



Victory at Peleliu: The 81st Infantry Division's Pacific Campaign (Campaigns and Commanders Series)

Bobby C. Blair, John Peter DeCioccio

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When the 1st Marine Division began its invasion of Peleliu in September 1944, the operation in the South Pacific was to take but four days. In fact, capturing this small coral island in the Palaus with its strategic airstrip took two months and involved some of the bloodiest fighting of the Second World War in the Pacific. Rather than the easy conquest they were led to expect, the Marines who landed on Peleliu faced a war of attrition from the island's Japanese defenders, who had dug tunnels and fortified the island's rugged terrain. When the Marines' advance stalled after a week of heavy casualties, the "Wildcats" of the 81st Infantry Division were called in, at first as support. Eventually, the 1st Marines Division was evacuated and the 81st Infantry secured the island.

Now Bobby C. Blair and John Peter DeCioccio tell the story of this campaign through the eyes of the 81st Infantry to offer a revised assessment. Previous accounts of the battle have focused on the 1st Marines, all but ignoring the 81st Infantry Division's contributions. *Victory at Peleliu* demonstrates that without the army's help the marines could not have succeeded on Peleliu.

Blair and DeCioccio have mined the 81st Division's unit records and interviewed scores of veteran participants. The new data they offer challenge the orthodox view that the 81st Infantry merely mopped up an already broken enemy. Allowing their interviewees to tell much of the story, the authors also give a human face to a brutal battle.

Although American efforts in the Palau Islands proved largely unnecessary to ultimately defeating the Japanese, the lessons learned on Peleliu were crucial in subsequent fighting on Iwo Jima and Okinawa. The 81st Infantry's contributions are now part of that larger story.

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