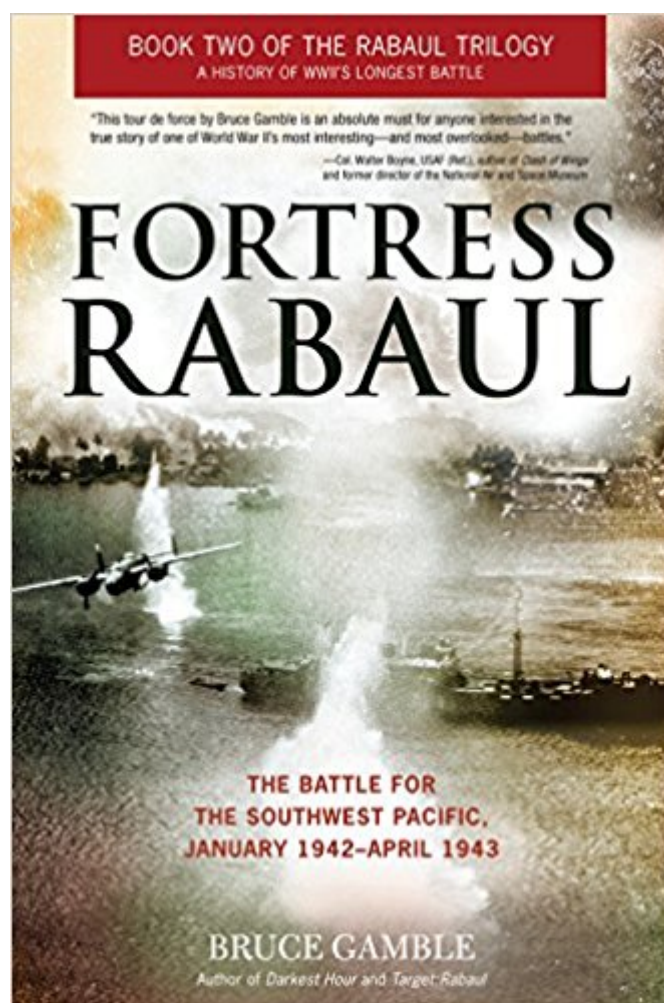


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# Fortress Rabaul: The Battle For The Southwest Pacific, January 1942-April 1943



## Synopsis

For most of World War II, the mention of Japan's island stronghold sent shudders through thousands of Allied airmen. Some called it "Fortress Rabaul" an apt name for the headquarters of the Imperial Japanese forces in the Southwest Pacific. Author Bruce Gamble chronicles Rabaul's crucial role in Japanese operations in the Southwest Pacific. Millions of square feet of housing and storage facilities supported a hundred thousand soldiers and naval personnel. Simpson Harbor and the airfields were the focus of hundreds of missions by American air forces. Winner of the "Gold Medal" (Military Writers Society of America) and "Editor's Choice Award" (Stone & Stone Second World War Books), Fortress Rabaul details a critical and, until now, little understood chapter in the history of World War II.

## Book Information

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AIR CLASSICS "Drawing on a variety of sources from both sides, the author has written a detailed reference book that reads like a novel." WWII HISTORY MAGAZINE "...Fortress Rabaul opens a broader vista on this under-studied campaign with its wide research, thoughtful analysis, and gifted story-teller's panache." "With the publication of this magnificent Rabaul Trilogy, former Navy flight officer Bruce Gamble has established himself in the foremost rank of Pacific War historians. In a compelling narrative that reads like an exciting novel, Gamble details "a history of World War II's longest battle," from the capture of Rabaul, New Britain, by the Japanese in January 1942, to its isolation, bombardment and final liberation by Allied forces in August 1945." - Armchair General "Fortress Rabaul would certainly benefit anyone interested in the Pacific war, the history of military aviation, and the geopolitical future of the region as the United States pivots

toward the Asia-Pacific." - Military Review Col. Walter Boyne, USAF (Ret.), author of Clash of Wings

“This tour de force by Bruce Gamble is an absolute must for anyone interested in the true story of one of World War II’s most interesting and most overlooked battles. The author rivals Stephen Ambrose with his detailed personal accounts of not only victory and defeat, but also of the more routine events that entail quiet pride or sometimes suppressed embarrassment.” Eric Hammel, author of Islands of Hell: The U.S. Marines in the Western Pacific

“Not for the first time, Bruce Gamble has done amazing work gathering a dazzling array of tiny, little facts, then arranging them in a big, dazzling story that amazes one’s inner historian even as it breaks one’s heart on its way to a triumphal conclusion.” Barrett Tillman, author of Whirlwind: The Air War Against Japan, 1942-1945

“To most of the reading public, the aerial siege of Rabaul remains one of the untold stories of the Pacific War. Nobody is better qualified than Bruce Gamble to relate that lengthy campaign, beginning with the first 15 months of the conflict. The depth and variety of his coverage is exceptional: not only the Allied and the Japanese perspectives, but the personalities and their attendant feuds; and ultimately the successful air blockade that released the unstoppable might of an industrialized America to take the war ever nearer Japan itself.”

Japan invaded the Southwest Pacific island of New Britain on January 23, 1942. Rabaul, on the northern tip of the island, was quickly developed into a major military complex. It served as a springboard for several new offensives and became the key to Japanese operations in the region. The mere mention of the island stronghold sent shudders through thousands of Allied airmen.

Author Bruce Gamble chronicles the dramatic events that contributed to Rabaul’s increasing notoriety, detailing the island’s transformation into the ultimate twentieth-century fortification. Millions of square feet of new construction provided housing and storage facilities for a hundred thousand soldiers and naval personnel, and by mid-1943 Rabaul’s air strength stood at six hundred planes.

Some called it “Fortress Rabaul,” an apt name for Japan’s mightiest base in the Southwest Pacific and the headquarters of the Imperial Japanese Navy’s 8th and 11th Air Fleets. In the beginning, only the Royal Australian Air Force’s 75 Squadron stood against the amassing Japanese force on New Britain, but there was an increasing presence of American squadrons in Australia joining the escalating air war over Rabaul. The virtually impregnable stronghold was the focus of attacks by American, Australian, and New Zealand air forces from January 1942 until the end of the war in August 1945, a total of forty-four months, the longest battle of World War II. Gamble fills in the historical background behind

Rabaul's crucial role in the Pacific war, from the Japanese invasion through the shooting down of Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto on April 18, 1943, a turning point in Japan's offensive operations. A compelling story of military strategy and might, it is also a critical and, until now, little understood chapter in the history of World War II. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I flew as a P38 Fighter Pilot with the 5th AF with my first duty station in New Guinea. The time period was late 1944 and, typical of many of us entering that war zone, we knew little of what had taken place up to that time. We just wanted to fly combat. I suspect most Japanese fighter pilots were of the same thoughts. They knew little of what was taking place. Or cared. Just wanted to fly and fight. Now, at age 93, I have started to look back at what that war was all about. This book is an exceptional history of what took place during the war during that period. And filled in many of the blanks about what led up to the war and the sacrifices and sufferings that took place. Filled in a lot of blanks for me. Exceptionally well written and documented history of air combat in the South Pacific. Highly recommended publication.

This is a terrific accounting of the naval battles that centered around Rabaul, from right after Pearl Harbor until the middle of the war in the Pacific, including some of the most famous, naval battles in the Southwest Pacific Ocean between, mainly US naval forces and those of the Imperial Japanese Navy. The book is very well written, very detailed, very easy to follow and understand but it is not historical fiction, not fictional at all, and an accurate, historical rendering of what actually transpired in this part of the world in the first several years after Pearl Harbor in the Southwest Pacific. It is a pleasure to read, easy to follow, quite detailed in its historical accuracy, and well worth the time and effort. I have read many accountings of this part of WWII, such as Unbroken and others but this one is much better than average, and it contains all of the historical figures involved, from the very top to the aviators in both American and Japanese planes. It is not just about the naval battles but also the air battles centered around the most famous, naval battles of those years. Just a great read!

This is the story of the fall of Rabaul by the Australian forces to the Japanese in the early stages of World War II, and the subsequent efforts of the United States and Australian forces to neutralize the fortress which the Japanese had built up. The author has conducted considerable research in order to cover efforts by both sides in the battle for Rabaul. In those early months of the war, the U.S and Australians were at a considerable disadvantage in so far as the numbers of pilots and aircraft

available to put against the Japanese. However, in time they were able to build up the resources necessary to neutralize Rabaul and to conquer islands around that island. This was the first book which I have come across which covered this area of battle of World War II, and I found it quite interesting.

I thought I had already reviewed this book but evidently not. As someone with an interest in the subject, I found *Fortress Rabaul* to be a very informative work that goes into great detail. Although there were a few things not directly related to the subject at hand that I felt were a bit off-base, the overall treatment of the subject matter is excellent. Rabaul was THE target for Allied military forces in the South and Southwest Pacific until General MacArthur's forces victories over the Japanese in Papua, New Guinea and particularly the capture of Lae made capture of Rabaul itself unnecessary. Although this volume only covers the period up to the spring of 1943 when the Battle of the Bismarck Sea signaled the end of Japanese domination of the seas, it is an excellent source of information and a well-written tale.

If you are a history buff and enjoy World War Two books of the Pacific Theater, then this book is for you. It is the second book in a three book series that gives a very readable and in depth look at the Imperial Japanese base of Rabaul and its strategic location and use. It picks up the story following the defeat of the Australian "Lark Force" on New Britain and it covers the build up and the tenuous beginning efforts of the Australians and the Americans in their attempts to dislodge or disrupt the Japanese in Fortress Rabaul very well. Details of the various commanders, their strategy and tactics and even individual raids and personal ordeals are all detailed in the book. This book comes to an end with the overwhelming victory in the "Battle of the Bismarck Sea" by the allies in mid 1943 and leaves the continuation of the story of Rabaul to the third book in the series "Target Rabaul." You don't need to read the first book to understand this second book. It gives a good review of the "Lark Force" and its trials in the first chapter.

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