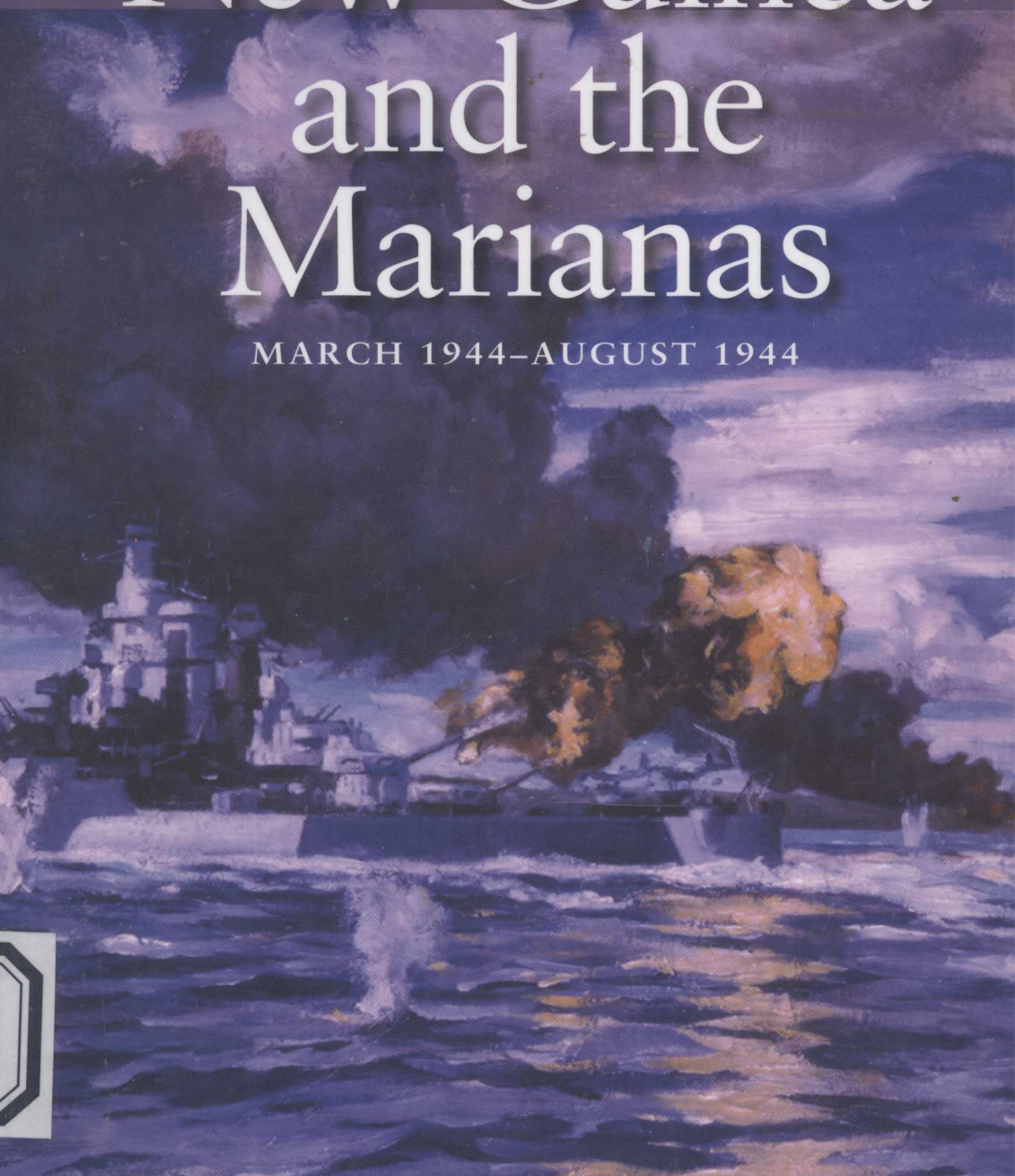


HISTORY OF UNITED STATES NAVAL OPERATIONS  
IN WORLD WAR II | VOLUME 8

# New Guinea and the Marianas

MARCH 1944–AUGUST 1944



SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON

HISTORY OF UNITED STATES NAVAL  
OPERATIONS IN WORLD WAR II

VOLUME VIII

# New Guinea and the Marianas

*March 1944–August 1944*

BY SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

Barrett Tillman



NAVAL INSTITUTE PRESS

*Annapolis, Maryland*

This book was brought to publication with the generous assistance of  
Marguerite and Gerry Lenfest.

Naval Institute Press  
291 Wood Road  
Annapolis, MD 21402

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First Naval Institute Press paperback edition published 2011

New Introduction © 2011 by the United States Naval Institute.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Morison, Samuel Eliot, 1887-1976.

History of United States naval operations in World War II / Samuel Eliot Morison.  
v. cm.

Originally published: Boston : Little, Brown, 1947-62.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Contents: v. 1. The Battle of the Atlantic, 1939-1943 — v. 2. Operations in North  
African waters, October 1942-June 1943 — v. 3. The Rising Sun in the Pacific,  
1931-April 1942 — v. 4. Coral Sea, Midway and Submarine Actions, May  
1942-August 1942 — v. 5. The Struggle for Guadalcanal, August 1942-February 1943  
— v. 6. Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier, 22 July 1942-1 May 1944 — v. 7. Aleutians,  
Gilberts and Marshalls, June 1942-April 1944 — v. 8. New Guinea and the Marianas,  
March 1944-August 1944 — v. 9. Sicily-Salerno-Anzio, January 1943-June 1944.

ISBN 978-1-59114-547-9 (v. 1 : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-1-59114-548-6 (v. 2 : alk.  
paper) — ISBN 978-1-59114-549-3 (v. 3 : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-1-59114-550-9 (v.  
4 : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-1-59114-551-6 (v. 5 : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-1-59114-  
552-3 (v. 6 : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-1-59114-553-0 (v. 7 : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-  
1-59114-554-7 (v. 8 : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-1-59114-575-2 (v. 9 : alk. paper) 1.  
World War, 1939-1945—Naval operations, American. I. Title.

D773.M6 2010

940.54'5973—dc22

2009052288

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

17 16 15 14 13 12 11 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
First printing

*To*

*The Memory of*

MARC A. MITSCHER

1887-1947

*Admiral, United States Navy*

## Preface

THIS VOLUME COVERS five of the most eventful months of the Pacific war, March through July 1944. After describing submarine patrols of this period, and the fast carrier strikes of March and April, we take up the amphibious operations in New Guinea under General MacArthur's command, and carry forward his Southwest Pacific Forces in a series of bold leaps to Hollandia, Wakde, Biak and the Vogelkop. The rest of the volume is devoted to Pacific Fleet operations from the end of the Marshall Islands campaign to the recovery of Guam. The Battle of the Philippine Sea in June, a naval action equal to Midway in tactical interest, and decisive on the outcome of the war, has been told in great detail; for it was the greatest carrier action of all time. In the history of World War II this battle occupies a place analagous to that of Jutland in World War I.

The three assaults into which Operation "Forager" was divided add up to one of the most important amphibious operations in history. Those that we have already described in the Gilberts, Marshalls and New Britain were "sudden death" affairs, in which the enemy was rolled over by one powerful rush. But the Marianas operation lasted two months; it was stoutly and bitterly contested during the whole of that time, changes in the original plans were forced by events, and the greatest flexibility as well as fortitude had to be displayed by the naval and ground forces to conquer or recover those rugged and well defended islands.

I participated in Operation "Forager" in U.S.S. *Honolulu* (Captain Harry R. Thurber), flagship of Rear Admiral Walden L. Ainsworth, and began to compile my materials and write my first draft on board that great fighting ship, as the news came in. There has been plenty of time since to correct first impressions! Early in 1945 I visited Guam to go over the beachhead with Marine officers who had participated in that

assault. For Part II, I have enjoyed the expert assistance of Rear Admiral Bern Anderson (Ret.), who throughout the New Guinea campaign was a member of the VII 'Phib staff and who, himself, directed some of the important phases of the amphibious assaults. Mr. Roger Pineau, a member of my small staff since 1947, has supplied me with translations of Japanese action reports and other documents, and has done research on specific points. From Tokyo, Captains Toshikazu Ohmae and Yasuji Watanabe have provided very many details and explanations of Japanese movements that are not found in the documents; and our former opponents, Admirals Toyoda and Ozawa, have answered leading questions. Indeed, the coöperation of our late enemies has been so wholehearted as to enable me to give the Japanese side of the Battle of the Philippine Sea in nearly as great detail as ours. Ensign Richard S. Pattee USNR worked up part of the material for submarine patrols and did other bits of specific research. Mr. Donald R. Martin compiled the task organizations; Miss Isabel J. Gatzemeier of the Naval War College drafted the charts; Miss Antha E. Card did some valuable checking as well as highly accurate typing; and Stephen J. Allen, YN1, assisted us in various ways.

Correspondence and conversations with ranking officers of the United States Navy and Marine Corps who participated in these operations have been frequent; their aid and assistance has been individually acknowledged in footnotes. Rear Admiral John B. Heffernan, Director of Naval Records and History, has given me constant support, encouragement and constructive criticism. Finally, I wish to mention, in all love and gratitude, the constant assistance rendered by my wife, Priscilla Barton Morison, who accompanied me to Tokyo in 1950, and has been both a comfort and an inspiration during the arduous months as this volume neared completion.

As in all other volumes of this series, responsibility for all statements of fact and opinion rests on me personally, and not on the Navy. I wish to express my thanks to the many officers and enlisted men who have pointed out errors in preceding volumes, and to assure them that a new and revised edition of Volumes I–VI, incorporating their corrections and many of their suggestions, is now being prepared.

As the war progressed in the Pacific, the tremendous increase in the striking power of the United States Navy, especially in its air and amphibious arms; the new techniques, weapons and tactics that were developed, and the greatly extended distance of active operations from continental bases, rendered naval operations more vast and more complicated than ever before in history. It has been no small task to bring the New Guinea and Marianas campaigns within the compass of a single volume. I have done my best to relate the essential and important events, to state the main outlines of strategy and planning on both sides, to describe procedures and methods new to warfare, and to preserve some record of the individual deeds of valor and sacrifice by sailors, aviators and ground troops which alone made victory possible.

SAMUEL E. MORISON

*Harvard University*  
*December 1952*

# List of Illustrations

Admiral Spruance and Staff

*Frontispiece*

Rear Admiral William M. Fechteler USN

Rear Admirals Crutchley and Berkey

Hollandia and Sansapor:

- A Lake Sentani field after air strikes, 21 April
- Coast between Humboldt and Tanahmerah Bays, 22 April
- Assault troops landing from LCIs at Sansapor, 30 July
- LSTs unloading at Beach Red 2, Tanahmerah Bay, 21 April

Saipan and Tinian from the Air, 29 May 1944:

- Magicienne Bay and Aslito Field
- Charan Kanoa

Commander Robert H. Isely USN

Saipan:

- The initial landings, 15 June
- The Charan Kanoa beachhead, 25 June
- Marines fighting on Saipan

Admiral Soemu Toyoda

Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa

Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher USN:

- On bridge of *Lexington*
- Lieutenant Commander Ralph Weymouth reports

Part of the Mobile Fleet during the Battle of 20 June:

- Cardiv 1 maneuvering under air attack

Rear Admiral Richard L. Conolly USN



Major General Roy S. Geiger USMC

Orote Peninsula and Asan Beachhead:

- Orote Peninsula and Apra Harbor, Guam
- The Asan beachhead after the landings

After the Battle, U.S.S. *Lexington*:

- Burial at sea

*(All photographs not otherwise described are Official United States Navy)*

# List of Charts

Movements of Fast Carrier Task Force, 22 March– 4 May 1944	35
Hollandia Operation, General Area, April 1944	62
Aitape, 22 April	71
Tanahmerah Bay, 22 April	76
Humboldt Bay, 22 April	80
Wakde-Sarmi, 17–18 May	93
Wakde Island, Landing Plan, 18 May	100
Geelvink Bay and the Vogelkop	105
Biak Island, Bosnik and Airfields, 27 May	109
Movements of Japanese Forces “KON” Operation, 30 May–11 June	121
Night Action, Stern Chase, 8–9 June	128
Noemfoor Island, 2 July	137
Sansapor and Vicinity, 30 July	142
Theater of Operations “Forager” and “A-Go”	153
The Greater Marianas, 1944	163
Saipan, Positions for the Landings, 15 June 1944	188–189
Saipan, Schematic Diagram of Northern Half of Assault Waves, 15 June	191
Saipan, Landings and Progress, 15–21 June	204
Japanese Submarine Operations and the Exploits of <i>England</i> , 15 May–16 June	226

Standard Disposition of Task Force 58, Morning of 19 June	259
Japanese Attack Disposition, 19 June	264
Battle of the Philippine Sea	275
Track of U.S.S. <i>Lexington</i> , 19 June	
Disposition of the Japanese Fleet at Time of Air Attack, 1840 June 20	293
Battle of the Philippine Sea	306
The Pursuit, 0500–2400 June 21	
Saipan Secured, 22 June–9 July 1944	323
Tinian, July 1944	352
Guam, July–August 1944	372
Guam, Landings and Beachhead 21–28 July	384–385

# Abbreviations<sup>1</sup>

Officers' ranks and bluejackets' ratings are those contemporaneous with the event. Officers and men named will be presumed to be of the United States Navy unless it is otherwise stated; officers of the Naval Reserve are designated USNR. Other service abbreviations are USA, United States Army; USCG, United States Coast Guard; USMC, United States Marine Corps; RN, Royal Navy; RAN, Royal Australian Navy; RAAF, Royal Australian Air Force.

A.A.F. — United States Army Air Force

AKA — Attack cargo ship; APA — Attack transport; APD — Destroyer-transport

AP — Armor-piercing; SAP — Semi-armor-piercing; HC — High capacity; HE — High-explosive; all shells

ATIS - Allied Translator and Interpreter Section, Far East Command

BB — Battleship

BLT — Battalion landing team

CA — Heavy cruiser; CL — Light cruiser

C.A.P. — Combat air patrol

C.I.C. — Combat Information Center

C.N.O. — Chief of Naval Operations

Cominch — Commander in Chief U.S. Fleet; Cincpac-Cincpoa — Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas

C.O. — Commanding Officer

Com — As prefix, means Commander

CTF — Commander Task Force; CTG — Commander Task Group

CV — Aircraft carrier; CVL — Light carrier; CVE — Escort carrier

DD — Destroyer; DE — Destroyer escort; DMS — Destroyer mine-sweeper

DP — dual-purpose

<sup>1</sup>The Japanese Monographs frequently mentioned in our footnotes were prepared by the Demobilization Bureaus of the Japanese Army and Navy during the occupation and are still being translated by ATIS of the Far East Command, whose serial numbers are first cited; the second number, prefixed by "851," is that of the Office of the Chief of Military History in Washington where the translations are on file. If a given document has been deposited in the National Archives, an N.A. number follows the WDC number.

- ESB — Engineer Special Brigade  
*Inter. Jap. Off.* — USSBS *Interrogations of Japanese Officials* (1946)  
 JANAC — Joint Army-Navy Assessment Committee *Japanese Naval and Merchant Ship Losses World War II* (1947)  
 J.C.S. — Joint Chiefs of Staff  
 Jicpoa — Joint Intelligence Center Pacific Ocean Areas  
 LC — Landing craft; LCI — Landing craft, Infantry; LCM — Landing craft, mechanized; LCT — Landing craft, tank; LCVP — Landing craft, Vehicles and Personnel  
 LSD — Landing ship, dock; LST — Landing ship, tank; LVT — Landing vehicle tracked (Amphtrac)  
 N.A. — National Archives, Washington, D.C.  
 N.A.S. — Naval air station; N.O.B. — Naval operating base  
 O.N.I. — Office of Naval Intelligence  
 O.T.C. — Officer in Tactical Command  
 PC — Patrol craft; PT — Motor torpedo boat  
 RCT — Regimental combat team  
 SC — Submarine chaser; also an air-search radar  
 SWPA — Southwest Pacific Areas  
 TBS — (Talk Between Ships) — Voice radio  
 UDT — Underwater demolition team  
 USSBS — United States Strategic Bombing Survey  
 VB — Bomber squadron; VC — Composite squadron; VF — Fighter squadron; VT — Torpedo-bomber squadron. M is inserted for Marine Corps squadrons  
 WDC — Washington Document Center document; these documents are mostly now in National Archives  
 YMS — Motor minesweeper; YP — Patrol vessel

Aircraft designations (numerals in parentheses indicate number of engines)

*United States*

- B-17 — Flying Fortress, Army (4) heavy bomber; B-24 — Liberator, Army (4) heavy bomber; B-25 — Mitchell, Army (2) medium bomber; B-26 — Marauder, Army (2) medium bomber; B-29 — Superfortress, Army (4) heavy bomber  
 C-47 — Skytrain, Army (2) transport  
 Dumbo — PBV equipped for rescue work  
 F4F — Wildcat; F4U — Corsair; F6F — Hellcat; Navy (1) fighters

OS2U — Kingfisher, Navy (1) scout-observation float plane  
P-38 — Lightning, Army (2); P-39 — Airacobra; P-40 — Warhawk;  
P-47 — Thunderbolt; P-61 — Black Widow, Army (2) fighters  
PBM-3 — Mariner, Navy (2) patrol bomber (flying boat)  
PBY — Catalina (2) seaplane; PBY-5A — amphibian Catalina; PB4Y —  
Liberator (4)  
PV-1 — Ventura, Navy (2) medium bomber  
SB2C — Helldiver; SBD — Dauntless; Navy (1) dive-bombers  
SOC — Seagull, Navy (1) scout-observation float plane  
TBF, TBM — Avenger, Navy (1) torpedo-bombers

*Japanese*

Betty — Mitsubishi Zero-1, Navy (2) high-level or torpedo-bomber  
Frances — Nakajima P1Y, Navy (2) land all-purpose bomber  
Hamp — Mitsubishi Zero-2, Navy (1) fighter  
Irving — Nakajima J1N, Navy (2) night fighter  
Jake — Navy (1) float plane  
Jill — Nakajima B6N, Navy (1) torpedo-bomber  
Judy — Aichi D4Y, Navy (1) dive-bomber  
Kate — Nakajima 97-2, Navy (1) torpedo-bomber  
Val — Aichi 99, Navy (1) dive-bomber  
Zeke — Mitsubishi Zero-3, Navy (1) fighter

# Introduction

SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON witnessed many of the operations he described in his monumental *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*. The sailor-scholar was most comfortable keeping his literary feet wet, and went ashore in several combat venues—to interview officers and servicemen and prepare new drafts of his series' fifteen volumes. Indeed, he watched part of the Marianas campaign from the Brooklyn-class light cruiser U.S.S. *Honolulu* (CL-48), in which he had steamed through the Solomons in 1943.

*New Guinea and the Marianas* spans a significant period of the Pacific War, from March through August 1944. During those six months America's Central Pacific offensive accelerated dramatically, as the fighting men behind it applied experience and knowhow painfully gained during campaigns in the upper Solomons, the Gilberts, and the Marshalls. Strategically, Admiral Chester Nimitz's operations in support of General Douglas MacArthur in the Southwest Pacific Theater represented just a brief diversion from the atoll hopping of the previous several months. The humid jungle fighting of New Guinea contrasted dramatically with sun-baked combat across Central Pacific coral. But the ultimate itinerary remained unchanged: Tokyo via Manila.

When published in 1953, Morison's eighth volume immediately became the primary source for writers researching the First Battle of the Philippine Sea. Nearly sixty years later it remains an indispensable reference for students of "The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot." And yet, Morison's description of the 19–20 June 1944 carrier engagement fills only sixty-three of the book's 400-plus pages. Operation Forager, the occupation of Saipan, Tinian, and Guam, accounts for just sixty-seven pages. But post-March 1944 action in the New Guinea area—at islands

such as Hollandia, Wakde and Biak, and Noemfoor and Sansapor in Dutch New Guinea (now controlled by Indonesia)—comprises one-fourth of the entire volume. And Morison devotes an impressive amount of detail to each landing.

Short sections of Volume Eight describe U.S. fast carrier strikes against the Palaus, Hollandia, and Truk during March and April 1944, as well as submarine actions from late 1943 into July 1944. Morison only touches on the Bureau of Ordnance's scandalous refusal to address defects in the badly flawed Mk 14 torpedo, which it had developed on the watch (1927–1931) of Rear Admiral (later Fleet Admiral) William D. Leahy. (Morison does briefly describe corrections to the torpedo authorized by Vice Admiral Charles A. Lockwood, the U.S. commander of submarines in the Pacific, whose boats finally deployed with reliable weapons in September 1943.) And he erroneously stated that Japanese submarines used 24-inch "Long Lance" torpedoes. In fact, most Imperial Navy submarines used the 21-inch, Type 95 model; the actual Long Lance, the Type 93, armed surface ships.<sup>1</sup>

Entirely appropriate is Morison's eleven-page treatment of the immense logistical effort behind Operation Forager. The author describes the multitude of challenges that faced American planners, who had only ninety days to compile mounds of information and then draft, revise, print, and distribute an encyclopedia of documents during the era of manual typewriters, carbon paper, and mimeograph machines. Keeping major elements of the Navy at sea for four-month stints was daunting enough without continually having to equitably distribute some 40,000 types of supplies ranging from skivvies to airplanes.

Closely linked to logistics, of course, is base construction, and Morison devoted more space to the subject than did many of his contemporaries. In discussing the New Guinea campaign he was justifiably generous in his praise of the Army Air Force's aviation engineer battal-

<sup>1</sup>"Naval Weapons, Naval Technology. Japan, Torpedoes of World War II"  
[http://www.navweaps.com/Weapons/WTJAP\\_WWII.htm](http://www.navweaps.com/Weapons/WTJAP_WWII.htm).



ions (which specialized in airfield construction) and its Corps of Engineers (which drained swamps, constructed roads, and provided essential facilities). The Navy's fabled Seabees—who arrived in Saipan almost cheek by jowl with assault troops in June 1944—do not appear until halfway through the volume. But Morison highlights their work on Tinian and Guam, and even heralds seldom-mentioned Marine Corps engineers. Neither Army construction units nor their leatherneck counterparts ever received the splashy wartime or postwar acclaim of the Seabees. After all, John Wayne never made a movie entitled *Fighting Aviation Engineers* or *Fighting Marine Engineers*.

Except in the area of fleet engagements (unseen on Earth since 1944), Morison's massive series contains numerous lessons for today's Navy—especially in the realm of joint operations. Operation Torch (the November 1942 landings in North Africa) and many other U.S. amphibious landings illustrate the cooperation required between the Army and Navy to put troops, equipment, and supplies ashore. And though Americans have not crossed defended beaches since the Korean War, Morison's descriptions of the planning, logistics, and execution of sea-to-shore operations remain a pertinent area for study. So too does his depiction of the unexpected—as when Army units splashed ashore at Tanahmerah Bay, Dutch New Guinea, only to encounter impassable swamps a short distance inland. As in the 1944 Overlord landings—when Allied intelligence officers examined aerial photos of Normandy almost daily and still completely overlooked its near-impenetrable *bocage*—reconnaissance had fallen short.

As is typical of the rest of Morison's series, Volume Eight offers little about intelligence. For instance, the author alluded only vaguely to "Allied intelligence" producing accurate details of Japanese dispositions and order of battle during the New Guinea campaign. Then again, Allied code-breaking operations remained widely unknown until the 1970s. As it was, the Army and Navy routinely mined Japanese secrets from high-level, "Magic" intercepts, routine traffic analysis, and radio direction finding. It would be interesting to know what Morison learned, or suspected, about Allied cryptanalysis, considering his high-level connections.