

Battle of Cape Gloucester

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The **Battle of Cape Gloucester** was a battle in the Pacific theater of World War II between Japanese and Allied forces which took place on the island of New Britain, Territory of New Guinea, between late December 1943 and April 1944.

The battle was a major part of Operation Cartwheel, the main Allied strategy in the South West Pacific Area and Pacific Ocean Areas during 1943–44, and was the second World War II landing of the U.S. 1st Marine Division, after Guadalcanal.^[1]

Contents

- 1 Objectives
- 2 Operation
- 3 Aftermath
- 4 References
- 5 Bibliography
- 6 External links

Objectives

The main objective of the American and Australian allies was the capture and expansion of the Japanese military airfield at Cape Gloucester.^[2] This was to contribute to the increased isolation and harassment of the major Japanese base at Rabaul. A secondary goal was to ensure free Allied sea passage through the straits separating New Britain from New Guinea.

Operation

Supporting operations for the landings in Cape Gloucester began on 15 December, when the U.S. Army's 112th Cavalry Regiment was landed at Arawe on the south-central coast to block the route of Japanese reinforcements and supplies from east to west and as a diversionary attack from the future Cape Gloucester landings.

Battle of Cape Gloucester

Part of World War II, Pacific War



U.S. Marines hit three feet of rough water as they leave their LST to take the beach at Cape Gloucester, New Britain. December 26, 1943. (Source: U.S. National Archives.)

Date	26 December 1943 – 22 April 1944
Location	Cape Gloucester, New Britain, Territory of New Guinea
Result	Allied victory

Belligerents

 United States	 Empire of Japan
 Australia	

Commanders and leaders

William H. Rupertus	Iwao Matsuda
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Casualties and losses

310 killed	1,000 killed
1,083 wounded	

The Marines were opposed by the Japanese 17th Division, commanded by Major General Iwao Matsuda, which was augmented by "Matsuda Force"—the 65th Infantry Brigade and elements of the Japanese 51st Division. Matsuda's headquarters was at Kalingi, along the coastal trail northwest of Mount Talawe, within five miles (eight kilometres) of the Cape Gloucester airfield.

The main operation began on 26 December with a naval barrage on the Japanese positions on Cape Gloucester by U.S. Navy and Royal Australian Navy (RAN) warships, followed by air attacks by planes from the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF) and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). These attacks and an aerial smoke screen were followed by the landing of the U.S. 1st Marine Division, at Yellow Beach 1 & 2 and Green Beach, under the command of Major General William H. Rupertus. The Marines faced swampy terrain and thick jungle, but met only rear-echelon Japanese troops.

Aftermath

After the operation, the main body of the Matsuda Force continued to resist Allied offensives on mainland New Guinea.

References

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2. "Capture of the Cape Gloucester Airfields" (<http://www.nps.gov/archive/wapa/indepth/extContent/usmc/pcn-190-003128-00/sec6.htm>). National Park Service – Marines in World War II. Retrieved 2010-03-28.

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U.S. Marines & cargo aboard an LST for the landing at Cape Gloucester



United States Marines pushed back a Japanese counterattack

(<http://web.archive.org/web/20061120062643/http://ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USMC/II/index.html>) from the original on 20 November 2006. Retrieved 2006-10-18.

External links

- "The fighting conditions during the Cape Gloucester campaign as remembered by Marine Sidney Phillips" (<http://www.marinesidphillips.com/sid-phillips-on-capegloucester.htm>). Archived (<http://web.archive.org/web/20100410235949/http://www.marinesidphillips.com/sid-phillips-on-capegloucester.htm>) from the original on 10 April 2010. Retrieved April 4, 2010.



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