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The final campaigns: Bougainville 1944-1945

Karl James

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The Final Campaigns: Bougainville 1944-1945

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

from

University of Wollongong

by

Karl James, BA (Hons)

**School of History and Politics
2005**

CERTIFICATION

I, Karl James, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of History and Politics, University of Wollongong, is wholly my work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Karl James

20 July 2005

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Abbreviations

ADC	Aide-de-camp
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AIB	Allied Intelligence Bureau
ALCA	Australian Landing Craft Assault
ALC	Australian Landing Craft
AMF	Australian Military Forces
ANGAU	Australian New Guinea Administration Unit
Aust	Australian
AWAS	Australian Women's Army Service
AWM	Australian War Memorial, Canberra
Bde	Brigade
BGS	Brigadier, General Staff
BM	Brigade Major
Bn	Battalion
Bty	Battery
CARO	Central Army Records Office, Melbourne
Cav	Cavalry
Cdo	Commando
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
CMF	Citizen's Military Forces
CO	Commanding Officer
Coy	Company
Cpt	Captain
Cpl	Corporal
DA&QMG	Deputy-Adjutant and Quartermaster-General
Div	Division
Fd	Field
FOO	Forward Observation Officer
Gen	General
GHQ	General Headquarters
HQ	Headquarters
IMB	Independent Mixed Brigade
Inf	Infantry
JCPML	John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library
LHQ	Land headquarters
LMG	Light Machine Gun
Lt	Lieutenant
Lt-Col	Lieutenant-Colonel

Lt-Gen	Lieutenant-General
MC	Military Cross
MM	Military Medal
mm	millimetre
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NGF	New Guinea Force
NGIB	New Guinea Infantry Battalion
NLA	National Library of Australia, Canberra
No	Number
OC	Officer Commanding
PIB	Papuan Infantry Battalion
Pl	Platoon
Pte	Private
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
Sgt	Sergeant
Sqd	Squadron
SWPA	South West Pacific Area
US	United States
USMC	United States Marine Corps
VC	Victoria Cross

Conversions

In accordance with the period of the Second World War, I have retained the then convention for writing army ranks, so Lieutenant-Colonel and Lieutenant-General are hyphenated. I have also kept imperial measures.

1 inch	2.45 centimetres
1 foot	30.5 centimetres
1 mile	0.91 metres
1 stone	6.35 kilograms
1 gallon	4.55 litres

On 14 February 1966, Australian currency changed from pounds, shillings and pence (£, s, d) to dollars and cents (\$, c) at the rate of £1= \$2.

12 pence	1 shilling
20 shillings	1 pound
1 pound and 1 shilling	1 Guinea

Amounts such as 2s 6d were frequently written as 2/6.

Abstract

Although Australian troops fought on Bougainville during 1944 and 1945, few people today know much about the campaign. The little discussion there is, merges the Bougainville campaign with the Australian army's other final campaigns, which have all been dismissed as just 'mopping-up' operations. The Bougainville campaign deserves to be remembered.

This thesis is an examination of the campaign fought on Bougainville. It has a clear operational framework and adapted the methodology developed by Peter Stanley in *Tarakan*, which contrasts and explores the experiences of the commanders with those of the men. Time is spent developing the personalities and characteristics of the various commanders as this influenced the decisions made during the campaign. Each commander had his own strengths and weaknesses; each had his own peculiarities and eccentricities. The Corps commander, for example, micromanaged the campaign even down to the level of platoon, while one infantry brigadier was widely recognised as being 'mad'. Some commanders were keen to commence the campaign and engage the Japanese, and pushed their men into battle accordingly. Yet others were less than enthusiastic and resented serving in militia units.

The view of the men was very different to that of their commanders. Tactics, strategy and commanders' idiosyncrasies, meant little to the men who did the fighting and dying. This thesis also examines the experiences of the men, their thoughts, feelings and fears. It gives a sense of jungle warfare and the nature of the fighting: the strain of patrolling, the fear of constant Japanese attacks, and the men's reaction to combat.

From a close study of the commanders and men, two sub-themes have also emerged as they appeared throughout the campaign. The first was the ever-present AIF and militia debate. The Bougainville campaign demonstrated that the rivalry between the two groups had not completely dissipated with the creation of the AMF and was, in fact, still an emotive issue in 1945. The second was the legacy of the First AIF, the prevalence of the 'Anzac legend' and the 'Digger myth', and the 'big-noting' Australian soldiers in official reports and unit war diaries.

Although the focus of the thesis is on the Australians, some attention is also given to the Japanese and the Bougainville Islanders.

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