Marine Corps Historical Collection

Close-in air defense around the airfield was accomplished by regrouping defense battalion assets from Rendova, Laiana, and Zanana. This "Twin-Twenty" is at Munda, and is on one of several types of mobile mounts at New Georgia.

William T. Box, with the artillery group's advance party, "we hiked up from Munda using a native guide. I remember we hiked through jungle most of the way. I remember I was scared. I remember I was glad to see that open area with the supply parachutes" left by the Army. Soon afterwards, Battery B moved to Piru and on 2 September participated in the shelling of Vila. A Japanese defender there with the *8th Combined Special Naval Landing Force* wrote in his diary, with "the situation as it is, one just can't help but distrust the operational plans of the Imperial Headquarters."

Dead at his post, this Japanese soldier lies by a smashed 37mm antitank gun near the airfield. As the tanks broke through, the infantry followed and the fighting continued until the positions were overrun or buried in the rubble.

Marine Corps Historical Collection

The artillery group used the services of spotter aircraft, but because of enemy gunfire, switched from the light observation planes to Grumman TBFs because their armor plating gave the pilots greater protection. First Lieutenant Donald V. Sandager and Sergeant Herschel J. Cooper flew these missions over Kolombangara. "We both volunteered to a request from Major Hiatt. When we reported to Munda Airfield we had no parachutes and were told each flier had to have his own," recalled Sandager. "The pilots were inexperienced and flew up from Guadalcanal each morning and we had to direct them to find the battery and Kolombangara. Radio communication with the battery was bad." Admiral Halsey noted the artillery group and Lieutenant Colonel O'Neil's ability to "utilize air spotting and the accuracy of their fire which stood out above other more experienced groups."

The peak of enemy air activity over Munda Airfield occurred the night of 14-15 September when enemy planes kept gun crews at battle stations all night. The 90mm group expended 3,378 rounds, downing one plane and causing most of the enemy planes to jettison their bombs over the jungle or the sea. At Vila, a Japanese commander reported, "it had become very difficult to fire the antiaircraft guns as the enemy places their artillery upon our position immediately after we commence firing upon the aircraft." At Piru, Japanese counter-battery fire hit the artillery group throughout September and the first two days of October. A number of the enemy artillery projectiles failed to detonate and there were no casualties from the shelling.

On 15 September, General Sasaki was ordered to evacuate his remaining 12,400 men from Kolombangara. The next month on 3 October, while flying his assigned air spotter missions, Lieutenant Sandager reported Vila evacuated; the Japanese had pulled out. Lieutenant Colonel Scheyer was pleased to state that for the "first time in this war the enemy had been driven from his base by

Other Japanese defenses included this 25mm automatic dual-purpose twin-barrelled gun in position on the airfield approaches. These proved to be deadly against both American air and ground forces.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 69975

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 58411

This 1 August 1943 bombing attack struck Marine positions on Rendova, only wounding one Marine, but destroying a height finder with flying coral.

bombing and artillery fire." He concluded that at Kiska it was bombing and ship's gunfire, at Kolombangara it was naval gunfire, bombing, and artillery fire that turned the tide. The final action of the campaign was a sea battle on 6-7 October when U.S. Navy destroyers intercepted Japanese evacuation ships during the Battle of Vella Lavella.

The Japanese air effort slackened considerably in October, and came to an abrupt halt in November 1943. While at Munda Airfield, the 9th Dfense Battalion accounted for eight more enemy planes. Numerous alerts, conditions red, and general quarters stand-tos that began an hour before dawn and an hour after sunset, had occurred daily for all gun crews. In early November, Battery A moved to Nusalavata Island and Battery B to Roviana Island where the 155mm guns covered Munda Bar and the eastern approach to Blanche Channel respectively. Lieutenant Colonel Scheyer remained in command of the 9th until 3 November, when he was assigned to I Marine Amphibious Corps and the command was turned over to Lieutenant Colonel Archie E. O'Neil.

On 22 November, the 9th Defense Battalion was attached to VI Corps Island Command for occupation duties. On 31 December, the battalion, with the exception of one radar crew and two searchlight sections, was relieved of the Munda Airfield defenses by the Army 77th AAA Group. The 9th Defense Battalion spent several weeks in camp in the Munda area waiting for transportation. These weeks were not idle as central camps for the several groups had to be set up and improved. Training schedules, begun in the later stages of the campaign, were carried out. Transport ships were available for the trip to the Russell Islands beginning on 13 January 1944 and continued until the entire battalion move was completed on 25 February.

The fighting by the 9th Defense Battalion contributed considerably to the victory of the land forces on New Georgia, and demonstrated the value of advance base defense. The 9th was in action against Japanese aircraft on 59 different days, for a total of 159 fire missions and 249 alerts, with 46 enemy planes downed. Not counted in these statistics were aircraft damaged or diverted from their intended targets and forced to undertake less accurate nighttime bombing missions. The fire of 155mm guns destroyed a number of enemy artillery positions and troops on Munda, Baanga, and Kolombangara. Numerous pillboxes and machine gun positions were destroyed and enemy troops killed by the tank platoon on New Georgia Island. Although the firing batteries and tanks were the most active elements of the battalion, other components of the battalion were deeply involved in the fighting also. The battalion also destroyed a machine gun position and killed three Japanese on Rendova and killed another 22 enemy and captured two prisoners at Zanana.

Battalion losses throughout the campaign were remarkably few: 13 dead, 1 missing, over 50 wounded in action, and other non-battle casualties. Malaria caused a number of the Marines to be evacuated. General Griswold summarized the battalion's performance by concluding that every "officer and man of the organization has reason to feel proud of its accomplishment." The I Marine Amphibious Corps commander, Lieutenant General Alexander A. Vandegrift, said "how proud I am to belong to the same outfit as they do."

Milk Runs and Black Sheep

The first Marines to fight at New Georgia were the aircrews who were sent to blunt Japanese efforts to establish an airfield at Munda Point in December 1942. Thus began a routine air and sea pounding of the Munda Airfield until ground forces could capture it for Allied use.

For Marine flyers, these missions evoked "a parade of impressions—long over-water flights; jungle hills slipping by below; the sight of the target—airfield, ship, or town, sometimes all three; the attack and the violent defense; and then the seemingly longer, weary return . . . . " The role of land-based aviation in the Central Solomons Campaign was critical, because the Japanese air effort had to be neutralized before Allied air and ground forces could climb up the Solomons ladder towards Rabaul. Unless the Allies could capture suitable airfields closer to the Japanese base areas at Rabaul and Bougainville, the air war would be limited in range and effect. The Guadalcanal airfields were 650 miles from Rabaul, Munda Point was a somewhat-closer 440 miles. For Marines aviators, Munda was a rung on the ladder that ended at Rabaul.

The air war for the Central Solomons was a series of sorties—fighter sweeps and bombing runs. For aviation units, the operating area was divided into the combat area, the forward area, and the rear area. These zones shifted as the campaigns moved north towards the Rabaul area. While the 1st and 2d Marine Aircraft Wings were present in the Southern Pacific, Marines flew under a joint air command, Commander Aircraft Solomons (ComAirSols). Rear Admiral Marc A. Mitscher's ComAirSols was comprised of three subordinate segments: Bomber, Fighter, and Strike Commands. Strike Command was led by Colonel Christian F. Schilt, who had been awarded a Medal of Honor for heroism in Nicaragua in 1928, and Fighter Command was under Colonel Edward L. Pugh; both veteran Marine aviators in a structure where experience, "not rank, seniority, or ser-

Flight Clothing and Equipment

Flight clothing was considered naval aviation equipment rather than a purely Marine Corps uniform and was strictly functional. Basic items included leather boots, leather gloves, goggles, a cloth helmet that contained headphones, and a one-piece cotton khaki flying suit. Captain John M. Foster, flying from Munda, stated he wore a flying suit and then slung a "leather shoulder holster containing my 45-caliber automatic over my neck and buckled the belt, strung with my hunting knife, first-aid kit, extra cartridges and canteen, around my waist." He also wore a baseball cap and carried his flying helmet, goggles, and gloves. In addition, the pilots carried 65 pounds of parachute, rubber raft, and " jungle pack."

Drawing by Kerr Eby, U.S. Navy Combat Art Collection

Drawing by Kerr Eby, U.S. Navy Combat Art Collection

The Douglas R4D 'Skytrain'

Not all aircraft in the Central Solomons were fighters or bombers. The Douglas DC–3 Skytrain or Dakota (C–47 in the Navy version) was designed in 1933, and became the standard American transport of the war. The plane was an all-metal monoplane with twin engines and retractable landing gear. It was powered by two Pratt & Whitney radial engines of 1,200 horsepower each. It carried a crew of three, 28 passengers or 18 stretchers, and three medical attendants. It could also carry up to 6,000 pounds of cargo at average speeds of 185 miles-per-hour. The U.S. Navy and Marines had some 600 Skytrains, designated as R4Ds. In the Central Solomons they were used for air resupply and medical evacuation. The Marines were still using the C117, a variation of the R4D into the 1970's.

vice," was paramount. The Marine squadrons flew Grumman F4F Wildcats, Grumman F6F Hellcats, and Chance-Vought F4U Corsairs in Fighter Command; and Grumman or General Motors TBF Avenger torpedo bombers and Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bombers in Strike Command. Also operating in the theater was Marine Aircraft Group 25, the South Pacific Combat Air Transport Command (SCAT), which flew unarmed transport planes, Douglas R4D Skytrains, bringing in supplies and replacements and evacuating wounded without fighter escorts such as the bombing missions had. Some 40 other squadrons were in rearward bases, making a total of 669 aircraft available for the Central Solomons campaign. They were opposed in the air by the Japanese *Eleventh Air Fleet* and Japanese Army air units defending New Guinea.

The Corsair, known as the "Whistling Death" to the Japanese and the "Bent Wing Widow Maker" to the Marines, was delivered in March 1943 in time to have eight Marine squadrons available for the New Georgia campaign. The Corsair, along with the new F6F Hellcat fighter, dominated the air-to-air battle to sweep the skies of the Japanese. This superiority was enhanced by Army Air Corps aircraft, the Lockheed P-38 Lightning, for example. Once introduced, each new aircraft version could do a little more than the basic models; it could fly higher, fly longer, and carry more armament than its predecessor. Advances in radio detection and ranging (radar) and communications continued as

well to ensure the control systems kept pace with the aircraft.

One Marine with Fighter Command, Major John P. Condon, recalled that ComAirSols routinely struck the airfields of southern Bougainville "with escorted bombers, night attacks by Navy and Marine Corps TBFs, and some mining at night of the harbors." He went on to observe that the shorter-range SBDs were "invariably escorted in their routine reduction efforts against the fields in New Georgia." Routine did not mean safe, as the Japanese just as routinely made their fighter presence known. Naval officer and novelist James A. Michener heard a pilot observe that he was "damned glad to be the guy that draws the milk runs." But, "if you get bumped off on one of them, why you're just as dead as if you were over Tokyo in a kite."

One incident occurred that symbolized the joint nature of the air effort, the destruction of the aircraft transporting Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, who had planned the attack on Pearl Harbor. Allied intelligence agencies learned that the admiral and his staff would fly to Kahili on 18 April 1943. Admiral Mitscher ordered Fighter Command to intercept Yamamoto's aircraft. Planning for this mission fell to the Fighter Command's deputy, Lieutenant Colonel Luther S. Moore, who scheduled Army long-range P-38 Lightnings fitted with Navy navigational equipment for the task. The flight plan was prepared by the command operations officer, Major Condon. Yamamoto's plane was intercepted and shot down, ending the life of one of Japan's major combat leaders.

At the end of April 1943, the Japanese *Eleventh Air Fleet* launched a series of determined, but unsuccessful, attacks to disrupt the Allied buildup on Guadalcanal and in the Russell Islands. These continued through the month, and on 16 June, ComAirSols planes intercepted and virtually destroyed 100 Japanese aircraft before they reached their target, the New Georgia invasion fleet. By the end of the month, the Allied forces were landing on New Georgia and the Japanese lost the battle to disrupt the offensive. The Japanese responded with repeated raids against shipping and landing areas, but the balance of air power was decidedly with Commander Aircraft Solomons. A Marine airman wrote that the Japanese were creating an ever-growing number of Marine, Army, and Navy fighter aces in the process.

By June, Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 21 was pounding away at Munda, but not without losses. Flying from Guadalcanal and Russell Islands, ComAirSols fighter and strike aircraft covered the Toenails landings and subsequent operations ashore. From 30 June 1943 through July, there were only two days that did not have "Condition Red" and

The first Marines to fight in the Central Solomons campaign were the airmen based on Guadalcanal and the Russell Islands. They flew the Douglas SBD Dauntless dive-bombers that struck at Munda and elsewhere on New Georgia prior to the landings. In 1943, the planes were painted, from top to bottom, sea blue, intermediate blue, and semi-gloss sea blue, with insignia white undersurface.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 81420

dogfights with Japanese aircraft over the objective area by Allied combat air patrols. At the same time, Japanese naval forces were located and attacked, thus forcing the Japanese to move at night by circuitous routes with landing barges alone. Bomber and Strike Command aircraft ranged as far north as Ballale, Buin, Kahili, and the Shortlands in concert with Fifth Air Force strikes at the same locations.

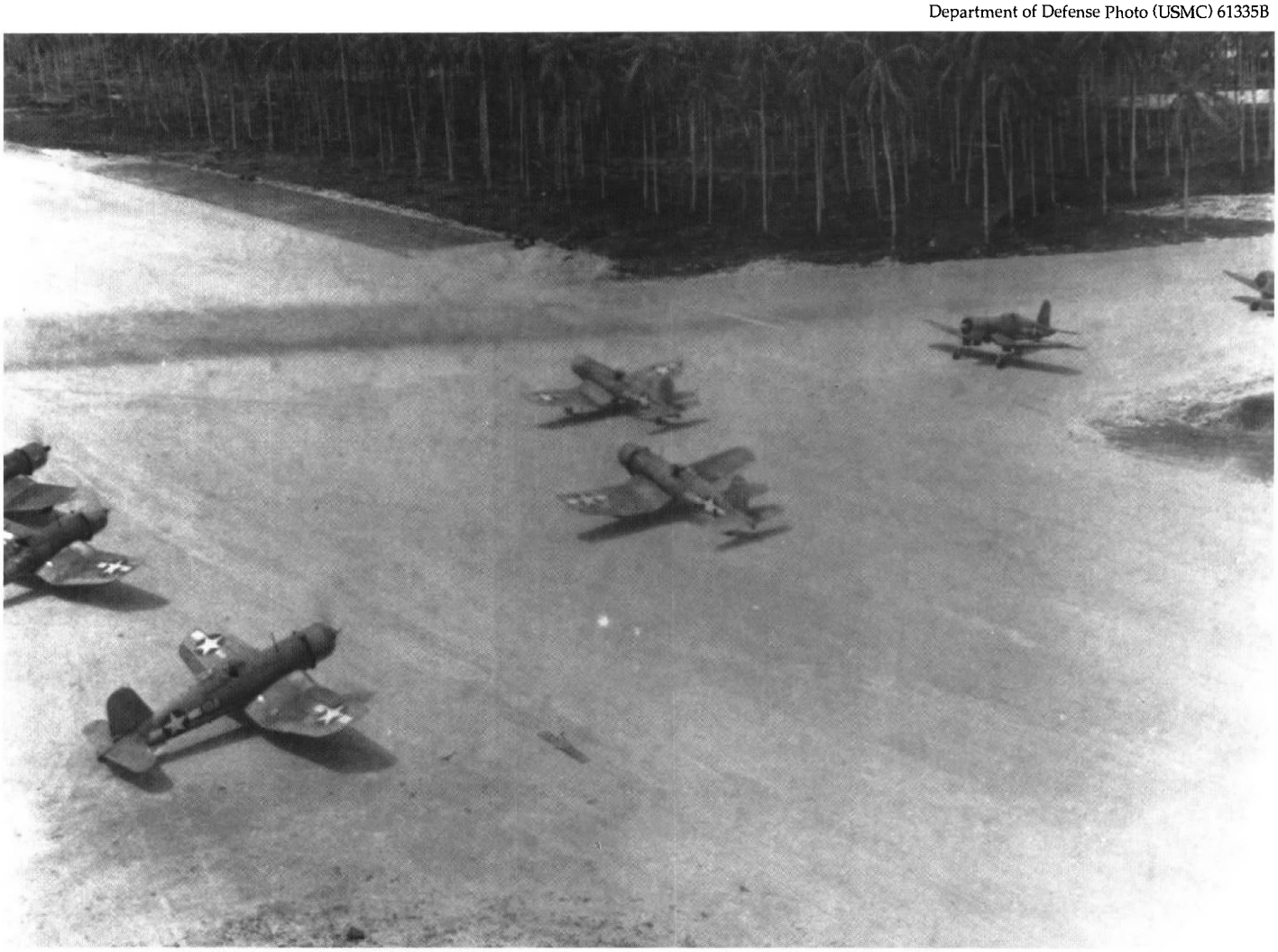
Despite this pressure, the Japanese continued to attack Allied forces from the air. ComAirSols planes were not able to operate effectively at night within range of Allied antiaircraft artillery that could not tell friendly from enemy aircraft. Another obstacle to total Allied success was the dense jungle-covered terrain that hindered identification targets and accurate assessment of the results of air strikes.

For efficient air control for the New Georgia operation, Admiral Mitscher set up a new command, Commander Aircraft New Georgia (ComAir New Georgia), as part of the landing force and under Marine Brigadier General Francis P. Mulcahy, who commanded the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing. ComAir New Georgia had no aircraft of his own, but controlled everything in the air above or launched from a New Georgia airfield. Mulcahy and his staff ensured command, control, and coordination of direct support air for the New Georgia Occupation Force after it had landed.

ComAir New Georgia established its command on Rendova after the assault waves landed on D-Day, 30 June 1943. From Rendova, he began to integrate the air defense and support system to provide XIV Corps with direct air support. On 11 July, Commander Aircraft Segi under Lieutenant Colonel Perry O. Parmelee was established under Mulcahy's direct command. The ground forces were ashore on New Georgia and pushed ahead at Zanana and Laiana and were poised at the edge of Munda Airfield at the end of July. Mulcahy provided air support to the infantry advance at Munda Point and against other Japanese-held areas on New Georgia. By the end of the campaign, Mulcahy had ordered over 1,800 preplanned sorties mainly flown by SBDs and TBFs against targets at Viru, Wickham, Munda, Enogai, and Bairoko.

The Vought F4U Corsair, such as these on the Russell Islands, provided much of the air support in the New Georgia campaign. Here they taxi out from revetments onto the air strip to meet Japanese planes coming down The Slot from Bougainville and Rabaul.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 61335B



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 59989

BGen Francis P. Mulcahy, Commander Air Solomons, at right, at his headquarters at Munda. On the left is Army Air Force Col Fiske Marshall and 1stLt Dorothy Shikoski, an Army nurse who flew with Marine transport squadrons during medical evacuations.

In addition, there were some 44 close air support strikes using ad hoc forward air control and tactical air control parties from Mulcahy's command. This was a significant step in the evolution of the air control system that eventually formed the air-ground team for the Marines. Close air support missions were planned in detail the day prior to execution. The requested missions went to Mulcahy and, if he approved, they then were forwarded to Guadalcanal, the Russells, or Segi Point for scheduling. The next day these aircraft reported to a rendezvous point and contacted an air support party on the ground which used radio, lights, smoke, or air panels to direct the strike. General Mulcahy commented that the use of aircraft close to the frontlines "proved to be impractical" with accuracy.

The R4D Skytrains of MAG-25 delivered 100,000 pounds of food, water, ammunition, and medicine that was the Northern Landing Group's only source of supply at times. This support prompted one Marine raider to ask that the air drop containers be combat, or spread, loaded as on one occasion they recovered 19 of a 20-container load drop and "only later discovered the missing drop contained medicinal brandy." Air drops of supplies went to the other ground forces as well, throughout a campaign fought in difficult, trackless, terrain.

On 25 July, a massive strike consisting of 66 B-17 and B-24 bombers in concert with naval gunfire ships struck at Lambetti Plantation, followed by an 84-plane strike on anti-aircraft artillery positions at Biblio Hill. This was coordinated with the final drive to take the campaign's main objective, Munda airstrip. The Japanese continued to delay the 43d Infantry Division and another strike followed on 1 August by a 36-plane attack of SBDs and TBFs, protected by some 30 fighters.

After the capture of Munda Point, General Mulcahy moved his command from Rendova to Munda airfield to set up strike and fighter control at Kokengolo Hill. In a Japanese-built tunnel that Navy Seabees had cleared of debris and dead, Mulcahy was able to conduct round-the-clock operations. The first fighters assigned to Munda landed at 1500 on 14 August. While safe, the Seabee-cleared shel-

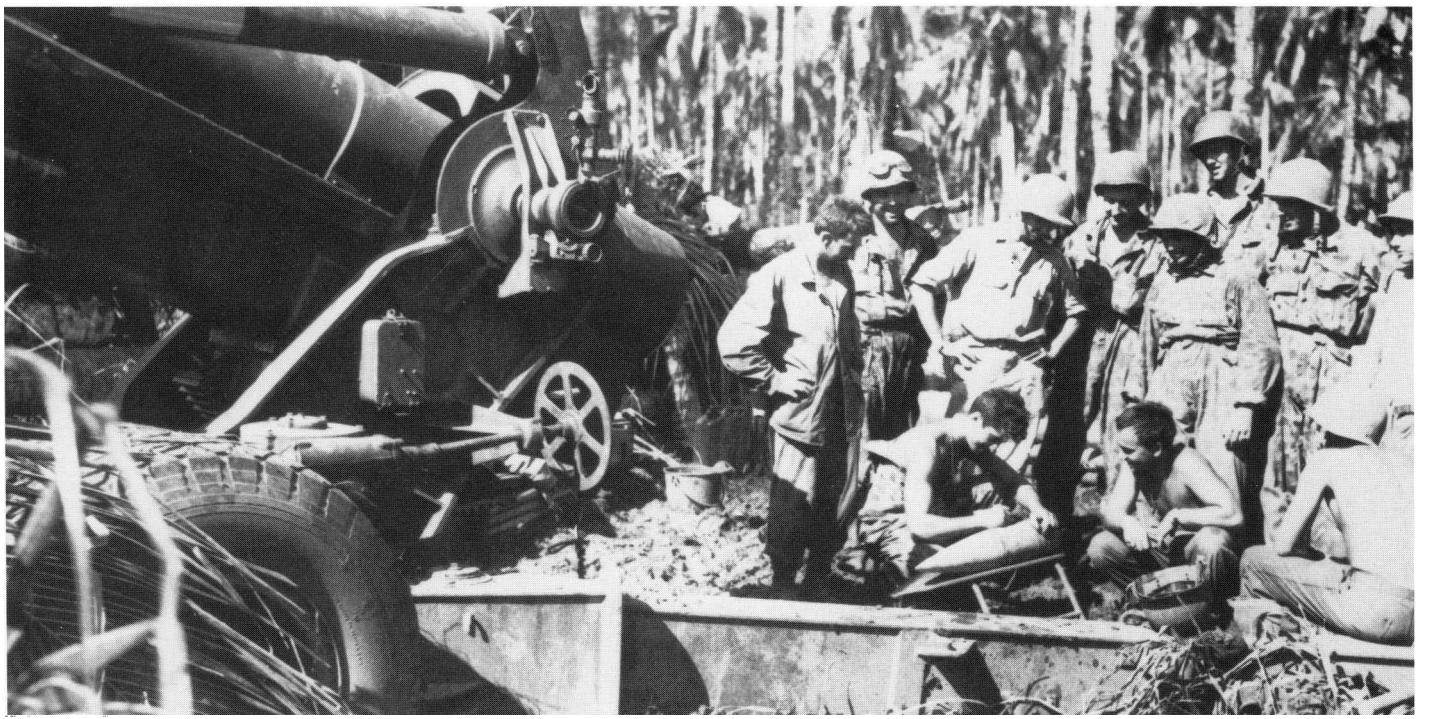
ter was also hot and smelled of its former dead occupants. On 15 August, Mulcahy sent VMF-123 and -124 fighters from Munda and Segi fields to cover the Vella Lavella landings, during which they claimed 26 Japanese aircraft downed. On this day, VMF-124's First Lieutenant Kenneth A. Walsh began a streak that would eventually earn him the Medal of Honor for shooting down 21 Japanese aircraft. After accounting for three aircraft over Vella Lavella, he brought his Corsair back to Munda Field with 20mm holes in the wings, several hydraulic lines cut, a holed vertical stabilizer, and a flat tire.

From 16 through 19 August 1943, the Japanese shelled the airfield in the day and bombed it at night. The artillery threat was eliminated with the capture of Baanga Island, but the air raids continued with intermittent bombing and strafing through the fall. From then, until the establishment of airfields on Bougainville three months later, Munda Field was the scene of intense activity as planes landed and took off to strike at Rabaul and Japanese shipping which were first trying to supply, and then evacuate, ground forces. Many barges were destroyed in the withdrawal that took some 9,400 Japanese off Kolombangara. Admiral Halsey believed that 3,000 to 4,000 other Japanese were killed during these evacuations.

Captain John M. Foster, an F4U pilot, wrote about flying during this time and his first mission from Munda. "Never had I attempted to

Munda Airfield was an essential element in supporting Allied air support in the battles for Vella Lavella, Bougainville, and New Britain that followed. Until air fields were established at Empress Augusta Bay on Bougainville in November 1943, Munda was the scene of intense aviation activity.

Marine Corps Historical Collection



Marine Corps Historical Collection

Here Batteries A and B set up at Piru Plantation to shell Vila. The counterbattery exchanges with the Japanese on Kolombangara gave the battle a personal note. Soldiers from the 25th Infantry Division add graffiti to a shell to be sent as a "Message from FDR" at the campaign's end.

land a plane on a field as narrow and short as the Munda strip," he recalled. Rolling onto the taxiway, he was thankful for the 2,000 horsepower of engine to "plow through the mud." The crews lived in tents and messed in a screened framed building chow-hall which the Seabees built. The air units provided dawn to dusk coverage, with the night spent in rest and recovery. The night's sleep was often disrupted by the appearance of a single Japanese bomber variously called "Washing Machine Charlie," "Louie the Louse," "Maytag Charlie," or "other names less printable."

On 24 August, ComAir New Georgia at Munda was relieved by Commander Aircraft Solomon's Fighter Command, at which time, General Mulcahy turned over his responsibilities to Colonel William O. Brice. Mulcahy's staff continued to coordinate liaison and spotter aircraft and strike missions launching from Munda Field until relieved of these responsibilities by ComAirSols on 24 September.

"Success in the air is a lot of little things," observed VMF-214's commander and Medal of Honor recipient, Major Gregory (Pappy) Boyington, and most of them "can be taken care of before takeoff." With the Japanese air bases now within closer range of Allied aircraft, Boyington and others conducted fighter sweeps of 36 to 48 planes that were classics of their kind. Throughout this, escorted bomber and strafing attacks continued. The capture and use of Munda Field was now felt by the Japanese "in spades" observed Fighter Command's Condon, as dive bombing and strafing attacks against the enemy were daily routine.

On 28 August, First Lieutenant Alvin J. Jensen of VMF-214 was lost in a rainstorm over Kahili and when he broke through the clouds he found himself inverted over the Japanese field. Turning wings level, he proceeded to shoot up the flightline and accounted for 24 enemy aircraft on the ground. Photographs confirmed the damage and Jensen earned the Navy Cross for this work, described as "one of the greatest single-handed feats" of the Pacific War.

During this time, Lieutenant Colonel Frank H. Schwable's VMF(N)-531 arrived in the Russells to begin night-fighter operations along with a similar Navy unit. Using ground-controlled radar intercept vectors, the squadron's Lockheed PV-1 Venturas then closed for the kill using the aircraft's on-board radar. This began the Marines' ability to deny the Japanese the cover of darkness over Vella Lavella and elsewhere.

Air support during the Central Solomons campaign was considered of high quality by all commanders. Aviation historian and veteran Pacific War correspondent Robert Sherrod estimated that of the 358 aircraft the Japanese lost during this campaign, 187 were destroyed by Marine air. More significant were the resultant deaths of highly trained and experienced pilots and crews whom the Japanese could not replace. Marine aviation unit casual-

ties for operations in the Central Solomons were 34 of the 97 Allied aircraft lost. As a postscript to New Georgia operations, on 20 October 1943, Commander Aircraft Solomons moved to Munda to use the airfield as his headquarters from which he would fight the New Britain and Bougainville campaigns.

A Joint Pattern for Victory

The last Japanese air attacks on New Georgia came the nights of 16 and 17 January 1944, but by then the campaign was finished and the final score taken. Army historian John Miller quoted a senior officer as concluding that the heavily outnumbered Japanese stood off nearly four Allied divisions in the course of the action, and successfully withdrew to fight again. One Japanese noted at the time that the:

> . . . Japanese Army is still depending on the hand-to-hand fighting of the Meiji Era while the enemy is using highly developed scientific weapons. Thinking it over, however, this poorly armed force of ours has not been overcome and we are still guarding this island

In his postwar memoirs, Admiral Halsey commented on how the smell of burnt reputations in the New Georgia campaign still filled his nostrils. The smoking reputations Halsey referred to came as the result of outright reliefs and transfers of senior officers and they were not limited to any one service. Numerous changes were made in the command structure until he got the commanders needed to produce results. The payoff to the New Georgia operation resulted in the Vella Lavella landings that bypassed Kolombangara and successful Bougainville and New Britain campaigns that demonstrated the pattern for successful joint operations there and throughout the Pacific War.

The Army had 1,094 men killed and 3,873 wounded in the fighting for New Georgia, while the Marines suffered 650 casualties in all. The Marines came through in better condition than might have been otherwise expected. Morale during the periods of greatest danger had been high. In the last two months of the campaign with enemy activity virtually nonexistent, the effects of the rough conditions showed to a certain extent, but at no time, was there any slackening in the performance of duty. For most of the campaign, shelter and sanitation were absent and the food, though usually of sufficient quantity, was seldom appetizing.

It was felt after the Solomons campaign that "struggle for control of the Solomon Islands was a critical turning point in the war against Japan. These campaigns can best be appreciated as a sequence of interacting naval, land, and air operations." The contribution to the ability to conduct joint operations was measured in the differences between the fighting on New Georgia in the summer 1943 and the success realized at Bougainville and Cape Gloucester later in the year. Here was a pattern for joint operations, and, as coastwatcher D.C. Horton phrased it, it was a "pattern for victory."

Even though the 9th Defense Battalion Artillery Group positions at Munda Airfield were bombed, they continued to fire at assigned targets. Here elements of Battery A smolders after an air raid. *Department of Defense Photo (USMC) Photo 56830*

Sources

The basic sources for this pamphlet were the second volume in the series *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II, Isolation of Rabaul,* written by Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and Maj Douglas T. Kane, USMC (Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, HQMC, 1963), and Maj John T. Rentz, USMCR, *Marines in the Central Solomons* (Washington: Historical Branch, HQMC, 1952). Other books used in this narrative were: Adm William F. Halsey and J. Bryan III, *Admiral Halsey's Story* (New York, McGraw Hill, 1947); Saburo Hayashi and Alvin D. Coox, *Kogun, The Japanese Army in the Pacific* (Quantico: Marine Corps Association, 1959); RAdm Samuel E. Morison, *Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier: History of U.S. Naval Operations in World War II,* vol VI (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1950); Robert L. Sherrod, *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II* (Washington: Combat Forces Press, 1952); Charles A. Updegraph, Jr., *U.S. Marine Corps Special Units of World War II* (Washington: History and Museums Division, HQMC, 1972); Col Joseph E. Zimmer, *The History of the 43d Infantry Division* (Baton Rouge, LA: Army and Navy Publishing Co., 1947); John Miller, Jr., *Cartwheel: The Reduction of Rabaul* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1959). In addition, in the Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C., are the Marine Corps Archives, which contain much primary source material produced by the Marine Corps units in the fighting in the Central Solomons. Also in the Center are the Oral History and Personal Papers Collections, containing many first-hand accounts of the operation.

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About the Author

Major Charles D. Melson, USMC (Retired) is originally from the San Fransciso Bay area. He is married to Janet Ann Pope, a former Navy Nurse.

Major Melson completed graduate education at St. John's College in Annapolis. He is a coauthor of *The War that Would Not End,* a volume in the official history of Marine Corps operations in Vietnam, and is the author of *Vietnam Marines.* He served as a historian in the Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard, for six years and continues to deal with the past as the director of The Queen Anne's Museum of Eastern Shore Life in Maryland. Major Melson was a Marine for 25 years, 1967 to 1992, and served in Vietnam in a variety of Fleet Marine Force positions. He was a history instructor at the United States Naval Academy, and served also at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps.

WORLD WAR II

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