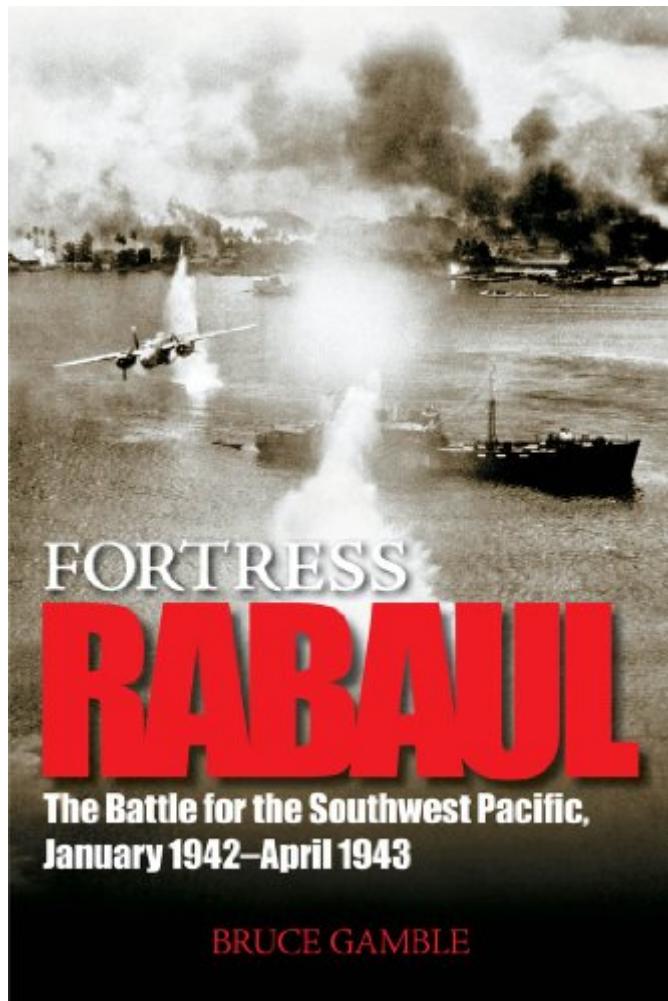


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# Fortress Rabaul: The Battle For The Southwest Pacific, January 1942–April 1943



## 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. A 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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## Customer Reviews

Second only to Truk in notoriety, the Japanese base at Rabaul, New Britain played a pivotal role in the fighting in the Southwest Pacific in World War II. It was a well-fortified stronghold in its own right bristling with hundreds of AAA guns, scores of fighters and bombers and possessing a fine harbor. Just as importantly, it served as a conduit funneling various Japanese air, land and sea units

southward to Guadalcanal and other areas. Fresh from his marvelous LARK FORCE book, noted military historian Bruce Gamble recounts the creation and evolution of Rabaul as a major Japanese base and the ever-increasing Allied air efforts to derail that development. Captured by the Japanese in early 1942, Rabaul was swiftly developed, eventually boasting of a number of airfields that could hold hundreds of IJN/IJAAF warbirds. Its Simpson Harbor was developed and was soon crowded with dozens of merchantmen and warships. Gamble skilfully interweaves the growth of Rabaul with other military developments in the SWPA in the early war years to underscore Rabaul's steadily growing importance to the Japanese war effort. For instance, aircraft from Rabaul pounded various Allied targets including Port Moresby, Guadalcanal (following its capture in August 1942) and American carrier units in the Coral Sea. Shipping from Simpson Harbor transported troops and equipment to various islands to establish and develop bases including airfields and so on. As shown in FORTRESS RABAUL, the American response to Rabaul's growth took the form of air attacks. Initially the attacks were feeble and ineffectual. Following George Kenney's arrival to the SWPA, the Americans began a very slow but steady build-up of air units that, in time, would mount devastating attacks on Rabaul.

Bruce Gamble's "Fortress Rabaul: The Battle for the Southwest Pacific, January 1942 - April 1943" is a magnificent and important work on this often neglected part of World War II. Mr. Gamble has paid the price in research. The accounts he collected from participants in the campaign, the US and Australian archives, and the official records of the US, Australian, and Japanese clarify and punctuate the events. You experience Rabaul and New Britain through his graphic description of the topography and weather. You get a clear understand of the volcanic origins of the Rabaul and the impact the volcanoes and volcanic activity to include earthquakes have on the land and inhabitants. Mr. Gamble does an excellent job telling the story. I read the book in one week while on vacation. I found it that compelling and entertaining. The author does an exceptional job telling the story. I was floored by the account of the bombing of the Komaki Maru. "The Komaki Maru shuddered under the impact of the two hits, which ignited the cargo of aviation fuel. 'A few seconds later,' recalled an Australian eyewitness, 'the ship was an inferno and the roar of the flames almost drowned out the screams of the Japanese trapped aboard.' The narrative reads with all the vigor and imagery of a novel. The chapter Medal of Honor: Lieutenant Edward H. "Butch" O'Hare reads like a Hollywood action movie. We learn the story of the man whose name graces O'Hare Airport in Chicago. We see how his action saved the USS Lexington and won him his nation's highest military honor, the Medal of Honor. We learn the story of how he interposed his fighter between his ship and

an advancing enemy formation of 9 attacking twin-engine heavy bombers.

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