

# Jungle WARRIORS

OF RECENT WEEKS in New Zealand there have been in the streets and spots where men foregather a number of officers whose shoulder-flashes bear the single word "Fiji." One of these officers was brought to bay and after a while persuaded to reveal who and what he was. He rejected the title "Commando," and declared himself as an officer on furlough from the Fijian Infantry Regiment.

The regiment is composed of Fijians, and officered by New-Zealanders and white Fijians. Later, as they gained experience and proved themselves, several Fijians were commissioned. Two of the battalions have a sprinkling of New Zealand N.C.O.s, but for the rest the Fijians provide their own. After hard training in Fiji, itself an ideal school for jungle fighters and very similar to the type of country they would find farther north in the Pacific, one battalion left for the Solomons, where it played a notable and successful part in the campaign, not altogether completed incidentally, to eject the Japanese invader from those islands.

After a short stay on Guadalcanal they were sent to a neighbouring island of Florida, and there for five long months they took up a defensive role relieved only by arduous and lengthy patrols which combed the whole length and breadth of the island. The infantry of the 3rd Division will understand their feelings. Finally it seemed their chance had come. They landed on Kolombangara and sent out patrols to contact the enemy. They found no enemy, and the total bag was two Chinese. But they did not have long to wait. Bougainville next saw them, and on Christmas Day '43 they set out for their first patrol

outside the perimeter at Empress Augusta Bay. Quickly settling down to their work they reconnoitred the area in all directions and increased their knowledge of the enemy. Before long they set out on an ambitious patrol, of company strength this time, and after a four-and-a-half day trek through the jungle they set up camp at Ibu, nine miles from the coast on the eastern side of the island, and thirty miles from the perimeter. From here they sent out patrols which established outposts sometimes ten miles away from the main camp. Their object was simple enough—to find out all about the Japs and kill as many of them as they could. For this the company was strengthened with the addition of a mortar section and a machine-gun section armed with Brens, not Vickers.

The camp was 1,500 ft. above sea level, and from an old native garden on the hillside they hacked out an airstrip. A "cub" airstrip it was called. One hundred and fifty yards long, it sufficed to land a small cabin monoplane which brought in specialist equipment and took out sick and wounded, of whom there were very few. Supplies were dropped by transport planes. So they lived for over seven weeks, for the first month on their own, and later reinforced with a second company, itself strengthened with mortars and machine guns. During the whole period the Japs were given no peace, and clashes and ambushes were regular occurrences. Striking out of the jungle without warning they took the Japs by surprise again and again, inflicting casualties and leaving the enemy bewildered and apprehensive.

Yet so much master of the jungle did the unit show itself, so resourceful and courageous, that during the whole period