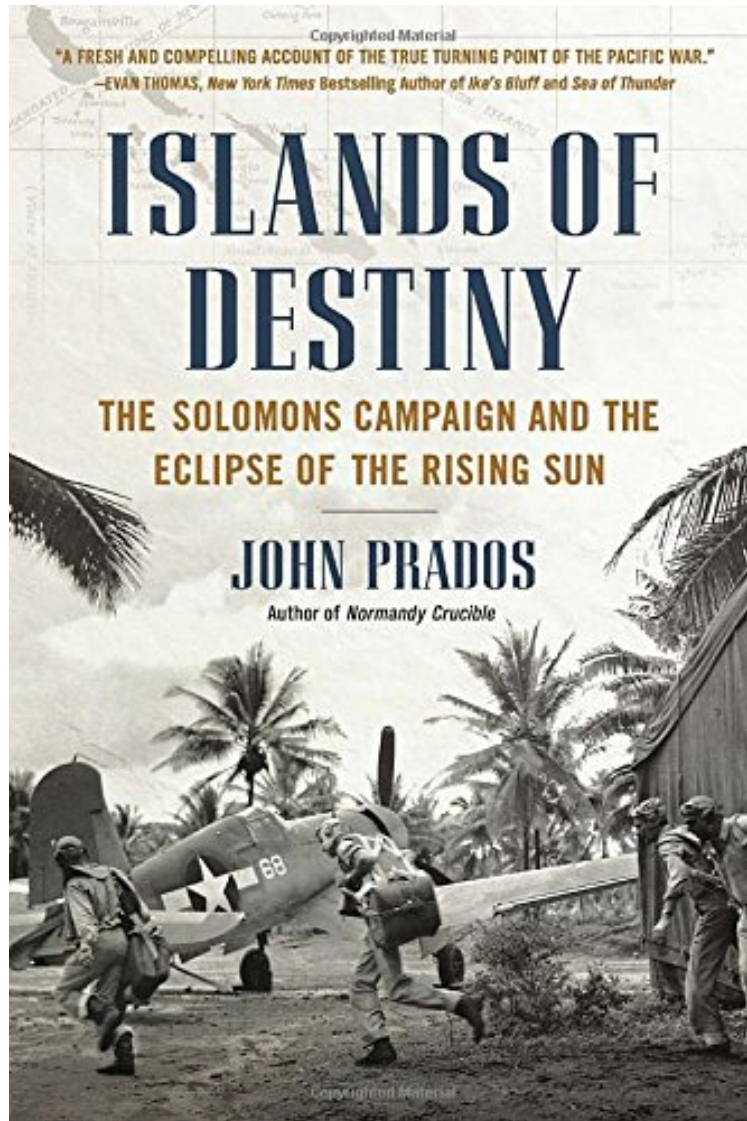


Islands of Destiny: The Solomons Campaign and the Eclipse of the Rising Sun

John Prados

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#839536 in Books John Prados 2013-10-01 2013-10-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.95 x .90 x 6.001, .85 #File Name: 0451414829432 pages Islands of Destiny | File size: 38.Mb

John Prados : Islands of Destiny: The Solomons Campaign and the Eclipse of the Rising Sun before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Islands of Destiny: The Solomons Campaign and the Eclipse of the Rising Sun:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good but sees econ as tactical By Ron L Prados' research is impressive, and while most of us have read the story regarding the intelligence assistance in the Midway battle, Prados

shows that to be the proverbial 'tip of the iceberg'. Nor does he ignore the Japanese efforts at spookery. His knowledge and explanation of that branch of the services is far beyond anything I've seen regarding the war in the Pacific. Not only well-researched, but Prados is no "homer". The Allies (mostly the US navy here) did not fight well in the early going, and Prados pulls no punches in reporting this. Other WWII books have made similar, factual, claims with regard to the Allied military in general and I find no reason to disagree, nor to object; peaceful nations have no reason to pride themselves on the blood-thirst of their soldiers and sailors. Yes, it took a while for the Brits (who started and learned earlier) and the US to get good at fighting. But they did, as evidenced by the Marines at Guadalcanal, beginning with later Solomons campaign regarding the Navy, and as proven by the USA at The Bulge. In that 'pulling no punches', Prados makes clear that the early going by the Navy in the South Pacific was lacking in leadership; the swabbies can't make the ship do what the Captain doesn't want. Ghormley was probably a good staff officer, not sure where Fletcher might have been valuable, but not here. Halsey got there at the right time, but as other sources mention, he stayed too long. Prados chronicles most of the Solomons' campaign, and enough of the New Guinea and central Pacific campaigns to lend background to the Allies increased skills and resources. My disagreement is largely on his early claim of the turn of the pendulum and his final chapter. We'll start with the later, and take a couple of examples: Pg. 353: "In the Outer Seas, the Japanese were weak by choice, the Allies of necessity." Nope, Japan had already begun to run short of freight bottoms to move men and material to where they were required; they were weak of necessity. The Allies were not fully armed, but by choice, what they had was dedicated to the "Hitler first" strategy. Pg. 354: "In the Solomons arena it became impossible for a Japanese ship or plane to execute a mission unopposed, despite the Allies at first inferior forces. Nope, Japan was already dealing with a superior technological and economic force. Pg. 356: "had the Japanese had a fully articulated base network at the outset of the campaign, the inadequacies of their aircraft designs would have mattered less" Which is to say that *if* Japan's economy were capable of winning the war, Japan would have won the war. Japan had one chance to win: The vain hope that early victories would force the Allies to the bargaining table. Similarly, Germany failed. Once it was obvious that the Brits and the US (ignoring the USSR and China for this discussion) were not going to cave, there simply was no way Japan was going to win, regardless of how they dealt with matters after the Santa Cruz battle. At best, they might have kept the war going for another 6 months or so, but so what? Japan lost WWII with the first plane that was launched on Dec 7, 1941. And the Japanese population is damned fortunate we dropped the nukes rather than invading or blockading; millions of Japanese are alive now as a result. Regarding the earlier claim, Guadalcanal was the economic/military terminus in the South Pacific; Midway the same to the north. The Axis lost the war by the simple reason of economics which was clear by early 1943; the rest was more wasted blood, lives and wealth.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Informative and well researched, suffers from structural organization. By Donald M. Matheson The book is well researched and offers a wealth of detail not often found in the writings about the Solomons campaign. I found it a valuable source of information for understanding the events surrounding the Guadalcanal campaign. The reader is hampered, however, by a lack of chronological structure and discipline that can be confusing. If the book had been tightly organized around a timeline of events with accompanying maps it would have been far easier to read. It would also have benefited by tight editing; insertion of gratuitous information contributes to a choppy style and distracting lack of cohesiveness. At times the book has stream of consciousness feel to it. For example Pappy Boyington's shootdown appears twice in the book; it should have been restricted to the period of the Rabaul air campaign when it actually occurred.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Worth a read, but better editing would have made this a very good book. By Brian Halma There is a lot of great content here. Prados brings in Japanese sources. He also wrote a book on the role of codebreaking in WWII, so there is a lot of great integration of information from different forms of intelligence - codebreaking, signals intelligence, photo reconnaissance - and it's nuanced, so it's a discussion of where there was or wasn't certainty, why the Allies had better success codebreaking at different times. Prados also brings an interesting angle - his argument was that Midway was important, but the true turning point in the war was the Solomon's campaign. Another good aspect is that Prados takes a more integrated view of the campaign - Guadalcanal is at the center of this book, but Prados provides good before and after context for the broader campaign. What holds this book back is the editing. At times, the narrative is orderly and makes sense; at others, it becomes a confusing jumble of facts. As it is, it's worth a read, but better editing would have made this a very good book.

The Battle of Midway is traditionally held as the point when Allied forces gained advantage over the Japanese. In *Islands of Destiny*, acclaimed historian and military intelligence expert John Prados points out that the Japanese forces quickly regained strength after Midway and continued their assault undaunted. Taking this surprising fact as the start of his inquiry, he began to investigate how and when the Pacific tide turned in the Allies' favor. Using archives of WWII intelligence reports from both sides, Prados offers up a compelling reassessment of the true turning in the Pacific: not Midway, but the fight for the Solomon Islands. Combat in the Solomons saw a series of surface naval battles, including one of the key battleship-versus-battleship actions of the war; two major carrier actions; daily air duels, including the aerial ambush in which perished the famous Japanese naval commander Admiral Yamamoto

Isoroku; and many other hair-raising exploits. Commencing with the Allied invasion of Guadalcanal, Prados shows how and why the Allies beat Japan on the sea, in the air, and in the jungles.

“A fresh and compelling account of the true turning point of the Pacific War.”—Evan Thomas, *New York Times* Bestselling Author of *Ike’s Bluff* and *Sea of Thunder* “Authoritative...*Islands of Destiny* serves as a powerful reminder of the geography, the strategy, and the ferocity of the Solomons campaign.”—*The Wall Street Journal* “*Islands of Destiny* is essential reading for anyone interested in the Pacific War.”—*World War II Magazine* “Even casual readers of World War II history will find [*Islands of Destiny*] engaging, and they will likely agree that the author makes a strong case for his revisionist assessment. A well-crafted addition to the canon of World War II military histories.”—*Kirkus* s “[Prados] argues that Guadalcanal and the Solomons campaign, not Midway, were the Pacific War’s true turning point. His use of Japanese primary sources is especially impressive. Imperial Navy figures, often treated as ciphers, regain their humanity in this author’s sympathetic hands.”—*San Diego Union-Tribune*

About the Author
Dr. John Prados is a Senior Research Fellow on national security, including foreign affairs, intelligence, and military subjects, at the National Security Archive. He directs the Archive's Iraq Documentation Project, as well as its Vietnam Project. He holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from Columbia University. His books *Unwinnable War*, *Keepers of the Keys* (on the National Security Council) and *Combined Fleet Decoded* (on intelligence in the Pacific in World War II) were each nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. He has published articles with *Vanity Fair*, *The Journal of American History*, *Scientific American*, *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Boston Globe*.