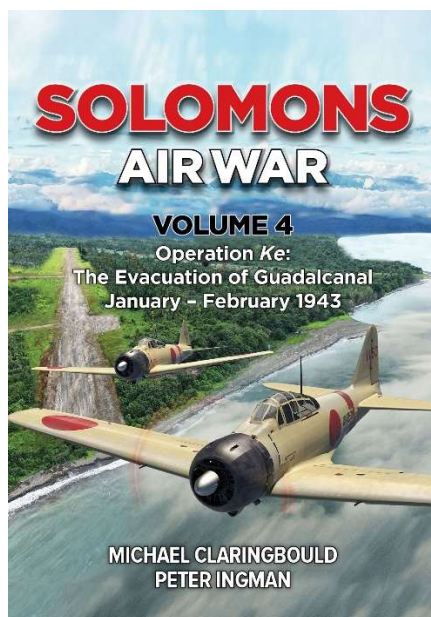


NEW RELEASE - DECEMBER 2025



Solomons Air War Volume 4

Operation Ke: The Evacuation of Guadalcanal January - February 1943

Avonmore Books

Michael Claringbould & Peter Ingman; softcover; 250 x 176mm, full colour, fully illustrated, 184 pages, Avonmore Books, 2025. ISBN 9781764193719 RRP \$46.95

This fourth volume of *Solomons Air War* chronicles aerial warfare throughout the Solomons theatre during the months of January and February 1943. It can be read alone or as part of the ongoing Solomons Air War series.

This crucial period saw the Japanese swallow a bitter pill and launch Operation Ke, which was the evacuation of Guadalcanal. It was a complex operation conceived under utmost secrecy, which then unfolded over several weeks. Included was a widespread air offensive that included the Japanese Army Air Force in the Solomons for the first time. Ironically, this operation was arguably the most successful yet for the Japanese in the theatre.

Against this background the intense air campaign continued. Enjoying a secure foothold on Guadalcanal and ever-growing facilities, Cactus Air Force expanded and pushed operations northwards into the Solomons chain where the Japanese were operating from Munda and building a new airfield at Vila. Temporary reinforcements were provided by carrier squadrons from both sides operating from land bases, including for the first time air units from USN escort carriers.

Among new types to debut in this period were USMC F4U Corsair fighters and USN PB4Y-1 Liberators. However, despite the emerging American ascendancy, the Japanese were still capable of striking killer blows. The cruiser USS Chicago was sunk in a skilful night torpedo attack by antiquated Nell bombers, and over southern Bougainville the Americans suffered landmark heavy losses on the 14 February 1943 "Saint Valentine's Day Massacre".

This chronicle has been written using primary Allied and Japanese records, to give a fresh, factual and highly detailed account of all aspects of the intricate Solomons air campaign.

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