

## **JAPANESE ATTACK. IN KOKODA AREA.**

### **GUERRILLA FIGHTING .**

The Japanese are attacking Australian forward posts in the Kokoda region. Our ground forces, closely supported from the air, are stoutly resisting. Scattered jungle fighting of a guerrilla nature also is reported at Milne Bay, where the remnants of the Japanese invasion force are bottled up in the narrow confines of the northern peninsula.

This is a continuance of the mopping-up operations reported in yesterday's communique. There is as yet no definite evidence that the Japanese actually used flame-throwers against the Australians in the fighting at Milne Bay, but it has been officially confirmed that flame-throwers were among the enemy equipment captured.

Apparently the enemy has strengthened his advance force at Kokoda with the object of pushing our patrols back towards the natural defence line of the Owen Stanley Range. There is no direct evidence, however, that he has pushed up troops from Gona in anything like sufficient strength for the back-door bid for the strongly held Port Moresby.

### **IN THE JUNGLE.**

Japanese are still operating in rough broken jungle-clad hills below the gap through the mountains, and have not yet come up against the natural difficulties which bar the way to Port Moresby. It may be that the new enemy thrusts from Kokoda have been for the purpose of creating a protective front for his use of Kokoda airfield, which he seized some time ago. Ever since the Japanese pushed inland from Gona, fighting has see-sawed in and around Kokoda with the airfield as a prize. This airfield, if made tenable by ground protection, would be useful to the Japanese as a fighter base for the interception of Allied bombers en route and returning from raids on Lae, Salamaua, and Rabaul. It would, however, be under constant threat of our air fighters strafing from Port Moresby, only 10 minutes' flying time away.

In a close fight Australian advance patrols have shown themselves capable of playing the Japanese at their own game in the jungle, and evidence is accumulating that the enemy in New Guinea has not lived up to his Malayan reputation. The Australians' brilliant success at Milne Bay is another case in point.

### **SUPPLY ADVANTAGES.**

In the Kokoda area the Japanese so far have had a tremendous advantage of good supply routes running all the

far have had a tremendous advantage of good supply routes running all the way back to their sea front base at Gona. In contrast, supplies for our advance forces have to be carried from Port Moresby through an 8000ft. gap in the Owen Stanley Range. This pass is so precipitous at one place that porters have to crawl on their hands and knees.

Our ground forces south of the range, however, are being strongly supported from the air. On Tuesday our fighters brought aid to the ground patrols by heavily strafing the enemy rear positions and lines of communication.

### **OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE.**

The following communique was issued by General Headquarters in the South-west Pacific area yesterday:—

North-western sector: Activity limited to reconnaissance.

North-eastern sector—Kokoda: Our ground forces are closely engaged in jungle fighting against enemy thrusts of increasing strength. Allied fighters in close support made two heavy strafing attacks on enemy positions and lines of communication.

Milne Bay: Scattered jungle fighting of a guerrilla type continues.