

Noemfoor ([134.89E 1.04S](#)) is a small island in Geelvink Bay in West Papua. It is about 25km x 18 km in diameter. The island was virtually undeveloped before the war, with a native population of around 5,000 who were visited about twice a year by trading ships seeking copra and ironwood.

The island is surrounded by a coral reef with a few small boat passages but no anchorages of any significance. Most of the coast to the north, south, and east is mangrove swamp. The island is relatively flat, with the highest point being 204 metres, but the terrain is somewhat broken in the south. The entire island is covered by jungle.

The Japanese began developing airfields on the island in September 1943 as a link in their defensive perimeter. The native population fled into the hills to avoid conscription as laborers, and the Japanese brought in some 3,000 laborers from Java (Indonesia). The Javanese were very poorly treated and after completing three airfields only 403 were still alive when the Allies finished capturing the island. Two of these airfields (Kamiri and Kornasoren) were located on the north shore while the third (Namber) was located on the southwestern coast.

Noemfoor Island and its three airstrips can be seen below. The Australian base is circled.



The Japanese Noemfoor force in June 1944 consisted of about 2,000 troops. The Allies landed on 2 July 1944 after which American patrols pushed Japanese resistance away from the airfields and into the interior of the island. The Japanese were still on the island when Clem arrived on 5 August.

Starved on food, the Japanese on Noemfoor were soon reduced to *“the most loathsome and promiscuous cannibalism ever noted in the South West Pacific Area.”* The Americans had dealt with the remaining Japanese on Noemfoor by the beginning of September, four weeks after Clem arrived.

As he had done on Kiriwina, Clem serviced RAAF Douglas Bostons on Noemfoor.



Noemfoor Island, Dutch New Guine c 1944-08 Boston Bomber Aircraft of 22 Squadron on Kamiri Airstrip.
- AWM PHOTO OG1517 -

As the Japanese were still on the island, it is likely that Clem's camp on Noemfoor would have been close to the Kamiri airstrip. The photo above was taken circa August 1944 at the time Clem was there servicing Bostons. The operations book for 22 Squadron confirms that the RAAF Bostons used Kamiri as their base.



Noemfoor Island, Dutch New Guinea. 1944-10-29. While ground staff of No.22 (Boston) Squadron RAAF trundle out two 250 lb bombs on low trailers for the bomb rack of the Boston aircraft, pilots who are to take part in the sortie check up with their navigators from a map spread on the coral airstrip.

- AWM PHOTO -



**A-20Gs 43-21976 (A28-66) & A28-67 "DU-V."
22 Squadron, Noemfoor, Aug., 1944.
Photo provided by Mike Mirkovic
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