

March 26, 2006

**Coleman Crew, MACR #10023, Lost over Yap Island on 25 June 1944**

B-24J , AAF Serial #44-40598, 13th Air Force, 372nd Bombardment Squadron, 307th Bombardment Group

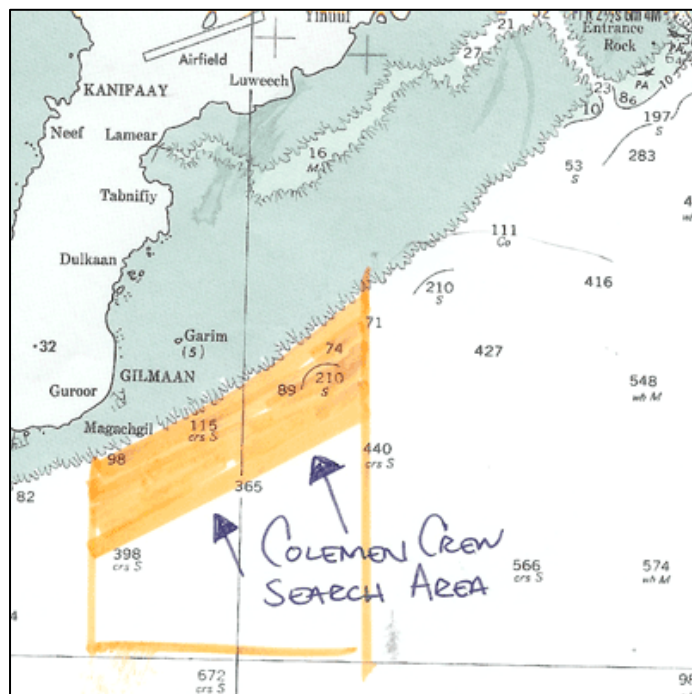
**Overview:** Aircraft #598 piloted by Lt. Coleman departed Mokerang Field, Los Negros (Bismarck Archipelago) the morning of June 25, 1944 on a thirteen hour round trip mission to Yap Island with the ten crew members onboard. The plane was attacked by Japanese aircraft about a minute and a half after bombs away over Yap. Direct hits were scored by the enemy interceptors on #2 and #3 engines. The cockpit and bombardiers compartment were seen with flames coming out of the windows which had been shot out. The plane made a perfect loop, then fell off to the right in a spin and crashed in the water 2 miles south of the Yap Island runway. They were strafed all the way down and also after hitting the water. No parachutes were seen.

**Coleman Crew Shoot Down Documents:**

The following statements are excerpts from documents located on the [www.MissingAirCrew.com](http://www.MissingAirCrew.com) web site that relate to the Coleman crew shoot down. The complete documents can be viewed and downloaded in a PDF file format from the MissingAirCrew.com web site at: <http://www.missingaircrew.com/shootdown.asp> and <http://www.missingaircrew.com/documents.asp>.

**Location of the missing**

**Coleman B-24:** Accounts of the shoot down differ from the various sources, however, we believe the plane is located in the shaded box on the image to the right based on the documents we have gathered and the interviews conducted on Yap in October 2005. As you will see from the following excerpts, accounts of



the shoot down and crash site location show a discrepancy:

- "...just outside the reef south of the island."
- "...three to five miles southeast of the southern tip of Yap Island."
- "...This position plotted in 2 miles off TONIL HARBOR entrance."

The 5<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group statement that the plane was, "just outside the reef south of the island", shows a visual reference point to the island that other statements lack. It is believed that the plane rest in water depths between 74-210 meters.

**5th Bombardment Group Combat Mission Report:** One plane of 307th Gp was seen to crash at 9°25'30"N - 138°05'E at 1152 K. No survivors were seen and no fire, smoke or explosion from the plane. This plane was reported to have gone down in a flat spin and crashed just outside the reef south of the island. Two enemy fighters followed this airplane down but were not strafing. No parachutes were seen.

**307<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Combat Mission Report:** Lt Coleman was flying ship No. 598. He was flying in a B-1 position in our squadron. As we were making a left turn off the target the Jap fighter started his attack. He came in on the tail at eight o'clock high; his altitude was about 1,000 yards higher than our formation. He was way out of range, possibly 2,000 yards. At this time, a white Zeke, with orange or yellow meat balls on the under side of his wings made an attack on our plane; I moved my turret around at this fighter coming up at seven o'clock low on our tail. I fired at him and he broke away. I immediately turned my turret around to six o'clock. The Jap fighter that was at eight o'clock slid over to four o'clock high, he moved his wings a little and came in for the attack. His attack was made from four o'clock high and he used a pursuit curve attack from about 1,000 yards out and 1,000 yards higher than Lt Coleman's ship. He broke away at five o'clock and headed straight down. This happened in a matter of seconds; I was only able to fire a burst at him. Right after that I saw pieces flying off of Lt. Coleman's right wing; the hole was between No 4 engine and the wing tip right on the trailing edge. This hole was approximately two feet in circumference. Lt. Coleman's ship slid over to the right just a little, big flames licked out of the bombardiers' compartment on both side. Both ammunition boxes for the nose turret in the bombardiers' compartment must have been hit. This ship wiggled its wings a little then its nose went straight up into the air. The ship made a loop that was approximately 100 to 200 yards above our formation. The ship went straight down for about 3000 yards in a dive then started turning in a tight circle. Lt Coleman's ship kept going down. I kept my eye open for parachutes but no one bailed out of Lt Coleman's ship. This ship dived straight into the water. There was a big ring and the center of it was black. Lt. Coleman's ship went down approximately three to five miles southeast of the southern tip of Yap Island. I saw all this happen from my position which is "tail gunner" on the lead ship.

**USS Submarine ALBACORE (SS 218) War Patrol Report #9:** The war patrol report from the U.S.S ALBACORE shows that the Captain of the ALBACORE spend 4 days looking for Coleman's B-24 crew in between supporting numerous LIBERATOR bombings of YAP.

**25 June:**

- 0845, Changed course to close YAP and be in position for strike 1030.
- 1016, SD contact 27 miles (Aircraft Contact #35). This contact on the SD screen at ranges varying from 30 to 17 miles until.
- 1037, When flight of 21 LIBERATORS sighted headed for YAP: Went ahead full on all engines, closing YAP.
- 1101, Observed large fires on YAP.
- 1120, Received word on voice circuit that plane was coming Down 95 miles bearing 290 degrees (T) from SOROL. This message distinctly heard by Communications Officer.
- 1123, Changed course to 153 degrees (T) to head for downed plane, and increased speed to maximum.
- 1135, Received word on 8455 CW that plane was down. This position plotted in 2 miles off TONIL HARBOR entrance. Continued to position of first plane reported as chances of rescue were thought to be better.
- 1418, Arrived at reported position of downed plane and commenced search.
- 1850, Received word on 8455 CW that plane was down one mile south of YAP.
- 1915, On 8455 CW asked if there was a plane down in area we were searching. No answer received.
- 2207 Discontinued search and set course for south end of YAP.

**26 June:** Enroute new search area.

- 0430, Two miles south of YAP, searching area
- 0530, SD contact 8 miles (Aircraft Contract #36). Dove. Conducted search submerged along southwest coast of YAP.
- 0630, Sighted BETTY thru periscope (Aircraft Contact #38). This plane or similar one's searched in our vicinity until 1015.
- 1108, Heard explosions and shortly thereafter sighted fires on YAP.
- 1205, In view of the fact we had been submerged during day's strike called the Army Bombing Bras and asked if they had any area for us to search. No answer received.
- 1525, Set course to head for and search area southwest of YAP.
- 1930, Commenced search of area.

**Japanese Report:** Total of 17 Zekes intercepted these Liberators. Four out of the seventeen were with 202 Ku (Sento 301)(PO1c HAYASHI, Josaku, PO1c OHKUBO, Kotozo, CPO TANAKA, Toshio, Ldg Sea (aviation) KIKI?, Motohiro) The 202 Ku took off at 1040 and returned at 1130. They claimed 1 KILL, 2 damaged against the enemy, no damage to the four Zekes. No further information for the rest of the Zekes. 1100 The alert ended. Damage in Yap: 2/3 of runway was damaged by the bombardment. Two KIAs on the ground (Ldg Sea ISHIBASHI, Yasuhusa, Sea 1c MORI, Shiro)

**Q1)25JUN:** 1 B24 shot over by fighters over water near Yap but witnesses said no survivors

**A1)** Earlier this morning, nine Zekes and one Judy (guiding these Zekes to Yap) flew from Peleliu to Yap and 8 Zekes and 1 Judy returned Palau after the contact. (No unit number or pilots' names are available)

**1000** An air raid alert was issued.

**1045(-9)** 22 B24s (in two groups) attacked Yap.

### **The Coleman Crew—Missing Air Crew Report (MACR) #10023:**

1. Gerald D. Coleman, Pilot
2. John E., Jr. Jurica, Co-Pilot
3. Martin B. Unger, Navigator
4. James F. Lind, Bombardier
5. Robert P. Wagoner, Engineer
6. James R., Jr. Lykens, Ass't Engineer
7. James R. Hurd, Radio Operator
8. John R. McCullough, Ass't Radio Operator
9. Romeo Tetreault, Gunner
10. Bill Williams,, Jr. Armorer Gunner

### **Additional Coleman Crew Information:**

- **Documents:** A comprehensive collection of documents relating to the missing Coleman crew can be viewed and download at:  
<http://www.missingaircrew.com/documents.asp>.
- **25 June 1944 Mission Overview:** In addition, an overview of the 25 June 1944 mission is located at: <http://www.missingaircrew.com/25june44.asp>.
- **October 2005 Yap Island Search Trip:**  
<http://www.missingaircrew.com/yapoct.asp>
- **American Planes Lost on Missions to Yap Island:** A comprehensive list of American planes and men lost on missions to Yap Island:  
<http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/yapmissions.asp>.

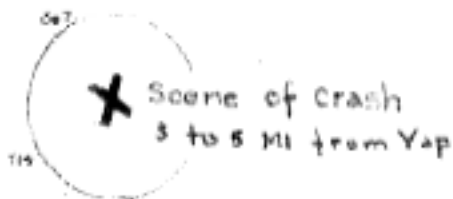
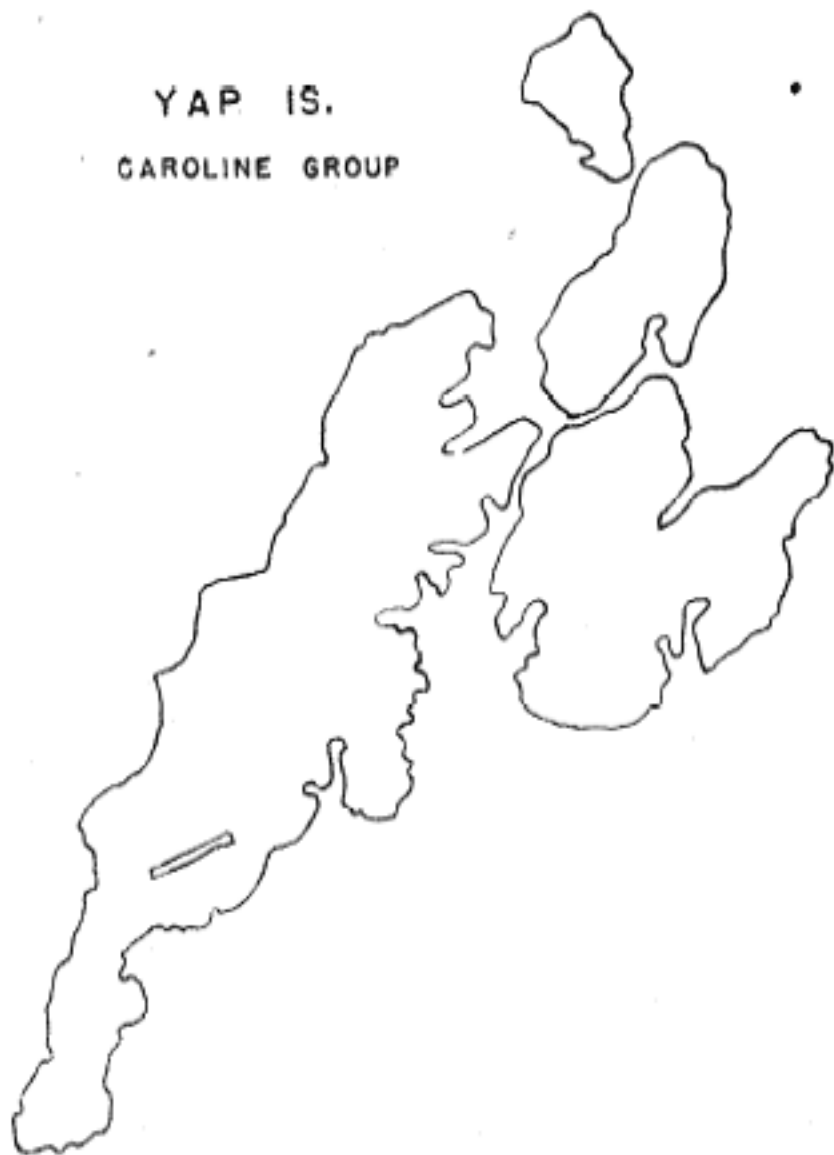
### **Patrick Ranfranz Contact Information:**

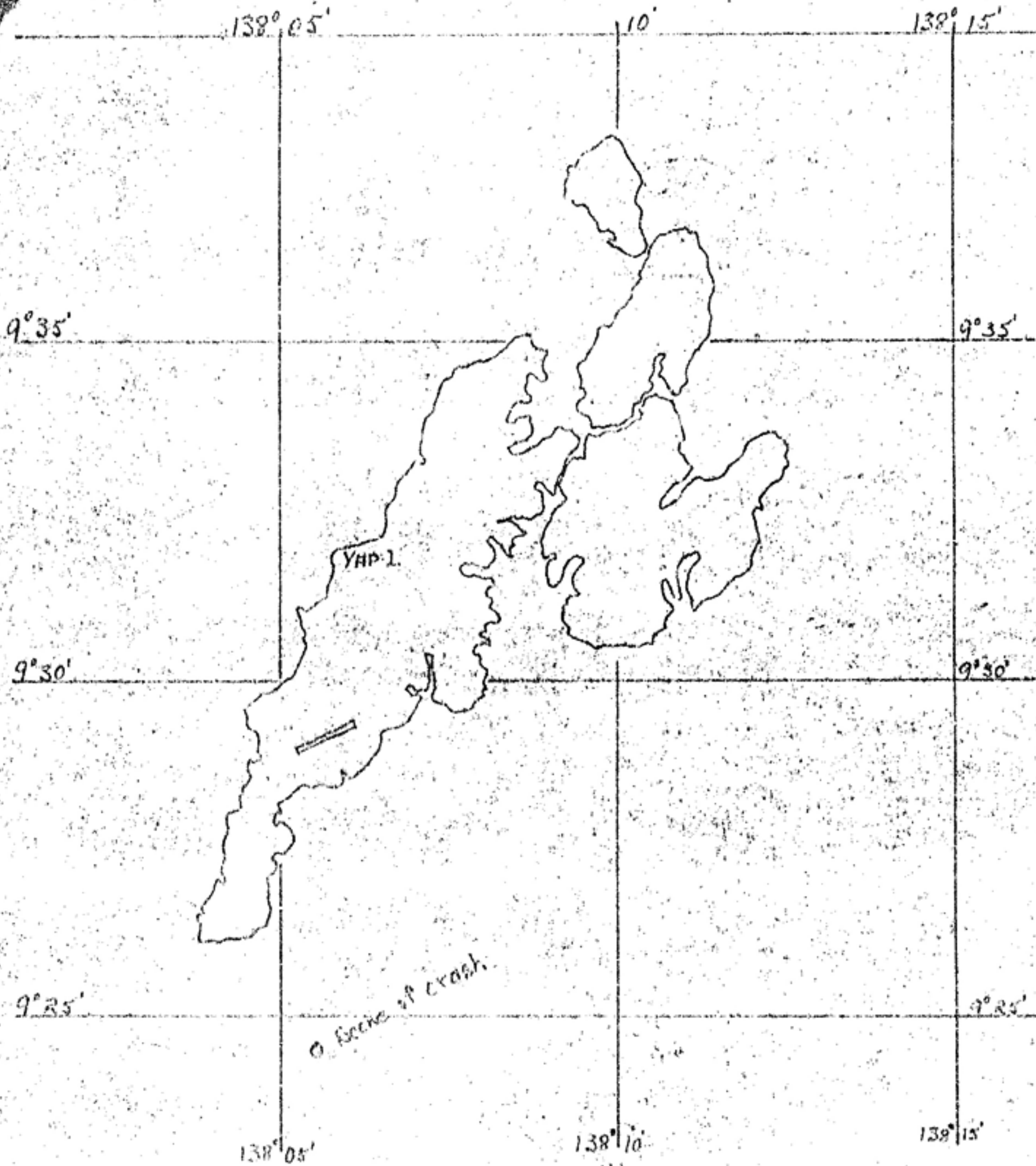
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Website: <http://www.missingaircrew.com>

YAP IS.  
CAROLINE GROUP





YAP ISLANDS (CAROLINE IS.)







Breakaway course (left 090 turn)

180 T

Yap Aerodrome  
Target Area

LEGEND

	5 <sup>th</sup> BG - 72 <sup>nd</sup> BS (10000')
	5 <sup>th</sup> BG - 394 <sup>th</sup> BS (10500')
	307 <sup>th</sup> BG - 370 <sup>th</sup> BS (11200')
	307 <sup>th</sup> BG - 372 <sup>th</sup> BS (11500')

270 T

Lt. Coleman (596)

Lt. Coleman (596)

180 T

Formation Box ~300 x ~3000 feet

Yap Aerodrome  
Target Area

