

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

“With the utmost precision and team play”: The 3rd New Zealand Division and Operation ‘Squarepeg’

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts (Defence & Strategic Studies)**

by

Shaun Mawdsley

Centre for Defence and Security Studies

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Massey University

2013

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the influences and course of the 3rd New Zealand (NZ) Division's preparations for Operation 'Squarepeg' in the Green Islands, in February 1944. It argues that as the largest New Zealand amphibious operation of the Second World War, 'Squarepeg' holds a key place in identifying the development of amphibious and jungle warfare doctrine within the New Zealand Army during the war. As such, it can indicate the abilities of the 3rd NZ Division to conduct combat operations in the South Pacific in 1944. The thesis shows that the New Zealand Army was unprepared for operations in the South Pacific, as it had neglected relevant inter-war developments.

The hasty formation of the 3rd NZ Division in 1942, as a response to Japanese expansion in the South Pacific, served to highlight the challenges that the division and its commander, Major-General Harold Barrowclough, had to overcome. The studying of foreign doctrine to supplement the dearth of New Zealand material was vital for the 3rd NZ Division's preparations for deployment. The thesis finds that matters were compounded by the influence of British military organisational standards despite the division operating in an American-run theatre of war. It provides details of the manner in which members of the division approached these issues while coordinating operations with the United States Navy. The importance of thorough training, a combined planning process, and stable relationships between commanders of all forces are identified as decisive factors to the outcome of operations in joint-combined theatres.

The thesis concludes that the 3rd NZ Division's preparations for Operation 'Squarepeg' were part of an incremental process of operational learning. This process, which was mostly successful, was unable to be properly tested on account of the division's reliance on foreign assistance, lack of resources, and a lack of domestic support. These findings may prove an important source of information for a region which will become of increasing military importance.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This has been a long journey that has had many ups and downs and there have been a number of people who have assisted me through those times. First of all, praise must go to my family – Butch, Sabine, and Lindsay – whose continued support has been of an immense help and I cannot thank you enough. I hope you can forgive me for all the years leading up to this point. To Abi, who has been there from the beginning, I thank you for your patience and caring.

My supervisor, Dr. John Moremon has assisted me throughout the process, and he has always been there when I have needed to chat about research developments and writing issues over cups of coffee (and the phone). He was also kind enough to provide me with primary sources from institutions in the United States of America, especially from the Library of Congress, and National Archives and Records Administration. They have proved vital to my work. He also devoted many hours of his time to reading the drafts of my thesis and therefore helped in the fine-tuning my thesis. Thank you.

I extend my unbound gratitude to Massey University's Scholarships Committee, which graciously granted a Masters research scholarship, which greatly assisted me in producing this thesis.

Likewise the support rendered by the staff of Massey University's Centre for Defence and Security Studies, especially Professor Caroline Ziemke, Director, and Dr. Negar Partow, Postgraduate Coordinator, for financial and other assistance in the course of conducting research, and Tania Lasenby for her efforts with the reimbursements.

Gratitude is also extended to Massey University Library and staff, for speedy and reliable service. Thanks go also to the staff at Archives New Zealand, Wellington and to Dolores Ho of the Kippenberger Military Archive, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

And finally, again, to my friends and family, for their understanding of all the late nights 'hermitting' away. My many trips to Wellington were made all the better by the time spent with Jenna Phillips, who kindly allowed me to stay with her during my research. This thesis would not have been completed without the assistance rendered by the above individuals and groups. All errors are mine and mine alone.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Maps and Images	v
Abbreviations	vii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The South Pacific, New Zealand, and the Raising of the 3 rd New Zealand Division	11
Chapter 2: The Context of New Zealand Developments in Jungle Warfare and Amphibious Operations	32
Chapter 3: Deployment to New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands	59
Chapter 4: Planning Operation 'Squarepeg'	87
Chapter 5: Force Organisation	111
Chapter 6: Proceeding to the Green Islands	139
Chapter 7: Accomplishing 'Squarepeg'	155
Conclusion	193
Appendices	198
Bibliography	218

MAPS

Map 1: New Zealand and the Pacific	12
Map 2: The Solomon Islands	19
Map 3: Vella Lavella	72
Map 4: Treasury Islands	81

IMAGES

Image 1: Brigadier Leslie Potter, DSO, 1943	17
Image 2: Major-General Harold Eric Barrowclough	25
Image 3: <i>Soldiers in the Jungle, 1943-1945</i>	36
Image 4: <i>The Jungle Book</i>	40
Image 5: Net climbing practice for troops of the 3 rd NZ Division	62
Image 6: New Zealand troops conducting amphibious training	68
Image 7: Vehicles of the 3 rd NZ Division on Vella Lavella's 'jungle roads'	78
Image 8: Scale model created during the preparation for 'Squarepeg'	106
Image 9: New Zealand troops with No. 48 wireless sets on Vella Lavella	127
Image 10: ASC officer and soldier confer at a beach supply dump	132
Image 11: Destined for combat – loading LCI 443	143
Image 12: LSTs of the Third Transport Unit on their way to the Green Islands	148
Image 13: A late war picture of LCI(G) 67	151
Image 14: Landing passing through the main channel into the lagoon	163
Image 15: Aerial photograph of Blue Beaches at Pokonian	164

Image 16: 'Getting 'em Ashore'	165
Image 17: 3 rd NZ Division troops aboard landing craft at Pokonian Plantation	166
Image 18: Aerial photograph of Southern Tangalan Plantation	169
Image 19: Troops of the 35 th Battalion at Tangalan	170
Image 20: Cliffs overlooking the ocean	172
Image 21: Aerial photograph of the Southwest corner of Nissan Island	177
Image 22: Vickers MMG in a firing-position	182

ABBREVIATIONS

APD – Assault Personnel Destroyer

ASC – Army Service Corps

BCT – Battalion Combat Team

CB – (Naval) Construction Battalion

COMAIRSOLS – Commander, Air Forces, Solomon Islands

COMAIRSOPAC – Commander, Air Forces, South Pacific

COMAIRSQUAREPEG – Commander, Air Forces, ‘Squarepeg’

COMGENSOPAC – Commanding General, United States Army Forces in the South Pacific Area

COMSOPAC – Commander, South Pacific Area and South Pacific Forces

HQ - Headquarters

IJA – Imperial Japanese Army

IJN – Imperial Japanese Navy

LCI – Landing Craft, Infantry

LCI(G) – Landing Craft, Infantry (Gun)

LCP – Landing Craft, Personnel

LCT – Landing Craft, Tank

LOC – Line of Communication

LSD – Landing Ship, Dock

LST – Landing Craft, Ship

NZ – New Zealand

NZEFIP – New Zealand Expeditionary Force in Pacific

RCT – Regimental Combat Team

RNZAF – Royal New Zealand Air Force

SNLF – Special Naval Landing Force

SOPAC – South Pacific Area

SWPA – South West Pacific Area

US – United States (of America)

USMC – United States Marine Corps

USN – United States Navy