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Lex McAulay, *MacArthur's Eagles: The U.S. Air War Over New Guinea, 1943-1944*.

Annapolis MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005. 408 pp., photographs, maps, appendices, works consulted, bibliography, index.

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Lex McAulay's, *MacArther's Eagles: The U.S. Air War Over New Guinea, 1943-1944*, is a complex and thoroughly researched book that describes the triumphs and tragedies of the U.S. Army's 5th Air Force. This book is one of a very few on the subject and it carves itself a niche in the category that will make it indispensable to future researchers of the topic. McAulay's work details how an unprepared, undersupplied, and initially unappreciated 5th Air Force came to dominate the South West Pacific Area, and hastened the end of the Japanese presence in New Guinea.

This book is exhaustingly researched; drawing from previously unpublished Japanese documents, personal journals and radio intercepts, as well as post-war prisoner interrogations. These sources provide a unique Japanese perspective on the problems and utilization of air power in the South West Pacific Area. The many advantages and disadvantages between the multitude of different Allied and Japanese aircraft is presented, as well as the Japanese failure to completely understand air power and its many uses. Not only at a tactical level, but on a theater wide scale. McAulay explains the differences between Imperial Japanese and Allied thinking, in terms of air power, in a style that explains away the seemingly miracle like successes of Allied air attacks. The

Imperial Japanese forces had underestimated almost every aspect of the Allied air campaign, from tactics, and aircraft, to pilot quality and sheer determination.

Included in book, primarily in chapter five titled, *In the South West Pacific*, is a delightful collection of anecdotes that colorfully illustrate various experiences of members of the 5th Air Force. This section helps to lighten the air of a work that would otherwise read like a high school statistics book. Where McAulay triumphs in research and uncovering an astounding amount of information, he fails in simply making the book readable, or otherwise enjoyable. The choppy text is littered with hundreds of references to specific Japanese and Allied squadrons and their kill ratios, probable kills, mission results, losses, and dates of engagements, all of which are listed in table format in the appendices. Intertwined in the vast amount of statistics and scores are occasional combat reflections, which are surprisingly vivid and electric. They describe the deeds of the many heroic and determined pilots on both side of the conflict and are a welcome interruption to the fore and after paragraphs. One such story recounts the air combat, and shooting down of P-38 pilot Captain James McLaughlin. McLaughlin was forced to bail out over the water, but managed to inflate his dingy and untangle himself from his parachute. After many hours in the water, a useless water logged smoke bomb and .45-caliber pistol later, McLaughlin was rescued by a PB4Y. Stories like this make the book worth reading in its entirety, and paint an intimate picture of the many difficulties faced by 5th Air Force pilots.

Sadly, the author's complete contempt for the Japanese militarily becomes apparent midway through the book. The constant belittling of the Japanese commanders, pilots, planes, and tactics becomes bothersome even to readers who may well understand many of the Japanese military faults. McAulay goes to great lengths to point out the many discrepancies between Japanese battle accounts and confirmed kills, and the accepted Allied accounts. McAulay may fail to recognize the power of this type of propaganda on the Japanese populous on the home islands. What may seem at present to be ridiculous claims of Japanese fighters shooting down hundreds of Allied planes, or sinking dozens of Allied ships, were very powerful tools then. It does not seem all that

ridiculous when compared to U.S. claims during the First and now Second Gulf War. The Japanese people believed their armies invincible, as they had been up to that point, as many Americans believe the same of U.S. Armed Forces in more modern areas of combat. McAulay paints the Japanese in the SWPA in such a dark light, that one wonders why the war went on as long as it did with the amount of buffoonery present within the ranks of the Japanese command. McAulay's treatment of the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy, although warranted in the case of atrocities and war crimes, to this reviewer often seems ill-considered and extreme in many other cases. Little respect is shown for an enemy that had taught the United States a serious lesson in the use of air power little more than a year before at Pearl Harbor.

In all, McAulay's work takes a very thorough look at the 5th Air Force and their operations over New Guinea. It is bountifully filled with in-depth stories, and facts. It is truly a valuable source for researches looking for a better understanding of both the big and the little picture in this theater.



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