifth Air Force will be in operation from bases less than 1000 miles from Mindanao.”¹³⁷

Biak is evidence operational art is rarely perfect, but still demonstrates the themes of the campaign. Biak’s most significant value was that it finally extended the operational reach of heavy bombers which had been based in the Admiralties with small forces on Wadke. Army and Navy engineers turned Biak into another logistical hub as well. MacArthur’s line of operation had become so predictable at this point that the Japanese accurately predicted it would be the next objective. However, the tempo of MacArthur’s advance was something the Japanese could still not predict and this was causing internal friction for their decision-making. Despite the lost time MacArthur was in no danger of culminating. As always he was willing to accept risk in return for time and tempo. The timetable for Biak was aggressive. Operations in Wadke-Sarmi were still ongoing. In this case poor intelligence and poor leadership reduced his reward, but overall the result was positive and certainly enough for MacArthur to remain confident that liberating the Philippines was still feasible.

Maintaining tempo was a key factor in the selection of all of MacArthur’s objectives. SWPA planners selected Noemfoor not just because it would support the overall campaign, but specifically to

¹³⁶ Taafe, 175.

¹³⁷ Taafe, 176.

mitigate concerns the Biak operation might cost more time than it was worth. Noemfoor was only seventy-five miles west Biak, a short advance by the standards of the campaign. In addition to offering an alternate base to Biak it was sixty five miles east of 25,000 Japanese troops defending Manowari.¹³⁸ Isolating this location and the garrison at Sorong would remove any further threat from the Japanese in New Guinea.

The circular island was about eleven miles in diameter and fifteen miles long. It was generally flat and covered with rain forest. Kenney was interested in the three airfields built by the Japanese and like Biak the assumption was that a coral island could support heavy aircraft. The island was also a concern to MacArthur and Krueger because ULTRA intercepts indicated the Japanese were using the island to help infiltrate reinforcements by sea to Biak. There were also indications that it was an obvious next target and the Japanese might reinforce the garrison. ULTRA reports suggested about 1750 Japanese soldiers were on the island, of whom 700 were combat troops.¹³⁹ Concerned that recent intelligence estimates had proven to be on the low side, Kruger chose to send in a ground reconnaissance element which learned little, but did alert the Japanese.¹⁴⁰ MacArthur authorized an attack for 30 June, but this was later delayed to 2 July. SWPA's swift advance had stretched just about every part of the organization to the breaking point. Land forces were still reducing pockets of Japanese; there was lack of shipping; naval escorts were refueling and rearming and Barbey wanted more rehearsal time.¹⁴¹

Troops were at a premium so Krueger selected the 158th RCT which was recovering from fighting near Sarmi. The lack of shipping led him to place the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) in reserve. Although this still provided a favorable force ration for the Allies Krueger was not taking any chances. An overwhelming amount of firepower from the AAF and the Navy would support the landings.

¹³⁸ Duffy, 362.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 363.

¹⁴⁰ Taafe, 178.

¹⁴¹ Taafe, 179, Barbey, 205-207.

Firepower was not always the solution in the Pacific but in this case over 300 1000-pound bombs supported by 12,000 shells and 800 rockets from the Navy crushed any resistance to the landing.¹⁴² Although the landing was going well, bad intelligence and excess caution resulted in the 503rd being committed the following day. The 503rd sped up the progress, but they also suffered a high percentage of jump related injuries. Nonetheless, for a small cost Noemfoor was captured. Infiltration to Biak ceased and Fifth Air Force could extend its reach as well as relief the congestion at other airfields. Control of Noemfoor was not a major advantage, but it had cost very little and continued the Allied advance.

The Noemfoor operation was in response to the evolving situation within SWPA. The pace of operations did not allow much time for deliberation if MacArthur was to maintain his timeline. Noemfoor was added to the schedule over concern the Biak might lead to a degree of culmination. The risk of Noemfoor was low especially when balanced against the unacceptable risk that tempo could be lost. The situation on Biak was considerably better by the 2 July landing, but a rapid low cost victory had little downside. The island's airfield extended operational reach. It moved the Allies along their line of operation and it prepared for the final phase of the New Guinea campaign.

Throughout the campaign, MacArthur maintained the initiative over the Japanese. Battles were fought at the time and place of his choosing. However, in early July the Japanese would make one desperate attempt to force MacArthur into a battle of their choosing not his. General Adachi's men had been lingering in the Hansa Bay-Wewak area since the Hollandia operation had cut them off from the rest of the Japanese in New Guinea. With no hope for relief or reinforcement Adachi decided to control his own destiny and his men set off for Aitape in the hopes of contributing something to the Japanese war effort before they starved to death.

Adachi hoped to draw SWPA's attention from their advance west back to the east. On 18 May his three divisions began the long march. The 20th, 41st, and parts of the 51st Japanese Divisions had to carry everything on their backs through thick jungle and were constantly harassed by Allied air and naval

¹⁴² Taafe, 180.

forces.¹⁴³ Throughout May and June they gradually made their way toward Aitape. The Japanese lead elements began skirmishing with Allied forces in late May while MacArthur's staff tried to divine the Japanese intentions and capabilities.

Initially, Willoughby thought a Japanese attack was unlikely, but ULTRA and other intelligence gradually changed his mind. Intelligence identified the 20th and 41st Divisions moving toward Aitape and the Allies were well aware of the number of Japanese in Wewak that could potentially participate.¹⁴⁴ The main challenge was identifying the timing of the attack. Late June was the first estimate, then early July. Eventually he settled on 10 July.¹⁴⁵ Adachi's men had little chance of changing the military fortunes of the Japanese in New Guinea, but they could significantly affect MacArthur's political goal of moving on the Philippines. Any attack against SWPA's lines of communication had to be taken seriously and even limited Japanese success could slow SWPA's attack enough to threaten its goal. Krueger was expected to eliminate this threat, quickly.

The necessity to address Adachi's moves had already drained men to reinforce Aitape. Krueger could not allow the Japanese to continue to control the initiative. Even though the tactical situation might favor the defense, Krueger's strategic concerns forced him to attempt the offense. Krueger wanted to slug it out as far to the east as possible and prevent Adachi from bypassing Aitape and striking directly at vital Hollandia.¹⁴⁶ There were the equivalent of over two divisions of troops in the Aitape area by early July and Krueger had assigned Major General Charles B. Hall and his XI headquarters to coordinate the fight. Krueger had already drained resources needed for the westward advance so he wanted Hall to get results fast. Krueger tasked Hall with protecting the airfields at Aitape and Tadi, conducting an active defense

¹⁴³ Taafe, 189.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 191.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Krueger, 71-72.

and following it up with a vigorous counterattack when his strength and tactical position permitted.¹⁴⁷ Hall chose to fight to the east of Tadjj along the Driniumor River. The 10 July estimate ultimately proved correct and the Japanese launched a major assault that day. A six week struggle ensued which cost the Allies almost 600 killed and 1700 wounded while inflicting 8800 casualties on the Japanese and eliminating Adachi's men as a threat.¹⁴⁸ Was the cost worth it?

A more conservative approach probably would have cost less lives, but it may have slowed MacArthur's advance and that was the one thing that could not happen. From MacArthur's view, American losses were justifiable in that they contributed to the implementation of a strategy—his—that would best enable the United States to defeat the Japanese most effectively.¹⁴⁹ Fortunately, despite the casualties, MacArthur's advance was not appreciably slowed by Adachi's attack.

The Driniumor River battles demonstrate that the Japanese had identified tempo as the key element to MacArthur's operational art. Buying time was critical both locally, to establish new defensive lines, and strategically to exhaust the Allies and negotiate an end to the war that was not catastrophic for Japan. Adachi threatened MacArthur's line of operation and key bases with the purpose of forcing culmination by the forces advancing westward. The Japanese tried to force MacArthur into transitioning from advancing to consolidating their gains. Since Adachi's force was essentially doomed, it risked very little, but also gained very little.

For SWPA, the Driniumor, grew from the risk in bypassing Japanese positions MacArthur had repeatedly accepted. His response was based on mitigating the risk that his tempo could be slowed. This was at the expense of risk to his force. Losing too many men also could threaten his advance, but in the short term MacArthur simply had other units take up the slack, which, although rough on the men and

¹⁴⁷ Taafe, 194.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 208.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

equipment subsequently denied rest and repair, permitted the tempo to be sustained.¹⁵⁰ MacArthur maintained the security of his bases and line of operations, prevented culmination and retained the initiative as he maneuvered his forces to support his argument that the Philippines must be liberated.

In late June, the Joint Chiefs decided to reassess the debate between Luzon and Formosa and added a new layer; skipping both of them and heading directly for Japan. Many JCS planners were starting to lean toward bypassing the Philippines. The Army had acquired intelligence that the Japanese were reinforcing many of their holdings including Formosa and there was concern Chinese forces might collapse without the support a Formosa landing would provide.¹⁵¹ MacArthur's and Nimitz's staffs were directed to comment on the feasibility of skipping both objectives. Their response and further study by JCS planners concluded a direct leap to Japan was not feasible so the debate returned to Luzon and Formosa. The renewal of the debate would see some odd allies and culminate with an unprecedented meeting.

In Washington, it appeared that almost everyone had been converted to King's view that Formosa should be seized and Luzon bypassed. The one notable exception was the Secretary of War Stimson. Even Army officers like Marshall and Arnold had sided with King. In the Pacific the reverse was true. Admirals Halsey and Spruance favored Luzon over the Formosa. Publically, Nimitz supported King's view that Formosa was the correct target. However, his own staff had circulated a recommendation that the Navy target Luzon over Formosa and Nimitz had agreed with their arguments and forwarded it to King.¹⁵² The debate reached a climax in Honolulu in July of 1944.

For reasons that have never been determined, President Roosevelt made a trip to Hawaii in July of 1944 to confer with his two theater commanders without the Joint Chiefs present. Marshall ordered MacArthur to attend and he dutifully left SWPA for the only time during the war. Nimitz was close to his

¹⁵⁰ Taafe, 209.

¹⁵¹ Ross, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 6.

¹⁵² Duffy, 346.

headquarters and could expect the full support of his staff. MacArthur was alone and had to rely on himself, but this was the moment he had been preparing for since February. Every decision MacArthur had made was to put his forces in position to make a convincing argument that liberating the Philippines was both necessary and would not slow the war down.

Roosevelt asked both men to make their cases. Nimitz was really arguing King's position while MacArthur was clearly arguing his own. MacArthur based his argument on two themes; military and political. The military argument was that the Japanese had three hundred thousand men in the Philippines and significant aviation forces. Failure to neutralize them would allow them to threaten Allied communications as they pushed toward Formosa threatening the pace of the war. Politically, MacArthur noted American voters would not be pleased if the 4,000 American POWs were to continue to starve in Japanese prison camps nor would they care for Roosevelt abandoning "17 million loyal Filipino Christians...in favor of liberating Formosa and returning it to China."¹⁵³ MacArthur's view prevailed. Roosevelt declared at a Honolulu press conference "We are going to get the Philippines back and without a question the General MacArthur will take part in it."¹⁵⁴ MacArthur returned to his staff believing that he had the President's support and continued to plan for an invasion of the Philippines.

MacArthur was technically correct, but Roosevelt did not impose this decision on the JCS. Instead he left it to Admiral William Leahy, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and personal advisor to Roosevelt, to convince the other Joint Chiefs. The process would require several months, but in the interim the JCS authorized MacArthur to occupy Leyte in addition to Mindanao. If MacArthur truly believed in the moral purpose of liberating that may have driven his continued emphasis on tempo. It is equally likely that he had learned that opinions can change quickly in the Pacific and any failure on his part to maintain his momentum could cause another discussion about the merits of Luzon versus another

¹⁵³ Duffy, p351.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

target. Any invasion of even Mindanao was still months away. Now that MacArthur had the President's support all he had to do was keep it.

The Vogelkop Peninsula at the northwest end of New Guinea was the only area that MacArthur had not gained control over. There were two significant Japanese garrisons at Manokwair on the east side of the peninsula and Sorong on the west side. Each base was estimated to have close to 5000 combat troops and another 7-10 thousand support personnel.¹⁵⁵ After the experience at Biak the size of both forces were enough to threaten MacArthur's timetable which by now included a 15 October landing on Mindanao. In order to neutralize these forces SWPA took its policy of avoiding Japanese strength to a new level. It avoided them altogether.

The SWPA staff identified the area around the villages of Sansapor and Mar as the next objective on 30 June with the landing scheduled for 30 July. The area was between the two Japanese strong points and was virtually free of Japanese presence. The campaign had proved that Allied control of the sea and air and the rugged, underdeveloped terrain of New Guinea meant there was little chance the Japanese could maneuver ground forces against this area. The main concern of Krueger and the SWPA staff was whether the location could support any basing. The lack of Japanese allowed for extensive reconnaissance and it was determined that a landing was supportable, but the aviation engineers wanted to wait until the area was secure before make a final decision on airfield locations.¹⁵⁶ The reconnaissance also confirmed the absence of any meaningful Japanese forces.

Despite of the lack of enemy, Krueger assigned that 6th Infantry Division with about 7,000 men at the objective. 6th Infantry was not expected to meet much resistance so it had an unusually high percentage of support personnel, especially engineers.¹⁵⁷ The goal of committing such a large force was to get airfields ready as fast as possible. Krueger was also running out of places to stage his units so moving

¹⁵⁵ Taafe, 211.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 213.

¹⁵⁷ Duffy, 374.

the 6th Division forward would allow them to be closer to any future operations.¹⁵⁸ The landing on 30 July went smoothly as expected and the biggest threat to Allied forces was disease as they worked to establish airfields. By the early September several airfields were available to support the final leg of the campaign and all at virtually no cost to SWPA. The remaining Japanese units in New Guinea were isolated and AAF units were able further extend their reach.

The Sansapor-Mar operation was a less costly version of the Noemfoor operation. Basing was secured that extended operational reach of Allied forces and reduced the effectiveness of Japanese forces by isolating them. The possibility of culmination was reduced by avoiding Japanese strength and targeting weakness. It maintained a tempo that the Japanese could not compete with due to Allied air and maritime control. The operation occurred shortly after MacArthur returned from his meeting with Roosevelt in Hawaii and it supported his conviction that SWPA would be ready to assault the Philippines on schedule. In this instance, MacArthur had to accept almost no risk because his line of operation and tempo left the Japanese without the means or the time to effectively react to his moves. The Japanese at Sorong and Manokwari would remain there until they surrendered. MacArthur now controlled New Guinea, but there remained one more obstacle between New Guinea and Mindanao, Halmahera Island.

About halfway between New Guinea and the southern most parts of the Philippines lies a group of several hundred islands known as the Malukus. The largest of these islands was Halmahera. MacArthur had originally selected it as the last objective before the Philippines based on its location and the nine Japanese airfields there. By summer of 1944 however, it the Japanese had also recognized its increased value. Reports indicated as many as 30,000 Japanese troops defended the seven-thousand square-mile island.¹⁵⁹ Willoughby observed that the “enemy’s realization that of the strategic importance of Halmahera, astride our line of advance, continues to be evidenced through his extensive construction of ground defenses. With Biak still fresh on the minds of the SWPA staff, Halmahera did not support

¹⁵⁸ Taafe, 212.

¹⁵⁹ Duffy, 376.

MacArthur's desire for tempo. By now using American air and sea superiority to bypass enemy strength was routine in SWPA, but where to strike if not at Halmahera?

The solution proved to be only six miles away. The tiny island of Morotai lay just of Halmahera's northeastern tip as was that much closer to the Philippines. Even better, intelligence indicated it was occupied by less than 1000 men and had an abandoned airstrip.¹⁶⁰ Capturing the island would provide airfields to support the Philippines liberation and protect SWPA's flank from any Japanese in the Dutch East Indies. Like Sansapor-Mar, there was more concern over whether the terrain would support adequate bases than Japanese resistance. The operation was scheduled for 15 September which was the same day as the POA would begin their landings in the Palaus.¹⁶¹ Synchronizing his operation with Nimitz allowed MacArthur the rare luxury of aircraft carriers providing a protective bubble over both the Morotai and Palaus operations. Escort carriers were also loaned to Barbey to support the landing.

The normal process of targeting the surrounding Japanese forces and bombarding those few on the island allowed the 31st Infantry Division to land and rapidly control the island. Failing to properly assess a coral reef caused more problems with the landing than the Japanese and the operation would cost only a handful of American lives and isolate tens of thousands of Japanese on Halmahera. MacArthur had travelled with the landing force and went ashore to observe the action late in the day on 15 September. The landing was going well, but MacArthur was undoubtedly happy about larger events.

Halsey's 3rd Fleet had conducted a series of carrier raids against the Palaus and Philippines in support of the landings at Moroatai and Peleliu. Halsey's men were able to destroy many ships and aircraft, but they did so against surprising light resistance. Halsey concluded the Japanese were unable to defend the Philippines and he recommended to Nimitz that the JCS cancel the Mindanao operation and strike directly at Leyte.¹⁶² The JCS liked the idea and contacted MacArthur's command for his opinion.

¹⁶⁰ Duffy, 376.

¹⁶¹ For a contrast to the Morotai campaign see James N Putnam, *Peleliu: A Study in Strategic, Operational and Tactical Judgment and Assessment*

¹⁶² Taafe, 221.

At the time MacArthur was with the landing force observing radio silence, but his chief of staff responded positively in his name. If the JCS approved, it would effectively signal that MacArthur had won his argument.

The Morotai landing effectively brought the New Guinea campaign to a close. SWPA could now transition from the necessary act of neutralizing the Japanese in New Guinea to the more satisfying liberation of the Philippines. Morotai was the end of a line of operation that extended through New Guinea, the Admiralties and ultimately back to Australia and the United States all for the purpose of placing MacArthur's forces in a position to return to the Philippines. Morotai would provide the final basing area to support the leap to the Philippines. It extended SWPA's operational reach while limiting the Japanese's. MacArthur's tempo prevented the Japanese from anticipating his next action and this allowed him to avoid culmination by striking at weakness. By closing with Nimitz's force he reduced what little risk remained by taking advantage of 3rd Fleet's support. Finally, MacArthur's staff's understanding of his end state and conditions allowed them answer without hesitation in regards to where MacArthur wanted to go next. This thought was probably on MacArthur's mind when, before leaving Morotai's beach, he gazed north and said to an aide "They are waiting for me there. It has been a long time."¹⁶³

Conclusion

On 3 October the JCS approved the plan to bypass Mindanao. A little over two weeks later on 20 October MacArthur had the satisfaction of wading ashore onto to Leyte and declaring "People of the Philippines, I have returned."¹⁶⁴ The year had started with the consensus being that the central Pacific was the fastest and most cost effective way to defeat the Japanese. MacArthur was only allowed to continue his campaign because the resources were on hand and it was believed he would keep the focus off Nimitz's forces in the central Pacific. MacArthur viewed things differently. He had been given a window

¹⁶³ Taafe, 222.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 225.

to prove his case. New Guinea was not a goal, it was a path. If he could move along the path faster than Nimitz moved on his then he might change the minds of those making strategy.

Throughout the campaign MacArthur's decisions reflect ideas now captured in Army doctrine as elements of operations art. The ten elements: end state and conditions, center of gravity, decisive points, lines of operation and lines of effort, operational reach, basing, tempo, phasing and transitions, culmination and risk are not new idea as MacArthur's campaign demonstrates. The elements have been extracted from history and committed to doctrine as a guide for future operational artists. The elements assist the operational artist, in this case MacArthur, in arranging tactical actions in time, space, and purpose to achieve strategic objectives.

Doctrine fails to provide the historical background of the elements of operational art. MacArthur's campaign in New Guinea provides a historical narrative which complements doctrine. Not only does the campaign include all the elements, but it represents a joint operation. In MacArthur's time, joint operations were ad hoc and not supported by doctrine. The result was the unusual command relationships MacArthur established or had to deal with. Today joint operations are guided by doctrine and law.

MacArthur's campaign also demonstrates how the arrangement of tactical actions is related to strategy. MacArthur's use of these ideas guided him and his staff in moving toward the strategic objectives established by the JCS and the President. What makes this campaign different is that MacArthur clearly had a personal agenda which initially was not aligned with his assigned objectives. That agenda modified his use of the elements. The JCS probably would have been satisfied with MacArthur's operational art as long SWPA forces could avoid culmination and keep the Japanese forces occupied in his theater. However, MacArthur clearly viewed tempo as much more important and he was willing to accept a considerable amount of risk in order to gain and maintain tempo. This is evident in his arrangement of tactical actions as well.

The geography of the environment and the limitations of land based airpower constrained MacArthur's ability to arrange his actions in space. The ability to use the sea as maneuver space mitigated

this, but with the exception of Hollandia/Aitape the Japanese generally knew the likely location of SWPA's next objective. All of MacArthur's actions conveniently supported the purposes of the JCS objectives and his own objectives. Time was the area where MacArthur really gained an advantage over the Japanese. MacArthur's boldness in the Admiralty Islands started a cascade of events that allowed him to maintain a faster tempo than the Japanese.

Once the Japanese fell behind, MacArthur made it difficult for them to regain the initiative. MacArthur sought to maintain or even increase his tempo throughout the campaign. Once again his speed relative to the Japanese was the most important aspect, but his speed relative to the Nimitz's action in the POA was also an important consideration. MacArthur's success increased the options available to the Allied political leaders and enhanced the effectiveness of Nimitz's campaign. By July of 1944 MacArthur had placed his forces in a position to win the argument over whether Luzon or Formosa should be a key objective in the Pacific.

MacArthur presented the final pitch in person to the President. MacArthur's emotional argument that the United States was morally required to liberate the Philippines may have been the deciding factor, but it was his military reasoning supported by the current location of his forces that won over Nimitz and his staff. If MacArthur's forces had still been far to the southeast it is unlikely he would have even been given the option to make a case for the Philippines or equally terrible a Philippines campaign would have been led by Nimitz. Instead history remembers MacArthur as both the man who lost the Philippines and the one who regained it.

MacArthur's 1944 New Guinea campaign is not as well known as other actions in the Pacific, but it provides value to the modern student of operational art. MacArthur's link between strategy and tactics is clear throughout the campaign. He and his staff's intuitive use of what are now the elements of operational art provide the historic foundation for current doctrine. Finally, it is easy to see how MacArthur's arrangement of tactical actions in purpose, space, and most importantly time allowed the Allies to successfully achieve strategic objectives.

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