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PREFACE

Through Instruction No. 126 to Japanese Government, 12 Oct 45, entitled "Institution for War Records Investigation", steps were initiated to exploit military historical records and official reports of the Japanese War Ministry and the Japanese General Staff.* Upon the dissolution of the War Ministry and the General Staff, and the transfer of their former functions to the Demobilization Bureau, the general research job continued and resulted in the development of a series of historical monographs. Detailed instructions covering the preparation of these monographs were included in Memoranda 15 December 1945 and 21 November 1946, subject "Japanese Operational Histories".

The basic material contained in this operational record was developed by former officers, on duty in command and staff units within major units during the period of operations. It should be noted at once, that the enormous destruction by aerial bombardment and fire has practically wiped out the Tokyo records; much of this material was reconstructed from memory.

The paucity of original orders, plans and unit journals, which are normally essential in the preparation of this type of record, most of which were lost or destroyed during field operations or bombing raids rendered the task of compilation most difficult; particularly distressing has been the complete lack of official strength reports, normal in AG or G-3 records. However, while many of the important orders, plans and estimates have been reconstructed from memory and therefore are not textually identical with the originals, they are believed to be generally accurate and reliable. Further data as a result of continuing research and the occasional recovery of hitherto unavailable original documents will be covered in the subsequent publication of "supplements" by the Demobilization Bureau.

* The action under this memorandum and incidental detailed instructions, which followed, were initiated by the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, GHQ, charged with responsibility for execution of the program under G.O. No. 9, SCAP, 2 October 1945.

In order to protect the interest of the United States, in the exploitation of Japanese Military Information, sub-paragraph 4 of G.O. No. 9 further provided for the screening of enemy documents and established inventories in Japanese Governmental Archives. Careful examination of the first records submitted by the Japanese Government in the summer of 1946 detected a misconception on the part of the Japanese as to what should be included in comparative histories; in a memorandum issued by Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, on 21 November 1946, the Imperial Japanese Government was directed to record the operations of the Japanese forces more extensively. The G-2 Section thereafter assumed coordination of the entire program, including the establishment of a small historical research section within the ATIS (Allied Translator and Interpreter Section.)

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
FAR EAST COMMAND
MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SECTION, GENERAL STAFF
Allied Translator and Interpreter Section

Translation Requested by G-2 Historical Section.

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Compiled 30 September 1947.

Southeast Area Naval Operations

Part II

Second Demobilization Bureau

General Progress of the Southeast Area Operations (from the
middle of February, 1943 to the early part of October,
1943)

Contents

- I. Battle situation of both the enemy and our forces immediately after our withdrawal operations from GUADALCANAL Island. ... P. 4
- II. Preparations for offensive operations in the New Guinea area. ... P. 5
- III. Preparations for defensive operations in the Central Solomons Area. ... P. 10
- IV. "I" Operations. ... P. 12
- V. Counteroffensive of the enemy and the counterattack operations of our forces at RENDOVA and NASSAU Bay. ... P. 18
- VI. Central Solomons Area operations. ... P. 26
- VII. New Guinea Operations (SLO - NASSAU Bay). ... P. 59

General Progress of the Southeast Area Operations (from
the middle of February, 1943 to the early part of
October, 1943)

- I. Battle situation of both the enemy and our forces immediately after our withdrawal operations from GUADALCANAL Island.

From the early part of February, immediately after the withdrawal from GUADALCANAL Island by our forces, the main ground strength of both the enemy and our forces, except for a part of those in the New Guinea Area, remained apart, and each was concentrating on building up combat strength and on preparations for the next operation.

However, the enemy air units intensified more and more their bombing of our rear key positions and their cutting off of our supply transportation. The Central Solomons, Lae, and Salamaua Areas, in particular, were subjected daily to fierce bombing by enemy aircraft so that it was difficult to reinforce our combat strength. During this period, the enemy strengthened its air fortifications around GUADALCANAL Island and BUNA, steadily brought in ground troop reinforcements, and converted this area into an impregnable fortress. While waiting for its aircraft to render powerless (TH our installations and forces on) its next invasion point, it showed its readiness to advance at any time.

In view of our painful battle experience in the GUADALCANAL Island operation, our fundamental policy was to bring the desired number of our troops into strategic key points before the enemy offensive, in spite of manifold difficulties and in event of an enemy offensive, to prevent our supply transportation from being hampered; to throw in our entire sea, land, and air strength at the first sign of an enemy landing to engage it in decisive combat; and to secure completely the strategic key positions linking the Central SOLOMONS, LAE, and SALAMAUA, which formed our national defense boundary on the southeastern front. Moreover we aimed to delay the enemy offensive, to speed up our combat preparations, and, again, in the event an offensive became possible, to be able to meet the requirements for the recapture of GUADALCANAL Island. We continued to concentrate our entire efforts on reinforcing our combat strength in the central Solomons, Lae, and Salamaua Areas and on bringing in supplies.

II. Preparations for offensive operations in the New Guinea Area.

A. Lae-Salamaua Area.

At the close of 1942, there was no hope of recovering the initiative in the Buna Area, and pressed with the necessity of strengthening the rear strategic points, LAE and SALAMAUA, the Okabe Detachment advanced to LAE on 7 Jan 43, and was barely able to prepare defensive positions in that area. Therefore, the decision was made to, first of all, withdraw the units operating in the Buna-Mambare Area to the Lae-Salamaua Area and consolidate the fighting front. The Buna Detachment (about 6000), under the command of the Yamagata Group, began to withdraw about 20 January. Although the withdrawal to the Lae-Salamaua Area was completed by the middle of March, the loss in strength during the withdrawal was about one-half. On the one hand, the Okabe Detachment engaged in the Wau attack from the middle of January in order to strengthen the strategic position in the Lae-Salamaua Area. However, after about a month's operation, it returned to its original positions without having attained the objective. During this period the combat strength of that detachment deteriorated greatly and the unit combat strength (BUTAI SENRYOKU) was lost. In this way, a great defect appeared in the military preparations for the strategic points, LAE and SALAMAUA, on the New Guinea Front; and so the rapid strengthening of military preparations in that area in view of the enemy offensive and determined construction of an operational base became the exigencies of the moment.

Accordingly, the 8 Area Army decided upon the drastic sea transportation of the main force of the 51 Division from RABAUL directly to LAE and decided to carry this out according to the following plan (called Operation No 81).

1. Troops to be transported.
 - a. Army 51 Division first echelon - Approximately 6,000.
 - b. Naval Land Combat Unit Replacement - Approximately 400.
2. Material to be transported.
 - a. Ammunition and provisions - Approximately 1500 tons.
 - b. Baggage belonging to 51 Division - Approximately 1,000 tons.

3. Transports. 8 ships (Special duty ship NOJIMA to carry the Naval Land Combat Unit).
4. Escort ships. 8 ships (Rear Admiral KIMURA, Shōfuku (木村 昌福) Commander, 3 Destroyer Squadron).
5. Air-escort. Army and Navy fighter planes scheduled to participate - Approximately 200 planes.
6. Scheduled course.
 - a. To depart from RABAUl at zero hour 1 March; convoy speed seven knots; to take a course just off the northern shores of NEW BRITAIN Island,
 - b. To disembark immediately upon arrival at Lae-Harborage, 1400 hours 3 March,
 - c. To complete debarkation before dawn of the next day, 4 March,
 - d. To depart from LAE, reverse the course and return to RABAUl.

Departing from RABAUl according to schedule on 1 March, (TN the convoy) was contacted by large type enemy aircraft in the afternoon, but there was no damage that day. Around 0800 hours the following day, (TN the convoy) was bombed by 10 large type enemy planes. KYOKUSEI Maru, carrying the 51 Division Commander, was hit, set afire and sunk within about an hour. (The personnel and materiel were transferred to two destroyers which went ahead and disembarked at LAE). In a renewed bombing attack by eight large type enemy aircraft on that afternoon, the NOJIMA suffered a near miss, but its fighting and cruising power were not impaired, and it continued on its mission.

The convoy and escort ships were making headway while being strafed and bombed from dawn of 3 March, by a few enemy planes when at 0755 hours, at a point about 30 nautical miles southeast of FINSCHAFEN, about 50 large type aircraft and about 40 fighter planes were discovered approaching to attack in several layer formations. At the time, our air escort numbered approximately 30 planes. From 0800 hours the convoy and escort ships were fiercely bombed by the enemy using new tactics, (a

method by which bombs carried on medium bombers were dropped at a low level, which caused them to skip on the surface of the water and strike hits on the broadside of ships, sinking them by the flooding of water through the holes (TH Made by the bombs), and one after another, the ships were damaged. By around 0510 hours tremendous losses, consisting of the setting afire of the entire group of transports, the sinking of two destroyers and the heavily damaging of another (TH destroyer), were suffered, so that Lae Transportation (TH operation) was completely shattered.

In the afternoon, a destroyer engaged in rescue operations radioed a message stating that it was being attacked by about 20 enemy aircraft, and no further word was heard from it. In the afternoon, the remaining four destroyers and the one destroyer which came to the rescue from KAVIENG searched for and rescued survivors. The search was ended at 0040 hours of 4 March and the ships headed north through the DAMPIER Strait, and separating, returned to KAVIENG and RABAUL.

Rescued personnel numbered approximately 3800 (of which 871 reached LAE). As a result of such a great blow as the loss of 2900 men, eight transports and five destroyers, the Lae Convoy Transportation (TH Operation) collapsed.

However, to leave the Lae-Salamaua situation in its present state would mean the abandoning of one wing controlling the DAMPIER Strait, the collapse of the strategic situation in the Southeast Area, and the yielding of an operational route for the proclaimed enemy Philippines invasion. Therefore, it was calculated that every measure be taken to strengthen LAE and SALAMAUA.

The decision to strengthen the strategic situation in the New Guinea Area was manifested by Imperial Headquarters on 25 March in Imperial Headquarters Navy Staff Section Directive No. 213. The essence of this tactical command policy was the combination of Army and Navy forces, the directing of the main operations of both forces primarily toward the New Guinea Area, and the speedy establishment of an operational base in the area concerned. It was considered inevitable that during this time the SOLOMON

Islands and the Bismarck Archipelago Areas had to be left as delaying action positions.

The following policies were decided upon in the field in accordance with the Central (TH High Command's) tactical command policy.

1. The reinforcement of forces by transports was hopeless without neutralizing enemy aircraft at their bases or taking drastic measures in regard to the strengthening of air defenses for convoys. Since these demands could not be met with the available air strength, both in quantity and quality, the use of transport ships necessarily had to be abandoned.

2. The likelihood of transportation by high speed ships and small craft being successful was small unless operated outside the 200 nautical mile range of enemy bases. Therefore, between RABAU-~~FINSCHAFEN~~ and RABAU-TULUFU high speed ships and small craft transportation was to be used. From these places to LAE, small boats and craft or land routes were to be utilized.

3. A chain of supply bases along the north and south shores of NEW BRITAIN and along the New Guinea coast was to be maintained along with the shipping of military personnel and materiel forward by motor sailboats and small craft.

4. Urgently needed and indispensable items were to be shipped directly to the Lae Area by high speed ships and small craft or submarines.

5. The main body of the land forces were to be sent forward by land after the construction of the Wewak-Madang-Lae Road.

In the above manner, the strengthening of the combat strength in the Lae Area was planned, but the sea transportation available could barely supply materiel needed for daily consumption. Moreover, the construction of the Madang-Lae Road did not progress as desired. In the end, without seeing any appreciable reinforcement of combat strength, the enemy landed at NASSAU Bay on 30 June.

B. Wewak-Madang Area.

In compliance with the Army's wish to strengthen the military preparations of the Wewak-Madang Area, it was decided on 19 Dec 42 to entrust

the transportation of the 20 Division and the 41 Division of the 15 Army, the main force of the Army Forces in the New Guinea Area, to the Navy. Thereafter, the Navy made the 9 Squadron (DAIKUSENTAI) Commander the transportation commander and steadily engaged in transportation preparations by high speed transports then available to the Navy. On 12 Jan 43 a convoy made up of eight naval transports, two light cruisers and five destroyers as escort ships accommodated 9,400 men of the main force of the 20 Division and departed from FUSAN. Entering the anchorage of WEWAK on the 19th, the main force of the 20 Division was successfully disembarked.

Following that a convoy forming three echelons, comprising of 11 Naval transports with two light cruisers and 10 destroyers as escort ships, accommodated the main force of the 41 Division at TSINGTAO on 12 February. Between 20 February and 28 February, (TH the convoy) arrived at WEWAK and the main force of the 41 Division numbering 13,700 persons was safely disembarked.

Following that, on 13 March six army transports, on 11 April six army transports, and on 28 May three army transports were escorted to the Hansa Area, and the remaining troops of both the 20 Division and the 41 Division, as well as a portion of the units directly attached to the 15 Army, were disembarked. By this transportation (TH Operation), the main force of the 15 Army was successfully disembarked.

C. Finschhafen Area.

Eight hundred army troops and 80 floats were disembarked from four destroyers at FINSCHHAFFEN on 30 March to strengthen the Finschhafen Area as a staging base for transportation to the Lae-Salamaua Area. Following that, reinforcements to the Finschhafen Area by four destroyers on 2 March and by two destroyers on 10 March were attempted, but these ended in failure due to interference by enemy aircraft.

Thus the preparations for offensive operations in the New Guinea Area did not develop as anticipated. In particular, the operational preparations in the Lae-Salamaua Area hardly progressed at all.

III. Preparations for defensive operations in the Central Solomons Area.

A. Munda and Kolombangara Areas.

To strengthen the defenses of the Central Solomon Islands Area, army units were brought in and land defenses were strengthened in conjunction with the Guadalcanal withdrawal operations. However, the plan was to replace the above forces with naval land combat units (THE KAIGUN-RIKUSENTAI) and withdraw them (THE presumably, army units) to the rear after completion of the Guadalcanal withdrawal operations. Moreover, the Navy was put in charge of the land defense of the Central SOLOMON Islands. This was clearly an excessive demand on the Navy, which lacked land combat forces: to take charge of the land defense in the Munda, Kolombangara and Rekata Areas which were strategic points in the SOLOMON Islands. However, the Army refused to dispatch its forces on the grounds that it was difficult to send supplies. Therefore, the Navy decided to bring in most of the 8 Combined Special Naval Landing Force, (THE DAIEACHI RENGO TOKUBETSU RIKUSENTAI), which was previously scheduled to reinforce GUADALCANAL Island, to the Munda and Kolombangara Sectors. From the latter part of January, forces were sent in successively, and in the first part of February the 8 Combined Special Naval Landing Force [Commanded by Rear Admiral OTA (太田)] took over the defense duties from the Munda Base Force [commanding officer, Col. INABUCHI (岩淵)]. The sending in of the 8 Combined Special Naval Landing Force was completed by the latter part of April.

Exchanges (THE of communication) were carried on, one after another, between the Southeast Area Fleet and the 8 Area Army in regard to the reinforcement of the army units. Eventually the central authorities (THE CHUO; presumably High Command in TOKYO) also came to approve the sending in of army forces after deliberations were held between army and navy commanders in the field. Consequently, it was decided to distribute approximately 5500 Army troops to the Munda and Kolombangara Sectors. The above troops were sent in successively from the first part of March and by the end of June the majority of them had been sent in.

With the sending in of army troops to the Central SOLOMONS, a headquarters to govern and command them became necessary. Therefore, on 2 May, the Southeast Detachment Headquarters was newly organized in accordance with the Imperial Headquarters Navy Staff Section Directive No 231. It (TN Headquarters) was placed under the command of the 8 Fleet Commander and was given the command over land forces in the guard area under the jurisdiction of the Navy in the Solomons Area. Immediately after the commander, Maj Gen SASAKI (佐々木), of the Southeast Detachment arrived in MUNDA in the first part of June, he was to unify and command the army and the naval land forces in land operations.

The land force in the Munda and Kolombangara Sectors in the latter part of June consisted of: Navy, approximately 5,000 men; Army about 5,500 men. Both were comparatively well equipped.

B. Rekata Area.

The seaplane base in the Rekata Area was within the distance where it could be defended by the small planes from the Munda Area, so the plan was to reduce the Rekata Garrison Force to the utmost; but in order to neutralize GUADALCANAL Island, one or two airfields were necessary on the SANTA ISABEL Island. Therefore, it was decided to station one combined special naval landing force, including a punitive force and a force to search for airfield (TN sites), on SANTA ISABEL Island. The 7 Combined Special Naval Landing Force (commanded by Rear Admiral KATSUNO (勝野)) was the one designated to be sent in around the middle of January. The sending in of this Combined Special Naval Landing Force was completed by the end of July. The entire force was about 3,400 and it defended mainly the area around REKATA. A part (TN of this force) searched the southern part of SANTA ISABEL for a place suitable to build an airfield but could not find one.

IV. "I" Operation.

A plan was made to reinforce troops in the Central Solomons and New Guinea Areas following the withdrawal from GUADALCANAL Island. However, due to harassment by enemy planes, a crushing defeat was suffered in the Battle of the BISMARCK Sea on 3 March in the New Guinea Area. In the Central Solomons Area shipping operations to MUNDA, KOLOMBANGARA, and BEKATA, were carried out under terrific threat from enemy planes. Furthermore, the enemy repeated its continuous air attacks on the Central SOLOMONS and the Lae and Salamaua Areas, thus interfering with our efforts to strengthen defenses.

In this way conditions became such that the deployment of troops and the progress of fortification construction in the front lines were tremendously delayed. The disparity between the enemy's force and ours became increasingly greater. In order to break down this disparity, it was extremely urgent that we neutralize the enemy air force at all costs and carry out the (TH transportation of) supplies under (TH the protection of) air supremacy as well as take resolute action to cut off enemy reinforcements and impede the building up of enemy combat strength.

At the same time the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet personally took charge and carried out a general mobilization of picked air force units under his command, and made plans to secure air supremacy in the Southeast Area and also to cut the enemy's supply route; therefore, the decision was made to carry out the "I" Operation in the early part of April, the summary of which is as follows:

A. Forces committed.

1. 3 Fleet.

96 fighter planes.

54 (light) bombers.

Several attack planes (TH torpedo bombers).

2. Land-based air force.

Approximately 90 fighter planes.

Approximately 20 (light) bombers.

Approximately 45 land-based attack planes (TH RIKUKŌ).

Several attack planes (TN torpedo bombers)

B. Period of the operation.

1. First period - 5 April to 10 April, Solomons Area (X Operation)
2. Second period - 11 April to 20 April, New Guinea Area (Y, Y1, Y2, Operations).

C. Plan of the distribution of forces.

Area	Land-based air force	3 Fleet
BUIH	32 fighter planes 27 (light) bombers 4 reconnaissance planes	9 (light) bombers
BALLALE		45 (light) bombers
BUKA	54 fighter planes	
RABAU		48 fighter planes
VUNAKANAU	36 land-based attack planes	
KAVIENG	36 land-based attack planes	
KAVIENG No 2		Several (light) bombers

D. Moving forward of the tactical command headquarters.

The headquarters of both the 3 Fleet and the Combined Fleet were moved forward to RABAU and they directed their operations from that point.

E. Progress.

1. X Attack (air attack on shipping anchored at GUADALCANAL).

Results of reconnaissance carried out in the Guadalcanal Area up to 0900 hours on the 7th confirmed the fact that there were four cruisers, eight destroyers, and 14 transports anchored there. A mass air attack was carried out with 117 fighter planes and 71 carrier-borne bombers. Resistance offered by ten or so enemy Grummans and P35's was beaten down and the attack on shipping was carried out. Among our planes, which had inflicted moderate to heavy damage on the majority of ships, 21 went down in suicide attacks or failed to return.

2. Y2 Attack (attack on enemy shipping in ORO Bay).

On the 11th, enemy transports were observed assembling in the Oro Bay Area. The attack on enemy shipping outside HANE* Bay and ORO Bay

was carried out (TH * indicates exact transliteration of the KANA) with 72 fighter planes and 22 carrier-borne bombers. Two medium transports, one destroyer, and one small transport were sunk, and 21 enemy planes were shot down. Six of our planes went down in suicide attacks or failed to return.

The plan to utilize destroyers as transports to the Tuluva and Finschhafen Areas was put into effect during this attack. The Tuluva Transport Operation was successfully completed on the 10th and 13th.

3. Y Attack (attack on the Port Moresby Base.)

A reconnaissance made of the Port Moresby Base up to 0700 hours on the 12th revealed that there were 55 large planes and 80 small planes at their No 2 to No 6 airfields. Furthermore, there were one large transport and two medium transports anchored there.

Our large mass formation consisting of 43 medium attack planes (TH CHUKŌ) from the Attack Unit, 76 fighter planes from the Close Cover Unit, and 55 fighter planes from the Interceptor Unit, a total of 174 planes, swooped down on the airfields and anchorages. No 2, No 5, and No 6 Airfields were blanketed with our bombs and great explosions or fires were started in 11 places. In addition, half of the 40 to 50 canvas shelters at No 6 airfield were destroyed. We shot down 28 enemy planes and sank one transport. Five of our planes went down in suicide attacks in this great victory.

4. Y1 attack (Attack on shipping in the Rabi Area.)

The first and second reconnaissance carried out on the morning of the 14th revealed that there were 10 large transports, and four medium transports anchored at MILNE Bay. One destroyer was reported moving north through KOTSUSHIEN Channel (TH Presumably, GOSCHEN Strait) and 11 large planes and 40 fighter planes were found on the airfields to the east and west of RABI. We made a surprise attack with 149 fighter planes and 37 land-based attack planes. We either sank or inflicted heavy damage on five large transports, four medium transports and one small transport. In this great victory, 44 of their planes were shot down. Ten of our planes went down in suicide attacks or failed to return.

F. Completion of I Operation.

On the 16th the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet announced the completion of the "I" Operation. He ordered carrier~~s~~planes of the 3 Fleet and base personnel to rejoin their parent units.

G. Combined results.

Participating Forces	Enemy Losses				Our Losses		
	Ships		Aircraft		Others	Planes downed in suicide attacks and those which failed to return.	Planes heavily damaged and those making forced landings.
	Sunk	Heavily damaged	Shot down	Destroyed on ground			
80 land-based attack planes 487 fighters planes 115 (light) bombers Total 682 (Force employed in attack and reconnaissance).	1 cruiser 2 destroyers 25 transports	2 transports Several sea trucks	134 planes (including 39 probables)	Several large planes, between 10 and some odd small planes.	Moresby Airfield heavy damage in three places. Rabi Airfield heavy damage in one place	8 land-based attack planes 17 fighter planes 17 (light) bombers Total 42	5 land-based attack planes 2 fighter planes Total 7

H. Inspection tour of BUIN by Adm. YAMAMOTO (山本).

The Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet, YAMAMOTO, who had achieved a great victory by carrying out repeated effective attacks against enemy shipping and aircraft in the "I" Operation, planned to make an inspection tour of BUIN for the purpose of encouraging front line troops. On 18 March he, accompanied by the Chief of Staff and staff members, departed RABAU at 0900 hours on two medium attack planes escorted by nine fighter planes. While proceeding toward BUIN they were attacked by 30 some odd enemy planes over the waters west of BUIN. The plane carrying Commander-in-Chief YAMAMOTO fell in the jungles north of BUIN and the Chief of Staff's plane fell into the sea. This disaster resulted in the death of the Commander-in-Chief, severe injuries to the Chief of Staff, and many casualties among the staff members. This loss of Adm. YAMAMOTO, who was held in veneration by all army and navy officers and men, dealt an almost unbearable blow to the morale of all the military forces. Vice Admiral KONDO (近藤), who was second in command, took temporary command of the Combined Fleet. However, Adm. KOGA, Mineichi (古賀峯一), Commander of the China Area Fleet, was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet. On the 25th he took over the command of the Combined Fleet.

V. Counteroffensive of the enemy and the counterattack operations of our forces at RENDOVA and NASSAU Bay.

A. The enemy situation prior to the launching of the counter-offensive.

1. The enemy, in launching its second counteroffensive in the Southeast Area, directed its attack toward RENDOVA and NASSAU Bay in the latter part of June. However, an offensive prior to these operations was started in the ALIUTIAN Islands on 12 May, landing on ATTU Island on the same day. As this enemy offensive bore a direct threat to our homeland, operations in the Southeast Area were markedly curtailed. The Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet transferred about 20 percent of the forces in the course of being assigned or available for assignment in the Southeast Area to the Northeast Area and he, himself, was transferred to TOKYO Bay from TRUK Island on 22 May, in preparation for operations both in the Southern Area and the Northern Area.

2. The enemy made a landing on RUSSEL Island on 21 May, hastily constructed an advance airfield and actively employed this field from the early part of May, mainly to strengthen its control of the air with small aircraft around MUNDA, KOLONBANGARA and southern BOUGAINVILLE. It also appeared that RUSSEL Island was actively used as a base for small-type ships and craft. On the other hand, in NEW GUINEA the enemy maintained a group of airbases in BUNA and WAU Areas and the OWEN STANLEY Range, gained control of the air in the Lae, Salamaua and Finschhafen Areas and completely severed our supply lines to those areas. The following is a summary of enemy air raids.

Date	Area	Central SOLOMONS	LAE, SALAMAUA Areas
March		700 planes	270 planes
April		500 planes	240 "
May		580 "	700 "
June		920 "	490 "

3. Enemy surface units repeatedly bombarded our air bases and supply installations, etc, in the Munda, Kolombangara and Shortland Areas. However, the damage inflicted by the surface units was slight. Enemy bombardment (TN may be summarized) as follows:

Date	Place of Bombardment	Strength	Damage
5 March	KOLOMBANGARA	3-4 cruisers 3-4 destroyers	None in particular
5 March	MUNDA	2 cruisers 5 destroyers	1,000 rounds of 8 cm shells destroyed by fire, one searchlight damaged; casualties of personnel-slight.
12 March	MUNDA, KOLOMBANGARA	Unknown	Unknown
12 May	KOLOMBANGARA	2 cruisers 3 destroyers	None
20 June	MUNDA	Unknown	Unknown
"	KOLOMBANGARA	Unknown	"
"	BUN, SHORTLAND	Unknown	"
29 June	KOLOMBANGARA	2 destroyers	None
30 June	Shortland Seaplane Base, Ballale Air Base	1 cruiser 1 destroyer	None Mines laid at the southern mouth of SHORTLAND.

4. The number of transport ships frequenting GUADALCANAL Island in the Solomons Area and MILNE Bay in the New Guinea Area was great. Airfields in these areas were thoroughly maintained and it was estimated that a great amount of arms and war materiel had been accumulated. Airbases No 1 to No 9 on GUADALCANAL Island were especially well kept up; a maximum of 500 aircraft were counted at times.

B. Our situation.

1. Because of the enemy attack on ATTU Island on 12 May, it seemed that attention was concentrated on the Northern Area Operation temporarily and that the Southeastern Area was left to the responsibility of the forces in that area. However, spurred by the concentration of enemy troops and by their active operations in the Southeastern Area from about the middle of June, a study to regain the initiative was conducted at the Imperial Headquarters by, first of all, an active offensive operation in the NEW GUINEA Area. This operation was concerned with the seizure of a group of bases on the OWEN STANLEY Range which was a direct obstacle to the operations in the NEW GUINEA Area, particularly to the transportation operations. In addition, it was concerned with drawing the enemy into a tropical jungle area to corner them by jungle warfare at which we were adept and to which they were not accustomed. From the Navy, one parachute unit (YOKO ITTOKU) (TN presumably YOKOSUKA 1 Special Naval Landing Force) and a part of the base air force was to co-operate with the army operation.

The study and preparations for this operation were pushed forward in the field from the latter part of June. However, because of the extreme difficulty of constructing a road necessary for assault and equal difficulty in the transportation of provisions to the forward areas, the realization of this operation was regarded to be quite a task, and its execution before the latter part of August was considered impossible. However, due to the enemy's counteroffensive at the end of June, this operation was automatically cancelled.

2. Considerable results were obtained in the Central and southern Solomons Area by enticing small enemy planes into combats for aerial supremacy from the early part of June to the latter part of the same month.

However, it was difficult to prevent completely the enemy planes from raiding the Munda and Kolombangara Areas. Nevertheless, unprecedented results were achieved in these aerial supremacy combats.

3. Troop disposition in the Southeast Area on 30 June (the beginning of the enemy counteroffensive at RENDOVA and NASSAU Bay). After withdrawal from GUADALCANAL Island, our forces, which were steadily reinforcing their military strength by a diversion of troops in the Southeastern Area, had, more or less, the following troop disposition at the time when the enemy opened the second phase of its counteroffensive in the Southeastern Area on 30 June.

a. Disposition of land forces.

Area	Place	Army Force	Naval Force	Airfield	Remarks
Central SOLOMONS	MUNDA	Southeast Detachment Headquarters; 229 Regiment.	3 Combined Special Naval Landing Force Headquarters; Kure 6 Special Naval Landing Force.	1	Total Army and Naval strength - approximately 10,500.
	KOLOMBANGARA	13 Regiment	Yokosuka 7 Special Naval Landing Force	1	
	REKATA	1 infantry battalion	7 Combined Special Naval Landing Force Headquarters; Kure 7 Special Naval Landing Force	1 seaplane base	Total Army and Naval strength - approximately 3,400
Northern SOLOMONS	BSIN	4 infantry battalions; 1 medium artillery battalion.	1 Base Unit Headquarters; Sasebo 6 Special Naval Landing Force.	2	Central base for units having small naval aircraft.
	BALLALE		Some troops for anti-aircraft defense construction.	1	
	BUKA	1 cavalry regiment; 1 mountain artillery battery.	Detachment of Sasebo 6 Special Naval Landing Force.	1	
	KIETA	1 infantry battalion; 1 mountain artillery battery		None	
NEW IRELAND	KAVIENG		53 Guard Unit	2	

a. Disposition of land forces. (contd)

Area	Place	Army Force	Naval Force	Airfield	Remarks
NEW BRITAIN	RABAUL	8 Anti-aircraft Headquarters and its attached units; 38 Division Headquarters	Southeast Area Fleet Headquarters; 8 Fleet Headquarters; 8 Base Unit Headquarters; Units attached to the Southeast Area Fleet	3	The main base for Southeast Area Operations.
	TULUVU	2 infantry battalions; also forces waiting in readiness to move forward to NEW GUINEA.	Detachment of the 81 Guard Unit.	1	
	SURUMI	1 infantry battalion	Detachment of the 81 guard unit	1	
NEW GUINEA	LAE	51 Division Headquarters	7 Base Unit Headquarters; 82 Guard Unit.	1	Total army and naval strength - approximately 15,000 (of these 5,000 available for combat)
	SALAMAUA	2 infantry battalions?	Sasebo 5 Special Naval Landing Force	1	
	FINSCHHAFFEN	1 Shipping Group Headquarters	Detachment of Sasebo; 5 Special Naval Landing Force	None	
	WADANG	18 Army Headquarters; 20 Division Headquarters		1	Total army and naval strength - approximately 20,000
	WEWAK	41 Division Headquarters	2 Special Base Unit Headquarters	1	Total army and naval strength - approximately 20,000

b. Naval force.

The 8 Fleet was engaged in operations mainly with the Shortland Area as its base, while a part of the Combined Fleet (the 2 Fleet) with its base at TRUK was assisting in the Southeast Area operations.

c. Air forces.

Forces built around the 11 Air Fleet as their nucleus: Approximately 300 planes (deployed principally on the BISMARCK Archipelago and in the Northern SOLOMONS Area).

Air forces directly attached to the 8 Area Army: Approximately 180 planes, (deployed principally in the NEW GUINEA area).

C. Enemy landings and our counter attacks.

From early morning of 30 June, strong enemy forces started to land simultaneously at RENDOVA, NASSAU Bay, WICKHAM, WOODLARK, and VIRU. We carried out naval and air counterattacks in the New Georgia Area, reinforced army troops, carried through supplies to meet daily consumption, and continued our fierce counterattacks over a long period. However, we were overwhelmed by the enemy's material and military strength, and finally on 14 August, had to inaugurate the withdrawal of our forces from the Munda Area to KOLOMBANGARA Island. On the following day, 15 August, the enemy landed on VELLA LAVELLA Island, and our army in the New Georgia Area became completely isolated from its own forces to the rear.

As soon as the Munda area operations became critical in the middle of August Imperial Headquarters concluded that there was no way to recover the initiative, and on 13 August issued Imperial Headquarters Navy Staff Section Directive No 267 converting the operations of the central Solomons area into a delaying action, and directing them to withdraw to the rear strategic line between the latter part of September and the first part of October.

The army and the navy forces in the field effected the KOLOMBANGARA Plan of Withdrawal between 27 September and 4 October through concerted operations and withdrew their forces to BOUGAINVILLE Island with about 80 percent success.

Before the enemy attack, the concentration of strength on the Lae and the Salamaua Areas could not be effected as desired. There was a total strength of about 15,000 which included both army and navy personnel and a large number of sick and weak persons who had been withdrawn from the Buna Area. Out of the above strength, there were less than 5,000 who were fit for battle. Moreover, the reinforcement of troops, the replenishment of supplies, and naval and air counterattacks were practically impossible because of enemy interference and also because of operations in the central SOLOMONS. Consequently, since the brave struggle rested upon the shoulders of those stationed there without the reinforcement of a single soldier, their fall was only a matter of time. Therefore, on 30 August Imperial Headquarters decided as per Imperial Headquarters Navy Staff Section Directive No 271 to withdraw the forces in the above area to the Dampier Strait area.

On 4 September the enemy landed in POPOI* (TH Presumably, HOPOI) and on 5 September enemy paratroopers captured the region around the Madzab Airfield so that our forces in the Lae and Salamaua Areas became surrounded on three sides. As the war situation grew worse, our troops in the above areas began to withdraw on 12 September to the Sie Area, battling all the way with the mud, mountains, cold and humidity. On the 22nd, the enemy landed anew in FINSCHHAFEN and our strategic position grew suddenly worse. The difficulty of our withdrawal through the jungles can be clearly seen by the fact that our losses in military strength rose to approximately 80 per cent. A summary of the course of operations in the central SOLOMONS and the Lae and Salamaua Areas will be given again under different headings.

VI Central Solomons Area Operations

A. Enemy Landing on RENDOVA

Judging from the infiltration of enemy forces into the Gatokai Island and Vangunu Island Areas, the active movements of enemy ships and aircraft in the southern Solomons Area, and from the radio intelligence of the latter part of June, it was concluded that the enemy counter-offensive was drawing near. Therefore, in the latter part of June, the air attack forces were first assembled in the Buin Area and deployed for interception. Special attention was given to reconnaissance and to the security of the Central Solomons area, but after the 26th the enemy movements slowed down somewhat. It was judged that recent enemy movements had bearing on a large scale reinforcement operation in the Guadalcanal Area, and consequently, the deployment for interception by the air units was temporarily called off.

At midnight on the 29th submarine HQ-103 discovered over seven enemy silhouettes while patrolling south of GATUKAI Island. Following this, KOLOMBANGARA Island was attacked by two destroyers, and before dawn of the 30th the airfield on SHORTLAND and BALLALE Islands were also shelled. Moreover, the garrison force on RENDOVA Island reported to have sighted silhouettes of enemy ships in RENDOVA Bay.

Thus, the situation became more critical and finally at 0530 hours on the 30th a large enemy force started to land on the northern coast of RENDOVA. Coinciding with this landing, the enemy landed a part of its forces on VIRU and WICKHAM and also at the same time conducted landings at NASSAU Bay and on WOODLARK Island in the New Guinea Area.

The next enemy counter-offensive was estimated in various ways and a series of measures was taken (TN to meet the situation). However, we hardly anticipated that they (TN the enemy) would first occupy the small islands across (TN from MUNDA) at the time of the invasion of MUNDA and that they would proceed with their operations under the cover of heavy guns (TN on those islands). Therefore, the landing on RENDOVA Island completely baffled our forces.

The landing operation method, too, showed signs of noticeable progress since the time of the Guadalcanal Island operations. They adopted tactics

wherein the Army, Navy and Air Forces closely co-operated and completely neutralized not only our positions but also the Munda and Kolombangara Airfields and all the while evaded the counterattacks of our ground forces. Moreover, they first landed on RENDOVA Island, and thus captured a sound operational key point which was not only located very near the main landing point but also most conveniently situated for the next attack; thereafter they advanced toward the main landing point.

The enemy, having profited from the experience of the night attacks by our surface forces off GUADALCANAL Island, adopted tactics of rapid and hasty disembarkation during the day hours when they landed on RENDOVA Island. The convoy returned promptly to the rear base during the day hours and only surface forces for security measures were left during the night. The speedy disembarkation of the enemy was absolutely miraculous. The convoy sailed after completing debarkation within two and a half hours after arrival in port. Almost superhuman speed in the construction of positions was displayed, as the enemy began firing heavy guns within 27 hours after the entry of the convoy into port.

B. Our counterattack measures for the time being.

1. In connection with the simultaneous counteroffensives of the enemy in the SOLOMONS and NEW GUINEA, our basic policy on counterattack operations was to secure the SOLOMONS and to hold out on NEW GUINEA. For the time being, it was decided to concentrate and use the greater part of the decisive naval and air strength in the Solomons Area.

2. On the front facing the enemy counteroffensive, the Navy was entrusted mainly with the land and sea defenses in the Central Solomons Area. In the New Guinea Area the Army was in charge of the land (TN defense) and the Navy in charge of the sea (TN defense). As a rule, the Navy was responsible for the air operations in the Solomons Area, while the Army was in charge mainly of the air operations in the New Guinea Area. However, at the time of the enemy counteroffensive, it was decided at the beginning to withdraw the majority of the Army Air Force's attack strength to the Solomons area in compliance with the decision to secure the SOLOMONS.

3. At that time our Naval strength was scattered in the Truk, Rabaul, Buka and Buin Areas either for maintenance or for transport duty. However, it was to carry out anchorage raiding operations (TN TOTSUNYUSAKUSEN; an

operation whereby surface craft enter enemy anchorages, damage transports etc and then escape) with those ships and smaller craft readily available for debauchment, and the remaining forces were to quickly gather in the Rabaul area to gradually prepare for counterattacks.

4. It was decided to send forward immediately to the Southeast Area the air strength which was either waiting in readiness or preparing for debauchment in the homeland area, and also to concentrate in the Southeast area the submarines presently operating or being serviced in the Truk Area. Furthermore, of the 2 Fleet, one cruiser and four destroyers were (TH sent) as reinforcements to the Southeast Area.

5. Strength of the Southeast Area Fleet available for the decisive engagement at the time of enemy landings. .

a. Air strength

53 Land-based attack planes.

83 Fighter planes

13 Bombers (light)

20 Reconnaissance seaplanes

b. Naval strength

1 Cruiser

8 Destroyers

8 Submarines

c. Our "Blitzkrieg" Attack

The enemy landings at VIRU and WICKHAM were dealt with by our forces there. Orders to withdraw to the Munda Area were given at an opportune time and at the same time all the counterattacking forces were concentrated on the enemy that landed on RENDOVA.

1. Air attacks

On the 30th plans were made to neutralize enemy air power in the Rendova Area and to attack enemy convoys. Our naval air units, employing 72 fighter planes, 26 medium attack planes, and 8 carrier-borne bombers, carried out a daylight attack on the Rendova Area, making two attacks in the morning and one in the afternoon. While engaging over a hundred enemy planes in daring air combat, we successfully attacked the enemy convoy on two occasions. Enemy losses were reported at eight transports either set afire or severely damaged, two destroyers and one cruiser sunk, two destroyers

set afire and 50 planes shot down. Our losses included 17 medium attack planes and 13 fighter planes which failed to return. Due to tenacious interference by enemy fighter planes, a decisive blow could not be struck against the enemy landing convoy.

2. Counterattack by surface units.

The commander of the 3 Destroyer Squadron, acting under orders, hastily assembled at SHORTLAND destroyers in the Rabaul area. On the night of 30 June he attempted to raid the enemy's landing point with the entire force of available destroyers. However, this force was not able to assemble as desired. As it turned out, the raid was executed that night with five destroyers under the commander of the 11 Destroyer Division.

The raiding force moved southward from the west of VELLA LAVELLA. At about 0130 hours 1 July, they arrived off the coast of RENDOVA. However, due to a squall, visibility became limited and they were unable to make contact with the enemy. Moreover, they were unable to reach the enemy's debarkation point, and withdrew without accomplishing anything.

3. Combat by ground forces.

There was a garrison unit of approximately 140 men on RENDOVA. However, after reporting that the enemy was attacking, all communication with the unit was cut off and the situation in that locality was unknown.

In this way the first day of the enemy landing passed without our force being able to cause serious damage to the enemy. It ended by permitting the enemy to establish a firm foothold for their landings. The enemy continued to pour convoys into the anchorage at RENDOVA on the second day of the landing. They were able to successfully complete their landing on the second day while receiving only one counterattack from our small force of planes.

D. Raid on RENDOVA by the Army-Navy Combined Air Attack Force, and the second anchorage raiding operation by the naval force.

1. On the morning of the 2 July, 24 heavy bombers and 24 fighter planes of the army, combined with 20 navy fighter planes to storm RENDOVA and to bomb the landing point. They reported great explosions at two places and the sinking of two small transports. However, considered damage was sustained by the army heavy bombers. On the morning of the 4th, 17 heavy bombers and 17 fighter planes of the Army joined with 49 navy fighter planes for a second attack on the enemy convoy at RENDOVA. Enemy

losses reported included the sinking of five transports and many small craft, setting fire to one point in the dump area, and the shooting down of 23 enemy planes. However, 11 of our planes failed to return or made forced landings.

The Army decided to discontinue air assault operations as a result of mounting casualties suffered in the two air assaults.

2. The Surface Force (YUBARI and nine destroyers), which received support from seaplane scouting (TN units), split up into two forces and raided the anchorage at RENDOVA at 0000 hours on the 3rd. They shelled the enemy's debarkation point for approximately 10 minutes and caused fires to break out. On their return trip they engaged an enemy motor torpedo boat unit and sank one of its craft.

3. On the 2nd the enemy began a bombardment of the Munda Sector with heavy artillery which it had landed at RENDOVA. On the 3rd it began a new landing on REBIANA* (TN Presumably ROVIANA) Island. It appeared that it had completed its landing on the 4th. It began bombardment of MUNDA with heavy artillery on RUBIANA* Island.

The air supremacy of the enemy air forces was complete and the bombing of our positions was intensive. The results of our feeler counter-attacks against such a superior enemy were questionable.

E. Army and Navy operational agreement; the opening of emergency transport operations; and the moving forward of the higher headquarters.

1. Operational agreement between the S Area Army and the Southeast Area Fleet were established on the 4th. The essential points were as follows:

a. The main operation was to be directed against the Central SOLOMONS; this area was to be secured.

b. The defenses in the New Georgia Area were to be immediately strengthened.

c. The New Guinea Area was to be held by local units in that area.

d. The Army was to send immediately approximately 4,000 men to the Central SOLOMONS as reinforcements. Naval vessels were to be used principally for their transportation.

2. Initial transportation of soldiers from SHORLAND to KOLMBANGARA was being carried out by four destroyers on the 4th when a chance engagement

was staged in the vicinity of KOLOMBANGARA at midnight of the same day with four enemy cruisers and other ships. An enemy cruiser and destroyer were sunk. However, due to interference by the enemy surface force, we were not able to attain our landing objective, and returned to SHORTLAND. Imperial Headquarters called this the 4 June Night Battle of KULA Gulf.

The enemy, on the other hand, again stepped up its offensive operations. On the 4th it began landings at RAISU* (TE Presumably RICE) Bay. Next, on the 5th, it attempted to make a landing at BAIROKO; however, it was repulsed by our garrison force in the Bairoko Area.

In view of the enemy's operational development, the situation required the immediate reinforcing of our forces in the Central SOLOMONS.

3. On the 5th, our second troop transport operation to KOLOMBANGARA was carried out under the following plan:

Support Unit

Commander: Commander of 3 Destroyer Squadron

Strength: Three destroyers

First Transport Unit

Commander: Ship Commander of 30 Destroyer Division

Strength: Three destroyers.

Second Transport Unit

Commander: Ship Commander of 11 Destroyer Division

Strength: Four destroyers.

In this transport operation also, in the waters northeast of KOLOMBANGARA, opposition was encountered from an enemy cruiser and several destroyers at midnight on the 5th, and the transport operation had to be made under pressure. The 1 Transport unit, for the most part, successfully accomplished its landing. However, the 2 Transport unit engaged in action with the enemy. One destroyer ran aground on the eastern shore of KOLOMBANGARA Island (The majority of the troops debarked and proceeded to their base by land). Two of the destroyers abandoned plans for landing. The remaining destroyer was the only one which was able to enter the

anchorage and successfully complete debarkation. The ARAZUKI, flagship of the Support Unit, was sunk during this engagement with the enemy, and one destroyer was damaged. However, we sank one enemy cruiser; and an enemy cruiser and three destroyers were either set afire or severely damaged. We succeeded in landing 550 troops. Imperial Headquarters called this night battle, the 6 July Night Battle of KULA Gulf.

4. The Commander of the Southeast Area Fleet, on the 6 July transferred the Admiral's Flag from RABAU to BUIN in order to alter the grave situation and to raise the morale of all the forces. Prior to this, on the 5th, the Commander of the 8 Fleet had advanced to SHORTLAND on board the CHOKAI. Such being the case, the naval units operating in the Southeast Area put forth their full efforts and advanced to the Buin and Shortland Areas which indicated their resolute determination to recapture MUNDA.

F. General enemy situation and our counter measures of 7 July.

1. On 4 July, the enemy, occupying RUBIANA* Island three days after the landing on RENDOVA, landed to the east and to the west of the Munda Airfield, and at Port ENOGAI and Rice Bay located on the eastern shore of KULA Gulf. The enemy further executed a pincers movement from the north and the south on the Munda Sector, a strategic point on NEW GEORGIA Island, and proceeded to cut off our sea transport route to this sector. Furthermore, enemy aircraft attacks on our positions in the Munda and Kolombangara areas became intense. Consequently, the fate of the Munda Sector became a matter of time but the heaviest blow to our side was the blockade of KULA Gulf.

2. The plan of naval units in the area to alter the (TH unfavorable situation of the) operations in the Central Solomons Area:

a. NEW GEORGIA, a key outpost for BOUGAINVILLE Island, to be secured at all costs.

b. Reinforcement of approximately one division of army troops to be requested for the New Georgia Area under the above-mentioned plan. The plan for the deployment of troops was as follows:

RICE Bay area - Approximately 2,000 men.

Sector East (Aikawa (相川) Area) of Munda Airfield -
3,000 men.

Rubiana* Area - 2,000 men

To be used as an attack force - 4,000 men

c. Military preparations for the New Guinea Area would be strengthened if the New Georgia Area could be defended.

3. The opinion of the 8 Area Army in regard to the foregoing navy plan.

a. Army central authorities had no intention of reinforcing the New Georgia Area.

b. The 8 Area Army harbored doubts that BOUGAINVILLE Island could be secured; furthermore, confidence to alter the war situation in the New Guinea Area was completely lacking.

c. The reinforcement of approximately one division to strengthen the defense of BOUGAINVILLE Island was considered.

4. The above plan did not progress as desired because of the differences in opinions as stated in the foregoing between the Army and Navy in the local area concerning the Central Solomons operations.

G. Reinforcements to the Southeast Area.

1. Air Strength.

The following reinforcements to the area were made on 2 July,

a. Planes from aircraft carrier RYUHO - 25 fighter planes and 28 (TN light) bombers.

b. Land-based air power. (21 Air Flotilla) - 20 fighter planes, 12 land-based attack planes, and 2 reconnaissance planes.

2. Submarine strength - approximately eight submarines (Possible to concentrate the entire strength by the latter part of July.

3. Naval strength.

a. 30 June - one cruiser and three destroyers.

b. 7 July - one cruiser and three destroyers.

c. 8 July - 7 Cruiser Division (2 cruisers).

4. Gradual commitment of troops, as shown above, could not regain the initiative in the combat situation in the central Solomons area and since the replacements could barely offset the losses, the difference in strength of our forces and the enemy's remained as great as ever.

H. Emergency reinforcement of land forces and the moving forward of the 13 Regiment to BAIROKO.

1. The Commander of the 8 Fleet, laying special importance on regaining the initiative in the combat situation in the vicinity of KULA Gulf, assumed direct command of the flagship, CHOKAI, two cruisers and four destroyers to transport land forces to reinforce the above vicinity. They departed from SHORTLAND at 1700 hours of the 9th and succeeded in landing 1,200 troops on KOLOMBANGARA at midnight of the same day.

2. The 13 Infantry Regiment (Strength - 1,300 troops), which was defending KOLOMBANGARA, completed its movement to BAIROKO by small craft on the evening of the 9th. Following this, the 1,200 troops that landed on KOLOMBANGARA on the evening of the 9th also moved forward to BAIROKO on the 10th and joined with the 13 Infantry Regiment on the 11th.

3. The emergency transport of land troops on 12 July. On the 12th, one light cruiser and five destroyers under the command of the 2 Destroyer Squadron Commander, escorting four destroyers that were transporting 1,200 troops sortied from SHORTLAND. While maneuvering through the sea north of KOLOMBANGARA, they engaged four enemy cruisers and several destroyers in the sea northeast of KOLOMBANGARA at midnight of the same day. Although one (TN enemy) ship was sunk and another set afire, one of our ships, the JINTSU was sunk. While the support unit was engaged in battle the transport unit departing from VELLA Gulf completed disembarkation on KOLOMBANGARA and returned safely. The Imperial Headquarters designated this night battle as the Night Battle of 12 July off the Coast of KOLOMBANGARA.

I. Situation of land operations during the middle of July and the co-operation of the air units in the land fighting.

1. In the early part of July, the enemy, who readied itself to launch a pincers attack on the Munda area from the north and the south,

gradually increased its military strength and attacked BAIROKO, the main body advancing from the east of the Munda Airfield and a part from Rice Bay and Enogai Areas. On our side, the main body of the 5 Combined Special Naval Landing Force, together with a greater part of the Southeast Detachment, guarded the Munda Airfield Sector, while the Kure 6 Special Naval Landing Force defended the Rice Bay Area. On 10 July the Kure 6 Special Naval Landing Force Area was reinforced by a part of the 13 Regiment, which came from KOLOMBANGARA Island, and the Munda Sector was reinforced by the greater part of this regiment. In the latter sector, (TN our force) engaged the enemy in fierce combat in the vicinity of AIKAWA on several occasions and inflicted heavy losses on them. However, our losses, too, mounted, and gradually it became necessary to reduce our front.

On 14 July, the army force guarding the Munda Sector, the main body of the crack 229 Regiment, launched a counteroffensive and routed the enemy to the AIKAWA Area. However, on 17 July, the last daring organized fighting, where even counter-landings were made near the mouth of the AIKAWA River, was being carried out. In the Rice and Enogai Areas, the 14-centimeters batteries of ENOGAI opposed the enemy landings effectively, and our side was carrying on admirably; but on 11 July these batteries fell into enemy hands and our force in that area gradually withdrew to BAIROKO. Thus, in the Munda and Bairoko areas, our forces were overwhelmed by the superiority of the enemy land units and by the over-all might of their concerted sea and air action in support of the land fighting.

The final stage of organized resistance was approaching. a force of approximately 170 men came from the Viru Area by the overland route and joined the main body of our force in the sector north of MUNDA on the 15th.

2. Together with the growing gravity of the war situation in the Solomons area, our air force concentrated its entire strength and engaged in such missions as neutralizing enemy air supremacy of the skies over MUNDA, launching night raids on the enemy's rear bases to confuse them, attacking supply dumps at landing points, protecting our reinforcing

units, and cutting off the enemy's reinforcements. In particular, our attack on enemy fighter planes steadily obtained good results, but it was extremely difficult to neutralize the enemy air force which was noticeably superior both in number and replacement strength. Conversely, it came to a point where the enemy conducted mass raids on the Buin Area, which was our central base for small-type planes, for the purpose of destroying our air strength and nullifying this base. Their raids on BUIN on the 17th and 18th, with approximately 160 and 150 planes respectively, clearly indicated their plan. However, our air force's counterattacks over the base were fierce, and 87 enemy planes were shot down on the aforementioned two days. Moreover, our air force displayed such skill that less than 10 of our planes failed to return, and the enemy's aim to destroy our base was completely thwarted.

J. Operation to destroy the enemy fleet in KULA Gulf.

1. For some time our transportation to KOLOMBANGARA Island had been impeded at frequent intervals by the enemy naval units. Therefore, operational transportation did not make headway according to our desires. Thus, setting the date for the 19th, first, the destruction of the enemy naval strength in the Kula Gulf area and, together with this action, the transportation of equipment, ammunition, and approximately 300 men to KOLOMBANGARA Island by utilizing three destroyers, was to be attempted by joint action of the entire Southeast Area surface strength.

2. In this operation, a part of the surface force (1 Carrier Division, 8 Squadron, 10 Squadron, MOGAMI, UYODO, HISSHIN, and 1 destroyer), which had been alerted for the northeast operation, was to start out from the INLAND Sea on 10 July and advance to TRUK. Thus, it became possible for our surface force in the Central and South PACIFIC to operate more flexibly, and, even in the Southeast Area, to conduct aggressive operations.

3. Participating strength.

Commander of

Commander

Night action force:

7 Squadron (2 cruisers), CHOKAI 3 Destroyer Squadron (1 light cruiser, 6 destroyers)

7 Torpedos /

2000000000

Transport unit: 3 destroyers

Air force: approximately 10 reconnaissance
seaplanes.

4. Progress. The night action force and the transport unit sallied forth from RABAU and SHORTLAND respectively and joined forces at 1730 hours on the 19th in the BOUGAINVILLE Strait. At midnight of the same day, the night action force and the transport unit separated in the waters northwest of VELLA LAVELLA Island. The night action force sortied into the northern waters off KOLOMBANGARA Island while the transport unit steamed south through the VELLA Gulf.

At a little past twelve midnight, the night action force engaged in combat with an enemy torpedo bomber unit (over 5 planes) on the seas north of VELLA Gulf. The destroyer YUGURE was hit and sunk, and the KUMANO was hit by a torpedo, its rudder damaged, and its speed reduced to 24 knots. At 0115 hours they were again bombed by enemy planes but did not suffer any damage. Then, too, the destroyer KIYONAMI, which was dispatched to rescue the YUGURE, was not heard from after 0230 hours.

In this manner, the night action unit sustained a surprise attack by enemy aircraft before contacting the enemy surface unit, and, after losing two destroyers, left the scene of the battle and returned to RABAU on the 20th. The transport unit succeeded in disembarking on KOLOMBANGARA Island, covered by the night action force, but on its return trip it fought with enemy planes. Although two ships suffered slight damage, they were able to return to RABAU.

Instead of achieving our aim of destroying enemy naval strength in this operation, it resulted in losses to our side by the surprise attack of enemy planes and in the reduction of our naval power.

X. Situation in land operations during the latter part of July and the tactical command policy for land warfare thereafter.

1. Situation of land operations in the Manda Areas.

The main force of the 229 Regiment, which turned the battle in the Aikawa Area east of the Manda Airfield into a decisive struggle,

suffered steadily mounting casualties. By nightfall of the 19th, communication (TN with the above regiment) had been completely severed. Therefore, positions were moved to the rear, and the battlefront was shortened to the line connecting the Munda Airfield and BAIROKO. However, the enemy thrust a wedge midway between BAIROKO and the Munda Airfield and added a threat to our north and south communications. Thus, within a period of ten days, the Munda Airfield had to be abandoned, which became the important turning point of the Central Solomons campaign.

2. Subsequent tactical command policy for the Central Solomons Area.

a. In view of the battle situation in the Munda and the Kolombangara Areas, it was seen that it would be extremely difficult to secure the above places, so the policy was revised to hold out as long as possible.

b. Attempt should be made to sustain the Munda and the Kolombangara areas, to maintain a supply line, to evacuate non-combatants and the sick and wounded; and every effort should be made to supplement the losses in the ranks of the combatants and to maintain combat strength.

c. If it should become difficult to hold out, the battleline should be gradually reduced and withdrawn while inflicting losses on the enemy, and a final stand should be made within the effectively protected sphere of BOUGAINVILLE Island based small planes.

d. BOUGAINVILLE Island should be strengthened, especially in the south around the Shortland Bay (TN Sic) Sector and the Buka Sector and military preparations should be speeded up to secure the above areas; approximately one division of army troops, a navy anti-aircraft defense unit, coast artillery personnel should be sent as reinforcements.

e. The strength of the base air force should be increased and all losses swiftly replenished mainly to cut off any enemy reinforcements (concentrate on attacking enemy transport ships) and strongly push a campaign to reduce enemy strength, causing a breakdown in the fighting spirit of the enemy.

(Note) The following is an outline of the strength of the air force as of the latter part of July.

- (1) Forces in operation under the command of the 11 Air Fleet.

	25 Air Fleet	26 Air Fleet	2 Carrier Division	Total	Remarks
Fighter planes	60	72	48	180	The figures in this chart indicate the normal strength, but the available strength at the time was about one half of the above figures.
Bombers	36	36	36	108	
Carrier Attack planes			18	18	
Land based attack planes	48	48		96	
Reconnaissance planes	24			24	
Grand Total				426	

(2) Forces under the command of the 8 Fleet.

40 Two-place reconnaissance seaplanes.

32 Three-place reconnaissance seaplanes.

The available force was about one-half of the above quoted figures.

f. The Combined Fleet attached importance to the operations in the Southeast Area and proceeded on 4 August from the western part of the INLAND Sea toward TRUK to assist in the Southeast Area Operations.

L. Transport operations to send the South Sea 4 Garrison Unit to BOUGAINVILLE AND BUKA.

1. This transport program was an absolutely essential operation to direct the Central Solomons Area campaign smoothly. It was a part of the special transport operation of the task force of the 3 Fleet, which left JAPAN around the middle of June for the purpose of strengthening the defenses of the Bougainville Island Area quickly since the battle situation in the central SOLOMONS had become grave, and, moreover, there was uneasiness that BOUGAINVILLE Island would be quickly overrun.

2. The South Sea 4 Garrison Unit had been in readiness at TRUK to strengthen the defense of the inner South Seas, but the Imperial Headquarters Navy Staff Section Directive No 259 of 17 July transferred it out of the jurisdiction of the commander of the 4 Fleet to the jurisdiction of the 8 Area Army Commander. The special feature of this unit was that it was heavily equipped.

3. The transport plan.

a. Participating strength:

Buin Transport Unit:

NISSHIN

3 destroyers

Buka Transport Unit:

2 destroyers



Commander -
Commander of
10 Squadron

b. Cargo.

BUIN Area	HISSHIN	618 Army personnel 49 navy personnel 22 medium tanks 15 automobiles and tractors 16 field and anti-tank guns 200 cans of fuel for tanks 200 tons ammunition and provisions
	3 destroyers	approximately 600 army personnel 20 tons ordnance, ammunition, and provisions
BUKA	2 destroyers	approximately 420 army personnel approximately 60 tons ordnance, ammunition, and provisions

c. Decision on the time for docking

Since the NISSHIN unit, scheduled to dock in SHORTLAND would require more than 10 hours to disembark due to its load of heavy arms, it was decided to co-ordinate movements so that disembarkation might be carried out throughout the night. The plan was laid to advance during the day under the cover of escort fighter planes in areas dominated by enemy planes and to dock at SHORTLAND at dusk.

4. Summary of the progress.

a. Buin Transport (TN Operation).

(TN The Buin Transport unit) sailed out from RABAU on 21 July at 2015 hours. On the 22nd at 1350 hours it was attacked by 12 enemy B-17s, 20 bombers, 20 fighter planes, and 19 carrier bombers. In spite of escort by 16 fighter planes, the NISSHIN sustained bomb hits (six direct hits), and raging fires broke out. It finally sank at 1405 hours (at a point $6^{\circ}28' S$ $156^{\circ} 45' E$). While three destroyers were engaged in the rescue of personnel from the NISSHIN, the second wave of 17 enemy B-17's came over at 1615 hours and dropped bombs; however, there was no damage. Rescue work was discontinued at 1630 hours for the time being. (TN The destroyers) Reached BUIN at 1815 hours and completed the landing operation at 2000 hours. They sailed out from BUIN and at 2200 hours, reached the point where NISSHIN sank. While they were engaged in rescue work, the third wave of enemy planes came over at 2255 hours; therefore, they left three cutters at the scene and headed for RABAU.

Except for the 189 men, who were saved, NISSHIN was a complete loss in this transport (TN operation). However, the three destroyers succeeded in fulfilling the objectives of this transport operation, though the South Seas 4 Garrison Unit lost a majority of its heavy equipment and was reduced to a force having no outstanding features.

b. BUKA Transport (TN operation).

Two destroyers in charge of the BUKA Transport (TN Operation) sailed out from RABAU on the 21st and successfully docked and completed disembarkation on BUKA on the 22nd at 0600 hours. They returned to RABAU on the 23rd at 0900 hours.

N. Vital transportation to the Central SOLONONS.

With the cutting off of our supply line by the enemy and the deterioration of the strategic situation in the New Georgia Area, the replenishment of supplies to that area became very difficult. However, the situation had reached a point where, without immediate transportation of a minimum supply of 1200 tons of ammunitions and provisions per month to the 16,000 men, they would find it difficult to hold out any longer. Therefore, the Southeast Area Fleet Headquarters made plans to transport a total amount of 930 tons of supplies by utilizing three destroyers for three trips, one submarine for six trips, and fishing boats and by taking advantage of the moonless night period which starts during the latter part of July. However, before the transportation by fishing boats and submarine was carried out, the enemy landed on VELLA LAVELLA Island on 15 August.

1. Three destroyers carried out the transport operation to KOLONBANGARA Island on the night of the 23rd. The enemy made its first attempt to interfere with the above transportation (IN operation) by motor torpedo boats in the KOLONBANGARA Area. However, the transport unit repulsed them and succeeded in disembarkation.

On the same night four enemy cruisers and three enemy destroyers appeared in the KULA Gulf Area and bombarded KOLONBANGARA and BAIRONO Islands, but the transport unit did not encounter the enemy.

2. On the night of 1 August, the transport unit (three destroyers) carried out a transport operation to the KOLONBANGARA Island (approximately 900 men and about 140 tons of goods), escorted by one destroyer, mainly for protection against enemy motor torpedo boats, and succeeded in disembarkation. On the way, it was bombed on two occasions by enemy planes, but no damage resulted. Moreover, it engaged in combat with five motor torpedo boats in the VELLA Gulf and sank three of them.

3. On the night of 6 August, while the transport unit, composed of three destroyers and a patrol unit of one destroyer, was steaming south in a single column through the northern entrance of VELLA Gulf for the purpose of transporting (IN supplies) to KOLONBANGARA Island, it suffered a

surprise torpedo attack from an enemy destroyer unit which had previously arrived and had lain in wait to the east in the lee of KOLOMBANGARA Island. The three destroyers of the transport unit immediately broke into flames and sank, one after another. Only the destroyer on patrol survived and counterattacked. In this night action, the enemy had completely surrounded us with two cruisers, more than four destroyers, one plane, and four motor torpedo boats and launched a surprise attack by means of skillful tactics. Because of this attack, the transport operation to KOLOMBANGARA Island was a complete failure and resulted, at a single stroke, in a loss of three destroyers, which were sunk, 520 army personnel and approximately 700 crew members. Survivors numbered about 190 naval personnel and 120 army personnel.

This transport operation turned out to be the last reinforcement and supply operation to the Central Solomons Area.

4. During the time the vital transport operation to KOLOMBANGARA Island was in progress, transport operations to REKATA were carried out only once. That is to say, three destroyers reached REKATA on the 27th at 0100 hours and succeeded in transporting 100 men of the 7 Combined Special Naval Land Force, who remained in RABAUL, and approximately 100 tons of ammunition and provisions. On their return trip, they took aboard one infantry battalion (approximately 820 men), which was scheduled to be transferred from the Rekata Area to the Munda Area. They reached SHORTLAND on the night of the same day. During this operation, they were attacked by enemy planes several times, but there was no damage.

H. Land operation situation in the Central Solomons Area during the early and the middle part of August.

Our forces in the Munda Sector were continuing their fierce fighting on 30 July with the reinforcement of two battalions of the 230 Regiment, newly arrived from KOLOMBANGARA Island. However, the losses of the 299 Regiment steadily mounted and there was no hope of regaining the initiative in the battle situation. In addition, the enemy's shelling and bombing in the Munda Sector became more and more intense, and the

jungle (TH Presumably, jungle hideouts) was cleaned out by the shelling from more than 50 pieces of artillery and by the bombing attacks of several scores of planes day after day. Against this overwhelming strength of the enemy's systematic attack, with the air and the land forces working as a unit, the magnificent fighting by our land troops was of no avail. Our land troops finally abandoned the Munda Airfield on 4 August and were forced to reduce their front to the sector north of the airfield.

While proceeding by surface craft to the aid of MUNDA from KOLONBANGARA Island, the 230 Regiment was attacked by enemy motor torpedo boats on the sea and (TH was forced to) land on BAANGA Island. Meanwhile, the remnants of the 229 Regiment, which had been the main force in the Munda Sector, also retreated to BAANGA Island on the 4th. On the 5th, the enemy took possession of the Munda Airfield Sector and immediately began putting the airfield into shape. Thus, the New Georgia Area front became untenable and the Southeast Detachment and the 5 Combined Special Naval Landing Force Headquarters withdrew to KOLONBANGARA Island on the 5th for the time being to prepare for the next counterattack.

On the 14th, seven enemy planes were seen landing on the Munda Airfield. On the same day, the enemy carried out a new landing operation on BAANGA Island and attempted to cut off our retreat. Our troops on this island carried out night raids on the enemy and engaged in fierce fighting in which half of the enemy force was killed but were unable to turn them back.

Following the enemy's landing on BAANGA Island, the troops in the Northern Munda Area rapidly began to withdraw to KOLONBANGARA Island. Following this on 21 August, the troops on BAANGA Island also began retreating to KOLONBANGARA Island by way of ARUNDEL Island.

The deployment of our forces in the latter part of August was as follows:

A part of the main force (including the Southeast Detachment and the 5 Combined Special Naval Landing Force Headquarters) was on KOLONBANGARA Island, and a part of it was on ARUNDEL Island and GIZO Island. (TH These forces retreated to KOLONBANGARA Island on 21 September.)

C. Future command policies in the Central Solomons Area operations.

With the fall of the Munda Airfield into enemy hands, in the first part of August, not only did the war situation in the Central SOLOMONS take a sharp turn for the worse, but BOUGAINVILLE Island, which lies within the ideal range for attack by small type planes from that (TH Munda) airfield, was now also gravely menaced. Moreover, the war situation in the New Guinea Area was also unfavorable to our side. The supplying of the Lae-Salamaua Sector was discontinued, and the end to the holding of this sector was approaching. Both the Bougainville and Dampier Strait Areas, which were important outposts of RABAU, the operational base, were faced with a grave crisis.

At this juncture, there was a grave difference of opinion between the Army and Navy on whether BOUGAINVILLE Island or the DAMPIER Strait was more important. The Army stressed the New Guinea-Philippine Island line as the line of future enemy operations, while the Navy stressed the Bougainville-Inner South Seas-Japan Proper line. However, when the matter was considered strategically, it was realized that the Marianas-Caroline Front and NEW GUINEA Island were in positions of mutual assistance, both offensively and defensively. So, in the event of enemy attacks, unless operations were initiated simultaneously on both the above fronts, the operational objectives would probably not be attained. From that viewpoint, the Army's and Navy's contentions gradually returned to orthodox (TH strategy) and an agreement was reached to carry out the simultaneous defense of both fronts. It was decided to speedily carry out concrete plans for this purpose. Therefore --

1. The Southeast Area Fleet Headquarters transferred the admiral's flag from BUIN to RABAU on 3 August for a conference with the Army and devising countermeasures so as not to overemphasize the tactical command of the Solomons Area.

2. The Combined Fleet Headquarters attached importance to the operations in the Southeast Area and advanced to TRUK on 14 August.

3. The Imperial Headquarters set forth the general outline of the Central Solomons Area tactical command on 13 August in Imperial Head-

quarters Navy Staff Section Directive No 267. Its essential points were as follows:

- a. To plan to hold the strategic sectors in the Central SOLOMONS as long as possible.
- b. To strengthen the defenses of the rear strategic line by the latter part of September.
- c. To endeavor to withdraw the forces in the Central Solomons Area to the rear strategic points at an opportune time, sometime during the latter part of September and the early part of October.

P. Enemy landings on VELLA LAVELLA and our counterattack.

1. In the early part of August radio intelligence reported active enemy movements. At the same time, the concentration of numerous enemy naval vessels toward the Guadalcanal Area was discovered. Thus, it was estimated that the next phase of the enemy offensive was near, and around mid-August while precautions were being exercised, enemy movements, especially those aimed at the Solomons Area, became aggressively active.

2. Therefore, the Southeast Area Fleet Headquarters on the 14th ordered strict surveillance of the next phase of the enemy offensive in the Solomons Area.

On the 15th at 0300 hours a large enemy force was sighted taking a westward course at a point 10 nautical miles south of GATUKAI Island. Immediately a scouting attack was carried out using six bombers and 48 fighters. A total of 20 enemy transports and destroyers in the process of disembarking near BILGA in the southern part of VELLA LAVELLA Island was sighted, as well as the movements of four cruisers and seven destroyers in the vicinity of GIZO Strait. The first phase of the attack was executed by our repulsing of 50 enemy aircraft.

Following that, the second phase of the attack was carried out at 1000 hours by 11 bombers and 48 fighters. At 1530 hours, the third phase of the attack was carried out by eight bombers and 45 fighters. In continuation of the above attacks, successive attacks were made by medium attacks plane units and seaplane scouting units. The day's landing on VELLA LAVELLA, on the 15th, resulted in the following casualties for the

enemy:

Sunk: four large type transports,
one cruiser,
one destroyer

Shot down: 29 planes.

Heavily damaged and set afire: four large type transports,
three places on land set afire.

In addition to the above, near misses were scored on one transport, three cruisers and two destroyers. Our losses amounted to 17 planes which made suicide crashes or failed to return (TH for other reasons.)

3. Particulars concerning the non-execution of the ground counterattack.

When the enemy first landed at BILQA, a proposal was made at the conference between the 5 Fleet and the 17 Army that a counterlanding with one battalion be effected, but the opinion of the 5 Area Army was that a counterattack with the above number of men against the enemy troops that landed, which were estimated to be approximately one brigade, was like pouring water on a hot stone (TH Connotes the idea of uselessness or futility); and that, if the land fighting was to be conducted in earnest, it was necessary to send in approximately two brigades. However, with the existing transportation and supplying capacity, realization was almost impossible. Moreover, in view of the central (TH Presumably, High Command in TOKYO) authorities' plan, whereby our forces in the Solomons Area were to retreat step by step while reducing the enemy strength and to defend RABAU to the last, it was thought that the proper thing was to cancel the counterlanding and to send approximately two infantry companies plus several land combat units to the vicinity of HORANIU (in the northeast part of the VELLA LAVELLA Island) to acquire a transportation staging base for the MOLOMBANGARA Island. Thus, as a result of the conference between the Army and Navy Higher Headquarters in the area, the counterlanding was cancelled.

4. Horaniu Transport Operation.

a. Plan.

Execution date - 17 August

Landing point - HORANIU

Forces employed.

Landing force -

2 companies, army

1 platoon, navy

Transport unit -

3 shipborne motor torpedo boats

13 large landing barges

Direct screening unit

1 shipborne motor torpedo boat

2 armed large landing barges

2 special subchasers

1 armored boat

Night action force

Commander - Commander of the 3 Destroyer Squadron

Strength - 4 destroyers

To support the entire operation

Air force - 938 Air Group.

b. Progress of the operation -

The transport unit sallied forth from ERVENTA on the morning of the 17th. While other units were maneuvering to screen and support the transport unit, our night action force discovered several enemy cruisers and destroyers in the waters north of VELLA LAVELLA Island on the night of the 17th, and engaged them in combat; we sank one ship, scored hits on two destroyers, and withdrew from the scene of the battle for the time being.

The transport unit, which was under the protection of the screening unit, reached the sea off HORANIU before dawn on the 18th, but it was unable to locate the HORANIU base that day because of interference by enemy planes and three of their destroyers. On the 19th, harried by enemy planes, it searched for the base. At night of the same day it arrived at HORANIU anchorage and began disembarkation.

On the same day the screening unit was attacked by four enemy destroyers in the waters north of HORANIU but suffered no damage. On the 25th, having completed the establishment of the Horaniu Base, the transport unit set out for BUIH; and, under attacks by enemy planes, it returned to BUIH on the morning of the 28th.

This operation succeeded in transporting 290 army and 100 navy personnel. Moreover, one enemy cruiser (or a large-type destroyer) was sunk and two destroyers were hit. Our losses were: two destroyers slightly damaged; two special subchasers, two shipborne motor torpedo boats, and one large landing barge sunk.

Q. Situation of the land operations in the Central SOLOMONS during the latter part of August and the first part of September.

As the result of the enemy landing on VELLA LAVELLA in mid-August, our troops were strategically split up in the Central SOLOMONS and became completely isolated. Relay supply, too, which had been managed with a few remaining small crafts, became completely severed on the 19th due to enemy torpedo boats and planes.

Our force, a large part of which had been concentrated on KOLOMBANGARA Island, attached importance to the defense of their outpost, ARUNDEL Island, and dispatched to ARUNDEL Island the 13 Infantry Regiment which was being evacuated to KOLOMBANGARA Island. With repeated counter-attacks on the enemy which had landed there in late August, we inflicted considerable loss.

In early September, the enemy opened fire on KOLOMBANGARA Island from their heavy artillery positions on BAIROKO and NĀFUI* (TH Presumably MAHAFFY) Island and also conducted successive air raids on KOLOMBANGARA Island.

Under this increasingly heavy pressure, if we had not abandoned our outposts, ARUNDEL Island and GIZO Island, we would have had even our avenue of retreat cut off. (Consequently on 21 September we withdrew completely from both GIZO and ARUNDEL Islands). In view of such a war trend, the troops in the Kolombangara Island and Retaka* (TH Error for REKATA)

areas were gradually withdrawn to BOUGAINVILLE Island.

B. Withdrawal operations from KOLOMBANGARA.

The transfer of forces from HEKATA during the latter part of August initiated withdrawal operations in the Central SOLOMONS. After careful consideration of the situation in land operations in the area (THE KOLOMBANGARA), the movements of the enemy, and the strengthening of defenses in BOUGAINVILLE Island, the evacuation of troops from the Kolombangara Island Area was carried out as scheduled in late September according to the following plans.

1. Summary of the plan.

a. To concentrate approximately 12,000 army and navy ground troops stationed in KOLOMBANGARA Island at the northern tip of the island and accommodate them in approximately 100 small craft to be sent ahead from the Buin area.

b. To evacuate these troops following the route along the southern coast of CHOISEUL Island (SUMBI Point to SAMBI Point) to the Buin area, and, at the same time, to accommodate the sick and wounded in destroyers and evacuate them to the Rabaul area.

c. The entire naval force and a part of the air force to assist in this transport operation.

2. Participating forces.

Force	Commander	Strength
Amphibious Force	5 Fleet Commander	Commander of the 2 Shipping group (Army) Navy TANEGASHIMA Force (9 Torpedo boats 9 Motor torpedo boats 35 Large landing barges Unit deployed on CHOISEUL Island (TN CHOISENUTO HAIBITAI) 17 Army Naval Action Unit (TN KAISENTAI) (About 70 Army small surface craft)
KOLOMBANGARA Island Garrison Force	Southeast Detachment Commander (Army)	5 Combined Special Naval Landing Force Southeast Detachment. Total about 12,000 men.
Assault Force	Commander of the 3 Destroyer Squadron	SENDAI and 13 destroyers.
Air Force	936 Air Group Commander	Attached Air Unit (Approximately 20 odd reconnaissance seaplanes)
Support Force	Commander of 7 Cruiser Division	SUZUYA (Stationed at RABAUL)

(NOTE) 11 Air Fleet Commander shall be in direct command of the Base Air Force and shall support this operation.

3. Operation schedule.

a. X Day: 28 September (Since it was during the moonless night period, air operations were impossible).

b. (X-1) Day: about 100 large landing barges to sally out, supported by the assault force.

c. X-Day: the sick and wounded to be accommodated and evacuated on 2 destroyers. The Arundel operation to be completed by (X-1) Day; assemble on X Day at KOLOMBANGARA Island.

d. (X+1) Day: withdrawal operations of the main force to be started with large landing barges supported by the total strength of the naval force and the air force.

4. Progress of the operation.

a. The amphibious force.

The amphibious force sortied on 20 September from BUIN and reached the assembly point on the north shore of KOLOMBANGARA Island on the 28th after engaging in battle with enemy planes, motor torpedo boats and a destroyer division. The boat unit (TN SHUTRITAI) suffered considerable loss. The first transport unit left the assembly point after sundown on the 29th, and disembarked on the 30th at SUMBI Point. On 1 October about 100 enemy planes attacked our landing point but damage was slight. On the same day, after sundown, (TN the transport unit) left from SUMBI Point on its second evacuation operation, arriving on the 2nd at the assembly point on KOLOMBANGARA Island. It sailed on the same night, after accommodating the personnel, for SUMBI and SAMBI Points and arrived after daybreak on the 3rd. However, due to attacks along the way from an enemy destroyer division and a motor torpedo boat unit, we again suffered considerable losses in small surface craft. From the 3rd to the 14th we carried out three transport operations between CHOISEUL and BUIN without encountering enemy opposition.

b. Assault force.

- (1) On the night of 28 September the transport unit (three destroyers) escorted by the support unit (eight destroyers) accommodated 2,115 sick and

wounded men at KOLOMBANGARA Island and evacuated them safely to RABAUL.

- (2) Then, on the night of 1 October, as four of our destroyers advanced to a point north of KOLOMBANGARA Island in support of a group of small craft, an enemy surface force was discovered. However, since the small craft unit came between our surface force and the enemy's we lost the opportunity for an engagement.

On the night of the 2nd the transport unit (three destroyers), screened by one destroyer, reached the northern extremity of KOLOMBANGARA Island and accommodated troops. While on its way back, it fought an engagement with an enemy force of three cruisers and three destroyers. A torpedo attack (14 torpedoes) was executed and the sounds of which confirmed hits; however, we left the scene of action without confirming enemy losses.

In the meantime, four destroyers, which were under the commander of the 3 Destroyer Squadron, were on patrol in the northern part of BELA* Sea (TN Presumably VELLA Gulf) when they observed the transport unit engaged in action. Since our ships were in a confused tangle (TN the destroyers) refrained from participating in the engagement.

- (3) The Base Air Force co-operated in the withdrawal operation from KOLOMBANGARA Island. It carried out an air operation in the VELLA LAVELLA Area. Its targets were enemy transports, support units, positions, the Munda Airfield, fighter planes and so forth. From 1 October to 3 October it made six assaults with a total of approximately 150 bombers and fighter planes, and achieved considerable success.

- (4) Results.

Number of troops evacuated -

By the TANEGASHIMA Force - approximately 5,400 men.

By a total of six destroyers - approximately
4,000 men.

Our losses.

Large landing barges and torpedo boats lost - 13.

Minor damage to one destroyer.

Killed in action - 66 men.

Enemy losses - one enemy destroyer was believed to
have been sunk, but it was not certain.

3. Withdrawal operations from HORANIU (VELLA LAVELLA Island).

This operation was a planned withdrawal effected following the withdrawal of forces from KOLOMBANGARA Island. In view of the battle experiences gained during the withdrawal operations from KOLOMBANGARA Island, it was planned to have destroyers transport landing barges to the forward areas to minimize losses (TH bound to occur), if the barges were allowed to travel on their own power. On the return trip, the pick-up force (TH the landing barges) was to navigate by its own power, taking advantage of the dark and its ability to elude (TH the enemy).

1. Participating strength.

a. Support force - 6 destroyers

(to screen transports
and to destroy enemy
vessels.)

Transport force - 3 destroyers to transport small
surface craft

- Commander - Commander of
3 Destroyer Squadron.

b. Pick-up force

Subchaser unit - 1 subchaser
4 converted subchasers

(to accommodate all Army and
Navy personnel)

Torpedo boat unit - 3 torpedo boats

(to screen transfer operations
from one ship to another)

Small landing craft unit - 4 small landing craft

(to transport personnel from
shore to ship)

Commander - Commander
of 31 Subchaser Group

2. Summary of the progress of the operation.

a. Support force.

It sallied forth from RABAUL on 6 October, and while advancing south was spotted by enemy aircraft north of BUKA Island. Consequently two destroyers were dispatched to escort the transport force after nightfall. The transport force detached itself from the night raiding force and proceeded ahead to BOUGAINVILLE Strait. Four enemy destroyers were discovered in the direction of the assembly point at approximately 1900 hours, a battle did not develop because the enemy was lost from sight due to a squall that restricted the field of vision. Furthermore, a patrol plane reported that an enemy cruiser division and a destroyer division were in the vicinity of the assembly point. The support force commander, assuming that it would be difficult to accommodate (TM the personnel) at this time, resolved, first of all, to destroy the enemy fleet. The transport force travelling ahead was withdrawn to the western entrance of SHORTLAND Bay, and the two destroyers escorting the transport force were recalled to join the main force while the main fleet maneuvered to lure the enemy fleet to the southwest. The night raiding force (less 2 destroyers) sighted the enemy cruiser division (3 cruisers) at 2035 hours, and the two destroyers advancing south to rejoin the main force sighted the enemy destroyer division (3 destroyers) at 2040 hours. This engagement, to the west of VELLA LAVELLA Island, developed into a fierce naval battle between the two forces. After approximately 50 minutes of battle, the enemy lost two cruisers and three destroyers; only one cruiser was barely able to withdraw from the scene of battle. Our side lost only one destroyer. The Imperial Headquarters called the night battle the Night Battle off VELLA LAVELLA Island.

The support force commander ordered the transport force to return to its base ahead. At 2140 hours, combined forces with the night raiding force at 2200 hours and proceeded toward RABAUL.

b. Pick-up force

The (TM pick-up) force, sallied forth from BUIN at 1453 hours on the 6th, sighted an engagement at 2058 hours between our surface

force and the enemy's, and arrived at MANDAIURA (万代浦) assembly point (northwest section of VELLA LAVELLA Island) at 2310 hours. Accommodating all personnel, total number - 589, the (TH pick-up) force departed from this point at 0105 hours on the 7th and arrived safely again at EUMI.

T. General results of the transportation of reinforcements to the Central Solomons Area and withdrawal operations (TH from the Central SOLOMONS).

The construction of the Munda Airfield was begun in the latter part of November 1942 since the Central Solomons was looked upon as the intermediate base for the Guadalcanal operations. Following the withdrawal from GUADALCANAL Island the Navy took over the sole responsibility of defending the Central SOLOMONS as the peripheral strategic point of the Solomons Area, and, with the co-operation of the Army, it earnestly endeavored to strengthen the defenses and reinforce the military strength. However, due to the counteroffensive of the enemy, we were finally compelled to withdraw completely. The Central SOLOMONS was entirely abandoned by the withdrawal from HORANIU.

The results of the transport operations of this period were as follows.

1. Transport operations for reinforcement of military strength.

a. Munda and Kolombangara transport operations -

Place of disembarkation - MUNDA and KOLOMBANGARA.

Total strength - 70 destroyers.

Number of trips made - 20.

Number of successful trips - 15.

Number of trips interfered with by the enemy - 5.

Number of troops - 9,963 men.

Cargoes - A large amount of ammunition, food and fuels.

(Note) This indicates only the results of the transportation by combat vessels, not by small surface craft.

b. Rekata transport operation:-

Place of disembarkation - REKATA.

Total strength - 3 cruisers,

33 destroyers,

2 torpedo boats,

Number of trips made - 16.

Number of successful trips - 15.

Number of trips interfered with (TH by the enemy) - 3.

Number of troops - 3,440 men.

Cargoes - A great amount of ammunition, food and fuels.

2. Operations to withdraw troops - Refer to various withdrawal operations.

VII. New Guinea (NASSAU Bay to SIO) operation.

A. Enemy landing at NASSAU Bay.

On 23 June, the enemy landed in the RENDOVA Area in the central SOLOMONS and, at the same time, carried out a landing at NASSAU Bay, south of SALAMAUVA in NEW GUINEA.

B. General situation of the New Guinea Area operations prior to the enemy landing at NASSAU Bay.

A chain of air bases was built in the BUNA Area by the enemy as soon as it occupied the area in the early part of January. It stepped up its air attacks, principally in the Lae and Salamauva Areas. In its ground operations it assembled a large force in the Buna and Kumasi River Areas. From these areas it pursued our retreating army to the Mambare and Wariya River Areas. On the other hand, enemy ground forces on the WAU Plain were gradually being reinforced. They began to threaten the Salamauva Area from the west.

Our army carried out an attack on WAU with a force of approximately 3,000 men of the OKABE (岡部) Detachment, which had landed in the Salamauva Area in the early part of January. However, it did not succeed, resulting only in useless expenditure of strength. We began to feel more pressure than expected in the above area. When March arrived, the northward advancing enemy forces completed their advance to the MAMBARÉ River; the enemy positions in the Wau Area were strengthened still further; and the enemy airfields at BULOLO and BULWA were put in order. In order to break the unfavorable situation in the Salamauva Area, we attempted to transport the main body of the 51 Division to LAE in the early part of March. However, the force was destroyed when the enemy skillfully delivered a surprise air-raid. Thereafter, our forces could not be reinforced as desired.

Finally, after the middle of March, we had no other course left but to try to maintain our strength in the Lae and Salamauva Areas by submarine transport operations. During that time we succeeded in landing 800 land troops at FINSCHHAFEN by means of four destroyers.

With the coming of April, the enemy's northward advancing forces

arrived in the vicinity of KUI. Their unit, which was advancing eastward from the Wau Area, closed in at a point 14 kilometers west of SALAMAUA.

In this way, the situation in the Lae and Salamua Areas daily became more critical. Moreover, in view of the fact that the enemy was increasing its strength more and more in the middle of April. We employed the greater part of our air strength for decisive battle in carrying out operations to cut off enemy reinforcements and supplies. However, we were not able to continue these operations with our inferior air strength. After carrying out the third attack in the New Guinea Area, we ended the operations (Refer to the page on the "I" Operation).

With the coming of May the enemy began preparations for the attack on LAE. They built a road for automobiles between WAU and WAMPIT. At the same time they stepped up their air attacks in the Lae and Salamua Areas and greatly hampered our efforts to strengthen our capacity to attack.

In order to improve the situation in the Salamua Area, our naval units dispatched the Sasebo 5 Special Naval Landing Force (composed of Commander TSUKIOKA (月岡) and 262 men) from LAE to SALAMAUA. It was used mainly to strengthen the defenses in the airfield sectors.

With the beginning of June, the enemy built new airfields at BENA BENA and KAINANTU. At the same time, it showed signs of readiness to attack SALAMAUA from the south and west.

With the main body of the 51 Division, approximately 6,000 men, we confronted the enemy forces attacking from the Wau and Mubo Areas. The defense of the Salamua Airfield and the coastal area was carried out by a force of approximately 1,200 men, the Sasebo 5 Special Naval Landing Force constituting the main body, and 500 men, who were elements of army units. We were engaged in strengthening our defenses to the utmost, but on 30 June the enemy made a large scale landing at NASSAU Bay, a weak point in our dispositions. Our force in that area consisted of only about 300 army troops and 10 or more navy lookout station personnel.

C. Our counterattack policy in regard to enemy landings.

1. Based on the agreement between the higher army and navy commanders in the Southeast Area, the operational policy in regard to enemy landings made simultaneously in the Solomons and New Guinea fronts, was that the Solomons operation would be the main operation and the New Guinea operation would be subordinated to it, as previously mentioned. However, despite all our efforts to reinforce our strength in the Lae and Salamaua areas, the enemy harassed us so thoroughly that it became impossible for us to carry out transport operations by water. Therefore, tactical command, whose objective was to increase the strength to the required level and to hold this area, became difficult.

2. Commanders of local army and navy forces in NEW GUINEA picked the Salamaua Area, first of all, to be the front line position against the enemy which had landed at NASSAU Bay. They selected LAE to be the final defense position and decided to make this their decisive stand and to hold out as long as they had strength left. For these reasons, emphasis was placed on holding the road link between LAE and SALAMAUA and the sea lane used by small surface craft.

D. Progress of the Salamaua Area operations.

The operations in the above area were principally army operations; nevertheless the Navy Land Combat Unit also participated in the fighting. Therefore we shall relate principally the battles in which the Navy Land Combat Unit participated.

1. Early on the morning of 30 June about 2000 enemy troops landed at NASSAU Bay. Army and navy forces guarding that place retreated without being able to offer much resistance.

Correlating with the landing at NASSAU Bay, the enemy used vastly superior air power in intensifying the raids on LAE and SALAMAUA. In one of these raids Commander TSUKIOKA, Commanding Officer of the Sasebo 5 Special Naval Landing Force guarding the SALAMAUA Peninsula, was hit and killed in action. The Commanding Officer of the 85 Communications Unit, Capt IKEDA took over the Command of the Salamaua Guard Force.

Enemy ground forces advancing from the MUBO, BOBDEBI, and

MT. MIYATA (heights northwest of SALAMAUA) in concert with the units landing from NASSAU Bay, commenced a simultaneous attack and adopted the tactics of enveloping SALAMAUA from four sides. On 3 July, the enemy began unloading heavy artillery at NASSAU Bay and the enemy attacks developed by degrees into a full attack, and our forces were steadily being placed under pressure. On the 13th, our force operating in the Mubo Area, withdrew to KOMIATUM.

On the 20th, enemy forces in the Buang River Area, situated midway between LAE and SALAMAUA, were gradually reinforced and attempted to sever land communications between LAE and SALAMAUA. Therefore, 90 members of the Navy Land Combat Unit were sent as reinforcements from LAE to strengthen the Army force in that area (TN: Presumably, Buang River Area). Every effort was made to preserve land communications between LAE and SALAMAUA.

On the 23rd, the enemy made fresh landings south of ROKANA* (TN: Presumably, LOKANU) Point, disembarking about a thousand troops, and began advancing northward. Our forces in the ROKANA* (TN: Presumably, LOKANU) Area were few, numbering 300 army personnel and 50 navy personnel, but they did well in impeding the enemy's northward advance and put up stubborn resistance.

On the 28th, the enemy commenced the shelling of SALAMAUA with heavy artillery. Our forces could not stand the enveloping attacks of the enemy and, finally, on the 30th shortened the perimeter to the Mt. Miyata - Bobdubi - Mt. Sayu (heights south of SALAMAUA) line, centered around the town of SALAMAUA.

On the 30th the 51 Division Commander moved his headquarters forward to SALAMAUA, and took personal command in the field, boosting the morale of all the forces.

Since the Rokana* (TN: Presumably, Lokanu) Area was faced with an imminent crisis, 250 members of comparatively well-equipped Navy Land Combat Unit were sent as reinforcements on 7 August.

Our air and naval forces did not put up any resistance and the enemy reinforced its troops. It was estimated that by the early part

of August the enemy troops that had landed at NASSAU Bay totaled about 8,000 men (TN: since we were). Unable to stem the furious air and land attacks of the enemy, the Rokana* (TN: Presumably Lokam) Area fell into enemy hands on the 14th. Next, our forces in KOMIATUM and BOBDUBI were also forced to retreat to SALAMAUA. Furthermore, on the 24th a part of the enemy forces closed in on SALAMAUA, directly threatening that area, and so the fall of that region was just a question of time.

On the 26th, the newly appointed commanding officer of the Sasebo 5 Special Naval Landing Force, Commander TAKEUCHI, took over command of the Salamaua Guard Force from Capt IKEDA.

2. In view of the fact that the war situation in the Salamaua Area was unfavorable for our side, and that it was extremely difficult to hold the area, Imperial Headquarters on 30 August, in Imperial Headquarters Navy Staff Section Directive No. 271, indicated the agreement between the Army and Navy High Command (TN: in TOKYO) concerning operations in the Lae-Salamaua Area. Its essential points were as follows:

a. On the whole, to plan the holding out to the utmost by using local forces to repulse enemy attacks, and to retreat to the strategic coastal area of DAMPIER Strait at the opportune moment.

b. To endeavor to speedily strengthen the defenses of the Dampier Strait area through Army and Navy co-operation, and at the same time, secure to the utmost the supply line by using every means available, such as the use of submarines, small boats and crafts.

3. In accordance with the above operational policy of Imperial Headquarters, the Army and Navy High Commands in the Southeast Area.

a. Adopted the policy to bend every effort to hold the Lae-Salamaua area, strengthen the defenses of the Dampier Strait region, and before anything else, strengthen quickly the forces in the Finschhafen Area, so that, in the event of a fresh enemy offensive in that area, the entire strength of the 18 Army could be used in a decisive battle. In compliance with the above policy, two battalions of the 20 Division began moving forward from the Madang Sector to the Finschhafen

Area at the end of August.

b. The commander of the 18 Army was designated to unify and command the Army and Navy forces in the field, on 3 September relative to land operations in the New Guinea area.

4. On 4 September about 15,000 of the enemy made fresh landings at HOPOI, east of LAE, and, in order to pour in the main force to defend LAE, we had no recourse but to abandon the Salamaua Area. From the 6th to the 11th, the forces were gradually concentrated at LAE.

E. Progress of the operations in the Lae Area.

1. Defenses in the Lae area.

In the Lae area the troops of the 82 Guard Unit were the principal defenders of the positions surrounding Mt. LAE and the west airfield, while the troops of the 51 Division defended the east airfield sector.

2. Enemy landing at HOPOI.

On 3 September, the enemy shifted its air attacks from SALAMAUA to LAE and, during this day's bombing, inflicted extremely heavy damage to the headquarters of the army and naval forces and to the Lae Airfield, all of which were situated in the vicinity of Mt. LAE.

Judging from this raid that the enemy's landing in the Lae area was near, our troops were in combat deployment and maintained a close watch. The enemy started landing at HOPOI from the early morning of 4 September. The initial enemy landing force, under the support of superior air and sea power, began landing from 70 large and small transports and from numerous large landing crafts along a belt stretching from the vicinity of the left bank of the BULU River to the mouth of the MONGI River. By 1500 hours, it looked as if (TN their operation), as a whole, had been completed. It was estimated that approximately 15,000 troops (TN had been landed).

Receiving the report of the start of the enemy landing, our naval air force made an attack on the enemy landing point with an approximate total of 80 medium attack planes, carrier bombers, and carrier fighters. At that moment, they discovered two enemy groups, one consist-

ting of six transports and four destroyers and the other consisting of three destroyers, steaming north on the sea east of SALAMAUA. They made an attack on the enemy convoy and inflicted heavy damage on them. At the same time they entangled with 40 P-38's which were patrolling the skies and shot down over one-half of them. On the following day, the 5th, our naval air force attacked the enemy convoy off the shore of HOPOI with a total of 55 medium attack planes and Zero Fighters and inflicted some damage on them. On the 6th our naval air force attacked the enemy landing point with 91 medium attack planes, carrier bombers, and Zero Fighters and inflicted some damage both on land and to the convoy. Henceforth, the air force shifted its attack objective to the cutting off of the enemy rear.

3. Enemy paratroop force descending at MADZAB (TN or NADZAB).

On the 5th the enemy dropped a paratroop force of approximately 1,000 men on the Madzab Airfield, 30 kilometers northwest of LAE and greatly increased its pressure on LAE from the northwest. Thus, the enemy surrounded and set up positions to attack LAE on four fronts: HOPOI, MADZAB, SALAMAUA, and the sea. It put strong pressure on our forces at LAE, co-ordinating its movements with those of the air force and motor torpedo boats.

4. Abandonment of LAE.

On the 8th the enemy destroyers intensified their fierce bombardment of the area near Mt. LAE, and, at the same time, they started an offensive from the vicinity of the Busu River, each of which was repulsed by our army forces in that area. However, the enemy's tenacious resolve to cross the BUSU River was finally realized on the 10th. On the 11th, the enemy began bombarding our principal positions in LAE with heavy artillery. LAE's doom was imminent.

Therefore, complying with orders from the 15 Army, the commander of the 51 Division, who had returned from SALAMAUA to LAE on the 10th, unified and took command of the army and naval forces and decided to withdraw from LAE to the Sio area. He disseminated withdrawal orders embodying the following general points:

a. Proposed withdrawal routes.

Withdrawal route no. 1: LAE -- BŪSHI *(TN Presumably BWUSSI or BUSU) -- Mt. SALAWAKET -- SIO

Withdrawal route no. 2: LAE -- YĀRU *(TN Presumably YALU) -- SIO

b. Order of withdrawal.

First Echelon -- The entire naval force, excluding the Lae Guard Unit.

Second Echelon }
Third Echelon } Army force

Fourth Echelon -- Army and naval forces defending LAE.

Fifth Echelon -- Army force

c. Protection of the withdrawing forces. The naval force relegated to this task of securing the area around BŪSHI *(TN Presumably BWUSSI or BUSU) and YĀRA (TN Presumably YALU).

d. The fourth echelon was to form the rear guard after completion of evacuation by the entire force and then to overtake the main unit.

e. Start of the withdrawal -- 12 September.

5. Shift of the naval force commander and the death in action of the commander of the Sasebo 5 Special Naval Landing Force.

The commander of the 7 Base Force, Rear Admiral FUJITA (藤田), whose re-assignment had been ordered some time before, transferred his command to Rear Admiral MORI (森) who had arrived on the submarine I-174 to take over his post in LAE on the 9th. He (TN FUJITA) retired that same day from LAE, where the fighting was raging fiercely, on the same submarine. The commander of the Sasebo 5 Special Naval Landing Force, Commander TAKEUCHI (竹内), was killed in action on the 12th while bravely fighting under the fierce bombing of enemy planes.

It is needless to set forth at length here the great influence exerted on the morale of the men by the shift and, again, by the death in action of their commanders at this time when the tide of the battle was going against us.

F. Withdrawal operations from LAE to SIO.

1. Withdrawal of naval forces.

a. First echelon: Headquarters of the 7 Base Force, 85 Communications Unit, Sasebo 5 Naval Special Landing Force and the 23 Antiaircraft Defense Unit. Total of 1,054 men.

b. Fourth echelon: 82 Guard Unit, 3 Antiaircraft Defense Unit and a part of the Sasebo 5 Special Naval Landing Force. Total of 1,000 men.

2. Period of withdrawal.

a. First echelon left LAE on 12 September and reached SIO on 14 October - a period of 32 days.

b. Fourth echelon left LAE on 15 September and reached KIARI on 18 October - a period of 33 days.

3. Results of the withdrawal.

a. Strength at the start of the withdrawal - 2,054 men.

b. Strength reaching the destination - 1,543 men.

c. (Percentage of the strength arriving at the destination - 77%)

d. Number of men killed in action, missing in action and stragglers - 511 men.

e. Number of sick and wounded evacuated - 1,134 men.

f. Actual combat strength - 409 men. (Percentage of the combat strength remaining 20%.)

4. General summary of progress.

The following is an outline of the withdrawal operation of the first echelon. (The progress of the withdrawal operation of other echelons was similar to that of the first echelon.)

The withdrawing units left LAE at 1900 hours on the 12th carrying with them only rifles, ammunition and food. On the 13th it was necessary to escape through the pincers attack of the enemy in the region between BUSU River and MADZAB. While marching on, unfamiliar with the terrain and the enemy situation, the leading troops suffered a enveloping surprise attack from the enemy paratroop force at 1030 hours and they

were forced to withdraw after the force commander was killed in action. As a result, the first echelon changed its prearranged route of retreat and started through the jungle for YARU* (TN Presumably YALU).

On the 15th, when the main body of first echelon was nearing the Yaru area, the advance guard (34 men) which was reconnoitering the road ahead of the main force was harassed by the persistent reconnaissance of enemy planes and lost contact with the main body. Furthermore, they were surrounded by about 80 enemy soldiers, and as a result of the fighting, most of them (TN advance guard) were killed. The main body recovered these bodies while blazing a trail through the jungles and continued its march toward the north. On the 20th it crossed the BUSU River and on the 22nd entered into a steep jungle region. The cold gradually increased and the march became extremely difficult but on the 27th, about four days later, it entered the great jungle region in the SALAWAKET Mountain Range (over 3,000 meters above sea-level). Precipitous cliffs continued, one after another; there were no roads; and the temperature went down to five degrees. It was a hardship really unbearable for the troops which were prepared for operations in only the tropical areas. Several hundred stragglers were left and deaths from cold and from falling (TN off cliffs) occurred in succession. On 2 October rain started falling in the steep jungle region and continued for several days in succession.

The condition of the Commander, Rear-Admiral MORI, who was suffering from a perihepatic abscess, became worse and finally on the 5th he was no longer able to continue; therefore, Capt IKEDA, Commander of the 85 Communications Unit, took over the command of the first echelon. On the 9th they barely reached KIARI on the north coast. After about four days' rest, they again started marching and on the 14th reached SIO.

The damage suffered by these men was several times greater than that of direct combat; they presented a very pathetic picture. We cannot help acknowledging frankly the operational victory of the enemy who drove us into such pathetic straits by cutting off our route of retreat during the entire New Guinea campaign. The enemy inflicted an annihilating blow on us without engaging in direct combat.

G. Finschhafen area operations.

1. After the enemy landed at HOPOI, our air force strengthened its reconnaissance to cut off the enemy's rear, (TN to detect) any new enemy plans, and to maintain a strict patrol. Toward the latter part of the middle of September the enemy's movements suddenly became active in the New Guinea area, and we learned that a large number of ships and small craft was moving about on the morning of the 20th in the Nassau Bay, Morobe River mouth, Bakurusu* (TN Presumably Hercules) Bay, Cape Ward Hunt, Buna Anchorage, Oro Bay, Cape Nelson, and Cape Bochiru* (TN Presumably Vogel) Areas. Its strength consisted of 23 transports, one tanker, 26 sea trucks, 26 special landing transports, about 50 ships and small craft, 3 cruisers, and 8 destroyers. It was concluded that the enemy's new operation was imminent, and strict vigilance was maintained, especially at FINSCHHAFEN and the western part of NEW BRITAIN.

As per expectation, the enemy started to land at ARNDT Point, north of FINSCHHAFEN on the 22nd.

2. Concentration of our strength in the Finschhafen area.

Our force, which concluded that it would be difficult to hold SALAMAU and LAE, decided to advance the crack 20 Division of the 18 Army to the Finschhafen Area, the foremost key position east of the DAMPIER Strait. Troop movements were started in the latter part of August from the Madang Area, and the concentration of about two battalions in the Finschhafen area was to be completed by the latter part of September.

3. Disposition of our troops at the time of the enemy landing and the strength of the enemy's landing force.

Our strength in the Finschhafen Area at the time of the enemy landing consisted of about 400 men of the Navy 85 Guard Unit and about 3500 men under the command of Maj Gen YAMADA (山田), Army 1 Shipping Group Commander. Both the army and the naval forces in the area were placed under the unified command of Maj Gen YAMADA.

Maj Gen YAMADA concluded that the enemy would advance upon FINSCHHAFEN from the Hopoi Area by taking the land route north, so he stationed about 2500 men west of Capt GRETIN which was south of FINSCHHAFEN and an army force comprised of about 600 men in the sector east of the

MONGI River, and detailed the direct defense of FINSCHHAFEN to the navy forces.

The enemy thrust at the weak point in our defensive troop disposition which stressed the southern front around FINSCHHAFEN and started to land north (TN of FINSCHHAFEN) near ARNDT Point. Without any opposition, they were successful in their landing operation. The strength of the initial landing was estimated to be about 6500 men; and there were indications that they received reinforcements of about 1500 men on the 23rd and about 2000 more on the 29th.

4. Progress of the land operations.

On the 23rd the enemy started to move southward from ARNDT Point and a violent battle ensued as they closed in on the 85 Guard Unit. Aided by heavy guns, our Naval Land Combat Unit without sleep or rest repulsed the oncoming enemy in a daring struggle, but finally on the 27th we were enveloped and forced into a critical situation.

On one hand, the army force commanded by Maj Gen YAMADA concentrated its strength in the SATTELBERG Highlands for the time being when the enemy landed via the sea at ARNDT Point. Troop movements to the SATTELBERG Highlands were made with extreme caution so as not to provoke the enemy into combat since our policy was to attack after the enemy situation had been thoroughly studied; these movements were completed on the 27th. On the other hand, our Naval Land Combat Unit, which had been surrounded and was engaged in bitter combat with the enemy, lost practically all of its rifle unit. So, under orders, it started to withdraw to TERIMORO (about five kilometers south of the SATTELBERG Highlands) on 1 October; it arrived there on the 2nd. Thus we were temporarily out of contact with the enemy and afforded them the opportunity to complete their necessary defenses.

On the 17th the 20 Division arrived at WAREO, north of the SATTELBERG Highlands, raising the total strength of the army forces to 7000. The 20 Division Commander headed immediately for ARNDT Point and began the first attack, but our poorly equipped forces could not break through the heavily armed enemy positions; and so on the 22nd (EN the 20 Division) was forced to retreat again to its original position.

In addition to the loss of its rifle unit, the 85 Guard Unit was plagued with illness and lack of ammunition and provisions. Since it had lost its fighting capacity as first line troops, it was assigned to take over rear guard duties; and so on the 28th it headed for KANOMI. During the latter part of November it withdrew from KANOMI to SIO and joined the 7 Base Unit which had withdrawn from LAE.

The 20 Division made a second unsuccessful general attack in the latter part of November. Thereafter, the division assembled its forces at WAREO. It was decided to formulate future plans while thus confronting the enemy.

5. Operations of the Air Force and Submarine Force.

Our Naval Air Force planned the annihilation of the enemy convoy at the onset of the landings. On 22 September, six medium attack planes and 35 Zero Fighters carried out a daylight attack on the south bound enemy convoy at a point about 20 nautical miles southeast of Cape CRETIN. A great victory in the sinking of two cruisers, two destroyers, and two transports was reported. Moreover, 14 enemy planes were reported shot down in aerial combat with a mass of enemy fighters which were on patrol. Fourteen of our planes either crashed, dived or failed to return (EN: for other reasons). On the same day our Submarine Force stationed four submarines outside FINSCHHAFEN and Cape CRETIN for the purpose of cutting off enemy reinforcements.

On the 24th, nine medium attack planes and 31 Zero Fighters attacked the Finschhafen Airfield and engaging in combat with 32 enemy fighter planes, shot down 12 planes. On the 26th, 22 medium attack planes bombed ARNDT Point and blanketed the enemy antiaircraft positions with many bombs.

On 1 October one of our submarines succeeded in our final transportation operation to FINSCHHAFEN. On the 3rd, another submarine sighted three enemy destroyers about 30 nautical miles north of Cape WARD HUNT and sank one of them.

Henceforth, except for the assault on BUNA with 15 carrier

bombers and 39 Zero Fighter Planes on the 15th and the attack on a convoy off Cape CRETIN with 4 carrier bombers and 20 Zero Fighter Planes on the 23rd, only a small number of our planes, was able to undertake daily assaults on (TN: Enemy) positions at FINSCHHAFEN, the dropping of supplies to our forces in that area, and the cutting off of the rear of the enemy on the northern coast of NEW GUINEA. Our New Guinea aerial operations were continued until the enemy landed on MONO Island on the 27th.

6. Effect of the enemy landing at FINSCHHAFEN on the tactical command of our forces.

The full-scale plan for setting up defenses on both sides of the DAMPIER Strait had not yet been carried out. Moreover, within 20 days after the end of August when the Imperial Headquarters had decided on the withdrawal from LAE, our forces were swiftly pursued to FINSCHHAFEN, the strategic point commanding the DAMPIER Strait, and, having no defense measure set up against such a swift counterattack in this area, (TN: our forces) were compelled to execute a large-scale tactical retreat to gain time and to secure a defense line capable of holding out and from which the enemy could be met.