

UNCLASSIFIED

DAILY ENTERPRISE



(U) HISTORY TODAY - March 23, 2016

FROM: CCH

Run Date(s): 03/23/2016

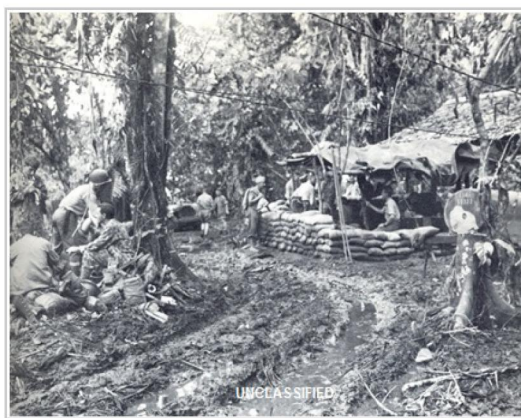
(U) COMINT's role during the Japanese attack at Cape Torokina

(U) On March 23, 1944, the Japanese 17th Army launched their last offensive in the campaign for the Solomon Islands. This struggle began with a landing by American marines in August 1942.

(U) The March 1944 attack on Bougainville was little noted at the time because the U.S. victory at Guadalcanal had been seen in the media as the end of the campaign in the Solomons.

(U) The Americans had a beachhead headquarters at Cape Torokina on Bougainville. The Third Marine Defense Battalion protected the site, while the Army's Americal Division and the 37th Infantry Division manned the headquarters perimeter.

(U) An initial Japanese attack made a limited breakthrough on Cape Torokina beachhead.



(U) A Marine Corp Installation at Cape Torokina.



(U) On March 19, the Japanese 17th Army sent a message to Tokyo stating that all available forces from their 6th Division were going to be concentrated to exploit the breakthrough on the beachhead perimeter. The attack, according to the message, was to begin the morning of March 22.

(U) The message was decrypted by the Central Bureau Brisbane (CBB), the joint U.S.-Australian cryptologic organization for the Southwest Pacific Theater, in mid-afternoon on March 21. Its importance was recognized; the Japanese message was translated, typed, and issued in just a little over an hour. It was taken by courier to theater headquarters; a warning message to the commander at Cape Torokina went out within another 10 minutes.

(U) The attack was carried out as scheduled on March 23 by about 15,000 Japanese infantrymen, backed by a large force of navy personnel and a heavy concentration of artillery.

(U) U.S. air superiority and support from naval gunfire helped contain the enemy advance. The Japanese withdrew because of the heavy level of casualties. Some fighting along the perimeter continued until the 27th, but the Japanese were completely routed.

(U) The Japanese retreated into the deep interior of Bougainville and in April, the Americans went on the offensive against them.

(U) The COMINT provided by CBB enabled the Americans to prepare to meet the new enemy offensive. In World War II, most COMINT product was issued within two or three days of decryption; while the one-hour process in this instance probably was not unprecedented, it was unusual. This instance not only illustrates the vital nature of COMINT in waging the war, but how the cryptologic units could surge to provide timely product when the circumstances required.

Approved for Release by NSA on 04-12-2019, FOIA Case # 84783

(b) (3) - P.L. 86-36

10/26/2018

Doc ID: 6660655

(U) For more on the CBB, see our publication [The Quiet Heroes of the Southwest Pacific](#).

(U) To discuss historical topics with interesting folks, visit the Center for Cryptologic History's blog, [History Rocks](#) ("go history rocks").

(U) Have a question or comment on *History Today*? Contact us at [DL cch](#) or [redacted]

Information Owner: [redacted]
Page Publisher: [redacted]
Last Modified: March 21, 2016
Last Reviewed: March 21, 2016

~~DERIVED FROM: NSA/CSSM 1-52, DATED: 20180110, DECLASSIFY ON: 20430110~~
UNCLASSIFIED

(b) (3) - P.L. 86-36