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OPINION…

LETTER

The role of the Army in a maritime strategy

I very much enjoyed Lieutenant General Morrison’s article in the Spring issue of your excellent journal [United Service 64 (3), 9 – 14]. However, I must take issue with his contention that the air raids across Australia’s north 71 years ago were the direct result of the defeat in detail of our ill-prepared land forces on Ambon, Timor and the Dutch East Indies; that they attacked us on land, from land; and that Australia was saved not by the battle of the Arafura Sea, but by the land effects generated by joint forces throughout the South-West Pacific Area.

Your readers should be aware that the initial raids on Darwin were carried out from the sea by the Japanese fast carrier force which bombed Pearl Harbour a few weeks before. Furthermore, at the Battle of the Coral Sea on 7 May 1942, the Japanese escort carrier Shoho was sunk by aircraft from the USS Yorktown and USS Lexington. In response, the Japanese invasion fleet from Rabaul, which was heading to Port Moresby, was ordered to return. A month later at the Battle of Midway, most of the Japanese fast carrier force was destroyed. The Japanese then abandoned their plans to invade Australia; and concentrated instead on establishing a barrier between the United States and Australia on the islands to the north and north east of Australia.

Vice Admiral Ian Knox AC RAN (Ret’d)
Lavender Bay, 23 October 2013