Chapter 3

Japanese air operations in New Guinea

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第3章
ニューギニアにおける日本軍航空作戦
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Japanese air operations in New Guinea

From February 1942 until July 1944, a war of attrition was fought by the air forces of the United States, Australia and Japan in Papua, New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago and the Solomon Islands. The air campaign in the South Pacific lasted a little over half the war but was nevertheless of extreme importance to its outcome. This is because it was around the island of New Guinea that the Japanese forces were first stopped, worn down and finally pushed back. This chapter concentrates on the major strategic and operational issues faced by the Japanese, focusing on Japanese air operations over the main island of New Guinea.

The first phase of the Japanese air campaign over New Guinea was the navy’s offensive against Port Moresby, from May until October 1942. Next, from early 1943 until June, the Japanese army filled in for the navy (whose air forces were increasingly committed to the Solomons campaign) and fought a campaign that was intended to be offensive but became increasingly defensive in nature. The third phase was a short period in the summer of 1943 in which the Japanese army assigned a more positive role to its air forces in New Guinea, only to see the bulk of that force destroyed in a single air attack. Finally, the Japanese army air forces fought an unglamorous defensive campaign for approximately a year, from the summer of 1943 until their army was pushed out of New Guinea and the war itself shifted to the Mariana and the Philippines.

Occupation of Rabaul and the start of air operations against Port Moresby

When the Japanese army and navy developed plans for a war with the United States and Great Britain in 1941, the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago, particularly New Britain, were included in their target list from early on. This was because Japanese planners saw Rabaul on New Britain, with its excellent natural harbour, as a potential threat to Truk Island in the Carolines – 1,100 kilometres to the north and the site of the Japanese navy’s most important base in the central Pacific Ocean. Japanese control of New Britain and the surrounding islands was therefore necessary to protect the base at Truk.

On 5 November 1941, the army’s South Seas Force was assigned the task of seizing Guam and then the airfields in the Bismarck Islands. The navy’s special landing forces

1942年2月から1944年7月まで、アメリカ、オーストラリアそして日本の航空部隊は、ニューギニア東部、中部そしてピスマルク・ソロモン諸島地域において消耗戦を展開した。南太平洋方面における航空作戦は戦争の約半分の期間続き、戦争の勝敗にとって非常に重要な意味をもっていた。なぜなら、ニューギニアの陸上、上空、そして周辺海上での戦いによって、日本軍は初めて進攻を制御され、疲弊させられ、ついには後退させられたからである。以下、ニューギニア本島における日本軍航空作戦の焦點をとどめて、日本の主要戦略及び作戦関連事項について述べたい。

日本軍によるニューギニアでの航空作戦の第1段階は、1942年5月から10月までの海軍によるポートモレスビー攻略作戦だった。第2段階の作戦は、（したいにソロモン諸島での作戦に航空力を寄せ込んでいた）海軍に代わって、1943年初頭から6月まで陸軍が実行したが、本来は攻撃作戦を実行するつもりだったが、日本本土に更なる非戦的攻撃ををおこす作戦が始まった。第3の段階は、1943年夏の短期間で、日本陸軍航空隊がニューギニアでより積極的な役割を担った。たった1回の敵の空襲によって、そのほとんどが破壊されてしまった。最後に、日本陸軍航空隊は、1943年夏から約1年間あまり精一杯の作戦を行った。その後、日本陸軍はニューギニアから後退し、実質的な戦いはマリアナ諸島とフィリピンに移っていた。

ラバウル占領とポートモレスビー航空作戦の開始

来るべき対英戦に備えて、1941年に日本陸軍と海軍が作戦計画を作成した際、ピスマルク諸島、特にニュープリテン島は英米が先に占領すべき目標に選ばれ、日本軍作戦計画担当者は、自然の良港であったニュープリテン島のラバウルが、そこから北へ1,100kmの距離で、日本海軍の最重要基地であったカロリン諸島のトラックに脅威を及ぼす可能性があると考えたからである。それゆえ、中部太平洋地区において、ニュープリテン島と周辺の島々を日本の勢力下に押さえれば、トラック島の基地を守るために必然性があった。

1941年11月5日、陸軍南方支隊はグラム島とピスマルク諸島に点在していた飛行場を占拠せよとの命令を受けた。海軍の陸戦隊が、グラム島の占領を引き続き、その後陸軍と協力してラバウルの占領を行う予定になっていた。そしてトラック島に拠点を置いていた海軍第44航空団が、グラム及びラバウル・ピスマルク両作戦の支援をすることに

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were to take over the occupation of Guam, after which they would cooperate with the
army in occupying Rabaul. The navy’s 4th Fleet, based in Truk, would be responsible for
supporting both the Guam and the Rabaul–Bismarck Archipelago operations. On 22
January 1942 the special landing forces assaulted Rabaul by sea and, with the support of
both land-based and carrier-based aircraft, the town was quickly captured.

While these operations were being carried out, the Japanese army and navy, faced with
the unexpectedly rapid success of their operations in the Philippines, Malaya and the
Netherlands East Indies, had to decide upon their next steps. After an invasion of Aus-
tralia was ruled out because it would have required excessive resources, the navy high
command ordered the 4th Fleet, with the 11th Air Fleet, to assault Lae and Salamaua in
New Guinea, Port Moresby in Papua, and the Solomon Islands.

Zero fighters of the Chitose Air Corps moved to Rabaul on 31 January 1942. On 2 and 5
February, Kawanishi Type 97 “Mavis” flying boats of the Yokohama Air Corps bombed
Port Moresby for the first time, and the air war over New Guinea was under way. On 9
February, Gasmata (on New Britain’s southern coast) was occupied, and work began on
an airstrip. To carry out further operations, the 4th Air Corps was created and headquar-
tered in Rabaul, with a nominal strength of 27 fighters and 27 bombers. On 24 February,
the 4th Air Corps began bombing Port Moresby.

On 7 March 1942, the Japanese high command decided upon the second stage of opera-
tions, which focused on the continuation of major offensives. As part of this new strat-
egy, the decision was made to continue the advance in the Solomons and New Guinea
area, with the aim of eventually cutting off the supply route between the United States
and Australia. Lae and Salamaua on the north-eastern New Guinea coast were occupied
on 8 March. Two days later, the Tainan Air Corps sent eleven of its Zero fighters to Lae,
which became an exceedingly busy advanced airbase.

Until the end of July 1942, the naval air units based at Rabaul and Lae conducted
intensive flying missions over the Owen Stanley Range to attack Port Moresby and
other Allied bases on the New Guinea mainland. Japanese fighter units were also kept
busy intercepting Allied air attacks on Japanese bases. Although the Australians and
Americans often lost more aircraft in individual air battles, Allied air strength did not
diminish significantly. On the other hand, the Japanese, although suffering fewer losses,
saw a slow decline in the quality of their forces as highly-trained and experienced pilots
were lost and replaced by increasingly less experienced ones. This period was, therefor

なっていた。1942年1月22日、陸戦隊は陸上攻撃機と艦上機の援護を受けながらラバ
ウルを海から攻撃し、市街地はまもなく陥落した。

日本陸軍と海軍は、フィリピンやマレー半島、そして荷領東インドなどで予想以上に
速く勝利を収めたため、上記の作戦の実行中に次の展開を決定しなくてはならなかっ
た。オーストラリア侵略があまりにも物資を必要とするため不可能と判断された後、
海軍司令部は第2航空艦隊と第11航空艦隊に対して、東部ニューギニアのラエとサラモア、
そしてポートモレスビーとソロモン諸島を攻撃するよう指令を出した。

海軍千歳航空隊の所属の零式戦闘機は、1942年3月31日にラパルに進出した。2月2
日と5日には、横浜航空隊所属の九七式飛行艇がポートモレスビーを初めて爆撃し、
ニューギニア上空での航空戦が始まった。2月9日、（ニューブリテン島南部沿岸の）
ガスマタを占領し、そこで飛行場建設作業を開始した。更なる作戦遂行のため、第4
航空隊が編成され司令部がラパルに置かれたが、それは航空機27機と爆撃機27
機の公称戦力であった。2月24日には、第4航空隊がポートモレスビーの爆撃を
始めた。

1942年3月7日、日本軍司令部は主要攻撃作戦を継続することを目的とした第2段階作
戦を決定した。この新しい作戦の一環として、アメリカとオーストラリア間の補給
ルートをいずれも断するために、ソロモン諸島とニューギニア地域において進攻を続
けるという決定がなされた。ニューギニア北部海岸部のラエとサラモアは3月8日に占
領された。その後、南米航空隊が零戦11機をラエに送り込み、ラエは非常に往來
の激しい前線航空基地となった。

The Tainan Air Corps, to which Sakai Saburo (left) and Nishizawa
Hiroshi (right) were attached, was dispatched to Lae by the
Japanese navy in March 1942.
somewhat of a stalemate, with neither side achieving air superiority and the Japanese failing to drive the Allied air forces out of New Guinea.

The commitment of army air forces to the South Pacific

The next stage in Japanese air operations over New Guinea involved the deployment of Japanese army air forces in the region. After the Americans landed on Guadalcanal Island in the Solomons on 7 August 1942, the Japanese air forces based in Rabaul were forced to make increasingly greater efforts in the Solomons, while continuing their campaign against New Guinea. The air battle in the Solomons was fought principally by naval aircraft and, as this commitment grew, the Japanese army’s air forces would play a greater role over New Guinea.

On 11 November Hattori Takushiro, of the Army General Staff, called for the deployment of army air forces to the region in order to regain air superiority. With estimates of future American air power projecting 24,500 US air force and navy first-line planes operating in the South Pacific by December 1943, it was now recognised that the most urgent need facing Japan was to increase air power.

Faced with looming defeat on Guadalcanal, and with setbacks in their drive on Port Moresby from the withdrawal of Japanese forces from Kokoda, the Japanese military finally decided to commit some of its air forces to the South Pacific. On 18 November an Army–navy central agreement on operations in the South Pacific Area was signed, and the 6th Air Division was committed to the New Guinea front. In accordance with the agreement, 60 Nakajima Type 1 “Oscar” fighters of the 11th Sentai (air group) reached Rabaul via Truk on 18 December, and almost immediately became involved in air defence operations. By the end of the month they were flying missions against targets such as Buna on mainland New Guinea. On 29 December, army heavy bomber units were ordered to deploy from Burma to New Guinea.

On 4 January 1943 the army and navy high commands ordered that operations on New Guinea be continued. The purpose of Japan’s operations in the South Pacific was to “secure a position of superiority”. Lae, Salamana, Wewak and Madang on New Guinea were to be strengthened or occupied, and the area north of the Owen Stanleys was to be secured so that it could function as a base for operations aimed at Port Moresby. The Japanese then had 164 army and 190 navy aircraft on their bases at Rabaul and the surrounding area. Thereafter, Japanese air operations over New Guinea were conducted principally by the army, operating out of Wewak and other bases.

1942年7月末まで、ラパウルとラウの海軍航空隊は、オーバー・スタンレー山脈を越えてポート・モレスビーと他のニューギニア南島の連合軍基地を集中的に攻撃し続けた。日本軍の戦闘機部隊はまた、自軍基地に対しての連合軍の空からの攻撃を迎撃するためしばしば発進した。個々の空中戦では、オーストラリア軍やアメリカ軍機の損失のほうが多かったとは言え、連合軍の航空力の減少は深刻ではなかった。一方、損失数は連合軍ほどではなくとも、訓練と経験を積んだ陸軍士を失い、しばしば経験不足の者がこれがこれに入れ替わったことで、日本の戦闘力の質は徐々に落ちていった。よってこの時期は、航空力ではどちらも優位に立たず、日本軍は連合軍空軍をニューギニアから追い出すことができなかったという、いわゆる膠着状況だったといえる。

南太平洋方面における陸軍航空隊

ニューギニアでの日本軍航空作戦の次の段階は、日本陸軍航空隊の投入にある。1942年8月7日にアメリカ軍がソロモン諸島のガダルカナル島に上陸した後、ラパウルに基地を置いた日本海軍航空隊は、ニューギニア攻撃作戦を継続しながらも、ソロモン諸島にさらに多くの戦力をつぎ込む必要があった。ソロモン諸島での航空戦は基本的には海軍機によって行われたが、その戦闘力が激しくなるにしたがって、陸軍航空隊が、ニューギニアにおいてもっと重要な役割を果たすことになった。

11月11日、陸軍参謀部の昭和18年11月号版に、航空戦力の優勢を取り戻すために、陸軍航空部隊の派遣を秘めた。1943年12月までは、南太平洋方面における将来的の航空力は、アメリカ軍前線航空機及び海軍機で2万5,000機を進めるであろうという予測のもと、日本軍は急激に航空戦力を増大する必要があった。

ガダルカナル島での攻防が目前に迫り、ポート・モレスピーへの日本の進撃がコロニーでの進撃で挫けた後、陸軍はようやくその航空部隊を南太平洋方面に派遣することを決定した。11月18日に、「南太平洋方面作戦海上中央協定」が署名され、ニューギニアの前線に第6飛行隊が派遣された。この合意に従って、12月18日に飛行第11戦隊の一式戦闘機60機（集中）がトラック島経由でラパウルに到着し、直ちに航空防衛作戦に参戦し、12月末には、ニューギニア南島のブナなどを攻撃するために出撃した。12月29日には陸軍重爆撃機戦隊は、ビルマからニューギニアへの移動を命じられた。

1943年1月4日、陸海軍の司令部は、ニューギニアにおける作戦を続けるよう指令を出した。日本軍の南太平洋方面における作戦目的は、「優位性の確保」にあった。そこでニューギニア本土のラウ、ラウ、ウエクワクトコマダを強化または占領し、オーバー・スタンレー山脈以北の地域を、ポート・モレスピー攻略の基盤として確保すべく、との指令が出された。この時点で、日本軍は陸軍機164機、海軍機190機を、ラパウルとその周辺の航空基地に置いていた。これ以後、ニューギニア上空の航空作戦
Further commitment and destruction of army air forces

On 25 March 1943, in recognition of the importance of the New Guinea front to Japan’s war efforts, a revised Army–navy central agreement was concluded. This resulted in a substantial commitment to the defence of Lae and Salamaua and the strengthening of bases along the northern New Guinea coast, while a delaying operation would be fought in the Solomons. The assault on Port Moresby, while officially still a long-term objective, was, for all practical purposes, abandoned.

Reflecting this revised strategy, the army decided to strengthen its air forces in the New Guinea area. The 68th and 78th Sentai of the 14th Air Brigade, flying the Kawasaki Type 3 “Tony” fighter, arrived in Rabaul in late April and were duly deployed to New Guinea. The 13th Sentai, flying the Kawasaki Type 2 “Toryu” twin-engine fighter and the 24th Sentai, flying the venerable “Oscar” began arriving in Rabaul in late May.

The situation changed further when the Japanese discovered that the Allies were constructing airfields in the New Guinea highlands, at Mount Hagen and Bena Bena, which would threaten the Japanese airfields at Madang and Wewak. Ground operations to meet these new threats were immediately planned. To provide further support the 7th Air Division, which was formed in late January 1943, was deployed to Wewak on 19 June.

While the actual deployment of these air units was delayed due to the insufficient readiness of bases in New Guinea, army air strength – at least on paper – was steadily reinforced during this period. The army made another organisational change during this period, when it created the 4th Air Army to exercise overall command over the 6th and 7th Air Divisions. The new air army was formed in mid-June, and its headquarters had deployed to Rabaul by 10 August.

Eventually about a quarter of the army’s air forces would be committed to the South Pacific. Considering that most of these units were the best that the army had, and would be subjected to losses of approximately 50 per cent per month, this was indeed a major commitment by the army.

The major 7th Air Division units deployed to New Guinea in July 1943 at this time were the 59th Sentai (fighters), 5th Sentai, 7th Sentai (heavy bombers) and 61st Sentai (heavy bombers). Meanwhile, on 9 July, the 6th Air Division also moved its headquarters to Wewak.
With these new deployments, it seemed that the army air forces had overcome the growing disparity between the Japanese and the Allied air forces. However, in mid-June, the army finally had to face reality, and agreed upon an Outline for operations guidance in the New Guinea Area with the operations section of the navy high command, which called for a holding strategy in New Guinea. While this meant that the assault on Port Moresby was finally and formally shelved, the army air forces in New Guinea still had the task of neutralising the Allied airbases at Montt Hagen, Bena Bena, Wau, Salamana and other places. In addition, they had to defend their own airbases, and provide fighter escort for convoys attempting to supply the Japanese garrisons on New Guinea.

Defensive tasks sapped much of the Japanese army's air strength on New Guinea. In fact, by this time the army air forces were fighting a largely defensive campaign. Out of 1,308 sorties flown in July 1943, 494 were convoy escort, 84 were intercept and 190 were ground support. Such missions meant that fewer aircraft and pilots were available for mounting air attacks on Allied airbases, even though such air attacks were necessary to regain air superiority.

In early August 1943, the 4th Air Army had an operational strength of 130 aircraft. This was just one-third the 4th Air Army’s nominal strength, and represented an operational rate of only 50 per cent approximately, due to widespread illness among the aircrews along with, of course, the lack of aircraft replacements.

Nevertheless, the Japanese attempted to carry out their plan to regain air superiority. On 12 August, the 4th Air Army began to carry out air raids on the Allied airbases at Hagen, Bena Bena, Wau, Salamana and elsewhere. This effort came to naught, however, when on 17 August 1943 Allied air armadas mounted a surprise air attack on Wewak, the Japanese army’s principal airbase on New Guinea. Over 100 Japanese aircraft were destroyed, and the 4th Air Army was reduced to an operational strength of just over 30 planes.

The major cause for the scale of the defeat, as stressed by 8th Area Army, was said to be lack of preparation, particularly the lack of sufficient aircraft shelters, and an inadequate warning system. The Japanese were still relying almost completely on a visual warning system, which did not provide enough time for aircraft on the ground to either scramble or be hidden. This problem was exacerbated by the primitive condition of the airfields, which did not allow quick scrambling of a large number of aircraft.

結果的に陸軍航空戦力の約4分の1が朝鮮太平洋方面に送られた。これら航空部隊は、陸軍の飛行部隊であろうが、そのうちのほぼ50％を毎月損失することになったことからも分かるように、これほ澤露にとって非常に重要な戦力の投入であった。

第7飛行軍団の主要部隊として1943年にニューギニアに派遣されたのは、飛行第59戦隊（附屬艦隊、飛行第63戦隊、飛行第7戦隊（爆撃機）、飛行第61戦隊（爆撃機）であった。一方7月9日には、第6飛行軍団がその司令本部をウエワクに移した。

このような新規戦力の投入によって、陸軍航空部隊は、日本軍と連合軍との間に増大していた戦力の不均衡を是正したかどうかに見える。しかし、6月中旬に陸軍はどうという現実を直視ざるを得ず、参謀本部作戦課、ニューギニア軍防衛作戦課が独自の「ニューギニア方面作戦指揮の大綱案」を海軍軍司令部作戦課と共にまとめた。これによって、ポートモレスビー攻略作戦はようやく正式に掲げられたものの、陸軍航空部隊は、マウントヘーゲンやペナベナ、ウウ、サラモアそして他の連合軍航空基地を制圧する任務を担っていた。さらに、自軍の航空基地を防衛し、ニューギニアにいる日本軍守備軍への補給船団の上空圧倒任務もあった。

ニューギニアでの防衛任務は、日本陸軍の航空戦力を消耗させた。実際この時点では、陸軍航空戦力はほぼ守勢の作戦を展開していた。1943年7月の出撃1308機のうち、494機は敵の空中戦、84機は迎撃戦、190機は上空戦の戦果であった。航空力においての優勢を回復するためには、連合軍航空基地を攻撃するよう審議されなかったものの、すぐに課された任務のために、攻撃用の飛行機や操縦士は不足していた。

1943年8月上旬、第4航空軍の戦力は130機だった。これは第4航空戦が本来保有しているべき戦力の3分の1にすぎず、また稼働率は50％に満たなかった。その原因は、乗員の間に病気の蔓延したことや、飛行機の補充不足によるものである。

にもかかわらず、日本軍は航空戦力の優勢を何とか取り戻そうと試みた。第4航空軍は8月12日に、ハーゲン、ベナベナ、ウウ、サラモアおよび他の連合軍航空基地への空爆を開始した。しかし、1943年8月17日、連合軍の爆撃機の大規模な空爆部隊が、日本軍の主要航空基地ウエワクを奇襲空撃することによって、この努力は泡と消えた。この攻撃で100機以上の日本軍機が大破し、第4航空軍の使用可能な飛行機は、わずか30機あまりに減ってしまってしまった。

第8方面軍は、このような大規模な敗北の主因は、飛行機の格納庫の不足や、警備システムなどの準備不足があったと結論した。特に、日本軍はこの当時、有警備体制を布き、それでは地上の飛行機を緊急発進させたり、避難誘導する時間が短すぎた。飛行場施設がまだ未完成で、多数の飛行機が短時間に緊急発進すること
Yet another major cause stressed by the 4th Air Army was the fact that all of its aircraft had been located in front-line airbases, such as Wewak. The 4th Air Army, along with the 6th and 7th Air Divisions, had wanted to deploy its units more in depth (instead of placing all its strength on the front line), with a certain number of aircraft based at airfields further to the rear. However, both the army high command and the 8th Area Army had insisted that as many aircraft as possible be based at airfields at the front, to make them easier to use in operations.

**The end of the Japanese air forces in New Guinea**

After the debacle at Wewak, the army tried to rebuild, while at the same time, strengthening its airbase at Hollandia, in order to provide more depth to the Wewak position. The Allies, however, would not wait while these efforts were being made. In September, the Allies pushed the Japanese back from their positions at Lae and Salamana, and on 22 September they landed near Finschhafen, on the north-eastern coast of New Guinea. In late September the Japanese air forces had only 60 or 70 operational aircraft, even though they had two air divisions, the 6th and 7th, in the area.

Faced with these developments, the Japanese high command was finally forced to make a major strategic change. On 15 September 1943 the concept of the **Absolute national defence zone** was adopted as policy, under which a delaying action would be continued in the South Pacific while a new line of defence was prepared along the Marianas–Caroline–Philippines arc. Counter-offensives would follow and, if the situation permitted, offensive operations in New Guinea would be resumed in mid-1944 or later.

On 30 September the army and navy high commands adopted new strategies based upon the new concept. The 6th Air Division, using what few planes it had, continued its mostly defensive operations out of Wewak. When the Allies landed at Saidor on 2 January 1944, thereby sealing off the Dampier Strait, the 4th Air Army launched an all-out counter-attack. By this time, however, it had less than 100 operational aircraft, and was able to fly only 160 sorties in all on five separate missions. Not only did this have a negligible effect on the Allied landing force, but mission losses took the 4th Air Army down to less than 50 operational planes.

The Japanese navy also launched attacks against the Saidor invasion force, since the loss of the Dampier Strait would mean that Rabaul and New Guinea would be isolated. Japanese air forces in the New Guinea–Solomons area had become desperate by and could not take the offensive.

The end of the Japanese air forces in New Guinea was the result of several factors. The 4th Air Army had been weakened by the loss of key airbases, such as Wewak. The 6th and 7th Air Divisions had wanted to deploy their units more in depth, but the army high command insisted that as many aircraft as possible be based at airfields at the front. This decision proved disastrous, and the Japanese air forces in New Guinea were soon defeated.

The end of the Japanese air forces in New Guinea was a major blow to Japan's military efforts in the Pacific Theatre. The loss of airbases such as Wewak and the inability to provide adequate air support to ground forces in New Guinea marked a significant setback for the Japanese military. The adoption of the **Absolute national defence zone** strategy was a desperate attempt to stem the tide of Japanese losses, but it was too little, too late. The end of the Japanese air forces in New Guinea signaled the beginning of the end for Japan's military efforts in the Pacific Theatre.
mid-January, with only 100 planes operational across the entire region.

In order to improve its position, the army high command decided at the end of January 1944 to move the 4th Air Army’s centre of operations further westward than Hollandia. The high command also decided at this time to temporarily reinforce the 4th Air Army with 2nd Area Army fighter and bomber units. While they would remain under 2nd Area Army control, these units were to “cooperate” with the 8th Area Army.

In the meantime, the Japanese navy’s air force was finally knocked out of both New Guinea and the Solomons. On 17 February 1944, US navy carriers launched a massive raid on the key Japanese base in the central Pacific, Truk Island, destroying over 200 Japanese aircraft and inflicting heavy damage. Since Truk was now directly threatened, the Japanese navy had to replace its air losses with the only air forces available, which were those at Rabaul. Three days after the attack, all of the remaining naval aircraft of the Japanese 2nd Air Flotilla at Rabaul were flown to Truk, and the Japanese naval air arm’s presence in the New Guinea-Solomons area came to an end.

On 25 March 1944, the 4th Air Army was transferred to the 2nd Area Army, and its headquarters arrived in Hollandia. As an airbase, however, Hollandia was still not adequately prepared. Facilities were still not ready, and radar and other warning and intelligence networks were only being prepared. Hollandia was as vulnerable as Wewak had been but, by the end of March, the Japanese army had managed to assemble approximately 300 aircraft there. Of these, however, only about 150 were operational.

In an eerie repeat of the earlier disaster at Wewak, the bulk of Japanese aircraft at Hollandia were wiped out in an air raid carried out over two days, 30–31 March 1944. Over 150 planes were destroyed on the ground. This time, the Japanese were not given any time to recover. On 22 April 1944, the Americans landed near Hollandia. The personnel of the 6th Air Division, including its remaining pilots, were forced to leave the 100 remaining aircraft and retreat overland to the west, arriving in Sarin near early May. The division was never reconstructed, ultimately being disbanded in August 1944.

This left the 7th Air Division, operating at this time primarily out of bases in the East Indies. But this force, too, was severely depleted. On 25 May 1944, it had an operational strength of only 87 aircraft. When the Americans landed on Biak Island two days later, the 7th Air Division tried to provide air support for the defenders, but since it had so few aircraft – most of which had to be used for convoy escort and air defence missions – it

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一方、日本海軍航空部隊は、とうとうニューギニアとソロモン諸島から退却した。1944年2月17日、アメリカ海軍機動部隊は、太平洋中部方面の日本軍拠点であるトランク島の基地に大攻撃を仕掛け、この攻撃で日本軍機200機以上が破壊され、大きな損害を受けた。トランク島が直接攻撃にさらされたため、日本海軍はそこでの損失を、唯一ラバウルに残っていた航空部隊で補うことができなかった。この攻撃の3日後、ラバウルの海軍第2航空戦隊の海軍機全数がトラック島へ移動し、ニューギニアとソロモン地域での海軍航空部隊の活動は終結した。

1944年3月25日、第4航空軍は第2航空軍配下となり、その司令部はホランディアに到着した。しかし、ホランディアは航空基地としての構築がまだ十分ではなかった。施設は未完成で、レーダーや他の警報体制はまだ整備段階にありました。ホランディアにウエワクと同様の危険が迫っているにもかかわらず、3月末には基地は約300機をそこで集結させた。しかしそのうちの150機のみが作戦参加可能であった。

まるで前のウエワクでの惨事の再来のように、ホランディアにあった日本軍機の大半は、1944年3月30日と31日の空襲で損失してしまった。その際、150機以上が地上で破壊されたのだった。今回は、日本軍に再建の時間がなかった。1944年4月22日、ア
was unable to do so effectively. By early July the Biak garrison had been wiped out. This was to be the last major action in which Japanese air forces operated over New Guinea. Thereafter, the major action in the Pacific would shift to the Marianas, Palaus and then the Philippines, and what remained of the Japanese army and navy air forces was committed to these areas. The air war in New Guinea was effectively over, having ended in an Allied victory.

**Chapter 3**

Japanese air operations in New Guinea

メリカ軍はホランジア近くに上陸した。第6飛行群の兵員は、まだ生き残っていた操縦士を含め、残りの100機の飛行機を捨てて西へと陸上移動を強いられ、5月上旬にサルミに到着した。この飛行群は再編成されることなく、結局1944年8月に解散になった。

この結果、蘭軍がインドに基地をおき、そこから出撃していた第7飛行群だけが残った。しかしこの飛行群も大きな損失をこうむっていた。1944年5月25日の時点で、たった87機の戦闘能力しかなかった。その後、アメリカ軍がビアック島に上陸した際、第7飛行群は陸上防衛隊に空からの掩護を試みた。しかし飛行群の飛行機は、船団の上空の戦や空中防衛任務に出動していたため、手持ちの飛行機数がありにも少なく、ほとんど効果がなかった。7月上旬にはビアックの守備隊は全滅していた。これが、日本軍航空隊のニューギニアでの最後の主要作戦活動となった。その後、太平洋における作戦の中心は、マリアナ諸島、パラオ、そしてフィリピンへと移っていき、日本陸海軍がまだ保有していた戦力はこの地域に投入された。ニューギニアでの航空戦は実質的に終結し、連合軍が勝利をおさめたのだった。

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