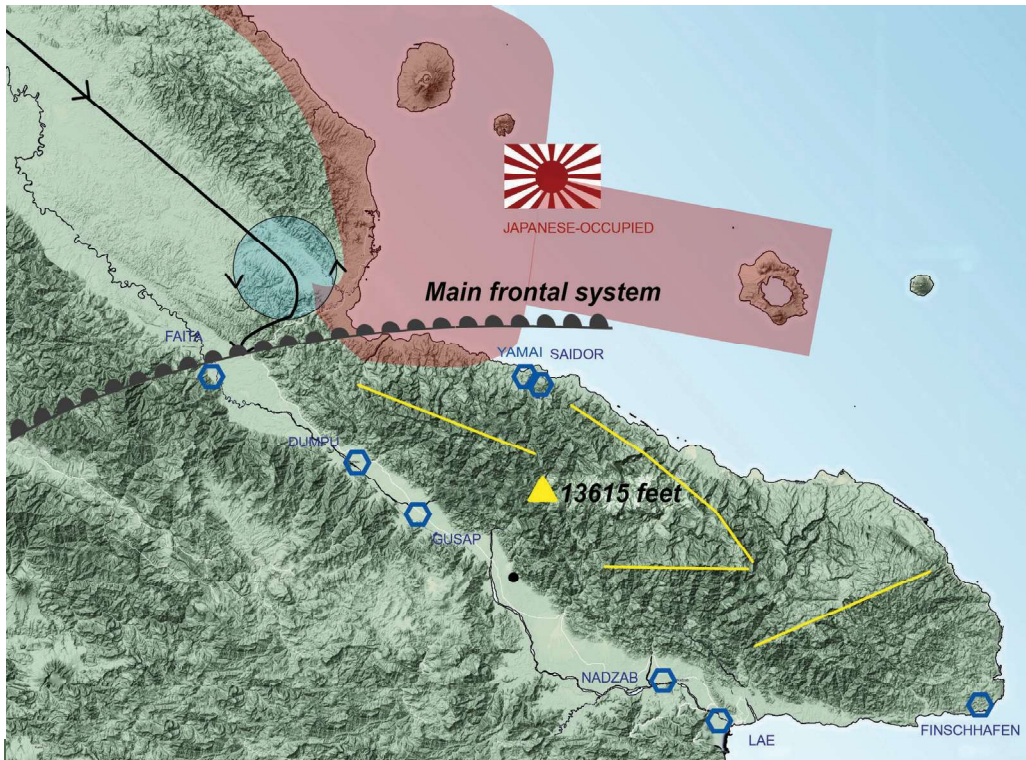


BLACK SUNDAY



The blue hexagons in this map represent Allied bases and airfields. Most of the airpower involved in the Black Sunday mission had departed from two bases in the Markham Valley, Gusap and Nadzab. While the valley had flat areas suitable for airfields, it was hemmed in by mountains on each side. To the north, the Finesterre Ranges towered to almost 14,000 feet. The highest point in the Finesterres is marked with a yellow triangle while other main mountain spines are shown with yellow lines.

On the way back from their mission over Hollandia on Black Sunday 16 April 1944, the attackers route back into the Markham Valley was blocked by a massive weather front as shown. The light blue circle is where many circled, mostly counter clockwise, trying to find a gap in the weather to enable them to enter the Markham Valley.

As aircraft began to run low on fuel, the options of baling out, ditching in the ocean or force landing in a grass clearing were complicated by the proximity of Japanese forces, as shown.