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Darwin 1942: The Japanese Attack On Australia (Campaign)



Synopsis

Following the devastating raids on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, lightning advances by Japanese forces throughout the Pacific and the Far East, and a desperate battle by the Allied command in the Dutch East Indies, it became evident that an attack on Australia was more a matter of 'when' and not 'if'. On 19 February, just eleven weeks after the attacks on Pearl Harbor and two weeks after the fall of Singapore, the same Japanese battle group that had attacked Hawaii was ordered to attack the ill-prepared and under-defended Australian port of Darwin. Publishing 75 years after this little-known yet devastating attack, this fully illustrated study details what happened on that dramatic day in 1942 with the help of contemporary photographs, maps, and profiles of the commanders and machines involved in the assault.

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Customer Reviews

In February 1942, a Japanese Navy carrier task force, the same that attacked Pearl Harbor, conducted a raid on Darwin in northern Australia. That raid caused extensive damage to Allied facilities in that isolated town. It is the subject of this Osprey Campaign Series book by Bob Alford,

with illustrations by Jim Laurier. The Second World War in the Pacific was going badly for the Allies in February 1942. The British stronghold at Singapore had just fallen, the Philippines were under siege, and the Allied position in the Netherlands East Indies was collapsing. U.S. reinforcements to the Southwest Pacific were being routed through Australia, including the town of Darwin, which was defended by a hodgepodge of Australian and U.S. units. The Japanese air raid came in great strength, overwhelming the defenses of the town and inflicting significant damage. It is clear that author Alford is an expert on the raid. He provides extensive background to the raid and an almost minute by minute account of the conduct of the actual raid. The detailed narrative is supported with lots of period and modern photographs, maps, and illustrations. As other reviewers have noted, the account is somewhat disjointed in places and hard to follow. There is perhaps too much emphasis on one of the provisional American fighter squadrons. It's not entirely clear to this reviewer that the raid on Darwin, as traumatic as it was for the defenders, produced any lasting effects that rate its own Osprey Campaign Series entry. Cautiously recommended.

This is an excellent book describing the details of the Japanese air attack conducted on February 19, 1942. The book describes the various Japanese, American, and Australian commanders and officers, the details of every American and Japanese airplane shot down, and the results of the Japanese attacks. The text is accompanied by numerous black and white period photos and some color renderings. There is an introductory chapter in pages 5-11 setting the scene of the war in December 1941-February 1942. This discusses general key issues such as the fall of Malaya and Singapore and the Japanese seizure of the Dutch East Indies (DEI). This text is fairly general, but is enough for the reader to understand what was happening in the region at the time. The biggest weakness of the book is the poor provision of suitable maps. The maps on pages 23, 40, 52, and 65 showing the layout of the city of Darwin and its environs, the key military points, and the details of the Japanese aerial attack routes are fine. There are two large-scale maps on pages 4 and 31 showing Southeast Asia in general. But there are no maps showing even the basic locations of key points mentioned in the text: Kendari, Staring Bay, Palembang, Ambon, Koepang, Palau, Tainan, Menada, Davao, Madoera Island. The maps on pages 4 and 31 do not even call out the islands of Java, Celebes (now Sulawesi), Bali, Ambon, Ceram, etc. The book also lacks a map of Australia depicting the points mentioned in the text such as Brisbane, Townsend, Freemantle, Queensland, Point Pirie, Charleville, Cloncurry, Amberley, Daly Waters, and so forth. For more detailed accounts on the overall war in the Dutch East Indies at the time, I recommend: "The Massacre of ABDACOM" by Ready

(2013) and "Rising Sun, Falling Skies" by Cox (2014). These two books describe the Allied catastrophes such the naval battles of the Java Sea and Sunda Strait as well as describing the fall of Java, Celebes, Borneo, Timor, and the area comprising the Java Sea, Flores Sea, Timor Sea, and the Banda Sea in general.

Excellent information and enjoyable reading about a little examined subject. Nice format with maps and pictures.

This is a remarkable, concise overview of that part of World War II. A good starting point with enough information in the bibliography to continue and interest. An excellent addition to my WWII library.

These battle shorts are very good summaries of the action What is good are the maps which show direction of the attacks and location of downed aircraft. These add depth to the narrative.

A fine coverage for a sometimes neglected narrow topic.

thank you

good historical perspective

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