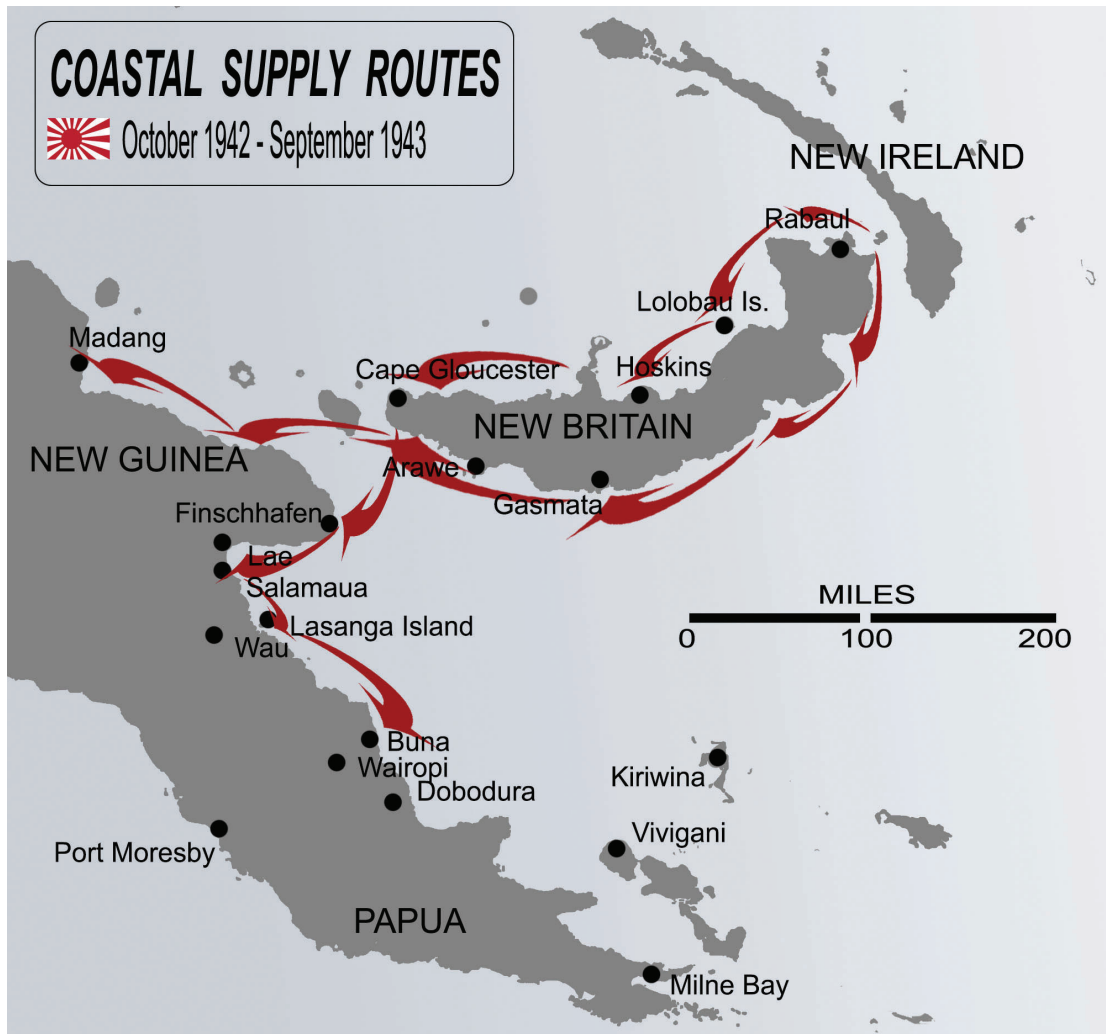


MARCH 1943: BATTLE OF THE BISMARCK SEA



Following the Battle of the Bismarck Sea in March 1943, Japanese troops in New Guinea were increasingly dependent on the coastal supply routes from Rabaul as shown. Interdiction of these routes became a key task for No. 22 Squadron for the remainder of 1943.

around eight knots until surfacing in the evening in the Huon Gulf east of Lae. They would then travel at about fifteen knots to Lae or Salamaua, aiming to commence unloading just before midnight. This enabled the submarine to get underway before dawn the next morning.

These unnerving voyages took three days during which troops were quartered in the torpedo storage area in place of torpedoes. Jam-packed into a confined area for the voyage, fresh air was available only when the submarine surfaced. Such surfaced submarines were encountered often by No. 22 Squadron off New Britain. At both Lae and Salamaua smaller MLCs would make multiple ferry trips to unload the submarines. Six transport submarines plied the route from Rabaul until end of June 1943 when the number was reduced to three, leaving the lion's share of supply runs to the MLC convoys. Overall, the most effective use of the RAAF Boston in New Guinea was in destroying these barges and coastal traffic.