

## World War II: The Pacific War, 1941–1945

When the United States restricted the sale of oil to Japan in July 1941 in response to Japanese expansion into Indochina, the Japanese had to find an alternative source of oil. The Dutch East Indies were the only possible source of supply in the western Pacific region. Thus, American strategists reasoned that a Japanese military move into the Indies would be their next logical step. To deter such a move, President Roosevelt had directed that the battleships and aircraft carriers of the U.S. Pacific Fleet be based at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. In October the civilian government of Japan fell and was replaced by a military government headed by General Tojo. In November a special Japanese envoy arrived in the United States to assist the Japanese ambassador in negotiations to resume the flow of western oil.

Unknown to the Japanese, the United States had an advantage in the negotiations because American code breakers had some months earlier succeeded in breaking the Japanese diplomatic code. Thus, Washington knew that a deadline for the negotiations had been set for late November, after which something ominous would happen. In late November a Japanese naval expeditionary force was sighted heading toward the Malay Peninsula, where they presumably would launch an invasion. But unknown and undetected was another Japanese force at sea. This one, which included all six of Japan's large carriers and numerous escort ships, was headed east across the Pacific toward Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

### THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR

Masked by stormy seas and heavy rain, the Japanese strike force had approached to within 200 miles north of Oahu, Hawaii, by the early morning of Sunday, 7 December.

Because of a threat of subversive activity, most American aircraft at the air base at Pearl Harbor on Oahu had been lined up in neat rows to guard against sabotage. The eight battleships of the Pacific Fleet were all anchored at Battleship Row in the harbor to permit week-

end liberty. Fortunately, the two carriers *Lexington* and *Enterprise* then stationed at Pearl Harbor were out delivering planes to Midway and Wake Islands.

At 0600 the six carriers of the Japanese strike force turned into the wind and launched over 180 planes to attack the battleships and destroy the parked aircraft so that there could be no counterattack.

At 0800 the first of the attacking Japanese planes reached the harbor and radioed back the signal "Tora . . . Tora . . . Tora," a code word meaning complete surprise had been achieved. At this time most American Sailors and airmen were finishing breakfast or just relaxing. Suddenly death and destruction began raining from the skies. The attack struck all parts of the harbor at once because all the Japanese pilots had predesignated targets. Within moments the battleship *Arizona* exploded and sank after a bomb set off her ammunition magazines. Soon all remaining battleships were sunk or badly damaged. By 0945 the attack was over. Altogether some 2,400 American servicemen had been killed and another 1,200 had been wounded. Nineteen ships had been sunk or severely damaged, including all eight of the battleships. Over 230 planes had been destroyed on the ground. Fortunately for the United States, a large tank farm near the harbor containing some 4.5 million barrels of oil was spared. Loss of this oil would have hindered later American naval operations even more than the damage done to the ships. Also, important repair yards and machine shops, which would make possible the eventual salvage and return to duty of fourteen of the nineteen ships disabled by the attack, were practically untouched.

Calling 7 December 1941 "A day which will live in infamy!" the next day, President Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war on Japan. Three days later Germany and Italy joined Japan in declaring war on the United States.

Despite the attack's apparent success at the time, the Japanese had made three serious miscalculations. First, they had counted heavily on the efforts of twenty submarines deployed in the area and five midget



Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, just before the Japanese attack of 7 December 1941. Ford Island lies in the center of the harbor. Hickam Field is off toward the upper left on the main shore. Battleship Row lies along the left side of Ford Island.

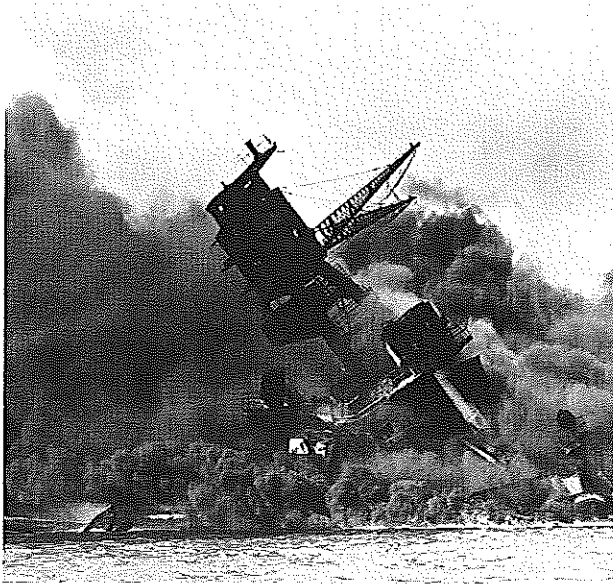
submarines launched for the attack. However, as far as is known, none of the midgets reached their targets, and the other submarines were never able to successfully interdict the sea-lanes between California and Pearl Harbor. Second, rather than demoralize their American enemy, as had the sneak attacks on their Chinese foes in 1894 and the Russians in 1904, the attack on Pearl Harbor roused and infuriated the American public in general, and the U.S. Navy in particular, as nothing else could have. Third, and perhaps most important, the attack forcibly altered the mind-set of the senior American naval leadership, which had until then believed that the dominant ships in naval warfare would be battleships. After Pearl Harbor, the U.S. and its allies had no choice but to build their offense in the Pacific around the aircraft carrier. The Japanese held to a belief in the superiority of a battleship-centered strategy until the end. History would show that the carrier, not the battleship, would be the dominant naval weapon in the Pacific in World War II, as it has been in all the major navies of the world ever since.

With the American fleet crippled in Pearl Harbor, the other parts of the Japanese master plan swung into action. Japanese forces landed on the Malay Peninsula to

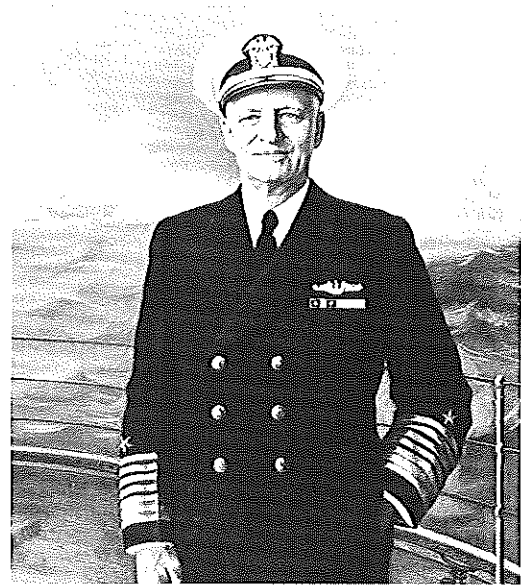
begin their successful push toward the great British base at Singapore. They took Thailand without resistance. Their planes bombed U.S. air bases in the Philippines, and troops landed on the U.S. territories of Wake Island and Guam and at British Hong Kong. All these would fall to the Japanese by year's end.

Into the confusion of successive defeats in the Pacific came the new commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. He arrived at Pearl Harbor on Christmas Day and assumed command in a brief ceremony aboard a submarine on 31 December. It was up to him to win the biggest naval war the United States had ever faced. Nimitz was quiet and unruffled, inspiring confidence. There was no question who was running the show. Nimitz was to prove equal to the monumental task he had been assigned.

Admiral King's first instructions to Nimitz were clear: (1) cover and hold the Hawaii-Midway line and maintain communications with the U.S. West Coast, and (2) maintain communications between the West Coast and Australia by holding a line drawn north to south from Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska, through Midway to Samoa, then southwest to New Cale-



The USS *Arizona* burning and sinking after being hit by Japanese carrier planes on the morning of 7 December 1941. Over 1,100 of her crew were killed in the attack.



Admiral Chester Nimitz, with Admiral King, devised much of the Pacific war strategy. He personified the true meaning of the phrase "an officer and a gentleman."

donia and Port Moresby, New Guinea. The order was to hold the line against any further Japanese advance. Available forces were to be sacrificed in delaying Japanese advances in the Dutch East Indies in order to hold that defense line. Forces would be sent to the Pacific to reinforce as they became available. In the meantime, the United States was going to have to make a major effort in the Atlantic in order to keep the sea-lanes open to Britain and thwart the massive German threat facing the British and Soviet allies.

### PACIFIC WAR PLANS

The fires had hardly been extinguished at Pearl Harbor in December 1941 before the U.S. Navy began to finalize both short- and long-term plans for the conduct of the war against the Japanese. The war in the Pacific was going to be primarily a naval war, and planning had already been done for the conduct of such a war. A contingency plan for an island-hopping campaign in the Pacific, called War Plan Orange, had been drawn up thirty years earlier by naval planners at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. It had been much refined in the years since.

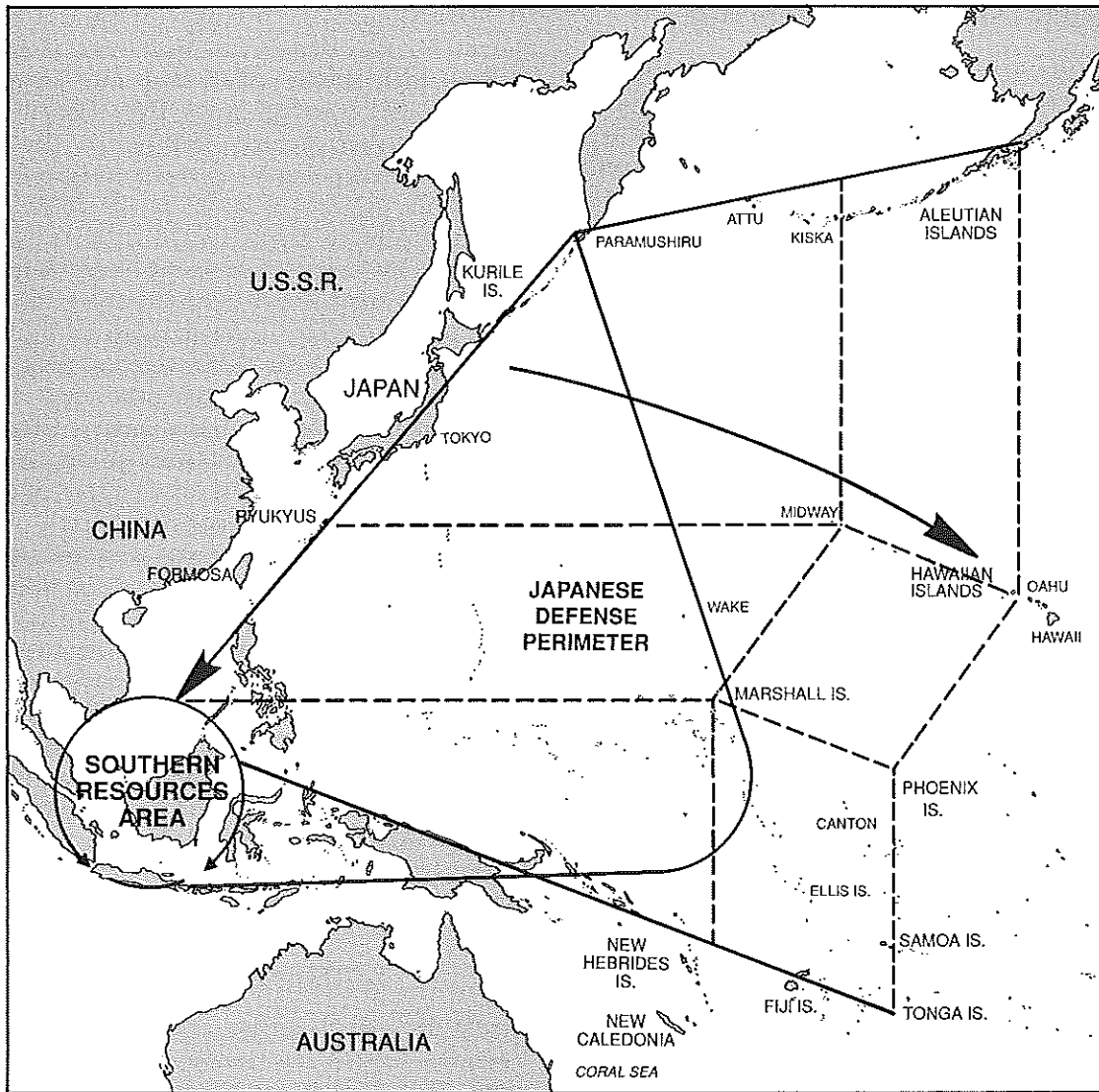
Given the orders to hold the line of defense across the mid-Pacific and to protect the sea-lanes to Australia, Admiral Nimitz knew his task would be a grim one for the first months while small Allied naval forces fought a delaying action in the Dutch East Indies. But after that, there was no question in his mind that the U.S. Navy would have to take the offensive.

### EARLY JAPANESE SUCCESSES

The Japanese moved quickly following their attack on Pearl Harbor. Within days they made landings in the Philippines to guard the sea-lanes of communications to their main objective, the oil of the Dutch East Indies. By mid-December they made their first landings near the oil fields on the island of Borneo, followed by an advance southward toward Java, the main island of the archipelago. Java was especially rich in the natural resources that Japan needed.

In January 1942 the ABDA (American, British, Dutch, and Australian) defense command was formed. Its headquarters was in Java. It was never very effective because of the small forces at its disposal and disagreements over what it should do. The Dutch considered defense of Java the principal goal; the British and Americans believed that a successful defense of Java was impossible, and that the best ABDA could do was delay the Japanese so they could not move their forces farther into the Southwest Pacific and isolate Australia. The Japanese methodically moved through the Indies, setting up airfields for land-based air support at each succeeding location they conquered. In mid-February Admiral Nagumo's carrier striking force arrived in the area. It raided Darwin, Australia's northernmost port, and supported an invasion of Portuguese Timor, thus effectively isolating Java from any major reinforcement.

The ABDA naval force under command of Dutch Admiral Karel Doorman made several attempts to stop the Japanese advance but was defeated in almost every



The Pacific theater, showing the Japanese defense perimeter.

encounter. The Battle of the Java Sea on 29 February all but eliminated the Allied force. The majority of ABDA ships, including the cruiser USS *Houston*, was sunk by aircraft and destroyer-fired torpedoes. The Allies fought gallantly, but they inflicted only minor losses on the Japanese before Nagumo's naval aircraft mopped up the opposition. Surviving Allied destroyers made it to Australia to fight another day.

The Japanese began landing on Java on 28 February 1942; by 9 March the island was forced into unconditional surrender. Before the end of March all of the Dutch East Indies were in Japanese hands, and the rich oil wells of Java, Borneo, and Sumatra were providing an inexhaustible supply of fuel and other resources. The Japanese had attained all of their objectives in the south, and at the same time they had conquered Burma and the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean. They had driven the

battered British Indian Ocean Fleet into East African ports. They had accomplished all of their primary objectives in less than half the time they had planned, and with insignificant losses.

On 11 March, two days after the fall of Java, General Douglas MacArthur was ordered out of the Philippines by President Roosevelt. He slipped away from his command post on Corregidor in Manila Bay on a PT boat and made his way to the southern Philippines. From there he flew to Australia to take command of the defense of that nation. As he left the Philippines, he promised the Filipinos, in his now-famous words, "I shall return." In April and May the last Filipino and American defenders of the Philippines were overrun on Bataan Peninsula and Corregidor. The survivors suffered every form of human brutality as they were forced on a "Death March" from Bataan to their prison camps.

## THE JAPANESE DEFENSE PERIMETER

The Japanese had now established their defense perimeter. Anchored by Rangoon in the Indian Ocean area, it included all of the Dutch East Indies and northern New Guinea on the south, extending to include Rabaul on New Britain and Kavieng on nearby New Ireland in the southwest. It then crossed the Pacific northward to newly acquired Wake, Guam, and the British Gilbert Islands. On the northern flank Japan was protected by bases in the Kurile Islands. Japan had also improved its many bases in the islands acquired from Germany during World War I—the Carolines, Marshalls, and Marianas. Japan made Truk in the Carolines into its “Pearl Harbor” of the central Pacific and developed Rabaul into a major forward base for further expansion southwestward. Only on the central perimeter, near Midway Island, did a gap exist. Admiral Yamamoto wanted to seal this gap, but the Japanese General Staff felt it was not necessary.

The Japanese hoped that their string of well-defended bases and their fine navy would be sufficient to keep the growing American strength at bay. They hoped to defeat newly arriving American forces bit by bit in a prolonged war of attrition. This, they hoped, would cause the American people to become disheartened and willing to make a compromise peace that would let Japan keep her newly acquired territory. But Admiral Nimitz, the U.S. Navy, and the American people would not let the Japanese achieve their hopes.

## LIMITED OFFENSE BECOMES THE BEST DEFENSE

Admiral Nimitz knew that the Japanese were planning additional moves to the southwest. Unknown to them, the Japanese naval code had been broken by U.S. naval intelligence. Thus, on many crucial occasions throughout the war, Japanese plans were known ahead of time. This allowed successful countermeasures to be planned and executed. Nimitz felt that he could best defend the sea-lanes to Australia by attacking Japanese bases in the central Pacific with carrier task forces in a series of hit-and-run raids. This would cause much concern in the Japanese high command. Yamamoto himself was afraid that the Americans might even attempt a raid on Tokyo and endanger the emperor’s life.

Vice Admiral William Halsey was selected as the man to strike the Japanese bases. He was to conduct raids at widely separated locations so as to cause the Japanese the most anxiety. Halsey even hoped to make them believe that there were more U.S. naval task forces in the region than they thought existed. Back home the press exaggerated the effects of the raids and greatly boosted American public morale, and so the raids achieved part of their purpose.

Then came an electrifying surprise U.S. attack on the Japanese home islands. In April 1942, Halsey’s carrier striking force boldly sailed deep into Japanese waters with sixteen long-range Army B-25s lashed to the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet*. The plan was to launch the bombers on a one-way mission to the Japanese home islands as soon as the force approached within maximum range. On 18 April the all-volunteer pilots, led by Army Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle, successfully took off when the force had come within 660 miles of Japan. They made air raids on Tokyo, Nagoya, and Kobe. None of the B-25s were lost over Japan. They then continued on into China, since they did not have sufficient fuel to return to the carrier. There the pilots crash-landed or parachuted to the ground. Most escaped in friendly Chinese territory, though some were captured and executed in Japanese-controlled areas.

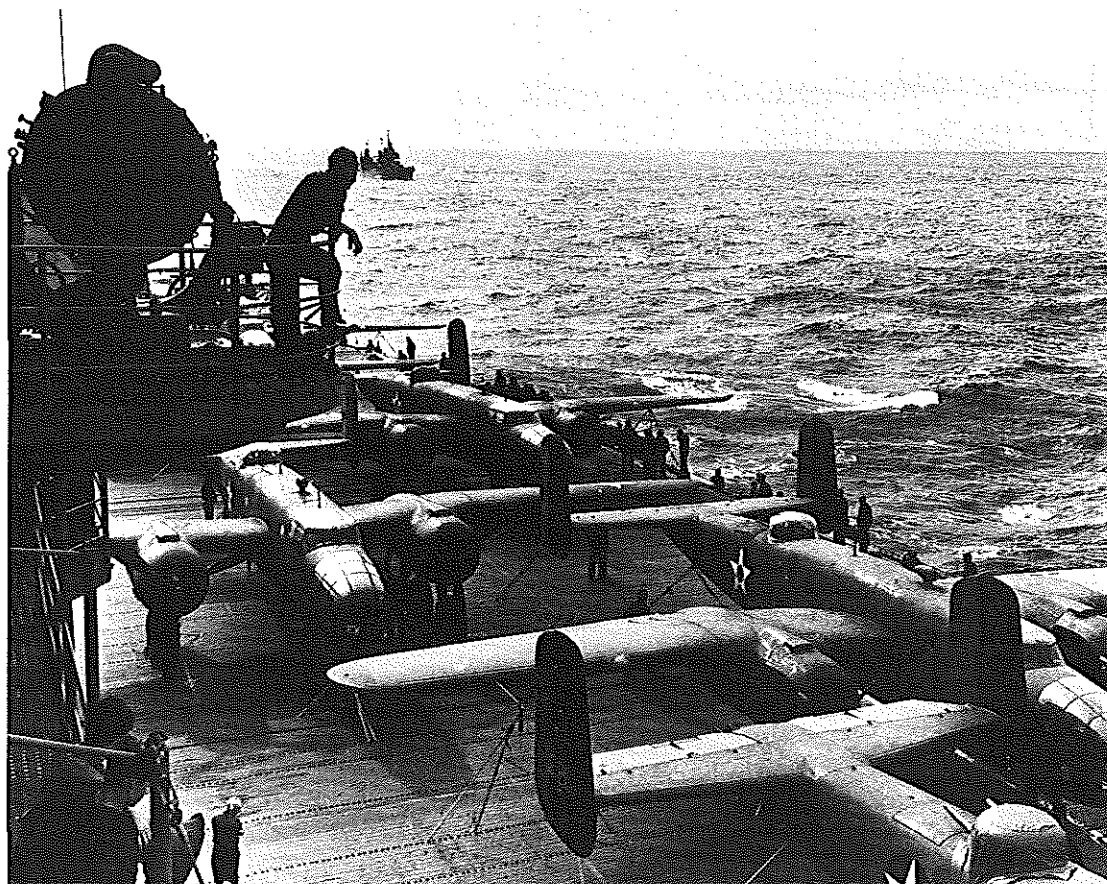
The Japanese armed forces were humiliated. Their boast that the sacred territory of the Land of the Rising Sun would never be attacked was proved wrong. Yamamoto’s plans to attack Midway in June in order to close the gap in the Japanese defense perimeter were now revived. Another Japanese move into the Coral Sea to cut the sea-lanes to Australia was put into action for early May. A third Japanese move, a two-pronged thrust into the Solomon Islands and toward Port Moresby in New Guinea, also was started. Nimitz, aware of these intentions through decoding of Japanese messages, planned his own actions carefully.

## BATTLE OF THE CORAL SEA

Nimitz directed his carrier task groups to converge on the Coral Sea to stop the Japanese moves toward the Solomons. The *Lexington* and her group were sent to reinforce Rear Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher’s *Yorktown* group.

On 8 May the Battle of the Coral Sea was fought. It was the first great combat between carrier forces, with neither fleet ever coming into sight of the other. Both groups launched their attack waves about the same time. The Japanese had several advantages: fliers with more combat experience, better torpedoes, and a storm front that partly concealed their movements. The opposing waves hit the two task groups almost simultaneously. The Japanese carrier *Shokaku* was severely damaged, and both the *Yorktown* and *Lexington* were hit. The *Lexington* was struck by two torpedoes, which ruptured her fuel lines and caused major explosions. The ship had to be abandoned and was later sunk by one of her own escorting destroyers.

The Battle of the Coral Sea turned back the Japanese advance for the first time in the Pacific war. Even though the American losses were somewhat greater, the strategic victory was clearly on the side of the United States. While only one Japanese carrier was sunk, another was



The Doolittle raid on Tokyo on 18 April 1942. B-25s are on the deck of the USS *Hornet*. The raid humiliated the Japanese armed forces, which had pledged that their homeland would never be attacked. When asked where the planes had come from, President Roosevelt said, "From Shangri-La," a mythical land of eternal youth in Tibet. Later in the war, a newly built U.S. carrier was given the name *Shangri-La* in memory of the attack. This book's author served aboard her before she was decommissioned in the early 1970s.

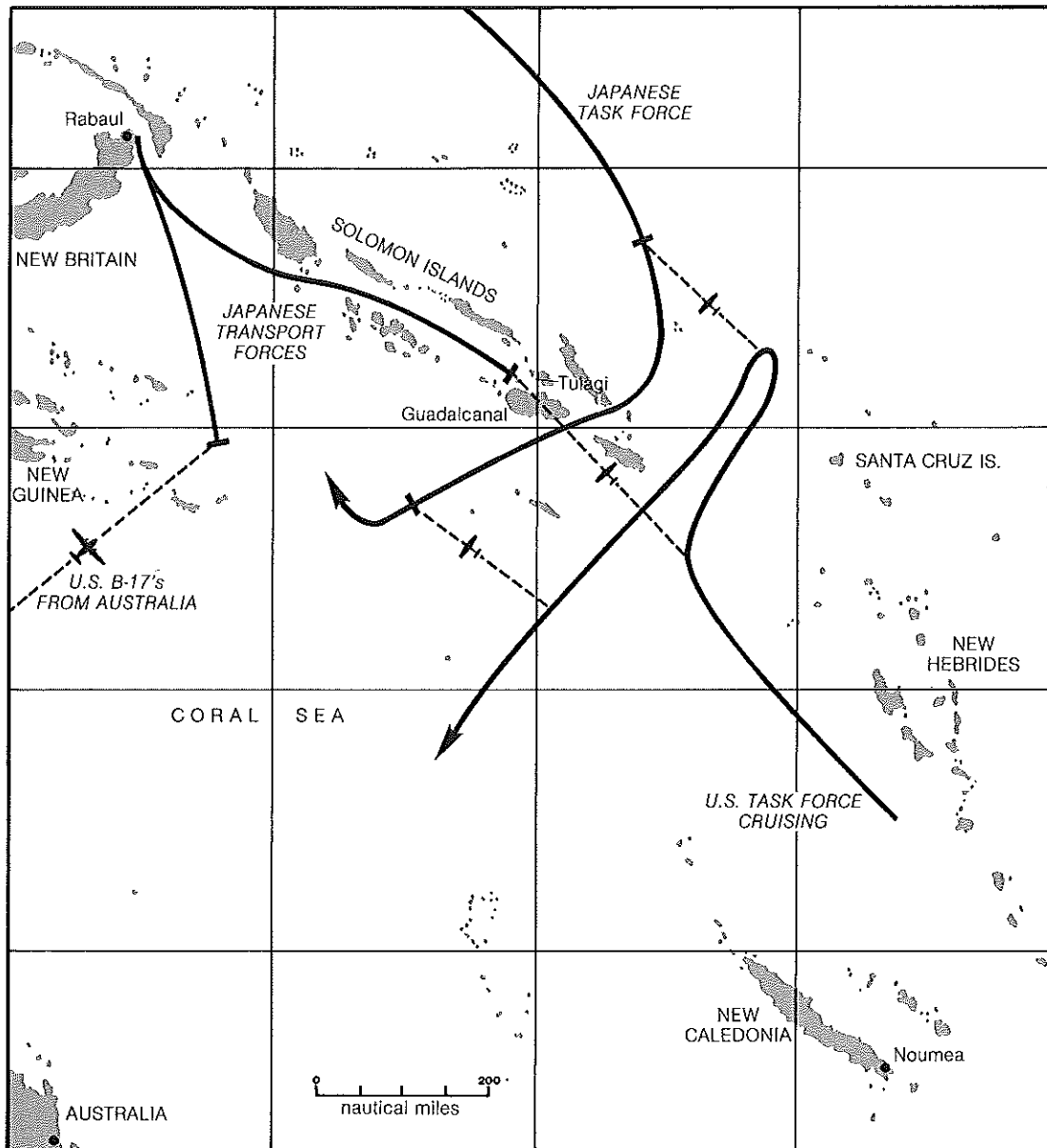
damaged, and the third lost so many aviators it was kept out of the Midway operation. Nagumo's Midway force would be short three carriers for the major action of Yamamoto's grand plan.

### BATTLE OF MIDWAY

In mid-1942 Yamamoto's Combined Fleet had immense numerical superiority over Allied forces in the Pacific. But he devised a curious battle plan that split his forces into ten separate groups, spread all the way from the Aleutian Islands to Midway itself. The Japanese Combined Fleet was a huge armada of eleven battleships, eight carriers, twenty-three cruisers, and sixty-five destroyers. They were pitted against Nimitz's small force of three carriers, eight cruisers, and fourteen destroyers. The key to the impending action, however, was U.S. intelligence. Nimitz had deduced all the major movements in the Japanese plan through radio intercepts and code breaking. The Americans were not going to be surprised—much to the astonishment of the Japanese.

The first action occurred on 3 June 1942, with a Japanese diversionary attack on Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians. A scout plane ranging 700 miles to sea from Midway alerted the Midway defenders. Fletcher drew his two task forces in to within 200 miles of Midway and waited. Nagumo launched his first attack of 108 planes against Midway at dawn on the fourth. Fletcher located the Japanese force with patrol bombers and then ordered Rear Admiral Raymond Spruance in the *Enterprise* to attack while the *Yorktown* recovered the search planes.

At the same time, all aircraft on Midway took off to attack the Japanese force. The American planes proved to be no match for the Zero fighters and were quickly shot down. Nagumo now was faced with four hours of fast action and difficult decisions. His carriers were successively attacked by torpedo planes and bombers, none of which scored a hit and almost all of which were shot down. Then an American submarine penetrated his formation and fired torpedoes, all of which missed. Finally, the aircraft returning from the first Midway attack re-



The Battle of the Coral Sea. This was the world's first all-carrier air and sea battle. It turned back the Japanese advance into the South Pacific and kept open the supply route to Australia.

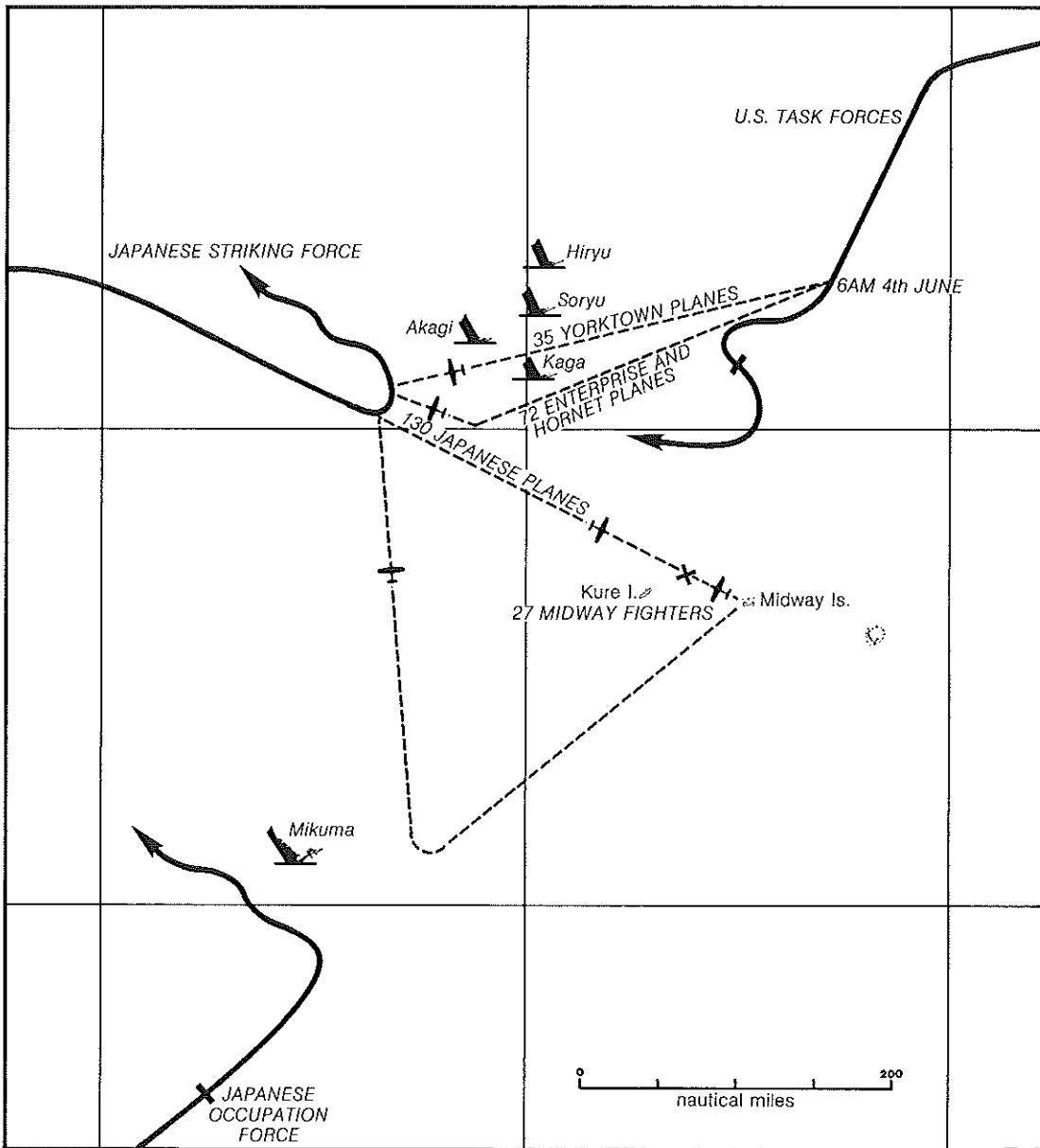
ported that another attack was needed to destroy the runways there.

At almost the same time, Nagumo received word of the American carrier task force. He changed course to approach it and ordered that the bombs that had been loaded on aircraft for the second Midway attack be replaced with torpedoes for an attack on the U.S. carrier force. The bombs were left lying on the deck. At the same time, the first Midway attack wave returned, and Nagumo ordered that the planes be recovered before launching the second wave.

Nagumo's force was now attacked by three low and slow waves of U.S. carrier torpedo planes, all of which

were shot down in flames before they could score a hit. Their sacrifice would not be in vain, however. Nagumo had now turned back eight attacks in three hours without a scratch. But his luck had run out. About to launch the counterattack, the four Japanese carriers turned into the wind. At that moment another American wave of dive bombers from the *Enterprise* and *Yorktown* came screaming down on a high-altitude dive-bombing attack. They met almost no resistance from the Japanese combat air patrol, which had been pulled down to meet the previous American low-level torpedo attack.

The Americans caught the Japanese carriers with planes on their flight decks about to take off, other planes



The Battle of Midway. This was the turning point of the Pacific war. Not only did the Japanese lose four carriers, but more important, they lost the best of their carrier pilots.

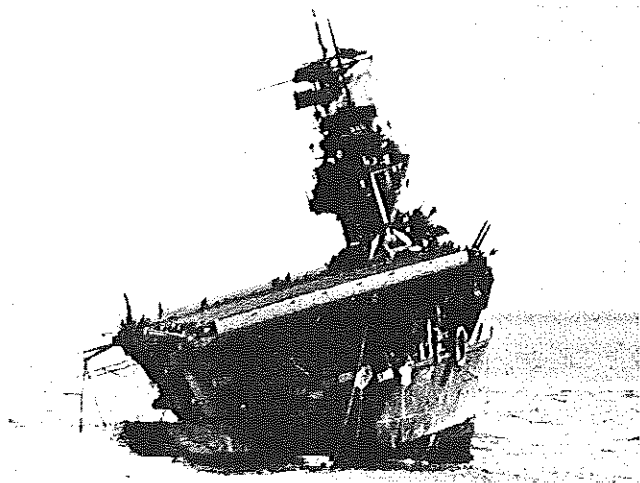
refueling, and the off-loaded bombs lying around waiting to be returned to the magazines. American bombs hit the carriers *Soryu*, *Kaga*, and *Akagi* and turned them into flaming torches in minutes. Only the carrier *Hiryu*, farther north, escaped this attack. Her dive bombers followed the *Yorktown's* planes back and stopped the U.S. carrier with three hits. Additional hits by torpedo planes caused Fletcher to abandon his flagship and turn tactical command over to Admiral Spruance.

About the time the *Yorktown* was being abandoned, her search planes discovered the *Hiryu* and reported her location and course. A short time later a wave of dive bombers from the *Enterprise* set the *Hiryu* on fire with

four direct bomb hits. Yamamoto was now without aircraft carriers to protect his main body of heavy warships. Though he ordered a counterattack during the night with four cruisers of his bombardment force, he canceled the Midway operation in the early hours of the morning, rather than have his surface force exposed to a daylight dive-bombing attack. He ordered his entire force to retire to the west.

The cruiser force now came under attack by a U.S. submarine, and in the process of dodging torpedoes, two of them, the *Mogami* and *Mikuma*, collided. On 6 June Spruance located the damaged ships and sank the *Mikuma*. The final action came when the *Yorktown*, which





The sinking USS *Yorktown* at the Battle of Midway.

was under tow after being abandoned, was sunk by a Japanese submarine. The spread of torpedoes also sank an escorting U.S. destroyer.

The Battle of Midway was the turning point in the Pacific war. The Japanese loss of four carriers and a cruiser was compounded by the loss of her best Japanese carrier pilots. This loss of pilots was one of the chief causes of Japan's ultimate defeat at sea. After Midway, new aviators sent to the carrier fleet were less prepared to face the growing number of well-trained American pilots.

Only the Japanese northern forces had achieved success in Yamamoto's grand plan. They had succeeded in occupying Kiska and Attu in the Aleutian Islands without resistance. But from then on, the Japanese would never be able to launch a major offensive.

### THE BATTLES FOR GUADALCANAL

After the defeat of the Japanese at Midway, both Admiral Nimitz and General MacArthur believed that an Allied counteroffensive should be started while the enemy was still off balance. To the Japanese, the defeat indicated that they had to reinforce their advanced bases and bring ships and troops down to the southwestern perimeter of their defense line. The Solomon Islands thus became an objective of both sides.

For the Japanese, this meant building an airfield on the island of Guadalcanal so its aircraft could be used to cover their flank while they completed the conquest of New Guinea. For the Allies, it meant launching an operation to lessen the Japanese threat to the Australian sea-lanes, protecting Port Moresby on New Guinea, and establishing an advanced base from which to strike the Japanese base at Rabaul. All the earlier planning incorporated in War Plan Orange had proposed recapturing



A night battle in the Solomons. The battle for Guadalcanal raged day and night on the island, and in the seas surrounding it, for six months. Losses for both sides were heavy, but in the end, U.S. forces were triumphant and the Japanese had to pull back their defense perimeter.

the Philippines, if lost, by a drive across the central Pacific. However, the Japanese threat to the sea-lanes of communication with Australia diverted much of the Allied effort to the south.

When an American scout plane discovered the Japanese building the Guadalcanal airstrip, that island became the focal point of a series of naval battles, and a prolonged struggle between U.S. marines and Japanese forces, for the next six months. A force of marines landed on 7 August at Guadalcanal and nearby Tulagi. The sea-way north of Guadalcanal used by the Allied task force staging the landings would become known as Ironbottom Sound because of the many ships sunk there during the campaign.

Within a few hours, the task force was under bombing attack from the Japanese base at Rabaul. After driving off the air attack, the U.S. carriers *Saratoga*, *Wasp*, and *Enterprise* retired because of heavy fighter-plane losses and the need for refueling. What the Allied force did not know was that a major Japanese naval force of cruisers was heading for the amphibious ships. They were coming down "the Slot," the passage between the major Solomon Islands from Rabaul.

It was now that the Japanese surface training in night operations would pay off for them. Catching the U.S. and Australian surface force completely unaware off Savo



The mud of the jungles of Guadalcanal made fighting there a terrible ordeal. U.S. forces had to fight not only the enemy but also the disease and discomfort of the hot jungle.

Island, Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa's cruisers gave the U.S. Navy the worst defeat it has ever suffered in battle: the U.S. cruisers *Astoria*, *Vincennes*, and *Quincy* plus the Australian cruiser *Canberra* were sunk, and the cruiser *Chicago* and two destroyers were heavily damaged. One thousand Allied sailors were killed.

With the Allied surface force shattered and the carriers away from the scene, the amphibious task force was forced to withdraw, leaving 16,000 U.S. marines on Guadalcanal without support and supplies. Only because the Japanese had no significant force ashore were the marines able to capture the airfield, which they renamed Henderson Field, and set up a defense perimeter. By 20 August the Seabees had the field in operation and the first planes were flying sorties and bringing in supplies.

When the Japanese learned that the Americans were repairing the airfield on Guadalcanal, they realized that they had to try to recapture that field. They began pouring troops onto the island at night, bringing them down the Slot by fast transports and destroyers with such regularity that the marines called the enemy ships the "Tokyo Express."

Japanese submarines were stationed at the approaches to Guadalcanal, and by early September, they had sunk the USS *Wasp*, damaged the USS *Saratoga*, and torpedoed the new battleship *North Carolina*. Japanese

forces continued to be heavily reinforced despite terrible casualties. By 15 October 22,000 troops were ashore.

Night naval battles and attacks by the Japanese Combined Fleet wreaked havoc on American forces. But the marines held, and they inflicted ten casualties for each one of their own men lost. Then, in the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands on 24 October, Admiral Halsey gambled his carriers—and came out the loser. The *Hornet* was sunk and the *Enterprise* heavily damaged, leaving no operational U.S. carriers in the Pacific. In the process, however, two Japanese carriers and a cruiser were badly damaged and a hundred Japanese planes were shot down.

The naval Battle of Guadalcanal was now about to begin. On 12 November the Japanese started down the Slot with 11,000 troops jammed into eleven transports. Escorted by two battleships as well as many cruisers and destroyers, this was to be the last major attempt by the Japanese to relieve their army on Guadalcanal. In a night cruiser action, the American and Japanese naval forces clashed head-on in the darkness, with heavy losses sustained on both sides. Seven of the Japanese transports with 9,000 troops were sunk.

Another night naval battle off Guadalcanal was fought in late November, again resulting in severe damage to U.S. cruisers by Japanese "long lance" (very long-range) torpedoes. But the Tokyo Express was slowly fading.

ing, and resupply of Japanese troops on the island was becoming more difficult. Extremely heavy casualties were inflicted on troop reinforcements by destroyers and PT boats.

The marines ashore continued their hard-fought advance, pushing the Japanese into the jungle interior. Finally, on 9 February 1943 the Japanese slipped out of the jungle, and 12,000 half-starved survivors made an escape on fast destroyers. Guadalcanal was secured.

### STRATEGY OF 1943: CONTINUOUS PRESSURE

A consolidation and planning period took place following the success on Guadalcanal and other successes on New Guinea. Events in Europe dictated that it would be mainly up to U.S. forces, assisted when possible by Australian and New Zealand (ANZAC) forces, to prosecute the war in the Pacific against the Japanese. The program put into effect for the rest of 1943 and early 1944 called for the elimination of the Japanese outposts in the Aleutians; intensified submarine attacks on the Japanese lines of communication from the Indies; and the isolation of Rabaul, with MacArthur's forces assisted by the South Pacific naval forces. A two-pronged advance across the Pacific would then follow, with the objective of reaching the Luzon (northern Philippines)–Formosa–China coast geographic triangle by late 1944. From there, attacks against the Japanese home islands could be launched. One line of advance would proceed across the central Pacific by way of the Gilberts, Marshalls, Marianas, Carolines, and Palaus toward the Philippines or Formosa, using naval forces commanded by Nimitz. The other line of advance would be across the Southwest Pacific via the north coast of New Guinea to the southern Philippines, using combined U.S. and Allied forces under the overall command of MacArthur. In the early part of 1943 there was also hope that the Nationalist Chinese army and other Allied forces under Chiang Kai-shek, the Allied commander in the China theater, could fight their way through Burma to the Chinese coast as well. Later in the year, however, these hopes were abandoned when it became obvious that the poorly equipped and badly organized Chinese army would not be able to overcome the stiff resistance of Japanese occupational forces in the region.

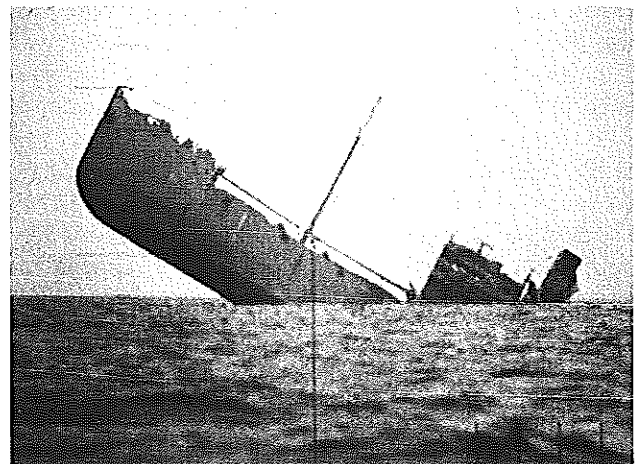
The reconquest of Attu and Kiska in the Aleutian Islands took place over the summer months of 1943. By August the Aleutians had been fully returned to American control, and they were never again threatened by the Japanese. Ground forces used in the attacks were redeployed to the central Pacific. Though some thought was given to establishing a third line of advance across the North Pacific via these islands, the Joint Chiefs finally decided that the foggy, cold North Pacific with its rocky islands was not suitable for such a major offensive.

### THE SUBMARINE WAR IN THE PACIFIC

The submarine war in the Pacific was in many ways a mirror image of the Battle of the Atlantic. In the Atlantic it was the goal of German U-boats to interdict Allied shipping in order to strangle Britain, but in the Pacific the roles were reversed. It was the American submarines that attempted to gain a stranglehold against Japanese shipping. In this endeavor they were aided somewhat by the Pacific geography, where shipping lanes to Japan from their sources of supply in Malaya, Borneo, Sumatra, and Java were often located in narrow straits between islands. This made interdiction easier for American submarines than for their German counterparts in the Atlantic. To build up the numbers of submarines, they were mass-produced during the war by American shipyards, just as escort destroyers and Liberty and Victory merchant ships were. For the Pacific, specially designed big submarines, nearly twice the size of German U-boats, were developed to carry greater fuel and torpedo loads for long-distance patrols against the Japanese.

The Japanese, on the other hand, never placed much emphasis on their submarine fleet. Their subs mainly targeted warships rather than auxiliary and merchant shipping. In general they underestimated the potential of the submarine throughout the war. This philosophy had been reinforced by the poor showing of their submarines at Pearl Harbor and during the early months of the war. Though they had some successes, they were insignificant compared to the effectiveness of the U.S. submarines in the conflict.

Making the situation worse for the Japanese was the fact that their antisubmarine operations were never very successful either. Because of a general lack of escort ships, the Japanese were not able to adopt the convoy techniques that were so successful in the Atlantic against



A Japanese merchant ship heads for the bottom after being torpedoed by a U.S. submarine during the Pacific war. This photo was taken through the periscope of the successful attacker.

the German U-boats, and they never developed radar. Consequently, by mid-1943 Japanese merchant shipping losses to submarine attacks were very heavy. The essential raw materials could not be delivered from the Southern Resources Areas to support Japanese war industry or military forces. Altogether in the Pacific war, U.S. submarines sank over 1,100 merchant vessels, totaling over 5 million tons. In addition, U.S. subs sank some 200 naval ships. The submarine was in many ways the naval weapon that won the war for the United States in the Pacific.

### BYPASSING RABAU

The Casablanca Conference in January 1943 decided on a movement through the remaining Solomon Islands toward the giant Japanese base at Rabaul. Admiral Yamamoto realized the importance of defending the Melanesian and Australasian approaches to Rabaul, so he reinforced his airfields with fleet carrier air wings and launched major raids on Ironbottom Sound. Heavy losses were inflicted on American ships, but in the process the Japanese carrier air wings suffered additional severe losses.

In an effort to boost morale, on 18 April Yamamoto and his staff set out on an inspection trip to Japanese bases in the Solomons. Because coded messages that outlined his itinerary had been broken by U.S. naval intelligence, American long-range fighters from Henderson Field were able to intercept his plane over Ballale Island near Bougainville and shoot it down, killing Yamamoto. This was a major blow for the Japanese, for they had lost their most able commander.

For the next twelve months into March 1944, the campaign against Rabaul progressed on two fronts: through the Solomons and on New Guinea. During that time the U.S. Fleet fought in no less than forty-five major naval battles and seventeen invasions in the Solomons and Southwest Pacific. The successful campaigns by MacArthur on eastern New Guinea were made possible by the Solomons operations, which tied up the Japanese navy. Since the Japanese could not concentrate on all fronts at the same time, the Allied advance toward the Philippines moved steadily onward.

By mid-March Rabaul was encircled, and 125,000 Japanese troops—90,000 in Rabaul itself—were bypassed, surrounded by the advancing Americans without hope of relief or escape. There was now no need for the Americans to capture Rabaul. It became a backwater as the war progressed westward along the northern New Guinea coast and northward toward the Philippines.

In the last phase of the campaign against Rabaul, a pattern developed that came to characterize much of the remainder of the Pacific war. The Allies would mount no frontal attacks against strongly entrenched Japanese

forces if they could avoid it. Moreover, they would not capture every island in the path across the central Pacific. Rather, they would advance in greater leaps, limited only by the range of available land-based air cover, or the availability of carrier-based air support. Thus, the Allies bypassed and isolated major strongholds such as Rabaul, effectively taking them out of the war without the Allies having to invade and conquer them.

### LEAPFROG ON NEW GUINEA

By early 1944 the rapidly growing Fifth Fleet was capable of supporting invasions far beyond the reach of land-based aircraft. The next move in the two-pronged attack across the Pacific would be by MacArthur's forces, leaping along the northern New Guinea coast. Units of Task Force 58 were called on to assist in these amphibious landings.

The Japanese thought the New Guinea movement was the single line of advance toward the Philippines. When MacArthur moved farther to the Wakde Islands and then threatened the island of Biak in May, the Japanese decided that they had to stop this advance. Biak had three airfields that were essential to the Japanese defense plan. The new Japanese Combined Fleet commander, Admiral Soemu Toyoda, decided to make an all-out attempt to hold Biak.

The Japanese first took much of their central Pacific air strength and sent it to New Guinea to attack the newly won Allied air bases there. Then they made three reinforcement attempts by sea toward Biak, where MacArthur's forces had become stalemated by the strong Japanese defenses.

The first two attempts turned back after being sighted by Rear Admiral Thomas Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet. The third attempt was to be supported by the finest ships in the Japanese Navy, including the superbattleships *Yamato* and *Musashi*.

On 11 June, however, just as they were about to make their run on Biak, 1,000 miles to the northeast the U.S. Fifth Fleet attacked the Mananas in preparation for an invasion of Saipan.

Toyoda immediately suspended the Biak operation and ordered Vice Admiral Ozawa northward to join the main body of the Mobile Fleet, east of the Philippines. MacArthur was now able to proceed unmolested by Japanese reinforcements. He wrapped up the New Guinea operation by the end of July.

### SAIPAN

June 1944 found U.S. forces engaged in arguably the greatest military effort in history. At the very time the Normandy landings were taking place in Europe, the United States was about to send a huge amphibious force

against Saipan in the central Pacific. The mammoth task of projecting 127,000 troops on 535 ships some 3,000 miles from Pearl Harbor, and providing them with fast carrier task force support against the entire Japanese Fleet, was just as complex as the D Day invasion in Europe.

As the amphibious task force proceeded toward its objective, Army planes from the newly won bases in the Marshalls and Navy carrier planes from Task Force 58 struck Japanese bases in the Marianas and in the Carolines. A bombardment by U.S. battleships began on 13 June. It continued until the fifteenth, when two Marine divisions crossed the coral reef through passages blasted by underwater demolition teams and hit the beaches.

Heavy casualties were sustained, but by the end of the day 20,000 marines were ashore. Reinforcements were put ashore, and by 17 June the American offensive had captured the main airfield and begun to push the Japanese back. By this time the Japanese Combined Fleet was approaching the operating area, and Admiral Mitscher had to steam out to place himself between it and the forces on Saipan.

### BATTLE OF THE PHILIPPINE SEA

Maneuvering went on for two days as the two forces searched for each other. Mitscher was always mindful of his primary orders: "Capture, occupy, and defend Saipan, Tinian, and Guam." On the afternoon of 18 June Admiral Ozawa's scout planes discovered Task Force 58.

Ozawa's main body had 6 carriers surrounded by cruisers and destroyers in two circular formations. One hundred miles ahead of the main body was Vice Admiral Takeo Kurita with the main Japanese surface force of battleships and cruisers, and 3 carriers. Facing the Japanese Mobile Force of 9 carriers, 5 battleships, 13 cruisers, 28 destroyers, and 430 carrier aircraft was Task Force 58 with 15 carriers, 7 battleships, 21 cruisers, 69 destroyers, and 891 carrier aircraft. From Japan, Admiral Toyoda radioed Ozawa that "the fate of the Empire depends on the issue of this battle; let every man do his utmost!"

Ozawa had counted heavily on getting air support from the Marianas bases. He felt that this land-based air support would more than equalize the opposing task forces. Unfortunately for Ozawa, he did not know that only thirty operational planes remained after the devastating American raids made earlier, and that many of his carrier pilots had returned from the Biak operations sick with malaria. Not aware that the odds were heavily against him because of these factors, he moved to close with Task Force 58.

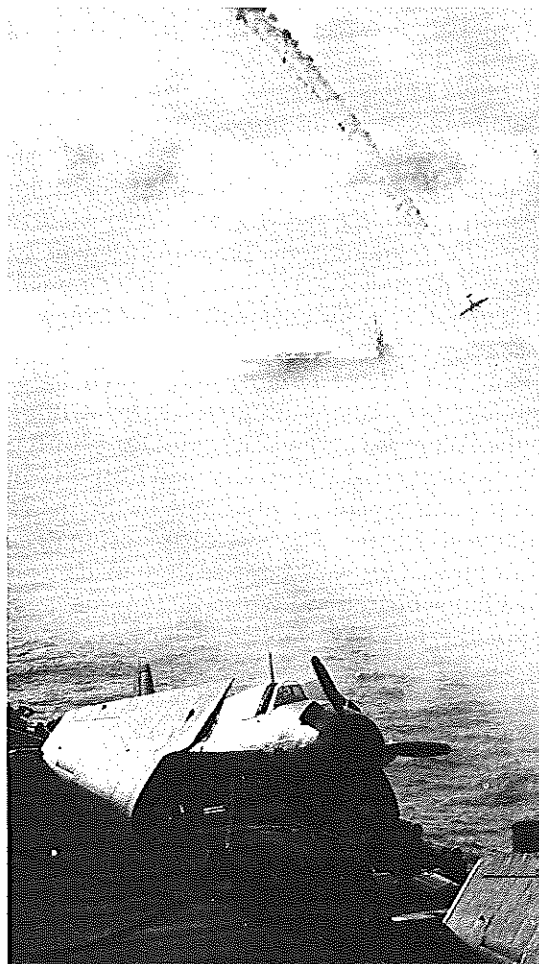
Alerted to the impending attack, Mitscher and Spruance put more than 450 planes in the air to meet the challenge. New combat information centers with the latest radar equipment guided TF-58's Hellcats to approaching

enemy planes from advantageous altitudes and directions. The superbly trained American pilots, at peak efficiency after a year of successful combat experience, were ready for the battle.

In eight hours of furious air warfare, 330 Japanese planes were shot down in what historians came to call the "Marianas Turkey Shoot." At the same time, the American submarine *Albacore* torpedoed Ozawa's new carrier flagship, the *Taiho*, and the submarine *Cavalla* put three torpedoes into the carrier *Shokaku*. Both carriers exploded a few hours later with great loss of life. But Ozawa and his staff survived and transferred to the carrier *Zuikaku*.

Ozawa ordered a general retirement to refuel, intending to resume battle the next day—even though he had only 100 carrier planes left. He believed erroneous reports from his surviving pilots that TF-58 had been crippled.

Mitscher, in the meantime, had received no information on Ozawa's movements and chose a course that



The Battle of the Philippine Sea, sometimes called the "Marianas Turkey Shoot." This photo shows a Japanese bomber plunging toward the sea after being hit by antiaircraft fire during the battle.

separated the forces well beyond his optimum operating radius. Late the next day a scout plane located the Japanese formation. Taking a calculated risk, Mitscher launched 200 planes against the Japanese when they were just within maximum operating range. Then came a shock: the Japanese were 60 miles farther away than originally reported. Mitscher decided to let his planes continue, while steaming full speed toward the Japanese in order to reduce the return flight distance.

Just before sunset the Americans found the Japanese force and attacked it, sinking two oilers and a carrier and damaging two other carriers, a battleship, and a cruiser. Ozawa managed to get seventy-five of his fighters into the air. Only ten survived, and the crippled Mobile Fleet sailed away with only thirty-five planes left. Japanese naval air capability had been destroyed, and the Marianas invasion was able to continue, opposed only by the Japanese garrisons on the islands.

During the night after the final engagement, Admiral Mitscher daringly turned on the carrier lights to guide back the returning pilots. Still, many planes were lost. They had to ditch in the sea when out of fuel. But of 209 aviators who had engaged the enemy that day, all but 49 were recovered, either on the flight decks or from the water by destroyers and float planes.

With the Mobile Force defeated and out of the area, TF-58 was able to concentrate on providing full assistance to the invading forces on Saipan and succeeding invasions of Tinian and Guam. Now sustained shore bombardment could be brought to bear before the troops landed, greatly reducing casualties. Both Saipan and Tinian were secured by the end of July, and organized resistance ceased on Guam by 10 August.

Japan had lost her direct air route into the Carolines. The United States had acquired logistic bases for additional steps toward the Philippines, advance submarine bases for attacks on Japanese communications and sea lanes to the Indies, and air bases from which the new long-range B-29s would soon be bombing the industrial cities of Japan.

This was the beginning of the end for Japan. The emperor and other high officials now knew that they would have to surrender. The Tojo government fell and was succeeded by a cabinet to which the emperor made known his desire for early peace negotiations. But the Japanese military ethic was still so strong that no official would initiate steps to end the war for yet another year.

## RETURN TO THE PHILIPPINES

The next series of invasion plans had yet to be decided when Spruance and other senior naval commanders returned to Pearl Harbor to rest and plan their future operations. The Fifth Fleet was redesignated the U.S. Third Fleet under Admiral Halsey, with Vice Admiral Mitscher

remaining in command of the Fast Carrier Task Force, now called Task Force 38.

In its two drives across the Pacific, both of which exemplified throughout the military principles of maneuver, economy of force, surprise, and massing of force, the Allied forces had arrived in mid-September 1944 at the threshold of their strategic objective, the Luzon–Formosa–China coast triangle. In seven months MacArthur's forces had moved nearly 1,500 miles from the Admiralties to the island of Morotai. In ten months Nimitz's forces had advanced over 4,500 miles from Hawaii to the Palaus. The time had now arrived when a final choice had to be made of the main objective in the target area.

Knowing that the Palau Islands, Yap, and Morotai were probably the next objectives, Halsey joined TF-38 in his flagship, the USS *New Jersey*, and carried out air strikes against the central Philippines. The results were astounding. TF-38 destroyed 200 enemy airplanes and sank a dozen freighters and a tanker. Convinced that the central Philippines were weakly defended, Halsey sent Nimitz an urgent message recommending that the Palaus and Yap be bypassed and that ground forces for these operations be turned over to MacArthur, at his urging, for an invasion of Leyte Island in the central Philippines. Until this time there had been some indecision among the Joint Chiefs between Formosa and the Philippines as the objective of the central Pacific campaign, but now the choice seemed clear. Because of the weaknesses discovered by Halsey in the central Philippines, the Allies would follow his and MacArthur's advice and take the Philippines—first Leyte in October, then Luzon in December. Nimitz would then invade Iwo Jima and Okinawa early in 1945. The Joint Chiefs directed Nimitz and MacArthur to combine forces for the invasion of Leyte on 20 October 1944, after securing Morotai and Peleliu in the Palau Islands.

Morotai was captured in one of the easiest conquests of the war, but overcoming Peleliu's defenses cost the marines the highest combat casualty rate (40 percent) of any amphibious assault in American history. A new Japanese strategy was put into effect. The old strategy called for the defenders to meet the invasion on the beaches, but this obviously had not worked in the face of devastating shore bombardment. The new strategy called for a "defense in depth." The defenders were to have prepared positions well behind the beaches, taking full advantage of the natural terrain. Resistant fortifications were to be constructed, and there were to be no useless banzai charges.

More than 10,000 Japanese had carefully prepared Peleliu in accordance with the new strategy. After three days of naval bombardment, the marines landed on Peleliu on 17 September and quickly made good their beachhead and captured the airfield. But then they ran

into the interior defenses, and from then on progress was costly and slow. It was not until February 1945 that the island was cleared of Japanese defenders. By that time the marines had suffered 10,000 casualties, including nearly 2,000 dead.

Long before February, however, the airfields and the anchorages in the Palaus were brought under American control. Had they remained in Japanese hands, they would have been a threat to the Leyte invasion and later operations in Luzon.

In preparing for the Leyte invasion, the Third Fleet conducted heavy attacks on Formosa and Okinawa to destroy potential land-based air support for the Japanese forces in the Philippines. Just before the landings took place, they attacked Formosa again, destroying most of the torpedo bombers that had been sent from the home islands. Over 350 Japanese land-based aircraft were destroyed between 11 and 15 October. This ensured control of the air over the Leyte beaches.

More than 60,000 assault troops were landed ashore on Leyte by sunset on D day, 20 October. From then on it was a tough fight in the interior of the island. General MacArthur waded ashore a few hours after the first landing, accompanied by President Sergio Osmena of the Philippines. In a radio broadcast MacArthur announced his return to the islands and called for Filipinos to rise and strike the Japanese at every opportunity.

By late December MacArthur's Sixth Army had secured the most important sections of the island, those required for air and logistical bases. Japanese troops in the mountains continued organized resistance well into the spring of 1945. While the fighting for Leyte continued, MacArthur's forces moved on to Luzon only slightly behind schedule. In mid-December two Army regiments captured an air base in southwestern Mindoro, 150 miles south of Manila. The invasion of Luzon itself started on 9 January 1945, when four Army divisions landed along the shores of Lingayen Gulf. The Japanese were incapable of naval intervention at Lingayen Gulf, their most significant reaction being kamikaze (suicide plane) attacks against Admiral Kinkaid's supporting naval forces and Mitscher's fast carrier force, now redesignated TF-58. Army units reached Manila on 3 February. It took them a month of bitter building-to-building fighting to root out the Japanese. By mid-March Manila Bay was open for Allied shipping. Except for a strong pocket of resistance in the mountains of central Luzon, organized Japanese resistance ended by late June 1945.

### BATTLES FOR LEYTE GULF

Between 23 and 26 October 1944 the Japanese made their greatest challenge to the Leyte landings. Admiral Toyoda knew that if the Japanese lost the Philippines they would lose everything. The lifeline between Japan and the In-

dies would be cut and the Mobile Fleet would be divided, without fuel and ammunition. The Fleet could then be defeated piecemeal and Japan would be blockaded. Toyoda knew he was outnumbered, but this would be the last chance for the Imperial Navy to stop the American advance. Accordingly, he directed nearly every Japanese warship still afloat to attack the enemy at Leyte.

In the four-day action there were four major battles: the Battle of the Sibuyan Sea on 24 October, and, on 25 October, the Battle of Surigao Strait, the Battle off Cape Engano, and the Battle off Samar. These battles were the largest and most complex naval engagements in history. When the battles were over, the Imperial Japanese Navy had lost most of its remaining carriers, plus most of its remaining surface forces.

With the Japanese surface navy ruined, its carriers sunk and pilots lost, the United States proceeded with the reconquest of the Philippines. Eighteen amphibious assaults were conducted between the landings on Leyte and the final landings in March 1945 on the islands of Mindanao and Panay. It was during these actions at Leyte Gulf, however, that another new threat appeared for the first time in the Pacific war—the kamikaze suicide planes. (The word *kamikaze* meant "divine wind." This referred to a typhoon, which reputedly saved Japan in 1281 by destroying a Mongol fleet that was sailing to invade the islands.) From then on until the Philippine Islands were secured, U.S. naval forces suffered increasing damage and sinkings from these planes. The worst of this type of attack was yet to come, however.

### IWO JIMA

The conquest of the Marianas had provided bases for the large B-29 bombers to make devastating air raids on the Japanese industrial cities. But between the Marianas and Japan was the volcanic island of Iwo Jima. As long as the Japanese held the island, the home islands' defenses were alerted when bombers were en route, and fighters were scrambled to intercept them.

The 3,000-mile round trip was much too far for Allied fighters to accompany and defend the bombers. Damaged bombers were often lost in the sea on the return trip because they would not hold up for that distance. The Americans determined to put an end to this dangerous situation. In U.S. hands the island's airfields could be improved to handle emergency landings for the big bombers, and to provide a base for fighter planes to escort them over Japan.

The Japanese, fully aware of the importance of the island to their defenses, expected an assault. They removed the civilians and reinforced the garrison to 23,000 troops. They proceeded to transform the island into the strongest fortress in the Pacific. Iwo Jima was an

8-square-mile island of lava cut into hills and ravines, overlooked by 550-foot Mount Suribachi, an extinct volcano. The Japanese tunneled into the volcanic rock and made interconnecting passageways between 400 concealed pillboxes and concrete blockhouses. Their artillery was placed in caves on Mount Suribachi, where it could sweep the beaches.

When the invasion force arrived, heavy naval bombardment on the island was able to be conducted for only three days of the ten requested by the marines, because of the accelerated timetable decreed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This was to prove grossly inadequate.

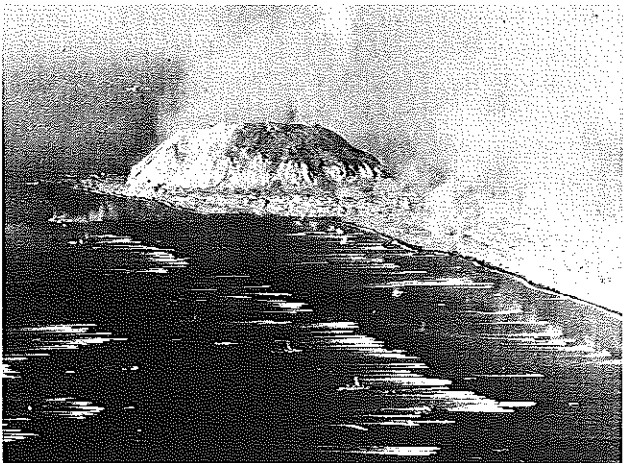
D day at Iwo Jima was set for 19 February 1945. Five hundred landing craft carrying eight battalions of marines moved to the line of departure. Meanwhile, more than a hundred of TF-58's planes attacked the island with rockets, machine guns, and general purpose and napalm bombs. Naval guns shifted from slow, destructive fire to fast, neutralizing fire to drive the defenders underground. When the assault waves approached the beach, the support ships shifted fire again to provide a barrage of fire ahead and on the flanks of the advancing marines. More than fifty rocket-firing amphibious ships advanced to give the marines close support.

Despite all this preparatory fire, the assault waves quickly piled up on the beach because the amphibious tractors were unable to climb the crumbling volcanic ash. Many landing craft broached (turned sideways in the surf) or ran into earlier boat waves. The marines, stranded on the steep beach, soon were hit by withering machine-gun, mortar, and heavy gunfire from weapons that had withheld their fire earlier so they would not reveal their positions. Through this holocaust the marines inched forward, isolating Mount Suribachi and reaching

the edge of the nearest airfield. Of 30,000 marines who hit the beach that first day, 2,400 became casualties.

The fighting continued through the night, and the next day the airfield was captured. The assault on Mount Suribachi then began. After three days of blasting and burning out pillboxes and sealing up caves with grenades, flamethrowers, rockets, and demolition charges, the mountain was surrounded and a patrol reached the summit and raised the American flag. By good fortune the flag raising was photographed by a war correspondent. A life-sized sculpture later made from the photo immortalized the moment and has provided inspiration ever since to the American people. The sculpture is now located in Washington, D.C.

While the vicious fighting was in progress on Iwo Jima, the supporting naval forces of TF-58 and the Amphibious Support Force were hit by numerous kamikaze attacks. The carrier *Saratoga* was badly damaged, and the escort carrier *Bismarck Sea* sank after a tremendous explosion that blew off her stern.



Some of the more than 500 amphibious craft en route to the assault beaches at Iwo Jima. Mount Suribachi looms in the background.



The Iwo Jima Monument near Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C., immortalizes the capture of Mount Suribachi by the U.S. Marines in February 1945.



Instead of taking five days as originally planned, the conquest of Iwo Jima took over a month. It wasn't until 25 March that the last Japanese troops made their final attack. Only 200 Japanese were captured; all the rest were killed. For the first time casualties among the assault forces exceeded those of the Japanese defenders. Over 19,000 marines and sailors were wounded and nearly 7,000 were killed. Admiral Nimitz said the marines on Iwo Jima made "uncommon valor a common virtue."

### THE BATTLE OF OKINAWA

The war was now closing in on the home islands of Japan. From the middle of February, carrier aircraft began striking the Japanese cities with high explosives and incendiaries. On 25 February, even before Iwo was secured, fighters from TF-58 supported 200 B-29s in a massive raid on Tokyo, burning out 2 square miles of the enemy capital and destroying 150 Japanese aircraft. Afterward, TF-58 steamed past Okinawa, bombing the island's airfields and taking intelligence photographs. The final gigantic amphibious assault and battle of the Pacific war was about to begin.

Weeks of heavy raids and softening-up attacks on Japanese bases on Kyushu and Okinawa preceded the assault landings on Okinawa. On 1 April a force of 1,300 ships carrying 182,000 assault troops arrived off the island, having come from bases all over the Pacific. Over 100,000 Japanese defenders awaited their attack from well-prepared positions, as on Iwo Jima and Peleliu. The Japanese troops on Okinawa knew that they were the last obstacle to an Allied invasion of the Japanese home islands. Many had pledged to fight to the death to prevent the island from falling.

Almost from the beginning, elements of the invasion fleet were subjected to fierce kamikaze attacks. On the morning of 6 April, however, the Japanese began their last major counterattack of the war. Over 350 Japanese kamikazes came out of Kyushu to strike the fleet. Meanwhile, the last surviving Japanese surface force, made up of the huge battleship *Yamato*, the light cruiser *Yahagi*, and eight destroyers, sailed south from the Inland Sea, propelled by the last 2,500 tons of fuel oil in Japan. It was to be a one-way trip, for both aircraft and ships. Since the ships did not have enough fuel to return, their mission was to drive through the invasion fleet, causing as much damage as possible. They planned to beach themselves at the invasion site, firing until all their ammunition was expended or until they were destroyed.

The kamikazes sank several U.S. picket destroyers, but not before warnings had been radioed by the sinking ships. Met by combat air patrol fighters from TF-58, 150 planes were shot down. The remaining 200 made it to the Okinawa area. There they were mostly destroyed by

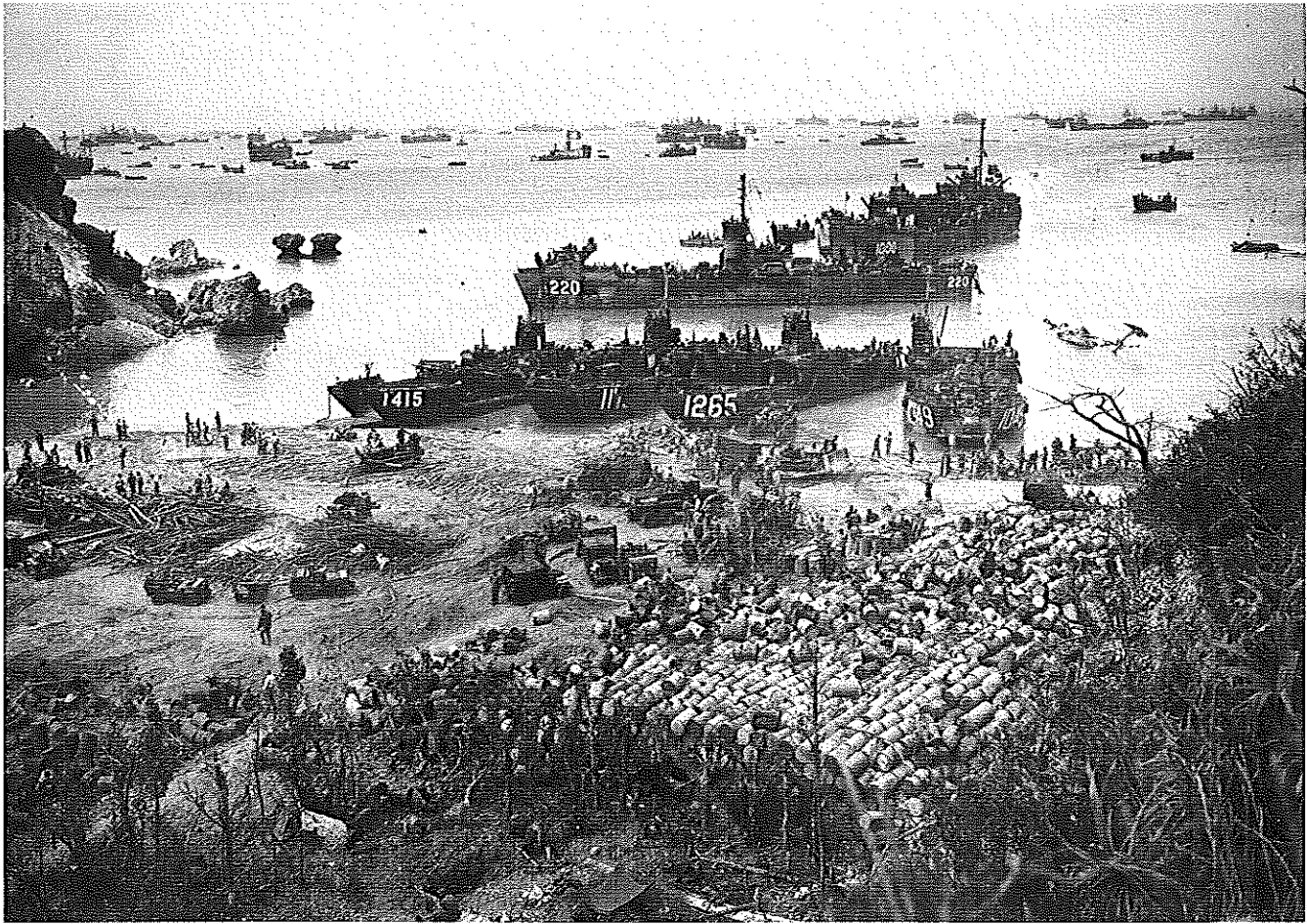


A Japanese kamikaze suicide plane comes in to attack the USS *Missouri* during the Okinawa invasion. The plane caused only minor damage; it can be seen coming in over the port anti-aircraft batteries.

fighter planes and intense anti-aircraft fire. Meanwhile, the *Yamato* force was allowed to proceed far enough southward so it would not be able to retreat to safety. Then Admiral Mitscher struck with the full force of his carrier aircraft. Only two destroyers survived the attack and made it back to base.

For the next three months the carrier task forces and other ships of the U.S. Fifth and Third Fleets suffered hundreds of kamikaze attacks as they supported the Okinawa action and thrust their power into the Japanese home islands. On 21 June 1945 Okinawa was declared secure after the defending Japanese general and his chief of staff acknowledged defeat by committing suicide. During the battle for the island the Navy had endured the loss of 68 ships and over 4,000 sailors—more than either the marines or the Army suffered in the hard going on the island.

But the U.S. Navy stayed, and Okinawa was secured. The battle had cost the Japanese 100,000 men and 7,000 airplanes. Okinawa was the end of the fighting for the Japanese. Emperor Hirohito told his Supreme War Council on 22 June that they must find a way to end the war. Fire-bombing raids were turning Japanese cities into ashes, and their Navy and Air Force were gone. The Soviet Union had informed the Japanese that they would not renew their Neutrality Pact in April, and since Germany had surrendered in May, entrance of the Soviets into the Pacific war was imminent.



An invasion beach on Okinawa. In the background, part of the huge invasion force is busy off-loading supplies to support the forces ashore.

### THE FINAL DAYS

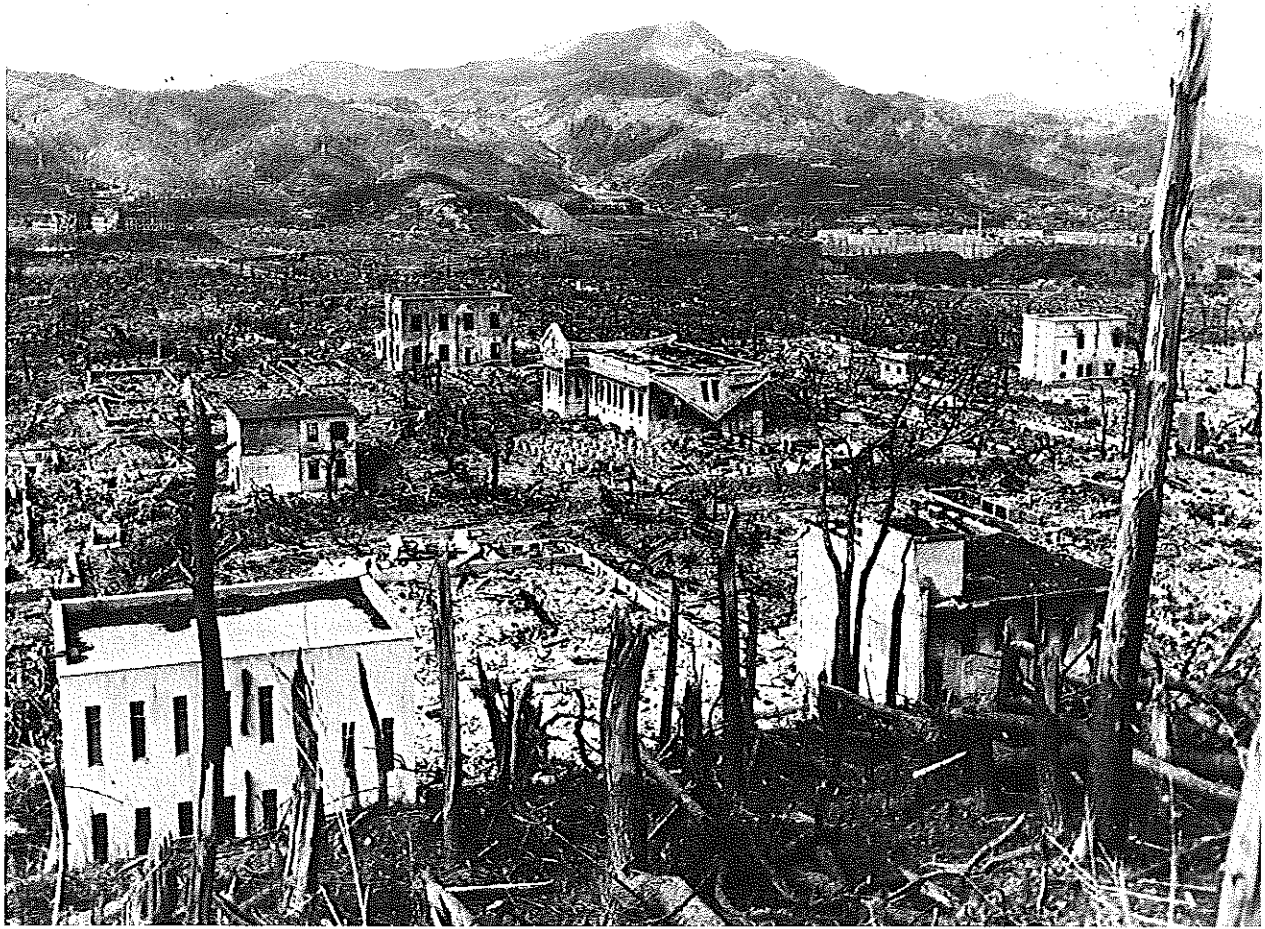
Bringing an end to the war was not easy. There were still powerful factions in the Japanese military forces who favored a fight to the bitter end. The Japanese people would never accept a surrender that would not preserve the emperor and imperial system. The Japanese made peace gestures to the Soviets during their negotiations for extension of the neutrality pact. But the Soviets remained silent—so silent that Stalin did not even tell the United States or Britain about the peace initiatives during their meeting in Potsdam, Germany, in late July.

However, the United States knew about the peace initiatives because U.S. intelligence was reading the messages between the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo and the Japanese ambassador in Moscow. On 26 July the Potsdam Declaration spelled out the terms of surrender for Japan, specifying that unconditional surrender would pertain only to the military forces and that possessions except the four home islands—Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu—would have to be given up. No

provisions concerning the emperor were made, since the Allies had not yet decided on this question. This omission caused much concern in Japan.

As the Soviets stalled and the Japanese procrastinated, the Americans and British were actively planning an invasion of the home islands of Japan, code-named Operation Downfall. Events were moving faster than governments, however. On 16 July the United States successfully exploded the first atomic device at Alamogordo, New Mexico. Within hours atomic bombs were en route to the Marianas bomber bases. And during the next three weeks the combined U.S. and British fleets, the most powerful ever assembled in history, ranged freely up and down the Japanese coast, shelling and bombing the cities virtually at will.

After a thorough assessment of projected casualties to both sides that would result from the planned invasion of Japan, versus the casualties and damage anticipated from dropping the atomic bomb, President Harry Truman decided to use the A-bomb in an attempt to end the war without the necessity of an invasion.



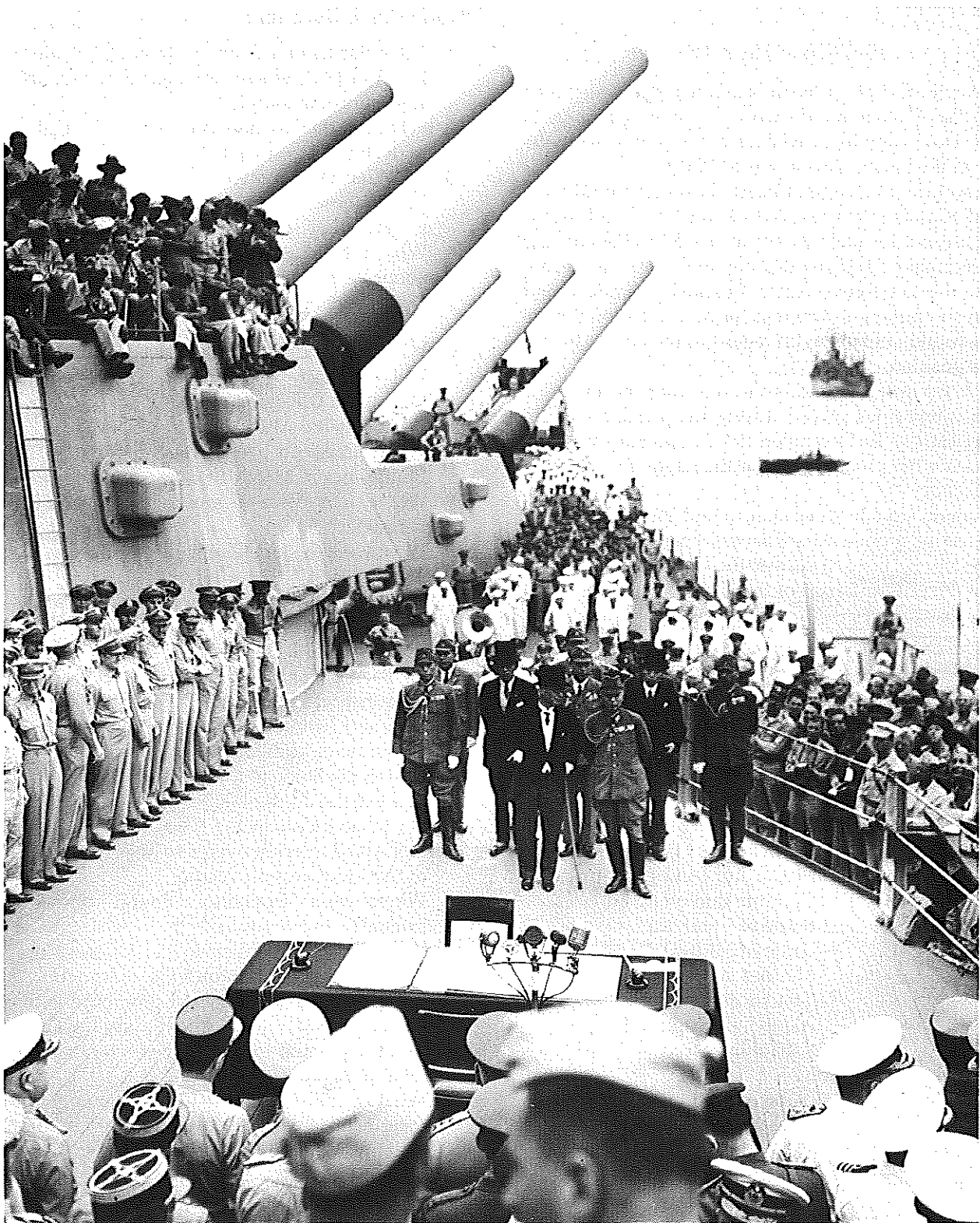
Nagasaki, Japan, after the atomic bomb explosion. Only a few steel and concrete buildings remain standing.

On 6 August 1945 a B-29 carrying an atomic bomb left Tinian and headed for Hiroshima, an industrial city on the Inland Sea. The weapon utterly destroyed the city. The Soviets then realized that the end had arrived and that they had to get into the Pacific war immediately if they were to get in on the victory. On 8 August the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and moved its forces into Manchuria and Korea, sweeping the Japanese before them. Despite the destruction at Hiroshima and the dropping of leaflets warning of the consequences of further delay, the Japanese military elements in the government refused to consider unconditional surrender. So on 9 August another U.S. aircraft dropped a second atomic bomb on the industrial port of Nagasaki.

Faced with this ultimate destruction, Emperor Hirohito advised his Supreme Council to accept the Potsdam Declaration. The cabinet agreed, but only on the condition that the imperial system remain. The U.S. secretary of state, speaking on behalf of the Allied governments, accepted the condition subject to stipulations that the emperor must submit to the authority of the supreme al-

lied commander during the occupation of Japan, and the Japanese people should decide on the emperor's final status in free elections at a later date. The cabinet, on the advice of the emperor, agreed to these stipulations on 14 August. The next day, with one carrier raid already flying over Tokyo, the Third Fleet received the order to "cease fire."

In the next two weeks the Allies converged on Tokyo Bay. On Sunday morning, 2 September 1945, the Japanese foreign minister and representatives of the Imperial General Staff boarded the USS *Missouri* at anchor in Tokyo Bay and signed the surrender document on behalf of the emperor, the government, and the Imperial General Headquarters. General Douglas MacArthur signed the acceptance as supreme allied commander for the Allied powers. Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz signed as representative for the United States. Following him were representatives of the United Kingdom, China, the Soviet Union, Australia, Canada, France, the Netherlands, and New Zealand. Shortly thereafter, General MacArthur moved into his Tokyo headquarters to direct the occupation of Japan. World War II was over. ■



The Japanese surrender delegation boards the USS *Missouri* for the final ceremony that formally ended World War II. This was the first time the Japanese had surrendered to a foe in more than 2,000 years.

### CRITICAL THINKING

1. Research the main provisions of the contingency plan *War Plan Orange* first drawn up by naval planners in 1911. How were its provisions carried out during the War in the Pacific during World War II?
2. The admiral in charge of Pearl Harbor, Admiral Husband Kimmel, was relieved of command and forced to retire as a result of the sneak attack by the Japanese in December 1941. His descendants have tried to reverse this action ever since. Research the attack and form an opinion on whether the admiral should have been found culpable with regard to the attack. Justify your position.
3. Much intrigue surrounds the role that the Japanese mini-submarines played during the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Research this issue and state the probable role of the submarines during this action.
4. President Truman's decision to end World War II by the use of atomic weapons has been a contentious issue among historians over the last several decades. State the pros and cons of this decision, and the modern consequences that resulted from it.

### Chronology

July 1941	U.S. halts oil sales to Japan
7 Dec. 1941	Japan bombs Pearl Harbor
11 Mar. 1942	MacArthur leaves Philippines
18 Apr. 1942	Doolittle raid on Japan
8 May 1942	Battle of Coral Sea
4 June 1942	Battle of Midway
7 Aug. 1942	Marines land on Guadalcanal
9 Feb. 1943	Guadalcanal secured
Aug. 1943	Aleutians recaptured
Mar. 1944	Rabaul bypassed
15 June 1944	Saipan landing
18 June 1944	Battle of Philippine Sea
July 1944	New Guinea secured
20 Oct. 1944	MacArthur invades Philippines
23–26 Oct. 1944	Battle for Leyte Gulf
19 Feb. 1945	Iwo Jima landing
1 Apr.–21 June 1945	Battle of Okinawa
6 Aug. 1945	Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima
8 Aug. 1945	Soviets declare war on Japan
2 Sept. 1945	Japan surrenders

### Study Guide Questions

1. After the United States restricted the sale of oil to Japan in 1941, where was their only remaining possible source of supply?
2. What did the Japanese do to cause the United States to declare war on Japan?
3. A. What targets were successfully attacked by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor?  
B. What key land assets were missed?
4. What three miscalculations did the Japanese make about Pearl Harbor?
5. What were Nimitz's orders at the start of the Pacific War?
6. What was the name of the war plan for the Pacific War that had been developed and refined at the Naval War College?
7. What was the ABDA defense alliance?
8. What American general was ordered to leave the Philippines in March 1942?
9. Where was there a gap in the Japanese defense perimeter?
10. What were the Japanese hopes for the conduct of the war in 1942?
11. What was the Doolittle raid on Japan in April 1942?
12. A. What battle was the first great combat of the Pacific War between carrier forces?  
B. What was the result of the battle?
13. How did Nimitz know about Japanese intentions at the Battle of Midway?
14. Why is the Battle of Midway regarded as the turning point of the Pacific War?
15. On what island in the Solomons did the Japanese and Allied forces converge to determine the outcome in the southwestern Pacific?
16. Where were "Ironbottom Sound" and "the Slot" located?
17. What name was given to the Japanese operations that attempted to reinforce Guadalcanal?
18. What was the fundamental difference between the submarine wars in the Atlantic and the Pacific?
19. What happened to the Japanese commander Admiral Yamamoto in April 1944?
20. What central Pacific island was the target of one of the greatest military efforts in history in June 1944?
21. What was the principal effect of the Japanese defeat in the Battle of the Philippine Sea?
22. What was the new Japanese defense strategy put into effect on Peleliu in late 1944?
23. When and where did General MacArthur make good on his promise to return to the Philippines?
24. What did the Japanese see as the consequences if they lost the battles for Leyte Gulf in October 1944?

25. A. What were the kamikazes?  
B. Where did they first appear?
26. Why was it necessary for Allied forces to secure Iwo Jima?
27. Why did the Japanese mount a fanatical defense of the island of Okinawa?
28. To whom did the Japanese make their initial “peace feelers” to end the Pacific War?
29. What three events in early August 1945 made it imperative for the Japanese to accept the Potsdam Declaration for their surrender?

30. When and where did the Japanese sign the surrender document?

**Vocabulary**

Tokyo Express  
defense in depth  
kamikaze  
pillboxes  
subversive

scout plane  
defense perimeter  
Bataan Death March  
demoralize