

# BATTLE OF THE BISMARCK SEA

March 2, 1943 ♦ March 4, 1943

## ♦ PACIFIC THEATER ♦



### AXIS FORCES



TORA "Zero"  
Commemorative Air Force  
Photo by Kevin Hong/SectorMedia

### STRENGTH

TRANSPORT	DESTROYERS	AIRCRAFT
Aiyo Maru	Shirayuki "White Snow"	Mitsubishi A6M "Zero"
Kyokusei Maru	Uranami "Shore Wave"	<b>8</b>
Kembu Maru	Asashio "Morning Tide"	DESTROYERS
Oigawa Maru	Asagumo "Morning Cloud"	<b>8</b>
Sin-ai Maru	Arashio "Stormy Tide"	TRANSPORTS
Teiyo Maru	Shikinami "Spreading Waves"	<b>≈100</b>
Nojima Maru	Tokitsukaze "Favorable Wind"	FIGHTERS
Taimai Maru	Yukikaze "Snowy Wind"	<b>≈100</b>
		<b>SUNK</b>

### LOSSES

<b>≈3,000</b> SOLDIERS	<b>≈20</b> FIGHTERS	<b>4</b> DESTROYERS
		<b>8</b> TRANSPORTS

### OBJECTIVES

#### AXIS

Japan's main objective was to remove any form of European domination in Asia. Japan invaded the Australian territory of New Guinea to isolate Australia from the U.S. If they could isolate Australia, Japan could prevent the U.S. or Britain from using the continent as a base of operations.

#### ALLIED

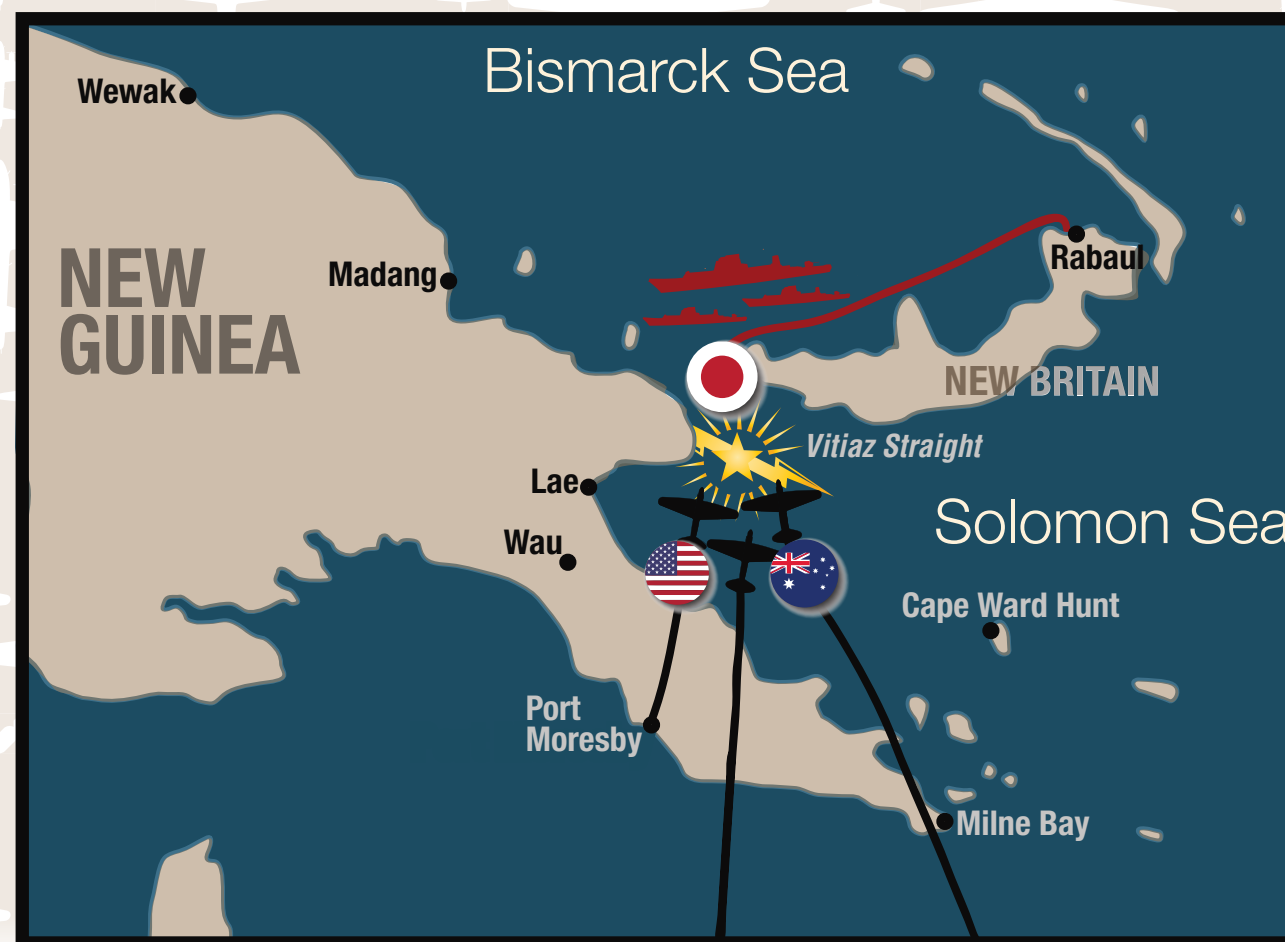
The Allies goal for the counter-offensives in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands was to capture Japan's main base at Rabaul, New Britain. This effort, later codified as Operation Cartwheel, would clear the way for the Allied forces to reclaim the Philippines.

#### AXIS

Japan's *Operation 81* was a convoy intending to reinforce their position in Lae, New Guinea. Eight transports and eight destroyers carried some 6,900 soldiers from Rabaul to Lae. The 540-mile trip would be escorted by Japanese Zeros providing air cover in case of an attack.

#### ALLIED

The Allied bomber force in the Southwest Pacific Area served to restrict Japan's ability to resupply their posts. To do this, Allied forces employed innovative tactics to perform missions to intercept convoys. Their use of air power overwhelmed and eventually led to Japan's defeat.



### ALLIED FORCES



P-38 Lightning  
Fagan Fighters  
Photo by Mark Naumann

### STRENGTH

<b>39</b> HEAVY BOMBERS	Beaufort Light Bomber	Beaufighter Fighter	P-38 Lightning Fighter
<b>41</b> MEDIUM BOMBERS	PBV Catalina Patrol Bomber	B-17 Flying Fortress Heavy Bomber	A-20 Havoc Medium Bomber
<b>34</b> LIGHT BOMBERS	B-26 Marauder Medium Bomber	B-25 Mitchell Medium Bomber	B-24 Liberator Heavy Bomber
<b>54</b> FIGHTERS			
<b>10</b> PATROL TORPEDO BOATS	Patrol Torpedo (PT) Boat		

### LOSSES

<b>13</b> AIRCREW (USAAF and RAAF)	<b>4</b> FIGHTERS 3 P-38 Lightnings 1 Beaufighter	<b>2</b> BOMBERS 1 B-17 Flying Fortress 1 B-25 Mitchell
--	--	--