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*NSADaily*

(U) History Today - 4 March 2011

Run Dates: 03/04/2011 , 03/05/2011 , 03/06/2011

(U) Intelligence from several sources, particularly aerial reconnaissance and ULTRA, decrypts of high-grade Japanese cryptosystems, revealed that in early 1944 the Japanese were building up strength on Los Negros, the largest island in the Admiralties chain. Senior generals in the Southwest Pacific Theater considered occupying the Admiralties, since bases there would support U.S. actions against strong enemy bases on northern New Guinea.

(U) General George Kenney, the senior air officer in the theater, directed attacks against Japanese airfields and aircraft on Los Negros. He believed that the Japanese forces there could be eliminated by air power alone, and, after a series of strikes that he believed eliminated all enemy troops, Kenney pressed General Douglas MacArthur, the theater commander, for a landing on Los Negros.

(U) Kenney's reconnaissance flights showed little Japanese activity there, and his planes flew over the island with impunity, even at very low altitudes.

(U) MacArthur authorized a reconnaissance-in-force of about 1,000 men.

(U) Despite General Kenney's assertions that there were only a "handful" of Japanese on Los Negros, ULTRA, decrypts of Japanese messages, showed the presence of over 3,000 on the island. Moreover, decrypts showed that the Japanese commander expected an American landing on his island.

(U) U.S. forces landed on Los Negros on February 29. They found the place, in the words of one of the Americans, "lousy with Japs." In one respect, they got a big break. The Japanese commander had his troops well dug in and camouflaged -- but he had guessed wrong about which harbor the Americans would land.

(U) The landing force confirmed the ULTRA estimate of 3,000 Japanese on the island. The number was quickly reduced, however, as the island's defenders attacked 'en masse' into superior U.S. ground and naval artillery fire.

(U) U.S. intercept sites picked up a plaintext message on March 5 in which one of the defenders reported to his headquarters "the time of our last hour is drawing near."

(U) Only seventy-five Japanese surrendered.

(U) The photograph shows the second wave landing on Los Negros; this wave bore the brunt of the Japanese counterattack.

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