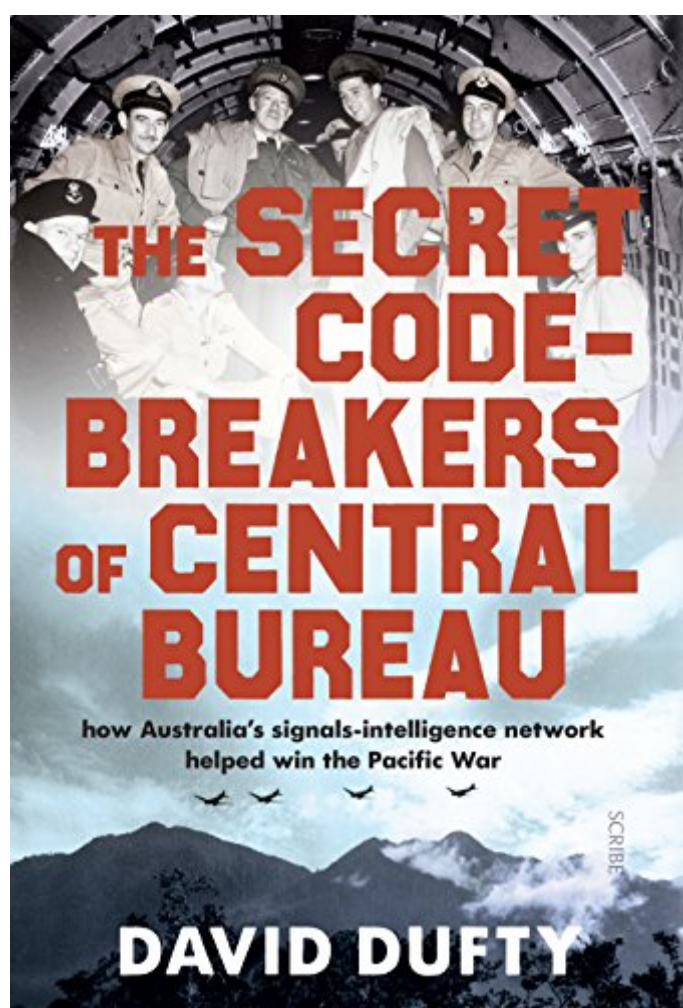


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The Secret Code-Breakers Of Central Bureau: How Australia's Signals-intelligence Network Helped Win The Pacific War



Synopsis

A groundbreaking work of Australian military history, *The Code-Breakers of Central Bureau* tells the story of the country's significant code-breaking and signals-intelligence achievements during the Second World War. It reveals how Australians built a large and sophisticated intelligence network from scratch, how Australian code-breakers cracked Japanese army and air force codes, and how the code-breakers played a vital role in the battles of Midway, Milne Bay, the Coral Sea, Hollandia, and Leyte. The book also reveals Australian involvement in the shooting down of Admiral Yamamoto near Bougainville in 1943, and how on 14 August 1945, following Japan's offer of surrender, an Australian intelligence officer established the Allies' first direct radio contact with Japan since the war had begun. This is a rich historical account of a secret and little-understood side of the war, interwoven with lively personalities and personal stories. It is the story of Australia's version of Bletchley Park, of talented and dedicated individuals who significantly influenced the course of the Pacific War.

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Customer Reviews

The Secret Code-Breakers of Central BureauHow Australia's signals-intelligence network helped win the Pacific WarDavid DuftyAn intriguing, detailed, often humorous book on breaking the Japanese codes by the Australians and allies across World War 2. Plus be prepared to gain expertise in the art of code breaking; admire the type of people recruited; read a fascinating story of the Pacific War from this secret vantage; see how the role of the code breaker expanded from 1929 "Gentlemen do not read each others' mail" (Henry L Stimson, US secretary of war) to its use by General Douglas MacArthur in the Japanese defeat. First the undercover name: "Central Bureau" was perfect, because it gave nothing away at all. It was, quite literally, the most boring name they could think of. And code breaking expertise: "Any pattern in a code or cypher system is enough to weaken it" is just one of 24 items noted to gain a foothold into a code ... "embedding a secret message inside a public message [e.g. a weather report]" is called an "open code" is another matter. Prof. Thomas Gerard Room, head of the mathematics department at the University of Sydney was recruited into code breaking in early 1941 and remained after demobilisation in 1945. His success, and his efforts to introduce IBM code breaking machines to Sydney University after the war, are recorded. As are two humorous anecdotes. (1) In 1940, the army censor noticed a curious pattern of dots on letters and newspaper clippings from a British officer in China to the wife of a senior air force officer in Melbourne. Room was able to break this "Dot Code" which was a love affair not espionage. Room recommended the censor allow the mail through but add a Dot Code message on the outside envelope "Careful! The Censor". (2) In 1943, Room solved code JN-16 also used by the Japanese to send weather reports. As weather reports required expensive reconnaissance planes or weather balloons the Allied air force utilised the Japanese reports as well. What of Japanese code-breakers? Unfortunately there is no spy vs spy drama. Apparently "every nation's tactical code systems had already been broken by their enemies" but frequent change of codebook and decryption delay were often enough. "Allied cryptographers believed that TypeX was probably secure, but they could not be sure. After all the Allies had cracked the Axis' high-level cypher machines, Enigma and Purple, so precautions needed to be taken, just in case. Could not be sure? Just in case? "...although they knew some code-breaking [was] going on in Japan during the war, [on occupation of Japan] they could find absolutely no trace of any such organisation". "Whatever story there was to tell about code-breaking from the Japanese side of the war, it was erased". Do we know we had a significant edge? [We do know the Japanese were good at Strine "the Japanese call sign for Sydney was SHI DO NI."] What of the people in this story?

This is a story of enthusiasm “ a 16 year old inflated his age and an over-60 year old deflated his age to be recruited into the Four Special Wireless Section. Females used initiative to join the ranks. In reality, it was work that “ would drive you nuts “. And, most sadly, the work has not been recognised, particularly due to its secret nature. One can only hope that David Dufty’s wonderful book “The Secret Code-Breakers of Central Bureau” can rectify this situation. Malcolm Cameron 10 July 2017

Very interesting true story

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